

# BONITOS COMPANEROS

Klaus Vorderstraße

Markus Kirschbaum



The following provides a brief overview of our kennel and partnership. We are Klaus Vorderstraße and Markus Kirschbaum of the kennel Bonitos Companeros. We live in the village of Korschbroich-Glehn, which is located between Düsseldorf and Cologne, the so-called Rhineland region that is known for its carnival and the people who so enthusiastically celebrate it.

It is for the sake of our dogs that we decided to leave the city and move to a more rural area. For the past five years, we have owned a home in the country, and we are still in the process of turning it into a dog's paradise, step by step. Our 2000 m<sup>2</sup> yard has been rearranged to make the largest part of it available to our dogs daily. We are very happy here, living the quiet life. Yet we are located centrally enough to reach several big cities within a relatively short time. Further, since we live in the so-called "Three Country Region," we are surrounded by Belgium and Holland, which are both only about an hour's drive from where we live. This allows us to travel to many international shows throughout the year.

And now on to our dogs and their stories: Klaus' first dog was a red Cocker Spaniel by the name of Bonny. When Klaus was twelve years old, he had to have an appendix operation and since his parents were dead against dogs, he had to come up with a clever little scheme how to get one. Hence, he absolutely refused to have the operation ... unless he was promised a dog! In that case, Klaus said that he would immediately and voluntarily agree to go to the hospital. Not only did Klaus' parents agree to the deal, but they also have been supporting his dog enthusiasm ever since. They stand firmly behind both of us when it comes to dogs, or more specifically, the breeding of Cavalier King Charles Spaniels. We are lucky enough that both our families help us as much as they can, although they cannot fully understand our passion for dogs. When they see how much effort we put into our kennel and how many setbacks we have dealt with, especially in the early days, our families can't always understand why we put ourselves through this. Yet they love both the looks and the endearing personality of the Cavalier as much as we do, and they are happy for us when we succeed in the show ring or with our breeding goals. They also see that we are having lots of fun with our dogs and with our friends in the show dog world

from around the globe. They then understand that we cannot rid ourselves of the "Cavalier Virus," nor would we ever want to.

I, Markus, had a different upbringing to Klaus', since we always had animals at home. From chickens to Toulouse geese to parrots, we had pretty much everything on two legs with feathers around our home. We frequently raised chicks under infrared light and to this day, my other big passion, aside from Cavaliers, is the breeding of pedigree birds and poultry. I am especially partial to the Chabos breed, a Japanese dwarf chicken. Yet, my passion for Cavaliers also goes back to my childhood. In the seventies, my uncle imported his first three dogs from Scotland to Germany. This led to me catching the "Cavalier Virus" big time, which has never left me, but instead grows stronger by the day.

As you can see, both of us have been Cavalier enthusiasts from fairly early on in life. In 1988, Klaus and his brother went to their first dog show. From that day onward, he knew that dogs and showing them would become a very important part of his life. When he spotted a blenheim spaniel in an old black and white movie, he got set on that breed and the thought never left him. He began clipping newspapers with anything he could find on the subject of Cavalier King Charles Spaniels. He made his first contacts with German breeders who, at that time, were still few and far between. Klaus was lucky enough to make contact with Brigitte Kellermann of Kennel Von den Lustigen Kommunarden. She is the woman who established the name of the Cavalier King Charles Spaniels in Germany. Mrs. Kellermann recognized Klaus' great talent in handling the dogs and entrusted him to handle her dog, Party Time of Homerbrent, a British import. At the age of only fifteen, Klaus began successfully showing at both national and international levels.

For me, Markus, the story was a little different since I had been around Cavaliers from childhood and they were the breed that interested me the most. My parents initially did not want to support my hobby to the full extent that I wished to expand on it. Our family only kept dogs, not bitches, and mainly tricolor ones. My passion for breeding had already become too strong to ignore. Nonetheless, I first concentrated on establishing myself in my work, with the sole aim of later having the funds available



*A lovely group of Bonitos Companeros  
Blenheim Cavaliers*



*BIS Winner and Multi Ch. Immenhof's Klassiker  
Insert - "Duncan" with Judge, George Donaldson*



*Multi Ch. Rattlebridge Roses are Red (RCC Winner Crufts 2006)*

to set up and expand my own kennel. This was something I knew I wanted even as a teenager. I have always loved nature and so I chose to become a gardener, something that seemed a well matching piece in the puzzle of my life. I have to admit that it sounds a bit like a fairy tale, and perhaps it really was, because around that time I also happened to buy my first Cavalier bitch from Brigitte Kellermann. I knew nothing of Klaus then and we developed our Cavalier passion independently from each other, each in our own corner, long before we ever met.

Klaus' first Cavalier of his own was the multiple Champion Immenhof's Klassiker and mine was the bitch, Jord Vinda von den lustigen Kommunarden. I undertook my first steps into the world of dog breeding with this bitch. When Klaus started out, he did not have the opportunity to raise litters of his own, and in his early days, exhibiting was more important to him. Yet, he soon came to realize that the best way to get a good show dog was to breed it yourself. When we met and began to build up our kennel, Klassiker was already a veteran. But we were lucky enough to be able to buy one of Klassiker's daughters, Ch. Habanera's Fascination, who was a splendid bitch. From her, we bred JCh Bonitos Companeros Gloria Dei, a bitch that won her first BIS from the Junior class. This allowed us to carry on, through her, the amazing legacy of Klassiker. To this day, Jord Vinda's descendants are still represented in our pedigree lines.

Once Klaus had successfully completed school and then

finished his training as a merchant, he met Dieter Heymann at an international CACIB show. The idea was born, right then and there, for Klaus to help him around the kennel for a while. What began as a great idea soon turned into reality and Klaus moved to Northern Germany for a year to work at the Immenhof Kennel. There, he learned the basics of Cavalier King Charles Spaniel breeding and also established important contacts for us internationally. Dieter is one of the great experts on our breed and to this day we keep in close contact with him to exchange ideas. Also among our mentors are Norma and Gordon Inglis from the Craigowl Kennel, now in England. Their close friendship with Klaus has been going on for more than fifteen years, something that is quite unusual in the dog show world. Not to be left out from among the list of our early supporters and inspirations are Ruta and Peter Towse. Their type of Cavalier, we call the Miletree type, greatly impressed us. They also allowed us to take their English Champion bitch, Miletree Miesque, to Germany. It was the first time ever that an English Champion bitch raised her litters here in Germany. We are very grateful to have had the best possible support from them when we were starting out together. Ruta and Peter now regularly come to visit us in Germany, which is always a wonderful occasion where we talk non-stop about Cavaliers.

When we set out in our breeding operation together, it did not take us long to come up with the kennel name Bonitos Companeros. In choosing it, we wanted something slightly different to the norm of the day. Most German kennel names



*European Winner 05, JCh. Pascavale Tyler*



*JCh. Bonitos Companeros Jet-Set*



#1 Cavalier in Norway - NUCH Bonitos Companeros Polish Gold



Bonitos Companeros Oh l'Amour

were too pompous for my taste and in my view somewhat over the mark. I was determined to pick a name to express the innate merits of the breed. Since the Spaniel, as its name implies, has its origins in Spain, it only seemed fair to use Spanish as the language of choice. Whenever I explain this, I regularly hear the objection being raised that it is a British breed. This is true, of course, yet it does not change the fact that the origins of the Spaniel are still in Spain. This is the main reason behind our kennel name but we are also very partial to Spain and to Spanish food. Literally translated, Bonitos Companeros means beautiful companions. This name really expresses the essence of what we strive to breed: happy and healthy little companions with the charm and grace of the Cavalier KCS.

It is somewhat difficult to answer the question "which Cavaliers from the past were our favorite." There were so many wonderful dogs that remain close to our hearts and dear to our memories. Just to name a few from days gone by: UK Ch. Harana Nina Simone, Hela nie the Gigolo, UK Ch. Lymrey Royal Reflection of Ricksbury, UK Ch. Craigowl Silkience, UK Ch. Aldachell Victoria Rose, UK Ch. Timsar Mischief, UK Ch. Maibee Sandra Dee, Int. Ch. Royal Companion Revolution, Lodewijk v.h. Lamslag, Fridericus Rex von den lustigen Kommunarden, and Immenhof's Union Jack.



Ch. Immenhof's Belle Epoche

More recently we fell in love with: UK Ch. Keyingham Branwell, UK Ch. Maibee Gentle Touch, Ch. Miletree Ninjinski and his sister Miletree Miesque, Rosscree Summertime, UK Ch. Aranel Cosmic, and Aranel Angelic.

Klaus' first Champion was his tricolor Multi Champion Immenhof's Klassiker. At almost fourteen years of age, he is still with us. In his show career, he has amassed the following titles: European Junior Winner, German Champion, Luxemburg Champion, Danish Champion, International Champion, Europasiieger 98 (Europe Winner 1998), VDH Bundessieger (Federal German Winner) 1998, 1999 and 2000. The latter constitutes a record that remains unbeaten to this day since no other Cavalier has ever managed to achieve winning the most important German dog show in three consecutive years. The breed specific judges for these titles were, among others: Gordon Inglis, Shealagh Waters, George Donaldson, Veronica Hull, and Brian Rix.

My first champion was from the B litter: Ch. de los Bonitos Companeros. Bentley was sired by the blenheim dog, Sanickro Comotion, and he was out of Europeana vom Hüsdau, a purely German dam. As you can see from the name of my first champion, the "de los" is still present to indicate our original kennel name: De Los Bonitos Companeros (of the Beautiful Companions). When we decid-



Multi Ch. Rosscree Diplomatic



Markus and Klaus' young star - Aranel Energie

ed to breed dogs together from 2003 onward, we abbreviated our kennel name somewhat since Klaus thought it would be better to simplify. From then on, we became known as just “Bonitos Companeros.”

We then started out together with some dogs from the UK as our basic breeding stock: Pascavale Tyler, Miletree Street Ballet, Miletree Nessun Dorma, and also Nevhills Nekita. Our joint base stock for the kennel also included some German dogs like the Multiple Champion bitch Immenhof’s Dreamgirl, whose ancestors go back to Craigowl Dixon and Craigowl Silkience, and her daughter Immenhof’s Belle Epoque. Further we had a splendid red American bitch named Rattlebridge Roses are Red.

We currently have five International Champions and eleven national Champions, such as Int. Ch. Bonitos Companeros Figaro, the top Cavalier of Austria in 2006 und 2007. Norwegian Champion Bonitos Companeros Polish Gold is now on his way to becoming top Cavalier of Norway 2008. There are also numerous Junior Champions like JCh. Bonitos Companeros Red Rum who in 2008 alone won a staggering number of eighteen BOB’s out of the youth class and won the group nine overall three times. This fills us with great pride.

There are numerous highlights from our time at the shows that we could report about, but we live more in the here and



Markus with King Charles Spaniel, Multi Ch. Castle of Roses Eloise



Klaus with Toy Group Winner, Miletree Jambo

now and look toward the future. Yet there are precious memories that cannot be erased by time and will always remain present inside our minds. We would like to share some of our favorite ones with you! It was a wonderful event for us when our ruby bitch, Rattlebridge Roses are Red, won the Reserve CC at Crufts in England. It was the first ever Reserve CC at Crufts to go a Cavalier that was not bred in the UK.

Something that Klaus will never forget is when Immenhof’s Klassiker, “Duncan,” won the Best of Show out of more than 7500 dogs competing there for the title in Dortmund in 1999. This is another achievement that has not been topped to this day. The summer of 2003 was another very special show year. Klaus and I traveled to the UK almost every weekend to show Miletree Ninjinski and his sister Miesque. Our greatest moment was when Klaus was handed his very first CC card in the show ring. This is another one of those very special memories that he will never forget. At that time their breeders, Ruta and Peter Towse, owned both of these champion offspring of the top stud dog, Tاملine Northern Dancer. Later, Miesque moved to us in order to elevate our own breeding lines. Now our dearest wish was born: to one day show a dog bred by ourselves and turn it into an English Champion! Dreams and goals are a very important aspect of breeding. They give you something to aim for in the day-to-day business



Klaus and Multi Ch. Immenhof’s Klassiker winning BIS over 7500 dogs in Dortmund in 1999

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Klaus with JCh. Bonitos Companeros Red Rum and Renate Peters



Young prospect, Bonitos Companeros Caribbean Rum

of breeding pedigree dogs.

It might sound a little strange, but with all the BIS titles we have accumulated over the years at toy dog shows and club shows, we have somewhat lost track. If we were to add up just the Best of Group titles in the Toy Group for the past two years alone, we would have a total of ten such titles. More currently, at the largest and most important dog show in Germany, the Federal Winners Show at Dortmund this October, our new import, a dog named Miletree Jambo, not only won BOB from the open class, but also claimed the overall Federal Winner 2008 title. Further, he won Group 9, making him best dog of all the toy breeds.

While we breed all four colors of Cavaliers, Klaus' favorite is blenheim. For me, it was the tricolors, however, since preparing myself to become an FCI judge, I now realize that the aspect of color becomes increasingly less important to me. It is the overall presentation that counts, the beauty of a Cavalier, not so much its color.

Regarding our breeding approach, for us there is only the path of moderate line breeding. We feel that line breeding is the most sensible way to secure a given breed and to improve on it. Since breeding and the various aspects of progeny were among the main points of my professional training, Klaus and I consider a controlled and planned line breeding approach. We carefully take into account all the risks, so it will not be the devil's work, but a valid approach in a well-thought out breeding program. This is why we chose the path of moderate line breeding. We realize that it is not an easy path, but we also know that outcrossing is not a valid alternative either. We consider outcrossing to be like gambling. It adds a higher risk to almost every important point to be considered.

We are in frequent contact with our mentors and other breeder colleagues to exchange ideas about the best possible pairings. We do not approach the subject lightly and have had our share of arguments over which dog to use for a given bitch. To us, finding the right dog is really the salt that adds taste to the soup. In our partnership, Klaus and I always strive to find a compromise that we are both happy with, even if it is a strenuous undertaking. All the various pros and cons of any given pairing are considered umpteen times and so no decision is ever entered into lightly.

There are four different kennels that count among the most significant influences for us. First, there is Dieter Heymann's Immenhof, kennel that strives to present a rounded overall picture of the Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, with one type not ever being enough for him. He always placed great emphasis on gait and style, something that is also close to our own hearts. Yet we do not wish to neglect the aspect of type, and it



BIS Winner Bonitos Companeros X-Treme

is finding the right combination of these two that represents a difficult balancing act for many breeders. When it comes to the Miletree and Pascavale kennels, we love their easily recognizable type. Most of their dogs are of a harmonic, balanced size, with very beautiful eyes and lavishly pigmented, something where many other breeders fall short. The Aranel kennel is also very good at uniting all these points to present a well-rounded overall picture of our breed in a manner that we so love and strive for in our own breedings.

On average, we keep twelve adult dogs, including retirees. We try not to go over this number. Our motto is that by day's end, when all the work is done, we still want to feel that we have enough quality time available to spend petting and talking to each dog. Yet it is not always easy to limit ourselves to that number. This is why we rely on our kind and strong partners, like Unni Lima Olsen

of Magic Charm in Norway, Gaby Sporrer of Happy Homelives in Switzerland, and other breeders we hold in high esteem where our breeding lines match in a good and fruitful manner. This allows us to always fall back on our lines while keeping up a solid exchange with others. This is a win-win situation for everyone involved.

The latest developments surrounding our beloved breed cause us some worry. One of the reasons why we succumbed to the "Cavalier virus" is not only because of the innate beauty of that breed but also because these lovely little creatures have a very empathic personality that delights us each day anew. This truly royal breed has made it all the way from the Middle Ages into our time. There are now some people who are shedding a new light onto this breed that has so many great merits, however, it is a light that does not truly belong there. It is the issue of genetic defects. Any purebred dog will have its share of problems, this much is certain, and also one must not close their eyes to this type of thing.

Yet, one should not put the negative aspects on the forefront. There are very few positive lists where all the Cavaliers with great health, that are the pride of their breed, are being listed. This is just some food for thought. Here is an area where we, as breeders, should work together, because it is the negative examples that are currently being highlighted most. While this may be human nature, unfortunately, it is still not right. Because we are still in the early stages of establishing the goals and desires of our Cavalier breeding program, we strive to invest our energy into upholding the merits of this wonderful breed and to advocate it in the best possible manner.

Klaus and I are very aware of just how lucky we are to be given the opportunity to breed these great dogs and to contribute to the overall advancement of this truly exceptional breed.



BIS Winner Bonitos Companeros Lokomotion

