

JULY CD TRIP REPORT 2011

SUNDAY JULY 10TH:

Every trip has its own unique experiences and this one was no different. We had 2 guests whose flight into Denver was late, so consequently they couldn't get their connecting flight into Sheridan. Like always there is a solution as long as you don't get your shorts tied in a knot first. It just so happened that one of our repeat guests was going to miss part of the first day and was driving up from Denver. We called him and he was more than happy to pick up the 2 newbies and tell them terrifying stories of his last trip. I can't thank Robert Lawrenz enough for giving the hitchhikers a lift to Sheridan. We are an equal opportunity torturer so want everyone there for the entire week.

We started the trip with the mandatory horsemanship clinic and then after lunch headed to the Barker Place to start the gather. After lunch Robert and his two stowaways joined us so they didn't miss out on any of the action. The gather went as smooth as could be expected for the first time out. We only had one little piece of excitement and that was when one of my crew members opened the gate into the next pasture as we trailed the herd through. He then was on the wrong side of the herd which allowed the herd to go through the gate and instead of continuing straight on ahead, they swerved sharply to the left and ran to the bottom of the hill. The horse race was on to stop the herd from charging out onto the hay meadow at the bottom of the hill. Hay is very hard to cut once cattle run through it and trample it down. This generally pisses the land owner off and since I lease from him I didn't want him ticked off. (He is also much bigger and stronger than I am). That evening around the fire Leslie Halliday from Scotland was nominated for the White Bags. It seems when the bus arrived that morning to pick people up she couldn't be found. She said she was still on Scottish time.

MONDAY JULY 11TH:

After breakfast we transported people to Bonanza Creek where we had dropped the herd the day before. As we were saddling up, another herd went by the ranch that takes the same route we do for the first five miles, then we go a different direction. As they were going by and since we were still getting saddled I felt their herd would probably be way ahead of us so it wouldn't be an issue. Once we had everyone mounted and saddled I had to go to Sheridan to get a part for a pickup that was broke down 60 miles north of us in Hardin Mt. The cooks had been on their way home with groceries on Saturday when it cracked a fuel line. Since it was Saturday afternoon I couldn't get parts until Monday morning. Trent and all the guest gathered the herd and headed out. Once they arrived with the herd in the little town of Parkman, they crossed the bridge that is over the railroad and there sat the other herd of cattle in the middle of the road right ahead of them. They could do nothing but sit and wait. The other herd had decided to stop and eat lunch. Since they allowed their lead cattle to keep walking we couldn't go into the neighbors pasture and go around them, so we were stuck, much to the delight of the other neighbor. He is sort of a jerk! We spent 3 hours sitting behind that other herd in the hot sun. I felt very bad for everyone but we have no control over others. Once the other herd finally decided to take off we could then take off with our herd. The other herd only had about 3 more miles to go before they were done for the day, we had about 6 to go. On the way with the herd, there are a couple deep washouts to cross and Randy Moore was leading his horse across. He didn't get out far enough ahead of his horse when the horse jumped so the horse landed right on top of him. Most people who own horses are way too easy on their horses as they are much tougher than they appear. We believe in being kind to our horses but to carry them on your back so early in the week, was slightly over doing it!! Of course this gave Randy the inside track on the White Bags. However, that night around the fire, Scott Black won the White Bags, it seems sometime during the day, he lost a lens in his glasses and wasn't even aware of it. Hey give him a break he is from Southern California. Heidi also got nominated as she

continually had to stop and get off and pick her hat up. We never did figure out if the wind was blowing it off or if she was just moving so damn fast she couldn't keep it on her head!

I did get my pickup parts but had to fix 4 flat tires and put on 5 horseshoes when I arrived back from Hardin. As I was approaching the ranch on my way home there were great big black clouds forming over the horizon and the radio announced they had tornado warnings. All I could think of was the people with the cattle. I had no way to warn them, so all I could do was hope they saw it coming. It was possible that they would have to abandon the herd and look for cover for themselves. When I drove into the ranch I was so glad to see that they had beaten the storm in by about 15 minutes. The route they take with the herd on that particular day has very little shelter.

TUESDAY JULY 12TH:

As I headed to the coral the next morning about 2 hours before daylight, I noticed that one of the big Cottonwood trees in our driveway had lost a great big branch. We had all the extra vehicles parked in the driveway and the only place the branch could have fallen without hitting a vehicle is exactly where it landed. It was truly amazing. Every vehicle in the barnyard was shut in due to the angle the big branch was laying. The end of it had fallen between the horse trailer and pickup so you couldn't move the pickup up and trailer forward or backwards. It would have been hard to have placed that huge branch there by hand. We had to go get the chain saw and trim a few branches so that we could get the tractor in close enough to pull it away from the pickup and trailer. Once we hooked a log chain to the branch and pulled it about 6 feet to the south, we could then come in at a different angle and with the grapple fork, pick up the branch. My best guess is that the branch weighed in excess of 1500 lbs. It was a green branch so there was lots of water weight in it. I know without the tractor we would have had to cut it up into 2 foot sections to move it by hand. It would have totaled any vehicle that it would have landed on.

We split into two groups with Taylor taking one group and gathering the cattle we had trailed in the day before. Trent and I took the rest and we rode west through the hills for about an hour to get to the next herd that we had to gather. The plan was to throw the two herds together somewhere in route. Once we had the cow herd gathered up and to the top of the divide, we had to cut out some of the pairs whose calves were just too young to walk all the way to the mountain. We have found that the calves need to be about 3 weeks old, before they are strong enough to keep up with mama for the journey. We arrived at our day's destination around 3:00pm which also happened to be lunch time. Since this is reality the cows dictate the clock. We had lunch at the Little Horn River as we sat and let cattle mother up. We had two nominations for the White Bags that evening. One was Bret for flirting with the cows. (now I can honestly say, flirting with cows is not as bad as it sounds). The other was one of our guests from across the pond. Dudley Freshwater was nominated for taping something up with duct tape on his back side. We decided it must be one of those English things and maybe we didn't want anymore information than what we already had! However, from that point on he was called Dudley Duct tape!

WEDNESDAY JULY 13TH:

We knew today was going to be extremely challenging. Since I knew what type of day we were headed for, we had to have breakfast real early to get a jump on the day. We had breakfast at dark thirty to keep as much of the cool of day ahead of us that we could. The terrain and brush that we had to trail through was going to make the day extremely difficult. The only good thing is that none of the guests had any idea how tough it was going to be. Climbing a couple thousand feet in elevation during the heat of the day, with very little water was going to try everyone's patience. I also knew and they didn't, that once we dropped the cattle for the day we still had a 3 hour ride on to camp. Sometimes ignorance is bliss!

We gathered the herd and went about a half mile when I noticed a couple tight bagged cows. This of course meant their calves had not made the journey with us the day before. We cut the two

cows out and headed them towards home. They were going to have go on their own because we weren't going to be back for at least 3 days. We then had about 3 miles to trail the herd before we crossed the Little Horn River and started up the 2500 foot climb in elevation for the day. The leads arrived at the edge of the Little Horn where we always wait and make sure the drags are caught up before taking off with the leads. We sit and mother up before going any farther. We certainly didn't want calves going back at the end of the day. We waited for over an hour. Two calves after walking about a half mile decided that mom wasn't anywhere around and decided they were going back home to look for them. Off they went with the cowboys in hot pursuit! They did get the two calves, but did have to give one of the calves a nylon treatment before he was convinced to go along. (for you city folks that means he got roped). With the delays and the temperature climbing along with the climb in elevation we had ahead of us, I knew we were in for a tough day. But hey, the tougher it is the better we like it!!

It was every bit as tough as I anticipated as we had to drop the herd about 2 miles from my hoped destination for the day. If it had not been at least a 3 hour ride on into camp once we dropped the cattle we could have kept pushing. As we were pushing up the steep slope, with brush lining both sides of the trail and cattle diving off on both sides the going was extremely slow. We were continually jumping off our horses and crawling through the brush after those 4 legged T-Bones. A bunch would go in and you would come out not having a clue as to whether you got all of them or half of them. I knew we were going to need another circle to get this pasture gathered. We had been pushing cattle since shortly after daybreak and it was approaching 3:00 in the afternoon when we decided we needed to c all it a day and ride the next 3 hours on to camp. We rode into camp sometime after 6:00pm and figured we had been in the saddle around 13 hours that day. When we say we are reality and not a dude ranch you had better believe it! However, the camp we were at that night is unbelievably beautiful so once people had a chance to get off and relax a moment, there spirits were very high. It's amazing but the thing we have learned throughout 18 years of doing this is that the tougher the day, the more memorable and cherished the trip is. People have a thirst for something new and unique and I promise you we will deliver!!

THURSDAY JULY 14TH:

Since we had a very long day the day before, we had a late breakfast so people could get rested up a little bit. With the distance back to where we had dropped the herd the day before, riding back to do a regather wasn't a real possibility. It wasn't just the 3 hours back to where we had dropped the herd but the additional 2 hours to go back clear to the end of the pasture we had dropped the cattle in. That meant 5 hours each way and 2 hours then trailing the cattle to where we were headed. If we had chosen to do that it meant we weren't going to get into camp before dark. Now you must remember that time of year, dark is around 9:30 pm. That meant one real long day on already tired horses. The Dry Fork was a new allotment to us and now that we have attempted it once I know how we will do it next time. Cowboying is a learning experience and the livestock and Mother Nature are your teachers.

After breakfast we decided to split three directions with one group going with me and taking a leisurely trail ride, while one group took the chain saw and were going to clear a trail that we had to take the herd through the end of July and the other group, took out a pack load of salt and fenced. We assumed the trail cutting crew were going to have a pretty easy day. Boy were we wrong on that. We had cut that particular trail out the year before, so we anticipated maybe 3-5 tree's that would need to be cut out. The trail crew cut trees out of the trail all day long and didn't get all the way to the end! The group with me that wanted a nice easy trail ride, got just what they asked for until I decided to see if there was a trail down the bottom of the Dry Fork next to the river. Remember, this is a new allotment so we were learning it ourselves. We started down a game trail by the river and crossed back and forth several times and it was becoming worse by the step. After we had gone down the river about ½ mile, it became evident that we either were going to need to turn back or climb up out of the canyon. The

ground was perfectly dry so the footing was good and the horses were all very experienced with this type of thing, however, several of our guests turned out to not be so experienced with this type of thing. We didn't have to use climbing gear, so I didn't think it was that bad. Once we reached the top, one of the guests said I need a minute and bailed off her horse to just stand on level solid ground. She was shaking so hard it took her 3 tries to light her cigarette. We had just climbed several hundred feet in the last couple minutes to reach level ground and the climb was more than the total climb in elevation in all of Denmark where they were from.

The winner that evening of the White Bags was none other than Dudley Duct Tape. Seems he got caught taking the toilet paper out of the ladies privy. Now by the code of the west that is just about a hanging offense. He is so lucky he didn't get toilet papered to a tree somewhere. I go to great lengths to make sure I never offend the fairer sex. I have been married almost 30 years and next to leaving the toilet seat up, stealing the toilet paper is the lowest blow.

FRIDAY JULY 15:

Today is the last day of the trip so we rode out of camp after breakfast about 8:30am. However, there were many things that happened today that made us wranglers smile and giggle to ourselves. One of our southern California repeat guests managed to saddle the wrong horse. Now I understand the confusion, both horses had two ears, 4 legs and two eyes. Anyone could have made that simple mistake. However, with the liberal mind set of a southern Californian, the fact that he had ridden a gelding all week and had now saddled up a mare, was of no difference. I wonder if Damian's girlfriend has explained the difference yet! One of the other grinning episodes was again Dudley Duct Tape as he swung on to ride off into the sunset and discovered, as he attempted to ride away, that he had left his horse tied to the hitchrack. At least this way he wasn't going to get lost!! As we were riding out that morning and topped out on top of the Dry Fork ridge we did get to see a moose trot by. That did bring out lots of camera's.

After a short break, (we had just climbed about 2000 feet in the last hour) we headed off the mountain. As we were coming down one of the single file trails that we use, we came around a bend and there was about a 5 inch tree leaning across the trail just below saddle horn height. Of course we hadn't brought the chain saw with us, so out came the world famous Leatherman. By pulling on the green tree and cutting at the same time we were able to cut the tree out rather quickly. We turned it over to two of our Europeans who had been on yesterday's trail cutting trip. It was probably the first time that an American pine tree had been cut out in the U.S. using a leatherman by a Belgian and a German who couldn't speak English.

However, with all this going on the winner of the White Bags that evening was Leslie Halliday from Scotland. Seems to me one of our guests found one of her gloves in his tent in the morning. Now we are not sure, but she might have been trying to steal the toilet paper back from Dudley Duct Tape. She tried to explain, that really what happened, is she came back from the ladies privy during the night and couldn't find which tent was hers. She swears she didn't know she had the wrong tent, until she entered it. That's her story and she is sticking to it. Did anyone catch the underlying drift of the White Saddle Bags. It seems in every instance it was always the same people involved. I just push cows for a living, so don't look at me for an explanation! Anyway, I want to thank all of you as you made our week very successful and delightful. I hope you had as much fun as we did, even though most of the laughs were at your expense. You people did a damn fine job!

