



Gunilla Wedeen and her working goldens

After a day of training, we sit down in the sun and enjoy a cup of tea with Gunilla Weeden, and talk about her life with dogs as a breeder, trainer and handler. We've known her for years and know that she loves everything about Italy: the landscape, the climate, the people she meets. She has a very strong personality and a magnetic gaze, and is very far from the Swedish stereotype: small, dark-eyed, vivacious and not at all cold – in fact, all emotion!

Gunilla Wedeen has been a friend of the RCI for many years and has been invited on several occasions to hold training courses and judge Working Tests in Italy. She has many friends here that admire her for her research into canine behavior and her ability to communicate with dogs. Her passion is to train communicating, and to reduce stress in dogs and thereby improve their performance in competitions.

She began her adventure with dogs as an adolescent, with a

poodle that she took to obedience courses. When she got her first job and apartment in 1981, she was finally able to get the dog of her dreams, a beautiful Flat coated. She remembers proudly how this Flat distinguished himself at the elite level of field trials, even



Gunilla and her dogs

winning a "Certificate". After her Flat, lost at a young age by a serious illness, she was introduced to the working line goldens of Agneta Gudmunson, owner of the famous kennel

Duvkullans. She began to collaborate with Mrs. Gudmunson, and obtained her first working golden, Duvkullans Dukat, a bitch that became a field trial champion and the foundation for Gunilla's own kennel.

Gunilla recalls with a smile her choice of stud dog for "Katten's" (Duvkullans Dukat's) first litter: "I drove 700 km north in bad weather to bring my bitch to this dog, a champion in tracking and searching, but totally unknown in retriever circles. And in the litter that came from this mating there were two field trial champions!"

Gunilla is proud of her strong bitch line that goes back six generations and includes four field trial champions, a bitch currently working towards her title in the elite class and a promising puppy. "I

believe that we have to rely on line breeding and plan matings generation after generation, in order to improve the breed on a consistent and long-term basis", she explains.

"I periodically use total outcrosses, by mating my bitches to 'old fashioned goldens' (goldens that work and look good). I call these puppies my 'lost generation'", she explains with a smile. "When I sell these pups I tell the new owners that they're getting sound, healthy dogs with good hunting abilities, but I cannot guarantee results in field trials. The best females from these litters are then mated to pure working goldens to obtain excellent field trial dogs."



Gunilla and Dream

As she speaks, Gunilla becomes animated and her eyes inflame with passion. She grows cross as she admonishes us to not breed on results only: "This path leads you to produce dogs that are too sensitive and too dependent on their handler. Hunting requires dogs that are strong, independent and that can work in all weather conditions and terrain, that are both responsive to commands and keen to communicate."

"In my experience I've seen the third generation backwards as the

most influential in a pedigree. When planning a mating I try to repeat the mother's father on the father's side. I admit that this is probably 'unscientific', but...it seems to work! And never, never, breed on titles alone. Remember that a dog without a title but with siblings that are working well is worth more to a breeder than a champion who is an exception in his line."

Gunilla now divides her life and passion for dogs with Bengt Roedseth: together they have developed new ideas and training methods, seeking to understand better communication between dogs and between man and dogs, as well as how to maintain correct

leadership. They live on a big farm where they have set up a training center for people who want help in communicating with their own dogs. She proudly tells us about how they have been able to help some people stop their dogs from whining or making other silly mistakes due to stress in competitions.

While dogs, breeding and training are her main passion, they are not her main line of work;



Bengt teaches his dog to swim

Gunilla is, in fact, a teacher and smiling, she tells us: "I use with dogs what I've learned from many years of teaching and...with children what I've learned from dogs." She recently published a book based on the work she and Bengt have done together up until now, that illustrates clearly how to develop a correct rapport with your dog. We hope that it will soon be translated, if not in Italian, at least in English.

As the afternoon draws to an end, Gunilla explains to us working trials in Sweden: "There are field trials on cold game, in which dogs are tested for a long time on many types of game, including rabbits; certain parts of these trials are very special, for instance the big search, where dogs are requested



Gunilla while she observes dogs

to methodically work through a vast area (about 150 x 150 m) that can be water, woods or even swamp. There are three levels and in each one dogs work against a standard rather than each other, and they can win a first, second or third prize, or zero."

"You start these trials in the 'beginners' class (NKL). When

(FTC's) or in the field (show champions). The titles SJCh and SUCh, instead, are used for field trial champions that have qualified in the ring and show champions that have qualified in the field. This gives both freedom and visibility to everybody."

At the end of the day, Gunilla tells us one last thing that is really in her

heart: "I would really like more people to try working with working goldens. They are often the best hunting dogs, and what makes them special is the way they use their nose and their brain capacity, plus they have a very big heart. They are a little more complicated to train, mostly because of a strong mentality combined with a great intelligence, but if you maintain good leadership and train your dog with respect and clear instructions, you will have a friend for life – a dog that will go through hailstorm and fire for you!"



Gyllerboda, Gunilla's House

Alessandra Franchi

"For the past ten years I have been passionately involved with retrievers, especially the working side.

I have a small breeding kennel of golden retrievers (Hillshire) and along with my family I spend many enjoyable hours with our goldens - training, taking walks, working and just relaxing!"

you get your first prize in that class you move to the 'open' class (OKL). In open you need two first prizes to qualify for the 'elite' class (EKL). In the elite class there are two to four dogs working together for about an hour. To become a Swedish field trial champion you need three first prizes in the elite class and one approved test at a day of hunting on ducks or pheasants, where you work as a picker up under the constant control of a judge."

"The new definition of show and ring championships in Sweden are very interesting. The titles S(J)Ch and S(U)Ch are given to, respectively, field trial champions and show champions that have not been assessed in the ring



The granary