

2018 Late Aug trip report

Sunday Aug 19th: We only had two people to actually pick up in Sheridan, the rest either stayed at Bear Lodge the night before pickup, or were following us driving their own vehicles to Lake Creek to get introduced to their 4 legged rocking chairs. We unloaded all the gear, transferred it to the cooks and crew and down into the Dry Fork they went. We started the horsemanship and then stopped for a short dry lunch before resuming with the rest of the horsemanship. This group appeared to be very savvy so we set off on the 14 mile jaunt to the Dry Fork camp doing some horsemanship along the way. On the last trip we didn't arrive in the Dry Fork till almost 8:30pm. Our goal was to try and shorten that up some this trip. We arrived around 7:00pm at the Dry Fork camp. This gave people time to find their tents and get their luxurious quarters all set up. However, people were tired so we served dinner and went to the fire for the White Bag nominations. As we counted noses, we realized several had eaten and just gone to bed. I don't know why 14 miles and a drop in elevation of over 2000 feet seems to knock people so bad on the first day, but it does. I think there could be a little anxiety mixed in with this. The riding we do is generally different than what most people have ever experienced. We decided to wait until morning to do the White Bag nominations. We just didn't want someone sleeping through their nomination and not having a chance to rebut the charges. We don't do it anything like Florida with our vote. We are always fair and straight forward.

Monday Aug 20th:

We awoke to clear blue crisp Wyoming skies, with a slight chill in the air. People came down the hill to the aroma of fresh cowboy coffee and food cooking in the 16 inch Dutch ovens. The cooks had been up several hours already, preparing the morning cuisine so as to keep the cowboys motors running till lunch time. After breakfast, before heading to the corral to saddle your horse for the day's experience, we first had to have the previous night's white bag nominations. The first day is a real challenge usually, because people don't know one another, so are somewhat reserved. Luckily we already have your money, so we don't have to be reserved and can nominate away. However, we did have one pretty solid nomination. Elaine Kelly from across the pond, had filled out her registration and said she was bringing her husband. But she would never give me her husband's name. I never received a registration on him, which made me start to wonder if she really was bringing her husband or just somebody she had met in the airport. She said she filled out the registration for both of them on one registration. I had his height, wt, age, sex but no name. She won the white bags rather easily that day.

We saddled up and once everyone was mounted, we described how the day was going to play out. We were going to split into 3 different groups and go different directions to gather various parts of the allotment, gather everything we could find and throw them in the horse pasture. One group went to Windy Ridge, which was the longest ride of the day and since they had so far to go, a lot of it would be at the cowboy's gait. (meaning if you couldn't sit a trot for two hours then you probably should go with another group). I took one group with me and we rode High Park and would circle around under the rims and come out on the head of Pass Creek. The other group would go to the bottom of the Pass and

we would meet up with a little luck, or just meet back up at camp sometime. The group that went to Windy Ridge did not find any cattle, but everyone who went had a glorious day experiencing how cowboys really ride when they are by themselves. The group who went to High Park had to comb back and forth through about a mile of heavy timber looking for cattle, and managed to find about 15 head. When gathering timber like that you never really know how many cattle you actually have till you get them all out in the open. In the timber you just keep kicking whatever you find out ahead of you and keep them going. We kicked into the head of the Pass just as the other group came up out of the bottom of the Pass and we all met at once about a mile north of the day's destination. We held herd and doctored about 6 calves before the final push of about a mile and a drop in elevation of about 500 feet.

The group who rode the Pass saw a bunch of Elk, Moose and a Bear. Now what was interesting about the bear, was the fact that it was rooting around looking for something to eat so he had his/her head down with the wind at it's back, and didn't hear or see the cowboys riding up to him. The riders all stopped and watched with awe as the little black bear was coming closer and closer. One of the Cowboys from Louisiana, hadn't seen the bear either and kept right on riding towards it. She decided it was time for a selfie, pullout out her camera and held it out in front of her, as her horse is getting closer and closer to the bear. Neither she nor the bear, saw one another until they were about 20 yards apart. The only one who wasn't shocked was the horse. I think he had seen the bear much earlier. Naturally the Bear selfie was the winner of the white bags that night. Once the cattle were gathered, the fog started rolling in and out. August heat was not something anyone was thinking about, as everyone was grabbing their jackets and putting them on. We trailed the herd to the horse pasture where they would spend the night so the gather the following morning would be quick and clean. We had a long way to go with the cattle tomorrow. When we had the White Bag nominations that night there were several nominations, but since I already told you who won them we will talk about the others. Elaine Kelly, (this mornings winner) was nominated again for allowing a branch to take her out of the saddle. Rob Lawrenz was nominated for stopping, getting off his horse and dropping his drawers right in front of everybody. He swore up and down he had something in his pants and since we really didn't want to know what was in his pants, we had to trust him, so he didn't win. About 5:00 pm the fog finally got heavy and it really started to rain. It's surprising how quickly a downpour scatters people sitting out around a campfire. Most people by 7:00 had had enough of the rain and headed to their tents for the night.

Tuesday Aug 21st:

When Alice and I arose before the crack of daylight to get breakfast started, it was clear as a bell with the stars overhead shining brightly. The rain had stopped sometime in the middle of the night so everything was damp but not soaked. I never worry about the weather unless it wakes me up, or my wife will wake me up to worry about it! About an hour after daylight you could see the fog building back in and by the time most of the people got up the fog, had rolled in and we had about 25yards of visibility. You snooze in you lose!! However, we had a roaring fire as there is very little fire risk in those situations. 4 People decided to take a recovery day and stayed in camp. In the thick fog I took a handful of people with me and we did a reride of the head of Pass Creek as we knew had missed some cattle the day before. The other group of cowboys were going to gather the cattle in the horse pasture

and head to Lunch Break Park with the herd. The fog was extremely thick and could ride by an animal, either cow or horse 30 yards from you and never see them. It is really very eerie in the fog because when you ride into a bunch of cattle and they move away from you, it is like looking at ghosts. Due to the heavy fog the animal is never clear in your vision and with a couple steps they just fade away, so it is critical to keep them in eyesight or they are gone. The question is, do I keep track of the cows or the cowboys? Its' generally the cows we keep track of. People are much easier to find than cows in the fog. How's that for reality! By splitting in two groups this meant we had less people to lose in the fog. The other group of riders went up river to come down the river and pick up any cattle that had gone upstream. The cattle we had dropped the day before in the horse pasture so want to go to Lake Creek, and since the gate is shut they can't go until we open it so they get to browsing and drifting up the river looking for a way to crawl up the canyon side and go onto Lake Creek. There is lots of deadfall along the creek so riding through it is very slow as you pick your way around and over downed logs. Some logs the horses can just step over and other are big enough they have to jump them. We always make sure anyone that goes on this swing knows that it's not a real easy ride, but it is reality in the mountains. Tim Woodville gave a perfect example of this. He was riding along trying to get around some cows in the timber so he was timber crashing to get through. Tim has two artificial legs and managed to catch the toe of his right one on a tree as he went by. The force of hitting the tree bent his leg out 90 degrees. It was not at all uncomfortable for him, it's just his toes were sticking out 90 degrees to the right from the rest of his leg. The tool Tim has to loosen the leg to adjust it was back at camp. Tim asked a couple burly guys to grab ahold of it and twist it back into the proper position. This of course made them rather uncomfortable, but Tim just grinned the whole time knowing what was going through their minds. A couple cowboys gave a big twist and couldn't budge the leg back into it's original position. This made them realize how hard Tim had hit the tree. This of course left no option other than for Tim to ride with it just like it was sitting. He of course couldn't put it back in the stirrup, so he had to just let the leg hang. When we rode into camp later that afternoon, as we got closer to the corrals, the trail to the corrals splits two ways. One goes on around the hill on grade and is about 200 yards to the corral and the other one is straight up the hill and about 50 yards to the corral. Thunder pulled at the bit and wanted to take the straight up 50 yard trail to the corrals, so Tim let him. Many horses when going up a steep hill will lunge going up it. Obviously for some reason it is easier for them to do it this way. Tim let Thunder go and charging up the hill they went. It seemed to Tim that Thunder was picking up speed as they went. When a horse lunges up a hill there is a tremendous amount of expulsion put on the rider to stay seated. Tim tried to pull Thunder back to slow up and lessen the force on the potential projectile, Tim. However Tim's efforts seemed meaningless to Thunder. Once they topped out it was about 20 yards onto the corrals. Tim grabbed the saddle horn with both hands and white eyed and white knuckled hung on, hoping that when Thunder got to the corrals he would stop. If he didn't Tim wasn't sure how far he might run. Thunder charged right up to the corrals and locked on the brakes and came to a sliding stop. Tim just sat there a moment and let the adrenalin subside a little bit before getting off. Once safely on the ground, he started to reflect on just what had happened. He then realized what had happened, as Thunder lunged up the steep hill this caused Tim's leg that was just hanging, to bounce up and down, spurring Thunder to more speed. Every time Thunder went with the lunge, Tim's leg would follow with a spurring motion so Thunder was acting perfectly and doing exactly what the rider was telling him to do.

Later in the day, when the first bunch of cowboys and cattle arrived at Lunch Break Park, the sun had come out and it had warmed so as people laid in the grass, eating their cowboy cuisine, many of them felt a big snooze coming on, so pulled their hats over their eyes and dozed off.

Back at camp that evening there were numerous white bag nominations. Bonnie was nominated again for the second time in two days for deciding to stay in camp and take a recovery day. According to the cowboy code of ethics Chapter 11, paragraph 3, line 2 it states: one must go the day following a win of the white bags. It's common sense, how else are you going to show them off if you are sitting in camp?

Alexander was nominated for teaching his horse to roll over. We decided though, that it was really Alexander that needed to be taught, and not his horse because he forgot to get off before having his horse roll over! However, the winner was none other than Arizona cowboy and guest Brett Rizzi. As people were snoozing at lunch, Brett had dozed off, also with his hat pulled over his eyes. Taylor's Border Collie Taz, has a tendency to go find cattle to work if you don't keep him close. Taz decided after a few minutes that he was sure there were some cattle needing gathered, so off he set to tuck the herd in. When Taylor discovered that Taz had gone looking for something to do, he hollered TAZ. Brett Rizzi sleeping soundly heard the yell for Taz but in his tired foggy brain it registered BEAR! Brett jumps up, clawing for his sidearm shouting where is the bear, where is the bear! Yep, here's your sign. Brett won the bags rather easily that evening. With people laying there in the warm sunshine, starring at him he really didn't have any rebuttal. That evening around the fire the fog again started rolling in and out, but at least it wasn't raining.

Wednesday Aug 22nd:

About 3:00am the fog finally cleared out and we awoke to a beautiful crystal clear blue sky. The crispness in the air is so very refreshing and uplifting on the mountain.

Today is a camp move day, so by the time most of the guests were up, my crew had been up several hours packing and cleaning things to make the move. Today when the guests get up, they have to pack their bags, bring them out of their tent and down the hill to camp, so we can pack them to the next camp. As soon as people are out of their tents my crew goes to dropping and rolling the tents because they also have to be packed and reset up at the next camp. A rather large undertaking I can promise. The cowboys jingle the horses and get them caught because today, everything is faster paced as we have a long day ahead of us. Day 4 always seems to be the day we have the most horses who have to be pulled because of soreness or injury. Seems if they haven't sored up by day 3 or 4, they will be good to go all week. There is always lots of horse swapping done today and it generally has nothing to do with the riders. By now though after spending several days with people we have a pretty good handle on their skill set, so can do lots of swapping. Due to the storm that had cleared out the day before, the temperature only made it into the mid 50's today. The absolute perfect temperature to work in for livestock and man.

The camp moving crew hustles like mad to get everything set up so that when the cowboys ride in, everything is ready. We know within about a 4 hour window when they will arrive. I always go with the camp moving crew on this particular day, to give one more able body to set up tents and help the cooks with the heavy lifting of setting the kitchen back up. By now most of the guests have figured out what moving a herd of cattle is all about, so are much better help than they were the first day out.

When the cowboys rode in around 6:00 there was lots of smiles and you could see by how they were sitting on their horses, that they had gained a great deal of confidence in their ability to ride throughout the week. Most people will double their skill level in a week with us and it basically goes back to just the confidence factor, after riding the terrain that we ride in all week. After supper with a roaring fire, we held the white bag nominations. The first nomination was Jessica Strahan for being a flashlight clepto. Seems she never could keep track of hers, so if she was needing one, you better have it in your pocket or sit on it. Like a pack rat, we knew somewhere there was probably a stash of flashlights. Alexander was nominated for getting his horse to take a leak on cue. Remember he was the one who earlier in the week taught his horse to rollover with him still on it. BJ Watkins confessed that she thought Alexander was just being a gentleman and letting her cut in front of him on the trail. However, it was just a stop on cue for the horse to water the trail. Crew member Jake was nominated for flashing his flashlight outside the fire ring after dark the previous night, only to catch Cheryl, who had just stepped out of her tent to water the grass. Yep, we had a full moon in the Dry Fork that night! The winner that night was Carl Polisenio. Those that nominated him had no idea what he had done, but he was acting guilty so therefore, that was enough of a reason to not only nominate him, but make him the winner. (sounds a little like whats going on in DC). Carl did fess up the next day, that he was guilty of something, but if we didn't know what it was, then maybe he wasn't going to tell us. However, unlike Washington DC, he came clean the next day. He had fallen on one of the tables and was afraid he had broken it. I suspect there is still more to the story than just falling on a table!

Thursday Aug 23rd:

We had a clear night and with the clear night coming behind a storm, it always comes with a drop in temperature, but no one was complaining as we didn't freeze any water on the water buckets like we have occasionally done in the past. We had a leisure breakfast allowing some to recover a little bit more. For most people there is a lot more physical activity daily than what they are used to. Consequently they are tired and sleep really well. That morning after breakfast we saddled the horses and headed to pick up the cow herd where we had dropped them the day before.

We saddled up and were standing around visiting, waiting for the last few to get saddled before mounting up. One of the things we always encourage people to do is walk their horse for a little bit before getting on. Horses can be sore and stiff just like people after a hard day. So if you walk your horse a little and loosen him up before getting on, the outcome is a lot less dramatic. Brian McGuire was riding a horse today that is a crew horse only, because of the poor job someone did breaking him, you had to be somewhat careful, or he might try and break you. If you walked him before getting on (cowboy term for that is warming up a horse) you generally could get him to just walk out of his bad mood. However, Brian was either really engrossed in a conversation or telling lies I'm not sure which, but he didn't warm Hop Scotch up at all. We all mounted and started towards the road. Brian stepped up on old Hop Scotch and then hollered at one of the cooks to please hand him his lunch, as had forgot to put it in his saddle bags. As Brian reaches over for the sack lunch, shifting his weight to the left and with the crinkling of the paper, as Brian grasped it, that was all the excuses Hop Scotch needed to warm Brian up. Hop Scotch head disappears between his front legs and exploded upwards. Since Brian's weight is already off center reaching for the lunch bag, he really had no chance. He tried to stay with Hop Scotch but as Hop Scotch hit the ground stiff legged, this jarred Brian's weight a little more to the

left. With each impact of his hooves, Brian got a little farther off center and about jump 3 or 4 you could see lot's of daylight between Brian and the saddle. At that time, inertia takes over and Brian comes down on his side and his back. It's amazing when a horse really bucks you off, how your feet and head can hit the ground all at the same time. Brian hit the ground and sort of laid their groaning. From what I had seen, I assumed he had the wind knocked out of him, or broken ribs or broken arm or broken clavicle or just broken! Brian sat up momentarily and then laid back over on his back. When it became obvious to us that Brian was going to live we headed out on our circle. The cooks helped Brian over to the fire to sit down when we rode off. That's really when the excitement started. Brian went over and laid on one of the benches by the fire. He was a little shocky, so the cooks went to get a sleeping bag to put over him to keep him warm. One of the things that we try to do on these trips is burn as much garbage as possible so we don't have so much to pack out. As Brian is laying by the fire, one of the guests who I will not name, had thrown a plastic bag full of garbage by the fire, however, it hadn't gotten into the direct coals. We think we know who tossed in the garbage but are not 100% sure. However if that person ever comes on another trip I can promise that will be the first night's nomination for the white bags!

The cooks grabbed a sleeping bag that was laying on someone's luggage and laid it on Brian. As they did this, a pair of Jockey underwear fell out of the sleeping bag, so fire monitor BJ just gave them a kick on into the fire. A very short while later, things started happening. Seems the plastic bag of garbage had an aerosol can in it, of which no one knew. As the can exploded, it of course sent other items out of the fire. Some flaming items were paper, or other small pieces of wood. However, one of the flaming items came out in two pieces and it was someone's Jockey underwear.

The underwear pieces landed on two chairs and ignited the cloth seats on them. The fire monitor BJ went screaming to the cooks for help, as the cook crew turned into a hot shot fire fighting crew instantly. In a matter of a minute they had the fire out and Brian could do nothing but just lay there and watch. (side note, Brian turned out to be fine, nothing broken) (another side note, no one has ever spoken up about being short a pair of underwear).

Taylor and I with the guests gathered Lake Creek and trailed the herd to Lick Creek. We doctored and tagged about 12 calves in the process.

That evening at Bear Lodge we had our dinner and had the treat of the Drum & Bugle corp. coming in and playing for a few minutes. They do get your blood flowing! Carl Polisenon won the drawing for the White Bags and Elaine Kelly won the cowboy trivia game for the Double Rafter Belt Buckle.

Tim Woodville tried to nominate crew member Jake Buckles for taking his group down through some real nasty deadfall trees. Tim said Jake should be nominated because he kept hitting his knees on the tree's. Jake turned the nomination right back on Tim, since Tim has two artificial knees how could he even feel the tree's hitting his knees? One comment I heard about the trip was that it was a "spiritual colonoscopy" what a description!

It appears there is a big bunch of this group that are planning on coming back on the same trip in the future. Thanks so much and God Bless all of you!

Dana

