

# The Red Mountain Way



*English huntsmen and their orthodox followers might shake their heads, but David Raley and his hounds do it their own way at Red Mountain.*

*“Penn-Marydels are just easier to deal with,” says Red Mountain huntsman David Raley.*

MARTIN ENGLE PHOTOS

by Norman Fine

I followed huntsman David Raley of the Red Mountain Hounds into kennels to see his pack of Penn-Marydels. Right away things looked a bit different. In most hunt kennels, dog hounds and bitches are confined to separate lodges. Here all the inside doors were open, and all hounds mixed freely.

“With the dogs and bitches mixed, we have no kennel fights,” Raley explained.

Even the feeding is different at Red Mountain.

“I need to keep it simple and uncomplicated,” he continued. “If I go away for a weekend, volunteers—members—have to cover for me. I feed free-choice food, and while hounds are eating, I pick up the kennels. I don’t have to stand over them.”

Raley explained that because feed is available to them for two to three hours, hounds aren’t inclined to gulp it down or fight with their neighbors at the trough. Hounds that get too fat are drafted.

Admittedly the Penn-Marydel foxhound doesn’t present the elegant image of the modern English or Crossbred hound—racy, streamlined, athletic, intense. But one look into their gentle brown eyes as they crowd around to greet you, and your heart melts for each and every one. They exude the friendly, laid-back attitude of the country hound lying under the porch, in contrast to the on-your-toes ambition of their high-church brothers and sisters.

One of the fascinating aspects of our hunting world is how each hunt develops its own culture. This uniqueness derives from a combination of

factors, among them hunting country, history, community, personalities, and hunt organization. With hilly and wooded hunting terrain, honorary whippers-in recruited from the membership, and strictly volunteer help available for training and exercising, Penn-Marydels are the answer for Raley, who is the sole professional.

## THE HUNTSMAN AND HIS HOUNDS

David Raley was Master and huntsman of the De La Brooke Foxhounds (MD) for six seasons before coming to Red Mountain as professional huntsman. He was also a practicing architect at the time. With no professional hunt staff and no one at the kennels during the day, Raley found the breeding, training, and hunting of De La Brooke’s pack of American foxhounds to be a trying experience.

“I needed help,” Raley recalled.

One day at a hound show he and his staff were waiting their turn in the pack

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*Red Mountain is named for the hilly, red clay terrain on the west side of the Flat River near Durham, North Carolina. It's a mostly wooded hunting country with trails maintained for good access through the hills and valleys and along the river.*

class, nervously trying to maintain control of hounds. He looked out and experienced an epiphany.

“There was Todd Addis [then huntsman for the Marlborough (MD)],” he recalled, “totally relaxed, sitting under a tree—alone—with his Penn-Marydels all around him.”

Raley saw the light. He built his Penn-Marydel pack mainly with drafts from Doc Addis, Marlborough, and Sandy Dunn at Kimberton. At the same time, he has maintained traces of superb American bloodlines from Piedmont, Orange County, and Middleburg in his Penn-Marydel brood bitches.

“Penn-Marydels have a place with the smaller clubs that have to get by with less help,” he says. “They’re just easier to deal with.”

## THE MELLOWING OF A HUNTSMAN

Like so many before him who became besotted by foxhounds, David Raley abandoned his architectural career to become a full-time professional huntsman. He lives with his beautiful wife Christine not fifty yards from the kennels.

“We’re so grateful for Christine,” jokes Joint-Master Bruce Dalton within Raley’s hearing. “Before David met her he was a real pain. Now he’s mellow. It’s so much more pleasant for all of us.”

David and Christine met at a Shakerag Hunt Ball. The Red Mountain contingent had hired a bus to take them to Atlanta and return them to Rougemont afterward. Christine, born and bred to city life, arrived at the ball late, just having returned home to Atlanta from London where she was living and working. When Raley saw her enter the room all was forgotten: hounds, traveling companions, return bus schedule, everything.

The relationship started with a scrap, however, as they found themselves bidding against each other in the silent auction for a seedy, moth-eaten stuffed coyote. They talked. They danced. When the bus was ready to depart for North Carolina, Raley was nowhere to be found. In fact, Christine and two of her friends had abducted him, then abandoned him in a hotel room where he awoke the next morning still in his evening clothes, alone but for the companionship of his disreputable coyote. To her credit, Christine had the grace to return and drive him to the airport so he could get home to his hounds. The pair were married six months later.

## CONVERSATION WITH A HUNTSMAN

I asked Raley to talk about the hound traits most important to him as huntsman of the Red Mountain Hounds.

“Speaking as a huntsman of Penn-Marydels, because that’s what I happen to have, nose and voice are always the two most important things,” he replied. “It’s what the breed’s been bred for, it’s what they’re noted for, it’s what you always go back to. It’s what makes a Penn-Marydel a Penn-Marydel.

“I love taking hounds down to Moore County (NC). Jody [Murtagh, Moore County huntsman] and I will take out twenty couple and mix our packs together. Now, that’s voice! But even that doesn’t compare to Doc Addis’s hounds, which are about the loudest things you have ever...ever heard. They’ll just knock you over.

“But for a hunting hound I don’t want to breed for one particular trait at the expense of all others. I need the whole package. I need them biddable, but I don’t need them to follow me around all packed up tight. I don’t like that, and Penn-Marydels don’t like that. They’re more free-ranging.

“But I want them to come when I call them. While hunting, I expect them to turn when I turn. When I tap my horn I expect them to look at me and see which way I’m going. Which they do.





*Above: Irmgard Hill, MFH was a founding Master of the Red Mountain Hounds in 1969.*

HAMILTON CREATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY



*Left: Dr. Bruce Dalton, MFH*

HAMILTON CREATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY

*Below: Garry Riggs, MFH and Carol Riggs, Honorary Secretary and whipper-in.*



## Rougemont and the Red Mountain Hounds

Red Mountain is named for the hilly, red clay terrain on the west side of the Flat River about twenty minutes north of Durham, North Carolina. It's a mostly wooded hunting country with trails maintained for good access through the hills and valleys and along the river.

Much of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century architecture still stands in and around the town of Rougemont—wood-frame, clap-board-sided homes with prominent gables set into spreading roof lines atop broad porches in the southern tradition.

In the early twentieth century, Rougemont was renowned for quail and foxhunting. The Quail Roost Hunting Lodge was formed in 1875 by a group of Durham businessmen. One of the Lodge members was John Sprunt Hill, great-grandfather-in-law of the current senior Master, Irmgard Hill. The club secured rights to hunt quail, dove, and turkey over three thousand acres of land, and in 1902 they formed the Quail Roost Shooting Club.

With the expansion of farming during the early 1920s, the area's quail population declined, and continued maintenance of the large quail hunting preserve was no longer feasible. John Sprunt Hill bought out the other members and in 1926 bequeathed the property to his son, George Watts Hill.

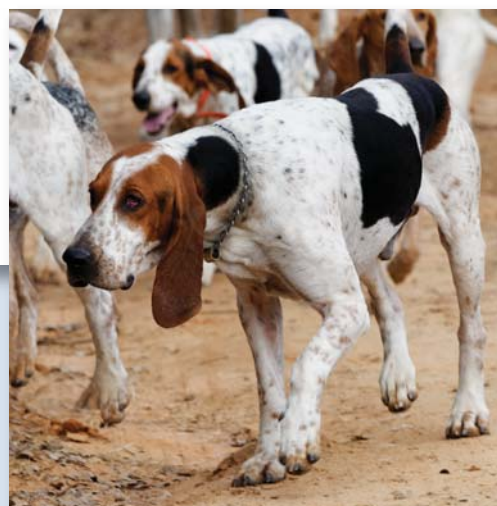
The new owner of what was then Quail Roost Farm took a serious interest in cattle farming, while his wife bred, raised, and trained horses—hunters, jumpers, and steeplechasers. By the 1940s the farm possessed one of the

premier Guernsey herds in the world. A birthday party for the herd's foundation sire was covered by *Life Magazine*.

In 1952, Watts Hill donated his handsome Colonial Revival home to the University of North Carolina to be used as a conference center, and about two thousand acres of land to North Carolina State University for use as a teaching forest. That land still comprises much of Red Mountain's hunting country. Watts Hill's son and daughter-in-law—John Sprunt Hill II and his wife Irmgard—made the remainder of Quail Roost their home in 1969, soon establishing the Quail Roost Stables.

The Red Mountain Hounds, of which Irmgard Hill was a founding Master, was organized that same year—a split-off from the Triangle Hunt. Over the years Irmgard has served the MFHA in several capacities: Director of the Carolinas District, Chairman of the Hound and Puppy Show Committee, and President of the Foxhound Club of North America.

Irmgard's Joint-Masters are Dr. Bruce Dalton and Garrison "Garry" Riggs. Garry's wife Carol serves the hunt as Honorary Secretary and whipper-in.



*Penn-Marydels exude the friendly, laid-back attitude of the country hound sleeping under the porch.*

MARTIN ENGLE PHOTO

"I don't want to need a bunch of whips riding herd on them. Professional whips who are around the hounds all the time are consistent in their commands. But for whips who can't spend all their time around the kennels, we need a hound that is more simply handled...easy to deal with. They have to be flexible and go with how we do things around here. The Penn-Marydel is a great low-maintenance hound."

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I was curious about Raley's reference to the bigger voice of Doc Addis's hounds. A Penn-Marydel is a Penn-Marydel, right?. They all have big voices. Why, I asked, were Addis's more so?

"I'll give you the serious answer first and then the not-so-serious answer" Raley replied. "Addis told me once that if you breed a deep-mouthed dog to a deep-mouthed bitch, ninety percent of your litter will have the same deep voices. If you breed a deep mouth to a lighter mouth, you'll probably get about half of them with a big voice. The key is to find a bitch with a big voice. Dogs usually have big voices anyway. Every bitch I have got from Doc has had a tremendous voice.

"Now the not-so-serious answer is that Doc is probably getting a bit

hard of hearing! He's getting older. He tells me, 'My hounds just aren't as loud as they used to be. I've got to breed for more voice!' It's incredible. His just have a different sound—more so than mine, more so than Jody's, more so than anyone's.

"Doc says his eyesight isn't what it used to be. So he went and bred to Andy Ford's white dog. He wanted more white so he could see hounds better. That's how he picked his outcross.

"You have to breed to suit the huntsman, as opposed to always breeding for country. We hunt in such varied country in such varied temperatures. I want to be able to take my hounds anywhere in the United States and have a pretty good chance of starting some game." 🐾