

# Dogs of the Past

By Mike Urseth

Back in 1985 Bill Urseth, our esteemed Editor-in-Chief, was doing a lot of work in what was then West Germany. The thought came upon him to seek out and acquire the best German Shorthair Pointer in Germany – the kind of dog that would make an impact in the U.S. hunting community. Bill went to the head of the German, German Shorthair Society, and asked him to evaluate the best dogs in the land. After a thorough review he announced with Germanic certainty that Cent von Esterfeld was indeed the best GSP in Germany.

Bill then contacted the dog's owner and made a generous offer to purchase him. Although flattered by this attention, he said that he loved the dog and could not bear to part with him. The chapter seemingly closed, Bill thanked the man and returned to his quest.

Two months later a surprise phone call, Cent's owner had suffered a major heart attack and the doctors told him that his hunting days were over. Knowing that Cent lived to hunt, he had made the noble decision to send him to Bill in America where he would live out his destiny. Naturally, Bill jumped at the opportunity.

When Cent arrived at the Minneapolis airport he was "as advertised" and more - big, beautiful, solidly muscled and very, very German. Cent had only eaten raw meat, never dog food and he understood only German. For his whole career, Bill commanded him in the field using the German language. This proved useful in some situations that won't be related here. Ask Bill about it sometime over post-hunt libations.

This is where Cent met Jäger. Jäger was another of Bill's Shorthairs, a beautiful female who was then reaching the peak of her hunting prowess. It was love at first sight. Mr. Cent took one look at the lovely Jäger, let out a blood-curdling howl and announced that this little girl was going to be his. From this pairing came some of the top dogs of the Nineties – HHC Gretchen, HHC Heidi, HHC Gus, HHC Liesel, and the legendary HJHC Mich, for example. The Jäger-Cent genes still show strongly in today's top tournament hunting Shorthairs such as HHC Tor, HHC Mia, HHC Hooty, HHC Abby and HHC Ty.

Because Jäger was such a dominant competitor in her prime, Mr. Cent was often relegated to the #2 slot in the U.S. Team's lineup. He had many runs that would've been winners, only to finish just behind Jäger. The season when Jäger was severely injured in an accidental shooting incident, Cent stepped up to the plate and won five state championships and grabbed a second place at the U.S. Open.

Cent was not just a tournament dog, but loved to hunt any kind of bird. He would retrieve ducks with the best of the Labs, even in the coldest weather. Bill couldn't stand to see him shivering in the blind and had a custom-designed neoprene wet suit made for him, probably the first of its kind in the country. In the field, he covered ground with a floating gait that appeared almost effortless. Although he would range widely, Cent was good about "checking in" and never got too far afield. He retrieved promptly, willingly and with a soft mouth.

Cent's only downside was a tendency to be undisciplined - perhaps a touch of Germanic arrogance in action. He expressed his displeasure at being left in Bill's Jeep while Jäger went hunting by eating the vehicle's dashboard – not one time but twice!

A bout of coonhound paralysis nearly marked the end of the line for Mr. Cent. He lived for 2-1/2 months in a kiddie pool filled with straw bedding, constantly nursed by Kathy. He eventually recovered, getting back to 90% of his old level and living to enjoy three more years of hunting.

Naturally, Cent lives on in Bill's memory. Even more important, his progeny are still active in the field and making an impact on tournament hunting in the U.S.A.



MR. CENT