



The Feedbag

November 2019

In this Issue

- 2 - Officers and Committees
- 2 - Upcoming Events
- 2 & 3 - Photos of BCH members
enjoying the outdoors
- 3 - Remembering John Sol
- 4 - Bandits of the Back Country
- 5 - Skookum Passport in Time
Project
- 6 - The River Trail of No Return
(Almost)
- 7 - Twogood Cabin
- 8 - Sponsors
- 8 - Mission Statement

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Volunteer Organization, 501c3

BCH of Missoula Presidents meanderings

Howdy folks,

It doesn't seem possible we are looking at the end of 2019. Where did the year go? It seemed to start cold and snowy then escalated into full blown get and ride season! I really hope you all had some time in the saddle and back country. Everywhere I rode this spring, summer and fall was awesome. The BCH had many rides this year that were led by great BCH folks who scouted out some great trails. Thanks to all our ride leaders this year for your time and experience in leading rides. We have a list of events and rides coming out for next year and it is shaping up well. We will have these on our upcoming calendar so you can participate as you are available to. Along with rides we had some very good informational speakers at our meetings and good campout times with BCH friends as well.

We also had many challenges and issues to deal with and I believe the board and membership have done a great job in representing our interest as it pertains to our mission. I want to thank everyone for your input and support throughout my presidency. As club members you are our representatives to the backcountry policy makers and together we faced and resolved many issues that benefited us all.

As time moves on it is also time for me to move along as well. I have enjoyed being your BCH president for these last 3+ years. Hopefully I have met your expectations and kept our course of actions clear and communicated. I have enjoyed working with the BCH of Missoula Board membership. I hope you have felt valued and respected as member of BCH and I appreciated the input and ideas that were brought forward. As always there is still more to do to protect our ability to access trails by horse and mules. Our ability to ride in front and backcountry is being chiseled away at and we need to be the guardians to stand firm. I am confident that our next president will be ready for the challenges ahead and will carry our mission forward.

Thanks to all our members for all you do for your BCH.

Randy Velin

President, BCH of Missoula



BCH of Missoula Officers and Committees

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Upcoming Events

November:

20th - BCH General meeting 7PM at ORI. Elections of Officers; Greg Schatz on attracting younger generation to BCH.

December:

7th - Christmas Party 6PM at the Hellgate Lions Park
(The Red Barn at 1305 Haaglund Drive in Bonner)

January:

8th - BCH Board meeting
15th - BCH General meeting 6:30PM at ORI - Program is Big Sky Horse Park
18th - Saddle cleaning 10AM at ORI. Contact Gary Salisbury

February:

5th - BCH Board meeting
22nd - Membership Roundup 6:30PM at Lolo Community Center

March:

4th BCH Board meeting
18th - BCH General meeting 6:30PM at ORI. Program is State of the Art Communications options for the back country.
20th - 22nd - Montana BCH State Convention in Hamilton



*Photos courtesy of
Kathy McGann, Deb Monson
and Mark Wright*



John D. Sol

On 10/22/19 there was a notice in the Missoulian that John Sol had died. He was a relative of long time Back Country Horsemen of Missoula (BCHM) member Lola Mae LaProwse and a horseshoer for many of us horse people.

John started shoeing horses for me in about 1979. He shod my past horses: Penny, Bunny, Rhett, and those living: Ladd, Maverick and Tuxedo. I also wintered my horses at his farm, off of Mullan Road for decades. Along the way we had some experiences.

Some time ago, I was keeping my horse at Helen Cipaloto's on the west side of the Rattlesnake in an 800 acre pasture. I had to hike in the rolling terrain to find the herd of horses, and then catch mine. I had come over a hill and was dropping down into a ravine when I discovered a dead horse. I found my horse shortly afterward and walked him to the road where John was waiting to shoe him. I discussed the dead horse with John. A short time later a young, very pretty dark haired woman stopped her car and asked if we had any openings for another horse. I said, "We just got one." John burst out laughing. Now I am sure the young woman was assuming that I was hitting on her, not knowing about the recently deceased horse. John and I laughed and retold that story for as long as we knew each other.

John took the time and taught me to shoe a horse in 1988. I learned enough to put shoes back on my horses in the back country, which I had to do a few times, and what a back breaking job it was. I was more than happy to pay to have my horses shod.

John and I developed a tradition of having a beer together after he was done shoeing my horses. I don't like or drink beer. I did for John. We would sit on the tailgate of his truck,

having a beer, talking, before he would head home at the end of a work day. We were at a pasture where I was keeping my horses, drinking a beer, when we saw the owner coming up. I looked at John, not knowing what the owner would say about drinking on his property (he was a lawyer with liability signs posted). John and I, like two high school kids, hide the bottles behind our backs. We were both in our mid-sixties at the time; we were only about six months apart, John being the older. John did see the humor in that. I later talked to the owner about it. He invited us to bring a cooler of beer and lawn chairs to drink anytime we wanted. Nice to know.

John and I were not of the same political persuasion. While shoeing he would go on about some political issue or politician. I finally figured out, that while driving from one shoeing to the next he was listening to talk shows on his radio in his truck, like Rush Limbaugh. Then when he shod I got the theme presented to me. He took delight in discussing his views with other liberal minded horse owners. A captive audience. But eventually he would laugh and temper his views.

He always wanted me to talk about horse trips or other adventures I had since our last shoeing. I did get him to float the Wild and Scenic River, White Cliffs of the Missouri, for 3 or 4 days. Well, he did do it with a motor boat instead of paddling a canoe or sea kayak.

He would always update me on his family, the building of his log home or what his kids were doing. He was always interested in my family also.

I would take my horses with another friend and her horse to see our vet. On a few occasions the vet would compare my horses shoeing job to her's. Pointing out what was wrong with her horse's feet. John was an excellent shoer.

Ken Brown



BANDITS OF THE BACK COUNTRY

by Arnold D. "Smoke" Elser

Leave No Trace of your passing is a very old concept and practice dating back hundreds of years. Explorers, Native Americans and trappers, such as Jim Bridger, all practiced the art of Leave No Trace in their passing. Their very survival frequently depended on this. Leaving clues that they were in the area, such as campfires (fire rings), scarred trees, heavily used campsites and even tracks could mean their very lives were in danger if found by less friendly intruders. Traveling through the wilderness areas and back country took a very specialized ability and a keen sense of your surroundings and how to leave them so that there was no trace. This concept has come of age again in our back country, wilderness areas and wild lands. Today's explorers, campers, fisherman, hunters and horsemen must also revive and practice with diligence the age old art of Leave No Trace. Our wild lands are getting more pressure by a more diverse population who have little or no experience in the art of Leaving No Trace.

Traveling with one or more thousand-pound backpackers, such as horses or mules, requires even more skill and training in minimum impact to the land and leaving no trace. It requires specialized training and maybe even special equipment. Above all, it requires planning ahead. Traveling through today's back country dictates a special behavior, a mindset that will take you and your animals and move them through this country, taking only memories, pictures and peace of mind and leaving no trace of your passing. We must educate ourselves and develop special practices that will allow us to be the trappers, explorers and Native American's of today.

Through many years of wilderness and back country camping and packing with mules and horses, I have found some equipment that helps leave no trace on the landscape. The use of lighter-weight equipment and materials, which has been developed in recent years, such as aluminum stoves and pack boxes, lighter-weight fabrics for tents, and some dehydrated foods, etc. has allowed me to use fewer animals and, therefore, reduce the pack animal wear and tear on the ground. Because of the use of these kinds of equipment, you do not have to reduce all of the comforts that are allowed when you use pack animals in the back country. Planning is still a major pre-requisite to any trip going into the back country with stock. It is a good practice to pack all stock with their optimum load, not maximum and not minimum, but their optimum load carrying capacity. This is 1/5th of the animal's weight, a formula that is based on information from the Manual of Pack Transportation by Mr. H.W. Daly, Chief Packer for the U.S. Army in the early 1900's. This manual states that a pack animal could travel twenty-five miles per day year around, with his optimum load, if fed, watered and cared for properly. This is a practice that I follow and it has reduced my number of stock, as well as made me develop, find, and purchase specialized equipment for my horse packing trips into the wilderness.

One of the most important things that everyone must do when entering the wilderness or the back country with stock, is to know the land, study trail conditions, campsite areas and, of course, collect all the information possible from previous users, government agencies and others who may know the country well. A poor campsite on wet ground, near the lake shore or the stream bank is always a fatal stockmen's mistake. These lands heal, but usually do not heal quickly and always heal with evidence of your passing, scars that may last for many years. Drier campsites, and carefully selected trails always lead to a better outcome in Leaving No Trace on our precious back country. Carefully selecting the site to hold your stock overnight is vital. Selecting a site that has grass that horses will eat, and by turning your stock loose as much as possible, away from your campsite, the main trail, running water, and any major attraction, will allow your animals to utilize the landscape very much like elk and deer. Pre-training at home is a must. Determine your ring leaders among your

animals, and learn to picket or secure those animals and allow the rest to roam free. This is an excellent practice. Of course, when in the back country always use tree saver straps and high lines to secure your animals for long periods of time. They must be trained to this practice, as well, prior to heading to the mountains. Here again, select your site carefully. It should not be too near (100 to 200 feet) trails, water, campsite locations, or soft ground.

When leaving a back country camp, you must be sure to clean up after yourself (such as fire rings, firewood, human waste, and any camp construction). You must also clean up after your "thousand-pound back packers" (your stock). Clean up any picketed and high line areas. Of course, I firmly believe that's one of the reasons that a pointed toe cowboy boot was developed! It works great for kicking the manure and scattering it out. Once while I was practicing this technique, I remember kicking a fairly large clump and hearing it make a funny "splat" sound against one of my more sophisticated elderly clients! With a red face, I apologized, but I have been much more careful of my aim since! Scattered manure returns to the soil much faster and leaves a campsite much cleaner. As you mount your horse and leave a campsite with your pack stock it is always a good idea to look back and ask yourself, "Is this how I would like to see this campsite next year?".

Keeping some of the above basic ideas and practices in mind, each individual horseman must look at his own equipment, stock and practices and adjust them according to the country he is planning to visit. We need to be constantly on the lookout for better ways to protect our wilderness and back country resources, and we must develop the right mind set to Leave No Trace of our passing.

Several years ago, while traveling over one of the higher passes in the Bob Marshall and coming down a series of steep switchbacks, looking out over many thousands of acres of pristine wilderness, I overheard a guest nervously talking to his steed. "Now easy, now watch what you're doing, now don't put your foot too close to the edge." Coming to a sharp switchback, his horse stopped and surveyed the horizon before turning sharply and continuing down the trail. I heard my guest say, "You scenery loving son of a gun, get back on the trail!" Later that night, as we sat around the campfire, he remarked, "That was a great adventure and a day's experience that I will never forget." The next morning while leaving camp, he noticed my packer carefully cleaning up the campsite and remarked that it is right that we not leave tracks across this beautiful country.

Today's back country users, whether with stock or hiking, must practice to be "bandits", stealing the wilderness experience and pleasure with every step and trip into these wild lands. If we are bandits, then we must leave no trace or clue of our passing, leaving the land in all its beauty the way it has been for centuries.



Skookum Passport in Time Project

On July 8-10 the BCH of Missoula helped by providing pack support for the USFS Passport in Time Lookout restoration project on the Skookum Butte lookout. The lookout is about 9 miles south of Lolo Pass on the Montana Idaho border. The packers were Dan Harper with 1 riding horse and 2 pack mules, Randy Velin and granddaughter Kara with 2 riding horses and 1 pack mule. We arrived on Monday at about 10am and set up our trailers and stock high lines. The restoration crew and cook arrived around 11am and set up their camp and cook tents. As some of the crew did that others started to unload a trailer load of tools and supplies that we would be packing in with the mules. There were many tools of different shapes and sizes along with varying weights.



They told us the trail in was about 1.6 miles and gained 1,200 feet in elevation in the last mile. Little did we know how steep and tight the switchbacks were going to be. We started to mantly up the first load of tools. Dan had brought along his pack boards and these worked great to strap on the

different sized items. We made some pretty tight packs weighing in at about 93 lbs. each. They were a little tough to get up on the tall mules but we made it. Then we made 2 pannier loads for the other 2 mules, these were of smaller hand and power tools. We then started up the trail. We went over a small rise about 1/4 mile and then the trail drops down into a wet bottom land. The recent rains made the creek crossing very boggy and the stock had trouble getting through. One mule decided to make some jumps to get out and we had to retrieve him but the load stayed on luckily or maybe good packing? We proceeded up the trail to where it crossed an old FS logging road and this also had a steep bank with a muddy bottom. We made it through and up the switch backs to the top without any problems. Most of the crew had passed us along the way and were waiting to unload the stock and carry the stuff the last 500 feet up the rock pile to the Lookout.

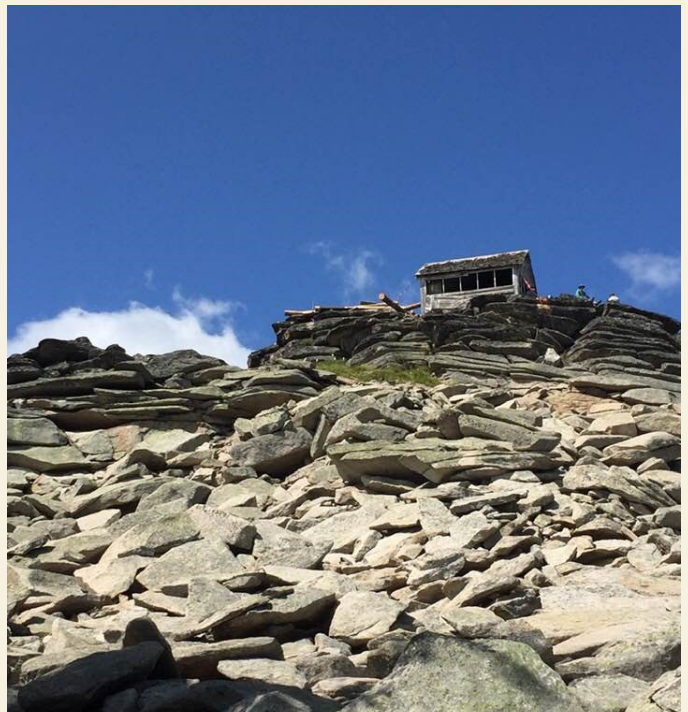
We decide to look for another route and after talking with Sydney the project coordinator. She said we could take the FS road around to circumvent the first bog. This would add about 1/2 mile but would be well worth it to keep from bogging the animals. The next day we made 2 trips without much trouble. On the return down they had 12 windows to come back with us. One had all the



glass gone, the others still had glass in them. We mantied them up with the pack boards on the pack saddle side to guard the glass and hopefully keep it from breaking. We made it back with no glass breakage. On the second trip up we had to haul a long stabilizer jack. It was about 9 feet long and the inner part would slide out so one was 8' long and the inside part was 6' long. We hung one of these on each side of my mule and I hitched the back up as far as I could which was about 6-8 inches from the ground. While we were on the road they rode well but when we hit the uphill switch backs with big rock, stumps and logs the pipes would hit them and play a tune. The workers said they could hear us coming from a mile away. The jacks rode well despite making music. The next morning we hauled up varies sizes of OBS wood sheet ranging from 72" x 41". Five sheets about that size and 6 sheets of about half the size of the larger ones. We had 12 sheets altogether and made it up without any problems. We had to load them with basket hitches as we had more height on some switch back corners that we did width.

It was a great crew to work with and they were very glad we could help pack in the items needed for the restoration. The project may take up to 2 years to complete and we hope to help them again if needed.

Randy Velin



The River Trail of No Return (Almost)

That summer I wanted to explore over into Idaho. I borrowed my friends big Appaloosa Mare, Clipper, to ride, and packed my mare Twinkle. Clipper was so big she filled my two-horse trailer, but at least it had the headroom for her. I had heard a rumor of a cave near Square Top Lookout, that could have been on the trail used by the outlaws that Killed Magruder for his gold. A lookout many years ago had lost his horses and found a cave while looking for them.

Driving over the Idaho divide from the West Fork, I noted that the Forest Service had parked their big horse trailer and trailed their stock. Driving down past Horse Hot Springs and some horse camps, the narrow road ended abruptly at a heavy private gate for the Gatten Ranch. I found myself backing my empty two horse up as far as hanging the back axle over the edge to get turned around. The road was blocked, but there was a trail headed up the sidehill next to it.

Next morning, I headed up the trail and noted that the Forest Service had constructed a new trail. It was parallel to the original now blocked with logs and brush. Easy going on mostly sandy terrain, and mild weather. I encountered an empty outfitter camp up on the ridge. There were tent frames with moth balls scattered around. Must have had a bear problem. Riding past to the top of the mountain, all that was left of the lookout was cinders and burnt glass. Years later my friend, retired Forest Service Packer, Bill Renolds, told how he and his partner had to demolish it. It was late in the fall, when they blasted it down, and spent the day burning the rubble. Packing out the next morning a winter snowstorm blew up, and trees were falling around them as they rode out.

Consulting my map, I discovered this was actually Picket Mountain. Square top Mountain was a mile further. Once on Square Top I found the signs of a primitive Lookout. There were stone alignments marking the path to the top of the large rock that was the high point. This was chosen initially for a temporary lookout site with a tent. Picket Mountain was a better lookout site after cutting many trees and building a tower. Either way the horse pasture had to have been on Picket Mountain.

In the next few days, I spent time exploring down the grassy side of Picket mountain, then down to a lake on the other side. I followed the trail past the mountains, all with negative results. Wanting to see more country and not backtracking I pulled out my ten-year-old Forest Service map. Halfway down above Horse Creek was a marked camp site, Big Indian. Seemed to be a strange area for a camp in the middle of a side hill, but it must have good grazing.

The trail dropped off starting on a gentle slope. The view toward the bottom was blueish obscure, almost like looking down to a lake. Clouds were building and the slope got a bit steeper with long switchbacks. The further I switched back down the side of the mountain, the further the bottom seemed to get. Light rain started, and in the afternoon, I finally arrived at the campground. According to my map this was only halfway toward the bottom with Horse Creek. Good grass alright, but too steep to place a camp. Riding around I found where some had camped in a nearby timbered draw near a water course. Neither place seemed inviting, so I opted to continue to the bottom.

My thought was to drop down to the trail and head up the Horse Creek to the Gatten Ranch. There must be some way through or around. I envisioned getting back to my rig around dark or latter if all went well. Below Big Indian the trail was not well used. There were more and more switchbacks, and the further I dropped, the shorter and more frequent they were. Across the canyon I now could see the draw of Little Horse Creek and parts of a trail in it. Still the bottom eluded me, and it was always below my field of vision as the slope got

steeper. It dawned on me that Horse creek would be much lower in elevation, that the Montana side.

Finally, I was on very short switchbacks, coming down between two large outcrops, and on slide rock. This had to be the most switchbacks I had ever encountered, more than Switchback Pass in the Bob. There just in sight of the trail along the creek, my trail disappeared. This was old lichen covered slide rock with large rocks, and there was now no trace of a tread. Leaving the horses standing on the end of the trail, I scouted a path down through the slide rock. Several places I filled in holes for safety and it looked just passable. Carefully leading the horses, we negotiated to the bank, where we slid down to the trail.

This does not look good I thought to myself, as I noted berry bushes growing through what was once a hard gravel trail. Leading the horses up the trail, I rounded the rock spur that had been blocking my view, and all hope of getting back that night was shattered. A landslide or flood had left boulders as big as small houses blocking any passage. Turning around I tried going down the river to find large logs blocking the trail. Going down Horse Creek to the Salmon river, would be an extremely long trip. The prospect was much clearing with my small axe, on such an abandoned trail. Closer inspection I located the ford to the Little Horse Creek trail. Not great, bigger rocks in the ford that I would like, but seemed preferable to trying to scramble up the bank and back tracking.

Following that trail it side hilled up into the canyon, with a very steep soft slope two hundred yards above the creek. The point where the trail rounded into the canyon there was a rock outcrop that had been blasted, and the trail passed under it. Further up the canyon the trail came to a slide, which had taken out fifty feet of the trail. Steep chute all the way to the bottom some three hundred yards below. Halfway across was a rock spine where the trail had once crossed. Stunned for a few seconds as the sight sunk in, Twinkle who was following loose, decided to take matters into her own hooves. She dropped off the trail and started across below me. All I could do was throw my reins over the saddle horn and scramble across in time to grab Twinkle's lead rope and help her climb up onto the trail on the other side. Next came Clipper staying higher, stepping over the rock spine, and gaining the trail. A sigh of relief, and a prayer that I would not have to go back.

My next prayer was this trail would go into the canyon bottom, and there would be an area suitable to camp as it was almost dark. That was answered in less than a mile. Not entirely flat, big trees, and the trail switched backed up the steep hill above it. It had been lightly raining, and I was damp. I had not wanted to put on my long duster and my windbreaker had been leaking. With the horses picking, I strung my tent fly up under a tree where it was still dry. Using my axe, I had a fire going to make dinner, and dry out.

Next morning it was a long way up with a lot of switchbacks through the timbered hill side. Near the top I found a box of 30/30 shells. Some hunter had dropped, and they looked to be two years old from the weathering. This would not have been a good place to turn up missing. Up on top I was able to follow a logging road back to a trail that took me back down near the horse camps. Along the way down I found a car gas tank, that had to date to early twenties or late teens. Probably someone had been packing water many years ago and abandoned it. It was good to be back to my rig, even though the outlaw's gold if any was still safe.

A week later I was packing down Spruce Creek towards Youngs Creek when I decided to chop a dead spring pole that stuck out into the trail. The first swing my axe and the head snapped off. I was sure glad it had held up when I needed it.

Don Dodge

Two good Cabin

In July of this year I had the opportunity to go on a back-country adventure with some of the BCH of Missoula leaders. Dan Harper, Ken Brown and Randy Velin headed up this trip, packing in feed for both the stock and the participants the day prior to our arrival. Kara Conley was along for this part of the trip to make sure the guys got the job done right.

Two good Cabin is located in the Bitterroot Mountains about 35 miles south of Hamilton. We met at the trailhead on Friday morning. After loading our gear on the pack animals, we mount-



ed up and headed up the trail. The trail has a gradual incline over the six miles to the cabin.

The scenery is beautiful along the way and you pass a couple of very impressive slide areas.

Once at the cabin we settled in. The "girls" got to sleep in the cabin on bunkbeds while the

guys set up tents outside. Our group included Lana Hamilton, Earl Tidball, Judy Allen, Kirsten Pabst, Ken Brown, Dan Harper, Randy Velin, Kara Conley and me.

We enjoyed fine cuisine at every meal prepared by Dan, Randy and Kara. As the camp rule goes the first in line to eat does the dishes. Kara, who is always hungry learned this rule the hard way. The time spent around the campfire telling stories was very enjoyable. Our sides hurt from laughing as Randy recounted his many adventures of the past.

On Saturday we headed up Porcupine Creek for a day ride. We switched back up the mountain side until we could go no further



due to downed trees on the trail. Along the way we met a few hikers and bikers. Only one was the unsavory type who did not understand the right of way that stock have on the trail. Dan educated him and we all went peacefully on our way.

It was a wonderful trip with many great memories. Earl always had a smile on his face. He and his horse Hank seemed to enjoy the adventure and made a great team. It saddens me that Earl is gone. I pray that as he looks down from Heaven he will be smiling at the adventures of his friends from BCH of Missoula.

Bonnie Doyle





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CHARLES CULVER
President

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 participa-
tion 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.***