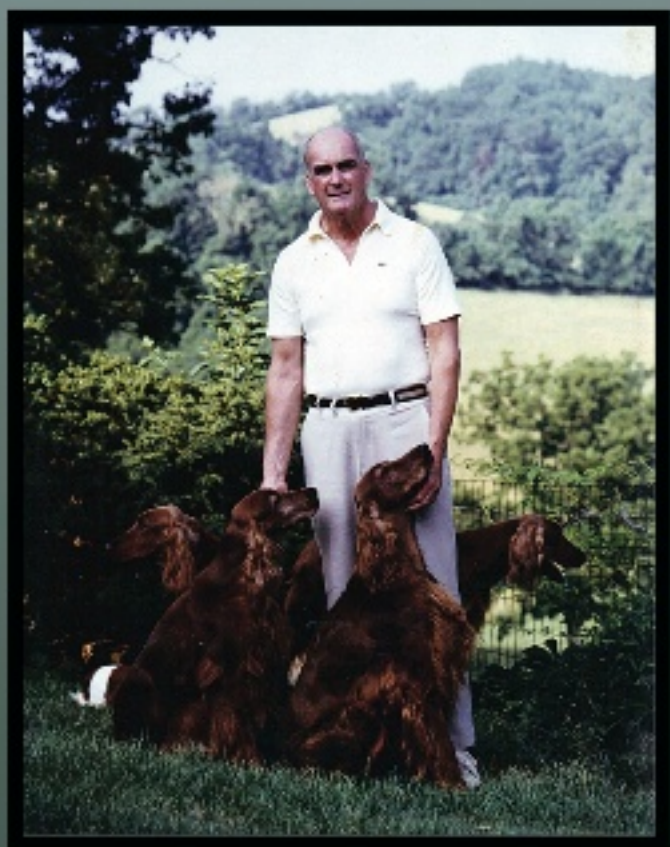


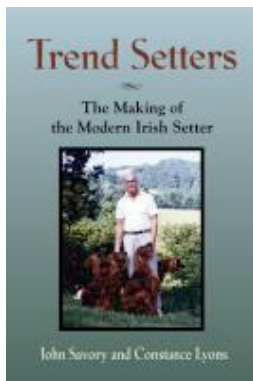
Trend Setters



The Making of
the Modern Irish Setter



John Savory and Constance Lyons



The Irish Setter has a long history as a hunting dog and its glorious appearance and outgoing personality has made it also a popular show dog and companion. This book traces the history of the Irish Setter through three great breeders, Eileen Walker, Lee Schoen and Ted Eldredge, who came together as if by destiny in the 1930s to develop a type that today influences the dogs that we see winning in the show ring.

Trend Setters

The Making of the Modern Irish Setter

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TREND SETTERS
The Making of the Modern Irish Setter



John Savory *and* Constance Lyons

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First Edition

The Vale of Kin: Lee M. Schoen

He was a slightly built, slender man of medium height. Glasses. He had a shock of graying dark hair that flopped across his forehead, which he pushed impatiently back. Later in his life he had it cut short, *en brousse*, and was gratified by the lack of maintenance.

In June of 1958, newly graduated from college, I (CL) set in motion my childhood dream of breeding and showing dogs. We wanted a big dog, long haired, good with children, and the Irish Setter answered all those specifications. Its beauty and elegance nailed down the decision. I bought a copy of Dog News magazine, then the premier canine publication, and set about answering all the ads. One (End O'Maine) didn't reply. Marion Neville of Red Barn Kennels kennel offered me a four month old female. "Right now it is difficult to know how she would do in the show ring," read the reply. "She has dark eyes, a good bite and moves well. I could let you have her for \$75.00" I was savvy enough, novice though I was, to know that I wasn't going to get much of a prospect for such a meager sum. But the next ad down the page looked promising. It read, "1957: Best of Breed Morris and Essex. 1958: Mid-summer Matron. Ch. Kinvarra Mary Eileen's lovely puppies available now." I inquired, Lee replied, and so began my long-lived friendship with the extraordinary man who was Lee M. Schoen.

"A charming, difficult man." That was how his longtime friend and fellow Irish Setter breeder, Dr. Wolfgang Casper, described him. He could be suavely, elegantly gracious and charming and on occasion, with little or no provocation, staggeringly rude. A natural athlete, he was a good enough tennis player to try out for the Olympic team. Every day he walked the two miles from New York's Grand Central Station to his office on West 29th Street in the heart of the city's bustling garment district. Jewish by birth, he was agnostic by conviction. He was so little involved in his racial culture that, when a friend remarked that he had donated a new menorah to his synagogue, Lee inquired, "What's a menorah?"



Lee judging Ch. Taradell Bright Future.

He was also an accomplished eloquent writer, effortlessly spinning out long, thoughtful, provocative articles on the dog show scene in general and Irish Setters in particular. In his forties he decided to try his hand at writing novels and produced three, one of which, *A Gesture in the Garden*, was eventually published. I read two, edited one, and they were not especially good. It is not uncommon for skilled creators of prose to lack the necessary creative skills of narrative, storytelling, character and dialogue manufacture, and such was the case with Lee.

Lee Martin Schoen was born in 1899, in St Louis, Missouri, to Isaac H. Schoen and Florence Hellman Schoen. He was the third of their four children, two boys and two girls. Aaron, the oldest, was named after his paternal grandfather. Jeanette was the second child; the youngest, Jessie. Schoen eventually moved his family to New York City, where he established his business of importing furs. Lee followed his father into the business and he and his brother took it over when Isaac died in the mid-1920's.

Trend Setters

In 1918 Isaac decided to send the 19 year old Lee on a buying expedition to New Zealand, where he was to make contacts for the business and establish suppliers. It was at the height of the Spanish influenza epidemic. The ship docked briefly at Samoa, where 20% of the population had died within three months, and the boy was overwhelming nauseated by the nightmare stench from the burning bodies of the victims.

Once he landed in New Zealand, Lee had to board a train to take him to the suppliers he was to contact. The town where they lived was so small that the train didn't even stop there; he was instructed that the train would slow and he must jump off and walk the rest of the way. By the time he reached the ramshackle hotel where he was to stay, he was exhausted; worse, he was uneasily aware that he was becoming seriously ill. He had contracted the influenza. For ten days he lay in a room by himself, without any kind of attention, including medical. Trays were left outside his door three times a day and removed. Miraculously, he recovered, and, like Jesus, went on about his father's business.

In the late 1920's he was living in The Bronx, New York City. It was then that he acquired the first of his Irish Setters: two puppies. The ancestry of these two is uncertain; as I recall, he drove up to a farm which had advertised puppies for sale in the New York Times. A large number of puppies were milling around in a barnyard pen; Lee waded in, looked for a while, and picked out two that took his fancy. He had a small back yard, where he constructed a shed to shelter them in bad weather, and where they stayed during the day while he was at work. One day he came home to find a policeman at his door. Someone had complained that the dogs were unattended and neglected; that they weren't being fed and were left alone outside in all kinds of weather. Lee took the policeman into the yard, where the puppies greeted them joyfully. "They nearly knocked him over," said Lee gleefully. "They were big enough for that." He showed the officer the shelter, food and water, and the man remarked on the fine condition of the puppies. They parted amicably. Two days later Lee came home to find a dead fish thrown into the enclosure. "I went into the house, sat down, and thought about it. Obviously, I needed to move out of the city."

That weekend he went on a house hunting expedition. He explored several towns within a reasonable commuting distance and settled on Darien, Connecticut, where he happened on a tall white farm house on a couple of acres. It had a separate garage big enough for either two cars or considerable storage, three bedrooms, a glassed in porch and a smallish country kitchen. A wide swath of lawn lay between the house and the garage, in the center of which stood a magnificent weeping cherry.

So he moved out of the city. He fenced a large enclosure where the dogs could run, and at the back of it built a tennis court. In Kinvarra's heyday, Lee would invite friends in for tennis and drinks (he was partial to a heavy rum concoction called a Pym's Cup, which was embellished with a cucumber spear). The dogs would rollick around the perimeter of the fenced in tennis court, barking encouragement and hoping for a wayward ball to sail over the fence. Ch. Tyronne Farm Malone II was fond of collecting as many as three in his jaws and would trot boastfully around the run, taunting his companions.

He also installed his lover, Hortense Werden. When Ted Eldredge, then thirteen, made his first visit, Lee tactfully (evasively) avowed to the naïve boy that Werden was his aunt, who lived with him and took care of things while he was at work. It appears that Hortense played a significant role in the Kinvarra operation for many years. William C. Thompson in his book "Irish Setter Word and Picture," first edition published in 1954 by Denlinger's, Richmond, VA, makes the following statement on page 214: "About 1934, Mrs. H.D. Werden and Lee M. Schoen were partners in the Kinvarra Kennels, Darien, Conn. Basic bloodlines stemmed from Ch. Kinvarra Son of Red Coat and imported Borrowdale Yseult of Kinvarra, which two dogs have been referred to as Mr. and Mrs. Kinvarra." Hortense's son in law, Michael G. Spoto was a freelance photographer and artist who contributed to the legacy of Kinvarra through his photographs and paintings. The classic painting of Yseult's head was his work, as were the well-known photographs of Ch. Kinvarra Craig and Ch. Kinvarra Kermit.

Until quite recently little was known about her; one visitor described her as very affable and gracious. But by a stunning trick of fate, cyberspace has intervened. Soon after the publication of *Trend Setters*, and out of the blue, the authors received an email that stated, "I am Hortense Werden's

grandson.” It was signed Donald Spoto; the writer had been idly trolling the internet; on a whim he typed Werden’s name in the address bar and the title “*Trend Setters: The Making of the Modern Irish Setter*” flashed onto the screen. Spoto bought the book on the instant, read it, and got in touch with its authors.

In the light of what Dr. Spoto relates, it becomes apparent that the rapid ascendancy of Kinvarra had much to do with the grooming skills and attention given to the dogs by Mrs. Werden. Lee had little patience with meticulous grooming or coat maintenance, and it is likely that she did all the hard, tedious work and maintenance of conditioning, training and prepping the dogs for the ring, as well as maintaining the house and grounds and graciously welcoming visitors and guests. It would be interesting to know if Kinvarra was registered with the AKC under both their names; however, their records do not go that far back.

We are honored to have the following essay by Dr. Spoto. He is a distinguished biographer and theologian; he received his Ph. D. degree from Fordham University and is the author of 29 books on film and religion. He lives in Denmark.

***Hortense Werden, Lee Schoen, and the Irish Setters of Kinvarra
by Donald Spoto, Mrs. Werden’s Grandson***

During the 1930s, my maternal grandmother Hortense Davidson Werden met a man named Lee Schoen. They shared a love of dogs—specifically, of Irish Setters. By 1940, divorced from her husband since 1925, my grandmother had become Lee’s lover.

It was easy to understand his fascination for her despite the fact that she was almost twenty years older than Lee. She was an immensely attractive woman with pellucid blue eyes, alabaster skin, an elegance of voice and manners so aristocratic that she might have been mistaken for a member of Mrs. Astor’s fabled 400. Years later, I described her as a woman who sprang from the pages of an Edith Wharton novel.

My grandmother had little formal education, but her childhood in an Upper East Side townhouse in nineteenth-century Manhattan—before her family’s wealth was lost in business ventures—had placed a premium value on all the social graces of the Belle Époque. She never shrank from hard work; she read good books constantly; and her admirable dignity and refinement were never elements of a manufactured pose. Lee Schoen’s background in St. Louis (so it was whispered) was not quite so polished; that is as it may have been—or not. My mother eventually knew his family very well. His parents were Isaiah (“Uncle Ike,” apparently a somewhat cranky eccentric) and “Aunt” Florence Schoen, about whom I have no memories. Lee—a kind of spectral, occasional presence who came and went with high-toned indifference during my childhood—had a brother named Aaron and two sisters, Jessie and Jeanette. Of these, I knew only Jean, as Jeanette was always called.

By 1940, Lee had purchased an old farmhouse with kennels and a spacious back run on Talmadge Hill Road, just off Mansfield Avenue in Darien (Fairfield County), Connecticut. He and “Hortie” aptly named the place Kinvarra, slightly altering the name of Kinvara, a seaport village in County Galway, Ireland. My grandmother and Lee Schoen were wholly committed to the breeding of Irish Setters; they registered their dogs with the American Kennel Club and participated in the annual Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show.

My mother and I lived with Lee and my grandmother during World War II while my father served in the Army. At the time, Darien was nothing like the enormously affluent town it later became. In wartime, it had a village simplicity and friendliness that called to mind the art of Norman Rockwell, who frequently found inspiration in Darien, nearby New Canaan, Norwalk and Noroton Heights, and along the banks of the Mianus River, which in parts was more like a creek. I’ve always said that I lived in Darien before it became Darien. It was just the right place for the care and breeding of those beautiful animals that were my best childhood friends. Our neighbors adored the Irish Setters—as what sensible person would not?

For a while in 1943, Lee was in London—hence the management of Kinvarra was left to my grandmother. Her energies were prodigious, and her calm *hauteur* evoked considerable respect from the hired men who cleaned the kennels and from the women who helped in the house. During Lee’s absence,

life at Kinvarra continued efficiently, as did the rush of activities prior to the annual Westminster show. Life was frugal during wartime, but my grandmother was a brilliant household economist.

Our beautiful Setters acquitted themselves brilliantly at home and “onstage,” thanks to my grandmother’s skills: she cared for and trained them with discernible love, and for good reasons. Even now, more than seventy years later, I remember the warmth and obedient gentleness of those dogs—Barry, Finesse, Cocoa, Rhu, Jane and the others. I clearly recall, for example, that they were all brought from their outdoor shelters into the house—for our comfort, I’m sure—when President Roosevelt died in April 1945. Our Setters seemed to know that something was very wrong, for they sensed the gloom and respected the fog of mourning that enveloped our house.

But the story of Lee Schoen and my grandmother does not end happily.

In the late 1940s, at the height of Kinvarra’s fame and success, my grandmother—then in her late sixties—was diagnosed with breast cancer and endured a radical mastectomy. As soon as she was released from hospital, Lee calmly announced that she was no longer welcome at Kinvarra or in his life. Overnight, she was virtually booted down the front steps of the house, which of course had only his name on the deed. My grandmother came to stay with friends in New Rochelle, over the Connecticut border in Westchester County, New York, where my mother and I, reunited with my father, lived after the war ended.

From that time, my grandmother had no permanent home and was quite frankly impoverished. She was forced to move every few months, as a guest in the apartment of one family and then a boarder in the house of another; her circumstances were even worse than that of my parents. For a while, she worked as a nursery-school assistant, and the children clearly adored her. But it was impossible for a woman in her seventies to find work in postwar America. For the rest of her long life, dependent on the occasional handout from one of her three brothers, she lived in what can only be called genteel poverty.

But as her family and friends attested then and later, she never uttered a syllable of complaint about her situation, her illness or Lee, and she kept a perpetual, dignified silence about the sudden, devastating loss of Kinvarra and of her beloved Setters. Lee's name was not mentioned in our household.

There was, however, one fine legacy: in our homes, we had an unbroken succession of Irish Setters (not bred at Kinvarra) from the late 1940s. Among these I especially remember Scarlet ("Knightscroft Scarlet Fever," according to her papers) and later Sunny, a name bestowed in honor of her benign disposition even as a rescued puppy.

My grandmother died in May 1971 at the age of 89. I delivered her eulogy, emphasizing her great dignity and her utter lack of self-pity. I did not mention that, in the throes of grave illness, she had been abruptly turned out by a man to whom she gave much personally and professionally—a man from whom she finally received nothing.

My mother was a close friend of Lee's sister Jean, who was a deeply mysterious character to me. Jean was (at least in my presence) invariably silent on the subject of Lee, but I had the impression that familial devotion was not a characteristic of the Schoens.

To this day so many decades later, I have clear and happy memories of those glorious Irish Setters, such faithful companions in my childhood. Even in the darkest hours of her life, my grandmother bestowed on these dogs a kind of love that was, I believe, almost mystically reciprocated.

The kennel was officially established in 1932, when the name "Kinvarra," which means "the vale of kin," was selected from a lengthy list of possibilities. Lee regularly travelled abroad on business, to Europe and England, and one of these trips resulted in the purchase of Kinvarra's foundation bitch, Borrowdale Iseult of Kinvarra, from the Borrowdale kennels of Mrs. Ogden. Iseult's dam, the lovely Ch. Norna, was bred by Rheola and eventually purchased by Mrs. Ogden. By this time Lee had familiarized himself with the Irish Setter standard, and being a meticulously precise person, he began to apply it to the bitches on offer, rating each one

numerically according to a scale of points: so many for head, so many for coat color, and so on. He narrowed the candidates to two and reassessed, adding up their scores once again. They came out even. Finally, he threw in the towel and the decision was made by the toss of a coin. Iseult came to America and anchored the line of Irish Setters that is influential to this day. It would be interesting to know what happened to the other bitch.

The trip also resulted in marriage. While in London Lee met and fell in love with Marjorie, married her and brought her home, ousting the unfortunate Hortense. Dr. Spoto attributes his actions to Werden's illness; perhaps it was one or the other; perhaps both. Marjorie (as did Hortense) had a great interest in field trials; during their marriage they ran their show dogs frequently in field trials. And indeed, Lee stipulated that any dog housed at Kinvarra must prove its ability in the field. By Lee's account they were impressively successful; not so, however, in the eyes of the field trial fancy, among whom he was to make many enemies.



Borrowdale Iseult of Kinvarra (bitch). Rheola Boniface ex Ch. Norna.

Iseult finished her championship easily and was duly bred to Ch. Higgins' Red Coat, a son of the highly successful mating of Higgins' Paddy of Boyne and Craigie Lea Mona. Paddy was imported in 1923 by William W. Higgins. He was bred four times to Lea Mona, and these matings produced six champions that had a heavy influence on the breed. Red Coat himself sired thirty champions, among them the great show dog and sire Ch. Milson O'Boy, Ch. Redwood Russett of Harvale, and Lee's dog, Ch. Kinvarra Son of Red Coat.

Redcoat then sired Ch. Kinvarra Craig, the sire of the legendary Ch. Kinvarra Kermit, the dog that firmly established Kinvarra in Irish Setter history. This dog and a couple of littermates were of sufficiently high quality that they were making a mark in the show ring and attracting notice from judges and other exhibitors, in spite of Lee's deficiencies both as a groomer and as a handler. He firmly believed in showing his dogs in as near to natural state as possible. Till the end of his career he eschewed the use of clippers, indeed, he deplored them, and insisted on "neatening them up a little with scissors" around the ears and feet. Bathing was also anathema; "it dried out the coat." He ran the dogs in the field, where their coats were filled with burrs and ripped ragged by thorns and brambles; no matter: he brushed them out as well as he could and off to the shows they went. As a handler he was extremely tense, nervous; his hands shook visibly. Since he also deplored the employment of professional handlers ("any able bodied youngish person can do it") he always showed the dogs himself, fully aware that the same dog in the hands of a professional would have doubled and tripled the amount of winnin.. Kermit met Ch. Rosecroft Premier eight times in the show ring, and defeated him only three, a statistic that Lee was unalterably convinced would have been reversed had Kermit been shown by a professional.

Of all of the Kinvarra dogs, Kermit made the greatest contribution (of the bitches this honor would have to be awarded to Ch. Kinvarra Portia). Kermit was actually bred by Ted Eldredge and was whelped in 1937 on Ted's sixteenth birthday. His sire, Ch. Kinvarra Craig pictured here in a photograph created by Michael Spoto was the sire; from this photograph it is hard to fault his impeccable topline, his well-muscled quarters and with just the right amount of coat. Craig's parentage is given above. Kermit's dam, as described later in the Ted Eldredge chapter was the lovely Ch. Kinvarra Mollie of Gadeland, imported by Lee for the young Ted Eldredge from the well-known Gadeland kennel in the United Kingdom. A condition for Ted acquiring Mollie was that Lee would get the pick of the litter. Fourteen puppies were born on March 31, 1937 and were evaluated by Lee and Ted (and also Hortense Werden, according to the William C. Thompson book). This evaluation took place when the puppies were 7 weeks of age. A more experienced Ted in later years had much more confidence in evaluating puppies at 3 months of age, a change undoubtedly influence by his evaluation of this first litter. Lee Schoen narrowed down his choice to 2 males and could not decide on his

“pick”. He eventually closed his eyes and picked one who became Ch. Kinvarra Kermit, one of the all-time greats. The other male became Tirvelda Barrymore, the only product of this remarkable litter who did not make the grade. In 1938 Kermit was sold to Mrs. L.B. Rowland of Rangemore Kennels in Waterloo, Iowa and was shown in the Mid-West by the well-known handler, Hollis Wilson who was also an Irish Setter breeder who founded with his wife the End O’Maine kennels. It was while still owned by Rangemore that Kermit won best of breed at the prestigious Morris and Essex show in 1939. Later in 1939 Mrs. Rowland sold all of her Irish Setters and Kermit went back to Kinvarra. Over a 5 year period he won 3 Best in Show, 12 Group 1 and many Best of Breed awards. However, it was as a sire that Kermit made his enduring contribution. He sired 154 registered offspring from 23 bitches of whom 10 were champions. In all he sired 29 litters, producing 29 champions including the wonderful Ch. Kinvarra Portia. Kermit was of ideal size: 27 inches at the withers; his sire, Ch. Kinvarra Craig was 26 inches. His superb balance, head and proportions can be seen in the photograph taken by Michael Spoto in the Ted Eldredge chapter, along with his younger brothers Ch. Tirvelda Storm Lark and Ch. Tirvelda Storm King.

Here is Lee in his own voice on competing as an amateur handler:

DEGREES IN SPORTSMANSHIP

ALL SETTERS, INC. wants me to contribute something. What can an old-timer do but reminisce? Lots, you say? What, for instance? While he waits for your suggestions, this old-timer will stick with days gone past.

Even way back then, there was the same talk you hear today about sportsmanship in the ring. About felicitating the winner. After all, when it's down in the book, storming out of the ring won't change anything, why not help the winner enjoy his day, good decision or bad; our turn will come.

Easy to say; hard to do. "I don't mind being beaten, but by a klunk like that!" is the more usual reaction. Not too many of us can admit even to ourselves, on the day, that our opponent really did tally a lot in the asset column. We are not calm enough for that at the moment.

Professional handlers as a group are by far the best sportsmen. They are paid to be gentlemen and they are gentlemen—and ladies. Watch them queue up to pass by a group winner and pat him on the scapula.

But they often feel exactly as you and I do. It may not be their dog they are angry for; but it's their record, their reputation, their livelihood. Certainly they don't laud aloud the other fellow's dog— that wouldn't be very good business; but they do know his virtues quite thoroughly, and are, for the most part, cautious about panning it. The AKC rather carefully monitors the handlers' mouths. Not to know when to keep these closed has caused many a handler to lose his privileges—be “set down”—for months at a time. Warnings have been more frequent, for the AKC well understands it is controlling humans and human feelings, not machines. One handler I knew notoriously raged from the ring, ripping off his armband and cursing. Five minutes later you would see him force himself alongside the same ring to smile at the judge and, no less, commend him on his work. This one the AKC hammered at for his own good until he learned.

The real toppers among the handlers almost never get the bounce. They are like many of the finest batters have been: able to say more to an umpire with a quick, quizzical glance than any outpouring of words could possibly do, as they leave the box—or the ring—in quiet dignity.

One great handler I was often in the ring with was a master at that. He had developed a system of praise (or punishment) for judges such as probably hasn't been equaled before or since. He made them so unhappy with that glance, or an utterly gentle word or two to them (and about them a few delicately seeded quips of appraisal, not praise, sure to filter back) until they longed urgently for his approval instead, longed to be on that side of the artist's ledger—for artist he was, not only as dog handler but, quite literally, man-handler. The offending judge would always get a second chance, but just let him muff that one, and you might well hear the handler mutter to his partner out of the side of his lips, “That's one (judge) for our black books.”



Ch. Kinvarra Craig (dog). Ch. Kinvarra Son Of Red Coat ex Borrowdale Yseult Of Kinvarra, born March 16, 1934.

I overheard precisely those words, walking from the Irish Setter ring in Boston's prestige fixture in Mechanics Hall a quarter century ago. It had seemed silly to go to the show altogether and I didn't finally decide to until one o'clock on the morning of the event. Trying to move somewhere with Kermit as a Special, I was only getting him slapped down to this same powerful handler and his powerhouse, smooth-striding dog. When one friend and Irish Setter Club associate, who had given Kermit a group two months earlier, turned him down for BOB in the Garden, everyone called me foolish to continue trying to penetrate such a stronghold. But I was young and stubborn and I loved Kermit, loved most everything about him. I went. If those judges who knew Kermit and knew me weren't convinced, perhaps the stranger-judge up in Boston could be. I went, but as I entered the Specials class that afternoon, it was I just then doing the muttering: "Not one chance in fifty," I said.

An hour earlier I had had my first contact with that day's judge. An inexperienced exhibitor had come to the benches in the morning with a Novice bitch that caught my eye. It proved to be a daughter of Kermit—they generally did pick themselves out—and I offered to show her for him. We got Novice bitch and Winners Bitch and the feeling came over me that my Specials entry would at least get looked at. There were half a dozen champions entered, rather exceptional under the monopolistic conditions of

the moment. The number was due in part to the fact that Warren Read was still active. For him to bring fifteen or seventeen of his Wamsuttas to a sizable exhibition wasn't unusual. Two of our adversaries were being handled by the leading handler we were talking about and his partner. Presumably both owners were agreeable to this somewhat uncommon arrangement. It was against the partner's animal, a handsome import, rather than the chief's, that Kermit was to fight his duel that time. And the duel went on and on.

Kermit felt good, as he almost always did. Circling the ring smoothly, and probably, at 27 inches, the tallest contender, I could feel that our very dark, ultra-glossy fellow had the judge's eye. He moved equally well when it came to the straight up and down. Then the two were placed side by side in the rear center of the ring, all others now ignored. Five minutes we stayed there, eight, ten, twelve! The judge studied and compared every point, nose tip to tail tip.

Once more he came around the front and I thought he couldn't help but admire our tiny compact feet with Kermit on the very tips of them. At last he walked away to get his book. Just as he returned and was again staring at the pair from behind, Kermit's right hind foot slipped backward on the too smooth floor—his rear fell apart. Brokenhearted, I knew that we were licked.

The judge glanced at our rival, standing solidly, marked down the number in his book. Infinitely tired, I reached round for Kermit's leash, got up off my knee. And he handed us the ribbon and the envelope and the trophy.

Again I heard myself mumble, "Not one in fifty!"

Next day—Boston was always a two-dayer then—Kermit got a gratifying Group 2nd under the late Cocker genius, Herman Melenthin. But what happened during the interval was more significant because it showed how adroitly a truly independent judge could take charge under attack; could try to command sportsmanship which wasn't being offered. During that first evening the Irish Setter judge took a courageous stroll along the benches of the animals he had sorted out, talking with this owner and that. Unexpectedly, he told me later, the defeated handler approached him:

“Hello, there! Sorry you didn't like my dog.” I could hear the soft tone, picture the cheerful, slightly sardonic grin).

“I didn't say that.”

“Did you happen to see the tail on the dog you picked?” (Kermit did at times push it a bit above back level, more frowned upon then than now). A master phrasemaker himself, our handler hardly could have foreseen the reply.

The judge said he looked at the man for a time, then said very quietly, “I liked the elegance. I liked the head, eye and expression; I liked the shoulders, feet and pasterns: I liked the dog.” He had deftly worked in each of the points where Kermit particularly excelled. It was not the only time that year that Kermit and I would prevail in this special vendetta but it was the first. And a first took fortitude. Renowned as that handler was for having always ready the clever last word, all he could muster this night before turning on his heel was, “You're the judge, mister.”

By Lee M. Schoen, Kinvarra Kennels

Temperament, and in this he included intelligence, was of paramount importance to Lee. (As it was to his disciple, Kelly Fox of Kilkara Irish Setters, who sold the outstanding show dog and sire Ch. Kinvarra Flicker to Walter Teegarden because, as Lee put it, “He didn't think much of the dog's brains.”) He would not keep or breed to a dog of doubtful temperament, and took careful note of the offspring of famous sires. Included in this assessment was Ch. Milson O' Boy. “Only once I allowed myself to overcome my misgivings and bred to him despite the number of timid progeny I was seeing. I got Ensign, fine, and a brother, more beautiful, dead shy.” His most famous protégé, Ted Eldredge, followed his example in this, rigorously. Ted felt that his dogs' show careers were only a brief part of their lives, and after that, their primary function was as companions.

But not everyone was so rigorous. Joe Knight, of the very successful Knightscroft Kennels and Lee's principal rival on the east coast, purchased Ch. Milson O'Boy II and bred to him heavily with great success, but a number of shy progeny were among his get. Lee was fond of telling people that Harry Hartnett, when he owned the dog, once exclaimed, “H'mmm! I guess I gave this blighter too grand a name.” There was considerable enmity between the

two rival kennels, and Lee, who could be vindictive, took care to point out the Achilles heel of Knight's dogs. Early in my show going days, one of Knight's dogs spooked visibly and Lee pulled me aside. "See that?" he exclaimed gleefully. "The Knightscroft taint. They're famous for it."

Lee possessed to a greater extent than almost anyone I have known, then or since, the elusive "eye for a dog." I am convinced that this is an inborn gift that cannot be learned. (Ted Eldredge was equally gifted.) Kinvarra owed its early spectacular success to his innate ability to select, even in his earliest years, the most promising individuals. As a judge he was rigorously independent and just as rigorously honest: he would not hesitate to put a little known but deserving specimen over the current top winners. Mrs. Cheever Porter, who campaigned many top winning sporting dogs, as a result refused to allow her dogs to be shown under him. I often sat by him at shows, and watched him grade litters of puppies, and he would see in a flash what it took less gifted mortals to discern in many minutes. "Often when I'm judging, sitting and watching the class assemble, I place them as they come into the ring," he said. "But of course I can't just stand up, point, and say, 'one, two, three, four.' People might talk." He was also relentlessly censorious about oversized dogs. For a while he brought a tape measure into the ring and measured any dog he was doubtful about. Indignant exhibitors complained, so he left the tape measure home and instead marked the outer seam of his trousers at 27 and 25 inches. His preference for a smaller dog, however, did not extend to the field trial setters, which he contemptuously dismissed as "midgets." The split between the field trial setters and the show-bred dogs has a lengthy and contentious history. Irish Setter enthusiasts in the late 1800's and the early part of the 20th century were almost unanimously active in both the field and the show ring; the dual dog was the norm and was highly successful at both undertakings. Gradually the balance tilted toward the show ring; the size and look of the dog began to change; and history's account of show kennels active in the field becomes more and more infrequent, tapering off to virtually none.

Field trial aficionados watched with dismay as it became increasingly apparent that their dogs could not compete successfully against English Setters and Pointers. In 1950 Horace Lytle wrote an article for *Sports Afield* suggesting an infusion of English Setter blood. With the enthusiastic support

of Ned Le Grande he embarked on an intensively researched program of crossbreeding. The FDSB agreed that after three generations of pure breeding, the fourth would then be eligible for registration as purebred and, since reciprocity was then in place, the AKC would be compliant.

The resulting animals did indeed become more competitive in the field. But they also departed precipitously from the conformation standard laid out by the ISCA. Lee was enormously disturbed by the appearance of the field-bred dogs. He sent the following letter to Leonard Brumby, then president of the AKC. Lee said, "Just after World War II, Ned Le Grande of Pennsylvania told me at a trial, 'You know, Lee, a number of us are giving up on these [AKC] Irishmen, and forming a new club to be called Red Setter Club. We don't like crossing out to other breeds, (he mentioned four) but must if we're ever going to put a red dog back on the map.' And that's what they did. They did it thoughtfully, systematically and intensively for several years until they came up with a tiny white and red, yellow or red, or yellowish and white animal that usually possessed a good nose (regardless of its shape or of the head), which did indeed get over the ground smoothly and fast.

"All very fine! But then, in accordance with their plan, they bred back these Pointers/Spaniel/Setter mixtures to some of the better hunting pure blooded Irish Setters for a number of generations, and in some strange manner that evidently escapes the attention of the Irish Setter Club of America seem to have persuaded them into granting the cross-breeds normal registration as Irish Setters

"We solidly believe this has to be changed. Those animals have every right to run with ours, and beat the Irish as they often do, along with the Shorthairs, Brittanies, Vizslas, etc., that we regularly try to compete with. But they must not do it as Irish Setters, which they aren't, must not be authorized to end up as AKC Irish Setter champions of record. By rights, this product, arrived at in a directly un-AKC fashion, if it is to continue AKC registerable, should appear under a separate category; for example, "Miscellaneous Spaniels and Setters" and could be called tawny (or tawny and white Setters) or tawny Spaniels or tawny Pointers, longhair and short hair, something like that. However it is handled, the AKC is respectfully urged to reverse whatever dictum permitted these animals so quietly to creep in. It is only fair to those

who, with the AKC, have tried throughout the century to preserve a fine Irish Setter.”

At Lee’s urging, the AKC dispatched the Irish Setter Club of America’s delegate, Ted Eldredge, to attend the National Field Trial and take a look at the (supposedly) Irish Setters that were competing. Anne Marie Kubacz, a proponent of the dual dog who has been highly successful in both activities (she is the only Irish Setter breeder to produce the top winner in both the ISCA National Field Trial and the conformation National) remembers all too well the visit of Ted Eldredge, the ISCA delegate to the AKC, to the first ISCA National Field Trial:

“Back in the days when ISCA was beginning a national field trial program, Ted came to the first National Field Trial at Rend Lake. Ted was certainly not pleased to see the variation in the field dogs, many of which were primarily FDSB dogs registered through the foreign registration program at AKC. When the campaign began to close the FDSB registration of Irish Setters, I was upset, in that I thought it was a very short-sighted thing to restrict the gene pool of those wanting to have a field dog who could compete on a national level with other pointing breeds. Ted was someone who was very polite and open, and did listen to everyone. He told me very clearly that while he was sorry for the honest people who had good field dogs and wanted to embrace AKC trials, there was no way to weed out the bad ones, so in this case for the purity of the breed, he felt he had to vote the way he did, and lead the way to closing the stud books. Personally, and maybe I want to see it this way, I think Ted would have embraced the technology that DNA provides today.”

The field trial folks were less than pleased with this outcome. Ned Le Grande wrote in *The Flushing Whip*: “I am not trying to take credit for making these crosses; in fact, I have been soundly condemned to hell fire by Lee Schoen, and other bench Irish breeders, and told that I was mongrelizing the Irish Setter breed. Even after all these years Lee Schoen, of Kinvarra bench Irish fame, has finally gotten the AKC to not accept cross registrations with American Field Dog Stud Book registrations.

“Twenty years ago, at various field trials in New England, Lee Schoen used to run some of his bench Irish in the trials of the Irish Setter Club of New England. His bench dogs were completely out-classed in those trials by the

new Red Setters owned by Bob & Jim Finn, Cooking Whiskey Cassidy, Arch Church and some that belonged to the writer.



Ohio National Specialty: judging Ch. Santera Tamberluck, owner-breeder handler Terry Newlon.

"I don't ever remember one of Lee's bench dogs placing in the trials, and he has never forgotten this. In a recent article in the AKC Gazette, which Ed Schnettler kindly sent to the writer, Lee Schoen wrote an open letter to the AKC governing body asking them to have one of their officers attend the recent AKC Irish trial held on the East Coast, asking the officer to throw out all of the Irish setter midgets that traced back to the crosses Le Grande made. Lee says in the AKC article that he pleaded with Le Grande, 20 years ago, not to crossbreed, and thus mongrelize the Irish Setter breed. History tells us the early Irish Setters in both Ireland and England had white spots on their chests, nose and an occasional blaze on the head and that they were a much smaller dog than the bench Irish in U.S.A. in 1949 or 1975. This was so in England as well as Ireland, as my Sulhamstead Norse D'Or would prove. I ran "Shane" [call name of Norse d'Or] for 7 or 8 years with great success, and he was about the size of our present day Red Setters and he had a white blaze on his head. And Shane was imported from Mrs. Florence Nagel's Sulhamstead Kennels, with bloodlines that were the bluest of the blue. So, in my humble opinion our crossbreeding did not mongrelize the breed, but to

the contrary it gave the Irish Setter back his rightful place in the hunting field where he could compete on even terms with the other bird dog breeds. The Irish setter's heredity was not to be bench dogs, as big as draft horses, but to run, and hunt, in the fields, and to aid man in his hunting and shooting sport, and to help put meat in the pan."

It would appear that, despite Lee's fervent espousal of the dual dog, he didn't have much success in the field. However, in the show ring he continued to dominate.



**Ch. Kinvarra Kimson (dog). Kinvarra Hartsbourne Kim ex
Kinvarra Dagon Cub II**



Ch. Kinvarra Flicker (dog). Ch. Kinvarra Kimson ex Kinvarra Derrydown Sally.

Kinvarra had an especially big day at the 1957 Morris and Essex show. The littermates Kinvarra Mary Eileen (owned by Lee) and Kinvarra Lord Raglan (owned by Kelly Fox) went Best of Breed and Best of Opposite Sex over a large array of champions. (Kinvarra Kimson, in one of his earliest shows, won his puppy class).

About a year before I first contacted Lee in 1958, his marriage broke up. His heart broke with it. "I was sitting in my office one day; the phone rang; it was Marjorie. 'I'm at the airport,' she said. 'I'm going on out now. You'll be hearing from my attorney.' No arguments, no warnings. Out of the blue. Just like that." He went home, sat in the kitchen and stared at the falling dusk, while the dogs, forgotten and unfed, pressed against his legs, whining uneasily.

Knowing that it was unfair to leave the dogs unattended all day every day, Lee went about dispersing the kennel. Malone II went to Lucy Jane Myers; Mary Eileen was sold to Jean and Jack Terry of Illinois. Others were farmed out or sold to breeders. Two years later he remarried, this time to Sonia

Wyer, a divorcee with two teen aged children. To Lee's astonished delight, she immediately conceived Lee's only child, a daughter, Torrey Lee, now an administrator for the American Diabetes Society in San Diego, California. Sonia died there of cancer in 2003.

Kinvarra's most successful show dogs, apart from Kermit, were Ch. Kinvarra Ensign and Ch. Kinvarra Kimson, who crowned a meteoric career by winning the Sporting group at the 1958 Westminster Kennel Club show. Bought as a Christmas gift by the King children for their mother, Louise King of Purchase, New York, Kimson was chiefly an amiable, beloved house pet. Lee happened by one day to take a look at what he had known to be a very promising puppy and suggested that the owners put him in the puppy class at an upcoming show. Kim won a large class and the Kings were hooked. They engaged the professional handler Ruth Williams of Rye, New York, and Kimson rocketed to his championship in sixteen shows, winning five Sporting Group firsts along the way. His sire, Kinvarra Hartsbourne Kim, had been farmed out by Lee (who liked to keep his kennel small) to a pair of maiden ladies. "They thought it was 'dreadful' when we wanted to use him at stud," said Lee "and as a result he was used far less than he should have been." Among Kimson's notable get were Ch. Kinvarra Viking, a multi-specialty winner bred by myself (CL), and my first champion; and Ch. Kinvarra Flicker, in his own right an excellent sire. I first saw Flicker, then a six month old puppy, at a very large Irish Setter match show judged by the late Paula MacAteer. Paula called in her class winners, stood back, advanced to Flicker, placed her hand on his head, and said, "This will be the Best in Match." To the dog, sotto voce, "You're beautiful!"

A couple of years later Eileen Walker was invited to judge the Eastern Irish Setter Club Outdoor Specialty. The show was held on the beautiful grounds of a country club in affluent Purchase, New York, and the entry was huge, well over a hundred Irish Setters with a large number of prestigious champions entered in the Best of Breed competition. Among the Bred By Exhibitor class dogs was Blayneyard Country Squire, an eventual Westminster group winner, who, with his owner-handler, Shirley Ford, had flown in from the mid-west for the show. Lee thought the dog, a grandson of his Ch. Tyrone Farm Malone II,

had an excellent chance to go Winners Dog. Unhappily, Shirley had tranquilized the dog for the flight and he was still slightly loopy. Halfway through the down and back he stopped dead, partially lifted one rear leg, and proceeded to urinate, copiously and on and on, gazing dreamily up toward the clouds. Eileen completed the judging of the males, called in the class winners, and with no hesitation pointed straight at Flicker.

Entered in the American Bred bitch class was Flicker's litter sister, Kinvarra Red Feather, owned by Dr. and Mrs. Frank Symonds and handled by Francis Jensen. She won the class handily and Eileen said to Francis as she handed her the ribbon, "I'd like to take this one home with me." During the open class judging that followed, Pat Symonds relayed the comment to Lee and said hopefully, "Maybe there's a chance at the points!" Lee surveyed the scantily coated immature bitch and said sourly, "I don't think so." Ten minutes later Eileen proved him wrong, awarding five championship points to the young Red Feather.

The champions filed into the ring for the Best of Breed competition, among them Group and Best in Show winners, heavily coated mature specimens in glorious full bloom. Eileen finished with the last of them, headed purposefully to the back of the pack, and pulled out Kinvarra Flicker and Kinvarra Red Feather, Best of Breed and Best of Opposite Sex. Happily stunned, Lee, shaking his head, said, "Astonishing that she could pick out her own breeding like that." Other spectators were not so pleased. Mrs. Cheever Porter, whose top-winning champion had gone unremarked in the Best of Breed class, telephoned Lee the next day, ostensibly to congratulate him. Then she let fly the poisoned dart: "I only wish you'd let me know about the party you threw for Eileen the night before the show," she said sweetly. "I would have been sure to attend."

Even in its later years, when Lee was showing very little and not breeding at all, Kinvarra maintained a formidable reputation and attracted some equally formidable patrons. One of these was the legendary financier and art collector, Joseph Hirshorn. Enormously wealthy and a self-educated connoisseur of painting and sculpture, Hirshorn decided to acquire a couple of Irish Setters and contacted Lee, who was able to locate a suitable litter of Kinvarra breeding. A year later, Lee decided to take a look at the dogs to see

how they had matured. He took my husband Tom along on the drive. Up a mountain and through a massive set of bronze gates they went, and before Tom's astonished eyes appeared sculptures by Auguste Rodin, Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, Alberto Giacometti, Alexander Calder, and Henry Moore: The Burgers of Calais, Seated Woman, the King and the Queen, all standing in lonely splendor on the hilly acres of Hirshorn's estate. Millions of dollars' worth of masterworks, which are now housed in the Hirshorn Museum in Washington, DC.

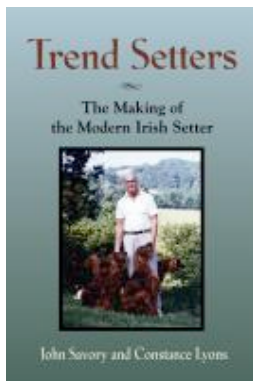
Lee's Irish in later years were Ch. Kinvarra Montecarlo, a son of Ch. Kinvarra Lord Raglan which Lee showed to his championship and Kinvarra Hartsbourne O'Neill, the last of his imports. O'Neill was an unintended purchase. Lee had been visiting Hartsbourne on one of his annual trips abroad and had seen and liked the dog, but was not overwhelmed with admiration. "Well!" exclaimed Eileen. "I wouldn't let him go to anyone but you." Lee made some polite inconsequential remarks, went home, and soon after received a telephone call from the airport saying they had a dog waiting to be picked up. Montecarlo was a sizable sturdily built male and inclined to be headstrong. He refused to come when called and one day Lee, infuriated by the dog's intransigence, decided to teach him a lesson. He got a sturdy leash and a length of rope which he tied together, clipping the leash to Carlo's collar and wrapping the rope several times around his own waist. He loosed the dog; Carlo took off like a rocket. "Carlo, come!" he shouted; Carlo hit the end of the leash; and Lee spun around and broke his leg in three places.

In the 1970's, hoping to resurrect his kennel, he contacted Janice Roberts of Cornevon kennels. The Cornevon dogs were descended from Hartsbourne and resembled them in type: dark, smooth and elegant. He made arrangements with her to mate several of her dogs, planning the matings himself, and agreed to import some of the offspring. None of them finished their championships; the first, a male, Kinvarra Cornevon Marlus, was hardly shown nor was the really lovely Kinvarra Cornevon Loveday. Loveday produced a specialty winning son, Kinvarra Aragorn, awarded Best of Winners at the Irish Setter Club of Connecticut specialty by Ted Eldredge.

Lee died of heart disease in his early eighties. Ted Eldredge said of him, rightly, "He never got the recognition he deserved." Quiet and unassuming, without the impressive physical presence that Ted had in abundance, he was passed over for honors that should have been his. The job of ISCA delegate to the AKC, which he coveted, went to Ted; he was not asked to judge the National until he was in his mid-seventies, and then nearly missed it due to a heart attack suffered a few weeks before the show. Nevertheless, it was his sure eye for excellence that led to the importation of the dogs on which Ted founded the enormously influential edifice that was Tirvelde Irish Setters. Today's glorious showstoppers and dominant producers owe everything to Lee Martin Schoen.



Ch. Kinvarra Portia (bitch). Ch. Kinvarra Kermit ex Beg Pardon Rury Limerick; born December 7, 1941. Portia was one of the most influential bitches of all time in the history of the breed in the United States. She was the cornerstone of the Thenderin and Draherin kennels and many others who made their start with stock from these highly successful enterprises.



The Irish Setter has a long history as a hunting dog and its glorious appearance and outgoing personality has made it also a popular show dog and companion. This book traces the history of the Irish Setter through three great breeders, Eileen Walker, Lee Schoen and Ted Eldredge, who came together as if by destiny in the 1930s to develop a type that today influences the dogs that we see winning in the show ring.

Trend Setters

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