

Joe Nemelka – Nemelka Racing Pigeon Loft - got into racing pigeons as many did through his father. Joe's father actually stopped racing when Joe was an infant, but in 1981 Joe stumbled upon a box of his father's trophies, diplomas, old breeding books, etc. In the box was a book called "Pigeon Fly Home" by Thomas Liggett. Joe read the book and he was hooked and Joe raced his first YB season in 1982. Joe's first birds were from one of his father's closest friends who still raced pigeons, Neil Christiansen, who was principally flying the Bricoux family of pigeons.

Joe's first win was in 1983 (when he was 14) and it was the Yearling Special Race from Jean, Nevada – 400 miles. It was a very difficult race and there were no reports of birds anywhere in the combine. Joe can still remember seeing three birds drop from the rainy and gray sky onto his little loft. When he started calling around telling club members he had three on the drop nobody believed him, and they told him they must have been late birds from the A or B race that same day. Joe can still remember the shock of the club members when they opened the clocks that evening and saw the purple countermarks signifying they were actually Yearling Special Birds.

Joe raced actively in the local Utah County racing pigeon club in both YBs and OBs for several years as a teenager but was not quite as active his last few years of high school due to playing high school sports. He then raced for a few years during college but got out of racing pigeons for about 10 years while attending Law School and building a few businesses. While living in London, England, Joe and his family decided it was time to move back to Utah so before moving in 2002 Joe attended the Blackpool Show and bought some Van Moorsel Janssens and Aardens. These two families are still the backbone of Joe's family of birds today.

Joe raced in the local club from 2004 until 2012 and won just about every award that could be won in both Young Birds and Old Birds within the club/combine in addition to many national ace pigeon awards. Joe likes to have a relatively small team of 45 – 55 for YBs and 15-20 widowhood cocks for OB – focusing on quality and not quantity. In 2012, Joe accepted a professional opportunity that requires a lot of travel, so he had to stop racing locally and he started competing in one loft races. Since being more active in one loft racing, Joe has done quite well winning many top positions in many of the largest and most prominent one loft races. Joe does not keep a lot of birds and currently keeps 12 pairs of breeders (with a couple pumper pairs).

While Joe loves to compete and rides the highs and lows of the wins and losses, he finds his greatest enjoyment from the many close friends he has made in the sport over the years. He also enjoys writing articles on the sport of pigeon racing and has put together a website on one loft racing ([www.olrstats.com](http://www.olrstats.com)) to promote transparency and recognition for both the races and breeders that are participating in that aspect of the sport. Joe still says his favorite part of the sport is racing in the club and looks forward to doing that after this professional chapter of his life is closed. There is just nothing that compares to the anxiety and excitement of those Saturdays when you are waiting on birds and every shadow makes you jump in excitement.