

**Louis Van Loon:
The Miracle Man from Poppel**

By Tony Rossi

Thirty years ago, Albert Vanderflaes visited Mr. Louis Van Loon. He left with a basket of pigeons. "They were bought for The Brothers Janssens," said Louis Van Loon, "I am 100% sure, although I never heard another word."

The pigeon sport in Holland and Belgium is extremely popular. Each week, hundreds of thousands of pigeons are liberated and awaited by thousands. It must be understood that this is still a sport enjoyed by the working class - just ordinary people. But it is the working class that has to compete with the professional flyers.

This working class does not have the money to hire managers, erect super lofts, and pay thousands of dollars to create the "Golden Breeding Loft". The average European loft must use good selection, dedication, and confidence, in order to compete.

This background is what makes the Louis Van Loon story so great. He was a hard working man all his life. He was a truck driver in a local factory. He raised his children with his wife, and maintained a household. We all know what this involves, but Van Loon rose to stardom against the most powerful, rich and arrogant lofts in Belgium. Stay with me and I will continue.

In Belgium, certain areas became the hotbeds for pigeon flying, worldwide. One of the most famous is the Antwerp Union. All over the world, pigeon fanciers have heard of the Antwerp Union, the "High School of the Pigeon Sport", at least in the opinion of some people.

For example, the big names that you may have heard of are: Huyskens Van Reil, Martin Van Tuyn, Stan Raaymakers, Serge Van Elsecker, and, last but not least, the "killer of the Union", William Geerts. These are terrific lofts that deserve much credit, but there are many other districts, that publicity does not follow.

One such area is an area near the Dutch-Belgian border. This area is known around the world, and is the home of the famous Janssen Brothers of Arendonk. Hardly a pigeon fancier, in every country, has not in some way been affected by their great birds. The Janssen's lived their entire lives in the village called Arendonk, Belgium. But it was not only the Janssen Brothers who gave Arendonk a worldwide reputation, there were others.

Just a few hundred yards from the Janssen Brothers home lives Mr. Karel Meuleman. (Former Wouter-Meulemans). Mr. Meuleman and his partner were lucky to form a once in a lifetime breeding couple, "The Golden Pair"!

About five minutes by car from Arendonk lives another man who created a family of pigeons that made history in the sport. His name is Jos Van Limpt, alias "Deklak". Mr. Van Limpt lives in Reusel, Holland and was employed in a factory with Driek Janssen. Yes, it can be said that Driek was the father of more than one brilliant career. Other big names that lived near the border was the Butcher from Merksplag, Mr. Gust Hofkens. He owned many super pigeons that won many first prizes. The popularity of the Hofkens pigeons was so great that after his death, people traveled around his neighborhood asking to buy any bird carrying the Hofkens band. Other names you ask? How about Albert Vander Raes, Marcel Borgmans, Ellis Vandepol, and there are more. They all had one thing in common, they all lived on the

Belgian-Dutch border. The brightest star also lived in this same area; a man who rose to the top and stayed there for 40 years. This man never wanted publicity and shunned attention. This man is none other than Mr. Louis Van Loon. Seventy four years ago, Mr. Louis Van Loon was born in Poppel, Belgium. This small village is located about 2 miles from the Dutch border.

Louis, as a school boy was already interested in pigeons. I guess this is not hard to understand, because the whole family (father, uncles and nephews) raced pigeons. Mr. Van Loon stated, "at a family party, you know the subject we talked about. But Louis served his apprenticeship under his father, and was taught many wise lessons. These lessons he remembered well, his entire life. Louis Van Loon in his early years married and started his own life.

This was when the Van Loon strain was created. These were difficult years for Louis. He worked hard as a truck driver in Ravels, and was raising a family, a son and two daughters. He was a normal working man with little time. Every day he had to leave for work early and work the whole day.



So you ask how did he fly his birds so well? Dedication, my friend. Up at daybreak. Hours before work and late at night, 365 days a year. His results are history. He is truly one of the greatest flyers ever in Belgium. Mr. Van Loon created a widowhood team that could compete with the professionals, the rich and the famous. The working man from Poppel did what every one dreams of he wan and won and won. For many years he was the terror of his entire area, In spite of his success, Mr. Van Loon was very humble. He never bragged about his performance. He said, "I made one mistake, I was too good with too many pigeons."

Why did he say is, you ask? They banned him! He was not allowed to fly middle distance aces anymore until he signed a paper that said he could never pool again. Of course Louis signed. Could you blame his opponents? They had no chance at all. It was said that in order to beat Van Loon, you must fly Van Loons.

Mr. Van Loon said he was too good with too many pigeons. How many did he fly? Would you believe just 20 widow cocks! He would ship no more than 12 per week, every week and won everything in sight. And for Mr. Van Loon, he always stayed as he is, humble, respectful, and honest.

The man of little words worked hard for his family and his pigeons with no selfish thought of himself. When the magazines came to write of his success, Louis sent them away. He did not want any publicity. He did not want to sell pigeons. He wanted to be left alone, with his family and his pigeons. Probably this is the reason Louis Van Loon never was as well known as the Janssen Brothers. Karel Meuleman, Jos Van Limp, and Gust Hofkens. I dare say that Van Loon's results were every bit as outstanding as the people above. This is a



true statement and we are prepared to prove this, if necessary.

When I visited Mr. Van Loon with Frank Aarts last April, I asked him, What methods do you use to get those kinds of results? Mr. Van Loon looked at me sternly and said, "Remember this, there is only one thing that is important good pigeons, nothing else."

You might say to yourself, who is he trying to kid! Well, the only thing I can say is that the results from the Van Loon pigeons in other lofts are phenomenal! Remember, Van Loon never looked for publicity, he never advertised, never had articles in magazines, never organized an auction, and never bragged about his pigeons.

The people who came to Louis Van Loon were smart people. They came by themselves, not in groups. They read the results and kept their purchases quiet, because they truly knew the Van Loon pigeons would bring their lofts to success.

Who are these lofts, you ask? Well, to name just a few, Mr. Gys Peters, Mr. Marcel Borgmans, Mr. Cassaet, Mr. Vieveen, Mr. Becht, Mr. Koopman and Son, Mr. Squibb (Planet Brothers) Mr. Frank Aarts. and many more. Even several national ace pigeons and national winners carry the Van Loon blood in their veins.

What have the Van Loon pigeons done in the USA? Wake up people!! I'll give you one example. Several years ago. Mr. Campbell Strange imported the "Super 73" from Gys Peters to the US. You can read in his catalogue, a quote from Mr. Strange, "I paid a four figure sum, but this was a real bargain. The Super 73 is the best bird ever imported to the US and the blood line of Super 73? Again, Van Loon!

Van Loon and his Pigeons Today

Mr. Van Loon invited me into his lofts; and it was a moment in my life that I will always remember. You could just feel the pride and reverence this man had for his pigeons. He let me handle his entire breeding loft. They were fabulous pigeons, but more important, they were there because of their performance. You see Mr. Van Loon, still at age 74, realizes that winners breed winners. I asked him if these were the same birds he flew in the 70's and he said absolutely.

These are the same birds I flew for over 40 years. He did tell me that he maintains a separate family for long distance flying, but keeps them separate from his basic family.

In several pigeon magazines you read articles and advertisements in which people claim to have purchased the best pigeons from Mr. Van Loon. When asked, Mr. Van Loon just smiled and said, "I never did this, and I never will sell my base pigeons, as long as I am still racing pigeons and as long as my health allows me to race. Louis Van Loon is 74 years old, and is still a winner, believe me. He races widowhood cocks, and no birds on the natural system. He is only interested in Old Bird racing. The young birds are only given about 7 training tosses up to 150 miles.

Van Loon makes his own feeding mix, that he gives this pigeons the whole year. When I was there, he was emphatic about giving me his mix. He was very proud, and I thank him for this.