

COME ON ALONG

If you haven't been on a ride or spent a weekend with the Squaw Butte Back Country Horsemen you're depriving yourselves of a great opportunity. Entertainment value alone is worth the trip.

One weekend every month our chapter has a work project when we spend time working on a back country trail. A typical work project is clearing trails of overgrown brush and fallen trees. Other projects involve improving trail surfaces, rebuilding trails, or even building new trails. We usually spend Saturday riding into a project sight and working, then Sunday is a fun day and we go on a short just-for-fun ride. Working on a project is voluntary and it's your choice whether you want to participate in the work project or just enjoy an outing with your favorite steed. Many of us use these projects as an opportunity to utilize our pack animals to get tools and chainsaws into the backcountry.

This past weekend was National Trails Day and we teamed up with the Forest Service in the Payette National Forest to volunteer our time and energy to improve a trail. We never really know ahead of time just what the project will entail; we have a general idea, but not until we get to the project site does the task really present itself.

Last weekend was a typical SBBCH outing in that there was nothing typical about it. Had you been along with us you would have been caught up in the action practically before you'd unloaded your horses. You'd have seen something you never want to see in the backcountry; you'd have seen a horse badly injured during a de-trailering incident. Luckily it happened at the trailhead and the horse could be taken out to a veterinarian where the facial lacerations were cleaned and treated, and hopefully the incident ended well.

Then, on Saturday you would have been entertained continually, all day long. The first attention getter was Rob's pack horse, all decked out with shovels and long-handled tools rattling around in large plastic garbage cans. The horse was bucking circles around Rob in the middle of the road as Rob hung on to the lead rope. Funny way to lounge a horse, Rob. But I should talk: I got all tacked up, rode up the trail about 100 yards with my horse prancing and dancing and rearing to go. Literally. Rearing to go. Then I had my own private rodeo, rolled down the hill half way back to the trailhead, re-saddled my horse a couple times, and finally just walked back to camp. I now know first-hand the meaning of "a burr under your saddle". I could not ride into where the work project was, but Shannon and Laurie said they'd try to have Mike the Forest Service guy drive back in his pick up to get me so I could at least help work on the trail. Well, I didn't know if he'd come get me or not, so I decided to be productive and clean the tack room on my trailer. Two hours later when he came along I had every single thing out

of the tack room strewn around on the ground. I'm sure he thought, as he turned the corner and saw the sight, that my horse trailer had exploded.

If you'd have come along on the work project you could have watched us wallow around in the mud (shoot, I missed this part) and transform a muddy bog into a "turnpike". You can read a full account of this, complete with before and after pictures, on our website; Laurie always writes up great accounts of our adventures. It was a great project—very rewarding to see how we made such a big difference in that trail. You could have seen each of us struggle on the back end of a motorized wheelbarrow that had a mind of its own.

One of the best things about our weekends is the food. It's simply incredible how a bunch of people can bring a potluck dish and turn it all into a feast. Rob steps into his horse trailer, rummages around a bit, and emerges with all the ingredients for the best breakfast you've ever had. If nothing else, you should come along on these trips just to eat, and see Rob cook for all us girls.

Our weekends are just plain fun. You can make them whatever you want them to be—relaxing around camp, leisurely rides in beautiful country, doing a little volunteer work to keep trails open and useable, and just plain good company around the campfire. It's your opportunity to get out and enjoy riding in the back country. You should come along with us. If you don't, you're missing all the fun.