



# Having 'no fear'

## Window Rock is the end of the trail for delegate riders

By Kathy Helms  
Diné Bureau

**W**INDOW ROCK — Delegate Jerry Bodie and his group of 45 Navajo Nation trail riders moseyed into the fairgrounds in Window Rock late Sunday, tired but happy to have survived nearly 300 miles of reservation roads and rugged terrain.

There were approximately 20 youth that joined up with Bodie along the trail. The youngest was 5-year-old Lalanlia Bah Johnson, followed by Delegate Ray Berchman's grandson, Kalen "Big Man" Yazzie, 10, and Colby and O.J. Largo, both 12. Elvina Curley, 15, who attends St. Michaels Indian School, took part in the group for the first time and made it all the way.

These kids taught the older folks the meaning of "No Fear." As riders headed out from Stinking Springs across the Hogback to Breadsprings, Lalanlia chattered excitedly, riding beside her dad, Timothy Johnson, who held onto the reins.

"Look at me dad! I'm bouncing up and down like a rabbit," she shouted, occasionally calling out to Bodie, "Hey, Mr. Trail Boss!" She hung on tight as her horse trotted up and down deep ravines most adults would think twice about traveling, while "Big Man," who is all of 4 feet tall, rode circles around everyone on his Arabian.

By the time we had arrived at Baca Chapter Wednesday afternoon after dodging beer bottles in the right of way, Chaps was acting like he was on his last legs and needed to be trailered. It was just as well, because I was called back to work.

Baca Chapter President Gary Vandever, son of Code Talker Joe Vandever Sr., sang a horse song for the riders before they left for Thoreau to spend the night at Vice President Ben Shelly's residence. One elderly lady, who looked to be in her 80s, shook my hand and told me, "It's fun to ride horses."

While I was back at work, Bodie and the group rode on to visit with Delegate Edmund Yazzie for breakfast in Thoreau, then traveled to Iyanbito Chapter where Navajo Nation Council Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan joined them for lunch. They spent the night in Cibola National Forest in McGaffey, watching the full moon rise through the pine trees.

A crowd greeted the riders in Breadsprings. "As we came in, they were honking their horns and clapping. They really fed us. That day



Jeff Jones/Independent

Riders make their way toward Thoreau High School and the end of that leg of their trip for July 16 as they participate in the delegates' annual ride on horseback to reach the Navajo Nation Council Chambers in Window Rock.

they butchered a sheep for us in our honor, and people had plenty of meat to eat, and stew," Bodie said. "We were just overwhelmed by their hospitality. The Veterans organization of Bread Springs provided breakfast."

Friday night I slept on a cot at one end of the horse pen where I could keep an eye on Chaps, while Bodie's son, Leon, a former Marine, slept on a cot at the other end. Bodie's nephew,

Franklin, rolled out a mat on the ground beside the horse trailer.

A thunderstorm woke us in the middle of the night. Franklin and I wrapped up in our sleeping bags and ran for the truck to wait out the storm. Leon zipped the waterproof cover over his head and went back to sleep.

We rode out of Breadsprings 36 riders strong, heading toward Chichiltah. I had forgotten my hat when

I left to rejoin the ride, so by Saturday afternoon, I had another sunburn on top of the one I already had, prompting Delegate Joe M. Lee to introduce me to his chapter as a member of the "Red Clan."

Avery John, who works at a saddle shop in Gallup, felt sorry for me and gave me his cowboy hat as I was leaving. By the time we reached Delegate Harriett Becenti's chapter of Manuelito, where they pro-

vided lunch along the trail, my gloves were gone. This time, Mr. Silver donated to my worthy cause.

Delegate Leonard Tsosie showed up with hay and grain for the horses as well as ice cream for the riders. You just can't beat Navajo hospitality!

As we finally reached Lupton Saturday evening, Bodie's horse uncovered a rattlesnake in one of the bushes. Nothing will make a bunch of riders scatter like the sound of somebody yelling, "Snake!"

A large crowd awaited us at Lupton Chapter, where the Bodie family provided dinner, and again Sunday afternoon at Berchman's chapter of Oak Springs, where they held a raffle and even presented gifts to the riders. Because we were running late, we trailered the horses to Hunters Point, unloaded, and began the final leg of the journey to Window Rock.

Chaps had caught his second wind and wanted to run. I finally gave in and let him go, at which point, he nearly dumped me in a prairie dog hole. Fortunately, I saw it coming and diverted at the last minute. Jose del Toro, who was filming former Delegate Willie Grayeyes' portion of the ride, said Grayeyes didn't fare as well.

About 400 people turned out in Window Rock to welcome the leaders of the annual Navajo Nation Council Horse Ride: Delegate Leslie Dele, who started the event, Kee Yazzie Mann, Bodie and Grayeyes. Five delegates joined Bodie for the ride: Johnny Naize, Tim Goodluck, Berchman, Young Jeff Tom and LoRenzo Bates.

Chaps was too tired to care about the band that greeted us or the huge meal that awaited. All he wanted was water, hay and a nap. Leon and I loaded him into the trailer and headed for the barn.

When Bodie came to pick up Chaps July 13, I was showing him my mare, "Rain," and telling him about how she eats like a horse and is getting too fat.

"She's not fat," Bodie said. "She's pregnant." I found this hard to believe because I certainly hadn't called for stud service.

As we got closer to the barn Sunday evening, I saw something dart over to Rain. "Dang! That's a big dog," I said out loud. Leon thought it was a goat.

I believe the muscle spasm Chaps had Sunday afternoon out on the mountain in Oak Springs was actually a sympathy pain, because Rain is now the proud mama of a colt, I'm a grandma, and somewhere roaming nearby is one sneaky Dun.