

2012 Clean Up Ride Trip Report

SEPT 26TH:

We have had the most incredibly mild fall I have ever seen. Usually on one of our fall trips we really get clobbered for at least one day. We hadn't even had any snow yet this year. We started this year's trip at the Double Rafter and rode up over the top of the Dry Fork ridge and dropped off into the Dry Fork to the Kerns Cow Camp. We planned on being in the Dry Fork 2 or 3 nights depending on what we found and where we needed to go with whatever it was we found. Trent took the guests and headed up the face with the idea of dropping off the Charlie Miller trail and then riding the high benches back towards Center Trail. There is so much country to ride you have to ride it in sections in order to get it covered. Trent and his group picked up a group of 8 head. When you find a group like this the question always goes through your mind, where can I drop them so that I will be able to find them in the morning? That is always a problem on an allotment of over 100,000 acres. You also must remember we have ridden this same country at least twice before so where did we miss them those two previous times? The cowboys decided that the best place to leave them was to trail them all the way back to the horse pasture and shut them in it for the night.

I had taken the Gator and everyone's luggage around and on into camp so that I could have dinner ready when people arrived that evening. It's so much fun being in camp and see people come riding in after the first day. They are tired and exhilarated all at the same time.

SEPT 27TH:

With the burning restrictions that were put in place by the Forest Service we weren't allowed to even burn the wood stove so all the cooking had to be done on the propane burners. On most mornings there is such a chill in the air that the warmth of a wood stove is very satisfying as you have your morning coffee, but it was so mild it really wasn't needed. After breakfast we headed two different directions. Trent, Stan and part of the group would gather the cattle dropped last night in the horse pasture and head towards Double Springs riding country and gathering any cattle that might be found and take them on off the mountain. It meant a long day for that group as it was 13 miles to where they would drop the cattle and then of course 13 miles back. Then when you figure all the extra side to side riding and looking I was sure they would have somewhere between 30-35 miles for the day. Yup, just another nose to tail trail ride!

I took my group and headed up through the Moose Hole to gather one cow and calf. The cow had a busted shoulder so was having a real hard time getting around. The hope was to take her down through a neighboring allotment. The problem was, with her injury if we had a deep snow she was done for, as she wouldn't be able to travel. Since a cow's instinct is to go down hill when the snow gets deep, we had to get her in an area that if she went down hill she was actually getting out of the mountain. It was an absolutely beautiful day. The cow's injury was actually improving from what I had seen a couple weeks earlier and she actually travelled pretty good. We actually got a couple miles with her and dropped her in an area where we were sure she would come out. (She actually was on the bottom waiting for us when we got off the mountain the end of the week.)

SEPT 28TH:

We closed up camp and headed to the Lake Creek camp the next camp today. I packed the luggage and groceries out and Trent and Stan took the guests and headed to the Lake Creek allotment which is about a 5 hour ride away. Once reaching Lake Creek the cowboys headed north to ride the Rubber Boot country. We had ridden it a week earlier and had found cattle there. We have no idea where they came from, since we had ridden it on the Sept Cattle Drive also. People got into camp around 6:00pm and I could tell they were tired and sore as they hit the alcohol just a little harder than

they had the day before. Since it was a Friday I had the evening off from cooking as my wife had come up from the valley to take over. She has a real flair for cooking that I don't have. My solution is "Have another drink, then we will eat".

SEPT 29TH:

Brendon arrived before breakfast to give us an extra hand with the day. Today was probably the biggest day of the week. We were going to gather the whole herd, work the yearlings off and then trail them to the Little Horn. Things got complicated as we found a sick calf that needed to be hauled off the mountain. He had altitude sickness and was extremely sick. The only chance he had was to get him to a lower elevation. The cowboys dropped him in Lick Creek and once we had the cattle gathered, Brendon and I took the trailer over and loaded he and his mom, and off the mountain I went with the sick pair. Brendon headed on back to help with the working of the herd. (the sick calf did not make it, as he was dead when we arrived home the end of the week). The rest of the cowboys cut the herd and trailed the yearlings on into the Little Horn. By the time people got back to camp they were dragging. I always know people are having a good time when they come in dragging. When they are dragging, it means they aren't going to miss out on one single moment of the experience. Since almost everyone on the trip was a repeat person, you don't need to have any sympathy for them, they all knew what they signed up for! Not that I have ever been accused of being sympathetic or sugar coating anything about the trip.

SEPT 30TH:

Everyone headed out to do almost a repeat of the day before. We were going to again gather the whole herd and work out any additional yearlings, doctor any sick calves and then kick the cow herd into the Little Horn drainage. I'm not real sure, it must have been because it was Sunday, but to a couple of Georgia cowboys doing a repeat of the day before meant we were going to push them a different direction than we had the day before. The cattle they gathered were more than willing to walk the direction the Georgia cowboys wanted, it was just the wrong direction. This of course created a fair amount of confusion with the calves. When you push cattle from two directions to the center, then push all of them a different direction you really unmother all the calves. This of course leads to a great deal of energy use for your horse as you are trying to keep the herd together. However, with the skill accumulated over the years, the cowboys (all 13 of us) did manage to get all of them to the top of the hill. It was nip and tuck several times. The real problem was that if the calves started running back down the hill there was no way you were going to outrun them to the bottom, and this of course means a do over which is not what we were after. Once we got to the top of the hill we just sat on the herd until we got cattle mothered up. It was so close to a complete do over it wasn't funny. With the sweat rolling off the horses and their lungs heaving, we just sat and held herd for about 20 minutes before we started doctoring any calves. Of course the horses were glad for the break. We roped and doctor'd about 6 calves, worked out an additional 13 yearlings and Trent and a couple guests headed to the Little Horn with the yearlings. We then layed the fence flat down on the ground, kicked the herd through into the Little Horn and put the fence back up. We arrived back into camp around 3:00pm which was the earliest we had been off our horses all week. The horses were happy for the reprieve as well as most of the guests. I was very happy because my wife was still there doing the cooking for the evening meal. However, she was headed back to the valley because as a teacher she had to be in the class room the following day. It was a very relaxing evening in camp. Just before dinner started Stan managed to get a poker game going, which went on till long after dark. Matter of fact as the night went on and players went out, those in the game kept putting on more and more clothing as the game was outside on the deck. It finally ended up with only two players left, but they stuck with it until there was only one winner. Trent was pretty happy as he ended up the big winner which was a hell of a lot more than a

cowboy makes in a day. It was a successful poker game as no one shot anyone else or hung someone for cheating! See we are civilized here in Wyoming!

OCT 1st:

Today was a big day for me as I had to move camp to the Little Horn and get set up and make dinner for everyone. The biggest headache was that no one had been in the Little Horn all summer so the camp needed a lot of cleaning to be presentable. All of the pots and pans that were going to be used needed to be washed first. Since that cabin is somewhere between 100 and 106 years old it isn't exactly mouse proof. There is going to be a great deal of improvement needed on that cabin next year because it has reached the point, if we don't, in a few years it will be just a pile of rotted logs. We are going to reroof it next year as well as replace the bottom log all the way around the cabin. This has created a great deal of anxiety for me because I am a cowboy, not a carpenter! I can rope it or ride it but cutting it, or nailing it isn't my thing. Then a miracle appeared out of nowhere- guest David Scheuer said he has been involved in lots of old barn restoration and this job didn't look that big. He said if I could get some labor lined up he would be glad to come out next summer and oversee the project. I swear his offer touched me to the bottom of my heart. Thank you! Thank You, Thank You!

Trent and the wild bunch rerode Dayton Gulch and Lick Creek and kicked through a few animals we had missed the day before, then headed to the Little Horn to pick up the yearlings and kick them down country to just above the Beaver Slide. They took a pack horse with them with the idea of swinging up into Rock Cabin Park and picking up the left over beer an pop from the September Cattle Drive. We hadn't had room on the pack animals when we came out in September to bring it with us. The tight wad in me didn't want to smash the cans with an ax and lose all the contents. The thought of a bunch of drunk worms was just more than I could stand. We had taken a pack horse instead of a mule just in case that they needed to pull into camp and have me saddle up and ride with them. Cooks don't ride mules!

Stan loaded up Gizmo while Trent went up the pipeline to see if he could get water for the water tank at Rock Cabin for the cattle. Once they had Gizmo loaded they started out of there headed back to the Little Horn. Things went real smooth and quiet for the first 200 yards. As the string of cowboys started off the steep hill out of Rock Cabin Park, Gizmo sort of trotted to keep up and that is when the cans started to bounce. Now the more the cans bounced, the higher Gizmo bounced. He went shooting by Stan who was leading him bucking and running with a wild eyed look. Beer cans were bouncing out of the panairds and busting open when hitting the ground. With white foam spraying in the air and a wild eyed horse charging through the middle of the group things began to happen real fast to everyone else. Many guests were getting a first hand look at a wild and wooly scene as horses ran, jumped and bucked to get out of the way. Gizmo running and bucking blind charged into David Newburg whose horse had seen enough and decided it was time to get rid of his rider. David hit the ground with a thud coming down on his side. Luckily he wasn't hurt but he did have a great story to tell the grandkids when he got home. David was a little sore when he rode into camp that evening and most evenings he was one of the last one to go to bed. Tonight he was the first. Nothing like a few ibuprofen and 3 fingers of whiskey to make one sleep like a baby! However, the next morning he said he felt better than he anticipated that he would and he slept better than he thought he would.

OCT 2ND:

Today it is down the canyon with the herd. The cowboys left right after breakfast and I closed up camp. The plan was that I would meet everyone in the valley at the Rafter. Seeing as I had everyone's luggage I knew no one was going anywhere until I got there. The feeling of power I had must equal the feeling Obama has every day. Do you know what it's like to have everyone's clean underwear and know they would do most anything to get them back. That and the presidency, it just doesn't get any better! The cowboys had a slow day down the canyon as the cattle could see no reason to head to the valley with the temperatures in the 70's and no feel of fall or winter in the air. I pulled into the yard

at the ranch and unloaded the stuff on the lawn so that people could pick through it and get their own stuff. Some were headed to Sheridan for the night while others were hitting the road to get some miles behind them before starting the real trek home. We decided to all meet in Sheridan for dinner that evening. As the last person pulled out of the yard and headed out I surveyed all the stuff left lying on the yard and figured I now know how a kindergarten teacher must feel all the time. There were several unclaimed items still lying on the ground. That generally speaks to how tired people are when they reach that point of the trip. I honestly find it amusing, they go away completely exhausted and bleary eyed and then sign up the next day for next years trip! Thanks to all of you for enhancing my life!

PS.

The next day when we trailed the cattle home after the hot week, it snowed on us most of the way home. The ground was so warm that it melted right away but we did wear our slickers all day. Trent and I went back up the mountain the following day and there was just barely a dusting of snow at Lake Creek and we were still kicking up dust under the snow. My guess is that we probably had close to a ½ inch of moisture along the face of the mountain out of that little snow storm.