This will be my last message in our newsletter to BCH members. I first would like to thank all the officers and the committee chairmen of the state board for their efforts, time, and service dedicated to the BCH organization, and to all other BCH members who have given their time and dedication in making the past two years as effective as they have been. I feel we have achieved with success many projects and dealt with many noteworthy issues for the benefit and future of BCH.

As many of you know, one of my main goals during the past two years has been to promote and enhance the image of BCH as to who we are and for what we stand. The DVD - "What We Stand For" - is finalized and has accomplished that goal. The DVD has already been distributed to all of our Montana congressional delegation, many local officials, Forest Service, BLM, as well as BCH chapters in other states, along with trail advocacy groups in the US. Again, Bonnie and Scott Kiser deserve a great "thank you" in appreciation for all their time and devotion in putting this DVD together, and to all the members who have submitted photographs for its use. Many press releases were sent out to various newspapers throughout the state during the past year. One other highlight to keep your eyes on is Public TV, in three areas of the state, is going to show our DVD throughout the year. One is Helena Civic Television (HCTV), channel 11; the second is Missoula Community Access Television (MCAT); and the third is Billings Community Cable Corporation, Community Seven, which will view on Channel 8. Hopefully, we should get a lot of exposure to the general public through this televised BCH DVD.

I can't begin to list all our past projects and accomplishments but do want to thank all who contributed and assisted in those projects.

Recently, BCH had a very productive meeting with Region 1 FS, along with a representative from the Smoke Jumpers in Missoula. This very important yearly meeting with the

Chairman, continued on Page 2
Chairman, continued from page 1

FS produces a good rapport between both parties in discussing important issues valuable to all concerned. One of the more significant issues discussed was the volunteer agreement versus cost share when doing FS projects. There are three districts (Superior, Seeley Lake, Missoula) which, in the past, have followed the cost share program. All other districts and chapters have been following the volunteer agreement plan. The FS said they will recognize either one of these programs when a chapter is doing trail projects. Presently, a plan is being constructed to incorporate these two programs into one. It is not known when this will become effective.

It has been frustrating lately with the FS budget and the monies that are supposed to be appropriated for trails. The FS budget is calculated on the national level, and then it is divided into the different regions and districts throughout the US. What monies the FS in Region 1 receives seem to be lost or transferred in the books. In fact, many of these dollars may never reach Region 1 because of the lack of population in Montana.

In regards to chain saw and cross cut saw certification, the FS is offering a conference which will also include First Aid certification from April 22-24. The course is being held at the Doubletree Hotel in Missoula. There are only 12 openings available for BCH. If interested, members need to contact Mike McVeigh at the Region 1 office in Missoula. Also, there is crossover recognition of chain saw certification between agencies such as BLM and FS.

The Defensive Horse Safety course will have available from the FS a booklet and video for teaching the basic requirements. Our program seems to be successful in that BCH has had no accidents in the past year.

Project reports from individual chapters should have been in to Chuck Miller by now for our end of the year status. I am pleased with our two new chapters and their volunteerism and efforts which they have accomplished in a short time.

One last item, I hope to see most of you at the state convention in Great Falls March 28-30. The Charlie Russell chapter is putting together a fine meeting with great prizes for the raffle drawing.

Again, I wish to thank everyone who has supported and assisted me in my tenure as chairman.

Ron Stuber

Correction

In the October 2007 edition I inadvertently made an error in the last paragraph of the “Boy Scouts of America Camporee” article. It should have read:

The BCH Master LNT trainers that took part were David Crawford from Mission Valley, Harry Boughton from Charlie Russell, Smoke Elser from Missoula, June Burgau from Flathead, John Chepulis, Paul Roccuforte & Ernie Strum from Beartooth.

I apologize for any problems this may have caused.

The River Honoring
May 7-9, 2007
Submitted by: Bonnie Kiser
Mission Valley BCH

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes hosted the 21st Annual River Honoring May 7th through the 9th. The River Honoring is a collaborative outdoor educational event sponsored by the Natural Resources Department, Tribal Education Department, Kicking Horse Job Corps Center, Salish-Pend d’ Orelle Culture Committee, Salish Kootenai College and other Tribal and community programs.

Thousands of students from all across the Reservation have attended this outdoor educational event in the past and more than 800 students attended this year. The River Honoring site is located along the Lower Flathead River where Crow Creek enters the Flathead River near Moiese.

The primary goal of the River Honoring is to increase public awareness and community involvement in the maintenance and preservation of the Lower Flathead River corridor. It combines resource specialists, concerned members of the public, and area 4th and 5th grade school children in educational programs and activities demonstrating how everyday choices affect the river and its ecosystem.

A community event on the first day of the River Honoring began with the naming of the 2007 River Honorees. Two elders and two educators are generally recognized for their contributions to maintaining the values and understanding of the Lower Flathead River Corridor. This year Honorees were; Matt Michel, Niarada, Clara Bourdon, St. Ignatius, Johnny Arlee, Arlee and Barney Finley, Ronan. A catered barbeque followed.

The next two days were filled with resource specialists and educators introducing topics such as water quality, forestry, fire, wildlife, fisheries, and other resource management issues to students. These short presentations educate the students and public on the role the Tribes are taking to preserve the river while also informing students and the public on what can be done to reduce impacts to the ecosystem.

The above article and more information can be found at www.cskt.org.

For the first time in our chapter’s history, we were invited to participate in this 21st Annual River Honoring event. It was a terrific opportunity to work in co-operation with the CS&K Tribes towards the common goal of educating the next generation of back country enthusiasts.

Dave Crawford, Scott Kiser and Connie Plaisay presented an overlook of what Leave No Trace camping can look like. The students and teachers alike were very impressed and had lots of questions. The event was a perfect opportunity to promote what BCH is all about.

The event was a success and we have been invited back to represent Back Country Horsemen at the 2008 River Honoring.
One-horse packing

By: Rick Sherman
Missoula BCH
Reprint from “The Feedbag”, December 2007

For the last several years I have been trying to put together a lead horse pack-horse team. Every time I get close something happens to one of the horses to set the process back. About three years back, I worked my Arab and my daughters’ horse together for the spring and early summer to get them accustomed to the roles they must play to work together as a team. We did our first of three days and they worked great together even in some pretty rough places. Unfortunately my saddle horse developed a heart problem that would cause her eyes to roll up into her head and she would flop over and pass our cold. This can be a bit unnerving. The good news is that she did this in camp after the long climb into the Great Burn and not on the steep narrow trail on the way up.

I finally got another horse. A four year old, off-the-range-reservation-feral horse that has taken me the last two summers to get to the point where I feel confident enough to take him out alone. He still has some issues with the unfamiliar, which also can be a bit unnerving when leading another horse. This summer I felt I could start working the two together. The pack horse pulled up lame and the vet diagnosed navicular in both front feet.

Now Feathers’ horse is around 32 and his teeth are worn out. He has a hard time holding weight. We are feeding him like an old dog. He gets senior feed, beet pulp, and soaked Brophy cubes every day just to keep him alive. Making it through the winter is questionable and then he really can’t be expected to work too hard. I’m looking for two more horses now and trying to find some good experienced mountain horses without much money to work with.

In the meantime, we have continued to go on back country trips with just the two saddle horses. This means one-horse packing. By that I mean carrying everything we need for up to four days on the horse we’re riding. It means going light.

The whole point of pack animals is to be able to carry the comforts and pleasures of a well-stocked camp with you. One-horse means something different. We tend to go lighter than when we backpack. There has to be consideration of how much the horse can carry in gear and rider without stressing him out. To do this, we pack like we would for backpacking, then reduce the amount of gear to a bare minimum.

The sleeping bags are essential, but bulky and tents are heavy and also bulky. I have dealt with this dilemma by eliminating the tent and rolling the bags up in 8x10 lightweight tarps. I roll them up so the bundle comes out about 5 feet long and 6-8 inches in diameter. I lay these over each of the horses’ necks and tie them into the D rings on the saddle. In this way we have our sleeping and shelter covered and the bulk of it is out of the way so we can swing our legs over the saddle when we get on.

For the cooking scene, I have been using one of those ultra-light backpacker stoves that fold up into a bundle the size of a fist. This and the fuel canister fit in one of the saddlebags. For food we have been using freeze dried packages. Some of these are designed to have hot water poured directly into the package to cook. This eliminates most of the cook kit. We take

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JERRY KAWASAKI 3-DAY HORSESHOEING CLINICS

Instructor: Jerry Kawasaki, A.F.A. Certified Journeyman Farrier with 21 yrs of experience.

Content: To provide horse owners with the skills necessary for trimming, balancing, and shoeing horses feet. Basic anatomy and physiology will be covered by dissecting a horse’s lower leg and foot. Standards for evaluating a proper horseshoeing job will be presented. Hands-on work consists of pulling shoes, trimming and balancing feet. In addition, all students will have the opportunity to shoe a horse and perform the necessary clinching and finishing steps. The course is about 90% hands-on work and limited to 12 participants.

Participants are required to bring their own horses or mules; these will be the ones they shoe during the clinic and start on them the first day. Recommend 2 (easy to handle) animals per person.

Contact instructor for more information and clinic locations and dates.
Call 406-763-4364 or 406-763-4432;
email jikawa@bearcountrycontainers.com; or
For my fiftieth birthday, all I wanted was to go horse camping! I cleared my schedule and plans were made. My sister Geri flew in from Enumclaw, Washington to ride with me. Originally we were to ride into the Bob Marshall National Forest and I heard lots of wonderful things about the ride, the countryside and the meadows of lush grass to camp near.

The Upper Clark Fork Back Country Club sponsored this ride. The forest fires threatened to cancel our ride and my dream from childhood to camp out with my two horses; Cotlet a five year old buckskin, and Lexee a four year old Dun. Both of which have been professionally trained by a local trainer and ridden for at least a year on Lexee and two on Cotlet.

The location was changed due to the fires to our local Racetrack Campground. I thought oh boy, close to home, horse camping here we go! FUN, FUN, FUN!! My sister Geri and I were raised to be avid horse lovers and we rode all over Auburn, Washington when we were kids. This was not our first ride but our first campout.

The night we arrived the horses were unloaded and tied to the two horse trailer. Did I forget to mention that the horses have never camped out either!

We ate a hot meal prepared for us and made our beds in the back of the pickup. I noticed right away that everyone else had tarps laid down folded over with their sleeping bags and pillows tucked neatly away. I thought we would be smart, out of “bear range” in the back of the pickup laying on padded horse blankets tucked into our sleeping bags. Through the night, the stars were bright overhead, and I could hear our horses at the horse trailer. Occasionally I felt one of them pull a bit, moving the bed but pretty much it was an uneventful night. The mist settled on the metal bed of the truck and it got cold where we touched any part of the bed with arms or legs. We tossed and turned and were a bit damp but the sounds of the night lulled us to sleep. Morning came early and we rose.

The group had packed “mule feed” and I started to worry that I hadn’t brought any hay for mine, but at least the mules would be fed. I learned the mule feed is compact and is fed while out on the trail for feed. They fed some to our horses. The mule packs were loaded and I really watched in awe of how they were not only crammed to the brim, but loaded onto the mules evenly for the trail ride ahead. We rode off into the sunrise....

The dirt road was windy, the creek water ran quietly, the wind blew softly and I thought this truly must be heaven. For two hours we chatted, I tried to keep up with my mare as she is a slow walker like her mother. Cotlet, on the other hand, walks faster and Geri did well working out their differences in riding styles. By the time we came to the mountain entrance they were companions.

The trail was marked and looked like hikers and motorcycles have used the trail, so how bad could it be? The side of the mountain we rode up, and up onto what they call the “switch back” trail. I tried to teach Lexee to ride close to the mountain side and not the edge. She did pretty well but kept looking up the mountain side. I wondered what she thought of the whole thing! We continued onward and upward; it felt like we would never make it to the top, but finally we made it and took a break. Occasionally we would cross a small stream and offer water to the horses. Mine would not drink and I thought of that saying; “you can lead a horse to water, but not make them drink”. I always hated that saying!

The group we rode with have ridden together for many years and they were “seasoned riders", thank God! They sandwiched my sister and I between them. I wanted them to know we had ridden before and we could handle whatever came along….so I thought!

We had ridden for six hours and surely we would come to the lakeside with flowing meadows and the campsite would miraculously be set up with a fire awaiting our arrival. We rode on. We rode past this small cabin, it looked ancient but hey it could be shelter, I imagined the pony express riding along needing a place to stop, rest and change horses. It

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looked run down, holes in the walls, but if that cabin could tell its story, I would stop and listen. We rode on.

The group stopped to rest the horses, a few of them talked about campsites, someone even had a map... hot dog we weren’t lost, we had a map! We settled on this site near the lake, boulders were embedded into the hill, the mountain grass grows in sparse clumps and we were told is a little bitter. (How can you tell?) We picked out our tent site and started to crawl off our mounts. Thankfully I brought my Ibuprofen, the strong stuff just for this occasion. My horses were tired and they looked at me expectantly as we usually ride a few hours, trailer back home, lavishly grain them with vitamins, then throw them a flake or two of alfalfa-grass mix hay to them to pick at thru the evening. The horses hadn’t drank much and finally they drank at the lake edge which was full of ragged large rocks but you could step down into it and drink your fill. We walked over to the small grassy area and let them eat. My sister and I looked around, the lake was still, and in the middle was an island. We were deep into the mountains and I was told there were many lakes or run off areas from the mountain snow. It was breathtaking.

The meal was prepared; everyone pitched in and I was waiting for the camp fire until I was informed that there was a no-fire ban in place due to the dryness and high fire hazard. Oh well, ok no fire, we will make do.

The pup tent was unloaded. I had made such a good deal at the local pawn shop. The picture on the front had kids playing innocently in the opening of the tent. My husband duck taped the hole at one end of the tent... why would there be a hole? It looked brand new.

My sister was standing there and went to take off her chaps... everyone looked at her and started to whip out there cameras, unnoticed by the two of us ( I don’t even own a pair) she had them on backwards and we laughed about that. Geri is of good humor and we are very close sisters. It was a very good thing as when we went to get into the “pup” tent, (did they mean puppy tent?) We had to cross our legs to separate corners across one another to sleep, and there wasn’t enough room to stretch out. Oh man, what a night. Every time I turned I either poked her somewhere or was stuck into my sleeping bag and couldn’t turn... it felt like I was tied down with tie downs. And to make matters worse, every time I spoke, turned or moved a muscle my buckskin, Cotlet pawed at the ground and nickered loudly to get my attention. The moon shown and I had to get up and relieve myself. I stood next to the boulder and did what I needed to do. Moments later I saw a flashlight coming our way from one of our group checking on us. Thank God he hadn’t seen me going to the bathroom...that would have been bad!

We laughed at our inexperience but decided to make the best of it. By morning my horses looked at us as if to say, “what the hell? where is the food?, when do we leave and what are you doing to us?” Cotlet had dug quite an area, even my tilled garden at home didn’t have such soft dirt milled to a fine pulp. They were untied and watered, they didn’t drink much again and we moved over to the clumps of grass, Cotlet ate but Lexee stretched out funny and put her head down...uh oh! We walked her around and Cotlet was tied between two trees. The
more we walked Lexee the more worked up Cotlet got, so I thought I would try the hobbles to keep her still for a while. Both horses are pastured together, but occasionally I separate them to keep the separation anxiety down to a minimum. My trainer told me he had used them on both horses and they did ok. After applying them to my buckskin to concentrate on my colic horse, we walked her around. Cotlet whinnied, stomped both feet and started to lunge forward between the two trees. She broke her lead, scraped up her back legs and took the hair off part of her front legs. I started to come near her, quite fed up by this time as she really was acting like a total twit. She came at me lunging with both feet, and I backed up concerned, that knowing my luck she would land on me or do more harm. After getting her settled the hobbles were removed and ointment applied to her self inflicted wounds. Lexee quietly stood there and pooped, one dilemma over.

We walked them to the waters edge and Cotlet was having difficulty walking down to the water and was off balance like she had one to many. She must have still had a few issues to work out as she nudged my sister so hard she almost was thrown into the lake. Cotlet ran back to the area where Lexee was tied. Geri caught her without incident and started to saddle her. Cotlet almost fell over on my sister, and could not bear any weight on her back leg...the same one she had injured with a partially severed tendon a year ago. That was another story. I was ready to go home. I announced to the group we were leaving if I had to carry my horses out. The group looked at me surprised but graciously tried to offer alternative plans but my mind was set. One of them let my sister ride his mount and he rode his mule while I ponied my injured horse down the hill. The plan was to pickup the mule feed at the bottom of the hill and return to campsite in one day... My first thought was...are you guys absolutely nuts? I couldn’t keep up with the one day up the hill ride. In my mind I really couldn’t see riding down the hill and back up. My five day campout I dreamed about was a sleepless sleepover in a too-small-duck-taped-tent with one colic horse and her psychopath roommate with a death wish who forgot all she was taught to be domesticated and women’s best friend.

Breakfast was served, we ate quietly then the group we rode with took us an alternative route down the mountainside. They took us under their wings and they told us their shortcomings and colorful events that made them who they are today. We rode through this marsh and let the horses just eat and relax. Our group looked out for us, clearly did not judge our inexperience but shared their knowledge willingly. The trip back was breathtakingly beautiful. We rode through trees with paths around huge boulders and I envisioned our ancestors taking this same ride over bridges and creeks. One fifteen foot ravine had a rock bridge two feet wide by fifteen feet long. (Sorry no picture to prove this) The horses trustingly followed one another across this bridge while I am sure their owners had their eyes closed and breath held (I know I did!). The ride seemed to go fast. An hour or so away from our parting point we came to a marshy area. The lead rider went thru with his mules in tow and was waist high in mud. He was bogged down but made it over with no injuries. We were so close to the road there was no going back up and around. One by one we crossed with cheers and encouragement to each other. Whoo...whooo! We got over that and out to the road. I have so much respect for each rider that we rode with. They are the very best riders and fearless. I feel we earned a notch or two on respect of our own. We bade our goodbyes and we rode back to the truck and trailer. My sister was about to ride Cotlet on flat ground. My horse had turned into a professional walker and I could hardly contain her to a walk all the way in.

When we returned I went to dismount and Lexee was dancing around so I swatted her with my open hand and said “stand still”. The next thing I knew the world was topsy-turvy; I heard my sister scream and in the dirt I lay. I must of hit my head as when I stood up I staggered. I dusted off after yelling at my horse she almost killed me and loaded up the two into my trailer. I was unable to back out so I drove around this fir tree. I knocked off the reflector on one side and bent the hitch again….my husband has had to fix twice before. This is why I have a used horse trailer to learn on.

By God I made it out alive, on my birthday with everything intact. Next year (yes we are planning again!). I have a list of things to obtain. My dreams about camping out are still present but a little more reality based. My sister and I are going to try again. Who knows maybe we will make it for the full five days. Keep your fingers crossed....
MOOSE THE BALD MULE
Submitted by Kathy Hundley
Selway-Pintler Wilderness BCH

We wanted to raise a mule! We had a leopard Appaloosa mare that the boys had ridden and she was “bomb proof”. We found a jackup in the Ozark Mts named “Porter” and decided to breed her. We dreamed of the fancy spotted mule we would get 11 months later.

One warm spring morning in April of 1995 I saw him in the pasture beside his mom. How could it be? He was as black as he could be and looked like a chimpanzee with his little dish face and the black bare skin around his eyes, ears and muzzle. Was this what baby mules looked like I asked myself? From the very beginning he had a heart of gold, but he sure was a pitiful little thing.

I phoned the vet to come have a look at him. Dr. Oates just scratched his head and said he’d never seen anything like it. He pulled hair samples with follicles attached and took some skin scrapes. We sent them to the vet school at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge for examination. Several weeks later they sent their medical diagnosis. The pathologist’s diagnosis was follicular/hair shaft dysplasia (malfunction of the hair shaft and hair follicle). This is the same condition that the Mexican Hairless dog has and is also why many Appaloosa horses have a thin mane and tail. The condition was not contagious and had no cure. Our baby mule had alopecia…he was bald!

I worried how he would deal with the sun and weather—would I have to make clothes for him? We watched him carefully as he grew. He would stay bald on pressure areas such as where his tail swished back and forth and on his hocks and knees from lying down. But, he did grow hair. He would “blow” his coat every spring and fall and would look like he had mange. But, it always came back. To this day he still goes bald twice a year. His hair is coarse and nappy and it’s nearly impossible to brush him clean. When he sweats it drips from his body like rain.

He kicked only once in his life. When he was two weeks old we found him separated from his mother across the only fence on our ranch that was still barbed wire. We had replaced all but that stretch with smooth wire. He had a deep wound on his upper leg where it meets the chest. The vet said it couldn’t be stitched and that we should scrub it clean daily and apply salve and fly repellent. Easier said than done on a bouncing baby mule! Joe built a small plywood gate about waist high inside a stall where we could catch him and back him into the corner and still access the wound. All went well until one morning he had had enough. As I tried to approach him he whirled and instinctively I whirled too…but not quick enough to avoid the two tiny rear hooves that made contact with my rear end—both cheeks! I was only bruised! He never did it again.

Moose will be 13 this spring. He lives to eat as his near 1400 pounds proves. We love him and we will always keep him—who else would want him? We ride him and pack him—but not hard. You can put anyone on him. He will do anything for Joe—almost! He’s a big baby and he’s convinced that trolls live under those Grand Firs alongside the trail, always tilting his big head to get a better look. High-lining is also one of those things that makes him worry—he grinds his teeth. Just ask Terry Reed! Moose may be short on hair and training—but he is all heart and devotion. He has his very own purple extra-heavy weight turnout blanket for the spring when he goes bald and the late spring snows come. And, oh yes, he did get Appaloosa speckles on one part of his body…the one that makes him a boy!
A Reincarnation
Submitted by: BCH of Wild Horse Plains

Wildhorse Plains BCH located in Plains, MT is a reincarnation of the former Sanders County Chapter from the 1990’s. We’re centered in the Plains/Thompson Falls Ranger District of the Lolo National Forest, with lots of short trails and a few trunk trails all left from the network built through this heavily-timbered area in the early 1900’s.

Long before those trails were built, Kootenai, Salish, Pend O’Reille and an occasional Nez Perce used the Clark Fork River corridor as part of their “Road to the Buffalo” and the Blackfeet used it to raid those other tribes. Early whites including David Thompson and Father DeSmet passed through here too. In fact, Forest Service trail remnants and logging roads intersect and occasionally follow those trails from earlier times.

Wildhorse BCH took on two projects in the summer of 2007. One was to clear approximately nine miles of the old Baldy/Big Hole trail, a trunk trail once used to service two fire lookouts and the phone line between them. The other project was a weed inventory on about 50 miles of back country trails. Both projects were completed and the club was paid from Forest Service grants. Consequently, we were able to put the club on a sound financial footing our first year.

We also completed chainsaw certification training, first aid courses, a basic defensive horsemanship course and did some trail riding, with no other purpose than just to go riding.

Our current membership is presided over by Cindy Ray, a relative newcomer to Sanders County but a seasoned BCH member after serving 25 years in a BCH chapter in the state of Washington. Cindy almost single-handedly breathed the life into the club.

We’re primarily retirees or middle-aged working couples. Some of us have considerable experience using stock in the back country while others have little such experience, but contribute vital time and talent nevertheless. We’re looking forward to hitting the woods with chainsaws and hoof tracks again in 2008.
My favorite things in 2007
By: Luanne Bauman
Selway-Pintler Wilderness BCH

If you have a little Christmas cash or gift cards that you “need”
to get rid of, here are some of my favorite things:

Fellow member, Terry Reed, should be writing this because
most of the ideas came from her. Terry likes to shop and
try new things. So if it works, I usually follow suit.

For around $5.00 (for three bowls), one of my favorites is the
“Outward Hound, Dispose A-Bowl”™. These are fold up
plastic bowls for dog water or food. They are perfect to fit
into a saddlebag, purse, truck, etc…. I fold them up and slip
them into a card for my dog loving friends as a gift. A must
for travel! I found mine at PetSmart.

After several attempts at the perfect hay net for travel, we
came up with a hay bag that is easy to fill, easy to hang onto
a highline, two horses can eat out of it if necessary, the
horses do not waste hay and the price is inexpensive
(compared to others). The bags come from TNO Tack and
Cowboy Gear in Priest River, Idaho. Their phone number is
208-290-4099. Sorry, I don’t believe they have a website
yet. These bags sell for around $25.00. They also make a
handy insulated water bottle/drink holder that attaches
to your saddle rings with a trigger snap. It is made with a Vel-
cro strip that will allow it to be adjusted to fit different sized
bottles and comes in different colors. This opens up more
room in your horn bag for lunch and the essentials-you can
hang one on both sides!

Another item we found is a boot from Ariat, the Terrain H20
™. These boots are leather, waterproof, manure resistant,
slightly lined, yet look like a regular boot and fit into your
stirrup (they are not lace ups). I guess some of the gals think
they are only water resistant, but I sprayed mine with Camp
Dry several times before even wearing them. I even wore them in the recent cold and snow
we had at Thanksgiving and my feet stayed dry and warm. I bought mine at Cenex in
Missoula, but they only had the women’s boot. I do have a pair on hold for my husband
when they get the men’s in. You can find them on the internet, but might need to check
the fit out first. They have been running about $130.00.

At Lowe’s we found a small handsaw (18
inch) with a regular handle (like an Oregon saw), Corona Professional Razor Tooth™. It
is reasonably priced at $18.00 and is great for
cleaning trail. Those bigger saws can get in the
way. These are easy to grab. They don’t come
with a scabbard but fit well into the Oregon saw
scabbard.

A few tips I learned this summer and fall were:
You can freeze those little juice sacks. It was
great when the temperature was 107° because you
still have ice crystals in your drink.

Some of us got together and made stampede
strings for our hats and as Christmas presents.
You can order your leather lace from Tandy’s in
Billings and get your supplies in two days!

A friend gave me a website to purchase good
quality mohair. www.ubraidit.com . So, now I’m cranking

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out reins and lead ropes. A few gals are making mohair cinches too.

The bags of rice that you get at Costco make the best bags for feed or pellets when packing in. I actually bought a bag of rice (I did not need) and made rice heat/cold packs for everyone for Christmas just to get rid of all the rice! I really wanted another grain bag!

I received a gallon of castor oil from friends Terry Reed and Kathy Hundley for my birthday! I was a bit puzzled at first until they told me they had learned about castor oil from the pack class they took with Smoke Elser last winter. It works wonders on your tack after cleaning with saddle soap. It makes the leather soft and supple, aids in preventing critters from chewing your tack in the back country, won’t mold your tack like neatsfoot oil does and you can put it on with your bare hands, rubbing it in so your hands end up nice and soft too! A great source for purchasing the oil is Majestic Mountain Sage in Logan, UT. Go to [www.the-sage.com](http://www.the-sage.com) or phone 435-755-2108. A gallon costs $14.50 plus shipping.

Another great find they learned from the pack class was a saddle slicker/cantle bag. It’s made from waterproof material and has a drawstring on one end. It also has two pockets on the outside. One pocket has an attached saddle cover that you can pull out to keep your saddle seat dry if you stop for lunch on a rainy day. The other pocket can hold extras such as gloves, scarves or rubber boot covers! They come in a variety of colors and are hand made by Pat Legato, the owner of Montana Frontier Dusters, 406-626-5651. The cost is $25.00.

One of the best finds of the year are the new cross-cut saws our BCH chapter purchased last summer. They are four foot (4’) work saws made by Tuatahi Racing Axes & Saws. The saw is easily operated by one person or two. Instead of thinking “misery whip” think “can’t wait to use ‘em”! They come from New Zealand and are hand forged when ordered. It usually takes 3-4 months. Can be found at [www.tuatahiaxes.com](http://www.tuatahiaxes.com).

Well, happy shopping, and if you have some good tips or finds, please let us all know.

I suppose I should write that my favorite trail last summer was Trail 433 known as the East Fork Trail. I worked two different weekends clearing trail and did a four day pack trip with girlfriends to Kelly, Hidden and Ripple Lakes. Our BCH chapter chose Trail 433 as their main wilderness project because the wilderness begins at the trailhead and it has burned several times. Members knew we would encounter lots of downfall. We cleared approximately 280 trees in 6 miles with axes, hand saws and crosscuts.

In 2007 the SPWBCH members worked on 9 projects and cleared 35 miles of Forest Service trail. This represents 421 man hours with a total of 3738 miles driven to the trailheads. This was a great accomplishment for such a small group of volunteers.
Three Rivers Back Country Horsemen Activities for 2007

Article by: Dan Pence
Photos By: Larry Jordan

Members of Three Rivers Chapter of Back Country Horsemen in Dillon, Montana met on March 7th and planned a very ambitious schedule for 2007. We hope the weather and forest fire activity will allow us to stick closer to schedule in 2008.

March 24: Our first scheduled event involved trailer maintenance at Kathy and Andy Allards. Three members brought trailers to have safety inspections and got bearings lubricated.

April 7: Our first ride occurred in the Rocky Hills with 14 members attending. An accident occurred when a member tried to bridle his horse while it was tied to the trailer. The horse spooked, reared and knocked the owner against his trailer. A lesson learned—untie your horse before bridling!

April 22: Our next ride in the Tendoy Mountains was cancelled when the Trail Boss had unexpected commitments.

May 5: This fun ride started at Bannack. Participants rode to “Road Agent Rock” following the route proposed for an improved hiking/horseback loop trail. Part of the route follows the historic stage road. Ten members participated with Mark Sant as Trail Boss.

May 12: Fourteen members hosted “Kid’s Day with Tom Hough and Dave Mathson as Trail Bosses. Rides were furnished for 47 children, followed by a hot dog feed thanks to local businesses.

June 9: A scheduled ride in Silver Star vicinity was cancelled due to rain. Four members rode in the Ruby Mountains the following weekend.

June 23-24: East Fork Blacktail ride and trail maintenance was cancelled due to rain. Dave Mathson cleared the trails later on his own. Several members attended a Horsemanship Certification session in Twin Bridges instead.

July 5-9: Members were encouraged to join the Mile High Chapter to complete trail work in the Gold Creek area. No members were able to attend.

July 14: Members were unable to participate in Beaverhead County’s Weed Day due to other commitments.

July 21-22: Dave Mathson, Mike and Joan Probst, Bob McNeill and Dan Pence gave packing and Leave No Trace demonstrations during Bannack Days at Bannack State Park. Attendance was good with an estimated 75 people participating in the four demonstrations.

July 22 and 28: We planned to assist the Dillon Ranger District pack supplies for a retired smoke jumper group on a trail maintenance project at Tent Lake. Schedules were shifted and the first date conflicted with Bannack Days so no one participated.

Forest fire restrictions cancelled the August 11-12 bridge replacement project on Rock Creek, August 25-26 Sand Lake pack trip, and September 8 Harrison Park ride.

Labor Day: Fair sponsors changed dates so the parade was the only event to occur on Labor Day. No riders participated due to the schedule change.

December 4: Twenty-one members attended the Christmas Party that closed our 2007 season.

Several incidental rides occurred when members could coordinate with others and work them in. Tom Hough completed trail maintenance on the Little Sheep Creek trail on his own.

See more photos of Kids’ Day on page 13
One Horse continued from page 3

one small pot, a four cup coffee percolator and the basic utensils. All this fits in the pot along with the coffee and some dry food like granola or oatmeal. I hang all this in a bag off the saddle horn on one side and the highline rope on the other for weight balance.

This is a summer thing, so I don’t take a lot of clothes. I usually take the clothes I’m wearing and a change in case I get wet. Coats and rain gear strap on behind the cantle. I ride with a small mountaineering back pack. It is narrow and has a padded belt strap and a crossover strap to hold the shoulder straps on. This kind of pack is designed for rock climbers so there is freedom of movement for the arms and the straps keep the pack tight to the body so it doesn’t flop around at a trot or lope or the occasional rodeo. The food and extra clothes go in the pack along with the first aid kit and any other small light soft things. I had a horse fall off a bridge in the Pinters last year when I was wearing this pack. I didn’t have anything hard like a pot in it so when I landed on my back I was protected from the impact. I realized then how important it is to be aware of what is in the pack in case you do come off.

The rest of the hardware associated with the horses goes in the saddlebags. I carry the picket chain, hobbles, and swivels for the highline in a bag in one saddlebag and water purifier and bottle, folding saw, etc. in the other.

When we camp, we throw up a small sleeping fly and lay the other tarp out as a ground cloth. The saddle blankets are our sleeping pads are much better but saddle pads are okay when there are not pack pads. I throw up the highline and picket one of the horses and let the other graze and we’re home.

This is roughing it a bit, but we are not limited by the lack of pack stock for short trips. We have gone for as much as four days this way and could likely do more if you could put up with that much free-dried food or bring fishing gear. It’s great for weekend trips.

Let’s fact it, stock does have an impact on the land. The more stock you have, the greater the impact. This way you can really lessen the impact for short trips and you have the advantage of using smaller, more sensitive areas that wouldn’t accommodate more animals for grazing. It’s good also for taking day trips away from camp on your saddle horses and you don’t have to pony your empty pack stock or worry about them being left on the high-line while you’re gone.

It would enjoy the opportunity to talk about this with more experienced back country riders. I’m sure I could pick up some tips on horse care and how much we could expect of our horses for this kind of use. There may be some good ideas for light weight gear that could be incorporated into the adventure. It would be worth the discussion.

It was decided unanimously at the January 13, 2008 annual meeting of the Greater Yellowstone Chapter of the Back Country Horsemen to dissolve the chapter. This was due to a major “burn out” of the few remaining members.

It was also decided that the chapter would make a $500.00 donation to the national legal fund.

The chapter members have worked hard over the years of existence for a very worthwhile cause.

Linda Brewer
Past President
Kids’ Day 2007  (continued from page 11)
Sponsored by: Three Rivers Back Country Horsemen & University of Montana Western
Not everyone gets to live their dream. Smoke Elser has been one of those fortunate enough to do so. When he rode into the Danaher Valley this spring, it was his 50th year in the Bob Marshall. For at least forty of those years, Smoke spent most of his time in the mountains, as we ran sixteen to eighteen summer pack trips, averaging eight days each and four to six eight day hunts each year. It was a life that Smoke loved and one that has made him approach retirement hanging on and dragging his heels.

Smoke was born just south of Youngstown, Ohio in a small rural community. He was an active boy scout, learning his outdoor and woodsman skills through participation in a very active scouting troop. This included lots of camping, hiking and canoeing.

He had a dream. He wanted to be an outfitter. Following high school, he came to Montana for a summer of work with the Forest Service. He was fortunate enough to end up on a trail crew working under Cloyce Mann in the Helena National Forest. Here he gained valuable experience in packing and working with stock. He honed his woodsman’s skills working with a master. He worked on some fire crews and eventually tried his hand at smoke jumping, however, too many years of playing football and bad knees made this option difficult. Smoke went to Ohio State for one year and then transferred to the University of Montana. The spring of 1957, he approached Tom Edwards at the White Tail Ranch asking for work. Tom was hesitant to hire a young man out of the East—but Smoke offered to work a week or two for nothing to prove himself. He did just that and ended up running the kitchen string of ten mules and cooking for the summer pack trips. That was the start. Here too is where Smoke acquired the name “Smoke”. Tom said, “you cannot be a wrangler with the name of Arnie. Do you have a nickname?” Well, when Smoke returned to Ohio State from his summer of working with the fire crews in Montana, he got called to fight a fire in the hardwood forests near Ohio State. He got violently sick from breathing in the smoke from the poison oak — hence the nickname of “Smoke” stuck while he was at Ohio State. This was the name that popped out of his mouth when Tom asked about a nickname. So began the career of Smoke Elser.

Smoke continued to work for the White Tail Ranch, Tom Edwards and later Howard Copenhaver, while working his way through the University of Montana (approximately six years). The spring he graduated from college (1964) we bought our own outfit. Hard to believe. I think we paid $2,000 for the privilege of starting in the outfitting business. That was back when an outfitter permit consisted of two pages. Now it is a small book of regulations! Of course, that was big money to us back then.

Smoke went into outfitting with the idea that guests wanted more than just a horseback trip. Thus, our trips became more educational in slant — or I guess you would call them eco-wilderness trips. He felt strongly that guests (don’t ever make the mistake of calling them dudes—I did that once and oh boy, did that guest let me know he was offended!) wanted to know the history of the area, to learn about the flora and fauna and he was a master at passing on this type of knowledge. He also felt strongly that second to taking care of the guests, was taking care of the land. Thus, he was constantly developing new and innovative methods of camping with horses in the back country. He became known as a leader in this area.

For several years I followed Smoke in the hills, usually bringing up the rear and catching all the dust, etc. On early season trips, with high water, hock deep mud, summer with explosively dry conditions when you could feel the heat and threat of wild fire all around you, or fall going into hunting camp when you couldn’t see the trail because of the snow, I never worried when I was with Smoke. I admit to being a little nervous about bears when I wasn’t with Smoke, but when he was there I was convinced that he would frighten them off with a stick of wood from the kitchen. He was so thoroughly at home in the wilderness and was so completely capable of handling any crisis that he inspired my complete trust and that of our guests.

If you gave Smoke a naïve guest, he would have them believing almost anything. A couple of the wranglers were really good at playing straight man to his cons. I can remember one guest spending considerable time looking the flush handle on the privy. I can recall a young girl looking earnestly for the man in the white robe and the long hair when we approached the top of a high pass. Smoke had told here we were going to be up in the clouds with “the old man”, meaning, “God”. She believed him. Another guest spent considerable time looking downstream (on a very, very small creek) for the canoe Smoke insisted had just gone down. The stream was so small you could jump across it.

After running a few trips on my own, and then going back in the hills with Smoke, it always both irritated and amused me when I would go about doing something, like folding tents, or packing the kitchen, only to have him come along and say “oh, we don’t do this that way” and he would promptly take over and do it his way—his NEW way that he had never shown me and, of course, he claimed he had always done it that way! Oh well, some things aren’t worth questioning!

We’ve shared something very special that few people are privileged to do. We’ve worked together for 50 years, building a successful business and I think have both enjoyed the challenges this presented. We’ve met some wonderful people and shared lots of fun times with crew and guests alike. Crew have become family and it is a real privilege to share memories with them. But more than anything, Smoke misses the thrill of seeing what’s around the next corner. I don’t think there are very many trails in the Bob Marshall that he hadn’t ridden and explored. He made his 50th year in the Bob — hopefully, he’ll ride the trails again for many more years.
About Your Newsletter

*Back Country Horsemen of Montana News* is published three times a year by BCH of MT, 2167 N 4th Road, Huntley, MT 59037-9105.

Publication dates are June 1, October 1, February 1. Deadline for submission of advertising and articles is the 10th of the preceding month (May 10, September 10, January 10).

The newsletter has three main emphasis areas: (1) issues (2) club activities/volunteer projects (3) light material (i.e. Humor, history, etc.). Please submit a copy that is typed or legible handwritten copy is acceptable. Photos should be prints only (no negatives or proofs). Black & white or color is acceptable. Please do not cut or write directly on the photos.

Submit articles, photos, and advertising to Linda Brewer, 2167 N 4th Rd., Huntley, MT 59037. Phone: (406) 698-5880 e-mail: lbrewer@tctwest.net

BCH Chapters are once again responsible for submitting articles for publication in this newsletter. Chapter divisions and deadline date for articles is as follows:

**May 10**
- Beartooth, Bitterroot, Cabinet & CMR, East Slope, Flathead

**September 10**
- Gallatin, Hi-Line, Judith Basin
- Last Chance, Mile High

**January 10**
- Mission Valley, Missoula, Selway/Pintler
- Wilderness, Three Rivers, Upper Clark Fork, Wild Horse Plains

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<th>Phone</th>
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<td>Ron Stuber</td>
<td>(406) 837-0360</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mtsms@centurytel.net">mtsms@centurytel.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice-Chairman</td>
<td>Charlie O’Leary</td>
<td>(406) 782-6504</td>
<td><a href="mailto:goldenwillow@juno.com">goldenwillow@juno.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Mark Himmel</td>
<td>(406) 771-0809</td>
<td><a href="mailto:markhimmel@att.net">markhimmel@att.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Kathy Frazier</td>
<td>(406) 777-7269</td>
<td><a href="mailto:TomKathy_frazier@msn.com">TomKathy_frazier@msn.com</a></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Chuck Miller</td>
<td>(406) 961-5453</td>
<td><a href="mailto:circlemr@cybernet1.com">circlemr@cybernet1.com</a></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ken Ausk</td>
<td>(406) 892-4673</td>
<td><a href="mailto:khaos1@centurytel.net">khaos1@centurytel.net</a></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Alternate) Rich Inman</td>
<td>(406) 388-7564</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rmules04@yahoo.com">rmules04@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Newsletter Editor</td>
<td>Linda Brewer</td>
<td>(406) 698-5880</td>
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If you would like to join, please contact a chapter in your area.