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THE AMERICAN PIGEON MUSEUM OPENS IN OKLAHOMA CITY

*Nation's Only Museum Devoted to the 5,000 Year History of Humans Raising Pigeons
Celebrates with Special Events - June 13 & 14*

Oklahoma City, OK – May 20, 2014 – More than twenty years in the making, the world's first public museum dedicated to domestic pigeons is slated to open in mid-June in Oklahoma City. The American Pigeon Museum (www.theamericanpigeonmuseum.org) is housed in a new 6,000 square foot building overlooking the Remington Park Race track. The site was acquired for the museum and national headquarters for pigeon organizations in 1993. Over the years, existing buildings on the site have been converted to house artifacts chronicling humans' 5,000 year relationship with the bird. The museum will host two days of special events to celebrate its opening on June 13 & 14

The new museum, managed by curator Lorrie Monteiro, is the result of combined efforts by different North American pigeon groups to create a showcase for the many breeds of pigeons and doves that are kept as pets worldwide. "We're delighted to be opening for the 2014 tourist season," said Monteiro. "The array of exhibits will give visitors a clear picture of the breathtaking scope of varieties and uses pigeons have been put to over the centuries."

According to Monteiro a central component of the museum is the fascinating history of the thousands of homing pigeons that served American forces from the First World War through Korea. "To this day there is still no more secret message system than these silent, undetectable birds carrying information from the battlefield back to headquarters," said Monteiro. Other exhibits show the hundreds of varieties of breeds developed by humans and the may famous people including Roy Rogers, Yul Brenner, Walt Disney and Queen Elizabeth who have kept the birds.

Some of the fascinating artifacts and exhibits relating to this little-known hobby and art include:

- Chinese Pigeon Whistles – not meant to call the birds but to make music in flight, these amazingly complex devices date back 1,000 years.
- WWI and WWII memorabilia from the US Army pigeon service and pigeoneers including an actual army mobile pigeon loft
- Large collection for pigeon race clocks dating from 1904 to the 1980's
- Large collection of photograph of clubs and birds. (New collection from George Nunez and Layne Gardner.)

The special opening, the museum's Kick-Off Summer event, will be on June 13th from 10am to 4pm and on Saturday from 10am to 4pm as well. Special events include the showing of several films by international award-winning filmmaker Jim Jenner (often referred to as "Lord of the Wings"). One of the original Board members who selected Oklahoma as the site of this unusual museum, Jenner will be premiering a film entitled "Young Wings." Produced over four years, the short production traces Jenner's own involvement with pigeons as a young boy and his subsequent quest to see if pigeons could be effective in combating what psychologists call "Nature Deficit Disorder" in children. He will also be showing his one hour "The Queen's Wings," a highly acclaimed documentary that traces the more than 125-year history of England's Royal Family in the pigeon sport and the special race that honored the Queen's 60th Jubilee in 2012. "The Queen's Wings" will have two free showings both Friday and Saturday at 10:30AM and 2:30 PM followed by the 20-minute "Young Wings." Jenner will be on hand to discuss the making of these films and his work with helping young people enjoy pigeon keeping.

Additional events during the opening include:

- 1pm both days - a presentation the centennial anniversary of WWI of the vital role pigeons played in wartime communication. Rare 16mm footage from the war will be screened.
- Local food trucks will be on the grounds to offer a range of tasty treats

The museum is located at 2300 NE 63rd, Oklahoma City, OK 73111. Complete details on the museum and the opening events can be found at www.theamericanpigeonmuseum.org.

PIGEON FACTS

- “Pigeon” and “dove” are two words for the same family of birds. In Spanish a single word, “Paloma,” represents this species, as do most other languages.
- Pigeons are the oldest domesticated bird. The Rock Dove [*Columba Livia*] was kept by the first farmers who cultivated grain around 5000 BC in Mesopotamia. Pigeons and humans have always lived a symbiotic relationship – the pigeons eating the grain, the humans often eating the pigeons as a vital source of meat. Humans also discovered they could be used to bring messages home from distant points.
- Pigeons mate for life and their gentle courtship, including "kissing" made them an ancient symbol of love. The bird is recognized as a symbol of the Holy Spirit by all the world’s major religions.
- A pigeon that carries messages is called a “homing” pigeon, not a carrier pigeon. Homing pigeons have carried secret messages since the earliest days of human writing.
- Today an estimated 1,000 domestic varieties of pigeons are thought to descend from the Rock Dove. These birds are bred for show, for performing aerial maneuvers and racing up to 600 miles in a day, typically averaging over 50 mph for hours at a time.
- Modern pigeon racing developed in Europe almost 200 years ago using birds formerly used as messengers. Today’s competitors are descended from commercial and military homing pigeons. Reuters, the world’s largest news agency began as a pigeon service.
- Over a million people race pigeons worldwide. China is the fastest area of growth.
- In January 2013, a colony of 530 Belgian racing pigeons sold for \$ 5.6 Million. A single male, “Bolt”, a top performer in several international races, sold for \$400,000.
- Homing pigeons have served in many wars, including both WWI & WWII. They have saved countless lives and are credited with a 98% success rate in the missions flown in WW II, despite enemy fire, and often with mortal injuries to themselves. In WWII, pilots carried pigeons and if they had to ditch their plane, released the bird for help. Many pilots owe their lives to a homing pigeon. The birds are still used to send secret messages that can't be detected by electronic snooping technology.
- Today there are many pigeon races worldwide with purses in excess of \$1 million dollars
- Advanced studies at the University of Montana concluded: “Pound for pound, *columba livia* (the pigeon) is one of the smartest, most physically adept creatures in the animal kingdom.”

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