

## An Interview with

# Linda Cain

## From the Heart Kennel

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Where are you from? Born in Kansas City and raised by my grandparents in Independence MO

How did you get started in Danes? Initially I got started in Great Danes as soon as I was living on my own at 18 in 1974. I went to a home near the Plaza in Kansas City and looked at a litter of fawns. I choose the one girl puppy that was hiding under the couch afraid to come out. While she was sired by Champion Moore Haven's Sultan, looking back, I know that her mom was bred every season just to help the owners make their rent. Heck, what did I know back then, I just wanted a Dane, and she needed protection. Oh, by the way, she cost me \$60.00.

Were they your original breed? No, before my Mother passed away, we had German Shepard's and Poodles and everything else I could sneak into the house. My Mother instilled in me the love of animals.

What is your kennel name, and how did you come up with the name? From The Heart Kennel. Unlike the way things are today, get a dog and get a kennel name, I didn't have a kennel name at first, I didn't get into that until I had my first litter of Harlequins in 1984. I always try to do everything, from the heart, so I thought I'd stick with that. Funny that it's called a kennel, because my dogs haven't really ever been in a kennel.

How many dogs do you have? 5 - I currently have the most beautiful dogs in the world, don't we all own them. One 8yr old, Group winning English Mastiff, Jack. My sweet, "I rule the world" mantle bitch, Mimi, who weighed in at a whopping 9 oz at birth, who pyo'd needing one major to finish. My baby-faced Harlequin champion, Teller, who is, of course, my silliest, peskiest, love bug. A gorgeous baby German Shepard, Faith, who was Vince's surprise puppy present, and my baby boy, Steeler, who is one of the most gorgeous babies I have ever had the pleasure to own. Steeler is out of the gorgeous Esther and Handsome Gable litter bred by Karen McCance and Marshall Stoner. I also co-own 2 Danes, the beautiful Dixie Doodles (Steeler's Sister), co-owned with Tracy Purser, and a gorgeous blue girl out of the magnificent Lola, Miz Bella, who is co-owned with my dear friends, Winton and Shirley Reynolds.

You handle your own dogs, have you always handled you own dogs? I started in Junior Showmanship at age 12, with Siberian Huskies. One of my girlfriend's mothers, Mrs. Hart, took me under her wing and started my dog

show passion. I have always handled my own dogs, there were times when I would hire a handler in the olden days when I was trying to finish my first harle bitch, Antiquity. Jerry Kesting, handled her to a point or two back then. Wow, is this bringing back fond memories.

Do you have any special training techniques that you would care to share? Well, I'd have to say that I have grown tremendously in raising puppies. The best thing I believe is to acclimate them to as many sensory items you can, so in my whelping box, they have so many toys and bones they bump into them. As they begin to walk, I put things in that they can crawl up on and through and by 5-8 weeks they are going through tunnels, up on short tables, into forts, balance beams and playground equipment (plastic kids forts and slides). They just seem more rounded and outgoing. I always begin training them to focus early on toys and bait. I also always give them a focus word, like "look" or "watch me" so that they know something good is going to happen when they hear those words. They will stop eating my favorite shoes when they hear their "word". lol

What was the name of your first champion? Ch. BMW's I'll Take Manhattan that I owned out-right.

How many years were you in the breed before you had your first champion? 10 years. My first two Danes were fawns from California from Ch. Von Raseac's Tybo O'Lorcain and Ch. Van Alstyné's Czar, neither finished but were joys to live with. In the early 80's I started handling for a harle breeder, she gave me my first Harlequin, Antiquity. ...the rest is history.

What do you think makes your dogs distinct from other lines? First off, my lines belong to others who began the journey long before me. Going into my past with my beloved BMW dogs, Laura taught me things that other breeders didn't agree with at the time. Laura's dogs were gorgeous beyond compare. I would see them and think wow, how does she get them to stand that way, or look that way. She taught me that her dogs were built correctly so they stood correctly. She taught me structure and beauty and obedience. Never had a seen such a tiny woman with such command over her beloved dogs. I remember her bringing Ruffian out on my first visit and walked him into a stack and just held him by his ear tip. BMW put that stamp of beauty on all her dogs. Now, looking at the present and into the future, I've been blessed with yet another great mentor and dear friend, Marshall Stoner. I've known Marshall forever, but really began loving his dogs when I met Joey as a baby, baby and fell in love. Neither of these lines are my lines, they were created by masters whose passion for our breed shows by what they have produced. I'm simply trying to grow in their footsteps.

Do you and what type of health testing do you do with your dogs? I test for everything possible, hips, thyroid, eyes, elbows, patella's, heart, etc...but one needs to keep in mind that while the parents and grandparents may not show positive to these health issues, we never know what lurks in the back of our pedigrees. Certain lines are predisposed to certain ailments and we need to deal with it and not shirk our responsibility.

Who were your mentors? My beloved, Laura Kiaulenas, friend and mentor, first and foremost and my dearest friend, Marshall Stoner. But many others have touched my life with the beauty of their dogs, Ray Cataldi with Boy and Rumor, John and Jessie G with Gable and Nash, Joe and Tootie Longo with Chief and most current, Scout, Arlene and Lowell Davis with Jessica, Don Carmody with Bumper and Preferred Risk, Dale Tarbox with Hunter and Guy, Gina Jableon with Poker, gosh, I could go on forever. Our breed is lucky to have so many dedicated to our breed that are not just a flash in the pan breeder but a forever, Great Dane person.

At what age do you evaluate a litter? If I'm not whelping the litter, I like to evaluate them at 6 weeks, 8 weeks and 12 weeks. I think that at 8 weeks you can pretty much tell how they will end up, but it is always hard to tell. If they are mine from the get-go, I start watching at birth and just watch them. Normally, like my Buck puppy that passed last year, I knew from the moment he dropped into my hands...but that's rare.

What advice would you give to someone just getting started in Danes? Do your homework. Listen to your breeder and get a mentor first and foremost. Don't ask everyone for their opinion because everyone has one. Don't rush into getting eager to breed a litter of your own, watch, listen and learn. It's not an easy thing to do to breed a beautiful litter and find the best and loving homes (forever homes).

What is your greatest success to date? Boy, this is a hard one, so if you don't mind, I'm going to tell you my top two.... I'd have to say it was winning the National with Felicity. She was clearly, one-of-a-kind and my kind of girl, BIG and BOSSY. Then came along my heart dog, Barney. Barney truly belongs to Jerry Kerr, but wow, what a dog. Sweet, silly, and full of the Zoomies. I remember working with Barney at a training class and told the facility owner, this puppy is going to win our Futurity this year....we just kind of laughed it off. He was so put together as a youngster that he gave me the goosebumps...Then BANG!!!! He Won the Futurity! And it was Jerry's birthday to boot! What a better birthday present. He was a winner from the beginning. He is a joy to be around and is doing what he loves most, staying by the side of his owner, Jerry Kerr.

What is your greatest challenge to date? Besides breeding that one in a million Harlequin, teaching not only beginners, but all around judges of what true breed type and structure is. I'm still learning and I'm no spring chick! I think we need to learn about structure and quit breeding the same faults back into our dogs. We have some breeders that continually breed bad neck into shoulders and bad fronts back to bad fronts and get bad fronts. What's that old saying, if you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you already have.

Would you like to become a judge? I keep saying that I'd like to judge when my handling legs give out, but the truth is, I love setting up a beautiful Dane, I love the feel of the body and I love the interaction with the dog.

What breeds would you like to judge? If I were to judge, however, I'd start with Danes, Mastiffs, Bullmastiffs and Dobs and Bedlington and Border Terriers. But I truly love them all.

Has anything strange or funny happened to you while you were in the ring? Well, one funny story a long time ago was that I was trying to save money so instead of driving in to the show the night before I drove up early the next morning. As expected, I was late and hadn't dressed so, I quickly dressed in the van and hopped out and ran in with my dog in tow...Just as I started to get my armband, a lady stopped me and told me that my rear was hanging out....I had stuffed my long skirt into the back of my panty hose....and sure enough, my rear was showing!

Any favorite Danes in the past? I've been lucky to have many favorite Danes. Antiquity, my first harle. Sara, my first BMW Champion, Buck my first Mantle puppy champion. Felicity and Barney who aren't mine, but are in my heart. And the list goes on.

What do you think are the biggest problems facing the breed today? Our fronts aren't great and we have lost some bone and substance. But first and foremost, we haven't gotten anywhere with our bloat issue. In 1974, the Morris Animal Foundation was doing research and they said just about the same things they are saying today. Why can't we figure this out? There are so many breeds that bloat that I would think we could pool our funds to figure it out. I have started tacking my dogs after my loss of Buck. It just about killed me.

What improvements do you see? Our toplines are improving and croups. Temperments are for the most part better.

I am honored to have been able to share with you my story and my thoughts. We have the most wonderful breed of dog. I can't ever see myself without one. I have made many life-long friends and I hope to continue to grow in Danes. And I'd love to thank Vince for standing by me with all my crazy dogness for all these years. God Bless you all.

Linda Cain

*GDR would like to thank Linda for taking the time to answer our questions.*