

Meet . . .

Owner-Handler

Wendy Cox

WecoDanes

- 1) **Tell us your whole name.** Wendy Cox.
- 2) **Number of years showing dogs.** 12 years.
- 3) **Your kennel name and how you got it.**
WecoDanes or Weco's if there isn't enough room for the whole thing. When planning my first litter after starting to show I played with many different names describing where I lived. I spoke with Linda Morelli about them and she recommended that I work on a name that was individual to me, so thinking cap back on I used the first two letters of my first and last name to come up with Weco.
- 4) **Where you live.** I'm in Western Pennsylvania in a small town called New Castle.
- 5) **Where do you travel to show?** I've traveled to upper New York State, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, and I've gone as far South as Georgia. I am lucky in that there are many shows in a very reasonable driving area. Most I can get to within 2-4 hours.
- 6) **How many shows do you attend in a year?** The winter months are slow here in the northern area maybe only 1-2 a month, then spring, summer and fall there have been years that I was at a show every weekend. Depends on who I have out at the time.
- 7) **Have you ever hired and/or used professional handlers and for what purpose?** I have used several different handlers. Tom Davis was the first and I have a true friendship with him. He was also a mentor when I started showing. I like to show my own dogs, but I honestly like to watch them being shown by someone who is really good at what they do. Right now I have a co-owned pup that lives in Maryland and Corinne Witt shows her. It is easier with her living that far from me and I love Corinne.
- 8) **What made you decide to owner-handle your Great Danes?** I started into showing with the intent of always showing my own, I found out that it doesn't always work out. My first show girl, a brindle, hated going in the ring with me. I tried showing her myself for the first 6 months of showing and she would look awful simply because she did not want to be there with me. Tom came to my rescue and you would not have known she was the same dog with him showing her. She was beautiful in the ring and showed beautifully with him. I tried at various times to take her in myself even after she was finished and got the same results with her. She just wouldn't show nicely for me. But on the flip side of that I had a boy that I wanted shown by a handler and that wasn't going to happen he would stand in the ring and cry when someone other than myself took him in. He was a dream to show, just like a wind up toy would hold a stack for an hour if that is what I wanted him to do with no bait what so ever just wanted to be in the ring with me. We even got a Best in Specialty Show.
- 9) **What are the greatest advantages of owner-handling your dogs?** I think knowing all your dog's triggers is a big plus and not having to change how you are moving in the ring to match different animals is also great.



- 10) **What are the biggest challenges of owner-handling your dogs?** I think that they can get too relaxed with the owner on them. It becomes just a casual walk and not the 'end-of-the-lead-show-themselves-off' that you get when they are with someone else.
- 11) **What do owner-handlers need to consider if they want to be competitive in the ring?** I think you really need to know your animal and your abilities honestly. If you are unable to move at the pace that you need to really showcase your dog you aren't doing them any favors. If your dog is too relaxed with you in the ring you won't be able to show them off to most judges eyes. Flash does seem to win over steady and stable, in my opinion.
- 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.** This has absolutely happened on more than one occasion. You can tell when the judge won't even give your dog a look and then puts up an animal with a handler on that they couldn't even examine. Or the many times when yours has stood perfectly for exam, moved beautifully and you don't even get spoken with and then the judge will put up one that they had the handler take down and back 4 times to try and get them to quit pacing which they didn't and then give them the win anyway.
- 13) **Do you feel there is any stigma against owner-handlers in Great Danes and if yes please explain.** I don't know if it is just in Great Danes, I think that is the dog show world period, and honestly it is the world. A judge is human and if he sees the same handler in the ring with 6 dogs and you have 1, who is going to get recognized? Much as we like to think that it is only the dog getting looked at that just isn't the way it is. Why else do we dress so carefully to go in the ring? It is the nature of the beast that a familiar face is going to get the dog another look and if it comes down to 2 very close animals the judge will most likely give it to the familiar face.
- 14) **What tips would you give a new owner-handler to help them step up their game?** First to me is to go to handling classes with your dog. I start pups at 3 months going to handling classes and attending as many shows and varied locations that I can find for them. I stop strangers and ask them to go over my dogs. You want your dog to be prepared for anything so that your nerves won't affect them. Watch professionals and mimic their actions when you see it making the dogs look better. Ask for help from handlers and breeders that have done this successfully and listen to what they tell you. If you can have someone video record you at handling class and or shows. Watching what you do is incredibly helpful.
- 15) **What is the most valuable advice you ever received about handling your own dogs from a professional handler?** To always be aware and watching the judge in the ring. You want to have your dog ready for that 1 look that will make them stand out.
- 16) **What is the most helpful technique you ever learned just by watching professional handlers?** I don't know if it is just by watching, but Tom can really show off a head. Watching him and asking him how he does it has really helped me.
- 17) **What are some common mistakes you see owner-handlers committing in the ring?** Not paying attention to where the judge is looking at all times. You can let your dog relax a bit in a large class, but you have to be ready to have them pulled up and looking good if the judge is scanning the line and looking at your animal. Not moving their dogs out in a manner that showcases their gait. Women especially that aren't tall enough trying to hold the lead up in the air and moving their arm up and down so that the dog's head moves like a yoyo.
- 18) **What have been some of your show ring successes as an owner-handler?** My best is a Best in Specialty Show win on my Bred-By Exhibitor boy. That was a wonderful experience especially when he beat the Number 1 Dane of that year. I also finished that same boy by going Best of Breed from the classes and then on to a Group 4. Again beating the Number 1 Dane that year. I have been so proud of my dogs for showing the training that I put into them. I have had some great wins with very stiff competition in my area. We have many big name professional handlers here and when you can owner-handler a win with them it is a great feeling.
- 19) **What are some of the most rewarding things about owner-handling for you?** I just really enjoy the time with my dogs. Especially when we are away from home and they cuddle with me in a hotel room and keep me

company on the road trips. I love when they become working machines in the ring because they know it is what you want from them and they love pleasing you.

- 20) **Most professional handlers began as owner-handlers. What keeps you from taking that same route?** My joy honestly is in the whelping box and planning breeding. I show my dogs to make sure that they are specimens that will bring something to the next generation. I enjoy meeting with friends and being in the dog atmosphere of shows, but that isn't where my true nature is.
- 21) **Who is your favorite judge and why?** Cathy De La Garza. She really has dogs and their best interest in mind and I like her calm manner in the ring. She is able to relax the dogs and the owners/handlers.
- 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?** Jeanne Tripplehorn. I've been told that we look alike.