

Some Memories During a Mt. Rose Hike

By David

Yvonne and I did the Mt. Rose hike last Sunday, Oct 10, 2015. It is our fifth time up this year, and of course that hike means a great deal to us since at the summit we scattered Owen's ashes. It always elicits a number of memories and this time I had a couple of strong ones.

One

Just after Owen's first brain surgery by Dr. Vacca, Owen asked if there were any limitations on his physical activity. Dr. Vacca said there were no limitations, other than no lifting of heavy objects (for a certain amount of time that I've now forgotten). Owen asked him could he go hiking immediately and Dr. Vacca replied, "Absolutely."

We got home from the hospital and Owen wanted to go on a hike right then and there. I think he was worried that he might have lost some physical abilities as a result of the surgery. Well, the surgeon had given permission so we agreed to go on a non-strenuous hike. We picked the hike to Tamarack Lake, which is probably just over 2 miles, maybe 3 miles round trip.

Owen handled it without any problems at all. His physical and cognitive abilities showed no changes at all, and of course we were all relieved.

We knew the upcoming battle with radiation and chemo would start in about a month, so Owen and I went to the gym on a pretty regular basis in order to build up some reserve stamina. This was a complete joke however, because he didn't need any stamina building. The first day, we rode stationary bikes which had a selection of several road courses. The bikes had monitors which were interconnected, so I could see his projected bike figure and he mine. Off we went, and I boasted to him I was certainly going to win. When hills came up on the screen, the pedaling got harder and pretty soon, I could not see his projected bike figure because he was too far ahead. So much for him needing stamina building...it was pretty obvious that someone else DID need it.

Two

We decided we would to skin up to Mt. Rose summit and ski down. I remember this as being shortly before we went to MD Anderson in Houston. It was a big winter and there was plenty of snow. It was a cloudy day and we were the only knuckleheads out there (Owen, me and Indy) and we were glad to be alone. We put the skins on our skis, threw on the backpacks and off we went.

Indy was so happy she would run ahead a bit, then charge back straight at us. She reared up on her hind legs and bounced off our chests with her front paws, and then ran ahead a bit only to repeat. She was laughing (as a dog might) as much as we were laughing.

We went for quite a bit but I had selected a poor route and eventually the side slope too steep for me. I wasn't worried about Owen, since he was a much better skier, but one misstep and it was going to be a long slide to the bottom, so we retreated. After our "victory" beers and lunch we picked our way back and I was exhausted. Owen and Indy...not.

It's funny how memory works. I have a couple of moments during that day that are so deeply embedded in my mind. I can go right to those moments and feel how I felt then. I can see Owen and hear him, laughing. What a special day that was.