

Meet . . .

Owner Handler

Shari Ziegenbein

De Robles Danes



1) Tell us your whole name.

Shari Ziegenbein.

2) Number of years showing dogs.

18 years.

3) Your kennel name & how you got it.

De Robles Danes. Our city is El Paso De Robles; Pass of the Oaks. I love oak trees, so that's how it came to be!

4) Where you live.

Paso Robles, California.

5) Where do you travel to show?

I'm right in the middle between Los Angeles and San Francisco. I travel both ways.

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

Depends on budget and judges or grandkids birthdays! Typically 2 or 3 times a month.

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

Yes, I have. I hired a professional to handle my homebred boy in the Specials ring.

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

Watching someone handle my dog at a show and realized that I was capable of doing that, and I would have the joy of being with my dog even more!

9) What are the greatest advantages of owner-handling your dogs? Never having to worry if your handler can make your ring time. Bonding even more with your dog. The satisfaction and pleasure of winning with your own dog!

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

I think the biggest challenge for me was self confidence! I admit that at first, the pros had me worried! I think most of our challenges are in our own minds!

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

I think you need to look professional. Your dress and attitude go a long way!

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.

Most definitely! I think the times I was overlooked was because I didn't do my job in presenting my dog properly! It's been a long learning process! I do believe there are judges that will not put up owner-handlers if they have a choice, but there are SO many judges out there that love to put up owner-handlers!

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

I really don't feel there is any stigma against owner handlers in Danes. Out here in California, I know the owner-handlers far outweigh the professionals in Danes.

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

Be confident! Know what you are doing! Don't go into the ring not knowing how to handle your dog to its best advantage. I do still struggle with this, but don't give up! The satisfaction you get from knowing you showed your dog properly is priceless!

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

That's a tough one! I have received so much advice from some very wonderful professional handlers! I think the biggest one, and this is going to seem silly, is to 'breathe'!!!! Take a deep breath, hold your head up and show off the most beautiful animal in the world!

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

I think being calm is very important! One of my favorite handlers, Carol Grossman, had the calmest hands ever! She really inspired me!

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

Let me start this off by saying I have done this many times! Fussing too much with your dog! It's so distracting to the judge, and I'm pretty sure it is annoying to the dog! Set your collar, stack the dog, step back, take a breath and smile! It presents such a nice picture!

18) What have been some of your show ring successes as an owner-handler? I owner -handled my first show bitch Ch. Anadane's Summer Solstice CGC, to her Championship, with a 5 point major Specialty win. I owner-handled my Bred-By Exhibitor boy, Ch. De Robles Colorado Caper CGC, to his Championship, finishing him up with a 4 point major Specialty win. Did I mention I liked Specialties???

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

I think the most rewarding thing about handling my dogs, is the satisfaction in knowing that I can, and did, do it myself! Plus, the added benefit of being with your precious puppy, even more!

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

I never had the desire to handle professionally. I very much appreciate the hard work and effort the pros put in to their work!

21) Who is your favorite judge and why?

I have several, but I really like Dana Cline! He runs a nice ring and he always has a smile on his face! He is gentle with puppies and extremely polite to exhibitors!

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?

Hmmmm....I would think that have to be Megan Mullally from the television series 'Will and Grace'!