

## SEPTEMBER CATTLE DRIVE 2010 TRIP REPORT

### **Saturday Sept 11<sup>th</sup>:**

You would think after 18 years of doing this you would have seen most every different configuration you could possibly come up with. Well, we had another first on this trip. We had 22 guests and 18 of them were women. WOW! You probably can't guess the biggest problem that arose with 18 women on one trip. No it wasn't a line at the Porta Potties! We try very hard to make sure our female guests have the lighter saddles. We just don't have 18 light weight saddles. ( I know that is not the answer you were expecting). However, I do have to say, this was a very savvy group of women and there was no complaining. Well almost none, Karen Lewis started to complain but Daniel Fuller solved that right off the bat by hitting her in the face with a pine branch. (More on that later). Actually the September trip started off pretty typical as we had a light dusting of snow the day before the trip. On this particular trip we had 3 from Denmark, 3 from Sweden and the rest scattered from around from the US. The one other amazing thing we had on this trip was a group from Florida. Generally, Floridians don't come on the September Cattle Drive because it can get cold and that is one of the big reasons people live in Florida. That night around the fire we had a sure fire winner for the White Saddle Bags and the great thing was that she didn't even know I knew. Laura Funk from Florida had been trying out her equipment for the trip and one of the items she decided to try out was her mummy bag, which was rated to 20 below zero. It was one of the good ones that when you zip it up, you have a hole just big enough to stick your nose through. Lying in the living room of her house, she crawled in, zipped it clear to the top and was immediately impressed at how warm she was becoming. She reached up to unzip the bag and discovered she had zipped some of the material into the zipper and it was stuck. I can't begin to know how hot she must have been in 80 degrees zipped in a 20 below sleeping bag!

### **Sunday Sept 12<sup>th</sup>:**

We awoke to a nice clear crisp morning on the mountain. It was absolutely fantastic until we discovered that the horses had taken an unexcused absence in the night and were nowhere in the horse pasture. Throughout the years we have discovered it is hard to have a cattle drive without horses! People just play out to fast. We drove to the Lick Creek drainage with a bucket of grain and shortly had a couple horses caught and saddled so we could find the rest of them. This of course allowed for an extra cup of coffee. Once the horses had been found and caught, Chris started the horsemanship clinic while part of the crew went to look for the downed fence that needed to be put back up. We are guessing a herd of Elk probably ran through the fence and knocked it down at some time, of course the horses didn't share their little secret with us until we had all the guests there.

After the morning horsemanship we split into two groups and headed different directions to start gathering cattle for the trip home. We had gathered the Lake Creek drainage the week before but we knew we had missed some cattle and so a reride was needed. Trent and his group went to Rubber Boot park and found 43 head plus two wild cows they didn't get out of there with. They had those 2 wild hides gathered with the herd when they decided they weren't going. Their heads went up in the air

and they started looking for the perfect time to make a break. Cattle are not nearly as dumb as people think. I am sure these cows had gotten away before, from someone else, so they felt they could do it anytime they wanted. These two cows were both cows we had purchased so were completely new to us, as well as the fact they were completely new to the country. With lots of cursing, dogs barking and branches snapping the cowboys couldn't keep up with those wild rips. The last they were seen they were headed north towards the Dry Fork at a wild run. There is a point you can't waste your day chasing two cows and screw up the whole circle and lose the other cattle. Those two wild cows showed up in the valley about 3 weeks later and from the looks of them must have spent a fair amount of time in the bottom of the Dry Fork Canyon with nothing to eat. However they did find their way through the Dry Fork and that generally doesn't happen. It seems only the Elk know the few breaks in the rims that you can get through. What does that say about those two wild rips!

That night around the fire Daniel Fuller won the White Bags for (you guessed it) hitting Karen Lewis in the face with a pine bough. I think I'll drop it right there. ( I believe Daniel is still in Virginia apologizing, or anyway that's what's in the wind).

### **Monday Sept 13<sup>th</sup>:**

We split about 4 different directions today with the goal of gathering everything we could find and throwing them into Dayton Gulch to work the herd. Once gathered we could then work the herd as to which ones go to the valley and which ones stayed on the mountain for another couple of weeks. We found one real sick calf in Lick Creek. He obviously had pneumonia . We couldn't find his mother but if we left him at that elevation, he had a 0 percent chance of survival. We doctored him and physically lifted him into the trailer and hauled him to the valley where I figured he had a 20% chance of survival. He did dye about a week later. His value on the market was about \$700.00 just to give you an idea of why we spend so much time riding on the cattle. Riding back to camp, people are always schocked because you think you did a great job of gathering and you discover all these little bunches of cattle that you missed that morning. That's about the time people start to realize this is a lot harder than the movies make it look. They also start to question "How do we ever find all of them"? Running all yearlings, I have only had one year we found every one of them. If you have cows and calves that have been up there more than once we generally find all of them by sometime in early November. That means it generally takes an additional 30 days of riding to find all missing cattle. It is a challenge people don't understand until they do one of our trips. Today is always a long day since we finish the day when we have the herd where they need to be, to make the next day push achievable. People are always very tired this night and today was no exception as most of the guests were in bed by 8:30pm.

The White Bags were won that night by none other than many time repeat guest Hans Hannus. He brought his niece on the trip and there was some comment made about using wipes on someone else back side and I think I will just leave it there. After all, this is a family cattle drive!

### **Tuesday Sept 14<sup>th</sup>:**

Today we move camp so there is a lot going on. We have to pack the pack mules, pack up the camp, set up the camp at the next site, move the herd and haul the vehicles and trailers off the

mountain and set up the camp in the valley so that we have it the end of the week. The first thing we do is get the cooks saddled and loaded, give them the grocery mules and off they go to the next camp. Then we finish packing rest of the camp and Craig Mead and myself drive it off the mountain to the Double Rafter. Then the cowboy crew heads out to gather yesterday's sort and move them several miles on down the trail towards the Rafter. Then lastly, the pack crew packs the rest of the belongings such as the sleeping bags and personal clothes and they head to the next camp. If everything goes according to plan we will all show up sometime that day, at the same camp, with everything that we need. Sounds simple enough.

John Barker won the White Bags that evening, it seems he started giving orders to people but was wrong about what he said. When one of our overseas guests questioned him, by asking him his name he refused to give them his name so they called him Mr. No Name the rest of the day. When Craig Mead and I rode into camp after dark that evening, we could hear the laughter from ½ mile away as they were retelling the story of Mr. No Name.

### **Wednesday Sept 15<sup>th</sup>:**

Trent, Ali, and Tyler headed up the Kerns Joslyn trail to ride the Sardine Lake Country and were going to meet us at the head of Bear Trap, with whatever we cattle we might find. We didn't allow any guests to go with them, as we had had the trail slide away with us during the summer, and there was about a 15ft span that was extremely dangerous to get across. We knew with it being September that it would be the following year before we could get in to rebuild that part of the trail. When the three of them topped out at Sardine Lake they found a couple pair. Now you always hope those bought cattle will cooperate and just walk along. Instead, they threw their heads in the air and headed to the timber on a dead run. The cowboys figured if they could just keep up with them for about a mile the cows would wind themselves and then be much easier to handle. Of course the trick is to keep up with them for that mile of log jumping. With branches popping and shirts tearing and with an occasional curse word being spoken, the cowboys did manage to keep the cattle in sight and after about a mile, it came to pass that the cows were winded and much easier to manage. It's surprising how the lack of oxygen can make a cow smarter!

The rest of us rode around the end of the Little Horn rim which was a longer distance, but much safer. Once we reached the top, we split and sent one group to reride Lick Creek and Little Switzerland while I took the other group with me and went down the forks of Bear Trap. My group found 22 yearlings and we trailed them to the head of Bear Trap when Trent, Tyler, and Ali showed up with two very winded cows and a couple cowboys looking like a porcupine with branches sticking out of their horses tails, manes, jackets and hats. We grabbed our little herd and headed towards the green cabin to gather the cattle that had been dropped there from the day before. We figured the other group of riders would catch us somewhere, or we would catch them somewhere. Once we got our little herd on the down hill swing I was sure they would start walking. Not exactly, but once we picked up the other herd of cattle we headed towards Elk Draw. At that point the cattle started walking like they were going somewhere and we covered the distance from the woven wire fence to the North side of Elk Draw in just over two hours. We had a very successful day but it was just a little before dark when we rode into

camp. The last group of riders and their herd caught up with us just as we were dropping the cattle for the day. In that group of riders there was one rider we just couldn't recognize. He was completely covered in mud. Seems he and his horse had taken a tumble in a very deep bog with very little bottom in it. If you go to the web site there is a picture of Charlie Gould riding old Mud Ball or was it Mud Ball riding Charlie Gould. There was just too much mud to be able to tell. The only way we could tell where the horse stopped and where Charlie started was that there wasn't any mud on the tip of the horse's ears and when Charlie opened his mouth to say something, Charlie had mud in his teeth so there wasn't a white glow from his teeth. His glasses were completely smeared over and his hat looked more like an adobe hut! To be honest we cowboys have a sick sense of humor because we thought it was hilarious. As we say on the web site we don't have to stage any of this because it happens on its own.

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

Today is another big day as we have to move camp again and all the logistics of pulling this off are rather complex. Shortly after breakfast we break into 3 groups to get the day accomplished. Craig Mead and myself plus a couple of the cooks, leave right after breakfast with a couple pack animals to help get camp set up in the valley for that evening. We go down the canyon before the cattle. We also have to transport vehicles back to the Rocky Bottom, to pick up people once they arrive with the herd. The cowboy crew sticks around camp until breakfast is over, then if it's dry they drop the big mess tent, roll it up and put it away for the winter. It weighs over 300 lbs. so the extra man power is really nice. If it is wet, Trent and I have to ride back in at a later date and do it. We had one year we didn't get back in to put it away until the 19<sup>th</sup> of November. The snow had done a lot of damage to it by that time of year. After the cowboys get the tent rolled up and put away, they gather the herd and head down the canyon. The pack crew then stays at camp and finishes packing the mules and putting the camp away for the year. So far everything was right on schedule.

It stayed on schedule until Craig, myself and the two cooks who were with us started to cross Robinson Crossing. I was in the lead and was just about across with my mules when I heard a scream and a splash. As I looked around there was Sue Sharp picking herself up out of the creek. From the look on her face, it was obvious she didn't know if she should cry, laugh, scream, get mad or just what. Now with 29 years of wedded bliss under my belt, I knew I wasn't going to react until I knew how she was going to react. I did a "are you alright"? and with water dripping off her hat and hair she sort of grinned and said yes. It still wasn't the time to react with anything other than, "are you sure"? Her saddle had slipped over to 3:00 and was just hanging there. As we started to straighten out the mess we noticed that the billet had come undone somehow! It is still a very sober setting without much being said and then I hear her mutter "damn Stan, he saddled my horse this morning"! I responded with how much life insurance do you have? Then realization dawned on me that she didn't have flotation devices in her boat and I became very worried. What if the Coast Guard should happen by. I'll bet she didn't even have a fishing license. Hell, I might be riding with a hardened criminal and didn't know it!! Fishbait waded over to a rock and sat down and proceeded to dump the water out of her boots and back into the creek. Now I don't know for sure, but after 5 days on the trail without a shower, I'm sure the DEQ would be real interested in what she was dumping back into the river. I am sure there are mutated fish just waiting for us to come back next summer.

After getting Fishbait back in the saddle, we headed on down the trail. Since Craig and I had ridden up the Canyon two days earlier, we knew we still had a long day ahead of us. We had found the trail blocked in several areas with downed trees and had difficulty getting by them on the way up. I knew there was no way we were getting a pack string and a herd of cattle by some of them. The real bad one, was in the switch backs so going around that tree was not possible. We stopped and cut out 6 different trees with a hand saw on the way down. There was only one that was a real challenge and it took about 45 minutes of cutting to finally get it cut into small enough pieces that we could move it. We had to cut all the branches off in order to get it light enough that we could move it. It was too big around to cut into 4 foot pieces. All of this waiting did allow Fishbait to soak up the sun and dry out though, so there is a silver lining in everything if you just look. I know I sure worked up a sweat getting the tree's removed. Of course we then had to listen to Fishbait the rest of the day asking "Who smelled so bad"? because she knew it wasn't her! I would have loved to have been a little mouse that night to hear what was really said when Stan and Fishbait were alone.

We arrived in the Rocky Bottom and headed to the Rafter to make sure that night's camp was all set up and ready to go so that when a hungry tired bunch of cowboys arrived later that afternoon, we would be ready for them. Every trip, there are new things that happen that you don't anticipate, that sort of make you laugh and cry at the same time behind the scenes. Well, we had one of those today. When we had pulled the porta potties off the mountain, I apparently forgot to check and make sure the lids on the toilets were down before driving off. It is amazing at just how high up a wall you can splash solids when driving 40 mph on dirt roads! Of course that meant also that someone had to wash the walls down before people showed up to use them. Now Alice is the one that discovered the rather unfortunate scene and like all things in life "You don't have to like it you just have to do it". She never said a word to anyone about this happening until after she had already cleaned them up. Now that's riding for the brand!!!

After dinner that evening we were sitting around the camp fire having nominations for the White Bags. Seems Hans was the winner as he managed to get bucked off the outhouse that morning at Rock Cabin Park. His defense was that they didn't have OSHA approved hand rails. Nice try Hans but it didn't work. The cowboys and pack crew had a great trip down the cattle and were in the bottom around 4:30pm. We have had more than one year when we arrived with the herd in the bottom around dark.

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

After the fiasco of a year earlier, when we let people sleep in, and it turned the day into a marathon, we didn't give them that luxury this year. We gave people two options- we were going to have breakfast at 6:15 and if they didn't get up they didn't have too. But the first group done with breakfast were going to head to the Rocky Bottom and start the herd on home. The previous year it was 11:30 before we had the cattle gathered, and on the trail. We didn't get all the way home with them and had to go back the next day and finish the job. We told anyone that didn't want to move that early that we would pick them up on the second swing and they could catch up with the herd. Absolutely every person answered the breakfast bell and chugged

down breakfast and coffee and was raring to go. What a great bunch of cowboys!!! We had the herd gathered and on the trail by 9:00am and had the drags in the pasture around 2:00pm which allowed plenty of time to get to Sheridan and have a hot shower and clean clothes. Well, we all know there was only one person who didn't really want or need a shower because she had taken hers the day before!! We had an absolutely gorgeous week of weather and a great bunch to share it with! Babbette Burke won the white bags drawing and took them home with her and Julie Amos won the "Cowboy Trivia" game for the Double Rafter belt buckle. Thanks for a great week and we learned 36 ovaries in camp is not a problem. Hope to see you all down the trail.