

June trip report 09

Sunday June 28th:

The 20 guests got off the bus, some of them looking very confident and others looking very unsure of themselves. Maybe some of those who were a little unsure of themselves had just done a little too much self medicating the night before. That has happened more than once. Over half the guests were from 3 states, Virginia, Illinois, and Louisiana. After brief introductions and camp protocol we headed to the corral to start the horsemanship clinic. The protocol is really very simple, all you have to remember is the bus that brought you ought here, just left and I control what taxi you ride for the week. The horsemanship clinic went very smoothly as the group had been pretty honest on their registration forms so we had them matched up pretty well and didn't have to spend much time swapping mounts.

Since this is a real cattle drive, once lunch is over we head out to start gathering cattle. This first afternoon is key to getting the group to start relaxing and realizing that this is reality. We have a big job to do that week and they are going to get it done. One of the many joys we have is watching people who have never punched cattle, do something that makes the animals do something, they would never do on their own. Well, we had one of these the first afternoon and it left me grinning from ear to ear the rest of the day as I knew, I had a winner for the nightly award. It was a typical first night, people were a little unsure of one another and didn't know how serious this might be, so they are always a little tentative with nominations. Well when we observe a good one, it makes the first night go so much easier and makes everyone else aware that anything they do all week, there is a pair of eyes observing from somewhere. It might be something a crew member saw during the day or one of the guests observed from someone in the group, but it becomes very cutthroat with people actually trying to bribe their way out of a bad situation. That afternoon as we trailed the herd around a reservoir, is when the mistake which happened rather innocently left me grinning. Now the best way to describe this would be say that the reservoir is shaped somewhat like a star. So in order for the cattle to go around it they were following the path of a star around the edge of the water. Well, Ann Bollenbeck thought the cattle would move faster I guess if they were a little cooler, she rode right into the middle of the herd as they were snaking around the water's edge. Now someone riding into the middle of a herd can cause cattle to move in a manner with which is not always good, and this was the case this time. The yearlings took one look at Ann barreling down on them, one look at the water on their right and decided swimming was more appealing. About 20 of them dived into the water and headed for the far shore. I was above them laughing because the look on Ann's face asked, "are they supposed to do that"? The funny part is that cattle are really pretty good swimmers when they have to, so the cattle were never in any danger and it provided me with a good laugh.

Monday June 29th:

Breakfast was at 5:00am and it was a perfect day to trail cattle. It was cool with a slight breeze which would make the day much easier to accomplish. It's always fun to watch people come staggering to the fire the first morning, some are so excited they didn't sleep much, while others look at you like this is a joke right? Of course by the time most of the guests get to the fire I have had just about had a pot of coffee so I'm

wired and ready to ride! With the cool breeze the cattle really walked making the day very easy. The group of new cowboys really did a good job so we were back at the Rafter around 12:30. Plans generally don't go that smooth on this outfit. We did have one slight glitch and it left us grinning again. The first morning we usually have someone who doesn't recognize which horse is there's and saddles someone else horse. Yup, it happened again. The great thing is Brian took it all in stride. However, people did get to the corral a little sooner, or at least ahead of Brian so they could be sure they had their horse. However, the big winner of the white bags that day was one of the Louisiana group. Seems this particular young man was missing his girl something terrible and with all the new fangled technology, was seen riding along texting her. Curry, as you are riding along texting your girlfriend, you totally shoot the image of the rough and rugged loner cowboy. Women like the independent appeal. Texting just blows the cowboy image to pieces.

Tuesday June 30th:

Because the cattle are right there at the ranch where we are camped, we always let people sleep in on this morning until 5:00am and then have breakfast at 5:30am. Today is a big day as we have to bust camp down and move it to the Rocky Bottom. We had another cool morning and all the new cowboys were gaining more understanding of how to trail cattle. As it is actually harder than it looks. They all did a great job as we covered the 12 miles and were in for lunch at the Rocky Bottom at lunch time. The amazing thing is the drags were only 40 minutes behind the leads. We have had many trips where the drags have been 2 hours behind the leads. After lunch Trent and the guest mounted up and Trent did the cutting seminar and then all the new cowboys had their turn at it. Trent makes it look so easy, but easy it is not. You must remember that you have to read the animal you are cutting by watching their ears, then send the message to your horse properly and also keeping your body in position so the horse can move accordingly. Sending the message properly to the horse is always the most difficult part. After a couple hours of cutting, the horses were turned out for the night and everyone grabbed their trunks and headed to the river for a swim in the warm swirling waters of the Little Horn. Everyone had done such a great job with the cattle that day, that I hadn't heard about any white bag nominations yet. However, the swim in the river managed to solve our problem. Seems as people finished up an argument over behind some rocks occurred and was heard by Troy Wiseman. Troy kept it to himself until that evening around the fire. Seems two ladies who came together got into an argument over whose bra was whose. Now it appeared to me, there wouldn't be much of an argument! When the votes were cast we had two winners. It was decided that they had to share the white bags but not the bra!!

As we sat down for dinner that evening we could see some real menacing black thunder clouds building in the west. As the storm approached it appeared we had some weather on the way. Just as most of the people were seated and starting to eat this huge gust of wind came blasting through the camp. The gust came up under the tent and raised it up off the ground several inches. When this happened it lifted on end of the tent off of the ridge pole it was seated on. The ridge support and leg came crashing down onto everyone sitting at their tables. With rain mixed in with it, some people were getting their second bath for the day. We jumped up, grabbed the upright pole and hoisted back up in the gale like winds and just stood there and held it. We were sure it would stop

before daylight!. The storm left as fast as it had arrived. The true blessing in the whole thing is that when the 20 ft ridge pole came crashing down it managed to miss everyone.

Wednesday July 1st:

This is always the hardest day of the week as we have a long way to go and anyway you do it, it won't be over until we get the dishes done which is around 9:30pm. On this morning we have to feed people, get the horses in and caught, the camp busted down and everything that needs to go packed up the mountain. This morning breakfast is closer to dark thirty. This is one of those days that there isn't a lot of talking early in the morning as people are just trying to get up and get going. We had a pretty good effort by everyone and got the cooks out of camp around 5:30am. They always have a brutal day. Once people were saddled and ready to start pushing cattle I had told Trent to go ahead and take off with the herd and guests. I was folding up tents and getting things put in the proper piles because not everything goes to the next camp on the mountain. As I looked over to the corral I noticed Lee getting on his horse rather oddly. At 6'4" you don't expect someone that size to have any difficulty getting on. He did finally swing up there and off he rode after the herd. As he rode by it became very obvious why the difficulty. He had brought a folding chair and had tied it on behind his saddle. You would think after 18 years of doing this I would have seen it all but this was a new one! We had the easiest trip I have ever had up the canyon with the cattle. One of the reasons other than all the good help was the fact that we had gone up earlier in the spring and built fences around the bad corners on the switchbacks. The only little mishap we had though was on the switchbacks. It seems Joe got pushed over the edge. I never was sure of the real reason as there were about 20 different reasons thrown out. Since he had so endeared himself to the females in the group it's even possible it was one of them. Anyway, Joe held onto his reins as there was know way, the horse was going to let Joe pull him off over the edge. It's pretty hard to beat seasoned horses!! This area is real steep but it's not a cliff that he was hanging over. The great thing about this day is that once we get to the Lower Drift fence we stop and let the herd rest. This gives everyone a chance to take a nap and catch up a little bit. I know when I arrive in the drags I generally just die for about 40 minutes. After our nap we gathered up the herd and headed on to Robinson Crossing and up the Beaver Slide. The river didn't give us any problems but there were some trees down across the trail just on the other side of the river and they did give us a problem. We rode into camp about 6:30 pm. As I said it's a long day. When we had the white bags nominations that we had a couple pretty good ones. It seems, Taylor's group who had Barbara Hadaway in got nominated first. I guess I should say Barbara got nominated not Taylor's group. As their group rode up the canyon Barbara kept saying "Taylor there's one for you to get, there's another one over there, there' one here. I don't know if it was nerves but she certainly kept Taylor hopping all day!! The grand prize winner that night though was Karen Bates. This was a first also! Karen got nominated for trying to saddle her horse without waking him. As Karen tried to explain her way out of it the explanation didn't make any more sense than what she got nominated for. She said she really wanted to do was saddle Jason Kim while he was sleeping and ride him. We decided we didn't want to know "The Rest Of the Story". Things were in order when we rode into camp but the cooks did say that there was sign of Mr. Bubbles around camp.

Thursday July 2nd:

We give everyone a chance on this day to sort of recover so we have a late breakfast. We had breakfast about 8:30am under brilliant clear blue skies. As we were eating breakfast we could see the big black clouds building on the western horizon. We saddled up around 10:00am to gather the herd and move them to the next pasture where they would stay for another 10 days. After we had been out about an hour it started to rain then snow. Everybody slickered up and kept moving with the herd. The temperatures had dropped enough to cause snow but the thunder and lightning was clapping right over our heads. As soon as we got to the trees we just sat and waited. With the snow and rain, and everyone in there yellow slickers sitting on their horses in the trees we looked like a bunch of camouflaged bananas. With the way the lightning was popping I wondered if there were going to be any barbecued bananas.

By 2:00 in the afternoon the storm had passed and we were back to clear blue skies as we headed to Leaky Mountain and Emerald Hot Springs. When we got to Emerald Curry dived in for a refreshing swim. That night around the fire Lee got nominated for tying his horse to a log when we were at Emerald. The problem was that the log was all of 6 inches around and all of 14 inches long. I guess in Louisiana everything that looks like a log might be a gator so you just pick small ones. The winner that night was a real week winner but a winner is a winner and must wear the bags with pride. It seems Joe through a piece of gum on the ground sometime during the day and the person doing the nominating did such a great job of selling it, that it stuck.

Friday July 3rd:

Since we have to close this camp up today and move out it's another early day for the crew. As the guests were saddling their horses that morning we were sure we had a slam dunk for the bags that night. By now the people were saddling their horses automatically. As people were saddling up Mark Parker came sidling over to me and said he and Troy had had a few words because Troy was saddling Mark's horse. Troy told Mark that he didn't know what he was talking about. That's when Mark came over to me. I quickly sized up the situation and sure enough Troy had Mark's horse. I said to Mark, lets not say anything and see if he notices. Troy all saddled up and was rather proud of himself as he was one of the first to get saddled. Now in all fairness to Troy, both horses were sorrels, had two eyes, two ears, and four legs, but that's about where it stopped. There was one very large difference that Troy hadn't picked up on. Troy had been riding a mare all week and Mark a gelding. Even when Marks horse stretched out to take a leak, Troy missed it. I believe I had the gender thing figured out about the time I was four. We thought maybe Troy had had a shot of testosterone or something and just had to ride a gelding that day. Maybe he should have had that cowboy coffee instead of Spring Water. Were not really sure, but I can say Troy was rather shocked when we pointed out the difference in the two horses.

We had another big first that night at the banquet. My nephew got down on his knee and proposed to Jill. It was great! I would like to thank everyone for their week of hard work. As you all learned, Hollywood makes moving cattle appear to be very simple but is rather a challenge. However, you people are a lot more cowboy than most of the Hollywood people who portray cowboys.

THANKS

