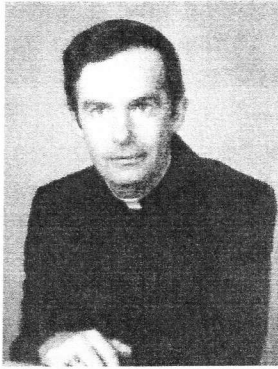


Chaplain's Corner, Hughes Camp Chaplain Richard W Rudd



Next month will conclude the reenactments and other activities associated with the 150th commemoration of the WBTS, while this month begins the annual spring pilgrimage throughout the South to the venerable old plantation houses and hallowed battlefields. We observe these anniversaries

and make these sojourns as a means of reinforcing the silver cord that serves as our lifeline to the past, our heritage, and all of the traditions and values we revere.

One of those traditions is the legendary fox hunt. Fox hunters are considered to be as much a different breed from coon hunters as the dogs with which they hunt and fox hunting is further divided into two categories. The British version involves participants clad in red jackets, riding pants and boots, galloping across the daylight countryside in the wake of a pack of hounds. The American version is a nocturnal affair done on foot. On a fall evening when the air is crisp, drive out into the countryside, turn down a less traveled road, and chances are that you could see the darkness broken by a match struck to light a hunter's pipe. Leaning back against the fender of their vehicle, these good old boys swap stories while waiting for the hounds to pick up the scent of the trail. Once that connection is made, the hounds bay in a rhythmic sequence referred to as music. It is indeed a timeless chant that echoes through the cathedral of the woods. Experienced hunters know the voices of their hounds and can pinpoint their location in the woods and proximity to the wily fox.

Some fox hunts were annual community events. The Kingston Fox Hunt was held on the fair grounds and entertainment was sometimes provided from as far away as Nashville. The Missouri Valley Fox Hunt was held on the Watkins estate,

which consisted of the main house, a three-story wool mill, church, school, slave quarters, numerous tenant houses and barns scattered over hundreds of acres of farm land and dense timber inhabited by foxes, wolves, deer, bob cats, and various other wild life. Families raised tents on the camp grounds, forming two main lanes—Hound Dog Ave. and Fox Trot Blvd. Their junction provided the focal point for entertainment ranging from celebrated speakers to local talent, movies, band concerts, dog and horse shows, and baby contests. During the day, picnics were held on a blue grass ridge under towering old trees. Every night, groups gathered around a camp fire to relate stories and listen to the sounds of the chase. It was not unusual to have 5,000 people and 200 hounds assemble for this event.

As a living piece of history, the fox hunt defied the passage of time and remained immune to the disruptive effects of change in the present and uncertainty of the future, preserving the charm and tranquility of another age by remaining independently detached from the modern world. Whether mounted on a horse surveying the horizon of woods and fields or sitting around the glowing embers of a camp fire enveloped by the darkness of the night, man, horse, hound, and fox, for one momentary space in time, engaged with each other in a suspended scene of animation where time seemed to stand still.

But, time does not stand still. Next June 30, time will experience a leap second, an adjustment to Coordinated Universal Time to keep time close to the mean solar time. The earth's rotation speed varies in response to climate and geological events. Without this correction, time reckoned by the earth's rotation drifts away from atomic time because of irregularities in the earth's rate of rotation. Unimpedable, time like a river flows and sometimes leaps in only one direction, pulling all of us along with it as if by hooks in our jaws, to eventually empty into the vast sea of eternity. All rituals, traditions, monuments, indeed all recorded

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history, serve not as points of destination, but rather as markers to sustain our memories and guide us along the way of our pilgrimage through life in this world, insuring that we do not lose our bearings and forget where we come from or who we are. This whole process can be summed up in the term *anamnesis*. While it involves recalling and remembering a past event, it means so much more. It is the actual reenacting and reliving of a past event so that its effects reach across time to become operative in our present lives. By this means, history really lives. What we experience from the past allows us to make practical application of history in the present. From the perspective gained by a working knowledge of the past coupled with a vision for the future, we are enabled to see the present more clearly. By our communication and transfer of rituals, traditions, values, and lore, continuity is maintained through successive generations. However, for an increasing number of urban dwellers, the fox hunt and timeless experience it conveys is becoming impossible to imagine. For the growing number of those illiterate about history and the Christian Faith, the truths they convey remain shrouded in mystery. The admonition St. Paul gave to the church at Thessalonica regarding the Faith can also be applied to our defense of all our heritage we hold dear against the relentless assaults of a rapidly changing world. "So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught..." (II Thess. 2:15) As my ancestors would have vowed, "Gib nie auf!" (Never give up!)

Fr. Richard Rudd

Hughes Camp Chaplain