

JULY 2005 CATTLE DRIVE TRIP REPORT

SUNDAY JULY 10TH: Thing One and Thing Two arrived with the rests of the guests but we weren't sure yet just who they were. On the previous cattle drive Cindy had called saying that they had two more who wanted to come and did we have room. Alice had said yes and we did have, but at this point in time I didn't know if they were male or female, 110 lbs or 310 lbs, Olympic riders or complete beginners. The only real complication was not knowing their horsemanship skill level. We were soon to find out as I picked two middle of the road horses that could go both ways, turned them over to Chris for the horsemanship clinic and stood back and watched. After a couple of hours in the arena I wasn't concerned in the least as it was obvious they were going to be just fine. After lunch we started the cattle handling seminar and I was very pleased at how attentive this bunch seemed to be. They were really trying to do it the right way which was going to make a huge impact on the course of the week. We didn't know it yet, but Wednesday we were going to be riding straight into hell!!!

MONDAY JULY 11TH: We had a daylight breakfast and headed to Bonanza Creek to start the first days trip. It was supposed to get hot and then hotter each day of the week. As we were gathering that morning the leads headed towards the reservoir and then across the dike of reservoir. Now once they get across the reservoir they get caught in a tight fence corner where with all of the pushing and shoving something gets pushed through the fence and then the wreck is on. One of the wranglers noticed to late what was happening and went spurring his horse off the hill to try and beat the cattle to the reservoir. Matty looked over and saw what was happening and off he went at a dead run on Pockets. Now, Josh, Tommy, and Justin looked over and saw Matty taking off at a dead run and weren't to sure what the hurry was but they didn't want to miss any of the action so off they spurred. Josh was on Rose and she stops on her front end so as she was running off the hill Josh was getting higher and higher in the saddle. Now it's generally not a good thing when it takes you 3 seconds between touches on your saddle and it certainly wasn't a good thing now. When Rose had time to stop and graze between bounces I knew Josh was just about to get a close up of Mother Earth. As Josh hit the ground and the dust flew we could hear the laughing voices of his so called friends. They were absolutely howling! Of course this then made the White Bags a slam dunk for the night.

TUESDAY JULY 12TH : We really had a great trip over to the Rocky Bottom with the cattle other than the heat was a lot worse than the day before. Fortunately we had gotten an early jump on the cattle and had them there before it got extremely hot. We did have several animals try and quit on us but that isn't allowed on the Double Rafter. As we are in a summer calving program by the July trip we are starting to get a few calves. We had three brand new babies while we were camped at the Rocky Bottom that evening. Of course they were the lucky ones because they saved their mommas a long hot walk the next day. Since the calves were to young to walk it they got a ride to the top of the mountain in the horse trailer about 2 weeks later. The ones that really suffered that day were the cooks. With the temperature over 100 degrees they were cooking using the Dutch Ovens, the pit barbecue with all of it's hot embers, and nothing more than knowing that the cooking had to be done. People had to eat. We had several cooks suffering from heat exhaustion. Most of the cooks went to the river just as soon as

dinner was served. My wife swears that the cool water saved her from being violently sick. I am real concerned about the future when the heat is that extreme but as of now, haven't been able to come up with a solution. While everyone was suffering from the heat Amber Ketler managed to kill a rattlesnake in the hills behind the camp and the kids were having a great time with this dead snake. Now, we still don't know today who put the snake in one of the coolers but it was one of the coolers who got put back in the supply trailer and wasn't opened until we got home **5 days later**. That cooler is still air drying and probably going to end up in the garbage dump. We just can't get the odor out of it. Of course we might give it to Matty as a souvenir of the trip.

WEDNESDAY JULY 13TH. The weather men were calling for record highs today and boy was it ever. We got a real early jump on things but it is just too far to go and all of it is up hill, so as the temperature goes up, the cow speed goes down. We were down to about ½ mile per hour the last two hours of the trip that day. I have never felt so sorry for the cattle or our horses as I did today. The heat was extreme with two temperatures recorded in the valley that day of 112 and 116. Anytime, there was shade the cattle flocked to it to stick there heads in the shade. It looked like flies going to a piece of meat. I have never had a herd of cattle try and quit but they tried to today. We didn't dare stop as we knew we would never find the cattle in the timber if we let them fan out and lay down, then we would spend all summer looking for the missing cattle. While we were coming through Sherwood Forest, the group of cattle that Trent and Matty had turned and went crashing through the timber to the river below. I have never seen that happen in my life. I have to say I have never had a group of people buck up like this bunch and work together helping one another without any snapping at anyone. It was incredible what they accomplished that day. With lots of effort we finally got the cattle to the lower drift fence where we could let them rest for 30 minutes until the next real tough push the last mile of the day. That last mile climbs 500 feet in elevation. When we got the cattle to Robinson Crossing we just sat on the cattle and made them stand in the river to bring their body temperatures down. I really thought we might have some cattle have heat stroke. As we were sitting on the cattle at the Lower Drift fence waiting for them to rest some of the guests were so thirsty they said they would drink anything. Matty and Josh gathered everyone's water bottles and headed to the river to fill them. When they got to the river they jumped off of their horses and started filling water bottles and drinking as much as they were filling, smiling from ear to ear as the cold water slid down their throats and brought life back to their thoughts. After the two horses they were riding had consumed their fill they looked around and thought, "I know where camp is, let's go." Both horses took off across the creek and were headed up the Beaver Slide headed to Rock Cabin which meant the two cowboys were afoot and also didn't have a way to carry 20 some odd water bottles back to the dehydrated cowboys holding herd. As they were standing their watching their horses leave the pack string showed up. As Brendon came down the hill leading the pack string he noticed immediately what had happened but since he was leading three mules his hands were sort of tied. Both Josh and Matty looked at Brendon coming down the hill with high expectations when Brendon shouted "You better go get your horses". Now everyone knows that cowboys weren't built for running, that's why they invented horses so that cowboys wouldn't have to run. Both Matty and Josh jumped into the river and partly wading, swimming, and floundering on the wet slippery rocks looked more like a Large Mouth Bass being pulled

out of the water than two cowboys chasing their taxis. They did catch their mounts and their first words were “Do you suppose we will get the White Bags for this”? After letting the cattle cool down in the icy cold waters of the Little Horn River for about 30 minutes we were ready to climb the last 3/8 of a mile up the Beaver Slide to the parks where the cattle would be on great feed so that we could call it a day. After the cool off the cattle walked amazingly well up the Beaver Slide.

THURSDAY JULY 14TH: This morning we let people relax a little more as we finally got to have breakfast at a decent time, other than dark thirty. Since our pasture rotation had us staying in the parks for another week we took a leisure ride over to Leaky Mountain and then a dip in Emerald Hot Springs. Most of the swimmers exclaimed how much fun the swim was!!! It was about 15 degrees cooler today and it made everyone feel rejuvenated which meant that the party would probably be a little louder tonight than it had been the night before. I decided for my own good it was worth going to bed before it got completely out of hand.

FRIDAY JULY 15TH: Today was a major push since we had to get camp closed up, catch the bus to the valley, have the banquet and make the rodeo all by 6:30 pm. This bunch showed exactly why we managed to complete the day from hell. They all pitched in and we had the dishes done, the barrels closed up, the new cook tent up the bear pole, and everyone saddled and the mules packed by 8:30am. This was a record that I’m proud of. The ride out was quiet partly due to a flu bug that was impacting some of the guests. I wasn’t sure if it was a flu bug or a bottle bug but by the time we got to Sheridan several other guests were feeling the effects also, which proved it to be a legitimate flu bug. That night at the banquet Lou Sylvia won the Double Rafter Belt Buckle. We couldn’t have been happier. After the banquet we caught the trolley to the fairgrounds and took the rodeo in. I can say it was one of the best rodeo’s I have ever seen. After the rodeo we all headed to the street dance where the thousands of people downtown made it very difficult to keep track of anyone. Chelsie entered the local Butt Darts contest and qualified for the finals the next night. I do have to say Chelsie did have a large cheering bunch of drunks rooting for her. It was a real tough week because of the weather but I have to say: “This bunch is welcome at my fire anytime”. So until next time I say thank you!!