

I Hear Dead Breeders Talking

First in a Series by Barbara Lee Williams

Sometimes, when welcome sleep finally overtakes me, I drift off and back into the past... and I hear and see and remember the times and the people and the voices and the conversations, so very long ago, among the German Shepherd Breeders I so admired and respected. They were the legends of the breed who often were difficult and tired of trying to pass on the messages of importance to those who were new and green and didn't understand the great responsibility to the breed, the task they must assume, if they were to become genuine breeders and valuable to the breed.

It is a daunting, exhausting and demanding emotional task to become a true keeper of the flame for the German Shepherd breed, to ensure that the breed remains healthy for generations to come, resourceful and beautiful, in mind and body, living its true legacy as the most respected and sought after canine breed in the entire world.

Those devoted and dedicated breeders of the glory days were life-long servants as the true keepers of the flame during those grand and beautiful days when our breed stood alone upon the stage of the most admired and respected breeds in the entire world.

They knew that the breed was forever dependent upon those who truly loved the German Shepherd breed, those who would seek nothing for themselves except keeping the flame afire and bearing the banner of the German Shepherd Dog into generations to come.

As sleep draws me deeper into its warm cocoon, whatever dreams may come enter thru a silent dark door....

(Enter the tall, handsome, elegantly dressed gentleman, addressing a 'never know nothing breeder' who has continually used the gentleman's "Let the sire of the sire be the sire, etc." breeding formula to produce generations of mediocre Shepherds. The lights are dim, but he, the tall elegant gentleman, is lit suddenly in a beautiful light and he speaks.)



"May I ask you, my good man, what you ever hoped to accomplish using my formula when you gathered such a mediocre, common group of German Shepherds, rife with health issues to boot, to embark upon such an ambitious journey?"

"Apparently I assumed too much when I wrote my simple formula, believing that I was addressing an educated, intelligent audience of my peers. I, unfortunately and far too late, realize upon viewing your results of using my formula that I would have done better to use paper and crayons and drawn a picture for all of you!"

"If one is to take my formula to heart, then you must, as I foolishly believed you would, select the finest bitch in the country, from one of the most extraordinary sires, to breed back into an extraordinary and legendary grandsire. One cannot make silk purses from common crabgrass! I simply and foolishly presumed you would know that; my mistake!"

"I also expected that you would be intelligent enough to understand that when such a breeding takes place, even among the most beautiful and breed-qualified participants, if in that litter unexpected health issues arose, then even if the very best one in the litter was top winning one or perhaps two or more grand victors or victrixes, and ROMs, they were, in my opinion, nullified and discounted

in their value, because of their genetic demonstration of the inherent serious health or temperament problems.

"It is the breeders, and they or he or she alone, who are responsible to the breed for what is issued in the whelping boxes. They are responsible for this breed. They are not allowed to take a long rest on their laurels. They are required to keep the flags flying for this breed. They are to be, and believe and practice this above all, 'to the breed thou must be true!'"

"We can all be forgiven for a few mistakes, here and there; that is the nature of all breeding and reproduction as true perfection simply does not exist. But we must be willing and indeed, eager, to step forward and declare to the world our failures in our efforts, in a grand attempt to better this breed.

"None of us is perfect, but few breeders today are true breed icons. Few are like those of yesteryear, who stand alone as those who have tried again and again, and even coming up short of their goal, have always put the breed first and foremost.

"When they have confronted terrible diseases that have challenged all their best efforts, they stood firm and acknowledged! They admitted and confronted their disasters and warn others immediately informed, so they may escape the genetic mine-fields.

"These are true breeders. These are the true keepers of the flame.

May all the shepherds, past and present, be with you and light your way. Each torch that is lighted marks a shepherd, gone but never forgotten by those who truly love this breed. None are forgotten nor left behind. They all have given so much. Now it is our turn to give them back what is their due."

(Fade to black...he leaves as silently as he entered... he waves his hand to me as he goes...and whispers..."It was a grand time, my dear, wasn't it?")

I answer softly "Yes, my dear, it truly was..." ■

Barb Williams
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