

JULY 2006 TRIP REPORT

Sunday AM: With a full slate, once the introductions were done we headed to the arena to start the horsemanship clinic. I found myself chuckling as I already had a good nomination for the evenings screw up of the day award. I had received a phone call from one of our guest's better half. (After meeting him there is no doubt she is the better half and I haven't even met her). As I said when he stepped off the bus "You I already know about".

As we were doing the horsemanship clinic and I was watching Chris put the prospective cowboys through there paces, I smiled to myself as we had 9 repeat guests, and that meant I didn't have to watch them as closely as someone whom we have never met before. Just as the thought entered my mind I was horrified to see one of our 4 time guests, saddle and all start slipping off the side of his horse. It didn't look graceful, planned, or like he was in control. It's a good thing the horse was in control because Gary sure wasn't. I will give credit to Gary, he got up, brushed himself off and said he was fine. Now Gary had gotten off the bus that morning with a sprained ankle that he had received back home before coming on the trip. Gary had had a horse accident getting ready for the trip but was determined to come and complete the trip. Now Gary rides for the brand, and never once complained about his ankle. When he got home he did go to the doctor and discovered his severely sprained ankle was broken.

That night around the fire we had the white bag nominations and I have never had so many good ones the first night. (Needless to say we had more great white bag nominations this week than we have ever had before). Of course we nominated Gary Burke for riding side saddle. (Since he wasn't bleeding he wasn't injured as far as we were concerned). I nominated Bob Gundrum, for not calling home and letting his wife know that he had switched motels once he arrived in Sheridan on Thursday, but hadn't bothered to tell his wife about the change. Now, I don't like being called and being told to "Tell that skunk Bob to call home, I'm sure he knows the phone number". The other really great one was also by a repeat guest. Russ called once he arrived in Sheridan which was fine, and told me he was at the airport in Sheridan, I thought so??? He wanted to know if we were going to come get him. I said no, call the motel and they will send the shuttle a lot faster than we can drive in and get you. Then the moment of truth came. Russ had left his itinerary at home and had no clue where he was staying in Sheridan. Boy did I pass up an opportunity to have some fun with him. He is so lucky I had more on my plate at the moment. If I had just thought quickly enough, I would have called him a cab and man could I have had fun then!!! Anyway, Bob Gundrum won the white bags that night for not calling home.

MONDAY: Breakfast was at daylight, and then we started getting saddled to start gathering cattle. It was going to be hot, but I felt really good about the upcoming day. Since the close call on the last trip we were ready for the 1000 loved starved steers so that we could get by them without any mishaps.

When we went to the corral that afternoon, to do the branding seminar, I saw the most bizarre thing I have ever seen. As Randy was leading his horse into the corral he walked by the branding pot, which had the branding irons in it heating up for the demonstration. They were just about cherry red so they were very close to ready. As he walked his horse by the branding pot, his horse switched his tail at a fly, and a knot in his tail hooked on

the handle of the iron and jerked it out of the fire. Now with a hot iron at the end of his tail, things started moving faster. First it was the horse, then it was the cowboys and dogs! No one knew what to do so you just scattered. We were lucky because, just like crack the whip, about the third change in direction, the hot iron came loose and went flying through the air and harmlessly landed in the dirt. It's just like we say "We don't have to plan a wreck, they happen all on their own!"

After the branding seminar, everyone headed over to camp, some to sleep, some to jump in the creek, and some to have a cold beer. At that point in time, Bob Gundrum finally got a case of guilt, and decided to call home. This was only after I had received 2 phone calls from his wife. Janise offered him her cell phone and told him to try and make amends with his wife. Now Bob didn't know that Janise had put it on speaker phone, so that the whole camp could listen in. I have to say, the conversation was hysterical! Now Bob was quick on the take, and had reasons for everything he had done, but it was still obvious that his boat was sinking fast!! He tried to convince his wife that winning the White Bags, was like winning a purple ribbon at the county fair.

That evening around the fire there were many nominations again, and again, some of the best I've ever heard. Steve Burke went hunting the outhouse in the middle of the night, with the full moon bright overhead, he didn't need a flashlight to find his way. As he walked by a willow bush in the middle of the night, out of the corner of his eye, he caught movement on the other side of the bush. Steve froze, and tried to stare through the bush and determine what type of wild animal he was looking at. His mind started to go through possible wild animals, and which ones were dangerous and should he be alarmed. He decided to explore a little more before letting his feet do their thing. He slowly stepped to his right and the animal moved to its right. He then moved to his left, and the animal did the same. He froze, and slowly started to look around for some sort of weapon. To be eaten on the first day of the trip was more than he wanted to think about. He noticed a big dry stick lying at the base of the bush, bent over and picked it up, and decided he wasn't going down without a fight. He decided that the best approach would be the direct approach and be the aggressor. He jabbed the spear like object in his hand through the bush, and stabbed this big dark animal, ~ ~ that turned out to be his own shadow! The amazing thing is that he told someone the next day as if know one else would say anything. Bob Gundrum (no shocker here) got nominated again for several things. After the branding, Bob decided to jump in the creek and take a bath, to wash the dust off. He jumped into the water and stood up, with only one little problem, when he stood up, his pants didn't. So he got nominated for mooning one of our cooks. They also nominated him for fishing with no license and too small of a worm to catch anything. I'll leave your imagination to ponder that one! Anyway, Steve Burke won the bags for his wild animal adventure. The Grizzly Bear man has nothing on Steve Burke!!

TUESDAY: They were calling for a hot day so we ate a quick breakfast, saddled up, and hit the trail. The cattle were actually going to fast. There was no way they could keep up that pace for 12 miles. We covered the first 3 miles in less than an hour. I knew once the heat hit, with that pace, the whole herd would slow to a crawl and some might just lay down and quit. Once we arrived at the top of the X-X hill we held herd and waited for the cattle to cool down. There was a slight breeze which kept the heat of the day from overpowering us. We sat on top of the hill for about 45 minutes, until the cattle started to act like their body temperatures had dropped down to the normal level. Then we got the

herd up and started moving them on west. Even with the stop we reached the Little Horn River at 11:50 am. The heat was beating down on us, and with the lack of sleep, you could feel the tiredness setting in. Most of the cattle were just standing up to their bellies in the soothing waters of the Little Horn. Once the cattle were cooled off and watered, we gathered them and put them in the 40 acre trap at the Rocky Bottom. I knew the cattle would walk most of the night, because there wasn't enough feed in the 40 for the cattle to get 2 lbs apiece. If it had looked bad two weeks earlier, it looked real bad now. The grass wasn't tall enough to generate shade even for the grasshoppers. I do have to say there was a healthy crop of hoppers!! As we came into camp, Les Broker stepped off his horse to get a picture or something, and his horse decided he had seen enough and took off without him towards the corral. This wasn't Gizmo's first cattle drive either, but we did have our first nomination for the night. After a dip in the river everyone was feeling refreshed and revived. One thing for sure, that mountain spring water will damn sure jump start your ticker!! As people were sitting around that afternoon, Janise decided to do her imitation of an airplane doing a 3 point landing. She did it perfectly, and landed on her forehead, nose, and chin. I was standing behind her and I can honestly say, those were the only 3 parts of her body touching the ground for the first few feet. As she was skidding on her nose, her feet were getting higher in the air as momentum was pushing her forward, but her nose was putting a major divot in the ground. She tried very hard to blame it on poor, helpless, blameless, Taylor but nobody was buying it. Maybe, she was just tired of all the grasshoppers and decided to eat them. Maybe it was the beer, who knows what goes on inside the cockpit of a plane. The greatest line of the day belonged to Janise, as they were coming down the Red Hill with the herd, she looked out over the valley, and commented to her husband. "Doesn't it look just like an old western"? Chip commented duh! Is it any wonder that Janise won the White Bags that night. When you have Janise and Bob on a trip, you have a horse race every night for the white bags.

WEDNESDAY: They were calling for it to be hot, but nothing like the year before. We got an early jump on the cattle and left the bottom shortly after daylight with the herd. The trip went extremely smooth except for the switchbacks. There is something about having \$20,000.00 of inventory milling on a rock, on the edge of a cliff, that makes me very nervous. All we could do was stand and wait for the cattle to come off of the rock on their own. If they had stayed on the trail there is no problem, but then they wouldn't be yearlings would they? They veered off the 3rd corner, and with about 30 of them standing on this bolder, kept staring at me as if to say "Come up here to get me and I'll start pushing, and who knows how many of us will get shoved off of the 60ft drop off". We will certainly ruin your day! As we sat and watched the yearlings finally started coming off the rock one at a time and walked back to the bottom where we were waiting to start them up the switchback all over again. I can't thank David McKarns enough for his help. I really don't think without him we would have gotten up the switchbacks. We did on the second try but it was no picnic. Earlier in the day, with the other groups going up the switchback a yearling knocked off a basketball sized rock from above, and as it went rolling and crashing down the mountain side, Trent tried to stop the rock with the inside of his knee, so he spent the rest of the week hobbling around, but other than that it was a great trip up the canyon. When we arrived at Rock Cabin Park around 4:00pm I found my wife lying under a tree with her leg up and ice on her ankle. She had stepped

off the ladder on the bear pole and sprained it when she stepped down. I guess dancing that evening was out of the question, and I really felt a good jitterbug coming on. Rats, I hate it when that happens! We were sitting there having a luke cool beer, when the black clouds on the horizon decided that we needed a little shower just to show us it could still do it. It rained pretty hard for about an hour, but as dry as it was, it didn't even hardly make the ground wet. That night around the fire when we were doing the White Bags the winning nomination was Bill McKarns. Our nurse nominated him because he had gone to her and asked for some ointment for his sore finger. When Kathy returned with the ointment she noticed that he didn't appear to have a sore on his finger. As Kathy questioned him about his sore finger she came to discover that IT WASN'T HIS FINGER THAT WAS SORE!!! Karley nominated her very quiet and polite grandmother for not using very grandmotherly like language coming up the canyon. Bob got nominated again (what's new) because he hadn't reset his alarm from the day before, and came into the kitchen wanting to know when coffee would be ready, at least an hour before anyone else was up. None of those were big enough to offset the greased cheeks of Bill McKarns!

THURSDAY: We headed to Leaky Mountain and had a great time, and there we plenty more nominations that day. Mary Roberts lathered up her head, grabbed her shampoo, put a big healthy dab of shampoo and went to working up lather. She soon realized that she wasn't getting any bubbles and took a second look and realized that she had grabbed the sun screen bottle instead of the shampoo bottle, but at least her hair didn't burn!! Kristin Flemming left Leaky Mountain and forgot her chaps hanging on a branch. Now a cowboy might forget his wife, but his chaps, NEVER!!! However, the winner for the day was Chip the chipmunk for his communication with the squirrels. We were so honored to have a bonafide squirrel whisperer among us. Since Chip runs a tree trimming business I guess it would be only fitting to be able to communicate with squirrels. How else would one get the little squirrel families to move before cutting their homes down?

FRIDAY: This day is always a push because we are headed to the valley to make the WYO RODEO that night. It is a PRCA show and great one at that. But in order to make everything work this day, we get out of bed running. I have to say everyone pitched in, and really helped us break camp down and get moving. We always have a real fast paced meal that night because the rodeo starts at 7:00 sharp. Bob Gundrum did win the Turd of the Week award which is voted on by the group! It wasn't even a close vote. It was more like Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter. After the rodeo everyone went to the street dance. There were over 5,000 people in attendance and I guess everyone made it back to the motel that night. You see when we get back from the rodeo I am no longer responsible for anyone. I do have to say it was an unbelievable week with a delightful bunch of people. Every one of you is welcome at my fire anytime!!