

Shirly Sroka, writing about the first PBGVCA Hunting Instinct Test (HIT), March 25, 2001 held at the Cabarrus Beagle Club, Concord, NC. Shirly competed with her two PBGV's, CH. Chien Blanc Valentina "Nina" (Chase's daughter) and U-CDX Chien Blanc Preux Chavalier CDX CGC "Buddy".

The weather was perfect, the bunnies were active and plentiful, the judges were ready and willing, the handlers and hounds were GRAND!!!!!! On Saturday, the hounds had "Bunny Introduction". They were allowed to sniff and see bunnies in cages and practice runs. We started off the Hunting with a bugling of "Petit Hunt Fanfare". Everyone, people and hounds, were excited and ready to go. Each handler and hound or hound brace was allowed 20 minutes on the field. When your time was up the judges blew the hunting horn and you were to gather up your hound. Some came back easier than others. When we couldn't get the hounds back we had "the bunny runners" to chase the dogs in the right direction back to their handlers. If that didn't work they used angels in golf carts to round them up. Some of us were lucky and our hounds came back to us quickly. Spectators were allowed on the field but had to stay on the high ground to get a view of the goings on of the hunt. We were told if hounds were in pursuit of rabbits anywhere near to stand perfectly still, not interfere and let them do their job. My God to hear the hounds out there crying with voice and seeing them in hot pursuit of a rabbit they had flushed absolutely took your breath away. It took all in our power not to yell and applaud them on, some of us could not contain ourselves. Camera's were clicking a mile a minute but I'm sure many of the pictures will be nothing but a complete blur. OUR HOUNDS ARE NOT SLOW MOVING.

At 6 pm. that evening we had the blessing of the hounds, a wonderful North Carolina Bar-B-Que and a silent auction. Many lovely items were auctioned off. People gathered and talked of the day and relaxed after a very stimulating day. Debbie Perrot passed out the HIT certificates to the teams that participated that day. We said goodnights and prepared for the next day. On Sunday, we were all back bright and early drinking coffee and eating donuts. It was quite cold in N.C. at 7am. Testing resumed at 8. We had a full day of hounds, handlers and hares. The organizers were afraid not everyone would get in to run their hounds because the entries were more than Bobbe ever expected. Pretty cool eh? But we did get them in. I know my brace went last and we got on the field at 6pm. I left the Beagle ground at 7pm. Everyone was exhausted, but absolutely exhilarated by the happenings of the day and the performance of these hounds. I do a lot of things and have a lot of wonderful memories with my dogs, Westminster, HIT with Buddy in Obedience, therapy awards and recognition with Lewis, but this was the most thrilling thing I have ever done with my dogs. Proud of them you bet your patootie I am but not just my dogs but every hound and handler should be proud we participated in a most monumental event for this breed of Hunting dogs we call "petit's".

I entered my dogs Nina and Buddy and ran them as a brace on Saturday. They were awesome. I was amazed and thought they couldn't get any better. The judges loved them and they passed with flying colors. I was amazed at what fabulous hunters they are, which I cannot take one ounce of credit for. They flushed more rabbits than we could keep track of and the judges were extremely complimentary on my guys. They advised me to keep running them as a brace and they would see me tomorrow. Sunday comes, we are to go at the beginning of the day.

Because of so many entries which were never expected and many people and dogs that traveled by plane to get here, I said my guys could go at the absolute end of the day seeing as I had no plane to catch and was leaving Monday morning. We got on the field at 6pm, the last to go. A few gentlemen from Cabarrus Beagle Club were there and said they heard that my petitt's did a great job yesterday and they were going to try to watch them as they waited to lock up the grounds after my turn.

I released Nina and Buddy as instructed and off they went into the briars and the bramble it didn't take long until bunnies were running amuck and Nina and Buddy were giving voice in hot pursuit. It was grand!!!! They went into the swamp and flushed rabbits out of the brush piles and fallen trees , a real team working together. The judges were having a ball watching them. They said just keep encouraging them and stay out of their way they know exactly what they are doing. Nina would flush out the rabbits with Buddy rooting and digging in the underbrush, when the bunnies were flushed they would give voice and chase in hot pursuit. All of a sudden, they came upon fallen trees, logs and undergrowth of briars and thorns about 20 feet long. They stayed at the base and dug and sniffed, and barked, then all of a sudden Nina leapt on the logs and briars, trying to get into the piles but there was no opening. She plunged her head through the briars and made a place to get in, she wiggled her body and she was gone. She was inside this pile of fallen trees and logs and brush. We could hear her giving voice inside but we could not see her. Buddy was on the outside giving voice back to her and hanging at the base of the pile. All of a sudden out from the briars come 6 rabbits, Bud's in a frenzy but he picks out one and takes after it, he chases it into the brush and comes back to Nina. She's still inside the pile. Long about this time I'm saying how is she going to get out????? The judges are yelling SHE WILL GET HERSELF OUT, SHE'S A FEARLESS BITCH. Buddy gets back only to have 6 more rabbits come running out from the undergrowth of this pile of logs, he tears after them and the judges say OH MY GOD , SHE'S FOUND A DEN OF THEM. When we think things can't get any more exciting out of nowhere we see Nina's head and ears come through the briars, with that the judge hits me on the back and screams "DO YOU SEE HER , DO YOU SEE WHAT SHE'S DOING, SHE'S HUNTING, SHE'S WONDERFUL, SHE'S FEARLESS, oh and I'm sorry I slapped you on the back, I just got so damn excited I couldn't help myself". As I got over the power of her punch I meekly smiled. As Nina plunged her head out of this pile, the rest of her body was still in this den of logs, trees, thorns and briars. She wiggled her body to free herself and sure enough, she popped out like from a cannon, but when she did at the base of this undergrowth 4 or 5 more rabbits came out also and Nina and Buddy were both in hot pursuit howling their hearts out. The one judge said Nina reminded her of her favorite bitch that she hunts with. It was time for us to go in but the judges didn't have the heart to break this up so they allowed them just a while longer to finish their task of rounding up these rabbits. As we waited, the judge said that my dogs had the ability and instinct and hearts of real hunters. They said they were truly built for the hunt and their coats were fabulous. They pointed out that when we started out and they were first in the swamp land, they were muddy and wet, but because they had the correct hard coat by the time they were to come in they were absolutely dry and clean, the only thing to do was to brush out the burrs. They also said mother nature took care of the grooming needs the undergrowth and thorns had brushed away the dirt and because of the hard coats they were waterproofed. They said "well, what do you think of your

show dogs now???? Doesn't it make you feel proud to know they can do what they were bred to do ??? And look at them, they could go on for another 20 minutes and it wouldn't phase them. I called my dogs, obediently they both came back to me, I put on their leashes. The judges, bent down and patted them both on the heads, Nina and Buddy licked their hands. The judges stood up and shook my hand . "Be proud they said", I was !!!!! We walked off the field and the gentlemen from the Beagle club said "some job your hounds did little lady, we could never keep up with those what you call em petit's!!!! One of the nicest moments and complements came from Mr. Buster Ritch. He's an AKC field trial judge that belongs to Cabarrus Beagle Club. He said. "I've been hunting and trialing my dogs since 1948, if I were you Mame, I would try to find myself somewhere to hunt those hounds". I gave him the biggest smile I could muster and said I sure the hell would. Needless to say we passed. Nina passed everything on the hunting test and Buddy failed 1 of the criteria. I want to personally thank Bobbe Jackson, who made this spectacular event take place and everyone connected with this to pull it off. And also to Cindy Teal , one great gal. Especially. I want to thank my dogs. I have a whole new way of looking at their abilities. They amaze me. But most of all I want to thank the people who bred them. Dot Garrett bred Nina and Buddy's mom Sissy and Gunnar bred both of their fathers. Not only are they beautiful for the breed ring but they proved they can do what they were initially bred to do, GET THEM RABBITS!!!!!!!!!!!!