

Daily Updates – Fall 2014

Update from Colville Saturday September 20, 2014

Another adventure begins! I am sitting in the lobby of the Comfort Inn in downtown Colville as I write this. It is a little after 6:15 am PDT and the sun will not be up for another half hour. It is 47 degrees outside and crystal clear.

Les and I had an easy cross country trip yesterday. We got a free upgrade to first class on Southwest Airlines for both of our flights which made it nice. We left home at 6 am EDT and landed in Spokane a little after 1 pm PDT. We picked up the rental SUV and headed to the liquor store. After boosting the local economy there we drove up to Colville. Two quick stops at The Big R and Clark's were nice but there was nothing there that we needed. We were just window shopping. We checked in at the motel and had an early dinner at the local upscale restaurant, Lovitt.

<http://www.lovittrestaurant.com/>

It was still in the high 70s so we were able to sit out on the front seating area and enjoy the view of the valley.

Being on east coast body clocks, Les and I were up early. I will get out and do some local birding in a little bit. Tom is scheduled to fly into Colville about 10:30 am and we will meet him at the Colville Airport. Sabine will be staying in Tacoma for two days or so to cover a colleague at their practice. After loading up Tom and his stuff we will head to the ranch and will be there by lunch. A nice afternoon "warm up ride" is on the schedule.

The weather for the beginning of the week looks to be hot and dry. We should have daytime highs in the low 80s. There will be dust on our boots and that is not necessarily a good thing.

Tom shared with me a correspondence with Michael in which Michael wrote " [Just at the Ortho yesterday—I could see in his face that he was very pleased with the progress of bone healing. All positive indicators and no negatives. He cleared me to put 25% weight on it next week. Then 50% the following week if no pain](#)"

Obviously that is great news. It is hard to get a grip in the fact that Michael has not been able to walk without a walker or cane since he moseyed down to the barn that morning and they put him on that wild, unbroken, ornery stallion named Grouchy.

Update From the Cookhouse – Sunday

Les and I are still on east coast time so it is about 5:30 am here and we are both awake. Dark and a sky full of stars. Temperature is in the low 50s.

Yesterday morning Colville was a happening place. There was some sort of a Veterans gathering, preparations for a Chili Cook-off, a farmer's market and a large biking event ("Blazing Saddles"). Lots going on.

<http://blazing100.org/>

I did manage to work around all those things and did some birding in the Colville suburbs.

We got to the airport about 10:00 am and Tom arrived on schedule at about 10:45. Great to see him. We loaded up and headed for the ranch arriving before noon. It was great to be back and see everyone. The major change to be seen is the rocks blocking the steep road up to the upper cabins. That way is no longer drivable. Instead a new road has been established. It starts between the two cabins on the cookhouse level, goes back into the woods and goes up behind the upper cabins and then circles around to the Bullagio. It was put in by a bulldozer and has been covered with a thick layer of gravel. It is much better than the rutted steep road. Even the "Johnson Wallow" has been graded and filled. There was serious talk of stairs leading up to the upper cabins and then up to the Bullagio to be built this winter. That of course is an encouraging sign that they are looking down the road at future projects.

Pete, Tucker, Mitch, Brent and Joe are all here and they are doing fine. The guest count is low this weekend but several groups are due in at various times during the week. Les and I are in the cabin that the Johnson's are usually in. That is because a two couple group coming in the middle of the week wanted our "usual" cabin with a larger loft.

It was a hard winter for dogs up here. Both Brodie and Boone are gone. But there are new dogs here. There are three wonderful puppies here now. One is Pete's, one is Joe's and one is Tucker's. They all are black and white and look the same. Pete's dog is "Gus" and it is easier to just call them all Gus

After lunch Tom, Les and I went out for a nice ride with Joe. We did a couple of hour ride out by Fence Line, over Cougar and then back in by the lake. Basically a counter clockwise circle up here on the top of the mountain. It was in the 80's and sunny. Summer weather. Some dust but not bad.

Dinner was ribs. Sun went down about 7:15 and it was dark "early".

Today is a "Brunch" day so we are going out about 10:30 for a couple of hours ride.

Great to be back here.

Update from the Cookhouse - Monday

Weather continues to be warm here. Yesterday afternoon it was in the low 80s with bright sunshine, It was hot. It was 52 degrees on the porch a few minutes ago.

Being Sunday yesterday, there was a 10 am brunch here instead of a breakfast. That gave me an opportunity to do some birding out by the lake and down the road, Nice morning to be out. Good birds.

Tom, Brent, Les and I got out for a ride about 11 am. We only wanted a 3-4 hour ride because it was hot. We dropped down Hubert's, crossed the road, road through the nice pine forest above the river, and then came up by Iris's property. Nice ride and it was just the right length on a bright hot day. Saw Wild Turkeys, some grouse and had a nice Sharp-shinned Hawk fly close overhead as it was hunting.

It seems odd to be using the term "hot" here. They have already had two frosts so this is a real Indian Summer stretch. The long-range forecast is for it to cool down, and possibility of rain later in the week. But only about 50% on any day.

In the heat of the day the wranglers were restocking firewood on the cabin porches. Not a fun job in the heat but they said they need to get it done when they could.

There was a little excitement in the Cookhouse about 9 pm last night. As things were winding down, a call came into Hunter that one of the ranch bulls had been hit by a vehicle down on Northport-Flatcreek Road. The vehicle that struck it did not stick around so someone else must have reported it. Hunter and Joe got in a truck and went down. They declined all offers of help or supervision. I went to our cabin about 9:30 and at about 10:15 I heard them come back. I did not come over to see what the story was so I do not know how it played out yet. Stay tuned.

Obviously Michael and his unfortunate injury remains in everyone's thoughts. All the ranch personal have asked about him and we have provided them with updates. Down at the barn yesterday we were looking at the spot the accident occurred and decided to "mark the spot". We used materials at hand and made a temporary monument.



Update from the Cookhouse - Tuesday

Overcast this morning with a temperature of 53 degrees. The forecast for the next couple of days shows rain showers possible every day.

Chris is the cook this morning. She came in at lunch time yesterday. Mitch will be back on Friday.

Yesterday I mentioned the report of a bull being hit on the paved road on Sunday night. Here is the story and I am not making this up.

Joe and Tucker drove up and down the road several times before they found the bull in question. It had not been hit but was in some major discomfort. The bull was well known to them because it has an injured penis. It has become infected and is an obvious source of discomfort. They are not sure how the injury occurred but there is little they can do about it. Obviously a person passing by saw it, assumed it was hit by a vehicle, and called the ranch. And no, I am not making this up.

For those of you who are interested, the ranch took delivery of 500 cow/calf pairs this spring. The cows as those who were here in June know, have bells on them. The ranch also took delivery of 20 bulls. The job of the calves is to grow. The job of the cows is to nurture the calves. The job of the bulls is to get the cows pregnant again. On this coming Monday shipment of the animals will begin. The calves and the cows will be separated at that time. If all goes well the pregnant cows will calf in the late winter and the same cows will return here in the spring with new calves to nurture.

Yesterday Plan A for Tom, Les and I was to ride to the overlook to Moses. But it was going to be a sunny day and we were told that the fields at Moses look pretty desolate after the summer heat. So for Plan B we thought of heading up to Rose Ranch. The other major option was to help move some cattle out of a person's garden up across the border in Canada. That is such a great distance that the riders and horses involved were going to be trailered up close to the border and ride from there. We were not interested in that because "moving cattle" usually ends up in long frustrating rides.

But Les came up with the idea for us. It involved us and our horses going up that way in the trailer and pickup and instead of moving cattle riding over to Rose Ranch and coming home. There was enough room in the vehicle to make that happen so that is what we did. It was an hour ride in the vehicle from the ranch to the drop off point and we were in the saddles by 11 am up near to the border. We rode to Rose Ranch in 50 minutes and ate lunch there. It was absolutely beautiful there with the changing colors and the falling leaves. We then rode back along the west fork of Crown Creek to Pence's, across the meadows, and then up the "steep way" to the ranch. We were at the barn about 3:30. Effectively it was doing Rose Ranch without the long ride on Crown Creek Road.

You are probably wondering what happened to Joe and the two guests who went to move cattle. They rode up to the place in question, found the cattle, moved them out and repaired the fence. They then returned to the trailer and drove back down making a short stop to move some other cattle down in the lower reaches of Sheep Creek. They arrived back at the barn at 6:40 pm. Les, Tom and I made the right decision as to ride to Rose Ranch as opposed to helping move the cattle.

I was at the bar last night when another phone call came in from the person in Canada. The cows had returned to her garden. There will probably be another expedition up there today. You can be assured that Les, Tom and I will not be on it.

Our plans today are to do "Slims Ride" up to the clear cuts and then eat lunch at the overlook above Butorac's fields. In theory Brent is going to lead up and Joe is going to go to learn the way. Laura is going to go because she had never done this ride that is commonly associated with Tom G. But I got a sense at the bar last night that the return of the cows to the garden in Canada might cause a change in plans. There are not enough wranglers to go up to Canada, for two to be with us, and to cover rides for the other present guests. We will see what happens.

A small thunderstorm came through about 7 pm last night. That might keep a little of the dust down.

Update from the Cookhouse - Wednesday

Temperature this morning is in the low 50's. Forecast for today is rain. Right now it is gray out.

The general plan for today is (was) for Tom, Les and I to drive to Colville and then fly to Tacoma to pick up Sabine. Weather may change this plan. A decision around breakfast time will be made by Tom and Sabine. If we do not go we will need to figure out a riding plan. If it is as steady rain Les and I might defer on riding. I really don't like to leave the barn in the rain. In June the Divas chose to ride in the rain. The rain let up on the ride but they certainly did not look warm and comfortable heading to the barn.

http://www.thefilemyrs.com/Riding/BullHill2014/FilemyrPictures/pages/BH_June2014_how_078.htm

Yesterday Chris made French toast stuffed with cream cheese for breakfast. That was good!

Yesterday I reported that it was Joe that went up and fixed the fence and moved the cattle out of Canada with two guests on Monday. I was wrong and I need to state that it was Tucker that lead that adventure Monday. Yesterday Tucker went back up and worked on the fence and moved the cattle alone. He left the barn, trailering a horse about 9:30 and was back about 8 pm. Long day. I accused him of not working and probably spending the day at the White Bird Bar in Northport. He said that was not possible because the legendary White Bird has closed. That's right, closed! There is a rumor that it may reopen in the winter. Tucker recommended that we try "Coots" in Northport as an alternative.

We had a great riding plan yesterday and it worked. We left the barn at 9:30 and did "Slim's Ride". That is the ride that goes up into the clearcuts over the ridge beside Butorac's fields. It was Brent, Tom, Les, myself, Laura, and 6 other guests. The other guests ranged in experience from long time riders to new riders. But everyone did well. We did the loop clockwise and has lunch at the overlook at 1 pm. We were back at the Barn by 4 pm. Light drizzle as we came back but it was hardly noticeable. It should be noted that in all her years here at the ranch Laura had never ridden in that area. She was amazed by it. And she must have heard from everyone who was there about our first legendary ride into the area when Tom G. said "wait here". And we sat in the saddles waiting for what seemed to be days waiting for him to return. Laura enjoyed hearing the story each time. Joe the wrangler did not go on the ride with us yesterday because he had to stay back waiting for 2 guests to arrive.

Some guests are leaving today and the Jovanovich (not the right spelling) group will be in later today.

Update from the Cookhouse - Thursday

Temperature this morning is in the low 50's. Gray morning with low clouds. Hard to believe that it is Thursday already!

The plan of picking Sabine up in Tacoma yesterday did not work. Rain and drizzle here and landing in conditions in both Colville and Tacoma were not acceptable for flying. Tom and Sabine will make a decision about today about breakfast time.

Tucker spent the day fixing the fence along the Canadian border again yesterday. This time he took up a four wheeler instead of a horse. That made access quicker. There is a bull up there that wants to get into "Gail's" garden and it seems that the fence they put up is just not going to stop him. One the bull gets into the garden, the cows follow. The total fence is about 1.5 miles long and is the responsibility of the ranch. It is not a border fence but is part of the lease the ranch has to graze cattle on forest service land. The government provides the materials and it is up to the ranch to build and maintain it.

The whole thing sounds goofy to me but what do I know.

With a steady drizzle going on Les decided not to ride yesterday. Tom and I wanted to do half day rides so we would not be a great distance from the barn if there was a major rain. Brent suggested that we help move some cattle north of Pete's ranch. I usually defer on "moving cattle" but it seemed like a good option. The plan was to trailer down to north of Pete's ranch, move problem cattle to Pete's ranch and then trailer up. Leave at 9:30 and be back at 12:30 ish. We decided to do it. It may come as a shock that what happened did not exactly fit the plan. But things were fine. Joe, Tom, myself and another husband and wife set of guests got in the truck and we trailered down leaving about 9:30. The problem cattle were not real close to Pete's Ranch. They were up at the racetrack beside Northport. We unloaded there and rounded up about 15 head and started down the road. It is about 9 miles to Pete's from there. There was a light rain but we had slickers and were comfortable. Sometimes the cattle moved nicely and sometimes they cut off the

road. The bells on the momma cows made finding them easier if they escaped. Along the way we picked up a couple of more cows and probably lost a couple. At about the 1/2 way mark we were pleasantly surprised to find that about 10 cows that we missed were following behind us on the road. We allowed them to catch up and after a long ride on the road we got all of the cattle to Pete's ranch. At this point we had two options. One was to just ride up the hill to the ranch or to wait until Pete drove took Joe back to Northport to get the truck and trailer, return to the ranch, load up and trailer up to the ranch. We decided to ride up while they futzed with the trailer. We rode down the road passing Wiley's where there were plenty of cows in their yard. After we passed there Joe came up with the trailer and said that it would be nice if we got the cattle out of the yard and to Pete's. So we stopped heading back to the ranch, turned around and wrangled about 25 head out of the yard, down the road and to Pete's. Joe left us as we neared Pete's, returned to the parked trailer, and brought it to Pete's. We then loaded up and trailered everyone and the horses up to the ranch. By the time we drove back past the Wiley's more cattle had appeared in the yard. But we agreed that "we did not see them". We got back about 2:45 and Chris had held lunch. There was still a light rain falling and we were done riding for the day. It was a nice little cattle drive with a purpose and not having to ride down and ride back up made it nice.

The Jovanovich group of 7 came in yesterday afternoon. Many of them took an afternoon ride to the Saloon and returned about 7:15. It gets dark about 7 but they said it was no problem riding back.

The internet here at the ranch is very erratic this morning. It may just be the heavy cloud cover effecting the satellite connection. You may get this message later than normal.

Update from the Cookhouse - Friday

This is our first morning with a chill in the air. It is about 45 degrees here. Chris says that the cooler temperature means it will be a clear day. We shall see.

There was flurry of night sounds about 4:30 am. I don't know if it was coyotes or other mammal but it was a weird set of noises.

Our major plan for yesterday was to pick up Sabine in Tacoma and it came off. Right after breakfast Tom, Les and I drove down to Colville. After a brief stop at Wal-Mart to boost the local economy, we drove to the airport and took off. The flight over had headwinds and because of the clouds Tom routed us a little longer way. But we were in Tacoma around noon. We drove over to their house and picked up Sabine. When we got back to the airport we had a bite to eat at the airport and then flew back to Colville. There were clouds most of the way so it was not a very scenic flight. We quickly loaded up our rental car and then faced the major problem of the day. We were trying to get out of the airport onto the major road and he encountered a major traffic jam. That's right, a traffic jam in Colville! It seems that we timed our day to hit when the local school, which is beside the airport, was being dismissed. There were cars leaving the school, cars entering the school, busses leaving the school, busses entering the school. I think some local people just got in their cars and drove there to join the traffic jam. We had to wait 2-3 minutes to get out on the highway! It was a mess. But it was a real bucket list moment! We experienced a traffic jam in Colville!

We were back at the cookhouse a little after 4 pm. We were undecided about getting out for a short late afternoon ride but the fact that they had our horses saddled and bridled for us caused us to decide to ride. We were in the saddles by 4:30 and did a clockwise loop around the lake and Monahan's. It was cool and nice. Nice to get all four of us riding together again. We were back at the barn by 6 pm. A quick cleanup, a quick cocktail hour and then dinner. After dinner the Jovanovich group built a fire in the fire pit outside. It was a good night for it.

There is a plan working up for today. We will probably do a counter-clockwise loop through Pepon Canyon and Sleepy Hollow. Besides Tom, Sabine, Les and I, there should be several other riders who will want to go.

Tucker did not go to Canada to work on the fence. I am sure Gail was disappointed.

Update from the Cookhouse - Saturday

42 degrees on the porch this morning. A crisp fall morning.

I am sitting here in the dark typing this note. Not just morning darkness but real darkness. There is an area wide planned power outage for electrical substation maintenance. The power went out at 5 am and should be back on at 8 am. There is still water and Mitch is getting breakfast together in the dark. He made coffee on the stove. I am using one of the ranch's flashlights to see the key board. This message will not go out until power is restored.

Yesterday was the last "pure" day here. What I mean is that yesterday was a full day without worrying about heading home. In the evening tonight we will have to spend time packing and transitioning from cowboys to travelers. And tonight here in the cook house there is a combination birthday party for Joey and Cary. So there will be more than the usual crowd of guests and employees.

As for riding, yesterday we did a counterclockwise loop through Pepoon Canyon and Sleepy Hollow. We had a large group but it worked out well. The path in the canyon is open. Some logs on the ground to step over but no other problems. We left the barn at 10 am and were back at 3:45 pm. Most of the people had never done that ride and then certainly enjoyed it. Beautiful sunny morning but clouds appeared around lunch time and we had a light sprinkle on the way in. Tom put his slicker on which guaranteed that the rain would stop, which it did.

Patsy G was up here for dinner last night. We had an opportunity to sit and talk with her which was nice. and Grandmom Cassie was in from Spokane.

The Jovanovich group was in the cookhouse late last night playing a drinking game - Left, Right, Center. A silly but fun dice game. I played a couple of hands and they were still going strong when I headed in. I don't think we will see any of them early this morning.

We have been having fires in the cabin stove every morning. I usually set the fire up the night before so I can just light it in the morning and eliminate a morning hassle. But yesterday I decided to lay in the fire in the late afternoon which I did. Unfortunately there were a few coals left in the firebox and in the early evening I saw smoke coming out of the chimney. The fire had started itself almost 12 hours early. Damn.

Coyotes continue to yap away at night.

Update from the Cookhouse - Saturday Night

The "last riding day" always starts out normal and then staggers to a close. This year was no different.

We did have the power outage as the power company promised. It went off within a minute or two of 5 am and came back on about 3 minutes after 8. There will be two others next weekend but we really don't care.

Earlier in the week we did Tom's (aka Slim's) Ride with a group and a wrangler. That is the ride that goes over to the clear cuts behind Butorac's Fields. We decided to do it again today without a wrangler just to lock it in our minds. So the four of us left the barn about 9:45 and did the ride with no problem. We were back about 4 pm. Nice ride in beautiful weather. The rest of the guests drove cattle down to Pete's from Butorac's fields and the surrounding area. Then they went to the Saloon afterwards. They got back to the barn about 6 pm.

Then the normal day changed. We put the bridles away, took the slickers off of the saddles and brought Les's saddle up to the cabin. We got cleaned up and had a nice happy hour. Tonight there was a celebration of Joey's and Carrie's birthday. That meant the Guglielmino's from far and wide arrived for dinner. There was a mass of relatives, cousins, friends and dogs in the cookhouse, plus all the ranch guests. It was a fun time.

Right now Tom and Sabine are up at their cabin packing and Les and I are in our cabin packing. We can still hear young people and dogs running around outside.

We will pick up Tom and Sabine at the Bullagio at 7:20 am, go to the cookhouse for a specially prepared breakfast. It is normally a brunch day and Mitch is coming up big. We will leave the ranch by 8 am, drop Tom and Sabine at the Colville airport and then head for the Spokane Airport and home. I do not expect to send out an update tomorrow morning but will do a wrap up one on Monday.

Update from Denver International Airport – Sunday

It was a pretty morning at the ranch and that made it hard to leave. But the real world beckons.

Les and I got up early, did our final packing and picked up Tom and Sabine at the Bullagio at 7:30. Mitch came up big and had a nice bacon and eggs breakfast for the four of us. We drove out of the electrically operated gate at 7:45. And yes, with the exception of a minor glitch in the middle of the week, the gate still works.

We delivered Tom and Sabine to Colville and we headed to Spokane. We gassed up the vehicle, turned it in, checked in for our flight, went through security (TSA Pre-check) and were at the gate about 10:45. While we were sitting waiting to fly out of Spokane we got a text from Sabine that they landed safely in Tacoma. At the airport we were pleasantly surprised to find that we were upgraded to First Class on our Southwest flight. It must be some sort of special promotion because everyone on the flight was upgraded. <grin>

Now we are sitting in Denver waiting to fly home to Philadelphia. We should be in Philly about 11:30 and be in our house about 12:30. A full but hopefully uneventful travel day.

It was another great week at the ranch. The weather, with the exception of one day, was great. The riding was fun and we all avoided any "power dismounts". The "Silver Buckle" award is still in the hands of Michael. We met lots of great new people and we renewed friendships with guests we met before. The staff was as outstanding as they always are. It was nice to spend time with Pete and Patsy and try to provide whatever support and encouragement we could as they work through major health and family issues.

Some physical plant projects, small but meaningful, are in the works. We look forward to seeing the ranch and all of our friends next June.

The following dates are in Laura's book

June 20-28, 2015

and

September 19-27, 2015

It is not too early to get a reservation in.