

An excerpt from

Working Dogs by Elliott Humphrey and Lucien Warner

Reprint of the 1934 classic

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Ch. 1: Dogs as Workers

...the employment of dogs was greatly stimulated by the war. The number in use and the variety of work accomplished increased tremendously. Despite this fact, prior to 1924, the year of the inception of the Fortunate Fields project, no deliberate attempt was made to discover the way in which those traits most essential to good work were inherited. There were hundreds of efforts to breed dogs of greater and greater beauty. But there was no systematic effort to breed dogs which would be superior workers.

To understand why certain traits are essential, others nonessential and some detrimental in good working dogs one must be familiar with the work which they must do. In the remainder of this chapter we shall consider the several forms of service performed by Fortunate Fields dogs and the courses of instruction preparing for each. Since we have used the German Shepherd exclusively our comments refer only to that breed. It should not be inferred, however, that other breeds cannot be as successfully educated. In police service, for example, the Doberman, Giant Schnauzer, Airedale and several other breeds have demonstrated remarkable ability.

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Ch. 2: The Story of Fortunate Fields

During the days when the hunt was not a sport but a form of work essential to the nourishment of the family, the dog unquestionably earned his keep. Later, when his master was not a hunter but a herdsman, the dog was still valuable. But as the world became civilized, marauding beasts became fewer, and miles of fences sprang up to protect the flocks. There was little left for dogs to do except sit on the doorsteps and bark at strangers. Despite the fact that few dogs any longer paid their way in

terms of true usefulness men continued to breed and feed them. They had won a permanent place in man's household and heart.

Today the world population includes millions of unemployed dogs. They represent an inestimable amount of willingness, of eagerness of actual energy going to waste. Can we harness some of this Niagara of energy? That was the original question of Fortunate Fields.

To be truly useful in the civilized world of today, a dog must be well educated. No one has discovered a method for breeding educated dogs and it is unlikely that anyone ever will. But it is quite possible that dogs of greater intelligence, of greater educability, could be produced. The prime object of the Fortunate Fields project, the aim which renders it unique, is that of producing a strain of dogs which are peculiarly able to profit by instruction. The classes of instruction at Fortunate Fields might be compared to the classes in our modern schools for "gifted children." There is this difference, however. Gifted children are selected from the general population. The gifted dogs of the earlier classes were so selected, but those of the later classes represent generations produced by the carefully planned mating of the earlier geniuses. There exists in this project, then, the possibility of constantly improving the quality of the students which enter successive classes.

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Authors **Elliott Humphrey and Lucien Warner** were an integral part of the research at Fortunate Fields.

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