

The Chase Is On!

By Tracy Ogle

Lewis Ogle proudly poses with his hounds.

My grandfather, Lewis Ogle, has hunted foxes for many years. He has been a police officer for the city of Kirksville for 15 years. Although the deer population in the county drove him out of the fox hunting business, he still has many fond memories about the chases that he shared with us.

Q. When did you start out hunting fox?

A. I have been a fox hunter and have had hounds for approximately thirty-five years. There are four different breeds of fox hounds. Walkers, July's, Goodman's and Triggs, but the Walker breed is my favorite fox hound.

Q. Were most of your dogs Walkers?

A. Yes, they were Walkers. Of course, years back we hunted in Adair County where Forest Lake is now. It was just woods then, and there were lots of foxes. We had a lot of good chases. A good true fox hunter ran his hounds—chased the foxes—but didn't believe in killing the foxes. We did have an abundance of foxes. There were a lot of fox hunters in Adair County, but a lot of those old-timers are deceased now. Some of the men I hunted with were Artie Howell, Merl Shoemaker, Dean Lewis, George Williams, and John Salaski, to name a few. Leonard Crow, chief of police in Kirksville for 30 years, was also a fox hound man who raised and traded hounds. Some are dead, some are still alive and just quit hunting, like myself. We didn't have any deer in Adair County then. This was one of the main things that caused me to quit hunting. It was hard to keep your hounds from chasing deer. You were very lucky if you ever had one, even one, hound that wouldn't chase them.

The foxes raised their young, most generally, in the latter part of March and April. Five or six foxes were the usual litter. Of course, myself and a lot of other hunters would get out in the woods and look for the dens to find out where they were. Of course, we'd keep check on them and you was darenst to disturb the den or they would move.

Q. Did the male fox run longer and farther than the female fox?

A. Yes, we'd always try to pick a good night—watch when the sun went down to see that it was a nice sun setting in the evening—no wind—the ground should be damp, not dry. We've went many times, back in those days, turned our hounds loose about the time the sun went down. Most generally, the hounds would jump the she, the mother fox, and the hounds would chase her for probably an hour—sometimes longer. Then the old dog fox would come in and take over and lead the dogs away from the young and the den, and the fox race was on! Lots of times, back in those days, a fox chase lasted all night—they'd still be running the next morning when the sun came up.

It took good hounds—you had to feed your hounds. Of

course, they didn't look like show dogs when you run them. You wanted them so that you could count their ribs down the side, because if you tried to chase with fat dogs (too much flesh on them) of course, you'd break them down—make them quit. You had to have a dog in good shape to stand the chase all night long.

Q. How many times a week did you hunt them?

A. To have a good running hound, he needed to be run twice a week, that is, if you kept him corralled up. A lot of hunters living in the country didn't have corrals to shut their dogs up—they ran loose all the time. They'd run to suit themselves. In later years, they had to go to building corrals or tie them up, because your hounds would be out and someone would come in from town with their hounds and they'd be fresh dogs and they's set in on your dogs and make it awfully rough on them, and if they wasn't the right kind of running hounds, they'd make them quit and that was one thing a good fox hunter didn't like. He wouldn't own a hound that would quit. He wanted one that would stay in there until they holed that fox or the old fox just trailed them out.

Q. Can you remember any interesting or amusing stories that happened to you during your fox hunting days?

A. Yes, I can. Of course, the main object in fox hunting was when you went out with a bunch of other good hunters, you wanted a hound with a good mouth, one with an outstanding bark that you could tell from the others. One time, I remember, several of us fox hunters went and we took a Baptist preacher with us. He was one of the old-time Baptists. I can't remember which hunter, but I remember he would say, "Listen, listen, man, listen to that heavenly music." And this preacher said, "I—I can't hear that music for those god-damned hounds!"

Max Randolph, from Carrollton, Missouri, was another good breeder of Walkers. I had a good gyp that I took down there to breed to his stud dog and I raised just a litter of three pups. You couldn't hardly call it a litter. Of course, I raised those dogs out. One particular time, these three young dogs were in a chase one night west of Kirksville out on No. 11 where Route N junctions to go to Yarrow. I stayed all night. By morning, the hounds were still running fox, but I had to go home and later that day I checked on my hounds. One young dog had come in. I found out later that one of my good neighbors had shot this one young dog with a bow and arrow. He came home with this arrow in him. I took him to the vet, but he died.

This is one more thing about the deer situation that drove me out of the fox hound business. I still think that when I retire, I will get into Walker fox hounds and try to enjoy a few more chases.