

CLEAN UP RIDE 07

Saturday Sept 29 -07

Craig Mead and I drove to Sheridan and picked up the group of guests patiently waiting there turn for a week of torture made up of thin frosty air and sore back sides. Jim McGarvey was the returnee with the most experience with this being his 4th trip. We had two gals from Holland, a gentleman from Germany, Kate Yates on her second trip with the clean up circle, Les Broker a 06 returnee, Dane Willis a June 07 returnee and his sister Seana, who obviously he didn't like, or he wouldn't have brought her. Dane again had his camera and has taken some incredible pictures on the two trips that he has been on. We arrived to a chill in the air that late afternoon to find Taylor already had the horses in and caught so we saddled up and headed north. As we were saddling the fog started to roll in and the chill in the air became sort of white and floated in the wind. However the good news is that it stopped snowing once we got off of our horses. Of course by then we were chilled so the lure of the warm cabin was certainly in my mind and I'm sure on the mind of those repeat offenders. We had a great meal and downed a few grapes and soaked up the heat from the Old Majestic. It was a great way to spend the evening.

Sunday 30th:

We rode out of camp and headed for the Lick Creek pasture and started gathering the cattle that we had missed and left from the previous trip. We were also looking for the loose horses that we had turned out in the Lick Creek pasture the week before. We planned on trailing them down country with the cattle as we went. Now the horses went real easy until we got into Dayton Gulch then they decided they were very happy where they were, and thank you but they didn't want to go home yet. Sounds just like my kids when they were six years old. After several trips up and down the hills we got everything gathered up and thrown into the bottom of Dayton Gulch. I could tell that we were short 4 horses out of the group. With the cattle and about a dozen horses I didn't feel we had the time to look for the missing brumbies. We opened up the gate and out the bottom we went. The cattle weren't real sure they wanted to go and horses were still protesting but we managed to finally get them walking. The cattle really scattered in the first patch of timber and we were having a difficult time keeping them gathered up. When we finally broke out in the swamp my worst fear came to be. Instead of going on down country the horses and sucked back East on us and were headed up the open face at the end of the Little Horn Rim. I spurred my colt into a run hoping to overtake the horses before they got up the face. I knew once they got up there, trying to convince them to come down off of there was not going to be any fun at all. As I rounded the corner of the timber and looked up the hill, I realized I was too late. They had 4 other people after them but they were intent on going back to Lake Creek. By the time I got to the top the colt I was riding was completely out of wind and gas. We made about 3 passes across the open face trying to force the horses back down but they kept outrunning us. I guess none of us should have had desert the evening before. I finally got down about 12 feet of nylon rope and started giving the loose bunch of horses a good dose of feel good (or at least I felt good about it). After about 20 minutes of chasing the horses around and with me

shouting many different instructions we finally got the horses back off the hill and headed down towards the Little Horn. I'm sure most of my instructions were anything but clear, or good, but they all took it with good humor. The rest of the day was rather uneventful which the colt I was riding was sure glad of. It was a real nice day and we enjoyed our time eating lunch around 2:00pm with the cattle and horses where they were supposed to be. That doesn't happen every day with livestock. But remember we were still short 4 horses somewhere in Lick Creek.

Monday Oct 1st. We were headed to the Little Horn today so Craig and I were busy packing and weighing different items. We had 4 pack animals and the loading is always slow so I sent Jim McGarvey out with the other guests and told him to reride Lick Creek and meet the pack string in the bottom of Dayton Gulch. Jim and his group had been gone about 20 minutes when I looked up and here came Jim and Simone back. The horse that Simone was riding was limping from time to time and they were a little concerned about whether to go on or what to do. Now the problem was if you remember, we had sent all the fresh horses to the Little Horn the day before. Now I know in all the westerns this is where they just shoot the lame horse but I just didn't think it was that serious. I lifted Buddies hoof and checked to see if I could find a rock or something he couldn't find any reason for his lameness. When we walked him on the level ground he appeared sound so I said to go ahead and ride him and hopefully he would walk out of it. When Craig, myself and head Chef, Meg got to the bottom of Dayton Gulch there was no sign of any of the cowboys so I sent Craig and Meg onto the Little Horn and I waited for the other cowboys to show up. I only waited about 15 minutes when around the corner of the timber patch came a couple of riders trailing the 4 horses that we had missed the day before. This was fantastic except we were still missing a few more cowboys. The slowly showed up and my only concern was that Simone was now riding the horse that Les Broker had ridden out on that morning and there was know sign of Les. As the last rider appeared around the corner I saw a man walking and realized it was Les. Buddy had gotten so lame they had decided they shouldn't ride him. Once everyone was there we gave Les back his horse, I unsaddled my horse and gave it to Simone. We held the 4 runaways against the fence and I caught the one I wanted so that everyone had a taxi again. My choices were rather limited, there was a two year old colt, 2 older horses with health issues, and one who had bucked the last cowboy off that had ridden her and that had been 2 months earlier. I saddled her up and borrowed Kates horse Scooter, from her and ponied Spotted Owl at a lope for a couple hundred yards. She seemed just fine so I crawled on and off we went for the rest of the day. She was great! The only problem were the two buddies with her who wouldn't leave here side so we spent the rest of the day with the loose horses running through us. We rode lots of country that afternoon looking for 4 yearlings that had been seen the day before in the Dayton Gulch country. We never did find them that day and around 4:00 in the afternoon I decided it was time to head to the Little Horn. At the end of the season with my tally coming out short 2 it became obvious that they had smelled the herd that had gone out ahead of them the day before and gone onto the Little Horn on their own. We rode into camp that evening to a warm cabin and hot meal. Meg had outdone herself again. We had a great evening until about 30 minutes after dinner when the long day in the saddle started to show up and people headed to bed. By 9:00 that evening it was just Craig, myself and Meg still up.

Nothing like a hard day in the saddle, the stars blazing overhead and the roar of a river to make you sleep like a baby.

Tuesday: After the horses were caught we rode through the Little Horn cattle and picked up a few of our yearlings and kicked them across the river and started our cattle toward the north end of the allotment to the gate that goes into the canyon. I wondered if Robinson Crossing would be slick but the cattle and horses went off with no mishaps. It was a beautiful day with clear blue skies and big white clouds floating over the rims. Once the gate was opened we started on down the canyon and I could tell by looking that we had about 20 of the neighbors cattle in with ours. It wasn't a big problem because he was coming off with his cattle the day behind us anyway. We had gone about a mile down the canyon when another group of cattle belonging to this neighbor came trotting down the trail from behind us and mixed in with our group. We had gone about another mile when another group of about 30 caught us and continued on down the canyon. I was starting to get a little concerned now because the last thing I wanted was 300 of the neighbors cattle mixed with ours to have to separate at the bottom. I was starting to think that maybe Chuck's cows had torn the gate down and were coming down on their own a day early. After we dropped our herd for the day and headed back to camp another group went charging past us so once we got to the Lower Drift fence I shut the gate to keep the mix as small as possible. If the two herds got mixed we were going to completely blow the rest of the week.

Wednesday: We sent Jim McGarvey and the rest down the through the parks with instructions to wait for the pack string at Camp Rock. Craig, myself and Meg finished loading the pack string and we headed down the Leaky Mtn side of the Little Horn. I was very relieved to find when we got to the Lower Drift fence that the gate was still shut and most of Chuck's cattle were still there. I hoped the cowboys ahead of us had a good head start on us. I was afraid that once the gate was opened it would be a flood of cattle coming down on top of our herd. We opened the gate and rode on through ourselves. We hadn't gone a half mile until the lead group of Chucks cows coming at a trot, caught us from behind. I stopped and sat for a while holding the herd back and letting the pack string continue it's slow pace through the canyon. When the pack string reached the point in the canyon where the trails split we took the high trail like always and discovered there was a new fallen tree across the trail and there wasn't anyway that we were going to get the packs under that tree. I was last in the string leading a pack horse so I tied the pack horse to a tree, dropped the reins on Spotted Owl and walked to the front to see if I could somehow move the tree enough for us to get by. As I assessed the situation on the 70 degree slope, I thought if I could pull several of the smaller trees off of the one across the trail I might be able to bend the tree enough for us to get by. After about 10 minutes of slipping and sliding and muttering under my breath I finally got the tree bent out of the way so that we could pass. That's when the delightfully dull day changed. If you remember back two days ago, I had said that Spotted Owls buddies were running through us all day long and were a real pain in the butt. Well they had been following along behind my pack horse all day so love sick for that mare that they wouldn't leave her. I had figured with the pack horse tied behind me she would stand just fine. Well she did until I moved the tree out of the way. At that time she decided she could push past the pack horse, which she did and off back up the canyon the three horses went at a trot. I ran to the corner hoping she would step on a bridle rein and stop just long enough for me

to catch her. Once I rounded the first corner after them I could see that I was never going to catch them afoot. Cowboys have never been known for their sprinting ability with 6 layers on unless they were encouraged by a mad mamma. I ran back to our group yelling at Uwe to get off his horse because I needed him in a real hurry. I jumped on, spun him around and off up the canyon we went. About 200yds up the canyon I spotted the 3 horses trotting up the trail headed back to the Little Horn. I charged up behind them and now we were all in a lope. Since this is a single file trail in a very heavily wooded spot all I could do was lope along behind until I saw a spot that was maybe wide enough for me to get by. I knew if this didn't work it might be a mile before I could get a head of them. I gave Gunner is head, tightened up my sphincter muscle and charged on by, leaning over to grab my reins as I went by. I swooped by, picked up my reins and came to a stop turned around and headed back down the canyon to the pack sting which was patiently waiting for me. The two love sick geldings who had started all of this went charging on up the canyon. I really didn't care at this point if they ever came back or not. When we arrived at Camp Rock the rest of the riders were there waiting just liked we had planned. As we rode up I hollered "Get back in your leather chairs and lets get going, we have another herd right on our tail". The riders scrambled and grabbed their horses and off we went. When we got to Gun Sight Pass I sat in the notch and held the herd back while the rest of the cowboys whooped and hollered to push our herd along as fast as they could. I waited about 10 minutes then went on until I reached the top of the stairs and sat and did the same thing again. When I reached the top of the Switchbacks our herd was about half way down with the other herd right in my hip pocket. I knew if we didn't get our herd to the bottom first we were going to have a major problem on the Rocky Bottom. I sat for probably 20 minutes holding back the other herd. They were pushing and shoving trying to get past me but with a few rocks, a few cuss words and two dogs I was able to hold my ground. This continued like this on down the canyon. I finally managed to hold them back enough for our herd to reach the bottom without getting a major mix with the neighbors. Once we reached the bottom we gathered everything and pushed them over to the state line where we held herd and worked Chuck's cows off from ours. If we didn't get them separated today we weren't going to get the cattle home on Thursday. Do to some great efforts by several different guests we got the herd worked and kicked into the road without any spilt milk. Once there we rode back to the corrals and turned our horses loose for the night and headed to the Double Rafter for dinner.

Thursday: We headed back to the Rocky Bottom the next morning and as we pulled out of the Double Rafter and onto the county road here were the Longhorns and a handful of yearlings standing at the gate waiting to be let in the pasture. With the miles down the canyon and the fact that they had walked all night that little group had traveled about 20 miles in the last 24 hours. That was good and bad because that meant our leads had gone off and left the rest of the herd. Once we were saddled up we rode through all of the neighbors cows that we had somehow managed to out run down the canyon and picked up a few of our yearlings that were with theirs. About 8-10 head if I remember correctly. This group of cowboys had really done a great job this week so once we were headed up the road I turned them loose with the herd and loaded the pack animals in the trailer and headed back to the Double Rafter. I had all the confidence that they could handle it by themselves with no trouble. After dumping the pack horses I went back to join them and they had made about 9 of the 12 miles and were doing just great. At the end of the week

you like to see that everyone still has a smile on and this bunch certainly did. I couldn't of hand picked a nicer group to spend a week with. The herd arrived at the Rafter around 3:00 pm with tired horses and tired cowboys. I'm sure the horses were glad the week was over, but I can say I really wasn't that excited. This bunch had done a great job and I hated to see them go. Craig and I loaded up the vehicles and took our cowboys to Sheridan. The biggest downer of the week happened when we arrived at the motel in Sheridan. Dane Willis had left his car in the parking lot and sometime during the week someone had backed into him and didn't leave a note or anything. Those are the same type of people who throw garbage out on the roads and complain about livestock grazing on the mountains. Thanks to all who made the week a huge success.