

RENIE BURNETT'S TEVIS STORY OCTOBER 8th 2011

Thanks, everyone, for all the congrats you've sent my way. A little story below.

I only knew I might be riding Tevis about a month before it actually happened. Pam and Don Bowen asked me if I would like to ride "Willy" Wild West, as Don was riding Pam's horse Wyatt, towards his 5th Tevis buckle. Willy is a 21 yr. old Arab who had done 7 100 milers including Tevis. He also had fallen 500ft. off of the Tevis trail near Deadwood about 7 yrs. ago! He was taken out by helicopter, luckily just cuts and scrapes. I figured he'd take great care of me.

As you probably already know, Tevs was almost canceled; I was staying with the Bowens in Michigan Bluff at the home of Gary and Judy Hall, who are very much part of all things Tevis. I arrived there on Wed. and it was raining, so all day Thursday, Gary Hall was on 2 phones, the scanner and the computer getting reports of weather, if the Tevis was being canceled, or rerouted or postponed or ??? By early evening, we got the word that Tevis would be starting in Auburn. There were a few rigs stranded at Robie Park, one was a vendor, "Healthy as a Horse". Susan Favro said they had driven 1000 miles, it took \$700 and most of the day Friday to get towed out, and drove the 1000 miles home. Not too profitable!

I have to give all the credit to Willy, who is just one incredible and special horse, and a very hardworking crew. They were hardworking and helpful and I have never had the luxury of a crew taking care of all the needs of horse and rider. What a difference it makes! Really necessary for Tevis, at least for me.

Don Bowen got pulled at Foresthill, so I was on my own from there on. I had felt pretty confident with Don as my riding partner, and was very concerned about going out without him. But my crew insisted, so away we went. Down to Chickenhawk, then Mosquito Ridge and back up again to Foresthill. That was a long, long 20+ miles back to Foresthill. After vetting there the 2nd time, it was getting dark as I rode through Foresthill, heading home to Auburn. Lots of spectators still out wishing us well, having fun and toasting us.

Riding the narrow single tracks with the American River far, far below was bad enough in the morning, but doing them again in the dark, Well, let's just say that I refused to look down and trusted Willy to not drop me. A few prayers were whispered... Luckily, I was able to follow some other riders who took good care of me. I didn't use my headlamp as it was Don's and way too bright. Instead, the glowbars on Willy's breastcollar at least gave a weak, though useless, glow. The moon helped where it wasn't obscured by trees. Sometimes I could see out of the corner of my eye the American River glimmering below, dizzying, scary, telling myself it wasn't real! Betsy taught me that one! "Nothing on your left is real."

When we got to Lower Quarry, I began to think, "Hey, maybe I can finish the Tevis?!?" We crossed over No Hands Bridge, a piece of cake after the rest of the trail and a very welcome sight, almost there! Being slightly pessimistic, it wasn't until I had gotten vetted for the last time, at the McCann arena, that I actually accepted that I had done the Tevis ride and would be getting a buckle.

Husband Bob, and son Rob along with his wife Rachel and the 2 grandsons Blake and Bryce had come down to see me finish, but couldn't find where we were parked. However, they heard my name announced as I rode the victory lap and crossed under the official finish banner. They totally surprised me, and it took me a second or two to recognize it really was my family. (Heck, after about 21 hrs. on a horse, thought I was hallucinating.) Sure made it fun and made me feel very special!

I don't know what to say about doing the Tevis-ReRoute Ride; I feel like, well, maybe I need to do it again the correct way. However, that remains to be seen, and I don't feel that deep of a need to do it again. The ride this year wasn't easy, wow, there are not too many places to make a lot of speed. Although trails were improved, some of it was slick, most of it steep, up and down, and there were plenty of rocks! Even so, we didn't have to

do the high Country or Cougar Rock, or all of the canyons or have the heat issues. I do know I will cherish my Tevis buckle and the memories of a long ride in the moonlit mountains. Renie

