

CLOAK, DAGGER WORK PUT VIZSLA IN U.S.

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The story of how Frank J. Tallman of Kansas City became the “godfather” of the Vizsla retriever in the United States is a cloak-and-dagger episode of the 1940's.

The Vizslas were virtually unknown. They were raised by Hungarian noblemen and developed as all-purpose dogs for hunting rabbits, birds, and waterfowl.

During World War II, a young Hungarian woman drifted into Rome with a Vizsla (pronounced Veeshla) female.

She had smuggled the Vizsla out of Hungary. On the train trip, the dog was hidden in a large sack, lying quietly at her feet.

She was in a quandary as to the future of the dog.

The young refugee took her problem to a Kansas City lawyer, Emmet Scanlan, who was stationed in Rome at the time with the State Department.

She asked Scanlan if he could provide a good home for the Vizsla. Scanlan said he couldn't, but he had a friend, Tallman, in the United States, who liked dogs and would take care of the Vizsla if they could get the dog out of Rome.

WELCOME 'HOME'

So in 1944 a crate arrived at the airport in Kansas City containing Sari, the Vizsla female, from Rome. With Sari were her two puppies, which had been born while all the red tape was being cleared to make the importation possible.

Tallman remembers the night he and the late Dr. B.F. Pfister and Melvin Schlesinger went to the Kansas City Air Terminal to see the new arrivals.

Schlesinger, president of the Heart of America Kennel Club, which stages Kansas City's big bench show each year, has seen most of the recognized breeds in existence, but this was a new one.

Tallman chuckles at the scene.

“I think Doc and Mel were feeling sorry for me,” he recalls. “They thought Scanlan had sent me an off-color Weimaraner, golden in color instead of mouse gray.”

As far as Tallman knows, it was the first Vizsla in the United States.

IN A FIELD

The next year, 1945, Tallman decided he wanted a male Vizsla, to breed to Sari, to keep the breed from dying. This called for more cloak-and-dagger work in Rome.

Scanlan talked to various refugees and finally located, indirectly, the owner of Vizslas. This owner, also fearing for the future of the breed, would part with a male Vizsla, but not for United States money. If he were caught with United States money, questions would be asked.

But for CARE packages, which contained items more precious than money, a trade might be arranged.

Now if Scanlan would send a man to the center of a field at a certain time, he would find a man's jacket on the ground. And on the jacket would be a male Vizsla dog, which the unknown owner would part with for assurance of a good home for the dog, plus CARE items.

It was an age-old maneuver, but it worked. Fox and coon hunters have used it for years. If one of their dogs is lost, they go back to the starting point of the chase, leave their coat or jacket on the ground and give the hound time to work his way back to the jacket. Once he finds his master's jacket, he won't leave it. The owner comes back later and picks up jacket and dog.

SIXTY-THREE DESCENDENTS

So the male Vizsla, Rex, was crated and flown to New York.

From Sari and Rex, Tallman produced several litters of puppies. Tallman sold some, gave others to fiends, and answered reams of letters and notes of inquiry on the Vizsla breed.

Both the original dogs are now dead, but they left 63 descendents to firmly establish the Vizsla in the Midwest and in the United States.

Tallman created interest in the breed by showing the dogs at various shows. To Minneapolis men then made some imports directly from Vienna. The breed “caught on.”

In 1954, the Vizsla Club of America was formed with 17 members. The same year the breed was accepted for registration by the Field Dog Stud Book. It was recognized by the American Kennel Club in 1960.

PRICE DECLINE

Probably the outstanding Vizsla in the country to date is Ripp Barat, owned by Mrs. Betty Kenly of Phoenix, Aiz. Rip has won the National Vizsla Championship three years running, 1960 though 1962.

At first, the puppies commanded quite a price in the United States. Now the price is down to \$75 to one-hundred dollars – in line with a good puppy of other breeds.

In personality, the Vizsla is lively, gentle, and affectionate. They make good family pets, the males especially being fearless and protective.

Afield, the Vizsla hunts rather slowly and methodically, close quartering, with nose low, searching for foot scent.

Article copied verbatim from 1980 Vizsla Field.