



## Toby & Art Spurlock – First Place International Running Hound Classic

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Toby and son Art Spurlock won first place in the International Running Hound Classic on Jan. 17 with a Running Walker Hound named Miss My Baby S.

Held at the Deep South Running Pen in Picayune, Ms., 172 dogs were loosed on Thursday, Jan. 14, at 8 a.m. With nine dogs in the first of the three trials, the Spurlocks listen closely for their hounds to find a trail. At noon, after five hours of running, the first trial ends and the scores are tallied.

The Spurlock's Miss My Baby S won first place with 1,250 points. Miss Rockette S won two trophies, sixth place and best mouth (prettiest mouth). "S" is for Spurlock; all the dogs from the Mr-Miss S. Kennel have the same prefix of "Mr." or "Miss" and suffix "S."

The father-and-son team have won this international classic three times: the first in 1981 with their Texas State Champion, Miss Lou Ann S, and the second in 2006 with their Arkansas State Champion, Mr. Razzle Dazzle S.

In 2011, Toby was inducted into the Master Fox Hunters Hall of Fame by that association.

The dogs are great athletes, often hunting every week. The dogs love to run. Some hunts can involve the dogs running for 10-12 straight hours. The hunters take care of their hounds with vitamins, check-ups, salve for their feet, anti-inflammatory meds, and good dog food. In addition to a little cash, the Spurlocks won 19 50-lb. bags of Showtime Dog Food.

Except for Sundays, work, family gatherings—and illness—Toby has hunted since 1957, nearly every week for over 60 years, and hunting with his son, Art, since Art was two years old. He and his son know Walker Running Hounds, love the hunt, and hunting together.

Lewis McCarty has been a long-time friend who brought over some fresh rabbit for a barbecue Toby was hosting for his Sunday school class; McCarty will get a few sacks of dog food. McCarty fox hunted all



Art & Toby Spurlock



Toby Spurlock and Lewis McCarty (l-r) show Toby and his son Art's trophy and their winning Running Walker Hounds in the International Running Hound Classic. Miss My Baby S won first place (#86 right), and his Miss Rockette S (#95) won both sixth place and best mouth, among 172 hounds that hunted the 2,000-acre Deep South Running Pen Jan. 14-17, some hounds clocking 40 miles of running each day during the three-day trials in Picayune, Ms.

his life, a lot with the Spurlocks, but has not the last decade.

Associations sponsor hunts, using fox or coyote mostly, and some wolf too. There are many fox hunting “pens” around the U.S., usually related to an association, and the Spurlocks have been to most. Some are local, like those in Shelbyville, Livingston and Jasper, Texas, and in Pitkin and Many, La. Many pens are from 600 to 1,000 acres.



Once loose, the hunters watch and listen to their hounds intently, able to tell when their individual hounds catch a trail and, importantly, when the hounds “jump it”: that moment when the dogs have found the fox and begin to vigorously run the fox.

On this hunt, 26 field judges were scattered throughout the 2,000-acre pen, judging the hounds’ every move. How confident the hounds appear. How the hounds work the trail. Each hound in the lead is graded, gaining points throughout the hunt. For example, the first five hounds to cross the road score, respectively, 35, 30, 25, 20 or 15 points each.

On the second day, Jan. 16, about 10 hounds were eliminated from the race, and on the third day, another 15 hounds were eliminated. Smiling, Toby said none of theirs were eliminated. Nevertheless, four of his hounds got less than 400 points each, so he pulled them. On the third day, the Spurlocks entered their five best hounds.

The grey foxes will climb trees and red foxes live in burrows. And the foxes and coyotes find their burrows. The hunters do not want the hounds to actually catch the foxes; they would run out of foxes.

The hunters’ skills are hard to imagine for a novice. The hounds bark with different voices depending on the progress of the hunt. A lazy dog just following the pack can be easily seen and heard. How well the astute hound is following the trail is graded closely.

Toby has served three times as president of the Texas Fox and Wolf Hunters Association, and he and his son have won first place in state



paces many times, perhaps nine times. Toby does not count each race or how many trophies they have won. For one competition, Toby designed the trophies himself, commissioned with Tyler County artisans, and he ended up winning back a few of those trophies.

Trophy or not, Toby would hunt. His modesty and love of the hunter fellowship, and hunting with his son, motivates his Christian heart.

With three to four trials each year, and hunts nearly every week, the Spurlocks have been a part of the National Fox Hunters Assoc. (FH), All American FH Assoc., Heart of East Texas FH Assoc., Sabine-Neches FH Assoc., Dr. Davis FH Assoc. and many more.

Toby loves his son, Art, very much, who has become an honorable Christian man with almost 20 years with the TDCJ. They hunt together every chance they get. The Spurlocks have a ten-acre pen to exercise their 15 dogs, surrounded by several strands of electrified wire.

Over the mantel of Toby's fire place is a painting of his grandparent's home, where he first hunted fox as a child. Fox hunting photos, artwork, tools, and memorabilia decorate his home. Two rooms have trophies on all four walls, floor to ceiling, layered two to four trophies deep, some over two feet tall. In the living room and den are many more.

Toby attended several colleges, including A&M and Lamar, but left college to go into the banking business, which brought him to Woodville's Citizens State Bank in 1961, where he stayed for 23 years and became vice president. He opened Toby's One Stop in Colmesneil in 1984, but sold it a few years later. He went back into banking at First National (now Compass) as president, finally retiring in the late 1990s.

Dearest to his heart are his God and his beloved wife, Shirley, who has supported him in his love for fox hunting and its comradery all these years—she is his anchor.

Those who know Toby know his penchant for telling inspiring stories of faith and family. A devote Christian and Gideon, he prays and shares his faith everywhere.

He has never forgotten a story by Herb Parson, the Showman Shooter, told decades ago. On an exhibition, Parson brought his son up for an impromptu demonstration, and the son shot about as good as his expert father. Then Parson gave the unforgettable line that Spurlock has cherished all these years: "If you hunt 'with' your son, you'll never have to hunt 'for' your son."





Where the Spurlock's Texas State Champion Mr. Jabber S was laid to rest in this plot of land donated by the U.S. Forest Service and mentioned by name among other great fox hounds with monuments to their great hunting legacies in Texas Folklore Society pub. #LXVII.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kenneth L. Untiedt, ed., *Hide, Horn, Fish, and Fowl: Texas Hunting and Fishing Lore*, chapter by Thad Sitton, "Hinkel Shillings and the Red Ranger" (Texas Folklore Society, #LXVII, 2011: 115-138), 117.

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