

# SULTANA

The following will take you through the life and show career of one of the truly great ones of the Doberman Breed-CH. SULTANA VON MARIENBURG. What is a great one, you say? The answer to that lies somewhere between the unknown quantity and the intangible. Thousands of words cannot adequately define the various facets of the elements necessary to create such a show dog. Simply stated, with this mark of distinction, a dog can rise to any height! Without it, he is just another one of the guys. A surefire explanation is just not possible.

In a show dog there are two very necessary aspects that must always be present, the heart and the spirit! They give the beautiful conformation, graceful movement and outstanding showmanship that extra sparkle that makes a dog stand out and excel, whether it is in the backyard or in the show ring at Madison Square Garden.

Aside from these necessary aspects for the show dog, there are also a few vital, prime people who contribute to his ascendancy in the dog world. Naturally, the breeder heads this list. Then the professional handler who shows the dog to the completion of his championship or in the Best-of-Breed Competition is very important as are the judges who place their stamp of approval on the dog by their decision in the show ring. The show-going public through their admiration for the excellence of the dog can also be important. Now that we have some concept of the vital essentials of the show dog, let us follow the real life career of one of the past greats, Ch. Sultana Von Marienburg.

She was the only bitch in a litter of four bred by George E. Olenik, sired by Ch. Steb's Gunga Din. The dam was Farley's Princess and the whelping date, May 28, 1963. The litter was sold to Dick Sufficool, a professional handler. Mary Rodgers purchased the bitch and a dog who later became Ch. Wilhelm Von Marienburg, I don't believe Farley's Princess ever had another litter.

In working with Mary Rodgers at various enterprises concerning dogs, I came to know Sultana quite well during the latter years of her life. It seems incredible that during such an illustrious career in the show ring, that I should have only seen her one time, and that in the classes. I was such a novice to dog shows, that I could not even tell you what class or what show! But I think I can tell you about the dog.

She made her performance in the ring-stacking like an ebony statue and moving true and effortlessly-seem like child's play. There was not an ounce of conceit in her but she could evaluate her own worth. And should you perhaps not appreciate her true value, she could charm you into becoming a Sultana admirer. Her fans were legion!

It was evident from her earliest puppy days that she was an outstanding example of the breed. Her iron-clad conformation never went through the usual awkward stages that assail most youngsters. At maturity, she measured 25 1/2 inches at the withers. She was short coupled, possessing a flashy tuck-up and I would say she was the most properly balanced dog that I have

ever seen. She always stood perfectly stacked whether it was to beg a bite of food or in the enchanted circle being selected Best in Show!

The following is a quote that appeared in Popular Dogs, July, 1967, written by Peggy Adamson, one of our most outstanding exponents of the Breed: "That delightful black skyrocket, Ch. Sultana V. Marienburg, celebrated her fourth birthday by topping Del Monte, making it her 20th all-breed Best in Show. What a record! And all made in about 9 month's time. At the risk of being tiresomely repetitious-for I have said it before-Dobermans do not usually reach their best until about three in the case of a bitch and four in the case of a male. Occasionally there are some which reach their maturity about six months earlier, but these are the exceptions, and the prime of life for such a structurally-sound Doberman usually begins at the ages I have mentioned so many times.

"Sultana is a neatly tied-together kind of bitch, who always looks 'all-in-one-piece,' whether moving or standing still. This is a tremendous asset for top winner, and her handler, Rex Vandeventer, makes the most of it by standing much of the time several feet away from her (as can be seen in many of her pictures).

At Del Monte Mrs. Edwin Sivori gave her the BIS win, Phil Marsh the group and your columnist the breed. The day before, at the Cabrillo Doberman Club's specialty, Mrs. Rhys Carpenter had also given her the top placement. In the 41-year-old history of Del Monte, only two Dobermans had previously won it, Ch. Princess Pan of Pontchartrain in 1935 and Ch. Jockel V. Burgund in 1937.

Sultana was bred by George Olenik and sired by Ch. Steb's Gunga Din, a Top Skipper son, ex Farley's Princess. Gunga, who was only seven and a half, died just two weeks earlier of a ruptured blood vessel in the lung. I knew this big black fellow with the engaging personality very well and had him with me once for a whole week. He was very smart, with many of the mannerisms of his sire, including a fantastic ability to open doors and latches. Sultana's topline and way of carrying herself were inherited from him. Gunga's passing was sudden and swift, as had been Top Skipper's at not much older, when he had a heart attack while the Stebbins were away at the Westchester show. Their teenaged daughter, Sue was home alone with the dogs on both occasions, a really rough experience for a young girl. Both dogs were house dogs and deeply loved by the entire Stebbins family.

Sultana had 23 Gr I in '66 and in the first three months of this year, she earned 20. During, this '67 period, her all-breed BIS totaled six against the seven recorded for all of the previous year. Since the May Del Monte triumph was her 20th Best-in-Show all-breed and her up-to-date specialty record is an enviable one, she should top her 1966 Phillips System standing of third in the TOP TEN WORKING GROUP (11,971 points).

In the final standings of the Phillips System of the year 1966-Sultana placed 9th in the TOP TEN of all Breeds. In the TOP TEN WORKING GROUP, she placed third.

Her temperament was unexcelled. I never saw a time when she did not have complete control of any situation. She dominated everything and everyone that she came in contact with. And it was

always done with such charm and grace, that you were "hooked" before you had any idea of what was happening! Once under the Sultana spell, you remained a loyal follower forever .

Peggy Adamson mentioned in her article that Ch. Steb's Gunga Din was extremely intelligent and a real Houdini with locks and latches. So was his daughter! She stayed with us for 8 days one time and putting her in a run was sheer folly. She had a most delightful sense of humor. I would put her in the run, return to the house and as soon as I had closed the door, there would be Sultana scratching on the other side of it. Had she wanted to, she could have gotten back in the house much faster than I could have but that would have destroyed the element of surprise that she loved so much. She never tired of this game.

I suppose that I should use all of the proper adjectives regarding temperament. Referring to the modern day Doberman, John Brueggeman defines it, in his chapter in THE COMPLETE DOBERMAN, as follows: "Circumspection of strangers, loyalty to and willingness to please master, shrewdness, uncanny intelligence, fearlessness, desire to protect master, his family, ability to cope with any emergency and general dignity."

She had all of these and more including a delightful sense of humor and an ability to love everyone. In the company of other dogs, she dominated effortlessly and unquestioningly. I don't know how she did it-probably a look, a nod or an invisible warning. In any case, it always worked! As an example, she used to be fed in a room with I I other dogs. Now, we all know that taking food from other canines is not easy!! Sultana quickly gobbled up her food, demanded the food of the dog nearest her and so on down the line until someone returned to pick up the pans. When she looked as though she was in whelp with a baby hippo, a little James Bond undercover work was called for. She was caught in the act and dined alone after that.

There is an old saying that first impressions are lasting. Naturally there are always exceptions to these adages and Sultana was that! If you check a complete listing of her show record, you would see that she fell on her face at the very beginning of her show career. She was entered in the wrong class! However, like the champion that she was, this was just a minor setback.

She took her first points on July 16, 1964, at the Rockingham County KC under Alonzo Reed, going BW for I point from the American-bred class.

Then the first best of breed and working group first at the Northwestern Connecticut Dog Club on September 20, 1964, from the Open class, under William Kendrick. Her Championship was completed on November 28, 1964, at the Maryland KC under Frank Foster Davis by going BB from Open for a threepoint major. On August 30, 1965, she completed her Canadian championship under Vic Williams, for a five-point major, going BW, BOB, Group I and Best in Show.

She received Group I at Juarez, Mexico, on September 27, 1965. Several years later, she made a return trip and completed her Mexican Championship at Ensenada, March 7, 1970, winning Best in Show under the well-known Derek Rayne. This was her 37th All-Breed Best in Show and this feat was achieved at almost 7 years of age.

Her First Best in Show came at the Sioux Valley KC September 18,1966 after going BB under Robert Wills and Group I and BIS under Haskell Schuffman.

As we all know, the dog is the one who makes all of the records, adds to the prestige of the pedigrees and generally receives all of the hoopla that surrounds a show dog. However, a perfect specimen, moving true can be made to look like a bag of bones unless properly presented by the handler. Although some fans feel that Sultana might have performed perfectly on her own in the show ring and even added a few new flourishes, she was most fortunate in associating with some very outstanding professional handlers.

Jane Forsyth, that most "winning" lady of the show ring, handled Sultana in the classes to her championship and Ellen Hoffmann showed her in Canada, where Sultana picked up her Canadian championship and another Best in Show.

She was handled in Best of Breed Competition by her owner, Mary Rodgers, Dick Sufficool, Jack Dexter, Larry Downey and once by Joe Gregory. Finally, she was handled by the person with whom she was to become the top-winning Doberman of all time, Rex Vandeventer. Leota Vandeventer, Rex's wife, also established some records for Sultana. However, it was the magical duo of Rex and Sultana that created such an awesome combination in the show ring. With Rex on the other end of the lead they both made star quality ring performances seem as effortless as taking a stroll in the park. There was never a letdown on either side of the lead, surefire ring presence was exhibited at all times. Upon retiring after 38 years as a handler, in 1972, Rex said in a newspaper article in the Omaha World Herald:

"The Doberman was a great dog I guess you could say she was my favorite. In 1967 she won more working dog groups in one year than any other dog of any breed. One unusual thing I remember about the dog was winning 12 working group titles before winning a best-in-show. She went on to win 37 Bestsin-show before being retired from the show ring. To us, the Doberman Sultana, was almost human. She was a house pet and constant companion. I kept her in top shape by trotting her alongside the car for a mile or two five days a week."

Once Rex and Leota began handling Sultana no one else ever handled her with the exception of her owner, twice in the Brood Bitch Class and Peter Miller who took Sultana, then well into her sixth year, to Mexico for two shows in 1970, where she picked up her Mexican Championship, two Group Firsts and one Best in Show.

After making a most successful breakthrough in 1966, Sultana skyrocketed to the top of the standings in 1967. She was Number Two dog in the nation, second only to the English Springer Spaniel, Ch. Salilyn's Aristocrat. She garnered 31,856 points by defeating that many dogs for the year. She had 26 Bests in Show, 58 Group Firsts, 9 Group Seconds, I Group Third and 1 Group Fourth. As of that year, Sultana had won more Working Group Firsts in one year than any other Working dog in history and was the Best-of-Breed winner at the largest Doberman Pinscher Club of America Specialty in history.

During the first seven weeks of 1967, on a most memorable Florida Circuit, she won 4 Bests in Show and 8 Working Group Firsts to really start the new year off with a meteoric upsurge.

Then on to the Texas Circuit in March, with a stopover in Oklahoma first to pick up a Best of Breed under noted Doberman Breeder, Tess Henseler, at the DPC of the Indian Nation and another Best in Show the following day at the Oklahoma City KC. From the eleven shows in Texas, Sultana received two more Bests in Show, 9 Working Group Firsts, 2 Seconds and 11 Bests of Breed. This pattern followed through for the three shows in Kansas also with 2 additional Bests in Show, 3 Working Group Firsts and 3 Best of Breed.

On July 30, 1967, at the Santa Barbara KC John Bieber awarded Sultana Best of Breed and Mrs. Alva McColl, Working Group First. Since Peggy Adamson had given Sultana the Breed at this show the year before, I would like to include her commentary about that win that appeared in the October 1966 issue of Popular Dogs:

"BB - striking one beautiful pose after another! - was the three year old black bitch, Ch. Sultana Von Marienburg, owned by Mary Rodgers and handled by Rex Vandeventer, who later took her to GR 4 in a very strong group won by the Pillsburys' famous Pembroke Welsh Corgi, Ch. Cote de Neige Derek. Theodore Wurmser of Kentucky judged.

"Sultana, bred by George Olenik, is by Ch. Steb's Gunga Din x Farley's Princess. She is a mediumsized bitch with a delightful personality; she moved expertly and handled on a loose lead, with the ability to set herself in a correct position without being "sculptured" in the ring by the person handling her. The practice of hanging a Doberman by its neck and holding the tail while pushing it to make the body appear shorter and change the balance of weight is one of the most unappealing sights."

Our next stop will be the Doberman Pinscher Club of America's National Specialty Show, held in Oakland, California, on September 16, 1967. Sultana topped an entry of 228 under Major B. Godsol. Best Opposite was Ch. Alnwick's Black Fury Bismarck, CD. WD and BW was Tevrac's Thelonious and W13 from the 9-12 bitch class, Weichardt's A Go-Go.

Among Doberman breeders, a win is always a pleasant experience. However, a win at a Specialty Show or at the National Specialty Show has a very distinctive significance. Not only did Sultana break all records at the All-Breed Shows in 1967 but she picked up six Specialty Bests of Breed, as well as the National Specialty: DPC of the Indian Nation, DPC of Missouri, DPC of Houston, DPC of Dallas, DPC of Louisiana and Cabrillo DPC.

In the Sunday, December 24, 1967 issue of the New York Times, the following article, by Walter Fletcher appeared:

"The flashy liver-and-white English Springer Spaniel and a sleek black-and-tan Doberman Pinscher waged a battle for top dogshow honors throughout the year. The Springer was Ch. Salilyn's Aristocrat, known as Risto to his owner, Mrs. Fred H. Gasow of Troy, Michigan. The Doberman was Ch. Sultana Von Marienburg, owned by Mary Rodgers 'of Sun Valley, California. Each had won more career best-in-show awards than any other dog in the history of these breeds.

"During the year Sultana was Best in Show 26 times and took 59 working groups. She is also a Canadian champion and needs only one more certificate for a Mexican title. She was best of 297 entries at the Doberman Club of America Specialty at Oakland, California. I'm going to retire her after Westminster, " said Miss Rodgers.

The year 1968 found Sultana the Number Four Doberman Pinscher in the Nation, although she had only been shown 14 times. The number one spot had been filled by a rising new star, Ch. Homeshires Judalinski, owned by Homer Anderson. Sultana had picked up a Working Group First at the KC of Beverly Hills Show at the beginning of the new year and then traveled down to Florida. In five shows, she was awarded 2 Bests-in-Shows, 5 Working Group Firsts and 5 Bests of Breed. Florida columnist Betty Place, reported in the Herald Tribune, January 28, 1968:

"The Best in Show dog at the show Sarasota was the famous Doberman Pinscher, Ch. Sultana von. This young bitch has just won the Ken-L-Ration annual award for the dog having won most Working Group Firsts during the year. These awards are considered the "academy" awards of the show dog world. The outstanding dog in each of the six groups is selected on the basis of most Group First place wins during the year.

"Anyone who has watched this champion in the judging ring is fascinated by the picture presented by Sultana who looks like a piece of exquisite sculpture, never moving a muscle and retaining the correct pose until requested by the judge to gait, and then again she is a joy to watch in motion.

Sultana definitely deserved all the honors which came to her during her few years of show ring experience. Of course a great deal of credit goes to Rex Vandeventer, who has so deftly trained this almost incredible representative of the breed, and she has responded fully. It was a privilege to welcome this famous Doberman to Sarasota even for just one day and everyone wishes the best for Ch. Sultana von Marienburg and Rex Vandeventer in the future."

Sultana then went into temporary retirement until October of that year, taking time off to whelp a litter. We will go into this in more detail later.

Once again it was National Specialty time, the big event being held in Houston, Texas. On October 11, 1968, she did it again, winning Best of Breed for the second year in a row, under William Blessing, in a class of 29 specials. Her puppies were exactly three months old. Best Opposite Sex was Ch. Hondobe's Piers of Marks-Tey.

It was an especially outstanding day for Mary Rodgers, since Sultana's kennel mate, Auriga Aquila went Winners Bitch. Winners Dog and BW was Tedell Black Walnut.

In the DPCA Column of the December, 1968 issue of Dog News, John Brueggeman wrote: "The grand climax of the Specialty Show was the sensational topping of the breed by that outstanding crusader, Sultana, who after having proven her maternal worth, was brought out of virtual retirement by her owner, Mary Rodgers Shea's Marienburg Kennels. She looked as beautiful and moved as great as she ever did and that unbeatable team of Rex Vandeventer and Sultana were a wonderful sight to watch. I'm sure it was the most moving event in Rex's long career of handling

and I could see tears of emotion in his eyes. Those of us present certainly saw breed history in the making."

On October 2, 1971, at the DPCA National Specialty Show in Sacramento this great dog gave her final ring appearance. Under Rod Carveth, she placed second in the Veterans Class and second in the Brood Bitch Class. With her in the brood bitch class was her black daughter, Marienburg's Unique d' Sultana and her blue daughter, Marienburg's Ichiban.

Although Sultana was a sensation in producing outstanding statistics as a show dog, she established no records in the whelping box, except perhaps for getting a low score. After whelping four litters, the sum total of her get was ten puppies.

On July 12, 1968, Sultana whelped her first litter sired by Ch. Marienburg's Maximilian. Although Max was endowed with the richest, darkest rust coat imaginable, he did not influence the get of this particular litter. They were all black!

From this first litter of five, she produced three champion daughters-Ch. Marienburg's Copy of Sultana, Ch. Marienburg's Black Onyx and Ch. Marienburg Portrait in Black. From the standpoint of general over-all structure, there was quite a similiarity in all dogs in this litter, but when you looked at their heads, that was quite another story. In this area they were all individuals, running the gamut from the blunt wedge to the dominant regal Roman proboscis. The two black males in the litter were Marienburg's Marc-Shan and Marienburg The Black Max. Mary decided to keep Black Max when they were very young, however, at just after three months of age, he suffered a serious injury to his spine, resulting in partial paralysis. He was never shown or bred and died at a young age. Marc-Shan was purchased by Moe Miyagawa. This dog was compact, well-balanced and possessed the perfect temperament. Shan was shown very little and lack of recognition in the show ring could not have mattered less to him. Just being a loving companion was his idea of living. Copy and Portrait have remained with Mary all their lives. Copy, following in her mother's pawprints has been bred several times producing only one red male.

Sultana's second litter of 3 puppies was whelped on September 5, 1969; Ch. Gra-Lemor Demetrius vd Victor was the sire. They were: Marienburg's Kabuki Dancer, a black bitch; Marienburg's Ichiban, a blue bitch and Marienburg's Shogan, a black son. The dog was sold but the two bitches stayed with Mary until their deaths at relatively early ages. Kabuki died at age four and a half in March 1974 and Ichiban was 5 years old at the time of her death in January 1975.

There is an old saying, "The third time is the charm." Despite this, Sultana continued in her own unique way. Her third litter on October 19, 1970, a repeat breeding to Maximilian, resulted in a singleton black bitch Marienburg's Unique d' Sultana. This bitch in my estimation has the most striking resemblance to her famous mother of any of the get.

Her last unique litter of one was whelped on April 29, 1971. The sire was Ch. Marienburg's Red Baron. The offspring was a beautiful black bitch, Ch. Marienburg's Only One. Only was never sold and still resides at Marienburg. While being shown in the classes, the highlight of Only's

brief show career came at the DPCA National Specialty Show in Toledo, Ohio, on October 5, 1972, when she was selected Best 12-18 junior in Futurity.

Sultana's most outstanding influence on her offspring was the poise and ring presence that carried through in all of her get. The other maternal influence always present was a compact, well-muscled, soundly structured body, generally resulting in a medium-sized dog. Aside from these two specifics, her progeny had the usual varied assortment of characteristics, some good, some not as good, influenced by their various ancestors.

Sultana died on June 22, 1974 at just past 11 years from cancer which had spread all through her body mainly affecting the lungs. She died as she had lived, with great dignity, generating love and happiness until she drew her last breath.

"Your corner is empty now and so are our lives. You have given your last performance. Or perhaps you have just begun, To reign again Supreme-The New Queen wherever doggies go."