

From the Home Country

By Alison Kollenburg, published in 1990

Rotkäppchen v.d. Cara-worthy U.S. ambassador to Germany

Worldwide, 1990 was a year of special events. In Europe, the two Germany reunited after 40 years, and other dramatic events were in progress in other lands as well. In the Dobermann world there were also some small milestones. Like in Holland, a German bred Dobermann bitch won the Dutch Winner title for the first time. And in Germany, the first American bred Dobermann became a German champion. This is the true story of a modern Little Red Riding Hood.

She came out of a litter born on July 16, 1987 in New York, from the kennel of past DPCA President Ray Carlisle, current president of the newly formed United Dobermann Club, a club formed specifically to cater to those Dobermann fanciers interested in actively developing the breed's traditional working abilities alongside the emphasis currently placed on the conformation in the USA.

Even the mating that produced Rotkäppchen's litter was, at that time, something of a breed milestone. It was the first time a schutzhund titled German National Champion was mated with an American Champion that had also aspired to national honors in the land of its birth.

German/American crosses have been done before, but never with individuals of this caliber. Both dogs represented breeding programs that shared their tap roots in common, but had been isolated from each other's development for over 70 years. Needless to say, with such high-profiled animals involved, it required a degree of innovative thinking and pioneering spirit on the part of the dog and bitch owners. Not to mention not a little self-determining courage to fly in the face of the entrenched xenophobic resistance to changes represented by "intermarriages" of this type. (The sort of political stigma the forthcoming puppies would have to struggle against to gain acceptance from their "families" on both sides of the world.)

Being a sort of "half breed" is a heavy load that can either defeat the bearer or reveal the hidden strengths of the mixed blood. So it was with the individuals from this litter that had to carve out their place on the American, German, or other foreign soils. Along the way it would often seem that any of their successes they earned were greeted with barely muffled disappointment or disapproval. Depending on their location, any achievement was often attributed to either the father or the mother alone. So intense was the underlying prejudice in some quarters that the littermate owners formed a private club to offer each other support and compare their latest "Archie Bunker" type experiences.

This is a story of one of those littermates, Rotkäppchen v.d. Cara, which, translated from German, means "Little Red Riding Hood." It's the story of a little redheaded girl that grew up against political odds to succeed in the Dobe world on its own terms, a small, red bitch that crossed the world sheltered in my husband's jacket to begin a new life in her mother's homeland. (She is also most likely the only female allowed to piddle on the VIP lounge carpet of the airplane. Off to an auspicious start.)

Her story really started the year before her birth, when my husband and her future breeder first met at the Westminster show in New York. It was not a happy beginning to what would, albeit, prove to be a long and close friendship. Both men represented systems of breeding that at first glance seemed to have little common ground apart from sharing the same breed. After a head-on clash at the first meeting, the heat subsided enough for them to realize that despite their differenced they really did speak the same language and wanted the same type of dog. Just how to go about achieving this was the subject of many hours of lively discussions. During the process, Ray took it upon himself to fly to Hamburg to visit us, and specifically to see firsthand our dogs and our way of doing things in Germany. On his first trip to Europe he met our young Siegerin Alida, and on his return to New York she accompanied him-the first combined step towards achieving mutual goals.

I think Ray must have understood his own people well and have had some inkling of what now lay



ahead of them both when he imported Alida. At that time she was the only genuine Siegerin in 70 years to reach the USA. And also, then, the only Siegerin ever with full working credentials and having passed the German Fit for Breeding test. How remarkable that she should also carry over 450 crosses to her early Sieger predecessor Jesse v.d. Sonnenhohe.

There were many hurdles to overcome. Not the least of which was the bad image German dogs were stereotyped with in many American minds and writings. Experience has shown us since that no amount of evidence to the contrary has any effect on closed minds with ingrained beliefs. Although upsetting the status quo and swimming against the stream are not beloved traits in any culture, Ray was inspired by his dream, which overruled all other considerations. His more practical concerns were to do it right. First, to pick the right male for his bitch. We all agreed it had to be what in Germany is called "a breeding animal." And more significantly for this start, it had to be American bred.

Many dogs moved on and off the short list. The choice narrowed to a male my husband was impressed by at a show in Los Angeles where he made him Best of Breed. The dog had stuck in his mind and further studies followed. The dog's type would look more at home in European rings, and his made him stand out in the Los Angeles lineup. Here was a male of international caliber, and even more importantly, his excellent outline and firmness did not disintegrate when moved.

The two men discussed what they knew about Alida and Windwalker's backgrounds and all concluded that he was an excellent phenotype to mix and match with her.

Those were exciting days waiting for the litter. Both animals were evenly bred on important domestic animals in their own countries. Electra's the Windwalker was the more inbred dog in immediate generations, which we concluded should give him the greater possibilities of prepotency in type. This was an important consideration, because genetics show us that there can be no successful outcrossing program without a

successful "pure in strain" program. Successfully inbred dogs are the final proof of the genetic ability of the foregoing ancestors. With inbreeding there are many risks as well as rewards and it should never be overdone. In Germany, there are strong inbreeding regulations to set controls on those animals allowed to participate in such programs. In the USA, the results of unfettered inbreeding combinations are the fertilizer for the coming generations, and hence the need for educated decisions based on not a little caution.

The creation of the beautiful outcross is undoubtedly linked to hybrid vigor. Every geneticist will hasten to tell you, however, that in subsequent generations "regression to the norm" will occur if the original outcrosses are simply bred together without further thought. A tentative solution is to line- or inbreed to those dominant individuals in their pedigrees that are also complimentary in breed characteristics and conformation.

Therefore, to understand the success behind outcrossing, one must first understand the contributing factors involved when integrating two unrelated strains. Certainly paramount in importance

is that the individuals involved be good examples of those strains they represent. We only have to consider the statistics in a variety of animal husbandry projects to wonder at the vigor and outstanding breed type achieved from breeding together bloodlines that have been developed independently from the original identical gene pools. What is also remarkable is the enormous influence these individuals often attain, despite the small numbers of crosses involved.

At this point I would like to issue a word of warning to those "political geneticists" found in all countries who campaign to deliberately restrain, confine, and narrow the genetic pool. Their irresponsibility does not consider the long-term consequences of their actions. Mother Nature is the great leveler, and today's refreshing influence must tomorrow take its turn to be refreshed. The multiple benefits surfaced by hybrid vigor in the first generations are just some examples of how to glean superior qualities found in pure strains, without necessitating the additional burden of the negative



Ger Ch Rotkappchen v.d. Cara, SchH 3, FH, Cappee



inheritance factors also to be found. A good example is the high incidence of cardiomyopathy accelerating in the breed. An annual projected death rate of 25 percent has not dropped out of the blue like a bolt from heaven. Such chronically ingrained disorders can only result from methodical inbreeding practices within confined gene pools. Dobermanns are particularly susceptible, due to the extremely narrow tap roots the breed shares.

Here something like hybrid vigor has much to offer. It offers an open door to those wishing to escape from locked-in cycles of perpetual breeding problems invariably ingrained in insulated gene pools typically found in dominant countries such as the USA or Germany.

The hybrid vigor generated by the Alida/Windwalker litter was apparent even at an early age. Overall it was a handsome group of puppies with a number of immediately eye-catching prospects to consider. Characterwise they were lively, normal animals with a somewhat wide degree of variation in the drives and instincts we were looking out for. My husband picked himself a female with the most eye appeal, intense play instincts and the rudest manners. After all, she was coming to Germany! The rest of the litter found good homes all over the world. Of Alida's ten offspring from this litter, seven today have earned champion titles, a result any breeder would be satisfied with.

We named our bitch Rotkäppchen and her immediate assets soon became apparent. Most obvious was the better hind angulation and more overall dryness from her father. From her mother came the lovely, long neck and the fiery show ring flair so essential for ring success in Europe. Other points were a mix and match of the good and bad of both parents.

Before a dog can become a champion in Germany, it must first qualify as being "fit for breeding." Then it must also prove its trainability by passing a breed-specific working test. In Germany, this means passing a Schutzhund trial. Schutzhund work is considered the most effective method at evaluating the essentials of the Dobermann's form to his function, as described in the German (FCI) standard.

Despite a range of personal preferences held by different individuals, the breed's standard has been built around the function of this type of dog as a personal protector cum companion. The credibility of its reputation depends on its viability at this task. Especially in this modern day where there is a greater and greater demand of animals suitable for this function.

Any deviations in the breed's utility away from the primary intentions of the standard might be applaudable in their own right, but are still abnormali-

ties in relation to the breed's purpose and type.

The Schutzhund trial is comparing individual function in competition with its peers. The additional ZTP (Fit for Breeding test) judging compares each individual in comparison with the ideal described in the standard. This is only judged by one of the twelve Dobermann ZTP specialists in Germany and grades both conformation and character. A minimum standard in both is necessary to pass. Both the Schutzhund certificate and the ZTP are prerequisites to any dog becoming a champion or being awarded a Sieger title in Germany today.

Cappee won or placed high at a number of big shows, and in 1989 she was also Reserve Junior World Sieger from a huge class at the World Sieger in Copenhagen (that year over 10,000 all breed entries). When mature, she became a regional Landesseigerin in north Germany and placed top of her class at a number of important European Sieger shows. She eventually earned enough CAC certificates to qualify to be a German champion. There can be no fast champions in Germany as in other countries because there must always be twelve months between the first counting CAC and the last counting one. This regulation is in place to prevent any fly-by-night champions who might finish early, but do not mature into good adults.

During this time we had placed Cappee with a friend from our Schutzhund club. She later also became her co-owner. This friend was a lady beautician from Hamburg who, in her spare time, liked to don her boots and sporting jacket to train her two Dobermanns on the local SV (GSD) Schutzhund grounds. It was here that Cappee eventually made her Schutzhund III and FH certificates. (The FH is the highest tracking degree a dog can earn.) Around this time she also traveled to southern Germany to take part in a Fit for Breeding test, to be judged by the German chief breed warden, Walter Hensel. She did an excellent ZTP, grading "V" (excellent) in the conformation, and a 1B (second grading) in the character. Nothing to be ashamed of, considering some dogs presented do not even get breeding permission certificates. Unfortunately these failures are often discarded into other countries' programs. I have noticed over the years a number of such animals turning up in the USA-some even sporting false titles and certificate claims and making untrue statements about their status back in the homeland. One can only caution buyers to beware and check things out properly before believing everything that is being claimed.

Cappee now had her two most important credentials-the ZTP and Schutzhund certificates. She was also graded HD free (excellent) and her vWD, thyroid, and eye tests all came back normal.



Despite all the time spent on the training grounds, Cappee did not lead a regimented life, and at different times of the year she joined her friend Anne Dethlefs on the beaches of St. Tropez or for ski holidays in the Swiss Alps. In combination with the latter, she has been submitted to some pretraining tests towards eligibility for avalanche dog training. This is demanding long-term work that requires dog and handler's full attention.

In September 1990 she got her final certificates towards her championship. Perhaps not a world-shattering event in itself, but the source of some considerable satisfaction for those who had been involved with her development from the beginning. It was certainly a unique event in one way, as to the best of my knowledge she is the first American bred dog to earn a German championship title, including having passed all those necessary tests required first. (The German champion title is the toughest champion title in the world to qualify for.) Ray's patriotic fervor had seen a dream fulfilled when he set out to breed himself his "total Dobermann," capable of competing successfully internationally in both conformation and breed-specific utility.

Still a very young bitch, her story is hardly to an end. Early in 1990 she returned to her breeder in New York to whelp a litter sired by her cousin, Nero v Norden Stamm. This was to be a linebreeding on Alida. A number of these are favorably placed in the USA and have already achieved show ring honors. In 1991 her litter will be whelped in Europe, most likely sired by a related Dutch male.

Cappee is only one small cog in the giant wheel of life. She was chosen for her own unique individual characteristics, as much as for her familiar family ones. Like stones thrown into a still lake, she and her mother will eventually disappear. But it's already clear that their combined genetic influence will continue to cause ripples internationally, creating ever widening patterns in numerous lands around the world.

Cappee's mother, Alida, like her mother before her, has proven to be a brood bitch of phenomenal international significance. Cappee is the next link in the chain, along with second and third generations from Alida that are influencing breeders in more than 27 countries around the world. A hybrid daughter that will continue as an extension of her parents' already significant influence for years to come.