



SKYLINES

Newsletter of the Skycastle French Hounds



Spring 2010

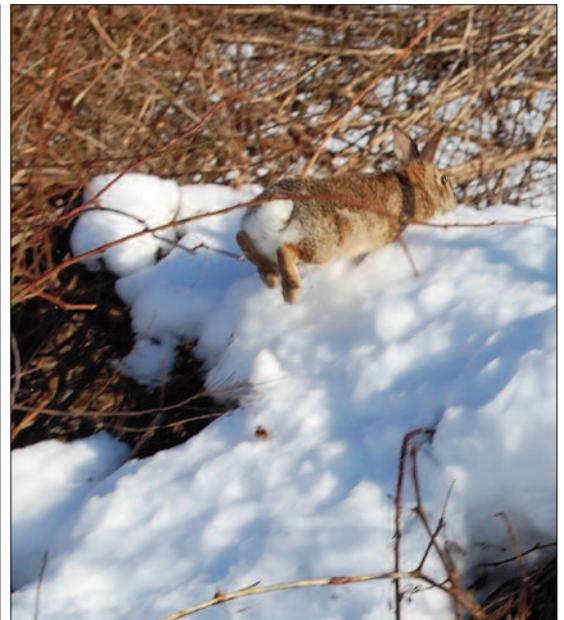
Gillian Wiedorn, Editor

Hunting Report, Spring 2010

Our 2009-2010 season has continued to be plagued with rough weather conditions, but hounds have shown very good sport. At the meet at **Brandywine Valley Association** on January 31, hounds put two rabbits to ground in the first big cover, then worked the rest of the property thoroughly with a final rabbit in the last cover going in. On February 7 we again were snowbound and walked out at kennels. Dave Duvall, Lisa Booth and Gene Bolt did a super job. The next big storm hit just before the weekend on the 12th. We cleaned out again on Saturday and walked hounds at kennels on Sunday the 14th. Sunday the 21st was a great restart for the season after the blizzards that shut us down for the past two Sunday meets. The Christiansen's was still buried in fairly deep snow with no safe parking for a lot of cars, so we hunted at **Church Farm School** instead. Headmaster Ned Sherrill was very kind to let us have another regular meet there on short notice. It was sunny and a balmy 45° after the arctic conditions we've been experiencing. We started hunting the lower field hedgerows and soon had a good run going. Our first rabbit took us the length of the left field and the next, down to the pond and across the walking trail to ground, with hounds working it out of several tangles on the way. They got up several short runners, including a run to ground with hounds marking out of sight two to three feet under the snow, and another the length of the left field and back to ground during the first hour. I lifted the pack and crossed Church Farm Lane, where they found immediately in the hedgerow along the walking trail and the fun began. Hounds ran this rabbit the length of the field almost to the next road, inside and outside the long hedgerow and half way back to ground. They worked back towards the lane, getting up a couple of dodgy rabbits for short runs to marks. Then we got a flier. This tricky rabbit led the pack back and forth, in and out of cover, the length of the field two times, with several checks in deep spots under the briars, until they finally



Hounds working the line inside and outside of the hedgerow line at Church Farm....



Our hard-running cottontail emerging from the inside....

marked in a heavy mass of briar and we gave it best to end this exciting day. We walked back to the barns to a welcome tailgate of Teddy Roberts's and Pat Stephanoff's hot soup, sandwiches, tea and assorted goodies, and a surprise birthday cake for your 72 year old master! On Sunday the 28th at **White Acres Farm** we had two 4 couple hunts in the upper fields and hedgerows. I took Uwchlan and Uproar out with them. The first pack worked well and got a good run along the upper edges on a fast doubling rabbit that they marked to ground. The next 4 couple worked hard to no avail through the drifts and covers near the tenant house. It was fun to see the puppies digging like veterans in with the older hounds. The Whittakers had a welcome fire going in the house for us afterwards at the "Gentlemen's Tea", which was great fun.

March 7 was another change of venue due to drifts at Grabosky's. We hunted at the **Moore's Great Marsh Farm** and had one good run in the woods border on the right side to ground and two short running rabbits in the upper hedge line before drawing back to end the day. The warm indoor tailgate was welcome after the heavy going in melting snow. Sunday March 14 was a washout after the previous torrential rains at Reiff's Farm. We hunted two 4 couples at **White Acres Farm** kennels instead. It was a good afternoon. Each pack found rabbits and ran them to marks in the upper pasture hedgerows. My two young 8 month-olds, Uwchlan and Uproar, did well, working hard inside and going quickly to cry when hounds found. We had a sumptuous barn tailgate afterwards. Wednesday the 17th we hunted at Marsh Creek. Hounds drew every inch of cover, and had 1 doubling rabbit on the east side of the old racecourse which they ran and marked to ground. Teasel and Trompette are becoming solid pack hounds. Hounds worked solidly and tight at Church Farm on Saturday, 20 March. It was Uwchlan's first training hunt, and he worked very well indeed. We had several runners to marks on the right side of the lane, and a nice hunt on the left side with a field loop and then a run from the lane to the pond, as well as a couple of short runs.

Mischief again showed the way on the bare gravel of the running trail. It was a good morning. On Sunday March 21, it was almost 80° F, sunny with little wind, and bone dry at our hunt at the **Bedwells' Seeds Rock Farm**. When we arrived, the farmer was busily plowing the fields and spreading fresh manure. With the erratic weather conditions, they have to take advantage of every window they can, but you can imagine what this combination did to scenting conditions! With all the noise from the equipment as well, rabbits were scarce. We got up three rabbits for short dashes to ground inside the hedgerows and the heaviest briar cover in the power line cut and flushed out one beautiful fox which the hounds ignored, otherwise it was a long hot working afternoon for staff and hounds. It is a fantastic property, with great views over the hills, and lovely rolling countryside, so it was a great walk for the field on our first springlike afternoon in a long while. At the tailgate afterwards, we were all lamenting that the season is almost over. Our Closing Meet on March 28 at **Hallman's** was a wow. We had a nice crowd of guests, Savoy friends of Gene Bolt and friends of Mary Jane Wallace and Audrey Cole, out to enjoy the day. Hounds got up their first rabbit in heavy briars in the middle of Hallman's south field and worked it to ground in the center hedgerow. They then worked across the field to Thayer's, where we drew the rim of the paddocks hedgerows to the back woods edge and found another. They pursued it down the woods inside almost to Theurkauf's pastures where it doubled back and went to ground in the heavy briar tangle. A second had been viewed, and we cast back to pick it up and run it to ground in the middle of the overgrown paddock above MacDonald's. A third was chased to the turnout yard beyond, but I called them out of there as we had no permission to hunt that part. We then drew the hedgerow above Theurkauf's and down to the woods line above Elbow Lane. Hounds flushed a rabbit out of the upper edge for a nice run the length of the cover above the lower field, and roared after it into the woods. They drove it to ground at the bottom of the slope near the road, marking strongly. The area reeked of fox, so I lifted the pack back to the woods edge and drew back towards Hallman's. They marked a short-running bunny to ground as we went up the hill, but that was it for the day as we drew back towards the cars and I blew 'Home.' The Peoples' tea afterwards was grand.



Our cottontail breaking cover in the 5 Couple Pack Class hunt.



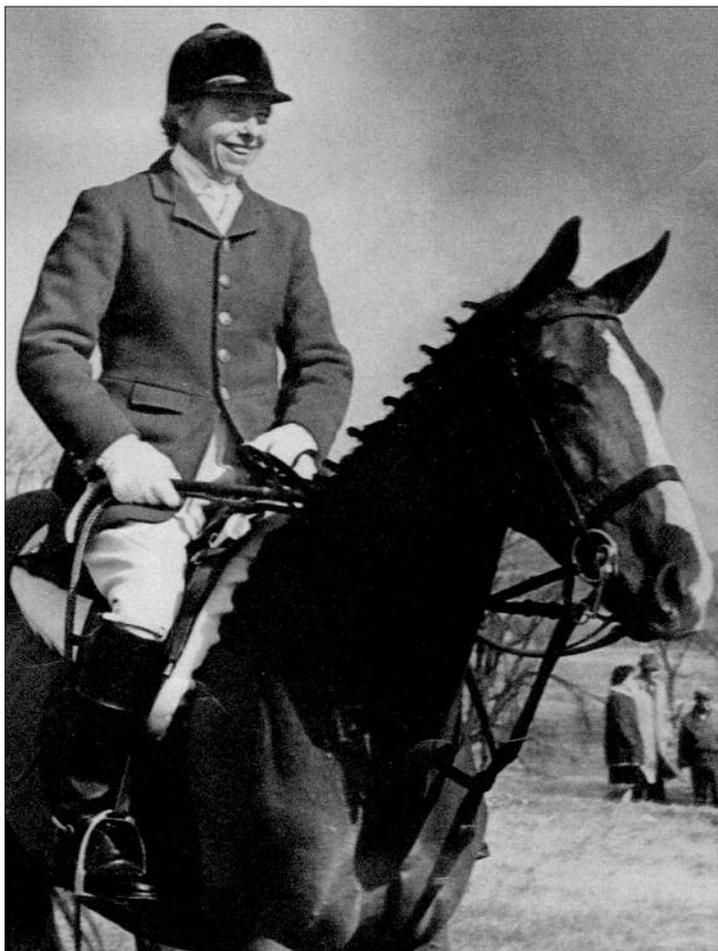
Hounds in cry on the rabbit as they ran it across the meadow to the woods and to ground.

The Spring Basset Pack Trials were a real challenge, with tough scenting conditions and tight sitting rabbits. Packs that scored one day went blank the next. We hunted at end of day in the 3 couples and had a long search before getting up a rabbit for an exciting run with not enough time left to get in the ribbons. The judges commented that it was really fun hunt and wished that we'd had a rabbit earlier. Nick and Laura Booth did a fine job whipping in. The 5 couple was much the same. Laura and Phyllis Allen gave perfect coverage as hounds had a long draw through cover strip after cover strip before forcing a rabbit out of dense cover. We drew up the right hillside through the meadow above the "graveyard" and hounds literally dug their rabbit out of a dense briar tangle and ran it across the meadow to the bottom of the woods where it doubled back and got into a log tangle as time ran out. There were 14 packs hunting, and the biggest crowd of people ever at Aldie. It was great fun seeing a lot of new people and watching the fresh packs hunt. The quality of hound work over all was terrific.

Our hard-working staff, Phyllis Allen, Lisa, Laura and Nick Booth, Paul and Gillian Wiedorn, Patrick Loughran, Coopie Heiserman, Liz Roberts and trainee whipper-in Gene Bolt, have gotten us through a tough winter season. They all deserve a huge vote of thanks from everyone. And David Duvall, our long time (23 years!) kennel man, has been wonderful.

Bye day training hunts Wednesdays and Saturdays have been very helpful in getting the young entry and other young hounds steady. We have started the "U" boys hunting with older hounds and they look very promising. Everyone is welcome to join us on bye days. Call Jim Scharnberg or Gillian Wiedorn for directions and times if you'd like to join us Wednesdays and Saturdays, in addition to the regular Sunday meets. We are very privileged to hunt so many beautiful properties here in Chester County. Let us know of any new land we can investigate.

We owe our sport to our wonderful landowners.



Nancy Penn Smith Hannum, MFH

On Tuesday, March 30, Nan Hannum died after a short illness. Some might say that her passing marks the end of an era, but that is not the case. The successes of her incredible efforts as Master for 50 years of Mr. Stewart's Cheshire Foxhounds to preserve open space in Chester County have given us an awesome legacy. The protecting of the King Ranch property and the creation of the Lenfest Preserve which became the even larger Cheslen are the jewels in the crown of the Cheshire's hunt country. Her passionate efforts over the years inspired friends and family and the hunt, and have given conservation groups a core to build on that has made it easier to convince others of the value of the land and the quality of life it gives to a community.

Hounds, Horses and Horn

Nancy Penn Smith Hannum was rarely away from her home. Her working days began and ended in the Cheshire kennels where she supervised the breeding and raising of some of the finest English hounds ever to provide sport in this country. For decades, their performances in the field and at hound shows set a high standard. The training regime she put the hounds through made them a remarkable, responsive pack. By five in the morning, no matter what the weather, she was always in the kennels. The hounds knew her well, and learned to respond to her commands and her hunting horn as they trained, the new entry early-on coupled to older, more experienced hounds.

While others might follow the hounds on horseback to, as she often put it, "shake up their livers," foxhunting was indeed Nancy Hannum's career. Her focus in working the hounds as they followed the scent was so intense that she was as close to understanding how they worked as any

human might— and was almost completely unaware of the vagaries of the mounted followers out for a day of sport. Occasionally, at the end of the day, she would hear of a rider coming to grief over a fence or into a brook, oblivious of the event when it happened.

In much the same way that her stepfather worked to establish the hunting country, Mrs. Hannum often bought properties as they came on the market. Then she searched for buyers who supported the idea of hounds and horses riding through and, perhaps, wanted to actively participate. An important facet of her informal preservation activity involved the local (non-foxhunting) farmers, for she has worked hard over the years to create good relationships with them. Some of these are Century Farms, land farmed by the same family for over a hundred years.

Nancy Hannum's career path was no less demanding than the diligent lawyer, or the stockbroker upon whose judgment fortunes rise and fall. The hours were long, emergencies more the rule than the exception, and like the postman, weather rarely held her back. She expected no less of herself than of the families she encouraged to move to the rolling hills and valleys of the Cheshire Hunt Country. Even when the accumulation of injuries brought her days on horseback to a close, she planned each day's hunting and followed in her battered blue Jeep, over hill and dale. Her abiding sorrow was that the Jeep could not be taught to jump.

In her eighties in retirement she was still in demand as a speaker about the history of foxhunting and the training of hounds. In relation to the broader community, she served for many years as a member of the Chester County Park Board and West Chester University's library board. Her determination and strong opinions have often launched her into controversy. It was not possible to fault her passion for that in which she believed. In 2002, she received a lifetime award from the prestigious Bryn Mawr Hound Show.

The very fact that the hunting country was there – open, beautiful, unspoiled – up to the time when it became possible to permanently preserve it through conservation easements, and that the community cared enough to want to participate in the saving process is a remarkable statement. Today, the land that Nancy Hannum knew and cherished deeply still echoes to the cry of hounds. The water that flows from faucets in Wilmington, the fish that the angler catches in the Brandywine Creek, the bald eagle on the old dead tree overlooking the Buck & Doe Valley would not be the healthy resources they are without these protected, rolling hills and stream valleys.

Land does not stand alone in beauty. It is a resource to use wisely or foolishly, and Nancy Hannum helped preserve its value in perpetuity.

—Nancy Mohr, President, Chester County 20/20