Decker Dispatch

February 2013 www.bchmt.org

Letter from the Chair

Mark Himmel, Chairman, BCH Montana

For the Chairman's letter this time I wanted to talk about the 40th anniversary for BCH coming up, without repeating what has already been said. Something new or different? There are not many topics we haven't touched upon.

Back Country Horsemen of Montana have probably removed a million trees blocking the trail and installed half that many water bars in our quest to improve the trail and lessen the impact of our use.

In a discussion with Charlie O'Leary, the idea of reviewing Back Country Horsemen volunteer hours over the years came up as a topic that might be of interest to our membership. It's a topic specifically related to Montana which I am almost sure we have not discussed. Digging around, we could only come up with documentation for the last ten years. I took on the task of creating a graph that fills in the missing thirty years.

Ken Ausk informed me that back in 1974, in their first year, the Flathead Chapter put in over 1000 hours of volunteer time. (I can't imagine coming up with the idea of Back Country Horsemen one year, then rising to that level of challenge the next. Heck! In 1974, I was still in high school).

Ok – Back to the graph.

I calculated that between 1974 and today, using conservative numbers, Montana's Back Country Horsemen contributed 256,000 volunteer hours. With that much time accumulated, it's hard to imagine that a trail exists in the forest that we have not spent time on at some point. Back Country Horsemen of Montana have probably removed a million trees blocking the trail and installed half that many water bars in our quest to improve the trail and lessen the impact of our use.

We ride the forest for many different reasons; whether it's trail clearing, pack support for a trail crews, or simply venturing out there and looking to make a difference. One horseman makes a little dent in the tasks ahead. As a chapter, with quite a few horsemen, we can conquer many challenges. As a state organization, there is no challenge that we can't overcome.

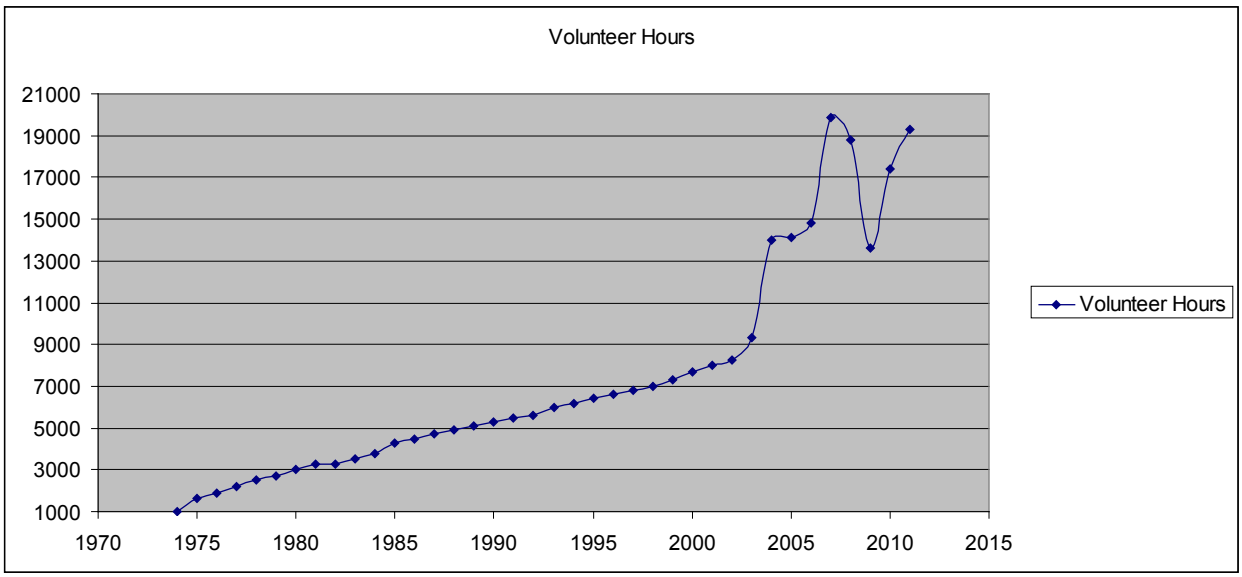
Back Country Horsemen of Montana Mission Statement

- Perpetuate the common sense use and enjoyment of America's back country and wilderness.
- Work to ensure that public lands remain open to recreational stock use.
- Assist various agencies responsible for the maintenance and management of public lands.
- Educate, encourage, and solicit active participation in the wise and sustained use of the back country by horsemen and the general public, commensurate with our heritage.
- Foster and encourage formation of new Back Country Horsemen organizations.

Letter from the Chair *continued...*

We know of our accomplishments over the past 40 years. What will the next 40 years look like? I am sure when Ken and company started this organization long ago, they could not have imagined it would build to a state-wide organization that logged 256,000 hours of volunteer time improving our trails. The next 40 is what we make of it. I predict Back Country Horsemen of Montana will exceed a million hours by then.

Mark Himmel



Extrapolating from known volunteer hours in 1974 to tracked hours beginning in 2002, Back Country Horsemen of Montana have conservatively dedicated over a quarter-million volunteer hours and improved innumerable trails.

There are many things in Western culture that are admirable. But a culture that alienates itself from the ground of its own being–from the wilderness outside ... and from that wilderness, the wilderness within–is doomed to very destructive behavior, ultimately perhaps, self-destructive behavior.

–Gary Snyder– *Turtle Island*, 1969

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2012 Mission Valley BCH Completed Three-Year Work Project with Forest Service

by David Crawford & Carol Madden, Mission Valley Chapter BCHM

The Mission Valley Back Country Horsemen kicked off a work agreement with the US Forest Service in 2009. In cooperation with Carole Johnson of the Superior Ranger District, it was agreed that the club would complete regular and special trail improvements to benefit all who use the back country trail system. There were four projects worked on over a period of three years. Regular maintenance of these trails occurs every year, while the special improvements were completed on an as-needed basis.

The first project was the River Trail that runs 13 miles, from St. Regis down the Clark Fork River to Ferry Landing at the St. Regis cut-off highway, situated between Hwy 200 and I90 to the north. The work consisted of clearing and brushing trails and reconstructing areas in the shale rock slides for trail passage in several different locations. Gravel and supplies were placed at the trail head and packed in by volunteers. Barbed wire was packed out to promote safety for those who use the trail.

The second project was the Boyd Mountain trail, located two miles west of St. Regis, between I-90 and Camel's Hump Road. This project consisted of clearing and brushing the trail that runs to the top of Boyd Mountain.

The third project was the Thompson Creek Trail, located outside Superior. This 10-mile trail had not been regularly maintained and this was the first time the Mission Valley BCH had performed clean-up. This took the club six days to complete in the first year, due to the amount of steep terrain and downfall in the area.

The fourth project completed was the Flat Rock Trail west of St. Regis. This ten-mile trail runs from Twelve Mile Creek, on Camel's Hump Road, to the top of the Continental Divide on Tamarack Creek Road. The work completed the first two years consisted of cleaning and brushing the trails. The third year two turnpikes were built to make dangerous mud bogs safer

to cross. This involved packing in supplies such as water bars, gravel, a culvert and required tools.

This agreement brought $22,000 to the Mission Valley Back Country Horsemen for their expertise and commitment to making trail riding-safe. While this type of agreement was unique and profitable, it is not what drives the spirit of volunteerism with this group. Since its inception, The Mission Valley BCH has done projects very much like these in many locations.

From the Saddlebag

"His father rode sitting forward slightly in the saddle, holding the reins in one hand about two inches above the saddle horn… The boy who rode on slightly before him sat a horse not only as if he'd been born to it which he was but as if were he begot by malice or mischance into some queer land where horses never were he would have found them anyway. Would have known that there was something missing for the world to be right or he right in it and would have set forth to wander wherever it was needed for as long as it took until he came upon one and he would have know that that was what he sought and it would have been."

–Cormac McCarthy, *All the Pretty Horses*

Upper Clark Fork Back Country Horsemen

Annual Fun Ride-Saturday, July 13th
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Come Join Us!! Ride a well-marked trail with your own group at your own pace. Special prizes and BBQ after the ride. Free camping available. Questions?-Call Wade Murphy at (406) 431-1717 or visit: www.bchmt.org/clarkfork/BCHfunrideflyer2013.pdf

Seeing Yellowstone on a Horse

by Cherie Russell, Missoula Chapter BCHM

In early Spring 2011, BCH member Sheila Getty and I put our heads together to organize a trip to northern Yellowstone National Park with our horses. Several months later, on a beautiful September day, six of us started an incredible adventure. My husband, Tom, was the only male in the group; "…to provide the muscle", he mused. Others in the group consisted of Nancy Stoverud, Barb Jennings and Jan Sousa.

Campgrounds at Yellowstone, unless in the backcountry, prohibit stock; thus, we had to stay outside the Park. We opted for Timber Camp in the Gallatin National Forest, seven miles from Gardiner. The ranger said "…it was our best bet", as there were corrals, water, plenty of grazing and "lots of room for trailers." I was assured that the dirt road, even though it turned into one lane past the teeny hamlet of Jardine, would accommodate long trailers. "People do it all the time", she added. A couple of hours into the drive, a flat tire on Sheila's trailer along I-90 delayed our ETA at Timber Camp; however, it allowed Tom "to provide his muscle."

Lamar River Trail terrain makes is easy to buchwhack.

Night had fallen when we finally pulled into Gardiner and headed for Timber Camp. Finding a strange campground at night has always topped my list of "Things to Avoid." On the other side of Jardine was a ninety-degree turn onto a very narrow and old wooden bridge with very little wiggle room for maneuvering the trailers. We provided entertainment for a few Jardine residents who could be seen peering out their windows through parted curtains.

After everyone safely maneuvered their vehicles over the bridge, we thought it would be just a few minutes to Timber Camp. We were all eagerly anticipating Barb's Jambalaya and a glass or two of wine. The full moon did little to assist driving the narrow, curvy and tree shrouded road along the side of a mountain. It was a painstakingly slow drive but we finally located the turnoff, a "road" recently carved out of the forest. At the end was a beautiful clearing, brightly lit by the full moon; the gurgling and bubbling sounds of running water pinpointed the near-by stream and the several corrals were there waiting for our horses. Our poor horses – they had been in the trailers for twelve hours.

We planned to ride into the Absaroka Beartooth Wilderness during the first two days and these trailheads were near-by. After a leisurely breakfast, we saddled up and headed to Knox Lake (aka Castle Lake). The trail was steep and rocky but Knox Lake is located in the middle of a very large mountain meadow hemmed in by mountains jutting up to meet the azure sky. There were fresh grizzly bear and wolf tracks along the shore.

On the return trip, Roy, Sheila's horse, stumbled and almost went down. There was a 2" nail embedded in his right front hoof; it took Barb's Leatherman and many tries before it was extracted. There was no blood and a horse medical kit provided the means to immediately treat it.

We decided to change our campsite for our Yellowstone rides. The president of the Gardiner Rodeo Association allowed us to use the rodeo grounds north of town to set up camp. There was no charge, but we gave a generous donation. There were plenty of corrals and hoses for water, plus a large parking lot.

We selected two trails to ride – the Lamar River Trail and the Specimen Ridge Trail. A park ranger told us that we could park in most pull-offs for the day. There were also certain trailheads that provided overnight parking for outfitters packing into the interior of

Yellowstone; in northern Yellowstone there were two of these – Soda Butte and Slough Creek.

Vista of Lamar Valley from the Specimen Ridge Trail.

It was drizzling at 7:00 the next morning when we headed out to Soda Butte. Nancy and Barb's certified weed-free hay, which was on top of the trailer, had to be bagged before they would be granted permission to enter the Park. The Park Service supplied the plastic bags; Tom supplied the muscle. We were asked if we had a recent (within a year) Coggins Test certificate and Brand Inspection. At Soda Butte, the parking lot was filled with wolf watchers, some illegally parked in "Stock Trailers Only" spots. A ranger soon arrived and remedied that. A pack of wolves was feeding on a bison carcass not far from the trail. By the time we tacked up, the wolves were finished and had moved on. The clouds had also given way to bright sunshine.

There was still an obstacle to overcome; a herd of bison was sprawled across the trail. Bison are unpredictable, especially the bulls during rutting season. Slowly and cautiously, we made a wide berth of the herd, while both humans and horses kept watchful eyes on the noisy herd.

Lamar River Trail starts out open, wide, and covered with sage and grass. Much of this area was burned to varying degrees in the fires of 1988. After fording Soda Butte Creek, the trail crosses high meadows with copses of trees and climbs up and over several side hills. From these hilltops, there are scenic vistas of the Lamar River. Cache Creek is the next ford, and while doable in September, earlier in the summer it may be too deep and swift to cross safely, even on horses. Very close to the ford on this creek, there is a stock campground. Much to our dismay there were several llamas tethered in camp about 100 yards away, staring at us with their unblinking and piercing eyes, while standing as motionless as boulders along the trail.

The next day we again left at the crack of dawn to ride the Specimen Ridge Trail from west to east. The day before, we had scouted a small parking area, located about a mile from Tower Junction, and across the road from the trailhead. It was large enough to park a few horse trailers if there were no vehicles already randomly parked. We arrived early enough to secure spots for our trailers.

Tom, Barb, Jan, Nancy, and Sheila in Yellowstone National Park, above Lamar Valley.

Seeing Yellowstone *continued...*

The scenery from Specimen Ridge rivals anything in the Park – the Absaroka Beartooth Wilderness to the north, Mt. Washburn to the south, and, at one place, an eagle view of Lamar Valley. The majority of us were not interested in scaling Amethyst Mountain at the far eastern end of the trail. NPS has marked the trail with posts, rock cairns and ugly orange markers, but bison and weather often flatten the posts and topple the cairns. In some cases, the game trails are more prominent and easily mistaken for the real trail.

The trail begins in sagebrush and grass meadows; then there is a steep ascent to the top of the ridge. Lone bull bison were seen here and there as well as numerous small herds of antelope. Various bones (elk and bison) and elk antlers were scattered all along the trail.

Bad luck is said to come in threes; unfortunately, for Sheila, these words rang true. Somehow, her bear spray, located in a bottle holder attached to her horn saddlebag, went off. Roy was not affected, but Sheila got some on her hands and without thinking, touched her face. She underwent an agonizing 45 minutes; there is nothing one can do except to keep flushing the areas with cold water.

The next day it was back to Missoula with lots of good memories and lessons learned. Despite the challenges we had faced, there is nothing better than experiencing Yellowstone with good friends, while on the back of horses. My husband had to admit that a group of cowgirls are, indeed, lots of fun.

Photos courtesy Cherie Russell.

Travelogue: Riding & Packing in the Beautiful Bitterroot Valley

by Kathy Hundley, Selway-Pintler Wilderness Chapter BCHM

The Bitterroot Valley of southwest Montana has some of the most varied resources for riding in our state. From Florence to Darby, a distance of only 44 miles, backcountry seekers can experience at least two weeks-worth of riding.

Instead of concentrating in detail on only one particular trail, I thought I would briefly highlight some of the never-ending possibilities here in our neck of the woods. All these trails can be found on the Bitterroot National Forest "North Half" map. (The Bitterroot National Forest "South Half" map offers an entire summer of riding in new country on new trails).

Rock Creek Horse Camp, located at Lake Como, just north of Darby, is one of the most popular horse camps in the area. It is located only minutes from the lake and has hay bunks, hitching rails, and several slots where horses can be high lined. Unfortunately, it is also a popular campsite for boaters and everyday campers. There are several slots on reserve each day for horse use. From Memorial Day to Labor Day there is a user fee.

The thirteen trailsheads and associated trails listed below represent easy rides–perfect for the novice or young rider–and challenging rides for those who like the feel of a rugged trail. I have listed them from north to south, starting just south of Florence.

1) Sweeney Creek – a four mile ride to Peterson Lake;
2) Larry Creek – a beginner trail with a multitude of loop rides available; Bass Creek – a more rugged, rocky trail that leads to Bass Lake;
3) Kootenai Creek – an approximately eight-mile ride;
4) St. Mary's Lookout – a short, three-mile ride to a manned lookout with an incredible view; parking is limited;
5) Big Creek – a beautiful canyon and timber ride with landmarks such as Teepee Rocks, the Narrows, and a "Big Lake" at the top. This trail can also be turned into a nice pack trip with camp sites and grazing along the South Fork of Big Creek and at the lake itself. The trail circles the lake and continues into Idaho over Packbox Pass;
6) Bear Creek – another timbered canyon trail, excellent in hot weather; mature trees and water leading to Bryan Lake; another ride into the South Fork of Bear Creek is pristine and notably features western larch;

Travelogue *continued...*

7) Fred Burr – a fairly easy five-mile ride into Fred Burr Reservoir; expect an amazing view;

8) Sheafman Creek – limited horse use due to poor parking and switchback drive, but well worth it to see Sheafman Lake and to ride a trail rarely travelled;

9) Mill Creek – gorgeous rock walls and an impressive dam at Mill Lake; This is rocky trail which passes through burned areas from years past. Expect downfall;

10) Blodgett Canyon –one of my favorites, with epic rock walls, a rock arch formation at the pack bridge, some challenging areas of rock talus, waterfalls, and two meadows for grazing and camping at Mile-7 and Mile-9; Blodgett Lake is at Mile-11. This is an easy pack trip with more riding over Blodgett Pass, whose trail was newly constructed in 2012 (the US Forest Service dynamited out a rock avalanche);

11) Sawtooth – another favorite of mine, this pristine trail has limited horse use due to trail and camping challenges at Mile-5, Mile-8, and Mile-10; A hike to Ingmar Lake is rewarded with great fishing;

12) Lost Horse – There are several trails up this road; Coyote Coulee is a nine-mile loop suitable for the novice; Twin Lakes & Fish Lake are at the top, but beware! The road can be a bugger; South Fork of Lost Horse – a pristine three-mile ride to a quaint little meadow along the stream, and finally;

13) Lake Como – There are several day rides out of the Horse Camp. A suitable pack trip along Rock Creek trail follows the south side of the lake and leads to Elk Lake and Bell Lake.

Always do your homework; take a saw (I recommend a 4-foot saddle saw) or an ax; and have fun!

Blodgett Canyon from the pack bridge.

Join us in celebrating

Where It All Began

Back Country Horsemen of Montana
2013 State Convention &
40th Anniversary Celebration

April 5, 6 and 7, 2013
at the Red Lion Hotel
in Kalispell, Montana

Schedule for the Weekend

Friday morning
- State Board of Directors meeting 9:00 A.M. to 12:00 noon

Friday afternoon

This year we are starting a new tradition at the convention, we are having fun and exciting exhibits Friday afternoon to give people a time to visit with friends that they only see a couple of times a year.

We will have the following free clinics:
At 1:00PM and again at 3:00PM-
- ***Are you ready to take your horse into the backcountry?*** - free horse training seminar with Kathy Valentine

At 1:00PM-
- Maps and navigation by Robert Eversole

At 3:00PM-
- Wilderness first aid by former outfitter Bill Tidwell

From 1:00 PM to 5:00PM booths will be set up with the following exhibits so everyone will be free to mingle around throughout the afternoon-
- Packing demonstrations by veteran "Bob" packers
- Plan a trip in the "Bob" with well-seasoned packers Ed Langlois and Gary Dalen
- History and artifacts of the "Bob" with Stu Sorensen, who started packing in the Bob in 1964
- Rope splicing and knot tying; making manti and sling ropes with Charlie O'Leary
- Dutch oven cooking by back country chef Tug Lieberman
- Alaska artifacts and dog sled stories by veteran musher Joe LaFieve
- Many more exciting demonstrations

Vendor booths will be set up by noon on Friday so you'll have plenty of time to peruse their wares-compare pack saddles, buy new tack, browse western art, etc.

Friday evening
- Social hour with cash bar starting at 7:00 P.M. followed by bluegrass music with Roy Wilhelm and friends from 8:00 P.M. to midnight or so

Saturday morning
- Silent auction begins, and runs all day
- A video history of the formation of the Back Country Horsemen, narrated by the grandson of one of the founders
- Panel discussion by BCH charter members *"Why BCH needed to be formed,"* moderated by Rick Potts

  Did you know that in 1973 there were plans to ban horse use in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex, the Anaconda-Pintler Wilderness and the Selway-Bitter Root Wilderness?
- Business meeting of the Back Country Horsemen of Montana

Saturday lunch
- Lunch speaker, Mike McGlenn, Back Country Horsemen of America chairman

Saturday afternoon seminars
- GPS, map and compass reading by Robert Eversole
- Presentation by LaSalle Equine Clinic
- Cowboys of the open range by Stu Sorensen, veteran packer and historian
- Knife making, use, care and types of knives by Steven Kelly

Saturday evening
- Social hour with cash bar starts at 5:00 P.M.
- 40th anniversary of the Back Country Horsemen banquet 6:00-7:15PM
- Keynote speaker, Rick Potts, *"Why Back Country Horsemen need to stay politically active"* 7:15-8:00 PM
- Live auction with auctioneer Joe Warner 8:15-8:45PM. Among the many items are a set of bear proof boxes and a pallet of feed.
- Silent auction closes and winners will be announced
- Dance the night away to country music by Roy Wilhelm and the Ashley Creek Ramblers 9:00PM-1:00AM

Sunday
- Cowboy church 7:00AM
- Presidents' breakfast 8:00AM
- Business meeting continues 9:00AM-12:00PM
- State board meeting 12:00PM

Convention questions? Call Andy Breland at 261-1109

BACK COUNTRY HORSEMEN OF MONTANA
2013 CONVENTION REGISTARTION

HOSTED BY BACK COUNTRY HORSEMEN OF THE FLATHEAD

Where it All Began

April 5 - 7, 2013
Red Lion Hotel
20 North Main Street
Kalispell, Montana 59901
(406) 751-5050 or (800) 733-5466

Room blocks until March 5 under
Back Country Horsemen at $79 (plus tax) per night

Convention Registration

Name(s) _____ Years in BCH_____

Chapter_____ Are you a Delegate? (Circle) Yes / No

Address (Street, City, State, Zip) _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

Registration Fee (includes Sat. lunch and 40th Anniversary Banquet):

Convention Tickets	Per Person	Number of Tickets	Total
Full Convention (paid by March 1)	$75.00	X	$
Late Full Convention (paid after March 1)	$85.00	X	$

Banquet dinner choice: (circle) Prime Rib, Stuffed Chicken Breast, Vegetarian Lasagna

Spouse and/or Guest Registration

Spouse / Guest Name _____ Spouse / Guest Name_____
Spouse / Guest Name _____ Spouse / Guest Name _____

Guest Tickets	Fee	Number of Tickets	Guest Total
Saturday Lunch	$14.00	X	$
Saturday 40th Anniversary Banquet	$30.00	X	$

Banquet dinner choice: (circle) Prime Rib, Stuffed Chicken Breast, Vegetarian Lasagna

Total Registration Paid $_____

Please make checks payable to BCHF and mail to:
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PO Box 1192 • Columbia Falls, MT 59912-1192

OR fill in credit card info:

Visa or MC	- - -	Exp. Date
Signature		3-digit CVC

Registration questions: Keni Hopkins (406) 892-7490 / rkhopkins@centurylink.net

Mules of the Remount - A Legend Is Born

by Peyton Moncure, Forest History Society

Nineteen Thirty was a good year in the Northern Region. Good because, among other reasons, that year saw the beginning of a colorful project that became closely identified with the U.S. Forest Service—the establishment of the Remount Depot with a promising program involving pack mules and saddle horses.

Here, in a beautiful location up Ninemile Creek about 30 miles from Regional headquarters in Missoula, Region 1 began the acquiring and breeding of superior pack mules and saddle horses which were to have a special destiny. Here would be headquartered the elite in pack and riding stock especially developed for the western mountains; and here would take place their training for the important role of transporting freight in the rugged forests of the Region, hauling supplies to fire lines, servicing lookouts, transporting construction materials into back country Ranger Stations and spike camps. This was the "Time of the Mule." This would be transportation with a capital "T".

Begun in 1930, phased out in 1954, the Ninemile Remount Depot saw history made, saw colorful characters and colorful events, saw the passing of the mule era with the great pack strings, witnessed the coming of the "Tin Goose"—Ford Tri-motor whose ilk was responsible, in the final analysis, for the demise of the Remount Depot. In between these dates, the Remount Depot and its neighborhood partner, the Winter Range near Perma, saw such events as the Forest Service "field days"—exhibitions put on for the public during which anyone could partake of a barbecue lunch for twenty-five cents, could watch packers load and show their pack strings in action, and could watch rodeo-type displays of bronc riding, lassoing, and other skills expected on a working stock ranch.

During these field days of the 1930s and 1940s, Dave Pronovost, the Forest Service blacksmith, demonstrated how the toughest and most stubborn of mules could be shod efficiently and without injury to either blacksmith or mule. It was during the early 1940s that Pronovost became known as the "Flying Blacksmith" when the Forest Service started flying him into Big Prairie on the Flathead to shoe the large number of mules kept there during the summer. He attained a record of 34 horses and mules shod in one day.

It was at the Remount Depot that a delegation of United Nations foresters stayed for several days and nights as part of their educational field trips to forestry-oriented projects in various parts of the world. These foreign foresters, most of who could speak very little or no English, were an interesting group. One of the highlights of their stay here was the capture of a bothersome black bear in a bacon-baited bear trap made of a large culvert. The most interested observed was a German forester, a "Baron" something-or-other, who was so fascinated by the bear that the rest of his colleagues immediately dubbed him "Smokey Baron," and the name stuck with him.

The Remount and its pack strings took part in some of the filming of "Red Skies of Montana," by 20th Century Fox. Incidentally, it was on a motorcycle ride between the Remount Depot and Missoula that the originally chosen star, Victor Mature, was involved in a wreck that landed him in a Missoula hospital for a time with a broken leg. After that happened the movie company packed up and went home to Hollywood, but were back the next summer for another try at filming the movie. (The final version was shot the following year with Richard Widmark as the star.)

It was during the late 1930s that a fleet of three giant "transporters" for mules came into existence—giant stock bodies built onto Kenworth chassis, each capable of carrying an entire pack string and its lead saddle horse. These 10-animal trucks had 10 wheels, the four sets of rear dual wheels being driven by tandem drive shaft, and were planned and developed at the Forest Service Engineering Shop in Missoula by Dave Pronovost, the blacksmith in charge of the stock. Frequently during the fire season these green behemoths—sometimes all three in a caravan—would pass through Missoula loaded with mules on their way to a fire, many pedestrians stopping to gaze at the thrilling sight of the unusual travelers whose heads and necks extended above the solid metal truck racks.

Many of the "old-timers" who were associated with the Remount Depot during its heyday have died, and information and photographs are not as complete as could be desired. But an old letter written by E. Arnold Hanson, Assistant Chief, I&E, Northern Region, bears this bit of interesting information:

Mules of the Remount *continued...*

'For your own personal information, you might be interested to know that during the time the Remount Depot was in operation, we raised Morgan, American Saddler, and Thoroughbred horses. Heavy-grade brood mares were crossed with jacks, which in turn were crosses between Spanish and Mammoth breeds to produce the mules we needed for our fire strings. At one time there were ten pack strings at the Remount Depot utilized almost exclusively for fire suppression work. The Depot was abandoned primarily as an economy measure, but also because of our increasing use of aircraft in forest fire control and the constantly increasing number of miles of road in the Region, which cut down our need for pack stock.'

Yes, "those were the days." And then it was over. The airplane had won. Planes could drop cargo by parachute onto a fire so much faster than a mule could deliver it. And fewer lookout stations needed to be supplied by pack strings—helicopters could do the job now. In fact, the airplane was even beginning to phase out the lookouts themselves. The fire-spotting plane could do the job better and cheaper.

The words "Remount Depot," "Winter Range," "mules," and "pack string" were fast fading from use. The times—in the words of a certain folksinger—"they were a-changing."

But a legend was being born.

With permission from the Forest History Society: http://www.foresthistory.org/ASPNET/Publications/region/1/early_days/4/contents.htm

Tribulation

Craig Edwards is a farmer and fine art photographer from the Northcentral Montana town of Big Sandy. His work can be seen at the Lost Woodsman Gallery in Lincoln, the Two Rivers Gallery in Big Timber, the S. Jenkins Fine Art Gallery in Butte, and in Big Sandy at the Bear Paw Deli and Miscellanea Antiques. He will also be showing at the Western Heritage Art Show in Great Falls during Russell Week, March 13-17.

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Bear Attack!

Mark Matheny was attacked by a female grizzly bear on a main trail. In less than half a minute the grizzly charged and mauled Mark twice. Mark's partner, Dr. Fred Bahnson, reacted immediately to Mark's condition and treated his wounds. Fortunately Dr. Bahnson got Mark out of the woods and to the emergency room without further incident. Mark suffered extensive bite lacerations to the head and neck, bite lacerations to the right arm, and also to the left anterior chest. This bear attack is what motivated Mark to establish UDAP Industries, Inc.

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Backcountry... Can It be Defined?

by Kathy Hundley, Selway-Pintler Wilderness BCHM

Is your definition of backcountry the same as the person riding the trail beside you? Is it the same as a co-worker, family member, a stranger passing by or someone you know who lives in another state? The answer is, "Probably not."

The Mirriam Webster Dictionary defines "backcountry" as: noun: "a rural region that forms the edge of the settled or developed part of a country;" For example, "He took a month's supplies and headed out to the backcountry." *Synonyms*–backcountry, backland(s), backwater, backwoods, bush, hinterland, outback, outlands, up-country; *Related Words*–boonies, boondocks, country, countryside, sticks.

Several years ago, while driving home from our Back Country Horsemen of Montana State Convention, my friends and I got into an interesting discussion on what the definition of the word "backcountry." To my surprise, the answers, though at times similar, were more often very different. This raised my curiosity so I began to ask everyone what their definition of backcountry was, even my students in school. I thought I knew exactly what it meant to me, but after these discussions, I'm not so sure anymore. My conclusion is that the term "backcountry" represents more a feeling than a geographical area.

We all know the definition of "wilderness", but have you ever defined "backcountry" for yourself, as a Back Country Horseman? Does your idea of the backcountry have to mean wilderness, or can it be the patch of woods behind your house that takes you away from civilization and the pressures of your everyday life, even for just an hour or two. Following are some of the answers I heard. See if any of these definitions are the same for you. Ponder the dilemma of a concrete definition.

For some, "backcountry" has to be roadless–similar to wilderness. It's a place that you can only get to on foot or by horseback. Does that mean that the 15 miles of Forest Service road lined with alpine, spruce and fir you just drove at 10 mph, pulling your horse trailer to get to the trailhead for your five-day pack trip into the wilderness, is NOT backcountry? Hmmm!

"I think backcountry is just a few minutes from town, where there are no houses, and I can hike with my dogs, trail ride and ski. I feel like I am out in the woods and I can't hear anything but the wind and wildlife…no vehicles." Some argue this is "front country." Can you define the difference?

One friend said that if you ride the trail and get so far in that you have to make camp, that is backcountry. In other words, it is a pack trip. So, you want to go on a pack trip into the wilderness– get away from it all–and the wilderness boundary begins at the trailhead, right where you just drove to with your truck and horse trailer; is it all backcountry, maybe?

One thing we can all probably agree on is that our backcountry here in Montana and in the other Rocky Mountain States is a lot bigger and wilder than it is around the rest of the country.

High school students' comments included: "deep trails way back," "somewhere where you can feel disconnected from society." One student defined backcountry as, "anywhere my cell phone won't work!" Students also felt that it was a "feeling." Their perceptions seem largely to be defined by where and how they were raised. Students born in Montana tend to define "backcountry" as trails way back. Students who moved here from larger cities consider areas right around town as backcountry.

One thing we can all probably agree on is that our backcountry here in Montana and in the other Rocky Mountain States is a lot bigger and wilder than it is around the rest of the country.

Yes, wilderness is definitely backcountry, but what about the rest of the United States? Don't you imagine that the definition of backcountry for the Back Country Horsemen Arizona and New Mexico would include desert; for the Back Country Horsemen of Florida, backcountry would include swampland; and for the Back Country Horsemen of Michigan, Indiana and Illinois, it would include rolling hillsides covered with hardwoods and cedars?

One thing is for sure; backcountry is global! And, it's up to us to continue using it wisely and preserve it for future generations. Backcountry is beautiful, wild, precious and humbling. It's the place we Back Country Horsemen want–no, need– to keep our inner spirits alive and well!

Tin Cup Lake near Darby, 11 miles from trailhead: backcountry? …a definite YES!

The Chinese Wall in the Bob Marshall Wilderness: Undeniably backcountry.

Painted Rocks Lake on West Fork Road: backcountry view, but alas, some would say NO because of the road and bridge.

We all know the definition of "wilderness", but have you ever defined "backcountry" for yourself, as a Back Country Horseman?

Lake Como, a popular swimming, boating & fishing lake with stock trails all around; looks like backcountry, but only minutes from the town of Darby …some would say NO.

For me, and for thousands with similar inclinations, the most important passion of life is the overpowering desire to escape periodically from the churches of a mechanistic civilization. To us the enjoyment of solitude, complete independence, and the beauty of undefiled panoramas is absolutely essential to happiness. —Bob Marshall

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BACK COUNTRY HORSEMEN

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See order form and color choices on back ⇨

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