Decker Dispatch

February 2014 www.bchmt.org

Letter from the Chair

Mark Himmel, Chairman, BCH Montana

Mark Himmel looks back on two years as Chairman of Back Country Horsemen of Montana.

Well here I am writing my last article as Chairman. Where have the last two years gone? Before I was elected Chairman, I had my own list of things I wanted to try and get accomplished. Looking back now I wonder, what was I thinking? Situations and events sort of take over and consume most of your time. Just keeping up with the unexpected is a challenge.

I was at a Forest Service meeting at Lubrecht last week and the topic we talked about was relationships with Forest Service personnel. Many members work with a Forest Service Trail Coordinator and we tend to develop a close friendship with them. If you want to be successful, with less stress, it really helps if everyone gets along. In time though they may retire or move onto another position and now there is someone new.

Personally I hate change; it's like starting over, and I'm not sure what to expect. Well think of it from their view. A new job – they want to impress their boss and get something accomplished, and they are faced with us. Most of us have been in our part of the forest longer than they've been alive (not that we are old).

Starting new and building trust is just part of life I guess. Reaching out and inviting the new coordinator helps build that trust. Everything we do may help them get to know us; club meetings, packing clinics, work projects, that occasional fun ride, or just sitting at the trailhead after a hard day's work and enjoying a burger. In time they may move on and you start over again but both have experiences that stay with each of us. That next position for them may include a BCH chapter wondering what to expect from this new person.

I have learned many things from Forest Service personnel over time and I pass that knowledge along to new club members or new Forest Service personnel; makes life fun!

In closing I would like to thank members for their time and dedication. This organization is what we make it.

See you on the trail!

Mark Himmel

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.

Progress (?) of the Rocky Mountain Front Heritage Act

Recent news source reports have provided some concerns involving the progress of the Rocky Mountain Front Heritage Act (RMFHA) toward its passage by congress. Those concerns, regarding political activity, includes the notice that Senator Baucus, the chief sponsor of the Act, has chosen not to run for re-election to his position in the US Senate. Subsequent actions have provided notice that he will resign earlier if he is able to obtain an appointment and confirmation as the US Ambassador to China. And, more recently, rumbling that the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee wanted to expedite that confirmation process, again shortening the time that Sen Baucus would have to complete his remaining work with the Senate.

Having attended two meetings recently regarding concerns for the RMFHA it has been learned that Sen Baucus has two main legislative goals remaining on his agenda, those being passage of the North Fork (of the Flathead River) Watershed Protection Act and the RMFHA. That sounds positive from a Senator that enjoys a powerful position on the Appropriations Committee, but it is not without its limitations. The Act has garnered approval of the Senate Energy Committee where it resides, but passage of legislation specifically regarding conservation/preservation bills is difficult to achieve in the current political climate. That means that the bill would need to be possibly accumulated with similar bills from other states or attached to legislation that has significant possibilities of passage. Both are possible, however, the process required to assemble similar bills takes time and so does the process of finding the appropriate legislative vehicle to which the Act can be attached in an acceptable manner.

So, what can we do to enhance the process? Not a lot. We can make calls to Max's office encouraging him to expedite passage of the Act and I truly believe that he is concentrating his effort to pass the Act presently, but time is still the enemy. Max's staff is also in a state of flux brought on by his changing roles. Several will lose their jobs, some may move to China with him and others may obtain employment with other congressional staffs. Hope and prayer seem the better options at this time mixed with a little patience. If passage doesn't occur we will be back in a formative mode recreating the package in a less motivated environment. That means that Congressman Daines is presently in an election campaign and not willing to commit to anything that he views as potentially damaging to his election. It is also questionable how supportive he may be after the election given some of his more recent votes.

I'm Hoping for the Best

Merlyn Huso,

BCH of MT representative on the Coalition to Protect the Rocky Mountain Front

Charlie O'Leary regretfully announces a cancellation of the scenic tour around the Alice Mine Dump.

BCH of MT Contacts

Chairman	Mark Himmel 406.771.0809 markhimmel@bridgemail.com	**National Directors**	Dave Crawford 406.675.4293 cbardiamond1@ronan.net
Vice-Chairman	Connie Long 406.644.7889 long@montana.com		Chuck Miller 406.961.5453 circlemr@cybernet1.com
Treasurer	Sandy Taylor 406.842.7843 boyd.taylor@att.net		(Alternate) John Chepulis 406.322.4823 barcdiamond@gmail.com
Secretary	Nancy Pollman 406.546.6492 npollman20@aol.com	**State Newsletter Editor**	Noorjahan Parwana 406.782.3682 nparwana@hotmail.com

HORSING AROUND
ON THE GREAT DIVIDE
WITH CDT MONTANA

The Continental Divide Trail was recognized by Congress in 1978 as a place worth protecting for its scenic, historic, cultural and natural resources. Officially called the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST), this path comes with a special set of regulations and funding. Think of it like a protected area, but as a long stretch of trail versus a chunk of land in one place.

Together with several Backcountry Horsemen chapters in the state, the Montana Wilderness Association hosts over 100 volunteers each summer via the CDT Montana trail program. These hard-working volunteers (both trail crew and packers) pitch in to help complete and maintain Montana's longest non-motorized trail. Local BCH clubs offer a great service by packing in gear, food and tools.

On behalf of trail users, all of MWA and the trail crew volunteers that join us on our projects: *THANK YOU*. I want to recognize your incredible contribution to our trail system and to a strong partnership. Together we get a lot of hard work done!

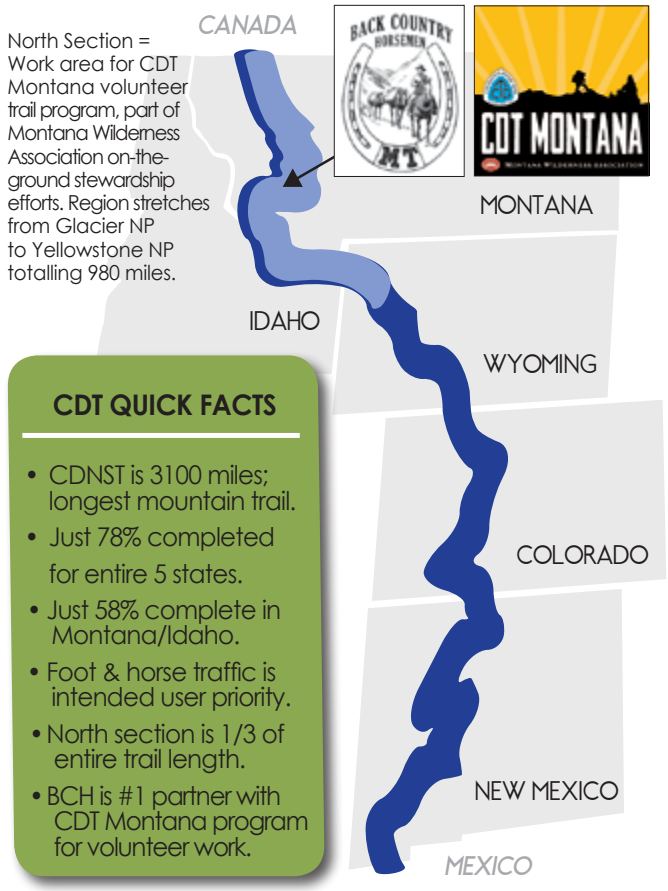
But it's not *all* work. On our joint projects we also share a lot of laughs, tall tales, good food and unforgettable memories. Through these experiences we build stronger working relationships and friendships.

I am proud to say that many BCH packers are not just volunteers, but my friends. Thank you for your contribution of time, energy and donations to our shared trails. I can't wait to see you out there next summer!

With Gratitude,

Shannon Freix, CDT Montana
Montana Wilderness Association
www.cdtmontana.org

CONTINENTAL DIVIDE NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL



CDT QUICK FACTS

- CDNST is 3100 miles; longest mountain trail.
- Just 78% completed for entire 5 states.
- Just 58% complete in Montana/Idaho.
- Foot & horse traffic is intended user priority.
- North section is 1/3 of entire trail length.
- BCH is #1 partner with CDT Montana program for volunteer work.

FEATURED CLUB: UPPER CLARK FORK

Thanks to Wade and the Upper Clark Fork BCH. Not only do they know how to pack some loads, but they have a good time doing it!

How many times have you packed with CDT Montana? I've packed 4 trips on the CDT with volunteer crews. Other packers included my wife, Lonnie Murphy, Pat & Wendy George, Reed Alred, Mike and Cheri Fischer, Todd Bosse and Chuck & Dana Gilman. I hope I didn't forget anyone.

Where have you packed on the CDT? Mostly in the Anaconda-Pintler Wilderness to beautiful alpine lakes like Johnson and Seymour. We explore new areas in between dropping off volunteers, then pick them up a week later. It's a great way to spend a week in the woods for both of us!

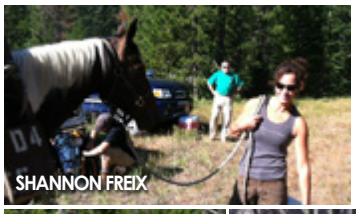
Why do your spend your time volunteering when you could just head into the woods for your own vacation? We all use the trail, so we should all pitch in to help take care of them. It makes sense to invest in what you love.

I would also add that every single person can make a difference. We have a small club so we cannot put enough bodies on the trail every weekend to cut trees and dig trail. BUT...when 2 people from our club pack in 10 trail crew volunteers, we've just multiplied our work by 5! It's all about teamwork and working together.

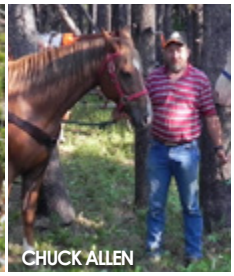
If you can pack this summer, please contact Shannon Freix at 406.499.2309 or sfreix@wildmontana.org to find out more.

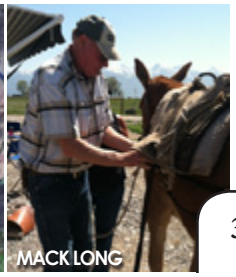
MIKE & CHERI FISHER

WADE MURPHY


SHANNON FREIX

CHARLIE O'LEARY


CHUCK ALLEN


MACK LONG

The Back Country Horsemen of Missoula proudly host

LEGENDS & LEGACY

Back Country Horsemen of Montana State Convention

April 4, 5 & 6, 2014 Hilton Garden Inn Missoula

Come Join Us In Missoula!

WORKSHOPS & SEMINARS

ENTERTAINMENT BY: WESTERN UNION

SILENT AUCTION - LIVE AUCTION

RAFFLE - PHOTO CONTEST

COMMERCIAL VENDORS

Please check our website
for up to date information and registration forms:

www.bchmt.org/wp/missoula/2014-convention/

Or for more information call:

Mark Wright 406-258-6795 Ken Brown 406-207-6067

The Back Country Horsemen of Missoula proudly host

LEGENDS & LEGACY

Back Country Horsemen of Montana State Convention

April 4, 5 & 6, 2014

Hilton Garden Inn Missoula

3720 No. Reserve

1-800-782-9444, 1-406-532-5300, Fax: 1-406-532-5305

Registration Form

Name:_____

Chapter:_____

Mailing Address:_____

City, State, Zip_____

Phone_____ E-Mail_____

Registration fee includes all Convention activities. ***Registration Received by March 20: $90***

Late Registration after March 20: $95

Name for Name Tag_____	$90	$95	$_____
Name for Name Tag_____	$90	$95	$_____
Guest Ticket for Saturday Lunch		$20.00	$_____
Guest Ticket for Saturday Banquet		$33.00	$_____
Guest Ticket for Sunday Breakfast		$15.00	$_____
Name for Name Tag_____			

Make check payable to Back Country Horsemen of Missoula ***TOTAL $_____***

Mail to address below, c/o Dan Harper

Please circle choice of entree: Chicken Cacciatore OR Roasted Beef Strip Loin

Hilton Garden Inn *Personalized Group Rate Website:*

Hilton Group Name: Back Country Horsemen of Missoula, Group Code: HORSE

$100.00/night, King or Two Queen Beds

Rooms blocked under Back Country Horsemen Montana until March 15

Website: http://bchmt.org/wp/missoula/

Questions or Comments Contact: 1-406-531-7408,

or e-mail caroline2009@questoffice.net

PO Box 2121 - Missoula, Montana - 59806

Back Country Horsemen of Montana State Convention
April 4, 5 & 6, 2014, Hilton Garden Inn, Missoula
Raffle Items

Mission Mountain Getaway Cabin

Win a relaxing and enjoyable four night stay for four people at this lovely cabin located 13 miles south of Swan Lake on MT Hwy. 83. This 530+ square foot cabin with modern conveniences offers a welcome break from hectic daily life and is just minutes from trails into the Mission Mountains and the Bob Marshall Wilderness. Horses are welcome! Facilities include corrals and pasture. *Donated by Scott Tuxbury.*

Ruby, The Ninemile Mule

This bronze sculpted by Bill Ohrmann of Drummond is of Ruby, a mule that was assigned to the Ninemile Ranger District. She was one of the Northern Region Pack String that made the trip to Pasadena in 1991 for the Rose Parade. Ruby died at age 29 on the District. Ruby has special meaning to us as we celebrate BCH Missoula and BCH Montana 40th Anniversary this year. *Donations were made to the National Museum of Forest Service History that holds Mr. Ohrmann's Letter of Authenticity for reproductions and to the Bronze Horse Foundry in Corvallis for casting. Donors are: Earl Tidball & Lana Hamilton, Gary Salisbury & Caroline Bauer, Richard & Diane Tamcke, John & Myra Mumma.*

Bob Marshall Wilderness Outfitter Pack Trip

Enjoy a five to seven day pack trip vacation for two. Mack and Connie Long will take you into pristine back country for a memorable Bob Marshall experience that will inspire you for life. Imagine waking up to smells of campfire coffee and fresh mountain air. Your Wilderness trip will include a variety of activities from adventure to relaxation. This is the trip of a lifetime! *Donated by Bob Marshall Wilderness Outfitters, Mack and Connie Long.*

Decker Pack Saddle with O. P. RobinetteTree

The first Decker pack saddle was used by an Arapaho packer in the Idaho mining boom of 1898-1900. Decker brothers made improvements to the Arapaho cover, or "half-breed" as it is known today. The modern Decker pack saddle tree was improved by blacksmith/saddle maker, Oliver P. Robinette (OPR) of Kooskia, Idaho shortly after 1906. Robinette and the Decker brothers combined ideas and marketed the tree as the Decker. This is a fine piece of equipment for any Wilderness back country pack trip. *Pack saddle tree donated by Smoke Elser; leatherwork by Larry Henderson, leather donated by BCH of Missoula.*

For Raffle Tickets Call Jan Rach, 531-9027

$2.00 Each

Drawing at the Banquet April 5, 2014

Glacier Park Ride – September 2013

photos and story by ***Pam Mariner, Charlie Russell Chapter BCH MT***

Chief Mountain

The Charlie Russell Back Country Horsemen Club members enjoyed another Glacier National Park fun ride thanks to gracious hostess and member Ginger Flesh. The weekend started with a Friday night chili feed put on by Ginger.

Saturday was up early and off to enjoy a most spectacular ride around Chief Mountain. We started by the Canadian border crossing and we rode up the west side of Chief Mountain. We went across the rock slide at Gable Pass, which was a little challenging. Then down by Slide Lake and out the east side of the mountain out to the highway. We had left a car there to shuttle the drivers back to the trailer.

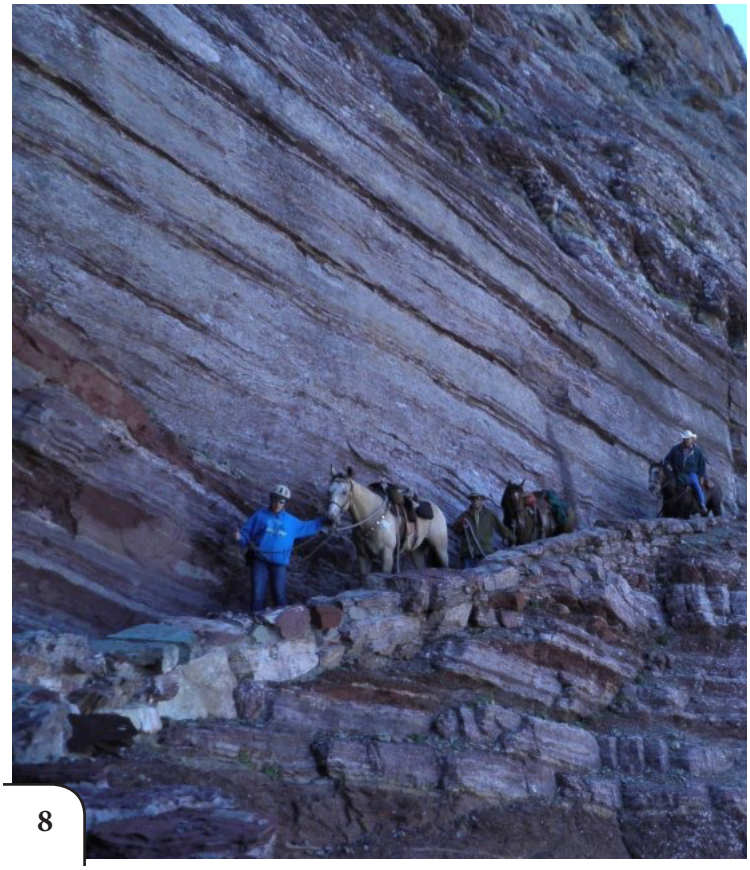
Back at Ginger's we enjoyed a delicious pot luck dinner.

On Sunday we started at Many Glacier.

What an amazing ride, almost to Swift Current Pass. From our lofty lunch spot we viewed many glaciers and many lakes. After we all took advantage of the photo op with our horses we rode back.

On our return ride we had the amazing opportunity to see a bull moose and watch the cow moose swim across the lake to us and exit the lake not far from us. I think she was curious about the horses and the horses were definitely curious about her. We encountered hikers from every corner of the U.S. and also France who were mostly all friendly and courteous with the trail.

Another great weekend enjoying the beauty and splendor that God has blessed us with here in Montana. Our time spent with our trusty mounts and friends will forever be in our memories.



SAFETY THOUGHTS

Skull Safety

by Kathy Austin, Charlie Russell Chapter BCHMT

Do you wear an equine helmet when you ride or when you are working around your beautiful critters? Have you just "thought about it", but somehow….Maybe you thought they were too expensive, would be too hot, too uncomfortable, wouldn't look as "cowboy" as your favorite hat, etc. All NOT true—except maybe the "cowboy" part. ☺

Kathy Austin and Shade

I love my hats too, but: Several years ago, after Alice Boughton relayed some of her experiences while wearing her helmet, and what could have happened if she hadn't had it on, I bought a Troxel.

At least twice, my brain bucket would not have fared well. Sep 7, 2013 was the biggest test of all. Bill said when Shade jumped out from under me as I was mounting; he saw me fly over backwards towards my head and just knew I would have a broken back. Our Lord kept me from having extremely serious injuries and my helmet made it easier for Him! I remember landing on the right side of my head, feeling lots of pain and, most scary, I couldn't catch my breath.

Bottom line: Multiple rib fractures, collar bone, hematomas, and pinched nerves where chips were broken off a couple vertebrae are all healing. I did NOT have any issues with my head, eyes or ears! The LifeFlight EMTs looked at my helmet, said it was a good one and that it absolutely saved me from much worse trauma.

Now that I have your thoughts, will you consider changing your "hat only" habit?

All infinite things reveal infinitude:
The mountain with its singular bright shade
Like the blue shine on freshly frozen snow,
The after-light upon ice-burdened pines...

from "North American Sequence" by Theodore Roethke

---

photo with permission- Hans Heiner Buhr

RED LODGE – Ernest C Strum, Lt. Col., U.S. Army, retired, passed away peacefully surrounded by family Dec. 19, 2013, at his home in Red Lodge. He was born on Jan. 31, 1931, in Seattle, WA, graduating from the University of Washington, College of Forestry in 1954, and married Marjorie Moyer that same year. The son of Charles and Erna Strum, he was the oldest of three siblings.

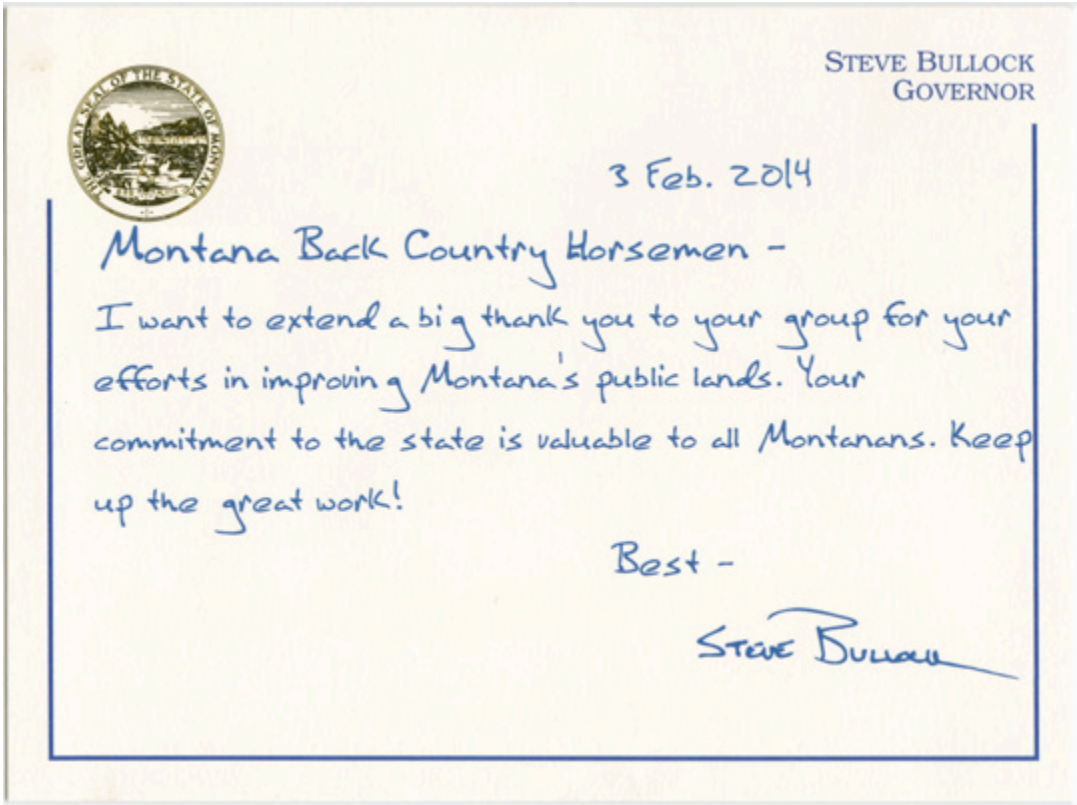
Ernie had a strong passion for the outdoors. During his college years he worked summers as a fire lookout for the U.S. Forest Service. He enjoyed camping, hunting, fishing, horsepacking and backpacking. He especially loved spending time horse packing with Marge in the Absaroka Beartooth Wilderness. During his retirement Ernie and Marge explored Alaska on three extended trips with their trusty van "Basecamp."

Ernie was a decorated U.S. Army veteran, completing two tours in Vietnam and serving posts in Panama, Venezuela, Germany and various locations around the continental U.S. Ernie was a Senior Aviator awarded the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star, and the Air Medal. Following retirement from the Army, Ernie enjoyed a successful career in real estate, opening the Red Lodge office of C-Mor Real Estate. After 20 years with C-Mor, Ernie followed his true passion and founded Rocky Fork Guide Service, becoming a licensed outfitter and fly fishing guide. Ernie was happiest teaching, which included over 30 years of volunteer work as a hunter's education chief instructor for the MT Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks in Carbon County.

Ernest C Strum

He was deeply rooted in the Red Lodge community, involved in the Chamber of Commerce, Inquiry Club, Rotary, and helped establish the Beartooth Nature Center, the Silver Run Wildlife Management Area, and the Lily Pad Lake Trail. Ernie was also an active member of the Beartooth Back Country Horsemen, enjoying his love of horses and the back country.

Ernie was very proud of his family and their accomplishments. They know that he wants us to keep his memory in our hearts, but not to mourn his passing.



STEVE BULLOCK
GOVERNOR

3 Feb. 2014

Montana Back Country Horsemen -

I want to extend a big thank you to your group for your efforts in improving Montana's public lands. Your commitment to the state is valuable to all Montanans. Keep up the great work!

Best -

Steve Bullock

Mules in the Mines: Part II

from ***Copper Camp: the Lusty Story of Butte, Montana, the Richest Hill on Earth***

Union-minded, the mules knew to the minute when the eight-hour shift was in. It was an utter impossibility to work them a moment past the allotted time. Another sense told them of the approach of the dinner hour. Although the mining companies allowed a half-hour for dinner, it had long been the custom of the miners to extend this to a full hour. The mules seemed acquainted with this fact and no amount of urging or pleading could get them away from the barn and their oats until every one of the sixty minutes had passed.

On upgrades, where it was too steep to pull the cars, it was customary for the mules to about-face and "breast" or push each car over the grade with their chests, then return to the head of the train, and resume their proper position when the grade was passed.

In most instances s deep affection existed between the skinners and the mules. Woe betide the misguided miner, no matter what the provocation, who would dare abuse a mule or horse. Some bitter feuds developed for this very reason.

There were instances where mule would work for only one certain skinner. Old-timers tell of a white mule, Nellie, at the Mountain Con Mine, who became deeply attached to her skinner, a young Irishman named Denny. Nellie would absolutely refuse to budge from her barn for anyone else.

Her master liked to celebrate a little on pay day, and occasionally could not make the grade the following morn. On these days Nellie remained idle. No amount of persuasion from a strange skinner could move her. No Denny, no work. The cars of rock had to be pushed out to the station by manpower. The occurrence was repeated at more frequent intervals, once the wily Denny discovered that the level could not operate efficiently without him.

The gruff foreman, Jim Brennan, finally grew tired of this display of temperament on the part of Nellie and the skinner and presented Denny with a pink slip. Nellie became disconsolate. No human could grieve more than she did over the absence of her adored one. First kindness was tried, and later force. Neither was of any avail. As a last resource, Brennan had to locate Denny and rehire him. The meeting of mule and skinner was most touching. Nellie immediately went back to work and continued to pull the trains under Denny's guidance until he gave up mining. Nellie was then brought up to the surface and retired to greener pastures.

Trussed mule ready to be thrown, bundled and lowered down the mineshaft.

Many of the underground mules adopted some of the miners' more pernicious habits."Peerless," a shredded brand of chewing tobacco and a great favorite among the underground workers, is noted for its durability and strength. Many miners cultivated the custom of giving the mules a good-sized chew of the weed. The animals formed a liking for the nicotine and would go to any extreme to obtain the biting leaf. An unerring sense of smell would direct them to any miner who had Peerless in his possession. And it was not unusual to see the tobacco-seeking mule nuzzling the miner's clothes with his nose, giving him a thorough frisking. Workers' coats or jumpers left hanging in the drifts or stations were continually being rifled by the tobacco-loving animals. Mules were known to have refused to work unless given their daily ration of tobacco…

The day of the mules in the mines is gone forever. Modern motors and machinery have supplanted the faithful animals, and today in the entire Butte mining district there are only two or three mules to be found. Although still a frequently heard ballad, *My Sweetheart's a Mule in the Mine* pertains only to fond memories of the past.

This article used with permission from Riverbend Publishing, Helena, MT.

Copper Camp – The Lusty Story of Butte, Montanan, the Richest Hill on Earth. Copyright 1970. 1943 Montana Writers' Project, Work Projects Administration of the State of Montana.

Photo source: Museum of Mining, Butte MT.

Montana Back Country Horsemen State Chapters

Beartooth
PO Box 614
Absorakee, MT 59001

Bitterroot
PO Box 1083
Hamilton, MT 59840

Cabinet
PO Box 949
Libby, MT 59923

Charlie Russell
PO Box 3563
Great Falls, MT 59404

East Slope
307 N Main
Conrad, MT 59425

Flathead
PO Box 1192
Columbia Falls, MT 59912

Gallatin Valley
PO Box 3232
Bozeman, MT 59772

Hi-Line
PO Box 1379
Cut Bank, MT 59427

Judith Basin
PO Box 93
Lewistown, MT 59457

Last Chance
PO Box 4008
Helena, MT 59601

Mile High
PO Box 4434
Butte, MT 59702

Mission Valley
PO Box 604
Ronan, MT 59864

Missoula
PO Box 2121
Missoula, MT 59806

Selway-Pintler Wilderness
PO Box 88
Hamilton, MT 59840

Three Rivers
PO Box 251
Dillon, MT 59725

Upper Clark Fork
PO Box 725
Deer Lodge, MT 59722

Wild Horse Plains
PO Box 398
Plains, MT 59859

If you would like to join, please contact a chapter in your area.