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 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.

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

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

Fala could always grab a headline as he was labeled the “Most Famous Dog of the Twentieth Century”
**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.

**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.

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