

# English Shepherd Breeders from the Past

Mr. Guy Wilson  
Elberton, Georgia

by Melissa Crislip

Who was Guy Wilson and what type of English Shepherds did he breed? Descriptions almost always include smart and good on stock – yet range from temperaments of tough and gritty to gentle and obedient. So which is it – tough and gritty or gentle and obedient? Versatile that they are, can one English Shepherd be both?

Guy Wilson and his wife were well known in the Elberton, Georgia, community as Mr. Guy and Ms. Helen. They were leaders in church and civic duties, especially in activities for and with children. Mr. Guy was a retired insurance salesman and Ms. Helen was a school teacher. Mr. Guy was also dedicated to his English Shepherd dogs and served on the English Shepherd Club's Board of Directors in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Just across the Georgia line, in South Carolina, lived Mr. Guy's mother and aunt. Aging and unable to keep up with their two English Shepherds, Mr. Guy decided to help them out and brought the dogs home to Elberton. No one remembers what bloodlines these two dogs were from, most likely some local Georgia/South Carolina stock, but they were the beginning of Mr. Guy Wilson's own and very distinctive line. Somewhere around 1960, Mr. Guy imported a stud dog from Arkansas, aptly named "Arkansas Tim". Arkansas Tim was about 40 lbs, black and white, with a very wavy coat. He was sociable and smart and could scale a 14 foot fence. He produced some really pleasing pups with Mr. Guy's other two English shepherds. He died of antler wounds from a large buck at the age of 14, yet he had left his mark. The breeding of Eng-



Guy Wilson bred dogs were usually black with white markings in and Irish pattern like Butch (on left), or clear sable, like King II (on right).  
Butch and King II belong to Jimmy Dunn.

lish Shepherds took off from there. At times Mr. Guy truly had as many as 100 dogs. Usually he kept about 6 breeding bitches and 2 to 3 males. Litters were large, 12 to 14 pups and the numbers could add up quickly. Registered with UKC from the beginning, most of the Guy Wilson line dogs now have “PR” (purple ribbon) pedigrees of at least 6 generations of registered English Shepherds. If you are familiar with the G. Wilson line, you probably picture a pure black dog with white markings in a clear Irish pattern, or a clear sable and white, but apparently in the early days there were some tri-colors as well.

Mr. Guy bred two separate types of English Shepherds, explaining the wide range of temperament. One type focused on the guardian characteristics of the English Shepherd. These were the tough guys and they came with teeth and the courage to use them. The other was an all-purpose type, described by Mr. Guy as ‘a practical working dog, possessing the instinct to heel and drive. He is versatile and adapts himself to the work at hand, whether he deals with cattle, sheep, hogs or poultry. He is dependable and cheerful. For the rancher he can round up the cattle and bring them out of any type of cover, keeping them bunched when the herd is on the move. For the dairy farmer he can be sent out on his own to bring the cows from pasture to barn and perform many other jobs like loading cows, hogs and sheep and tending poultry flocks. His protective instinct makes him the ideal watch dog. He is gentle with children and devoted to

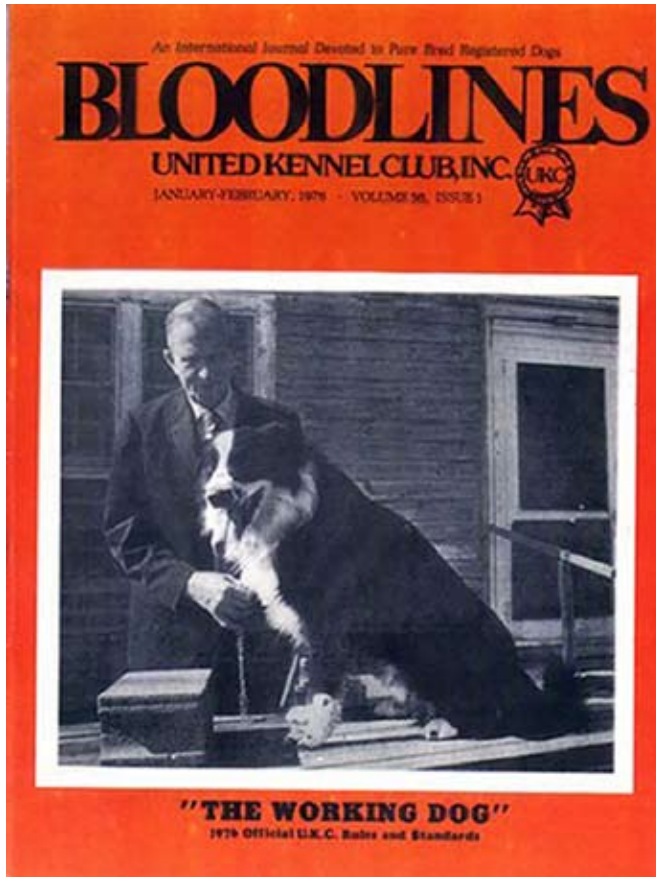
his human family.’ When I asked Mr. Guy’s son, Joe Wilson, how a person could tell by a pedigree whether the dog was of the guardian type or the all-purpose strain, he answered simply, “you’ll know by the dog.” Mr. Guy primarily bred his own dogs, furthering his line, but occasionally brought one in from other breeders. It is difficult to tell by a pedigree who some of these other breeders were, but Sandra Ransom in Georgia and the Mohns in Wisconsin were two.

Mr. Guy did not work his own dogs and surprisingly, did not purposefully breed for herding instinct. (but why the comments above when he talks about what his perfect dog could do – which implies herding?) His primary interest was the dogs’ interaction with humans. He was fascinated with the English Shepherd mind, believing them to be the smartest of breeds. He was innovative for his time, greatly believing in socialization of the pups with humans. He made a point to visit with each and every dog and pup at least twice a day and his love for the dogs and excellent care was clear as he spoon-fed canned dog food to his puppies.

Thanks to Jimmy Dunn of Elberton, Georgia, Joe Wilson of Elberton, Georgia, Darren Wilson of Saluda, S.C., and Diana Karr of Baltimore, Maryland, for their kindness in sharing oral histories and memories of the Wilson dogs. Thanks to Donna and Bryan Altizer for the 1973 brochure with pictures of Guy Wilson and his dogs.



## ES BREEDER, GUY WILSON



The last issue of English Shepherd Journal featured an article by Melissa Crislip on Guy Wilson, one of the English Shepherd breeders of days gone by. Since that article was printed, Melissa found these two wonderful photos of Mr. Wilson with some of his precious English Shepherds. Both of these photos were featured on the cover of *Bloodlines*. Unfortunately, Mr. Wilson's face is missing in the photo below, but the dogs are still wonderful!

