

# Shaking up the Stereotype

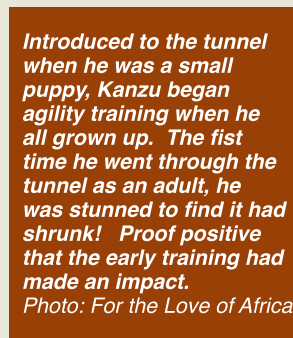
Meet America's *first* and *only*  
Grand Champion Triple Champion Hound

# KANZU

By Theresa M. Lyons  
Publisher, *The Ridgeback Register*



*Kanzu is intensely focused when "chasing the bunny," and doesn't let anyone or anything get in his way.*  
Photo: Jim Wallace



*Introduced to the tunnel when he was a small puppy, Kanzu began agility training when he all grown up. The first time he went through the tunnel as an adult, he was stunned to find it had shrunk! Proof positive that the early training had made an impact.*  
Photo: For the Love of Africa

You've heard it before: "That's a show line, they can't course." Or, "That's a coursing line, they can't win in the show ring." But over the last few years, more breeders and owners have set out to emphasize the versatility of the breed by exploring just how much their Ridgebacks really can accomplish.

Enter Linda D'Antonio, PhD, a respected health-care provider, educator and international development specialist with a lifelong dedication to studying and remediating communication impairments in children around the world.

Linda has owned Ridgebacks since 1990, learning much about the breed through trial and experience with four long-time companions. In 2006, when the time came to welcome her fifth Ridgeback, she set out to find breeders who shared her philosophy about the role of early puppy development in assuring a stable Ridgeback who was easy to live with, highly trainable and who could expand her vision of what she could do with her dogs.

Those breeders were Mike and Lisa Patterson of Tigris Ridgebacks in Norco, Calif. "I just knew they were the ones," Linda says. "Lisa spent hours on the phone talking with me about her emphasis on early stimulation, as well as exposing me to all the wonderful activities available to the Ridgeback, like lure coursing and agility." Linda was hooked.

"Being a developmental specialist and working with kids with disabilities, I absolutely loved Mike and Lisa's approach to the first 10 weeks of the puppies' development," she explains. She knew then that she would wait for a Tigris litter. After the puppies arrived, the Pattersons invited Linda to come to their home weekly and participate in the puppies' early development. This not only allowed Linda to build a bond with her puppy, but also develop a wonderful relationship with the breeders. "They had everything from puppy-sized tunnels, teeter-totter, dog walk and tire 'jump,' to a wading pool, a lunge whip trailing white plastic bags and more developmental puppy toys than I ever thought possible," says Linda, who soaked it all in until the time came to take her puppy home.

"Kanzu" (GCh. TC Tigris African Treasure, RE, MC, OAP, NJP, FCh, JOR, CGC, ET, HIC, VC) soon became Linda's greatest treasure.

Linda's emphasis on early development prompted her to test her theories with her new puppy. Her philosophy was to identify Kanzu's strengths, create opportunities to maximize his potential and never focus on perceived limitations. The early stimulation and confidence building during the first 10 weeks laid the ground work to maximize Kanzu's learning potential ... now it was time to go to work.

Linda began by play-training Kanzu. "I set out

to create constant opportunities for him to try new things and succeed," says Linda, who believes once a dog's trust is earned, the sky is the limit. "You never take such a big leap that the dog fails, but take him just to the edge of where he can succeed. It's about the baby steps." And it was those many baby steps, one after the other, all added together, that ultimately resulted in Kanzu's huge achievements.

With Mike at the helm, Kanzu started showing in early 2008, finishing with three majors, including two back-to-back majors at the prestigious Kennel Club of Palm Springs show weekend. He completed his conformation championship on January 3, 2009, and earned the first leg of his Rally title that same day. That led to more Rally, lure coursing and the beginning of agility.

Rally-obedience was a prime example for Linda to abandon the stereotypical limitations that some people place on a Ridgeback. After working with young kids with disabilities, Linda knew how to celebrate every achievement, no matter how small, and learn from the opportunities provided by the non-successes. "There were people who told me how hard it is to do any sort of Rally or obedience with Ridgebacks. I was just too inexperienced to be biased. I believed if I trained Kanzu by rewarding his every small success, he could do it. And so, he did!" To perform in events that are not typically associated with Ridgebacks, "these

guys need huge cheerleading,” she continues. “You can’t be afraid to make a fool of yourself cheering them on and celebrating every little success as if it was a championship!”

By the end of 2009, Linda’s training methods had paid off handsomely as Kanzu obtained his RN, RA and RE Rally titles. He also earned his AKC lure-coursing field championship (giving him the Dual Champion title), Master Courser and ASFA Field Champion titles, as well as AKC #10 Ridgeback Lure Courser.

With Rally as a foundation, Kanzu began formal agility training, exhibiting an exceptional willingness coupled with great consistency.

By the end of 2010, Kanzu had earned his NA, NAJ, OA, OAJ AX, AXJ, MX and MXJ agility titles as well as his ET (Endurance Trial), HIC (Herding Instinct Certificate), JOR (Junior Oval Racing) and RRCUS VC (Versatility) titles. He was also the RRCUS #5 Agility, #3 NOTRA (oval racing) and #5 LGRA (straight racing).

As Kanzu became more successful in the performance arena, Linda began to notice a bias or stereotype involving “performance” versus “conformation” Ridgebacks. So she set out to prove that Kanzu was not “just a performance dog.” In late 2010, Kanzu went back into the conformation ring, handled by breeder Mike Patterson and friend Curtis Freeling, to obtain his grand-champion title.


Busy with other performance events, like becoming the #2 RRCUS Agility Ridgeback in 2011, it took more time and effort to juggle all the events and shows. But in early 2012, Kanzu earned his grand championship in nine shows, with four majors, including three

Best of Breed, three Best of Opposite and two Select Dog awards.

Eleven days later, Kanzu became the first AKC Grand Champion, Triple Champion Ridgeback by obtaining his MACH title in agility, a huge reward for all of Linda’s hard work and positive thinking. Her philosophy has always been: “You never know what your dog’s potential is, but you just have fun and go wherever it leads you, one step at a time.”

What’s next for Kanzu? Linda says they keep doing new things and setting new goals. Kanzu is still competing in agility, this time at the Preferred level, in pursuit of a PACH title. He also serves as a therapy dog, visiting children with emotional and physical disabilities. Lately, Linda and Kanzu are busy raising his 20-week-old son, Kikuyu (Bakari Tigris African Legacy), who has some pretty big “paws” to fill. Luckily for Linda, Kanzu passed down many of his wonderful traits to his son – energy, drive, conformation, and above all, sparkle and zest for life. I am certain we will be seeing more of these boys.

I have done many interviews and cover stories over the years, but none like this. From the moment she said hello, Linda and I connected. It was like I have known her all my life. We share many of the same beliefs – fate, karma and not judging a book by its cover.

If you think that way, too, then be sure to introduce yourself if you ever come across Linda and Kanzu. Fate brought Linda a treasure, and karma rewarded her with successes beyond her dreams. Her Kanzu has shaken up all the stereotypes, becoming the *first* and *only* Grand Champion Triple Champion Rhodesian Ridgeback and Hound\*. 

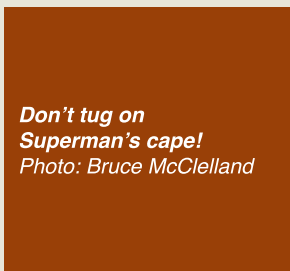
•AKC Grand Champion Stats 03.05.12



**Kanzu finished his conformation championship with three majors, including back-to-back BOWs at the Inland Empire Hound Club and Kennel Club of Palm Springs shows at Indio in January 2009, shown by breeders, handlers and co-owners Mike Patterson and Lisa Ganje-Patterson.**



**Kanzu and Linda celebrate one of his many High Scoring Ridgeback in Agility Trial honors and double Qualifying scores. Kanzu was not fast in agility, but he was extremely precise and consistent, finishing his MACH with more than twice the double qualifying scores necessary.**



**Don’t tug on Superman’s cape!**  
Photo: Bruce McClelland



**TRIPLE HEADER**  
What exactly is a triple champion? It is a dog that has earned the AKC’s Dual Champion title (field and bench champion) and has also been awarded the title of Obedience Trial Champion (OTCH), Tracking Champion (CT) or Agility Champion (MACH).

## Fast Facts

**GCH TC Tigris African Treasure, RE, MC, OAP, NJP, FCh, JOR, CGC, ET, HIC, VC**

**Sire:** Ch. Of Afrikka’s Kumbayah, JC

**Dam:** DC Lexus She’s Got Game by Tigris, MC, RN, CGC, HIC

**Whelped:** July 2, 2006

**Screening:** CHIC #54864: OFA Hips Good, OFA Elbows Normal, OFA Thyroid Normal, Cardiac, CERF and DM Normal  
DNA Profile #V57107

**Breeders:** Mike and Lisa Patterson, Sherry Riordan and Pam Mathews

**Owners:** Linda D’Antonio and Mike and Lisa Patterson

## It Takes a Village

I worked a lot in Africa, where I learned the true meaning of the expression “It takes a village.”

This expression captures our journey to Kanzu’s Grand and Triple Championships. There were many people on “Team Kanzu” who helped in a variety of ways. Many people in the RR community and in my broader life supported us. But some individuals who I would like to acknowledge are:

**Mike and Lisa Patterson**, for trusting me with one of their puppies and for giving Kanzu such a great start both genetically and experientially and for exposing me to the versatility of the breed. And to Mike for handling Kanzu and showing him to his championship and grand championship ... **Curtis Freeling** for showing Kanzu to many of his grand-champion points ... **Justin Dannenbring**, Kanzu’s most special human friend ever, who was incredibly supportive in Kanzu’s lure-coursing career and beyond. ... **Tracy Tennison** of Citrus Hill Canine Center for agility and Rally training and for handling Kanzu in the beginning of his agility career ... **Vicki LePenske** for handling Kanzu in his advanced agility pursuits and finishing his MACH, and for continuously letting him know how much he is enjoyed when she runs with him ... **Debbie and Bing Drastrup** for unfailing encouragement and support ... And, finally, but not least, **Jennifer Gysler** and **Coby Anderson**, special friends to Kanzu and me who supported both of us along the way in so many big and little ways that helped make our journey possible. – **Linda D’Antonio**