



5 DOGS CREEK HOWLER

Most people today don't give much thought to where their steaks and hamburgers come from or if they do, they just don't care. Now myself I just don't want to have to go out and catch it and process it and then cook it. Yuk. But if it wasn't for the work and effort of so many people this is just what I and all of you would have to do. I have been really guilty of forgetting the past and how all of our conveniences came about. Now that I am into the cowboy action shooting club and getting to be more involved with the history of the good ole cowboys I have come to really appreciate all the work that the cowboys and cowgirls have done for our history. I was presented recently with the opportunity to retell the story of a more current point in time of our present day cowboys in action. The story I would like to bring forth was published November 5 & 6, 2006 in the Herald and News paper in Klamath Falls, Oregon.

The fellow who gave me this information is none other than our own Even Dozen (Dave Cooper) from Bakersfield. Now Even Dozen can testify to being part of this history because he actually grew up working on a ranch in the area. His father ran the Bettford U ranch for 17 years, that was owned by Tennessee Erny Ford. Dave grew up with some of the Cockrell and Grove boys who's parents owned two of the ranches participating in the annual roundups. Dave grew up doing chores around the ranch, getting up before dawn to start his day, attending school then more chores at evening time. In Spring and Fall the cattle were rounded up which took about 2 weeks with branding done usually in the Spring. He went on the cattle drives in the Spring to take the cattle to Home Camp then in the Fall to bring them out, which usually took 4 or 5 days each time. He not only got to experience that but he lived it too.

The following is from Sundays' paper with photos also from Mondays'. To save space I have compressed these articles to show the life of these fine cowboys .

HOME CAMP

Cattle drive brings families together

By Larry Turner
Special to the H&N

Dawn comes early for the Cockrell and Grove families as they trailer to Home Camp for their annual autumn cattle drive.

At 4 a.m., they pass through their sleepy hometowns of Eagleville and Cedarville, CA., traveling with two trailer loads of horses nearly 50 miles—mostly on dusty, dirt roads—to Home Camp, nestled in a sequestered swell of Nevada's Hays Range east of Surprise Valley. They drink coffee and rekindle memories as their modern day pickups spew dust en route to the unique property—the first structure was built in 1866—owned by both families. Granfather—along with six other families purchased the property from a Basque sheep herder family in 1937. The Cockrells bought an interest in 1948.

Today, it is a property of four families: Bob, Tom and Ruth Cockrell; Jim (Bob's younger brother) and son Dean Cockrell; Betty (the wife of Bill Cockrell, Bob and Jim's oldest brother who passed away two years ago), Will (Betty and Bill's son) and Deb Cockrell; and Grove brothers, Danny and Link Groves.



Bob Cockrell at the Home Camp corral in Nevada's Hays Range.

“Coming to Home Camp is like coming home to my youth.” Says 72-year-old Bob Cockrell. “Brother Jim and I came and stayed here when we were young saplings. The memories run deep with our dad, mom and brother Bill here.” Jim, wife Judy and Dean's cattle drive north takes three days from Home Camp to their Lake City, Calif, ranch.

The Groves and Bob and Will Cockrell bring their stock home on a one-day drive southwest, through dramatic Hays Canyon into Surprise Valley just east of Eagleville. It is the drive with the most stunning scenery as the near 1,000 plus head herd leaves the gathering meadow of Home Camp, climbs through The Narrows to the summit of Hays Peak and descends down Hays Canyon through Devils Gate en route to Eagleville.

“We are the true West that everyone reads about, wants to see and experience but through politics constantly hobbles,”

says Link Groves after the final gathering was done. “The urbanization of America, the extreme environmental politics of the far left has left many ranch families in America high and dry,” Danny adds.

“The summer government range is critical for our survival,” Deb says. “Wise grazing also allows young forbs to germinate which is highly valuable to wildlife. Grazing also helps in reducing forest and grassland fire fuel.”

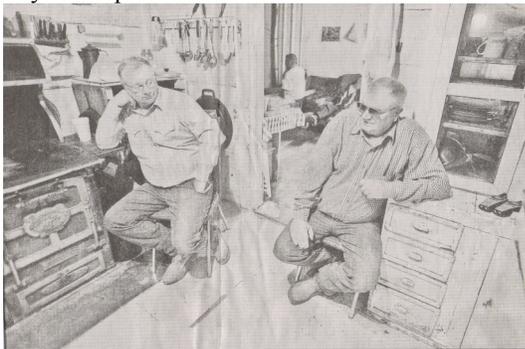
A chorus of coyotes can be heard morning and evening echoing through out the valley. Deer, antelope, rabbit, mountain lion, squirrels and a variety of bird life exist here, including a large population of golden eagles.

At Home Camp

Home Camp is a series old building utilized by humans since 1866.

Though there is modern seasonal outside toilets and showers, the property has several outhouses along with a small barn, corrals, storage sheds and a bunkhouse. On one bunkhouse lower window well, there is a mark of a bullet that killed a sleeping man back in the 1930’s. “He was alone at Home Camp and someone plugged him.” Says Fred Beeman, who has cooked at the Home Camp gathering for 16 years. “The murderer was never caught. People speculate that it was a grudge, probly over a woman.”

Beeman cooks meals over an old wood stove. Hanging in the kitchen are pots and pans large enough for the gathering crew that sometimes approaches 25 cowboys. A spring above Home Camp supplies gravity flow water for the kitchen and bathroom. The refrigerator, freezer and house lanterns are operated by propane. In the shade of the porch are modern day coolers filled with ice and beverages. Food storage is in screened cupboards—an heirloom to the old days when there was no refrigeration and circulation was necessary to keep food cool.



Brothers Link and Danny Grove chat in the Home Camp kitchen. The set up is a throwback to a time when cowboys lived in seasonal camps.

A long wooden table—where food is eaten and card games are played—occupies part of the living room. Old copies of Range Magazine and Western Horseman are here and there. Large local range maps, weathered with finger smudges, occupy the table wall. The house is heated with an old

potbelly stove. Bedrooms are spread throughout the house and in outside camp trailers for the gathering crew.



From left, Fred Beeman, Link Grove and Link’s son, Brian and Andy, play cribbage.

A grassy lawn with shade trees and an old, rickety, long porch with a weathered secondhand couch are well utilized by the cowboys after a day’s work.

Home Camp is a throwback to an era when cowboys lived in spring, summer and autumn camps. Nowadays, pickups and trailers allow cowboys to go back to their private homes each day. “Home Camp to us is about family, friends and traditions,” says Will, who was this year’s cow boss of the gathering.

The cow boss makes all the decisions and is rotated between the four families each year.

“We have fun, we get work done,” he adds. “We honor those who preceeded us here. We enjoy it and we hope we always can with the new generation of Groves and Cockrells.”

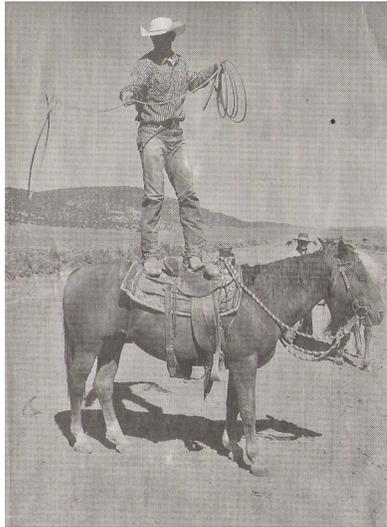
Beeman, a classmate and lifelong friend of the Groves looks forward to the Home Camp gathering every year. “No one has died from my cooking yet,” he laughs. “Then again, I haven’t inspired anyone to trade their spurs in for culinary school.”

“You don’t dare complain about Cookie,” interrupts Danny. “Especially after a long, hard day in the saddle. His buckaroo food is downright gourmet!”

This year’s gathering crew included two Chilean cowboy brothers, Dany and Christian Oyarzun, and Mike Whalen, a Fremont, Calif., executive and Dean’s father-in-law.

The Oyarzun brothers dazzled everyone with their roping and horse skills.

Whalen took a pleasant ribbing everyday from the cowboys about his grooming skills, immediately tended to after each days ride. “They like to tease us greenhorns.” laughs Whalen. “But I wouldn’t give up participating for anything other than death. I die and go to heaven every time I’m here.”



History and politics

As kids Bob and Jim Cockrell spent a good share of their summers at Home Camp.

“It was open range when we were young. No fences. No excessive government regulations.” Bob says. “You could get on a horse and ride forever, just like the days of the Indians and the early cowboys.”

The Cockrell’s owned Duck Lake Ranch from 1929 until 1991.

“I remember as kids, Bill, Jim and I once drove 500 head from Duck Lake to Big Valley (between Lakeview and Adel)—a seven-day cattle drive. Our Dad drove the hay truck.”

As a 10-year-old, Bob and his brothers would leave Duck Lake and spend 20 days taking their cattle to Home Camp. In those days, there was 5,000 head of cattle on the Hays Range.

In 1964, the BLM reduced range numbers by 52 percent. Ranchers went to running cows and calves. No steers.

“Actually it wasn’t a bad thing because the range had been overgrazed. The country looks good now.” Bob says.

As time moved on, Bob saw more fences build on open range. “Actually, I’ve found it to be a good thing for managing the stock and for moving stock.” Bob says. “So that the range doesn’t get overgrazed though the romance of seeing country without fences had its value, too.”

The biggest regret of Bob’s life happened two years ago when they sold their Home Camp range to a private party. “We sold all but the home property and the 40 acres where we gather the cattle for the drives. It wasn’t so much our decision as we were forced into making that decision by the feds.

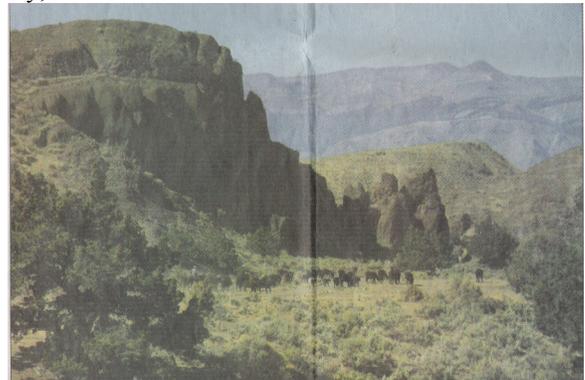
Sister-in-law Betty Cockrell adds, “Had the Clinton administration under Secretary Babbitt and the local range manager treated us fairly as family caretakers of the range, we would not have been forced to sell.”

“The area range manager at that time required that we cut our lower country into three pastures with limited feed and water. Implementing a program to purge us from our traditional range holdings. Cattle can exist on limited grass but they’ll perish without water. She just wanted cattle off the range. Period.

“What troubles me more than anything.” Continues 72-year-old Betty. A lifelong resident of Surprise Valley, “is the total disregard for our history and lifestyle. And more so, that one person can attempt to undo five generations of history and stewardship of the land. Too often the people that know the least about the land and lifestyle of the natives make the decisions that lead toward the extinction of those families and their way of life. If we didn’t take care of our environment year end and out, how could we have survived for so long?”

The families still have permits, which are renewed every 10 years, to graze, and Bob calls the current BLM management team a good one.

“The range manager has become an active member of our community—whereas the last one didn’t—and we appreciate that.” Bob says. “He understands the value of family, communities and livelihoods connected to the land.



The Grove and Cockrell clans annually drive their cattle in the fall through this landscape to the surprise Valley.



Bob Cockrell, 72, oversees part of the 1,000 cattle herd being driven from Home Camp, Nev.



Bob Cockrell's grandson did his share on the drive



The scenery is a fringe benefit on the cattle drive, as evidenced by this view from Hays Peak to the Warner Mountains.

For most of us it would be hard to imagine doing this type of work for a living, generation after generation but this is something most people will never get the opportunity to do in their lifetime. Today's modern technology and up dated transportation have taken a lot of work off of the cowboys of today. There are a lot of ranchers who raise cattle for market who never have to do any of the drives such as the Cockrell's and Groves still do to this very day. Even with the technology that we have, we shouldn't forget the history that those cowboys are living today. My special thanks to Dave Cooper for giving me the information to share with all of you reading this. Whenever you get a hamburger or that special steak, remember how it came to your table.

Doll Maker

A special notice has come in from Mescalero and Calgary Kate requesting help to support the troops.

Many of you ask us frequently what the troops need and how you can help with care packages going to them. Usually our answer is very general as very seldom do they ask for anything specific. They are grateful and appreciative of everything sent. Therefore, we know that when they do request a specific item, they can REALLY use it.

Recently we had a request from Andy Bozylinski on behalf of his squadron in Iraq (Apache attack helicopters). We're hoping 5 Dogs Creek will help to fill a box for them. Andy is the son of The Headmaster, SASS # 48548, and he is on his third deployment.

If you'd like to help, here are the specific items Andy says are in high demand. We'll be including them in the shipment after our February match.

1. Mach 3 razors and/or cartridge inserts. Yes, these razors are very expensive. Yes, we have asked and they really want this specific brand. Andy says the cheap disposables seem to tear everybody's face up, especially in the really dry climate...and they are required to shave every day. These razors provide a much closer shave, last longer and sell out at the PX the same day they come in. Mach 3 razors have been requested by others on multiple occasions.

To ease your wallet, consider partnering with a pard to share the cost. We've checked around where the best prices can be found. At Target a single Mach 3 razor is \$7.44 and a box of eight Mach 3 cartridges is \$15.29. Costco has a big package of 16 cartridges for \$29.99. Expensive, but our guys are worth it!!

2. AXE shower gel. Andy says this is what most all of the guys use and it also quickly disappears from the PX.

Thanks for your help! Our cleanly shaven soldiers will be most appreciative!!

Mescalero & Calgary Kate