Riding into history local ranchers part of Rough Riders

By Luann Dart

GS Publishing Reporter

With a majestic vista of North Dakota's Badlands soaring to the sky as a backdrop, 25 horsemen rode into history during President Donald Trump's visit to Medora to dedicate the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library.

Portraying Theodore Roosevelt's storied Rough Riders, the reenactors on horseback escorted Trump's motorcade to the newly built Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library for the official dedication July 1, then stood behind the president during his speech at the Burning Hills Amphitheatre.

The lope up the 1.5-mile winding highway ushering the president was the ride of a lifetime for two New England ranchers.

Grady Bock, 19, and Jake Wolf, 24, who both ranch with their families in the New England area, were part of the 25-man ensemble portraying the Rough Riders. Steve Marmon, who lives in Dickinson and works at Helena Agri-Enterprises in New England, was also part of the group.

"It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, because it's America's 250th anniversary. North Dakota doesn't often get this kind of national recognition. It was an incredible honor to be part of it," Wolf said.

"It was a once-in-a-lifetime thing. I'd never expected to be a part of something like that and it's just a really cool thing to be able to do," Bock said. "It was an awesome experience and it went well. We didn't have any wrecks, so that's always good, and it was just a great day."

Putting haying season aside for a day, Wolf saddled his horse, Tuff, and Bock rode Cinch into local history among the buttes overlooking Medora.

After flying into Bismarck, Trump traveled the final third of a mile into Medora aboard the red, white and blue "Freedom250 Train" to dedicate the library in honor of the nation's 26th president. As the country celebrated its 250th anniversary July 4, North Dakota hosted the grand opening of the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library in Medora.

"There were a lot of people there," Wolf said. "That little town was packed."

The Rough Riders for the day were organized by Eli Waddington, who knew Bock after selling him a mule.

photo | Submitted Photo

TWO NEW ENGLAND RANCHERS were part of the Rough Riders who escorted President Donald Trump during his visit to Medora to dedicate the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library. Jake Wolf stands second from the left in the front row, while Grady Bock is third from the left in the middle row. Steve Marmon, who lives in Dickinson and works in New England, is second from the left in the back row.

"He called me and he said, 'President Trump's going to be coming on the first, so you probably want to be there for that.' I was like, 'Well, of course, I'll be there for that,'" Bock said. Bock then called Wolf, and the two were ready to ride alongside other experienced horsemen.

The one requirement was having a steady horse who could handle the uphill lope on pavement.

"We were all trusted to bring a pretty well-broke horse to make sure the job got done with no disasters," Wolf said.

"We knew President Trump was scheduled to attend, but with an event of that size, you never really know how things are going to go until it happens. We were excited just to be part of the presidential library's grand opening. Getting the chance to ride alongside Secret Service on horseback, escort the president and shake his hand was something I never expected to do. It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience," Wolf said.

Beforehand, the riders were asked for their boot and hat sizes, along with their Social Security numbers for a federal background check.

"We had one day of practice and we really only ran through it one time and it went pretty smooth and that's all we needed to do," Wolf said. "We made quick work of it."

"Rehearsal was very short and sweet, because we can't keep loping our horses up and down this hill on asphalt. That's hard on them, so we had one chance to get it right the day before and then we're expected to do the same thing the day of and everything went really smoothly and it was a lot of fun," Wolf said.

The men were able to keep the clothing from the event, including boots, boot covers, hats, pants, shirt, handkerchief and suspenders.

The Rough Riders was a nickname given to the 1st U.S. Volunteer Cavalry, one of three such regiments raised in 1898 for the Spanish–American War and the only one to see action. Eventually led by Roosevelt, the Rough Riders became known for the Battle of San Juan Heights July 1, 1898.

The Rough Riders of 2026 also rode into history.

The riders arrived early in the morning July 1 in Medora, where they were screened, then maneuvered through the crowd before marshaling.

On horseback, the riders anticipated Trump's exit from the train, as Bock shot a short video of the moment.

"There was a ton of anticipation, and he finally stepped out the door and everybody started cheering. The vibes were super high and then we started our ride. The ride went perfect. I couldn't really imagine it to be any better," Bock said.

Once Trump and other dignitaries arrived at the library, the Rough Riders ran their horses back to the trailers, then gathered at the Burning Hills Amphitheatre, where holding rooms were labeled, including one for "POTUS."

The men then stood behind Trump during his hourlong speech.

"It was so awesome. I was right directly behind him and it was just a really cool experience listening to him talk," Bock said.

"It was pretty warm. But he said a lot of good things and we were just proud to represent. It was pretty cool that Grady and I, a couple of New England kids, were there," Wolf said.

After his speech, Trump shook the hands of all the riders in the front row, which is when Wolf was able to shake the president's hand.

"It was pretty neat," Wolf said.

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PUBLIC NOTICE

MORTON COUNTY WEED CONTROL BOARD OPENINGS

Morton County Weed Control Board has openings from District #1 Hebron Area District and District #2 Almont Area District. The Weed Board shall implement a program for the control of noxious weeds. The board employs a Weed Officer and works closely with landowners. The County has been divided into six weed districts.

Any qualified elector of District #1, Hebron Area District is eligible for appointment. The appointment is for a 4-year term expiring 08/01/2030.

Any qualified elector of District #2, Almont Area District is eligible for appointment. The appointment is for a 4-year term expiring 08/01/2030.

Please complete the application for consideration, which can be found on our website at www.co.morton.nd.us/employment.

Deadline for submission of applications is July 27, 2026.

If you have questions or comments, please reach out to Dawn Rhone, County Auditor or Wendy Bent, Human Resources Director.

Published July 8, 2026