

We Bid Farewell to William Deemer, Fitzarran Irish Wolfhounds

Rather long, swiftly and strongly built with the elegant shape of the Greyhound; lovely planed heads, with long strong, muzzles and special, soft, faraway expressions, their eyes clearly portals leading back into the mists of antiquity, as if they were telling you a story. They were quiet, well mannered hounds, they were proud, and most memorably, they had fluid, gliding gaits. These were the Fitzarran Wolfhounds, and in the sighthound community, they were renowned throughout the world.

In The Beginning...

Many may not have known that while still a young man and before University, William (Bill) Deemer was an avid dog fancier. He was quite active, owning and exhibiting Bulldogs. Throughout his life, Bill was very fond of all the Bully breeds and in the 1990s, one of his adored companions was “Bubba” the White Bull Terrier. Both William and Betty Deemer originated from western Pennsylvania and in 1974 settled into their beloved Kentucky via New Orleans. Bill and Betty Deemer were in the medical profession, Betty was a registered nurse and Bill a nurse anesthetist. Their charming country home and farm was set amongst significant acreage in Richmond, Kentucky complete with the requisite plantation tobacco barns. With them they brought two wolfhounds; one of those being *Jocopa's Juliana of Eagle* whelped in 1970, a daughter of *Ardmore of Nendrum* whose breeders were Samuel Evans Ewing 3rd and J. Council Parker.



This early photo was taken at the 1977 Locust Grove Irish Wolfhound Association Match held in Louisville, Kentucky. The Locust Grove Irish Wolfhound Association was founded by Stannye Musson (Maghera Glass Kennels), in 1967 and the judge pictured was Rosalie Graham Fox (Cu Kennels). Bill is shown here with his 6-9 month old puppy, Petasmeade Senator, bred by Peta Innes (Petasmeade Kennels). This photo is from the collection of William and Shirley Pfarrer, Piuratan Farms.

The Fitzarran Breeding Program...

Before I proceed, please note that I do not include all the following hounds designations as Specialty, Multi-Best in Specialty, or Multi-Best in Show titles because simply, it takes far too much room. The Fitzarran wolfhounds were a study in genuine phenotype and even with our sports competitive conformation events and pursuit of titles, the Deemer's wolfhounds were unsurpassed. Suffice to say that nearly every one of their hounds were champions of record with four Fitzarran hounds having won Best in Specialty (BIS) at the Irish Wolfhound Club of

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Eaglescrag Kate. Owned by Fitzarran.



The exquisite Eaglescrag Janine. Owned by Fitzarran. Photo by Deemers appearing in IW Quarterly 1987

Janine (Eaglescrag Liam x Eaglescrag Kelt) arrived at Fitzarran. Eaglescrag Kate was bred several times, notably twice to the accomplished champion stud dog, *Wildisle Warlock*, producing a number of excellent, influential hounds, e.g., *Fitzarran Dudley of Whitehall* (owned by Martha & Skip Dean),

America National Specialty, two of these being litter mates. Fitzarran hounds have won Best in Specialty (BIS) at the Irish Wolfhound Club of Canada National Specialty and have won Specialty Best of Opposite Sex (BOSS) awards at both American National and Canadian National Club Specialties. Many have won Best in Specialty Show at almost all the American Regional Specialty's -- Irish Wolfhound Association of New England, The Irish Wolfhound Association of Delaware Valley, The Potomac Valley Irish Wolfhound Club, The Irish Wolfhound Association of the West Coast. They have won Best in Match at the well-regarded Locust Grove Irish Wolfhound Association and have won the titles of Best of Breed at the Canadian Ontario Sighthound Association. All this in addition to the number of Specialty Winners and Reserve Winners awards over the years. Simply, the Deemer's accomplishments were extraordinary. Additionally, I would be remiss not to speak of the well-known and quite successful Fitzarran Cavaliers (King Charles Spaniel) breeding program, and although mainly Betty's passionate pursuit, Bill was her staunch supporter.

Although Bill & Betty "Doll" -- Bill's affectionate term for Betty, had owned wolfhounds from the late 1960s, their foundation bitch was *Eaglescrag Kate* (Eaglescrag Toby x Eaglescrag Kelt), whelped in 1977 whom they obtained from Ruth and Leslie Jenkins of Eaglescrag fame and with whom the Deemers continued to have a very close relationship with for many years to come. Not long after Kate's arrival, *Eaglescrag*

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Fitzarran Dauntless of Essex (Owned by Nancy Sayers), *Fitzarran Yankee of Eaglescrag* (Owned by Ruth & Leslie Jenkins), *Fitzarran Kingsland Koren* (Owned by Phillippa Crowe Neilson) *Fitzarran Kinsman* and the unforgettable, exquisite *Fitzarran Kelt*. Although they had an overall exceptional breeding program, the latter, *Fitzarran Kelt*, was considered by both Bill and Betty to be their very best achievement. Superb in type (shape) head piece, gait, coat, length, strength and stature; she excelled in all and held a very special place in their hearts.



Mr. & Mrs. William Deemer's Paint Lick, KY, residence.



Fitzarran Shadowfax. Photo by Deemers appearing in IW Quarterly 1987

The magnificent Eaglescrag Janine was bred several times producing stunning litters by *Solstrand Fenton of Bailebrae* and *Fitzarran Dauntless of Essex*. To name just several, Janine's litter by Solstrand Fenton of Bailebrae sired the magnificent *Fitzarran Shadowfax*, *Fitzarran Mandan*, *Fitzarran Madara O' Bailebrae*, and *Fitzarran Mahdi*. Janine's litter by Dauntless produced five including *Fitzarran Momus*, *Fitzarran Kingsland Marin*, and *Fitzarran Merriment of Essex*.

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Fitzarran Comus as a yearling. Photo by Deemers

Over the years, Bill and Betty produced many beautiful, memorable hounds. This certainly is not a complete list, but a sampling. The lovely *Fitzarran Rhiannon* (Fitzarran Shadowfax x Fitzarran Kelt). *Fitzarran Caitlin & Fitzarran Caroline of Sciota* (Fitzarran Kinsman x Eaglescrag Kate) with Caroline owned by Claire & John Parker of Sciota Irish Wolfhounds. *Fitzarran Comus & Fitzarran Celebration* (Fitzarran Kinsman x Fitzarran Mandan). *Fitzarran Jubal & Fitzarran Jade* (Fitzarran Shadowfax x Fitzarran Wicce) with Jade being co-owned by Jackie Carswell.

Kingsland Song (Fitzarran Shadowfax x Fitzarran Kingsland Koren) who was bred and owned by their dear friend Phillippa Crowe Neilson of Kingsland Irish Wolfhounds. *Fitzarran Chaos & Fitzarran Circe* (Fitzarran Comus x Kingsland Song). *Kingsland Fitzarran Linnet* and *Kingsland Fitzarran Leander* (Fitzarran Shadowfax x Kingsland Song). *Fitzarran Mignon* (Fitzarran Shadowfax x Fitzarran Caitlin). *Fitzarran Wicce & Fitzarran Will of Falcaragh* (Fitzarran Momus x Fitzarran Kelt) with Will being owned by Ms. Diane Koontz (Bresee) and Cameron Smith of Falcaragh Irish Wolfhounds. *Fitzarran Wildisle Wardance & Fitzarran Rhian* (Fitzarran Comus x Fitzarran Rhiannon) with Wardance owned by Mrs. Jill Bregy of Wildisle Irish Wolfhounds. *Fitzarran Soleil* (Fitzarran Shadowfax x Fitzarran Celebration). *Fitzarran Vesper and Fitzarran Victory* (Ballyhara Fitzarran Sentinel x Fitzarran Soleil).



Kingsland Fitzarran Leander. Photo by Deemers

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Fitzarran Rhiannon. Photo by Deemers.

In the 1990s, the Deemer's also owned several other lovely hounds. Notably, *Ballyhara Fitzarran Salute & Ballyhara Fitzarran Sentinel* (Fitzarran Shadowfax x Cashel Siobhan of Culach) and *Ballyhara Fitzarran River* (Lilliput Fitzarran Khronos x Ballyhara Scarlett) bred by Lisa Dubé Forman, Ballyhara Irish Wolfhounds. *Lilliput Fitzarran Khronos* (Nellwyns Barnabus x Fitzarran Nyke of Lilliput) bred by Mrs. Beverly Little of Lilliput Irish Wolfhounds. *Piuratan Fitzarran Peregrine* (Lilliput Fitzarran Khronos x Piuratan Pandemonium of Eagle) bred by William and Shirley Pfarrer, Piuratan Farms and a lovely Greyhound bitch made up in the United States and bred by Mrs. Dagmar Kenis, Solstrand Greyhounds.



Fitzarran Mignon. Photo by Deemers appearing in IW Quarterly 1987

Bill delighted in his other passion, gardening, as he was a zealous flower horticulturist, with his favorite being Dahlia's. Bill had an avaricious appetite for reading, genetics being one of his many interests, an everlasting passion for history, and a love of antiques, particularly furniture. One day, they were driving in the countryside when they drove by what Betty described as their dream home which they had previously admired for many years, and now as fate would have it, it just so happened to be for sale. So up and away they moved from Richmond, KY, to the new estate in the small village of Paint Lick, Kentucky, whose facade with its stately Greek columns, reminded me of "Tara." I visited a few times and would sit amazed as they recounted their labor

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of love to restore the glorious home to its original condition.

Their new home was large, set on approximately six acres upon a knoll, nestled within open fields of grazing cattle. Bill was enamored with the new property and spent countless hours researching its venerable history. Both desired authenticity and sought to renovate and restore the property to its original stature. Their work was extensive and arduous, taking years to have the original hand stenciled wallpaper designs painstakingly replicated from the homes many rooms. Bill's great love for the property led to role playing with him fondly being called the "The Laird of Paint Lick." Completing the truism, their new estate even included, amusingly enough, a mule named "Rosie" who took a comical interest in the wolfhounds.



Fitzarran Kelt. Photo by Moments with Jane



Fitzarran Momus. Photo by Beverly Stobart

All things English...

In reminiscing, those close to Bill and Betty knew they were dedicated Anglophiles. They held the English in very high regard, especially the veteran purebred dog fanciers, the sportsmen and women. The Deemer's were of the opinion that many veteran English breeders had an inherent understanding of function and form who typically sought out animals they believed could perform and work. As a result of having these ingrained or elemental abilities, the Deemer's felt many of the old-school, English dog fanciers had a much more

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comprehensive understanding of breeding practices. This sentiment was not exclusive to wolfhounds but their general conclusion, as Bill would frequently reference his learnings and valuable interactions with Bull Terrier and Bulldog authorities. Both Bill and Betty had a great love for England, the people, its culture and venerated history. Though they had not traveled overseas lately, they did on several occasions visit England through the years. Bill especially enjoyed his judging assignments in both Ireland and England. Over the years, I along with others, had prodded both of them to obtain their AKC Judging Approval for Irish Wolfhounds and Cavaliers, however, due to the extensive



Fitzarran Dauntless of Essex as a yearling owned by Nancy Sayers



Fitzarran Jubal. Photo by Deemers appearing in IW Quarterly

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Fitzarran Kelt in repose. Photo by Deemers appearing in IW Quarterly



Fitzarran Kinsman. Photo by Deemers.

paperwork involved in the application process neither were favorably disposed to do so. However, we fanciers were fortunate to have both Betty and Bill adjudicate Wolfhound Sweepstakes assignments and most notably, Betty had judged The Cavalier King Charles Spaniel Club - USA National Show.

In closing...

Bill and Betty Deemer strove for and were dedicated to the beauty of the functional sighthound.

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Kingsland Song (Fitzarran Shadowfax x Fitzarran Kingsland Koren) Owned by Philippa Crow



Fitzarran Rhian. Co-owned by Leslie Van Arsdale

As it were, they were significant contributors and renowned fanciers of the Irish Wolfhound breed. I began this tribute by describing the indelible characteristics of their beautiful wolfhounds which always attracted an observer or judges' attention. These attributes were of the utmost importance in their breeding program and the Deemer's were exceedingly endowed with the finesse for producing these traits in almost all their hounds.

Wonderful greyhound shape with curves galore, no abrupt stops or corners, strength and stature, glorious headpieces and outstanding, unforgettable movement. In their breeding program the Deemer's, as did all respected, knowledgeable breeders in our past, based their kennels strength upon their bitches. However, Bill was especially fond of his males as they were unique. The Fitzarran stallions were affectionate, gentleman hounds and were very easy to live with. Bill was very proud of his boys.

How fortunate one could consider themselves to have bred the following stallion hounds, but to have them all on the premises at the same time would be remarkable. The Deemers enjoyed such privilege with the likes of Fitzarran Shadowfax, Fitzarran Kinsman, Fitzarran Momus, Fitzarran Comus and Fitzarran Jubal. Perchance, such a breeder may have well-founded hubris. Alternatively, fortune may not have played a role at all. Rather, the Deemer's knowledge, some of which was gleaned from their mentors and contemporaries, some of it intrinsic, along with their acuity,

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enabled their talent to produce such a bevy of beauties.

I believe today's breed fanciers should all pay homage to the memory and achievements of the old-guard who, because of their tremendous, instinctive knowledge, have forever been bestowed with the high honor of 'Irish Wolfhound breed guardians.' For me, having had the opportunity for maturation under



Fitzarran Jade. Co-Owned with Jackie Carswell. Photo from IWCA website

Betty and Bill Deemer was an irreplaceable experience. I shall always retain and utilize the teachings and fundamentals endowed upon me, which I believe is embodied today in my breeding program. How shall we remember Bill Deemer? *"It has to do with how we behave with each other. If we really look at our dogs -- you know, it's a really noble breed we're talking about, a very old breed. There are various theories about it being revived by Captain Graham and so forth, but there's no question that a dog very much like what we have today existed a long time ago and has spent so much time with us, living with us, putting up with us. Really it's a very noble creature. If we could just take some lessons from that, just learn from it, watch our dogs more and treat each other like our dogs treat us, we wouldn't have a single problem, not a problem that we couldn't solve. We shouldn't spend a lot of time damning each other. I know shows are competitive, I know everybody is trying to get the best, I know this is the USA, where number one is so important, and I must say, I like to win, but there's a lot more to*

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Lilliput Fitzarran Khronos. Bred by Beverly Little and owned by Bill & Betty Deemer

it than that. Maybe someday, someone will say, 'Well, they really had some beautiful dogs,' and that's all they need to say to make me happy," said Bill Deemer in both his and his loving wife Betty Deemer's interview in the 1988 Irish Wolfhound Quarterly -- Summer Issue.

"Dedicated to the beauty of the functional sighthound"

by William & Betty Deemer, Fitzarran