

2017 Late Aug Trip Report

Sunday Aug 20th:

We usually pick people up with a school bus operated by the local school district. But since this was the first week of school the district had decided not to drive for us. This of course creates a last minute problem as you are now short a bus and driver. Anyone one a ranch is extremely good about coming up with a plan B, C D, or whatever is needed to rectify the situation. Consequently we came up with another plan and no one knew the difference. We headed to town with plan B for pickup to find we had a few small glitches but again they were all minor. Claes had the wrong pickup time and when we stopped to pick them up they were just sitting down to breakfast. Not a big problem as it gives us a chance to start to get to know the people that we are going to torture all week. However, it did put into camp about an hour later than what was planned for. A plan is somewhat irrelevant as it is daylight about 5:00am and doesn't get dark until about 9:30 pm so we still had plenty of day to get accomplished what we wanted to do.

We did a quick camp orientation and turned people over to Chris to do the horsemanship clinic. Once we had people and horses matched up and saddled, it was time for people to get mounted and give us a chance to start getting a true feel for people's riding skills. Since we were riding before we were out of diapers our evaluation is probably different than the one you do on yourself. Our medical staff who had been through the orientation just a week earlier, managed to fall off her horse on her attempt at getting on. I quickly made a tally mark in my book by Deb's name for nomination for the White Bags that evening. Claes also had a tally mark as well, and so did Steve Opler from Atlanta for losing his water bottle. However, the group decided that Claes should be the winner for the night with an overwhelming vocal vote. Claes was very good natured about it, which is a good thing, because if he wasn't, he probably would have won them again. Cowboys have a good sense of humor and it is generally at someone else's expense. Cowboys spend their entire lives chasing cattle and don't see a lot of humor in what a cow does. So consequently, they are starved for laughter so they don't miss much that can be considered humorous at some paying guests expense.

Monday Aug 21st:

We had a long circle to make today as we planned on riding the Bear Trap country. Bear Trap is one of those pastures that you ride and ride, and are sure you have them all, then 3 weeks later you find 15 head, which always makes you wonder, just where in the world have they been hiding. I have been riding that pasture since 1968 and I am convinced there must be a couple springs in the timber somewhere that the cattle have found, but we never have. It is not uncommon to have water spring up out of the ground only to have it run 15 feet and then disappear back into the ground. There are only 3 main water holes in the entire Bear Trap pasture which is in excess of 5000 acres, which means there has to be water somewhere other than where we know of.

Well today was going to be a first on one of our trips, as we had the solar eclipse today. I have to say, it was the strangest thing I have ever seen. We coordinated our lunch stop so that we could watch the eclipse. The shadows that were formed from the eclipse were very eerie. They were very

short lived, but did give a very haunting feeling to the surroundings for about 20 minutes. There was lots of wild speculation as to how animals would react to it, but from observation of our horses, it was that they were just happy we had stopped, so that everyone was off their backs for a short while. After lunch we got back on or most of us did. Robert Kritzbürger attempted to get on but had not checked his cinch, so as he put weight in the stirrup, he pulled the saddle slid and it went under the horse's belly. The horse had been through this type of stuff before so he just stood there. However, we decided for future reference we would put a "THIS SIDE UP" sticker on the saddle horn of Robert's saddle.

After lunch we made our circle to Sardine Lake by riding down the Taylor Creek drainage, coming up the backside of Horse Apple Park and into Sardine Lake and then back to Dead Calf reservoir. We picked up about 10 head of yearlings at Dead Calf and headed them up the trail to Dayton Gulch. By the time we got to Dayton Gulch our group of yearlings had swollen to about 50. This meant we still had about 140 unaccounted for. We did know some of the missing yearlings were in the pasture we planned on riding tomorrow however.

This night as we did the White Bag nominations, we had several for the day. Of course Robert got nominated for his improper mounting, however he was not the winner. Angella from Sweden also got nominated. Seems her horse jumped up out of a Buffalo wallow and the horse jumped up 2 feet to get up over the lip, and Angella jumped 4 feet. This of course meant when she came down the horse had already moved forward, so there was no horse under her to catch her. Other than a bruise on her back side and temporarily knocking the air out of her, she was fine. We did pick up on the fact that out of the 5 swedes, 2 of them had been nominated the first two days. Our Medical person was also nominated. In the middle of the night she realized she needed to get up and go to the outhouse, only to hear a noise outside her tent. She was sure it was a Moose and was afraid to move. She laid there until it became obvious she either had to get up and go to the outhouse or wet her bed. Deb decided the best thing to do was be aggressive, so she made noise and charged out of her tent to face what she thought was a moose. It turned out to be Jake's dog Marvin, all 25 pounds of him. But the winner turned out to be Taylor. On the way back that day, since we were short 140 yearlings, Taylor decided to make an outside loop on the way back to camp to see if there were tracks going down the Bull Elk Park Trail. Since he and Cathryn hadn't been married yet a year, the chance to ride with her husband was an opportunity she couldn't resist. Now none of us cowboys, have ever been accused of just riding the trails, so after Taylor was convinced that no cattle had gone down the trail, instead of riding another half mile to the trail, he decided to just dive off through the steep timber patch which would be a short cut. Well, as they were ducking under branches and jumping over downed logs on about a 60 degree slope, the Honey moon came to an abrupt halt. Cathryn is a superb rider but was positive by the time they got through the timber, it had taken much longer than if they had continued on to the main trail. You know the Honey Moon is over when your bride nominates you! As they say "Love is blind".

Tuesday Aug 22nd:

Since we were short so many cattle, it was decided that we would split and ride three different directions throwing anything we find into the Dayton Gulch pasture, which we would then gather and trail on to Lake Creek. Jake took a group of riders and headed to East Burnt to ride, Taylor took a group of people with him and did a reride of the Bear Trap Pasture and Dana took a bunch and was going to

ride the upper Bull Elk Trail and then drop into the bottom of Dayton Gulch and gather all of Dayton Gulch. Every group ended up finding cattle. Jakes group had one pair and the calf was real sick with pneumonia, so they had to drop him in Dayton Gulch. Jake didn't have any medicine and the sick calf had walked as far as he was physically able to. They didn't find much for yearlings but did find a couple of missing bulls. Bulls are like 19 year old boys who have about 3 drinks under their belt, in that this convinces them they are probably the toughest thing walking. As the little group of cowboys got just about to the fence into the Dayton Gulch pasture, the two bulls got into a fight. When you take 2 bulls each weighing a ton and they start fighting, you really don't want to get close to them. They will knock you over if you happen to get in the way. The power of these animals is beyond description. I have seen bulls weighing a ton get flipped as if they weighed 20 pounds. Their strength and courage is beyond description. The two bulls went to fighting and one bull knocked the other one into a standing dead tree that had a radius of 18 inches. Wood splintered as the tree came crashing to the ground, only to miss Tim Woodville and his horse by about 10 feet.

The gather went pretty well today as each group had found some of the missing yearling so that by the time we got gathered today, we were only out about 20 yearlings which was a huge improvement from the 140 of the previous day.

That evening around the fire there was lots of snickering in anticipation of the white bags. Obviously someone or someone's had some major oop's! The first nomination was for Dr. Chad Kritzberger for not knowing the difference between a sheep and a cow. Luckily he is a pediatrician and not a veterinarian! Kathleen Belschner got nominated for being a city girl, since she thought cattle turned black when they reached a certain age. However, the winner was none other than another one of the Swedes. We came to the conclusion that the group from Sweden was actually a synchronized dismount team, and that they were actually just rehearsing. Jerry Hansen won the bags for zigging when his horse was zagging so he ended up digging himself out of the dirt!

Wednesday Aug 23rd:

Today is a very long day with the most miles to travel in a day on any of our trips. Since we have such a long ways to go we must have a very early morning. We had breakfast at 5:00 am, jingled the horses in the dark at 5:30 am and the first bunch of cowboys rode out of camp at 6:15 am to start gathering cattle. Just riding the trail today it is 28 miles round trip. Then when you add the miles gathering the cattle and the back and forth as you are trailing the cattle, it equals a long day, any way you slice it. This is a day that if things go wrong, it could be after dark before you get back to camp. I am pretty sure this is why we have never had anyone say they were shorted on saddle time on our trips.

As you remember from the previous day we had a sick calf that also had to be doctored today. I took my horse, jumped him in the trailer and headed back to find and doctor the sick calf. Once I had done this I would jump my horse back in the trailer and try and catch up with the herd somewhere in route. I roped the calf and got him doctored easy enough and was pleasantly surprised to find an additional 10 yearlings that we were short and had missed the day before in the gather.

I caught up with the rest of the herd about 9:00am. Yearlings are like teenagers in that things like joy rides seem like a good thing at the moment. Well the yearlings had no idea where they were going, but the joy ride seemed like a good idea so they were really walking along. Not thinking, just following the one ahead of them. The one in the lead was happy they rest were following, so just kept

walking. When they get like this the only trick is to be sure the lead animal is going in the correct direction and the rest will follow along. We arrived at our destination about 2:30 in the afternoon, 2 hours sooner than I had anticipated. This put us back into camp that evening 2 hours sooner than I anticipated. That was the fastest trip to the Dry Fork that we have ever had. People are always exhausted on this day when we get back to camp. There were several white bag nominations tonight and crew member Cathryn won them as a branch knocked her out of her saddle. I wonder if this was a get even from her husband for her nominating him 2 days before. Jack Beigalus also got nominated for the white bags as it was discovered he was slipping out of his tent and sneaking into his car and spending the night there. A major infraction of the Code of the West, chapter 3, paragraph 4.

Thursday Aug 24th:

Since we had a long day the day before, we allowed people to sleep in and had breakfast about 8:00 am instead of 5:00am like the previous day. Today is Indian Fry Bread which is always a favorite of the crew or at least the married crew. Tradition on the Cattle Drives is that the single crew members have to do the cooking of the Fry Bread. I wonder if this is why Taylor and Cathryn got married?

Taylor decided to ride Tye Dye this morning so he saddled him up in the corral. Tye Dye is a young horse that needs lots of miles and use and today would be a good ride for him. Taylor cinched him up and Tie Dye went to the stars. Before he came to a side heaving stop, he had torn all the strings off of Taylor's saddle. This meant Taylor didn't have any way to tie his slicker or any saddle bags to pack his lunch in. Oh well, a little rain wouldn't hurt him and it wouldn't be the first time he went without a lunch. Tie Dye was fine once Taylor got on him and rode away. Only fools want a horse to buck, it's just a good way to get hurt. You must remember that rodeo cowboys always know exactly when the horse will buck, knows he only had to ride him 8 seconds, there are mounted people in the arena to get them out of jam if they get in one, the environment in an arena is always the same. I am not downplaying the skill a bronc rider has, I couldn't compete against them, but they don't have any unseen obstacles to deal with.

We all rode out of camp and gathered Lick Creek and kicked what we found into Lake Creek. When we got back to camp we turned the horses out and headed to Bear Lodge for a hot shower and he nights banquet. Jim McNeil won the white bags for the day for putting his bridle on his horse first and then putting the halter on. This put both reins coming up through the halter which meant he had no control at all. We always have a drawing for the white bags at the end of the evening so that someone can take them home and hang them on the wall. The white bags went all the way to Sweden as Claes was the winner of the drawing. It was a really great week and we had the pleasure of meeting all the new people and getting the chance to spend another week with the repeat people. What a true blessing all of you are for enriching our lives. Thanks so much!

Trail Boss