

## 2012 SEPT CATTLE DRIVE TRIP REPORT

### **SATURDAY SEPT 8<sup>TH</sup>:**

We picked the guests up in Sheridan and unlike last year's trip we were able to transport all the guest directly to camp without the bus breaking down and spraying antifreeze all over someone's saddle. My favorite part of that day is stepping on the bus once it arrives, and looking at everyone's expressions. You have the repeat people who are excited and glad to be back, the people who are thinking, I can't believe I let so and so talk me into this, the people who are thinking, I just can't wait to get off this bus and get my horse and go chase something, the people who are excited and very apprehensive at the same time, and then those that have needed a potty stop for the last 30 minutes. Of course those are the easy ones to spot. They certainly aren't wiggling around in the seat with a pasted on smile just for the fun of it.

One of the other enjoyable moments is that with the email's flying back and forth there is always someone you are wondering about before they even get off the bus. Of course at this point in time you don't even know which one that is. About a month before this trip started I had received the registration form and she had made the comment that now that she had sent in her registration she assumed she would get a horse to ride. I of course being the straight forward, dull truthful one told her we didn't have a horse but did have a donkey! She responded that she wanted a free moving horse that was willing to go. I responded with it's name was Ehore! At that point, realization hit her that she was paid up in full, but I still had transportation authority during the week. This of course made her very nervous so she refused to answer any more of my emails. I of course, being the dull boring one was really looking forward to meeting this gal from Omaha. When I stepped on the bus I mentioned a few camp details before allowing anyone to get off the bus. I of course asked who was riding Ehore this week. She barely raised her hand. I of course, being the dull boring one, was really enjoying this as she didn't know if she was in trouble with the cow boss or not. The other thing that I noticed real quick while on the bus was that one of the guests had a real nice felt hat with only one problem- it was white! Now there is nothing wrong with a white hat other than we are in a drought and had a tremendous amount of dust as a result of that. I knew what color the hat would be by the time we finished the week and it wasn't going to be WHITE!

The other real noticeable guest was one sitting with a grin from ear to ear. She wasn't squirming so it wasn't a pasted on grin that was saying "quick I need off this bus". The grin was so big and wide I was sure that jaw cramping would be taking place at any time. Turns out she was just that excited to be here! It was definitely a Cheshire cat grin.

Once off the bus with everyone set up in their tents and trips to the privy out of the way we started orientation. Now the fun part of orientation is the fact that the bus has left by now and they are yours for a full week!

### **SUNDAY SEPT 9<sup>TH</sup>:**

This year's trip had an entire different flavor than in the past. Chris was not able to make the first couple days of the trip so Trent had to take over Chris's duties and do the horsemanship clinic. This of course was a whole new burden for Trent. The saddling and unsaddling are the easy parts, it's the riding part that is the headache. One of the problems people have who have ridden from the time they were out of diapers is explaining to people how to do certain things. Which muscles to use etc etc. You do it and do it easily, but to explain it is another challenge. Trent must have done it just fine because we tallied everyone out at the end of the week. They all rode out on their horses the first day and all got off their horses the last day with no casualties in between.

That morning as the horses were jingled we had three horses duck off through the timber just as we were getting close to the corrals. These three horses belonged to Stan, Dave, and Diana. These three had just come up the mountain the day before and were strange horses to the bunch.

Consequently when 45 head of horses went ahead of them on into the corral, in their minds they were going to be fish bait as the three new horses. They decided they wanted no part of that so off they took headed south threw the timber behind the cabin. Trent took off after them. We don't know if they didn't see the fence because of the timber or what, but they hit the wire horse pasture fence going wide open. Trent didn't see them hit the fence as he was just far enough behind them to not to be able to see them through the timber, but he did hear the wire screech as it became taut and then snapped. Off up the ridge the three of them went. Trent charged up to the horse pasture gate, leaned off of horse, opened the gate and gave it a heave while spurring his horse on up the hill in hot pursuit. After about a half mile Trent was ahead of them and with his rope down turned the three horses around and brought them thundering down the road back, to the corrals. We assumed the adventure was over. Well it was for that day but we missed the byline that said "To be continued".

After lunch we broke up into different groups to start gathering some yearlings that were still in with the cows. The goal is ride through the cattle as you are out gathering and only take the animals you want and leave the animals you don't want. This is called Rawhiding. When I mentioned we were going to rawhide through the cattle and take only the yearlings, the blank looks on people faces made it obvious they had no idea what I was talking about. The other look said what the hell is a yearling. Now a yearling is really a teenager and both have about the same attitude and outlook on things. Sometimes a joy to be around and the next time you want to rope and choke them. To someone who has handled cattle, a yearling is as obvious as the difference between your thumb and little pinky. However to someone who has never been around cattle they can't tell the difference between a yearling, a calf or a cow. As I stated earlier, the trick is to just ride through and gather what you want. If people get to riding to fast and get too far ahead of one another when you get to the end of the pasture you have to stop and cut out all the extra cattle that came along with you. This is exactly what you are trying to avoid. There will be a few to cut out, but you are trying to save time by riding by those that you don't want. The way it started I was sure we were going to end up with the whole herd by the time we got to the other end of the pasture. However, I was wrong again and everyone did a fantastic job of working together and dropping what we didn't want. When we reached the other end of the pasture we only had a few to cut out. I couldn't have been more pleased with a bunch of greenhorns. They did an absolutely fantastic job that day! We trailed the yearlings on over and kicked them into the Lick Creek drainage where they would be gathered the next day.

#### **MONDAY SEPT 10<sup>TH</sup>:**

We kept in one of older horses for a jingle horse. Out of respect for his age and service we use him as a fill in horse now. We generally don't assign him to anyone and use him wherever he is needed. You can put a little kid on him or go out and rope the biggest cow. He has done it all and his only drawback is that like all of us old cowboys, the crashin's and bashin's finally take a toll and your just not capable of doing the things you once did. It doesn't mean the heart is any less willing or the desire is any less, it just means you can't do it with the grace you once did it. That is Scooter, quit or I can't, just isn't in the thought process. Trent was jingling on Scooter and those same three bone piles did exactly the same thing as the day before. They ducked off, went south around the cabin and into the timber patch hitting the wire fence again, tearing it down again and off up country they went. Trent was a little farther behind this time as it had taken a little longer to corral the remaining horse cavy. He saw the three horses going over the horizon, so up the dirt road he charged on Scooter. When Trent topped out on the horizon he had seen the horses go over, he could see them up country still running lights out. By now they were a good mile and half from camp and the horses were at least a quarter mile ahead of Trent. Trent slowed Scooter up some because about a half mile ahead of him was the next fence. Surely the horses would stop once they reached that next fence. Scooter with lather dripping off of him was side stepping and chomping at the bit. He was certain he could take them if Trent would just give him his head. Now the problem with an old horse is that to give him his head, in those types of terrain

settings is like driving a car at a high rate of speed with the nut off the end of your tie rod. The faster you go, just means at some point, the wreck is going to be bigger. Trent is not especially fond of big wrecks. Trent went on up the road at a slow lope. Just as he entered the next clearing he heard the sound of stretching wire and the twang of wire snapping. The three had run on through the next fence also. By this time, the decision you are facing is the three horses that just got away and the fact that everyone else back at camp is waiting for you to arrive back there. Unlike Bengahzi, cowboys won't go off and leave another cowboy who might be injured or laying underneath a horse somewhere. Trent made the correct call and turned Scooter around and headed back to camp. We were glad to see Trent arrive because we could then continue on with the day. The three missing horses were just part of typical things that happen on a ranch all the time. You continually adapt and flow everyday all day long. Engineer types don't make good ranchers. Stan, Dave and Diana spent the day looking for their three missing horses while the rest of us continued on with the day's plan. The days plan was to gather the cows and calves in Lake Creek and vaccinate all the calves. We were having a real outbreak of some sort of pneumonia in the calves. Trent and I had roped and doctored probably 50-70 calves so far and the vet felt the only way to head it off was to vaccinate the entire herd. We had already had about 6 die from it. You just can't find all of them soon enough to keep them all doctored. Of course vaccinating the herd is easier said than done. This meant catching each individual calf in a chute and giving them their shot. This particular inoculation is given nasally, 1 cc per nostril.

We gathered the upper half of the Lake Creek pasture and put all the cattle in the corral. We then worked the cows away from the calves and proceeded to push each calf into the chute to be vaccinated. Since we had to catch every calf it was the perfect time to do one other little procedure while we had them caught. Since these calves were young, while we had them caught we were going to rubber band all the bull calves. Very simply put you put a rubber band that is about as big around as a cheerio over the testicles, this cuts the blood supply off and in a few weeks, they fall off. This method is commonly used today because by cutting them with a knife you will end up losing a calf or two from shock. Rubber banding is more humane and bloodless. The job is easy to do as long as you can count to two! It's imperative you get both of them and all of them below the cheerio. If you don't they still fall off but you have part of a testicle which causes them to produce testosterone which makes them have male characteristics. Then when you sell the animal they discount the steer because he has the masculine traits of a bull. This doesn't affect the quality of the meat but does cause the meat to be darker in color. This is called a dark cutter. The homemaker is trained that the meat they buy must be bright red. Consequently they discount the value of the carcass because it is a deep red.

We gave all the guests that wanted too, the chance to be involved doing the different jobs provided they weren't in the corral where they could get run over by a cow on the panic. The evening before as I was explaining to the group how we would do things so as to minimize someone getting seriously hurt, 72 year old Dennis Alferman spoke up. This is how I would do it he explained, with a grin on from ear to ear. Dennis had always wanted to go on a cattle drive from the time he was a little kid. His son Brian had bought the two of them the trip has a Christmas present. A couple times during the week we had to help Dennis off his horse at the end of the day, but he rode every single day, all day long. As he explained, this was a once in a life time trip and he wasn't going to miss anything. Consequently I started calling him the cow boss!

One of our many time repeat guests wanted to learn how to run the rubber bander, to put the cheerios on the calves. We showed him the technique and because he could count to two, he was qualified to do the job. We didn't anticipate how much he would enjoy it! We called him the Mad Nutter the rest of the week. By day two of this, he was teaching other guests who could count to two the art of rubber banding. However, it gave me grave concern to see how much some of the women were enjoying the job. I want to apologize to all you husbands out there. A bit of caution: **DO NOT TAKE FOR GRANTED WHAT YOUR WIFE COULD DO WITH A RUBBER BANDER OR THAT WHAT SHE LEARNED IS TRIVIAL!**

The guests who didn't stay at the corrals to help vaccinate the calves went with Trent and Chris to start gathering the Bear Trap country where most of the yearlings were supposed to be. After we finished vaccinating the cows and calves we kicked them into the Lick Creek pasture just as Chris and his group of guest showed up with the extra horse string out of Bear Trap. We were short a few horses out of this bunch, so Trent had stayed to look for them and he would show up at camp later that evening. When I talked to Chris it was disappointing to find out they didn't find anywhere near the cattle they were looking for that day in Bear Trap. Stan had also caught up with us to report they had spent the day looking for the 3 missing horses and had not found them. This meant we had to change plans again for the next day. However, a couple bow hunters had seen them that day and given us a rough description of where they had seen them. This at least gave us somewhere to look. As the guest rode in that evening I noticed Lisbeth still had on that Cheshire Cat grin. She had it on when she arrived and was still wearing it.

#### **TUESDAY SEPT 11<sup>TH</sup>:**

We gathered all of Lake Creek today and corralled the remaining cattle. We did a repeat of the previous day of working the cows away from the calves and catching each individual calf and giving it a shot. The shot consisted of giving 1cc up each nostril. We had been doctoring and treating lots of sick calves all summer long for a pneumonia type ailment. We also administered 10cc subcutaneously of LA 200. LA 200 is a long lasting antibiotic and not a night club in Las Angeles. It was the same old thing as the day before. The Mad Nutter would put on the cheerio, followed by a fiendish laugh and grin as he would look forward to the next one. We did finish up the day sooner than I anticipated and were done around 3:30 with the herd. We then kicked them on into Lick Creek. As we trailed the cattle on to Lick Creek one of our new guests, Brian Alferman bailed off his horse several different times to out run a cow in the timber and turn her in the direction we wanted her to go. Many times you can't outrun a cow in the timber on a horse, you just can't get around or under the branches quick enough to keep up with her. Now jumping off your horse is the sign of a top hand. The thing that made Brian's assault on the cows so amazing was that he would jump off his horse, run about 10 feet, stop, look back at his horse, point his arm at his horse and go click click. Then off he would turn and sprint through the timber after the cow. Once getting the cow back in the herd he would run back up to his horse, stop about 10 feet away, point his arm at the horse again and go click click. Then jump on his horse and off they would go. This of course caught the attention of one of the crew members who asked him "What the hell are you doing". Brian calmly replied he was locking and unlocking his horse. Made sense to me!

#### **WEDNESDAY SEPT 12<sup>TH</sup>:**

I kept telling Stan, Dave and Diana not to worry, their horses would show up. They had plenty of feed, water and the weather was very warm and dry. Stan believed me but Dave and Diana didn't. The big problem with these types of situations is that the three horses had never really been up here so they didn't have any idea which way to go to find anything. My native horses are very predictable as to which way they will go during these types of things. They know the country and will head certain directions. Dave had notified the Forest Service, the Fish and Game and the people at Bear Lodge to be on the lookout for 3 lost horses. He had also notified the Coast Guard, the Border Patrol, Doppler weather service, and a Delta team stationed in Rapid City. I have 42 years of experience dealing with types of things, I know what I'm talking about. We took all the guests and headed to Bear Trap after breakfast to find the missing yearlings that were unaccounted for from the day before. Dave, Stan and Diana went back to Lake Creek and spent another day looking for their three horses. As things go, they came up empty handed again. Those of us who had gone back to Bear Trap picked up about 70 head of yearlings that had been missed the day before. As I have said before there is a lot of country to ride and look for a bunch of missing teenagers.

Amy was back in the saddle again today. She had taken a little time off the day before as she had ended up with some major blisters, you guessed it, on the insides of her knees. However, with the

help of medical grey (duct tape) she was able to ride comfortably again. If you call it medical grey it sounds like you have really treated something .

Most of us headed to Sardine Lake today to look for more cattle. When we reached Fossil tank draw, I gave everyone the chance to decide which circle they wanted to go on. Trent was going to go down into the bottom of Bear Trap and then back up Cooking Pot draw, catch the Bull Elk Ridge trail and then head the 5 miles down to Bull Elk Park. They had a very long way to ride that day. Trent was planning on going at a trot since they were going to cover about 25 miles that day. I asked for volunteers to go with Trent. Only one guest, George Mattern said he would go. Trent left at a trot and the only think I could think of was, poor George.

#### **THURSDAY SEPT 13<sup>TH</sup>:**

Today is a big day as we move camp to the Little Horn. We weren't able to follow our standard plans for the Sept trip because of having to spend two days vaccinating calves. By spending two days vaccinating calves we had spent one extra night at Lake Creek. This meant that we would only be spending one night in the Little Horn. We broke the camp down and pack it all up. Since we hadn't found the three lost horses yet Dave, Diana, and Stan didn't go with us to the Little Horn as they felt they needed to continue to look for their horses. I just shrugged and continued on. The three of them did stay at camp that morning and helped us pack the mules and put camp away. We headed to the Little Horn around 11:00am. The three of them figured they would go to Bear Lodge and check to see if any messages had come in so they might know where to look next. As they drove to Bear Lodge, about 2 miles east of the Lake Creek camp they found the 3 horses standing on the road. Damn I hate it when I'm right! I knew they would show, it was just a matter of being patient. They caught the three horses, loaded them in the trailer and Dave and Diana said they were headed back to South Dakota and the hell with the Double Rafter. Stan didn't have a bed roll in the Little Horn so he had no choice but to go off the mountain with them. They dropped Stan and his horse off in Story.

Trent and Chris took all the guests and did a rawhide through the cow herd and then gathered the yearlings who had been dropped at the Green Cabin the day before. The tally that had been found the day before showed 156 head out of the 175 that had been put on the mountain. Of course when they came through today they only picked up just a little over half of that. Approximately 70 of them had disappeared in the night. Remember, they are teenagers and don't need a reason to go somewhere, just someone to take off walking and a bunch will fall right in behind and just go. Absolutely clueless! As the cowboys came down country today they came through an area we call the swamp. Maybe we should rename it and call it the bog. Seems every trip, regardless of caution, some guest will always ride their horse into the bog and down they both go. The reason it is so treacherous is that it looks just like normal sod until you ride into it. Is what the experienced people notice and others don't is that the grass will not have been grazed by cows in the real boggy areas. That's one of the real simple signs cowboys always look for in a swampy area. I can promise if a cow won't go into it, you really don't want your horse in it. This Alabama cowboy sure had a surprise when his horse goes down clear to his belly. Barry pulls the emergency switch and jumps. You are actually better off to stay on your horse because generally when you come off you land right beside or just in front of them. The horse then figures he can use you as something solid to stand on while getting himself out of the bog. This of course is not good for the cowboy, cowboys don't make good rocks! However, Barry managed to avoid that scenario but did have a fair amount of liquid mountain dirt on him.

#### **FRIDAY SEPT 14<sup>TH</sup>:**

We had to break camp again today and down the canyon with the yearlings. The logistics of this day are always challenging. I went with the pack crew and what was the big challenge for us was to make sure we got all the luggage off the mountain and to the motel for the last nights banquet before the guests arrived. Nothing like showing up to the motel the very last night, not having showered for a week and then not having any clean clothes or toiletries there when you arrive. It was my job to make

sure that didn't happen. I arrived at the Holiday Inn, unloaded all the luggage by the front door and then had to sit and watch everything. Everyone's valuables, passports etc. etc. were in their luggage somewhere and I sure didn't want to have anything missing. I also had a weeks worth of trail dust on and as I was sitting there someone came by and took one look at me and said "If you would put out a cup I am sure people would assume you are homeless and you could make some money". It wasn't until I got to my room a couple hours later that I really realized how dirty I really was. Once people arrived and picked up their luggage I was able to go shower myself. People arrived over a 30 minute time span. Seems one group had stopped at the Parkman Bar for a cold one before coming to town. Their designated driver (dad) had them all under control when they arrived. Stan pulled up with a load of people also. Since Stan wasn't able to help much during the week he did what good hands do, they look for a way to help. He had driven to the Rocky Bottom with his vehicle to get a load of guests and haul them to Sheridan.

That night at the banquet it came to my attention that the swamp swimmer, Barry didn't have any socks on. I know lots of people don't wear socks but cowboys aren't in that group. Barry explained he just didn't have any clean ones left. Once he had showered and cleaned up he said there was no way he was putting on dirty socks. While we all agreed with him, we weren't about to let him know that. It just wouldn't be the Cowboy Way! We had a great success as far as the trip went, the weather was great, the people even better and when we trailed the yearling home the next day we tallied 118 through the gate. This meant we had missed 38 yearlings that we had two days earlier and were only short 57 head from the total. I guess we still had a few rides left to do on the mountain looking for yearlings plus getting all the cows gathered. Thanks so much for a great trip people and being part of our lives.