

Rockbridge Hunt Newsletter - April 2002

Hunt Ball

A big **thank you** to all those who contributed to the silent auction to make it such a success. Please *patronize and thank* the following businesses that contributed to the 2002 Silent Auction:

Augusta Farmers Cooperative, Fairfield and Staunton, VA - see them for your horsefeed & farm supplies

Dominion Saddlery (across from the Horse Center)- see them for your horse show & hunting attire

Mary Donnarumma – riding lessons in the Radford area

Fancy Hill Jams & Jellies – add jams and jellies to your next gift basket

Farm Choice , Staunton, VA – see them for your Purina horse feed

Fitzgerald Lumber & Log Company, Inc. , Buena Vista, VA - sawdust delivered

Marsha Heatwole - see her art work and children's book at Artist in Cahoots, Lexington

Kroger's , Daleville – shop in their wine department

Lincoln Hill Florist, Lexington - flowers for all occasions

North Shore Design - Embroidery - see them at most large horseshows at the VA Horse Center

The Pink Cadillac – stop in after hunting or trail riding

Rockbridge Farmers Cooperative – a large selection of tack & horse needs

Saddles 'n Stuff, Route 220 N, Daleville, VA – a full line of horse equipment

Second Story Bookshop, Lexington, - see them for new & antique horse & books

Eastfield Farm – Bill Streaker - See Bill for your next hunting horse

Jan Sweet Tack Repair , Bent Mountain, VA (drop off point at The Tack Room, in Roanoke) – quality tack repair

Lisa Sweet Fredrick – Jewelry –call her for custom made jewelry 540-929-4313

The Tack Room 7717 Williamson Road, Roanoke, Va - English equipment & apparel

Virginia Born & Bred, Washington Street, Lexington VA – beautiful gifts made in Virginia

Francis Yeardley, dressage lessons in the Lexington area

Tish Vest, horse training in the Lexington area

The Southern Inn, Lexington, - upscale casual dining

Ruley Automotive – see Gary for inspections & repairs

Special thanks to Buster Lewis & The Jefferson Florist for the wonderful decorations.

Jt MFH -

David Bolen
463-5574

Jt MFH –

Cindy Morton
463-6025

President -

Carol Atwood
463-1000

Treasurer –

Katharine Conner
463-7816

Honorary Secretary -

Wilson Shepard
463-6466

Stewards -

Fred Burks
258-2828
Kathy Eichelberger
947-2966
Paula Ursoy
966-1001
Sandra Worthy
343-2713

Newsletter:

Blair Jones
(Abjones@vt.edu)
Erica Jones
(Emjones@vt.edu)
Cindy Morton
(cmorton@wlu.edu)

Web site:

[Http://home.wlu.edu/~mortonc/archive/index.html](http://home.wlu.edu/~mortonc/archive/index.html)

Hunt-mail listserve:

Contact cmorton@wlu.edu

Rockbridge Hunt Newsletter - February 2002

And we got items for the auction from the following people:

Mr. Dominick Alberti	Family of George Moore
Mr. Frank Bierman	Mrs. Pamela S. Moskal
The Bowring family	Ms Wendy Orrison
Chris Bowring	Ms Terry Poff
Mr. Fred F. Burks	Mr. and Mrs. Terry Secker
Ms Mary Lynn C. Camper	Mr. and Mrs. Wilson E. D. Shepherd
Mr. Joe A. Conner	Ms Brenda Simmons
Mr. and Mrs. N. Thomas Debevoise	Mr. William E. Streaker
Dr. Kathy Y. Eichelberger	Ms Doreen Tansey
Mr. and Mrs. Frank Farmer, Jr.	Ms Jean G. Taylor
Dr. Judy Gustafson	Ms Paula J. Ursoy
Maj. J. Frank Hartis	Ms Bobbie Jo VanNess
Mr. Bernard Hylton	Ms Joanne Van Siclen
Mr. and Mrs. Leon B. Jarvis	Ms Tish Vest
Blair and Erica Jones	Mr. William and Dr. Joy Watkins
Ms Ann B. Layman	Miss Viola Wise, MFH
Ms Diane I. Long	Ms Cameron York
Nina Marshall	Mr. and Mrs. James S. McMillan

PROXY FOR ANNUAL MEETING ON MAY 8, 2002

If you are unable to attend this meeting, please complete this proxy form. You may give it to anyone attending the meeting or mail it to your secretary:

Wilson Shepherd
75 Deer Drive
Lexington, VA 24450-6046

Currently business scheduled is:

1. You will vote on MFH, president, secretary and treasurer. The current nominated slate is: MFHs David Bolen and Cindy Morton; Hunt president Carol Atwood; secretary Wilson Shepherd; and treasurer Katharine Conner. There are no vacancies for stewards this year. Additional nominations will be accepted from the floor.
2. Reviewing the past year's financial results and approving next year's proposed budget
3. Receiving the Master's report
4. Receiving the Huntsman's report

If you have additional topics you would like addressed, please provide them to Carol Atwood (463-1000) as soon as possible.

Proxy from: _____

I wish to assign my vote to _____ at the general Rockbridge Hunt membership meeting of May 8th 2002.

Date _____ Signature _____

Rockbridge Hunt Newsletter - February 2002

Financial Activities Summary 2001-2002 (6/1/01 through 4/8/02)

Note* Because these activities take place near the close of the fiscal year (June 1 to May 31), the figures include expenses from upcoming events and income from past events. This is not a financial statement for the 2001 Horse Show or for any one Hunter Pace event.

Bowring prints

Remaining debt	477	
Income	75	
Subtotal		75

Breakfasts (includes VHW breakfast)

Expenses		
Misc	114	
Staff	300	
Food, supplies	1,060	
Income	1,230	
Subtotal		<244>

Endurance Rides

Expenses		
Awards	164	
Facilities	631	
Food	343	
Insurance/Fees	296	
Postage	0	
Printing	0	
Staff	610	
Supplies	47	
Misc.	100	
Income	3,945	
Subtotal		1,754

Horse Show*

Expenses		
Awards	212	
Facilities	0	
Fees & Other	325	
Food concession	46	
Postage		
Printing		
Staff	1,550	
Income		
Entries	4,605	
Sponsorships	235	
Subtotal		2,707

Activities Total \$8,805

Hunt Ball & Silent Auction

Expenses		
Decoration	890	
Entertainment	2,400	
Food & Facilities	7,627	
Postage	170	
Printing	363	
Income		
Receipts	9,565	
Silent Auction	4,121	
Subtotal		2,236

Hunter Pace*

Expenses		
Awards	166	
Facilities	55	
Food	826	
Postage	211	
Printing	44	
Staff	200	
Supplies	72	
Other		
Income	3,075	
Subtotal		1,501

Landowners Dinner

Expenses		
Staff	40	
Other	25	
Income	0	
Subtotal		<65>

Newsletter

Subtotal		<612>
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Virginia Hunt Week

Subtotal		1,453
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Rockbridge Hunt Newsletter - April 2002

Masters Report

Another hunting season has ended and it was a good one in spite of the drought. There was more game in the area than we've seen recently. Strangely enough, for the first time in several years we didn't see any coyotes while out hunting. We did view red fox and gray fox and black bear. I'm not sure anyone saw bobcat while hunting but it's likely that we chased a couple of those. And any time you're on a horse you're likely to see deer and wild turkey. Even though those aren't our quarry it's always a good sign to see a variety of wildlife.

I'm sure all of us want to thank our landowner members for this past year. They've been generous and welcoming and gracious about last-minute rescheduling. The luncheon for our landowners was changed from fall to spring this year and was well-attended, as usual. It was a pretty day and it's a wonderful group of people – I always enjoy seeing them and getting a chance to talk to them.

This year several of our landowners waited until after the hunting season ended to put out the baited coyote snares. In some cases that was a conscious decision for the convenience of the Rockbridge Hunt and in other cases it may have been coincidence but it's certainly appreciated.

Right now the hunt staff is busy getting hounds ready for the Derby Day Hound Show. They have also gotten some new coops installed at Broadview – just in time for the hunter pace. Alan Tilson is also building (and planting) some brush boxes – it won't be just coops.

The hunt staff worked hard this year, as usual – thank you! David Conner did a great job with the hounds. That's nothing new but it's a lot more fun when the hunting is good and it's been nice for him to receive some recognition. Several people who know hounds have commented on how good our pack looks and how well they're hunting. David, along with Katharine Conner and Gary Ruley, put in countless hours getting the pack fit and working well. Joe Conner and Pete Whitlock led the field by example: quietly and competently, pitching in wherever needed. I know that Dick Ford led the second field on many occasions and Blair Jones led both fields at different times during the season. And David Bolen was always in the right place at the right time, solving all kinds of problems.

I want to thank the riding members for all their work. Someone always appeared on the scene whenever and wherever they were needed, doing all the things that have to be done for us to keep hunting, whether that was in the hunt field or at fundraising activities. I know that Dick Ford led the second field on many occasions and Blair Jones led both fields at different times during the season. I won't try to list everyone because I inevitably forget someone but the work done this year has been tremendous. That's the good news. The bad news is there's always more to be done.

The hunt staff and the Executive Committee have been talking about a few new projects but the calendar is already terribly full. Inevitably some changes will have to be made. We'll consider the options and try to make the right decisions. I know the Rockbridge Hunt membership can be counted on for help and support. Thank you. *Cindy Morton*

Bits and Pieces

Don't forget our hunter pace scheduled for April 28th (and rain/snow date May 4th) at Broadview ranch 11:00AM to 1:00PM. Lunch will be available AFTER you make your loop. Bring some friends and make up your own 'herd'. Entry fee is \$30 per rider adult; \$20 for juniors.

And, our annual hound show/derby day is on schedule for May 3rd. We hear that Oak Ridge is going to bring some hounds and the judge will be Jake Carle. All this will happen at Glenmore this year at the Shifflet Pavilion. Classes start 1:30 pm and the derby party starts at 4:30pm. Please contact one of our MFHs if you need directions.

Rockbridge Hunt Newsletter - April 2002

Fox hunting in Nebraska

My friends often tease me about being a Yankee when my nasal twang gives me away as a native of some place other than Virginia. I usually correct them by saying that I am no Yankee, I am a "flatlander", born and raised in Omaha, Nebraska. Really, though, when you get up close and personal with the sod of Nebraska (as I have all too many times when my horse and I had a miscommunication), it is not flat. I foxhunted there with the North Hills Hunt for ten years, and it was rare we hit some really flat ground unless riding along a creek bottom. For those infinite stretches of flat earth, you need to go south into Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas.

But Nebraska has hills. All kinds of hills. The North Hills Hunt had its kennels and primary territory just across the Missouri River from Omaha, in Iowa. The hills were made up of loess, wind-drifted silt from ancient glaciers that at one time covered the northern part of the continent. You can dig a long way and find no rocks in the fine, grayish-brown soil. In grid patterns, the mostly unpaved county roads run ruler straight, making neat square-mile boxes of the countryside. Driving to a hunt, it didn't matter what kind of trailer you owned, your horses would be covered with a thick layer of dust by the time you turned off of the two miles of dirt road that ended at the kennels. With five acres and a house for the kennelwoman, these sat in the middle of plowed farm fields, interspersed with wooded ravines and grassy pastures. While the crops (corn and soybeans) remained in the fields, our territory was greatly limited. A big part of our master's job in the fall was to urge the local farmers to harvest their fields.

There were very few fox where we hunted. The coyotes generally did not share their territory with fox. Except for some rare instances when the hounds came across a fox scent (and some not-so-rare but embarrassing times with deer, sheep, and farm cats) we hunted coyote. The hounds were crosses between English and American Foxhounds, and we had gotten several of Ben Hardaway's castoffs. Shortly before I joined North Hills Hunt in 1989, the master began breeding the hounds for greater speed, and the pack got faster and faster over my time there. Previous masters had liked a more leisurely hunt, but this master was more aggressive. In the thirty years North Hills Hunt had existed before I joined, they had never caught or killed anything. (At least, nothing they would admit to.) In the ten years I was with them, they killed three coyotes. Although this was not the real goal, it shows how much the pack had improved. Of the three, one was chased into an old outbuilding and cornered and killed. Another, when flushed from cover after we removed the hounds a hundred yards or so, was obviously too sick to speed away from the hounds as coyotes normally do. The third, in a one-in-a-million chance, was sleeping in waist-high grass on a very windy day, and did not hear the hounds that literally stepped on him while following the master's horse to the next cast.

Many people hunted on thoroughbreds. Those who used draft crosses knew that they would be left way behind at least once on most hunts. I happened to have an old racehorse that had great stamina and good speed when he quit bucking. One typical hunt, we had the hounds about a mile from the kennels along one of the county roads, and the master cast them. Usually they went into the field between the road and a ridge of hills, and followed the lowlands along the road. Not this time. They immediately were hot on line and scrambled straight up the ridge, over and out of sight, entering the one piece of land in the middle of our territory we were not allowed to ride on. Nothing for it but to gallop the mile back to the kennels, turn left three miles up another road, turn again and another two miles went by before we could get close to the now scattered hounds. No jumps, no difficult terrain, just miles of soft gravel roads. We started out with about thirty-five riders, but at the end only three of us had kept up with the field master on his arab-thoroughbred cross (luckily, my horse quit bucking early on and we kept up). We usually had at least one good, long gallop every hunt, and sometimes had several. I worked harder at getting my horse into shape and keeping him in top condition than I do hunting fox in Virginia.

Rockbridge Hunt Newsletter - April 2002

We had one opening hunt on a beautiful day (Nebraska has at least five beautiful days each year) in early October with about eighty riders, most of whom never hunted except at opening or closing hunts. Many of these biannual hunters rode horses unprepared for the mob mentality of a foxhunt. We had walked away from the kennels only about five minutes when the hounds opened up and began a seven-mile run down dirt roads, over fields so laced with holes you could not safely go faster than a slow trot, up and down plowed cropland with terraces so steep they were more like drop jumps than slopes, bunching up at several ravines and coops, on through woods and briars that tore skin and clothes, over earthen dams, finally to end up in a field next to a patch of woods where the scent disappeared. I counted at least five bucking horses in the first thirty seconds, and we lost the casual riders in the first few hundred yards. I was riding a quarterhorse that I usually kept firmly in hand, but we hit a flat, long meadow with grass up to the stirrups and a firm bottom and I let him go. He flattened out and it seemed as if he no longer went forward but pushed the earth behind him. We passed everybody. I will never forget the feeling, or the sound of the grass hissing by.

We had three other fixtures in Nebraska that were variations on this theme. The one near the capital of Lincoln had the added challenge of scrub hawthorn trees (big bushes, really) with long thorns that would rip whatever came near: clothing, skin, boots, tack, whatever. The coyotes seemed to take malicious pleasure in leading us at speed through patches of them. Our venerable and dignified retired master appeared at our Hunt Board breakfast at the local country club looking like he had been attacked by a lion, with bloody scratches on his neck and face, and bloodstains on his stock tie. I still have furrows on the sides of my boots that no amount of polish or boning will cover.

But my favorite fixture, Burwell, was 200 miles west of Omaha, in central Nebraska, the start of the Sandhills. For our part of the Western Challenge Hunt Series we used this fixture. We hunted there twice a year, October and April. Large cattle ranches on sandy grasslands, rolling hills with steep, eroded ravines, a large dammed lake in the background with mist rising off of its surface in the mornings, lots of cactus, few trees, and no rocks. Very little cropland meant few fences -- the sandhills soil does not react well to disturbance. It needs the long grass roots to keep it stable. The vistas were awesome. Also the cow paths. You have never seen such cow paths. At times three to four feet deep, only about a foot or so wide, they snaked around and over the hills and appeared under your horse's feet with no notice whatsoever. And not just one at a time. Sometimes it felt like my horse was playing hopscotch at a full gallop, and I was praying I wasn't going to be the stone tossed to square number ten.

What made Burwell such a good fixture was the opportunity to watch all the action, no matter the size of the field. Rolling hills and few trees or bushes meant that you could see the coyote, with the pack chasing it, for miles. We were all standing on top of a hill when the hounds struck one time, and we saw the coyote two hills over, the hounds giving chase. Reaching the top of the next hill at full speed we could again see hounds and coyote still headed away from us. When we got to the next hill we arrived in time to see the whips gathering the hounds at the fence that marked the end of our territory. That rancher had been known to shoot our hounds, and the clever coyote, year after year, made a beeline toward that same fence. It felt like we had a permanent place on the coyote's dance card.

The ground in Nebraska generally freezes solid around Christmas and stays that way until March. Even when we got a week or so of sunny warm weather, as we usually did in January or February, only the top few inches would thaw, creating a slick surface on top of impermeable ice. Fields that would start out on opening day at about sixty or seventy riders, would dwindle to maybe twenty regulars through Thanksgiving, and then down to about five idiots once the ground froze and the thermometer headed south for the winter. Average January temperatures are a high of 31-degrees and a low of 11-degrees. Over the other sixteen layers of necessary clothing, we often wished we wore body armor when the ice balls from the horses' feet in

Rockbridge Hunt Newsletter - April 2002

front of you started bulleting past with lethal intent. Most of January we hunted a part of our home territory that had no jumps, fewer steep ravines, and more plowed fields. After one joint hunt in October, a full three hours of freezing rain, hail, snow, sleet, wind, lightning, and thunder, I had to have someone help me hold the coffee to my lips, my hands were shaking so hard. Some of the most fun I have ever had being miserable was foxhunting in Nebraska.

Submitted by Louisa Golian

Calendar

April

RH Spring Hunter Pace at Broadview 28th; rain date May 5th

May

Derby Day Fun Hound Show at Glenmore - 4th

Annual meeting - May 8th (Wednesday) 7pm at Tilson Lodge

Virginia Hound Show - 26th

June

Rockbridge Hunt Spring Hunter show 1st, 2nd at Hollins University

Rockbridge Hunt News
AB Jones III
Rt 1 Box 272
Newport VA 24128