

British International Championship Club



A tribute to Carol Francis

A few years ago, I wrote a profile on Carol because I was told by so many fanciers what a wonderful job she did as the BICC secretary. She was considered by many, to be one of the hardest working women in the sport and was one of the most dedicated and committed secretaries that the BICC has ever had. I wrote the profile on her because administrators are often the unsung heroes of our sport, but we know without them, no racing would take place. I thought it fitting that I should reprint this to mark her passing. She will be missed and remembered by her family, first and foremost. But, without a doubt, also by hundreds of members who she spoke to and emailed over the many years she was the BICC secretary.

Along with my wife, Helen, I had the pleasure of sitting on the table with Carol at the BICC presentations for a few years. For anyone who knew her, they would know that she never enjoyed the meal because she was so anxious before the presentation. But, after she called the members up for their trophies, she would relax and enjoy a large glass of her favourite tippie. And what was that? Well, only the best quality brandy that was on offer!

I hope that those who knew her will raise a glass of their favourite drink to remember and celebrate the life of a wonderful woman who gave so much time and effort to the sport of pigeon racing.



A familiar sight to many, Carol calling up the prize winners.



And relaxing after it was all over.

So, when I spoke to Carol a few years ago, this is what she told me. She was born in Hanworth, West London and moved about 5 miles away to Bedfont, when she was two years old. Carol lived with her parents and had two younger brothers. She said, “One of my friends who lived in the same road as me was Brenda Newell, and her dad raced pigeons under the name of J Newell & Son at Feltham Pigeon Club and I used to visit his loft regularly. After leaving school, I started to work at Dunlop Hatton Cross where I was employed as a junior to a secretary, and I finally took over her position when she left. In fact, I have worked as a secretary for several big companies including Trust House Forte, but my last position was with Proctor & Gamble where I worked in the Consumer Services Department, dealing with complaints. I actually think this experience helped be become BICC secretary.”

So, Carol’s early introduction to pigeon racing stood her in good stead when she met and married a pigeon fancier in 1967. And, as they settled down to married life, Carol and her husband bought a small general stores in Kingston, while she was having her first child. A few years later, she was persuaded to become secretary of the Kingston Pigeon Club, and there begins her involvement in the sport’s administration.

Carol continued her story by saying, “We gave up the shop some years later and we moved with, our then three children, and me expecting a fourth, to Stanwell. During my working years, I also became – or rather got thrown into the secretary’s job at our local club, which was Sunbury. When we moved clubs I later became secretary of Ashford North Road Flying Club and then the South Road Club. I think in all I have been secretary of at least six clubs.”

When the position of secretary of the BICC came up, Carol was again persuaded to, ‘go for it’ but was reluctant at first because she had only been secretary of the smaller clubs. She said, “I was not sure if I could actually take on the BICC because of the amount of work that would be involved.” However, she applied and went for the interview at the headquarters at the Lion Brewery, along with two other people. Carol recalls, “During my interview I was asked several questions including why I applied for the position and answered that I thought it would be a challenge. Also, with my experience in the

consumer department, I said I would know how to respond to people with complaints or questions! I was actually 'gob smacked' when I was told I had got the job and thought OMG what have I done. Well, that was some ten or eleven years ago."

A few years ago, Carol lost her eldest son which obviously hit her really hard, "I must admit that I did consider retiring after my eldest son died in January, but it was the BICC that got me through it, with all the work I had to do at the time. I was sending 1000 emails to the members, who had supplied them, to remind them their renewals were due by the end of March. And now I'm working on the job of sending out letters."

So, the BICC helped her cope with that personal tragedy, and I remember the season we flew north and south, when Carol worked long hours, one weekend after another, and never failed to compile the race results to get them sent off to the papers.

As I said at the start of this tribute, when I first wrote this, member after member asked me to thank Carol for all the help she has given them. I'm sure all of those members will remember her as the woman who was there to help them when they needed it, to sort out their problems, offer advice and put them straight on a few things too! I for one will miss her at this year's presentation and send my thoughts and prayers to her family and friends at this difficult time.



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