



# SKYLINES

Newsletter of the Skycastle French Hounds



December 2008

Gillian Wiedorn, Editor

## Master's Report, Fall/Winter 2008

Skycastle celebrated the start of its sixtieth season with a **60th Anniversary Dinner** at Stonewall Golf Club in Elverson on September 26th. It was a grand evening, highlighted by the presentation of a Congratulation Certificate from the Senate of Pennsylvania by Senator Andrew Dinniman, in recognition of our sixty years of providing sport to the community and our continuing efforts to promote open space conservation in Chester County.

Our **Opening Meet and Blessing of the Hounds** at Marsh Creek State Park on October 12 was very special. It marked the start of our sixtieth season hunting in Chester County. Our Chairman, Rick Litts, who has helped to refocus the hunt on enjoyment of hunting and the countryside, was back out and recovering nicely. And on a hot, dry afternoon hounds worked very well with a long run along the right side woods to ground at the top of the rise, then two rabbits were run from the crossover hedgerow and the woods above the road to marks. The Kalmbachs' tea was super. The **Bedwells'** on the 19th was again very dry, but hounds had three good long runs, especially the find and driving run out of the upper power line briar hell and in two loops from cover strip to cover strip and to ground after a good 35 minutes to end the day.

The **Fall Basset Pack Trials** were great. The weather varied from dry to rain and gale winds. Our three couple on the 24th October was outstanding, and the only solid hunt of the day. Scenting conditions were tough. Several packs hunted to losses with little action before and after us. We started in a cover where a rabbit had been viewed, but the preceding pack could do nothing with it. Hounds dug in the brush piles and worked through all around it, then Sabine and Mischief opened strongly. The rest flew to them and drove the rabbit out for a doubling run in and out of three patches of cover, then ran it down into the left back side woods to the bottom of the enclosure and turned it back up the hill. Pampa led the charge as the pack ran it to ground in a large brush and log pile. They got a second one going for a short run through two patches and to ground, and then drew left handed towards the center. Pampa spoke, then Daphne and Sabine, and a rabbit exploded back towards the back fence cover with the pack all on in cry as our time ran out. It was a well earned win. Hounds were impressive. Laura and Nick did a fine job. Laura's performance earned her the Best Whipper-In Award of the Fall Trials. The next day was the turn of the five couple class. We hunted in driving rain and wind, so loud we could barely hear hounds or each other. They found the first rabbit in the bank briars below the cabins and ran to a loss, then got another going for a loop in the bottom along the stream briars to a possible mark left of the kennel woods, and worked back through the "graveyard" bottom to get another up and running across the drive for a run back and forth behind the kennels and to ground on the wooded bank above the drive. We crossed and began working the cover below the drive as time ran out. It was good for a third place, and I was very proud of our hounds in such conditions. Liz and Megan Roberts did a super job whipping in. A fine weekend indeed.

**Welkinweir** on November 2 was a new meet for us, and proved to be a winner—6 rabbits were run, 3 to ground, with plenty of views for the field, as the pack scoured one hillside cover after another. At the **Silbermans'** on the 9th, we had a short run in Eli's hedgerows and held off deer, then a really nice run at Joanie Cadwalader's from the road end up to the back of her property. There hounds drove the rabbit up the long stream cover and back across the drive to ground. They then got a couple up in and out of the center field hedgerow and to ground to finish up. We hunted **James Mill Farm**, another new meet, from Wesley Sessa's on the 16th. It was a long



Whipper-in Laura Booth, Master and Joint Huntsman Jim Schamberg and Whipper-In Nick Booth presenting the pack to the judges for the three couple pack class



Nick Booth, Jim Schamberg and Laura Booth with the Three Couple Pack Bohemia River Plate, the Carpenter Plate (50% Field and 50% Bench) and first place ribbon

blank through the lower pastures til we go back to Wesley's and drew the swamp and hedgerows. Paydirt! Three rabbits were found and run all over the area, one to ground on the far hillside and two were accounted for in the bottom covers. Mireine and Sabine were the drive, and young Salsa was great. The 23rd at **Amy and John McKennas'** yielded only one rabbit, and hounds were repeatedly tempted by fox and deer, but they worked every bit of cover. Audrey Cole, Mary Jane Wallace and Pat Roche gave us a great tea afterwards, and Amy's soup was super. The **Hallmans'** on the 30th was a very good day, with excellent houndwork on 5 rabbits—nice runs in the hedgerow and fields above the barn and in the coverts and hedgerows at Thayer's and the woods above Theurkauf's. Tea afterwards at the Geers' was welcome, especially the venison chili.

**Wickersham's** on December 7 was a great day in icy, howling wind. A stalwart field saw hounds find almost immediately in the hedgerow and corn strips beyond the corn maze area. They put their first rabbit to ground and were quickly on another that looped out through the corn, where two more got up. After a split they got together and holed one, then another, working steadily the length of the field cover. Drawing toward the new development they flushed out another and drove it up toward the fields near Wawaset Road, running it right hand to the corner of the thick briary fence line, where rabbits blew out in all directions. Hounds ran one up the left line and marked near the road, then followed another one back to the corner to ground. After a steady hunt back the length of the field tracking a rabbit to ground, we ended this amazing day and got hounds loaded up in the trailer while our field and staff warmed up on hot soup and tea. Meeting in Embreeville at the **Cheslen Preserve** on the 14th, we had several nice long runs to marks along the old railroad cut and the big covert up to the power line hedgerow at the top of the hill, and finished the day with a good hunt back down to the railroad line and a run past the potter's field to ground below the bank on the left side of the big field. Gillian and Maria's tea at the Booths' was very welcome, and we surprised Laura with a birthday cake. Our next meet was iced out on the 21st, but the Boxing Day meet at **Josie Parman's Allerton Farm** on the 26th was very good. We put two to ground in the woods covert at the meet and didn't break on fox and two deer, and ran another to a loss in the woods above Allerton road, again steady to deer. Then hounds worked the briars in the power line cut for a short run to ground and a good long looping run from one briar hell to another, with deer interruptions, til it finally got to ground in the top big briar patch. Josie Parman's tea was super. We finished the year with a young staff hunt at **Twin Ridges Farm** on the 28th. Sally Roberts hunted hounds. It was a tough scenting day, but hounds never stopped working, and got good runs on two rabbits in the quarry covert. Hot soup, tea and goodies were most welcome. It has been great to have Megan and Sally Roberts, Eliot Kalmbach and Gwen Knight with us over the holidays.

Bye day training hunts Wednesdays and Saturdays have been very helpful in getting the young entry and other young hounds steady. Gillian and Paul Wiedorn, Coopie Heiserman and Lisa Booth have been great. Our young staff, Laura and Nick Booth, have also helped out Saturdays, and Liz and Teddy Roberts have helped whenever their job schedules have permitted. We owe them all alot for their time and effort, week in and week out. Soon we'll be starting the "T" litter hunting in ones and twos with older hounds. Everyone is welcome to join us on bye days. Call Jim Scharnberg or Gillian Wiedorn Tuesday and Friday evenings for times and locations.

The 60th season is going very well indeed so far, with two new meets added this fall, and new ones we will be exploring on bye day hunts the second half of the season. Our First Whipper-In, Phyllis Allen, has opened up some great property in the old Brandywine country, notable Cheslen, Allerton Farm and the Wickersham's. We can also use new locations north of Route 30, as more of our old meets in the Pickering country get developed each year. Happily, Welkinweir, which Julie Geer gave us a lead to, has proved to be a success. Please let us know if you have any friends' properties in mind. We owe our sport to our wonderful landowners.—JFS



Eliot Kalmbach and Gwen Knight, Whippers-In, Sally Roberts, Joint Huntsman, and Laura Booth, Megan Roberts and Nick Booth, Whippers-In, at Twin Ridges Farm on December 28th.