

## The Tragic Loss of Bloodlines and Mentoring in America by Carol D. Hawke

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These tremulous topics are subjects I have been carefully contemplating for better than a decade after we first began to hear rumors from British friends about the unsettling disappearance of renowned bloodlines and having personally witnessed the decline of individual mentoring here in America. The disconcerted whispers have evolved into various public outcries as numbers of longtime breeders, handlers and judges worldwide have united in mutual concern.

In all recorded decades past in America and over much of the centuries written of dog breeding, serious dog breeders have always worked diligently to produce "bloodlines." Americans are still inclined to fondly refer in slang to their breeding programs as their "lines." These were typically direct canine lineages that traced back to one or more foundation stock of note. These "lines" remained consecutive as the decades pushed steadily onward, with breeders adding and removing characteristics in the same fashion as an artist adds and removes detail from a masterpiece in progress. Sometimes that forward momentum came at a crawl and other times in leaps and bounds, yet serious fanciers rarely abandoned their "lines." In actual practice, bloodlines were only rejected when a deadly defect or perilous plague allowed no other option. For a few breeders, such disaster spelled the end of a life's work. The venture was over insofar as they were concerned. Others found opportunities to begin again with some related stock shared by a former pupil or two. The point remains; dedicated breeders remained intensely loyal to their original programs.

Each major bloodline presented a differing view of the standard while all of them offered some presentable version. Every kennel or "line" did its' own share of winning and staked-out a firm place in the annals of canine history. Large or small, each one made a contribution, of that there can never be any question or doubt. One could count on those "lines" inasmuch as they were identifiable types, to produce dogs that would in turn, produce more dogs that bore the distinct resemblance of "the line." There was a notable, positive measure of consistency both phenotypically and genetically. A common practice was for the next generation of dog breeders (the mentored) to take up foundation stock from two popular "lines" and create, much to their own and everyone else's great delight, a "new line." Wisely mentored, talented individuals found ways to bring out the very best of differing "lines." Such efforts frequently made fast friends of longtime show opponents. After all, both lines contributed to a reawakened success in much the same fashion proud grandparents are spontaneously united. In a few cases where the "lines" clashed and the new efforts failed, each side could blame the other for the unhappy results. Regardless, a mutually satisfying proposition resulted however the tossed genetic coin may have landed. If one cross failed, another was attempted until success was eventually obtained. The entire process was accomplished under the watchful eyes of scrupulous mentors. A successful breeding program of one's own marked the rite of passage for the past two centuries of dog breeding in America until the most recent decades. Tendencies

and trends in dog breeding have suddenly taken a series of sharp turns. Times have changed, yes, but times always do change while dog breeding as a hobby is manifesting an entirely new face.

What shall we entitle this fallacious facade? Nobody I have the pleasure of knowing at length in dogs is able to fully grasp this anomaly and accurately identify it. Is this a transitional phase in dog breeding or is it the wave of the future rendering many of us the tail end of an ancient entity that will cease before our very eyes? The visible characteristics of this incomprehensibly unorthodox approach to dog breeding reveals first and foremost the loss of distinct "lines" as we knew them. Subsequently and secondarily we note the rapid decline of clearly identifiable variations within breeds owing to an apparent lack of resolve to preserve known lines or even develop new ones for that matter. Evidently, many of today's trendy fanciers may view dog breeding as a sort of genetic 'smorgasbord' wherein it really does not matter what one starts with or ends up with as long as it produces a winner instantly. What we are witnessing is the rejection of the proven practice of long term breeding from a particular line or lines in order to manifest some version of the breed standard along with the essential fine-tuning that it has always necessitated. I have personally noted (along with many who have arisen from the traditional role of dog breeding) that no apparent mental concept of the breed standard seems to be required by this new generation of dog breeders. In its' place resides the quaint desire to refrain from producing a show specimen with any disqualifying faults or other serious refractions that might prevent winning. If every critter produced by such breeders and their typical, entangling alliances is entirely different in type, temperament and structure from the next, this is apparently incidental if not amusingly quirky - rather than appropriately humiliating. This recent phenomena poses a genuine dilemma for the mentors currently addressing dog breeders and doubtless, to our reigning judges.

Much of the murmuring amongst longtime breeders and judges reflects the rarity of locating two dogs with remotely equivalent virtues in any given breed, much less in any class at a dog show today. There appears neither rhyme nor reason to the breeding techniques being implemented. One might surmise from the evidence presented that today's dog breeder expects to win at each outing with every show prospect entered. Infinitely worse, far too many are wont to sell as show prospects all remotely saleable individuals from each litter produced without regard to consistency of quality or future prepotency. Perplexingly overlooked is the simple fact that a great deal of time has always been expended at home by serious, ethical dog breeders planning, growing out and placing the majority of litters who are not and never will be, show or breeding quality dogs. That's just the way dog breeding pans out. Only the best were brought forth for public exhibition. Every pup a conscientious individual produces doesn't rate 'show prospect' nor should they all be considered as breeding stock by virtue of the obvious fact that they share the same illustrious pedigree. This lack of common sense (or excessive greed, if the truth be revealed) is one of the primary factors that engenders severe anxiety for longtime mentors who are valiantly risking their own reputations to educate and represent novice breeders, just as their illustrious predecessors once did.

It has historically been stressed that no individual can successfully breed a line of dogs without a very specific breed template in mind. Similarly, ethical breeders have always been taught to conscientiously remove from the breeding program all stock that failed to meet those criteria. This is the foundational motivation behind judging dogs and the primary protocol for assessing them in a show ring. Today's version of novice unfortunately tends to reveal the stereotypical know-it-all who eagerly acquires a dozen differing bitches from equally as many breeders (often worldwide) and pack them right off to the top winning stud dogs in their breeds. Such blatantly shortsighted behavior is still preferable to nauseating scenario B. Consider the latter case wherein those same bitches are bred to the most local and convenient stud dog(s) the breeder can find or pick up inexpensively. The fact that these naïve newcomers are frequently financially raped by what should be 'reputable' dog breeders (especially overseas) is another issue entirely. Owing to a considerable lack of deep thinking or just glaring ignorance, countless modern breeders are more interested in health clearances than pedigrees and show records than prepotency. Health clearances are marvelous (we've promoted them for years ourselves) but they can never substitute for the intimate knowledge that will reveal exactly which lines tend to produce which defects. A series of health clearances

achieved by a dog from a line that has consistently produced those defects is like a rubber sword. It's not going to protect your breeding program in the end run. You may be inclined to disagree with this; but I would rather breed to a dog from a line I know rarely produces a certain defect even though my choice may have failed that test, than the previous candidate. Equally vitally, an experienced analysis of pedigree quality and depth is vital to the success of any breeding program. The inability to wisely apprehend each of these invaluable tools and utilize them from the standpoint of experience will render a pedigree little more than a fancy piece of paper and health statistics and show records no better than an interesting collection of facts. Widely available are wonderful books and new programs designed to help instruct the breeders of this era but again, I reiterate and strongly advocate; personal, individual mentorship has absolutely no substitute. Only a mentor can personally impart every detail of an intimate knowledge while role modeling ethical and conscientious conduct. Successful breedership is taught not bought!

Herein lies my second key point today. Until a wannabe breeder develops a specific breed photograph (hopefully, based upon the breed standard) internally and makes the choice to honor proven, worthwhile mentors who will devote themselves to their pupils success, he will fail to create any long term impact on his chosen breed. Today's candidates seem to compose a burgeoning group of rootless competitors that buy dogs left and right in each breed and hop right into the ring with them longing desperately for winnersŠor, at least wins. Every year they sport new dogs, new lines and a new look. It causes one to ponder precisely what happened to last year's models! These people don't have the groundwork to breed dogs of the merit they desire. Compare any such individual to another who is championed by successful mentors and is blessed with the wisdom and patience to actually heed their advice. Both individuals will output similar amounts of time and effort but the former, self-appointed orphan will nearly always struggle vainly and likely abandon the effort. Others just switch from breed to breed, hoping for better "luck." Worse yet, many become bitter renegades determined to regain their initial investment one way or another. Perhaps the impact being sought currently is a different one than that so admired in previous decades. If the motivation is simply to "win, win, win!" and subsequently, "any dog will do you," then our nation's mentors really ought to step back, take a deep breath, uncurl their toes and fingers and let come what may. My assertion has long been, "Big winds blow over," but perhaps in this case; "Big wins blow over," would be more apropos. The end result of each individual's efforts will eventually become visible in conformation and performance circles and in the annals of canine history, as it always has. However, the likelihood of this fast-food mentality (as applied to dog breeding) ever producing consistency in type, temperament or soundness is well beyond the realm of a slim chance and if it were to gain foothold, we would be forced to concede that the days of bloodlines and prepotent producers may be nigh over. These strangely inspired opportunists will still manage to produce winning dogs hither and yon but never two and three in the same litter. Moreover, such dogs will seldom pass on the characteristics that caused them to win in the first place. Flash-in-the-pan winners may even produce healthier pups in the short term owing to the blessing of outcross vigor but in the long run, the progress will not be sustained. It takes generations of working through genetic defects to breed them out to a very safe distance, if you know "the line" and what it tends to produce consistently that is. It also requires generations to breed in virtues that will reproduce faithfully.

Allow me to relate an incident at this point. It's a true story so I hope all prospective dog breeders will sit up and pay attention. When I was a teenager I worked very hard for a lady who raised German Shorthairs. One day she informed me we were going to clean a large kennel owned by a wealthy fancier of the breed. My mentor warned me to be wary of the dogs and not speak openly regardless of what I saw. The elderly fellow who owned the place was no longer able to manage the operation properly but she also insisted that he had been "an eccentric" all his life. In fact, that is what everyone in our area called this man, "eccentric." Over a period of decades the patron had built a beautiful, full-fledged kennel with indoor/outdoor runs on a lovely parcel of acreage. Inside this brick facility were special rooms designated to breed, whelp and rear pups and even space for displaying show and field trophies. A small home on the property had been provided for live in kennel help. Large yards to exercise the dogs were overgrown while previously well-kempt flowerbeds had withered away. In previous years they must have supplied a lovely grandeur to the

exterior. Once inside the kennel, all lofty expectations fell desperately short. The dogs were as many types as one could ever dread coming across in any given breed. There were tall ones; short-legged ones, coarse headed and snikey dogs and not one that looked remotely like the next. There were friendly, tail-wagging dogs kenneled next to neurotic, circle-spinning, crazy dogs that would as soon bite you as look at you. To tell you the truth, it was rather nauseating. I had to seriously rethink the prospect of breeding dogs as a hobby for some time after we finished cleaning the kennel and departed. That chaos was the end result of decades of breeding based upon the incredibly mistaken premise that "winning is the only thing," and little else mattered. What cemented the dismal failure in my young mind was the realization that the rewards (ribbons and trophies) accumulated over those decades were rendered utterly trivial and meaningless by the lack of consistent virtue in those dogs. This 'breeder's' efforts provided nothing of value and in some ways, served to set the breed back locally. He had accumulated a few, tarnished trophies and wrinkled ribbons but nothing consequential was accomplished. If one can be satisfied with so little then I will admit that this fast-track mindset regarding dog breeding may be of an extremely limited value.

Here is another case in point for those who feel personal mentoring should remain a lost art. An individual whom had migrated from another breed decided to focus an effort at linebreeding on the most prepotent stud dog of the past century. Although himself a dog of many grand virtues, he possessed equal and grievous faults that he managed to set into his offspring. His main fault was a weak, round headpiece featuring a narrow, triangular shaped muzzle (instead of the broad muzzle required) with its' accompanying narrow, wry jaw. To a lesser degree, he was also straight stifled. Without the meticulous, personal mentoring that should have been provided in order to point out to this newcomer those serious deficits, they became quickly overlooked. As time passed, this confused individual concluded that the miserable headpiece that came to characterize that breeding program should be promoted as a correct feature for the entire breed. These dogs were widely advertised throughout the canine world until many judges began to accept this outlandish conglomeration of faults as an acceptable version of standard breed type. This tragedy may not have occurred if just one particularly prodigious breeder had been properly schooled individually regarding the correct utilization of the breed standard and modern bloodlines. A qualified mentor could have steered this novice around the immobilizing point of blind ignorance. Those judges who fail to read and apply breed standards and who judge by advertisement (familiar faces) alone do purebred dogs an equal disservice. Very often, a simple lack of proper tutoring is all it takes to instill a negative trend into any given breed.

There are invaluable concepts becoming lost to our recent generation of dog breeders. Either that or the wrong shaped pegs are being pounded against their will into the incorrect holes by the stubbornly ignorant for lack of other suitable explanation. I cannot personally conclude that the dog world is so lacking in serious, experienced mentors as it is deplorably void of dedicated, loyal students who are determined to 'mind their mentors' and invest more than their silly, petty funds. Rather, let them invest something into the Sport of lasting value such as their time, talent and devotion. I would cheerfully trade ten thousand of these ridiculous, "Top-Ten-Syndrome" devotees with fistfuls of dollars for one modest, respectful and loyal breed student. Moreover I would prefer one without a spare penny. Such a prodigy will be far less wasteful with my precious bloodlines than some exasperating, bill-folding biped that deliriously suspects she can magically create a breeding program from thin air by waving a few bucks in the right direction. Deluded individuals are further inclined to believe that currency can induce lost bloodlines to reappear intact at a moment's notice. I suppose that our longtime handlers feel equally plagued standing knee-deep in so many upstart "instant agents" who collect dogs to exhibit at sundry fees like garbage men do waste from our sidewalks on a weekly basis. This miserable misconduct readily explains what we end up with in our rings each weekend! Am I suggesting that all modern dog breeders are hopelessly sidetracked? By no means, only that peculiar faction that fit neatly into the trappings of the disclosed package. What if you wish to succeed as a novice breeder but dread falling into this pattern? How can you identify the wrong track if you are on it?

Take the following rudimentary quiz to challenge yourself:

1. How many bitches does it take to produce a quality line of dogs?

- a. Five (one from each of the top names in your breed)
- b. Ten (the above group plus one from each of the top breeders in Europe)
- c. Thirteen (one can never go wrong with a baker's dozen!)
- d. As many as you can accumulate with the funds you have or can finance
- e. One good one from a reputable line

2. How many puppies in each litter are show prospects if you have produced a typical litter of four well-bred pups?

- a. Four (they all came from the same parents and the same pedigree)
- b. Three (one is bound to be a pet and you have one pet home waiting as it turns out)
- c. Two (keep the best bitch and the best dog or the best two pups regardless of consistency)
- d. None of them until your mentor has helped you evaluate which to grow out.

3. What actually constitutes pet quality?

- a. A serious genetic defect
- b. A breed disqualification
- c. A & B combined
- d. Bad temperament
- e. A, B & D combined
- f. A mediocre specimen regardless of pedigree
- g. Pet home waiting

4. What actually constitutes a show prospect?

- a. No genetic defects
- b. No breed disqualifications
- c. Showy, outgoing attitude
- d. Loud color
- e. Good legs this baby can really move out!
- f. Pretty face and fabulous coat
- g. An outgoing, outstanding breed representative with a solid pedigree to back it up.
- h. Show home waiting

5. What is the difference between a "breeding quality dog" and a show quality dog?

- a. Breed disqualification(s)

- b. Good quality, poor temperament
- c. Ugly head, sound legs
- d. Pretty head, can't move
- e. Great dog, lousy pedigree
- f. None of the above. There should be no difference.

6. How many pups per litter do you need to keep to maintain a bloodline?

- a. Half the litter
- b. One dog, one bitch...just in case one is sterile or does not turn out.
- c. The two best bitches
- d. The whole litter, in case some don't turn out or are sterile.
- e. The one pup that is better than it's quality parents.
- f. How many bloodlines do you intend to work with at one time???

7. How many litters per year do you need to produce to maintain your bloodline?

- a. Two if it's an easy breed or five if it's a hard breed to raise live litters out of.
- b. Three, in case the first two didn't cut the mustard
- c. As many as possible without sending a red flag up at AKC
- d. Enough to cover all doggy expenses
- e. One, if it's well thought out and carefully evaluated
- f. How many bloodlines do you intend to work with at one time???

8. Why do you need a mentor and why should he or she help you evaluate your litters initially?

- a. You don't, really. Take their good advice or leave it since it's basically just another opinion.
- b. You only require a mentor long enough to obtain that quality dog.
- c. Anyone who will trust you with his or her life's work will gratefully help you manage it properly. An ethical mentor will never intentionally steer you wrong and will work hard to see you succeed. Translation: your success is their success!
- d. 'Mentor schmentor!' Anything she can do, I can do better already.
- e. This is my third litter and I'm tired of growing out puppies. I want something that will WIN and I mean, NOW!
- f. Which mentors do you intend to work with now that you have all those bloodlines???

9. What is the correct definition of a top quality litter of pups?

- a. None have breed disqualifications
- b. None have serious genetic defects
- c. None have poor temperaments
- d. All are ideally marked
- e. Half of the litter finished
- f. One pup became a Top Ten ranking show dog (gotta' repeat this one right away!)

- g. The quality of the pups was equally distributed; the majority finished, the pedigree was solid, and they created a permanent, positive impact on the breed
- h. Both parents are champions
- i. Show homes waiting impatiently with money in hand.

The correct answer is available in each category. Moreover, they are overt answers. Did you quickly arrive at them? If you were regularly drawn to multiple choices in each category and are confused at this point you definitely need a good mentor. If you aren't sure whom to approach in your breed, ask around at dog shows. (Forget the Internet, you will merely come out showered with arrows!) Collect sufficient expert opinions to obtain a consensus. A quality mentor can document considerably more than a decade in their breed; will have produced many champions and one or more notable producers of that breed.

Conscientious mentors carefully monitor the genetic defects within their lines throughout each generation and can prove it. Such individuals will desire to mentor only serious students, so please do not waste their time and break their hearts if you do not happen to be one of them. If you aren't in this hobby for the long haul, please get out now while the getting is good. Successful dog breeding is about quality relationships, long-term investments, a dauntless love for dogs and conscientious determination. If your ideal hobby is all about winning and making a big name for yourself as quickly as possible, you are harboring an incognito loser mentality and what you really need is counseling. That's a strong opinion. If you decide to stay, you will discover many more where that one came from. However, if you really love a certain breed of dog and your heart's desire is to be intimately involved, produce a line of healthy, happy, sound dogs from proven bloodlines, then by all means find a good mentor or two and super glue yourself to them. If you are willing to become a lifelong student, can take advice humbly and gratefully from those who are willing to share their doggy endeavor, you deserve a good mentor. If respect ranks high in your personal vocabulary and you weren't born knowing it all, you have the potential to contribute as a valuable member of doggy society. Honestly, I cannot recall even one top breeder I have known that succeeded entirely alone. One day you may discover that you are a dog breeder of renown and qualified to mentor students yourself! You will become absorbed in a worldwide community of dedicated, ethical, compassionate people who have embraced you slowly but surely.

One word in admonition; if you are in the process of being mentored and choose to intentionally thwart prominent mentors who have taken you under their wings, the doggy world can become a very cold and lonely place all of a bloody sudden! (This is by no means a reference to honest mistakes which all of us can and do make regularly.) I remember one of the first individuals who ever mentored my husband and I. At a club meeting held in our home he hung back after everyone departed and confided in my ear, "These new people come in and they want you to help them get started. You help them and they turn around and put a knife in your back so you can never trust them again!" I cringed internally wondering if our club leader was on drugs or just an overly dramatic sort of fellow. At the time I thought it was a rather amusing incident. Years later I came to appreciate the full impact of his presumably paranoid statement. Anyone who has been in dogs for a decade is already mentoring newbies. It just happens naturally for most of us. At that early stage the process is rather akin to a teenager mentoring a toddler. A decade later there is a further transformation and we become adults leading teenagers. In each mentoring relationship there is mutual growth from differing aspects. That is how this mentoring relationship should progress. It is at the initial checkpoint that we are noting a bizarre glitch in the system, if you will. Around the five-year mark those students who should depart since they are unwilling to learn anyway, for various, insidious reasons - don't. Instead, they tack up their own signs and go into business thumbing their noses openly at or even more commonly, behind the backs of their previous mentors. A few actually resort to destroying the reputations of their former mentors as a boorishly pathetic hobby.

Reading every dog breeding and genetics manual ever manufactured won't cut the mustard when such independent students actually try to breed litters from various bloodlines (especially those ridiculous, tossed-salad combinations thereof.) Half the time, these mentoring dropouts retain the wrong pups and let

the outstanding prospects go, thus insuring their own failure. Without proper mentoring, they are literally lost amidst a world of pedigrees, canine husbandry and exhibition. Still, the foolishly proud would rather struggle alone than face the music and apologize to the honorable instructors they have grieved. I've watched such individuals attach strings to every pup they sell in mortal terror of repeating these dread foibles. A team of veterinarians will be less successful at diagnosing the various stages and odd quirks of those lines than one longtime breed mentor. In stubborn rebellion, these folks will rely upon any opinion other than that of a qualified expert. The number of lives of dogs saved by good mentoring is impossible to calculate but I would suspect at least a dozen for each successful mentor. Which is why it irks me to no end that some veterinarians treat all dog breeders like dirt bags. Technically, we are on the same team and it is beyond certain that we've saved lives their professional education and training could not. Whether veterinarian and dog breeder or mentor and student it's all about functional relationships. Lacking respect, no relationship will function. Yet daily we witness supposedly serious students of dog breeding or handling backstabbing their dedicated mentors!

Mike and I have mentored newcomers to the world of purebred dogs for the entire duration of our marriage. I can recall few instances I have been as emotionally wounded by our own family members as I have by doggy individuals we chose to mentor. Perhaps it is human nature to become too controlling over those we mentor on occasion. We may overprotect them out of concern that others will misuse them. At the same time we strive to help them avoid making terrible mistakes. However, mentoring at this initially intense level should never extend beyond the point at which the pupil has actually advanced into a successful breeding program of his or her own. There must be a clear distinction between manipulation and guidance. Yet, release from quality mentoring can only be unwisely sought with the first champion produced or in the first five years of breeding for that matter. The use of poor judgment by the mentored is never as hard to swallow as utter disrespect without provocation. Foolish as it will undoubtedly seem to most of this reading audience, I sold many outstanding, young show prospects to complete novices. I remembered how difficult it was to obtain a quality dog. Equally importantly, I did not want my dogs in large operations or breeding kennels, stacked in crates in people's basements or garages. So I stuck my neck out and took a chance on novices who kept their dogs at home, primarily as pets. Each of them made verbal and written promises. Only a handful lived up to their contractual agreements. Some of our mentored were extremely successful (the patient minority) while others ruined perfectly good dogs. One newbie we sold a quality pup to continually despaired that the dog would never reach its' full potential. However, maturity occurred precisely when I insisted it would and the dog finished with a flourish. In fact, this dog continued to collect honors regularly until it began to win on a national level. This apparently happy conclusion was completely spoiled a short time later when I inquired to purchase a pup from the individual hoping to regain the bloodline that I had disbursed in order to more freely judge dogs. To my old fashioned way of thinking I believed my request would be received as an honor by the grateful novice, only to be quoted a price nearly twice that of the original stock with potential strings attached! In shock over this scandalous misbehavior, I was then formally advised, "It's only business and that is the current pricing."

Whoahoahoooo there, little doggeez! Let's pause for a moment and analyze the statement that selling dogs is 'strictly business.' It wasn't 'way back' when your mentor entrusted you with their foundation stock! Moreover, if you claim to bear any love for them whatsoever, dogs are never 'strictly business.' If they are, you are not a hobbyist - you are a profiteer and had better change your "buy from a breeder" motto to reflect your grasping mentality. Secondly, no student of a breed in the initial process of learning should ever charge top dollar for any puppy because he possesses neither the experience nor the credibility to back up that price tag. After you have endured a decade or two and have produced noteworthy, prepotent dogs that actually had some influence on your breed and when you are able to scrupulously manage and predict the general development of a bloodline as your mentor did, then and ONLY THEN charge a reflective price. You did not breed the dogs of note in those pedigrees that you are basing the outrageous prices upon, nor do you even remotely grasp the full impact of the innate faults and virtues harbored within those bloodlines. No photographs or second-hand rumors will ever reveal that information to you. Only a trusting,



experienced mentor can offer those breeding shortcuts and such information will never intentionally be shared with a fool. Following in the wise footsteps of my own mentors, I failed to charge full price for a show prospect until I had fifteen years under my belt as a breeder. We rarely placed strings on any dog and only requested approximately five puppies back in all those years. We did not ask pick puppy for a stud service in those days nor ever required litters back on bitches sold. Our stud dogs, when at public stud, were offered at fees reflecting the PROVEN value of their get. There is a point that seems to have been reached in our modern dog world where hard-nosed business principles have completely overshadowed good sense and propriety. There are sufficient dog profiteers outside the legitimate Fancy; we certainly don't desire any on the inside. Many dog breeders are visibly infected with a self-serving greed that has eroded their essential respect for mentors and minimized the true value of purebred dogs to such a degree that it is reducing an otherwise fine Sport to a paltry game. The reality is that the hearts of this generation must change for gracious, sensible conduct to reemerge in our world.

In another frustrating case, a sympathetic, longtime mentor tucked under her wing what could only be described as an "iffy" candidate for mentoring. This student came from a most precarious position having purchased breeding stock from disreputable sources and selling it over a puppy miller's network. However, the student seemed bent upon a course of integrity and cleared up the negative ties as requested. The candidate further insisted all mediocre stock was disbursed and began health-testing the few quality dogs on the premises. The mentorship ensued and the pupil was able to finish a high quality dog of superior pedigree with the guidance of the breed expert. Naturally, the mentor was contacted again in order to help select the appropriate mate. The mentor pored over pedigrees of available dogs at the request of the student until an excellent choice emerged. At the pupil's further request, the mentor offered herself as a reference since the stud owner was quite discriminating. Suddenly in midcourse, the pupil jumped ship and decided instead to breed to an untitled dog with an incompatible pedigree. The motivations were supposedly financial and for the sake of simplification. A very old, mediocre quality dog was provided the pupil without charge from a calculating source that only requested "a puppy back in return." The clever, second-rate breeder was thereby able to seduce the naive student and acquire stock from a bloodline that was previously unavailable without investing a penny. Moreover, an unwanted dog at retirement age was conveniently disposed of at the same time from a sizeable kennel operation. When the mentor was informed of this treachery, she replied calmly and candidly, "If it were possible to breed high quality dogs conveniently and cheaply, every dog breeder in America would be equally successful." Consequently, in both cases the mentors severed all ties with these (sic) 'serious students' of their breed.

What other course can ensue when mentors apply full effort and skill toward the success of individuals who later proffer the proverbial "knife-in-the-back" treatment? One could wish to label these pupils' sophomoric actions "poor judgment," but the greedy motivations behind them would swiftly nullify those otherwise inert descriptions. These are but two examples plucked from among dozens of graceless incidences mentors around the country are reporting regularly, obviously increasing the number of abandoned or dropout students each year. The only reward any mentor is ever granted for his or her personal investment is the satisfaction of shaping a successful and ethical patron for their breed. After several such devastating experiences in the lives of longtime mentors, it is little wonder so few will extend their time and talent to the continually inquiring newbies vying for their attention. It is seldom true that the dog world's finest canine mentors are, as so commonly characterized, "stuck up," but rather that they have simply been burned emotionally one too many times. If you are a student of a breed; please don't confuse emotional distancing with arrogance since they aren't remotely alike. If you would be mentored by one of America's renowned Doggites, you may find it necessary to prove your loyalty to them and their dogs first.

"Bloodlines," as we once acknowledged them, are fast disappearing. The remnants of those precious,

former hardwoods are being sold as a commodity to the highest bidders both here and abroad. In the place of the elaborate effort that once hallmarked a lifelong craft one discovers pressed board covered over with cheap laminates. Is it possible that the invocation of genetic charting in some fashion has ended America's reverence for bloodlines? Or is it merely the saturation of equal amounts of greed and egomania on the part of today's foundationally disengaged crew of incoming dog breeders that is to blame? The principles that have long sustained dog breeding, as applied both intellectually and instinctively are clearly on the wane. In direct repercussion, mentoring has become a most precarious proposition for all who compose the framework of the Sport of Dogs. Will educating breeders with the intact blanket approach resolve these issues? We will be most fortunate if this program can manage a nip at their fast wilting buds. If public education could instill ethics and character this program could be deemed feasible, however, individual mentoring (like the parenting role that it has always evoked) remains the only practical, proven and effective means by which to tackle such perplexing problems and that process is entirely dependent upon willing and worthy students. It occurs to me that in order for a breeder education program to succeed, there must be a valid mentorship program firmly in residence. Recruitment for qualified, mentoring volunteers to act as "big brothers" to novice breeders will prove absolutely essential. No family is functional without diligent parents nor will any breeder educational system flourish minus experienced, conscientious mentors. If those prerequisites could be met, it still remains to be seen whether or not there exists a sufficient headcount enrolling in breeder education to salvage the future of an entire nation's purebred dog Fancy.