

Bull Hill Fall 2016

Sunday 10/2

Good morning from the Comfort Inn in downtown Colville Washington.

Another Bull Hill adventure has begun.

This year the fall adventure is a little bit shorter than usual. We normally arrive at the ranch on a Saturday but when we booked they did not have any lodging available for Saturday night. They must have had a good week. And at the other end we are going home on Saturday rather than the usual Sunday departure. I am committed to giving a presentation at the local library on Sunday and that could not be rescheduled.

So it is a Sunday to Saturday trip this time. Tom and Sabine will be in at the end of the week.

Les and I left Meadowbrook early yesterday morning and had a non-eventful trip out here to Spokane. We flew Southwest and went through Denver. We were in Spokane by 2:30 PDT. We picked up a rental car and headed to the Total Wine store in Spokane. After beefing up the local economy we drove up to Colville arriving about 5 pm. Les made a brief walk through of both 40 North and Clark's All Sports but there was nothing there we needed. But Walmart was also on our schedule and we did pick up one or two things there.

Our "go to" restaurant in Colville has been Lovett's. But they closed shortly after our June trip. It seems our twice a year visits were not enough to keep them in business. We had dinner at Maverick's which was OK but certainly not special. We checked into the Comfort Inn and because of the time change we were in bed early.

And that meant we were up early. We will be on east coast time for a couple of days. Right now it is 37 degrees out and I am waiting for the sun to come up. When it does I will do a little local birding before we head up to the ranch. Being a Sunday we can get there at 10 am and enjoy Brunch. We will be out riding this afternoon.

In some correspondence, Tucker said they were doing a "little landscaping" at the ranch. I am not sure what that is and we look forward to seeing what is going on.

Monday 10/34

Good morning from the Cookhouse

34 degrees on the thermometer on the porch.

I went out and did some birding in Colville yesterday morning. It is not an official trip to the ranch if I do not visit the Colville Sewage Ponds at least once.

By 9:45 Les and I were on the road to the ranch. Since we had plenty of time we drove up to Northport on the east side of the Columbia River. It was a nice drive and provided us with a different view of the ranch and the Moses Overlook. We got to the ranch in time for brunch. Lots of people around. This past weekend there were two weddings here. One was a small 4 person wedding on Friday night and the other was a large wedding on Saturday night. Everyone connected with the weddings headed out after brunch.

Les and I were able to retrieve our stuff from the Bullagio about 11:30 and by 12:15 we were down at the barn. Jordana Wiley (Wrangler) and her boyfriend took Les and I out for a "warm-up" ride. About 2.5 hours in the area of Fenceline, back of the lake, near Cougar, etc. It was nice way to start the week.

There were cows to be moved yesterday. They needed to be removed from neighbor's property (mostly the Butorac's) and pushed up to Pete's. They expect to ship cows out today, Tuesday and Wednesday.

Joe and Hunter, plus three guests left the ranch at 11:30 am and trailered down the hill. I am not sure what areas they covered but it should be noted that they did not get back to the ranch until after 8 pm. Sundown was at 6:26 pm. It seems they did make it to Pete's with a bit of light and then got the cattle in the pens. They then trailered up from there.

Les and I are glad we were not on that ride!

The guests from the weekend are pretty much gone. There is Paul and Linda Moneymaker here. They came in on Thursday and will be here about 2 weeks. Two ladies are here together. One is Shannon who has been here before when we were here. She trailers her own horse in. A family group of 6 came in yesterday and are in the Bullagio until Wednesday. Another single lady came in last night.

We have not seen Pete yet. The boys are using his truck for trailering and he does not have it available to drive up here. I am sure this is part of a plan to cut down on his driving.

Hunter, Tucker, Joe and Brent are all doing well. We have not had a chance to really talk but there will be time this week. Mitch the cook mentioned that they had a really busy summer and he attributed to Tucker's marketing and to having a management team in place that really functions well.

The area in front of the barn that was covered by gravel in June has pretty much reverted back to horse mud. Adding new gravel will be a yearly process.

On the exterior wall of the barn away from the corral, they added screw eyes along the wall this provides them a place to tie up saddled horses before the riders mount. It is better than tying them to the corral fence.

They did a major landscaping up by the cookhouse. They created a large flat area inside the fence to the right of the fire pit when you are facing the fire pit. They added steps up to the fire pit and a major stone retaining wall above the flat area. The walls are in place, the ground is level and the planted grass is just coming up. This will provide a nice flat area for weddings and allow the erection of wedding tents if necessary. And picnic tables out there will provide a nice exterior eating area. This area is a big win. (see picture)

Enough for now. More tomorrow.

Tuesday 10/4

Good morning from the Cookhouse

40 degrees on the thermometer on the porch. A little warmer because of a cloud cover.

Yesterday there was frost in the area but because it is still dark here I have not seen any yet today.

Looking at a long range forecast we could be entering a period of cloudy weather with a chance of rain every day.

Yesterday started sunny but high clouds came in mid-day.

Nice group of people here at the start of the week. Paul and Linda Moneymaker are the only ones that will be here all week. Several people leave tomorrow and others, including the Jovanovich's and Tom and Sabine will be coming in later in the week.

The ranch is in the process of shipping out cows so that is a focus of the ranch. They need to have enough in the pen at Pete's to fill trucks. Two trucks were scheduled yesterday and two more today and to more again tomorrow. They had enough for Monday and today but cows needed to be rounded up for the Wednesday shipment.

Usually we avoid cattle drives because they can be tedious after the initial phase of finding and gathering up the cattle. Les and I would have ridden alone yesterday if we did not join a cattle drive and we decided to be sociable and join the adventure. But we made it clear that if things went downhill we were going to split off and go our separate way.

Seven of us set off about 9:45 am. Les, myself, Hunter, Jordana, and three guests. The plan was to go down to Crown Creek, find cows and move them up to Pete's. We started down via Hubbard's and were pleasantly surprised to find cows on Blizzard. About 25 pairs of cows and calves. We gathered them up and pushed them down Hubbard's. When we got close to the road we held the cattle up. Hunter took a couple of guests, including Les, up to Shaffer's and rounded up about another 10 or so pairs. They brought them down the road and we combined the two groups. That was enough to start to Pete's. We pushed them down the county road with little problem. Some traffic went through but none scattered. We got to Pete's about 1 pm. We held them in the pasture while the day's trucks were loading over at the corral. After the trucks left we moved the cows over to the corral and put them in. By then it was about 1:45 and our work was done. We rode back up to the ranch and by 3 pm we were in the barn.

One of the best cattle drives I have ever been on. Hunter was clear about what we were doing and was clear about what we as individuals were to do. And the cows were cooperative. Nice 5 hour plus ride.

John Butorac came up to the ranch on Sunday night. Always interesting to talk to John. It seems that the cows with their cow bells have been a real problem on their property this year. He says that his wife Connie is not handling it well. She is getting very depressed over it. They are in the process of fencing off their property but will not finish until spring. On Monday morning he was at Tucker's house at sunrise telling Tucker he had to get the cows away from his house.

Last night Steve and Sally Shaffer came up to the cookhouse. Nice to see them. Steve is of course interested in what Ed is doing and wishes him the best as he moves forward.

Margarit was the cook last night and that means Mexican food. It was a great meal. Always a treat.

As part of the process of shipping the cattle to market they separate the cows and the calves. That is done in the corral here and cows and calves get loaded on separate trucks. The wranglers are doing it at 7am this morning for the shipment today. Les and I are driving down to Pete's at 6:30 am to watch them do it. I am not sure how exciting it will be to watch but it is certainly something that we don't have the opportunity to see at home.

Not sure what today will bring in the way of riding. We are thinking of a long ride but it might be too much to ask for two good cattle drives on consecutive days.

Wednesday 10/5

Good morning from the Cookhouse

38 degrees on the thermometer on the porch. Cloud cover yesterday kept the high temperature to about 55 degrees. Nice temperature for riding but a bit cool to be outside on the porch.

Yesterday morning Les and I were down at Pete's at 7 am. Trucks were coming in to pick up cows and calves and they needed to be separated. It was a fairly easy process if anything involving cattle can be described as easy. A mixed group of about 25 would be put in a pen. Brent went into the pen and encouraged the cows to leave by an open gate maned by Tucker. That gate lead to a holding pen. Once Brent got all the cows out, the calves that were huddled in the back of the pen were allowed to leave. By that time Tucker had changed the open gate to direct the calves to a separate holding pen. That process went on until all the approximately 200 animals in the big pen were sorted. The first truck arrived at backed up to the loading gate. There are separate areas inside the truck and some areas were loaded with calves and some were loaded with cattle. This was a factor of load distribution in the trailer. Les and I left as the first truck was finishing loading. The second truck arrived later and was loaded. Two more trucks are due today.

It was an interesting process to watch and supervise.

All the riding guests (there are three non-riding guests) including Les and I set out on a cattle drive lead by Hunter and Jordana. The major goal was to get cattle away from the Butorac's where they have been terrorizing Connie. We road down to the Butorac's and could not find any cattle. We did some exploring and stopped for lunch. While we were at lunch Hunter did some further exploring. After we all finished lunch we rounded up these five pair (10 animals) and started to drive them to Pete's. As we got to the end of Butorac's fields, Les and I waved good bye and split off. We did not feel like pushing cows up the county highway. Been there, done that. As were worked our way back to the ranch, five others who also left the group joined up. That still left Tucker with plenty of people and dogs to get the cows to Pete's. We got back at about 2 :15 pm. We had been in the saddle about 4 hours, excluding lunch. It was a nice ride. The others got back about 2 hours later.

Several people are leaving today. The group up in the Bullagio, 5 nice people, are out of here early this morning. And Shannon and Kim who brought their own horses from the western part of the state are out of here today. They were staying in one of the tent cabins. They like to stay there even though the tents are officially not available for guests after October 1. The Javonoviches (party of four) are due in today. They will be in the Lonestar.

Pete came up for dinner last night. Frankly I don't see much change from the spring. He came in using his walker. His speech is still a challenge but with some effort a person can figure out the subject he is talking about. Great to see him. I showed him a couple of pictures from Alison's wedding.

Not sure what today will bring in the way of riding. There is always cattle to move but that does not thrill us. And there is a chance of rain showers today. Certainly not a day to venture hours away from the barn.

Thursday 10/6

Good morning from the Cookhouse

39 degrees on the thermometer on the porch. Cloud cover yesterday morning with what looked like storms in the area. We did not get any rain of those dark clouds. But it cleared and was partly sunny in the afternoon. Great riding weather.

Les and I decided to do two half day rides yesterday. That was because Mary Kay and George Jovanovich plus Art and Linda Samuelson were coming in about noon. By doing two half day rides we could ride with them in the afternoon. The morning ride was just Les, myself, and Jordana the wrangler. We did Cougar Mountain and then Hoodoo. It was a nice 2 hour ride. The other two guests here went to Moses and moved cattle to Pete's.

Mary Kay and company came in about 1 pm. We were at the barn, ready to ride by about 2:30 and off we went. The ride we did was the clockwise traditional "warm-up ride". The only change is that the road between the Kelly Hump and the right hand cut off up the hill has been widened in preparation for logging. The trees next to that road have been cut back and all overhead limbs have been removed. Still nice along that road but much more open. And the "triple Kelly Hump" has been flattened to allow truck access.

We ended up riding about 4.5 hour yesterday. About what a short full day ride comes out to be.

Chris made an Oriental stir fry dish for dinner and it was quite good.

Not sure of the riding schedule for today. I think Mary Kay and all want to move cattle. Most the cattle in the area has been moved already. There are still some down by the river and of course lots up north. That would mean a long ride or trailering.

Tom and Sabine hope to get in to Colville late this afternoon. I will drive down to pick them up. That will impact my choice of a ride, and probably Les's choice of rides today.

Nice fall colors here. Not as brilliant as some years but the aspens are quite yellow. Trails are a little dusty but since we have been riding in small groups it has not been a problem.

Friday 10/7

Good morning from the Cookhouse

43 degrees on the thermometer on the porch. Rain started over night and is continuing. I have not looked at the forecast but it probably, based on yesterday, is not good for riding.

Interesting day of riding yesterday as always.

Les and I could not commit to a full day ride. Tom and Sabine were flying in to Colville and we promised to pick them up in the late afternoon. I figured we had to be back at the ranch at 3 pm. The all-day cattle rides had been getting back later than that on the average. We thought about doing just a morning ride but that did not peak our interest. All the other guests were going on a cattle drive. They were going to head down past John Butorac's house and then turn down to the river. They would ride north along the river and move any cattle they found up to Pete's. That sounded almost interesting but we could not commit to that amount of time. Les and I decided to go with them and peel off at some point, come back alone, and then go to Colville to meet Air Plumley.

We all set off about 9:45 am. We went down Hubbard's, crossed the stream to the north of The Crazy Lady's house and headed to Lael Road. Lael Road is on the north side of the Butorac's field. As we were on the high ground above Lael Road we all ran into a group of 5 pairs of cattle. The plan was to ignore these cattle and head to the river. Les and I suggested to Hunter that we (Les and I) should hang back, round up these cattle and move them up to Pete's on our own. That would fit our available time frame and be a fun little "Filemyr" cattle drive. So the group took off and Les and I started to round up the cows. It should be noted that there was just two of us, no wrangler and no dog! It was a bit of a challenge but we did get them together and moving in the direction we wanted, until we got to Lael Road. The cows knew we wanted them to go left on the road so when they got to the road they went right. Up the road and into the trees. Les went in after them and I headed up the road to head them off. After a bit of time, lots of bush crashing, a smattering of cursing, and the help of a barbed wire fence, we got them turned around and headed back in the proper direction. Right when we were getting them back out on the road, the cavalry showed up. Hunter and the rest of the riders had ridden down the main road when it occurred to him that it was not necessary for us (Les and I) to drive these cattle all the way to Pete's. There is a small corral on the "Gifford property" that would make a nice holding pen. He brought the entire group back to tell us that and to help us get them in the pen. With a bit of an effort we got the cows in the pen.

We rejoined the big group and headed south down the main road. We still had time to ride with the big group. We rode uneventfully down to John Butorac's house where Les and I decided to turn back. We saw Connie Butorac outside her house and she saw us. We met at the edge of her yard and Les and I had a nice visit with her for 10-15 minutes. Then we said our good-byes to Connie and we headed north the "back way". We passed the construction site of Ryan Butorac's house where John and others were working on putting a roof on. We chatted with them and they mentioned there were cows up in the trees. John suggested we get them and move them. We deferred because we did not have time and there was only the two of us and we did not have a dog. I think John was a little disappointed that us easterners were coming up small. But that was the way it was. We continued through the fields south of the main Butorac Fields and came upon several cows, there were two pair plus an extra calf. A total of five but I am sure over the years the number will grow larger. Les and I got these cows together and moved them north. We got them up to the main road and then drove them north up the road. At Lael Road we moved them left and up to the corral where the cows from earlier in the day were penned. We maneuvered our small herd into the corral and got them penned with the others. All by ourselves, with no wrangler, no dog and no other guests. We were quite proud of ourselves. It was a true "Filemyr cattle drive"

We then rode uneventfully up to the ranch. Within five minutes of our taking the saddles off, we got a text message from Sabine. They were taking off from Tacoma. Les and I got organized and headed to Colville. We got there about 5 minutes before they landed. The timing was working out nicely. We were back up at the ranch at about 5:30 pm. A full day!!!

Several guests came in yesterday afternoon so the bar was full last night with lots of stories and laughter. Pete made an appearance which was nice.

As I stated early in this message, it is raining. Not sure of what will be the plan, if any for riding today. It would be nice to ride with Tom and Sabine because we leave on Saturday morning. But riding in the rain is no fun. Drinking on a rainy day is more fun.

Saturday 10/8

Good morning from the Cookhouse

40 degrees on the thermometer on the porch. There was a light mist as I walked over to the cookhouse

We woke up to heavy clouds and fog yesterday. And a moderate rain. And cool. Not good riding weather for us wimps. We watched the weather during the morning and nothing was improving. Les, myself, Tom and Sabine held off riding. At 10 am we drove down to Pete's to watch a cattle truck being loaded. As we drove past the barn we saw a small group of riders preparing to go out in the fog and mist on a cattle drive. It is always an interesting experience to see the cow shipping process. They only shipped cows (no calves) yesterday and it surprising how big those animals are when you are next to them on the ground. Pete came out of his house as we watched the operation. We all were struck by how much better he is in the morning as opposed to when we usually see him in the evening. At lunch we told the wranglers to let our horses go. The weather had not improved. We would not be riding at all yesterday. Sure enough, about an hour later it started to clear and it late afternoon turned out to be nice. We probably made a bad decision not to ride but that was the way it was. Some of us took naps and some of us went birding in the late afternoon.

Noisy night at the bar last night. Pete was there. Jeanne G was there. John Butorac was there. And Patsy even showed up. The Javonoviches lead rousing games of "Left, Right, Center" – a low stakes dice game.

Now it is Saturday morning and Les and I have to pack and leave. I have an obligation at home tomorrow that I could not change. Unusually we are some the last of our group to leave. This time we are the first. We will pack, have breakfast, and head out between 8 and 9 am. Home before midnight. It has been a great trip that went all too fast. Dates for 2017 have been set
June 17-25 and October 7-15
We hope many people can make it. Always a lot of fun and more the merrier.