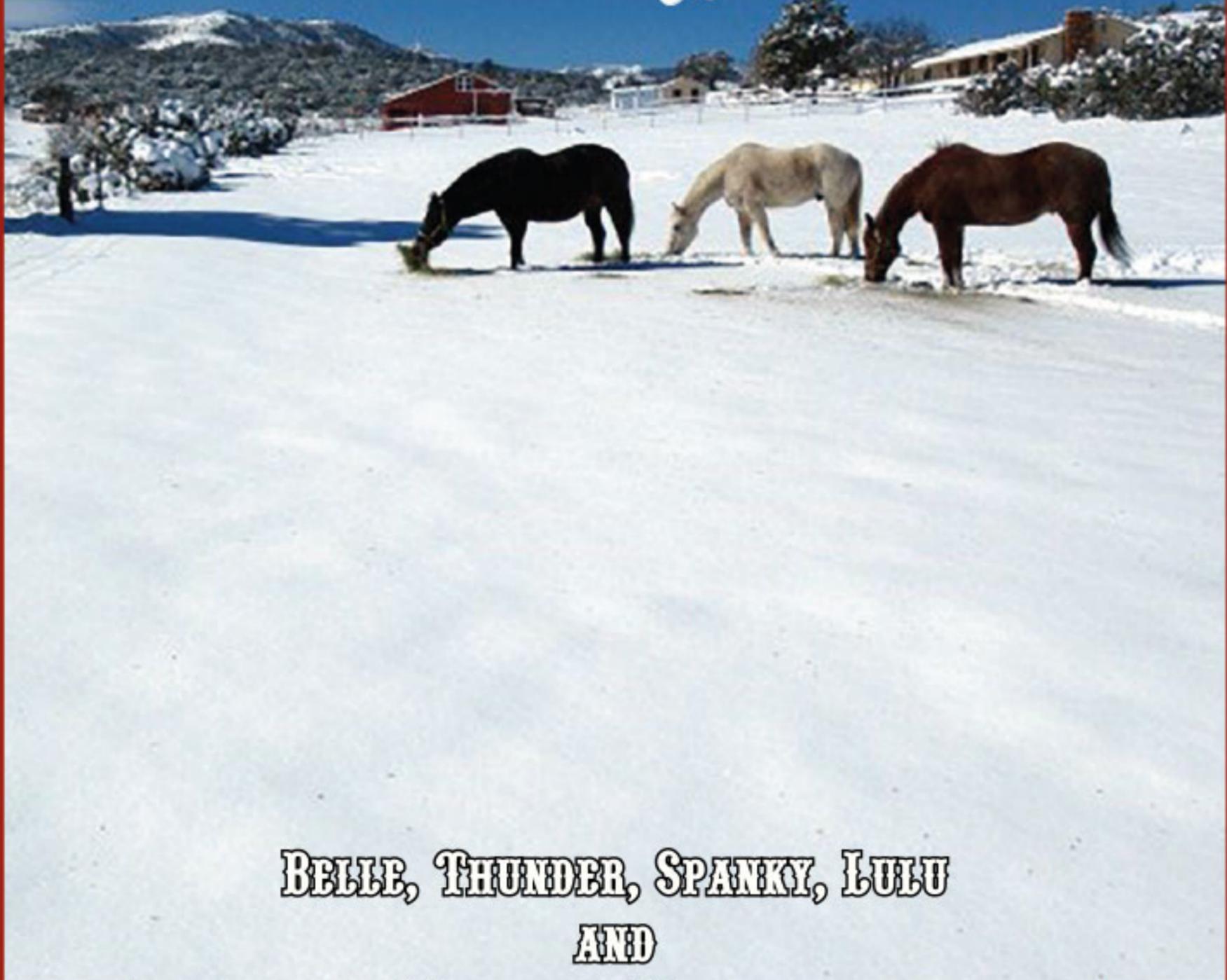


# THE NOGAI JOURNALS

*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.

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## 2020-04-04 - Open Spaces

Sometimes I can sense that the horses are hankering for some wide-open spaces. Me, too.

*The Salado zone of the Fort Stanton/Snowy River Cave National Conservation Area (whew!) is former ranch land now under BLM management.*



*Lots of open space here.*



*We begin following an old cattle trail.*



*Right now, there's lots and lots of these tiny yellow flowers . . .*



... and ONE pink one.



*Wish the camera did them justice - in places it was like a bright Oriental carpet.*



*I felt we were being watched. Sure enough - curious pronghorns!*



*Moseying on.*



*Then a stop by an old ranch water tank. Wonder what they are saying . . .*



*"Hey . . . I'd sure like to do some running . . . how about you guys?" "Sounds good to us!"*



*"Here's a good place!"*



*Off we go!*

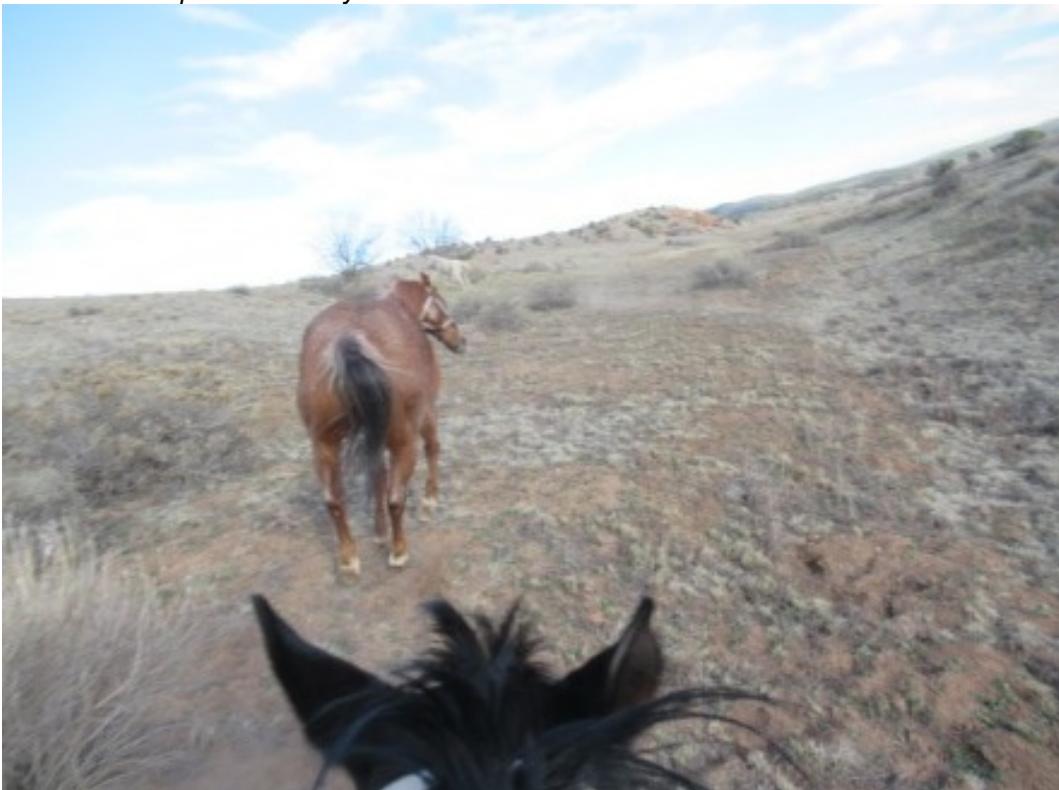


## 2020-04-04 - Open Spaces

*Belle tries to pass Spanky. I'm hanging on for dear life (remember . . . no saddle!) . . .*



*. . . but we have to drop back. "See 'ya!"*



*Then, the boys really take off. They are having a ball (they know the route back).*



*Zoom! Zoom! . . .*



*. . . but of course, they stop and wait for us (center of photo). Belle pauses for a little grazing. "Let 'em wait. Showoffs . . ."*



*Special horses.*



*We have a beautiful run together. Lucky . . .*



*. . . and grateful.*



*Very grateful.*



MM



FOLLOWED  
DREAM  
RANCH

## 2020-04-05 - Ranch Ride

We were invited to ride on a big ranch in the Tularosa Basin, north of Carrizozo. How big? Well, asking a rancher how many acres he has, is like asking a city-dweller how much money he has in the bank. But I can tell you this, from the highest point, you can't see where their land ends. The ranch has been in the family for generations.

*The long abandoned, original homestead on the ranch - complete with 'kitchen faucet' (the hand pump outside the house).*



*This is classic cattle country - as far as the eye can see.*



## 2020-04-05 - Ranch Ride

*The soil here is ideal for riding - soft and dry. It's good for making sand angels, too!*



*A cool drink before taking off.*



*With so much space, the horses thought a high, rocky mesa looked most interesting. From a distance (behind Spanky), it resembles an impregnable stone fortress . . . but the horses knew better.*



*We found sort of 'ramps' between the various levels of stone.*



*We took our time over the rough spots.*



*The horses are always game for a new adventure. "Next time, let's choose someplace flat!" "Yeah. And NO ROCKS!"*



*As we continued to climb up, the views became impressive.*



*At each level of the mesa, we discovered hidden tablelands, perched high in the sky, where the horses could graze (or in this case, pose for a photo).*



*While they enjoyed the grass, I did some exploring of my own - climbing up the rocky escarpments to discover things like this natural arch . . .*



*. . . and some magnificent views of the vast Tularosa Basin.*



*Far below, the horses kept their eyes on me - and stayed put. Remarkable cooperation.*



*Time and again, I wandered off to look at this or that . . . while they patiently waited. That's them . . . those tiny dots in the center of this photo. "Is that him, way up there?" "Yeah. He's nuts. Have you tried the little yellow flowers?"*



## 2020-04-05 - Ranch Ride

*I'd take my photo, then climb back down to join them, and we moseyed on. "Hey, glad you made it safe. Just a couple more bites . . ."*



*It was a long, wonderful ride. Spanky rested his head on Belle, for a minute. "Got treats?"*



## 2020-04-05 - Ranch Ride

*Thunder and Belle have a chat. "This place is cool!" "Yeah . . . and it's nice that he climbs those rocks so that I have time to enjoy grazing, too!"*



*Nature's art - this bright lichen has an Asian feel to it.*



*It was time to go back down.*



*Thunder leads us in a run, as we head to the trailer.*



Thanks for joining us on a very special ride, in the heart of New Mexico.  
MM

Chile and I were in the barn, playing . . . "It moved!"



## 2020-04-06 - Moonlighting Cat and Those Deer

*When it dawned on me . . .*



*I had seen his face (well, sort of) on the bag of IAMS cat food. Of course, the professional lighting is better . . .*



*I think he may be moonlighting as a feline model.*



*Outside the barn, a group of deer had gathered. Living so closely with them, we have come to appreciate their individuality, and sense of community. This couple seem to be having a "some enchanted evening" moment.*



## 2020-04-06 - Moonlighting Cat and Those Deer

Page 4 of 6

*"Oops . . ."Yeah, I saw you eyeing that other doe . . . You better not be meeting THAT stranger, buddy!"*



*They are generally polite in social settings. "Oh, hi! Would you mind if I tried this apple over here . . . ?"*



## 2020-04-06 - Moonlighting Cat and Those Deer

Page 5 of 6

*. . . and they have real family values. This is a mom, dad, and their little boy - we have watched them interact as a family many times. The young buck (left) is just now developing his first pre-antler bumps on his head.*



*They know how to relax . . .*



*... and they sure are sweet.*



MM

The Blue Pond, in Bonito Canyon, is a remarkable place. Situated in a remote forest glade and seldom visited, the pond is crystal clear - maintaining it's distinct jade-blue color year-round.

*The horses are happy to be back in the forest. Winter snows (and subsequent muddy conditions) had kept us away . . .*



... and of course they are *VERY* happy to see lots of spring grass.



"Yum!", they all agree.



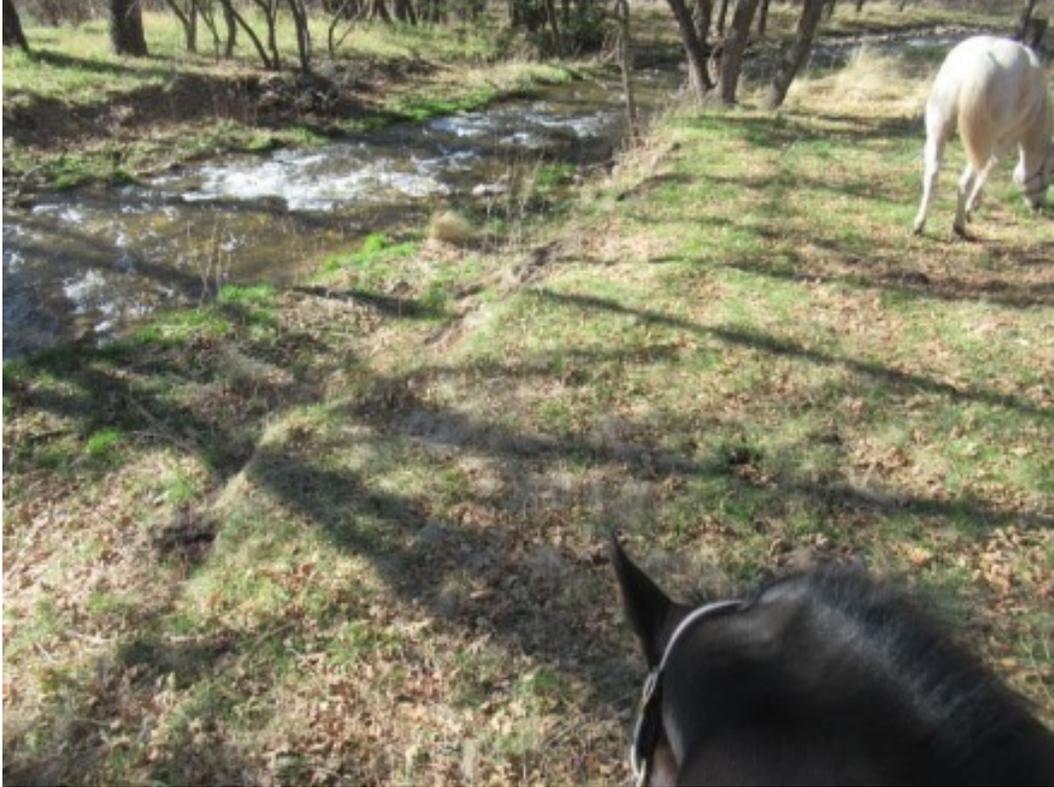
*Warmer weather has prompted a healthy snow melt (there is still lots of snow at the higher elevations). The most water we have seen here. We wonder how this will affect the pond . . .*



*Farther upstream, the flow cascades over what may be a beaver dam.*



*Our route to the pond takes us along a more placid stretch. Always special to ride next to flowing water.*



*"I hope the pond is okay", fretted Belle.*



*We were relieved to find the Blue Pond just fine! Bright sunlight brought out more green hues than normal, but it was still calm and clear.*



*"Whew! I'm glad it's okay!" . . . "Me, too. makes me feel kinda romantic." . . . "Awww . . ."*



*We continued on to the old apple orchard. Begun by the first settlers here in the 1860's, some of the antique varieties are virtually unknown today (apples now are developed for commercial durability).*



*Although it doesn't show in the photo above, all the trees are just now leafing out with new spring growth.*



*It's peaceful here.*



*Although Spanky has a frisky moment.*



*Even the meadows are beginning to green up.*



*The soft grass makes for good rolling . . .*



*Thunder thought so, too.*



*A quiet stream in the late afternoon sun . . .*



*Always nice to share with you!*



MM

Last night's "Pink Moon" was spectacular, as it rose over our hill.



*The term "pink moon" is given to the full moon in April, because of the pink phlox flowers which traditionally are in bloom at this time. As it rose, we could make out its entire silhouette, behind the faint clouds.*



## 2020-04-08 - *Pink Moon*

*The tiny camera did a surprisingly fine job of capturing it, later in the clear night sky.*



MM

Now that winter has retreated, the area around Nogal Peak is one of our favorite places to be. Endless views and solitude. A timeless connection with nature.

*Creeks and brooks cross the road on the way to the trail head.*



*We found plenty of water all along the trail, as well.*

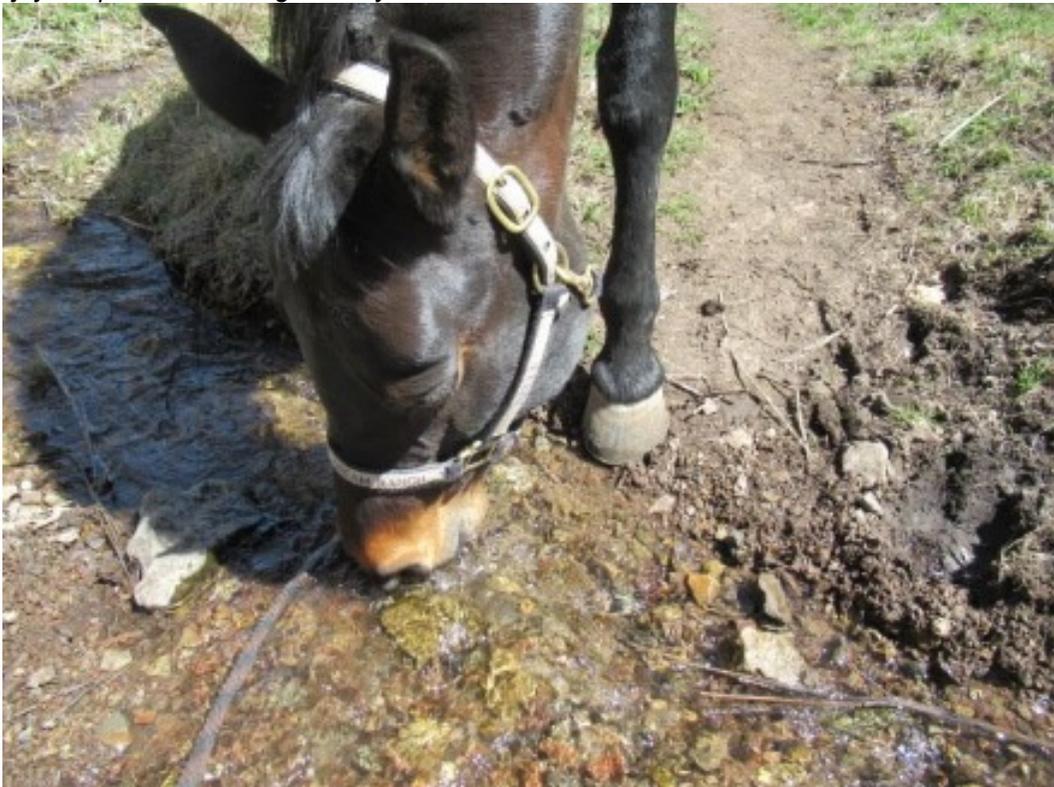


## 2020-04-09 - High Country Friends

*In places, brooks have overflowed and cascade down the trail itself . . . but Thunder keeps to his usual course. "I don't remember all this water before . . . but the grass sure is nice!"*



*Belle enjoys a quick drink along the way.*



*Spring hasn't quite 'sprung' in the high country yet. The oaks sport only tiny clusters of tightly furled leaves, and the ferns have teensy green sprigs, close to the ground. Only the Mountain Hawthorn bushes have donned their fresh spring foliage.*



*Did I say we find 'seclusion' here? Well . . . sort of. A small herd of new mothers with their little calves greeted us.*



*They know we mean no harm, so allowed us to join them. There were lots of 'awww' moments. Like this baby with an itch.*



*Everything is new to the calves. Though still nursing, they begin to graze a little, too.*



*Thunder was especially paternal with this newborn (who wasn't at all worried about that big white thing sniffing him).*



*A peaceful place.*



*For the babies, it's always mealtime.*

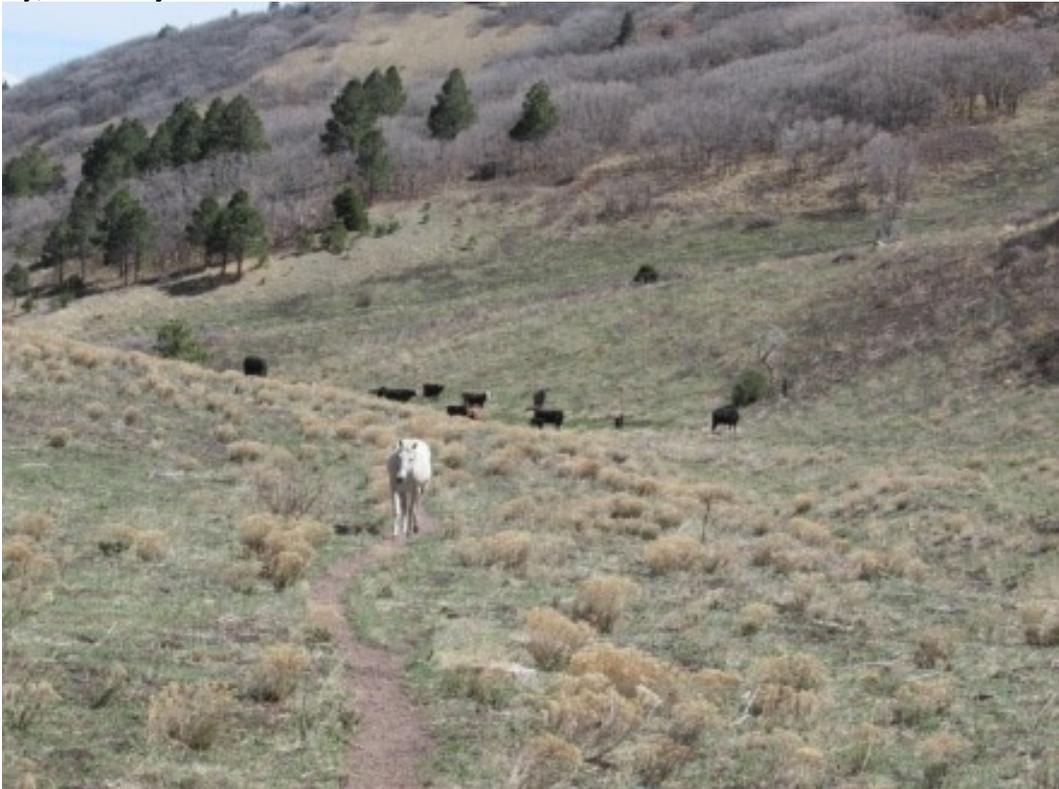


*Yup. Lots of 'awwws'.*



## 2020-04-09 - High Country Friends

*We were eager to get up to the top, but the boys had trouble leaving their new friends. Somewhat reluctantly, Thunder joined Belle and me.*



*Spanky's good-byes took longer, and he ran to catch up. "Wait for me!"*



*Then he and Thunder blast by us.*



*We all were joyful - to be back in our beloved high country.*



*No matter how often we come up here, it always provides comfort - like visiting a friendly home.*



*This day, the valley below was covered in yellow and purple wildflowers - a magic carpet flying below us.*



*Thunder taunted us - "Come on! Let's go higher!" So we did.*



*We climbed up and up, along the shoulder of majestic Nogal Peak.*



*Until from our lofty perch, we could see the still-snowy runs at Ski Apache . . .*



*. . . and the colorful spring mosaic of the Tularosa Basin, far below.*



*Yes, someplace very, very special.*



Thanks for letting us share it with you.

MM

## 2020-04-13 - *Easter Ride*

Easter is a special day for us. It is a time of reflection and renewal - and remembrance, too, as our beloved Maverick passed away on Easter Sunday, 2011. Gone, but certainly not forgotten.

*A beautiful Easter Day. Perfect for a family ride at nearby Ranchman's camp.*



## 2020-04-13 - *Easter Ride*

*The horses set the pace on this one. There was an abundance of tiny, bright-green grass shoots coming up in the meadows. They were so small I couldn't even photograph them . . . but the horses knew they were there and managed to graze some of the (apparently) delicious blades.*



*It wasn't all slow and easy . . .*



## 2020-04-13 - *Easter Ride*

*... and then ... a very interesting thing. A small herd of elk came busting out of the forest to the east and ran directly toward us. Why? Were they curious? Did they think we were some kind of 'super-elk'?*



*I don't know, but they suddenly stopped and stared. Like the "Magnificent Seven" (there were about a dozen of them), ready for a shoot-out.*



## 2020-04-13 - *Easter Ride*

*After a few minutes of mutual attention (the horses were curious, too), they took off past us for whatever mission they were on.*



*It was odd. We continued on our ride . . .*



*. . . but we kept encountering elk 'scouts' in the trees.*



*Quick stop at an old natural spring cattle 'tank', where Thunder found some more of that tiny new grass.*



*The rest of the way they enjoyed the usual early-spring grazing.*



*I dismounted so that Belle could munch at her leisure, with the others.*



*We traversed verdant stretches of green.*



*Thunder remembers this long route, and scouts ahead for us.*



*Then he and Spanky have a chat, as we view Nogal Peak in the distance . . .*



*. . . and (yet another) snack . . . beneath snow-covered mountains.*



*A last nibble, before jumping into the trailer and heading home.*



MM

## 2020-04-14 - Road Construction

Many of the areas we ride have remained unchanged for generations. Some - like the high-country peaks - for centuries. But change does happen around here. The U.S. Forest Service is improving road access to the Argentina trail head and horse camp. Thunder is the practical one and wanted to check out the construction progress.

*"Come on, let's go have a look at that new road!" "Okay, but why do we have to hurry?"*



## 2020-04-14 - Road Construction

*"Because we're horses, and it's fun to run!"*

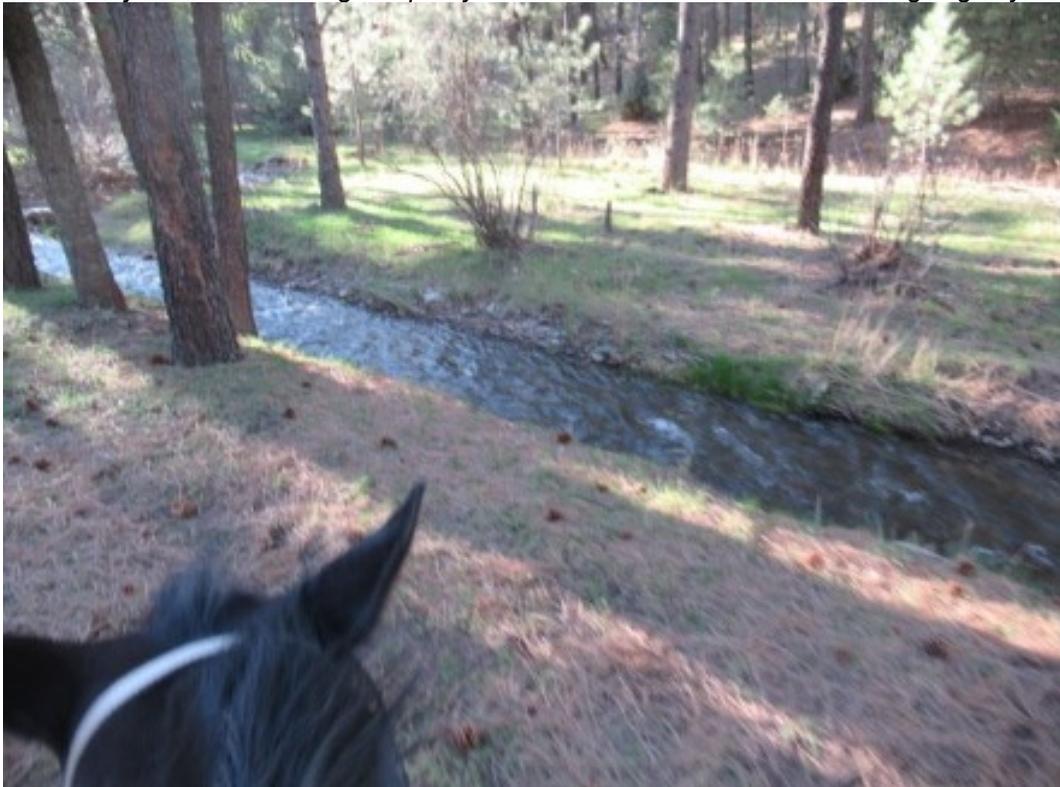


*So, we ran.*





*"Whew! Can't we just meander along this pretty little stream? That construction isn't going anywhere!"*



*"Alright. We might as well have a snack . . ."*



*"Okay, let's go!"*



## 2020-04-14 - Road Construction

"Oh, I see. That's the new bridge for the road?" "Yeah. They're building three of them. It's turned out to be a big job. It's still not finished."



"Wow. That's impressive."



*"Wait! There's more!"*



*"See? They have to allow for drainage of that little brook under the road." "Gee, Thunder, you would be a good road engineer!"*



*"Another bridge."*



*"I don't know, Thunder, I kinda miss our bumpy old two track road through here."*



## 2020-04-14 - Road Construction

*"Think of how much smoother it will be riding in the trailer now . . . and remember the mud?" "Oh, yeah."*



*Spanky asked if the new portion of the road would be paved. "Naw, but good gravel."*



*"That'll be nice . . ."*



MM



FOLLOWED  
DREAM  
RANCH

With chores (mostly) done, it looked like an ideal day to visit our cow friends down near Carrizozo.

*As we were leaving, the deer came by. "Hey! Could we have our happy hour a little early today?" No problem.*



*The desert around Carrizozo is still abloom with wildflowers.*



## 2020-04-16 - Ghost Tracks

*When we arrived at our usual spot, there were no cows. The horses were perplexed. "Where are our friends?"*



*There were none in sight.*



*I tried to explain that cows graze all over this range and must be in another area today . . . but the horses were disappointed. "We thought they would be here to say hello!" They kept looking.*



*Finally, in the distance, one lone cow showed up.*



She explained to Belle that the others had found some good grazing to the east. "Oh, I understand. You have to go for the best menu!", Belle responded.



"Well, then, let's hit the trail! Bye, cow!" "Bye!" . . .



*... and we were off!*



*Parts of the desert have really greened up.*



*We decided to head west, to an area we hadn't explored before.*



*Eventually, we were blocked by a huge arroyo. "Yikes!", exclaimed Belle.*



*"That's deep!"*



*While they grazed, I looked for a way into the arroyo. Unsuccessful, I promised them that we would come back sometime and look for one again. They were cool with that.*



*As we wandered around, we discovered an abandoned bridge . . .*



*. . . and what appeared to be a raised railroad track bed. But why out here . . . and what happened to the tracks?*



*We found clues that seemed to tell the story. Lots of black coal scraps along the route . . . and these small-scale spikes. There is lots of coal underground all over this area. We figured at some point (1906) there must have been a mine in the vicinity, served by a narrow-gauge railroad, which was removed when the mine petered out.*



## 2020-04-16 - Ghost Tracks

*We found something else - much older . . . about 280 million years ago, this part of the Southwest was covered by shallow water - the Permian Sea. About 30 million years ago, as the continent developed and the surrounding mountain ranges rose, the Tularosa Basin was formed, dominated by 1,600 sq. mile Otero Lake. When the last Ice Age dissipated (about 12,000 years ago), the lake gradually dried, creating the famous White Sands - and the desert we were standing on. This oyster shell, preserved in the dry climate, dates back to that ancient lake.*



*"Wow! That stuff is really old!", marveled Spanky. "Yeah . . . let's get going or we'll be late for supper!"*



## 2020-04-19 - Elk Meadow Trail

The Elk Meadow Trail at Fort Stanton is one of the 25,000-acre Conservation Area's longest - and most remote. We haven't been on it in several years. Seemed like a good time for another visit.

*Getting to the isolated trail head takes some effort. The horses enjoyed views from a high ridge along the way.*



## 2020-04-19 - Elk Meadow Trail

*As soon as he left the trailer, Thunder was delighted to find a soft spot to roll in. "Ahhhh!"*



*The trail traverses several long valleys (and Elk Meadow) as it descends from the high hills, down to the Bonito River.*





*We follow an unusual path of yellow flowers . . .*



... and do some running.



There are some great views along the way.



*Several miles later, we reach the cool waters of the Bonito.*



*"Hey, Snookems, isn't this a pretty spot?"*



*It was a beautiful afternoon for a stroll along the flowing water . . .*



*To a cascading waterfall.*



## 2020-04-19 - Elk Meadow Trail

*In all honesty, we are all happiest at a moment like this.*



*Sure can't take it for granted.*



*Spanky seems deep in thought.*



*"Yeah. I'm a lucky horse!"*



*Thunder strikes a noble pose.*



*"Yup. You're right, Spanky!", agrees Belle.*



*At home, Mommie Cat cuddles with her family. "Did'ya have a nice time? (Yawn)".*



We did, indeed. Hope you did too!  
MM

It was late in the afternoon, and after our long drive to the Elk Meadow Trail, the truck really needed washing, but Belle had other ideas. "Hey, we haven't been to Mills Canyon for a while. I bet there is new grass along the water!" The boys agreed. So . . . the truck could wait.

*She was right again. The grass is suddenly lush. Spring is definitely 'springing' here.*



*Even if the cottonwoods are just now beginning to leave out.*



*The horses certainly didn't seem to mind.*



*To them it is a big salad bar.*



*Then Belle spotted something tasty on a little island . . .*



*"No you don't! Remember what they say about the grass always seeming greener . . . " "Oh, okay. Spanky would probably jump in and splash us all anyway (but it does look delicious)."*



*I distracted her with some interesting foliage. "Yeah, it's pretty . . . but I can tell from here it's not good eating."*



*We continued on the trail in search of . . . greener grass.*



*It's remarkable that they are willing to pass this up . . .*



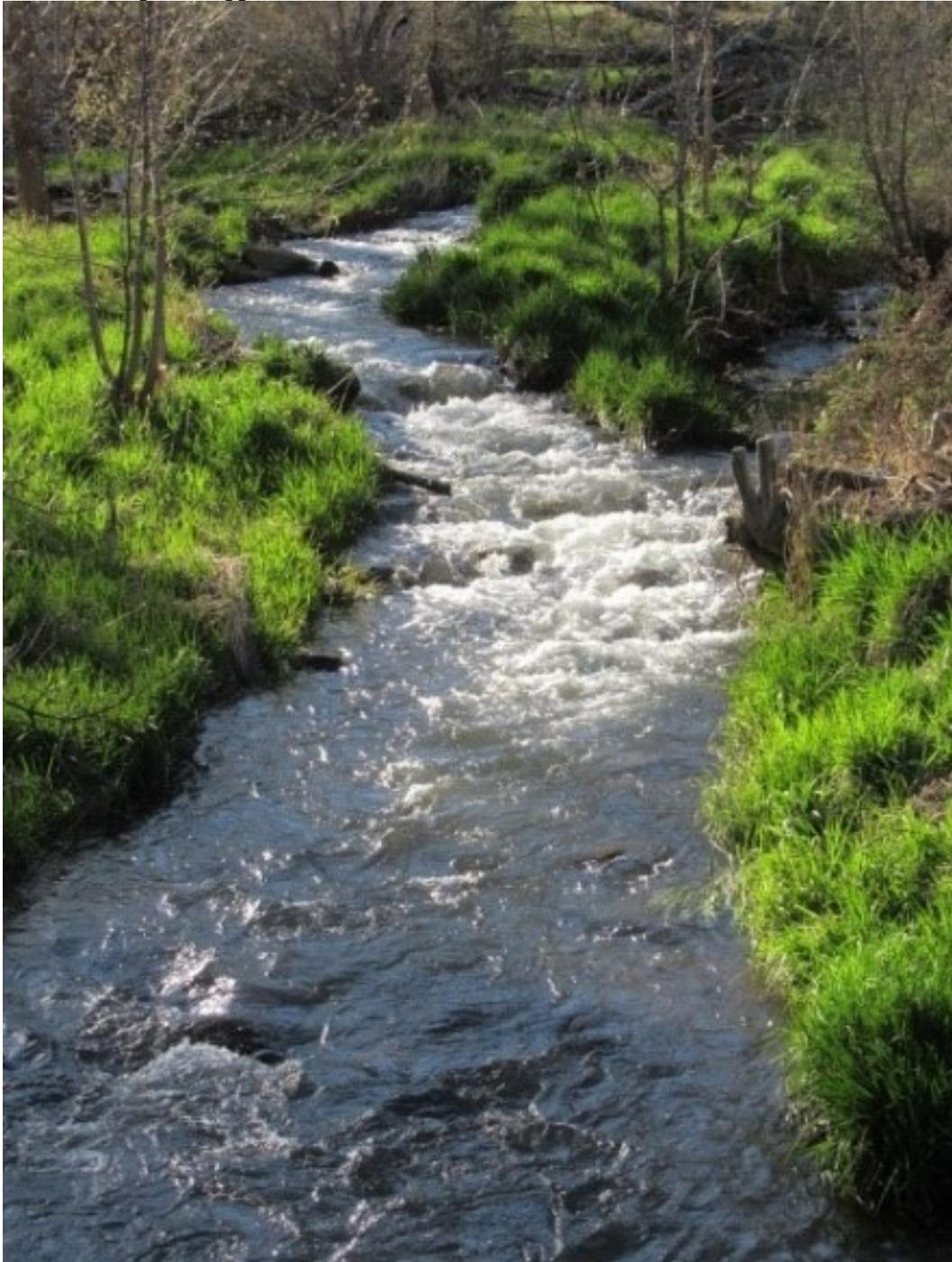
... and we found it.



The stream provided some soothing background music.



*Thanks, Belle, for a good suggestion.*



# 2020-04-20 - Spring is Springing

*At home, the horses joined the elk for a little happy hour before supper.*



MM

We hadn't been to the picturesque little waterfall below Alto Lake for a while. When Belle saw the photos (she tries to edit out unflattering ones of herself - "That's NOT my best angle . . ."), she suggested that they didn't need much narration. "Just let'em enjoy the pretty pictures", she advised.

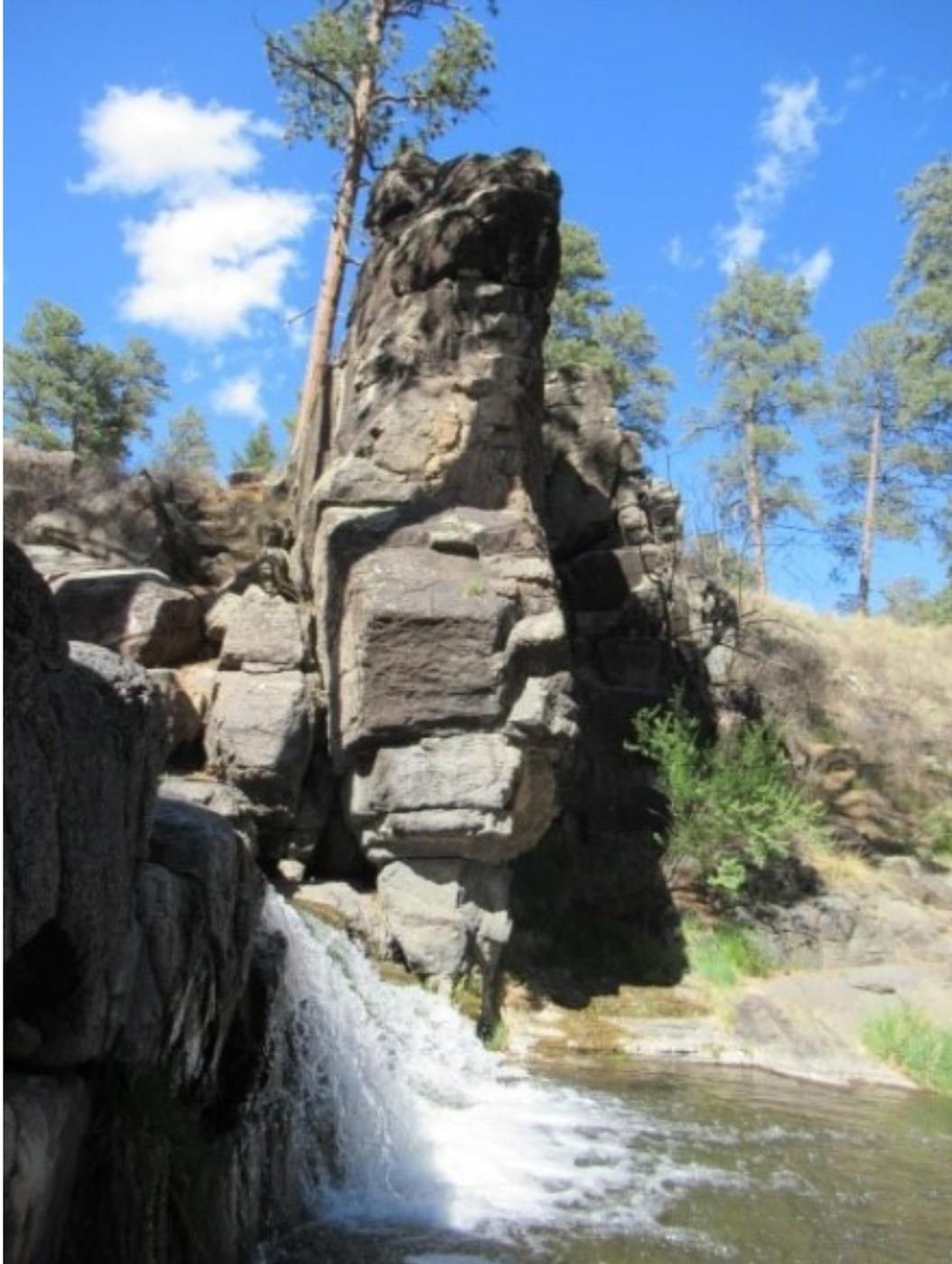
*Before we left home . . . the apple blossoms.*



*On the way to the falls.*







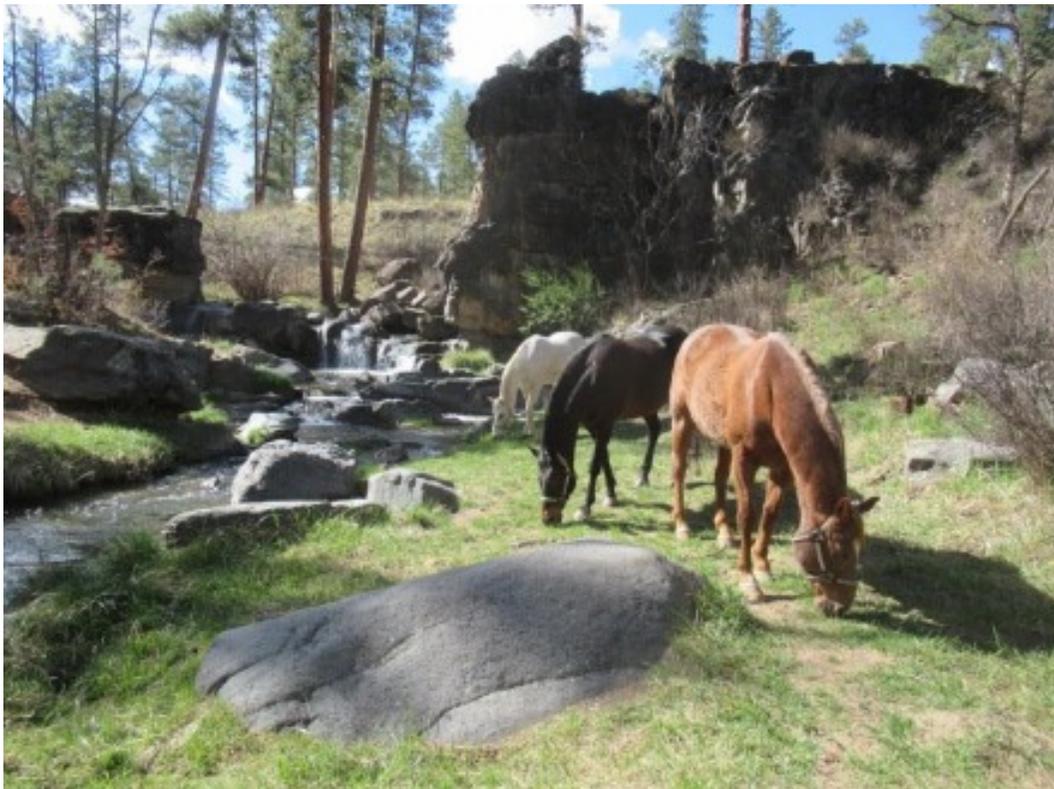








*Nice, huh?*



*Belle did want me to explain these photos - there are a couple of foot bridges which the horses don't mind crossing "We like to hear the clump of our shoes on the wood!", Spanky says.*



*In fact, they chose to go back and forth (on their own) a couple of times.*



*Why did the horses cross the bridge? "This is GREAT!" "Yum!"*



*Heading home.*



*Still a little snow . . .*



Thanks for coming along!

MM



FOLLOWED  
DREAM  
RANCH

## 2020-04-24 - *Splish Splash*

Sometimes monsoon rains can be gentle and brief. Other times . . .

*The rain can come down so hard it must be what the inside of a dishwasher feels like.*



*It's not unusual to receive more than an inch of water in an hour when a monsoon cloud forms and stalls overhead.*



## 2020-04-24 - Splish Splash

*Times like these, the horses are happy to be in the barn.*



*The rain can end as quickly as it began - suddenly the sun comes out again. "So, what do you think?" "Looks good to me!" "You go out first".*

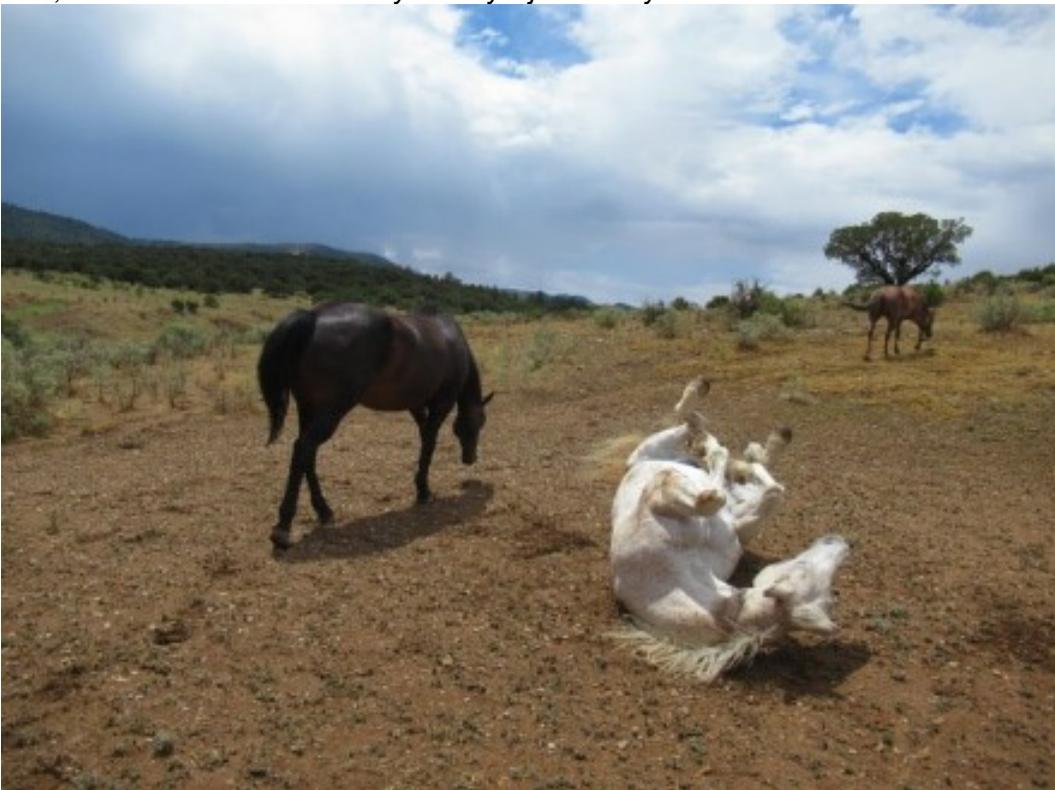


## 2020-04-24 - Splish Splash

*"Hey! It's great! Nice and soft . . . ah!". "Oh Thunder, really. You are going to get filthy."*



*"I don't care, it feels wonderful!" "Have it your way. I just did my hair."*



## 2020-04-24 - Splish Splash

*"Let's go play in the sunshine!" "Yuck! You're all muddy now!"*



*We head to Capitan Gap. Only 14 miles away, everything is dry there (Spanky keeps an eye on those clouds, just in case).*



*Sure makes for beautiful scenery . . .*



*. . . and extravagant cumulonimbus clouds.*



## 2020-04-24 - *Splish Splash*

*Most folks around here prefer autumn, with its mild weather and fall colors. But we appreciate the drama and intensity of summer in New Mexico.*



MM

A mountain lake is special. It's closer to the heavens and seems to capture the stars in it's sparkling surface. There is a peace that comes from life-giving water gently lapping at the shore, and the scent of pine luxuriating in the warmth of the sun. We had the place entirely to ourselves. It seemed then, like our world was encompassed by the forested hillsides, and the snow-crested mountain silently observing our progress.



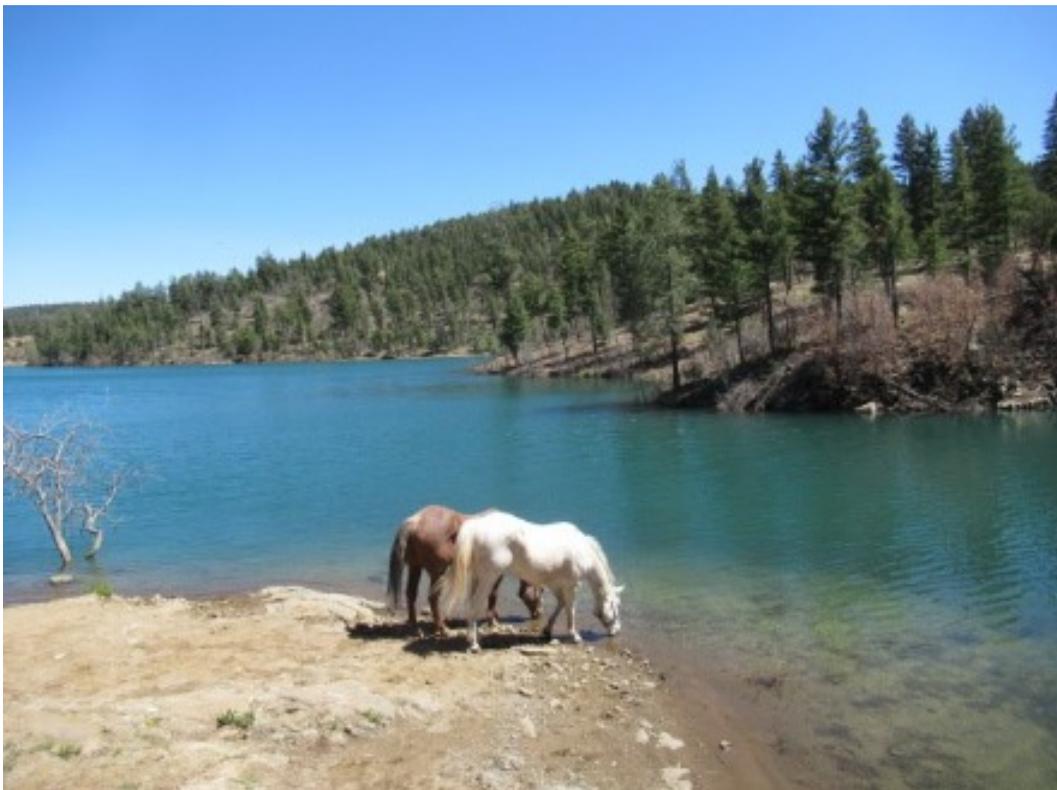
*The lazy trail meandered along the lake's shady edge.*



*Then emerged into the bright sunlight, which turned the clear water various shades of jade and emerald.*



*The horses strode confidently to the water's gentle border, for a long drink.*



*... and shared special thoughts which only equines have.*



*Then the soft path carried us gently into the trees . . .*



*... framing an arcadian scene below.*



*As our family's progress kept time with the music of the songbirds - a muted 'clip-clop' in step with the cadence of a happy whippoorwill.*



*At every turn, a new and inspiring vista.*



*Time to reflect . . . and to give thanks . . .*



*... as the mountain welcomed our peaceful presence.*



*It knows the fleeting emotion of a beautiful moment . . . and the lasting assurance of faith.*



That was our ride at the lake. Thank you for joining us!

MM

Belle had been nagging us (no pun intended) to check out the mouth of Mills Canyon. She was just sure there would be a spring crop of green grass there. "You, know, along the stream? You really need to get it while it is fresh. Those new blades of river grass are delicious!"

*She was right, but someone was there ahead of us. We decided to let the little band of wild horses enjoy their meal, undisturbed. We would come back another time. Even Belle was good with that idea. "After all, it's their home", she generously stated . . .*



*. . . but on our return several days later, Belle fretted. "I hope they left some good grass for us!" The stream ran fast, with snow melt from the mountain.*



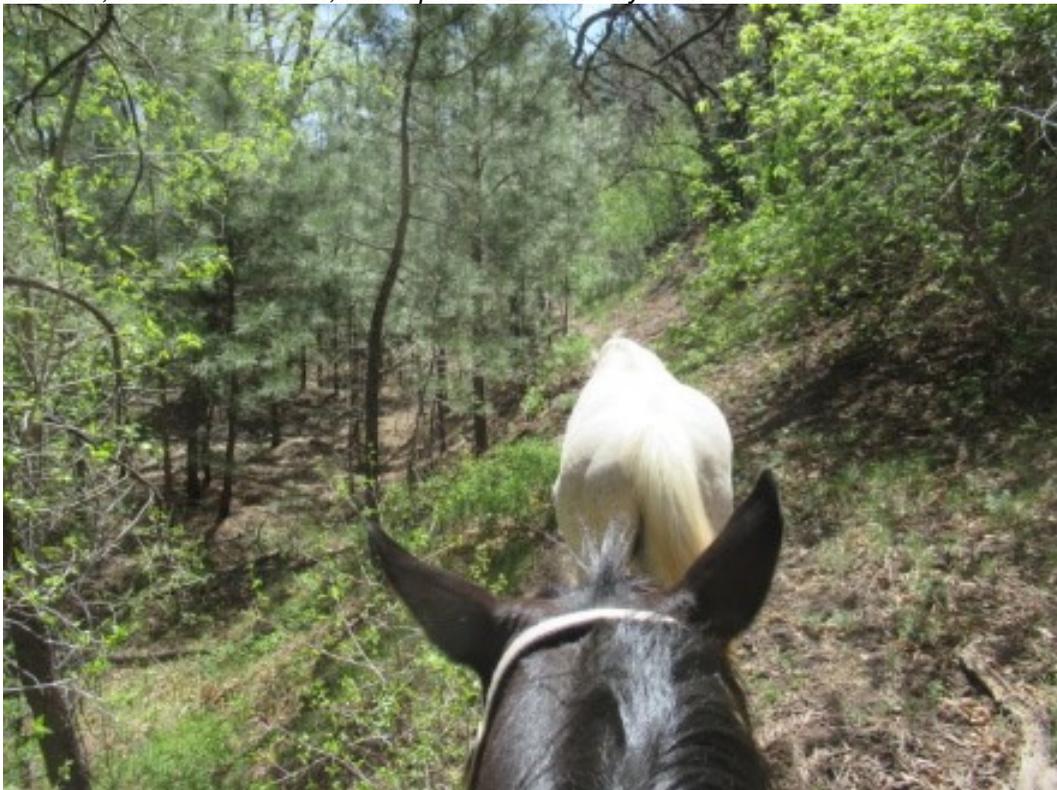
*Thunder has really gotten into this wooden bridge thing. He went across on his own . . .*



. . . and then crossed back and forth a few times. "This one sounds different than the other one!", he said ". . . but it was nice to have some guard rails along the sides . . ." Belle and Spanky waited, while he had his fun.



"Okay, Thunder, let's move on now," an impatient Belle finally said. "Sheesh!"



*She was eager to check out that river grass.*



*"Yum!", she exclaimed. "Those other horses left the best part!" . . .*



. . . but of course . . . "I wonder if the grass is greener on the other side? . . ."



*She did choose an idyllic spot, with the first leaves of spring unfurling overhead to greet the sun.*



*The boys seemed to have a bit of spring fever, as they frolicked along the stream . . .*



*... and Spanky did is usual splashing (Thunder stayed clear).*



*Belle and I found a very old apple tree, which was celebrating the day with a bouquet of blossoms. Must have been a pioneer's homestead here, long, long ago.*



*Across the way, the boys continued to graze.*



*"Belle sure has some good ideas", said Spanky with gratitude.*



MM



FOLLOWED  
DREAM  
RANCH

Belle's picnic at Mills Canyon was so popular, she suggested another one farther upstream. The portions weren't quite as abundant, but everyone had a good time.

*A sure sign of spring - the late-leaving aspen trees have just a tinge of green.*



*It seems odd that the grass throughout the forest meadows appears almost 'mowed'.*



*Thunder does his part!*



*In search of Belle's special grass.*



*Bingo! Belle is happy.*



*Water in the creek is crystal clear.*





*Everyone enjoyed the salad bar at their own pace.*



*"Ummm, I think I will have a little more of this . . . I just love dining al fresco!"*



MM

## 2020-04-30 - Return to Argentina Spring - Part One

Page 1 of 10

There's something very special about returning to the high country in the spring. Because of the elevation (about 9,000 ft.), the season unfolds more slowly up here - nature seems to show special appreciation for the miracle of new life in the tougher environment. The horses are always eager to visit one of their favorite places.

*It was an exceptionally nice morning. After early chores, I asked the horses if they would like to go up to Argentina Spring. They joined in a collective "DUH!!!" . . . and off we went.*



## 2020-04-30 - Return to Argentina Spring - Part One

*The road follows cascading water up to the trail head parking.*



*Back on familiar trails, Thunder leads us (grabbing a quick bite of spring grass along the way). He knows the way.*



## 2020-04-30 - Return to Argentina Spring - Part One

Page 3 of 10

*It wasn't easy going. There was challenging winter deadfall in several places. Spanky gingerly detours around some downed trees.*



*Early blooming wild mountain irises are beginning to bud, near a tiny brook.*





*Another blockade. Aspen trees are earth's largest living organisms. What appears to be a grove of individual plants is actually one giant colony, sharing a single root system. Their great height and relatively shallow roots make them especially vulnerable to high mountain winds. The boys negotiate a way around.*



## 2020-04-30 - Return to Argentina Spring - Part One

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*Stacks of old clearing. This is a Wilderness, so all cutting must be done with hand saws - nothing mechanized.*



*Further up, Thunder finds a seep (spring) flowing across a rocky outcrop . . .*



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. . . and stops for a fresh drink.



*As we approach the top of the ridge, their excitement is obvious. They love it up here!*



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*While they contentedly graze, I attempt to have a snack of my own.*



*Spanky is a master moocher, and it doesn't take long for him to hit me up for some of my sandwich. "Is that by chance, sourdough bread?" There's a blanket of haze to the west - sign of a heat wave in Arizona.*



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*This is one of our favorite spots. They are content here.*



*Truly.*



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*"Aren't you glad to be back, Belle?" . . . "Sure am, Spanky! Now may I have some more of those dandelions, please . . ."*



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*This is the actual Argentina Spring - miraculously emerging from rock at the top of a mountain. The split rail fence was constructed by the Forest Service, to protect the spring from any cattle that might manage to wander all the way up here.*



*To be continued . . .*

MM

## 2020-04-30 - Return to Argentina Spring - Part Two

Continued . . .

*We (well, really just me . . .) had planned to ride up and go back down the way we came . . . but the horses made it very clear that they were eager to make a big loop ride out of it (a favorite route of theirs). Thunder and Spanky went directly to the trail leading on to Turkey Spring . . . stopped, turned, and stared at me as though to say, "Come on, let's go this way, please!" Belle was in agreement, so we did.*



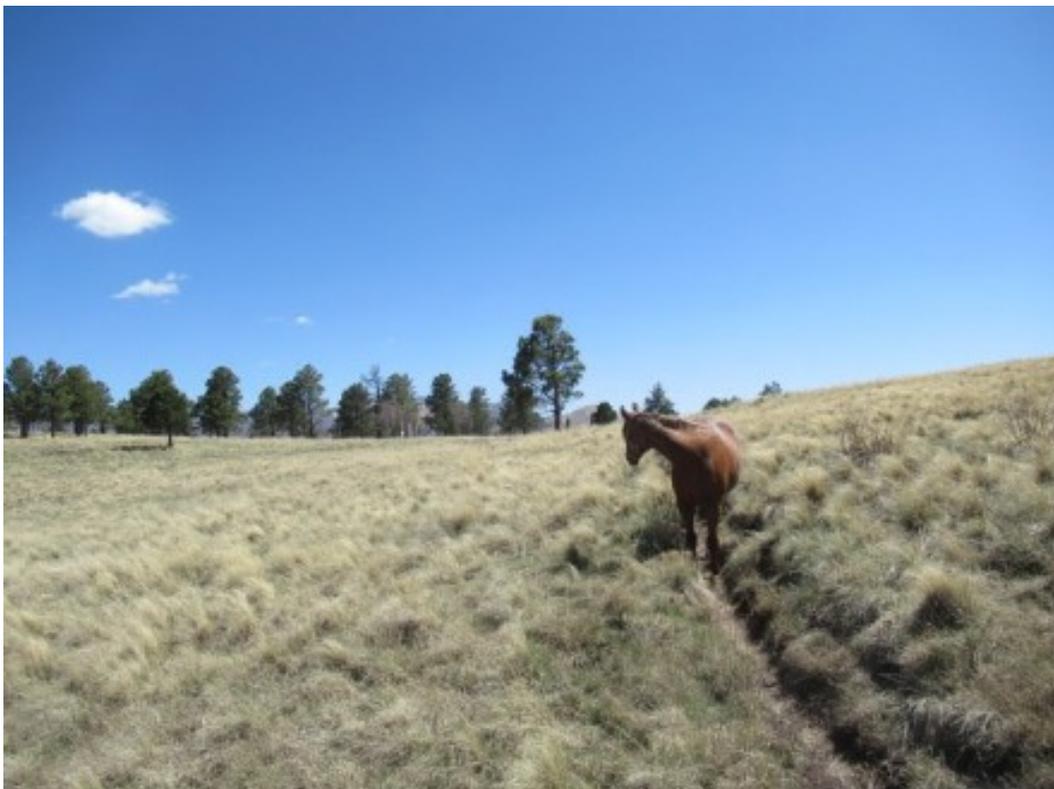
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*The high plateau has yet to green up (that usually waits until summer), but the horses had a ball running through the tufted grass.*



*Then lagging behind, Spanky saw 'something' in the pines behind us. "Oh-oh. What's THAT?" (Likely an elk).*



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*"Uh . . . I think I will stay up with you guys!"*



*He remained alert. There is a wild turkey (a tiny dark dot in the photo) moving through the oak grove. Spanky made certain that was all it was!*



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*We crossed the mesa . . .*



*. . . and they enjoyed a nice cold drink at Turkey Spring, before heading back down.*



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*We take our time, down Turkey Canyon.*



*There was less deadfall here, but we were glad not have been around when this big tree fell. The horses always seem to find a way around - or over - it.*



*A drink . . .*



*. . . and a snack - always welcome on the trail.*



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*Getting closer to the horse campground.*



*It was a long and athletic ride - I was happy to see that the horses still had so much energy (especially Spanky, who has done remarkably well at overcoming his ringbone arthritis disability).*



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*As we neared the trailer, it was clear they were sorry to see this ride end. Everyone slowed down.*



*Even speedy Thunder slowed to a walk.*



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*Since we had the place all to ourselves, they spent time enjoying the late afternoon solitude.*



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*Icing on the cake! As the road crew was leaving, they moved the "Road Closed" sign out of the way and waved us onto the new bypass road. We are the first to use it!*



Thank you for joining us. Each ride is special, made more so by being able to share them. We feel so fortunate at this time to be able to escape into nature . . . with you.  
MM

It's remarkable that after so many years, we still discover new places to ride nearby. We spotted a Bureau of Land Management gate near Capitan which we hadn't noticed before (BLM gates are green, with a big yellow stripe down the middle, and are generally unlocked - it's public land).

*Although this land abuts the National Forest and Ranchman's Camp to the West, it's our first time here.*



*A lone coyote watches our progress.*



*Then settles down for a warm-afternoon nap. "I wonder what they are doing here?"*



*It's much like Ranchman's Camp - with primarily juniper and pinon pines. We headed for a high point, to get a good view. Those are the familiar Capitan Mountains in the distance.*



*The horses seem always to find something to nibble on - even up here.*



*"Well, it's good to have a little snack . . ."*



*We head for an interesting valley down below.*



*Nice, easy riding along an old ranch road.*



*What's that?*



"Hmmm?" Belle wonders.



My gosh. An ancient steam shovel was abandoned here who knows how long ago. Did it help build the railroad that finally opened this region? Or maybe worked on a gold mine at Nogal . . .



*Belle says it's like a giant, old Tonka Toy.*



*She's right.*



*Relic of another time - long forgotten, in this remote place.*



*"That's cool . . . but can we have some treats now, please?"*



At home, Wilcox lodged a complaint. "HEY! This pillow is TOO SMALL!" . . .  
Sorry. I'll get right on that . . .



Always something . . .  
MM

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