

FIRST PLACE: The Log on Top of the Hill

by Angela Parn, 14, D-3, Horse Sense Pony Club, South Region

I am old. Ancient, even. In the 372 years of my life, I have seen many things. Wondrous things. Although there is one memory that comes to mind that especially stands out... Would you like to hear the story? Great! I am quite good at storytelling (I've had a lot of practice since there isn't much else for a rotten old log to do), and I enjoy it, too! Well, I suppose I should start at the beginning...

It was a cold, damp, misty morning. Quite dreary it was. Yet at the same time, one of the most glorious days I have ever witnessed. I especially loved the morning dew that lightly frosted the rolling hills and forests of this beautiful Yorkshire farm while soaking deeply into my old, brittle bark. As I was admiring the morning, I heard, "Thump... thump... thump..." as trucks and trailers crawled slowly over the rickety wooden bridge (an old friend of mine) to the parking area. For today was THE day! A day filled with Foxhunting, that is. Foxhunting used to be called, "The Sport of Kings," and for a rightful reason, for only the richest noblemen and best horsemen in England would come to this farm for a day of hunting. They with their pure-bred hounds and fancy equine mounts with even fancier names such as *Mystic Rain* and *Sir Humphrey*... sorry, I guess I should be getting back to my story now! What living 372 years does to an old log's mind! Well, anyway, where was I? Oh, that's right... I remember now...

All these trailers were pulling in, and then all the riders and their horses came out. Shortly behind them was a large van and when the driver opened the doors, 156 foxhounds came tumbling out, howling all the while (and yes, I did really count them). Today is the big day. The riders get dressed in traditional hunt attire; then they groom their mounts to perfection and tack them up. I hear the hunt master blow his horn, and then they are off! The order went something like this: the hounds led the pack, with the whippers-in on either side of them, guiding them. Directly behind them was the hunt Master, and behind him were all the other riders with "colors" and pinque coats. Behind these riders were the rest of the field and the guests. So up the hill they started. Now, they didn't start at a

leisurely walk, no... they galloped! Faster than the wind itself! They had no time to look at the picturesque scenery; they had a fox to catch! I saw them thunder up the hill (magnificent sight it was, seeing these huge stallions running!), then take on the stone wall. Over they went, still maintaining their order, usually 6 or 7 abreast, they sailed over it as if this 4'6" wall was merely a twig. Then... then... I hear them... I see them... I even feel the ground shaking from their pounding hooves... First comes the fox. Quite a sly creature, he is. He runs right through me. Next, the hounds. They come to me and look all around for that clever fox's scent. Never even thought he would run through a log. A tan and white hound finally picks up the scent on the other side of me and the whole pack bays and howls as they run around me. Lastly, I see the gigantic steeds, (frightening, really). About 2 or 3 abreast they leaped over me, all of them, galloping and jumping over me. So I witnessed Excitement and Danger go around me, over me, and through me.

After this, the field continued up the mountain, but suddenly there was a call of "fox taken cover!" as the fiery red creature dashed into his burrow at a speed that even a cheetah would envy. The riders waited... and waited... and waited some more; until finally, about 2 hours later, the fox thought the coast was clear and then ran for it. They all came tumbling back down the mountain, galloping all the while and jumping me and other obstacles as they went. One blue roan mare and her rider slipped on a wet spot as they galloped downhill, and down they went! She rolled 3 or 4 times, but then the mare and her rider got up. Thankfully neither was injured, just shaken up a bit... Meanwhile, the rest of the field had come to the bottom of the mountain and into a large field about 950 meters long by 700 meters wide. They were at a flat-out racehorse gallop, with their mounts' necks stretched out and their legs stretched out so far it appeared that their bellies would touch the ground. They were foaming at the bit and sweating so much you could see all their veins. Their nostrils looked like those of fire-breathing beasts. The fox had given a good hunt, but now was weary; so as he slowed, the Master finally caught him and pulled up the rest of the field. They rejoiced in their victory and then let the fox free in hopes that he, too, would again enjoy another glorious day of Foxhunting.

They then ate the traditional brunch and packed up their things. The rider who had fallen had recovered quickly and went on to be at the front of the field. In honor of her and her mare, the Master gave her the official hunt horn. After this, I once again heard the familiar “thump... thump... thump...” as the vehicles and trailers and van with the foxhounds left this serene place. But no worries... as they will be back soon... very soon... to have another wonderful day of Foxhunting.

Meanwhile, our friend the fox will be waiting in his burrow, looking out the corner of his eye every other second; anticipating the sight of the field as they gallop up the mountainside in pursuit of him. And he will be ready... Oh, ever so prepared!... for he spends his uneventful days devising new plans to escape the hunters. Remember, he is very sly and clever!

Angela Parn is a member of Horse Sense Pony Club in the South Region. She has been in USPC for almost two years but has never been on a real Foxhunt. She takes part in her club's annual mock hunt, and has participated in some hunter paces, two rallies, and numerous shows. She rides a 16.3 dark bay thoroughbred gelding that just got off the track. She is training him for Eventing, which is her favorite horse sport. She also competes in mounted games.

SECOND PLACE: Cee Bar's Foxhunt

by Sara Margaret (Maggie) Tally, 9, D-1, Moore County Pony Club, Carolina Region

Cee Bar's Fox Hunt

It was a cold Saturday morning. Yawning, my friend Diamond and I were aroused suddenly as our riders clomped into the barn. I wasn't even through with my morning hay yet when my rider pulled me away from it. "Now, that is rude!" I thought. Well, she began to groom me. Now, I am stubborn picking up my hooves and this morning I was especially belligerent. But finally I gave up the fight and let her have my hoof. After she finished picking out my hooves she completed my grooming and slung the saddle pad on my back. That saddle had never felt heavier than it did that morning. I'm normally good with my girth, but today I felt fat and tried to squeeze in my belly, but it hurt. When she finally got the girth on, I saw a sight that made my heart stop. MY DREADED BRIDLE! I hate my bridle.

Then the girl said, "Come on Cee Bar," and I wouldn't budge. But suddenly I saw the thing that made my heart rise with joy, Cookies! I love cookies, but I think I should probably lay off them for a while because I went from a 50" to a 52" girth.

She led me out of the barn and down the path to the trailer. It was still dark. Behind me I could hear Diamond snorting in anger. She hates to get up early. I don't mean to blow my own bugle or slap myself on the saddle, but I am an excellent loader and I was especially good that morning. When we were both loaded onto the trailer, I had to hear it again. Diamond's talk about how much she dislikes getting up early. It went on and on and on. Finally, we got to close to Southern Pines and I saw two familiar stone hounds and knew we were going Foxhunting!

As we were pulling in, Diamond gave me another one of her speeches. Now it was about how much she loves to Foxhunt. That girl confuses me.

As perfect as I am loading, Unloading is another story. I always seem to trip up myself and this time I was especially in a tripping mood. I even kicked myself! But I got out alive.

When our riders got mounted up and warmed up, we went to talk to the Huntsman. Now I have to say, today was one of my good days. I was looking fabulous, and as much as I like Diamond, the Hunt Master's mare was looking especially sharp! "Good Morning Pretty Lady," I nickered. She turned her tail on me. How rude! "Come on," Diamond said. "We're leaving."

We stayed with the Hilltoppers. That made Diamond even madder, if that is possible. Now I had to listen to her whining that she wanted to be in First Field. We had only been gone a few minutes when the Hunt Master's mare reluctantly stepped up to me. The Hunt Master was helping out my rider with her saddle. "Hey darling, want to go out for some Timothy?" I said sweetly. "Go hang out with the nags, that's where you belong," she replied. I was hurt. But just then I heard "TALLY HO!" I whirled around in excitement and it was like dominoes. I accidentally kicked Diamond. I guess the next time out, they'll have to put a red ribbon on my tail. The hounds went wild on the scent of a coyote. But suddenly they stopped and looked down on a baby Coyote. It was injured and the Hunt Master dismounted to pick it up. She turned to the Field Master and said "I think we should go in now." And I gasped nooooo!

Suddenly I woke up by clomping into the barn. "Come on Cee Bar, time to go hunting." Was it all a dream? Or not? Diamond jumped up. "Cee Bar? Did you just go hunting in your dreams?" "Oh, yeah," I replied. "Well, I hope that dream doesn't come true, I certainly don't want to stay on the hunt field for only thirty minutes!" Diamond said.

Maggie is a member of the Moore County Pony Club in North Carolina. She has enjoyed hunting with the Moore County Hounds for the past two years and is looking forward to hunting this coming year on her new Quarter Horse mare, Grace. In addition to Foxhunting, Maggie enjoys playing Polocrosse, participating in Quiz Rally, and hanging out with her horse-loving friends.

THIRD PLACE: Ellen and Her Own Elite Eight

by Hank Watson, 11, D-2, Eno Triangle Pony Club, Carolina Region

It was the coldest night of the year and one of the Red Mountain foxhounds, Ellen, was whelping (giving birth) to puppies.

My sister, my mom, and I were sitting at Speedway Cafe eating our dinner when my mom, TJ, got a call from the huntsman of Red Mountain Hounds. His name is David Raley. He told mom that Ellen, one of the hounds of our hunt, was whelping. He also told her that he needed our help to help her give birth to puppies. The reason that he called us is because he was in Georgia at a Performance Trial. When mom hung up she told us two words, "Let's go." So, she put a twenty-dollar bill on the table and we raced out the door, of course grabbing a couple of gumballs on the way out.

When we got there one of the hunt members was already there. Her name is Mrs. Donna. She was in the heat pen bundled in a horse blanket looking at Ellen unblinking with awe. Mom tapped her on the shoulder... she jumped and said, "She has already had three puppies. I'll come back in three hours to switch places with you." When she left we were there all alone with a mother hound and three puppies. I gradually fell asleep but awoke to the sound of a loud whimpering. It was Ellen; she was giving birth to another pup. Mom told me to grab a towel from the corner so she could wipe the pup dry. But to our sorrow the pup was dead. We said a prayer and laid it to the side. But, after that I was able to see three other puppies be born. To see the pups take their first breaths. Watch Ellen lick off the sack and break the umbilical cord. It was just amazing. An hour or two later I was in a deep doze, sharing the heat lamp with my sister, mom, Ellen and her pups. Patiently waiting to go home but we couldn't until Mrs. Donna showed up for her shift. It seemed like an eternity until Mrs. Donna showed up but she did and so we went home. When we got home I went straight to bed and luckily Mrs. Donna called and said that Ellen was finished whelping puppies and she had had eight puppies alive and two had passed on.

A good thing that came out of this cold night is that we got to name the puppies anything we wanted but the names had to start with an E. Eloise. Eskimo. Egad. Enchanted. Enchilada. Hmmm...

Hank has been riding horses since he was 4 years old. He started Foxhunting with the Red Mountain Foxhounds, Rougemont, NC, in 2004 hilltopping on his then 21-year-old TB mare, Society. Hank earned his colors in 2006. At every opportunity he hones his horn-blowing skills. Hank has helped the hunt panel, show hounds, and clean kennels when the huntsman is away. His favorite hound is Yo Yo Ma. Hank is an active member of the Eno Triangle Pony Club where he is hoping to pass his D-3 this year. He enjoys any clinic with jumping and is never without a Polocrosse racket. Outside of horses, Hank loves to play soccer, the violin, and dance. Hank doesn't like zucchini.