

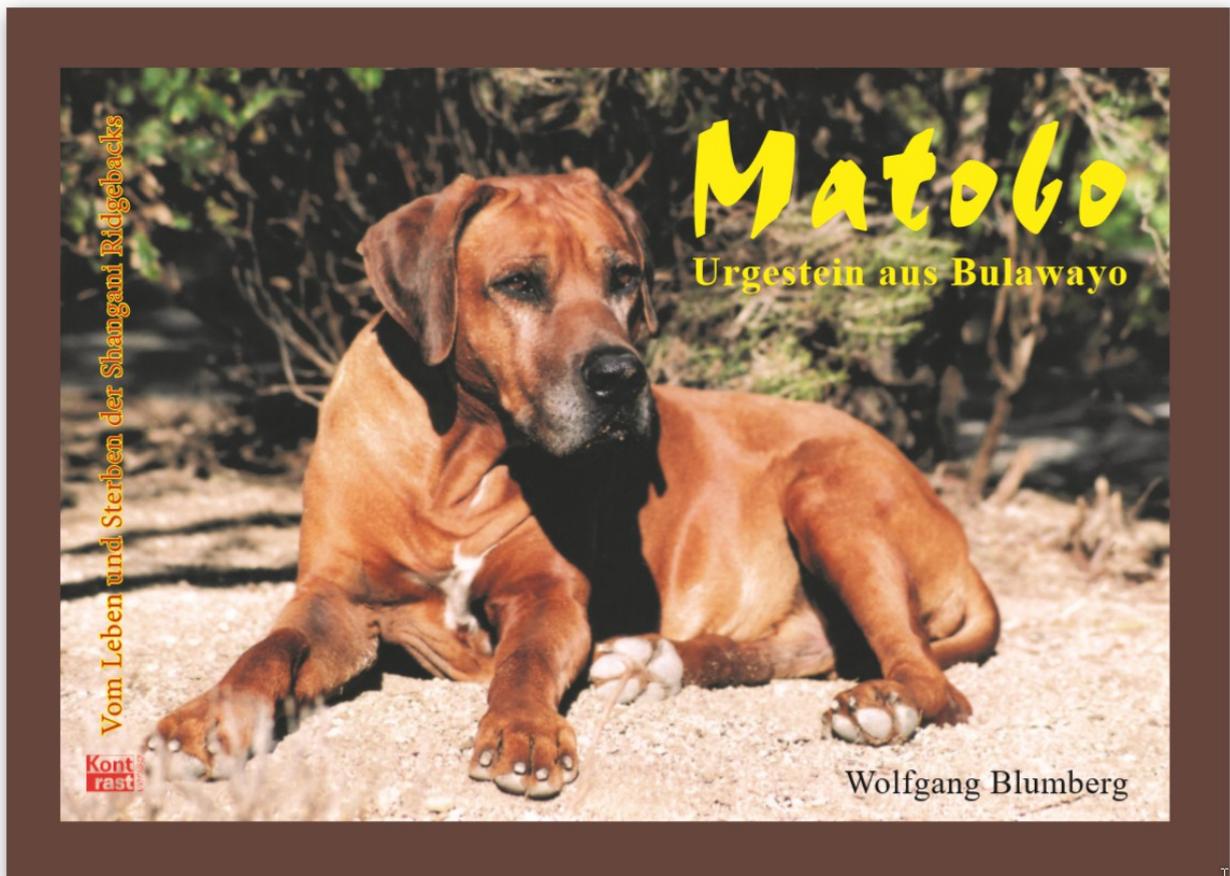


About Life and Death of the Shangani Ridgebacks.

Wolfgang Blumberg

Matolo

Bedrock from Bulawayo



Extract

Introduction.

The origins of our passion for Rhodesian Ridgebacks and our breeding goals for these extraordinary dogs have been described in my book CHIKADZI - Mother of Mothers, which describes the history and background of Shangani-Ridgebacks.

MATOBO - Bedrock from Bulawayo is a continuation of our life with the Shangani pack. Dr. Joachim Schmidt, who lives in Westerwald, had already had Ridgebacks in his family for over twenty years when he received a Shangani male from us in 2005, who he named Ben. Ben's mother is our Pea Doya, whose brother Pansa Dafina is uncle and grandfather, while Matobo and Chikadzi are the grandparents and great-grandparents of little Ben.

When Ben was a year and a half old, his owners wrote us the following letter : "Dear Christine and Wolfgang, Ben is most certainly an original Ridgeback. After reading the wonderful book about Chikadzi i can also understand why that is. The bloodlines back to Dingo and his owner provided us with the crucial clue. To quote Barnes from the Ridgeback-Pioneers book : "Our Dogs will never let Strangers touch them."

I am sure that in Ben's case, you have succeeded in returning in the origins of the Ridgeback breed. When it comes to hunting, guarding and protecting, he makes no compromises and knows no pain ! Sometimes he can be so wild and unruly that i could image him as part of van Rooyen's pack. Within our family, Ben is the dearest dog you can imagine. However, when he feels there is danger, things get very serious. In regards to the genes that Ben has from his mother, Pea Doya: once again, your instinct was correct : Ben is a born and bred hunting dog ! His nose is always to the ground - he can't stand cats and foxes, wild boar awakes an absolute passion in him and deer are absolutely taboo, which he has actually accepted !"

Thank you, Joachim, for these honest insights into your life with young Ben.
Not all Ridgebacks are like Ben.

Many of the dogs you find in Central Europe nowadays have developed in a much different direction than Ben. There are a growing number of dogs that are referred to as "Ridgebacks" simply because of the ridge on there back. These dogs no longer have much in common with the origin of the breed. A good Ridgeback is not only impressive because of his elegant and strong appearance, but because of his internal characteristics, such as the distinct hunting and protective instincts as well as his unparalleled loyalty, and these characteristics are exactly what make him so intelligent and remarkable. His coat color is of only secondary importance.

In our breeding of Shangani Ridgebacks, we reject the popular trend of breeding sweet dogs with a ridge on their back. In contrast, we take pride of maintaining the originality and uniqueness of this working dog from South Africa.

A real, genuine Rhodesian Ridgeback is not a dog for just anyone. To breed Rhodesian Ridgeback means accepting the responsibility that comes with the breed. Selecting the future owner of a Ridgeback puppy requires not only a good sense of human nature, but also an enormous input of time and energy in raising a litter of newborn puppies.

Ben the hunter ended his fulfilling Ridgeback-life after more than 10 years on February 14, 2016. Up until the day before his death, he was out hunting with Joachim and his friend Janosch the

Jack Russel. He scented, tracked and caught a wild boar one last time. It was a worthy farewell for the passionate hunter, Ben.

The Trio Infernale.

Matobo's sons, Pacha and Pansa, always respected him throughout his long, fulfilling life. He had a particular close, lifelong friendship with his son Pansa. The two were completely inseparable for ten years and lived happily and harmoniously with one another. Once in a while, in some certain situations, Pansa's twin sister Pea Doya would join this dynamic duo.

When all three of them went hunting together, they could stay out in the countryside for hours or even overnight. Their territory was the large, continuous forest area between Petignons and La Maurette.

They would track all the wild game they could find - no thicket was impenetrable and no herd of wild boar could frighten them. They always found their way home, exhausted but happy. Often they would be bloodied - either with their own blood or that of their hunt. Thank god their hunting wounds always healed - the only lasting injuries were Matobo's and Pea Doya's loss of a canine tooth each, which must have gotten stuck in the neck of a boar. The resulting holes left in their gums were sewn shut by our veterinarian, so that the incident did not result in any complications. Not only did our trio live out their exceptional passion for hunting, but they also proved to be remarkable guards and protectors of their pack, their family and our homes in Petignons and La Maurette. No unfamiliar dogs were tolerated or allowed to come near the rest of the pack and would be driven off with painful consequences if necessary.

No strangers could approach our property unless we approved and welcomed them. Any who failed to respect this could also expect quite the painful warning. Our Pea Doya proved herself most formidably in many situations, leaving us to take care of the resulting consequences. Matobo, Pansa and Pea Doya earned their nickname of "The Trio Infernale" many times over and together, they were something absolutely singular and spectacular. These three were certainly a once-in-a-lifetime group.

Qhawe and Chinaka as a duo.

Qhawe and Chinaka gave birth to their puppies at almost exactly the same time, just as they had a year and a half prior. Four days before she gave birth, Qhawe weighed 51 kg. This was 13 kg overweight for her. Chinaka was 12 kg overweight the day she gave birth.

On April 4 the big day had come. Qhawe went into labor at 8 AM and ten hours later, 13 healthy puppies, six boys and seven girls, lay with her in the whelping box. All of them were strong and weighed around 500 grams each. There were no complications with the birth.

As for Chinaka, her birth was a bit more exiting, as her first birth had also been. On April 6 at 8 AM she squeezed the first puppy out onto the floor of the whelping box with absolutely no warning. He just slipped right out. She didn't take care of it right away and we ended up having to bring her back into the whelping box with the little guy. It seemed like she only then realized that it was her puppy and accepted him.

The following puppies were then born in the whelping box. Around noontime, Chinaka had just given birth to her sixth and seventh puppies within ten minutes. We let her out for a moment so

she could relieve herself outside. Right afterwards, not even three minutes later, she wanted to come back into the house and she laid herself back down in the whelping box. I thought everything was normal until ten minutes later when our gardener, Herr Pfeifer, came into the house with a puppy covered in sand. "Is he alive?" I asked immediately. He was alive. Herr Pfeifer had found him just a few meters from the door lying on the ground. Chinaka had given birth to him outside while I thought she was just peeing. Counting this little fellow, she had given birth to three puppies within the span of 15 minutes - the last one being popped out right in front of the door. All the puppies were alive and well, as were their sibling.

After 11 hours of labor, Chinaka had given birth to a total of three males and nine females. With birth weights around 400 grams, they were 100 grams lighter than Qhawe's puppies in the neighboring whelping box.

On that evening and in the following weeks, we had a total of 37 Shanganis under our roof in Petignons. We were really a big family.

Four days after giving birth, Qhawe had a high fever. 41oC. It wasn't mastitis, her teats were soft and full of milk. The vet took an x-ray to determine if another puppy could possibly be in her uterus. Her uterus was empty, but had become infected. Qhawe was put on strong medications. I fought against her high fever that climbed up to 42 oC. Now her life was in danger ! Throughout the entire night, we gave Qhawe fresh cold compresses every half hour. We got her temperature down to 40 oC.

Dr. Verneuil had already begun the preparations to perform a hysterectomy the next day, but waited, as Qhawe's fever had gone down. We were now administering an IV-drip twice daily. Her high fever refused to break for four long days. It would go down, but then rise again up to 40 oC. After five days, her fever finally broke. Qhawe had made it - without having to undergo a hysterectomy.

"Je n'ai jamais vue ca."

These were the words of Dr. Soares on the morning that he removed the large piece of wood from Dundubala's left eye.

What had happened ?

As always, I had been out with the dogs that morning in the forest. The dogs were all out and about, hunting rabbits or wild boars or following scent trails through the woods. Dundubala returned to me earlier than normal. With his paw he was rubbing his left eye, which was watering. I looked at his eye and noticed a rounded piece of wood inside, towards his nasal passages. I wouldn't be able to remove it there in the forest. We headed straight home. The other dogs had also returned.

At home I tried to remove the wood myself, but couldn't get it out. His eye was watering even more than before, so we headed to the vet. Dr. Soares took a look at Dundubala's eye, but was also not able to remove the foreign object so easily. He would have to be put under. He used tweezers to grasp the wood and pull it carefully out of his eye. simply didn't stop coming. After three centimeters he was holding his breath. I was getting nauseous just watching. He kept pulling until the whole piece was out. 6 cm long, 1 cm circumference. Unbelievable. At first glance, Dundubala's eye appeared to be okay. There was no blood.

The next day we had an ultrasound conducted by Dr. Verneuil, as he was an eye-specialist. The

eye was now swollen shut, and the eye itself no longer visible.

We treated his eye for several days with medication. The eye was once again visible and the reflexes returned as well. His eye was healthy.

Dundubala was able to see just as well as before the incident. It was a miracle.

Worried about Jeka.

Within the first two years of her young life, Jeka had to face death several times. She was always brave and always came out on top. When she was ten weeks old, she had already survived four intestinal operations and a pulmonary edema.

On July 10 when Jeka was almost five months old, our gardener ran her over with a trailer at Petignons. The wheel rolled over her rear end and at first she couldn't move her left leg. She screamed and cried out in pain. Luckily her x-rays showed that there were no fractures. We hoped she would have no lasting handicap from the incident. Jeka limped for several days, but afterwards was back to walking normally.

When Jeka was 14 months old, she was injured by a wild boar and needed an operation. This incident also failed to leave any lasting marks on her. Jeka had developed well despite it all. She now weighed in at 35 kg.

On September 23, we had her x-rayed by Dr. Legrand in Frejus to have the images officially analyzed by Prof. Genevois. We were eager to hear his opinion, even though Dr. Legrand couldn't detect any lasting effects from the accident the year before. Prof. Genevois evaluated Jeka's hips as HD-C, as there were some problems on the left side, everything was fine on the right side. The report we had enclosed regarding the accident on July 10, 2014 didn't help. Prof. Genevois informed us that he was not allowed to take such a report into consideration in this matter, even if it would provide an explanation for the problems he found.

We had two other examiners take the same x-rays, Prof. Fau from the university in Marcy l'Etoile (Lyon) - also an official appraiser - as well as Dr. Kasa in Loerrach, both of whom were in agreement that the right hip was an A while the left hip was a B - therefore giving an overall assessment of HD-B. According to our non-authoritative opinion, the left hip had been injured in the accident, meaning that there was no genetic background for the problems seen there. If in the course of Jeka's life she should have the chance to bear children, we would support this so long as the stud-dog in question could prove he had HD-A hips. Such thoughts were far-removed, however, as we first had another very, very horrible incident.

On October 16, on the way to the exposition in Poitiers, Jeka was suddenly struck with massive watery diarrhea. It lasted for days, and even after weeks we still couldn't stop it. Various medications and antibiotics failed to get it under control. Jeka was steadily losing weight and by the end of November, her intestine was overlapped again from the constant contractions. On November 28 she had another operation in Toulon. Her intestine was once again shortened over the area where it had overlapped. The doctors were very reserved in their prognosis. Following the operation, things failed to improve. We tried several variations of special food and kept trying new medications. Nothing helped. The doctors were out of answers, Jeka was running out of time. We were desperate.

Over the Christmas holidays and thereafter, Jeka was taken to the clinic for a daily infusion to compensate for the high levels of fluid loss her body was suffering from. She now weighed less than 30 kg. No one knew how to help her.

Anne Masini gave us the tip to visit an "alternative" veterinarian in Brussels : Dr. Eric Vanden Eynde in Tervuren near Brussels. Christine contacted him and arranged the next possible appointment. On January 4 at 9 AM I was in his office with Jeka. We spoke for two hours. I told him Jeka's problematic history, he told me of his philosophy as a vet. He only inspected Jeka briefly. She only weighed 26 kg at this point. He gave me hope that we could still turn things around. It would just take time - approximately six months. Jeka would stop taking all pills and medications immediately, and would no longer eat any commercially produced dog food. She would only get homemade, carefully balanced food.

I drove back home and a miracle happened. After two days, Jeka's watery diarrhea already stopped. Her stool was now a paste, and after a few more days we saw the first firm stool. We were happy as schoolchildren to see it. Jeka was visibly improving. She would live. She started putting weight back on, first she reached 30 kg, then more. In May 2016 she finally reached her old weight : 36 kg.

Doc Eric, as he calls himself, saved her life with his knowledge and experience. We say a huge "Thank you" and are grateful for every day we have with our brave, lively girl Jeka.

"When can I go?"

"The tumor in my head has now gotten so large that I can feel it. Soon it will start to hurt. I got to experience the birth of my 13 grandchildren two weeks ago, and I have watched them grow until their eyes opened and they started to blink. Seven boys and six girls. They are so beautiful, and their mother, my daughter, Dandane, is such a good and caring mother. These are her first children, and my last grandchildren that I will get to experience. Everything is lovely. So when can I go ? I can already my mother, Chikadzi, calling my name."

We had to give the most difficult of all answers to Sarula's question yesterday on October 6, 2011. That afternoon at 3 PM, Chikadzi and Matobo came to Petignons to accompany their daughter across the rainbow bridge. Sarula, our girl from another star, went back to the star she left ten years before in order to come to us. She had given us so much happiness from the very first day. In return, we gave her the love and comfort of a big family and a home for all the time she was with us on this earth. We miss you so much, dear Sarula, we all do.

Several weeks prior, I noticed for the first time that something was wrong with Sarula's left eye - it seemed fixated. It passed quickly and went back to normal, so I didn't give it any further thought. A few days later, I noticed it again. Now you could also see that her left eye seemed larger, swollen. It wasn't watering and Sarula didn't seem to have a problem with it.

Later, the lower part of her eye slowly began to protrude and the pupil was pushed upwards. Dr. Verneuil, eye specialist, took an ultrasound, but couldn't make a diagnosis. Her eye was reacting in all tests. Maybe it was just an infection ? No. Her condition got worse. Her eye now looked completely unnatural, like a glass eye. We were hoping that it was just a cyst, but we were afraid of the worst - that it could be a tumor.

On October 4, Sarula's head was scanned in a specialized clinic in Nice. The result was devastating. There was no hope of improvement. An aggressive tumor had grown behind her forehead into the sinuses, was pushing her eye outwards, and was close to reaching the brain. At the time, Sarula didn't have any pain. She had been more tired and slow the past few days, but still went out with the pack for their morning run through the forest as always and had a healthy appetite.

On the night of October 6, catastrophe struck without warning. I was sleeping in the salon next to the welping box - always a light sleep - and heard Sarula fall off the sofa. I jumped up and saw that she was completely disoriented and was having massive trouble with her balance. I took her out into the terrace. She was panting heavily but did not seem to be in pain. The tumor had reached her brain and disabled her sense of balance. Christine gave her two shots of Dolorex, after which Sarula calmed down and began to relax. She laid down on the sofa next to the terrace door, quiet, but completely exhausted. We covered her up and pet her. After an hour, she began to panic again. Sarula sat up and was panting furiously. Another dose of Dolorex. Slowly she began to calm down. She was now completely exhausted. Thank god, she wasn't in pain.

With heavy hearts, we decided to let her go the following day before she was suffering. I spent the rest of the night by her side on the terrace and kept stroking her lovely head. She was peaceful now and felt secure. When the sun came up, her condition had improved significantly. Her eyes were alert and she was hungry.

I decided to go out into the forest with her one last time. A bit unsteady on her feet, she followed me. Gashle, Qhawe's six-month-old daughter, accompanied us joyfully. Together we walked a portion of the path, Sarula had taken for over ten years with the rest of the pack. It was her territory. This was where she had experienced so much that makes a good Ridgeback happy: hunting rabbits and wild pigs, getting in the way of mountain bikers, scaring mushroom collectors and, most of all, running freely with her pack, playing roughly and hunting. Out here, Sarula was always happy. Now she was saying her goodbyes : she sniffed all the well-known spots, marked her territory one last time. She returned to me often when she knew a treat was waiting for her. She even trotted once.

Gashle, the young one, was constantly in motion, sometimes I could see her, sometimes not. She was overconfident and enjoying life to the fullest, just as Sarula had ten years ago. It felt good to see, in these emotional minutes, how one Ridgeback life was beginning and another ending. On the way back, as we came out of the forest and saw the vineyards before us with the cliffs of Roquebrune in the background, Sarula stopped and stood still for a while. She took a long look at the view, soaking it in, and must have been thinking of the countless times when she had run here with her pack, free and happy. She said her farewells and followed me.

Five minutes later, we were back home. Sarula spent her final hours on the terrace at Petignons. She was acting normally, and just seemed to be a bit unsteady on her feet. Her appetite never ceased. She was allowed to have whatever she wanted and was delighted about it. Time passed quickly and we needed to say our goodbyes. It was so difficult and so horribly sad. At 3 PM Dr. Verneuil came.

We buried Sarula on the little hill at Petignons by her parents and her brother, Pansa. Her grave is right to her mother, Chikadzi, under the trees, but where the evening sun hits. Her lovely, now peacefully still body lay covered in flowers in the afternoon sun before we laid her to rest in her grave. All of the dogs at Petignons said their goodbyes to her. Her sister Pea Doya especially said a long farewell. She was familiar with burials and knew what was happening. Once the grave was closed and we had cried extensively, Sarula's son, Dundubala, laid down over his mother's fresh grave next to the sunflowers. It was his way of saying goodbye and you could see that the parting was hard on him.

"Farewell, our dear Sarula, now you are reunited with your mother Chikadzi and your father Matobo and with all the rest of the Shangani over the rainbowbridge. You will always be "our girl from another star" who came to bring joy to us and to all who know you. Your children will continue what you started. You will see it when you look down on us from your star. Thank you, Sarula, for coming to us and sharing your life with us on earth."



Shangani on the WWW

Find out more about our dogs at
<http://www.shangani.de>

You can order your copy at the author:

Dr. Christine und Wolfgang Blumberg

Les Hauts Pétignons
F-83520 Roquebrune sur Argens
Internet: www.shangani.de

or at the publisher

Kontrast Verlag

Barbara Jost
Raiffeisenstr. 30
56291 Pfalzfeld
Deutschland
Telefon 06746/8502
Fax 06746/8503
www.kontrast-verlag.de
ISBN: 978-3-941200-69-2

