

Gliding through the Night

I might be over-scheduling myself.

(Not to be complaining), I'm told that non-"horse people" have these things called weekends. They sometimes have civilized breakfasts that come from a frying pan, not from beneath the golden arches. They do yard work that doesn't require a pitchfork. They do something they call "recreation."

The reason I'm not complaining is that most of these non-horse people also have real jobs, a condition which I have scrupulously avoided for the past forty years. I do travel a lot, though. During the week I am the itinerant instructor, driving all about the middle of Florida to meet my regular students. On many, many weekends I rack up my frequent flyer miles as I head to Thither, Yon, or someplace in between to judge or clinic. That schedule makes for a lot of late Sunday night, bleary-eyed driving up the interstate from Tampa or Orlando, the closest real airports to our little farm. If the wheels touch down on Runway 18R at 12:07 am, I can count on opening my farm gate at 2:07 am.

Night driving on I-75 between Tampa and Ocala can be stultifying, even with my faithful iPod to keep me company. On one particular ride home when even Art Bell had packed it in, I was wending my way north behind an 18 wheel tanker truck, my windows rolled down, occasionally slapping my face to stay awake.

Gradually, I became aware of the signage on the back of the trailer in my headlights, and started to mull over the spectacle of such a large quantity of sloshing coffee being transported up the highway. I'd never noticed them doing that during the day, I ruminated, but those truck stops must surely sell a lot of coffee at night.

I trailed along behind that truck for a good fifty miles before it dawned on me that I was reading *an advertisement* for their coffee and the truck was just carrying plain old boring Pilot brand gasoline!

Fortunately, the car was able to find its way home that night without very much help from me.

[Note: The photo which illustrates this story was taken well after the actual incident and in daylight. It has been altered to appear as the truck did that night.]

