

PERSONALITIES

Master and Director

By Barclay Rives

A five-dollar ride changed Pat Butterfield's life. In 1961, Butterfield was a first year student at the University of Virginia. A classmate named Frank Briggs told him about Keithwood, a riding establishment run by legendary white-haired equestrienne Ellie Wood Keith. The two students walked to the stable. After assessing their riding abilities in her ring, Ellie Wood let them ride up Observatory Mountain and back, charging each of them five dollars. After their return, Ellie Wood piled them into her old Nash for a drive to the farm owned by her daughter, "Little" Ellie Wood Baxter. Baxter was her mother's most successful pupil and for decades one of the country's top show riders. Back at her stable, Ellie Wood asked Pat if he would like to come back and ride again. The five-dollar fee was an obstacle, a significant amount of money in 1961. Ellie Wood never charged him again. His riding at Ellie Wood's led to foxhunting. Foxhunting brought him new friends, and secured his permanent attachment to Central Virginia.

Pat Butterfield has been Farmington Hunt Master of Foxhounds since 1995, and Director of Racing of the Foxfield Racing Association since 1990. Before college, he had lived in Florida, Long Island, and "all over." In his early teens he rode at a Long Island barn and at summer camps in upstate New York. He started on horses and never rode ponies.

Keithwood was in a Charlottesville neighborhood and had no turnout space. Ellie Wood appreciated having able riders like Butterfield take her horses out of their stalls. He rode some challenging green mounts. Ellie Wood never used any tranquilizers. To quiet the fractious ones, hours of ring work or long hacks to hunt meets had to suffice. She also demanded 50 cent contributions to a "cursing jar," whenever she heard unacceptable language, even if provoked by bucking or other equine misbehavior.

For his first hunt with Farmington, Pat Butterfield had the privilege of riding Dixie. Dixie was a plain looking bay mare. Though unenthusiastic and sluggish in a ring, she loved to hunt. She initiated scores of novice foxhunters into the joy of the sport. Butterfield remembers galloping and jumping across the farm that is now the Foxfield racecourse on his first hunt. Ellie Wood Baxter rode up beside him and advised him to loosen the reins and give Dixie her head, commenting, "That mare knows more about foxhunting than you do." He profited from her advice.

Pat Butterfield met his future wife Kay Walker at Keithwood. She was a teacher at St. Anne's girl's school (now coed and known as St. Anne's-Belfield), and brought the students to the stable to ride.

The Butterfields ride and hunt together, and they are also graceful dance partners. They have regularly attended the MFHA Ball in New York. One year Butterfield and a few other Farmington gentlemen attired in evening scarlet were in an elevator on their way to the ball. Two older ladies got on from a lower floor. They looked at the men, and one said to the other that she had heard that the hotel was not what it used to be, but she was impressed with the way they dressed their help.

A Californian named Tom Bishop entered the University of Virginia in 1964 and began riding at Keithwood. He became another one of Butterfield's lifelong friends. Tom Bishop and his wife Claiborne now own The Barracks, a successful and popular equestrian center. Bishop accompanied Pat and Kay Butterfield and other Farmington comrades on a 1967 hunting trip to Ireland. Their ten-day tour included hunts with the Limerick, the Scarteen, and the Galway Blazers. As they drove from the airport, they stopped their car and stared at the overgrown hedgerows and banks. They said to each other that surely they would not be riding through anything like that.

The following day's hunt with Scarteen took them through country exactly like that, a seemingly impenetrable jungle, without anything resembling a panel or path. Butterfield remembers the first bank of the day was a small fairly clear one, which raised everyone's confidence. They later followed Huntsman Thady Ryan into a field from which there seemed to be no way out. A short man on foot appeared. He snapped a few limbs, creating an opening for Thady Ryan to ride through. As Butterfield followed, an Irishman called out, "Lean back, me ladie," which he learned was especially important coming off a high bank.

I first met Pat Butterfield in 1966 at Camp Yonahnoka, a summer camp for boys in the mountains near Linville, North Carolina. Ellie Wood Keith ran the rid-



Pat Butterfield, MFH, Farmington Hunt, and Goody Two Shoes, winner of the 1983 Virginia Field Hunter Championship. Photo courtesy of Kay Butterfield

ing program there for decades, and Butterfield assisted her as a riding counselor from 1963 to 1970. I was eleven years old. Although I had grown up around horses, I had negligible riding skills, despite my father's earnest instruction. My older brothers had achieved show ring glory by age eleven. Demonstrating on my family pony Glory Be, who had accompanied me to camp, Pat Butterfield taught me how to put on a bridle, a skill I now use nearly every day. Ellie Wood had me bounce around the ring on Glory Be amid her pack of ponies until I learned to post. Ellie Wood had a stableman named Joe Hill, a short black man with a limp. I remember Joe Hill asking a cocky older camper why he had taken a pony out of his stall to tack up, instead of doing so in the stall where he could not get loose. The boy ignored Joe until Butterfield reprimanded him, "When Joe asks you a question, he deserves an answer." That lesson was more important than riding.

The camp celebrated the Fourth of July with a gathering in the Dining Hall and a dramatic presentation of Paul Revere's ride. While another counselor narrated, Pat Butterfield impersonated Revere, galloping into view and pirouetting outside the hall on a bay horse named Squire, who belonged to Tom Bishop. Butterfield shouted, "To Arms! The British are coming!" with a measure of amusement and anxiety in his voice, because the horse was overeager in his role.

After college and a year of graduate school, Butterfield taught for 22 years, first at Brownsville Elementary School, followed by teaching American History at Henley Middle School in Crozet. He rode and hunted when work allowed.

Among the successful horses he bred and raised was a big bay mare named Goody Two Shoes. Goody showed, evented, hunted, competed in pair races, and served as an outrider horse. She won the Virginia Field Hunter Championship in 1983, when Rockbridge Hunt hosted the event. Goody performed well two years later, when Keswick hosted, but she lost points when she passed the Field Master. A judge told Butterfield, "It's not supposed to be a race."

My best day in the hunting field with Pat Butterfield was a Keswick/Farmington joint meet that took place January 3, 1991. We hunted from Mount Sharon, a reliable fixture in Keswick's Rapidan country. As a visiting whipper-in, Butterfield rode with me. I always try to give any visitor a front row seat. I do not always succeed. Luck was with us that day. Hounds kept turning our way, and the combined packs, often led by Keswick Champion and Farmington Piedmont, ran brilliantly over most of the fixture.

Farmington MFH Jill Summers asked Butterfield to be her joint Master in 1995 along with Carol Easter. Summers, a dedicated leader who had been master since 1968, chose a pair of gifted diplomats to help with landowner relations. Pat Butterfield's relaxed manner and affable personality suit him for the demanding position of Master of Foxhounds. Farmington's challenges include increasing traffic, subdivisions, vineyards, and new landowners unfamiliar with hunting. Charlottesville's expansion has pushed Farmington westward. Butterfield comments, "We could use more land, and more juniors."

Butterfield was an outrider for the inaugural running of the Foxfield Races in 1978, under a deluge of eight inches of rain. Years later he was outriding when a belligerent spectator refused his request to get off of the racecourse, saying, "What are you gonna do about it, red coat?"

"Nothing," Pat said calmly, while riding away to notify authorities, who apprehended the culprit.

Since taking over as Director in 1990, Pat Butterfield appears as calm and genial during Foxfield's spring and fall race days as he is in the hunting field. He trusts that the scores of workers involved will do their jobs. In 2015, 207 buses came to the spring Foxfield races. Despite the rainy, muddy conditions, none of them got stuck because the people overseeing parking directed them to back up a hill to park. Butterfield says race day is stressful; however, "I love the job. Steeplechase people are a special group, in it for the love of it."

Pat Butterfield says that Farmington has fewer colorful characters nowadays. "When I came here in the '60s, the whole crew was a bunch of characters." Among others, he mentions Katinka Hume, an English sporting lady who liked to gallop, and Evernghim Blake, who liked to gallop faster. "Now younger people tell me I'm one of the characters." 