

# Feathered guest returns to coop

RICHMOND — After a week-long visit here, the white and grey show racing pigeon found at the elementary school last month returned home to Massachusetts.

While its visit was voluntary, the bird's return trip was made in the custody of a human escort. It was retrieved two weeks ago from the Richmond home of Anne Fasano by Val Smith of North Grafton, Mass.

Mr. Smith had been boarding the pigeon for its owner, William Bernat, when it apparently lost its bearings on a training flight from Springfield to North Grafton.

Contacted by *The Chariho Times*, Mr. Smith had seemed eager to get the bird back. He arrived two days later to claim it and pay the Fasanos \$2 for the seed it had eaten.

The pigeon ate well and had a cage to itself at their house, Anne's mother said. A cage was made by putting screen around the legs of an old kitchen table and placing paper on the floor.

Even after a week in its unfamiliar surroundings, the

bird stayed healthy, she said. "He was good and you could still pick him up and hold him." She said she was glad Mr. Smith had come when he did, however, because she feared the bird would eventually have gotten sick.

What sparked the interest of school workers the most when the bird walked inside the building Aug. 16 was a note attached to its leg. The note said, "Help. Being held prisoner at MCI-Norfolk, Norfolk, Mass."

So, Richmond evidently had not been the first stop on the bird's sightseeing flight.

Authorities at the Massachusetts Correctional Institution (MCI) said prisoners do not keep pigeons, so it must have flown onto MCI grounds and been befriended by an inmate.

Mr. Smith did not indicate whether the bird would be reprimanded for its independence. However, a racing pigeon enthusiast contacted during the search for the pigeon's owner said once a bird's navigation is fouled up, it is not much good as a racing pigeon anymore.