

**Koos, thank you for taking your time to speak to us. Could you please tell us about your background? How did you begin to be involved with working dogs?** Certainly, I was born in the east of the Netherlands closed to the German border. When I was a kid, there was a dog club in the village where I lived. I saw people were training dogs and I was very interested. When I was 15 years old (45 years ago) I started putting on a sleeve to do some bitework for the older guys in that club, and then also the German border custom. At that time, we didn't talk about working dogs or show dogs.

We had only one type of German Shepherd. At that time I knew a German guy from custom, who was also a breeder. From him, I bought my first German Shepherd puppy for 300 D.M. In the old days, it was not as simple to cross the border as now, so how I bought this female puppy was, I met my German custom friend at the border, with me on the side of the Netherlands and him on the side of Germany, I threw him the money across the border and he threw me the puppy. My parents had a big grocery shop then. I did not get permission from my parents to buy this puppy. So I hid the puppy in the barn. Food was no problem for the dog because of the grocery store. After about 4 weeks, my father finally found out about my dog but he was ok with it. I told my father I got the puppy for free because I was doing bitework for the old guys in the dog club. Later on I take another male from this German breeder and I trained him.

As a child, I was always interested to be in the police or the military, when I was 20 I joined the police force in the Netherlands. After I graduated from the police school, I moved to the south of the Netherlands, together with my wife. The major of the village at that time asked me if I wanted to be in the K9 unit in the police force, and I said YES of course. I could not find a German Shepherd that was in my opinion good enough for police work so I started with a mixed Malinois. This Malinois had already 2 different handlers and sent both of them into the hospital. I made a KNPV/POLICEDOG certificate with this dog, 4 times (3 passes). Back at that time, every 2 years we had to go through the KNPV (Diensthond) program and pass to stay in the dog squad. There were already politics back then. This Malinois was a very good one, but my heart has always been with the German Shepherd. Because I could not find the type of German Shepherds that I wanted, I decided to breed my own.

I started breeding in 1973, with dogs I found in Germany. The first stud dog I used was Marko v. Cellenland. Greif v. Bielpkopf in my opinion was the best dog in protection. I used him 3 times in my breeding. My very first breeding bitch was Rena v.d. Boxhochburg. She was a normal female with good temperament. She was good in biting but she was never titled. I bred her with Marko to produce Anjou van Tiekerhook. I bred Anjou with Hero v. Lauerhof to produce Beauty van Tiekerhook. Then I bred Beauty with Greif to produce Esthera, who I produced only after 5 generations of my breeding. Esthera became my foundation brood bitch. She was a very strong willed dog, very stubborn in obedience but very good in bitework. It hardly took me any effort to get her to bite from the sleeve to the suit, and then from the suit to civil. She was very hard on the streets, but very stable in family environment, good with children. She was completely black. I had the idea of the foundation bitch then. She must be hard and without any flaws, and self-assured in all situations. She was dominant but not handler aggressive. I used her quite a few times.

**Who has been the main influence in your breeding and training?**

In the early 80's, the German Shepherd started to split into working lines and beauty lines. I decided to breed dogs only from the working lines. Around that time I met Alfred Hahn from Kennel Busecker Schloss. Alfred has had influenced me the most in my breeding. At that time he was the man in my opinion that has introduced the better type working dogs. Alfred was a judge in conformation. He liked the dark sable dogs, which I also liked. I believe the dark colour has certain genetic lineage with the working capacity in the German Shepherd. In the old days the most popular colour was the black and tan and also some dark sable and black. Because of Alfred I also came across Greif Lahntal and his son Sagus v. Busecker Schloss. Greif and Sagus were very hard dog and I used him both about 10 times in my breeding.

**What makes you choose working with German Shepherd over other working breeds?**

Personal feelings, I always wanted a German Shepherd since I was a kid. This is the only thing I wanted from childhood. When I see people working with other breeds and make a spectacular performance, I appreciate it, but it is just not for me. My breed is German Shepherd.

**What is the goal and vision of your breeding? What do you strive for? What is your philosophy and believes?**

My goal as a breeder is to produce genetically hard dogs with good health. Dogs that can bring us better dogs in the future. This is absolutely necessary. For me a hard dog is a dog that is robust in all phases. In Tracking he must be able to confront on natural way difficult conditions, handle firm corrections, and has the persistence to keep going without thinking about quitting. He can handle solid corrections in Obedience, learns from it without affecting his expression. In Protection he must have a full, powerful, and serious grip. The grip must be naturally full, but there must be more than only a full grip. The dog must be able to show natural ability to take the fight to the helper. He must be willing to actively challenge the helper. Some dogs fight very hard with the helper due to nervousness and some due to dominance. For some judges it is very hard to see the difference, because they have not enough knowledge to see it. In the protection phase, how many judges can see that the dog is confronting the helper or begging for the sleeve? And than dogs get high points, use for breeding and produce worse dogs. On this way of judging they kill the working abilities.

**What are your favorite bloodlines? What do you like about them? How do they mix with each other?**

I prefer the mix of Greif, Sagus, Falko v. Haus Sindern. With this line I combine with Fero Zeutener Himmelreich. I also linebred on Grief and Fero to preserve the working abilities of these two dogs. I made the linebreeding first on Grief and later on Fero. I used also Xato Bose Nachbarschft. He brought me some very hard dogs especially with the Grief line. One of the best females in my breeding was Vixen van Tiekerhook. She came from the combination of Grief and Fero line. When I used Yoschy v.d. Dollenwiese, the hard, full, serious grip was continued. The father of Yoschy was Troll Bose Nachbarschaft, who was a son of Fero. I had Fero in my kennel for 7 months and saw also his super qualities but also some not so good things. But I think this was more a matter of training than from inside of the dog. So I can see this line is very potent with its traits. Yoschy brought me several KK1 dogs. After that I used Nick v. Heiligen Bosch, together with the Yoschy line, that produced Max and Manus van Tiekerhook. I saw that Nick and Yoschy form a very good mix, so I tried linebreeding them together, 2,2 Nick, 3,3 Yoschy, that produced Ziggy and Escha, also some good Mondioring dogs. Quick was a linebred of Yoschy. Noery is a Nick daughter. Gina is a Nick daughter. The next step that I made was the linebreeding on Nick. Noery and Max bring super dogs, they are both from Nick. I made a breeding with Ziggy and she continues that line. For sure Escha and Catch will do the same. Some young and very talented females like Noeska-Nadja (Quick x Jim) and Laika (Thaira x Jim) and Radja (Catch x Jim) are coming up and I'm sure they will continue this line.

**Who are your favorite dogs in the last 30 years? What can you tell us about these dogs? How do they produce?**

A good producer is a dog that can continue the line after many generations. He should be able to pass his strength into his progeny's and their progenies. Greif-Fero-Troll-Yoschy and Nick did this. For sure some other good dogs did this. But I use them.

**Could you tell us some of the best dogs you have bred?**

The dog that I like the most is Rick van Tiekerhook born in 1983. He was a son of Grief and Esthera. He competed in the European Championship. It was the time before we had the WUSV World Championship. Rick was a very impressive male in conformation, almost black. He was a very fast dog. You can see it in the way he picked up the dumbbell. His protection was one of the best I've ever seen. He was also a super tracker. He was very intense on the track. The best combination I produced using Rick was with Steffi. Steffi produce in Belgium the famous Orry von Haus Antverpa. (2x number 1 on the Word Cup). My other favorite male is Lanzo van Tiekerhook, who was a son of Sagus and Fanja (very sharp bitch, a little dangerous). And of course now my Max. But I only could bred this dog by my selected and hard females

**Do you use a lot of line breeding? What dog do you like using for line breeding? What is your view in line breeding?**

**How often do you line breed and when do you decide to do an out cross?**

I do line breeding to save the important traits such as the hardness and dominance and social aggression. In line breeding you must not focus only on the dog you are line breeding on. What more important is the dogs around this dog you are using for line breeding. The families around the dog being line bred on are very important, because they have a lot of influence in the genes. This is the only thing we can learn from the show lines.

### **What do you do to test your puppies?**

On the moment that the puppies are born, I want to see them being healthy. I want to see them finding their mother quickly and start suckling. I want to see them being competitive. If I see them without the survival instincts, I put them down by the vet on a respectable way. I raise them in a natural environment. When they are 6 to 7 weeks, I test how they bite on a towel or something soft, to see how the grip is. After that, I tease and stress them a little bit and see how they bite again. For a trainer's point of view, most good trainers prefer to develop a full calm grip in prey drive first, and then develop the protection drive or aggression as the pup grows older. For training, this is right. But I am a breeder, as a breeder I want to see how my pups bite in prey drive but also in aggression, so I get the information of how strong the genetic is. I always selected on that. This is in my opinion the only way to continue the working abilities.

### **What is your view in the protection phase in Schutzhund? What do you emphasize in your protection training?**

When I do it I always do it from the breeder's point of view. I keep mostly females because from working my own brood bitches, I know what I have. In bite work, first I train my dogs on a bite roll. By the time they are about 8 months, they should be able to bite on a hard sleeve on a long attack. I want to see the genetics. When I train I do it to obtain information from the genetics of my dogs and not for the points. It is important for me to have a dog with strong barking. It is important for me to use a dog that is naturally balanced in prey drive and protection drive (aggression), and I develop them in my training. I bring out the aggression from the beginning. The dog must be able to channel protection drive into prey drive. I see that dogs in my breeding have the balance that I want. The most important thing for me is to bring out all the natural instinct of the dog, not to make something out that is not naturally there. I want to see a dog in different situations, not only on the trial field or the training field, but most importantly in a natural environment like his garden or the street or a forest. I can see more of the natural state of the dog.

### **What is your vision for your breeding in the next ten years?**

At the moment I'm very worried about the future. The sport at the moment, with all the technical things we have (clicker, ball, etc) bring us many fake dogs. This is not a problem, but many judges cannot see the difference, and also the helpers. A lot of trial helpers are not helping the judge to evaluate the dogs but they are helping the dogs instead. The ego, politics, and money involved bring us down. Now it's changing a little bit (influence of Gunther Diegel-Jurgen Ritzi) but 5 years ago, German Shepherds in a lot of working trials received V rating because of the training alone. In my opinion a V rating dog in a trial should be a really special dog in genetics and good for breeding. In the 60's, especially in the SV, there started to be show dogs. They decided to have protection in the Siegerhauptzuchtschau in Mannheim. The president of SV Dr. Funk then made the protection test, but the dogs couldn't even handle that. There were 2 dogs from the working lines and they were supper. So, Bodo v. Lierberg was first and his brother Bernd was 3rd. I was there in that show. At that time I was 15 or 16 years old and I brought a female to the protection. This female made a super protection. After that the show people started training their dogs for protection and it became a little bit better. Then came a new president Dr. Rummel, and the protection level went down. At that moment more politics came in. With politics, money, and ego, Walter and Hermann Martin ruined the German Shepherd breed. In my opinion, these 2 brothers also caused the split between the show lines and working lines. That was the beginning of the end of the German Shepherd. Dogs that were too big, hip problem, elbow problems, health programs all came out, too much line breeding. For the sport and police work, most people started going to the working lines because there was nothing else in the show lines anymore. That's why the shepherd people started using Malinois instead. For a lot of the working dog breeders, only biting is important, but for me, the conformation is important too. In the working dog people, a lot of people are going only for the points, just like most the show people want to breed only with the top ranking show dogs, but this makes the gene pool very small for the German Shepherd. And now there is no balance between the show line and working line. In 1996 came the Universalsieger. To enter this the dog must be selected for the BSP and also the Siegerhauptzuchtschau. I don't think this is a good idea because the dog is not good for both. These for me are only mediocre dogs, and in breeding the mediocre dogs are usually not good producers. About four years ago changes in de rules for KORUNG were made. The changes are in favour of the show line dogs, who can hardly make it through a SchH.I exam. Most - if not all - of the working abilities in these dogs are gone. With the

changes in KORUNG, with a substantially increased focus on control with out and holding, the SV tries to increase the quality of these dogs.

**This is the theory; what happens in everyday life: The judges (Kormeisters) do what they individually please, either judging as before or adjusting (explained by them as an own interpretation) the rules to their own interest and benefit.**

For instance: A dog on KORUNG that releases (stops biting) on the moment the helper shows the stick, has had no hits from the stick, but is in good control of the handler **can still pass for KORUNG**. This is what is happening today.

**The sport is polluted; infected by politics, business (the big money) and ego. I'm afraid it will not ever change for the better. The top of the board in the SV and the VDH in the Netherlands accepts this all. Rules are made to satisfy the people who have ambition, yet these rules are not in any way enforced.**

Thinking of the German Shepherd as a working dog, and in particular its future, this seriously worries me. My honest opinion about more and more working line breeders is that these dogs are so ugly you can better breed malinois!!

This is also bad.

*Thank you very much for doing this interview with us. I wish you all the best with your breeding and competing in the future.*