



# Hark to the Line

*The Newsletter for the Oak Ridge Fox Hunt Club  
February 2006*

*Huntsman  
Dr. Rita Mae Brown*

*Joint Master  
David Wheeler*

*Professional Whipper-In  
Dana Flaherty*

*Hon. Whipper-In  
Dr. Mary T. O'Brien*

## FEBRUARY

**Fri. 3rd** 9am Cistern  
**Sun. 5th** 9am Foxden  
**Wed. 8th** 10am Buffalo Station  
**Sat. 11th** TBA Joint Meet at Reedy Creek  
**Sun. 12th** 9am Kennels  
**Fri. 17th** 10am Snell Farm, Charlotte County  
**Sat. 18th** 2pm Ashland Bassets (on foot) Tea Time Farm  
**Sun. 19th** 9am Cherry Hill, North Side  
**Wed. 22nd** 10am Joint Meet at Keswick  
**Fri. 24th** 9am Dairy Barns  
**Sun. 26th** 9am St. Mary's Chapel

## MARCH

**Wed. 1st** TBA  
**Fri. 3rd** 9am Oak Tree  
**Sun. 5th** 9am Run-In Shed  
**Fri. 10th** 9am Wilson House  
**Sun. 12th** 9am Cherry Hill  
**Wed. 15th** 9am St. Mary's Chapel  
**Fri. 17th** 10am Chellowe  
**Sun. 19th** 9am Kennels, Last Hunt of the Season

## Master's Report

Chicken one day, feathers the next describes hunting since Opening Hunt, November 6, 2005. A slow day would be followed by a brisk day without much variety in conditions to a human. Clearly the foxes thought otherwise.

A canvas of Masters of Foxhounds and Masters of Bassets in Virginia and Maryland underscored the above conditions. In some cases, the fox appeared, hounds put on the line and scent evaporates.

As cubbing season proved delightful for most of us in the Mid-Atlantic, the particularly erratic fall was a disappointment. Certainly there were good days but it was the inconsistency that baffled us.

New Year's Hunt, the last of the High Holy Days, saw hardy souls, the horses braided and shining, riding out from the kennels at 10 AM. Those flopped on the bed, recovering from welcoming in the New Year, missed a terrific hunt. Apart from that, you all have one year to live down being a wimp. Stay up all night, if necessary, but don't miss a High Holy Day.

Hounds were cast on the drive up to the lower barn since a well fed red enjoys crossing there. (If anyone of artistic bent wishes to make a fox crossing sign, please do. It will appeal to his considerable ego.)

Nothing provoked even the slightest feathering by the barn, so we shifted behind the barn, jumping inside the "babies' " paddock. The foals, about seven months now, hung their heads out of their stalls as the field rode by. Fascinated, calm (they see hounds and regular dogs frequently), one suspects they can't wait to grow up and three years hence begin with Hilltoppers.

No sooner had hounds swept through the babies' paddock and the field cleared

the stacked railroad ties, than hounds hit. The music made the hair stand up on the back of your neck it was so thunderous.

After that it was neck or nothing just to keep up. Priscilla Friedberg, leading the field, kept them smartly up and together. Bob Satterfield pushed second flight up, too. We dropped into the woods behind the upper barn and hounds ran a floppy figure 8. Out popped the red from the narrow covert inching into the uppermost pasture. The foot followers were treated to a view as were the hunters in the pasture, relaxing on their off day. For whatever reason, the fox, once in the open, reconsidered his position, ducked under the log jump, doubled back on his tracks and vanished just as we turned to stay near him.

Hounds, close to their quarry, searched, their frustration mounting. The creek bed is eight feet deep in some sections and they leapt down into the creek working the bed from the water. That was impressive, yet no matter how they worked, he had successfully foiled his scent and gone to ground.

My hunch is he has a den entrance off the creek bed so he can literally jump up from the water. The pack did stop at one den entrance protected by massive roots from the tree close to the creek. However, no one dug in so I don't know except to say, as usual, the fox works his magic.

After that, hounds picked up bits and pieces of scent, but not enough for a long run.

We repaired to Headquarters for a pancake breakfast that was as successful as the hunt. No food remained to be packed away.

The first week of January, after New Year's Hunt, hounds stayed in the kennels for it is the last week of deer season. The

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guns unsettle them because the crack of a whip means they are being rated and that crack sounds like a pistol shot. When the hounds run back to you after rifle fire, you know it's time to lift them. It's not fair to the hounds and it's not fair to the humans either. Riding out those last few days of deer season (or the first few) one displays a death wish. Those of you who remember your Greek know the word is a variant of "tramos," pretty accurate, too.

I bring up the Greek word less to show off (okay, a little) than because it illustrates the fact that there have always been people who really do have a longing for death. If the Greeks had a word for it two thousand and five hundred years ago, it is part of the human fabric. Suffice it to say, Oak Ridge folks don't share this longing although I'd be willing to bet any one of us would rather go quickly in the hunt field than to be imprisoned in an impersonal hospital room.

Deer season is over. Hopefully the game, all game really, which sticks tight during this period will now venture out. As I always say, although deer hunting does impact our hunting, slowing us down, it is necessary to thin the herd and it's important for fox hunters to support responsible deer hunters.

So far, I have not seen grays traveling in twos. They usually court about two weeks before the reds begin. Last year, some of you will recall the grays began traveling in mid-December treating us to some incredible runs. We'd put one fellow to ground, swing around and get on another. Again, I've called other masters and no one has seen anything yet. Typically, the grays begin in mid-January which is why last year attracted our attention. However, they will start sooner or later, the weather will darken as it always does, and fairweather hunters will dry out their boots. The rest of us will enjoy the runs of the season, hoping we return without frost-bite.

Have you ever noticed, no matter how bitter the day, if you're on a scorching run you don't notice. It's the walk back that tests the patience of all the giving saints.

Can you believe there are eight weeks left in the season? Let's make the most of it.

Up and Over,

Rita Mae

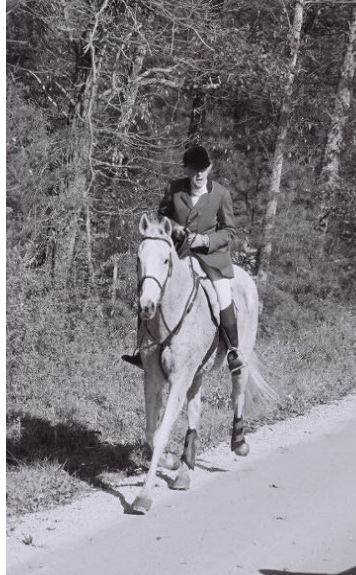


Photo from Opening Hunt courtesy of Annette Dusenbury

### ASHLAND BASSETS

Hooray, these hard hunting hounds return to Oak Ridge on February 18, 2006 at Tea Time Farm at 2 PM. Hunting will be on foot.

Those of you who ran behind the bassets last year, were treated to excellent hound work. Since this is on foot, it's a nice way for people of all ages to be introduced to hunting. Bring your friends.

### THE DIRTY DOZEN INVADES KENTUCKY

(A novella)

Twelve Oak Ridge members repaired to central Kentucky where Emily Schilling arranged for us to stay at Shaker Village outside of Harrodsburg. How peaceful. We did our best to rectify that.

Dr. Mary T. O'Brien, Emily Schilling, Bob and Sue Satterfield, Maria, Sonja and Bill Johnson, Teresa Gilbert, Gretchen Robb, Cindy Green, Dana Flaherty, and your Master/Huntsman rose early on the morning of January 13, 2006. January 13 is the day that Cremation Societies were formed in London and Vienna, 1874. I chose to believe this was not a sign: we'd all survive.

Rain, chilly, but not too bad, everyone brushed off their horses (Shaker Village has a nice stable for horses), loaded up and off we trundled to Owen County Fairgrounds about one hour and fifteen minutes north of Lexington. Perhaps it's faster, but we elected to be secure in our direction as opposed to fast.

The fixture delighted us for it was tighter hills than down in Lexington with more coverts. Despite the wind, a few gusts at least 25mph, and the odd shower, Danny Kerr, the huntsman, wasted no time on a wonderful cast, using the country to his advantage since the weather certainly wasn't.

The hounds, in good flesh, were large, mostly Crossbred. A few put me to mind of the Rockbridge hounds that carry July blood. They worked diligently. I think there were two couple of youngsters in the pack. I tried to keep my eye on them, too. They hunted like old hands.

Danny took hounds down low off the hills, which while affording everyone spectacular views, also insured that scent would be blown to kingdom come.

Soon enough the pack found Mr. Coyote's distinctive signature and off they ran, humans after them.

The jumps, well built and well sited, really allowed the field to move through the territory. The Hilltoppers, led by Mr. Kersting, whipped through gates as fast as they could. Courtney Ball, MFH, led First Flight, behind the Huntsman. Mr. Ball was mounted on one of those horses who really can do it all.

The run buoyed everyone's spirits and when the coyote zipped right out of the territory, a few folks quietly caught their breath.

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Hawthorne trees and another variety of vile thorned bush were strategically placed. If a Camargo member harbored anger toward another, they could run them right into the thorns. I scanned their faces. No deep scars. I concluded they all got along tolerably well.

Edith Conyers, ex-MFH of Iroquois, galloped along on Friday, her mule. Whatever chore needed doing, Edith and Friday did it proving, once again, how handy he is.

Our intrepid band rode together which proved such a joy for Mary, Dana and myself as we don't get to do that at home. All the Oak Ridge people hopped to it. Emily Schilling, fighting a bug, finally turned back. (She recovered after a long night's sleep.)

Deer popped out on numerous occasions and the Camargo pack ignored them. How lovely to see that and how lovely to see them cast themselves looking for another coyote.

Camargo can be justly proud of its foxhounds.

I forgot to mention that Thursday night, Carl and Leslie Mattacola, formerly of UVA, hosted a wonderful party at their home in Harrodsburg. What a testimony to the stamina of the Oak Ridge Dirty Dozen and all who attended this gathering that they rose to hunt the next morning.

As to parties, the Camargo breakfast bordered on sinful: hot little things wrapped in bacon, a perfect salad, crisp as a new dollar bill and much more edible as well, and hot food, desserts, spirits, coffee. The hospitality spoiled us rotten plus these folks added a Friday just to please us.

A few comments on what I learned at Camargo, apart from the good pack work, always first in my book. The Masters, Dr. John Babcock, Courtney Ball, Barbara Kreider and Morley Thompson, Jr. work well together. It's obvious. They enjoy a warm relationship with their members and landowners.

They think ahead. Camargo has accomplished something Oak Ridge hopes to accomplish in Charlotte County. If we ever really get rich, perhaps Buckingham, too. Nelson is already too expensive. The members of Camargo have not been born with a silver spoon in their mouths. Yes, some have prospered in this world, but it's safe to say this is a working hunt, people must make a living. Many of them have pooled their resources to purchase tracts of land. This locks down their fixture against the continuing encroachment of suburbia. More than that, they have put up a clubhouse, hunt boxes and become part of the community. It's very impressive, as impressive in its way as Mrs. Hanum's work to preserve land around Unionville, a success decades in the doing.

One note: a shiver of guilt flashed through me (a rare emotion for me) when I read Courtney Ball's account of the joint meet. He mentioned that I said I didn't wear a raincoat. I don't, but I didn't mean that he shouldn't. The ghosts of my mother and grandfather would upbraid me. While it's sensible for people to pull on a Barbour, I just can't do it. As it is, when my time comes, I will have so much to answer for when I see my mother again and she evidences her opinion of Six of One, Bingo, Loose Lips, each novel about her. For the record, I cleaned the first two up to get them published. Mother's parts had finally worn out by the time I wrote Loose Lips. I availed myself of the freedom.

The evening of Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>, we gathered in the winter kitchen at Shaker Village along with some members of Wood-

ford Hunt. Naturally, hunting tales filled the evening as well as gusts of laughter.

The gusts of laughter were followed by 35mph winds rattling the windowpanes. The wind was stronger than on Friday morning. Remember, this extraordinary place, built in the 1800's still has the original paned glass in many rooms, no insulation unless the Shakers used horsehair behind the walls. The heat in the rooms helped but the strong wind gusts found every nook and cranny.

We awoke to snow covered pastures, stone fences, but the wind dropped off to a breeze.

January 14<sup>th</sup> marks The Festival of the Ass, a theatrical representation of "The Flight into Egypt" popular throughout the Middle Ages in all of Europe and England, too. I should have known.

Woodford met at Crab Orchard in Lincoln County (Abraham Lincoln was born in Springfield, Kentucky). This area is being developed by the three masters: Jane Winegardner, Robbie Lyons and Sam Adams. Once there you can see why they are enthusiastic about it: a wide expanse of fields, no woods as a Virginian knows them and smallish tributaries which feed into the Dix River. This is galloping country.

The fixture was on Sam and Laura Adams' land, well fenced. All the jumps Jane, Courtney and I popped over were coops, perhaps the biggest 4'4". It's difficult to estimate since the ground in front of many of the coops was poached. At any rate, one needs a very good horse for Crab Orchard. The Camargo people came down, all of them well mounted. First flight at Woodford is also beautifully mounted. Mary O'Brien on Hardy certainly was up to it and she rode out with a whipper-in. I was on Ozzie, a Thoroughbred, who used to steeplechase, so he wasn't overfenced.

Jane, a fine rider, on her chestnut, allowed me the luxury of going off with her so I could get to really see the hounds work, but as an observer. In other words, I had no function as did Mary.

Dana and the rest of the Dirty Dozen stayed back with the Hilltoppers, wise, since most people had hunted their horses the day before.

The snow, like a thin coat of icing, added to the beauty of the scene.

The first cast by Paul Jeremy (mostly Crossbred and English hounds) curled around a little pond. The hounds showed interest but not enough to open. This pattern continued for an hour as the mercury dipped, the breeze strengthened. Whenever one would ride out of a low area to a higher pasture, it cut you. However, not being steady, it wasn't too bad, but it certainly played havoc with scent. This topography lacked the small (again to Virginia eyes) but dense coverts of Owen County. After an hour, hounds picked up one coyote. Two were viewed. The run, good and fast, seemed straight as an arrow to me and the hounds blasted right out of the territory, an easy thing to do in such land, and on a coyote.

They headed for Route 150, a major highway. Thanks to the whippers-in and the wheel whip, hounds did turn back.

Jane, Courtney and I missed this and that was partly my fault and partly the fact that two radios didn't work, so Jane was without. (Both hunts used radios which we do not. Long discussion but the short version is: hunts must do what they feel is in the best interest of their hounds given their territory).

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## EAT A DIRT SANDWICH

Think of all those minerals. People pay good money for vitamins containing these minerals whereas if you part company with your horse, you ingest them for free.

We think of your dismount as a lovely contribution to the bar. Juniors, of course, bring a six pack of Co-Cola or soft drink instead of spirits.

Stuart Jones donated a huge bottle of Jack Daniels Black, January 1<sup>st</sup> accompanied by a poem read with brio. Stuart never does anything halfway.

Barbara Dixon was swept off her lovely bay at Cherry Hill December 30, 2005 so we include her poem.

Maria Johnson treated all to a wonderful demonstration of trick riding January 1<sup>st</sup>, but she did finally leave her saddle. Her very generous bottle of port was accompanied by the following poem, proving once again, that Oak Ridge members harbor many talents.

### Maria's Jours

Maria Johnson (1/1/2006)

A glorious day,  
the Hounds in full cry!  
The woods, then a jump,  
went breezing right by.

The best New Year's Hunt,  
that ever could be,  
was, just for **one** moment,  
held up by a tree.

The tree had a mission,  
He'd been scheming all year.  
To fill up headquarters  
with bottles of cheer.

I rode into sight,  
a wide grin - and no fear.  
He thought to himself,  
My joust partner is here.

He jumped to attention,  
and took aim at my knee.  
He went in slow motion,  
to be sure **all** would see.

Like Velcro - I stuck  
to the **side** of my horse,  
no chance in hell...  
I fell off, of course!

Bob had a view,  
he'll remember for years,  
and Sonia just laughed,  
until she ran tears.

The field whooped and hollered  
as it tore right on past.  
and Tuffy just snorted  
and yelled "Get Up! **Fast!**"

Back in the saddle,  
we caught up with the pack.  
but He'd won his bottle  
to help fill the rack.

The tree was the victor,  
but I'm a good sport,  
I've brought a chainsaw



Please send poetic contributions to  
rebeccabirnbaum@cstone.net

### Barbara's Downfall

(to "I Rode a Cock Horse to Banbury Cross")

I brought a bay horse to Cherry Hill Farm  
To follow Rita Mae upon a paint horse,  
To chase hounds chasing foxes, no matter the course.

My hubby was late...though the hunt was at ten  
So we threw in our tack and set out with a grin.  
While I was fastening my hard hat, Dana did cry,  
"Take that coop over there, and the field you will spy."  
The rider was up; another track had to be found.  
We finally reached Sue upon the low ground.  
Now fieldmasters know you must always show care  
To not cause our landowners any despair.  
So spying a crossing already awry,  
Sue thought to duck under the tree limbs she'd try.  
Now with Priscilla and Shannon I was following along,  
But my brand new Charles Owen was sitting all wrong!  
Those two sturdy tree limbs were hanging so low.  
And I couldn't see them - that's why, I'll vow.  
Then, with a loud whack, I felt a KAPOW!  
Knocked backward, I still felt somewhat in control,  
Until while the second limb was crunching my nose.  
And Chance, ever eager to follow the chase, went left,  
While I took it all full in my face!  
And now, being dragged off the horse to the right,  
I landed with a thud, and gave up the fight.  
And with Chance's feet so near my face  
Things didn't really look so great.  
My first rule abandoned, I let go the reins,  
And hoped that I might catch my Chance again.  
But Pete to the rescue, never fear; and even Rita Mae drew near.  
And Chance stopped, as if wondering "Where's Mommy Dear?"  
Now with mud on my breeches, and scrapes on my nose,  
I shall be teased wherever I go.  
But that's not the worst - oh no, for you see-  
Two black eyes added insult to my injury.  
And on that New Year's Eve,  
My black and green dress matched my face to a "T"!!

So... Always take care as you set out to chase  
That you can be sure you can see past your face!

-Barbara Dixon, fall of December 2005

**Oh Sue's Saga**

(to the tune of "Oh Susannah")

The Woodford Hounds, Camargo too, invited us to run.  
Midwinter still, and over the hill, but we were keen to come.

Thirteen we were, with two to spare, a caravan were we.  
The Oak Ridge bold were on the move, Kentucky for to see.

Oh Foxhunters, now don't you envy me?  
For I'm off to Old Kentucky with my saddle on my knee

It rained all night the day we rode; we had no hope of dry.  
Two hours north we drove to hunt, with only darkened sky.

The land was steep, the road was dirt; our doubt was running high.  
But when we reached the hunting box, we breathed a happy sigh.

Oh Foxhunters, I know you'll side with me.  
We'll hunt in Old Kentucky if we have to swim to see.

Oak Ridge luck was on our side, the sky began to clear.  
And when I met my horse to ride, my heart was full of cheer.

A handsome bay, with raffish air, was labeled "I'm for Sue".  
A snaffle gag, still green at five, but surely he would do.

Oh Foxhunters, now wouldn't you be me?  
A fine big bay was waiting there, Kentucky hills to see.

BUT...His head was low and on his chest; his brain was in the sky.  
I didn't see the Ace go in, but knew that he was high.

He'd rather back than go ahead; he'd rather spin than stop.  
Dr. Mary pulled me from the brink...so I was still on top...

The owner said "Let's take him back." I had no wish to fight.  
Four other riders joined the march – protected left and right.

Oh Foxhunters, now won't you pity me.  
I'd come to Old Kentucky, just a spectacle to be.

The air was cold; the line was hot – coyotes on the run!  
I swapped my bay for Gretchen's boy. We shot back like a gun.

We found the field; we forded the flood; we joined the grinning group.  
But no gate appeared to help us through – can this pony fly the coop?

Oh Foxhunters, now don't I feel the chump?  
A nice new horse is under me, but who knows if he'll jump??

I kicked him on; I grabbed his mane; he took a mighty leap.  
He cleared that coop with room to spare – then dumped me in a heap!

The ground was wet; the grass was deep – hurt nothing but my pride.  
Kentucky soil's now part of me – rubbed deep into my hide.

Oh Foxhunters, the lesson's clear to see.  
Go West to ride; you'll have good sport,  
But Home's the place to be.

AND

Keep your saddle UNDER your knee!

**MAKING IT EASY**

Foxhunting, enriched by centuries of tradition, takes time to understand. In the past, people have joined our club, some with long hunting backgrounds, others, brand new.

After a fulsome discussion with our Field Master, Sue Satterfield, we've decided to try something that will not only make it easy, but make it more fun to learn the minutiae of foxhunting.

Next season, we'll pair up new people with a Big Sister or Big Brother. These "Bigs" will be members who have earned their colors.

If anyone now wants a mentor, ask a person with colors.

The thing about being a mentor is you will wind up learning, too. For instance, what if your little brother asks you about garter straps? You might call a master or you might go to the books and do some research yourself if you didn't know the answer. (Or see below...)

The other benefit is this will continue to strengthen the relationships among us, one of the true joys of foxhunting.

**GARTER STRAPS**

As you know, Oak Ridge gives new members one year to pull together a proper hunt kit. Garter straps are proper, but rarely worn. David Wheeler, MFH wears his.

Originally, these straps held up a person's boots. The strap slipped in the inside back of the boot top, through a slit in the leather, and then was wedged between the legging buttons on the britches.

As Velcro began to take the place of buttons, those who grew up "the old way", still wore their garter straps. Successive generations have forgotten this sartorial former necessity.

For the record, I used to wear them religiously (I being RMB, your MFH and Huntsman). Then I slacked off, wearing them only on the High Holy Days. Last year, even with double thick moleskin on my knees, we happened to have one of those barnburner days. My garters cut through the britches, the moleskin, and finally, my leg. So, I am now a bad person. I haven't worn them for a year.

However, if I were to go into a Corinthian class, I would wear them. If I were to hunt with a hunt whose Master was even stricter than myself or David concerning attire (and we are pretty strict) I would wear them just as I would wear my derby and not a hunt cap.

Up to you.

(Continued from page 3)

Back to The Festival of the Ass. Forgive me for writing about myself but since I was away from the others, another Oak Ridge member must provide those happy field memories.

Ozzie, who has gone out with hunts here, becomes a trifle strong but he does rate. By the seventh stout coop, a vast expanse in front of him, the snaffle in his mouth might as well have been a strand of dental floss. With each jump he tested my biceps. After an hour and a half of this, with Ozzie scorching across a huge pasture, Jane took pity on me. We walked after that, God bless her. My biceps, 14 inches at the start of Woodford, had to be 15 inches at the end. The last two coops I cleared sans stirrups. Since I couldn't feel my feet, it hardly mattered.

That was not the end of it. We picked up flotsam and jetsam along the way until Jane headed a small band of people, Sue Satterfield being one. The field, thanks to the pace, had gotten strung out. Since Jane knows the territory and others did not, their joy at finding the Master was noticeable. I suppose the Woodford staff would have put out coolers of food and drink for the lost. (Good television show idea, don't you think?)

Among the folks shepherding along the crew was Edith, who leaned over getting every gate or slid off to do so. She's lithe as a schoolgirl and performed this chore with a wave of the hand.

As we walked back, the cold intensified. Having no long underwear, since I foolishly believed The Weather Channel, I said to Heath Ball (Courtney's wife) "This is discomfort in such lavish proportion only the rich can afford it." Note: Beryl Markham wrote that line in West With The Night and it stuck in my mind.

Those of you who have met Heath know she is funny, really funny. The cold deepened. The tears flowing from my eyes at her jabs, jokes and bubbling good humor about froze on my cheeks. How glad I was to see the trailers, Dana, Emily and Mary having arrived long before me. They could move their fingers thanks to huddling in the tack room. How jealous I was.

The breakfast showed off the Adams' house, one of considerable vintage for the area and really a lovely home. As the rooms filled up, who should appear but Tessa Dole, the wife of the founder of Woodford and a lady who *knows* hunting. What a joy to see her again and feel the warm energy that has made her so dear to so many.

Jane, true to form, was making sure everything was perfect in terms of people meeting one another and Laura Adams, our hostess, made this an unforgettable breakfast.

Louise Kelly, Hilltoppers' Master, a friend to Oak Ridge, did a great job as our people who rode with her all commented on how she put everyone in the right place at the right time. Given the coyote's run, the openness of the terrain, that took skill since the Hilltoppers are always slowed by gates.

Bob Satterfield, our Hilltoppers' Master, commented on how much he had learned from Mr. Kersting at Camargo and from Louise at Woodford.

And anyone who needed to be reminded of what a good rider Sue Satterfield is, saw proof Saturday. She handled a touchy mount with her usual aplomb.

Sonja, our one junior, rode well, rode quietly and kept her eye on the hounds. The Oak Ridge golden oldies took a big sigh and remembered when we were in Sonja's position. We also felt that her department reflected highly on our hunt in particu-

lar and juniors in general.

I do hope the others write of their experiences, but one thing everyone will tell you: What fun.

We saw good hound work at Camargo, we flew over fences at Woodford, and most of all, we continued friendships which, I trust, will endure. ☺

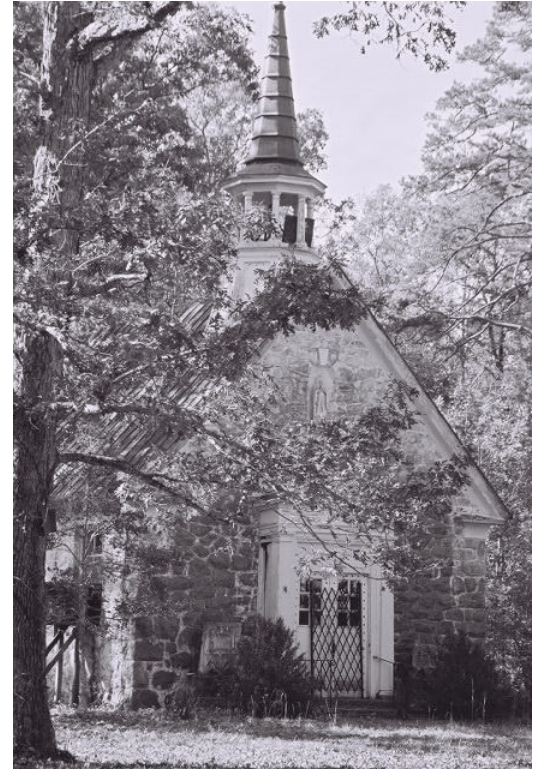


Photo courtesy of  
Annette  
Dusenbury