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The Feedbag

October 2017

President's Letter:

Howdy all!

Well last winter was long, spring was short, and summer was hot and smoky. Welcome to Montana.

Despite the weather I think we had a good year with supporting our mission. I want to thank some of the people who stepped forward to help accomplish our tasks in the last few months. I know I will miss naming some folks but you are still a great value to us. Richard Tamcke (Trails chairman) Mark Wright (saw training), Mike Moore (rendezvous Chairman), Dan Harper ((trail crew packing), Ken Brown (VP and all around projects coordinator). This year we had trails day at Blue Mountain and cleared from top to the saddle in June. We cleared Monture creek trail to almost Hahn pass. Then we switched up our annual steak ride to a rendezvous, with the public invited for a free barbeque and demonstrations on horse packing, Light on the land, Dutch oven cooking, highline, bear aware and wagon rides. I want to thank all who helped put this on at the Blackfoot/Clearwater game range. It was a fun and informative event for those who helped and attended. Three Missoulia reporters came and did a very good article on our mission and values in the Missoulia and some other publications around the state. Dan provided pack support to trail crews at 2 different locations and is much appreciated by those folks.

In July we also helped with a corral building project at the new National Historical Forest Service Museum out by the airport. Thank you to all that helped with that project. If you are out that way please take time to check it out. Well as fall comes we are trying get back on schedule from being scattered due to recent fires. There is still business to attend to so hopefully we will see you at the meetings to help us shape up next year and make BCH an organization that moves forward building on our mission and goals.

Randy Velin. BCH President



Back Country Horsemen of Missoula

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MEET YOUR BOARD:

LANA HAMILTON (New Member Chairman)

Like many girls growing up, I was horse crazy. The happy part of this story is my Dad's parents were dairy farmers and we had a Welsh pony named Queenie that my sister and I rode every time we visited them.

There have been half a dozen horses in my life and they all were very special to me. It is very hard to pick one over the others as a favorite.

I have been retired for 6 years after working as a Medical Technologist at St. Patrick Hospital for 34 years in the Laboratory. I have a BS in Bacteriology and Public Health from WSU Pullman, WA '63.



EARL TIDBALL (Publicity Chair)

I am a founding member of the Baby Boom Generation, conceived during the war and born just after its conclusion. My first 4 years were spent at various East coast naval installations as a navy brat. I remember ration coupons and going to the base exchange as well as living in a Quonset hut on base.

When my dad left the Navy we spent some time on the family farm; pigs, chickens, milk cows and horses. Our horses were work horses even though tractors were now doing the heavy work, horses still mowed, cultivated and pulled the grain and hay wagons. They still made trips to town when the roads were too bad to get a car thru. I still love the smell of a barn. We left N.D. for California after the winter of 49/50. My love for the Back Country was cultivated in the Boy Scouts there.

My Grandfather encouraged me to become an engineer, at the beginning of my Sr. Year I was drafted into the army during the Vietnam War. I was trained to be an MP given RVN training and all the shots for S.E. Asia. My MP Company went to Vietnam; I however, was assigned to NATO forces in Germany guarding classified weapons installations. After completing my 2 years in the Army I returned to Cal Poly to finish and get my degree a BS in Environmental Engineering. Ronald Regan signed my diploma. I'm now retired but still think like an Engineer.

BCHMT has given me the chance to give back to all of those before me who made it possible for me to enjoy the many memories I've had trekking on so many scenic trails. This is enhanced when you can share it with like-minded folks and a horse.

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Hopeful fishing up in the Southern Lee Metcalf Wilderness Peaks

Well the trip started with great expectations as most backcountry trips do. I had read an article in the Western Horseman magazine by Ryan Bell a couple of years ago. He described a lake high in the Metcalf wilderness that the fishing was out this world and only experienced by a few people each year. The lake until a while back was only accessible to the general public by a difficult 34 mile journey from the south of Lee Metcalf wilderness area. However he was the outfitter for the Sun ranch at that time and they had a private trail from the ranch to the lake a trip of about 6 miles. Yes there was some climb on the trail to it as the lake sits at an elevation of around 9,000 feet. He described Finger Lake as the best one around with the fish just waiting to be caught. He mentioned in the article that owners were going to work with the Forest Service and FWP to allow access across about 1&1/2 mile of their property to give access to the short route.

I started to look into the idea of doing a pack trip into the lake this last summer. I looked at maps of the area and could see the trail cross the corner of the property that connected up with Moose creek which would take you up to the lake.

I pitched this idea to my packing partner Dwayne and my 2 sons and 2 grandsons. We agreed that would be the place to go over a short 3-4 day stay. Since it was looking like once you hit the trail head it would be only about a 2-3 hr. ride in and out so we only needed 4 days for the entire trip including driving time from Missoula.

We took off from Missoula in mid July on a Thursday and met my sons and 2 grandsons at Cardwell and proceeded from there to Ennis. At Ennis we had lunch and then head south the 26 miles to the Sun Ranch access road. This is where our plans went arye. When we got to the ranch there was a huge gate we drove thru and proceeded to follow the Forest service map to our trail destination when we went up the road about 2 miles we were at junction in the road, The map was not definitive on which road to take so Dwayne and I took his truck up to the main ranch "mansion". Really this thing was huge and with about 4 other homes that were obviously for the rich and famous. Well we were there so we



looked around to see if anyone was around. We found a fella cleaning out a small cabin by the barn and corrals. I approached him to see if he could tell us where to go and he did. He pointed out we were on private land and needed to move on and in no uncertain terms. Well me being a little slow in comprehension sometimes I went ahead and inquired about the trail access he replied quite brashly that it was not open the public. So we took the hint and left the area and headed back to Ennis.

However, all is not ended here as Nathan my son, said him and Ryan my other son had explored the Bear creek area a few years back and there was good trail riding around Helmet and Sphinx mountains.

Since the day was getting late we drove up bear creek road and found really nice horse facilities with pens, hitch rails and camping with a creek and even water spigots. So we set up camp there for the night. The next morning after breakfast we decided to do a day ride and headed up the trail to Helmet and Sphinx mountains. What a beautiful trail ride, Wow no burned areas and the trail was well maintained. The view from the top was spectacular in all directions on the pass between Helmet and Sphinx. We spent the afternoon explor-

ing around the mountains before heading back to the trail head, on the way back we stopped at an area of dead downfall and cut wood for our camp plus the pack animals had to do some work so we loaded them down with fire wood. We spent that night as well at the trailhead and next morning we went to the Madison River to try our hand at fishing. By 10:00am the wind had blown us off the river so we grabbed some lunch at a local road side saloon. We then went back to the trail head and decided to ride to Cameron Lake. It looked like a fairly easy afternoon ride of about 6 miles. Again it was really scenic country to ride thru and after about 3 ½ miles we hit some switch backs that followed North Bear creek, after about the 5th switch back we hit a fork in the trail, one kept going up the side of the mountain and the other sided alongside the creek and the sign said Cameron trail so we took it. About a quarter mile up the trail it started to deteriorate and we found a sign that said "closed" because a spring slide had taken out the trail and it does not exit any farther. Bummer this forced us to turn around again and headed back to the trailhead. We reached the trailhead and protection of the horse trailers just minutes before a thunder storm unloosened all its fury of wind, lightening and rain on us for about an hour.

After the main storm had passed we settled into fixing dinner and invited a couple of guys that were camped next to us to have dinner. They had been backpacking in the area and really enjoyed a good meal of meat and potatoes and a warm dry campfire. They were from Canada and we had a really good time talking with them about experiences on both sides of the border. We enjoyed their company and as we turned in for the night we said our goodbyes as we were leaving the next day to head home.

All in all it was great trip despite a few setbacks. Always good to see new country, ride new trails and meet new friends.

(At Ennis we found out that the Sun Ranch changed ownership and the access was not approved.)

Hope to see you on the trail someday! **Randy Velin**

It's Not Usually This Way

It's not usually this way, Dean, I gushed as I looked at the wreck, broken quarter straps, torn up top pack and gear pounded into the gravel. The mule got to his feet standing there quivering.

For Dean this was the first trip with our crew: Don, Jaye, Mike and me. The four of us had many trips with many miles in the wilderness. I could not remember any wrecks like this one. Indeed we often never even had to stop to adjust a load. For this trip Mike had a beautiful new riding mule. The mule had tolerated the pack saddle and load at home so it was concluded that he had packed before. This apparently was a poor assumption. Don was mounted on his mule, Duke. This was his last pack trip before succumbing to cancer. Jaye had a new lead horse and two mules that he worked with on his ranch. We intended to show Dean how to do this packing, camping, and fishing thing the "right way".

The first blow up happened before we got out of the Indian Meadows trailhead parking lot. After patching the saddle up and reloading the gear and food we immediately found trouble. As Jaye started across the low bridge heading out of the trailhead his lead mule balked and then firmly committed to no way am I going to cross that bridge. That caused Jaye's lead horse to fall back off the bridge with Jaye landing in the mud. There was no laughter as Jaye struggled up. "Is not usually this way, Dean", I exclaimed reassuringly.

Jaye is a rancher and ranchers are known to have lots of common sense. He decided to go back to the ranch with his horse and lead mule. He left behind his second mule loaded with the kitchen and food for us. The rest of us decided to forge on thinking of the good camping, good fishing and cold beer ahead.

We ambled up the trail with Mike leading his new mule and the old reliable mule hitched behind. There we were a real outfit kicking up the dust as we headed into the Scapegoat Wilderness. The peaceful ride didn't last long. Mike's new mule jerked free taking the mule behind with him. Around the corner they went, still strung together, ahead of us all at a flat out gallop. I was riding drag pulling three mules when I came around the bend and spotted mustard splattered on the trail followed by assorted food and gear scattered about. The unfortunate older couple leading a pack course didn't have a chance to see the wreck coming. They encountered the two loose mules still hitched together coming at a full gallop. One mule went on one side of the couple's pack horse and of course the other mule went to the other side. The packs were raked off before the astounded pack course could move. My gosh, Dean, it usually isn't this way.

We soon had the pack horse quieted and his loads back on the pack saddle. The old couple still stunned into silence and went on their way toward the trailhead without even asking for a phone number or proof of insurance. It's a matter of conjecture whether they ever ventured into the wilderness again.

Meanwhile back on the trail the two mules still pigtailed together were tearing up turf. When the trail split, Dean, Don, and I went one way while Mike took the other trail hoping to locate his mules. Mike probably correctly assumed he'd find his packs and gear on the trail before he found his mules. We were a somber bunch when we arrived at camp and started to wait for Mike. The horses let us know that he was arriving. Mike's euphoria over finding his mules with their loads intact was short lived as he saw our sober countenance. Dean, the lawyer, did mention that for a while he thought Mike would likely need his professional assistance.

As we dropped the loads, placed the high lines and started to take care of the stock I mentioned to Dean, many times, "it usually isn't this way". Well as we assessed our situation life started to look better. There was no Life Flight ambulance and no injured stock. The gear was repairable and beer was cold. Life was good. We were lucky.

After a good night's rest the three of us headed out to fish. What a day in the sunshine. We all caught fish and Don landed his last trout. Dean enticed and netted an exceptionally large trout on a small fly. I muttered under my breath, and "it usually isn't this way, Dean"

Dan Harper

2017 Burnt Cabin Trail Clearing Project

It has been a few years since I have been on a trip into the back country with Back Country Horsemen, and I have missed it tremendously. We were allowed to use chainsaws because we were outside wilderness boundaries. I was not certified to use the chainsaw, but had taken the horse safety class and first aid. I offered to be the cook and I knew how to help with horses. Richard our trail work "boss" took me up on the offer.

Our team included Richard, Adam, Randy, Dwayne and me. All preparations at the trail head at Montour Ranger station went well. To my surprise the soft sided cooler I had brought the food in fir in the pannier very well. As we started down the trail there was the usual changing of positions till we found the best positions for quiet travel with group of horses. We made good time the first half of the trip due to work the Fishers and company had done clearing the trail last year and earlier this year. The blow downs we encountered after that were this years' work of wind.

I was pleased with my horse; I should say Janet Rose's horse. She covered new obstacles and territory confidently. She is a good trail horse and responds well to the rider.



We were fortunate that Richard could lead this trip, but because of some medical issues he couldn't operate the chainsaw. Randy and Adam fulfilled that role and Dwayne was a good buckner. They worked hard. We encountered enough down fall that it became easier for them to walk between blow downs than to remount their horses. I led Dwayne's horses and Randy's were between myself and Richard's. We progressed down the trail blow down by blow down.

Our arrival at the cabin was timely. The horses were unloaded and all materials were undercover when the sky opened in a downpour. While some cared for the horses, I started dinner and Adam started the cabin cleanup from the previous mouse visitors. We had a warm meal and lots of stories before crawling into our bags for the night. One of the things I enjoy most about these trips is the camaraderie that develops.

After breakfast, the next morning we were on the trail clearing duty again. There were so many trees down it reminded me of a giant's version of the kid's game pick up sticks. Those of us not running a chainsaw were busy with hand saws cutting branches or small stuff and helping pull logs off the trail. I don't remember how far we went but it was a full day and counting both days at least 80 trees were removed from the trail.

I wanted to use the oven in the cabin stove for our dinner that evening but was unsure how to light it safely. Randy came to the rescue. He did more than the simply lighting the stove. It was quite dirty and upon removing parts to be cleaned he made a discovery of the remnants of one of those visitors I mentioned earlier. I cringe to think what our dinner would have been like if that discovery had not occurred.

It was a good successful trip. It is a wonderful way to be involved in our club. There are more stories to be shared, but not all the details can be put in one article. Look for your opportunities to either be part of a story or to hear one from other.

Barbara Parker



Rendezvous Reflections

Since our family became members of BCH of Missoula just this year, it has been our pleasure to meet a lot of great people. One of the highlight events that I looked forward to attending was the Rendezvous at the Blackfoot-Clearwater Game Range in June. This was our first time to take our horses on an overnight trip. We went on a couple of great rides through the game range on Saturday and Sunday, and there is no better way to experience the beauty of the land. Saturday was filled with activities and demonstrations that were educational and very interesting. We gained much knowledge of both the backcountry and packing. The Big Sky Clydesdales, along with their owners, took us on a wagon ride. That experience brought back wonderful childhood memories of riding with my Dad and Grandpa and their teams and wagons. The rendezvous was a great family experience and we look forward to more trips with our horses in the years to come. **Bonnie Doyle**

The Blackfoot-Clearwater Game Range rendezvous was our first camping trip of the summer, and our first time ever camping with our horses. We came home with many great memories. The sunrises and sunsets were beautiful. The food was great and breakfast never tasted so good after sleeping on the ground in a tent. We really enjoyed the evening conversations around the campfire. We both love music, and we had fun as we sang around the campfire to the tune of the guitar and ukulele. Saturday evening, we got to go on a trail ride through the old cattle ranch. The cattle acted like they had never seen a horse before, and they stampeded across a metal bridge causing quite a racket. The only thing we wish we could have left behind that weekend were the sunburns that we both took home. We look forward to more camping trips and trail rides with our horses in the years to come. **Baylee and Bethany Doyle**



Rattlesnake Equestrian Trailhead Cleanup

On August 19th Back Country Horsemen of Missoula (BCHM) members Mike and Nancy Chandler, Lee Crawford, Kristy Rothe, Adam Davis, Dean Hoistad, Richard Tamcke, Barb Parker and Ken Brown met with Forest Service Bike Ranger, Melanie Hogsgood at the Rattlesnake Equestrian Trailhead to pull noxious weeds. About 5 hours later and about 25 large bags of weeds were collected between the trailhead and the equestrian bridge. This is the third year BCHM has pulled weeds on this official adopted trail. There has been a noticeable decrease in weeds in the trailhead. The lower portion of the trail to the bridge has a large amount of acreage with weeds. The Forest Service did spray this year so we will have to see what the progress will be there next year.

Ken Brown



Destination California

For a spring or fall getaway try Joshua Tree National Park and Pioneertown in California. We visited the area last March and had a grand time riding among Joshua trees, fantastic boulder formations, scenic canyons, and hills with vistas that stretch 50 miles out into the desert. There are two horse camps in Joshua Tree: Black Rock and Ryan. Nice trails extend from both horse camps. About 10 miles north across the valley is Pioneertown. This was established in the 1940's by a group from Hollywood for a place to film westerns. Over 200 movies and shows have been filmed there. You can stay with your horses immediately adjacent to the town in the Pioneertown Corrals. Ride up main street just like in the west and head out into a preserve where you can ride two different scenic loops up through boulder formations. Top the evening off with steaks barbecued over local mesquite wood at Pappy and Harriet's Saloon in Pioneertown. **Kent Krone**



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Back Country Horsemen of Missoula

~Mission Statement~

1. To perpetuate the common sense use and enjoyment of horses in America's back country and wilderness.
2. To work to ensure that public lands remain open to recreation and stock use.
3. To assist the various agencies responsible for the maintenance and management of public lands.
4. 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.
5. To foster and encourage formation of new Back Country Horsemen organizations.



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