

Interview with the association's head of training, Wilfried Tautz

SERVING THE ASSOCIATION

Wilfried Tautz had to be very patient until he finally had his first German Shepherd to call his own. That was at the age of 22 – shortly after leaving his parent's home. Stages as a professional dog handler, federal group (LG) president and now as an SV board member followed. All this time, the breed he loves so much has always been at his side.

by Roswitha Dannenberg

The name of his kennel is vom Modderloch (of the mud hole). What is the history behind this name? After I had started thinking about breeding 'sometime in the future', it was important to me to think about a fitting kennel name. I was of the opinion that it should be a kennel name with a certain recognition factor. I rapidly dismissed ideas such as *vom Haus Tautz*, *aus dem Kührener Wald* or *vom fleißigen Wachtmeister*, because these names sounded somewhat boring to me.

When did you have the inspiration?

A coincidence helped me: at the back of my property, there is a small pond I created years ago. Only the pond has neither an inlet nor an outlet; the water is maintained by the relatively high groundwater level and filled by rainwater. Around the pond, there are some big trees, the leaves of which partly fall into the pond. So, the water and especially the bottom of the pond are quite swampy.

Years ago, my dog at that time, Carl von Calimero, had a special love for mud baths – they are said to be quite healthy too. As the dog was not only completely dirty after such a bath, but also smelled accordingly, I wasn't too enthusiastic about his more or less regular baths.

When one day he came back from the pond and shook off the water right next to me, I said, 'You stupid dog, have you been to the mud hole again?' All right, I didn't really say 'dog' [laughing]. At that moment, the kennel name was born, and the thought didn't escape me to register this surely unusual name with the SV. I then requested this kennel name and, as a precaution and against all regulations, did not submit any more proposals. To my great joy, on 31 July 2003, I received a certificate for the kennel name *vom Modderloch* [of the mud hole] from the pedigree office of the German Shepherd Association (SV), signed by the manager, Clemens Lux.

You breed dogs with your wife. Is this a hobby that bonds you?

Exactly. In my wife, Gisela, I have a partner at my side who can look back on more than 16 years of very successful work as a breeder and on much experience (in the kennel *von den Ost-Kantonen*) and who now, together with me, has made our goal to breed 'little mud holes' a reality. Our two current German Shepherds live with us in our house, by the way.

Where do you place particular value in breeding?

So far, I have bred two litters, one with my female dog, Pandora von den Ost-Kantonen, and now at the moment another litter with the female dog Finny von der Schiffslache, whom I was able to borrow for breeding from a friend. For me, the dog's health, vitality, joy in working and toughness, paired with anatomical assets, are in the absolute foreground. I do not want to breed a dog that can be 'marketed' well, but a sociable dog that brings joy to the owner for as many years as possible.

Let's go back a few years. Is it true that you fulfilled your dream of having a German Shepherd as soon as you moved away from home? Where did this desire come from?

Since childhood, it has always been my dream to have my own dog. My parents, however, were not able to fulfil this dream. In 1976, I had moved to an apartment with my girlfriend at the time and then finally fulfilled my wish to own a German Shepherd. At the time, I was 22 years old and, of course, overjoyed.



‘I SEE ONE AIM OF MY WORK IN DEVELOPING A TRAINING CONCEPT FOR THE NORMAL DOG HANDLER.’

Did you become a member of the SV at that time?

Shortly after buying the German Shepherd puppy, I was approached by an SV member on the street and invited for a visit to the Preetz local group. Those were my first contacts with the SV, and I have remained loyal to the Preetz local group until this day.

You later went on to take care of this first dog of your own as a dog handler in the police. How did that occur?

The desire to become a police officer also stems from my childhood days – probably without much serious background, but under the influence of the TV crime series heroes of that time. Together with a friend from school, I had applied to the police and, unlike my friend and to the surprise of many, passed the entrance examination. At the time I bought my first dog, I was a policeman in Preetz, and coincidentally, a service dog handler was in demand. My dog was suitable, I was very interested and so I became a police dog handler. In the following 20 years, I had various working dogs, but they were all German Shepherds and all of them were my property which I provided or sold to the Schleswig-Holstein state police.

The question of having a working dog of another breed thus never occurred to me.

You’ve done the training course to be a performance judge – why and how does this experience help you association life nowadays?

For me, a crucial experience was participating in a local group trial, in which I did not agree with some evaluations of the incumbent performance judge. Now, I didn’t want to be one of the many ‘specialists’ who stand at the fence and think they know it all better, but I wanted to try to really do it better from my point of view. Earlier, besides my official training, I led my dog dually in the SV and was furthermore the local group’s head of training for 15 years. All these experiences, paired with the work-related daily contact with different people, were and are very, very helpful for my work as an SV performance judge.

Since 2015, you have been on the SV’s board of management. When did you decide to run as a candidate? Why did you apply for the office of head of training?

In the time from 1997 to 2009, so for 12 years, I was the federal group’s head of training. I then decided not to run for office again, to give a successor the chance to bring new ideas to the task area.

PROFILE



The SV head of training

Wilfried Tautz was born in 1954 and joined the SV in 1977, where he is active, among other tasks, as a federal group president and performance judge. Since 2015, Wilfried Tautz has been the SV head of training. In 1970, he took on service in the state police of Schleswig-Holstein, and from 1979 until 1998, worked as a professional dog handler. From 1998 to his retirement in September 2015, he was an official in charge of corruption affairs in the state criminal investigation department. Wilfried Tautz lives with his wife and the dogs Pandora von den Ost-Kantonen and Ed vom Patriot in Kleinkühren in Schleswig-Holstein.



‘AT 22, SHORTLY AFTER MOVING OUT OF MY PARENTS’ HOME, I FULFILLED MY WISH TO OWN A GERMAN SHEPHERD.’

When the former association’s head of training, Günther Diegel, announced in 2011 that he would not run for office again, my interest in running was already very great. However, due to time constraints, it didn’t seem possible to me. Last year, the situation was a different one, as my retirement was just around the corner. After I had considered the idea for a longer period of time, in March of last year, I officially announced that I would run for the office on the occasion of an administrative and economic meeting which I attended as the federal group president.

I often like to use the term transparency – and for me, it was and is transparent to publicly announce my candidacy about three months before the Federal Convention.

You were head of training in the Preetz local group for 15 years, and for 12 years, head of training of the Hamburg/Schleswig-Holstein federal group. Are the topics similar, only that you now have to take care of ‘bigger solutions’ as a member of the SV national board of management for the department of training?

At the moment, I can’t make a direct comparison between my work as federal group head of training and association head of training. For that, the many tasks I am suddenly being confronted with are too varied. At the moment, however, I have to acknowledge with regret that I have to spend a big part of my time with ‘political decisions’, and I can’t concentrate on what I stood for during my election: committing myself to the dogs’ and their handlers’ training in the SV. In this regard, with the fullest conviction, I serve our association and give my best!

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Please describe to us your tasks as head of training: Which topics and projects would you like to initiate within your department in the coming years?

The task area and the topics are very versatile. I see one of my focal points as creating a training concept for the 'normal dog handler' for the future, together with specialists and the excellent dog handlers we have in our association.

The unification of the training standards of our learning helpers is another focal point which I have set for myself. The education and training of the performance judges is also among my main tasks. Here, action needs to be carried out to make judging and the interpretation of the trial regulations as uniform as possible. Of course, the topic of trial manipulation and the related and absolutely necessary examination supervisors have to be brought into focus again and again.

What do you like to do in your free time when the SV is on break for once?

So far in my term of office, I have not had many breaks, as I have to become acquainted with many areas. Nevertheless, I also have a very versatile life outside the SV, of course. I'm interested in many things and would like to spend my still scarce free time in a reasonable and relaxing way. In my garage, there's an old motorcycle which I would like to explore beautiful Schleswig-Holstein with. I like horses very much and would like to start riding for fun again, and just recently, I got the crazy idea to keep bees. But, as I said, at the moment, everything is on hold. First of all, I'm looking forward to hopefully sometime finding more time for my two grandchildren.

After the election of the board of management in 2015, there was often talk of 'atmospheric disturbances' with your predecessor in office, Heinz Gerdes. What was the situation like then, and what is it like now?

I wouldn't overrate the situation and talk about 'atmospheric disturbances'. Nevertheless, I have to admit that I would have wished for a more relaxing change when assuming office. Despite all sympathy for the disappointment of not having been elected again by the national assembly, I do find it quite regrettable that since my inauguration, I have hardly had any support from my predecessor. This is certainly not helpful for me, especially in regards of the many tasks that I have to master, and it's therefore not conducive to the SV's work either. Nevertheless, I hope the situation will improve again, and that I will find a way for me and Mr Gerdes to commit ourselves to the association together. I worked with Mr Gerdes in the training committee for many years, with much pleasure and very effectively.

What do you wish the SV for the future?

If I were to write a wish list, it would surely be long. Right at the top, however, would be my wish that the 55,000 or so members we have at the moment will continue to identify with our association, and that the fun and joy of our common hobby, the German Shepherd, will continue to be in the foreground. And that the personal needs of a few individuals to wield power and satisfy their financial interests will not determine the future of our association.

Thank you very much for the interview!

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