



An Interview with  
**Breeder Judge**  
**Katie Edwards**

**How did you get started? Why Great Danes?**

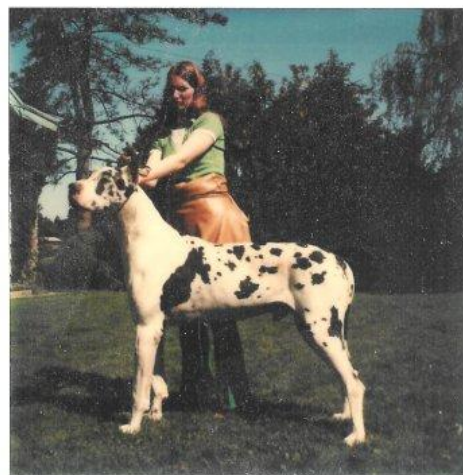
I've been involved in Great Danes for about 45 years now. I bred my first litter in the early '70's.

Back in the mid 1960's I spent a lot of my childhood growing up on my grandparents farm which happened to be across the road from where the original Laurado Kennels moved to. One day when I was 10 or 11 years old I was out at the end of the hayfield spying on the new people moving in across the road. When they started unloading some really big dogs I ran back to my grandmother and excitedly told her about the giant dogs the new neighbors had. Grandma was unimpressed since she felt the only good dog was a hunting dog since it "earned it's keep." I soon met Laurado Kennels owner Hazel Mage and started using every excuse to go over and help with the dogs until she and her husband Leo got pretty used to me popping in at all hours. My grandparents went to bed early and Mage's stayed up late so I got pretty adept at quietly leaving the house after "lights out", spending the evening hours feeding Danes, typing pedigrees or whatever else needed doing, then being back at Gran's by about midnight and get up the next morning with no one the wiser. Pretty soon I figured out I could whip through my chores and be over at the kennel part of the day learning to leash break pups, handle the older dogs and generally soak up danedom. Before long I was traipsing off to dog shows with Hazel. When I started spending more time at the kennel than at home I think my mother and grandparents threw up their hands and decided I was going to find a way to be over there anyway so they might as well let me live at the kennel a good portion of the time. I haven't been without at least one Dane since.

This was back in the days when some breeders had pretty good sized kennels. Hazel probably averaged 20 or more adult dogs plus puppies.

There were 5 approved colors at the time and she

produced champions in all 5 colors. The original kennel produced over 50 champions counting



(Right) About 1967 with a harl in the original kennel  
- I'm about 15 years old.

American, Canadian and foreign country titles. Since I've owned the Laurado name I think we've added another 18 champions, virtually all breeder/owner/handled or owner/handled. I breed very little - averaging less than a litter per year.



With Ch. Laurado's Celtic Warlord

### **What people influenced you early on?**

Hazel of course early on. Later I got to know Anna Mary Kauffmann and communicated with her quite a bit. Various judges & handlers opinions and advice helped a lot. When I got started we still had some great old timers around - Derek Rayne, Vincent Perry, Melborne Downing, Percy Roberts, Alva Rosenberg, Langdon Skarda to name a few. I tried to listen and soak up what was said. Like anything else breeding and showing is an on-going learning experience. You never finish learning.

### **What dogs influenced you early on?.**

For movement Am. Can. Ch. Laurado's Prince Rebel. The Working and Herding groups were combined back then and his balance and structure allowed him to fly around the ring keeping up with the German Shepherd and make it look easy. He had a great headpiece also. Maxwell Riddle featured his head in the book he wrote. Also for movement Ch. Polldane's Jason's Dandi Dandy. Form & function do go hand in hand.

There were not a lot of great blacks years ago but Othello, Chief Joseph, Primo d'Aquino were stand outs. For Fawns and Brindles a number of Mountdania, Marydane, Dinro, Danelagh, Sheenwater and some Honeylane dogs were very noteworthy. In harls, Riverwood & BMW overall had the most impact. On our side of the country, the Davis's dogs, Tallbrook, and Crockerly, Ch. Edeldanes Wildfire (& son Odin) come to mind. More recently, the Gray's bitch Gala was probably the best blue I've seen. There are certainly many more but I'm lousy at remembering names.

### **Have you had other breeds in the past? Currently?**

All three of my daughters have been junior handlers, and since I didn't let them handle Danes until they were about age 12, we either owned one of a few other breeds or used dogs provided by other people for juniors' dogs. More handling experience came from simply helping friends show their dogs. My oldest daughter Julia handled Danes, Siberians, Airdales, small terriers and a Beagle. Middle daughter Shannon and youngest daughter Rachel have handled Dalmations, Siberians, Chihuahuas, a Berner, Airedales, Boston Terriers and Danes. We currently have a champion Bernese Mt. Dog - great temperament - she just walks under and around the Danes.

**How do you feel the breed has declined?? How do you feel the breed has improved?** I think you used to see more weak rears, mostly cowhocks years back. Today we need to work on the straight fronts, function, balance, and health. Remember the Dane is a working breed that had a job to do other than lay on the couch. The percentage of Danes not passing echos is worrisky.

Not that these same faults weren't around years ago, but breeding has become more efficient. Thanks to computers we have better & faster access to information. We can instantly pull up pictures, health info, statistics and contact information instead of writing letters, asking for pictures by mail and doing things by phone. That and health testing allows breeding decisions based on more data. That's got to be good for the breed.

Being able to ship semen around has improved access to good stud dogs tremendously. In the past you would have to load bitches on a plane and ship them off to the stud or drive long distances hoping you timed the heat cycle right. Thank you to whomever developed the progesterone test. Developing tests for certain hereditary problems will give us tools to breed for better health. Some of this science is pretty exciting stuff for future breeders.

### **Is there a deceased stud dog you wish you had bred to and did not?? and why??**

I wish I could go back to Prince Rebel because he lived to 10 and so many of his kids lived to over 10. This combined with his stability, conformation and stamina was a great thing. In his prime we road worked him at a fast trot for 2 miles and he was barely breathing hard. At one time he was #1 male in the nation, also Top Dane in Canada for years but is a virtual unknown since he wasn't campaigned

around the country. He left the west coast one time to go to the Danorama in Chicago and won that under judge Laura O'Day.



**BIS, BISS Am. Can. Ch. Laurado's Prince Rebel**  
(as a young dog - his first of 7 All Breed BIS's)

### **Do you keep mainly dogs or bitches or both??**

I keep both, though you have to wonder why when you have a bitch in heat and your male wants to starve himself, whine and pout for a week or two. A couple long time breeders I know say they will now only keep bitches and have the studs live with other people. Can't blame them - you have to be set up and prepared to separate dogs when necessary.

### **You do co-own with a lot of people?**

My name is on a number dogs that I've bred but sold to other people. I've sold to many novices and, if they decide to show, they often need help. As a judge I'm not allowed to handle for other people or handle a dog I don't have my name on. Being listed as an owner on the dog allows me another class option (Bred By).

**Do you health test all of your dogs?** Yes, I'm a big believer in health testing. In certain areas of the country it has been difficult to get dogs to an echo machine but there are more of them now. Veterinary services continue to specialize and get more sophisticated. Canine cardiologists, ophthalmologists and fertility specialists were virtually unheard of some decades back.

**What advice do you give to new people?**

I like to see people try to show their own dog if they are able. People get so much more out of a sport if they can participate instead of just observing. This was a factor in creating the Amateur Owner Handler class. Handling isn't for everyone - I know one gal that gets physically ill just thinking about going in the ring and her dog won't behave for "mom" anyway. Professional handlers definitely have their place but the sport can lose grassroots support if people believe that they can only win by hiring a handler.

Stop trying to find a "diamond in the rough" for a show dog. If you are serious about showing, get the best you can from a legitimate breeder from the get-go. I see too many people start with something mediocre and try and "breed up." Also please try and have fun in the sport of dogs. The judge has not dealt you a death sentence if your dog does not go up that day. Hopefully you are going to love that dog anyway win or lose. I too have to bite my tongue at some placings but it's not just in dog sports. The best football team doesn't always win does it? They too can have a bad day or a ref can make a bad call, but in the long run quality normally drifts to the top.

Also, be nice. Join a breed club and be one of the people that keeps the club on track for it's intended purpose without falling into the trap of taking sides and the petty bickering that deteriorate so many clubs.

**How do you feel the judging is today as compared to 5-10 years ago?? Better ?? Worse and why??**

It depends on the judge. We lost a good teaching tool when they took away mentoring within the ring however I can see how it took up too much time. Most Nationals, the AKC, and judge's organizations make a concentrated effort to provide seminars but people have to make a substantial financial commitment to get to them.

The majority of judges are knowledgeable trained professionals that have put a great deal of time, effort and money into getting their license. I doubt if they would take a chunk of their life to do this unless they planned on being good judges. But judges are people and people can be fallible. Breed standards can be open to interpretation. You have to make a real effort to learn the fine points of other breeds if you are going to judge correctly. The successful breeders and knowledgeable judges in each breed are out there, and most are helpful, but you have to be proactive in contacting them to learn the things that make up proper breed type. Some judges have put out more of that effort than others. Interestingly enough many good judges have an artistic bent - they've developed an eye for line and proportion that aids them in judging. An AKC rep once told me that he only helped people to become judges, whether they would become a GOOD judge - only time would tell.

### **What breeds do you judge? What breeds would you like to judge?**

I'm permanent for Danes and Juniors and am finishing provisionals for Siberians. I will be applying for more of the Working Group as I get time (which is in short supply right now!)

### **When judging do you have any pet peeves?**

Hmm, maybe bringing a dog into the ring that is known to be a biter. No excuse for that.

I don't know about peeves - you've got to be flexible - but there are certainly things that are amusing. I've seen spectators get hit with chunks of liver when handlers heave it out of the ring getting their dog's ears up. Can you imagine someone's first experience at a dog show - getting pelted with liver chunks? Here's something to chuckle at. I found my teenagers laughing hysterically at this picture - it's mom in the early '70's in a miniskirt. Kids never think we were young once.



### **What is your most embarrassing moment in the ring?**

Heavens, there's been so many - which one? I'm not the picture of grace sometimes. I've slipped and gone down in the ring. You look up and the dog's going "What are you doing?" A leash slipped out of my hand on the "down" part of the down & back once - the bitch went to the corner, perfectly executed the turn and came right back with me to the judge before I could get hold of the leash again. The judge grinned told me I wasn't really needed here since the bitch clearly could do this all by herself!

### **As a judge what advice do you have for exhibitors?**

Understand that judging is often a tradeoff. For example, sometimes you have two dogs you like equally well but one's better in the front while the other's better in the rear. You must judge as you see them that day. The same judge can take the same dogs and place them differently at another time. Sometimes you don't find what you're looking for, but when you do it's a real joy to put it up.

Know your standard - it's not just for breeding - it will help you exhibit if you know what the best points of your dog is. If you're new, learn ring procedure - the judge only has a few minutes to evaluate your dog - be ready inside and outside of the ring.

*A special thank you to Mrs. Katie Edwards for taking her time to contribute this interview to Great Dane Review. We always appreciate comments and information about our judges and breeders. It is such fun to share with everyone.*

About 35 years later with Ch. Laurado's Celtic Warlord