

## **WinkWorld July 2004**

### **The Drought**

First and foremost, the dreadful drought of several years has lessened. Those of you who are watching national news might think that we have flooded out. Not true. However, we are dangerously close to 4 inches of rain this year. I am constantly amazed at how quickly the prairies respond to even a small amount of rain. The prairies are green, and we are thankful. Our dams still have not filled.

### **4 Interesting Young Women**

On our road trip back to SD from CA, we met a couple of young women in Rawlins, WY. They had just graduated from Mt. Holyoke and Smith; they were filled with the headiness of graduation and were en route to begin their new lives in CA. One was hoping for an internship at NPR, and the other wanted to be a forest ranger. They were as charming as they were unarmed and unafraid. The next morning we stopped at a ranch near Medicine Bow WY and reconnected with two young women, whom we had known when they were small children. These two sisters might have graduated from high school, but I am not sure. They were single-handedly operating their own ranch, which included several hundred head of cattle; 60 head of horses, and a land reclamation business, which involved operating several huge tractor-like machines, with tires taller than I. I wondered what could be learned if the two young women from Smith and Mt. Holyoke could spend a year living and working the land with these two young ranchers. Imagine what all four of these young women could learn from each other through conversation/dialogue, love, and a critical perspective.

### **Branding**

We had our branding in the middle of the month. This involves 20 riders bringing in the cattle and calves; sorting the calves from the cows; roping each calf individually; branding and giving shots to each, plus castrating the bull calves.

### **Making a Rope**

Probably the most interesting thing I have seen in a long time is my Cousin De making rope from bailing twine. Now, this is truly a lost art of the prairie people. He told us that he saw it done when he was a young person and has been carrying it around in his head for more than 50 years. I had never thought of how a rope is made, and now I'll never forget. It requires at least two people, a couple of homemade wooden tools, and a lot of ingenuity.

### **Wink's "Girls"**

The most interesting thing on the ranch right now are the new filly colts: Pip Squeak, Brown Sugar, Josie, Rosie, Jeanie, Amiga, CJ, Molly, Dolly, Blue Moon, Snippy, and Tic Tac. The plan is that these little fillies will grow up, have babies, and give us something to do in our retirement. In addition, we have three new horses: Lucky (young and spirited for Wink); Pepe (short and slow for the grandkids); and Pete (old and slow for me).

### **The Prairie Perspective**

Heard during branding day:

"Are you gonna cowboy up or just lay there and bleed?"

This kind of sums up the prairie perspective.

## **Our New Dam**

Some of you know that we built a new dam south of the house last year (see <http://www.JoanWink.com/gifs/newdam.jpg>). It has a little water now, and of course, we are hoping for enough run-off someday so that it fills up. However, even now with just a few feet of water, it is amazing how it is changing the environment. We have more birds and animals. For example, this a.m. we awoke to 3 deer coming in for water. We have many more birds, including baby ducks, which we have never had so close to the house. Later on my walk this morning on the prairies, the killdeer, marbled godwit, and curlew were trying to lead me away from their nests on the prairies. The lark buntings seemed to follow me along the fence lines.

The 4 Little Ranchers (Wyatt, 8; Luke, 6; Wynn, 4; and Austin 2) will all be here in July. This is your hint of what I will write about next month.

In closing, enjoy:

Eggs for breakfast?

(see <http://www.JoanWink.com/gifs/eggs.jpg>)

Oprah was fuzzy.

(see <http://www.JoanWink.com/gifs/op-fuzzy.jpg>)

A sleepy swimmer.

(see <http://JoanWink.com/gifs/sleppyswimmer.jpg>)