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TWO

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FOR THE SHOW



Traveling to dog shows led Glen VanderHart and Les Stallings to buy an RV that they now use to transport their canine trio during their blue-ribbon quests.

By Sharon Scott Wilson, F88505S

My friends Glen VanderHart and Les Stallings have carried the concept of RVing with a dog — or, in their case, three dogs — to an entirely new level. A few years ago, the two became involved in showing Aussie, their Puli — a breed known for dreadlock-like locks reminiscent of Jamaican singer-songwriter Bob Marley.

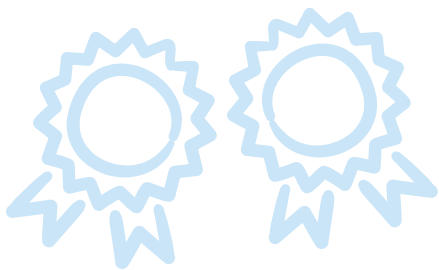
Glen and Les stumbled into what would become a whirlwind lifestyle change through a serendipitous chain of events. What started as a simple wish to buy a dog as a companion resulted in the formation of a passion for showing dogs, thereby leading to extensive RVing, and eventually to living in an RV community. The two acquired land and built a 3,500-square-foot house with

an attached, two-bay, 3,500-square-foot RV garage in The Gardens RV Village, located in Crossville, Tennessee. (And, yes, the garage is indeed the same size as the house!)

“We’d never even considered showing a dog in our lives,” Les said. “But, when Aussie was born, it was evident he was highly show-grade material. The breeder sold the dog almost reluctantly, absolutely begging us to show him, just once, as an experiment. That was it; we were hooked!”

Picture a huge show in Atlanta: A relatively untrained 6½-month-old pup with Glen as his deer-in-the-headlights trainer struggling through the rigors of the ring. “I did the show, despite my inexperience,” Glen said with a laugh. “There were a significant number of dogs in the show, and most of the trainers were





TWO FOR

professionals. At the end, Aussie won a major award! It was a phenomenal achievement for a first-time showing . . . truly a significant win.”

Les and Glen stumbled into RVing as well. Originally, they hauled Aussie from show to show by car. “We enjoyed the shows, but roaming from hotel to hotel, staying in less-than-first-class motels . . . well, it was for the birds . . . certainly not for the dogs,” Les said with a grin. “Finally, one day we were staying in what was euphemistically called a two-room ‘suite,’ near the Perry, Georgia, fairgrounds. When a mouse ran across the floor, that did it! We ran out immediately and bought an RV.”

RVing became almost a compulsion, with the couple buying increasingly larger RVs and, eventually, even buying a home in The Gardens. “It’s great for us,” Les said. “Being in Tennessee, the location is central to most of the shows we visit. There



Glen VanderHart and Les Stallings

↑ Les and Glen’s 3,500-square-foot RV garage in their home at The Gardens RV Village provides ample space for their motorhome, and more.

were many times we’d have a weekend event in the South and need to go up North the following Friday. Being able to go back home in between shows allows us to wind down and visit with friends.”

The event schedule can be relentless. Glen explained that they have been known to do a show literally every weekend except for Christmas and New Year’s. “The trick to showing a champion dog is to accumulate as many wins as possible; the competition is ferocious. So, you might be in Philadelphia one weekend and Myrtle Beach the next. It’s been great to be able to come home to unload and restock the RV directly from the RV to the kitchen and laundry room and never step outside,” he noted.

Glen and Les retired their current show dog after the 2018 Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show and are waiting for their youngest dog to mature and be ready for the ring.

A FEW WORDS OF ADVICE

With all this “street cred” when it comes to RVing with dogs, we asked

Glen whether he had any tips for the rest of us. “Your first concern is the health of your animal,” he stated.

First-aid kits vary in price from less than \$20 to well over \$100. Because Glen and Les are on the road so often, and given the stress their (now) three dogs experience while being put through their paces, their kit has a pretty extensive assortment of supplies, including a subcutaneous drip kit to fight dehydration.

While most of us traveling with pets won’t necessarily be including that particular item in our gear, Glen said one of the most serious health threats to an animal is dehydration. He urges dog owners to always watch for signs such as sluggishness, diarrhea, or refusing water. He noted, “It can be deadly. If your dog shows any of these symptoms, take your dog to a vet immediately. Don’t wait till morning!”

Glen also suggests paying close attention to your pet’s diet. “We only give high-quality dry dog food and lots of purified water,” he said. Their



Glen VanderHart and Les Stallings

↑ Glen romps with Blu, one of the Pulis that he and Les have shown at numerous dog shows. The breed is known for its intelligence, high energy, good nature — and, of course, its long, corded coat.

THE SHOW

dogs have a spill-proof water dish, which ensures water is available throughout the trip. Glen also recommends taking dogs for a long walk before hitting the road to avoid the need to stop along the way. Rest-stop dog parks are notorious breeding grounds for disease.

For those looking to buy a dog — whether for showing or just as a companion — Les recommends taking a look at the American Kennel Club's website, AKC.org. "They are very 'average person-oriented,'" he said. "There are lots of misconceptions about purebred dogs, most of them resulting from [inbreeding] and poorly managed breeding practices. That's where the AKC can help direct you to a qualified breeder who will sell you a healthy dog."

Admittedly, the rigors involved in trekking from show to show every week may not be in the cards for everybody, but Les and Glen are eager to share the excitement of the ring. They have hosted a couple neighborhood events, "The Gardens Annual Dog Shows" — a play on the name of their community, The Gardens RV Village, with a nod toward Madison Square Garden, site of the Westminster Dog Show. Twenty dogs strutted their stuff at a recent neighborhood show, and everyone won a prize. ●

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

An avid RVer, Sharon Scott Wilson is a business and marketing writer providing public relations services for The Gardens RV Village. She and her husband, Tim, frequently host a display booth for The Gardens at FMCA events.



Glen VanderHart and Les Stallings

↑ Glen and Blu seem equally proud to display one of their blue ribbons. RVing makes the dog show circuit easier for both humans and canines.



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