

Tales(Tails?) from Tennessee as Reported by Andrea McDonald

Thurs. Feb.5th- Head 'Em Up and Move 'Em Out!

It was a finger numbing -28C when the horses loaded at 4:50am for the 5am departure. The thought of actually being somewhere that didn't involve the wearing of Polar Fleece for underwear was foremost in everyone's mind at that point!

Karl was "strike hound" out of the driveway and the trip to the border was an uneventful 4 hours; the roads were clear and the sun was shining, once it came up of course! We all met at the Duty Free store to load up on beer and other "necessities", after all Fentress County is dry and the gang down in Jamestown do love Sleeman's and Keith's ales!

Lulled by tales of breezing through the border check point from last year, I was the first to get up to the booth. I am always astonished at some of the questions; it makes me feel like it's a surprise exam and I didn't study the right stuff. Papers for the 2 horses were duly checked and we were just about to be waved through, when I, in a burst of honesty, enquired about the new document that needed to be stamped. Duh! I asked about this, and the guy coming on duty's brow clouded. In an official tone I was told I had to turn around and go down through where all the big trucks were. Fergawd'ssake! After deftly executing an 86 point turn with the trailer and getting to drive AT the oncoming traffic on the Ambassador Bridge for a heart stopping few seconds, we got into line with the big boys.

Hank and Karl and Maggie and Sherry were ahead of us and we waited. And waited. Suddenly on the 2 way radio Hank is asking about copies of the forms the vet had given us: Did we have copies? No. Turns out they had the Copy Nazi and it was "No border crossing for you!" without going to find the vet and get copies. Waved off to the side they disappeared into the confusion that is the Detroit border and US Customs.

I was in the lane to the right of where I saw them go thru and decided I would take my chances with the lane I was in. I got up there and went thru the same 3rd degree as before; I had no idea that perhaps terrorists maybe WENT trail riding...And we were fine. With the identical documents that Hank and Karl needed copies for. We met up with Maggie and Sherry- they had no problems without the dreaded copies but got charged \$10 to cross. Figure it out!

For us with horse trailers the rest of the drive was really uneventful and we had fun watching the thermometer on the truck gradually rise to (gasp!) above the freezing point by the time we hit the end of Kentucky. Fuel was only about \$1.77 a gallon (this is about 47 cents US) so fill ups seemed almost pleasant. About this point Carly and Christine were touring some of the finer points of Jamestown KENTUCKY. Seems Christine's GPS unit glommed onto the Kentucky version of our Tennessee destination's name and it wasn't until Carly thought "Hmmm, never seen this huge dam before, maybe we aren't where we are supposed to be...." that they figured out the minor (2 hour) detour had happened.

We finally heard from Hank and Karl about 1 ½ hours after we left the border. I personally was having visions of the pair of them face down in hand cuffs at gunpoint but they had finally found the vet who looked at their papers and said they had been fine with what they had. Turns out they got a trainee on the gate who obviously didn't know what was right and they paid the price.

We all arrived 16 long hours later at East Fork Stables. EEK! There were still traces of snow on the ground but we were assured it was supposed to warm up a lot the next day. Stalls were located right up behind our cabins so we set up there. Dick and Lugene Askins were there to greet us and help get unloaded and stalls prepared. Ellie and Artie unloaded giving me filthy looks for having been the b*tch who had kept them incarcerated all this time, but got over it quickly when they saw buckets of water and their grain.

Hank and Karl arrived not too long after us despite their delay- Karl may get asked to drive NASCAR while he's here! The bassets were no doubt grateful to get moved into their temporary digs up in the Tipple Building up the hill, and dreamt of Tennessee bunnies for the next day.

The Askins had a welcome meal for the weary travellers who felt better after a cold beverage or 2 and something hot to eat. We fell into bed like dead people but looking forward to better weather tomorrow!

Fri. Feb.6th- A Nice Ride and Bundles of Bunnies!

Friday dawned below freezing but we could just tell by the feel of the air it would warm up pleasantly. After a group breakfast featuring John's Jalapeno Scrambled Eggs followed by stable chores we tacked up to head out for a leg stretching quiet hack. Well the horses had other ideas! Maybe it was the 16 hours in the trailers the day before, maybe it was the strange surroundings, maybe it was the fact they were out with their hunting buddies, and all were jiggling idiots! We pranced and lunged forward the minute another horse even THOUGHT about trotting; we rocketed around for an hour. The ground is amazing- sort of sandy clay on so much of the trails and the fact it wasn't frozen solid or 2 feet deep in snow made it even better. The park is a mind blowing 12 thousand (!) acres with over 100 miles of cut trails with difficulty ranging from open fields as flat as a pancake to steep and rocky mountain goat paths down cliff sides for the Snowy River types. Much of the land is being reclaimed gradually from strip coal mining and it's nice to see it being put to good recreational use. The land is graded and then planted with grasses and lots of pine trees and many ponds dot the landscape to help with the drainage.

We headed back to get cleaned up/off, what a treat to actually be able to hose legs and equipment off. It wasn't warm enough to bath the critters but it did help start to get them ready for hunting for the following day. This was the weather we had expected last year that never appeared; in fact last year's cold weather snap had the Canadian Contingent being accused of "Y'all left the door open behind ya when ya left!" Hopefully we had brought warm weather with us this time!

We then headed up to the Manure Dump to meet with the basset pack. The Tintern Bassets were going to join forces there with a few of the Upper Bay Bassets for some rabbit hunting. Many of the land marks they hunt at in this area have such interesting names- the Powder Keg, The Pea Patch, Raccoon

Gap, Tipple Building, Base of the Rocks, Big Piney Overlook, Tar Gap, Apple Bag and Strike Pond to name just a few.

Bassets moved into the covert under the expert guidance of both Carly and Dick, and scent seemed nonexistent for the first 20 minutes although hounds were working well. A sudden burst of music signalled bunnies were in residence after all, and after a short run put a cottontail to ground in a dirt pile covered with brush. Masters lifted hounds and drew again down along the edge of a clump of pines and were rewarded with more rabbits than they knew what to do with! Hounds ran for close to 15 minutes without letting up, finally calling hounds off when they started to head to the neighbouring farm. Drawing again down the other side of the laneway the bassets found again and ran another rabbit around and down towards the highway.

After a very busy 2 hours hounds were called in and everyone headed back to the Tipple Building where the hounds are kennelled for a welcome drink.

Dinner that evening was hosted by Dick and Lugene at their home where Hamilton Hunt members got to meet and renew acquaintances with the Cumberland Mountain Hound members. It wasn't a late night; most of the Canadian contingent was definitely ready for bed after such a busy day.

Sat. Feb.-7-Weather As Advertised!

Saturday dawned mild and sunny with an expected high of 65F. Woo hoo! We got horses ready and hopped to the Tipple Building where the meet was scheduled for a 10 am departure. The Cumberland Mountain Hounds hunt meet times are often flexible because a lot of their members come up from Knoxville which is about 90 minutes away and traffic with the interstate could mean a late arrival that they don't mind waiting for. The field was quite large, about 30 riders and featured an assortment of mounts that might be considered unusual by Canadian standards, including a number of gaited or racking horses (very popular down here for just regular riding) as well as a gaited pinto mule!

Hounds moved off and drew along the edge of one of the many gullies there. Scent was spotty to nonexistent and hounds worked hard, speaking occasionally but not able to continue on the line at all. As far as the Canadian Contingent felt, getting to ride without fear of frostbite rocked! I am sure those heavy weight hunt coats Hank and Karl were sporting started to feel like personal portable saunas.

Hounds were hunted for about 4 hours and finally were called in and a tasty potluck breakfast was put on by the hunt members featuring 2 kegs of beer on tap, which made for a merry gathering but with the warm riding temperatures were appreciated.

Since the party never seems to end we were then treated to an amazing dinner at Janet and Phil Hopson's house with all Cumberland members invited as well as the Hamilton Hunt crowd. They have the loveliest house which is so totally set up for parties and decorated with the enormous hunting trophies Phil has bagged in the past. We feasted on prime rib, stewed wild boar (!) and all the fixing's. It

was so nice to be able to sit outside to enjoy the amazing meal and company. I understand the Canadian Contingent departed for the cabins just as things were heating up, especially in the hot tub.....

Sun. Feb. 8th - Bassets Go Wild!

Sunday started off with a basset meet combining the talents of both the Tintern and Upper Bay basset packs and hunted again by both masters Carly Martin and Dick Askins. It was a day that both hunt enthusiasts and hounds just dream of! Hounds found within 5 minutes of being put into the first covert and it didn't let up for over 3 hours. Rabbits were viewed by the field at least 9 times and hounds hunted back and forth across the laneway making it an easy hunt for the field but a lot more challenging for the hunters and the whips. The 2 packs worked together so well it was hard to believe they had never worked together before and the music as they flew back and forth across the fields was unreal! Finally a day was called as no one had much "left in the tank" and a cold drink and some lunch provided by the Upper Bay supporters was appreciated.

Since the Tennessee group had done so much the dinner that evening was put on for all by the Canadian Contingent. A grocery run by John, Carly and Christine was done while the rest of us went out for trail ride. (They rock!) We enjoyed the warm weather and lovely views around the Fern Gully cabin while John, Carly and Christine were whipping up burgers for 16 or so. Hank and his trusty steed Homer received a true Tennessee compliment as we trekked out to the trails through the campground area. An observant riding fan complimented Homer- telling Hank that Homer was "A magnificent mule"! (?) Homer is magnificent all right but unfortunately his breeding is otherwise...Oh well, it gave Homer his new nickname for the balance of the trip-"Mighty Mule!"

We then had a bonfire and BBQ featuring burgers, salad and snacks for ourselves and our Tennessee friends. It was an early evening as the next morning the bassets were meeting earlier and hoping for a repeat of the day's events.

Mon.Feb. 9th - Bassets and Base of Rock

Monday was another beautiful day with temperatures in the low 60s when the Tintern and Upper Bay Basset packs hoped to recreate the previous day's adventures. We were joined by 3 members from the Beech Grove Hunt up from the Nashville area. They were planning on a day with the bassets and then to foxhunt the following day with the Cumberland Mountain Foxhounds.

Both of the packs were eager to get to work and drew the first covert with enthusiasm. Hounds found down in the edge of the woods and ran a rabbit for close to 10 minutes before being called in and lifted to an area just to the west. Several bunnies popped out of this field and provided great sport And views for the field, who had decided by then that this hunting style was easy and enjoyable!

After a couple of hours of very active hunting the packs were called in and the followers returned to the Canadian Contingent cabins where Chef John BBQ'd more burgers and sausages accompanied by a big batch of pulled pork with Joe McCord's secret BBQ sauce; very yummy on a bun!

Once lunch was cleaned up we saddled up the steeds and headed out for another exploration of the amazing place we were staying at. Base of the Rock was our chosen destination for the terrific view. Accompanied by Fletcher, who thinks "horse walks" at this place are the best ever, we strolled along the forest trails, basking in the near 70 degree temperature. There are signs directing you to the various lookouts and trails and after about an hour we reached it. Why it is called BASE of the Rock is quite a mystery, as it's atop a CLIFF with about a 600 foot drop. You can ride out to as close to the edge as you dare and the view apparently goes right up the valley to Kentucky on a clear day. Pictures were taken all around and we later learned there is actually a hiking trail that can take you all the way down to the valley floor. Problem is you have to get back up afterwards....

Dinner for the Tennessee Tribe as well as the ladies from the Beech Grove Hunt was hosted at the cabins with Phil providing a "man sized" BBQ and cooking up a batch of chicken that was super tasty and just about fell off the bone. Salad, twice baked and scalloped potatoes and green beans completed the meal and of course lots of beer and wine. The Canadian Contingent presented Dick and Lugene with a hunt stool painted with the favourite quarries, fox and hare as well as a donation to the Cumberland Mountain Hounds. Most decided to make it an early night as we were hunting the next day.

Tues.Feb.10th - Hunting and Hwy 127- Just Do It!

Our next day for hunting again dawned sunny but with a few clouds and a chance of rain in the forecast; great for scenting conditions but not so hot for riding. Sherry and I decided to "take one for the team" and wear our raincoats, thereby ensuring we'd sweat to death and it WOULDN'T rain.

Hounds found after a short draw but didn't seem to run very far, leading Dick to suspect it was either a grey fox or most likely a bobcat as we saw quite a few cat tracks in that area. Hounds were then lifted and headed off into the woods where they found and spoke wonderfully. They seemed to be circling around in the same area and the field just got to stand there enjoying the music while the hounds hunted their hearts out.

Suddenly on the radio we heard Karl announce he'd come off his horse Nike. He sure sounded a lot calmer than most of us would but that was quickly followed by Lugene saying she needed help with the horse as he was near the road, which is Highway 127. A few minutes later Karl is on the radio again very calmly letting us know Nike was now running up and down the highway. EEK! In the distance we hear the blast of an air horn from a semi, double EEK! All this time the hounds are still hunting their hearts out around through the woods.

Finally the hounds are getting too close to the edge of the property and Phil decides it's time to call them off. At the same time as we are waiting while hounds are being called in Lugene was racing down Highway 127 on her horse, trying to stop Karl's horse Nike. He has decided to head north; perhaps heading home? (Anyone know the way to the I-75 North?) Several drivers finally managed to help get him stopped down by the Highland Manor Winery, a close to 5 mile run from where he had gotten out onto the road.

Seems that what had happened was Lugene and Karl encountered an electric fence hidden in the tall grass. Well Nike took great exception to this, and in bucking and kicking at the hot wire he unloaded his rider, broke through the fence and headed for home!

Luckily no one seemed any the worse for wear, Karl was unhurt and Nike still seemed fresh as a daisy, prancing as we headed back to the Tipple Building to put the hounds away. Gives new meaning to the Nike slogan, "Just do it!". Please not again anytime soon though.

Dinner was hosted at Phil and Janet Hopson's house and Phil wowed us again with his BBQ skills cooking all manner of ribs, regular pork ones as well as wild boar ribs which were really tasty. Phil and Lugene are both amazing cooks and every meal they do is fantastic. I'm sure our horses aren't appreciating how well fed their owners are down here.

Wed.Feb.10th - Day Off From Hunting so We Shopped

Hounds were given a day off from the scheduled basset meet due to weather today. A severe front was due to sweep through in the afternoon and the wind was already extremely gusty and strong, the bunnies would probably have blown away! We decided to take advantage and ride before the rain came and again went out touring with Fletcher leading the way.

East Fork has so much variety of terrain and if you can get yourself oriented to the trail map it's pretty easy to get around. Unfortunately Porky the Wonder Pony aka Artie has real issues with pieces of paper being held while you are sitting on him and reading a map as he tries to spin and shakes like a leaf isn't easy or worth my life, so Karl and Nike aka King of the Road, got to do the map reading today. We headed up towards the north end of the park past the Powder Keg and took some trails across and back into the woods, which provided a welcome relief from the wind. You encounter a lot of rocky areas that look like waterfalls (without the water) going both up and down, usually with a pretty little stream at the bottom. These rocky areas were a bit alarming at first but we were reassured by our Tennessee friends they were sandstone so quite safe and not slippery. A few of these felt like I was riding up and down flights of stairs! Back out in the open gave us the chance to have a nice leg stretching canter along some of the sandy clay sections. This stuff is soooo pleasant to ride along; I've been in show rings that would cry to have footing as nice as this stuff. We were out for about an hour and a half and came back to put away the critters and get a bit battened down for the coming storm.

After a quick lunch we headed out for a little retail therapy, starting with Rim Riders, the tack shop located at East Fork. She has some very unique items and jewellery as well as apparel. The owner was glad to see the Canadian gals back, as last year we blazed a trail through there and this year was no exception. We were in there when the predicted storm hit and it was a doozy! Wind was rattling the metal roof and blowing so hard the rain was actually coming sideways. So we stayed and shopped as it was a safe dry place to be! From there we headed to Duncan's Clothing which is sort of an outlet kind of place with lots of jeans and western style shirts. With the coming Western theme party I HAD to have the purple, black and white one with the shiny purple snap buttons! From there we went on to the TSC

store which was new and very nice, lots of boots and clothing as well as farm and animal stuff. Fletcher could have had a whole new wardrobe of doggy John Deere stuff but I managed to control myself.

That night for dinner Carol had arranged for us to have a private party dinner at the local dining establishment The Hangin' Hog. It is a cute little place whose speciality is southern style BBQ and he'd done some amazing prime rib of beef. Fentress County is "dry", meaning you can buy beer at 2 places in Jamestown, but if you want alcohol or wine you have a drive to Knoxville which is 90 minutes away. This means The Hangin' Hog doesn't serve any kind of alcohol, even beer because "it's too close to the church". Apparently the county can vote to change that, but it requires a pretty high percentage of voters to get it passed. Go figure. Anyways, with a private party like ours you can bring your own and they'll provide the glasses for free! Dick and Lugene treated us all to dinner there which was incredibly generous. We just have to get them to come up north so we can return the favour sometime. We keep working on them!

Thurs. Feb. 12th- Hunting Turns Hog Wild!

After yesterday's stormy weather, which managed to bring down a giant tree alongside the driveway back around to our barn, it was great to see another cloudless blue sky greet us. We were meeting with the Tennessee Tribe up at the Tipple Building. They have all their meets there as it's a good spot to turn a trailer around and provides some shelter for the breakfasts afterwards. This building gets its unusual name from its previous use, which was as a coal tipple or dumping place during the property's mining days.

We headed out to the east and had a couple of good runs but the new low humidity and high pressure system seemed to make the scenting uneven at times. The Cumberland Mountain pack is a mixture of American and Penn-Marydel hounds as well as 3 English hounds we gave to them last year. Obviously the warmer climate and "southern cooking" agrees with them as Promise, Landlord and Molly all look somewhat like they've been inflated in comparison to the much trimmer American bred hounds. Whatever their background, they are a great working pack for a young group of hounds with several whose voices just boom out when they've found the line.

As we headed west across a part of the park that has recently undergone reclamation from coal mining hounds started to speak in a covert just around the edge of one of the many ponds. The field stood and waited on a rise above this area and later were glad we hadn't tried to follow Phil and his daughter Claire, who was whipping in to her dad. They went down into a tough to get to spot where a group of the hounds were milling about. In the middle of their group was a huge wild boar, one of the many who live in the park. These fearsome beasts are nearly black in colour, average 150 to 200 pounds and come armed with a razor sharp set of tusks, an almost armour tough hide and a cranky disposition. As Phil tried to get the hounds out of the area the hog suddenly turned and ran, diving into the pond where it turned to face down both the hounds and Phil and Claire! They managed to get the hounds lifted and safely moving away and the hog decided to make a break for it, running up and out across the road where the field was astonished to see it and the high rate of speed it was travelling at!

Hounds were moved to safer hunting locations and drew a few more coverts but with no luck and so we headed in for another great breakfast put on by the hunt supporters. These folks sure know how to put on a lunch!

Dinner was a "joint meet" again featuring Phil's talents on the BBQ only this time with a cut of beef called a London broil. It had been marinated in a sort of teriyaki blend of spices and is served cooked quite rare and sliced thinly across the grain of the meat. It was delicious- I don't know how Phil, Janet and the kids stay so slim! The meal was topped off with a birthday cake helping Phil and Janet's youngest daughter Katie celebrate her 11th birthday. She and her sister Claire are super nice kids, polite, friendly and very comfortable around adults. I know all from the Canadian Contingent love them both!

Fri. Feb.13th-Another Amazing Bunny Day

The weather had cooled off overnight to just below freezing (boo hoo!) but again the sun was shining and the sky was blue so how can that be a bad day, even for Friday the 13th? Breakfast was a group affair like most mornings with Chef John again wielding his expert egg flipper. Bassets were scheduled to meet for 10 am so at least we all had plenty of time for a second cup of coffee; Carly does make the best coffee!

Joint packs were again the plan and the weather was warming up nicely making following for the field very pleasant but a lot warmer work for the whips and two huntsmen. Hounds were put into the covert about 100 yards from the Tipple Building and again the Tennessee bunnies did not disappoint. Hounds took off to the east in an amazing burst of music and roared around the lower part of the small valley for several minutes. Once that rabbit had been exercised enough bassets were lifted and drew going up towards the gravel roadway. They found again almost immediately and circled with a good sized rabbit crossing over the road right by where we were standing. They hunted along down towards another low piece of ground and the pine woods were soon ringing with hounds voices. Once that quarry was lost they had the longest run of the day circling around after a rabbit which had sat tight until the pack was almost on top of it and swinging around up through another of the many sections of pine forest. John and I viewed at least 6 of the rabbits as they were being hunted as well as other "spare" bunnies. What a great spot and another super day for the Tintern and Upper Bay packs. Should we consider calling them the Upper Tinterns?

Another amazing lunch was put on by the basset supporters and Lugene Askins, who whizzes up in her little red car and pulls out an incredible amount of food from it. Kinda like pulling a rabbit out of a hat, but we'd seen enough of those for one day already!

After lunch we opted to give our trusty steeds an afternoon off and head out to explore the tiny town of Muddy Pond. Carly and Christine had explored it the other day while we were foxhunting and so a bunch of us all piled into Maggie's van to head there.

This little town is hidden way back in the hills about a 30 minute drive from Eastfork and has a surprisingly large number of Mennonites living there. We hit the harness and custom leather shop first; scoring some real bargains on belts and a few horsey items (yes, I can always find something I need!)as

well as these neat big hooks. They look like giant coat hooks and are actually to hang your harness on but we thought they'd be perfect to hang planters outside the house with.

Next we went next door to the little food market which has lovely bacon, fresh churned butter and many types of homemade jam. Yum. Finally we headed back down the road to the general store which features a surprising selection of implements and some butter brittle stuff with cashews in it which was to die for! The lady running the shop was amazed we were all the way from Canada and told us she was married to a Canadian from Saskatchewan. Bet he like winters in Tennessee better than back home!

Dinner was on our own tonight, giving the Tennessee Tribe a night off, probably to rest! After a few of us took in the bright lights of Jamestown and a tasty pizza at Pizza Hut, we sat out before bed enjoying the stars around the raging bonfire Karl had built. It has truly been a fantastic trip so far, with another day each of foxhunting and bassetting still to look forward to.

Sat. Feb. 14th-Last Hunt and The Last Supper

Valentine's Day dawned cool and cloudy with puddles from the hard rain overnight making for good scenting conditions but bad if you have to clean tack later! After Karl caught Ellie, who had decided to head off to the meet without Maggie when she untied herself, we did all finally manage to get organized and up the hill to the Tipple Building for the 10am meet. Lugene Askins was hunting the hounds today as Phil Hopson was attending a family funeral. Hank and Karl both got to help with the whipping duties, a bit of a daunting task when you aren't 100% familiar with the area. There were about 20 mounted for the meet and again featured an assortment of mounts and dress. The Cumberland Mountain Hound group would rather have folks out and having fun, enjoying the sport and supporting the hunt than worrying about how you are turned out. Those riding gaited horses have to bundle up a lot more than those on "regular" horses as it's a lot less work. I really think they are onto something...

Hounds moved off and drew a covert alongside one of the ponds which features a sizeable beaver dam under construction. A grey fox had been seen and hunted there before and it didn't disappoint this morning! A brief run took us around and down along the gravel road towards the Manure Dump and then back up again to where we started. At this point Mr. Fox decided he'd give the hounds the slip and disappeared despite the valiant efforts of hounds and staff to re-establish the line.

Next they drew up along the edge of one of the large pine forested areas to the northeast. They spoke a few times but nothing firm seemed to be happening, which was surprising with the damp cool ground. They continued to pick away and we moved out into the newer reclaimed area which is a super place to see whatever gets put up. Hounds found and ran a coyote who headed eventually out to the edge of the bluff above the Eastfork River where Lugene opted to call hounds off rather than risk them along the cliff. Hounds have run off over before and can make their way down but it's impossible on horseback to follow them.

Hounds moved off into a wooded area next and started speaking soon afterwards. The field had to do a complete reverse and somehow in the commotion I got stuck behind a group of younger kids who with their coach stopped and were deciding which way to head. I continued off up the main trail with Sherry

behind me but we got separated. I stopped to walk past a group of trail riders who said they rest had headed up Trail H8. I continued and could hear the hunt faintly in the distance but by the time I got out in the open was alone and couldn't hear anything. Rats! I continued slowly along and Sherry reappeared. In the distance we heard a couple of shots and that told us we didn't need to hurry. Hounds were being stopped for chasing what Dick refers to as "stick hats". You can guess, I'm sure....

Sherry and I on our two Arties made our way leisurely back to the meet; we'd been out close to 5 hours by the time we were heading up the driveway to our own stables. The sun was poking through the clouds and tomorrow promised to be a nice day for our final ride at Eastfork.

That evening we again were fed handsomely with Dick and Lugene hosting us at Phil and Janet's house. Phil is a wizard with his BBQ smoker and did a huge prime rib and tenderloin of beef that were perfectly cooked and melted in your mouth served with Lugene's brandy and mushroom sauce, with emphasis on the brandy!

We showed off the day pictures on the laptops and Christine was able to conjure up all the pictures from the slide shows from the Hamilton Hunt meets. They enjoyed seeing what our country looks like and loved all the hound pictures taken by Botts-Watson over the several years they've attended our meets. I learned that the Tom and Carol of the Tennessee Tribe referred to my horse Artie as the Saran Wrap Kid. This is because they can't believe how clean he looks, (Thanks Cowboy Magic! Thanks Showsheen!) so they figure I keep him wrapped up in plastic wrap to keep the dirt off. A novel idea...

We headed out later than usual, hating that it would be the last time we would see a lot of these folks until next year. We really worked on trying to get them to come up mid-August later this year so we can try and return some of the hospitality they've shown us so generously. Hopefully...

Sun. Feb.15th- The Upper Tinterns Dazzle Again!

Sunday dawned as quite a bit cooler with a bit of a breeze making it feel colder but with a pleasant bit of sunshine in the forecast. We were meeting Dick and his pack at 10 so had time for some scrambled eggs and cinnamon buns for breakfast. We all seem to be moving a bit slower this morning, I know I'm not the only one feeling like I need to go home from this holiday for a rest!

The joint pack moved off into the pine trees at the side of the laneway and a rabbit was quickly found and hunted well out into the field and then it swung out and across the roadway and across the pasture with the whole pack speaking in hot pursuit. They ran along through the trees and about halfway around the pond before the rabbit gave them the slip. Drawing back up the slope another popped up and was viewed going out across the edge of the pasture and into the long grass and weeds of the next field. Things slowed down for quite a while as they drew all around the edge and across this area but the bunnies were sitting tight. Hounds were cast into another clump of pine trees and yet another rabbit emerged, running back to the east along one of the gullies before the line was lost. Heading back into that pine covert from the opposite direction had another bunny flying out and crossing the roadway where it circled behind the Tipple Building and tried to head back for home with the whole pack close behind. Fortunately for the rabbit there was a handy culvert and it went to ground there and wouldn't

be roused again, despite the hounds' efforts. It was a great ending to another amazing bassetting day. Another yummy lunch was put on where the day's events were reviewed and some cold beverages enjoyed before final good byes to Dick and Lugene, Tom and Carol, Phil and his daughter Katie, Scottie and her friend Debs and Debbie were said. We are really going to miss these folks that we've become so close with over the last 10 days.

When we returned to the stable Maggie, Sherry and I decided one last trail ride was in order before heading back to the Great White North. We tacked up and headed out to the area to the north of the stables and explored a part of the forest we'd not been to before. The trail in this area was a lot muddier to Fletcher's delight and some parts of the trail were quite a bit more challenging than what we'd encountered before. We enjoyed seeing a large cave area cut in under the ledge by the stream and huge expanses of mosses and lichen, quite different than the other parts of the park. We did "ride the edge" for quite a bit of the trail, going along the trail at the edge of the plateau with an amazing drop off and lovely views in several places.

Finally we had to head in as we had to get packed up and I had a REALLY filthy but very happy dog to clean up. Turns out Cowboy Magic works on dogs too! All but the overnight essentials were organized for all the steeds and packed into the trailers. I hate to head home and am not looking forward to the drive but I know both my horse and I are ready for a rest. Lucky Maggie is not coming home with us but instead is driving down to her mom's place in Florida where she will meet up with her hubby and take a break in the sunshine.

We once again went to Pizza Hut- dining options in Jamestown can be kindly described as limited on a Sunday night but it would mean less cleanup and gave us one last get together before we head out in the morning. 4am is going to come waaaay too soon.

Mon.Feb.16th-Homeward Bound

4am does come really quickly when you went to bed dog tired but we all hopped out of bed as soon as the alarm went off. With coffee brewing I headed up the hill for the last time to feed Spotty Horse who is always glad to see his grain, no matter what the time is. As Karl and I were lugging some of our last items to the trailers we had a "musical" good bye from the Tennessee coyote choir. As it was really clear and still they sounded like they were just on the other side of the trees from us and there were definitely more than a couple of them there. (Where were they Saturday?)

Sherry was the last to pull up to the barn as her alarm hadn't gone off but we helped get her loaded. Karl, Hank and Carly then went up to collect the bassets and gear while the rest of us got to finish our coffee waiting by the driveway. Once they appeared we headed out and north up Highway 127 with the McDonalds leading the way. We took Hwy 52 across through Rugby but when we got to the turn on to Hwy 27 where I had a blonde senior's moment and turned south instead of north. A navigational Freudian slip? Perhaps....We managed to get turned around after a couple of miles leaving Sherry and Christine in the lead.

We finally got caught up with Karl north of Lexington Kentucky and followed them for a while, finally passing them and moving on up the I-75N. Thank goodness it's President's Day in the US today as a lot of businesses and things are closed, making for less traffic for both us headed north and Maggie and Raven her trusty poodle dog wending their way south. The drive is clear but cold; we'll miss our taste of spring like temperatures we've had for the last ten days.

Through the border finally- not near the hassle we had going the other day. The girl at the booth had such a big wad of chewing gum in her face at first I thought she had some sort of speech impediment. John handed her the horse documents which she examined closely; you could just tell she had NOOOO idea what she was looking at and we got waved through just fine. Fletcher is always so disappointed when he goes through Customs. He's convinced all drive through windows will provide his Mom with a coffee and a 10 pack of Timbits and this one never does!

The rest of the drive was painless for us as well as Christine and Sherry. Not so for Karl, Hank and Carly. Somehow that sign about the bridge to Canada got missed and they got to tour some of the finer places of Detroit- no small feat with a 20 foot stock trailer but they finally got back on track and over with no problems.

We all ended up back at the Kennels within about 15 minutes of each other and got the critters settled in, fed and watered. It has been an amazing time; good hunting both on foot and on horseback, good hacking through the wonderful Eastfork property, plenty of good food but the best part was doing it with great friends, both the ones who went and the ones down in Tennessee both new and old. Can't wait for Tennessee 2010!