

September 16, 2001

Trip Report

First and foremost, let me extend my deepest sympathies to all who were struck by the terrorist attacks at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. I also want to commend the passengers of the fourth airliner who paid the supreme sacrifice, as they wrestled with their captors for control of the plane. No doubt thousands of lives were spared, as I am sure the terrorists were targeting something other than a rolling hills of Pennsylvania. I have been reviewing all the lists of dead or missing and so far I don't recognize any Double Rafter cowboys in the mix. If someone knows anything different please let us know here at the ranch. As with all America, this one hurt us deeply.

Dana and I contemplated canceling the fall drive, as we knew many guests would find cross-country travel to be somewhat inconvenient. I walked into my office on Thursday the 13th, and prepared to notify the guests that we were canceling. The very first e-mails I opened were from George and Allen in Connecticut. They said they were coming regardless, and had been assured by their travel agent that their Friday flight was still scheduled. Admiring their determination, I kept the trip as a "go", and proceeded contacting other guests. Here is where the trip gets exciting.

Early Friday morning George and Allen hop in a car and drive two hours east, from Connecticut to Logan Airport in Boston. Evidently there were three people in all of the United States that thought Logan was up and running, George, Allen and their travel agent. Armed guards at the airport parking area politely explained to our disappointed travelers that Logan was down and probably would be for the next week. Now most normal reasoning people would give up at this point, but since there were none of those people available, Allen brought up the grand idea of TAKING THE BUS!!!! I'm not sure what George truly thought of the idea. Perhaps he just wanted to humor his little traveling companion but, after a couple moments of negotiations, they zipped into the Boston bus depot, grabbed a good seat and were on their way-----sort of. George questioned the wisdom of their decision when, after six hours of riveting bus excitement, they finally arrived in the exact town they had driven from earlier that morning. Yes this was going to be some adventure.

I really can't properly relate all their wild stories third hand but believe me; they have bar room fodder for decades to come. The one tale that I vividly recall is the one where, after waiting for three hours for a replacement driver, they were treated to the antics of a large female bus driver they described as "surly." (Being somewhat ignorant, and not having a dictionary close at hand, I took that to mean she had hair growing on her back.) By this time, George and Allen were wise to the ways of bussing, so they sat right up front so they could assist the driver with the little things----like navigation. I understand that Allen really took to his new job as trip director and learned to fluently scream in four different languages, "sit down and shut up, we know the air conditioning is broken!!"

Late Friday evening, as our weary travelers explored the bowels of every bus station along Interstate 80, I received a call from Craig in Omaha and he volunteered to pick up George and Allen in Des Moines and drive them to the ranch. A quick search of my records produced home phone numbers and so we gently awakened both George's and Allen's wife to find out if they were carrying a cell phone. Now, I realize it was a little late, but neither could quote their respective spouse's cell number without digging through a file cabinet or two. As a matter of fact, Nancy, George's wife, snipped, "George is riding a what?" (She seemed a bit surly to me.)

Craig did pick up our Greyhounds, and saved them a good fourteen hours of thrills conversing with people who drink from brown paper sacks. Evidently, the suggestion of riding in a car was a good one, because Allen spent the rest of the week trying to show his gratitude by kissing Craig on the cheek. Craig, like most cowboys, thought a handshake should suffice, and so he spent his week trying to dodge Allen's affections. Now, I'm not sure how this figures in, but the last night, at the Mint Bar, Allen did receive a kiss on the cheek from a six foot six inch, two hundred and fifty pound bar-fly that answers to the name of Ryan. He is definitely surly.

At last, on to the cattle drive. Because our guest list was only five, we were able to use the cabin at our Lake Creek camp. We also made the decision to leave the herd on the mountain for an additional 20 days due the grass conditions in the valley. Taking advantage of our eager guests, we decided to move the entire herd of 600 pair into the Sardine Lake country to get better use out of the farther edges of our permit. This turned out to be quite the task and we had numerous runbacks. Ed, our cowboy from Canada, remarked that he was somewhat disappointed when he first heard we were leaving the cows on the mountain, but after four solid days in the saddle, he felt more than satisfied. Ed is one of those surly types, with hair everywhere but on his elongating forehead. At the end of the fourth day he announced that the saddle had rubbed all the hair from his calves and inner thighs. He asked if we wanted proof but the mental picture was enough

for me. I couldn't help but wonder though, where did the hair go? Did it migrate south into his boots or north into his shorts?

This trip's guest list included four repeaters and one unfortunate newcomer, Jim from Colorado. Jim did admit he was a bit overwhelmed at first, as the camp seemed so loud, boisterous, and opinionated. I explained that Dana is just that way. Jim is credited with the quote of the trip. Riding into camp after seven tough hours on day one, Jim moaned to Dana, "I was hoping you would tighten my butt on this trip, but I didn't think you would do it on the first day." Well said.

We did spend one night in Rock Cabin Park, and then headed on out the Little Horn Canyon. Given all the riding we did as we tried to gather the high country, I would say that most people rode over 75 miles this week. Definitely this was a trip for the record books.