

## 2018 JCD Trip Report

### **SUNDAY JULY 1<sup>ND</sup>:**

We picked people up in Sheridan and things were slightly different than years past. We usually hire the school district and driver to run a bus to town and pick people up. Well the school district can't seem to find enough drivers so that option went out the window. When you are a rancher you generally figure nothing will go as planned so you are always formulating a plan C, D, or E as fall back. We borrowed two vans from the church and I drove my pickup to put people's luggage in. Once we had my pickup loaded and strapped down it looked more like the Beverly Hillbillies going down the road minus the rocking chair on top. However, I do think Granny could have been buried in the load somewhere.

Our last pickup in Sheridan was the Holiday Inn and then we headed to the ranch to start the orientation and the Horsemanship clinic. Once arriving at the ranch, one of the repeat guests came up to me and said, "man have I really screwed up". He was correct, in that yes, he really had screwed up. One of our repeat guests from the year before had arrived last year, but the airline had sent her luggage on a walk about. So Vic being heroic, told her that she should put her luggage in his vehicle and he would see to it that it got there this year. Well the luggage got to Sheridan all right, but Vic managed to leave it locked in his pickup in Sheridan and didn't realize it, until we got to the ranch. So much for the valiant cowboy saving the damsel in distress! The irony was that the heroic cowboy was causing the stress in the damsel. Vic won the white bags that evening for the screw up. Last year Vic won the white bags the second night, but he had outdone himself this year and won them the first night! Another fellow guest had an interesting trip out here. Pam Smithbower decided to see the country so she took the bus all the way from Pennsylvania to Wyoming. There of course were several changes in route and of course Mother nature had a hand in this also. By the time the bus made Denver after storm delays in the Midwest and flat tires, she was not able to make the connection from Denver to Sheridan. This meant she was going to miss most of the first day. Pam not being one to back down from a challenge hired an Uber in Denver to drive here to Sheridan. I can't begin to imagine what the cost of the Uber must have been. At least a cow's worth I'm sure. She arrived in Sheridan about 2:30 am with pickup in about 5 hours to get to the ranch. Pam got nominated for the white bags for the extreme of hiring an Uber but did not win them due to Vic's heroic actions!

### **MONDAY JULY 2<sup>RD</sup>:**

We hollered at people to "Grab and Growl" about 4:00am for breakfast. The first morning some get right up and others swear they just fell asleep when we hollered. There is always some nerves that first night that cause some to have a real restless night of sleep but generally by the second night exhaustion takes over and you sleep really well. We loaded people in the vans and transported them to where the cattle and horses were to start the gather and the first days trail. We had people in the saddle by 6:00am which is pretty darn good for a bunch of city slickers. It's a little like sending 20 first graders out to play in the snow. By the time you get the snowsuit on the last one the first one has to go to the bathroom. We gathered the cattle, cut a few out that couldn't make the trip due to injury or sickness and started the 12 mile trek to the Double Rafter. We had a good day for this but the cattle didn't seem in too much of a hurry. Now I know Hollywood always shows the herd running, but you

have to understand their actual day is probably  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a mile not 10-12 miles. We stopped and had lunch and made everyone get off and unsaddle their horses to give their horses backs a break while we ate. Everything had gone real smooth up to this point even if it had gone slow. However, we did have a couple real dangerous potential issues with the cattle pop up later that afternoon. We had a lot of rain this spring and at a couple creek crossings, the water had flooded and washed out most of the old road bed we were trailing down. There was still water running through the culverts but when the water and run over the culverts, it had washed some real big holes on the back side of the crossings and most of the culverts were somewhat undercut from all the water. This left about a 3 foot wide path available to cross the cow herd on. If the cattle were pushed too hard from the back, they of course, shove which means the weaker or smaller ones, get pushed out of the way or off over the edge. They have no way to communicate to the others to stop pushing. It looks more like loading the subway in New York, those in the back just push and keep pushing until they are where they want to be. Well several calves got pushed off over the edge into the pool of water just below the road. Most of them landed in the water then walked out shaking the water out of their ears, as they scramble up the bank to join the cowherd. Several calves when hitting the water were completely submerged before surfacing and crawling out. Taylor was afoot at the edge of the drop off trying to slow cattle up so they couldn't push any more calves off over the edge. I was on the opposite side of the culvert from Taylor trying to make the cows keep walking so as to give cattle a chance to walk across the narrow path. The problem is other than pushing, those that crossed, then decided they wanted a drink of water out of the pool before it went into the culvert so back they came. This was causing a log jam of cattle with more and more pushing going on. As the cattle pushed and shoved one of the calves got tipped over backward and fell into the pool alongside the culvert. At this age the calves are about 3 foot long from shoulder to hip and about 14 inches wide. The hole, filled with water was about 4 feet long and 2 feet wide and 3 feet deep. As the calf was pushed over the edge he fell over backwards and landed upside down in the pool. With the narrow hole, this meant he couldn't roll over to get his feet underneath him to stand up. At that same moment another calf got pushed into the hole landing right side up but exactly right on top of the other calf. This meant the calf on the bottom was pinned. I saw this happen and screamed at Taylor who jumped down off the bank and stuck his arm down into the churned up mud hole and grabbed the calf that was on the bottom by his nose, and pulled his nose to the surface so he wouldn't drown. With his other arm he stuck it under the calf's head while I scrambled down into the hole to try and get the calf on top, off of the other one. Both calves are thrashing and kicking. The one on top was having hell getting off because his legs wouldn't reach the bottom because of the calf underneath him. Of course this was keeping the calf on the bottom on his back with Taylor struggling to keep his nose up for air. When I got down there, I grabbed the calf on top by both ears and pulled him towards me to try and get him off the one on the bottom. I pulled him just far enough forward that his front legs caught the muddy bottom enough to propel himself forward off the other calf. Once the calf on top was gone we could pull the other calf on out, roll him over and get him on his feet. We really got lucky on this as this could just as well have been a drowned calf and the Ohio group had nothing to do with this.

We rode into the Double Rafter with the drags around 4:30 in the afternoon. People were tired but amazed at what they had accomplished and witnessed!

That night around the fire we had numerous nominations and several of those nominated would prove to be repeat offenders. We had a group from Ohio who must follow the Cleveland Browns very closely

as they continually got nominated. Here it is, night two, and 3 of the 4 nominations were from Ohio. I think just for giggles we will keep a running tally this week of the Ohio nominations. So after night two it is Ohio-3 all other states combined-3, but who is counting. The nominations for the night were EJ for losing his shirt numerous times during the day. (Ohio) Larry was nominated for attempting to get on and pulling his saddle off. (Ohio) Erik for not being a bathroom buddy and when Larry got off to take a leak, Erik rode off and left him. You always wait for your buddy to get on, just like flying a plane, the most dangerous time it getting on and getting off. Oh I forgot (Ohio) and the final nomination was for the Colgate Kid from Illinois. Seems when Tim came to breakfast this morning, he was all dressed and ready to get on his horse and spend the day eating dust behind a herd of cows. Now Tim is very concerned about dental hygiene and even though he had his chaps on, he still had his toothbrush in his back pocket. We concluded that not only Tim was concerned about dental hygiene but also wanted to make sure his horse had brushed. We of course wanted to know if Tim's wife had her own toothbrush or did they all use Tim's? Tim did not want he or his horse to look bad, in any pictures that might be taken during the day and that was why he was carrying his toothbrush. Well the Colgate Kid won the White Bags for his stance on dental hygiene.

#### **TUESDAY JULY 3<sup>rd</sup>:**

Today we give people a break and they get an extra 30 minutes of sleep. With breakfast moved back to 4:30 am people were refreshed and raring to go. Today is always a big day as we not only have to move the cowherd another 10 miles but also have to break camp down, move it and set it up at the next destination. So it's very exhausting for the kitchen crew. We were moving the cattle by 6:00 am but the cattle didn't seem to be in any hurry again to go where we were heading. They just sort of plodded along all day. We only had one mishap with the cattle as we trailed along. We were about a mile and half from the days' destination and alongside the road canyon creek runs parallel to the road meandering in and out of the ditch. When we arrive at this point the cattle are tired, hot and thirsty so the chance to catch a little water is always refreshing for them. Well with the early spring runoff there was a pool of water that had washed a hole under the fence. This hole was about 15 feet across with about half of the pool being in the roadway and the other half on the neighbors' property. As the cattle streamed along and saw the pool of water, they naturally went over to get a drink. Is what we didn't know, was that the hole was about a 5 foot drop off. It is very common for cattle to take a few steps into a water hole to try and get a little closer to the fresher water that is away from the bank where the cattle haven't churned it up. Well when cattle stepped off in this one, they just disappeared and when they surfaced, they of course were swimming but came up in the neighbor's pasture. Sounds just like the immigrant train from Central America. I ended up sitting there and keeping more cattle from swimming, but it was difficult because everything wanted a drink. I waited until the next rider came along and then had them sit there while I went to find a gate to be able to get the cattle back, who thought they had swam to the promised land, only to be gathered and put back in the herd.

Well tonight we had only one nomination for the white bag, but it set a record because Larry(Ohio) was nominated for 5 different things during the day. We have never had in the history of 27 years of cattle drives, have one person get nominated for 5 different things on the same day. He of course won the white bags for the day. So let me see where the tally is, Ohio 8 the other states combined 3.

## WEDNESDAY JULY 4<sup>th</sup>:

This isn't the first time I have had a herd of cattle on the way to the mountain on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. Most years we are ahead of the hikers because of the time of day and this year was no different. We realized people would be tired this morning so allowed them to sleep until 4:30am with breakfast scheduled for 5:00am. The plan, since today is another camp move, getting people up at 4:30 would allow them 30 minutes to get packed, so that as soon as they are out of their tents, we can start breaking them down and packing them for today's camp move. However, there are always a few who claim they are just about dead and can't get up. However, they always manage to as we convince them they are still breathing so there for, they are not dead. Being tired to a certain degree is a mental attitude and once you start moving you realize that actually you feel pretty good. I will admit for the most part this group was pretty good as there was only one person who was consistently late. We broke camp down after breakfast, packed it up, saddled the horses and started gathering cattle. Today is an all day affair regardless of whether you are on the cowboy crew or the packing crew. The day is actually much more challenging for the packing crew than it is to the cowboy crew. Once camp is broken down it then has to be put back up so when people ride in this evening they have camp ready to go. All week the cattle had been in no hurry to go to the mountain and today wasn't any different. I think it had to do more with all the spring rain we had and the forage was absolutely lush still in the valley. We only got the cattle about 5 miles today instead of the 8 I was hoping for. Once we hit the mountain and the cattle hit the beaver ponds, which are surrounded by acres of Aspen Trees, Nine Bark and Chokecherry bushes, they dived into them looking for water and shade. It is just about impossible to get a horse through the dense thickets and undergrowth, so you end up tying up your horse and charging gallantly in and chasing cattle in a circle. You get some out to only look back and see more showing up from where you just came from, so back in you go again, to do it all over. After a couple of hours of this you decide the cattle have won and you better go to plan B. The glitch is that from the Beaver Ponds on to this day's camp it is still another 8 miles and about a 3000 foot climb in elevation, so it is not fast. We rode into camp to find the camp crew had made it in on time and had things ready to go. More than once we have topped the hill looking down on camp and of course the first thing I do is count the number of tepee's that have been pitched. That tells me immediately what sort of day the camp crew had. The food always comes into camp first and the tents are set up last, so if the tents are up that means I am going to ride into a smiling camp crew. If the tents are not up, lets' just say I would rather be somewhere else at the moment. We have had several times things weren't set up. One time the pickup had been wrecked loaded with horses on the way up the mountain. One time a tire had blown on one of the Gator's meaning we only had one to use instead of 2, doubling our number of trips in. We arrived into camp around 5:30 with a worn out group of people, but all were smiling knowing the day was about over. We only had two nominations for the White Bags this evening. Larry(Ohio) of course got nominated by his roommate for just being Larry and the other was my grand niece who rides very very well, but just about fell off flirting with the two teenage boys from Ohio. They got a little game of horse tag going and as she leaned out to tag one of them her horse ducked the other way leaving her about 18 inches out of the saddle and about level with her stirrup. However, she did manage to scramble back in and of course once she did, her first reaction was to check and see if I had

noticed, and of course I was staring right at her. I believe Larry won just on principal. TALLY Ohio 9 other states 4.

#### **THURSDAY JULY 5<sup>th</sup>;**

Today is the first day we can relax if everything has gone alright. When we plan these weeks we always have to leave a disaster day in there somewhere in case things don't go as planned. If things go well, this day is always very enjoyable as we plan breakfast for 7:30am. People are always shocked at how tired they were the night before and how refreshed and energized they feel the next morning with a few hours of extra sleep. We have had many trips where we can't do the white bags on Wednesday evening as some go to bed as soon as they finish dinner. However, Thursday morning you have a feeling of conquest and enthusiasm that only sleep can bring. With the coffee pot hanging above the fire this is the first real chance we have to actually get to enjoy some good conversation with our guests. After breakfast we saddled up and headed out for a leisure day of riding. People had their choices of 3 different options. They could do a ride with me to High Park, which has fantastic views and includes a ride up "Oh Shit Trail" or go with Cathryn on a slower paced, wild flower and wildlife viewing expedition, or go work with Taylor in the mud fixing a water tank. I am always shocked there are a few who actually want to go play in the mud. As the three groups all ended up in camp, all three were sure they had made the best choice and had the best day. People thoroughly love the slower change of pace day. When we did the white bags this evening we only had two nominations for the white bags and you guessed it, both were from OHIO! I think the one nomination was one of the funniest things I have ever seen. Larry had been working real hard all week to improve his mounting as his roommate was unmerciful to him about it. We ate our lunch in High Park and after lunch Larry realized he had been sitting on about a 14 inch rock ledge. He figured this 14 inches would give him just the edge he needed to make his mounting attempt look smooth and effortless, just like the real cowboys! He led Six Moons over to the ledge, put the reins around his neck and thought to himself how graceful he was going to look. He planted his right foot hard on the ground, swung his left foot into the stirrup and with a mighty sweeping motion swung his right leg up over the top of the horse. Now the goal is to come down in the saddle with the follow through motion of your leg right into the right stirrup. We all know Larry's intentions were really good, however intentions don't get you in the saddle. Larry looked so good until he came down in front of the saddle horn! I have never seen that happen in my life! I have seen people fall off the right side but never ever land in front of the saddle horn! With a wild yell for help, there he was teetering back and forth on the horse's neck. Now his yell for help didn't exactly send the 7<sup>th</sup> Calvary to the rescue because they were all too busy laughing. Larry did the only thing he could think to do because his left foot was still in the stirrup. He leaned forward flat along the top of Six Moons neck and with a bear hug around Six Moon's neck, held on. His teetering back and forth and Six Moons eyes beginning to bulge, made everyone laugh even more. Six Moon's never twitched a muscle. (Maybe due to a lack of oxygen) we really don't know. Once Larry was on the ground he really became the topic of conversation for the next couple hours. The bizarre thing about this was that Larry didn't win the white bags that evening. It was none other than his roommate "Bagdad Bob" another fellow Ohion. Seems the night before Bagdad Bob forgot to turn the propane bottle off around the campfire and apparently stepped on the accelerator lever on the bottle sending a wave of propane towards the burning fire.

This caused a mad scramble of people away from the fire as they saw the cloud of vapor advancing towards the flames. So tonight the tally is OHIO 11 and all other states combined 4. Before turning in for the night there was a wild game of cowboy football played. There are two people per team and we had 3 teams. Team Ohio consisted of EJ and Johnathan vs. Jake and Brian. Cowboy football is played naturally, with lariat ropes. Team Ohio won the first match and then was matched up with team Wyoming. Team Wyoming won but team Ohio put in a real good effort. I can also say the officiating that was done by Stan "the screw" Sharp who might have had a few more judgment calls than were needed. Matter of fact, if you look at the officials in the NFC Championship game my best guess is you know who the official was that blew the pass interference call!

### **FRIDAY JULY 6<sup>th</sup>:**

Friday morning we saddle up, caught horses, broke the camp down and headed out up the Garland Gulch trail and Screamer Hill. Logistically today is the easiest day of the week, because we don't have to set the camp back up. Once people ride into Lake Creek around 3:30pm we turned the horses loose, loaded everyone up in the cowboy taxi and took everyone to Bear Lodge for the nights banquet and last night's laughs. Everyone is always sad to turn their horse loose as they recognize how hard that horse worked for them all week long, so they could have an enjoyable vacation. There are always a few somber moments when people sort of realize that the bond they had with their horse will soon be just an afterthought. While I'm sure the horse is looking forward to the week off, the guests realize what heart and effort the horses put in for their enjoyment.

Once showers are taken and people put on clean clothes the sense of realization of what they have accomplished during the week puts people in a high that you have to witness to appreciate. Nothing we do is for the faint hearted but that is what makes it so enjoyable, and why we book up so early. We give people exactly what we tell them they are going to get. We promise you that you will be tired, dirty, and experience a high that you probably have never felt before.

That night for the white bags nomination we only had one and of course you can probably guess what state he was from. Ohio **12**, all other states combined **4**. EJ won the white bags for his heroics around the camp fire when the propane came close to making them all look like burned marshmallows. He jumped behind my 14 year old grand niece. There was a lot of ribbing going on over the nomination and the nomination was probably slightly exaggerated. I have seen several that started out with one thing and by the time the nomination was finished you actually had no idea what the original nomination even was! However, in saving face EJ won the Double Rafter belt buckle in the Cowboy Trivia game. This was an absolutely delightful week with a wonderful bunch of people. Hope to see you down the trail and you are always welcome at our fire!

Dana

Cow Boss

