



FOLLOWED
DREAM
RANCH

Volume 3 - Part 2 of 3

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2012-07-02 – *Cloudcroft Rim Trail*

Cloudcroft sits at about 9,000 ft. - ideal for riding this time of year.

"Hey! Before you leave for your ride, how about some corn?"



The road to Cloudcroft.



2012-07-02 – *Cloudcroft Rim Trail*

"We're ready! Hurry up and saddle Thunder so we can go!"



Stopping for a snack.



A view to the desert below.



This was logging country (for the railroads). Because of the steep terrain, a cable system was developed to lower the logs to mills far below.





"I'm getting confused! Which way?"



MM

2012-07-05 – *High Ridge Ride*

We joined Dacodah for a warm summer night's moonlight ride in the Rio Grande . . .

First, we went along with a couple of new riders who wanted to see how their horses would do in water . . . during daylight. My kids were fine with riding in an unfamiliar trailer on the way to the river - I was very proud of them! Of course, Belle had to discuss it: "Why am I in the middle again? With you two in the way, how am I going to meet any interesting single horses?"



A monsoon sky above the old trestle.



2012-07-05 – *High Ridge Ride*

Page 2 of 6

Spanky doesn't understand the big deal. "It's just water!" They all did just fine, and the moonlight ride in the river was magical as always (too bad moonlight rides don't photograph at all!)



The next morning, Belle enjoyed some fresh alfalfa before a ride in San Lorenzo Canyon.



Yup. Posing again . . .



2012-07-05 – *High Ridge Ride*

It was a good group, and a wonderful ride.



2012-07-05 – *High Ridge Ride*

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Thunder takes his leadership very seriously. I am still amazed by how responsive he is to my verbal suggestions - if he takes a wrong turn, a few words from me sends him on the right one!



2012-07-05 – *High Ridge Ride*

"Yeah, well, I don't care what he said; there must be a better way down!"



MM

2012-07-06 – *Fourth Of July 2012*

This is a very patriotic community, and the Fourth of July is a big deal. I missed the Smokey Bear parade in Capitan this year, because I was volunteering at Fort Stanton, where we had many visitors.

While the parade was going on in town, the morning of the Fourth was beautiful at the old Fort.



The flag flew proudly over the parade ground - as it has for nearly 160 years.



2012-07-06 – *Fourth Of July 2012*

A little after noon, we got a BIG monsoon rain. This ought to help green the grass up!



It stopped raining just in time for the opening of the 57th annual Smokey Bear Stampede Rodeo in Capitan.





The muddy arena made for an interesting evening! Especially events like the children's sheep riding . . .



Oops!



... and it made for softer landings in the rough stock events.





2012-07-06 – *Fourth Of July 2012*

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We had a beautiful sky at sunset - then a full moon and lots of fireworks over the fairgrounds. When the crowd sang "God Bless America" acappella, it was an American moment to remember.



Hope your fourth was a happy one!
MM

It rained most of the day . . . stopping as usual just before the rodeo kicked off this evening.

It turned the fairgrounds arena into a lake! But the third night of the rodeo went on as scheduled.





The cowboys didn't seem to mind too much.







The rough stock competitors (bronc and bull riders) took the brunt of it!



... and the outriders, normally a colorful bunch, were solid, muddy brown.



This will be a rodeo to remember!

MM



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2012-07-11 – *Ranch Rodeo*

The Smokey Bear Stampede in Capitan includes both professional and "ranch" rodeos over the course of several days. I like the ranch rodeos because the entrants compete as a team, in events featuring regular cowboy work (roping, moving cows, etc.).

Of course, this year there was the mud . . . !



"No, no! Don't shake! You'll get mud all over me!"



"Dang!"



I wonder how much mud there was on the inside of his hat!



*Wilcox enjoys his usual mud-free spot in the apple tree.
"Mud? I don't think so!"*



MM

On our way to ride in the high country of Cloudcroft, Esther and I came across a group of teepees and a ceremonial structure. We stopped to investigate . . .



One of the most traditional and sacred ceremonies practiced by the local Mescalero Apache is the puberty rite ceremony. It is an eight day "rite of passage" event that marks the transition from girl to woman-hood. Usually conducted at the age of 16, a young girl celebrates this time with family-prepared feasts, dancing, blessings and rituals established hundreds of years ago. It emphasizes her upbringing which includes learning her tribal language and instilling, from infancy, a sense of discipline and good manners.

The family must prepare and provide food for meals on four consecutive days - for the entire tribe!



That takes lots of provisions!



Although this is a very private time for the family and entire tribe, we were honored by being asked into the sacred compound and introduced to the girl, who is never referred to by her actual name, but is known as "White Painted Woman"; she must wear a special buckskin regalia; she must not allow water to touch her lips for eight days, using a special drinking straw; etc.; as she learns the many lessons of her people, the girl is urged to talk little, to heed what is said to her, and to maintain a dignified manner.

I was astonished when it was offered that I take a photo of the sleeping White Painted Woman. I would have thought this to be forbidden.



Her buckskin regalia is handmade especially for the eight day ceremony. Cattail pollen on her nose is for spiritual cleansing.





2012-07-17 - *Special Occasion*

After this interesting experience, and time to graze, we continued on our ride.





It is believed that the purity of Painted White Woman is a tonic for the Apache people and the entire earth.



May it be so!

MM

2012-07-19 – *Fort Stanton LIVE 2012*

Page 1 of 10

Each year, historic reenactors from all over come to old Fort Stanton for a long weekend of camaraderie, artillery shows, tours, guest speakers, a military ball, historic vignettes, and good times together - in the re-creation of our frontier past.

This year as always, a large encampment was set up on the parade grounds. The participants live just as they would have in the old days (ca. 1860) . . . We had a crowd of more than 2,000 visitors on Saturday.





The camp includes an accurate (and functioning) "settlers" trading post. Esther checks out beer in crockery "bottles" - used when glass was a luxury.



At night, it became a popular meeting place . . .



Matrons at the Ball.



The artillery firing is a stirring recreation . . . and LOUD!





Mescalero Apaches performed several traditional dances, including the sacred "Ghost Dance".



... and there was a terrific minstrel show in a tent.











At times during the weekend, it really felt like the past had come alive. When it was over, and everyone had packed up and headed home, there was a real feeling of emptiness at the old Fort . . .

MM

2012-07-24 – *Ranchmen's Camp Meeting*

For many years during the early 20th century, a preacher had traveled this country, ministering to the (then) isolated ranches in the region. By the mid-1930's, annual Christian revivals had become popular in many rural areas of New Mexico, and the local ranchers decided to begin one here in 1940. The parents of LaMoyne and Opal Peters were among the founders of the first interdenominational Ranchmen's Camp Meeting in 1940. Not yet married, LaMoyne and Opal attended that first meeting - and every one of the 72 since (the Peters recently celebrated their seventy-first anniversary!) They invited me to join them for the first night of this year's five day revival.

Opal and LaMoyne Peters. At 91 years young, they are inspirations in many ways. Here they arrive at their 72nd(!) annual Ranchmen's Camp meeting.



2012-07-24 – *Ranchmen's Camp Meeting*

Page 2 of 12

The Ranchmen's Camp is located on a beautiful mesa, just 6 miles from our ranch. LaMoynes father negotiated a 99 year lease with the National Forest Service for use of the land in 1939.



Today, 72 years later, the road to the Camp looks much as it did at the beginning.



2012-07-24 – *Ranchmen's Camp Meeting*

LaMoyne and his neighbors constructed the dining hall during WWII.



Three meals a day for the five-day event are still prepared here (every meal features locally raised and donated beef). In the old days, more than a thousand people would gather for the Camps. Today it is closer to 400. Still, that's a lot of mashed potatoes! (And they were the best I've ever tasted. New potatoes are brought in from Texas . . . dug up, washed, boxed, and in this kitchen within 24 hours of the field. I don't know what they put in them - or how they get them so smooth.)



2012-07-24 – *Ranchmen's Camp Meeting*



Most attendees of the meeting camp out in RV's and trailers (because we live so close, the horses and I got to sleep at home each night). Big tents like this one are used for youth activities. We had a rain shower one afternoon, and I found the horses staying dry and grazing under this tent.



2012-07-24 – *Ranchmen's Camp Meeting*

In 1947, LaMoyne and the others built the Tabernacle, where large services are held. The lumber came from Opal's father's ranch, where a saw mill was set up for the purpose. For three months, LaMoyne would determine the lumber needs for the following day, and the wood would be milled overnight, for use the next morning. The wood makes wonderful acoustics for the hymns.



2012-07-24 – *Ranchmen's Camp Meeting*

Page 6 of 12

Both sides of the Tabernacle building open to the fresh air - and amazing views of the Carrizozo Valley to the west.



Sunsets are a true inspiration, especially accompanied by the old hymns. This was the view from my seat in the Tabernacle.



2012-07-24 – *Ranchmen's Camp Meeting*

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This experience was new to me, and I found myself coming back the next day . . . and the next. I ended up attending all five days. I brought the horses along, and each day between services and meals, we rode the area surrounding the camp - discovering some wonderful cattle trails to explore. Come ride along with us!



2012-07-24 – *Ranchmen's Camp Meeting*

LaMoyne and Opal dug this dirt "cattle tank" in the 1950's to water their herd.



Beyond the Camp, a long, green (this time of year), canyon makes a picturesque place to ride.



2012-07-24 – *Ranchmen's Camp Meeting*

A seasonal stream runs along the canyon bottom.



2012-07-24 – *Ranchmen's Camp Meeting*

Belle spots something (an elk?) in the distance.





2012-07-24 – *Ranchmen's Camp Meeting*

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Headed back to Ranchmen's Camp.



It was a great experience for us all. Thanks for sharing it!

MM

2012-07-27 – *Salado Canyon*

Most people feel that fall is the best season in New Mexico - and it is wonderful. But the surprise to me is summer. Mild temps, cool nights, beautiful skies, and frequent afternoon thundershowers which green things up in a hurry.

About halfway between Capitan and historic Lincoln, there is a large tract of public land along the Capitan Mountains. Running through it is Salado Canyon.



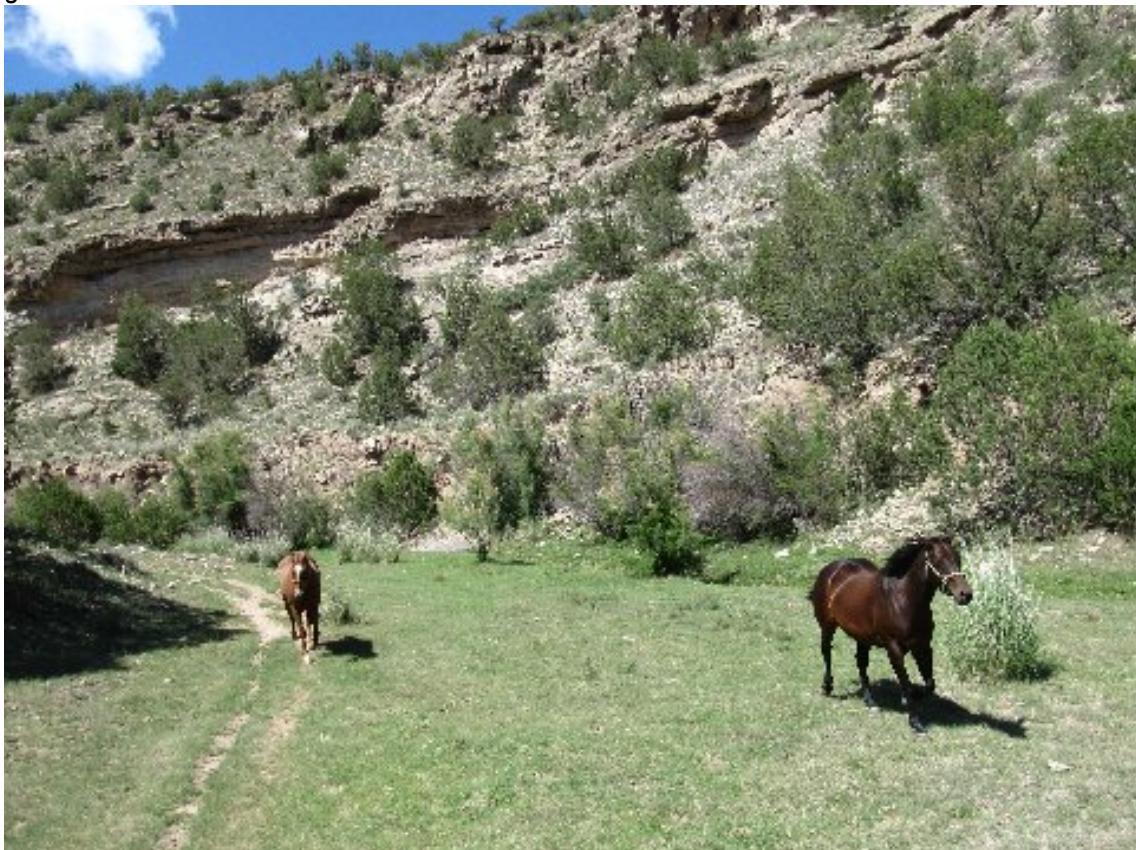
They always spot game (in this case, deer) before I do!



Salado Canyon meanders for miles.



This portion reminds us of Arizona's high desert terrain. It's easy to imagine Indians whooping it up along the rim . . .





2012-07-27 – *Salado Canyon*

Out of the canyon, much of the land is leased to cattlemen. These water tanks make perfect "cowboy hot tubs" (yes, I did . . . after they had a drink!)



Thunder strikes an iconic Western pose, windmill and all.



The West.



MM

2012-08-01 – *WWII Comes To Fort Stanton*

Page 1 of 8

New Mexico is known as the "Land of Enchantment". But sometimes it can be downright surreal. Take this last weekend for example. Old Fort Stanton was the site of another reenactment. But this time it was a large group (from Louisiana, Kansas and Texas), who used the Fort's buildings and open spaces to recreate significant battles of the Italian theater of WWII - specifically, battles waged from Anzio, up the boot of Italy, to Rome, in the summer of 1944.

So, there I was, in my 1858 Mounted Rifle uniform, giving Fort tours to Allied and Nazi soldiers from WWII . . . Italy . . . in the middle of New Mexico . . . It was different.

As we arrive for volunteer duty, the horses check out yet another historic encampment at "their" Fort. "Hmmm, Belle, these guys aren't in blue or gray . . ."





Allied troops, Italian partisan fighters (and German soldiers), were everywhere.







2012-08-01 – *WWII Comes To Fort Stanton*

Page 5 of 8

By now, the horses seem to be ready for anything. Even German soldiers from 60 years ago . . . in New Mexico!



Sometimes it really did look like old photos come to life.





This tableaux gave me serious pause. "Captured German Troops" . . . just like in the old newsreels. See what I mean?



Time warp: 1858 meets 1944



As the horses might say, "Humans sure are interesting!"
MM

2012-08-01 – *More Peaceful Pursuits*

Page 1 of 6

After World War II (!) . . . we took a nice quiet ride out of the Fort and into the hills.

It was a quiet day at the ranch.



Summer skies.



2012-08-01 – *More Peaceful Pursuits*

Page 2 of 6

Back at the Fort, the old German Internment Camp in the distance (the reenactors used this for one of their Italian "battles")



Thunder and I wait for Belle and Spanky to catch up (says Belle, "Well, those damned Nazis better be out of here . . . they give me the creeps!")



Headed to the top of that hill.



Overlooking the Fort.



The Fort is surrounded by 25,000 acres of BLM land for riding.



Nice and quiet. Thunder takes a snooze.





Ah, peace! Thanks to all who made it possible . . .
MM

2012-08-06 – *Pennsylvania Trail*

Even after all this time (and all those miles of riding) - we continue to discover new trails nearby.

The Pennsylvania Trailhead is just a few miles from the ranch.



The trail climbs quickly.



Recent rains have brought out lots of wildflowers along the way . . .



Steeper and steeper . . .



Parts of it are pretty rocky.



But the views are worth it! Monsoon rains come down on the Capitan Mountains in the distance.





2012-08-06 – *Pennsylvania Trail*

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The trail actually makes a big loop near Nogal peak, returning down a different route. We didn't have time today, but look forward to the longer ride soon!

Mommie Cat gets tired just thinking about it!

"Whew! You go and have a good time."



MM



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It seems like there has been an awful lot going on around here lately - rodeos, reenactments, and revivals. The horses have been part of most of it. Saturday, Belle and I were invited to participate in the annual anniversary celebration of Dowlin's Mill, Ruidoso's oldest building. Considered the founding of Ruidoso, the mill was established in 1868 by Captain Paul Dowlin, who had served at Fort Stanton during the Civil War. It is said that Billy the Kid once hid in a flour barrel there.



We were asked to present the colors (flag) at the public event. Belle had never carried a flag before, and I was very proud of her dignified demeanor in front of a large crowd (buglers and all). She so impressed the organizers of the Old Lincoln Days event, a big three-day festival in the historic village of Lincoln, that they asked us to lead their annual parade. So, the next day, Belle not only carried a flag, she did so first in line, along a parade route filled with noisy crowds, motorcycles, fire trucks with sirens blasting . . . you name it, even reenactors shooting off their guns. It was her very first parade. She behaved beautifully, and I was very proud of her.

2012-08-08 – *Belle Of The Ball*

Belle prepares to lead the parade down the main drag of Lincoln - once referred to by then-President Rutherford B. Hayes as "the most dangerous street in America".



I was very proud of her!



After the parade, we were asked to pose for photos in front of the historic Torreón, a rock tower where early settlers hid during Indian raids.



2012-08-08 – *Belle Of The Ball*

Belle stood patiently for hours, as dozens of tourists had their photos taken with her. She seemed to genuinely enjoy it - as though she understood what a special moment she was providing them.



After that, we retired to a nearby outdoor bar . . . oh, Belle!



It was another memorable experience in New Mexico!
MM

2012-08-20 – *Drummer Boy*

During this month's Fort Stanton Garrison (I guess I have become a re-enactor . . .) we did a lengthy march along some old Cavalry-era roads around the Fort.

Belle was intrigued by the drummer.



Every time she got the chance, she drifted closer to the drum.



Spanky and Thunder drifted closer to snacks . . .





We found a number of interesting artifacts, including this rusted and flattened Civil War era tin cup (being compared to a reproduction).



Belle has a little drink from my canteen.



I was VERY proud of the way the horses behaved, just joining up and walking along with the rest of us.



Of course, they got to graze, too.



... a thunder storm in the distance.



Frequent rain showers and mild temps have greened things up at the ranch.



MM

2012-08-23 – *The Elk Come For A Visit*

Early this morning we had company while the horses ate their breakfast.

Just over the fence, in the National Forest . . .



"Hey! Those horses get alfalfa and stuff!"



2012-08-23 – *The Elk Come For A Visit*



I almost got a shot of a big, handsome bull elk! Too elusive for me . . .





Darn!



But I did catch this mom and baby.



Nice way to start the day!
Wishing you a good one.
MM

This has been a busy week for Belle - she and her escorts have conducted several group tours at the Fort.



2012-08-23 – *Tour de Force*

Spanky helps her explain things to some ROTC cadets.



Belle seems interested in what "Sgt" Mike Bilbo (of our Garrison) has to say. It's remarkable how these horses join right in . . .







She is quite a gal!



2012-08-24 – *Ghoulish Skies*

The morning started like most this time of year - beautiful skies, and the cats playing on the lawn. Seemed like a great day for a ride up Nogal Peak!



Off we go, along Nogal Canyon Road, just behind the ranch. What's this? Gray skies all of a sudden . . . these are flat gray skies . . . very unusual.



Wildflowers are everywhere.



Come'on Spanky, we're leaving!



2012-08-24 – *Ghoulish Skies*

It's so lush, the trail is hard to find. "Hurry up, Belle." "Okay Thunder, don't rush me. God knows what's in here; snakes, mice, Chihuahuas . . . I hate hidden Chihuahuas."



"I'm telling you, get off my tail!"



2012-08-24 – *Ghoulish Skies*

Spanky does an end run around us, which drives Thunder crazy.



"Ha! Ha! I'm ahead of you!"



A pretty pool along the way.



When we got to the top of the ridge, we saw what the gray skies were all about: a big low front had blasted destructively through Arizona, and slammed into our mountains. I have never seen clouds like these. Dark, menacing and dangerous looking and moving our way fast! Even Thunder is impressed.



Spooky.



We thought we should skedaddle out of there before the storm got to us, but we were too late. Belle led the way down. I have heard about mountain storms like this, but never experienced one. It was like being in a special effects film - but for real. The nasty clouds flew over us like ghouls - the temperature dropped 20 degrees instantly - and then a dark foggy mist came down in front of us like a deathly claw. Belle stopped in her tracks.



Soon we were racing through a chilled fog.



Whew! We made it back to the trailer just before it began to rain. At home, the storm formed a double rainbow right over the ranch.



2012-08-24 – *Ghoulish Skies*

Later, at sunset . . . looking south, the menacing clouds turned oddly golden. While in the west . . .



It was a beautiful end to an interesting day. Thanks for joining us!

MM

2012-08-25 – “Just” A Nice Afternoon

After the dramatic skies above Nogal Peak, it was nice to enjoy a quiet late afternoon ride in the Forest behind the ranch . . . elk and all!

It was the perfect temperature for a ride along familiar trails. We leave by the gate behind the house.



2012-08-25 – “Just” A Nice Afternoon

This was just an elk path when we moved here. Now the horses have made it "their" trail.



2012-08-25 – “Just” A Nice Afternoon

Belle spots some elk - maybe her breakfast friends.



"Hi, Belle!"



2012-08-25 – “Just” A Nice Afternoon

That's Belle's pasture in the background. They do seem to recognize her. These are two moms with their babies.



Looking back towards the ranch.



2012-08-25 – “Just” A Nice Afternoon

These clouds don't look real!



Headed home.



2012-08-25 – “Just” A Nice Afternoon

Like the song says, "Nice and easy does it every time."



Now wasn't that relaxing?
MM

2012-08-26 – *Blue Skies Over Nogal*

After the "war clouds" of two days ago, bright blue skies made for a very nice ride near Nogal Peak.

From the ranch, Nogal Peak beckons like the mystical "Bali Ha'i" in the distance.



And from the paved road up, parts of the road are very rough; it takes about half an hour to go just seven miles.



Our safari begins.





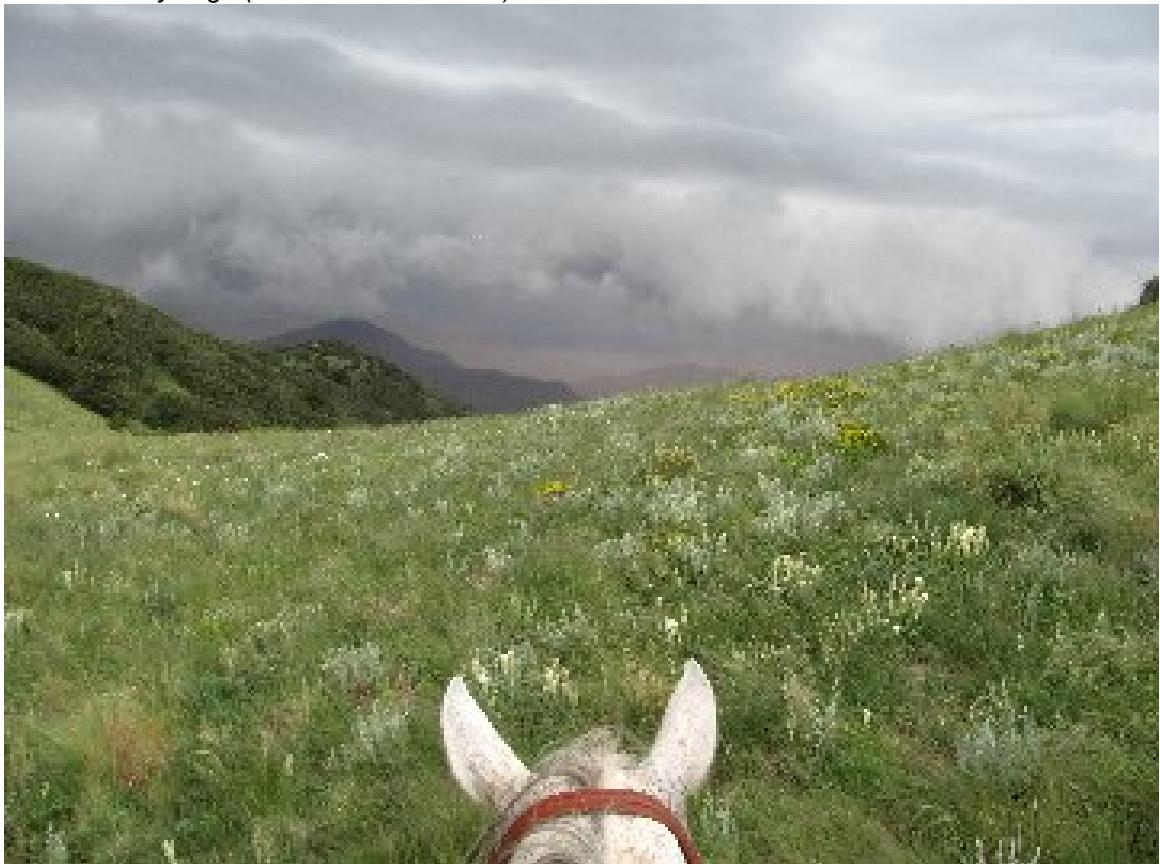
Looks like Thunder can't decide which wildflower to try first (actually, he does not eat flowers).



"Bali Ha'i" (Nogal Peak)



The view two days ago (with the storm clouds) . . .



2012-08-26 – *Blue Skies Over Nogal*

... and under a blue sky. Even the horses seemed to notice the difference!





Thunder shares my sandwich. "Hmmm . . . just the whole wheat, please".



Here comes Belle.



"Hey! Where's MY sandwich!"





As afternoon rain clouds form in the distance, we head back home.



It was a beautiful ride - thanks for sharing it!
MM

2012-09-10 – *A Sunrise And A Parade*

Page 1 of 5

Belle and I were asked (and honored) to carry the American flag in the annual Carrizozo Labor Day Parade.

We started early. We have had lots of rain lately (things are still very green at the ranch), but it was a beautiful day for the parade. Here is the sunrise as the horses had their breakfast.



Getting ready to go.





The Carrizozo parade is more modest than most . . . and the slowest-paced! Belle had difficulty walking soooooo slowly. But she did it!





She even got her nails done for this one! "I would like a little more color . . ."



After the parade, Belle seemed pleased.



It is always an honor to carry our country's colors.

MM



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It started out like most late afternoon rides behind the ranch.

Belle helps me open our gate to the Forest.



"Our" trail. Thunder leads the way.



Lots of flowers.



Then . . . Spanky spots something.



WOW! A big bull elk!



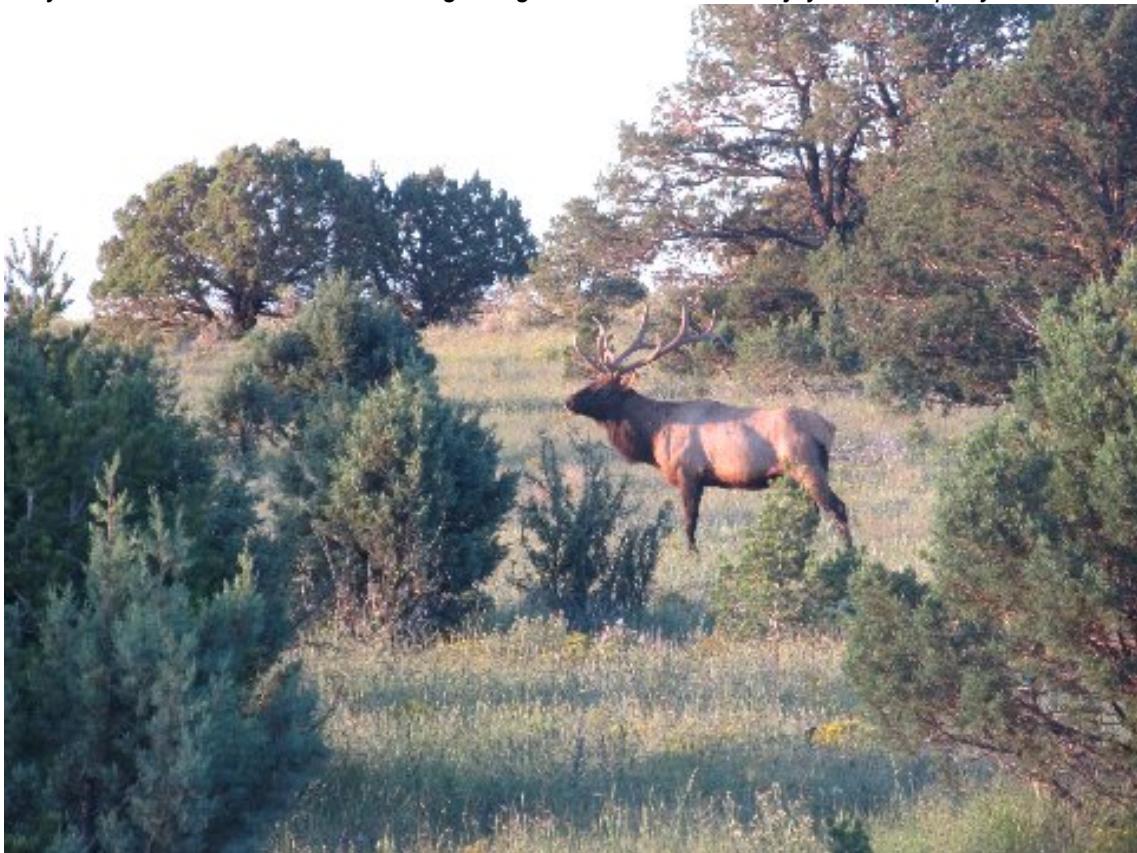
2012-09-10 – *I Would Like You To Meet Someone Special*

And very close, too! (That's Thunder at the bottom of the photo)



2012-09-10 – *I Would Like You To Meet Someone Special*

He really doesn't seem to mind that we tag along. It's almost like he enjoys the company!



He leads us to his family. All the while he is bugling to them - a thrilling sound at this close range! (See the OTHER big bull at the upper right of the group?)



We join them. I think they must recognize my horses.



This is magical. We can hear them "talking" to each other.



As the sun sets, we tag along with them.



We continue until it gets too dark to go on.



This was a THRILL!



So glad we could share this extraordinary meeting with you!

MM

2012-09-11 – *In Remembrance*

I received this just as it appears below, from someone who captured the image at the Carrizozo parade. I thought it would be good to share, on this anniversary of 9-11.

MM

United We Stand

May the world be at Peace.



End Volume 3 - Part 2 of 3

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