

Chapter Three

Shaw Verbatim

This chapter in Shaw's book is titled, "Imagination," and is so difficult to understand that the writer has decided to quote parts of it as it appears.

"How many fanciers, by use of their imagination, have ever reflected what their birds might say to them could they but talk? Fanciers would find results of such mental exercises most interesting and instructive. I recall an instance years ago of my stating, during a lecture, 'Mr. Chairman, Gentlemen. I wish you to believe with me that our pigeons possess more intelligence than 85 percent of the fanciers who own them, myself included.' Unfortunately, the remark was greeted with general laughter, a reaction which emphasized the necessity of cultivating the imagination.

When racing from the Grange lofts, the 20 racing cocks during the racing season were flying out from 6 am to 7 am, and, in the evening from 6 pm to 7 pm; after this, 'imagination' began to play its part- seated on a grit box with a false top and with the loft doors wide open, I would study the birds in an imaginative manner. Taking each bird separately from No. 1 to No. 20, it was surprising that, although type and formation were very similar, each bird possessed its own peculiar character. 'Champion Picture,' for example, was as obedient as a well trained Alsatian dog and when spoken to would understand, as could most of the birds- although both doors were wide open, no bird dared to

fly out because of orders to the contrary previously given, except on rare occasions, when one would, perhaps, disobey and then 'on command,' the remaining 19 cocks would go into their respective boxes, to be shut in, until the one who was absent 'without leave' returned, when he would be confined for half an hour whilst the others were allowed their freedom, thus fully comprehending the discipline and regarding the confined bird as in disgrace. Thus could one imagine their thoughts, and each night after taking any particular bird in hand for study he would be tossed for a late fly-around and on returning and dropping on his perch would find some small tasty morsel. Three or four birds per evening were handled and tossed in this manner, so that they became more and more accustomed to dropping right in and on the perch, and during this practice none of the other birds would attempt to fly out because they had received their warning order, delivered in a Sgt-Major's form of command, not to do so.

There exists, without doubt, some degree of telepathic communication between the understanding owner and his birds. In particular do I remember this of 'Neaty' (1st Rennes all sections, M.F.C., by 12 minutes)-he disliked being handled, and if ever I decided to do so he would immediately come out of his box. To overcome this I had to concentrate my thoughts on 'Picture' or some other bird in an adjoining box and casually exclude his exit with my knee over his box before catching him.

I could, of course, have closed the doors and caught him in darkness, but most birds were willing enough to be taken from their perch with none of them flying out. Use of the imagination greatly assisted in the case of a yearling, 'Beauty Spot,' who, returning from his first race, by-passed his own loft and flew on to the north of Northumberland, and when returned and examined was 'forgiven,' and prepared

for the M.F.C. Bournemouth race, in which he and 'Champion Apollo' won first by 56 yards per minute in a north-east wind.

---"To continue the study of birds from the imaginative point of view it is necessary to go beyond the confines of the loft when, for example, they are in the baskets laid out for liberation; they know, particularly the good, fast birds, in which direction lies their home and set a straight course for it when liberated consistently. Imagine then their thoughts as mile after mile they forge their way homewards, at what high pressure must their brains be functioning (with not double pay for extra effort!). The question is often posed as to why, of two cocks born in the same nest, one is a real racer but not a producer, whilst the other a fine producer but no racer. Apart from their own peculiar good qualities possessed at birth the difference is often that of learning a good route home and unfortunately that of learning a route which is longer. We mortals, particularly those of us who motor, are familiar with certain roads from one point to another and invariably because we are accustomed to them we travel by these known routes, yet other motorists know of shorter routes and use them to their advantage- so, then, is it with Gurnays or other birds. No doubt some seemingly logical argument could be raised against this reasoning, but the ways of racing pigeons go contrary to human logic, and though the fancier may often theorize, does he ever try to imagine what his birds are thinking of him?"

Shaw goes on to enumerate the many things men can do around the birds and claims that the birds feel more respect for the fancier who is better concerned for their welfare. He asserts that the birds will then give a better performance.

To continue, " it is difficult to foresee in which order four birds will return from a race, but imagination which has some foundation can play a part in this, as can be illustrated by

imaginative thought displayed on past occasions by M. Gurnay- for example, from seven birds which were exercising, four had to be picked for the Angoulleme National and two for the Vierzon National, the result was 1st, 12th, and 38th and 1st and 2nd, respectively, with one bird remaining at home. Whilst the seven were at exercise they were carefully observed by M. Gurnay and myself in order to decide which was to be the heaviest pooled bird (as an example of these pools-when it is mentioned that 'Angoulleme won the \$100 pool, fanciers assume \$100 was the total of the pool win, whereas \$100 was the amount required to enter this pool per bird. 'Angoulleme' (ahn-gool-eh-may), incidentally sired 1st prize winners whilst at 'The Grange,' at 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 years of age, and in this it is most desirable that observation should quicken the imagination (or, in the case of women fanciers, their intuition) and give some guide to selection. In this manner M. Gurnay, watching the birds in flight, was confident 'Bronze Favourite' would be his first bird in the Grand National- it subsequently won 1st by half an hour. It is futile to desire a bird one particularly likes to win and expect it to do so, more successful results will be achieved in imagining how they will fare in the race which is contemplated from their ease of flight and their speed during these to and fro exercises-not the 'hobby horse' manner of exercise of flying around and around, all closely crowded together, but with the birds flying for the joy of it in any direction which appeals to them regardless of where or how others are flying-from such independence shown by certain of the birds imagine how they dislike the crowd and will hasten to speed ahead leaving their considered inferiors behind-thus can be appreciated the foundation of sound imaginative reasoning Visualize how, when young birds are turned out at 7 am, let us say, for four and a half hours' flying, then back quickly into the loft for food, sleep and rest, considerable must be the extent of their development of frame, muscle, brain and general intelligence-nothing the birds may do in after life will

stand them in such good stead as this early development. Even if the birds are not raced as youngsters or yearlings and their training only commenced at two years, as generally practiced by M. Gurnay, it can be readily imagined how, on a frame already well developed muscle can be added and the inclination to race invited-this, coupled with a thousand and one other items, makes a Champion of the World with winnings of \$250,000.

It must not be imagined, however, that beauty cannot be allied with paramount ability-the glorious feather, eyes, and robustness of the Gurnays is no accident, but the result of imagining what effect this or that food or this or that herb will produce, and in having the courage and patience to put theory to test and prove it-or not being proven to note accordingly.

I am often asked how it was possible to create, in addition to the other hundred and one admirable features, the wonderful feather possessed by the Gurnays. Consider the photograph of 'Bronze Excellence,' one can perceive immediately the abundance of feather and by virtue of his 100 percent perfection in other respects was never beaten in the exhibitions which M. Gurnay would sometimes enter. Here, again, imagination had played its part-M. Gurnay had first to visualize the results of certain foods and, in contrast to myself, was always in search of wild plants and herbs; these he 'brewed with his own methods, assisted by his wife, the Great Pauline and administered to his birds in their drinking troughs, which were of earthenware with small openings. One can picture the thought and diligence required in experimenting with this or that in constant search of ways to improve his birds with his motto 'From the Best, Better Still' ever before him-just as the pigeons were trained to race ahead, well to the fore and away from 'followers,' so were his methods always in advance."

Shaw goes on to emphasize the importance of the eye. His work barely preceded that of Caiger, who first introduced "eye sign," to US fanciers in 1948. Shaw, of course, does not use the term, and he emphasizes that the eye is only one quality on the list of feather, bone, etc. Nevertheless, he furnishes some fuel for the eye sign fans. Not that many of them need any further encouragement. Their minds are made up.

Shaw's final point in this chapter is that some fanciers feel that the Gurnays are too beautiful to be good racers. This, of course, he denies. He points out that for 50 years, Gurnay developed his family by careful inbreeding, using his, "Better from Best," philosophy. Shaw asserts that beauty was a perfectly natural part of the development.

Some additional author's notes:

Shaw says the birds can "imagine" the direction to the home loft. This would seem to be an additional argument for allowing the crates to sit for a time before liberation.

When Shaw advertised, he sold "Shaw/Gurnays," flown on the "Shaw-Gurnay" system. However, in his book he repeatedly speaks of Gurnay as his mentor, as well as his friend and gives clear credit to Gurnay for his years of development of the Gurnays and the handling methods which made them unbeatable.

Shaw rather casually mentions the automobile; with no reference to the effect upon the pigeon racing sport. In fact, in early times, Gurnay and Shaw had no choice in the debate on loft training versus tossing, since tossing was not a practical option.

Recently (summer of 2000), veterinarians and others have been recommending bleach as a germ killer. A horrified

reader wrote recently to report that bleach is a poison. Of course, so are most medications, if given in improper dosages. Gurnay used potassium permanganate in bath and drinking water; Shaw did not. One supposes that its greatest value would have been as an iron supplement. Modern veterinarians recommend iodine; one variation is marketed as "Lugols." It is a deadly poison if the dosage is too strong.

Darkening the loft is in vogue these days. Many fanciers may not know that this is a technique which has been common in widowhood lofts for decades. Shaw presents an off hand comment in passing.

Scientists worry about possible decline of any species which is subjected to close inbreeding for too long a period. The term, "hybrid vigor," is used to combat such potential decline. The writer has attempted to obtain Gurnays from anyone who has them; to breed them true to type, and to train and to fly them extensively in order to follow Gurnay's example as closely as possible.

Critics should read the proviso of Arvil Stone, in the American Pigeon Journal of April, 1984. Stone says,

"He who pays the feed bill should decide what kind of performance is right for him."

To conclude: history does not record how many different loftmen Shaw employed, but we know that there were at least two.

The first was an unnamed Yorkshireman, who, upon leaving Shaw's employ, sold a pamphlet describing the "secrets" he learned in the Shaw loft. Shaw bought a copy through a confederate and was much amused by the "rubbish" it contained.

Shaw also mentions his last loftman, a Scot named Robert Clark. Shaw and Clark were very compatible, and Clark soon disposed of all of his own birds, for he was also convinced that the Gurnays were superior to any others.

Shaw died in 1951, and Robert Clark saw himself as a partner and was ready to help the widow dispose of the priceless colony of Gurnays. However, Mrs. Shaw was a veddy British lady, who knew a servant when she saw one, so Clark returned to Scotland, with no further help to the widow.

Chapter Four

Other Gurnay Fliers in Great Britain

O.I.Wood

Wood lived in Ilkley, Yorkshire, and was a very successful flyer, employing the old Stanhope family. He became an intimate friend of Renier Gurnay through business dealings and adopted the Gurnay pigeons. Recognizing that they were superior to his other strain, he switched nearly one hundred percent to the Gurnays. His greatest champion was called, "Young Hawk." This bird was a dark check, and we are told that he had a violet eye.

He was bred in 1923, and in his flying career, he won 19 diplomas, at races of over 230 miles.

Wood obtained many great Gurnays over the years from 1920. Many were given to Wood by Gurnay, and, at the Gurnay disposal sale in 1936, Wood purchased the Gurnay champion of champions, Le Fonce Angouleme.

Wood flew widowhood and was considered to be an expert on conditioning. Although he was secretive of his methods, he wrote many articles on conditioning, on which subject, he made no attempt to hide any facts.

He did not fly young birds and flew no races less than 230 miles.

Wood wrote an article for Squills in 1935. Among his comments:

"The bulk who keep racing pigeons depend upon quantity, rather than quality, and this craze for quantity is encouraged by our so called fanciers who contend that the basket is the only way to find out the good pigeons." Author's note: Wood says that the poorly proportioned, poorly feathered bird in poor condition must not be shipped.

He says that weather must be studied carefully and that expense must not be spared in order to get the birds to release point in uncrowded crates. Since, in his view, good birds are worth more than spending a bit more on shipping, a fancier is actually saving money by ensuring that a bird has every chance.

"Never keep a weakly, or try to cure an ailing pigeon, no matter what they are bred from.

Never send a pigeon to a race unless you feel quite sure it is in condition.

Never expect a pigeon to breed hard and race hard at the same time.

Never expect a bird which has been raced hard as a youngster and as a yearling to keep this up in future years. A good pigeon not over raced as a youngster should race well up to seven or eight years of age."

O.I.Wood died in 1942, and a Mr. Jack Barrett obtained Young Hawk. However, this champion pigeon died shortly after, at the age of nineteen.

A.F.Brown

Brown obtained Gurnays; both from Gurnay, himself, and from Fred Shaw.

One of the reasons that he was able to get the birds inexpensively was that many charlatans; following the success of Shaw, were active in the market. Coupled with the difficulty of flying widowhood, many English fanciers concluded that the Gurnays were not the way to success.

Brown proved them to be wrong.

Brown set up his Gurnays at Tewksbury, Glos., where he joined the elite group of champions, flying Gurnays.

I am deeply indebted to my friend, Frank Soares, for copies of correspondence with Frank from 1947 to 1950.

Brown makes a series of points, which could be a primer for a successful flyer; as well as being a testimonial to the mighty power of the Gurnay family.

Viz: Upon release from Lerwick, the birds must immediately fly 60 miles over water. This requires champions.

Under these conditions, it is impossible for a bird to fly more than one 500 or 600 per season.

The "correct" eye for a Gurnay is dark.

Young birds should not be flown, but should be trained 50 miles, north and south.

Yearlings should be stopped at 250 to 300 miles.

Three year olds and up will be your most successful racers and the most fun.

Don't overcrowd your loft (he flew both natural and widowhood, with a total loft of about 40 birds.)

Toss no more than 50 miles. Follow long efforts with long rest periods.

A cross may give quick results, but the "straight bred" Gurnay has the longevity.

Hemp and linseed help the molt; especially if your bird is changing climates.

Following the World War Two years, basics were still in short supply in England. The government encouraged exports, and Brown sometimes had to trade birds for feed.

Soares endeared himself to the Brown family by sending them butter and sugar.

Brown agreed with Gurnay that he didn't want to compete against his own family.

This is one we must continually caution Gurnay lovers about, and your writer has made up a helpful saying:
"Some lookers don't fly, and some flyers don't look."

Small size birds have early successes. Large birds are not winners until the third year.

Brown did not believe in eye sign.

He felt that a family had to be raced continuously. He derided Shaw; who, after 30 years of not racing, was still selling birds at \$200.00 each.

Gurnays are difficult to settle to a new loft. (This is a phenomenon we still observe today.)

Be careful not to sell yourself out of quality.

You must consider temperament when mating.

J.E. (Jack) and Ted Hart

This father and son team were both excellent flyers and managers of pigeons.

J.E. Hart obtained Gurnays from Fred Shaw in the 1920's and was one of the last people to get birds from the widow in 1939.

There is a rumor of a falling out between father and son, but whatever that case may be, they were among the most reliable in exporting true Gurnays to the US.

William R. Black

Black lived in Scotland, and he was probably responsible, to a large extent, for the growth of Gurnay popularity in that country.

Black was an excellent flyer and a master breeder.

Bruce Beebe

Beebe obtained his first Gurnays directly from the master, himself. Beebe had to sell a whole herd of hogs to finance the purchase. In retrospect, surely he felt well rewarded.

Beebe survived until very recent times and still flew a few Gurnays, although his main birds were a sprint family.

J.W. Palmer

Palmer was the main individual responsible for introducing the Gurnays into Ireland.

He got his foundation birds from Fred Shaw, and they cost him a small fortune.

They were mostly dark checks, and 90% of them had dark eyes.

William Streeter

It is important to mention Streeter, because he bred white Gurnays.

The reader will remember that there were white Hansennes, and a generation ago, they were popular with flyers in the US.

However, they quickly followed the fate of the Gurnays, because the purchasers were more interested in the color than in the strain, so white Hansennes were crossed with Pletincx and other white birds.

George Greenshields

Greenshields was from Scotland and was primarily a showman, rather than a flyer.

Of course, he used Gurnays to develop his show birds, since the Gurnays were the handsomest of the flying breeds.

Showing is not a new phenomenon; as early as 1937, it was mentioned by O.I.Wood.

As one reads the show material, two names recur over and over: Greenshields and the American, Arthur Peck. Of course, Greenshields used Gurnays to develop his show birds, since the Gurnays were the handsomest of their generation.

Eric Craven

Eric Craven has had pigeons since he was seven years old; in the early '30's.

He was early attracted to the Gurnay's, because they are a dual purpose bird. Eric's uncle was a showman, so Eric was attracted to that phase of the hobby, in addition to flying.

He obtained a few Gurnays from other Englishmen who had them, but he has never been able to avoid close inbreeding.

In addition to that, he has moved several times and has had to cut back to a few breeders upon occasion.

Since his first races, he has always been "at, or near the top of the sheet," as we say in the U.S.

At one time or other, he obtained Gurnays from Elwyn Jones, A.F. Brown, and Tom and Charlie Watson.

He tosses young birds in all directions and single ups when he can.

One report has him using a modified deep litter system. Your writer has not been able to verify this.

William Mellor

Mellor is similar in age to Craven; in that he served in the military from 1939 to 1945.

Like some other fortunate flyers cited, he flies in partnership with his son.

The Mellor birds have been imported into the US by Tom Nettis of New Jersey.

Perhaps it would be appropriate to mention a next generation. Some bought birds from Shaw; some got them from Gurnay's final sale; still others obtained them from other fanciers.

They include: Eric Craven, Perkins Brothers, R.G.Silson, Hilton & Son, Watson Brothers (later, Tom and Ian; father and son), George Snell, and Arthur Mellor and Son.

3. Relative lack of popularity. In May of 1988, numbers of fanciers were:

Great Britain - 130,000
Belgium - 93,179
US - 15,000

Part Three: United States

Chapter One

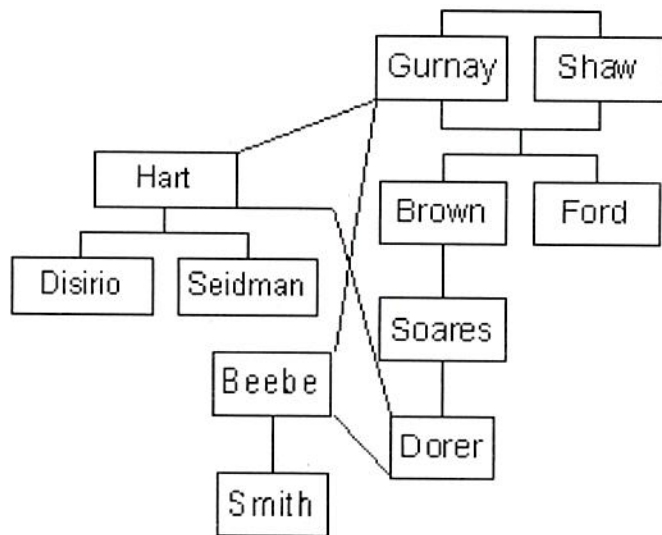
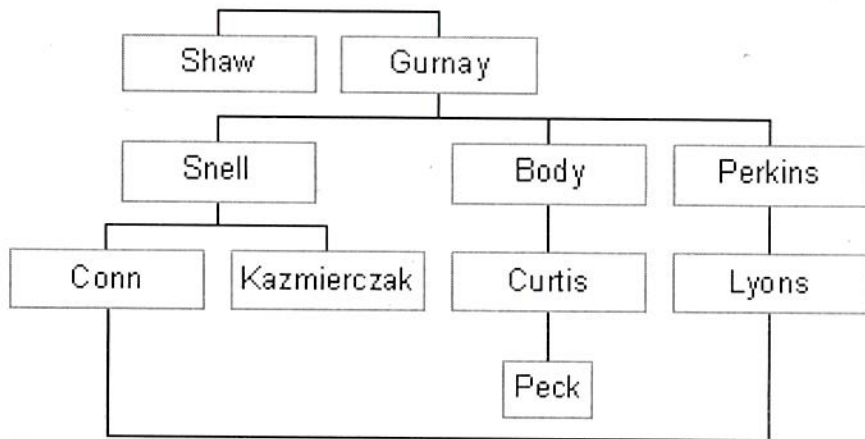
Introduction

Although there were fanciers in the US somewhat earlier, it was not until the early 1920's that any US flyers imported race birds, and then, it was primarily from Great Britain that such birds were received.

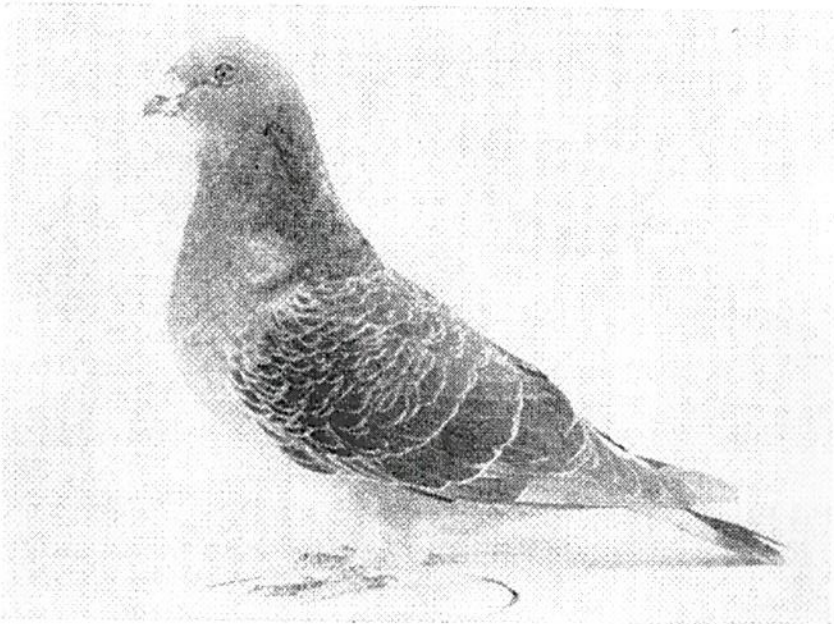
Probably there were several reasons for this phenomenon:

1. Distances. With the English Channel being some seventy miles at its narrowest, it was relatively easy for a Dr. Anderson or a Fred Shaw to visit Belgian fanciers.

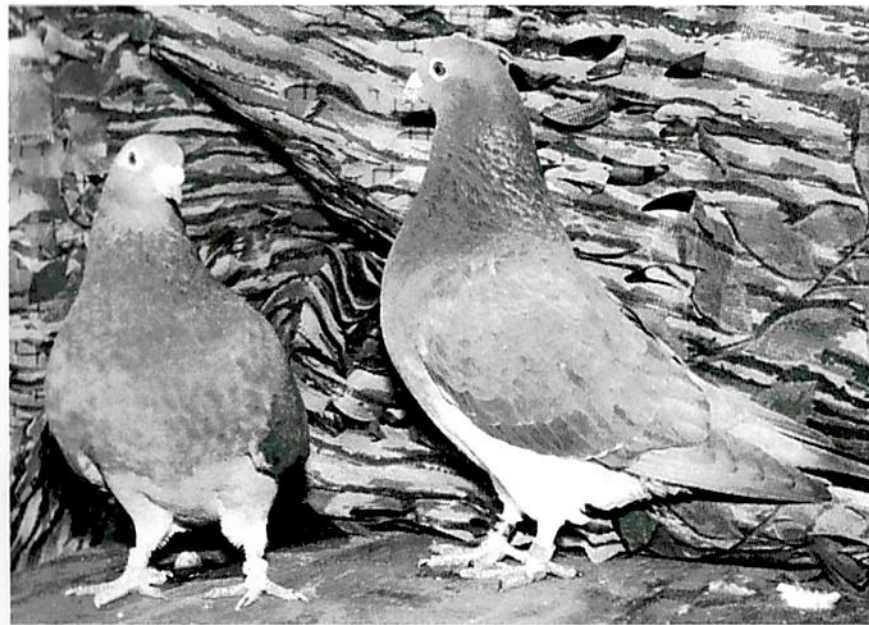
2. Language barrier. Flyers in the US could easily correspond with fanciers in Great Britain; since both spoke the same language. To correspond with Gurnay, the American had to read and write French. Anyone who has studied French will attest that learning that language is no easy task. The writer had a college advisor who said, "French is the language in which you do not pronounce half of the letters; and you mispronounce the other half."



Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Peck
At the "National" in 1970.



AU-67-WCC-625 D.C.C. "Black-Jack"
Best of Show, The National Show Likeliest
Flyer classes, 1968. Bred and shown by
Arthur Peck.



A pair of modern Gurnays

Chapter Two

Early US Gurnay Men

As nearly as can be determined by research, The first three US men to import Gurnays were a Mr. A.J. McDermott, of Massachusetts, Lee Ford, of Montana, and L.F. Curtis, of Boston. This was about 1920.

Mr. McDermott dropped out of sight and has not been heard from again, so far as can be determined.

Lee Ford was a wealthy banker. He first imported from Shaw but found that the type had declined; even in a few generations. Shaw may have been able to communicate with the birds by ESP, but he lacked the eye for the true Gurnay type.

Ford then applied directly to Gurnay, and over a period of several years, the two men became fast friends through correspondence. Of course, it must have been a plus that Ford was willing to pay up to \$800 per pair for top Gurnay birds.

At any rate, Ford and his family had a standing invitation to visit the Gurnays in Verviers. They were fated never to accept the invitation.

L.F. Curtis was also a very wealthy man, and he obviously felt that his role in American pigeon flying was to import the best from Belgium. During his lifetime, he imported Gurnays, Bastins, Stassarts, and Sions, as well as others.

Of these, it seems that the Gurnays were the first, and, initially, the relationship was warm and cordial. Later, Curtis felt that Gurnay had somehow not followed through on a promise, or had not provided top quality. At any rate, the collaboration soured, and Curtis turned to Louis Body, a Vervier friend of Gurnay and to Bastin for further importations.

Chapter Three

Other Importations

(Information is the best available at this time)

Dr. Betzer, Pennsylvania	1923
Robert Howlett, Massachusetts	1923
Mr. Lean, Indiana	1923
A. Mix, Mass.	1924
H.H. Kangeter, South Carolina	1924
H. Smith, Pennsylvania	1928
J.E. Bremen, New York	1928
A.H. Bancroft, Massachusetts	1930
W.B. Magner, California	1930
W.B. Wilson, California	1930
C. Cornish, New Jersey	1931
E.G. Himmelberger, New Jersey	1931
A.F. Weigman, Iowa	1932

Charles Koons, Pennsylvania 1938

S.J. Edwards, Pennsylvania 1938

Frank Soares, Massachusetts About 1940.
Imported from A. Brown, as previously noted. Soares was a highly successful flyer, who disseminated great Gurnays widely in the US.

Frank is still living and in reasonable health. He no longer has birds, but he shared all of his correspondence with Brown, and I am grateful for a great pen pal.

Mike Kolar, Pennsylvania 1946

Jim Lyons/Webb Boegeman
San Diego, California About 1950-60
Imported from R.G.Silson, Hilton & Son, and Perkins Bros.
Also imported Hansennes, including Ball & McCallion.
(note: the writer got my first Gurnays from Jim in 1957).

George Dorer, Columbus, Georgia About 1950
Good flyer, fine friend. "Coach" got his imports from Ted Hart and Bruce Beebe.

Tom Smith, New York. Imported from Avona Lofts, Ireland, Beebe, Perkins Bros., and Tom Watson. In the 1950's.

Tom Nettis, New Jersey, about 1970 from Eric Craven and Mellor & Son.

Dr. John Kazmierczak, New Jersey; about 1980 to the present. It would be easier to make a list of folks from whom he has NOT imported. John visits Great Britain frequently and has met virtually everyone who still has Gurnays. In

2001, he visited the Gurnay Loft (Tom Smith also did this a few years back).

John's other imports include Beebe, Watson, Harry Harris, Craven, Butt, and Chippendale.

Arthur Peck, Mass. Peck got his Gurnays from L. F. Curtis. We are told that, on a visit to the Curtis loft, Peck saw a handful of bronze Gurnays lazing in the sun, and he said that it was the finest sight he had ever seen.

Evidently, Peck's close friend, Lew Curtis, shared his Gurnays freely, and, in 1961, Peck won average speed with 12 Gurnays at 300, 500, and 600 miles.

However, outstanding as his flying records were, it was in showing that Peck excelled.

It was said that Greenshields was the champion showman of Europe, and Peck was the champion showman of the US. The two never competed against each other.

Chapter Four

The Gurnay Club

Question from many fanciers in the US: Why a club to celebrate the achievements of a man who died sixty-two years ago? Pedigrees don't mean anything. I can, with modern breeding methods breed champions which will far surpass his records.

Reply from modern Gurnay people: We love, admire, and revere the records of Renier Gurnay, and we want to breed a bird which looks like Gurnay's champs and flies like them also. We think it is a travesty to take a Gurnay and cross it against anything. Further, we believe that the pedigree does mean something. But it's ok; we are not asking you to pay any part of our feed bill.

John Kazmierczak and your author found in 1980 that George Snell; near the end of his life, was willing to export Gurnays to the US. In fact, John visited him in the hospital during his final illness. John hid a bird in his raincoat pocket, and Snell wept with joy at getting to hold one of his birds for the last time.

Out of this relationship, John and the writer determined to attempt to form a club, dedicated to the Gurnay strain.

In 1983, we began a newsletter, which was sent to George Dorer, Jim Bangs, John Fox, Jack Voita, and a few others.

1997, we met at Dorer's home in Columbus, Ga., and opted officers, a constitution, bylaws, and race rules.

arter officers were:

- u McElroy President
- nk Paz Veep
- l Conn Secretary/Treasurer
- u McElroy Chief Judge
- ce Anderson Show Steward

r first convention was held at Dorer's; where we had a loft race and a show.

1991, we had a show, but no race, at Mike Anderson's in nama City, Fl.

92 found us back at Dorer' s for a race and show.

1993, we were at Conn's in Crystal River, Fl., for a race d show.

94 found us with Lou McElroy in Cary, N.C., for a race and ow.

1995, we were back at Dorer' s for the one loft futurity

1996, Wendell Perry was the handler at Chassahowitzka, and there was a show.

97 found us back a Conn's for a race and show.

1998, our handler was Will Mena at Quebradillas, Puerto o.

99 found us at Conway, Texas. Our handler was Mark Del o.



In 2000, our handler was Eddie Rodriguez, Quebradillas, P.R. Eddie died suddenly of a heart attack, and Will Mena took over once more.

Lou McElroy has moved on, and our Chief Judge is now Mike Anderson.

In 2001, we will be in Prosser, Washington, and our handler will be Bruce Kuhlman.

Be the Good Lord willing, we will be in Ellabell, Georgia in 2002, and our handler will be Mike Anderson.

Chapter Five

Modern Day Successful Gurnay Flyers

Tommy Bangs, Dawson, Georgia

Tommy is now flying in that great loft in the sky, but he had several notable wins a few years ago.

In memory serves, he won a race from Cairo, Illinois three years in a row. His champion was a silver hen, bred from Dorer stock, which was down from the Hart blood. In her pedigree was a one eyed silver cock, who capped a great flying record with being a top producer. Old timers will tell you that that is a difficult achievement. In her pedigree also, I believe, was the Soares blood, which would make her a blend of Hart and Brown. Those two flyers also traded birds over the years.

The silver hen flew 500 on the day, and Bangs always wanted to get her ready for 1000, which he said would find her in the clock early on the second day.

Harry Estes, Phenix City, Alabama

Harry flies a couple of other strains, but he always pools the Gurnays when the distances are long and the weather is tough.

He flies natural and trains hard. His blood is down from Dorer, and dark checks predominate. Birds are often in the clock several weekends in a row; which is another characteristic of the Gurnays. Of course, this is easier with widowers, since they can go every week under normal conditions.

Mike Anderson, Ellabell, Georgia

Mike flies both natural and widowhood. His other principle strain is Wegges, and he got both strains from Lou McElroy. The Wegges go back to Tommy Buck and the Gurnays to an Englishman named Bateman. Mike also has Gurnays from the writer.

He flies young birds very successfully; and the only way that young Gurnays can be flown in competition with the sprint strains; that is, by extremely hard training.

He advocates 30 miles, first toss; uses a lot of feed supplements, and when the birds get home, they drink Gatorade.

When flyers in the tough Savannah Combine ask him about winning with "Janssens", he says, "Janssens, heck. Those are Gurnays. "

Roy Gray, Inverness, Florida

Roy is an engineer, by training. He is constantly tinkering with lofts; getting improved ventilation, easier cleaning methods, and a healthier environment for the birds.

He is very sensitive to his birds, and they react with trust and affection. He can walk into the loft and pick any bird off the perch, with no nervousness exhibited.

Roy is a relatively new flyer, but he is fast filling up trophy cases in the Mid Florida Combine, against 40 to 50 lofts.

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