

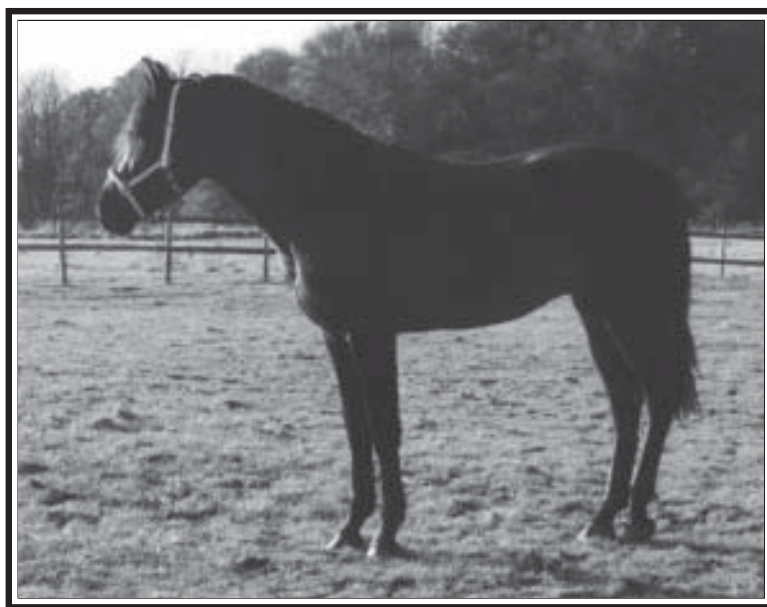
# The Internet Babe

By Eileen Brooks

We had for some time been looking for a young colt to establish our stud, we had looked at some grey colts but I had decided that I wanted black. I had first fallen in love with Churumbel years ago when the Horse and Pony magazine had done a feature on the Andalusian horse. He was the perfect horse to look at equally proportioned in front and behind not like all the warmbloods that have a roach back, sloping hind and drop wither fronts. He has the kindest eyes of any horse, a big powerful neck, which he arches beautifully when ridden and he is highschool trained, to watch him work is wonderful, my kind of horse.

So I knew I wanted black and I knew I wanted a big horse as our mare 'Orgullosa' is not very tall so I need a large stallion to make sure our foals would be large enough. So we looked at some colts, and at Sicab 98 we also were very kindly shown some colts, one was too small, another was very beautiful and had exceptional movement (if I had had any 'spare' cash I would have bought him just for his movement, alas I do not have £22,000 spare cash) but he was bay, the Spanish consider any dark horse to be black and as we did not have enough time left we were not able to see any more.

During the winter months I had been trying out the Internet, I had used some addresses that had been printed in our magazine (which should be repeated as they were very good) and I tried all the American Andalusian breeders. This is where I found Donna and Jay Hecht at Jdon Farms, they had been breeding black Spanish horses for quite a while. I ran through their for sale list and found two possible colts, I made enquiries and received their promotional video of their stud and stallions. The sire 'Genio' is 16.3hh and



totally black. Both he and his progeny have won every title in the American showing as well as performing in every discipline.

As I cannot travel very far due to my illness Peter offered to visit California and see if the colts were what we wanted, so March 25th 1999 Peter and my youngest son Mark flew out to Somis California. The day Peter arrived at the stud was the wettest day they had had for years (Peter must have brought it with him) Peter had a lot to see, about 100 horses, he was allowed a ride on a wonderful mare who they hope to qualify for the Olympics in Dressage, she was by 'Genio' out of a warmblood mare and was brilliant!

I received a phone call that evening and Peter informed me that only one colt fitted our criteria, I anxiously waited till he found all the notes he had made on each horse, I had already decided which horse I wanted but would it be the same one that Peter had chosen? He went through them, telling all the details of each one got to 'Donado' my chosen one, yes he was Peter's chosen colt as well.

Peter arrived home just before my birthday in April, very tired and brown! We had been found some other colts to look at in Spain but my heart and mind was already made up, I wanted 'Donado'. We had to sit down and do some sums as we had traveling costs and immigration to consider as well as the price of the horse.

When I received my mare 'Orgullosa' for my birthday in 1994 I never thought there could be

anything better or even equal to it but I was wrong, we decided to buy 'Donado' as our birthday presents (both in April' and he is everything I could have wanted.

So we informed the Hechts, sent them some money and started to work out how to get him home. We used a large horse transporter from America which the stud had recommended, I had already found out what medical tests and vaccinations he needed and that it needs to be carried out 30 days before you travel the horse, as he has treatments at exact days before travel. The problem was that you need 3 horses in a crate and we had to wait until the transporters 'Triton International' had another two horses for the crate. This seemed to take forever but we eventually had a date set for his arrival.

Thursday: We set off for the 7.30pm ferry from Harwich to Amsterdam, where we were to meet 'Donado' Friday morning. We had a four hour ferry trip ahead of us, something I was not looking forward to as I do not like sailing and there is always a thunderstorm when I get on board! We were lucky the water was calm, the ferry treats the lorry drivers like royalty, giving us a reserved dining area, all the food and drink you can consume, and ice-cream! By the time we had finished in the restaurant we were nearly there (other horse people in the dining room). So it was 11.30pm we had received some valuable information from a horse transporter traveling on the ferry with us and so set off to Schipol Airport, Amsterdam, (if we had waited for a flight to Heathrow it



back at 10am, no horse yet, about 11.30am we were told, more tea and some chat to a German lady who had also bought a horse she had not yet seen (see I am not the only one to buy without seeing) her horse was to arrive Wednesday and she was still waiting now Friday. 11.30am we could not find anyone, there were now horses in the unloading bay, we could see one black head, could this be ours? 12pm came and we were told that all the horses in the bay had to have their papers checked then see the Vet, then their papers are taken to customs and stamped



will fly home and get it (yes but that would take time and I wanted my horse!) We set off again for the airport (due to my illness when walking I get completely tired very quickly so it was very tiring going over to the airport again), Peter went to the bank and I went to get a light for our gas stove; it was very busy and I waited for what seemed ages, I thought great, no horse, no money and now I have lost Peter (lack of sleep and very disappointed), Peter found me, it's OK the bank let me withdraw on my card, we will get the horse at 3pm.

3pm- the horses in the bay started to come out, I knew the German lady was waiting for an Appaloosa colt and three came out, I said 'yours?'-'No', then more, 'yours?'-'No'. Eighteen Argentinian polo ponies came out including the black one but none were hers. I know exactly how she felt.

could have been a year) with his directions. We were following the lorries, confidently allowing them to show us the layout of the road and where the bends were, we did not realise until we were on the way back that we had been sloping down into deep ditches running into the canals, (don't trust the lorry drivers they must be mad to drive such a big vehicle that fast with no sides to the road!). So we arrived at the Airport and thought that we should find the Animal Hotel, where we would meet 'Donado' while it was quiet. We found it very easily and the security officer let us park next to it for the night. So nothing to do now but sleep, I don't know who they measured for the double bed in that lorry but it definitely was not Peter and I! As he was driving I let him have the bed and I slept Ha!Ha! on the sofa with my feet in the wardrobe!

Morning had arrived, I had tried to keep still as I did not want to wake Peter but it was no good I had to go, that was it as we were now both up, we had breakfast and then went out to try to find out when we could see our horse.

We were told he would be landing at 10am so we went off for a walk around the airport, we were

and then they will be allowed out and then the next flight of horses could move into the bay for their checks, but the vet may not arrive until 3pm as he had an emergency.

We were very disappointed as we wanted him now, we were then told that we had to pay import duty on the horse, we had several times asked our operator exactly how much we needed to pay and had been given the handling charge, hotel charge and vet charge but he had not mentioned the duty, no problem we had bank cards, 'sorry we do not have equipment to take payment from cards, do you have a cheque?' 'No' Peter had rushed home from work late and we had set off straight away, I had all the paperwork and maps and Peter had sorted all the money. We had forgotten the cheque book, no matter Peter said (ever the optimist) if necessary I



4pm- three more horses came out, not ours, not hers.

4.30pm and a beautiful came through into the trailer and off to Germany! So Peter and I went around the back of the building and the one crate that we had seen that morning was still there, I bet he's on that one Peter said. The groom wandered over and we asked what he had on the crate. One thoroughbred stallion, one thoroughbred mare and in between a very tired Andalusian colt. Ours!

We went back around to the front, no one there again, we searched and found our operator and Peter asked if I could just go and see him as I had never seen him before, after a while the operator came back and said the vet said I could go around and look at him through the door as long as I did not touch him, we jumped at the chance and there between the thoroughbreds was along forlock and two big Spanish eyes, yes he had his dads' wonderful head. I was very emotional, not like me but it had been a very long day, I don't know about tea and a cake I was ready for the hard stuff (except I don't drink).

Well we have missed the 4.30pm ferry that we should have been on, the next is the 8pm slow boat (8 hours) or a wait till 7.30am tomorrow, all of a sudden we heard the clatter of horse hooves and there he was, the only thing you could say was my God he's big! A 15.3hh yearling! We put him on the box (bless him he walked straight in), at last, I watered him and Peter told me we still could not go as his papers had now gone back to customs, we'll never make the ferry, it's at least an hour and a half, 'don't worry' -the optimist again- I wasn't I had my horse.

6.20pm- we grabbed papers shook hands and away, you really should come and sit down Peter said, 'just drive dear', poor 'Donado' he had enjoyed being cuddled and fussed, then he felt movement, he stopped eating, splayed his legs and waited for the take off and there he stood with his head drooped until we arrived at the docks.

7.45pm- Don't ask how we made it in that time but we did, we tried to book in but the horse can only travel at the discretion of the

Captain so we were parked up while everyone boarded the boat. Peter was getting worried so he went to find out what was happening. Many people had come to see the horse and we were enjoying more cuddles when an official popped hi head around the door 'you have one horses'? He asked, 'yes', I signed some papers (I don't know what as I don't read Dutch) and he handed me our boarding pass and left, I sorted everything out and shut all doors ready to load. Peter arrived and we reversed round the bend, down the ramp and between big lorries with 12 inches either side (glad he was driving) I was now informed that having waited all day and six months for this beautiful animal that I had to leave him for eight hours! He would not eat any of the six foods that I had brought but loved the hay so I left him with water and hay. I hate boats! No it wasn't that bad, we had food, drink and a shower and a bed and apart from the pure nicotine that I was breathing it was quite a comfortable night. Peter had been for a walk when he asked me at 4.30am whether I was awake, 'I am now', we dressed and went down for tea or something, we were on a ghost ship, for half an hour we were totally alone, then drivers started to come in and help themselves to tea, each one picked up a bag, apparently drivers are given a breakfast to take with them, we took ours and our stuff and

down to the lorry bay we went. You are not allowed in while the ship is moving as you could be squashed between lorries. There he was, happy to see us and fully rested.

We phoned our sons at 5.30am Saturday morning to tell them that we were two miles away, put the kettle on! The horse finally stepped out into our yard very stiff, a little confused about day and night but happy and well. He had flown three hours to New York sat on the tarmac for five hours, flown ten hours to Amsterdam, sat nearly six hours on tarmac, one and a half hours drive to ferry, eight hours sailing and one and a half hours drive home, and was still a pleasant happy fellow.

Oh Yes and the cost? Jdon Farms have now put up their prices, but we paid a lot for him, £5,500 in quarantine and flight and a further £1,200 in costs at Schiphol, (their duty rate is far less than Englands) plus ferry £387.74 plus diesel for the lorry. Not a cheap horse but worth every penny! He cost with traveling about the same as the good horses in Spain. So you see the net is worth a surf. Especially now that our Society is on it.

