

Irvin T. Goss, A Giant Among Breeders Of Giants

by PAUL STEIDEN, Louisville, Ky.

My close personal association with the late Irvin T. Goss was indeed a most pleasant and enlightening experience. Even in my teens, when I was seeking to acquire a few Giant Homers, I would hear him spoken of with deep respect by other fanciers. They would proudly point out certain birds in their lofts and say, "There's a Goss bird." Finally I got a chance to visit him in Harrods Creek, KY. Those birds of his were a real sight to see - pen after pen of Giants of various colors. I bugged my eyes at this display. After he had explained some of the details of what he had, he went back in his house and left me to look over his flock. It was a long building with a center aisle divided into medium sized pens. I was banging doors from pen to pen for hours, with my appreciation of the breed steadily increasing. Here you could see direct ancestors of the birds that were originally crossed to make up our breed. The Show Homer curved frontal was evident in some, as was the Exhibition Homer gravel eye and some with groused legs from I don't know what! A variety in size still existed, and most of the heads were thin muzzled and with beaks a bit long. Later he often spoke of his fond association with some of the builders and movers of the breed, such as Doc Keene, H. M. Fowler and Harry Odom.

A few years passed and he moved

to Louisville. I guess I made a real pest of myself then, visiting both him and his neighbor, L. G. Becker, who also had Giants and Show Racers. They did some early crossing of these two breeds to improve the heads of the Giant Homers. Their results were very successful, and they helped put the finishing touches on the breed. In those days the Railway Express was dependable and inexpensive, and we regularly shipped birds to various shows and fanciers. Needless to say, Goss did most of the winning. His birds won national Championships in 1939, 1942, 1948, and 1951.

A few years later Goss moved back to the Louisville suburbs in Jeffer-

sontown. There he built quite an elaborate loft of modern design and with provisions for complete record keeping. He had the space to set up whole pens of certain colors, including auto-sexed for squabbling. He ventured quite deeply into color breeding, acquiring a steady stream of new, bazaar colors from Carl Graefe and Dr. W. F. Hollander. He would then cross these to make even more varieties. He worked these new colors into his best stock and soon he was exhibiting top quality birds in these very rare colors. The impression these birds made at the shows was electrifying. They were the basis for our present day Rare color class.

Giant Homer fanciers from other areas regularly visited the Goss loft to see what was happening and to acquire stock. Often I would be informed of those impending visits

Photo from the letterhead of the Giant Homer Association in 1935. The Standard then called for "A reproduction of the Racing Homer with more breast development." Time marches on!



GIANT HOMER

Photo from the 50s shows group of people who did much to develop Giant Homers and the AGHA to what they are. From left: Frank Dallas, LeRoy Becker, H. M. Fowler, Irvin Goss, Art Morris, and Carl F. Graefe.

