

## Understanding Brackett—Part II

- by Dr. Robin R. Lyle

*“Physical compensation is the foundation rock upon which all enduring worth must be built.”*  
- Lloyd C. Brackett

This is the second part of Dr. Lyle’s article on Lloyd Brackett. See Part 1 **in our archives, under July 2008.**

Dr. Lyle began by analyzing the writing of Brackett using his booklet entitled Planned Breeding. He has gleaned ten insights or principles based upon his reading and analysis.

In Part I, principles 1 – 5 were explained. They include:

- 1 Learn What a Good German Shepherd Dog specimen is
- 2 Build a Strain
- 3 Build your kennel on the selection of bitches
- 4 Linebreed/Inbreed wisely
- 5 Outcross – **but only for definite purposes**

Principles 6 - 10 of Brackett’s planned breeding program continue here.

### #6 Know what to expect through inheritance

*“...ONLY those breeders knowledgeable in what constitutes a near-perfect specimen of the breed, as well as those having information on what to hope for, and look out for, through inheritance factors, should even THINK of doing closed-up breeding on them.”<sup>1</sup>*

Brackett used a three-step procedure for this component of visualizing what a proposed breeding might bring. First, the breeder must know what constitutes a good GSD according to the breed standard. Next, be knowledgeable of the pedigrees of the potential mates. This naturally leads into the third step: knowing the characteristics (attributes and faults) of as many of the dogs on the pedigree as possible.

It is imperative to be certain to select near faultless dogs as foundation stock. It will be very difficult, if not impossible; to implement planned breeding using mediocre stock. Brackett was adamant that if a beginner, or any breeder for that matter, discovers (obviously through gained knowledge and experience) that they possess mediocre stock, then there is only one course of action: “Cull relentlessly!”

Even when a proposed mating matches very good dogs, never mate two dogs with similar faults. This action would only heighten the probability of reproducing that very fault.

This principle rests upon knowing both the “phenotype” and the “genotype” of the dogs being used in your breeding program. **Phenotype** is defined as the “outward, physical manifestation of the organism. These are the physical parts . . . anything that is part of the observable structure, function or behavior of a living organism.”<sup>2</sup>

**Genotype** is the “internally coded, inheritable information carried by all living organisms. This stored information is used as a ‘blueprint’ or set of instructions for building and maintaining a living creature. These instructions are found within almost all cells (the ‘internal’ part), they are written in a coded language (the genetic code); they are copied at the time of cell division or reproduction and are passed from one generation to the next (“inheritable”).”<sup>3</sup>

Brackett goes so far as to suggest that many beginners are “stuck” and have little hope of moving away from mediocrity. He wrote that “few indeed are those who have more than one bitch and, more often than not, that one not such a specimen as a knowledgeable fancier of the breed would

select as a foundation brood matron.”<sup>4</sup> They are stuck with the stock they have and therefore are determined to make use of it. The reasons for breeding from such mediocre stock may be the result of affection for the bitch, insufficient financial ability to purchase something better, the lack of knowledge to be aware of what constitutes a good GSD, and the inability to set a vision in regard to developing a breeding program or planned breeding. Brackett advocated beginning with something much better than an ordinary, run-of-the-mill specimen.

## **#7 Know faults for correction through physical compensation**

*“...we must center our attention on several faults in type or structure possessed by this bitch, so we can go about breeding her for correction and over-all improvement.”<sup>5</sup>*

“Paper breeding”, as Brackett called it, alone can be very dangerous. Start with the pedigree as you consider linebreeding, but avoid if both the bitch and the prospective stud dog carry a common fault - or if a weakness or fault is observed in the bitch. Then be sure that the stud dog and his ancestors do not carry that same fault. Carmen Battaglia stresses that “it is safe in study of pedigrees to assume that the recurrence of certain traits for more than four generations is genetically stable and not likely to be easily lost.”<sup>6</sup> In other words, if you’ve seen a trait for four generations, it won’t be easy to get rid of.

*“We must also try to find one who not only possesses these correct attributes himself but comes from dogs who had them.”<sup>7</sup>*

If possible, the sire should further be prepotent in the attributes in which the bitch is weakest.

*“If we DO know that either the sire or dam, or any others amongst her ancestors, did have one or more faults mentioned, then we most certainly do not want that dog or dogs in the pedigree of the mate we select for her – if we can possibly avoid it. Should such be unavoidable, then that animal should be so far back in the pedigree as to make its influence negligible.”<sup>8</sup>*

It is critical to properly undertake an evaluation, particularly of the breeding pair and their sire and dam and their littermates, if at all possible. Above all, know the genotype traits of both the bitches and potential studs back a minimal of three generations.

## **#8 Use Only Outstanding Studs!**

*“We should also select a stud who is preferably inbred, or at least quite strongly linebred, so that the strength such breeding gives to his prepotency will most likely insure his dominance in the mating pair.”<sup>9</sup>*

Brackett says this, knowing that an inbred or strongly linebred male’s virtues and faults will be overt – clearly seen in the dog and his progeny. Remember that perhaps the greatest advantage of family breeding is simply to get predictable results. If the selection has been good, the “pulls” are all in the same direction. As stated in the foundational principle #4 (Linebred/Inbred wisely), a breeder should be able to move from hoping for a good result to having the power of the hereditary influence pull these factors into a favorable direction. Therefore, using an inbred or strongly linebred stud dog should ensure some degree of prepotency. Of course, you as the breeder, must know the dominant virtues of the stud you select.

*“...in selecting a mate for a faulty bitch whose wide-open pedigree offers no individual in it free of her faults, and dominant in correcting them, one must select as her mate a dog not only himself CORRECT where she is failing, but through some intensity of corrective blood is dominant.”<sup>10</sup>*

Decisions must be based on carefully collected information. Obviously this data must be objective, measurable (and not given to hearsay and rumor), and factual. Selection of studs must be based upon the excellence of both the phenotype and genotype and the proper match and compensation with the bitch.

### **What is an outstanding stud?**

1. Dogs without phenotype faults? These are faults which can be seen with the eye – obvious faults.
2. Dogs without genotype faults? These are faults which cannot be seen with the eye. However, these faults are nonetheless possessed by the dog and can be passed on genetically to the dog's progeny. Discovering genotype faults can only be accomplished by knowing the virtues and faults of the ancestors through at least three generations, preferably more.
3. Dogs that have a proven track record for producing very good (fault free) progeny.
4. Dogs that possess proper temperament. An outstanding stud will be dominant in producing proper temperament for several generations. "Any dog which is not mentally sound should not be used as a breeder," Brackett said.<sup>11</sup>
5. Dogs that possess compensating factors when you consider and measure the bitch against the stud.

When Brackett selected his foundation stock, he chose three males as foundation stones that had overall type, noble appearance, iron backs, properly angulated fore-assemblies, excellent rear angulation and good pigmentation.

### **#9 Always select the best bitch puppies!**

*"As soon as the litter is sufficiently grown so enough can be told about them to make a fairly safe selection (and this varies amongst different breeds), we try to pick the best bitch puppy. Let us presume that we find one resembling her sire more than the dam, as we have planned and hoped for."<sup>12</sup>*

Hopefully that bitch puppy resembles her outstanding sire more than the dam. If she resembles the bitch that has weaknesses, when she has puppies, she may pass on those similar weaknesses to her offspring.

Limit your interest in keeping male puppies. They take up space, time and resources. You can always breed to the outstanding studs outside your kennel. Mediocre males are just as expensive to keep and maintain as outstanding males. In fact, one could argue that they are more expensive since the mediocre male will generate little or no income to the kennel through stud fees.

It should further be mentioned that Brackett encouraged "culling relentlessly" the average, ordinary bitches in a kennel as the more correct structure appears in others in your program. Culling simply means to remove the average, ordinary bitch from one's kennel by selling her or placing her into a good, nurturing pet/companion home.

It is best to keep two bitch puppies (if they are close in structure, temperament and movement) until the breeder can be certain that the pick bitch puppy has matured properly with good ears, full dentition, etc.

### **#10 Breed back to your "Toppers"**

*"I try to point out a procedure by which a beginner breeder might, most quickly and surely, improve the 'mean' or average quality of his production – and indeed, within a few years, bring forth, and quite consistently, some 'toppers.'"*<sup>13</sup>

*"Given a foundation bitch who herself is of superior quality as compared to the average of her breed, and who has a pedigree in which some top-quality dogs appear one or more times, the procedure recommended herein, of course, would have been different. Advice would have been given to breed back on one or more of those 'toppers.'"*<sup>14</sup>

Brackett utilized the terminology of "toppers." In Planned Breeding, he does not define in any detail the usage of "toppers." However, based on the context of the above paragraphs, the intended meaning is obvious. Also note that the use of the term "toppers" seems to have become non-existent.

Brackett seemed to be stating that "toppers" are superior specimens in the breed, possessing all the attributes of a show dog, along with a great genetic background. A "topper," then, would also produce great specimens and would have a family of good specimens behind it.

Mr. German Shepherd also advocated breeding back on one or more of your own "toppers." He said ". . . we must remember that inbreeding and linebreeding serve to accentuate not only the GOOD but the BAD points and, again, that when such breeding is used, STRICT SELECTION must be made."<sup>15</sup> In addition, **he vehemently warned against breeding the best to the best without regard to bloodlines. Furthermore, he seemed to reluctantly agree to out-crossing, emphatically stating that out-crossing should be used only for definite purposes.**

## Conclusion

Where are we now? Are these ten foundational principles passé or still of value? What are the principles upon which you are building your kennel? How do your principles meld together with Brackett's?

From time to time, I have heard criticism of Brackett's system of planned breeding. As I have read and reread Brackett's writing, I am impressed of his very deliberate openness to his system. He has shared indiscriminately about his successes (and he did not seem to hesitate to share his achievements) and about his failures. I have been amazed that he was so transparent about the shortcoming of his system. He was a rather rare individual in this regard. **Today so many breeders hide the problems that become evident through their breedings. Brackett wrote about them, shared them with others and refined his system as he observed, gathered data, and allowed his mistakes to inform his future practices.**

Some interesting points:

As I research pedigrees of the Grand Victors and Grand Victrices from the past five years (2003 to 2007), they all have a common characteristic; there is a Longworth dog in their pedigree. Brackett himself bred 1950 GVx CH Yola of Longworth, and 1951 GV CH Jory of Edgetowne was sired by Brackett's CH Vol of Longworth. The Dual (1966 and 1968) GV CH Yocalla's Mike was linebred (5-4) on 1951 GV CH Jory of Edgetowne. I encourage you to do thorough research of the pedigrees on your German Shepherds. You may have to go back eight to ten or more generations, but there is a good chance you will find a Longworth dog there.

Finally, below are some comments from several other writers about Brackett's contributions to the development of the German Shepherd Dog specifically and, of course, to the breeding of canines in general.

**Gordon Garret:**

*"A sorting through years of German Shepherd Dog Reviews leaves little doubt as to the tremendous impact this one man made on the German Shepherds in North America. He is one person, who should be given recognition for keeping the breed going through the rough times. There were others, but Lloyd Brackett was really the one to point the way. It was in the '30s that he found the golden ring. From all indications, it would appear that he was a perpetual student, always studying how others had been successful. He learned to be flexible but with very definite principles as to the right way to breed dogs. He had it all figured out. He spelled it out in his articles, and later generations found a lot of truth in what he had said. He philosophically endured the unbelievers that scorned him. Then he added more fuel by bragging of his successes."*<sup>16</sup>

#### **Fred Lanting:**

*"Another famous program of the 1940s was the Long-Worth line of Lloyd Brackett. . . Lloyd emphasized linebreeding, while Grant Mann's Liebestraum kennel was based more on a type-to-type philosophy which maintained genetic diversity, better yet, was just as successful in turning out great numbers of great dogs.*

*"Long-Worth dogs did a lot of winning and producing in the late 1940s and 1950s, and their genealogical branches intertwined with those of Browvale, Edgetowne, Dorwald, and Rock Reach. Many of the LongWorth dogs were richly-pigmented with much of their coloration coming down thorough Pfeffer . . . By the 1950s and early 1960s, many experienced dog watchers could guess at the LongWorth background by simply looking at a dog's markings and build."*<sup>17</sup>

#### **Carmen Battaglia:**

*"Brackett understood the value of using quality dogs that were related to each other. This approach allowed him to concentrate the genes needed to produce desired traits. His techniques for reducing error and improving quality focused on the careful selection of breeding partners. . . Brackett became famous for breeding quality dogs with consistent type. His strategy relied on a series of breedings using relatives. Often times he was quoted as saying, 'never outcross when things seem to be going well, do it only as an experiment or when some fault or faults cannot be eliminated.' He was careful to study each stud dog and their offspring, eliminating those who did not measure up and those who produced faults. . . Brackett's success helped to make line breeding popular. He demonstrated how to make improvements by retaining a common pool of genes through the use of related dogs."*<sup>18</sup>

Lloyd C. Brackett himself wrote the following in *Popular Dogs* (December 1952); it was also printed in the German Shepherd Dog Club of America Inc. 1973 National Futurity and Maturity Section, Tabulation of Stud Dogs and Brood Bitches (Redbook):

*"While it is undeniable and often observed, that good dogs do come by accident at times, the consistent production of outstanding specimens and the obtaining of multi-champion litters can be had only through knowledge, and a familiarity with various traits possessed by the animals in the pedigrees of the mating pairs. The breeder must also have in his mind's eye a picture of what he wants to produce; the idealized dog as described by the standard of his breed. Through this knowledge of what constitutes both desirable and undesirable physical traits in his dogs, he can do compensator breeding. This mating of dogs with certain shortcomings to dogs which themselves as well as their ancestors are strong in the characteristics desired, is even of more importance than dependence upon pedigrees alone. Physical compensation is the foundation rock upon which all enduring worth must be built."*<sup>19</sup>

German Shepherd fanciers and breeders owe more to Lloyd Brackett than we realize. I might suggest that there may not be a single individual, at least in this country, to whom we owe more. Lloyd Brackett. Well-deserving of the affectionate title, "Mr. German Shepherd."

<sup>1</sup> Brackett, Lloyd C. *Planned Breeding*. Westchester, IL: Dog World Magazine, 1961, page 20.

<sup>2</sup> Blamire, Professor John. Accessed from: <http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/bc/ahp/BiolInfo/GP/Definition.html> on July 16, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Brackett, page 28.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., page 29.

<sup>6</sup> Battaglia, Carmelo L. *Breeding Better Dogs.*, Atlanta, GA: Susan hunter Publishing Co., 1986, page 43.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., page 29.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., page 29.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., page 29.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., page 30.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., page 6.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., page 30.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., page 28.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., page 31.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., page 31.

<sup>16</sup> Gordon Garret. *History of the German Shepherd Dog.* Accessed from: <http://www.grunfeldshepherds.com/articles/garrett/Gordon%20Garrett%20History%20of%20the%20German%20Shepherd%20Dog-CHAPTER%2012%20BRACKETT%20AND%20MANN.pdf> on July 12, 2008.

<sup>17</sup> Lanting, Fred. *The Total German Shepherd Dog.* Wheat Ridge, CO: Hoflin Publishing, 1999, pages 26 – 27.

<sup>18</sup> Carmen L. Battaglia, *Brackett's Formula.* Accessed from : <http://www.breedingbetterdogs.com/bracket.html> , on July 21, 2008.

<sup>19</sup> Lloyd Bracket, *Breeding, An Art.* GSDCA Redbook, 1973, page 130.