



Status of the Racing Pigeon Cross Country Relay

by John Vance

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As I write this update, on 10/29/18, the relay has entered the State of Alabama on its way to Daytona Beach, Florida. That is quite an accomplishment as the relay started in Vancouver, Washington on September 18th. We did jump over a segment of the relay from Tucson Arizona to Midland Texas, because of the heat and restarted the relay in San Antonio, on October 20th.

On October 28th the leg from Tucson to Midland started up again, and will be finished around November 4th. In the meantime, we continued the relay in San Antonio on October 20th and the birds are, as mentioned above, crossing into Alabama on their way to Daytona Beach.

Now, you may be wondering why are we doing a cross country relay, in the first place. Well, it is a project involving 30+ racing pigeon fanciers from coast to coast, to do something beneficial for our sport while at the same time raising funds for wounded veterans with special needs.

When you think about it, what we are doing is historic. A relay crossing 11 states (WA, OR, CA, NV, AZ, NM, TX, LA, MS, AL, FL), in 55 days. At the same time honoring the relationship between our birds and our soldiers, during WWI and WWII while at the same time, raising funds for our wounded vets with special needs.

We have already had some good success, as the Review Journal, in Las Vegas, NV picked up our story and did a wonderful article on the cross country relay and about how our pigeons served in times of war, carrying life saving messages from the front lines back to headquarters.

On October 4th, 2018, the 100th year anniversary of Cher Ami's famous flight that saved 194 American troops referred to as the "lost battalion", the cross country relay leg organized by Vicente Valenzuela and Oscar Ruiz, started in Victorville, CA and ended in Las Vegas, 170 miles away. The birds carried a copy of the original Cher Ami message and upon their arrival in Las Vegas, a news crew was waiting for them to film their arrival. The Review Journal, wrote an excellent article about the relay and about Cher Ami with a video and photos of the loft and the birds. It was good publicity for the sport and mentioned our fund raiser for wounded veterans. There is a link to this article on our website <http://oldgloryflight.org/>

Cher Ami was released by the troops of Major Whittlesey's 1st Battalion from the 308th Regiment, of the 77th Infantry Division, with a message that the battalion was under friendly artillery fire and pleading that the shelling stop. The battalion had advanced deep into the German lines, and the troops to their left and right had not been able to advance along with them because of resistance from the German troops arrayed against them. The lost battalion advanced so far forward, that they were surrounded by German troops, running low on water, food and ammo.

When Cher Ami was released, the bird came under German troop fire and was hit more than once. It fluttered to the ground then took off again under heavy fire and arrived 25 minutes later at headquarters, having been shot through the chest, blind in one eye and having one leg (with the message) hanging by a thread. The artillery fire was lifted and after several more days a rescue force fought their way to the lost battalion and pulled them out. Of the 554 men in the 1st Battalion, 194 were rescued, 197 were killed in action, and 153 were missing or taken prisoner.

The day after the "Cher Ami" leg of the Racing Pigeon Cross Country Relay, the Las Vegas to Phoenix leg was flown by Bob Swanson, and the birds from this leg carried a special message for a special active racing pigeon fancier. Waiting for the birds to arrive was 89 year old, Korean war veteran, Ed Rogers. The message carried by the birds was "Finally, We're coming home", referring to the remains of American service members killed during the Korean War, that were recently handed over by the North Korean Regime after negotiations with the White House.

We could think of no better message for Ed Rogers to receive, these 65 years later, then that some of his Band of Brothers, were in the process of being identified and reunited with their families and to finally rest on American soil, with the honor they deserve.

There were two additional articles written about the relay and our fund raising activities. One was by the TV station News15 in Lafayette, LA which had a video of the birds being released at the local War Memorial and information on the relay. The other was an article in the New Orleans Advocate newspaper. Both of these media events were organized by Fred Werner. Fred, also organized all the relay legs from Hamshire, TX to Pass Christian, MS.

There is a link on our website of the News 15 video and article at <http://oldgloryflight.org/>

Hopefully, the cross country relay will end on Veterans Day November 11th with the birds arriving in Daytona Beach, Florida. On that same day, our Veterans Day Auction on iPigeon, will conclude our official fund raising activities. However, you will still be able to donate to our "Building Homes for Heroes" fund raiser, from our website.

Building Homes for Heroes, is the charity we have chosen to support. This organization, builds and gifts mortgage free homes to wounded veterans with special needs, every 11 days and they are on schedule to hand over at least 33 homes, in 2018.

As of today, racing pigeon fanciers have donated \$1000 towards our fund raiser and we need your support to make this cross country relay / fund raiser a success. 30+ racing pigeon fanciers have committed to making a difference for our sport, in our communities and in the lives of our special needs veterans. Please support us to help our vets and build goodwill in our communities.

Please take the time to visit our website and donate towards building homes for our wounded veterans. We will continue to take donations up through at least the end of November. Any donations made

through our website, will be credited to our fund raising activities with “Building Homes for Heroes”, so that we will know just how much money racing pigeon fanciers, across the USA, donated towards benefiting our wounded veterans.

<http://oldgloryflight.org/>

Thank you, on behalf of our 30+ racing pigeon fanciers, working hard to project our sport in the best possible light, and to help our wounded veterans with special needs.

Mike Coleman ~ Salem OR, Russ Codd ~ Grants Pass OR, Walt Schaffer ~ Red Bluff CA, Carl Perry ~ Hilmar CA, Darryl Coston ~ Bakersfield CA, Leonard Lee ~ Oak Hills CA, Vicente Valenzuela + Oscar Ruiz + Rasiel Martinez ~ Las Vegas NV, Bob Swanson ~ Waddell AZ, Mick Claves ~ Tucson AZ, Bill Jacques ~ El Paso / Las Cruces RPC, Cole Creek + Randy Correa / Blue Collar RPC ~ Midland TX, Gary Donelson ~ Llano TX, David Stanley ~ Splendora TX, Glenn Melancon ~ Hamshire TX, Dave Ratliff ~ Bell City LA, Kenneth Credeur ~ Rayne LA, Fred Werner ~ Lafayette LA, Mark Pursifull ~ Denham Springs LA, Vick Corso ~ Slidell LA, Charles Lee ~ Pass Christian MS, Joe Mitchell ~ Biloxi MS, Harry Bensen ~ Citronelle AL, Chad Ward ~ Robertsdale AL, Eric Miele ~ Defuniak Springs FL, Wes Howell ~ Monticello FL / Florida Georgia Line RPC, Jerry June ~ Fort White FL, Ray Donawa / Florida East Coast RPC ~ Daytona Beach FL.