



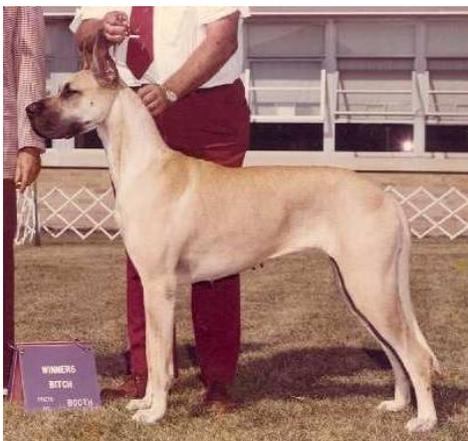
A couple of moments with Breeder Judge Nancy Lerch

Please tell us how you got started in Danes?

My Husband, Bob, and I began in Danes in the late 1960's. Bob came home one day and said the family needed a bigger dog than the Westie we had gotten for our 3 children. I thought big was a Dalmation so when Bob announced 'no a Great Dane' I had to really think about it. Needless to say the following weekend we checked out the paper and found a 'breeder' who lived rather close to us and who had puppies for sale. We fell for this darling fawn male puppy and that was the end of our search. Now....take note, we fell for the trappings of puppy mill breeders however we never regretted our getting a puppy this way. But let me go one step further and explain, Caesar opened the door to the Great Dane world, specialty clubs, puppy matches, dog shows, judging, making lifelong friends with common goals, etc., etc. Though now after all these years I would suggest/urge anyone looking for a puppy not to follow in our footsteps, for us however it was a beginning. My suggestion is always to first research the breed, check out local Affiliate clubs and of course the GDCA. Next check with vets in your area, they know who has puppies and can certainly give you some insight as to the breeder's qualifications and responsibilities to their dogs.

Who was your mentor?

My mentors were Ray Cataldi, Jr. and Steve Cochran, to whom I will forever be grateful. They were always willing and helpful to share their experience in Danes and very patient with a new, and really novice, Dane owner.



CH Petite Amour de Lorian

What was the name of your 1st Champion?

CH Petite Amour de Lorian, "Cleo" was a CH Rojon's the Hustler daughter and my foundation bitch for Orleans Great Danes. Every litter I bred goes back to "Cleo". To this day I know Cleo gave me the best to begin my 'life in Danes'.



Did you finish her yourself or have a professional handler?

A handler finished Cleo for us. I am not comfortable showing. Once in Wisconsin my Bred By bitch (BISS CH Orleans Mechante du Nikan) was entered and my co-owner, who showed her for me, could not make the show. So...I convinced myself I could do it. All the way to the show I kept saying out loud, "Nancy, this is the dumbest thing you've ever done!" By the time we reached the show grounds even the

BISS CH Orleans Mechante du Nikan bitch, Missy agreed. However after taking the class, and there was more than one dog entered, I breathed a sigh of relief. Since then I have 're-entered' the show ring on only a few other occasions. And those times were to show in the Brood bitch class and Veterans. Why you ask only those two classes? Because they move just as slow I do!



As a breeder have you owned a particular dog or bitch you thought was special over others?

Yes, BISS CH Summerfield's Lady of Hope is very special. Hope is everything I could ask for, type, conformation and attitude. That being said, I have bred/owned several 'heart dogs'. Each dog has been very special to me. Each dog brought something special into our lives, along with more insight into the breed and each was an additional learning experience.

Were there any particular dogs that you admired or thought represented what you wanted to breed or own?

Yes, BISS CH Rojon's The Hustler and CH Rojon's Please Me. Both were the early examples of, in my opinion, what I hoped to emulate in my breeding.



BISS CH Rojon's The Hustler

Though never will I breed the absolute perfect Great Dane I will continue to strive to that end.

Your greatest challenge?

Two things come to mind. Finding just the right stud dog for a bitch. This can be especially difficult when I want to stay true to my pedigree and still improve the conformation on the puppies. That being said it's obvious I believe in line-breeding. The second challenge is trying to keep silent when confronted with a new person who has been in the breed for a week but comes off expressing themselves as a pro. I sincerely feel that is one of the reasons some the Danes look the way they do now.

What do you think we need to improve on in our breed?

I think we need improvement in fronts and croups. So much depends on the individual dog that it is difficult to come up with one or two examples. One dog will have a gorgeous front but can't move worth a darn. Another moves wonderfully but has a croup that is half way down the rear legs. On a positive note, I see great

What do you consider your greatest success to date?

I have made some wonderful friends who share the same regard for Great Danes. Also having been given the opportunity to judge the GDCA National. My greatest success to date in breeding dogs has been to see the progression of traits I feel are important to the breed, in other words taking a negative and turning it into a positive.



CH Rojon's Please Me

improvement in temperaments and attitudes. I feel we are also lacking in consistent breed type.

What advice would you give to someone just starting in Danes?

Find the 'look' you admire most and then find a breeder who will share with you their experiences. Don't be afraid to ask questions, the smart and successful newcomers can gain tremendous knowledge from these people. And, remember always, we all started out as newbie.....diligence and ever seeking knowledge is what will make success come your way. Attend the seminars put on for breeders and read, read, read the many outstanding books and magazines regarding Great Danes.

How long have you been judging and what breeds are you licensed to judge?

I was granted the privilege to judge in 2002 and am licensed to Judge only Great Danes. However, that being said I also have owned Salukis and am considering applying to judge them also.

What do you think about the new Grand Champion Title. Will you give SD and SB points?.

I think it is a good way to bring back into the ring those Great Danes who have been shown and are sitting at home retired. IF those GD's are still in a competitive state than certainly, they should be in the ring. They are the good examples that should be recognized again. As far as SD and SB points, if they deserve the award, certainly I will award it.

What do you think about the idea of reserve Best In Show?

Personally, I think it takes the overwhelming sense of accomplishment away from the BIS animal. I feel the same way about awarding a reserve for Best of Breed.

Was there ever an embarrassing moment in the ring?

Fortunately only once, it happened while I was on my second provisional. I made sure I was wearing very comfortable shoes but.....lost one of them while walking the line prior to selecting Winners Dog,

Have you seen a trend (good or bad) in the Dane ring?

This question would generally lead me to a very long dissertation on the breed as I see it today. However, there are several trends that are making me wonder what have we done to this breed. Like it or not but in general our dogs today are lacking in type, good fronts, top lines and croups. Of course these are hopefully not all on

the same dog! A breeder should always approach a breeding with an honest evaluation of their bitch. I'm not sure if some problems come because bitch owners are buying the dogs from photos in the magazines and not putting their hands on the dogs and seeing that dog move. Seeing get from a stud dog that has been bred to other bitches also is helpful. This allows you to see if 'his' fault is consistent with the faults of the get I also don't think enough emphasis is being put on what the bitches' pedigree looks like combined with a particular dog's pedigree. We all should acknowledge that every breeding in one way or another is a crap shoot however the odds can be more in your favor if you do pedigree research. You can come out better knowing that the odds are in your favor. With all the work that goes into raising a litter of puppies, it's better to err on the side of positive rather than negative.

How do you feel about being approached after judging to discuss your placements?

I have 'no' problem with discussing my placements with the owners. Too many times I think exhibitors are afraid to approach a Judge. However if they do approach me I hope to explain so that they can understand my assessment that day of their GD. I believe in both positive and critical assessments. Those critiques are a good learning tool for the owners. Having the dog with them is a huge help as it is difficult to remember all the dogs you've judged that day. They must also realize that it is my assessment that day and on another day their GD may receive a different placement. The owners have to face the fact that as a Judge I'm judging what is presented to me on that given day and I'm mentally comparing it to the standard.

The question always comes up in breeder circles. Do you want to see the photos of the dogs you put up? OK to send Thank you cards or gifts??

I certainly appreciate an emailed/scanned photo of the dog I've put up. With today's economy being as it is, that money spent on a photo to send to me could go for another entry. Regarding gifts absolutely **not!** My gift is going back and reviewing the catalogs and seeing the scanned photos of dogs I've placed, those are gifts enough. Certainly a thank you note is also appreciated.

What is your biggest Pet Peeve when judging?

People who go overboard clapping and screaming over a class dog outside ring noises. That 'noise' is not only distracting it has never influenced me in my placements. Everyone that knows me is aware of my becoming stone deaf and shutting out the noises from outside the ring.



What other hobbies do you enjoy?

My other hobbies revolve around my family, working on the GDCA Website and of course going to more dog shows :-)

The End

Thank you Nancy for the interview