



American Cream News

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"WAGONS, HO!"

by Donna Miller

For at least the last 10 years, I've dreamed of going on a wagon train. Maybe I've watched too many westerns, but there is something alluring about covered wagons and repeating the western trek of the pioneers. This summer, I finally fulfilled my dream.



"MCD Joshua's AnnaBelle" and a Belgian "Top Valley Gwen"

There were a lot of baby steps to take first. I needed (wanted) a team of horses. Some people drive a single horse with a cart, but that wasn't what I wanted. Secondly, I needed a wagon. And lastly, I might want to get a little camping experience that didn't involve a 5th wheel trailer complete with air conditioning, microwave and a shower.

My first taste of the wagon train experience was in the summer of 2005 (2006 ?) when John Schwartzler organized a 3-day train on the historic Henness Pass. This trail was a major thoroughfare between Virginia City and Sacramento when the Comstock Load was producing silver and gold. On this catered wagon train, I was an outrider on my American Cream Draft mare, Sugar. For a beginner, it was great! It was close to home (an hour north), and all human and equine food was provided. I just needed my tack and camping equipment. I met some neat people, had a great time and wanted more!

My second experience was this last May when I joined the Rough and Ready Wagon Train, again as an outrider. This time I took my Cream Draft mare Bridger. It started at the Nevada County Fairgrounds in Grass Valley, went through the city streets, onto some country roads and into Penn Valley the first day. The next few days we crossed some private ranches, went onto the Spenceville Wildlife Preserve, and then ended up on another ranch in Penn Valley. Since this was so close to home, I cheated, trailering my horse out every day and coming home every night. I missed some of the camaraderie by not camping out, but sleeping in my own bed and being able to shower daily made up for it. On this wagon train, I met members of the Sierra Ghost Riders Horse Club (SGRHC). They told me about their August wagon train up in the Sierras. I made it my goal to have a team ready for it.

I had been attending auctions of wagons and carriages once or twice a year. After looking at restored wagons and reproductions, I settled on a rubber-

tired wagon. It was more affordable, more comfortable to ride on because it had springs, and it should be more reliable mechanically. I consider it my "starter" wagon. Because of the rubber tires, I can't go on wagon trains that require authentic equipment. It doesn't have bows or a canvas top, but they can be added in the future. I wanted the horses to get used to pulling it before I added things which would make it more "spooky".

Getting a team together was the hardest part. I had hoped to pair our home-grown "Little Orphan Annie" (now 7 years old), with "Brandi" a mare I bought several years ago. Both are American Cream Drafts, well matched in size (16 hands) and color (medium cream). Unfortunately, every time I hitched Brandi, she was a bundle of nerves. She doesn't walk, just prances at various speeds. Ground-driving them, she and Annie together weren't very successful – Brandi was a bad influence instead of a positive one.



American Cream News is a benefit of membership in the American Cream Draft Horse Association, published quarterly, as of 2005. American Cream News welcomes articles, pictures, letters, and classified ads dealing with American Creams, other draft horse breeds, and equipment and events dealing with draft horses.

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2010 breeding reports and meeting fees are due now to Nancy Lively.

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Ad size	Color 1x	Color 4x
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1/2 page	\$ 90	\$ 300
full page	\$ 160	\$ 550

- Provide photos in jpg format at 300 dpi or higher.
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to send in photos for the calendar.

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American Cream Draft Horse Association



Statement of Fees

January 1, 2005

MEMBERSHIPS (Due by June 15th)

Full Membership:	
One Time Fee	\$30
Annual Dues	\$25
Associate Membership:	
One Time Fee	\$30
Annual Dues	\$25

REGISTRATIONS

Up to one (1) year of age:	
Members	\$25
Non-Members	\$40
Over one (1) year of age:	
Members	\$50
Non-Members	\$80

TRANSFERS

Within fourteen (14) days of sale:	\$20
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Members	\$40
Non-Members	\$60

American Cream Draft Horse Association
193 Crossover Road • Bennington, VT 05201

SILENT AUCTION ITEMS

Don't forget to pack items for the Silent Auction. Or ship them ahead and save room in your suitcases for souvenirs!

18th National Small Farm Trade Show & ConferenceTM

**November 4-6, 2010
Boone County Fairgrounds, Columbia, MO**

Overview

This is the largest annual small farm show in the United States! Last year, over 4,500 people attended and received ideas and information on both traditional and alternative income opportunities for the family farm. This is a great opportunity to reach new customers.

Location

The Show takes place in the heated exhibition hall at the Boone County Fairgrounds on U.S. Hwy. 63, 3 miles north of I-70 (exit 128A). Take Brown School Road exit and follow fairground signs to the right.

Exhibiting & Show Hours

Thursday, Nov 5 – 9 am-5 pm
Friday, Nov 6 – 8 am-5 pm
Saturday, Nov 7 – 8 am-5 pm

INFO: 1-800-633-2535 or smallfarm@socket.net

HORSE COOKIES

Peanut Butter Squares

1/4 C Butter
1/3 C Chunky Peanut Butter
1/2 C Light Corn Syrup
1 T Water
1 t Vanilla
1 (1 lb) box Confectioner's Sugar
1/3 C Non-fat Dry Milk Powder

Butter a 9" x 9" pan. In the top of a double boiler over boiling water, combine butter and peanut butter. Stir until butter melts. Add corn syrup, water, and vanilla. Mix well. Combine sugar and dry milk, and gradually add to peanut butter mixture. Heat over boiling water until smooth. Pour into pan. Cool before cutting into squares. Makes 72 small squares for dipping into chocolate.

Old Farmers Almanac

BEREA COLLEGE HOSTS SYMPOSIUM ON HORSES IN ART Saturday, October 30

BEREA, KY - The Berea College Art Gallery will present a free public symposium, "The Reign of the Horse: Exploring Cultural Connections Through Equine Images in Art," from 9 AM to 3 PM on Sat, Oct 30, 2010. The symposium coincides with the art exhibition, "The Horse in Japan, 1615-1912," through Nov 12 in Upper Traylor Gallery in the Traylor Art Building. The symposium will take place in the Frost Building, Room 218. Dr. Info: Elizabeth Tobey at etobey@nsl.org or 540-687-6542 x 11.

The dominant theme will be on the role of the horse in the development of cultural connections and how widely Kentucky's influence extends throughout the world by virtue of its prominent role in the world of horsemanship. Curator and art historian Dr. Sandy Kita's research on woodblock prints from Japan's Edo period (1615 - 1868) examines the role of the horse in Japan's cultural and military history and in its art. Dr. Kita will discuss how the connections established throughout history continue into the present day, connecting Japanese culture and Kentucky traditions in surprising and significant ways. Dr. Kita is Senior Scholar at Chatham University in Pittsburgh, PA.

Dr. Ingrid Cartwright will examine connections between equestrian imagery created in the American Revolutionary period and early Republic and the European artistic traditions from which they spring. Dr. Cartwright is an Assistant Professor of Art at Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, KY, and is the curator of "Hoofbeats and Heartbeats: The Horse in American Art," which is on view at the Art Museum at the University of Kentucky in Lexington through November 21.

Dr. Elizabeth Tobey will discuss the similarity of cultural roles of the horse throughout history, specifically how Italian city states cultivated diplomatic and trade ties with European and Ottoman courts through the equestrian activities of riding, racing, and horse breeding. Her contributions to the exhibition and the symposium will highlight the present-day connections between Kentucky and Japan through the Thoroughbred racing and breeding industry.

The exhibition features woodblock prints (*ukiyo-e*), paintings on silk, and a rare Edo-period book on horse ornaments, all with equestrian subject matter. Selections are drawn from the Berea College Art Gallery, the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art in Eugene, OR, the National Sporting Library & Museum, and the private collection of Walter and Dörte Simmons.

Detail from Utagawa Yoshitora (fl. 1850-1880),
"Battle at Uji Bridge", woodblock triptych, Berea College Collection



At this point I borrowed my friend Nancy Footlik's Belgian mare "Gwen". Gwen had originally been trained by the Amish, which included both farm work and street work. I had gotten Gwen ready for last year's Draft Horse Classic show in Grass Valley. Nancy's son Michael, then 12, showed her in the Junior Singles class (where he got 4th place) and I showed her in Ladies Pleasure and the Americana classes. Gwen was very steady, if sometimes slow and lazy.

I hooked Gwen with Brandi to the forecart and drove them for about a week in hopes that Brandi would settle down enough for me to try her with Annie again. She never did, so I decided that I'd need to take Gwen & Annie this time.

After the experience of driving those two, driving Annie and Gwen together was a pleasure. They worked pretty well together. Annie tends to walk faster but eventually she slows a bit, so it works out. They both know their "gees" and "haws" and listened to me. My arena is really too small for driving a team, so after a lap or two, I'd take them out. We did a lot of circles around my driveway and then figure eights when we added going around my haystack. After that, it was out to our front pasture (about 3 acres). That was awfully bumpy in the forecart. Since this is Grass Valley (in the Sierra foothills), nothing is flat and there are lots of trees, boulders and an irrigation ditch to avoid.

Then we progressed to going up and down our gravel road. The road is only one lane in places and the speed limit is 15 mph, but we do have a few residents who think it is a freeway. The first time, Nancy followed me in her car - at least I wouldn't get rear-ended. Traffic proved to be very light mid-day and the drivers were very considerate. Most pulled over to watch us go by and the others crept by slowly.

Annie seemed to be fine out on the roadway - she had seen it before being driven single. Gwen was funny - she was steady as could be about traffic, but Nancy warned me that she was afraid of cattle guards and guard rails. There weren't any guard rails on our country road, but there was one cattle guard on a driveway. Going out, she'd ignore it - it was on Annie's side. But coming back was another story! She leaned into Annie, forcing her to the far side of the road, then rushed the twenty or so feet next to it. I can see now the value of a team - with Annie staying calm, Gwen was back to normal in 60 seconds. Farther up the road, some horses galloped up to the fence line, six feet from Annie, spooking her. Annie jumped and tried to run, but Gwen was fine and didn't. After ten or twenty feet, Annie gave up dragging her 2000 pound anchor, and settled back down.

The next step was hitching them to the wagon. I had never driven it and had only had a few hours of experience driving any team from a wagon. One of my fears was how high off the ground I'd be. In the forecart, my eye level is the horses' backs. The Meadowbrook cart has larger wheels, putting my eye level about a foot higher. But on the wagon, my feet are level with the horses' backs - eye level is maybe 4' above that. You are definitely looking down on everything, horses

included!

It turned out, getting up there was my biggest concern. Once there, my mind didn't have time to dwell on being high up. I was busy guiding the team, adjusting to a larger vehicle and learning how it maneuvered. I really liked the view too! It was the first time my view hadn't been obstructed by those big draft hindquarters in front of me. I could see where I was going so much better - even avoid some of those rocks I'd been bouncing over in the forecart.

The team was a little excited by the noises the wagon made - a whole new set of clunks and creaks. But because I had already worked them in the forecart, they didn't have much excess energy to put into it. After a few days up and down the road, it was old hat and we were ready to go.

There is a lot of planning involved in being gone for eight days. Husband George and daughter Casey would be taking care of all the critters at the ranch (we have eight other horses, goats, sheep, chickens, dogs and cats). Luckily, Nancy and her family go camping regularly and had all the camping equipment we'd need. She took care of the people food and I took care of the horse feed.

Then came the logistics of how to get everything to Bordertown, Nevada. The wagon was too wide to fit into either of our stock trailers, so I borrowed a flatbed trailer for it. The horses and harness went into her trailer, the camping equipment and food went into the trucks. Then we drove to Bordertown, she pulling the horses and we the wagon. We unloaded the wagon as soon as we got there so George could return home with our truck and the flatbed trailer (we didn't want to have to transfer both trucks and trailers every day during the wagon train).

The wagon train began on Monday, August 2nd, but we had been advised to come a few days early to let the horses get acclimated (the start is at around 5000' elevation). We pulled in at 5 PM on Saturday. That gave us just enough time to set up camp and get the horses settled before dark. Neither horse had ever been on a picket line (something we should have practiced at home), so we tied one to the trailer and the other to a sturdy tree. After listening to Gwen pawing and banging the trailer that night, they both were tied to trees after that.

On Sunday, there was a practice drive. After I was harnessed, Loren & Shelley Marcus came over to check things. I learned some safety tips from them: if you weave the throat latch of your bridle through the halter worn underneath it, it reduces the likelihood of the bridle being rubbed off. Also, electrical tape has many uses. A few wraps around where the chains on the traces hooked to the singletree will keep the chain from coming off. And taping over the clip to the neck yoke will keep the bit from being caught on it if the horse rubs its head there. Loren also pointed out that my neck yoke was too narrow - it should be the same width as the doubletree /evener (it came off another set I have at home). Gwen's collar fit fine with the pad underneath, but adding a pad to Annie's made it

too small. Off came the pad. Loren also advised using a dog collar at the end of the pole to prevent the neck yoke from sliding off. Unlikely, yes, but not something that you want to happen out on the road. The pole to my wagon was also pretty low. The yoke straps had to be let out all the way to attach the neck yoke to the pole. That is something that I will redo in the future. So after about 15 minutes of adjustments, we were ready.

The wagon train was led by a team of Fjords. They set a nice pace. My team settled in fine. We drove for about an hour, mostly uphill. Once, Annie pulled ahead of Gwen enough that the doubletree got hung up on the frame of the wagon on Gwen's side. (That night, Loren put chains on each side of the doubletree to limit its motion). At a stop, I opted to return to camp with another wagon. I had just wanted to get everything adjusted and make sure the horses would behave in line. There wasn't any point in getting them too tired – on Monday they would need to climb 2000' in elevation in about 7 miles.

I had unhitched the horses and was working on the harness when I heard a commotion. Looking around, I saw the grey Percheron that had come back to camp with us trotting up the road, pulling its wagon. Empty. With people chasing it. It trotted up the hill, around a curve and was out of sight. The footrace after it was replaced by a Jeep full of people. I said a prayer for them and went back to unharnessing. The wagon would be destroyed if the horse left the road. It could get really ugly. About 10 minutes later, the Jeep returned, pulling the intact wagon. The horse was led back. The horse had stayed on the road. Neither it nor the wagon was hurt. Lucky!

That night the SGRHC hosted a barbecue for us. It gave us a chance to get acquainted and to learn what was expected of us. The registration fee for the wagon train was fifty dollars per adult (children were free). They also had T-shirts for sale. I bought one as a souvenir – it had a nice graphic of a covered wagon on it. I would wear it with pride!

On Monday morning we had to break camp before we left at 10 AM. With the horse trailer empty, it was relatively easy. Cots didn't have to be taken apart, we could just put them in the trailer whole. Tables and chairs folded up quickly, luggage was stowed and boxes of food were carried in, (we just left the ice chests in the trailer all week). We also had to pack lunches for Michael and me, along with plenty of drinks. The tent was the only challenge. It took several days to develop a system of putting it up and taking it down (reading the directions helped). Michael had it figured out before Nancy or I - we let him take the lead with it.

At home, I hitch and unhitch at a hitching rail. The closest we could come to that is tying the harnessed horses to the back of the trailer and bringing the wagon to them. Hitching went smoothly this way - I was one of the first ready. I had been assured that nobody would ever tell me to hurry because safety came first. But still, it felt good not to have everybody waiting on me.

We headed out the same forest service road as the day before, this time with ten vehicles and about twenty outriders. It was nice scenery – a gentle grade, hills covered with conifers, rocks and shrubs. We stopped to “blow” (rest) the horses every 15-30 minutes, depending on the grade. Annie and Gwen were doing fine. Then in the blink of an eye, the buckle on my right line got caught on Annie's left hames ring. I yelled “whoa” and tried to pull back. Horse teams are not trained to do a one-rein stop, so pulling back didn't accomplish what I wanted. The team veered left and in a few seconds time span, did a 270 degree turn. Michael was riding in the back of the wagon and wisely decided to bail out. Here we were on a one lane fire road - to make that turn, both horses had to go off the downhill side of the road over rocks, brush and a few small trees. I was praying that the wagon wouldn't tip and that they wouldn't try to go down the hillside with it. Luckily, when they got back on the road, they kept turning to the left (I might still have been pulling on my left line), and chose to stop instead of going up the embankment. Annette Nylander, who had been outriding for me, jumped off her horse and ran to them, grabbing their bridles (she told me later that she was very wary standing in a ditch, holding two big drafts that were upset). Within seconds, help started arriving. One man took hold of Gwen, leaving Annette with Annie. Annie had gotten her left foreleg over the pole and was pawing, trying to get it back over. It was decided that the horses would need to be unhitched to get Annie's leg off the pole. Several guys got them unhitched, then Annie was walked forward off the pole. The horses were walked back uphill off the wagon. While they were held there, the wagon was turned back uphill. Gwen backed readily into position, but Annie was trembling and refusing to back. At Loren's suggestion, we gave her a few minutes to calm down. That worked - she allowed us to hitch her up. Sometime during this I had explained about the buckle on the line getting caught and that was what had caused the incident. Loren went to his wagon, got some rings that he had, and taped them to the buckles on the lines. These rings acted as “stops”, preventing the buckles from going into the hames rings and getting caught again. After this was done, I asked Annie and Gwen to walk and off we went.

We were supposed to stop for a restroom break about 200 yards further up the road. Yes, the club had a “potty wagon” (a travel trailer converted into 5 port-a-potties) with us. At the experienced teamsters' suggestion, I kept going. The horses behaved fine and eventually caught up with the front half of the wagon train. The rest of the day's drive was uneventful. Michael rejoined me and even drove for awhile. (While Michael did drive some, his main duties were blocking the wheels on our stops and passing out food and beverages).

When I reflected on this incident, it was obviously my fault. I was watching my lines but it only took a second's inattention for Gwen to turn her head to the left far enough to pull the buckle through the hames ring. She may have also been a bit ahead of Annie. Next, when I yelled “whoa”, I'm not sure I waited long enough to give them a chance to just stop. I probably pulled back on my left line right away, causing the turn. The forward momentum must have stopped, because the

wagon never left the road - the horses just fanned left. They were doing what they thought I was asking for. I'm very grateful for the experienced help I had straightening out the mess and that nobody (people or horses) was injured. And no harness nor the wagon was broken - I guess it was my lucky day!

Monday night we camped by a pond. Amazingly, there weren't any mosquitoes. And we had cell phone reception, so I could check in with my family (I guess we were still close enough to Reno). Nancy had set up camp for us. That night we were on our own for dinner, but afterwards we had a short meeting to discuss the next day's schedule.

Tuesday we did a loop. The horses were fine for harnessing and hitching, and drove off as though nothing had ever happened. We went up a very steep grade with breathtaking views of the forest and valley below. We could even see some suburbs of Reno off to the east. I was so proud of the team! They really had to work to make it to the top. They worked as a team and just kept going. No lollygagging or balking. After a "blow" at the top, we continued to the lunch spot. As we approached, what a sight! There were 10-15 police vehicles: Trucks, SUVs and cars, some marked "K-9 Unit". They were from local police departments, sheriff's offices and even the FBI. When we asked, we were told that they were doing some training exercises. They were wearing bullet-proof vests and carrying what looked like automatic weapons. While we were having our lunches, staring at them, several came over to visit and take pictures. We took a few pictures of them too! It was not what you'd expect to find out in the forest.

The road that we took back to camp had been made on an old rail line. It was bumpy and narrow, but the grade was very mild. That was appreciated after the morning's climb. On the way down, we passed a rock in the roadway that was painted red. Last year that rock had been responsible for several flat tires. Some SGRHC members had gone back with a sledge hammer and knocked the sharp edges off it, then painted it to make it more visible. Nobody damaged a tire on it this year.

On Wednesday, we had to break camp before we hitched again. The wagon train got rolling about 10 AM. We took the railway trail back to the point where the police had been the day before. We drove for about 4 hours to the "dry" camp (no water). Along the way, two trucks pulling travel trailers had pulled over to let us pass. Later, one of the outriders rode up and told us to be careful not to disturb anything at our lunch stop. One of the guys in the trucks had moved a log to sit on and had been issued a \$275 citation for disturbing the natural environment. Ouch!

The dry camp was in a forested valley near Stampede Reservoir. It was picturesque. During the daytime, we put the mares out on a picket line and tied them long enough so that they could graze. After living on pelleted feed, it was a real treat. Since we were in Tahoe National Forest, all feed had to be certified weed-free. It is difficult, if not impossible, to find hay that is certified. But most pelleted, all-in-one feeds are, so

that's what they got to eat.

Thursday was a layover day. Some people rode or drove nearby, some relaxed in camp as we did, and some went to town (either Truckee or Reno). The Cabela's store in Boomtown was a big draw. Those riders staying in camp could try their hand at a trail course that Shelley and Loren had set up. It included going over a tarp, opening a rope gate, putting on a rain slicker and retrieving the beverage of your choice out of a bucket. It was fun to watch! Prizes were awarded at dinner that night.

We were running low on bottled drinks. Michael and I were drinking one per hour on the trail and still feeling dehydrated. My husband and daughter decided to drive over to visit, so they agreed to bring us supplies. To get ready for company, we laid out our solar shower bags in the sun. Two to three hours later, the water had made it up to lukewarm, which I decided was good enough. Annette had a shower stall tent with a hook to hang the solar bag on, so I borrowed it. I felt claustrophobic in it, so later I just showered in our horse trailer. It was fun seeing family and showing them around camp. After the visit, Nancy and I went to the reservoir in the truck and refilled our water barrels. Always better to have too much water than too little!

Dinner that night was a potluck. The club provided hamburgers, hot dogs and fresh corn on the cob. I was amazed by the variety of homemade dishes that people provided - potato, macaroni and green salads, rice and potato dishes, and even pie. Nobody went away hungry! After dinner we played a game called "Trailer Trash" (the name was because we were to grab whatever we had at our trailers that we no longer had a use for). It was similar to a gift exchange I'd done at a Christmas party. Everyone who wanted to play donated an unwrapped item or two. Most were used horse-related items but some were arts and crafts. The items were piled on the back of a wagon: A pair of boots, a well-worn black Stetson hat, bug repellent, hoof picks, reins, shipping boots, flashlights, a Swiss Army knife, T-shirts, a flannel nightgown (?), a picture of a mule reaching over to bite a farrier on the butt (some knew the parties involved), decorated baskets, etc. A pack of cards was used to determine order - you received one card for each item you donated. Instead of going in any order, cards were drawn from another deck of cards. Each person could pick an item off the wagon or "steal" an item already picked. Items could only be stolen twice - after that, they were out of play. It was a lot of fun and a great way for your "trash" to become someone else's "treasure".

SGRHC then had a short business meeting and then discussed Friday's schedule. Another loop was planned, so camp didn't need to be broken up in the morning.

Friday's drive took us to the shore of Stampede Reservoir. Right before we reached it, one of the riders had an accident. He had just switched horses with someone at the front of the wagon train. He rode past our wagon toward his, which was right behind us. We heard a gasp, and I turned in time to see

the horse go over backward. It was horrible. His wife, in the wagon, witnessed it. The horse got up but the rider didn't move. It was a tense few minutes as people responded (luckily a nurse and an Emergency Medical Technician were present). Amazingly, there was cell service and 911 was called. Due to the location, a helicopter was dispatched from Reno. Forest Service staff and the Truckee Fire Department also responded. After a few minutes, he regained consciousness, and being an ornery old cowboy, had to be convinced to remain still.

The wagon train was moved about a quarter mile away, where we waited for the helicopter. My team really didn't like the standing still. That's something else I need to work on at home. The helicopter was there in 20 minutes. The pilot circled us several times, staying away from the horses, then landed on the far side of where he was lying. They life-flighted him to a Reno hospital. His wife was given a ride back to camp and then driven to the hospital. (By dinner that night, we heard that he was in stable condition with a broken rib, fractured vertebrae and a lacerated adrenal gland. He would be in the Intensive Care Unit that night for observation, but was doing well under the circumstances. He could have had more internal injuries if it hadn't been for his large silver belt buckle - which was bent into a "V" shape where the horn of the cutting saddle had hit it. Who knew large belt buckles were safety equipment?)

A somber group headed back to camp. Leaving the reservoir, we needed to cross a one-lane wooden bridge. As we approached, Annette asked if it was going to be a problem. I didn't know - we'd never crossed one before. We chose to have a positive attitude and act like it would be okay. Unfortunately, right as we were about to step onto it, Annie locked up her feet and Gwen swerved to the right, away from the metal railing on her side. That put Annie off the road, pointing down toward the creek. Once again, help was there immediately. Glen, a passenger on the wagon behind me, grabbed Annie's bridle and shoved her towards the bridge while I pulled on the left line and encouraged the team forward with the whip. Gwen straightened out and stepped onto the bridge, pulling Annie with her. As soon as Annie was on the bridge, she wanted off, so I changed gears from urging them on to holding them back. The bridge was short, maybe 15-20 feet, so we were back on the gravel road in a few seconds. We had about 50 yards to regroup before we went over a second, shorter wooden bridge. Luckily, this one didn't have a metal railing, so Gwen stepped right onto it, taking Annie with her. Annie was better going over, not in such a panic to get off, so maybe our next wooden bridge crossing will be less exciting. (I had asked ahead of time if there would be water crossings or cattle guard crossings, so I could practice before the trip, but I had been assured that there weren't any. Nobody thought to warn me about the wooden bridges because this loop had not been done in the past). The rest of the trip back to camp went smoothly. Michael had bailed out before the first bridge and was riding on another wagon. I felt a little strange showing up in camp without him - I'd have to reassure his mom that he was okay, just riding with someone else.

There was a short meeting that evening. There'd been another call from the hospital. The "ornery old cowboy" was insisting he'd be out of the hospital the following day so that he could attend the party scheduled for the end of the wagon train. For the night though, he was sedated and resting comfortably. Everyone was relieved to hear it.

Saturday's drive was only 7 miles long. We shuttled rigs in the morning, so we didn't leave until 10 AM. The first part was on paved roads, including going over the dam. Although there were guard rails, the road was wide enough that it didn't bother Gwen. It was fun waving at passing cars, campers and even boaters out on the water. We put smiles on a lot of faces. The second part was on gravel roads, but these were wide and well-traveled. Traffic was light and the drivers were considerate.

We pulled into "Fort Seaborg" ranch at 1:30 PM. It was a wonderful sight to see. We had made it! The party didn't start until 5 PM, so we busied ourselves unhitching and packing for the trip home. Some people camp overnight and go home Sunday, but since Grass Valley is only 2 hours away, we weren't staying.

My husband arrived with the flatbed trailer about 3PM, so we loaded the wagon up. Michael was up at the house helping get food ready for the party. Nancy took her husband to see the route that we had driven. Then the 20% chance of rain showed up in the form of a thunderstorm. I didn't want the horses standing out in it, so I loaded them. Then the hail started ... I looked at my husband and said, "I want to go home." I was exhausted and really looking forward to sleeping in my own bed. So we skipped the party and headed home. It was so nice when we got there. We unloaded the horses and then I went in, took a shower, and collapsed. The rest of the unloading could wait until tomorrow.

The horses and I will be going on more wagon trains. I will continue to use Gwen until Annie is solid, then I'll pair Annie with one of my other Creams. And hopefully by next year I'll have bows and a canvas top for my wagon! (I'm asking Santa for them for Christmas!) •

Foal playing at Cream Acres Ranch



*American Cream Draft Horse
Association*

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Born and bred in the U.S.A.

Belle Davis in an American Scurry buggy driving Bobbi

