

I.F. Person of the Year 2009

By: Paul Walsh



Dr. Alfred Piaget

The 79 year old Dr. Alfred Piaget is known for many things. A noted educator and professor, he taught educational psychology at Rutgers University for years and created a therapeutic day program for emotionally disturbed adolescents. Wm Paterson University which he attended with the help of the G.I. Bill named him as a "Distinguished Alumni" for his work in his field, the education and counseling of both gifted and troubled youth. What is remarkable is that a number of his students, some of whom he taught 50 years ago, came to the university to celebrate with the Doc on that day.

In the pigeon world, Doc is a fancier with world renowned Tournier pigeons. He is known as a pigeon writer. Doc told me personally, when I was visiting his Fairway lofts in New Jersey, that he had his first article published in the old Racing Pigeon Bulletin in the year 1947, when he was just 17 years old and still a student in high school. He is proud of this achievement and to be the oldest American pigeon writer still having his work published.

Doc is also known for his humanitarianism. In 2001, while visiting South Africa Doc established a charity fund for a wonderful South African woman, Rosie Gwadiso. She lives in one of the infamous settlements outside of Cape Town. Rosie runs a food program for impoverished school children. She ran her program out of a shipping container... until Doc's efforts enabled her to build small cinder block house. Today, nine years later, Rosie feeds over 180 children daily and has trained 42 other women from her township to do the same. He continues to support her and will see her this January for seventh time.

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Tournier of Lommel, Belgium, was known for helping countless small fanciers and I think Old Jack would've done this."

In 2001, Jessie Garza III, along with his father, presented a talk at the AU Convention in Florida, on the "Eagle High School Racing Pigeon Project" that had completed its 5th year of operation. Dr. Piaget was so moved by the program that he immediately approached the duo and told them, "I want to do something to help you with the project." Doc, attending a subsequent I.F. convention, took to the podium and spoke to the attendees at length about the Eagle High School Racing Pigeon project. His talk was a talk of passion as he believed in this project with his whole heart. The result was a benefit auction of Dr. Piaget's Tournier pigeons that brought in \$7,100, all proceeds going to the school project. Doc also donated his personal copy of Levi's The Pigeon to their library. He even persuaded Silvere Toye to donate a pair of pigeons! Two more auctions of Doc's birds in the following years netted almost \$27,000 in total for Garza's school project. Jessie Jr. the teacher moved away from the area and the program now has ended.

Doc sponsored the 2009 Paterson Big Three 500 Mile 3 Bird Memorial Race by guaranteeing the top three prizes. The race honored the late Ned Peranio, Art Kacharian, and Frank Rainey for the benefit of the Paterson Pigeon Club. Doc said "I have raised a lot of my money for Wayne club. I'm pigeon rich and I can afford to give back to the sport. I have a small operation so am limited in the number of projects I can contribute to, but I do my best. I find you get more back than you give."

He has supported many I.F. pre-convention auctions which help the host clubs with seed money for the next convention. Doc supports the I.F. with advertising in our yearly magazine the Sky Talk. "The pigeon sport is more than a just pigeons, Doc says, the relationships that have opened up to Darth and me through the pigeons have really enriched our lives. The friends I have in the sport world wide are personal friends, whose homes are always open to

Doc said "I have always tried to give back to the sport. When my friend Paul Giblin, the IF legal advisor, had a benefit years ago in the name of his daughter for brain tumor research, I organized two pigeon auctions that brought in a total of \$35,000." When the Lehigh Mountain Combine truck was totaled in a bad accident, a new truck was priced at \$25,000. Piaget heard of the Combine's plight and picked up the phone and called me to come and pick up a team of birds to offer to this combine for auction, to raise some of the funds. I went out to his lofts. Doc said: "I read about their catastrophe and thought I should help because (a) it's the right thing to do, (b) we need to help each other in this sport, and (c) my hero in the sport, the late Jacques



Dr. Alfred Piaget, Paul Walsh and Richard Smith

us. We have been able to travel all over the world because we can travel to another country and know that we can visit with pigeon flyers who are personal friends there."

Doc is regular at I.F. conventions. He is easily found with a group of people around him listening intently to his telling stories of his European trips, educating fanciers about his personal friends in Europe. It is nothing for Doc to pull out a blank paper and write up a six generation Pedigree of a champion pigeon from Europe. Doc and Darth are always cheerful, friendly, and helpful to all. At a convention when the music starts, you can usually find the first ones on the dance floor are Doc and Darth, his wife of 45 years. This couple is very social and is always having a good time with every one at the convention. Doc enjoys this pigeon life he has made for himself and Darth. We at the I.F. applaud this Man of the World for his great humanity, passion for the sport, and kindness to all. •

Congratualtions and thank you.



Dr. Alfred & Darth Piaget - 2009 IF Convention