



# The Feedbag

July 2019

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### Website:

<http://bchmt.org/wp/missoula>

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<https://www.facebook.com/missoulabch/>

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Volunteer Organization, 501c3

## Presidents Letter:

Howdy Folks,

Well somedays it feels like summer may be here, at least the calendar says so. So far we have had some really good day rides (5) with BCH.

We have had our annual spring tune up that was great success. Thank you to Gary Salisbury for teaching safe horse handling, and Chris and Connie Basham for the use of their facility. Dan Harper hosted our annual Defensive Horse Safety Clinic at his place and was another great success. We participated in National Trails Day at Blue Mountain with BCH members working on clearing a portion of the upper trail. During the trail clearing Mark Wright certified some of our members on chain saw use. Thank you Mark for your help in getting folks saw certified for our trail projects. We also fixed the fence, pulled weeds and handed out surveys for the land use for the USFS at the main trail head. Seven BCH members traveled to Monture Creek trail head on a 3-day trail clearing project, from Burnt Cabin to the top of Hahn pass. We also had the annual family campout and ride hosted by Mike and Suzette Moore at the Blackfoot Clearwater Game Range on June 21-23<sup>rd</sup>.

Despite a late spring we have accomplished a lot and have had a variety of members involved in the activities, rides and trail work. Too many names to mention so a big "thank you" to those who volunteered and participated.

We strive to improve our commitment to preserving horse/mule use on trails and the horse/mule packing way of enjoying the back country. I hope that the events and programs we offer help you with your horse/mule experience on preparing for a safe and enjoyable experience in the backcountry.

**Randy Velin**

*President, BCH of Missoula*



**Upcoming Meetings, Events and Rides**

**July:**

19th-21st Too Good Cabin Dan Harper 258-6467

**August:**

7th Board Meeting 7 PM at ORI

16th Summer Picnic Holt Museum Lolo 6:00 PM

18th Lubrecht Forest Ride Mark Wright 531-2455

24th-25th Clearwater Crossing Gary Salisbury 529-7242

**September:**

4th Board Meeting 7 PM at ORI

7th Fred Burr Ride Richard Tamcke 258-6621

18th General Meeting-Ice Cream Social 7PM at ORI

21st Primm Meadows Ride Richard Tamcke 258-6621

24th Spring Gulch to Stuart Peak Trail-Rattlesnake

Ken Brown 207-6067

28th Wire rollup at Clearwater Game Range

Richard Tamcke 258-6621

**BCH of Missoula Officers and Committees**

**Officers**

Randy Velin President 406-544-4582

Ken Brown Vice President 406-207-6067

Kirsten Pabst Secretary 406-396-7050

Suzette Moore Treasurer 406-370-7561

**Board of Directors**

Judy Allen Lee Crawford Smoke Elser

Chuck Erickson Lana Hamilton Earl Tidball

Cody Allen (Membership chair) Nancy Chandler (Social chair)

**State Directors**

Gary Salisbury (Senior Director) 406-529-7242

Richard Tamcke (Junior Director) 406-258-6621

Mike Moore (Alternate) 406-370-7549

**Issues**

Mike Chandler 406-549-7639

Ken Brown 406-207-6067

**Recreational Trails Grant**

Judy Allen 406-274-2339

**Defensive Horsemanship**

Dan Harper 406-258-6467

**Website**

Adam Davis 406-529-1892

**Feedbag Editor**

Bonnie Doyle 406-546-1793



*Above - Richard Tamcke (photo courtesy of Kathy McGann)*

*Right - Monture Creek Falls (photo by Bonnie Doyle)*

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### Monture Creek/Burnt Cabin Trip

It was my pleasure to go on the Burnt Cabin trailing clearing trip June 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>. The crew consisted of 1 mule, 9 horses, 7 people and 1 chain saw. Our group included Randy Velin, Adam Davis, Bonnie Doyle, Dwayne and Billy Chilton, Mike Chandler and myself.

On the first day the crew arrived at the trail head about 10:00 AM and hit the trail at 11:00 AM. We stopped for lunch at 1:00 PM and arrived at the cabin around 3:30 PM. The most threatening object on the trail that day was a tree that Cinder ran into with her pack causing the tree to move and spook the other animals. The cabin was spacious enough to fit 7 people comfortably. I was one of two girls so we got the bunk beds while the men slept on cots on the floor. Dinner was tacos without beer, because Dwayne forgot the beer.

We started the next day with a sleep deprived crew because a porcupine or some unwelcome visitor



was under the cabin during the night. It kept everyone but me awake most of the night. I heard great complaints in the morning, but I had slept through it. We left about 9:00 AM to clear the trail to Hahn Pass. While clearing the trail we saw 2 elk (or bushes). It was a chilly day with snow and some blue skies. We reached the top of the pass, stuck our toes into the Bob Marshall Wilderness then headed back down the trail to eat lunch. We made a camp fire to warm by, which we put out before we left. Smokey the Bear would be really proud of us! For dinner we ate chicken parmesan. That night the crew partied continually while I slept because I was tired and apparently they were not.

The following day after a filling breakfast of pancakes (which I cooked) and sausage we left the cabin at 9:00 AM. It was a speedy ride back to the trail-head arriving at noon. After unsaddling the horses and mule the crew enjoyed a refreshing beer, for everyone but me. While removing the packs we realized that the chain saw was still sitting on the cabin porch. We had ridden approximately 30 miles throughout the trip and cleared 9 logs from the trail. The trail had already been cleared from the Monture Trail Head to Burnt Cabin when the Forest Service took hay in to the cabin. Our crew cleared from Burnt Cabin to Hahn Pass.

***By Kara Conley***

## **Gwen Thibodeau**

*(decades shared with horses)*

**By Ken Brown**

In the mid-80s I had met Gwen and her husband Pat on a scouting ride for the club's steak ride up Nine Mile. Shortly afterwards Pat passed away during heart surgery.

Our friendship bonded on a 1986 Labor Day horse trip in the Rattlesnake. I had been away in Oregon with an ill family member and had no shoes on my horses. Gwen let me ride her favorite horse, at the time, Digger. Gwen rode Queeny, although on this trip the horse had a few other names. Names she denied and I never heard again.

We rode with a couple of women who had been students of Gwen's when she taught school. This was to be just a short pleasure ride. We left the backway through Gwen's, up over Marshall Mountain, into Mid-Tower – the canyon east of Marshall, and up a very steep old jeep trail to a place on the way to Sheep Mountain, called Blue Point. The problem was it has started to sprinkle and then to rain. We all had light coats but no rain coats. Gwen didn't even have a hat. By the time we got to Blue Point to eat lunch, the sun was out and things were warming up. Gwen went to sit down but backed her spurs into each other and fell over backwards, laughing.

After lunch there was a discussion on what to do next. The other two women, being of sound minds, decided to turn back. Gwen and I decide to ride a bit further, since it was such a nice day now. We eventually were not far from Sheep Mountain. Gwen talked about a trail that she and Pat had always looked for but could not find. Not much farther, I found an illegible sign on the ground off the main trail, next to what appeared to be a game trail. We decided to "explore" this trail, since we had no map or idea where the trail might go. It turned out to be the trail they had been looking for. We kept going to the point of no return, hoping it would drop us in to the Rattlesnake main corridor. The going was steep downhill that finally dropped us into a clearing that had been made by a microburst. There were down trees everywhere. We had no saw, ax or even a Swiss army knife. I had to get off and move trees or bend them to the side enough for Gwen to lead our horses through.

We came to another fork in the trail. We chose the one going downhill toward what we thought was the main corridor in the Rattlesnake. We finally picked up a stream heading in the direction we were going. The thought was that it would eventually drop into Rattlesnake Creek. We eventually came out a few hundred yards above the Franklin Bridge in the main corridor. However, it was still 8 miles from the bridge to the trailhead and



then another 3 miles over another mountain to where I kept my horses. The trip was likely to be 30 to 33 miles in total.

I was extremely sore. The inside of my legs, my inner thighs to be exact, felt like they were swollen. I now realize that old cowboys aren't bowlegged but walk that way to keep their sore thighs from touching. I had to get off and walk. But Gwen, which would be true throughout our riding together, never walked. I walked my horse over large logs, she jumped hers. There was a large log followed by a 3 foot drop. I walked my horse. She jumped it down. When we were almost done I asked her if she was hurting. She rolled her head and shoulders and said her shoulders might be sore tomorrow. I was dying right now! Even my hair hurt!

We got back at 11:30 pm and then got a ride to pick up my horse trailer by my wife. So it was with this sense of adventure and exploring that we rode together for thirty to forty some years.

Some other things about Gwen. She had disabilities. She had survived colon cancer. She had Osteoporosis to the point that her nurse told me if the horse even bumped her she would likely have broken bones. Gwen told me if she got hurt, not to do CPR, I would kill her for sure. She did not have strength in her left hand. She had to either wrap the rein around her left hand or the saddle horn. She had Directional Dyslexia. She had no idea where she was going on the trail. She would ride by herself and when she wanted to go back home she just gave the horse his head. She said, so far, she always made it home. She couldn't swim. I did a 9 day pack trip in the Bob with her in which she had to swim her horse across the South Fork of the Flathead River a few times. She just said she trusted her horse to get her through.

Then there was her horse Howdy. I believe she got him when he was two or three. He was an Arab (pronounced "air-head") gelding. He had to go to a few trainers before one could get him



to stop bucking. We wintered our horses over decades at her 20 acre pasture on Grey Wolf out of Arlee. We would drop the horses off in the fall and they would race around pasture like a couple of kids in a candy store. A truly amazingly beautiful sight to behold. We would then go around the pasture fence in opposite directions to fix the fence that the cows on the other side would push in. The rancher there told me he was afraid to be on foot in the pasture with Howdy. Howdy was also hard to catch. So I would spend the winter getting him into a routine of giving him a pan of 3-way if he would let me halter him and tie him to a tree. When it came time to bring him back to town in the spring I would catch and halter him. I had another person way up the road out of sight with the horse trailer. If Howdy saw the horse trailer he would run and run. Once he almost ran

over Gwen but at the last moment, skidded and then leaped to the side to narrowly avoid running over the top of her. Howdy also did not like sheep, backpackers or hikers on the trail. We worked with hikers to drop their packs or get on the downhill side before he would go by. We once came on a pregnant woman in a flowing dress that was blowing in the wind. Howdy just would not go by her. I told Gwen. We are "up agin it". I am not going to ask this lady to take her dress off. Gwen laughingly agreed and we left. When Howdy was 6 years old she said she wanted me to take Howdy if anything happened to her. I thought a minute, and said, "What would I do with a 30 year old horse? He died at 30 some years of age. The rancher found him dead in the winter pasture, my horse Maverick, standing over him, not leaving his side. Howdy was buried there, as had Digger before him. He was the last horse Gwen would own, but not her last horse to ride.

Gwen always had some project going on. She was involved in getting the foot bridge in Bonner, trying to get legislation for safety for school buses, saving the polo grounds in Bonner, and lately, a water pump in her stream on her property for better irrigation. She and I were involved in the Limits and Acceptable Changes for the Rattlesnake. She had opinions. One participant said, "Ok that Thibodeau woman". But she got her way. Gwen had a plaque in her house that said, "If there are no horses in Heaven I don't want to go". I am pretty sure they don't allow horses...until now.



## **Fort Robinson, Nebraska**

For a little different riding than our usual backcountry experience, you might try camping and riding at Fort Robinson, Nebraska.

We stopped by earlier this year on our return from Tennessee where we picked up a new Tennessee Walker. Fort Robinson not only has some beautiful riding but is also full of western history. It became a fort in the 1870's, was where Chief Crazy Horse was killed, Red Cloud's agency was located here. It was a remount for the cavalry, and was a location for German prisoners in World War II. Now it is a state park with restored buildings, a restaurant, a couple museums, and a melodrama.

You can board your horses at the mare barn or in the original 1909 brick cavalry barns. And, you may camp at the fort and ride right out of the fort. There are several loop rides from the fort across open areas, up along a creek, and through rock formations. You may also trailer 6 miles to Soldier Creek Wilderness where there is a trailhead with corrals. You may camp there as well. There are a couple loop rides in the Soldier Creek Wilderness some of which follow old military roads.

You can see the ruts made by horse and mule drawn wagons from long ago. In the photo of Charlene taken from behind, you can see wagon ruts to the right. One point of interest at Soldier Creek is the foundation of the officer's party quarters. They must have been serious about partying in those days because it was a long ride from the fort to get to the party quarters.

***By Kent and Charlene Krone***



### **Twinkle and Thunder**

Twinkle was a pasture muffin when I got her. She was a gentle soul, having been handled extensively when she was young due to wire cuts. My buddy Harley and I had been riding weekly around Kelly Island, so that is where I first started riding her. The first time I was following a deer trail, she would veer off into the brush. Eventually following game trails and going through deep water were second nature to her.

Twinkle, Thunder and Harley's horse Clipper were pastured with Bernie's horses close to the Kelly Island access. She became a gentle saddle horse and a good pack horse, even though it was hard to get the pack saddle to stay put. She would stop before the load got to the point of turning over. One trip coming out the Dry Fork, I found myself putting a rock on top of my pack boxes, for balance. Then later I had to take it off, then place it on the other box. When I got back, I weighed them, and they were exactly the same weight.

She was mischievous, and would pull stunts, especially when I had her on trips with her girlfriend Clipper. One time I was camped at a Bitterroot trailhead. In the evening I had Clipper grazing loose with Twinkle tied up. Time to switch them, but Clipper played hard to catch. Followed her for 1/2 hour, until she went and stoop next to Twinkle. I ducked under Twinkle and picked up Clippers foot and had her.

The next morning, I had Twinkle out loose, while I put Clipper in the trailer. I had not gotten half way to Twinkle when the trailer started rocking violently.

I dashed back to find Clipper with both feet in the manger and had tied her head to the front of the manger. Cutting the trailer open briefly flashed in my frenzied brain. Calming down, I was able to work her feet out of the manger.

Later camped along the Selway river, I had Clipper tied to the trailer, with Twinkle loose. Twinkle deliberately went behind a tree not too far away, and Clipper started calling "don't leave me". Later when I switched them, Clipper deliberately went behind the trees, so Twinkle could continue the charade.

Another time, walking out of the Dry Fork with Thunder my saddle horse that day tied behind Twinkle packing, I stopped for lunch. Sitting on a rock eating my sandwich, I watched as Twinkle grazed, and moved past me. She seemed to trip on her lead rope with every step. When I rose to gather them up, off she went, lead rope over her neck, dragging Thunder along. I kicked into high gear when they got out of sight. Found them after 1/2 mile and a creek crossing, just off the trail with Thunder tangled in the trees.

Twinkle never walked out, but Thunder the endurance jock, would keep her trotting till midafternoon. Needless to say, I had to pack the loads good and tight. Thunder was pissed when he had to pack. Head down moping. The first year I packed him, he hit every bump tree he could reach. Twinkle as a saddle horse perked up with her exalted status.

***Don Dodge***

### **Back Country Horsemen of Missoula**

#### ***~Mission Statement~***

- ◆ To perpetuate the common sense use and enjoyment of horses in America's back country and wilderness.
- ◆ To work to ensure that public lands remain open to recreation and stock use.
- ◆ To assist the various agencies responsible for the maintenance and management of public lands.
- ◆ To 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.
- ◆ To foster and encourage formation of new Back Country Horsemen organizations.



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