

July 13, 2003 Trip Report

Sunday, July 13

Prompt arrival of most of the guests;

Patrick Brownell arrived first

Jean Schilling had told me she would be there at 2:30

At 3:30 Dale from Bear Lodge came pulling in with a couple of hitchhikers looking for a cattle drive. He had Jean Schilling, daughter Vanessa and Marci Johnson from Casper. It seems their clutch had gone out in Ranchester. Dale showed them a little western hospitality as all he had done was pull in to Ranchester to gas up but any western person always helps those in need. While Jean was trying to figure out what to do with the present problem Marci decided she was going on a cattle drive regardless and was going to take matters into her own hands. She didn't know that Dale had offered to give them all a lift. She walked across the street and being the young attractive individual she is, she put her thumb in the air and decided she could get herself to the ranch. There was only one little problem. Instead of headed west she was hitching east where she had just come from. I'm sure Dale got a chuckle out of that as he loaded her gear into his pickup and headed to the Double Rafter. We really didn't mind the delay as it was very warm that day. We still had plenty of time for orientation. However, we mentioned to Marci that she needs to take a course with a couple of our expert travelers (George and Allen, who rode a bus from New York to Iowa to make our fall trip of 2001). It is also a given that Marci won the white saddle bag award the first night for her over active thumb.

Monday morning we had breakfast early and saddled up and started gathering cattle early. We had a great trip that morning and were in at the Rafter around noon. The cattle walked right along which was amazing because of the heat. Little did we know that fast trip on Monday was going to be the only fast trip all week. That night around the fire Vanessa caught on very quickly about the cut throat approach for the white saddle bags. After dinner we were going to have the white bag nominations but we were short Jean. We waited for a while then Vanessa went looking for her mother and came back and said I can't find her so let's nominate her for missing the nominations. As she wasn't there for a rebuttal she won them hands down.

Tuesday morning found us to be dealing with more heat than we had had the day before. They set a record in Sheridan that day of 109. Now, black hided cows bought out of the flat lands of South Dakota could see no reason why they should walk to the top of that hill let alone have to deal with the heat. We had a long slow trip with that bunch of cows. We arrived on the Rocky Bottom around 2:00 pm only 2 hours later than I had hoped. However, on a real cattle drive you go until the day is done. Brendon brought a trailer load of mules over to the bottom when he came and told me had had 4 flat tires that morning. So at 3:00pm he headed to town to get the tires fixed. The rest of the crew drove the remaining vehicles to the top of the mountain so we had a way off on Friday.

That evening after dinner as we were having the white bag nominations, Vanessa apparently out of sympathy for her mother. decided to keep the bags in the family. While she was chasing cows that day she had managed to ride her horse half way across a barb wire fence. I have now idea how you can get a horse to step both front feet over the top two wires on a fence bus she did. She must be a hell of a horseman. When she discovered her problem she very calmly said "Dana I have a little problem here". I grabbed my wire pliers and quickly cut all the wire so she could ride her horse on through. We really prefer you leave those tricks to my highly paid professionals.

Due to the heat from the previous day we had breakfast at dark thirty the next morning and hit the day running. However, it's just to far and too much up hill to beat the heat. We did get about 5 miles into the day before we had to give up on the first animal. One of the bulls had decided he had had enough and wasn't going any futher. Now when Mr. Testosterone decides he isn't going to do something you really don't have a lot of options. We had put that bull with the lead group of cattle that morning and each bunch tried for about 20 minutes to get him to walk. In the drags we whipped on him just long enough to no we were going to blow the whole day with the whole herd if we spent much more time with him. So we dropped him and went on. Mr. Testosterone spent two weeks pouting in the canyon then showed up with the rest of the cattle on top. (He is still on top of the mountain as he is coming off the mountain the same way he went up, on his own terms. I'm sure he will be home by Christmas or the first heavy snow). The evening before we had had a couple of newly weds join us so their first day was spent in the heat of the canyon wondering what they had gotten themselves in for. I'm sure it's something they won't soon forget. I do have to say we had a real good bunch because their wasn't one complaint from any of the guests. They pitched right in and ate the dust and heat just like everyone else. When we reached Robinson Crossing we let the cattle stand in the cold water of the river for about 20 minutes before we made our last push up the beaver slide. If the cattle didn't cool down I knew we weren't going to get that last half mile that climbs about 700 feet in elevation. While we were waiting for the cattle to cool down the pack string went through and my head packer Stan Sharp winked and said boy do I have a good nomination for the white bags tonight. That night as the discussion slowly turned to the white bags I noticed Stan grinning to himself. That morning as we were packing Kari (one of the newlyweds) asked if they could take a few more items. I said sure because we had a small group and plenty of pack animals, or so I thought. It seems Tom and Kari have set a world record for packing as they managed to pack **NINETY EIGHT LBS. Since they were newlyweds no one was going to ask what they brought!** We still don't know.

Thursday morning we gathered the cattle and moved them another 4 miles up country and dropped them in East Burnt. It is amazing how nice the cattle walked on the cooler mountains. We then swung over to Leaky Mountain and down to Emerald Hot Springs for a swim. Kari asked if she could swim long or was the water to hot. I assured her she could swim as long as she liked.

Friday morning we broke camp down and packed out to Lake Creek where our vehicles were. We had one of those mornings where the coals just wouldn't burn so

breakfast was a little bit late and I began to chomp at the bit. We finally had everything packed and were taking some last minute pictures when the pack horse that Stan was leading fell over backwards. Now we don't know if Stan is a hell of a singer and sang him to sleep or if the horse got down wind from Stan and passed out. (I suspect the latter). Anyway we had to completely unpack him to get him on his feet and repacked. The rest of the trip was smooth. That night at the banquet Kari won the white saddle bags to take home with her and Patrick Brownell won the Double Rafter Belt Buckle in a game of Cowboy Trivia. (we make up the questions and answers). Thanks people it was a great week and you really did a great job of pitching in and making the week successful. Just remember "You've never lived till you've damn near died".