

Sunday Sept 14<sup>th</sup>:

Had a slight delay picking people up as some of the people had read where we pick up people at 1:00pm, so when we arrived at 7:30am several of them were still eating breakfast. Instead of a 30 minute pickup and departure it took us an hour and half. However, it worked out well for everybody. There was only one person who didn't get everything on the bus, but, she was on time. Seems she had purchased a special water filter to carry with her in case she needed to drink out of a spring during the week, then she lost the filter before getting on the bus. This of course led to a slam dunk of Tanya (oops I didn't mean to mention her name) winning the White Saddle bags.

It was about 53 degrees for a high today so it was rather nice. We had had a foot of snow at camp just 3 days earlier. Once into camp we did the horsemanship, a short ride and we were all set for Monday morning.

**Monday Sept 15<sup>th</sup>:**

Like all of our trips, reality is the driver of the bus. Yesterday morning as we were leaving the house to come to the mountain top, I picked up a sack of garbage and heaved it into the back of Taylor's pickup, told him to go throw it into the dump before heading up the mountain. If you don't, you have a very recognizable odor by the time you get home a week later. I obviously threw it wrong, as I pulled a bunch of muscles in my back so was very hobbled and stiff. I knew it was from shoeing too many horses the week before. I had an Uncle who had passed away a week earlier and I had been in Yuma, AZ cleaning out his house instead of shoeing horses. This meant I still had the same number of horses to shoe, just half the time to do them in. Because of that, my back muscles were tired and sore. When I pulled the muscles in my back it also meant I probably couldn't get on a horse to ride. I spent the day in camp doing whatever odd jobs that you could do without bending over. I found sleeping difficult because I had to get down on the ground to sleep and then of course had to get back up after sleeping. To be honest with you, I was bored out of my mind!

As people gathered cattle today they found several sick altitude pair. One cow who had a very sick calf was pushed too hard and the calf dropped over dead as they were walking along. His heart probably just exploded. Chris and his group rode Rubber Boot Park and picked up a small number of cattle. Of course like so many times, just because you found some cattle and are glad you did, the cattle weren't so glad to be found, so getting them gathered and trailed out was a bigger challenge than Hollywood has ever be able to duplicate. The cowboys and guest came stringing into camp around 4:00pm kicking cattle ahead of them and kicking them into Lick Creek. It's sort of hard to write a good story when you are stuck sitting in camp with a back injury, so bear with me.

Dan Connelly won the white bags that evening for insulting Trent's hat. There are a few things in life that you never get away with and one of those is insulting a cowboy's hat. Yes, I know real cowboy hats don't exactly follow the standard of looking new and attractive. I can promise every dimple, crease, droop, and hole has a story of its own. You must ask yourself, how should the hat really look, when it is a crash helmet, a slicker, or a sun shade? Cowboys generally have two hats, one for city or dance wear and the other for working in. And Cowboys really don't care if they are color coordinated with your saddle, slicker, your horse or the tree that you just crashed into. They develop a feel of

functionality that is irreplaceable and to insult a cowboy's hat is to insult what he does for a living! Since Dan is a many time repeat guest he wasn't given any slack for his foo paw. It is so much fun to tease the repeat people!! Warren was nominated for saddling the wrong horse. We have 3 black horses and it seems they were confused by our guest all summer long. I believe it happened 3 different times this summer. The other nomination was Garry Lawrenz from Colorado. Do you suppose it is a coincidence that all 3 nominees for tonight's award have approximately 18 trips between them? I guess it just shows the IQ level of some of our repeat people!

### **Tuesday Sept 16<sup>th</sup>:**

Today was the first day I had ridden since my back incident and I was confident I would be fine, if I could get on my horse. Once up there it would be as natural for me as walking. The challenge was going to be getting up there. I deliberately rode a short horse that was good and gentle. Getting up there was challenge enough without adding to it, a bronc ride. My concern was, how was I going to move camp in a couple days if I got piled off my horse today. Riding didn't bother it at all, it was just after getting off I started to stiffen up.

The cowboys the day before had left one sick pair in Lake Creek so Craig Mead and myself were going to ride down there and see if we could pick he and his mother up and haul them to the valley. We did find some cattle but not the particular pair that we were looking for. I did find a calf who had been bummed in the bottom of Lake Creek and another bum calf around Thompson Springs. We had picked up one more bum calf the day before so Craig and I hauled the 3 of them off the mountain to the valley where we could start taking better care of them, once we were off the mountain. The problem little baby calves have, is that their gut isn't developed enough to process the grass into the nutrition that they need. Over time they would starve to death if not fed properly.

Everyone else headed to the Bear Trap country and make sure we were clean in it. We had gathered it on the Aug Open Range trip but were sure we weren't clean. We never are in that pasture as it is one tough son of a gun to gather. They found enough cattle that it certainly made me glad that they had ridden it again. If you don't find them when you can, you get to come back up and do it when there is 3 feet of snow on the ground. It is anything but fun at that time. It is just pure dangerous hard work.

### **Wednesday Sept 17<sup>th</sup>:**

We were going to move camp today into the Little Horn. It of course had rained and snowed some during the night. This was going to make the road a little greasy going down into the Little Horn. Bob, Alice, and Dana took all the camping gear, beds and groceries to the Little Horn meadows where we piled it high on the trailer we were taking down into the Little Horn. We put 4 chains on the pickup and Bob and Alice followed behind in the Gator which was loaded to the max also. It was a beautiful day if you like mud bogging. Driving in mud is a very unique challenge as to whether you go like a bat out of hell or just barely creep along. It is actually a combination of both. At times you are going straight up a hill or straight down it with your load pushing you and other times you are side hilling. You have to know when it is time to pour the coal to it and when it is time to just barely creep along. I drove because I have been driving that road for close to 40 years and in many different

conditions. The other big unspoken truth was that if something bad happened, they wanted it to be the boss driving and not them. There were times we were throwing mud 40 feet in the air as we were digging and clawing and other times you weren't sure we were even moving. There was one bog we had to cross that the hole on the right side was at least a foot deeper than the one on the left. We had our load fastened down real tight which was a good thing. The left side tire dropped into the hole first and was just slightly ahead of the right side. This meant when the ride side dropped into the deep hole, the left side was actually on its way up out of the hole. This caused a real twist to the trailer. The load was piled at least 5 feet high on the trailer and luckily strapped down real tight. I was looking out my left side mirror and noticed the entire trailer disappeared from sight as it twisted to the right. I was sure it was gone and that we would break the tongue. The trailer came down with a crash, but the load was still there. We of course could only utter a sigh of relief because we were only half way to camp and had one real tough spot left to get by. If I was a serious drinking man I would have started right there. The next bad spot is a real sharp turn to the left in the middle of a timber patch while going down a very steep hill. If you can't make the corner you are off on a side hill in the middle of a timber patch with no way to back up. This means you get to get out the chain saw and build a new road down through the timber patch as your only way out or wait until the road dries which it will, in 8 or 9 months. The problem with cutting a new road is that it is against forest rules to cut down live trees. I can promise you, I am never lucky enough to slide off in a timber patch full of dead trees. However, we had had enough excitement and were able to creep around the corner and from there on to camp was all downhill, so as long as you keep sliding forward you are getting closer to camp. Once into camp we set things up and waited for the cowboys to show up with the days gather. The cowboys while gathering Dayton Gulch today found about 65 more head of yearlings that they had missed two days earlier. That is what is so amazing about the mountain. They rode the same country two days in a row and picked 65 head they had missed the first day. They then gathered all the cattle they had gathered the day before and kicked them all down into the Little Horn below Elk Draw.

That evening the White Bags were rather subdued but Warren managed to win the prize. He was being extra kind to his horse that morning and after saddling him, left him standing with a loose cinch while he finished getting ready. Now all cowboys do that, but the difference is that when Warren did it, there was at least 3 inches between the horses belly and his cinch. If the saddle slipped off, it would have been right under Mickey's belly. This doesn't bother some horses but some horses come unglued and generally kick the saddle until something breaks. You never really know how the horse will react until it actually happens.

#### **Thursday Sept 18<sup>th</sup>:**

Thursday morning we saddled up and rode back up country to do a reride of the previous days circle and the one made the day before that. So that is the 3<sup>rd</sup> time we rode the same country and picked up an additional 23 head of yearlings that we had missed the previous two days, in the same country. The trip had gone well until this afternoon. Dan Connelly came off the horse he was riding. We don't know what spooked her but it spooked her faster than it did Dan. Dan wasn't able to keep up with her and off he came. Dan broke his fall with his head, shoulder and ribs. Once Dan's head stopped spinning it became apparent that it was his ribs that were the issue. As we were standing there

discussing with Dan his options he continued to say he was fine other than his ribs. He and his wife had a decision to make. We could get a vehicle and drive them both off to the valley, they could split and Marnie continue with the cattle and group, while getting Dan off the mountain or Dan could tough it out and ride all the way back to camp and then have to ride the whole next day getting off the mountain. Not really being sure what the injury was, none of us liked that solution. Since Dan was showing no signs of a concussion, you just have to step back and let them make the decisions. Dan decided he was good enough to drive himself off the mountain. Bob walked over to a hunter's camp that was nearby and convinced them to give him a ride back to Lake Creek where his car was. Bob then drove his car back to Dan and Dan drove it off the mountain and to the hospital to be checked out. X-rays didn't show any broken ribs but then about half the time x-rays won't show broken ribs. Two weeks later Dan was sure they had been broken. Anyone, who has had broken ribs and I can speak to that, regardless what the x-rays show, you wouldn't still be this uncomfortable 2 weeks later if they weren't broken or cracked.

While this was all going on Craig Mead had ridden clear back to Lake Creek because he had been having trouble getting his vehicle to start all the time. His batteries were good, but somewhere in the system there was a short which would drain the battery if you didn't start it every day. We had jumped it to start it the day before when we had left camp. The wrangler who then parked it, shut it off leaving the keys in it. It has a numerical code unlock system which is great, as long as your battery has juice in it. Without juice the electronic buttons don't work. Craig rode back hoping that there was still enough juice to unlock it. Of course this is the Double Rafter so no such luck. Craig was able to crawl under it and find the rod that unlocks the hood and push it up with another piece of pipe he found lying around. I of course would have loved to see Craig crawl under the outfit. That would have been worth seeing. I do have to tip my hat to Craig though for getting it unlocked. As we rode back to camp that evening after dropping the cattle, storm clouds started building in the west. Those of us who know the mountains, when you see those types of clouds building that time of year, it generally isn't bluffing. I drew a red line in the sand just like our president did, but just like our president it was completely ignored and I of course had no golf course to go to.

Yani won the white bags that evening. We had just come down through a pretty steep slick timbered hillside with the herd and everyone was breathing a sigh of relief to be off that slick bugger, when all of a sudden out of the timber came crashing a riderless horse. This caused a couple of the cowboys to go charging back up the slick timbered hillside looking for the rider. Your imagination always paints the worst possible solution. Since we had lost Dan earlier in the day with broken ribs, we naturally were a little more on edge. As happens so often, Yani and run off into the timber to get rid of some coffee and her horse waited until she had assumed the position and then decided she had waited long enough. Maybe it's natural for a mare to understand, because she can't run either when she assumes the position!

#### **Friday Sept 19<sup>th</sup>:**

When the storm blew in it got very wet and white rather quickly. This meant that going out of here in the morning was going to be as much fun as coming in here. Around midnight the storm blew out and the skies cleared. By daylight, as I could assess things and it was obvious I wasn't going to be

able to pull the trailer out of here that I had brought stuff in on. Remember it is 5 miles downhill coming in, so that means 5 miles uphill going out unless you are the government or Brian Williams. Then it is 8 miles going out. We ran 3 loads out with the Gator and with 4 chains on the pickup and the load piled high and strapped down, we could get about 80% of the stuff we had brought in back out. We were going to have to come back next week for the rest. Oh well, I have nothing else to do!

Jess and Trent rode back up country just after daylight to get around any yearlings that might have gone back up country during the night. Dana, Alice, Stan, Roy and Bob all went out with the camp while the rest of the crew and guests started gathering yesterday's herd and headed towards the Beaver Slide. The wind came up and blew all day making it a rather cold day.

Since we were packing out, Craig Mead put all his wet stuff, including his tent in a garbage bag. One of the biggest logistical problems is always the garbage we accumulate over the course of a week. We didn't dare leave the garbage bagged with the idea we would get it next week, as by then, the place would look like a swarm of honey bees except it would be bears getting into the garbage. You can pretty much guess what happened next. Craig's wet stuff in a garbage bag ended up getting mixed in with the regular garbage and when I pulled into the dump at the ranch late afternoon, it of course got thrown in the dump with the rest of the garbage. We generate about 2-3 bags of garbage a day and these are the big bags, not the little bags that city people can use because they have garbage pickup. Did I mention that is one of the joys of owning a ranch, you are also your own garbage man. Every summer as it dries out the county puts on a burning ban to keep us from playing with matches. So we not only had the garbage in the pit from this trip but from the previous two trips also. Ball park, around 50 big bags of garbage. When I unloaded the luggage that evening at the Holiday Inn I didn't see Craig's garbage bag and that concerned me. When I told Craig I hadn't seen it, we figured out what happened, so he said he was going to drive back to the ranch and go look in the dump. He showed up a couple hours later but said he didn't have any luck. I went to the dump the next week, rummaged around and did find it and shockingly everything was in pretty good shape. There had been a slight rip in the bag and this allowed air in, so things pretty well dried. I came to the conclusion that Craig had probably been in someone else's dump instead of ours, because the bag was sitting on top and was the first one I opened and looked in. We had an extremely productive week as we got all but 6 of the yearlings off the mountain and we would bring them out with the rest of the cowherd when they came during the Clean Up Ride. Short of Dan's ribs it was a perfect week. If Dan could just learn to spook at the same speed as his horse he would be just fine! Thanks to all of you for your help in making this a successful and enjoyable week. This was an absolutely delightful bunch of people to spend the week with. Come have coffee at my fire anytime!

Cow Boss