The image is a book cover for 'The Nogai Journals Volume Seventeen'. It features a photograph of a rural scene. In the foreground, a tan-colored dog stands in a field of tall green grass. In the middle ground, three horses (one white, one dark, and one brown) are grazing. The background is a dense forest of trees. The title 'THE NOGAI JOURNALS' is written in a stylized, outlined font at the top, and 'Volume Seventeen' is written in a cursive font below it. At the bottom, the names of the subjects are listed in a simple, outlined font.

THE NOGAI JOURNALS

Volume Seventeen

BELLE, THUNDER, SPANKY, LULU
AND
MATTHEW MIDGETT

“Thank you, Matt, as always, for injecting such beauty and good will into our world. Your posts never fail to bring a smile and even a laugh to brighten the day. Your animals always look so happy. Bright eyes, heads high, heels kicking up in pure joy...”

—Tina Scharf, MS Consulting Wildlife Biologist



Come along and ride with us!

THE NOGAL JOURNALS

Volume XVII

With sincere gratitude
to Randy Clarke-Ianiero and Clem Ianiero-Clarke
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Please use the BOOKMARKS TOOL:



for your active TABLE OF CONTENTS
(located on the far upper right corner of the
window).

2019-04-01 - *The Elk Were Right*

Those elk sure knew . . .

We woke to a beautiful sight this morning.



"Wow!"



Onyx the cat was surprised, too. "Huh?"



Nearly 3" of fluffy fresh snow!





The trail is clear . . . let's go get the horses.



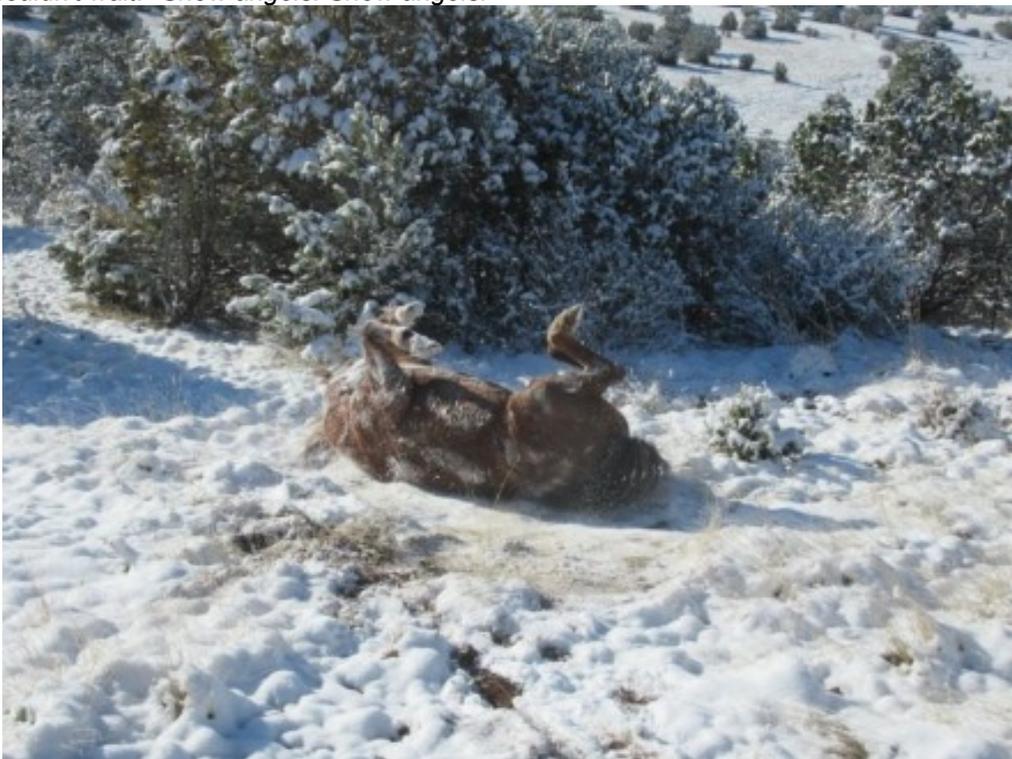
Come on and play!



"Oh, boy!"



Spanky couldn't wait. "Snow angels! Snow angels!"



2019-04-01 - The Elk Were Right

"This is so cool! . . . and it's not an April fool's joke!"





They were like little kids. "Ha! Ha!"





2019-04-01 - *The Elk Were Right*

Eight o'clock this morning . . .



... Noon. Perfect!



Amazing, enchanted New Mexico.

MM

2019-04-05 - *Dark Clouds, Happy Hearts*

As we began our ride, dark squall clouds suddenly eclipsed the sun. All was still and quiet. The horses didn't spend time being contemplative - they knew there was fresh grass along the stream banks ahead!



"Where'd the sun go?" ponders Belle, briefly.



Thunder and Spanky head to the grass.



Little Lulu comes along at her own pace.



While Thunder circles around at his . . .

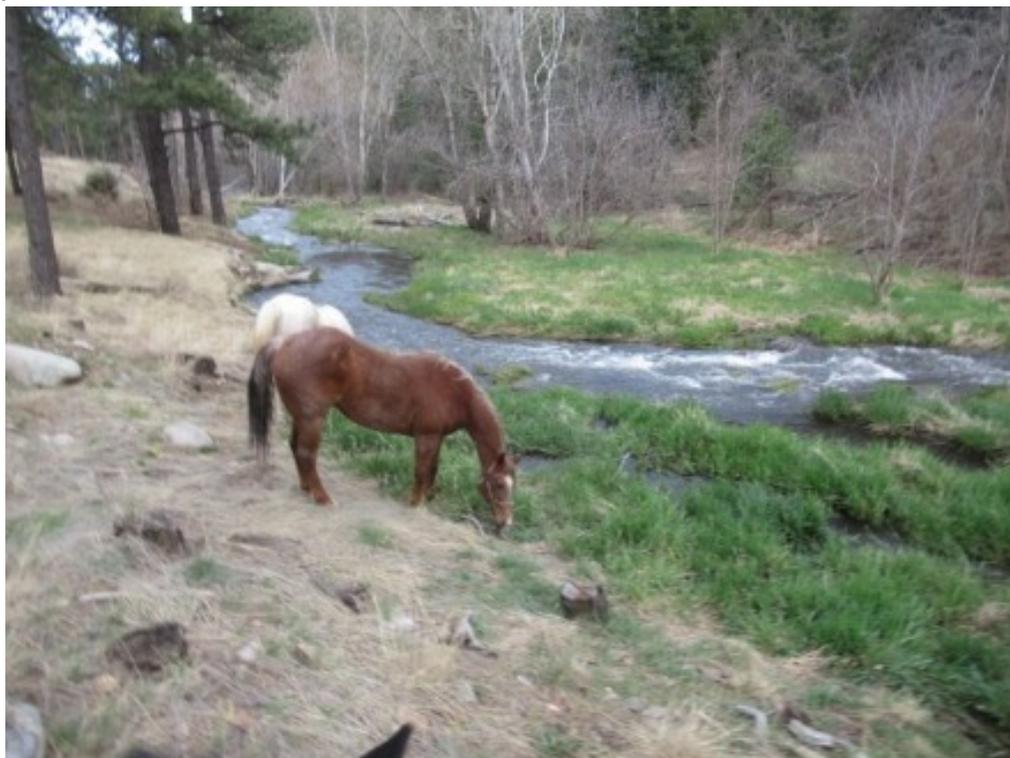


. . . and Spanky makes joyful angels, "Oh, boy! We're going to get green grass, tee hee!"





They did.



Sweet and delicious.



Thunder enjoys a sip of water between bites.



2019-04-05 - Dark Clouds, Happy Hearts

"That's all well and good for them, but I am not all that keen on grass . . ."



"Uh . . . sorry . . . but we know you get those icky meat-flavored treats in the truck." "Yeah, and that weird cheese stuff!"



Farther along, the stream picks up volume.



Then a peaceful stretch of water.



Before we enjoy a burst of speed.



The clouds begin to break at sunset.



Horses with happy hearts.



MM



FOLLOWED
DREAM
RANCH

2019-04-06 - Crazy Horses

Mostly, the horses are pretty mellow. But sometimes they need to let out a little steam.

We figured this would be a slow and easy ride. Thunder and Spanky thought differently. They hung back, so that they could play catch up with Belle and me. "Yee Haw!"



Must've been something in the air.



2019-04-06 - Crazy Horses

This was a very fast ride.



There they go again.



As we crested the ridge, we encountered some very startled elk.



Thunder seemed amused. "Did you see their surprise?" We kept going.



2019-04-06 - Crazy Horses

Thunder did stop to investigate something on the trail - a genuine antique tin washtub in the middle of nowhere. God knows how it got here, or when.

"I know I shouldn't . . . but I think I will bite him again, just to see what happens." Don't do it, Spanky.



More elk.



Thunder paused at a spring-fed pond . . .



. . . and then grazed in an arroyo bottom.



Before flying out to meet us.



"How's that for an entrance?"



2019-04-06 - Crazy Horses

"Come on, Spanky, let's go!"



2019-04-06 - Crazy Horses

Belle was wondering what got into them. "Geez . . . I was all relaxed."





2019-04-06 - Crazy Horses

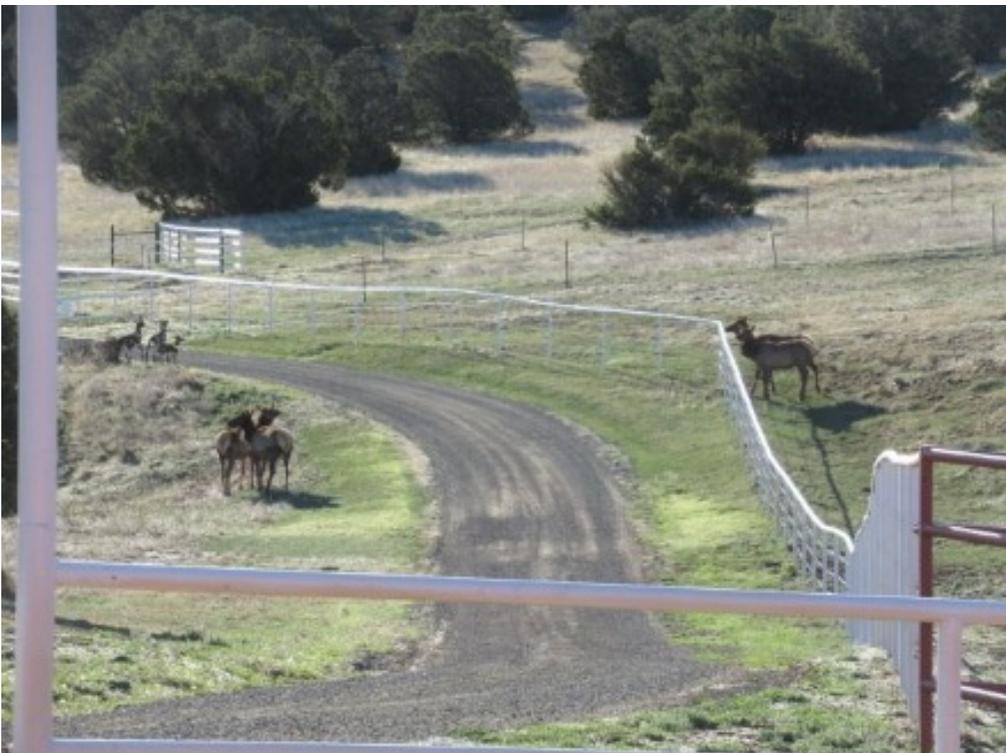
"Look at that! I'm not sure what those things are, but they are CRAZY!"



MM

2019-04-11 - Nosey Neighbors and a Lost Dream

The elk have been busy around the ranch. They seem curious about my chores, etc.
This little group hung around as I worked near the barn.

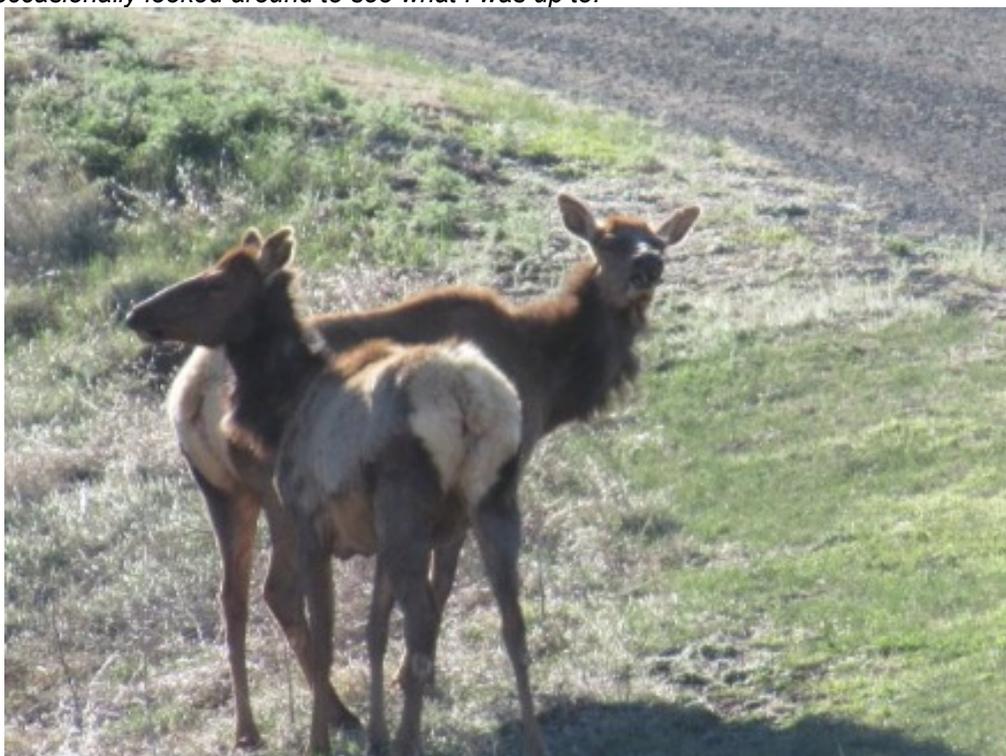


2019-04-11 - Nosey Neighbors and a Lost Dream

They enjoyed the fresh green grass along the drive . . .



. . . and occasionally looked around to see what I was up to.



The sun was in my camera lens for this shot.



They seem to be gossiping over the fence. "And do you know he uses this noisy contraption, to chop our grass down. What's that all about?"



"Nothing he does surprises me anymore!"



Back to snacking.



2019-04-11 - Nosey Neighbors and a Lost Dream

The wildflowers are in bloom on the mountain, and in the desert below.



While out and about in the middle of nowhere, Lulu and I discovered this old homestead.



2019-04-11 - Nosey Neighbors and a Lost Dream

Someone worked hard to build a home from the materials at hand, including carefully placed local stone.



This room once would have been cozy.

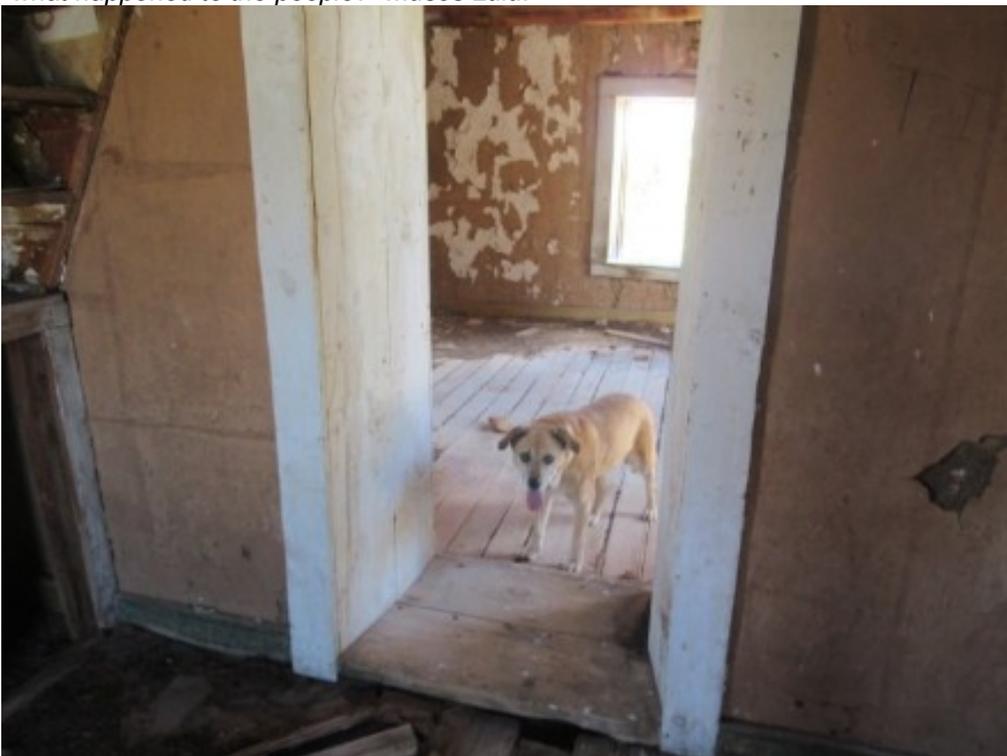


2019-04-11 - Nosey Neighbors and a Lost Dream

With hand-cut wood vigas holding up the ceiling.



"I wonder what happened to the people?" muses Lulu.



2019-04-11 - Nosey Neighbors and a Lost Dream

It's hard telling, but there are stories here . . . and dreams.



We hit the road for home.



MM

2019-04-14 - A Courtesy and Non - Surprise

There is an advantage to living in an older property (in a small community) - long ago the owner was friendly with the county road crew, and as a courtesy (and tradition), they still maintain the driveway all the way up to the barn.

It's a nice benefit!



Adding road base (gravel) . . .



... and grading ...



Then it's all watered down and rolled.



The horses find it interesting.



As the crew leaves, Thunder has a comment. "Can you get them to work on our trails, too, please?"



2019-04-14 - A Courtesy and Non - Surprise

Then, a little sunset ride.





As it clouds up.



2019-04-14 - A Courtesy and Non - Surprise

The next morning . . . sure enough . . . our traditional April snow.



Soon, it was gone.



Except for the fast-melting stuff on the Capitan Mountains to the east.



Back to business.



MM

2019-04-16 - Spring Fever

With temps suddenly in the 70's, the horses seem to have a dose of spring fever. It doesn't seem to affect the elk, as they quietly graze on new grass.



Thunder surveys the territory ahead.





At a trough, Spanky has fun blowing bubbles underwater.



He always seems to amuse himself. "That was so cool!"



We come upon a little stock tank (pond).



Thunder heads down for a closer look.



"Do you think the water is too cold for a swim?" Most likely, Thunder.



He checks it out.



"Yup. Cold. Brrr. Darn!"



2019-04-16 - Spring Fever

We were exploring an arroyo when their spring fever kicked in.



2019-04-16 - Spring Fever

Thinks Belle, "Oh-oh, it's going to be a fast ride back!"



She was right.



The boys outdistanced us.



We ran all the way.



. . . but I could see them making sure we were following.



They were waiting for us back at the trailer. Smart horses. "Ha, ha, we got here first!"



MM

2019-04-19 - Little Ride

It really feels like spring around here (after a day of rain yesterday). After chores, it was a beautiful afternoon for a little ride behind the house. Accommodating her "maturity" (and the warmer weather), we let Lulu decide if she wants to go with us.

There's our little girl, tagging along behind Spanky.



I honestly think the horses and Lulu communicate somehow; everyone took it easy on this little ride. Thunder spotted an elk under a shady tree along the trail.



2019-04-19 - *Little Ride*

It didn't move as we passed. (Sorry, I was shooting into the sun . . .)



She does love her time on the trail.



She stayed with Belle and me, while the boys meandered a bit.



"Okay, let's go over there!"



Thunder was waiting.



"Come'on little girl, you want to lead for a while?"



"You do'in alright, Lulu?"



"Yes, thank you! (It's nice to have caring friends)."



"Is it time for a treat?"



"That was great! Thanks!"



We just apply our motto: "Accept and Adapt".

MM



FOLLOWED
DREAM
RANCH

2019-04-20 - Good Friday Badlands Ride

It was a perfect day for exploring the Tularosa Basin badlands - 75 degrees, and snow on the mountains above.

. . . and we had a nice surprise, too. When we arrived, there was this lone bald-faced yearling calf to greet us . . .



Almost immediately, others began appearing out of the chaparral. "Hi! Who (what) are you?", they seemed to ask.

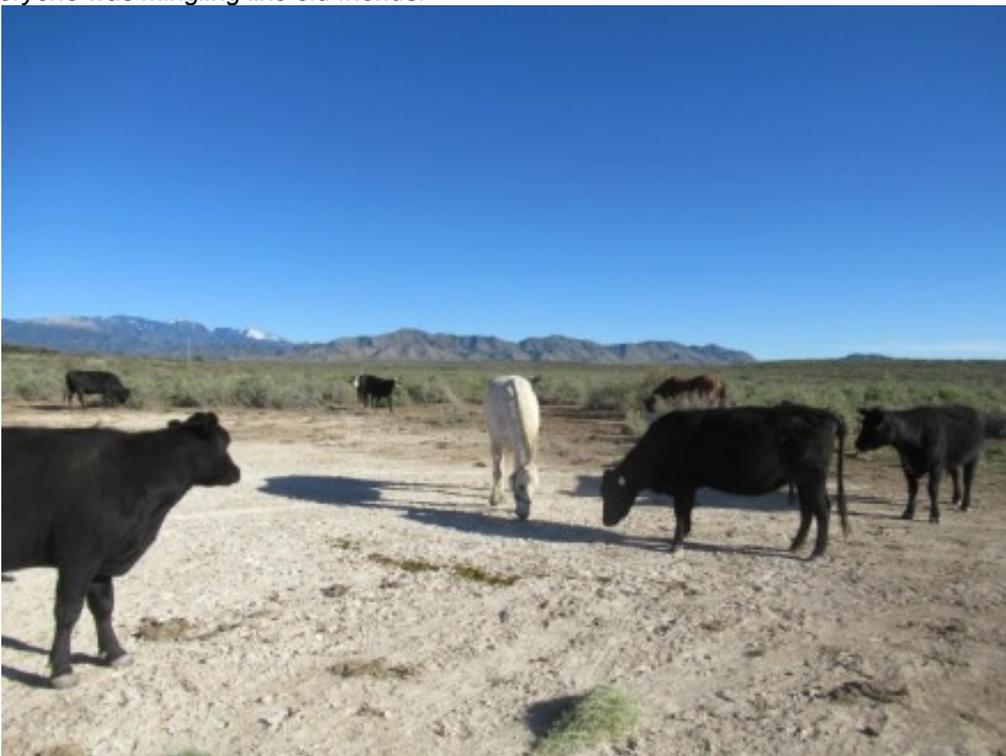


2019-04-20 - Good Friday Badlands Ride

Spanky gave them a warm greeting. "Hello! It's simple - we are horses and you are cows!"



Soon, everyone was mingling like old friends.



2019-04-20 - Good Friday Badlands Ride

Page 3 of 13

We often come across cattle on our rides - but these are without a doubt the friendliest! They were not concerned about "personal space".



We kinda hated to leave the party, but we had planned a ride . . .



2019-04-20 - Good Friday Badlands Ride

Soon, we were entering the badlands.



And bad, they are - but beautiful.



2019-04-20 - Good Friday Badlands Ride

As usual, my intrepid companions find a way.



Down into the arroyos.



2019-04-20 - Good Friday Badlands Ride

Of course, Spanky finds a good spot to make angels.



"Better stand back - this is going to be dusty . . ."



2019-04-20 - Good Friday Badlands Ride

Page 7 of 13

I climb up for this overhead shot, like a human drone . . . while they just hang around, wondering what the heck I am doing up there.



Thunder sees his chance for a real gallop in the sand. Off he zooms.



2019-04-20 - Good Friday Badlands Ride

Then waits for us at the proper turn, up another arroyo.



Before leading us over an often-blind course, right toward the trailer. He really is a "GPS" horse.

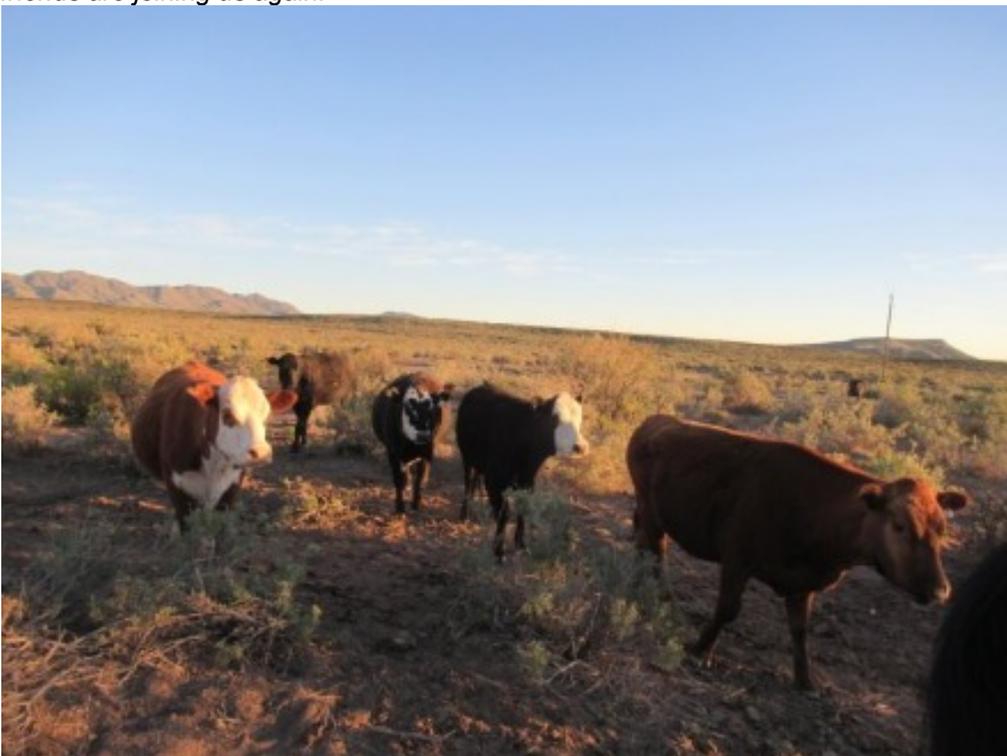


2019-04-20 - Good Friday Badlands Ride

. . . and a handsome one. He is alert to a disturbance in the desert . . .



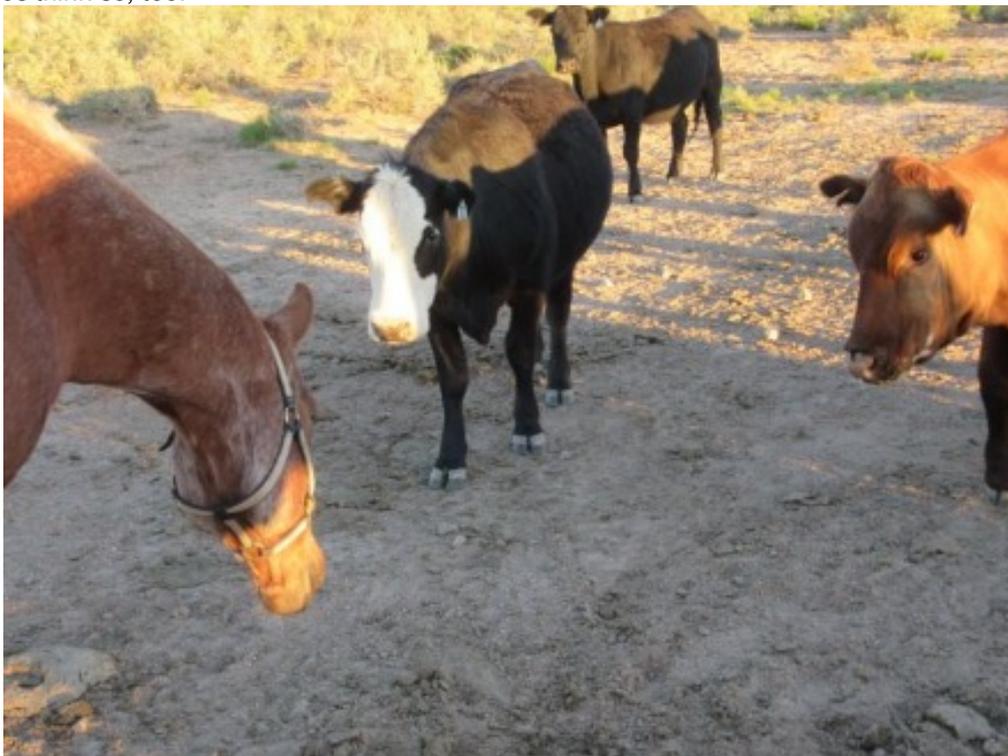
Our new friends are joining us again.



These definitely are the coolest cows! "Moo, dude."



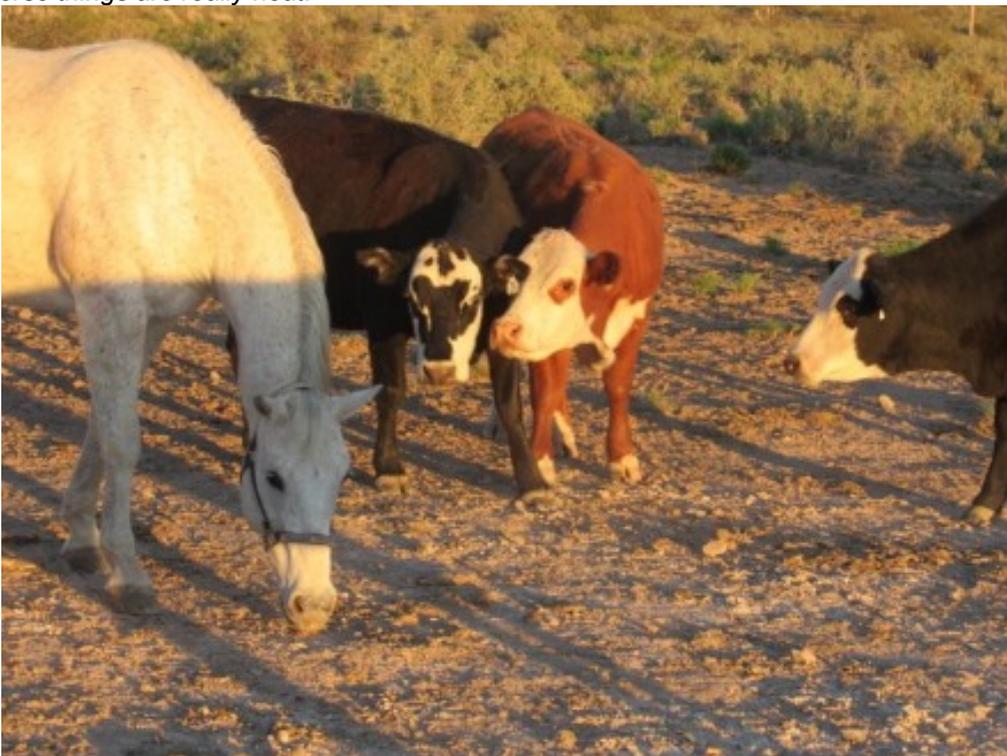
The horses think so, too.



"You don't smell like my mom . . . no milk, either . . ."



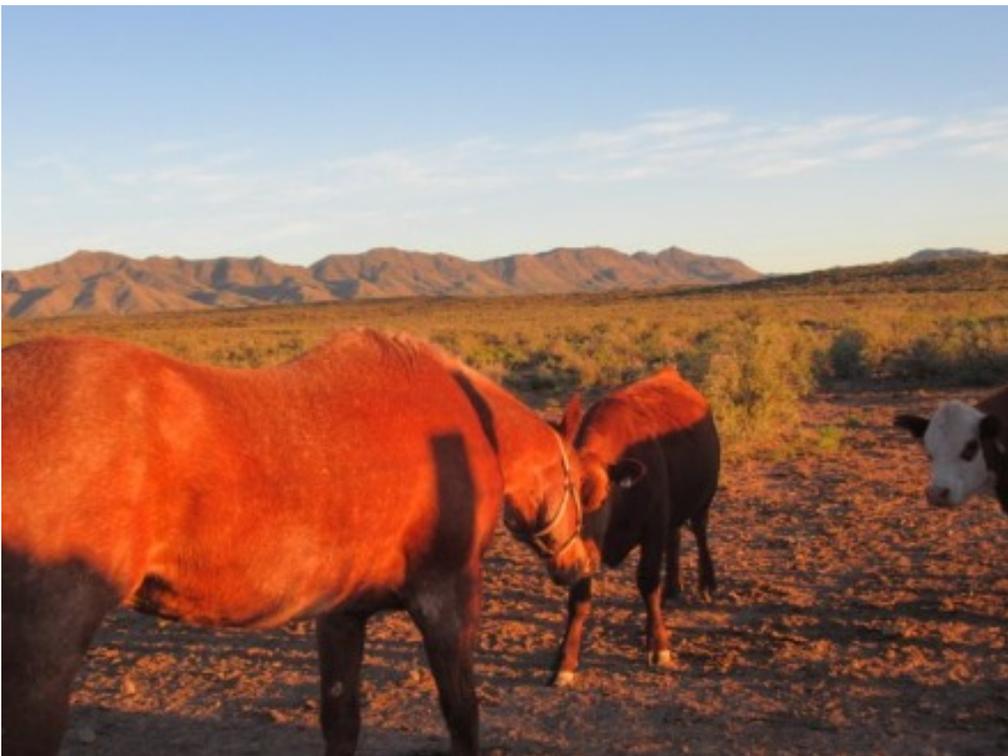
"These horse things are really neat!"



We wanted to take this little herd home!



Awww.



But instead, we bid a fond farewell at twilight. Sniff, sniff.



MM



FOLLOWED
DREAM
RANCH

2019-04-21 - *Family Time & Remembrance*

Our beloved Maverick passed away on Easter Sunday, eight years ago. He was a very special horse and is never forgotten.



As in years past, we spend the day as a family, doing what we love - just being together. The dawn was beautiful.



2019-04-21 - *Family Time & Remembrance*

Apple blossoms are a fresh reminder of life's constant renewal.



Later in the day, we headed to a quiet place . . . where we knew there would be some green grass and running water.



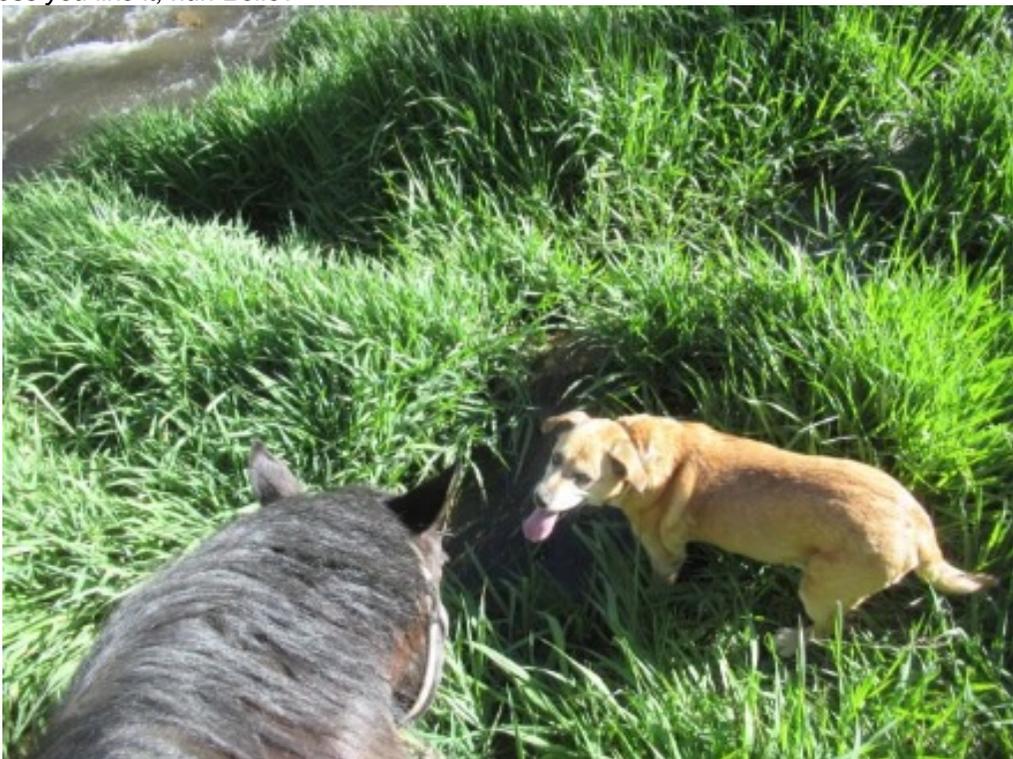
We found plenty of both.



Lulu still doesn't get the 'grass' thing. "It has no flavor . . . and it makes me yak!"



"But I guess you like it, huh Belle?"



"And you, too, Thunder?"



"Oh well, Spanky, to each his own."

"You must remember that we are vegetarians."

"Okay but give me a nice hamburger patty anytime!"



"I'll just have some water."



Of course, it isn't about the grass or the water - it's about just being together.



That's always the best.



Family time. And warm memories of loved ones - who are never far from our hearts.



MM



FOLLOWED
DREAM
RANCH

2019-04-25 - April Skies

We're grateful to have had some nice rain during what is more typically a dry time of year. It's brought fresh grass for the cattle (and elk), and beautiful skies.

On the hill above the barn, these elk enjoy some fresh grass at breakfast.



"That's okay - we order our breakfast off a menu!", brags Spanky.



2019-04-25 - April Skies

Picturesque clouds made for a beautiful ride at Fort Stanton.



Spanky pauses by a water trough.



Thunder and Belle drink up.



2019-04-25 - April Skies

The boys talk it over along the way.



Buddies.



Thunder checks out snow on the distant mountains.





To us, each hill presents a special view . . .



... as we mosey along under the April skies.



Along our driveway, we have to wait for some elk to cross in front of us.



They're back for supper.



MM

I had to run down to Carrizozo and asked the horses if they wanted to come along - and maybe look up their new yearling calf friends. "Oh, yeah! Those cows were cool!", they responded.

It was a beautiful day for the drive.



I figured the little herd would be where we saw them before - at the water tank. But with countless acres to graze, I wasn't sure . . . When we arrived, there was just one cow. I could hear a group sigh of disappointment from the trailer.



But soon, they all were back - as though they had been waiting for us!



Thunder and the little bald-faced guy seemed glad to see each other.



"Your'e back! Nice to see you!"



"We wondered where you'd gone!"



"Well, we live up on the mountain there." . . . "Oh. What's a mountain?"

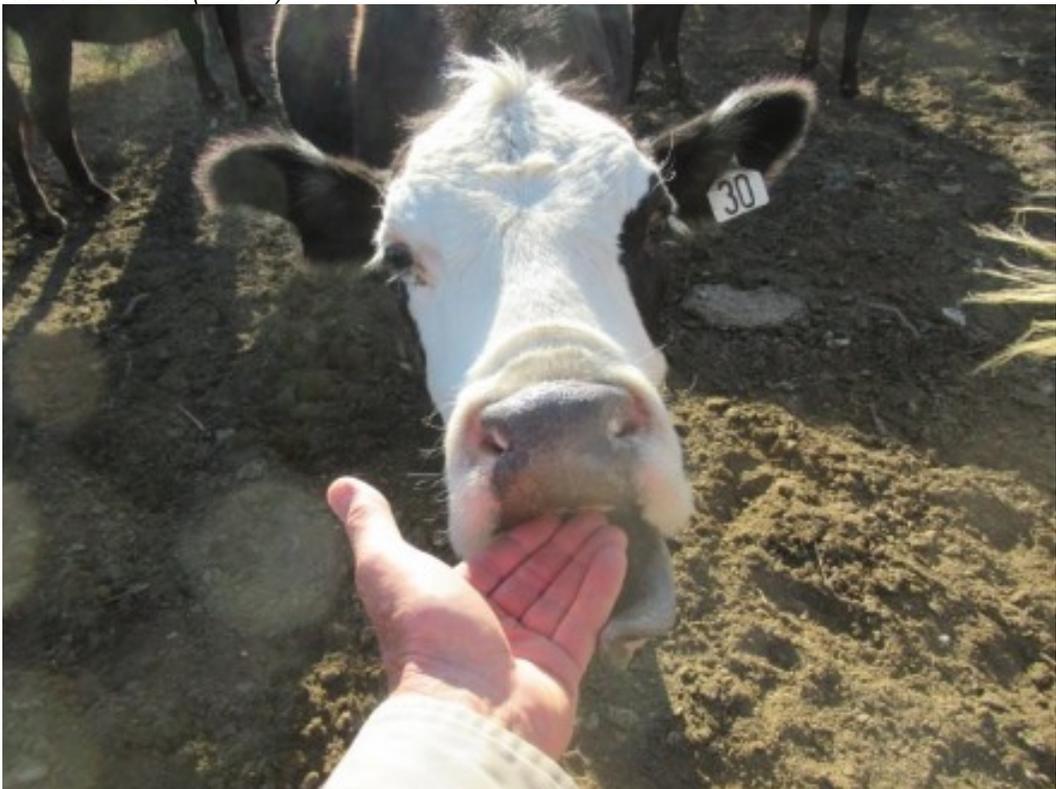


We've never known such a friendly calf.





I guess cows don't bite (whew!).



"I know you are a horse. Mom told me. We really did miss you."



"AHEM!", grumbled a jealous Belle. "I thought we were going to take a ride".



"I'm waiting . . . "Okay, just a minute, honey."



Here, little guy - have a granola bar. We'll be right back.



Thunder finally joined us for the ride. But really, we were all eager to get back to our friends and hang out.



All too soon, it was time to leave. Come on, Thunder, we gotta go. "Huh?" said the little one.



"Yeah, we gotta leave now, buddy."



"Is this how you travel? Looks like there is plenty of room . . ."



"I could go along!"



"No, little friend, you can't leave your family and all."



"Really, you'll be happier here."



"Okay. I guess you're right. But it sure is good to see you!" "Yeah, you too."



"Sigh."



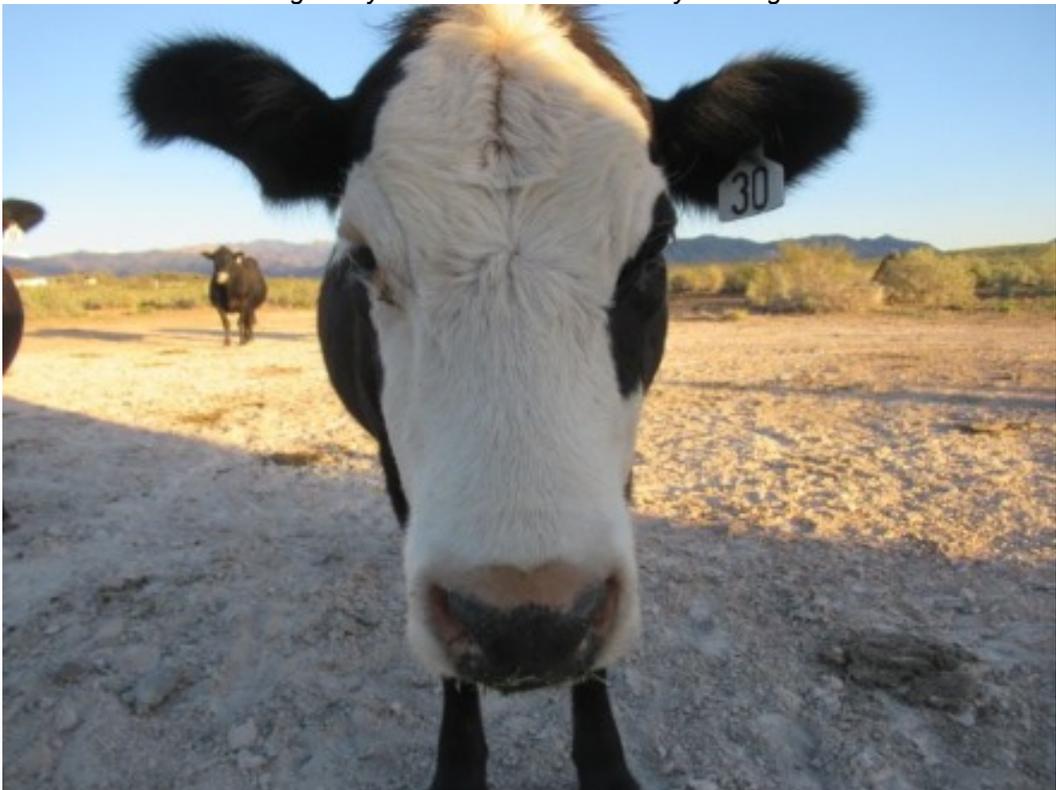
"You sure he can't come along?" "No, Spanky, he can't - that's cattle rustling. They hang you." "Oh."



"Well, then, we'll see you next time!"



"Sorry. You're a cow. You belong with your herd." "Yeah. I know you're right."



"Bye-bye. Have a safe trip home, everybody!"



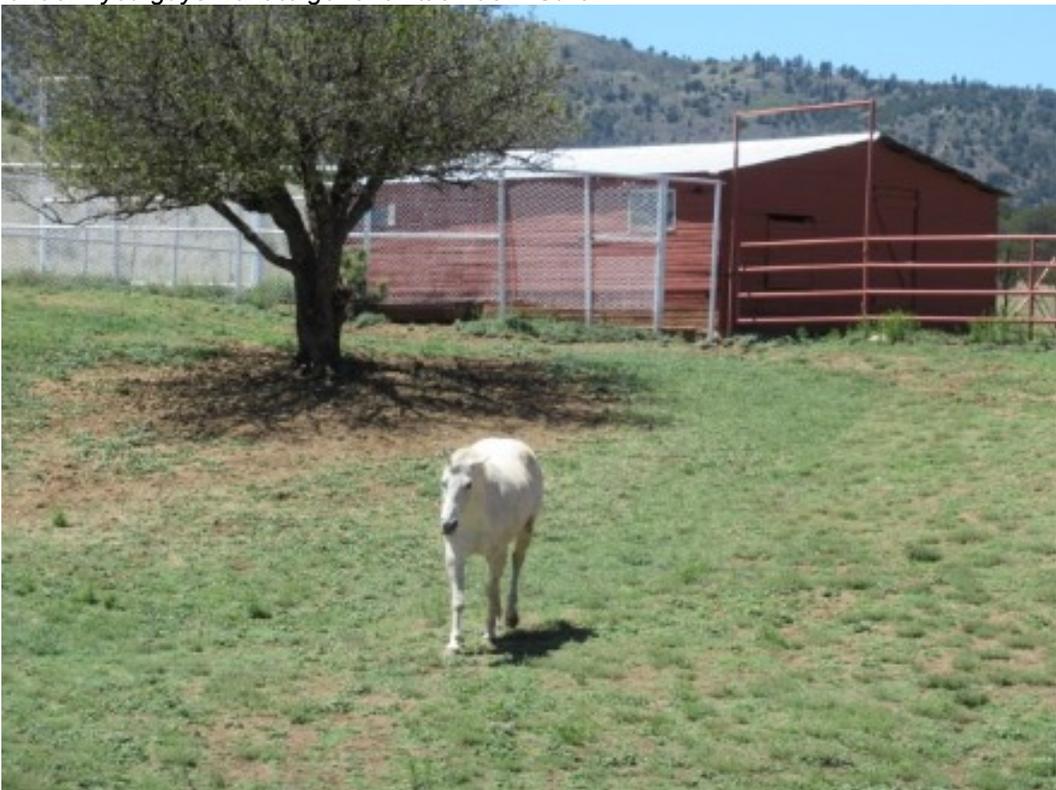
I know. But no.
MM

2019-04-29 - Spring Treat

Spring is often a dry season in New Mexico - but we've had a little more rain this year. *Spanky enjoys some fresh grass near the blooming crab apple tree.*



Hey, Thunder - you guys want to go for a little ride? "Sure!"



2019-04-29 - Spring Treat

We headed to where green grass grows, along water flowing out of the mountains.



Trees are flush with new leaves.



Belle checks out some adobe ruins from the days of Billy the Kid.



They know where we are headed.



Lots of snacking along the way.



Gotta duck under a fallen tree.



Dramatic scenery.



Water falls noisily over the rocks (Ruidoso means "noisy water").



"Is that true?" Yes, Spanky, it is.

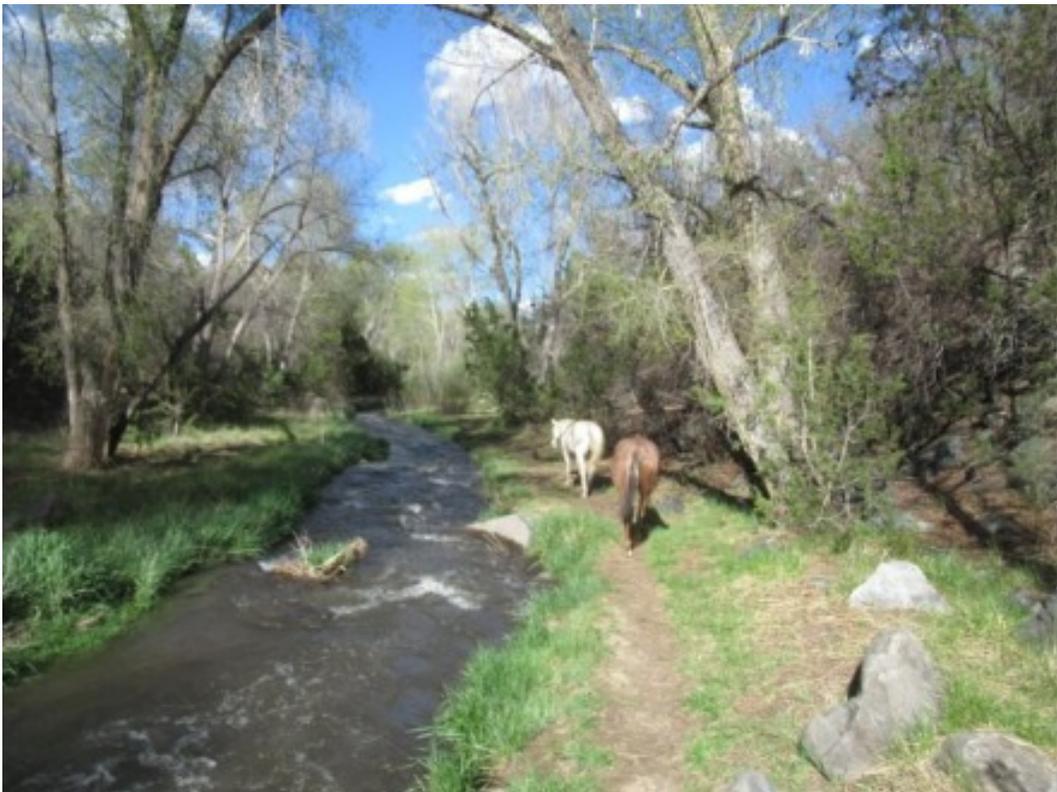


Belle enjoys her grazing, by the falls.



2019-04-29 - Spring Treat

This ride is a real spring treat.





Spanky leads us back to the trailer at a run.



MM



FOLLOWED
DREAM
RANCH

Few things are as pleasurable as hanging out in an old apple tree on a fine spring morning, says Wilcox.



Kitty yoga.





Kitty bliss.



MM

2019-05-04 - *Big Day for Little Belle*

Once again, Belle was invited to open the annual Smokey Bear parade by carrying the American flag - but this time it is the iconic symbol of fire prevention's 75th birthday! Lots of activities in Capitan, Smokey's birthplace (and where he is laid to rest).

In preparation, she had a spa day, as an admiring Spanky looks on. "You look especially beautiful, Belle!"

"Thanks, but I wish I could do something different with my hair . . ."



While drying off, she took a nice walk with her boys (and enjoyed a "good girl" carrot "Eh, what's up, doc?").



2019-05-04 - Big Day for Little Belle

At the parade, all ready to go.



2019-05-04 - *Big Day for Little Belle*

After the parade, she checked out a competition of artists using chainsaws to create bear sculptures (not every horse would put up with that racket!)



2019-05-04 - *Big Day for Little Belle*

Then she traveled on for an appearance at old Fort Stanton, where they were holding a Folk Music Festival



2019-05-04 - Big Day for Little Belle

Oh . . . and also a beer fest . . . "I'd like to try some of that lager, please . . ."



I think this was her favorite part of the day. "My, that's refreshing! Maybe just another sip . . ."



2019-05-04 - Big Day for Little Belle

... and of course, she was gracious with the paparazzi. "Is this okay? Want a different angle? How's my hair?"



After greeting her public at the Fort (and running a couple of saber charges), she went back to the Smokey Bear Museum and Park for a solemn occasion - as a memorial to our State's fallen wildfire firefighters was unveiled.



The bronze dedicated in their honor is very moving.



Then, there was cake for all (including Belle).



2019-05-04 - *Big Day for Little Belle*

After a very big day, her boys were waiting to welcome her home. "Where have you been? You've been gone forever!"



As they grazed, she told them all about it. "And I had cake, and a beer!"



Orca likes to help me edit these journals . . . "I think 'chainsaw' is supposed to be two words . . ."



MM

2019-05-06 - Belle and the Boy Scouts

Belle donned her cavalry best again, to participate in the annual Boy Scouts Troop 180 weekend campout at the Fort.

She greeted her young friends, high on a hill above the Fort.



Officially it might have been her engagement, but Spanky stole the show.



2019-05-06 - Belle and the Boy Scouts

The scoutmaster had made some hard tack - the historic 'snack food' of the cavalry. It is just as delicious as it sounds, but Spanky recognized it. "Is that hard tack for us?"



While the scouts hesitated, Spanky was happy to accept some of the flour and water 'treat'.



2019-05-06 - Belle and the Boy Scouts

"Yum! Thanks!" That ought to clean my teeth!"



With a hearty Scout Salute of thanks, it was time for the horses to have some recreation.



First order of business was a grass angel in front of the Fort's senior officers' quarters (1855)



Then a leisurely ride along the water (Belle deserved a nice break!)





We've had a real spring this year.



Thunder was in the spirit of the season.





Squeezed against a rock cliff face, the water picks up speed.



They carefully cross the "rapids".



Just a bit of snow left on Sierra Blanca peak.



This poem was read at the Boy Scouts' gathering:

A Cavalry Soldier's Prayer c. 1862

Please God let not the lashing fray

End our lives this coming day

Before my chance to make amends

To pledge my love to kin and friends.

Please stay the hand that targets horse

My faithful friend on many a course

He asks for naught, his heart is true

Brave warrior horse, both gray and blue.

Give angels wings to horses here

Who tarry on and show no fear?

No saber, shot nor cannon's roar

Should still the hearts who can't give more.

Lay down the steeds in pastures green

Where smoke and fire are never seen

Quiet ears and eyes that know such Hell

'Til in your heavens they may dwell.

Yon sunlight gleams on metal bright

Assurance of yet another fight

Please God I bow my head and pray

End not our lives this coming day.

Robin Shields, 6th Ohio Cavalry



MM

End Journal Volume 17 - Part 1 of 4

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All the Journals.

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