

# The Rapp Sheet



## Newsletter of the Rappahannock Hunt

Issue 1

Spring 2017

We are pleased to present the newest rendition of a Rappahannock Hunt tradition. We hope to publish quarterly, and we welcome your submissions of articles, essays, poems, photos, items for sale, and announcements.

## *From the Huntsman*

### One Fine Day...

For many years now, when the calendar promises frigid temps, occasionally accompanied by biting winds and often snow, Rappahannock Hunt members have longed for the promise of warm temperatures and hospitality in southern regions of the country. History has been kind to us, to say the least, as great friendships have been realized in the friendly confines of North and South Carolina, Georgia and Alabama.

No doubt each of you reading this is now fondly looking back on your own excursions on our hunt trips and the bonds that have been formed. From the huntsman's perspective, I see an evolution. Never have I been concerned of our membership's ability to mesh with the locals ... I have supreme confidence in the depth and quality of character each of you bring to the table. Rather, it is the pack to which I refer. When we were wet behind the ears in our

travels south, happiness came in the form of taking a group of hounds that kept up, kept quiet when expected, and ran like hell in between. As the years mounted, happiness was harder to come by. The individual that "fit in" was no longer enough, so a keen eye was put to work looking for the individual(s) that stood out. (With any luck, it was for the right reasons.) As the pack started to raise the bar of expectation, I, the coach, did so as well. We have both been rewarded.

Fast forward 20-plus years. Many fond memories are always present as I reflect on past trips. As I sift through them from time to time, it becomes apparent that I am looking back through generations of quality RH hounds. A quick trip through the memories will bring about Pester, Piper and Pagan in their first hound trial, coursing through the Georgia pines. hot on the heels of a native coyote

that was accounted for an hour or so later in a three-foot-deep creek. The next memory is of a combined pack of hounds, some 60 in number, going into a covert 30 minutes into a tremendous run on another coyote. Voices rang over the airwaves with shouts of "Tallyho Coyote" so often as to give the illusion of a never-ending echo. By the time the hounds emerged from the wood to the clearing, no fewer than five coyote had been viewed. Not one hound left his original quarry. Two hours and 20 minutes later, the pack was halted as they crossed the riding ring at Foxboro Farm under nothing more than moonlight. More than 30 riders were still in tow.

Moreover, there were hunts in monsoon conditions, hard gallops into and over wire fences, extreme chases down the elusive Stillwater Road, hounds surrounding the base of a treed fox, regular views of bobcats, pigs, foxes and coyotes galore.

As special as each of these memories is, none can match the newest. This year we arrived for a joint meet with Whiskey Road. The day was already hot as the hounds were released and the temperature promised to climb higher still. No matter. The mixed pack was not to be deterred. A coyote was viewed early into our day and the hounds set on the line. Over the next two hours and 20 minutes, the hounds treated all in attendance to the most glorious hound music. Coyotes sprang from tree lines, from grassy fields, from swamps and seemingly from thin air. Now, I would like to tell you the hounds never ran any but the first, but that would not be true. That said, they ran hard in the 80-degree day with a tenacity that fills my soul. Over the two-plus hours, I would estimate we never left an area the size of 75 acres. This afforded tremendous and frequent views of the hounds in their pursuit. All in the mixed pack did quite well, but Rappahannock Bishop was the superstar. Those of you that

know him have learned he has a deep, booming voice like none other. It was on fine and constant display that day. When the hounds broke covert, he was on top. When they went out of view, he was heard above all else. It was an extraordinary display to say the least.

I have had the good fortune to hunt behind some impressive hounds over 30-plus years. None of those hounds impressed me as much as Rappahannock Bishop did that day. Never have I witnessed a hound so in his element, so made for the moment he was in. The pack veered off course several times over the day, but each time Bishop set them right again. Best of all, as the run progressed the young entry ran with more vigor, more determination, more want-to, as they learned from their leader.

As I sat on my horse in awe, I heard a wonderful thing taking place behind me. The field started to take note of what the hounds were doing and the conditions in which they were

doing so. The field members picked up on the leader, who could be heard above all else. They realized something special was happening, that moment that you read about in the books from times gone by, only this time it was in front of their eyes, in the present. Eventually, talk could be heard more easily as they remarked to each other. Due to the confines of the run, I passed the field many times to chants of "Isn't that Bishop leading the way?" and "You must be so proud."

The truth is, we all left there proud that day. Each RH member sat a little taller in the saddle. Each Whiskey Road member did the same as they remarked on the stellar day. The staff enjoyed not having to run like hell and instead seeing hound work they all too often miss. A retiring Master sat perched on her horse, incredibly satisfied that the day had turned out so perfectly as she hosted RH one last time. Lastly, two

huntsmen congratulated each other on as fine of a day as they could remember, following a tired pack of hounds led by a bull-mouthed dog from Rappahannock.

Michael Brown, MFH

Rappahannock Hunt Huntsman

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### *Musings of a Field Master*

What is it we love about this sport of foxhunting? How did we come to devote fortunes and abundant time to this obsession? Let me recount a little how I came to be in the position of (your grateful) Fieldmaster.

Initially, I started riding to hounds as a kind of lark - really, as an adventure in keeping up with my wife and children, who had adopted the habit of leaving in the o'dark on weekend mornings and not returning until later in the afternoon, glowing and often exhausted. Soon, my job became grooming for Connor, my then-eight



year-old son: getting up with them before the birds, helping wrangle the pony (and horses for various other riders), driving the horse van to the meets, unloading the pony (and horses), holding the pony, and then seeing the field go off through a field, over a hill, into woods and disappear ... for about three hours, while I waited impatiently for their return.

Upon their return, I got to hold the pony again, untack him, put him (and several others) in the old van and drive home. (Of course, I left out the eating and drinking and socializing part,

which makes Rappahannock's hunt breakfasts some of the best anywhere).

After just the first time of doing this, I knew that I would need to foxhunt, too. That was in fall 2003. By the following fall, I took my first sojourn in saddle behind (and maybe once or twice inadvertently past) Master Oliver Brown (who graciously my first time out forgave me my transgressions).

Since that time, I have come to love, as many of us do, the cool morning camaraderie of horses and riders. I am deeply appreciative of our landowners, who allow us to ride over and experience the beauty of their farms

and fields, mountain trails, and breathtaking views.

Of course, too, I am fueled by the adrenaline rush that ensues when the hounds speak, the huntsman blows the horn, and the hunt field picks up a chase.

Along the way, from 2003 until today, there have been some spills to complement the thrills. But I'll address those perhaps at a later time.

Kris Deal  
Fieldmaster

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## What's Wrong With Wadsworth?

By J. Harris Anderson

Have you ever recommended the classic primer *Riding to Hounds in America* to someone new to foxhunting? Written by William P. Wadsworth, MFH, and first published in 1962, it's widely considered the essential introductory text about our sport. Now in its 19<sup>th</sup> printing, the original text has never been revised. The absence of any alterations suggests two possibilities: either Wadsworth's pen flowed with such eternal infallibility that not one jot has become outdated in 55 years or, alternatively, no one who knows a damn thing about foxhunting

today has actually read it since the Kennedy Administration.

To be sure, there's much within those light beige covers still of inestimable value. But a few caveats would be in order before putting this pamphlet in the hands of the foxhunting "newbie." A dozen or so citations of questionable applicability include the following [where italics appear, they are Wadsworth's emphasis]:

"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.” (Page 5)

“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.” (Page 6) [And to make sure he gets his point across, Wadsworth adds this farther on:] “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.” (Page 39) [By “shoot him” I think we can assume Wadsworth wasn’t talking about a shot of Acepromazine.]

“Never use a hunting whip or a bat to discipline a hunter. Use spurs instead, if necessary, and he will not be whip-shy.” (Page 7)

“Do not use a saddle cloth unless necessary...” (Page 7)

“On no account should you use rubber pads on your stirrups as they are most dangerous.” (Page 7)

“The running martingale can be most dangerous, and some hunts frown on it use. The standing martingale, *properly adjusted*, is considerably less dangerous.” (Page 8) [Back in “The Day,” the redoubtable Mrs. Randolph would have sent you home if you showed up at Piedmont with the wrong martingale. Wadsworth’s counsel still holds in the estimation of some. But others take the opposite view or have no preference either way.]

“Sandwich cases or flasks (never both) may be carried...” (Page 9) [Never both? You mean I’ve been violating a Wadsworth dictum all these years and no one has ever bothered to correct me?]

“...never wear a hunting cap without being sure the MFH approves. The cap is a symbol of authority, to be worn only by staff and other persons singled out by the MFH.” (Page 9) “Hat: Black...hunting bowler. (see Foreword p.2) (Page 10) [Granted, in his Foreword to the 1987 printing, Peter Winants does state his belief that Wadsworth would have agreed that “harnesses for hunt caps are acceptable in the hunting field.” But no effort was made to revise the text beyond that parenthetical reference to the Foreword. And even that might still be read to suggest even a harness-equipped “hunt cap” is only for staff and everyone else should wear bowlers.]

“Breeches...should have buttons at the knee, not laces. They must fit well, so unless you are one in a million, they should be made to order.” (Page 10) [The helpful and knowledgeable ladies at Horse Country Saddlery might disagree on the made-to-order part. And while I still have one old pair of breeches with buttons at the knees, they are a true oddity to today’s hunt field.]

Under instructions for how to tie a stock: “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).” (Page 12) [Even at my advanced age, I’m not familiar with “collar buttons” for a “man’s dress shirt.” And I challenge anyone without an engineering degree to tie a proper stock by following Wadsworth instructions.]

“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...” (Page 14) “Your van...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.) (Page 24)

Interspersed with these outdated, or at least questionable, bits of counsel are valuable passages of timeless advice. While some elements of turnout have changed (e.g., hunt caps as a mark of authority and buttons on the knees of tailor-made breeches) much has remained the same. Moreover, even back in '62, Wadsworth recognized that while he considered hunting attire to be "rigidly conventional," he conceded that "some hunts are much less conventional about what is expected of the field than others" and that "certain local customs have developed." As such, he advised the novice to "consult with an experienced hunting person who is acquainted with what is expected of a newcomer to that particular hunt." [I'm always amused by questions posted on Facebook asking about some element of turnout. The hunting traditionalist can pontificate till the hounds come home about what's "correct," but the simple answer is almost always, "Ask the leadership of the specific hunt."]

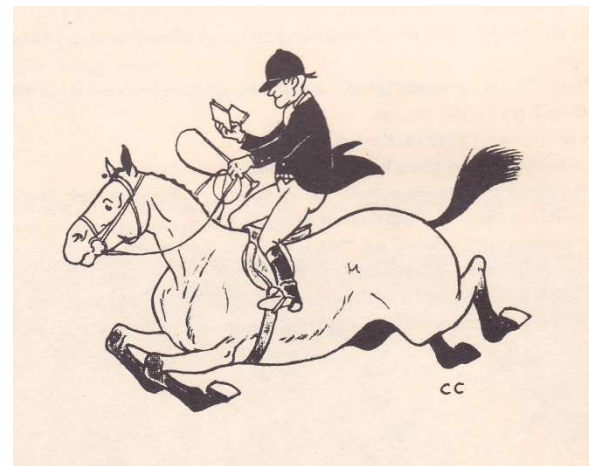
Another passage worth reading is Wadsworth's excellent definition of hunting etiquette: "Good manners may be defined as habitual consideration for the rights and feelings of other people with whom we come into contact. Hunting etiquette may be defined as the rules by which good manners may be best expressed under conditions prevailing in the hunting field." (Page 35)

Most would likely agree that other Wadsworth citations on turnout and etiquette, such as the use of ladies' hairnets (he was for them) and excessive

"coffeehousing" (he was against it), are also still valid. But, again, even those could be considered within the purview of the particular hunt.

Yet despite all its outdated passages, Wadsworth's booklet is still considered by many to be a must-read for anyone new to foxhunting. In reality, though, much of its message is likely to leave the "newbie" more confused than edified. If there's one admonition worth following, it's one already cited above, a bit of counsel that, if followed faithfully, will negate the need for any general purpose instruction manual: "consult with an experienced hunting person who is acquainted with what is expected of a newcomer to that particular hunt."

On the upside, for the price (\$6.00 at Horse Country), it makes an amusing addition to your foxhunting library. And if nothing else, the classic Custer Cassidy sketches are good for a chuckle.





## *From a Veterinarian's Viewpoint*

In my short tenure as a practicing veterinarian, I have had the pleasure of working with both “horse” people and “dog” people (we’ll save “cat” people for another time) and have learned a thing or two about these illustrious groups along the way. Firstly, sometimes a “dog” person is also a “horse” person, a double whammy. Secondly, there seems to be an ongoing competition to determine which group has flown farther over the cuckoo’s nest (still no comparison with the “cat” folks), and from where I stand, it is difficult to determine the winner. One thing is true of both of these camps, however, and that is that the lucky canine or equine is more than just a warm body, but is a trusted partner, a confidant, a protector, and a beloved member of the family unit.

Folks seem to choose breeds of both species that are natural extensions of their own personality. The outdoorsy, happy go-lucky fellow will

more than likely have a Labrador Retriever at his side. The arm chair adventurer with the physicality to traverse the globe but the mentality to feel more comfortable locked in a closet will choose an Arabian for her equine partner. The optimist who believes that dreams always do come true, who may or may not have the stickability to stay on top, but who will continue to remount if unseated brings home the OTTB, usually sight unseen. The man about town who enjoys the finer things in life and wouldn't dream of leaving the house unless coiffed, tucked, and scented tends to have under his arm a miniature Poodle or Yorkie or some kind of creative combination of breeds whose name ends in “-oodle” or “-orkie” (Dorkie is one of my personal favorites). The practical lady who keeps a strict attention to detail and tradition, prioritizes comfort, and is able to find a suitably sized mounting block will

invariably swing her leg over a Warmblood on a hunting morning and can be counted on to share her flask with the field. The kid at heart, who has both the stature to pull it off and the mettle to win the battles that invariably ensue, will ride the ponies. The do-gooder, kind-hearted, individual who has trouble getting just the one dog (or 10) will have the rescue(s) in all shapes and sizes and leg numbers.

I salute you all, those that share their lives and their love with these wonderful creatures who enrich us and

deepen our characters and our experiences.

Dr. Virginia Rushing, DVM

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### *Messages From the Masters*

In this issue, we have heard from Michael Brown, MFH, and below we feature a column from Gus Edwards, MFH. Our senior master, Oliver Brown, will tell us a hound tale in the next issue.

## COURTESY COUNTS!

Even in the hunt field, a little consideration goes a long way and can add to the fun.

As all foxhunters know, our ancient sport is steeped in traditions, and not least among them is courtesy. Good manners and consideration for others are hallmarks of the truly accomplished foxhunter. There's also an important underlying reason: safety.

Many of our traditions were established because the Masters and staff have a responsibility to see that members of the field go home in as good shape as when they arrived.

Practices and procedures can vary widely from hunt to hunt, but there are some basic, universal guidelines we follow at RH that will stand you in good stead wherever you may be hunting.

1. Keep safety foremost in your mind. No matter how skilled a horseman you believe yourself to be, if you're out on a new or green horse of whom you're not sure, or if you think you might be overmounted, ride with the third flight or keep to the rear of the other field(s).  
If we're on a run and the person in front of you can't keep up, pass safely. Otherwise, stay where you are.
2. Arrive at the meet on time and ready to ride. It's bad manners to keep the field – and particularly the Huntsman – waiting while you tack up and get ready to ride. If you can't tack up at the barn before you load, be sure to arrive at the fixture in plenty of time to do so without keeping everyone waiting for you.
3. Both horse and rider should be properly attired at formal meets. While at RH, unlike at some other hunts, we are not sticklers for formality, it demonstrates respect, for the sport and for others in the field who have made the effort, to be properly attired on formal days. Black coats with brick colored britches are RH's official uniform. For those wearing scarlet, tan britches are appropriate. Turtlenecks are acceptable, but make sure you're wearing a stock tie. Saddle cloths are not acceptable under pads on formal days. If you must have an exception, or if you have questions about what's proper, ask a Master or the Honorary Secretary.
4. Keep your conversation to a minimum and keep it quiet. It's fine, and fun, to chat with other riders, but be mindful not to be so loud as to make it difficult to hear hounds. Although your Field Master usually has a radio, sometimes it's necessary to listen for hounds to determine their direction. Loud conversation and raucous laughter make it hard for the Field Master, Whips and members of the field to do that.
5. Refrain from giving advice to the Master or Huntsman or voicing complaints while in the field. If your Field Master or the Huntsman seek your advice, feel free to provide it quietly and politely. If you are discontented with any aspect of the hunting, speak to a Master before or after the hunt to get it resolved. Do not inflict your complaints upon other members of the field, who may otherwise be enjoying themselves.
6. Do not speak to or otherwise interfere with working hounds. Some of us know many hounds by name, sight and sound and have real affection for them. However, when they're in the field, hounds are at work – even at checks –

and should not be distracted from what they're paid to do. Distracting them can spoil everybody's fun. The only voices they should hear and respond to are the Huntsman's and Whips'. On occasion, the Huntsman or a Master may that request a member of the field help in moving or gathering hounds. Then, and only then, is it appropriate for a member of the field to speak to them.

7. If your horse stops at a jump even once, get out of the way immediately. Circle around to the back of the field and let the rider behind you proceed. Not only is it rude, but it's also dangerous to obstruct riders behind you by repeatedly trying to get your horse to jump. And, it slows down the pursuit if we're on a run.
8. Never, never, never smoke in the field.  
The smell of tobacco (or any other noxious weed!) is offensive and can affect hounds' scenting. It's also

dangerous if we've had a particularly dry spell. Besides, you shouldn't be smoking anyway!

Gus Edwards, MFH



Thanks to all who contributed to the spring issue of The Rapp Sheet.

Your editor,

Melanie

