

The Master Breeders



Karasar Whippet breeder Kerrie Kuper runs with CH Karasar's Artistry, the No. 1 Whippet in the country. "Darbee's" great-granddam, Multi-BIS/BISS CH Karasar's Preference, ROMX, who recently died at age 15 1/2, was the first No. 1 Whippet to be campaigned by a breeder-owner-handler.

Having bred 12 generations of AKC show champions has earned Karasar Whippet breeder-owner-handler Kerrie Kuper far more than a placeholder in the record books. She, like many other breeders who dedicate their lives to their breed, has earned status equivalent to an icon of breeder perfection.

Multi-BIS/BISS CH Karasar's Preference, ROMX, a brindle-and-white bitch, was the catalyst that brought acclaim to Kuper's breeding program. "Pearl," the No. 1 Whippet in the country in 1994 and 1995, produced two Best in Show daughters that led to two different combinations of three and four generations of multiple-Best in Show winners. Kuper's beloved Whippet bitch was also the first No. 1 Whippet to be campaigned by a breeder-owner-handler.

When Pearl died earlier this year at age 15 ½, Kuper and her husband, Neil Barthelette, mourned her loss. Condolences came from more than 100 admirers around the world, showing that the dog community never forgets the special ones.

"I had no idea the impression one little 19 ¼-inch Whippet girl had on people," says Kuper of St. Petersburg, Fla.

Pearl's legacy is stamped in her great-granddaughter, CH Karasar's Artistry, who is currently the No. 1 Whippet. "Darbee" finished her championship at 10 months of age with two Bests of Breed won from the Bred-by-Exhibitor class over Specials. "Though she is a more substantial, bigger-bodied and -boned version of Pearl, Darbee has her great-granddam's classic look and 'princess' Whippet girl attitude," Kuper says.

"I named her Artistry because I consider Darbee to be my best work of art in all the years I have bred Whippets," Kuper says. "Pearl must have told her how to perform in the ring because she acts so much like her, always keeping me on my toes with her antics."

Discipline in breeding and an eye for quality dogs came early for Kuper. She grew up with Standard Poodles and Whippets. Though she chose a Standard Poodle for junior showmanship, it was a Whippet that she finished



Doug Huffman of Broughcastl Pugs wins Best in Show in May with Multi-BIS CH Tupelo Shoboat Tu China Tu. Bred by Karin Thompson, the 2-year-old, also pictured at left, won Best of Breed at Westminster this year. "Boo's" dam goes back to CH Broughcastl Clark Kent, Huffman's first big winner and the No. 1 Pug from 1981 to 1983, and his sire has Broughcastl Pugs on both sides of his pedigree.

as a 10-year-old. CH Silver Sassafras ignited in Kuper a competitive streak and complete devotion to Whippets.

"I began reading dog magazines and judging pictures of dogs in the magazines," Kuper says. "I drew my favorite dogs. In my mind, I saw an outline and symmetry that appealed to me. I like balance in dogs, and I particularly liked what I saw in this graceful, athletic breed."

As she began breeding, Kuper was critical of her own dogs, keeping only one puppy from a litter. If the puppy didn't mature as she hoped, she would place it in a pet home. With each litter, she tried to improve.

Master breeders, like Kuper, have developed successful breeding programs through years of practice. Not every litter turns out as expected;

not every champion reproduces himself. Despite their share of setbacks, master breeders remain dedicated to producing the best examples of their breed. The rewards, they say, outweigh the challenges.

'No Rule Is Absolute'

Doug Huffman, breeder-owner-handler of nine generations of champion Broughcastl Pugs, including the top-winning Pug bitch in history, Multi-BIS/BISS CH Sandcastle Simplistic ("Rose"), says in breeding, "no rule is absolute."

Recalling the breeding of his CH Bonjour Angel on My Shoulder to an English dog, Huffman of Fenton, Mo., says, "It should have been a perfect breeding. They really complemented each other."

Instead, it was the most disastrous litter Huffman produced; he sold all the puppies as pets. "One had legs like a piano bench, another had a tail that went straight up, and another had a wry mouth and lolling tougue," says Huffman. "The best bitch was a hideous color. The same bitch when I linebred her produced wonderfully for me."

Cammcastle Rottweiler breeder Suzan Otto of Toms Brook, Va., agrees that "nothing is absolute" in dog breeding. She has bred or co-bred five generations and 50 champions that started with her foundation bitch, CH Seren Just Dazzling, CDX, CGC, TDO ("Zanne").

"A truly great dog may not reproduce himself or herself," she says. "You can't count on the offspring of a great dog to exceed or even equal the quality of the outstanding parents."

In Otto's case, Zanne has reproduced herself through many offspring. Among them are Multi-Group/Multi-BISS CH Cammcastle's X Equals One v QR ("Trig"), a granddaughter co-bred with Angela Payne of Charlottesville, Va., and Multi-BISS CH Cammcastle's Quantum Leap ("Launa"), a great-granddaughter. Zanne's great-great-granddaughter, CH Cammcastle's Fleur de Lis ("Paris"), won Best of Opposite Sex at Westminster in 2007.

Breeding six generations of champion Dakota Dalmatians has not been without some disappointments for John and Kristine Benoit of Union, Ill. Six years ago, they were planning to merge their foundation lines with two outside lines they had used before. "Everything should have worked, yet it was the worst litter we ever produced," says Kristine Benoit.

Another time she leased two bitches and planned their litters for when she would be home with time to devote to raising puppies. Both dams had complications requiring Cesarean sections, the first she encountered in 20 years of breeding Dalmatians.

Knowledge of the breed standard is an inherent part of breeding; it is the backbone of producing beautiful breed examples. Most breeders start out as diligent students of the standard. They attend breeders' seminars and read everything they can about their breed.

Breeding Techniques

In producing conformation champions and establishing successful pedigrees, dog breeders use techniques such as inbreeding, linebreeding and outcrossing. Here are definitions:

- Inbreeding is a mating between closely related dogs. Examples are breeding a dog to his or her parent, sibling or offspring.
- Linebreeding is a breeding between dogs with common ancestors but more distantly related than inbreeding. This is the tool responsible for the creation of the variety of dog breeds we know today.
- Outcrossing is a mating between distantly related dogs. Many breeders consider outcrossing to be an efficient tool to ensure hybrid vigor, or in other words to ensure health, strength and longevity.

"We don't stray from the standard," says Cambria Doberman breeder Jim White of Holton, Ind. "The Doberman should be a square, medium-sized dog with good bone. 'Pretty' is not in our standard. We believe in moderation and breed for a balance of temperament, conformation and good health."

White, along with his wife, Ann Ramsbottom-White, has bred six generations of Doberman Pinschers, most notably the top-producing sire and dam in breed history. CH Cambria's Cactus Cash ("Eddie"), who

died in 2002, has produced 145 champions and 13 Best in Show offspring; he also is the top-producing Working Group sire and continues to produce winners through frozen semen.

Meanwhile, the top-producing dam, CH Florowill Bit of Magic ("Betta"), was their foundation bitch and dam of the first litter White whelped in 1988. White finished seven of her eight puppies, sired by CH Agape Lion of Judah. Altogether Betta produced 21 champions.

Whippet breeder Kuper also holds true to the standard in her breeding, but cautions that the standard is only half the equation. "The standard is the blueprint, but temperament and overall balance of the dog are also important," she says. "The breed standard is open to interpretation."

Breeding Excellent Producers

The goal in breeding conformation champions is to produce outstanding examples of the breed that also are excellent producers on both sides of the pedigree. Master breeders learn to be objective when judging their own dogs and not afraid to get opinions from other breeders. They study pedigrees and learn when it is best to inbreed, linebreed or outcross.

The Whites commonly use linebreeding in producing their Cambria Dobermans, although they will outcross if they think it will help their bloodline. "Jim has a wonderful memory for pedigrees," says Ann

Ramsbottom-White. “We researched pedigrees and watched before jumping in. Even today we have a large resource library, and we organize study groups with other breeders.”

The same is true for Kuper, who usually linebreeds, but will outcross to a linebred Whippet. “In the next generation I typically come back to my own line,” she says. “It’s not necessary to breed to dogs of the same type as long as the strengths and weaknesses of each parent complement the other. I breed to the grandparents. You must match them though — that’s most important. A recent half brother to a half sister breeding is my best ever.”

Otto, the Cammcastle Rottweiler breeder, says linebreeding works well for her as long as she knows what she is breeding to. “I like to find a



In contrast, the Benoit's, who breed Dakota Dalmatians, say linebreeding isn't always successful for them. They emphasize diversity in choosing breeding partners, and thus, rarely collect or breed from frozen semen. “When everyone wants to use one stud, it creates a bottleneck effect,” says Kristine Benoit. “We need to keep moving forward. You forget the negative

things about a dog as time goes by.”

The Benoit's also are not likely to dub any breeding, regardless how successful, a once-in-a-lifetime breeding. “We are always thinking about what can be done to improve our line,” she says. “A perfect pedigree on paper may not produce the best results. If we see a dog we like, we look to his sire as a potential sire for one of our bitches. We also tend to not use young dogs until we see what they produce first.”

The Madurhason Dalmatian line of Anne Fleming of Memphis provided the Benoit's' foundation stock. One of their current Dals, CH Dakota's Diagon Alley, named for the Harry Potter character, is 3 years old and has already earned a Best in Show and several



Professional handler Michelle Starry poses Multi-Group/Multi-BISS CH Cammcastle's X Equals One v QR after she wins Best of Breed at the 2005 Medallion Rottweiler Club Specialty. Co-bred by Cammcastle Rottweiler breeder Suzan Otto and Angela Payne, “Trig” was No. 1 in the breed and the No. 1 Rottweiler bitch in all systems in 2005. Above right, Otto is pictured at home with Multi-BISS CH Cammcastle's Quantum Leap (“Launa”). Both dogs go back to Otto's foundation bitch, CH Seren Just Dazzling, CDX, CGC, TDO.

dog that is the type I need or is ‘overdone,’” she says. “I carefully study a stud dog's littermates when evaluating his potential for use in my breeding program. I look four generations back in a pedigree to see what the ancestors have produced. I then look two generations ahead and think of what I will do in future breedings.”

Group Firsts. Her sire, CH Aberdeen Sawyer Brown, a liver-spotted Madurhason Dalmatian, won three Awards of Merit at Dalmatian Club of America National Specialties, the last one only a month before turning 8 years old.

Long before Broughcastl Pug breeder Huffman bred his first litter he spent a great deal of time studying the history of the breed and examining different pedigrees and breed types. Much like Kuper, Huffman got an early start in Pugs, showing the breed as a child. His godmother, Mabel Blaylock, introduced him to the breed; she bred CH Blaylock's Mar Ma Duke, who held the record as the top-winning Pug for 20 years.



Dakota Dalmatian breeders John and Kristine Benoit have bred six generations of champions. They stress diversity in choosing breeding partners and are always looking to improve their bloodline. Their foundation stock came from the Madurhason Dalmatian line of Anne Fleming in Memphis.

The best dogs are often produced by an outcross to a dog of similar type, Huffman says, although he linebreeds to establish and maintain consistency. When he judged the 2001 Swedish National Pug Specialty, Huffman was impressed by the “beautiful necks and faces like angels” of daughters of the English-bred Swedish CH Pallyn Pigarotti.

Eventually, Huffman bred his bitch Canasta to “Pigarotti,” producing CH Broughcastl Blaque Blush, who he co-owns with Mary Carton Henricks of St. Louis. “Blush,” stamped with the same beautiful neck and facial characteristics Huffman saw in the Pigarotti daughters, went on to win 80 Groups and 12 Bests in Show. The breeding proves, he says, that “you can cross families and you can cross type but not at the same time.”

Mentors Are Important

Mentors serve an important role for people getting started as breeders. Jim White credits Mary Rodgers of Marienburg Kennels in Missoula, Mont., in helping him to form an image of the ideal Doberman Pinscher. Rodgers bred and co-owned the Whites’ CH Marienburg’s Sun Hawk.

“We listened to people who were smarter than us and were respectful of people who came before us,” says Ann Ramsbottom-White.

Among the Whites’ standouts today is CH Cambria’s Victoria Secret (“Reigny”), who has won 12 Bests in Show and Best of Breed at Westminster in 2007 and 2008, even placing second in the Working Group this year. Two of their males, Multi-BISS CH Cambria’s Commander in Chief and Multi-BISS CH The Cambria’s The Captain, are currently ranked among the top 10 in the breed.

Dakota Dalmatian breeder Kristine Benoit values mentors particularly for their ability to provide perspective, especially about dogs she has never



seen herself. “Knowledge of pedigrees is also important, but I don’t base my breedings solely on pedigrees,” she says.

Giving back by serving as a mentor to others is important too. “Breeders have an obligation to help the next generation of fanciers,” Huffman says. “New people are the lifeblood of the sport and the breed.”

As breeders develop their breeding program, they start evaluating breedings for what they can contribute to their bloodline in the future. “Any breeder worth his salt already has a plan for two generations into the future when a breeding is planned,” says Huffman. “That, of course, always depends

Tips on Breeding Multiple Generations of Show Champions

Breeding champions of any breed is not an easy task. It involves patience, diligence and hard work. Here are tips from the breeders interviewed for this story on how to breed multiple generations of champion show dogs.

- Seek mentors who can give sound advice. Look for those who are positive influences and be cautious of those who only criticize and never praise.
- Have a picture of the ideal dog of your breed in mind and know what kind of dog you want to produce. Research and learn about the breed before breeding your first litter.
- Buy the best foundation bitch you can. Look for one that is sound with good temperament and that well represents the breed.
- Breed to a stud dog that is right for your bitch. Never rush to breed to the current "popular" stud and never use convenience of breeding as the reason for selecting a stud.
- Do not be kennel blind. Always be objective when evaluating your dogs; the key is to never be satisfied.
- Set goals that are realistic for you. Dog showing is a sport with many levels. Decide where you fit in.
- Don't forget that successful breeding involves quite a bit of luck. It is important to have fun. If breeding and showing dogs isn't fun, you should stop doing it.

on what you actually get from the first breeding.”

While the Benoits look ahead to future generations, they are careful not to plan ahead more than two generations. “We need to be open to future possibilities as they come up,” Kristine Benoit says.

Master breeders such as these will agree that setbacks are as much part of breeding dogs as is winning Best in Show. Bloodlines that produce dogs with type and quality take years of hard work and discipline to develop. Yet for those who devote time and energy to creating beautiful, healthy dogs with exceptional temperaments, there is no greater pleasure or fulfillment. ■



Ann Ramsbottom-White, above right, who breeds Cambria Dobermans with her husband, Jim White, is shown with CH Cambria's Victoria Secret ("Reigny"), the No. 1 Doberman in the country and No. 2 Working dog, and 4-month-old puppy, Cambria's Hugo Boss. Reigny is also in the photo above.

