

DOUBLE RAFTER NEWSLETTER #14 3-15-08

Well, it's been a while since our last letter so I'll bring you up to speed on some ranch happenings and what's new in this neck of the woods. This first story goes back to early October. I didn't have room for it in the Christmas letter; you know how I get to rambling.

Last October we were gathering cattle at the Rafter that had come off the mountain in the Clean Up Ride. There were about 160 head of cattle that we were going to trail the 8 miles to Bonanza Creek. Since most of this bunch was made up of the cows and calves, I wanted to get a bull put with them to start the cycle over. The bull was up on the Antenna Hill. We gathered the cattle out of the Pond Pasture and put them in the Triangle lot so that I could run up on the hill and grab Mr. Bull. Now Mr. Bull hears all of the cattle bellowing, so he figured he needed to come down and investigate. When I rode to the gate here is the bull waiting for me to let him in with all of the girls. Now the 5 Longhorns were with this group of cows and calves and sort of felt like maybe they were in charge. As I ride down to open the gate to let the bull in, one of the Longhorns comes running down, puffed up like the over inflated bag of leather that he is. Since he is a steer, he is just a tad short on testosterone, but his rack of horns still make him rather formidable. He bellowed at the bull, drew himself up to look as big and menacing as possible to the much smaller bull. (Butterscotch) the Longhorn glanced over his shoulder at the 4 other Longhorns as if to wink, and say "watch this". Now the bull had been bellowing at the steer from across the road for days and was all riled up and had no shortage of testosterone flowing through his veins. When Butterscotch looked over his shoulder to wink, the black bull hit him from the side as hard as he could. It knocked the steer sideways as the smaller bull was pushing for all he was worth. Butterscotch let out a frightened bawl. The other four Longhorns threw their heads in the air and came charging to the rescue. Now the Longhorn steer probably had 500 lbs on the bull, and once he got his feet straightened out he started to hook the bull with his horns. I'm not sure at what point Mr. Bull felt like Custer, but it didn't take him long to realize if he didn't outrun the mob he was going to get a royal butt kicking. Now I was off my horse shutting the gate, when this all took place. I closed the gate and went sprinting as fast as I could towards my horse. Now cowboys with 4 layers on have never really been known as sprinters. My horse snorted at me charging up on him, I grabbed the reins and swung on spinning my horse in the process. I glanced up to see the bull running towards the corrals as hard as he could go with 5 mad Longhorn steers in hot pursuit, bellowing at the top of their lungs. I over and undered Buddy for more speed, I knew if they all got into the corral, I wasn't going to have any corrals left. A plank corral means nothing to a frightened bull with five mad Longhorns after him. The bull went through the open gate with the Butterscotch about 15 feet behind him and the other 4 Longhorns about 30 feet behind him. It was going to be close as to whether I was going to beat them or not. Matter of fact it looked like a game of chicken was about to take place between me and 7,000 lbs of mad beef. I got to the gate first by about 5 feet, and as I skidded Buddy to a halt, I was greatly relieved to see the Longhorns pull up and head the other direction.

Now all I had to do was get Butterscotch away from the bull and all would be well. It was really amazing how fast Mr. Bull could run when he was being jabbed in the butt every time he slowed up. The gate at the north end of the arena was open which lead into the smaller pens behind the barn, and the bull noticed this as soon as he entered the south gate into the arena. Gasping for air, he was doing all he could to stay ahead of the sharp tips of Butterscotch. Now Butterscotch was still pissed and right behind, encouraging more speed from the bull. The bull ducked in the yellow gate and noticed the gate was open into the alley, and so that's where he headed. He went through the gate into the alley with the steer right behind! I'm sure that's about the time the bulls eyes got really big because the gates on the other end of the alley were all shut. There was no escape!! The alley is about 12 feet wide and 50 feet long with several gates at each end leading to different pens. It took the bull a couple seconds to reach the end of the alley, where he spun around to face his attacker head on. With the charging Longhorn coming, head down and the sharp tips of his threatening horns about 24 inches off the ground, the bull had a panic attack, and decided to try and run right at the steer, then try and sidestep and run by the steer. As the bull sidestepped and went by, Butterscotch turned sideways, stuck both horns under the bull, and with a flip of his head, flipped the 1300 lb bull onto his back, pinned up against the corral. Then Butterscotch proceeded to jab the bull in the belly with first one horn, then the other. With the bull on his back, with four legs pointed at the North Star, there was nothing the bull could do but bellow in panic. I jumped off my horse with my rope in hand, scrambled up the fence so that I was above the Longhorn Steer. There was no way I was playing hero and jumping in the middle of them. Swinging my rope and hollering, the steer looked up startled, and moved a few feet down the alley, so I jumped down and charged him, ready to scramble back up the fence to safety if needed. Once the steer was out of the alley I shut the gate and went to check the extent of the injuries to the bull. I was completely amazed because there were no visible wounds on the bull. I didn't know about internal injuries, because the bull was in no frame of mind to let me look. I put the steers out the gate and put them in the next pasture, brought the pairs into the arena and put the bull with them. Generally, when you put a fresh bull in with a bunch of cows he immediately becomes rather interested and starts checking cows. His pride had been so damaged that he just stood in the middle of the herd with his head down and didn't move or say anything. I hoped it was just his pride and not internal injuries and figured time would tell. He was pretty sore for a day or two but other than his pride, nothing was injured.

LEAD STEER NEWS: It was about the 10th-15th of January and we had about 3 weeks of cold and snow blow in. I had left the 5 Longhorns on the Barker place about 3 miles from home on the other side of the interstate. We had about 8 inches of snow but it hadn't been real cold yet. They were calling for a cold front blowing in with more snow. They were calling for below zero weather. The day it started the phone started ringing and we had three different neighbors call and say "Do you have any Longhorns"? When we answered yes, the next sentence was "Well they are on there way home". The fences weren't an obstacle as they just jumped them, and following one another nose to tail, they didn't look left or right, came under the interstate, right up the road and went right to the barn. They must have some sort of antenna in that rack of horns!!

RANCH NEWS:

We have had a lot of snow this winter, but also lots of wind and warm weather. We have had a low of 22 below and a high of 63. It made for lots of ice so we tried to do as little riding as possible. It was just flat treacherous! Most of the country is open, but the draws and the tops of the hills, all have large snow drifts on them. We are going to have a lot of run off this spring. One of our neighbors has recorded over 50 inches of snow this winter. There is a lot of snow on the mountain. It hasn't looked this good in about 15 years.

Trent graduated from UW in December and has been home on the ranch since then. It's really great to have him home. With the addition of 14 new horses this year we have been busy riding horses trying to get them pegged as to what they know and what problems need to be corrected. Every time we bring in new horses, it always amazes me at how good our existing string is. We have a great upside to the horses that were purchased; it's just going to take wet saddle blankets and miles to get them there. Out of the 14, it appears we only have one buckner and we are still undecided on his fate. I guess we could let Hans ride him since he is planning on going to bull riding school. The rest are really going to make great horses in time.

Trent and Daniel attended the World Horse Expo in Harrisburg PA. in February and had a great time. The crowds weren't as large as in the past, but then the weather was anything but nice so I'm sure that slowed the numbers some. They then went to DC for a few days and stayed with my brother in-law and toured the Nations headquarters. Of course they wore their Stetsons the whole time and had lots of strange looks. Not that they minded.

Trent and I purchased 500 yearlings in February and will take possession of them around the 1st of April. I was real encouraged about the market until the price of fuel started to skyrocket. I heard it mentioned that food will be up substantially and of course the whole reason is the price of freighting the food around this country and the cost of fuel to produce the food. The cost of propane for our house cost me \$1500 two years ago. This year it is going to be about \$2700. Trent and I purchased another little package of heifers at the Buffalo sale barn and Trent hauled them home in the trailer. It took two trips and because of the snowy, icy roads, we had to unload them a mile from the house and trail them in. As he unloaded the second load one of the yearlings came out of the trailer on the run and instead of following the other cattle took off by herself in another direction. As she hit the snow covered cattle guard going wide open she managed to break several bones, so we had no choice but to put her out of her misery and butcher her. We were out of hamburger anyway. However, that piece of beef is one expensive piece of hamburger.

We feel very lucky that everyone in the family and crew still have their health and is doing well. Randy and Pauline have moved into their new home and are loving it. Bob and Laurel Main have been extremely busy with the kids involved in basketball and hockey. I had their youngest on my basketball team and it was great fun. Their son Wyatt would come to basketball practice after school, and then go into Sheridan after basketball for hockey practice. Then have games Thursday through Saturday. We are hoping that their daughter Tianne will run the video camera this summer. Jerry and Kathy are doing fine and all is well on their ranch. John and Kathy Barker are doing great. John had shoulder surgery a couple of weeks ago and Stan is still selling vehicles.

He hasn't been in the saddle recently so I'm looking forward to getting him good and sore the first time out. Krayton is running for reelection to the House in Montana. Brendon and Erin are doing fine but very busy with school. Chelsie is still in law school and Tyler is still at the University of Wyoming. Taylor has been busy with Golf in the fall, basketball in the winter, and is doing Track this spring. Since he is a distance runner we can always take his horse away from him if we need another horse. Mom and Dad are doing great and are still very involved in all aspects of our lives. Fortunately!!

POLITICAL VIEWS:

You know there is know way that I can write a newsletter and not mention a few political points of cowboy views. With a 14% approval rating for the Senate it sure is encouraging that the 3 top candidates for the Presidency are all from the Senate. I have never felt my livelihood more threatened than I think it will be the next 4 years.

I hold the entire body of elected federal officials responsible for the situation we are currently in. The high price of fuel is what is driving this whole problem. Since our spineless elected officials have been more interested in getting reelected than doing what is needed for the country we are headed for some very unstable times. It's not the big oil companies that the politicians continually hold out as the problem. It's the fact that we haven't built a refinery in 30 years, haven't developed the oil in Alaska, or off the Gulf of Mexico. Politicians are afraid of the votes of the tree huggers and liberal judges. Without those votes they might not get reelected! Getting reelected is really the only thing that matters to them. This is not a Democrat or a Republican failing, it's the Federal Government failing and they need to be held accountable!!!

Have you seen these statistics on the loss of life in the military for the last 26 years? Keep in mind that we are actively engaged in a war currently. These are military personnel while actively serving from 1980 through 2006.

Fatalities:

1980- 2,392	1981- 2,380	84-1,999	88-1,899
1989- 1,636	90- 1,508	91-1,787	92-1,293
93-1,213	94-1,075	95-2,465	96-2,318
97-817	98-2,252	99-1,984	00-1,983
01-890	02-1,007	03-1,410	04-1,887
05-919	06-920		
8 Years of the Clinton Administration		13,417	
7 Years of the Bush Administration		9,016	

Does it make you wonder at all about the honesty and integrity of our media? The media also likes to imply that the majority of those who have lost their lives are minorities.

Look at these facts by race:

White 69.12%	Hispanic 12.5%	Black 12.3%	Asian 3.7%
Native American 0.1%	Other 2.6%		

These statistics can be confirmed at www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL32492.pdf

I received a notice from the IRS the other day informing me of the economic stimulus package that has been passed by the FGG (feel good government). My understanding is

that it cost 42 million to send out the notices for this FGG program. Why don't they keep the 42 million, give me credit on future taxes and we could both feel good about it. If the FGG can send us all a rebate THEN WHY IN THE HELL DID THEY TAKE THE MONEY IN THE FIRST PLACE!!!

Okay enough of politics. Matter of fact I think I was rather mild on how I really feel!!!

COWBOY COMPUTER LOVE:

Those of you that have been on one of the Cattle Drives no how much I love technology. I finally decided that maybe I should look at a computer more like a horse instead of something that does things on its own, something you can't rely on, and something that takes great pleasure in shutting your business down while it redoes whatever computers do when they reboot. Maybe it's because I was using these cowboy terms long before computers we even invented.

REBOOT- In cowboy terms that is when you come in from the muddy corral, take off your boots and put your good boots on to go to town.

MEMORY- Without a doubt, for a cowboy it's a short one, because you pick yourself up out of the dirt and crawl back on that horse that just put you there.

DOWNLOAD- That is when you hang your packhorse up on a tree, or tip him over backwards and watch him roll to the bottom with a load on.

UPLOAD- It is just after you leave the saddle but haven't started the decent back to earth.

MOUSE- A furry little creature that chews the strands in two on your cinch so that when you rope a cow and she hits the end of the rope, you, saddle, and horse all end up in a pile of kicking horse flesh. It is also a furry little creature that can be caught and put in some body's saddlebags much to the delight of everyone watching.

CURSOR- A cowboy whose horse has come untied and is walking up the trail with the cowboy following 20yds behind and every time you pick up the pace, so does the horse, and you are 5 miles from camp.

BROWSER- A horse that is standing in belly deep grass and just nibbling the seed heads off the grasses.

COOKIES- Those are the tell tale signs that horses have been here.

MEGABYTES- It's what happens to the horse in the corral who's is at the bottom of the pecking order.

INTERFACE- That's what happened to me last year when that heifer had me down on the ice and was going to kill me. She was "inerface".

At this point in time I can't say I'm feeling any more love for this here typing machine but maybe it just takes time. I'll have more in the next letter. Nope, I'm about sure I still like a horse more.

SUMMER HAPPENING:

Well all of the cattle drives are full and it looks like a very busy summer. There is still some room on the Cowboy Camp adventures so if you have time, come join us for a great week. The summer of 09 is looking busy already, as June 09 is 40% full with a couple bookings on the other trips.

I want to thank every one who stopped by the booth in Harrisburg and from reading some of the comments; I think Trent and Dan were rather popular with the lady folks. Well I hope everyone has a great summer and we look forward to meeting the new people and getting to renew our old acquaintances. Have a great ride folks!

One new venture that we will be starting this winter is that we are going to start offering some of our great horses for sale. You can't beat a horse that has survived the cowboy wars for honesty. They are just no nonsense horses that will do the job right, every time out.

Take Care and God Bless!!

Dana