

Significant Breeders of our Day

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This article was originally printed in the October 1983 Review; reprint permission granted.

Introduction

Hopefully, this article about Langenau Kennels, Dave and Martha Rinke, will be the first of a series about prominent kennels of our time, the seventies and the eighties. To my knowledge, no in-depth descriptions exist of the influential kennels and breeders of the past. We know what Marie Leary's ideas on puppy raising are because of her booklet, "The Care of the Shepherd." But what is there available to us about her concept of sound breeding practices, conditioning, training, temperament? By reading old *Reviews*, through the ads, shows wins, etc., we can gather facts regarding her successes, names of champions, ROM titles, etc. I know that she was an early advocate of x-raying all breeding stock, using only animals with normal hips, but that is all I know.

We know about Lloyd Brackett's ideas on breeding practices because of the reprint of his *Dog World* articles, but he aimed his articles at all dog breeding; they were superb articles, but if only we could have an expanded version, with much more detail about German Shepherds specifically.

If only we could have a book with a chapter by or about – **John Gans, Marie Leary, Lloyd Brackett, Grant Mann, Margaret Polley, Lois Brundred, Eleanor Cole** – with each of them telling their views on breeding, evaluating puppies and young stock, nutrition, training, housing, health problems.

For two or three years, the Futurity Tabulation books gave us brief articles on several breeders; those articles were very interesting; but some of the experienced breeders had very short articles that left the reader longing for more details; what did Lorraine Clifford think about this and this and this? Some of the newer breeders who appeared seemed to recognize that they were new and had gotten off to a marvelous start with a very good first litter. Others seemed to believe because of their initial success that they had it made and were already experts (and maybe they will indeed be the Marie Leary and Lloyd Brackett of the future); time will tell.

What I plan to do in this series is expand on the concept of those Red Book articles. I plan to choose breeders whom I think have already given strong indication that the results of their breeding will have an influence on the breed in the future. Some of the breeders that I may choose will perhaps produce dogs that will be significant now and for a few years and then perhaps time will show us that those lines have a detrimental influence, and they will be weeded out. Other lines will live on indefinitely.

For example, **Lance** now seems to be as prominent in the pedigrees of our dogs today as **Pfeffer** was to the dogs of the forties and fifties. Will **Lance** still be the line-breeding of note behind dogs of the nineties as **Pfeffer** still was in the early sixties? I happen to believe that he will (of course **Lance** himself has one line to **Pfeffer**, although distantly).

Should as many as two dozen of these articles appear, if my judgment proves to be of any merit, I would predict that four or five of those breeders will be the Marie Leary, Grant Mann, Lloyd Brackett, etc. of the future. Then, perhaps, these articles could be cumulated and future breeders will be able to learn more about our thoughtful breeders of today.

My hope is that the situation we are now in, of not having access to the views of yesterday's breeders, will not continue.

Langenau Kennels – Dave & Martha Rinke

Time is a very important "thing," if one can look at time as an object. Only the passage of time can show what qualities, what concepts, which dogs, which people who breed dogs, will endure.

And time, or the passage of it, is one of the greatest aids to those few people who are to earn a place in the annals of German Shepherd breed history by breeding dogs whose genes will continue on through succeeding generations. Those individuals are the ones who make the fullest use of passing years to see and to study and to benefit from the results of their breedings, and those of their contemporaries in order to improve future breedings.

Sixteen years have gone by since Dave and Martha Rinke bred their first litter of German Shepherd puppies, and those years show us today that they have indeed utilized the passage of those years to the fullest.

Langenau Dogs Today

In describing the achievements of Langenau and how Dave and Martha went about getting these results, let's start with now, instead of starting with the beginning. Let's look at the results of two shows in the fall of 1982, the GSDC of Wisconsin and the 1982 National Specialty of the German Shepherd Dog Club of America.

At the Wisconsin specialty, 21 of the award-winners (from a cursory inspection of the catalog) were of Langenau breeding or descended from Langenau dogs. This includes Winners Bitch and Best of Winners, **Brasban's Promise of Langenau**, from a Watson son bred to Langenau's Nassau, who is linebred on Qessa 3-3. Promise goes back to Christi 4 times. Best Opposite Sex was a Watson grandson. Best of Breed was **Ch. Jeanden's L'Erin of Langenau**, whose dam is Langenau's Minx Renaissance, a Tango daughter. Even the Veteran dog and bitch, both champions, were bred by Langenau.

At the National Specialty, Langenau was represented by L'Erin once more, as #3 Select Bitch. L'Erin was also Best in Maturity and Maturity Victrix. **Ch. Langenau's Ida of Jahn-D**, a Watson granddaughter, was #7 Select Bitch. Also, a Watson daughter, Langenau's Saucy Rose of Ro-Tan, was second Bred-by-Exhibitor Bitch.

How did Langenau Kennels get to this position of prominence both in their own region and on a national level? Now to go back to the beginning!

Back to 1966

Dave and Martha Rinke are the perfect but somewhat unusual example of breeders who started out the right way, by beginning their process of education *before* they bred their first litter. But apparently everyone does not start with a pet. In their case, they took their pet to training class conducted by the GSDC of Minneapolis & St. Paul, where they met Paul Johnson, a relative newcomer to the breed himself, but who owned two of the famous **Ricella "F" litter, Fantasy and Fancy Quinlan**. They were advised by Paul to go to as many shows as possible, see as many dogs as possible, read the *German Shepherd Dog Review* and all available books.

Topline was the first large specialty show attended, and then the 1966 National Specialty in Kansas City. **Lance, Mike, and Ilk** were the dogs that impressed them most. **Mike** was Grand Victor, **Lance** was Maturity Victor and Select #6, and **Ulk** was presented at the very first Parade of Great Dogs. The following spring, Paul & Joan Johnson's **Ch. Ricella's Fantasy** became available on lease for the first Langenau litter. Dave and Martha showed their dedication to the breed right from the very beginning, as their honeymoon was the trip to Ohio to breed **Fantasy to Lance!** (**Fantasy** was a **Field Marshall** daughter; **Lance**, a **Fortune** son.) They were destined for success: this first litter, whelped May 25, 1967, produced two champions, and the Rinkes were off and running.

They kept two bitches from this litter, **Christa** and **Carin**. Dave and Martha moved to the Milwaukee area, after both graduated from college, when the puppies were 8 weeks old. About this same time they purchased an additional bitch, Nora of Arbywood, a Fels daughter; and later, **Very Special of Frohlich**, inbred Elsa to her son, Uhlor. While one could say they needn't have bothered with any of these bitches except Christa, since all of their bloodlines today go back to

Christa alone (with the exception of one champion going back to Very Special), that's hindsight, which is always accurate! Also, every breeding they made with all four bitches contributed to their own learning experiences. Reading about and looking at other people's results is important, but in the end, the breeder who will ultimately be successful must learn by doing.

From that first litter in 1967, the Rinkes showed both Christa and Carin, and also bred both of them when they were old enough. Christa was bred first to the Bernd son, Ch. Rex-Edu-Mibach, which produced Ch. Langenau's Etude CDX. Etude was bred to **GV Ch. Langenau's Tango**. Tango was bred to her house-mate and relative, **GV Ch. Langenau's Watson ROM**, also a Christa grandson, and produced Ch. Langenau's Java Renaissance, who was bred to Langenau's Dylan (a Christa great-grandson) and produced Langenau's Nassau. Bred to a Watson son, Nassau produced Promise, mentioned earlier as Winners Bitch at the 1982 Wisconsin specialty. And now (summer of 1983) Promise has been bred to Watson. To bring us to another 1982 winner mentioned earlier, Tango was also bred to Ch. Cobert's Reno of Lakeside, producing Langenau's Minx Renaissance, who was bred to **Ch. Doppelt-Tay's Hammer** to produce Ch. Jeanden's L'Erin of Langenau. So a line goes on . . . and on . . . *if it is a good one and the breeding partners are wisely chosen.*

Shortly after her first litter, Christa's show career began in earnest and she won her first major in August, plus became Canadian Grand Victrix in September 1969. The following year, shortly after her third birthday, Christa finished her American championship, handled by Dave all the way. Her next breeding was to Ch. Santana's Man O' War, but none of those puppies have carried on for their parents. Then Christa was bred to **GV Ch. Hollamor's Judd**, who had been awarded Canadian Grand Victor at the same time Christa was Canadian Grand Victrix. This mating produced **Langenau's Quessa ROM**. Quessa was truly a producer – her litter from the GV Ch. Mannix son, **GV Ch. Scorpio of Shiloh Gardens**, resulted in the three champion "W" litter, Windsor, Winchester, and the famous **1977 US Grand Victor Ch. Langenau's Watson ROM**. Watson himself is the sire of 17 champions and is the top ranked ROM sire of those still actively at stud.

Christa's breeding to Circle High's Fast Eddy combined their famous Grand Victor sires, **Judd** and Lance, together with their dams, the litter sisters, Fantasy and Fancy Quinlan, but no champions were to result. Christa was also bred to Valtara's Uri of Vanderworth, which produced Ch. Arabella of Langenau. Ironically, this great foundation bitch, Christa, who has left such a rich heritage, never attained her own Register of Merit title. Officially, she is the mother of two champions and one ROM daughter.

The breedings discussed thus far resulted in most of the Langenau champions and/or producers of champions, but Dave and Martha are quick to point out that it takes a lot of breedings that don't give the hoped-for results in order to get the occasional litter that is successful. But the "failures" of a thoughtful breeder always have a valid basis, and also increase one's knowledge of the bloodlines one is working with. So even the failures do make their contribution to the eventual successes.

Not all breedings were a success

The other three bitches from Langenau's starting point in 1967/68 do not figure in their present breeding animals. Cain was bred to the import, King v. Starrenburg, and to Lance; neither litter was a success. Nora of Arbywood was bred to Visco of Frohlich (inbred **Elsa** son), and to Judd, again nothing noteworthy. Very Special of Frohlich was bred to Lance, to Mike, to **Shiloh**, and to **Paladen**. Her Lance litter produced Langenau's Holly, who won her Maturity class. Holly bred to Wyatt produced a champion daughter, Circle High's Faith of Langenau. Also, the Paladen breeding produced Extra Special, who did some winning, but never finished.

The first breeding of a bitch does not always tell the story. For example, before Etude was bred to Mannix (resulting in Tango), she was bred to Lance, but there was nothing approaching Tango. In addition, Etude was bred to Joey of Fran-Jo and to Valtara's Uri of Vanderworth.

Quessa was also bred to Joey of Fran-Jo, producing Ch. Langenau's Meghan of Mardean. Meghan was bred to **GV Ch. Caesar v. Carahaus**, producing Dylan, grandsire of Promise (whose other grandfather is Watson). Quessa was herself bred to Caesar, to her son, Watson, and to **Hawkeye**, but no champions have resulted from any of those breedings so far.

A reasonable prediction is that Minx (Reno-Tango) will be the next Langenau Register of Merit since she is already the dam of Ch. L'Erin, by Hammer, and of **Ch. Langenau's Libra of Jeanden**, by **Ch. Jahn-D's Excalibur**, a Watson son out of Circle High's Emminence, from Judd and Ricella's Fancy Quinlan.

Most of Dave and Martha's other breedings, some successful and some not, come from less well-known dogs of their own breeding, or from leasing bitches appropriate for Watson, including some from previous successful breedings, like the dam of **Select Ch. Centennial's Dirty Sally**.

Dave and Martha themselves summarize their 16 years of breeding in two sentences: "We have been involved for the most part in a line of dogs that combines the 'F' litter Arbywood, mainly through Lance, with the Bernd background dogs. This has been a successful combination in that the two types are complementary and there are many dogs available possessing virtues of each extreme that fall within the framework of our breeding program." **GV Ch. Yoncalla's Mike ROM** was a Bernd grandson whom the Rinkes tried to incorporate without success by going directly to him, although they did breed Quessa ROM (and this Watson) by going to Mike's son, **GV Ch. Hollamor's Judd**. Dave feels that "Mike is the dog nearest the standard I've ever seen, a super representative, unfortunately not a prepotent sire, for us." In contrast, Dave feels that Lance was the most prepotent dog of our time, who stamped his own type on his progeny, from the great majority of bitches bred to him.

Ideas on Breeding the German Shepherd

Dave and Martha are very articulate and very willing to share their ideas on the breeding of the German Shepherd. They believe that the breeder must have a strong desire to be successful, must know why he is in Shepherds, and must know what he wants to accomplish, what kind of a Shepherd he wants to produce. Dave points out the statistics involved – that if one considers the futurity nominated litters as being those bred by breeders who are seriously interested in producing quality Shepherds, these litters produce about 6-7 thousand puppies per year, with about 120 champions finishing each year. The odds of breeding a champion don't sound too good, but Dave believes that these odds can be cut by educating yourself, developing a plan, and taking action. The German Shepherd standard is one of the best and clearest of any breed, and any prospective breeder should know it thoroughly. Be determined about your goal; read, go to dog shows, speeches and seminars. When you're ready to begin, start with the finest bitch you can find. Anything less is a waste of time. Breeding requires a continuous process of selection, and you must learn to be objective. Expect failures, but with fewer and fewer of them between occasional successes.

Make your own decisions. Most ringside advice is free, but much of it is also worthless, including a lot of the advice on breeding from handlers. How many handlers are also breeders of note? Ask yourself: where is the best dog in the country for my bitch, and forget about the personality of the owner. At dog shows, look at the dogs. Try to determine which will be the stars of the future.

Don't Wait for Everyone Else

Be a student of other people's breeding programs. But, if you see a young dog you like, don't sit and wait until everybody else has bred to him to see what he produces. "Martha and I breed to what we like. We're not interested in being a duplicator."

Some breeders use a "shotgun approach." They bed their bitches to whatever "hot" stud dog (the one everybody else is using) appears, without any preconceived long-range plan, hoping one of the matings will be a successful "click."

In-breeding can be successful if done in volume with extensive selection. But who today can keep enough dogs to be able to do this? Dave doubts if anyone currently has dogs good enough to withstand continuous in-breeding. However, incestuous breeding can be valuable for the breeder's own education.

Dave and Martha believe that the most successful results come from breeding specimen to specimen, animals sharing good points and not sharing the same faults. Paper breeding, breeding pedigree to pedigree, is always very tempting, but too often the partners don't look like the great dogs in the pedigree that one is trying to reproduce. Dogs tend to throw what they are more than what one might hope to get from their family.

Is Luck a Factor?

For those who think luck is a factor, Dave defines luck as "preparation meeting opportunity. The harder you work, the more luck you have." He warns against fads. Be aware of and avoid them. When asked how you can tell what is a fad and what is a permanent change or evolution in the breed, he answered: "Breed to the standard with the best of the dogs available at the time. If the breed is evolving, your dogs will change accordingly."

When picking puppies, Dave and Martha advise: Look and look and look, both at your own litters and at others in your area, every chance you get. Judge your puppies (and adults) by looking at the whole animal. Be a total concept judge rather than a fault judge. But temperament and movement are the main qualities that can be evaluated in young puppies.

Breed Problems

Every breeder must constantly be aware of the problems in the breed. The "visible problems" (the problems most often seen in the ring) are: lack of suspension in movement, need for better shoulders, and need for stronger secondary sex characteristics. The most serious "invisible problems" (those that prevent dogs from even getting to the show ring) are monorchidism, panosteitis, dysplasia, and poor temperament.

Lack of longevity and fertility are becoming serious breed problems. Dave feels that dogs are finishing too young. It might be better if German Shepherds couldn't be awarded points until they are at least two years old. Here the German system is better with the young dog classes and the open class for mature dogs, without the different ages competing against each other.

Within their own breeding program, Dave and Martha feel that they have been learning more and more about the German Shepherd; each breeding provides a learning experience and in each successive generation, one knows more about the dogs with which he is dealing. When they select breeding partners, they look for compensating faults, of course, but always consider "movement to movement" to be the final weight in any decision. The more knowledge one has of the pair's ancestry, actually knowing the entire family from which an individual has been derived, is the most valuable asset a breeder can have, one which comes with time and objective observation. The second advantage to a breeder is the opportunity to watch a puppy from the moment of birth, to evaluate critically almost every move the puppy makes in relation to a set of criteria in one's own mind.

Evaluating Puppies

They comment on puppy evaluation: "By the time a litter is eight-ten weeks old, most major decisions about a puppy's potential can be made, as long as we are working with the dogs from the family with which we are familiar. From that point on, a puppy can go through awkward stages, but as long as the reassurance of movement is still present, we try to look the other way until perhaps after a year of age when the pup is beginning to pull himself together. The hardest part of the evaluation is personal involvement; it steals objectivity and leaves one with mediocre animals."

Dave and Martha also emphasize that once you've succeeded in breeding a quality animal, then you must make the most of it by proper care, conditioning, and training.

Langenau puppies are whelped on the Rinke's enclosed front porch, "handy to the TV set" while waiting for the action to start! They make sure someone is there as each puppy is born, to help if necessary, get the puppy started breathing, to make sure each puppy gets proper start. However, Dave no longer believes in trying to save a clearly weak puppy, one that the mother keeps pushing away. In such a case, it is probably better for the puppy to die than to possibly grow up and be a sickly dog or be bred and pass on the tendency to weakness. When the puppies are old enough to go outside, they are moved to a 12' x 20' pen in the barn, with shavings on the floor and a straw area for a bed. They also spend a great deal of their time romping and playing in a 50' x 100' grass paddock during the day, if the weather is nice. Their puppies are wormed at 2 weeks, 4 weeks and 6 weeks.

Training the Puppy

The puppies' training consists of plenty of socialization . . . taking them out whenever there are visitors, encouraging them to play with children. They initially pick their show prospect puppies at seven-eight weeks, and evaluate them basically on temperament, looking for a showy animated puppy with lots of self-confidence, and on movement. They feel most of their puppies go through awkward stages, and that a breeder needs to develop the confidence in the early signs of potential in the puppy, and not to give up when the puppy is going through its bad stages.

Dave and Martha take a show prospect puppy to their Shepherd Club, let it be around the other dogs, encourage it to follow an older dog around the ring a little bit, but basically concentrate on making sure the puppy has a good time and learns to relax and enjoy itself when out in public. They might show a puppy at one or two matches. The puppy can do no wrong and learns self-confidence. Martha does not believe in pressuring the puppy at all – for example, by making it hold a show pose. Make sure the puppy is having fun!

Conditioning the Show Dog

When a dog is ready for serious showing, Dave and Martha may have it do some limited road work, either with a bicycle or beside the car, up to one and a half miles at the most, with the dog moving at an easy trot. The major conditioning program, however, is just free exercise in the several 50' x 100' grass paddocks.

Most of the Langenau dogs are on a self-feeding program where they eat when they choose. The Rinkes feed a good dry dog food with a moderate protein level like Kennel Biscuit, Bench & Field, ANF "M," Purina Puppy Chow. They don't feed any of the super-high protein food. They give multiple vitamin supplements to pregnant bitches, and feed a meat scrap mixture which includes some liver, that they get from a local locker plant, as a supplement to dogs that may need a little extra protein, including puppies.

Avoid the Health Fads

They try to avoid some of the fads regarding dog health, such as the ascorbate/vitamin C supplements that were supposed to prevent any and all health problems. When palpation was being promoted as the answer to determine which, if any, puppies would ultimately develop hip dysplasia, Dave & Martha had four litters (back when they were first getting started) palpated by the best known practitioner of palpation. They feel that this was a big mistake on their part and they put down puppies which were otherwise very promising. They found palpation to be very unreliable as a prediction of hip dysplasia, despite using the most noted "expert." The lesson learned was to be very cautious about any unproven technique which might turn out to be a fad.

Right now, they are taking a "wait and see" attitude toward the vaccination for Toxic Gut Syndrome. They have vaccinated four of their dogs that they felt might be of higher risk for TGS.

One health practice that seems a bit controversial is their policy regarding acaricide preventative for heartworm. They do not use this drug at all, but they do have all of their dogs checked for heartworm twice a year, and they spray regularly for flies and mosquitos [sic].

Dave and Martha have converted a former machine shed into a kennel building. They have two large runs, 10' x 20' and twelve smaller ones, 4' x 16', all with gravel surface. The inside pens contain partitioned alcoves filled with straw in the winter for warm sleeping beds.

Success of Co-Ownerships

They try to keep no more than half a dozen adult dogs, including their two famous house dogs, Tango and Watson. They have found that co-ownerships of breeding bitches works very well for them, and they sometimes lease a bitch for co-breeding. They caution that one must be very sure about being able to get along with the co-owners; both parties have to be flexible. They don't have written contracts with their co-owners, as they take pains to be sure of the reliability of the co-owner before they agree to the arrangement; they have been extremely fortunate in having very satisfactory co-owners thus far. They mentioned particularly their first co-ownership with Etude, whose co-owner, Joyce Krause, was also very interested in obedience and attained the CDX degree on Etude who was also high-scoring champion in obedience at the National Specialty one year.

Dave in the Obedience Ring

Dave approves totally of obedience training for Shepherds, but said he himself does not enjoy obedience competition. This is based on his one-and-only time in the obedience ring where his dog, Alex, earned a score of 194, but Dave got so tired of waiting for the long-sits-and-downs that Alex never made it to another obedience trial!

The Langenau criteria for keeping a young male requires a positive answer to the question: "Is he a dog we would want to use ourselves on our own bitches?" Apparently, they have very tough standards in arriving at a "yes" answer to that question as over the years, Watson is the only male they have kept on a permanent basis (other than Alex who was Dave's pet).

Watson

The story of how Dave and Martha happened to keep Watson when he was a very young puppy is very interesting, and reinforces the fact that accurate evaluation of young puppies is not an easy task. Following is an excerpt from the section on Watson, written by Dave and Martha, in the 1977 "Red Book."

"The story of how we happen to have Watson with us is not unique among dog breeders, but is perhaps reflective of some decisions which dog breeders face. We would *like* to tell you that we spotted Watson as a newborn and could tell when he was still wet that everything was going to mesh into a great dog. What really happened is this:

"We were visited by a family which was desperate to have a puppy – it had to be a male – to replace the one they had just lost. At that time, we had a litter that was six weeks old which had six males in it and, though we'd been watching and liking them for some time, we were certain that at least one of the males was going to fall below our standards for a show dog and be a fine pet.

When the day came for these people to take their puppy home, we evaluated the male pups one more time and narrowed it down to two; we eventually decided the black puppy had a firmer middle piece and used his fore-assembly better, so the red puppy was selected to lie with this young family. The red puppy is still a pet and the black one grew up to be GV Ch. Langenau's Watson. It is humbling to remember how close we thought the decision to be."

Will Langenau dogs be among those whose bloodlines will carry on for many generations? Again, TIME will give us the answer.