



Free, free at last. Max and Roo celebrate their freedom in a paddock in West Virginia while their owners try to figure out how to pull the trailer out of the ditch.

Custer's Last Stand. The Hasbury-Snogles feel honored that they were treated to a private tour of the historic battleground by an historian and a Crow Indian guide.



The west coast at last. Most of David and Anita's photos of riding on the Oregon coast are blurred (this is an exception) because, for some reason, the horses were nervous and jittery when in close proximity to the Pacific Ocean.

video camera mounted in the back and stopped every four hours to water them.

They spent some time in a ghost town in Nevada, and shot a Civil War-era pistol. They were shocked by Nevada real estate prices. "I was really surprised how expensive it was for a piece of dirt," says Anita. They descended 6,000 feet "smoke coming out of the brakes," into Cedarville, CA in 114-degree heat, where they discovered the joys of Frappuccino. "The hardest thing with that trailer is not pulling it, it's stopping it," says Anita with that nervous little laugh of hers.

They discovered when they finally arrived at a campground on the Pacific coast that "the horses were not too keen on the seaside." They persuaded them to get their feet wet, but "they didn't know what was happening to them; they thought the world was coming to an end."

After a nice layover in Seattle, they headed east again, through Yellowstone and into Montana where they visited the site of Custer's Last Stand and rode the battlefield with an historian and a Crow Indian. "We really felt quite privileged to be going out with them across the battlefield," says Anita appreciatively. "Montana was great. It was amazing huge country, but we couldn't imagine being there in the winter." It was plenty hot enough in the summer with a forest fire nearby. They rode their horses in the butte country of Nebraska and the corn country of Iowa and the bug country of Missouri. They loved Kansas City because "it's like being in Europe, cafes and things and horse drawn carriages going down the road."

On the way home, following a host of switchbacks on a long mountain lane in West Virginia, "the back end two wheels fell off the tarmac into the ditch and we were stuck." They had to unload the horses, tie them to a tree, and jack the rig up before they could haul it out.

By this point in the trip, their base had shifted to the home of Donna and Rob Martin of Reva, the owners of Blue Ridge Trailers. There David and Anita rested up for a month before they set out for New England, where they visited and rode in eleven states in six weeks.

And then they came back to Virginia. "We started off in Virginia and went around the whole country looking at different parts of the country, different scenery and stuff... and suddenly realized actually Virginia is really quite nice," smiles David.

They decided to emigrate here, going through the lengthy and somewhat nerve wracking process of obtaining their green cards. "Here in Virginia you have views. You've got the mountains, the grass fields, the woods, the rolling hills, the sea; it's a beautiful state," marvels Anita. David looks out the window of the Orange County home they've owned since last June. "Unlike England, you have sunshine... even in winter."

So what's next? The trip is over. They've even sold the trailer. "Now we need to earn a living again which we were hoping we wouldn't have to do by going back to jobs," says Anita a note of disappointment in her voice. "But we have to after what's happened the last year or so." She's talking, like everyone else, about the economy. "Our timing on our whole trip was not good. Financially, we didn't know the credit crunch was going to come. If we had known that beforehand, possibly we wouldn't have done it."

Anita thinks about that for a moment. She straightens and adds, "but then again at least we did do it. We made that attempt in our lives."

"Why don't we?"



Travels with Max and Roo

They were sitting on a park bench when they decided to do it. "We were walking the dog on top of this hill down near Shaftsbury, and we sat on this bench and made the decision to do it... whatever it took." Anita Hasbury-Snogles pauses for a beat and adds with a nervous laugh, "Of course at the time we didn't know how much it would take."

What it took was she and husband David leaving their native England, coming to the United States, buying a huge live-in horse trailer and an equally huge truck to pull it, loading it with their personal possessions and two unfamiliar horses and heading out with the goal of riding in every state in the country. They came pretty close actually, visiting 40 and riding in 35. They called it Horsequest USA.



Top photo, "We're a long way away from Virginia, Roo," says Anita Hasbury-Snogles as she surveys Nebraska butte country on the Flying Bee ranch near Scotts Bluff. Above, after they returned from their trip around the country, native Brits, David and Anita realized that Virginia is pretty nice too. So they obtained their green cards and bought a house last June in Orange County.

It wasn't exactly a cake walk. It cost a lot of money. David cracked some ribs in an accident in Mississippi. They almost fried their brakes descending from Nevada into California. They got lost in Salt Lake City, drove through a forest fire in Montana, and were almost sucked up by a tornado in Michigan. They got stuck in West Virginia, one horse colicked in North Carolina and later developed an allergic reaction to something in Missouri. Yet with all of



Roo and Max standing in a corral at a campground on the Oregon Coast. "What is that strange crashing sound we hear from beyond the dunes?" they seem to be asking. Traveling cross country together has made the pair inseparable.

those set backs, David and Anita with their legendary English pluck, persevered.

Ask yourself this question: How many times have you secretly dreamed of doing something like this...of saying 'why don't we?' dropping everything and actually doing it? Go on admit it; you're just a little envious.

This couple actually lived that dream. They made it happen. They saw America as few of us ever will. "We traveled through the rural parts of the states because we had the horses, and for me that's the best part anyway," says Anita. "What surprised me were the parts that were really lovely, but they're not the places that tourists normally go to. There are so many places that are basically undiscovered that are so very beautiful."

Later in our conversation she continues, "The really nice thing is, traveling with horses, you're not a tourist; you become a part of where you're staying and who you are with." They met some remarkable people in their travels...like the Kentucky woman who had been burned out of her home and lost a small museum's worth of heirlooms and relics. "She was like incredibly generous and friendly, and she had nothing, absolutely nothing," says David, shaking his head in disbelief. "It's the people who have very little who are the most generous," sums Anita. How true. How true.

Hailing from England, David and Anita were also able to see this big ol' loveable bumbling country of ours through fresh objective eyes. He wrote weekly about the experience in the *Culpeper Star-Exponent*.

"One of the real contrasts that we've seen is driving along, you go from places that are plush cities like Seattle, New York. And then you go, and you see this real third-world poverty, almost, in parts of the country. And we could-

n't believe it. In places like Alabama there are these little shacks that people are living in. And so that was quite a surprise," he notes.

The sight of ever present guns also caused them concern. "In England you can't even walk down the road with a gun; you'd be arrested straight off," he says indignantly. "Out here in the cafes...holstered guns; it was like being in the Wild West." He remembers staying with some folks and asking them how many guns they had, "thinking they would say one or two. 'Oh, about seven,'" they would reply. "Got a rifle here, a rifle there, there's one by the door, there's one over here, there's one in the bedroom.' Good grief," he exclaims incredulously. "They kept a loaded rifle by the door."

Another thing that bothered them: "Rubbish everywhere. Look at that trash piled up. And we went up to Winnemucca (NV) and I was talking to a guy there and he said 'you know that's called a stack yard. The reason is, you live so far away from anywhere that if you have an old truck, you keep it there 'cause there might be a spare part you'd need at some point in time and rather than drive 50 miles to the nearest town.'" David smiles, understanding the reasoning at last. Still, he says, "it's a complete eyesore."

And how about our different sense of distance? He rolls his eyes. "Where's the nearest shop?" he remembers asking. "Aw it's just 'round the corner,'" comes the drawled

reply. "Okay, maybe two minutes down the road," he figures. "Twenty miles later we're still trying to find the shop!"

But that didn't stop them from driving great distances themselves, sometimes as much as 500 miles a day. "A couple of times we did a bit more," says Anita wearily, who did virtually all the driving herself. "It was a long haul, and it wasn't too bad if you knew exactly what you were getting into at the other end. But if you didn't, that's tough." She laughs nervously. "There weren't that many times that we were traveling without knowing where we were going, but there was the odd occasion."

Back in England the biggest thing Anita had towed was a 12'6" tagalong horse trailer. At this point, the dream was just the faintest glimmer on the horizon of their consciousness. Both of them are information technology professionals. Because David was between contracts and she was tiring of her job of 11 years in municipal government,

they were going through what he terms, "a crazy mid-life crisis type of thing." Anita chimes in. "We were thinking about making some changes in our lives." With her three sons pretty much out of the nest, they thought they might move to France, until they spotted an online ad for a live-in horse trailer here in the United States. Anita recreates the conversation from memory.

"Wow, if we had one of those..." she let the sentence dangle.

Gazing lovingly at the picture of the 41-foot long gooseneck trailer with room for three horses and full living quarters with slide out, David oohed, "that's like a hotel room."

Then she said, "If you had one of those, you could just travel around and see things."

And then he said, the now infamous words, "Why don't we?"

Well, why don't we, indeed? So they did.

Just one tiny little insignificant problem...shouldn't even mention it, actually. "I had never been near a horse until I met her, really," says David sheepishly. "Horse? Ooh. Nasty." Or as he says, "Nahsty. Big thing, bites, kicks," his radar warned. So Anita, who had fox hunted and even competed in England, arranged a horseback riding vacation in Italy to introduce David to the sport. "And we were cantering uphill and suddenly he comes charging past me, and I think 'oh my God he's being run-away with.' And he's sitting there going, 'Yee-haw,' trying to make the horse go faster," she says incredulously. David came back to earth, quite literally, "because after that, he came off a couple of times, and that kind of brought him back to square one. It has been a



Throughout the trip, David Hasbury wrote weekly articles for the *Culpeper Star-Exponent* about the experience. Here, Max who David refers to as "a character," exercises some editorial control.

confidence-building process. In fact," she pauses with another one of her nervous laughs, "this whole thing has." The goal was "to try and ride in every state." And they even set up links to several charities, with limited success. "We haven't been awfully successful at raising money for



March 2007, the truck and rig are just about ready to leave Culpeper County for their shake down cruise to Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, South Carolina, North Carolina and back. All in all, Horsequest USA visited 40 states and rode in 35.

charity," says Anita disappointedly. "We're not the sort of people that can ask for money very easily."

At one point they even had an English TV program called 'Horse and Country' promising to follow them around and do a whole series. But then they said, "We'll lend you the equipment and you film yourselves."

"And then it was like, 'if you get your own camera and everything, send us the film back,'" smirks David. He could see that was going nowhere fast.

"Organizing something from another country is extremely difficult," continues Anita. They did virtually everything on line and in some cases sight unseen: the trailer came from Blue Ridge Trailers in Ruckersville, the big ol' Ford 350 diesel dually complete with Union Jack decals came from Florida. Her horse hailed from Ohio. She reserved Roo online, and then went to visit her in person when they came over here in December 2006. They found Max the day they were to fly back to England to tidy up loose ends. He was in a "meat sale" in Marshall, "so we call him the meat sale horse."

Their base of operations became Andorra Farm in Culpeper County. This is also the home base for The Best of America by Horseback TV show that airs on RFD TV. And so one cold March morning on their maiden voyage, "we had to get Max on the trailer, everything finished, loaded, whatever; it was freezing cold," remembers David. "I don't think I got any sleep, and we had to travel all the way up to Ohio, and I was ill all the way."

Not an auspicious beginning. In Ohio, Roo came on board and David and Anita attended a three-day horsemanship clinic. "It gave us some time to learn our horses," says Anita, adding "I had never ridden western before." Heck, that's nothing; David had never been on board Max before! "Poor old Max," he laments; "he was so exhausted at one point he decided to just lay down...and I was on top of him."

From Ohio they traveled through Kentucky, Tennessee, to South Carolina for a Best of America by Horseback gath-

ering, then on to North Carolina and back to Culpeper...sort of a shake-down cruise. And once they sorted out some issues with the trailer, they set out in earnest deep into the southland. This was April of 2007.

Do you remember Easter Sunday in April of 2007? It snowed about four inches here. It sleeted in New Orleans. "It was much colder down there than anticipated," says Anita with a shiver.

It was in Mississippi that David says "the ground came up and hit me." Anita points in opposite directions: "Max just went that way and David went that way." David puts his hand where the ribs come around from the spine on their way to the sternum and winces. "It felt like somebody had kicked me in the back...of course when I was in England I did the front of these same ribs going through a fence coming off a horse, and then I did the back here." He didn't know he'd cracked the ribs until he sneezed two days later. Yikes! He sure knew it then!

Still, they went on to Oklahoma. "We met a lot of nice people out there and sometimes we didn't want to move on," notes David who remembers having an odd epiphany one day in Kansas. He had been introduced by his hosts to that quintessentially American pastime of large-mouth bass fishing on a farm pond. "I suddenly looked up and I thought, I'm in the middle of Kansas... fishing!" His eyes open wide in amazement.

Typically they would spend several days at a time in the

same place before moving on. "A lot of people had actually seen our web site and offered for us to come and stay with them before we even came to the states," says Anita.

Finding a place to dump their holding tanks was "the hardest part;" sometimes they paid a fee at a normal RV campground. A portable battery-operated two-strand electric fence on a reel proved invaluable. "As soon as we'd stop somewhere, that's what we'd do. We'd get it out, put this little corral up, horses would go in and then they're sorted and then you can get on with everything else you have to do," says David who remembers protesting one Sunday, "This is harder than work!" Anita counters, "It was tough. There's a lot of things to think about, a lot harder than just taking a dog with you."

The horses coped quite well. In fact the experience bonded them and to this day Max and Roo are inseparable. Max's colic incident during the shake-down cruise taught them to keep something moving through the horses' gut all the time, a steady diet of hay wheat bran and soaked sugar beet pulp. But then, of course, you have to deal with the "exhaust."

This leads to a rather amusing discussion on the various regional preferences for the disposal of manure. Wet climates wanted them to compost the stuff, or just chuck it in their yard. Dry climates, they leave it where it fell. "In fact, in Oregon that was the weirdest one," says Anita. "Keep your poo, put it in a pile outside your stall, we use it as fiber with the sand in the arena." So they had to dry out the poo to use the fiber in it; it's so dry over there."

The trip took them up into Michigan, where they had a near miss with a tornado. They took a side trip without horses to Mackinac Island which operates exclusively on horsepower, which seems odd. They went on a lovely trail ride in the Hoosier National Forest in Indiana. They stayed on a pancake flat ranch east of Denver, and took a trail ride in



By the time they made it to a restored ghost town in Vya, Nevada, David and Anita were comfortable with new horses Roo (left) and Max (right). Before the trip started, David had little horseback riding experience.

the Rockies. They got lost in Salt Lake City and had to turn the 41-foot gooseneck trailer and 23-foot long truck around in a cul-de-sac in the dark. They crossed the Great Salt Desert at midday in June "80 miles totally straight across the salt flat." They were able to monitor the horses with a