

Malachy and Uggie: A tale of two dogs

A Pekingese with a pear-shaped body – apparently the sought-after Peke physique – and gray mane worthy of a Shetland pony won the coveted Best in Show title Tuesday at the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show, the Oscars of the canine world. Just a day before, Uggie, the Jack Russell terrier that was the breakout star of the movie “The Artist,” fetched the prize for best film dog at the Golden Collars Awards presentation and is rumored to be appearing at the Oscars show. He was the toast of the Golden Globes stage last month.



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Malachy, a Pekingese, winner of the best in show title at the 136th Annual Westminster Kennel Club dog show, is fed a chicken and rice meal at Sardi's by restaurant owner Max Klimavicius in New York. At rear right is owner/handler David Fitzpatrick of East Berlin, Pa.

The award-winning Pekingese is a show dog with a storied pedigree and dozens of awards to his name, which is Malachy. Uggie, on the other hand, was a wayward puppy who went through two different owners and was slated to go to a shelter before a film industry animal trainer adopted him, discovered his potential and launched him on a career in commercials and movies.

Animal welfare advocates have often been critics of dog breeders, particularly those who oppose mandatory spay/neuter ordinances. Why breed more dogs, advocates ask, when so many end up in municipal shelters and hundreds of thousands are euthanized each year in this country? But some dog lovers say they are reluctant to adopt a dog of unknown history from a shelter.

Officials of the American Humane Association, which has a film and TV unit that certifies whether animals on sets are being treated decently, estimate that 80 percent of the cats and dogs that appear in movies and television shows are rescued or adopted from shelters. The legendary Rin Tin Tin – the subject of a new biography by Susan Orlean – was rescued as a puppy during World War I. He went on to become so hugely famous as an acting dog that, according to Orlean, he received the most votes for best actor in 1929 (although Academy officials deny the story, saying nothing in their records supports it).

All this fanfare should remind us that canines across the spectrum – including those languishing in shelters – are capable of becoming remarkable dogs, whether that means walking a red carpet in front of photographers or curling up on the rug at our feet. Although their backgrounds could not have been more different, both Uggie and Malachy intend to retire after this awards season.

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Bob Rolfe

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ARTIST'S VIEW



COMMENTARY | SEN. TOM O'MARA

President's Day and New York history

Every now and then I'll receive a letter from a student asking me to name my favorite U.S. president. What an assignment! Trust me, it's no easy task to choose just one from the long and distinguished (and, yes, sometimes not so distinguished) list of American Presidents.

But when a fifth-grader reaches out for your help on a Social Studies project and asks you to please single out one President who's better than all the rest, well, you just do your best to whittle the list down to one.

With that in mind, I'll take the opportunity on this President's Day weekend to reflect on the interesting and prominent place that New York state holds in the history of the American presidency.

New York state can lay claim in some way to at least seven former presidents:

■ Martin Van Buren (the 8th U.S. president) was elected in 1836 after having served as Andrew Jackson's vice president.

■ Millard Fillmore (13th) was also a vice president who became president in 1850 upon the death of Zachary Taylor.

■ Ulysses S. Grant (18th), a West Point graduate who died at Mt. McGregor, north of Albany (where the Grant Cottage is now a State Historic Site), was mourned at the Capitol and buried in New York City.

■ Chester Alan Arthur (21st) was a third vice president who rose to the highest office following James Garfield's assassination in 1881.

■ Grover Cleveland (22nd and 24th) was elected president for the first time in 1884 and then elected again in 1892, becoming the only President to serve two non-consecutive terms.

■ Theodore Roosevelt (26th) was elected vice president in 1900 and assumed the presidency a year later following the

assassination of William McKinley, then was re-elected in 1904.

■ Franklin Delano Roosevelt (32nd) was elected four times as president beginning in 1932.

Of the above, Van Buren, Cleveland, and both Roosevelts served as governor of New York state. In fact, across the centuries as a state, we've also had our share of vice presidents and we've taken equal pride in Supreme Court Chief Justices (including John Jay, one of the nation's Founding Fathers and the very first Chief Justice) and Associate Justices, historically famous and influential members of Congress, prominent Cabinet members, winners of the Nobel Peace Prize and on and on throughout the worlds of government and politics, the arts and entertainment, sports, medicine and so much more.

You name it and it's likely that a New Yorker has played a part in it somewhere along the way.

So it's a proud past and for those of us fortunate enough to serve at the Capitol – or even if you've just had the opportunity to visit Albany – you can't help but be struck by the aura of this history when you walk the halls, sit in a historic meeting room, or just pass by one of the many monuments and memorials dotting the expanse of the Empire State Plaza – like the bronze cast of George Washington in the West Capitol Park, which was unveiled on Armistice Day, Nov. 11, 1932 (read more about the Empire State Plaza's memorials at the state Office of General Services website: <http://www.ogs.ny.gov/ES/P/CT/Memorials/Default.asp>).

And even if you've never had the occasion or the opportunity to set foot in Albany, plenty of this history is at your fingertips today online.

One of the most recent

and prominent online additions is the new virtual “Hall of Governors” unveiled by the Cuomo administration earlier this year (<http://hallofgovernors.ny.gov/>). The site opens with these words, “For more than 100 years, our state's history has been shaped in this building, and many great leaders have walked these hallways as they worked for the people of New York.”

I started this President's Day column with the question I sometimes get asked from area students, “Who's your favorite U.S. President?” So I guess it's only fair to close with an answer.

Hints? He's one of the four Presidents represented on the Mount Rushmore National Memorial in South Dakota. He was the first American to win the Nobel Peace Prize. He once said, “Let the watchwords of all our people be the old familiar watchwords of honesty, decency, fair-dealing, and commonsense...”

Still not sure? If I'm forced to settle on just one, it's Theodore “Teddy” Roosevelt, a native New Yorker and former New York State Assemblyman and Governor who served as America's 26th President from 1901 to 1909.

For breadth of experience, devotion to lifelong learning, and love of country, TR, as he was so commonly known, is more than noteworthy among America's 44 presidents.

Visit the Sagamore Hill National Historic Site, Theodore Roosevelt's home on Long Island, and learn a little more about his legacy through the following National Park Service (NPS) website: <http://www.nps.gov/sahi/index.htm>

■ **Sen. Tom O'Mara, R-Big Flats, represents New York's 53rd Senate District.**

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COMMENTARY | GREG ALLEN

Great War heroes

Did you have a chance to watch the Super Bowl this year? That Super Bowl set a record for the most-watched television show in American history. The Nielsen Company said an estimated 111.3 million people watched the New York Giants beat the New England Patriots that Sunday night. It was a great game, but I was struck by something other than the game that night. Several times the network switched coverage to the troops watching the game at Camp Leatherneck in Afghanistan. Every time that happened the crowd would erupt in thunderous applause.

Sadly enough, there are a miniscule few in Washington and around the country who have a disdain for the American military. They don't share my convictions though, nor do they speak for me. They're like a mouse with a notion of a lion's roar.

A few weeks back I was at work and a trucker got out of his rig and walked up to me. I was a little standoffish at first, but I soon learned a thing or two about humanity's appreciative mood.

The trucker said he noticed I was wearing an Air Force hat and he asked me if I was in the service. I said, “Yes ... eight years.” He then stretched forth his hand to shake mine, and as he did he made the claim: “I was never in the service, sir, but I wanna thank you for keeping all of us free.” With that he walked off.

Never before had anyone ever thanked me for my military service – the gesture broke me.

With that I had flashbacks of those I'd spoken to before, ones far braver than me.

As I was writing my second novel I had the privilege to interview several World War II veterans, and among them was a black man I befriended. Henry was from Mississippi and he always called me “Mr. Craig.” I liked the sound of it so much I never corrected him. Henry was in the infantry during the war and won two purple hearts, the first for shrapnel in his legs and the second for the loss of his thumb in a firefight. Cancer took Henry's life a couple years ago.

My wife and I met John, a WW II war correspondent and graphic artist, last summer. We had occasion to see some of his paintings and were captivated by his talent. We were sad to learn that only a few weeks ago cancer took his life, too. For many years John had a place in his heart for the survivors of the USS Indianapolis. He dedicated countless hours of his own time and money to helping those men.

But time is swiftly thinning the ranks of those World War II veterans.

The last verified World War I veteran died recently at the age of 110. She was Florence Green, who served in the British Royal Women's Air Force from 1918 to 1919. The last American veteran of World War I was Frank Buckles; he died February 27, 2011.

World War I veterans are now extinct, and WW II

SEE WAR | 5A

■ **Greg Allen is an author, nationally syndicated columnist and the founder of *Bulldier of the Spirit in Jamestown, Ind.*, a nonprofit organization aiding the poor.**