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Extract from:

The Police Dog: History, Breeds and Service

Chapter 4

Canine Protection Training

An effective police or military protection dog is the creation of mankind through generations of breeding selection, emerging from the tending style herding lines of northern Europe, culminating in the creation of our police breeds at the advent of the twentieth century. Performance based breeding selection is a never ending process in order to maintain an ongoing supply of young working candidates, for one cannot teach or train effective aggression based service skills, they must be there, must be incipient in the heart of the dog. Protection training, especially in the initial stages, is primarily a process of encouraging the inbred instincts to mature and assert themselves, overcoming social, man created, inhibitions so that the natural propensities can evolve into overt behavior patterns. Good dogs selected from proven working lines, properly raised in an environment promoting drive building and a minimum of heavy-handed discipline in general readily respond to the opportunity to engage the human adversary. In such instances the training quickly becomes a matter of control, procedure and technique, that is, teaching the dog to desist from responding to provocative actions at handler direction, to guard rather than engage as necessary and to release on command. It is a fine edge, for the dog must be capable of vigorously responding to direct aggression without handler action so as to defend the interests of the team when the handler is disabled or distracted.

Although the structure of this book is intended to make each chapter as much as possible a self-contained, stand-alone entity, protection training has evolved a convoluted terminology, involving references to concepts such as predatory drive and the self-preservation protection instinct. Those familiar with these concepts and terms are certainly welcome to proceed directly, but others, less familiar, would be well advised to review Chapter 2, *Age Old Skills*, for an introduction to the underlying concepts and terminology.

Historical and Social Perspective

Canine obedience training is universally regarded as a good thing; there is no rational reason to object to well behaved dogs under firm handler control. Protection training and the breeding of willing dogs, encouraging and enhancing the propensity to bite human beings, is similar to civilian gun ownership and recreational drug or alcohol use in that diverse elements of society have always had the inclination to

endorse vigorous legal and cultural restrictions on such activity. Although much of this is rooted in the general population with no specific involvement in dog breeding and training, elements of the canine communities have also been ambivalent or antagonistic to the protection applications. In Belgium some of the early police administrators were generally opposed to civilian activity and elements of the early Belgian Shepherd establishment had a strong preference for herding, obedience and tracking for civilian training and competition to the exclusion of participation in protection work. These minority reservations did not prevail, but did in fact exist, apparently for the usual reasons of appealing to the more gentile and pacifist attitudes of the emerging canine show dog establishment. Historically entities such as the AKC and the *German Shepard Dog Club of America* were actively hostile to civilian protection activity and ambivalent toward police applications. Although this opposition has somewhat abated as registration numbers collapsed, beginning in the middle 1990s, the bureaucrats of the conformation establishment always stand ready to throw the heritage under the bus for their own advantage. All of this was exacerbated by the civil rights conflicts in the American South in the 1960s; snarling German Shepherds along with fire hoses and aggressive response by club wielding police officers was not generally regarded as good publicity.

But in spite of this squeamishness the police oriented breeds were from the beginning enormously popular among civilian populations. Total German Shepherd registrations in the homeland were closing in on 100,000 at the advent of WW I, enormous growth in little more than a decade, and in the aftermath of the war the Shepherd became overnight the top AKC breed in terms of annual registration numbers. In later years similar popularity surges for the Doberman Pincher and Rottweiler demonstrated the staying power of this propensity; a significant segment of the American population has held an affinity for the police dog persona, and been quite willing to switch breeds in order to own the latest and most fashionable protection dog in spite of the fact that most of the puppies supplied to this market have come from increasingly softer, more servile, less serious breeding lines.

Conformation oriented breeders, in Europe as well as America, benefited from this and encouraged and abetted this virile image, for it provided an enormous outlet at very good price for pups that for one reason or another were deemed as lacking in show potential. In general this market for lowest common denominator dogs was typically larger, easier to sell into and more lucrative than the production of actual police or military potential dogs, the replicas soon becoming much more popular and lucrative than the real thing.

This commercialization has been an ongoing problem for police and other agencies in that, generally, viable candidates today come only from very specific police level lines, maintained by the more serious and traditional trainers and breeders. Thus not every dog from these breeds has the potential for successful training and deployment; winnowing the wheat from the chaff in candidate selection is an ongoing process for every prospering police or military canine program.

Thus society in general, especially in the English speaking world, has had a complex and often conflicted attitude toward these breeds; there on the one hand being significant support for the idea that biting dogs are a societal problem and that such dogs should be strongly discouraged or at least bred and trained under tight control for police service only. On the other hand, as mentioned above, such dogs have become enormously popular exactly because of the police dog persona; many of us are drawn by the reflected sense of personal vigor and masculinity such a dog is perceived as providing. Thus there is an ongoing conflict between pacifist elements which believe passionately that guns and aggressive dogs should not be in the hands of the population as a whole and those who find fulfillment and personal liberty in their possession and are equally passionate in defense of their rights as citizens to unfettered access to any sort of gun or dog. This conflict is a profound political,

ethical and practical rift in western civilization today; emotional commitment and a sense of impending loss of personal liberty or societal order, peace and tranquility make compromise – common ground – very difficult to establish.

These conflicts and contradictions exist on several levels. The advent of the canine establishment in the latter nineteenth century – featuring formal breeds, registry books, dog shows and national kennel clubs – transformed the structure of the canine world. Especially in the English speaking nations the ideals and formalities of this emerging canine establishment were those of the proper upper classes, with emphasis on their hunting and house or lap dogs, and with a sense of gentility disparaging overt aggression. Aggressive dogs were generally perceived as vulgar, working class outcasts in this elite social hierarchy, as witnessed by the long delay in accepting the Belgian Shepherds into the formal Belgian registration system, which evolved in emulation of the British Kennel Club. As a consequence, the emerging protection breeds became in a sense the forbidden fruit for the upwardly mobile civilian; for to endorse and flaunt the inherent aggression, the broad basis of the popularity, was also to embrace lower class values, thus jeopardizing one's social aspirations.

These dogs of the more refined social elements were conceived as the noble friends and companions of mankind, especially the right sort of mankind, and elimination of any residual potential for overt aggression was a fundamental foundation of this new canine world order. Upwardly mobile urban middle class show dog hobbyists very much wanted to become perceived as being of the right sort, to feel included in this world of gentility and privilege. In such a world dogs which bit people, especially those bred and trained to bite people, were perceived as grossly inappropriate. Just as the people needed to labor in the fields and factories or provide services were to be kept in their place, perhaps necessary but not the sort for your children to play with or your daughters to marry, working dogs – like working men – were to be segregated, to exist on the periphery and for the benefit of elite society.

The resolute guard or protection dog has always had the aura of power and masculinity and in the era before firearms hunting dogs commonly participated in the kill as well as the chase or search. The upper classes in this era, and especially those aspiring to higher social stature, might disparage overt aggression in dogs as well as men, but on some level the powerful, confident, capable dog was always desired and admired, covertly if not openly. Formal duels, bear baiting, the dog fighting pit and other activities for manly men, and the women who admired and married them, may have gone out of fashion and the realm of legal activity, but the desire to perceive oneself as strong, capable and bold, and to have dogs with these qualities to reinforce this aura, has always been an integral part of our fascination with such dogs.

The advent of the police breeds thus created a problem in that many of these better sorts of people sought such dogs out for fashionable breeding programs and show ring competition, but were unable to reconcile the conflict of breeds whose functionality was based in aggression in a world where canine aggression was perceived as vulgar and low class. The solution was to evolve a mythology, an unspoken agreement to pretend that real police dogs still lurked in the souls of these pathetic, emasculated caricatures of the show ring. Of course it was and is an enormous, obvious, blatant falsehood; but it has become the conventional wisdom, the rationale of show line pseudo police dog breeding everywhere, even the European homelands, even in Germany, even in the SV, the mother club of the German Shepherd.

In America there was much less conflict in the early years since protection applications of any sort were at the extreme fringe of the canine world, with virtually

Schutzhund protection engagement. The padded sleeve is separate, has a bite bar, comes in both left and right arm versions. The leather pants are for decoy protection, the dog is to bite only the offered sleeve. Shoes generally have rubber cleats for good footing. Stick is fiberglass, padded and then leather covered. Dog is the German Shepherd *Gass Moravia Artex* or *Chico*, earning his Schutzhund III, owned and trained by Chris Hruby.

no civilian involvement. American breeders resolutely emasculated their lines, practical protection training activity was virtually nonexistent and police programs were small, sparse, short lived and entirely out of the mainstream. There were no American military programs prior to WW II and in the aftermath military canine activity was on a vanishingly small scale prior to the Vietnam conflict.

Thus while the police dog was becoming enormously popular in America, nobody quite knew quite what to do with them in terms of practical application of their working potential. As a result they evolved primarily as nonfunctional replicas for dilatants, becoming increasingly soft and fragile show dogs whose popularity was in reality based on mythology and pretend masculinity and vitality.

In the 1950s and into the sixties working dogs in America were at a low ebb, all police department programs had gone extinct and training involving any sort of aggression was on the extreme fringe of the canine world, a small number of guard dog trainers with their old fashioned pillow suits and junk yard dogs. Schutzhund or any sort of amateur sport training was years in the future. None of the breed books of the era ever really said anything about Schutzhund or protection applications beyond vague references to war service and police work; somehow biting dogs were analogous to your parents having sex: they must have because you were there but nobody really wanted to think about it.

The reemergence of police canine programs in the 1970s, driven to an extent by our national war on drug distribution, the spectacular success of canine scout and search dogs in Vietnam and a little later the emerging popularity of Schutzhund created a surge in serious protection dog training in America, ongoing even today.

Civilian applications of canine aggression are generally defensive in nature, as in personal, business or residence protection; there are very few circumstances where it is legal or appropriate for the ordinary citizen to send a dog for an engagement at a distance. Deterrence is usually the preferred mode of operation, an alert, barking dog can often send a potential problem down the road or alert the homeowner or pedestrian to the potential threat, often sufficient to avert criminal or violent interaction. The defensive fight or flight instinct is generally sufficient and appropriate; the posturing of aggression associated with this behavior often works as nature intended, causing a potential advisory to stand down thus averting an actual engagement. A successful bluff is usually the best outcome, without risk of injury or the potential legal ramifications of the dog actually biting an assailant, who always has the potential to prevail in court at great cost to the dog owner.

But the police dog must bring more, must have a strong offensive game to complement the defense, the ability to engage enthusiastically at a distance, as in pursuit and engagement deployments or area and building searches. For the patrol dog the bluff is not enough, many adversaries will persist and fight back and the dog must prevail until the handler or others can gain control and affect an apprehension. In the early years defense of the officer walking a beat, particularly at night in an era prior to street lighting, and intimidation on the street was the primary police canine role. But today the purpose of the dog is to extend the reach of the officer, to employ canine speed, agility and potential for intimidation and aggression to apprehend a suspect, offset his potential for violence or, most desirably, produce an apprehension without a physical engagement. Because of this need for overt aggression at a distance the defensive instinct, while necessary and fundamental, is in and of itself insufficient. To go beyond the simple close in protection the dog must have sufficient fighting drive to carry the action to a distant adversary and prevail.

Today a fundamental issue in canine protection training, and particularly in evaluation, is the relationship between sport performance and police patrol service. In the ideal, the highest scoring and most successful sport dogs would on the whole also be the best police candidates, that is, the trial should test and verify those attributes and capabilities fundamental to effective service. Just as the nature of police service evolves over time, driven by technical advancements such as the routine use of patrol vehicles and ubiquitous radio communication, and societal expectations in terms of evenhanded justice, the parameters of police canine service, and thus breeding, of necessity evolve.

In general there has been an increasing emphasis on discipline and control, partially driven by the fact that civilian video recording, aided and abetted by technical innovation and increasingly protected by court rulings, is possible in even the most remote and isolated circumstances. The days of "what happens on the street stays on the street" are over; street justice is increasingly subject to formal judicial review as citizens of the lower social strata are increasingly aware of their rights and civilian video recording and increasingly vehicle based departmental video, makes all police action potentially viewable in court. These evolving dynamics extend to canine service, and today there are instances of police canine handlers winding up in prison because of unwarranted aggression and inappropriate bites. On the whole, these are good things.

An ongoing problem, to be explored more completely in subsequent chapters, is that increasingly sport competition has become stylized and come to favor the compliant dog in a rote display of a routine series of exercises. Today these conflicts

are so far advanced that we are seeing an evolving division of these breeds into show, sport and police lines rather than the historical division between show and work. This is, or should be, of great concern to all involved.

Since most of my background and experience has been in Schutzhund, the tendency here is to speak in terms of sleeve presentation and other references to specific aspects of this style of training. In general suit training is according to the same foundation principles with adaptions for equipment, and variations in technique or training approach are discussed as appropriate. For instance the modern Schutzhund helper will often slip or release the sleeve to end an engagement, allowing the dog to carry it off; a maneuver not directly possible with a full body style suit. Ring trainers will typically use tugs and other preliminary play devices and have leg paddings which can be released for the dog to carry and various other adaptations to allow reinforcement and reward of the predatory drive. As another example of variation in training philosophy and practice, emphasis on the full grip upon engagement is strong in Schutzhund, important in Belgian ring and KNPV and less so in French ring. This needs to be understood both from the point of view of trial points and the consequences for subsequent field deployment.

Expectations

The job description of the police or military dog has variations according to the requirements of the working and deployment environment and the policies, culture and preferences of the particular agency. General functional requirements calling upon the aggressive potential include:

- Apprehension of a fleeing subject.
- Searching for and detaining or engaging persons hidden in a building or other area.
- Response to any attack on the handler or others.
- Guarding a stationary suspect, that is, prevent him from fleeing.
- Guarding a person under escort.

Guard of an object, such as a bicycle or jacket, was also often an historical requirement, and these exercises are still included in trial systems such as KNPV or the ring sports. Such things are less prevalent in actual service because routine foot patrol is unusual, because the dog on his own is more vulnerable in that his adversary is more likely to be armed, and because of liability in the event the dog engages an incidental civilian with no specific criminal intent. Tactical radio systems, vehicle based patrol and more sophisticated and better armed criminals have driven evolution in the tactics of and requirements on police officers and their dogs.

Crowd control was historically an important canine function, even the primary reason for the dogs in some situations, but has to a major extent disappeared from public view in more recent years, especially in the United States. In the current era large-scale public demonstrations are often planned and scripted by quasi-professional political activists rather than the spontaneous eruptions of ordinary citizens. A primary objective is to provoke police response which can be taken to the courts for redress or for publicity and propaganda purposes; the video camera and manipulation of the press have become primary tools. In the 1960s snarling police dogs and fire hoses became all too common on the evening news, and police agencies have become much more sophisticated in training and deployment. In America particularly the use of dogs has been greatly curtailed, and if present at all they are in the background, deployed in a way unlikely to result in a featured role on the evening news.

Many patrol dogs today have a primary substance detection role, typically drugs for police dogs and explosives for military service dogs, in addition to the protection and aggression roles. Although single purpose detection dogs of various breeds are in common use, the aggressive potential of the police bred dog is often desirable because of the natural intensity, the resilience in difficult environments and the immediate visual identification as a police or service dog. The protection function of such dogs may be primarily the defense of the dog and handler as they perform their detection services, with less emphasis on wider area search or pursuit capabilities or other more specialized or advanced functions. In such applications deterrence is an important benefit, the dog can intimidate without harming people encountered at a crime scene or in a military engagement, especially in urban areas, as in our recent Middle East engagements, where the adversaries are difficult to distinguish from the indigenous civilian population. Other applications require dogs more exclusively focused on the protection functions.

A primary justification of the police canine is the use of less than deadly force. Converting this to practical reality is one of the most fundamental and challenging aspects of training and deployment, for a person of interest may be entirely innocent, and the deployed dog may encounter innocent people other than the intended subject of the action. A factory or warehouse may for instance contain an unsuspecting watchman or guard, perhaps asleep in some remote corner, or a child, as well as a possible thief. Or the dog may redirect toward some other person in his field of view when sent after a fleeing subject, sometimes another police officer.

Other police personnel present in an engagement are sometimes bitten by a police dog out of confusion, poor situational management or just old-fashioned bad luck; and even with the best selection, training and deployment practices this is always a possibility. Sometimes the inappropriate aggression is against the handler rather than another police officer; and shooting the dog to resolve a conflict is a rare but unfortunately not unknown result of such incidents. Overt aggressive potential without the commitment to stability and reliable handler control and discipline is a serious threat to the agency personnel and the general public and in the long term the credibility and thus the viability of the canine program.

An effective police canine service with good public relations is founded in a solid selection and training program, with emphasis on practices and tactics where safety and control are built in with the foundation rather than afterthoughts. Training for the call off and the bark and hold in a search situation are often endorsed as tactics contributing to these ends, and incorporated in practical qualification tests such as the KNPV trial. The call off is a command, usually verbal but sometimes a whistle or other device, to cause the dog to break off the pursuit of a subject and return to the handler or to go to the down position. The bark and guard on a search procedure is the trained response to halt in front of a found subject and bark intensely rather than biting, intended to intimidate the subject and let the handler and others know of a find if out of sight.

But to an extent these can be public relations ploys which prove to be less than effective and reliable in the field: calling off the dog requires that it be in view of the handler, but a fleeing suspect, potentially an innocent person reacting in fear and panic, may go out of sight around a corner or disappear from view in a wooded area. Bark and hold is dependent on a subject locking up into a motionless posture, possible for the trial decoy with extensive experience and the protection of the body suit, but often not a reasonable expectation of an unprotected, inexperienced civilian, criminal or otherwise. The dog in the bark and hold posture is also vulnerable to a subject with a gun. The work of a police dog and his handler are by their nature often extremely hazardous; good strategy and training can minimize but never eliminate these hazards.

Good public relations are fundamental for successful canine programs, which means that control and neutrality in the presence of non-threatening people, animals such as other dogs and unexpected circumstances are a fundamental part of selection and training, equally as important as the characteristics of courage, hardness and aggression so admired and necessary in the police dog persona. The foundation of the aggression potential comes from breeding, and as a consequence much of the training, both initial and especially maintenance of the in service dog, is focused on proofing the dog against possible distractions, such as other dogs or people engaged in innocent activity.

Just as the bravest man will know fear and insecurity but overcome it in the course of his duty, each dog is potentially subject to insecurity and fear of things such as gunshots or threats from the stick or bat of an adversary. Fear is natural and necessary to elicit an appropriate response, but a significant aspect of training is preparing the dog to persist in the face of aggressive action from the subject, such as striking with a bat, stick or other object. Stick hits, pushing or driving a dog on the sleeve and verbal intimidation during an engagement are thus generally part of the training regimen and trial or evaluation process. Teaching the muzzled dog to fight is also a time honored practice, although more prevalent in police rather than sport training. Other examples of testing and training include long distance pursuits and engagements, for going out away from the security and support of the handler can bring out the latent fear and insecurity in the marginal dog.

The Bad Old Days

In its most primitive form protection training is based on raw defense, often implemented by isolating the young dog from human contact – negative socialization in a sense – to foster fear toward all unknown humans. As the training commences the dog is restrained to preclude escape, by chaining to a fence for instance, and applying pressure by a show of threat and aggression on the part of the decoy and striking or beating the dog as necessary. The lesson for the dog is that all human beings are a threat best dealt with by a preemptive show of extreme aggression. This was never pretty, and of only limited real utility; even a cornered rat will fight. But in a quick, dirty and very crude sense this is sometimes superficially effective.

In earlier years American canine protection applications involved a certain amount of "agitation" to bring out the aggression of an often reluctant or marginal dog, such things as flanking, that is, grabbing and pulling the web of skin between the hind leg and body, striking the dog or cornering and pressuring the dog until he snaps and bites out of fear. Most of this was driven by simple stupidity and ignorance, the attempt to turn random dogs into supposed protection dogs. Crude methods were used because more sophisticated breeding, candidate selection and training approaches evolving in Europe were not yet widely understood in America. Much of the historical repugnance toward protection training on the part of the public in general and the canine community, particularly in America, was based on the observation or reports of this sort of crude and inhumane training of dogs. The fact that the dogs were often inadequate or marginal to start with, because those doing the training did not really understand the requisite character, tended to exacerbate the situation.

This old-fashioned approach to training was primarily built on fear and defense, cornering or threatening a dog to elicit a fighting response because the possibility of flight had been precluded by physical restraint. Although some vestiges of this have limited applications even today, modern methods emphasize escalating response to the predatory drive in combination with lower emphasis on defensive reaction; basically evolving as increasingly serious games. The defensive instinct is a fundamental aspect of the canine nature, and must be sufficient and drawn out

carefully in training, but initial training should as much as possible be based on the predatory instinct. A primary reason for this is that true defense involves enormous psychological and psychological stress on the dog, the serious fear and the release of adrenaline into the system for a desperate fight of flight response. This is difficult to invoke on a routine basis and unnecessary, the dog responding from the predatory and fighting instincts rather than fear knows joy in his work and gains confidence that he will prevail regardless of what his adversary might do. Sometimes a little bit of defensive pressure, followed by the decoy cowering and retreating at the first sign of aggression, is used to bring out a reluctant young dog. This needs to be the work of an experienced helper, and should perhaps be taken as a sign that the young dog is not quite ready.

This junkyard dog style was typical of much or most of American training into the 1960s and 70s, and was largely responsible for the poor public perception of protection work. The inherent problem is that this tends to produce a dog essentially fighting from a foundation of fear, and the response to fear is unpredictable and context dependent, which means the dog is likely to be indiscriminate and difficult to control. When the dog is weak or genetically insecure it might look impressive right up to the moment he runs and thus allows the adversary to win and succeed in his robbery, rape or home invasion. To train a capable dog in this way, to create and build on insecurity, to focus on fear driven aggression, is a waste and puts a potentially dangerous dog in the world at large. Good dogs improperly trained in this way can become dangerous dogs, and very good dogs can become very dangerous.

To force an insecure or inadequate dog to take on primarily fear based aggression is morally wrong, is dog abuse and is fraud when the dog is sold for service or bred based on the deceptive perception. Eliciting response from the defensive instinct is a legitimate and important aspect of all canine aggression training, even today. But this needs to be in the context of a balanced program with emphasis on the predatory and fighting instincts. Eliciting a defensive response by pushing the dog to respond at an extreme fight or flight point is wrong and ineffective, but eliciting the earlier and lower level stages of the defensive response and channeling this into a prey or fighting response where the dog succeeds and defeats the helper builds confidence and allows inborn courage to emerge. An escalating pattern of such engagements can play an important role in preparing the dog for fearful and stress inducing incidents in order to succeed in field deployment.

Balance is the key to success, training the dog at the other extreme, entirely based on the prey response where the helper never sufficiently challenges the dog by overt physical aggression and body posture, where the dog becomes confident because the engagement is a script with his win preordained, can produce success in the trial. But a more demanding helper or adversary encountered in real service may go beyond sport scenarios, break the script and sometimes thus break the dog. This is never a good thing, and failure in the field is an especially bad way to make the discovery.

Although modern training has become enormously more sophisticated and effective, even today remnants of the old-fashioned defense based methods persist, cornering the dog by tying to a fence or a tight hold by the handler, with the helper approaching with verbal threats, ominous body language and a threatening stick or whip and then suddenly creating a bite opportunity is a standard approach to training, and done with skill can build confidence and aggression in the dog. But dogs which respond only to such an approach are of very limited potential and should not be used in service or breeding.

Americans are fond of gadgets and mechanical contraptions, and this extends to dog training. Innovations in bite sleeve construction, promising rapid training progress and automatic full grips, are continually offered by competing firms and

vendors, and new features in bite suits and protective pants are continually introduced. Much of this is profit driven; a pile of discarded sleeves replaced by the latest and greatest model represents pure profit for the vendors.

Table training, going back to hunting dog practice, has become fashionable in the past twenty years or so. Such training generally employs a round table, perhaps six feet across, with a post or ring in the center to which the dog is restrained, often on a harness. This brings the dog face to face with the helper and can bring a higher level of threat and conflict. The dog is restrained so when great fear is induced the option of flight is precluded, and ultimately the dog must fight, the idea is to teach the dog that the only safe place is on the sleeve. Sometimes dogs are under such stress that they lose control of their bowels and bladder. Dogs fighting desperately for survival can be enormously intense and aggressive, but only the novice is taken in, those with experience recognize, and are dismayed by, what they are seeing.

While table training has been controversial and often rightfully condemned, the table itself is just another training device, morally neutral. An enormous amount of bad training has been done based on the table, but there are trainers using a table, often smaller and square rather than round, in the process of perfectly good training. If something bad is going on in table training, it is not the table itself but the training. More recently, the training "box" has come into use, based on the same general principles. Here the dog is in something akin to a small open front horse stall, on a platform perhaps two feet above floor level, restrained often on a harness with a wall on either side. Regardless of the mechanical contraptions involved, good training is good training and bad training is bad training. And training based primarily on fear, the raw invocation of the fight or flight instincts, is always bad training.

In my mind the old-fashioned fear based training is morally repugnant, is animal abuse when the dog is weak and fights back only from primitive survival instincts. When push comes to shove in a real world engagement or under pressure in the trial the dog may very well rediscover the option of flight at the worst possible moment. Eliciting the defensive response, done with skill and restraint and built on a foundation of confidence established through primary reliance on the predatory instincts is useful in preparing the dog for pressure he may see in the field or in the trial. But fear should not be the primary mechanism of dog training, and when fear is the only way to bring out a response the dog is inadequate and training should cease, a better dog is needed.

The Schutzhund movement in the 1970s and 1980s and more sophisticated police program administration brought a generally much better approach to training to America, one based on balance in selection and training foundation. In this approach the young dog is brought along by playing with a jute tug or an ordinary towel, the biting is part of the game and the dog wins in the end. As the dog becomes stronger and more mature the play is a little more intense and evolves to bring forward the defensive or fighting instincts. Over time the dog must become more assertive and aggressive in order to win.

Selection and Preliminary Training

Procuring, training and deploying police, military or security dogs must be done in a business like way so as to produce a profit or run a governmental operation within a reasonable budget. Expending time and money before eventually discarding the marginal dog greatly adds to program cost; it is essential to start with the best possible candidates and to initially focus on testing as well as training so as to identify and discard inadequate dogs as quickly as possible.

Capable, cost effective protection dogs are most reliably – and thus most economically – drawn from among strong working lines. Not every pup, even from

the best lines, is born with the inherent potential to become an adequate police dog, and it can take a great deal of time and effort to bring the actual potential into focus. For the casual amateur trainer this can become a matter of eventually seeking another dog or being satisfied with the marginal dog, perhaps capable of a home field title on a good day but not something for breeding or to take in harm's way. But for police or military training, where the time of both the handler and the trainers is a substantial ongoing expense, expending inordinate time attempting to train a dog which will ultimately be discarded becomes a serious financial drain.

Modern police and military dogs often serve in the presence of innocent people, including the taxpayers supporting the various programs. Extreme, overt aggression with marginal control was at one time sufficient or desired for some military perimeter security or old style police crowd intimidation applications, but today the vast majority must be reasonably social, neutral in non-threatening environments, in order to be acceptable. Effective socialization of the puppy and a foundation of confident social neutrality and obedience are today prerequisites for most service environments. For these reasons, and the need to test the aggressive potential early in the full time training cycle, professional programs often purchase older dogs, or dogs with some training, where experienced personnel can evaluate the dogs and thus greatly increase the expectation of success. As an example, the United States military training operation, at Lackland Air Force Base in Texas, breeds some of its own Malinois, which are placed in foster homes as pups to mature in a supportive environment providing good imprinting and social foundations. (This emulates a practice which has been ongoing for seeing eye dog programs for many years.)

This is also why police and military programs today are reluctant to accept donated dogs, for the cost of processing, training and then all too often discarding such dogs becomes prohibitive. Misguided efforts to train inadequate or marginal dogs, even from the police breeds, is inherently wasteful and likely to produce disappointment in service even if such dogs are moved through a training program without being pushed hard enough to demonstrate a realistic expectation of street success.

The strong emotional bond between handler and dog is the foundation of effective service, and in the ideal the pup comes into the long-term handler's care when it leaves the whelping box. But this is not generally practical in a world where a large portion of candidates, even from the best of lines, are found wanting and moved on. For economic and logistical reasons, patrol dogs are often brought to maturity in other environments to begin training as a more mature dog, where the inadequate can be quickly – and thus more cost effectively – identified and discarded. The typical police officer may have only one or two partners in a career. Military tours of duty are normally not much more than a year; when dogs are in short supply, as they have been in the Middle East conflicts for the past ten years, the military dogs remain in service, that is are generally placed with a new handler when the current handler's deployment comes to an end.

Although there have historically been instances of programs where a single dog was partnered with several concurrent handlers, and very unusual circumstances where this is current practice, the most effective and normal situation is an ongoing team of a single dog and handler where the dog resides with the handler. Thus the police canine usually resides with the officer in his home, and the military service dog and handler are together more or less around the clock when deployed.

Dogs are typically trained by full time specialist personnel and then introduced to the handler in a relatively brief transitional training program. The foundation training may be done either by commercial operations for eventual sale to the deploying agency or trained by full time in house personnel. For these reasons, training the individual handler is thus focused on establishing a viable working relationship with

his specific dog, already trained by specialists, and establishing the necessary emotional bond, discipline and control rather than training the handler to become a ground up dog trainer. Just as the military truck driver does not need to know how to design or repair diesel engines, canine handler training is specific to the skills and knowledge needed to deploy an existing trained dog. (Such handlers may and often do have or develop more advanced skills, sometimes moving up a step to join the ranks of the training staff.) Military dogs often have relatively long service careers and thus routinely transfer to a new handler, sometimes several times.

Today most established trainers work with their dogs to build confidence and drive at a young age, balancing light obedience and impartiality in the presence of neutral people and dogs with early aggression encouragement. The older dog which has been subjected to heavy-handed obedience – or admonished or punished for exuberance and enthusiasm – may require a period of encouragement and patience to understand that aggression is permissible and praise worthy in specific circumstances. In general a good dog who has been well socialized and exhibits acceptable manners will respond well; ruining dogs by being too nice to them or insisting on obedience and deportment is unlikely. On the other hand, lack of socialization and building fear in the young dog is likely to have long-term negative consequences, in the extreme rendering the dog dangerous or spooky and thus useless.

The importance of bringing out and encouraging the young dog is sometimes illustrated by an older dog of good potential, but through a lack of encouragement and a figurative tight leash in his early years does not immediately comprehend that aggression is acceptable, and may exhibit symptoms of avoidance. If the basic quality is there, a patient handler and helper can sometimes bring such a dog around, but this can be time consuming, a little frustrating and sometimes less than fully successful.

On the other hand, delaying training until a year or so old, as was the conventional wisdom many years ago, at least in some circles, can have its own set of problems. I recall like it was yesterday taking my old Gambit dog to training at about a year old, some thirty years ago. The introduction was to be a puppy or young dog circle, where a group of dogs, each on a line with a harness or leather collar, were to be introduced to beginning aggressive response, the idea being that the vocalization and response of the group would bring out the initially unsure dogs, sort of a group excitement thing. The helper would go around the circle, shaking a rag or tug at the dogs, seeking to elicit a response, eventually allowing one to get the object. One way or another the puppy sleeve came within reach and Gambit took it, and the problem was not getting him to bite, and not building a firm or secure bite, but how to get him to release. There was some sincere verbalization from the helper to get the dog off, for puppy sleeves are compressible, and the man was in real pain.

Based on thirty years of more perspective, this dog should have been started at a much younger age, and the release should have been built in from the beginning. In that way the inherent aggression could have been shaped and directed as it matured rather than emerging all at once, fully ready to go. Things have changed enormously over the years, we were a couple of years into Schutzhund training before seeing a German trainer with a Bouvier actually let the dog carry the sleeve off the field. I was astonished to see such a thing, which indicates where we were at the time. We had so much to learn.

Formal Foundations

Effective protection training requires simulating an engagement in a way that is realistic for the dog, that is emulates as nearly as possible the situations likely to be experienced in service or the trial, and is safe for the human adversary, variously referred to as the helper, agitator or decoy. Although early stages of training may involve biting and pulling on an object such as a rolled burlap bag or tug, as the dog advances to actually bite the helper injury is prevented or minimized by the use of protective equipment, that is padded arms in Schutzhund style training and a wide variety of padded protection training suits. Such suits can be very elaborate and expensive, that is often more than $1000 US dollars, sometimes much more, not an insignificant sum for sports equipment.

Protection training is largely a matter of finding the right dog and getting out of the way, letting the dog out to become mature in confidence and strength by winning at each stage, first by making the helper flee and then by controlling the helper with his bite. When extensive and elaborate effort is necessary to bring forth the aggression and the willingness to engage and bite, generally it is a matter of the wrong dog or a dog where the natural behavior propensities have been suppressed through heavy-handed discipline, an overly dominating handler or home situation. Even when such dogs can be induced to bite in defense through pressure, the aggressive capability may be only on the surface, likely to evaporate in a street encounter.

Usually informal training of the pup or very young dog is a matter of increasingly intense play with the handler, involving the grip of a rolled up burlap sack or commercially produced tug toy. In the transition to formal training with the helper, he will often also play with the young dog in a similar way, perhaps with the same objects employed in the preliminary training.

In the beginning stages of formal training especially, the helper is the dog trainer while the handler plays a secondary, supporting role. The helper is in the best position to gauge the response of the dog, by the firmness and calmness of the grip as well as what he observes, to know when it is necessary to reduce pressure and momentarily revert into a more overtly prey oriented presentation and when pressure can be increased to build drive and confidence through one small success at a time. As the dog matures the helper begins to bring more pressure through the intensity of presentation, by fighting after the grip and later by the stick in order to bring the defense into balance and build the confidence to respond to the unexpected. The protection engagements are driven by the prey and defensive or fighting instincts, and the most effective training program continually adapts to bring these drives into balance, to produce persistence, reliability and vigor in the dog's performance. This is primarily the function of the training helper, and while physical attributes such as quickness and strength are important elements of this work the most important helper skill is the ability to perceive moment by moment what is in the dog's mind, to see into his soul and know his fears and the depth of his aggression, and instinctively react to build confidence and drive. Immediate, instinctive response is the key element, one must become able to perceive the emerging problem in the early stages and react; a few moments to consider a response will often mean that the opportunity to build confidence or allay fear is lost. This is why experience and practice as well as abstract knowledge are of such fundamental importance in this work.

When I became involved in Schutzhund in the early 1980s young dog training was generally more defense oriented than it has become today. Typically it would begin with the helper quietly, menacingly approaching the young dog, staring directly at him, a practice referred to as making eye contact. A good helper can have enormous presence – demand the dog's attention, intimidate the dog – with very

little overt motion through demeanor, presentation and posture. (This is very similar to the famous "eye" employed by Border Collie style herding dogs.) The dog may hesitate, and then give a tentative bark, in response to which the helper immediately retreats, often going out of sight in a blind. This experience builds confidence, shows the dog that he is in control, can make the adversary flee. Notice that this exercise begins by bringing out a defensive response but immediately flips over into a prey driven reaction. In this era it was not the usual practice to have the dog carry the sleeve but rather focus back on the helper when it was released, sometimes by helper threat after the sleeve release to draw the attention back. Teaching the out, the release of the sleeve or body suit, was generally deferred to a later phase of the training, which meant that it was often difficult and required vigorous enforcement corrections. (This was an important reason for the transition to the more overtly prey oriented introduction typical today, where the teaching of the release is integrated from the beginning and thus generally less demanding of force and more reliable in the long term.)

In more recent years there has been a trend to bring out the young dog more in prey, for instance attaching a line to a tug or the sleeve itself and throwing it to one side and then retrieving it, inducing the pup to chase it in prey, similar to playing with a kitten with a mouse or object on a string. The follow up is often a series of helper run by maneuvers, with the sleeve just out of reach, resulting in a strong grip when it finally is presented. The usual conclusion of the exercise today is slipping the sleeve for the dog to carry.

In my view a measure of defense and the potential for resolute fighting drive is also essential, and it is normal to gently probe for defense in the beginning, and if adequate potential seems to be present to leave it alone and progress primarily through prey, where the dog is driven by the excitement of the engagement. This also sets the stage for control, and when the young dog is taught from relatively early in the progression that the release is sure to be rewarded by another bite, and carries the sleeve off the field after the last bite, the extreme pressure sometimes needed to enforce the out on a strong adult dog is minimized or entirely eliminated.

This shift in emphasis toward early reliance on the prey response has been an evolutionary trend, a matter of focus and emphasis in the balance point, for these are not diametrically opposite methodologies, but rather end points of a continuum. Good programs will continually adjust the balance between prey and defense according to the short-term response of the dog. Generally I find slightly challenging the dog early on useful for gauging his intrinsic nature as a down the road reference point. A moderate awakening of the defensive instinct with transition to prey can build confidence and enthusiasm. I have always been a little more comfortable with the concept of fighting the helper rather than playing with the equipment, but perhaps I am just an old dog having trouble with new tricks. In the broader perspective these are secondary issues, for if the power and aggression are present in the heart of the dog emphasis on preliminary prey training is not going to diminish the ultimate intensity and drive. The key element is always the ability of the helper to perceive weakness or insecurity and immediately adapt on the fly to produce the win for the dog, regardless of underlying philosophical training issues. This is not a matter of right or wrong so much as observing the reactions and at the first indication of insecurity immediately adapting the exercise to conclude with a win, thus building confidence.

Training based on foundations in prey and play have proven to be effective in many circumstances, and when real aggression and response through fighting drive and escalating helper aggression, and confident response to unexpected threats outside the trial script, is incorporated in later training this is a perfectly rational and reasonable approach. But when dogs are only tested to the script, and when trials are adapted to remove the stress of standing up to real, unscripted decoy

aggression, as in the instances of the removal of the attack on the handler and the old fashioned turn on the dog courage test in Schutzhund, we are entering the realm of pretend and fantasy protection training. This will not be viable in the longer term, for serious police and military trainers will be forced to look for real dogs from other sources, exacerbating the ongoing separation between real service and traditional sport training and national breed clubs.

This general trend to a more purely prey oriented introduction to protection training is perhaps a reaction, even an overreaction, to the historically abusive methods of earlier American training. Particularly in sport venues there is a tendency to regard the whole thing as some sort of a game, to be uncomfortable with real anger and aggression in the dog. Many French Ring proponents are this way, but it is a general trend among a large component of civilian sport oriented trainers.

In the early stages the bite, first of separate objects such as the tug and progressing through soft puppy sleeves, usually introduced as separate objects rather than on the arm, the helper pulls away, inducing the dog to bite more firmly and persistently in order to maintain possession of the object. Once the bite is engaged, helper aggression evaporates as he pulls away, showing passivity and avoiding eye contact or other aggressive gestures and postures.

Since the dog is firmly restrained by an agitation harness or wide leather collar, which the line handler must absolutely control, the helper can come closer and closer before fleeing. In early bites the helper tends to run by the dog or the dog is allowed to move forward, restrained by the line, to get the grip on an essentially fleeing opponent. The sequence is from gripping an object, to gripping the object held by the helper, to biting a padded arm on a passive or retreating helper to, eventually, the point where the dog in his mind is engaging the man rather than the object.

As the process progresses the helper will more and more step forward into the dog with a presented sleeve and allow a bite, to which he typically turns and pulls away, maintaining the horizontal sleeve position so as not to twist the sleeve in the mouth. This turning the head and body away, and shunning eye contact, is a submissive posture intended to give the dog the sense of winning, that is, building confidence. If the dog releases his grip the helper escapes, ending the fun and the game. This builds the strong, firm, persistent grips desired in the trial and service. Today the engagement will usually end with the helper slipping his arm out of the sleeve, allowing the dog to carry the prey object home in triumph.

As the training advances the helper is more persistent and aggressive, in time responding to the bite by stepping forward into the dog, with the opposite hand up with a stick or in a threatening posture. This evolves into a process, called driving the dog, of continually stepping into the dog with an increasingly aggressive demeanor and increasingly threatening with, and eventually striking with the stick.

Every dog is different and presents a new set of training challenges; there is no recipe to turn out good protection dogs automatically like apple pies. Thus there must be variation and ongoing adaption in the process of bringing out and enhancing the willingness and ability of a young dog to engage, to go to the sleeve or suit and take the desired firm, confident grip and fight the man even when he is aggressive and uses the stick to test confidence and courage.

In most protection training programs the desired bite is the full grip, in which the initial bite is firm and persistent, taking in and holding as much of the offered sleeve or suit fabric and padding as possible. Thus the full grip is the fundamental objective from the beginning of training, because it is the safest for the dog and the helper, because it is the most desirable in most deployment circumstances and because it measures and builds confidence in the dog. One important consideration is safety, for with the full, secure grip the weight of the dog is not brought to bear on the fangs, which function primarily to keep the sleeve or suit from slipping rather than

bearing the weight of the dog and the forces arising from the aggressive motions of the helper. Since the teeth are simply keeping the sleeve from slipping rather than bearing the weight of the dog, broken teeth are much less likely.

Discipline

Much of the operational justification for the police dog is limited and recallable force, that is, a non-deadly option to the gun in deployment engagements. The concept of innocent until proven guilty, although not perfectly observed, is the foundation of the modern judicial system and the deployment of canine force must be justified in these terms. For these reasons the ideal modern police dog should be recallable, engage with minimum practical force and release a bite and go into the guard mode upon handler command, or when the adversary ceases resistance. This is of course all fine in theory, but in reality adversaries flee or fight back in unpredictable ways and people, too often innocent people, get bitten; but training and deployment decisions need to strive for the ideal in a much less than perfect world. The adaptability of the tending style herding breeds to this mode of operation is a primary reason for their evolution into our police breeds of today.

Uncontrolled aggression, where the off lead dog is beyond effective handler control, has little practical utility in the modern urban environment. On their own dogs revert to primitive, instinctive reactions according to territory and social associations where unknown people are often by default adversaries; it is the responsibility of the handler to maintain control and to the extent possible direct limited aggression to the intended adversary rather than incidental people present, including other law enforcement personnel.

In the trial there is always an out or release command after a bite when the helper becomes stationary or locks up, to which the dog must respond by releasing and going into a strong guarding posture. In the early years of my Schutzhund experience the general tendency was to introduce the out or release relatively late in the training cycle, when the dog was showing strong aggression, often in the days or weeks leading up to a first trial. The conventional wisdom behind this was concern that the coercion necessary to compel the release would intimidate and confuse the dog and thus diminish the intensity and drive. The consequence was often a crisis in training because a great deal of pressure and compulsion was necessary to affect a release, and the dog would have the tendency to bite again immediately. Furthermore the out was a result of handler intimidation, which meant that the dog would be less likely to comply the further away he was. In the trial the handler is relatively far from the dog, and the dogs would often perceive that the trial situation was different, further reducing the incentive for compliance.

Training is reward and punishment, and in the old-fashioned mode of training the release was almost completely coercion, there was nothing in the dog's mind that was or could be construed as a reward in releasing the bite and giving up the engagement. In obedience a reward in the form of food or the expectation of a ball for a straight sit or quick recall was a practical ancillary approach, but balls and treats mean little to a serious dog engaged with the helper. These dogs were bred and selected for aggression, tenacity and fighting drive, and to give up the fight and release is contrary to this basic nature.

Contemporary practice is to introduce the out as much as possible based on reward rather than physical compulsion. The problem is that a ball or a treat are not practical or sufficient, mean nothing to the dog in the aggression mode. The solution was found in giving the young dog another bite as a reward for a clean release, with the dog carrying the sleeve off the field after the last bite so that every release is quickly followed by the reward of another so that the association is firmly

established. Properly executed, this training process usually results in a quick, clean out and an intense guard because of the expectation of an immediate repeat bite. Rather than delaying the release to late stages in the training cycle, often under the pressure of an approaching first trial, the release is incorporated from the very beginning, sometimes even in playing with the puppy tug or burlap sack before the introduction of the helper. Some correction and coercion is often necessary, but it is secondary and transitory, reinforcing the basic reward based training process.

Tom Rose used to teach a sit stabilization method where the dog was on a long line and a harness and a second person, often the dog's handler, was behind the helper with a separate line and a pinch collar. The advantage of this is that the correction is into the helper, which avoids a tug of war scenario. When the correction is from behind the dog, strong dogs will often become extremely stubborn and difficult, persist and become even more determined in response to the compulsion.

In the Schutzhund trial the decoy always comes to a complete halt, becomes locked in a fixed position, before the release command, and the dog is always expected to go into an intense guard mode. In ring sport the out is in some situations required before the complete cessation of decoy motion, and the dog is in some exercises recalled rather than expected to guard.

When the dog outs or releases, he must stay focused on the helper. With proper training the dog believes that he has won, and is challenging his adversary to continue the fight. This is, of course, the picture that makes the judge tend to give full points. And, even more importantly, it is the picture in the police patrol dog that makes the suspect just want it all to come to an immediate end, puts him in the frame of mind to accept apprehension without further resistance.

While the release and guard is the most difficult and important aspect of discipline, the dog must also learn to guard a subject under escort and to reliably stay in the heal position as the handler moves about the trial field, even though the helper is present and sometimes in plain sight. The protection or guard dog is made in breeding selection rather than on the training field, and the fundamental task of protection training is to build reliable discipline and control, and teach correct biting technique, that is proper grips, while minimizing inhibitions on aggression.

Ongoing Training

The normal training sequence is motivation, teaching, repetition, distraction proofing and testing or evaluation. This is not a linear process progressing sequentially one phase at a time but rather a continuum with emphasis on motivation and teaching in the early stages gradually evolving to build reliability and confidence through success in scenarios with escalating complexity, pressure and unexpected challenges. Helper presentation increases in presence, persistence and unpredictability. It is important to subject the dog to new and unexpected challenges beyond the trial, such as sudden direct attacks from unexpected places and long distance pursuits on a new field with a new helper. Distractions can also include the introduction of a second helper, barrels or buckets suddenly bouncing to the side or behind the engaged dog or the throwing large, soft objects such as a plastic swimming pool or light folding chair at or to the side of the dog as he engages. Unexpected attacks away from the training field, on the street or in the dark, are also a common practice. (Belgian Ring incorporates this sort of unexpected occurrence into the actual trial.)

Distractions, unexpected occurrences during training and at other times, serve two purposes, that is, they build and maintain excitement, anticipation and enthusiasm in the dog and they create confidence that will carry on through the inevitable unscripted adversary responses typical of actual on the street service.

Surprise events are also part of the evaluation process, for the dog who falters in a new situation, even if he regains composure through acclimation, must be questioned as an actual patrol candidate. It is true that this is less of a consideration in trial preparation, where in the popular systems there is little or no variation; but this is a serious and difficult to overcome limitation of the working trial and the reason why the trial or resulting title should not be the ultimate deciding factor in the suitability of a dog for service or breeding.

In general, while most of protection training is confidence building, acclimation to increasing threats and overt helper aggression and establishment of discipline in increasingly demanding circumstances, it is necessary from time to time to test the dog, to create novel, unexpected threats to gauge the progress. When the dog does well training is on track, and if the dog should show insecurity the competent helper will immediately convert a testing situation into a confidence building exercise, show enough weakness to give the dog a win. This can often be done by fleeing and allowing the dog to catch up and take the sleeve or by going back to line agitation.

In commercial or agency environments, testing and evaluation are usually incorporated early in the training because elimination of inadequate prospects is a primary requirement, and must be done as soon as possible consistent with sound and humane training because the process is expensive; military or police dog programs cannot routinely put six or eight weeks of training in a dog only to wash him out. (Although inevitably on occasion a dog will be on the edge and thus be taken further in order to make a good ultimate decision.)

Testing is both informal and ongoing and formal in the trial. The working trial is a known and predictable sequence of exercises with consistency in trial helper behavior as a fundamental feature. The consistency of the exercise sequence is the strength of the system in that it is the foundation of repeatable testing; helps insure that each dog receiving a title has met similar challenges. But it is also the weakness of the system in that it does not emulate the enormous variety in adversary response – that is evasive and retaliatory action that the dog would encounter in actual police service. Good trainers and clever handlers are often able to conceal flaws and put titles on dogs, often with impressive scores, and this will always be true.

Because of these inherent limitations in the formal trial, it is necessary for the serious working dog breeder and trainer to take personal responsibility, to strive for deeper understanding than the trial can provide. Failure in a trial coming as a surprise is an indication of a failure in the testing aspect of training and the intrinsic competence of the trainer. It is true that there can be a bad day, the baseball batting champion sometimes strikes out, and professional football players sometimes throw interceptions rather than touchdown passes; but these are the exceptions.

Protection work can be like magic in that a skilled practitioner can deceive the eye by directing attention away from the action and by feigning pressure. The attack on the handler, where the helper suddenly appears and intensively approaches the dog in an intimidating way, demanding response to a serious threat, can actually consist of a quick show of threat and then subtly stepping back to draw the dog in; it happens so quickly that the inexperienced will usually be deceived. This show of threat and then weakness to let the dog win easily is the foundation of protection training, but is not a valid test to verify the dog. Such deceptions are created for a variety of reasons, including convincing a customer that his beloved pet has been transformed into Fang the wonder dog, selling a marginal or inadequate dog and passing a trial or certification. This is the inherent weakness of the Schutzhund trial, for a dog can be and often is certified working on a familiar helper who knows from experience the strengths and weaknesses of the dog and how to elicit the most impressive responses, where he can show pressure and where he must subtly ease

off. This is why experienced people will very often ask to test a dog on a new and neutral helper of their own selection before purchasing a dog.

In canine protection work, as in so much of life, what you think you see is not always what is actually transpiring. Some exercises, such as a dog being agitated in his own vehicle, may be full of sound and fury but signify essentially nothing; even a cornered rat will fight. Knowing what you are seeing is a matter of understanding what the dog must overcome. A strong, confident man facing a dog directly, wielding a stick, or stepping into the dog to accept the bite is a true challenge; the man running by the dog is much less challenging and weak or fearful dogs will often bite a man turning away. Distance is also a challenge to the weak or marginal dog, every step away from the handler is into the unknown, and away from security. The KNPV trial features extremely long runs, often with a call off, in order to test the dog. The old style Schutzhund courage test lured the dog to a significant distance by a fleeing helper, who suddenly turned and charged the dog. The level of challenge and stress is demonstrated by the fact that this exercise was eliminated from Schutzhund by the conformation show politicians for the same reason they eliminated the attack on the handler, these were the heart of the old Schutzhund trial, and too many of the show line German Shepherds were proving to be inadequate.

In evaluating a dog it is necessary to know and understand what is truly challenging, reveals inherent flaws, and what is being set up to impress the less than sophisticated audience. Holding a dog in on a short leash while a familiar helper makes a big show of arm waving and intimidation is fine for beginning dog training, but not a demonstration of strong character, is a bit like the little guy in a bar whose friends are holding him back from the fight, scared to death that they might actually let him loose. In a similar way, leaving a dog in a vehicle with open or partially open windows and having a helper approach in an aggressive way is likely to result in a lot of barking and showing of teeth from even a relatively weak dog, yet many people are impressed with such things. Inexperienced people in the market for a candidate or trained older dog are often well advised to seek out, and pay for if necessary, assistance from a competent trainer in testing and evaluating the dog. A seller unwilling to have the dog tested on a neutral field by a new helper should be taken as an indication that extreme caution is appropriate.

The Helper

The training decoy or helper[1], the man who puts on the suit or sleeve to impersonate the human adversary, is the foundation of the training process. This work is quite demanding, both in terms of the requisite knowledge and skill and the physical strength and quickness to engage the dogs, many of which are big and powerful or quick and energetic, hitting and biting very hard. Working the novice dogs, trying to bring forth the latent aggression, often involves a great deal of skill and physical exertion. Although accidents in the sense of a bite on unprotected flesh are unusual, most helpers end their day with aches and pains from the physical impact. It is said, only partially in jest, that there are two kinds of helpers: those with back problems and those whose back problems have yet to surface.

Selecting a protection helper to work with is the prerogative of the owner or trainer, but once this commitment is made it becomes the training helper's function to provide direction, to devise and adapt his procedures according the characteristics of the dog and where it is at in the training process. It is generally desirable for the young dog to work consistently with a primary helper for the sake of continuity, so as to adapt to the progress and propensities of the dog, and to give the dog confidence through familiarity. In this way the dog sees the same picture from

[1] The terms decoy, helper and agitator are used more or less interchangeably.

session to session, without disconcerting differences in technique and presentation. Also by noting reactions and trends over time the astute helper is often able to perceive and resolve small problems as they emerge with minor corrections and adaptions rather than having to deal with a significant problem. As the dog progresses and gains confidence it is the normal practice to introduce gradually other helpers in order present diverse presentations and styles. The handler of the titled or trial ready dog will often seek out diverse helpers in order to prepare the dog for whatever might happen in the next trial.

Although size, strength and quickness do matter in the decoy, ultimately such things are less important than intuitive knowledge of the nature of the canine, honed through experience for instinctively presenting the picture and challenge the dog needs to progress. While good communication between helper and handler is essential, one simply cannot expect to micro manage on the training field. The handler or person working the line on the harness or collar must respond to helper direction; although there is typically a brief discussion prior to the session only the helper can effectively make the moment-by-moment decisions.

In many ways the training helper is similar to your personal physician; it is your prerogative to choose but once committed you need to accept guidance, follow the program and procedures in a cooperative way. Those finding themselves in disagreement consistently are working with the wrong person and need to adjust either their attitude or seek a more compatible helper to work with.

While the blatantly insecure dog is obvious, even to the owner if he is willing to see it, only the helper facing the dog, looking into his eyes, observing the subtleties of demeanor and feeling the strength, confidence and firmness of the grips, has the complete picture. It is a quick, intense, intuitive process and the handler must pay close attention and react quickly to direction, often nonverbal as in a nod of the head or a quick glance at the handler to indicate increased or lessened line tension or an out command. It is the skill of the helper which is ultimately responsible for channeling aggression, bite building and confidence establishment, and he must make the intuitive moment-by-moment hands on decisions. As the training progresses the helper will increasingly apply pressure in subtle ways involving eye contact, demeanor and sleeve presentation, observing reactions and adapting accordingly. As the training advances and the focus changes to discipline and control, these roles begin to reverse: the handler gradually begins to make more of the ongoing decisions, trains and corrects the dog and more and more directs the helper. In the refinement and polishing of the nearly ready dog, the handler normally directs the helper so as to create temptations and distractions so that he can correct faulty actions by the dog, such as nipping the sleeve during a guard exercise, which would result in trial point loss.

Excellence in the protection dog flows from his internal confidence and fighting drive, and to build and maintain such dogs the training exercises must be increasingly intense and focused, with the helper increasingly in the role of adversary. Conflicts or misunderstandings between handler and helper, particularly on the field, interrupt the flow of training and are seriously detrimental to the progress of the dog. For the helper to slip out of character to engage in a running commentary or direct the handler verbally confuses the dog enormously, with the worst possible scenario being to stop and discuss things during a session, with the dog just standing there. When the helper suddenly flips roles from adversary to neutral person it immediately confuses and sucks the drive out of the dog; and when this occurs often in training it is extremely detrimental to the long-term progress and potential of the dog. The proper thing to do when there is serious confusion is to give the dog a good strong bite, a brief fight and then put him away. In this way the differences can be worked out in detail and a new session begun to resume the training.

Virtually all initial and drive building level training takes place on a line, attached to a harness or the wide leather collar, because there is minimal obedience in the beginning and because much of drive building is a process of overcoming inhibition, either innate social inhibitions or created in previous training. Handling the line demands a great deal of knowledge, skill and understanding of the process, which the novice trainer is, by definition, lacking. Often a third person will handle the line, in order to avoid dealing with two novices at one time, the dog and inexperienced owner.

Third party line handling has significant advantages even when the handler is experienced. The young dog is often uncertain and insecure, and can be overly sensitive to the presence of the handler, yet quickly accept a third person as just part of the equipment on training day. Typically in this situation, the line handler's role is to provide correct restraint on the line and perhaps coach the inexperienced handler, but direct interactions with the dog such as commands and corrections come from the actual handler. The third person can sometimes make verbal or other suggestions or directions which would be extremely distracting to the dog were the helper to take on this additional role. Sometimes there is pinch or chain correction collar in addition the control line. Corrections in many circumstances, especially in enforcing the out command, are much more effective when the line on the pinch or chain collar is such that a correction is toward rather than away from the helper. This is because a correction that pulls the dog away often only reinforces the determination to hold on.

Protection dog training is very serious business and an accident can produce a bite to exposed flesh and a serious injury, other injuries such as muscle pulls or strains or injury to the dog such as broken canine teeth. The handler or line handler plays a key role in safety by preventing the dog from reaching the helper at the wrong time or in the wrong manner or by restraining the dog when a potentially dangerous situation evolves. On occasion the helper will go down, either trip or be caught off balance by the dog. If on the line it is the responsibility of the line handler to protect the helper, which is only one of several reasons why virtually all of the early training is on a line. Older and more experienced dogs will generally hold the bite on the sleeve or suit if possible or refrain from biting or harassing the down helper. This is entirely appropriate for the in service police dog, guarding but not engaging the downed suspect gives the police handler and other officers the opportunity to deal with the situation. At the risk of excessive anthropomorphism, my perception is that most dogs have or develop a sense of fair play and are not generally looking for the cheap shot. When two dogs face off, if one goes into the down submissive posture usually the other dog will stand over him but not otherwise bite or harass, and similar response to the down human adversary is reasonably explained as a natural extension of this instinctive behavior.

Helpers or decoys serve two distinct functions or roles; that of training helper as discussed to this point and that of trial decoy, where the purpose is to test the dog and reveal correct or improper response and verify the courage and control in the dog. The trial helper must be physically capable, honest and consistent, but reading and evaluating the dog, the core of the training helper's task, is much less important, for his responsibility is to test the dog so as to allow the judge to assign the appropriate points. Although many helpers easily step into either role, the best trial helpers are not necessarily great training helpers and many men who may be less physically gifted, or older, excel at training because of their intuitive grasp of canine reaction, honed through experience, and ability read the dog and devise an effective approach. The key trial helper skills and attributes are more physical than mental in that he must be strong, quick, reliable and honest, but not necessarily especially skilled in observing and reacting to the particular propensities of the dog before him. Quite the opposite in fact, his function is to work all of the dogs in a

uniform way, setting aside his personal observations of the nature of the dog and leaving evaluation and commentary to the judge.

Suits and Sleeves

Canine protection training requires equipment and protocols that allow the dog to bite or grip with minimal risk of serious injury to the helper. Although the agitation muzzle can provide this protection in some situations, most training today relies primarily on protective equipment worn by the helper to take the brunt of the bite. The helper's protection comes in two basic forms: the full body suit where the dog in principal may bite wherever he can or a separate, padded arm sleeve where the dog normally bites only the presented forearm. Even with the best equipment safe training requires skill, knowledge and commitment on the part of the helper, the handler and third parties handling a line. An inadvertent dog bite is only one potential injury, as the high impact of the bite and the extreme athletic maneuvers, such as the dog pursuing from behind and leaping to grip the sleeve, can lead to all of the common injuries of serious contact sports, especially to the back and knees. Although I am not aware of any statistical data, my general impression is that serious and disabling injuries to the helper are much more often the result of a twist or strain, producing knee, shoulder or back damage for instance, rather than an actual bite. Safety for the dog is also dependent on good equipment and skillful work, for he is without protective equipment and dependent on both the helper and often the line handler to insure a minimal impact and secure grip. The full, firm, secure grip is very important to the safety of the dog, for in this situation the grip on the sleeve or suit is through the power of the jaws, with the teeth merely keeping the grip from slipping. The faulty grip can put the weight of the dog on the canine teeth, which can often lead to a broken tooth.

The historical configuration and construction of protective equipment has been according to the nation and sport, that is, the removable, padded sleeve and forearm only bite was characteristic of Schutzhund and thus associated with Germany and the German Shepherd. The rest of the European police dog world – the Dutch, Belgians and French – have from the beginning primarily relied on variations of the full body suit allowing the dog wide latitude in bite placement and style. The suit consists of pants that strap over the shoulders and a fully padded jacket, both intended to withstand bites. In the bite jacket especially protection from contusion and actual puncture is dependent on the skill of the helper in making a presentation that results in the bite to the fabric of the jacket itself, the arm being positioned within the jacket sleeve to avoid a direct bite. This is generally not entirely effective and minor injury to the helper is not the least bit uncommon. Helpers will often use an elastic bandage wrap (Ace being a popular brand name) commonly used for ankles and other applications in vigorous sports on the arms or legs where extra protection is desirable. Suit construction at the top level is complex and continually evolving, with many suits made to special order according to the measurements and preferences of the helper. The French Ringers and their suit makers tend to favor bright colors and elaborate decorative fashions, which resonates with the general tendency of the ring helper to be a performer, a part of the spectacle, rather than in the background to the dog.

These differences in equipment configuration and construction necessitate inherently distinct biting and training styles in that the forearm presentation of the bite sleeve allows the helper to aggressively run at the dog and accept the bite in a catch maneuver designed to dissipate safely the momentum of the dog, which is difficult to do with a body suit. The inherent problem is that this teaches the dog that his adversary is cooperative, will always present a forearm in a highly stylized

French Ring Suit. Top and bottom separate, bottom generally supported by suspenders over shoulder. Dog may bite legs, body or arms. In other exercisers the helper will use a split bamboo stick.
Beauceron: Avatar des Ombres Valeureux, owner Tim Welch, helper Waleed Maalouf

manner, an unrealistic preparation for a real world where adversaries are real enemies with a natural desire to evade or strike back at the dog.

These contrasting protection trial procedures and practices are driven more by historical differences in equipment configuration than deep-seated philosophical considerations, which seem to have evolved more to justify existing practice rather than on their own internal, intrinsic merits. Equipment style selection and design is always a compromise. The use of the sleeve means that the dog learns only one style of bite, making variations in presentation and engagement scenarios more difficult to implement. The suit generally renders impractical running hard at the dog and demanding a full engagement as the criteria of success, one of the fundamentally most demanding and intimidating maneuvers. This philosophical division along national lines – the parties to which engaged in two gut wrenching twentieth century military confrontations – has engendered the irrational, deep-seated distrust and hostility normally reserved for religions differences.

Although Schutzhund style training involves the dog only biting the presented arm, and some dogs are occasionally worked without any other protection, dogs will at unpredictable times bite whatever they can get at. This can come from frustration, inexperience or plain nastiness in the dog; or an illicit bite may be the response to an inappropriate or poorly timed sleeve presentation. Thus when using the sleeve the helper is also generally protected from inadvertent body or leg bites by a pair of padded pants, usually with straps over the shoulders to support the weight while still giving maximum mobility. A sleeveless jacket is sometimes also used. In recent years the trend has been toward much lighter pants, referred to as scratch pants, which prevent damage from the claws and minimize but do not entirely eliminate the pain and damage from a bite. This trend has in general been a consequence of more resilient materials increasingly available and reasonable in price. In initial training the ability of the dog to bite, the reach, is usually restricted by a line attached to an agitation harness or wide protection collar, usually leather. In this situation the

safety of the helper is directly related to the skill and alertness of the line handler and effective communication between the two.

The dog goes to the sleeve because of the manner of presentation and training, that is, he is restrained by the line, and the sleeve is presented in such a way that it is the natural and effectively only way to get a grip. In training the helper often releases the sleeve so that the dog can carry it, making it in a way the object of the exercise rather than the man. Many object that equipment orientation brings into question the commitment of the dog to persist in an actual encounter with an aggressive and unpredictable man. These are valid concerns, but proper training will also test the dog in more realistic, unpredictable situations and correct any revealed vulnerabilities.

Hidden sleeves are commonly employed to test the willingness to engage what appears to be a person without distinctive equipment. Such sleeves tend to be harder and more compact, and are worn under an article of normal clothing to conceal their presence. The elastic bandage can be wrapped over the arm under the hidden sleeve to provide more protection. The external surface which the dog bites is often leather rather than jute like fabric, but the diameter can be only slightly larger than the man's arm, allowing the larger dogs to gain a secure grip encompassing most of the sleeve. Purely sport trainers seldom employ hidden sleeves, or other ancillary training methods countering equipment reliance, because these are perceived as a distraction to the fixed scenario nature of the trial.

Dogs persistently failing to make a strong transition from equipment to the man are generally unsuitable for actual service, and the fact that some dogs relying on equipment for motivation do quite well in the trial is one reason that trial results are not definitive indications of suitability. Those making breeding selections or acquiring dogs for police service need to be aware of these issues and sufficiently test each dog to their satisfaction; the trial or title can never be the ultimate determination of quality or real value. This is especially true of the export market. Locally if a dog slides through a trial on a lucky day or with a soft judge, prospective purchasers generally have or can locate contacts with firsthand knowledge, but those purchasing an import, especially through a broker, are unlikely to have similar access.

Sometimes in training the helper will work with only the sleeve or with a leather apron for scratch protection, usually when the dog is securely restrained by a line. For obvious reasons, the experienced helper tends to work this way only when confident in the ability of the handler to maintain control over the reach of the dog by good line handling and proper equipment. This is often done with young dogs because it provides more mobility and thus animation in the presentation and because it is less tiring in warmer weather or when many dogs are to be worked. French ring trainers often use a separate, detachable leg pad in young dog training for similar reasons of convenience and allowing the dog the encouragement of actually taking possession of the padded object.

Although the Belgian, Dutch and French systems all incorporate a full body suit, which the dog will bite in the way natural to him and according to his training, there are substantial differences in the construction of the suit itself and the style of presentation and training. The Dutch police or KNPV suits are still relatively stiff and heavy and as a consequence there is a lack of mobility in training and trial maneuvers, while the French Ring trainers have evolved much lighter suits and much more active and agile helper behavior. Typically leg, thigh, arm and body bites are permitted or encouraged. In general in KNPV, bites are to the upper part of the body or upper arm rather than the leg or a presented forearm. An exception is that most KNPV participants train their dogs to go to the leg in the bicycle exercise, in which the dog pursues a person fleeing on a bicycle, in the interest of safety, although dogs going airborne and making a spectacular grab of an arm or shoulder have also been

popular, especially for the audience. The French ringers generally prefer the leg bite because of the style of the decoy work and the scoring of the judges. The Ring helper is expected to evade the bite by shifting his body and by deceptive maneuvers. In most other systems the function of the decoy is to present a consistent picture to each dog in the interests of safety and fairness.

In Schutzhund the dogs come in fast and hit hard on the long bite or courage test; the function of the helper is to safely catch the dog and then drive him, that is, push into and threaten him with the stick in an attempt to intimidate and cause a release, which results in failure if the dog does not immediately come back hard. On the long bite the helper runs toward the dog, slowing as the dog begins to engage, so as to minimize the speed of impact, which is the combined forward speed of the dog and the helper, while still maintaining the threat to the dog. The point of physical engagement is referred to as the catch, which is exactly what should occur: the dog will grip the sleeve and carry it forward while his momentum dissipates because the helper allows the arm and sleeve to flex. A hard impact where the helper holds his arm rigid relative to his body is faulty and very dangerous; this is sometimes referred to as jamming the dog. The helper must position the sleeve correctly and maintain relative position once the dog leaves the ground, for at this point the dog has little control over his trajectory, although he can to some extent twist his body in the air to adjust position slightly for the bite. The helper will typically allow the dog to swing to the side, dissipating momentum, and as the dog gathers his feet under him on the ground begin the drive of the dog. In addition to correctly executing the catch and drive, the helper is expected to wind up driving the dog in a direction providing an unobstructed view for the judge. The consistent execution is fair to all dogs and allows the judge to place himself for the desired point of view to score the dog. All of this requires an enormous amount of skill and practice on the part of the helper, which is why really good helpers are so greatly respected and valued.

The suit style decoys do not run at the dog but rather hold their ground and threaten the dog with the stick, which is split bamboo in Ring and a freshly cut three quarter inch sapling in KNPV. The KNPV decoy does not evade, but will strike the dog a sharp blow with the sapling before the dog actually engages. This can be very intimidating, and if a dog is going to fail this is likely to be the moment.

The French ring helper on the other hand is, by culture and tradition, expected to evade the dog, that is, make last moment maneuvers to the left or right and otherwise deceive the dog. This results in the dog slowing slightly and looking for the helper to commit. Most French Ring dogs are rigorously trained to go to the thigh or leg because going higher gives the decoy more opportunity for evasive maneuver and the consequent loss of points.

My view is that the suit sports would in general be enhanced by an exercise where the helper aggressively runs directly at the dog in the most intimidating manner possible; but the mechanics and dynamics of the suit render a safe and yet intimidating final engagement in such a scenario very difficult. The ring dog, at one level or another, comes to understand that there is an invisible plane in front of the helper which will not be crossed, that safety and security are always just a step back. This implicit plane of safety is an inherent negative aspect of the suit training, but credible and workable alternatives are difficult to conceive. Nevertheless the fact remains that aggressively running hard directly at the dog with threatening gestures and verbalization is enormously intimidating and in the ideal would be incorporated into every serious test.

On the other hand there is a credible argument that Schutzhund helpers making a predictable presentation and uniform catch on all occasions acclimates dogs inappropriately and thus reduces the intimidation of the test, does not adequately

emulate the pressure of real world encounters. Real criminals after all are not often capable of or willing to behave in this way. Introducing systematic variation in the final approach would require that the dog hesitate, gather himself and react according to the action of the decoy, providing the opportunity of a more realistic and truly demanding evaluation of the dog's courage, judgment and discipline. Such an approach would also lessen impact and thus the danger of injury, without any lessening of effective real world engagement potential. But evasive action by a Schutzhund helper would be likely to result in dogs going to the exposed body parts rather than the sleeve, contrary to the spirit, traditions and rules of the program. These are difficult problems to remedy.

The dramatic high-speed catch is deeply ingrained in the Schutzhund culture, perhaps to the detriment of more effective and safer dogs. Recognition that long standing sport and trial traditions and procedures are becoming obsolete or having unintended consequences is not unique to the dog sports, for American style football is struggling with severe long term brain injuries as a consequence of the glorification of extreme physical impact, and thoroughbred horse breeding creates such extreme lightness in bone in the feet and legs that every day horses routinely collapse and are put down because the power of their muscles and ligamentation simply snap bones bred at the edge of fragility for lightness and speed.

In the early days the decoy’s suit tended to be heavy, stiff and awkward which limited mobility, rendering the helper less agile and more awkward. This was an impediment to realistic training scenarios and drained the energy of the helper. These awkward suits were primarily a consequence of the available materials, usually leather, coarse jute and padding. The old-fashioned American pillow suit, looking very much like the Michelin man of automobile tire fame, was a good example. Photos of the earlier European suits, while still quite restrictive, give the appearance of being more mobile and thus more realistic.

These material and design limitations of early bite suits were perhaps a factor for the German preference for the bite sleeve. By putting the primary bite padding into the sleeve and making the rest of the suit relatively light to protect only against an inadvertent bite they were able to make the helper more mobile and minimized energy expenditure.

As mentioned, over the years, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, modern materials such as ballistic nylon or Kevlar began to supplement and replace the heavy leather, fiber and jute padding of traditional suits, making them much lighter and much more flexible. KNPV and to a lesser extent the Belgian Ring program have been conservative and largely retained original materials, designs and training procedures. But these material and technical developments revolutionized French ring almost overnight, changing it into a virtually new sport and replacing the predominance of the German Shepherd at the competitive levels with the lighter, quicker, much more mobile Belgian Malinois, and putting the focus of the sport on the skill and mobility of the decoy. As with any fundamental change there are positive and negative consequences, French Ring has become much more of a game for the agile dog and an arena for the initiative and showmanship of the helper rather than a test for the powerful, aggressive dog.

The sleeve sports, Schutzhund and IPO, have also benefited from modern materials through lighter and more flexible equipment, which has enhanced durability and made the work physically less tiring for the helper. The effect of this on the actual training process has been marginal, has not had the profound effect on the nature of the training and trial as has occurred in French ring sport.

As we have seen, in Schutzhund the dog is trained and expected to go to the arm, which is presented according to rules, custom and style to allow a safe bite even when the dog engages at high speed and with much power. Although in the

trial the Schutzhund helper usually wears a vest like padded jacket to protect the body in the event of an errant bite, the sleeve itself is a separate piece of equipment. While soft puppy or young dog sleeves can usually be used on either arm, the trial sleeve is left or right handed and incorporates a built up section on the forearm known as the bite bar. Although not used in formal trials, police and protection style trainers sometimes use more compact sleeves or arm protection, known as hidden sleeves, which are worn under a shirt or jacket to determine to what extent the dog is reacting to the equipment rather than the actions and demeanor of the helper.

The helper's equipment is always a compromise: the lighter, less bulky and thinner the gear the more quick and mobile, and thus realistic, his performance can be. Thus the willingness to risk contusion, abrasion or an actual puncture by one or more canine teeth determines the potential for quickness and mobility. In addition to freedom in working the dog, lighter equipment is less tiring and thus enables one to work more dogs and for longer periods.

The agitation muzzle is a mask or cage like device worn over the dog's muzzle to prevent a bite but still allow unrestricted or minimally restricted breathing. Such muzzles are relatively massive and heavy, since they must allow the dog to engage and butt the helper with the muzzle, minimizing the possibility of injury to either party. It is typically heavy leather held together with sturdy rivets and strapped securely behind the ears to prevent an actual bite but allowing the dog to head butt or otherwise engage and fight the helper. Careful design and construction is necessary to prevent the muzzle coming off because of material failure or the dog slipping out of it, which has obvious implications for unpleasant consequences.

Not all muzzles are suitable for agitation work; some are intended to merely restrict the dog, that is prevent a bite in inappropriate situations as for example when he must be in close proximity to people or other animals. Examples include a police dog in a crowd or when providing veterinary aid to an injured or aggressive dog. Such muzzles are typically of fabric or plastic construction rather than the more expensive leather agitation muzzles.

The agitation muzzle historically played an important supporting role, especially in the early years when suits and protective gear was primitive, that is, heavy, bulky, stiff and hot. When the dog is muzzled, the helper is able to work without a suit or other protection, thus becoming much more mobile and agile.

Use of the agitation muzzle in sport work, where the bite occurs in a very stylized and restricted scenario, is unusual. In my experience of some thirty years in Schutzhund I cannot recall an instance of the use of the muzzle in protection training. It is also absent in the KNPV trial, although it may be part of some training programs. The French ring people use a muzzle during part of the obedience exercise, but not in the actual protection work. There is some muzzle work in the Belgian ring.

American police trainers use the agitation muzzle more extensively. A primary reason is that it acclimates a dog to aggression against a man without any specific equipment, which is of course what he will see in service. The person emulating the suspect in training the building search or an outdoor search can more conveniently hide or be concealed and much more realistically represents actual service. Dogs do to some extent become equipment oriented, that is, associate the suit or the sleeve with the occasion for aggression, sometimes becoming confused or tentative in the absence of the equipment. This is fine for the sport situation, but unacceptable in the actual service dog; a solid foundation in aggression in as many scenarios and circumstances as possible, with the decoy as closely as possible emulating field situations, is fundamental.

I have never done any serious decoy work with a muzzled dog, but the people that have tell me it is hard, demanding and exhausting work when done well; an

enthusiastic muzzled dog is very punishing. Bites or lacerations may rarely occur when a muzzle slips off, but a lot of soreness and bruising is routine. As mentioned above, the hidden sleeve is another effective tool for bring realism to the protection training.

The case could perhaps be made that the evolution of the modern suit, so much lighter and more flexible, has negated the original rationale for the use of the bite bar style sleeve, that the fundamental reason for the Schutzhund style of training has been eliminated by modern technology. The counter argument is that no matter how light and flexible the suit, it is still not adaptable to aggressively running at and engaging the dog, and thus in a serious way limited. In the Schutzhund long bite the points go to the dog that launches himself without hesitation to make a spectacular bite, relying on the skill and honesty of the helper to make a proper catch. But in a realistic police encounter the actions of the man are going to be unpredictable with no formal arm presentation to facilitate a good bite. Seen in this light, the value of the courage test is in what it demonstrates about the character of the dog rather than practical on the street engagements.

Each style of equipment, that is the suit or the sleeve, is a compromise that in its own way limits the freedom of the helper to maneuver and engage, and thus restricts his ultimate potential, both in training and testing. My view is that we need ongoing reevaluation of much of this in light of modern equipment, training methodologies and breeding; that trial procedures should be periodically reevaluated in terms of current police deployment realities. Both French Ring and particularly Schutzhund have been diminished by sport and politically motivated compromises; become much too stylized, put too much emphasis on features that do not relate to real world service. The removal of the attack on the handler and the old style turn and attack courage test in IPO were serious degradations, inappropriate concessions to show line breeding and political correctness. The KNPV program has been very conservative and tended not to take advantage of modern materials; new thinking could perhaps bring more mobility and quickness to the work of the KNPV helper. We need to refocus on these trials as gauges of suitability for actual police service, incorporating modern materials, knowledge and technique – and accounting for evolution and change in police deployment practices.

Trial or training scenarios can only emulate and approximate a minute sample of the enormous range of unpredictable events that could potentially occur in the ongoing police engagement. Even for the most experienced canine team, the next encounter may produce entirely unforeseen, threatening challenges. No dog or man is ever perfectly prepared; this is the nature of life. In the end the determining factor is not the equipment or abstract philosophical foundations of the training, but rather the intensity, dedication and vigor of the decoy and the determination of the trainer and decoy to challenge the dog in training as fully as possible rather than merely preparing for a rote trial performance. Ultimately it is the courage, instincts and trained responses of the man and his dog that are decisive, rather than the training equipment or underlying philosophy.

Man's Best Friend

In the police dog world the hard biting, aggressive dog is greatly admired, and the man with one tends to have a little more swagger in his step. But in a broader social context unwarranted dog aggression is an enormous social burden worldwide, resulting in death, disfigurement and a lifetime of disability – physical and emotional – for thousands of men, woman and especially children. Dog bites and aggression contribute significantly to the national cost of medical care, as reflected in insurance rates and increasing limitations by insurance carriers. Roughly a thousand Americans are daily bitten severely enough to seek hospital emergency treatment, resulting in

thousands of hospitalizations often generating enormous bills, a significant ongoing social burden. All sorts of dogs are potentially dangerous and become involved, but those bred for size, power and aggression are for the obvious reasons the most physically capable of contributing to the carnage. Small dogs may be pugnacious or even nasty, but when they bite it is without the power of the larger dogs, and adults and older children can much more effectively fend them off.

Dogs are so useful because of their inherent genetic pliability; through breeding selection we are able to create diverse types or breeds vastly different in size, physique, behavior propensities and aggressive potential. Thus the potential for damage from the individual dog is according to his breeding, both in terms of physical capability and social propensities. But ultimately all dogs descend from wolves, fierce predators driven by innate hunting, social aggression and defensive instincts and drives, which are often not apparent in daily life, but never entirely absent.

In creating the police breeds we have produced dogs which are larger, more robust and much more aggressive than the norm, and taken on an enormous responsibility to maintain control of individual dogs and to keep the wrong dogs out of irresponsible hands. Demonstration of stability and control has been an increasingly predominant factor in breeding selection and more prominent as a prerequisite to on the street service. Although some handlers and units have perpetrated or condoned on the street brutality involving savage canine bites on passive, incapacited or handcuffed suspects – and sometimes wound up in jail – generally our record is credible, demonstrates ongoing responsibility from the top down, that is police and sport administration right on down through individual breeders, trainers and handlers.

This pliability of the canine genetic potential is a double edged sword, providing the baser elements of mankind the potential for enormous evil rather than good. The blood sports – canine bull and bear baiting and dog fighting – have a long and sordid history on the dark side of our canine heritage. The dog fighting community has been condoned, excused and even justified. Apologists make reference to higher class acceptance and participation by supposedly respectable people with clean hands such as lawyers, bankers and politicians. But lawyers, bankers and politicians – as well as main stream clergy – have condoned, profited from and participated in slavery, prostitution and abuse of the working class as well as dog fighting; clean hands, fancy clothing and social status has never in reality been correlated with moral rectitude or social justice. The truth is that the breeding of dogs to fight for the entertainment of perverts is and has always been closely linked with crime and gambling, notwithstanding participation by those with social advantage. This is a shameful chapter in the story of man and dog, an abomination.

Most canine attacks resulting in human fatality in America are a direct consequence of this dog fighting heritage, perpetrated by animals bred over generations for the fighting pit. In the years 2005 through 2012 canine attack resulted in 251 deaths in America. Pit Bulls were responsible for 151 of these fatalities or 60% of the total. Rottweilers, in second place in this grisly compilation, killed 32 Americans in this time period. Fatalities are of course just the most dramatic and press worthy incidents; thousands more are maimed, disabled and traumatized with relatively little attention because such things are so routine and commonplace.

Smooth talking apologists contend that the Pit Bull propensity for aggression and savagery merely reflects irresponsible owners, that all breeds and lines are inherently similar, that inappropriate aggression is primarily the result of environment, upbringing and training rather than the genetic propensities present at birth. This is an absurd canard. Pit Bulls were created by blending Molossers and

terriers to create fighting lines through breeding selection, eliminating or minimizing the normal instincts for self preservation, the propensity to stand down from a confrontation except where life is at stake, to remove through breeding selection all inhibitions against senseless violence.

The word "game" was coined to venerate this perversion of the partnership between man and dog, this glorification of the relentless, senseless propensity to attack and kill for no reason except entertainment, to provide the thrill of blood and gore for the perverts standing in and around the fighting pit. Even several generations away from pit fighting selection these dogs, like unexploded bombs rediscovered decades after a war, have the potential to revert to their pit fight legacy and strike out to maim and kill. It is, after all, the losers, dogs defective even in this bizarre world, which were discarded to become the foundation of urban street breeding. This glorification of the game dog is the shared shame of this perverse community. Michel Vick, famous American football star, personally torturing his dogs onto death for the crime of losing in the pit, was not an aberration, but rather was the quintessential personification of everything evil the pit dog fighting culture stands for.

Although individual law enforcement personnel have from time to time condoned or engaged in dog fighting, the fact that it is patently beyond any moral standard and is illegal in civilized nations demands absolute separation from police canine breeding, selection and deployment. Beyond these issues the fighting line dogs have become the symbols and agents of the cruder and more brutal criminal elements, owned, postured and paraded to bolster fragile egos and intimidate the most vulnerable elements of society. Police deployment of such dogs would be rightly perceived as symbols of brutality and oppression rather than service and protection.

European evaluation venues such as KNPV and the ring sports generally preclude participation by fighting breeds or lines, and venues that do not strenuously exclude dogs of the fighting heritage, and any association with those involved, are simply pandering to the perverts; there is no other honest way to say it.

Angel's Lair All Breed **Angel's Lair Schutzhund** **Police Dog Book**