

**Debbie Cooper  
Longmont, CO**

My love affair with Rhodesian Ridgebacks began back in 1999 when my husband and I first saw the breed in person when we saw a couple walking their Ridgebacks in a park near our home in South Florida. I grew up with English Setters but I was immediately smitten by the regal bearing and sheer impressiveness of the breed. It was over two years until a Ridgeback joined our household, after a move to the Philadelphia area and a great deal of persuading my husband on the merits of sharing our lives with a new family member.

Like many first-time owners, I wanted “just” a pet. Unfortunately - or, fortunately in hindsight! - the breeders we’d been referred to, Gail James and Sandie Gordon, had a very long waiting list for companion-quality puppies but they had a show-potential male available in a current litter. We visited to meet the puppies and it was all over... “Cooper Cooper the Ridgeback” was meant to be ours and our journey into the wonderful, crazy, amazing world of Rhodesian Ridgebacks began.

Our foundation bitch Garnet came to us just over a year later. By that time, we’d made friends with people in the Ridgeback community and I’d learned to show dogs on my own. We’d also gotten involved with lure coursing as our boy REALLY loved chasing bunnies. Garnet was supposed to go back to her breeder to have a litter but our relocation to Colorado changed all our plans and we decided to whelp and raise the litter ourselves. In partnership with Sandie, we bred our first litter under the Dimond kennel name in 2005. After another co-bred litter with Dimond, we decided we were in this for good and we established Maijani in 2006. While we don’t breed often, we have lived the joy and heartbreak of being breeders and I am proud to have bred over a dozen AKC Champions. As a breeder, I strive to produce physically and mentally sound dogs with consistent type. We are now raising our 4<sup>th</sup> generation at our home north of Denver, Colorado.

I have been blessed to have been mentored and supported by many long-time breeders across the country and every year I look forward to spending time with them during the week of the National Specialty where I always learn more about our breed. I believe in giving back through volunteer work and have served as a past chair of the RRCUS Ethics Committee and am currently the President of the Colorado Rhodesian Ridgeback Club. I have also volunteered as a member of the Top 25 committees at several National Specialty shows. I have been privileged to judge puppy and veteran sweeps for the Arizona Rhodesian Ridgeback Club and the Bay Area Rhodesian Ridgeback Club and being nominated to judge at our National Specialty is truly an honor.

**Marie Glodowski  
Belleville, MI  
(Zareba)**

I am honored and delighted to be nominated as Sweepstakes Judge for our incredible breed. One of the most fun events at the National Specialty is the Sweepstakes competition. With each assignment comes new opportunities and responsibilities for finding the dog (or bitch) that best embodies the breed we all love. When you see the Ridgebacks that pull together everything you're looking for, they can't be denied. The excitement of finding the special puppies with a bright future, or the delight in seeing the greatness in the veterans is truly a privilege.

Since meeting my first Ridgeback in 1993, then co-owning my first Ridgeback, a Juniors dog in 1995, this breed has been my passion. Over the past 26 years, my dogs and I have participated in conformation and various performance activities like lure-coursing, obedience and nose work. I appreciate all aspects of what our dogs were bred to do. They are truly beauty in motion. As a breeder-owner-handler, I've finished many dogs and enjoy competing with them in conformation and other events where time allows.

Continuous education of our standard and its elaboration is something I enjoy and something I've taken seriously. I have attended judge's education seminars given by the Education Committee at various specialties. I am also a RRCUS Breed Mentor. Previous sweepstakes judging assignments over the years have taken me to the San Diego Rhodesian Ridgeback Specialty in Palm Springs, California, Perry, Georgia, Lexington Kentucky, among others including the Michigan Hound Association where I judged all Hound sweeps for Puppies and Veterans.

Thank you for the nomination as a sweepstakes judge for the National Specialty. I look forward to the privilege of seeing the dogs in action. Being a breeder, owner, handler and having judged several Ridgeback and Hound assignments, I anticipate the honor of being able to combine all of this into rewarding your beautiful Ridgebacks as a Sweeps Judge. I thank you for putting your trust and support in me as a nominee and if voted in, it would be my absolute pleasure and joy.

## **Valerie Nunes-Atkinson Temecula, California**

Valerie Nunes-Atkinson is a second generation breeder of German Shorthaired Pointers under the prefix of VJK. Since 1971, Valerie's involvement in confirmation began at the young age of 8 in Junior Handling, showing a pup from her Father's first litter. Her Junior's career included many top awards including California Junior Handler of the Year and culminated with Best Junior Handler at the Westminster KC in 1980.

After graduating from SDSU with a BA in Journalism, Valerie eventually gave up the corporate life to follow her dream of becoming a full time All Breed Professional Handler. For the past 25 years her success as a Professional Handler and as a Breeder is noteworthy. Having won well over 200 Best In Shows and numerous Nationals on a variety of breeds. In 2013 Valerie was awarded by her peers with "The Winkie" for Best Professional Handler. In 2014 Valerie and her co-breeder Yvonne Hassler-Deterding were awarded for their decades of breeding top GSP's under the prefix VJK-MYST, winning AKC's Sporting Group Breeder of the Year and Santa Barbara KC's Sporting Group Breeder of the Year. As a breeder she most notably co-bred/ owned and handled 2016's Westminster KC Best in Show winner CJ. Valerie was also Co- Owner on Carlee, 2005's Westminster KC Best In Show winner. VJK-MYST GSP's is known worldwide for producing top GSP's that have won, titled and excelled in a variety of disciplines. Her thirst for breeding beautiful dogs has led her to a few other breeds where success has followed as well. Her love for Sighthounds allowed her the opportunity to be a co-breeder on Harley the All Time Top Winning BIS Dog of All Breeds in Sweden, in addition to him winning BIS at the World Show in 2012. More recently, her passion for breeding Whippets has already produced BIS, National, SBIS, TOP 20 and Westminster KC BOB winners. Valerie's passion is not limited to just breeding and presenting beautiful dogs, she also loves teaching the future generations the fine art of presenting dogs successfully. Dedicated for decades to mentoring and training Juniors, she has now expanded her seminars to adults and all breeds seminars that have been well received nationally and internationally. As a member of the GSPCA she heads a successful National Juniors program and finds great satisfaction in watching her kids succeed and find confidence in the ring.

Her pride and joy at home comes from her two children, Danica going into her senior year in HS, and Garrett who will be starting HS this next year. She takes great pride in her Pet Resort & Equestrian Center, Briarcliff, and is looking forward to some exciting new additions in 2020. In addition, Valerie enjoys working and supporting the NAIA efforts in preserving the rights of animal ownership and breeding, loves International travel with her family and riding horses for her relaxation.

The year 2020 brings another dream to fruition for Valerie, that of being honored to judge Best Jr. Handler at the Westminster KC. She wants to thank the members of the WKC and looks forward to this assignment. She wants to extend best wishes to all juniors competing as she remembers...this is where it all started for her all those years ago.

**Karen R Stewart  
Moraga, California**

I got my first Rhodesian Ridgeback in 1992 from Oakhurst Rhodesian Ridgebacks. That is when I fell in love with the breed, and when I first met Barbara Rupert. I met Barbara at the very first dog show I ever attended. I wandered by the ring and saw this breed of dog I had never seen, and this German lady was walking out of the ring with her dog, so I asked if she would please talk to me for a few minutes about this breed. She graciously accepted my request! I knew I had to learn more about this breed, so I promptly went to the bookstore to find whatever information I could on the Rhodesian Ridgeback. Five interviews later, I was going to get my first Oakhurst Rhodesian Ridgeback! CH. Oakhurst Jewel of The Nile (“Niles”) lived to be 14 ½ years old. In 2005 I got my 2<sup>nd</sup> Rhodesian Ridgeback, CH. Oakhurst Alafin Son of a Princess (“Fin”). Fin met Uncle Niles at the Rainbow Bridge in 2017.

Today, 27 Years later, and 5 litters whelped, I have 3 generations living under my roof! Fiona, Sangria, and JoJo.

I have been a member of the Bay Area Rhodesian Ridgeback Club and Rhodesian Ridgeback Club of The United States for more than 15 years. I have served as the 2nd Vice President and a Director for the board of BARRC, and most recently have been voted to serve as the 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President for 2020. I have served as the Ethics Chairperson for the RRCUS Ethics Committee, provided expertise to the Audit Committee and have served as the Top 25 Chair on several occasions for the RRCUS National Specialty. In May of 2018 I was invited to judge Sweepstakes at the RRCUS supported Trenton Kennel Club Dog Show.

When I am not being a dog fancier I work as the Surveillance Program Manager for a Compliance Company that provides services to the Healthcare industry. I have worked in the Healthcare industry for more than 30 years serving in many financial, operational, and compliance capacities.

**Teresa West-Holmes  
Wadsworth, OH  
Luvakis**

I'm thrilled and honored by this nomination. Some of my most enjoyable and memorable times in the ring have been judging Sweepstakes entries at regional specialty shows. To have the first-hand ability to examine the next generation of our breed showcased in the 2022 RRCUS Sweepstakes competition would be thrilling beyond words. As I write this, I'm currently awaiting progesterone results with high hopes and eager expectations for our next generation.

As a child, I was introduced to the sport of dogs by way of our family's breeder who had been a well-known breeder and judge of Cocker Spaniels for many decades. I had the great fortune to learn the ins and outs, highs and lows of being a breeder and passionate proponent of a breed. Swanks gave me the tools to be a hard worker, good sportsman and a compassionate handler when competing as a 4-H Dog Program exhibitor. Not surprisingly, this expanded into AKC sports when I aged out of 4-H and purchased my first show dog.

Although I still have a special place in my heart for those funny, fuzzy, little clowns, as a young adult, I had a strong desire for larger breed that was a bit more "wash and wear." It was chance we stumbled upon our first Ridgeback, Seti, in 2002. This led us down the rabbit hole that is the wonderful world of the Rhodesian Ridgeback, meeting exhibitors, breeders and fellow fanciers along the way, and ultimately leading us to our foundation bitch and my heart dog, Ekundu.

Experiencing success as an owner-handler in the Breed ring fueled my desire to explore the full capacity of the breed, including obedience, Rally, agility, lure coursing and therapy dog work. Not only have these experiences enhanced my desire to participate in an even wider array of events with my dogs, but it has also fueled my desire to help educate and train other dog owners. I've built puppy kindergarten and Rally programs at several clubs and training facilities, and currently am the AKC S.T.A.R. Puppy instructor at my local kennel club. In addition to training adult dog owners, I've also taken on the role of project advisor for my county's 4-H Dog Program, which allows me to introduce so many young people, including both our daughters, to the fun they can have training and exhibiting their dog.

From the show ring to the performance ring, from the coursing field to the nursing home bed, our dogs continue to amaze me. I marvel at our breed's versatility and our breeders' continued commitment to producing the sound, versatile puppies that carries us into the next generation. I am truly humbled by this nomination, and it would be my profound privilege to judge Sweepstakes at the 2022 RRCUS National Specialty.