

“MEET THE BREEDER”

BARBARA GARNETT-WILSON, LAUGHING CAVALIERS



ONE THING LEADS TO ANOTHER

Although I have lived in the USA the majority of my life, I was born in Cheltenham, England, went to school in Canada, and university in France. My international journey began indirectly when my late father, a colonel in the British army, was sent to Washington D.C. for most of World War II. Dad loved the USA; so a few years after the war was over he suggested to my mother that they

“[The filly] kicked out with her back legs, and one of her hooves caught me full on the side of my face. I didn’t know how badly I was hurt until I tried to call for help and couldn’t open my mouth. My cheekbone was smashed. Surgery to repair my face took hours and I was not allowed to ride for a few months afterwards. This is ultimately what led me to Cavaliers.”

emigrate. Being the staunch Englishwoman she was, she agreed to a compromise move to Victoria, Canada, which in those days was much like England. I had a halcyon childhood there, which included my much-loved older brother and many trips across the Atlantic to visit family left behind.

My dream from quite a young age was to be an airline stewardess. As this required second-language proficiency, I chose to go to university in Lyon, France. Having always gone to an all-girls school and armed only with simple schoolgirl French, I was extremely unprepared for a big co-ed university in a foreign country, where no English was spoken. But it was sink or swim, so I dogpaddled my way through French literature and history. I did come home able to speak the language, something that stood me in good stead in the years to come.

I became an airline stewardess for United



Airlines in the mid-1960s. Flying in those days was very different from the way it is now. Hats, girdles, white gloves, and never a run in a nylon stocking! The planes were quite small, and there was plenty of time to spend with passengers. This led to the inevitable: In 1969 I married one of them, my late husband, Bob Smith.

I retired from flying and moved to Marin County, CA. There I became heavily involved

in Arabian horses and had a wonderful time on the show circuit for ten years. One day after returning from a tiring show weekend, I went down to the barn to see a three-month-old foal. I had a scoop of grain in my hand and leaned over to put it into a low bucket. I stupidly put myself in a position of no escape, when something frightened the filly. She kicked out with her back legs, and one of her hooves caught me full on the side of my face. I didn’t know how badly I was hurt until I tried to call for help and couldn’t open my mouth. My cheekbone was smashed. Surgery to repair my face took hours and I was not allowed to ride for a few months afterwards. This is ultimately what led me to Cavaliers.

During my down time, I went to England to see my family, as I have always done at every opportunity. One of my aunts owned a charming fourteenth-century pub, The White Hart, in the magical village of Castle Combe,



Wiltshire. The pub had a mascot named “Tiger”, a typically enchanting Cavalier. I was hooked on the breed from the moment I met him.

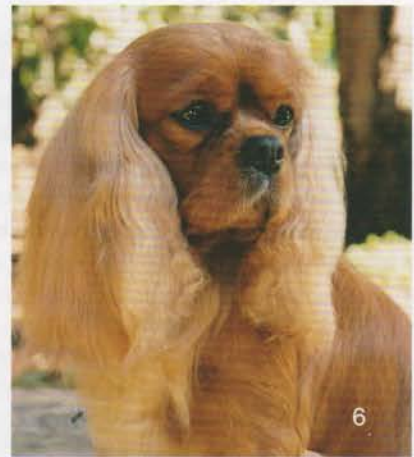
In 1979, a few months after returning from England, I received a call from British Airways, saying I had a live shipment arriving. Intrigued, I went to the airport, where a son of Tiger’s toddled out of his kennel and into my arms. A bitch puppy soon followed, and Laughing Cavaliers was launched (the kennel is named after Frans Hals’ 1624 painting “The Laughing Cavalier”).

DEVELOPING A BREEDING PROGRAM IS LIKE WEAVING A FABRIC.

I looked at the pedigrees of the two Cavaliers I had and saw a common name: “Amantra”. So I visited the late Di Fry who subsequently sent me some wonderful dogs. My first club champion, Ch. and Canadian Ch. Amantra Some Dame was one. Amantra Jodelle, the dam of Jane Pitts’ great obedience dog, U-UD Laughing Brix UD, C-UD, RE, C-RN, Can CD, was another. One of my greatest treasures, “Fiona”, Ch. and Canadian Champion Amantra Sweet Fantasy, also came from Di. (PHOTO 1)

Fiona’s son, Ch. and Canadian Ch. Laughing Stormin’ Norman was one of my all-time favorites, as was his daughter, Barb Hoorman’s Ch. Laughing Society Dame at Benchmark.

In building a breeding program, my goal was gorgeous heads with sound bodies and a good familial health history. How incredibly lucky I was to be able to import these traits in the superb English, Canadian and CKCSC, USA Champion Alansmere Rhett Butler, (PHOTO 2) bred by my dear old friends
(Continued next page)



John Evans and Alan Hall of the Alansmere Kennel, owned by Roger Calladine. "Rebel" was the first English Champion Cavalier to be shown in this country. John and Alan also sent me Alansmere Dizzy Miss Lizzie "Glitter", who had just won England's Puppy of the Year. The large dark eyes these two dogs put on their puppies are still evident in my dogs of today. (PHOTO 3)

In 1988 I added English, Canadian and CKCSC, USA Ch. Sukev Dolly Daydream to my Cavalier family. (PHOTO 4) "Sarah", the first English Champion bitch to come to the USA, was the 1987 top-winning bitch in England, as well as Cruft's BOB. I bred her to English Ch. Salador Crismark before importing her, and this produced the dog who was to become one of my most influential stud dogs, Ch. and Canadian Ch. Laughing Charisma. (PHOTO 5) The familial longevity of this group of Cavaliers was astounding. Fifteen and sixteen years old were not unusual. A few lived to seventeen and even one to eighteen years old.

Charisma won the CKCSC, USA National Specialty in 1992. His granddaughter, the lovely Ch. Benchmark Bunny Hop, co-bred with and owned by Barb Hoorman followed in his footsteps by winning the CKCSC, USA National Specialty in 1998.

A glorious Ruby Charisma daughter made breed history in 1997, when Ch and AKC Ch. Partridgewood Laughing Misdemean-

our ("Demi") (PHOTO 6), owned and shown by Cindy Huggins, won BOB and a Toy group fourth, the first time Cavaliers were shown at the Westminster Kennel Club Show. I wasn't at Westminster that day, but I will never forget the phone call early in the morning to say that Demi had won BOB. How well I remember the excitement of watching the Toy Group that night!

I had a subscription to a French magazine for years, and one day the front cover depicted a couple surrounded by eye-catching Tricolor Cavaliers.

I contacted that couple, Danielle Marchand and Daniel Olivier, of the great French Kennel "des Marliviers", and found that many of their dogs went back to the Amantras. They were the perfect answer to my quest for an outcross, with a distant commonality to keep my breeding program somewhat diverse. So, off I went to France, taking a dear veterinarian friend with me, armed with a stethoscope!

The des Marliviers Cavaliers, of such breed type and style, captivated me. Each one I saw seemed better than the last. Many trips to France later, Iggins, Lioury and Loxley, (PHOTO 7) all French champions, joined Laughing Cavaliers.

Over the years some beautiful bitches came as well, the best known being Hewshia and Judith, both French Champions, and two of the first AKC champion Cavaliers. The influence of these stunning dogs to my breeding program was tremendous.

In 1994, Bob became very ill while we were on a visit to England. When he was no



longer critical, I took a day to visit the Granttilley kennel. There I saw and immediately lost my heart to an eight-week-old puppy, who was to grow up to be the spectacular La Liz. I cannot adequately describe how breathtakingly beautiful she was and how important she was to me emotionally. Bob died in 1997, (the sitting President of the CKCSC, USA at the time of his passing). Lizzy made Bob's illness and death bearable. Ch., Canadian and AKC Ch. Granttilley English Rose at Laughing, (PHOTO 8) winner of fourteen Bests in Show, suddenly died just after her fourth birthday, three months after Bob. Those were such very dark days for me.

Danielle and Daniel of the des Marliviers

1. Ch. & Canadian Ch. Amantra Sweet Fantasy at Laughing. 2. English, Canadian & CKCSC, USA Ch. Alansmere Rhett Butler at Laughing. 3. Alansmere Dizzy Miss Lizzy at Laughing. 4. English, Canadian & CKCSC, USA Ch. Sukev Dolly Daydream at Laughing. 5. Ch. & Canadian Ch. Laughing Charisma. 6. AKC & CKCSC, USA Ch. Partridgewood Laughing Misdemeanour. 7. French champions Lioury and Loxley des Marliviers at the French Club Show. Lioury was BIS, Loxley RBIS. Shown by Daniel Oliver and Danielle Marchand. 8. Ch, Canadian, & AKC Ch. Granttilley English Rose at Laughing.

knew of my loss, and almost immediately let me have multi BIS winner Ch., French, International, Canadian and AKC Ch. Lioury des Marliviers. What a dog he was! Daniel and Danielle also promised that upon their retirement, they would send me their treasured French and International Champion Loxley des Marliviers.

LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

After Bob died, I knew I would never get married again. After all, I lived on a mountain in the wilds of Oregon, surrounded by Cavaliers, horses and sheep. My chances of meeting a man who was attractive, charming, well educated, a dog lover, who could put up with ever-so-slightly eccentric me? ZERO!

But one day two years later, there was Roy. He had just retired from a long career in musical theater and had moved to Phoenix from New York. Mutual friends from whom Roy had bought his Cavalier "Captain" suggested he look me up. It was almost as though we had known each other years ago, and just took up where we had left off. The morning after we met, he said, "You know we are going to fall very deeply in love, don't you?" I nearly fainted. He proposed later that day, before we even kissed--and I said yes! Our respective families thought we had lost our minds.

Five weeks later, in September of 1999, Roy's minister father married us, with Roy's Captain and my Lioury as our ring bearers. (PHOTO 9 September 13, 1999) We brought home French Ch. Loxley des Marliviers on our honeymoon.

Roy threw himself into helping with the dogs. He quickly became as involved as I, and we became the perfect team. Fifteen years later, we still are.

Roy played a huge part in the design, writing, editing and publishing of my second book on the breed, *The Cavalier King Charles Spaniel in Fact and Fancy*. My first book, *The Cavalier King Charles Spaniel in North America* came out in 1998, and my idea for *Fact and Fancy* was that it would simply be a bigger, more current version. But Roy took the book to another level entirely. In 2007 *The Cavalier King Charles Spaniel in Fact and Fancy* won the Dog Writers Association of America's Maxwell Award for "Best Breed Book of the Year" and an "IPPY" award for "Excellence in Independent Publishing" from The Independent Publishers Association.

No sooner had we completed *Fact and Fancy* than we began *The Cavalier King Charles Spaniel: A Tribute in Art*. It was Roy who did pretty much everything on this project. I am

so proud *Tribute* carries both of our names. We continue to collaborate on other award-winning publications such as our "Cavaliers in Art" note cards and our annual "Cavalier King Charles Spaniel in Fine Art" Calendar (last year's edition just received another Maxwell Award).

I had always admired the Cavaliers of Hans Boelaars v.h. Lamslag kennel, and knew some of the des Marliviers went back to his dogs. Hans and I became friends, and after a trip to Holland, some of his dogs joined us as well. Twonya v.h. Lamslag, our adored "Muffy", gave us some really outstanding puppies, one of which is our AKC Ch. and Toy Group winning Laughing Nessun Dorma, "Pavarotti." (PHOTO 10)

On an auspicious day in 2010 I saw a gorgeous Facebook picture of a stunning dog who had just won the French National Championship. I wrote to his owner, Thierry Carteau, to congratulate him, only to find French Ch. Carham Cover Boy was line bred on Loxley. "Robby" was from dogs I knew so well, had the look I love, and I knew his health history. (PHOTO 11) Thierry graciously agreed to let me have Robby, who was the perfect way to round out the breeding program I had begun weaving thirty-five years ago.

A difficulty with my hands no longer allowed me to safely clasp a leash or to groom extensively, so I reluctantly retired from showing. However, I have greatly enjoyed the privilege of judging Cavaliers, which has given me an up-close look at the way the breed is changing. The biggest improvement I have seen has been better top lines and tail sets. The biggest improvement I would like to see would be better movement.

I have owned, bred – but most of all loved – many incredible Cavaliers. There have been some heart-stopping thrills along the way... with some gut-wrenching sadness, too. I have also met some extraordinary people and made life-long friends all over the world. It has been quite a ride! 🐾



9. Roy & Barbara on their wedding day with ring bearers Lioury and Captain. 10. AKC Ch. Laughing Nessun Dorma (Pavarotti). 11. French Ch. Carham Cover Boy at Laughing.