

From Owner to Breeder, Part I

How dog ownership evolved into a canine career for four successful breeders.

Matthew Schenker

John has been showing Collies for five years, but he has never won a point. This year, with his third dog, he started hearing the term "beautiful expression." It has been some time since he last checked the Collie standard. Taking another look, his heart raced when he read that "beautiful expression" may be the highest praise for a collie--a statement that the dog possesses all the obvious qualities, as well as the indefinable aesthetics breeders strive for. He thinks, "Imagine what great dogs I'd have as a breeder." In just a few weeks, he maps out a plan to create a fantastic line of Collies that will ensure his dog's traits are passed along.

John's story is representative of a growing number of people across the country who feel they are ready to make the transition from dog owner to dog breeder. Experienced breeders say it is wonderful to have new people excited about enhancing the health, beauty and winning ways of a particular breed. They openly share their instructive experiences, insights, frustrations and honest mistakes.

Philosophy Check

Barbara Williams has bred German Shepherd Dogs for decades. She was fortunate to own one of the most memorable German Shepherds of the 20th century, Man O' War, or 'Red' for short. More than 30 years after Williams last took Red into the show ring, she vividly recalls her experiences. "He had a beautiful, red coat I've never seen before or since and a superb nature. I received requests from people all over the country to breed to him, and he sired many successful dogs." In his prime, 'Red' died of bloat. Williams has made it her mission to breed dogs free of this disease.

Williams is happy to share her opinions: "After we're gone, people might not remember us. But they'll see the legacy of the dogs we breed many generations ahead. When we're lucky enough to have top dogs, we are given a sacred trust. It's our responsibility to carry that forward. People must realize the power in their hands when they breed."

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