



On the road to dual purpose A day with Leospring Labradors

by Patty Fellows

I weave my way around the busy roundabout, cutting off several cars as I tentatively edge my way into the exit lane. With RCI publications and parmesan cheese in hand, my friend Laura and I are on our way to meet Joy Venturi Rose, well-known breeder of dual purpose Labradors in Southwest England. Our mission is to establish contact between clubs (she is field trial secretary of the Kent, Surrey and Sussex Labrador Club) and visit Leospring kennels. She has kindly set aside time from her busy schedule as veterinary nurse practitioner, dog breeder/trainer and show and field trial judge to spend the day with us.

We meet up at Stubbs Farm Estate, not far from Lipshook Hampshire, where Joy lives with husband and fellow field trial judge Chris Rose. Back at their house, with mugs of coffee in hand, we are greeted in the kitchen by 12-year old red fox Augustus Tuplady (sire or grandsire of many Leospring dogs today), and a black and rotund Colhook Kalinka, expecting puppies from Champion Carpenny Anchorman. Both dogs are kind and friendly, and make an excellent first impression by not jumping up on us or spilling our coffee. Joy explains that as a breeder “good temperament comes first – my dogs must be bomb proof with children, and sensible to live with. After working ability, my next priority in breeding is good health and good/acceptable health screening results. I also aim for dogs that conform to the breed standard: good but not overdone kind head, correct double coat, good feet, good tail, good but not overdone bone, good spring of rib and then you generally have a super Labrador.”

She goes on to explain that when judging a show she “looks at how well dogs conform to the breed standard and whether their construction would help or hinder them if they were a working Labrador.” She continues, “I have a picture in my mind’s eye of the perfect Lab. It



Chris Rose e Carpenny and Arnie of Leospring

is not far from an old Beswick China Labrador I have, in type. I always look at it before I judge and read the standard and when being critical about my own dogs. I am very critical about my own dogs, more so than about others.”

When we ask Joy about the history of Leospring and what influenced her to seek the dual purpose ideal, she proudly points out some of the influential dual purpose and field trial sires in one of her pedigrees. She explains:

“I had my first litter in the early ‘80’s, and the major influences behind my thinking were Mary Roslin Williams’ book *The Dual Purpose Labrador*, PRA Moxon’s *Gundog Training and Field Trials* and later, Susan Scales’ *Retriever Training*. For my first bloodlines I used the

sires FT Ch Spudtamson Berry of Mirstan and Ch Squire of Ballyduff. With the help of Joan Harvey of Treherne working Labs, I eventually got the foundation bitch of my current bloodlines, Butsash Pollyflinders of Leospring. She had a “pass” on her hips (rare in those days) and she proved to be a good brood bitch, becoming the dam of several FT winners for us.”

“Everything I have kept in my bloodlines has been

important to me because they were the strands that made up my strain of Labrador. I have tried to be very particular in keeping the dual purpose ideal but could not do this without the influence of other kennels. The original Treherne-based dogs were really honest workers and proper Labradors, plus Joan Harvey had done a lot of work with hips, which gave me a bit of a start. Mated to the honestly-bred dual purpose sire Manymills Drake,



above: Leospring Atomic Man with a retrieve
(photo Sharon Rogers)

right: J. Venturi Rose and Oakingham Monarch of Leospring (photo ruralshots.com)

down: Carpenny Arnie in the water (photo ruralshots.com)



this bloodline gave us some useful trialing dogs which could win a bit in the championship show ring also, such as FT winners Treherne Fairly Game at Leospring and Treherne Game Fall at Leospring, both now behind a number of FT winners and champions in the UK."

"Another influential sire that produced excellent working, reasonable looking dogs was Abbotsleigh Pluto. He produced Leospring Mars Marine, a two-day open stake winner and the father of FT winner Augustus Tuplady of Leospring, whose son Ch Carpenny Anchorman is the only current champion in the UK since Ch Squire of Ballyduff to win field trial and open working test awards

as well as the BOB at Crufts. The Kupros line, both Ch Master Mariner and Ch Marfell Seafarer, has also been important to keep working ability and improve looks, passing on biddibility to their children and grandchildren. More recently, I have used Carpenny and Warringah lines to improve the quality of looks in my bitch line."

When mixing show and working lines, Mrs. Venturi Rose aims to maintain a proportion of about 25% to 50% field trial bloodlines with the remainder show lines that can work in her pedigrees. With this mix she feels she can preserve the working ability, conformation and temperament that she wants. Every so often she reintroduces a pure field trial dog to revive and strengthen the work side.

We ask Joy if she can give any advice to breeders who would like to follow the dual purpose path, and she answers:



"**G**et out of the box. Have thick skin and shoulders. Have an ideal in your mind and keep aiming for it through thick and thin. Be prepared for everyone to say it can't be done. Mix and match your lines to get what you want and then line breed back to it. Get at least two good people to help you, one good show person and one good working person (still insist on being dual purpose but don't keep on about it as it bores them and actions speak louder than words) as you will need to know all the professional tips on how to succeed and train in the best way possible both on the work side and show side. Really read around your subjects. Enjoy it. Also, you do get the odd high that makes you occasionally believe what you do is important. The other day a top "A" panel field trial judge, who I thought was totally anti-show dogs, phoned me out of the blue and asked for a dual purpose pup to make into a FT champion. That is pleasing."

“There are actually more dogs than you would think that have both show and working lines behind them, including some runners in recent IGL Retriever Championships. The more people are prepared to have a go, the easier it will be to find the kinds of stud dogs you need.”

As we walk through the back door, we are surprised not to hear any barking as we approach the outdoor kennels. Joy explains that teaching dogs not to bark is a keystone of her training, and important for a breeder living in a residential area. Her method (ironically based on teaching dogs to bark on command) can be found with other useful training, behavioral and breeding tips on her website at www.leospring.moonfruit.com/.

She brings out her dogs one at a time into a small garden adjacent to the kennels. Posed in stand, her dogs, most of whom are shown at the championship level, look and behave like any lively show Lab. Surprisingly, when Chris throws a few dummies, they seem transformed into working retrievers, marking with concentration and retrieving with speed and style.

We think of a recent article written by Mrs. Venturi Rose for a supplement of Dog World, in which she describes following the dual purpose ideal like “paddling against the stream”. She notes that while most breeders will choose either the show or work path, it is important that everyone recognize that “the look of the animal is more than skin deep; it represents its anatomy and conformation which when correct reduces injury and wear and tear and enables it to work most efficiently. Show dogs not selected for working ability are at risk of becoming heavier, becoming less easy to train for their original role and may undergo anatomical changes which look attractive but which may hinder health and active functionality. Likewise, in the pursuit of more speed working dogs can lose bone, substance and double coat, all required to warm and strengthen dogs required to work a long hard day picking up.” *

After seeing her dogs, we talk a bit with Chris and Joy about their experiences judging field trials in the UK and on the continent. Joy notes that she admires the effort in France to “make sure their show dogs can still work and their working dogs are a reasonable example of the breed. There are a few notable superb breeders in all countries and

in quite a few, certainly until recently, many of their dogs are more dual purpose than our own. I have often seen more about how British show lines can work abroad than I have in England. We have, in the UK, moved a bit further along this now and I hope they can equally keep this up abroad. However, in some countries the requirement for show dogs to have at least one qualification in the field and vice versa has been dropped. A retrograde step in my mind.”

We ask Joy if field trials have changed much in Britain over the years, and she answers:

“They have changed enormously but how does depend on the type of trial run. More straight line work and less

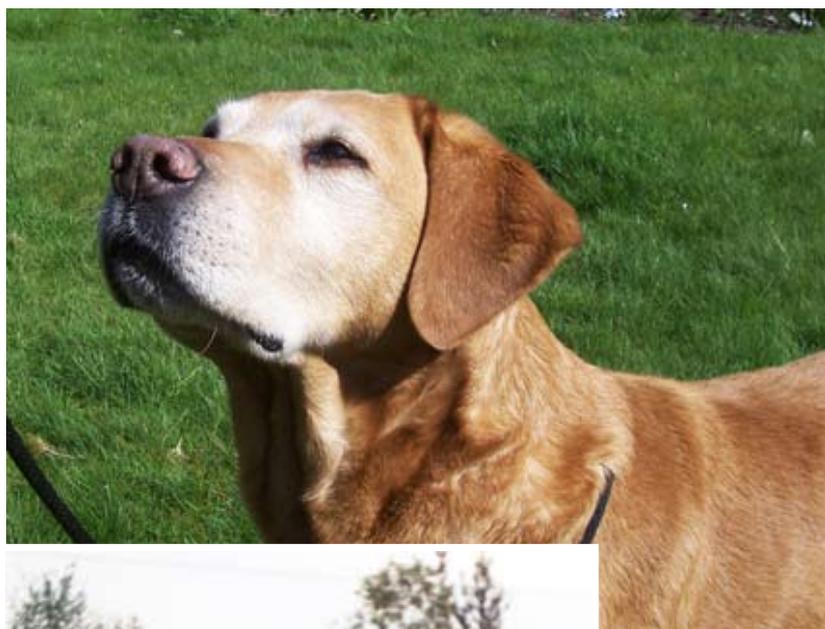


above: CH Carpenny Anchorman
(photo *ruralshots.com*)
left: Carpenny Austin retrieving
(photo *Sharon Rogers*)
down: Earl Harow of Leospring
(photo *ruralshots.com*)

quartering out to a retrieve will put pressure on maintaining a really good hunting dog. There is more control and handling and less hunting than in the former years. Marking is still pretty good, I think, probably very good and much improved particularly in walked up trials. Having to hold a dog in an area rather than let it work out naturally and potentially pick up the line of a runner is something that needs to be watched as it can stifle tracking ability and stop runners being collected. The best breeders can use it as a valid way of selecting good game finding ability providing the strengths and weaknesses of the dogs used are considered, not just a rush to use the latest field trial champion. Probably more importantly, trials have been responsible for markedly reducing hereditary hard mouth and noisiness."



Colhook Dancing Bay at Leospring (photo Pat Spratt)



After our discussion of trials in the UK and Europe, Chris returns to work and Joy accompanies us part of the way back to the airport. As we drive through narrow, winding lanes in the English countryside (having inadvertently set the navigator for the "shortest" rather than the "fastest" route), we consider the challenging path breeders like Joy Venturi Rose and others have chosen to follow. Certainly, they may not be the first to make up numerous field trial and show champions, but in the long run, they may just take us to where we want to go.

*"Can there ever be another dual champion Labrador?" by Joy Venturi Rose, Dog World supplement Labrador Showcase, April 11, 2008.



above the upper: FTW Augustus Tuplady (photo L. Buosi)

above: Oakingham Monarch of Leospring (photo ruralshots.com)

right: Carpenny Arnie in line (photo ruralshots.com)