



Hark to the Line

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

*Huntsman
Dr. Rita Mae Brown, MFH*

*Joint Master
David Wheeler, MFH*

*Professional Whipper-In
Dana Flaherty*

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

CALENDAR

Cubbing Fridays, Sundays
Call Huntline for fixtures and
times: 540.456.8787
November 12: Opening Hunt

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

David and Cheryl Gilliam
Jaimee Dolan (Junior)
Becca Duncan (Junior)

CHICKEN LITTLE

The landowner's party at Menagerie Farm Saturday, October 19, six o'clock in the evening had so many people flocking in, Ryan and Emily had to reconsider parking. The chickens flocked in, too, and they ran everywhere, obviously desperate for attention. The calves kept sticking their heads under the fence, the horses could have cared. Old news to them, foxhunters. The party was our best landowner's party ever and while we must thank the Schillings, we also need to thank the chickens, one of whom was quite bossy.

Master's Report

LAST HUNT OF THE 2005-2006 SEASON

The road to hell is paved with good intentions and I've laid asphalt down. I really wanted to write about our last hunt immediately thereafter but I didn't even make it to the tailgate since I had to run to catch a plane for San Francisco and a book tour. I don't think the gentleman next to me in the plane appreciated the fragrance of eau de cheval.

I will encapsulate it though. Our last hunt was March 19, Sunday closest to St. Patrick's Day. The morning, warm, presaged little sport but as always, hounds and I started out with high hearts. The field which I didn't count looked to be perhaps fifty-five or so and everyone fairly gleamed they were so well turned out.

We piddled around for twenty minutes and then we struck and we never really stopped except for a check here and there. The first fox ran toward Carter's Ridge then cut left and he finally dumped us near the creek bed in Mrs. Woods'. By the book, scent should have been stronger there but he sure had some kind of mojo because we lost.

"Well, that's it." I thought. "At least we had a go on a warm day and our last day." I headed back toward the kennel and we hit again and this time I thought we were in an electric blender. Round and round the kennels, the barnette, the log jumps in the barnette field. We'd picked up one of the foxes who live behind the kennels. There's a mini-Manhattan back there and they're spoiled rotten, will never give us a run. As soon as we put hounds up they come out to swan about. For whatever reason, this medium sized red just kept running in circles. He passed the many dens time after time and elected not to duck in. Dee

Phillips mounted and dismounted so many times to drop riders on fences, that I expect she'll take up vaulting.

At long last, he popped into his den. I dismounted, handed Dee my reins, walked in where hounds carried on, dug, made music and blew "Gone to ground". Hounds followed me out with a reluctant Lefty, who needed persuasion to say goodbye to his fox. We really did go in after that.

Whatever possessed one of those foxes to give us a go after thirteen years of watching hounds go out and giggling in our faces? Don't know but I'm glad of it.

Heard the tailgate was sensational but all of that season's tailgates were good and great fun. The gossip is as hot as the coffee. Not that I listen.

Staff worked better in our thirteenth season than ever before. I include John Morris in that, our wheel whip. His work has been critical near roads. You all rarely see him but he's there when we need him and if the pack must be got off game heading for 151, it usually falls to John to do it. Toot has been a godsend in the kennels and Melvin is there on Sundays. Without Melvin we'd be mucking out kennels, etc. until eight at night.

You all don't often see Toot and Melvin. You do see John. Thank him. Thank them all if you get the chance.

As always, my whippers-in make me look good. The pack does the rest and I really think this season might be better than last. We've taken drafts from Middleburg, Colonial and Deep Run to help us since we had only one girl whelp. For whatever reason, we couldn't get our girls bred. This happened a few years back, too. Some other clubs have reported similar experiences and then there's Keswick which has puppies galore.

(Continued on page 2)

You always want young entry to bring along for a smooth transition when the older hounds retire. Any big gaps in years will diminish pack performance often over years. It's critical to keep up to speed so to speak. We are especially grateful to Middleburg, Deep Run, Colonial and Tony Gammel, (Keswick's huntsman) bless him, who also called and gave us a young one.

We've been working with the drafts that are old enough to enter, as well as those who were entered by their former packs, to bring them into the Oak Ridge system. The Foxpen visits proceed toward this purpose and I am happy to report: so far, so good.

Speaking of Foxpen, an interesting event occurred at Milton Wickham's Foxpen Wednesday, August 30. Even though we left here at 5:30AM, by the time hounds were cast, it was so humid you could scarcely breathe. John, Mary and I listened. Nothing. Fifteen minutes passed and they hit and they worked very well. Along with our hounds, we had two couple of drafts with us and one, Powerball, kept checking back at the truck just to make sure we were still there. We viewed but you always do at Bubba's. (Bubba Wickham is worth the trip. He's full of good cheer, stories and a lot of insight. He's so wise I can't believe he's that much younger than myself. This proves once and for all that wrinkles do not equal wisdom. They just equal wrinkles.) The run continued, breaks here and there. All three of us were surprised that they got much up then kept at it. Then the hounds lifted themselves and trotted back to us. Within twenty minutes every hound was back. They must have felt Ernesto coming as I have never had this happen. Always, I've had to blow, call and cajole because hey, hounds want to hunt and if there's a slip of a chance, some of the hardheaded ones really make you work for their return. By now we've gotten all but two very naughty "L" girls to realize they must come back.

So the hounds jumped in, John shut the gate and we were home by noon. That's a record.

OFFER SUPPORT

Oak Ridge has bid some wonderful people goodbye this summer. Donna Gaerttner lost her brother, George, who endured a long illness with stubbornness and resolve. Dana Flaherty had the honor of being a pallbearer. I think George would have been pleased.

Dee Phillips lost her brother, Michael who wasn't but fifty, I think. That was a wrenching loss.

One of our former members, Gordon Reistrup lost his wife, Amy. She was much too young but in these circumstance, we bow to a Higher Power.

Donna Eicher, a dear friend of mine for decades, also died. I keep writing a memorial for her and then I can't finish because I'm still struggling. Many of us are and we console ourselves by hoping she is with Jack who died six years ago, also in the summer. (Jack Eicher was huntsman at Farmington and then Keswick when he suddenly died, leaving Donna a widow in early middle age. As Donna formerly modeled for Oleg Cassini her middle age didn't look like most of our middle ages.)

Our sympathies go out to Rockbridge Hunt because Frank Farmer passed away, one of the funniest, warmest gentlemen in foxhunting. When I called Cindy Morton, MFH she said, "We're going to miss Frank." We're all going to miss Frank. Not only because he understood foxhunting but because he understood people.

And today, September 2, was the funeral for our very special James Carter. He was a kind man, an understanding man. You didn't have a simple chat with Mr. Carter, you had a real conversation. The people came from all around Afton and beyond to honor him. I hope that was some comfort for Florence, his wife, Jimmy, his son, Diane, his daughter-in-law, and Rebecca Sue, his granddaughter. We know this is hard for his brother and wife, too, Mr. and Mrs. Carl Carter, as the family is close-knit. His was a life well-lived, full of love. We were lucky to know him.

CUBBING REMINDERS

Carry your Virginia Hunting License (cost \$18) along with your name and insurance information.

You also need to carry your negative coggins test and this is required by State Law as is the hunting license.

Do get a State Forest Stamp which is \$4 as joint-meets with other clubs may involve fixtures that are State Forests. Not to have this stamp would expose our host club to censure should we be carded at the fixture. Remember, state employees have to justify their salaries.

The correct attire is ratcatcher. Anyone new to Oak Ridge has one year to put together their kit so if you don't have it all together, remember this: Do not wear red.

There is no fixture card for cubbing which is traditional although in the last decade some clubs have put out one as it does save wear and tear on the masters. However, the real reason fixture cards were not printed is farmers are still bringing in the various harvests. A master calls the landowner to ascertain if the hay is up, etc. As we all know, weather plays havoc with the best of schedules so the call is often the day before casting hounds. By November, by St. Hubert's Day, most crops are up, all the orchards are picked, etc. and a card can go out without worry. Even then, something can happen which will change a fixture, e.g., a bridge gets washed out so one is always to call the Huntline: 540 456-8787

Tattoo this on the inside of your eyelids: HOUNDS ALWAYS HAVE THE RIGHT OF WAY.

Tattoo on your wrist: DURING CUBBING, WE ARE THERE FOR THE HOUNDS. DURING THE SEASON, HOUNDS ARE THERE FOR US.

Poker Run 2006

Lynn Stevenson

Neither Hurricane Ernesto nor postponement to the rain date deterred 100 stalwart riders from coming out to the 2006 Poker Run. This year's ride encompassed some of the most beautiful terrain in Nelson County. Kudos to Dana Flaherty, for laying out and flagging the course, and to Big John, Little John, and Robert for the bush hogging and brush clearing. Due to their combined efforts, the trail was well marked and easily traversed with good footing.

The weather was beautiful, literally, the calm after the storm. Who would have imagined that 36 hours after receiving almost 9 inches of rain, the Poker Run would have happened? It's also hard to fathom that the small bridge leading in to Tea Time Farm, just before the run-in shed, was under 18 inches of water late Friday afternoon!

Returning riders raved about the course. Once back they were able to satisfy their hunger pangs and shopping urges by visiting the food, T-shirt and used tack tables. The Oak Ridge hounds benefited nicely from proceeds of the used tack sale.

The entire event was a huge success due to the many workers who manned the registration table, the card/outpost stops, and the food and T-shirt/used tack tables. Thanks to the following folks, without whom, the Poker Run could not have succeeded: Dale and Sara Bateman, Becky Birnbaum, Ellen and Megan Brock, Deb Brown, Hugh Brown, Jean Duncan, Cindy Green, Joe Manning, Beth Marcinko, Pete Osborne, Gretchen Robb, Bob and Sue Satterfield, Gib Stevenson, Amy Wade, and David Wheeler.

Since many of the above have worked the Poker Run for several years, and would like to ride next year, we need new folks to help and volunteer. I'll be calling you! Thanks again to everyone.

And the winners were:

1st Place: Lynn (Beegle) Gephard

2nd Place: Kathy Kuhlmann

3rd Place: Kathleen King

Congratulations, all!

WHAT A GIFT

Our neighbor and landowner, Jim Klemic, gave the club two large flatbed loads of two inch thick lumber to help build our kennels. This is beyond generous and once again points out how extraordinary our landowners are, how much support we get from the community of non-riders.

Jim and Joan also rescue dogs, cats, even turtles so you know they are on the side of the angels.

NOW, THAT'S RECYCLING

In 1987, Herb bought a new four horse steel stock trailer. What an occasion, which then precipitated in a short time, a new truck because the old one was lacking in power and polish.

In 1995, Herb gave the trailer to the Club and I painted it royal blue. How many miles are on that trailer and if it would talk as Herb, Sam (his assistant) and I covered most of Virginia, some of Maryland and North Carolina in that thing. When he gave it to me for hounds and staff horses, it was really a big gift and one totally unexpected -- like Jim calling me up and volunteering that lumber.

Your Master, Dana and John have nurtured this trailer, repaired it, bought new tires, rebuilt the nose, rewired it, etc. through the years. Emily Schilling wanted to buy it and I crawled under it and over it and realized I couldn't even give it to Emily as it really was breathing its last as a roadworthy vehicle.

You'll be pleased to know that it is in the back corner of the acre area where we hope to build the new kennels in time. Mark Greenfield and his assistant, Steve DeSilva, used some of Jim Klemic's lumber to create a kennelette of my design. The summer Friday houndwalkers have all seen it and a few thought with alterations it would make a good clubhouse with the bar outside. Hounds first, fellas.

It's sturdy, will be warm in winter and boasts a wonderful deck with levels for hounds plus they can crawl under if they choose. It's secured on concrete piers and protected by a peaked roof with a four foot overhang.

We can't relocate some hounds out there until we are able to fence part of the area which brings me to the next headline:

ANGELS STEP FORWARD

Folks, we need fencing materials and we don't care if they're used. The ideal is chain link fence but that costs an arm and a leg even used.

We need heavy fencing, turkey foot if no chain link, and we need poles or posts at least ten feet high, twelve is better but we can work with ten.

As you may know, one must bury the wire pulling it forward then covering with concrete and earth so hounds can't dig out. Ideally, one likes to bend wire in at the top so they can't climb out. Every now and then, we'll breed a climber but digging is a bigger problem. If we can't bend the wire in with supports then we must run a hotwire at the top powered by the sun. Works until one of us hits it when we clean and then it really works.

So, please, if you can give us anything that qualifies, we need enough for one full acre. The new area will take half of that and we must rebuild all the interior fencing at the old kennels.

If you can't donate materials perhaps you might know of someone or a company where we could purchase materials, used, at a discount.

Please call me, Rita Mae at 540 456-8787 or David Wheeler at 434 977-1563. I do better with design, David is great with construction stuff. You may not know this but our joint-master built his own house himself and I doubt that anything is more than a millimeter off.

pony club corner

IT TAKES A CLUB TO RAISE A FOXHUNTER

By Maria Johnson
Wintergreen Pony Club, DC

After reading several articles in recent months about the lack of Juniors in the hunt field, I feel compelled to share my experiences from this summer with the Wintergreen Pony Club (VA) and the Oak Ridge Fox Hunt Club.

Dr. Rita Mae Brown and the Oak Ridge Hunt Club have taken Wintergreen Pony Club under their wing to get them ready for the upcoming hunting season. By taking the time to do so they have made our Pony Clubbers feel like they are a welcome and valued part of the tradition of foxhunting.

The process began when the Pony Clubbers heard about the Live Oaks Challenge, and decided that they were quite capable of placing in the 2007 season. The Challenge offers a cash prize to the Pony Clubs that have the most new foxhunters in a given season. The Wintergreen Pony Clubbers set the goal of getting at least 8 new kids out hunting this year. The Oak Ridge Hunt Club has been very accommodating in our quest to reach that goal.

Rita Mae worked hard throughout the summer getting the kids familiar with all aspects of sport of Fox-hunting. The curriculum has included visits to the kennels, hound walking, puppy visits, stable visits, a conformation lecture, horn demonstrations, and attire discussions.

During one visit to the kennels Wintergreen member, Jaimee Dolan, 9, got to bond with a very young foxhound puppy and has plans to follow its progress through training and out onto the huntfield over the next few years.

One visit was particularly effective in helping the pony clubbers understand the relationship between huntsman and hounds. It started with a talk on the history of foxhunting by Rita Mae and continued with a horn blowing demonstration and an explanation of the meanings of the sounds and the reason that they have evolved that way. Rita Mae explained foxhounds in a way the pony clubbers could relate to. She compared a foxhound to a well bred thoroughbred and explained how sensitive they are to even the smallest sounds and smells. She also helped the kids see that, just like their ponies, the foxhounds like to be treated fairly and with respect.

The children were quite surprised to hear that the hounds would recognize them in the huntfield, and that as the Huntsman, Rita Mae, could tell what was going on around her just by the behavior of her hounds. They vowed to be a little quieter in the huntfield!

Another thing the children learned that pleased them, was that the hunt club takes care of the foxes in

their territory by worming and inoculating them whenever possible.

One very interesting topic was appropriate mounts for staff and field members. This meeting included a visit to a staff barn and a very informative discussion by professional whipper-in Dana Flaherty. Dana brought out different hunt horses and showed our group different conformation attributes and faults that may help or hinder in the hunt field. Our kids got a deeper understanding of the importance of a well trained and obedient mount.

Wintergreen Pony Club was also invited to join the hunt club on one of their training trips to a foxpen. Our group got a closer look at the hard work that goes into training and maintaining a pack of foxhounds. They were allowed to work with the huntsman, Dr. Rita Mae Brown, and the whippers-in, Dana Flaherty and Dr Mary Obrien. This visit was a true eye opener for some of our pony clubbers! They got to run through the woods alongside the huntstaff and help with the hound training, an awe-inspiring feeling they will not soon forget. Several of the kids got very good views of the hunted fox and working on the ground they got the rare experience of getting to track the fox and the hounds using all their senses. The whole experience was a very hands on one, and one we will all always remember.

To encourage continued interest by the pony clubbers, Oak Ridge Fox Hunt Club has set up regular events for our juniors throughout the year.

Junior hunts have been organized giving the younger members the opportunity to lead the field, ride with the whips, and help with the hounds. The junior hunts even include a leadline group at the beginning to allow the smallest of our members to participate!

Sonia Johnson, 15, of Wintergreen Pony Club was invited to lead the field on several occasions last season, where she stepped up the the daunting task of feeling responsible for those following in her footsteps.

Allowing the junior members to take on these challenging and exciting tasks has kept our Pony Clubbers truly interested and looking forward to a lifetime of fox-hunting.

Saturday, November 11th, 2006

Wintergreen Pony Club

Combined Tests and Dressage Schooling Show

at

Oakside Stables

All divisions of Combined Test - Guppy to Training
Plus special gOLDFish division

\$5 discount for Oak Ridge Hunt members, Pony Club and 4-H
for more information, download flyer at

<http://www.oakridgefoxhuntclub.com/WPCshow.pdf>

Pony Club Corner cont.**My Favorite Summer Memory**

By: Jaimee Dolan 9 yr. old Pony Clubber

My favorite memory this summer, was the time I went to Fox Pen with the Master of my local hunt ,Dr. Rita Mae Brown. We met very early in the morning so the hounds could catch the scent before it rose above their noses. We took eight couple (which means sixteen hounds in hunt language.) Each of us was assigned to a Whipper In. Then we followed the hounds into the woods and waited for them to catch the scent of the fox. We caught the scent of a grey fox who was running figure eights around the hounds. After we ran the grey fox for awhile, the hounds lost the scent of that fox and picked up the scent of a red fox who was running circles around the hounds. My Whipper In, Judy, told us where the hounds would run the fox out of the woods. I missed the fox almost every time it ran out of the woods. Finally The fox broke from the woods with the hounds running only a few feet behind and I got to yell " Tally Ho!!" Which means I see the fox!!! I have never seen anything that is more beautiful than that red fox with it's bushy tail.

I'm so glad that Rita Mae invited my Pony Club to the Fox Pen.

HOW TO GO TO OPENING HUNT

Becky Birnbaum

ONE WEEK PRIOR:

Dry clean all formal attire.

Wash every saddle pad and girth cover you own.

SATURDAY:

9:00-10:00 am Bathe horse, being sure to thoroughly saturate horse, self, and everything within 20 feet of bathing area. Put horse in stall to dry.

10:00 Change into dry clothes. If horse is a grey or a paint, swear to self that you will never buy a grey or a paint again.

10:15-11:00 Clean tack that you plan to use for hunt.

11:00 Check horse to see if he is dry. He is not.

11:00-12:00 Clean schooling tack.

12:00 Check horse to see if he is dry. He is not.

12:00-1:00 Take a break for lunch.

1:00 Check horse to see if he is dry. He is not. Let him out anyway.

1:10 Watch in horror as horse rolls.

1:15-2:00 Repeat step 1.

2:00 Have fight with spouse about whether you're going to spend the whole weekend "playing" with the horses.

2:15-3:00 Load the following essential items into trailer (What, you don't have a dressing room? Cram into passenger seat of truck.)

Saddle, bridle, 3 different bits (just in case), breastplate, 2 girths (fat girth and not-quite-so-fat girth), girth cover, pad, bell boots, galloping boots, easy boot, dress boots, boot pulls, boot jack, coat (pockets loaded with tissues, gloves, extra hairnet, candy, last year's hunting license, hay), vest, hat, extra gloves, hairnet, stock tie, pin, flask, sandwich case, camera, towels, cooler, stable blanket, horse treats, pitchfork, hay net.

3:00 Start braiding.

3:30 Lock up other horses who are charging around the paddock, causing the hunt horse to dance around.

3:45 Redo last 6 braids that look terrible because horse was dancing around.

5:00 Finish braiding mane, decide not to braid tail.

5:15 Feed horses, leaving hunt horse in stall so he won't roll again.

Lock buddy in stall so hunt horse won't have a fit.

Lock buddy's buddy in stall so buddy won't have a fit.

6:00 Fix dinner for spouse.

SUNDAY

6:00 Feed horses.

6:15-7:45 Rebraid mane while horse dances around after being locked up all night.

8:00-8:15 Ask horse nicely to get on trailer.

8:15-8:30 Ask horse sternly to get on trailer.

8:30-8:45 Get longe whip and encourage horse to get on trailer.

8:45-9:00 Enlist spouse's help to get horse onto trailer.

9:05-9:10 Change clothes.

9:15-9:45 Drive like bat out of hell to Oak Ridge.

9:45-10:05 Unload horse, tack up horse, put on belt, boots, vest, heavy wool coat, stock tie, pin, hairnet, hat.

10:05-10:10 Mount horse and run over to where everyone is already on. Notice green drool on your shirt sleeve.

10:10-10:30 Stand around in 75 degree heat, waiting.

10:30-10:45 Stand around some more for blessing of hounds and picture-taking (oops, you left your camera in the truck).

11:00 Finally, you're off! Try to stay on as 60 horses do airs above ground.

11:10 Someone fell off. Wait while everyone makes sure they're ok and they get back on. Notice manure on your breeches.

11:15-11:20 Enjoy a brief run: our hounds can spin gold from straw.

11:20-12:30 Try not to pass out from the heat as you go on the most high-falutin' trail ride of your life. Notice mud splatters on your coat.

12:30-1:00 Untack and bathe horse.

1:00-3:00 Enjoy the most high-falutin' country cooking you ever ate, recounting every detail of the day as if it was the best day of foxhunting you ever had.

3:00 Go home and wait desperately for Friday, so you can do some real foxhunting!