

## A MICHIGANDER'S MARCH MADNESS MADNESS

Twelve hours, 650 miles (one-way), an additional 700 miles during and a total of 2,000 miles for the week, hundreds of dollars (it seems) in tolls, untold total shopping dollars and numbers of museums, wineries and golf courses, oh, and an average of almost four hours per day hunting, times seven years, equals ~14,000 miles (~300 hrs) driving, and almost 200 hours of hunting. And, now, we're in the midst of planning for our eighth year attending the Annual Bull Run Hunt "March Madness" week. Madness, indeed.

The Bull Run Hunt website ([www.bullrunhuntclub.com](http://www.bullrunhuntclub.com)) does well to describe the 'spectacular, beautiful territory, 30,000 contiguous acres to hunt, and tremendous views of the Blue Ridge Mountains'. What a web site cannot adequately do is convey the sincere warmth, hospitality, genuine friendships and camaraderie of the shared sport, and other-worldly experiences this 'madness week' event presents.

My wife, Krissy, Kristina Brown, Hon Sec, Battle Creek (Michigan) Hunt, and I first ventured to Virginia in 2016, hoteling in Culpeper, and stabling in nearby Locust Dale. In 2021, 11 members from Battle Creek and our Michigan-neighboring Waterloo Hunt Club participated in all or part of the week. Several other members from both clubs have joined us throughout the years.

March Madness is six straight days of hunting, from Monday-Saturday, culminating in the annual Hunt Club Ball, which we've attended every year. We travel to VA the Saturday before, strive to visit another local hunt on Sunday morning, and enjoy the annual Oyster Roast and Pig Plucking that evening; (I've yet to sample an oyster, but all our others have!). The week's schedule is chock-full with morning hunting, after-hunt breakfasts, morning, evening and after-hunt horse care, evening cocktail parties, and the shopping, winery and museum excursions in between. Pleasantly exhausted by the early Sunday morning departure (especially after the Hunt Ball the night before), we still excitedly start the countdown for the following year!

Krissy has put together a photo album each year, and keeps a running MM scrapbook. There's many a pause in her writing as she recounts, with emotion, the daily fixtures and experiences. The landscape and terrain (hills, woods, fields, streams, footing, fences, jumps and livestock). The horses and riders (the familiar faces and friendships developed over the years). The admirable action between huntsmen and hounds. The many frequent runs and occasional Tally-ho witnessed (I've spotted her a few times after a run-to-ground with a huge smile and tears of joy for the sport). Even after a bad fall the week before MM '22, she still attended – the broken wrist didn't keep her out of the saddle, but the bruised internal organs did; it was both heart-breaking and still heartwarming to see her horse go out under other rider, but she was there!

The other-worldly experiences? – Our amazing hosts, Betty, and Mike Long, MFH Bull Run Hunt, without whom our Group visits would not be possible; we are so, so grateful for their hospitality and friendship. Visiting several times with renowned author, Rita Mae Brown, MFH Oak Ridge Fox Hunt, at her Tea Time farm; note to all: adhere to GPS, do not take Afton Drive, especially with a three-horse gooseneck trailer. A leisurely hack between fixtures with the esteemed Epp Wilson, MFH, Belle Meade Hunt. We go well-shod, but have established a

relationship with local farrier who now recognizes our calls. The five inches of snow on Wednesday in 2018; (I built a Michigan-worthy snowman along the drive). Another year where it was so warm I collected riders' jackets mid-hunt while car-topping. Speaking of which, the road-whips and other car-toppers are so welcoming, allowing this non-rider to follow and even ride with to enjoy the territory and views; and, conduct mid-hunt emergency tack repair and replacement. In addition to Bull Run and Oak Ridge, we've visited with Old Dominion Hounds, and the Rappahannock Hunt. The Masters of Foxhounds museum, as well as many other DC-area museums and landmarks, were visited for the first time by many in our group. The many dedicated tack and other supply stores (which are fewer and further between elsewhere in the country). Krissy's parents joined us for the week in 2019. The flat tire from an Oyster Roast oyster shell. The three homemade jumps we've come home with from the Hunt Ball auction; thanks, Diane.

If you foxhunt, you are undoubtedly invested in yourself and your horse(s), the time and level of effort it takes to train, develop and maintain yourselves, to enjoy the riding and sport – you then deserve the adventure of a Bull Run March Madness week!



Krissy & Tank



Krissy & Spyder



Masters of Foxhounds Association



One winery (of many)....



Car topping



Cocktail Partying