

CATTLE TO THE MOUNTAINS—350 white faced cattle, with calves at their side, head up the mountains to government summer pastures. Riders for Walter & Ray Wright, Hardman ranchers, accomplished the 30 mile drive in three days.



TIME OUT FOR LUNCH ON THE TRAIL—Walter Wright, Hardman rancher, and daughter Janet (far left) with family friend, June Proctor of Mosier, fill their plates at the picnic table prepared by the rancher wives.

Chats With Your Home Agent

By ESTHER KIRMIS

I had quite an adventure this past week. I went on a cattle drive!

Several months ago, I expressed the wish to Mrs. Walter Wright, Hardman area, that I would like to see a cattle drive. So many of my extension unit women are rancher wives and talk of branding calves, taking cattle to mountain pastures, and the big round-up in the fall; that I felt I should get some first-hand experience. I came away feeling that a rancher's wife is a special breed of woman. She not only carries on her housework, but must have the stamina and desire to work right beside her husband in looking after their herds.

Mildred Wright invited me to come out on June 15, the day the government allows cattle on the mountain ranges. This was the second day of a three-day cattle drive which started from the Ray and Walter Wright ranches above Hardman and took them about 30 miles to the Umatilla Forest range on the boundaries of Morrow and Grant counties.

Early that morning, Mrs. Velma Glass, county health nurse, and I climbed into Wright's jeep, loaded with all the food supplies and with Mildred at the wheel, took off for the mountains. We had a trail-lunch rendezvous with the cowboys and cowgirls at an old camp site, a little below Parker's Mill on Board Creek. There on the flower-dotted green meadow with tall green pines rearing on either side we made our camp fire and heated up the beans and made good, black, campers coffee.

The picnic began to take on aspects of a family reunion when Mr. and Mrs. Ben Anderson, Heppner (Hannah Anderson celebrates her birthday each year on this trail ride); Mr. and Mrs. Ray Wright, Mrs. Mary Wright, Mrs. Barton Clark and daughter, Nonda, Heppner; and Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Anderson, wheat ranchers from Arlington, joined the happy convention.

These people have all had "their day" in the cattle business. In fact, Ray Wright told me that he had been making this cattle drive for the past 50 years. Now his health would not permit it.

We then caught our first glimpse of the cattle coming in to the canyon. Three hundred and fifty white faced Hereford cows, with bawling calves at their side, came pouring in from all sides, filling up the entire meadow. Man! What a sight! Nine riders, and Keno, the Wright's faithful dog, prodded the herd along at a slow gait. They drove the cattle into a holding pasture while the eager calves pumped their mothers for a short one, and the riders took turns eating.

This annual cattle drive is a family affair. The Wright's daughter's, Janet, a medical student at the University of Oregon School of Nursing in Portland; and Patsy and her husband, Don Anderson of Arlington, came home purposely for this event. June Proctor, a fellow student of Janet's, brought over her own horse from Mosier for the drive. Barton Clark and son, Ned, (son-in-law and nephew of Ray Wright), Lawrence Williams and Les Robinson rode for Ray Wright. Because of the rough riding through trees and brambles one sees why they are attired in leather chaps and high boots.

The trail lunch finished, the cowboys started the cattle on up the mountain. We packed the lunch equipment in preparation for the drive to "Cow Camp" to prepare supper for the riders.

Before we broke camp, however, we were in for some excitement. A three month old, frightened calf broke away from the herd and came running back—headed for home. All of us "foot-loose" people got out in the road, flapping our arms, trying to head off the little maverick. But he had other ideas! He nearly bowled us over in his mad race. Two of the cowgirls pounded after him on their horses, but they couldn't catch him. Walter Wright then joined the group and laid some strategy. He thought if we took the jeep and

the other cars back to the Board Creek Junction, near Parker's Mill, we could block off the road before the calf got there.

Back to the junction we drove and there on a knoll we spotted the run-a-way. We had out-distanced the riders so we sneaked up on foot to keep the calf in sight. But as soon as he heard the horses' hoofs he was off like a scared rabbit. The riders took out after him, but they finally gave up the hunt for another

day. I imagine his mother was "bawling" for him by evening.

We then took off up a mountain trail with the jeep to "Sunflower Flats", the end of the day's drive. Sunset Flats is yellow with wild sunflowers. Here the Wright's have a holding pasture where they kept the cows overnight. They still had another ten-mile trek the next day to the head of Lovelett Creek where they will leave the cattle for the summer. The cattle will be

brought from the mountain pastures sometime in October.

The Wrights have an old log cabin at "Big Cat Springs" which they call "Cow Camp". Here 70-year-old "Lote" Robinson will stay and look after the cattle for the summer. Each day he will ride out on his pinto pony and see that everything is well and occasionally take out a block of salt for the herd. The Wrights

come up once a week to bring him groceries. It's surely far away from civilization, but, oh, what beautiful mountain country!

We drove to "Cow Camp" and there Mildred soaked up the old cook stove and cooked a stew of meat, potatoes, and carrots for the riders. We ate out under the trees and I watched them

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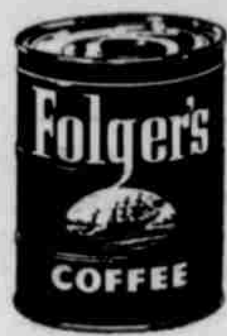
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