

Member Profile

by Gil Dueck



(L to R) Kora, Gil, and Duke

I grew up on a small dairy farm 60 miles East of Vancouver B.C. My earliest memories of hunting were with my father in the fields around our farm for ducks and pheasants. Our dog was a springer-collie cross that loved to flush pheasants but was hard mouthed and a reluctant retriever.

As a teenager I hunted ducks and pheasants without a dog. During my 2nd year at university I happened upon a litter of shorthairs and couldn't say no to a solid liver bitch. During the hunting season I probably hunted more than I studied and this gave her many opportunities to learn by osmosis as I had never hunted with a competent dog. None of my

hunting buddies had dogs (and do not even to this day) giving her many bird experiences. I unfortunately lost her to an auto accident as a young dog.

Soon after this I was married (no connection between dog loss and this event) and Susan and I lived in a Vancouver apartment while we finished our degrees (I a teacher and Susan a registered nurse). After graduation we headed back to our country roots and decided to buy a Golden Retriever. A year later we had two Goldens, one of which became a field champion as a 3 year old.

In 1980 I decided to leave teaching and join the expanding family dairy farm. As a farmer I could find a few hours each day to hunt ducks and geese. Pheasants had by then disappeared mostly due to a loss of habitat. I stopped competing in retriever field trials as they became more and more technical and were a poor reflection of my hunting needs. In 2000 I acquired another Golden and this time competed in hunt tests. At this time I met Barry Kolodychuk who was instrumental in our success (Master Hunter Cert). My farm business was now more established and this gave me time to hunt upland birds in the Canadian prairies. Here I connected with another dog trainer friend. After hunting together he commented, 'Stop trying to overly manage your flushing dog. Alberta is big country. If you want to find birds your dog must be allowed to range far and wide. **"Go big or go home"**. I soon had a wide ranging Golden and I did a lot of running whenever I saw him get on a bird. Being somewhat younger I enjoyed the challenge. As 60 approached I found it more difficult to keep up and after several falls from badger holes and uneven ground while running. I worried about injury, especially after breaking a gun stock while falling. Maybe a pointer should be part of my future.

I had always taken a keen interest in breeding cattle and spent a great deal of time studying pedigrees as I searched for the best sires to enhance my herd for both type and milk production. I did some research as I firmed up my decision to buy a GSP. After talking to some dog people I bought a shorthair with quite a few F.C. in his pedigree and a few German imports. The breeder talked enthusiastically about these, 'German imports'.

It wasn't until the boredom of a beach holiday to Mexico had me surfing the net and I happened upon the Deutsch Kurzhaar Verband site. While looking through the dogs and puppies for sale area, I gradually came to understand the German system of testing. It impressed me that a dog had to qualify by meeting a standard for field work and conformation before a litter could be registered. I next noticed that some of the qualified sires were owned by North Americans. The closest one was in Walla Walla so I couldn't wait to see these German Imports. Further research led me to the Trocken Bach site. I was impressed by the depth of pedigree on the females owned by this kennel. When purchasing brood stock for the dairy my first place to look for strength in a pedigree is on the bottom side, the theory being that you can always find good males - it only takes a few to cover a large number of females but strong performing lines of females are much harder to come by. I took the plunge and bought a DK, Kora vom Trocken Bach. The testing program has been a challenge especially the fur and blood tracking components, which I had never done.



With a 1 ½ year old male (Duke) and an 8 month old puppy (Kora) I was off to Alberta in the fall of 2013. Kora's only hunting experience prior to Alberta had been 2 three day hunts at the Douglas Lake Pheasant hunt in BC. By the end of the 2nd hunt she was pointing and retrieving. On one occasion while hunting with 3 seasoned pointers Kora was noticed to be missing. We backtracked 100 yds. There she was locked up on a rooster. In Alberta it didn't take long for her to learn about birdy objectives and produce points on

wild birds.

In the fall of 2014 Kora completed a Solms Prize 2 and Formwert V. The next fall (2015) she competed in the VGP with Barry Kolodychuk doing the training and handling, receiving 283 Points/Prize 2. We had hoped for a Prize 1 but the search without a duck let us down. The blind retrieve was the next part of the water work and



Gil and Barry after a prairie hunt with Kora and Barry's Lab

somehow she now went into duck search mode - bad timing. I suspect that since she had two seasons of duck hunting (8months & 1yr 8months) along waterways and ditches that are about 20 ft. wide that she did not acquire a need to stay in water to find a wounded duck. She would often find birds by crossing the water to get down wind and then search from the bank for the wounded bird. Often birds that were jump shot were not even in the water but 20 or 30 yards in the field. In the future I would avoid this kind of water with young dogs that I will be testing as water work

tests place high value on dogs searching in the water. I would like to add that our success in completing the VGP would not have been possible without the help of Frank O'Leary and Jeff Martin. Their kind patience and explanations about training and evaluations of our progress helped us address weaknesses and helped us understand the multi faceted test which at times seemed overwhelming to a first time participant.

After the 2015 VGP Barry and I had a great two week bird hunting trip in Southern Alberta. Hunting wild birds drained the dogs (5 in total) and especially this old man. Some days were epic and others were long, tiring, and at times frustrating. This was our second year in Alberta and we spent a good deal of effort exploring new terrain. New areas give a sense of exhilaration as you stand on a rise in the open prairie and head into the distant expanse that holds great promise mixed with uncertainty and adventure. Coulees, river oxbows, distant copses of birch and gnarly scrub brush with the endless grass prairie fill you with the hope as you follow your dogs with only your shoe leather to get you there and back.



Uschka on a prairie hunt

After several years of hunting as a pair we noticed an interest by others to accompany us to the prairies. We took four friends to a pheasant release ranch near Bindlos (50 miles north of Medicine Hat). We stayed in a 120 year old log cabin and found the hunt to be first class. Two of the friends had not hunted birds for thirty years and this is when having pointing dogs was perfect. Whenever they hunted with me I told them not to worry about staying close to the dogs for a shot. "When they point I'll call you in and you'll have the first shot." They loved it and when I suggested we try it again next year - they were all in without hesitation.

Hunting released birds gave me a new appreciation for wild birds. I've come to a place where a hard day of pursuing sharp-tail, Huns, and pheasant is a joy all to itself. If we get a point, shot, and retrieve then that's a bonus. On the other hand to walk all day and have the birds beat you means I tip my hat to them and marvel at how they survive in the hostile prairie (blizzards, drought, foxes, coyotes, hawks, ect.). And when we have meat for the dinner plate there is nothing better than wild fowl that are – 1) organic, 2) free range, 3) no antibiotic, 4) no hormones, 5) low cholesterol, 6) high protein, 7) low fat. Add a pre-dinner drink and good wine – Umm!!



I currently still own Kora (although she lives with a friend she is available for hunting trips) and Duke. In the spring of 2018 I purchased Uschka vom Trocken Bach. She is currently in training in Germany. Susan and I have great hope for her future and we were thrilled by her dam's (Maggie KS vom Trocken Bach) success at the 2018 Kleemann. She not only achieved the KS title but was also the V1 female at the Kleemann.

Our dogs are first and foremost part of the family. They spend large parts of the day in the house and travel with us when we are away from home. Secondly, the dogs are a significant part of my outdoor activities as I train, exercise, and hunt them. Thirdly the dogs are test dogs in that I enjoy proving out their genetics.

We enjoy our dogs and have met many wonderful people through this hobby. I feel privileged and honored to be involved with DK's and look forward to connecting with other DK owners in the future.

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