

Beartooth Back Country Horsemen Trail Tales

President's Pen

Welcome to summer!

Hope everyone is enjoying the nice weather we are having. It has definitely been great for our trail projects.

As I send this out, members are preparing for another project this weekend. We will be working on the Jims Gulch trail out on West Bridger ck road. This trail starts off down the ridge and ends up in Deer Ck. It is a beautiful and fun trail.

Our collaboration with the BLM to get a parking lot outside of Belfry to provide better parking and ease of access is progressing along.

Coming up this month (June 21) our club will be riding in the Fishtail parade. This parade is a wonderful opportunity for our club to showcase ourselves and interact with many people from the community. We will have a booth set up in town for people to stop by and talk with us about the club and what we do. We will meet at the turn off to West Rosebud Rd to saddle up. The parade starts at 11 am so please be there in plenty of time to get saddled and have Sarah "brand" your horse if you would like with the BBCH logo. White button up shirts and our vests, if you have one, should be worn so we can look uniform. But most of all come out and have fun!

The club will not be holding general meetings in June and July as the summer is a busy time for all. We will plan to reconvene in August for our club rendezvous.

We will be providing support for the ABW foundation this summer on a pack project up the main Stillwater, (Sioux Charley) trail. More info to come.

Get out and enjoy some time in the back country and stay tuned for updates as the summer progresses. Don't forget to get a hold of Melissa to sign up to help with the 2027 convention!

See you on the trail,
Randy Thomsen

BBCH DIRECTORS

Randy Thomsen President

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Sarah Lewis, Secretary

John Shamel, Treasurer

Clark Linn, Board Member

Scott Fluor, Board Member

Bill Yager, Board Member

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Randy Thomsen, Jr. Director
406-425-0204

NATIONAL DIRECTOR

John Chepulis
406-322-4823



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We will plan to reconvene in August for our club rendezvous.

2025 Membership dues:

- Business Membership \$40
- Family Membership \$35
- Individual Membership \$25

Please pay your 2025 dues!

Not a member yet? Application available for download [here](#).

FISHTAIL PARADE



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2027 CONVENTION OPPORTUNITIES

WE ARE HOSTING CONVENTION IN 2027!

If you'd like to join the committee for opportunities to serve in the following areas: Communications, Meals, Education, Fundraising, Entertainment, Volunteers, Vendors, Sponsorships, & Decorations. please reach out to Melissa C. via email codner.melissa@gmail.com or text 308-390-0465.



TENTATIVE TRAIL CLEARING SCHEDULE

April 26th—Island Lake

—— 4.8 miles of clearing / 7.8 mile ride

May 3rd—Lodgepole & Deer Creek

—— Parking area to intersection w/ Lower Deer Ck Trail 5.1 miles

—— Parking area to Deer Ck Cabin 10.8 miles

May 10th—Main Stillwater

—— Parking area to intersection w/ Tripod Hill Trail 5.7 miles

—— Parking area to intersection w/ Wounded Man Trail 10.7 miles

May 17th—Jim's Gulch/Lower Deer Ck

—— Parking area to cabin 4.7 miles

—— Parking area to intersection w/ Lodgepole 10.4 miles



May 24th - 26th - West Fork of the Stillwater

— This will include the new Castle Ck from Picket Pin

June 7? — Meyers Ck gravel

— Working out details with USFS for pack support subject to availability of the pack animals and packer. Stay tuned for updates.

June 14th Jim's Gulch - Be ready to go at 9:30 am Contact John Jenkins, trail boss, for more info. john.k.jenkins@gmx.us



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HORSE DADS: FOND MEMORIES ON FATHER'S DAY

[June 19, 2016 ~ Posted by The Horse Staff](#)

Father's Day is a time to celebrate and honor the dependable, hard-working, and much appreciated fathers, grandfathers, uncles, and fatherlike figures in our lives. They work hard to provide for their families and help us learn valuable lessons. They might not always understand our obsession with horses, but that doesn't stop them from helping us achieve our goals and dreams with them.

So in honor of Father's Day, here are some of the equine lessons and memories that we—The Horse staff—and you—The Horse readers, Facebook fans, Twitter followers—have shared with the fathers, grandfathers, and horsemen in our lives.

For some, it was their father or grandfather who introduced them to horses.

Reader Lorna MacDonald said her grandfather introduced her to horses early in life. "My grandfather put me on his horse before I could walk, so the love of horses was started," she recalled. "Then my grandmother bought me my first horse when I was in primary school. I'm a grandmother now and still have horses. My daughter, granddaughter, and great-granddaughter all ride so the love of horses has been passed down through the generations."

Likewise, reader Elly said, "My grandfather put me on my first horse, Prince, and my dad came to watch my first show."

Meanwhile, Clair Thunes, PhD, who answers your horse feed and nutrition questions on TheHorse.com, said it was because of her grandfather that she first came home with a pony. "My mum was getting there but he beat her to it," she said. "He was a great horseman. He also showed Dartmoor ponies at Wembley (Arena, in London, England) and had to do an equitation round where they jumped with no girth on the saddle."

Other readers shared memories about fathers who have been and continue to be involved in their horse-related activities.

"My dad has been involved in everything horse related I've done my entire life," said reader Myranda Grace Elliott. "From my boot shiner, to flag assistant, to my 'knight in shining armor,' he's been there for me in every way. Of course when he showed himself I gave him some pointers as well. So thankful for supportive parents who enjoy the horses as much as I do."

Jennifer Whittle, TheHorse.com web producer, has many horse-related memories with her father as well. "Dad would always come to the horse shows," she said. "He would run to the show office to get our entries in on time when we were running late, hold a horse as we hurried to change tack, and took pictures from the stands. We spent many weekends, and maybe even a couple of Father's Days, at horse shows and he didn't complain."



And The Horse managing editor, Alexandra Beckstett, said her father was the consummate show dad: “He would use up his vacation days to drive me to shows all over Texas and beyond.”

Reader Sallie Hill Outten continues to share equine experiences with the horsemen in her life. “My father and I foxhunt with the Bull Run Hunt. My uncle also hunts with us,” she said.

Erica Larson, The Horse’s news editor, said that while she was the first rider in the family, her father eventually “caught the bug” and ended up with a horse of his own—one the pair started under saddle together. “The first time he got on his horse was one for the ages,” she laughs. “I’m still not sure exactly what happened, but after he picked himself up off the ground—I don’t think he lasted the eight seconds—he tried again and had a very successful first outing! He’s really become a very good horseman, and I love hearing him talk about how much he still enjoys hacking Lance out and about.”

Fathers often put in the extra work and hours so that we can enjoy our time with our horses. “Dad built our barn so we could have horses at home,” commented reader Amanda MacDonald.

Michelle Anderson, The Horse’s digital managing editor, grew up with a dad who was active with her 4-H and horse clubs and liked to trail ride. “It seems like Dad and I spent every summer weekend headed to some kind of horse activity. My mom never liked coffee, so we never had it around the house. It was always a special treat when my dad would run into the gas station on our way to a show or trail ride and come back with cups of coffee for the two of us. It was our secret, and there are still few things I like better than holding a warm cup of coffee on a cold horse show morning.”

Tracey Best added, “My father drove hours on a vacation in Oregon to take me to C&M Stables so I could fulfill my dream of riding horses on the beach.”

And sometimes fathers know just how to cheer us up, as reader Johnnie Bigalke explained.

“It was winter, and I had been sick for a couple of days,” she said. “I am guessing I was maybe three. I cried because I couldn’t go out to the barn that night with my dad. I was lying on the couch when I heard a bit of a commotion out in the kitchen and then, when I looked up, there in the living room doorway stood my dad ... with my pony Gypsy!”

So this Father’s Day, thank the horsemen in your life for always being there to support your horsey habit. You know they wouldn’t want it any other way.



CAPTURING A LEGACY



[WWII Hero's Bond with a Horse: A Son Shares His Father's Story](#)

JULIE BLIM

Walt says his dad, Phil Larimore, never told him about his war experiences until they sat together at his parents' 50th wedding anniversary in 1999. Walt asked him if he'd share some stories, and for some reason, his dad decided the time had come to open that box of memories. He talked with Walt and later many others, as well. "After Dad passed away in 2003, I began transcribing over 400 of his letters home as well as the many stories he told my brothers, his friends, and me—some that bordered on unbelievable, such as a secret mission to find and save the world-famous Lipizzaner horses. I researched historical accounts of his battles and World War II in hundreds of books, memoirs (some unpublished), periodicals, newspaper articles, and websites.

I interviewed a few of the remaining men he fought with and the children of others. I traveled to and spent months in several states and in Europe studying exhibits and documents at archives, museums, posts, forts, redoubts, and stables. The information I discovered allowed me to fill in holes and add color and detail to an already incredible story." All that he learned led Walt to believe this was a story that

honored God, and revealed details of the forgotten Southern Front of the European theatre, which he says people need to know.

WAR AS A TEEN

Phil was the youngest Army officer in WWII, graduating from Officer Candidate School (OCS) in 1942, just weeks shy of his 18th birthday. After a little more than a year of training, Phil and his fellow troops are deployed to Anzio Beachhead, Italy, where some of the most intense fighting of the war took place. Walt tells in great detail many of those scenes. “The following night in shivering rain, Phil accompanied his men on his first mission: laying down a series of booby traps and mines in ‘no man’s land’ just a few hundred feet from German machine guns. Phil couldn’t believe that this was the way he’d start fighting a war, but those were the cards he’d been dealt.” Later that night, one of Phil’s men, Private Winfield Doner, was burying a mine when something went terribly wrong, causing it to explode and kill him. “No matter how much he thought he’d be prepared for war, seeing up close the first of his men killed instantly changed the way he would look at things in the future. He knew he couldn’t dwell on the loss right then, but he could not shake the memory. Echoing in his mind were these unanswerable questions: Why did he get killed and not me? Why him? Why not me?”

Another awful time was when Phil had no choice but to shoot two Germans who stood with rifles aimed at him. “This was the first time Phil killed another human at point-blank range, face-to-face, which weighed on him. All his previous killings had come from downrange shooting and his superior marksmanship. Phil reminded himself for the hundredth time that it was kill or be killed. That was the hell he had entered.”

A SPECIAL HORSE

A master equestrian, Phil had ridden horses since childhood, worked with draft horses in the Army, taken part in war games on an Arabian stallion, and learned dressage in Naples, Italy. On a special, one-day mission in Czechoslovakia to collect intelligence on a horse stud farm, he met a German officer who rode up on a dazzling Lipizzaner stallion. Trailing behind them was a bay-colored Thoroughbred

with a rather ugly head, Phil thought. The officer directed Phil to mount the horse, and the men went rode off toward the farm. By the end of their time together, Phil was convinced of the horse's speed, jumping ability, responsiveness, and had taken quite a liking to him -- and vice versa. As the men said their goodbyes, Phil whistled at the horse, who tried to return to him before being led away.

Just a few days later, Phil was the target of a Nazi sniper, whose bullet shattered his right leg. It was only four weeks before the Germans surrendered. Requiring amputation, Phil was evacuated to the States and spent the next year at a hospital in Atlanta for rehabilitation. Fit with a prosthesis enabling him to walk, Phil was offered a job as the Executive Officer to his beloved former commanding officer, Colonel McGarr, at Ft. Myer in Virginia. McGarr and Phil's best buddy, Ross, also stationed there, took him for a ride one day through a pasture. "Several dozen horses were grazing, but one horse in particular caught Phil's eye: a gorgeous bay-colored Thoroughbred... He admired the remarkable horse's deep hindquarters and long legs. But what caught Phil's attention was the horse's unique head. Not attractive or sleek, just clunky looking. Could it be him? But how? He looked at Ross and the colonel, who were both carefully watching him. Then McGarr broke into an ear-to-ear smile and nodded. 'It's him.'" Phil was reunited with the horse he had so admired in Czechoslovakia, rescued at McGarr's request, along with 300 other prized horses, including Hitler's secret stash of Lipizzaners. Half of them were shipped to America. Phil had the great delight of riding and training him -- with one leg -- for the next year. He renamed him "Chugwater," and found that riding and grooming him was therapy. "Chug not only carried him away from his worries and disappointments but also away from his horrific war memories and recurring nightmares."

When Phil was separated from the Army after a narrowly-lost appeal to remain despite his disability, he was offered schooling at the University of Virginia. He happily accepted, but leaving Chug, who belonged to the Army, broke his heart. A couple of months later, he learned that a number of war surplus horses, including Chug, were to be auctioned off. He gathered the \$50 minimum bid, and headed out to buy his beloved friend. When he saw the other horses going for far more money, and realized he would be outbid, Phil's heart sank again. Chug was one of the last horses to be auctioned, and when he was introduced, Phil was suddenly blinded by a spotlight. The auctioneer told the crowd

all about Phil being a decorated Army hero, and how he'd spent the last year training Chug to respond to left-leg-only cues. He then asked the crowd not to bid, and opened the bidding at the minimum. Phil waved his \$50, the gavel came down, and Chug was his, to the roar of the crowd's cheers! When a reporter asked Phil, "'I understand Chugwater was going to be euthanized by the Germans at one time. Is it true that you saved his life?' Phil shook his head. 'Actually, he saved mine.'"

SURPRISES DISCOVERED

Walt says that in the 15+ years he researched his father's story, there were many things that surprised him, both about his dad's experience and WWII:

- that all of Dad's "unbelievable stories" were true
- Dad's stunning bravery and leadership skills as a teenager
- The fact that he was the youngest-ever graduate of OCS, the youngest commissioned officer in WWII, the youngest Company Commander in WWII, one of the most highly decorated frontline junior officers in WWII, and that he survived, given that in some battles the average life expectancy of a frontline Second Lieutenant was only 21 days
- the suffering and successes on the forgotten Southern Front in Europe (northern Africa into Europe), which had five "D-Days", first divisions into the war, most days of battle, most casualties, most valor medals, etc., which Walt most wants people to learn and appreciate about WWII

PHIL'S FAITH

Walt says his dad walked his faith more than he talked about it. When he asked his dad one time if he had a personal relationship with God, Phil responded by saying he'd settled that during his combat days, and took a piece of paper out of his wallet to show him. It read: "No shell or bomb can on me burst, except my God permit it first. Then let my heart be kept in peace; His watchful care will never cease. No bomb above, nor mine below need cause my heart one pang of woe. The Lord of Hosts encircles me, He is the Lord of earth and sea."

MAY MEETING MINUTES

Board Meeting May 8th, 2025

The meeting was called to order at 6:34pm at the Stillwater County Chamber of Commerce.

In attendance: Jon Shamel, Randy Thomsen, Clark Linn, Scott Fluer, John Chepulis, Sean Chepulis, and Sarah Lewis. ABW Representative Finian.

Motion to approve the April board meeting minutes made by Clark Linn. The motion was seconded by Jon Shamel. No discussion. Motion carried.

President's Report: Nothing to report.

Vice President's Report: Nothing to report.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer's Report was read. Motion to approve made by Scott Fluer. Sean Chepulis seconded. No discussion. Motion carried.

President Randy Thomsen delayed committee reports till after speaking with ABW Representative/Crew Leader-Finian.

Finian is the new crew leader for ABW that we will be working with on our ABW pack support trips. Discussion included planned packs support trips for the season, how to pack more effectively, and coordination between ABW and BBCH. More information to follow as pack support trips are finalized. Schedule will be posted.

Committee Reports

2027 Convention: Melissa Codner (chair) Melissa and Randy have discussed that more volunteer support is needed. Melissa will discuss it at general meetings.

Activities: Sarah Lewis (chair). Discussed using Benbow as Youth Packing Clinic area. Need to plan on facilities needed. Sarah will follow up.

Education: Sean Chepulis (chair) Sean reports that he will contact "Bear Guy" out of Red Lodge to speak at next general meeting. Other possible topics include Dutch oven cooking, tack cleaning, and trailer maintenance.

Projects: Jon Shamel (chair). Jon Shamel updated that Island Lake was cleared for 10.5 miles and 2 trees were cut. Discussed that some de-brushing work is needed still. Discussed upcoming clearing projects of Stillwater and Meyer's Creek Gravel project. Project schedule needs adjusted accordingly. John Chepulis discussed the possibility of crosscut certifications on current projects. Trail boss needs to keep in communication with Allie before and after projects.

Communications: Randy Thomsen (chair). Randy updated that we received a thank you letter from Class of 2025 for our donation. He also had a summary letter from the MT State DMV about our continued license plate funds.

Unfinished Business:

Discussed vest order. Will be placed and embroidered in time for Fishtail Parade.

Belfry Access- a productive meeting was had between BBCH, DOT, and BLM. Scott showed an initial design draft for the parking access area. This will include 4 parking spots and hitching rails.

Discussed DOT requirements and the possibility of working with BLM for funding.

Ernie Strum- Randy will set up a meeting with Jennifer Alexander of the BLM to discuss a plan.

New Business:

Jon Shamel informed the board that he will be stepping back in some of his board commitments due to his new career he will be starting immediately. The board discussed having an assistant treasurer to relieve Jon as needed. Detra Chepulis was discussed. Sean Chepulis will contact Detra. The ongoing issue of the sale of federal public lands was brought up. Discussion of BCH needing to remain bipartisan but involved in protecting our public lands.

State Update: Nothing to report.

Meeting adjourned at 8:10pm.

RESOURCES

Life Flight Network

Let's talk about the not so fun part of the backcountry. There are definite risks involved about being away from civilization and being self reliant if anything goes awry. If something bad happens and you are unable to exit on foot or horseback, the only option is via helicopter. It is incredibly expensive but there is some insurance for the just in case instance. Following is the link for informative purposes only.



PLEASE NOTE: This is NOT a sales pitch. This is a non-commissioned link.

<https://member.lifeflight.org/#lp-pom-block-370>

Membership is under \$100 and, according to the website, will cover the flight. There is also additional ground insurance.

Online Defensive Horsemen Information

Website - <https://bchmt.org/wp/education/>

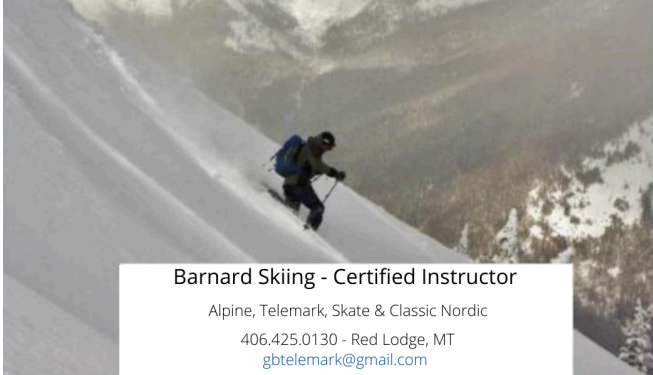
Scroll down towards the middle and you will see Horse Safety

This is good information and a great resource for new members that still need some defensive horsemen prior to doing any work activities this year.




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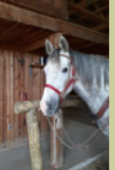


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