

KOMPARE

KILKERRAN

Wayne Kompare

The major piece of my life with Westies involved the Kilkerran prefix, the breeding program I shared with my first wife, Kathy (now Kathy Norris). Kathy was the heart and brains of Kilkerran during its 20 years of operation from 1973 to 1993. My major Kilkerran roles during this period were as driver/roadie (to dog shows), occasional handler, and all-around kennel help. Since no one could relate the Kilkerran story as well as Kathy, she graciously agreed to pen the first part of this story.

Kilkerran Westies

I had never included dogs in my life plan--not showing them, or breeding them, not even owning them! Wayne was the one who had his heart set on a dog, and it had to be a pure bred dog. I would have been OK with getting a rescue, but Wayne wanted a purebred. Little did he know where that would lead!

So we bought our first home and sold my car for carpet (white carpet, at least it started out white) and a Westie puppy, the breed carefully chosen for size, temperament and ease of care (right!) from the *AKC Complete Dog Book*, borrowed from the public library and combed thoroughly, page by page.

We watched the newspaper ads (what did we know?) and finally saw an ad for a litter of Westies in our hometown. I remember asking Wayne: "Do you think Westies are the same thing as West Highland White Terriers?"

Two-hundred-fifty dollars later, a lot of money in 1973, we drove home with Flash McTavish on my lap. I was afraid of dogs, but within a couple of weeks I was totally won over by this cutest ever ball of white. Wayne was in love from the first.

Then came that karmic day. I saw an ad for a match show for purebred Westies, given by the Westie club of Greater New York. Well, we had a purebred, right? Papers and everything! So off we went, with our ungroomed, but still darling, 3-4 month old and his papers too, just in case. Well, he won his class and that was it for me. The next thing Wayne knew, I was devouring the *AKC Gazette* in search of a show bitch. After a 2-year wait, innumerable phone calls and an interview (I was very impressed that we needed an interview, and very nervous--what if we didn't pass?), we bought our first show bitch, Jasmine of Windy Hill, from Ann Frinks of Selkirk, NY. I could not have asked for a better or more devoted mentor than Ann. Jazz got her championship fairly quickly, shown by Roberta Krohne (now Roberta Campbell). But Ann recognized that Jazz really did not turn out to be truly top of the line from a show or breeding perspective.

So Ann offered us Jazz's full sister, from a later breeding, Kortni of Windy Hill. She offered her free, can you believe it? And I hesitated! Gives me the shivers now when I

think of it.

Those of you who remember those days probably remember Kortni, the Westie love of my life. She was 10 inches of dynamite, who held her own in the ring against all comers, astonishing everyone when she took Best of Breed from the classes at the WHWTC of Greater New York, defeating five Specials along the way. Kortni was an irresistible little show girl.

She was also our foundation bitch and the dam of our first BEST in SHOW winner, Am., Can. Ch. Kilkerran D'Artagnan (Tag), shown by Dora Lee Wilson and Grand-dam of our other two homebred Best in Show winners, Ch. Kilkerran n' Wicket A Kut Above and Ch. Kilkerran Quintessence.

Kortni ruled our house with a paw of iron and licks of love, until we lost her to cancer at age ten. That loss nearly tore me apart. Her daughter, Kilkerran Joy to the World, would sit outside for hours and stare at Kortni's grave. Joy haunted Kortni's favorite spots in the house for years. I believe dogs grieve, as I have seen it firsthand and grieved with them.

Wayne and I continued with our breeding program, and started to show some of the dogs ourselves. All seemed to be going smoothly, with no health or temperament problems until disaster struck out of the blue, or so it seemed

We had whelped two litters fairly close together in time, but not closely related in bloodline. We noticed that a couple of the puppies in the older litter seemed to develop a little difficulty in walking when just a few weeks old. When taken to our vet, who was an absolutely fabulous diagnostician, he was unable to come up with a diagnosis. We started the litter on steroids and kept our fingers crossed; the pups did not improve, in fact they worsened.

This was worrying enough, but then the second litter was struck with the same symptoms. This led me to believe that it was not genetic, as the two litters were not closely related. Well, I was wrong about that. After many tests and intensive research by our vet, he discovered that all the pups had globoid cell leukodystrophy, a disease caused by a recessive gene. GCL erodes the myelin sheath of the spinal cord and is fatal. There is no cure.

I give Wayne full marks for this heart wrenching time, as he played with and comforted these puppies while we went through the desperate process of diagnosis and experimental treatment, meanwhile watching them go downhill day by day; the pups were not in any pain, but I saw their ending looming near as each day passed.

Finally, upon reaching the diagnosis, our vet, Dr. Seymour Schimmelman, called upon colleagues at the University of Pennsylvania for consultation and together this group was able to develop a blood test to determine carriers of the disease. This test allowed us, and many others, to test our sires and dams and spay/neuter any carriers. What a relief!

It was scary, testing our stock, but at least there was a way through this breeder's nightmare.

I recall so many terrific moments during our time in Westies. We enjoyed many wins; the ones I loved the best were owner handled. My precious Fame (Ch. Kilkerran Name of the Game), a Kortni granddaughter and Ch. Whitebriar Jollimont daughter) won RWB at one year from Bred By at Montgomery County, and then BOS over 100+ bitches the following year, again at Montgomery, all owner handled.

Then there was the Roving in Texas, where Ch. Kortni of Windy Hill won the Veteran Bitch class, handled by Wayne and then Ch. Whitebriar Jollimont (Monty) won the Veteran Dog Class at Montgomery, also handled by Wayne.

Wayne and I have both judged at several Specialties, and I must say that I just loved it! The only downside for me was classes of five--how I hated to send just one exhibitor away without a ribbon! I judged Montgomery Sweeps in 1994 and had a fun time with all the puppies and young adults. I remember I used a shorthand system of note taking so I wouldn't get mixed up!

The memories are never ending, although my involvement in breeding and showing ended around 1995. I lost my last Westie, Jinny, bred by Barbara Hands (Crinan's Christmas Carol) just five years ago. She was my faithful traveling companion and treasured friend for all our lives together. I miss her.

Kathy Norris (formerly Kompare)

Wayne here again: I'd just like to add a few comments about the Kilkerran years, plus what my involvement in Westiedom has been over the past 18 years.

What I'm most proud of is that Kathy and I whelped approximately 30 litters during those 20 years, and produced somewhere between 75 to 100 Kilkerran Westies. First and foremost was that we aimed for healthy Westies with great temperament. Next was that they be sound structurally and meet the standard. Finally, we tried to improve on appearance and movement: good coats, good pigmentation, good bone and angulation, proper tailsets, etc. I believe we had good results with most of our Westies, partially borne out by three Kilkerran-bred multiple BIS dogs and approximately 30 Kilkerran champions.

During those 20 years, Kathy served as a director of the WHWTCA from 1992-1993, while I was a director in 1986-1987, and treasurer from 1987-1989. Kathy and I were both privileged to judge Montgomery sweeps (she in 1994 and I in 1988), as well as sweeps at several regional specialties. After I obtained my judge's license, I also judged the regular classes at several regional specialties.

My favorite Westie of all time was our foundation bitch, Kortni. She absolutely loved to

show, and had, in my opinion, just about perfect structure, movement, type and temperament. Many of those traits were evident in her offspring, as she was the dam or granddam of our three multiple BIS dogs (Tag, Kutter and Quin).

My second favorite Westie was another Kortni son, Ch. The Joker is Wild (Joker). The first time I took him into the ring was at the Indiana Specialty, where, at 10 months of age, he went Best in Sweeps, then WD and BOW in the regular classes.

Since the end of the Kilkerran years, I was honored to be one of the founding members of the Westie Foundation in 1997, and served as president from 1997 to 2010. I am very proud of the accomplishments of the Foundation towards improving the health and quality of life of Westies everywhere.