

A trail ride to remember or The mother of all hacks

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This is a true story of a most wonderful, eventful hack. It may, in fact, be blurred and unbounded memories of several hacks - at this point, who knows (and who cares?). We'll each share the story from our own perspective.

RaH: It was a typical, unassuming spring morning. I had already been whipped in the face by my mare's tail, leaving me with an eye that, having once been blue, was now red and blue. Immediately previous to that I had managed to partially electrocute both myself and my gelding vis-à-vis an electric wire fence, a metal feed scoop, and four size 0 horse shoes. Unfortunately (for my horse) aforementioned shoes were on his little feet. I had just settled my fried and frazzled body and was headed for recovery when HiT drove into the barnyard.

HiT: I arrived at the barn in anticipation of the hack that had been planned by myself and RaH with our horses, Arty and Gale. Now, while most people would probably look forward to such hacks, I tended to be somewhat apprehensive due to my gelding's rather unpredictable nature, not to mention his overactive imagination. However, previous hacks (of which there, up to this point, had been few in number) had proven themselves to be quite enjoyable. Furthermore, my gelding really does enjoy the break in routine that a good hack provides and loves being at one with nature (as long as nature keeps its distance). Although upon seeing RaH's dishevelled state I questioned whether we should go ahead with our hack, we are an adventurous group (horses and riders included) and decided to forge ahead. Little did we know that our upcoming hack would be one we would never forget.

RaH: I managed to force my helmet over my fried and electrocuted hair but decided against the eye patch. As we left the safety of the barn and headed down the road I knew that our first obstacle would be THE FIVE GEESSE who hung out in the barnyard after we made the left turn

towards the house next door. We were now on pavement. These geese were large and loud and had been known to attack. The geese were at the top of the hill (paved) and of course on the opposite side of the road were Dick's HIGHLAND CATTLE that looked and smelled like giant yaks. Of particular concern were the calves who hid and played in the bushes by the ditch on the road across from the geese (attack). Get the picture?

HiT: We headed down the BLIND, PAVED HILL, past the woolly cattle. I caught a glimpse of the dirt road ahead which had metamorphosed into a giant puddle thanks to the spring thaw. This caused some inward concern, knowing that I was atop a horse that liked to jump over water in his path and this "puddle" engulfed the entire road. What was to become of us? My gelding has been known to surprise me in the past, and I experienced great relief as he daintily stepped through the water without a second thought (perhaps he was distracted by the barking, snarling dog tied out by the post office). Whatever the reasoning, I went with it.

RaH: I proceeded down the hill with my horse in hyper alert regarding the geese. As I glanced back I could see HiT's horse ping-ponging between geese and yak, yak and geese. There was some competition as to who's eyes were larger, HiT's or Arty's. I decided that HiT was the winner of said competition. My mare proceeded to moonwalk past the geese, past the barking, growling, snarling dog. But, alack and alas the road gave way to water.

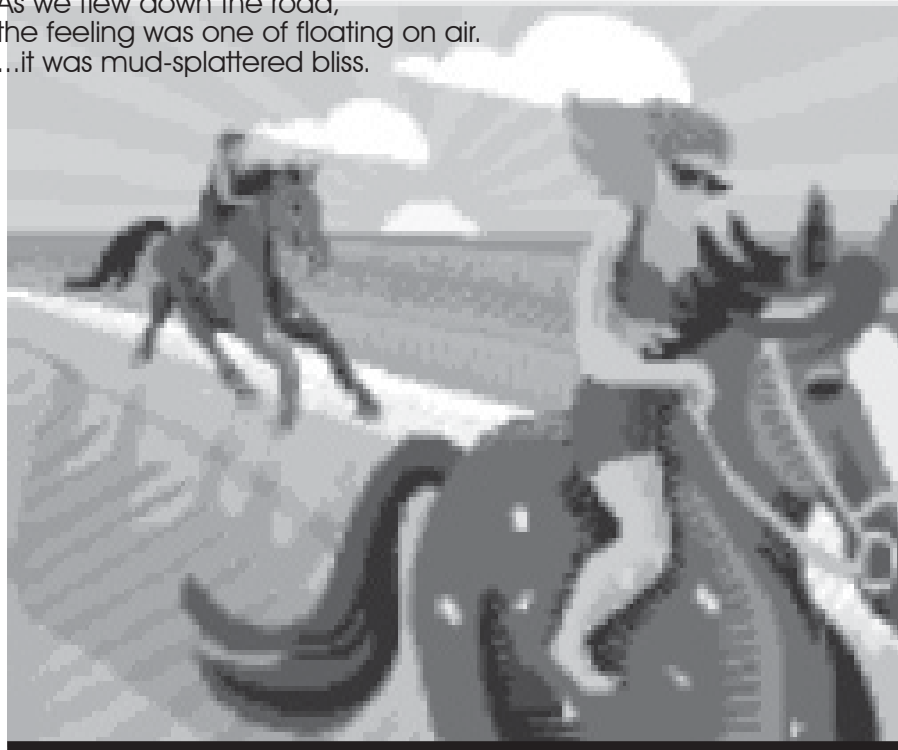
HiT: The road we were heading down was a wonderful place to hack due its soft, forgiving footing, remote, natural setting and open expanses, most suitable for forward motion. Once past the initial lake of water, we were able to enjoy a gentle trot, one we hoped would set the tone for the rest of the ride because our horses were quite content and amicable. It was then that

we decided to head down to the Ducks Unlimited Dyke, a lovely grassy roadway with water on both sides. This was the first memorable turning point. Little did we know that when there is a spring thaw, the drainage pipe near the entrance to the Dyke turned into a gushing geyser with water spouting at least 6 feet into the air. RaH convinced me that it would be worth getting past the pipe and continue on to the GRASSY KNOLL of the Dyke. It seems she forgot to convince the horses, who upon seeing the water spouting right next to their path, decided home was a much safer place to be and tried to head back there.

RaH: We spent 5 minutes spinning, rearing, bucking and turning, whilst being photographed by some guy with a very big camera. Now my mare is bold but like her owner can be tough and single minded (that's single, not simple). She clearly told me through her behaviour that she wasn't much partial to geysers. Having the more advanced brain (I hoped) I decided to use her tactics to move her past the waterspout from hell. I used her evasion of backing up to back her past the water. HiT did the same. Unfortunately, they insisted on backing up all across the Dyke. We then had to turn them and back them past the geyser in order to reach safe ground. Once safely back at the Dyke's starting point, Mr. Professional Photographer asked our permission to take pictures for his magazine. HiT and I agreed and I asked him, staring at him with my blood-red eye, fried face and frizzled hair, if he would like the photos head on as we walked towards him. For some reason he chose to photograph us walking away.

HiT: I felt great relief as we headed away from the Dyke. The horses were wound up by this point so we let them loose in a wonderful gallop down to MAD COW ROAD. I had heard stories about this road. Apparently, a psychotic jersey cow lived there and she liked to attack people on horseback. Several of my barn friends (RaH included) had succumbed to the pleasure the cow took in charging

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at horses and I did not want to share a similar memory. But we were in luck, for the cow was nowhere in sight. Of course, the odd rock-cootie (those invisible creatures that scare unsuspecting horses and hide out behind rocks, posts, etc) did poke its scary little head our way and propel Arty's quick reflexes into action. Gale, being the much more sensible horse, would simply side-step out of the way, showing Arty a creative approach to dealing with these little monsters.

RaH: My horse and I had experienced MAD COW ROAD on a previous hack. I recall the brown jersey galloping towards me, her eyes rolling, her tongue lolling and her voice mooing. I had further experienced my horse, Gale, having grown 2 hands that day and galloping at unearthly speeds, mad cow in pursuit (it was because of that hack that we had proceeded to a double-twisted wire snaffle for future trail rides). Mad cow road was uneventful on this day and I looked forward to proceeding down Oromocto Lake Road.

HiT: The LAKE ROAD was in great condition for riding upon. We experienced a few canters and trots as we headed further and further down the road. The lake was very high on both sides and the road narrowed with each step we took. Cars passed us, birds flew overhead and everything was pleasant. Then suddenly we heard a muted whirring noise. RaH and I looked at one another in confusion. As the noise got louder we looked into the clouds in search of a passing plane - there wasn't one. We looked behind us

in case a car would eventually want to pass. There was no car. But the noise continued to increase in intensity. In response, our horses' steps quickened and their ears pricked up. I can't remember if we saw the boat first, or the waves that consequently rolled across the road behind us. All I know is that I felt a great terror grip my heart as I had a mental image of what would happen as a wave swept over us when the boat, which was fast approaching, passed by. I can't say what Arty was feeling, but he wasn't happy. We were trapped.

RaH: "It's a stupid boat!", HiT and I yelled in disbelief. The horses moved from prance mode to airs above the ground as the motorboat careened past us, the waves washing over the road. After the boat had passed, I noticed a bridge up ahead crossing the river. Several cars were parked on the bridge and beside it and people were fishing from the bridge. I looked in apprehension. Suddenly I heard this soft little voice behind me saying "Joannne...do you mind if we don't do the bridge today?" "Sure" I said as we turned around, thinking: "there's no freakin' way we're doing the bridge"; a thought I shared with HiT a short while later. At this point we'd been gone a good three hours or more and it was time to return home.

HiT: My gelding's reaction to the waves lapping at his feet surprised me. Rather

than taking off he was actually very well behaved considering the circumstance. Once again I felt relief. We continued down the road a short way when I caught sight of the bridge. We had experienced so many things up to that point, I didn't think my heart could take the challenge of the bridge and the trolls lurking beneath. Thankfully, RaH was ready to head home as well and we turned the horses around. They seemed happy at the change in direction and we decided to push the horses into a little canter. The horses had something else in mind. As we flew down the road, the feeling was one of floating on air. It didn't feel as though Arty's feet ever touched the ground. His ears were pricked forward and we sailed on the wind. It was mud-splattered bliss.

RaH: We galloped on over the mud-covered road. The wind blew in my ears and tears ran down my face...my horse was flat out. Sure-footed and strong she raced on. I turned once to see HiT leaning forward in the saddle, covered with mud, her face muddied and brown with a big white grin. We hooped, hollered, and yahooped, until we reached the end of the road. It was absolutely exhilarating. We laughed so hard we cried as we pulled the horses up. We then had an uneventful walk home.

This mother of all hacks has never been replicated but will always be remembered. 🐾