

Manfred Lerner - A Real Dog Man

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Ginni von Bayern with Manfred Lerner

I have a close friend whose greatest compliment - which he very infrequently bestows on anyone - is the appellation "a real dog man."

Over several years, I have come to understand that this endearing term means someone who loves dogs, working dogs, whatever kinds of dogs - regardless of breed or age. Someone who thinks, and more importantly, feels dogs, and has dogs in their blood. Whose idea of fun is training rain or shine, with the worst dog in the group, or the best. Who can be objective about his dogs, but remains deeply respectful to the innate wonder of each dog. Someone who gets tears in their eyes when they talk about the "greats" of yesteryear, not about the handlers, but about dogs - and not even their own. This term "a real dog man" most accurately describes Manfred Lerner of "v. Bayern" Dobermann Kennels.

Of all the photos that I have from my last trip to Germany, there is one that I wish

I'd taken - for it would illustrate the essence of this man. But then again, maybe it was better that I was distracted from reaching for the camera. Some things you are meant to hold in your mind and in your heart, not on paper. I was busy watching Manfred: grinning and holding his newest puppy "Granit" with a look of loving pride and excitement, that made everyone forget that he's been at this dog game for well over 30 years.

Throughout Manfred's clubhouse are photographs of his and other people's long dead Dobermanns, his old SchH3 Am Staff bitch, and a particularly interesting Boxer/Giant Schnauzer cross. "Sammy" is dressed in German Police uniform; complete with cap-- he stands as yet another example of Manfred's lifetime devotion to dogs. A mongrel pup who was due to be put down, Manfred saved "Sammy," trained him, and later placed him with the police in a neighboring town. Manfred beams when he tells of "Sammy's" narcotics suitability test, and how he destroyed a cabinet to get to his drug toy. He is also now a certified cadaver dog. "Sammy" still comes to visit, and by all accounts, goes crazy with excitement when he sees Manfred. Not surprising. I didn't find a dog there, including mine, who didn't think Manfred was possibly the neatest person they had laid eyes on for a long time.....

PART I: Manfred Lerner's Background in Dog Training & Dobermanns

DSM: At what age did you first own a dog?

LERNER: My father was a hunter and worked already with dogs. So, I grew up with dogs and dog training. My first dog was a German Shepherd called "Daga von der Hermansheide." I was just 13 years old and already very interested in training for Schutzhund.



Cliff v. Kirchbühl with Manfred Lerner

DSM: When did you become a helper?

LERNER: In 1968, I became a member of the German Shepherd Club (SV), which was already associated with the VDH (Verband für das Deutsche Hundewesen). Very soon, I began my work as a helper which I have been able to perform for many years now.

DSM: I understand that you are Chief of Protection Dogs for the German Air Force Base at Landsberg/Lech. Do you also train dogs to detect drugs and/or explosives?

LERNER: I have done dog training for the German Air Force since 1977. We also train dogs to detect explosives. Two of our detection dogs are actually working in Bosnia. Dog training to detect drugs is a task of the German Police, not of the army. However, the army is thinking about using drug detection dogs.

DSM: What breeds have you trained for the Air Force?

LERNER: The trained breeds are German Shepherds, Malinois, Bouviers, Dobermanns, Riesenschnauzer [Giant Schnauzer] and Rottweiler. During 21 years now, I have the experience of training approximately 600 dogs.

DSM: Which breeds do you consider the most suitable for police service work?

LERNER: Considering the great number of dogs which have passed through my hands, I can tell that you cannot compare the capabilities of dogs by their breed. But the dog which I personally consider as the most unusable for military and police is the German Shepherd. This is for two reasons: the first reason is the numerous health problems such as HD (hip dysplasia) and problems in Bewegungsapparat. [Note: This is not easily translated into one English word. Manfred is explaining that the inherent gait mechanics-- the harmony between front and rear legs, spine, shoulders, and pelvis-- are problematic due to underlying musculo-skeletal afflictions]. The second reason is the good-naturedness reached by breeding with very calm dogs.

DSM: When did you get your first Dobermann?

LERNER: I got my first Dobermann in the year 1973, a female called "Dona von Fürstenfeld." I trained her at the German Shepherd Club (SV). One day, two Americans saw me working, and watched Dona doing her bite work. They came here to buy German Shepherds, but finally they bought my Dobermann Dona and took her to the United States. After that, I had to leave the German Shepherd Club. Dona had a very suitable working character. She was natural, self-assured and insensitive to noise. She had good obedience and did good, hard bite work. She was not so tall. She was 66 cm

high and her structure was elegant. She had a very dark face.

DSM: Why did you "switch" from working with the German Shepherd to the Dobermann?

LERNER: Well, I had had enough of trying to succeed with German Shepherds. I could not reach my goals with these too gentle dogs, who always had health problems in the spinal column and HD. Then, I met the Dobermann, which I liked very much. So, I got Dona. I think that we cannot compare the German Shepherd to the Dobermann. These two kinds of dogs have been bred for a long time to fulfill different tasks. The German Shepherd originally was a guardian of sheep, as his name says. His character is completely different. The Dobermann has been bred in the past, to be an aggressive dog to make people afraid of the person who leads that dog. To compare these two breeds is like comparing a tractor to a Porsche. Both of them have their reason to be how they are.

DSM: Could you tell me about the character of the Dobermann 20-30 years ago? Has it improved?

LERNER: In former times, the Dobermann was nervous and very impressed by any kind of noise or unexpected action. By special breeding which focuses on utility value, a stable character for any kind of use has been obtained. This is the only type of character which is valid for working dogs.

DSM: Could you tell me about the body structure of the Dobermann 20-30 years ago? Has it improved?

LERNER: The structure of the Dobermann has been improved in the domain of Bewegungsablauf [gait execution & coordination] and HD. In some blood lines the structure of the head became worse - stark abfallende, obere Kopflinie [downfaced]. There have been increased cases of death by heart disease and gastric torsion.

DSM: What do you consider the Dobermann's best qualities are as a working dog?

LERNER: Their very pronounced drive to play and to get the Beute [prey].

DSM: What character trait would you choose to improve on in the whole breed?

LERNER: Generally, the Dobermann lacks in adaptability and in courage.

DSM: When you speak of the Dobermann's lack of adaptability, what exactly do you mean?

LERNER: The adaptability has to be seen in the connection to being unscared, which depends on the nerve. Some Dobermanns are very sensitive to a new situation, which they haven't before "rehearsed" how to act. It is impossible to make them deal with new situations, because in any situation, something different will happen. This is when the dog shows you his nerve. For many dogs, it is a problem to remain stable.



Ginni v. Bayern

DSM: How do you rate the Dobermann in intelligence?

LERNER: Regarding intelligence, better [or] instinct, I would like to say that the Dobermann is one of the most intelligent breeds. He is always watching his environment, and checking the atmosphere out, deciding whether everything is okay. They give you the impression that they understand every word you say, and I can tell you that they do!

DSM: When you speak of the Dobermann's high play behavior, how do you think this affects their workability?

LERNER: For all scent work with dogs, the play behavior is the basis for success. A dog with much play behavior, is generally easier to train. It is the task of the handler to see whether he needs to promote this play behavior, or whether he has to contain it for better control and proper work.

DSM: Do you feel, (as I do), that the Dobermann's beautiful appearance is also a curse - that many people just breed them for their good looks, and don't think of

temperament?

LERNER: Yes, many people who have a nice house, a big car, and many other things to show who they are, are interested in the Dobermann because this breed portrays noble birth and elegance, with their impressive appearance. Most of the breeders today, focus on beauty. You can find many more very big, beautiful Dobes in national and international "beauty shows" than working Dobermanns. It has been proven by statistics that tall Dobermanns with a very large chest cavity can die already at the age of 4 years. My goal as a breeder is first to have a Dobermann with a good, strong character, which at the same time is also a beautiful dog in structure, but without sacrificing their health. My oldest Dobermann (from first "E" litter in 1975) died at the age of 14 years. The Dobermanns which I have bred, are reaching an average age of 10 to 11 years old.

DSM: Manfred, how would you say that the German public views the Dobermann?

LERNER: The German public mostly considers the Dobermann a vicious attack dog. Many people buying a Dobermann puppy have had this similar experience. Their friends are petting the pup and saying: "Oh, what a nice little dog baby. What's his breed?" The answer from the proud owner: "It's a Dobermann." Immediately, the friends stop petting the puppy, jump away from it and scream: "What a crazy idea, this dog will eat you one day! Think about your children!" But, this negative image is the fault of the media. If there are bad dogs needed to be in films or TV, it's mostly a Dobermann, or sometimes a Rottweiler.

DSM: How many German Dobie kennels still breed for service ability? (interviewer cringes, expecting a low number.....)

LERNER: Dobermanns are not very often police dogs. But there is a simple arithmetic reason for that: in Germany about 46,000 German Shepherds are bred annually, while only 1,300 Dobermanns. The few useful working Dobermanns are kept by the breeders themselves, for continuing the breed and are therefore, just for personal use. So, it is very normal that you cannot find many Dobermanns with the Police.

DSM: How many Dobermanns do you know personally who are doing police service work, aside from "Kleo v.d. Weyermühle" who is a GSV-Hund (Scent Comparison Dog who IDs criminals) for Nordrhein?

LERNER: I know of about 7 Dobes working as police service dogs. Most of the owners of these dogs are police officers who are very attached to our breed. Using a Dobermann for service is publicity for the breed. But the very good service dogs with Geltungstrieb are mostly difficult to be integrated into the family. [Note: Geltungstrieb

means to have aspirations for rank and standing. Dominance is an aspect of this, but is not a complete translation for the word either. The term denotes a dog who wants to be considered important, who seeks "personal prestige," and never wants to "lose face."]

DSM: Some dog trainers say that the Dobermann generally lacks courage, and would flee when confronted. What do you think about this statement?

LERNER: Flight behavior is a very natural reaction of any animal which helps him to survive. The flight behavior is strongly connected to the survival instinct. In difficult/unknown situations, only the dogs with very high drive for "personal prestige" will stay to attack in any case, no matter which breed they are. There is one exception: the Deutscher Jagdterrier, his flight behavior has disappeared by breeding through human hands. They prefer to die before they will flee. But this is not a natural instinct. [Note: the Deutscher Jagdterrier is the German Hunting Terrier. Developed in Bavaria, they are a medium sized, wire-haired or smooth-haired terrier. They hunt predators, particularly those below the ground. They are well-known for their toughness and absolute savagery.]

DSM: There have been debates in U.S. Dobermann circles about why some Dobes "miss" or don't hang onto the sleeve in the SchH courage test. Do you think that this is simply a lack of courage on the dog's part, or lack of training, or a combination of both?

LERNER: There are many excuses why a dog does not hang onto the sleeve in this test. Some may have had bad experiences which can change the behavior of very sensitive Dobermanns. The Dobermanns that I breed-- you saw some of them-- they are getting more and more angry while running at the helper. This fury drives them to bite and hold the sleeve. It seems as if the bite work is revenge for this long way to run! The bite expression is very different to how the playing dogs bite. For my dogs, it's not play, but they like it very much. When I am training dogs as a helper, I always pay attention that they will not have any bad experience, that they always feel the winner when they leave the "battlefield." I, as a helper have to decide within just a second or less, whether I can put pressure on that dog, at that moment, or not. Good dogs can be broken by a bad helper.

DSM: I have heard it said in Germany that Manfred Lerner has always cared most that his Dobermanns are good biting dogs. Is this a fair statement?

LERNER: For me, the dog which bites is foremost. It is important that he is controllable and obedient. You have always to decide which task your dog has to fulfill. The usable Dobermann can be trained for any task: just for family companion, or as a merciless

protection dog. In my opinion, a good Dobermann is the best companion you may have. Eiko (4th at the '98 Bavarian SchH3 CH) and his mother, Cassi (best bitch with 287V at the '96 German SchH3 CH), are Dobermanns which have been educated for certain tasks. Eiko, Cassi and Elisa (2nd at the '98 Bavarian CH) have been chosen by me and trained for performance sport competitions. My wife's bitch, "Susi" (an Uran v. Bayern granddaughter) is a dog chosen and trained by me for extreme civil protection work. She is a calm dog who shows outstanding, strong bitework under enormous pressure, which hardly any other dog may be able to do. As I have said, the owner must know which kind of dog he needs. Then, the dog has to be selected, trained and kept in a way that corresponds to that aim.



Elisa von Bayern



Cassi von Bayern



Jano von Bayern



Eiko von Bayern

PART II

(Part two of a three part series, first published in Dog Sport Magazine in the Nov. '98 issue, part two in the Dec. '98 issue, and part three in the Jan. '99 issue.)

The following interview represents part II of my discussion with esteemed German Dobermann breeder, Manfred Lerner of v. Bayern Kennels. It covers the topics of why Manfred began breeding Dobermanns, and some of the dogs who constituted his foundation stock. Included with this article, are some obscure photographs of the famous Yago v. Ellendonk. Manfred has very kindly shared not only his knowledge and expertise, but has also offered for publication, some memorabilia that very few Dobermann fans would ordinarily have access to. This kind of openness and desire to educate others about the breed - this goes for any breed, folks - is the example that must be followed for the continued growth of all our working breeds. Manfred isn't giving up the torch just yet, but, he is more than willing to share the light so that others may find their way.



Yago v. Ellendonk

PART II: The foundation of Manfred Lerner's "v. Bayern" Kennels

DSM: When and why did you decide to begin breeding Dobermanns? You seem to put much emphasis on trainability and work ethic - I am thinking of Eiko, Granit here. Is this something that you started with in your breeding stock, or something that you have worked hard to produce by you personally breeding for this quality?

LERNER: In 1973, I decided to breed useful Dobermanns, which are strong enough to correspond to daily needs, as well as to their use as military, police or protection dogs. My goal was to produce good biters and hard dogs which are controllable, and which have a clear mind. I started the breeding with very selfish and contrary dogs, and during the years, I am proud of the result to breed now with a strong drive and a high workability.

DSM: Who was your foundation bitch, or bitches?

LERNER: My first bitch was Czilla vom Wehrwinkel, daughter of Robby Rene vom Weinberge. She was the mother of Branko von Bayern. He had a strong severity, a low threshold (Reizschwelle) and a high readiness to aggression. This dog produced many pups with the same character. In 1974, I bought Dixi vom Kirchbühl as a puppy. Her dam was Zira v. Frankenland, who was a calm bitch with excellent structure. In the 1970s, she placed V3 at the Siegerhauptzuchtschau in Mannheim. Her character was

good.

DSM: Who was the breeder of Kirchbühl? I remember a good story....

LERNER: The priest Fritz Fischer was the owner of Kirchbühl Kennel. He was a unique character of a priest. He used to train his own dogs inside the church, running and climbing up into the bell tower. But the Bishop was very angry about that, and imposed a disciplinary transfer on Fischer.

DSM: Dixi was a daughter of the legendary Falk v. Rotbachtal (DZB 80781, WT 9.3.1968, Boss v. Salza, SchH3 x Centa v. Petershügel, SchH3)..... Please tell us about Falk? What did he produce in his pups?

LERNER: Falk was a very hard dog, who never disappointed in the bite work (Schutzdienst). He always caused problems to the helpers because of his enormous drive for "personal prestige." He was 70 cm. tall and had a large, but spare physical structure. Falk produced different kinds of pups in character and structure, always depending on the different bitches he was bred to. It was a striking thing though, that nearly all his pups showed good, hard bite work.



Kassandra v. Bayern

DSM: I have heard that Falk worked as the guard dog of a junk yard, and that his owner took him to the Körung (LR: O. Vogel) where Falk's "abilities" were discovered. When did you first meet Falk? Did you work him as a helper ever?

LERNER: I discovered Falk in 1974 at the German SchH3 Championship. There, I had the opportunity to test Falk's bite work. He was a hard biter by his drive to defend

(Wehrtrieb). Falk was one of the hardest and geltungstriebllichsten [personal prestige seeking, egotistical] Dobermanns. Many of his descendants have the same genetic make-up.

DSM: You bred Dixi to Yago v. Ellendonk, SchH1, ANGEKÖRT I (DZB 84475, WT 4.2.1973, Satan v. Ellendonk, SchH2, ANGEKÖRT I x Vesta v. Ellendonk, SchH1) once, after the owner decided not to stud him anymore?

LERNER: Yago v. Ellendonk was a very successful male Dobermann. Envy and resentment came up in Germany concerning this successful dog. I talked and worked together with the owner of Yago, and he realized that our objective was very similar. So, he let me breed Dixi with Yago. Maybe, I am the last one to have bred a bitch to Yago v. Ellendonk.



Yago v. Ellendonk

DSM: Tell us about Yago's pups?

LERNER: His pups were very hard and aggressive. One of them was Enno v. Bayern (Yago x Dixi). He was a very short and compact dog with strong drives, who did his bite work in every situation. He did the ZTP with 1A for character. When Enno was three years old, I sold him to America.

DSM: What breeders/judges have influenced you the most in developing your own breeding ideas?

LERNER: I have been influenced most by Fritz Sauermann, the breeder of the v. Ellendonk kennel. Among the Dobermann judges, the personal attitude of Ottmar Vogel [SV/DV/ADRK Judge] towards the working Dobermann was decisive in developing my program.

DSM: What is your goal as a breeder?

LERNER: My goal is always to select the best character, and most beautiful and healthy working dogs. During the years, a strong, consistent line has been developed - the Bayern kennel. Nowadays, many other breeders are trying to get back to this line.

DSM: Do you have to apply to the DV to do certain breedings that are considered very "inzucht"-- what relations need to get permission?

LERNER: You need permission for very close incest breedings such as mother-son, father-daughter, brother-sister.

DSM: Over the years, you have used some breeding bitches from different kennels such as: Czilla v. Wehrwinkel, Kessy v. Pfaffenberg, SchH3, and currently, Dequina v. H. Weissenberger, SchH3, IPO3 ("Susi"), who is an Uran v. Bayern granddaughter. Tell us about these bitches-- what was/is their specialty in work?

LERNER: Czilla v. Wehrwinkel represented a very robust health together with elegance, toughness and very good fierceness. Kessy v. Pfaffenberg was a bitch who combined a very high workability, with good drives and a very short structure. Dequina v. Haus Weissenberger ("Susi") is a bitch which has been chosen by me, among 13 puppies. She has made her way through all the important working exams. Actually, what I know of her brothers and sisters is that four of them have been put to sleep because they were considered "too aggressive." But of course, this depends on the owner and his ability to handle an animal. Susi is not aggressive in daily life, but she knows what to do if it is necessary. She is stable and able to contain herself. Susi is comfortable wherever she goes, and is nice with children. Also, she is owned by a responsible handler who knows her dog's character well.



Uran v Bayern

DSM: Please tell us what you look for in the character and structure of a brood bitch and a stud dog?

LERNER: The most important criterions are absolute, unconcerned behavior at noisy situations and no fear for any direct and difficult personal contact. The most important fact regarding the structure of a brood bitch or stud dog are a head with parallel nose and forehead lines, strong jaws, a strong, short back as well as perfect and straight legs.

DSM: How can a puppy buyer know if a person is really a "breeder", as opposed to just "reproducing puppies"?

LERNER: Only by very intensive research, by getting in regular touch with the breeder to observe his work and his working results, going to visit the kennel and watching the dogs out of this chosen line.

DSM: What does being a "breeder" mean to you? Do you feel that luck plays any role in a breeding's success?

LERNER: Breeding means to me, the responsibility for the breed. Breeding means to be conscious of what you are doing. Breeding is not to raise the population of a certain animal. For any kind of success, you need a little bit of luck. But the more intelligent work you can combine with this little bit of luck, the more success you have.

DSM: In your opinion, Manfred, what is easier to fix when breeding dogs: temperament flaws or structural flaws?

LERNER: It is easier to fix structural flaws.

DSM: What litter combinations do you consider your greatest successes?

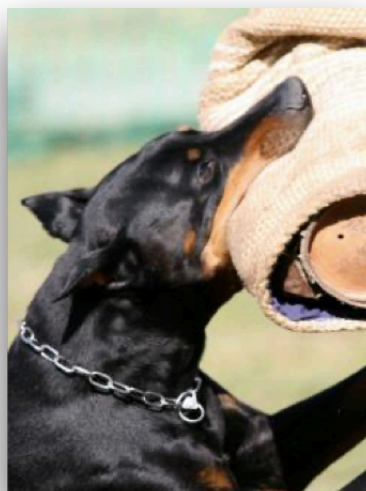
LERNER: During the many years of breeding, I personally consider many of the combinations as very successful. It takes too much time to name all my successful Dobermanns. Just the youngest ones are Cassi, Debby, Elisa (6th at the Deutsche Meisterschaft 1998 in Bonn- Bad Godesberg with 96/97/92), and Eiko. These last dogs represent the combination of Yago v. Bayern bred to Cassi. And, even in beauty DV Jugendsieger 1991: a daughter of Quint v. Bayern (who was the hardest one of them all). Our absolute Dobermann of the future is : Klarissa v. Bayern (daughter of Susi x Anton v. Bayern, SchH2, FH. Anton is full brother to Cassi; Susi's sire was Yago).



Elisa v Bayern



Jaska v Bayern



Jano v Bayern

DSM: Which specific dogs do you consider your greatest successes? Granit, Kassandra, Puck, Cassi, Eiko etc.?

LERNER: As you are writing most correctly, all these dogs: Granit, Quint, Wora, Kassandra, Puck, Cassi, Eiko, Elisa..... are Dobermanns who were/are able to compete with any other dog, of any other breed, in any situation.



Puck v Bayern



Anton v Bayern



Wora v Bayern

DSM: Were there certain dogs that you've bred over the years that did other work -- military, bodyguard-- that you were proud of?

LERNER: I am proud of my dogs - who in many different countries of the world did their job conscientiously, and this was proven. Luzifer stopped three burglars, Fena stopped a car jacker, as well as Kero, who saved the life of his handler against three attackers. The first Granit was involved in military jobs, and was known as a reliable "guy" at the German Air Force.

DSM: I seem to remember that some of your dogs have made newspaper headlines for defending their owners?

LERNER: The dogs such as Kero and Urk just did their job as we would expect - to protect their owner and all their belongings. Dog sport seems only a minor matter in these cases.



Quint v Bayern

DSM: Do you feel that SchH training and trialing is adequate testing for breeding stock, or do you have tests that you feel push the dog, to see more of his real character?

LERNER: The Dobermann breed is very intelligent. You can teach many things to them especially for SchH trials. But, it very often happens that when you provoke situations that the dog did not learn, you can see his real character. This is needed to make breeding decisions.

DSM: At this point, how many litters has v. Bayern had?

LERNER: I have done more than forty litters during many years, with much work. In addition to that, I trained many other dogs of other people.

DSM: Who is your up and coming star? I remember a certain 11 week old male puppy carrying around a SchH3 dumbbell. How is the young Granit doing?

LERNER: Granit is developing to my entire satisfaction, carrying and bringing me bottles of dark Bavarian beer every evening. He is 71 cm. tall now, resembling his mother in character very much. He is destined to be a successful sport Dobermann. He is natural with excellent drives, and is admired by many professional trainers.

Part III

(Part three of a three part series, first published in Dog Sport Magazine in the Nov. '98 issue, part two in the Dec. '98 issue, and part three in the Jan. '99 issue.)

Following is part 3 , the final part to my interview series with Manfred Lerner of v. Bayern Dobermann kennels who has generously shared his time with us. Having trained military patrol dogs for the German Air Force since 1977 (approximately 600 dogs), and having been involved with Dobes for even longer, Manfred is well-situated to offer us a uniquely rich, and personal perspective on his breed of choice, the Dobermann.

Manfred deeply loves dogs and dog training, and is serious about his goals and their realization. But, on the subject of people involved in dogs, and people in general, he takes a lighter tone. Unable to keep silent about the German tail-docking ban - an issue close to his heart - Manfred cannot help but poke fun at the politicians whose hunting dogs can still have their tails docked by law.

I am reminded of a small sign that hangs above his clubhouse door that reads something like: "If every day you work hard to teach your dog to walk on water, and then one day, after much work, he does so, do not be surprised or upset when other people say that he does this, only because he is afraid of being in the water."

Manfred was grinning when he showed me the sign. Certainly the mark of someone who has spent a long time "with the wind at his front", but has never strayed from his dream....



Uran v Bayern



Kiro v Bayern

DSM: How has the ZTP test changed over the years? Do you feel that it is conducted in the manner that Vogel planned for it to be? [Ottmar Vogel is a DV/SV/ADRK Working Judge and acclaimed helper who has titled 9 different breeds to SchH3 countless times. He bred Dobermanns under the kennel name "v. Wilden Markgraf" for many years - in 1983 Hektor v. Wilden Markgraf was DV Meister with 100/97/97. (Incidentally, "Hektor" was trained in Manfred Lerner's SchH club). Vogel has given the Dobermann many gifts over the years: his revamping of the ZTP or "fitness for breeding test"; his establishment of the Körung; his writing of "Zucht und Sport mit dem Dobermann" - the only comprehensive book available on working and breeding the Dobermann; and lastly, the bloodline chart which traces the breed's major producers from 1948-1981. Vogel continues to breed GSDs and Rotties today, and to judge actively throughout the world.]

LERNER: Before 1975, the ZTP was just a judgment about the structure of the Dobermann, plus a test of his protection drive, but without any bitework. Since 1975, the test of the dogs' character became more important. The Dobermann had to convince the judges about his capacities in self-confidence, temperament, workability, courage, obedience, drive and bitework. This "new ZTP" was worked out by Ottmar Vogel. It is his contribution to the improvement of the breed. Since the judges had to focus on the character of the Dobermann, the breed has been improved year by year. [Dobermanns have 2 chances to pass this test, and may attempt it after the age of 14 months old. They must have either a hip score of HD-1 or HD-2, and must have all their dentition. Only blacks and browns are allowed, and failure at 2 ZtP's results in a breeding ban for life in Germany.] The goal of Vogel's Körung, was to point out the top animals in beauty and character of all Dobermanns. But the Körung itself is no

guarantee for the quality of the dogs. [Dogs attending the Körung must have minimum BH, SchH1, AD, ZTP, HD score, at least 2 show ratings of SG or better, under 2 different judges. In previous years, ratings were recorded as Koerklasse I or II. Now, the ratings are: IA for best conformation, best temperament; IB for best conformation, second-best temperament; IIA for second-best conformation, best temperament; IIB for second-best conformation, second-best temperament. The title itself is recorded as "angekoert IA (ZVA) ", for example. The DV continues to designate whether the title has been earned for 2 years, or for life (ZVA). The title has to be reattempted at the end of two years, in order to earn the "for life" designation].

DSM: I have heard that judges now do not feel comfortable passing a dog that acts aggressive on the ZTP tie-out/isolation test, rather than being friendly with the judge. Do you think an aggressive response in this ZTP isolation test should still be allowed, so long as the dog shows readiness to bite confidently, rather than being cowardly and "fear biting."

LERNER: We have to distinguish between pretended aggression, and aggression which comes out of the proper "personal prestige" drive. A responsible judge recognizes whether the dog is aggressive because of his drive, or because of his fear, and he will make the right decision.

DSM: Do you feel that judges take liberties with the dogs in some of these tests - where the dog should not have to tolerate some things judges do? I'm thinking of Quint here.....

LERNER: There are judges who during the ZTP are sometimes moving outside the regulations of the ZTP procedure. In one such case, I had taken a dog to the ZTP who was strong and aggressive. The judge hit the dog hard with his book, and the dog bit him for this. [Interviewer: "ten points for the dog!"] Quint failed the ZTP and was declared unbreedable in Germany because of this. Later, Quint did the Czech Körung with top scores, being one of only a few dogs to pass that day. In 1990, the same judge who declared Quint unbreedable, gave his foreign-bred daughter the title, "DV-Youth- Champion."

DSM: Vogel speaks of how he feels that his interest in GSDs and Rottweilers kept him from "wearing rose-colored Dobermann glasses" Many breeders become completely centered on their breed, and can't see when their dogs are no longer comparing favorably to other working breeds. Do you think that your career in training dogs for the Air Force - and interest in many different breeds - has kept you more focused on what overall good working character is?

LERNER: I have to answer "yes." I am sure that I know much about the character of any dog. I am not just focusing on the Dobermann. I would never say that there is just one dog breed in the world who is good. Many people do though. I like any dog who has the value to be trained. One of the numerous examples is "Sammy", the son of a Riesenschнауzer and a Boxer. I chose this dog, raised and trained him, and then gave him to a Police Officer in Augsburg. He is now a very successful cadaver dog for the Police.

DSM: I understand that you bred American Staff. Terriers. When did you begin working and breeding with Staffs? I remember seeing the photo of your bitch "Amber Rose." Where did you get her from?

LERNER: I have always been interested in dogs with very high drive. So, I was interested in American Staffs. After having searched more than two years, I found Amber Rose in Austria. She was seven weeks old when I brought her home. I raised her and trained her in SchH. At any dog show that I presented her, she was shown free, without leash. She won 22 events, and finally became world youth champion and world champion.

DSM: I understand that there is a breed ban against Am Staffs and/or Pitbulls in Bavaria. When did that come into effect? What motivated this action by the government - were there any incidents of dog bites that caused this, or was it just a political decision made by non-dog people?

LERNER: There is a breed ban against Am Staffs and/or Pitbulls and similar breeds in Bavaria since October, 1992. This law was made because some people who owned such dogs were responsible for very awful incidents (dog killing children and adults seriously hurt). This made the public want a breed-ban and interdiction against owning such dogs.

DSM: Are any other breeds expected to be breed banned - there was talk that the Dobermann was next to be banned in Bavaria?

LERNER: In Bavaria, any dog can be declared a "Kampfhund" (dangerous dog) because of his individual character, in terms of incidents. Every breed is concerned: Dobermanns, GSD's, or a cross- breed.

DSM: What is happening with the law against tail docking in Germany? I heard that certain breed organizations are trying to appeal the decision in court?

LERNER: Since June 1, 1998 it is prohibited to cut tails of any breed. The only exception are the hunting dogs of the politicians! There are no prospects that this law

will be repealed in the future.

DSM: Are some Dobermann breeders still docking tails?

LERNER: Tail docking is prohibited by law now. Those who still do, run the risk of having legal problems.

DSM: Are you ready to have to own a Dobermann with a tail and floppy ears, Manfred?

LERNER: We have Klarissa..... (young daughter of Anton v. Bayern, SchH2, FH x Dequina v. Haus Weissenberger, SchH3, IPO3)



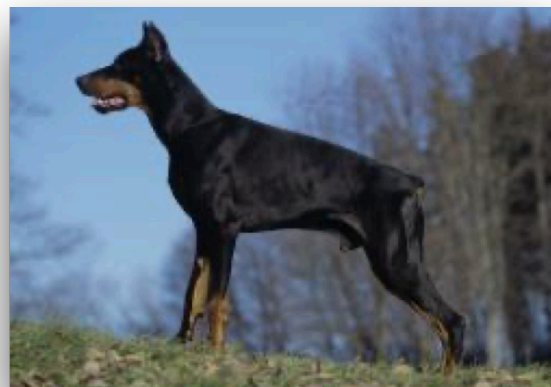
Shakira v Bayern



Shakira v Bayern



Vasko v Bayern



Jano v Bayern

DSM: Are you still planning to retire to Spain? Don't forget to consider California, people speak Spanish here, it's hot, and I promise that you won't "have to wait 19 years for someone to break into your house" (a favorite Manfred witticism).

LERNER: Yes, we still want to leave Germany for a country where the sun is always shining. Spain is our favorite country at this time, or maybe California? We'll think about it.....

DSM: How long do you expect to still keep working dogs, and breeding? They say at your club, that you will probably be a helper even if they have to carry you onto the field!

LERNER: The dogs and the dog training mean very much to me: "A life without dogs is a loss."

DSM: Has the number of working Dobermann breeders declined in the last few years? When do you think that this decline has set in and why?

LERNER: There is a small permanent number of working Dobermann breeders who are trying with more or less success to keep breeding good character. In my opinion, many breeders prefer to breed dogs for the beauty shows because it is just easier. It is much more work to train a dog, and to do trials, and to compete. For the big competitions, a nearly daily training regimen is necessary. Many hours have to be spent training to be successful.

DSM: Do you feel that the Dobermann is generally a healthy breed, or are you seeing more physical problems than in years past?

LERNER: Through my experience of working together with many different breeds over many years, I can say that the Dobermann is not more delicate than any other breed. To the contrary, in consideration of providing the correct and necessary living conditions (especially in winter time), the Dobermann can expect a long and healthy life.

DSM: What about soft temperaments-- more now than before?

LERNER: Yes, there are more "softies" than before, because many breeders are so blindly in love with certain bloodlines (and the appearance of such dogs), that they produce many softies. These breeders do not pay attention to the working value of the Dobermann.

DSM: You have known and worked as a helper, many famous Dobermanns over the years: Cliff v. Kirchbühl (Falk x Xandra), Milo v. Forrellenbächle, Yago v. Ellendonk.....

LERNER: I chose Cliff as a puppy for a friend, and raised and trained him. Milo was a military dog in Lagerlechfeld near Augsburg, at the German Air Force. The dog should have been killed because of the problems he always caused to the soldiers. I preferred to take him home. At that time, he was four years old. This male was really aggressive. Yago was a dog that I respected very much, and was very pleased to use for breeding.



Xaro v. Bayern

DSM: Did you personally know the Sauermanns (v. Ellendonk)?

LERNER: Yes. Herr Sauermann died many years ago now. During WWII, he was responsible for training the military dogs. I respected his breeding and work very much.

DSM: When all is said and done, what do you think your greatest contribution will have been to the breeding of Dobermanns.

LERNER: My biggest contribution, through all these years of breeding working Dobermanns, is that I never gave up my determination about what the breed should be - even though the wind is always coming from the front side!



Kassandra v. Bayern

The End

Epilogue:

In 1998, I travelled to Germany and visited Manfred and Maria Lerner of the v. Bayern Kennels. I also had the opportunity to spend a day with Leistungsrichter Ottmar Vogel, who very kindly made me the gift of his framed original Dobermann bloodlines chart. We discussed the blending of the Weyermühle and Bayern lines and he agreed that it would be a good outcross to try. Unfortunately, I got my bitch Snoopy v.d. Weyermühle too late in her cycle and she had no pups.

Shortly thereafter, I arranged the importation of Janus v. Bayern (a repeat breeding of the E litter) to America. A few months later, I followed that up by importing eight week old Kiro v. Bayern (7/8 brother to the E, I, J combinations). Kiro v. Bayern has recently achieved his SchH2 with excellent scores (96-88-97a), and we plan to incorporate him in our future breedings.

A combination between Janus and Anuschka Germania, SchH1 (Qastra v.d. Weyermühle, SchH3, FH, AD, IPO3 and IDC WM Alfred v.d. Urftquelle, SchH3, angek. ZVA) was made that resulted in the A litter v. Haus Mann. In 2002, Melody Mann

repeated the combination between Janus' brother, Jano v. Bayern, SchH3 and Anuschka for her B litter.

Our I litter is a combination of Ingo v. Bayern, SchH3, FH, VPG3, HD-1 and Ascomannis Fenya, PH Karing, HD-A.