

SEPTEMBER 07 TRIP REPORT

I was looking forward to the September trip since we had 13 repeat guests coming. With 13 I know exactly which horses to put them on. They know where we are going so I don't worry about losing them and I know that they will be dressed to handle any curve balls that Mother Nature throws at us and from time to time and Mother Nature has thrown us a curve ball or two.

SATURDAY: We left the valley around 7:00am wondering what we were going to get into once we reached the mountain because the mountain was all fogged in. You couldn't see the mountain. Once we got out on top though we were above the fog and it was clear. Naturally it stayed clear on top until after lunch when we wanted to go gather the horse cavy. Just a hunch, but I think you would have some upset people if you told them they had to walk this week because we couldn't find their taxi. I sent three cowboys out to find the horse string and when they came in about an hour later they were missing several due to the fog. I could think of 7 right off the top of my head. A couple of horses they had for a while, but when they got into the corral they could see that in the fog they had disappeared like ghosts.

All trips have some areas of concern and like all trips I was concerned about two guests in particular. These two foreigners had booked, and paid up but never returned the flight information. I knew they were flying into Sheridan but what day or when or where they were staying I didn't have a clue. Since they were from Norway it wasn't like I could just ring home and find out where they were. I was sure they would call me once they arrived in Sheridan. I called several motels checking for them but didn't get anything other than not here. Several of the repeat guests called in when they arrived and I mentioned to them that we were missing to Norwegian cow girls hoping that maybe someone would run into them at the Mint. I informed Dad of the situation so when he picked people up he asked if anyone had seen or run into these two. The good lord was looking after these two because one of our repeat guests Anna Wood spoke up and said she had seen their names in the guest registry at Kings Museum. The Norway address had caught her eye. Then it was just a matter of calling motels until they found them. I had decided they were terrorist sneaking in under the cover of the cattle drive. Is what they didn't understand was that calling ON-STAR wasn't going to get them directions to the cow camp.

SUNDAY: The skies were clear and the water was frozen but they were calling for a nice morning. I sent the cowboys back out to find the missing taxi's while Chris did the horsemanship clinic. About mid morning the skies went from Blue to Grey and it started snowing. By the time we broke for lunch people were chilled and ready for a hot meal. The cowboys had found the hidden taxi's and brought the rest of the brumbies in so that after lunch we finally got everyone on the horse they were supposed to be on. After warming up and eating we split 5 different directions looking for cattle. In the fog and snow we weren't sure what we would find or what we could see. It wasn't snowing hard but just enough to make visibility limited. Of course those types of conditions always lead to a white bag nomination and today was no exception. Kimberly managed to fall off her horse and she wasn't concerned about falling, off but she was very concerned

about her rebuttal and spent all afternoon thinking of one. I have to hand it to her, she gave a rebuttal fit for an elected official. She explained how she had been studying the snow from on top of her horse and it was truly beautiful and she wanted to see if it had the same effect on her from a different angle. Hans was nominated for enrolling in Ike Sankey's bull riding class. We were convinced that he enrolled in Ike Spankey's bull riding instead. You know, the one where the bulls wear pink lace!! Two Shaves got nominated for trying to help the cooks out by throwing the garbage on the fire but managed to miss the fire when he threw it. However, Camilla (one of the Norwegian terrorists) won the white bags for shutting herself on the wrong side of the fence when she closed the gate. She really didn't see where the problem was!! Just because you are on one side and your horse on the other doesn't really mean anything, that's how they do it over there I guess.

By the time we went to bed the storm had passed and it was clear and cold. The stars were truly bright.

MONDAY: We saddled up and rode out as everyone was anticipating a great day with clear skies and crisp air. I managed to burst everyone's bubble slightly because as we rode out I noticed two people that were riding each others horse. When we got out to the rode I announced that two people were on the wrong horses and would give anyone a pass that would fess up right then and there, but there was nothing but silence. I knew we had a couple solid nominations and weren't 5 minutes out of camp. I didn't say another word; I just turned my horse and rode off. Matter of fact I snickered about it all day! We spent the whole day working yearlings out of the cow herd and it got pretty wild a time or two but then we never said this was a trail ride. About mid day one of the guests, Curt Gabrick noticed that his horse was acting differently than he had the day before. At this point Curt starts looking around trying to figure out whose horse is he riding. It was great!! As the afternoon wears on Curt has finally figured out who is on his horse so he rides up to this other fella and says "How do you like my horse". Bill was really hoping that no one would ever figure it out and he would get away with it. As the nominations were announced around the fire that evening Bill had a better rebuttal so the winner of the bags that night was Curt Gabrick. Bill was sure that horse stealing was a hanging offense out west so we took Bills rope away from him just to be on the safe side.

TUESDAY: We had to break camp down today so it is hectic to say the least. Craig and I had to move the camp from the top of the mountain to the bottom of the mountain and set it up for later in the week. The cooks had to move to the Rock Cabin Park camp with the groceries, the packers had to pack the pack string and take it to Rock Cabin Park and the wranglers had to go gather the cattle that had been worked off yesterday and trail them to the Little Horn. I was busy packing the camp when one of the packers came over and said he wasn't sure which horses other than the mules to pack. I came over to pick out the pack horses and was horrified to see that the horse that one of our cooks was supposed to be riding was standing in the corral. My heart jumped, because Annie while game enough, isn't noted for her bronc stomping. A wave of fear went through me because there are a few horses in the string while gentle enough on the ground aren't ready for someone who isn't an experience horseman. The last thing I wanted was a scared or hurt cook. When I finally figured out which horse she was on a sigh of relief went over me. That particular horse had cinch sore but other than that was fine for her to ride. We weren't going to use him that week just because he was sore and not because of

the fact that he might be a high humper. This is always a long day and everyone was tired once they got into camp that night. The cowboys had hell getting through Elk Draw with the cattle just like we new they would. I was sure glad we had the 13 returnees. Craig and I rode into camp several hours after dark and decided to see if we couldn't scare the hell out of the people sitting around the campfire. It was pitch black outside the fire ring so we let out a scream and went charging our horses into the camp. What we didn't know was that head packer Roy had gone to bed and unrolled his bedroll in the middle of the park right between us and the ring of people around the fire. As we go charging by we missed him by a good 6 inches. I'm sure if Roy had been cold when we charged by he wasn't any longer. I didn't even know until the next day how close it had been, because Roy just went back to bed.

WEDNESDAY: As we saddled up to make our daily swing I noticed that a particular individual had managed to saddle the wrong horse. Now the interesting thing is that her husband had managed to saddle and ride the wrong horse two days earlier. Since the horse she had saddled was one that I didn't feel comfortable with her riding, I mentioned to her that she had the wrong horse and we needed to get the right one. When confronted with this she calmly replied that it was a sympathy saddling and she knew all along that it was the wrong horse. We split two directions today with Chris, me, Craig Mead, Bill and Anna Wood, Kimberly Michaelis, Bill Klenke, and the two Norwegian terrorist Camilla, and Kristen heading up the Kerns-Joslyn trail. Now the trail is just a little steep and rocky in a few places, however it is a relatively short trail and only 2 miles before we break out on top. There is one real bad rock and for safety reasons we make everyone get off and lead their horses. Once across the danger is over people can get back on. Everyone was on except Bill Wood. Now Anna was a gymnast when she was young so vaulting on a horse wasn't anything new to her but obviously Bill forgot to pay attention and missed that training session. As Bill swung on from the up hill side his momentum kept him right on going. Now swinging on from the up hill side it was probably 3 feet to the saddle. But from the saddle to the ground on the down hill side was probably 8 ft. As Bill tumbled off the down hill side he did have the presence of mind to scream **DISMOUNT!** I was afraid that Anna's scream was going to bring the rims down on us. Bill wasn't hurt and his second mount was done without any mishaps other than the sheepish look on Bills face and few pine needles hanging off his hat.

We gathered the Bear Trap country and picked up the cows and calves and trailed them to the Green Cabin where we dropped them for the night. As we were getting ready to leave the Little Horn face with the herd it was obvious that Camilla Sander wasn't feeling well at all so Craig Mead took off for camp with her. She had been feeling rather tough all week with an inner ear infection. As we had climbed higher in elevation that day she was feeling tougher and tougher. When we approached camp that night we could see the cattle that the other group of riders had gathered which made me feel greatly relieved because we were right on schedule for the next days trip down the canyon.

THURSDAY: We had planned on getting a real early start because the trip down the canyon the year before had been a battle all the way. We awoke to fog so thick you could only see about 30yds. I wasn't worried about losing guests in the fog but we might miss some of the cattle so we sat tight and had another cup of coffee. Once we had 4 pack horses packed the cooks and myself took off down the canyon. The fog lifted about that time so it was a go for everyone. The wranglers and guests gathered cattle and headed

down the canyon. Roy, Dan, Craig, Meg and Kimberly stayed in camp longer to tear down as much of the camp and put it away for the season. I really owe this group of people as they had a really long day due to the extra effort that they put in on my behalf. I owe all of you! Once the fog lifted it was an unbelievable day. It was crisp which was the perfect temperature to handle cattle. The yearlings basically ran down the canyon. The year before they got the drags to the Rocky Bottom at dark and this year they were there at 2:30 in the afternoon. The only tragedy of the day was a yearling that got pushed off the switch backs and rolled clear to the river and landed in the river. It took several people and two saddle horses with ropes to pull the heifer out of the river onto the bank. She wasn't able to get up but she was breathing, so they left her there hoping for the best. The funny thing is that as Stan approached he made his group of guests dismount and lead their horses down. As he said "they had to watch for falling yearlings" the yearling got pushed off the edge. Point made. The yearling did survive and came out of the ordeal with no side effects other than a fear of fish. Mario won the white bags that night for creating a divot on the Beaver Slide while leading his horse off the steep trail. When we arrived at the ranch Camilla still wasn't feeling well so we took her to the emergency room where they promptly hospitalized her.

FRIDAY: We had a real hard frost last night but the skies were bright and blue. Once we were saddled up we kicked the extra horses into the road with the cattle and started the 12 miles home. The yearlings didn't walk the same speed they had the day before but the drags did arrive at the ranch around 3:30pm so all in all it was another great day. At the banquet that evening we had some really great moments and I will relay a few of those. I was telling Mario about some of my experiences at cowcamp over the last 40 years. I told him the story about the time I saw a Mountain Lion get an Elk calf. He responded with "He once saw a caaaar get a raccoon". Mario you are completely delightful! We had several nominations for the white bags that night. Camilla won the white bags to take home with her. It was a great gesture from a great bunch of people since Camilla was still in the hospital. Those type of gestures is what makes me so love the cattle drives. People are just fantastic all over the world. The two big white bag nominations were for Heidi being a vegetarian and Anna for putting her overshoes on the wrong feet. No wonder she saddled the wrong horse. The belt buckle was won by Kristen and even though her English wasn't extremely great we did have Laurel Main who spoke Norwegian so she was able to help her in the translation!!! It was a great week and I really owe a whole bunch of people for all they put in during the week. Thank You and God Bless.