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"I knew it was going to be hard and there were going to be lots of elevation gain and of course the canyons. What did surprise me was the ruggedness of all the terrain. The heavily forested mountains, the steep drop-off to the river.

"At the water crossing, I really noticed the strength of the currents and the roundness of the rocks. Patrick was very uncertain the first time. He just wanted to blast through and get out of there. That might be because we didn't cross in the optimum place, and everyone was kind of bunched together still."

For a loner, being in a big group creates all sorts of stresses. "He doesn't want to stand still," Jas explained, but this was not a situation where she could cater to Patrick's emotions. "In the first thirty-eight miles to Foresthill, there wasn't much opportunity to move anywhere."

Fortunately, although Patrick can get competitive when he sees other horses on the trail, "As long as he had his Kenlyn buddies he didn't worry about the other horses. I am sure that that did help him mentally. "

The out-and-back loop to Mosquito Ridge that was added to make up mileage for the 2011 Tevis was the toughest part of the trail in some ways. The constant downgrade on the way out, and uphill on the way back, limited options for the riders, although the road did permit the necessary two-way traffic. It wasn't always high-speed.

"You could not make any time going down or coming up. We trotted only in three short sections that were a little flatter. As we were going down we passed a lot of people going up that were off their horses and walking."

In spite of the tough terrain, all the Kenlyn horses came back strong into Foresthill and vetted through along with Patrick. He had adjusted to this new concept of being waited on, though he was a bit grumpy about the lack of forage along the trail, Jas said.

When they headed out again, things felt different. Patrick realized he was heading back to the stall at the Auburn State Fairgrounds that had been home for a week. He no longer cared about the other horses. Still, Jas stuck with the group plan. "Lynn, Linda and I were riding to whichever horse needed something."

That horse was not Patrick. "He never wavered, he never slowed. In fact he kept getting stronger," Jas said.

At Francisco's, a gate-and-go check twenty miles from the finish, it was Lynn's horse that needed some time. Jas could have ridden out in other company, but she waited until Linda and Lynn had vetted through. They made their own evaluation and thought they needed to give their horses a chance to eat more. Patrick clearly wanted to push on.

So Jas told them, "We'll just start out walking and I'm sure you'll catch up."

The moon was high and bright overhead. They were entirely alone on the trail.

"That was my perfect Tevis experience. When I left I had no lights, just my glowsticks. I didn't even turn my headlamp.

I was amazed how well I could see and how well Patrick felt. When you leave Francisco's you start winding down the trail through the trees with switchbacks. He was feeling great and he got in his zone.

I will never forget that. I don't really know how many miles I was alone but it was awesome."

At the river crossing, glowsticks marked the best channel. "By that time I was with only two other horses and riders, too."

She had caught up with Steve Hallmark and Renie Burnett. Patrick crossed the river without any of his former nervousness, and continued on confidently. "After the quarry he would have just cruised all the way in if I had let him."

Patrick didn't get to decide and they went conservatively, arriving at 2:58 a.m.. They had enough energy to canter into the stadium, and finished with a euphoria that, Jas said, she had yet to come down from two weeks after the ride.

The best journeys are not just transcendent, they are transformative.

About Patrick, Jas says, "I am thinking he is going to be more social, at least along the trail. I never had to fight with him about anything on this ride... I have to usually orchestrate my starts with him – either be way at the back or with the front running horses and just let him go. I think riding with a small group helped his comfort level."

Linda and Lynn came in 45 minutes later and vetting through to hugs all round They had done it – seven riders, seven buckles. The Kenlyn Arabians record stood and Jas was part of that. It was twenty years since she herself had done a hundred mile ride. Although she trusted Patrick to bring her in, she feels that being in the group made her part easier.

Now, since Patrick has proven that he can maintain himself mentally and physically over the distance, Jas is setting her sights for the future even higher.

"I have just realized that AERC has that 100 mile award program. I think I am going to do at least two more 100's. The Bighorn and... "

Jas mentioned another landmark ride in the same way she used to talk about Tevis – too far away, too expensive, and clearly impossible.



heading out for Mosquito Ridge

