

## Life is Unpredictable

- Rev. Rod Barks

*"...the shadowed questions of Earth will be answered fully in the light of Heaven."*

A great Chief recently taught me that the one thing predictable is that life is unpredictable.

Our meeting that day began with an intense gaze into his blue-tinged eyes. They conveyed peace, serenity and the assurance that all would be well. I should have looked deeper.

Together, we meandered down a grass-framed, sunshiny lane – sparrows flitting and the warm breath of a breeze toying with my collar.

Without warning, chaos erupted.

Chief suddenly spooked, rearing straight up then toppling sideways into a pile of wood and metal beside the trail. While kicking his way free, he launched me through the air – an unwieldy missile in a death-spiral (or so I thought). At the apex of my launch, gravity grabbed hold and body-slammed me back to reality.

Yes, Chief is a horse and I was on a trail ride.

The gash on my left knee looked innocent enough, but the gush of red refused to stop, necessitating a grudging trip through the emergency doors of a nearby hospital.

"You're not going anywhere," the attending physician announced after examination. "The wound is deep and may have punctured the joint. We're not taking any chances." Before I could say, "but I have plans", a wheelchair whisked me to a comfortable room designed for palliative care. Thankfully, I was assured it was no longer used for such.

I settled into the quiet routine of vitals and visits, needles and nodding off at random hours. Pressing plans were deflated. Three days of forced immobility provided opportunity to repeatedly replay the event in my mind -- asking questions.

Did God cause my pinto to act irrationally, resulting in injury? Was He lurking by the trail, waiting to leap and frighten? I don't think so. I knew there was a risk in choosing a "spirited" steed and went ahead with it anyway. And God allowed me to choose -- just like He always does.

Choices lead to reciprocal results -- sometimes a taste of bliss; on this occasion a taste of dirt.

Even in the midst of questionable choices, however, the fingerprints of God are evident to those with eyes to see. In my case, an adept nurse was handy to dress the wound, the small-town hospital had an orthopedic surgeon on staff, friends and family were able to linger long, I had time to watch the Roughriders win and my computer was available so I could crank out this column.

“But why didn’t God prevent it,” some may ask. Why didn’t He warn me or just zap those rocks out of the way?”

They’re great questions and deserve more than a tidy, clichéd answer. That’s why I delve into the deep recesses of personal wisdom and proclaim, “I don’t know.”

However, I am convinced that the shadowed questions of Earth will be answered fully in the light of Heaven. There, we will grasp the “whys” of life and frequently exclaim “Ah-hah, now I understand.”

For now, it is enough to trust and rest in God’s promise that “in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” (St. Paul)

I may be limping into that promise, but it’s a limp fueled by the firm belief that one thing God can’t do is lie. He will indeed use *all* things in my life – including punctured knees, hospital rooms and even a horse named Chief.