

Meet . . .

Owner-Handler

Charity Nicole (Fulkerson)

Peech

Shebang Great Danes



- 1) **Tell us your whole name.** Charity Nicole (Fulkerson) Peech (though I've had a few other last names throughout the years....Ha!)
- 2) **Number of years showing dogs.** 15
- 3) **Your kennel name & how you got it.** Shebang Great Danes – Well, when I was showing my foundation bitch and decided I was really going to do this and breed her. I knew I needed a kennel name. I was in college at Auburn, Alabama at the time so I first came up with Dixie Danes. After a little research, I discovered that was taken plus I didn't always plan to live in the South. So, meanwhile, a new college friend of mine gave me a music CD and said, "You have to listen to track four! It's so awesome". I thanked her for the Dixie Chicks CD (which was ironic because of the kennel name I couldn't use) but I really didn't listen to country music. She says, "It's NOT Dixie Chicks!!! It is SheDaisy! Just listen to it". I did eventually learn that when you live in Alabama and your friend is from Mississippi, there are two things to listen to; silence or country music!! So, once I listened to the SheDaisy CD, I DID really like it! Track four is called "I Will (be the Whole Shebang)". Then it hit me; my kennel name would be Shebang Danes because I want my dogs to be The Whole Shebang – color, conformation, temperament, longevity, soundness, intelligence, etc.!
- 4) **Where you live.** Richland, Indiana. Although, I have lived in Auburn, Alabama and Fairfield, California while showing dogs!
- 5) **Where do you travel to show?** Mostly Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Ohio. Though I have been to shows coast to coast due to living in a couple different places! There are several shows I still go to in Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi, too!
- 6) **How many shows do you attend in a year?** It depends on who I'm showing and what other things life has dealt me. My broad answer is I'm out showing anywhere from 10 to 25 weekends a year.
- 7) **Have you ever hired and/or used professional handlers and for what purpose?** Yes, definitely, but only ringside. I have yet to send one off with a handler! When I first started showing in college I went to handling classes and watched every handler I could. I was trying to learn to handle my own dog but I was so new, I sought a handler every chance I got! When I was home in the Midwest, my mentor, Michael Chiles (Michaeldane JB) always handled for me. In the South, I mostly tried myself but John Plessner helped me a lot. Jane Chopson and Sondra Peterson (all-breed) handled for me in California. It was a whole new world and I really lacked the confidence.

- 8) **What made you decide to owner-handle your Great Danes?** After moving back to the Midwest, my first now ex-husband thought he could handle my foundation stud dog (who I still have at almost 12 years old!) and I learned a lot from the sidelines (like what I would have done different). He did some winning and after he was out of the picture, I started taking in some of Michael Chiles' dogs back in. Through Michael's encouragement, I built up my confidence and started going to small somewhat local shows and handled myself.
- 9) **What are the greatest advantages of owner-handling your dogs?** Well, it is MUCH more economical to owner-handle! That eliminates handling fees and if you show in Bred-By, there is a reduced entry fee. Plus, there is no better way for judges and fellow Dane people to match your dog to its owner! Professional handlers often take many dogs in so it can be confusing as to whose dog is whose! It is also very rewarding to win with your own dog!
- 10) **What are the biggest challenges of owner-handling your dogs?** Politics! As unfair as that sounds, there are advantages to being at a show EVERY weekend and getting your name and your dogs 'out there'. It is challenging to know the judges, their breed background, and what types and things they tend to like. The level of involvement in this sport can be minimal and simple or a mind boggling game of strategy! With our breed, it is hard to actually win big with the minimal and simple approach though.
- 11) **What do owner-handlers need to consider if they want to be competitive in the ring?** Well, like I said in the above answer, there are so many details involved the further away from minimal and simple and closer to the strategy game you get!! If your dog is similar in conformation and you are in the ring with the professionals, you have to ACT like a pro! It is a pet-peeve of mine to look in the ring and the owner-handlers stick out like a sore thumb! Watch and learn what the pros do – every detail – small dog grooming things, choose your attire wisely, stop fidgeting, pay attention to the judge, etc. The list is long!
- 12) **Do you feel your dog has ever been over-looked in the ring by the judge because you are an owner-handler and if yes please describe.** Yes. I can't say for sure WHY we have been over-looked although I have many theories! I immediately think it was my fault because I did not show my dog to its full potential. Some dogs I've had in the past actually look much better when they are looking for me outside the ring. They get too comfortable with me handling them and can be sloppy or have their head down. And then there is the theory that some judges just have a tendency to put up handlers! Hmm??
- 13) **Do you feel there is any stigma against owner-handlers in Great Danes and if yes please explain.** More so than some other breeds I have dabbled in. I have taken in other breeds in the ring and it doesn't seem to matter who is on the end of the lead. Though it also seems there are other breeds that are even harder than Danes to finish owner-handled.
- 14) **What tips would you give a new owner-handler to help them step up their game?** Research and memorize your breed Standard first and foremost. I'm always amazed that novices aren't even sure what a correct Great Dane looks like! Also, ask questions, listen, and learn! You get as much advice as you can and then form what works for you.
- 15) **What is the most valuable advice you ever received about handling your own dogs from a professional handler?** I have received such a wealth of knowledge from Michael Chiles, it is hard to just pinpoint one thing! Even still, every show is a learning experience. I think the most valuable thing he taught me is to look at all of a dog's qualities, not just its faults. It is often hard to see past the weaker parts of some dogs – especially when

they beat you! But, if you can see the characteristics of that dog that made it stand out to the judge then you learn – instead of just criticize!

- 16) **What is the most helpful technique you ever learned just by watching professional handlers?** I'd say the tricks they use to stack a dog well in a quick manner. It seems when you are starting out and you look at how your dog stopped on its own, it couldn't be more awkward looking! I learned to line up the dog's body by controlling where and how the dog's head was positioned.
- 17) **What are some common mistakes you see owner-handlers committing in the ring?** Everyone makes mistakes including myself so I could list many! But, I think many owner-handlers have a tendency to fidget over the little things too much. I also see some owner-handlers making it too simple and as a result look sloppy. They think, "Stand (ok, four feet on floor), around the ring and stop here (ok, four feet on the floor), down and back. Stop at judge (isn't my dog pretty?!), then around the ring again and exit (why didn't my dog win – it's prettier!?)". They think they have 'nailed it' like a pro and their technique never improves because they did their pattern and don't learn from watching the others. Kind of goes back to my answer on #10; it is easy to make it too simple or too strategic!
- 18) **What have been some of your show ring successes as an owner-handler?** I've put points and even majors on some other breeds but in the Dane ring, I only have a small timeline of truly being an owner-handler because I can't take all the credit for my finished Champions! But, every point I have on my mantle bitch I bred and I'm showing now (Shebang's Classic Dark Shadows, 'Collins') was earned by my handling (6 points). We even took Best of Breed over the specials last year! A couple weeks ago, I went BOB over the Specials with Michael Chiles and Edna Taylor's young black bitch. She isn't my dog, but since I co-breed with Michael Chiles and Jodie Keim, I consider their dogs as family.
- 19) **What are some of the most rewarding things about owner-handling for you?** It is a very rewarding sport! Showing my own dogs that I bred is such a feeling of accomplishment even if we don't win! It also forms a bond and a special relationship with my dog and me. They know they get special attention and it is their chance to 'work' for me and show off! I spend a lot of time training and preparing these dogs for the ring and handing them off at the last minute to someone else seems futile for me and the dog!!
- 20) **Most professional handlers began as owner-handlers. What keeps you from taking that same route?** Two main things; confidence and time! I go through low confidence periods when I feel like I'm not doing my dog justice. Then there is the time issue! Having a family, a farm, my own retail pet health food store, and running a Great Dane rescue prohibit me from just gallivanting off half the week every week like a dedicated professional handler does!! I have to say my life pretty much revolves around Great Danes and the betterment of the breed as a whole! Handling is something I WANT to be awesome at because I love it, but being a breeder that produces dogs that are 'The Whole Shebang' is more important to me.
- 21) **Who is your favorite judge and why?** Hmmm. I like certain things about a lot of judges. I guess my all time favorite was George Heitzman. I'm really big into Great Danes being WORKING dogs so form and function are important to me. It always seemed that Heitzman recognized that in my dogs. I showed several generations of my dogs to him and who wouldn't like a judge that would put up her dogs? LOL
- 22) **Bonus Question! (Please answer!) If the mockumentary movie "Best in Show" made a sequel with you as one of the characters, what famous actor/actress would play YOU?** Really? That is a brain switch! Umm... since

'Best in Show' is a comedy, I would want someone that could play my Gemini personality in my little dog-show-world head. But then again, that character would have to be bright, cheery, attractive in her own plain way, and able to portray how I feel I act compared to how the other characters would feel about me . . . because that is what a mockery is all about. I guess I would choose Jennifer Aniston?