

"I APOLOGIZE" by L. H. (BILL) GARNETT

After reflecting on the past two or three DPCA Nationals I've come to the conclusion that I owe an apology to any and all of you that ever read any of the articles I have written. How arrogant and yet somewhat naive you must have found me. However, you must cut me some slack for I have been laboring under the misconception for all these many years that we judges were suppose to study, understand and apply breed standards and pin dogs based according to how closely they conform to their standards. Going all the way back to that day in Maryland some fifteen years ago when Connie Barton, an AKC rep at that time, grilled me every which way but loose regarding my knowledge of the Doberman's standard, I came away with a strong sense that the standard was extremely important and was the very bases or foundation by which we judges were suppose to evaluate dogs.

However, it has taken those fifteen years and the past several Nationals for me to fully understand just how confused I have been and how little, people like, McDowell Lyons, William Schmidt, John Buggerman, Otto Goeller, Frances Fleitmann, Gruenig, Rachel Page Elliot, Alfa Rosenberg, Melborne Downing, Marge Kilburn, Peggy Adamson, Tess Hennsler, Jane Kay and Judy Doniere ever knew about dogs in general and Dobermans in particular. For my confusion and their ignorance I apologize. I, personally, just didn't realize that if the standard called for balance fore and aft it was perfectly acceptable to put up dogs that were . . . grossly out of balance. I didn't know you could pin draft sized Dobermans . . . even though the standard called for medium sized companion dog. I apologize for missing class the day that over-angulation was applauded and deemed a good thing. I must have fallen asleep when it was determined that exaggeration was in . . . and moderation was out. I must have been in the john when it was agreed that long Dobermans should win out over square dogs. I apologize for not knowing that performance is more important than . . . conformance. I really blew it when I came away from my studies and observations thinking that soundness of limb, body, assembles and mind were important. I apologize for not knowing that "certain people" had the edge regardless of what was on the other end of the lead. I never realized that you didn't put up dogs that were shown by people whom you didn't like. Then there are the big winners that I never put up. I need to apologize to them for not understanding that their records carried more weight then their lack of standard conforming features. So you see there are a lot of things I need to apologize for. I know by now some of you may be saying . . . what's the point? And a fair statement that would be . . . if what I'm saying had no merit. The point is this . . . what in the hell is going on! What in the hell is being taught in our seminars! Who in the hell is overseeing the overseers! When was the standard revised? And finally, what is it going to take to stop this madness?

I get calls and e-mails all the time from people as frustrated as I am also wondering what in the hell is going on. The common thread running through all these calls, e-mails and complaints is, "but the standard says this or the standard says that and the judges are just not going by the standard." All I can tell these people is to hang tough and keep showing their standard conforming dogs and to assure them that there are enough good, honest and competent judges out there that will recognize their dogs standard conforming traits . . . particularly the all-rounders. You know what their

answers are to me. "Where? If the breeder judges don't go by the standard how in the hell do you expect the all-rounders to do so." My response is. "Most all-rounders abide by the standard more so than breeder judges. The reason being is that they have actually studied our standard . . . they don't have preconceived notions . . . personal preferences or alliances . . . and interestingly enough they blend breed characteristics with balance and soundness."

Speaking of all-rounders. As a owner-handler my dogs won just about everything there was to win at a dog show. Majors and breeds from the puppy classes to over fifty-some group wins and placements and five bests-in-show, all owner handled, and in the vast majority of cases those wins came under all-rounders. I tell you this not to brag on my dogs but to make this "point" we breed specialist should be ashamed of the fact that competent all-rounders do a better job in our breed than we do. Let me cite you some experiences I have had with breeder judges. There was one that I showed under a that was so afraid of Dobermans she had no idea of how many teeth they had or didn't have . . . she couldn't get out of the mouth quick enough.

Not so good when two disqualifications are in the Doberman's mouth. Still another didn't know the difference between undershot and overshot. We now have a breed authority that doesn't know the benefits of moving the dogs down and back and still another that thinks the ear set is the most important feature on a Doberman. I'll never forget the one that asked me if my bitch had a missing tooth. I said no and went winners bitch. She was missing the third premolar judge's side. Then there's the one that talks baby talk to the dogs and then stays clear of any that growl at her. It's a disgrace. And made more disgraceful by the fact that they all have attended our National Judges' Seminars and a couple have actually officiated.

A few years ago I talked about a new breed of dog had been sighted on the horizon masquerading as a Doberman. It had the markings of a Doberman but the characteristics of a Shepherd thus the name "Dobeherd" was coined. Since then many Doberman enthusiast have been conned or intimidated into accepting the "Dobeherd" as a Doberman. For some in order to get along in this breed they believe they have to go along. But what about the judges that are pinning these imposters? What is their excuse? Judges, in a sense, are sworn to protect the breeds through proper, knowledgeable and honest evaluations. We are the last line of defense. When we crumble to pressure, fads and ignorance and fall prey to the kind of breed assassination that's going on . . . it's just about time to get the hell out of Dodge.

Is there an answer? Yes but it is not easy. Nothing worthwhile comes easy. You've got to read, study and learn the blue print yourself. Why does the standard call for certain arrangements of parts and what are the benefits derived? Why does the standard call for fill under eye? Why is spring of rib important? What's the importance of depth of body? Why is balance so vital to a square dog? What's a proper tail set and why? Why a medium size dog? Learn what is proper reach and drive. What's a good foot and why is it important? What's the job of pasterns? Learn the advantages of a good front. Attend judges' seminars. Ask questions. Don't let the instructors get by with just making statements. Have them explain to your satisfaction just what it is they are saying and why things should be the way they say. Don't be nervous and timid . . . some of them are just puffing and bluffing . . . call their bluff. We've got to start somewhere. And another

thing, maybe . . . just maybe, the breed would be much better served if we spent more energy studying, learning and applying the standard and less time fighting and bickering over who's going to be next year's Ringmaster for the-three-ring circuses known as the National Breed Club.

Friends we're getting further up the creek without a paddle. It's time for responsible and knowledgeable people with courage and convictions to step up. I don't have all the answers . . . nobody does . . . but if there are enough of us purest out there then maybe we can come together somehow, somehow and put a stop to this insanity. I do know that we have to be better educated as to the what the blue print is saying. I do know that we have to want to get the ship back into calmer waters. I swear once you begin to understand the blue print and the benefits derived you'll see the beauty in a standard conforming dog. Trust me, its a world of form and function of beauty and symmetry of balance and soundness . . . once you've mastered it . . . the reality is euphoric. Just for the moment forget the hundreds of words, maybe thousands, that go into making up the standard for Dobermans and just think about the following twenty-seven. "The Doberman is a square, compact, medium size dog of of balanced proportions, noble in it's carriage, courageous by nature and sound of mind, body and joints." Now, as a judge, if you should be lucky enough to find two dogs that process all nine of those traits . . . than be all means break the tie with any of your personal preferences.

"the DOBERMAN PINSCHER is a square, compact, medium size dog of balanced proportions, noble in it's carriage, courageous by nature and SOUND of mind, body and joints." . . . bill garnett