

THE NOGAL JOURNALS

Volume Twenty-five

**BELLE, THUNDER, SPANKY
AND
MATTHEW MIDGETT**



“Thanks for bringing me along on your terrific adventures
and the delightful antics of your wonderful creatures! ”

Whitney Mandel



Come along and ride with us!

THE NOGAL JOURNALS

Volume XXV

Part 2 of 3

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to Randy Clarke-Ianiero and Clem Ianiero-Clarke
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window).

Autumn's approach is a mellow time. The extremes of summer (monsoon deluges, dramatic skies, and intensely green meadows) begin to relax. And the high country beckons.

Rainwater still pools in low places on the road to the trail head . . .



. . . and some trees are just beginning to change into autumn's gold.



It's a great time to explore the high country.



Streams continue to flow with the gift of monsoon water.



The miraculous transition of summer to fall has begun . . .



. . . but the trails are still flush with summer's foliage . . .





... and water is everywhere.



Perfect for a cool drink.



Summer's bounty remains a while longer.



We are climbing up the mountain.



Gradually, up, and up.



All the way to the top.



Trustworthy horses, grazing in the distance.



The country we love.





It's said that the thinner air up here can create a sense of euphoria.



We think there's more to it than that.



[To be continued . . .]

MM

The high-country wilderness offers a sort of refuge - a place which is simultaneously timeless, and in the 'now' of the moment.

You'll have look hard to see the horses in the distance, enjoying their freedom.



All of this surrounds us . . .



. . . and yet there's the intimacy of sharing a snack of sweet wildflower buds. "Yum!" "Yeah! These are tasty!"



The world - from a different perspective.



"This is so cool!"



A crushed depression in the tall summer grass is an elk's bed. It's their home.



The day is passing, as we begin our descent.



Down again into the deep, natural forest.



2022-09-26 - High Country Reverie - Part Two

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Our little family shares the reverie of this moment. No saddles, or reins, or ropes. We're fellow wanderers in this special place of harmony.



Just the muffled sound of our footsteps on the soft forest floor . . . and the a-cappella chorus of water flowing beside us.





We appreciate how fortunate we are.





Thank you for joining us.
MM

Summer is leaving - gently. In many places the cheery daisies have begun to dim their brilliance heading into autumn. In other spots, they rush to bloom some more before the first frost . . .



"Wow! They're still here!"



"Yeah, pretty cool!", says Spanky.



"This has been going on for a couple of months, and I'm still not tired of 'em . . ."



There's something idyllic about riding through golden meadows, even when a passing cloud subdues their incandescence.





Ya can't help but 'hear', "We're off to see the wizard", along stretches like this.





Along this old wagon road near Fort Stanton, they're mostly gone.



"Where'd they go?"





Ah, here they are . . .



. . . and more! (Belle enjoys some grama grass between the blossoms). "Flowers, smowers - I'm hungry!"



Truly happy trails.





We're going to miss them when they're gone.



MM

It seems that each year at this time, Nature pauses to extend the last of summer's beauty, before autumn fully arrives.

We are very grateful for this gift.



Spanky sees someone watching us. "Who is it?", asks Belle.



A curious deer, in the brush.



It's hard to imagine a more peaceful setting.



With a few daisies still in bloom, cheerfully smiling at their good fortune.



Autumn is waiting in the wings - some eager leaves have managed to put on their colorful finery a little early.



This vine has become a brilliant signpost on a tree trunk. "Autumn is coming!", it shouts.



It won't be long before the first frost begins to move us to a new season . . .



. . . but for now, we enjoy this special time.



What's this? Our wild horse friends have come to join us. "Hello there!", greets Spanky.



Everyone looks healthy and happy (and maybe just a little pregnant . . .).



The 'babies' have grown so fast during this pleasant summer.



They all fall in behind us as we mosey along (that's the stallion - responsibly bringing up the rear).



It's like a scene from a horsey "Pied Piper".



"Uh, are they going home with us?", wonders Thunder.



That would be nice - but this is their home . . .



. . . and so they bid us good-bye, until the next time . . .



. . . and that's what summer is doing, too.





MM

2022-10-04 - Lake Loop

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This is a wonderful time of year for a ride around Grindstone Lake.

It's always a special treat to ride with a lake view.



The trails here are soft and easy.



Spanky takes his time, emerging from the forest's shade.



Thunder knows the trails well, as he leads us along.



If you look closely, you'll notice he has a mouth full of grass. "Munch! Munch!"



Everyone enjoys a snack along the way.





Who's this? A wild stallion has come to check us out (he has seen us before).



Recognizing us, he returns to his wild herd, down along the lake shore . . .



. . . as we continue on our ride around the lake.





We come across a grassy little dell . . .



. . . with a quiet little brook.



Belle has a sip. "Ah! Refreshing!"





We encounter the 'wild ones' again as we end our ride (that's the same stallion, standing on the left). They seem to have followed us, and calmly bid us a group goodbye.



MM

2022-10-06 - Deep Canyon

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With several days of rain predicted (no complaints here!), we took a quick late day ride into one of the mountain's deeper canyons.

Along the way, some of the Aspens are beginning to change to their autumn gold.



Clouds make fluffy patterns above, as we begin our ride.





Little brooks lace the narrow canyon floor.





Spanky takes the lead . . . of course stopping for a quick bite along the way.



"Maybe just a little more . . ."



Belle doesn't miss a chance, either.



Another little spring emerges from the rocks.



This was gold country, a long time ago. Some of the mines still remain.



Golly - imagine tunneling by hand, through solid rock. Hope they were lucky!



Thunder hears more running water.



A placid stream, bordered by lush grass.



It makes for a serene picture.



As the sun sets deep in the canyon.



MM

So far, it has been an unusual early autumn here. Typically, a crisp and dry season (the favorite time of year for many), it's been much wetter than normal - we've had around eight inches of rain during the past week alone.

At times the skies still sport monsoon-type clouds.



Of course, rain is always welcome. It's as though we can hear the forest sighing with pleasure. The fruit trees, too, are enjoying the extra moisture. The pears are nearly ripe now . . .



. . . and it's certainly a bumper-crop year for the apples - every branch is laden.



Some already have been baked into pies (this one is going fast . . .!).



Gracie still doesn't understand their value. "I mean, they're just a fruit! What's the big deal?"



"Oh, well . . ."



"To each his own!"



Of course, the deer love them.



'Our' bucks are beginning to shed the protective velvet covering (which develops during growth), exposing their new bone-like antler racks (the two bucks on the left have just removed the velvet by sparring together, rubbing the velvet off and leaving their fresh antlers temporarily a deep orange color).



2022-10-10 - *Early Autumn in New Mexico*

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All the rain affected the annual Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta - celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. Some events had to be cancelled, but there still were some spectacular scenes.



It's the world's largest ballooning event, attracting participants from around the globe.





2022-10-10 - *Early Autumn in New Mexico*

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It's remarkable that they can fly to such heights and distances using only heated air, captured in a fabric balloon called an 'envelope'. Seems kinda risky - those big flames in a fabric bag!



The balloons are huge - most more than 100 ft. high . . .



To give some scale, here is someone walking inside the balloon itself while still on the ground - as it is being inflated with warm air.



So-called 'Special Shape' balloons can be whimsical . . .





... and some are downright adorable. Her name is "Airabelle", and she is sponsored by a local dairy. She is 80 ft. tall, 129 ft. long, and requires a crew of 16 to fly her.



Awww...



Floating balloons are a mesmerizing sight, and an autumn tradition in New Mexico.



MM

It is with profound regret that I inform you that our beloved Belle has passed away. She had been dealing for some time with very painful bouts from a cystic ovary, which suddenly grew worse. She was at the vet for treatment when she suffered an apparent massive heart attack and passed away instantly.

There really are no words - she was my first horse, and I was very fortunate. She taught me to understand a horse's point of view; I taught her to trust. Belle had a naturally loving nature. She welcomed Thunder, the late Maverick, and Spanky into the family, setting an example of kindness, patience, and enthusiasm in all we did. We enjoyed many years of a rare and perhaps unique relationship together - riding everything from urban streets to wilderness with confidence and freedom, thanks to her example. She attended special events, and led countless parades, with poise and dignity.

The miles we rode with Belle are without measure, and the memories beyond compare. She will be forever riding with us - always in our hearts.

Thank you for sharing her journey,
MM & Family



As we struggle to accept the loss of our beloved Belle - Thunder, Spanky and I begin to adapt to the new circumstances.

So far, this is the wettest October in memory. The deer enjoy a brief dry spell during their breakfast (all the bucks have lost the 'velvet' from their antlers now).



As usual, Gracie plays hostess.



"Hi! Getting enough corn? Need some more apples?"



We took advantage of the dry afternoon to visit a favorite place along the stream . . .



Where Spanky spots the little 'wild' family.



One of the mares comes over to say hi.



Then we continue along our way (snacking as they go).



The boys enjoy the remaining lush green summer grass.





Later, we ride in search of some more autumn leaves in a nearby canyon. Thunder is saddled and ready to go.



Spanky isn't sure about this, but gives him a compliment - "Hey, that looks good on you!"



"Let's try this trail!", he urges.



We continue peacefully along, as clouds obscure the sun once more. Rain is on the way.



The unusually mild and wet weather has somewhat limited the fall leaves this year, but we still enjoy a beautiful show of autumn color.





Each leaf is a miracle of nature.



Of course, the green grass is a great attraction, too.



Even a few summer daisies to brighten the cloudy day.



It was good to be on the trail together.



MM

We continue to mourn Belle's passing and adjust to life without her with us on the trail (though always in our hearts).

One of our favorite destinations is the Apache Trail. It winds through a beautiful, narrow canyon - terminating at a quiet, tree-shaded stream. The trail begins on a broad mesa top. I let Thunder and Spanky find their own way to a fresh water tank, before beginning our ride. They stayed together and waited for me.



Then we hit the trail together, with Thunder in the lead. I decided to walk with them, rather than ride.



I know they miss Belle and wasn't sure they would stay close to me without her . . .



. . . but we traveled as always - in sync together.



It's their habit to run ahead over the last stretch, down to the water.



"There you are! We waited for you.", Thunder seems to say.



This is a special spot.



I continued to trust these very special horses, giving them freedom to graze . . .



... and to make grass angels.



They casually followed along with me.







Then, on the way back to the trailer . . . Thunder has never been suited to bareback riding - he is too athletic and somewhat unpredictable (Belle was perfect for it) . Even with a saddle, he can be a handful. But I decided to give it a try. I found a natural rock 'mounting block', held my breath, and climbed on. He tensed up, uncertain of this new situation.



2022-10-21 - True Companions

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Using just a nylon halter, and two lead ropes as makeshift reins, we did okay. He certainly paid attention to this unfamiliar circumstance (see how his ears are turned toward me in concentration) . . .



. . . and I probably would not have tried this on the open range - but it worked out. So far, so good.



Back on the mesa top at sunset, Spanky strikes a noble pose.



I'm very proud of them both.



True companions.



MM

After such a mild and green summer (with more rain than usual), and a very pleasant early autumn, it was hard to think about snow.

The past few days we've been appreciating blue skies, green grass . . .



. . . and full-flowing streams.





In fact, Spanky has been enjoying one of his favorite summertime pastimes - splashing in the water. "Splish splash!!"



"Hey Thunder, are those trees turning autumn colors?" . . . "Yup - you know what that means."



Then, surprise. A forecast for a VERY early snowstorm. "Say it ain't so!", griped Spanky. But the sudden gray skies seemed to confirm it.



"I'm just not ready for winter yet, Thunder." . . . "Yeah, I know. It's been really nice. But remember, we ought to have an Indian Summer pretty soon." "Whadaya mean 'Indian Summer'? Our regular summer hasn't really ended yet!"



He's right, it's been shirt-sleeves weather, and there's lots of green grass everywhere (the first snow usually doesn't wilt it - but we thought we better take advantage just in case).



There's still lots of monsoon-like water flowing down from the mountain in heavy cascades.



"It sure is getting cloudy", moans Spanky . . . "Keep eating!"





The grass always looks greener on the other side. "If . . . I . . . could . . . just . . . reach . . . it . . ."



A picturesque autumn scene.



Even in the drab gray light, colorful leaves brighten the trail.



The boys lag behind . . . snacking.



Catching up at their own pace.



"Did I just see a snowflake? Naw . . . it's much too warm", said Spanky hopefully.



I rained during the night - the sound of it on the roof was soothing . . . but this morning it seemed too quiet . . . Yikes!



Gracie was ecstatic. "Oh, boy! I remember this stuff! It's fun!"



The rest of us thought the green grass was awfully nice . . . but the snow will sweeten the apples.



Ah, New Mexico!
MM

With our unique climate, we are always grateful for the beauty and moisture which snow brings - and thankful that it generally melts into the ground within a day or so.

Outings during the early snow are a special treat. We chose a break in the storm to enjoy a jaunt in the forest behind the house.



The ground was still so warm from the sunny day before, our trails turned to little brooks of snow melt. "Hmmm . . . is that a trail or what?", wonders Thunder.



That's a lot of precious water (and mud).



Snow in the forest sure is pretty.



Spanky admires the fluffy accumulation. "Nice!"



"I love this! OH! Time for a snow angel!"



"Whee!"



As another snow cloud approaches, there is a kind of magic to it - we can see new snow falling in the distance.



Beams of warm sunlight find their way between the clouds, as smart Thunder uncovers some green grass.



Dramatic skies enhance the moody atmosphere.



Meanwhile, little Chile is happy in his barn - under the heat lamp. "This is so weird! It was sunny only yesterday!"



By the end of the day the skies had cleared, and the snow began to melt - first from the driveway (which is helpful) . . .



. . . and then from the pastures. Thunder tries his own snow angel - a little late (yuck!).



Remember this? Just the day before!



On the suddenly(!) snow-free lawn, one of the moms enjoys an apple . . .



While four fawns share some snacks together, awwww . . .



. . . and these two little ones relax on the grass . . .





. . . and that's how fast our snow can come and go!

MM

Our early snow melted within a day - leaving moisture renewed - and we returned to more seasonal autumn weather.

With the snow gone, Thunder and Spanky searched out the green grass again in the forest.



Then they trotted on, under the tall pines.



Despite the recent snowstorm, some of the trees are just now beginning to change color (maybe they're confused - I don't blame them).



Spanky enjoys a cool drink . . .



. . . and a fresh grassy snack.



The stream is clouded with silt stirred up by the influx of snow melt.



Thunder finds his own salad bar. "As usual, the best stuff is over there!"



"Yum!"



Here and there, more fall color.



Spanky searches for a place to make grass angels. "Hmmm . . ."



"This is perfect!"



We mosey along together, on this beautiful autumn day.





Bright gold leaves stand out against the deep blue sky.



Spanky takes a moment to enjoy the beauty. "Gee!"



We all appreciate this good day.



It's nice to have autumn back . . . for a little while.
MM

2022-10-29 - Day of the Dead - a Tribute

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Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) is celebrated to remember and honor deceased loved ones who have passed on from this world, while at the same time portraying death as a natural part of the cycle of life. For many years, Belle attended (some would say 'starred in') the annual event held in historic Lincoln, New Mexico. It seems fitting to remember our Belle as she participated in last year's event - with her own remarkable style.

The journal from 10-31-21:

Dia de los Muertos ('Day of the Dead') is sometimes confused with the similar celebrations of Halloween, All Saints' Day, and All Souls' Day. Though they all concentrate on remembering the departed, Dia de los Muertos is less solemn. In many New Mexican household's temporary memorial alters, or 'ofrendas' are assembled displaying photographs and offering the departed loved one's favorite foods, drink and objects. Families gather to reminisce. Public activities include visits to cemeteries, parades, or festive gatherings like the annual event held in historic Lincoln town (originally named 'Las Placita del Rio Bonito' by Hispanic settlers).

Belle is always excited to participate - she sees old friends and meets new ones . . . and she gets to wear her special Dia de los Muertos outfit (not every horse would relish dealing with a fitted dress and long train!)



The wind can catch it, creating some challenging situations which she takes in stride. "A little snack before the party . . ."



She also seems to enjoy her flowered mantilla and lace. She is an unusually fashion-savvy lady.



2022-10-29 - Day of the Dead - a Tribute

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The traditional paper flowers were made for her by our friend Linda.



All dolled up, Belle is eager to join the other merrymakers (dressed in typical 'Dia' mask and garb, I come along for the ride) . . .



2022-10-29 - Day of the Dead - a Tribute

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. . . but first she spots a vendor selling hand-crafted jewelry. "Oh, let's stop for just a minute . . ."



"Lovely. Um . . . so do you have anything sized for a 'larger' girl?"



2022-10-29 - Day of the Dead - a Tribute

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Of course, she is happy to pose for photos with friends old and new. ("Does this dress make my butt look big?", she frets).



She handles such attention with genuine patience. "Take your time . . ."





There are quieter moments, too - greeting old friends . . . "Nice to see you!"



"How've you been?"



And new... "What's your name?"





She stands very still for hugs.



All the while managing that dress . . .



She even stopped to listen to some festive mariachis. "They're good - wanna dance?"



You can bet she had plenty of stories to share at home with Thunder and Spanky . . . "And then my dress flew up, and I wondered what the Queen of England would do!"



You are remembered and loved - always, our special girl.
MM & Family

It wasn't until the last minute that Thunder, Spanky and I decided to attend this year's Day of the Dead event in Lincoln. Belle was such a part of that celebration - it seemed a good way to honor her legacy.

Belle is irreplaceable, and we didn't even try to emulate her magic. We just wanted to be part of something which was so important to her. The boys behaved flawlessly, and I am very proud of them.



They seemed to know how much joy their presence brought, as folks photographed them . . .





. . . and offered them treats (in this case a tasty apple). "Thank you!"



Spanky checks out a to-go container - "Would that by any chance be carrot cake?"



. . . and there was love, from those who knew Belle . . .



... and of course, the children ...



Who are delighted by the 'horsies'.



Naturally Spanky found a place for grass angels (no lead rope is needed for him, but it seemed like the proper thing to do in a public place).



There was the traditional posing for photos by the historic Torreon defensive structure.



We enjoyed the mariachi music. "They're good!" . . . "and LOUD!", added Spanky . . .



. . . and then a truly touching moment - local artist Tiffanie Owen (pictured) had set up a tribute to Belle in front of her gallery.



Gosh.



So many memories.



Such thoughtful sentiments. Thank you, Tiffanie.



On the way home, some quiet reflection . . .



... and a nice cool drink.



Grateful for the love, the memories, and the gift of the present.
MM

Sometimes (most of the time, actually), it seems like we are living in a deer park. Generations of deer have come to think of our lawn as their home, too. Here's a portfolio of their recent visits.

Few things are more peaceful than seeing the bucks resting on the grass together. It shows great trust.



Such splendid dignity in nature.



Some babies follow suit . . .



With their watchful moms nearby (and a crow enjoying some corn in the background).



Sometimes, moms and dads socialize together. "What a fun party! I haven't seen that couple in ages!"



Once in a while an elk will sneak in, too. "What? Where?"



A typical lunchtime with just moms and babies.



It can get kinda chaotic. "Junior! Where are you!"



Sometimes, one mom will 'babysit' the little ones, giving the other moms a break (cows do the same thing). This scene resembles the Pied Piper. "Come on, children, let's go this way . . ."



When a mom says to her fawn, "I have to go do something. You stay right here!", the baby obeys (unlike their human counterparts . . .).



"Oh, look! One of those apple things mom eats."



"Think I'll try one . . ."



The bucks have a club of their own.



They aren't intimidated by the bronze mountain lion. "Are you kidding? That thing's fake!"



Seeing them up close like this allows us to appreciate how magnificent they are.





Gracie always enjoys their company. "Hey! How are you all doing today?!"



This buck is a special friend of hers. "He's my buddy!"



Good friends come in all sizes.



MM

It was the perfect crisp autumn morning for picking apples - about 1500 lbs. of them. The deer will be very happy! . . .



. . . and of course, the pies . . .



When the picking was done, a deer mom came by to see if there were any 'leftovers' on the ground (there were) -- and she brought her brand-new twins!



It was 'Awwww ...' overload!



The tiny legs are still a bit wobbly.



Look at all those fawn spots.



"What's in there, mommy?"



"Ooooh! It smells good!"



"Yum!"



"It's crunchy! That's weird!"



"Where's my sister? Oh, there she is. What'd you find, sis?"



"I don't know! But it's nice and sweet. Mommy says it came off the tree!"



"Gee! There's a lot to learn about around here!"



"Come on children, time for your lunch! . . ."



Who needs television?

MM

Autumn days in New Mexico can sometimes be windy, and on a breezy day the best places to avoid the gusts are within deep and narrow canyons below mesas and mountains. On one such day that's just where we went for a quiet ride.

In the distance, a weather front surmounts lofty Sierra Blanca peak - generating winds which fan out across the open mesa.



We quickly descend into a calmer world.



Where the air is so still, it doesn't disturb this delicate 'giant dandelion' - nearly five inches across.



Spanky stops for a quick snack in the sheltering shade of a big pinyon pine . . .



. . . but the real treat is finding deep green grass along a rapidly-flowing stream.



"Oh boy, this is terrific!", says Spanky - his eyes nearly closed in horse nirvana.



Then a peaceful walk across a dry meadow, on the way to another favorite spot.



They lead themselves down to the stream. The view from above - of contented horses.



There's still lots of water volume, rushing from the rain-soaked mountain.



Cascading down, it carves channels along resistant stone cliffs . . .



. . . but it's the gift of tasty grass - soon to disappear with winter's coming - that makes this time so special . . .



. . . and so they enjoy it together. "Hey! I found some clover!" . . . "Me, too!"



Too soon, it's time to begin the trip back across the protected valley floor.



Spanky lingers in the serene space.



"Hurry up Spanky, we're leaving!", urges Thunder. "Sheesh!" . . .



. . . and here he comes.



While I hitch a bareback ride on Thunder (he's still adjusting to sharing his liberty).



MM

All the cats have good relationships with the deer - but none seem to enjoy their company as much as Gracie.

At least a couple of times each day the deer gather for their snacks and socializing . . .



. . . and napping.



Gracie likes to join them.



She's still fascinated by their appreciation of apples. "I really don't get it . . . but as long as they like them . . ."



"I think apples are boring!"



"Crunch! Crunch! Crunch! They sure make a lot of noise when they eat 'em!"



"Oh! More guests arriving over there!"



"Hi! Did you come for the apples?"



"Hey, there're some nice fresh ones over here!"



"Being a hostess sure keeps me on my toes!"



"Speaking of which, I better go check on those bucks . . ."



"Everybody seems happy! Finally, I can relax!"



"Uh, got any more apples, Gracie?" "(I spoke too soon!)"



MM

With the loss of our beloved Belle, I wasn't sure how Thunder and Spanky would react - would they continue to cooperate when at liberty in the wilderness?

It seemed like a good time to visit the high country, before the arrival of winter weather. I planned to ride Thunder bare back on part of the ride - losing his liberty after all the years of freedom is a big adjustment for him , too (Spanky can't be ridden now due to his ring bone arthritis). They grazed together at the trail head as we prepared to leave. "Yum! Green grass!"



It's a beautiful time in the lower forest, with crisp air and lots of running water everywhere.



I decided to start out by hiking along with them - no lead ropes or controls of any kind (just like they have done for years . . . but without Belle along). This is in the White Mountain Wilderness. No mechanized equipment is allowed, so when large trees like this one fall across a trail, they must be cut with two-man handsaws. "Wow. That was a lot of work!", observes Spanky with gratitude.



Thunder and Spanky remain with me along the trail, stopping for a snack. "Golly, isn't this a nice day for an outing?", they agreed.



Lots of places for a drink along the trail.



"Ahhh . . ."



Then the real test - wide open country at the crest of the mountain. As usual, Thunder bolted up the last distance to the top.



"Don't worry - I'll hang with you!", assured Spanky.



Trust. I went about my wanderings like always, allowing them to graze in the open wilderness country. They kept their eye on me and didn't leave.



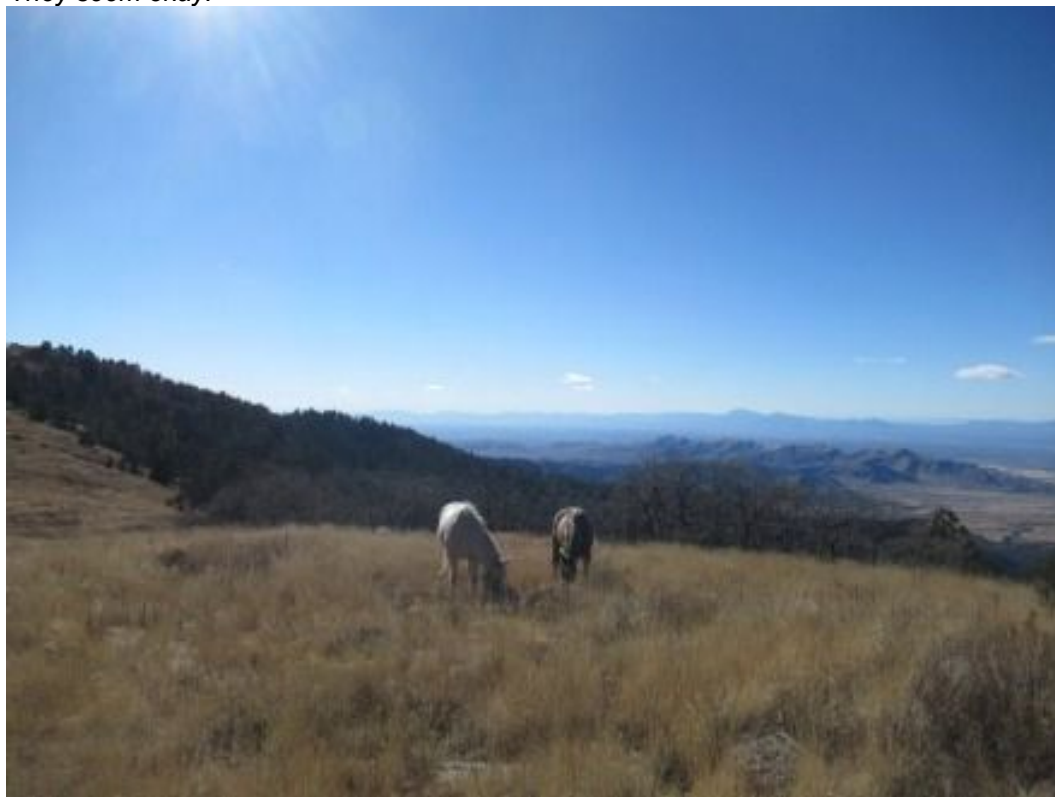
Of course, Spanky enjoyed making an alpine angel. "Oh-oh. Better not roll downhill that way . . ."



. . . and they both shared my sandwich. "Um . . . avocado on whole wheat! That crust looks delicious!", hints Thunder.



Whew. They seem okay.



We continue along the topmost ridge of the mountain. I forgot about riding Thunder - our time together as compadres was too special.



We take in the view of distant Nogal Peak.



The alert Spanky spots some elk in the oak groves. "Hmmm . . . where're they going?"



"I sure love it up here!" . . . "Me, too!"



It is a magnificent area.



By the time we left, dusk had come to the deep canyons leading back down to the trailer.



One more drink . . .



A sylvan spring.



We appreciate the magic of our mountain.



It worked out well. I'm very proud of the boys - and grateful for their companionship.
MM

It seems like there's always something going on around the ranch.

Mom brings her little spotted twins by for visits (she's a little thin because of nursing).



One of them sneaks a quick snack from mom as she drinks. "Hey! Leave some for me!"



Everything is new and exciting to them. "Oh! Look over there!" . . . "Yeah! And what's THAT?"



That 'awww' factor is still there.



As in a kiss on the head - "I wuv you mom . . ."



. . . and just plain 'awww'.



The bucks are here every morning - a wonderful way to start the day.



They're totally relaxed as they wait for their breakfast apples (it's kind of a game - 'bowling for bucks' - as the apples roll out).



That's a little bit of frost on the ground . . . and on the big buck's back (good thing their thick coats are so insulating).



Then, surprise! That frost became snow. REAL snow.



It was a nice wet blanket, coming down in big flakes (I told Gracie that she could go out and play in it tomorrow - when the sun comes out. "Aw, gee . . .").



But of course, the horses wanted to enjoy it now (as the snow falls on their warm bodies, it melts - making damp streaks along their back and sides).



A curious elk watches us pass. "If I had a nice dry barn, I wouldn't be out here . . ."



"But I like playing in the snow!"



Yup - no reason to be bored around here.
MM

Sometimes, the magic is . . . well . . .

Waking this morning to a bright snowy Shangri-la.



As the song says, 'Walking in a winter wonderland . . .'





Of course, Gracie was thrilled. . . . "Oh Oh Oh!"



"Where's them snow mousies?"



"Where are they?"



"Is that one under here?"



She's quite a girl.



Meanwhile Chile is in the barn, snug beneath his heat lamp . . .



"You want me to go OUTSIDE? Are you OUT OF YOUR MIND?"



"Well . . . alright . . . it is beautiful! And not as cold as I thought."



Elk tracks in the snow.



A 'bubbler' keeps the drinker tank from freezing over.



Snowy scene looking east from the barn loft.



There goes Smarty Pants across the barnyard (it's interesting how the cats don't sink down very far into the deep snow).





Lots of snow up in the high country, too.



It just wouldn't be a snow day without angels . . .



. . . and off they go!



What a treat (it's melting fast already).

MM

As much as we enjoy the beautiful snow (and the water it brings), it's nice to have time to dry out a bit between storms.

It doesn't take long for wintry scenes to melt away - so we enjoy them while we can.



"Wasn't there green grass over there just a coupla days ago?", Thunder wonders.



As snow melts, the horses know the first places where the grass emerges.



"Hey! How about that little patch of grass near Fort Stanton? It usually stays green!", Spanky reminds us. So, we head that way. "See? No snow here!"



Off we go in search of Spanky's secret green grass - "It's just down there, by the stream!"



There's still a little snow along the trail . . .



... and an icy-looking waterfall pours down in the shady stream.



"Hey! You're right! It's delicious!"



"Yeah, I told you so!"



"This is great!"



"It's better on the sunny side . . ."



"Oh, look! A taste of summer (sort of) - dried sunflowers. Yum!"



"Yup - it's nice to have a little break from the snow!"



"Of course, I'm glad there's still enough around for making angels! Whee!"



Fawn update: They're enjoying the patch of warmer weather, too.



"Hey! Where did all that white stuff go?"



"I don't know, but I'm good with this sunshine!"



"Makes it easier to find the corn!"



MM

"Give Thanks for Unknown Blessings Already on Their Way"
Navajo Saying



Wishing you and yours a very Happy Thanksgiving!
All of us at Followed Dream Ranch



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End Journal Part 2 of 3

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