



THE

# MORGAN HORSE

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**FOCUS ON WORKING WESTERN AND COLORFUL MORGANS**



# Scaling Mountains on a Morgan

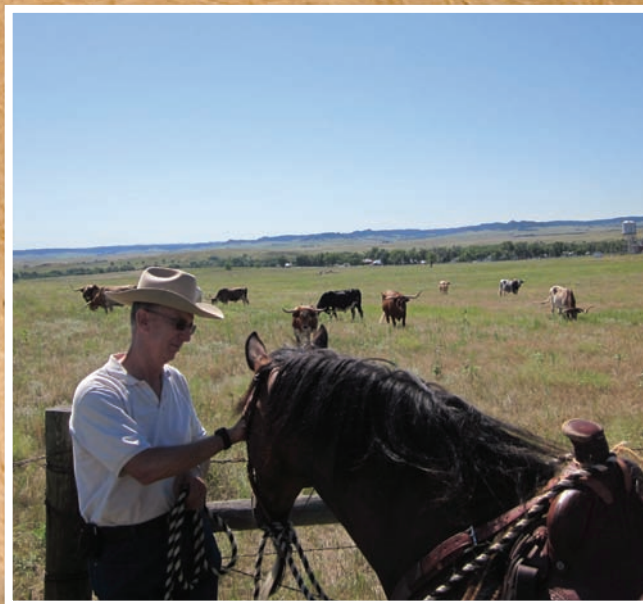
## One Man's Continuing, Extraordinary Horseback Travels

By Col. John Hutcheson

**M**y sister is fond of saying: “if there isn’t a near death experience involved, John is not interested.” On this forty-day loop through Wyoming, Colorado and New Mexico, I rode out a true “runaway,” incited by a large buffalo bull in Nebraska. I “met my shadow” really hard when a large Angus bull jumped out of a patch of weeds up on the Paint Rock in Wyoming (a flash back for the horse to the buffalo I am sure). In the Teton Wilderness under Yellowstone a sow grizzly and her triplets ran the horses out of camp...I was armed with a plastic water filter. Traveling alone at 12,000 feet on the alpine spine of Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP), I experienced severe weather and near hypothermia. At Valle Vidal, New Mexico, I survived a wreck when the colt I was ponying through a narrow gate in a stock pen set back hard. And I walked away from a prairie dog induced horse fall where my leg was pinned under the horse. I came through all that, in my opinion, because of the saneness and

toughness of two Morgan horses.

It was August 1<sup>st</sup> when I left Georgia. This time I was hauling PKR Primavera Brio’s full sister, Gabcreek Gay MaShanta, aka “Shanta Mae,” who is a veteran of the Cloud Peak / Pryor Mountain / Platte River Wilderness adventure of 2008 and her nephew, Gab Creek Soldado, aka “Soldier” (PKR Primavera Brio x Longstreet Serenata). We had gone through one set of shoes on Jake and Bull Mountains in Georgia and were up to 20 miles a day at a 2,500-foot altitude. We had shod again before we left home with borium for some extra purchase on that western shale.



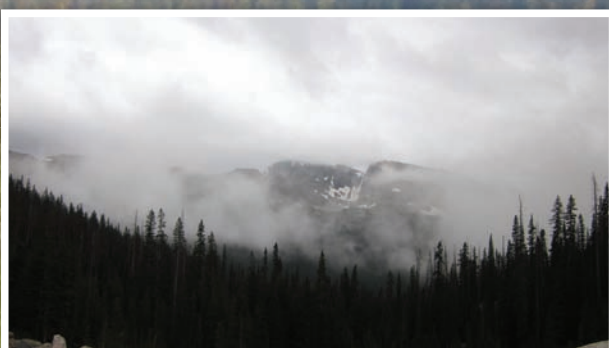
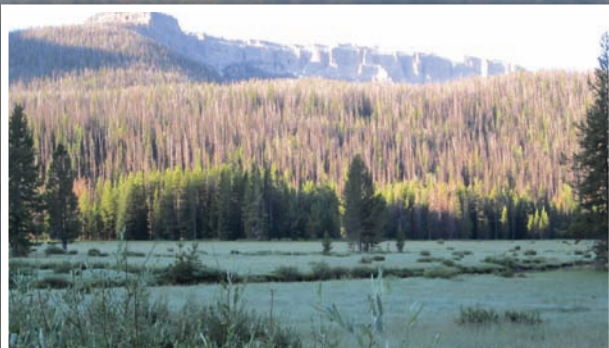
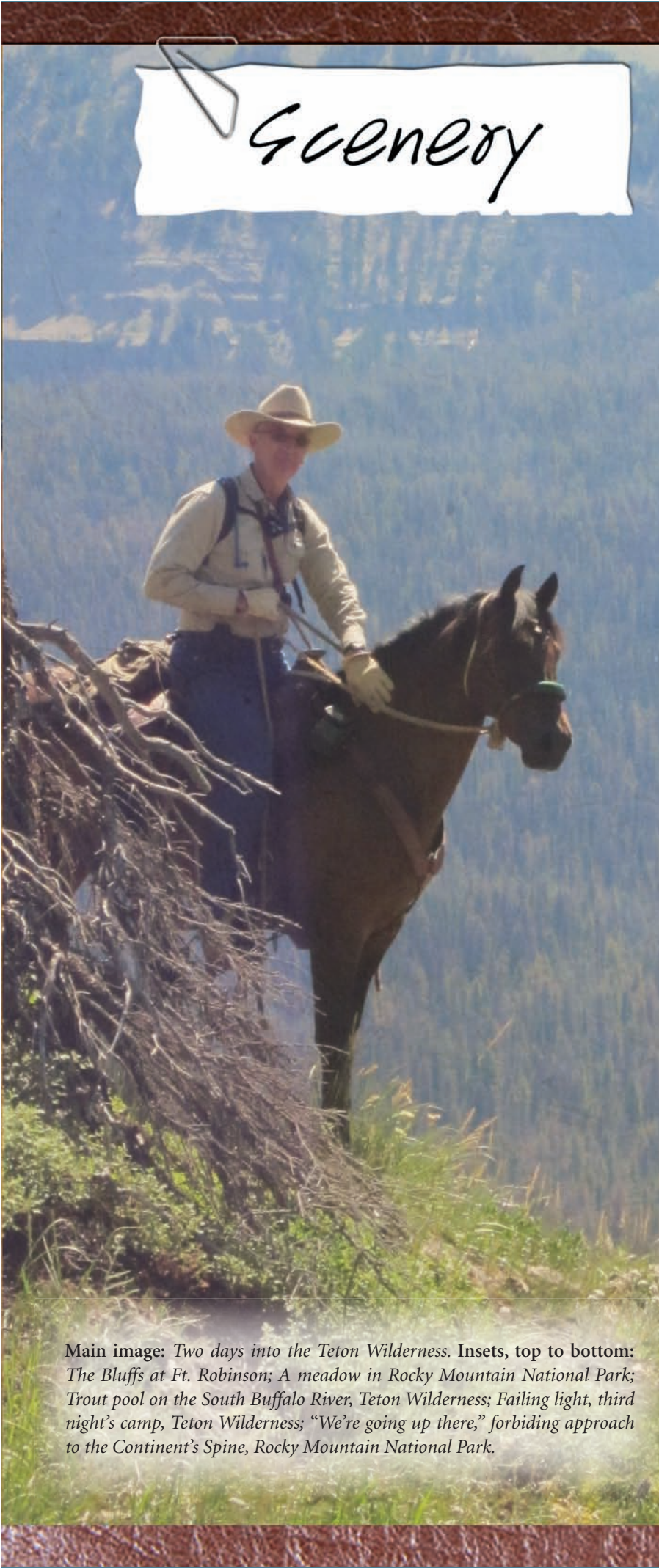
*Longhorns at Ft. Robinson.*

*Thursday, August 4<sup>th</sup>*

We arrived at Ft. Robinson, Nebraska in the evening and rode to the top of the bluffs the next morning to take in the scenery. I fell in love with a young longhorn steer and got a tourist to take several pictures of Soldier with my camera. The next day we made two trips: once

# Scenery

Scaling Mountains on a Morgan



**Main image:** Two days into the Teton Wilderness. **Insets, top to bottom:** The Bluffs at Ft. Robinson; A meadow in Rocky Mountain National Park; Trout pool on the South Buffalo River, Teton Wilderness; Fading light, third night's camp, Teton Wilderness; "We're going up there," forbidding approach to the Continent's Spine, Rocky Mountain National Park.

## Scaling Mountains on a Morgan

to the top of the bluffs again and a big loop and that evening to the south side of the fort. It was late evening when we got to the edge of the fort's property, which bounds a wildlife preserve of thousands of acres. There next to the fence was a herd of some 150 buffalo. There was a rainstorm coming across the prairie with lightning breaking and all was ok until a very large bull came out of the herd and ran towards the flimsy three-strand barbed wire fence that separated us from the herd.

I decided to rein my horse away in a roll back but there was no canter departure. When his feet hit the ground we were flat out and headed for Kansas City. There was a cliff and I told him "let's not go over that, please." We got straightened out and picked up Shanta and I have never experienced such a big walk as those two put on going back to the fort. The rain came in sheets and we sought refuge in one of the old brick stables.

How the Indians got their horses to run right next to a buffalo so they could deliver an arrow amazes me. But it all started, I suspect, with the fact that a plains horse grew up with the buffalo.

### Sunday, August 7th

I got a private tour with the state historian of the veterinary hospital that served the remount station in its heyday when there were 22,000 horses there, 7,000 in one pasture alone.

We pulled into Basin, Wyoming that evening after five horse hauling days and a three-night break at Ft. Robinson with two full days of re-conditioning horses. Shanta and Soldier were very glad to be in Jim Hallman's pasture after all those days in a trailer or a box stall.

Jim had company scheduled so I drove back over the mountain and checked into the Occidental Hotel and drank beer in the bar where Tom Horn used to stand. The next day I went back to Basin and rode up the Paint Rock Creek to fish and met that bull. It all happened so fast. Soldier was just out from under me and I was very grateful it wasn't a grizzly with me on the ground. The next morning was August 12<sup>th</sup> and I was really sore but we were now in prep for our trip into the one million acres that comprises the Teton Wilderness that adjoins Yellowstone to the south (not to be confused with the Grand Tetons to the west).

### Sunday, August 14th

It was Sunday afternoon when we loaded the string of three pack mules, a saddle mule, and three saddle horses onto Ed Stidolph's stock trailer and pulled to Togwatee Junction. We overnights at the trailhead with the meat pannier locked in the truck.

### Monday, August 15th

We started down the mountain for the South Buffalo River. All the horses and mules refused the long suspension pack bridge until someone said "show us how it's done Hutch." I let Soldier drop his head and we went right across.

At a good hole in the river Ed caught five nice, heavy bodied trout with a spinner and released them. I caught four small trout on a dry fly and a nymph. We camped in lower Pendergrass Meadow and put up a tent in the rain looking up at Terrace Mountain. The horse and mules kept wanting to leave and we had to catch and tie them up. Everything was now soaking wet. I was "water boy" and filtered two gallons every evening for the cook, Jim Hallman. Ed Stidolph was our guide and senior packer and Jim's young cousin Garrett Yerkey was his assistant.

We all finally got in the tent and took a nap and I could hear Soldier's bell gently tolling outside in the rain.

Ed got up and made coffee and the sun came out and God smiled on us. Can you say "pristine," "gorgeous," "refreshed"? Jim cooked steak for supper and discovered a few broken eggs. I noticed what a social creature my Morgan is as he went mule to horse to mule to visit with each one that was tied up. I guess he is running for office.

### Tuesday, August 16th

OK, here we go with the routine. Hutch filters water and doctors the stock, Jim cooks, Garrett gets the tent down, and Ed wrangles the mules. Then it's wash dishes, manly the loads, saddle the horses, weigh the loads, hang them on the mules, manly up, and throw the diamond hitches.

Now we are headed on up the South Fork of the Buffalo, right under the continental divide on the west side. We crossed the river and I could not get my feet high enough to stay dry. We turned up Cub Creek and took in a wonderful vista looking back down on the meadows where we had spent the night. Ed is leading on his fast mule and we kept halting to let Jim and Garrett catch up with the other half of the string.

We descended into a valley parallel with Cub Creek with wild flowers in profusion: Lupine, Paint Brush, Blue Bells and many other varieties. We hobbled the stock and had lunch and one mule tried to roll over with his load. We mounted and took FS 6053, the "Continental Divide Trail" and set up camp at over a 9,800-foot elevation in a meadow with a stream. Ed went to scout ahead; Jim and I took a nap. Then Jim began to work the kitchen and I was back on the water filter while Ed and Garrett got the tent up. Again, the horses and mules acted like they wanted to leave us. Joe Back always said to camp astride your back trail. This one renegade mule was leading them all to perdition and leaving



Three tired hombres: Jim Hallman, John Hutcheson and Ed Stidolph at trails end, Teton Wilderness.

other  
critters



Main image: Soldier eyeing a longhorn in Ft. Robinson, Nebraska. Insets, clockwise from top left: Longhorns at rest in Ft. Robinson; Buffalo in Ft. Robinson; Elk herd in Valle Vidal, New Mexico; Bull elk at 30 feet, secure in his mountain fastness, RMNP, Colorado; Outfitter horses across the river in the Teton Wilderness.



## Scaling Mountains on a Morgan

us afoot. Ed and Garrett were running after them. The last one in the file was Soldier. I called his name and he broke off and ran back to me leading all of them with him. Now Jim wants to buy my horse.

All the culprits were tied up except the Morgan who was belled and turned loose to be outfit chaplain and visit and console all the other stock each in turn.

It got cold quick when the sun went down. Chicken and rice for supper. Katie the blue merle Australian Shepherd, should sleep good tonight as she has put in many a mile today going back and forth between Ed's fast mule up front and her master, Jim, who was leading the slower mules in the rear. Today, we have been through bogs, crossed big rivers, seen the continental divide and marveled that less than even a fraction of one percent of our national population will ever see the interior of even one of our wilderness areas.

At midnight Soldier got in the kitchen and everyone was after me to go tie him up. But the zipper on my sleeping bag was stuck. Ed and Jim were howling with delight at my predicament while they offered helpful (derisive) comments.

*Wednesday, August 17th*

Eggs over easy with elk sausage for breakfast. The stock is turned loose to graze while we pack up. We lined out up the creek. In about an hour I rode up on a bear scratch post. It is intimidating to see a tree scratched to pieces nine feet off the ground.

We crested a drainage into a long valley where I envisioned a mountain man in a Hudson Bay blanket coat and three Shoshone bartering in sign language. At the bottom of this valley we lost the trail in a rough drainage but found it again. There was a lot of bear scat. We came down a steep mountainside and lost the trail in a river bottom. There were hundreds of bogs. Finally, we descended into Pendergraft Meadows, crossed the river and set up camp. We doctored horses and turned them loose. There is an outfitter with a dude string across the river. Elk steak for supper.

So much for our relaxing evening of fishing as our stock has decided to swim the river and join the outfitter's remuda. I took off my boots downstream and crossed the four channels, about 70 yards wide, in a shallow place (they were not smooth stones). I was joined by Ed and Garrett and we caught a mule and Soldier. Ed rode the mule, Garrett caught a horse and I rode Soldier and we pushed them all back across the river. (Yes, we tied them up for the night.)

I could not raise a trout on a dry fly but did catch several with a nymph while everyone else took a bath. Near dusk dark all the

outfitter horses across the river came to drink. He had nine white/grey horses in his string and they made a pretty picture. There were pink clouds above the canyon wall and this was another good day.

*Thursday, August 18th*

Pancakes, load up, ride out. Jim's horse Cowboy has been galled and Jim made him into a packhorse, took Garrett's horse and put Garrett on a mule. We met two pack strings resupplying the outfitter and we made the falls of the South Fork of the Buffalo by noon. The force of water has cut a chasm into solid rock that is hundreds of feet deep. Now we are riding north over Nowlin Meadows towards the Soda Creek drainage. We set camp that afternoon on a finger of high ground above a large meadow with a stream in a willow area just adjacent. I had faithfully kept the 1911 .45 under my arm for all this time and no bear, so I left it on the saddle horn in camp when I went to filter water. There was the sound of thundering hooves as all our stock left the camp. I dropped the water filter and ran for the pistol. When I could see

into the meadow, there were three men chasing horses and mules. A sow grizzly with triplets had come through just above where I was at the stream and one whiff of that and the horses were gone. I saw them catch them and saw the bear go back into the timber and went to finish the water detail.

When I came back up at 4:15, I saw her in the tree line about 400 yards below camp. Garrett brought my binoculars. She is a big sow with triplets. We discussed what to do for the night in case she circles back up to our camp. It is wonderful that we still have country wild enough to support them. It takes a huge expanse to maintain the corridor they need to move in—Yellowstone, Teton,

Bear Tooth, Absaroka—but it is just a narrow ribbon of our country.

I stayed on the edge of the meadow for 20 minutes glassing after she went out of sight and then came in for coffee and to doctor horses. Jim and Garrett said that where I was drawing water was real close to where one of the cubs had been and if I had said anything mama was close enough to be all over me. We carried an extensive medical kit for horses and humans but a serious piece of equipment to consider is the five ounce SPOT that will uplink to satellites and communicate a request for MEDEVAC—otherwise it is a Paul Revere ride for help to a trailhead for communications.

Fresh cowboy coffee (water & grounds boiled together and cold water poured in to settle the grounds), a good fire and the scene down the side of that big meadow (where the four bears had been) was hard to beat. Pork tenderloin and pasta for supper.

We tied all the horses close in the camp and put Katie in the



*Hutch and Katie, the blue merle cow dog, share a moment.*

# Camp Life

Scaling Mountains on a Morgan



Main image: Tight place on East Inlet Trail, RMNP. Insets, top to bottom: Garrett and Jim put on the final touches; "Don't interfere with the cook!"; After the work is done; Garrett on bear watch with Soldier looking on; Ed enjoys some coffee after a bear-less night.

## Scaling Mountains on a Morgan

tent with us. At 2:00 a.m. she was going crazy with the hair standing up on her back. Otherwise it was a bear-less night.

*Friday, August 19th*

Jim announced after breakfast that we were down to one egg in the pannier. Ed said that from this camp, years ago, he and his brother would ride one drainage over and send the horses loose back to camp to his Dad and then hunt their way back to camp themselves.

Before noon we were at the Patrol Cabin and there was a gentleman doing a solo trip there with his mules. We pushed on and made it over onto the Soda Fork Creek and rode through to the North Buffalo and started south. We stopped for lunch and broke out the fishing poles and I promptly broke my pack rod on a heavy fish. Resolved to buy a better one. Ed found three live grass hoppers, a hook, line and sinker and we shortly had caught enough mountain whitefish for a taste at supper. It is full of bones but once gashed it fries up with no bones in the way.

An hour or so later we were looking at a camping spot and discussing why we would want to set up camp, tear it down in the morning, saddle and repack everything when we could just sit up and ride and make it to the trail head before black dark. So we rode on out and fried the fish for supper. They were excellent. We spent the night on the ground behind the horse trailer in our bedrolls looking at the stars and in the morning awoke to a grand vista of the Grand Teton Range to the west.

We loaded the stock and pulled over the mountain to Dubois to the "Cowboy Café." I would have gladly given \$50.00 for that \$9.99 breakfast platter. It was 253 miles back to Basin. There are only 23 counties in the state of Wyoming so a trip from one county to another can be like a trip back east to the neighboring state.

After a few days of recovery, rest for the horses and maintenance on the truck, I got new veterinary health certificates and started south to Rocky Mountain National Park. Late on the night of August 27<sup>th</sup> I checked into the Winding River Camp on the west side where there were pens for the horses.

*Sunday, August 28th*

I filed for a backcountry permit with the Park Service to make a 33-mile loop over the top and along the spine of the continental divide. Now I was riding Shanta and using Soldier as a packhorse. I left the trailhead at 3:00 p.m. and rode till near dark and camped in bear country. Much to my chagrin I discovered my headlamp was still in the truck. The wood was wet and I was not packing the axe so nothing to do but retire to a small cold tent and hope the bears

left me alone. I moved the panniers more than a hundred yards from the tent. The horses were high lined and it rained all night.

*Monday, August 29th*

I was up early to cook, feed the horses, saddle and load up. I started up the approach to the alpine region by 9:00 a.m. and carefully read the sign about how dangerous it is (which basically says "you're on your own"). The approach trail was in huge moraine rock. Storms are common in the afternoon so I wanted to get up there, make the traverse and get off before the weather got bad. But as soon as I was on top, the weather closed in. There was rain in heavy sheets and sideways to the ground. The visibility was 30 feet with heavy fog and the temperature dropped. I put on everything I owned and rode for over two hours holding my hat on my head. I was on the edge of a precipice and could feel the vortex of wind and rain sucking over it.



*The Cowboy Café, Dubois, Wyoming.*

We navigated by the "cairns" (rock piles erected after fatalities to help the lost in a snow storm) riding from cairn to cairn. I missed a turn and went further along the spine than I wanted to go but found my way back. Shanta had her head down in the storm so she could see where to put her feet. When we finally turned off the divide she fairly flew over the rubble to come off that mountain—it was a walk but so big I doubt a runner could keep up. When we got back down into the timber we rode up on a big bull elk and photographed him several times at 30 feet. By noon we were at the second night's campsite but kept riding and we were back at Winding

River before black dark. I slept like a log this night.

*Tuesday, August 30th*

Trailered the horses to East Inlet, RMNP and talked to a trail crew loading mules for trail work. Went up the trail on Shanta again ponying Soldier. This was one of the roughest granite trails I had been on. The Borium shoes were just the ticket. At the trail's end that afternoon, I switched to Soldier and had a fresh horse to ride back down. There was a hiker where I switched horses who kept saying that what I was doing was the neatest thing he had ever seen. He just could not fathom that you could bring your own horses from back east and ride alone.

*Wednesday, August 31st*

Headed out driving for Crested Butte, Colorado and GPS took me over Cottonwood Pass which is a long winding dirt road but the scenery was superb. At dark I found the USFS horse camp



Soldier



Main image: Riding to the top of the bluffs in Ft. Robinson. Insets, clockwise from top left: Crossing the Pack Stock Bridge over the Buffalo River; Howdy from Ft. Robinson, NE; A pat for Soldier for a job well done; Soldier checks out the scenery in Paint Rock Creek, Wyoming; A noon break in the Teton Wilderness.



## *Scaling Mountains on a Morgan*

at Kebler Pass (no pens and a creek). There was a couple there with a big camping rig and horses. The guy introduced himself as Kent. He watched me put up my high line between two poplars and said that was the fastest he had ever seen anyone get one installed. Then his wife Charlene brought me a cup of coffee and admired the now very fit Morgans. She invited me to dinner and only then did I figure out that my hosts were Kent and Charlene Krone, the traveling writers for Trail Horse Magazine. We had a wonderful time talking about all the places we had ridden.

### *Thursday, September 1st*

This was a long driving day south to Cimarron, New Mexico and then 55 miles off the paved road to Cimarron Horse Camp and Valle Vidal. The valley is some 100,000 acres of USFS land that backs up on Ted Turner's Chama Ranch. The altitude is above 10,000 feet. I found my way to the camp in the dark and it rained and stormed all night.

### *Friday, September 2nd*

I was up early to cook, clean up and take a bath. I was trying to pour water over my head when an older gentleman pulled up, got out of his truck and came down to the pump to do it for me. He said, "we did this a lot in WWII." He introduced himself as Joe Torres, a veteran of the Normandy invasion in which he made all the jumps with the 1<sup>st</sup> 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division. He has the grazing concession in the valley. I asked if his family were long-time residents and he responded, "somewhere back to the 1600s." He was headed to find his son and grandson who were moving cattle. He said he always admired the Morgans and remembered the ones he had seen on big ranches in California long ago.

It was noon before I got up to the cattle pens. I was riding Shanta and ponying Soldier. Joe and two hands were in the pens and I rode through a narrow people gate and for some reason Soldier set back. Never take a full turn around the horn with your lead rope and never, ever do anything but hold the lead in your free hand when you go through a gate. I only had half a turn but got in a wreck anyway. While I had been busy saying hello, the slack in my rope had got under my leg. Shanta was driving forward—Soldier was setting back—and yours truly was being leveraged up onto the neck of his saddle horse while his favorite horse was setting back intent on severing the leg the lead rope was now wrapped around. Three good cowboys could not help me as no one had a knife and mine was in my pocket. I was riding Shanta's neck (right behind the ears). I

finally figured out to back Shanta against the fence and got enough slack in the rope to get back in the saddle (while one of the hands had vaulted the fence and was urging Soldier to go forward). When it was over, one of them said, "at least you've got a gentle horse." Thank God for that. Now every ligament in my right leg was stretched out of whack like a super groin injury in sports.

Before me lay the Valle Vidal and I rode a five-hour circle through it. But the wrecks were not over. Two hours into the valley Shanta went into a prairie dog hole with both front legs up to her chest and rolled onto her left side. I could not get kicked free fast enough and was trapped with my left leg under her. The heavy Trina Weber buckaroo stirrup kept my foot and leg from breaking, but when she struggled to her feet I was pitched forward, my spur shank went over the stirrup leather and my foot stayed in the stirrup so I was face down and locked in place by the spur. I had a rein in my hand.



*Soldier and Shanta enjoying trail mix.*

I just talked to her and she stood there while I stretched for all I was worth to get the shank of the spur free. Always kick free when you even have a hint your horse is going to go down. I lay there admiring God's creation while Shanta and Soldier nuzzled me. Then I got up and beat my left spur back into shape with two rocks.

Valle Vidal is an amazingly beautiful, high place. I saw elk and turkey and on the way back to camp, a bluish wolf in the timber. Tom Curley, the FS camp manager, said that was the eleventh sighting of that particular wolf this season. He says it has a mate and that there is a black one that preys on

buffalo calves. I figured out to trailer to the pens tomorrow to cut out the two hours ride from camp to the valley and back. Weather permitting I would have one long day to ride before I start east.

### *Saturday, September 3rd*

Trailer up to the pens mid morning and had nine hours in the saddle during which time I never saw another soul. We made a loop into the western valley, then all the way to the southern boundary, then east through the timber to the main valley and back north to the pens. We saw 134 elk on our circuit. It rained on and off and it was arguably one of the best days of my life. No map, no GPS. I was cutting through sections of timber, literally "cutting sign" like Tom Horn, because if I could find a shod horse track, then I knew I could get through where I was trying to go. We loaded up and I got soaked in camp trying to care for the horses.

Scaling Mountains on a Morgan

# Trails

Main image: "God is in His heaven and I am on a Morgan." Insets, top to bottom: Spending a moment taking it all in; Convincing a mule to cross a bridge in the Teton Wilderness; A halt on the trail in the Teton Wilderness; Tanking up; Lining out the string.



## Scaling Mountains on a Morgan

Sunday, September 4th

We pulled out of Valle Vidal at 8:00 a.m. and arrived in Palo Dura Canyon State Park, Texas at 5:00 p.m. It had not rained for weeks but had poured two days before and released a plague of flies that looked like something from Exodus. All I had was a bottle of Shapley's MTG and I literally poured that on the horses' legs. Then a hiker took mercy on them and gave me a can of Deep Woods Off. The flies abated at dusk dark when legions of dragonflies took over snatching flies out of the air. It was a magnificent display of the web of life. Then the dragonflies were gone in an instant and a second later the air was filled with bats. It was like there was an air traffic controller coordinating everything.

Monday, September 5th

Best map of Palo Dura is the USGS Fortress Cliff Quadrangle 1:24,000 @ mapspoint.com. The horse camp is eight miles down in the canyon from the entrance to the park. I rode south and worked my way over to the east wall of the canyon. I have the greatest respect for the cowmen who work cattle in this 165-mile long canyon because everything has thorns or stickers. I was surprised to find that four miles into the backcountry was the park boundary fence. It is then private land for the next 150 miles.

Met Orin Barnes of Canyon, Texas, on his mule. Orin has been a trainer since 1971. He suggested I call him next time and let him guide me in the canyon. He also recommended the Pole Ranch and that I consider the Caprock Canyon State Park as it has much better horse facilities and there is an old rail spur that is now a 63 mile trail which you can ride and pack along with a concessionaire who will haul you to drop points.

We left Palo Dura at 11:00 a.m. and arrived at Weatherford, Texas at 5:00 p.m. where we laid over with Lee Conley, former President of the Georgia Morgan Club.

Wednesday, September 7th

Drove to Rayville, Louisiana, and laid over with reining horse trainer Mark Wilcher and let the horses rest.

Friday, September 9th

Left early and arrived back home in Georgia at 8:30 p.m. I am always tinkering with my equipment list and found a scrap of paper in my coat pocket when I was back home with all the following scrawled on it in no special order of importance:

### TO PACK

-L.L. Bean Camp shoes	-Fly rod	-feed bag
-small Mepps spinners and split shot	-SPOT	-water filter
-chap wax for your boots	-first aid kit	-water bottles
-parachute cord	-bear spray	-towel
-halters/hobbles	("Assault")	-toilet paper
-repair kit (shoes/#6 nails)	-GPS / MAPS	-toilet kit
-cameras/batteries	-compass	-long underwear
-cell phone holder for camera	-hat	-change of clothes
-matches	-packer boots	-underwear/socks
-backpack stove/gas	-camp shoes	-handkerchief
-headlamp/batteries	-fish license	-bandana
-sheep skin gill guards	-saddle/pad/halter/ bridle	-horse feed
-horse bell	-saddlebags	-high line
-small waterproof bag	-canteen/camel back	-salt
-bins	-Packer's wax coat	-axe
-sleep bag/pad/pillow	-sticker	-polar fleece gloves (you can wring the water out of them)
-fishing gear	-chaps	
	-knife	
	-handgun	
	-gunnysack	

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Some after thoughts:

You can take a one week horse packing vacation using an outfitter and fly out and back but there is something about using the horses you have bred, raised and trained. The more you go the better you get at finding the right equipment. Even if you have a whole pack string, you still can't take the kitchen sink. Weight is important. And if you solo pack then weight is critical. (I even have the handle sawed off my toothbrush). I pack feed so I can jingle in my horses and keep them fit. This limits the weight I can take for my own comfort.

I guess my favorites were Ft Robinson because of the amenities and Valle Vidal for the vast open valley, timber and wildlife. RMNP is aptly named (I have never seen so many rocks since Alaska). The Teton Wilderness is big and I would like to ride all the way through it and out through the southeast corner of Yellowstone to the paved road going from the park gate to Cody (about 10 days). There is so much wilderness to see...the San Juans, the Bob Marshall, all of Colorado, Alberta. There is not enough time to do it all but I will sure try as long as I have the strength and vigor. Enjoy your horses. Use them outside the arena. That is what sells newcomers on the breed. These Morgans have heart, bottom and try. Shanta never lost a pound through all of this and got stronger every day. I have been astride almost every breed you can name in my life and am convinced that for what I like to do, there isn't a better horse than these old blood Morgans. ■

In January, months after the journey described in these pages, Gab Creek Soldado, "Soldier," lost a battle with cauda equina, a serious nervous system disease causing acute loss of function. For a remembrance of John Hutcheson's partner on the trails, turn to page XXX.