



[Back to Article Page](#) \_\_\_\_\_ [Print This Article](#)

The Gap Widens  
by Fred Lanting (Nov.2006)

In the German Shepherd Dog world, and echoed elsewhere, we have long heard (and voiced) complaints about the schism that exists between the "show" (Hochzuchtlinie or high-breeding) lines and the "sport" or working-competition (Leistungs) lines. I'll speak to the issue of the non-standard (AKC, Alsatian) styles elsewhere, but first I intend to discuss the continued and even widening gap in the international type. Here, I will allude a little more to the history of the breed. You might consider this "Part Two", with an illustrated companion article (though not actually designated "Part One") having been made available under the title, "Will the True Working Dog Disappear?"

The vision of Max von Stephanitz, which even today is cherished by many of us who love the breed, was to standardize, to "fix Type" in, the many variations of the shepherd's dog he found all over Germany and many adjoining lands. Some were shaggy, others were short-coated. Some were scrawny, some high in the rear, some had ears that did always stand up. But all that he incorporated into the new "breed" association in 1899 had jobs they worked in.

Besides the flock tending, which was becoming less needed in the age of industrialization and migration to the cities, dogs with these talents and type were finding other occupations. Captain von Stephanitz saw, selected, and developed the abilities that soon made his German Shepherd Dog the preferred breed for police and military service. Before long, its combination of sensitivity and need for nearly-constant human contact, plus its size, made it ideal for the newly-recognized occupation of guide dog for blind people. It was still a dog with "working papers".

Between the two big wars, the pastime of exhibition and competition grew, designed to select the dogs that looked like they were best qualified to produce the next generation. Coat length and colors, body size and proportions, ear and tail carriage: all these were added to the evaluation of character and some evidence of utility. Conformation competition classes were categorized by age, with any dog over two years old being required to have a suitable training title in order to compete in the "beauty" shows. These titles included the HGH herding certificate and the newer Schutzhund (protection) title. Other, less-encountered service designations were retained for a while.

After WW-2, with the breed in Germany decimated as a result of personal dogs having been commandeered by the military, and most of them killed in action or having disappeared when the concentration camps were found and dismantled, the breed and sport had to start all over with a limited gene pool. Conformation shows were only suspended during a few of the war years. Still, despite different zones of Germany being assigned to the major allies, and many GSD's becoming prisoners of Communism behind an iron curtain, there was still the oneness of the breed, with one conformation standard and set of requirements for proof of working ability.

This united, single-breed status continued for another couple of decades. In Eastern Europe, because of the Soviet Union's cancellation of such freedoms as communication, dogs on "their side" stopped sharing and exchanging genetic material with their western counterparts. Therefore, we who were around then and for many years later could see the result of this isolation. We could spot, at a glance, the rust-red Czech dog, the bicolor or black East German dog, and the wiry sables from many parts of these imprisoned lands. But in western Germany and in all the countries of the free world that got dogs from there, the GSD looked pretty much the same. Even in North America, where no proof of working ability

was or is needed, the international type and styles were honored until the late 1960s.

There are two main annual, national competition events in Germany that are of the greatest interest to people around the world, and I have led tour groups to both. One is variously called the Sieger Show or Bundessiegerzuchtschau (BSZS), and the other is the Bundessiegerprüfung (BSP). The former, held around the first of September, is supposed to select and rank those dogs that conform anatomically, and the latter is to rank those that perform all the schutzhund exercises (tracking, obedience, and protection). The BSP is generally held two weeks after the conformation event, in a different part of Germany. The BSZS is open to all qualified dogs regardless of country of birth or residence, but the practical fact is that if a dog has not been competing in Germany's local and regional shows during the spring and summer under the judge who will see them at the Sieger Show, and if it has not been placing highly there, it will not get an elevated placing at the big show in the autumn. The BSP is open only to dogs resident in Germany.

At the Sieger Show, there is a qualification performance for adult dogs on the first of the three days. It is commonly referred to as "the courage test" and involves two short excerpts from the SchH-1 (IP-1) exercise. In the first one, the handler and dog walk at heel toward a blind from which an attacker jumps out and threatens them. In the second, the dog is sent from the far end of the field to intercept the "bad guy". In each case, the trespasser is charging at them, waving a stick as his weapon. The dog must confidently and firmly hit the intruder, and bite steadily with (hopefully) a full-mouth grip. The dog must not "shy" at any time or let go during the struggle.

In each case, after the "out", the dog must guard the motionless "bad guy" until picked up by the handler. An evaluation of *Ausgeprägt* (pronounced) enables a dog to be presented for the conformation judging, which for that dog begins a few minutes after leaving the courage test field. An evaluation of *Vorhanden* (sufficient" means the dog barely passed but with a relatively poor level of courage and fighting drive (TSB). Such a dog can still get an SG (Very Good) rating at most, but is ineligible for the V (excellent) rating, or the VA, which is what the top few qualifiers get. Adult females go through the same process, but since males produce up to ten times as many offspring a year, they are the ones most studied at the show by breeders and potential puppy buyers. The dogs that completely fail to engage, stay on the sleeve, and act protective and brave are sent home or to the kennel box — hopefully in the shade.

Now, here's the rub. The judge who decides which dogs get the VA and high-V placings (and therefore will contribute most to the Hochzuchtlinie gene pool) does not get to see the actual performance in the courage test. In fact, he doesn't even get a report on how well or how marginally the *Ausgeprägt* dogs really did. Many do not deserve a pronounced rating, although the 2006 courage test judge for males did a tougher, better job than average. So, how can the breed judge know what the character, as tested in the qualifying ring, is really like? He cannot. About the only thing he can use as a tiny part of his judgment, is the knowledge of whether the dog passed in the previous year.

In 2006, the Sieger was a dog that had failed the courage test at a prior BSZS, and at least half of his adult offspring did very unconvincing jobs in their own bitework. The vice-sieger was this dog's father, who has not proven to be much better in either his own work or in producing brave dogs. Von Stephanitz must be turning over in his grave! In third place, a dog that perhaps should take their place next year, unless the Chinese snap him up as they are doing with so many dogs, is Orbit Huhnegrab. He, himself, did a good job on Friday, but had not a single offspring entered that was over two years old. A progeny class of untested dogs, no matter how good they look in stance or gait, should not be used to make a dog the Sieger. In the next several dogs in the VA group, problems with hip ratings, bitework, and other less-than-exciting qualities, made me yearn for the method used in the years of 1938, `41, `42, `74, `75, `76, and `77, when there was no Sieger named and the VA dogs were not ranked in order. I was so disappointed with the "Friday fiasco" lack of courage and preparation, and poor proof of progeny in the 2006 show, that I would not have awarded any VA's at all.

I had a dream about a week after the 2006 BSZS, in which I was the judge doing the adult males conformation. Not only did I have the authority, but I also was in charge of organizing the show, and formulating official SV policy. I scheduled the courage test for males to begin on Thursday, and instructed

the Leistungsrichter (courage test judge) to be as tough and demanding as he would be if he were doing it at the BSP. Instead of sequestering myself in a distant ring and only trying to see which dogs were prettier than which, I took private notes from my viewpoint, which was standing right next to the Leistungsrichter.

Later that night, he and I reviewed those notes and watched the video clips of those dogs that were in the running based on their show placings in previous months and years. We also looked at the films of dogs not usually shown: the "working lines" dogs, many of whom were hoping to compete for the Universal Sieger award, which is heavily weighted on BSP and other trial scores, but influenced by how high a V rating they get in the beauty shows.

In my nocturnal fantasy, I had the backing and encouragement of the Leistungsrichter when I moved certain great-working dogs up in the standings from where they would otherwise be if evaluated only on anatomy. Since the judges in charge of the adult bitch tests and show were in the meeting, too, I persuaded them to look at the bitches in the same light. Having seen several of the females work, I helped formulate those eventual placings, too. I decided to input data on Zuchtwert and "a"-stamp grades into the "calculations" — on a subjective basis, not a mathematical point system. The SV "a"-stamp has improved hip quality in the breed only up to a certain low plateau, and there must now be greater restrictions on what sort of hips and elbows we judges promote with our show placings.

As Chief Breed Warden, I was also formulating suggestions to improve the Zuchtwert system by including PennHIP data. This is the system, now widely used in Denmark, and increasingly in Belgium and Holland, that gives much better diagnosis because of much greater accuracy in determining joint laxity, and a better handle on heritability and progeny prediction. I also directed the responsible parties to work out an arrangement whereby non-German registered dogs could have their radiographs and allied data put into the SV system and database, so that "foreign" dogs did not have to start with 100 for their ZW value.

As an example of the present design not allowing sufficient information, the bitch from the Netherlands, Yasmin v. Nieuwlandshof, SchH3, (Erik Ehrenfeste ex Yelena di Fossombrone); linebreeding: 5-5 Enzo Burg Aliso) was outstanding in both anatomy and TSB. The ZW hip rating on this lovely granddaughter of Timo Berrekasten was 88, but it might have been even better had she not come from Holland and her dam from Italy. One of the bitches in my dream was "Space Geanie", who in the real-life 2006 show got the only SG in the adult class, was instead advanced to a very respectable V rating in my dream. She gave one of the most exciting, positive, and pleasing performances of the day at Oberhausen. Excellence is more than croup angle and upper-arm length and layback.

Another that was very enthusiastic and practiced was Shalome vom Oasis, and I recommended to my fellow judge that he seriously consider her for Siegerin. Of course, outside of a dream, that would be looked upon as crude interference, but in my imagination-discourse, I was only doing what Captain Max would have done. Shalome had been consistent in both bitework and gaiting in the past as well as on this day. Other bitches that did well in both were VA 8 Oduscha Team Fiemereck, and of course Lothar Quoll's beautiful VA1 Xara Agilolfinger.

My dreamland consultants and I returned to the subject of the males. They agreed with me that we should give much better placings than would otherwise be based on simply gait and stance, in such cases as the otherwise-V-132 Nando vom Haus Vortkamp. This male was breathtaking in his speed, precision, and enjoyment of being "macho-man" in the protection role.

The next day, when I had to build the preliminary order of highest-V down to the few SG dogs, I relied a great deal on the comments of my fellow judges, and the notes I took on the video review and during the protection work itself. The protection judge and my assistant who had done the statistical study were with me when I evaluated the structure, movement, and show history of the dogs in the past 18 months. All this was added to information on how many offspring had done poorly, how many were good, and how many were excellent in anatomy and/or work, especially in the previous day's TSB. The percentage of progeny that passed the courage test, as well as the ratio of Ausgeprägt to Vorhanden, were part of the picture I based my rankings on.

After the decision on what placing each dog was given, all the Leistungsrichter (working trial judges) at the show came up and congratulated me on the primary emphasis I put on character. I reminded them that I was born the year von Stephanitz died, and ever since I became a show judge, I felt that I inherited his mantle, the way Elisha was chosen to continue the work of Elijah. I told the gathering that it was up to both groups to bring the German Shepherd Dog back to the center, where character, working ability, and usefulness to individuals and society are as important as such aesthetic qualities as good pigment, long croups, strong but normal toplines, good front angulation, proper dentition, and excellence in orthopedic matters.

But alas! Dreams soon are left to wither and fade on the pillow when the sun rises and pierces them with its burning rays. And the dream I was in, about being the Chief Zuchtrichter at the Sieger Show, was no exception. I woke to stark reality.

Instead of foreseeing the "total" German Shepherd Dog, it seems likely I will not live to see a single breed re-created from the two branches that now exist. It's possible, but nothing to bet the farm on. As long as the breed judges (especially the ones choosing the top males) are isolated from even knowing how good or how marginal the TSB performances are, they will continue to choose on the basis of appearances (beauty) alone. They might as well stay home and judge from snapshots and video clips.

On the other hand, as long as BSP competitors and breeders ignore the cigar-shaped torso, the vertical front, the steep pelvis, and other problems, the gap will not be closed from their side, either. If breeders rely only on numbers — such as Schutzhund/IPO scores — they are also doing an injustice to the breed.

If show dogs need a SchH or IP or HGH title in order to gain recognition in the conformation ring, then "working-line dogs" should be required to have a V rating in the Zuchtschau or perhaps a Landesgruppe show, and a Körklasse-1a in order to rank in the top-ten BSP spots, or in the annual WUSV working trials.

The gap, the "great divide", was not a creation or intention of von Stephanitz and his colleagues. Nor should it be continued by the SV and WUSV any longer. It was our (breeders, exhibitors, judges) creation, especially since the end of the 1960s, and we should be responsible for filling in that gap, for making the German Shepherd Dog one breed again.



2006 Sieger  
Zamp Thermodos



Idol Holtkamper hof



Odin Holtkamper hof



Quantum Fiemereck



Quenn v Loher Weg



Shalome V Basis



Yasmin v Neuwlandshof



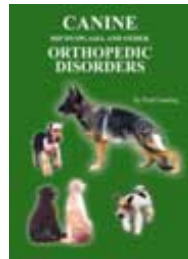
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Fred Lanting is an internationally respected show judge, approved by many registries as an all-breed judge, has judged numerous countries' Sieger Shows and Landesgruppen events, and has many years experience with SV. He presents seminars and consults worldwide on such topics as Gait-&Structure, HD and Other Orthopedic Disorders, Anatomy, Training Techniques, and The GSD. He conducts annual non-profit sightseeing tours of Europe, centered on the Sieger Show (biggest breed show in the world) and BSP. Check out his website: [www.MrGSD.com](http://www.MrGSD.com)



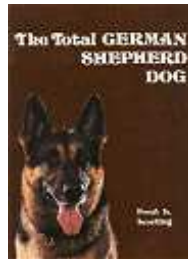
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**Canine HD and Other Orthopedic Disorders by Fred Lanting.**



It covers all joints plus many bone disorders and includes genetics, diagnostic methods, treatment options, and the role that environment plays. This new Hip Dysplasia and Other Canine Orthopedic Disorders\' book is a comprehensive (nearly 600 pages!), amply illustrated, annotated, monumental work that is suitable as a coffee-table book, reference work for breeders and vets, and a study adjunct for veterinary students, for the dog trainer and the general dog owner of any breed.

### **The Total German Shepherd Dog by Fred Lanting**



This is the expanded and enlarged second edition, a "must" for every true GSD lover. It is an excellent alternative to the "genetic history" by Willis, but less technical and therefore suitable for the novice, yet very detailed to be indispensable for the reputable GSD breeder. Chapters include: History and Origins, Modern Bloodlines, The Standard, Anatomy, The German Shepherd in Motion, Shows, Showing, and Training, The Winners, Nutrition and Feeding, General Care and Information, Health and First Aid, Parasites and Immunity, Diseases and Disorders, The Geriatric German Shepherd, Breeding, Basics of Genetics, Reproduction, Whelping, The First Three Weeks, Four to Twelve Weeks, Trouble-shooting Guide

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