

## Travelers enjoy an American fox hunt

Funny how things work out, isn't it? I was getting a little concerned that still being here in Culpeper, I might have a little difficulty finding something new to write about — at least something equine-related. We haven't been anywhere new on our travels this week, and as regular readers of the column will know, the format of each article generally revolves around our recent experiences on the road. I mean, how interesting can you make a story about how I went shopping/ate lunch/watched TV (a rare occurrence indeed these days) or shockingly, how I went to bed at well past midnight last night?

Fear not, dear readers, as our gracious hosts Donna and Robbie Martin (your local Blue Ridge Trailer people) have ensured that we have plenty to keep us occupied.

Last weekend we went to the local Hunter Schooling show at Summer Duck Farm, where we saw a number of the students from the James Madison University equestrian team (Holly Martin, Bridgett Holroid, Sarah Petri & Danielle Parkinson) go through their paces.

In fact, these delightful young ladies had persuaded our son Tom to practice his newly acquired "Film Executive" skills by having him video the event for them, in order that they could see just how good (or bad) each of them were around the jumps.

He did an outstanding job of editing his footage to create a "masterpiece" of film artistry for the girls, which we all enjoyed watching at an impromptu party on Sunday night. Following the girls' obvious delight and gratitude at Tom's efforts, he's now thinking of changing his name from Snogles to Spielberg — might look good on the resume, that!

As if that wasn't enough to keep us going, Donna had arranged for us to go on Labor Day to the opening "cub hunting" meet of the Rappahannock Hunt at Elmwood Farm.

The subject of fox hunting has been a little "thorny" of late for us Brits, what with the recent ban imposed back in England, so we were delighted to go along and see what it was all about in America, even though we had to start at 6:30 in the morning!

I should make it clear here that although Anita used to regularly fox hunt when she was younger, I have never been to a fox hunt myself, so with an open, if somewhat sleepy mind, we trotted out to Elmwood Farm to see what it was all about.

Cubbing in England is very different from that in the states, and essentially for those of you not in the know, over here it really is just a practice session for young hounds, unfit horses and unfit riders alike before the season starts in earnest; whereas in England it used to (until the ban) take on a slightly more "sinister" role, where the hounds were used to hunt down and destroy the young fox cubs before they can grow into the crop and livestock-damaging adults we all know (although foxes do help to keep the rodent population down!).

Another thing different



David and Anita Hasbury-Snogles, on a break from their cross-country travels, joined the Rappahannock Hunt for a cub hunt on Labor Day. The event, David says, is a practice session before November, when the season starts in earnest.



DAVID AND ANITA HASBURY-SNOGLES

over here is that you have both gray and red foxes, whereas we only have the red fox in the U.K.

The gray fox is the smaller of the two and is the only one of the species that can actually climb trees, so when you see those comic post-cards of a fox up a tree waving at the passing hounds below, it has to be a gray.

Mr. red fox has to rely on cunning and speed to outwit his pursuers, although at a top speed of 45mph he is more often than not the one that got away!

But back to the hunt. Although fox hunting was introduced along with the fox itself by us Brits back in the 1700s, it wasn't until many years later that formal hunts were officially recognized, and Virginia has more hunts than any other state in the country. In the case of the Rappahannock Hunt, they began in earnest in 1926, but were not given official recognition by the controlling body MFHA (Master of Foxhounds Association of America) until as late as 1939.

The Rappahannock is a small group of around 100 dedicated members (both riding and social) and is unique among hunts for a number of reasons: First and foremost, they are a democratic hunt, with the members electing the Masters of the Fox Hounds (currently Oliver Brown, Janet Payne O'Keefe and Augustus Edwards III), which is something that is almost unheard of elsewhere.

They are also based more in the mountain region of the state, and open, maintain and clear trails all by themselves, which means they are more used to riding



With a ban on fox hunting in the U.K., the British travelers were eager to see what the American sport is like. They were impressed with the hunters' hospitality.

single file down narrow paths than charging ahead as an unruly bunch across open fields. As Janet, the first lady ever to be voted in as a Master of the Fox Hounds at Rappahannock, was telling me, on occasion when they join forces with other hunts in the area their members can appear a little too orderly for the rest of the riders on the chase!

But perhaps the most significant difference about the members of the Rappahannock Hunt is that they are busy organizing a fundraiser for someone other than themselves.

This year they are foregoing their annual Hunt Ball in favour of an amazing fundraising event called "Casino Royale."

A portion of the proceeds of the fundraiser will help to establish a scholarship in memory of Emily Jane Hilscher of Woodville, one of the first victims of the Virginia Tech tragedy last April, who graduated from Rappahannock County High School and was an avid

horse enthusiast. This is one exclusive reservation only event (there are only 230 tickets available) which takes place on October 13. For more details take a look at the Hunt's Web page at [rappahannockhunt.com](http://rappahannockhunt.com).

My thanks go to Master of the Fox Hounds, Janet Payne O'Keefe, who not only spent considerable time talking to me, but also gave me a copy of the Hunt's handbook, which outlines the considerable etiquette involved in fox hunting.

Contrary to popular belief, huntsmen (and women) do not go marauding across the country, ignoring property boundaries and personal rights in pursuit of their quarry; they very much respect and appreciate the landowners who permit them to hunt on their land, and ensure that they take good care to protect crops, livestock and the environment as they ride.

After all, they want to be invited back, not banned from enjoying what is a very healthy and community-

related sport.

Perhaps one of the greatest differences between U.K. and U.S. Hunts is evidenced at the refreshments at the end of the day's hunt. Unlike in Britain, there was no apparent snobbery on display here, and we were made very welcome by the members of the hunt.

Young, old, rich, poor, experienced rider, novice rider, or indeed just a spectator, as we were — all were genuinely welcome, and all were equal on the day. How refreshing — almost as much as the bottle of beer I helped myself to from the cooler, even though at the time it was only 11:00 in the morning — but then I had been on the go since 6:30!

Until next week .....

David and Anita Hasbury-Snogles are British residents riding across the United States on horseback to raise money for charity. Visit [HorseQuestUSA.org](http://HorseQuestUSA.org) for more information. David can be reached at [david\\_hasbury@yahoo.com](mailto:david_hasbury@yahoo.com).

## Company claims greater efficiency with corn

Says it can produce 27% more ethanol per acre of crop

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. — A company that has been making ethanol from corn for more than 20 years says its ethanol research should allow it to squeeze 27 percent more fuel from each acre of the crop.

Poet, a privately owned ethanol producer in Sioux Falls, plans to expand its dry-mill ethanol plant in Emmetsburg, Iowa, to produce alternative fuel not only from corn kernels, but also the cobs and stalks normally left behind in the fields.

Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, who toured the company's headquarters and research lab last week, said there is only so much ethanol that can be made from corn starch.

"It's just a way of moving on to have further independence from foreign sources of energy," he said. "It's a way of doing more to clean up the environment, and it's obviously going to put money in farmers' pockets."

So-called cellulosic ethanol is basically fuel made from plants or plant waste — something other than a corn kernel. Making fuel from this biomass costs about twice as much as cooking up corn-based fuel, government researchers say.

The U.S. Department of Energy earlier this year awarded \$385 million to six companies hoping to build the nation's first big biomass-to-fuel plants.

Poet is slated to receive \$80 million in grant money, which is part of the Bush administration's goal of making cellulosic ethanol competitive by 2012.

Poet, formerly Broin Cos., plans to convert its 50-million-gallon-per-year Emmetsburg plant into one of the nation's first commercial cellulosic biorefineries.

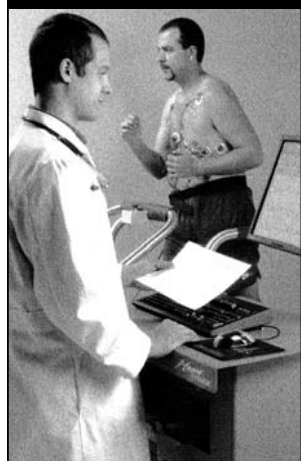
Once complete, it is expected to produce 125 million gallons per year — 25 percent of them from corn cobs and fiber. That means each bushel of corn could yield 11 percent more fuel.

Jeff Broin, Poet's president and chief executive officer, said focusing its cellulosic ethanol research on the corn plant is a natural for a firm that operates 20 ethanol plants in the heart of corn country.

"All of our existing facilities are located in the Midwest," he said. "And of course they're surrounded by cellulose — and that cellulose is actually corn stover, corn cobs."

The company has been testing the process in its Sioux Falls lab as it prepares to set up a pilot-scale model at its research center in Scotland.

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