

## Colorful People and Unusual Hunts



In the history of any group or organization, there are generally colorful characters who, when recalled, elicit a smile, or sometimes even a chuckle at the mere mention of their name. Edgie Throckmorton set the precedent in the Fox River Valley Hunt. Without exception, everyone had the same initial reaction about Edgie; first a smile and then the phrase “what a great guy he was.” Exuding enthusiasm for any undertaking, he was a natural in the field of public relations, for it appears that it was virtually impossible for anyone to say no to this good will ambassador of the hunt.

Edgie treated his hounds the same way he treated people, with enthusiasm and a complete expectation of success. Early in his hunting career, while training the offspring of his initial hounds, Red and Betty, Edgie felt that the puppies didn’t clearly understand that they were to enter a covert, use their noses to find the scent, then throw their voices to acknowledge the scent. His immediate remedy for this problem was to dive off his horse, get on his hands and knees and begin baying in front of the puppies. If the hounds still didn’t get the idea, his friends and future members of the hunt certainly did.

In the 1950s, Spider Reinhardt carried on the legacy begun by Edgie of enthusiasm for the sport coupled with a flair for telling a great story. Being new to both riding and hunting, he enjoyed the physical activity, camaraderie, and most particularly his hunter, Hazard, which he had purchased from fellow foxhunter Tom White. Hazard was a huge horse, which Spider needed, since he was 6 feet 4 inches tall and weighed 220 pounds. Spider loved to tell other people about Hazard’s hunting prowess in the field and the horse’s innate ability to do the right thing. Whenever a Hazard story would begin, Gina would look heavenward as if to say, “not another one.”

The ultimate Hazard story occurred on a day when the field found themselves in a dense woods on a narrow path and they had to pass under a fallen tree that was about six feet above the trail. All the riders passed under it safely in single file while warning the one behind of "low bridge." This tree was much too low for Hazard but he tried it anyway, with Spider ducking as far below Hazard's withers as he could get. Even with the superb effort they didn't fit and Spider's back was tightly wedged between his saddle and the limb, causing great discomfort. This resulted in a loud string of obscenities centered around Hazard. Later, at the breakfast following the hunt, after a couple of scotches, Hazard was once again elevated to greatness. It was reported that, "when this low tree became apparent to Hazard, he bent all four legs to get me under safely." Gina again looked skyward.

Another man who must be affectionately remembered in the story of the Fox River Valley Hunt is Paul Cook. "Cookie," with his big grey hunter, St. Nick, was a loyal member for 24 years. When the Longmeadow Hunt disbanded in 1956, Paul moved Nick to Al Moore's barn on Denny's Big Oak Farm. After two seasons in the field, Paul was appointed whipper-in, a position he held until his retirement in 1980 at the age of 80. Although he lived in Evanston, he faithfully and cheerfully appeared for every hunt, maintaining perfect attendance throughout the 24 years of his hunt membership. In the off-season, Paul managed to ride Nick twice a week, making him the fittest horse in the field.

Paul and "Old Nick," as he came to be known, were perfectly suited for each other. Nick was a big, raw-boned, coarse hunter, while Paul would probably have stood 6 feet, 2 inches except that he was very bow-legged, which reduced his height considerably. He described himself as "a seat-of-the-pants rider and Nick has to be a saint to put up with me." Paul gave constant verbal instructions to Nick. "Nick, (beware) 'ware hole,' ware wire," or even, "Nick, don't eat that, it's poisonous!"

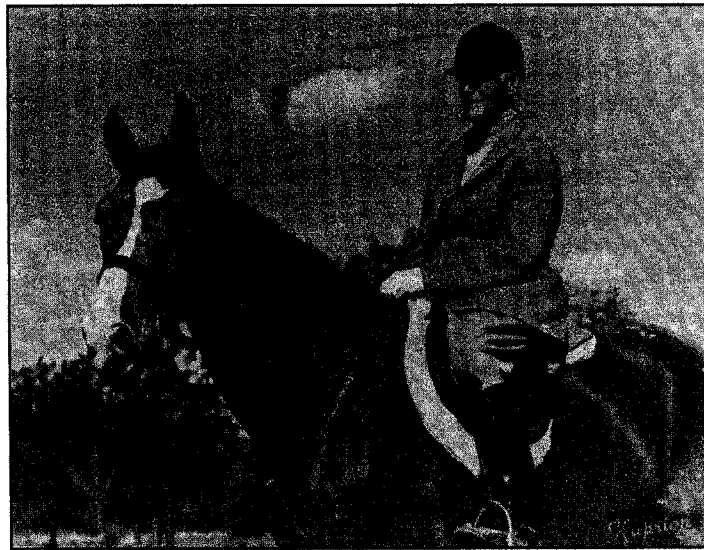
As the hunt country became dotted with new homes, Paul would chat with new residents while he was out in front of the pack as a whipper-in. On the hack home to the kennels, he would casually inform everyone who had just bought which house, and sometimes what the purchase price was. He had told them of the hunt, the ball, and when they could come and watch the hunt, even if it was cubbing season with a 6 a.m. start. He took up Edgie's job of good will ambassador, and appeared to know just as much about Barrington as he did of Evanston.

Paul taught Nick to jump the cattle guards that were in the Bateman valley on Deepwood Road, because as he said, "I'm too lazy to open the Riding Club gates, nearby." Dangerous as this practice was, he successfully did it for many years and when the Hunt found Northern Pump Farms dotted with cattle guards over the roads, he jumped those too.

When Al Moore moved to George Bachner's Twin Win Farm, Nick moved also. For cubbing in Richmond at 7 a.m., Art Nelson's van arrived at

Al's at 5 a.m. to ship the hunters up to the meet, then waited for the hunt to end to bring them back. Paul could have left Evanston and met the van in Richmond, saving himself many miles, but he always insisted on driving to Barrington first, to make sure Nick was loaded safely. This meant that he arose at 3 a.m. for breakfast, then drove to Barrington to meet the van and follow it to Richmond. After about a two-and-a-half-hour chase, the entire operation was reversed, putting him back in Evanston in the early afternoon. Paul did this for the last 11 years of his long hunting career.

In 1978, while riding a leased hunter because of Nick's advanced years, Paul entered the Hunter Trials which were being hosted by the Fox River Valley Hunt at the Riding Center. At these trials he won the coveted Longmeadow Perpetual Trophy for gentlemen foxhunters. This brought his foxhunting career to full fruition, and nobody was more proud of him than the many members and friends of the Fox River Valley Hunt. His patience, love of horses and hounds, combined with his ability to get along with everyone made him a treasure of the Fox River Valley Hunt.



*Paul W. Cook*

Paul chuckled often at the mere mention of his contemporary, Nathaniel Hamilton. Nat would probably have won any award for the most colorful character in Barrington, as well as the Fox River Valley Hunt. He was divorced and the father of several grown children when he appeared on the scene in the early 1960s. An extremely handsome man, he loved animals, children, and women, in no particular order. He resided in the charming house on Spring Creek Farm, currently part of Hill 'N Dale Farm known as Next Door, which was then owned by his friend, Haddon McClain, former president of Harris Bank. Nat's love of animals led him to acquire his

menagerie, which consisted of three horses, a goat, a donkey, a basset hound and three Great Danes. These, he called his "conversation pieces." His business of merging companies afforded him the luxury of working out of his home, which allowed him to further enjoy his rural setting and the animals.

Nat was one of the founders, with Oak Knolls Road resident Jerry Joswick, of the Barrington Hills Mounted Patrol. These two men were part of a mounted group that assisted the police in off-road activities and in traffic control when the hunt had to cross a busy highway.

In 1970, when Charmian Jackson came to the United States for a short visit, Nat lent her his guest room as a base while she toured the Midwest. Nat and Charmian had much in common since they both felt there was no such thing as too many animals around. Charmian suggested that Nat breed some basset hounds and be the master of a foot pack. Before Charmian's visit was over, the Spring Creek Basset Hunt was formed and Nat was selecting colors for his hunt. Amid the lurking rumors that Haddon didn't want animals on his property, many fine litters of bassets were whelped and raised there. Some went on to successfully compete in the National Beagle and Basset Trials at Aldie, Virginia.

Nat's menagerie occasionally escaped their confines, causing considerable problems with Haddon and the neighbors. Many repairs were hastily made to the single strand of electric wire fencing that was expected to keep this wandering group of hooved creatures in place. Nat finally gave in to the pressure of all the complaints. One Christmas Eve, he loaded the donkey, who he knew to be the culprit and escape artist, into a friend's Jeep and deposited it in the Nativity scene on Main Street in Barrington. The wayward donkey was last seen peacefully munching hay behind a strong wooden fence, while the baby Jesus slept nearby in the manger. After the holidays, Nat often visited his wanderer at Langendorf Park, where a proper fence kept him in place.

Nat remained a loyal member of the hunt and graciously offered to organize a hilltopping group, escorting members who preferred not to jump through the country, both in Richmond and Barrington. He traditionally hosted the annual Thanksgiving Day Meet at his residence, always hiring a professional photographer to photograph the meet for his Christmas card.

Indeed, he was a charming man who was greatly missed after his sudden death in 1976. While on a hunting trip that was to take him around the world, he suffered a fatal heart attack.

Throughout the long and varied history of any organized foxhunt, no matter how well orchestrated, planned or thought out it is, there are bound to be occurrences that cause the activity to take a left turn when a right turn had been expected. Fox hunting, like any other hunting pursuit, is unpredictable and that is precisely what makes it fun for the participants. The Fox River Valley Hunt is no different than any other, in that, through the course of 50 years some unusual and unpredictable hunts have occurred.

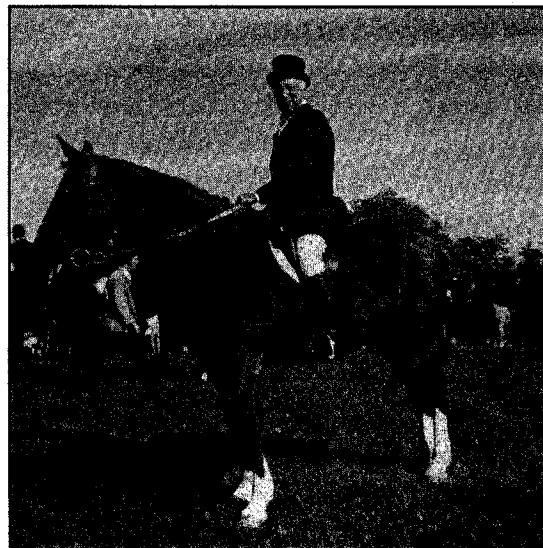
The Fox River Valley Hunt lost two foxes through no fault of its own, but from shotguns. Bearing in mind that hunting birds, squirrels, and other animals was common practice in rural Barrington in the 1940s, the hunt had worked tirelessly to secure permission to hunt with hounds. One day, Edgie was hunting Red and Betty's offspring, who were hot on the line of a fox in a large cornfield. Suddenly a shot rang out, followed by silence from the pack. Edgie and Gina, who were positioned on the outside of a field, were dismayed and feared the worst. At that moment out of the corn came Otto Sunderlage, a farmer from Penny Road, proudly holding up a dead fox, which he presented to them. They attempted to convince him all over again that they wanted to chase the fox, not kill it. Reportedly this hunting farmer had great difficulty understanding their logic.

Later in the 1940s when Denny was Master, a similar event took place which he wrote of in his book:

"One crisp November day we had drawn the McIntosh Woods, had found very quickly, and hounds had gone away through the woods, across the road on the northern side, and were streaming out into the rolling grassland half a mile beyond. There had been the usual mad scramble through the woods to get to the narrow post and rail panel on the far side of the road, for there was bound to be a queue, and nobody wanted to be the last man on a day like this.

But by the time we were across the road, hounds had been brought to their noses far out in the middle of the first field, and were industriously casting about for the scent that had failed so mysteriously. When it became obvious that they could do nothing alone, and were asking for suggestions, we took them for a big Tom Smith cast, swinging around as far back as the road. Still there was no sign of a fox. With perfect scent on a perfect day in a field of grass, he had vanished as completely as if he had done the old Indian rope trick, and had pulled the rope up after him. There was nothing left to try. Reluctantly, therefore, we called hounds in, and started jogging to the next covert beyond a nearby farmhouse. As we approached the house, a little old Model T Ford, black in color, with folding top and cracked celluloid side curtains, an apparition straight out of a Charles Addams cartoon, rattled up the gravel road, and jerked to a halt in front of us. The side curtains parted, a dead fox was thrust through at arms length, and a cheery farm voice called out, "Here you are boys! We got him for you!"

One particular section of the country seemed to invite unusual hunts. In the far western area near the Bonnie Dundee Golf Course, which adjoins a cemetery, there were two embarrassing occasions for the Hunt. Former Master Tom White reported that one day the hounds put a fox to ground in the cemetery while a funeral was in progress. The staff and field all came to a halt at the edge of the cemetery and were perplexed as to how to get the hounds out



without disturbing the funeral. They didn't feel comfortable walking into the cemetery and certainly were reluctant to use the horn to call hounds back. When the funeral procession finally departed, hounds were retrieved.

Another day, the golf course adjoining the cemetery became the final resting place for a skunk, according to hunt member Dan Dan Flint. Her memory of the long hack home one very hot cubbing morning down Helm Road, behind a pack in which every hound had been sprayed by the skunk, remains vivid to this day. She recalls the odor whenever she drives down Helm Road.

The Bonnie Dundee Golf Course was the turning point in a dramatic hunt in 1966 with professional huntsman, Arnold Towell. Hounds met at the intersection of Penny and Healy Roads. They were cast into the woods heading south when a large fox jumped up in front of the pack and took them straight west through Pond Gate Farm. At the far edge of this farm was a stout line fence of wire, with no panel to jump to get to the other side. The staff and field pulled up to a stop, only to hear hounds in the distance flying through the gravel pit near Shoe Factory Road in full cry, heading toward Dundee. Arnold ripped off his "pink" coat, threw it over the fence, backed his hunter up three strides and fairly flew the fence to catch his hounds.

No one else in the group was that confident of their horse's ability, so they decided to wait for his return. During the long wait, they heard a rustling in the woods at the south end of this fence, and saw a very tired fox, literally sneaking back to the east. Later, when Arnold returned with the pack he reported that they had run to Bonnie Dundee where the line had vanished into thin air. Somehow, this smart fox had decided that he had gone far enough, and wanted to return home without the hounds. The conclusion of this chase would have remained a mystery had it not been for those who stayed behind.

