

JULY BEEF TRIP REPORT 2011

JULY 30TH:

The bus picked people up in Sheridan and transported them to the corner of the game pasture, where we had the horses tied and waiting to start the horsemanship clinic. We started this trip different than any other trip we had done in 18 years. The July Beef Roundup has always started on top of the mountain at the Lake Creek cow camp. We had so much snow last winter, that when we finished the July Cattle Drive, we had to ride off the mountain because there wasn't any grass in the high country because it was still under snow. Snow just doesn't have a lot of nutrition in it. We rode up onto the top of the TR Bench and Chris did the horsemanship clinic and it appeared that all was well as far as horse and rider went. If it wasn't correct we knew we would discover it by the time we got into the Kerns Cow camp in the Dry Fork. We anticipated about a 5 hour ride into camp. One of our repeat guests Derek Breslow had brought his dog with him on this trip. The dog travels with him while he is on tour, so gets along very well with people. I was a little hesitant about allowing him to bring his dog. It wasn't that I was worried about someone getting bit, it had more to do with an environment that the dog had never been exposed to in it's life. The day was a hot day and the first 4 hours into camp are all up hill. The horses were sweating and Bailey (the dog) was discovering that walking up the mountain was a little more challenging than walking from the dressing room to the stage and back. There is very little water that first couple 4 hours. We did cross one little spring after lunch and Bailey and our dogs went down a crack in the rim to the spring below the trail. There wasn't enough water for the dogs to get a good drink and cool off. It became very clear at that point that Bailey had Derek very well trained. All the dogs came back up onto the trail except Bailey. Derek said very sternly "Bailey Come"! He said this 3 or 4 times very sternly, then Derek walked down and carried Bailey back to the top. From there Bailey rode on the saddle with Derek. It was obvious that Bailey had attended Rin Tin Tin's class "Human Training for Dummies".

The biggest shocker of the day actually came after dinner that evening. We had 6 or 7 people who decided to use Yoga and stretch out after the day's ride. My hat is off to them. The only time I have ever been in that type of configuration was when some horse decided to see how hard he could plant me. Had I done the Yoga, I'm sure just like getting bucked off, getting back up would have been the challenge! The winner of the White Bags that evening was Roseanne for her not so graceful dismount before we were stopped for lunch.

JULY 31ST:

Since this is reality things happen that you can't plan on. One of those things was discovered this morning. We sent the wranglers out to jingle the horses and they discovered that both gates of the horse pasture were swung wide open and hung back. This really wasn't a big problem as we knew the horses were somewhere in the next pasture of 5000 acres. Obviously someone (probably a tree hugger) was irritated. We had just built a new horse pasture about a month previous. The tree worshippers were probably upset that now they had some gates to open and shut. It was obvious that it was a direct dig at us, because they had hung the gates open so that no horse could step in the wire and get injured. I at least appreciated that much concern. Since the gates had been left open we had cattle scattered from one end of the allotment to the other. It appeared we had plenty of cattle for our first push above the cabin in the Moose Hole. There weren't supposed to be any cattle in the Moose Hole pasture until after the July Beef Roundup. We headed to the top of the Moose Hole to start the days gather. Some of the country that we had to gather that morning is very very steep and rough. You always hope that there aren't cattle in those areas but that just doesn't happen. We had lots of yearlings scattered in the rough country above the cabin. You would find some and start down with them and then hear another

one ball somewhere above you, so off you would go climbing and cussing as you went. The plan was to gather that pasture and throw those cattle into the horse pasture so they would be ready to go the next day. The biggest problem we faced was that since the horse pasture gates had been opened the cattle had been grazing the horse pasture also, so we were a little short on feed in the horse pasture. The cattle spent all day walking the horse pasture looking for a way out to go back to the lush pastures they had just come out of. This of course left me nervous because I knew if they got out during the night the next day wasn't happening as far as destination went. I knew we had a very full day of trailing cattle the next day and was sure we wouldn't be back to camp until dinnertime. After we had the cattle gathered we doctored a few calves and went to camp. That evening around the fire we had several nominations for the white bags. The nominations for the day were Johnny Teng for going to the outhouse in the night and then coming back and not being able to find his tent. Glen Chocky got nominated for carrying so much camera equipment with him on his horse. He had a hell of a time getting his leg over the back of the saddle with all the equipment tied on. Then of course Josh Dean got nominated for hitting a high soprano note as he and his horse slid off of some of the real steep hills while gathering cattle. Riding a horse in very rough country is like the saying goes while flying "Any landing you walk away from is a good landing". It's the same with a horse. If you finish on top of the horse it's a good ride. Nothing like a drop in elevation of 15 feet in .03 seconds to make the soprano come out in anyone. However, the winner was the Lost Tent Seeker Johnny Teng!

MONDAY AUGUST 1ST:

At daylight I looked up and could see the cattle laying down so felt very relieved that we still had a herd. Once they got up they went to walking around the horse pasture again. We had the horses gathered and people were getting saddled, but it takes a while for a group that size to get saddled and ready to go. I was saddled so I rode out to the west fence line on the horse pasture so that I could keep an eye on the herd until everyone else was ready to ride. I was riding around the herd kicking cattle towards one spot when I looked up to see a group of cattle jump the fence and head west. I spurred my horse to the top of the hill and once there I could see cattle strung out ahead of me. There had been about 50 that had gone through the fence and were leaving. The challenge that presented itself was do I go sit in the hole in the fence and keep what cattle we had or do I go after the group that has already got out. If I did this that means that there would be more cattle joining them by the minute. But if I didn't go get the lead they might be completely gone by the time everyone else showed up to help me. Cattle can disappear in a hurry in that timber and sage brush. I decided to throw the gate open and give pursuit to the fast disappearing lead. I tossed the gate open wide and down the trail Buckshot and I charged. The cattle had about a half mile lead on me at that point. I knew if the cattle entered the next timber patch those particular cattle wouldn't be going to Lake Creek this week. The goal was to beat them to the next timber patch and then try and bring them back knowing that the 7th Calvary would be showing up shortly! I did beat the herd to the next timber patch but the cattle were trying to continue to go around me. I was charging up and down the mountain trying to stem the flow hoping that at any moment I was going to see help coming over the horizon. I manage to fight the herd back about ¼ mile when it became obvious that the best I was going to be able to hope for was to just hold my ground until the 7th arrived. We had been jumping sagebrush and charging up and down the hillsides for about 20 minutes, I could tell Buckshot was desperately needing to stop and get some air. He was still giving me everything, but everything wasn't going to be enough. If I had been Custer it would have been another massacre, because reinforcements didn't arrive for close to an hour. This of course delayed our whole day, but not the plan. This little episode probably cost us 2 hours on the day.

Since the trail we were taking was completely new to this bunch of cows I knew we were in for a tough day. The first half mile is very steep and was a real challenging push but we got it done. Once we reached the first park (We call it Mother Up Park) we sat on the cattle for about 20 minutes to let them

mother up. Then on up the next 8 miles of Lodge Pole pine patches and open meadows. Around mid day we arrived at what we call Lunch Break Park and allowed the cattle to rest up while we wolfed a sandwich. At this point, it became obvious we had a couple cows who hadn't brought their calves with them so they had to be cut out and headed back towards the Dry Fork. After lunch the clouds rolled in and we had a light drizzle set in. Some people wore their slickers while others didn't. It was a real blessing because it kept things nice and cool for the long day. After lunch we were trailing up Garland Gulch in the heavy fog and bumped into a flock of sheep bedded down. They are rather hard to see in the fog. Trent rode up to the herder and asked if we could move them and he was more than happy to oblige. We finished the day shortly thereafter, (2 hours) but we still had a long day, and we owed it all to the tree huggers leaving the gates open in the horse pasture. We rode into camp that night at 8:30pm. We had two nominations for the White Bags that evening. One was Hans for riding his horse out onto a flat rock on a hillside and all four legs of his horse going out from under him and both of them sliding down the hill. However, the winner was Colorado guest Laurie Dewey. She had been riding along and decided she was limber enough to ride under this low branch. As the horse went under it, it cleared the saddle horn by several inches. Laurie leaned way back onto the back of horse and was going to make it all the way through until she got to her boobs. There was a slight hang up that kept her from completely making it. Those of us who witnessed this event were still chuckling several hours later.

TUESDAY AUG 2ND:

Since people were exhausted from the previous days circle we had a later breakfast to allow people to sleep longer. However, I am always shocked at regardless how hard you torture them most of them are up bright and early. I will say the early mornings on the mountain are breath taking with the stillness in the air and the wildlife still stirring. It's not uncommon to see a bear travel across the open parks across from the cabin in the early morning. After breakfast and lunches being packed we caught the horses and headed to Double Springs to ride and gather that country. We felt we were short somewhere in the neighborhood of 150 head of cattle. I found it hard to believe that there could still be so many cattle around Double Springs but you never knew until you ride it. It's a 2 hour and 45 minute ride to Double Springs. We rode through a little bunch of cattle about a mile west of the horse pasture on the way down and that was all the cattle we saw. Once arriving at Double Springs and not finding any cattle the decision was made to ride on into the next pasture and go as far as Bear Springs. This was about another hours ride and Bear Springs sits in the middle of a big timber patch full of fir and spruce trees. When dad was a kid this area was just scattered trees but the tree encroachment in this area has been huge and just about chocked out most of the grass. Since our knowledgeable government has been fighting all these wild fires we no longer have Mother Nature's way of controlling tree growth. Consequently we are dealing with thousands of acres of trees where there used to be grass. Since the tree huggers have stopped logging there is absolutely no control on the spread of trees. When my father was a kid the Dry Fork allotment was a 400 head allotment. Today it is 185 head, mostly due to tree encroachment. Anyway back to the trip report. As we rode up to Bear Springs and people started to dismount and grab their lunches, I noticed 3 yearlings standing there staring at me. It was very obvious from the look in their eyes that they were saying "We are completely lost, but are teenagers, so we know best". I took one look and knew to lose sight of them while eating lunch, meant we weren't going to see them again or at least not this week. The 3 yearlings turned and walked off into the heavier trees just downhill from where people were sitting. I headed off through the trees to get below them and keep them from getting any farther down into the heavier, steeper hillside. I knew if they started running I wouldn't be able to keep up with them. They broke into a little clearing probably 20 ft by 20ft and here were two more yearlings standing there. I came out of the trees just below the 5 of them and just sat there for probably 15 minutes trying to decide what to do. The problem was that everyone had stepped off and were sitting under the trees, eating lunch, but the trail that I needed to take to head

back to Double Springs went right through the middle of the group. I felt my chances of getting 5 teenagers through the middle of the kitchen were probably pretty low. I knew if the 5 teenagers did anything fast I was beat. After 15 minutes, I just sort of bumped them back towards where everyone was eating lunch. After they had moved that direction about 20 feet I just sat and watched for another couple minutes. Then I bumped them again, that direction and stopped and waited. The trick was to bump them just enough to make them move but not bump them enough that they moved out of fear. It was the same philosophy as working with a horse on pressure and release. After 4 or 5 times of doing this, they understood that when I rode towards them slowly, if they started to move away from me, that I would stop pushing. After about 5 or 6 times of this, we were approaching the area where people were lounging in the shade. I was afraid to yell out to people to get out of the way, for fear that the people sitting on the grounds reaction, would be enough to cause the 5 teenagers to panic and take off running through the timber. Running was fine, as long as they ran the direction I need them to go. I didn't like my chances of getting them to run that direction. I hoped I could just bump the 5 teenagers along the edge of the trees and get by everyone. Things worked out just fine. Once by the group, we headed on up the trail. I wasn't about to lose sight of them so we kept going. It's funny how things play out, I didn't see the rest of the group until they rode into camp that evening. I kept the 5 walking and about an hour's ride from camp, started coming across little bunches of cattle. I would gather them and keep them walking in front of me as I swung up onto little benches and parks looking for more cattle. By the time I got back to the horse pasture I had picked up about 35 head of cattle which was a long way from 150, but I was happy none the less. Trent, Taylor and the others, started riding big circles on the way back but rode back into camp to report they hadn't gathered any cattle. The rode into camp around 6:30 that evening in good spirits but no cattle in front of them. When they were about 2 hours from camp on their way back, they looked up onto a real high bare bench right under the Dry Fork Rim and could see cattle. They estimated they could see about 20-30 head, however it was going to take the better part of an hour just to ride up there, then gather what they could find, then trail them back to camp. The decision Trent had to make was, if we do it, we get into camp after dark and since tomorrow was the last day we wouldn't be able to trail them out anyway, so they made the choice to leave them for the August Beef Roundup people to find. We at least knew the cattle were there.

That night around the fire there were a few nominations that were firsts for nominations for the White Bags. Pat Young got nominated for washing hands that morning with lemonade. I now know why she is so sweet! Alex Varelis got nominated for putting his lunch in someone else's saddle bags. Alex Varelis actually got nominated for a second thing and this one he won the white bags for. Alex got nominated by Trent for hitting on his wife. Yes, Trent's wife is very attractive but the Code of the West strictly forbids that kind of thing.

WEDNESDAY AUG 3RD:

We rode out after breakfast headed for Lake Creek, where we had dropped the cattle two days earlier. The snow had finally subsided enough that grass was plentiful and good. We had a nice easy ride back of about 6 hours. Since we had climbed from about 6500 feet to 9000 feet the green grass and flowers at the high elevation were rather stunning. It was like going to another world.

That night at the banquet Walter Tang won the belt buckle in our little game of cowboy trivia. Frances Bobbie won the drawing for the white bags and got to take them home. However, the nominations for the white bag that night were many. Maxine got nominated for getting on her horse to start the days ride and discovered she was still tied to the hitch rack. This happens more than you can imagine. Charlie Krebsner got nominated for putting his lunch accidentally in someone else's saddle bags. This also seems to happen on a regular basis. Hans Wang got nominated because he couldn't find his horse. The ironic thing on this, is that as he was asking people if they had seen his horse, the horse was tied to the hitch rack 2 feet in front of him. We think the problem was that he had always approached

his horse from the front all week and since there was a tail instead of a head, he was sure it couldn't be his horse. However, the winner of the White Bags was none other than Alex Varelis for the second night in a row. When we had ridden into camp the night before and had dinner, people started hitting the beer a little harder than they had all week. Of course everyone knows that large amounts of beer go right through a person. Since it was very dark out, a lot of people just go into the dark instead of making the trek up the hill to the outhouse. Well, Alex wandered off to get rid of his beer and stepped behind a tent to use as additional cover. Now the problem was that the tent owner happened to see Alex lifting his leg on the corner of his tent. Since the tent owner was a seasoned veteran to the cattle drives, his first thought was, Alex, you just won the white bags. I knew if I just kept it to myself until the following night, Alex was dead meat! Besides, it was Alice's side of the tent anyway! I have to say this was a really fun group that did a great job, as the week turned out to be a very challenging. Trailing cattle through new country and gathering strange cattle in new country is harder than it sounds. Until you do one of our trips you just can't imagine what the reality of it actually is! Thanks to all of you and know that every one of you are always welcome at our fire.

THE COW BOSS