



GAINESVILLE

APRIL / MAY 2014

MAGAZINE

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**AMERICA'S
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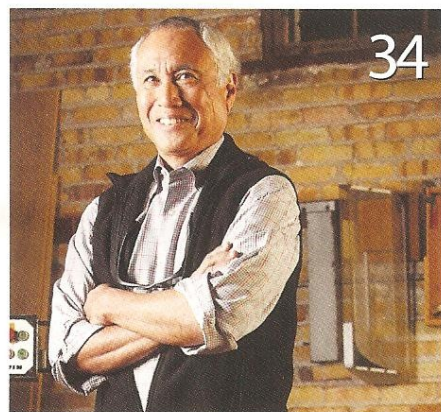
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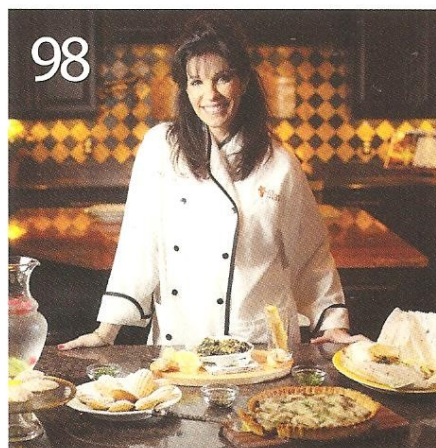
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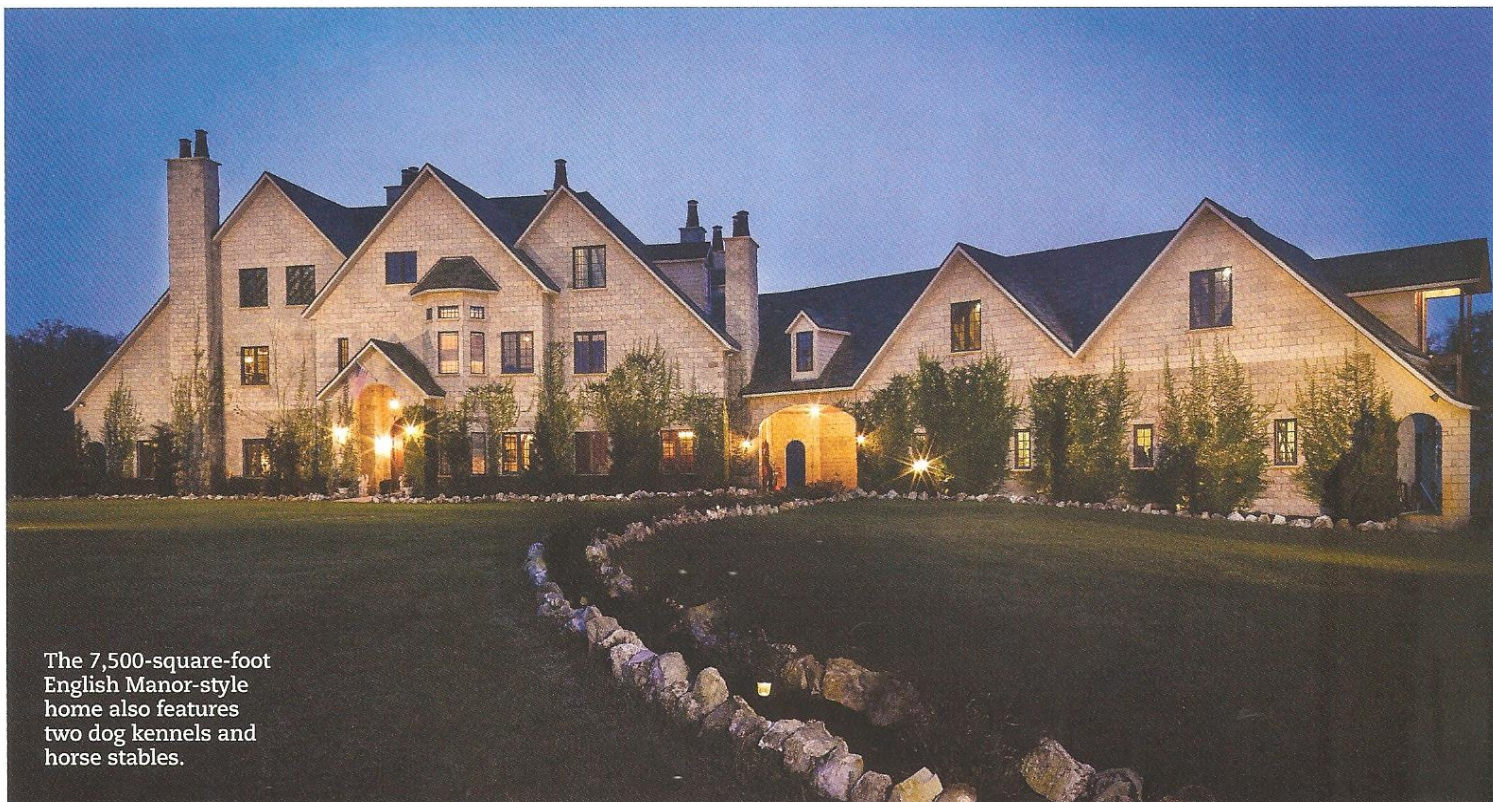


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Alexis and Walter
"Mac" Macaulay with
two of their American
Foxhounds, Felina and
Elvis Presley, at the
entrance to their
3-bedroom, 8-bathroom
home in Rochelle.

A HISTORIC PROPERTY FIT FOR THE HOUNDS





The 7,500-square-foot English Manor-style home also features two dog kennels and horse stables.

Once owned by Florida's fourth governor, this historic Rochelle property was reinvented as the Perry Plantation — Alexis and Walter “Mac” Macaulay’s working hay farm and drag foxhunting club.

STORY BY PATRICIA KLIER
PHOTOS BY ROB C. WITZEL

WALTER “MAC” Macaulay and his wife, Alexis, didn’t know at first the 527-acre property they bought was “famous” in terms of Florida’s history.

It had once belonged to Florida’s fourth governor, Madison Starke Perry. (All that remain of Perry’s burned-down plantation are the charred bricks and foundation.) Nor did they realize the historic property was also home to the first civilian fort in the state, Fort Crane, used during the Seminole Wars. They just knew they had to have it.

“The property really found us,” recalls Alexis. Mac owns Southside Fixtures, a commercial cabinet shop in Jacksonville known for its custom woodwork and cabinetry, and Alexis is an interior designer by trade. They had called a Realtor about the property in 1998, but



A pack of 50 American Foxhounds calls this kennel home. The males are separated from the females. The building also houses a small clinic for the care of the hounds.



ABOVE: Looking down from the iron-work mezzanine onto the Great Hall, visitors to the Perry Plantation can feel the festive atmosphere.

AT RIGHT: A classic mudroom allows the Macaulays and guests to hang up their hunting gear and wash up for a meal.

discovered it was tied up in a lease. In 1999, they were in the process of closing on another property in Citra when a Realtor phoned them about the farm. At that point, Alexis says, “We had pretty much forgotten about it.”

She suggested that Mac take a closer look. After he did, he was sold.

“He called me about an hour later saying I really needed to see it,” Alexis says.

Although the property was overgrown with weeds that rivaled the height of their transport, Alexis and Mac fell in love with the place.

“We made an offer and bought it that night — and then cancelled the Citra purchase the next day,” she adds.

That was in 1999. Roughly 10 years later, the couple finally finished building their grand English Manor-style home: a 7,500-square-foot residence with three bedrooms and eight bathrooms, plus a separate kennel to house their pedigreed American foxhounds — all 50 of them.

“It also has eight fireplaces, a conservatory, an English pub, and a museum/trophy room,” says Mac.

“We built it entirely for hunt [club] functions and it works beautifully for that,” Alexis adds. “I often look at the house



and cannot actually believe that we live here.”

The hunt club she is referring to is their drag “foxhunting” (or draghunting) club, known as Misty Morning Hounds. The sport involves a pack of hounds trained to follow the scent of anisette liquor (not live animals), which has been laid out on the trail beforehand. Riders on horseback (often clad in traditional red hunting uniforms) gallop and jump to keep up with the hounds as they follow the scent. Their season lasts from October to March.

Alexis grew up hunting in Memphis and graduated



A wine-colored formal dining room is often used for Hunt Club functions and large events.

from the University of Tennessee. Mac, a native of Rhode Island, moved to Jacksonville with his family when he was a teen. He later started his custom cabinetry company in Jacksonville.

Misty Morning Hounds is just one of three operations at their property. The hunt club has approximately 50 to 75 members, who pay membership dues at a rate of \$1,050 per individual or \$1,800 per family. The land also is used as a working hay farm, and maintaining the rented stables and kennels on the property is practically a full-time job.

Alexis and Mac nearly maintain the whole thing by themselves. They have some assistance in the form of part-time helper, Dana Moore, a pre-vet student at the University of Florida. She works with the kennel and hounds, but overall, the farm chores fall to them.

"It's a very country and earthy lifestyle," Alexis says. "Despite the image of the house, we are working farmers by choice — we're feeding the horses, cleaning kennels, training hounds, tending to hay fields every day. The hours are long and the work is hard, but it is so very rewarding at the end of the day."

The property has been consistently in use for farming since the 1800s, when Governor Perry raised crops such as cotton, citrus and tung oil trees, as well as cattle, according to Alexis. That was back when the community of Rochelle, just a few miles outside of Micanopy, was a center of bustling activity with more than 100 residents.

"We tossed around a lot of names for the farm but as we learned about its history, there was no choice but to tie it back to its roots — and we named it the Perry Plantation," she says.

As neighbors, acquaintances and friends shared their knowledge of the property, Mac's brother, John McCraw, an amateur archaeologist, did a little digging of his own.

"[He] has found loads of artifacts on the farm — military buttons and musket balls from the fort, arrowheads and spear-heads, clay pipes, coins dating to the early 1800s, and many other objects from that time period at the old Perry house location," she says.

The property's ties to history don't end there; the area was used as a civilian fort called Fort Crane in honor of Colonel Ichabod Crane during the Seminole Wars from 1835-1842.

"[He] commanded the 2nd Artillery unit in the Second Seminole War and acted as Commander of the U.S. Army District of Northeast Florida," Alexis says. "The fort was built in January 1837 and commanded by Lt. John H. Winder. Col. Crane was a career military officer for 48 years and the namesake of the protagonist in Washington Irving's 'The Legend of Sleepy Hollow.'"

Fortunately, there are no headless horsemen on property; wildlife, however, abounds. There's the requisite alligator (or two) in their pond, plus herds of deer, sandhill cranes, owls, bald eagles, hawks, coyotes, foxes and, every once in



awhile, a panther.

"We've seen just about everything here," Mac says. "The deer run in herds of 35 to 40 in some of the fields. Since the deer know our vehicles, we can get incredibly close to them.

"The sandhill cranes are all over the place, too," Alexis adds. "We have a couple of resident foxes, some coyote at the back of the property. We've also seen bobcat, otter, skunk, gators, rattlesnakes, bald eagles, and loads of very interesting birds. There is even a panther that migrates through the property every six months or so."

The property itself serves as more than just the residence for Mac and Alexis. As a working hay farm and a home base for Misty Morning Hounds kennels and horse stables, the Macaulays rarely have time to rest or vacation — but they wouldn't have it any other way.

"They are both truly labors of love," Alexis says. "I think any farmer would quickly tell you that you're never in it just for the money, because farming is simply not that profitable — there are so many variables, like the rain or lack of it, insects, and weed control that can spoil your crop overnight," Alexis says.

The Hunt Club is similar in a lot of ways, she adds. "If you don't love the sport and hounds, and aren't dedicated to the work and long hours, you won't last in it very long," she says. "The hounds are like an extended family here at Misty Morning. We keep them from birth to death, and

want them to have long, quality lives ... They are companions, but they are also working partners — much the same as the relationship you have with your horse. But with hounds, it is a much more complex endeavor because you kick into their primal hunting instincts. These hounds have been bred for centuries to hunt game. Though these are scent hounds, by nature, if it runs, they want to chase it. We ask them to alter that instinct."

Another labor of love was building the home itself. It was a project that combined their strengths—Mac's as a woodworker and Alexis' as an interior designer. With their expertise, they pulled their own building permit and started working, incorporating energy efficient materials throughout.

"I designed the house, drew up the plans, and did the lighting and electrical schedules, as well as the custom detailing, finish and fixture selection. Mac brought it all to light, though, and made it happen. It was the absolute most fun I ever had designing," Alexis recalls.

Mac agrees. "It was a very stressful endeavor but so rewarding in the end," he says.

Their collaboration didn't begin with the house. The two of them met in Jacksonville where she was an interior designer and he was a master craftsman. Mac's best friend happened to be Alexis' boss, and after working together on several projects, one thing led to another.

"Let's not go into too much detail," Mac says with a



wink.

The building and construction of the home, however, was no laughing matter. In fact, some people gave them a hard time about taking on a project that was perhaps too large or difficult to handle.

"It ended up, as always, a more involved project than we had initially planned, and the house took 10 years to complete," Alexis admits. "We took a lot of ribbing during that time from folks that thought we would never see it through — and at times we thought they just might be right!"

Ultimately they persevered and even put their own personal touches throughout the home, such as the impressive

ABOVE: Hunt Club members can grab a pint at "The Flews and Dewlap Inn," an English pub on the home's second floor.

AT LEFT: The Gladys Rankin room, named after Alexis' grandmother, features traditional wood furnishings and a fireplace.

custom front entry: a 12-foot-tall by 6-foot-wide mahogany door with an Old West-style hand-forged iron speakeasy grate and hand-forged iron clavos (decorative nails), designed and brought to life by Mac.

"Mac made all the custom woodwork in our house including the doors, which are spectacular," Alexis says of the more than 30 doors in the home. "He planed them down from raw [mahogany] wood and the end result is unbelievable."

Alexis contributed much of the interior design work, from the dual-sided his-and-hers sink in the master bathroom to the multiple-windowed conservatory, which houses her drafting table and a plethora of potted plants (though she admits she doesn't have much of a green thumb.)

If they had to choose a favorite room or place to congregate, they agree the Great Hall is hard to top.

"The fireplace is huge, with a lovely mantel," she says. The area is spacious, with the ceiling extending to the second floor, and the mezzanine balcony overlooking it. "It's great for hunt functions because everyone on the second floor can feel a part of the first-floor activities," she says.

Continued on Page 123 >>>



The 69th Annual Newberry Watermelon Festival is May 17.

5-10 p.m., Thunder Music Park, 9057 U.S. 301, Hampton

VIVA! 2014, April 12, Haven Hospice fundraiser, Rembert Farm, NW 172 Avenue, Alachua (379-6238)

GREAT AMERICAN CLEAN-UP, April 12, 8 a.m.-3 p.m., Westside Park, 1001 NW 34th St.

FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY BOOK SALE, April 12-16, 430-B North Main St., (375-1676, folacld.org)

BRADFORD COUNTY STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL, April 12-13, 10 a.m., East Call Street, downtown Starke

7TH WHITE ROSE LUNCHEON AND HAT FASHION SHOW, April 12, 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., Hilton University of Florida Conference Center, 1714 SW 34th St.

GAINESVILLE'S "OLD FLORIDA" BIRDING AND NATURE FESTIVAL, April 18, 19 & 20, 7 a.m., Bo Diddley Plaza, East University Avenue and SE First Street

7TH FLORIDA INFANTRY REGIMENT MUSTER, April 18 & 19, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Dudley Farm Historic State Park, 18730 W. Newberry Rd.

EASTER EGG HUNT, April 19-21, Kanapaha Botanical Gardens

EARTH DAY BUTTERFLY PLANT SALE,

April 19, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Florida Museum of Natural History

EARTH DAY EXPLORATION, April 19, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Florida Museum of Natural History

"PASSPORT TO DISCOVERY, RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK," food, music, dancing, creative black tie, Florida Museum of Natural History fundraiser, April 25, 7-11 p.m., Florida Museum of Natural History, 273-2047, www.flmnh.ufl.edu/passport

HIGH SPRINGS PIONEER DAYS CELEBRATION, April 26-27, 10 a.m., downtown Historic High Springs

35TH ANNUAL FIFTH AVENUE ARTS FESTIVAL, April 26-27, NW Fifth Avenue and NW Sixth Street

E.T. YORK WORK OF HEART AWARDS, April 30, 7 p.m., Santa Fe College Fine Arts Hall

MAY

PERFORMANCES

"A NIGHT IN THE ISLANDS," 2nd Annual Miracle Makers Barn Dance, May 3, 6-9 p.m., Haven Horse Ranch, 7333 CR 208, St. Augustine

WILLIE NELSON AND ALISON KRAUSS, May 6, 6-10:30 p.m., St. Augustine Amphitheatre, 1340 A1A South, St. Augustine

CLIMB FOR CANCER FOUNDATION, Barbara Padilla performance, one of the world's great sopranos, May 10, 7:30 p.m. Santa Fe Fine Arts Hall Theatre

"MICHAEL JACKSON THE IMMORTAL WORLD TOUR," new Cirque du Soleil production of the pop legend's music

and choreography, May 13-14, 8 p.m. O'Connell Center

MUSIC BY THE SEA, concert series, Wednesdays, May 14-Sept. 24, 6-9 p.m., St. Johns County Pier Park and Pavilion, 350 A1A Beach Blvd, St. Augustine

JACK JOHNSON WITH SPECIAL GUEST ALO, May 20, 6:30-10 p.m., St. Augustine Amphitheatre, 1340 A1A South, St. Augustine

"INTO THE WOODS," May 23-June 15, Gainesville Community Playhouse

STYX, FOREIGNER, & DON FELDER, May 23, 6:30-10:15 p.m., St. Augustine Amphitheatre, 1340 A1A South, St. Augustine

ROOM TO DANCE, May 30-31, The Fine Arts Hall Theatre, Santa Fe College

SUMMER MUSICAL, May 28-June 22, Hippodrome Theatre

EVENTS

GATOR STOMPIN', May 1, 9 p.m.-2 a.m., Bo Diddley Community Plaza

ROMANZA FESTIVAL, street fairs, dancing, plays, and more, May 9-18, Various locations, downtown St. Augustine

69TH ANNUAL NEWBERRY WATERMELON FESTIVAL, May 17, downtown Newberry

JUNE

PERFORMANCES

EPISODE (FORMERLY KNOWN AS THE DRIFTERS), June 21, Santa Fe College, Fine Arts Hall

{HOME & GARDEN}

FIT FOR THE HOUNDS

Continued from Page 79

Another favorite spot is the English pub, which seats 35 people, and can be found on the second floor.

"We named it 'The Flews & Dewlap Inn,'" Mac says. "You might have to look those terms up if you aren't into hounds, but people also have those features, so it's a fun name."

In case you're wondering, flews are the lips that often hang down on hound dogs and similar breeds; dewlap refers to the saggy jowl area under the mouth and chin.

It's easy to imagine grabbing a pint or perhaps a glass of scotch at the copper-topped bar. Mac's handiwork can be seen in the carved details and arm-ease railed bar.

"It strongly incorporates a ships and sailing theme, along with the horses and hounds," Alexis says about the sailing flags, boat photographs and banners that decorate the area. She and Mac owned a 42-foot Tayana sailboat and lived on it for four years.

Those days are long gone and now it's the hounds that rule the roost, so to speak.

"People thought we were crazy," Alexis says of the custom kennel for their pack of foxhounds just beyond their back door. "But our hounds are our family and we spend loads of time out there with them so it's very convenient."

Despite their great affection and respect for the hounds and the hard work that comes with each hunt, you won't find any four-legged friends running through the manor. Most likely you'll find members of the hunt getting ready to ride or resting after a great chase.

"We really do live the country and sporting lifestyle — the house is not just for looks," Alexis says. "It gives me the most pleasure to see it being used for what it was designed: a roaring fire in the Great Hall with hunt members after a hunt with boots on, propped up on the fireplace fenders, breakfast plates in their laps, laughing, catching up and re-living stories of the day's hunt."

"We don't pamper the house," Mac adds. "It is designed for country life and actively used for that. Horses, hounds and hay — that's what we do and who we are."

After a long day of farm chores, hunt club functions and meetings, and the massive undertaking of caring for and training a pack of 50 foxhounds, Mac and Alexis can finally soak in the beauty of their surroundings.

"We love the old, natural outdoor Florida," Mac says.

"The live oaks, the wildlife, the sunsets, the woods and the wide open spaces — and most of all the peace and quiet," Alexis adds. "We also enjoy being close to the quiet, small-town atmosphere of Gainesville and Micanopy. Of course, being a stone's throw from Ocala horse country is a huge plus."

Alexis says their helpful neighbors are also a big part of why they love the property.

"We don't get together often, but we do look out after each other," she says. "Here at the farm, we work hard, we play hard, and then we pretty much collapse at the end of the day."

For the love of the chase

This ancient sport thrives where Florida's fourth governor once settled

PHOTOS & STORY BY ROB C. WITZEL

UNLESS YOU HEARD THE howl of the hunting horn, you probably wouldn't even know. About 10 miles from downtown Gainesville, a town known for its world-class college sports, is the home of a premiere destination for the centuries-old sport of fox hunting — with a modern twist.

A large group of hounds surrounds Huntsman Alexis Macaulay as she offers them treats. Meanwhile, a "kill bag" is being set elsewhere for the next hunt. The hounds hunt for bags filled with scrap meat and dog biscuits and scented with anise.





ABOVE: Alexis Macaulay, from left, and Kim Munoz, (the “fox,” who lays the drag from an ATV), count the hounds prior to the day’s hunt. Accounting for hounds is a constant and critical part of the hunt.

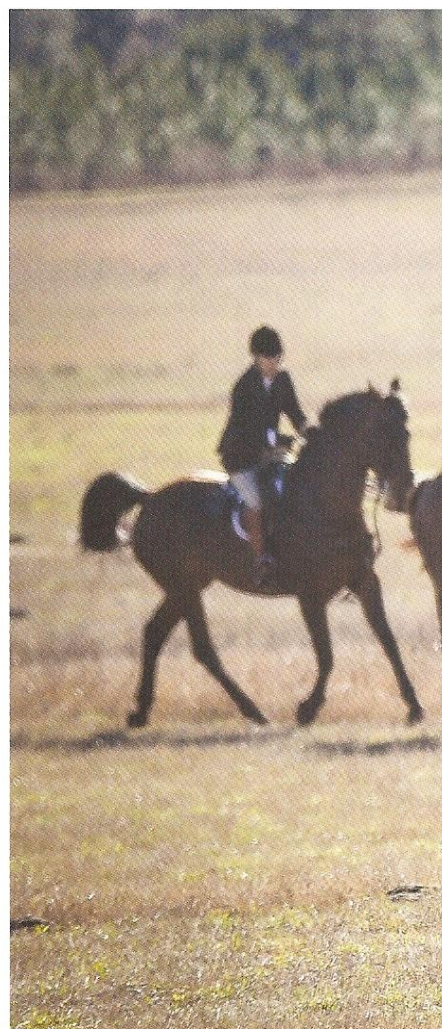
AT RIGHT: A group of hounds jump as they compete for the next treat that’s given between hunts.



Amidst a 600-acre plot of pristine land, once the homestead of Florida’s fourth governor, Madison Starke Perry, resides a state-ly almost 7,500-square-foot English manor — home of the Misty Morning Hounds hunt club, and its founders, Mac and Alexis Macaulay.

It’s the site of twice weekly hunts that attract participants not only locally but from around the world. As Huntsman, Alexis Macaulay leads a pack of regal hounds through

the property as they pick up the scent, not of live fox, but of a series of cleverly-placed brown bags filled with scrap meats and dog biscuits, scented with anise. The chase, often over rolling hills on foggy mornings, has participants atop horses as they keep pace with the pack that dart throughout the line until they make a “kill.” The end of the hunt presents an opportunity for rest and treats for the dogs, while participants sip on mimosas before moving on to the next chase. 🐾



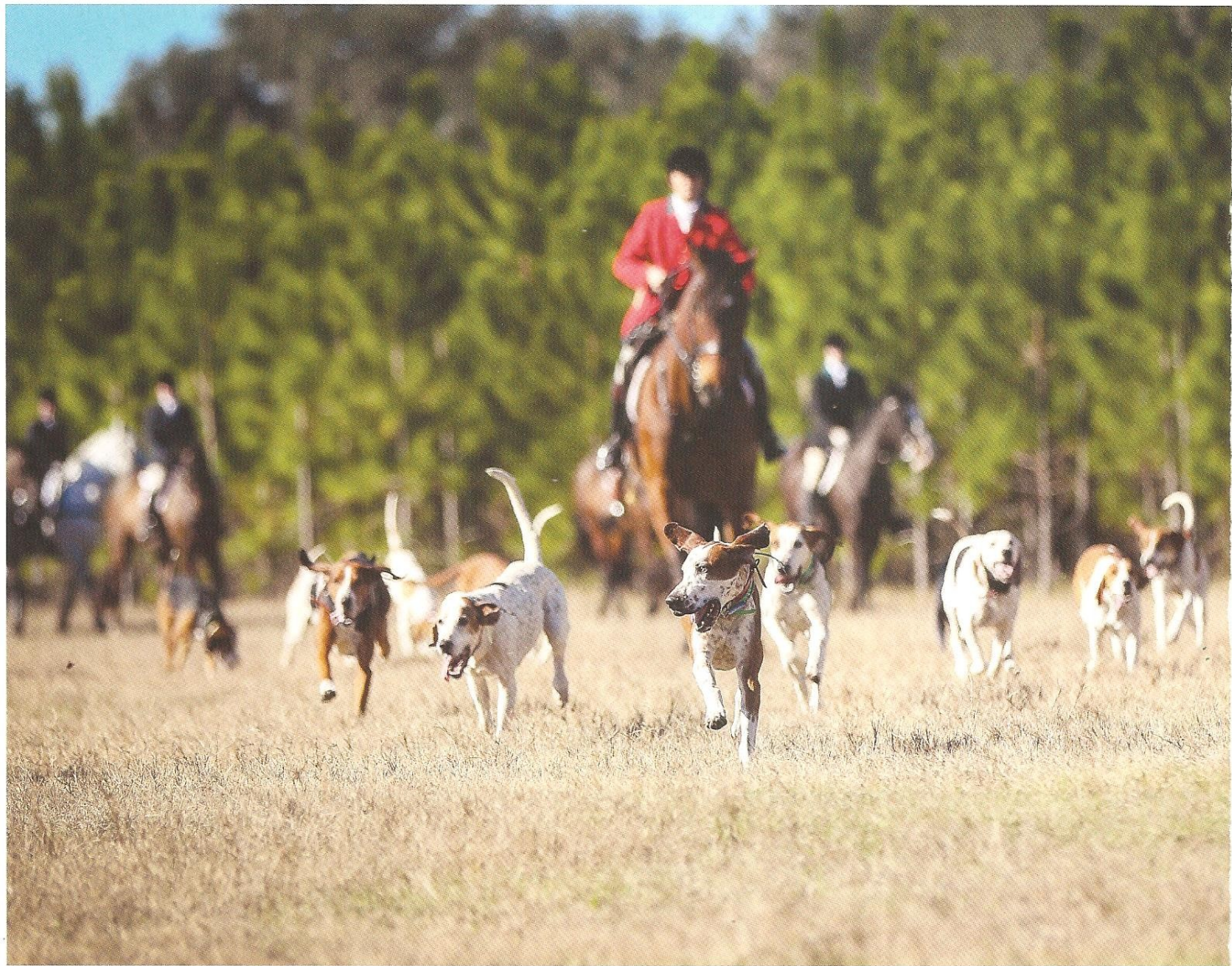


ABOVE: Alexis Macaulay, Huntsman and Joint MFH (Master of Fox Hunting) of the Misty Morning Hounds, blows "the kill" on the hunting horn to signal the successful find of their "kill bag."

AT RIGHT: A pack of eager hounds is released from their kennel as they begin the day's hunt.

BELOW: A group of hounds is cast on a drag by their Huntsman as mounted riders follow their Fieldmaster.

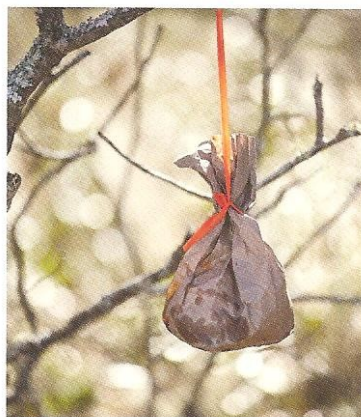




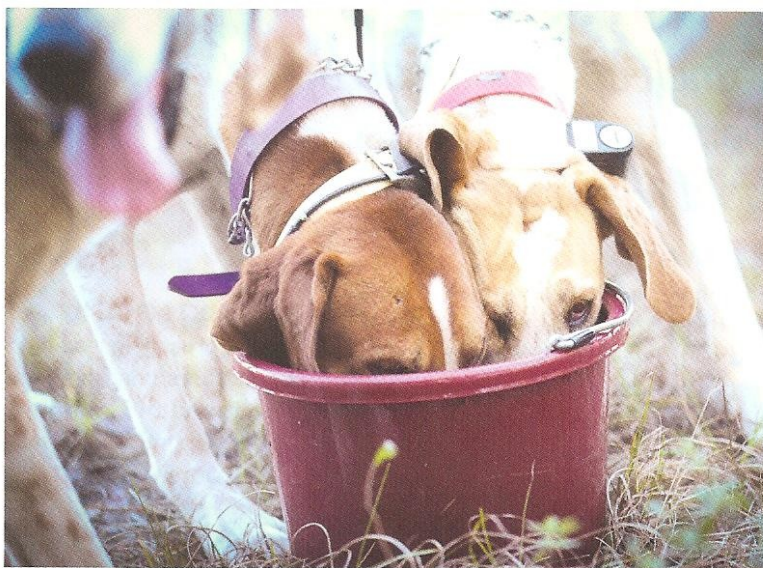
ABOVE: The hunt is on as a group of hounds runs while hunting for the next “kill bag” of scrap meat and dog biscuits.

AT RIGHT: Macaulay jumps over an International truck from the 1940s, complete with keys in the ignition, that’s a long-time farm resident. It was requisitioned from the farm for use during World War II and outfitted with an Army star & numbers. However, the war ended just prior to pick-up.



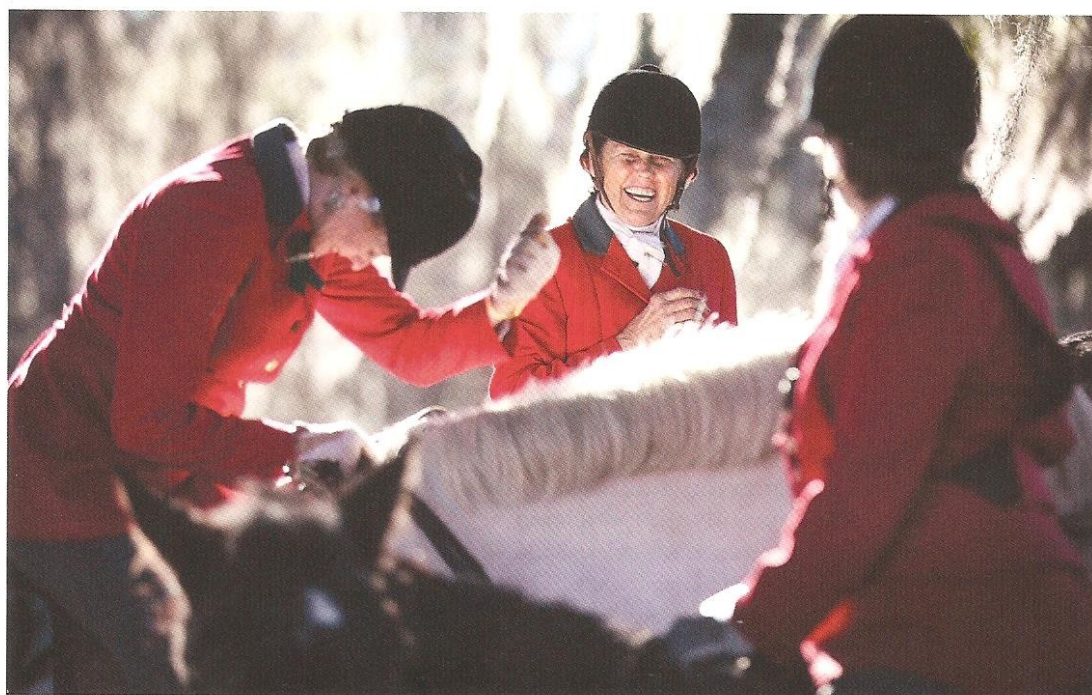


The end of the hunt presents an opportunity for rest and treats for the dogs, while participants sip on mimosas before moving on to the next chase.



AT TOP: The “kill bag,” a brown lunch bag filled with meat scraps and dog biscuits, is tied to a branch as hounds search and eventually find it.

ABOVE: A pair of hounds digs deep into a bucket to get a drink of water between hunts.



AT LEFT: Staff members (from left) Mallory Robertson, Alexis Macaulay and Nancy Hardt share a laugh as they gather before the day’s hunt begins.