

Meet . . .

Owner-Handler

## Kathryn A. Kudron

Voyager Great Danes

**1) Tell us your whole name.**

Kathryn A. Kudron.

**2) Number of years showing dogs.**

19 years (17 years handing Great Danes).

**3) Your kennel name and how you got it.**

Voyager; When we thought about a kennel name, we thought we would use Big Paws or Big Dogz or something like that. Another Dane person thought that wouldn't be a good idea in case we ever switched to smaller dogs. She suggested using Voyager (since our first Dane was BISS CH. Rocwinds Starship Voyager 'Kes'. It has worked very well as we continue our voyage in dog showing!

**4) Where you live.**

Aurora, Colorado.

**5) Where do you travel to show?**

Colorado, Wyoming, and South Dakota mostly. Occasionally Utah, New Mexico, Kansas, and Nebraska.

**6) How many shows do you attend in a year?**

Approximately 15 weekends for a total of approximately 40 shows.

**7) Have you ever hired and/or used professional handlers and for what purpose?**

Only once or twice, and it was because I was either unable to attend the show or I was at a different show.

**8) What made you decide to owner-handle your Great Danes?**

The challenge and the competition. I enjoy competing against the handlers and winning.

**9) What are the greatest advantages of owner-handling your dogs?**

If you are only showing one dog, you have plenty of time to prepare, train, and groom your one dog (it gets a little more difficult if you have more than one of your own dogs to show ).

**10) What are the biggest challenges of owner-handling your dogs?**

Being complacent. Just because you only have one (or maybe two) dogs to work with and train, you need to remember they **do** need to be trained and ready to go.



**11) What do owner-handlers need to consider if they want to be competitive in the ring?**

Although they are not a professional handler, they should not look casual. They are competing against people who are being paid to be there. Look the part of a professional. Always act professionally in (and outside) the ring. I think my biggest pet peeve is those people who feel they don't have to dress for showing (because it should be all about the dog) and then get upset when a professional wins. It's true that it should be all about the dog; but if you aren't working to show your dog to its best (and that includes making sure you look your best) then don't blame the judge or the professional handler.

**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.**

Sadly, yes. Not usually in the classes competing for Winners, but in the Breed ring with a Special, competing for Best of Breed. On several occasions I have had the handlers themselves remark that the dog I had they felt was their competition and they were surprised they won.

(On the other hand, I once won Best of Breed over a professionally handled dog that the judge had recently given a Group placement to; so it does go both ways!)

**13) Do you feel there is any stigma against owner-handlers in Great Danes and if yes please explain.**

No. I think Great Danes are one of the easiest breeds to owner-handle. However, that may be a reflection of where I live as there just aren't a lot of professionally handled Great Danes here.

**14) What tips would you give a new owner-handler to help them step up their game?**

No dog actually shows itself. You have to know both the good and bad about your dog to determine the best way to train and show your dog. It takes knowledge about the breed to know how to hide the faults and highlight the virtues.

**15) What is the most valuable advice you ever received about handling your own dogs from a professional handler?**

To be honest, the best advice I ever received from a professional was that I was good enough to do it myself!

**16) What is the most helpful technique you ever learned just by watching professional handlers?**

I love watching Dobermans and their handlers. I watch them all the time to learn from them. Probably the most helpful technique I've learned from them is how to move a dog's feet with just a little gentle tug on the leash. Done correctly, no one should ever actually see it done but the dog will suddenly be standing 4-square.

**17) What are some common mistakes you see owner-handlers committing in the ring?**

Besides the above-mentioned lack of professional dress, I see a lack of smoothness or togetherness. This is most likely related to nerves and inexperience, but it could also be related to a lack of training. You don't have to work hours with the dog (it will get bored) but spend a couple minutes a week working with your dog to learn its quirks and dislikes. Work with the dog just standing for a couple of minutes to practice bringing the collar up high on the neck for example. Just that togetherness will help create the bond necessary to look smooth in the ring.

**18) What have been some of your show ring successes as an owner-handler?**

Yeah! Brag time!!!! Some of my biggest successes were while showing Kes, BISS CH. Rocwinds Starship Voyager, my first Great Dane. They include a Best of Breed win over 50+ Great Danes (including the prior year's National

Best Opposite bitch) and then at that same show (same judge) going on to a Group 1. I thought I was going to be sick I was so nervous! But here again, I actually got a lot of help and encouragement from some of the professionals in the Working Group ring. And although a small specialty, Kes did defeat her sister for a Best in Specialty Show (BISS) win. Then there was Tia, CAN BISS-AKC/CKC CH Lagaradas Gold N Tiara RN CGC. She finished her Canadian Championship in 5 straight shows and then as a move-up the following day won a huge Canadian Specialty. I currently own the second Great Dane GCH to earn the Bronze level in Colorado (and the first bitch). She is the only Great Dane in Colorado to be working both in Conformation and Obedience/Rally, GCH. Bronze Daystar Voyager Gimme Heaven CD BN RN CGC. Stepping out of the Great Dane ring, I could not forget my Saint Bernard Doozer, CH. Sleepyhollows Doozer v Voyager RN CGC, the #13 Saint Bernard in 2008.

**19) What are some of the most rewarding things about owner-handling for you?**

Other than the brags above? Ha! I love the competition. I've never been one for team sports, so dog showing is great. I get to compete, even against friends, and we all are there for each other when it's over.

**20) Most professional handlers began as owner-handlers. What keeps you from taking that same route?**

It's hard enough training the 1 (or 2) dogs of my own! I think it would be very difficult to train and show multiple dogs in different breeds without a slew of assistants.

**21) Who is your favorite judge and why?**

I have many judges that I enjoy showing to because, although they don't like what I show them, they are so friendly to exhibitors. Sharol Candace Way, Nikki Riggsbee, and Ken Buxton. I have a list of judges that don't always like what I bring them and they can be much more stern (even rude) in the ring, but I totally respect their opinions as dog people; Edd Bivin and Robert Stein.

**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?**

Cameron Diaz!