

SQUAW BUTTE BACK COUNTRY HORSEMEN

PO Box 293, Emmett, ID 83617

October, 2007

REAGAN PEAK

A group of approximately 15 horse riders is seen from a high angle, riding along a dirt trail that winds through a hilly, arid landscape. The riders are dressed in western attire, including hats and jackets. The terrain is rocky and sparsely vegetated with dry grass and shrubs. In the background, rolling hills and a clear sky are visible.

PACKERS' PLAY DAY & MORE

Squaw Butte Back Country Horsemen

Meet the 1st Thursday of every month at La Costa Restaurant in Emmett, ID

For information about joining contact Ellen Knapp, 208.398.7279 or president@sbbchidaho.org



by Robbin Schindele

October 6, 2007 was a fine fall day and the number of horse trailers parked in the field near Reagan Peak proved it. This ride always draws a lot of people, possibly because of the close proximity to Emmett, the exceptional food that follows or the fun of riding free on this spectacular bit of open country. Whatever the reason, it was great to see a big bunch of riders besides myself, Sally and Rob Adams. In fact Rob never rides on this one because we all meet up at his place to eat after the ride and he's at home preparing one of his excellent BBQ turkeys.

We have done this ride as an orienteering ride in years past but this year it was just a fun trail ride. There had been a lot of rain in the days before the ride so we decided to change the route. Normally we ride the east side of the butte and go

over the top and down the west side, this year we decided the rains had made the steep east side to unstable for horses. So for safety sake we would ride the road we usually return on around the base of the peak to the other side and return the same way, sort of. The peak itself is a cattle pasture so there are lots of trails to follow so the ride can be varied quite a lot. Like most rides in cattle country meandering is usually the order of the day.



Dan & Linda Phillips

Once everyone was saddled up and ready I led off. It was quite a string, counting from the pictures, 18 riders took to the trail behind me. There is an old road that follows a bench around the east and south side of the peak and that was our route. The bench is about 100-150 feet above the Payette River and affords great views of the Montour area and the river below. We strung out as the riders chose their own pace and rode forward singly or in the chat groups. It's an easy route to follow and everyone seemed to be enjoying themselves.

As the road approaches the southwest corner of the peak it sort of peters out and we dropped down to river level, following a trail sided by willows on the river side and steep hillside on the other. Making the west side I followed a cow trail up the slope and the others followed me. My

objective was a beach on the NW corner of the peak I had visited in previous years. We would ride up the slope then down again to the beach. Well I went too high and we all came to a place high above the river and way too steep to ride down. It was a great view though and everyone enjoyed it as they circled their horses to follow me to a lower bench and down towards the where I thought the beach was.

And I'm sure the beach is there, but I couldn't find a way to it through the willows and tall grass. So everyone turned their horses and once again followed the way in out. Back on a flat spot, the river on both sides of us I rode up to where most of them had stopped ahead of me. "Listen up folks," I hollered. "You all know your way now so you're on your own." This brought some laughs, some titters, and a few frightened looks as well. Seeing that, I figured probably not and said. "All right maybe not. We run out of land just a quarter mile to the west so I guess we can turn around here and make our way back."

We had been in the saddle about two hours and there was relief on some faces. I added, "Once we reach the south side of the peak you can go back on the road or you can ride higher on the peak on an easy trail up. That will probably let you see the wild horses that live up there. Or you can follow me down to the river through a channel that's dried up this time

of year. We'll leave the trail, head down-slope, go through some trees and water the horses on a sandy beach. Whoever's up there in the lead, lead on."

Everyone turned their horses and I followed the group more or less back the way we came.

When we reached the south side I left the trail and headed down through the sage brush towards the river. Sally was near the front of the group and when her horse saw me out in the brush he followed. I saw John Bush leave the trail too and cut down towards me. As Sally caught up with me I saw John head back towards the group. I dropped into a gully and as I came up the other side I saw the group had stopped. I waited and they didn't start up again so I put Pancho into a trot to see what was going on. It was about a quarter mile and by the time I got there I could see someone on the tail end afoot, leading their animal.



The river channel

I waited until I could see who. It was Linda Phillips with her husband Dan riding alongside

her. "Are you all right?" I asked as they came abreast of me.

"Yeah." She answered. "He just spooked when someone rode up behind me so I got off. I'll just walk a bit."

"OK." I answered and headed back down slope, Sally behind me. We made it to the dried up channel and headed towards the river to the east. I like this spot, the channel is about 100 feet wide with thick willows on the river bank side and trees and tall grasses on what is, in summer, an island in the river. The ground is fine river sand, flat and leads to a very gradual sandy beach, a perfect place to water stock. When we got there we found neither horse interested much in water, but as long as we wanted to stop they would be more than pleased to rid the bank of some of that lush grass for us. We headed back.

When we came out of the trees and into the sage brush no one was in sight. So we worked our way back to the road and rode towards the trailers. There is a gate and Rob had reminded us to be sure the last one out closed it, so I did that as we passed.

Turns out, that was premature. While most of the riders had gone back, Joanna Shroeder and Justin Davis had ridden up the peak to check on the wild horses. Technically they are not *WILD* horses, they are domestic horses that have been turned out there and have lived mostly wild for a number of years. It was a good thing they went that way as one of the horses had a

bad cut. Later that day we were able to alert the owners and they had it treated. As Sally and I loaded our horses in the trailer Joanna and Justin rode up. They told us about the horse and we said we could call when we got to Rob's and headed out.



The bird

Rob and Linda Adams only live about 2 miles from there so we were soon pulling our trailer around the ones already there and heading towards the house with smoked ham and libations in hand. Rob is always telling people how well we eat at our gatherings and he is right. They often attract even non-riders, friends and relatives show up to eat and chat the afternoon away. That day was no different, I suppose at day's end we fed about 30 people and no one left hungry. Least of all me.



The Feast



The view from the bench

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By Ellen Knapp

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If you missed it, you missed a fun day and will have to wait for next year. We had a blast. I had wanted to take a horse, but Charles convinced me I would be too busy and would not have time to play. As our own members began showing up, Rob convinced me to go home and get a horse. I am glad I did because we had a ball. I grabbed Amber because she is 'experienced'. She and I had done barrels and poles, once, 15 years ago. That is the extent of our experience!

The first event was pole bending and the competition was fierce. We all had multiple go's with everyone cheering and clapping in support of each other. We ran more events, laughing and cheering each other, until it was time to break for lunch.

We had a hearty lunch of sloppy joes and returned to the arena for

the afternoon events. Roger Beyer rode Amber in the afternoon. They did great together and were tough to beat. He and Amber flawlessly executed the walk/trot race – an event where you cannot break gait. Musical chairs was a hoot. Folks had to ride around the cones in a big circle and then find a cone to stand next to when the music stopped. Of course, there was always one less cone than the number of riders. Cassie Neilson was a tough competitor, galloping for that available cone. Trisha Beyer and I had an hilarious trot-off after a cone. I was riding Rob Adam's Willow who was feeling REALLY good with the cool weather. Consequently, I wasn't going to let him go any faster than a trot unless I wanted to end up in the sand.

The final event was the obstacle course. It was fun to watch some of our seasoned trail horses eye the

obstacles such as the flapping mantle on the fence opposite a white barrel. Some horses cleared the 'creek and bridge' like they were show jumpers. Roger and Amber had no problems with any of the obstacles. At this point it just looked too fun, so I took Amber back from Roger and had a go at the course. She and I had a blast.

I discovered the next day that I am (1) not used to riding fast starts and stops and (2) not used to riding a trotting horse. I was sore. Amber, too, was moving a bit more slowly and stiffly the next day as well. But, over the next few days, we both worked out the kinks. And we look forward to playing again next year.





PONDERING FROM THE PREZ' SADDLE

Hi All –

The latest issue of the BCHA newsletter contained a lot of interesting articles. While we have all been hearing about the 'Right to Ride' bill, I hadn't realized what has begun happening in other states to prohibit equestrians. In some states, the FS travel management plans are prohibiting off-trail travel by equestrians. I don't know what 'off trail' means, though. Does it mean, if the equestrian steps off the trail to allow someone to pass or to take a rest break they are in violation? And just how do the managing agencies plan to enforce this? And what is the penalty for off-trail travel? I have more questions than answers regarding this, but regardless it is a scary trend and doesn't bode well for us equestrians.



Do you know the following? "In the Sawtooth Wilderness of Idaho, Forest Service planners proposed to limit camping with recreational stock to the most heavily impacted portion of the area and to require them to pack feed for their animals (a provision that would severely limit the length of time stock users could stay in the wilderness). After an extensive effort, including inquiries from Idaho legislators, the restrictions were limited to the eastern half of the wilderness. On a field trip with a Back Country Horsemen representative, the measures were defended by reference to a survey conducted by college students from an eastern university who determined that many visitors preferred not to see stock in the wilderness, and recommendations of a Forest Service researcher who determined that it is more efficient to prevent damage to high areas than to rehabilitate them. The areas covered by the restrictions (the more scenic and attractive portion of the wilderness) had been accessed with, and grazed by, stock since the late 1800s, however, and managers acknowledged that stock use had not increased (and may actually have decreased) since the areas were designated as wilderness. No monitoring data documenting impact trends were provided to justify the measures implemented." Charles and I have been impacted by this with our pack trips into the Sawtooths. I knew we were prohibited, but I didn't know how that prohibition decision had come about. We don't have enough pack horses to be able to pack in feed as well. So this has essentially closed off the eastern portion of the wilderness to us, unless we can ride through it in one day.

Even though at times, the 'Right to Ride' bill discussions sound like a broken record, I urge you not to once again tune out, but to wake and pay great attention. I certainly will from now on. Our continued access to public lands is in great danger and we stand a chance of losing it if we aren't awake and vigilant.

See you in the saddle.

- Ellen

Please read this article to find out why we need the right to ride:

<http://www.backcountryhorse.com/docs/Right%20to%20Ride%20Examples%20corrected%20version.pdf>