

OBITUARY: MRS. P. M. RHODES (FEARNLEY)

How saddened my wife and I were to learn of Pat's sudden death on July 12th 2014. Many in this breed and indeed in other breeds will I know mourn the passing of this fine lady.

As I sit here and write obituary notes about Pat Rhodes, my overwhelming feeling is the loss of someone we valued and cherished as a friend - not so much the well known "Irish Setter Dog Breeder and Judge" - but Pat the pretty, charming, considerate lady who one was always pleased to see. She was warm and affectionate as a person and a delight to talk to. On Irish Setters particularly her knowledge was profound and deep based upon many years of loving, owning, breeding and judging. In other words a complete understanding of what an "Irish Setter" should be, and this knowledge which can only be acquired this way is so precious in maintaining a breed. The Fearnley Kennel bitch lines almost always invariably pleased me personally and I felt therein lay the strength of the "Kennel". Our association with Pat and her late husband Barry goes back to the 1970's. Pat and Barry's close association with Leeds City and District C.A. goes back many years probably to the 1960's. Their family home was at Otley, not so very far from Harewood House and the Leeds Championship showground. Pat's committee associations apart from Leeds, were with Setter and Pointer Club and the Irish Setter Association (England). She judged Irish Setters at the Crufts Centenary show in 1991. This was the second time she had judged Irish at Crufts. She was a member of the Kennel Club from 1979 (74) and judged the Gundog Group at Crufts in 2004. She judged extensively in the UK breeds within the gundog group, Irish Setters, English Setters, Gordon Setters, Irish Red and White Setters, Welsh Springer Spaniels and Pointers .

Pat had been involved with dogs for most of her life. Both Pat and Barry grew up with dogs around them. Pat initially with Retrievers and English Springer Spaniels and Barry with Spaniels I believe. In 1961 began their all consuming involvement with Irish Setters which never wavered or changed from that point onwards to the present day. They went on to win top honours at home and abroad for their "Fearnley" breeding in Irish Setters and Welsh Springer Spaniels. Over the years Pat and Barry showed to distinction many Show Champions. Apart from the lovely Fearnley bitches Pat will always be associated with a previous breed record holder Sh. Ch. Sowerhill Satyr of Fearnley bred by Olwen Hunt who won 31 CC's and Sh. Ch. Fearnley Fire Hurricane. Both these dogs appear in the background pedigrees of not only the Fearnley's but many other pedigrees of dogs shown today. The affix "Fearnley" derives I believe from a Yorkshire Cloth Mill family name and was indeed Barry's second Christian name.

Pat first awarded CC's in Irish setters in 1972. Her International experience dates from 1973, having judged in Belgium, Holland, Germany, Sweden, Luxembourg, Ireland and the USA. In 1985 Pat judged the Gundog Group at the World Show in Holland. In 2000 she judged in Sydney Australia and Auckland in New Zealand.

Pat's contribution to the breed of Irish setters is considerable and is there to be witnessed in many pedigrees.

As I began by saying, Pat's CV in pedigree dogs is illustrious to say the least and that is a matter of breed history and records. It is impressive in itself, but for the writer it is Pat, the charming, friendly, affectionate lady who we mourn and will miss. We shall hold that memory with affection, as will many others, particularly perhaps those in the setter world and Leeds City and District committee members who have been associated for so many years. She was an honorary life member of Yorkshire Gundog Society, Leeds City and District C. A. and earlier this year was made an honorary life member of the Kennel Club.

Quite apart from all this legacy of success in the world of dogs, Pat and Barry stood at the centre of a family with Louise, Sally and Johnny as their children and in turn their grand children. Pat was widowed and lost Barry some 20 years ago. Since that time she was central to the family unit as a loving mother and grandmother. There was certainly "life after dogs" as they say. I know I speak on behalf of scores when I say she will be sadly missed. Hopefully you can deduce from these words in tribute I held her in high regard. The many lovely Irish setters bred at the Fearnley kennels did much to sustain and enhance this breed.

If you look at a photograph of Pat you see her nature and kindness etched on her lovely face and countenance. It was always so and whatever the frailties which come to all with old age she never appeared or struck me as "old". She had too much life and character in her to give that impression. We saw her twice and spent time talking with her in the past 12 months. She seemed well and happy and as always that lovely smile. Ironically it was only last month she sent us a card which explains why her sudden passing did come as a shock. As I write I did not even know her age...but then again does it really matter? Very few possess this gift for seeming "timeless".

To her son and daughters, Johnny, Louise and Sally go our sincere condolences and to her seven grandchildren and two great grand sons who I am sure will find the loss of their grandmother difficult and so sad.

The funeral is to be held at the Parish Church of St. Giles, Bramhope on Monday 28th July at 12 noon followed by a wake at the Roebuck, Otley where the family would love all Pat's friends to share some food, memories and one last glass of gin and tonic in her honour.

JAMES S. F. SMITH ("REDDINS RISH SETTERS")