

THE NOGAL JOURNALS

Volume XVII

Part Three

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Please use the BOOKMARKS TOOL:



for your active TABLE OF CONTENTS
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window).

2019-06-16 - Meandering Water

A warm, sunny day . . . perfect for following meandering water as it courses along.
The open road ahead - always inviting.



As she drinks from her bowl before the ride, Lulu gets a loving nuzzle from Belle.



Heading to the water. Thunder knows.



2019-06-16 - Meandering Water

Spanky gingerly tries some grass, as Belle waits for the verdict. "Well, Spanky, is it as tasty as it looks?"



"I love taking Belle to lunch!"





Everyone enjoyed this one.





Lacey wildflowers.



Spanky has his splashing fun. "Belle stays clear - "My hair!"



While Lulu finds a quiet pond . . .



. . . and does some wading in the stream as the horses graze the banks. "Ah!"



A thunder cloud looms overhead . . . time to go.



2019-06-16 - Meandering Water

It was a very nice family afternoon. Thanks for coming along!



MM

2019-06-20 - High Country Reverie

To be immersed in a nearly silent, green world - kept company by like-minded and generous companions . . . that is the real reverie of our ride up Argentina Trail.

The road beckons, with the embracing arms of nature's bounty.



The horses recognize a favorite route.



Ah - a special trail never loses its natural appeal.



In warm stillness, everyone seems lost in their own reverie.



Whispering little brooks provide cool water and fresh grass along the way . . .



. . . and keep fresh, the last wild irises of spring.



Open meadows . . .



... encourage faster progress.



Spanky celebrates reaching the crest of the high country.



We feel at home here, where the horses enjoy total freedom.



Is it any wonder that this is a favorite spot?



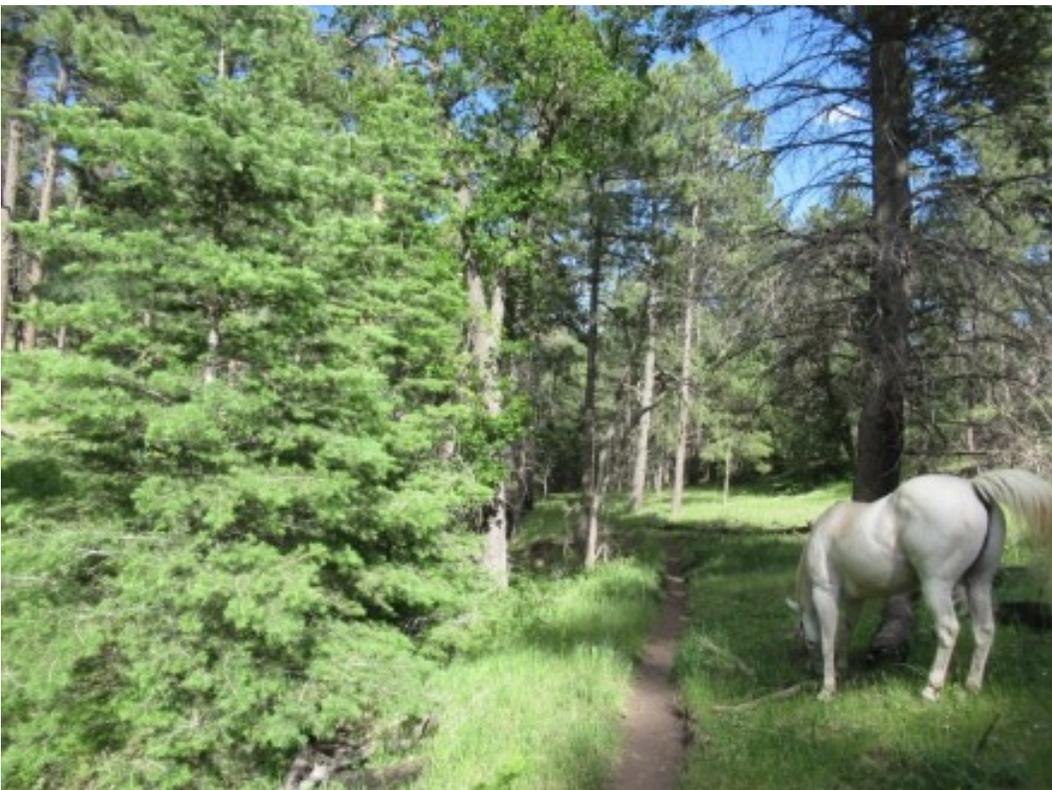
Fine company.



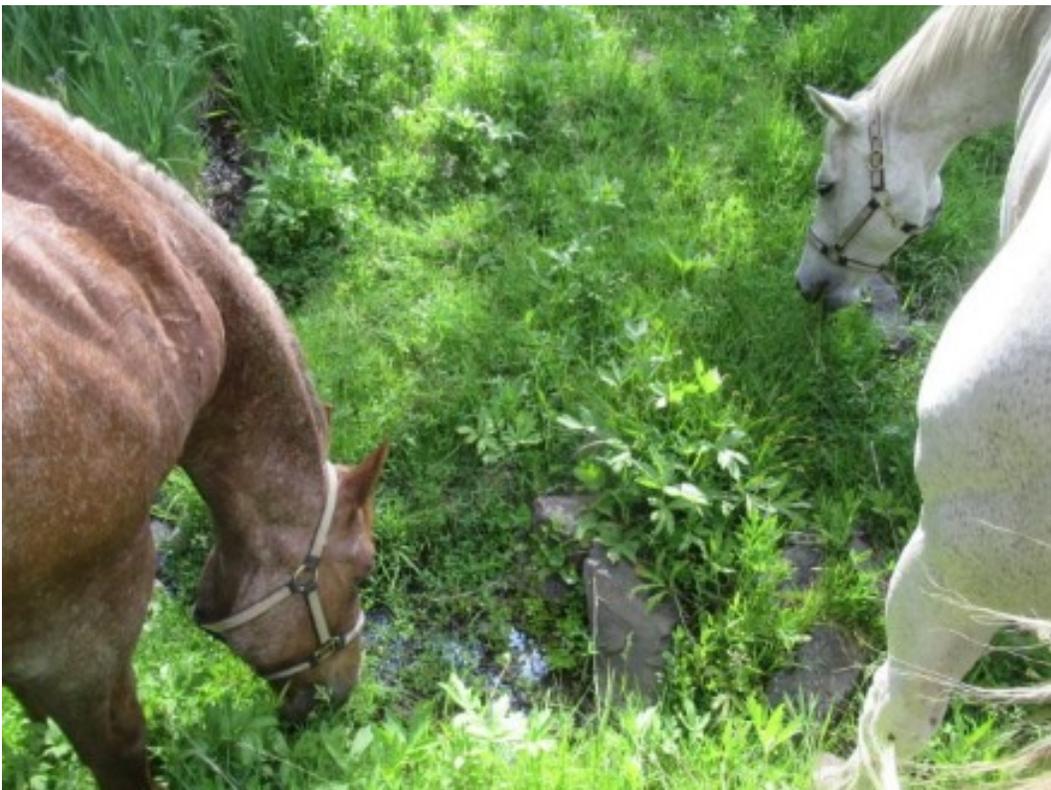
Thunder is understandably reluctant to leave . . .



. . . but soon joins us for the journey back down.



It is a thoughtful and appreciative time . . .



. . . and when we get back to the ranch, our favorite cow elk has a surprise for us - an introduction.



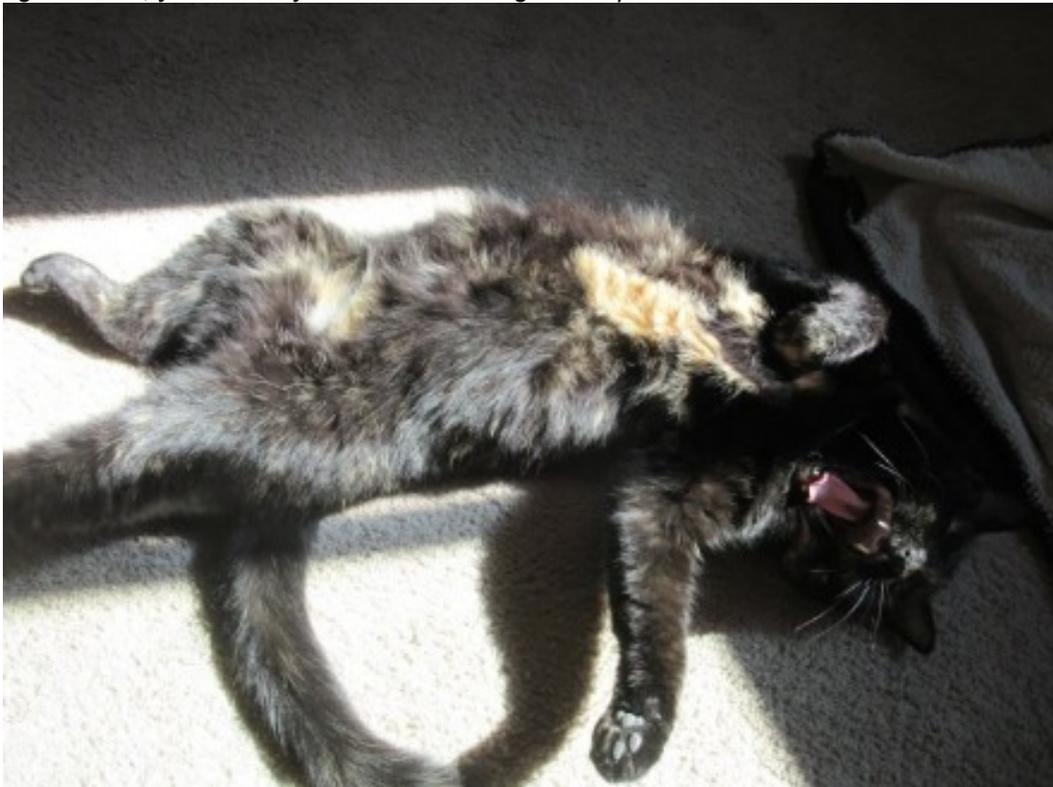
Every new life, a miracle.



"Nearness to nature . . . keeps the spirit sensitive to impressions not commonly felt, and in touch with the unseen powers." Charles Alexander Eastman
MM

"The only constant is change". The Village of Ruidoso has added (for the summer only) a water park attraction to picturesque Grindstone Lake. It includes a re-designed parking area, concession stand, and the "Wibet" - a huge, floating action station "for kids of all ages". I am told it is called a "Wibet", because that is the sound frogs make (?). I thought they said "ribbet-ribbet" . . . but this attraction is produced in Germany, and maybe frogs speak differently there. The horses were curious about all this (they have always considered the lake to be their own "Golden Pond") . . . so we went to have a look.

"Have a good time", yawned Onyx from her morning sun-nap.



We parked in the forest near the lake (to avoid the fancy parking lot with the trailer).



Thunder seemed eager to check out the new stuff.



So, that's a Wibet. People seemed to enjoy it (we thought just having a beautiful lake in the mountains was enough . . .)



2019-06-22 - What's a Wibet?

It really didn't seem to bother the horses. They were more concerned about avoiding people who had "camped" right on our trails. Thunder stepped gingerly over a fishing net left thoughtlessly in his way . . .



. . . but, they always enjoy meeting new people (and visa-versa!)



They do attract a crowd.



Hey guys! It's time to move on . . . "But they have carrot cake!!!!"



"Oh, okay . . ." . . . "Bye! We gotta go now. It's been fun meeting you!"



We headed to the natural part of the lake.



Ahhhh . . .



What's this?



More fans to meet.



2019-06-22 - What's a Wibet?

Belle led us to the unpopulated far side of the lake. "I love my public, but sometimes a star just has to get away, you know?"



The lake is at record high water levels. Thunder tried to use the old trails - some of which are now under water.



As usual, he figured out a way (smart horse).



Beautiful views from over here. That's Sierra Blanca peak in the distance.



See Belle's ears? She learned during our time in Sedona (where there were tons of mountain bikes on the trails), to always look around blind turns wherever there might be bikes headed her way (we didn't see any). Another smart horse.



In fact, we didn't see anyone here. Nice.



"I don't mind sharing the lake during the summer - as long as they don't mow the grass!"



The Wibet leaves after Labor Day.

MM

Lulu often comes up with great ideas. In this case, she reminded me that it had been awhile since we visited the little village of Cloudcroft, about 50 miles to our south. Fodors travel guide has called Cloudcroft one of their "Most Overlooked and Underrated Destination Spots". In the 1890's, as the railroad grew north from El Paso, the builders eyed the vast timber lands of the Sacramento Mountains with great interest. They needed lots of lumber for bridges and ties, and by 1898, an "engineering marvel" train spur had been blasted and gouged up the mountain. Along with hauling lumber down, enterprising railroaders used the trains to transport tourists up to the beautiful (and cool) alpine setting. Soon the famous Lodge was constructed, which hosted numerous early celebrities, including Pancho Villa, Judy Garland, and Clark Gable. During the 1930's it was managed by the young Conrad Hilton, a New Mexico native. At 9,000 ft. elevation, the Lodge golf course is the highest in the nation. But this isn't why Lulu wanted to go - "They have the best extra thick bacon in the dining room", she enthused. So off we went.

The drive from Ruidoso to Cloudcroft is one of the nicest anywhere.



It climbs gently through the Mescalero Apache Reservation.



Bands of horses live wild throughout the area.



We came upon these new parents and their offspring.



Lulu said, "We have horses at home." She was eager to get to that bacon at the Lodge.



First a drink from the pond out front.



Then she admired some remarkable mountain poppies in the resort's garden.



Wow!



Everyone knows her here, and the chef went for some bacon . . . "Extra crisp, please."



"Oh, boy!"



There were also lots of pets and ear rubs from passersby. "Goochy-goochy-coo."
"Alright lady . . . my bacon is here."



After lunch, a beautiful drive back.



An abandoned cabin enjoys an enviable location.



We spotted another band of horses, living on their own.



This protective stallion kept his eye on us.



We got home just in time for happy hour.



The guys were gathered at the watering hole. "Gosh, half the year is over already! Where does the time go?"

"I know . . . soon it will be hunting season again."

"Did you have to bring that up?"



We even had time for a little ride at sundown. Thunder was feeling frisky.



Lulu told the horses all about her day. "And then we ate a ton of bacon!"



"You chose bacon over those delicious poppies? What were you thinking!"



MM



FOLLOWED
DREAM
RANCH

2019-06-27 - *Splash Splash'in*

The Wibet floating amusement thing at Grindstone is closed on Mondays and Tuesdays . . . so Thunder thought that might be the best time to go for a swim in the lake. He was correct.

Other than the colorful contraption looking lonesome in the water, it was the way it used to be . . . quiet and virtually deserted.



"Where is everybody", ponders Belle.



"There's the duck family!", offered Thunder. "Let's go for a swim!"



2019-06-27 - Splash Splash'in

... and we did. Thunder has always loved swimming. During the challenging days of overcoming his prior abuse, it helped us to build trust.



Spanky was next. He likes it, too.



Then there was Belle. Of course, she was worried about her hair. "I will be a big mess!", she protested. But the boys egged her on. "Come on, scare-dy cat", joshed Spanky, "You're not going to shrink!" "(I should be so lucky)", Belle thought to herself. "Okay, okay (I'll show them!)"



2019-06-27 - Splash Splash'in

"Eat your heart out, Esther Williams! (You stay close in case something slimy grabs my legs!)"



She had the best form (she's more, er, buoyant).



Meanwhile, the boys dried off by rolling in . . . you guessed it . . . dirt.



Hey, Thunder, that is not "dry cleaning"



After their swim, we just enjoyed the lake . . .





. . . and, of course, made new friends.





Then a peaceful ride, all by ourselves.





MM

2019-06-28 - Monsoon

Our southwest monsoon season has begun. Essentially, it is a seasonal phenomenon in which the normally prevailing winds from the west and northwest reverse. As they shift to the south and southeast, the atmosphere picks up moisture from the Gulf of Mexico. As this warm, moist air gains uplift into higher, cooler air (such as that found above our mountain), it condenses to form towering cumulonimbus - thunderhead - clouds. Most of our precipitation occurs during the monsoon season, from July to September.

Mornings are typically clear and cool. Not a cloud in the sky. It's a good time to head to the feed store to pick up more hay!



By the time we're home and unloading the feed into the barn, pretty little clouds have begun to form. They look innocent enough. But as the hay is unloaded, they quietly grow (Spanky observes the feed moving into the barn, conducting his own inventory).



The unloading is nearly completed . . . and the clouds are growing fast.



Time to put the truck away.



Dramatic rogue clouds begin to collect more moisture out of the air.



2019-06-28 - Monsoon

Before long, the sky becomes gray - and thunder is heard. A few drops fall.



The horses run for the shelter of their barn. Then, a deluge lasting scant minutes, or more than an hour. The earth suddenly smells "green".



The clouds release their precious cargo, and - more quickly than it began - the storm is suddenly over. By the time the deer gather for happy hour, the air is clear.



"Rain? What rain?"



2019-06-28 - Monsoon

Though not an everyday occurrence, the monsoon rains are a welcome and beautiful pattern all summer long.



MM

2019-06-30 - Shady Trails

An early summer's day calls us to the shady Pennsylvania Trail in Nogal Canyon. *Nogal Canyon Road is bordered by some big trees along the way.*



We chose a fork of the trail which offers lots of shade, and grass for grazing (Belle's request).



As usual, we didn't see anyone else all day.



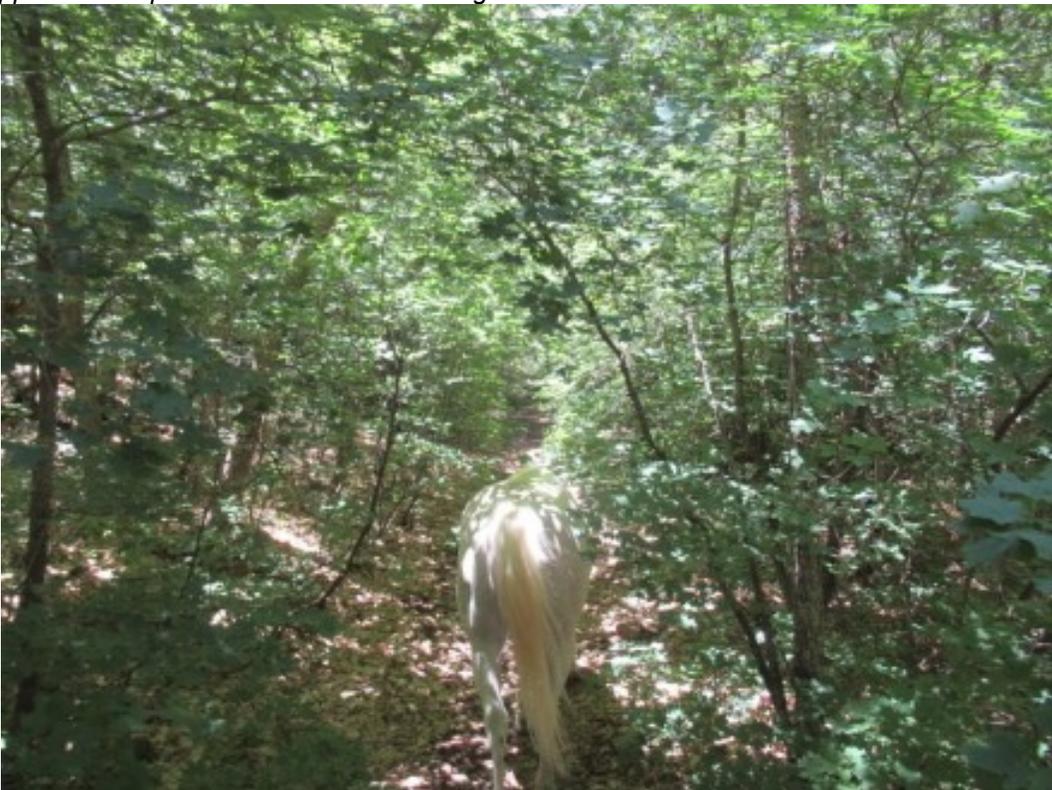
Spanky enjoys a snack . . .



... which allows Thunder to take the lead.



The dappled shade provides a kind of camouflage.



Spanky seems to be playing hide-and-seek. "Ha ha! You didn't even see me!"



This tree has some interesting seed pods(?) hanging from its branches . . .



. . . and these lovely flowers usually come later in the summer.



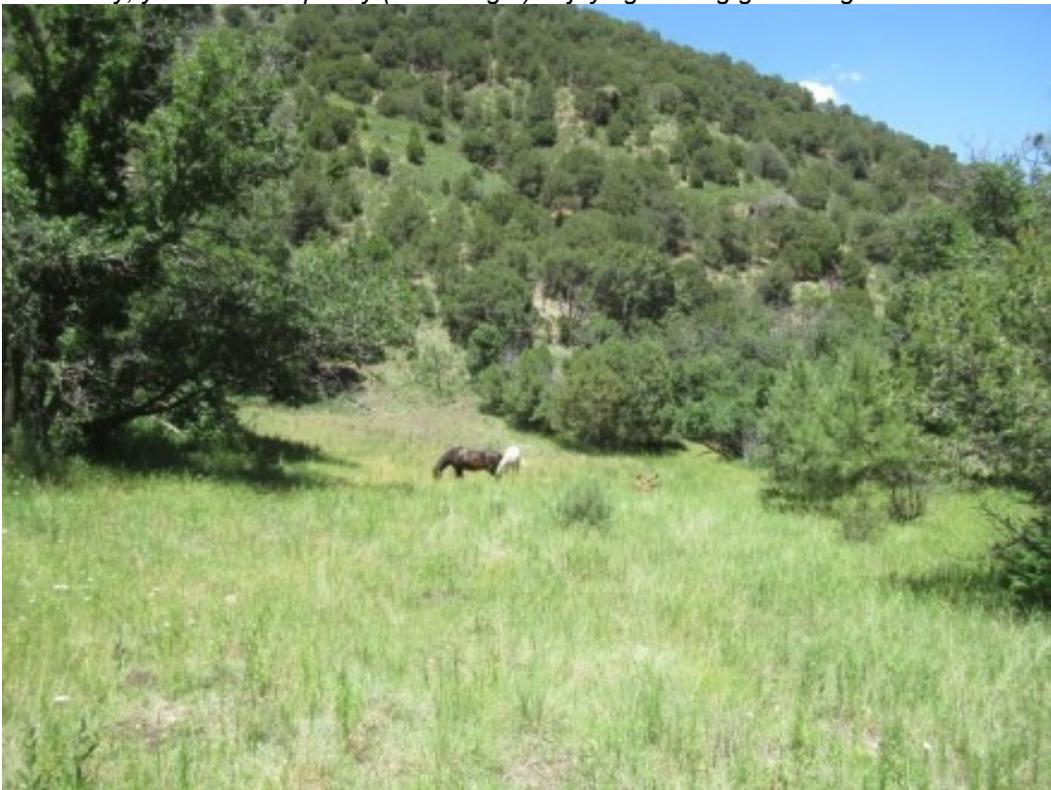
We spent a good deal of time removing fallen deadwood on the rarely used trail. A few BIG barricades (like this massive tree trunk) required creative detours. The horses are great about all of it.



The trail opened onto a high alpine meadow.



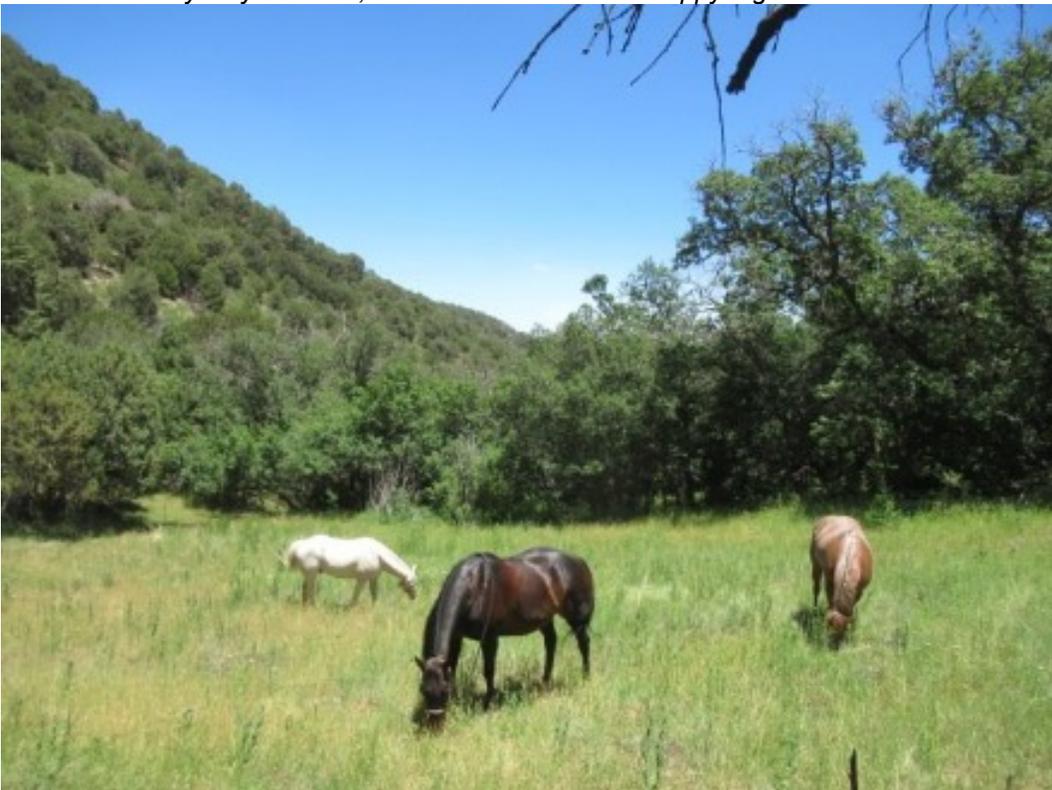
If you look closely, you will see Spanky (on the right) enjoying making grass angels.



Lots of these showy purple flowers.



It's remarkable that they stay so close, in this remote location. Happy together.



I hate to tell them that it's time to head on.



Thunder lingers, and then catches up.



Spanky lollygags, too. Can't blame them.



Thunder seems curious about what Belle has found to nibble on. "Wazzthat?"



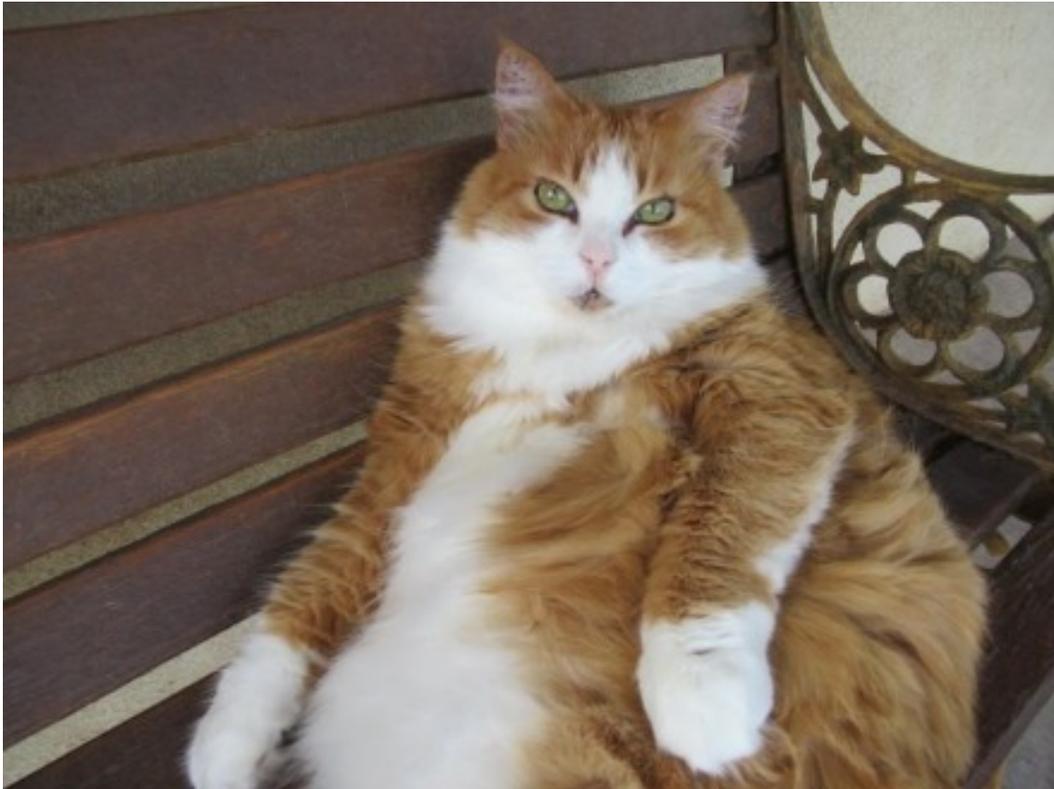
We pass an impressive swollen tree gall. Harmless to the tree, the growths can be caused by insects, parasites, viruses, or even other plants. Galls are rich in resins and tannic acid and have been used in the manufacture of high-quality permanent inks, astringent ointments, and in dyeing and tanning processes.



The stillness of the forest . . . the piney fragrance of warm needles underfoot.



At home, we disturb Mommie Cat's nap. "Did you have a good time? I'm exhausted just hearing about it!"



MM



FOLLOWED
DREAM
RANCH

Sometimes the simplest rides can be the most enchanted.

Monsoon clouds had begun to form (we even got a little rain) . . .



. . . but long about sunset, the horses thought it was a perfect time for a little ride at Ranchman's Camp; they were right - even part of a rainbow to greet us.



Most rainbows are pretty fleeting. This one was different.



It hung around, while Belle had a pre-ride snack . . .



. . . and hung around . . .



In fact, it lasted more than half an hour.



It lingered, even as we began our ride. Thunder said, "Let's chase it!" And so we did.



Funny thing about rainbows . . . they usually stay just out of reach. Pretty, though. It finally faded away.



So, we just moseyed along.



In and out of arroyos.



. . . and came across a curious young bull elk.



He couldn't quite figure us out (I don't blame him).



It was getting late, so we bid him goodbye and headed back.



We picked up the pace - skimming lightly across meadows.



A final snack.



Thunder and I appreciate a special moment together. Beautiful day. Lucky ride (even without a pot-o-gold).



Then, a real wowser sunset.



A pot-of-gold, after all!



MM

HAPPY FOURTH OF JULY!



AMERICA. Land of the Free because of the Brave.

MM



FOLLOWED
DREAM
RANCH

2019-07-06 - Smokey Bear Stampede

The annual Fourth of July Smokey Bear Stampede rodeo is a big deal in Lincoln County. Rodeo (the word is a derivative of "roundup") as we know it did not exist until the late 1800's, but its roots can be traced to the Spanish settling of California, where friendly competitions among the vaqueros were held on ranchos. Historians have difficulty determining the first proper rodeo in America, but likely it was in Santa Fe, in 1847. The famous July 4, 1888 rodeo in Prescott, Arizona incorporated much of what we know as rodeo today - including rules for competition, prizes and awards, and featuring events such as bronco riding, steer roping, and cow pony races. Steer riding was introduced in 1889, which evolved into modern bull riding. In the early 1900's, Wild West Shows (starring personalities like Buffalo Bill Cody and Annie Oakley) began touring the East Coast and Europe, where they became wildly popular and influenced rodeo, too.

Rodeos traditionally begin with a parade - like the one we had in Capitan on the Fourth of July.









Patriotism is strong at the rodeo which follows . . .



... and the horsemanship is impressive.





The Stampede includes an annual "Ranch Rodeo". This year, 16 teams from local ranches competed in events designed to test the cowboys' (and cowgirls') skills in aspects of everyday ranch life (such as cow doctoring and trailer loading).



2019-07-06 - Smokey Bear Stampede

They're the real deal.



2019-07-06 - Smokey Bear Stampede

These men and women are carrying on a true American tradition, embodying independence and work ethic.



Few things in our country have changed so little.



MM

Any culture is only as strong as its youngest members. The cowboy way is no different. In a real sense, it is one of the most old-fashioned lifestyles in our society - based on hard work, self-reliance, and honesty. Young people living the true Western life must forego plenty of tempting negative behavior and distractions, in exchange for healthy, responsible habits.

One of the last events of the annual Stampede is the Youth Ranch Rodeo, where - much like the ranch rodeos - children compete as teams, doing typical ranch-related tasks. Ages range from nine to seventeen, and boys and girls are treated equally. The teams are comprised of four members each, and effort is made to balance them out equally (the whole point is working together). Without the continuation of these traditional ranching skills from one generation to the next, an important part of our American heritage (and an agricultural economy) would be lost.

Activities include timed saddling and unsaddling of horses (not easy, when the saddles weigh nearly as much as some of the kids!)





Hurry up!



Even here, they work as a team - encouraging and helping one another.



When moving unruly cattle into pens (tricky even for adults), they learn focus and cooperation.



These kids (boys and girls) can ride!



In the pen. The team is a success!



On to the next challenge.



Some activities, like roping and moving sheep into a trailer, teach special skills and patience.





They learn concentration . . . and the futility of whining.



This isn't just "kids' stuff" - it is real and useful work.



A purpose, and an identity they can be proud of.



The awards ceremony is less about trophies for achievement, than about shared success and camaraderie.



Encouraging each other and learning as they go.



An American tradition, alive and well in rural New Mexico.



Much of the profits from the Stampede, go to supporting Lincoln County youth in various ways.

MM



FOLLOWED
DREAM
RANCH

In the late afternoon before the final pro rodeo, we took a quiet ride together.



Of course, there was snacking along the way.





Enjoying views of open country, and the Capitan Mountains in the distance.



Rodeo time! The Stampede continues for four consecutive evenings. The last one has a special feeling, as organizers, contestants and spectators share a final gathering.



2019-07-09 - Rodeo Memories

The next day, we visited the empty arena - now so quiet . . . everyone's gone home.



The horses expressed their own rodeo spirit. Even Belle kicked up her heels!





Then a ride near Capitan Gap.



"We're lucky to live in this country!" Spanky says.



Thunder agrees.





Heading home together.

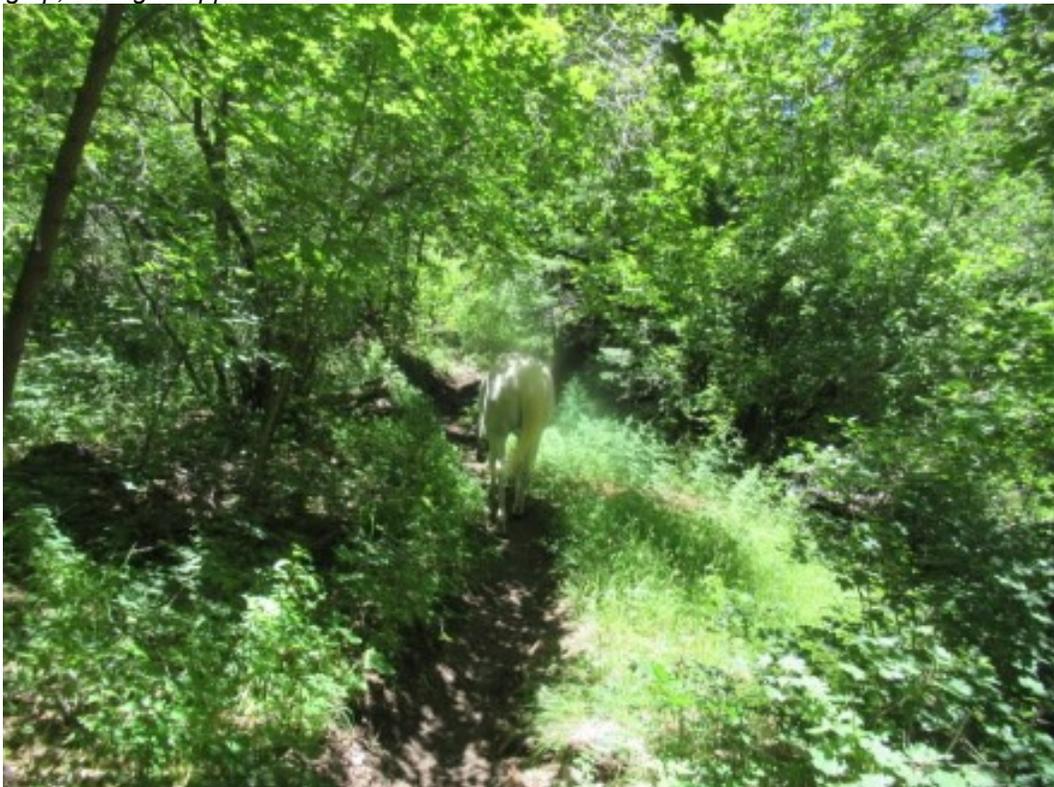


MM

The high country's clear air paints the mountain with pure colors. This ride was dominated by the infinite blue sky, and an entire palette of green around us.



Climbing up, through dappled shade.



All the green was punctuated by the early summer flowers.



Belle admired these - and a field of mountain wood ferns.





A picture of summer.





Spanky found a soft, dry spot . . . "Ahhhhh . . ."



Soon, we were in the green alpine meadows at the top.



Happy horses - closer to heaven.



A perfect lunch spot - for all of us.



"Would that possibly be oat bread . . . ?" (He always gets the crust).



Soon we were on the trail again . . . or, actually on no trail at all.



A picture of freedom . . . in blue and green . . .



. . . and companionship.



We traveled under the oaks . . . stirring up lots of elk - just brown blurs among the trees, as they phantom away.



"What's that?"



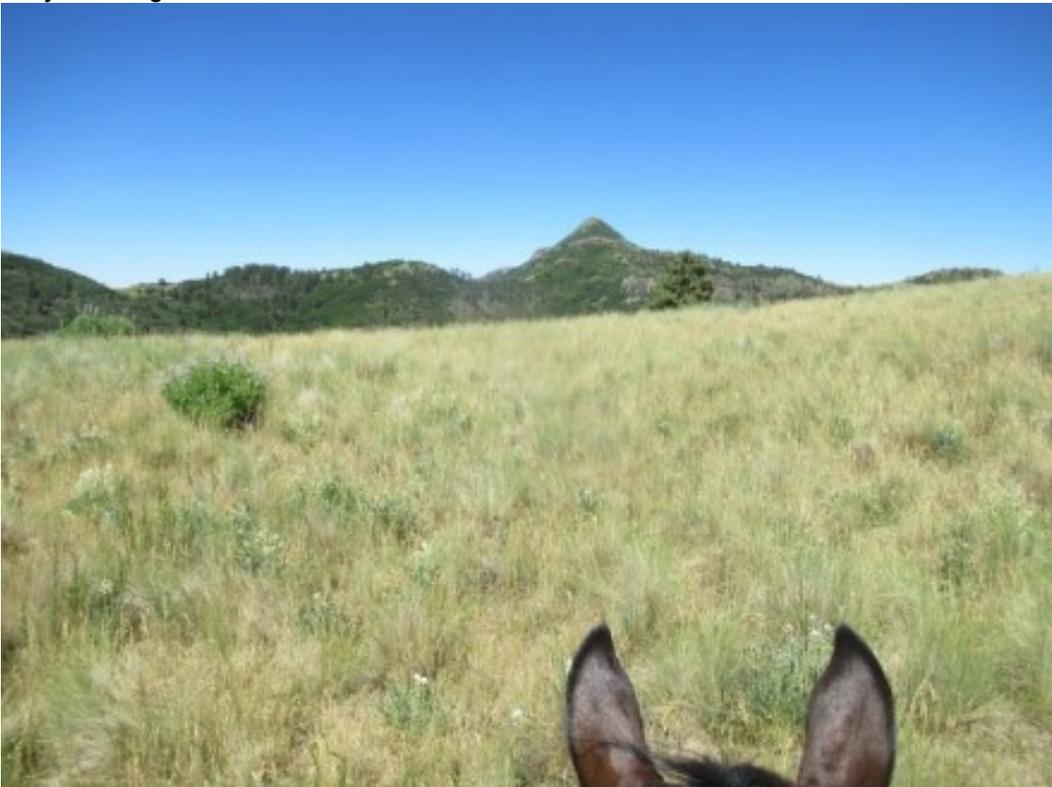
A 'Where's Waldo?' moment - can you spot the curious elk calf watching them?



We crest another high ridge . . . Belle takes in a world view. Arizona is out there. Then California . . . and the Pacific Ocean . . .



. . . and majestic Nogal Peak.



We took our time leaving this special place.





Thanks for joining us!

MM



FOLLOWED
DREAM
RANCH

All the cats (and even some of the deer) like Lulu . . . but Orca and she have a special bond.



Speaking of deer . . . this time of year, something interesting happens. The females come early for happy hour; then the bucks all gather here at sunset for theirs.



2019-07-12 - Special Friends

This guy is especially friendly and hangs out on the lawn (it's fun watching those antlers grow day by day - nature is amazing).



Lulu had a trip to Mescalero Lake yesterday (just before we got a really nice long rain).





Thirsty girl.



More friends at the lake. "Is that Lulu?" "Yeah, she's cool . . ."



MM

2019-07-13 - An "Historic" Day

Belle returned to the annual "Fort Stanton LIVE!" living history event, and really worked like a pro. Since she was the only equine representative of the Fort's cavalry past, she did her best to illustrate many aspects of that storied era.

She carried the U.S. flag, with dignity . . .



. . . and speed when it was called for . . .



... and did some rousing saber charges - full out.





2019-07-13 - An "Historic" Day

In between, she mingled with appreciative crowds, and had fun with her fellow re-enactors. This handsome team and wagon captured the period beautifully.



She learned about spinning and weaving yarn in the old days. "Gee, a blanket would take forever!", she said.



And watched as tallow candles were made by endless dipping. "I'm sure glad we only have to flip a switch for light in the barn!"



She observed old-fashioned children's games, like 'catch the hoop'. ("Golly, that really doesn't look like all that much fun . . ." she thought to herself).



2019-07-13 - An "Historic" Day

And learned how laundry was done on the frontier (tediously, in a series of buckets). "Phooey on that!"



She even enjoyed a bit of shopping. "Say, do you have that black dress in a size . . . oh, never mind . . ."



2019-07-13 - An "Historic" Day

She crashed a Victorian tea party - "Any carrot cake, perchance?"



And tolerated the cannons' roar at close range.



"I'm not sure I understand the appeal of THAT", she shouted over the din.



These are the quarters where General of the Armies (the highest possible rank in the U.S. Army), John J. Pershing, got his start in 1887.



2019-07-13 - An "Historic" Day

It was an honor to meet a real Mescalero Apache Princess.



And a member of the famous Black 9th Cavalry Regiment (the so-called "Buffalo Soldiers").



2019-07-13 - An "Historic" Day

But most of all, she provided enduring memories of a living past, to countless visitors, young and old.



It was a long day, I'm very proud of our little girl!

MM

Late in the afternoon, heavy, dense monsoon clouds began to form.



We took a chance on a quick ride near Capitan Gap. Here we are, galloping to the mesa.



2019-07-16 - Gray Ride

Belle is always concerned about "critters" in tall grass like this . . . "Well, you just never know . . ."



Thunder seemed to float through it.



We could see the rain coming. "Come'on boys, let's head back now!", I shouted.



They came at a run.



Along the way, we spotted this lone pronghorn, who seemed curious about us.



Then off she ran (guess she knew about the rain, too).



We made it back just before the rain began.



"Whew! You know how Belle is about her hair . . ."



MM

Sometimes, the spontaneity of monsoon rains makes it difficult to know which way to go.

Should we head that way (looks kinda menacing) . . .



. . . Or that way (which direction are those clouds going)?



2019-07-20 - Which Way

So, we postponed it until later in the day - when the deer were waiting for their happy hour to begin.



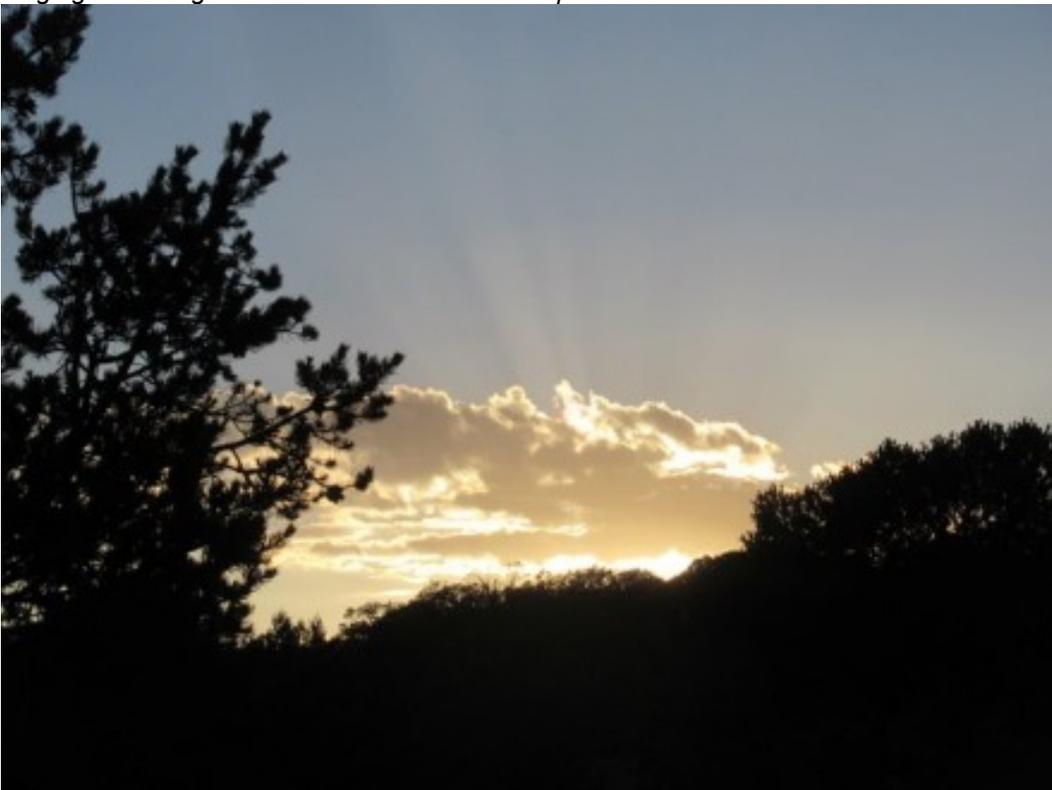
In the cool of the evening, we set out for an easy ride behind the house. Belle and Thunder talk it over, "Yeah, this is a really nice time of day for a ride".



No more threat of a downpour.



Ever-changing skies began to form a beautiful backdrop.





The golden hour.





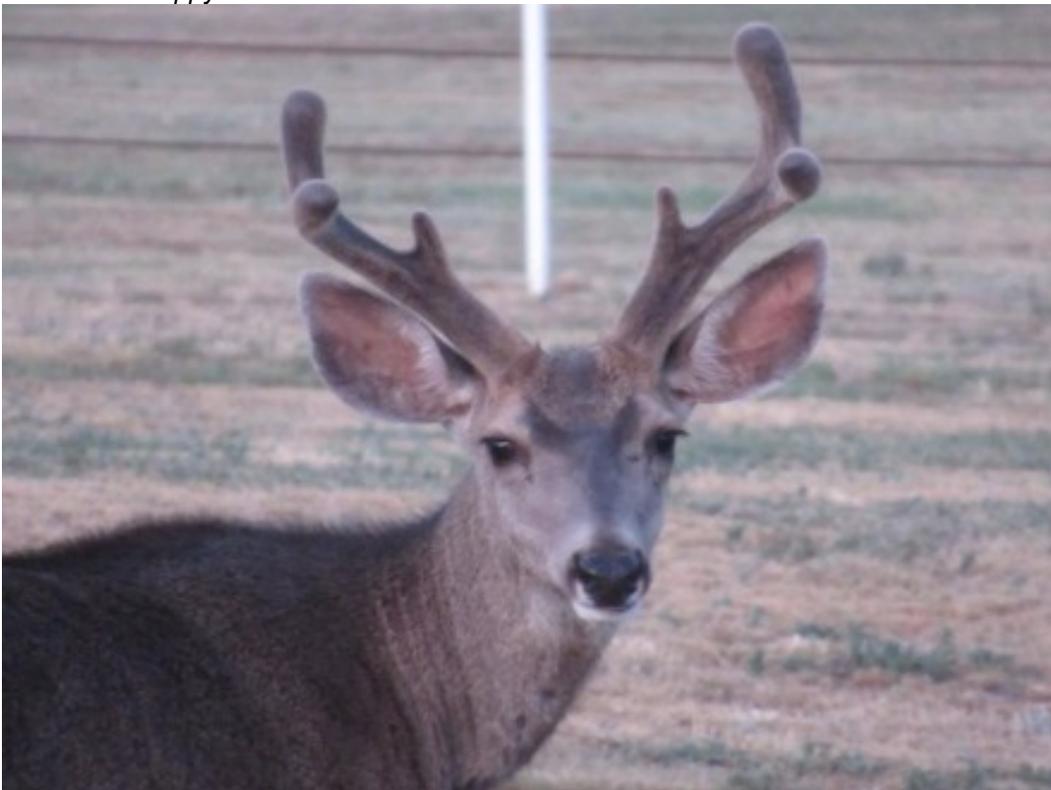
We race home at twilight.



They head to the barn for supper time.



"Oh, no! Did I miss happy hour?"



MM

2019-07-21 - Caught

In typical New Mexico summer fashion, the early morning started out cloudless and bright.

By 10:00 am, some pretty white clouds had begun to form. We knew . . .



At noon, we thought we better take our ride . . . it was raining lightly as we left the ranch. "What about my hair?", prodded Belle.



2019-07-21 - Caught

Looked pretty promising to the east, at Fort Stanton equestrian trails. So that's where we headed.



We parked at the horse campground. Although it wasn't raining, Belle was already fretting about her hair. "I have a feeling about this . . ."



A cloudburst, not far away to the north. "Let's NOT go that way", suggested Belle.



Thunder headed toward blue skies.



2019-07-21 - Caught

Page 4 of 8

That didn't last long. You guessed it; the rain followed us - we were caught in it! Thunder led us at a full run, back toward the trailer (rain wasn't the issue - except for Belle's hair - but we are very cautious of possible lightning on this open land).



By now, it was coming down so hard it hurt. "I knew this was going to happen. No one listens to me . . .", huffed Belle.



2019-07-21 - Caught

Thunder took off like he had a supercharger (he stirred up dust from the dry ground under the moist top layer!) Spanky hung back with Belle - but we were all running.



When we got back to the trailer, it was pouring. The minute I opened the trailer door, Thunder loaded himself inside. Smart horse. As we headed home, an area not far from the ranch was still dry. So . . . we stopped and unloaded again, . . . but the horses weren't convinced . . . "Ahem, is anyone looking at those clouds?"



2019-07-21 - Caught

In the distance - Fort Stanton, where we had just been - rain is still pelting down.



The horses smelled it coming our way. "Quick, back to the trailer!"



So, off we flew.



Even Spanky is running full-out now.



We made it into the trailer, just as the sky opened up.



At the ranch, rain fell in a soft, steady shower - horses snug in the barn, 66 degrees. No one is complaining.



MM

2019-07-24 - *Taking A Chance*

Monsoon rains can hit here, and not there - just a half-mile away. So, as the clouds build, we head out and take our chances.

Sunlight sneaks under the clouds, as we get ready to ride.



Soft green grass makes for a picturesque slalom course along an arroyo.



2019-07-24 - Taking A Chance

The horses were in a running mood this ride.



With plenty of snack breaks, of course.



2019-07-24 - Taking A Chance

The sky was getting darker. Rain? You never know . . .



Spanky picks up the pace . . .



. . . while Belle has "just one more little bite".



We discover a hidden canyon.



Thunder challenges us to a race.



"Catch me if you can!"



"Which way'd he go?"



"A-ha!"



2019-07-24 - *Taking A Chance*

Page 7 of 10

Racing along, I managed to hit some button on the camera - and mistakenly got this eerie shot (we never alter our photos).



2019-07-24 - Taking A Chance

Not sure what the camera was doing, but it created this "painting" too, before I figured out how to get it back to normal.



Here is a totally natural shot of Spanky, racing against a dramatic sky.



Just head to Nogal Peak - it'll guide us home.



We dodged the rain.



MM

2019-07-25 - Gentle Ride

This is a gentle season in New Mexico. The days are long and embracing - the temperatures moderate and comfortable . . . and the skies are classic "New Mexico".

Our 'buck club' enjoy their afternoon happy hour.



Covered in blood-rich "velvet", their new antler racks grow rapidly during the many hours of sunlight each day.



The set on the right is strangely angular. It will be interesting to see how it develops.



See the difference?



They sure like their apples. "Oh boy!"



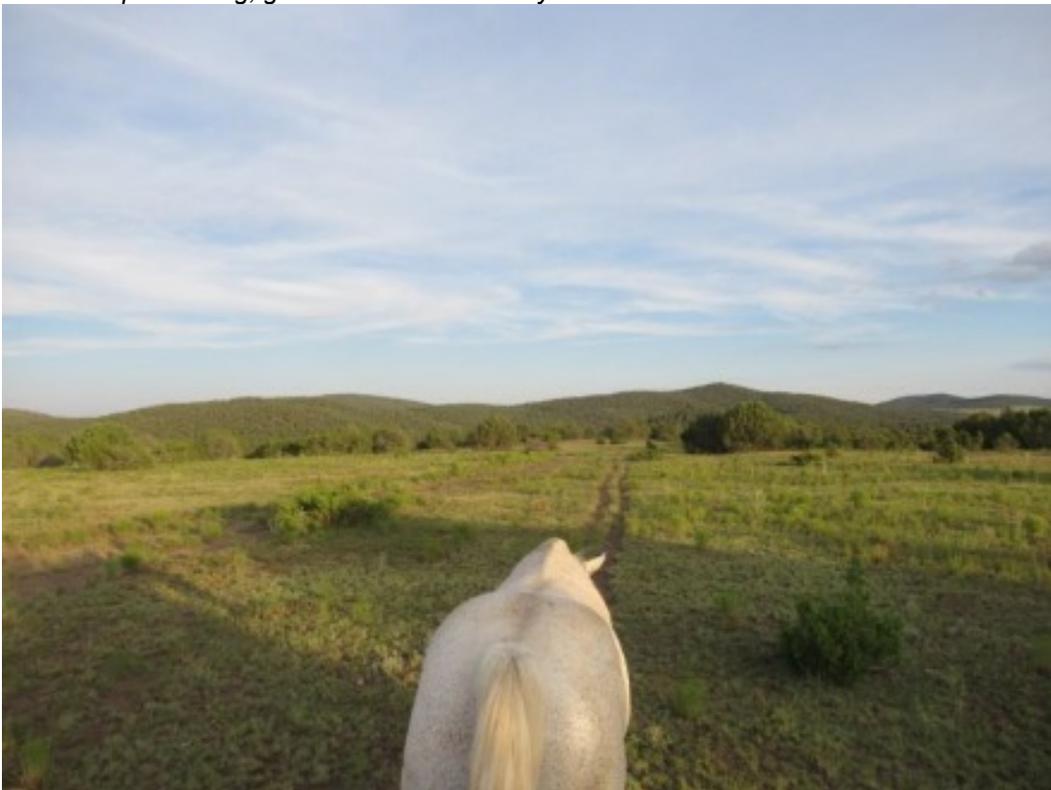
"Yum!"



The cats take languorous naps (as you can see, Orca has been accepted fully into the family!)



While the horses prefer long, gentle rides in the balmy embrace of nature.



Only the melody of bird song punctuates the silence.



Soft, meandering trails.



Goldfish are used to keep water tanks clean. The horses are curious about them.



Long shadows as evening approaches.



Spanky leads us back at sundown . . .



. . . finding the best route across dry arroyos.



A picturesque finale to a contented ride.



Thank you for sharing it with us.

MM

2019-07-28 - *Clouds Over Cloudcroft*

The mountain hamlet of Cloudcroft is one of Lulu's favorite spots (not the least because of the wonderful bacon - I mean brunch - they serve at the historic Lodge).

She suggested that today might be an ideal time for a visit . . . and the views along the road looked promising.



Even with monsoon clouds building along the way . . .



Beautiful, green country.



This abandoned barn speaks to all the history here.





There were miles and miles of "Brown-eyed Bettys" (or "Black-eyed Susan's" - or whatever - I'm never sure).



Either way, they are spectacular this time of year.



Lulu wanted a closer look.



"Hey! These things are taller than I thought!"



We continued on our way to the Lodge.





In the Lodge dining room, Lulu could smell bacon . . . "Ahem . . ."



2019-07-28 - Clouds Over Cloudcroft

Afterward she checked out the swimming pool - at 9,000 ft. one of the highest in the nation. "It's the cleanest pond I've ever seen!"



The view of White Sands National Monument, shimmering far below, like a mirage.



2019-07-28 - Clouds Over Cloudcroft

Leaving the Lodge, we drove through the village (all two blocks of it!) Heavy clouds were moving over the old Western Bar.



In just minutes, those clouds opened up.



The temperature dropped from 80, to 58 degrees. Lulu thought that was great!



Majestic Sierra Blanca welcomes us home.



MM

Frequent summer showers make the high country especially enchanted this time of year.

There is a constantly changing palette of color.







Sometimes it feels like riding through a painting.







Even the old Silver Spoon Mine is decorated for the season.





Hey, Belle, please don't eat the daisies!



2019-07-31 - *Mountain Magic*

As we reached the top of the mountain, heavy clouds gathered, and a soft rain began.



It was so gentle, not even Belle minded.



2019-07-31 - *Mountain Magic*

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What a gift, to be able to let them be free in the wilderness. Every bloom and blade of grass seemed to emit a heady perfume.



Finally, Thunder let us know it was time to head home.



"Wazzat???"



A curious deer. "Hey, that's not one of our neighbors", Spanky noted.



"This place could use some trimming!"



It's a kind of summer wonderland.



"Thanks for joining us!"



MM

It's been just about a year since Orca finally allowed himself to be seen around here (he was wild, living in the forest) . . . and a month or more before he got close enough to photograph.

Hungry kitty.



2019-08-01 - Anniversary

Lulu was the first to welcome him . . . and they remain very special friends (note the touching paws!).



Happy Anniversary, Orca!
MM

Wilcox was checking out the apple crop this year.



He got himself out on a limb.



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Looks like a good crop.



"Oh, boy! Can't wait until fall!"



Only in New Mexico . . . (painted burro sculptures take a ride).



MM