

VISITING USA FANCIERS HOMES

BY MIKE HATCHER

Since our first trip over in 1989 my wife Sylvia and I have built up a great bunch of poultry friends across the country. We keep in touch with phone calls, emails and Christmas cards. We also try on our visits to spend time at some of our old friends homes and also see the homes we have never so far got to. This time with it being only an 8 day trip we fitted in 3 days at a show and 2 visits to long-standing friends we had met at shows but had never been able to take up the invite to visit their homes. We know that with money and time, which we don't have, we could spend months taking up the invites from East to West across USA and Canada.

The first home we visited was in South West Ohio to West Alexandria and the home of Gary & Audrey Overton who we have probably spent more time with than anyone else. They have a nice small home with plenty of land and some real quality stock. Gary also collects old books, an interest which I share, and has a fantastic collection of old glazed clay poultry water founts. Their hospitality not only extends to feeding and watering us very well but taking us to shows and visits to friends and other places of interest. Having collected us from the plane, given us a meal and then boxed their birds they took us to the show reported in the February issue.

When we returned we had more time to look round their stock. They have always been into waterfowl, these days only Toulouse and Sebastopol geese. However these birds are some of the best in these breeds and always in demand. Audrey's Sebastopol have curl in abundance and with the nice dry soil and constantly changed water look brilliant. Over the years Gary has always had top class Gray Toulouse but over recent times has put much effort into establishing the Buffs. Having sold many goslings from day old to a few weeks old he still had a flock of 15 Buffs. The great thing is they are now the equal in type and size to the Grays. He also has one of the top strains of large and bantam Speckled Sussex. The white and black ends of feathers are very clear and defined and there no large white areas on the flights. They also have large Silver Laced Wyandottes which looked really smart. Lastly they have Rumpless Araucana bantams. (The tailed versions are called Ameraucanas). It is a real challenge to get them with two tufts of whiskers and no tail.

During our stay Gary took us over to Connersville in Indiana to the home of Bill and



Above: Jim Koneeny's Rouen Female

Left: Jim Koneeny's Calls & Rouen, also Blond Mandarin

Below: Calf Shelters make good Goose houses

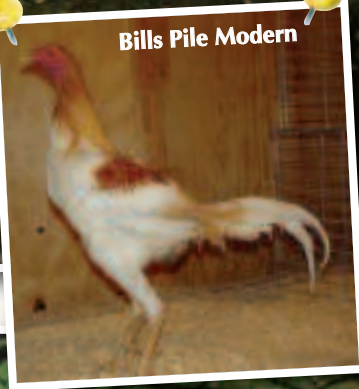


Below: The Overtons Geese





Above: Audrey's Sebastopols



**Buff Toulouse.
Equal to Grays**



Right: Lou's East Indies



Gary's Speckled Pullet

Joyce Wulff. They own and produce the only real fanciers poultry paper (Poultry Press). Bill is a hard feather man and over recent years has been perfecting the large Red Pyle Moderns. He also has many OEG bantams and his granddaughter Samantha has her own Modern bantams. All too brief a visit as Bill dived home to see us in his lunch break from another printing business he helps to run.

On our way home we spent a short day in the Chicago area. We were collected from the O'Hare Airport by Jim Konecny. Jim has judged for The Domestic Waterfowl Club over here and also imported Aylesburys from Hicks Waterfowl World. He is currently President of The International Waterfowl Breeders Association. He lives in a lovely country area bordering Chicago. Many mansions surround him and the house he has created is very tasteful. Jim made his money with a couple of music recording studios, one in Seattle and the other in Chicago. These days he has his animal feed business and also acts as consultant to a large pure breeds business. Jim has predator problems so all his birds, except the geese, are kept in large pens which are wired over. We noted the concern of his Toulouse with an eagle flying over. His ducks include some of the best Rouens I have seen for some time, in large numbers too. His Aylesburys show great type and are much in demand. Jim wrote a great in depth study of them for the DWC Yearbook a few years back. Because he feels the White Runner has gone back in quality over there he has taken them up. Bantam ducks include a winning strain of Black East Indians and you have to be good with these as competition is hot in the north of the USA. His Calls are whites and mallards with the latter in my opinion superior. His chickens are black Wyandotte large which had almost died out over there. How I would like to get him some of Allan Brooker's strain.

A quick cup of coffee and we drove through the country areas to the west of Chicago to an area known by that name (West Chicago). We were visiting the home of Lou and Nickie Horton to see their birds. Lou along with Darrel Sheraw are the best known and most prolific writers on waterfowl affairs. These days having gradually become surrounded by new houses he has reduced his birds. No more geese or Calls and only a few cockerels which are kept inside. We were taken across a lovely garden with many shrubs and plants and like Darrel he specialises in Hostas. We went through his immaculate penning room with his champion White Wyandotte bantams and his main project, Buffs, which he is trying to perfect to beat the whites. In my mind he hasn't far to go. On through the pens to where his Black East Indians and wildfowl are kept. They are really great but have the advantage of being quieter than the Calls. After a lovely evening meal we headed back to Jim's for a few hours sleep as we had to cross the City for a very early flight out next day.

Thanks folks for your hospitality and sharing your birds and homes with us.