

EXPLORING THE LITERATURE & LANDSCAPE OF THE HORSE

JUNE 1-6, 2008

The cavalcade of women came from every direction. From the east, a cluster of New York City publishing and insurance executives possessing all the grit and humor that the east coast has to offer. From the south sauntered a marketing executive. From the west and northwest came fiction writers, a documentary filmmaker, a special events facilitator, an illustrator, teacher, hypno-therapist, magazine editor and an author espousing the merits of chocolate.

What these

women had in common was a zest for life, a *joie de vivre*, and a sense of adventure! Just as their predecessors had over 150 years ago, these were women with strength of character and bravery traversing the great divide in search of a new life experience.

We conquered the Wyoming landscape on our steeds of palomino, buckskin, gray and bay set against the backdrop of the ever-changing Wyoming big blue sky. We rode along a variety of roaring rivers, alongside gallivanting elk and antelope and nesting bald eagles.

We felt the sweet swell of the saddle against our thighs, and heard the hearty footfalls of our horse companions against the sometimes-rocky plains. We heard meadowlarks and listened to the wise words of our wranglers. We saw remnants of early homesteading, and spotted skulls of fallen wildlife. We trotted along abandoned railroad tracks, saw remnants of early homesteading, heard stories of gold strikes and tales of logs turned into lumber.

What we did not hear was the din of television, nor the cry of the cell phone. This was a welcome

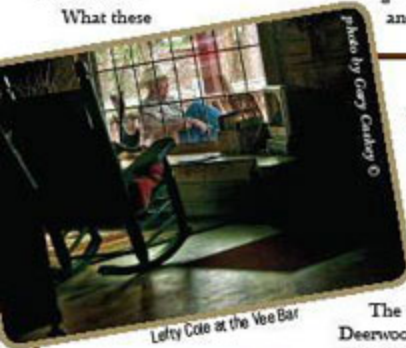


Photo by Gary Caskey ©

Lefty Cole at the Vee Bar

VEE BAR RANCH

Nestled in the Centennial Valley below the Medicine Bow National Forest lays the Vee Bar Ranch. The Vee Bar is a world-renowned family guest and dude ranch with a relaxed atmosphere.

The Cole family owns and operates the Vee Bar as well as the Deerwood cattle ranch, ten miles south. Lefty Cole and his wife, children and grandchildren take part in every aspect of running the ranch from housekeeping, wrangling, cooking and management and more. The love of his family is evident as Lefty often gets a little misty when introducing his family to visitors.

Clearly this facility is geared toward the ultimate family experience. Activities range from horseback riding, hay rides, hiking, river tubing, herding cattle, trap shooting and more. The cabins are warm and inviting. The menu of home-cooked food is not to be forgotten. I highly recommend the Vee Bar Ranch to any and all.

Susan R. Stoltz



- (1) Road through the ranch
Photo by Elspeth Nairns ©
- (2) Our Cabin by the River
Photo by Susan R. Stoltz ©
- (3) Walk to Breakfast
Photo by Gary Caskey ©
- (4) Paint Horse at the Vee Bar
Photo by Susan R. Stoltz ©
- (5) Heading to the Hills
Photo by Gary Caskey ©
- (6) Morning Stampede
Photo by Susan R. Stoltz ©



respite from the hectic and erratic modern world we had left behind. Despite the enormity of the space, there was no room for such modern things.

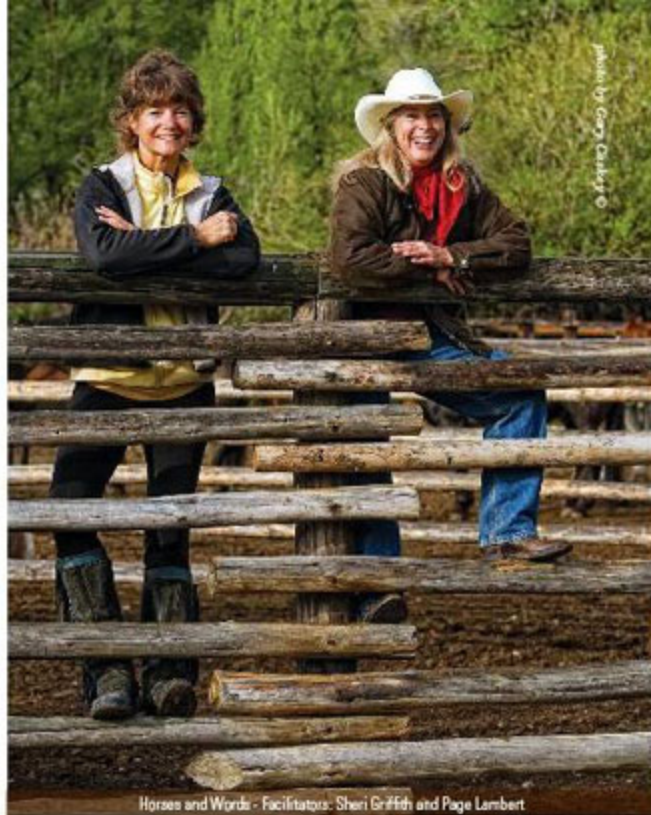
We gathered in a windswept oasis of horse and river. We sought conversation, and quiet, introspection and observation, and companionship. In the end we found some element of ourselves we had overlooked but which was brought to life through the eyes of a different landscape and amongst our newfound friendships. We found ourselves in the wild Wyoming.

Candy Jones

I had been looking forward to this clinic for several months. The remote Wyoming landscape was something I was familiar with and yet, had very little time to enjoy. It seemed like I hadn't had a vacation since the second grade. I wanted to be rid of my computer, cell phone and business as I worked to move slowly through the week. I longed to be surrounded by other writers and to enjoy the feel of the horse beneath me out on the mountainside. This was my gift to myself for turning fifty years old.

My cabin was quaint and situated right by the rushing river. Not one to sleep with any regularity, I wondered if the sound of the water against the rocky banks might induce the slumber I longed for.

Facilitated by Page Lambert and Sheri Griffith, the conference was well organized. It offered a positive experience for amateurs as well as veteran riders and writers. Our goal was to learn more about how a horse communicates with



Horses and Words - Facilitators: Sheri Griffith and Page Lambert



Western Wranglers

WOMEN OUT WEST

the world and develop a deeper awareness of our own modes of communicating, verbally and non-verbally. Time was spent journaling, sharing our writing, reading excerpts of horse literature as well as out in the wilderness on the backs of these loving and forgiving creatures the horses. We made new friends. We laughed much of the time.

Susan R Stoltz

As writers, we reach out to others through the written word. Yet often our work lacks the energy and vitality necessary to engage the reader. We often fail to trust our instincts when telling a story. A horse is an instinctive animal, and the relationship between horse and human requires an abiding trust and understanding of these instincts. Humans, too, are instinctive creatures. Yet our instincts can easily become subverted by the modern technical world in which we live. It is my hope that by being fully engaged in the immediate, vital and natural world of the horse, we will awaken our own lust for life. This renewed passion will fuel our writing because it will strengthen the bond that connects us to the natural world."

Page Lambert

The smell of the Vee Bar Ranch has not evaporated. It still seems to emanate from every pore. I continue to sense the odor of the barn, the river, and most of all, Rocky. Rocky, my horse for the week, was strong and

gentle. He stayed near the back, but was part of the herd. This was not the horse I would normally have chosen. However, when we pay attention, we usually find we get what we need, not what we want.

Elsbeth Nairn

The week for me was transformative. It was about vanquishing ghosts and conquering fears. I had ridden when I was younger but was always so intimidated by horses that I was unable to become really attuned to them. They were large, unpredictable and dangerous creatures, almost a complete mystery. . . . I could have ridden my horse Lucky forever. I learned more about horses in this one week than in all the years I had ridden before. I learned a lot about myself, too. I left feeling as if I have twenty-two new friends and a new perspective on writing, riding and my life.

Susan Paturzo



Bridge crossing



A quiet moment for Sheri Griffith



Nesting Bald Eagle