

Chapter 2

Early Lowchen History

The first known standard for the Löwchen was published in 1905 in *Dogs of All Nations*. Compiled by Count Henry de Bylandt, this series of volumes covered the known dog breeds of his time. In Volume I *NonSporting Dogs*, is found a section devoted to the Löwchen. Here are the only surviving photos of Löwchen from the turn of the century. Most of the dogs pictured were listed as owned by the first modern documented breeder, M. de Coninck of Diegham, who exhibited and bred both Löwchen and Havanese in Europe with great success. There is some mystery connected to this person. It stems from confusion over whether Coninck was a man or woman. There are published accounts of this person referring to Coninck as being of the male gender, other accounts as being of the female gender. According to Madame Bennert, this person was a male named Maximillian de Coninck. Little would anyone realize how much influence he and his dogs would have on Madame Bennert. From the following Löwchen that were owned by Monsr. de Coninck, were certainly the forefathers of our modern day Löwchen: 'Black, Coquet, Cora, Dora, Eli, Folette, Garcon, Marquise I, Marquise II de Diegham, Max, Mignonne, Miss Chocolat, Monsasaurus, Neger , Petit, Pietje, Mosasurus, Garcon, Poucet, Princess Rita, Snow King, Tresor, Triton , Turluton, Zola and Zoulou'. Also mentioned as owners by Count de Bylandt was Mme. A. Orban of



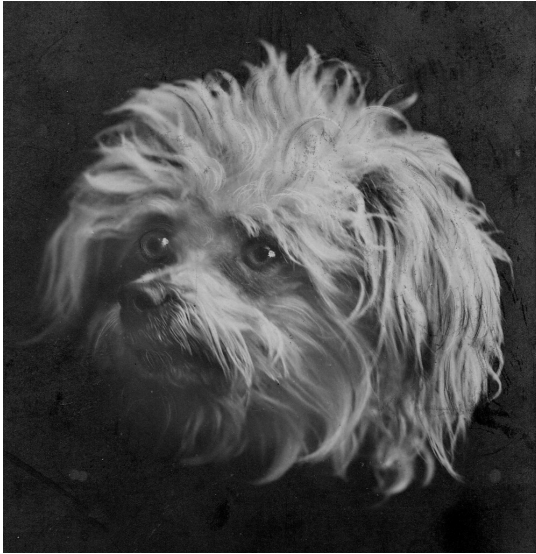
Lowchen belonging to Maximillian De Coninck. L to R: Turluton, Coquet, Marquise and Eli. Print d. 1905. Ashford Collection

QuareuxAywaille, owner of Zouzou de Quareux; Mlle. J. Van Den Eynde of Anvers who owned Diane, and Heer C. Abraas from Amsterdam who owned Petit. There also exists in this book an old picture of a Löwchen owned by Heer J. Ouwershyyr from Gravenhage. This dog was a white, rather poodley looking Löwchen. Its existence could further substantiate the idea that at the turn of the century the Löwchen was used as a foundation for the Toy Poodle. It is possible that this particular dog descends from one of those possible mixed breedings of the Löwchen and Miniature Poodle. It could be that its forefathers resembling the Löwchen were kept as Löwchen and those that looked like Poodle were kept as such. This dog could be a throw back to this mixed heritage, resembling the Poodle more than the Löwchen.

Monsr. de Coninck noted the petite Havanese appealed more to the tastes of his time when a small ladylike dog was greatly desired by the fashionable ladies of the day. The Löwchen, while petite, were like tomboys and more limited in appeal. Maximillian de Coninck was the earliest breeder whose Löwchen we are able to document. He bred Löwchen through the years leading up to the First World War. Very little is found of him after the war. Since most of the people in the Count's book who owned or bred Löwchen lived in Belgium, it seems that this country was the last strong hold of the breed before its



Lowchen belonging to Maximillian De Coninck. L to R: Marquise II, Snow King, Triton and Tresor. Print d. 1905. Ashford Collection



German Postcard d.1900
Ashford Collection

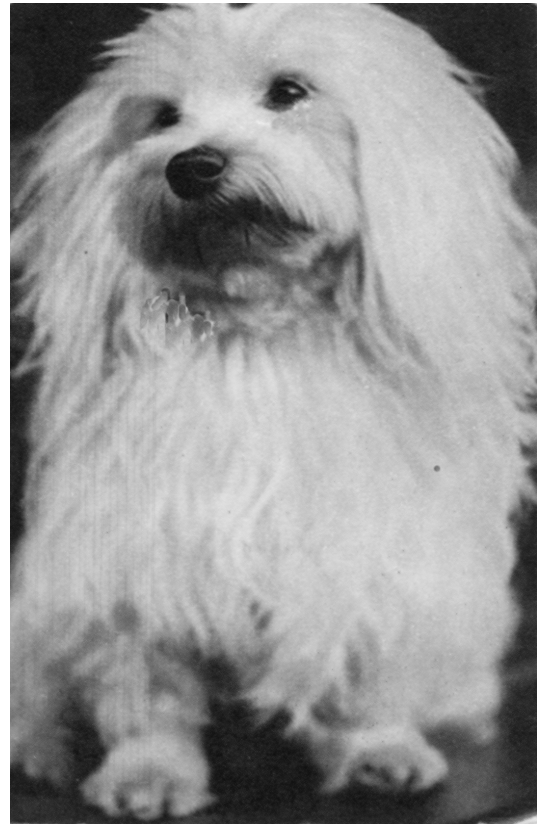
impending extinction. In Belgium, French influence was very strong since it was a possession of France off and on through the centuries. This history could explain the Löwchen's designation of French origin. It is certain the breed thrived there early in its existence. The people of Belgium continued to play a significant role in the Löwchen history through Madame Bennert's efforts, which included recognition by the Federation Cynologie International.

By the time of the Second World War, the Löwchen had fallen on particularly hard times. Due to the poor economy in Europe, pet dogs were not as popular as in previous years. During the massive upheaval brought by the war, entire families were dispersed or killed. Many lost all their possessions and became homeless. The keeping of a pet became impossible in many circumstances and as a result, thousands of dogs starved to death or were killed. The act of killing the family pet was sometimes done out of humane reasons by their owners. Other dogs were killed by invading soldiers because the dogs were trying to protect their owners. Some farsighted breeders sent their dogs overseas to enhance their dogs and the breed's survival, but Löwchen were not among those lucky few. The war would have caused the breed's final demise if it were not for the

successful efforts of a remarkable woman. Fearing the breed would become extinct; Madame Bennert of Brussels gathered what was left of the breed in the hopes of ensuring its survival.

Madame Bennert

Madame Bennert can be credited as the most important contributor to the breed, for if her efforts had not been made, the breed would most certainly have died out. She literally saved the breed from the very edge of extinction. Born Madelaine Brinard on the 19th of January 1877, in Brussels, Belgium, she later married Victor Bennert. Always a lover of animals, in 1896 Madame Bennert decided it was time to acquire a family dog. After looking at the breeds available, Madame Bennert decided she could not resist the charms of the Löwchen owned by Maximillian de Coninck. In 1897 she bought.



German Postcard d.1905
Ashford Collection



Russian Postcard cir. 1900. Ashford Collection

her first Löwchen. While she did not breed Löwchen she became keenly interested in them.

In 1902 she joined a small breed dog club which was founded in Berlin and known as the "ZwerghundKlub e.V." She eventually served as the club's breed registrar, working with one of the first small breed registries in Europe. While she would have enjoyed exhibiting her dogs, her husband preferred she not do so. Madame Bennert owned Löwchen until she entered middle age. As she grew older she had no intention of breeding Löwchen, but during World War II she recognized that there were no more official breeders registering their dogs in any of the breed registries.

When Madame Bennert was a widow in her sixties, she decided she would have to gather what Löwchen she could find to attempt to ensure the breed's survival. Her experience in the Löwchen and additional research into its origins equipped her well for the job. In 1945, Madame Bennert began what was to be her life's work purpose, saving the Löwchen from extinction. She consulted with the Belgian registry "Livre de la Societe Royale St. Hubert de Belgique" to find the names of all who bred Löwchen prior to and after the First World War. She decided to travel to the area of Diegham in Belgium to seek dogs that were said to be Löwchen. In her words is described the beginning of the breed's resuscitation: "After a long and disappointing search, I finally found two wonderful females; one was blue and came from the town of Lille, the other was biscuit colored and came from the area of Diegham. After a long search, I finally found a blue male and this was the beginning of my small dog



German Postcard cir. 1900. Ashford Collection

kennel." The breeders of these dogs are unknown. The blue male was born December 1946 and entered in the L.O.S.H. registry on November 7th, 1947, as Ulan. His registry number was 138181. The biscuit colored female, Sigrina, was born in September 1944. She was registered with L.O.S.H. September 30th, 1947 under the number 138469. In 1949, Madame Bennert, still seeking Löwchen, found a blue female born in May 1948. Named X'Marquise, she was registered with L.O.S.H. June 15th, 1949, under the number 148779.



German Photo cir. 1930. Photographer: Martin Munkacsi. Ashford Collection



L to R Sigrina and Ulan. Owner Madame Bennert.d.1946. Photo Ashford Collection

The first litter bred by Madame Bennert was between Ulan and Sigrina. This produced two puppies on April 13th, 1948. The biscuit colored male named Xandre was kept for her breeding program. Xandre was bred to X'Marquise producing Blagueur (fauveclair) and Berta (fauve ombre) on November 10th, 1952. After this breeding, the first incest pairing was done. Xandre was bred to his daughter, Berta. This produced the tricolored Domino on June 7th, 1954.

In 1957 Madame Bennert visited with a gentleman named Professor Konig who lived and taught at the University in Rotenburg, Germany. They had corresponded for some time since he too had an interest in the Löwchen. A geneticist, Herr Konig had rescued the Hovawart from oblivion, along with several other breeds. He also specialized in genetic engineering. One of the projects he was working on was the 'Kobald' line of dogs.

He described the Kobald Mascot as stemming from the same type of dog as the Löwchen. In 1955 he proposed that Madame Bennert send him one of her bitches to be bred to one of his males. She would be given the bitch back after the litter was whelped and weaned. Dr. Konig would keep one puppy to be raised by him from infancy on, with the rest of the litter going to Madame Bennert.

Whether Madame Bennert sent Dr. Konig a bitch or not is still unknown. What did occur is that on December 6th, 1957 a black and white bitch named "Quinte, registered KMST 192/56" was given a health certificate for travel from Germany. The KMST probably stands for Kobaldt Mascot Sucht

Tier. This translates into Kobaldt Mascot breeding animal. This bitch was the 192nd Kobaldt Mascot entered into the Kobaldt Mascot studbook. She was born in October 1956, was sent to Madame Bennert, who had her entered into the ALSH registry as Fgitane, ALSH number 04862, on June 11th, 1958. Thirteen months old when she arrived, she was bred to Blagueur after registration was completed. On September 27th she produced the blonde colored Judith

Madame Bennert, with her knowledge and reputation, was able to persuade the Belgian Royale St. Hubert to register the Löwchen. The first registry they were listed in was the Livre Origines SaintHubert (L.O.S.H.). This registry contained the original dogs registered. Later the Löwchen were registered in the Annexe Livre SaintHubert, which was essentially the same registry. With registration and F.C.I. papers taken care of, the next step for the breed was making it known. To do that Madame Bennert began exhibiting her dogs around Europe. Unfortunately, there were several breeds that were beginning anew, and getting attention for the Löwchen



Madame Bennerts Lieschen. Photo Ashford Collection

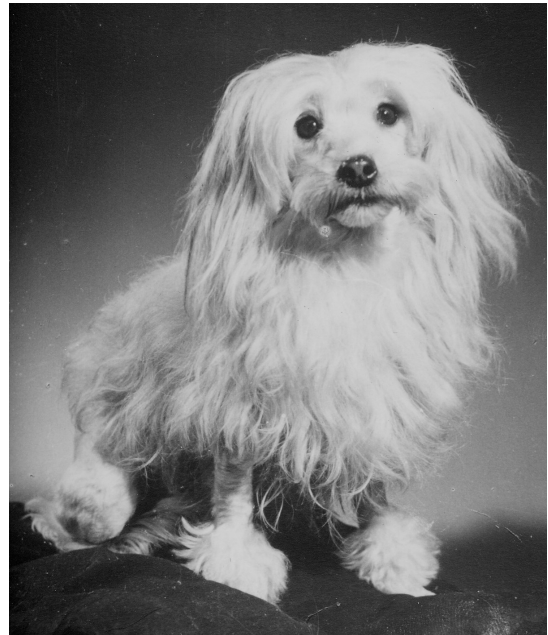


Madame Bennert at home with Lissy. Photo
Ashford Collection

was somewhat difficult. But slowly interest grew. The breed found its way into newspapers throughout Europe at major dog shows. In 1962, Madame Bennert was finally allowed to add her kennel name 'Souveraign' to the names of dogs bred by her. "Souveraign" was the name of the street where Madame Bennert's family home was located. Use of one's kennel name was only permitted when all parents were listed in a given dog's five-generation pedigree. Prior to this time, the dogs bred by Madame Bennert still had 'XXX' on the pedigree where the parentage was unknown. When this day came for Madame Bennert, it was a happy time signifying great accomplishment on her part. One has to consider that when she started saving the breed, her original dogs showed no ancestors on their pedigrees.

Madame Bennert kept her dogs in a variety of clips. Some of her Löwchen were in the classic Löwchen trim and sometimes their bangs were tied up in silk bows. Hardi was shown with a clipped face while others had various degrees of hair removed from their faces. In all the photos of her dogs, the hair around the lower half of their eyes is removed, so that the eyes are clearly visible. Dr. Rickert also followed the same clipping practices favored by Madame Bennert.

Löwchen Club of America founders, Charles and Jane Cook, traveled to Belgium on one of their many journeys. While there, they hoped to visit with Madame Bennert at her home on Rue Souveraign. They finally found her imposing home only to have the butler explain to them in a somewhat haughty manner, "... Madame is very old and not in good health. Madame is not seeing anyone." They tried to explain that they were there to talk to her about the Löwchen, hoping she would see them. He steadfastly refused to budge, maintaining Madame was too ill to see anyone. As the Cooks were about to turn away, a small, elderly yet commanding voice came down the main staircase. It was Madame, curtly informing the red-faced butler that if these people were there to discuss the Löwchen, she would indeed see them! To the Cooks' delight, Madame Bennert spent several hours with them, regaling them with the breed's history and her part in it.



Jacée, owner Madame Bennert d. 1959
Photo Ashford Collection



Madame Bennert and Friend walking a few of Madame's dogs. L to R Berta, Evdie, Niniche and Ramette. Photo Ashford Collection.



Madame Bennert & Siskia in the Garden.
Photo. Ashford Collection



Siskia appears to be an Irish Pied.
Photo. Ashford Collection



Madame Bennerts dogs at a show in Germany. Photo by Dr. Rickert. L to R: Evozee, Berta, Blageuer, and Niniche. Ashford Collection.



Madame Bennerts Berta (L) and Niniche (R) Photo Ashford Collection



Ch. Dourak as a puppy. Photo taken June 1955 at Essen Germany by Madame Bennert.
Ashford Collection

Interestingly enough, through the years her reputation developed painting her as an eccentric old woman obsessed with picking Löwchen up off the street throughout the war. There is a story that she refused to leave her house with out wearing her high top boots. In reality Madame Bennert came from a wealthy family and even as she aged she was very elegant, fashionable and current with world events. Those that knew her described her as autocratic and yet a fun person. Her strong character is revealed in her determination to save the Löwchen breed.

Madame Bennert, who must be given the title as the Löwchen breed's 'mother` had devoted the rest of her life to the breed. She died at age 92 on December 20th, 1972.

KobaldMascot

Until now the name Kurt Konig is unfamiliar to those who know the Löwchen history. There is no mention of him in any history told of the Löwchen until this date. He played a small, but crucial part in our dogs' genetic history. Dr. Konig was a researcher at the Zootechnisches Institute Rotenburg since the turn of the century. He is best known for having saved the Hovawart from extinction. His interest in dogs began with an interest



Ch. Dourak born 7.6.54, bred by Madame Bennert.
Look for him in Bichon Frise books where he is mistakenly known as Ch. Yobi of Milton..
PhotoAshford Collection

in genetics. To those who knew of him, he was recognized as the 'MouseKing`, thanks to the thousands of mice that he bred in genetic experiments. Involved with dog breeding at the Institute since the turn of the century, Dr. Konig described the KobaldMascots as his earliest endeavor in dog breeding for the purpose of studying genetics. He explained that small dogs were ideal since there was little time that lapsed between generations, as opposed to breeding large dogs, where one had to sometimes wait until they were several years old prior to breeding a first litter.

Dr. Konig explained that in 1901, he and his research associates gathered dogs from the Atlantic region (northern Europe?) to form the basis of their experiment. He describes the dogs as descending out of ancient breeds of dogs. In their gathering of dogs they searched for dogs that were extremely hardy, healthy and outgoing. Shyness was not wanted or tolerated. After they had gathered what they felt would be a selfsupporting



Kobalt Mascot Minatuarian (L) and Kobalt Mascot Daumlinge (R)
Photo Felizitas Dylla



Kobalt Mascot Minatuarian (L) and Kobalt Mascot Daumlinge (R)sitting in a car's glove box.
Photo Felizitas Dylla



Kobald-Mascot-Miniaturen d. 1953 Ashford Collection

colony, they closed the books to dogs from outside their institute-breeding program. They felt that outside breeders, while possessing dogs that resembled theirs possibly would not have been as careful in weeding out undesirable genetic defects as the associates at the Institute. Eventually the dog-breeding program came to be under Dr. König's sole control. His desired goal was reconstruction of an ancient breed, which we today recognize as the Löwchen. He describes the KobaldMaskott as "a dog for the heart". Their coat, according to Herr König was nonshedding and needed brushing. He felt that this breed was and should be an ideal housedog. It was dogs with these qualities that he chose to use in the breeding program.

Dr. König was well known in Germany for his animals. He placed many of the dogs from his program with those interested in them, to have either as pet, show or working dog. Greta Weiser, a famous German actress, had a KobaldMascotMiniaturian from him which was featured in a German magazine in 1954. It was through Greta Weiser that Dr. Rickert became aware of Dr. König. He wrote with Dr. König and notified Madame Bennert to

tell her about the KobaldMascot dogs. For some time Dr. Rickert handled the correspondence concerning the dogs, but eventually Madame Bennert dealt with Dr. König herself.

There were five classifications of KobaldMascots. The KobaldMascot encompassed a breeding program of not only small dogs, but dogs of varying sizes and shapes. What Dr. König was attempting to accomplish was reconstruction of various breeds, as he knew them, in the 1800s. He did not mix dogs from one classification to another, but gave each classification the prefix KobaldMascot so that they were recognized as coming from his experimental breeding program. The five classifications that he worked with were: KobaldMascotGriffons which were around 40 centimeters tall, KobaldMascotBarbets at 30 centimeters, KobaldMascotBassets which weighed the same as the Barbets, but were low slung to the ground, and the KobaldMascotMiniaturen. These smaller dogs were around 21 centimeter tall at the shoulder. The last category was named the KobaldMaskotDaumlinge. These were very tiny dogs, which came out of the Miniaturen lines. Dr. König gave them their own classification since they were so exceptionally small.

There were always around 150 dogs at the Institute. Dr. König's life was totally centered around his experiments, so much so that he lived by the kennel building. He had a few helpers, but the main care of the animals fell to him. He assured Madame Bennert that should she send him any or all of her bitches for breeding that they would receive the best of care. He invited her to send at least one bitch, if not all, so that her breeding program would not end due to too much in-breeding. He was eager to receive offspring from her dogs for his own program since he was worried about not having fresh bloodlines too. He recognized the type her dogs were as being what he had, as such he was willing to risk bringing their blood into the program, since what they had to offer seemed worth the risk.

It has not yet been determined if there was more involvement between the

KobaldMascot breeding program and Madame Bennert's other than the one bitch that we today know as Fgitane. The question is did any of Madame Bennert's males go to Dr. Konig? It does not appear that any other Löwchen registered with the L.O.S.H or A.L.S.H. came from the KobaldMascot dogs. It was with Fgitane that Madame Bennert was able to further expand her bloodlines in order to avoid incestuous breedings as much as possible.

The Institute is no longer in operation, and Dr. Konig is now long dead. Where his dogs went, with the exception of the Hovawart is unknown. Sadly his KobaldMascotMiniaturian bloodlines were not continued. Perhaps they could have been added to the FCI registry as Löwchen, but no one had the foresight to pursue this. All that is left now is the blood that courses through our dogs today, courtesy of Fgitane, some of his personal correspondence and photos of his dogs.

Von den Drei Lowen

A veterinarian from Borcken, Germany, Dr. Hans Rickert had been breeding and exhibiting dogs for years when he met Madame Bennert. His interest in the Löwchen was piqued as he was attempting to delve into ancient dog histories. He wondered where the Löwchen came from and what their chronological importance was in the chain of dog breeds and their development. It was by lucky coincidence then that he and Madame Bennert met in 1948. She was looking for a quality hunting dog for her nephew, and in



Lissy and Judtih
Photo Ashford Collection



DR. Rickert with Wife Magda, friend & Löwchen.

doing so met Dr. Rickert at a show. He indicated an interest in the Löwchen, not as a potential owner and breeder but as a scholar. After some correspondence in German, which she was fluent in, Madame Bennert became determined that Dr. Rickert must and would help save the Löwchen. His genetic knowledge as both breeder and veterinarian was indispensable. He helped her make some of her breeding decisions in the early years, yet not owning any Löwchen at that time. His interest was enough to allow for the effort and time needed from him by Madame Bennert. She began to try to persuade him to become involved with the breeding program as an owner. At first he refused, being too involved in his own breed, the Munsterlander. He felt the task was too involved and time consuming. Finally Madame Bennert invited Dr. Rickert and his wife to visit her again in Brussels. The visit went well enough that Madame Bennert convinced Dr. Rickert to help her in her endeavor. One must wonder if it was because this visit impressed upon Dr. Rickert Madame Bennert's advanced age since she was around 80 years old, that he

finally agreed to take on some dogs. He had later told people that he feared the end of the breed would come when Madame Bennert no longer was able to continue.

It was in the early nineteesixties that Dr. Rickert finally came into possession of the bitch Judith and males Hardi and Domino. He named his kennel Von den Drei Lowen (VD3) to signify that its breeding program was based on the three original dogs secured by Madame Bennert. Dr. Rickert started his breeding program by putting Judith to Hardi. The first VD3 litter was born April 10th, 1963. The light colored Aline VD3 Lowen was the result of that breeding. She went on to produce Cissie VD3 Lowen after being bred to Benjamin VD3 Lowen. Sadly Aline died young of an accident. She had been walking with Dr. Rickert's sons when she was run over by a train. The next breeding with Judith was to Domino producing, on February 16th, 1964, Benjamin VD3 Lowen, Butzi VD3 Lowen and Bienchen VD3 Lowen. This litter is of great significance since each of the get was used extensively in early breedings.

Later Dr. Rickert acquired Lissy, a blanc et noire (black and white) colored female from Madame Bennert. Her birth date was September 16, 1962. She was out of Igor and Judith. Several years later, Quartz De la Souveraine, also bred by Madame Bennert followed Lissy. These dogs made up the foundation of Dr. Rickert's Von den Drei Lowen kennel.

Dr. Rickert and his wife were close friends with Madame Bennert, making several visits to Brussels to see her. They returned with many wonderful photos of Madame Bennert at home with her dogs and



Judith
Photo Ashford Collection

of a painting hanging in Madame Bennerts grandmother's sitting room. This painting was a magnificent head study of a Löwchen. What became of this painting is unknown. The visits enjoyed by Dr. Rickert and Madame Bennert were full of talk, planning and scheming for the breed. Additionally, through the years Dr. Rickert visited various museums searching for examples of Löwchen to guide him in his breeding program. His photographs of paintings and line drawings are still kept in the same album in which he placed them.

Dr. Rickert bred the Löwchen approximately 15 years. In a conversation with several of his sons and this author, mention was made that the doctor was accused of infusing new blood into the bloodlines by breeding to dogs that resembled the Löwchen, from a small animal shelter he ran behind his clinic. Another Löwchen breeder claimed that he used



The 1st Von Den Drei Lowen Litter.
Photo Ashford Collection

Dachshunds. This possibility could be borne out by both the smooth coated and long bodied Löwchen that occasionally are produced. The smooth coat still occurs, but rarely. While the idea that Dr. Rickert mixed blood from other breeds into the breed is possible, it is also unlikely that any of the results of these cross breedings were actually infused into the main bloodlines. The Doctor would most certainly have documented this. There is no such documentation in the records. Dr. Rickert was very thorough with his records. All details were recorded by him including shows, placements won, females' seasons and their lengths in season. Breedings and their results were among the many records kept. What is most probable is that Dr. Rickert did experiment but never



Quartz de la Souveraign on the left. Photo
Ashford Collection

actually used the results of his experiments. All the dogs that are ancestors to the modern Löwchen have complete pedigrees going back to dogs owned by Madame Bennert.

Some people give credence to the idea that Dr. Rickert mixed foreign blood into the breed by pointing to the smooth coated or very long bodied Löwchen as evidence. While occasionally these dogs can be found in our modern bloodlines, they also existed in the years prior to Dr. Rickert's involvement with the breed. Photos of Maximillian de Coninck's dogs show several Löwchen, which appear quite long bodied. There is also a photo of three dogs sitting on a settee in Madame Bennert's home. They were Fgitane, Prizzi and Jarouffe. Jarouffe was smooth coated and resembled a spaniel. Remember, too, that should the need have been so urgent that new blood was needed, Dr. Rickert and Madame Bennert would most certainly have moved to work more closely with Dr. Konig. Fgitane is proof they had no reservations against working with Dr. Konig and his bloodlines.

According to Frau I. Ostertag, this supposed mixing in of foreign breeds was Dr.

Rickert's downfall in the breed. She also claimed that he exhibited a dog under the name of Quartz de la Souveraine at a show, which was not the actual Quartz. Frau Ostertag was convinced that this dog could not possibly be Quartz since he was a black puppy and as such was registered as a black dog. The dog in question, in the show ring, was a light colored dog. She claimed to have filmed the dogs in the ring at this show and contacted Madame Bennert to tell her what she had seen. Frau Ostertag describes Madame Bennert's reaction as anger and shock. Frau Ostertag claimed that this was the cause of the demise of the close working relationship between Madame Bennert and Dr. Rickert. She also claimed that Madame Bennert urged her to lodge formal charges with the Verband Duetscher Kleinhundezuchter. Whether she had done so is unclear. Allegedly, Dr. Rickert resigned from breeding Löwchen in the midseventies because of this incident. The explanation for his action of showing a substitute dog, offered by Frau Ostertag, was that the real Quartz was monorchid and would not pass the Zucht examination required by the Verband in order to be approved for breeding purposes. The show where this alleged incident took place was a Zucht Richter show. In Germany, individual breed clubs designate which shows will include time with a Zucht Richter. Zucht Richters evaluate and designate dogs that will be allowed to be used for breeding. If a dog is not approved, its progeny is not allowed to be registered in the studbooks.

The incident as described is unlikely to have occurred as discussed by Frau Ostertag. Madame Bennert would not have been likely to send a monorchid dog to Dr. Rickert for breeding. Also to be considered is that often, in Löwchen, light colored dogs can be dark colored puppies. Most of all, Dr. Rickert, so careful with his documentation and reputation, would not have chanced such a deceit. But this incident seriously disheartened him, as he described in a letter to an Australian woman. That and Madame Bennert's death led to his losing interest in continuing in the breed. The breed had been taken over by others and he would not battle



Cornelia and Alexander von Livland. Photo Felizitas Dylla.

with them over its future. Dr. Rickert's family maintains that Madame Bennert and Dr. Rickert were close friends until Madame Bennert's death. They had never had a falling out as described by Frau Ostertag.

It was from Dr. Rickert's kennel "Von Den Drei Lowen" that the Löwchen started on its travels around the world. Dogs out of the VD3 Lowen kennel are the backbone of this breed. There are no Löwchen in existence whose roots do not trace back to VD3 Lowen. The Livland, Bungner-Hedide, Cluneen, Cherrycourt, Rossglen, Lowe-Ray, and Berdot Kennels all bought foundation stock from Dr. Rickert. Without his contribution and aggressiveness on behalf of Löwchen, it is certain the breed would not have survived. There were others who acquired dogs from Madame Bennert, but they did not register dogs that they may have produced from breedings. Their dogs are lost to the breed's history. Dr. Rickert was the only person possessing dogs directly from Madame Bennert who actively pursued championship titles and registered his litters.

Livland Kennel

This kennel is not readily recognized in the United States or Great Britain. Owned by Irmgard Ostertag who lived in Bremen, Germany, it was a major foundation kennel in Germany. It had its origins in November 1964, when Frau Ostertag saw an advertisement for Löwchen. She quickly contacted the advertiser since she was sure this rare dog would sell quickly. Dr. Rickert told her about the breed and sent her a photo. Frau Ostertag said it was love at first sight. She had to have a Löwchen. On December 20th, 1964, she acquired her first Löwchen, Bienchen VD3 Lowen. While she had no intention of breeding or exhibiting Löwchen she was eventually persuaded to change her



Photo from Dr. Rickerts Negatives. Ashford Collection.

Frau Ostertag joined the Verband Deutsche Kleinhundezüchter early in 1965. Dr. Rickert began encouraging her to consider breeding Bienchen. Also a member of the Verband, Dr. Rickert invited her to attend her first dog show, even asking her to handle Bienchen's litter brother. Upon Frau Ostertag's agreement, Dr. Rickert sent Benjamin to her. She was entranced with him, describing him as being much smaller than his sister with rich hair and sweet manners. She asked to buy him right away, but Dr. Rickert was not interested in letting him go. In any event, after two years she managed to acquire him. Frau Ostertag attended her first dog show April 26th, 1965. Here she met Frau Van den Boom who was judging the breed that day. It turned out that Frau Van den Boom knew not only Dr. Rickert but had

been friendly with Madame Bennert for years and as such was well educated in the breed. Frau Ostertag felt lucky to have met her since Frau Van den Boom explained the finer points of the breed, increasing Frau Ostertag's understanding of the breed.

At a Bundesieger show held in Frankfurt, 1965, Frau Ostertag met another



Bienchen Von Den Drei Lowen and her son Alexander Von Livland (on the floor) . Photo Ashford Collection

breeder, Frau Marga Schuh, who was planning to use Benjamin on her bitch. Frau Schuh also encouraged her to breed Bienchen. The wheels began to turn, and somehow the decision was made to do so. Frau Ostertag did not know what it was that made her mind up, just that it happened. She decided she would become better educated in breeding methods and genetics. At Dr. Rickert's suggestion, she read a book written by Eric F. Daglish and Dr. Toepfer. It was this book that she credited with her lifelong interest in genetics. Through the years she studied the Löwchen and its genetics, carefully gathering years' worth of notes and theories on breeding. She was one of the first breeders to attempt a color inheritance chart.

The first Livland breeding was an incest pairing between Bienchen and

Benjamin. Born February 18th, 1966, were six puppies of which four survived. The first born was Alexander V. Livland who became well-known in European show circles.

Eventually Frau Ostertag's kennel grew to four Löwchen, Bienchen, Daisy VD3 Lowen, Adam and Alexander V. Livland. She



Frau Ostertag with Adam Von Livland
Photo Ashford Collection

outside of Germany. Held in 1966 in Amsterdam, it was at this show that she first met Madame Bennert. Madame Bennert fascinated Frau Ostertag with her combination of old age and incredible vitality. According to Frau Ostertag, Madame Bennert came with three wonderful Löwchen, which were all approximately 26 centimeters at the shoulder. All three had championship titles. Dr. Rickert also came with three of his dogs, creating a nice number of Löwchen. A noted and well-respected judge, Leo Helbig, judged the dogs. Madame Bennert had no kennel help with her and had to get her dogs through the large crowd of people to the show ring by herself. Since she walked with a cane and had only one hand free for the dogs, Dr. Rickert walked in front shielding her and Frau Ostertag brought up the rear to protect Madame Bennert from

being knocked over in the crowd. They were late getting to the ring and had held up judging. Once ringside, sheer confusion ensued. The dogs had to be sorted out and attempts were made to decide who should be first in the ring. Madame Bennert set all to order with her entrance into the ring with all three of her dogs. Once there, she commandingly struck her cane to the ground to show she was ready and to tell the judge to get on with his job! She was most impatient for the judging to begin. While Frau Ostertag and Dr. Rickert traded off dogs for their classes, Madame Bennert would not let her dogs out of her hands. The best of breed went to Madame Bennert's male. It was during this show that Frau Ostertag and Madame Bennert began a friendship that lasted until Madame Bennert's death.

Eventually Madame Bennert gifted Frau Ostertag with some of her breeding records and registration papers. She also sent along many priceless photos that Frau Ostertag kept, eventually taking them into

the retirement home she went to after suffering a debilitating stroke. Frau Ostertag died in 1996. Her collection was passed to Felizitas Dylla of the Burgwald Kennel.

The Livland Kennel was one of the great foundation kennels in Europe. Many of the top Löwchen ever bred came from there. Among the best known of her dogs was Ch. Pan Tau V. Livland. He achieved his world title at the 1991 world show held in Dortmund, Germany. Pan Tau was one of the top winning Löwchen in Europe. His many achievements in the show ring included Europasieger and Bundesieger titles and countless best of breeds. Pan Tau was one of the last top winning show dogs to come from the Livland kennel. He eventually was bought by and exported to the Ashford Kennel in the United States. His achievement as a top winner was the culmination and tribute to the years spent as a Löwchen breeder by Frau Ostertag.



Dora von Livland