

## REFLECTIONS ON A TRAINING ADVENTURE

These famous words, meaning “Seize the Moment”, often have moments of significance for us. It is especially so for me in my life.

In 2016, towards the end of the year, I started following Christo {Tokki} Mostert as he began recording his journey with his German Shorthaired Pointer on Facebook in Sweden.

The writings were packed with experiences and with some great advice and comments. But the most significant was a reference to a man that Tokki had great respect for, and mentioned regularly in his writings. This man was Jeppe Stridh, a trainer of great experience and expertise, and to whom Tokki accredited much of his success with his dog. I found it intriguing that a trainer could have such great impact on one person, and wondered if, perhaps one day, I would meet up with Jeppe.

Towards the end of 2016 I received a message from a fellow trainer and friend in Cape Town, Trudi Winter, to say that she had noted that I was “following” Tokki, and that Jeppe and his wife Kerstin were due to holiday in South Africa, and that part of their journey would be to Durban, which is located in my home Province. I am most grateful to Trudi for her intervention and sharing, as it began a relationship that has become very special to me, as well as to my wife Jean.

In early 2017 we met up and ran a series of training workshops for a group of interested people in Natal. The impact was powerful, and the concepts presented were paradigm changing. This first visit had enough impact to get one thinking, and to open up a channel through which much liaison and sharing began. Those who attended these early workshops certainly had their eyes opened....the moment had indeed been seized....and networking works....!

During the remainder of 2017 a great deal of dialogue was entered into between Jeppe and me. I found that after each occasion we chatted or communicated I was more and more encouraged. This encouragement was enabling me to consolidate what I felt and learnt about training, helping me to articulate my experiences and thoughts. It also helped me to sift through what I saw as applicable, and how to incorporate this into my training philosophy and methodology.

Then, during 2017, Jeppe announced that he would be returning to South Africa, and so began a campaign to encourage as many opportunities as possible to be taken by a wide audience to hear and see Jeppe and Kirsten. During this campaign to organise the itinerary I learnt a lot about people and their agendas in the Canine Training Arena, and this has stood me in good stead as I embark on my own journey in this field.

The second visit saw a number of workshops being held around South Africa.

In Natal we run a series of workshops over two week-ends for as broad a cross section of dogs and handlers that we could find. These were well attended, and the impact was once again profound.....this being seen not only in the techniques and methodology, but more importantly in the way that handlers now discussed and compared training in general, and this is always healthy. The feed back after the event was very good, and there was a healthy buzz in the South African arena. There is nothing like new concepts, different opinions and challenging methods to stimulate dialogue and thinking.

Out of all this comes much success. Many people who attended the workshops have overcome difficulties they had been experiencing with their approach to training, and they have since been successful in both field trials and general training. There is a greater dynamic that has been created in that many trainers are now taking their training more seriously, and being stimulated along the way. There is greater co-operation occurring between many of the groups that have been exposed to the workshops and presentations from Jeppe.

***Most importantly it speaks for itself because the result is that it works***

Personally, I have made two great friends, and I enjoy a relationship with a couple of dedicated and highly capable trainers who are sincere, extremely generous and only too willing to help people to be successful with their approach to training their dogs successfully.

Jeppé is amazingly pragmatic and honest in his approach, openly acknowledging that not all will agree with all he has to say, or with his techniques. This is healthy as far too many trainers are either stuck in their ways or far too dogmatic or narrow minded to listen, let alone to receive and process. So with this in mind, I pass on this final observation that I have recognised and learnt through my friendship, association and adventure with Jeppé and Kirsten:

***“For the trainer equipping the handler; it is perhaps important to remember that you don’t want to make an impression, you want to make an impact, constantly reminding yourself that excellence must be a habit not an act. Make sure that your servant heart is bigger than your ego. Show sincerity and kindness, remembering where you once began and be an empathetic encourager....always following through. Promote networking, encourage your charges to listen to others on their journey, participating in healthy discussion and applying what works for them with wisdom and gratitude. Be attractive, be available and make the journey fun for those whom you are mentoring, leaving a legacy of modelling what you believe and teach. You are travelling the trainer’s road that is less travelled in your quest to build success in others in the wonderful world of Gundogs, passing on a rich Gundog heritage to the generations to come.***

***For the handler of the dog, the Gundog enthusiast; if you are going to train your dog, do it right the right way. Remember that good isn’t good if it can be done better, and better isn’t good enough if it can be done best. Your Gundog is relying on you to show, teach and encourage so that he can become one with you, and then teach you, if only you are willing to learn”.***

David Padbury

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