

ZELDA CASANOVA, SANDIA DOBERMANS

Q How did you get involved in Doberman Pinschers?

In 1987 I was mugged---hit over the head with a butt of a gun and robbed; receiving a severe head injury. It took me months to recover. I had wanted a Doberman for years but kept putting off getting one. The robbery made me realize that time was ticking and life could end any day. WHAT was I waiting for? I lived in Ft. Worth and located Edd & Irene Bivin of Dob Mann, acquiring my first red boy Thunderation Dob Mann. Irene and I went on to co-own 'Taipan's' sister and co-breed together. My Doberman life began! Nancy Wagner from Gemstone was also an inspiration to me, not only with Dobermans, but with Dachshunds. There were many years we "dabbled" in Dachshunds, showing, breeding but mainly enjoying their antics. In 1992, with the support of my husband we founded our kennel, Sandia. We selected the name Sandia for the breathtaking Sandia mountains in New Mexico. Without Bev's support with grooming, traveling and showing, many of my dog activities would not have come to fruition. I am lucky to have him help with the dogs and cheer me on in my passion!

Q What inspired you to enter the ring as an owner handler?

Jim Briley of Aquarius Dobermans inspired me to enter the ring and handle my own dogs back in 1991. Jim made me aware that most judges appreciate seeing new faces in

the ring, owners that are prepared, working with the dog(s) they love — competing. Jim had shown our dogs early on, but he encouraged me to go in the ring confidently with my own dog because I had prepared and had a good dog. Fortunately, I listened to his advice then and again in recent years when he encouraged me to show my dogs myself. Additionally, I have had some expert guidance from my handling classes in Dallas. Verjean Lunenschloss at Top Dog, holds terrific all breed handling classes with excellent instruction that prepares me for the show ring. Peggy McConnell also helps prep me with specific techniques to get dog's attention and stack quickly. The professional handlers have also been very supportive and kind to me, providing guidance and tips along the way. Preparation is the key! Many hours have been spent watching the ring, handlers, reading, watching all available handler videos and attending seminars. If your dog is groomed well, trained well, you are dressed neatly and you have done your homework for the ring — then showing your pride(s) and joy is the icing on the cake and is extremely rewarding! Because I am not showing every single weekend, my heart races and my adrenaline soars before every ring experience. My nerves continue to be my challenge, but it may also be what keeps me sharp with my dogs. I need to buy stock in Altoids---they do seem to help mask my nervousness down the lead to my dogs.



The Sandia Doberman Family



Stoneleigh Dob Mann and me winning the 6-9 Futurity Black Bitch Class

Q Are you also involved in performance?

When I purchased my first conformation Doberman, disappointingly, he didn't pan out in the conformation ring, so I quickly became aware of obedience. Performance is still my passion. My main focus is obedience and my current Dobe, Wally, is trained through utility however we have yet to enter the ring. We are working to put much needed finishing touches on him prior to showing. I have been increasing my knowledge in other performance areas as well. A few weeks ago we entered our first Barn Hunt and earned a leg in Novice. Lure coursing being opened to all breeds has been a lot of fun for us too. It is wonderful to see our Dobs so well represented in this exhilarating event! Another exciting area we just earned a title in is weight pull. When trained and done properly, this is a very exciting venue where Dobs can also excel. When we have 'spare' time, we attend agility classes at a fabulous new facility in our area, What a Great Dog. Dock Diving at Dallas Air Dogs is another really challenging event we are practicing. There is little time to be idle for performance Dobermans! This year was a year of increased learning for me. I entered



Zelda and Wally winning 1st place.

UKC and International conformation shows to expand my knowledge of these Clubs and what they have to offer, so I would know about them first hand. These associations have been quite interesting and fun.

Q Did you have a mentor?

I have been very fortunate to have Jim Briley as my mentor in conformation and breeding. He has given me a great foundation of knowledge to build on. I reach out to Jim every few weeks for input on a variety of topics, from handling to breeding and judging. Having a successful, experienced mentor, has given me a terrific base to grow from. My dear friend Lynn Eggers is always there to support and give me much needed guidance as well. Not only do I have mentors, but I feel like I have a VILLAGE that help keep SANDIA Kennels performing well, whether it is conformation, obedience or our other areas of interest. Fortunately, living in a large metroplex, we have excellent veterinarians, reproductive specialists and wonderful training venues with knowledgeable professionals willing to share their training tools and tips.

Q To date what has been your most memorable ring experience?

My most memorable ring experience was in 1991 at the Chandler, AZ National. I showed Stoneleigh Dob Mann, a puppy from my first litter and he won the 6-9 Puppy Dog Futurity out of a huge class. It was very exciting! When I returned to the room Irene (Bivin) said "Where have you been, the class should have been over a long time ago?" I told her I'd still been showing and we won the class! We both got a laugh out of that. I was recently asked to judge Sweepstakes for the DPC of San Antonio. This was also one of my most memorable experiences from a different perspective! I loved this opportunity and hope to be able to have more ring time in a judge's role. *continued on page 35*



Wally in a 'happy' heel!



Zelda and baby Wally.



Zelda and Wally.