

CLEAN UP RIDE OCT 2006

Well, compared to the Sept Cattle Drive the Clean Up ride was like sitting on the beaches soaking up the sun. They were calling for a few showers on Tuesday but other than that it was supposed to be 60 and sunny all week. Since everyone on the Clean Up Ride was experienced I just couldn't wait to get to camp to get their butts in the saddle. I don't know if I have ever mentioned it, but I love to torture people from the back of a horse. There is just something comical about watching someone say "I'm just fine", when the expression on their face says something entirely different!!!

Sunday afternoon we arrived in camp around 2:30pm and I told them to get changed because we had a circle to make that afternoon. We headed to Lick Creek to gather the cattle that we knew were there, and get them kicked into the Little Horn drainage so that we could take the next day and make a big outside circle. We picked up 39 head of cattle and kicked them into East Burn and headed back to camp for dinner. It was a great start to the week. The weather was crisp, yet warm and sunny. The amazing thing was that all of the snow that we had during the Sept trip and completely melted except for on the North side of the trees where they just don't catch as much sun. The amazing thing about this fact is that we had had 38 inches of snow total. It just shows you how terribly dry it had been.

MONDAY OCT 2nd.

We had a gorgeous morning and with out lunches packed we headed out for the days ride. I sent Randy and 2 guests to Bull Elk Park to look for cattle, while myself, Craig Mead and cook Meg took the remaining guests and were going to reride the Bear Trap drainages, Taylor Creek and the Sardine Lake Country. It was a full day and we got back into camp around 5:00 pm for dinner. Our group didn't find any fresh sign at all, but the group in Bull Elk Park did say that some cattle had been there sometime earlier in the summer, but no fresh tracks were found. On the way out of Bull Elk they came across a track of a Wolf, which of course we only like to look at through the scope of a rifle. Oh, excuse me, I'm supposed to say how wonderful and free they look, where have my politically correct manners gone too!!!! On the way out of Bull Elk Park, Randy, Jim and Larry thought they heard a cow bawl somewhere in the bottom of Lick Creek. All three agreed that they heard it, but only once and not completely sure where it came from. After dinner that night, as I lay there in bed I decided that now was the time to go down Rubber Boot, and check and see if maybe there were some more cattle down that way that we hadn't found yet.

TUESDAY 7:30 AM After breakfast I informed everyone that we were having a change of plan. We weren't headed to the Little Horn as planned, we were headed down Rubber Boot. Of course a storm had rolled in during the night and it was snowing and blowing. The ground was just barely white as we caught our horses and headed north. Between the snow and the fog, the visibility was rather limited (about 40yds) We rode to the far end of Rubber Boot and saw cow sign but nothing that looked real fresh. The real problem was that there had been no cow sign when we had ridden that country on the Aug trip, so these cattle had come in after that, and probably after the Sept snow storm, but where were they, or where had they gone to? We rode most of the day and came up with absolutely nothing and didn't find any sign that was real fresh. It's real hard to judge just how old the sign is when it has been snowing every 3rd or 4th day for two

weeks. Since we hadn't come up with cattle, the plan was to pack to the Little Horn the next day.

WEDNESDAY: By now the skies had cleared up and it was a nice crisp morning. We caught horses and pack mules and started the camp move to the next camp. Randy and the 5 guests headed to East Burn to pick up the cattle we had dropped there on Sunday and take them on down across Robinson Crossing and into the canyon. It was a gorgeous day and we weren't even wearing overshoes in the Little Horn it was so nice. When Randy and his group came in around 4:30pm you could tell by the looks on their faces that they had about pegged out the fun meter for the day. With all of the moisture that we had over the previous two weeks the Beaver Slide was just a little on the slick side. But then you've never lived till you've damn near died!!!

THURSDAY: Right after breakfast, as I was jingling the horse herd the beauty of the Little Horn made me just stop and look for a couple of minutes. With the deep blue sky overhead, and the golden leaves of the Aspen trees rustling in the slight breeze, I realized why I love the mountains so much. We were in our own universe there in the Little Horn and I loved it. Randy and the 5 donkey whippers took off after the cattle just as soon as they were saddled, (two of our guests were from Minnesota and both liberals, is it politically correct to call them donkey whippers)? Craig, Meg, and I packed the mules and headed down the canyon to catch up with the herd. I mentioned to Randy to stop in at Rock Cabin Park and see what was left of that camp on his way by. The news wasn't good. The inch galvanized ridge pole was broken in two on the mess tent and a rip went the length of the tent. I guess it's a good thing we were only riding by and not stopping to spend the night.

The pack string went straight through and never had to reset a pack, but still didn't catch the cowboys until we got to the Rocky Bottom. We put the cattle in the corral, loaded our saddles in the top of the trailer and loaded the mules in the trailer and headed to the Rafter where we had left camp standing after the Sept trip. We were at the Rafter by 5:30 in the evening. What an enjoyable day we had.

FRIDAY: Since we had small numbers of cattle, around 40, I felt the best thing to do was for me to haul the cattle to my place instead of taking two days to walk them there. Randy and the Donkey Whippers headed up the Dry Fork as Randy had seen a couple of our yearlings up there when he had been bow hunting the week between the cattle drives. This was new country to everyone except Randy, but that is what happens on the Clean Up Ride, you are never sure exactly where you will be headed. They did find one yearling and saw lots of elk, so I think everyone had a great day and a great week, and the great big bonus was "THE WEATHER WAS ABSOLUTELY OUTSTANDING". At the end of the week we were still short 7 head, and I'm not exactly sure as to where to start looking. I will probably head back down Rubber Boot for another swing just to double check that country. I can't help but feel grateful for the people who came and helped us on the Clean Up Ride. I sure had an enjoyable week and from a cattle gathering stand point it was a huge success. I just wish I knew where the other 7 animals are hiding out.