

An Interview with

Teresa La Brie

WYSIWYG Dane



Where are you from?

Defreestville, New York

How did you get started in Danes? Were they your original breed?

Our family had Poodles when I was growing up. I was really infatuated with Great Danes though. A neighbor, a local restaurant and a high school boyfriend all had Danes and I couldn't wait to get my own. I adopted a blue merle rescue just after high school. I purchased my first blue Great Dane in 1983.

What is your kennel name, and how did you come up with the name?

After I got my first Dane I started to talk to other people that owned blues. A couple friends complained to me after they had their first litters because they ended up with "surprise" colors in the litter. They were disappointed because they thought they had color pure Danes. Their color marked pedigrees showed only blue or black but they never checked the vertical pedigrees to see what else was in those lines. My first blue came from a litter that had 2 perfectly marked blue mantles. They were beautiful but could not be shown. When I got my first show blue I didn't want any "surprises". I did a lot of computer work back then and a WYSIWYG (pronounced Whiz-E-Wig) screen was used to preview a document and see exactly how it would look before you printed it. I used this as my kennel name with the thought that I wanted to know in advance what I would produce. Nothing hidden, no surprises. Of course that only related to color at the time.



Am GCh/Int'l Youth Ch WYSIWYG's Hulett Me B a Rock Mover, CGC BN RN AOM GDCA-VA, Westminster KC AOM winner 2012, First blue dog Grand Champion

How many dogs do you have?

I actually hate to answer that! Well I have 12 Danes of my own, another that is here temporarily and 2 Chihuahuas! However, eight of those Danes are veterans with 3 that are over 10 years. My dogs stay with me for life and I am fortunate to have so many of them into their senior years.

You handle your own dogs, have you always handled your own dogs? Do you have any special training techniques that you would care to share?

I handled my first show dog for his first several points. I quickly realized that even though I got some singles I really wasn't good enough to get the majors. I met Judy Harrington at a show and I asked her if she would be interested in showing my male. She put several singles and his first major on him.

Later, Rick Zahorchak stepped in and put the finishing major on him after handling him for only 3 weekends. I learned a lot by watching Judy and other pro handlers. I think the best thing people can do if they want to handle their own dogs is TRAIN!!! Get to as many classes as you can and take the dog everywhere. A well-trained and well-conditioned dog is a beauty to behold. A poorly socialized, ill-behaved dog is difficult to judge and can be a distraction to others in the ring. I also think that owner handlers have to be careful to present themselves in a professional dress and manner. You don't want a judge to look at you and think "pet owner" before you have even had the chance to present your dog.



My first blue champion (pictured at 8 years):Am/Can Willowruns' WYSIWYG Gulliver CGC TDI

What was the name of your first champion? How many years were you in the breed before you had your first champion?

My first blue champion was Am/Can Ch Willowruns' WYSIWYG Gulliver, CGC TDI. My first black champion was Am/Can Ch WYSIWYG's Black Sambvca, CGC TDI.



My first black champion:Am/Can WYSIWYG's Black Sambvca, CGC TDI

I know you are showing natural eared dogs, how did this come about? What made you decide to stop cropping? Do you think it is harder to finish dogs with natural ears?

When I first started showing I was told that you couldn't win with a natural ear Dane. My rescue was natural ear but I cropped my show dogs. When I had my first litter I left some natural and had some cropped. I continued to leave some "pets" natural ear and loved the look and feel of those ears. I was always a nervous wreck when I had puppies cropped because I had heard of so many dying under anesthesia. I had also seen so many good crops that never stood or ears that were ruined by improper taping/posting. At some point while I was showing Gulliver I saw the most beautiful natural ear blue dog at a show in New England. From that show I met Kathy Fraser and Judy Harrington and later, Sterling Moffat. Kathy later bred one of her females (Lazy Days Good Golly Ms Molly) to my Ch Gulliver. Her blue male from this litter, Ch Sterlings Blue Chariesis, became my first WYSIWYG sired natural ear champion. These ladies proved that you COULD show and finish uncropped Danes!

I later had my own ear bitten off by a Great Dane. I went through months of plastic surgery and skin grafts to repair/replace the ear. After experiencing that pain I just couldn't bring myself to crop a puppy! I still love the look of a cropped Dane but I am very happy with my natural ear dogs. I think they have a gentle, soft look to them. I cropped my last litter in 2000 and haven't looked back since.



Am/Int'l Ch WYSIWYG's Hullabaloo - First uncropped black male to ear an AKC championship

by Mike Teneriello.

CH Hauerdanes N to Mischief (CH MJB Hauerdanes Mr Coffee x Hauerdanes Makin Whoopie) was the first black to win Futurity. "Louis" and "Mister" were, indeed littermates!

What do you think makes your dogs distinct from other lines?

Well, if my dogs are distinct I would have to say it is their size and substance. I like a Dane that *looks* like it could take down a wild boar. I don't just want size – I want width/breadth and bone. I also want a really strong rear. I love to do agility with my dogs and they have to be sound and athletic. My dogs are often mistaken for being part Euro because of the bone. However, this perception may have more to do with them being natural ear. Some people mistakenly think that uncropped Danes are clunky or appear short in muzzle. However, people are surprised at the difference in the head when I lift the ears to show them what they would look like cropped. I think as people see more uncropped Danes they will become more accustomed to the look. I do think a good judge can *see* the head without lifting the ears but I have no problem with brushing them back or lifting for an instant if asked. I



Ch WYSIWYG's Ben Swing'n on a Star, CGC TDI



Am/Int'l Ch WYSIWYG's Steel Magnolia, First uncropped blue to finish from the BBE class

I do think it can take longer to finish a dog with natural ears – especially if you are attempting to do this as an owner/handler. However, I think that it takes longer to finish ANY Dane if you are new to showing and/or handling.

Did you have the only Blue to win the Futurity? I believe that the only Black and only Blue to win the Futurity had sire's that were littermates.

Am/Can/Int'l Ch WYSIWYG's Lothario v Luca, CGC TDI (BISS Ch Longo's Endless Gossip x WYSIWYG's Diamond Solitaire) was the first, and to date only, blue to win Best In Futurity at the Great Dane National Specialty Show. Thank you Judge Ms. Penny Twaits! He was expertly handled

do see a trend in the show ring right now for exaggerated length of muzzle with lips falling far from the jaw. The breed standard states that "The length from the tip of the nose to the center of the stop should be equal to the length from the center of the stop to the rear of the slightly developed occiput." It also states that "fluttering lips are undesirable".

Do you and what type of health testing do you do with your dogs?

I try to do as many health screens as I can. I do OFA hips, elbows, heart, thyroid and eye certifications. I have also

submitted DNA samples on all my dogs to the CHIC DNA repository for research use. I am a firm believer in health testing but I also realize the limitations with the tests currently available. Current testing is just a snapshot in time. They are useful tools but with the exception of hips/elbows, not predictive of future health. I continue to test throughout life and this is something I wish more people would do. Testing once for heart, thyroid and eyes is a start but it is far from “the whole story”. I think the establishment of the CHIC program was a good thing because it encourages people to share both the good and the bad in their lines. Unfortunately, most people do the minimum just to get the CHIC number and then never do follow up testing. I also think that people should pay more attention to vertical pedigrees when looking at potential breeding pairs.

Who were your mentors?

Unfortunately I didn't have a mentor when I got started. I went to all-breed handling classes and obedience classes. I purchased books about Great Danes and I subscribed to any Dane magazine I could. I learned to show by trial and error and by watching the pro handlers. I learned a lot about showing from Judy Harrington. Later when I decided to breed my first litter, my veterinarians took the time to talk to me about breeding and health testing and they walked me through whelping and raising my first litter.



**Speciatly HIT Am/Int'l Ch WYSIWYG's Trojan Horse,
CGC TDI CD RE GDCA-VA**

At what age do you evaluate a litter?

I don't have a set age. I spend a lot of time in the whelping box just observing the puppies. I watch how they move as they get older and how they interact with each other. I do attempt to stack once a week starting at about 4-5 weeks of age. I take photographs and use those to get a general idea about conformation. I like to keep puppies until 10 weeks of age. This gives me time to get preliminary health screens done (heart and eyes) and so they can socialize with my “pack”. It also gives me a chance to get them started on crate and leash training. By this age I can pretty much tell what I like or do not like with each pup. In the end, I have to choose a puppy that not only looks and moves well, but one that has the temperament and personality that fits into my home and

life style.

What advice would you give to someone just getting started in Danes?

I would say get to know the breed before you breed! Access to information is much easier than it used to be but you have to remember that ANYONE can post information on the internet. Try to join an affiliate Great Dane club or at least an all-breed club. Hopefully your breeder will be a good resource for information but if not, try to find a good mentor. I see so many new breeders making decisions based on information they obtain from chat groups.

What is your greatest success to date?

I have done many things that I am proud of in and out of the various show rings. I could rattle off all the titles I have earned but those are just a small percentage of what this breed means to me. I think my greatest accomplishment has been to mentor new owners. I have had many wonderful homes – both pet

and show. I have tried my best to share all I know and have learned over the years. I put a lot of effort into every litter I breed and every home I select for my puppies. I maintain a Yahoo Group just for WYSIWYG Dane owners. It is a safe place to ask questions, share stories, photos and discuss any Dane/dog related topics. I try to encourage all my puppy customers to work with their dogs no matter what their ultimate goals may be. Success as a breeder has to include looking out for the future of the breed.

What is your greatest challenge to date?

The blue gene pool is extremely small and choosing breeding pairs seems to be getting more and more difficult. I used to be able to choose from both blue and black stud dogs. I generally breed only 1 litter per year and want to maximize my chance at getting quality show dogs/future breeding dogs. With so many people breeding black to fawn now, it is hard to find homozygous black or black out of blue lines. I do not want to produce mismarks or non-showable colors. I also struggle with all the same issues all Great Dane breeders face. How can we improve the health and longevity of the breed? Despite all the research and our best efforts Great Danes still suffer from a variety of health problems such as bloat, cardiomyopathy, wobblers and bone cancer. It is heartbreaking to lose a loving companion before their time. But I can tell you that it is even worse to get a phone call from a puppy customer that suffers such a loss. I am hopeful that one day we will have improved health screening methods.

Would you like to become a judge? What breeds would you like to judge?

I do enjoy judging sweeps and might like to become an AKC judge someday. If I ever got beyond Danes/Working dogs, I would most likely want to do the Hound group.



WYSIWYG's Nikko Blue, AJP GDCA Venerable Dane

Has anything strange or funny happened to you while you were in the ring?

I once took the wrong dog in the ring. I was showing 3 females that day and mixed up one of my open and BBE entries. I was running back and forth to my van to switch dogs when I realized my mistake. I immediately told the ring steward and judge. Unfortunately the judge and AKC rep said I couldn't do anything about it and the dog that won the incorrect class did need to go on and show in winners. I did not show the other girl and did my best to be ignored in winners! I later had to wait weeks

for AKC to make all the corrections and turn back in my ribbon. It was terribly embarrassing and the judge

told me that my girl would have taken WB that day if I hadn't spoken up. Interestingly, the AKC rep told me that I should have continued showing all the girls and tried to win. Then later that win could have been disallowed and the RWB could have taken the points.



Am/Can/Int'l Ch LaDoguerie Flasback v WYSIWYG, CGC CD RAE AX MXJ FN GDCA-VA GDCA-HOF "Fang"

Any favorite Danes in the past?

My favorite black of all time is BIS BISS Longo's Primo D'Aquino. My favorite blue and heart dog will always be Am/Can/Int'l Ch LaDoguerie Flashback v WYSIWYG, CGC CD RAE AX MXJ NF GDCA-HOF, GDCA-VA.



What do you think are the biggest problems facing the breed today? What improvements do you see?

The biggest problems I see are with health and temperament. I think that breeders as a whole are doing their best to improve health but I have seen a decline in temperament. I can't even count how many times I have seen aggressive dogs in and out of the ring. I get calls on a weekly basis from people looking to dump Danes in rescue because of aggression. I believe one of the reasons we are seeing more of this is because people are breeding to dogs that they have never seen or laid their hands on. The internet and easy access to photos, as well as increased use of Artificial Insemination, has made it possible to breed to dogs from all around the country and world.

GDR would like to thank Teresa La Brie for taking the time to answer our questions.