The Ring and the Trial

Malinois on French Ring Sport scaling wall.

The emergence of the dog as a working partner in the primitive past was based on immediate and direct hands on selection: those perceived as useful were kept and fed and others were likely to be abandoned, pushed out to fend for themselves or culled. When times were good the ineffective dog could perhaps linger, be fed and tolerated as some sort of pet, but hard times would mean that only those contributing to survival would survive themselves. As the human social structure became more advanced and complex, good dogs would have been sought out from neighboring bands, tribes, farms or villages, based on observation of the dogs at their work and perhaps some informal testing. This was effective as long as the social structure was simple enough to enable meaningful observation of the dogs as they went about their work; that is the man needing a dog would be personally familiar with the dogs available or the parents of pending litters.

At the advent of the twentieth century the Industrial Revolution was far into the process of changing a centuries old way of life throughout Europe, altering the very fabric of society. The population was shifting from rural areas to rapidly expanding industrial cities, and uniformed police forces were evolving to deal with crime in the crowded industrial districts and to maintain order throughout the city.

Across much of northern Europe diverse groups of men came to realize that the indigenous working dogs of the farmer, drover and stockman were in imminent danger of being lost forever because of rapid industrialization and the mechanization and modernization of agrarian life. Separately and in small groups they sought to gather together and preserve these various regional working types and form them into breeds. Their legacy to us is the German and Belgian Shepherds, the Rottweiler, the Bouvier des Flandres and the other herding and working breeds as we know them today.

Since the purpose of these men was the preservation of this centuries old working heritage, it was quite natural that as they created their various

organizations and evolved formal standards of appearance and structure they also devised a number of working trial systems. The primary reason for these trials was to serve as a gauge of working character so as to facilitate the selection of desirable breeding stock. In this way, the working trial served the purification of the soul just as the conformation show served to consolidate the desired appearance and physical structure. The sporting aspect drew in many who enjoyed the training and then the competitive nature of the trial itself; it would seem that the desire to go out and see whose horse is faster or whose dog is stronger, quicker and more courageous is as old as the domestication process itself.

In the early years this was essentially a northern European phenomenon. Subsequent to WWI, in the 1920s, the German Shepherd especially and later some of the other breeds became enormously popular in America, but this was primarily for family companionship and conformation exhibition rather than dogs with a serious working role. Actual American police dog deployment was sparse, marginal and transient. Breeding and training according to working capability and function was beyond our comprehension, did not exist in any meaningful way. In the 1970s this would begin to evolve as police canine deployment began to proliferate and amateur involvement through the emerging popularity of Schutzhund began to bring European ways and more work capable dogs and training to the new world.

The Euro Way

Just as working class European immigrants – the Irish, Poles and Italians – looked to America as the land of opportunity, with dreams of gold paved streets, in the earlier years of the Schutzhund movement we, the enthralled Americans, believed that Europe was the land of working dog opportunity, that there was at least one training club in every village or town, easy access to working pups and serious dog training as a way of life. And so it was. But it was also an illusion, a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow that we could approach but never quite grasp and bring home to America.

When I first went to the Netherlands in the 1980s it was all there: the clubs, the dogs, and above all the people with years of breeding and training experience. Belgium and Germany were more of the same, abundant picturesque training fields, often with a cozy clubhouse and a friendly bar complete with old timers conversing or playing cards over a beer, sometimes French fries on the table. Trophies, ribbons, photos and trial posters, going back for decades, adorned the walls. These were people of every walk of life, and the clubs provided an opportunity for the ordinary man to participate and achieve according to his willingness to work and his luck rather than his money. The young trainer was commonplace, and many were aspiring decoys, anxious to put on the suit and engage the dogs. A training field on public land, where you could perhaps have a clubhouse for your own use, seemed easily available, just as American parks have a tennis courts and ball fields. Pups of proven working lines were affordable, especially for those with a more experienced trainer as a mentor. It was typical to see several young men doing the helper work, often with a couple of older men directing in the background. The young enthusiast would often have a father, uncle or family acquaintance who could take him along to the club and, if the interest was there, help him find and train a first dog. Clubs were plentiful and close by; stopping by the club in the evening was a short drive or even a walk with the dog. It was a training life style most Americans could only dream of, and the dream was to become increasingly elusive as the years passed.

Dog training is a way of life for many Europeans used to a selection of training clubs in the neighborhood or just down the road. Many years ago, visiting an old friend near Hilversum, a KNPV judge, she remarked as we were pulling out of the driveway that it was going to be a long ride; that we were on our way to an

especially distant club. Along the way she would point out a KNPV or IPO club, often with a comment on why it was not appropriate for this day. Finally, after an arduous twenty-minute drive we arrived at the desired far distant club, just in time for training. We had gone perhaps 20 kilometers or 15 miles, a short distance most Americans can only envy.

On another occasion, a warm late afternoon sitting outside a clubhouse in Belgium, near the Dutch border, Turnhout if memory serves me, as we sat idly sipping our beer a little old man with a large Malinois male appeared and began his obedience training. In a way it was not very impressive, for the man was slow moving and low key and not much seemed to be going on. A little while later a helper, a very young man, casually came onto the field. After a few words, the helper took up his position on the opposite side of a pond, probably ten to fifteen feet across. The man and his dog moved off to the other end of the field, where the dog was sent with a soft command. The dog burst across the field and over the pond, but at one low key command from the handler stopped, took a regretful look at the helper and returned. On the next go round the dog was, much to his enthusiasm, allowed to complete his attack.

In talking to my friends, I learned that this man, while never quite a big winner, had participated in Belgian Ring for most of his life. A little later, I noticed the man heading out for home. He had a three-wheel cycle arrangement, homemade with two dog crates and bicycle parts, into which he loaded his two Malinois and peddled off home. I am sure that this is a little bit unusual, that many more Europeans load up the Mercedes station wagon, perhaps with an expensive, high tech aluminum dog trailer, than a homemade three-wheeled bicycle on training night. But the access of the common man, the young man with a family or the old man on a fixed income, to the training sports has always been a fundamental, and I believe necessary, part of the heritage. Somehow, we have never quite been able to make this a reality in America.

European training offers diverse opportunities, from the casual social trainer seeking an evening out with his dog to the driven, ultra-competitive fanatic. Some trainers traverse both worlds; I knew a Dutch IPO judge who was training director at a local club and on another evening drove down into Belgium to work with a more competitive, exclusive group. In this way he was able to carry on two distinct and rewarding roles. This was viable because the distance he drove in a month was likely less than the typical American Schutzhund trainer drives in a week; everything is so close together in Europe that even international travel for training can often be done in an evening!

Quality helper work is the foundation of protection training, and historically many European trainers would take up the suit or the sleeve to one extent or another so that the burden was distributed.[1] Many clubs have several helpers with roles according to their age, experience and physical condition. The older men tend to serve mostly as teachers and instructors, only occasionally picking up a sleeve or suit jacket to demonstrate a point or fill in. And, of course, there are a few older men in denial, determined to put the callow young men – the whippersnappers as it were – to shame. But on the whole the bulk of the work is carried on by younger men with the knowledge and experience to work on their own. At the bottom of the pyramid are the novice trainers, eager for opportunity and recognition. Although some helpers prefer the role for its own sake and seldom train a dog, many are also trainers and take for granted that their dogs will receive excellent work in return, since the club with one exclusive helper is very unusual. Not every club has this ideal situation, but most have several helpers, so that the serious trainer can routinely work near to home with good helper several evenings a week.

[1] Participation by women was generally unusual prior to the 1970's.

In Europe as in America modern technology has created a series of distractions – radio, television, video games, the internet – increasingly occupying discretionary time, especially among younger people, chipping away at social activities such as soft ball leagues or dog training. The same trends exist also in Europe; generally amateur dog training seems to be in moderate decline. Police breed registrations have fallen in half or more around the world starting in the mid-1990s, including the German Shepherd in Germany: the European popularity base is eroding in the face of current social and population trends, with ominous, unforeseeable consequences.

Beginning in the 1970s the emerging American Schutzhund movement was a time of excitement and promise, of better things to come. We had come to believe that dog training was fundamentally different and more exciting in Europe, that an all-pervasive working ethic predominated in working breed affairs, that the credo that form must follow function was the universal mantra. Somehow we believed that every European was above the venality of the AKC world; that working the dogs was a serious matter, that what counted was what a dog could do in his work even more than his appearance. Our faith was general, in all breeds, but above all else was in the German Shepherd mythology, so effectively nurtured by von Stephanitz: that form must follow function, that every German Shepherd must pass a rigorous Schutzhund trial as a prerequisite to breeding, each an incipient police patrol dog.

But the reality proved to be disillusioning: not only were insipid show people the norm, not all Schutzhund trials were honest, and what was worse this was known and condoned at the highest levels of the SV. Except for the Malinois community, a significant majority of Europeans involved in the police style breeds were and increasingly are primarily show oriented, just as in America, paying little more than lip service to work. The SV, the legacy of von Stephanitz, was perhaps the greatest disappointment, for in time we were to come to see that the Schutzhund trial was being prostituted, that judges were too often pimps and that titles were increasingly being given to show dogs void of serious police level character through emasculated trials, lenient judges and outright fraud. Most of us had come to accept that American bred German Shepherds were evolving into a deviant breed, but it was almost inconceivable to us that these German show lines were being allowed to degenerate in the same way, just as in America.

Although our expectations, in hindsight grossly unrealistic, led to disillusion, all was not lost, for outside of the SV establishment and the all-breed show dog world there remained diverse pockets of old style working German Shepherds and true guardians of some of the other breeds. Rather than focused on Germany itself, today many of the better dogs are in neighboring nations, that is places such as the Czech Republic, the Netherlands or Belgium. The good dogs from within Germany are coming from lines outside of the establishment mainstream, such as remnants of the old East German breeding or those maintained by the older hard-core German trainers and breeders. Thirty or forty years ago one could look at the four or five generation pedigrees of the winning show and working dogs and see commonality, dogs which in extended pedigrees were producing both working and conformation winners. In recent years, this has become almost unknown; only a fool tries to cross the lines.

Beyond the German Shepherd the other breeds, often with a scattering of really excellent individual dogs, existed only as fragile communities. I saw some excellent Rottweilers, a wonderful Beauceron or two and some of the Bouviers I was looking for, but in a broad sense these were breeds in decline, even in 1984. Although my younger readers will no doubt suspect that I exaggerate, the Malinois was simply not on our radar screens, very few of us, even those of us venturing out to the new Schutzhund clubs, were even aware of the breed.

In America today, some forty or more years after our initial wave of enthusiasm, Schutzhund is still marginal: our vision of prospering amateur clubs available to large segments of the population, with the ambiance of Europe, remains unfulfilled. Among the reasons is our inability to achieve critical mass, to have enough clubs close enough together to bring in the young trainers which carry the bulk of the helper work burden. The sport is increasingly commercialized; with the purchased titled dog still predominant on the field, and helper work more and more a commercial service rather than amateurs working together in a club environment. Young people especially are finding Schutzhund increasingly out of their reach in terms of both time and money.

Our personal experience is an illustration of these trends, for our first Bouvier des Flandres came from the du Clos des Cerberes kennel of Edmee Bowles, driven from Belgium as WWII commenced and living just outside Philadelphia, the founder of the breed in America. We were able to train this male to the Schutzhund III and the FH, the advanced tracking title, in relatively short order. The dog was an excellent natural tracker and strong in protection. The obedience was marginal, mostly because of my inexperience as a trainer and because there was no one with experience to help; I often wonder what the dog could have become had I been better trainer, or if there had been a mentor.

But there was a serious down side to this, for we came to believe that in general the European Bouviers were serious working dogs, that all of their lines were fundamentally sound, that belief in working character could be taken for granted. As a consequence we acquired a few dogs of the then very fashionable Dutch show lines, with the expectation that a little selection would enable us to insure the appropriate character. This turned out not to be true at all, the dogs were in general lacking in sufficient drive for the protection work and difficult in obedience and tracking, exhibiting passive resistance rather than enthusiasm. These lines were eliminated and we went on to establish relationships with people in Holland who were active trainers with police line Bouviers, which provided us a reliable source of excellent dogs. But it was a major detour, a loss of time and a waste of money.

Some might perhaps comment that we should have known better, and there is a grain of truth to it. But this was before the internet and the advent of European travel for the typical American training enthusiast. These were difficult lessons to learn, and even today many spend too much money and time to understand that dogs coming out of mainstream European show lines, of all breeds, fall far short of serious police service potential, are in reality no better than the typical American breeding.

Dog Sports

Why do men engage in violent sport, a ritualistic, limited form of aggression? Today there are enormous amounts of money involved, but this was not the purpose in the beginning. Men engage in boxing or football primarily as condoned and controlled outlets for aggression. Since society at large has generally endorsed, glorified and rewarded this, it is a reasonable premise that maintenance of a certain level of aggressive and competitive drive has always been necessary for the vigor of the social fabric, necessary to enhance and maintain a population with physical fitness and potential for combat prowess. Throughout history the male warrior role, to defend the hunting band or the crops in the fields, has been fundamental to every viable social structure, from the age of hunting and gathering through the military and police service of today. Success in the hunt or an abundant crop meant nothing if outsiders could take by force what time, labor and skill had produced. The fundamental dilemma of mankind is that while war and conflict bring only suffering and deprivation, we glorify the warrior and the implements of war, from the knight

with sword and lance to the military aviator. In a similar way, men admire and desire aggressive dogs, even when there is no social justification, as witness the age-old practices of bear or bull baiting or the fighting pit. Uncontrolled aggression becomes tyranny and oppression, but eradication of the manifestations of aggression through social emasculation and political correctness creates vulnerability at every level.

Just as young men have since antiquity been encouraged in aggressive outlets, pups and young dogs by their nature routinely engage in mock fights and roughhouse play, and much of this propensity carries over into the adult. Just as sport in the ideal teaches the young man to engage and compete within the context of a set of rules and limits, sport training instills in the dog the sense of appropriate, proportionate reaction to specific provocations or simulations, making the dog controllable when the threat is not imminent and thus useful in police service and similar related roles.

Sport, ritualistic aggression, is much more than game playing. In human society, in the era of the Greeks and Romans, and indeed most primitive societies, sport evolved as preparation for war; and reflects these original purposes even today. Although modern working dog training has become increasingly ritualistic and obedience oriented – seriously detracting from the original purposes of breeding selection and service preparation – the training is still essentially sport in this fundamental sense. In the protection work particularly we play out ritualistic aggression without the intent of actual injury for purposes of developing physical fitness and skill in adversarial engagements, to solidify and enhance the instinctive confidence and tactics to prevail in meaningful confrontation.

From the beginning of the modern police dog era the breed founders and police canine pioneers devised functional tests or trials to provide the screening process for breed worthiness and as practical prerequisites for service. Examples include the Belgian Ring Sport, the Schutzhund trial in Germany, extended to all FCI nations as IPO, and the Dutch police or KNPV trials. All of these trials became popular as civilian training, social and competitive venues, a way of life for thousands of amateurs.

Every police breed and line has been based on such trials. In the homeland of the German Shepherd a dog needed to prove his mettle on the Schutzhund field in order to produce progeny worthy of carrying on the heritage, to be members of this noble breed. In the Netherlands the KNPV trial was created to be a police service qualification, primarily a test of readiness for patrol duty, but also emerged as the de facto breeding requirement for the Malinois and the working Bouviers. The Ring Sports of Belgium and France are suit oriented sports similar to KNPV but somewhat more civilian oriented, but with little practical emphasis on the scenting or olfactory capability.

Schutzhund, and to a lesser extent the Ring Sports, were primarily created as breeding certifications and sport rather than to produce dogs ready for immediate deployment in a police patrol role. Thus in some ways these exercises, relative to KNPV, can be seen as less practical and less directly related to service. In the older days this was of relatively minor practical significance, since innumerable Schutzhund titled dogs historically went on to exemplary police service with minimal additional training; a good Schutzhund dog was indeed usually transformable into an exemplary on the street patrol dog. When the trial was sufficient to challenge the dog, to reveal and discard the insecure, unwilling and unstable, the details of the exercises were relatively minor issues, the resulting dogs easily adaptable to street service.

But in more recent years the lowering of standards in the IPO program, and the emphasis on style and rote obedience rather than challenging the dog physically and in character attributes, has diminished the credibility for police service. Much of the rising popularity of the Malinois in police and military applications is related to this

degeneration in IPO and the consequent diminished confidence in German Shepherd working lines; a good German Shepherd is still a remarkable police patrol candidate, but the proliferation of show line Shepherds with suspect IPO titles has debased the currency. The IPO title is no longer a serious universal indication of police potential, and police level German Shepherds are today virtually unknown in these show lines, virtually a different breed from the heritage of von Stephanitz.

Schutzhund as we came to know it after WWII did not exist in the early years. Prior to the WWI there was a police dog certificate which predated the Schutzhund title, held by a significant number of the influential breeding males of the era. But this was mostly a matter of evolving programs and terminology, the expectation of actual proof of performance as a prerequisite, although not always honored, was an objective from the beginning.

Thus it is to be understood that in the early years the process was imperfect and sporadic, not all or even most German Shepherds actually held a Schutzhund, police or herding title and the tension between emerging show breeders and the police oriented trainers intensified in the 1920s as explored further in the chapter covering German Shepherd history. Toward the end of his life von Stephanitz implored:

> "Take this trouble for me; Make sure my shepherd dog remains a working dog, for I have struggled all my life long for that aim."

The real concern was not so much the external societal influences but rather the enemy within, the show and commercial elements this man struggled against throughout his leadership tenure. This internal struggle for the soul of the German Shepherd is not novel, was incipient in the beginning, even prior to the SV in the days of the Phylax Society, and is ongoing today.

The working trial in the ideal serves to set a minimum level of physical prowess and inborn character attributes – intensity, trainability, stability – for breeding. But even when honestly and diligently conducted this is an inherently flawed process, for no matter how severe the written requirements and diligent the judge and decoy it is still artificial and contrived, cannot recreate the reality and stress of street engagement. As a consequence, trainers have always been ahead of the curve in their ability to prepare a marginal dog to pass the trial, even if with indifferent scores. Thus even the KNPV certificate or an impressive Schutzhund score does not guarantee that a dog will succeed in actual service, and every serious working breeder and police trainer knows this.

But for purposes of breeding selection this does not negate the essential validity of the ongoing process. Training and certifying marginal dogs is arduous and unpleasant work, and does not enhance one's standing in the esteem of his peers. Knowing that one's reputation is based on the actual serviceability of the dogs produced, and that the breeder will most likely need to train the progeny in their turn, provides a strong incentive to select for breeding the strongest and most trainable dogs.

Thus in the beginning, and for many years thereafter, even today, it was and is the selection through the training process itself rather than the actual titles, or the relative scores, that were of paramount importance. Dogs had value not only because of a working title, but because they and their line were known and acquired locally by those who had seen them work, or had friends and associates who could provide first-hand knowledge. The fact that the dog had a lucky day and barely made it through, or was a particularly strong dog losing points through enthusiasm, was available knowledge that had its own influence on the value of the dog. The point of the trial was not so much that bad dogs will fail and be eliminated but rather that the breeder and trainer, since he must title each dog, will make a strong effort to

improve his lines so that the training takes a reasonable amount of time and effort, and is a much more pleasant and rewarding experience.

This natural competitiveness played out on the trial field is a fundamental aspect of the process. When I take my dog on the field in a club trial or when a European trainer takes his dog into the stadium for the most important and prestigious European event, scores, diplomas, titles and who is first or second are of secondary importance. What is most desired is the ongoing respect of one's peers, the people who have shared the struggle on the training field over the years. These people are not fooled, see through the points and the pieces of inscribed paper and know and respect the good dogs and programs, the trainers who have struggled to produce them. This is the mechanism by which the trial system maintains and enhances the working breed, this is why the individual breeders and trainers struggle each year to come back with a better dog and earn the ongoing respect of the community.

In the 1970s and 80s Americans in increasing numbers became aware of these titled dogs and were willing to spend ever increasing amounts of money to obtain one. Acquisitions for individual need and desire quickly evolved into the concept of brokering dogs, of buying dogs on speculation with the idea of a substantial profit through eventual resale in America and other remote nations lacking an indigenous working dog heritage.

This was a critical juncture, for it profoundly changed the dynamics of the European training community. When the dogs remained within the local community it was knowledge of the work of the dog and the reputation of the lines, the trainer and the training club, that established the value of the dog. The advent of brokering dogs, selling them into distant and unknown environments, tended to change the titled dog into a commodity. In these new circumstances, a piece of paper denoting a working title took on new and unreasonable value. A dog with such a certificate had significant foreign sale value even if the title was earned in a marginal way, on a lucky day, under a lenient judge or simply fabricated, an untitled dog fraudulently sold with falsified papers.

For the European trainer with one eye on the dollar this meant that the quickest route to the title, regardless of the actual quality of the dog or his training, became a primary consideration. Why put extra work into a dog which is going to disappear into the broker's hands the day after the trial, never to be seen again? Rather than training the dog with the objective of laying a foundation for ongoing training and serviceability the remainder of his life, training just to get through the trial, by any means, becomes the profitable approach for the quasi-commercial trainer.

Thus the trial based training and breeding system is a fragile process, susceptible to outside influence, primarily in the form of money. When ignorant Americans will buy a dog based on the title alone, for what are seen as incredible prices in a largely working class training community, the system is corrupted and weakened at its very core. The desire for the quick title and the money from the consequent export sale rather than excellence and personal satisfaction can quickly become the primary motivation. When the Americans are joined in ignorant enthusiasm by the newly rich Japanese, Chinese and others willing to expend enormous amounts of cash the heritage is prostituted, in danger of collapse.

In summary, the reality is that a title is a piece of paper, that the presence of a title does not in and of itself guarantee that the dog is capable of effective service. Aside from the fact that the title might be fraudulent at some level, which does happen, the dog may have been slid through under a lenient judge or just had a lucky day. Every person buying a dog needs to regard the title as an indication that the dog is potentially worthwhile, but base the actual purchasing decision on more comprehensive testing and confidence in the seller of the dog. In buying a dog, especially an ongoing series of dogs as in a police program, knowledge of and

confidence in the seller is even more important than the evaluation of any individual dog.

For the person new to the working dog world it can be quite difficult to grasp that while the working trial is the foundation of every successful working line the title on the individual dog is of only limited value, is not and should not be taken to be a credible guarantee of working potential. This is always a paradox for the novice, and we all begin as a novice. This paradox can only be mastered gradually through experience and observation over time. The tendency is to make one of two errors: either believing that the title is literal proof of working functionality, or the more treacherous converse, that since the title does not always correlate with working excellence in the individual dog, it is not of fundamental importance in the ongoing breeding process.

This fundamental principle, the absolute necessity of testing working stock through training, has at times been an enormous difficulty for those in what have come to be known as the alternative breeds, that is, breeds other than the German Shepherd and the Malinois. Since it is very unusual, almost impossible, to find lines in these breeds generally based on the title as a breeding prerequisite, overly credulous enthusiasts come to believe that these breeds and these lines are or can be viable sources of reliable working stock. Sometimes, depending on the integrity, dedication and skill of the individual breeder solid, reliable lines do exist. But all too often this is not true, the program is based on emotional appeal and clever promotional schemes, as many have learned through personal disappointment. Thus many enthusiasts for these breeds are in a perpetual state of denial, choose to believe things that common sense, the evidence available through observation and accumulated wisdom, have made obviously untrue. But widespread denial of objective reality has only tended to accelerate rather than retarded the demise of these unfortunate breeds, as I know too well.

Schutzhund and IPO

Doberman Pincher Buster Wimmerhaus
Decoy Rolando Salvador

In America, Schutzhund was the big new thing in the latter 1970s, an exciting alternative to the dreary obedience programs of the era, where passive compliance was the preordained role of the dog. This was a venue where the protection dogs were called upon to fulfill their age-old heritage, to protect, to engage human adversaries in simulated attack scenarios. The dogs, the good ones, came alive, and their handlers were right there behind them. The AKC establishment was appalled, biting dogs were simply not the American way, and dire predictions, by establishment icons such as Carmine Battaglia, of action by the civil authorities to suppress this German perversion were shrill and widespread, which only added to the aura of excitement.

Throughout most of the twentieth century, Schutzhund was the predominant European working dog venue, created by the founders of the German Shepherd as a character and working evaluation for their incipient breed. Beyond these origins this program quickly evolved to become the predominant all breed police style working dog trial system, first in Germany, and then through the international popularity of the German police breeds increasingly prominent in various national venues in other European nations and the rest of the world, particularly North America. Most Americans, including the dog people, had never heard of strange things such as ring sports, bite suits or breeds with funny sounding names such as "Malinois."

Schutzhund specifically evolved as a German national sport under the VDH, that is, the German national organization comparable in scope to the AKC. In other FCI nations a similar bite sleeve style international program under FCI auspices, the IPO program (*Internationale Prufungsordnung).* Over the years there had been substantial differences in rules, philosophy and judging expectations, but beginning at the turn of the twenty first century the programs converged, became more and more similar. International annual championships under the IPO banner gradually became the most prestigious venues in the world.

Finally, on January 1, 2012 IPO became the universal FCI protection dog working trial and Schutzhund as a distinct entity passed into history, although the term is still widely used in the colloquial sense.

The primary purposes of Schutzhund are:

Identification of those dogs suitable to be bred, that is, of sound temperament, willing to work and of correct structure.
Preparation of the individual dog to serve the purpose of its breed in police or military service or civilian protection of family and property.
Provision of sport and recreation for man and beast that brings out the best qualities of both.

The use of the separate, removable, padded arm in the protection work, rather than the full body suit, and the fact that the dogs are trained to bite the forearm exclusively, distinguishes Schutzhund from other protection dog venues. The Schutzhund trial consists of three separate phases or distinct sequences of exercises, focused on tracking, formal obedience and protection. These individual testing phases normally take place in a single day at a small or local trial, but are spread over two or more days at major regional, national or international championship events. All of the dogs are sequenced through the individual phases individually, so a particular dog will typically have an hour or more between phases in a single day trial. In a larger trial, each dog's work will normally be spread over two or more days. The local trial employs a single judge, while the larger event uses three judges so that the phases can go on concurrently, that is, while one group of dogs is out in the field tracking, another group, with a different judge, will be sequencing through their obedience routine. In any situation, all of the dogs see the same judge for any particular phase, that is, one judge does all of the tracking or protection evaluations.

Although there have been historical references which describe Schutzhund as originating as early as 1900 as a foundation on which the German Shepherd was built, this must not be taken too literally, especially in light of the fact that there is no explicit use of this term as late as 1925 in the seminal von Stephanitz book. Schutzhund is the German word for protection, and in this generic sense they were evolving a variety of tests and trials under varying rules and procedures. Thus although police trials and certifications began well before 1910, Schutzhund titles as such did not begin to become common in German Shepherd pedigrees until the 1920s, and the program as we know it today would not entirely emerge until the post WWII era.

Veterans of the sport tend to regard the transformation of Schutzhund into IPO as part of an ongoing watering down, a popularization based on political correctness in an increasingly pet oriented European canine environment. In such minds IPO is Schutzhund reduced to Schutzhund light, mere sport in the pejorative sense, stripped of much of the potential to guide breeding in the way of strong, serious police patrol level dogs.

Since the Schutzhund program is for dogs of the protective heritage, its emphasis is on those qualities necessary in such dogs, such as initiative, courage and trainability. The three phases of the program are tracking, obedience and protection:

Tracking tests the olfactory capability, the ability to follow the path and find objects dropped by the tracklayer, as a dog would be called upon to do in police or civilian search and rescue service.
Obedience demonstrates heeling, retrieval of objects, jumps and other exercises that demonstrate agility, compliance and handler control. The presence of another competing dog on the field during the obedience exercise verifies impartiality to such distractions.
Protection involves a search and hold of an adversary, close in defense of the leader and a remote pursuit and engagement of an adversary.

The performance in each phase is evaluated by the judge and awarded up to 100 points according to the correctness of the exercise, with a resulting 300 points for a

hypothetical perfect performance. The dog must receive a minimum of 70 points in each phase in order to achieve a new title or pass. Titled dogs which fail a trial do not revert to a lower level or give up the title as is customary in some other sports such as French Ring or KNPV.

There are three progressively more difficult levels of competition that lead to the IPO titles I through III. Many dogs go on to compete repetitively at the IPO III level in order to achieve the highest possible score and thus to qualify for participation in various regional, national or international championship events. There are also advanced tracking programs and a number of other specialized titles; it has more recently become possible to compete in a single phase such as tracking or obedience although no actual titles are awarded.

Among the factors contributing to the usefulness of the dog is the remarkably sensitive nose, which makes the sense of smell so superior to that of a human being that a dog virtually lives in another world. The olfactory sensitivity adds another dimension, a further capability, to the human-canine team. In service dogs locate lost children, detect the presence of narcotics or warn of and perhaps engage a concealed adversary, as in a criminal hiding in a commercial warehouse, store or factory.

Tracking is thus an integral facet of the program in order to verify and enhance this most useful faculty. The test is conducted in an open field where a person, the tracklayer, walks a prescribed route several hundred yards long and drops a number of articles, such as a glove, which the dog must locate. Elementary level tracks are laid by the handler himself; more advanced competition uses a different person as tracklayer. The IPO three track incorporates four ninety degree turns, three objects such as small blocks of wood to find and is an hour old. The track is sometimes laid in a plowed field rather than on grass or in a pasture, but there are no transitions in cover.

The track is aged for a period according to the title being sought (20 minutes to an hour) after which the dog is taken to the marked starting point and sent out, usually on a ten meter line attached to the collar. (The handler has the option of sending his dog off lead, but I have never seen this done in an actual IPO trial.) It is necessary for the handler to stay ten meters behind the dog, at the end of the line, except when the dog picks up a dropped article or indicates its presence by laying down or sitting. The difficulty of a particular track is dependent on the nature of the vegetation and the weather. Damp, cool, still conditions are generally the most favorable. Early in the morning is often the best time of day, and most local trials begin with tracking as early as practical. Tracking dogs goes on regardless of weather, my dog has passed tracking after an inch or two of snow or enough rain to cover the articles occurred between the laying of the track and the actual exercise. Freshly plowed or disked fields are sometimes used for tracking.

The rules, procedures and judging expectations require that the dog track footstep by footstep, that is, according to the disturbance in vegetation or soil at the surface rather than the air borne odor of the person which dissipates over a wider area. Even the slightest deviation from the track is penalized by point deductions.

During the obedience exercises the dog heels at the handler's side in a pattern with turns, changes of pace and distractions such as gunshots and a group of milling persons. The dog must be left in the down, sitting and standing positions and come when called. Objects thrown by the handler are to be retrieved on command. This is done on the flat and over a one-meter barrier and over an A frame shaped scaling wall. The dog must go out away from the handler and then down on command. The gun sure AKC obedience competitor at the CDX level will find the Schutzhund I obedience routine familiar, the only additional exercise being the go out which is introduced at the Utility level under the AKC system. There are always two dogs on

the field during the obedience exercises, one doing the active routine and the other on a long down away from the handler; this demonstrates control and the willingness to tolerate the presence of a neutral dog, often important in actual working situations.

The protection exercises involve a number of simulated attack and guarding scenarios where the dog engages a human adversary wearing padded pants and a padded sleeve which the dog bites or grips. Schutzhund training, in contrast to most other systems, requires that the dog bite only the arm with the sleeve. Once on the sleeve, the decoy will strike the dog twice with a padded stick across the rib cage to establish the willingness to persist in the face of a counter attack. The dog is trained to respond to an active aggressor and that when the helper ceases active opposition and the release command is given he must remain attentive and guard but must not bite unless the decoy renews physical aggression, in which case the dog must firmly grip the sleeve. Control and discipline are recognized as essential attributes of the well-trained dog.

In the IPO III protection routine, the dog begins at the end of a long field, often a football or soccer field, and searches six blinds, often portable, triangular fabric covered frames looking like small tents, and then intensively guards and barks at the decoy standing still and silent in the last blind. After a time the judge will indicate to the handler to call the dog back to his side, and the decoy leaves the blind and takes a stationary position. The handler places the dog on a down about six yards from the decoy. The decoy runs away, and the dog pursues and bites the decoy on the arm. The decoy turns and drives the dog several yards and locks up in a stationary posture facing the dog. On handler command the dog releases and goes into the bark and guard posture. The decoy lunges and the dog bites a second time, followed by two sharp stick hits to the rib cage, and the locks up again. The handler gives the release command and steps up behind his dog calls him to his side. Finally the handler takes the stick from the decoy and the handler and dog escort him to the judge.

The final exercise is the long bite, formerly known as the courage test, which involves the handler sending the dog against a distant helper running toward the dog in a threatening manner, with the helper slowing as the dog engages for a safe grip or bite. Once the dog engages the helper drives the dog, that is, steps into him in in an intense way and strikes two measured, constant stick hits. When I became involved in the late 1970s the Schutzhund III courage test began with the decoy walking to the center of the field, about 40 yards from the dog and handler at the end of the field, and then running away from the dog. When the decoy was about 50 yards out, the judge would signal the handler to send the dog. As the dog approached the decoy would suddenly turn and aggressively run at the dog, waving the stick and presenting a very threatening picture. The turn was serious psychological pressure, for the fleeing prey suddenly became the aggressive adversary. For reasons of political correctness and to reduce the pressure on the show line German Shepherds, the flee and turn aspect was eliminated and the distances, which test confidence and drive, were greatly reduced.

Advocates of other systems, usually enthusiastic novices, sometimes contend that this is an artificial restriction and renders the Schutzhund trained dog less well prepared for actual police or civilian guard service; but the fact is that for a century such dogs in Germany have been the wellspring of police service canines and provided much of the foundation for the advent of American police dog service. Other trial systems use a suit providing full body protection and provide much more latitude in bite location. (All of this is discussed in great detail in the chapter on protection training.)

In the early years of the American Schutzhund experience, in the 1980s, most of us came from an AKC obedience competition background, seeking out greater challenges and a more fulfilling experience for our dogs. For us the immediately striking difference was that the Schutzhund obedience exercises are conducted outside on a relatively large open field rather than the cramped AKC ring with its confining fence, important considerations with the larger, more robust dog. In the earlier years there was less emphasis on precision – the handler had some latitude in the precise location of turns in the healing pattern. The fact that the dog might be a couple of inches ahead of or behind or sit slightly crooked was not of Earth shaking consequence, for the purpose was to demonstrate control, cooperation and working willingness rather than to turn the dog into an ultra-precise heeling machine. Unfortunately in recent years Schutzhund has increasingly focused on the details of precise obedience, becoming much more obedience and style oriented in the process. This trend has been greatly exacerbated by the metamorphosis into IPO, where subservience is increasingly important relative to the aggression, initiative and robust character fundamental in real police dogs.

Although tracking, obedience and protection are the three phrases of the program, the divisions are in a certain way more apparent than real, for each facet of the training must contribute in harmony to the balanced whole, result in a fundamentally sound dog, or they mean nothing. In a properly run program there is synergism, the lessons of one phase positively reinforcing those of the others. The tracking builds confidence and initiative that carries over as an alert, positive attitude in the obedience. Obedience teaches discipline and responsiveness to the handler, which reinforces the precision necessary for high tracking scores and paves the way for the control aspects of the protection work. And the enthusiasm of most dogs for the protection work carries them through the long haul, provides the spark that makes training day the best part of their lives The proper Schutzhund program does not train tracking, obedience and protection, it does not even consider the dog as a whole and train him, rather it trains the team, the dog and his leader together.

The club level trial generally starts with the tracking early in the morning, since that is the most favorable time for this work, and because there is a long day's work ahead if there is a full slate of ten or twelve dogs. The judge begins by assigning tracklayers and supervising the laying of the tracks. Each team in turn reports and is sent out to attempt their track.

The judge does a cursory temperament evaluation in which he will purposely pressure the dog, perhaps by walking between dog and handler, perhaps pushing him with his knee; the dog showing a fearful or inappropriately aggressive reaction can be excused.[2] It is the judge's prerogative to devise whatever tests he believes to be necessary to establish the stability of each dog as they progress through the day. It is entirely appropriate that the Schutzhund judge have sufficient latitude in conducting the trial in that his duties are by far the most difficult and serious one can take on in the entire scope of canine affairs. In the larger view, it is much more important that the best dogs, according to real life utility, be favored for breeding than who takes home the biggest tin cup that particular day, for in thirty or forty years the cup will most likely have been left on the curb for the trash man by the descendants of the handler, but the dogs selected will still be contributing through their progeny.

At the completion of the track the judge will give a brief critique of the performance and announce the scores. At the local trial, especially in newer clubs with less experienced members and competitors, a primary purpose of the critique is

[2] Increasingly stringent screening in the preliminary BH examination, and diligence in training and selection, has severely limited the problem of inappropriate or poorly prepared dogs entering trials.

education; the judge will often not only point why he has taken points away, but go on to suggest improvements in training approach to correct the problems. Teaching at the club level, especially where the sport is relatively new as in America, is an important part of the judge's role, and a trial conducted by a good judge can be an effective educational opportunity as well. There are similar critiques after the obedience and protection exercises.

The judge's critique can greatly enhance the spirit of fair play and sportsmanship, for those present may come to understand what he has seen that was not apparent from their vantage point or within the scope of their experience. They will occasionally find out that they noted a detail that he in fact missed, for no man can see everything when there are two dogs and two handlers on the field, often widely separated. Many years ago the noted judge Jean-Claude Balu made a point that bears repeating: it is the judge's responsibility to score according to what he actually sees and hears, that while he will on occasion know or suspect that something has occurred when his vision was blocked or his attention diverted he must not deduct points. It is important that those in the audience be aware of this distinction. (God forbid that in this day of instant replay anyone suggest that we interrupt the flow of the trial for a review of the judge's decision, especially one initiated by a disgruntled handler.) The necessity of giving a critique and announcing scores immediately after the exercise puts an element of pressure on a judge, as there is no such thing as having a ring steward post the scores and being long gone before anyone knows what went down.

Temperament or Character Testing

Ongoing training and testing of each generation, in which aggregate working effectiveness is enhanced as dogs found wanting are discarded from breeding, is the engine which drives the working dog world. In the police dog trainability, the willingness to cooperate, to take pleasure in working with his leader, is essential, as important as aggression, fighting drive and olfactory prowess. Initial and ongoing training is a substantial component of overall deployment cost, and the willing dog who takes joy in his training rather than rendering only sullen, passive compliance requires less training effort and time and thus less ongoing cost. More willing dogs are by their nature under better handler control and thus less inclined to inappropriate aggression, with the associated liability vulnerability.

Furthermore, the inherently willing dog, with sufficient drive, is much less likely to be discarded from a training program, with a substantial waste of time and money, than the aggressive but difficult dog which ultimately has to be dropped after extensive training. These are serious considerations for the amateur trainer, but are even more critical issues for police and military agencies where cost effectiveness is the prerequisite for long-term viability of canine deployment programs. This does not imply soft dogs for marginal handlers, but rather hard, aggressive dogs which can be effectively molded through training for reliability as well as effective work in capable hands. On the other hand, many police handler candidates will not be easily capable of dealing with extremely aggressive and difficult dogs that the exceptional experienced trainer might be able to deal with; there is a fundamental need for mainstream dogs in the sweet spot of the balance among aggression, trainability and willingness.

Training dogs, especially breeding and show stock which will never actually work, is time consuming. Training good dogs is generally pleasant and rewarding, but training mediocre, reluctant dogs soon becomes drudgery, and sometimes reveals what you do not want to know, inadequacies in the dog which should eliminate him from a breeding program. The obvious solution, and the way the system is supposed to work, is to breed stronger and more willing dogs. But conformation oriented

breeders tend to keep many dogs and do not want to put forth the effort to train them, or to eliminate for character defects revealed under training dogs which otherwise have the potential to be show winners. Conformation exhibition is extremely competitive, and breeders which attempt to have balanced programs, under slogans such as "the golden middle," are often unable to compete with breeders with large operations which simply ignore character unless it interferes with show ring performance. Even character flaws such as spookiness which would be a detriment in a simple companion home are brushed aside because most of these dogs spend a dreary life in a kennel run.

Essentially it comes down to a marketing problem: people in general buy a Doberman or Rottweiler based on the police or protection dog image, imagining that their families will become more secure and especially that they will feel, and be perceived as, more virile and manly as the proud owner of a police breed dog.

In response to these needs and desires many conformation oriented organizations, in Europe as well as America, devise and promote so called character or temperament tests intended to certify totally untrained dogs. As we shall see, there are several reasons why such tests are patently absurd, not the least of which is that trainability, in and of itself, is an important component of correct character, and trainability obviously cannot be demonstrated without actually training the dog and demonstrating the results in a credible public forum.

Almost from the beginning breeders of the police breeds, particularly the German Shepherds, began to split into those primarily focused on producing dogs actually capable of police, military and high level civilian and sport work and those interested in success as conformation show breeders, selling most of their pups, increasingly weak in character, to the indiscriminate companion market. Those focused on the commercial companion market, the pet sellers, know very well that what they are selling is the image of the robust police dog, the aura of working character, just as those seeking an automobile sometimes desire the aura of racetrack excitement even though they drive only on mundane local errands. They further know that selecting and training real police level dogs interferes with selection for the conformation win, a problem that only becomes more difficult as show fashions require increasingly grotesque physical form and gait, as witness current German Shepherd show lines in Europe as well as America.

Thus over time the show breeders found that their weaker and less trainable dogs were less and less in demand by deploying agencies and serious amateur trainers, with the result that the breeder's customer base became increasingly tilted to companion owners that could not really tell the difference and were less able to manage the more intense dogs. Training unwilling breeding stock for the trial field became more onerous and time consuming, and being competitive in the show ring increasingly required retaining dogs in the program which are inadequate for work, and pass this on in their progeny.

It is thus the natural desire of the show breeder for a simple certification process, not involving any real work or effort, and not likely to disqualify their breeding and show stock, sort of a mass production universal verification process. The SV solution has been the subversion of the trial itself through less stringent rules, more lenient judges and home field or quasi-private special trials. This was possible because the conformation elite of the SV was in real control of the Schutzhund trial, that is able to established the rules, designate judges and condone ever increasing leniency. This was an option not as easily available in other nations or other breeds.

As an alternative the so-called character test has been extensively promoted and deployed. Such tests are based on the premise that training is actually unnecessary, and is in fact an impediment to effective breeding selection. The thesis is that by devising clever tests for the natural or untrained response we can see the true

nature and potential, unhindered by human manipulation, thus gaining a more accurate insight as well as avoiding the time, cost and effort of training. In this view of the canine world, training serves to unnaturally conceal and cover over the essence of the dog. Various temperament or character tests have been proposed and implemented for these purposes, often under the auspices of conformation oriented national breed clubs.

There is a tiny grain of truth here, for all trials are and always will be imperfect, it is possible that a combination of clever training, a cozy home trial field, a less than ruthlessly diligent judge and a simple lucky day can get a dog – sometimes a very seriously inadequate dog – through the trial, perhaps even with an impressive score. It cannot be said too many times, a title is not an absolute proof of inherent quality.

But there are larger and more pertinent truths. It is impossible to create a system for testing untrained dogs because they will not be untrained, owners will extensively prepare for the tests, know the weaknesses of their dogs and the expectations of the testers, and acclimate them. Rather than a test for untrained dogs it will become an emasculated pseudo trial, a self-defeating charade. This is precisely what the currently implemented systems have become.

At the heart of the matter, dogs are useful because they are trainable, that is, willing to respond to the needs and commands of the handler and thus bring the physical and moral aspects of the dog – his power, his quickness, his olfactory prowess – into harmonious partnership and service. The responsiveness to command and training is especially important to the police canine team, where any break down in discipline can result in injury or the loss of life to innocent civilians as well as criminals and police personnel.

Much of this cooperation and control is the consequence of environment, a sound upbringing with appropriate socialization and effective, timely training. But working willingness is in fundamental ways genetic, inherent in the dog, the consequence of generations of selective breeding. This underlying genetic predisposition to cooperation and trainability is fundamental, and can only be verified through the actual training and testing process.

The idea that it is possible to evaluate a dog for breeding or service without hands on validation of his trainability, his inherent willingness to be a partner, is an absurdity only the most naïve or disingenuous could put forth. Unfortunately, people profoundly ignorant of the real process of canine deployment and training become conformation oriented breeders, officers in canine organizations, conformation judges and in general those in control of the canine establishment.

If the canine working trials are imperfect, as they are and always will be, the solution is not to contrive superficial tests for untrained dogs, but rather to incessantly work to improve trial procedures, require more advanced titles at regional trial fields and move the selection of judges into the hands of regional officials rather than local club officers. No baseball team, after all, expects to select, hire and pay their own umpires. No football team – in the European meaning – expects to bring their own referee to issue yellow cards to irksome opponents.

Furthermore, because it imposes compulsion the training process exerts psychological pressure on the dog. Since this pressure is likely to be greater under the stress of deployment, where the consequences of a breakdown in discipline can be very serious, the resilience of the dog during training pressure is in and of itself an important factor in service worthiness. The decision to continue or discard the dog under training is an ongoing process; every trainer will dismiss candidates because of observation and contrived tests in order to make as good a selection as possible before investing further time and effort. And it is true that mistakes are made, for it is not uncommon to select a dog and yet in the future discard him when he is revealed as inadequate under the pressure of training. Indeed, for this reason, the

trainer will typically give the benefit of the doubt to the questionable dog for this very reason, so as not to make a mistake and bypass a good dog. And no doubt dogs who under some trainer, some place, sometime could have evolved into excellent workers are discarded and lost; such is the nature of life.

But the fundamental fact remains that canine excellence is proven only in the crucible of training, and that projections or evaluations of untrained dogs are mere speculation. The most courageous and hard dog in the world, capable of the most impressive olfactory feats in search and tracking, agile, swift and powerful, is useless if that dog cannot be molded into an effective, obedient working partner.

The unwilling dog is a useless dog, and no dog who has not demonstrated cooperation in training is of fundamental use. Making breeding decisions on untrained dogs, to speculate that they have the potential for police style service, is akin to having untrained people picked at random on the street operate to see if they are potential surgeons.

An intrinsic problem with these character tests is that they inevitably wind up being conducted by the show-oriented breeders who control the national clubs and others under their direct influence and control. Inexorably, standards are lowered and ongoing weaknesses in the show lines are dealt with not by selection in breeding but by lowered expectations and ever more lenient evaluation criteria. The weaknesses are simply swept under the rug and ignored.

As an example, in such tests the dog is generally required to engage the helper wearing the padded bite suit as a verification of courage and defensive potential. But it is often a sham. On one occasion I was present in Belgium when the well-known Bouvier des Flandres breeder Felix Grulois presented a bitch which exhibited marked avoidance of the helper, even though he averted his gaze and showed great weakness so as to encourage a response. Finally, Grulois just picked her up, touched her to the suit and she was passed, became certified. Nobody seemed to notice, it was just more business as usual. These tests degenerate because when you strip away the pretense and propaganda they are just taking turns certifying each other's dogs. None of them have any real concern about character, they just want show ring glory and to quickly sell puppies for the best possible price.

Schutzhund Commentaries

In the beginning, the advent of our Schutzhund enthusiasm, we had the natural propensity to idealize all things European, especially German, and even more especially the German Shepherd establishment, the SV, the legacy of von Stephanitz. In time familiarity began to breed a more realistic view of the Euro scene, one with bad people as well as good, those with the normal human failings of greed, sloth and false pride as well as inspiring breeders and trainers faithfully carrying on the heritage one dog at a time. That there are all sorts breeding working dogs for money, pet sales and dog show trinkets as well as the perpetuation and evolution of the working legacy.

All of this could be attributed to a certain natural element of naiveté, except for one thing: the realization that the Schutzhund trial itself was systematically being compromised by the SV, that there are private trials, outside of the public purview, available only to favored people, where titles are routinely awarded to unworthy dogs, usually those destined for the conformation ring or export.

My first inkling of this surfaced in the 1980s when reliable people, primarily involved in American GSD conformation competition, were reporting supposedly Schutzhund titled Shepherds which failed to respond to a thrown dumbbell, were gun shy or otherwise obviously seriously deficient, incapable of passing an honest trial. The American show mentality has always been willing to embrace any dog which

could win, regarded the soft or gun insecure German import as an opportunity to acquire a dog otherwise unavailable or much more expensive. It became apparent that there were Germans willing and able to accommodate them, but at the time it seemed likely that this was an aberration, a few people who had somehow discovered a crack in the system, that the export process could somehow be made to conceal the ruse, that in time it would be discovered and corrected. Little did we know.

Denial was for most of us the natural response, a deep seated reluctance to see the truth. But in time it could no longer be denied, there really were and are trials provided for the insiders as a means of titling weak or inadequate dogs, or simply to save the time and effort of training, and as a means of enhancing the value of dogs being exported as breeding and show stock. Americans and conformation oriented people in other nations also routinely send dogs to Germany to obtain a title, likely in many instances through these special trials. Sometimes the dog does not even need to step on the field, the paper work somehow working its way through the system without a trial actually having taken place, as if by magic. (Sometimes it is difficult to tell magic from money.)

It must be noted that deception and deceit are not unique to the Germans or the world of conformation, are melancholy but ubiquitous elements of the human condition. As examples, registration papers for "undocumented" KNPV dogs can routinely be conjured out of thin air and a tinge of favoritism sometimes touches high level working trials. What is unique about these special trials is that the corruption is systemic, that the senior SV leadership abets, condones and profits from this, and has for at least thirty years.

Although motivations are complex and obscure, the copious flow of foreign money, especially American money, has clearly played its part in all of this. The rationale is apparently that one should be free to falsify titles or records on dogs for export, that Americans are vulgar and clueless and thus undeserving, that when they are unable to tell a good dog from a bad dog it is a waste to send them a good dog, which would just disappear into the morass.

Part of the problem is structural, in that other than championship events IPO trials are generally run by a local club, even a private club, as a virtually closed affair where they can and do select their own judge and the trial takes place on the home training field with decoys selected by the club rather than assigned by a higher authority. Where else in life can one select, pay and reward his own judge? Often there have been obscure and unpublished times and locations, making these essentially private trials rather than transparent events, open to scrutiny by the community at large. DVG judges were routinely doing this in the 1980s, particularly in Florida. At the local trial, the judge is all-powerful in his small world. Particularly in the 1980s and early 90s, prior to the common use of video recording, the judge at an American trial was beyond scrutiny, could do whatever he wanted to do. It turned out that some of them wanted to do some remarkable things.

Although the social and sporting aspects of the Schutzhund program became enormously popular, a pleasant way of life for many, the fundamental rationale was always that the dogs doing the best in the trials, and thus preferred for breeding, should be those with the highest potential as actual police or military dogs. Over time this has been seriously compromised, and more so in Schutzhund than the other European venues.

Many regard the Schutzhund style of tracking as done today to be artificial and contrived; more of an obedience exercise than a demonstration of the dog's olfactory prowess. In actual service the dog is permitted and expected to apply his aggregate search capability adaptively – using sight, sound and air scent as well as ground disturbance – according to his instincts and experience and the opportunities of the

actual search. The object in reality is to find persons and objects or other evidence, and stepping off the track to inspect a possibly dropped object is part of the process rather than a defect to be penalized. But any deviation from the formal nose in each footprint track is penalized in the Schutzhund trial. In similar ways, the obedience and protection phases have evolved with less and less relevance to actual work, with emphasis on style in obedience and increasingly less real pressure in the protection.

This tension between fostering effective and adaptive application of the potential of the dog, according to his natural way of working, and the increasingly stylized and artificial requirements of sport competition is among the most serious and important issues in the working dog community today. Dogs are increasingly bred according to artificial, unnatural tracking styles and for rote obedience in exercises that less and less reflect real world working scenarios such as a police dog would face in his work. Under the pressure of the German show breeders and other elements the protection work has been watered down both in the formal rules, where the old reed stick, the attack on the handler and the original courage test are gone, and in the double standard of judging where special, less rigorous, trials for the show dogs are not only permitted but encouraged and condoned. The most slavishly obedient dog, or the most stylishly prancing dog, is not necessarily the best dog.

Although my history has been in Schutzhund for more than thirty years, and I still believe in the old style program, it must be reported that it has become incessantly less rigorous and demanding. The rules have been continually relaxed in a number of ways: the substitution of the A frame for the scaling wall, the introduction of the padded stick, the elimination of the attack on the handler and the severe shortening of the long pursuit, formerly the test of courage. Over these years, no feature to prove the mettle of better dogs and training, such as a call off in the long pursuit or variations in the order and details of the obedience routines on a trial by trial basis, have been introduced or seriously considered. Popularity and accommodations for increasingly marginal dogs always win out over innovations for more stringent breeding and service selection. Most importantly the incessantly weakening rules and especially the lenient trials for show line German Shepherds have greatly reduced the credibility of the Schutzhund title, which after all can be no greater than the weakest performance by the most docile IPO titled show dog, a very low standard indeed.

The Schutzhund program, and the vitality of many police breeds, has been in serious decline over the past twenty years, as evidenced by European and American yearly puppy registrations, which have declined by half or more. The essence of the problem is that most of these dogs are destined for civilian homes, and most of the money has come from these sales and services rather than police or military applications. The Belgian Malinois is the noteworthy exception.

Military and police procurement is increasingly going to programs and breeds outside of the historical Schutzhund world, such as Malinois from KNPV or NVBK backgrounds. Watering down Schutzhund and transforming it to the more politically correct IPO ultimately depreciates the value of these dogs in the public mind, for the whole point for many civilian owners has always been the enhancement of their personal sense of vitality and masculinity through the ownership of a "real" police dog. You can famously fool all of the people some of the time and some of the people all of the time, but increasingly the public at large is coming to see the IPO breeding lines as counterfeit police dogs and taking their money elsewhere.

In the earlier years in America, when the AKC establishment became hysterical at the mere thought of biting dogs, there were reservations in many minds about protection training of dogs by private individuals. Although this has dissipated with the acceptance of Schutzhund and similar sports, and the demonstrated usefulness of police canine teams, these questions are relevant even today, for enhancing a

dog's willingness and ability to perform an effective attack on a human being is very serious business. The prominent and well publicized service of our military dogs throughout the long and difficult Middle East engagements subsequent to the 9/11 atrocity, the increasing success and publicity of police patrol dogs, especially in drug and explosive detection, and a strong history of responsibility and good public relations by protection sport trainers have largely put such concerns behind us.

The Ringers

Although it was German dogs and the Schutzhund trial that became the focus of American attention in the 1970s, in the early years the Belgians were pioneers: arguably training and deploying the first police dogs and then holding the earlier Ring trials. The Dutch and French were not far behind. Well before Schutzhund titles began appearing in German pedigrees like-minded Belgians and Dutchmen were busy creating their own trial systems, including KNPV and the various national Ring Sport venues.

Their distinctive feature of these venues was the use of the full body suit, with the bite surfaces integral to the jacket and pants, as opposed to the separate fore arm sleeve. But there were also significant differences in equipment, philosophy, trial procedures and training methodology. The reasons for these distinct national programs, rather than unity, was separation due to language and culture, the difficulty of travel, especially with dogs prior to the common ownership of automobiles and other modern means of transportation and communication. As regional and national cultural barriers diminished in the 1970s there was an emerging interest in international competition and a German movement to promote their programs and breeds elsewhere in Europe and overseas, which tended to create some push back and conflict, as does all change. These conflicts are ongoing, even if often below the surface.

The Dutch police trials (KNPV), which commenced in 1907, are an arduous, comprehensive daylong sequence of exercises, beginning with water retrieval and obedience in the morning and a sequence of protection exercises in the afternoon. The Dutch suit was historically relatively bulky and heavy, rendering the helper less mobile than in other programs. Newer, innovative suit materials and fabrication methods have enhanced the flexibility and utility of the Dutch suits, but this program has never emphasized decoy mobility the way the French Ring has in the modern era. The Dutch police trainers have tended to be traditional and conservative, which has done much to maintain hard-core, old style demands on dogs and trainers. Their protection exercises emphasize long-distance engagements, and hard impacts in the bites, but modest mobility or evasiveness on the part of the helper. The KNPV trial typically uses a large area, with the water work in the morning at a separate location. With three judges, the obedience and search exercises can go on concurrently, each judge handling the various separate exercises such as the coin search, guard of object and bicycle exercises.

The Belgian Ring suit is similar to the Dutch suit, that is, relatively bulky with a separate bite jacket and maintaining the original configuration. But the trial itself is significantly different from KNPV in that is conducted on a small, compact field using a single judge and decoy. Although the Belgians emphasize the full grip in the bite their rules and procedures allow the judge and decoy a certain amount of latitude in adjusting the details of the various exercises so that the dog and his handler will see variations on trial day. In the protection and object guard exercises, there are different distractions such as rolling barrels or thrown buckets of water to test the reaction of the dog to the unexpected in order to verify confidence and stability.

The French Ring Sport was originally more similar to the Belgian, and their suits were also relatively bulky, stiff and heavy because of available materials and the evolution of training methods. Beginning in the 1970s the French began the aggressive utilization of modern materials such as ballistic nylon to produce light, flexible suits allowing greater speed and elusiveness in the decoy. This revolutionized training and especially the trials, where the decoys employ lighter trial suits to become even more agile and elusive.

While the KNPV helper is engaged from great distance and is very aggressive with the stick, and the Belgian helper presents unexpected challenges at each trial, today the French decoy is expected to, within very rigid rules, evade the dog and take away as many points as possible, again within specific limitations. Where the Schutzhund decoy is expected to make a constant sleeve presentation to all dogs the French Ring decoy is expected to do the exact opposite, evade the dog and trick him into missing his bite. This puts the emphasis on quick, agile, confident dogs and enhances the trial as an entertainment event for the spectators. Trainers adapted to evading decoys by teaching their dogs to go exclusively to the lower body, the legs and thighs, creating a virtually new trial format.

Debate about the practical relevance of these systems is ongoing, one point of view being that real world criminals generally do not approach the dog directly and offer their arm in a stylized manner, and on the other hand a dog missing a bite but persisting is especially effective, allowing the police handler to approach casually, perhaps enjoy a cigarette while the dog and suspect dance, and simply apprehend the man when he becomes exhausted. No actual bite? Less likelihood of a court seeing inappropriate force in the apprehension.

The German Shepherd had historically, before the 1970s, been the predominant competitor in French Ring, but this new style was ideal for the smaller, quicker, more agile Belgian Malinois, which by the 1980s was becoming the predominant championship level competitor. Malinois domination is today so complete that at the Cup of France the thirty or so finalists, almost always all Malinois, are joined by a token dog of another breed, selected on a competitive basis but not competing directly with the Malinois.

Although Schutzhund and IPO have been discussed in detail here, the details of the KNPV trial and French and Belgian Ring are covered in corresponding detail in the chapters on Holland, Belgium and France.

War, Politics, Commerce and History

From the middle 1800s through WWII European history focused on the ongoing conflict between the German peoples, merging into nationhood, and the more established national cultures to the west, especially the French. The armed conflicts of this era – with technical innovations such as the repeating rifle, the machine gun, trench warfare and widespread use of poison gas – took war to new levels of devastation and brutality, decimating civilian populations as never before. Although Germany lost these wars in the formal sense – no German soil was ever actually occupied during or immediately after WWI – Belgium and northern France were subjected to brutal occupation, with enormous devastation inflicted on all aspects of civilian and economic life.

This is relevant in a book about police dogs for several reasons. First the Belgian police canine service and breeding program, of worldwide influence prior to WWI, was decimated as part of the general destruction of the Belgian social fabric and governmental infrastructure. Decades old breeding programs evaporated; full recovery would take most of a century.

In a more general sense the police canine evolved at the epicenter of incessant European conflict. Although the two major world wars are the focus for this, most of the twentieth century, through the 1950s, was a period of intense conflict and often hardship, with enormous consequences for canine affairs. My older readers, especially the Europeans, having lived through it, are fully aware of this; but younger readers need this general context in order to understand the evolution of these police breeds, the service heritage and especially current ongoing conflicts, with deep roots in this tumultuous history.

In WWII the German occupation of France, the Netherlands and Belgium was brutal beyond any purpose of war, focused on inflicting social change by eradicating Jews and other minority groups and making the rest of Europe permanently servile to the Third Reich, establishing a new order in Europe with the Germans established as the master race.[3] Although Germany surrendered and was occupied at the end – and the Soviet Union devastated eastern areas and held them captive for two generations – combat operations on German soil took place only in the final months. Allied post war occupation in western Germany was remarkably benevolent relative to that which had been inflicted on Holland, Belgium and northern France, where brutally enforced labor in German war industries and widespread civilian starvation had gone on for five devastating years, rending the social fabric.

Long lasting and deeply entrenched antagonisms were the preordained consequence of this tragic history, and became factors in canine affairs as well as other aspects of social intercourse, such as economics, politics and commerce. Although much of the angst and anger has been swept under the carpet in the push for European economic and political unity, the smoldering anger of the victims was not so easily abated. Several of the older Bouvier pioneers I came to know carried deep, bitter resentment of all things German to their grave. Today these wounds are healing, are passing from the realm of personal experience into history; but it remains essential to grasp this wretched history in order to fully comprehend working dog evolution and ongoing realities and conflicts.

While Schutzhund was emerging as the predominant working program for the police style breeds in Germany – and increasingly on the international scene – the suit or ring sports of Belgium, France and the Netherlands gained little or no influence beyond national borders. This has been the source of some residual resentment of German domination and success, particularly in nations with historical animosity toward Germany, such as France and especially Belgium, as a consequence of the two world wars. Some of this resentment was based on the ongoing popularity of German breeds in these countries among the general population, especially in France where indigenous national breeds withered on the vine. While the German police breeds were conquering the world, the Beaucerons and Picardy Shepherds were much less popular than these German breeds even in France itself.

Significant factors in this German predominance most certainly included general German economic vitality and emerging national dominance in the critical time period and most especially the effective promotional and publicity program of the GSD establishment. Max von Stephanitz was a public relations genius, an enormously effective leader and marketing strategist.

But the primary reasons that the Belgian, French and Dutch working canine communities failed to establish a presence beyond their homelands were internal, had to do with inherently more inward looking cultures. KNPV in particular

[3] Any American retaining a sense of moral superiority need only to reflect on our struggles to ameliorate the ongoing consequences of slavery and the fate of the American Indians, especially the Cherokee Nation, to know that all cultures, nations and races have things meriting shame; this is the human condition.

maintained its Dutch identity, and attempts to create programs in other nations, especially America, were primarily driven by external enthusiasts, with only reluctant and halfhearted Dutch support. Belgian NVBK efforts were on the whole much too little and too late, and being outside of the FCI establishment much more difficult to implement.

France had always been a relatively prosperous nation, with less economic and cultural incentive for her citizens to seek emigration or foreign economic opportunity; thus there was no large American base of recent French immigrants to promote the interests of homeland canine communities. As a nation the French, more agricultural than Germany, never seemed to be especially interested in propagating their culture or commercial interests beyond their borders, and this mind set carried over into canine affairs. As mentioned, the lack of popular indigenous police oriented national breeds, such as the German or Belgian Shepherds, to promote and exploit contributed to this general lack of French enthusiasm for foreign engagement.

The emergence of IPO under FCI auspices as the predominant international working venue, diminishing the formal German dominance through the Schutzhund program, has profound implications. The pussification of the SV, with real control increasingly in the commercial hands of GSD show breeders, had in later years diminished the rigor and credibility of the Schutzhund trial as a realistic gauge of police patrol dog potential. But in spite of these negative aspects of German dominance, FCI control has not been in any sense an improvement, for it has resulted in an incessant further lessening of the physical and psychological challenge to the dog and increasing emphasis on civilian sensitivities, political correctness and fine points of obedience style irrelevant to real world police work. Control of serious working dog affairs by a pet and show establishment is never destined to end well.

Max von Stephanitz, the master of promotion and public relations, was without doubt the driving force behind the German Shepherd expansion on every front. This was primarily within Germany in the early years, prior to WWI, but became an international juggernaut after the war, continuing until his passing in the middle 1930s. Shortly thereafter the juggernaut faltered badly as the lead up to war under the Nazi regime brought German canine expansion to an abrupt halt. In America German Shepherd popularity plummeted.

The 1940s, WWII and the aftermath, were a time of general stagnation in canine affairs. Since international travel had been by ship, slow and expensive, until well into the 1960s the primary emphasis had been on exporting dogs for conformation competition and breeding. Serious efforts to promote German control in foreign lands through the introduction of their training and evaluation systems had not been a realistic option; difficulty in communications and time-consuming travel prevented serious efforts at meddling in foreign canine internal affairs. Relatively low levels of English proficiency in that era, especially among the working class men who were the typical trainers, had also impeded international intercourse.

This began to change in the 1970s. The Germans, particularly the SV, began to expand their horizons, sought to promote not only their dogs but also their administrative structures – their political and economic power – and trial venues in other nations, especially America. The advent of ever more affordable international air travel meant that they could more easily extend their influence beyond their European neighbors, to America and other more distant regions. The primary formal mechanism for this was the evolution of the World Union (WUSV), where national German Shepherd clubs throughout the world were encouraged to look to the Germans for leadership, guidance and competitive venues. Directly or indirectly they encouraged trainers in neighboring nations to forgo their national venues, such as the ring sports, to take up the practice of Schutzhund or IPO as the preferred sport and trial system, with the intention of making it the standard throughout the world.

This has to a significant extent been successful, but has also created a certain amount of push back, particularly among more senior trainers and breeders, in nations where prior German invasions had been military rather than economic and political.

This new sell was a package deal, promoting the Shepherd and German financial interests went hand in hand with promoting Schutzhund – from the 1970s forward an ever-increasing army of SV judges marched out of Germany each year to do just that. Each judge and trainer was also a salesman and missionary for the German way. As a consequence today most European and North American nations – including the Netherlands, Belgium and even France, the bastions of the suit sports – have significant communities of IPO trainers and high-level representation at the various international IPO championship events.

A decade after the advent of the American Schutzhund movement, in the 1980s, there was a serious effort to introduce the French Ring Sport to America. There was a lot of enthusiasm – and an unfortunate bit of Schutzhund bashing, mostly by those floundering in that venue. After the initial wave of enthusiasm, and the usual political bickering, French Ring settled down to a about a hundred national enthusiasts, two per state on average, and perhaps ten or twenty different teams competing yearly.

The intervening years have seen the attempted introduction, successful and mostly otherwise, of Mondio Ring, Belgian Ring, KNPV and a series of American invented venues, most of which have drawn away French Ring enthusiasts looking for yet another brave and exciting new world rather than bringing in new people. Thus this has not generally been growth but rather the same small band of enthusiasts, perpetually splintering into diverging clans; after thirty years these suit venues still only involve a few dozen resilient advocates while Schutzhund is an order of magnitude or even more larger in terms of clubs, trials and participation. On a positive note, the earlier tendency of the suit sport advocates to incessantly disparage Schutzhund or sleeve style training has for the most part abated, reflecting more maturity as people tend to focus on their own training programs. Visions of involving breeds beyond the Malinois has faded, as sooner or later the vast majority of those who persist in the long term go to the right sports equipment and acquire a Malinois with a ring background, either a French import or a young dog out of import stock. (Dutch Shepherds have also had increasing popularity.)

While the Germans have relentlessly promoted their breeds and their sports, the French, with no numerically significant breeds of their own, have been ambivalent, made sporadic and only halfhearted attempts at some sort of International Ring but with no real commitment. Even in the Euro canine political arena the French have faltered, where at one time French Ring was internationally recognized and allowed ring titled dogs access to the working class at FCI conformation shows, this is no longer the case. Because of its strong ties to the Dutch police services, KNPV has never really aspired to any sort of international expansion beyond the selling of dogs. Several groups of Americans have attempted to create some sort of KNPV organization, but these have all faltered. The Belgian NVBK efforts have been halfhearted and markedly amateurish.

The only real fly in this German ointment has been the success of the Malinois, which in the 1990s began sneaking in and enjoying a nice German lunch at more and more international Schutzhund and IPO competitions. The emerging predominance of Schutzhund, being converted to IPO on the fly, has highlighted the underlying flaws. The fundamental problem with this Schutzhund surge is that it has fallen under the control of the pet and show oriented establishment, especially the hierarchy of the SV, and thus become enmeshed in their corrupt and increasingly commercialized world.

The primary marketing strategy has always been to use the police dog aura to provide dogs artificially enhancing the sense of personal vigor and manliness. The problem has been that generally these shallow, status-seeking customers tend to be inadequate to deal with the real thing, quite naturally leading to emasculated breeding lines and trial procedures. Thus the trend has been to compromise trial rules, procedures and judging to favor the weaker, more compliant dog. This has put breeding and selection increasingly under the control of show dog dilettantes with little commitment to serious police style dogs. The most egregious offender in all of this has been the SV.

The American Experience

Across northern Europe the emergence of the formal police breeds went hand in hand with the evolution of the police dog trial, which was essential for ongoing breeding selection and as a means of evolving and perfecting training doctrine and practice. The police dog role emerged in the social mainstream, and vigorous protection components to these trials were accepted as a matter of course, as generally necessary and unremarkable.

American culture – under British influence – was fundamentally hostile to actual working dogs: protection applications especially were disparaged as low class and of questionable propriety, most certainly not something the respectable person would want to become associated with. Thus even though the European police breeds such as the German Shepherd and the Malinois were created and maintained through working trials, including vigorous protection exercises, in America the AKC never allowed performance requirements for breeding or the conduct of such trials by their breed clubs, nationally or locally, either as sporting events or as the prerequisite for breeding and registration.[4] Yet, in the spirit of the forbidden fruit, police style dogs were enormously attractive to a wide and diverse segment of the American population, as illustrated in the enormous surge in popularity of the German Shepherd following WWI.

As a consequence of this dichotomy the typical American breeder, marketing his dogs on the basis of their implied robust police persona, of necessity became the consummate salesman: when questioned as to whether their Shepherds or Dobermans had the potential for protection or police work they were somehow able to calmly and with a straight face claim that of course their dogs could be fearless defenders or exemplary police dogs, it was just a matter of a little training; which, of course, they never did quite get around to actually doing. The truth is that most of them had little or no idea what the original working dogs behind their watered down lines were capable of, for breeding such dogs without selection based on performance rapidly degenerates into passive, soft dogs, particularly when they discard breeding stock a little difficult to manage or which produced pups coming back as too much to handle.

While America always had a small cadre engaged in informal protection work and self-styled guard dog training, often with a drop off junkyard style protection dog service, and sporadic police department programs, often dying out within a few years of initiation, there were always among us those with a sense of something missing, the desire for better understanding and a more sophisticated approach. Thus a serious interest in the training, trialing and breeding began to gain critical mass in America in the 1970's, largely because of a growing interest in the Schutzhund trial. The Germans stood ready to help, for the enormous popularity of their protective breeds provided a natural outlet for the desire of individuals and breed communities in expanding influence and sales overseas. In addition there were significant numbers of Germans and people with a German heritage from neighboring lands, such as Czechoslovakia, in America, many having emigrated in the years after WWII, with personal knowledge of European ways, European contacts and the desire to recreate elements of this working culture in America.

Gernot Riedel was the self-proclaimed father of American Schutzhund, and there is little doubt that he was correct, or that he was a man of very little false modesty. Mr. Riedel was born in Czechoslovakia where he began training Bavarian border police dogs in 1946 for the American military. He was an active German Shepherd breeder and trainer, emigrating to the United States in 1955, settling in the San

[4] Shortly after the year 2000 the AKC began to realize that police style working trials and breeding were becoming well established, and began to relent, to seek to control and profit from what they could not prevent.

Francisco area. (Riedel, 1982) By all accounts, including his own, he was an outspoken and aggressive man who seldom bothered to look before making a leap, characteristics not especially unusual in a founder.

In 1958 Riedel was instrumental in the founding of the *Peninsula Police Canine Corps*, which was a group of bay area police trainers destined to become the oldest still existent American Schutzhund club. Riedel was active in procuring European dogs and the introduction of their training methods. From the beginning the focus had been on police training, but in 1971 there was a transition as Riedel put the emphasis on Schutzhund, bringing over the first German judge. Most of the police department trainers wanted to go on in the old way, and there was a split, with the word police being dropped from the name to reflect the new reality. In a 1982 Dog Sports magazine interview, Riedel was sharply critical of the departing police trainers, characterizing them as not interested in control, reliable outs, tracking or the other aspects of police service, but only in biting dogs. (Riedel, 1982)

In retrospect, this split in a seemingly minor training group was of enormous symbolic importance, for the separation of police canine activities from Schutzhund and other civilian training into two worlds more than anything else has retarded progress in America, predestined us to be second rate in breeding, training and especially police deployment even to this day.

Dr. Herbert Preiser in the Chicago area founded the *Northern Illinois Schutzhund Club* about 1969 and also a short-lived National Schutzhund Association. Preiser was instrumental in calling a meeting in Illinois in 1970 with the purpose of exploring national level organizations, which bore fruit in the next year. We, my wife Kathy and I, were members at *Northern Illinois* in the early 1980s, although by that time Preiser had become estranged from the group. We have fond memories of working with people such as Betty Sagen and Mike Lichtwalt, true pioneers in the sport, before the commercialization of recent years. I suppose everybody thinks in terms of the good old days as they become older, but I wish there were still places where young people with limited financial resources could be introduced into the working sports in such a congenial environment.

In 1971 Alfons Ertelt, Kurt Marti and a few others launched the North American Schutzhund Association. Although they almost immediately changed the name to the *North American Working Dog Association*, the NASA abbreviation was maintained. NASA's goal from the beginning was to differentiate themselves from the Europeans and work toward mainstream acceptance, with AKC affiliation a goal of many. The American Doberman Pincher Club was a charter NASA member and held out to become last-ditch supporters in the end. NASA was a purely American organization with no links to or affiliation with any European entity. They created their own set of rules and certified their own judges. Many felt that this was not real German Schutzhund and that no one speaking English without a German accent could possibly be a real working dog authority. (Schellenberg, 1985)

The real sticking point was of course commercial, for there was a strong desire by potential German and American dog brokers to sell European titled dogs, many of them decidedly second rate, to Americans who could thus become players and overnight Schutzhund authorities. Ultimately the appeal of being really German was hard to resist, and NASA withered and eventually disappeared in the 1980's.

In 1975 the German DVG established a relationship with a group led by Dr. Dietmar Schellenberg in the New York area known as the *Working Dogs of America* or WDA, not to be confused with the WDA founded as a subservient organization to the American German Shepherd club a few years later. After a flurry of activity, this organization also experienced difficulty and its association with the DVG authorities in Germany came to an acrimonious end in 1979, closing another transient chapter in American Schutzhund history. (Schellenberg, 1985)

In the early to middle 1970s, the *German Shepherd Dog Club of America* (GSDCA) had begun some tentative Schutzhund activity under the leadership of Gernot Riedel. Several clubs, including the above-mentioned *Peninsula Police Canine Corps*, had become active. In 1975 the American Kennel Club cracked down hard on such activities, forcing the GSDCA to abandon its fledgling Schutzhund program. This precipitated a crisis, for there was growing activity and enthusiasm but a total lack of organization or supporting infrastructure. Shortly thereafter, the people involved in this aborted effort joined together with similar minded people in some other breeds and struck out on their own.

USCA, the Early Years

As a direct consequence of AKC repudiation of Schutzhund, there were meetings in California beginning in late 1975 that led to the foundation of the *United Schutzhund Clubs of America* (USCA) as a specifically German Shepherd entity with formal links to the SV, the mother club in Germany, thus providing access to German Schutzhund judges and Schutzhund titles with international recognition.

The fact that the words German Shepherd did not appear in the name and people with other breeds made up a substantial portion of the membership created confusion and strife that continues to this day. Although USCA conformation events and breed surveys, introduced a number of years later, are for German Shepherds only, other breeds have always participated in local training clubs, often self-styled as all breed, and Schutzhund trials. USCA quickly became the predominant working dog sport organization in America and within a few years was larger, and certainly more influential, than the AKC shackled GSDCA.

For the Germans, there was the good news and then there was the bad news. The good news was that they had become major players in American canine affairs. Though the focus in the beginning was on the Schutzhund trials, this connection was to be used as a wedge for German Shepherd conformation guidance in America, a way to bring in substantial numbers of German conformation judges to provide guidance and help, and of course to sell dogs and make money.

The bad news was that while the SV had become mother to a new organization, they already had a petulant child in the GSDCA through their world union link with that organization. This set the stage for struggle and strife that would go on well into the next century as each entity, that is, the SV, USCA and the GSDCA, played one against the other in a struggle for influence, control, power and of course money.

Overall the American Schutzhund movement has been marginally successful, but with a decline in numbers and cohesiveness beginning as we moved into the twenty first century. USCA, which formally came into existence in November of 1979, peaked out at about 5000 members about 2003 or 4, but fell of significantly to about 3500 members by 2013. (This was not uniquely a USCA phenomenon, as organizational vigor and numbers, amateur training activity and most significantly national puppy registrations have been falling off in Europe and America since the mid-1990s.) The good years featured an elaborate magazine, upwards of 150 clubs and a very strong judges program; the magazine came out on time, in a consistent format for many years and the judging program produced excellent American judges and an ever-increasing curve of better quality work and more consistent scoring. Although USCA is a German Shepherd organization, all breeds were allowed to participate in Schutzhund trials, but not breed surveys or conformation shows. Historically about a third of the USCA membership primarily trained a breed other than the German Shepherd, but they were living on borrowed time.

Beginning about 2005 serious problems began to emerge, with increasing SV commercial interference, declining membership and the overhead of an increasingly

costly and overbearing bureaucracy, mostly created by the expense of the SV mandated support of their commercial breeders. The organization was forced by the conformation oriented SV establishment to become overtly hostile to other breeds, which was entirely in line with their commercial marketing strategy. After a period of relatively benign indulgence, life as a subservient German colony was becoming increasingly onerous.

The other Schutzhund organization active in America today was a result of political strife and a split from USCA in the early 1980s, resulting in the establishment of LV/DVG America as an American affiliated geographic region (Landesverband) of the DVG in Germany. Much smaller than USCA, DVG America is estimated to have about 400 current members. The first DVG American championship was in the Fall of 1981. DVG America was very strong in Florida, with virtually all USCA clubs going with the new DVG organization, loyal to a group of popular trainers and leaders, notably Phil Hoelcher, experiencing severe differences with the USCA leadership. The organizational support tended to be regional, with strength in St. Louis and the Los Angeles areas in addition to Florida among other places. As of 2014 total American DVG membership was 872.

This second coming of DVG operations in America, the result of a quarrel and split among Americans, turned out in many ways to be the opportunity to be under the thumb of a heavy handed German bureaucracy with well-established priorities: the interests of commercially oriented German judges, the most conspicuous carpet baggers of the era, German breeders and their own bureaucrats.

In the early years of the Schutzhund movement in America, in the 1970s and 80s, everything was new and exciting. Most of us had our beginnings in obedience of some sort, and protection training on the part of ordinary dog owners was virtually unknown, but an enticing prospect. The biting dogs of the era were mostly those in nightly drop off services of area protection dogs for commercial operations such as car dealerships and some personal protection training by commercial operations, often run by a German. In the AKC scheme of things man aggressive dogs were unmentionable, the forbidden fruit. Police dogs were few and far between, and their association in the public eye was in many ways with the fire hoses and riots in the south splashed across the evening news on national television. People expressing interest in biting dogs were admonished, told stories of evil dogs out of control like the scare stories used to make children behave. Even the European police style breeds were suspect, the German Shepherd people to a large extent staying in their own little world of specialty shows, with their own elite group of judges and handlers, rather than the mainstream all-breed AKC shows. Within the AKC power structure care was taken to minimize evil influences, the Rottweiler was for instance denied a national club with its single delegate vote for years, even as it became one of the most popular and numerous breeds in America. When the *German Shepherd Dog Club of America* (GSDCA) began tentative, exploratory steps into the world of Schutzhund, the AKC power structure cracked down hard and formalized rules against even the most indirect link with protective dogs. In the early 1990s they became even more adamant and explicit in their opposition to any sort of protection activity.

In this environment, exploring the world of Schutzhund, even in the most tentative way, was like opening a door into the sunlight. Instead of the protective capability being the skeleton in the family closet, the original sin, it was openly an intrinsic and necessary aspect of the canine nature and strongly aggressive dogs were not only accepted but greatly admired.

Americans taking tentative steps into this training found that their obedience background provided a basis for their new sport, that there were no particularly mysterious skills to master. Those with tracking experience needed to deal with a

new and controlled style of training, where details of the dog's performance rather than the simple finding of the object were scored; but that existing skill sets provided a solid foundation.

The protection work, however, was a new ball game. Security style training with the negative socialization, heavy reliance on pure defense and the pillow suit were of no use at all, and some of the military sentry style training of the era was equally inappropriate. Instead of fear based, non-discriminating aggression the Schutzhund dog was required to demonstrate control and restraint as well as aggression.

Moving on up into the new era meant adapting European ways and methods, and in that context this meant German Schutzhund style work, since the suit style work of KNPV and the various ring flavors was virtually unknown in America. Doing Schutzhund meant working with a few Germans resident in this country, spending time in Germany to learn or bringing over German judges and trainers. A few American service men took the opportunity of a tour of duty in Germany to develop some useful dog training skills.

Many Germans, and a little later Dutchmen and Belgians, were enormously helpful, supportive and sportsmanlike in the best meaning of the term. Most of us who achieved any level of success received enormous help from new European friends. Sure, there was the occasional judge or itinerant trainer on an ego trip, a few arrogant buffoons, and a few more who were and are primarily financially motivated. But in the big picture most of these European trainers and judges have been what they seemed to be, good people motivated to share their working dog culture and training in a truly sportsmanlike way.

American Ringers

American interest in French Ring Sport began to emerge in the early 1980s, with a wave of excitement and enthusiasm. For several years there were growing pains as local groups conducted seminars, founded clubs, commenced training and gathered together to form several incipient – sometimes competing – national organizations. After several years of jockeying and maneuvering for allegiance and influence, in 1987 the various groups merged to create the *North American Ring Association* (NARA), which established a formal relationship with the French authorities, provided stable and effective administration and conducted national level affairs such as providing a magazine, maintaining a web presence and conducting annual national championships. In the early years most trials were conducted by French judges, and often featured French decoys. In the same time period small but serious Mexican and Canadian communities of French Ring enthusiasts emerged, with a generally cooperative relationship. Programs to develop certified American helpers, and a little later judges, as steps toward independence and cost containment were carried forward.

French Ring in America has always been small and fragile, critical mass in terms of widespread access to good training remaining elusive. In the early years there was a pit jump, meaning that you had to dig a large hole in the ground, making a dedicated trial and training field a necessity. Later the pit was replaced by an on the flat broad jump, meaning that any open field could serve for training or a trial. Requirements for a complete fence around the field and a high jump more elaborate, and much less portable, than the Schutzhund "A" frame meant that equipment was still an issue, but not as serious. The suits were and are expensive, and many helpers use one for much of the training and another for trial purposes, adding to the expense. The fact that the suits provide the actual bite areas rather than just protection against inadvertent bites, and the requirement for maximum mobility,

highlights the necessity of good fit and tailoring to the individual. This has generally minimized the practicality of suit sharing and contributed to the expense.

In 2012 there were 23 NARA member clubs and various forming clubs, some of them perpetually in the "forming club" category somewhat overstating the actual activity. These are United States numbers; both Mexico and Canada have their own French Ring organizations. As a point of reference, in 2011 there were a total of 23 club level trials, all but one with an American NARA judge. Many of these trials were back to back on consecutive days, inflating the perceived activity level. Thus many clubs exist, sometimes for years, without actually holding a trial. There were three championship events: a Western Regional, an Eastern Regional and a National, each presided over by a French judge.

At the National Championship there were seven Ring III entries; the winner of the trial was the Dutch Shepherd Sniper vom Kelterhoff handled by Jason Davis.[5] The remaining entries, all passing, were Belgian Malinois. There were seven Ring II entries, all Malinois, and 12 Ring I entries including two German Shepherds, two Dutch Shepherds, the remainder being Malinois. Although in the early years there was a great deal emphasis on all breed participation, as an effort to gather support and numbers, the Malinois has become the standard French Ring sports equipment. A few Dutch Shepherds, essentially a variety of the Malinois when you look at the actual pedigrees, and an occasional German Shepherd compete. Other breeds are only occasional, and seldom go beyond Ring I. Most people coming from another breed either lose enthusiasm and fall away or go the Malinois. Most of the competing dogs are French imports or first or second-generation progeny.

In 2010 a group of dissident NARA members led by Richard Rutt, Robert Solimini and Frankie Cowen – all prominent NARA names – broke off to form the *American Ringsport Federation* (ARF). This has been mostly a shell organization which has never really gotten off the ground: in 2011 there were about 15 member clubs listed on the web site, all in the eastern United States, but only one actual club trial, with no results listed. There were a total of three Ring III entries at the so-called "National Championship" in 2011.

None of this would really matter except for one thing: this dissident ARF organization was able to obtain immediate recognition from the French authorities on an equal footing with NARA, which for 23 years had proudly claimed to be "The governing body for French Ringsport in the US since 1987." The French casually throwing NARA under the bus would seem to indicate either that their NARA relationship was extremely strained or, perhaps more likely, nobody in France has any real interest in or commitment to Ring Sport in foreign nations. The fact that NARA is using homegrown judges for all trials – other than the championships – and the lack of French decoys or seminar appearances, would seem to be further indication of the estrangement.

In the early years French Ring was logistically difficult because of the small number of trials, the lack of judges and training venues and, the complex and expensive equipment, that is the open pits and high scaling walls, rendered actual trial opportunities sparse. In addition, the French Ring suits are expensive and, because of size and other considerations, generally require each helper to have his own equipment. In contrast, a Schutzhund style sleeve and a pair of pants are less expensive and can be used in the short term by several helpers.

In looking back over a quarter century of French Ring in America, there has been a lot of dogged enthusiasm by a hard core of advocates but a failure to flourish. There seem to be perhaps 50 to 100 people nationally seriously involved in training,

[5] By winning this event, Davis became the Cup winner; the yearly domestic champion was Richard Bonilla based on average scores in the three championship trials.

trialing and supporting the organization, but very little real in depth enthusiasm or growth.

While the immense popularity of the German Shepherd provided a wellspring of potential Schutzhund interest, the Malinois was to a large extent unknown and much less numerous in America as a whole. Promotion of the Malinois among the general public has consequently been difficult because rather than the novel and exotic aura that drove the popularity spikes of the Doberman or Rottweiler it had the appearance of a smaller, more frail cousin of the German Shepherd, hardly the stuff of a popularity surge. Promotion of Ring Sport among those with other breeds can create interest, but also the inevitable realization that the real choice is to go to the right sports equipment, the Malinois, or being perpetually on the fringe.

This desire for something novel and exciting has fostered a number of other attempts to establish various trial systems, both European based and home grown. Thus there have been sporadic attempts to establish KNPV, Belgian Ring and Mondio Ring in North America, none gaining much real traction. Quite often these are the same suit oriented or "not Schutzhund" people playing at a flavor of the month dog sport, popping up in every new venue.

Over the years there have been a series of American based protection style competition systems, from *Pro Sports K-9 Rodeo* and *American Street Ring* to the currently popular *Protection Sports Association* (PSA), but they have mostly come and gone without ever gaining any real traction. All of these programs have used the bite suit, and dismissive, condescending remarks about Schutzhund as some sort of play sport have been common, as among some of the early French Ringers. Part of the problem is that many of the people involved have been motivated by business and personal promotion, for the founders can assume office and the aura of expertise and appoint themselves judges without any real demonstration of training and breeding ability. Since importers and dog brokers have been prominent in these incipient programs, many of the competing dogs have been trained European imports, often KNPV. Their trial systems have not been generally comprehensive and balanced enough for long term breeding selection, that is, have not emphasized things important skills such as the olfactory capability and the distance attack that characterize complete systems devised by people with more mature and sophisticated experience focused on police level service.

These domestic systems have tended to be one dimensional, with emphasis on protection rather than a more complete program reflecting the overall requirements of a police level canine, including tests of olfactory capability such as search or tracking tests. The question thus becomes what precisely is the purpose of these trials and organizations, if they are not intended to be police dog certifications and they are not comprehensive breeding tests because of a lack of search, tracking and long attacks, exactly what is their purpose? There is a streak of pseudo machismo running through all of this, a propensity to be little more than back yard protection play trainers on a larger and more formal scale.

While the domestic working trial programs have lacked depth and sophistication, and tended to wither on the vine, this does not belie the need for American independence and self-sufficiency – just because we have yet to do it well does not mean that we need not do it at all. Schutzhund or the Ring sports of today are open to criticism on many grounds, have drifted from their original rigor, and many believe that an effective American heritage will eventually require the evolution of American organizations run by and for American trainers and breeders, free of the yoke of European and conformation and companion oriented American interests. But in order to be successful such organizations would need the support of a broad base of existing trainers, something very difficult to bring to reality. In the broader perspective, the primary limitation on independence and vigor in American police dog

programs is the deeply seated separation between the police community, hamstrung by dependence on European breeding and broker domination, and the American sport and breeding communities, rendered sterile and directionless because they are afraid to break free of European domination and thus produce nothing of real long term value. We are imminent danger of evolving into the Shakespearian tale "Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

Creeping Commercialism

Taking a pup and training him to the Schutzhund III level, and then perhaps competing in regional and national events, is an arduous task even where the sport is well established and there are experienced mentors and capable training helpers readily available. In America there has from the beginning been a lack of such resources – most of us struggle, learning by trial and error and working with helpers learning their skills as best they can, lacking experienced coaching and guidance. Many young dogs, even those carefully selected from strong lines, prove to be inadequate in one way or another while undergoing training, often making it necessary to start over with a new pup or young dog.

Very early in the game it became apparent that there was an alternative to training your dog, a way for the novice to become a player, an immediate competitor. In Germany and other European nations there were innumerable titled dogs, retired because they had gone as far as they were capable of going, unlikely to be successful in higher-level competition or in demand for breeding purposes. Many such dogs remain as beloved family companions or go on to police service; but European homes are often compact and having several older dogs can be a problem with young dogs on the way up. A supply on one side of the ocean and a demand on the other inevitably awakens the entrepreneurial spirit: dogs purchased in Germany for a few hundred dollars could through a simple airline shipment become a commodity, worth serious money for service in North American police departments or for a would be Schutzhund competitor looking for the short cut to the trial field. The working dog world was rapidly shrinking, and becoming much more commercial: the dog broker’s day had come and many, European and American, were quick seize the opportunity.

In a way, these first imported competition dogs were the forbidden fruit, were our loss of innocence. Instead of an idealized level playing field, where every sort of person, man or woman, young or old, could gather together as a community to learn through shared experience and come to know the satisfaction of adversity overcome through a first Schutzhund title, the sporting aspect was compromised in commercialism. When we left the Garden of Eden we came to accept that money was always a substitute for character, hard work and personal accomplishment, that the place on the podium could be had for price. And in learning that anything was

Early in the game trainers were able to become prominent by purchasing and competing with dogs which had been trained, titled and successful at high-level competition in Europe, commercializing the sport almost before it gained traction. Relative novices were sometimes able to buy a high-level titled import one year, participating in a few trials, collecting some tin cups and conducting seminars the next year, the blind leading the blind. Others, such as Tom and Holly Rose, were successful the old-fashioned way, by purchasing German line pups in America and training them from the ground up for success at the highest levels of American Schutzhund competition.

A contributing factor to these trends is that any local club can run a trial, selecting their own judge, trial helper and field. Sometimes this has been blatant, with unannounced, essentially secret, mid-week trials. In America we have had

instances of Schutzhund judges showing dogs owned by others in Schutzhund trials for payment, an obvious and blatant conflict of interest. (These were German DVG judges and trials; USCA has always had more strict nonprofessional rules for their judges and in general been much more diligent in this area.) Shopping for the lenient judge became more accepted, and judges not going along did not get along, found their engagements evaporating.

In contrast to this SV way of doing things, the Dutch police trials are region or province wide public events with three certified judges and two certified trial helpers, usually from outside of the local province. In order to certify a dog there are one or two yearly opportunities to do so; there is no option of a home trial or shopping for a lenient judge.

In the ideal the sporting aspects of Schutzhund focus on the club, the local community of trainers and competitors. Here younger people get a beginning, acquire a dog, perhaps from a relative or family friend in the sport, and within the training community learn the skills necessary for beginning titles. Older participants provide instruction and leadership, while training and competing with their own dogs, and take pride in the accomplishments of the newer members. In Europe it is still quite common to see the club name listed along with that of the owner and dog in a trial catalog and the club was a center of social and family life. As the dogs advance toward Schutzhund III some are retired to become family companions or the housedog while the new candidates lived in the kennel and others went on to compete at a regional and eventually national level championships.

In the early years we had the vision of recreating this idealized way of life for ourselves, of creating clubs where one could take a short ride in the evening for training, or perhaps even walk as some of my Dutch friends were able to do. We envisioned pleasant evenings of dog training and conversation over a beer, the club as a social as well as training center. This was to be every man's sport, open to those of modest means, for promising pups were reasonably priced in Europe, clubs were close together and the cost was moderate, as most training fields, with a small clubhouse, were on public facilities of one sort or another. European trials are inexpensive as local judges are the norm; the cost for a trial being perhaps lodging for a night, a couple of meals and a moderate fee.

In the 1980s some of this seemed to be coming to pass. Clubs were slow to evolve and widely separated making travel time and expense for training sessions the primary obstacle to success. Many of us had AKC style obedience or tracking backgrounds, most of it applicable to the new training regimen. Obedience was very similar, while tracking was a bit different in that the dog was expected to adapt a specific style of working. The protection work was the real challenge, for typically it was a matter of starting from the beginning, seeking help and knowledge wherever it could be found. The work of the helper, the man that wears the protective pants and padded sleeve for the dog to bite, is demanding and complex, difficult to master even with good instruction. But mostly we were on our own, picking up knowledge and coaching from trial judges and occasional seminars or visits to other clubs with more experience, but also a lot of improvisation. Looking back, it is amazing that we were able to evolve as well as we did.

From the beginning access to good training was the limiting factor and a suitable place to train where biting dogs did not bring the wrong kind of attention was sometimes a difficulty. The trial generally tended to be expensive because of the necessity of bringing in a judge from a great distance, very often Europe. This could be ameliorated by neighboring clubs sharing a judge, with trials on subsequent weekends, and by revenue generating seminars in conjunction with the trial. Early on many of these judges, including many of the Germans, were extraordinarily generous in providing help and minimizing expenses. There was a general pioneering

spirit, confidence that as the sport grew clubs would become more numerous and thus less expensive, thus drawing in more people. The early difficulties were seen as priming the pump, getting the process started.

Within a few years, commercialization began to creep in. While amateur pioneers, brimming with enthusiasm and the spirit of sportsmanship, were struggling to learn training and become proficient within the club structure, a few more pragmatic men had found the short cut, were purchasing increasingly expensive titled dogs in Europe, often quite good, and making a name for themselves by placing or winning at the various regional and national trials. Based on their newly purchased reputations these men sometimes created Schutzhund clubs that were adjuncts of their expanding business ventures, with clients rather than voting members. Since USCA elections were based on one vote per club these professionals became increasingly influential in national affairs. Sometimes the commercialism was overt, with behind the scenes sponsors putting up substantial sums of money. Training increasingly became a professional service, with fees, often substantial, for every training session in addition to annual or semiannual club dues, which went into the pockets of the club "owners." Protection work helpers, even in the amateur clubs, increasingly expected to be paid, became less and less willing to provide for free what was evolving as a lucrative commercial service. Extended business relationships evolved, often involving European trainers and brokers who supplied dogs to American business associates, and often were featured at training seminars which promoted both partners. Once the beginner became engaged it was often discovered that his dog was not up to his goals, and that, by fortunate coincidence, they could sell him an expensive new dog to get out there on the trial field.

This commercialism was not limited to Americans, for German Schutzhund judges, such as Gottfried Dildei and Paul Thiessen, came to America to profit on their status and German contacts by establishing commercial training operations. Serious ethical lapses such as quasi-secret mid-week trials at which judges took turns titling each other's client dogs compromised the integrity of the entire sport. Regional and especially national trials became competitions among European trained and titled dogs, sometimes owned and supported by sponsors in the background, just like racehorse owners. The expectation that the winning dogs would be owned and trained from a puppy, by hard work and diligence within an amateur club faded.

Commercialism has been endemic in the conformation world as well as the Schutzhund trial. At the beginning of a German style conformation show there is a brief protection test, an attack on the handler out of the blind and long bite, to demonstrate the character of the dog. In principle a good thing, but in practice generally so emasculated as to be essentially meaningless. At a local German Shepherd conformation show, presided over by a German SV judge, I witnessed the American helper doing the attack on the handler test in a professional, normal and entirely fair way. After the second bitch showed marked insecurity there were exhibitor complaints, resulting in a quick conference with the judge and then an admonition to the helper to go easy on the dogs, that these were show dogs that needed to pass. This is not an aberration or an unusual occurrence but rather just business as usual. We never saw the helper again.

There were in Germany in the eighties well documented cases of breakfast table trials, where all of the paper work was made out and sent in, producing Schutzhund titles for dogs never stepping foot on the field. Much of this was for exported dogs as well as the conformation breeders, the Americans being seen as too ignorant to know the difference, which was only partially true in that some knew but just did not care.

In the early 1980s I witnessed a German SV Schutzhund judge pass two dogs bred by his host, the German born owner of an American kennel, who was also the trial helper, which did not receive stick hits. One perhaps could have given the

benefit of the doubt on the first dog, perhaps the helper really did forgot and the judge did not notice, but on the second dog bred by the helper given a pass by the judge and all of the others were tested it became quite obvious. At the time I was new and naive enough to be astonished by all of this.

On another occasion I witnessed another well-known big name German dog importer beat a bitch unmercifully in full view of an American judge and then walk the thirty feet that separated them to report for the obedience exercises. The judge pretended that he just did not see, for the man's place in the Schutzhund world was such that he was afraid to challenge him. The Schutzhund "club" run by this German as a commercial adjunct of a business enterprise was relatively unusual in that era but has become unfortunately the norm today.

Although expense had always been an issue, the decade after the turn of the twenty first century was particularly difficult. The fundamental problem of Schutzhund in America had always been the failure to attain critical mass, clubs close enough together to provide convenient, economical access. As petroleum prices increased every aspect of the sport became increasingly expensive. Trainers tend to have larger vehicles such as trucks or SUVs which, while convenient for dogs and equipment, consume increasingly expensive fuel. Airline travel became more expensive, affecting the cost of travel for trial judges, competition and transporting dogs. The overall incomes of middle Americans were stagnating and young people especially found good jobs very difficult to obtain and keep. As Schutzhund became more elite and expensive enthusiastic newcomers, especially young people with family obligations, increasingly found that they simply could not afford to participate. Administrative costs, such as USCA dues, saw dramatic increases as entrenched officers sought to solidify their privileged status. Over the years club members became noticeably older because of the disproportionate burden of a poor economy on the younger generation. But athletic young men, increasingly in short supply, have always been the primary protection training helpers.

Amateur police style dog training programs grew up in Europe along with the breeds and service cultures as a low cost activity that combined camaraderie, family social centers and sport beginning in an era before television, electronic games and the internet. Many clubs are centered on property acquired fifty or a hundred years ago which would be difficult to purchase today. Americans in the same era evolved their own after work social and sport activities such as softball and bowling, and to a lesser extent canine obedience training. Most of the Schutzhund pioneers in America were focused on recreating this training infrastructure and social tradition here, but tradition building has turned out to be a very difficult task. In most areas of Germany, the Netherlands or Belgium, the potential trainer has grown up with the sport all around him, seen active training fields his entire life, as or more common than ball diamonds in America. He likely has a family member or acquaintance that can make an introduction, or he can just show up and show an interest. These resources are there because they grew up with the working breeds, acquired a little bit of land for a field and clubhouse and gained membership before television let alone cars, video games and the internet provided competition. In Holland it is quite common for municipalities or other agencies to provide parkland for training fields and clubhouses just like little league baseball fields are a standard feature of every American town. These recreational activities usually commence early in life, and society, through park districts and schools, provide facilities and services that make them attractive and affordable. Very few things in life have a comprehensive, one line explanation, but the failure of Schutzhund, and the Ring Sports, to prosper in America is largely due to the fact that they have become increasingly expensive and difficult for young people to get started in.

A Dog of Your Own

When acquiring an automobile or higher end camera there is an enormous amount of information available on which to base a selection. Life teaches most of us a number of lessons which carry over into dogs, such as that dealing with an established business is a hedge against problems down the road and what seems too good to be true may not be true – there is usually no free lunch.

Nikon cameras and Volkswagen automobiles are well-established brands with strong corporate track records, you can generally purchase from an established dealer with confidence that if things go wrong they will be make good, if not by the dealer then by the manufacturer. But if you buy your Nikon from an unknown internet source with an unusually low price you are likely to find out that it is not really new, that not all of the normal and necessary accessories are included and most importantly that if something goes wrong you are in real trouble: not only will Nikon not fix it under warranty, they may not even supply parts or repair it because you bought from an unauthorized source. In making your purchase you are not just buying a camera; you are committing to a system and establishing a business relationship in that future accessories, such as lenses and flash units, must be compatible.

Think of a dog in the same terms. When looking for a pup you are making a decision as to breed, a particular breeding line and establishing a business and personal relationship with a breeder. Although all of these common sense principles apply to dogs, the situation is much more complex because reliable sources of information are more difficult to identify and dogs are living beings; no matter how careful you are you can reduce but not eliminate risk. Ultimately buying a puppy is always a gamble: one cannot be certain of success, but can stack the odds in his favor.

In general the best approach when seeking a dog for serious purposes is to seek a mentor, a personal relationship with an established breeder, preferably one actively training and titling his own dogs. The closer to home the better, because an in person visit can often help resolve a problem or provide guidance and no breeder wants dissatisfied customers in his back yard. Such a person will have been through the unforeseen consequences of training decisions and have real appreciation for the subtleties of breeding selection.

The European import is seen as desirable and sophisticated, but generally this is not practical for the novice because of the difficulty of evaluating breeders in a distant nation speaking a different language. Some American "breeders" focus on European imports for resale and as breeding stock, and although their advertising is often elaborate, slick and extensive their real knowledge too often is superficial if it has not been established and verified through real long term hands on experience. Such people are better described as brokers rather than breeders, and although they can sometimes provide the right dog at a fair price to a knowledgeable customer one must always keep in mind that the broker is primarily a businessman motivated by money rather than a deep personal commitment to the heritage or a breed. Multi breed importers merit especial suspicion and scrutiny, for here there is little doubt of the overweening profit motivation.

Many of us eventually go to Europe with the idea of acquiring a dog, and find the process daunting in that language and culture can be an impediment and there are many people – who cannot easily be sorted out as to reputation and quality – anxious to sell to the bumbling American. Buying a dog is not the right reason for a first European visit, is putting the cart before the horse. Go to Europe to learn, to come to understand the heritage, the Euro lines and over time to build an experience and knowledge base on which to sort out the people. Focus on establishing relationships with those likely to help you learn and mature rather than just shopping

for a dog, when the relationships become established the right dog is much more likely to be found. I do not mean this in a phony or calculating way, that you should make friends just to save money or get a dog, but rather that in order to become successful in any endeavor one must be able to fit in and establish personal relationships with compatible people currently successful and respected in the field.

Even when you are interested in something from a stranger your European friend can be enormously helpful. Generally the price of a pup to an American is much more than to a resident of the country. I recall years ago looking at litters of Bouviers in Holland with Ria Klep, a very successful trainer and working breeder. My instructions were to be absolutely silent, as one word of English would automatically double the price; apparently my dress and appearance did not shout American. In this instance Ria just went ahead and bought the pup and explained later that if I did not want it she did, which of course only increased my enthusiasm.

People tend to think of the breed as the starting place in the dog acquisition, and for those with a deep emotional attachment to a particular breed this is of course perfectly valid. But breed selection has serious implications that can make an emotional decision irrational and likely to lead to disappointment. If you live for French Ring and love Rottweilers you have a serious problem, and if the problem is not obvious to you then you have an especially serious problem. Breeds come with history, purpose and an established community, and a good Rottweiler is a massive, headstrong, powerful dog but not a quick dog, agile dog or easily trainable dog. French Ring is an elaborate, sophisticated sport that favors the prey driven, agile, trainable dog; everything that the Rottie is not. If you buy a Rottweiler for Schutzhund after serious research you will in the process have identified people that can provide the emotional and informational support that are so important in training; when problems arise, and they will, there will be people to go to who have been through it. But if you buy a Rottweiler for ring training you will pretty much be on your own; people will think you are crazy, even those polite enough not say it to your face. The Malinois out of ring lines is the right sports equipment for that venue, and going with anything else is like taking your baseball catcher's mitt to the basketball try out.

The first step in the dog acquisition should be to recognize these general categories, so as to base the selection on a realistic set of expectations:

Companion dog owner: One with no particular interest in training beyond practical obedience to make the dog safe and pleasant to live with and perhaps an introductory level of watchdog training. Breed selection is purely a matter of personal preference and practical considerations. Depending on breed, the individual dog needs to be moderate or less in intensity or aggression; the intense young Malinois out of KNPV lines is probably going to be unhappy living with you, and in turn make you unhappy and frustrated. You need to go to a local breeder who selects for generally moderate and stable character and diversity in his lines, which translates into a serious breeder minimally involved in conformation. The show breeder is often a poor choice, not only because of a lack of performance potential but because the close breeding for champions becomes associated with health problems and dull, stupid dogs. There is generally nothing wrong with a carefully selected mixed breed, and going through one of the all-breed or breed specific rescue organizations can be a viable option. In selecting an older dog one must of course realize that it is one someone does not want and carefully evaluate temperament, and have a complete veterinary evaluation before a final commitment. But in the broad scheme of things many good dogs are acquired in this way. In general it is best to avoid the show-oriented breeder as paying their exorbitant prices is basically just rewarding stupidity.

Casual trainer: You enjoy dog training and the social aspects of a dog club, but titles are of secondary importance. The breed should be generally appropriate, that is if you are drawn to Schutzhund big enough for the jumps and historically aggressive enough to be interested in engaging the helper; even if you do not aspire to trophies a dog who likes the work is a lot more fun and you will fit in much better. You need to start your search with local working line breeder, perhaps a member of the club you are interested in, and select a middle of the road pup.

Serious trainer: You really do want titles and trophies, and tend to be impatient with the casual trainers and pet owners. Your dog should be from a breed historically successful in your preferred sport and specifically from strong working lines within that breed. Good dogs from the alternate breeds, that is other than the Malinois or German Shepherd, are difficult but not entirely impossible to find.

Competition trainer: The reality here is that today only the Malinois and German Shepherd are consistently successful in the top levels of IPO or Schutzhund and that the Malinois predominates in all of the suit sports, that is, ring and KNPV. Going with another breed is in the big picture irrational, inevitably leading to frustration. Sorry, I wish this were not true, but it is.

Once requirements and goals are established, an appropriate breed and sound working lines are the right starting point, but success requires diligence and a generous portion of luck. Many once promising pups fall by the wayside even in the hands of experienced trainers, who sometimes wind up placing a prospect because he did not seem to be fulfilling his promise as he matured. Sometimes this is a mismatch between the man and the dog; a dog that could perhaps have achieved excellence in other hands. This is why many trainers are willing to pay a premium price for a promising young dog which has passed relevant health, stamina and character tests.

The novice with hopes for serious training in a sport or professional arenas, but not diligent and persistently skeptical enough in his search, is likely to wind up with a poor or marginal prospect out of ignorance and gullibility. By definition such a person makes a selection not sufficiently aware of the reputation of the various working lines and the various people and thus becomes a prime candidate for a dog with a questionable background or concealed flaws of temperament, character, structure or health. Like the empty place in the game of musical chairs, someone always winds up with the marginal pups.

Assuming an established breed preference, the initial phase should be attaining familiarity with the relevant people by reputation and through personal contact and attending trials and seminars. If there are breed specific organizations it is good to become a member or subscribe to the magazine, and study the web site. If the preference is the German Shepherd then there may be a number of local options, generally preferable to out of town sources. The advantage of the local breeder, especially one in your preferred club, is the enhanced chance of an appropriate dog, a good match, and local support. Every breeder wants to have people training his dogs in his club, and will generally do everything possible to support his customers.

If you, as a novice, go on the internet or pick a breeder out of a magazine (I know I am dating myself here) you put yourself at risk of winding up with the lesser dog because preference is going to go to those with an established relationship and those with a serious competitive record. Experience teaches that most such queries are from people who are not going to turn out to be serious, and most of the dogs are going to ship and never be heard of again. The novice has a much better chance to sell himself as serious to the local or regional breeder and obtain a high expectation candidate and the support to back it up.

Those interested in a breed other than the German Shepherd will likely find it necessary to go out of the local area to obtain a suitable dog, as most of the local offerings are likely going to be discards from a conformation oriented kennel. Show breeders are similar to used car salesmen in not letting ignorance of the facts interfere with their sales pitch. Even though profoundly ignorant of working breeding, selection and training they will go on and on with all sorts of blatant lies about the working potential of their dogs, and how with a little training they are just as good as those actually working and achieving titles.

The problem is that beyond the Malinois and the German Shepherd all of the traditional alternative breeds are in decline, a spiral to oblivion, in terms of numbers and overall quality. As a result finding a viable candidate becomes more and more difficult, and many self-styled working kennels are really half-baked back yard breeding businesses selling mediocre and less pups to the gullible.

Thus in summary those looking for a high potential pup or a good young dog must first do their research and get to know the bloodlines and most especially the people. You get good dogs from good people, breeders and trainers who have paid their dues, built a real reputation based on accomplishment. So go to the trials and seminars, for that is where you meet the real trainers and breeders rather than the posers and salesmen. When the opportunity presents itself, visit their kennel and seek their knowledge. The novice, especially one without a mentor, should usually buy a dog in America, based on this knowledge, because the closer you are to the breeder the more help and guidance you can expect, and the more interest he will have in your success as a reflection of his breeding.

Early on I was fortunate enough to spend a lot of time in Europe, under the guidance and support of an experienced Dutchman, Erik Houttuin, in my breed residing in America. The internet as a basis of initial research and more affordable flights to Europe have made it much easier go and see for yourself. But do not go with the idea of buying the wonder dog on your first trip, go to extend your first-hand knowledge of trials and kennels, the history and culture. Wherever you go, focus on identifying and getting to know the serious and helpful people, in time the right dog will be the natural consequence of your diligence and patience.

Eventually most of us at some point wind up importing a dog or pup, often because of a need for a specific breeding line. When done with foresight and caution the shipping process is generally safe and reliable, if sometimes expensive. Although we imported many dogs and pups over the years, and shipped many others, we never had any real problem. A primary consideration is a direct flight without a stopover, which is much less stressful. When airline personal directly interact with the dog there is always the potential for an escape, and a dog on his own in an airport, which does happen, sometimes with tragic consequences. Taking the dog directly to the airport immediately prior to the flight and having him picked up immediately on arrival avoids many potential problems. When the dog arrives it is preferable to resist the temptation to let him out of the crate (unless he is in obvious distress); just load up the vehicle, head for home, put the crate in a run or other confined area and let the dog out cautiously where he can be approached on his own terms. Adult dogs shipped to an unknown person are under significant stress and may become aggressive or bolt and run; you do not want your expensive new dog loose in an airport or beside a highway.

In conclusion, let me say it again, because it cannot be emphasized enough: in finding a good dog, particularly for sport training, the first and most important step is to identify a breeder or mentor willing to help you, not only in finding a dog but in seeking out training resources and knowledge that will enable you some day in turn mentor others and thus repay your obligation to the heritage.

Only in America

In America we have a robust hunting dog culture, families breeding and training such dogs into a third or fourth generation are not especially unusual, and there is no need to go to Europe or anywhere else for dogs or guidance. So it would seem that Americans are not inherently dog stupid, that there is nothing in the culture or water to require it.

But police and protection dogs somehow are different; after forty and more years of playing at the game we remain insecure, dependent on Europe for dogs, guidance and validation. Although our military is, commendably, breeding a portion of their own Malinois at Lackland, most police dogs today still come out of Europe, either directly as imports, largely through brokers, or indirectly, through commercial operations in America which breed for police service, but which rely on Europeans for breeding stock, guidance and reflected credibility, are little more than offshore extensions of European enterprise. They cannot be more, are not breeders and trainers in the deeper, longer term sense of ongoing generations of their own lines because they lack the European resources and culture, the synergy of an ongoing tradition of cooperation with civilian breeders, trainers and sport competitors, as best exemplified by the Dutch KNPV program.

In the kingdom of the blind the one eyed man is king, and as a consequence of our European dependence all sorts of one eyed experts with a thin veneer of credibility pose as canine authorities in much of America, including police canine circles. The proliferation of police programs, driven largely by our war on drugs, and our ongoing dependence on European dogs has created a lucrative opportunity to provide for profit civilian brokerage and training services. Where the police administration is savvy, experienced and honest the free enterprise system tends to work, to drive out the dishonest and incompetent suppliers to the ultimate benefit of police canine units, tax payers and the civilian working dog community alike. But rapid expansion and ongoing creation of incipient canine programs, lacking a foundation of experience and knowledge, provides an opportunity for the pretender, an entire new world of blind men for the one eyed opportunists to exploit. Successful, ongoing businesses are routinely based on this sort of thing.

American police canine operations exist in profound isolation from our civilian training and sport culture, such as it is, so separate that there is virtually no communication, not even enough awareness for animosity or competitiveness. The consequence is the aggregate emasculation of the American police dog establishment, rendering both service and sport more costly and less robust than they could and should be, in a perpetual juvenile state, unable to step into adulthood and independence. Canine political and commercial interests in Europe, like grasping parents unable to let go, enable, encourage and abet this dependence. Our police agencies look to Europe for dogs, directly or indirectly, because these European sport and certification programs provide the guidance and validation that are the foundation of long-term police dog breeding, training and deployment. In America we seem unable to break this circle: are so much less cost effective and robust than our inherent potential because we are so insecure and dependent, but at the same time we are unable to grow up and stand on our own because of these divisions and insecurities. This network of commercial operations – brokers, breeders and consultants – which have evolved to provide these services tend to discourage and impede initiative and independence for the obvious reasons, the preservation of their own status, security and income. Even if it is not widely perceived in the world at large, they know well that real progress in America can only diminish their status, influence and profit.

The fundamental problem is that real decision making authority in the civilian working dog establishment is much too often in the hands of canine politicians and

bureaucrats, too often in Germany, motivated to promote themselves, their commercial interests or their breed, as measured by increasing puppy registrations and broad popularity or perception of vigor and quality by the public at large. This tends to foster ongoing slackening of performance requirements and the propensity of conformation oriented bureaucrats to allow or encourage working judges and trial decoys to be more and more lenient in order to promote participation or, more maliciously, to enable weak dogs to pass and thus gain in commercial value or win in the conformation ring.

Although all trial venues are vulnerable to dishonesty and corruption there are systemic differences that render some inherently more credible than others. As discussed previously, Schutzhund or IPO titles are especially vulnerable because there is a single judge selected by the local club, the people actually trialing their dogs, and because some trials are run for confirmation line German Shepherds featuring extremely lenient judging and decoy work, essentially giving away IPO titles.

The KNPV certificate, if the dog to be acquired is actually the one awarded the certificate, is somewhat more reliable. KNPV trials are not conducted on the local club level but rather offered by one of the provincial governing bodies at specific dates and places, with three judges and two certified helpers, usually from other provinces. These are very public affairs with large, knowledgeable audiences; trickery and favoritism are of course possible, but much more difficult to conceal and thus less common. Furthermore, KNPV leadership for more than a century has been focused solely on police dog service. While there is the need to be ever vigilant against individual acts of dishonesty, over the years the integrity of the system, the commitment to the validity of the trial, has remained intact. Although the KNPV imports and the example provided by their program in the Netherlands have had profound influence on American police canine evolution, there has never been any evident interest in meddling in internal American working dog affairs.

German control of Schutzhund and German Shepherd affairs in America has always been the overweening priority of the SV and other German entities. The DVG in America was from the beginning under tight German control, by and for the benefit of Germans, with the American officers subservient and functioning as administrative assistants to carry out German executive policy and decisions, and of course collect the money to send to Germany.

USCA was through the Maloy years, roughly through the mid to late 1990s, a strong and substantially independent organization, still then working dog oriented, charting their own course and conducting internal affairs according to working dog principles and priorities. Roughly coinciding with the turn of the twenty first century there has been a concerted SV effort to evolve USCA into a subservient German Shepherd breed club, essentially *SV Distribution America GmbH,* primarily serving German show dog interests, that is SV breeders, conformation judges and other insiders in exploiting the lucrative American market. Under the Lyle Roetemeyer tenure as USCA president the situation deteriorated as the SV increasingly dictated policy and restructured the organization to support the interests of their conformation breeders.

At the end of the day, the question remains: Why can a people capable of shaking of the British Empire as it approached its zenith not break free of grasping German dog politicians?

What are Obedience Trials Really?

In the normal course of events things tend to evolve, to have original good reasons and then gradually accumulate some real reasons as baggage. The

obedience trial, and the obedience aspects or phases of the more comprehensive trials such as Schutzhund and Ring, were originally conceived as serving two purposes, that is, as a demonstration of the necessary character attributes for breeding eligibility and for practical service as a patrol dog or companion dog. But as these practical trials evolved into sport venues competition and especially scoring had an inexorable tendency to evolve according to conventions of style and procedure more and more remote from practical life and service. The role of judge, referee or umpire is critical. In sports such as gymnastics and figure skating, the judge's numerical opinion of the style of presentation is the determining factor in who stands on the podium and who goes home empty handed. The football referee may make a bad call and in the extreme affect the outcome of a close game, but he does not have the opportunity to announce that a particular touchdown will only be allocated 4 rather than 6 points because he personally did not like the style of the quarterback. As refinement and competition increased the dog sports tended to devolve to opinion judging, as in gymnastics, rather than objective performance evaluation relatable to real life service expectations.

Part of obedience is the ability and willingness of the dog to heel, that is, stay at your left side as you walk or run, change direction when you do and go to a sit position when you come to a stop. In the spirit of the original purposes the more advanced dog would be expected to maintain discipline in the presence of real world, practical distractions such as walking on the street, the presence of other dogs, bicycles and so forth. And, indeed, these kinds of things are to some degree incorporated into programs such as the Dutch Police and Schutzhund trials.

But in some systems, and all systems to some degree, flash and style for points tended to emerge and predominate. Rather than staying alertly at your side, for the big points the dog must prance and twist his body into a big U so he can stare in your eyes and slap his rear end down as you do the contrived and unnatural stop required. The problem with this is that increasingly drifts from the original purposes and favors the subservient, hyper dog rather than the confident, obedient dog. There are significant differences here, with the KNPV dog expected to just do real world heeling and the AKC and Schutzhund folks gradually evolving obedience heeling into dancing with the dogs. This is in general not a good thing, as it makes tends to emphasize subservience over confidence and aggressiveness.

As another example, consider the guard of object. The premise is quite simple, the police officer will often need for his dog to remain in place and take care of an object such as a bicycle while the officer goes out of sight, perhaps into a building on a police matter. In the Dutch Police trial this is pretty much how it is played out, the handler puts down his jacket or a bike and leaves the dog to take care of it. The helper appears and calmly walks toward the dog, who is expected to respond with aggression when he comes within perhaps ten feet and to break off the engagement when the helper retreats. Takes thirty seconds or so and is a practical exercise.

But the French Ring people have expanded this into an esoteric several minute exercise, requiring a great deal of time in training and interesting to watch, but with questionable relevance to the real world. French ring has gradually evolved into a sport with less and less practical relevance and more and more contrived exercises. This is of course a tendency to be guarded against in all situations, but it seems to be human nature to tend to the elaborate ritual over the practical. The consequence is that French Ring has evolved as a competitive sport only for their specific line of Malinois. There is a certain irony in the fact that the French have driven all of their native breeds such as the Beauceron, Briard and Picardy Shepherd out of their national sport in favor of one developed in the Flemish or Dutch region of Belgium. For all of their historic animosity to the Germans, the Malinois they promote is in reality the product of the German culture and heritage rather than their own.

Schutzhund and IPO have no guard of object, food refusal or call off in the attack exercises, which from a practical point of view serious deficiencies. On the other hand, this is to an extent understandable in that Schutzhund evolved as a breeding eligibility test rather than a full test to certify a dog ready for police patrol service as in KNPV.

Social and Political Context

The training of dogs, especially large, powerful biting dogs, does not take place in isolation but rather in a broad social and political context. Legislators and administrative authorities come under pressure, often intense, to intervene in canine affairs, as in the banning of specific breeds or styles of dog, as in the banning or discouragement specific activities such as dog fighting or civilian participation in protection training. Even the equipment comes under scrutiny as in the prohibition of prong or electric collars or the use of the stick in the protection exercises.

In general these issues are at the moment much more intense in Europe than America, with incessant pressure for bans on ear cropping and tail docking, eradication of fighting breeds and the elimination of prong and electric collars. America in general has a much stronger heritage of individual freedom, less intrusion on personal rights, as exemplified by the widespread ownership and use of diverse firearms. But the alcohol prohibition fiasco of the 1920s serves as a reminder that pressure groups always have the potential to prevail and change a way of life.

Every society must of course establish legal boundaries and enforcement processes in order to maintain social order, community security and individual civil rights and self-determination, the pursuit of happiness; and this need for regulation and order quite properly extends to canine affairs. Bear and bull baiting, dog fighting and other grotesque amusement venues – long accepted and practiced by those of every social stratum – have today become illegal in most civilized nations. English and American culture historically has been averse to civilian protection training, which has been largely overcome or at least suppressed in recent decades, largely due to the diligence of the Schutzhund community in maintaining standards of responsibility. This is exemplified by increasing emphasis on the BH examination as a prerequisite to the Schutzhund trial, requiring a demonstration of control and stability before protection competition.

The underlying problem is that the vast majority of legislators, and the pressure groups with adverse agendas, are profoundly ignorant of serious police level dogs and training. Many, such as PETA (People for Ethical Treatment of Animals), are no more than the ever present lunatic fringe, opposed to companion animal ownership in principle, while others seek to limit breeding or training involving protection applications. While few openly oppose actual police deployment, there is an undercurrent of opposition to civilian involvement, largely ignoring the issue of where police dogs would come from with no civilian participation in breeding and selection.

While no reasonable person can doubt that society must set boundaries and limit specific behavior and practice, such as dog fighting, many of these elements will not be satisfied short of the emasculation of all dogs and an end to breeding or training of overtly aggressive dogs. Much of this is akin to bullying, the attraction being the sense of power, of controlling and subjugating others; and success does not bring satisfaction but only generates the desire for more.

These trends are reminiscent of our ongoing national gun conflict: while most will agree that there must be limits, that civilians should not be able to wander into a store and buy machine guns or military style recoilless rifles, gun control advocates will never be satisfied short of comprehensive firearm confiscation, as has played out in Australia for instance.

Many of us tend to ignore politics in our daily lives, canine or otherwise, and focus on our personal training and breeding, simply want to engage in a private avocation as a diversion from the cares and responsibilities of life. We are largely content to live in our own private world, wanting little more than to go to the club a couple times a week, train our dog, enjoy the camaraderie and a couple of beers after the protection equipment is stored and eventually trial the dog. To a large extent we live in blissful avoidance, oblivious to potential legal and social hazards looming on the horizon. This is naive, for politicians – governmental and canine – can be pressured to enact widespread, ill-considered measures just as the prohibition of alcohol consumption was inflicted on an unwary nation.

In addition to regulation and legal restrictions on canine affairs by governmental agencies on the national, state and local level, various national administrative and registration bodies, such as the AKC and the national FCI entities in most European nations, have enormous power over every aspect of canine affairs, especially breeding and sport. These registration bodies do not generally directly dictate or limit behavior but do wield enormous economic and practical power through the potential denial of registration, which is generally crucial in order to sell or export puppies and older dogs. Many European nations have national kennel clubs with government recognition and thus some legal standing, but in America these are independent entities; the AKC has no special legal standing and in fact there are several other, competing, registration organizations. Over most of its existence the AKC was profoundly opposed any association with canine protection activity, only recently softening this stance under the pressure of falling revenue from plummeting registrations.

Although falling registrations, and thus revenue, has trimmed their sails in recent years, the AKC has historically focused on clever and generally successful promotional schemes, routinely obtaining fawning press and television coverage for their events and social agendas. A great deal of effort goes into congressional lobbying and influence peddling at state and local levels, much of it to good ends, but generally prioritizing the interests of show and pet breeders over the interests of canine working functionality. Some of the European national organizations, for instance, played a role in the banning of cropping and docking. In general the AKC and the FCI, and their affiliated national and breed entities, do not represent the interests of the police or other working dogs, will routinely betray us as a matter of expediency whenever convenient, as in the banning of prong and electric collars and other training practice and equipment usage in Europe. One may choose to ignore canine politics, but no one can escape living with the consequences.

The working canine community needs to become more engaged politically and socially, employ good public relations principles and discipline ourselves, apply peer pressure to encourage ethical, legal and moral behavior. When videos of in uniform police handlers appear on the internet or television kicking a Malinois hung up by his collar without mercy in the name of training and discipline we are all diminished, and at risk. When our sport systems become subverted to the gods of profit and money, when Schutzhund becomes a pastime for older, more financially able people because the young cannot afford thirty thousand dollar dogs, long distances to training and several hundred dollars monthly for professional helper work we will remain marginalized.

This American estrangement of the police canine community and the civilian protection sport movement seriously impairs all of us, renders sport essentially meaningless and service dependent on foreign sources and commercial vendors, and thus more expensive and less effective. In this context we become especially susceptible to intrusive interference from government bureaucrats, political pressure groups with adverse agendas and the show and pet oriented registry bodies.

Cooperation between civilian and police breeders and trainers would have many and diverse benefits for both, would foster understanding and enhance the aura of legitimacy and responsibility of civilian participation in protection training. In America today our working organizations, such as USCA (United Schutzhund Clubs of America) or the ring clubs, contribute essentially nothing to society in terms of supporting police and military canine deployment; the police dogs are generally imports or commercially bred from imported stock rather than coming from sport participants. The fact that USCA is dominated by and run for the benefit of Germany and Germans rather than America and Americans is the essence of this problem, a primary reason for the feeble state of our dog sport community, why we continue to wallow in mediocrity and contribute so little to the public good.

 April 2, 2014

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