

AUG BEEF ROUNDUP TRIP REPORT 2011

AUGUST 13, 2011:

It seems like the most common theme that seems to pop anymore at the start of a trip, is that somewhere, somehow, the airlines will not make a connection and someone will not make it into Sheridan in time to be picked up the first day. It happened again on this trip. The airlines are 3 out of 3 so far this summer. Gerry McDonnell and her daughter Shannon Balmer were delayed in Chicago, so missed their connecting flight from Denver to Billings. So they called and said they would catch the first flight out of Denver in the morning, so we put plan F into play. I called Dad and he said he would be glad to pick them up. However, as we were picking people up the next morning, I got a call saying they had decided to rent a car that night and drive part way, so would be into Sheridan earlier than anticipated, but not soon enough to catch the bus. Either way was fine, as it still left Plan F in play, Dad was still going to meet them and bring them up the mountain. We had plans to have someone with 2 horses and a pack animal meet them at the head of the Dry Fork and they would ride on down to camp. This would get them and their luggage into camp so that we would all go to bed than night on the same plan.

On the way up the mountain we swung into Bear Lodge to pick up one guest who had driven up from Texas and brought his own horse. Since we pulled into Bear Lodge we decided to let people off the bus for a potty stop. Once back on the bus we headed to the Lake Creek camp which was 30 minutes from Bear Lodge, where we would meet Chris and he would do the horsemanship clinic. We were then going to ride the 5 hours to the Dry Fork Cow camp. The plan was to gather the cattle that had been missed on the July Beef Roundup. We anticipated somewhere in the neighborhood of 150 head. We had lunches packed for people and once the horsemanship clinic was finished we headed to the Dry Fork. We rode into camp around 6:00pm just in time for dinner. I was smiling as I rode in because Plan F had worked and Gerry and Shannon were there waiting for us. This meant the first day had been a huge success, everyone still alive and kicking. That evening after dinner, we did have our first mishap of the week. Bobby Kuykendall was wrestling with Wyatt Main and both went down in a pile. Bobby heard something pop and her week was over. She spent the night and the next day we ran her to the valley to get a medical opinion. The doctor assumed a torn ACL.

The winner of the esteemed White Bags that night was Karen Howes. As we have stated before, anything goes, including anything that might have gone wrong on the trip out. Seems while traveling out here with her Aunt, she reached into her purse to pay for a meal and as she pulled her billfold out, she also pulled a pair of lace panties out of her purse and they went flying across the room. Of course the tough question then becomes, do I retrieve them or act like I don't know who they belong to and walk off? The other nominee for the White Bags that evening was repeat guest Diane Bricco (aka captain of the Michigan synchronized swim team). As we rode in the first night, there is one real steep hill we have to come down about a half mile from camp. Diane's saddle slid clear forward and if Diane hadn't had Geronimo's tail pulled up over her shoulder she would have slid right over the top of his ears. Once we reached the bottom I asked Diane why she hadn't SCREAMED out, or stepped off and she said she was too scared to move or scream. Of course I found this very humorous. It's not very often that Diane is SPEECHLESS and you certainly want to take advantage of it when it happens!!

AUGUST 14TH:

We headed west the next morning to start gathering cattle, as the plan was a reride of the Double Springs Pasture and then gather the Moose Hole pasture, then throw everything into the horse pasture for the night, so we could head out early with the herd. Sounds pretty simple, other than you must remember we were planning on gathering an area that day of around 10,000 acres, of very rough timbered country. We did find the first bunch of cattle about 2 miles west of the Cow camp. We split there and I sent Taylor on west with one group of people and Trent and I took the remaining group up

into some rather difficult country to gather. It was the country where they had seen cattle the week before but hadn't had time to gather them on the July Beef Roundup. Once we climbed to the high park we sat and had lunch. You can see for a long long ways up there, however, we didn't find any cattle in that high park. Lots of sign that cattle had been there, but according to the sign, I felt like the cattle had moved out about a week earlier. I was sure the cattle had drifted East on the high timbered bench above the Moose Hole and we had plans on riding that country later that day. It is a great ride in that it has all kinds of challenges as you go. We were riding through the heavy timber, one behind the other, on a random game trail following old cow sign. The image that cattle always stay in the lush green meadows just isn't the truth. We were riding through some pretty heavy timber when I looked below me, and saw the head of a couple yearlings. You wouldn't expect to find cattle somewhere that there was very little to eat, but there they were. A bunch of us swung down to get below them as we didn't want them running downhill, or we weren't going to be able to keep up with them. We found about a dozen yearlings who were surrounded by miles of timber and they were not concerned in the least. They were probably browsing on the same thing the Elk do and completely enjoying it. When we finally broke out into the Pass we continued to gather cattle, as we ended up picking up about 60 head of cattle in our swing. We kicked them into the horse pasture and found that Taylor's group had picked up about 50 head. The amazing thing is that the group on the July Beef Roundup were positive that we couldn't have missed about 150 head of cattle, yet we had gathered 110 on the first circle on the Aug Beef Roundup riding the same country we had ridden on the July Beef Roundup. We threw the cattle into the horse pasture and I spent a restless night, wondering if the cattle would still be in the horse pasture come daylight. The White Bag nominations held again true to form. It seems it is always the same people who continually win them or get nominated. Again tonight it was an exact repeat of the night before. It was Karen Howes and Diane Bricco. Karen Howes was walking across the little bridge that crosses the creek in front of the cabin when she slipped and slid off the bridge into the water. The water is not on the hot side and people generally only stay in for a few seconds, if that. As Karen was trying to get enough air into her lungs to scream, her Aunt said "Wait just a minute and let me get my camera". Diane who was also just walking by said to her Aunt "Push her back in if you would, while I go get my camera". At least Diane didn't have to take the White Bags off her saddle to give to someone else that night.

AUGUST 15TH:

The cattle stayed in the horse pasture that night and off we went with the herd the next morning. It was a bright sunny day, but they were calling for late afternoon showers, so it appeared the weather was in our favor. It's just a shade under 14 miles from the Dry Fork Camp to Lake Creek. We had about 110 head of cattle and one little baby calf about 10 days old, that just refused to be left behind, but his pace was slow, so it slowed up the whole herd. We had lunch at lunch break park to rest the cattle and horses. I did manage to lay down in the grass and catch a power nap. As we were approaching the 11 mile mark, it became obvious to us that somewhere between here and Lunch Break park we had missed a calf. His mom was running around bawling and we sat on the herd while she wandered to and fro looking for junior. When it became obvious he wasn't with us, the only thing we could do was cut her back and let her go find him. We would have to gather them up another day. At about that same time, we could start to see big black thunderheads building off the western horizon and they were getting blacker by the minute. As the herd approached the 12 mile mark, we could see a white wall of water coming out of the sky moving towards us. It was one of those you didn't wait and see how hard it was going to rain before putting your slicker on, you were putting it on because if you waited until it hit, you were going to be soaked by the time you had it on. The idea of a slicker is to shed the water not hold it in. The wind roared in ahead of the storm with a white wall of hail and rain coming right behind it. It roared in so hard that cattle and horses alike, swung their butts around into the

onslaught of rain and just stood there taking the beating. Like most mountain storms they generally come in very fast and furious, but don't last very long. After several minutes it had let up enough that we could start to push cattle the direction we were headed. There was no way you were going to get that herd moving into the storm when it hits that strong. You just have to get Cowboy tough and sit there and take it. I'm sure that's about the time some people are saying "What the hell did I sign up for"? It continued to rain and mist as we pushed the cattle off the now slick Kane Creek Trail. We had people ride down the trail with just their toes in the stirrups just in case a horse went down. However, everyone made it to the bottom and that was where we dropped the cattle. The storm lifted, and we rode the 40 minutes on into camp. We unsaddled, turned our horses loose in the horse pasture and headed to the mess tent, to get a fire roaring in the barrel stove. Just as we finished turning horses loose, it started to rain again and rained pretty steady for the next couple hours, then lifted and we had clear skies by the time we went to bed. We did have a new nominee for the White Bags that evening. Seems Jeane Keyasko had fed her horse her ham sandwich for lunch, which I guess he rather enjoyed. From that point on we called Jeane "Cannibal". It actually fit! Now I'm sure some of you are wondering how Diane managed to NOT get nominated for the White Bags again this evening. You must remember, a Swim Team Captain is at home in the water!

AUGUST 16TH:

After breakfast we headed into lower Lake Creek where we had dropped the herd the day before. We rawhided through the cattle and picked up any sick cattle that needed doctoring or any slick calves that needed branding. Once we had the cattle gathered, we doctored those that needed doctoring and turned them loose. We then had an old style branding. We had several of the guests hold the herd out in the open and then we rode into the herd and roped some of the slick calves and dragged them bawling to the fire, where we branded them and then turned them loose to go back and find mom. People really enjoyed seeing an old style branding. On the way back to camp we stopped and had a group photo taken beside one of the left over snow banks. We rode our horses beneath one of the snow banks above the cabin and using it as a back drop, took several pictures. Anyone who has one of these photo's I would really love to have one. Anyway, the interesting thing to me, was that the snow in that drift was still about 8 feet deep. That particular snow bank always melts out every summer but there is so much snow in it, I'm not sure it will this year. You have to remember it can snow every month of the year up there.

Repeat Guest Dick Shiloh won the White Bags that evening for making the comment, "Wouldn't it be nice if people could clean their noses like a cow does". You see a cow's tongue is long enough, that they can stick it up each nostril to get the job done. They can't hold a Kleenex so how else are they going to do it? Dick also has one other distinction with our operation. Dick is a 3 time repeat guest and has the record tied for the oldest participant in our drives. Dick is 74 years old. The other person who he is tied with has only come once, but says he is coming back when he is 84 to hold the record. I know I certainly enjoy Dick and hope we see him again.

AUGUST 17TH:

Well the last day of the August Beef Roundup had beautiful blue skies. So after Breakfast we headed South from camp and gathered all the cattle we could find and trailed them to the very bottom of Lake Creek. Cattle are no different than humans in what they like to eat. Some like certain things more than others and that is where the cattle will locate and overgraze an area. One of the things we do on a daily basis all summer long, is move cattle from an area they prefer, into areas they don't prefer. This is what it takes to meet the standards set forth by the Forest Service. We are grazing public land and it is important that we take care of it. The tree huggers always paint us out to be rapist of the public lands. Most of the left leaning Media swallow it in stride and paint us out as dust bowl makers. Well

reality is, if we destroy the grasses by overgrazing, how do we make a living? We make a living converting grass protein into edible human protein. There is no other practical use for that grass. Nothing can eat it in the winter because it has 6 foot of snow on it, so it just rots. If a cow or sheep doesn't eat it, the only other option for it is photography and fuel for wildfires.

When we arrived back at camp we transported everyone back to Bear Lodge to have our last night festivities. We really had an enjoyable week and were so lucky to get to spend it with a very diverse group. I can't thank all of you enough for the successful week. Karen Howes won the drawing for the white bags to take them home. She now has somewhere to keep her black lace panties! Maria Lukowsky won the belt buckle in the Cowboy Trivia game and since she had won a buckle previously, she gave it to fellow guest, 17 year old Chelsea Keyasko. Thanks so much Maria.

THE COW BOSS

PS. Here is a little side note to the trip. You remember that Gerry McDonell and daughter Shannon Balmer had driven to Bear Lodge from Denver. Well they decided to leave real early the next morning since they had their own transportation. Well, they walked out of their room way before daylight and realized they had left the vehicle keys and room keys on the desk in their room, and of course it had locked behind them. As they are standing in the parking lot before anyone was stirring, Shannon looked up and noticed that the window into their room from the outside was open. The window next to their room was also open, so she was hoping that she could get into that room and out that window, she could then crawl along the overhang and get in the window to their room, retrieve the keys and hit the road and no one would know. When she was back in the lodge she bumped into one employee who was headed to the kitchen to get the day started. Shannon explained and they were more than happy to unlock their room.

About 10 days after the Aug Beef Roundup, Trent, Myself and Johnny made another swing into the Dry Fork and picked up an additional 60 head of cattle. I certainly felt very good about it. It just shows how difficult it is to get a good gather in rough country. It will get a little easier as time goes on and we get cattle who are used to going to Lake Creek from the Dry Fork.

