

The Five Mile Rock

June 10, 2004

Hello to all,

Many years ago, when I lived in the Midwest, I would often fly to California during the winter months for a weekend of dirt riding with my good friend Avery Innis. One sunny day we were riding the trails of Southern California and having an exceptionally good time. It had rained the day before, so the trails were tacky, and one trail in particular was rich and loamy, almost exactly the texture of the Midwestern trails I'd grown up on.

A few miles into it, I noticed a solitary rock in the middle of the trail. As I motored around it, I thought, "that has to be only rock I've seen in this trail in five miles." That was quite a statement, since Southern California's trails are known for two defining characteristics: dust and rocks. At the next junction, I stopped and waited for Avery. When he didn't show up after a few minutes, I turned around and headed back. I soon found him lying in the trail, his bike down, with a most peculiar moaning emanating from his lips. It was a combination howl of pain, growl of frustration and stifled laughter.

"I can't believe I hit it!" he finally spat out. "The only rock in five miles, and I hit it with my knee!" I choked back a giggle. I was incredulous. Not only had he managed to wipe out in the only possible way that would put his knee against the only rock in five miles, he had called it exactly the same thing I had only moments before.

I relate this story to you because we have had a duplication of that incident here in Eastern Turkey, this time with a different cast of characters and an upturned shard of glass playing the villain.

A few days ago, while running up a hill to shoot a photo, Steph stubbed her toe, fought to retain her balance, came down on her knees, then slammed down to the ground with both hands. Unfortunately, her left hand came down on the only upturned shard of glass within five miles and drove it nearly completely through her hand.

We quickly washed the wound with bottled water, applied some antibiotic cream and sterile bandages, used pressure to stop the bleeding and had her in a local hospital within 30 minutes of the accident. She exhibited her usual stoic tolerance of pain as she endured the nurse picking the remaining gravel out of the wound and five stitches later she was ready to go.

In typical Turkish fashion, the hospital refused payment, considering it their duty to exhibit characteristic regional hospitality.

Fortunately, the accident happened here in Turkey, just after we'd joined up with the small group of American riders with whom we are finishing our circuit of Turkey. Since they have a chase truck, Steph spent the following day lying down and resting her hand while I followed behind in case she needed anything.

Yesterday she returned to the bike, and while her hand is sore and swollen, like Avery after banging his knee against the five mile rock, she's back in the saddle.

Be well,
Doug



The local hospital's Turkish doctor and nurse insert five stitches in Steph's hand. All the consumable supplies came out of sterile wraps and the utensils came from an antiseptic bath. The window behind the doctor was open to the outside with no screen, but the breeze really helped Steph out. (Steph insisted I shoot these photos so she would have them available for scrapbooking!)