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MASTER'S REPORT

Tempus fugit. We've been working with the young entry and the second year hounds. Wonderful results.

Our hardest work is off-season. We'll begin building the new condos and painting the small office rooms in the puppy palace and kennels should it ever stop raining. No complaints. Given the droughts of the last two years, the water table is back up, all to the good.

I'm finishing a Mrs. Murphy mystery which ties me down but I wanted to finally give the end-of-season report.

As you know, cubbing was slow but it worked in our favor when hunting picked up. Starting with Opening Hunt, the season lifted off. For about six weeks we enjoyed good sport especially on our Wednesday 3:30 PM hunts. The one sloppy hunt on those Wednesdays was when I had the respiratory flu: two foxes, views, I couldn't get arrested. But other than that, with one glorious exception at Thanksgiving Hunt, our Wednesdays provided our best hunting. Then came the bitter cold, allied with a drought. The ground punished anyone who walked on it and scent evaporated. At one point, most of the pack was foot sore - used lots of Bag Balm. Occasionally I'd hear that an adjoining hunt had a decent to good day, but in the main, we were all up against it.

The most irritating part of this was it happened when hunting is the best: mid-December to March. February, in particular, usually provides long runs, hours in the saddle at a brisk to flying pace. For the first time ever, we drew blanks at Snell. How frustrating for hounds and for me. We truly tried our best to no avail.

March offered little solace. Sunday, March 8, the mercury climbed to 80°F. No one could believe it. Exactly one month before, we did get off a decent hunt starting on the north side of Cherry Hill. But March 8, International Women's Day, was blazing. Against all odds way up on Lem's Meadow, we picked up a fox. He walked, mind you, since he knew how bad it was. The other curious thing was he did not go over any jump. At one nice coop, which I was eager to take on Dodger, since he can do anything, he placed his front paw prints. The heavy dust left clear imprints. At another coop, he went under it. So we walked our fox for about an hour and we'd been out almost an hour before this. Finally, I had to stop the hunt for the heat was affecting the hounds, especially Oops. The fox chose to sit in Miss Henderson's back yard while we had our tailgate. What a cheeky fellow!

The joint meet with Farmington was lovely, at least it wasn't 80°F. Their pack, as always, was quite impressive. This was the day before Cherry Hill. What a difference one day made.

Hunting was painfully slow. Tuesday, March 10, six inches of snow blanketed the ground. From Wednesday, March 11 to Sunday, March 15, it rained, sleeted. We had to cancel Snell, the weather was so heavy. The last hunt of the season, it was raw, Heavy mist to occasional light sleet. Mark Cassidy, who trained under the great Mrs. Hannum, carried the horn for Orange and now whips-in to his brother at Radnor, visited.

Out we went. We wound up at Foxden and by this time, noses were cold, toes also and hands ached. Even with those toe packs my feet get cold. The stirrup iron cuts across the little heat pack and eventually it gives out. Nothing. Not one damn thing for 1 ½ hours and the footing was filthy. We avoided most jumps. Even though I do like collecting those bottles, at bottom, I have a heart and it could have gotten ugly. The hounds kept trying. They'd check in with me, I'd tell them "Hunt 'em up" or "Try back" and they would.

Finally I turned for home. I wanted to show Mark good sport and Michelle Schultz, MFH of Colonial, too. Wouldn't you know, and by now we are miserable, Siren spoke. Within seconds she was honored and all on they roared. We happened to be coming up from Perry Creek, just reaching that lovely meadow above, when it happened and the whole pack blasted out of the woods, followed the tree line and flew. At one point I saw Rocco, Emily Schilling aboard, and Kokopelli, with our junior Georgina in the irons. I hoped Karen Osborne was on my left, but at this point, I wanted to stay afloat and afloat it felt, too. How Sue Satterfield and Bob Satterfield kept their respective flights together I don't know. Gretchen

Submissions for newsletters and/or
photos for website welcomed.

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Robb also had her hands full but everyone made it. The fox ran almost to the Foxden sign then ducked in the culvert between Foxden and the adjoining property owned by John and Kathy Carr, a rugby player. (No wimps there, I broke my neck playing rugby back in the 70s.)

Emily held the north side of the culvert while I dashed out on the road, then up the farm road to see to the south side. I was sure the fox was therein and I didn't want the hounds to chop him. God bless our hounds. They wanted to go in especially Siren, Shelia, Barley and Vandal (looking for loot). They held up even though excited and Karen was a big help there, as was our wheel whip, John Morris, who prudently took along his son, Toot, now taller than Dad, and Melvin, his cousin. The men, good hound people, got out of the Tahoe, which a club member has donated and outfitted for us. Within seconds they were as wet as we were. No fox.

No fox! How did he get out of the culvert without me, the whippers-in or the wheel whips observing? The only thing we could figure out later was that there is a hole in the culvert and he escaped at a ninety degree angle emerging wherever he has a planned exit.

After ten minutes of waiting and the cold really setting in, I lifted and we hacked home. I don't know when I've seen people so happy to get to Sara Bateman's house. Warmth. Dryness. Food. Hot drinks and those that lift spirits. What a lovely hunt breakfast.

I would have bet anyone \$100 we wouldn't have done squat.

Shows you what I know. The fox has us all beat.

Keep fit. Read the great hunt classics and dream about cubbing which will start mid-September.

Up and Over,
Rita Mae

HOUND REPORT

We are low on hounds in the prime of life. Our older hounds will teach the young ones during cubbing and then we will retire at least two couple. Tony Gammell has drafted us three lovely hounds, all made, and one carrying the old Brandywine blood. He has also promised us two fat puppies as he has quite a few.

We have had poor luck breeding this year. Poppy was pregnant and died en route as Karen rushed her to the vet, for she looked a little peaked that morning. Strange to say, her wonderful sister at Keswick, Peanut, also died the same way mid-way through her pregnancy. Tony was so upset about Peanut. Staff and I are still wretched over the loss of this most loving, talented hound.

I have her ashes and hope to erect a suitable memorial. Sooner or later we'll find a slab of marble chipped broken and we can square it off and have it inscribed. As you know marble costs. In the meantime she's at the house with me.

Ava, not yet a year and very much alive, is also at the house. She had to have an operation on her hind leg due to a bone splinter. She's healing. The muscles atrophied but we are hoping they will improve and each day she has more use of the leg. It is doubtful she will hunt with her littermates but she has been marvelously successful at tearing up my books on the coffee table.

Her littermates should be able to hunt on the farm this season. They carry Dewdrop blood, one of our establishing girls. The sire is a wonderful hound bred by Bob Ferrer, MFH at Caroline Hunt. Most of the litter carries his blue ticking (goes back to Gen. Washington's pack) and his lean body type. Some of you will recall that Dewdrop was a full-figured girl.

The "M" litter, apart from being gorgeous, shows brilliance, true brilliance. The "T" litter, now in their second year, hunting only lightly last year due to being a little high, are finally settling in.

Very, very impressive during their exercises and at foxpen. They carry old Bywaters blood. Not as much as some of our hounds but it shows in their drive.

Fred Duncan, thanks to Jeff Blue, MFH and John Tabachka, Huntsman of Middleburg is bringing us a brood bitch of old Bywaters blood.

Back to Poppy for a moment. Her daughter, Precious, will not be hunted. She is all we have of that bloodline and I simply can't risk losing that. She is retired, although young, to be a brood bitch. Tony Gammell wants a puppy and he shall have one, once we get her bred.

We've opened a new run, re-arranged the hounds and at the end of cubbing will be looking for homes for our retirees. Most of you remember Esther, who retired to my couch but felt compelled to make appearances at Headquarters. She was the hound who had gotten rather stout and had she been human would have carried a handbag on her arm, worn a simple strand of good pearls, nice earrings and a good dress but the slip would have shown in places below the hemline. She lived to an advanced old age and lost no time in telling us all, "These young ones are so spoiled. Now in my day.....". What wondrous creatures the foxhounds are!

Farmington Hunt Ball Weekend

Farmington Hunt Club invited us to a series of events the weekend of March 6-8 in our new cooperative Hunt Ball effort. Oak Ridge was well represented at all events, with the exception of the Bloody Mary trail ride, where just a few die-hards made it. Next year, Oak Ridge will host the festivities.

- Friday evening - party at Knole with a special light show.
- Saturday morning - a vigorous joint meet at Millington, complete with a view for the whole field.
- Saturday evening - Hunt Ball at Farmington Country Club
- Sunday morning - Bloody Mary trail ride at Knole



Gene Dixon, Dr. George Lindbeck, Barbara Dixon



Gib Stevenson, Mark Catron, Lynn Stevenson

new arrivals

John Morris, Sr. and Rachel are proud to announce their daughter Stephanie presented them with a beautiful baby girl, Alice, May 2. She is named for John's late mother. He is exactly as you would expect him to be as a grandfather. He spoils Josh, his grandson, and Alice rotten. Toot isn't far behind on the spoiling either.

On May 1, Tony and Whitney Gammell welcomed James Noel Gammell into the world. The baby, whom I have seen (he's just a pip, the cutest) was named Noel for Noel Tywman. Those of you who show hunted or hunted with Keswick may remember Noel, a horseman of great gifts and someone lovely to sit down and enjoy a chat over a libation.

I'm waiting for some of our younger members to give us babies. I'm always canvassing for young hunting talent.

Tea Time Bassets

As many of you inquire about these rollicking hounds, a little report is in order. We have a ratio of too many young to old, but a series of exercises disguised as games are making a difference in just one year. We are a long, long way from Ashland Bassets, our “mother” hunt, but we can occasionally hold up our heads.

The big difference has been the draft from Mary Reed, MBH and Aggie De La Garz, MBH of Hobbit, Logo and Lightning who have settled the young ones.

Mirabile dictu. Outlaw is also proving to be a good teacher after being a real stinker. Robert, a young hound, has an old hound’s mind. But like the fox-hounds, the boys are not as volatile as the girls.

Emily Schilling, sometimes on horseback and Karen Osborne, also mounted, have proven invaluable. So has John Western and Dom, his horse. It’s obvious that Dom loves whipping-in. We suspect John does, too.

Using horses has helped us immeasurably. Hannah Gardner has ridden a few times but being young, she’s fleet of foot and I abuse her weekly. Having her close to the hounds, and sometimes Karen and Emily are also on foot, keeps them from splitting.

Mark and Karen Catron have been faithful and Karen is working double time so when the season starts, she can lead the field.

We did have a very good hunt April 3. The summers are for training, but Lynn Lloyd, MFH from Red Rock, Nevada visited. She’d never hunted bassets. The day before, Tuesday, we couldn’t hunt because it was a monsoon.

Emily Schilling and Judy Pastore whipped-in under a light drizzle with total slosh underfoot. Some places the mud threatened to suck the boots right off your feet. Karen Osborne was at the hospital because her youngest daughter (middle child) was having a knee operation. Judy had only whipped-in once before and that was on horseback.

So there we were, two whippers-in, Lynn and myself, Lynn in borrowed boots since all she had were loafers. They would have died a sudden death out there. We cast up near the St. Thomas Equinus sign, actually midway down by the gate. They took off in a perfect line, circled once, then blasted into the woods. Not one minute passed and they opened. Lynn and I headed down, Emily was on the left picking up her feet in the mud, but she was upright and Judy stayed in the pasture which meant she was soaked from the uncut hay from mid-thigh down. Hounds crossed, circled down by Poet’s Corner. Lynn and I ran as fast as conditions would allow to see the tail end of the line, Luciano and Hobbit, stop and come back to me. I told them to “Hark” and they scrambled back to the others, who now crossed back. The rabbit was heading back to his original starting point and Judy saw them put him to ground. They then, not thirty yards away, picked up another rabbit and this one they ran, full cry which was fabulous, down to the back of the equipment shed. That smart bunny hopped under a big brush pile. I blew them in and they all came, although Lightning took her sweet time about it.

Lynn was very complimentary, but she inclines that way. Emily, Judy and I have to confess, we were very proud of the little ones. Again, the cry was magic for bassets have good voices and none as good as Maestro. He’ll bring the hair up on the back of your neck.

He’s a big AKC hound, slow to learn and hangs back. This will be his second season and he’s starting to get it. Kathleen King, Whipper-in at Ashland, who graciously drives all the way down here to help us with the bassets, swore that’s how he would develop. Right as rain. Did I mention we were all totally soaked now and chilled?

Put them up. Went into the house to enjoy a bracing cup of tea.

We hope with continued work we can open our basset hunts to all. There’s no doubt it has made me a better huntsman and I think our whippers-in feel the same way about their abilities. We are hunting what the fox wants. What an eye-opener!

We are in the late Al Toews, MBH’s debt. He wouldn’t give up on me. Drafted me our core and made regular visits to work with me. I plucked his last nerve. I so loved him. We all did.











Since his passing, Dec. 21, 2007, Kathleen, his widow, has taken us under her wing. Mary Reed, MBH and Huntsman (a supremely gifted huntsman, a complete natural) along with her joint-master, Aggie De La Garza, as natural a whipper-in as Mary is a huntsman, have gone out of their way to help. Once they even allowed us to bring our rag-tag pack, by now I had bred two litters, put our pack with theirs, put our whippers-in with theirs, me with Mary and worked for a good hour and a half. The time and trouble they all took, plus they even had food for us. Good thing, we were about to drop. We’d hunted Great Meadows, bursting with cotton-tails.

As a child I grew up with hound people and then I migrated to New York and L.A. to make my way. I met and worked with some fine people there, but I lost sight of how generous and giving country people, hound people are. The thing is, the Ashland Basset gang would do this for anyone who loved hounds. They’ve also helped Reedy Creek.











Next time the world gives you hives, the greed, the disgusting self-aggrandizement of our so called “leaders” (politicians, yes; statesmen, no) remember all the wonderful people who have helped Oak Ridge foxhounds and Tea-Time bassets. It will put you to rights and hey, pass it on.















Congratulations!

Be sure and congratulate Karen Osborne when you see her. This Spring, she accepted the position of Professional Whipper-In for Oak Ridge Fox Hunt Club. She is already hard at work with the hounds.

BIG DADDY

As an aside, some of you may know that one of the basset whippers-in is Stuart Jones. Stuart is what, 75? In great shape. He is often on foot and when he rates those hounds, they listen. I mean listen. So we call him "Big Daddy".

During Oak Ridge's hunt season, mounted on Boy Scout, Stuart whipped-in on a few occasions with Karen as she was learning the ropes. He kept viewing and one time the fox ran between Boy Scout's legs!

Busy Spring

Oak Ridge had a very busy Spring, with three fundraisers held shortly after the end of hunt season. Special thanks to the many members who pitched in to help organize and put on these events.

The Oak Ridge Mountain Lion

Reading up on this occasional quarry, I was astonished to learn they can broad jump forty feet. That's the length of a school bus. The vertical leap is eighteen feet. In terms of stock they aren't the problem that coyotes are. I suppose if they produce high numbers they could be, but right now that appears doubtful. After our mountain lion hunt someone asked did I hear a roar since I saw the cache then later heard a snarl. No. Lions and tigers possess different larynxes. The mountain lion can't roar. Fine with me. The snarl is quite sufficient. The other thing about any type of wild cat. Never, never turn your back on them. Walk backwards not losing eye contact. When you're on horseback you can't do that but so far no reports have surfaced about attacks on mounted horses. Essentially the mountain lion wishes to be left in peace unlike our foxes who delight in making fools of us.

April 18, the first Cherry Hill Chase was held, although rescheduled and relocated to Tea Time due to heavy rains (this seems to have been a theme this year). Jumpers and Hilltoppers rode a 3 mile course, with prizes of commemorative coolers for the winners of each division.

May 9, we held a Murder Mystery Dinner, sponsored by the Wayne Theatre Alliance and written by Inspector Kathy Johnson, with star performances by several members and staff of Oak Ridge. We had a fabulous turnout and many donations by area businesses that helped make this event a huge success.

Memorial Day weekend, we held the 2nd annual Oak Ridge Challenge at the Estate. Activities included a poker chip ride, pole bending, barrel racing, knock down-and-out jump courses, races on the track and a handy hunter obstacle course. Great fun was had by all until Georgina took a nasty fall when her pony tried to run through a closed gate. Word is that she has bounced back quickly. We look forward to seeing her out again soon.

February Master's Report

If variety is the spice of life, our cupboard overflows. The last month witnessed hunting going to hell in a handbasket. We did enjoy a good run at gorgeous Buffalo Station on February 27, Friday.

Hounds drew over the pond, then behind as the winds made scenting difficult. We drew along the creek as far as we could but we need to do some work there to follow along as we should. So we turned back, and trotting down the dirt road. Nothing. Then we turned up about a half mile from the Dixon sign with the English setter. Halfway up that dirt road hounds struck, Taylor finding first. The others rushed to her and honored. Scent was blazingly fresh because we still had intermittent gusts plus leaves crunched. This fox ran parallel to the road heading south. Nearly at the juncture of the state road down the railroad tracks which dead ends and the Buffalo Station Road, he crossed the tertiary state road. Hounds spoke all the way down to the Tye River but we couldn't follow. We are learning this fixture and that is one of our tasks for this summer, finding paths down to the Tye. Actually, it's where the Tye meets the James, I think. Across the river we can see the incredibly beautiful Branch estate. Despite the wind we could hear hounds. So we followed as our fox turned heading north. But we'd lose sound, then hear it again. A few times we stopped and now it was raining. The field, led by Priscilla Freidberg, Maria Johnson second-in-command, no hilltoppers, forgave me these cold, wet standing delays. Finally as the rain intensified, I blew hounds in. The walk back to the trailers seemed colder than the ride out but all were in good spirits.

The tailgate continued as it always does at Oak Ridge but I headed out with Emily Schilling to pick up hounds. Donna Gaertner had three wet wriggly happy hounds. We got everyone in. Bill Johnson gave me a mess of deviled eggs, egg salad sandwiches and chicken salad to see me through since I skipped breakfast that morning. That man really must meet my chickens. He has a way with eggs. Emily, starved and wet as well (cold, too) ate the roast beef huge boy that Donna provided since it contains garlic which I can't eat with a coke each, we still felt wet but somewhat warmer. There's something to be said for a full stomach warding off cold which is one of the reasons we feed higher fat content and protein in winter to both foxhounds and bassets. A drizzling of corn oil is reserved for the bitter days.

Dana, Karen and Haley Osborne stayed behind for a half hour but horses really needed to return to the barn, be wiped down, etc. So Emily, Donna and I remained. A couple and a half stayed out: Zachery, Willie and I forget the third. Given the weather and the distance from our kennels, we worried. After an hour, Emily and I prevailed on Dan Gardner who kindly said if they came in he'll put them in his kennels. So back to first cast to put out a towel with human scent, a bucket of water and a pail of kibble. Donna remained. By morning's light, Donna had the hounds and Dana drove down to Buffalo Station to retrieve them. Whew. Hannah Gardner also proved a big help. The whole Gardner family pitched in and we are very grateful.

As I write this, we've had our first snowstorm, power has quivered, the winds have blown the snow into drifts. Tallulah Bankhead (my childhood idol) said, "I used to be Snow White but I drifted." In my twenties I had occasion to speak to the Alabama belle many times before her death in 1968. She liked hounds. Wild woman but would you have them any other way? Confess gentlemen, you'd be bored. Well, maybe we'd all be bored. We need a few Tallulah's in our life and Oak Ridge isn't lacking. Back to hunting. Mary Reed, MBH wrote me a lovely letter and noted, "Scenting has not been good and covert isn't as thick as I have seen it." Farmington's newsletter said the same thing. Don't we all know it. Conditions were better on the west side of the Blue Ridge but still spotty. If it would be consistently cold or consistently warm we'd be better off.

I note here that Diana has passed away due to a hunting injury. We rushed her to the vet, she seemed to recover although not fully and then a week later her whole hind end gave way. Her spinal cord had been damaged. This was one of the most incredible hounds I have ever known in my full life. Well built along clipper ship lines, sired by Piedmont Glider out of Deep Run Dimple, bred at Oak Ridge, entered in 2000, she proved tireless and dependable in the hunt field and a lovebug off. She became anchor hound in her third year. Our connection was truly psychic. The pack has faltered without her. Willie wants to be the next anchor hound but that position must be elected by the hounds. I may identify who has the leadership, steadiness, nose and drive but the hounds must accept.

We will get this worked out over the summer at Foxpen. Orion is another candidate and more experienced than Willie. We'll see. These accidents occur and accident it was but her loss is heartbreaking. Now I must search for Glider blood or Piedmont Glory, his mother. Chances are it will be three generations back in other kennels. I still have Dimple blood, thankfully. Well, that's my job. I must have that blood, all there is to it.

Another loss is Dana Flaherty who is retiring from hunt service. She's been our professional whipper-in for eight years. Like Diana, our connection when hunting was psychic. She's a wonderful whipper-in and she'll be missed. We thank her for her years of service, wishing her well in the future.

Karen Osborne will take over the care of the hunt horses and she will also whip-in. Emily Schilling will move up to first whipper-in. We hope Dr. Mary O' Brien will make a full recovery. Our bench is thin. Ideally I like to go out with two whippers-in. When one is learning, I pair her/him with a made whipper-in.

Every huntsman has their own way of going and I don't like the commotion of a lot of whippers-in; for nothing else, I fear they'll

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wind up in the covert. Nor can I bear a noisy one. We only have Emily for Wednesday afternoons and Sundays. Should Karen and Mary, if available become out of commission for Friday, I will go out with only a wheel whipper-in, John Morris, one of the best. This summer hounds and I will work/play tirelessly so should that occur we ought to be able to hold it together.

Hard to believe the season is almost over. Strange, too. Slow cubbing which actually proved to our benefit with young entry. Good going from Opening Hunt on to the bizzare weather ping-pong and dryness. This is one of the driest winters I recall. But you, know, hounds go and try. The only time in sixteen years they have ever disappointed me was when Shayne Haysome, MFH, Windy Hollow Hunt, New York State, visited. The day provided zip scent and half the hounds returned to the kennels. The ones that returned were young and a bit lost without Diane. I had many more young ones than usual but most of the girls were in season. I had to take the kids, most of whom were going out for the first time since Diane's loss.

For those of you with an interest in training, I like to keep my young entry close that first year, usually I don't hunt them off the farm until their second year. Without enough room for the hound numbers we truly need, I am very protective of the kids. I would be anyway but if we had the proper number of made hounds most of the girls in season wouldn't have as great an effect. Granted, the girls are quite high, brimming with drive but our dog hounds are steady and have a great work ethic. They do just fine but take a bit more guidance from the human in the pack. That may be more than you wanted to know but I try to give you a great hunt. Without the kennel addition I can only give you a good one. I'm proud of our progress but frustrated. On a personal note I'm sixty-four, tough as nails. I want to show what I can do while I can still do it. Vanity? well probably, but when my time comes I have to answer to PopPop Harmon. I'd like to hold my own. Given that we are in the beginning of a depression, world wide, I don't know how we can do it but I'm not giving up. Also, our club grows apace and with each new member we gain a new perspective, new skills. The work party at Buffalo Station showed me that. We divided up into those who put out kibble for foxes and those who built jumps, turned out not by design, the men built the jumps, the women tended to foxes. Those men, three of them newer members along with our stalwarts knocked those jumps out in no time. We ladies were pretty impressed. So new kennels are not impossible. We'll find a way.

All right, Enough.

Roger, Wilco, Over and Out

P.S. Friday, March 6 Cistern:

Picked up a big dog coyote. Ran him until he headed for Rt. 29. John & Mary turned hounds back.

Picked up a fox behind old beef barns off and on scent. Getting very warm 68-70/d F.

Finally came in where hounds, horses and people gratefully took a drink.

TGIF!

HOUND WALKS

A month after hunt season we begin the open hound walks. We need a month to work on repairs, etc. Staff will walk out small numbers but after a month we take most all our foxhounds and will also be folding in the bassets. The foxhounds like the bassets but wonder what happened to their legs.

I will put on the huntline the times since heat is a factor. By mid-April we should be going at nine but when the stinky hot months come, that is moved upwards. We are bringing back our Friday evening walks as they are greatly missed.

Our new wrinkle for this return is twice a month we will take hounds to another fixture. Ryan Schilling has conceived of a form of temporary fence so that after our walks which usually take forty-five minutes to an hour, we can put hounds in the shade with water. That way they'll be part of the lovely tailgates we have had on Fridays. Of course, we will have to provide them with cookies. It's not polite to eat and not offer some to others.

This is a great way to stay in touch with hounds and people. Given that I may be short of whippers-in next season, it is also imperative that young entry and second year learn off-farm fixtures. Young entry may not have much opportunity to hunt these fixtures but some mature more quickly than others. I so look forward to this and hope you do, too. There's always high tone talk enlivened by gossip. Mother always said, "Scandal is cayenne for the conversation."