

June 29, 2003 Trip Report

Our first guest showed up at 8:00 am at the ranch and we weren't even there yet. We were busy loading horses and having a crew meeting to make sure we were all on the same page. Nothing like having half of the crew think we are on a pig roundup and the other half think they are going on vacation. I'm sure Don O'Connor thought we were a little rude because we didn't spend a lot of time visiting but since this is the real deal there was a lot going on and several of my crew members were brand new. Sorry Donald! The plan was for everyone to be at the ranch at 3:00 for introductions so we could get everyone started on the same page. Now when you are picking people up in Sheridan, Billings, and some are driving, it's an accomplishment to get them there at the same time. It didn't happen. We finally started without one car load as we had no idea why they were 2 hours late and we hadn't heard a thing from them. They were repeat people so it wasn't as important that they be at the safety lecture. Is anyone feeling guilty yet? It turns out my professional wrangler and the two repeat guests stopped at a watering hole for a social moment and the hole was much deeper than they anticipated. When they realized the error of their ways they drove straight to my place where the horses were and were waiting for us. We had been patiently waiting at ranch headquarters for them for over two hours. After the safety lecture and horse orientation we went back to the Double Rafter for dinner and the evening events of the famous White Saddle Bag nomination. It's always difficult to nominate people the first night because people don't know one another so sometimes the first night is a reach. One of our professional crew members won them the first night for getting bucked off a donkey. Now Stephen is 6ft 3 and the donkey was all of 2ft 6. Now Stephen claims it takes a hell of a good donkey to buck him off, it just doesn't take him very long. After his winning we were sitting around the fire when our next night's nomination came to light in front of every one. David McDonald got bucked off the log he was sitting on. Now he claimed the same excuse "It takes a hell of a log to buck him off, it just doesn't take very long". No one believed it for a moment.

The next morning we trailed the herd from Parkman to the Rafter. We had a really quiet trip with everyone finishing on the top side of their mounts. That's something that makes the crew smile. It had been the hottest day of the year so far.

On Tuesday morning we trailed the herd of cattle to the Rocky bottom and had a great trip other than one guest who was so ashamed of winning the white bags for his winning score in the log bronc riding that he put the white bags under his other saddle bags. Major no He handily one them that night also. The rules clearly state Page 2 Sect 3 Article 4- THE WHITE BAGS MUST BE DISPLAYED ON TOP SO THAT ALL CAN SEE.

Wednesday morning we got a later start than we wanted and the heat was tough. When the sun starts to radiate off the canyon walls the temp climbs real fast to broiling. However, the cattle walked well in spite of the heat and we had the drags at Robinson Crossing at 2:pm which is about normal. Up the canyon we had the quote of the week. Diane Geer gets credit for this one. Now heights bother some people and there is a place

or two that make someone with this affliction tighten up a little bit. Her quote "I have used every yoga breathing exercise I know" was a classic. After reaching the meadows with the cattle, we had one of our more energetic guests decide to rope a calf would be the greatest achievement. He borrowed a rope, we helped him build a loop and off he went. Everyone thought I was loping along side him because if he got in a wreck I was there to save himnot true! Everyone loves to see a good horse wreck and I wanted a birds eye view. Much to every one's dismay, Matt caught a calf and ended up with all his fingers still in tact. When we arrived at camp later that afternoon, we discovered that Mister Bubbles the bear had gotten into camp and made a serious dent in the beer population. We now know he definitely prefers Coors over Bud. Oh well, the life of a real cowboy.

Thursday morning we gathered the cattle and moved them up to the next pasture and then swung back to Leaky Mtn and a swim in Emerald Hot Springs. Much to every ones delight the swim turned out to be more memorable than they imagined with many squeaky proclamations of how great the water was!! That night around the fire we had nominations for the white bags and we had a bigger railroad job than I have ever seen before. Cindy was nominated for falling off her horse. Her son put one of the crew members up to it and the only true part was that Cindy was on a horse that day.

Friday morning we closed up the Rock Cabin Park Camp and headed to the Lake Creek Cow Camp where our vehicles were waiting. From there just a short 30 minute drive to Bear Lodge and showers. We stopped at Dayton Gulch for lunch on the way to camp. After lunch with every one mounted I headed out leading three mules when I heard a scream. I was in the lead, glanced back and saw Kathy one of our cooks streaking for where Taylor was. I could tell he wasn't in the saddle and wasn't on the ground so I assumed he had hung up his chap strap on his stirrup. Now someone hanging up is a cowboys worst nightmare. My twelve year old son was no different. I dropped the mules and spun the mare around that I was riding and stuck the iron (spurs) in her. She leaped out there about 20 yards and then decided paybacks were hell. As her head disappeared between her front legs and the sky line became closer; I understand I muttered "you sonofabitch". At that point I had grass stains all over my back and figured a good night of jitterbugging on the dance floor was probably out. My hamstring later proved that point right. As Kray said later, it will stop hurting in about 6 months. So Jan 3rd that sucker better feel better. At the banquet that night at Bear Lodge it became apparent that we were missing one of Randy Beirmans suitcases. At 10:30 that night I drove back to cow camp to look for the lost luggage. I couldn't dance so what the heck. I breathed a great sigh of relief to find it under a saddle in the horse trailer because I had no idea where to look if it hadn't been there. I would like to thank you people who made our trip such a great success. It is you that make it worth doing. Thank you and may God Bless.