

Notes from June 2017

Saturday 6/17

Good morning!

Another adventure at Bull Hill Ranch begins.

Les and I left home around 1 pm yesterday and started the trip west. We had a long layover in Chicago and along with some flight delays; we got to Spokane at midnight. We quickly picked up our rental vehicle and came to this local Ramada Inn at the airport.

We are both on east coast time so in spite of getting in late, we are up early.

We will grab a breakfast here and drive north.

The plan is for us to meet Air Plumley at the Colville airport about 10:30 and then up to the ranch. Lunch and then a ride.

Good to be back here in the area

Sunday 6/18

Good morning!

49 degrees as recorded on the cookhouse porch thermometer.

Yesterday morning Les and I drove up to Colville arriving about 9 am. Since Air Plumley was not scheduled to arrive until 10:30 am, we drove over to the scenic Colville sewage ponds. There I enjoyed the resident colony of Yellow-headed Blackbirds. Always good to see. This bird is common here but is rare at home.

Air Plumley arrived on schedule. Then the fun began. We had rented the largest SUV possible. It is big, it is fancy, but the space inside is not really designed for lots of "stuff" and many people. There were going to be 6 of us headed up to the ranch. Les, myself, Tom Sabine, Carol, and a young man hosted by Tom and Sabine – Ryan.

Les and I had our usual luggage which while not excessive is not small. We watched as Air Plumley unloaded and were immediately very concerned about the getting everything and everyone in the vehicle. We did some work and finally got loaded. It was jammed with people and gear. Les and Carol squeezed into an area in the back and Les rode with a lounge chair on her head. I do not have any pictures available yet but will at some point.

When we got to the ranch we drove directly up to the Bullagio, not stopping at the cookhouse. We wanted to get people and stuff out of the vehicle as quickly as possible. We dropped off the stuff at the Bullagio and took our stuff out of storage. Then we came back down to the cookhouse to say hello.

We had passed Brent on the road up to the ranch so we had seen him. At the cookhouse, we saw Tucker, Mitch the Cook and others. We had timed our arrival to coincide with lunch. Mitch put out a nice hamburger/chili meal.

We were down to the barn about 2:00 ready to ride. Brent went with us along with his two sons, Pete and Joey. We did a nice lazy 2-hour ride. Good to be back in the saddle. The young man with Tom and Sabine had never really ridden before but he did fine.

By 5 pm we had all gotten cleaned up and were at the cookhouse. Tom and I challenged Brent and Tucker to a horseshoe game. We are going to play every day and the winners of the most games during the week will get some money from the losers. Tom and I graciously allowed Brent and Tucker to win the first game since we are gracious guests.

Nice group of people here. Many will be leaving today.

Last year we rode with a nice couple from Switzerland, Beat and Debra. They are back here this week which is nice.

This being Sunday morning, brunch is at 10 am. After I get done this set of emails, I will go out and do some birding.

Good to be here.

Monday 6/18

Good Morning!

50 degrees. A sparkling morning. The morning yesterday was also sparkling but it clouded up in the afternoon and there was a brief shower. I hope that today will remain sunny.

I did some birding yesterday morning. Brunch was not until 10 am so I had some time. Some nice birds over at the lake but nothing special. The hummingbird feeders on the cookhouse porch are surprisingly quiet. Last year we had dozens of hummers but this year we alone have singletons visiting the feeders. I cleaned the feeders and refilled them. We will see if that makes a difference.

Attached is a picture of the back of the SUV as we drove up from the airport. Les slid the lounge chair off her head as she turned for the picture. The 5 plus duffle bags stuffed into the passenger areas are not visible.

We were in the saddles by 11 am yesterday. We wanted a nice three-hour ride and that is what we got. We did the traditional warmup ride past the lake, over the Kelly Hump and around the back towards the Osprey trail. We did that and extended the ride by going up and over Cougar Mountain. It started to spit just as we got back. It never really rained hard but it was nice to get back before the brief shower.

Several of the groups that were here when we arrived left yesterday. They were nice people and it would have been nice to get to know them better but they have gone.

Mitch was the cook over the weekend. Today Margarita is the cook today so it means Mexican food for dinner tonight.

The grass around the property is quite green. The horses were feeding right off the cookhouse porch last night, which is always a good sight. The ranch does have 500 pairs of cattle this summer but we have not seen any. However, we have only ridden so far up on top of the mountain so that is not surprising. Today we expect to ride down to the river. That will be a nice long ride.

Tuesday 6/20

Good Morning!

59 degrees here this morning. Partly cloudy. It looks like a light shower went through overnight.

It has been a wet spring here and the grass inside the fence is quite green and thick. They mowed it yesterday and it looks like a well-kept suburban lawn.

We have not seen Pete G yet. Tom and Sabine saw him at Cassie's wedding and the consensus is that he is "not doing well". Both Hunter and Tucker promise that they will bring him up to the cookhouse sometime next week. It will be good to see him but also very sad.

There have been several verifiable sightings of Mountain Lions around the ranch this spring. A riding group last week saw a Mountain Lion on three different rides. We have been watching but nothing yet.

Yesterday we rode down to the river. We left the barn about 9:30 and went down via Pete's Ranch. We had a nice long lunch at one of our usual spots and came up via "Slope". On the way up, during a stop to let the horses get a rest, one of the accompanying dogs went back in the brush. He came out quite noisily and startled a couple of horses. The horse that Carol was on was particularly startled and it threw Carol. Carol landed on the ground and was unhurt, except for her pride. This means that the Silver Buckle Award has passed from Michael Warren to Carol. Michael had it for several years and I am sure he is glad to pass it on.

After we got back to the ranch Carol was up taking a shower at the Bullagio and the water in the Bullagio "went out". The wranglers reset the supplemental pump there and it came back on. However, while Carol was still in the shower it went out again. The pump was reset again and it seems to be working. Carol had a bad sequence of events yesterday afternoon. Fogel Pump from Colville will be out today to check out the pump. I hope that we will be around to supervise.

Off to Rose Ranch today on an all-day ride. Should be great riding weather.

Wednesday 6/21

Good Morning!

A bit cooler this morning. It is 50 degrees out. The wind really blew last evening but it was a warm wind and was quite comfortable on the porch. Still a bit of wind this morning but not a cloud in the sky. Sparkling morning.

Yesterday we did the full Rose Ranch ride (Clockwise). We left the barn about 9:30 am. The barn is well organized in the mornings and most horses are saddled by breakfast time. We dropped down Hoodoo, went through Pence's and up the west fork of the creek. We ate lunch at Rose Ranch and were headed home by about 1:45 pm. There were a couple of blowdowns on the trail out of Rose Ranch, which held us up. Our path back took us up about Sleepy Hollow. On the ride back we spread out a bit as some loped, some trotted and the wranglers (Brent and Hunter) trailed behind. We were all back at the barn at about 4:50 pm. It was about 21 miles.

There is a new female wrangler here this year – Stephanie. She had been off for a few days and she was back at work when we came back from the bar. Seems like a good person. We especially liked the back of her pickup truck. (See photo).

Nice after dinner conversations on the porch with Carrie B, Chyna (Hunter's significant other), Hunter and others. Definitely, an alcohol lubricated conversation.

No real plans yet for the ride today. Probably something as little less than yesterday.

Thursday 6/22

Good Morning!

42 degrees on the porch thermometer this morning. There was a brisk wind last evening that caused jackets and fleeces to be brought out. Not much wind this morning but definitely our coolest morning. The wind seems to have settled down. Not a cloud in the sky.

I had some names wrong yesterday. The new wrangler's name is Jennifer. She seems to be quite good around the barn but we have not ridden with her yet. A single mom with 4 kids came in yesterday afternoon and Jennifer seems to be super with the kids. I also got the name of Hunter's significant other wrong. It is Shyanne. At least that is closer to her name than what I sent out yesterday.

We did two half-day rides yesterday. Some of us were a bit beat from Rose Ranch and on top of that, some of the women wanted to head to Colville for a retail adventure. Therefore, we did a morning ride (Fence Line, Trespasser, etc.) and a couple of us did an afternoon ride (Blizzard, back of Cougar Mountain, etc.). Les, Sabine, and Carol went to Colville and had a nice time.

Pete came up to the Cookhouse about 4:30 pm. Better put they brought him up to the cookhouse. He is wheelchair bound. His speech is slurry but you can chat with him if you really work at it. He was at the cookhouse about an hour and then it was time for him to head back down. A heartbreaking situation.

Mary Kay and Linda arrived from the Seattle area yesterday. They did the afternoon ride with us. As I mentioned a single mom, (Sarah) and her 4 kids arrived yesterday. Beat and Debra head back to Switzerland today. Other guests are expected today. Hunter says the ranch is "full" this weekend.

The current plan for today is to take a full day ride to Moses. The great riding weather should continue.

Friday 6/23

Good Morning!

Yesterday was a sparkling day and we expect the same today. Currently 44 degrees with a clear sky.

Last year, Dawn and Deidre surprised Les and I by suddenly appearing at breakfast on Thursday morning.

They did the same trick this year. The surprise was not as "clean" this year but it was just as nice. They came to the ranch about 3 am Thursday morning and it was wonderful to see them at breakfast.

The ranch was about 1/2 full during the week but several groups of people came in yesterday. All the cabins and tents are full and will be full this weekend. Many people at dinner and at the bar last night. Probably about 10 kids around. Hard to keep track.

There will be many riders going out today but the barn is significantly better organized and that will not be a problem.

Yesterday we did a full day ride to the Moses Overlook for lunch. Besides "our group", Mary Kay and Chris were with us. Last fall we did that ride in the fog but this time there was unlimited visibility. On the way back, Brent and Hunter peeled off to round up some cows we saw from the overlook so we were on our own for the ride home. It was not a problem.

We have two full days of riding left and still have two classic all day rides to do – Slim's and Pepon Canyon. Not sure, in which order we will do them.

Attached is a picture of the women of yesterday's riding group up at the Moses Overlook.

Saturday 6/24

Good Morning!

48 degrees this morning and not a cloud in the sky. It will be a sparkling day. Yesterday was warm and today promises to be hot.

We set the dates for June 2018 Saturday June 16th to Sunday June 26. Mark your calendars now. I do not know what the reservation / deposit policy is here at the ranch but keep in mind that the ranch is full this weekend and they had to turn away several last minute bookings.

Great ride yesterday. Just Les, Tom, Sabine, Carol, Ryan, Deidre, Dawn, and myself. Plus Brent and Tucker. In addition, a dog.

We did the "Face of Slim's Ride". That is riding directly to the overlook over Slim's old cabin, had lunch at the overlook, and then rode back. We did not do the backside clearcuts. We were out of the barn at 9:45 and back at 3:45. Great timing.

It was a two-rattlesnake ride! I remember several one rattlesnake rides but never a two-snake ride. It is amazing that in all his year's here, Brent had never done the "Face" ride. He had only done the full clearcut ride. However, Brent did know a way to avoid the county road, which eliminated a tedious part of the ride.

Fun cocktail hour, dinner, and post dinner refreshments last night. We ate at two picnic tables out in the new flat area near the horseshoe pits. Great place to eat.

The ranch remains full and many interesting people here.

The plan today is to do the Pepon Canyon ride counterclockwise. That is we will do the canyon first, eat lunch at Sleepy Hollow and then come up through the old clearcuts to the road. It will be a hot day and we decided that being in the canyon on a hot day is a good idea.

Hard to believe that today is our last riding day.

Sunday 6/25

Good Morning!

54 degrees here this morning and the string of beautiful days continue. Hard to leave on a day that will be great for riding.

We saved the classic Pepon Canyon/Sleepy Hollow ride for yesterday. And that was a good decision. It is a challenging ride and it is a good ride to do on a hot day. We left the barn at 9:45 am. Myself, Les, Tom, Sabine, Ryan, Carol, Shyanna (Hunter's significant other), Deidre, Dawn, Hunter and Brent. It was a nice sized group. We dropped down off the hill near Monahan's and entered the canyon. Hunter and Brent had cleared it out somewhat earlier in the season so while there were a couple of deadfalls the going was easy. We arrived at Sleepy Hollow for lunch right at noon. After a leisurely lunch, we started back to the ranch. The ride up to the road is a major event on this traditional trip. We worked our way to the start of the "brushy part" and started up. There had been some talk about the wranglers having cut some of the brush back but there was little or no evidence of that. The last part is very steep and very brushy. And that is where Ryan's saddle decided to shift. Really shift. It ended up under the horse. Ryan was OK but the committee decided that this was a Silver Buckle qualifying event. Ryan is now the "holder" of the Silver Buckle. Brent came up huge by getting back down the slope on foot and getting the horse and saddle under control.

We all finally made it to the top and everyone was glad that Ryan was OK. It could have been a real rodeo on the hillside.

The ride back was uneventful. We were back at the barn at 3 pm. We are finding that this model of getting out of the barn about 9:30 and getting back at about 3 – 3:30 is working well. It is enough riding and while it is physically challenging, we are up to it.

Several of us enjoyed a hot tub session before cocktail hour. Mitch put out quite a spread for dinner – smoked pork, beef, vegetables, many salads, pies for dessert, etc.

Travel day today. I am sitting in the cookhouse right now. At 7:00 am (MDT) I will get back over to the cabin and Les and I will spend 45 minutes packing up. We will drive up to the Bullagio, drop off some of our gear, and pick up Tom, Sabine, Carol, Ryan and all their stuff.

Today, being Sunday is brunch day here. That is at 10 am and we will be long since gone at that point. Mitch the Cook will come up big for us and will have a small hot breakfast for us at 8 am. This is a special arrangement. Then we will all head to Colville where we will drop people and stuff off at the airport. Les and I will continue to Spokane. After a plane change in Denver, we should be home in Meadowbrook about 1 am EDT.

Dawn and Deidre have arranged for a special 8 am loping ride this morning. Then they will pack up and head to Spokane. Deidre has business in Spokane on Monday and she and Dawn will spend Sunday night and Monday night in Spokane. They fly home on Tuesday.

It has been another great week. Good friends and good riding.
Some of us will be back in October. We cannot wait.

I will send out a final message when I get pictures posted.
Hope you enjoyed these little daily thoughts.