

Seventy Seventh Opening Day at the Arapahoe Hunt



marc patoile

Dr. Beeman leads the hounds home after another successful opening hunt

While some ride to hunt, others hunt to ride. The 77th Opening Day at the Arapahoe Hunt was held Sunday, October 9, 2005. Ninety-three rode in the field for the beginning of another season. The huge number turning out should be no surprise, as the popularity of fox hunting is swelling. There are currently 171 organized clubs in North America.

To gallop over open country on a fine horse, who meets his fences well, is a memory that lasts a lifetime. And the thrill of riding over the countryside is something that is becoming increasingly hard to find as development encroaches on open spaces. Combine this with the sight and sound of a pack of hounds in full cry, may simply take your breath away. A word of caution though---the sounds of the

huntsman's horn mixed together with the music of the hounds can cause you to lay in bed at night wondering if you'll have just one more chance to hear it just once again. Ask any follower; life is never more fully lived; even if you are content to trot along watching the hunt from hilltops and passing through gates, as many often do.

The mounted followers included Mimi Dunckel-Martin, Executive Director of the

Colorado Horse Park. A four year old, riding a pony on a lead line held by her mounted mother, bowed her head to receive the blessing of horses and hounds, just next to a seventy-four year old member. Followers came from all walks of life; attorneys, car dealers, doctors, secretaries, and law enforcement. The powers of St. Hubert, the patron saint of hunters, were invoked and following a

stirrup cup, the field followed hounds gently to cover.

Hounds hacked to the creek, where they were put into cover and they hunted just a mile before five coyotes were viewed. The hounds elected to run one of the coyotes. This coyote was clever and ran a different pattern than they have previously in the year. When hounds were picked up in the CRP grasslands, they had run a five-

mile point nearing the limits of the hunt country. "This time of year, coyotes frequently develop a different route," explained Huntsman and Joint-Master G. Marvin Beeman, D.V.M. "Hounds don't do very well scenting when they get dehydrated, so we elected to pick them up and hack back to the creek, a mile and a half away to water them," he recounted, "but it turns out there was a coyote right there, so



Photo by Kathy Tourney

Horses and riders begin the run



Photo by Kathy Tourney

Huntsman and Joint Master Dr. Marvin Beeman holds the attention of the hounds



Photo by Rebecca Patoile

The traditional blessing of the hounds.



Photo by Rebecca Patoile

The author, Marc Patoile, getting his game face on.

they had another run of three to four miles before we got them a drink." The hunt left the kennels at approximately ten in the morning and returned at five minutes to one o'clock. "It was a very successful opening day," exclaimed Dr. Beeman.

It was the 62nd year that Dr. Beeman has worn a scarlet coat ahead of all of his Whippers-In, which was an unusual step for the hunt, but a tribute to those who work all season training the hounds. Bob Knox, Professional Whipper-In and Kennel Huntsman, was there as Beeman's right hand man, together with Honorary Whippers-In: Herb LaMee, Tom Mallard, Lyn Robinson, Ken Slyziuk, Christopher Towt, and Marshal Younglund. Michael Wilfley, President of the club, lead the field and Donald O'Connor, Joint-Master, headed up the second flight. The Arapahoe Hunt has had only three huntsmen since its reactivation in 1929. David Thornton, a Scotsman, was the original Huntsman. George Beeman succeeded him in 1934, and George hunted

the hounds for 53 years until his retirement in 1987, when his son, Dr. Marvin Beeman, succeeded him.

George not only hunted the hounds, but also bred and raised them; bred, raised and broke the staff horses; cared for 30 members' horses boarded at the kennels, and mended everything from saddles to pickups to windmills.

When George retired in 1987, his son, Marvin, a prominent equine veterinarian, took over as Huntsman and has hunted, exercised, bred, and doctored the hounds ever since.

Beeman pointed out, "It makes one appreciate our country even more, when we can see the hounds work, and riders don't have to be crowded." He related that, "two days before, while exercising hounds, a coyote followed us for a mile and stood up on the mound and watched us ride off, seeming to say, 'Now, you guys can go about your business and I'll go about mine.'" The hunt went 18 miles in two hours, forty minutes on Opening Day. ■

THE HOUNDS

Without the hounds, a hunt wouldn't exist. Thirty-seven tails wagged at the blessing of the hounds, as 18 couple of "the fast pack" were hunted from the Arapahoe Hunt's pack of 37 1/2 couple of hounds, (i.e., 70 hounds). This number does not include this year's puppies, which were back at the kennels being loved on by several children. The pups awaited their part in a fund raising auction, which followed the hunt's breakfast feast. The auction is for the right to bid on a hound for life in a race of hounds, which occurs annually at the Arapahoe's Point to Point in April. The Arapahoe Hunt uses English foxhounds rather than American foxhounds, and the breeding is listed to English packs such as Old Surrey and Barstow, the Whaddon Chase, the Puckeridge-Thurlow, the Vale of the White Horse, the North Cotswold, the Exmoor, and the College Valley. Some of the best working hounds on Opening Day included hounds only in their second season, who lead the last four and one-half mile point: Id, Hostile, Ickvin, and Ink. An older hound, Foss, set them straight a couple of times, as some of the younger hounds were thrown by the changing winds. Faultless and Foss came back to the line quite well.

HUNTING ATTIRE

Hunting has a long tradition, and it is out of tradition and a respect for the hounds, that a formal dress code is still followed by foxhunters. Black leather boots, breeches, a riding coat, a shirt with a tie or stock tie and a protective hat are generally seen at most hunts. Every hunt has two seasons: the early season when young hounds are introduced into the pack, and the formal season. The early season allows for less formal attire called "ratcatcher". Ratcatcher normally refers to the attire to accompany a neutral-colored sport coat or hacking jacket.

When the formal season opens, on Opening Day and thereafter, the staff wears its livery, often red coats with white breeches and black boots with tan leather tops. Some members who follow are also invited to wear the hunt's colors. Others generally wear black coats, buff breeches and black boots. Traditional hunting attire has changed little since fox hunting began, and is based on practicality at most hunts. The heavy boots and breeches protect riders from branches and thickets. The heavy Melton coats are almost waterproof and are heavy to provide some protection in the event of a fall. The stock tie, fastened with a plain gold safety pin, can serve as a bandage for man, hound or horse, in the rare event of an injury.



Photo by Kathy Tourney



Photo by Kathy Tourney

Don Gonzalez joins the Arapahoe Hunt from his hunt in New Mexico



Photo by Kathy Tourney

All ages of riders participated in the opening hunt

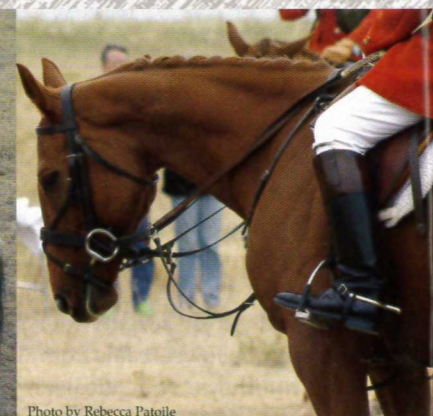


Photo by Rebecca Patoile

An elegant hunter pauses for a rest

HISTORY OF THE ARAPAHOE HUNT

Fox hunting has existed in North America since Colonial days with early records dating mounted hunts to 1650. The Arapahoe Hunt was founded in 1907 in Denver. We know very little about the early Hunt other than that its kennels were located on what is now the eighth green of the Denver Country Club golf course. Its hunt country was along Cherry Creek in what was then "South" Denver. The Arapahoe Hunt went dormant during World War I but was reactivated in 1929 by Lawrence C. Phipps, Jr., who had moved to Denver from Pittsburgh with his father, Lawrence C. Phipps, who later became a U.S. Senator. Mr. Phipps located the kennels on his ranch, the "Diamond K," now known as Highlands Ranch. Lawrence C. Phipps, Jr. was the father of one of our current Joint Masters, Lawrence C. Phipps III. In 1988, the Arapahoe Hunt built kennels and staff horse barn on the Lowry Bombing Range, leased from the Colorado

State Land Board. Donald J. O'Connor, Esq., and G. Marvin Beeman, D.V.M., are the present Joint-Masters of the hunt, together with Lawrence C. Phipps III.

The Arapahoe Hunt pursues only the coyote and was probably the first hunt in the U.S. to hunt coyotes exclusively since its reactivation in 1929. The fox and the coyote seldom appear to coexist peacefully.

The coyote is one of the very few animals that has extended its range in the face of civilization. You have probably seen pictures of the coyote drinking out of a Los Angeles swimming pool or loping through a suburban New York City cemetery. Guests are welcome at the Arapahoe Hunt and more information can be found at www.arapahoehunt.com. The hunt especially invites junior and novice riders for introductory hunts on Oct. 22, Nov. 26, Dec. 17, 2005, and Jan. 21, Feb. 25, and Apr. 1, 2006. A successful hunt usually ends when the

fox or coyote is accounted for by entering a hole in the ground, called an earth. Once there, hounds are rewarded with praise from their huntsman. The quarry is left to be followed another day.



Photo by Kathy Tourney

HUNT TERMINOLOGY

Away - The quarry is in the open and hounds are on the line of scent.

Babble - To give tongue on a scent other than fox, on no scent at all, or on a scent too faint to follow. Hounds are not said to "bark" but rather to "give tongue," "make music," or if mistaken to "babble."

Blank - Failure to find the quarry in a covert is to draw blank. Failure to find the quarry all day is to have a blank day.

Capping fee - A capping fee paid by non-members to ride with the field, which supports the hunt. Traditionally, the masters may have held out their hat for a donation to feed the hounds, hence the reference to a cap.

Cast - When hounds search for a lost line. The Huntsman may take charge of the pack and help them, or hounds may cast themselves.

Check - An intentional or unintentional interruption of the run caused by hounds losing the scent.

Colors - The distinctive colors that distinguish the uniform of one hunt from another. To be awarded colors, is to be given the right to wear them and the hunt button. This is an honor awarded by the master of the hunt.

Coop - a paneled jump, which resembles an old triangular chicken coop.

Couple - hounds are counted in pairs. Five couple would be 10 hounds.

Covert - (pronounced "cover") Woods or dense growth where a fox or coyote may be found.

Cry - The sound given by the hounds when hunting. Also called "giving tongue" or "speaking." Voice of the hounds as in "full cry."

Cubbing or Cubhunting - the early season before the formal hunting season begins, where often the young hounds are introduced to hunting.

Dogs - A term never used in fox hunting. We say "hounds" unless you are referring only to the male hounds, which are "dog hounds." The term for females is "bitches," but you'll also hear huntsmen lovingly say "my ladies."

Draw - Put hounds into a covert to find a fox or coyote.

Entry - hounds "enter" regular hunting with the pack, usually at a year of age. Young riders are often called "young entry" by older members of the hunt.

Field - The group of people riding to the hounds, excluding the Master and staff.

Field Master - The person designated by the MFH to control the field. Never pass the field master, as he or she is intended to lead the field, beware of the hunt's territory, and to ensure that the hounds are not interfered with in any way.

Fixture - The time and place of a meet, or hunt assembly. A fixture card is a listing of the scheduled meets.

Hill Toppers - Foxhunters taking an alternate route (usually on top a hill) to watch from a distance and follow along with the field but not ride in the thick of things. This group usually covers less ground and is comprised of green riders, riders with green horses or simply less experienced fox hunters.

Hounds - The correct term used in fox hunting for our canine counter parts.

Huntsman - Hunt staff member who is responsible for controlling the hounds in the field.

Line - The trail or scent of the fox.

Master or MFH - Master of Foxhounds (MFH), the person in command of the hunt in the fields and kennels.

Meet - The meet is where all the hunt and followers collect before a day's hunting.

Point - Distance covered during a run, as the crow flies. The straight line distance of a run.

Quarry - The animal hunted. A fox or coyote.

Ratcatcher - Informal hunting attire. Black, brown or grey tweed coat. Tan, buff or brown breeches. Black or brown boots.

Run - A gallop for the field when the hounds are on a line.

Scent - The distinctive odor the quarry on the ground, grass, foliage, and in the air. Can vary with weather and ground conditions.

Staff - The Huntsman and Whippers-in.

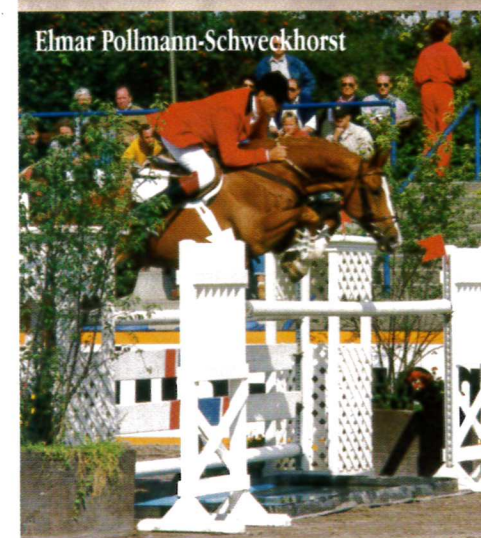
Stern - tail of a hound.

Tongue - Cry, a hound "gives tongue" when he proclaims with his voice that he is on a line.

View - To see or sight a fox.

Whipper-In - Hunt staff who assist the huntsman with hounds.

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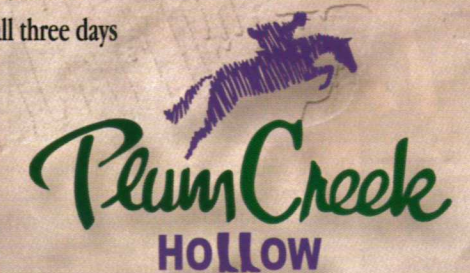
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