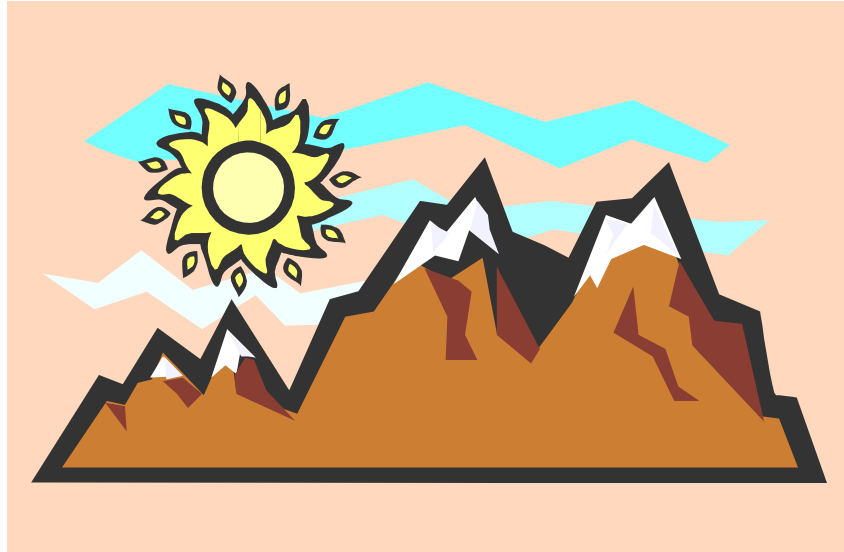


Smokescreen

August 2011

A Newsletter Publication of Missoula Rural Fire District



Missoula Rural Fire District
2521 South Ave. W.
Missoula, MT 59804
www.mrfdfire.org

August 2011



SMOKESCREEN

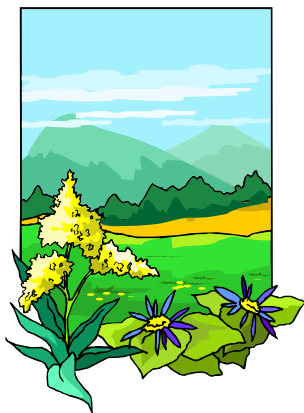


August 2011

MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF

By District Fire Chief Bill Colwell

During the last week of June, I had the pleasure to have some time off and spent seven days in the Bob Marshal Wilderness with my son Clint. June is a beautiful time to go to the back country: the spring flowers are blooming and the green is absolutely amazing. Because of higher than normal snowpack, the only entry in the South Fork of the Flathead River that was open was through the North Fork of the Blackfoot River.



We left the North Fork trailhead early in the morning and traveled to the North Fork Cabin, then turned up the Dry Fork and went over the Dry Fork Summit into the Danaher Meadows. The USFS trail crews had been out working and the trail was opened up for travel. We did have the pleasure of being the first civilian string of riders and pack animals to travel the trail this summer. The "Bob" is absolutely beautiful and being the first group in the spring has its rewards and its challenges. Most of the downed timber was cut out by the trail crews, and the grass and available areas for stock and camping was unlimited. However, the stream crossing on what are normally small streams were a challenge and fording the larger streams was not even a consideration. The areas that were muddy and boggy were hard to read: some still were solid in the bottom and were just a puddle to splash through, but some spots were soft and challenged the horses as we travelled.

About a year ago, I purchased a new horse at auction. He is a large paint named "Tanner," and I have been working with him to become my primary saddle and lead horse. He is big and strong and was reputed to be experienced in the woods and has a history of being a lead horse. The owner of an outfitting business was liquidating his outfitting equipment and stock, and I purchased Tanner at his sale. Tanner and I have had some good experiences



(and a couple of bad ones) as we have been training each other. I say training each other because as you build a relationship with a horse, he trains you to know and read him, and you hopefully train him to know what you are "asking" of him.

Continued next page...

August BIRTHDAYS

- August 1 Lewis Ball
- August 1 Ranier Batt
- August 8 Ben Crocker
- August 8 Jim Ferrier
- August 20 Jim Steyee
- August 21 Eddy Kanduch
- August 22 Ron Lubke
- August 22 Luanne Parker
- August 23 Ron Jacobson
- August 25 Cal Alsbury
- August 26 Tim Tsuber
- August 31 Marty LaNier

Happy Birthday!

ATTENTION VOLUNTEERS!

Each Volunteer and Resident must have their completed report turned in by the 10th of each month, to ensure that they have no lapse in their worker's compensation coverage.

The primary purpose for the time record is to record your shift time.

Please note that the section for "training" hours refers to the training activities hosted by the training division.

If you respond to an incident in addition to your normal volunteer shift, please also record this on your time record under "incident hours."

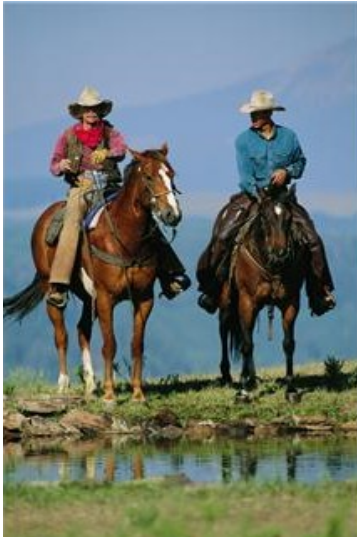
It is “asking” because you are a partner with your horse. You can only send him signals through your position, your reining, and your weight transfer, and he will react as those signals interact with his perception. Tanner has many great qualities: his size, his strength his willingness to work hard and travel effortlessly though the mountains. He has, however, a couple of problems that I recognized and hoped to work through. Part of being a lead horse and a lead rider is having confidence and the willingness to believe that the horse under you will believe in your signals and judgment. He must trust your judgment as well and believe you are not going to put him in a situation that hurt him or potentially hurt you. The two bad experiences Tanner and I shared before the “Bob” trip were first a lack of time together and my over confidence in his ability as a lead horse. The first wreck we had was on our first ride. A blue grouse exploded off the side of the trail at his right side, and that is the first I knew of how quick he could move to the side. The spill was insulting to my ego, but painless and written-off as a lack of experience together. Our second wreck was on a ride above Potosi early this spring. The trails were blown full of small green timber because of the heavy snowfall and we were working our way around most of the small “blow down” by leaving the trail and going out in the timber. I was in the lead and came out on an old logging road and was following the old road back to the new road, working our way out of the heavy timber. Just before the two roads connected, we came to two large “Kelly Bumps” that separated the old road from the newer road. The holes where the soil had been excavated to create the bumps were full of approximately four feet of water. Tanner and I went around the first hole and then the second hole and found a six inch diameter log about six to eight inches off the ground laying across the trail. I brought Tanner up to the log and nudged him to step over the log. He balked and when I nudged him again he backed up and his back feet slid down the edge of the hole and we fell backwards into the four feet of water in the bottom of the “Kelly Bump” hole. Tanner lit on top of me and the saddle horn hit me the chest and his head hit my left wrist as he struggled. I was very fortunate that the water was in the hole because the water cushioned our fall and though I was bruised and wet, I was not seriously injured. Tanner was skinned up on his nose and legs but he was not hurt either. I had my survival gear with me on the horse and though some things were wet, I had gloves and a down shirt that were zip locked and dry that provided warmth and protection for the two hour ride back to the pickup. I felt this wreck was more my fault than Tanner’s, because I had pushed him to cross the log and should have gotten off and led him across to help build confidence to become a better lead horse.

Clint and I were past the North Fork Cabin and fording the east fork of the Dry Fork on our trip in the “Bob,” when Tanner showed me another lesson in horsemanship. Clint had forded the creek on his saddle horse Orbit, and he and his pack horse Spirit were across the creek. Tanner and I, along with my two pack horses Newt and Orbit, followed Spirit. As the water came against Tanner, it pushed his shoulders downstream and I reined him to the right to turn his shoulder into the current. He reacted by throwing his head instead turning into the stream, and this caused him to stumble and then lose his footing and we went down in the middle of the stream. I stayed on top, and he immediately recovered and stood back up; though wet and unhappy, we were across and safe. Tanner had chosen to follow his herd instinct and trail behind Spirit’s butt, rather than follow the reining command and turn his shoulder into the current. He balked at the command and by baulking



put himself and me at risk. I stubbornly continued to ride him and we arrived safely in the Danaher Meadows and set camp. We spent two days and nights in a camp at the Danaher Meadows, riding side trails and exploring the old Danaher homestead. The Danaher Family homesteaded the meadows in 1900 and ranched there for fifteen years. They sold the ranch back to the Federal Government and the ranch became part of the wilderness area. The horse operated farming equipment is still present from the old homestead days from long before the area became protected as wilderness. Knowing there are no roads, and the challenge of the trails to get the twenty plus miles it is to the Danaher, makes me marvel at the amount of machinery they had to disassemble and pack in on mules or horses then reassembled on site to put to work. There is still a field area in the lower Danaher that is several acres of nearly pure Timothy hay, left over and persistent from the planting of many years ago. We also had the opportunity to see several herds of elk and two bulls that were already sporting full 6x6 racks in velvet. With nearly four weeks to continue to grow mass and length, they will both be large trophy-class bulls by this fall. Clint and I spent time looking for horn sheds and took a ride toward Observation Point on the East side of the Danaher looking toward the China Wall. We ran into snow at about 7,000 feet elevation and were stopped from reaching the summit, some 1500 feet higher and 1.6 miles farther up the ridge top trail.

We left the Danaher Meadows and followed the Dahaher to the confluence with Young's Creek where the two form the South Fork of the Flathead River. We camped below Flat Iron Mountain about a mile below the confluence and rode the Big Prairie area visited with the visitor host at the Big Prairie Ranger Station. She told us we were the first visitors to the Big Prairie Station for the summer of 2011. The USFS has twenty eight employees that are living at Big Prairie in 2011, clearing trails and maintaining the five building complex that is the center point of operations for the Bob Marshall. The employees are seasonal and work from early May until late November each year. Their jobs vary and change as the season progresses from opening the 1856 miles of wilderness trails that provide access to the 1,535,352 acres that are the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex, to supporting hikers and packers who travel throughout the wilderness season. They also maintain large span suspension bridges that cross the major streams and rivers in the wilderness.



Clint and I spent two nights at the camp near the confluence and rode Gordon Creek and Big Prairie looking for antler drops during the day. We did locate two sets of drops: one a larger 6x6 and the other the remnants of a bigger bull that had been mostly eaten by critters as a source of calcium. A significant part of the confluence area was burned in 2003 by wildfire and the area is full of seed-

ling timber about three to six feet tall. Among the new growth are many blow down logs and standing snags whose root systems have rotted away. It is common during the course of a day to hear four or five trees come crashing down. Though setting camp in the open is not always desirable, finding a location away from potential falling snags is important for safety.

We loaded up and headed back to the lower Danaher Meadows, just above Basin Creek to locate a new camp for the fifth night of our trip. As you travel above the South Fork of the Flathead River below Flat Iron Mountain, the trail is above the river by 100 to 200 feet in several places. The edge of the trail is steep both above and below the edge of the trail. Tanner and I were in the lead as we came around one of the high places and I could see into the next draw that the trail would cross. I could see a group of back-packers on the trail about 3/4 of mile ahead of us and

coming towards us. Reading the trail, I judged where we would meet to facilitate a safe pass when one the hikers gave a load scream. Tanner immediately reacted and jumped up the steep bank and then started to fall but recovered. I cleared my feet from the stirrups and slid off of him as he turned in his recovery. He then turned down hill and came back to the trail between my two packhorses. The rope connecting the two packhorses was across his chest and he was in between my pack horses faced over the bank headed for a two hundred foot fall to the South Fork of the Flathead River. The two pack horses stopped and stood dead still or all three of them would have gone. I cut the breakaway string between the two packhorses and separated the three horses, allowing the front horse to go with Clint and his pack horse and I lead Tanner and Newt down the trail to get off the hillside. We stripped the riding saddle off of Tanner and unloaded the Packs and packsaddle from Spirit. We resaddled Tanner with the pack saddle and loaded him and set the riding saddle up for Spirit. We completed our ride to our camp in the lower Danaher Meadow and enjoyed a wetting rain and lightning show just before we located or camp spot.

We loaded early the next morning and traveled back through the upper Danaher and the Dry Fork to the North Fork Cabin and then turned up the North Fork of the Blackfoot and rode several miles above the North Fork Falls to locate or camp for night six. The volume of water in the North Fork canyon made the roar from the river intense as we traveled through the open burn area of the upper North Fork. The wind was strong and gusting and we set camp out on an open point alongside some re-growth lodge pole pine and sheltered the horses from the wind in an open pocket in seedling timber.

We slept in the next morning and then packed up and headed out stopping at the North Fork Falls and marveling at the power and force of the water passing over the falls and through that gorge. The ride back to the truck and trailhead went well and we counted our good fortune as we passed other strings going in for the July 4th week end realizing we had had the pleasure of experiencing the "Bob" early before the summer rush.

Tanner completed the trip in his new role as a pack horse with no negative events. His dependability is still a question; he at best will be a packhorse. In good faith, he could not be sold as a riding horse. So the question is, do his good traits as a pack horse outweigh his bad traits? Time will let the scale reach its resting point before we know.

OPERATIONS REPORT

By Assistant Chief Brent L. Christopherson

The other day I was reading the monthly newsletter from Dr Larry Iverson PhD, and he touched on a number of good points in which I thought were worth repeating. "Everyone who gets where he is, had to begin where he was." Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894)

Do you have big dreams? Do you have something that you would like to do for others, family, your community, your friends, or even for yourself? When would you say is the **perfect** time to start or kick-off your action? How about today? Yes, you could wait and this may not be the perfect time---but usually there is never a **perfect** time. If any of you have been contemplating about whether or not to continue with your higher education, I would encourage you do so. The perfect time may not be now, but will there ever be a perfect time or does it fall into the category of procrastination?



I would like to commend some of you, most recently, that are planning on attending the company officer and chief officer training classes being offered at Fire-Rescue International (FRI). Training at any level is very important, and FRI is one place that you can receive some quality education at the fire officer level while meeting new friends. For those of you that are interested in continuing with their undergraduate or graduate levels of education on-line, please see me and I would be glad to listen to your thoughts and offer some suggestions. For those of you that have already acquired your 4-year degree, please consider applying for the Executive Fire Officer Program (EFO) at the National Fire Academy. It is a great program and offers a number of quality classes that really will help you in your career.

Of course, education is just one of the important aspects of a well-rounded individual. Experience and how one deals with people are truly some others. Please consider that today may not be the **perfect** time for you to continue your education and advancement in your personal learning efforts, but if not today, when? If there is something you've been meaning to do and not quite gotten to---start where you are today. You don't have to complete it---you may only have 15 minutes to begin---but do begin. Start where you are!



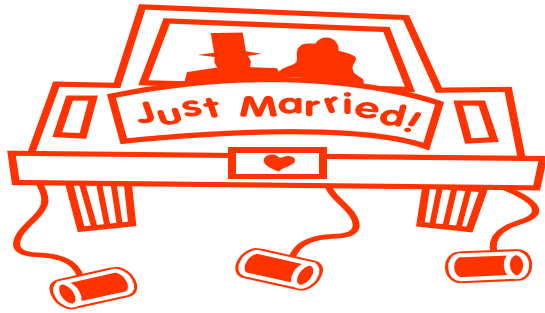
Child Safety Seat Checkup Events

WHEN: Saturday, Aug 20th and Saturday, Sept 10th
10:00 a.m – 2:00 p.m.
Appointment is Required!

WHERE: MRFD Station #1
2521 South Ave West



If you, or someone you know, would like to have help in getting a child's car seat or booster seat inspected/installed, please contact Station 1 at 549-6172 to schedule a free appointment!



Congratulations to Casey Porte and his new bride, Amy! They were married on Saturday, July 9th, 2011 at the beautiful Marshall Mountain Ski Slope. Best wishes to you both!

Starting with the September 2011 issue, the MRFD Smokescreen will be sent *via e-mail* to all career and volunteer personnel.



We will continue to mail paper copies to all of our retirees.

BOT MEETINGS

The following is not a complete record. Contact Heidi at Station 1 if you would like a complete copy of meeting minutes.

BOARD OF TRUSTEE MEETING, JUNE 14, 2011

TRUSTEE REPORTS: *Chair Cheryl Hanson reported:* On a personal note, she was very happy to be here, as her health was touch-and-go for a while. She said that the medical staff at St. Patrick Hospital was amazing and took very good care of her.

LOCAL 2457: *President Greg Orr reported:* The education seminar in Fairmont Hot Springs went very well. A union member's home was recently in peril due to the flood, so several members went out into the community to help him and surrounding neighbors with sandbags.

STAFF REPORTS: *Deputy Chief Finlay reported:* He's been helping the airport establish a larger fueling system. He's also been working on a contractor's sprinkler issue in Target Range. We are seeing more housing starts involving sprinklers. Chief Finlay then showed the board a video from the Missoula County incident management team regarding the recent flood conditions. MRFD has been busy in reaching out to the community, and has currently passed out FEMA forms to approximately 320 homes.

Assistant Chief Brent Christopherson reported: The annual consortium took place from 6/6/11 to 6/9/11: Chiefs Colwell and Christopherson were accompanied by Engineer Giardino and Firefighter Crocker to support in the CPAT testing. Big Sky Fire has now joined the consortium, which brings to the participating agencies up to 10 members across Montana.

District Fire Chief Bill Colwell reported: Chief Colwell attended CPAT, and then went on to attend the senior advisory committee meeting for the SERC (State Emergency Response Commission) in Helena. The business of this meeting was to go through the Homeland Security grant applications. Chief Colwell highlighted that there were two grants that were of particular note for MRFD: the first was the approval of the purchase of two additional Hazmat vehicles for the City of Kalispell and the City of Billings. Our MRFD chassis for our Regional hazmat team will be delivered this week to Helena, which is one of the four chassis that were purchased in last year's granting cycle. Construction will begin soon, and then all six teams will have an apparatus. The other grant that was of particular benefit to us is a training grant that all of the Fire Wardens applied for: this will provide training opportunities for instructors to attend S-380, 381, 420, and 480 classes in the state of Montana; these are all classes that develop leadership skills and incident command skills in a big way, and should be exciting opportunities for our folks in this next calendar year.