



The German city of Weinheim

PART 10:

Julius Wipfel and the Eurasier

Most dogs were developed after hundreds of years of evolution and lengthy selection by breeders. However, some breeds owe their existence to just one person.

The story of the Eurasier began in 1960, when Julius Wipfel (1919-2002) from the German city of Weinheim crossed a wolf-grey Wolfspitz (Keeshond) with a Chow Chow. Wipfel's aim was to create a healthy, stable and sociable family dog. But who is Julius Wipfel, and why a Wolfspitz and a Chow? Was it necessary to create a new breed, with so many others around?

The Eurasier is one of the few breeds whose history can be traced from the first generation. Several books have been published with a detailed history of the breed, and Wipfel himself recorded his ideas and breeding for future generations.

The first crossing to create the Eurasier took place less than 50 years ago, so it's possible to keep close track of the breed's progress, a great advantage to breeders and owners because almost every question about its development can be answered.

POLAR EXPEDITIONS

Julius Wipfel was born in the German city of Mannheim. As a young boy, he loved animals and especially dogs. He was very fond of books and stories about polar expeditions and dreamed of owning a sled dog.

During the Second World War, Julius and his wife Elfriede owned dogs, but mixed breeds, not purebreds. After the war, the couple moved to Weinheim an der Bergstrasse, north of Heidelberg, and lived on the Leberstrasse.

After 1945, Germany was under the control of Allied troops. When Canadian troops stationed around Mannheim withdrew, they left behind a dog. Some say this dog came from Canada, but there is no evidence to support this assumption. The dog – known as “the Canadian” – went to an animal shelter in Weinheim. When Julius and Elfriede went there looking for a dog, they took “the Canadian” home.





Wolfspitzen – the breed Wipfel chose after “the Canadian.”



Born in 1960, Barle von der Bergstrasse was one of the first results of the cross between a Wolfspitz and a Chow Chow.

The dog’s origin was unknown, but because he looked like a sled dog, Wipfel decided to take him home. Wipfel described the dog as “something in between an Eskimo dog and a Samoyed.” The dog was black, had a skull like a wolf and more-or-less-erect ears.

Within three days, the dog felt at ease in Wipfel’s house, but could be peevish with family members and was unfriendly to strangers. Still, he was a great and reliable friend to Wipfel’s son Rudolf, who at that time was only a toddler.

BELOVED DEVIL

This dog was the reason for creating a new breed. In his book *Eurasier*, Wipfel wrote almost lyrically about the Canadian. The dog was extremely intelligent and had “an untameable and dangerous behaviour.” He howled like a wolf and killed every small animal that crossed his path. “We loved him,” Wipfel wrote, notwithstanding the dog was “a beloved devil” until he died.

After its death, Wipfel and his wife looked for another dog of the same type and the Wolfspitz Bella von der Waldmühle became the Canadian’s substitute.

The wolf-grey Wolfspitz is one of the oldest dog breeds in Europe. Bella’s appearance reminded the Wipfels of their first dog, but Bella’s temperament was far better. They bred several litters, but after the war, many new breeds were introduced in Germany and the Wolfspitz was being overlooked. Julius and Elfriede could not forget the Canadian; he had left an unforgettable impression.

One day Elfriede said, “Let’s breed a dog for ourselves, one that looks like Bella and our Canadian.”

KONRAD LORENZ

Konrad Lorenz (1903-1989) was an Austrian zoologist and ornithologist who became known worldwide because of his research on imprinting in animals. After the Second World War, Wipfel devoured Lorenz’s books; the accidental crossing of a Chow Chow and German Shepherd particularly caught his interest. The temperaments of the puppies in this litter appealed to the Wipfels. Meeting Lorenz, who won the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1973, was something Wipfel could only dream of, but he hoped to discuss his plans for creating a new breed with this great scientist.

In the meantime, Wipfel was studying genetics, putting his study into practice crossing caged birds and wild birds, and breeding mice using a high percentage of inbreeding.

WOLFSPITZ X CHOW CHOW

After much thought and study, Wipfel decided to mate Bella to a Chow Chow, one of the oldest breeds in the world. His theory

was that the Chow had the most “primal genes.” He was not alone in making this decision; others advised him. The anatomy of the Wolfspitz and Chow are well matched; the Chow’s genetic material and Wipfel’s positive experience breeding Wolfspitzen convinced him that his choice was the right one.

In his genealogical scheme, Wipfel showed that the Chow Chow and Wolfspitz were on the same level as descendants of the old peat dogs and *Canis familiaris palustris*, another peat dog of Wolfspitz type.

Still, there was a long way to go. “It was a real battle – all negative qualities of *Homo sapiens* appeared: envy, jealousy and pedantic behaviour. The closest fellow workers became disloyal and, in their opinion, a new sort of learning had to be created. Not everybody got the point of this crossing, that is the Eurasier is a true descendant of the primal Samoyed and is not a failure, looking like a cross-bred Chow Chow.”

At first, Wipfel named his breed Wolf-Chow. Chow fanciers didn’t like this name at all, but Wipfel’s goal was well defined: “It must be a Polar type of dog in nice, attractive colours. The dog must have sufficient distance to other breeds and, last but not least, it must possess an attractive temperament, adapted to the circumstances.”

Wipfel also wrote a provisional breed standard; in the decades to come it was changed on points of vital importance.

TYPES I, II AND III

For his first crossings, Wipfel used three Chow Chow males and four Wolfspitz bitches. The males all had heavy bone and were red

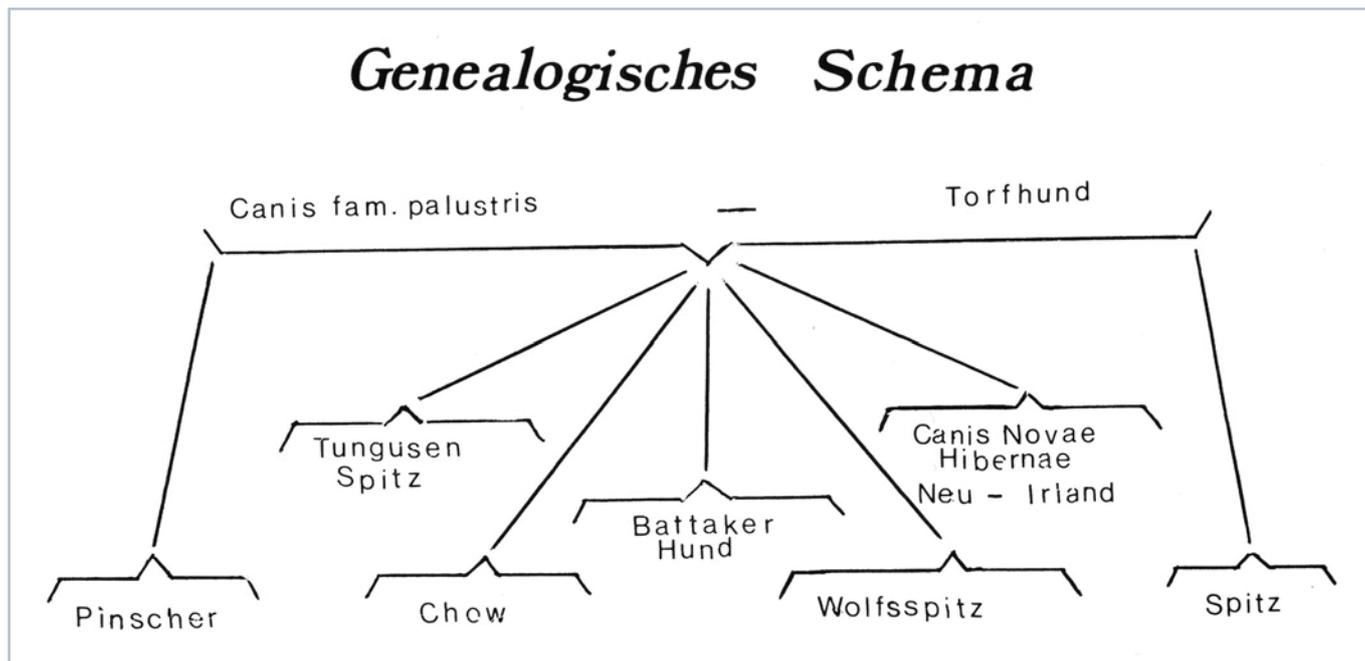
or black. The four bitches had light bone and a grey coat. Wipfel described the males as “doggy” and the bitches as “Spitz types.” He knew that these crossings would produce various types of dogs. Apart from the *Mischtypen* (Type 1, mixes), every litter had two other, totally different types. Wipfel was surprised and named the types Wolf-Dingo type (II) and Polar type (III). The mixes were in the majority and could not be used for further breeding. The Wolf-Dingo type came in various colours, but they were not suitable as family dogs and had reverted to ancestral type.

Type III, the Polar type, was present in every litter. Their coat was yellowish red and as adults, they showed the characteristics described in the breed standard. Wipfel wrote, “Only type III is suitable for breeding.”

INBREEDING

From the first litter (whelped June 22, 1960) until 1972, Wipfel had about 20 breeders under his supervision – a must in developing the breed in the right direction. Yet Wipfel saw various kennel types emerge and decided that only the most typical males would be allowed to mate the bitches. His decision was right, because almost immediately type improved, but at the same time the percentage of inbreeding increased.

Outsiders criticized the way the new breed was being developed and Wipfel feared that his dream could not be fulfilled. Desperate, he contacted the Institute for Breeding Animals and Genetics at the university in Göttingen and supplied them with a comprehensive explanation of his plans. Dr. Ruth Gruhn re-



Wipfel demonstrated that the Wolfspitz and Chow Chow are on the same level in evolution.



The Austrian specialist on dog behaviour Eberhard Trumler, with Charlotte Baldamus (vom Jägerhof)

sponded; she told Wipfel that she was very interested in the Wolf-Chow and continued, "It is a pity that your gene pool is built on one male... From literature and also from my own experience, I know dogs are not very sensitive for inbreeding. So after all it's not a tragedy."

Ruth Gruhn was of the opinion that Wipfel should stick to inbreeding and linebreeding and she advised him to divide the available bitches into five groups. These groups should be mated by five different stud dogs. She also advised against a cross between brother and sister.

In his letter to the Institute, Wipfel had also asked if there was a relation between the colour red and the desired type. Dr. Gruhn answered that, in her opinion, the combination of colour and type in Wipfel's litters was only a coincidence. If Wipfel liked this colour, he should – at the expense of type – choose a male and make his selection afterward. Wipfel was pleased with her advice and felt he had made the right choices.

SAMOYED AND A NEW NAME

After more than 200 Wolf-Chows, the breed needed new input to establish sled dog type and create more distance from the



Julius Wipfel, creator of the Eurasier

Wolf-Chow type. Wipfel contacted Lorenz; both were of the opinion the breed should be improved by using a Samoyed, a working dog that's tireless, amiable and easily satisfied.

In 1972, five Wolf-Chow bitches were mated to a white Samoyed, and Wipfel was surprised that all the puppies were black. Another surprise was that Konrad Lorenz purchased one of the puppies.

Wipfel himself gave the breed its new name – Eurasier – mainly because the FCI did not accept the name Wolf-Chow. The meaning of the new name is simple: the breed owes its existence to European and Asiatic breeds.

BREED CLUBS

The breed club *Kynologische Zuchtgemeinschaft für Wolf-Chow-Polarhunde* (Breed Club for Wolf-Chow Polar Dogs) was established by Julius Wipfel in 1960. In 1971, the name of the club was changed to *Deutscher Zuchtclub für Wolf-Chow-Hunde* (German Breed Club for Wolf-Chow Dogs) and in 1975 the club was renamed *Eurasier-Klub e.V., Sitz Weinheim* (Eurasier Club, Site Weinheim). In 1978, as the result of a disagreement, Wipfel founded a new breed club, the *Kynologische Zuchtgemeinschaft, Sitz Weinheim e.V.* (Breed Club, site Weinheim). It didn't last long; in 1988, Julius Wipfel, supported by a group of sympathizers, founded the *Internationale Eurasier-Club, Sitz Weinheim* (International Club for Eurasiers, site Weinheim).

This club disappeared in 1995. Today, there are three breed clubs in Germany, all three accredited by the German Kennel Club (VDH).



The Eurasier is fundamentally a family dog.

DIFFERENCES OF OPINION

Wipfel's star was shining; he wrote about the breed for international magazines and got interest from all over the world. However, he came to the conclusion that "It went too fast in my opinion. The inadequacy of my small organization and its staff could not stand up to the situation. It came to conflicts before a further development of the breed started, let alone ended."

Unfortunately, differences of opinion escalated between Wipfel and Charlotte Baldamus, one of the important breeders (vom Jägerhof). Her foundation bitch, Asta von der Bergstrasse, was bred by Wipfel. A group around Baldamus founded yet another club – the *Zuchtgemeinschaft für Eurasier* (Breed Club for Eurasiers), which joined the German Kennel Club (VDH) in 1986.

One of the issues between Wipfel and Baldamus was Baldamus's critical attitude toward the use of a Samoyed for a new crossing. She stated that this *Fremdblutenmischung* (mixing with strange bloodlines) would have too much influence on the genetic characteristics of the breed.

As well, X-rays proved that the Eurasier suffered from hip dysplasia. Immediately, Wipfel wanted measurements in the whole breed, but Baldamus disagreed. Some people described Wipfel's viewpoints on hip dysplasia as panicky, but the story ended with a breeding ban for Charlotte Baldamus. Dr. Werner Schmidt tried to mediate, but Wipfel would not budge.

NOT A WORKING DOG OR ONE MAN DOG

According to Wipfel, the Eurasier is not a working dog or one man dog, it's a loyal and watchful companion for the whole



The FCI classifies the Eurasier in Group 5 (Spitz and primitive types), section 5 (Asian Spitz and related breeds).

family. Rearing and training should take place in the family; Wipfel had no faith in dog schools. During his lifetime, Wipfel made decisions only after he had consulted scientists.

The new breed was recognized both nationally (VDH) and internationally (FCI) in 1975. The FCI classified the Eurasier in Group 5 (Spitz and primitive types), section 5 (Asian Spitz and related breeds). The present standard dates from 1994. The Eurasier was recognized by The Canadian Kennel Club in 1995.

On January 1, 2000, Wipfel wrote an open letter to the various breed clubs: "Maybe I can live through the installation of a substantial and solid roof above all Eurasier Clubs. A roof that takes binding decisions about breeding and about judges." His appeal was the signal for the foundation of the International Eurasier Union 2000, a club of the breed's friends and fanciers. Wipfel was appointed patron (www.eurasier-international.org).

In 2002, Julius and his wife Elfriede were prominent guests at an event celebrating the breed's 40th anniversary. During the festivities, he spontaneously reached for the microphone and said, "The KZG [*Kynologische Zuchtgemeinschaft Eurasier*] is not one of the best, but is, in my opinion, the best Eurasier organization in the world."

Julius Wipfel died in 2002. In 2006, his wife Elfriede moved to Hessdorf, a village in Bavaria.

A breeder/exhibitor/judge and retired bookseller and publisher, Ria Hörter is a contributing editor of De Hondenwereld, the national dog magazine of Holland.