

RIDING TO HOUNDS IN AMERICA

*AN INTRODUCTION
FOR FOXHUNTERS*

WILLIAM P. WADSWORTH, MFH



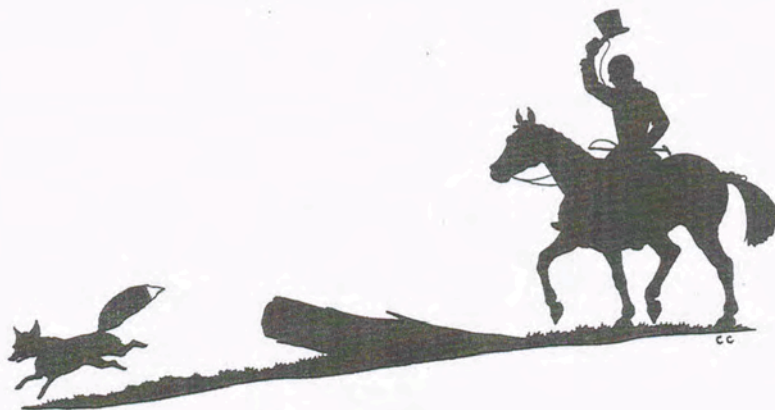
**Published by The Chronicle of the Horse, Inc.
P.O. Box 46, Middleburg, Virginia 20118
540/687-6341**

**Copyright© 1987 by The Chronicle of the Horse, Inc.
All Rights Reserved**

Nineteenth Printing, 2009
Thirteenth Printing (Revised), 1987
First Printing, 1962

RIDING TO HOUNDS IN AMERICA

AN INTRODUCTION FOR FOXHUNTERS



WILLIAM P. WADSWORTH, MFH

FOREWORD

William P. Wadsworth, who died in 1982 at the age of 76, was MFH of the Genesee Valley Hunt, 1932-1975, and president of the Masters of Foxhounds Association of America, 1972-1973.

Members of the Wadsworth family initially came to the Genesee Valley in upstate New York in the 1700s. In 1876, Maj. William Austin Wadsworth (W. P.'s father) formalized the sport of foxhunting with the founding of the Livingston County Hunt, which became the Genesee Valley Hunt in 1894.

In 1971, W. Austin Wadsworth joined his father as jt.-MFH, becoming the third generation of his family to carry the horn for Genesee Valley. In 1986, Austin's sister, Martha Heen, became jt.-MFH.

Through the years, W. P. Wadsworth wrote articles on foxhunting for *The Chronicle of the Horse*. In 1962, the *Chronicle* assembled these pieces in the first printing of *Riding to Hounds in America*.

Now in its 12th printing, *Riding to Hounds in America* has served as an introduction for novice foxhunters and a refresher for veterans.

Precious little has changed in foxhunting practices and theory since Mr. Wadsworth's text was initially printed 25 years ago. We have made progress, though, in the area of head safety. I feel certain that, today, even though he was a staunch supporter of tradition and traditional dress, Mr. Wadsworth would have added in Chapter I, under the heading "Clothing and Equipment," that harnesses for hunt caps are acceptable in the hunting field.

Peter Winants, Publisher, 1987
The Chronicle of the Horse



William P. Wadsworth, who was MFH and huntsman of the Genesee Valley Hunt for 43 years, at the kennels with some of his favorite hounds.

PREFACE

The following observations are for those who have recently taken up, or who are considering taking up, the sport of hunting foxes on horseback behind an organized pack of hounds.

If you did not have some idea, from hearsay or otherwise, of the fascination of the sport, its disappointments and its rewards, its companionship, and above all the indescribable thrill that comes of riding across a good country, watching a good pack of hounds hunt a good fox, you would not have read this far.

If you have hunted for years and know the game, you need read no farther unless you are amused by comparing your opinions with those of another who knows probably less than you do.

The author assumes that the reader is enough of a horseman to control his horse (or replace it with one he can control), and has a firm enough seat (flat saddle, either English or forward seat) to stay on with fair regularity over the jumps which are necessary in the country where he considers hunting.

Riding is a fine art which has been covered by experts in other books. This text, then, is designed to be a guide for the transition from rider to foxhunter. It covers preliminary matters such as arrangements to hunt and thoughts on horse, tack, clothing, and final preparations for the day before.

There follows a brief chapter on hounds, an explanation of the way hunts are organized, a chapter on the fox and one on the way the hunt actually functions in the field.

Perhaps the most important chapter for the novice is the one on etiquette, by means of which the beginner may avoid some of the pitfalls which may make him appear impolite.

The author has drawn heavily on the writings and experiences of foxhunters, both past and present. He is indebted to so many that he does not attempt a list of acknowledgments, for fear that it would be incomplete.

WILLIAM P. WADSWORTH, MFH, 1962

CONTENTS

Chapter I	PRELIMINARY MATTERS	Page 5
	The horse, tack, clothing and equipment and the day before.	
Chapter II	HOUNDS	Page 15
Chapter III	ORGANIZATION IN THE FIELD	Page 19
Chapter IV	THE FOX	Page 21
Chapter V	THE HUNTING DAY	Page 24
	The meet, hounds in covert, gone away, accounting for the fox and on the way home.	
Chapter VI	HUNTING ETIQUETTE	Page 35
	Courtesy to the landowner, the field and staff, the field and hounds, courtesy to other riders, avoiding natural obstacles and a conclusion.	
Chapter VII	GLOSSARY OF FOXHUNTING TERMS	Page 44

PHOTO CREDITS

Bo Alley: 29. Gillen: 20. Marshall Hawkins: 23. Denise Hendershot: 22 (top). Douglas Lees: 8. Leonard Lee Rue III: 22 (bottom). Libby Stokes: 37. Peter Winants: 10, 30, 32.

ARTWORK BY CUSTER CASSIDY

Chapter



PRELIMINARY MATTERS

If you wish to hunt with any organized pack of hounds, of course the first thing to do is to find out whether you will be welcomed. Running such a hunt is expensive, and those who dance must, in general, pay the piper. Likewise the greater the number of riders, the more crowded they are in the field, and the more damage may be done to landowners. For these reasons some hunts, like some clubs, are not as anxious as others for new members, and some have stricter guest rules than others.

Hunts are supported financially in one of three ways. A "private pack" is supported by an individual, known as the Master of Foxhounds (MFH) who owns the hounds and pays all the bills. He (or she, and if she, she is still called the master) asks whom he pleases to hunt as his guest and may or may not accept contributions to help with expenses.

A hunt club is organized like any other club; the club owns the hounds, its officers and directors appoint the MFH, and its treasurer pays the bills. The club gets the necessary money by collecting regular dues from its members. These members have the right to hunt, and under certain conditions, to invite non-members to hunt as their guests, usually on payment of a capping fee, which corresponds to a greens fee at a golf club.

A subscription pack lies somewhere between. The hounds may be owned by the master or by a small organization representative of the country usually called the hunt committee, which assists the master financially, and normally appoints him. It also solicits subscriptions from other people hunting with the pack. In some cases, the amount of the subscription is fixed, in some cases it varies according to individual circumstances.

Before making any other plans to hunt, you should find out, through a friend who hunts or by direct application to the secretary, whether the hunt is accepting new members or guests, and on what terms. If this obstacle is cleared, the secretary may be requested to see that you receive fixture cards, which tell when and where hounds are going to meet. This is also a good time to find out what the master's policy is with regards to cubhunting (cubbing), the name applied to early season hunting, whose main function is training young hounds to hunt and young foxes to run.

Cubhunting is purely the business of the master and the staff, and except by his express permission, no one else has a right to attend. By all means go if you are

welcome. You will learn more about hounds on a quiet cubhunting morning than in three mornings during the regular season, but do not expect to gallop and jump.

THE HORSE

This is not a book on horsemanship or horses. However, I feel I must warn the horseman who wishes to take up foxhunting against considering the hunter as seen in the show ring as the type of horse that will give pleasure across country. He may or he may not. To be successful in the hunting field a horse needs less size (but not less endurance), less conformation (but not less soundness) and much less flashiness, than in the show ring. He needs more room for his heart, lungs, and other innards, better eyesight, and far more brains.

Most beginners who hunt are over-mounted, that is they have a more spirited horse than they can control.

The performance of your horse is most important to your pleasure, as can be seen from a study of Chapter VI. He should, of course, jump reasonable obstacles willingly and without excitement, at varying speeds. It is nice to be able to "fly 'em" when hounds are screaming on, but if your horse won't jog up and pop over at a tricky place you may have to go a long way around. It will give you added pleasure and convenience if you have trained him to yield to the pressure of either leg, and to turn at your will on either the forehand or hind quarters.

The most important thing is control. You must be able to rate him without a battle to any speed desired, at any gait, alone or in company. He should be used to going in the company of other horses without excitement, and should leave them, or be left by them, at your command and without argument. Remember that the most important gait in a hunter is the halt. If your horse won't stand, teach him; if he won't learn, sell him; if he won't sell, shoot him.

*Most beginners who hunt
are "over-mounted."*



During the summer you should get him used to the hunting whip. Never use a hunting whip or a bat to discipline a hunter. Use spurs instead, if necessary, and he will not be whip-shy.

Next to temperament and training, the most important factor in the enjoyment of your horse is his condition. The hunter needs in general much longer work at slower gaits than a show horse. To get him into condition he should be given slow work, especially up and down long, steep hills (walk down and walk or trot up to put on the muscle). The long hours will give you a chance to brush up on his training, and get him used to rough going, opening and closing gates, and moving through thick woods and underbrush.

TACK

Hunting tack is subject to certain conventions, most of which stem from experience. In general, the less tack you need to ride your horse comfortably, the less you should put on him. As to quality, the best is the cheapest in the long run; but good or bad, new or second hand, it should be cleaned and cared for like a Marine's rifle. Replace all weakened parts at once. If you clean your own tack, inspect it carefully while doing so. If not, inspect it daily before it is put on.

Any flat saddle, forward seat or "old-fashioned English," in which you ride comfortably will do. Be sure it fits your horse, and that the tree is not broken. Stirrup irons should be large, for safety, but not large enough for your heel to slip through in the boots you are wearing. The leathers should be of superior quality, and the safety catches holding the leathers to the tree should always be open.

Do not use a saddle cloth unless necessary, and then it should be as plain and inconspicuous as possible. The saddle cloth must, of course, be perfectly clean.

Remember that in hunting your weight is on the horse much longer than in showing, and more care is required to avoid sore backs. On no account should you use rubber pads on your stirrups as they are most dangerous.

There are three conventions regarding a hunting bridle. First, reins and cheek pieces are attached to the bit by sewing (or by a stud attachment, which gives the appearance of sewing), never by buckles. Second, the brow band is always plain, of the same color as the rest of the bridle, never cordovan, patent leather or colored. Third, the bridle always has a noseband.

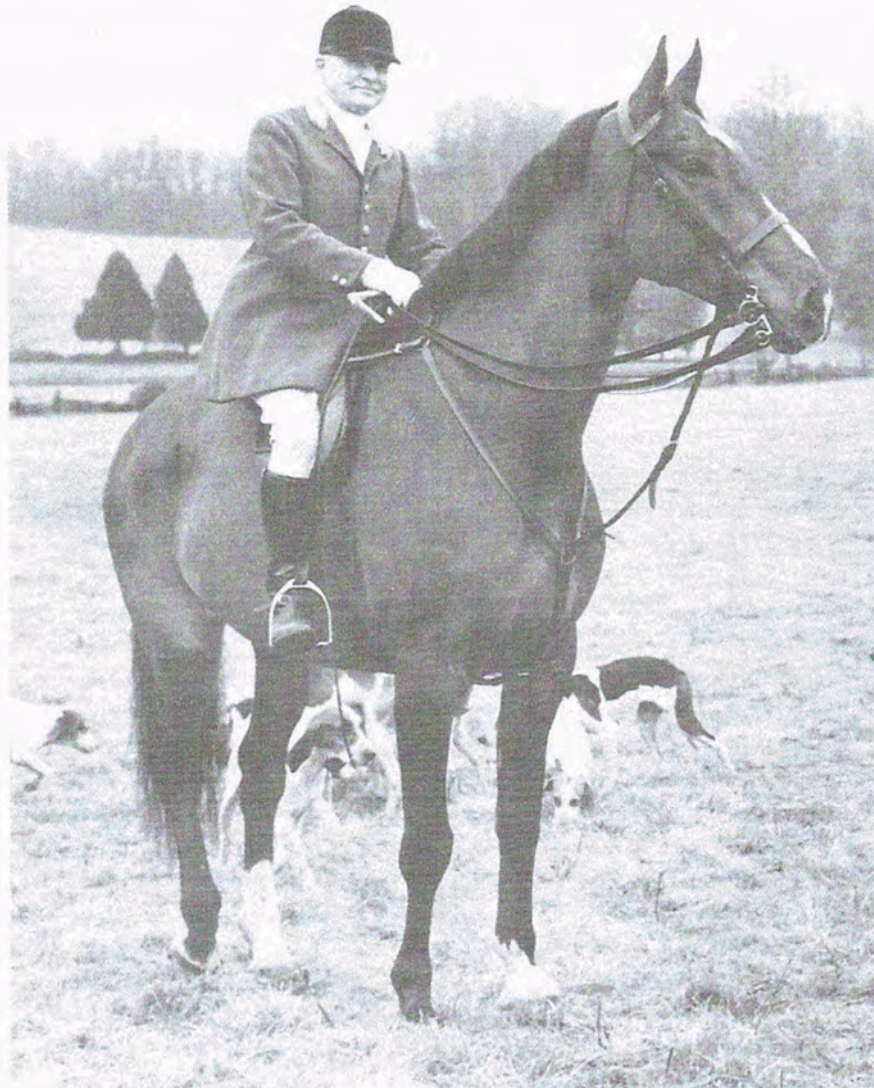
Other than these conventions, use your common sense. If your horse goes well in the hunting field in a snaffle alone, don't clutter up his mouth with anything else. If, to control him, you need equipment as complicated as the working end of a steam shovel, by all means tie it on.

It is unfortunate that horse shows have been permitted to give the impression that certain accessories are, by convention or fashion, part of proper hunting tack. The following are optional, to be used if *needed*, and left at home otherwise.

(1) Martingales are, of course, necessary on some horses, highly desirable on others. If not required, they should not be used, as they are a definite danger to horse and rider.

The running martingale can be most dangerous, and some hunts frown on its use. The standing martingale, *properly adjusted*, is considerably less dangerous, and the Irish martingale is practically as safe as no martingale at all.

(2) Breastplates are for use on herring-gutted horses to keep the saddle from slipping back. They are also a potential hand hold to the very old, the very young, and the infirm



Wilbur Ross Hubbard embarked upon his 57th year of sport with his Kent County (Maryland) Hounds in 1987.

or slightly disabled, but a mane just long enough to get a grip on is a much more secure hold for this purpose.

(3) Sandwich cases or flasks (never both) may be carried if you expect to be in the saddle longer than your tummy will go without a snack. If you have to carry either flask or sandwich in your pocket, let it be the sandwich, which (we hope) is softer than the flask in case you fall on it. Flask or wire cutters, if carried at all, should go on the saddle.

Again, let me emphasize the importance of condition and cleanliness of all your tack. Inspect each time you take it off, inspect while cleaning, and inspect before you put it on. How do you know what that mouse was chewing on last night? It might have been the billet of your saddle.

CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT

Proper hunting attire is rigidly conventional for two reasons. In the first place, over the years that people have been hunting, a form of clothing has been developed that comes closest to the most practical under the average conditions of weather and terrain encountered in the hunting field. In the second place, some of the pleasure derived by those who hunt, especially those of us who are older, and much of the pleasure derived by those who watch (and that includes many farmers and farmers' families) comes from the feeling of tradition, and from the spectacle of people properly and conventionally dressed for the event. You could play the World Series with both teams in slacks and polo shirts, but neither the teams nor the fans would enjoy it quite as much.

Correct hunting attire costs money, and some hunts are much less conventional about what is expected of the field than others. Also certain local customs have developed. Before the novice purchases any clothes just for hunting, I would strongly recommend that he consult with an experienced hunting person who is acquainted with what is expected of a newcomer to that particular hunt.

Remember, however, that like your tack, your clothing, however informal, must be well fitting, workmanlike, and spotlessly clean and neat.

A hard hat should always be worn. If you have passed early childhood, never wear a hunting cap without being *sure* that the MFH approves. The cap is a symbol of authority, to be worn only by the staff and other persons singled out by the MFH. The cap has the advantage that it is a better protection against superficial scalp wounds, and does not cause the wind to interfere with your hearing. Your hat should never be worn on the back of your head, or cocked to one side, but squarely on, and well down over the forehead.

While on the subject of hats, a word to the ladies on the subject of hair. Unless very close-cut, your hair should be done up in a tight and inconspicuous do of some sort that will keep it out of trouble; once done up, it should be imprisoned in a hair net or other inconspicuous device to keep it that way. Your locks may be your crowning glory at other times, but nothing looks worse on a woman in the hunting field than loose, flowing tresses.

Let us hope that you are able to make your first appearance with hounds during the cubbing season. At this time, the proper dress is what is known as "ratcatcher."

Remember that, especially during cubbing, many hunts are far more flexible as to dress than indicated below. The following I believe to be correct anywhere in the United States.

Coat: Brown or gray tweed or white linen (salt sack) cut as a short riding coat (no belt or pleats), cut in center rear to avoid bunching up on saddle.

Breeches: Tan, buff, or brown, of Bedford cord or whipcord; should have buttons at knee, not laces. They must fit well, so unless you are one in a million, they should be made to order.

Boots: Black or brown plain, without tops or lacings. (Brown worn only for cubbing, so unless you already own brown, black is more economical.)

Hat: Black or brown (the latter not acceptable except for cubbing) hunting bowler. (See Foreword p. 2) It must be reinforced, and should fit well enough to remain securely

The Elkridge-Harford (Maryland) Hunt annually meets at St. James Church on Thanksgiving Day.



on your head without undue discomfort. A hat that falls off when trouble begins is useless, as is an ordinary bowler. A hat cord, although not strictly necessary, is most useful. If worn, it should be attached to a ring sewn inside the coat collar, a little to one side.

Shirt: Soft, with necktie or white or colored stock. (Colors come and go, white is always correct. Colors never worn except in cubbing.) The stock whenever worn should be fastened with a *plain* gold safety pin.

Gloves: Optional, if used should be white string, brown leather, or yellow chamois.

Spurs: Optional, if worn should be blunt, not rowelled, and have the single straps going all the way around the instep. Strap should match boots in color. If you wear spurs regularly, you will get used to not bothering your horse with them unless necessary, and you will not get in the deplorable habit of using your hunting whip when your horse needs waking up.

Hunting Whip: Crop with thong and lash should be carried. (Use a thong short enough so that horse cannot step on it if carried in normal manner.)

Beginning with the opening meet, masters prefer that their fields dress more formally than in cubbing. Again, the degree of formality in dress that is necessary to avoid comment varies considerably with different hunts. However, I believe that in most cases the novice would be comfortable in the following:

White stock, canary waistcoat, tan breeches, black boots without tops, spurs (black straps), black or oxford gray short riding coat with plain black buttons, black hunting bowler.

Gentlemen have a more formal costume, which is correct on any occasion until they have received the right to wear the colors and hunt button. It is as follows:

White stock, canary waistcoat, white breeches of cord or cavalry twill, black boots with brown tops and white boot garters, spurs (black straps), black melton frock coat, cut with slightly rounded fronts on skirts, no outside pockets (except whistle pocket), and reinforced hunting top hat. The coat should have either four or five plain large black buttons in front, two large ones behind, and two or three small ones on each cuff. Brass hunt buttons ordinarily are never worn with a black coat.

As a mark of distinction, regular followers and supporters may be given the right by the master to wear the hunt button, which means that the buttons on their coat and waistcoat will bear the hunt insignia. In the United States (not generally in England) those wearing this hunt button usually also wear the colors of the hunt on their coat collars.

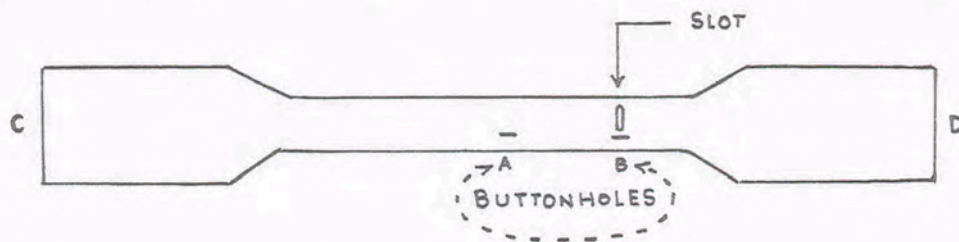
Note that ladies, whether or not they receive the button, do not (unless an MFH) wear scarlet, nor do they wear brass buttons on their coats.

When ladies receive the button, they continue in the same uniform, but wear the distinctive hunt colors on their collar, and may wear brass hunt buttons on the waistcoats, and in the back of their hats as an attachment for the cord. In some hunts they may wear on their coats the black button with the hunt insignia in white.

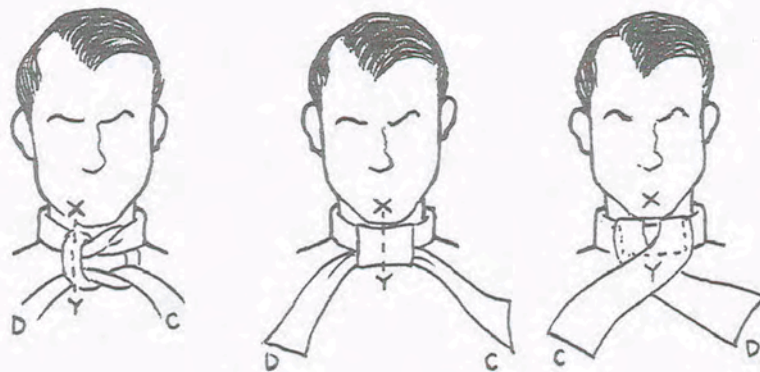
Gentlemen with the button turn out dressed as the staff, except that the cap is replaced by a hunting top hat, and the skirts of their coats are rounded in front (not square).

The easiest way to learn to tie a stock is to get an old hand to show you. Failing that, pay *strict* attention to the following:

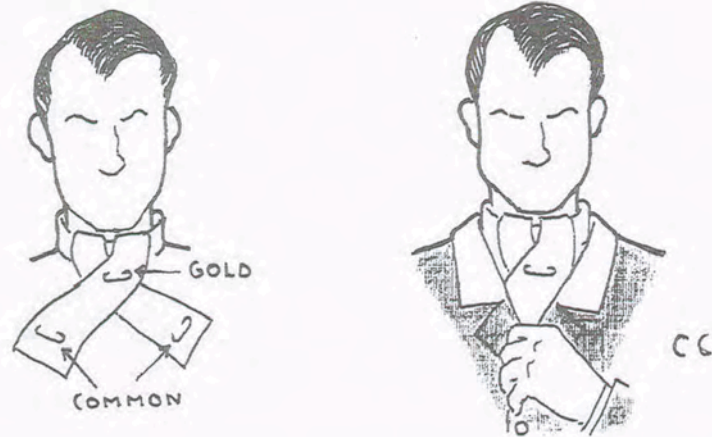
- (1) Procure a *plain* gold safety pin between 2½ and 3½ inches long.
- (2) Procure at least four (two are spares) plain safety pins three-quarters to 1¼ inches long.
- (3) Unless your shirt has buttons on the collar, front and rear, procure at least three (one is a spare) collar buttons (the longer type, designed for the front collar of a man's dress shirt is necessary in front and easier in the rear).
- (4) Take *extreme measures* to see that no one borrows any of the above while your back is turned.
- (5) Procure a stock, preferably of the type sketched below. Note that the distance from button hole A to button hole B must be one-half the distance around your neck.



- (6) Put collar buttons in shirt, put on and button shirt, and place all safety pins where you can reach them as you stand in front of a mirror.
- (7) Put buttonhole A over front collar button (making sure the label that the stockmaker insists on putting on is inside where it will not show), and buttonhole B on back collar button.
- (8) Draw end C through slit and carry right around to front.
- (9) Bring end D to the front.
- (10) Tie a square knot (see a Boy Scout Handbook) in ends, very *loosely*.
- (11) Unfold outside vertical portion of knot (x-y) to its full width, centering it.



(12) Flatten, straighten, and otherwise adjust the portion of the ends which come out from under x-y until they can be brought up and folded over, THUS. . . and pin securely as shown.



Note that the two common safety pins are low enough to be hidden by your vest later. Note also that the gold safety pin *must* go through portion x-y as well as the ends. This pin is the mainstay of the whole operation. Get it through as much of the knot as you can.

There are stocks on the market that are easier to tie than this, *and they look it*. There are also stocks on the market that look better and are slightly harder to tie, although easier to launder and much more long lasting.

THE DAY BEFORE

As I will mention later, it is not only bad form, but bad judgment to be late at a meet. If, as you naturally will, you wish to arrive in good time and prepared to enjoy the day, there are certain things that have to be done the day before.

Your horse must be checked for condition. He will naturally have been given some slow work, and lameness or sickness should then be apparent, but do not forget, when grooming him, to check legs and feet carefully, with emphasis on his shoeing.

If you cannot hack to the meet, you will rely on a horse van or trailer. Remember that a vehicle cared for by a horseman is rather apt to be in the same condition as a horse cared for by a mechanic. If gas, oil, tires, battery or anything else needs attention, you are apt to have a hard time routing out the local service man at 3:30 or 4:00 a.m. Even if the meet is later, and said man is on the job, you won't have time for him to work. If you use private transportation, see that it is checked the day before.

Your tack and clothing should be carefully checked for condition and cleanliness. When you are half-dressed is no time to find a loose button. When your horse is half tacked up is no time to find a weakened strap or a cracked stirrup iron.

Make sure that *every item* is where you can find it early in the morning, and take steps to see that children or dogs do not hide anything from you overnight. It takes longer to find a misplaced collar button than to find a stray horse. Safety pins are the worst—everyone borrows them.

Sit down and plan your time for the morning. Decide whether to hack or van. Hack if possible, but don't go across country where you may disturb foxes or livestock. Stick to the roads.

If you van, find a spot five or 10 minutes hacking time from the meet where there is room to unload and park without interfering with traffic or blocking someone's driveway, and figure the time necessary to load and unload as well as time on the road in van and hacking.

Six miles an hour is a good guess for your hacking speed, slower if the distance is short, as you will naturally walk the first mile. Add the time necessary to feed and groom, to dress carefully, have a leisurely breakfast, and get to the stable. Add time to saddle. Count on being at the meet a few minutes *before* the announced time, and set your alarm clock accordingly. Then, when it rings, *GET UP!*



Chapter



HOUNDS

If we had no hounds, obviously we could have no hunting. It is fun of course to ride across country with pleasant companions, having a fast burst now and then and pausing to enjoy the scenery as the spirit moves one. Paper chases are fun, and I believe that a paper chase was the event that provided the idea of foxhunting to the group that started the Genesee Valley Hunt.

However, those who hunt purely to ride, those who never learn the fascination of watching the work of hounds in unraveling the intricate line of the fox, miss most of the pleasure. Even those whose enjoyment of hounds is confined to the spine-tingling thrill of listening to their cry, get great added pleasure from their presence, an added pleasure that can be multiplied indefinitely by an intelligent interest in what they are and what they are doing.

In speaking of hounds, there are certain ways of speech that distinguish those who know from "them what don't." This is so of sport generally—no sailor would speak of a mast as a pole, although it is one.

Hounds are hounds, *not dogs*. Hounds are for convenience counted in couples regardless of sex (or friendship). A male hound is known as a dog hound or dog. A dog that is not a hound is known as a cur dog, even if his pedigree goes back to 900 A.D. or further. Likewise a female hound, no matter how exemplary, is known as a bitch.

A hound has a stern instead of a tail. A hound may wag his stern only in greeting. If he moves it as a signal of excitement when striking a line, or while working an old line, he "feathers." When hunting, a hound never "barks"—he "opens," "gives tongue," "throws his tongue," or "speaks."

As the size of the glossary shows, there are many other specialized hunting terms that may be new to you. However the ones above mentioned seem to cause most humiliation to beginners.

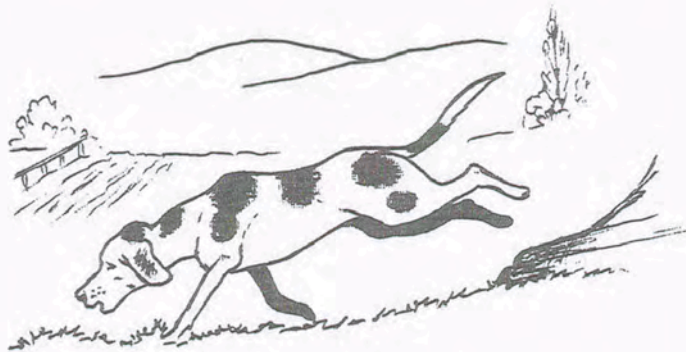
I do not know how long hounds have been bred as hounds. If we consider the fact that man has hunted for a living for more centuries than he has done anything else, it seems reasonable to suppose that dogs have been bred as hounds ever since man's first experiments in selective breeding.

We know that hounds were bred for sport in the time of the Assyrians. We know that

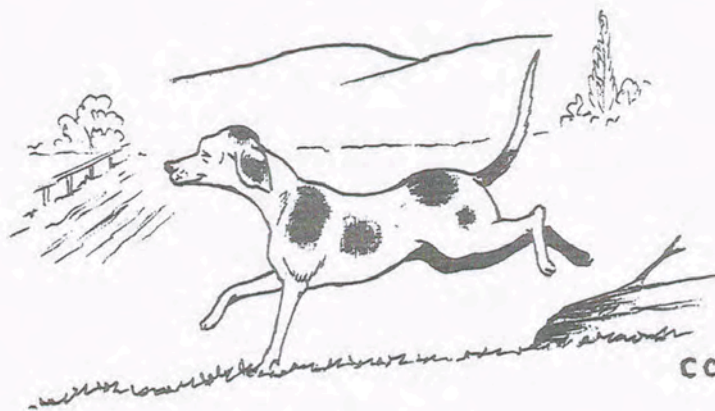
hounds were bred for stag hunting in the eighth century by the French nobility. We are fairly sure that these hounds were imported into England by the French after the Conquest in 1066, and we believe that these stag hounds were the foundation stock of the hounds that were used in England to hunt stag and later fox. By the end of the 17th century foxhunting had eclipsed stag hunting in England, and foxhounds have been bred as foxhounds ever since.

Of this you may be sure. The pack that you see at the meet is the result of selective breeding as hounds for over 3,000 years, and as foxhounds for over 300.

Fashions change, and the ideas of individual breeders are affected by the conditions of climate and terrain with which they have to contend. For instance, the hounds brought from England to America in colonial times were bred for many years primarily for cry, nose and independence. Foxhounds are still bred for nose (the ability to detect and interpret the scent of a fox), cry (volume and quality of voice while giving tongue), drive (the urge to get forward on the line), stamina, and speed.



The working hound.



The loafing hound.

*Huntsman Tommy
G. Haney blows
a fox to ground
with the Mooreland
(Alabama) Hunt.*



Stamina and speed both depend, of course, largely on conformation, although speed beyond the ability of the hound's nose to guide him is largely wasted. Too much speed in some hunting countries also may mean that the riders cannot keep up with hounds on a good scenting day.

As the breeding of the pack is the result of the efforts of the master and his predecessors from time immemorial, its condition and training are the result of the more recent efforts of the master and his staff in field and kennels.

Every year puppies are whelped (born), preferably in the spring. They are weaned at about five weeks, and shortly thereafter must start the series of vaccinations that local experience has proved necessary.

In most hunts they are then put "out to walk." This means they are assigned by ones and twos to local residents who take over their early care and training, preferably on a farm, for their first summer and fall. At walk they learn their names, not to hunt chickens, sheep, pigs, cows, goats and cats. They also learn that children will not injure them seriously, and they learn (perhaps) to avoid being stepped on by cows, horses, tractors and automobiles. They run at large a good deal of the time, and naturally learn to use their noses on all kinds of game, possibly including foxes.

When they come in from walk, usually at the conclusion of the hunting season when the kennels staff has more time, their pack discipline must begin. They learn to come when called by name; to submit to the collar, and to go coupled to another hound. At walking exercise in couples they learn, from the older hound they are first coupled to, the meaning of the various signals and commands given by the huntsman, and they learn that they must stay together as a pack, and not go gaily off as the spirit moves them.

This training is continued at horse exercise through the summer, during which time the slow work turns fat to muscle. As training progresses, young hounds are taken off the old ones and coupled to each other, and gradually the day approaches when they can be trusted on their own. As their training progresses their condition also becomes harder. The hours on the road are longer, or some days faster.

Sooner or later hounds are fit, the young 'uns are trained (?) to pack discipline, and the state of the crops in the area permits hunting. Then the word goes out to the staff and the cubhunting season begins.

All through the season the young hounds are watched in their work, the outstanding ones are noted, pedigrees are studied and sooner or later a stallion hound or a brood bitch is picked out and, another year, another generation of puppies starts the sequence of being fed, doctored, trained, exercised, rewarded, punished, praised, rated, disciplined and loved, in kennels and at walk, in the exercise yard, on the road, and finally in the field that is the lot of all proper hounds in perpetuity.

Chapter



ORGANIZATION IN THE FIELD

The actual organization of a foxhunt in the field is subject to considerable variation between hunts, due to conditions such as the resources available to pay professionals, the availability of competent amateur help, and the desires of the MFH.

I will describe the various jobs that are to be done and the titles of the people who do them, although in most hunts some of the jobs are combined. For instance, the master usually performs the duties of either the huntsman or the field master in addition to his own. The master and secretary are almost always amateur. The huntsman, if not the MFH, may be amateur or professional. The whippers-in may be amateur or professional. The kennel huntsman and kennelman are usually professional.

The master, or MFH, is in overall command of the hunt, and his word is final in field and in kennels. He decides when and where hounds will meet, what coverts are to be drawn, and when hounds will go home. He is responsible that hounds show the best possible sport under existing conditions, and he is responsible that the hounds, the staff, and the field neither damage nor annoy the landowners who make the sport possible. He is the boss and, during his term of office, there is no higher appeal. In many hunts, the duties of the master are divided between two joint-masters.

The huntsman controls the hounds, indicating to them by signals where he wishes them to draw for a fox, and is responsible that, when found, a fox is well hunted. He attempts to be sure that hounds work together as a pack by encouraging the tail hounds and steadying the lead hounds, and, in case of a check, must be prepared to assist hounds to recover the line by use of a cast if necessary. His technical decisions must be quickly made, and staff and field must abide by them or utter chaos will ensue.

If the MFH acts also as huntsman, he may employ a kennel huntsman, who is responsible for the care of hounds in kennels. If the master (or huntsman if amateur) can spare time for detailed supervision of the kennel work, he probably will have a kennelman directly under him, who does the work under his close supervision.

The huntsman is assisted in the control of hounds by one or more whippers-in, frequently, but improperly referred to as "whips." A whipper-in assists the huntsman in controlling hounds by turning them back to the huntsman, or by encouraging them forward to him as necessary. He is also used by the huntsman as a scout to get timely

notice of the movement of a fox (or for that matter, riot). No one except the huntsman gives orders to whippers-in. No one except by request of the huntsman or MFH should accompany them or attempt to assist them.

The field, consisting of the mounted followers, is controlled by a field master who may, and usually does, ride at the head of it. He is responsible that the field does not interfere with hounds in their work and also that the field avoids damage to landowners.

The secretary assists the field master in his job by observing and reporting the behavior of the field, particularly as it affects the landowners. The secretary will also observe visitors in the field and will be attempting to put together the faces he sees with the names on his list of contributors.

Do not fail to make yourself known to the secretary. It is not considered necessary to present your calling card. Your bank will provide you with a printed slip of paper, which, properly filled out and signed, will be a perfectly acceptable substitute.

The Genesee Valley (New York) Hunt moves off to draw a covert. W. Austin Wadsworth, MFH and huntsman, is on the left and George Walter, professional whipper-in, on the right.



Chapter



THE FOX

The fox, both red and gray varieties, is a small, dog-like animal whose range includes the northern and eastern portions of North America. Although normally plentiful, the fox is apparently subject to the general rule that the population density of any wild animal will in cycles gradually increase to a peak, and then, more rapidly, decline to a minimum, due to disease, limitation of the food supply, weather conditions, or a combination.

Individually, the fox ranges for food over an area of several square miles, but normally he has a specific small area that he considers his home. He hunts mostly at night and sleeps by day. He may sleep in an earth (usually a remodeled woodchuck hole), but usually prefers to lie out in grass, dead leaves, or just on the ground, preferably on the sunny side of a bank or fallen tree. He eats anything that comes his way from beetles to roosters (and is a great fellow to clean up any carrion that may be lying around), but his principal diet is field mice.

As the fox hunts by scent for a living, he is well aware of the problems connected with it. Being quite intelligent, he makes use of this knowledge to throw hounds off his trail.

I am convinced that the fox also is a sportsman and has a sense of humor, as I can see no other reason for a fox to stay above ground and permit himself to be hunted in a country so full of holes as my own.

No man could list all the fox's stratagems to throw hounds off his trail, but the most common are the sudden turn after a straight run, and running on a surface that he knows will not hold scent, such as a road or cart track, a railroad rail or fence rail, or even a fallen tree trunk, or a manured field. He loves to run through a flock of sheep or





Red Fox.

Gray Fox.



a herd of cows or pigs, and will often follow a deer for a while, hoping that hounds will stay on the deer line when he turns off it.

When hunted, a good fox in a sporting mood will often make a point of up to 15 miles before seeking safety in an earth. A fox that is sick, tired, full of food or lazy will sometimes go to ground in as many yards. I have seen such a fox, having been dug out and given a good start, then make a point of 12 miles in an absolutely straight line, crossing a winding river four times before going to ground again. He was left alone that time, in the hope that he would do it again another day, which he did.



A view.

Chapter



THE HUNTING DAY

Before describing the technique employed by the formal, mounted foxhunts of Great Britain, the United States, and Canada, I wish to make myself clear on one point. It is frankly (although not frequently) admitted that the method herein described is *not* an economically efficient method of killing foxes. If that was our purpose, we could do it much more cheaply and easily by use of poison and traps, but it is not.

We hunt foxes with hounds and follow hounds on horseback because it is fun, and a good, healthy sport. Many otherwise intelligent people have been hunting foxes for fun for centuries, and the consensus of their recorded opinion is that it is most fun, over the long period, when done in the way that I am attempting to describe. Now then!

THE MEET

Let us suppose that all the matters mentioned in Chapter I have been seen to, and that you and your horse, shining clean and neatly clothed to fit the occasion, are approaching the meet about five minutes early. Your van, if any, has been parked clear of the paved or traveled part of the highway. (If you leave the ramp sticking out on the road, the users thereof will scream to the police, then the police will scream at the master. Guess who gets it next.)

Keep your eyes and ears open, your voice down, and your mouth usually shut. Thus you will be able to locate and placate the secretary (if this has not already been done) and pay your respects to the master, if he comes your way. Conversation with him should be limited at this time to a "Good morning, master," accompanied by tipping the hat, if a gentleman, or a nod if a lady.

Keep your horse away from the heels of other horses, and do not aim his heels at them. You will find that the field is collected, *but not crowded*, in one area, and are greeting each other and chattering in what we hope are low tones. Join them. They probably know from experience which area the huntsman would like to have clear for hounds. Keep at least 10 yards away from hounds at all times, much further when they are at work.

Hounds will arrive at the meet before the announced time. If they are about to pass



The Kenada (Texas) Fox Hounds at a meet. On the left is William J. Garvey III; Bob Shewman, whipper-in, is on the right.

you, pull your horse into the ditch, and turn him so that his heels are aimed toward the fence, with his head facing hounds. Let the thong of your hunting whip hang down toward hounds so that they will keep away from you.

If your horse kicks a hound, even if you are lucky and no permanent damage is done, all concerned will be put into such a state of trauma that the chances of sport will be reduced for hours.

A cheerful "good morning" to the huntsman as he goes past will give him pleasure. Your horse's heels pointed well away from his darlings will give him peace of mind.

During the time allowed for "difference in watches" (no one ever admits that anyone *could* be late at a meet) the master and huntsman confirm or alter their previous plans for the day's draw, the whippers-in keep a close eye on young hounds for any tendency to stray off and investigate on their own.

The improvident noisily unload horses and inquire vaguely if anyone has a spare bridle, and people who should know better drive cars and horse vans back and forth, and park them in the way of everyone else, including the farmer's milk truck.

The master and huntsman look at their watches for the 17th time, and finally the master nods to the huntsman. The eyes of the latter meet those of the first whipper-in, who then attempts, with a politely spoken, though not necessarily politely meant, "Hounds, please," to clear the way through the wreckage.

The huntsman with his hounds around him follows the first whipper-in, the second whipper-in follows the pack, and the MFH rides where he pleases.

If the field is small, the field master may permit the field to follow as close as 10 yards behind the second whipper-in, since a small field can stop easily without jamming up, but if the field is large he will follow at a much greater distance, so that a hound that

stops to relieve himself will have time to accomplish his mission without getting behind a group of horses. Never, if you can possibly avoid it, get between a hound and the huntsman.

HOUNDS IN COVERT

As they approach the first covert, hounds will be kept under the close control of the huntsman, so that they may be put into covert as a pack, and will not be too spread out if a fox is found. Also, the huntsman will probably wish to send a whipper-in (don't follow him!) to the far side of the covert to view away a fox. (In countries where deer abound, there is an added reason for this.) The second whipper-in will stay with the huntsman.

The MFH goes where he pleases, and the field master will hold the field in the position that he believes will give them the best opportunity to enjoy the sport without interfering with it. Pity the field master. If he errs on one side, sport is spoiled; if he errs in the other direction, the field misses the sport. Pity him, I say, and cooperate with him wholeheartedly.



Never get between a hound and the huntsman!



When the huntsman has allowed time for the whipper-in to get to his point, he signals his hounds into covert with a movement of his horse, a wave of his hand, and a few cheerful calls.

In this booklet no attempt will be made to reproduce hound language in writing. In the first place it never looks the way it sounds, and in the second place, huntsmen have individual differences in the actual words used. You will notice, however, that any good huntsman uses usually the same words, and *always* the same intonation under the same circumstance. It is more by the tones of his voice than by the words used that the huntsman conveys to his hounds his censure, caution, question, encouragement, or thrill. After you have hunted long enough with a particular huntsman, you will learn to recognize his system of voice and horn signals, which will greatly increase your understanding and pleasure.

When hounds are in covert, the huntsman will place himself so as to best influence their movements in drawing for a fox. He attempts to have them spread out enough so that all the covert is drawn, without being so spread out that they cannot quickly get together when a fox is found.

If the covert is a large one, he will probably follow them in, and go slowly through it, combing it as it were with his hounds for a fox. If it is a small one, he may either wait in place or go around the edge as hounds go through.

Some huntsmen prefer to have the field wait outside coverts while they are being drawn, some prefer that the field be behind them where its location can be known. If there is a field master, you should, of course, remain with him; if not, a stranger should rely on observation of the more knowledgeable members of the field.

During the draw, the huntsman will keep his location known to his hounds by his "questing" voice, and an occasional short note on the horn, making just enough noise to keep hounds, staff, and field aware of his location and movements.

Never get "ahead of the draw." Stay behind the huntsman so as to give him room to turn. If he turns and comes back toward you, *stand still!* If he wishes to pass you on a narrow trail, get off it quickly and make your horse face the trail, with his heels away from and the thong of your hunting whip toward any hounds that may be with the huntsman.

Soon, we hope, a hound will find a fox. If you are listening, you will hear him speak, and sense the electric thrill that stops in their tracks all who hear it. Momentarily all movement ceases, while hounds, huntsman, and staff evaluate the position and the reliability of the report.

The other hounds flock to confirm the find, and the huntsman, who recognized the voice of the hound that first spoke, quickly decides whether to cheer the other hounds on or to await a more reliable witness. Soon (we hope), another hound honors, and the

hunter, satisfied, cheers hounds together (a different, very distinctive call, in a very encouraging tone) and, if he can be near the line, gives a series of short sharp blasts, called "doubling the horn," to call hounds together.

The fox, meanwhile, has reached one of three possible decisions. He may put an immediate end to the sport by going to ground; he may trust to his knowledge of his home covert to throw hounds off the trail by doubling and twisting about, running fence rails, stream beds, and old tree trunks; or he may trust to his superior early speed and leave at once for some distant refuge.

If, as he usually does, he chooses the second, he soon finds that a pack of hounds, spread out and working as a team, can go past many of his carefully prepared breaks in the line without pause, and that the covert is really not a safe place to stay after all.

While the fox is ringing about the covert, the whippers-in are probably posted at spots where they can view the fox if he leaves. The field, if the field master is clever and lucky, are held at some location where they can hear what is going on and be in a fair position if the fox goes away.

The huntsman is in a quandary. He must be near enough to his lead hounds to be able to get the pack together by cheering the tail hounds to them, but not so tied up in a thick place that he will be all day getting out if the fox goes away.

If the huntsman does not make noise enough, hounds that were too far away when



Part of the Hillsboro Cedar Knob Hounds pack in Tennessee with huntsman John Gray.

the fox was found may be left out entirely; if he makes too much, hounds become excited, their heads come up, they race past a turn in the line, and a check is the result.

Also it is impossible for a man on horseback to go through thick covert at the speed of hounds when running on a good scent. He must therefore keep to the rides, and cut corners as much as he dares.

During the hunt in covert, a fox (*but not necessarily the hunted fox*) is often viewed across a ride. If hounds are on his line and well together, there is nothing to be gained by trying to assist them. A "halloa" at this time will do no good, and may get hounds' heads up and cause a check.

If you see a fox, keep still as long as hounds are hunting. If hounds check, get word to the huntsman or the nearest member of the staff with as little noise as possible. The universal signal that a fox has been viewed is to stand still, as nearly on his line as possible, your horse facing in the direction taken by the fox, and to hold your hat in the air.

Be sure to memorize exactly where the fox went, and where you last saw him. Trees in a wood have a habit of looking alike, so be sure before you move or look away, that you can find and describe the exact spot again. If the huntsman is near you, but out of sight, go to him and tell him what you have seen, and be prepared to show him where the fox crossed the ride and *exactly* where you last saw him.

If you do not know where the huntsman is, or cannot possibly get to him, shout "tally-ho over" two or three times, to be sure the huntsman hears you. Do not attempt a "view halloa," which may bring some of the hounds, but let the huntsman bring up the pack as a unit.

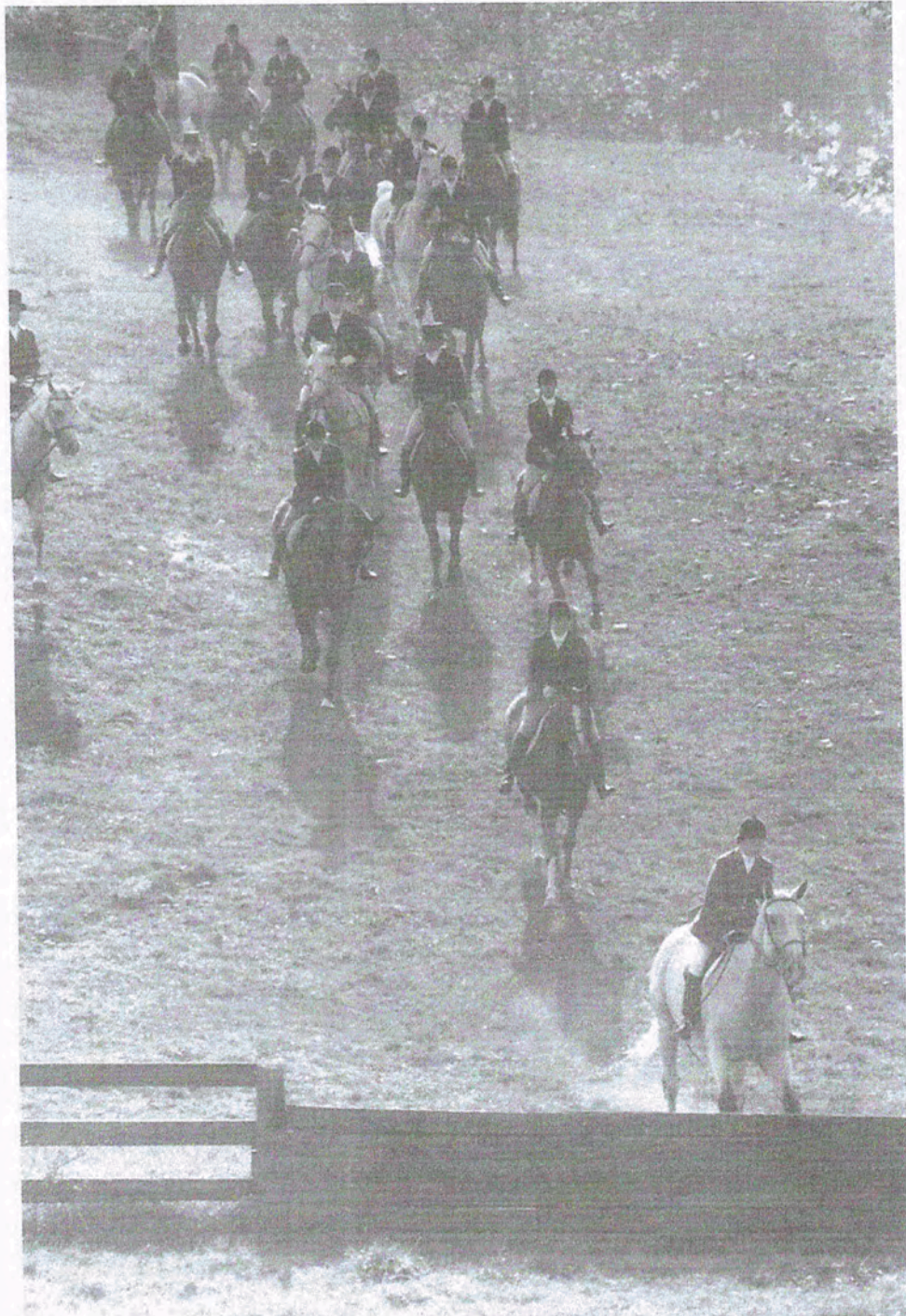
Let me repeat, if hounds are hunting, keep quiet although the raised hat is always a welcome signal to the staff. Remember, the huntsman must decide whether your fox is the hunted fox, and if so, whether to lift hounds or let them work it out. His decision is final.

Perhaps during the hunt in covert, Mr. Fox will locate deer or other riot. He will naturally run past it in the hope that the resulting confusion will cause a check. If you see a deer, look closely to be sure a fox is not following it. If not, stand on its line, *facing backward*, and shout "ware deer" loudly and clearly, but *without excitement*. Let the members of the field who know the huntsman take any further action, if desired. If fox and deer are running together, quietly get word to the nearest staff member and let him decide what action to take.

If the huntsman believes that hounds are running riot, he will blow a long, even, and slightly sour note on his horn, and the whippers-in will place themselves between the hounds and the riot, and take measures to stop them by use of voice and thong. This is the "censure" voice, and a quick recognition of it will save you false starts and consequent embarrassment.

GONE AWAY

Let us hope, however, that hounds stick to their fox, working out the twists and turns in his line, and after one or two circles around the covert, persuade him that it is too hot



Margaret Gardner (foreground), Jt.-MFH of the Middleburg (Virginia) Hunt, serves the vital role of field master.

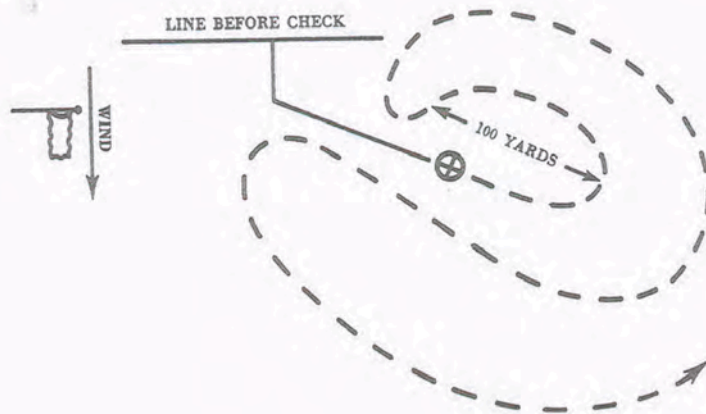
to hold him. Off he goes, like a streak across the first field, and a whipper-in, posted in a likely spot, sees him go. Up goes the whipper-in's cap, he canters to the line and, after he is sure that he has seen the hunted fox, he gives the thrilling, high pitched gone away call that we have waited to hear.

With a decent bit of luck, the huntsman can be on the spot at about the time hounds have reached it, and the very distinctive gone away note on the horn, usually a series of short and long blasts — — . . —, — . . —, — — . . —, will bring any tail hounds out of covert on the dead run, and will warn the field that the time for talking is over and the fun has begun.

Now be careful. A fox will frequently turn sharp after the first or second field. Hounds, glad to be in the open, are racing on, excitement is high, and they often will overrun well into the next field, hoping that the fox has made only a slight change in direction. Your horse is fresh and highly excited. Many a fox has turned sharp at a fence row, proceeded a few hundred feet, and sat watching in obvious amusement while the field, their eyes on the next jump and not listening for the faltering of the cry as hounds overran, have galloped across and completely obliterated his line, and then formed a perfect barricade against hounds and huntsman in their attempts to cast.

Remember also that hounds are trained to react to movements of the huntsman's horse, and that movements of other horses distract them, so stand still at a check, and watch what the huntsman does. Normally, he will stand still, and watch his hounds while they make their own cast, and only interfere after they have definitely failed. He then picks them up (to pick up hounds is to get their attention and regain control of them) as quietly as possible, and makes his cast.

There is a standard cast that, in the opinion of many huntsmen, will recover the line in the least time on the average over a great many checks. This cast is diagrammed below, and in my opinion, no huntsman should ever cast hounds without first considering its merits.



One problem is that the huntsman is almost sure to have some idea—whether guess, estimate or virtual certainty—as to where the fox has gone, and he must balance his degree of certainty in the particular case against the advantages of the “patent cast” under average conditions. Another is that some obstacles (such as a wire fence) may interfere with the speedy completion of the cast in the normal manner. Any cast must be made at a slow pace to avoid getting hounds’ heads up.

Let us hope that the cast, whether standard or tailor-made to fit the circumstances, is successful, and that hounds hit off the line. The huntsman gives a cheer and doubles his horn to collect any wide-ranging hounds and to warn the field, who should be *standing still* behind where hounds checked instead of following the huntsman about and interfering with his cast.

Off hounds go, with a grand cry, perhaps a little slower this time. They have steadied, and the fox has gained a few moments at the check. If the country permits you to take your own line (in this age of wire fencing you will be exceptionally lucky if you do not have to play follow the leader), you should stay *at least* 100 yards behind hounds, and a little on the downwind side.

Under no circumstances ride the line taken by fox and hounds. If hounds check and cast back along the line, the scent left by your horse will not help them.

Gone Away with the Green Spring Valley (Maryland) Hounds.



Look to the field master; be prepared to stop on his signal, and be sure that you do not get closer to hounds than he does.

Watch hounds and listen to their cry. If hounds falter, stop at once. If they turn toward you, slow down or stop to avoid approaching them. If hounds check, stop instantly and stand still until they hit it off again.

When approaching a fence, make sure hounds have not turned short in the next field, and do not commit your horse to the jump until you see and hear hounds streaming on well ahead.

If you are in wrong, it is no excuse that you are following someone else unless it is the field master. The staff and master ride where they must to give you the best sport, and can do their work best alone. Other members of the field may not know where they are going, and may lead you into embarrassment.

If, as is mostly the case nowadays, the field must follow a line of made panels in wire fences, remember as you approach the jump that you must give other riders a sporting chance. Drop into your place in line well back from the jump, and do not cut in ahead of someone who is already committed.

Give the person in front "room to fall" to avoid the possibility of jumping on him while helpless. If your horse refuses, pull out and join the end of the waiting line.

Some panels are wide enough to jump double. This should be attempted only if you know that neither your horse or the other fellow's will swerve; in some hunts it is considered more polite to consult with your partner before attempting it. In any event, let him know what you intend to do. Do not ride into a jump on the other fellow's quarter, and do not force him to ride in on yours. Keep always on the alert for members of the staff, particularly whippers-in whose duties may have caused them to be behind at the start. They should be given the right-of-way, as they may be needed in front.

Perhaps it is as well to mention that, although the young and inexperienced may be excused for occasionally looking for big places to jump, those who make a habit of it are seldom with hounds at the end of the day. Old-timers are apt to consider them as mildly annoying exhibitionists.

ACCOUNTING FOR THE FOX

It is, of course, traditional in song and story to expect a kill at the end of a run. In the United States and Canada, in this day and age, in a country well provided with hollow trees, woodchuck holes, and such safe refuges, you will probably hunt a long time before you witness a kill, and then the chances are that the fox was guilty of a very grave miscalculation, which is not in accordance with the nature of foxes.

The chances are, however, that the run will end in a loss (may we be forgiven for mentioning the possibility), or by marking the fox to ground. In the latter case, the fox, having had enough, stops at one of the earths that he knows, and rests in safety while hounds scratch and bay at his front door.

You will notice the difference in the cry of hounds. The huntsman then dismounts and encourages hounds, prolonging the excitement as long as he can.

ON THE WAY HOME

When the huntsman is sure hounds know he is proud of them, he will look at his watch and glance at the master, who must decide whether to draw on or call it a day. The decision takes account of the condition of hounds and the staff horses (which may have gone twice as far as yours); the availability of country to draw, considering the plans for the next two or three hunts; and the time of day.

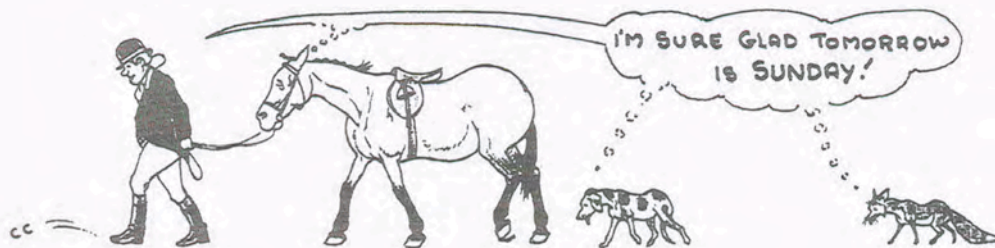
You may think it still early, but remember that it is no longer safe, as it was in the days before high speed motor traffic, to hunt right up to dark. The first years I hunted with my father, it was a frequent occurrence if hounds were on a line, to let them hunt through dusk to darkness, staying with them as long as possible, and then keeping track of their cry in the long extinct but never to be forgotten evening stillness of the pre-truck era.

When they ran to ground, we would get as close as we could, and my father would blow his horn. When he judged by ear that most of the hounds were on, we would jog home in the darkness, with never a thought that a motor car would come down the road and crash into the pack, or kill a stray hound coming home late. Those days are gone, and the master and huntsman must allow for this fact in deciding when to go home.

The huntsman will blow a long, slowly-wavering blast on his horn, which is the signal for the end of the day. If all hounds are on, he will then start at a slow jog back toward kennels. Thank him, and of course the master, as you bid them "good night," and if you wish to move faster than a hound jog, ask if you may precede them on the road, but do not keep crowding the pack from behind, and do not ride alongside the whipper-in. He has his work to do, and cannot do it and talk with you at the same time.

Common politeness also requires that you be on the alert to allow cars to pass you from behind. Remember that the farmer you hold up now may be the owner of the best covert in the country.

I do not consider it part of this work to comment on the speed at which you should return to your stable or your van, or to point out that a horseman must see to the comfort of his horse before his own.



Chapter



HUNTING ETIQUETTE

Good manners may be defined as habitual consideration for the rights and feelings of other people with whom we come in contact. Hunting etiquette may be defined as the rules by which good manners may be best expressed under conditions prevailing in the hunting field. No sportsman wishes to cause injury or offense, but without a thorough knowledge of hunting etiquette, one would need the wisdom of Solomon and the mental speed of a computer to avoid doing so unintentionally.

COURTESY TO LANDOWNERS

Major W. Austin Wadsworth, founder and first MFH (1876-1917) of the Genesee Valley Hunt, soon caused to be printed and distributed to his field a brief folder on hunting etiquette, which has been quoted by greater authorities than I. It has become known as The Hunt Bible.

"You have no business on a man's land but are there by his sufferance and he is entitled to every consideration. It is no excuse that you are in a hurry. It is much better for the hunt that you be left behind than that a farmer should be injured. If you take down a rail you should put it back. If you open a gate, you should shut it. If you break a fence or do any damage that you cannot repair, you should report it at once to the responsible officers of the hunt that it may be made good.

"Although you may feel convinced that it improves wheat to ride over it, the opinion is not diffused or popular, and the fact that some fool has gone ahead is no excuse whatsoever, but makes the matter worse. The spectacle of a lot of men following another's track across a wheat field and killing hopelessly the young plants, which the first had probably injured but slightly, is too conducive to profanity to be edifying in any community.

"You may think that the honest farmer deems it a privilege to leave his life of luxurious idleness and travel around half the night in the mud for horses that have got out, or spend days sorting sheep that have got mixed by your leaving his gates open or fences down. You are mistaken, he doesn't."

In addition to these points, there are others the importance of which later experience has emphasized.

Modern legume hay is much more sensitive than timothy, and high-speed farm

machinery (and the man who rides it) is much more sensitive to bumps. For this reason avoid new meadows, and avoid all meadows as far as possible when the ground is soft.

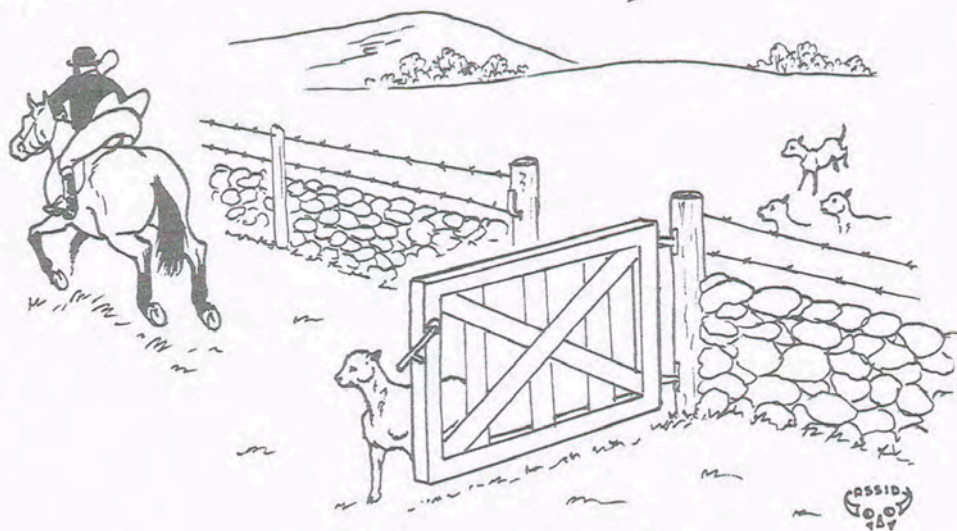
Livestock today is more frequently out to pasture in the hunting season. Detour *well* around pastured stock to avoid getting it running, and if you cannot detour around it, slow down to a walk. Pounds of milk or fat are lost when animals run.

Never gallop through a barnyard, but trot through, prepared to walk or stop if stock becomes excited. And while you are at the farmstead, be sure you *keep off the farmer's lawn*.

Do not jump fences unnecessarily. If your horse breaks a fence when hounds are running, or when there is no other way through, it is an accident (which of course must be reported), but if you jump a farmer's fences for fun or experience, it means to him that you are too lazy or too cheap to build a schooling course yourself, and the hunt and all hunting people are blamed for your thoughtlessness.

During my years as master, more farmers have complained about individuals hacking across their land on non-hunting days, or going to and from hunts, than about any other single discourtesy. *Hack on private property only with express permission from the owner*, and never jump his fences or disturb his stock while hacking. Avoid at all costs unharvested crops, including hay. Many crops, for example dry beans, are cut or pulled and left in windrows or small piles to dry before threshing. There is room to pass between these windrows or piles without damage, but do not let your horse touch one, as then the grain is shelled out on the ground and lost.

If you carry sandwiches or cigarettes in your pocket or sandwich case, the same receptacle will certainly provide room for the wrappings when empty. Do not make the farm look like Coney Island Beach on the morning after. Be careful when smoking, particularly during dry seasons.



If you open a gate, you should shut it.

I have treated the subject of courtesy to the farmer at some length. Remember that, in a hunting country, your actions while mounted reflect for good or for ill on the hunt. The hunt, which includes you, is the guest of the farmer, and no host is going to tolerate discourteous guests for long. Greet the farmer or his wife politely and pleasantly if you meet them.

THE FIELD AND THE STAFF

I quote again from The Hunt Bible:

"The MFH is a great and mystic personage to be lowly, meekly and reverently looked up to, helped, considered and given the right of way at all times. His ways are not as other men's ways, and his language and actions are not to be judged by their standard. All that can be asked of him is that he furnish good sport as a rule, and so long as he does that, he is amenable to no criticism, subject to no law and fettered by no conventionality while in the field. He is supposed to know more about his own hounds than outsiders and all hallooing, calling and attempts at hunting them by others are not only very bad manners but are apt to spoil sport.

"As a general rule he can enjoy your conversation and society more when not in the field with hounds, riders, foxes and damages on his mind."

This about covers the duties of the field to the master. You should salute him politely



*George Beeman
retired in 1987
after 55 years as
huntsman of the
Arapahoe Hunt
in Colorado.*

by tipping your hat (gentlemen) or a nod and a smile (ladies) when arriving at the meet, and if you are present at the end of the day.

If there is no field master, the field should follow the master, but not crowd him. Remember he is always listening for hounds, so do not chatter and thrash around in the bushes or dry leaves if you are near him.

In most hunts, the field is controlled by a field master, whose primary duty is to see that the field does not interfere with sport.

As far as preventing the field from interfering with each other, however, they are to a certain extent on their own, and short of mass hysteria leading to mass suicide, the MFH really doesn't care what goes on behind him. It is only the innate decency of the individual sportsmen and women who make up the field that keeps the average foxhunt from having a casualty rate comparable only to that of the Light Brigade at Balaclava.

Never crowd the huntsman. Even if you do not talk, the movements of your horse cause rustling of leaves and creaking of leather, which may cause him to miss a faint or a distant sound he should hear. Never get between the huntsman and the pack, and never, if you can possibly avoid it, get between any hound and the huntsman. Like any member of the staff, he should be given the right of way at all times. If he is in an impossible position when hounds find, it is natural that he may be behind the field when they go away. If so, keep an eye out, and give him the right-of-way as soon as he is there to claim it.

The whippers-in must also be given the right-of-way at all times. They have much further to go than the field, and often one is posted on what turns out to be the wrong side of covert. The sooner he gets forward to his proper position, the surer you are of sport.

Do not follow a whipper-in when sent off on a point. He knows where to post himself without heading a fox, and his horse is trained to stand motionless.

Do not talk to a whipper-in. His full attention is needed on his job. Politeness, especially in the case of a professional, is apt to prevent his telling you to shut up or go home.

Never get between a whipper-in and the huntsman on the road, and never ride beside a whipper-in. He may have to turn quickly and unexpectedly. If he has to go around your horse if a deer jumps up, the day may be ruined through your carelessness.

THE FIELD AND HOUNDS

Quoting again from my father's "Bible," he says of the hounds:

"Keep away from them at all times and at every time. Even if you consider them worthless, the master may be quaintly indifferent to your opinion, and as the quietest horse will kick at a strange dog, and the stupidest dog distrusts a strange horse, KEEP AWAY. Stand still at a check and give them a chance to work. No hound can hunt while figuring the odds of being bitten, kicked or stepped on, and if the field keep pressing them in any direction, however slowly, the benighted beasts are capable of thinking there is a rational cause for it. And keep away from the huntsman also, that he may be in full view and the hounds see him and follow his movements

and signals. And do not get between him and the whip on the road. There are miles of it before and behind where your equestrianism will be more appreciated."

When hounds are drawing or hunting, never get ahead of the fox, between the fox and the hounds, or between the hounds and the huntsman, and never gallop along where hounds can see your horse, so as to carry them on, perhaps past a bend in the line.

When hounds are working before a find, or casting or being cast at a check, *stand still*. Hounds are trained to signals given by the movements of the huntsman's horse. If other horses are moving, hounds have to get their heads up to know which to follow.

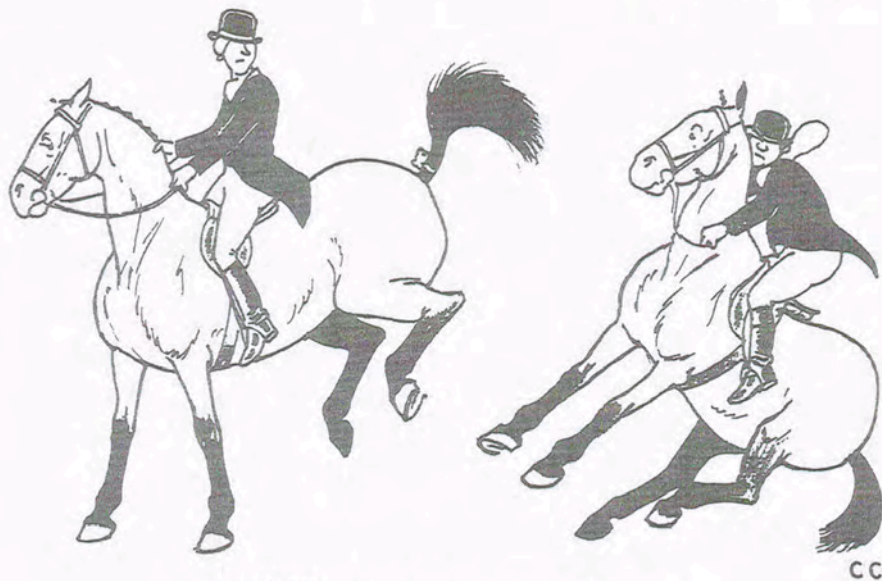
Keep your voice down at all times, as chatter distracts hounds and makes it difficult for the staff to hear.

Remember that a keen pack, on a good scenting day, will overrun the line at a check by many yards. Listen for the faltering of their cry, and *stop before you approach that place*. Don't gallop on after the huntsman, who may wish to get to them only to bring them quietly back.

When hounds pass you on the road, on a trail, or any restricted place, get as far to the side as you can, and turn your horse's head toward hounds. Never interfere with a hound by attempting to hunt it, call it, or turn it. Some masters welcome assistance from the field in certain emergencies, but unless you know that this is the case, and fully understand the drill, do not attempt to help.

COURTESY TO OTHER RIDERS

If you cannot control your horse, train him or sell him. If your horse is a kicker, get rid of him or put him humanely down. If he kicks occasionally, braid a red ribbon in his



A red ribbon does not rid one of responsibility.

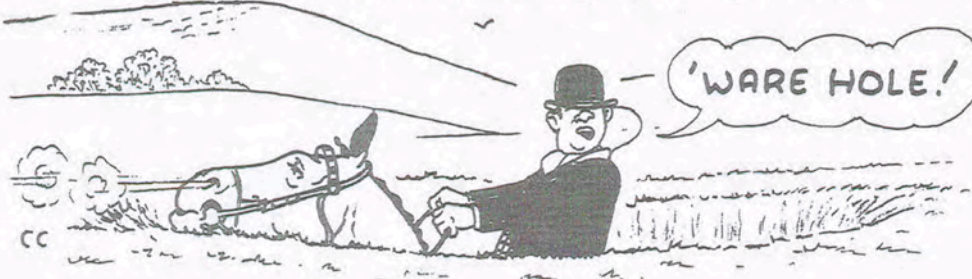
tail as a warning. If some damned fool keeps riding up on his heels, and he shows signs of resenting it, hold his head up with one hand while holding the other forearm horizontal behind your back as a warning. (It is surprising how many people do not know this once universal signal, which means, "Look out, my horse may kick.")

Do not crowd against other horses, or let your horse get the annoying habit of getting slightly ahead of another horse and turning toward him, thus riding him off. This is, of course, dangerous at the faster gaits, and is also infuriating at a walk.



When going through a wood, do not hold a branch for the rider behind you. About the time he gets where the branch wants to be, your horse will have gone past so far that you have to let it go.

If you see a woodchuck hole (groundhogs are called woodchucks in my country, and I am provincial), do not scream. It will not jump up at you, and the woodchuck will not bite you if you leave him alone. *Turn your head to the rear* and say "ware hole," in a tone just loud enough to reach the rider next behind. It is not necessary to yell "ware hole" loudly enough to alert the nearest air-raid warden and get all hounds' heads up. The fellow behind you probably can't hear what you say anyway, but if you turn your head, say something, and point at the hole with your hunting whip he will get the idea.



Perhaps this is the time to mention that it is very difficult to hear anything on a galloping horse. If what you say is important, be sure to face the person you are speaking to, and speak clearly. If not, tell him later. A cry of "ware wire" under appropriate circumstances is not only excusable, but definitely indicated.

If you go through a gate, the last man through is expected to close it. The two or three next to him will earn his gratitude by waiting so his horse will not get lonely. Pass back the word received from the front about a gate. The farmer left it open or closed, and he

has a right to expect that you will leave it the way he did. When in doubt, close it, as the damage caused by stock straying is far greater than any inconvenience that may be caused by a gate mistakenly closed.

As explained before, do not cut in ahead of another horse at jumps, and always yield the right of way at once if your horse refuses. Never jump so close behind another person that you take a chance of jumping on him if he falls. Never ride too close behind another horse, or permit your horse to crowd up on him if he stops.

Most good hunters are long suffering in company, but almost any horse will kick under sufficient provocation. Naturally you should never permit your horse to nip or nuzzle another unless you enjoy going around with your leg in a cast.

Do not try to ride two abreast on a narrow trail, or crowd up against another horse while going through a gate. Gate posts are apt to be more solid than knees.

These rules of course are merely common sense and common politeness applied to hunting field conditions. Most people who break them do so either through ignorance, or lack of control of their horse. A horse new to the game is apt to be difficult to control, but if it is impossible to control your horse well enough to obey these rules, he is a hazard in the field, and should be removed from it at once, before someone is seriously hurt. Such a horse should not be hunted again until some corrective action has been taken. More exercise and less oats may be all that is needed. Sometimes a different bit will help.

AVOIDING NATURAL OBSTACLES

There are some other hints that, although not properly part of this chapter, will perhaps add to your pleasure, comfort or safety if you are new to cross-country riding.

Cultivate the habit of observation. Study the vegetation and note how it will sometimes give you your first clue to the presence of bogs, holes, or other hazards. Study the lay of the land and the general direction taken by rivers, creeks, roads and railroads. This will make it easier for you to learn to know where you are.

Before crossing extremely rough or boggy ground, where you may have to let your horse have his head to pick his way, or before starting up a very steep bank, plan to allow space for your horse to catch up a little on the one before him without crowding.

One of the principal mental hazards to the visitor in my country is the number of woodchuck holes, and I have developed a theory about them. It is my opinion (a minority one) that a decent horse will avoid any hole that his rider can see, and that any last-minute attempt on the part of the rider to avoid it, is just as apt to pull him into it. If I can see a woodchuck hole soon enough to avoid it by several feet, I guide my horse around it, allowing for the fact that most dens have at least two entrances as well as the almost invisible and very dangerous "chimney," which is a vertical shaft from the tunnel to the surface, *with no pile of dirt around it*, for use if the woodchuck's enemy gets between him and his hole.

If I cannot see a hole in time to signal my horse at least three or four strides away, I pray that he sees it (he usually can see it before I can) and interfere with him as little as

possible. I also am prepared to give him all the rein he needs to recover in case he steps in it.

In tall grass or weeds, where neither of us can see, I try to keep down to a speed at which my horse has a chance to recover—and I pray. Remember that the horse does not want to fall any more than you want him to, and he is most agile at getting back on balance *if the rider does not interfere*.

The same principle applies to bogs and extremely treacherous ground such as piles of rocks and tangles of down logs. Avoid such places if you can. If you can't, approach the hazard as slowly as possible and leave it to the horse. In bogs, of course, the horse should never be turned, and must never be allowed to stop. Some horses have to be driven hard at a bog or a ford, or they will stop and roll, which is more amusing to other people than to the rider.

Speaking of fords, I cannot give any general rules. The character of the bottom and speed of the current determine whether it is safe to ford at any particular place, and the only general rule is if you don't know, follow someone who does. If the water is clear, be on the lookout for submerged logs or rolls of discarded wire fence. If it is not clear, only local knowledge can give you an idea of the extent of the hazard.

There are tricks to going through woods at speed. The horse could do it much more efficiently if allowed to pick his own way, but cannot be expected to allow for the rider when passing trees or going under limbs. To hang on a limb while your mount continues without you is always embarrassing and sometimes painful. Also it is considered advisable to pass on the same side of a tree as your mount.

A part of the field with Two Rivers Hounds in Florida gallops through Two Hole Branch.



For these reasons, you must pick the route, and it is important that you decide which side of the tree to go in time to indicate your wishes to the horse *before he has reached his own decision*. My experience seems to indicate that if you have your route picked out at least five strides in advance there is seldom confusion.

A horse that is at all responsive to pressure of the leg can be kept from hitting your knee against a tree. If it becomes necessary to pass through a space between two trees that is too narrow, forget form, sit back and put your legs on either side of the horse's neck just in front of the shoulders. A horse will never hit your knee in that position.

In going up or down a very steep or slippery slope, go straight up or straight down. Never go diagonally, or let your horse get turned diagonally to the slope. If he slips going straight down, he will sit like a dog and slide, and if he slips going straight up he will scramble around and keep his feet under him. But if he is not straight, his feet will go sideways and he will fall.

If your hunter cannot get up a steep place, get off. Without your added weight he probably will make it. In leading a horse up a very steep place, mind he doesn't step on you in the scramble. If you turn him loose and follow him, you have to risk his not waiting for you at the top.

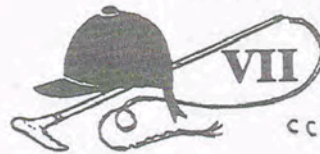
A horse always pauses for a breath or two at the top of a steep place, but unless you are in good condition yourself that may not be enough. Some people get a tow up a steep place by hanging on their horses' tails. All right, if the horse approves.

CONCLUSION

As indicated by the title, this book has been merely an introduction. I have observed the trials of many a beginning foxhunter over a period of years and have covered, to the best of my ability, the questions that beginners seem most frequently to ask, as well as the things I feel it most important for them to know. Do not be afraid to ask questions, as any sportsman worthy of the name is glad to help a novice learn to love his sport.

Good hunting!

Chapter



GLOSSARY OF FOXHUNTING TERMS

- AWAY**—A fox has “gone away” when he has left covert. Hounds are “away” when they have left covert on the line of a fox.
- BABBLE**—To give tongue on scent other than fox, on no scent at all, or on a scent too faint to follow.
- BLANK**—To draw blank is to fail to find a fox.
- BRUSH**—A fox’s tail is always called a brush.
- BUTTON**—To receive, or be awarded the button is to be given the right to wear the hunt buttons and colors.
- BYE**—A bye day is a hunting day not scheduled on the fixture card. An extra dividend.
- CAP**—1. (n) The safe headgear for foxhunters. 2. (v or n) To “pass the hat” among the field. Visitors may be “capped” or asked to pay a “capping fee.” A hunt may have a “cap” for some particular purpose, such as paneling, charity, etc.
- CAST**—1. (n) A planned move in searching for a lost line (trail). 2. (v) To make a cast. Hounds may cast themselves, or the huntsman may cast them.
- CHECK**—1. (n) An interruption of the run caused by hounds losing the line. 2. (v) Hounds check when they lose the line temporarily.
- COLORS**—1. The distinctive colors that distinguish the uniform of one hunt from another. Usually a distinctive color of collar on a scarlet coat. (Some hunts have coats other than scarlet.) 2. To be awarded or given the colors is to be given the right to wear them and the hunt button.
- COUPLE**—1. (n) Two hounds (any sex), for convenience in counting. 2. (n) a device for keeping two hounds attached to each other for convenience in control or training. 3. (v) To attach two hounds together by use of couples.
- COVERT**—(pronounced “cover”) A patch of woods or brush where a fox might be found.
- CROP**—The stiff portion of a hunting whip, to which the thong is attached. (Also incorrectly applied to the whole whip, i.e. crop, thong, and lash.)
- CRY**—(n) The sound given by hounds when hunting, e.g. “The pack, in full cry.”
- CUB**—A young fox.
- CUBHUNTING**—Early hunting before the formal season. Hounds are encouraged to

- stay in covert, foxes that go away being permitted to do so in peace if practical. This gets cubs in the habit of running straight, rather than circling in covert.
- DOUBLE**—(v) To “double the horn” is to blow a series of short sharp notes. Signifies a fox is afoot. The “gone away” note is a form of “doubling the horn.”
- DOUBLE BACK**—A fox that returns to covert after having left it is said to double back.
- DRAW**—1. (v) To search for a fox in a certain area, e.g. “To draw a covert.” 2. (n) The act of drawing, e.g. “Thorny Wood is a difficult draw.” 3. (v) To select and separate a hound or a group of hounds in kennels for a particular purpose, e.g. “Please draw out Bluebell’s last year’s litter, so I can show them to Mr. . . .”
- DRIVE**—The urge to get forward well with the line, e.g. “That hound has drive.”
- DWELL**—To hunt without getting forward. A hound that lacks drive is apt to dwell.
- EARTH**—Any place where a fox goes to ground for protection, but usually a place where foxes live regularly—a fox den.
- ENTER**—A hound is “entered” when he is first regularly used for hunting. “This year’s entry” are the hounds entered or to be entered this season.
- FEATHER**—A hound “feathers” when he indicates, by actions rather than by voice, that he is on a line or near it. The stern is waved, and activity is concentrated and intensified.
- FIELD**—The group of people riding to hounds, excluding the MFH and staff.
- FIELD MASTER**—The person designated by the MFH to control the field.
- FIXTURE**—The time and place of the meet, or assembly of the hunt. A fixture card is a card sent out to list the fixtures for a given period.
- GROUND**—“To go to ground.” To take shelter (usually underground), e.g. “The fox went to ground in the main earth east of the swamp.”
- HEAD**—(v) To head a fox is to cause it to turn from its planned direction of travel. This usually causes a check, and is not recommended.
- HEEL**—(adv) Backward. Hounds following the line the wrong way are running “heel” (also called “counter”).
- HOLD HARD**—“Stop please.” If used twice to the same individual, it probably means “Stop, please, damn you.”
- HONOR**—A hound “honors” when he gives tongue on a line that another hound has been hunting.
- HUNTING WHIP**—The assembly of crop, thong and lash is known as a hunting whip, incorrectly as a crop or hunting crop.
- HUNTSMAN**—The man who controls hounds in the field.
- LARK**—To jump fences unnecessarily when hounds are not running, or on non-hunting days. (Annoys landowners. Not recommended.)
- LASH**—The short piece of cord (occasionally leather) attached to the end of the whip thong away from the crop. Sometimes improperly applied to both thong and lash as a unit.
- LIFT**—To carry hounds forward. Usually implies that hounds were hunting when lifted. (Risky, but sometimes advisable. Don’t crab the huntsman unless he does it often.)
- LINE**—The trail of the fox.

LITTER—A group of young born of the same mother at the same time. In foxhunting applies to whelps (puppies) or cubs. Equally correct when applied to kittens or pigs.

MARK—(To ground) A hound “marks” when he indicates that a fox has gone to ground. He stops at the earth, tries to dig his way in, and gives tongue in a way quite different from his hunting voice. Some hounds are better at marking than others.

MASTER—The MFH. The person in command of the hunt in field and kennels.

MEET—The assembling of the hunt for a day’s sport, e.g. “The meet tomorrow is at . . .” or “Hounds meet tomorrow at . . .”

NOSE—The ability of a hound to detect and interpret the scent.

OPEN—A hound is said to “open” when he first gives tongue on a line.

PAD—(1) The foot of a fox. (2) The center cushion of a hound’s foot.

PANEL—(1) The portion of any jumpable fence between two posts. (2) A jumpable portion built into a wire fence.

POINT—(1) The straight line distance made good in a run, e.g. “That was a six-mile point, but 12 miles as hounds ran.” (2) The location to which a whipper-in is sent to watch for a fox to go away.

RATCATCHER—Informal hunting attire. Correct for cubbing.

Gen. Gordon Sellar, MFH and huntsman of the Frontenac Hunt in Canada, with Mrs. Sellar, whipper-in, and their pack of English foxhounds.



RATE—A warning cry given to correct hounds. The words less important than the intonation, e.g. "Back to him" or "Ware riot."

RIDE—(n) A lane cut through woods.

RIOT—Anything that hounds might hunt that they shouldn't.

RUN—(n) A period during which hounds are actually hunting on the line of a fox. (Usually implies a gallop for the field, as opposed to a "hunt in covert after a twisting fox.")

SCENT—The smell of a fox, and the physical and chemical phenomena by which the smell gets from the fox's footprints to the hound's nose. Scent can be good or bad, meaning easy to follow or difficult. It depends in general on weather.

SPEAK—To give tongue. (Usually of a single hound, e.g. "I heard old Homer open, and he spoke for some time before the others got to him.")

STAFF—The huntsman and whippers-in.

STERN—Tail of a hound.

THONG—The long flexible braided leather portion of a hunting whip joining the lash to the crop.

TONGUE—1. (n) Cry. A hound "gives tongue" when he proclaims with his voice that he is on a line. 2. (v) To give tongue.

VIEW—(v or n) See (or sight of) the fox.

VIEW HOLLOA—The cry given by a staff member on viewing a fox.

WALK—Puppies are "sent out at walk" in the summer and fall of their first year, preferably on farms where they learn about chickens, etc.

WARE—A caution (1) To riders, e.g. "Ware wire." (2) To hounds, e.g. "Ware riot." Usually pronounced "war." An abbreviation of beware.

WHELP—(n) A young puppy (v) to bear puppies, e.g. "That hound was whelped 3/6/87."

WHIPPER-IN—A staff member who assists the huntsman in the control of hounds.

