

# Lines from Linda

by linda ayers turner knorr



## For Lina, with Love

*Some people in our lives surpass all "Ordinariness" when it comes to thoughtfulness, generosity and love. This makes it difficult for us to give back in any equivalent measure. Such is the way I feel in wanting to express my love for Lina Basquette.*

Everyone who knew her is aware of Lina's special love for my family. My brother, Roy Ayers, Jr., expressed himself as follows:

**"E**very one hundred years or so a Lina Basquette comes along. Someone who impacts forever every person they touch. Such was my relationship with "The Godless Girl." Who else can you point to who waltzed (or in her case pirouetted as a prima ballerina) through the Roaring 20's, starred in Cecil B. DeMille classics in the 30's, warded off the advances of Adolf Hitler in the 40's; and that was just the beginning for Lina. In her third or fourth life as a dog show judge in 1981, Lina was judging on a panel with my dad in Denver, Colorado. I thought she was in her 50's, and she let me think it. A few years later we celebrated her 80th birthday at a bench show in Virginia, and she still insisted that she must be in her 50's. I continued to concur. At the Old Dominion Centennial Show in Virginia several years back, I took my girlfriend, Christine, to see Lina judge her favorites, Great Danes. I wanted Christine to witness Lina's ability to flow about the ring, actually becoming as one with each magnificent animal.



The crowd was huge. Upon spotting me she flowed all right; straight over to me, knowing the dogs would be waiting she kissed me, eyed Christine up and down and asked, 'So Roy Jr., who is the pretty one?' I introduced Christine as my girlfriend to which Lina responded, 'If I were only 20 years younger; I could kick you!' This was so typical of her humor and unpredictability. Lina always amazed me.

"Recently, at the International Film Festival here in Washington D.C., Lina was highly honored for her work in silent

*At the International Film Festival in Washington, D.C., Roy Ayers, Jr. presented Lina as she was honored for her work in silent films*

films. I was fortunate enough to be her escort. Imagine a room full of modern day directors and stars, all networking with ego. One guess

who completely captured the imagination of all those present within minutes. One more guess who the press migrated toward in her flowing gold sequined dress. No need to guess, really, it was the same person who charmed the entire world for at least 50 years. It was Lina. She went out with grace and style. I will miss her."

**Roy L. Ayers, Jr.**

When I was six years old, Lina placed me first in Junior Showmanship competition. Afterwards my mother introduced





*Lina as she appeared in "Show Folks," a 1928 Pathé picture directed by Paul L. Stein.*



*Lina exhibiting the inimitable style that she brought to all aspects of life: Ch. C & B's Special K Gribbin, Trumbull County K.C., 1983. Judge: Roy Ayers*

me to the movie star. I was awe-struck by her very presence. Lina has always been a part of my life.

Lina was by my side for my second real judging assignment at the Fox River Valley Kennel Club in Chicago. It was just before Christmas of 1992. She had spent the Thanksgiving holidays at my parents' home in Stone Mountain, Georgia. Lina shared many holidays with the Ayers family.

Dick and Judy Cooper were our hosts for dinner after the show. As long as I live I will treasure the memories of reminiscing with that group. There were fourteen rings set up inside the O'Hare International Trade Center that day, but the crowd surrounded ring one where Lina Basquette held them in a trance, as was usually the case wherever she judged. She was captivating! Lina and I stayed up all night visiting in her room like two young girls at a spend the night party.

My mother Hazel Ayers remembers that any conversation with Lina always led to her mentioning "The Campbells" or "K." Their relationship was as special as

the name of her favorite Great Dane. Frances and Jim Campbell were Lina's family, too!

Dr. Campbell relates their family's relationship with Lina as follows:

**"T**he dog world has lost a great lady. Dogs have lost a special friend. Many friends and admirers have called to talk about Lina 'The Legend,' the 'Grand Lady of Great Danes' and one of the great women of the dog game. All of the above is true. Frances and I feel like we have lost part of our lives. Lina was more than a friend - she was family. We loved her very much. Still do.

"We first saw Lina handling at the Harrisburg show in 1970 and first spent time with her at Dr. Jim and Betty Gribbin's home (owners of top win-

*Jim and Frances Campbell with Lina during the judges' luncheon, Westminster, 1990*



ning Kimbayh). Erna and Hans Heidere were there also. It was the beginning of a long friendship, but not long enough.

"Lina's first visit to our home was in the early 70's. She was judging a Dane match at the Metropolitan Washington Dane Club. She came to our home to see our Kimbayh daughter, Karni. She liked Karni and said she would like to handle her. As she was leaving to go judge, she asked if we were bringing Karni to the match. We told her we had planned to, but since she had come to our house to see the puppy, we thought it would not be fair to Lina to show under her and we had decided not to go. We did not realize it at the time, but have since believed, that was the beginning of a close and honest relationship with Lina.

"We never showed one of our dogs to Lina. About nine years have passed since she handled for us. Lina finished Karni, our first champion, under Nelson Radcliff in the mid-70's. She showed specials for other clients during the 70's as well.

"In 1979 I received a phone call at my dental office - it was the first time I heard Lina cry. Her car had just been repossessed with no warning from her client. She was devastated. I told Lina that was the best thing that could happen. Now her





*Last photo of Lina  
with "K" - with Dr.  
Jim Campbell at  
his home in  
Maryland, Easter  
1988*



ning Group One (Judge Council Parker) to get her last major when majors could not be found that summer. She won her first Best In Show (Judge Don Booxbaum) at twelve and one-half months. Winning the Working Group at the Garden in 1983 (Judge Mel Downing) was a highlight. 'K' and Lina broke the all time Great Dane record on Easter Sunday 1985 with her 103rd Group One and 29th Best In Show. That record still stands. By the way, it was

relationship with that particular client was over and she could move on to better things. I was not sure what, though. That night I drove five hours to Wheeling, West Virginia and brought Lina back to our home.

"In August of 1980, Betty Gribbin died. She gave us ownership of stud puppies which had not yet been whelped. Later in '80, Frances and I selected a puppy that had been born on August 29, about a week after Betty's death, a free gift from Betty.

"You guessed it! It was a beautiful bitch puppy which we named C And B's Special-K Gribbin. When Lina saw her it was love at first sight. The devotion was mutual. At six months and two weeks, 'K' won her first major (Judge Joe Mellor) while traveling to keep another Dane company. She finished by win-

Kimbayh's record that she broke. Betty Gribbin's Kimbayh was also handled by Lina. We treasure Kimbayh's twenty-eight Best rosettes, which Betty left us, along with 'K's' twenty nine.

"I have shared this to give the background to a relationship which we consid-

er to be the most exciting and meaningful years we have spent. Lina was a star! There was always a certain mystique, but once Lina became a friend, she was the most real, down to earth person ever. She enjoyed many plain, simple meals, occasions and people. She was extremely honest, thoughtful, very bright, and witty. Her sense of humor was magnificent until the very end. When any judge would dare to turn 'K' down, Lina would say, 'Jim, I really don't wish them death, but I do hope they come down with a bad case of Hemorrhoids.' What a competitor! She very seldom complained about a loss, but she always went on to the next win. Once she lost the breed at an early judging and jumped into the car driving two states to win the Breed and Group at a late judging show. She had a lot of respect for most judges, often using, 'Yes Sir' or 'Yes Ma'am' in the ring. I would like to mention her favorites, but it would not be fair if I missed one. I helped Lina move from Honey Hollow at Chalfont, Pennsylvania to Wheeling, West Virginia. What an experience! She had some very old catalogs. One, from Alva Rosenberg, is a treasure.

"With Lina, the dogs were always a priority. She was never willing to go out to dinner until the dogs were fed and exercised. She seemed to love all dogs, even the mixed breeds. She always made our cats feel special, too.

"We must share a note Lina received

*Frances Campbell joined  
Lina in 1989 for a party  
honoring Barry Paris who  
wrote a profile on Lina for  
The New Yorker Magazine*







*Celebrating Thanksgiving at my parents' home in Stone Mountain, Georgia; Lina and my daddy Roy Ayers, Sr.*

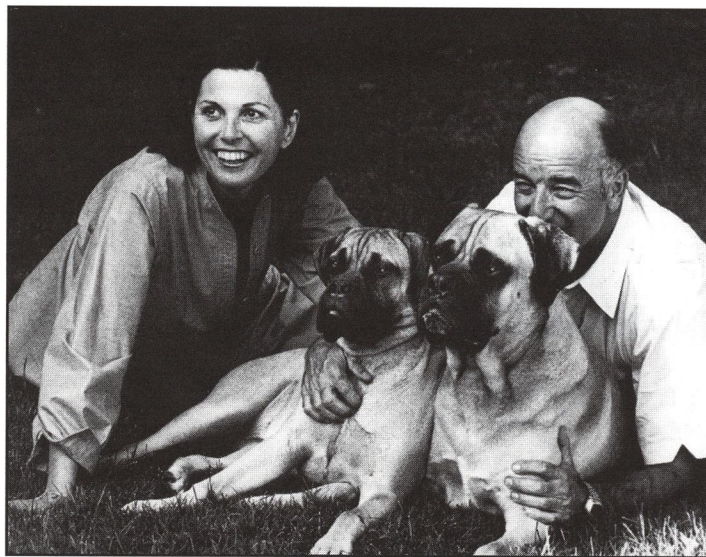


*Part of the ShowSight family ringside following Lina's judging assignment, January 1994, Lakeland, Florida; Joe McGinnis, Lina, and me*

while in the Washington Adventist Hospital. It was from Kevin Thomas, film writer and film critic for the Los Angeles Times:

*"Dear Lina, Know that you are in my thoughts and prayers. I've known a fair share of this century's legendary ladies, but none can compare with you! One of the countless qualities that sets you apart from all the rest of the glamour girls is your dazzling lack of pretentiousness. We should all be as down to earth as you are!"*

"What a description of Lina! That was the Lina that we knew and loved. We respected her, admired her, trusted her, and always let Lina be Lina. She did the same for us and our family. Our sons Greg and Chris grew up with Lina as part of the family. We all



*The reflection of Lina's beauty shines here in her daughter, Lita Warner Heller, with her husband Mort and their lovely dogs, Aspen, Colorado*

shared dogs, celebrated holidays, played together, and prayed together.

#### **Dr. Jim Campbell**

During a telephone conversation from her hospital room, Lina said to me, 'I would rather die that cancel a dog show.' It was her strong will to go to Annapolis to do her upcoming assignment. We also talked of her great joy in being a part of the ShowSight family. She adored Joe McGinnis, Duane

*January of this year - out to dinner in Lakeland, Florida during the January Circuit*

Doll and James Taylor. The excitement of teaming up with a brand new magazine and see it through to become a success was yet another challenge she had enjoyed in life. During the conversation Lina said she was trying to get her strength up so she wouldn't miss her monthly column for the magazine. Fighting back tears I acknowledged all of her wishes expressing whatever encouraging words I could muster at the time.

She said if she could only go home to Wheeling she could get some good food and regain her strength, thus

allowing her to accomplish her goals. She could tell I was crying, as I did many times during her final weeks. Lina quoted Phillipians 4:13, a Bible verse which meant so much to her... "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." It was her testimony to me! Then over the telephone we closed our eyes and prayed together. I need not tell you what happened next. Lina returned to her home in Wheeling. She was there to judge her assignment at Annapolis. She met her magazine deadline. And so the 'Godless Girl,' with all the stories surrounding her life, in the end was a testimony to us all. We want Lina to have the last word, so we close this with her own words as written in her last will and testament...







*"From a long, productive life, I leave fairly small material assets, but those who have known me know that I have never shirked hard work and have made few demands on my associates' time or assets."*

*"Perhaps, I should mention that I leave this world with few regrets, few encumbrances and a life that has been a marvelous adventure, many ups and downs, tragedies, good times and an independence of spirit that has often sprayed flakes of trouble on my 'rebel head!'"*

*"As God is my judge and my guardian angel, who has taken care of me all these impervious years, this is the whole truth and nothing but the truth."*

*Lina  
Basquette*

MEMORIALS HONORING LINA BASQUETTE HAVE BEEN SET UP AS FOLLOWS:

**MATCHING BLOAT FUND  
MORRIS ANIMAL FOUNDATION  
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PLEASE REQUEST ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS BE SENT TO:

**THE FAMILY OF LINA BASQUETTE  
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