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From the Master

Cubbing season has been spotty. Other clubs are enjoying good cubbing but for whatever reason we're just bumping along. The hounds are doing very well. The young entry are settling down, if there's scent, hounds find it but we haven't needed velcro to stay in the saddle for those long runs.

Some of you will recall that last season's cubbing was quite good and then the season went to hell in a hand basket, not just for us but all up down the East coast. Maybe this year will be the reverse.

The Sister Jane weekend, Oct. 24-26 was so much fun I'm surprised higher authorities haven't declared it illegal, or found a way to tax it. Bruce and Denise Dalton, MFH brought their great crew from Red Mountain, North Carolina. Sewickly was having its Opening Hunt October 25 (poured here, wonder if it did there) so only a few folks from Pennsylvania made it. Cindy Morton, MFH of Rockbridge, came up for a joint meet on Sunday.

The people that traveled the greatest distance were the Red Rock girls from Reno, Nevada, Lynn Lloyd, MFH is a good friend to your Master, as is Jane Winegardner, MFH of Woodford



Hounds who was also here. Lynn, apart from being an incredible huntsman, is one of life's enthusiastic people. You cannot be around her without being lifted up. Those Red Rock girls are rodeo queens, just wild women every one.

Jean Roberts, ex-MFH of New Market, came down along with Marion Maggiolo of Horse Country and Jim Meads who flew in from Wales.

Everyone wanted their picture taken by this famous man who is so charming, full of energy and smart that I wish we could kidnap him. There he was Sunday, veering close to eighty years old, mind you, running along with the hunt, getting those photos which have made him famous. No one believes he is 78. He looks maybe 50, maybe. He's a testament to exercise, doing what you love and having a wee spot of gin to restore one's spirits. *cont. pg. 2*

"Dodged you? Ducked
you? Went to ground?
Cheer up Puppy! You'll
have another round."

- Clifton Lisle -

From the Master cont.

The party Saturday night was the first time we used the Rockfish Firehouse and it really worked. Emily Schilling and Mark Catron pulled together a silent auction that was wonderfully successful. Bless you, my children. Thanks to you we now have a part-time kennel-man, through Jan. 1 2009, our own Karen Osborne. Karen Catron ably assisted Mark, another man with a lot of energy. Emily organized the food. She's a whiz at that and per usual, Lynn Stevenson dealt with everybody and everything. How did this club ever function before she (in a weak moment, I bet) agreed to be our Hunt Secretary?

For those of you new to hunting, the Hunt Secretary is the political arm of a hunt club. Her or his function is much beyond a secretary, it's more like being a cabinet member to the governor. It is the most important position in a club that is not a hunt staff position. A good hunt secretary is wise to the world of politics and people, smoothing ruffled feathers, making sure information is correct and dispersed. Often another master will contact a Hunt Secretary before contacting the master. This is entirely proper for the Hunt Secretary is perceived as

speaking for the master or masters. If Lynn were a power queen this would be the job for her but she's not. She's a good woman who walks out hounds in the hot, sticky summer months, listens to all and seems happy to help our club function better and to grow.

Friday's hunt at Cherry Hill found us on dry, hard ground with the mercury climbing. Hounds found right off the bat. They picked up the gray who lives near a trailer on the other side of our wonderful Anne's beautiful farm. We can't go in there and it's so small, we couldn't really fit the field in there anyway. The gray knows this.

Page Turner pushed hounds back to me and we trolled for scent. We'd get some feathering but we didn't really hear any music until about an hour into the hunt, we picked up a line down by the widest of the creeks. First, Dana and Steve Green had to free a calf who had wedged itself in a forked sapling. The little girl was dehydrated but after the hunt, Dana borrowed Anne's new ATV from Wayne's Cycle, retrieved the calf, bedded her down in nice hay and gave her water. Anne came by after the breakfast to check on her little charge and to feed her. The calf is now named Dana.

Well, we did finally get something and the pack shot up the ridge but stopped halfway, turned east and ran all the way to Lem's hiding place. Lynn Lloyd, riding with me on Evinrude, and I hurried up the high ridge. We were glad we didn't have to go all the way up because it was now warm and horses had been out for a good hour. We hadn't run much but heat tires horses. (cont. page 3)



From the Master cont.

Their ideal temperature is in the high forties or low fifties. Hounds stopped at Lem's, cast themselves again to thread down the deep ravine which feeds the creek. Scent faded but hounds persevered. Once at the creek you'd have thought scent would intensify even though by now it had to be in the sixties. I sure was sweating, pardon me, glowing. Horses sweat, men perspire, ladies glow. Hunted hounds back to the trailers. They acquitted themselves with honor. Lulu lingered as did Powerball, loathe to come in. That's quite naughty but they did come back.

Lulu, a good hound, brims with personality. She can't hunt with her sister, Lilac, because they are bad girls. Oh, they hunt fox, they don't bump deer, it isn't that but the minute I turn for home or the trailers they go off together. They've visited neighbors. They've eaten other people's picnics. They are impossible. Separate them and they usually behave although now I fear Lulu is corrupting Powerball. He's so easily led, the poor dear, and Lulu is saucy. Lilac is more genteel than her sister. Let's lay it on the

line, Lilac is a lady, Lulu is a tart.

Sunday's hunt we got a few yips but it was in essence a blank day. It was also one of the most beautiful days of the year: robin's egg blue skies, color beginning to paint the leaves, and the mercury again was up. We hunted toward Foxden, went in. Hounds visited to inhabited dens when there was barely any scent.

Two things happened on this hunt that were good portents of things to come. First Flight witnessed the first, only staff and Dr. Mary T. O'Brien riding with John Morris, saw the second.

The individual who had the best time over the Sister Jane weekend was my coonhound, Homer. I put him up, shut the door but he's an escape artist. He knows how to open the door even if you lock it. So there we were roading the pack up to the St. Thomas Equinus sign and who joins in but Homer. Much as I love my coonhound, I wasn't happy about this. John put him in the hound truck but somehow he got out of that.

So Homer is boo-hooing (his voice is
(cont .page 4))



From the Master cont.

distinctive) while he worked with the pack. I give him credit, he packs in. Hounds were tracking a line which was relatively fresh because conditions were so bad scent rose to our noses in about ten swift minutes. We were behind our fox but he was in no hurry because he knew we couldn't do squat. Tell that to Homer. He pushed, he prodded, he gave tongue, a lot of tongue. Well, Orien did too as did Diana and the other hounds, imitating their betters, spoke but it wasn't the booming sound when all are on a hot line in good conditions. Still, they were telling their huntsman there was a fox and they were going to do all they could. Finally, hounds stopped at a den high in the steep creek bank (Perry Creek). Not Homer. He started digging. The hound was obsessed.

You will recall it had rained steadily the day before. I suppose I should have dismounted, slid down the bank as there was no way to climb up on the other side and blow "Gone to Ground". I demurred. For one thing, Homer was truly funny. Lynn and I sat there laughing for the other hounds decided he couldn't do all the digging.

The fox, as you know, creates many entrances and exits. Our gray wasn't sitting there waiting to get his whiskers plucked. He'd gone off to another part of his den or he may have

even slipped away.

Finally after trying sweet reason, cajoling, I left him. I knew the other foxhounds would follow and Homer, being convivial, would relinquish his quest. He did but what a mudball. And what a happy hound. I really must find a way to keep him inside. I'll try a stall next time. If that fails he can go on the road as Hound Houdini. Might be a source of revenue.

The other event, as I aforementioned, was seen only by the whippers-in and Mary. We'd come up to the parking place at Foxden and Jim Meads was taking pictures, putting people together. After we'd rested a bit, it was warm and many people needed a libation, I'd figured I'd hunt the hounds back to the kennels. Hounds and I are reluctant to give up although there really is an optimum time to pick up hounds especially if there are young entry in the pack. Hounds want to hunt and the grade schoolers have a lot to learn despite their evidenced talent. Keep them out too long and they hunt what isn't their quarry. But I figured we had another fifteen or twenty minutes before reaching the danger zone so I cast them at the woods' edge after noticing that six huge does bounded out, the pack didn't bat an eye. Then I noticed another doe standing there. She finally ran off but not terribly far. Then I spied her fawn lying still as a mouse just like Mother told her/him to do. The entire pack went over to the fawn. No one opened as they stared at this new life.

I said, quietly, "Leave it."

They did.

I recognize that nothing is as exhilarating as a cold day, hot scent and a bracing run. But this was a special moment for a huntsman and staff. To see that
(cont. page 5)

"HERE'S TO THE FOX IN HIS EARTH BELOW
THE ROCKS!
AND HERE'S TO THE LINE THAT WE
FOLLOW,
AND HERE'S TO THE HOUND WITH HIS NOSE
ON THE GROUND,
THOUGH MERRILY WE'LL WHOOP AND
WE'LL HALLOA!"
- G. J. WHYTE-MELVILLE -

From the Master cont.

obedience for they went right into the woods as I asked them to and no one looked back at the fawn, is thrilling. This is a good pack of hounds. We just need more of them.

By the time we reached the second creek by the fallen down sheep pens, I bet the doe had bedded back down with her baby.

Judy Pastore organized the breakfast

and it was delightful. People kept hovering over the tables because the food was so good.

What a lovely weekend with hounds, horses, friends and guests who are becoming friends.

Homer slept like a log Sunday night. Me, too.

- RMB -

❖ SALUTATIONS AND SYMPATHIES

- ❖ CONGRATULATIONS TO MARY CORBETT WHO RECEIVED HER BUTTONS AT THE THANKSGIVING HUNT
- ❖ HAPPY NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS TO: SARA TAYLOR, STUART AND CUSHMAN JONES, KEVIN MCKENNA, GIB STEVENSON, FRANCES MCGOVERN AND MASTER RITA MAE BROWN. (EDITOR'S NOTE: IF I INADVERTENTLY LEFT YOUR BIRTHDAY OFF THE LIST PLEASE FORGIVE MY OMISSION. YOU NOW GET TO REPEAT THE YEAR. ENJOY YOUR REPRIEVE. I'LL GET YOU NEXT YEAR!)
- ❖ CLAIRE MCGOVERN IS RECOVERING FROM A RIDING MISHAP AT OPENING HUNT. HEAL QUICKLY! WE HOPE TO SEE YOU BACK IN THE SADDLE AGAIN SOON.
- ❖ LYNNE GEBHARD IS HEALING FROM A BROKEN ARM DUE TO A NAUGHTY HORSE SHE WAS WORKING WITH. WE HOPE YOU ARE



We live in a world in which we should give careful thought before we discard anything. Can an item be re-used or re-worked for another useful purpose? With this in mind your editor has looked again at issues of *Hark to the Line* from days gone by. This month's newsletter and future ones will contain articles from the past which are still relevant to our hunting and riding skills. For those of you who have seen this information before, I hope you will smile and say, "Yes, I need to practice this again". For newer members or those new to fox-hunting I believe you will appreciate the information put forth.

Reverse Field!

One of the most difficult aspects of hunting a green horse is dealing with field reversals, which inevitably happen in places where you're least able to manage a problem. If you have the good fortune to be riding right behind the master then a reversing field won't affect your horse since he'll be one of the first to move.

It's a rare horse who will quietly stand by while all the others appear to be leaving without him. Some of the more common problems include bolting, backing up, rearing, or attempts at all three. The severity of a horse's reaction depends on where the reverse occurs and how often the horse has hunted. Some horses never quite get used to it, and others learn to cope in a relatively short period of time.

The first thing to do if you're having a problem, no matter what it may be, is to address your influence over your horse. His only impulse when the field is going by will be to try and find a way to go with them. Recognize that you don't matter as much to him as do the other horses, and you will have an easier time correcting him.

That's the first step: the second is in establishing respect at home and in other areas of his training. If you can't get your horse to stand or stop at home, you won't have any control at all in the hunt field, and

won't stand during a reversal. When you are riding at home, make him stand on a loose rein for a few minutes each day, and make him wait until you tell him to go again. If you tell him to halt, insist that he react. Don't pick at him until he feels like slowing down, pull back hard once and when he listens, let go. His respect for you at home must be automatic, and automatically rewarded by a loosening of the reins. Automatic respect will carry over into the hunt field: even when his brain is fried, some part of it will be in the habit of responding to your aids.

Before you discipline your horse you need to be sure that you're not inadvertently causing or contributing to the problem. When the field begins to reverse in the woods or other close quarters, softly back or circle your horse off the trail and sit quietly in the saddle, leaning neither forward nor back. Keep a very light feel of his mouth, and make sure you are not gripping with your legs. If your horse ducks his head and backs up, you may be holding his head too tightly. Try loosening the reins a little and checking him only when he tries to move, then immediately lighten your contact when he responds. Too much contact can result in a horse who rears to get away

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Reverse cont.

from it. If it's possible, keep him with a buddy the entire hunt, and whenever the field reverses, let him go directly behind his friend.

If he reacts violently to other horses going by without him, you may need to introduce him to the idea more gradually. The first time the field turns around, make him wait for just a few horses to go by, and then ask permission to slip into line. It is a common courtesy to wait your turn, but it's also courteous of the other members of the field to notice when a fellow rider is having an inordinate amount of trouble, and offer an opening in line. You can always return to the rear of the field once the danger is past. The next time the field turns, make your horse wait a little longer – perhaps for half the field to go by. Each time wait a bit more until he learns that he will indeed get to go when his turn arrives.

When the field reverses in an open area, it's much easier to deal with a horse's inclinations. Turn him to face a friend or any

nearby horses that are standing quietly, to get his attention off the others. If that doesn't work, move him away and walk in a direction opposite to that of the reversing field, so that he can go somewhere and use his energy without interfering with anyone else. Bring him around in a circle so that he ends up at the rear of the field, which should have completed turning at the point, and then let him go along with the others.

Don't force a horse to stand if he has any inclination to jerk the reins out of your hands, back up or rear; get him moving and out of harm's way before it occurs to him to try any of it. Give him something else to do, and eventually he'll learn that he will get to go out, and that you are not trying to make him miss out on the fun.

- Sara Taylor -



A FEW NOTES OF IMPORTANCE

WHEN HUNTING PLEASE DO NOT RUN UP ON HORSES FROM BEHIND OR WHEN PASSING. YOU MAY THINK YOU ARE JUST CANTERING ALONG, BUT WHEN THE OTHER HORSES HEAR YOU COMING HERD MENTALITY COMES INTO PLAY AND THEY THINK THERE IS DANGER. PLEASE DON'T TAILGATE THE HORSE IN FRONT OF YOU. SOMEONE WILL GET KICKED. PLEASE WALK THE LAST MILE BACK TO THE TRAILERS. IT MAY HAVE BEEN A SLOW DAY AND YOU WANTED TO ROCK AND ROLL A LITTLE, BUT HEADING HOME IS NOT THE PLACE TO DO IT SINCE OTHERS ARE NOT AWARE OF YOUR PLANS. THANKS FOR YOUR HELP IN KEEPING SAFETY FIRST.

Hunting Tips

We all know it's harder to get a run in warm weather. For one thing scent rises quickly and when it's above hound noses they can't smell it. They will stand on their hind legs to catch as much as they can but when it reaches your nose, the game's over.

Another reason hard runs are rare in the heat is the fox doesn't move around too much. When it's cold he has to go out and hunt his game as we hunt him. He needs more calories to stay warm. He loves corn but mid-winter even if corn has been left standing it's picked clean. So he's got to earn his daily bread.

When the weather's warm he'll laze about. Foxes are power-nappers. Snoozing in the sun is a favorite activity. Sitting and watching the world go by and maybe even a mouse, darting about on a warm day, trying to get the shopping done before the cold front moves in, gives him a lot to think over. Then again, if the heat hasn't vitiated his appetite, he could pounce on our mouse.

Years ago we did surprise a fox who was sound asleep on a flat rock on the other side of the bridge at Oak Ridge, the bridge on the Wilson Road. I had to shout to wake him up and then wait for him to get away. Wonderful run and it had to be eighty degrees. We were

actually glad when he went to ground for the heat that day punished hounds, horses and humans.

Which reminds me, when you see a fox if conditions are such that you can "Tally Ho, you must count to twenty first. You must always give the fox a sporting chance.

The conditions for tallying your fox are as follows: if hounds are close, noses down, **don't**. You're going to bring their noses up which is the last thing you want to do and trust me, it's the last thing your huntsman wants you to do.

If the hounds are working and they're coming in your direction, they'll get that line and off you go.

If hounds are not near then after counting to twenty holler for all you're worth. Take your cap off, turn your horse's head in the direction the fox was traveling and hold your cap in the hand of your outstretched arm which should also mirror the direction in which the fox was heading.

If you wear a cap with straps, take out a handkerchief and hold it in your outstretched hand. If you are following on foot this is also the proper procedure. Always keep a handkerchief in your pocket, preferably a large one so the huntsman can actually see it.

By the way, the hounds and staff horses know what "Tally Ho" means. Think the fox does, too. The fox knows everything.

- RMB -

FOR YOUR INFORMATION: WHILE THE HOCK JOINT OF A HORSE HAS AT LEAST A HALF-DOZEN BONES, MOVEMENT ONLY REALLY OCCURS AT ONE OF THE JOINTS, THAT BETWEEN THE TIBEA AND THE TALURS. THE OTHER JOINTS ARE THOUGHT TO HAVE DEVELOPED TO ABSORB SHOCK.

- The Horse's Health Bible -

Tea-Time Bassets

A new pack, it will be three years before we're at what might be called "a steady place".

We're trying to hunt one day a week, but really won't have a steady schedule until we get into December. By that time your Master of Bassets, Rita Mae Brown, will have a better idea of staff schedules.

The Basset Hot-line is 703-999-3879.

The great thing about this is those of you who hop on the band wagon now will get to see all the work it takes just to get hounds to work together and with their staff.

It may help you appreciate the progress of our foxhunting pack.

The basset personality is an "I love life" one. They'll delight you.

"WHEN THADY RYAN AND HIS BLACK AND TANS SWING BY, YOUR IMMEDIATE REACTION IS "JEEPERS! THEM'S FOXHOUNDS!"

WHEN THEY BURST OUT OF A COVERT, THE MUSIC OF THE HORN RISING ABOVE THE SHRILL SOUND OF THEIR CRY, AND THE MASTER SETS SAIL, ON HIS LONG-LEGGED, LONG-STRIDING HORSE, IN THE WAKE OF THE PACK, YOUR FEARS ARE FORGOTTEN. A SENSE OF URGENCY SWEEPS OVER THE FIELD AND YOU FIND YOURSELF CARRIED AWAY, OVER AND THROUGH THE MOST AWESOME PLACES, ON A WAVE OF EXULTATION AND EXCITEMENT."

- Jane McIlvaine - **To Win the Hunt**

AS EDITOR OF HARK TO THE LINE PLEASE SEND ME ANY COMMENTS, CORRECTIONS, ADVERTISEMENTS OR IDEAS FOR FUTURE ARTICLES. THE NEWSLETTER CAN ONLY IMPROVE WITH YOUR INPUT.

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