

The Quest

Introducing

"Maestro Favory Naussica" Lipizzaner Stallion!!

More than three year's search culminated in finding what seems to be the dream colt! I cannot express how excited and thrilled I am to have been able to find and buy such a lovely young horse. **And I know I am fortunate.**

We have a tiny gene pool in Australia, so any stallion that comes into the country is going to have a HUGE impact on all our breeding stock. So he must be exceptionally good. This proved depressingly difficult to find!

Are you any good with statistics?

The search consisted of 21 journeys to 11 countries, (not counting Australian searches), only 5 places were visited more than once, and I looked in at least 41 premises!

So you see why I feel fortunate. To have been able to make a search like that - not many of us would have been able to do that - my husband is an airline pilot, so frequent travel is made easy for us!

Last year, in July in Belgium, I saw a mare which I felt was extraordinarily good quality, and as I had already been to many countries, and to 15 different premises, including some of the same more than once, I felt I would never find the colt/stallion we needed, and that the way ahead was to buy this mare and try to breed one. So I bought her and she is at stud in France.



I had been told by my friend Johann Riegler at the Spanische Hofreitschule (SHS - formerly the Spanish Riding School) that there are some outstanding quality Lipizzaners in France. In January 2002 we were going to be in France again, so I decided to try to contact an international dressage judge there who is involved with Lipizzaners. He lives in a castle! It turned out that he does have a stallion, but does not breed. However, he told me that there was a big show coming up shortly, and that I should go. As luck would have it, the show was not far from where we were staying with friends, so we all went – it was an all breeds show in Avignon, Provence. There were only four Lipizzaners there, only one stud represented, but we found out that this stud would be easy to visit on our journey onwards through France.



We made an appointment to visit the stud (where no English is spoken), and were shown about 12 colts for sale. This stud is one of the biggest Lipizzaner studs in Europe, with between 60 and 80 horses, and it is operated by two brothers, Girard and Christian Philip and Christian's son Guillaume, who is an experienced horseman. The standard of their stock is outstanding, and there were some very attractive colts amongst those offered. Scopy, great movement, baroque – luckily nowadays I am blessed with a wonderful digital video camera, so my cameraman (husband Nigel) filmed, while I looked. Strangely, it is not possible to look at a horse and film it at the same time!

You HAVE to see a horse moving towards you and away from you in a straight line at the walk and trot. You HAVE to see whether the horse has a good walk. You HAVE to see if a horse is balanced at the canter and can do clean flying changes and how frequently it moves disunited. The trot can be so impressive, but a trot you can train into a horse --- a good walk and canter must be there to start with.

We filmed the stud stallions, and went away, feeling devastated once more. Nothing here for us, except *perhaps* we could buy some semen from the stallion I really liked, Favory Agena. But before we departed, Christian told us that there is an outstanding Hungarian stallion standing at the French National Stud at Rodez, in the centre of France. He gave us a name and contact number for the manager.

Favory Agena



We continued on with our trip, first staying near St Tropez, then onward through Italy to Trieste and from there into Slovenia. Next stop, Lipizza. Long story, nothing there for sale at the moment. Private buyers, several horses to see. Nothing worth looking at. No-one wants to lease me their good stallions to take away to Germany to obtain frozen semen. We went on with our journey.....

Eventually we returned to England. We were there ten days, then we returned to France to Lake Annecy. In the meantime, I discovered that the camera-man Nigel had recorded over everything we had filmed in the south of France.

But, in a moment of great generosity, Nigel agreed that we should drive the five or six hours each way to Rodez to see the Hungarian stallion!

We rang the manager of the French National Stud system, Jean-Michel Foucher. There are 23 studfarms in this system, and they literally breed thousands of horses every year for private owners. This is the first year they have had a Lipizzaner! For some reason which I have not gone into, they have the stallion called Favory XXIV-23, which was the European champion in 1999, and which has won numerous national harness championships, on loan from Szilvasvarad, (the State Stud of Hungary). He is in France for two or three years.



Favory XXIV-33

This Favory is a very big horse for a Lipizzaner, about 163 high (about 15.3 hands). He is very lovely. The Stud has no mares so they have no stock on offer. But I decided to send my mare Pluto XXIV-23 to him, and she is there now. If we get a colt, it will be another option for Australia in the future, as she will fly to Australia in foal, all being well, in November.

Then Nigel suggested that if we drove back via the Stud in the south of France, we could go and re-film the stallions there, so we could have them on record, if we were to try to lease Favory Agena to get frozen semen from him! I was amazed' by my husband's generosity of spirit! He had obviously seen how devastated I was to lose the video footage!!!

So we did. And we saw Favory Agena again. WHAT A MACHINE of a horse. Absolutely stunning. So I decided to try then and there to either buy him, or at least lease him to obtain frozen semen. They were not too keen! Eventually they told us that they had a youngster by him which they had not shown us before, because they had not wanted to sell him. But now they would rather sell him than his dad. They brought out Favory Naussica, 'Maestro', let him loose in a small paddock, and he blew me away.

He is straight in his legs. He moves straight. He has lift, elevation and stretch. He is so balanced, even at his age, that he has three *outstanding* paces. He has such a beautiful head, and it is put onto his neck elegantly – he is narrow through the gullet. He has a really generous length of rein. And he has a really sweet temperament, not pushy, not bitey, no threat of kicking. He should grow to 155cm. I had seen his dam the previous visit, and remembered her, because she has such great movement.

It took me 10 minutes to be absolutely sure I had found my horse in Maestro. It took another 10 minutes to negotiate the price. It will take me a long time to pay for him, but it will be worth every penny of it! I will have years of pleasure with him.



Maestro Favory Naussica