

The Best Hunt I Ever Had

A joint meet and a wily coyote make for a memorable day.

Marc Patoile

So, I suppose I cannot just write, "It was the best hunt I ever had," and leave it at that. Not many readers would be interested in such a hunt report.

In *Hounds and Hunting Through the Ages*, Joseph B. Thomas wrote, "It is surprising how few people can give an accurate account of a hunt or the kind of season they had. In order to do this, one must have some comparative point of a view, a good eye for a country, and know the five essential fundamentals to be remembered in describing a hunt—the point, the distance, the pace, whether the line of country covered was good or bad, and whether the quarry was accounted for."

It was a five-mile point, 15 miles were covered in just short of two hours, the line of country was very good except through the wash bottoms of Box Elder Creek, and the

quarry was accounted for in front of the entire field. This brief account does not do it justice either. The problem is: there are not any adequate words to describe it—you just had to have been there.

Beginning Nov. 15, the Arapahoe Hunt (Colo.) hosted our annual week of hunting, now dubbed the Arapahoe Hunt Rendezvous. The Fort Carson Hounds (Colo.) hunted the first day, followed by Caza Ladron (N.M.),

and then the Arapahoe hounds on our home territory.

On the fourth day, Nov. 18, we hunted a combined pack from all three hunts. We met on the lawn south of the Arapahoe kennels, as 11½ couple of Walker Foxhounds from Caza

Ladron were mixed with 7½ couple of Walker Foxhounds from Fort Carson Hounds, and 11½ couple of English Foxhounds from the Arapahoe Hunt.

A field of 95 followed, with 10 various staff. Dr. G. Marvin Beeman hunted the hounds with the help of his staff and others who were invited to ride up with the staff. This made for quite a spectacle.

Hounds were put into cover just west of the driveway and, shortly thereafter, trailed a cold line toward the south. After losing scent, they again worked a cold line, which took us east toward Box Elder Creek. The pace was a working trot, which was uneventful for this wide-open country of rolling hills. Nearing the creek, a coyote was capped by Field Master Mike Wilfey (also a Jt.-MFH of the Arapahoe).

The field was quickly away on a four-mile point when the coyote checked at a barbed-wire fence at an old corral area. The field split to take fences and gates, which are intertwined around this old corral. As a result, many of the field were left behind as the coyote ran north along the fence for a mile.

Suddenly, old Charlie looped back around, right into the midst of the now spread-out pack of hounds. He emerged on the south side of hounds, with five hounds in close pursuit



(Ray Orth Photo)

MFH G. Marvin Beeman (center) led the pack, staff and field to the first covert of a remarkable Arapahoe Hunt joint meet.



(Ray Orth Photo)

The combined pack gave great chase to a coyote during the Arapahoe joint meet.

and the remainder of the pack now reversing to catch up. The field was strung out along the fence line, just as the quarry and hounds reversed on the same line, giving all the most spectacular view.

I stopped as the coyote was just 10 feet in front of us, with the lead hound, Arapahoe Ivan, just five feet off of his brush. Seeing only a whip, with the huntsman coming up behind and the first-flight field master stuck back in the corral's tangle of jumps, and the second-flight field master up ahead trying to reverse everyone safely back through the tangle gate, we remained smack in the middle of the field as the coyote reversed his line.

We rode parallel with hounds for ½ mile until the quarry was accounted for as the jumping field stood looking on. Dr. Beeman was very proud of the hounds that day and noted, "It was really great to see a mixed pack perform that well, especially given the poor scenting conditions this week."

Hon. whipper-in Ken Slysuiik was nearest the lead of the pack and commented, "The pack and hounds were really excited. Their ears were up and they were running as fast as they could. This was a very exciting time for the pack, as they closed in after this coyote, which they pursued for some time. The field typically doesn't have this good of a view of the coyote and hounds, which made it all that more exciting for those that were there."

I am afraid I may never have a better day afield. If I could conjure up a better day, I suppose it would be a four-hour hunt with two such events and a horse able to carry me in the action all day. While I am sure every seasoned hunter has some rivaling tale, to me, this hunt ranks up there with the legendary hunts that Surtees and others describe in the days gone by. I only hope I live long enough and travel well enough to see such a grand day again. ■



Goshen Hunt

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A Great Day Following A Grey

For all of you who thought the wind and cold of winter were sufficient reasons to skip hunting, let me just tell you that you would have missed one of the very best days of the Goshen Hunt's season on Jan. 7.

We started the day with a nice hack across the road from the kennels in Sunshine, Md., to the cemetery, with MFH Robert Taylor putting hounds into the first little covert to give them a chance to settle a bit. It was pretty evident that there was little—if any—scent, since hounds went through quickly and showed very little interest.

The wind was blowing briskly out of the northwest, so Robert chose to hack hounds nearly to Rt. 108 before putting them back in a covert so that he could draw with the wind at his back and the quarry could run with the wind.

We spent about the next hour going from covert to covert with no scent to be found. The wind was blowing at about 20 mph, and the sun shone brightly through a cloudless sky. Nonetheless, our huntsman and the Masters were delighted with the pack's performance.

Our pack of American hounds is predominately first- and second-season hounds that have been a challenge to keep together this season. Huntsman and staff have worked extremely hard to teach these youngsters the necessity of working as a pack. These trying and difficult lessons are beginning to pay huge dividends as we watched covert after covert drawn with all hounds going in willingly, working hard with nose to the ground, but finding nothing to chase and then coming nicely back to the huntsman to try again.

Perseverance Pays Off

After numerous such attempts with no result, Robert asked that I bring the field forward so he could explain what was actually happening and how pleased we were with this progress. As he finished his short dissertation, I added that it would be fine if we could now find a bit of scent for them to work.

No sooner had I uttered the words than the first hound opened. It was a very trusty and solid older hound named Gameboy, who had finally found something worth speaking to. Equally as magical as the steady work we had been watching, the entire pack honored Gameboy and rushed in his direction to join the chase.

The fox, running with the wind as expected, led us on a quick chase up the "gas line" then turned south toward the old Griffith farm (now the Evans farm) and after a run of 25 to 30 minutes decided that the earth was his friend. Robert blew him to ground and called all 13½ couple back to him rather quickly, with Gameboy the last to return, having been very interested in the den of his fox.

The pack was then put into the adjacent covert that had been avoided in the preceding run, and we moved down into a rather swampy area created by the invasion of a beaver or two in the past year. This area has always been rather boggy with briars and heavy undergrowth making it difficult to cross, but the efforts of the beaver have made it all but impassable. Nonetheless, we did cross and followed the hounds as they worked to find the next quarry. It was not long until we were rewarded with the sound of hounds in full cry.

Robert moved quickly through the woods to the gas line, while the field took the easier but longer route to the top of the hill and then back down the gas line to enjoy the chase. We continued back up the gas line again and went quickly to the north edge of the covert within view of Rt. 650. As the field came onto the open field, Robert doffed his cap back toward the covert and sat very quietly.

After a short pause he motioned for me to bring the field forward and he said, "It's a grey." While grey foxes are not rare in our country, they are unusual. They also run much differently than our red foxes and this fellow would be no exception.

Having now run through the swamp bottom for maybe 15 minutes, he now made an abrupt U-turn and headed back to the swampy briars he had just left. We circled the covert, staying in the cut cornfield and headed back southerly toward the more swampy area. Sitting on the edge of the covert we had a clear view of the entire pack, hard at work and tonguing fiercely on the line of this fox as he turned back again and headed north.

A hard working substitute whipper-in, Mark Happ, at the right place at the right time, nearly leaped off his horse in excitement as he viewed the fox crossing a narrow gap in the briars right in front of him! Careful not to disturb hounds as they worked up toward him,

but wanting to be sure Robert was aware, Mark waved his cap aggressively to indicate the direction of our quarry.

► **The Right Risky Move**

Hounds were working hard on the line, but trailing through the swampy path chosen by this little fellow was hard work. Robert made what for me is one of the most difficult of all decisions a huntsman has to make. That is to lift hounds working a line, put them forward, and let them cast again. Not an easy thing to do with the added risk that if they do not pick up the line again, you have lost your quarry. Also, this is not something that we routinely do, so hounds may be confused by such a maneuver, but on this day, with this quarry, hounds were faultless.

All hounds came quickly to the cheering and horn of the "alpha hound" and quickly reacquired the line as we raced to keep up. Unfortunately, we were headed back to the same beaver-induced swamp we had left a short time earlier. Now, though, our pilot tried a different route by turning south and heading toward the Evans farm.

As he did, one new entry hound decided that the allure of a different fox was just too enticing. As she left the pack on her own she took four couple of "friends" with her. What had been up to now a splendid day was threatened with disaster with the pack split.

Undeterred, but very unhappy, Robert raced through heavy cover with whipper-in Mark and I, having left the field to assist as best possible, trying desperately to keep up. What a ride, as we dodged trees, branches, briars, and all else in a desperate effort to not increase the wrath of the irate huntsman (he is Irish after all!).

We finally got to an open field, and Robert quickly headed the errant hounds that were immediately stopped in their tracks. With Mark and I doing our best to help, Robert quickly went from vehement scolding to cheerfully calling them on as he brought the miscreants back in line.

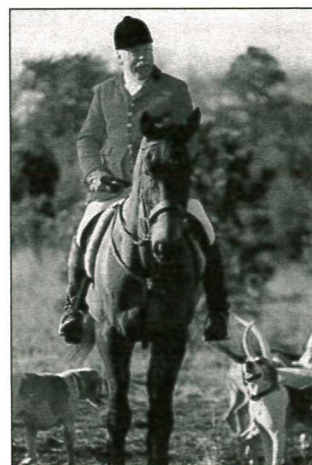
The other nine couple were still running hard on their grey fox and speaking to the joy of the chase. Within moments, our straying few rejoined the pack and once more we had all 13½ on the line.

All told, that little grey fox kept us running for nearly two hours. We covered maybe 1,000 acres, but we did it many times in all manner of routes. At the end we came home with all but one couple that rejoined us with the urging of substitute whipper-in Charles Norman Shaffer within minutes of our return to kennels. This was a foxhunter's day for sure.

Thanks to all that have worked so hard to put this pack of hounds together and who have remained faithful and undeterred. Thank you Robert; I'm sure Jack is beaming with pride.

Tom Pardoe, jt.-MFH

Helge J. Jacobsen



*If you close your eyes and listen,
The sharp crisp sound of a horn pierces the air,
The rustle of leaves beneath his trusted mount
Sailor's hooves,
A soprano yodel from a baritone voice,
The deep throated sounds of the always true
Chief- soon joined by a chorus of many,
Fading into the distance,
Until the horn brings us home.*

*vi mangler De
(we will miss you)*



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