

DOUBLE RAFTER NEWSLETTER #6 SPRING 2006

Well, I'll start this newsletter off like all standard conversations, "How's your weather?" Well since you asked --it has been warm and dry. Feb 8th we hit a high of 67 degrees when the normal temperature for that time of year is probably around 35 degrees. We are getting some snow today and are white but its still 29 degrees out. They say the snow pack on the mountain in early January was 97% of normal. Now don't forget this is the same government that feels if we just ask the captured terrorists nicely they will divulge all of their secrets. On my 50th birthday we went up and snow machined into the cow camp and had lunch. The tops of the sage brush were showing through the snow. When I used to do a lot of that activity back in the 70's and 80's there was at least 5 foot of snow on the level. On Monday Feb 13th it was 57 degrees and today Wed the 15th its 20 degrees and they are calling for a high Friday of **5 degrees below zero**. So it's all over the board which is what the almanac called for.

SHERIDAN WYOMING:

Recently Sheridan Wyoming was chosen by True West magazine as the No 1. TRUE WEST TOWN in the nation. Cody Wy was chosen second. Sheridan had a big celebration and the Chamber of Commerce and the Tourism department says that this will definitely be a boon to Wyoming's travel economy for the next several years. I certainly hope that, with the fact that we are the only one of a kind cattle drive out there, it will have a positive impact on our business. Our goal has always been to offer the most unique horseback experience out there!!!

STATEHOOD:

As I'm sure most of you who have been here are aware, we are called the Equality State due to the fact that we were the first state to give women the right to vote. WELL, HERE'S THE REST OF THE STORY:

The bill to give equal rights to women was put forth by a senator who had a wife half his age (I'm sure it was mail order) in 1890. She convinced him that it was the thing to do. Now being one who has been married just about 24 years, I certainly understand how persuasive a women can be and all the many tools they have available to them to get their point across. At that time, the territory had a population of 7,000 people, of which 6,000 were men. Now this concerned both the male and female population of the territory. With the difference in numbers, it certainly wasn't going to attract men looking to settle down and build something permanent, nor was it going to attract many women to the kind of man that was already here. The mail order bride convinced her husband that by giving women the right to vote, it would attract many women from all over the United States; thus the equality state. The interesting point was the toast that the Senator made after achieving statehood on July 10, 1890, which was: "To women, who were once our superiors, and are now our equals". Since then we have set many standards for women. Dayton, WY was the first town to have a woman mayor, and the State was the first state to have a women Governor.

BENEFITS OF LIVING IN SMALL TOWN RURAUL AMERICA:

The day before leaving to go to Omaha for Christmas break I was mailing several packages at the local Post Office and as I was filling out mailing addresses I managed to

leave one of the packages sitting on the desk in the Post Office. We left early the next morning unaware that one package was still sitting at the Post Office. When we came home a week later there was a note from the Post Mistress saying that she assumed we wanted that one package mailed so she went ahead and paid the postage and mailed it. Now, I'm sure if a package got left at the Post Office, say in New York City, the bomb squad would have been called. I count my blessing everyday for living where I do.

COW WHISPERER:

I'm starting to sound like an old timer but in the spring of 77 Blaine and I were doctoring sick baby calves on one Saturday morning, when the temptation to pull a gag on dear naïve little brother overcame me. I look back on it in horror as I could have killed him, but at the time it seemed like the thing to do. Baby calves like all babies are susceptible to many different sicknesses and the most common one is scours. When about 75 cows calved we would move them and their babies to a pasture by themselves, so as to be able to watch them closely for sickness. The best way to doctor these calves was to feed the cows in a small circle or feed in several lines parallel to one another. With the cows busy eating you could walk through the cattle with a sheep hook that had a 10 ft handle on it and reach around, or under a cow and snag the calf that needed doctoring. Generally, the cows would just continue eating as you worked quickly and quietly. With most of the calves standing next to the cows, they generally felt pretty safe, so they were pretty easy to catch. Usually, the calf wouldn't bawl and alert mom that something was wrong. If you rope the calf they scream like a banshee and all hell breaks loose. Now, I know it's not the cowboy way to do it this way, but most cowboys don't own the cattle, so they don't have any financial risk and it's all about fun for them.

Blaine and I had been through about 5 different bunches of cattle that morning and were going through the last bunch for the day. Now Blaine was a senior and had just finished basketball season, so he was young and in good shape. However, he really didn't want to be out there, so wasn't paying too much attention to what was going on. He had the sheep hook and I had the purse with the medicine in it. I would point to the calf, he would snag it, then go up the pole, grab the calf, flank him down and I would come with the medicine and doctor said calf. This whole process would take less than a minute per calf and the calf was back standing within the safety of the cows before the cows became alarmed. Now, every rancher who calves have some of these cows that you leave their calves alone, unless they are deathly sick, because momma will **kill you!** Well, ole# 332 was in this bunch. With the warm sun beating down and Blaine about half asleep I pointed to her calf. Because I was with the cattle everyday I knew which cows were killers and which ones were bluff and of course Blaine was clueless. Due to the fact you were in a herd most of the cows lost track of which calf was theirs while they were eating. By the time you were done doctoring momma cow maybe hadn't found her calf yet, so generally it was relatively safe. Most of them would only take you if it was their calf that you were treating. They would run up, sniff the calf and if it wasn't theirs they would walk off and go back to eating. Now it just so happens that ole #332 never lost track of her calf **anywhere, anytime**. So when I pointed to the 332 calf it was standing right beside mom. Blaine reaches over with the sheep hook, snags the calf and starts down the handle---this is the point in time where I took off running towards the pickup because I know what's about to happen. Blaine grabs the calf, flanks him down and drops on top of him. Now ole 332 bellows, and comes charging with very serious

malicious intent!! Blaine looks up for me because it is the job of the person carrying the medicine bag to keep the cow off the person on the ground. When he sees me running as hard as I can go for the pickup he knows he's been had! Now it's probably a good thing he was an all conference basketball player because if he had been any slower I'm sure he would have had cow tracks all over his body. The funny thing, as I think back, I don't recall him being mad at me; I guess it's just the warped sense of humor we have out here.

COW TRACKS:

A year ago last January I got a phone call from a rancher on the other side of the mountain saying that they had picked up one of our yearling heifers. I was greatly appreciative and went over and retrieved the animal. Since we had already shipped all of the other yearlings she was left over and looked to me like she was pregnant and going to calve sometime in late spring, so I decided to just keep her. Well she calved after we had turned out last spring and lost the calf so that was a money losing plan. I decided the best thing to do was to ship her in the fall after she had had a chance to fatten on the rich mountain grass. I remember seeing this cow in the Little Horn before we went out on top. I never saw this cow again the rest of the summer. I was starting to think that maybe she had died and we hadn't found the carcass. I knew we didn't have her on the September trip and she wasn't with the cattle when we did the clean up ride. I did get a call from a neighbor saying they had a cow that wasn't theirs and maybe she was mine. I went and looked and unfortunately it didn't belong to me either. Then in early January I got a call from a Brand Inspector from Lovell and you guessed it, she had gone off the other side of the mountain **again**. The brand inspector suggested I sell her, I said hell no, I want to see if she can do it three times in a row. So for those of you who are coming back this year you have your assignment!!!

HORSE NEWS:

Well, most of you won't remember this horse because usually the crew rode him. He was a big tall sorrel horse 7 years old we call Johnny and like all horses sometimes they aren't happy unless they are costing you something. He must be one happy horse now!! Daniel Fuller, Chelsie or Tyler usually rode him. This was the first year we had this horse so the potential career ending injury is more concerning. About 3 inches above his left knee; he caught it on something and tore it clear to the bone. He severed two tendons and took a chunk out about the size of an 8oz. steak. I have no idea what he hit. I would guess another horse laid his ears back and came at him and he spun away and caught it on something sticking out of a tree or post, who knows. Well he has been in a box stall for 3 weeks now and I have been changing the bandages daily. I have \$800 in medical bills in him to date and will find out in a day or two what the prognosis is. If it is more surgery I have a decision to make, where is the point that you decide you have spent enough. The last check up the vet was guardedly optimistic so we will just have to wait and see.

CREW NEWS:

Chelsie graduated from Old Dominion in December and has several applications out to various law colleges around the country. She is home right now and decided to get a part time job and since she has a degree and her mother is a teacher, it was only natural that she apply for a substitute teacher's permit. That all took longer than expected because when she went in to get her fingerprints taken to prove she wasn't wanted, (other than by her family) they had a very difficult time getting a good print from Chelsie. While Chelsie was going to school in Bozeman she worked at a pizza parlor and got her

fingers of one hand caught in the dough machine. It pretty much shredded several of her fingers, so consequently she has altered fingerprints. Due to that, it took a while longer to get her permit. Because the thumb was still the original, she did finally get her permit. I'm sure if she ever applies for a government job there will be real close scrutiny going on her fingerprints.

Krayton has decided to throw his hat in the political arena and is going to run for one of the state legislative seats open in Laurel for the state of Montana. It's hard to believe, a Kerns getting into politics!!! I wish him luck, Montana has modeled both California, and Massachusetts in their political views.

Kathy Jones has had a very difficult winter with the passing of her father in December. Two days before her dad died they diagnosed her grandmother with cancer, and then a couple weeks after her fathers passing, her mother was also diagnosed with cancer. I wish I could say this was the end to the story but it gets worse. Kathy's brother in-law was just diagnosed with a very serious lung disease, and he and his wife are still at the Mayo clinic. The prognosis is not good. So I would ask all of you to keep Kathy in your prayers.

John and Cathy Barker were sitting in their living room, last Sunday watching the Super Bowl, when a car drove through their fence, across their yard, and out the driveway. At about the same time the phone rang. It was the Highway Patrol saying they were pursuing a stolen jeep that had driven off the interstate and through the fence and into the hills headed their way. It was this same Jeep and they wanted John to block the road until they got there. The person they were chasing was wanted in two states on charges of stolen vehicles. John as some of you remember is the local Marshall for the town of Ranchester. Can you imagine the shock on the driver's face when he drove around the corner of John's house and there is a cop car parked there? Anyway, he took off across the hills with the jeep and John blocked the road like they asked. Because it was a dead end road after about 3 miles, the Sheriff's office wouldn't let John pursue the stolen outfit until they got there. They found the jeep later with the front end stuck in a cow trail they said. If it stuck the jeep, it wasn't a cow track it was a gully. Anyway, the male and female occupants of the stolen vehicle took off on foot into the hills. This would have been about dark. Four days later... they still haven't been seen. Anyway, I guess it has saved Sheridan County some money by not catching him. I suspect they got back to the interstate and caught a ride somewhere. Now this all happened within a mile of our house, but the sheriff's office forgot to notify us. We heard about it at school 24 hours later. We did lock the door that night and took the keys out of the vehicles which was a little foolish since it had been over 24 hours since the incident, and we were sure he was long gone. Plus, out here in the country, it's a good way to get shot to come into someone's place, after dark, being real quite. Most everyone has a loaded gun out here that is usually only seconds away from wherever you happen to be. I don't know of one person out here that lives in the country that doesn't have a firearm within reach. Throughout the years I have shot several coyotes from the door of the house and that is generally why there are firearms within reach.

With some of the spare time I have had this winter I have done a lot of subbing, primarily, in the elementary. I am also coaching basketball at the middle school with 6th, 7th and 8th graders. I am really enjoying it. Just think I get to torture all of you in the summer time and then a bunch of teenage boys in the winter. What more can a man ask

for? Anyway, last week my beloved bride turned 50. Of course we had a basketball game in Sheridan, so we decided that we would all go out and celebrate by having dinner together after the ball game. Of course this meant we had several different vehicles in town, so after dinner everyone headed home on there own. I had to catch a bus at 6:15 the next morning to go to our games for the next day. I had taken Johnny into town that day for another exam of his wound so I had the horse trailer on. We had had a cold front going through that day and it was about 10 degrees that night with a 20mph wind. I got out of town about 2 miles and glanced in my mirror and realized I had a flat tire on the trailer. I had looked at the calendar that morning so I new it wasn't July, so I assumed that the sparks flying 6 ft in the air was the rim running on the pavement and not a Roman Candle. I pulled over onto the shoulder and zipping my coat up close to my neck started to get the things I needed to change the tire. Now, I was a little ticked off at having to change a flat at 9:00 at night, in the cold weather, when the weather had been so mild and warm all week. I opened up the back door of the pickup, grabbed the jack and crossbones, and was looking for my flashlight when I realized it was on the other side of the pickup. So instead of crawling over the seat, I just shut the door and walked around to the other side and proceeded to try and open the door on the passenger side. It was locked, so I trudged back to the other side and went to open the door to hit the unlock button when I discovered that I am completely locked out of my outfit. I don't know if I hit the door lock button with my arm or what, but that is irrelevant at this point. You can hear the engine humming away as you are standing their looking in knowing it's probably 80 degrees in the pickup and 0 outside with the wind chill. About the 6th outfit that went by I managed to flag down so he gave me a ride back to Sheridan where I got on the phone and called my lovely 50 year old bride and said "How would you like a little alone time with just me tonight"? You can drive back into Sheridan with my extra set of keys and pick me up and while we are driving back to the locked pickup, it will be just the two of us, don't let anyone tell you I'm not a true romantic. Anyway, I'm sure she will remember that birthday for a long time.

Craig Mead and I will be in Harrisburg PA for the World Horse Expo as I mentioned in my previous newsletter. We will be manning our cattle drive booth the 24th, 25th and 26th. So if you are in the neighborhood please stop by and say hello. I would really love to have the opportunity to catch up on what's going on in your lives. We have met so many great people throughout the years that it would be great to be able to visit with you knowing that I'm not responsible for you. On the cattle drives it seems like I have to always have one ear tuned in for the problems that could arise at any moment. If you have any friends who have expressed interest at some point in time, I would love to have you encourage them to stop by the booth and say hello. As I have stated at the banquets, your support of our operation has been critical to helping us hang onto a piece of dying America that was so instrumental to the growth of this great country. Remember, the **cowboy way** is a standard to live by, not a way of life.

