

THE NOGAL JOURNALS

Volume XV

PART 3 OF 3

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2018-09-19 - *Mellow Time*

Late summer evenings seem to put everyone in a mellow mood - as in this late-day ride at Ranchman's Camp.

The sun had nearly set, as we set out at a leisurely pace.



It's good to see the stock tanks full again.



Nice reflections.



We mosey on.



2018-09-19 - *Mellow Time*

The last of the sun strikes the Capitan Mountains.



. . . and silhouette Nogal Peak to the west. All is still.



2018-09-19 - *Mellow Time*

Since it is getting dark, we take a shortcut back to the trailer, bushwhacking cross-country.



Something vaguely "Australian" about that sky above a black mesa.



2018-09-19 - *Mellow Time*

You have to look closely, to see Thunder and Spanky gently cantering along.



They pause (at the center of the photo).



2018-09-19 - *Mellow Time*

. . . and wait patiently for Belle, Lulu and I to catch up.



The light this time of day takes on a special quality.



Meditative progress at dusk.



MM

2018-09-20 - A Last Hurrah

Our monsoon season should be coming to an end soon, making way for the dry glory of autumn. But it isn't leaving with a whimper! Most monsoon rains are relatively brief events - it rains (sometimes very hard) for a couple of hours, and then the skies clear. Our most recent monsoon was different. It rained gently and steadily for about 24 hours.

Typical summer skies.



More clouds forming.



2018-09-20 - A Last Hurrah

... and then this.



With rains nearing, we stay close to the ranch.



2018-09-20 - A Last Hurrah

Big Buck wonders why we are leaving, with a storm coming. "If it was me, I would head for that nice barn!"



"Are you sure we should be doing this?", frets Spanky.



2018-09-20 - A Last Hurrah

They grazed, keeping tabs on the clouds. Rain is falling in the distance.



Whoops! A raindrop hits Belle. Ears back, "I'm outta here!"



We head for home.



Lulu wonders why the rush. "I like the rain!"



2018-09-20 - A Last Hurrah

We take a short cut, and race through the gate.



They try hanging out under a tree. Not much protection there.





Ah. Nice and dry.



2018-09-20 - A Last Hurrah

It rained all night. By late this afternoon, things were looking up. The horses were excited to go outside and play - mud and all.



While dad cleans the barn . . . again.



2018-09-20 - A Last Hurrah

In the storm's aftermath, soft skies.



... and a beautiful sunset.



Yup. We'll miss those monsoons.

MM

2018-09-22 - *Last Day of Summer*

Yesterday was raining and gloomy - today cloudless and bright . . . but with a feeling of fall in the air. As the last sun of summer began to set, and the moon began to rise, we took a quiet little ride around home.

It was very still, like the air was holding its breath between seasons.



Hey, guys, how about a little ride over there?

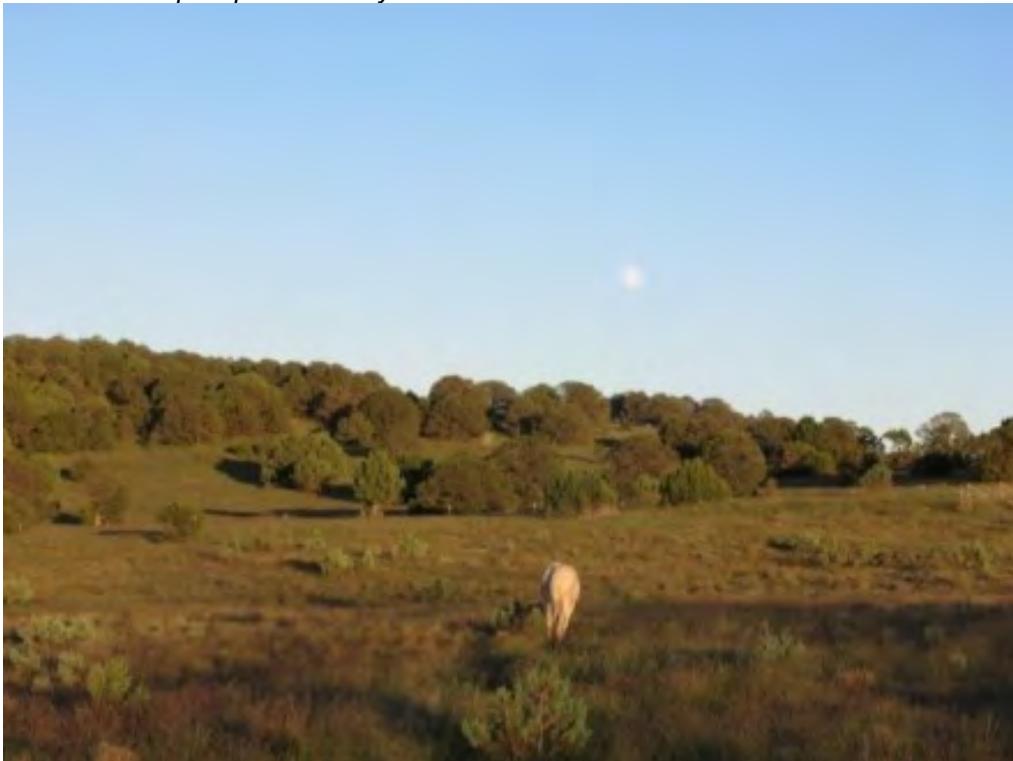


2018-09-22 - *Last Day of Summer*

One more nibble and we were off.



The near-full moon is a pin-spot in the sky over Thunder.



2018-09-22 - Last Day of Summer

In just a moment, the summer sun was gone.



Spanky's last roll of summer.



2018-09-22 - *Last Day of Summer*

Some friends on their way to happy hour.



The end of Orca's first-ever summer, and the beginning of his first autumn . . . with his new family.



MM

2018-09-23 - *First Day of Autumn*

As summer passes her crown to autumn, there is a brief period where both reign, providing some of our area's most spectacular weather and scenery.

Still looks like summer, but it feels like autumn.



2018-09-23 - *First Day of Autumn*

With no monsoons in sight, it seemed like a great time to visit the high country. Our trail starts out under the oaks.



. . . and along a little brook.



2018-09-23 - *First Day of Autumn*

Past clusters of elderberries, ready to be made into wine.



Then a long climb through an alpine meadow.



2018-09-23 - *First Day of Autumn*

"Whew! Spanky, this better be worth it!"



It is.



2018-09-23 - *First Day of Autumn*

We reach a grassy bowl . . .



. . . where Thunder and Spanky enjoy a run.



2018-09-23 - *First Day of Autumn*

What freedom . . .



Lunch stop (Lulu guards the knapsack).



2018-09-23 - *First Day of Autumn*

It's a top-of-the-world salad bar for them.



Thunder appreciates the view (we all do).



2018-09-23 - First Day of Autumn

What a great spot. What wonderful companions.



2018-09-23 - *First Day of Autumn*

As we head down, I stay dismounted, and let them make their way.



2018-09-23 - *First Day of Autumn*

But the boys lag behind. Who can blame them? Here they come at a run - remarkable horses, leaving all that good grass.



2018-09-23 - *First Day of Autumn*

Of course, they continue to snack along the way.





Back at the trailer, Lulu finds a soft spot.



2018-09-23 - *First Day of Autumn*

Special horses - and a very special day.



Really glad we could share this with you!
MM

Living without a layer of pavement between us and the land, makes things somehow more direct and simpler, allowing for appreciation of the subtle side of nature - like the curiosity of deer fawns. Two deer-moms brought their little ones for an introduction today. The babies are nearly constantly in motion . . . so please forgive the photos.

One of the moms with the little ones.



Okay, is that not an "Awww"? (Even slightly out of focus . . .)



They still have fawn spots.



Little buddies.



2018-09-24 - *The Land of Awwwws*

See what I mean about always on the move? Must drive the moms nuts!



Well, when they are that cute . . .





Yup. Definite "awww".



MM

2018-09-25 - *Miracle on the Mountain*

One of our favorite high-country destinations is Argentina Spring. With 360-degree views overlooking the entire Tularosa basin below, it is spectacular, but to get there is a long ride up a fairly challenging trail. When Belle was injured, we thought we might not be able to visit it again as a family. Her recovery has been nothing short of a miracle, supported by the good wishes of her many friends. Today, we thought we would head back up Argentina Trail - and go as far as Belle felt comfortable.

It was a beautiful day - and a freshly-graded road, too!



The horses realized where we were headed. "Oh, Boy!"



2018-09-25 - *Miracle on the Mountain*

Horses are sensitive. It was obvious that Belle was very happy to be back on the familiar trail - she understands the significance.



Just a touch of fall color above.





Thunder let Belle lead; while he kept an eye on her and Lulu.



2018-09-25 - *Miracle on the Mountain*

They had a cool drink together, from a little brook crossing the trail.



Belle, too.



2018-09-25 - *Miracle on the Mountain*

We were careful to let Belle set the pace, and she seemed to have no difficulty - even over the rougher areas. Soon we were approaching the top. You could feel the excitement.



"Come on, Belle!", Thunder urges.



2018-09-25 - *Miracle on the Mountain*

*She made it! She pauses to take it all in. Such a long time . . .
My throat had a big lump in it.*





It really was a kind of homecoming.



2018-09-25 - *Miracle on the Mountain*

Lulu was glad to be back, too.



This is trust. I let them enjoy some horse-time together (that's them, the little dots in the middle of the meadow).



2018-09-25 - *Miracle on the Mountain*

Meanwhile, Lulu did her Rin Tin Tin thing. She is no longer a young dog, so this is an accomplishment for her, too. She had a great time.



2018-09-25 - *Miracle on the Mountain*

Then the horses came up to join us. Spanky gave her an affectionate nuzzle. True friends.



A sight more precious than I can express. So grateful . . .



2018-09-25 - *Miracle on the Mountain*

After a nice stay, we head (very carefully) down.



Belle and Spanky share a drink. "Gee, Belle, it sure is good to be up here with you again . . ."



2018-09-25 - *Miracle on the Mountain*

"Yeah, Belle - you're doing good!"



This is important to them.



Family time on the mountain.



Speaking of which . . . when we got home, the little fawns were there to greet us. Can't beat that!





Thank you for sharing this very special day.

MM

2018-09-29 - Social Cat

"Smarty Pants" is one of the feral barn cats we acquired with the ranch. He was the last to convert to domestic (after ALL of them were captured and neutered) thus his unusual name. Like the rest (including Orca), he spends much of his time in the house now (they all sleep indoors). It seems he has made some friends, whom he invited to an early happy hour.

"What's new, pussycat?"



That's "Big Buck" in the background. He is the patriarch.



He is very much at home here, and even responds when I call his name. "What did you say?"



His magnificent antlers are still developing - thus the "velvet" covering.



His right eye is underdeveloped and provides poor vision.



It's likely he is the father of the new fawns.



So darned cute.



There's mom.



She is still thin from nursing and is starting to wean the twins. Born late, they have to be ready for winter.



Great guy.



MM

2018-09-30 - *In Transition*

During early autumn, our high country can give a pretty good impersonation of spring!

Days are warm (though the nights are cooler). Water still flows . . .



. . . and greenery still flourishes.



2018-09-30 - *In Transition*

The forest still wears its summer dress . . .



. . . and as the aspen trees begin to turn from green to gold, their leaves give a "spring green" appearance.

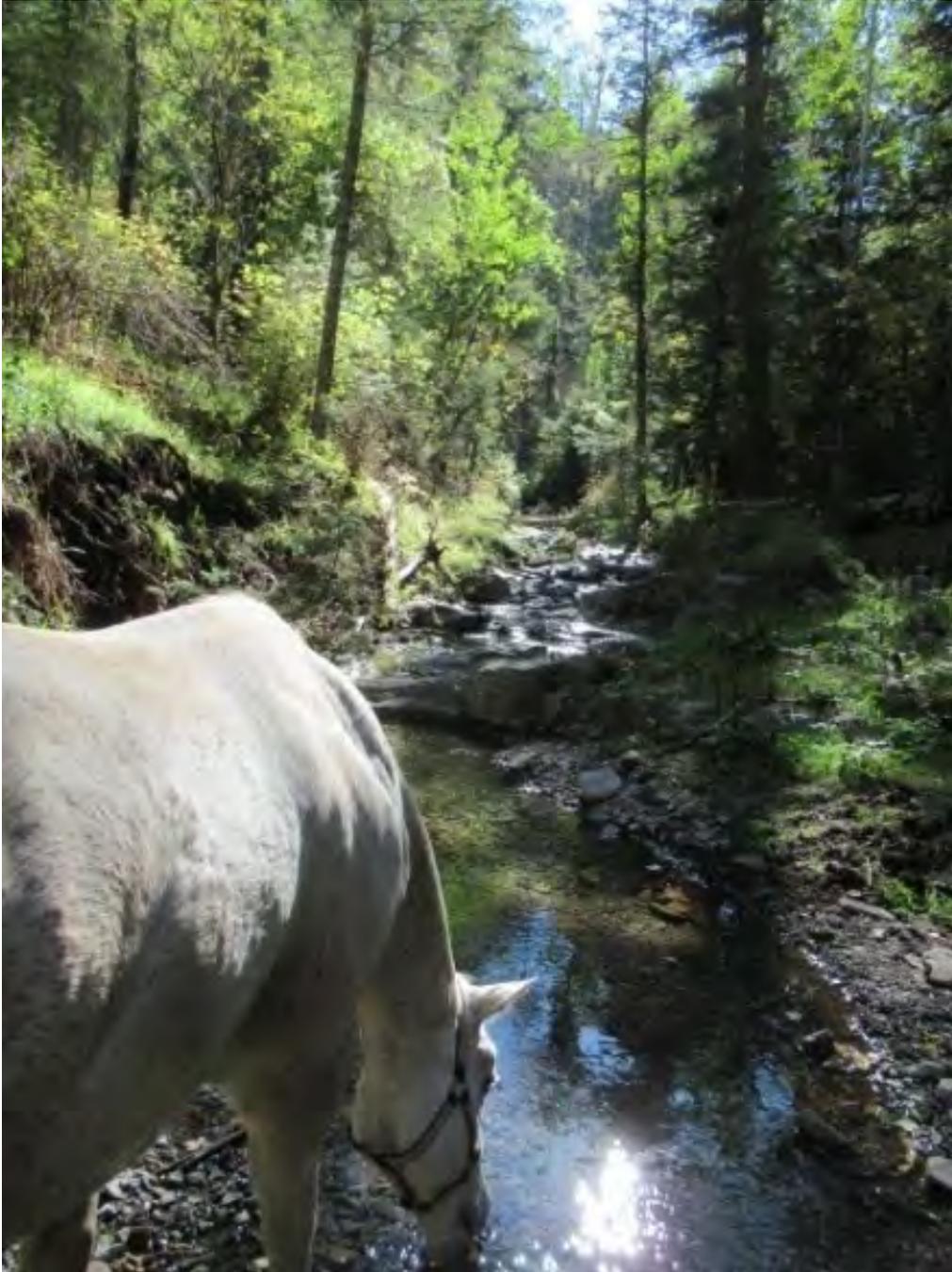


We take a ride to see what is going on up there now.



2018-09-30 - *In Transition*

The weather and flora combine to give a spring-like feeling. And yet . . .



Crossing a languid stream, Belle enjoys a drink of cool, clear water.



Delicate ferns still hold their summer color.



2018-09-30 - *In Transition*

Trails meander through lawn-like meadows. (How come no one has to mow this?)





The green grass is appreciated for more than just its appearance!



They know it will soon dry to gold.



Lulu cruises through a shady glen . . .



. . . as a brook flows happily along.



She races with Thunder ("I wish I had longer legs!")



That gets their attention! They spot an elk, out of camera range, on a distant hillside.



But wait! What's this? A touch of fall color at water's edge...



More along the trail.



Ah-ha! It isn't spring after all.



The beauty of seasons in transition can find reflection in our own lives.



MM

2018-10-01 - Crazy Family

First of all, one of the roadrunners has decided to stalk me - I find him hanging out wherever I am.

Here he is in the garage rafters, watching me as I work on my car. "Beep-Beep!"



Then, Mommie Cat has discovered that the porch swing . . . swings (and she likes it!); she jumps up on the swing to get it moving, rocks contentedly back and forth, and then - when it stops entirely - jumps down and repeats the process.



And Wilcox . . .



. . . loves to make faces. "Buggabuggabugga!"



2018-10-01 - *Crazy Family*

Our newest member, Orca, seems pretty normal (so far). "What have I gotten myself into???"



MM

2018-10-02 - *Chance Encounter*

I nearly left the camera at home. It was threatening rain and getting late, but at the last minute, I asked the horses to wait while I grabbed it. We figured we could have a quick ride behind the house before the rain started.

We figured wrong! The sky opened up, and in minutes I was drenched to the skin.



You can just barely make out Nogal Peak through the downpour.



2018-10-02 - *Chance Encounter*

Belle was fretting about her hair, and smart Thunder decided we should head back - which we did.



As we neared the house the rain slowed, and Spanky took a wet roll.



2018-10-02 - *Chance Encounter*

That's when we saw a bull elk. The horses greeted him as a friend.



What a moment!



2018-10-02 - *Chance Encounter*

We all drifted closer. He didn't seem to mind.



I dismounted Belle, and soon everyone was grazing together.





He looked me right in the eye - as if to say, "It's cool. Good to see you."



2018-10-02 - *Chance Encounter*

Then, he bugled for his herd to join us.



They came out of the trees - like the ball players from the corn in "Field of Dreams".



2018-10-02 - *Chance Encounter*

An indescribable experience. We have been very close to them before . . . but this time it seemed like we were being accepted.



2018-10-02 - *Chance Encounter*

Nothing to fear. Mutual respect.



2018-10-02 - *Chance Encounter*

Minutes went by - everyone grazing and meandering around the meadow. Then Lulu headed in their direction, just moseying along like she does. I held my breath.



No one seemed to mind that, either! (What a good girl).



2018-10-02 - *Chance Encounter*



More than an hour had passed - it was getting dark as we bid them farewell. The bull seemed kinda sorry to see us go.



2018-10-02 - *Chance Encounter*

As we headed home, a rainbow overhead.





Unforgettable. Sure glad I grabbed my camera!

MM

"Autumn leaves" are among nature's most glorious creations. The result of complex photo-chemical reactions, their development depends on a delicate and unpredictable combination of daylight and temperature. Although we have had very mild weather, Lulu thought it might be fun to ride up Pennsylvania Canyon, where the many maples sometimes make for spectacular fall displays.

Thunder finds a little color right away. "Look here, Lulu!"



Not sure what these odd little low-growing plants are, but they are among the first to turn from green to red each year.



2018-10-04 - Too Soon

We were eager to see what the maples were doing, so off we went.



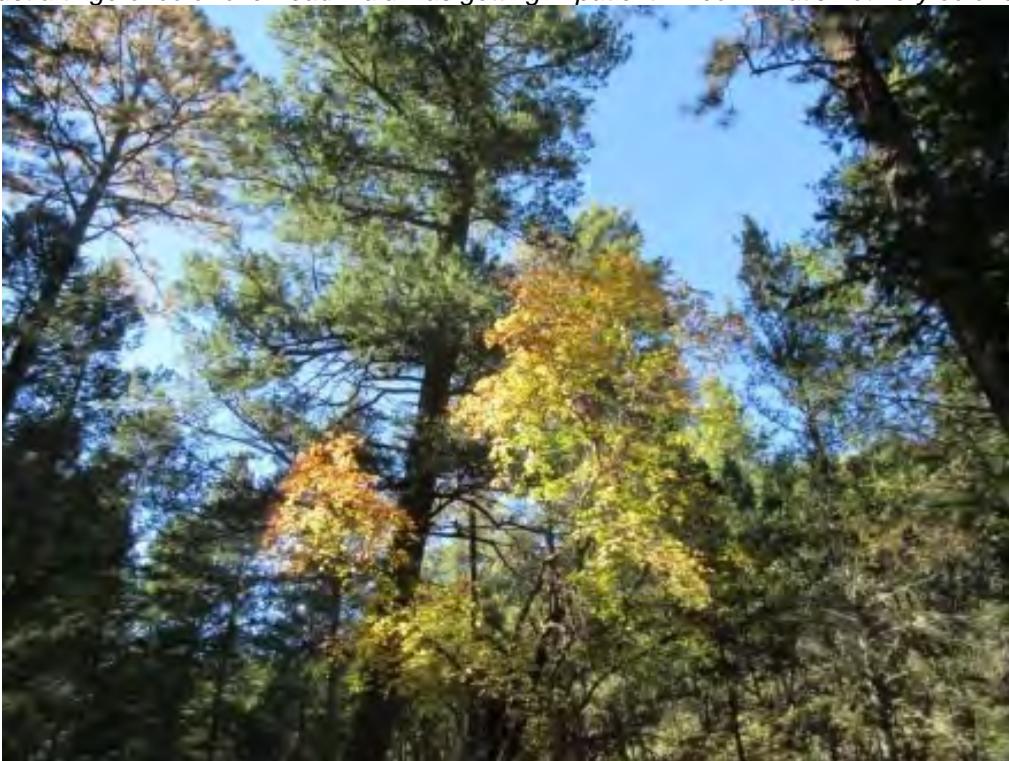
We had a hard rain the night before, and big puddles remained along the trail.



Hmmm . . . lots of green grass.



. . . and just a tinge of color overhead. Lulu was getting impatient. "Heck! That's not very colorful . . ."



2018-10-04 - Too Soon

We hurried along at a canter - maybe there is more color ahead.



We spooked out this wild turkey, who wondered what all the fuss was about. "Is it Thanksgiving already?"

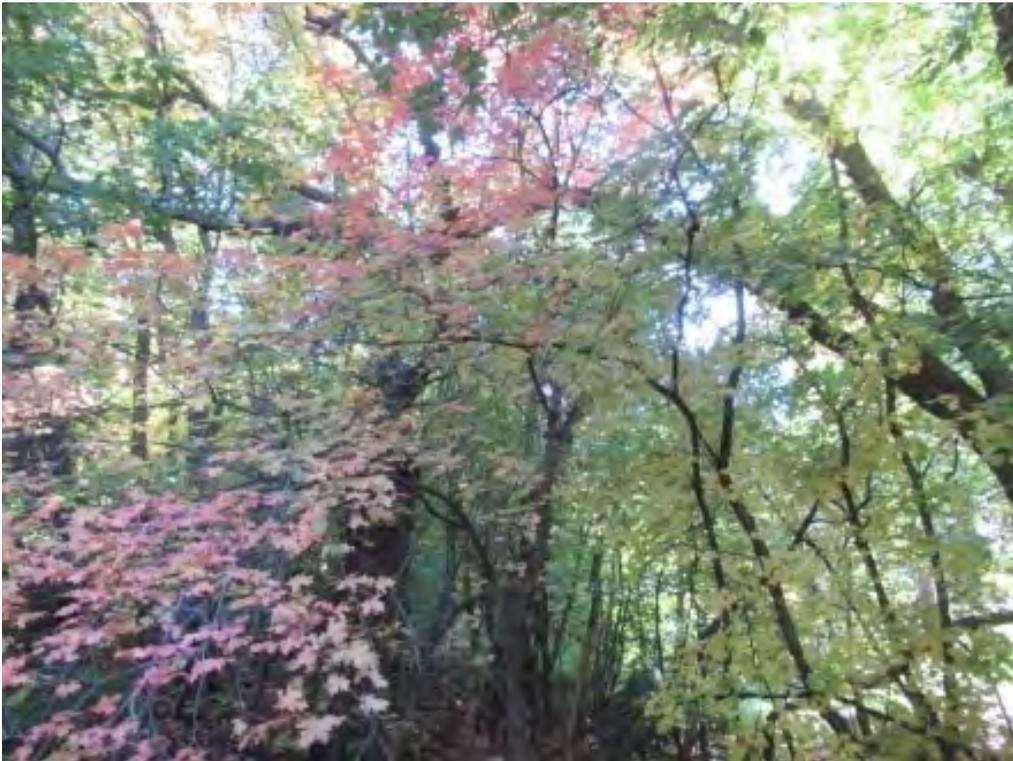


"Pretty, but not very fall-ish", sniffed Lulu.



Thunder said, "I think I see some up here, Lulu", and off we went again.





"Hey, look! My favorite color - grass green!" said Belle, hungrily.



Thunder was sure there were more leaves up ahead.



Spanky wondered sensibly, "Why can't we just enjoy the green, before it's gone?"





"Nice", said Lulu, "But not quite what I had envisioned."



Look up there, Lulu!



... and did you see these?



(She's right, we are a little too soon for the real fall foliage).



"Okay, that was fun. Let's go home and wait for some cold weather."



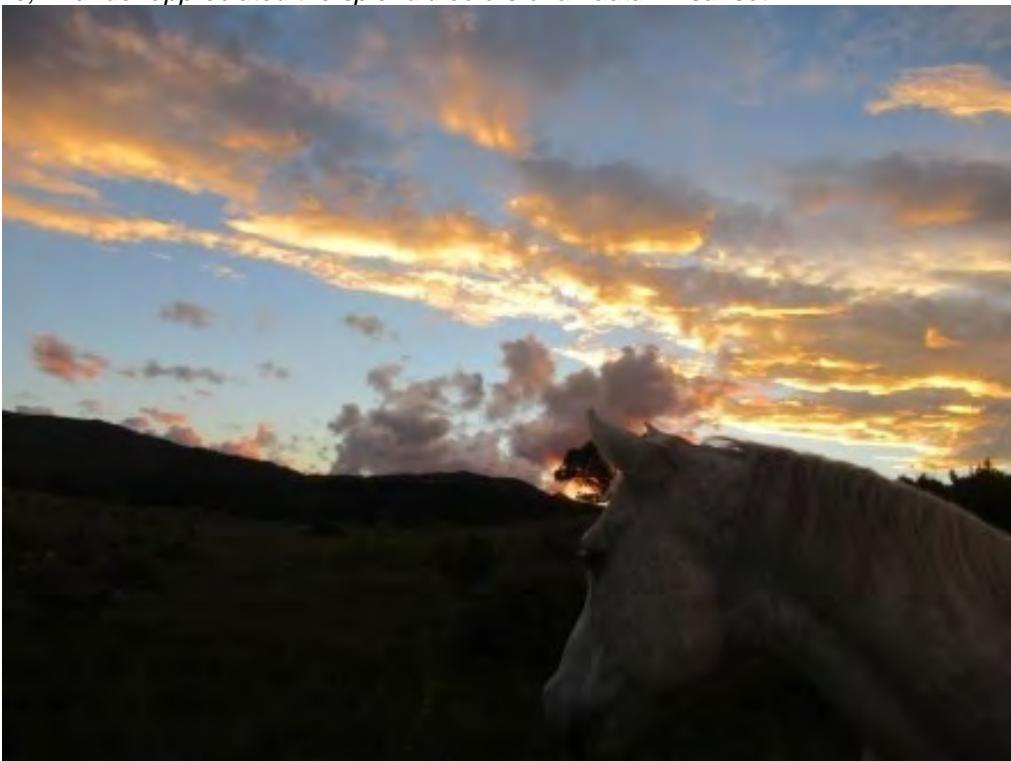
The horses had wonderful time.



After all, their favorite color is green.



Back home, Thunder appreciated the splendid colors of an autumn sunset.



MM

2018-10-05 - *Fall Fever*

It may be early autumn, but the horses were acting like they had spring fever today.

They were hanging out in the little barn on the hill - we call it their "Clubhouse", when Thunder decided it was time to play. Here he comes.



Whoa, parder!



2018-10-05 - *Fall Fever*

He slid to a stop, spun, and raced up the hill to get the others.



Here they all come at a gallop.



2018-10-05 - *Fall Fever*

Belle took the lead - what a blessing to see her running.



2018-10-05 - *Fall Fever*

It was terrific to see Spanky moving so well.



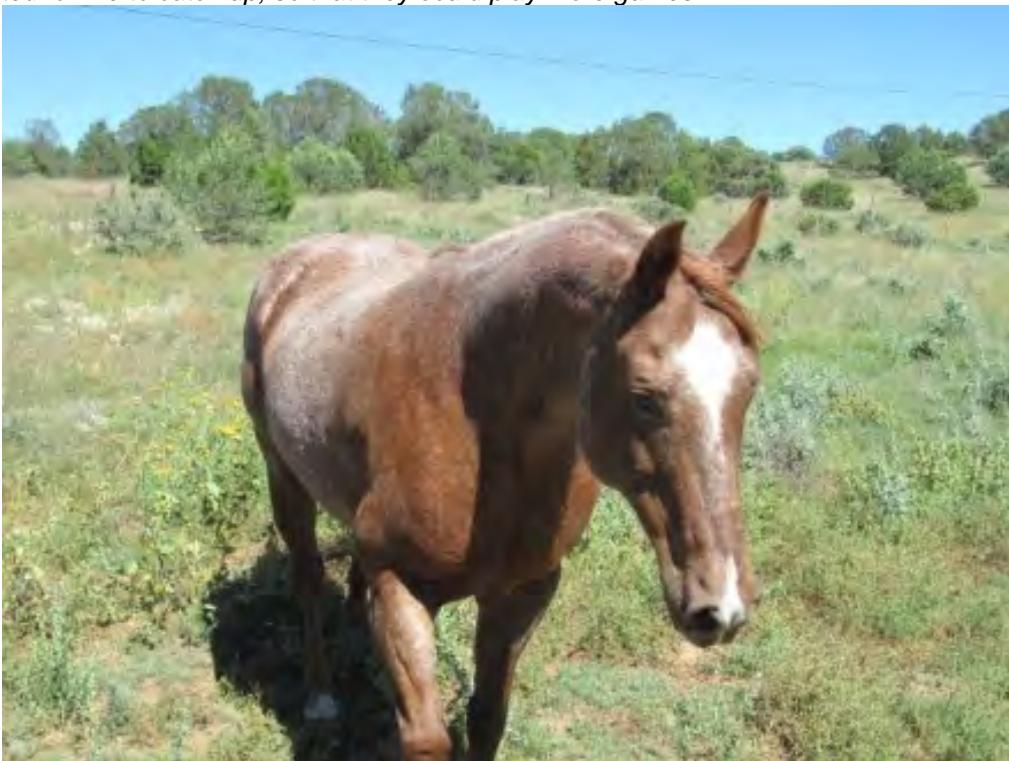
Around the turn they flew.



... and out into the west pasture.



They waited for me to catch up, so that they could play more games.



2018-10-05 - *Fall Fever*

Spanky turned and bucked - all four feet in the air - and ran to join the others.



They raced along the fence line . . .





Before turning back to me.



2018-10-05 - *Fall Fever*

... but Thunder wasn't done being silly.



"What's gotten into HIM?"



Maybe it's his new Mohawk hairstyle . . . tee hee.





Since they were so energetic, we took a little (fast) ride together . . .



. . . had a quick bite . . .



. . . saw this prehistoric-looking horned toad, soaking up the sun . . .



... before charging off again.



Sure was great to see them having such a good time!

MM

2018-10-06 - *Horsepower*

The rain woke us up at 4:30 am. Oh, no. Ran out to get the horses into the barn. Why this day of all days? Ruidoso's annual fall "Aspen Fest" event is an all-day outdoor celebration, including a parade, al fresco wine and food extravaganza, and rod and classic car show on the lawn of the Inn of the Mountain Gods. The old Buick was waxed and sitting in the garage, all ready to go (with the top down) . . . as the rain pelted down.

By eight o'clock, it was still raining off and on. We had to decide to go or not. Lulu looked pretty comfy in bed . . . but we had been invited to bring the car . . . and suddenly in all the soggy gloom, there was a rainbow.

Maybe it was a sign. "Come on, Lulu, let's go".



2018-10-06 - Horsepower

We kept the top down and got rained on several times on the way to the show. Cuddled next to me, uncomplaining Lulu was wearing her winter coat. "You better be glad it wasn't Belle in the car with you . . . her hair, you know . . ."



The arriving entries were slipping and sliding on the wet grass - when suddenly the rain stopped, and the skies began to clear. We toweled off the old Buick.





As the sun came out, car fans began to arrive at the spectacular lakefront setting.





There were some great cars - like this 1949 Cadillac.



A colorful custom Plymouth.



... and this swivel-seated '57 Fury.



Lots of horsepower.



... and nostalgia by the carload.



The Inn of the Mountain Gods belongs to the Mescalero Apaches (Lulu takes a quick snooze next to her car).



Maybe the best view was from the popular zip-line ride over the lake.



It is a beautiful location.



Lulu needed a break from the crowds. "Ah, nature!"



More and more people kept arriving.





By contrast, the happy hour gathering when we got home seemed kinda cozy. Just the bucks.



The sky, which had given such concern in the morning, ended the day beautifully.



MM

2018-10-07 - *Nature in Charge*

Although we are still having monsoon-like rains, and the days are still warm, Mother Nature is telling us summer is over. The green grass is turning to gold in the meadows around Fort Stanton.



Rain clouds are gathering on the horizon, as we start our ride.



2018-10-07 - *Nature in Charge*

Thunder sets a brisk pace.



I love to see him run!



The clouds are coming our way . . .



. . . and they have begun to gather over the pass to old Lincoln Town in the distance.



2018-10-07 - *Nature in Charge*

Beautiful, open country. The clouds are catching up with us.



A nice spot for a drink.





... and some annoying splashing around by Spanky! "Gee, I'm just play'in!"



He sure loves his freedom.



Thunder and Belle gallop along a scenic trail.



Lulu and Spanky come racing behind.



Together again.



The guys have a chat along the way.



They lag behind, deep in conversation.



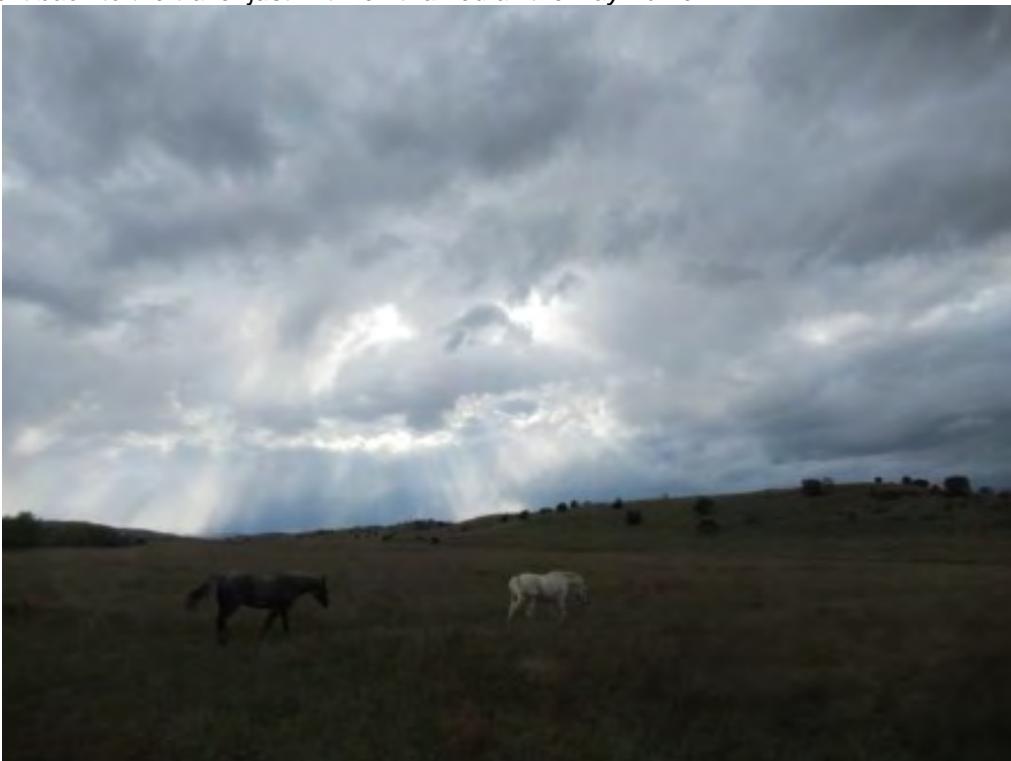
Hey, you two . . . the rain is coming . . .



We hurry down the trail.



We made it back to the trailer just in time. It rained all the way home.



MM

2018-10-12 - *Valles Caldera National Preserve*

We had appointments in Santa Fe - so on a moody, cloudy late afternoon, Lulu and I took a side trip to little-known Valles Caldera. About 1.25 million years ago, a spectacular volcanic eruption created the 13-mile wide circular depression (it can be seen from space). Ash from the blast covered all of New Mexico and stretched into Kansas, but it created one of the world's most beautiful landscapes. During the 20th century, the remote area was over-logged for its timber, and overgrazed by sheep. In 2000, the U.S. Government purchased what became the Valles Caldera National Preserve and created an experimental agency to administer it. In 2015, congress transferred management of the Preserve to the National Park Service. Today it sustains a large elk population, world-class trout fishing, as well as providing grazing for cattle - and serves as a very special recreational area (some might recognize it as the location for several movies, and most recently the home of the series "Longmire").

Along the way, aspens were just beginning to put on fall colors.





Surrounded by jagged mountains, the valley is crisscrossed by brooks and streams, providing many riparian areas.



2018-10-12 - Valles Caldera National Preserve

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The Valles Caldera Preserve is vast - nearly 100,000 acres. I sure was thinking about how much the horses would love this, . . . but because of sensitive wildlife habitats, dogs are not permitted off-leash; and my loose horses might not be allowed, either.

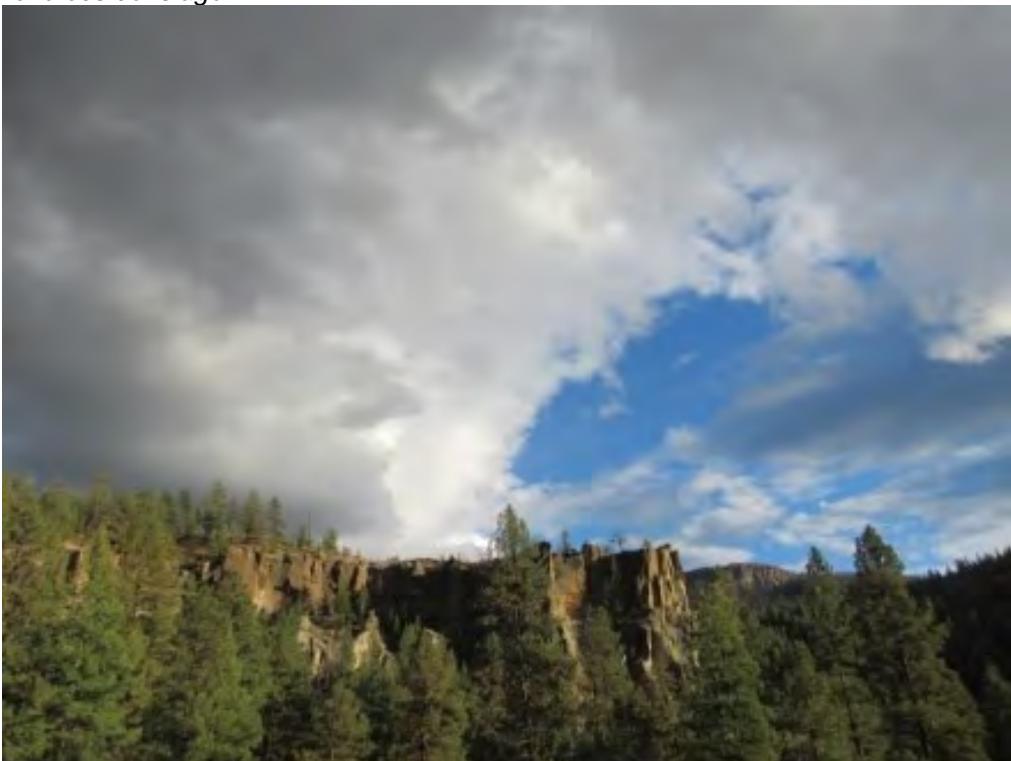


A thunderstorm douses part of the valley.





Leaving the Preserve, we continued into the beautiful Jemez Mountains - a dramatic landscape sculpted by volcanic forces eons ago.



This outcrop is named " Battleship Rock".





Another impressive promontory.



More aspens.



Near the Jemez Pueblo, the earth turns crimson . . .



... and broad fertile meadows are contained by dramatic stone walls.



Ancient ruins dot the landscape, blending into the stone slopes as dusk settles in.



Thanks for joining us on our little road trip!
MM

2018-10-13 - *Rainy Ride*

"And the Skies Are Not Cloudy All Day" . . . well rarely, anyway, but it was a drizzly (and cloudy) day when the horses were scheduled for their fall inoculations. After the vet, we decided to bundle up and ride anyway.

Rain doesn't seem to bother the elk.



They watched us ride through the back gate. "Where do you think they're going in weather like this?" "I don't know, but I'm ready for a hot toddy . . ."



2018-10-13 - *Rainy Ride*

Meanwhile, Lulu had worries of her own. "Does my new 'puffy' rain coat make my butt look big?"



"Come on you guys, quit looking at my butt."



2018-10-13 - *Rainy Ride*

Belle spots a tiny bit of sunshine in the mud.



Someone - hunter, likely - has been driving through our aspen meadow (see the tire tracks?)



2018-10-13 - *Rainy Ride*

They all enjoy some of the last really green grass. "Yum! The September crop is still sweet!"



2018-10-13 - *Rainy Ride*

"Of course, you guys don't care how your hair looks . . ." protests Belle.



Thunder scopes it out. "Looks like more rain for sure."



2018-10-13 - *Rainy Ride*

"Better head back now. Come on Lulu. By the way, I think your new coat is slimming."



"He says it is slimming!!!"



2018-10-13 - *Rainy Ride*

"Oh, for heaven's sake, Lulu - let's get going!"



"Ooh. Got an itch. Wait just a minute . . ."



2018-10-13 - *Rainy Ride*

"Okay, let's go!"



"Yahoo!"



MM

2018-10-15 - Cowboy Symposium - Part One

Each October, Lincoln County hosts perhaps the nation's best festival celebrating all things "cowboy" - from chuck wagon cook-offs and cowboy poets, to big-name entertainers.

The rain ended just in time for Saturday's event.



At dawn, our big bull elk came for a visit.



2018-10-15 - Cowboy Symposium - Part One

Let's hope he stays on private land during the hunting season.



At the festival, was a beautiful day for it.



2018-10-15 - Cowboy Symposium - Part One

Lulu and I headed to the Symposium, where kids were already busy with a "bouncy" horse race!



There were demonstrations of early pioneer life . . .



2018-10-15 - Cowboy Symposium - Part One

... and strolling musicians. This is K.R. Wood, winner of the Western Music Association's 2017 "President's Award".



Of course, Lulu made lots of new friends.





Including this cutie - a miniature donkey with lots of personality . . .



2018-10-15 - Cowboy Symposium - Part One

... but her favorite part was the chuck wagon lunch. "When do we eat???"



It's one of the country's most prestigious chuck wagon competitions - everything must be done in the authentic Western way, using mostly Dutch ovens in campfires.



2018-10-15 - Cowboy Symposium - Part One

Many of the authentic wagons have been in families for generations.



The wagons come from all over the West - this crew is from South Dakota (they once took their wagon on a 250-mile reenactment along the old Deadwood Trail).



2018-10-15 - Cowboy Symposium - Part One

Biscuits gotta be just right.



2018-10-15 - Cowboy Symposium - Part One

'Taters mashing is a team effort. Hang on, Ma!



Chicken fried steak is done with artistry.



2018-10-15 - Cowboy Symposium - Part One

Typical chuck camp.



"Okay, okay, when to we eat?"



2018-10-15 - Cowboy Symposium - Part One

"Come and get it!"



2018-10-15 - Cowboy Symposium - Part One

"Is that mine? Whatta you mean we have to share???"



To be continued . . .

MM

2018-10-15 - Cowboy Symposium - Part Two

After lunch (Lulu got most of it...), we moseyed around the Symposium.

We discovered a mountain man, doing needlework with porcupine quills.



Pre-dating decorative Indian beadwork, the quills are dyed with natural substances . . .



2018-10-15 - Cowboy Symposium - Part Two

... and then patiently worked into intricate patterns in leather.



Next, we enjoyed some dancers celebrating the Spanish heritage of nearby Hondo Valley. Ole!



2018-10-15 - Cowboy Symposium - Part Two

There were various horse demonstrations, including Cowboy Mounted Shooting - considered the fastest-growing equine sport in the world today (riders compete for speed and accuracy).



Then, we were watching a cutting horse demonstration when I was called out of the audience to join in the fun.



2018-10-15 - Cowboy Symposium - Part Two

Those horses are quick!



2018-10-15 - Cowboy Symposium - Part Two

There's always lots of great music at the Symposium . . . everything from bluegrass to big cowboy bands. It's kind of frustrating, because the performances take place on multiple stages, simultaneously all day long.



Some truly remarkable talent.



2018-10-15 - Cowboy Symposium - Part Two

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This is Billy Mata's band. Billy has been performing for more than 35 years - he is a two-time Academy of Western Artists' Vocalist of the Year winner.



These folks have a lot of fun.



2018-10-15 - Cowboy Symposium - Part Two

We all did!



The Symposium is a special part of true Americana. Thanks for coming along!
MM

2018-10-15 - *Quick Change*

An extraordinarily quick change in season (even for New Mexico!) came overnight.

We woke to gray skies, and hard frost clinging to everything. The poor mulberry tree's leaves hadn't even started to change color yet.



Advection frost refers to these tiny spikes of ice - formed when very cold (in the 20's!) wind blows moisture onto plants and objects.



2018-10-15 - Quick Change

The horses were in the barn; I blanketed them in the middle of the night. "I'm not ready for winter!", mumbled a groggy Thunder.



In the morning, they were eager to run out and play - still wearing their warm blankets.



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2018-10-15 - Quick Change

Belle is always ready for a snack - even a frozen one!



More advection frost . . .



2018-10-15 - Quick Change

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More advection frost . . .



2018-10-15 - Quick Change

... and the last of the bright summer flowers, "frozen in time".



2018-10-15 - Quick Change

Later, they took off their blankets for a fast ride (Lulu was happy to wear her coat).



Spanky was happy to be able to scratch his back. "AHHHH!"



2018-10-15 - Quick Change

They had lots of energy, and really moved out on this ride.



2018-10-15 - Quick Change

Surprisingly, the grass is still green in the meadow.



The crisp air put them in a frisky mood. I hung onto Belle (who helped keep me warm).



2018-10-15 - Quick Change

How Thunder loves to play!



Oops. "What's that?"



2018-10-15 - Quick Change

An elk on the hillside.



"Oh, okay. I'll wait for you up there!"



2018-10-15 - Quick Change

He always does.



Spanky disappeared into the frosted forest.



2018-10-15 - Quick Change

Another "frost-free" meadow.



Nearing home, Spanky shows off, too.



2018-10-15 - Quick Change

Back at the ranch, our bucks don't seem to mind the weather (it's happy hour!).



Who knows what tomorrow will bring!
MM

2018-10-17 - *Climate Change*

We are accustomed to blue skies - so after four days of persistent unseasonable gray, misty, foggy weather (almost unheard of here) on the mountain, the horses were ready for a change in climate (Belle said she couldn't do anything with her hair). Less than 30 minutes away is the dry creosote habitat of the Tularosa Basin's high desert, so into the trailer, and off we went.

"Hey! This is more like it - sunshine!" (And warmer, too)



In the distance, dense clouds still hung over our mountains like a heavy gray shroud.



2018-10-17 - *Climate Change*

While down in this valley, only a few miles from home, all was dry and mild.



Even some (unfrozen) summer flowers still in bloom. "I'm liking this!", enthused Belle.





We came upon a whole circus of yucca plants gathered together in the desert.





Looking back to the mountain, the sky was dramatic.



2018-10-17 - Climate Change

Crossing a dry wash, the horses enjoyed the varied terrain. Thunder wondered, "Hey, what's up here?"



"Hmmm . . . an arroyo. Let's figure away across it!"



2018-10-17 - *Climate Change*

And we did. Down... ("What was wrong with being up there?" Spanky pondered.)



... across ...



2018-10-17 - *Climate Change*

. . . and up again. They were having a ball. "I still don't see what was wrong with that other side", said Spanky.



We came upon these unfamiliar little red flowers blooming in the sand.





There is a spacious beauty in this desert.





2018-10-17 - *Climate Change*

The wet fog was still clinging to our mountain (the ranch is over the ridge, just above Spanky in this photo).



Come on guys, we gotta get home now. "Huh?"



"Aw, shucks! Do we hafta?"



Yup.
MM

2018-10-18 - *Thunder's Wild Ride*

We hate to keep harping about the weather - but in a place that boasts blue skies 350 days a year, a week of clinging fog and rain is news.

See what we mean? All day long, day after day. Of course, precipitation is always welcome . . . we keep telling ourselves.



The cats know how to handle this (yes, that's Orca making himself right at home with the others).





Well, anyway, the horses are tired of the dreary fog and rain. They really enjoyed our trip down to the desert country yesterday - and it was Thunder's idea that we go again today. "Come on, it isn't far, and we're all getting depressed." So off we went again. Only this time . . . it was raining down there, too.



2018-10-18 - *Thunder's Wild Ride*

Lulu was happy to be wearing her stylish ("and slimming!") new rain coat.



Yup. It was raining, but the horses didn't seem to mind at all. They were really frisky.



2018-10-18 - *Thunder's Wild Ride*

It's pouring. I still think it's remarkable that those free horses can run around like they do, without running off.



It's wonderful to see them having such a great time together. I just have to whistle . . .



2018-10-18 - *Thunder's Wild Ride*

See? Here they come, all on their own!



Spanky was feeling especially energetic (sorry that I missed some shots of him bucking and rearing up).



2018-10-18 - *Thunder's Wild Ride*

We've had so much rain - even down here in the desert - that this normally dry land looks like a rice paddy.



This is part of the historic Bar W Ranch - the earliest records show that the ranch was already in existence by 1869. It's one of the biggest in the state. How big? Well around here, that question is like asking someone how much money they have in the bank. It's big.



2018-10-18 - *Thunder's Wild Ride*

You can't see the boundary of the ranch from here.



We came across some old pens and troughs.



... but what's this?



Yikes! it's a partly-covered old mine shaft. When I threw a rock down, we never heard it hit bottom. We got far away from that!



2018-10-18 - *Thunder's Wild Ride*

Then Thunder decided to take a mud bath.



Nice going, buddy. "I always wondered what it would be like to be a bay . . ."



2018-10-18 - *Thunder's Wild Ride*

"Don't you come near me until you've had a bath, buster!" "Gee, Belle . . ."



Muddy Thunder spotted something in the distance.



A pronghorn racing across the prairie.



We just moseyed along. See those bald hills in the background? The story goes that during the old days, when 20,000 head of ranch cattle were on the way to the railhead in Carrizozo, the last cattle were still trailing past these hills, while the first of the drive were pushing their way through the gates of the stockyard - more than seven miles away.



2018-10-18 - *Thunder's Wild Ride*

Beautiful, wonderful, big country.



Here's a peek of the mountain between layers of clouds.



2018-10-18 - *Thunder's Wild Ride*

We had a great time - the rain made it magical.



Thanks for riding along!
MM

2018-10-21 - *Fall Back*

Autumn returned just as abruptly as it departed - as though to say, "What do you mean? I only stepped out for a minute . . ."

A crisp, clear morning was perfect for going to the feed store. "Please bring us some goodies!", encouraged Belle.



Lulu loves going to town.



2018-10-21 - *Fall Back*

We passed these contented cows, enjoying the weather too.



Afterward, of course it all had to be unloaded . . .

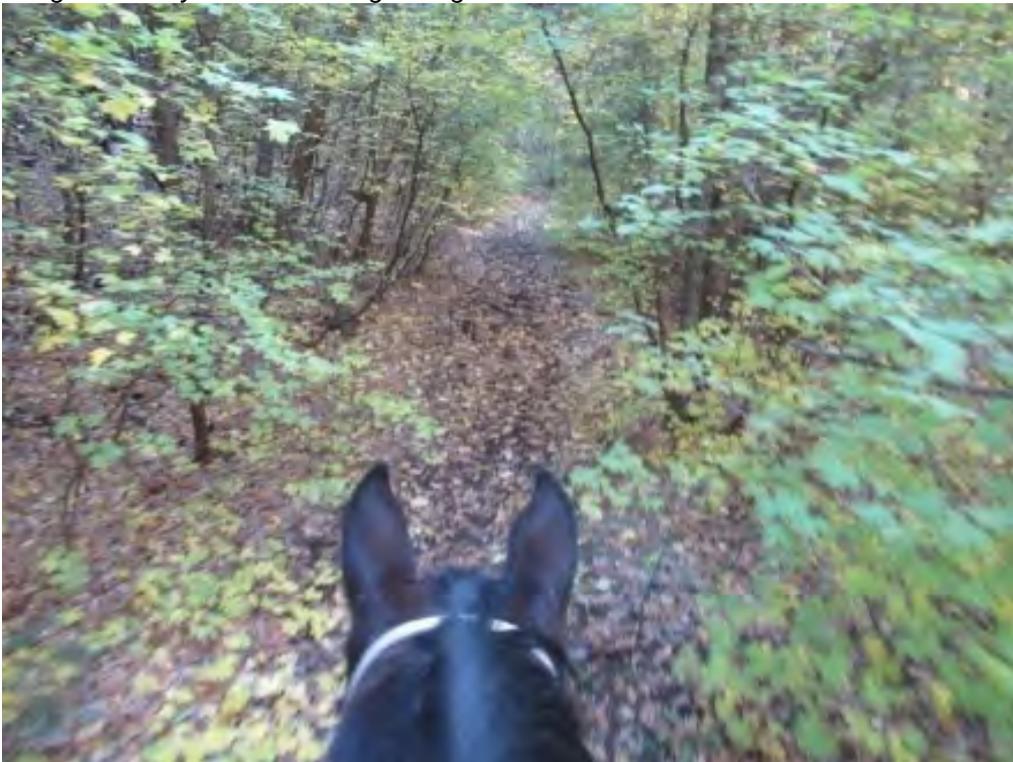


2018-10-21 - *Fall Back*

When that was done, we all decided it was much too nice a day -- time for a ride! Lulu wondered if our cold spell might have brought out more autumn leaves. Good idea! But the tiny spots of color when we started on the trail weren't very encouraging.



Still, it was a glorious day for a run through the green forest.

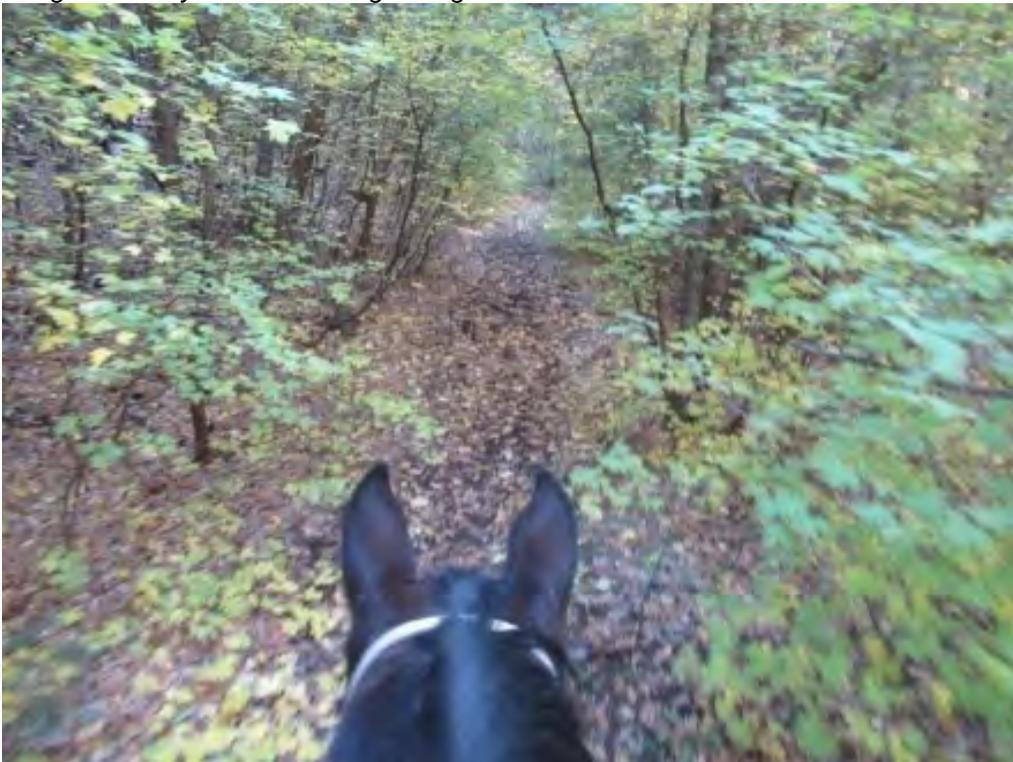


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Pretty.



"Yeah, that's nice . . . but where are the fall colors?", fretted Lulu.



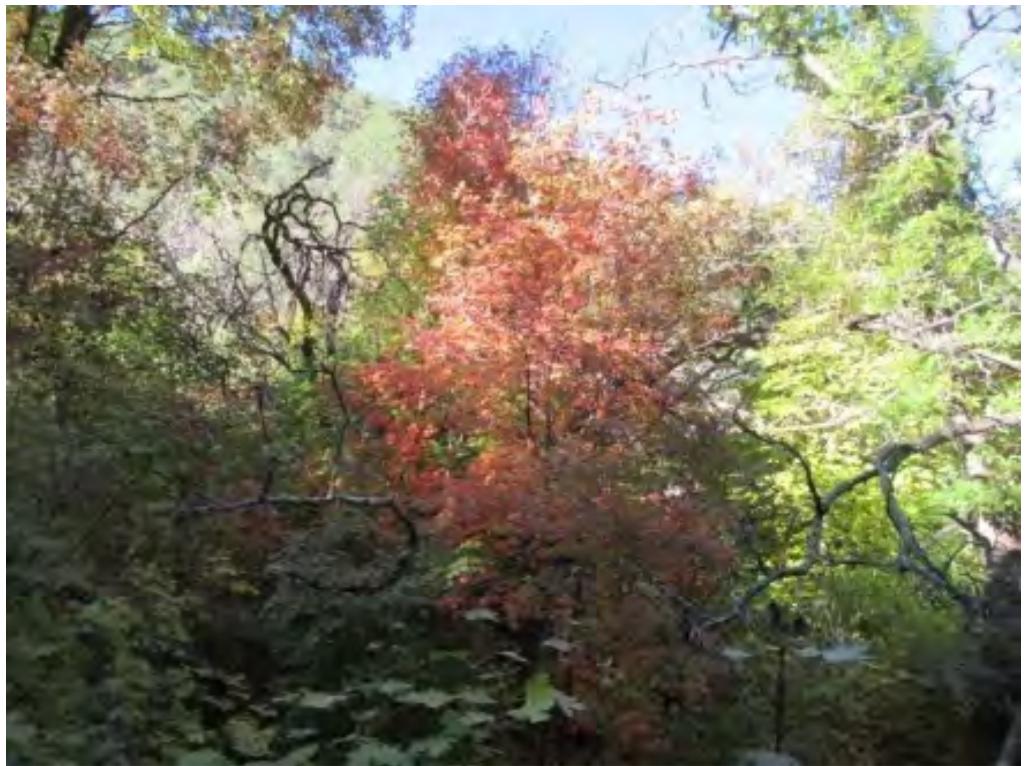
2018-10-21 - *Fall Back*

That's more like it, we all agreed.



2018-10-21 - *Fall Back*

Whoa! Gotta duck under this low-hanging branch. Fortunately, Mother Nature had provided just the right space for my head . . . whew!



2018-10-21 - *Fall Back*

Is that better, Lulu? "Yeah - this is great! Now can we see some snow?" Oh, Lulu . . .



She found this oddity in the forest.



2018-10-21 - *Fall Back*

Spanky kept right up. "NO tailgating!", protested Belle.



All the rain has kept things unusually green, so there was lots of grazing.



Pretty.



"Yeah, that's nice . . . but where are the fall colors?", fretted Lulu.



2018-10-21 - *Fall Back*

We kept climbing up the trail, and . . . a-ha!



Autumn in her glory!



2018-10-21 - *Fall Back*

That's more like it, we all agreed.



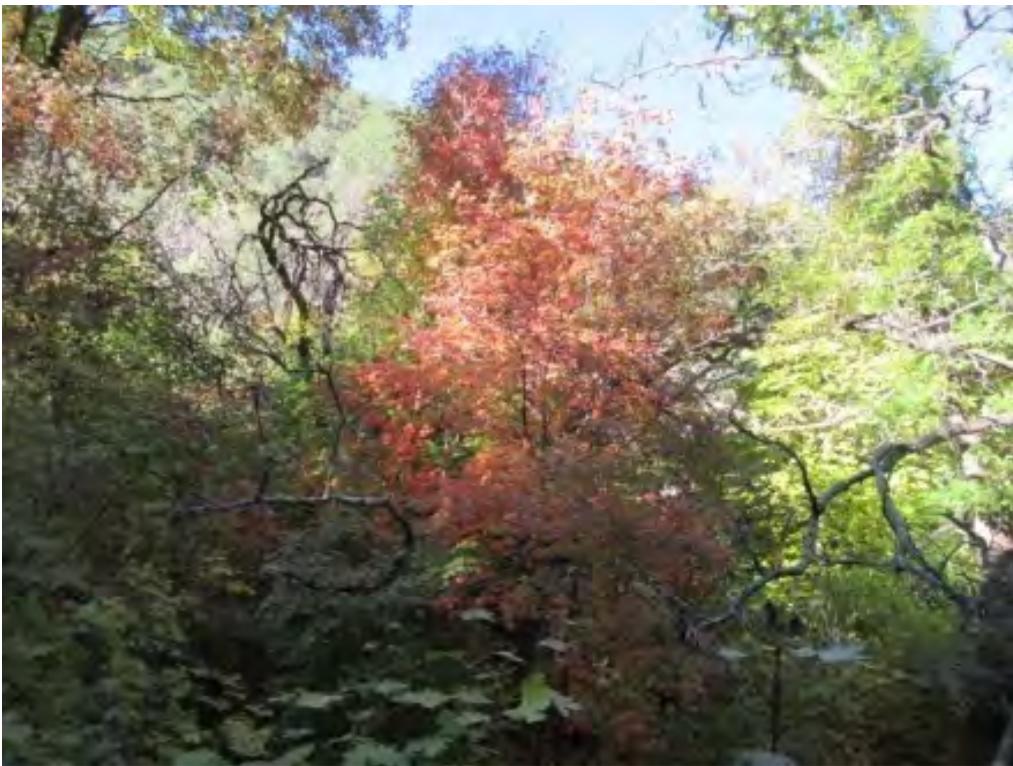
2018-10-21 - *Fall Back*

Classic "fall". Pumpkin pie and cider . . .



2018-10-21 - *Fall Back*

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2018-10-21 - *Fall Back*

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She found this oddity in the forest.



Looks like some kind of squash . . .but we didn't try it.



MM

...You've reached the End of

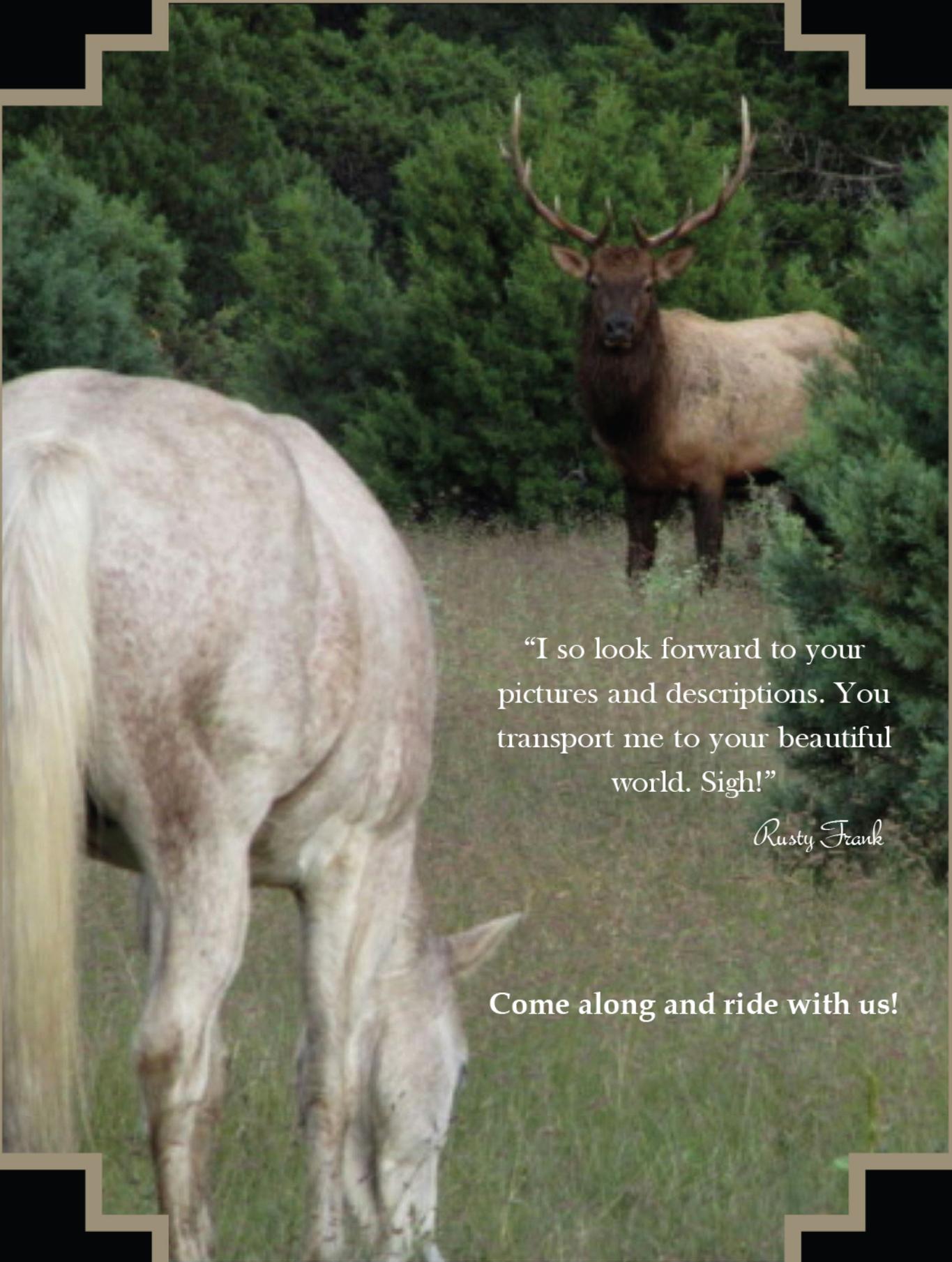
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Rusty Frank

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