

## UVALDE 2006

by Norrene Trama

Frustration after frustration after frustration best describes how this ride started out; but in the end proved to be a great time for all. The first "frustration" was trying to find a place to accommodate the group with both cabins and pens.....not an easy job. Nancy finally decided we could build our own pens and booked the Williams Ranch. The pen problem rectified itself in that we were able to modify the pens that were there and accommodate the horses very nicely; so that frustration was overcome. The next "frustration" was lack of directions for Chuck and myself. Nancy had emailed us the directions but somehow they are still wandering around in cyberspace; and I failed to recheck the email for the new set of directions the morning we left, so we were off to the big adventure with just a sketchy map and Chucks previous knowledge of the area as he's had hunting leases there for many years. What we failed to interpret on the map was the fact that we needed to go into Fossil Creek Ranch to get to the Williams Ranch. It was not until we spotted an elderly local that we were redirected back onto the path and then onto the correct road.

Meanwhile back at the ranch; another "frustration" was unfolding, this one for Nancy and Jesse. The big new KODIAK 5500 decided to shut down again right after refueling. The good news is; (if this is "good") is that it broke down right outside the ranch and not half way to Uvalde. This put Nancy in the position of having to impound the Marshalls truck and trailer to get herself down to the ride. (I think Nancy's best bet would be to scale down that Taj Mahal of hers, and get a smaller trailer, rather than trying to increase truck size, just one person's opinion). In spite of it all the unstoppable Nancy Flick arrived with Jesse and Judith in tow. A little later than planned but there just the same. While Nancy was dealing with her truck problems; Chuck and I were stuck at the gate to the Williams Ranch. Trying to call Nancy proved futile as Verizon service did not work out in them thar hills. Somehow Chuck had managed to wrangle a phone from a poor unsuspecting worker (when a guy Chuck's size wants your phone you just give it to him) and get in touch with Nancy who gave him the codes she had just gotten from the ranch people. They proved to be the wrong ones, and after another go round of trying to find someone out in the vast wilderness, I managed to figure out that the gate was closed but not locked and would open with a push. Hallelujah! We later learned that they had changed the code since giving it to Nancy.

Once all of our "frustrations" were overcome we were finally free to enjoy ourselves and explore the beautiful countryside. While waiting on Nancy the small band of early arrivals set out to explore the ranch and found it to be an exquisite place. There were lots of jeep trails and cattle trails to follow and we managed to pass some interesting waterfalls and beautiful tanks. I must say the owners of the ranch were more than accommodating. They were very helpful in getting our horses settled in and allowed us to go just about anywhere we wanted with no reservations. It was just great.

On Thursday we decided to enlist one of the owners, Trey, as a "guide" to help us navigate the far corners of the ranch. He promised to take us to the "Box Canyon" which was a beautiful sight. The problem with the ride on that vast ranch was he lost his way and that subjected us to one of those "adventurous rides" to say the least. Both Jesse and Greg wound up hacking our way thru all the jungle in the back country and I am sure we were riding on land that hadn't seen a human or equine footprints in many years. They managed to do with just their bare hands which made it all more astonishing. All I can say is THANKS guys for making it possible. After the Box Canyon ride some of us chose a less taxing ride back to the camp. I had a broken stirrup leather, and some had had enough adventures, but the rest kept on. The later half of the ride proved to be even more highlighting than the early part, as riders were forced to dismount and lead their trusty equines down steep rocky slopes while trying to navigate thru more jungle overgrowth. Definitely not a ride for the faint of heart. It was speculated that Trey the guide was somehow lost on his own ranch, and this is quite possible since neither he or his horse had been together in over a year and things down there can change a lot in that course of time. Late in the afternoon a band of weary, slightly bloodied but still functioning riders returned to camp with lots of exploits of their big ride. All horses and riders were accounted for and thus another crazy but fun ride was added to the list.

One of the highlights of the ranch—they make candy that is sold all over the world. Sally actually went up to the "candy manufacturing premise" and helped in the kitchen. She returned with candy for all.