



# The Feedbag

March 2024

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### Website:

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

### Facebook:

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

### Address:

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P.O. Box 2121  
Missoula, MT 59806

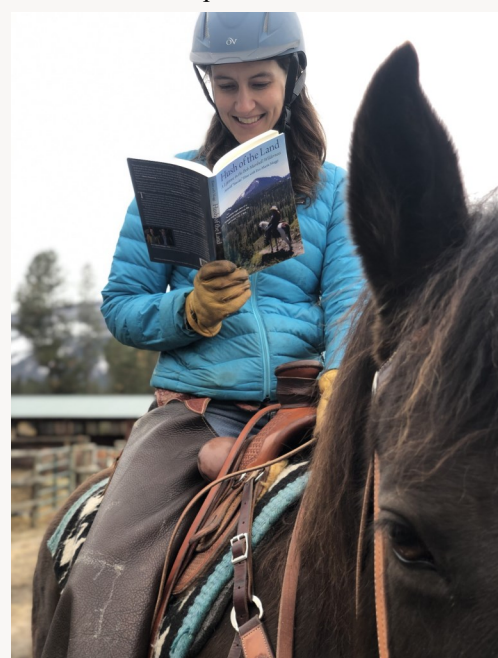
Volunteer Organization, 501c3

*Dear Missoula BCH members,*

Fifty years of Back Country Horsemen of Missoula! Congratulations to us, the members, what an accomplishment. When Smoke Elser and Mike Chandler founded our chapter in 1974, it was an exciting year. The Watergate scandal rattled the nation. West Germany hosted and won the FIFA soccer world cup. The Endangered Species Act was written into law, and the Wilderness Act turned 10. In the past 60 years, 118 million acres of wild places were protected for people and wildlife. Without the 1964 Wilderness Act, the Back Country Horsemen organization would probably not exist today.

Since 1974, Missoula has changed a lot. The average population pretty much doubled from a little over 60,000 in 1974 to 122,000 in 2022. Back then a single-family house cost around \$26,000 with an average family income of \$8,300. The University of Montana and the wood product industry were the largest employer in the county. When I asked Smoke the other day if he had ever seen that many days of fog in town like this spring, he said, yes, but it was the exhaust from the paper mill! Today, a single-family home in Missoula is a luxury, and even more so one with a pasture. In 1974, an average, good horse cost, \$150. Has anybody seen an ad with that price lately? In times like ours, a community like the Back Country Horsemen is more important than ever. If we don't show up to give equine trail use in Missoula and beyond a voice, no one will. So, let's go to that community meeting, attend one of our training clinics and learn how to make your horse or mule a safer trail partner. Go clear that trail, take a pack trip, but most importantly, bring your friends, kids, and grandkids along so Back Country Horsemen can keep going for the next 50 years!

*My best, Eva*



## BCH of Missoula Officers, Board and Committees

### Officers

Eva-Maria Maggi	President	406-531-6037
Ken Brown	Vice President	406-370-7374
Carey Powers	Secretary	434-989-8018
Jane Kelly	Treasurer	406-370-4363
Dan Harper	Past President	406-544-7296

### Board of Directors

*Second year: Mike Chandler, Taylor Orr*

*First year: Alex Drayton, Eric Skelton, Sydney Young*

### State Directors

Judy Allen	406-274-2339
Gary Salisbury	406-529-7242
Smoke Elser (Alternate)	406-549-2820

### Committee Chairs

Issues:	Mike Chandler/Ken Brown
Social Chair:	Volunteer needed
Membership Chair:	Judy Allen
Electronic Media Coordinators:	Robert Braun Carey Powers
Feedbag Editor:	Bonnie Doyle
Assistant Editors:	Dan Harper Sydney Young

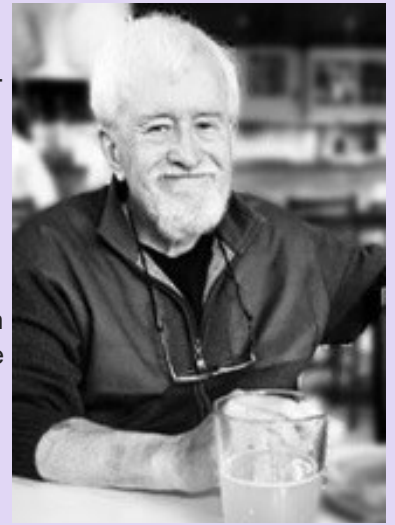
Philip (Phil) Thompson Bain, 80, of Missoula, Montana, left the trailhead for the last time from his home on Tuesday, September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

Phil was a many facette guy. For 31 years he was the Registrar at the University of Montana.

He was one of the original wood carvers on the Missoula Carousel. Phil helped carve, American Beauty, one of his favorites. He also worked on Red Ribbons, Horse Pal, and Trapper. He also collaborated on the carving of the US Forest Ranger for the Missoula International Airport, and he created and carved the bench seat that sits near Brendan's wave at Caras Park on the Clark Fork River.

Back Country Horseman became a passion for Phil. He took Smoke Elser's packing course learning about Decker saddles, canvas manties, the basket and barrel hitches, but unfortunately, on pack trips he used panniers and a top pack. Phil and his wife, Marleen and his friends Ron and Karen Hoff and Don Faldrof found themselves

on week-long pack trips in the Bob Marshall or Rattlesnake Wildernesses. Phil had many horses over the years that he named, including: Brownie, Blackie and Bingo. He was also a past President of the Back Country Horsemen of Missoula. He was the voice of reason and will be missed.



## **Back Country Horsemen of Missoula**

### *Purpose Statement*

- To perpetuate the common sense use and enjoyment of horses in America's back country, roadless back-country and wilderness areas.
- To work to ensure that public lands remain open to recreational stock use.
- To assist the various government and private agencies in their maintenance and management of said resource.
- To educate, encourage and solicit active participation by the general public in the wise and sustaining use of the back country resource by horses and people commensurate with our heritage.
- To foster and encourage the formation of new state back country horsemen organizations.
- To seek out opportunities to enhance existing areas of recreation for stock users.

**BCH MISSOULA SCHEDULE OF EVENTS:**  
**MARCH 20-SEPTEMBER 30,2024**

**March**

- Saddle Cleaning, March 16, 10:00 am-2:00 pm at Fish Wildlife and Parks Meeting Room (FWP). Contact Gary Salisbury 406-529-7242
- March 20, Membership meeting, FWP Meeting Room. 6:30 pm. Dr. Stierms DVM will discuss equine emergencies occurring on the trail.

**APRIL**

- April 2, 12:00-10:00; Mules on the Oval, at University of Montana. Tabling and Manure patrol.
- April 17, 6:30 PM membership meeting at FWP. Judson Corn MD will discuss Backcountry emergencies.
- April 20, 9:30 AM to 4 PM. Defensive Horse Safety Certification course. People recertifying will be excused at 1 PM. Those certified for the first time will need to bring a lunch. All participants are encouraged to bring a camp chair. Dress accordingly for the weather for outside activities. The event will be held at the Harper barn. Contact Dan Harper at 406-544-7296. for information and to sign up.
- April 27, 10:00 -4:00 at Basham's arena. There will be a pot luck luncheon. Gary Salisbury will present a trail riding clinic and discuss saddle fitting. Chris Basham will give a presentation on equine chiropractic. Participants may bring a horse if they choose to participate in a trail ride after the clinic. Contact Gary at 406-529-7242.

**May**

- May 2, 6:00-7:30 pm at the Big Sky Horse Park. Gary Salisbury will lead a trail ride through the park. Be ready to ride at 6 PM sharp. Contact Gary Salisbury or Dan Harper.
- May 15, membership meeting at FWP meeting room at 6:30. Mark Wright will present information on the Burnt Cabin project.
- May 19, the yearly Flower Ride leaving from the Harper barn at 10:00 to return about 3:00. Bring a saddle bag lunch. Contact Dan to sign up. Trailer parking is limited.

*During May the shorter notice trail rides in and around Missoula will start. Participants will receive a text message with information about each ride several days in advance. The participants can choose which rides they want to go on. The rides will generally be limited to 6 to 8 participants. To sign up to receive text messages about each ride contact Ken Brown at [kenbrown1042@gmail.com](mailto:kenbrown1042@gmail.com) or 406-370-7374*

**June**

- June 1, National trail Days at Blue Mountain. The BCHM will do maintenance on horse trails. Contact Ken Brown, 406-370-7374
- June 19-20 clear and Mark trails at the Blackfoot Game Range in preparation for the BCH Montana Rendezvous at the Blackfoot Game Range. Contact Ken Brown.
- June 21-23. The **BCH Montana Rendezvous** will be held at the Blackfoot Game Range. It will be a camp and ride opportunity. A barbecue dinner will be offered on the 22nd. Many hands will be needed to bring this program to fruition. More information will follow via email. Contact Ken Brown.
- June 26-30. Mark Wright will lead a pack trip to Burnt Cabin. Pack stock will be provided allowing those with a single horse to participate. The purpose of the trip is to apply stain to the cabin. The cabin is beautifully located and is about 8 miles from the Monture trailhead. Contact Mark Wright 406-531-2455

**July**

- On July 26 the BCHM will pack in a trail crew from the Indian Meadows Trailhead in the Scapegoat Wilderness north east of Lincoln for the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation. Pack out will be on July 31. Ken, Dan and Taylor Orr will be at the Indian Meadows trailhead ready to do trail rides. Anyone who would like to come and do a day ride or stay for a couple of days are welcome. Contact Dan or Ken.

**August**

- On August 14 the BCHM will pack in a weed treatment crew for the Great Burn Conservation Alliance and the pack out will be on August 17. We will be working out of the North Fork Fish Creek Trailhead. We will be packing a crew about 5 miles into Straight Creek. Any BCHM member will be able to participate in either the pack in or the pack out. In addition, day rides will be available on the 15th and 16th. The North Fork Campground is well equipped for horses. There are corrals, water, outhouse, and campsites. Contact Dan or Ken. This is an excellent opportunity for members to participate in a pack in or pack out or to participate in day rides.
- August 25-29 are the dates for the Issues Committee scoping pack trip into the West Pioneer Wilderness Study area. Taylor Orr will be leading the trip into the area where we are involved with a lawsuit against the inappropriate placement of a repeater station on the top of Odell mountain. Contact Ken Brown.

**September**

- September 12-15. The BCHM will again be packing out of the North Fork of the Fish Creek Campground to support a trail crew for the Great Burn Conservation Alliance. The pack in on the 12th will be a short 3 mile trip on the West Fork of Fish Creek. Any horse person interested in the pack in or pack out would be welcome to participate. In addition day rides from the campground will be available on September 13 and 14. To participate contact Dan for Ken.
- September 18. The Membership meeting will be held at Smoke Elser's barn. The ice cream social will start at 6 PM and will be followed by a horse and packing trivia program.

*Please understand that unanticipated events, such as drought, fires, and other unforeseen events may necessitate changes in the schedule of events. Be sure to check with the contact person before participating in an event.*

**Smoke Elser** will be offering three two day ***Packing Skills Clinics***.

- May 18-19
  - May 25-26
  - August 31-September 1
- Contact Smoke at 406-549-2820

**Missoula BCH 50th  
Anniversary Celebration**

On February 24<sup>th</sup> about 100 people, young and old, both former and current members, joined the Missoula Back Country Horsemen for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration. This year's event occurred at the Fairgrounds in the Floriculture Building, allowing ample space for our potluck, auction, and live music! There was also a slideshow of past events that Missoula BCH has organized over the past five decades.

Good food was had, conversation was plentiful, and it was good to see new and familiar faces. I think we had more food than we could eat, so thank you to all the folks who contributed to our potluck!

The highlight of the night was a conversation with Missoula BCH president Eva Marie Maggi, and founding club members Smoke and Thelma Elser, and Mike and Nancy Chandler. It was amusing to hear about Smoke buying horses for \$150 and Thelma telling stories about Smoke stealing her best horses!

The live auction included a trailer maintenance package from Sport Land Trailers and two beautiful paintings, one done by our very own Marge Harper! Silent auction items included a gift basket from Tractor Supply, gift cards to Murdoch's, and art and tack donations from several members.

New merchandise was also available for purchase - including beanies, ball caps, and special edition 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary steel cups! Merchandise will continue to be available at our membership meetings, inventory permitting!

Thank you to all those who contributed food, silent auction items, and time to make the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration such a success. We look forward to seeing you on the trail this summer!

***Sydney Young***

**HUSH OF THE LAND**

***A LIFETIME IN THE BOB MARSHALL WILDERNESS***

Arnold "Smoke" Elser with Eva-Maria Maggi (University of Nebraska Press/Bison Books)

Smoke Elser, outfitter, packer and educator well known throughout the North West has shared the extraordinary adventures of his 57 years in the Bob Marshall Wilderness in the "Hush Of The Land". His stories of a lifetime of outfitting, packing and teaching, have been chronicled by Eva-Maria Maggi, PhD who is a social scientist and skilled packer. She teaches a Wilderness Issues course at the University of Montana which includes an optional Wilderness pack trip. Her labor of love was spending over 800 hours listening to Smoke relay his experiences and adventures. Each chapter relates a new story, but all share a magnificent respect for Wilderness, people, and horses, and mules. The names and characteristics of places, people, and livestock intertwine with the development of events explored in each chapter.

Smoke's "light touch" on the land has influenced a profound improvement in the way Wilderness visitors impact the landscape. One of Smoke's guests, Bill Allen, the president of Boeing Aircraft Company, told Smoke about the new Gore-Tex fabric used to line airplanes. Mr. Allen subsequently sent Smoke a big roll of green Gore-Tex fabric which Smoke sewed into lightweight tents for his guests. In his classes, he taught the use of highlines for securing stock rather than tying to trees. Campfires were to be built on reflective old fire shelters rather than bare ground, leaving no trace for the next camper.

For the many hundreds of people who have been influenced by his packing classes, seminars, and outfitted pack trips into the Bob Marshall Wilderness, the book will be exhilarating. Those folks who have not traveled Wilderness trails will be vividly entertained and may will be stimulated to visit the wilderness. Some will want to learn new mule packing skills. The reader absorbs his stalwart advocacy for "the hush of the land", indeed the magic of the land, as the events from the Wilderness unfold.

***Dan Harper, MD***

## **Trail Etiquette**

*by Gary Salisbury*

1. Be aware of what is going on around you.
2. Stop when others stop.
3. Don't ride too close to the horse ahead of you – two to five horse lengths between you and the horse in front of you.
4. Don't trot up on the horse ahead of you.
5. Stay on the trail to reduce impact on the environment.

### **Things to teach you horse before going on a trail ride**

- Teach your horse to walk instead of trotting.
- Teach your horse to stand with hobbles or with a lead rope tied to a front foot.
- Teach your horse to accept ropes around his feet and under his tail.
- Lead another horse from your horse – you never know when you might have to help out.
- If you are going to use a breeching or crupper on a trip, use it at home first.
- Cross water calmly and without jumping.
- Cross bridges at the same speed of travel as the other animals.
- Cross bogs without lunging or jumping.
- Ride alone at times, this allows your horse to be independent, not herd bound.
- Teach your horse to accept a rain slicker.
- Teach your horse not to be afraid of overhead branches.

***Refer to the Back Country Horsemen Mountain Manner Handbook***



## The Nez Perce Clearwater Revision

by Ken Brown

This year is the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of BCHM. During this time BCHM has made several day and pack trips into the Great Burn. A couple members and I rode from Hoodoo Pass to Lolo Pass across several days. A few decades ago, our club took an official Issues Committee pack trip from Clearwater Crossing to Goose Lake, to Fish Lake and back along the West Fork to see for ourselves what the country looked like. BCHM has found the Great Burn proposed Wilderness Area to be a prime example of what Wilderness should be. We have seen the mountain goats on the State Line Trail, a cow moose and calf in Goose Lake and Siamese Lakes, and numerous elk and deer. The quality of water in this area is pristine.

We also know the Great Burn is home to the endangered lynx and wolverines, with range for wolves and grizzly bears. This area is seen to be an important corridor for animals, especially the grizzly bear. Snowmobiles will stress mountain goats, lynx, and wolverines during the critical winter months when they are struggling for food sources and maintaining their body weight.

The trails in the Great Burn, especially the State Line Trail, are more challenging than other areas BCHM has ridden, including: the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex, Pintler Wilderness, Bitterroot Wilderness, Rattlesnake Wilderness, Teton Wilderness, Wind River Wilderness, Sapphire Wilderness Study Area (WSA), Blue Joint (WSA), East Pioneer (WSA), the Badger Two Medicine and the trails in Glacier Park from West Glacier to Essex. For example, the trail section from Goose Lake to Fish Lake has several steep pitches with drop offs being several hundred feet. To allow mountain bikes, that move fast and quietly, would present a major safety hazard for stock users and hikers, which would include Forest Service employees.

Most importantly, allowing snowmobiles, having motors, and mountain bikes, being mechanized, would make the Great Burn ineligible for the Wilderness status it deserves. To me the Great Burn is close a comparison to the Glacier National Park. Snowmobiles and bikes are not allowed on the main trails in Glacier, nor should they be in the Great Burn. There are lots of lands presently available for snowmobiles and mountain bikes, just not in the Great Burn.

## Me and Bigfoot

by Mr. Sass Quatch, Esq. (aka Taylor Orr)

I come into this world a born skeptic and was raised thusly so. My daddy told me don't never believe nothin' without some science to back it up. He would say the proof is in the pudding. I've lived my entire adult life following his advice until one day several years ago. It was deep into fall when I was ridin' up Gold Creek Ridge in the Sapphire Mountains and I saw me a Bigfoot. Laugh if you want but I seen it for sure. I used to snicker at the folks tryin' to persuade people that Bigfoot exists, but they didn't have nothin' but blurry photographs, fake footprints, and phony DNA samples. And I poked fun at the attendees of the Big Sky Bigfoot Conference held in Hamilton, Montana a few years back. Now, I'm ashamed of my behavior and want to repent. Anyways, it was long around mid-day as I was riding up the Gold Creek Ridge that I come across an awful stench in the air and commenced to looking around to see what it was. And there, just 100 feet or so ahead of me I seen it. Sure as shootin' – a Bigfoot. A little scrawnier than I had imagined but a sure enough Sas-

quatch. The beast didn't seem to mean me no harm so I followed it for a bit, then held up, and it vanished into the forest. But don't take my word for it cuz I got a picture to prove it, and not the grainy, fuzzy kind. You must look close but it is a bonafide photo of a dang sure-enough Bigfoot. Maybe this ain't science but it's not no alternative fact neither.

I don't mean no disrespect, but if I haven't convinced you non-believers you need to trailer up the Burnt Fork to Gold Creek Trail-head, get on your high horse and go see for yourself. I reckon.



## **BECOMING A MULE MAN**

My wife, Marjorie, and I returned to Montana with two horses in tow. After getting settled in our new location, a colleague suggested that I should take Smoke Elser's packing course, offered each winter. Marjorie, the owner of the two Arabian horses, reluctantly agreed to attend the packing clinic sessions with me. She was soon mesmerized by Smoke's knowledge of packing skills, his teaching skills and his stories of horse and mule adventures in the Wilderness. Soon enough, she and Smoke were great friends.

The English Arab mare had become the horse of Marjorie's life. Both were involved in the local Arab Horse Society. With this in mind, I looked for a time when her defenses might be down and asked, "could we breed your beautiful mare to a jack?" Expecting a hysterical "no" or even a slap in the face, I was astonished when she concluded that breeding to a mammoth jack might be worth considering. It's suddenly became clear to me that Smoke's class, had clearly affected her mental processes. The mare was bred to a champion mammoth jack, and that is how we acquired "Ahab The Brayrab". Oh joy I was on the way to becoming a mule man.

Following a "WHAT!!! YOU BRED YOUR ABAWU FARWA GRAND DAUGHTER TO A DONKEY!" Marjorie was excommunicated from the local Arab Horse Society. The sting didn't last long. We were soon plenty busy raising and training Ahab. As a yearling, he taught me some lessons about the mule mind that Smoke forgot to mention in his classes. After Ahab kicked out a time or two, I tied him to a tree, teased him with a whip on his



rump to induce kicking, followed by a swift lash. After two taps he refused to lift his feet. However, when I released him, he went right over to the tree and gave it a good kick.

When he was a three year old, we were incredibly fortunate to join an extraordinary



Smoke Elser Wilderness pack trip. The guest included three university professors and the President of the Wilderness Society. I rode Ahab and Marj was on her Arab Mare. Of course Ahab and I received more complements (comments?) than the lady and her mare. That's just the way it is when you are a mule man. Our minds were overloaded with packing techniques, flower identification, incredible scenery and love of the Wilderness. Smoke was the cook and made it clear that the guests were to stay out of the kitchen. Everyone tanked up on the delicious camp food the first two days thinking it could not last but it did. We had four incredible wilderness campsites ending at Half Moon Park below the towering cliffs of Scapegoat Mountain. Smoke's, charming stories, still reverberate in our minds. When asked about the possibility of wildlife in a nearby cave, he responded "oh sure. I went up there and found lots of Charmin".

The pack classes were held in Smoke's old stone barn, sitting at the base of a mountain next to the livestock pens. The barn became, in essence, a community center for many civic groups. Smoke and Marj worked together laying the foundation for the Missoula Equestrian Park now a source of pride for the horse community. Smoke has been honored many times over for his commitment to conservation and Wilderness and his many civic contributions. He has been inducted into the Montana Cowboy Hall of Fame and received the 2022 Distinguished Alumni Award from the University of Montana. Marj became a serious dressage competitor and continued to follow me down the trail. As for me, I'm still trying to understand mules.

***Dan Harper***  
***Missoula, Montana***

**BACK COUNTRY HORSEMEN OF MISSOULA**

**P. O. Box 2121 Missoula, MT 59806**

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION 2024**

**NAME(S):** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Street**

**City**

**State**

**Zip**

**PHONE #:** \_\_\_\_\_ **EMAIL:** \_\_\_\_\_

**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\*\***

**MEMBERSHIP DUES**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Family: \$45/year**                      **New Member** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ **Individual: \$30/year**                      **Renewal** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ **Secondary Membership: \$15/year**

The membership list will be distributed to the members to be used only for legitimate BCH Missoula business. You may choose to opt out by place a check next the following options:

**opt out of email sharing** \_\_\_\_\_                      **opt out phone number sharing** \_\_\_\_\_

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

**COMMUNICATIONS**

The Feedbag (quarterly club newsletter)? **EMAIL** \_\_\_\_\_ **MAIL** \_\_\_\_\_

Occasional notices of meetings, rides, and special events? **EMAIL** \_\_\_\_\_ **CALL** \_\_\_\_\_

State BCH Newsletter? **EMAIL** \_\_\_\_\_ **MAIL** \_\_\_\_\_

**Print Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **\*\*Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_