

Eric Craven

The Last of the Great Gurnay Men

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It has been a 1 ½ Months, since Eric Craven from Bradford, England has passed away. He passed, after a lengthy illness on May 17, 2020. Eric was 93 years old. I simply could not sit down and write his obituary, partially because, I was not willing to accept or believe he is gone. Eric Craven was first of all a generational person, someone, who was with us, once in a lifetime. When one speaks of what we want to be and aspire to—he was it. He was intelligent, kind, honest, loyal, humble, generous, and forthright—any positive virtue, one could imagine or wish for. He had it. He loved and cherished his family: daughter Suzanne, sons: Michael, Pete, Anthony and several grandchildren. He also held tight to his pigeons, the Gurnays. The Gurnays were a wonderful family with an unbelievable history.

Eric started with pigeons, when he was seven years old. This was during the early thirties. This interest was maintained, so that even during his National Pigeon Service at the end of the Second World War, he was able to have a loft. This is when he was serving in The Coldstream Guards, when he was guarding German POWs. A surprising number of the POWs were pigeon fanciers. After the War, He became interested in the Gurnays. This happened, because, they were the only strain Eric knew of, that could win in showing and racing. He cultivated and raised this family the remainder of his life and it would take volumes to tabulate their winnings. Although beautiful, they were not kept as ornaments and were always raced hard and selected thoroughly. His Gurnays were obtained from all the leading Gurnay men of that time. He always treated his pigeons with kindness and appreciated their worth. They were really his second family. Eric's birds were vigorously selected and valued worldwide and sent to many countries.

Eric was from a time, when club racing and federation (combine) meant something. It was a time, not of one loft futurities, where pigeons are temporary, disposable phenomena, but where families of pigeons were valued, cherished, cultivated, enjoyed and shared with others. At that time, one could simply look at a pigeon and tell its origin, strain or family.

Eric's Gurnays have won over 100 1st positions as well as many positions, combine averages and cross Chanel (English Chanel) averages. He always did his share of the administrative side of the sport, holding many club and federation positions. He deplored splinter groups founded on disagreements within clubs. He felt this really hurt competition (which he loved) and the overall quality of racing.

I could go on indefinitely, but can only say that, I will always miss and remember him. He enriched my life and those he was with and valued his many pigeons. I truly value the many pigeons that I imported from Eric, which he generously gave me, free of charge. He was also a great friend of Paul Butt from Wales. Paul Butt was a loyal friend and a wonderful man, who shared a great love of the Gurnay Family.

Eric Craven was the last of the original Great Gurnay Men in England. He represented the passing of an era that can never be duplicated. Thank you Eric for all you have done for me. I will always remember and miss you. Rest in peace, until we meet again.

Your friend,
John