

Meet . . .

Owner-Handler

Karen Hamlin

Hamlin Great Danes

- 1) **Tell us your whole name.** Karen Hamlin.
- 2) **Number of years showing dogs.** 32.
- 3) **Your kennel name.** Hamlin.
- 4) **Where you live.** Salem, Oregon
- 5) **Where do you travel to show?** Pacific Northwest and California
- 6) **How many shows do you attend in a year?** Greatly varies.
- 7) **Have you ever hired and/or used professional handlers and for what purpose?** Louise Van Alstyne finished our first Dane. We hired Bob Hastings to campaign our Doberman, dachshund, and whippet specials. Georgia Hymmen helped me finish Cade.
- 8) **What made you decide to owner-handle your Great Danes?** I enjoy it.
- 9) **What are the greatest advantages of owner-handling your dogs?** The fun of doing it myself.
- 10) **What are the biggest challenges of owner-handling your dogs?** My current dogs are spoiled and know that I won't really make them behave—which they take full advantage of.
- 11) **What do owner-handlers need to consider if they want to be competitive in the ring?** Their dogs need to be well trained, well presented and in perfect show condition.
- 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, absolutely, with a very few judges who were clearly looking for just 'faces'. But I don't believe this happens very often.
- 13) **Do you feel there is any stigma against owner-handlers in Great Danes and if yes please explain.** No, I have always felt very well supported and that, in general, my dogs and I had our fair chance in the ring.
- 14) **What tips would you give a new owner-handler to help them step up their game?** Find a mentor and take lessons. I go to handling classes, often, with a fantastic instructor. Ask a friend to video tape and take (private) photos of your dog in the ring so you can evaluate how your dog looks. Have objective mentors evaluate your performance in the ring and use their feedback to keep improving. Stay positive and keep it fun for you and your dog.
- 15) **What is the most valuable advice you ever received about handling your own dogs from a professional handler?** (From a judge) Work so hard in the ring that even if you can't convince the judge to put up your dog then at least leave the ring having convinced people watching ringside that your dog should have won.
- 16) **What is the most helpful technique you ever learned just by watching professional handlers?** Watching Michelle Santana use any spare moments in the ring to train her young dogs.
- 17) **What are some common mistakes you see owner-handlers committing in the ring?** Not taking into account their dog's strengths and weaknesses in how they present their dog
- 18) **What have been some of your show ring successes as an owner-handler?** I enjoyed showing Mia as a Special and getting a number of Breeds on her because, back then, many of those judges told me that she was the first mantle that they had either pointed and/or given Breed wins to.
- 19) **What are some of the most rewarding things about owner-handling for you?** Having fun with my dogs, bonding with them in doing this together.



- 20) **Most professional handlers began as owner-handlers.** What keeps you from taking that same route? Well, I've shown two "client" specials to the Top Twenty: Sean for Vickie Soper and Georgia and Luther for Sheila Sammons (with Jane Chopson and Angie Radford as breeders) I did it for them because they were friends so I knew it would be fun and I loved those two dogs.
- 21) **Who is your favorite judge and why?** Adrian Woodfolk and Faye Strauss. Both are encouraging and tell you what they want you to do to give your dog its best chance.