

MEMORIES

MY FIRST FILAS

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Many events that happened during the course of our lives, especially the “first time” events turn out to be landmarks of big importance. Many positive things we will remember with joy, when they gave us a lot of happiness. This counts specifically for the first dog in our lives, and more specific in the case of the first fila. This experience taught us a lot of surprising facts about how noble a dog can be and how much this dog had influence in our daily lives.

I still remember with joy our first filas, a male named Rambo and a female named Carua.



RAMBO

The story began in 1987 when we still lived in Holland; also the period that we were preparing to move to Spain. We knew that we were going to need a good guard dog and my husband decided – after some good research about the character of the breed – to buy a Fila Brasileiro. Rambo von Rūflohof was born in Holland. His father was a Brazilian import (Carolina – CAFIB) and his mother also had Sao Paulo blood but from a CBKC kennel. During that period we did not have any idea of the big Brazilian controversy, that was something we only learned in Spain when we became members of the Molosserclub.

In April 1987 I moved to our country house in Spain with Rambo. My husband had to stay in Holland to dispatch business and would come some months later. Rambo grew up very well and was a very happy brindle pup that was christened “Tigre” by the local people.

My husband contacted Rambo's breeder because he wanted to buy a female from a different bloodline. The breeder did not have anything available but suggested a kennel in Germany where a four month old female was still waiting for a new owner. They both traveled to Germany to the kennel "da Montanha" and brought the brindle girl "Carua" back to Holland.

Carua had a very interesting pedigree, both in a positive and negative way. There we found names like Orixá da Carolina and her father Castor da Tamakavi, but also, the polemic Ogum de Siege. On the German side of the pedigree the famous Clavigo v.d. Hofreite from the first Brazilian imported bloodlines in Holland, a line that was not admired very much by Dr. Paulo Santos Cruz. Again, in those times we were beginners without any technical knowledge and what counted for us were some nice companion and guard dogs.

My husband arrived after a long trip at home in Holland with Carua, he opened the backdoor of the car to take her out but the young lady had other plans, she jumped out and ran away, at full speed. My husband was a very good athlete in his young years; a champion at the 1500 meters running, he was still in a good condition and thanks to all that he caught the little girl that was very upset.



CARUA

Soon she understood that life was good, she did not leave my husband's side for one second, learned a lot of new things and caused sensation among the family and friends. She developed a strong "ojeriza" (mistrust) and at her young age she was biting our business successor and almost my mother.

My husband wanted to give me Carua as a surprise, so nobody was allowed to tell me about her. This worked out very well and I saw her for the first time when my husband arrived in Spain. Rambo and I came out of the house to welcome him, he opened the car door and Carua – that brindle devil – jumped out and almost attacked me. She did not allow me to come close to the car, she did not allow Rambo to say hello to my husband, she was terrible.

I must admit that I was really not a dog psychologist at that time, but I knew one thing, my "gift" had to respect me in my house. And she did, because my husband demanded that she do so. I cannot say that she started to love me, and I knew that she needed a lot of time.



One day we made a big mistake. We wanted to go for a ride with the dogs. My husband made the dogs enter the car, I was the last one that arrived and took the front seat. This was too much for Carua. In her opinion I had to respect her territory, the car belonged to her and to her boss. I was not welcome and she attacked me, biting me on my shoulder, destroying my lovely blouse. My husband corrected her and we decided to go on with the ride to show her that her behavior had not been successful.

My husband had to go back to Holland. I stayed with the two dogs. Rambo was such a nice good hearted boy, Carua respected me but did not love me.

One day that I will never forget, I found Carua in the middle of some plants, covered with flies and under the stinging sun. She was ill, very ill. I was astonished and upset. She allowed me to take her in my arms, to bring her to the car and right away to the vet.

This was the first time in my life that I had heard about Parvo and this was what she had. Treatment began right away; she went on the drip and got medication. The vet started to shout about the breeder who had given her only one vaccination, a combination against all kinds of diseases. I learned that the way of protecting dogs in Central Europe is not the same as in Spain where we had all kinds of diseases that did not show up that much in the north and vice versa. I was really going through a learning process that first year that I lived in Spain. When I compare the quality and quantity of the vets twenty two years ago and the present I see a major difference. The vet in our village was very old and had a nickname; “the butcher”. The best option was to go to town to younger vets who had received a better University training than the old men who were not that much used to dogs as a luxury pet. For many Spaniards in the old times dogs were for hunting, for utility.

To make a long story short, Carua survived. The vets said that she survived due to my perseverance because I forced them to treat Carua even at night (not usual in those days) and at home I also did what I could. So Carua survived and we were the best friends, better said, she adored me after that.

My husband had finished all his work in Holland and discovered a new hobby; showing dogs. The first show he participated in was in Madrid with Rambo and he won the puppy class. This is really beginners luck and made him go on. We joined the Molosserclub and slowly started to learn more about the Fila breed. In those days they talked a lot about testing the temperament of Molossers, I even published an article about that subject written by Carlos Salas in the CAFIBE bulletin 2007 – 3. During the Monografica of 1989 Carlos Salas would carry out a test with Molosser dogs that were fastened on a rather long leash, without their owner.

We, beginners had no idea about temperament tests and we asked some dog trainers to help us by trying out our filas. In the area we had only dog trainers that were used to working with German Shepards and they refused to work with a Fila. The reputation of the fila must have reached them somehow and they did not seem very willing to have a new experience. One of them was so nice to send us to his teacher and this happened to be the

famous Vicente Ferré from the province of Valencia and had close contacts to the Molosser world. During a few weeks we went there for a short training of our dogs. It was a sacrifice of time and money because we had to travel 125 km. for 5 minutes of training, nonetheless we loved to do it and we learned a lot. What Vicente Ferré did with our dogs was waking up the defense behavior by provoking them in a rather soft way during a few minutes. Very soon they understood what they were supposed to do and especially Rambo was a talented pupil. After some weeks we had to fasten them on a tree and to hide ourselves. Rambo defended very well, Carua did not show very strong nerves. Vicente called her *hysterical* while Rambo was a very stable defender.



Rambo photo: Ana Mesto

While being tested by Carlos Salas at the Monografica we noticed the same result. One thing was funny; Rambo broke his collar while jumping forward and went after Carlos Salas who ran zigzagging to avoid sweet little Rambo's teeth. . But Rambo stopped and obeyed us when we called him. This was the first and the last time that we prepared our dogs for defense.

Rambo showed us he was a very noble and obedient dog. A Shepard who lives not far from our house used to come often with his sheep to an abandoned plot next to us to let his flock graze for some hours. The dog he had was an enormous pointer mix. He loved to come to our gate and to bark like hell to Rambo. One day, Rambo managed to open the gate and started to

give this dog a lesson. The Shepard panicked and yelled because he feared for his dog's life. We ran outside, called Rambo to stop and to our big surprise he obeyed at once. The poor pointer mix survived with a big amount of stiches and a lot of purple spots because of the disinfectant spray.



Carlos Salas testing Rambo – photo: Ana Mesto

As I mentioned before, these first filas were a learning experience for us, Specially, about the character of the fila, which was new to us. It showed us that early aggression (Carua) does not mean a well-balanced dog. Rambo who did not show this behavior, turned out to be a companion with enormous self-confidence and without fear for anything.

During the following 22 years after these first experiences we bred 2 alphabets of litters. We always had, and still have, many filas around us and we remember all their special qualities and personalities. This period has been one of the most important ones in our lives.