



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Early interviews with Texans Hinkel Shillings of Shelby County, Aubrey and Walter Cole of Jasper County, and J. R. Cockrell of Polk County, as well as others, led to my interest in American folk fox chasing—"hilltopping"—the kind of ritualized nocturnal hunting described in this book. I am grateful to these men for showing me the way.

F. E. Abernethy of Nacogdoches, Texas, folklorist and longtime head of the Texas Folklore Society, helped me the most. In addition to his early writings on foxhunting, Abernethy enthusiastically encouraged my research, opened his files for my study, and allowed me use of his photos of the 1967 National Fox Hunters Association field trial, held near Nacogdoches. Every time I mentioned any doubts or difficulties in telephone or Internet communications with Abernethy, his message was, "Just do it."

Abernethy also made first contact for me with hunter Rudy Eddington, who—with his brothers, Jimmy and Eddy—took me out in the dark of Shelby County to hear the dogs bark and the angels sing. It was far too late for me to become a real dog man and fox chaser, but it seemed as though I had been there before. The Eddington brothers deserve my sincere thanks.

Kay Woodward of Sand Springs, Oklahoma, registration editor for *Hunter's Horn* magazine, vastly facilitated my research task. Not only did she throw open her complete set of back issues of "the *Horn*" to me, but she graciously allowed me to borrow her back-issue collections of the competitor magazines, *Chase* and *Red Ranger*. Back issues of *Chase* I might have had

at its existing offices in Lexington, Kentucky, but Kay's extensive files of the defunct *Red Ranger* were available nowhere else. I obtained many additional copies of all three magazines on the wonderful Internet, where anything eventually drifts up from everywhere for sale on eBay. It should be noted that two of the three monthly periodicals still flourish and may be reached at the following addresses: *The Hunter's Horn*, P.O. Box 777, Sesser, Illinois 62884-0777. Telephone: 618-625-2711; *The Chase*, P.O. Box 55090, Lexington, Kentucky 40555-5090. Telephone: 859-254-5090. It is fair to say that without the many hundreds of past issues of *Red Ranger*, *Chase*, and *Hunter's Horn* published over the decades, no comprehensive study of American hilltopping would have been possible.

My final and deepest thanks go to the many thousands of unpaid contributors to the foxhunting magazines, who, writing across three-quarters of a century, taught me nearly everything I know about the chase. They told the story of hilltopping in their letters and first-person accounts. It was my job to listen as carefully to their dead voices as they once had to foxhounds in the dark woods.

## **GRAY GHOSTS AND RED RANGERS**

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