

Notes From Bittinger

by Joan Sussman

Our Korean seminary student will go back to Fairfax, Va., to pick up his wife to join him in Bittinger. They were Saturday dinner guests of the Southerly family. Sheila managed to cook a dinner after a beautiful day on her cross-country skis with Kevin Bass on a trail broken by a snowmobile driven by Shane Buckel. I was with them in spirit.

It was so beautiful. I once painted a picture titled "A Perfect Winter Day" and today it was with blue sky, sunshine, and a thick white blanket covering everything, and now after sunset, a brilliant silver winter full moon. I learned about that from Patty Diehlman, who called to let me know that she and Steve will have to go on a plumbing emergency call for, guess what - broken water pipes in the Dry Run Road area. So Hannah will spend a few more hours with us.

It is surprising that, even if it is beautiful out, it is also very cold. I am not sure, but I think it is around zero. But this snow really makes for good cross-country skiing. It is the kind of snow that talks to you, with the creaking and cracking when you put your weight on it. How I envy Kevin, Sheila, and Shane. The beaver dam called me so loudly today. But alas, it was out of reach for me, like most things these days.

After I finished writing the above I ventured outside to my car just at sunset and got the double thrill of seeing a brilliant full moon rising over Meadow Mountain. During yesterday dusk we were lit with two bright skylights.

I was not as lucky as Mere's friend and teammate, Ashley Friend, who woke in the middle of the night late last week from a flood of bright moonlight. She got to see a lunar eclipse.

Last evening was as beautiful as the sunlight-drenched afternoon was, but it was a very subtle beauty. The wide-open fields were not white, but a silverish cream shade with moon shadow of purple and indigo. A row of pine trees showed their wind-bent form in the west in front of the pink-gray sunset. The little woods behind "Pappy" Dale's house were silhouetted in front of the silver moon. The branches of the hardwood trees reached toward the light of the moon, except those many

felled by the ice storm.

Every time you look at the woods you are reminded of that chaos and damage from that icy natural disaster. Imagine if every time you step outside you see the remainder of a human disaster: bombed out buildings and ruins everywhere from a war. Many people of the world see things that remind them of America and what our economics might do: a full graveyard, but not as many wells or happy, healthy children, hungry or sick, because of America's selfishness. Why do Iraq or North Korea hate us so much?

The Global Mission worship service at Emmanuel Lutheran Church was moving and inspiring. In place of the regular liturgy was a litany of a Korean United Methodist Church. The seminary student is fluent in his native language as well as English. The reason for his fluent English is that he spent much of his grown-up years in a rural part of Arkansas, and then went to college in Arkansas. He then lived in Canada and is now working as an indoctrination student in a Korean-American Methodist Church in Fairfax. I had to ask him if it was really true that South Korea has winter like in Bittinger. He said yes, it is true. I am sure that they may get cold and snow, but not like this spell of real winter in Bittinger with subzero temperatures and wild winds blowing lots of snow around.

I was surprised that our church attendance was so good, as it was one of the worst winter days so far. It was a small miracle that many cars started up bright and early, especially my poor old car, and that my lane was passable. I do not just thank God for that, but also a real good neighbor, Jack Beitzel. Also a good friend of Mother's, Rick Perrone, makes regular stops to help keep it open.

Jack has repaid me many times for the help I gave to his mother Leah, with her big pinto mare and her foal. I was thrilled to ride Flicka over to Accident to meet a stallion called Fire Ball, belonging to Ellsworth Yoder. Fire Ball was one of two stallions that can be claimed as my Little Joe's sire. The other possible sire of Joey was a big fancy palomino stallion belonging to Bob Glover. If you judge by appearance, Joey was much more similar to Fire



NHS STUDENTS LENDING SIGHT - Several students from Northern High School have offered to "be the eyes" for skiing guests from the Maryland School for the Blind. Sonya Broadwater and Shawn Covell are pictured above with a student from the school, with whom they spent a day last week on the slopes of Wisp Resort. In addition to Sonya and Shawn, 32 students from Northern have pledged to help with the Deep Creek Lake Lions Club blind skier program, which will take place from Jan. 28 to Feb. 13. More volunteers are sought, and an invitation is being extended to students from Southern High who may be interested. SHS students interested in volunteering may talk with their service learning coordinator. Many of the volunteers from NHS have helped in previous years and, according to teacher Barbara Law, enjoy the experience so much they keep returning to do it again. They serve as BOLD (Blind Outdoor Leisure Development) guides. Pictured below, from left, are BOLD guides Scott Pusateri, Darcy Branthoover, and Sonya and Shawn. Local adults also help with the program. For more information, persons may contact Tom Wenzel of the Deep Creek Lions Club.



Another big regret for me was that I never tried racing. Joey over fences that probably would be the very best thing for his talents. He was as fast as the wind, jumped like a deer, and had a heart so big he was never defeated in any informal pickup races we would get into. If he were bigger, or else if I were smaller like a jockey, we could race over any fence with the best of them, I believe.

I had the pleasure of assisting our American National Velvet, who actually rode in the Grand National Steeple Chase in England. Joy Slater rode a horse in my care in the sidesaddle class at the National Horse Show in Madison Square Garden in Manhattan. When she carried off the big bouquet of red roses it was one proud moment in my life, because in that class success was at least half dependent on the presentation of the horse, which required a good grooming and braid job. To win that class at that show you had to put on a perfect picture. Instead of a regular 20-braid mane for the biggest sidesaddle, it took 40 long perfect braids and with a combed pattern of tiny checkerboard pattern on her gleaming red rump. Isle of Erin and Joy were a perfect picture and gave a perfect performance.

That was a big thrill for me, but I think I was even more happy when I helped my middle-aged mother boss win the same class at Penn National Home Show the next year, not on Erin but her less classy mount, Bit of Hope. She was so nervous, as it was the biggest moment in my life for my sweet boss, Joan Sher. My primary responsibility with the Sher family was to show her two teenage sons how to show horses at horse shows. Joan never rode in shows except that one time, and she won a big one. She was mainly only a sidesaddle foxhunter lady.

It was a long way from an elderly country lady keeping a couple horses on her own in Bittinger to an ultra rich society lady who regularly hunted with Jackie Kennedy Onassis. I can't believe I got off that far from my original track. But you know, I always start with items about life today in Bittinger and you never know where I will take my readers, which is something some of my readers like very much.

admired Leah on her big rangy paint since she was brave enough to tend by herself and not have the luxury of staff to take care of their stable full of blue-blooded mounts. It was almost a full time job for me to keep one sidesaddle mount of Mrs. Sher sound enough for her son Greg to use for jump competition.

I used to whirlpool, massage, and bandage his leg four times a day.

Of course, Leah's horse Flicka only needed his elderly owner to trudge through deep snow to provide her with hay, water, and love. I learned half the know-how to keep Take A Chance sound by helping Leah nurse Flicka's foal's broken knee. It was a different world in Fair Hall, New Jersey, than in Bittinger, but both had women who loved a horse and faced their fears and obstacles. They were great ladies!

Jackie always looked like a deer caught in headlights at that Hunter Trail. For all her help she still had to face those jumps alone with the whole world watching to see if she made a mistake or fell off, and she knew a picture of it would be in the newspapers and the news.

Leah faced her challenges alone, but she showed fear when faced with that terrible injury of her baby horse. What is harder, to be a pampered princess who had to face life, or a fiercely independent woman who had to ask for help? I can identify with both challenges now. I am terribly grateful that Leah's son now helps me without having to be asked.

Probably the one thing that Jackie and Leah had in common was just not love for horses, but to face whatever life gave them with gritty determination to get on with it. I know where Jackie got her character since I had the great pride of knowing her mother, a grand-dame society lady who gave her time and effort to help a young rider to develop and excel. I believe she could pull up a chair in Leah's old farmhouse and swap horse talk with Leah. Maybe they are doing that in Heaven now. They would have plenty to talk about besides horses and husbands, kids and losses. They could talk about a young horse-crazy girl, Joan Giotofly. They are still a part of me.

I decided to call Fern to find out whether Leah Beitzel had spent her whole life growing up in Bittinger, but I got Cindy on the phone, who was at home busily babysitting her grandniece little Marley, daughter of Doug, who is the son of Cindy's sister Mary Ellen.

Drug, wife June, and son Matthew were skiing and tubing at the Wisp. Cindy chose to stay cozy at home with little 3-year-old cupcake Marley.

I am not sure whether life on my farm has more in common with Jackie's home far in the ultra-exclusive Newport, Rhode Island, or the old-time Bittinger farm where Leah grew up. Probably a piece of both. I am sure life is not half as hard

Adorable Adoptables



READY TO NUZZLE A MUZZLE - The gray kitten pictured at the left appears ready and willing to nuzzle the muzzle of the tan-and-white puppy at the right, but the canine appears to mull all his options over first. Both animals are available for adoption at the Garrett County Animal Shelter, located along Oakland Sang Run Road just north of the Oakland Golf Club. For further information on these and the shelter's other home-seeking critters, persons may call 301-334-3553 or drop by for a free nuzzle of their own.

now for my three little princesses as it was on a farm during the very early part of the 20th century when Leah grew up on a farm in Bittinger. It is much easier to jump in a car and go somewhere than tending horses and hitching them up to a sleigh. Probably the sleigh would be more pretty and fun.

When I was a little girl we still had some old heavy blankets my grandfather carried in his sleigh to cover the horses while his family was in church.

My Caitlin cooked an old-fashioned dinner for her little sister, Meredith, on her birthday. She cheerfully peeled the potatoes for her

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