

Hunting With The Rough Riders And Special Forces

The author enjoys several unique days with some western hunts.

Marc C. Patoile

With the Arapahoe Hunt snowed in for the longest period of time (more than nine weeks) in its nearly 100 years of history, we ventured south for hunting in southern Colorado and northern New Mexico.

These parts were once home

to the 1st United States Volunteer Cavalry, one of three volunteer cavalry regiments raised for the Spanish-American War and the only one of the three to see action in 1898. The original nickname for the regiment was "Wood's Weary Walkers," later becoming known as the "Rough Riders," then "Roosevelt's Rough Riders."

Hunting coyotes in this desert home of the Rough Riders seemed fitting, since the word "coyote" was borrowed from Mexican Spanish, which itself borrowed the term from the Aztec word *cóyotl*, which may have meant "singing dog."

We hunted with Caza Ladron (N.M.), Juan

Tomás Hounds (N.M.), and the newly organized Fort Carson Hounds (Colo.). These hunts have some rough riding country, and a sure-footed horse is a necessity. When asked

how this hunt country differed from our wide open rolling plains, I affectionately termed their members the "rough riders" as they stick to their saddles like glue through these often rocky, hilly countries.

On Feb. 24, we were graciously hosted by Caza Ladron. Guy McElvain, MFH, outfitted us with lovely, warmblood sport horses for us to hunt, as we met at the Buckman fixture under threats of snow in the forecast. The temperature warmed from a windy and cold 28 degrees to a nice 55-degree sunny, but windy day.

Professional kennelman Daniel Woods hunted 13½ couple of American, English and crossbred hounds. Brian Gonzales, MFH, introduced us with a warm welcome and we were off into high desert mesas and river valleys thick with brush, cholla cactus and yucca.

Hounds worked several cold lines, taking us twisting and turning across arroyos and ditches. There are a few paneled fences, but

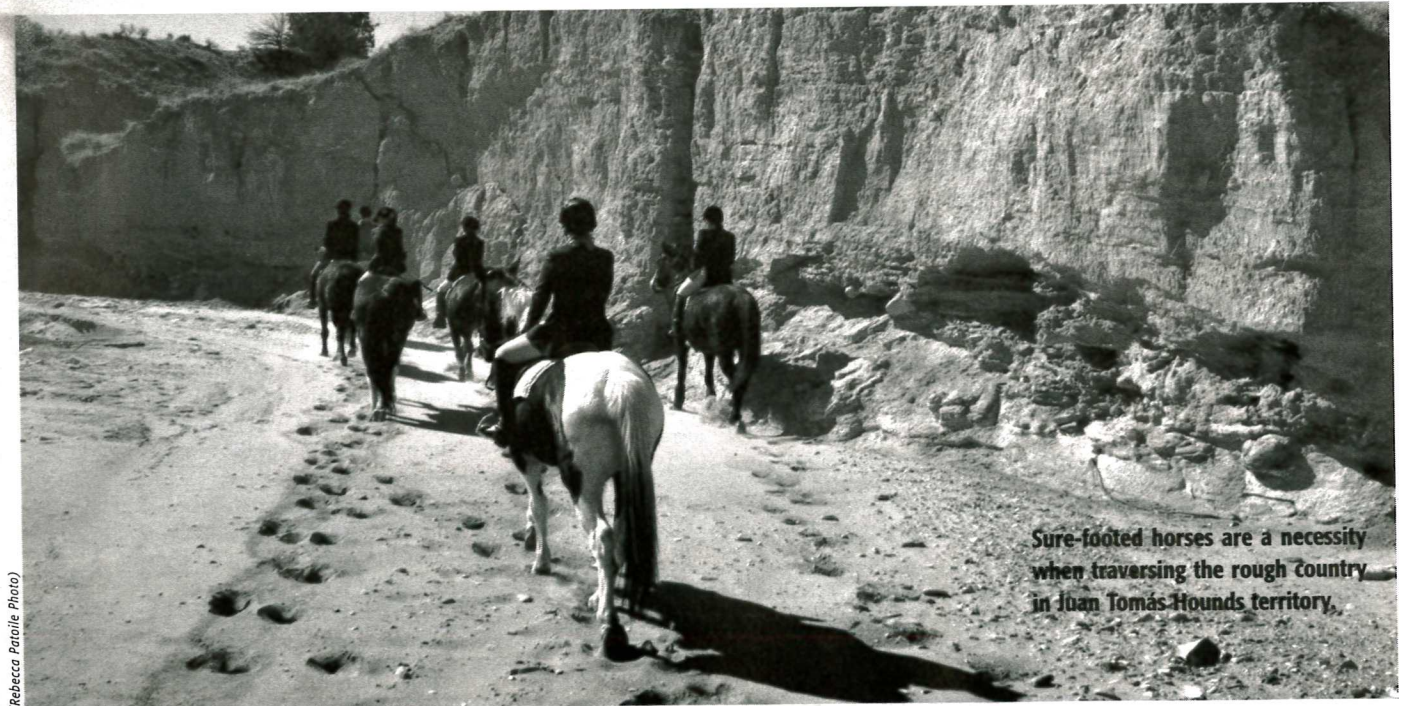
barbed wire is not common at this fixture, so jumping is not often necessary. However, the drop banks and rocky hills at a gallop proved to be more than enough challenge, that even the most courageous of riders would find their adrenaline rush in a day. Don Gonzales provided a graceful lead and carried a bone-handled hunting whip, made from the wood of a cholla cactus, an appropriate choice for this rough country.

The next morning, we drove to the Diamond Tail Ranch, also just south of Santa Fe, to hunt with the Juan Tomás Hounds. Juan Tomás Hounds were established in 1970 and Helen Kruger, who has been an MFH there for nearly as many years, greeted us. Huntsman James A. Nance, jt.-MFH, graciously offered his personal horses and hosted our hunting.

I was given a very pretty 17-hand, gray Thoroughbred, aptly named the Gray Bomber, who was very sure-footed throughout the day and never winded by this rugged country. My wife, Rebecca, rode a "mountain horse" of Mrs. Nance's, and this little roan knew the country on autopilot. This hunt is also a family affair, as James L. Nance led the field, with son Adren Nance and Mrs. James A. Nance whipping in.

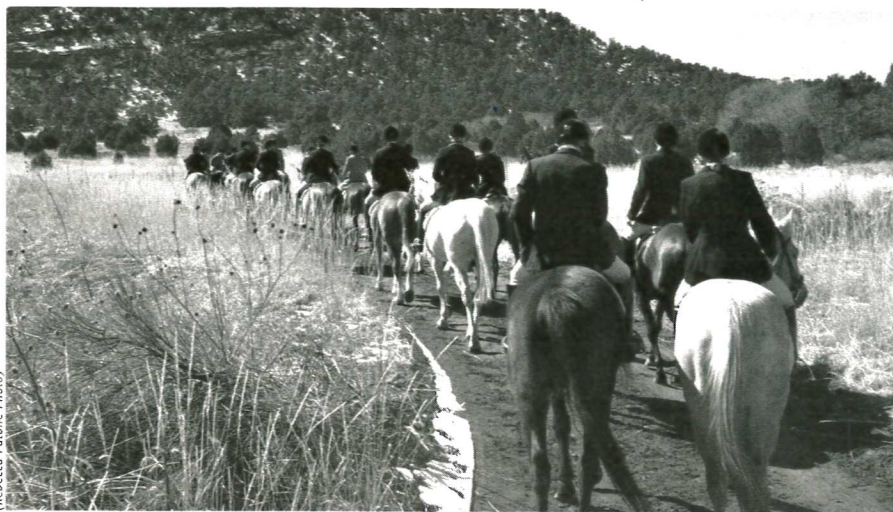
The country consists of 25,000 acres bordering an Indian reservation. We hunted behind 10 couple of mixed foxhounds, including several that had lion-hunting breeding in their backgrounds, and one Plott hound. The country is wide-open high desert with varied terrain from rocky foothills to sandy brush-covered mesas, only a few man-made jumps but many "ditches" and banks.

You thank God for a sure-footed horse after three hours hunting in this country. One check included looking at Indian pottery shards and knives on the top of a ridge-line, which James L. Nance explained was an old Indian site. I could almost hear a coyote



Sure-footed horses are a necessity when traversing the rough country in Juan Tomás Hounds territory.

(Rebecca Patoile Photo)



(Rebecca Patolle Photo)

Hunting with the Fort Carson Hounds involves hacking along tank tracks and over artillery firing ranges.

howling, wondering how long humans had heard their songs from this very ridge.

On March 4, we drove just south of Colorado Springs, Colo., to hunt with the relatively new Fort Carson Hounds. Gary Worrall, MFH, said that we would be hunting behind 10 couple of Walker hounds that were experts at following cold lines and known for their superb voice.

This description proved accurate as we hunted a portion of the 300,000 acres available at this Turkey Creek fixture. The hounds chased two coyotes, and the field had a nice view of one of them. Then, the field viewed two more coyotes as we exited the hunt country. This country features some of the sandy arroyos of the New Mexico fixtures, as well as wide-open pastures and galloping country.

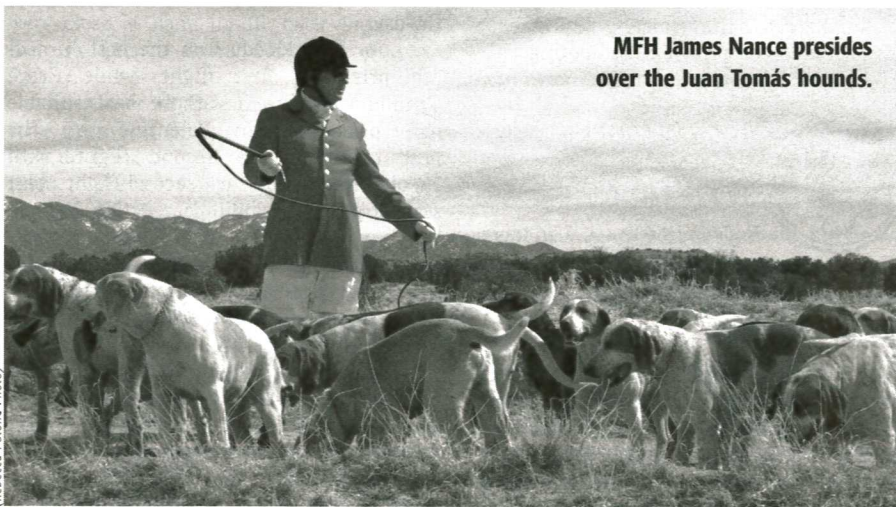
Field Master CWO Doug Bell, who is active-duty U.S. Army Special Forces, led us. He carried a radio, not for purposes of keeping with hounds, but for informing the Army Range Control of our locations. At the opening of the meet, he warned the field not to become separated from the hunt, as live artillery firing

was occurring on land adjacent to the hunt territory.

As we put hounds into cover on a tank track, there was no need to repeat this command to any of the field. I am embarrassed to admit that our horses were out of training, as this was their first hunt in some nine weeks due to the snow cancellations at our country. After we were slow to arrive at a check, he suddenly appeared from nowhere, and we were politely encouraged to, "Please close the field," which was said with a military feel of "closing the ranks."

The hunt was concluded by a radio broadcast, "Range Control, this is Foxhunt, mission completed and exiting the range." I doubt if another hunt can top the feeling that this type of radio broadcast leaves you with as you hack home.

Although many, if not most, of the members are civilians, the military feel of the hunt was unique, and one that surely left us feeling safe. The hunt breakfast featured German beer imported specially by the regiment and was located next door to the cavalry stables.



MFH James Nance presides over the Juan Tomás hounds.

(Rebecca Patolle Photo)



Mission Valley Hunt

17885 Nall St.,
Stilwell, Kansas 66085.
Established 1927.
Recognized 1930.

Tommy Jackson Finds Pot O' Gold On St. Patrick's Day

On March 17, Huntsman Tommy Jackson led the members of the Mission Valley Hunt on a merry chase, including a joyous run ending in a long view of a golden coyote—a St. Patrick's Day surprise.

After several weeks of canceled hunts due to an icy winter, members arrived early at the Black River fixture in Miami County, Kansas, the southernmost fixture of the Mission Valley Hunt Club. The formal dress code was suspended slightly, to allow for "the wearin' of the green," and many members put their imaginations into their green attire.

The weather was perfect for hunting, cool and overcast, but not cold or wet. Twenty-seven riders, plus a staff of six whippers-in aiding Huntsman Jackson, headed off shortly after 10 a.m., moving west down the hill from the barn.

The hounds were walked to the far southwest corner of the fixture, in a fallow corn field. Blowing his horn to start the hunt, Jackson cast the hounds north through a wood that borders two farm fields. At the end of the wood, whipper-in Christine Bondank viewed a coyote running north ahead of the hounds. The huntsman and then the riders in the field viewed the golden coyote—let's call him the pot o' gold—just as he entered the next wooded area, with hounds in hot pursuit.

Jackson led the field east, to the lane at the edge of the farmed area, and then north on the lane bordering the wire fence that separates the fields from the wooded hills. After stopping several times to listen to the hounds as they ran the coyote north, Jackson quickly ran back to the west, and plunged into the woods to follow—with the field following close behind.

► No Wet Feet!

Hounds, huntsman and riders then went, in fits and starts, picking their way through the woods, with one hound and then another sounding a wail, finding a scent. But Jackson was relentless, encouraging, cajoling the hounds. Suddenly, the hounds found the line again, and ran due west, toward the river, toward the edge of the hunt country. If the quarry crossed that river, the run would be over.

But the pot o'gold inexplicably stopped at the river and turned to the south—perhaps fear of wetting his paws surpassed his need to survive. In any event, with hounds and horses in close pursuit, the coyote ran south along the edge of the river. For more than a mile of perfect galloping with perfect footing, Irish eyes were smiling, watching and listening to a perfect pack do its job. As the field approached the southwest corner of the field, again about