

LOCAL NEWS

Naples photographer captures the life and times of Southwest Florida dogs



Atlas and Athena Edwards pose on a couch in front of their North Naples home. Pictured in the background are homeowners Terry and Bob Edwards standing on their second-story balcony. Photo submitted by Jack Kenner.

By *Kristine Gill* of the *Naples Daily News*

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For many dog owners, the goal is to keep the furniture fur-free.

For North Naples couple Terry and Bob Edwards, the idea was to get their two

Harlequin Great Danes onto the couch. All 320 pounds of them.

“They’re not allowed on the couch,” said Bob Edwards. “So that was interesting.”

It took some coaxing, and the help of local dog trainer Erol Denizkurt, but eventually Atlas and Athena, the black-and-white purebreds, managed to lounge on the sofa and make it seem natural.

The result of all that effort was a picture featured in photographer Jack Kenner’s newest book “Dogs I’ve Nosed from here to Naples.” The 166-page book features colored photos of more than 100 Naples dogs, many of them sitting on furniture. The pictures are juxtaposed with home recipes Neapolitans make for their four-legged friends.

“When I was growing up I had dogs but they never came in the house,” Kenner said. “We had a doghouse in the backyard and dogs were dogs. They didn’t come in the house.”

Kenner said he was blown away to find so many people, in Naples especially, pampering their pooches at home and out on the town, pushing them in strollers and dressing them in clothes.

Hence the premise of the book. The Naples edition is the third of such books he’s compiled. Two others before it feature dogs from around the country. He used to shoot photos in a studio, but wanted to explore the ways in which dogs have become ingrained in our homes.

“These days the dogs have moved into the big house and now the big house is a doghouse,” he said. “I never see a doghouse any more, ever. People are living with their dogs in their beds. They’re cooking for them. They don’t even walk them, they have other people walk them.”

He began taking photos for pet owners in Naples and got permission from most to compile them into the book. Copies sell for about \$40.

Starting Nov. 11, Kenner will be in town to sign copies of his books at three different locations: The Ritz-Carlton, Cafe Lurcat and The Von Liebig Art Center.

As a nature photographer Kenner, who hails from Memphis, Tennessee, has shot everything from frogs to rhinos from here to Africa. He used to shoot dog shows as well, but when the recession hit, attendance dropped.

Around the same time, a sudden illness made him lose his voice. Working with humans was out of the question. He looked for other ways to make money doing photography, and noticed many art show attendees were drawn to his pictures of pets.

A black-and-white photo he took of his own dogs gained popularity in 2007 when he snapped the pair of West Highland Terriers standing in an open dishwasher. Kenner worked with pets while his voice recovered because he was able to give direction without speaking. He continued the work after he was well.

When he met Atlas and Athena, Kenner came up with the idea to have them sit on

the couch together. But first he had the couch moved outside to the end of the driveway so the Edwards' home was shown in the background. If you look closely, Bob and Terry Edwards can be seen standing in the window wearing white.

“So we're in the picture,” said Edwards. “Jack then comes up with a squeaky toy Atlas has never seen or heard. Erol has him looking one way and Jack makes him turn his head in a way we've never seen him turn it. Atlas goes ‘What in the world is that?’ And Jack takes the shot.”

Just as much work has gone into many of the photos featured in the book, including the cover shot. Pictured there is a rescue dog named Molly whose owners adopted her in the hopes of making her a first mate on their boat.

But Molly was scared of the dock and the boat. They needed some professional help to fix that problem.

“They get me and within an hour I have the dog on the boat,” Denizkurt said. “That dog was the cover of Jacks' new book.”

Kenner said he's grateful to have found a new way to make a living doing what he loves. He said he used to scrape together money so he could travel to take pictures. Now, he's made a name for himself and is often commissioned to lead tour groups for nature photography overseas.

“I'm very blessed,” he said.



About Kristine Gill

Kristine Gill is a features reporter for the Daily News who has also covered crime, education and the city of Naples. Each morning, she puts together a short list of stories the newsroom is working on for her video spot, The Daily Scoop. She's always looking for interesting people to write about.

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