

JULY BEEF ROUNDUP 2010

SUN JULY 25TH:

This trip was going to be rather unusual as we were doing a couple new things we had never tried before. We were going to do a moonlight ride on the mountain. At that elevation it is truly a work of art. Since we had 10 repeat guests on the trip I also new it was going to be wild and unpredictable since one of the guests is the famous "Crash Thornton". Crash earned his nickname from several early trips that he had been on. For some unknown reason he has a real fascination with the dirt on the mountain. He feels that the closer he gets to it the more it makes him one with it! Too a certain degree I was dreading having to witness this.

Now 2 months before they came I got a call wanting to set up a practical joke on one of his traveling partners who is also a many times guest. Crash wanted us to put Shannon on the smallest horse we had plus in a saddle that was too small for him. I told him we could do that. Crash gets off the bus smiling from ear to ear knowing what is going to happen later in the day. Once introductions were completed we turned the group over to Chris Ellsworth for the horsemanship and headed to the corrals. As giddy as Crash was you would have thought it was Christmas. Now the joke actually backfired because Shannon didn't complain about the little horse we call Deringer who is only 13 hands, and the too small saddle. Actually John was the looser because of an email he sent me days before the trip saying, and I quote "I know that you know that I know Shannon is going to try and put you up to something". Just a little paranoid Crash?

Russ Tuthill got off the bus sporting a brand new saddle that Chris's wife Clair had just finished making for him. It was the saddles maiden voyage. What a way to christen a brand new piece of leather. After the two hour horsemanship ride we were back in camp having dinner waiting for night fall. We were going to pack down to Rock Cabin Park, spend the night there then start gathering cattle the next morning. Since we had a full moon we decided to ride the 4 hours down after dark on the full moon. As all maiden voyages you learn things that you would do different next time and I certainly did on this one. We packed up the cooks and pack crew and they headed out about 7:15 and the rest of waited until after 9:00 to take off. The fool moon was absolutely spectacular during the ride. There were only 2 glitches that we will change for our next full moon ride. Even with the full moon when you were riding through the timber patches it was pitch black and I hadn't made sure everyone had flash lights. There were many crashes with branches breaking and people uttering under their breath. The other draw back was that we didn't get into Rock Cabin Park until a little after 1:00 in the morning. I know I got to bed around 2:00. The next one we do we will either leave much earlier and get half the ride out of the way during the daylight so we don't finish so late or we will stay at Lake Creek and do a 2 hours swing above the cabin which is above timberline. Either way we need to finish up by 11:00 as people including myself were completely exhausted by the time we got in. We had a leisurely breakfast the next morning though which helped everyone's spirits even though we had some people up by 5:30am. While we ate breakfast we turned the horses loose so that they could partially fill their gas tanks.

MONDAY JULY 26TH:

After breakfast the pack crew packed up the mules and headed back to Lake Creek where we would be tonight. My youngest son Taylor was a little apprehensive as he was going to ride his colt back to Lake Creek. It would be the first time she had been ridden outside of the corral. We packed her down the night before and she did really well. Taylor crawled on and for about 30 seconds it was a little tense then she lined out and did really well. The rest of us headed up the Kerns Josyln Trail. To say it's a little steep is a slight understatement. It's one of those trails that make you know you are alive, because you can feel your heart beating even though the horse is doing all the work. It's about 2 miles to the top and climbs around 1500 feet in elevation in distance. You can always tell who the trail is bothering the most because they get real quiet and look straight ahead. Well this time it was Callie-Jean Tuthill. It takes about 40 minutes to go up the trail and she never twitched the whole time. There are 3 places in the trail that bother me so we make everyone get off and lead across those places before allowing them to get back on. One of the places the trail started sliding away as we got to it with the last couple of horses. It slid enough that we won't take people on it again until we get the chance to do some maintenance on it. Once we reached the top we had people get off to let their horses catch their wind. I decided it would be a good place to eat lunch so people got their lunch sat down, dropped their horses and went to eating. I headed towards the timber with plans of sitting on the trail so the horses couldn't get by me. I had obviously had two to many cups of coffee so I took the opportunity while in the timber. At the most inopportune time someone walked by a horse who had his head down grazing and slapped him on the butt. He jumped which caused the loosened cinch to not hold the saddle on top and under his belly it went. Him jumping and racing forward in a panic caused the rest of the horses to bolt up the trail. Remember I had just stepped behind a tree when this all took place. We were extremely lucky because the only person who still had his horses reins was Trent or we would have all been afoot with a 7 mile walk back to camp. Trent swung up on his horse and went into a dead run to beat the horses to the timber patch that I was visiting. I felt completely helpless. Trent beat them to the trail in the timber by one half horse length, it was that close. Everyone doesn't know how much they owe Trent. Maybe we would have still been okay because the horse Stevo was riding was the one who's saddle slipped under his belly and after about 3 jumps stopped and froze so if Trent hadn't beaten the horses to the timber, maybe just maybe we would have had at least one horse with 20 of us to ride. As soon as lunch was over we split into different groups and started gathering cattle and heading towards the head of Bear Trap gathering cattle as we went. After about 3 hours of gathering and trailing we had the herd together so we doctored 3 little calves with pneumonia. This is the time of year we are calving on the mountain and at that elevation pneumonia is a real issue in those baby calves. We dropped the herd at our destination and rode on into camp for dinner. We arrived back around 6:00pm and had dinner with several people going straight to bed after eating. They were a little tired but in very good spirits.

TUESDAY JULY 27TH:

Since we didn't have more than an hour to ride this morning to get to the pasture where we had dropped the cattle the day before we were able to give people a chance to get rested. Some of them slept 10 hours last night so they showed up with smiling faces

and were raring to go. We headed west and gathered Dayton Gulch and Lick Creek. When we arrived at the fish enclosure we held the herd next to the pole fence and doctored 4 more calves for pneumonia and 3 yearlings for foot rot. We then trailed the cattle that we had gathered and trailed them on to the Lake Creek pasture. I got a rough count as we kicked through the gate into Lake Creek and came up with about 375 head. We swung into camp to grab some lunch and let the cows and calves mother up before taking them off into the bottom of the Lake Creek pasture. After lunch we loaded 200lbs of salt on one of the pack mules, gathered the herd and headed to the bottom of Lake Creek. This push was shocking to me in that it went much easier than I had anticipated it would. When we got to the very bottom we doctored 4 more calves for pneumonia. I know that the impression has been given by the environmentalist that we are being subsidized by the tax payer because we pay less per head than you would in the valley. Now in less than 24 hours we have doctored over a dozen calves with pneumonia. Without being doctored every one of them would have died. Now keep in mind that we are short over 150 head of cattle so far in this gather and ask yourself how many of those that we are short have calves that might need doctoring? This is just one example of why the mountain grass that we graze is not as cheap as it appears on paper. At the valley elevation of 4500 feet we have very little pneumonia but at 9000 feet we have a lot of it.

WEDNESDAY JULY 28TH:

Trent and Taylor took two trailer loads of people and riders and headed to the Dry Fork which is the new allotment that we purchased a year ago to check on the herd of cattle there. It is over a 2 hour ride from where they unloaded into the allotment. It was an incredibly gorgeous day for this ride from a scenery standpoint. From a livestock standpoint it was a very alarming day. The group saw a total of 7 moose and only 7 head of cattle. This of course means there is a large group of cattle somewhere and obviously it's not where they are supposed to be. This also means we know exactly what we are going to be doing next week.

All the guests that didn't get to the Dry Fork went with Dana and rerode Bear Trap, Sardine Lake, and Taylor Creek to try and find the cattle we had missed two days ago and the cattle that we had dropped who we doctored but were too sick to walk that day. We picked up about 30 head of cattle but did not see hide nor hair of the 5 pair that we had dropped who had sick calves. This if not at all unusual and is why it is so difficult to get a clean gather on the mountain and why it takes weeks to get everything gathered out of a pasture. We spent all day gathering and kicked the cattle into the Lick Creek pasture where we would gather them the next day. That night after dinner we could see the black thunder heads building in the West. At that elevation you never know what that means, rain, snow or nothing. It rained off and on all night long but most people slept well.

THURSDAY JULY 29TH:

The only mishap during the rain was that John Ott who had covered himself with his ground sheet moved wrong during the night and managed to pour a puddle of water right into his bed sometime during the middle of the night. Of course when this happens you spend the rest of the night trying to sleep in a funny shape by sleeping around the wet spot. He said it was fine but I'm sure it was a long night for him. We did awaken to

sunny skies and so after breakfast we split into two directions. I took one group into upper Lake Creek to gather the cattle that had drifted up from the bottom of the pasture and kick them back into lower Lake Creek. Trent took the other group and went to the Lick Creek pasture to gather the cattle that we had kicked into there the day before and gather any cattle we had missed two day earlier in that gather. They gathered about 45 head of cattle so we trailed them down the Lake Creek ridge to Rubber Boot park with a pack load of salt and dropped them there. When we got back to camp it was time to turn the horses loose for the week and head to Bear Lodge for a shower, banquet and a real BED. Everyone had a great time and Bear Lodge really does a good job. I just can't say enough nice things about them. I also can't say enough nice things about the people we get the privilege to spend a week with. One other thing to note and this was a real shock to me. After day one you never heard another word about "Crash Thornton". Obviously his wife must have said something to him about playing nice with everyone!!! Thanks everyone!! See you down the trail.