



FEED BAG



Editor: Myra Mumma

March 2008

President's Message.....Another year has begun for the Missoula Back Country Horsemen. So far it's off to a great beginning. The Membership Party was so much fun and we had a great turn out. I would like to personally thank everyone who helped out to make the party such a success. It takes a lot of volunteer hours to do these events and again the club pulled together to get things done. Thank you!

Spring is such a busy time for our chapter and this year is not going to be any different. The state convention is coming up at the end of this month in Great Falls. There has been a lot of interest from our members and we should have a good representation.

There are plans being made for our annual skills and educational trainings. Defensive horsemanship is already scheduled for April 19 at Dan and Marge Harper's arena. Depending on how many folks need it, Mark Wright will be scheduling First Aid classes. In addition, saw training will also be scheduled as needed. At our March general meeting we will take a count to determine who needs these training classes. If you are not able to attend the general meeting, please contact a board member to let them know what you need so we can make sure you are informed and on the list. Defensive horsemanship is good for three years; First Aid is good for two years as well as the saw training.



Connie & Webster

At the March general meeting we will also be getting the committee together for the annual Steak Ride. This event is scheduled for Fathers Day, June 15, and unless the committee decides otherwise it will again be at the Blackfoot Clearwater Game Range. If you are interested in being on the committee and are unable to attend the general meeting please let a board member know you would like to be included on this committee.

There are several events scheduled as well that will be fun. The program for the March meeting is on horse shoeing and we have a follow-up clinic scheduled. Gary Salisbury has a horse training clinic scheduled for May and with this will be a Dutch oven cooking class the same day headed up by Caroline Bauer. June is always busy with National Trails Day and the previously mentioned Steak Ride. Mack and I will again be holding our annual Leave No Trace training probably in July. We'll let you know soon.

These are just some of the trainings and events we have scheduled for this spring and early summer. If you have some type of education you would like to share or if you'd like to host a trail ride, please let Sandi Treadaway know so she can get your event on our calendar.

As usual it's going to be a busy year and we are going to need a lot of volunteers to get these events done, if you are interested in helping out let a board member know.

Until next time,

.....**Connie Long, President**

MISSION STATEMENT

- ◆ Perpetuate the common sense use and enjoyment of horses in America's back country and wilderness.
- ◆ Work to ensure that public lands remain open to recreation and stock use.
- ◆ Assist the various agencies responsible for the maintenance and management of public lands.
- ◆ Educate, encourage and solicit active participation in the wise and sustained use of the back country resource by horsemen and the general public commensurate with our heritage.

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SCAFFOLD ♦ EVENT

A volunteer Forest Service packer shares his knowledge with two friends while facing an interesting packing challenge in the Scapegoat Wilderness.

BY NICK KAUFMAN

♦ PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAN TUXBURY AND NICK KAUFMAN

IT IS NOT OVERLY DIFFICULT to get to Welcome Creek Guard Station in the Scapegoat Wilderness, [Paul Evenson](#), (retired USFS Smoke Jumper and volunteer packer for the Augusta Ranger Station on the Lewis and Clark National Forest) can attest to that. The challenge lies in the logistics of organizing the stock, wranglers, equipment, food and seeing to the seemingly infinite details that make a working pack trip successful. On a sunny day in late September 2006, he left his home in Missoula, Montana, where he lives with his wife Sandy and fills part of his days with the duties of Vice President of the Missoula Chapter of the Back Country Horseman, and headed to the Rocky Mountain Front on a USFS horse packing assignment.



At the River City Grill in Bonner, Montana, Paul hooked up with his volunteer wranglers, Dan Tuxbury and me. We had chicken fried steak for breakfast (a tradition for Paul) and then loaded into Paul's truck for the three hour drive to Augusta, Montana, at the eastern front of the Bob Marshall-Scapegoat Wilderness Complex. Our assignment was to re-stock the Welcome Creek Guard Station. Our responsibilities would also include a side trip over to the Green Fork Guard Station to pick up scaffolding that was used when the cabin was re-roofed. We would pack the scaffolding back to Welcome Creek Cabin where it was now needed for a scheduled roof replacement. Our initial destination, the Augusta Ranger Station, consists of an administrative office, warehouses, bunk house and corrals. And that is where the real adventure begins.

ORGANIZING EQUIPMENT AND FOOD

In the main warehouse, Paul was gathering the riding and pack saddles, blankets, halters, bridles, manties, ropes and panniers from the various storage lockers. Over in the equipment shed Dan was organizing the food for the trip while I unloaded and sorted our personal gear. Paul's dog Riikka (a Karelian Bear dog) offered me anxious encouragement with whines and yips from the bed of the truck. While we were busy with our tasks, the Augusta Ranger Station staff Russell Owen and Joan Stevens were purchasing the perishable food, pulling stock out of the mountain pastures, collecting equipment from Choteau and arranging for the truck and trailer needed to get everything to the trailhead at Smith Creek. This three-day trip would require three saddle horses and five pack animals. On the trip in we would take food, equipment, hay and pellets to re-supply the guard station at Welcome

Creek. With the gear organized and stored in the warehouse, we walked the few blocks into town for a hearty supper at the Buckhorn. After supper, we settled into the bunkhouse for a good night's rest. The weather forecast was favorable and we were anticipating an early start the next morning.

MAKING LOADS AND COLLECTING STOCK

Under Paul's watchful eye, mantying up the loads and stocking the panniers happened pretty efficiently (except for repacking to balance load weights). Coleman fuel was double wrapped in plastic bags as were the liquid portions of the grub.



Dan puts the quick release knot on a set of loads.

In short order, the truck was loaded and we were off to the upper pasture to collect the stock. The upper pasture contains about a quarter of a section of open hillside dotted with aspen groves. Just off the road are administrative buildings, a barn and associated corrals. The whole shebang is situated in the valley bottom of Willow Creek. White limestone reefs protrude in stark contrast above the dark green forest forming a spectacular backdrop against the clear blue sky.

The horses and mules, attentive to the arrival of the truck and trailer, thundered off the hillside and greeted us at the corral gate. Letting this overly anxious crowd into the corral starts a decades-old ballet where dominant animals defend salt blocks. New, spirited animals whirl and twist, bleeding off excess energy while part-time wranglers sort through the dust and confusion to catch up individual animals so they can be brushed, checked for soundness and loaded into the trailer.



Searching for the "Ghost" stock.

And, of course, the animals have to be checked against the manifest to make sure we have the right stock. This is where things got a little rocky. It seems the manifest did not match the animals in the corral so off Dan and Paul went, up into the pasture to retrieve the wayward animals. I stayed behind to groom the stock we had identified as going in with us. While I groomed, pulled burs and checked feet and shoes, I noticed the boss (Paul) and Dan initiate a search pattern on the hill, a pattern that seemed to repeat itself with no new horses appearing. When the foot-weary wranglers finally got back to the corral, without any new animals, Paul noticed he had read the manifest upside down and we really had the appropriate horses corralled after all. I thought this was pretty funny. Dan did too, but he restrained his laughter (for some reason).

POINT THEM WEST AND HEAD ‘EM OUT

With the stock in the trailer, the dog and packed-up loads in the truck, we headed south and west to the trailhead at Smith Creek. Along the way the prairies give way to the majestic mountains of the Rocky Mountain Front. As we traveled through these foothills, we came upon small herds of antelope grazing or resting in the gullies and along the hills. If the presence of a truck and trailer zipping down the gravel road like a green comet with a dust tail was not enough of an intrusion into this peaceful setting, Paul had the unusual habit of honking the horn at each individual band of antelope. It was as if he knew each buck or doe from previous trips. However, I suspect that deep within his chest beats the conservationist heart of Smokey Bear and he was giving them advance warning for the pending opening of antelope season.

Just before the trailhead, the road passes a ranch and climbs a small but steep hill. This hill consists of clay that has worked its way up through the gravel road surface. While not a problem in dry weather, it was a bit dicey because a rain storm had passed by a few days before our arrival. Paul, with just a bit of slip and a tiny bit of slide was able to keep our momentum until we topped the hill. As the truck pulled to a stop at the trailhead, Dan noticed a herd of elk grazing on the far open meadow. We unloaded the animals, brushed and saddled them. Dan and I hitched the loads to the pack saddles. Paul has some experience packing, and likes to have things done his way. As I tied

my first basket hitch I heard Paul say, “Wait now, just wait a minute.” He followed with an easy explanation of how he likes to use a



A good example of a packer, mule and “crow’s foot” hitch.

As I worked with Paul over the next days his gentle, “Wait now, just wait a minute,” would become a familiar mantra always followed with an easily understandable explanation of how things should be done.

“c r o w ’ s
f o o t”
h i t c h
w i t h
t h e
b a s k e t
h i t c h
f o r
a d d e d
s t a -
b i l i t y .

With the loads adjusted and tied on, we saddled up and headed for the trail. Dan was in the lead on a gelding named Checker. I followed on Java, another stout gelding. Paul followed behind me with the string. I thought it unusual for the boss to ride drag with the string. Usually there would be a wrangler behind the string to watch the loads and help with any adjustments that might need to be made. As we moved up the trail and fell into our pace, I would often look back to see how Paul and the loads looked. For his part, Paul always had this suspect grin on his face. The revelation finally came to me . . . as much as he may have wanted to lead and lead with the string . . . he stayed behind to watch his wranglers. Not in a critical or judgmental manner, but accepting his responsibility as the trail boss on this trip. As the first miles melted behind us we all relaxed into the easy rhythm of the stock, the dog and each other.

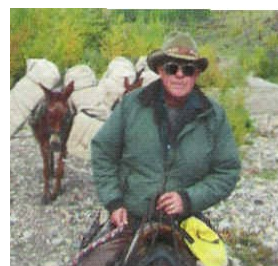
ON THE TRAIL AND UP OVER THE PASS

The trail follows Smith Creek up through several sections of private land before entering the Wilderness Area. This section of the trip went well. We stopped for a break and to make a load adjustment a few miles up the trail. Being the second in line behind Dan, my view did not change much. The gelding in front of me had such a dancing, swinging gait that I wanted to change his name from Checker to Fred (Astair) but Paul objected. Also, if you have to ride behind another horse, it is better if that horse is not a high-tailed Arabian. See photo below for my view for most of the trip.

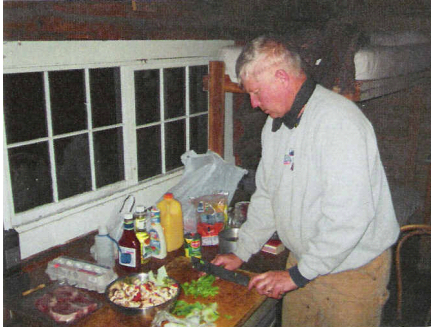


The trail up Smith Creek overlooks several deep spectacular pools and small waterfalls. There are some nice places to camp or to stop and have a picnic. A few miles up, the trail rises to the north up and out of Smith Creek. We crossed a low pass and dropped down into Welcome Creek. A short distance down Welcome Creek and just before the Dearborn River, a cut-off trail will lead to the Welcome Creek Guard Station administrative site. The Welcome Creek Guard Station is located on a broad flat with Scapegoat mastiff as the incredible backdrop. As we pulled into camp, a weather system was just enveloping Scapegoat Mountain. We tied the string to the hitch rail, dropped the loads, loosened the saddles and gave them all pellets. The pellets went into storage barrels in the main cabin, the hay and Coleman fuel went to the hay shed. The food and equipment was stored away. We made necessary corral repairs, threw out hay and turned the stock into the corral.

Dan cooked up a good supper and Paul discussed the 1988 fire and the spectacular fashion in which it moved through this area. With a good day of hard work behind us we laid out our bed rolls, Paul and Dan in the cabin and me on a cot on the porch with a mantie to keep my sleeping bag warm and dry. As twilight slipped to darkness the front arrived from the West. In the morning we awoke to a layer of fresh, wet snow!



“The Boss” with the string.



MORNING HAS BROKEN

The smell of wood smoke drifted down with the breeze and notified me that life was stirring in the cabin. I shifted on the cot and peeked out from under the mantie with the only eye that was awake. It was snowing, big, wet heavy flakes. The ground was white. I climbed out of the sack, stowed my bed roll and entered the cabin. The smell of coffee and the warmth of the wood fire

Dan prepares the first night's meal.

greeted me along with the sound of bacon frying in the big cast iron frying pan. Dan and Paul had been up for a while. I went out with Dan and threw the stock some hay and checked their water.

Back in the cabin we had breakfast, I cleaned the dishes, refreshed the water bucket and swept the floor while Dan made lunches and Paul planned our strategy for the day. We donned our cold weather gear, silk scarves and hat covers and went out to catch up and saddle the stock. In a short while we were headed north up the trail to the Green Fork Cabin—Dan in the lead, Paul in the back leading the pack stock and me tucked safely in the middle.

Time slips by quickly when you are covering new ground. In a few hours we were up over the top of the pass and dropping into the Straight Creek drainage. The low clouds obstructed what view there might have been. Still it was good to be in the mountains on a warm horse with the creak of leather serenading in time to the rhythm of the horse. With the stock bare there was no stopping to adjust loads so we made good time and arrived in pouring rain at Green Fork Cabin just before noon.

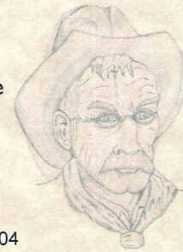


SCAFFOLD EVENT

I tied the stock while Dan and Paul got the fire going along with a pot of coffee. We took our time with lunch allowing the warmth to seep back into our bodies and to dry out wet clothing. It was pushing into the afternoon when we collected the scaffolding, scaffold braces, aluminum planking and set ourselves to the task of mantying them up into loads that the horses and mules could pack out. The scaffold sections were pretty easy to manty and a rectangular bundle of three to each side of an animal worked pretty well. The braces, while over six feet long, were bundled into two loads to ride on a single animal. It was the planking that caused some head scratching. At each end of each plank are two-inch and one-half aluminum hooks and each plank was well over six feet long. We mantied the planks and wrapped the hooks with duct tape to protect the pack animal. We loaded the planks first on Jester, Paul's big gelding. At seventeen hands tall and a laid back disposition, Jester is a gentle giant. We loaded the planking on Jester and set the angles off the "D" rings just right by adjusting the cargo ropes. Dan led Jester around the small meadow along side of the cabin. At first Jester was a bit skittish but as the loads settled in so did Jester.

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Green Fork and the mantied loads.

The braces went on Custer, the big bay mule. Sara, Marco and Buggy carried the scaffolding. With all the pack animals loaded and the loads adjusted one last time, we set out for the top of the pass and the trail back to Welcome Creek Cabin.

BACK TO WELCOME CREEK CABIN

The trail back has some steep sections with some close rock on the uphill side and, of course, some exposure on the downhill side. Making load adjustments at some of these tight spots would make for a good story. Fortunately, you will have to wait for our next trip to get a good story. On this trip we listened well to Paul, and the loads held true for the whole trip back to Welcome Creek. The only anxious moments came with the disappearing daylight. When we pulled into Welcome Creek Cabin it was the beginning of twilight and we were glad to be back.



We worked fast and efficiently when we arrived back at Welcome Creek. Paul took to building a fire and Dan and I dropped the loads, gave the stock pellets while they cooled out, and threw hay in the corral. After we

unsaddled the horses, stacked and covered the saddles, we led the horses into the corral. They were pretty tired and we did not hear much from them for the rest of the night.

Back in the cabin we settled into the cozy warmth generated by the wood stove. Dinner was as good as any I ever tasted. After we cleaned up we recapped the day over a cup of coffee and we were all ready to turn in. I set up again on the front porch. The storm front had moved through during the day and the clear, star-filled sky told me the night would be cool so I took two manties out with me. In the middle of the night I realized my weather prediction skills were sorely lacking. It was colder than the dickens; I could see my breath! I pulled on a stocking cap that Paul had loaned me when I had turned in and burrowed deeper into the down of my sleeping bag.

HEADIN' BACK HOME

Morning broke cold and clear. We worked through the morning routine with hot coffee and a filling breakfast. We cleaned the cabin

and mopped the floor. The horses seemed eager to hit the trail and they easily took the cold blankets and stiff saddles. We stowed the scaffolding behind the hay shed and built our loads for the trip out. Paul took a moment to share the finer points of pack saddle adjustment. We then loaded the pack animals and tightened the cinches for the last time. The sun rose high over the eastern ridge beckoning us with its warmth to hit the trail. Swinging into the saddle I had

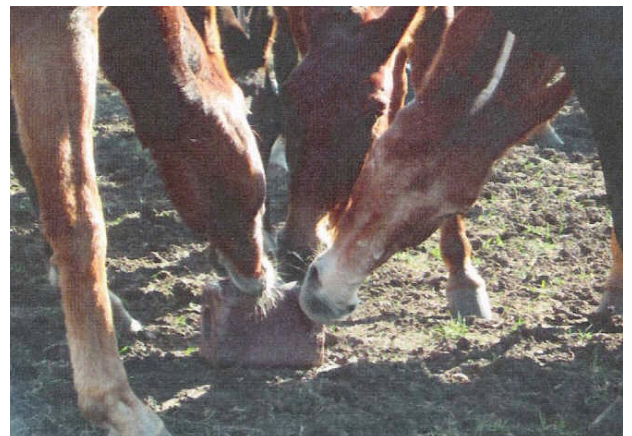


A gentle touch goes a long way.

mixed emotions. Missing my family I wanted to get back home, but the magnetism of the wilderness and adventure with good friends was holding me to this spot.

As we climbed the pass up and out of Welcome Creek and back into the Smith Creek drainage we picked up the track of a big grizzly bear. It was made after the rain the day before. The bear tracks stayed with us for the next three miles as we rode down off the pass and along Smith Creek. Then the tracks disappeared into the forest. We started the last leg up and out of the creek bottom to the trailhead. Dan still in the lead, me in the middle and Paul riding drag pulling the string. This day, just like the day we started, was bright and clear.

Our thanks to the Lewis and Clark National Forest, the Rocky Mountain Ranger District, the staff of the Augusta Ranger Station and to Custer, Hank, Jester, Java, Checker, Buggy, Sara, and Marco, our steady and honest stock, and to Riikka for keeping the bears safe.



Classified Ads

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Club News



The February 23 Membership Drive and Potluck had a great turnout with lots of good feedback about the dancing. There were many raffle items donated from MBCH members and club sponsors, including halters and brushes, paste wormers, break-away strings for pack animals, eggs, etc. Mike Speake donated a "bachelor chair" which he is displaying at the left. It can be used as a step stool, as a flower stand, or as a short ladder for reaching high cabinets. For holidays the ironing board, covered with a festive cover, can be used as a sideboard for serving food. Of course, it can be used to iron clothes! Mike hand-crafted this piece from swamp maple wood from the southern part of the U.S. All of the February Membership potluck donations are very much appreciated!



More pictures from the Membership Potluck. Upper right: Thelma and Smoke Elser, Nancy Chandler and Lola Mae LeProwse. Right: Dan and Marjorie Harper doing the jitterbug. And upper left: No clue! Is Rick really dancing with a broom?
Photos provided by Lola Mae LeProwse

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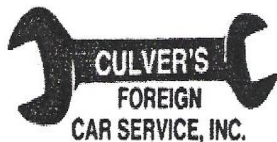
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CHARLES CULVER
President



On January 26, 2008, Past President Gary Salisbury and friends organized a roping event in honor of Fred Benefiel. Fred was able to attend the competition that included about 100 people including Fred's entire family, roping friends, BCH members and neighbors. A potluck dinner was provided. Donations were accepted. About 30 ropers participated in the roping and presented Fred with an engraved silver belt buckle.

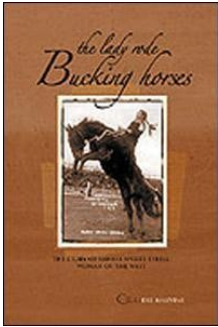


Caroline Bauer organized gifts from MBCH members for the Missoula Youth Homes that were on their Christmas Gift List. She delivered the items just before Christmas. Included were gift certificates, T-shirts, sweat shirts, jewelry and picture frames. The Missoula Youth Homes appreciated the effort and formally thanked MBCH with an ad in the Missoulian. Thanks, Caroline, for spear heading that good cause.

March Book Review

Mark and Jenna Wright suggested that *The Feedbag* feature a book review each issue. They even offered to provide some of the reviews as well! If any of you have read a book lately that would interest MBCH members, feel free to share with a review. For this issue the Wrights submitted a book titled *The Lady Rode Bucking Horses* by Dee Marvinne.

The pages of this amazing book bring Fannie Sperry Steele to life. She was raised on a north-central Montana homestead during the 1880's. Fannie's family earned extra money by selling wild horses, which they captured and trained. By the time she was fourteen, Fannie was riding bucking horses to entertain her neighbors. She was hired to perform for traveling Wild West shows, where she rode broncs, participated in relay races and sharpshooting competitions. In 1912 she earned the title "Lady Bucking Horse Champion of the World."



Fannie was briefly married to the owner of one of the Wild West shows. They operated a dude ranch in western Montana where she lived until her death in 1983.

The book is a short, interesting read. Fannie provided the author her collection of letters and newspaper clippings, so the reader gets a clear image of Fannie. There are a dozen photographs in the book—pictures of the family homestead, Fannie riding a bronc at the Calgary Stampede with her dress flapping and her long braids flying, Fannie in her 70's riding one of her paint horses.

Her life story is one of inspiration about a young woman who did what she loved even though other young women of that era chose different paths.

SANDY'S QUILT

Sandy Evenson donated this machine-pieced, machine quilted quilt to the Montana Back Country Horsemen for this year's annual convention in Great Falls on March 28-30. The drawing will



be held March 28 at the evening banquet. Smoke sold all our club's tickets and thinks other clubs have sold out as well. Some lucky winner will take Sandy's lovely creation home with them!



Editor's Notes

Have you checked out our website lately: www.bchmt.org. Sandy Evenson does a great job as our web diva. She also publishes past issues of the *Feedbag* on the website. The quality and color is such an improvement over the mailed black and white copies.

I volunteered to catalog and maintain a library for our club. Shortly a list will be put on our website and in this newsletter. If anyone would like to donate to it let me know.

Springtime in Western Montana is horse clinic time. To mention a few, Pleasure Park Farms on Big Flat Rd. has several spring clinics coming up, including Steve Edwards' Mule Clinic over Memorial Day. Dunrovin Ranch in Lolo has several events scheduled. That website is www.DunrovinRanchMontana.com. Ninemile Wildlands Training Center has a varied 2008 Course Schedule at www.fs.fed.us/rl/lolo/resources-cultural/index-nwtc.shtml. The schedule includes Smoke Elser's Packing Clinics on May 19-23 and June 2-6 plus many more! Big Sky Fox Trotter Assn. has several events coming up. Their website is www.bigskyfoxtrotters.com. The Sapphire Event Center in Corvallis has a ton of events scheduled throughout the spring and summer. Their website is www.sapphireeventscenter.com.

My horsey friend in Peck, Idaho is treating two of her quarter-horses for Leptospirosis, a bacterial disease contacted from either direct contact of urine, blood or tissues from infected animals carrying the disease or from water, hay, grain that has been contaminated by mice, raccoon, deer or livestock urine. Leptospirosis knows no geographical or environmental boundaries. There is no vaccine for horses. Symptoms are eye problems—tearing, discharge, puffiness, cloudiness. Early treatment of steroids and antibiotics can minimize chances of partial or total blindness.

Richard Tamcke is looking for judges for a 4-H Competitive Trail Riding event in June. If you can help out, call him at 258-6621.

I really appreciate the contributions of stories and pictures for this March issue. A special thank you to Nick Kaufman and Dan Tuxbury for their great story and pictures. Next *Feedbag* comes out June 1 and traditionally focuses on trail safety and etiquette. The deadline for submissions is May 20.

Happy St. Patrick's Day!



Myra



2008 MULE DAYS

- May 20-25, Bishop Mule Days, Bishop, CA
- Apr. 1-6, Mule Day in Columbia, TN
- June 6-8, Rocky Mtn. Mule Days in Eagle, CO
- June 11-15, Jake Clark Mule Days, Powell, WY
- June 13-15, Montana Mule Days, Drummond, MT
- June 13-16, Cimmaron Mule Days, Cimmaron, NM

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John Favro Retirement Party January 11, 2008

Smoke and Thelma hosted a retirement party at their barn for John Favro, Region 1 Trails Coordinator, on January 11. John was roasted by family and friends with the Forest Service and Back Country Horsemen. Back Country Horsemen of Montana presented John with a silver buckle. MBCH also presented some valuable(?) items such as well used tack and a red, dented, shot-up hard hat with a backwards BCH logo on the back! The evening reflected John's legacy of being a great guy, one who listens to everyone about their concerns and tries to be fair with all. Best to John and Susan.



Presenters Left to Right: Charlie O'Leary from Mile High Back Country Horsemen, Mike Chandler, Paul Evenson, John Favro, Smoke Elser, and Connie Long

If you haven't already done so, please renew your MBCH membership.

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BACK COUNTRY HORSEMEN OF MISSOULA
 P. O. Box 2121
 Missoula, MT 59806

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION 2008

NAME(S): _____

ADDRESS: _____

E-MAIL: _____

PHONE #: _____

If applying for family membership, name children under 18 and their ages.

ATTENTION!

Notice of Risks Inherent in Equine Activities!! Serious injury or even death can result from equine riding and related activities. There are risks inherent in equine activities, and these dangers or conditions that are an integral part of equine activities include but are not limited to: a) the propensity of an equine to behave in ways that may result in injury or harm or the death of persons on or around the equine; b) the unpredictability of an equine's reaction to such things as medication, sound, sudden movements, and unfamiliar objects, persons or other animals; c) hazards, such as surface and subsurface ground conditions; d) collisions with other equines or objects; e) the potential of another participant to not maintain control over the equine or to not act within the person's ability. Participants in any equine activity shall act in a safe and responsible manner at all times to avoid injury to themselves and others and shall be aware of the risks inherent in equine activities.

The Back Country Horsemen of Missoula shall not be liable for injury to or the death of a participant as a result of their voluntary participation in any sponsored activity. I certify that I have read and understand the above notice.

Signature _____ Date _____ Signature _____ Date _____

MEMBERSHIP DUES

_____ Family: \$40/Year _____ New Member
 _____ Individual: \$30/Year _____ Renewal

Membership is on a calendar year basis (expires December 31st). Please make payments to Back Country Horsemen of Missoula. Any membership dues received after October 1 will be applied to the following calendar year.

DATES TO REMEMBER

- Mar. 5 MBCH Board Meeting, Jokers Wild, 6:30
- Mar. 19 MBCH Issues Meeting, 1:00 *(call in to Mike)*
- Mar. 19 MBCH General Meeting, FW&P, 7:00
- Mar. 28-30 MT BCH State Convention, Holiday Inn, Great Falls
- Apr. 2 MBCH Board Meeting, FW&P, 6:30
- Apr. 16 MBCH General Meeting, FW&P, 7:00
- Apr. 18-20 Montana State Trails Conference, Holiday Inn Downtown/Parkside, Missoula
- Apr. 19 Defensive Horsemanship, Harper Arena, 9-4:00
- Apr. 22-24 USFS Region 1 Crosscut/Chain Saw Training, Missoula DoubleTree 8:00-5:00
- Apr. 26-28 Montana Wilderness Assn. 50th Anniversary, Best Western Heritage Inn, Great Falls
- Apr. 26 MSU Equine Conference, GranTree Inn, Bozeman
- May 7 MBCH Board Meeting, Place TBA, 6:30
- May 10 MBCH Spring Tune-up & Hobbling Clinic by Gary Salisbury w/Dutch Oven Cooking by Caroline Bauer
- May 10 Annual Missoula Livestock Exchange Cataloged Horse Sale
- May 18 Mission Valley Rangers-sponsored Bison Range Ride
- May 20 Deadline for *Feedbag* submissions
- May 21 MBCH General Meeting, FW&P, 7:00
- June 4 MBCH Board Meeting, FW&P, 6:30
- June 7 National Trails Day
- June 15 Fathers Day Steak Ride
- June 18 MBCH General Meeting, FW&P, 7:00

Forest Service Happenings

Repair on the Gates Park Bridge in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area started last summer. The approaches to the bridge were worked over and the dead-man anchors were stabilized by increasing the overburden. A small re-route on the eastern approach will prevent further erosion over the anchors. The worn-out running plank was replaced before trail crews got pushed out by fires. Still to be completed is more technical work left of replacing the sills that are crushing and repairing the concrete abutments. When snow came last fall approximately 165,000 acres of fire encompassed about 200 miles of trail on the Choteau-based Rocky Mountain Ranger District alone. This trail damage will become the District's priority so the bridge repairs will likely get moved to the back burner for a years. *Submitted by Ian Bardwell, Rocky Mtn. RD*



Andy Kulla, Resource Staff Officer on the Missoula Ranger District, says work will start this summer on the Blue Mountain Trailhead expansion. If you'd like a copy of the expansion plan, call or e-mail Editor Myra.

Please support our sponsors listed throughout *The Feedbag*. Let them know how much we appreciate their support!

Two Friends

....Author Unknown

Just up the road from my home is a field with two horses in it. From a distance, each horse looks like any other horse. But if you stop your car or are walking by, you will notice something quite amazing.....

Looking into the eyes of one horse will disclose that he is blind. His owner has chosen not have him put down, but has made a good home for him. This alone is amazing. If you stand nearby and listen you will hear the sound of a bell. Looking around for the source of the sound, you will see that it comes from the smaller horse in the field. Attached to the horse's halter is a small bell. It lets the blind friend know where the other horse is so he can follow. As you stand and watch these two friends you'll see that the horse with the bell is always checking on the blind horse and that the blind horse will listen for the bell and then slowly walk to the other horse is, trusting that he will not be led astray.

When the horse with the bell returns to the shelter of the barn each evening, it stops occasionally and looks back, making sure that the blind friend isn't too far behind to hear the bell. Like the owners of these two horses, God does not throw us away just because we are not perfect or because we have problems or challenges. He watches over us, and even brings others into our lives to help us when we are in need. Sometimes we are the blind horse being guided by the little ringing bell of those who God places in our lives. Other times we are the guide horse, helping others to find their way. Good friends are like that. You may not always see them but you always know they are there. Please listen for my bell and I'll listen for yours. And remember. Be kinder than necessary. Everyone you meet is fighting some kind of battle. Live simply, love generously, care deeply, speak kindly.....and leave the rest to God.

Submitted by MBCH Members Karen Buck and Joyce Ruana