

JULY 09 TRIP REPORT

Saturday July 11th:

The trip is supposed to start on Sunday but at 1:00pm I was up at the Rafter putting the finishing touches on camp when mom leaned out the window and said there was a phone call for you. It was on the answering machine and it says someone is waiting in Billings to be picked up. This confused me because as near as I knew everyone was flying into Sheridan. According to the answering machine it was Pia Freiden from Sweden. I wasn't sure where the mistake was but now I needed to make a trip to Billings pronto. I jumped in the pickup and headed to the house to shower. I figured showing up in Billings to pick someone up smelling like a bull elk in the rut probably wasn't going to make the best first impression. I took a quick shower, jumped in the car and headed to Billings. I knew that since we hadn't made contact yet with Pia directly she would be calling again. I left instructions and told Alice to call me when she had some solid information as to where I was headed once I got to Billings. About 20 miles outside Billings I got the call I was waiting for. I headed to the Holliday Inn to where Pia was waiting. As I pulled up there was Pia and her luggage sitting on a bench waiting patiently. I felt really really bad!! Pia had flown to New York a week earlier and didn't want to bring her laptop so she had left it in New York to pick up on the return. Of course all the information she had on us was on her laptop. When she asked the hotel limo driver if they had internet at the motel, he replied yes but for guests only. Pia explained her situation and he said of course she could use the hotel internet. Once on the internet she was able to look us up and get the emergency number at the ranch and make a phone call. That started the whole rescue process. We headed back to Sheridan where we were going to take everyone to the rodeo for the night. We generally end with the rodeo but this year the rodeo was too early to do it at the end of the week so we started with it. I had a great time!!

SUNDAY JULY 12th:

The official unofficial start of the trip was right on schedule. We had the first two guests show up 2 hours early. Once everyone arrived we headed to the arena to start the horsemanship clinic. Like all the trips the skill level was from beginner on up. It's amazing to watch the beginners because they are the ones who improve their riding skills 300% during the course of the week. I guess sink or swim is rather motivating. We did have a very international flavor this trip. We had two from Israel, three from Sweden, two from California and two from Chicago. The two from Chicago had emigrated here from China. We of course had the Michigan State Swim team but we will get into that later. We also had repeat guest Andrea West from Connecticut and Larry Zaborowski from Texas who was a retired traffic cop. We had two nominations for the white bags that evening. Once we had spent several hours in the arena it was time to take a short trail ride before lunch to start seeing how well matched up we were on our horses. We had those pegged pretty good though. As we were at the top of the hill above the barn the wind was blowing pretty hard. Itsik had his hat blow off approximately 28 times. We finally put a rock on it and told him we would pick it up on the way back. The other nomination came from Jerry Chao. As we were working in the arena walking in a big circle, Chris asked them to step up the gate a little. Gunner shifted into a little faster pace and Jerry leaned forward. Well that body language told Gunner he was to speed up even

more so he did. Gunner started into a lope. Now Jerry was a beginner. As he gripped the saddle horn with both hands Gunner increased the speed even more. With the whites of Jerry's eyes showing all the way around the arena we hollered to pull the reins and stop him. Our yelling jarred Jim out of his white eyed pace and he pulled on the reins and Gunner immediately went back to a walk. So Jerry got nominated for getting the whites of his eyes sunburned.

Monday July 13th:

There was lots of anticipation this morning as we were going to gather cattle and start up the road. We had breakfast at 5:30 am. As soon as daylight broke I noticed some major black thunder clouds building in the west. About the time everyone was saddled the ceiling dropped in low and the thunder and lightning started to rock and roll right over the top of our heads. Every one on the crew made a mad dash for the barn. Once the crew made it to the barn I looked out and here were all the guest standing in the arena holding their horses with their slickers on. The down pour hit. I knew they were anxious to be on the trail, but I wondered how long they would stand out in the down pour before realizing we had all gone to the barn. I finally yelled and got their attention so they tied their horses up and came to the barn to join us. Now you cant' nominate the whole group so we just giggled about it all week long. The storm was strong but rather short so after about 30 minutes in the barn we mounted up and rode out. The rain was still coming in rather light but the thunder and lightning had left. Around 11:00 that morning it stopped for the day. Since it was cool the cattle walked real well. After lunch Trent started the horsemanship clinic. As they started the clinic the western skyline was building again with more thunder storms. Everyone got through one round of cutting before the lightning started to pop and the thunder started cracking. We wanted everyone off their horses so had to cancel the rest of the cutting. We headed back to the rafter for the rest of the day.

That night around the fire we had several good nominations. Jerry Chao got nominated for coming out of the shower and asking "Which way back to camp". Janet Bruno got nominated for tripping and landing in a fresh pile of pooh fresh from the factory. She was often referred to the rest of the week as Janet the Pooh!. The winner though was Jenny Lof from Sweden. As she saddled that morning she grabbed someone else's saddle that was considerably shorter legged than she. We had switched Jenny to a new horse this morning that was 2 hands taller than the one she had ridden the day before. When questioned how she could get on someone else's short legged saddle and not notice the different saddle she responded it was because it was a taller horse that she was on. Nice try at a rebuttal but it fell short and she was the winner.

Tuesday July14:

Generally the day up the canyon all of the excitement revolves around the herd and the problems coming up the canyon. But this year was different. The cook crew went to the top to pack down to Rock Cabin and when they pulled up to camp they realized the horses were out instead of in the corral. The gathered them up and noticed that Eddie had been injured and wouldn't be able to go. The pack animals and cooks horses had been put in the corrals the night before and left shut in. As they looked things over it was obvious something had cause a panic in the horses during the night. What it was we will never know. My guess is probably a bear or a wolf going through, but we will never know. Eddie healed up and was fine in a couple of weeks. We had a very easy trip up

the canyon but when we rode into camp it was obvious they hadn't had as good a day as everyone else. A bear had gotten into camp and torn up lots of stuff and eaten a fair amount of groceries. It was obvious we were going to have to send a pack horse out to get more groceries. The bear ate 2 boxes of gallon size zip lock bags, 1 bottle of whiskey, the flour, sugar, baking powder, lighter fluid and dish soap. I hope Mr. Bubbles is one sick bear!!! In a ranchers life these types of surprises are very normal. You learn to adapt and adjust to whatever comes along. We got on the SAT phone, called the valley, placed an order with my mother who was going to meet someone on top the next day with the groceries and we would then pack them back to camp. So really no problem at all.

Alon won the white bags that night for trying to ride under a low hanging branch on a tree. If he had only kept his mouth shut he wouldn't have had his teeth brushed with a pine bough! I guess when you are from Israel pine trees aren't something you have to give much consideration to.

Wednesday July 15th:

After breakfast we saddle up and headed up country to gather East Burn and bring the cattle back to Rock Cabin Park. It took the better part of the day to get everything gathered up and brought back down country. Larry Zaborowski ended up getting the white bags that night. As an ex traffic cop he got caught giving cattle hand signals as we were trailing along. What ever works!! When we rode back to camp it was obvious that we were going to have some water issues as we just weren't getting enough water to the tank to water 600 head of cattle. As I rode into camp it was sure good to see that Brendon had gotten back with the much needed groceries. Dinner was going to be rather interesting without some of those needed items. However, my cooks are really good and probably could have made something out of horse apples!!

Thursday July 16:

We finished filling our gas tanks and headed up country to the woven wire fence to bring the leads back down country. We doctored 6 different yearlings for a variety of ailments. A couple of them were foot rots, a pneumonia, and one lump jaw. We explained to people that in the rodeo arena it's a timed event but out here on the range it's a pound event. We want to take it as easy and slowly as we can. We don't need to stress them any more than necessary. After doctoring we headed to Leaky Mountain and Emerald Hot Springs. At Emerald we had 4 different swimmers with 3 of them being the Michigan State Swim Team. There was Nancy Gaudino, Janet the Pooh Bruno, and the team captain Dianne Bricco. They treated us to a rather quick version of their synchronized swimming. That night around the fire as the nominations for the days heroic event of the white bags was going on, we had the winner boldly step forward and put both feet in her mouth and win the bags easily. It happened to none other than the captain of the Swim Team, Dianne Bricco. Sometimes someone will give a heroic nomination to someone who they thought did something rather impressive. Well Dianne announced to the whole group that she wanted to give a special "**atta girl!**" to Daniel Fuller for his work in the timber that day moving cattle. That would have been all fine and dandy, except Daniel is one of the crew and of course is a GUY!!! "**ATTA GIRL DAIANE**"

Friday July 17th:

Shortly after breakfast most of the guests quickly saddled and headed up country to turn the leads around again and bring them back down country. According to our grazing plan the cattle are not to graze that part of the pasture very hard and of course they love it up there. I really don't think it's fair to make them stay down country just because they can't read the FS manual. But that's our government at it's finest! I do agree though that the cattle do need to be kept dispersed and off of those areas as much as possible. That night at the banquet Andrea West won the white bags for braiding Scooter's main and forelock. Do you realize what this can do to a cowboy's warhorse? He has spent his life getting all the tough circles, roping all the tough cattle and now he has braids in his hair!! If she had put ribbons in his hair, I'm sure Scooter would have never been able to live it down. All kidding aside, Scooter has been my warhorse for years and has damn sure earned some softer treatment. I could write a whole newsletter just on Scooter stories. When I was either terribly short handed or had a really tough circle to make Scooter was always the horse. He was unbelievably catty on his feet, in any type of terrain at any speed. He also had an unbelievable amount of tough in him. He is real slow walking, but it never mattered how tired he was, if you needed a little more he always had it to give to you willingly. This was a very enjoyable week and I would like to thank each and every one of you for allowing us the privilege of spending it with you. Thanks