

Walter Martin (von der Wienerau) – the man we knew

Walter commenced his love for the more serious association with the German Shepherd Dog breed in the late 1940s. In the beginning, his priorities were more to do with the obedience and working dogs, but that was to change significantly by mid to late 1950s. At his home in Viernheim, Germany, he established and registered his breeding kennel “von der Wienerau” in September 1957. For the following 48 years, until his untimely death in 1996, he did more than any other individual breeder to shape the development of the German Shepherd Dog breed in the world, as we know it today, in the 21st century.

Walter Martin himself was a very wise and charismatic man who always went his own way as an individual, especially with the breeding of German Shepherd Dogs. Consequently he always tried to pursue his vision for the correct type of the German Shepherd Dog and never lost sight of that goal despite setbacks or failures from time to time. Against all the common or general opinion he did not have continuous success with his methods but almost always reached his ultimate goal.

To his credit, he did create through astute breeding probably three out of four most outstanding and significant pillars of the breed that the world has seen over its past century of development. Whereas Max von Stephanitz had the original vision, Walter Martin had the capacity to deliver that concept in the form of the most influential stud dogs. Those dogs of course are Quanto von der Wienerau, Canto von der Wienerau and Zamb von der Wienerau. His brother, Hermann, a past President of the S.V. bred another main breed pillar, being Quando von Arminius.

Quanto (VA2) and Canto never achieved the title of Sieger however in most instances since about the late 1970s and onwards both appear in almost all German Shepherd Dog pedigrees around the world. Zamb von der Wienerau was Junior Sieger in 1988 resulting from the successful teamwork of Walter and his wife Renee Rosen-Martin. An extremely successful period of breeding was to follow this for Walter’s kennel “von der Wienerau”.

Highlighting Walter Martin’s success as a breeder was his achievement in Germany at the 1992 Bundessiegerzuchtschau (BSZS). Not only did his kennel win the titles of Open Dog 9VA1 Zamb), Open Bitch (VA1), Junior Bitch 9SG1 Nathalie) and with other numerous high placings in all classes but he also won the coveted title of having the best Breeders Group in a very strong competition. The kennel was the leading one in the 1960s to 1990s.

Walter, like many of his contemporaries in Germany, qualified as an SV Judge and Breed Surveyor and soon became very much in demand as an International Breed Specialist Judge. He had numerous appointments in all of the significant countries of the world that breed German Shepherd Dogs. Australia was very lucky to have so many visits from Walter.

His first judging contract was for male dogs at the 1978 6th G.S.D. National Show and Trial in Sydney where he made a lasting impression on the whole German Shepherd Dog fraternity here in Australia. Walter made further appearances at Nationals in the following years judging bitches in 1983 (Melbourne) male dogs in 1985 (Sydney) and male dogs in 1990 (Brisbane)

We here in Western Australia were very fortunate and privileged to see Walter Martin as Judge of the West Coast Challenge Show in 1983, 1987, 1991 and 1995. It is fair to say that we saw Walter at his consummate best as a judge in the period from 1978 to 1995. His knowledge, enthusiasm, foresight, wisdom and great memory for individual dogs and the breed as a whole is not likely to be surpassed by any other person in the breed.

Many friendships were forged here in Australia and in other places, including New Zealand, all of Europe, South America and the U.S.A. to name a few from that mutual respect of common interest and aspirations. Walter was always keen to share his knowledge and love of the breed with others in his travels as a judge with much enjoyment socializing at celebratory functions and parties.

Finally in 2006 the G.S.D.A. of W.A. secured a second G.S.D. Specialist Championship Show in its calendar and this event would complement the West Coast Challenge Championship Show. We needed to recognise and pay tribute to those who have served the breed with us by acknowledging great input and endeavour in our common goal.

Walter often said "I am a fighter, I never quit". We too are fighters in W.A.

I felt that it was entirely appropriate and respectful that this G.S.D. Championship Show should be named in accordance with the ideals we hold in common with the Walter Martin "von der Wienerau" vision for our breed. The unique support and guidance that Walter Martin has given this club for the development of our beloved German Shepherd Dogs has become an integral part of the fabric and heritage of our association as was his legacy to Australia and the rest of the world.

Complied by:

John Fenner

GSD Judge & Chief Breed Surveyor

State Breed Administrator, 2006

G.S.D.A. of W.A.

