

Trip Report June 2008

Sunday June 22nd:

We had the most unusual arrival we have ever had since we had 11 people driving. Consequently things were a little jumbled. We had some show up early and some show up a little late. Either way we did get them all there.

We couldn't help ourselves and had to have a little cowboy fun with one of our repeat guests right off the bat. Dan Kristinsen who was back for his 5th or 6th trip is 6'10". As we started the saddling part of the horsemanship clinic and everyone went to their horse for the week, we just couldn't help ourselves. We have a little horse we call Derringer. He is all of 13.2 hands. Of course we were filming all of this. To us it was hilarious as 6'10" Dan walked up to 13.2 hands Derringer. Dan looked back at us immediately, expecting a joke but we were all looking away as he looked back at us with this real puzzled look on his face. It was all we could do to keep a straight face. We did have a full sized horse for Dan but she was still in the barn. If Dan had been a greenie he would have liked the smaller economy sized horse. Dan said he would rather have the SUV though, so we did get his horse out of the barn.

We took the afternoon and gathered the herd off the Barker place and trailed them to Bonanza creek where we left them for the next days leg of the trip. As we went under the interstate with the herd all 300 of them went, except one, who decided it was just too much and back to the pasture she went. She was definitely going to take counseling to get her under the interstate. We decided she was better left to come with the July herd.

That night around the campfire Terry Hawk won the white bags for falling off of one of the logs around the fire. Now this isn't the first time that someone has fallen off and won the white bags. We are always glad it's a log and not a real horse. However, with the week still ahead of us we thought about duct taping Terry onto his horse the next day.

Monday 23rd:

At daylight someone came out of the outhouse and brought me a wallet that they had found in there. I stuck it in the chuck box knowing that whoever claimed the wallet was also probably going to claim the White Bags for the day. It's always great to have a nomination so early in the morning. I mean after all the day was only 20 minutes old. Sure enough that night around the fire Marshal confessed that it was his wallet. Now being an attorney from California where nothing is black and white he did have a defense. And I do have to say it was really pretty good. He said he just assumed it was a pay toilet and that's why he had his wallet in there in the first place. I guess in California they need to balance the budget anyway they can.

We had breakfast at dark thirty and headed to Bonanza Creek to gather the herd we had left there yesterday. We had a really good trip and the cattle walked well and Terry stayed on top of his horse all day. We were so proud! As we were trailing the herd up the 1 mile of highway, one of the yearlings decided to visit the neighbors herd as we went by. She jumped off of a 4 foot embankment over the fence and into the 800 head of the neighbors. Now these types of things are what can cause a very good day, turn into a very bad day in a hurry. It took about 30 minutes to get the yearling back into our herd. By the time we got the heifer back, there was a train coming down the railroad track and

we had to cross the bridge over the railroad track so this delay caused us to sit at the railroad tracks for another 15 minutes. . Luckily that was the end of the excitement for the day.

Tuesday 24th:

The morning of the 24th we trailed the herd the 12 miles to the Rocky Bottom at the mouth of the Little Horn Canyon. We had a good quiet trip which is always a plus. After a late lunch we gathered up some cattle to give instruction on cutting cattle. It's always interesting because it goes against everything they have seen on Hollywood. Faster is not better. It's actually just the opposite. The slower the better for people who are just learning. You have to look at the animal you are cutting out and by reading their body language, it will tell you what they are going to do and how fast. For someone who has never cut cattle, just learning the aspect of reading the animals body language is a challenge. Then once you know what the animal is going to do, you have to communicate that to your horse, so that your horse understands. That is all done through pressure with your legs, shifting your weight and hand positioning, so that your balance doesn't become and impediment to the horse you are riding. As we go through this process it is always fun to watch, because some people pick it up fairly quick, while others just don't have the horsemanship skill yet to do so. Some of them see what the animal is going to do but can't pass it on to their horse fast enough in a way that the horse understands what is expected. I'm sure this leaves more than one horse saying "What the hell is going on up there"? Anyway since we cowboys find humor in a number of odd ways, we find this leaves all of us with a grin on our face.

As we progressed through the cutting several guest did an outstanding job. Hanna Rioux, Debbie Remington and Jennifer Cultice all did an outstanding job. The comment of the day came from Linda Harlow, once she cut her animal out, she trailed it over to the others that had been cut out and once there, sternly told the animal, "Now lay down and stay there." I fully expected the animal to wag it's tail, and bark a response of yes ma'am. Once finished we had to corral the cattle we had just cut out and brand a few that had been missed at an earlier branding. As we were trailing them to the corral one of them cut back to the herd with Jennifer Cultice in hot pursuit. The horse she was riding is pretty nimble and was cutting right with the yearling. It was pretty fast and wild for a moment with lots of zigging and zagging. Hollywood stayed right with the yearling, sliding to a halt and spinning around to cut her off. Jennifer stayed at least on top of Hollywood, with much daylight seen between her and the saddle more than once. Jennifer is a firm believer in the old cowboy saying, The higher the jump, the sweeter the breeze, as long as you keep'em between your knees!! The next day Jennifer complained about her bruised thighs. I can't imagine why!

As we were branding those few yearlings that we had missed, we were showing a couple of the guests how to tail over a roped animal. Now for those of you who don't understand this, it is the original cow tipping. You grab the animals tail at the end and pull towards yourself tipping the animal over on it's side. Nicole wanted to give this a try so we let her. She ran over grabbed the end of the tail and pulled, nothing happened. We assumed when we said the end of the tail, she would understand which end. She grabbed the end where the grass discharger is located. We called her the cow proctologist the rest of the week. She also won a turn with the White Bags. Louis Delustro almost won the

White Bags for telling everyone about his dream of being roped and branded by a bunch of cattle. Sometimes dreams are better off being left untold!

WEDNESDAY 25TH:

This morning is always tough because breakfast is around 3:00am. No one is really in a eating mood but this is the one day you really want to eat and pack a big lunch. Sometimes you can spend 12 hours in the saddle on this day, and there is no way around it.. This day is single file for 11 miles, all up hill. However, this was one of those great trips up the canyon. The cattle walked extremely well and it stayed cool. I had huge concerns about this day however. We had real heavy snowfall in the mountains in the spring. On the 5th day of June the snow pack was 300% of normal. This meant there was going to be a lot of water rushing down the river. As we trailed up the canyon next to the river, my apprehension began to grow. It river was all riled up and very very high. I knew we were in trouble when the lead Longhorn steers got to the river and instead of crossing just stood there and looked at us. When you are close to 6 ft at the shoulder and weigh 1800 lbs a little water is generally not a problem. Those lead steers new exactly what they were supposed to do, but acted like the very few conservatives that are actually in congress. The few conservatives wanted to take a little time and think things through and look at other options before just bailing in. (sounds a little bit like the federal bailout) I really think my Longhorn steers have more between their ears than most of those in congress. As I sat on my horse and pondered the situation I realized there was really not another option. To trail around the river crossing would have taken two more days of trailing. The pasture where we needed to go with the herd, was only an hour away by the direct route. I got off my horse and walked directly into the milling herd at the waters edge. Swinging my rope and beating on the Longhorns, I managed to force them into the current. The force of the water knocked the first Longhorn 4 feet sideways in the stream. With his great strength he managed to continue on across the river. With every step forward he was moving a foot downstream. The Longhorns, one right behind the other made it across the stream with water marks 2/3 the way up their sides. The yearlings, not knowing any better, fell in right behind the Longhorns which was exactly what I was hoping would happen. Now the yearlings are weighing 700 lbs and are 2 foot shorter than the Longhorns. Most of the yearlings were knocked into one another and many were bowled over. With yearlings jumping on top of one another and panic setting in they kept lunging forward to get out. Most of the yearlings managed to get across without going over the rapids. I am guessing about 25% of the yearlings got knocked off their feet and went rolling and tumbling over the rapids into the pools below. I sprinted down stream, not to try and rescue an animal, but to see how many weren't going to make it out or which side they came out on. I knew if an animal came back out on our side the only way to get him back across would have been to rope him and drag him across. **THERE WAS NO WAY I WAS GOING TO ROPE AN ANIMAL AND RIDE A HORSE INTO THAT RIVER!!!** I was completely stunned when all of the animals who rolled into the pools, managed to come out on the other side of the river. You can't imagine the sinking feeling when \$200,000.00 of inventory is rolling end over end down the river. To my delight every animal survived the ordeal with only a few complaining of water in their ears. After the cattle were across I looked at everybody sitting on their horses, they were all very quiet and looking directly at me. I knew the question on all of their minds, the look of relief that went across their faces was

indescribable when I announced we would ride down stream a ¼ mile and cross a bridge. Now the Forest Service built that bridge 30 years ago with the idea that we could cross cattle with it. However, typical government project, we were never consulted so the bridge they built is about 4 feet wide. We can ride a horse across it, but you would never get a herd of yearlings across it without roping and dragging lots of them across.

Jason Dufner won the White bags that night for trying to ride Tiny under a log that was all of 4 foot above the ground. Now Tiny gets his name from exactly what you would expect- he is over 16 hands tall. It wasn't even close.

THURSDAY 26th.

Headed to the high meadows with one bunch of people and to Leaky Mtn with the other. Those that went to the high country were shocked to see that it had just barely started to turn green in the high country. The others went to Leaky and went swimming in Emerald Hot Springs. They said the water was just too hot to stand. Today it was Jason Dufner's brother Erick who won the White bags as he rode his horse into a bog after being told that it was probably a little boggy and that maybe he would want to go around it. With mud up to his stirrups the horse did struggle his way out leaving a rather large hole in the mud pit. Erick is no dummy, so on the way back he didn't have to be told it might be a little soft.

FRIDAY 27TH:

We normally ride to the Lake Creek Cow Camp on this day, but because of all the snow the roads weren't even open into the high country yet, so we had to ride back down the canyon. Once we got to the bottom of the canyon we had to transport everyone back up the mountain to Bear Lodge for the last night stay and banquet. We left the horse cavy on the bottom with the idea of coming over the next day and trailing the string of horses back to the ranch. Johannez from Sweden won the drawing for the white bags and was able to take them back home with him. He also won the White bags for the night for being just too damn perfect. He was a great guy that we all really enjoyed so it was a lot of fun to make something up and pin it on him and what better thing than saying he was perfect. It was a great week and since we didn't drown any cattle or guests it was also a profitable week. Take care and thanks everyone for joining us and I would love to see any of you again. Feel free to call and just say hi! We always develop a bond with the people that we spend a week with.