

2011 GERMAN SHEPHERD

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DOG FORUM

1. When were you first attracted to German Shepherds, and what attracted you?

My first encounter with the GSD was in high school. The breed was popular as a show dog and companion but also because of its role as a military dog and the work it was doing for the blind and police. I admired those who owned them and I knew that someday I would have one of these great dogs.

It was not until I married Nancy Van Cleve that I was able to buy my first German Shepherd. It was a Black and Tan female and she was an excellent obedience dog. Nancy was quick to become involved with AKC and the sport and did very well. At that time I was in graduate school at Florida State University. My studies involved deviant behavior, but my real interest was in research; Animal Genetics and the breeding of dogs. My first job took me to Emory University where I served as Assistant Dean. By this time both Nancy and I were involved with the breed. We had four children and a small kennel where we began our breeding program. Nancy continued with obedience and agility. I was active in obedience, titled a few dogs, but preferred conformation and breeding. Within a few years I was president of the German Shepherd Dog Club of Atlanta and then president of the German Shepherd Dog Club of America. This involvement included not only conformation but also the working dog sport.

From the very beginning I was taken by the responsiveness of the breed and the ease with which it could be trained. We enjoyed instant success in obedience and slowly began to make progress breeding dogs for conformation. My interest quickly extended itself to helping with the breeding of military dogs. Over the years I have made many trips to Lackland Air Force Base, in San Antonio Texas where the military and TSA have their breeding programs.

2. What is the difference between an All-Breed German Shepherd and a Specialty German Shepherd?

One can argue that there is a difference, but in reality we need to consider how we look at this question. Let's start with the size of the show ring. At most All-Breed shows the ring is small and indoors. The small ring is attractive to those owners who themselves can no longer run because of bad knees or age. On the other hand, the large grassy rings of the specialty show favor the handler who is still an able athlete and can run

for up to 30 minutes with his/her dog. In addition to ring size, the larger specialty rings favor those dogs that have a longer stride and the willingness to run, which typically are those with the longer upper arms and sometimes the better angulation. So it comes down to a combination of ring size, handler's athletic ability and the structural style of the dog.

I am delighted to say that there are many German Shepherds dogs today that perform well in both rings.

3. Who has influenced you the most in your Breed and please tell us why?

I have been blessed with my friendships in the breed. They include Ernie Hart, the famous author and breeder who wrote one of the first great books on the breed ("This is the German Shepherd"); He co-authored it with Capt. William Goldbecker. Ernie owned Lynnlan Kennels and became famous for his good dogs and his ideas about how to manage a show dog. He introduced me to several important imports (Pfeffer von Bern, Odin von Busecker Schloss and Chlodulf von Peltztierhof).

Next came another Ernie. This time it was **Ernie Loeb** who was an importer and a handler. Ernie got his real start with a dog called Brando von Heidelberger. For Ernie, it all began when he became good friends with Geraldine Rockefeller Dodge. She helped him in many ways. She often referred to him as "a refugee and one of the best (handlers) she had seen". It was his kindness and eye for quality and his willingness to take the time to help me learn about the breed which helped in my early years. Later he became known as "Mr. German Shepherd." Ernie was an immigrant who understood the risks of importing dogs from Nazi Germany and even though this was a risky business during World War II, he crossed the border many times to buy German Shepherd Dogs for buyers in the United States. He earned the respect of the SV (German Club) and the AKC as a noted judge with an eye for the breed.

The remaining trio to have influenced me included: **Connie Beckhardt** who bred and judged many of the best dogs in the breed. I bought dogs from her and finished them. She gave me a lot of breeding advice. The other two key people were **Joan and Fran Ford** who were also so generous with their time and advice. They bred a dog called Fortune to their Froehlich's Elsa v Grunestal and produced Lance of Fran-Jo, who became the American and Canadian Grand Victor. Lance represented

a new era in German Shepherds that included: angulation, topline and side gait. Lance's popularity in the sixties was also due to the tendency to turn away from imports. Lance produced many offspring which became pillars of the breed including: Lakeside's Harrigan, Cobert's Reno of Lakeside, Eko-Lan's Morgan, Cobert's Golly Gee of Lakeside and Mannix of Fran-Jo. Important offspring of these dogs included Doppelt-Tay's Hammer and Hawkeye who figured prominently in the late seventies. Jim Moses who was many times the handler of #1 dogs and an AKC Herding Breeder of the year. He is/was always generous with his time. He taught me the necessity to develop a good eye for the exceptional dog with an outstanding pedigree. Jim understood the value

of dogs like Yoncalla's Mike, a Bernd v Kallengarten grandson. "Mike" was a potent sire transmitting balanced structure, rich color, strong bone and good feet. "Mike's" best known son was Grand Victor Hollamor's Judd whose daughters were also widely used.

4. What would you like Judges focus more on when Judging German Shepherds?

I would like all judges, and especially a new judge to the breed to appreciate why structure and movement of the GSD is different from most other breeds. For example, the "flying trot" is unique to German Shepherds. It means that all four feet are off the ground while gaiting. This takes a good eye to see the "flying trot". Too many look for a lot of motion and think that it is correct. The breed standard describes in some detail the architecture of the dog. The standard calls for longer pasterns in the front assembly to handle the length of stride. The breed is expected to be able to scale an eight foot wall so it needs a longer pastern that can act as a shock absorber. The standard also calls for a long steep croup and more bend of stifle than is seen in most other breeds. This allows the dog in motion to bring its rear feet up under the chest for a long and smooth stride. The gait is also different. It should be outreaching, elastic, without effort, smooth and rhythmic, covering the maximum amount of ground with the minimum number of steps. This means that at a trot the German Shepherd covers a lot of ground, moves easily with coordination and balance and produces a gait that appears to be the steady motion of a well-lubricated machine. To do this the feet must travel close to the ground. At full trot, the

back must remain firm and level without sway or roll. The dog should single track front and rear and its legs should travel in parallel planes.

Having said all that, judges have a lot to look for in the Shepherd standing and in motion. I have conducted many judges' seminars and I am always willing to help judges who want to learn more about the breed.

5. Other than one of yours, of course, who were/are the 3 best German Shepherds you have ever seen and why?

Of all the GSDs I that have seen the best three were stud dogs who each made significant

impact on the breed. They include: Ch. Lance of Fran-Jo; Ch. Kismet's Sight For Sore Eyes, and Ch. Hi-Cliff Bronson Kaleef. Each one of these males contributed something to the gene pool. Lance represented a new era in the breed that included: angulation, topline and side gait. Kismet, better known as "Dallas" added type, style and more health. "Bronson" was a dog I put Best Puppy at the National. He went on to become the top stud dog and a producer of high energy offspring with reach and drive.

6. Tell us, in your opinion, the difference between a good German Shepherd and a great German Shepherd?

The difference between good and great German Shepherds is a matter of type, temperament health and performance. The good ones are bred and have type, temperament, and health. Much of this can be achieved with pedigree analysis, good management, training and nutrition. The great ones are born with something special. Not only do they have type, temperament, performance and health but they are able to produce it.

The great one comes around about once in every 10,000 dogs.

7. Please tell us why you are so passionate about your Breed?

Everyone loves their breed for their own reasons. I have always appreciated and loved the German Shepherd because of its devotion to its owner, its work ethic and its willingness to work and serve.

