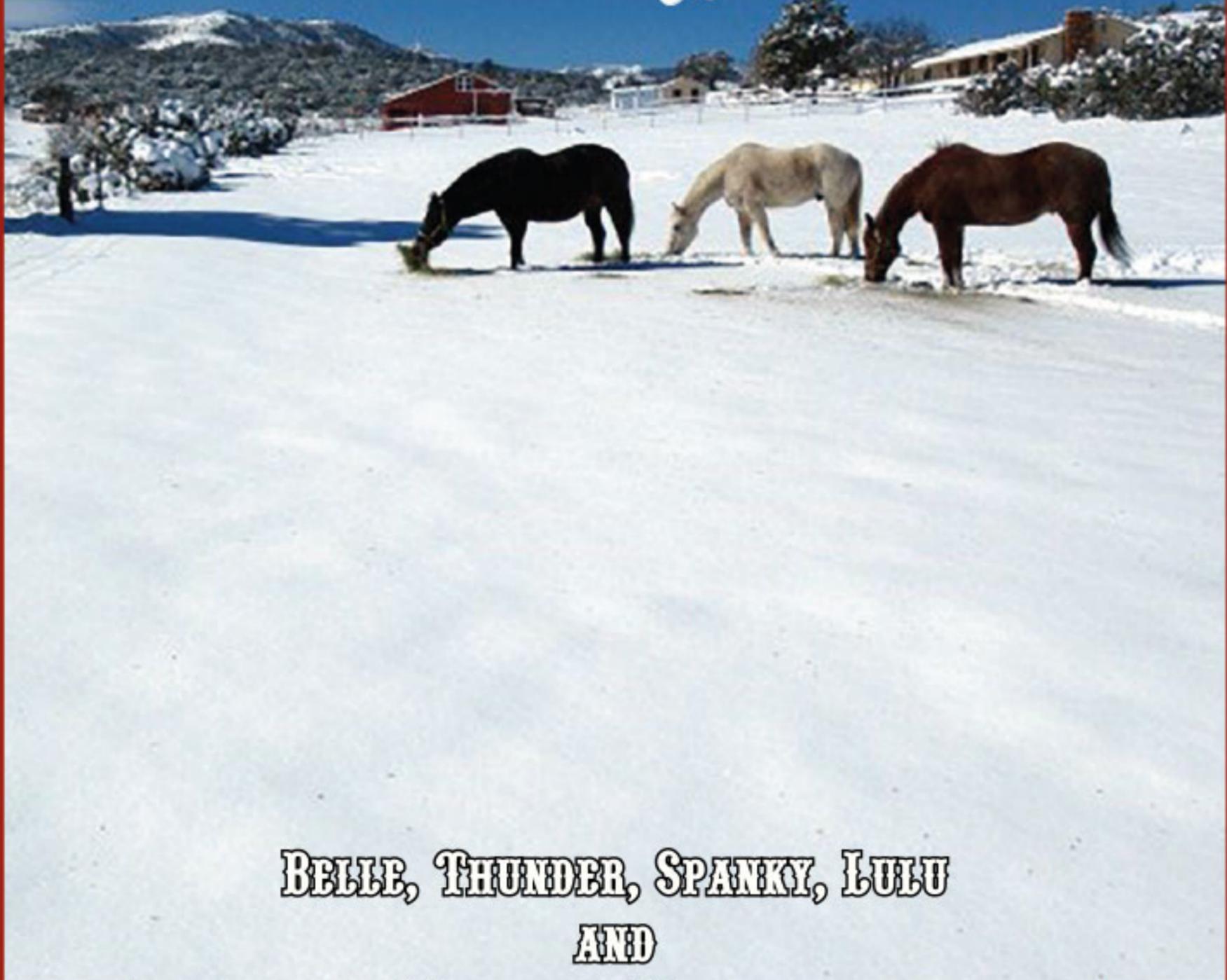


THE NOGAI JOURNALS

Volume Nineteen



BELLE, THUNDER, SPANKY, LULU
AND
MATTHEW MIDGETT

THE NOGAL JOURNALS

Volume XIX

With sincere gratitude
to Randy Clarke-Ianiero and Clem Ianiero-Clarke
whose technical expertise and tireless efforts
made this publication possible.

Cover Design: Laura Reynolds

Printing: PrintStar San Diego

First Edition Printing October 2020

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Please use the BOOKMARKS TOOL:



for your active TABLE OF CONTENTS
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window).

Our friend Lynda told us about a large beaver dam on the river west of old Lincoln town. We decided to check it out.

Like humans, beavers modify their environment to create habitats for food, shelter, and protection. They mate for life. Their teeth grow continuously and are self-sharpening. A broad tail and webbed feet serve these semi-aquatic mammals well. Their small eyes have transparent eyelids, allowing vision underwater, and their ears and nose can be closed when submerged - dives may last 15 minutes or more.



Due to trapping, by the 1900's the beaver population in New Mexico had been decimated. In the early 1930's, government programs for restoration and reintroduction began, and today our current beaver population is estimated to be around 6,000 throughout the State. Beaver dams increase total water surface areas, stabilize stream flows, prevent erosion, and raise the level of water tables. Though they can be a nuisance to farmers and others, their benefits far outweigh any negative impact. Plus, they're cool.

Before we left, I tried to tell the deer about beavers, but they were more interested in their snacks.

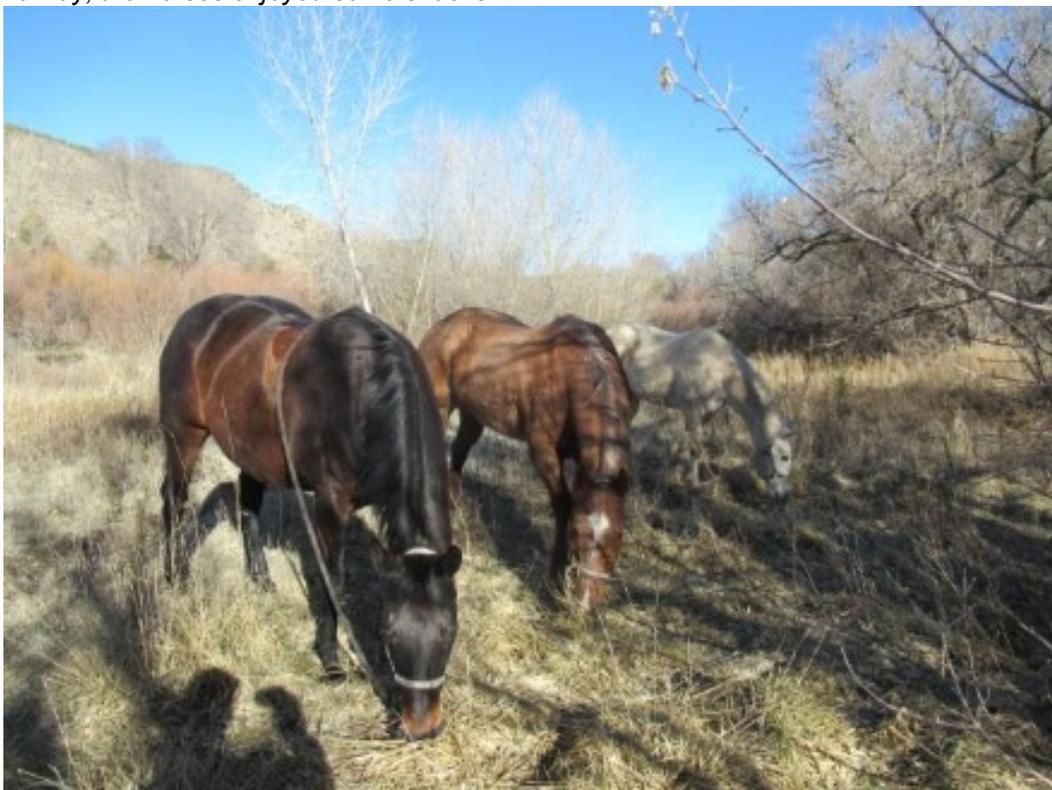


2020-02-18 - Beaver Dam

We sometimes come across small beaver dams and lodges on our river rides, but this was supposed to be a really large one. It was a beautiful day for our trek.



Along the way, the horses enjoyed some snacks . . .



Drinks from a little spring . . .



. . . and . . .



In places, the river is obscured by a variety of aquatic plants, like these cattails and salt cedars.



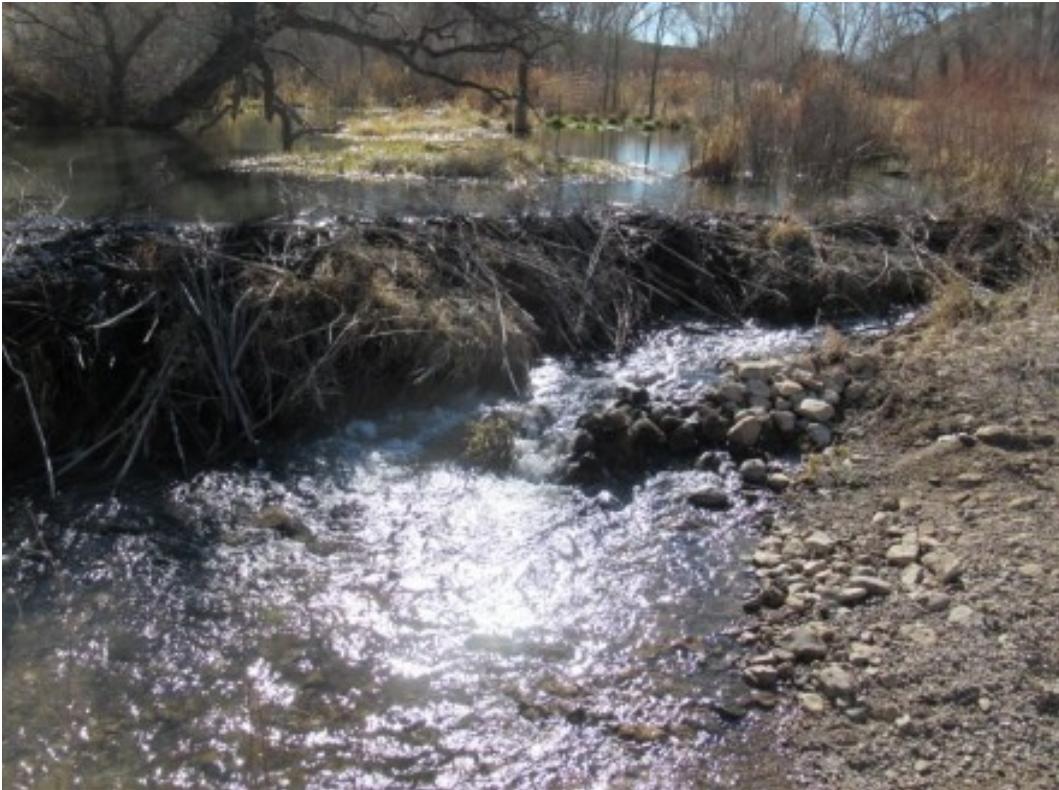
We kept searching . . .



... and eureka!



We found the beaver dam.



2020-02-18 - Beaver Dam

What a remarkable engineering feat for the little critters.



Built one stick at a time, the dam actually raises the water level behind it by about four feet!



2020-02-18 - Beaver Dam

If you look carefully, you can see that each branch has been cut and woven into the dam.



After our field trip, we continued our ride above the river.



Spanky puts it in 4-wheel drive . . .



. . . and off we go.



Thanks for joining us on this excursion (and thanks, Lynda!).
MM

2020-02-21 - Swing Time

Our weather has been swinging between wintry and wet; and spring-like and mild.
A mild, spring-like day is ideal for stocking up at the feed store.



At home, Chile the barn cat makes certain all the feed is stored properly. "Make sure you stack that alfalfa right!"



"That's purrfect"



A beautiful sunset this time of year often means a change in the weather.



Sure enough, a thick, cold fog descended on the mountain overnight. Frost clung to the trees . . .



. . . and a strange, slushy froth formed on the water tank.



2020-02-21 - Swing Time

Well, then . . . let's go down into the Tularosa Basin, and see what things are like there! The fog continued to menace the mountains . . . but the desert floor was clear.



The horses love riding the arroyos, so that's where we headed.

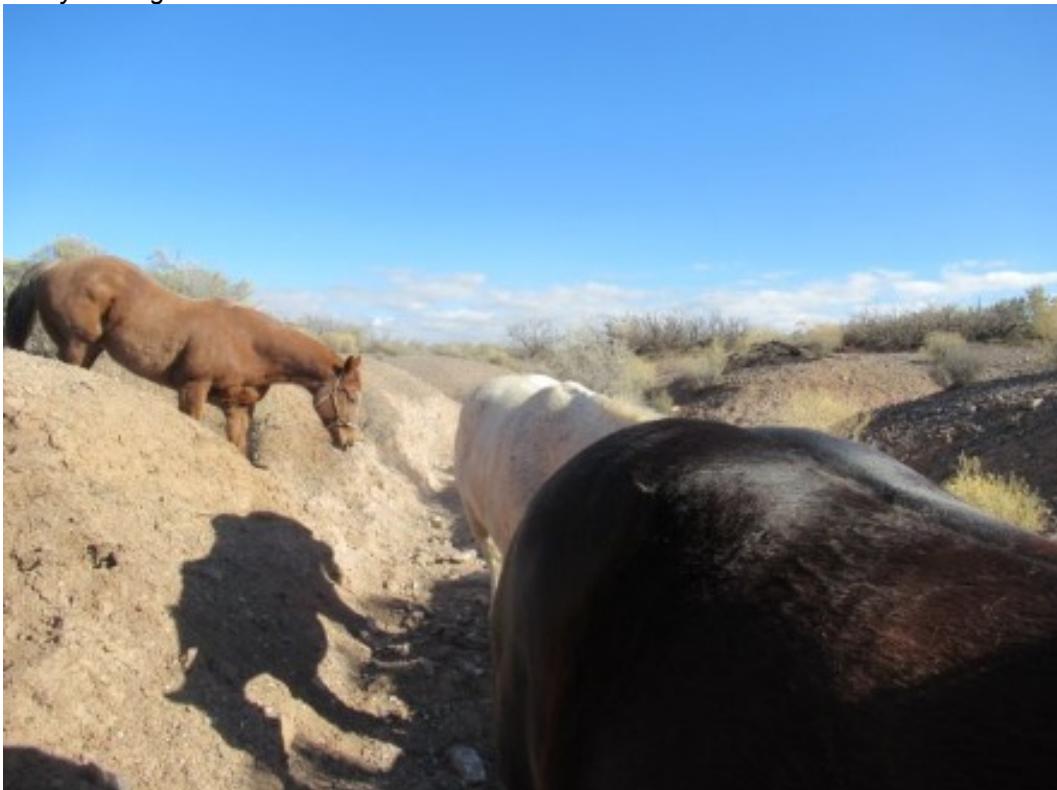


2020-02-21 - Swing Time

Spanky enjoyed all that dry, warm sand. "Ahhhhh! Sand angels are great, too!"



Into the arroyos we go.



The cold fog is forgotten in the sun-warmed canyons.

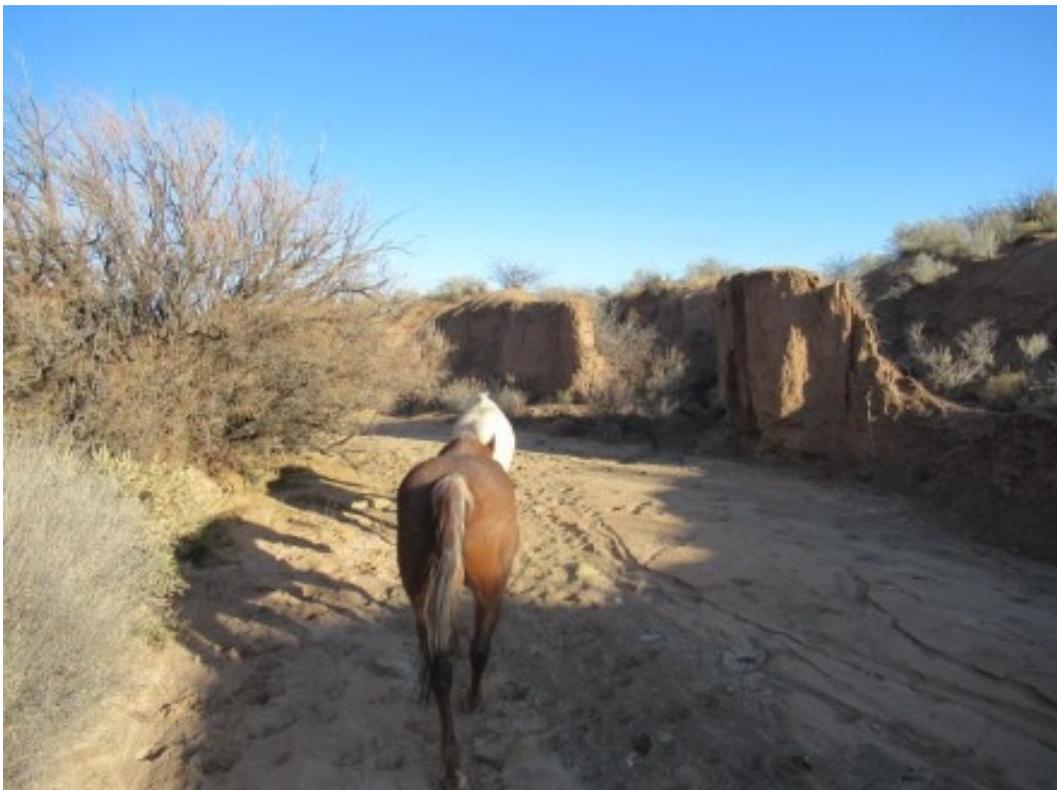


"This was a great idea!" enthuses Belle.



2020-02-21 - Swing Time

We do some running in the soft sand - racing through narrow channels makes it seem even faster . . .



... and then up ...



... and out.



2020-02-21 - Swing Time

Clouds continue to linger picturesquely on the mountain (but we were grateful for the sun).



MM



FOLLOWED
DREAM
RANCH

2020-02-24 - Waterfalls 'Video'

Our local newspaper adapted last month's waterfalls journal into a very short tourist video. Just 'FYI'.

Type this link into your favorite browser and enjoy the wonderful Video! (Sorry for the ad.)

<https://www.ruidosonews.com/videos/news/2020/02/11/hidden-waterfalls-fort-stanton-2/4701760002/>



MM



FOLLOWED
DREAM
RANCH

2020-02-25 - Winter's Fading

Winter is playing cat-and-mouse with us. Still a few snowy days - but more sunny ones.

The elk understand. They enjoy the dry days.



2020-02-25 - Winter's Fading

Wandering through the east pasture. (It's unfortunate that they have 'targets' on their rear ends!)



"Targets? What does he mean, targets?"



2020-02-25 - Winter's Fading

We enjoy the sunny days, too. Even a little ride behind the house becomes a celebration, when the snow is gone.



Spanky sneaks a dry roll behind a tree.



"What?"



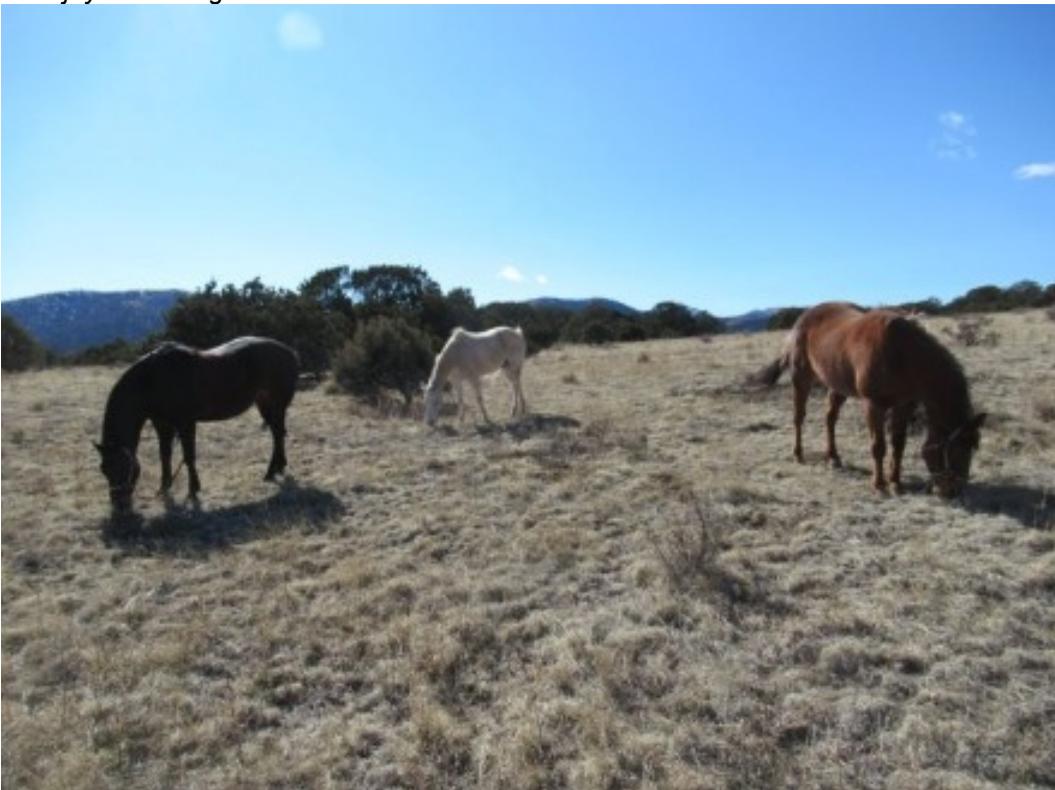
Thunder takes a 'dry run'.



"Got treats?"



Everyone enjoys snacking.





Well, almost everyone. "Yechhhh. When does the green grass come back?"



Soon, Spanky. *"Let me know when it gets here!"*



MM



FOLLOWED
DREAM
RANCH

2020-02-26 - Cool Cows

It was a typically bright morning - then a sudden cold front descended on us from the north, blotting out the sun with gray, unsettled clouds. The horses were okay with it, but Belle was disappointed. "It was so nice and sunny!", she sighed.

As tiny snowflakes began falling, I asked them if they would like to head down to the desert below. It might be sunny down there, I suggested. "Oh, yes!", they answered in unison. "Let's go now!"



So, we headed down. At first, it didn't look very promising. Ominous clouds clung close to the ground. Snow continued to fall all around us . . .



. . . but the desert floor was clear. "Well, Belle, look up where we just came from. It's definitely better down here!", Thunder offered optimistically.



From down below, we could see swirls of snow enveloping our mountain home.



Sun was breaking through to the south. "Let's go that-away!", they said.



Ah, blue skies ahead.



We arrived to a bovine welcoming committee. "Hey!"



"Gee! You came from all the way up there?", asked one.



"Yeah", said Belle, "But it really isn't as far as it looks - if you don't have to walk."



"I'm not sure they believe me. That mountain does look far away, if you are a cow."



2020-02-26 - Cool Cows

Belle then told them about her life on the mountain. "Gee", the cows said in amazement. "I know. It's pretty cool". Belle didn't want to brag.



These are really friendly cows. This one wanted to taste my gloved hand. "Where does leather come from?", he asked. I changed the subject.



Spanky met a friend at the water trough.



Awww...



... and Thunder had a new fan.



In fact, he didn't want to leave the cows as we began our ride . . .



... but he came along.



Showing us the way into an interesting dry stream bed.



Looking back at the mountains, Belle said she was glad we came down here today. "Us, too", her boys replied.



"Yup", as they dozed in the afternoon sun.



MM

Morning is a very social time around here. The horses and cats are having their breakfast, and the other critters seem to enjoy a morning get together.

The sun is in the wrong position for this photo - but if you look closely, you will see some elk in the driveway.



They seem to enjoy watching the horses have their breakfast.



"I wonder if they order ahead?"



They have their own menu . . . it's buffet.



The deer gather for their breakfast, too.



This little one seems to have a question. "Is this corn organic?"



... and then there is Chile ... who keeps tabs on everything.







Good morning!
MM

We have such a wealth of riding options here; we sometimes forget about some special ones. We hadn't ridden the Apache Trail near Fort Stanton in a long time.

The trail head is near the world-class (in the middle of nowhere!) Spencer Theater. Its design was intended to mimic the profile of Sierra Blanca Peak, in the distance. The horses love playing tourist. "I always wanted to go on the stage", mused Belle. "It would take a big stage", Thunder thought to himself.



The view of the peak, from the nearby trail head (you can just make out the theater's white roof on the left). It's a remarkable setting. Local heiress Jackie Spencer wanted a great theater close to home. So, she wrote out a check for \$22 million . . . and here it is. <https://www.spencertheater.com/about.html>



2020-03-02 - Apache Trail

The trail begins on a broad, high mesa, with the Capitan Mountains to the north.



Thunder is frustrated by our relaxed pace. "Beep! Beep! Can we go a little faster, please?"



Finally, he makes a fast pass around us. "Sheesh!"



A drink with a mountain view.



2020-03-02 - Apache Trail

The trail begins its descent into a pretty little canyon. This portion is fairly steep and rocky, so I dismounted to make it easier on Belle.



They take a little snack break . . . (we've only been on the trail for 15 minutes!).



... "But I need a little something . . ." Belle complained.



"That was good. Come on, boys, let's get going!" "Jeez! It's all about her!", Spanky good-naturedly grumbled. "You just figured that out?", said Thunder.



Spanky takes the lead . . .



. . . but then, "Let's move it! It's getting late."



Of course, there's always time for another snack.



MM



FOLLOWED
DREAM
RANCH

2020-03-03 - *Family Time*

Chores done (mostly), a nice day (in winter), easy trail (at Fort Stanton) along a peaceful stream - and good companions (always) . . .

Billowy clouds portend a change in the weather, as Thunder leads us toward the trail.



We pass remains of the Fort's historic cattle operation - deteriorating corrals . . .



... and an old vaccinating chute.



The boys lag behind (never for very long).



We reach the stream, for a cool drink . . .



. . . and Spanky gets to splash around. "Isn't this great!", he says. "STOP IT, SPANKY! You're getting us all wet.", complains Belle, for the umpteenth time.



"Geez, Spanky, I'm soaked!", as Thunder wipes his face.



Spanky dries off in his own peculiar way (you can just see him rolling behind that bush).



The race is on! We have a good run across an open field . . .



. . . s Sierra Blanca looks on.



Another drink . . .



. . . Another splash (everyone else stays clear) . . .



...and another roll - this time Thunder (the white spot on the right), on the Fort's parade ground.



Before heading home.



Family time is best.



Well, that was yesterday. Today, the clouds really gathered - and very suddenly a beautiful snow came down - quickly interrupting Thunder's nap in the sun. "Phooy. Just when I got comfortable."



So, they all went into the barn, where Chile wasn't bothered in the least. "Ahhhhh . . . no complaints from me!"



MM



FOLLOWED
DREAM
RANCH

Riding with three clomping horses means we likely spook off most smaller critters (and snakes . . . which is a good thing), . . . but occasionally . . .

It started out like most rides at Ranchman's Camp - peaceful. "Hey, Belle, whatta you going to have for supper this evening?" "I don't know why you keep asking that, Spanky. We always get the same menu."



Thunder did his usual 'king of the hill' run along a ridge. Maybe he is looking for outlaws or Apaches . . .



We spotted some elk and headed their way.



They're pretty used to us by now.



Still, they are very curious of the horses (that one in the middle seems to have spotted me).



Then we stopped for a snow cone (there're are still some patches of snow in the shade).



"Here, Belle, I saved the best part for you!" "That's sweet. Thanks!"



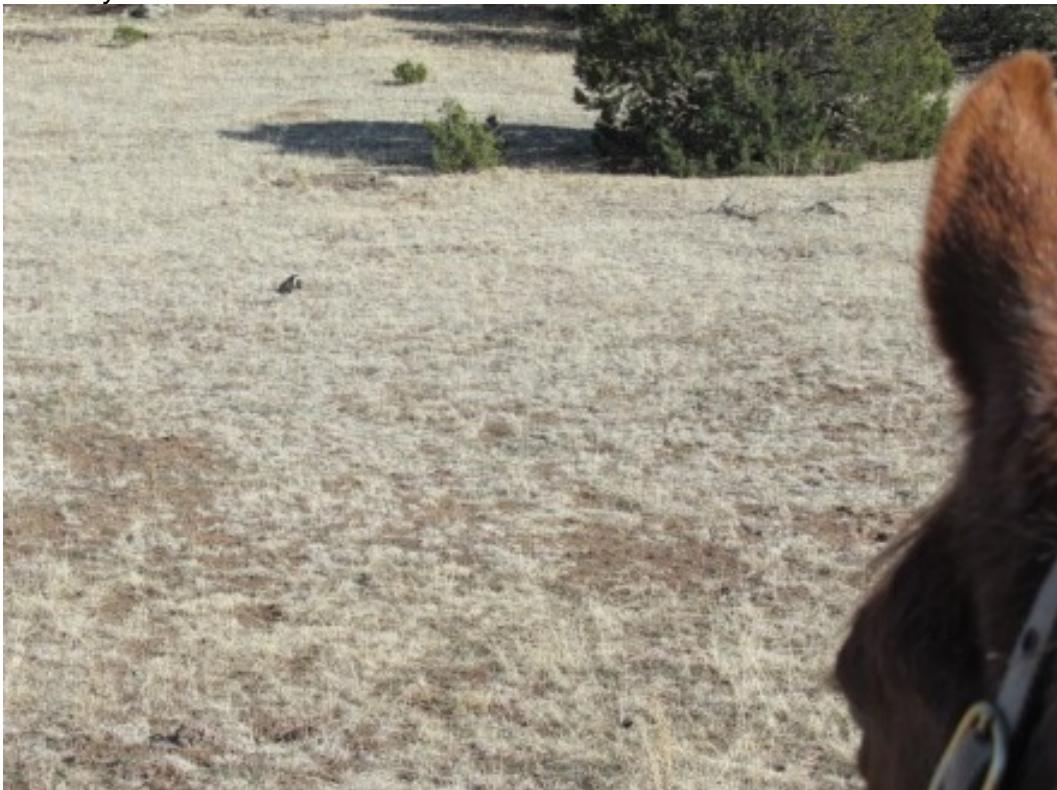
"Wow! We almost kissed! Golly!!!"



Meanwhile . . . "That's enough of that mushy stuff . . ."



But then . . . "Hey - what's THAT over there?"



"SKUNK!!!"



"Yes, it 'ees me, Pepe!"



"YIKES!!! We're outta here!"



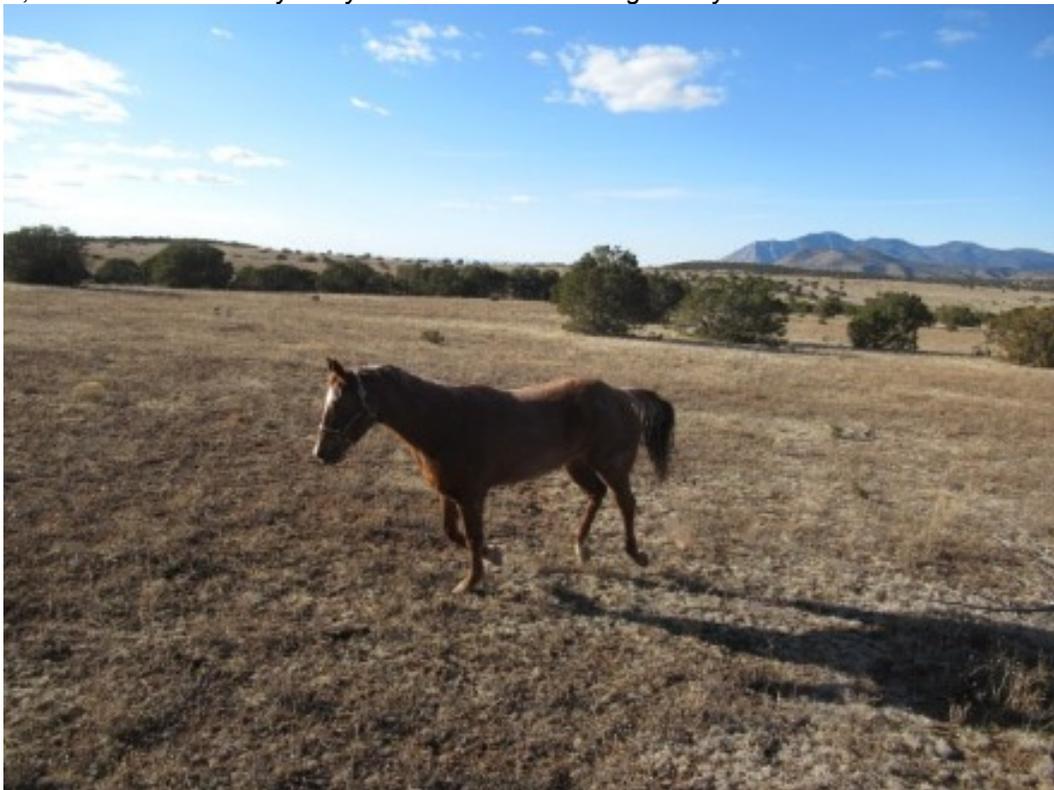
We ran FAST!



"Whew! Glad he was friendly!"



"Even so, better safe than sorry! Do you think we're far enough away?"



Time for some stress-free grazing.



MM



FOLLOWED
DREAM
RANCH

Even after all this time - and countless miles on the trails - we still find corners of our area which we have not yet explored.

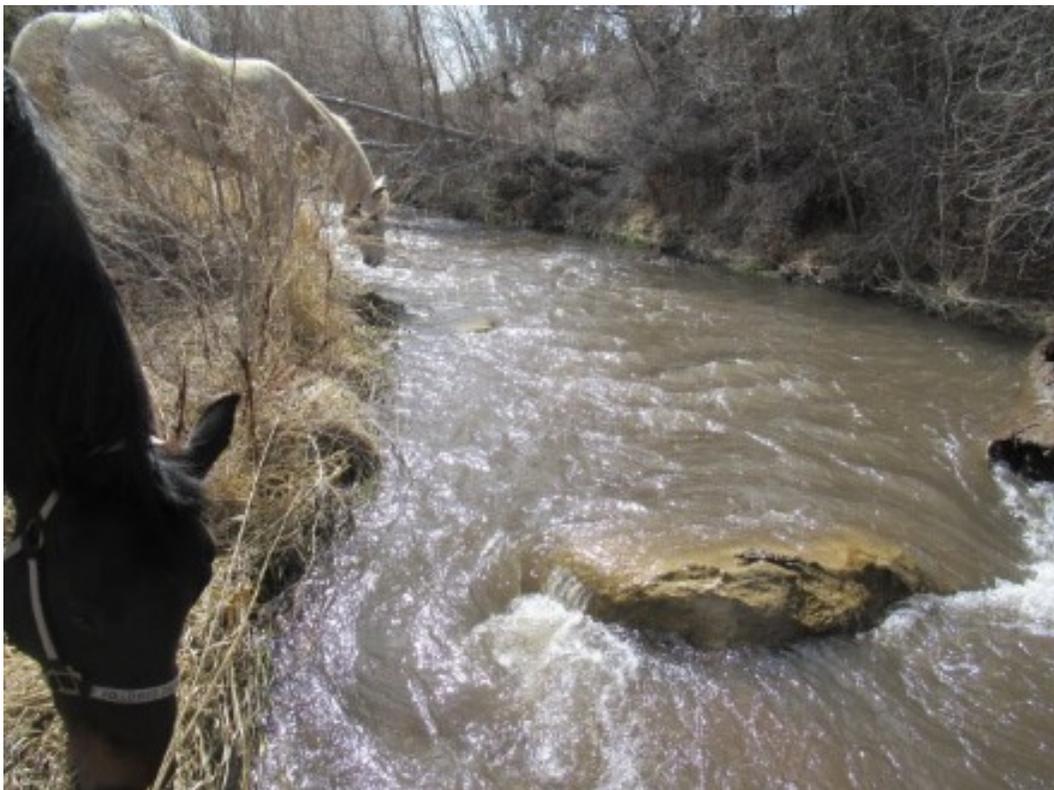
Just east of Fort Stanton, along the Bonito, is an area of broad meadows and mountain vistas. We hadn't ridden here before.



Spanky, especially, seems to enjoy new places to explore.



Mostly we followed the water, rushing down from melting snow on the mountain.



It's a handy drinking fountain for the horses.



Distant mountains look on.



As we meander along, I dismount and allow Belle to wander, too.



Spanky gives Thunder a little nip, to get him to move along.



It worked.



Belle sees something (maybe she is looking for skunks).



We spot a natural 'bridge'!



A quiet corner of our world.





A peaceful ride. Thanks for joining us.
MM

We continue to entertain our neighbors.

The Bucks Club meets here every day.

Wilcox always seems to attract the young deer. "Hey, mom, what's that?" "Not 'what' - it's a 'who'. His name is Wilcox, and he lives here."



"Yeah, but what is he?" "He's a cat. They're nice." "He smells funny."



"Look what he just did! He climbed up into that tree! I want to do that, too." "Hey, kid! Look! I get to scratch my claws on this branch!" "What are claws?" "You don't have any." "Aw, gee . . ."



"How come cats get to climb, and scratch, and stuff?"



"Because cats are COOL!", said Wilcox, nonchalantly.



"Oh."



We have to be especially careful on the road to the ranch, when elk school lets out for the day. We really ought to have a crossing guard.



I had to run into town, so the horses came along for a short sunset ride along the way.



It was a nice day for it.





MM

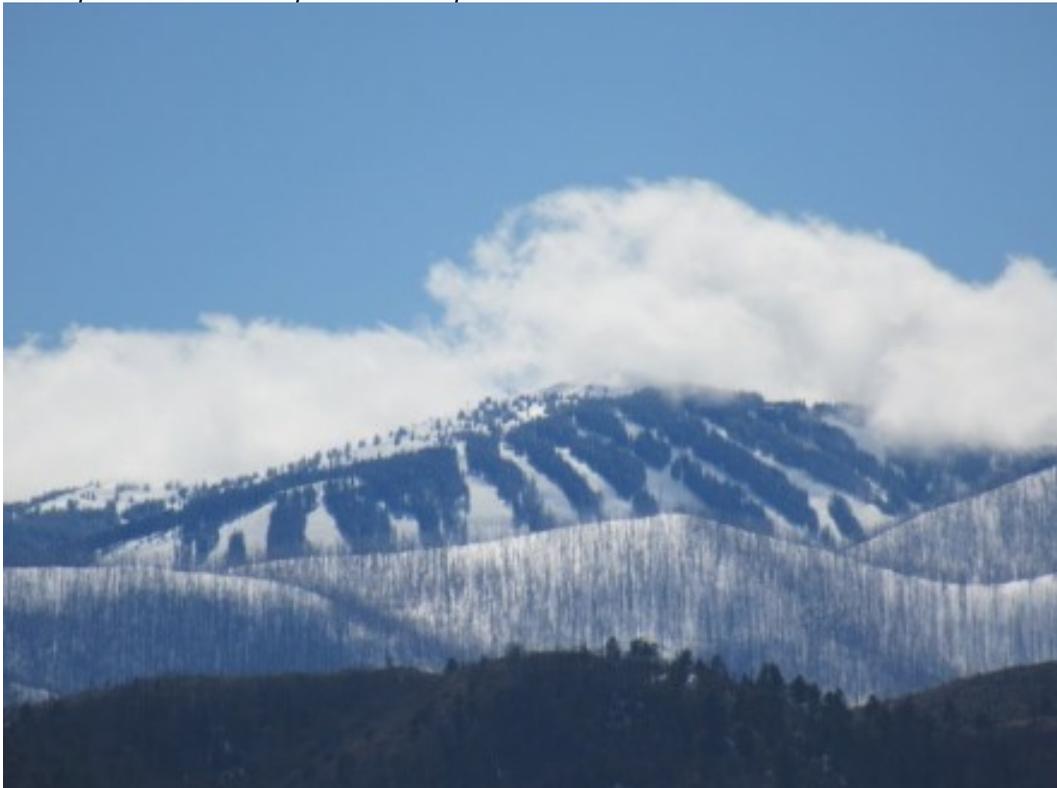
2020-03-12 - Snowy Peak

We had some overnight rain, and the horses were eager to get out of the barn and exercise.

The brief storm left a new layer of snow on the mountain . . .



. . . and fresh powder on the 'stripes' of ski slopes.



On the mesas below, the horses enjoyed some good rolls in the soft, damp earth.



We usually groom before a ride . . . to no avail.



Oh, well - they are having a blast! "Whoopee!" . . .



. . . and some quiet moments, too.



2020-03-12 - Snowy Peak

As often happens, the horses (with their superior vision) spot something in the distance (likely an elk).



Spanky really enjoys giving Thunder an affectionate 'nip', to speed things along. Thunder tolerates it . . .



. . . but also appreciates having his own space, trot'in along.



An interesting line-up with Nogal Peak.



Everyone has a relaxing moment together.



2020-03-12 - Snowy Peak

Before moving on - climbing up for the view ("Puff, puff").



Then racing back to the trailer.



We are always aware of national, and world events - and don't ignore serious situations which affect us all. Everyone has their own concerns. We hope these 'horse journals' might provide brief respite and comfort. Thanks.

MM

The morning was beautiful, and we planned a nice ride . . . but by lunchtime, the clouds had moved in, and heavy thundershowers began raining down. Belle was undeterred. "I bet it's not raining over by Capitan Gap!", she said confidently. Thunder said we should give it a try, and Spanky agreed. So, we went.

Sure enough. It was still pouring at the ranch, but the area Belle chose was clear.



As we unloaded, Spanky spotted something in the distance.



A lone pronghorn on the prairie.



He seemed kinda lonesome, and paced along with us awhile.





We watched as he disappeared beneath the rainbow.



We could see that it was still raining back at home. "I told you . . .", said Belle rather smugly.



"Well, she's right again . . ." "Yeah."



This public land is managed by the Bureau of Land Management, who had done a controlled burn in the valley (to remove excess brush) just a week ago.



Tiny blades of green grass are already sprouting through the ashes. "Oh boy! This is going to be delicious!", gushed Spanky.



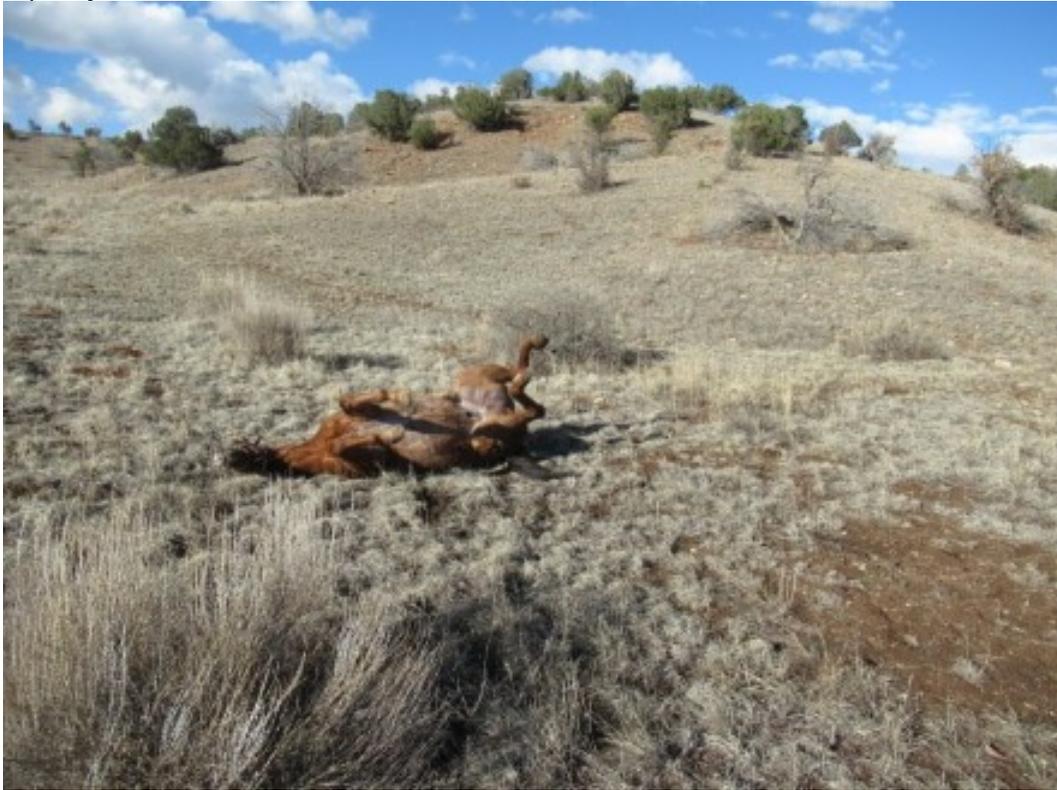
Then we went for a run, as blustery clouds raced over head.



Thunder likes to speed in a big arc around us - joining along the way . . .



... and Spanky likes to ...



Yup - Belle was right.



Thunder bolted across an arroyo, and up the other side.



While Spanky takes his time. "Hey! Why hurry?"



He's right.



Good timing. The storm caught up with us just as we were leaving. "Whew! That was close!" It rained all the way home.



MM

2020-03-15 - Sky High

Although snow - and ice - keep us from riding the high country yet, the horses still love scanning the view from a lofty point (they used to stand for hours, gazing out from Bell Rock, in Sedona).

In the middle of the 25,000-acre Fort Stanton National Conservation Area is a very high knoll. We'd never climbed it. Spanky was keen on checking it out ("It's a perfect day for it!"), so we all went along. It is a climb, as we follow a deer trail all the way up from the mesa far below.



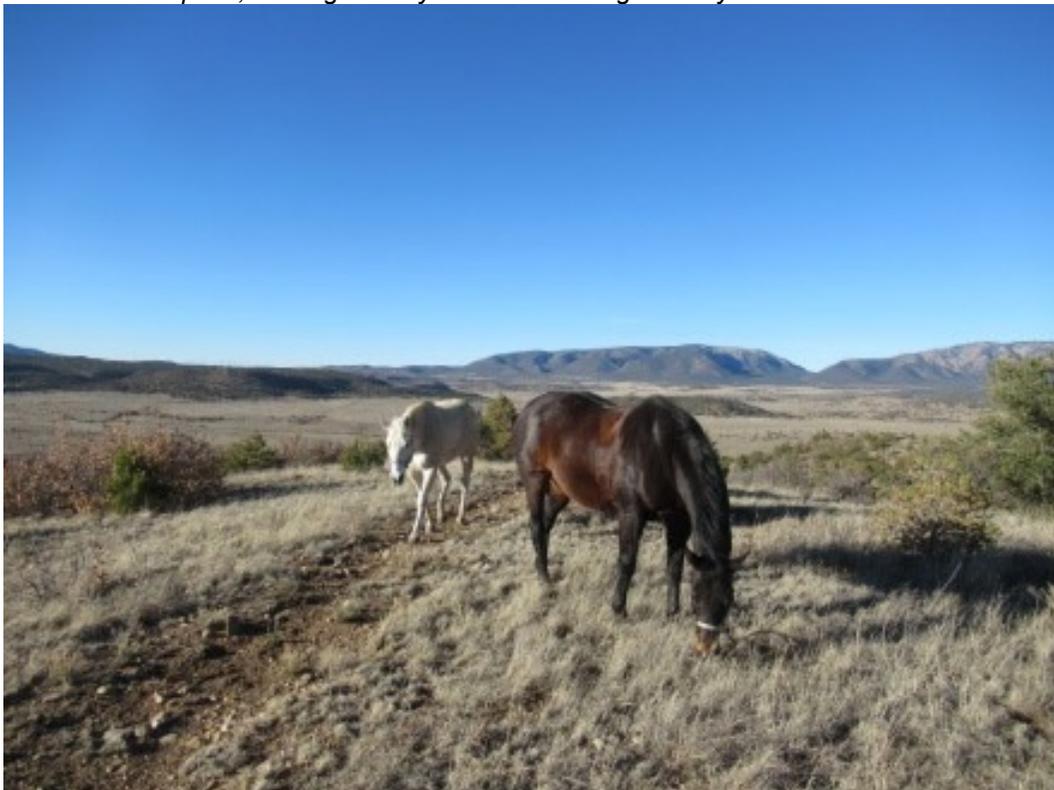
Along the way, there's a terrific view of historic Capitan Gap - a rift in the east/west Capitan Mountain range. Spanky was right, it was a perfect, clear and windless day.



Still climbing.



The horses never complain, as long as they can snack along the way.



2020-03-15 - Sky High

The dry grass must be especially tasty up here. "Hey! I just worked my fanny off climbing this Matterhorn, and I'm hungry!"



They reach the top.





Spanky got his view. "Ahhh."



"This is so cool! Thanks!"



MM



FOLLOWED
DREAM
RANCH

It's not quite officially Spring, but the weather has warmed enough to melt some snow on the mountain. It runs through the streams in muddy torrents.

Belle can tell the difference in the volume.



The roar of rushing currents.



At a crossing, more water for Spanky to play in!



Thunder enjoys wading through . . .



He dries off by rolling in the sun-warmed grass, under cottonwood trees getting ready to leaf out.





It doesn't look like much yet, but they enjoy the newly emerging grass. "Gee, this is tasty!" "Yeah - nice and fresh."



We're on Fort Stanton grounds now. They wonder about the old dance pavilion. It's empty and alone - but during the hospital years, crowds of doctors and staff used to jitterbug here, on moonlit nights many years ago.



"What's a 'jitter bug'? Do they bite?", asks Spanky.



"It was a dance humans used to do. It looked like fun" "Oh . . ."



As we work our way upstream, the current grows stronger, biting into the banks like a relentless steamshovel.



It forms rapids and churning white caps.



Water surges over the remains of an old dam - destroyed in the great flood of 1942, and never rebuilt.



A more placid stretch.



Perfect for some quiet time, as I sit along the shore - and Belle finds a patch of grass to gently nibble between my boots.



Heading back, we pass ruins of the Fort's WWII German Internment Camp.



The old Fort has witnessed many momentous events. Fierce battles for control of the West; a calamitous war between North and South; treatment of tuberculosis, which had menaced mankind for thousands of years before finally being subdued (by research partly conducted here); the Great Depression, that brought nations to their knees; two terrible World Wars (WWI's General Pershing was trained here, and the Fort was lit by a distant pre-dawn glow, as the first atomic bomb was detonated at Trinity Site, soon ending WWII). Each of these events seemed, at the time, to be earth-shattering. Yet each has passed into history. Mankind overcame and we all ride on.

MM



FOLLOWED
DREAM
RANCH

On an overcast early morning, several neighbors were doing their usual morning stuff.
A deer was waiting for a nice red apple.



"Thank you!" - An elk (out there to the left) comes down the pasture, and Thunder and Belle enjoy a drink at the tank.



Everyone is busy (Thunder is busy with his morning nap).



The elk would like some of the corn. "Silly elk, corn is for deer!", says the doe.



"Sigh."



Mov'in on.



MM

Horses understand more words than most people realize. Since mine often are at liberty on rides, they have come to know directions, like 'right' and 'left'. Also, things like 'careful' in case of fence wire on the ground and such; and 'rocky', which slows them down over rough terrain. Recently, Thunder showed me he knows a word which is important to him.

On a quick a trip to the grocery store, the horses came along for a short ride.



Beautiful open country.



Thunder sure loves his Belle.



While they were snuggling, I was talking to them (as I often do) and mentioned that I would pick up some carrots for them at the store. "Huh? Did you say carrots?"



"You did say CARROTS, didn't you?" Yes, we will pick some up on the way home.



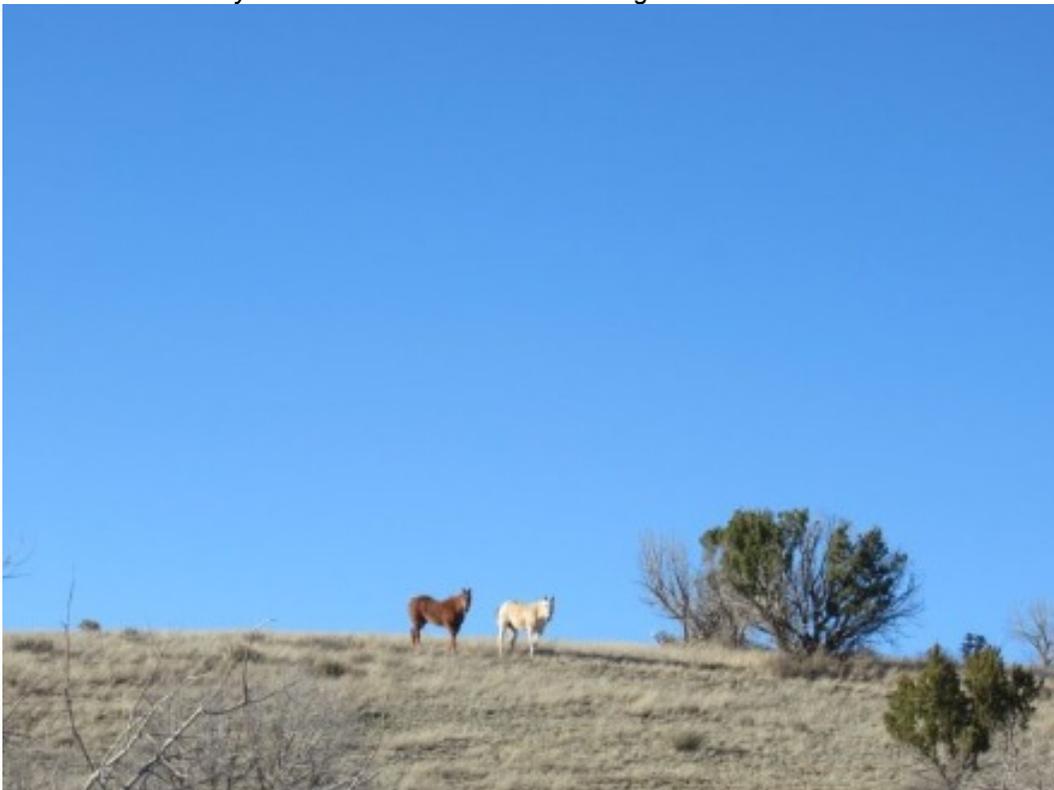
"Well, then, let's get going!"



"Guess what, Spanky" "What?" "He's going to get more carrots for us" "You mean right now?"



"No. At the store on the way home" "Then what are we waiting for?"



"You're right. The sooner we get there, the sooner we get more carrots!"



"Yippee! Carrots!"



They were in a hurry.



"Come on!"



Yup. They know that word (and they got their carrots).
MM

A stack of hay bales . . . and some twine. That's all it takes to make Chile happy!
In his barn playground.



"Okay. Go ahead . . . make a move . . ."



"I'm ready for you."



"Gotcha!"



"Wait. Did it move again?"



"Grrrr."



"Hmmm, is it dead?"



"Better keep an eye on it."



"ATTACK!"



"Wait. What's that over there . . . ?"



Yup. Simple fun.
MM

2020-03-22 - *Trusting Friends*

The horses mentioned that they hadn't seen their friends down near Carrizozo for awhile - so we went to pay a visit.

It was a beautiful day for a short drive down the mountain.



We were in luck. The cows were home. A black heifer was the first to greet us. "Well, lands sake, we haven't seen you in too long. How you'all been?"



Cows don't shake hands, so she kinda sniffed a greeting.



The horses aren't too keen on the sniffing thing but accept it as cow etiquette. "It's kind of embarrassing", said Spanky.



"Alright, that's enough!"



It was a beautiful day, so after everyone got caught up on the gossip (who had just had a calf, and such), we decided to take a ride.



The cows have created some soft, meandering trails . . .



That skirt the badlands . . .



. . . *but the boys like to bushwhack, too.*



This is classic Thunder. He figured we would go up the arroyo straight ahead, but I wanted us to go into a side canyon to the left. When I told him so - immediately to the left he turned.



The snacks are at a convenient height . . .



. . . and the sand comfortably soft.



The scenery is classic Southwest.



Although the boys like to run ahead sometimes, they always turn and wait for Belle to catch up. "She has to lug him around . . ."



Back at the trailer, a new calf was napping in the sun.



His mom shows true trust of Belle around her baby.



"Oh, no. Not again! So much for social distancing!"



MM



FOLLOWED
DREAM
RANCH

By the time I got done with my chores, it was late afternoon - too late for a ride, I thought . . . but Belle had an idea (she frequently does), "Why don't we take a little walk along the water at Bonito? It's close, and there might be some green grass there now. It would be a nice appetizer before our supper". Although green grass didn't sound appetizing to me, we went.

She was right. There was some fresh green grass, and lots of water coming off the mountain.



She went to work right away. "Yum!"



"Appetizers!"



2020-03-24 - Peaceful Visitors

Spanky and Thunder found a nice green patch. "She does have some good ideas!", said Spanky. "Sometimes . . .", said Thunder.



"The grass is great - but how about a treat?"



After his treat, we continued on.



The water coursed by us, singing a gentle song.



2020-03-24 - Peaceful Visitors

There were lots of stops for snacks and drinks. "It's a happy hour!", enthused Belle.



"Isn't this fun, Spanky?" "Everything we do with you is fun." "Aw, thanks!"



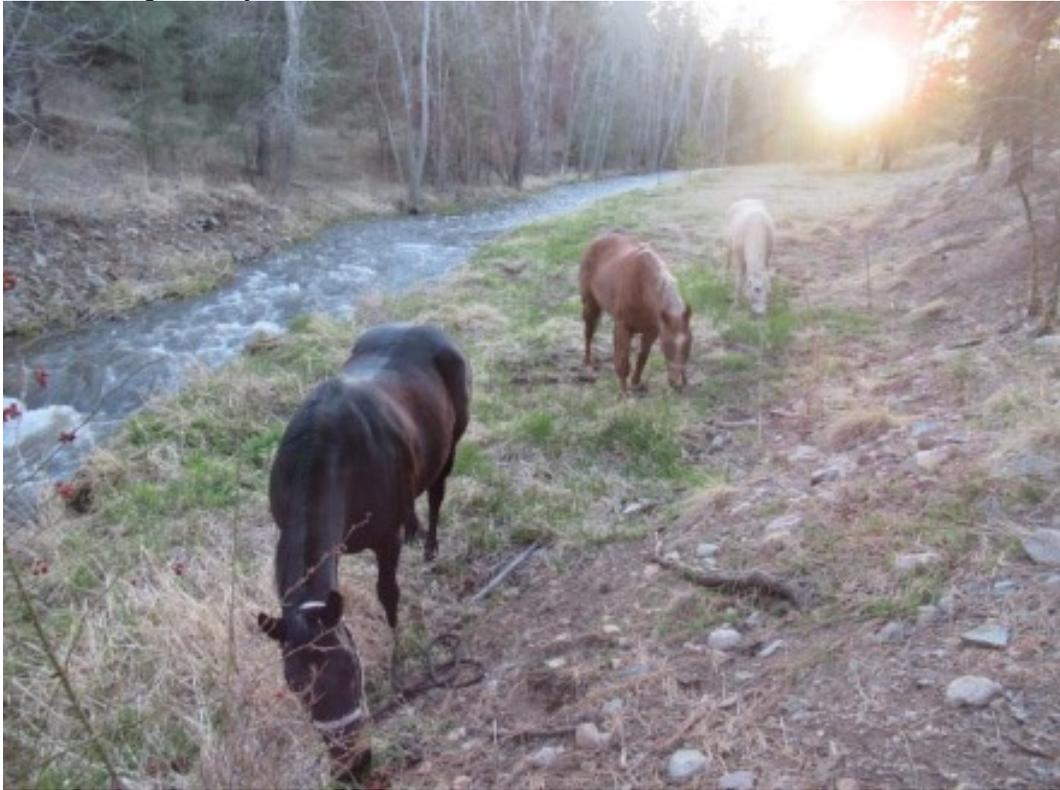
A little inlet creates peaceful waters.



It was getting dark. The forest was silent, as we headed back home.



One more bite along the way . . .





Thanks for joining us on this peaceful walk.

MM

2020-03-26 - North Apache Trail

There are nearly 100 miles of trails around the Fort Stanton Conservation area - which is a popular site for long-distance equestrian endurance competitions. With so many choices, we sometimes forget about a good one like the North Apache Trail.

The trail head features a grand view of (still) snow-covered Sierra Blanca - "White Mountain".



The trail is long, and much of it steep and rocky, but the horses don't complain. Spanky leads us along a pleasant section . . .



... and through a soft, sandy stretch in a dry creek bed.



"Soft sand? Right on!"



2020-03-26 - North Apache Trail

Belle was interested in an ancient, dead tree. "I think it's beautiful. Just imagine all the history it has seen. Billy the Kid might have rested against it while cleaning his guns before another killing." Belle is romantic that way.



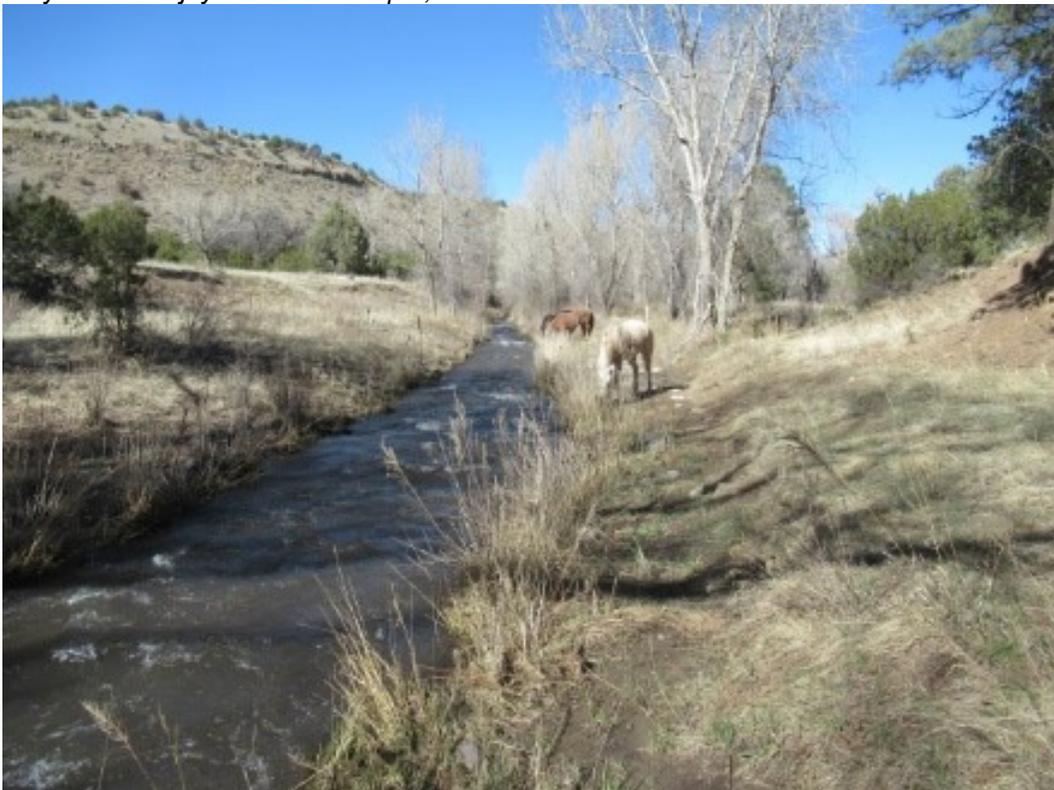
Ahhh . . . After a long, dry ride, we reach a wonderful prize - cool, fresh water. "This is great!" . . .



... and green grass, too!



Trustworthy horses enjoy the beautiful spot, while I hike on ahead.



They work their way along.



Stopping occasionally for another snack. Not all horses would be so cooperative.



2020-03-26 - North Apache Trail

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When she has had enough, Belle comes my way, "Okay, let's move on. Jump aboard! . . . and, oh, a treat would be nice . . ."



We climb the trail back up. I get off during the steepest places, to give Belle a break. Thunder and Spanky linger, then race to join us.



2020-03-26 - North Apache Trail

There is a water tank at the trail head. They each took a drink . . .



. . . and then Spanky had another roll . . . while Belle came over to beg a belly rub (she got it).



Back at home, the deer were ready for their happy hour . . .



. . . and lots of gossip.



Glad we remembered that trail. Thanks for coming along!
MM

2020-03-27 - Close to Home - and Something from Peggy Lee

Page 1 of 8

Most of the day was rainy/windy, and then just windy . . . but near sunset, everything settled down. We took a nice, easy ride behind the house.



Belle is really good about getting us close enough to the forest gate for me to open the chain latch from her back.



2020-03-27 - Close to Home - and Something from Peggy Lee

Page 2 of 8

We created this loop trail (from an old elk path) many years ago. They know every foot of it, but we never tire of riding here. As always, it's the company . . .



Our trail passes the old U.S. Forest Service barn.



2020-03-27 - Close to Home - and Something from Peggy Lee

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The barn has been unused for many years. There was a ranger's house here, too. It's long gone, but some of the ranger's wife's fruit trees manage to survive. I think these are pear blossoms. Spring!



Thunder catches up (again).



**2020-03-27 - Close to Home -
and Something from Peggy Lee**

Nice views. Things are just beginning to green up.



The boys always love to run up this hill. Belle and I take our time.



**2020-03-27 - Close to Home -
and Something from Peggy Lee**

Green grass under the trees.



Now they take their time (center of photo) . . .



**2020-03-27 - Close to Home -
and Something from Peggy Lee**

. . . but here they come.



**2020-03-27 - Close to Home -
and Something from Peggy Lee**

Racing home before sunset.



**2020-03-27 - Close to Home -
and Something from Peggy Lee**

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From Peggy Lee's song, "There'll Be Another Spring":

*Don't cry, there'll be another spring
I know our hearts will dance again
And sing again, so wait for me till then*

*Be glad the bird is on the wing
Another time to love
And laugh with me, just wait and see*

*For the sky is bluer overhead
If you will just believe in me
There'll be another spring*

Performed with George Shearing HERE: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h1utcGFixu8>

MM

Although we had been riding at a favorite spot near Carrizozo not too long ago, Belle pointed out that familiar places are very nice to visit anytime. "Besides, it's chilly here today, and it will be nice and warm down there". Belle can be practical - and she was right.

Along the way, we spotted these very curious pronghorns. They are often mis-named because of their resemblance to true antelopes (their closest relative is the giraffe) . . . and of course, that classic song line . . . "where the deer and the antelope play". Somehow, "Where the pronghorns play" just doesn't have the right ring.



2020-03-29 - Wailing Maiden

They are the fastest land mammal in the Western Hemisphere (cheetahs can have quicker short bursts of speed). They stopped to have a look. In unusual behavior, they actually moved towards us. "Go on!" "No, you first". "No, you . . ."



We explained that we were going riding and had to move on. "What do you suppose he meant by going riding?" "I have no idea."



Belle was right - it was a nice, warm day here.



This is a land of confusing badlands, and an almost impenetrable web of arroyos. Do you remember the story of the wailing maiden? It seems the beautiful daughter of an Apache chief fell in love with a handsome warrior. The chief disapproved and banished her lover. Distraught, the young woman followed and was lost in these arroyos - never to be seen again. It is said that she still cries out on windy nights . . .



"Wow! That's sad . . . and kinda spooky. Glad it's daylight and there's no wind!"



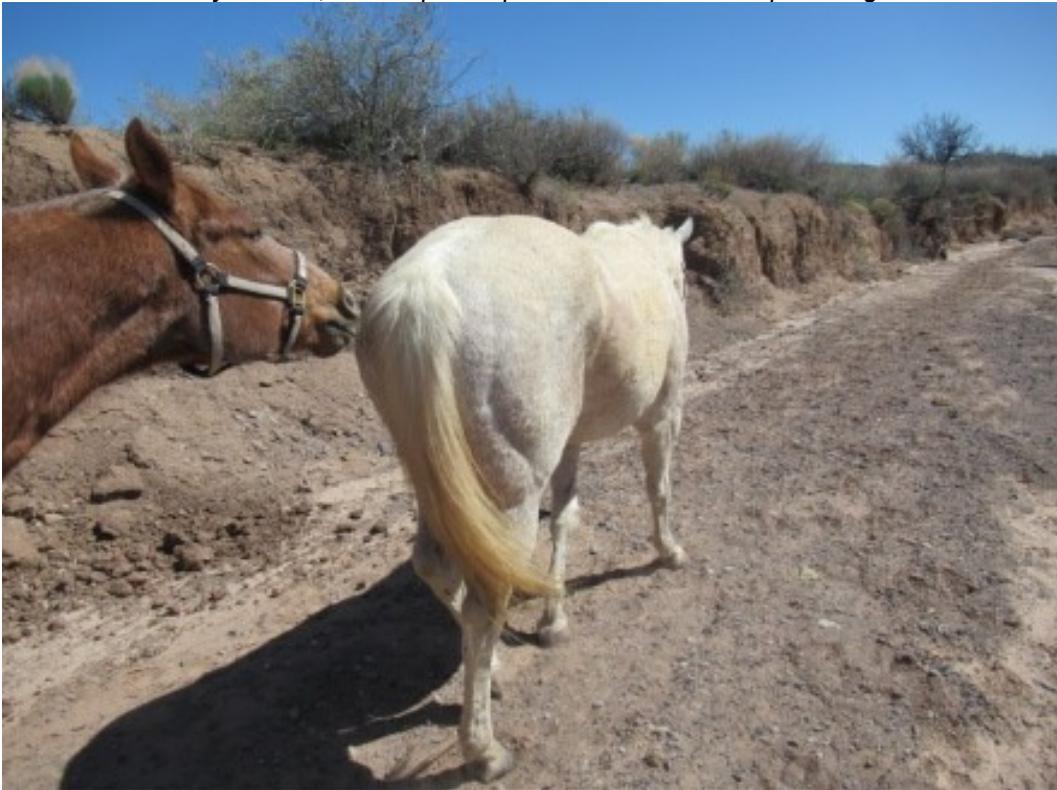
We've only found two ways of accessing the Arroyo of the Wailing Maiden. The horses enjoy the dramatic cliffs . . .



... and soft sand. "Hope I don't hear no wailing noth'in!"



Spanky seemed in a hurry. "Ahem, either speed up or move over. That spook might be around here . . ."



We explored a side canyon . . . but it soon became choked with salt cedar trees (tamarisk).



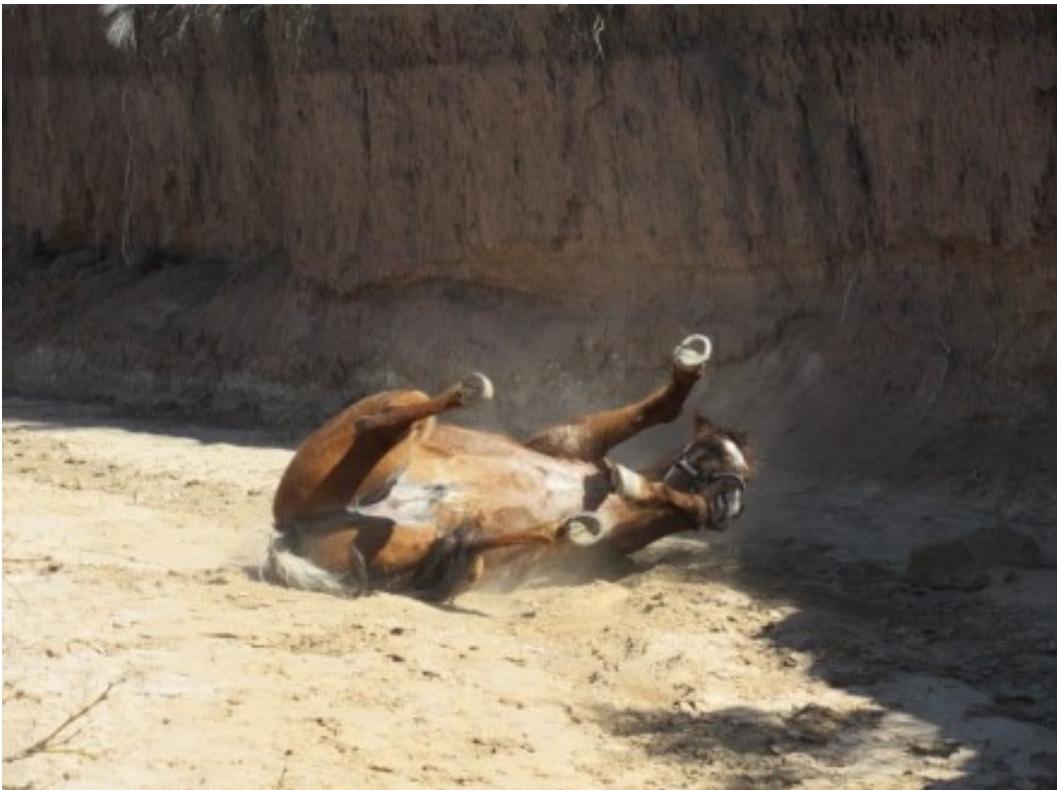
Until finally they seemed to be reaching out with their grasping branches. We beat a quick retreat.



That's okay - there's plenty of open riding . . .



. . . and . . .



Thunder climbed up for a look (and a typical Thunder pose).



Out of the arroyos, they grazed contentedly as we leisurely headed toward the trailer.



We encountered some friends along the way. An excited calf announced our coming. "Mom! Mom! Look who's here!"



This baby didn't get too excited about us. "Oh. Hi. Time for lunch?"



"I remember doing that with my mom!", recalled Thunder.



Ahhh. A refreshing drink before heading home.



2020-03-29 - Wailing Maiden

A young cow bid us a friendly good-bye. "Hope to see you again soon!" (It's always tempting to bring one home . . .)



Beautiful day. Glad we could share it with you!



MM

2020-03-30 - Elk Visits

The elk have been all over the place lately. They're so accustomed to us, they ignore our comings and goings (and the horses are used to them, too).





They're still losing their heavy winter coats - makes them look sort of moth-eaten.



The deer don't mind their visits.



"We're cousins, after all! (But don't you think we're better looking?)"



The water tank is a favorite gathering spot, both morning and evening.





They're good about sharing.





MM

When a railroad finally came to our area - linking El Paso, Texas, with Alamogordo (New Mexico Territory) in 1897, it promised to transform the region.

But an insurmountable challenge soon emerged. The water beneath its route through the Tularosa Basin was heavily laden with minerals leached from the mountains above. The steam boilers which drove the trains were rendered useless by its corrosive effect (in the mid-50's, diesel engines finally made steam obsolete). Pure mountain water - gained directly from its alpine source - was the answer . . . and thus was born one of the engineering marvels of the time - the Bonito Pipeline. The pristine waters at Bonito were harnessed and transported by pipeline to the valley floor below, eventually covering a distance of 140 miles over remote terrain. It was a remarkable achievement in an era of horse-drawn wagons and hand-dug trenches. At one time, there were 110 wagons hauling pipe - the drivers housed and fed in Nogal boarding houses.

The first pipeline was made of wood. With a 16-inch diameter, it resembled an astonishing long, continuous barrel. The tongue-and-groove stays were held together with wire or metal bands. When it was finally replaced, in 1938, by a pipe made of something called 'transite' (a combination of asbestos and cement), many landowners dug up and recycled wood from the old pipe. The portion which ran through our land was re-purposed into the barns and outbuildings we still use today.

Before coursing through the pipe, down to the railroad 1700 ft. below, the water was held in Nogal Lake - a man-made reservoir only a few miles from the ranch. Today the area is known as Ranchman's Camp - one of our favorite riding areas. We began our riding exploration of the historic pipeline there.

The reservoir was a natural, shallow bowl - only 36 ft. at its deepest, with a 412-million-gallon capacity. It was far from ideal. Seepage was always a problem - it lost about an inch of water each day. Local ranchers were paid twenty-five cents a head per-day, to drive their cattle around the lake in an effort to compact the soil. It didn't help much. Long abandoned, the old reservoir today is a beautiful green meadow in summer. Some of the historic waterworks remains.



A view of the valley below - the precious water's destination.



Our late friend LaMoyne Peters grew up here. His father was caretaker of the lake. Once the reservoir was abandoned, the Peters house was moved elsewhere. Belle has a look at all that remains - the exposed rock root cellar. "I wouldn't want to stumble into that in the dark", she thinks.



2020-03-31 - Explorers

We heard that a large water treatment plant had been located nearby, to purify the water before it entered the main line. So off we went. The horses love to explore. "I don't know what we are looking for - but this is fun!", said Thunder as we bushwhacked through the dense forest.



Belle was the first to find a clue - a cast cement support for a large pipe.



Then we hit the jackpot. She spotted a large concrete silting pond below. "Eureka!"



Thunder was prudently wary of its steep walls. "I ain't going near that!" Spanky was more nonchalant.



The work it must have taken . . . to mix and pour all that concrete in such a remote location . . .



Belle really took the lead on this adventure. Through overgrown trees, she spied a tangle of old pipes.



Amazing that these have survived, untouched all these years. Under the more recent metal pipe can be seen remains the original 1907 wood pipe, with its metal wire wrapping. It could carry seven cubic feet per second - about a million gallons a day!



Here is a closer look. The replacement transite pipe (above) and older wooden pipe (wrapped with flat metal bands) - the material of our barns. The oak stays were removed and used as siding, floors and interior walls.



There's something else in that arroyo. A late 30's automobile found its final resting place here.



By now the horses had caught on. "Oh, we're following that funny round thing along the ground!"



Soon, they were leading me along . . .



. . . and enjoying a tasty grass snack, while I did some exploring on my own (that's Belle in the distant center of the photo). They helpfully stayed put and waited.



An historic find!



Heading back. "That was COOL!"



LaMoyné Peters liked to reminisce about old times. Once he remembered, "When they put the new line in [1938], the old wood pipe was still good. Daddy told Henry Peebles [who then owned our ranch] to make the railroad give him the old pipe in exchange for the right-of-way. They did, and we would use mules to jack the wood pipe onto a wagon, and that is what we used to build the barns and garage. There was a pipe section coming out of Cherry Creek canyon that was exposed, and it was really easy to pull that. Henry stood on the pipe joint, and after three licks, the pipe broke, . . . but the pipe was full of water, and it blew him off the pipe and into the canyon!"

The good old days.

MM

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