

A*starz Keeshonden - our history

A*starz Kees began in 1979 when I bought my first Kees from Art & Sandi Peterson of Trekin Kees near Pittsburgh PA. Previous to this, my sister, Bev and I had Shetland Sheepdogs in Ohio since the mid 1960's. We were very young, very new and gullible about purebred dogs. All I can say is it was a learning experience, full of heartbreak and disappointment. Had we been made of lesser fiber, we would not have continued in dogs.



I had always loved keeshonden, but my parents would not allow us girls to have one as we both had to have just one breed while growing up at home. As soon as my last Sheltie died (I was on my own then) I went out and purchased Vixen (*Trekin's Netherland Vixen CD TT*), a daughter of Ron & Carol Cash's "Feathers," *Ch Wistonia Warbonnet* out of a sister of *Ch Keedox's Koka Kola ROM*. While Vixen was very sound, silver and had a wonderful temperament, we chose not to breed her as she wasn't of the caliber we wished to start with. She was one of the first Kees in the country to achieve her ATTS (Temperament Test Title). She also attained a CD and a few AKC points.

I bred one Kees litter (Ruttkey/Fearless based) out of my second kees bitch, Krishna, *Can Ch. Van Florik's Krishna CD*, under my "starter" kennel name of "Van

Vixen - Trekin's Netherland Vixen CD TT

Tayl," which produced three homebred Champions (*Am/Can Ch. VanTayl's Vivacious Voyager, CD*; *Ch. VanTayl's Silver Sensation*; *Can Ch. VanTayl's Chasing Rainbows*) Krishna lacked one major for her American Championship.



Kilroy - Am/Can Ch. VanTayl's Vivacious Voyager CD

After that, I bought several Kees bitches in the quest to find the right foundation bitch. "Lexy" *Am/Can Ch BISw Ch Markwright's*

Promiscuous ROMX came along quite unexpectedly. The bitches that came before Lexy just didn't measure up and they were not the "right" foundation stock. Lexy was plopped on my kitchen floor in Ohio, as a puppy, in the wee hours of a morning by my sister Bev who ventured down to North Carolina to pick her out of Mary Ellen Marx-Meyer's litter.

That was the real beginning of A*Starz Keeshonden. From there, Lexy was a winning show pup from coast to coast. Her first splash into the kees world was at the 1986 KCA National in San Jose California, where Lexy went RWB. My sister Bev and I, "raised" our younger sister, Kathy (aka: Tootie, now known as Tootie Barker) as a Junior Handler. Tootie and Lexy were a show winning team that was not often beaten. Lexy's soundness, clown temperament and overall Breed type had her heads and tails above most of the rest of her competition. That was supported by judges across the country with Lexy's multiple Breed wins from the classes over (top-ranked) specials.



Lexy - Am/Can Ch. Markwright's Promiscuous ROMX



Krishna - Can Ch. Van Florik's Krishna CD



Lexy - Am/Can Ch. Markwright's Promiscuous ROMX

Lexy was bred four times. Her notable get are: Am/Can Ch BIS BPIS A*starz Right Stuff CopyKee ROMX AX HOF (Stuff), BISS Ch A*starz Special Effect ROM (Justy), BOSS BPIS BOSw Am/Can Ch A*starz Close Encounters (Jenna), Ch A*starz Novel Dee Light (Delilah), Ch A*starz And Stripes (JD), BISS Am/Can Ch A*starz Conan (SmoKee).



Stuff - Am BIS/Can Ch. A*starz Right Stuff CopyKee HOF ROMX (multiple agility titles)



Justy - BISS Ch. A*starz Special Effect ROM with owner/handler Kathryn "Tootie" Barker



Jenna - BOSS Am/Can Ch. A*starz Close Encounters with breeder/owner/handler Donna



Delilah - Ch. A*starz Novel Dee Light



JD - Ch. A*starz And Stripes with breeder/owner/handler Donna



SmoKee - Am/Can BISS Ch. A*starz Conan with breeder/owner/handler Kathy "Tootie" Barker

Stuff produced many fine Kees including *Ch Windrift's Doing It Right CDX ROMX* and one of the top Kees in history (now the top breeder/owner-handled Kees in history) *BIS BISS Am/Can Ch CopyKees Ashwood Alliance CGC HOF* (multiple agility titles behind her name) (Allie). Justy produced very nice get, including notable *Ch Markwright's Black Hills Gold ROMX* (Kodi) who is behind many of the Windrift and Markwright dogs of today (2000s).



Allie - Am/Can Ch. CopyKees Ashwood Alliance CGC HOF (many agility titles) with breeder/owner handler Cherrrie Treber



Kodi - Ch. Markwright's Black Hills Gold ROMX

From JD's only litter, his son, *BISw Ch Keeshusker's Blu Chip A*starz ROM CD CGC* (Chipper) and daughter, *Ch Keeshusker's Pink Champagne* (Bubbles) carried on. Chipper produced eight litters which include notable boys *BISS Ch Sherwood's Silversmith HOF* (Smitty) and *Ch Sherwood's A*starz Chips Ahoy* (Skipper). These two boys have made significant positive impacts on many breeding/show Kees kennels across the country.



Chipper - Ch. Keeshusker's Blu Chip A*starz ROM CGC CD with breeder/owner handler Donna



Smitty - Ch. Sherwood's Silversmith HOF



Skipper - Ch. Sherwood A*starz Chips Ahoy

Our next significant bitch in the whelping box was *Ch Perikees' Jardin At A*starz CD CGC* (Lysa Sue) who was a Group-Placing girl. We partnered up with friend Dr. Perry Dillon of Perikees in Oklahoma to co-breed Lysa and her siblings. Lysa, a Chipper daughter, produced *Ch A*starz Exxtasy* (Stacee), *Ch A*starz Enchantresse At Perikees* (Tresse), *Blm Ch A*starz Cause For Applause* (Devin) and *Ch A*starz That Magic Moment* (Dreamer). Dreamer was a top ranking Kees for several years running.



Lysa-Sue, Ch. Perikees Jardin At A*starz CGC CD



Stacee - Ch. A*starz Exxtacy with Tootie Barker



Devin-Sue, Ch. A*starz Cause For Applause



Dreamer - Ch. A*starz That Magic Moment

Chipper daughter, *BISw Ch A*starz Platinum Plus v Novel* (Candee) was bred one time (motherhood was not her thing) to our SmoKee (*BISS Am/Can Ch. A*starz Conan*), producing *BISw BISS Am/Can Ch A*starz Patriot* (Marcus) and *Am/Can Ch A*starz Razzle Dazzle* (Tootzee) who have carried on the line.



Candee - Ch. A*starz Platinum Plus V Novel (KCA Select)

Marcus



Am/Can BISS BISw Ch. A*starz Patriot



Tootzee - Am/Can Ch. A*starz Razzle Dazzle

Stacee, a Justy daughter, produced notable bitches: *Ch A*starz That Petty Magic ROM* (Angel), *BISS BOSn BOSS BISw Blm Ch A*starz All That Glitters HOF* (Satine). *BISw Ch A*Starz PE Wild Nights VosDal* (Gina) and *Ch A*starz On The Bright Side* (Macy). Satine and her niece *BISS BOSS Ch VosDal's Victory Junction HOF* (Vickee) have been top ranked show Kees (not just show bitches) for several years running. The girls named above are responsible and will continue to be responsible for producing many fine Kees across the country now and in the years to come, not only for our kennel, but for many new start-up Kees kennels. What a nice tribute to our roots.



Angel - Ch. A*starz That Petty Magic ROM with owner/handler Lanora Madden



Satine - BOSn BISS BOSS Ch. A*starz All That Glitters HOF



Gina - Ch. A*starz PE Wild Nights VosDal

Macy - Ch. A*starz On The Bright Side



Vickee - BISS BOSS Ch. VosDal's Victory Junction HOF

With the impact of PHPT testing and other health concerns, A*starz will continue to screen for hereditary defects in Kees, as we have all along, and not breed Kees that will negatively impact the breed.

We have been on board with “Modern Natural Rearing” since 1990 and will proceed with our quest to improve the breed by producing healthier generations via the use of limited vaccines, drugs and topicals as well as a more “natural” diet of blending raw foods, cold water fish and sea veggies with high quality commercially available dog foods, selected herbs and selected supplements. We believe you can't have a complete, healthy keeshond, whether a companion or a show dog, without paying close attention to the whole dog. *See our article series at: <http://mnr.astarz.info>*

We have been successful through the years, blending Markwright, Windrift, Candray and Sherwood lines. We have been blessed to have some of the best people in Kees as sounding boards and mentors. We will do our best to help others who are like-minded in the same way we have been assisted.

The type we strive for is our interpretation of the American Kennel Club Breed Standard for Keeshonden: silver color undercoat, clean legs, that clown Kees temperament, sound bodies, good fronts, solid rears, show attitudes, good length of neck, carriage with style, balance, smooth movement and natural, distinct markings. Most of our dogs are owner/handled to their titles which speaks volumes to their quality. We believe the raising of Kees is of utmost importance to the future of the breed. With that in mind, we will, not only be involved with genetic testing and the best diets for Kees, but we will select temperament as an equal portion of the mix to success.

Starting in 2009, I took a leave of absence from being a volunteer trainer (puppy, Jr Showmanship, obedience classes) at the Catoctin Kennel Club (for over eight years) and started training my own dogs in Agility. My two girls and I now have several AKC Agility titles with one being a HIGH IN TRIAL Jumpers. It is very rewarding and fun for the dogs. There is so much to learn with agility, not only in the training of it, but from the sports medical aspects such as structure, muscle, weight management and all that goes into making sure canine athletes are truly fit for such sports. Taking care to introduce kees at the right age, in the right way to obstacles is paramount as well.



Juliette - Ch. A*starz Pure Imagination NJP NFP at the KCA National Trial in 2011



Juliette - Ch. A*starz Pure Imagination NJP NFP, High In Trial Jumpers at the KCA 75th Anniversary Trial 2010



Valerie - Ch. A*starz Once Upon A Time NAP CGC at the KCA National Trial in 2010



Valerie - Ch. A*starz Once Upon A Time NAP CGC at the KCA National Trial in 2011



Juliette - Ch. A*starz Pure Imagination NJP NFP at a local agility trial 2011

Some of our best friends and mentors in kees have been (and some continue to be):

Maureen Larsen - Sylvan Kees
Flo & Rick Bastuba - Van Florik Kees
Mary Ellen Meyer - Markwright Kees
Pat & Carol Harrigan - Challenger Kees
Joanne Reed - Windrift Kees
Jan & George Wanamaker - Candray Kees
Brenda Brookes - Keesbrook Kees
Phyllis Noonan -Sherwood Kees
Karen & Steve Evasuik - Twin Trees Kees

I continue to make new friends along the way. I learn from them and they learn from me. My journey along the keeshond road has been filled with fun and laughter but also the most intense pain (from loss of dogs and other disasters that come from owning pets). That said, it is life and if one can't get along with the sweetest wins and the heartache, then what use it is to carry on. Why not just retire from life and find a desert island to drop out of sight in. I choose to carry on.

As for our contributions (other than dogs) to the Keeshond Breed:

*Video – We started taping National Specialties and some Regional Specialties in 1987 and offering videos and DVD's to the Keeshond public at affordable prices. This service has grown with the technology. We have a vast history of Kees on video as a result and the Keeshond community has a valuable source to see Kees in motion, in their prime...something many breeds do not have. <http://video.astarz.net>

*First on the Internet – We were the first to launch a Kees breeder website on the Internet in the late 1980's and we have expanded the site to include good information readily available on the breed to the public. <http://www.astarz.net>, www.astarz.com

*First Pedigree info on the Internet – We were the first to offer pedigree information on the Internet to the public. When Steve Dworkin started his interactive database service we retired our pedigree information as his was much more robust. With the loss of Steve, we now support and link to Trevor Roger's database (which he inherited his start up data from Steve's information.)

*Free Keeshonden available listings – We have been offering free listings on the Internet since about 1996 for those (reputable) with Kees to place including litters, older Kees and rescue Kees. Our site has become "the place" with the best and most up-to-date info for those searching for a Kees to add to their family. <http://keesavailable.astarz.info>

*Writer for most of the keeshond magazines during my time in kees. I have written for all of the Keeshond magazines since I have been involved with keeshonden. I started with Keezette writing articles and compiling show results. Then, I started a series of articles on Modern Natural Rearing that ran in JabberwockKees and continued to the next magazine, Keeshonden. I am currently writing for the on-line magazine, KeeshondWorld (out of Australia).

(Donna Stekli)

A*starz Keeshonden:

Donna Stekli, Lemuel Burnett, Bev Stekli, Kathryn "Tootie" Barker, Jordan Barker

<http://www.astarz.net>, <http://www.astarz.com>

Member: Keeshond Club of America, Capital Keeshond Club, Catoctin Kennel Club, Pomeranian Club of America