

July 2015 Cattle Drive Trip Report

Sunday July 5th:

Picked people up in Sheridan and arrived at the ranch around 9:30am. We had 3 people follow us to the ranch with their vehicles, so getting everyone found and gathered, is always a bigger obstacle than you would anticipate. After introductions Camp Procedure's 101, we headed to the arena to start the horsemanship clinic with Chris Ellsworth. The day was overcast with a slight drizzle so we did the horsemanship clinic with most everyone wearing their slickers. After a late lunch we gathered the first herd of cattle and headed to that days destination with them. Everything for the most part went according to plan. Notice I said for the most part. We had the white bags that evening and both nominations were new screw ups, that had never happened on any earlier trips. Keep in mind we have been doing these for 22 years. The first nomination came from Rebecca Sharp who realized as the bus was pulling out of the ranch that she had left something on the bus. Taylor took off sprinting to stop the bus, and just got it stopped as it was pulling out of the place. If he had been 15 seconds slower we wouldn't have gotten it stopped. Now we have had this happen before and it was always something like, I left my heart medicine or insulin on the bus. When we discovered what it was that Rebecca had left on the bus I knew we had a real strong nomination for the white bags that evening. Rebecca had left a baked potato on the bus! I can only assume she was afraid we weren't going to feed her this week. However, the winner was her traveling partner Steve. When he had sent in his final payment he had written on the check, continuing education. (He actually had no idea how much education he was in for). We had only been with this group for about 8 hours and I was already sure, I knew why those two travelled together.

Monday July 6th:

3:30am- I hollered at the ground hogs to get out of bed and get their horses saddled. Taylor and the cowpushers road out of camp shortly after daylight so that would be around 5:00am. I hadn't checked, but my gut told me if I went to the kitchen and counted the potatoes we were going to be one short that day as Rebecca rode by. I stayed in camp to help the rest of the crew pack up camp and then I would ride on and catch up with the herd somewhere in route. As we were packing up camp Tyler who was my camp foreman for the day, came over to me and said, "Someone has bent the frame on the Goose Neck, that has the 500 gallon water tank on it and the tank is just about to slide off". This 500 gallon tank is our drinking water and anything else that is needed around camp. Seems when someone had pulled in with the tank filled with water, they had cut a corner to close and dropped a tire into a hole, tweaking the frame. There had been so much force that the whole tank had slid about 12 inches one way. If it slid much more the tank was coming off. The week before the trip I had told a couple of the guys to take the 300 gallon tank off the trailer and scrub it out real good. I went on about my way not realizing they had dropped the tank in the process and broke the tank. I went to town to get another one and all they had was a 500 gallon tank so with limited options, that is what I got. I told the Yahoo's to remount the new tank and never checked it myself. Turns out the brackets that were built for the 300 gallon tank wouldn't fit the 500 gallon tank and of course no one bothered to say anything to me about it, they just cinched it down and away we went.

Well, with the tank having slid over, it was obvious we weren't going anywhere with it, until it was centered again. Since we had only been at that camp one night there was still about 400 gallons of water. All I could do was open the drain and let the water out until it got lite enough that we could recenter the tank on the trailer. When we reached about 100 gallons still in the tank, we took the Bobcat and managed to slide the tank back over center. They then had to go to the school and refill the tank and then drive real slow and easy around any sharp corners. After we got this resolved I went and crawled on Rooster and headed out to catch up with the cow herd. I caught up with the herd about 5 miles down the trail. The cattle walked really well today and we were into the Rocky Bottom that day around 1:00pm, which is really early. This gave us plenty of daylight to corral the cattle still today and give the calves their shots. That night around the fire, the white bag winner was none other than Rebecca (baked potato)Sharp. Seems she was trailing cattle down the road today and Mother Nature finally forced her to stop and water the garden. She dropped her pants, assumed the position, just as a car with two guys from Idaho drove by. Of course Idaho is known for the potatoes they grow. We thought it was only fitting that Rebecca showed them two peeled Idaho Spuds.

Tuesday July 7th:

Today is another camp move so everyone was up early as we had a lot of camp to get broke down and loaded. After getting the camp packed, Taylor and all the guests headed up the narrow Little Horn canyon with the cow herd. The camp crew has to hustle like mad, or the cowboys get into camp around 5:00pm and camp isn't set up. This of course always adds a lot of stress to the crew. As the cattle started stringing out single file to go up the canyon, Taylor ran into a couple Holdings cowboys who said we had some cattle that had crawled out, and were in the next pasture west from where we had been camped. So Taylor and a few others backtracked to go find the missing cattle. This of course put everyone into camp much later than expected. Now the thing about a real cattle drive, is the day is done when the cattle get to the days destination. It's not when your watch says it's quitting time. The camp crew hustled like mad but didn't get into camp until about 5:00pm. It was a sigh of relief for us that none of the cowboys had arrived, but it also meant the cowboys were having a long day of it. It was a typical day up the canyon with normal mountain weather. The camp crew coming in from above never had any rain, but the cowboys coming up the canyon with the cattle got dumped on by one of those mountain showers, that can be so swift and ferocious and then be over within 15 minutes. I went back for the second load of camp supplies and got back to camp around 6:30pm. Most of the cowboys had made it to camp, but there were a few diehards still out with Taylor and Chris. They rode into camp around 9:00pm, completely exhausted but completely exhilarated at the same time. People were so tired most of them just ate dinner and went to bed, so we didn't do the White bags this evening. Hollywood never shows the reality side of things, just the glamour side of things. People so tired they don't know if they can get off their horse when they ride in.

Wednesday July 8th:

Since people had come into camp so late the night before, we waited until this morning to do the White saddle bags. We had a couple nominations for the biggest eye opener from the day before. Guest Laura Marshall was struggling to get on her horse yesterday morning and several cowboys were standing around watching, since we pretty much want this to be your experience. There is still pretty much a true code of the west that we live by out here. You show respect to all women and are a

gentleman at all times. Boy did a couple of my young cowboys get an experience. As my young 20 year old cowboys were holding her horse as she was struggling to mount she finally screamed, " I don't give a damn about humility, push!"

However, the winner was crew member Clayton Dana who went over to use the porta potties the next morning. He tugged on the door and it seemed stuck so he really gave a big yank, jerking the door open on one of our guests. Now which guest it was, we still don't know, because they wouldn't speak up for fear of identifying themselves.

The cowboys headed down country to gather the cattle that had been dropped the day before and take them to the days destination. As the herd was being pushed up the Beaver Slide it was a real test of wills. The cows didn't want to crawl up the steep incline to the top and the cowboys new they had to get them up to the top or the day wouldn't end. Then to complicate things just as the herd hit the steepest part a cloud burst blew in and poured on everyone making the trail not only steep, but now very slick. Aw the life of a cowboy is just sunsets and whiskey! Sandie Hood was walking up the steep slick incline leading her horse, when her feet went out from under her. She fell on a log impaling a branch into her leg. Since blood wasn't spurting, we weren't overly concerned and of course we weren't through with the cattle yet. We had plenty of time to patch Sandie up once we got back to camp. (A quick side note,-Sandie has already rebooked a trip in 2016 and 2017, so the loss of a little blood was really not that much of a detriment to her.) We actually got back into camp relatively early, around 4:00pm. However, it started raining and that's what it did pretty hard for the next 3 hours. But hey, everyone was dry, the wounds patched up, and everyone was accounted for. It just doesn't get any better than that!

The winner of the White Bags for today was none other than Rebecca Sharp. Now this was her 3rd nomination in as many days and she has won them twice. I am not sure I would ride with her by choice. She seems to be a magnet for bad situations. Earlier in the day we were trailing the herd along when all of a sudden the herd stopped, threw their heads in the air and just stopped. Now if this had been a 130 years ago, I am sure we would have had a stampede. When the cattle stopped, Taylor loped on ahead to try and see what had spooked the cattle. As he rode towards the front he looked up and here were the same two peeled potatoes looking back at the herd that had stopped the two people from Idaho 2 days earlier. I really don't know how to explain it. Maybe as a kid she had a stuffed cow in the crib with her, I really don't know!

Thursday July 9th:

Today is one of those days that you leave in the middle of the week to give you some flexibility if things have gone south during the week. We let people sleep in, which gives the horses a couple more hours to fill their tanks and rest. We did a trail ride to Leaky Mtn, then Emerald hot springs and then a reride of the days previous circle, so as to pick up any cattle we missed the day before. We also ran out a load of garbage to lock in the horse trailer, so we didn't have to take it out the next morning. When we went out and got on the Gator the next morning, here on the seat of the Gator were the muddy paw prints of a Bear Cub. Moments like this make you so appreciate the beauty of what we do. Other than a couple holes his claws poked in the seat, it made you smile. While most of us went down the West side of the canyon to Leaky Mtn. the crew went to the east side to dig up a water line that wasn't working and get it in working order. Those types of projects are always amazing as the only tools you have is what you can carry on your horse, and of course you always run into something you didn't anticipate

and have to figure out a way to be creative and solve the problem. When the crew rode in that evening they did have water but all of them were covered with mud. So cowboying is not always doing the romantic things from the back of a horse. I remember one time we were putting up the big mess tent and had cut fresh poles but didn't have the proper size bit. The one we had was too small. Trent pulled out his 44 magnum and shot through the poles putting the appropriate size hole in the end of the poles. Anyway back to the day. We did have a new winner tonight for the white bags. However, Rebecca was nominated again and I'll bet you can just about guess for what. She stepped out of her tent just after the crack of dawn to take care of her morning call. She didn't want to walk the 40 yards to the outhouse, so she just did it by the side of her tent. That would have been fine except for one slight glitch. She forgot the crew is always up much earlier than the guests and sure enough, she was spied again showing off her potatoes! Her travelling partner also got nominated as he crawled through a barb wire fence he snagged his shirt and there he was hooked into the fence. He couldn't go on through or back up. No one was in a real hurry to help him get out, it was too much fun laughing and watching him struggle. However, crew member Tyler Kerns won the white bags for throwing his saddle blanket up on his horse but not having him tied. As Tyler turned around to grab his saddle, the horse walked off back towards the horse pasture as if his day was already done leaving Tyler standing there holding his saddle.

Friday July 10th:

Rode out to Lake Creek where we left the horses and headed to Bear Lodge for a shower and a real bed.