

Saturday Morning

Another adventure has begun!

Les and I left our house in Meadowbrook PA about 2 pm yesterday. We drove to the Philadelphia (home of the Super Bowl Champion Philadelphia Eagles) Airport and began our trip west. Philadelphia to Las Vegas, then Las Vegas to Spokane. We arrived in Spokane about midnight, picked up our rental car, and then checked into the airport Ramada Inn.

Since both Les and I are both on "east coast time", while it is 6 am this morning we are both awake.

Today we will have breakfast here at the motel and then drive up to Colville. The plan is for us to meet Air Plumley at the Colville Airport at 10 am. The weather forecast calls for 70 % chance of showers today so we hope Air Plumley can get into Colville. The memorial service for Pete G is at 11 am in Colville. We will be attending that before we head up to the ranch.

We are sure it will be well attended and it is nice that the schedule is working out so that we can attend and pay our respects.

Sunday Morning

58 degrees on the cookhouse porch this morning. Going to a gorgeous day.

Yesterday Les and I were out of Spokane by 7 am. We drove up to Colville and stopped in North 40 and boosted the local economy. Then we stopped at the sewage ponds for some birding before we headed up to the Colville airport. Tom, Sabine, and Merrie arrived about 10:25. After unloading the plane and some quick wardrobe changes we all headed to the church for Pete's memorial service. As expected it was packed. Standing room only for late arrivals.

It was a moving service. There was a full Catholic mass followed by a eulogy by John Butorac. John set the right tone. Some tears, some laughter. He provided a great portrait of Pete. Jason, Iris's husband, who is a decorated Navy Seal presented a flag to Patsy as a symbol of the respect the military community has for Pete and his support over the years. That was moving.

After the ceremony there was a light meal in the social hall. It was a great opportunity to reconnect with many people. There of course were the locals and there were many ranch guests that came in to the service. Pete would have been thrilled to see his many friends and family enjoying themselves.

We then drove up to the ranch arriving about 3:30. We had already decided that we would not be riding that day. As we got there was a large ride going out. Ranch life goes on. Two new wranglers, Tony and Maddie, were handling the chores. The Charbonneaus were already at the ranch arriving about an hour before us. It was great to see them and reconnect. We look forward to spending time with them during the next couple of days.

Mitch put out an amazing dinner as always.

None of the family members came back up to the ranch in the evening. That was to be expected.

The ranch is very full. Lots of people here, nice to meet many of them. Many will be leaving today and then the week will settle in.

East coast time caught up with Les and I last night. Early to bed. And that means early to awake. Being Sunday Brunch is at 10 am. I will go off and do some birding once I get through my morning emails.

Good to be back here. Seems like we never left.

Monday Morning

50 degrees on the cookhouse porch this morning. Another beautiful day is on tap

Yesterday being Sunday, there was a brunch instead of a breakfast. And it was a day of guest turnover.

I got out in the morning and did some birding and then Rick and I drove over to the lake to enjoy the early morning there.

After brunch at ten we took off for a ride. We had missed a warm up ride on Saturday due to the memorial service. Rather than do a warm up ride yesterday we did a full ride. We rode down to the river and ate a lunch. Seemingly we had just had the big brunch but it was good to sit by the river and relax and have a sandwich. Joe was the wrangler and it was the Charbonneaus, the Filemyrs, and the Plumley-Speers on the ride. No dogs) Tom surprised Sabine with a stunning new saddle. She was amazed and thrilled. We were back at the ranch about 3:30 from a nice 10 mile ride. Still a nice crowd here at the ranch but it has thinned out from the weekend. They are developing a nice weekend business.

One of the landmarks on the ride up the gravel road to Bull Hill is the "white house". This was occupied by Tom and Laura for many years. Now Joe and Ericka own it. Since our last visit it has been painted. It is no longer the "white house". It is not the "light purple house". Looks quite nice.

There are actually three young wranglers here. Tony, Maddie, and Grace. They are doing a nice job. And yesterday Madeline G. was here to help out.

Lot of cows on the hillside as I write this. Some of them have bells and it makes for a nice morning sound.

Tuesday Morning

52 degrees on the cookhouse porch this morning. Not a cloud in the sky. It should be noted that sunrise this morning was at 4:49 am

Full day of riding yesterday. We chose to do the Rose ranch ride. We left the barn at 9:30 am and got to the ranch at about 12:15 pm. After a nice lunch, we worked our way back via the road overlooking Sleepy Hollow. We were back at the barn at 4:20 pm. Of all our traditional all day rides, this is our longest. Les tracked it at just short of 19 miles. That is almost twice as long as the ride from the day before. Lots of moans and groans as we got off the horses at the barn. But in a little bit the joints started working again and all was well.

Perfect riding weather yesterday. A nice cloud cover and mild temperatures.

Monday is "Margarita Monday" meaning Margarita is the cook and she treats us to a great Mexican meal. Lots of wonderful tastes.

For the past several years Tom and I have had a daily horseshoe game against Tucker and Brent. The team that wins the most games during the week get \$20 each from the other team. Right now Tom and I are ahead 2-0. I will continue to report the results as long as they are in favor of Tom and I.

Mosquitos are more numerous than they have been in past years. They have a mosquito trap on the porch and citronella candles around . Hard to say if they are making a difference.

Current plans are to ride to the Moses Overlook today.

Wednesday Morning

Yesterday we rode to the Moses Overlook for lunch. About 12 miles round trip. A fairly easy ride but a couple of side hill stretches that are always interesting. One or two steep downhills that look worse than they are. A wonderful lunch spot. The ride was rather without drama until we got back to the rhubarb patch on the way home.

Those of us at the front of the group were scouting for a nice place to take a group picture. And then, without warning, my horse (Smoke) sat down. Just like a camel. Legs folded underneath. No roll or anything. Just sat down and stayed down. I stayed in the saddle and found both of my feet still in the strips but on the ground. I was willing to wait for the horse to stand up but Brent suggested that I get off in case the horse decided to roll. So I calmly stepped off. Brent came over and convinced Smoke to stand up. With the usual amount of effort I remounted and we all rode back to the barn. It was interesting.

Chad and Julie Butorac stopped by about dinner time. They brought their two 9 month old twin girls. They are so cute and it was great to see all four of them.

Chris is the cook got the next couple of days. Nice dinner last night!

Mitch the cook went to Walmart yesterday for a beer/soda run. He needed 8 carts to get the beer to his pickup truck. That should hold us for a few days.

Tom and I continue our success at horseshoes. Now we are up 3-0

The Charbonneaus leave today. It was great seeing and riding with them. Looking forward to next time.

Plans today call for a Pepon Canyon ride. Should be just Tom, Sabine, Les, Brent, Tucker and I. Will be a great ride unless Smoke decides to sit down again.

Thursday Morning

58 degrees on the cookhouse thermometer this morning. Humidity seems to be up. A thunderstorm was in the area around dinner time yesterday but we only got a few sprinkles.

The ranch is doing a super job of getting riders out in the mornings. The horses are all brought into the corral and saddled before breakfast. When they say 9:30 start for a ride they mean 9:30. Horses are ready, lunches are ready, wranglers are ready, dogs are ready. It is nice.

Several guests, including the Charbonneaus, left yesterday and about 12 new guests came in. Mary Kay Jovanovich brought a group but there are also a few other guests. It is interesting that all the guests that came are female. Tom and I are the only male guests here. Brent said that that is not usual. A high percentage of their guests are female. Female groups, mother/daughter outings, etc.

Yesterday we did the Pepon Canyon / Sleepy Hollow ride. We did it counter clockwise. Our little group was Tom, Sabine, Merrie, Les, myself, Hunter and Brent. The canyon has been cleared of debris but is still wet. And the rocky section was really rocky. It appears that over the winter as the stream flowed through the canyon more rocks got exposed. The horses just picked their way through them. Lunch was at Sleepy Hollow.

When we first started doing this ride we rode through a clear cut to get up to the road above Sleepy Hollow. Over the years we have seen that clear cut grow back in. What was once knee high growth is now 20 feet tall. When we rode through that area last year it was a real bear staying on trail and not getting knocked off by the brush. Now the trail is considered impassible. Unless someone goes in there and does some very serious trail work it will never be ridden again. The alternative is to ride around to American Forks and come to the road over Sleepy Hollow that way. It adds about 45 minutes to the trip back.

As we started back the ladies (Les, Sabine, and Merrie) trotted out ahead. We did not see them again until the barn. They trotted, walked, loped all the way back via Crown Creek Road. They had a wonderful ride.

The rest of us came in via the road over Sleepy Hollow.

The ride is about 18 miles long. We started at 9:30 and my group was back at the barn at 4:45.

Nice day of riding.

Today we are going to explore a new area down by Lael Road. It will be a shorter all day ride and it will be interesting. There is a forecast of showers/thunderstorms in the area today.

Yesterday was Chris the cook's birthday. She did not think anyone knew. She baked a carrot cake for dessert and that served as her birthday cake as we all sang happy birth day to her.

The week is flying by. It is Thursday already!

Friday Morning

52 degrees on the cookhouse thermometer this morning. There has not been much of a temperature range here this week. Pretty much the same every day.

Tucker surprised us by adopting a pig on Wednesday evening. He had it up at the cookhouse at dinner last night. NO name yet and he swears it will only grow to 40-50 lbs. We will see. Attached is a picture of Tucker and his pig. The pig is on the right.

Every year is different here. This seems to be the year of the mosquitos. No gnats, just mosquitos. And very few hummingbirds or swallows. They had a late cold snap and that could have effected things. Good year for wildflowers. The vetch on the hillsides is spectacular.

We did a ride yesterday that we have not done in years. It was a "river ride" but not to the traditional lunch spot. We dropped down off the mountain, got near to the river and worked our way downstream. We stayed up a bit high and ate lunch at a nice flat spot overlooking the river. There were thunderstorms in the area and it was nice to know that we were not far from the ranch. After lunch we worked up Larkspur Road and came out at the hay sheds on the Butorac property along Northport-Flat Creek Road. From there we came up through Hubbard's. We left the barn at 9:30 and were back at 3:00 pm. About 12 miles. A nice, shorter, all day ride that we all enjoyed

Still lots of guests here and more due in today. Tom and I are still the only male guests here. There were a couple of thunderstorms around the area in the evening but nothing came our way. Merrie and Sabine went over to the lake in the late afternoon and tried out the paddle boards. They enjoyed them.

We plan on doing an all-day ride today somewhere along Crown Creek. Brent has a place he remembers from many years ago and wants to check it out.

Saturday Morning

59 degrees on the cookhouse thermometer this morning. A bit cooler because of the storms yesterday afternoon

To explain yesterday (Friday) we need to go back to Thursday. After breakfast on Thursday I developed heartburn. It may have been the sausages but who knows. I spent the entire horse ride on Thursday belching and being uncomfortable. By the time we got back to the barn I was feeling a bit better. I was OK through dinner but when I went to go to bed I was feeling uncomfortable again. I was unable to get to sleep on Thursday night. I tossed, I turned, I tried sitting in a chair, I tried sitting on a sofa, I tried sitting on the porch. I could not get into a comfortable position. It was a long night with no sleep.

On Friday morning I told Mitch about it and he gave me some antacid tablets. They helped a bit. There was no way I could ride on Friday. I was exhausted. I hung around the cookhouse to about 8 and let people know I was not going to ride.

I went back to the cabin and crawled in bed. I tossed and turned but started to get some sleep. At about 11:45 I was considering getting up, wandering over to the cookhouse for a bit and then taking an afternoon nap.

Tom, Sabine, Les, Tucker, Brent and others had set off for an all-day ride to check out a possible new lunch spot.

As I was preparing to get up, Tucker knocked on the door of the cabin. His message was simple.....Les had fallen, hit her head, and need to go to the Colville Hospital.

Obviously that changed my plans. I quickly dressed, jumped into our SUV, and followed Tucker in his truck down to the Crown Creek Meadows. The group was still gathered around Les who was sitting on the ground. Her horse, Scout, had tripped and gone down to the ground. He rolled on Les's left foot. And Les also had a concussion. She was groggy and had a small short term memory loss.

We gathered her up and after a brief stop back at the ranch to get her medical cards we were off to Colville and the emergency room. We got there about 1:15 and they saw her fairly promptly. The two concerns were her head and her foot. Her memory pretty much had come back by the time we got there.

They got her into x-ray for her foot and some sort of scan for her head. The news was good. Nothing broken. All was OK. We were out of there about 3:30 with Les on crutches and a small boot on her left foot.

She spent the rest of the afternoon and evening in the cookhouse.

Meanwhile when we were in town, we stopped at the Walmart to pick up a brand of antacid pills that Tom and Sabine recommended. I took one and it seems to be a big help. Yesterday I skipped breakfast, lunch, and only had a couple of bites for dinner. No alcohol. I slept from 8 pm last night until 6 this morning. It felt good. And I am hungry.

Les reports this morning that she is feeling much better and can put limited weight on her foot. She will not, on doctor's orders, be riding today.

Just another quiet day here at Bull Hill. And yes, Les now has the Silver Buckle

Sunday Morning

51 degrees on the cookhouse thermometer this morning.

Time to pack up and go home. We will eat breakfast at 8 am and then Tom, Sabine, Merrie, Les and I will head to the Colville airport. From there Les and I will head to the Spokane airport. Les and I will be home about midnight Philadelphia time.

Les continues to improve. There is still swelling in the foot and toes but she can put a bit of weight on it. It will be a slight challenge navigating through the airports but she will be a trooper and do it.

Tom, Sabine, and Merrie took a nice ride down to the river yesterday. Les of course did not ride and I also stayed back. They had a great ride with some bear sightings and a great horned owl mobbed by ravens. It was a cool misty morning that cleared as the day went on.

On the way they stopped over at the meadow next to the road to lake. There they did some barrel "racing". One of the current seasonal wranglers in the Missouri state champ. She gave them some pointers and explained the event.

Since Les got thrown on Friday, she had "to drink from the horn". She did it at the bar last night with no problem. She is the only one who had that honor this week.

Astute readers will know that I have not recently mentioned the weeklong horseshoe match between Tucker/Brent and Tom/myself. When I last mentioned it we were up 3-0. Unfortunately Tucker/Brent won three straight games and we were tied going into the final game yesterday. In an exciting overtime match we pulled out a 22-20 victory. And we did not have to cheat.

Yesterday the three seasonal wranglers were tasked with replacing the screening on one of the cookhouse porch doors. It really needs to be fixed. They carefully took it apart, removed the old screen and prepped the surface for the new screening. They stapled the bottom of the screen and realized two things. One – they were out of staples, Two – the provided screening was too short for the job. It was fun watching this process and at some future date it should be completed.

So that wraps up the week. It went all too fast. We are all thankful that Les was only bruised and not really hurt. Looking forward to the fall trip and the future trips beyond that.

I will provide a link to pictures in a couple of days.

Hope you enjoyed these daily messages of happenings here at Bull Hill.