

June Cattle Drive

June 25, 2000 – June 30, 2000

Here is the latest news from the Double Rafter. We just finished our June Cattle Drive on Friday the 30th, and compared to previous trips, it was quite unusual. After successfully trailing 200 pair up the canyon, and consulting our final guest and horse count, we found absolutely everything and everyone accounted for. There were no injured horses; no injured guests; no run backs; no wagon wrecks; absolutely nothing exciting to report at all.

With that said here are the trip highlights as I remember them:

The cook crew out did themselves by adding a theme to each night's dinner. There were Holstein chef hats and snake grass hula skirts, complete with native flower leis. I am afraid they may have raised the bar too high and may be unable to continue to perform at that level. I am nervously awaiting our next drive.

Our June trip brought us three cowboys from the Netherlands. Hans, Jack and Frank certainly represented their homeland well. Jack demonstrated his synchronized swimming skills in the soothing waters of Emerald Hot Springs. He seemed impervious to the 32.1°F water and actually seemed to enjoy the dip. What I cannot understand is why he took off his chaps, socks, boots, rolled up his pant legs to just below his knees, and then briskly waded in...up to his neck. (I guess that must be how they go wading in Holland, having never traveled to Europe, I am unfamiliar with their customs.) After exiting the waters, Jack shook dry, wrung out his reasonably white tee shirt, removed his dripping pants and *then* pulled on his Nike swimming trunks followed by his chaps and boots. Trembling as he approached, the nervous horses acted as if they had never seen a bare legged Dutchman in black leather chaps before. Silly horses.

Have you ever sipped coffee in our Rock Cabin Park Camp, and pondered what the scenery was like high on top of Boyd Ridge, on the western rim of the Little Horn Canyon? Well, we had a guest from Illinois make the hike from Leaky Mountain Falls high to the top and then back again to camp. After donning a makeshift backpack made of his coat, 4 granola bars, his canteen, and bridle reins, off he went. With a "Sir Edmund Hillary-look" of determination, Scott disappeared into the timber. Dana and I stood there and quietly waved good-bye. I turned to Dana and asked, "Suppose we should tell him there is a logging road on top that is so well traveled he stands a greater chance of being hit by a car than he does being injured in a mountaineering accident?"

“Nah,” Dana replied, “some things an outdoorsman just has to figure out for himself.”

Seven hours later, our modern day version of Lewis and Clark came staggering into camp. Other than the fact he was hypoglycemic, hypothermic, dehydrated, and exhausted, he looked to be in marvelous condition. Squatting inches from the blazing bonfire, Scott ate anything and everything we were brave enough to place in front of him. Early on it appeared he was swallowing granola bars whole without removing the foil wrappers, but as his rate of foraging slowed, we discovered the fire light was merely glinting off one of the several forks, or spoons, he kept shoving in his mouth. Yep, nothing like a little fresh mountain air to stimulate an appetite.

The last night also found most of the group gathered around the campfire in a spontaneous cowboy karaoke that would make Snoop Doggy Dog sound like Gene Autrey. Our Dutch trio led the boisterous and eager crowd through a Rocky Mountain rendition of “Tulips of Amsterdam,” while the younger contingent hollered out the Dixie Chicks smash hit, “Good-bye Earl.” Mid-song Meagan decided she needed to teach her cousins how to jitterbug, and soon the rolling ground between the fire pit and the first tent looked like a skinny, western version of tag team All-Star Wrestling.

Through it all, Scott ate.

Each trip has someone or something that leaves an indelible mark on the entire ranch and like it or not, this person, place, or thing changes us all forever. This June we had Judy. Poking along on her faithful steed, Sherman, Judy spent half of her time arguing with Sherman over who, in fact, was in charge. The remaining hours were spent rewriting the lyrics of Elton John’s song, “Bennie and the Jets,” using the substitution “Dana and the Drags.” Banquet night Judy pounded on the piano and screamed out the first, last, and only line of the song, “ Da...Da...Da...Dana, Da...Da...Da...Dana, Da...Da...Da...Dana, and the drags.” It was awful.

Through it all, Scott ate.