



Cowhands and foxhunters round up five hundred head of cattle, then follow the Arapahoe hounds in pursuit of the coyote.

REBECCA PATOILE PHOTO

## Cowboy Cubhunting with the Arapahoe

### Cattle roundup and coyote hunt: an ecumenical meeting of cowboys and foxhunters

by Marc C. Patoile

Robert Frost wrote, “Don’t ever take a fence down until you know why it was put up.” With 150 linear miles of barbed wire fence at the Monaghan Ranch near Laramie, Wyoming, it is obvious why the fence was put up: there are thousands of Angus cattle scattered in the various pastures. However, the cowboys at the Monaghan Ranch are not afraid to take the fences down when hounds give chase. Once a year, Rob Deline, Joint-MFH of the Arapahoe Hunt (CO) hosts an annual fund raiser for the hunt at the ranch, which is owned by the Deline family. If you weren’t there, you missed one of the best hunts in the Wild West.

Nearly sixty riders, including guests from California and New Jersey, saddled up for the first day’s action—a genuine Wyoming roundup. This was no trail ride for city slickers; it was a long working day to round up and sort five hundred head of red and black Angus yearlings. Following the roundup, where riders spread out to gather the cattle into a corner of the pasture, the red cattle were sorted from the black cattle. Hunt members and guests helped the professional cowboys with a bit of driving, sorting and holding the separate groups of cattle. It was quite a scene, with English saddles and hunt caps mixed among Western stock saddles and wranglers. Following the drive, Mr. Deline served his home-raised beefsteaks at a barn party. Riders enjoyed the open bar in the barn and “The Show 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon” with a bucking bronco on the label.

The following day, some forty-two members of the field followed Mr. Deline, who served as Field Master, over hayfields, trappy irrigation ditches, and rocky buttes. Many had worn themselves out the day before on the all-day cattle drive.

In these parts, coyotes are lucky when they don’t end their days in the crosshair of a rancher’s rifle scope, so they seemed more than happy to provide a good sporting chase for hounds.

“This is the best day cubbing in the ten years we have been drawing this special fixture here at the Monaghan Ranch,” commented Dr. Marvin Beeman, MFH and huntsman. Dr. Beeman had a lot to talk about after hounds quickly dispatched their quarry not more than ten minutes out of the ranch headquarters.

Hounds were put into covert again, which Dr. Beeman admits is a bit of a misnomer. An Irish friend once laughed upon seeing this coun-

try and hearing hounds being put into covert with a “lieu into covert and try.”

“That’s a damned funny one,” the visitor said, “as there ain’t no covert here!”

Indeed, this is wide open country with hardly a tree in sight. The Monaghan Ranch spans nine miles in one direction and fifteen in the other, with the Snowy Range Mountains off in the distance to provide a point of reference. Some twelve and a half couple of English foxhounds gave us a four mile run on one coyote and five miles on another.

Although you don’t encounter a fence very often, as these are large pastures, when you do come across a fence it can be problematic for keeping with hounds. This is only a once-in-a-year fixture for the hunt and is not paneled. The nearest gate is often a mile or more down the fence line. Fortunately for the hunt, the wranglers magically appear with wire cutters and are more than happy to cut the barbed wire to make way for the hounds, staff, and field.

Lest you think this a run-down fence that they don’t mind cutting, this is the tightest five-wire fence you’ll find. These well-manicured ranch pastures would compete with the manicured greens at Morven Park in Virginia. Barely before the field is through the cut in the fence, the cowboys have dismounted with fencing pliers in hand, have it mended, and are galloping back to rejoin the hounds some miles away. These cowboys ride in Western stock saddles with full Western dress on the ranch’s Thoroughbred horses. A glance at them instantly convinces you that from the looks of their worn cowboy boots and dress hats, these guys are the real deal. But their Western attire appears as elegant and in place as any salt sack coat and Newmarket boots ensemble.

Mrs. Beeman—Eunie—who has hunted more than forty years with the Arapahoe said it was “an amazing day hilltopping.” The youngest member of the hunt, Lillian Rogers, had to sit this hunt out, as her mother insisted that her pretty grey pony had had too much work the day before on the five-hour cattle drive. Miss Rogers accompanied her mother to the hunt breakfast, which was catered in the 120-year-old horse barn at the ranch headquarters following the hunt. *Huevos rancheros* and a lot more fixings had this hungry crowd satisfied with a hunt breakfast that would be very hard to duplicate. Diners gazed out the barn doors onto a pasture filled with home-raised Angus cattle and Thoroughbred horses.

Dr. Beeman laughed in remembering. “I don’t know if the field could see it, but as that last coyote ran out ahead of hounds, I saw something bouncing on the edge of the butte. It was the coyote jumping in the air to see if the hounds were still in pursuit.” And sure enough, the hounds were in pursuit, far into the western horizon towards the Snowy Range in God’s country.