

## Sept 21, 2003 trip Report

### SUNDAY SEPT 21

Everyone arrived on time and all things went well except for about 20 little items that always happen behind the scenes of which we never want the guest to know about. The biggest on was the fact that I blew the propane stove up in the cabin two weeks earlier. I guess we got lucky because we had flames touching the ceiling before I got the propane bottle shut off. The cabin hadn't ignited so my problems were small compared to what they could have been. There are lots of Natural Gas stoves out there but trying to find a propane one is not that easy and we didn't get one found in time for the trip. Now you might ask what difference that makes, well the main course for the first night has always been cooked in the oven in the cabin. With the setting up of camp that day it just puts a big load on the cooks that first evening. Now none of our cooks had any experience cooking on the wood burning stove in the cabin so they had to learn in a hurry. Nothing like trial by fire! The cooks did a superb job with the wood stove and the meal was excellent. Just as we were sitting down to dinner our last arrival showed up. Suzie Cornwall was a writer for Cowboy Magazine and was going to do a article on the trip. If she had been much later she would have had to wrestle with the dogs for something to eat and my money would have been on the dogs. Sunday night turned out to be the coldest night of the week. We were about 22 degrees. You can always tell the cold ones for the night as they are the ones with the real baggy eyes the next morning and that look that says "don't say a word or your dead"! Sometimes it's hard to tell if the baggy eyes are caused by Mother Nature or Mother Bottle but I do believe this first night it was all Mother Nature. We had a very easy choice for the white bags that first night. When I had emailed George asking him where to pick him up in Sheridan his reply was "SOMEWHERE"! Now George in 6 trips had never won the white saddle bags so it shows you no one is immune. There was also a real weak attempt at a frame job on the cow boss. Craig Mead is real sorry he attempted it and promised never to do it again if I would keep some pictures I took of him to myself. It didn't take much of a rebuttal on my part to convince people it wasn't in their best interests to vote for me. (remember I assign the horses and the days circle so to a certain extent your life is in my hands) My only worry was that people might call for a recall vote, then I remembered it was Wyoming and not California.

MONDAY: With the frost still white on the ground and horses jingled we started catching horses for that days gather. We had 29 mounted cowboys that morning and we headed three different directions to gather 10,000 acres of country. We had a great day and circle and we were into camp by 3:30 that day. The winner of the white bags that day proved to be a first and a slam dunk. A gentleman by the name of Al Brachfeld shaved that morning before breakfast and then again that afternoon when he got back to camp. Generally we don't have people shave twice in on week let alone twice in one day. From then on he was known as Al Two Shaves. All week long Two Shaves had that clean fresh look of a new arrival. As the week went along we could always tell where Two Shaves was by the glow on the horizon from his freshly shaved face. My

only concern was that some plane flying overhead would think it was a distress flash from a mirror and come to save us.

TUESADAY: Tuesday morning the work really starts as we have to break camp down, pack all of the mules and gather the cows and move them about 8 miles. As we jingled that morning we noticed we were short two horses. One of them we didn't need but the other one belonged to the head cook. Now the biggest problem you can encounter on a cattle drive is a PISSED OFF COOK! I would rather face a grizzly bear than a mad cook, so with that in mind we jumped several horses in the horse trailer and headed west as I thought I knew where the missing horses had gone. My hunches aren't always right but this time I was. They had gone about as far west as they could get. It's a good thing the gates were shut or they would have gone on to the Little Horn. While we were looking for the lost cooks horse the packing crew was busy building packs for the mules. With the number of people we were packing for it had to be done in a certain way. As the packers were putting stuff in one pile and the cooks were putting there needed things in a separate pile to pack on the cook strings mules it was decided to top pack some items. At the same time everything that wasn't going on the mules was to into another pile to be put in the supply trailer to meet people at the bottom of the mountain two days later. Somehow, one of our crew members stuff got loaded into the supply trailer so when Denise got to Rock Cabin Park that night she didn't have a sleeping bag or any clean clothes. It's a damn good thing she is cowboy tough! The white saddle bags were easily won that night by Joseph Garone. He spent a whole hour Tuesday morning brushing out his horse and getting the tangles out of his mane. The only problem he discovered later was that it wasn't his horse! Now Fred is not the kind of horse to really stand for that kind of thing and I'm sure with enough counseling Fred will be just fine. We had had a pretty good day on Tuesday as we had gotten the cattle to our destination (the north side of Elk Draw) and actually gotten to camp earlier than expected. The next day had the ear markings of a easy 4 hour ride.

WEDNESDAY: The morning was a beautiful day until we rode out of camp and couldn't find our cattle. The cows had decided with such beautiful weather they weren't ready to go to the valley so they had turned back south and headed back to where they had come from the day before. We gathered a total of 47 head in the parks where I was expecting at least 250. The cowboys split at this point with some of us taking the 47 head and heading north and everyone else headed south to find the missing cattle. This meant redoing most of Tuesdays work. The cowboys went as far south as they dared because we still had a long ways to go with the cattle we had found. Our short 3 or 4 hour circle turned into a good solid 8 hours in the saddle and it appeared short a lot of cattle. As we were riding out that morning JD one of the guests jokingly stated he had asked for a little light housekeeping. BIG MISTAKE! When he rode into camp that evening tired and looking forward to calling it a day he found his tent had been moved to the top of the big rock that Rock Cabin Park is named after. Anyway at the end of the day it was COWS 1 and COWBOYS 0. It was a real interesting day as we had one cow that day that decided to introduce herself to the cowboys and their horses. She hit 4 or 5 different cowboys as the day went on. It was a case of cow PMS. (protective mother syndrome) Anyway by the end of the trip people were starting to read a cows body language without looking at

her tag number to see if it was really 343. Now Stan another one of our gallant and professional crew members was chasing a wild cow that day and as they were charging through the timber there were two trees and the cow charged through and Stan not to be out done by some old cow charged on after her. Stan looked at the rapidly approaching trees and decided there was room for he, his horse, and his lips to fit between the trees. Stan was wrong, his lips didn't fit. With blood streaming down his face and shirt out of the timber Stan came with the cow. She had seen the gates of hell and didn't want to go there and was headed to the valley. I was really very pleased to see all that blood because it meant Stan was at least human. The one thing I was sure of was that it was going to take lots of pain killer to get Stan through the night. I was right about that also.

THURSDAY: This morning starts before daylight as we have to break camp down again. I can't thank everyone enough on this day because our load is huge this day. We have to get the cowherd through the canyon and the camp broke down and packed up. Everyone pitched in and made a good hand this day. The only mistake made all day was enough to get JD the white saddle bags. The amazing thing is that it was 20 minutes from calling it a day. Chris was in the gate trying to get a count on the cattle to see how many we had missed and JD rode up and started asking a bunch of questions. Chris said he got a good count anyway and might only be off in his count by 40 or 50. By this time it was COW 2 and COWBOYS 0. Well anyway we were short over 100 at least. I guess that's why we have the clean up ride.

FRIDAY: The trip Friday went extremely smooth. We had the drags into the pasture by 2pm. It's surprising how much cowboys work the closer they get to taking a shower. That night at the banquet Mary Keating hit a home run by winning the drawing for the white saddle bags and the Double Rafter Cattle Drive belt buckle for winning the cowboy trivia game. I can't express my gratitude enough to everyone who made the trip a success. It was a great trip and I hope everyone had as much fun as I did. You people like it or not are part of the Double Rafter now. Please feel free to call our 800 number even if it's just to say hi! We always enjoy talking to family.