



Max von Stephanitz

## Decline and Fall of the House of von Stephanitz

Jim Engel  
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*As our family became involved in working dogs in the latter 1970s the police dog and sport community was on the cusp of a three decade golden era of prosperity for the purebred generally, the German Shepherd in particular and for the emerging American Schutzhund movement.*

*It was a time of optimism and innocence, an era of unbounded enthusiasm and the promise of ever expanding prosperity. Yet in retrospect even then ominous clouds were gathering on distant horizons, foreshadowing precipitous decline.*

*Four decades later the von Stephanitz era is drawing to a close as the German Shepherd devolves from a serious working dog to a defunct police breed of prosaic Golden Retriever replicas for even the most feckless German pet owner.*

*Societal change as divergent as the advent of the digital age, rights activists, the end of the cold war and the extreme left animal rights movement all played a role in this decline, but the proximate causes of failure were repudiation of the police dog heritage, ever more grotesque show ring type and blatant pandering to the lowest common denominator of the pet dog market.*

*Ultimately the dagger was wielded by the SV establishment, the enemy within.*



These are complex topics with a convoluted history, those not familiar with the background would do well to review the following:

[Who Owns the House of von Stephanitz?](#)

[Working Dog Organizations: Structure and Ongoing Conflict](#)

[Glossary](#)

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## Organizations

SV	<i>Verein fur Deutsche Schaferhunde,</i> German Shepherd Mother Club in Germany.
WUSV	<i>World Union of German Shepherd Clubs</i>
VDH	<i>Verband fur das Deutsche Hundewesen</i> German kennel club, equivalent to the AKC
FCI	<i>Federation Cynologique Internationale,</i> International Canine Federation
AKC	<i>American Kennel Club</i>
AWDF	<i>American Working Dog Federation</i>
USCA	<i>United Schutzhund Clubs of America</i>
NVBK	<i>Nationaal Verbond der Belgische Kynologen</i> Belgian non-FCI National Ring Trial & Registration Organization
KNPV	<i>Koninklijke Nederlandse Politiehond</i> <i>Vereniging</i> Royal Dutch Police Dog Association

A hundred and twenty years ago, at the turn of the twentieth century, a community of advocates led by Max von Stephanitz formalized the German Shepherd as a breed in order to preserve and protect age old herding lines through establishment of the modern police dog persona, which prospered so vigorously that for decades they were one in four German registrations and the most popular breed throughout the world, most particularly in America.

Along with advocates of other emergent breeds such as the Belgian Shepherd (which enjoyed a decade long head start) von Stephanitz belatedly came to realize that the need for large scale sheep herding was vanishing across northern Europe and that preservation of the age old herding lines depended on new service roles appropriate to the prevailing propensities, structure and character of the dwindling herding lines. Thus police patrol in burgeoning industrial cities emerged as the new way of life for the age old guardians of German meadows and fields.

For well over a century the breed predominated worldwide as the prototypical patrol dog, rendering service onto mankind as a whole in peace and in war; so much so that police dog and German Shepherd came to be virtually synonymous. This noble breed rightfully became the pride of the German people, a national treasure in a rapidly emerging world power.

A century later in the year 2000 the working dog in general and the German Shepherd in particular seemed to be on the cusp of another century of ever expanding prosperity.

Yet today the wheels are coming off as the viability of the breed, the heritage of von Stephanitz and even the unfettered deployment of the police dog hang in the balance as the motherland club, the SV, repudiates the police dog persona to pander pathetic pet dogs to what the SV spin masters apparently perceive as a newly effete German people.

How could this existential crisis have come to pass? As with most deep seated societal change it has been a complex and convoluted saga; here we shall explore the realities at play leading to this unhappy state of affairs.



The Grey Wolf

### ***In the Beginning***

For millennia herdsman and farmers bred their own herding, farm and guard dogs according to their needs, desires and preferences by the straightforward expedient of combining males and females according to robust service efficacy and then selecting from among the progeny for the next generation in the age old cycle of life. Particularly in pastoral and agricultural husbandry regional types emerged and formed foundation breeding lines similar in structure, stride and service propensities which came to be known as landraces.

As these herding lines evolved over centuries a herdsman or farmer in need of a pup or stud service would have quite naturally looked to extended family or neighboring shepherds for guidance and would likely have been personally familiar with several generations of local herding dogs. This was an informal but most effective process. Since the individual herdsman selecting and using his own dogs was answerable only to himself there was no urgent need for written records or any sort of ongoing formal administrative infrastructure.

For untold generations this worked perfectly well, yet in the latter nineteenth century unforeseeable forces unleashed by the Industrial Revolution were to bring profound change. In the latter 1800s the Kennel Club emerged in England on the pretense of bringing order to the canine world by gathering existing regional types, landraces, into formal breeds with registration records and dog shows to consolidate type. The continental Europeans, particularly the Belgians and Germans, were quick to follow suit. The Belgian shepherd club came into existence in 1891 under the guidance of Dr. Adolphe Reul followed in 1900 by that for the German Shepherds by Max von Stephanitz, both with emphasis on police service.





Send Out

## **Schutzhund**

The efficacy, courage and discipline of the individual combat soldier or police dog in a street engagement is inherently unpredictable, but aggregate expectations can be strongly enhanced by breeding selection according to observable attributes and well-structured performance tests followed by training to prepare for the stress of engagement.

To this end concurrent with the advent of formal working breeds standardized performance evaluations or trials with certified judges and decoys emerged. In Germany the Schutzhund (Protection dog) trial, featuring the bite sleeve, emerged as the breeding prerequisite for the German Shepherd and also became available to other breeds. In Belgium and the Netherlands it was the Ring or police dog (KNPV) trials, primarily for the Malinois, using the full body suit. The French evolved their own version of the Ring trial in which the German Shepherd prevailed until it was pushed aside by the Malinois in the 1970's, foreshadowing the world wide emergence of this breed.

To be effective such trials must be sufficiently rigorous to reliably reveal inherent character or structural flaws and the judges and decoys must be honest, correct and strong enough to test the dog to his limits and render a true evaluation. The skill and physical prowess of a strong decoy is essential to an effective evaluation, and in buying a dog or securing a stud service verification of decoy intensity must be a primary consideration. Indeed requiring the demonstration of courage on a strange field with an unfamiliar decoy is often a common sense prerequisite to a sale.

In order to maintain long term integrity such trials must be under the control of serious working breeders and trainers. Failure in this ultimately proved to be the Achilles heel of the SV Schutzhund protocol: emasculation of trial and breed has gone hand in hand.

The Dutch police trials have from the beginning in 1907 been run by senior police administrators which have maintained integrity for more than a century. In Belgium the Flemish trainers broke away from the FCI establishment and show breeder influence in 1963 to establish the NVBK, which established the Malinois as the breed of the future on the international scene, destined to dominate French Ring in the 1970s and much of the police and military service worldwide as the advent of the twenty first century approached and the German Shepherd declined.

When I became seriously involved the early 1980s, not long after the abandonment of the scaling wall, the long pursuit and courage test was the dramatic climax of the trial defining the integrity and value of the dog, worth 50 of the 100 protection points. Handler and dog would proceed to the far end of the trial field and the decoy would emerge from a middle blind, 40 yards from the dog, walk to the center and turn away from the dog at an accelerating trot. In pursuit, in prey drive, the dog at every step was further from the security of the handler building fear in the weak dog. Then the decoy would turn and charge, requiring the dog to flip from prey to full aggression and engage 50 to 70 yards from the security of the handler. After the release and guard there was a reattack requiring the dog to prevail under the stick. Such was the hard core Schutzhund created by von Stephanitz; the pathetic

IGP game we play today is a mockery, an absurd parody that we somehow pretend to take seriously.

International German Shepherd predominance prevailed in post WW II Germany into the 1960s or 70s at which point the wheels began to come off as the SV came increasingly under the sway of a corrupt cabal of commercially oriented show ring breeders and dog merchants. The consequence has been the relentless emasculation of the trial—formally through much less rigor in the exercises and surreptitiously by the emergence of corrupt trial judges openly granting false titles to dogs patently unable to perform at a police patrol level. This was blatant, increasingly condoned and finally normalized, eventually leading to the abandonment of the working title as a breeding prerequisite. Historically many dogs have been granted Schutzhund or IPO titles without ever stepping on a trial field, as in the famous breakfast trials where the paper work is created as if a trial had actually taken place.<sup>1</sup>

The trial can of course never completely replicate the stress of the street, primarily because of the necessary standardization of the trial scenario. Marginal dogs likely to eventually falter in service can at times pass, often with impressive scores, yet break and run when something outside of the script occurs on the street.

The challenge in devising an effective trial is thus to somehow create surprise and thus fear in what is essentially a fixed set of rote exercises—similar to the trained seal jumping through the hoop for a piece of fish—which in training the dog can learn through increasingly realistic experience that there is nothing to fear.

The fine line between preparing an inherently good dog and enabling the faulty dog to squeak through is elusive, which is why a dog should not generally be acquired or bred to unseen on the basis of a title alone. In order to bring reality Belgian ring provides differing procedures or exercise sequences known only on the trial day, but this is not in any sense a comprehensive remedy for the problem.

In order to qualify for the KNPV certificate it is not possible to work with the training decoy on the home field in a club trial, just like another training day. Instead there are regional trials with a decoy from another province unfamiliar to the dog. Lower level club IGP trials for purely sport purposes or younger dogs have their place, but in a serious trial system breeding males particularly must qualify off of the home field under a specific judge on a strong decoy unfamiliar to the dog. The home field trial with a self-selected judge and the friendly club training decoy "testing" the dog has been the Achilles heel, always diluting the credibility of the Schutzhund trial.

The net result of all of this is that as recently as the 1980s the Schutzhund trial was generally viable and credible in this police service suitability evaluation role and thus the foundation on which the breed as the prototypical police dog was built and maintained late into the twentieth century.

But beginning in the 1970s there was an incessantly escalating SV propensity to resolve evolving deleterious tendencies in performance, character or physique by lowering standards rather than resolute remedial

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<sup>1</sup> In America such things were common among European DVG judges in the early years, but I am not aware of this occurring in a USCA trial.

breeding selection for better and stronger dogs. As a prime example when the increasingly extreme backlines and angulation of the show dogs began to create difficulty with the scaling wall it was replaced by the A frame. This decline in physical prowess is incessant; it can only be a matter of time before the one meter high jump becomes the 80 or even 70 centimeter low jump.

Beyond these structural trends creating increasing physical inability to perform, as in the high jump and scaling wall, serious moral and instinctive character flaws such as fear of the stick, noise sensitivity and unsureness before the decoy were becoming increasingly predominant and troublesome in the show lines generally.

Perhaps the most egregious compromise in trial integrity came in response to the escalating trend of the show dogs to avoid or run before the stick in the Schutzhund I attack on the handler. Rather than instituting serious selection for better dogs the attack was eliminated from the exercise sequence. Historically my observation had been that failure in the Schutzhund I courage test was relatively uncommon, that dogs capable of standing up to a really hard core attack on the handler were most likely to take care of business in the courage test. A decade later the other shoe was to drop when the actual stick hits were also to be eliminated, essentially completing the emasculation of the trial as a gage of serious police dog suitability.

Any human being with a multi digit IQ would have perceived this escalating fearfulness in the show lines as a wakeup call, but the establishment, the SV apparatchiks and show breeders, had other ideas. Like the smoker so terrified by reported links of cigarettes to lung cancer that he quit reading the SV went into denial, pretended, chose to believe, that the problem was the trial and began emasculating it by replacing the scaling wall with the A frame, eliminating the attack on the handler and the turn on the long pursuit, padding the reed stick and the rest of the litany of shame.

### ***The Ornamental Purebred***

The root causes of the precipitous decline of the German Shepherd and similar working breeds are to be found in the creation, evolution and history of the purebred dog in the latter 1800s. This is because the advent of the purebred—leading to formal breeds, stud books, dog shows and national kennel clubs such as the VDH and AKC—transformed the relationship of man and dog shifting focus from utility and companionship to selection according to superficial appearance. To this end standards—written descriptions of hypothetical ideal dogs—often conjured by committees of dilators generally profoundly ignorant of and disinterested in the original purpose of the foundation stock. The ultimate objective, the Holy Grail, is in effect if not original intent a breeding population of visually identical dogs conforming perfectly to the standard—virtual clones. In spite of serious inherent flaws the purebred paradigm persisted and prospered for a century, but for reasons we shall enumerate and explain a bit later the wheels were to come off in the 1990s.

Center stage of this brave new world was to be the dog show featuring an often feckless, socially prominent judge conducting the Purebred Mass, the elaborate ritual where the dogs go round and round while the drama mounts,

finally culminating in the dramatic extension of the magic glory bestowing finger.<sup>2</sup>

But the fly in this ointment is that a written standard is inevitably problematic in that the process of conjuring a mental image from text is inexact, complex and highly dependent on the mindset, life experience and predilections of judge or breeder resulting in significant variation in perception of the quality of any subject dog.

No matter how lengthy and detailed mere words cannot uniquely map to a specific image, ultimately there is always sufficient ambiguity to allow one to focus according to personal inclinations. Think of an eminently wise but profoundly ignorant man captured in the Siberian wild yet somehow able to understand English and a gifted illustrator—or perhaps even more interesting one of these newfangled Artificial Intelligence systems. Now let us imagine each given only the text of a standard and asked to conjure an image on paper. Repeat the experiment a dozen times. How likely would this be to yield twelve identical images or something resembling what is winning in a contemporary show ring?

In practice judges naturally are influenced by the selections, private comments and published commentaries of their peers tending over time to a common interpretation, eventually bringing forth focus on specific breed defining structural features. To a point this is not entirely a bad thing, indeed such collective evolution and consolidation is the essence of the breed creation process, often under the guidance of a founding figure in the role of senior judge as in Reul or von Stephanitz.

Examples of such features are the foreshortened muzzle of the Boxer or the narrow head of the Rough Collie. But this often becomes problematic in that over time the ongoing process tends to extremes such that in order to differentiate between increasingly similar candidates there is a propensity to rank order according the extreme in such attributes. If the short muzzle is definitive then other things being equal the dog with the shortest muzzle must be the best dog. This process is inherently unstable, tends to spin out of control.

This is our original sin, and it is not going to be expunged by dribbling holy water on our collective foreheads.<sup>3</sup> Pertinent questions arise:

- What, exactly, is a purebred dog?
- Were all dogs prior to the commencement of kennel club registration in the latter 1800s somehow inherently "impure"?
- How did the assignment of a registration number scribbled in a book by effete dilettantes somehow render a dog "pure" and thus noble?
- Do the FCI nations and major independents such as the AKC own, define the purebred?
- Are dogs in other registries such as the NVBK also purebred?
- Is all of this another step forward in the ascent of man or just a huge scam, a hoax perpetrated in homage to the great gods of greed, money and arrogant vanity?

Such are the underlying issues in the slow moving train wreck before us today. Although the purebred establishment has for most of two centuries

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<sup>2</sup> Thus providing one place where getting the finger makes your day!

<sup>3</sup> I would, however, be quite willing to contribute to a list of candidates for purification, the great ceremonial drowning, baptism to completion.



been furtively concocting their persona as a new and better canine world order reality is much more prosaic, focused on evolving visually identical dogs—virtual if not literal clones. While passing lip service was at times paid to function, particularly among the hunting breeds, the reality was total focus on the ornamental image. Although today largely of the middle class the purebred movement emerged among the elite—with primary focus on their hunting dogs—where police, guard and herding services were regarded as low class, vulgar and thus to be marginalized.

While national entities such as the VDH and St. Hubert worked reasonably well in the early years, particularly for the SV because of the numerical preponderance of the breed and the von Stephanitz commitment to real work, in the long term working dog affairs were run for the benefit, convenience and profit of effete show breeders to the exclusion of any real control in the hands of working dog people. This was a plan for the disaster we see emerging before us today.

From the very beginning, going all the way back to the founding of the Belgian Shepherd in 1891 under the guidance of Adolphe Reul, the working dogs under the purebred paradigm were hijacked by effete "show breeders" rendering those actually training, trialing and deploying police level dogs as subservient after thoughts.

Thus exclusive focus on the conformation show took precedence over historical selection according to service efficacy subverting the age old process. Today the judge is much too often a feckless politician, a pseudo expert with little or no interest in or knowledge of real world on the street service. The primary beneficiaries have been blatantly commercial show breeders pandering to a largely urban pet market and oppressive, overweening national establishments, most particularly the SV.

The process inevitably fails because without the guidance of function form can be nothing more than capricious fashion, the creation of insipid ornamental creatures—not really worthy to be called dogs—with each generation evolving an even more grotesque caricature in order for breeders and judges to stamp their personal impact on the breed and thus affirm their place in the ongoing saga of absurdity.

No matter how grotesque each generation became enough was never ever enough. As the collie skull becomes so narrow as to exclude normal functioning eye balls or the Boxer's inability to dissipate heat and maintain body temperature precluded serious sport and service the incessant litany of more drones on unabated. They persist irrationally in the face of blatantly obvious insanity even as the public finally comes to see the truth of the matter, causing registrations and show participation to collapse.

In fundamental ways the German Shepherd with the firm von Stephanitz hand on the tiller was the exception, for it was his prioritization of the working role and the burgeoning prosperity of the emerging German state that was largely responsible for the century of police service prominence and prosperity of the German Shepherd. The irony is that those that came forth under the ultimate exhibitionist, Reul, are today in large measure displacing the working lines on the street that were the legacy of von Stephanitz, in many ways the true father of the police dog.

While this conversation revolves around the standard, no doubt in the beginning strongly influenced by if not actually written by von Stephanitz, in reality his wisdom and vision was not primarily in this text but rather much more fundamental and direct, the principle expressed in exactly four words: "Form must follow function."



In the founding years selection according to street efficacy was the heart of the legacy and this—rather than the political and money driven selection of effete show judges—must predominate. If the standard as interpreted does not fulfill these fundamental principles then either it is wrong or the interpretation is faulty.

The fatal flaw is that the conformation establishment—show breeders and judges—have from the beginning been profoundly dismissive of and oblivious to the practical realities of police patrol service. This is the direct cause of the ongoing demise of the German Shepherd coming to the preordained fate we see emerging before us today.

Why did this come to pass? From almost the beginning the mantra of the exhibitionists was that form and function are boring and quaint, it is mythology, conjured mystique and concocted fashion that feed the cash spigot, especially from the deep pockets of gullible Americans, Japanese and Chinese. And for those willing to sell their soul for pieces of silver they have proven over the decades that in terms of money that their approach was in the short and medium term viable if corrosive to the soul of all involved, most specifically the dogs themselves.

To belabor the obvious, that the founding conceptual basis of the modern purebred dog is a hoax perpetuated by effete dog show hobby breeders—dilatants—is to beat the dead horse; but the fact remains that purely ornamental breeding of soft dogs is the foundation of the twentieth century FCI and AKC marketing juggernaut.

In reality the purebred paradigm has little or nothing to contribute to real world service in hunting, herding or police patrol but rather was conjured up solely to provide the framework for the new hobby or sport of exhibiting ornamental specimens akin to the showing of hot house orchids or roses which wither away in the real world light of day. The serious hunting trainers in America bypass the AKC in favor of the UKC, an example we desperately need to emulate.

In spite of insinuations of the show dog dilatants there was nothing the least bit crude or "impure" about this age old heritage, no existential need for "purification," for show rings with pseudo expert finger pointing judges to purify, bring redemption, bringing forth—wait for it— the purebred. It never amounted to anything more serious than a superficial solution looking for a problem, and is thus now fading away because you cannot fool all of the people all of the time.

In retrospect the conjuring of the "purebred" and the consequent establishment propagating it—national entities such as the FCI kennel clubs and the AKC—planted the seeds of the ongoing destruction we see before us today in the collapse of yearly registrations. The problem was and is that such dogs have no real function, are of ornamental value only as in hot house orchids which wilt and die in the fresh air and sunshine of the real world; somehow it does not seem to matter that the hunting dogs cannot hunt, the heading dogs cannot herd and the show bred "police" dogs are an absurd parody.

Thus Karma is finally being asserted, leading to the collapse preordained in the 1800s when form was divorced from function as the foundation of the brave new purebred world.



The Night Watch

## **The Police Dog**

The advent of formal police canine service, initiated by the Belgians in 1900, went hand in hand with the emergence of the purebred dog. This brought forth a paradigm shift transforming breeding selection, acquisition, training and deployment of utility dogs, most particularly in police service. As we shall see formalization was necessary, but the devil was in the details and for the German Shepherd the details incorporated the prelude to tragedy.

The age old herding function had prospered on an informal basis for untold generations because herdsman were by and large aware of the attributes of the dogs of their local peers; it was quite normal for a farmer or herdsman to acquire and train a pup or obtain a stud service from another with both parties well acquainted

with the dogs in the background. The mutual trust of the established personal relationship extended to the acquisition, and dogs likely often changed hands without direct payment in response to past favors or the expectation of future consideration, particularly within extended families.

Selection, training and deployment of police dogs tended to be more complex because these functions were in diverse hands lacking the trust and familiarity of a personal relationship. Such dogs were generally produced by more or less commercial breeders and purchased for cash, either trained or as young untrained candidates, by departments rather than individuals. Formal training was often in the hands of full time trainers working with individual prospective handlers.

Thus rather than dependence on personal knowledge of the parents and previous generations breed affiliation provided a preliminary qualification in the selection process and a similarity of appearance contributing to the public perception of the police dog persona. Common breed specific characteristics streamlined the training and deployment process and tended to be helpful when a handler needed to be replaced.<sup>4</sup>

Thus the selection, training, certification and deployment of police dogs involved diverse individuals and organizations each with its own interlocking authority and set of responsibilities which needed to be much more formally defined and delineated. This created the need for national control of performance trials, certification of judges and decoys, trial rules and the maintenance of written records of descent in a national or international stud book.

Because of these realities the gathering of native herding dogs into breeds was a prerequisite for successful large scale police deployment, facilitating the provision of services and thus the need for the associated infrastructure, that is the national breed and kennel clubs. A generation later the FCI emerged in order to facilitate international standards, pedigree recognition, commerce and general international cooperation.

Prior to 1900 many breeds including the Airedale Terrier, Great Dane and English Collie had been tried by police and particularly military programs with

<sup>4</sup> This contributed greatly to the failure of the alternate breeds to prosper.

lackluster success while the best latent police dog candidates, the Belgian and German sheep herding dogs, languished in fields and meadows awaiting breed establishment.

An alternative national model where the breed plays a less prominent formal role in administration is that of the Dutch police as embodied in the KNPV. This has proven effective and well adapted to the breeding, selection, training and deployment of police dogs. Note that this is not entirely devoid of breed affiliation as virtually all KNPV certified dogs are identified as of a particular breed or, more often, a cross or unregistered dog; breeders and trainers are well aware of lines of descent even where there is no registration. This Dutch program has in practice in many ways proven superior to the administration of FCI national clubs, such as the VDH. Today the great majority of KNPV dogs are Malinois or Dutch Shepherds, often undocumented crosses, although in the 1960s and 70s the Bouvier des Flandres also had a notable presence.

It of course goes without saying that just as the uniform of the police officer provides immediate recognition a general similarity of appearance needs to be a fundamental basis for a canine breed. But beyond this efficacy in actual service needs to be the fundamental criteria of quality.

In Germany von Stephanitz was a driving force and thus largely responsible for the enormous prosperity of German police canine service and the German Shepherd. A century later the SV initiated estrangement from the German police community and continues to be a direct causative factor in the precipitous decline of the breed in terms of both numbers and quality.

Although the separation of the purebred in general and the German Shepherd in particular into so called show and working lines was of escalating concern prior to the second World War, by the 1980s this chasm was emerging as the Achilles heel of police and military canine programs as they increasingly struggled to find viable, affordable candidates. Various agencies explored their own breeding programs, often quite successful and transformative in Eastern Europe but tending to struggle elsewhere. Major consequences included increasing exportation of KNPV titled dogs and the general emergence of the Malinois, often unregistered, as serious competition for the German Shepherd. The purebred working dog paradigm has been skating on very thin ice for several decades.

### ***Legacy of the Martin Brothers***

In the beginning and through the Second World War the German Shepherd had prospered in spite of the inherently hostile environment of the emerging purebred establishment primarily because of the firm hand of von Stephanitz on the tiller. In that era under his guidance the SV was so predominant in Europe that they were for all practical purposes beyond the reach of any other canine institution and thus able to establish their heritage as the prototypical police dog throughout the world. Even after the war—through the 1960s—form to a large extent continued to follow function as the spirit of von Stephanitz persisted and prevailed causing the police service heritage to remain vigorous and strong. But then over time as the influence of von Stephanitz began to wane the general propensity of purebred show breeder influence to emasculate and corrupt began to take its toll.

Thus although the outward manifestations of prosperity and virility persisted for a time in the latter third of the twentieth century the SV was increasingly dominated and transformed by a cabal of new men—motivated

by personal status and money—focused on ever more grotesque form, extreme structure and ongoing, gradual, incessant loss of focus on the working origins of the breed.

From the perspective of the outsider the prototypical "show breeders" were the Martin brothers, Walter of the *von der Wienerau* kennel and Herman whose kennel was *vom Arminius*. Walter was in many ways the guiding light, the architect of this new German Shepherd, and Herman was SV president from 1984 until 1994, only two years before the passing of both brothers within weeks in the fall of 1996.



Zamb von der Wienerau

Although my fellow Schutzhund trainers back in the day tended to regard the Martin boys with disdain—as the personification of evil—allocation of blame tends to be emotional and complex from a distance. A more nuanced view is that while they were in retrospect seriously culpable in taking the fateful wrong fork in the road to abandonment of the working heritage in favor of the purely ornamental lines this might have been a bump in the road subject to correction had not ongoing trends spun out of control in the hands of overtly opportunistic men driven by the prospect of money and vainglory.

Power does tend to corrupt and it seems fair to say that the appearance of corruption, or at least influence, began to emerge when Walter's dogs became Sieger and it was Herman in his role of SV president who was making the selections and handing out the trophies when he was not actually selecting his own dogs as in these Sieger selections:

- 1986 & 1987 Quando von Arminius
- 1992 Zamb von der Wienerau
- 1996 Visum von Arminius

As a point of historical reference von Stephanitz set the correct precedent early on by ceasing to show his own dogs and becoming inactive as a breeder as he took on the role of overall breed architect.

But the die had nevertheless been cast, in the twenty first century the irrational pursuit of extreme type emerging in the 1970s and 80s became even more egregious and blatant as the side gait at a trot emerged as the only thing that really mattered. Thus this brave new world of the Martin Shepherd subverted the legacy of Max von Stephanitz and emasculated the breed. Robust good health, vigorous physique and real world police service potential came to be perceived as old fashioned, secondary concerns to be rendered little more than lip service in the conventional propaganda.

Even as the winners came to have increasing difficulty in mounting the dais for their awards and network TV featured video clips mocking the blatantly crippled show lines—virtual banana backs—sidewinding to the ring of glory they are oblivious, just soldier on like lemmings over the cliff with the foundation principle that form must follow function long since abandoned in the pursuit of show ring glory.

In the wolf, progenitor of the dog, nature created form and stride according to efficacy and robust endurance, producing a relatively short and

compact stride because they hunt as a pack covering large distance at moderate speed in diverse and often rough terrain and then moving more quickly to pursue and bring down their prey. Any pack member not able to keep up faces a bleak future, so a robust stride minimizing exposure to injury is essential. Thus the more or less level top line and moderately long back responsible for the natural stride is the physical structure nature devised, as can be seen from any video of a wolf in motion. Modern breeds such as the Malinois tend to maintain this general structure and stride for the same practical reasons nature created it in the first place on the principle that if it is not broken we should not try to fix it.

So why has there been this insane obsession with extreme reach and ultra-long stride which German breeders blindly pursue as the Holy Grail? It has been postulated that von Stephanitz believed that, relative to the wolf, increasing angulation and top slope could transform efficiency in a short stride to more efficiency in a longer stride. Aside from the question of whether this postulated increased efficiency is actually realized what he likely had in mind was a moderate adaptation in the service of esthetic and practical ends rather than the grotesque freaks of the SV show ring today. The 1926 selection by von Stephanitz of Klodo vom Boxberg as Sieger would perhaps lend credence to this point of view.

When we build off road all-terrain vehicles they generally feature four wheel drive, high ground clearance and a short wheel base. While few of us actually travel beyond the road network there is potential if largely unused utility in such vehicles. On the other hand most of us realize that pseudo racing cars such as the Corvette have no practical use at all, are by and for 47 year old males insecure in their masculinity and hardly driven in day by day life, sitting for years under canvas in a corner of the garage as a symbol of virility. In a certain sense the SV show lines are in a similar way useless and fragile in the real world, the fans largely consisting of hopelessly effete and insecure men and woman with way too much money trying to buy meaning in otherwise dreary lives.

Thus today as the consequence of SV repudiation of the police dog heritage the breed is entrapped in an incessant downward spiral. This has gone forward on two interrelated fronts: physical structure and stride on the one hand and on the other the abandonment of the intrinsic moral attributes of aggression, intelligence, working willingness and stability in the heat of engagement.



Klodo vom Boxberg set a new direction when von Stephenitz made him Sieger in 1925.

Gait is of course fundamental and any dog not capable of a smooth powerful stride is a flawed service candidate and contraindicated for breeding, but it is only one of many diverse aspects of structure and stride. Yet in the contemporary show ring it predominates over agility, power and other physical requisites to say nothing of moral attributes. In the original Schutzhund breeding qualification trial exercises such as the broad jump, high jump and scaling wall are essential and fundamental, but the physical attributes essential for the requisite agility have been incessantly marginalized or swept under the carpet to focus entirely on gait. Difficulty in doing the jumps was a

primary reason for the abandonment of the working title as a breeding prerequisite, which of course will only exacerbate the decline.

For better or worse this is the ultimate legacy of the Martin brothers.



### ***The American Experience***

Beginning in the early 1970s Germans such as Gernot Riedel pioneered a second wave of American police canine service and brought the Schutzhund program to the attention of many of us, opening an exciting new world beyond dreary AKC obedience and tracking trials. Original efforts to work within the existing AKC national club, the GSDCA, came to an abrupt end when the AKC came down hard on anything involving dogs biting people, leading to much disorder.

In the late 1970s our family became involved through affiliation with the *Northern Illinois Schutzhund Club* (NISC), which had been founded a decade previously by Dr. Herbert Preiser and was at the time led by Betty Sagen and Mike Lichtwalt. This club had initially been affiliated with the DVG in Germany through a New York based group—a previous incarnation which soon went defunct—and then eventually affiliated with USCA. At the time the sport was struggling to emerge through several tenuous and competing entities which included the two DVG incarnations, the *North American Schutzhund Association* (NASA) with their own peculiar rules variant and initiatives by the above mentioned German trainers and advocates.

This beckoning brave new world turned out to be a difficult vision to bring to reality, and the failure of the original American attempt, NASA, made it abundantly clear that a European kick start was going to be necessary. After the collapse of the original DVG transplant in the 1970s USCA came into existence as a new beginning, a brand new organization for all Americans to build upon. Indeed, the words "United" and "America" were highlighted and bandied about while the words "German Shepherd" lurked discretely in the fine print.

NASA as an entirely American based program unfortunately but predictably failed to prosper because of the lack of credibility of their amateurish home brew rules and judges conjured out of thin air. After a flurry of enthusiasm NASA withered away in favor of national clubs affiliated with German organizations, primarily the SV for the German Shepherds or the all-breed DVG, which came first in the 1970s but then floundered and expired, only to be resurrected several years later in the early 1980s by dissident USCA members in response to serious internal conflicts in that organization.

NASA was inherently the right idea whose time had not quite come because we lacked so much in the way of serious training and breeding expertise, resources and culture; it was simply a bridge too far. For many years my view has been that America will remain third rate until we finally find the courage to grow up, break free and establish a program by and for Americans. A half century down the road it is quite evident that Europeans will always regard us as slightly amusing, childish dilatants with way too much excess money—which relieves us of the necessity of standing on our own two feet—to be controlled and exploited for their own profit and amusement. History has tended to prove this European view correct.

The German affiliation was quite natural in that the sleeve oriented Schutzhund program had been originated by the SV for the German

Shepherd, with other prominent working dog nations such as Belgium, France and the Netherlands focused on bite suit style programs such as Ring and KNPV, which were generally outside of FCI auspices. In these other nations Schutzhund style programs were just getting off the ground with their own nation specific programs and titles, which were later migrated to an international basis through the advent of the FCI IPO program.

Although the Belgian Malinois is prominent today in sport and police service, prior to the twenty first century this breed was virtually unknown in America with very few AKC registrations. In this century imports of KNPV titled dogs began to attract attention, although many were unregistered, which was not an especially important issue for police service. The fact that inclusion in one of the FCI registries was a prerequisite for IPO or Schutzhund competition was a hindrance, but surreptitious introduction of NVBK breeding stock in Belgian and German Malinois lines in time to some extent alleviated this problem.

In twenty first century America the emergence of serious and increasingly politically active Malinois advocates transformed the landscape from ubiquitous German Shepherd hegemony to a more multi breed world, which tended to produce widespread and in some ways disruptive ramifications as in the AWDF meltdown in the latter half of the 2010 decade.

From the beginning European judges came to America serving as teachers, mentors and advisors in addition to presiding at trials and promoting their own European organizations. These were primarily the SV but with perhaps ten or fifteen percent from the DVG and a few others from breed specific clubs. Although these were mostly from Germany, some also came from Belgium, the Netherlands or perhaps other nations, usually SV recognized foreign judges because Schutzhund per se existed only within the SV and WUSV affiliates with other nations often having very similar but nevertheless distinct programs with their own nation specific titles and rules variants, mostly later replaced by IPO.

Prior to the 1980s all of this more or less worked; within the SV the rift between working and show lines was not so pronounced, with many credible working dogs having prominent Sieger show placing ancestors in their pedigrees. Over all it had been a much more cohesive and congenial world but during the last thirty years the wheels have come off leading to the chaos of today where almost a half century later the American Schutzhund movement is at best treading water. Our saga had begun in comradeship and idealism, but all too soon the money changers were to find their way to the temple.

### ***Innocence Lost***

In the advent of our American working dog awakening we had quite naturally looked to Europe for dogs, leadership, knowledge and the helping hand up; and this was right and good for it was in central Europe—Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands—where the transformation of a millennium of tending style herding service had evolved into our protective heritage breeds. It is because of the foresight and leadership of men such as Konrad Most and Max von Stephanitz in Germany and Earnest van Wesemael and Adolphe Reul in Belgium that we have the police, service and military dog culture of today, which has taken the canine partnership with mankind to new levels.

Little did we know in the 1970's and 80s as our idealistic quest gathered momentum that the new generation of German leadership had feet of clay,



that even then betrayal lurked in high places of the *Verein für Deutsche Schäferhunde* (SV), the mother club of the German Shepherd. These heirs of von Stephanitz, these Germans on our pedestal, were abandoning his credo "form must follow function" in favor of their own new creed: "beauty is what we say it is and marginally good enough is to be the new standard for work." And, of course, as the dogs degenerated and good enough become inconvenient they incessantly emasculated the Schutzhund trial, for they held the keys of the kingdom for good or for evil. The consequence was the gradual but incessant and now far advanced sundering of the breed into show and working lines.

From the beginning the test of work, the Schutzhund trial, was the foundation of the German Shepherd Dog. But in the second half of the twentieth century—slowly, subtly at first but with ever gathering momentum—the trial was incessantly made less rigorous for an increasingly predominant conformation oriented segment of the breeding community. The process was insidious, subtle in the beginning; pressure was put on judges to be a little bit lenient, on the helpers to moderate their intensity, to go easy on a weak dog because of his promise for the show ring. In the eighties the export market, especially in America, for titled dogs put a cash value on even mediocre or less titled dogs, creating another group with an interest in an emasculated trial. The rules were relaxed numerous times, decreasing courage test distances, making the scoring less demanding, introducing the padded stick and entirely eliminating the attack on the handler. Thus both the letter and spirit of the law were incessantly compromised.

The direct consequence was the collapse of SV puppy registrations from 30,000 yearly to current numbers in the 9000 range. And the Belgian Malinois now routinely dominates the most prestigious Euro Schutzhund and IPO competitions, the German Shepherds increasingly retreating to their own back yards, the SV and WUSV championships, to maintain the illusion of dominance or even relevance.

The evil spread. Just as the Martin boys and their ilk had hijacked the SV to pander their show lines disciples in America such as Johannes Grewe infiltrated USCA with the same agenda, the transformation of USCA into a marketing arm promoting and pandering the Martin Shepherds.

Thus as a consequence of decades of German corruption and lowering of standards the soul of the breed, the heritage of the founders, now hangs in the balance. Proponents of the Martin Shepherd, the enemy within, have a firm grip on the reins of SV power and are establishing the WUSV as their own private captive worldwide show dog marketing enterprise. Those with the courage to advocate the working heritage such as Helmut Raiser are systematically marginalized and vilified. The true threat is greed and corruption, the enemy within.

## ***Decline and Fall***

Although ultimate ramifications would emerge only over time the year 1995 heralded a portentous new era, marked the advent of several transformative trends which would over the next generation bring far reaching change, shake the working dog world order—most especially the AKC, FCI and SV—to their foundations:

- The worldwide collapse of purebred registrations.
- The international emergence of the Malinois.
- The advent of the Internet.
- The pinnacle of the influence of the Martin brothers.

Although associating historical eras with specific individuals is to some extent arbitrary it seems to me entirely appropriate to think of this ongoing era as the age of the Martin Shepherd. There is a certain sense of irony here in that persons who well knew and esteemed the brothers hold the opinion that they would on the whole be deeply distressed at what was to transpire in the twenty first century.

Today, three decades down the road, the viability of the purebred paradigm hangs in the balance as registrations collapse so precipitously that the AKC—in avoidance like the proverbial ostrich with his head in the sand—will no longer even release the numbers, only an annual rank order of plummeting breed popularity in the race to the bottom.

### **Annual German (VDH) Registrations**

Year	GSD	Doberman
2022	8395	417
2021	10031	422
2020	10003	442
2019	8634	478
2018	10679	417
2017	9766	491
2016	10202	583
2015	10523	478
2014	10470	635
2013	11092	650
2012	12786	619
2011	13339	494
2010	14501	570
2009	15870	522
2008	16854	505
2007	16868	456
2006	16908	700
2005	18278	580
2004	19874	644
2003	19882	784
2002	20352	734
2001	21372	712
2000	20872	712
1999	23839	860
1998	27834	1312
1997	29824	1577
1996	30802	
1995	29805	
1994	28730	
1993	27648	
1992	28000	

The Schutzhund trial—the foundation upon which von Stephanitz had built the breed—is long gone, replaced by a wretched FCI IGP abomination, a fake or pretend play game lacking even the stick blows that historically separated the wheat from the chaff. With the removal of the stick the annual WUSV and FCI IGP championships for all practical purposes eroded to irrelevance, diminished to little more than dancing with dogs, akin to a touch football Super Bowl or even a walk in the park. Docking and cropping have been largely banned in Europe and the ever voracious animal rights activists are mounting a serious threat to end police patrol dog service in Germany. As our age of innocence and optimism collapses in disillusion there is much shame and blame, the lion's share of which must rest squarely on the shoulders of the SV, the motherland club entrusted by Max von Stephanitz to preserve and protect the heritage of the founders.

Although the registration collapse, which came at the crest of a euphoric wave of expansion in the 1980s, was worldwide in scope and general across breeds the enormous decline of the German Shepherd in Germany from thirty thousand annual registrations to less than ten by 2020 shook the SV, the empire of von Stephanitz, to the core. They have yet to recover their bearings, reel in blind confusion and panic.

Although the Belgian Shepherd preceded the German by a decade and the Belgians were first on the street with uniformed police patrol the German invasion and occupation of 1914 and the Nazi atrocity cast a deep shadow over this unfortunate breed, which remained lost in a backwater for

most of a century. But ultimately at the approach of the twenty first century the emergence— like the Phoenix from the ashes—of the Malinois in the limelight of center stage in military and police service, as well as sporting venues, for the first time provided a viable international alternative to the German Shepherd as the predominant patrol dog, a direct threat to the relevance if not the existence of that breed.

The advent of the Internet once and for all broke the back of the overwhelming dominance of the purebred establishment—as embodied in the AKC and the various FCI national kennel clubs—which had stood like the Rock of Gibraltar in support of their haughty public persona, overweening avarice and mythology laden narrative.

Domination of the media at large had created a predominant propaganda based empire which the international press and specialty magazines such as *Dog World* regurgitated without question as revealed truth. Breed specific and general canine books endorsed and glorified all nine yards of this as the conventional mythology. Thus the digital age shattered the lock on this prevailing monolithic wasteland of pretense and propaganda and within a very few years opened the floodgates to those with contrary views, such as myself.

The entrenched canine bureaucrats and haughty "breed authorities and experts" had no idea at all of how to respond to all of this, for the decades of unquestioning adulation had turned their minds to mush. The world could never be the same; this genie was not going back in the bottle.

Over the past generation it has become painfully obvious that the German Shepherd as a serious working breed is in free fall as the direct consequence of the perversions of the SV show ring and ever proliferating bureaucratic control, complexity and cost of the breeding and registration process. This overweening micromanagement—akin to repressive east European communist regimes—has created sharply escalating cost to feed the bureaucrats, incessantly diminishing registrations and repression of the breeder's unfettered selection according to his own experience and expectations, which is where the first rank of working police dogs and more importantly vigorous and robust working lines inevitably emerge.

What would Michelangelo have produced with a squad of grasping government bureaucrats hovering in his studio demanding free lunch, dictating stone and tool selection, verifying a sanitary pad dispenser in the men's rest room and requiring formal approval, in triplicate, of sketches and plans before applying chisel to stone?

In the aggregate contemporary German Shepherds are increasingly physically unable to perform in the police service role which was, according to Max von Stephanitz, the existential reason for the emergence of the breed in the first place. Yet the deeper crisis is in the inherent instinctive drives and propensities preordaining the potential for service, the very soul of the breed.

In recent years the SV, the German mother club, has to its everlasting shame driven two interrelated nails into this coffin. It:

- Precipitated, added and abetted the removal of the stick hits from the IGP trial—the putative replacement of Schutzhund as the breeding prerequisite—utterly emasculating, trivializing, the trial and thus the breed.
- Abandoned the working title requirement for breeding eligibility, which was the foundation rock upon which the founders based the breed.

*Lest we forget:*

**The ideal of the Society was to develop Police trial Champions** out of Exhibition Champions, our shepherd dog therefore, was further developed by dog lovers as a working dog. The Standard by which he would be judged and approved was this, namely:—utility is the true criterion of Beauty. Therefore our dogs exhibit everywhere to-day (in a fittingly developed frame, and never as the caricatures of Nature, the greatest of all teachers) a build of body, compacted and designed for the highest possible efficiency, spare and powerful, with wonderfully well-proportioned lines which immediately attract the connoisseur, who soon recognizes that it imparts to its owner a swift, easy gait, a capacity for quick turning and powers of endurance.

*Max von Stephanitz 1925*

Thus today the SV is repudiating the heritage, literally bringing to an end the era of von Stephanitz. The relentless pursuit of effete show ring predominance and all-consuming avarice has produced ever more grotesque structure and stride, dogs increasingly ill-suited in terms of the robust agility and durability essential for real world service, an absurd parody. Avaricious show breeders are emasculating the police character—the very soul—pandering to the lowest common denominator of the pet dog market, conjuring little more than second rate Golden Retriever replicas.

And to what end? They relentlessly slay the golden goose to line their pockets and inflate their egos, but at what cost? Though they may in the light of day recite the litany of the founders it is but a hollow dirge devoid of virtue, for in the dark they only count their money. The wretched truth is that they care

nothing about the heritage, the integrity of the breed, but are concerned only with their own selfish short term aggrandizement.

From the dawn of the twentieth century the German Shepherd dog had resonated with of the spirit of the German people, and for decades represented well over one in four VDH registrations. Military service in the First World War propagated the wave of predominance worldwide, especially to America where by the middle 1920s it was the leading AKC breed.

This robust civilian popularity was in many ways driven by the police dog persona, the pervasive desire to possess a serious protection dog, or at least a dog generally perceived as serious—for its own sake without regard to practical necessity. From time immemorial men have sought meaning and a sense of personal virility in things such as fast horses, powerful hunting rifles, race track capable cars, robust sport vehicles and similar accouterments of adult masculinity. Effete critics may well comment derisively that these things are merely shallow symbols of machismo, props for suspect masculinity, and there is a grain of truth in it. But ultimately vigorous masculinity embodies leadership and robust initiative, has driven the economic and social emergence of western civilization and also on a much less pretentious scale the universal appeal of the German Shepherd.

The fact that most pups are destined to become companion dogs rather than on the street patrol dogs is a tribute to the stability and trainability of the breed, the control emphasized in the Schutzhund trial. The widespread presence of sport training clubs was an essential resource, provided both training suitable for the home companion and the breeding qualification trial. Von Stephanitz had gotten it right, achieved sustainable balance.

Yet in spite of so many decades of success as robust home companions and guardians in recent years the emerging SV mantra has increasingly shifted toward passive and increasingly docile pets suitable for the least demanding potential owners—the lowest common denominator. This in combination with the repudiation of the police service role was in effect if not original intent a complete redefinition of the breed and thus the repudiation of the vision of Max von Stephanitz.

Civilian ownership of real police line dogs has been feasible and prosperous because with proper support many owners are perfectly capable of dealing with such dogs and also because there is even in the best working lines a general Normal or Gaussian distribution of intensity in the relevant attributes, the famous bell curve, which inevitably produces some pups lacking a pronounced police service potential which nevertheless have the potential to become first rate home companions, watch dogs or guardians. The experienced breeder makes the whole thing work by initial selection and dealing with situations where a police candidate in training falls short or a home companion proves more robust than the owner can deal with. Many fine police or sport dogs start out life as an overly robust returned home companion.

Ultimately repudiating the protective heritage in order to promote pet dog sales, as has been the SV mode of operation for several decades, is a plan for failure, cutting off the nose in spite of the face. In the long run this will do much more to promote the sale of Golden and Labrador retrievers rather than the wretched remnants of a defunct police breed.

### ***Advent of the Internet***

Ever since the beginning of history—the advent of the written word—power over the people has been in the hands of those controlling the public narrative, that is what is printed in newspapers and books, preached from the pulpit or inculcated in the schools. Each social or technical innovation such as writing, the printing press, television, radio or the control of the Catholic Church from the Vatican in Rome has had profound effect, realigned power. Each of these novel venues has had one paramount commonality, that being absolute control in the hands of the establishment be it king, church, the press or a national kennel club. The word of the common man never carried further than his voice or hand written letters, perhaps as far as the end of the bar or meeting hall.

No more. The advent of the Internet has projected the voice of the common man, even Jim Engel, as far as the reach of the age old canine establishment propaganda. This has transformed the world of the purebred so profoundly that the all-pervasive control by the prevailing establishment—the AKC, SV and FCI—has been shattered forever. We have indeed come to live in interesting times, a much more egalitarian era.

Historically the establishment, as embodied in august personages such as an FCI president, dwelt in a lavish remote world of elite travel and five star hotels wielding absolute power over canine affairs far beyond the purview of the man in the street. But in this internet era he is reduced to pandering on Face Book to establish a likeable persona and promote his agenda, rubbing elbows with all of those street dwellers just like everyone else.

In this age of electronic media who you are, and perhaps even more importantly who you want to be, your face to the world, is the web presence. Those with passion for the German Shepherds, police dogs in action, would quite naturally look to the motherland web page expecting historical context, photos of von Stephanitz, an opportunity to buy his book, the early dogs, working trials, police and military dogs in action, a century of honor and heritage proudly presented; the whole nine yards. But what you get is something else entirely. [SV Web Page](#)

What we find is little more than a do over of a generic pet owner oriented Golden Retriever page, a sales brochure for the meekest and most timid

people devoid of any hint of the police foundations, over the top in insipid political correctness. The SV comes across as apologetic, embarrassed by or even ashamed of the von Stephanitz heritage.

It is a large, well organized, carefully laid out, technically well done site careful not to offend even the most sensitive perspective pet owner with a photo or mention of serious protection. No photo of a decoy, a sleeve, a dog griping, a stick or any overt aggression. Rather than a police breed that responsible and capable civilians can, with proper management, enjoy in a home and family context it is targeted at the least common denominator, the most inept person who could possibly scrape up the cash.

Clicking on the photo of the dog by the police car reproduced in the figure yield nothing, and has not for years, apparently they never took it seriously enough to provide content or much more likely nobody involved in the web site has any idea of what first responder service is all about. Elsewhere we are told that aggression is unnecessary, inappropriate, that a dog should have "drive predisposition" which, bowing to political correctness, is "not to be confused with aggression."



The stirring words of von Stephanitz are reduced to "The idea of the founder of the Association for German Shepherd Dogs, Max von Stephanitz, to develop a powerful, safe and balanced dog has become an international recipe for success on four paws."

This boggles the mind on several levels. It the first place it is an outrageous parody of the von Stephanitz heritage, stripped of any reference to the police service role, a crude appeal to the most inept and clueless potential purchaser. In claiming "Success on four paws" we see the ultimate in denial, totally oblivious to the fact that the breed is in free fall, is being supplanted as the default worldwide police dog and abandoned by the German people.



### ***No Man is an Island***

Just as no man is an island the purebred establishment has been profoundly shaped by social and political evolution; at this point it is helpful to step back and view all of this in the context of the twentieth century struggle of economic and societal order, of the basic fabric of our civic institutions. The western paradigm has been the capitalist or free enterprise scheme where the individual is the innovator, free to choose and act, most seriously embraced in America where we, for all of our many and grievous faults and occasional arrogance, led the world into a century of unprecedented innovation and prosperity, especially coming forth with the Marshall plan in the aftermath of the Second World War.

Others, led by Karl Marx, took note of the inequality which has prevailed throughout history and instigated a revolution of the people where all would share equally in the bounty. The evil that Marx addressed is real and palpable and every national regime or administration is a balance between the prosperity of the individual and the economic, technological and social realities constraining national policy, the ongoing balance between liberal and conservative policy and programs. The ultimate problem was of course that the communist pie tends to be very small, that there is much less bounty to

share, and the apparatchiks and bureaucrats claim the lion's share to enable their life style and support their dachas.

You can see where this is going. The SV is the penultimate instance of the canine socialist regime, where all guidance and decisions emanate from on high, from supposed establishment experts—breed wardens and judges—because German breeders and trainers are on the whole deemed too coarse, ignorant and irresponsible to be trusted with unfettered breeding selection. Which may well be true, but throughout history innovation and excellence has always come from the exceptional individual—such as Edison, Gates or Ford—and in order for such men to be free to strive the more mundane must be free to practice mediocrity, for the only way to find genius is to notice it after it has come to pass. The Soviet Union, and perhaps the Euro Union, could never have created the personal computer which has recast the world in a single generation.

The Malinois on the other hand has prospered mightily under a canine free enterprise or laissez-faire paradigm in which every breeder has agency, makes his breeding selections entirely according to his own wisdom and experience and prospers or withers according to who is willing to purchase his pups and how they fare on the trial field or street.

Thus while the SV experience of robust central leadership and domination launched a century of unimaginable prosperity and hegemony, it also carried concealed within the seeds of its own destruction, which evolved into the micromanagement of the SV bureaucrats and the oppressive burden on the breeder and trainer in terms of effort, time and money to fulfill artificial requirements often impeding innovative breeding and ever expanding medical screening duress and cost. While intentions may have been good in the beginning, in time the purpose came to be reservation of the privilege and profit to the inside elite, thus suppressing the natural and necessary renewal, the novel ideas and principles necessary in every successful ongoing human endeavor.

The Malinois on the other hand experienced a long century of deprivation and disunity—particularly in the early years driven by German invasion, occupation and exploitation—and lack of a dominant mother land and yet ultimately emerged from obscurity and chaos to challenge and perhaps eventually eclipse the house of von Stephanitz.

### ***USCA Name Games***

The emergence of the *United Schutzhund Clubs of America* (USCA) in the latter 1970s was in many ways a turning point as it immediately became strongly predominant in terms of membership, clubs and trials. Prior to this the sport had been struggling, with a few scattered clubs affiliated with the DVG and efforts underway, particularly by Gernot Riedel in California, to establish the program under the auspices of the American club (GSDCA) emulating the SV role in Germany. But when the AKC came down hard on any sort of activity involving dogs biting people and the original DVG relationship collapsed the time was ripe for an entirely new beginning.

The mantra featured unity, there were strains of "Kumbaya" blowing gently in the wind as USCA was emerging, promoted as welcoming to all breeds in spite of the latent SV connection, which was not widely understood, particularly by those with other breeds. This seemed necessary to gain access to working judges which were to come through the SV. But the price was to





be very high, would ultimately be surrender of the USCA soul hijacked and enslaved as the promotional agent of the grotesque SV show lines. While in our naivety this seemed to make perfect sense it was the sowing of the seeds of destruction, would have complicating ramifications for decades down the road.

In post WW II Germany there had been ongoing struggle for predominance between the SV and the DVG<sup>5</sup> which carried on to American shores. As noted the DVG was first to establish a formal relationship, but their leadership was from the beginning relentlessly inept, corrupt and short sighted leading ultimately to a very small American footprint today.

The SV cabal was much more farsighted and opportunistic, adopting USCA as a stalking horse, that is an incipient client marketing arm for their show lines under the false flag of an American all-breed training and sport program. Omitting the words "German Shepherd" in the name was overt deception, inherently perverse and dishonest, which would lead to four decades and counting of strife and confusion. Rather than dealing with the problem forthrightly USCA eventually attached a "for the German Shepherd Dog" tag on the web site and magazine as some sort of pathetic fig leaf.

A decade later, in 1989, for diverse reasons mostly involving SV entanglement, the all-breed pretense was creating serious European dog politics problems. This was to a large extent resolved by the creation of the AWDF at the initiative of USCA President Paul Meloy and myself representing the Bouviers and through my Dog Sports magazine column. This worked well for two decades until a next generation of leadership went collectively stupid, but that is a tale of a dead horse which has been amply covered elsewhere.

[AWDF, Stillborn American Elite](#)

The American Schutzhund movement was predominated in the early years by about sixty percent German Shepherds, not an overwhelming majority, but also featured Dobermans, Rottweilers, Bouviers des Flandres, Airedales and a few others. A general spirit of inclusion predominated, but the forty percent increment in income and participation was very important because we were spread so thin. Strange as it may seem to the current generation the Belgian Malinois was not a factor, was to be virtually unknown in America for another quarter century.

Thus for Americans Schutzhund was a German program and options were subservience to either the SV through USCA or the DVG as a member of a foreign "Landesverband," in either case directly under a repressive German thumb. The SV and DVG were for financial reasons deeply competitive, the one common factor being the eternally naïve and compliant Americans reliably there to provide incoming German cash flow. The concept of American working dog affairs by and for Americans never even crossed their minds, and we have accepted subservience, with exceptions such as American Schutzhund, so completely that it is never taken seriously by our leadership whose sense of identity and relevance seems to be tied irrevocably to a personal if subservient SV relationship rather than idealistic abstractions such as the general vitality of the German Shepherd as a police patrol breed.

This more or less worked as long as Schutzhund was the focus, but when the SV snapped the baited trap shut and hijacked USCA to become the subservient marketing arm for their feckless Martin Shepherds it was a whole new ball game. This and the abandonment of real Schutzhund in favor of the

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<sup>5</sup> and several smaller, all breed national organizations.

inane FCI IGP sport, the removal of the working title requirement for breeding ten years later and finally the collapse of SV registrations (read cash flow) created the crisis before us today. USCA leadership's only real response to all of this was to more than triple annual membership dues from thirty dollars to a hundred; the Germans were now going to dictate USCA operation—USCA leadership having been casually reduced to an essentially clerical role—according to their own profit and privilege, but they were certainly not going to foot the bill.

While more or less appropriate at the time each of the four words in the USCA name, for diverse historical reasons, are today defunct or at least deeply misleading. This was primarily on our part a matter of changing times and historical accident rather than any sort of founding era connivance, although where the SV is involved connivance is their stock in trade, never very far below the surface.

### ***United***

As mentioned above USCA was promoted as united as in providing American all-breed trainers with access to judges, clubs, score books and trials. One overall national alliance offering many trials rather than several incipient half-baked entities providing a few trials was in practical terms a significant step forward because of how thinly distributed we were. The problem was of course the false flag concealing subservience to the SV; that while we were led to believe that we were creating an American organization to advance the sport here behind the scenes, on the paper, we were under German control and authority in service to the propagation of grotesque show lines for the profit and hegemony of the German homeland. We had been recolonized by the Germans two centuries after gaining freedom from the British.

### ***Schutzhund***

Unfortunately USCA is no longer conducting actual Schutzhund trials, but rather pathetic FCI IGP pretend trials. Nobody outside of the show folks are happy about this, but so far nobody has had the courage and grit to do anything about it either. If this is not resolved it's game over and nothing else will really matter.

### ***Clubs***

In the beginning USCA was an organization of amateur clubs because throughout the world the training club was the foundation, providing comradeship and cohesion. Today many "clubs" are actually for profit business ventures with clients and paid coaches and decoys rather than members in which those actually training their dogs have no voice in either the local club or in USCA affairs. This professionalization of the sport is making it a venue for the well off, inhibiting younger participation particularly those with young families, thus cutting off our noses to spite our faces because such people are the wellspring of novice training helpers. This is an existential problem. [The Commercialization of Schutzhund](#)

### ***of America***

USCA was in the beginning portrayed as an American organization putting control of American working dog affairs firmly in American hands, but over time SV connivance transformed it into a blatant de facto SV marketing arm forcing us to pay for the promotion of their pathetic show lines. This was to a certain extent being alleviated with Dr. Messler as SV president, but to no one's surprise he was replaced at the next election with the old cabal, which is not likely to make such a mistake again.

After decades of success USCA has come on seriously hard times, primarily because we have embraced the force feeding of an FCI IPO program without the stick hits placing the credibility and indeed the very existence of the breed in dire jeopardy. While this existential threat is the primary focus of this document as a whole there are secondary but nevertheless critical issues to be addressed here.

There is an inherent and necessary emotional aspect of human nature served by culture, tradition and ceremony ranging from the coronation of a king or inauguration of a president to a young man's first communion or bar mitzvah. In a similar way there are ceremonial aspects to our working trials ranging from the first BH of a novice to an international championship in a major sports stadium.

Historically—in the latter 1980s and 90s—the elite level of American competition, where the big boys played, where the world team slots were at stake, had been conducted with elaborate ceremony in a stadium according to European custom. Marching into the stadium was how you arrived, your coming of age. Those making a world team thus had at least that one stadium appearance under their belt, had the confidence boost of having been there and done that.

None of the USCA championships have been in a stadium in recent years. In what sort of second rate nation is it possible for a team to go abroad to a WUSV championship without ever having had the opportunity to build confidence in a stadium appearance at the national championship level?

When a major dog sports venue such as USCA comes to the point where its championships are on an open field instead of in a stadium, its journal is on the internet rather than printed and they chose not to apply the stick in their trials how far away can the end be?

### ***Beginning of the End***

Beginning in 2023 the FCI, at the instigation of the SV, removed the stick blows from IGP, that is the stick became a threat only with no actual striking of the dog. Since fear under the stick had always been the primary means of separating the wheat from the chaff this was the crossing of the Rubicon, essentially rendering the IGP meaningless as a gage of police service potential, little more than a walk in the park.

Looking back a decade the beginning of the end came in 2012 as the SV abandoned the Schutzhund trial, the legacy of von Stephanitz, in favor of the FCI IPO program.<sup>6</sup> At this point the intention was clearly in place to eventually abandon the working title itself as a breeding prerequisite. The purpose of the ten year delay was to apply spin doctor magic casting their treachery as progressive adaptation to changing times rather than the abandonment of the police dog heritage and the legacy of Max von Stephanitz that it in fact was.

Although Schutzhund and IPO were variants of the original trial and had coexisted for many years with differences in rules and procedure varying over time the fundamental distinction was that Schutzhund was in the beginning and still pretended to be a serious breeding qualification trial while IPO was never anything more than a prosaic play sport like Mondioring.

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<sup>6</sup> Background: [Working Dog Organizations: Structure and Ongoing Conflict](#)

The primary motivation for the emasculation of the trial system was embarrassment, the increasingly obvious fact that the SV show lines had become a hollowed out parody of the police dog that von Stephanitz had created. The strategy from the beginning was to provide cover for the SV, plausible deniability, so they could pretend to be true to von Stephanitz as the FCI did the hands on dirty work. It was more or less like hiring a hit man and then attending a public event to provide an alibi when the assassination took place.

This conjuring of plausible deniability, however transparent, has become characteristic of the SV as they have gone about systematically emasculating the breed in their misguided attempt to bolster popularity with what they perceive as younger and thus increasingly more timid elements of the German population. Historically the WUSV Schutzhund championship was the pinnacle competition for the German Shepherds and FCI IPO was in a similar way primary for the other nations and breeds. There was very little overlap in participation because Schutzhund and IPO, while very similar, were different enough that it was unusual for a dog to be a serious competitor in both venues simultaneously.

Thus an key but largely unforeseen subsidiary ramification of adopting IPO as the working trial for the SV and WUSV was that suddenly large numbers of Shepherd trainers had a second potential world team to aspire to. This had serious ramifications in America because of resulting conflicts within the AWDF over control of the qualification trial and process. The USCA leadership dropped the ball on this big time, leading to a down and dirty confrontation with the AWDF, a nasty fight in which nobody exhibited much statesmanship or wisdom until finally Vadim Plotsker finally stepped in to resolve the conflict. It was an ugly and embarrassing chapter.

As Schutzhund, rebranded and emasculated as IGP, was being watered down more rigorous programs such as the Dutch Police KNPV trials and the Belgian Ring NVBK program emerged as inherently superior and became increasingly the source of serious police dogs, mostly the Malinois. The primary difference is that IGP is run by and for effete SV and FCI show breeders while the KNPV trial is under direct control of Dutch police administrators and NVBK is run by a set of serious trainers who bolted from the FCI in 1963 to run their own working dog affairs. In order for the German Shepherd to persist as a serious police capable dog real control of the trial and breeding qualification must one way or another come into the hands of serious breeders and trainers. Real German Shepherd breeding is and must be police dog breeding, it truly is as simple as that.

Thus in spite of this decline of the German Shepherd those in need of serious working dogs—the police, military and serious sport trainers—have options. The Malinois or Dutch Shepherds can still do the scaling wall, and do so convincingly in the serious suit venues—such as French and Belgian ring and the Dutch police trials.

Apologists for the SV are generally in avoidance, blame liberal politicians, the FCI or their discovery of a newly emergent timidity in the German people for this emasculation of the German Shepherd; but it is utter nonsense. Their treachery is driven by the motives of greed, the love of money and the sense of personal importance and power in the imagined glory of the show ring.

The abandonment of the Schutzhund trial and the working title requirement for breeding a decade later were the harbingers of the end of the von Stephanitz era and the police dog persona of the German Shepherd dog.

Thus the working title as the prerequisite for breeding, the foundation upon which von Stephanitz built the breed, has been surreptitiously abandoned in favor of yet another pathetic character test, usually effete show breeders sanctioning each other's feckless breeding stock. The German Shepherd under the stewardship of the SV is rapidly degenerating into little more than a garden variety pet and play dog suitable for not much more than dancing with dogs, and due to the grotesque physique not even very good at that.



Terrance Floyd's Uno vom Mutzbach  
at the 2018 WUSV IPO Championship  
Photo Brian Aghajani. Decoy Martin Knudsen

### ***The Stick Saga***

The ongoing and incessant emasculation of the Schutzhund trial finally came to a head, crossed the Rubicon, with the abandonment of the stick hits. This rendered the long term extinction of German Shepherd working credibility inevitable both symbolically and in practical terms in that courage under the stick has always been what sorted the wheat from the chaff, separated the real working dogs from those with only play potential. For these reasons it is necessary to fully grasp the importance of the stick and the dire consequences of abandonment.

The advent of agriculture and domestication of farm animals was a long term consequence of the evolution of modern man, particularly the adaptation of fire and the introduction of weapons such as clubs, slings, spears and arrows. Because domesticated plants and farm animals provided a much more robust and reliable food supply than that of hunting and gathering the advent of weapons eventually transformed primitive man from a marginal scavenger and harvester of small game to the big game hunter which cleared North

America of large animals such as the mammoth, mastodon and dire wolf within a few thousand years.

The dog evolved from wolf predecessors at the advent of pastoralism and agriculture to become partners with this new and improved version of Homo sapiens, to share in the advantages of this novel prowess in security and sustenance. Newfound fear of weaponized men presented the wolf with a novel set of options, and some gradually adapted to living on the margins of bands, farms or villages where food was available to eventually evolve into the dog as we know him today.

In breeding the police dog the most fundamental prerequisite is and must always be the ability to stand up to an aggressive man in a serious confrontation, and the idea of an unarmed man or one never actually deploying his weapon as the adversary in the evaluation process is ludicrous, utterly absurd. Thus in every serious trial the candidate must be subjected to a test for confidence and courage under the gun and the stick. While discharging a firearm with live ammunition would be unreasonably hazardous resilience in the face of the sound is essential. The stick, as a much less lethal weapon, must not only be deployed but applied in a controlled way to safely test the dog. The elimination of the stick hits marks the end of an era, is the

existential, generational transformation of the trial—and ultimately the breed—into the atrocities we see emerging before us today.

Indeed, for this reason the very idea of any sort of "working dog championship" with IGP rules is inherently fraudulent, a mockery of the heritage in that without the stick hits the decoy is no longer the adversary of the dog but little more than a dancing partner.

Though a few pathetic apologists have made self-serving attempts to deny it this abandonment of the stick is fundamental in that the vast majority of dogs dismissed in the protection phase do so under the duress of the stick, which has always been the primary means of separating the wheat from the chaff.

While in the near future most seriously competitive IGP dogs will remain stick sure because of the decades of selection, as time goes on dogs which otherwise would have been discarded as weak will remain in training and as more and more such dogs prosper and are thus bred the entire sport gene pool will be fundamentally compromised. A major consequence will be the further division between sport dogs, even at the supposed elite level, and serious police breeding, lending further weight to the preference for the Malinois in police or military service and, indeed, all serious applications.

Even this pathetic FCI farce, the IGP title, the emasculation of the Schutzhund trial of the founders, sets too high a bar for the ornamental show lines of today and has thus been surreptitiously forsaken by the SV.

This is in reality the abandonment of the German Shepherd as a credible police breed; yet somehow the SV and USCA remain oblivious, soldier on with a business as usual demeanor as the breed slides into the abyss. All that seems to matter is that the really important things remain, such as "making the team" and strutting into Euro stadiums in gaudy uniforms behind the waving flag to partake in fake trials leading to pathetic pretend "championships," more opportunities to stand on a decorated wooden box and wave an empty tin cup. Somehow they can't quite seem to grasp how utterly absurd and childish it has become, are blind enough to actually to take it seriously.

Ultimately the real issue is whether the German Shepherd is to be a police dog or a play dog, and the outlook is grim as defeatism and pessimism proliferate and prevail. Over the past decade the waning passive resistance to what was perceived as the inevitable removal of the stick hits has not only emasculated the trial as a breeding and police service qualification, it has sucked life out of the serious police service elements of the working community as well, seen hope flicker and fade.

Just as Judas betrayed and Peter denied a few among us border on preemptive surrender, have become blatantly obsequious in order to curry favor and ingratiate themselves by embracing the humiliation. Prominent Scandinavian IGP judges were quick to pander, justify stick elimination as superfluous, not needed, because they, clever as they think they are, can see into the soul without resort to such brutal tests and public displays of abuse, playing directly into the agenda of the animal rights activists.

Those echoing and endorsing this canard, this defeatist attitude, claiming that the stick hits are somehow not really essential, that this emasculated trial is still somehow "Schutzhund," are pandering to prop up a personal persona or sense of importance (as judge, decoy or commercial "coach") or seeking personal popularity among the weak and confused in denial in a time of crisis. Judas is their patron saint.

The USCA president at the time declared in ringing words this to be the line that could not be breached. Yet when the time did finally come USCA, following the SV, folded without a whimper, embraced this latest emasculation of the trial and humiliation of the breed as business as usual. Such things have been ongoing for decades, but the point of no return is finally at hand.

To provide cover USCA spawned an alternate trial, a fig leaf, with a cobbled together variant of the old rules; but it is meaningless, a ludicrous farce. There is no participation because it goes no place, has no purpose or real long term or international significance, is not even in the most convoluted sense a legitimate title. It is nothing more than pretense, a pathetic distraction from moral failure further repudiating the commitment to real police service. There are no world teams to aspire to, no regional or national championships, no place in the process of appeasing the suffocating micromanagement of the SV bureaucrats.

All of this became inevitable with the abandonment of Schutzhund a decade ago in favor of FCI IPO, cleverly handing off the task of the formal emasculation to the feckless FCI bureaucrats.

Make no mistake. The stick is gone because of the long term SV policy of emasculation, of pandering to the animal rights elements and the imagined desire of the German people for play dogs rather than real police dogs, the lack of will at the highest level to resist the social emasculation agenda of the animal rights factions. This century long pride of the German people is being transformed before our eyes into insipid pet dogs and no one has the courage to notice that the emperor wears no trousers.

### ***Pretend Trials***

In this dismal new world pathetic Schutzhund derivatives such as IGP are emerging akin to the popular America Civil War re-enactments where enthusiasts dress up in uniform replicas—Union or Johnny Reb—and tote period equipment such as rifles, tents, canteens and swords to spend weekends camping out and marching around in circles, pretend engagements.<sup>7</sup> (Many Germans are in a similar way apparently quite fond of dressing up and playing or re-enacting American style cowboys and Indians.)

Thus the FCI—aided and abetted by the SV—has been busy deploying Schutzhund re-enactments, pretend trials, in place of the serious police service level breeding qualifications, real Schutzhund, created by von Stephanitz as the foundation of the breed.

Thus in this new canine world order rather than seriously challenging and testing the dog we are destined to just pretend, to go through the motions. Rather than a one meter high jump we will soon see a 50 centimeter low jump and a "courage" test where the on lead dog politely barks at an insipid pretend adversary huddled behind a chain link fence.

The abandonment of the stick hits by the SV was the end of any vestige of real Schutzhund and the beginning of the final decline of show and sport (now play) dogs, with only a small cadre of serious police level breeders and trainers likely to continue to carry on serious police lines, which will for all

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<sup>7</sup> I find the whole concept mystifying in that the glorification of dying in the mud in misery, more likely of disease than combat, or enduring life without an arm or leg is a horror beyond comprehension. Perhaps it is an acquired taste.



practical purposes be a separate and much smaller breed. It will of course be pointed out that it was the FCI that abandoned the stick, but this is a vile canard in that the reality is that eliminating the stick was at the instigation and surreptitious support of the SV show dog establishment which has for decades been maneuvering to be rid of any link to the working heritage, that is entirely eliminating any association with Schutzhund, IGP or anything else beyond the play dog persona.

The honorable approach would have been to once and for all break free of FCI control establishing the WUSV as the ultimate authority, with any links to the FCI reducing it to a subordinate service role with no authority over breed affairs. This could have been either by relief through the courts as in the removal of restrictions of foreign judges or by a complete break establishing the WUSV as an independent stand-alone entity, emulating the courage of the Belgians who established the NVBK in 1963.

This atrocity has been brewing for decades. When my family began Schutzhund training in the early 1980s the scaling wall had recently been replaced with the A frame, and although in retrospect this compromised trial integrity there was the practical justification of portability. While transportable versions of the wall were unwieldy the foldable plywood format made it convenient to put an A frame, a collapsible high jump and a set of canvas blinds in the back of a pickup truck and quickly set up for training on any modest sized field. Especially in America where many clubs were starting on a shoe string and did not have permanent grounds this was enormously convenient and practical. Yet it was in a sense the nose of the camel under the tent, foreshadowed ongoing and more serious compromise in trial integrity which had no practical purpose other than incessant lowering of physical and moral standards primarily to accommodate the deteriorating show lines.

Over the years there was incessant emasculation, with the elimination of the attack on the handler particularly enervating because at the young dog level it was a fundamental means of winnowing out weak dogs, particularly the show lines. Finally with the abandonment of the stick we crossed the Rubicon, relinquished the last tenuous vestige of credibility as a breeding or police qualification trial. In a certain sense the elimination of the stick hits could be seen as the straw that finally broke the camel's back, but much more fundamentally the stick test was at the very heart of the trial, the moment of truth that defined the dog. As a consequence the various annual championships (SV, USCA, WUSV or FCI) are in honest reality little more than pretend or fake trials, reduced to absurd parody, akin to a touch football Super Bowl in the name of political correctness.

Looking back the evolution of IPO or IGP has been a matter of getting better and better at less and less. AKC obedience competition at the competitive level is challenging, yet it tells us nothing about the potential of a dog for the police patrol role, which is why so many of us were drawn to Schutzhund in the first place forty years ago. In a similar way while IGP can be competitive within its own scope it is not and cannot be a true gage of police working character such as Schutzhund was in the early days as created and defined by the founders.

Thus the fact that most of the dogs winning today are inherently strong is a tribute to the many past generations of rigorous selection but not a long term viable means of maintaining character. As we move forward without the stick in time weakness will creep into the overall genetic base, if you do not test for it incessantly then in time you will lose it. Schutzhund, the original

bite arm program, has finally been relegated into the past, is dead; and pretenders such as IGP are an ongoing embarrassment to those of us who know better. The posers and pretenders who carry on with IGP know better in their hearts, but lack the grit and courage to do the right thing, to break free and build stand alone alternatives.

Although for the German Shepherd this is playing out as the final act of a Greek tragedy there is a silver lining for the Malinois community in that the historical roots are in the suit sports such as the Belgian and French Ring and the Dutch police trials thus beyond FCI influence. (The FCI sanctioned Mondio Ring has from the beginning been sans stick hits, which is why as a play trial it has been held in such utter contempt by serious trainers.) Thus as the German Shepherd fades into play dog irrelevance the Malinois, by default as much as intrinsic merit, seems destined to prevail in police and military service and serious sport competition, that is the bite suit sports.

Today as the heritage of von Stephanitz fades into the mist of time in the new pretend and play dog era we seem destined to go on strutting into stadiums behind the waving flag in gaudy uniforms oblivious to the shame of what we are doing and what we have become.

### ***Collapse of the Purebred***

Lifestyle evolution in a world of ever more sophisticated and intrusive technology, urbanization and proliferating entertainment venues such as television and then in the 1990s the internet have transformed our lives, inevitably impacting trends in canine breeding, service and relationships.

Over decades annual publication of AKC registrations rank ordered by breed was a celebration of onward and upward, particularly among the breeds in ascendance. In the 1990s one audacious enough to have predicted a worldwide collapse so precipitous that the AKC in a fit of hysteria would entirely cease publishing the registration numbers would have met with utter incredulity. Yet this is what came to pass and ramifications continue to unfold. Similar reductions have come in Europe and the rest of the world.

The obvious question is why and how did this come to pass? In order to find a way forward—devise effective remedial strategies—the first order of business must be recognition and comprehension of the causative factors. Of particular interest is to what extent the decline of the German Shepherd (and similar breeds) is due to the police dog persona—or the perceived erosion thereof—and on the other hand to what extent it merely reflects general purebred decline.

Issues specific to the larger breeds need to be identified and quantified; while the German Shepherd has been in collapse VDH Golden and Labrador retriever registrations have been persistently in ascendance suggesting that rather than replicas some Germans are opting for the real thing.

Cost of ownership has expanded significantly beyond the general cost of living, both in terms of price and ongoing expenditures. In particular the increasing efficacy of veterinary care due to advancing technology has produced the same exponentially escalating cost as human medical services, but the financial burden has not been remediated by employer or government insurance, placing increasing burden on breeder and owner alike.

An especially aggravating factor has been the actual or perceived genetic fragility in terms of incipient genetic defects such as hip dysplasia, heart defects and blindness and a general lack of robust good health and inherent vigor, often with references to the good old days prior to the great wave of

burgeoning purebred incest. A major consequence has been proliferating medical screening incessantly exacerbating ongoing cost.

Yet in spite of all of this we know full well that over countless generations and hundreds of years robust, vigorous herding dogs were bred for husbandry and protection by the simple expedient of mating those proven the most effective in their work. A key factor was selection based on the efficacy and vigor of the more mature adult rather than show ring selection of young dogs almost exclusively on the basis of superficial appearance, typically with a brief show ring career and then a dreary life in the kennel being bred in spite of ongoing physical or moral defects. The result is ongoing deterioration of the breed, that is fragility and lack of robust good health. Over time all show lines tend to lose genetic diversity due to focus on winning males rather than selection according to proven efficacy of a more diverse set of serious adult working dogs.

Rather than returning to more diversity in breeding and selection according to service efficacy the establishment solution to escalating genetic defects, fragility and lack of vigor has been incessantly expanding, increasingly expensive and onerous medical screening. The fly in this ointment is that testing further reduces diversity, accelerating the spiral to oblivion. Herdsmen and farmers prospered breeding according to proven efficacy of adult service for untold generations without carrying the oppressive burden of an overweening canine establishment.

This burgeoning bureaucratic overhead, particularly conformation showing and medical screening, has relentlessly driven cost to the breaking point. The ongoing collapse of registrations is the consequence; we have simply been slaying the goose laying the golden eggs by incessantly driving price beyond what the market will endure.

Historically the general press led the cheerleading, incessantly and indiscriminately glorified and promoted the AKC and FCI establishment. But in more recent years there has been an increasing tendency to mock the absurdity of the styling and lend credence to the idea that the incest bred purebred is fragile, disease prone and subject to onerous veterinary cost over a life time. This was driven largely by the emergence of the internet.

At some point enough is simply enough, people in want of a pup can—instead of spending thousands of dollars jumping through hoops for registration papers—just ignore the paper chase and breed a bitch, producing pups at much less than the cost of showing, medical screening and meaningless registration, which in many ways was always a scam anyway. In a free market breeders and enablers will emerge to fill a need; the purebred decline is the market telling the establishment that they were and are dead wrong. The market always wins in the end.

Abandonment of the faltering purebred lines has gone hand in hand with a vigorous movement, with a great deal of media support, pushing the adoption of homeless dogs or pups, often from unregistered parents, from shelters to the detriment of purebred sales. Although there is a certain amount of opportunistic greed among those peddling these shelter dogs this is a natural consequence of the decreasing real and perceived value of registration in particular and the purebred in general. The chickens are coming home to roost.

Thus in a more comprehensive perspective the primary causative factor in the collapse of the purebred has been pervasive and ongoing greed, pillaging and plundering, by the purebred establishment—effete money driven pet and

play dog breeders, marketers, puppy mills and bureaucrats generally. You cannot fool all of the people all of the time.

Spectacularly prominent among the guilty would be the SV, which over forty years has emerged as the primary agent driving the emasculation and fashionable grotesque physique of the German Shepherd. Over and above the general purebred collapse the decline has been spectacular, in Germany dropping from 30,000 annual SV registrations in the mid 1990s to less than ten thousand today. But the underlying nature of purebred appearance according to the capricious whim of fashion is that like the grass fire it extinguishes as quickly and inexplicably as it arises, which is what the SV has wrought and is now reaping.

Not only do the national kennel clubs—such as the AKC and particularly among the FCI—neglect and thwart working dog affairs, their practice is overtly malevolent, intended to emasculate the serious working lines because their existence and excellence highlights the pathetic frailty of show lines. Exhibit one of this malevolent intent would be the FCI removal of the stick hits from the IGP play and pretend trial.

Thus the ongoing collapse of the purebred establishment before us today is both the proximate cause of the decline of the German Shepherd as conceived by Max von Stephanitz and at the same time a once in a generation opportunity to break free and reestablish a vibrant police dog culture centered on a standalone WUSV entirely free at last of FCI hegemony. All that is required is to somehow gather the grit and courage to do what we know in our hearts to be the right thing.



Heinrich Messler

### ***Stillborn Redemption***

Over several past years there had been a fleeting interlude of hope, the perception of a viable path forward, an opportunity for redemption due to the leadership of Dr. Heinrich Messler as SV president and close associates who, among other initiatives, had been successful in mitigating onerous FCI manipulation and thus firmly establishing SV control over its own destiny. This was accomplished largely through Euro court rulings rightfully reigning in rogue FCI elements and thus restoring the potential for independence, vigor and leadership in the WUSV. This has been a good thing, a significant long term service to the breed and working dogs generally, and those responsible—such as Rodrigo Gonzalez and Vadim Plotsker—are most certainly commendable. An impending crisis was mitigated and then permanently averted, leading to a

welcome sense of relief. Yet one bullet dodged does not win a war any more than the Arab Spring brought forth peace, tranquility and prosperity in the Middle East.<sup>8 9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The background for this discussion and the terminology is complex and arcane. Those not familiar will perhaps find the references at the end, particularly the [Glossary](#), useful.

<sup>9</sup> [Supreme Authority of the Canine World](#)

The underlying existential crisis, the inexorable emasculation of the soul of the dog, remains unabated. Messler and his associates had provided a breath of fresh spring air, bringing forth unprecedented vigor and wisdom in leadership and mitigating issues which had festered for decades. But this reformation was still more optimistic promise than accomplished fact when he became the marked man: the inevitable show breeder reestablishment of hegemony, the power to obfuscate and obstruct, to profit and plunder, came to pass in the next SV election.

Thus the ominous reality is that the regained domination of the old guard gives every indication of resuming the road to perdition, the incessant fiscal aggrandizement and exploitation that has seen SV registrations fall by two thirds in three decades and the Malinois emerge as the prototypical police and military dog throughout the world, overshadowing a century of German Shepherd preeminence.

For decades the SV, the German mother club, has been increasingly estranged from and hostile to the police service, most particularly within Germany, which was the foundation on which von Stephanitz built the breed in the first place, indeed propagated and brought to maturity the police and military service culture pioneered by the Belgians.

Over recent decades the emerging SV perception of reality has been that of a German people so cognitively feeble and spiritually frail that a new paradigm becomes necessary, that ongoing breed viability, the cash flow, demands the evolution of their police lines into insipid Golden Retriever replicas for a hopelessly emasculated German people.

Yet over these same decades as SV registrations plummeted establishment panic escalated. Their response was to double down, increasing irrational denial of and hostility to the working heritage, as seen in the failure to endorse and celebrate police service and Schutzhund style sport on their web site. Also self-evident is the oppressive micromanagement, characteristic of any dictatorial regime under duress and in fear of their rank and file.

Primary manifestations of this SV panic include the abandonment of the working trial for breeding—the Schutzhund heritage of von Stephanitz—and the removal of the stick hits in the IGP trial instigated and abetted by the SV ornamental breed establishment.



Vadim Plotsker

### ***Evolution or Revolution?***

Those believing that the police dog persona is fundamental to the vitality of the German Shepherd share an ongoing sense of frustration and impotence, perceive an existential crisis. The undeniable reality is that we are being systematically exploited, used and abused, have fallen under the thumb of a pack of effete, avaricious, self-serving dilators—otherwise known as the SV show breeder establishment.

How can this have come to pass? The short answer is that it is in many ways our own fault, that we are weak and indecisive, enable and tolerate it. Yet there are other communities such as the KNPV and NVBK which have had the resolution and courage to break free, which lends credence to the

undeniable fact that when seeking the root of our problem we need to look no further than into a mirror.

The long answer is more complex and nuanced.

Pride inevitably comes before the fall. For all of the reasons enumerated previously a general decline in annual registrations commenced in the mid-1990s with a gradual but increasing downward trend as breed prosperity transformed from reality to illusion. Even in decline the widespread hubris—overweening arrogance—which prosperity had nurtured continued to fester in the ranks of leadership generally. While these trends prevail in most working breeds, with the notable exception of the Malinois, mostly because of generally ineffectual leadership and marginal show breeder influence, they are particularly and egregiously prevalent in the SV and to a lesser extent even in the USCA.

This hubris, this lack of commitment to the police persona and denial of the painfully obvious widespread decline in working efficacy, has led to ongoing long term failure to take remedial action to preserve working character and physical form guided by function. The elimination of the working title requirement for breeding was the culmination, the ultimate repudiation of von Stephanitz and more than anything else marked the end of his era.

The question before us today is evolution or revolution, whether salvation lies in reforming and reinvigorating the existing order or striking out to build a brave new world.

Men such as Messler and Plotsker have achieved admirable success in mitigating external abuse, particularly in regard to onerous oppression at the hands of the FCI. But the enemy within prevails. Dr. Messler not unexpectedly was denied a second term as president by the SV establishment, and short of following in the footsteps of Helmut Raiser seems, most regrettably, unlikely to be an agent of further change. The contributions of Vadim Plotsker were also of great importance, but with the loss of Messler at the helm his role as USCA president is, also most regrettably, essentially lacking the agency to bring any further substantial change. The removal of the IGP stick hits, added and abetted by the long term connivance of the SV insiders, was the final nail in this coffin, rendering the IGP trial an irrelevant absurdity.

In response to ongoing developments my view has evolved and at this point is that, again regrettably, it is inherently impossible to bring fundamental change within the context of the existing order. To survive and prosper police dog breeding, administration and deployment must be by and for working trainers, breeders and particularly those entities actually deploying such dogs. This is a well proven principle; the later twentieth century prosperity of the Malinois springs directly from Flemish establishment of the NVBK in 1963, breaking Belgian working dogs free from onerous FCI and French oriented St. Hubert domination. In the Netherlands the Dutch police trial system has been demonstrating this for more than a century.

The net result is that reform and salvation from within is not going to happen, that revolution rather than evolution is the only hope for the revival

## ***Thin Ice***

Revolutionary intent is always denied until the eve of the act. And for good reason, for most revolutions falter because they are ill conceived or their time has not come; we must act decisively but only after consulting the lessons of history and firm establishment of what the new order is to be.

Just as the USSR collapsed in the early 1990s leaving Russia alone, insecure and estranged from neighbors on all sides, the SV is vulnerable to the collapse of the WUSV or perhaps even more intriguing to a WUSV insisting upon real power in German Shepherd affairs.

Some sense of proportion is appropriate here, Germany is a nation of 83 million people with SV membership of approximately 50,000 and America, as the strongest WUSV member after Germany, is a nation of 338 million where USCA has a relatively paltry 3000 members, and thus operates at a tremendous disadvantage in terms of economy of scale, especially in light of the vast unserved distances between training clubs. Successful revolution is always problematic, but on the eve of the American Revolution we were thirteen tenuous, primitive colonies precariously clinging to the east coast of the North American continent casting stones at the British Empire with the most robust and powerful navy ever known to man.

Although the SV is only half the size of a generation ago with only a third of previous annual registrations, it remains by far the largest, most influential and most prosperous national breed entity worldwide. Unravelling of the WUSV would not seem to be likely, but imminent revolution is seldom apparent on the eve of collapse.

That said the existential dilemma is that while the SV is on very thin ice—is a slow motion ongoing train wreck—no other nation has the resources and, of overriding importance, the will to stand alone. Thus we march together quietly into the night pretending fidelity to the heritage of von Stephanitz, clinging to the delusion that the abandonment of the stick and other aberrations of the play dog purebred establishment somehow do not really matter.

Throughout this entire process, indeed throughout the history of the purebred movement, the interests of working trainers and breeders have been incessantly thwarted. Yet we somehow remain stoic; continue to obediently accept—with our heads down and gaze averted—each degradation and humiliation. The abandonment of the stick is only the latest and most egregious manifestation of our pathetic servitude and cowardice.

The FCI Utility Dog Commission, where the welfare of the working trainers and breeders was supposedly represented, was always an empty shell, had zero power or influence. All real power was in the hands of the FCI show breeders at the top who predictably emasculated the trial, finally leading to the elimination of the stick blows.

Ultimately we have no one to blame but ourselves for not breaking free and establishing organizations by and for serious trainers, as did the Malinois people, the Flemish Belgians, in 1963 with the founding of the NVBK. Everyone involved, including those who today accept or condone the abandonment of the stick without reinstating a hard core Schutzhund venue as the breeding prerequisite should hang their heads in grief and shame, for we have betrayed and squandered the patrimony of Max von Stephanitz.



## ***New World Order***

The not unexpected removal of Heinrich Messler as SV president in the recent election reestablishing oppressive old guard hegemony has cast a deep pall rendering the ongoing decline of the breed seemingly inevitable. Can there be any realistic hope for redemption? Is absolute emasculation of the breed inevitable, preordained?

It has been suggested that salvation could be possible through the WUSV—cleverly bypassing the SV—that the way forward is to be found in the educational and promotional programs and buoyant, optimistic spirit characterizing the twilight of the Messler era. But this is disingenuous in that the WUSV was from inception anything but about empowerment of an egalitarian international community.<sup>10</sup> Indeed the purpose was and is money and power, to project SV hegemony beyond Germany to the world at large as the commercial arm of the SV establishment rather than any sort of meaningful international partnership.

Though we may on occasion join hands and sing "Kumbaya" in the alcoholic haze of late evening of social gatherings real decisions are made in the light of day behind the scenes, in back rooms where the cabal—the insiders—count their cash and allocate the spoils. These people are not about to relinquish control allowing the world union to be usurped by national GSD clubs such as USCA. Real revolution, the overt or implicit threat of a competing organization, will be necessary to bring meaningful change.

Revolution is very difficult, as it must be to have any sort of stability in the world, and thus usually fails, sometimes because its objectives are satisfied by peaceful change and compromise. Yet at times real change can be forced and recast the world order, always seeming to come out of the blue yet in retrospect perceived as preordained. As an example, prior to the American Revolution the cause was rightful representation in Parliament under the king rather than succession, which was abhorred as treason until the eve of revolt yet is today in retrospect celebrated as the foundation of our nation. Failed revolutionaries tend to hang while those who succeed emerge as founders and sometimes come to have their portraits on the currency of great nations.

Two pertinent instances are especially relevant in our current crisis:

- Flemish breeders and trainers broke away from the Belgian FCI national club, St. Hubert, in 1963 to form NVBK and by the turn of the twenty first century the Malinois predominated in French Ring and was emerging as the preferred breed in military and police service throughout the world.
- In the early 1980s American Schutzhund trainers united to establish USCA, which eclipsed the GSDCA and provided a viable alternative to the AKC paradigm, a brave new world.

Starting with the North American Schutzhund Association (NASA) in the 1970s there have been periodic attempts to establish an American working dog national entity and thus our own culture. Similar new European entities have from time to time arisen to create reform.

Particularly pertinent are:

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<sup>10</sup> The SV president is automatically also the president of the WUSV, although dictator would perhaps be a more descriptive term.

- RSV2000 launched in Germany at the turn of the century by Helmut Raiser.
- American Schutzhund in the mid-teens of this century by Debby Zappia and a small band of stalwart associates.

Both of these are struggling, as have many others over recent decades; such things are generally an act of frustration and desperation proving unable to overcome the apathy of the rank and file. The failure of these efforts as of yet to prosper and bring forth change have produced the usual knowing smiles among the entrenched insiders, but they are wrong, dead wrong. The failure of these efforts, or similar new beginnings by those with the wisdom to see a better way, is not their failure but our failure, mile markers on the road to oblivion of the entire amateur based protection oriented American working dog movement. Though they may pretend otherwise USCA without the stick is a dead man walking, the harbinger of collapse.

The rank and file has by and large remained apathetic, not really concerned about the breed, seeking little more than fawning approval and validation of their illusions of relevance. Through their pretend play sport they aspire to tin cups and fond memories of waving those empty cups upon the decorated wooden boxes, just like children with a nice gold star pasted on their forehead after winning a spelling bee.

Dr. Messler, and his brother, had been deeply entrenched members of this establishment yet under duress proved to be farsighted enough to break out, to perceive that the ship was taking on water, that a fundamental course correction was necessary to preserve the breed and the heritage. A decade ago it would have been inconceivable that such a man could close ranks with American and Hispanic WUSV leaders and long term critics wandering in the wilderness to seek mitigation of the ongoing crisis. He may not be quite ready to embrace a wholesale return to breeding focus on police service, but he understood the necessity of real dialog with the hard core working community, that preservation of the breed was not compatible with excluding the police service foundation, that work and service had to be finally taken seriously. It remains to be seen if this brief interlude of rationality and common sense is over or if he can through some miracle reemerge in an effective leadership role, that is participate in overt revolution. The odds would most unfortunately seem to be very long.

## ***Utopia***

In the sixteenth century, the era of Henry the Eighth, Thomas More portrayed Utopia as a vision of the ideal world, things as they should be, but beyond the reach of imperfect human beings in this real world. We also have crisis and strife; in order to resolve this we also need to project a vision of what the ideal should be, working dog Utopia.

The existing structure of national kennel clubs such as the AKC, the British Kennel Club and the VDH—all in one way or another related to the FCI as member nations or through cooperative agreements—is today entirely obsolete, a detriment to the purebred generally and serious working breeds in particular. This world paradigm worked reasonably well in the early decades of the twentieth century when business was conducted in person or by postal service, each nation had its own currency, customs, language and mode of international intercourse. Travel was very slow, very expensive and thus for the elite. In particular the FCI facilitated the importing and exporting of dogs by providing a reliable means of registration verification and transfer.

That world no longer exists, but the obsolete but still entrenched infrastructure of the era remains as the root of many current problems. Today in a world of rapid communication and travel through airline transport, the Internet, the European Union and cashless transactions there is simply no current reason for all breed national kennel clubs or the FCI, obsolete structures that are mill stones around our collective necks.

There were several reasons or justifications for this now bad old world:

- Maintenance and verifiability of registration and competitive event records such as working trials and conformation evaluation.
- Economies of scale in the conduct of international competition such as conformation shows and working trials.
- General regulation of international service for working and show judges.

But today these ends and much more would be better served by our choosing to stand alone, entirely severing administration of police breed affairs from the rest of the canine world. The advent of modern technology as in powerful desk top computers and the Internet has bought an enormously beneficial new world order within reach.

In order to break free of FCI manipulation and abuse—as in the arbitrary and capricious removal of the stick from IGP—and have working dog affairs conducted by and for working dog people the FMBB and WUSV, for the Malinois and German Shepherds respectively, need to establish an umbrella alliance of international breed specific world unions open to similar entities for other breeds. Very importantly any dog regardless of breed or registration status would be eligible to compete and become certified because we need to establish the principle that the value of a dog is what he can do on the street or trial field rather than what is scribbled by dilators in elitist record books. (Trial record integrity could be maintained by a registration without breed designation, perhaps with a photo or DNA records as is the KNPV custom.)

Such an organization would have strictly limited power, be the obsequious servant rather than the supreme authority, basically setting up rules for the equivalent of the original Schutzhund, the bite bar style sports, and perhaps one or several suit style sports or police trials if the NVBK, KNPV and French Ring folks want to go that way and we can work out the details.

International registration services and breed standards and breeding requirements would be under the absolute authority of the breed specific world unions. Today the SV maintains their German Shepherd stud book which could be unified and extended to other WUSV nations without any real need of the FCI, AKC or any other agency. Other breeds could follow suit or for economies of scale a stand along entity strictly limited to providing registration services at the direction of the contracting member union could emerge.

This umbrella organization would run world and perhaps regional championships and be responsible for the rules of each program and maintain a cadre of licensed judges. The name does not particularly matter, perhaps **International Police Dog Federation (IPDF)** would be appropriate. It does have a nice ring in French or German:

**Internationaler Polizeihundeverband** (German)

**Fédération Internationale des Chiens Policiers** (French)

This would bring forth a world free at last of the FCI, VDH, AKC and similar mill stones which have nothing to offer except the oppression of the malignant bureaucrats that removed the stick from IGP.

That's it. Because of twenty first century technology there is simply no reason at all why the WUSV, FMBB or any other international union cannot run their own registration systems and keep their own stud books and international trial records. Software and other administrative services of a clerical nature could be supplied on a contract basis by, for instance, the SV or standalone commercial entities to the international unions of less numerous breeds as a means of empowering economies of scale.

In order to participate these breed specific unions must be serious about working requirements for breeding; there should simply be zero tolerance for breeding programs based on pretend working legitimacy.

The basis for the proposed international affiliation of world unions would be one common Schutzhund style sleeve oriented trial venue and a limited number of suit style venues akin to old style Schutzhund, NVBK ring or the KNPV police trial.

There would of course be many specific operational aspects to be worked out, with emphasis of retaining real power and independence in the breed specific unions. Above all else power should be in the hands of the breed specific unions rather than another overweening bureaucracy such as the FCI.

As for Thomas More, in the long term many of his ideals did indeed ultimately come to reality, but in the short term they cost him his head to the establishment, to the anger of Henry VIII.

### ***WUSV Reborn?***

From the German perspective the breed has always been their breed absolutely, to do with as they see fit. Furthermore specimens in even the most distant and remote corners of the world are valid only according to German certification; a dog may exist and be owned in a foreign land but the validity is only according to specific homeland certification. There has of course been a great deal of rhetoric about the international integrity of the breed, but the real purpose of the WUSV was and is to enforce this dogma, to insure that the lion's share of the cash winds up in German pockets.

In the beginning this was primarily theoretical because of the enormous cost and time delay of transport and communication. Enforced war time separation meant that overseas nations such as the United States tended to evolve an essentially separate, derivative breed and culture. Post World War Two German influence in terms of guidance and breeding stock was a shadow of prewar levels as we went our own way.

In recent decades airline transport and particularly the Internet have effectively reduced the width of the Atlantic to little more than that of the Rhine rendering America in many practical aspects as close a neighbor to the Germans as are the French. The historic volatility of Franco German relations and the German propensity to project power and extend hegemony have tended to be reflected in our contemporary relationship with the SV. Because of this history allocation of power and authority within the international German Shepherd community is problematic, a complex Gordian Knot.

Today the prevailing order with all real power in the hands of the Germans, the SV, is an ongoing disaster because they have over past

decades become commercialized and corrupt leading to plummeting registrations, decline in police service presence and grotesque conformation. An international power sharing arrangement would seem to suggest itself.

But seemingly plausible simplistic solutions can produce unforeseen ramifications exacerbating rather than ameliorating the overall situation. As a specific example a one nation one vote arrangement would come to mind, but this would put control in the hands of nations with small numbers and little in the way of knowledgeable and experienced leadership. A further complication is that some nations such as the United States currently have more than one WUSV member club. Thus some sort of power sharing arrangement would seem to be in order, but the devil is as always in the details.

Perhaps voting should be according to annual national registrations or other metrics so that nations lacking capable leadership and experience would be precluded from participation prior to a certain level of maturity, vigor and credibility, that is some sort of a multi class membership structure.

Another possibility which I tend to favor would be proportional representation according to annual registrations in an international governing body where as a hypothetical example Germany would have ten votes, the United States two votes and so forth with some small, frail nations no vote until they became more mature and achieve a certain activity level. Ultimately the Germans should predominate but not dictate, need to seek consensus in order to rule. As noted the devil is most certainly in the details, but the details do matter.

In this new German Shepherd world order there would be an epiphany. The WUSV would withdraw from the FCI and VDH, empower the member nations in a true partnership and reclaim the legacy of von Stephanitz.

Step one would be the reestablishment of real Schutzhund, with enhancements reflecting the lessons of the past century:

- Trial judges would be appointed rather than selected by the local club. This selection would be the prerogative of the WUSV national clubs rather than the SV.
- The trial secretary would be appointed to insure honesty in the records, and held personally responsible, as in expelled, for false or suspect titles.
- Young male dogs achieving Schutzhund III would be eligible for one stud service a year for three years, allowing progeny from a relatively young dog to be evaluated. To be eligible for more than one yearly service or formal conformation ranking the dog would have to prevail in a regional qualification trial with a helper from another region or nation and thus unfamiliar to the dogs. This would mean the complete elimination of the open conformation class.
- Only those candidates passing this regional working qualification would be eligible for senior conformation recognition, that is to become Sieger or V rated and rank ordered among the select. Regional trial performance would play a primary role in Sieger level rank ordering, perhaps by selection of the working trial judge and conformation judge together, each with a veto.

Rather than incessantly watering down the trial to accommodate ever more feckless show dogs the ongoing effort would be to more realistically test the dog according to what he is likely to encounter on the street. In the real world the police officer and his dog on patrol live in a world of distraction and potential threat, for if there were no threat there would be no need of the

dog. But the trial is a fixed rote world, the same every time, devoid of any distraction or unexpected threat.

As an alternative let us go back to the drawing board and do it right. We start by reinstating the attack on the handler, but this time will get it right. Rather than in protection it shall be part of the obedience routine. At the beginning of the exercise a decoy with the minimum of unobtrusive protective clothing and the sleeve concealed shall be standing somewhere on or near the field, perhaps among the spectators. During the obedience exercise there should be on the field but well outside of the healing pattern and away from the jumps, a distraction, unknown beforehand, such as two people throwing a ball or Kong back and forth.

At some point the decoy shall begin approaching the dog and handler in a casual, indirect manner designed to conceal his presence. When the dog takes notice of the threat but does not break his obedience position the decoy shall attack the dog in the normal way. Should the decoy be able to approach within five feet of the dog without any response the dog will fail and the trial shall be over. The decoy shall have wide latitude to select his own approach to the dog so as to come into close proximity without attracting his reaction to the increasingly imminent threat.

Some breeds, such as the Rottweilers and Bouviers, cattle dogs, tend to be stoic and deliberate rather than animated and frivolous, which just as in human beings where substance must not be subservient to style serious patrol dogs should not be penalized in evaluating the potential for actual police efficacy.

Thus should the stoic dog, or any other mode of style, complete the complete exercise in compliance with rules and directly service related attributes he shall receive the maximum points. There shall be no style points for dancing dogs.

What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world yet suffer the loss of his eternal soul is an age old philosophical query. Today advocates of the German Shepherd must ask what it shall profit the police dog shall he predominate and prosper in the pet market yet suffer the loss of inherent working prowess and character, the soul of the breed?

### ***Plan B***

Stepping back into the real world serious WUSV reform is likely a pipe dream and the SV is on a trajectory ensuring that huddling within its sphere of influence will mean drifting silently into the night, accepting the demise of the German Shepherd as an elite or even credible police dog as a virtual certainty. Those disinclined to roll over and accept emasculation at SV hands thus find themselves desperately in need of a viable Plan B.

By far the best outcome would for USCA to finally grow up and summon the courage to reestablish as their exclusive venue a robust upgrade of the old school Schutzhund trial, which would likely mean estrangement from the SV mother club. But part of growing up has always been relinquishing mother's apron strings; most especially when mother turns out to be an evil, grasping, conniving old woman. USCA presidents have at times talked big, made bold statements about never giving up the stick, but in view of the persistent lack of real courage and hardness at the moment of decision their breaking free to do the right thing is simply not in the cards.

We desperately need a new way forward.

Over past decades various foreign and domestic alternative venues such as French Ring, American Schutzhund, the Protection Sports Association(PSA) and various programs emulating KNPV or Belgian Ring have emerged, but most have failed outright and in spite of admirable efforts as of yet none have conspicuously prospered, posed any serious threat to USCA.



Debbie Zappia

### ***American Schutzhund***

The most relevant of these alternatives has been American Schutzhund, launched in the mid-teens of this century by Debbie Zappia as a direct challenge to USCA. This was not well received by the USCA establishment, but as events have unfolded it has become increasingly evident that Zappia has been right all along in advocating American independence and USCA leadership has been dead wrong in slavishly following the Germans down the road to perdition by accepting the IGP play trial, thus repudiating the German Shepherd legacy of Max von Stephanitz.

The exclusion of the stick from IGP—the childish FCI pretend trial the Germans switched to in place of real Schutzhund—is the proverbial straw breaking the camel's back. Thus on their watch SV and USCA leadership submitted to emasculation without a whimper, without exhibiting any real courage or putting up any serious resistance, just pulled up their pants to march on as if everything was still good.

Thus after all of the rhetoric and posturing USCA—to their everlasting shame—abandoned the stick without any hint of resolution, resistance or courage. Apparently while they are more or less willing to pay lip service to the breed and the heritage when nothing is personally at stake they resort to lame excuses and shamelessly fold for the potential opportunity of making a world team, standing on a decorated wooden box to wave an empty tin cup.

Furthermore Zappia is correct in facing up to the twenty first century reality that tracking as the obedience ritual it has evolved into today is less and less viable or practical in much of our burgeoning urban world where suitable tracking fields are increasingly hard to come by in many regions. Historically tracking was appropriate in Germany and other northern Euro nations in 1880, but that world is long gone, and it never was really practical in much of the rest world and is much less so today. In particular it is difficult in burgeoning urban areas worldwide and regions lacking the temperate climate and moderate rainfall prevailing in the lush German countryside. Tracking as a breeding prerequisite has evolved into a means of maintaining German exclusivity because it is for all practical purposes impossible in much of the world. Other means of maintaining olfactory acuity and effectiveness are available, practical and not dependent on large areas of vegetation or plowed fields such as area searches for persons or objects. Police trials as in the Dutch KNPV program or the various ring venues have utilized various localized searches successfully for well over a century.

Modern police service is much more about search and hold as in clearing a building or trailing where the emphasis is on finding the person rather than the ritual of putting the nose obediently in each footprint. Neither the Dutch police nor the Belgian ring community cling to this outmoded ritual yet still produce much more realistically street ready police patrol candidates. It was and is high time for a serious reality check.



Zappia may very well fail, may be tilting at windmills, but in the end she will have stood tall, done the right thing with grit and courage. Those still in denial need to grow up, embrace reality and get their heads screwed on straight.

Should the USCA leadership be so small minded as to not want to adapt her solution directly, then they should go ahead and reinvent the wheel and create and implement their own version of Schutzhund, which would be their only trial, abandoning IGP to the increasingly irrelevant AWDF.

### ***House Divided***

Abraham Lincoln's immortal, Biblically inspired words ringing out at the commencement of the long and arduous struggle to once and for all resolve the evil paradox of our American founding, the curse of slavery—men and women in bonds for the benefit of a brutally repressive southern plantation elite—in a nation consecrated to freedom and democracy:

*A house divided against itself cannot stand.*

*I believe this government cannot endure permanently  
half slave and half free.*

*I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not  
expect the house to fall—but I do expect it will  
cease to be divided.*

*It will become all one thing or all the other.*

The House of von Stephanitz is also divided, rendered asunder. There are among us those faithful unto the vision of this noble house, of working police dogs whose form is according to function, a breed purified in the crucible of the Schutzhund trial. But there are also those who, like Judas, betray and deny the heritage—defile the breed, have created the grotesque monstrosities of their show ring in homage to their god of money, have repudiated and abandoned the Schutzhund trial. Just as a nation cannot endure half slave and half free, this breed cannot endure half police dog and half effete fashion dog.

In the 1980s, after a period of struggle and futility, false starts and strife Americans went to the motherland, the SV, for guidance, support, dogs and judges. Much good came of this, for most of these SV Schutzhund judges were men of good will, experience and wisdom; and the hard core working line German Shepherds being trained on our fields and in our clubs today carry on the proud heritage of Max von Stephanitz.

But there was also evil and greed in the hearts of the show line dominated SV establishment and we—Germans and Americans alike—have been betrayed, for the SV itself is a house divided. The spirit of von Stephanitz lives on in hundreds of German men and woman devoting themselves to breeding and training a few good dogs according to the old ways in their training clubs, sometimes rising to the honor of a stadium appearance but always striving to progress, to pass the heritage on to another generation. But the reins of real power, of the SV establishment, are firmly in the grip of these money people, the show dog establishment with their watered down special trials and their Martin Shepherds.

This is our existential crisis, for the German Shepherd must be either the police patrol dog of Max von Stephanitz or the grotesque fashion dog of Herman Martin, it cannot endure half the one and half the other.

Any way forward, any meaningful ongoing existence of the breed, is contingent on the resolution of this crisis in favor of the working lines.

### **Way Forward**

In the relentless march of history great empires such as the Roman and ways of life prevailing for millennia such as the horse as the foundation of agriculture, transport and war in their own time come to an end. In a similar way the purebred dog as it has prevailed over the past century is coming to an end because the inherent service potential of most breeds is eroding and the egregious greed of institutions such as the AKC and VDH has driven cost beyond perceived benefit for working service and companion owner alike. In police and military service purebred status is more and more irrelevant as the SV repudiates the working role and incessantly alienates the working dog community and even more egregiously the German police establishment. Civilian owners in ever increasing numbers eschew the purebred due to escalating cost and more fundamentally the widespread perception that it is a con, a blatant scam.

While the decline of the German Shepherd goes hand in hand with that of the purebred as a whole the Malinois ascendance is ongoing because the roots of this steadfast breed are in serious protection and search service—as in Belgian Ring and Dutch Police breeding—and thus are for most practical purposes beyond the reach of malignant show ring influence.

In light of all of this what does the future hold for the German Shepherd? The short answer is that in all likelihood there is no way forward, only ongoing descent into ever more shameful mediocrity. The inherent German problem is not in the quality of the dogs, which in principle could be recovered through a return to an honest, vigorous working trial protocol, but that SV leadership is reeling in confusion and corruption and serious German working breeders and trainers are overwhelmed by the vast wasteland of downward spiraling show and pet breeding.

In America USCA, by far the largest and most predominant venue, has relinquished any shred of credibility by embracing IGP stripped of the stick and remains the captive American marketing agent for the grotesque show lines, essentially *Martin Shepherd Distribution America, GmbH*.

USCA was from its beginning in the latter 1970s promoted as united, as providing all American trainers with access to judges, clubs, score books and trials, a national presence offering many trials rather than several incipient half-baked entities providing a few trials. And for more than forty years this was to a large extent the reality; although there were ongoing rough patches USCA was the foundation upon which the American working dog movement was built.

Yet there remains the matter of the false flag, the reality that we sold our soul to the SV and that eventually the devil, in his moment of desperation, was going to demand his due. Through all of those decades this hung over us and now—almost a half century later—the time has come to pay the piper, to meekly submit to the force feeding of FCI IGP trials sans stick, to embrace the shame and dishonor manifested with each pretend title granted. In stark reality after all these years USCA is little more than the enslaved agent of the SV show breeders, to our everlasting shame pandering their pathetic SV show lines and conducting sham trials that are a wretched parody of the Schutzhund heritage of Max von Stephanitz.

Given this somber reality salvation is most unlikely, but we do need to at least go through the motions of seeking a way forward.

The crux of the problem is that we are so far down the road to two breeds—each preordained to fail—that the extinction of the show lines and then rebuilding the working lines is the only plausible means to the end. Step one must be recognition that combining show and working lines for some sort of golden middle is a fantasy, a childish pipe dream. The atrocities so diligently conjured by the show breeders have long since crossed the Rubicon, are so far gone that there is no realistic use for them in the reconstruction of the breed; just as you put down a hopelessly injured or sick dog extinction is their rightful and appropriate destiny.

Although the better working lines remain as good dogs, many truly excellent, the compromised structure and cost inflicted by the show breeder conducted breed surveys—seeking to inflict the banana backs and other manifestations of effete fashion on the working lines—and other aspects of the overly complicated and expensive show oriented breeding protocol have seriously eroded these lines in police and similar service in terms of cost and structural integrity.

It is utterly absurd that we have the Bundessiegerprüfung or working championship and the Sieger show for the Martin style Shepherds for entirely separate populations and at the same time there is a "Universal Sieger" as a silly side show for the second rate, a not to be taken seriously consolation event for those not able to rise to elite status in either sphere. Yet in encompassing the complete dog—both structure, stride and working character attributes—some sort of universal sieger should be the only Sieger, evaluating candidates for breeding according to the old style Schutzhund examination complete with the scaling wall, a traditional long pursuit, turn and attack and aggressive stick wielding decoys truly empowered to sort the wheat from the chaff.

Were the SV to embrace this, eliminate the conformation only Sieger in favor of a no holds barred comprehensive working evaluation as the guide to elite breeding, then we could have hope of redemption from within. But we well know that the SV is the problem and will not and cannot be the solution. In order for the German Shepherd to return to prosperity the SV must be obliterated and then rebuilt from the ground up or replaced by an entirely new paradigm. The likelihood of this is vanishingly small.

Thus USCA has three choices:

- Force WUSV change, a virtually impossible pipe dream.
- Withdraw from WUSV and lead the establishment of a new world order based on an entirely new world union. This would of course be canine Utopia, the impossible dream.
- Embrace the ongoing emasculation of the breed as the price of subservience to the SV show breeders, thus continuing on in their journey to perdition, everlasting punishment for our grievous sins of pride, arrogance and avarice.

Short of a miracle the latter, perdition, is our future.

In the place of the time honored Schutzhund trial pathetic Schutzhund re-enactments<sup>11</sup> are emerging before our eyes in a surreal parody where we

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<sup>11</sup> Reminiscent of America Civil War re-enactments.

show up and pretend, go through the motions without ever challenging the dog. Ultimately rather than a one meter high jump there will be a two foot low jump and on the courage test the dog on lead will emit only one symbolic bark at a feeble bad guy secured behind a chain link fence.

The fall of the House of von Stephanitz was a long and convoluted saga with elaborate twists and devious side plots. But the ultimate cause of collapse was too many decades of SV establishment corruption, driven by self-interest and avarice with strong doses of false pride, overweening arrogance and abject stupidity. It truly is as simple as that.

USCA is an entirely different matter in that these have been on the whole idealistic and fundamentally honest and decent men and women, many remarkably able and dedicated, with a sincere desire to do the right things; but so driven by blind subservience to the SV that they have entirely lost the ability to think and act in their own best interest or that of that of the breed as a whole, have bought into the purple Kool-Aid.

The SV and USCA could have and should have reestablished hard core old fashioned Schutzhund and left the emasculated FCI IGP to the play dog folks. Ultimately everybody spouts the right words, talks about real Schutzhund, the good old days and how they are never ever going to give in on the stick issue. But the crux of the dilemma is that nobody is playing to win or even not to lose; everyone is focused on the construction of a personal narrative where it is somehow not their fault, that there was nothing more that they personally could have done.

This has for me been a tragic personal saga playing out over more than four decades, always in the vain hope that somehow in the end we could conjure redemption.

*Jim Engel Marengo January 2024*

## ***Background and Reference***

[Glossary](#)

[Decline and Fall of the House of von Stephanitz](#)

[Who Owns the House of von Stephanitz?](#)

[SV Power Corrupts](#)

[Canine Organizations](#)

[Supreme Authority of the Canine World](#)

[Animal Rights and Wrongs](#)

[German Shepherd Police Dog Heritage Repudiated](#)

[SV Abandons Work Test for Breeding](#)

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[Ongoing FCI / WUSV Strife](#)

[Conacts & References](#)

*Much more historical detail can be found in the police dog book:*

[The Police Dog: Evolution, History and Service](#)