

# The Little White House NEWSLETTER



Roosevelt's Little White House - 706-655-5870 - 401 Little White House Rd. - Warm Springs, Ga. 31830

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## Fala: FDR's Constant Companion

Franklin D. Roosevelt had had pets before, but Fala became his friend.

Fala was born on April 7, 1940. He was given as an early Christmas gift to Roosevelt from his cousin, Margaret "Daisy" Suckley. As a puppy, Fala was given obedience training by Daisy, who taught him to sit, roll over, and jump. His original name was Big Boy; Roosevelt renamed him Murray the Outlaw of Falahill after John Murray of Falahill, a famous Scottish ancestor. This was later shortened to "Fala"

Fala moved into the White House on November 10, 1940, and spent most of his time there until Roosevelt's death in April 1945. He traveled with his master to his home in Hyde Park and to Warm Springs as well as overseas to visit troops and to wartime conferences.

He captured the attention of the public in the United States and followed Roosevelt everywhere, becoming part of FDR's public image.



*Fala often accompanied Roosevelt to important events; he traveled on Sacred Cow, the president's airplane, and the Ferdinand Magellan, Roosevelt's custom-made train car; as well as by ship. He was with Roosevelt at the Atlantic Charter Conference, Quebec, and the meeting with President Camacho of Mexico in Monterey*



*Fala was taken to the hospital after a few weeks at the White House for intestinal issues. Roosevelt discovered that Fala had found his way to the kitchen, and was being overfed. Roosevelt then issued an order to the staff that Fala would henceforth only be fed by the president himself.*



# Fala in the News

During the war, the press often covered Fala and the public devoured the news. It was a pleasant distraction to read about the president's dog. After FDR's death, Fala was covered extensively in the papers. This reflected the national mood as we began to get used to a new president, the public wanted to know how the little dog was getting along without his master

## FDR's Dog Fala Still In Running As Pampered Pet At Hyde Park

**H**YDE PARK, N.Y., July 7 — Some people wonder what's happened to the most famous dog of the Twentieth Century, Fala.

He's 11 years old now and continues to lead a retired "dog's life" at Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt's expansive Val-Kill cottage here.

The nation's "first canine" disappeared from the public eye six years ago after the death of his famous master, President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Since then, he has romped about freely at home and occasionally has accompanied his mistress to the Roosevelt historic site for various memorial services.

His best playmate these days is one of his grandsons, Tamas McFalla. When nobody's home, he frequently is the guest of Miss Margaret I. Suckley, of nearby Rhinebeck, distant cousin of the late President and the one who introduced Fala to his master.

The famous Scottie is still coal black and as perky and appealing as he was in the early 40's when his name was

a household word through the nation.

★ **FALA WAS** born April 7, 1940, a son of Peter and Wendy. He was owned by Mrs. Augustus G. Kellog of Westport, Conn. She offered him to her friend, Miss Suckley, who in turn suggested that he would make an ideal dog for the President.

Fala was on trial at the White House for a few months that year and was officially "adopted" Nov. 10. From then until his master's death, his fame rose to international heights.

During his "term" at the White House, Fala scampered around the grounds during the day and slept on a rug in the President's bedroom at night. He frequently accompanied FDR on train, car or boat trips and was with the President when he met Winston Churchill for the Atlantic Charter talks.

Perhaps his most famous trip was when he went with his master to the Aleutians. Re-

publicans charged the dog was left behind and that a destroyer returned for him at the expense of thousands of dollars to taxpayers.

Since Roosevelt's death, Fala's publicity has dropped off considerably.

★ **IN NOVEMBER** of 1945, he tangled with Blaze, Elliott Roosevelt's huge bull mastiff. Although Fala fared badly, Blaze paid with his life for the encounter. He was killed and his brains sent to Albany for a rabies test.

Fala hit the front pages again the following summer, when Mrs. Roosevelt took him to Maine with her. A Portland hotel told her she could not have the dog in her room so she cancelled her reservation and, with Fala, spent the night in a tourist cabin.

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## Fala Gets His Cookie at Tea

**WASHINGTON—(INS)—** Fala — President Roosevelt's much publicized scotty—would not let Mrs. Roosevelt's tea guests "eat their cake" yesterday until he had eaten some himself.

Mrs. Roosevelt was pouring at the White House for delegates of the rural education conference when Fala scampered into the room, darted to her side and begged for a cookie.

He got it, rolled over, sat up again and barked, as the delegates laughed.

Fala could always grab a headline as he was labeled the "Most Famous Dog of the Twentieth Century"

# FALA GOES ALONG

The late President's little Scotty follows his master from Warm Springs to Hyde Park

In Washington Fala is led to funeral by Franklin Roosevelt's cousin, Margaret Suckley, in whose kennels he was born. Beside him walks Anna Boettiger's Irish setter.



DATELINE April 15, 1945 The Nation grieves with Fala at the loss of President Roosevelt.

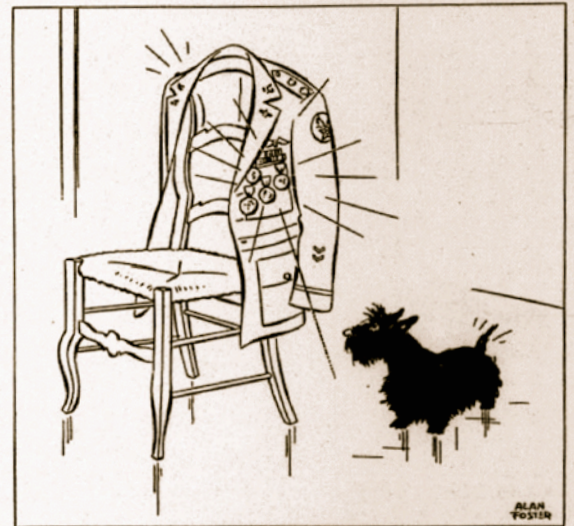
## FALA HOLDS PRESS CONFERENCE IN QUEBEC



Although denied a part in the allied war strategy talks, Fala, FDR's pet scottie, is representing the dogs of America at Quebec. "When the war is over there'll be a nice, juicy beef bone every day for every dog." Fala told reporters while flash bulbs popped and cameras clicked. (NEA Telephoto.)

## MR. FALA OF THE WHITE HOUSE

by ALAN FOSTER



COLLIER'S

"Elliot must be home"

In 1943, Fala was the subject of a short series of political cartoons by Alan Foster titled "Mr. Fala of the White House".

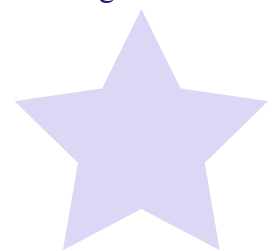
## Fala in Books

Fala became a part of our culture. An MGM film about a typical day in the White House featured the dog in FALA AT HYDE PARK, He was portrayed in SUNRISE AT CAMPOBELLO, one of the most popular films of its time. In the 1943 romantic comedy PRINCESS O'ROURKE, Fala was played by a dog named Whiskers.

During the Battle of the Bulge, American soldiers asked one another the name of the President's dog, expecting the answer "Fala," as a supplementary safeguard against German soldiers attempting to infiltrate American ranks.



Books about, and featuring Fala were written. He even had a private secretary to answer the large volume of mail he was receiving.



## Fala in the Movies



## Fala in War Time



Fala also became an honorary private in the U.S. Army by "contributing" \$1 to the war effort for every day of the year and setting an example for others on the home front.

## The Fala Speech

On September 23, 1944, Roosevelt opened the 1944 presidential campaign in Washington, D.C., speaking at a dinner with the International Teamsters Union. The half-hour speech was also broadcast on all U.S. radio networks. In the speech, Roosevelt attacked Republican opponents in Congress and detailed their attacks on him. Late in the speech, Roosevelt addressed Republican charges that he had accidentally left Fala behind on the Aleutian Islands while on tour there and had sent a U.S. Navy destroyer to retrieve him at an exorbitant cost to the taxpayers:

*"These Republican leaders have not been content with attacks on me, or my wife, or on my sons. No, not content with that, they now include my little dog, Fala. Well, of course, I don't resent attacks, and my family don't resent attacks, but Fala does resent them. You know, Fala is Scotch, and being a Scottie, as soon as he learned that the Republican fiction writers in Congress and out had concocted a story that I'd left him behind on an Aleutian island and had sent a destroyer back to find him at a cost to the taxpayers of two or three, or eight or twenty million dollars his Scotch soul was furious. He has not been the same dog since. I am accustomed to hearing malicious falsehoods about myself... But I think I have a right to resent, to object, to libelous statements about my dog."*



**FDR Won the election, or perhaps we should we say Fala won!**



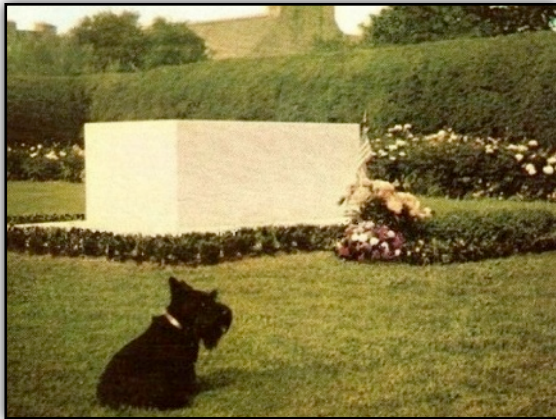
"The audience went wild, laughing and cheering and calling for more," wrote historian Doris Kearns Goodwin. "And the laughter carried beyond the banquet hall; it reverberated in living rooms and kitchens throughout the country, where people were listening to the speech on their radios. The Fala bit was so funny, one reporter observed, that 'even the stoniest of Republican faces cracked a smile.'"

## After FDR

“In the minutes after President Roosevelt died at Warm Springs, Georgia, Fala behaved very strangely.” FDR biographer Jim Bishop wrote. “He had been dozing in a corner of the room. For a reason beyond understanding, he ran directly for the front screen door and bashed his black head against it. The screen broke and he crawled through and ran snapping and barking up into the hills. There, Secret Service men could see him, standing alone, unmoving, on an eminence. This led to the quiet question: 'Do dogs really know?'"



Fala attended Roosevelt's funeral and went to live with the widowed Eleanor Roosevelt at Val-Kill. She took great pleasure in Fala's company, and the two became inseparable companions.



Eleanor often mentioned Fala in her newspaper column, "My Day", and wrote of him in her autobiography:

*“It was Fala, my husband's little dog, who never really readjusted. Once, in 1945, when General Eisenhower came to lay a wreath on Franklin's grave, the gates of the regular driveway were opened and his automobile approached the house accompanied by the wailing of the sirens of a police escort. When Fala heard the sirens, his legs straightened out, his ears pricked up and I knew that he expected to see his master coming down the drive as he had come so many times. Later, when we were living in the cottage, Fala always lay near the dining-room door where he could watch both entrances just as he did when his master was there. Franklin would often decide suddenly to go somewhere and Fala had to watch both entrances in order to be ready to spring up and join the party on short notice. Fala accepted me after my husband's death, but I was just someone to put up with until the master should return.”*

Suffering from deafness and failing health, Fala died on April 5, 1952, two days before his twelfth birthday. He was buried near his master in the Rose Garden at Springwood.

For more information about Roosevelt's Little White House, scheduling tours and hours of operation, please visit our website: [www.GeorgiaStateParks.org](http://www.GeorgiaStateParks.org) or like us at [www.Facebook.com/littlewhitehouse](https://www.facebook.com/littlewhitehouse)