

Lines FROM Linda



Lassie's Legacy continues through TED PAUL

Nearly two o'clock in the morning in Niagara Falls, New York...a chill was in the air and the hotel lounge was buzzing. As June Lockhart wrapped her red jacket around my shoulders to keep me warm, I noticed her radiant smile. Yes, the movie actress and star of "Lassie" is just as you would imagine...lovely in every way.

Ted and Beverly Paul had asked us to join them and their other two guests, "Ace" Collins (author of the brand new book *Lassie, The First Fifty Years*) and his wife, Kathy. The beginning of the new friendships and this very special evening are memories I will always cherish!

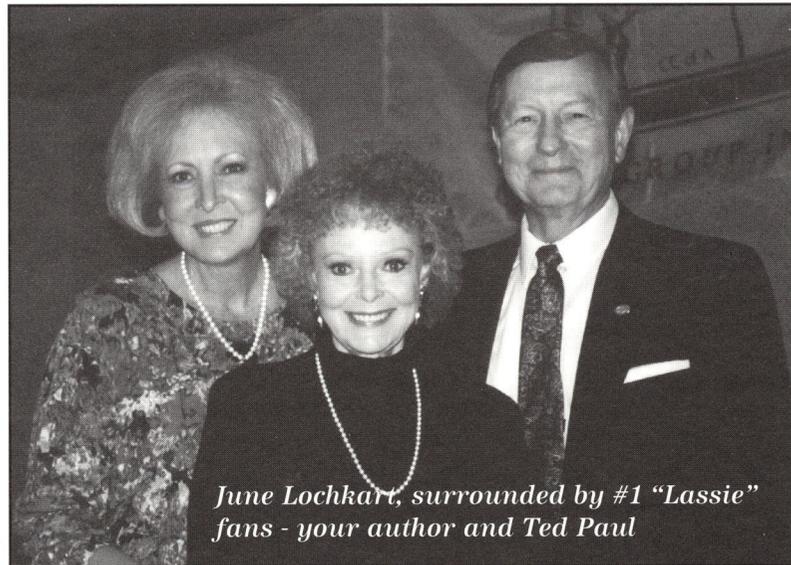
Ted Paul, a multifaceted man, is a businessman, gifted speaker, private pilot, accomplished musician, natural artist, and, oh yes...a Collie breeder of thirty some years as well as an AKC judge of Collies, Shetland Sheepdogs, Pembroke and Cardigan Welsh Corgis.

And how do you find time for all of this? "Very simply," says Ted, "we just live life like a calvary charge!" The "We" to which Ted refers is himself and his lovely wife of forty years, Beverly. An exciting couple, they are never very far apart. But on with our story...one facet at a time.

The businessman is the owner of Beautiful America Publishing Company of Portland Oregon. They publish high quality, full color books and calendars

which are distributed and sold nationally. The publishing company came about after a full career in another field and after the age of fifty.

When asked about a career change at that age,



June Lockhart, surrounded by #1 "Lassie" fans - your author and Ted Paul

he just replied, "I couldn't retire at that point, I was just a kid!"

As he was getting ready to head off to the American Booksellers Association show in Los Angeles, I asked him what his "Big Book" would be for this fall. He smiled and said "Entertaining with Betsy Bloomingdale."

And, he wasn't kidding. The book is outstanding and Ted says putting it together with one of the country's top socialites was a ton of

fun. "Betsy is a delight to work with and a wonderful lady."

How will the book do? "It's always a big gamble," says Ted, "But already we've heard from the *Q.V.C. Network*, *Kathie Lee and Regis*, *The Joan Rivers Show*, *Alan King*, *Town & Country Magazine*, *W Magazine* and others." How

do you measure the success of a book? Too modest to say, Beverly explains, "We will measure it against a small family book that Ted authored a few years ago, titled, *The Christmas Collie*, which sold over 65,000 copies

and grows stronger each year."

As a gifted speaker Ted is legendary among dog people. He has been the featured speaker, TV interviewer, or symposium moderator at literally hundreds of dog functions from border to border and coast to coast. His strong suit is his booming, resonant voice, his command of the language and a marvelous sense of humor delivered with a message. He was recently chosen to present Eric Knight, the

author of "Lassie Come Home" into the Collie Club of America, Quarter Century Group's prestigious "Hall Of Fame." This event took

by Linda Ayers Turner Knorr



place in Niagara Falls and seated at the head table with Ted and Beverly Paul and also participating in the program were June Lockhart and "Ace" Collins. In the audience were Eric Knight's three lovely daughters, Betty Knight Myers from Rockville, Maryland, Jennie Knight Moore of Bayside, New York and Winifred Knight Melborn who traveled to Niagara Falls from Torrance, California. The following is taken from the text of Paul's speech.

"It is a fitting tribute that Eric Knight be inducted into the Quarter Century Collie Group's "Hall Of Fame", as this wonderful man has done much for the Collie. As most people are aware, it was Eric Knight who created the captivating character, "Lassie." Even though he was the author of many other books, he will always best be remembered for the classic story, "Lassie Come Home." His niche in history is for writing one of the most honest and touching stories of a boy and his dog that has ever been written.

"It is appropriate to honor him here tonight, because his character "Lassie" has single-handedly done more for the popularity of the Collie breed than any other single dog! The fact is we have Lassie to thank for putting our breed on top of the popularity charts for many years! He has done a tremendous amount of public relations work by showing Collies to be intelligent, courageous, loyal, protective and great with children. How many of us grew up watching Lassie on television or in the movies, fully convinced that we had to have a

Collie?? How many of us sitting in this room tonight, set on a course to become Collie breeders because of Lassie?? What child doesn't come up to your dog and say 'There's Lassie!' Thanks to Lassie, there are few people who don't recognize a Collie. Add to that scores of people who think Collies are wonderful animals because of Lassie's very positive image, and you have a breed loved by millions.

Lassie has been the most endearing and enduring of all canine stars. The fact that she is still going strong after fifty years, is testament to her popularity and her mass appeal. When Eric Knight created the character in 1938, I am sure he never realized it was to be the beginning of a phenomenon that would outlive him by more than fifty years. "Eric Knight was one of those people who, had he lived a longer life, there's no telling what else he might have accomplished. As it was, his short life of forty-five years was rich and full. He was born on April 10th, 1897 in Yorkshire, England. His father, a Leeds merchant, disappeared from the family when Eric was quite young and Eric was sent to live with an aunt and uncle in Yorkshire. When his mother remarried an American and eventually settled in this country, Eric joined her at the age of fifteen.

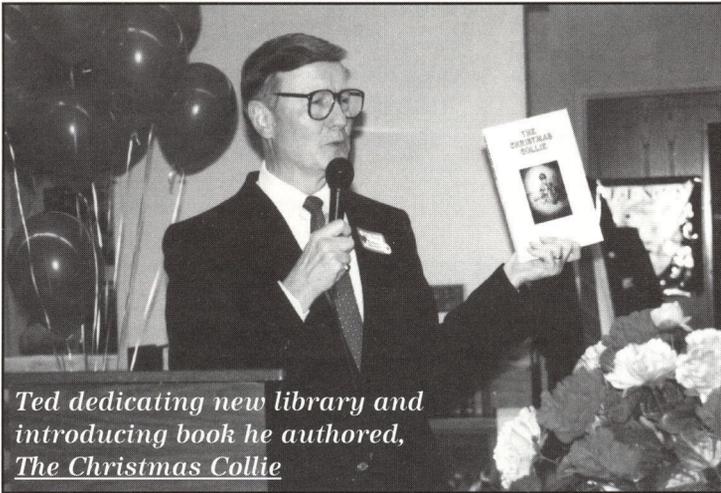
Eric graduated from the Cambridge Latin School in Massachusetts and also pursued art at the New York National Academy of Design. Later he lectured at the University of Iowa. His start, however, was in journalism. Over the years, he worked for several newspapers, starting as a copy boy, later editing a



*Westminster Kennel Club 1972
Judge Roy Ayers taking one last look before awarding Ch. Ransom's Legacy and Ted Paul Best of Breed*

New England weekly. Still later, he was a highly respected film critic for the Philadelphia Public Ledger. For a short time, he tried film-writing in Hollywood where, in 1942, he wrote the Oscar winning U.S. Army orientation film, "Prelude To War," in association with the legendary filmmaker, Frank Capra. However, one of Eric's most overwhelming desires had been to write a great novel.

"Upon marrying his wife, Jere, they settled on a farm in Pennsylvania where they began to raise Collies. Shortly thereafter, they were forced to give up the farm and their Collies, so they could move to Hollywood, where Eric would pursue that brief career in film-writing. They took their household Fox Terrier with them, but shortly after returning to California, the dog was hit by a car and killed. To help ease the sorrow, Eric purchased a female Collie puppy that was to be a Christmas gift to his wife. However, it quickly became apparent that the puppy was to be no one else's dog but Eric's! The mahogany sable and white puppy was called "Toots," after the then popular



*Ted dedicating new library and introducing book he authored, **The Christmas Collie***

song, "Okay Toots." She was not a show Collie by any stretch of the imagination. However, she possessed the traits that Collies have become famous for: intelligence, courage and devotion. Eric spent many spare moments training "Toots" and was continually amazed at her intelligence. Her repertoire of tricks became famous the country over when she traveled with the family. He forever delighted in showing her off, even stating that she understood many languages when actually she had been expertly trained by him in hand signals!

"The two of them were practically inseparable. When Eric was away, "Toots" would sit patiently, at the stone wall in front of the house, waiting for her master to come home and take their daily walks. Eric obviously felt bonded to this dog and somewhere in his subconscious a story was already lurking. "Toots" was to be the main inspiration for this future story. "The other inspiration for the story was conceived while on a return trip to his English homeland in 1938, during the Great Depression. It was a time in which the whole country was witnessing hard times and many people were being forced to sell their beloved dogs. Realizing full well how much he loved "Toots," Eric could understand what a hard proposition it would be to part with her. Upon returning home from Europe, he masterfully created "Lassie Come Home" into the story of a dog's love and devotion, coupled with the hard times of a Yorkshire family. Much of the material was drawn from his own childhood memories in

England. The end result was a beautifully-written classic. "The short story first appeared in the Saturday Evening Post on December 17, 1938. It proved to be so popular that the John C. Winston Publishing Company approached Eric about expanding it for book publication. Two years later, the book was published

and became a popular best seller. Simply put, it was the story of a loyal Collie who crossed hundreds of miles to return home to the boy he loved. Intertwined with this, was the much bigger story of a family's confrontation with hard times. The values of honesty, trustworthiness and devotion leap out at you on every page. The story has had immense worldwide appeal and has endured all these years, proving what a very gifted story teller Eric was. "All in all, it has been published in over twenty five languages and has remained continuously in print all over the world in various



Lucky me with Hall of Fame inductee Eric Knight's three daughters, left to right: Jennie Knight Moore, Betty Knight Myers, Winifred Knight Melborn

editions. It is considered today, a true classic. Coupled with several other perfectly timed events, such as the discovery of an errant Collie named "Pal" and his subsequent training by Rudd Weatherwax, the book led the way for what was to become an overnight sensation. In 1942 MGM purchased the movie rights and the rest is history. The movie,

"Lassie Come Home" was released in 1943 and was a huge success. It went on to inspire seven other movies, a radio show, a long running television show, countless books and artifacts, and a great love for Collies and particularly the one called "Lassie."

"Unfortunately, Eric did not live long enough to see what he had created. He visited the movie set of "Lassie Come Home" in 1942 and got to meet "Pal," the original Lassie, but he didn't live to see the finished film. He was commissioned in the United States Army in 1942 to work on Army orientation films with Frank Capra's group. It was during World War II in 1943 that he was killed in action when his transport plane was shot down in the jungles of Dutch Guiana. The plane was flying in the same echelon as President Roosevelt's flight to Casablanca. It was at that time one of the worst air disasters in American aviation history.

"Eric wrote several other books, such as *Invitation To Life*, *Song On Your Bugles*, *The Happy Land*, and *The Flying Yorkshireman*. In fact, at the time of his death, one of his books, *This Above All*, was a best seller. It probably never occurred to him that he would forever be remembered for the wonderful story of a Collie dog. But this book has withstood the

test of time and has proved to be his most lasting contribution.

"Thanks to Eric Knight, Collies and the character "Lassie" will forever be linked. How very lucky Collies have been, to have had such a positive influence, representing them. We have Eric Knight to thank for all of it! "And now...the rest of the story!"

[This portion of his speech was taken from excerpts of the

October '93 issue of ShowSight Magazine.]

"In 1943, the same year Eric was killed in action in World War II, a young aviation cadet along with another cadet stationed in Santa Ana, California, received a weekend pass. While waiting for a bus, a large limousine pulled up and a distinguished movie star

offered them a lift. As they arrived at the dance, he inquired about their accommodations and graciously offered them lodging later that night at his home. After the dance they took a cab to the home, were warmly greeted, chatted a while over a cold beer and retired to two cots in the family room. At breakfast the next morning the two cadets enjoyed a wonderful meal, a lovely view and they even had coffee served by the actor's beautiful daughter, a teenage starlet. He then sent them off with studio tickets to a popular Sunday radio show. It was a weekend to remember.

"The officer earned his wings and commission in Virginia and a short time later was assigned to B-17 bombers. One night after an especially inspiring base movie, the crew decided upon a name for their new bomber, and with that, they were shipped off to England to join the Allied Forces in the war against Nazi Germany. "Their plane flew eighteen tough missions, many times limping back to England like an injured puppy. But on May 13, 1944, while on their nineteenth mission, the enemy was too strong and too many and with their bomber on fire and two of its four engines knocked out, the crew bailed out over Germany. All landed safely, were immediately captured and interned. The "Ghost Bomber" was not found. Both the Germans and the crew speculated that it had exploded over Germany or possibly the Baltic Sea. It wasn't until a few years ago, when the government finally released previously classified World War II information, that it was learned that the blazing B-17 with their number 2107082 on the tail - with no one in it - had actually managed to fly on automatic pilot, from Stetin, Germany all the way over the Baltic Sea to Stevns, Denmark, where it made a spectacular soft landing - skidding to a stop with its nose resting against a hospital for children. The serial number 2107082, is clearly visible in the pictures of the tail, and while the nose was crumpled, you could still read the name "Lassie Come Home". Like her famous namesake, Lassie was trying to get home to England when she crashed in Denmark. And just in case you don't realize how completely this man, Eric Knight and his Lassie

have captivated and entwined the hearts of millions around the world, the young officer in this story is Harry Jensen, noted breeder of Great Pyrenees from Western Springs, Illinois; the handsome movie actor was the famous Gene Lockhart...and the young starlet, none other than our special guest here tonight,



Left to right: Mrs. Helen Denton, Beverly & Ted Paul, Kathy & "Ace" Collins

the lovely June Lockhart!

"And if that were not enough, Eric - the final paragraph of this article reads, "This story has been written from the hospital room of my father, Roy Ayers, who even more courageously than Lassie, is fighting to come home." signed, Linda Ayers Turner Knorr. "And now you know the rest of the story!" "Ladies and gentlemen, it is my great pleasure to induct Eric Knight, the man behind this great legacy into the Quarter Century Collie Group Hall Of Fame!"

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At the conclusion of this eloquent talk, there wasn't a dry eye in the house! It was following this occasion that we reminisced until the wee hours of the morning in Niagara Falls. Holding a pilot's license since he was in high school, Ted laughs when he tells of buying his first flyable airplane for one hundred dollars! "Try that today!" he quips. His favorite airline story? The twinkle lights up as he relates that he and Beverly had one of their first dates in his airplane! They flew from far west of Cleveland, Ohio to the Lake Front Airport to attend a Cleveland Browns football game. And Ted adds, "Her mother wasn't pleased!" A young swing drummer in a dance band in his early years, Ted picked up side instruments as the big bands faded and the combos became the music of choice. A clarinet, then a vibraharp and finally a concert marimba,

which he dearly loves, were added to his collection. Does he still play? "Yes, indeed," chimes Beverly, "and a year or so ago, he acquired a keyboard and amplifier and he's at it almost every evening. He can really make it jump!"

As if that were not enough, this natural artistic ability has been with him since he was a child. He was always drawing, painting, sketching and somehow it has stuck with him and served him well in virtually every endeavor in his life...in the business world, in his publishing company, his music, his ability to groom a dog, his eye for the truly good ones and his artistic flair in the ring and on the speaker's podium. One cannot miss Ted Paul's artistic background!

And what about those thirty years in Collies? "They have been great! We have done it all - bred them, raised them, groomed them, showed them ourselves, won and lost with them and now judge them. We've come full circle and I have enjoyed every minute of it!" says Ted. I asked the Collie Club of America's past president and national specialty judge about his biggest thrills? Paul replied, "I have handled my own Collies at multiple Best In Show all-breed wins, back when I had to win a tough Working Group First to get there...those wins and the memory of taking our newly finished Ch. Ransom's Regency to Madison Square Garden's Westminster Kennel Club show and going Best of Breed from a quality-packed specials class under the noted Collie judge, Roy Ayers and then, a few years later, to stand with "Randy" in the specials class at the Collie Club of America National Specialty show and watch his young son, Ch. Flambeau Monobo, go Best of Breed...these are things one never forgets!" And what is the baggage you carry away from all of this? "The people...the wonderful, wonderful people you meet, become acquainted with and who go on to become your life long friends! Friendships are truly the rewarding by-products of the dog game!" ■

Linda Ayers Turner Knorr