

## Volume 1 - Part 3 of 3

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## 2011-03-20 – *Seems Like Old Times*

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One of the things the horses seemed to like best about our time in Sedona was meeting all the tourists along the trails. So far, most of our riding in New Mexico has been in solitude. But the great warm weather (and Spring Break) brought out some families and hikers this weekend. The horses greeted them like old friends.

*This is a now familiar area near the ranch . . . we have ridden here in the snow! But it is bright and warm today.*



## 2011-03-20 – *Seems Like Old Times*

*Spanky checks the old orchard for apples. Wrong time of year. Sure is good to see him having so much fun.*



*He leads the herd at a gallop.*





*Here they are, running full out, to catch Thunder and me.*



## 2011-03-20 – *Seems Like Old Times*

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*Belle kicks her heels up - in fact, they all did. I am very lucky to share this with them (and with you!) . . .*



## 2011-03-20 – *Seems Like Old Times*

*A group of hikers enjoys giving treats to the horses almost as much as the horses enjoyed receiving them.*



*Belle is very gentle with the little ones. So's Spanky.*



## 2011-03-20 – *Seems Like Old Times*

*The Aspen trees are still bare, but a little grass has come up in the meadows.*



*When we got home, the deer were waiting. It's as if they know about daylight savings time.*



# 2011-03-20 – *Seems Like Old Times*

*So everyone relaxed together.*



*"Hey, do you see my friends, the deer?"*



*Leave it to Belle to find a more comfortable way to graze! The fawn seems interested.*



## 2011-03-21 – *Kraut Canyon*

There's a wonderful long loop trail up through Kraut Canyon, and back down Littleton Canyon (actually, the trail passes pretty close to the back of the ranch, but I haven't yet figured out how to connect with it from here). We trailered the short distance to the trail head this afternoon. Then we took our time, and went only to the midway point before returning the way we came.

*We started with a break at Bonito Lake. Actually, it was not my idea; the parking area for the trail head is nearby, and Spanky, Belle and Maverick let me know they wanted to enjoy the grass for a while . . . by quietly walking there while I saddled Thunder. Maybe they didn't think I would notice.*



*Belle lingered a while longer.*



*We were soon all together on the trail.*



## 2011-03-21 – *Kraut Canyon*

*These trails are very soft -- covered in fallen pine needles. The scent in the warm sun is wonderful.*



*And there are little brooks along most of the way.*



# 2011-03-21 – *Kraut Canyon*

*Maverick and Spanky stopped to graze a minute, and run to catch up.*



*Pretty place, even when the meadow is not green.*



*The kids stop and have a chat. I wonder what Belle is saying . . . "Whew! Let's save the rest of the trail for another time . . . "We spend a lot of time like this, just being together.*



*Homeward bound is always faster . . . with Belle in the lead.*



*Here they come at full tilt again.*





*Time for a breather. Maverick has learned not to stop too fast on the trail, lest someone play bumper cars with his tail.*



*A cool drink and a snack.*



## 2011-03-25 – *Philadelphia Canyon*

I'm afraid after a while the photos might become repetitive - horses, mountains, desert . . . but to me every ride is unique. Each one filled with special moments.

*Philadelphia Canyon, between Ruidoso and Nogal, starts out as a forest road. We parked and traveled it by foot.*



*It began to climb.*



## 2011-03-25 – *Philadelphia Canyon*

*Although it looks like Spanky is taking a rest, actually he is just getting up from rolling on some soft grass.*



*Pretty soon, the road becomes a trail as it continues to gain elevation. This section is steeper than it looks. Following along behind Maverick, Belle and Spanky often seem to be having their own conversation. "And I'm telling you, Spanky, that mare is 15 if she is a day. I think she dyes her mane. And another thing . . ."*



# 2011-03-25 – *Philadelphia Canyon*

*Down we go, trotting over soft pine needles.*



*"Well, are you coming?"*



## 2011-03-25 – *Philadelphia Canyon*

*The three others stand and wait while Thunder and I catch up.*



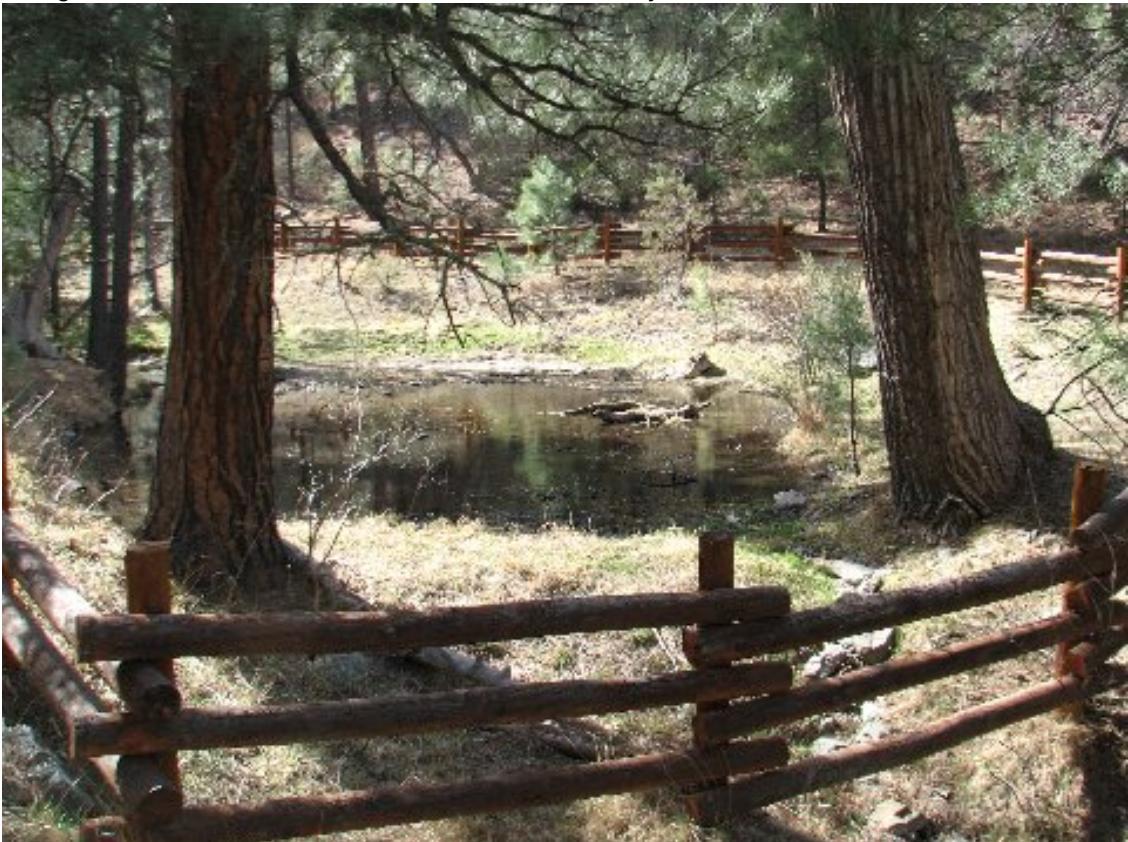
*A fallen tree provides an interesting obstacle. It is a nice warm mid-day and the horses are too mellow to jump it.*



*Belle just leisurely passes over. They all follow as if in slow-motion.*



*Strangely, in the middle of nowhere, someone has built a very nice wooden fence around a watering hole along a brook in the National Forest. But who? and why?*



## 2011-03-25 – *Philadelphia Canyon*

*As always, we take some time to snack along the way. When Thunder and I ride on, they are good about following (although sometimes there is a lot of sighing . . .)*



## 2011-03-25 – *Philadelphia Canyon*

*Greener grass along a stream. The trees are still bare, but tiny green buds are starting to appear.*



*Thunder and Maverick share a drink.*



## 2011-03-25 – *Philadelphia Canyon*

Page 8 of 8

*Waiting at home, Big Guy and Wilcox are napping together. Not surprisingly, Big Guy likes being the older brother . . . he is a great cat. (He still is outdoors about half the time, but comes in when he wants.)*



MM

It wasn't easy leaving California and moving to New Mexico. But . . . all it takes is a day like Saturday to make it all worth it!

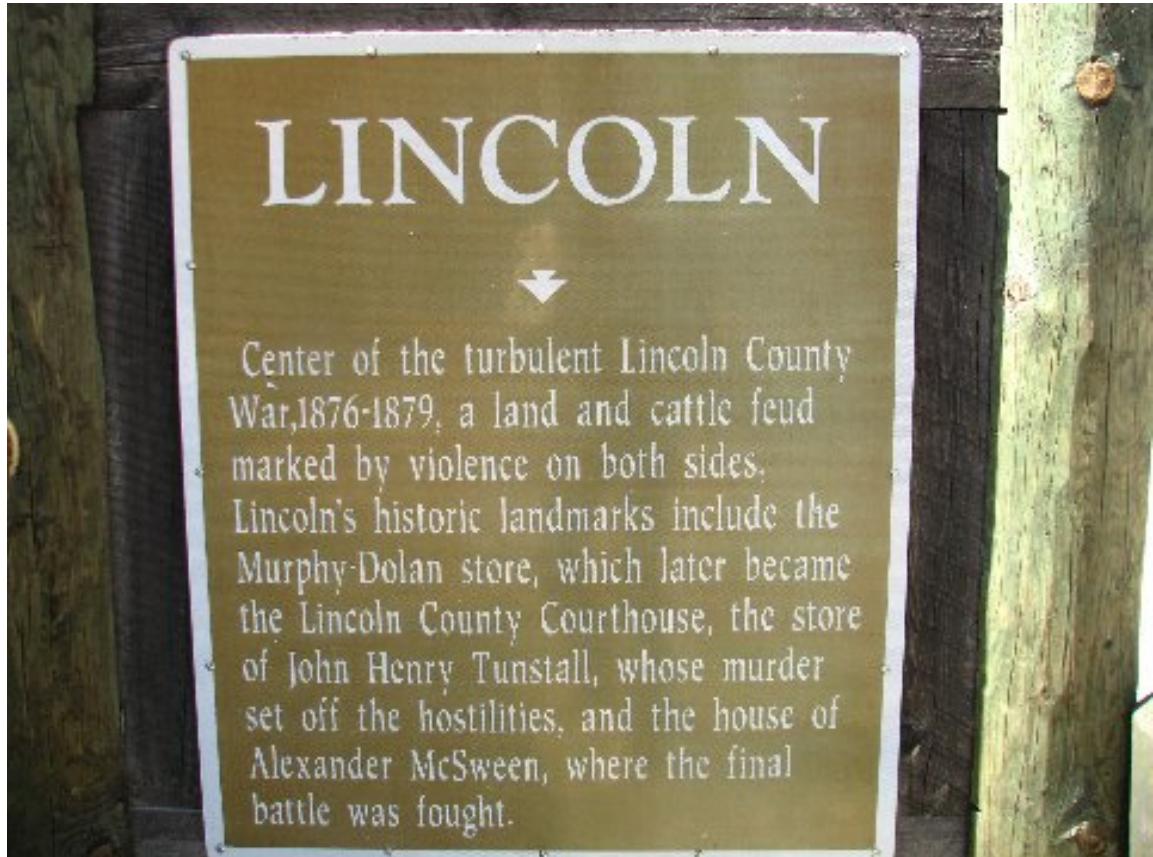
The weather was glorious; in the upper 60's. We loaded up and headed for Salazar Canyon, about 20 miles from the ranch. This is very historic country. Sheriff Pat Garrett; Billy the Kid; Kit Carson - they were all here. In the timeless quiet on horseback, you can sense their presence. And nearby is the entirely historic village of Lincoln.

Lincoln is considered one of the most historic towns in New Mexico. In the late 1870's, two powerful local factions clashed for nearly four years in what became known as the "Lincoln County War". It nearly cost us our statehood, which didn't happen until 1912. (Ulysses S. Grant famously ranted to Congress, that "owning New Mexico isn't worth defending it".)

This is the real Old West of dime novels and countless movies. They were mostly fiction. But the fact happened right here.

*Leaving the ranch, we're headed for Salazar Canyon, at the base of the Capitan Mountains (10,200 ft. elevation) in the distance.*





*But first we stop by historic Lincoln, for some famous lemon bars at the Dolan House Tea Room. Here is a little private cemetery along the way.*



*The whole community is a registered historic site, so restoration of places like this ruin must pass review committees, etc. Stuff stays pretty much as it is.*



*One thing that has been restored is the thick-walled, fort-like "Torreon" from the 1850's - where early residents holed up when Apaches attacked the town. Note the small gun ports instead of windows.*



## 2011-03-28 – *The Reason We Came*

*Things are more peaceful now. The tiny town boasts four museums, several boutiques and galleries, and artisans like this weaver. No traffic lights, nor even a stop sign on its single main street.*



*The Tunstall Store Museum is kept just as it was during the Lincoln County War, merchandise and all.*



*The Dolan House figured prominently in the Lincoln War; today it serves high tea, genteel meals - and great lemon bars.*



*Trees in front of the mission church are just starting to bud on this warm March day. (The horses and I drove by this church to view the luminaries on Christmas Eve. I went inside and discovered a touching sight: Santa Claus giving donated presents to every local child in need.)*



*Another building in typical "Territorial" style.*



*Billy the Kid really did sleep here. And so have I. The original Ellis Store is now a wonderful B&B, where I stayed during my exploration of the area.*



*And here is the Courthouse where Billy shot two guards and made his final escape (his bullets are still in the walls) - only to be gunned down shortly thereafter by Pat Garrett.*



*Thunder checks out an old adobe on the way to Salazar Canyon.*



*The road to Salazar. We climb a bit above Lincoln, into a beautiful area of trees, forest and meadows.*



## 2011-03-28 – *The Reason We Came*

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*On this beautiful Saturday afternoon, we are the only ones here at a former CCC Camp, known as "Baca Campsite".*



*Getting ready to ride. They all wait patiently.*

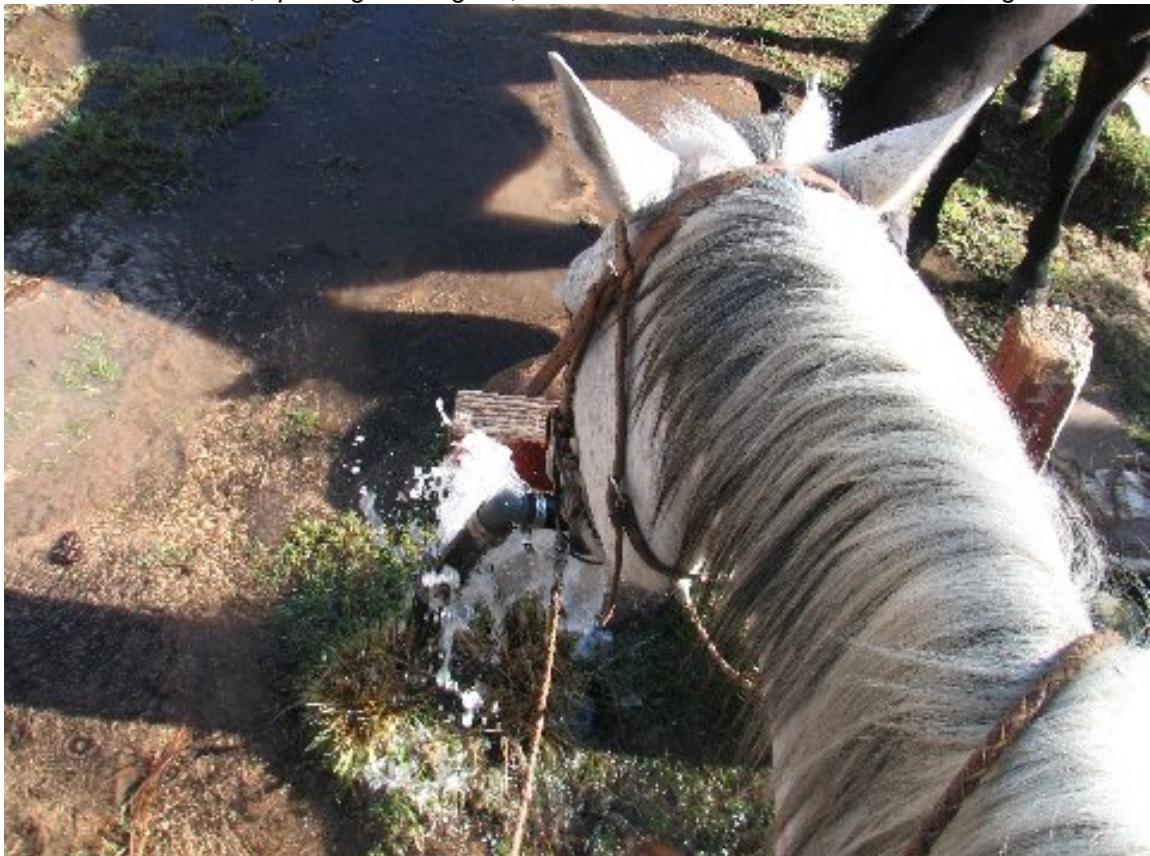


## 2011-03-28 – *The Reason We Came*

*And . . . Maverick sneaks into my cache of granola bar snacks. He always knows where the goodies are!*



*There is an artesian well, spouting lots of good, cold water. Thunder uses it like a drinking fountain.*



*While Spanky and Belle play in it.*



*This big fireplace is all that remains of the 1930's Civilian Conservation Corps camp lodge. The former camp is now a US Forest Service park.*



# 2011-03-28 – *The Reason We Came*

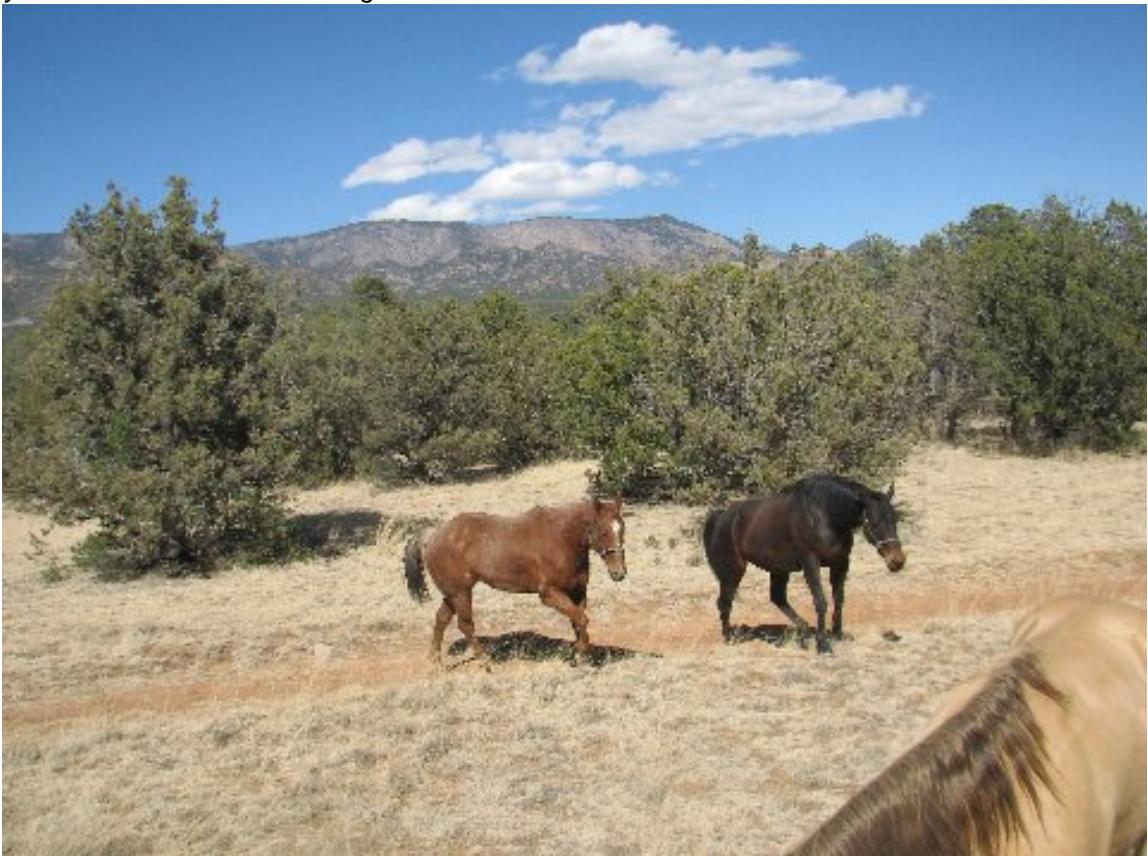
*The trails here are terrific; and the scenery as pretty as we have seen.*



*Oh-oh.*



*They all make fast work of crossing.*



*Belle is fastest of all!*



*Miles and miles of open space. And a sky, big and wide.*



*Even in this unusually dry season, there are several little streams in the area.*



*Spanky and Belle lie down and roll in one of them.*





*As usual, we stop for a snack before heading back to the trailer.*





*On the way home, we pass a roadside memorial to Smokey Bear, who was found as an injured cub in the Capitan Mountains, not far from where we rode today. There is an entire museum dedicated to Smokey and modern forest fire prevention and management, in the town of Capitan.*



Lots of history, beautiful surroundings, and exceptionally congenial companions. I am most appreciative. It is great to share with you!

MM

Most people don't realize that there were Christian missions established in what became central New Mexico one and a half centuries before those in California, Arizona or Texas.

Our spring weather has been remarkable, so before it gets too hot down below, the horses and I thought we would visit one of the three missions associated with the Salinas Pueblo Missions National Monument.

Now, strictly speaking, horses may not be permitted at the Monuments... but there are no signs discouraging it, and we were respectful. Besides, I think my horses are now just as enthusiastic tourists as anyone else!

*This part of the state, about 90 minutes south of Albuquerque, is classic Southwestern high desert.*



*Time has forgotten the cattle town of Claunch. This Depression-era school has sadly been allowed to deteriorate. We could imagine the happy squeals of children . . . generations ago.*



*In fact, it's as though life ended here in the late 1930's. Only isolated ranches remain.*



*Our first view of the mission ruins looks almost like a mesa in the distance.*



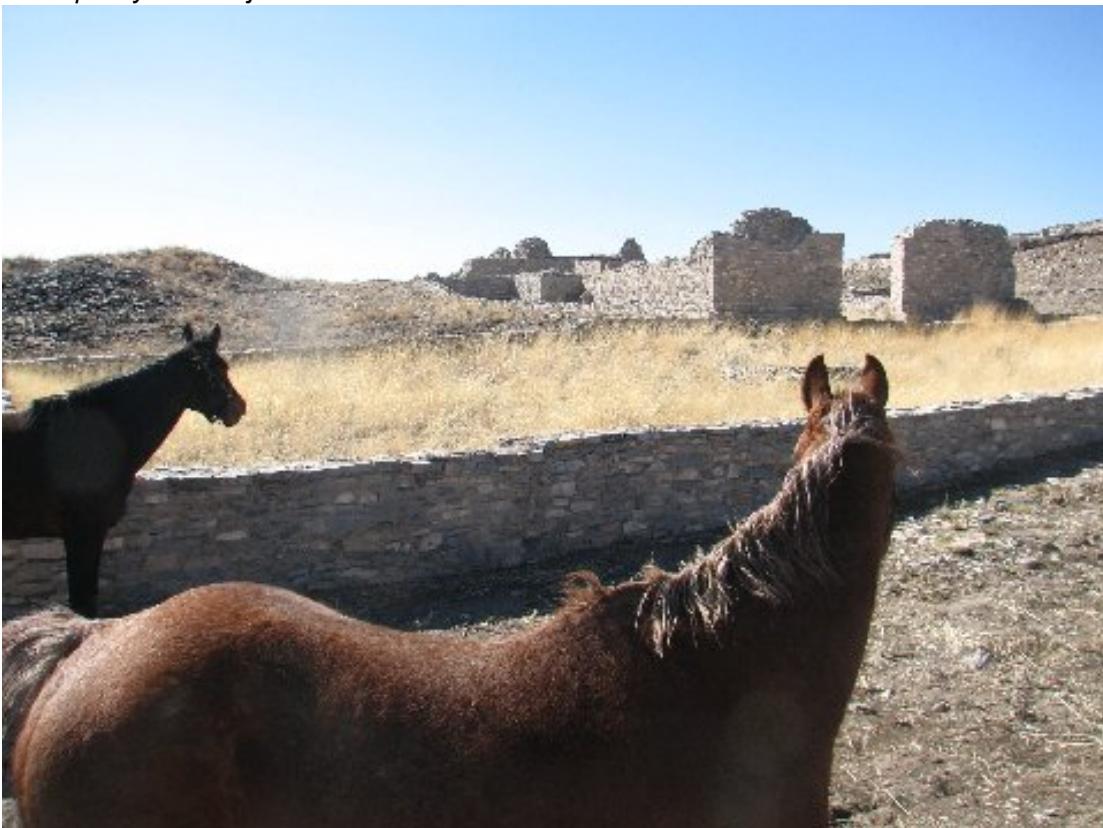
*Maverick and Belle share a pre-ride drink on this warm spring day. And they do share. Very cool. "Ahem . . . it is my turn . . ."*



*Early people had established a huge stone village here before the coming of the Spaniards. When the missionaries arrived they found a very sophisticated society. The first Catholic mission was built of the same stone in 1629; a later and much grander church seen here was begun in 1649 and never finished.*



*Belle and Spanky wonder just what that is . . .*



*The earlier pueblo (1300 a.d.) was a huge community of inter-connected buildings and kivas (underground ceremonial rooms).*



*These walls are seven centuries old.*



*Kivas were important gathering places, and originally roofed with wood and earth.*



*We can sense the activities of so long ago . . .*



*Belle explores the ruins.*



The warm day, ancient gray stone ruins, and quiet made me imagine that I was exploring the Greek Islands with my horses. (What a great idea!) That's just what it felt like.



*But instead of an ocean . . . a sea of plains.*



*"Can we go inside?"*

*"No."*

*"Sigh."*



*I wonder what Spanky thinks of this . . .*



*They all cooperatively wait to load up for the return trip home.*



*Ah . . . the open road. The possibilities . . .*



MM

## 2011-04-07 – *Kittens Progress*

A kitten update:

*Although it looks like Onyx is throttling her brother Wilcox, they are devoted to each other I'm glad they ended up staying together.*



*I'm building a stone fire pit area. The kittens are helping. Onyx checks it out.*



*Mommie cat still keeps on eye on her babies.*



*"Hmmm . . . what's this?" Wilcox wonders.*



## 2011-04-07 – *Kittens Progress*

*"I guess I will leave it alone."*



*"Naw. I don't leave ANYTHING alone. I feel just like a movie star at Grauman's Chinese Theater."*



## 2011-04-07 – *Kittens Progress*

*Wilcox fearlessly approaches a fawn . . . pretty brave for a little guy like him!*



*They size each other up . . .*



*Friend or foe?*



*We're all friends here!*



MM

## 2011-04-07 – *Ranchmans Camp*

We discovered a great place to ride only about four miles from home. Ranchmans Camp Road is gravel, and leads across a high plateau on the way to the village of Capitan. The road is named for an annual non-denominational religious gathering. Begun by Ralph Hall, the first Ranchmans Camp was held here in 1940. Then as now, ranchers came from miles around. The Camps have grown in popularity ever since (this July, hundreds are expected to participate in the week-long event of sermons, campfire meals and fellowship). He chose Nogal Mesa because the spot "made you want to take your hat off". The horses and I agree. It is a beautiful area. Although the camp is fenced off, we ride nearby.

*It was 80 degrees as we started out. Here is part of an old cattle chute near the camp. Cattle still run here on this combination of private, public, and National Forest lands.*



## 2011-04-07 – *Ranchmans Camp*

Page 2 of 10

*We spotted a big herd of elk entering the trees. My camera wasn't quick enough to catch the "phantoms of the forest".*



*Something about the area reminds me of central California; only instead of live oaks, we have pinion pines.*



*Belle leads the way.*



*Yee haw! Off we go.*



## 2011-04-07 – *Ranchmans Camp*

Page 4 of 10

*I don't know what is was about this particular ride, but after we had been gone for a while, the kids really seemed to want to run close to each other. Not out of apprehension; they just seemed to really enjoy being with one another. The weather was perfect - and it was so quiet . . .*



*We're running full out here.*



## 2011-04-07 – *Ranchmans Camp*

*Miles and miles of open spaces, and interesting arroyos and rock formations. Maverick waits for Belle and Spanky to catch up.*





*There's even some water in the hollows.*



*And a big bull.*



*Spanky checks out the calves and cows, and seems to be looking to me for reassurance. "Uh. Do those things run faster than us?"*



## 2011-04-07 – *Ranchmans Camp*

*Not Belle. She LOVES to move cattle. "Gittie up little doggies."*



*On the way home . . . in "formation".*



*When we arrive at dusk, the deer are waiting for their treats. "Got apples?"*



MM

## 2011-04-13 – *Gypsum Skies*

After working on the new outdoor fireplace all day, I needed to gather some more stone, and thought the horses might like to go along for a late-afternoon outing. They jumped in the trailer and off we went.

*The fireplace is beginning to take shape. Its slow going: gathering the large stone (along some very interesting back roads), hauling it home, mixing cement, and assembling it by hand.*



## 2011-04-13 – *Gypsum Skies*

*While I gathered stone, they enjoyed an early evening snack. It is so quiet and peaceful with them.*



*Lots of new grass here in Bonito Canyon, but it is too soon for the trees to leaf out.*



## 2011-04-13 – *Gypsum Skies*

We had such a nice time, and they enjoyed the grass so much, that I promised we would come back the next day (I have to let the cement dry on the fireplace for a day before I continue working anyway).

*It started out as a typical blue sky day as we drove up the canyon the next morning.*



*They went right for their favorite meadow.*





*As we kept riding, the sky began to take on a peculiar gray color.*



*But the trail beckoned ahead as always . . .*



*Maverick figures out how to negotiate an especially challenging spot . . .*



*Upsy - daisy. Fortunately this is the roughest part of the trail for them. Most of it is smooth.*



*The earliest leaves of spring shone brightly . . .*



*And the creek sang its song as we rode alongside . . .*





*We were alone all day, except for one family of hikers. They said they had come up to escape the wind below in Alamogordo. We had only a slight breeze in the forest. The children fed the horses "special" grass.*



## 2011-04-13 – *Gypsum Skies*

*There are ruins of an old cabin. Since I am presently doing stonework myself, I know what effort it took to build by hand here in the forest. They did a more professional job than me!*



*Belle and Spanky enjoy a snack in front of an old fireplace. How I wish I could just move that to my front yard!*



*Maybe this is where the stone came from. Too high for me!*



*The group stays together as we go along.*





*Because of our mild winter (too little snow), the wild flowers are sparse so far this year. Still, these little yellow ones are everywhere.*



## 2011-04-13 – *Gypsum Skies*

*As the horses enjoyed their grazing, the sky turned an odd pearlescent gray.*



It seems that there were terrific winds in the valley below, which picked up gypsum dust from White Sands Monument and carried it, high above us. That's what gave the sky its gray cast.

*But we enjoyed the peace in our canyon.*



*And the next day, the sky was clear at the ranch. Mommie cat enjoys it!*



*I don't know what this tree is yet . . . but the blossoms sure are beautiful. Maverick is hoping it is a carrot (!) tree . . . the deer hope it's apple . . .*

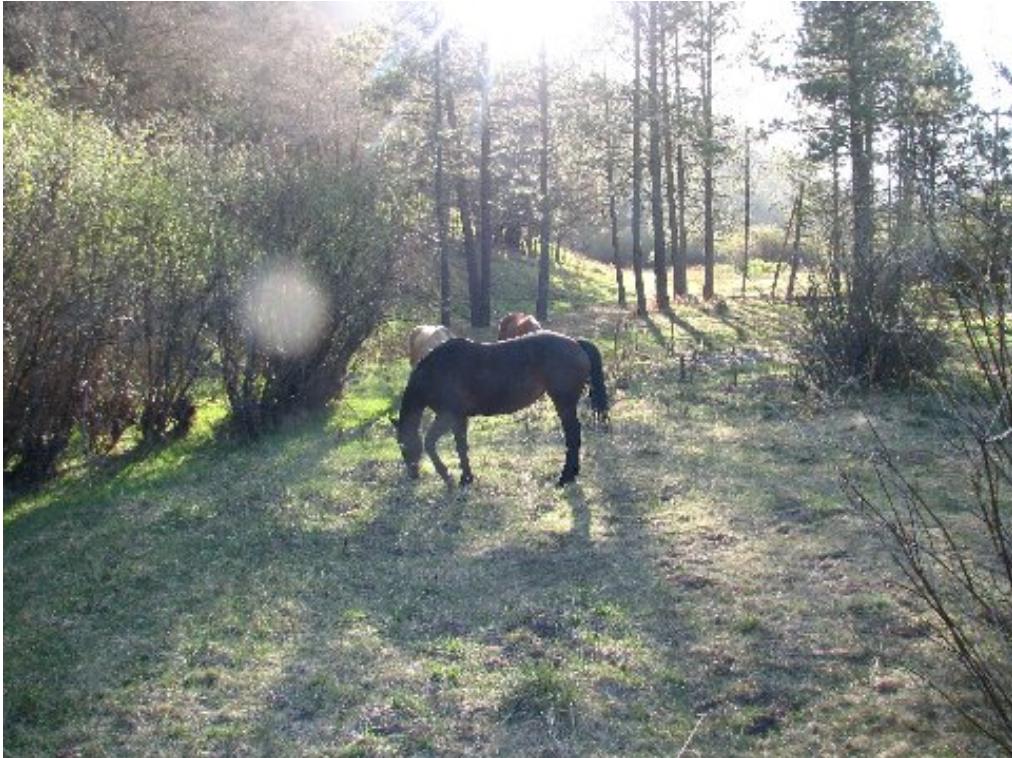


MM

## 2011-04-16 – *Apple Blossoms*

Suddenly it seems like there are blossoms everywhere; most are on apple trees planted by entrepreneurial folks back when the miners would pay a buck apiece for them. Many of those orchards are now abandoned, and we find remnants on our rides.

*Such was the case on a sunset ride this week.*



*This old orchard is near Bonito Lake.*



## 2011-04-16 – *Apple Blossoms*

*Maverick checks out the blossoms, and undoubtedly wishes they would hurry up and become apples.*





*The sun was low in the sky when we got home, and the deer were waiting . . .*



*Little Wilcox went out to greet his friends.*



MM

## 2011-04-19 – *Moonlight And More*

Saturday boasted a big full moon, and a gorgeous evening along the Rio Grande. We were fortunate to join Dacodah for another memorable moonlight ride.

*The Rio Grande is the fourth longest river system in the US; the 20th longest in the world. In the mid-day light it is beautiful; but after dark, magical (too bad it can't be photographed as it really looks by moonlight).*



*The alfalfa fields surrounding Dacodah's place are lush with new growth, in striking contrast to the Rio Grande Valley desert.*



## 2011-04-19 – *Moonlight And More*

*The moon rises over one of the many irrigation canals along the Rio Grande. By the time we cross the river, it is too dark for photography. Too bad, because riding through the moonlit water on horseback seems to capture all the romance of the Old West.*



*Looking in the opposite direction. That's Ladrone Mountain (9,100 ft.) in the distance. This area features tremendous diversity, ranging from the wetlands riparian environment of the Rio Grande, to towering mountain ridges. Within a few miles lie four major biomes: Chihuahuan Desert, Great Plains short grassland prairie, pinion juniper woodland and Colorado Plateau shrub steppe.*



## 2011-04-19 – *Moonlight And More*

*Dacodah knows this country as few ever have. He leads us to a remarkable, isolated wall of ancient petroglyphs. The bright moonlight gave them a surreal and otherworldly look (I used flash to make them more visible in the photos). I can't explain the weird floating lights around Dacodah. Since many believe this area is an energy vortex . . . who knows . . .*



*The stone walls are literally covered in petroglyphs, most likely dating from 900 to 1400 AD.*





*What do they represent? What are the ancients telling us?*



*Even Thunder seems intrigued.*



*The next morning was warm and beautiful - perfect for a ride along (and in) the river. Onyx and Wilcox's brother Trigo, adopted by Dacodah, play happily in the morning sun. Like his siblings, he is a great cat, and very content in his new home.*



*Here is the old adobe church at San Acacia, a favorite with artists.*



*The horses were eager to play in the river - and so was I.*



*It was in the mid-80 degrees.*



*Belle is NOT fond of getting her hair wet. "Hey! LummoX! Quit splashing me!"*



*"See? It's just as much fun without all that horseplay."*



*We went back to the petroglyph site, to have a good look in the daylight.*



## 2011-04-19 – *Moonlight And More*

*This is rough country for the horses. But they don't complain (Belle found some dry sand to roll in).*



*And the Salt Cedar tangle is nearly impenetrable; good thing Dacodah knows the way.*



*Nearby is another ancient site - a kind of Southwestern Stone Hedge, high on a ridge overlooking the river. What was life like here for the ancients? Why did they build these stone structures here?*



*As in Sedona, the horses seem to sense a special kind of energy . . .*



*So do I.*



*It's plenty warm enough for a ride in the river.*





*Even Belle gets her hair wet!*





*It's beginning to feel a little like summer in this part of New Mexico . . .*



Thank you, Dacodah!  
MM

# 2011-04-23 – *Happy Easter*

Around here, springtime means apple blossoms, songbirds and . . . calves.

*Before our afternoon ride, little Onyx spends some time with Thunder.*



*We head out near home, at Ranchmans Camp . . .*

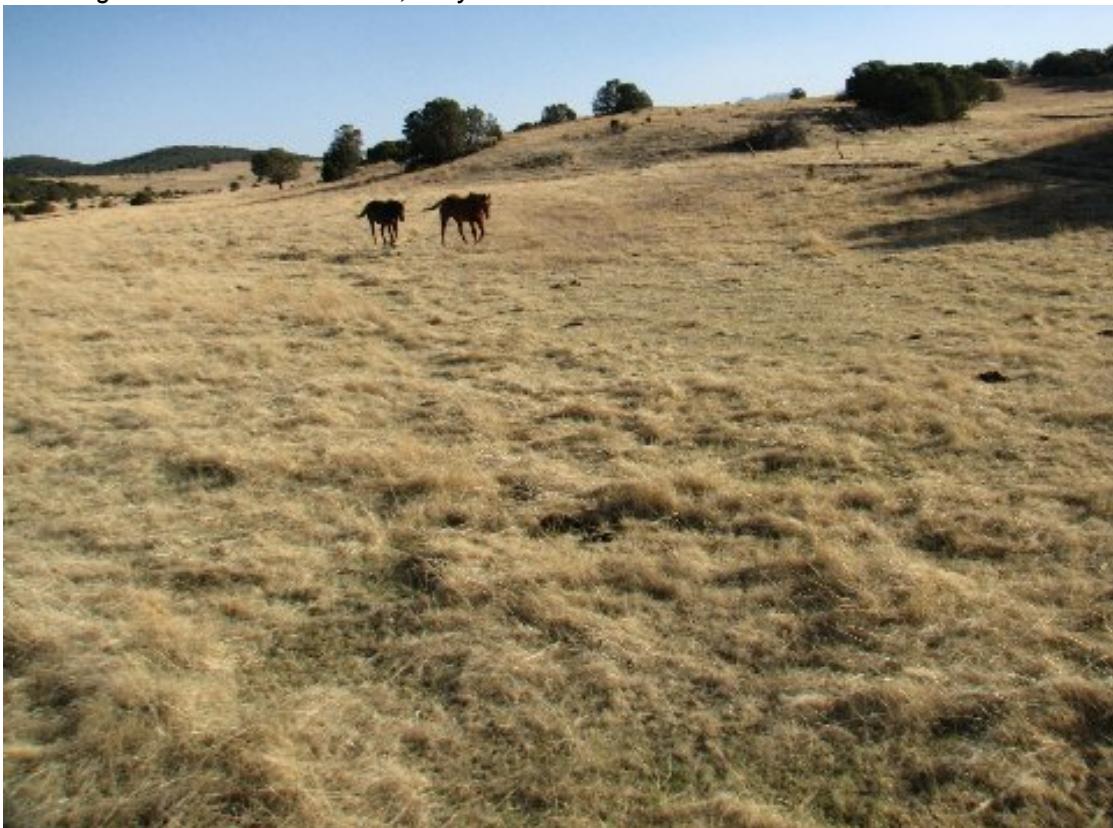


## 2011-04-23 – *Happy Easter*

... up a soft arroyo. Is that a cattle trail?



*Belle and Spanky have their usual conversation. "So what do you think we will do for Easter?" "I hope we don't have to look for those stupid colored eggs again. I mean we find them, and then what?" "Well, he seems to get a kick out of it." "Yeah, okay."*



*Maverick spots a little watering hole . . .*



*. . . and some cattle.*



## 2011-04-23 – *Happy Easter*

*Belle and Spanky go check them out. It's calving time, and there are lots of Moms with their babies.*



*In the past, Belle in particular has liked to move cattle along. But when she spots a newborn calf lying on the ground, she seems more maternal. I don't think the cows know what to make of this visit. I'm not sure Maverick does, either.*



*After a while, Maverick joins her and the little one.*



*Whew! It's up, and doing fine.*



*Belle makes sure.*



*Now Spanky becomes interested . . .*



... as Mom watches.

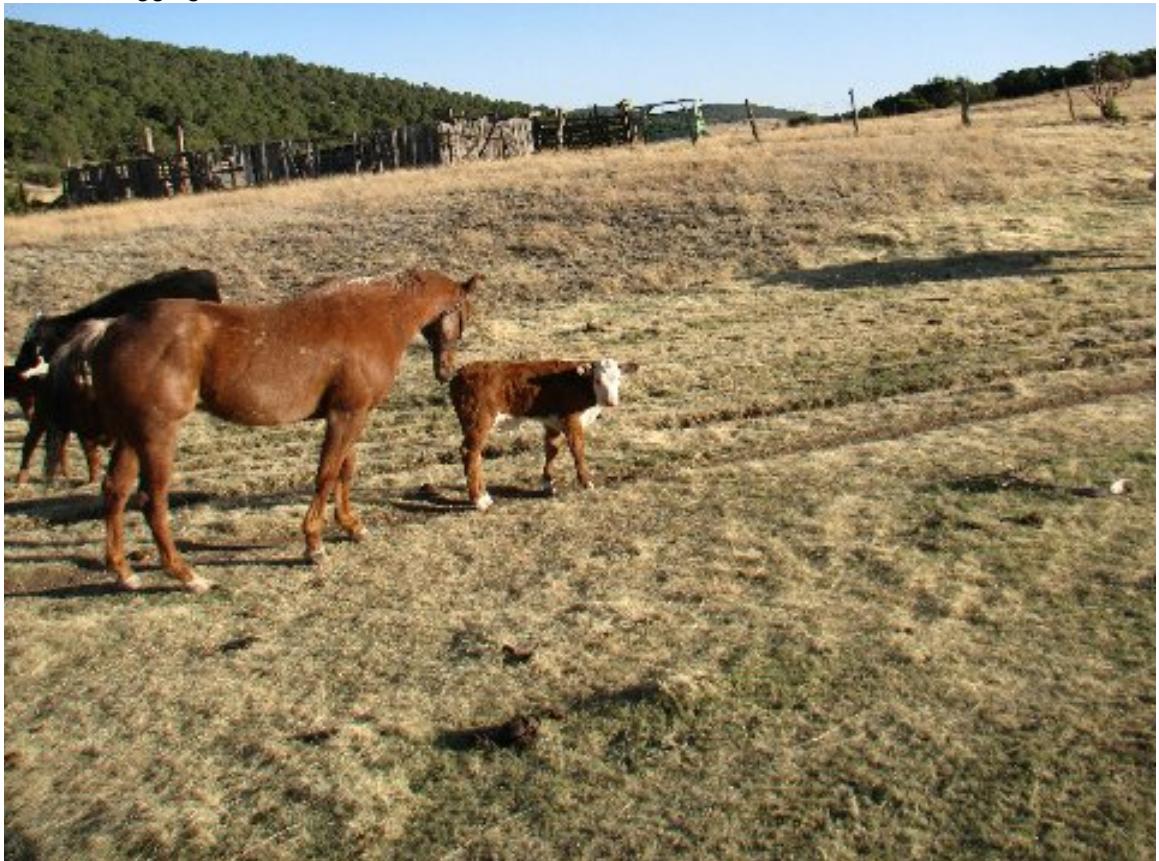


An "Awww" moment.





*"Mom! He's bugging me!"*





*Spanky seems to ask, "Can we take him home? Please?"*



*"Hey, you wanna come to our place? Lots of alfalfa and treats."  
"I don't know what those things are. I like milk."*



*Mom says no. And she looks like she means it.*



*They follow us back to the trailer. Well . . . Belle helps a little.*



*I think Belle wants to be a Mom.*



*They come all the way to the truck.*



*Say good-bye to your little friend, Belle.*



*You too Spanky. We gotta go.*



What a cool experience. At this special time of year, it's good to see the kindness among these creatures.



Happy Easter!  
MM

# 2011-04-23 – *Homecoming Queen*

When I was in high school, we used my car (yes, *this same one!*) for the Homecoming Queen. Onyx thinks I still do.





FOLLOWED  
DREAM  
RANCH

## 2011-04-26 – *I Regret To Inform You*

It is with inexpressible regret that I share with you the loss of our dear Maverick.

At sunrise on Easter morning, I found him in the West pasture with a severely broken leg. An excellent veterinarian came immediately. There was no sign of other trauma; the vet searched the area, and found no likely cause of his injury. Horses are more fragile than they look. It may have been a pre-existing bone weakness. How it happened will remain unknown.

Knowing that I would do anything in my power for my horses, the vet said that the injury could not be treated; nothing could be done.

Maverick passed away peacefully in my arms, as I softly repeated to him over and over that he was loved. He looked directly into my eyes, and I know he understood.

To love is always to risk loss. We can take comfort in knowing that Maverick enjoyed an extraordinary life with his family. He had years of freedom, love, care and companionship. He gave us trust, wisdom, humor and devotion. Maverick was a very special being, and is profoundly missed by all of us. He is interred in a beautiful place here at the ranch.

Perhaps there is some significance to his passing on a day of resurrection. I believe our golden boy will continue riding with us in spirit always. I know he will never leave my heart.



MM

*I will send a separate message about the other horses' response to the loss. It is touching proof of the capacity of horses for understanding and devotion. I hope it might provide comfort and closure. However, it is very moving, and you may wish not to view it.*

## 2011-04-26 *The Vigil*

I felt it was important for the other horses to understand that Maverick would no longer be with them; and for them to say goodbye in their own way.

They spent several hours standing at vigil, even after I covered Maverick with a sheet. Their devotion was unmistakable. In an extraordinary gesture, Belle laid down next to him.

After they said goodbye, I led them away. I think they would have stayed indefinitely.







MM



FOLLOWED  
DREAM  
RANCH

On the morning after we laid Maverick to rest, I went out to feed, and found this on the front lawn where Maverick loved to graze.



Some of Maverick's unmistakable curly golden hair from the base of his mane (probably from a time when I had trimmed it); mixed with bits of red yarn (which I have never had on the ranch). Perhaps part of a bird's nest that had somehow landed on the lawn. And yet . . .

# 2011-04-28 – *Together*

*Belle, Thunder, Spanky and I are riding forward - together, with Maverick forever in our hearts.*









MM



FOLLOWED  
DREAM  
RANCH

## 2011-05-02 – **Spring Trail**

Despite its apt name, Spring Trail isn't much used this time of year (ironically, the maples make it popular in fall); we didn't see anyone, or any sign that anyone had used it in a long time.

*Access to the trail is off this paved road . . . and then a narrow dirt one with only enough parking (barely!) for one trailer. It's interesting that the horses behave differently when we approach a place we haven't been before. On familiar trails, you can see how comfortable they are. They perk up their ears and seem much more curious on new ones.*



## 2011-05-02 – *Spring Trail*

*The trail head. This doesn't look too promising. More like a rocky goat path. I promise the horses that if it doesn't get better around the corner, we'll give it a miss . . .*



*Fortunately, it improved quickly; I guess this spring-fed brook gives it its name.*



## 2011-05-02 – *Spring Trail*

*Soon, it turned darned pretty!*

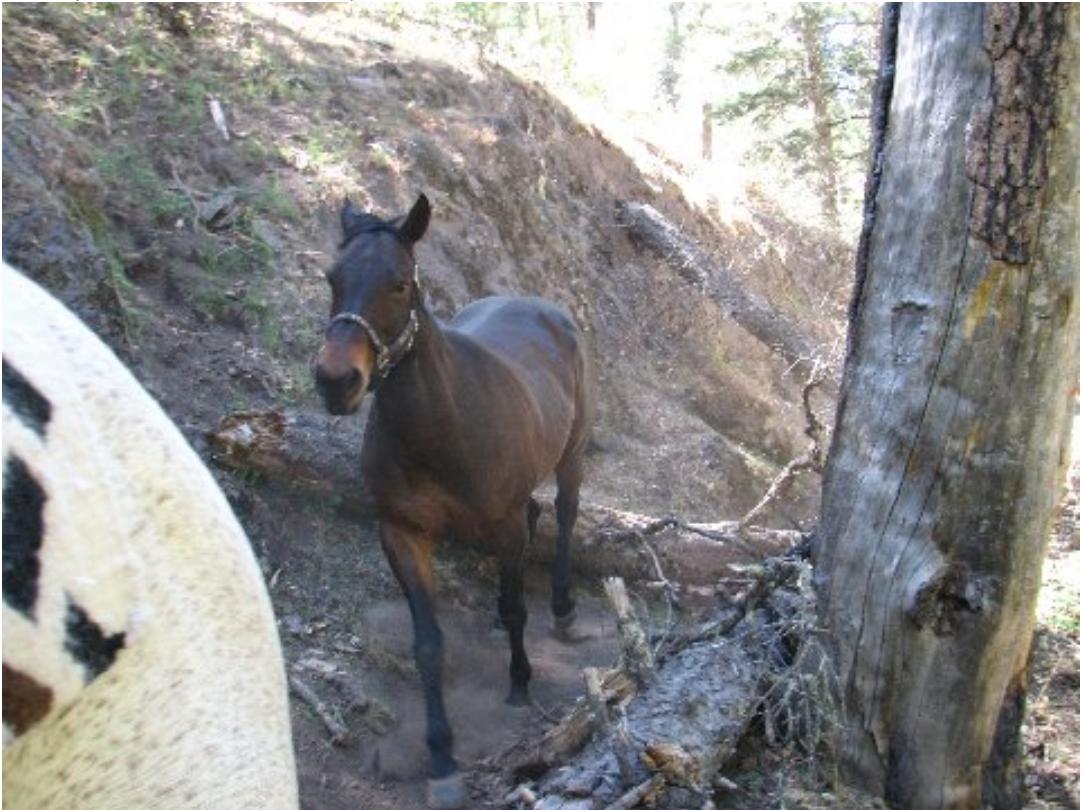


*But it became apparent that no one (on horseback, at least) had been here in a while.*



## 2011-05-02 – *Spring Trail*

*There were numerous fallen trees and washouts on the trail. The horses took it in stride (I told Belle she looks very slim in this photo . . . she liked that)*



*And it is strenuous; the trail climbs nearly 1,000 ft. in elevation during the first two miles. The views are wonderful.*





## 2011-05-02 – *Spring Trail*

*And the little brook follows the whole way - even in this unusually dry season. Spanky thinks that is a big plus on a warm spring day!*



MM

## 2011-05-02 – *Wide Open Spaces*

Page 1 of 9

After the green intimacy of the forest, we sometimes have a hankering for wide open spaces (both are within a few minutes' trailer ride from the ranch). Today the horses had their spring shots (there is a new strain of Rabies that makes its victims very aggressive; we want no part of that!), and as a reward, we explored a little side road halfway between Capitan and Lincoln.

*The road wanders through grasslands, towards the Capitan Mountains.*



## 2011-05-02 – *Wide Open Spaces*

*Yep. Wide open spaces, alright!*



## 2011-05-02 – *Wide Open Spaces*

*There are interesting rock formations along the mesa walls.*



## 2011-05-02 – *Wide Open Spaces*

*And caves, too.*



## 2011-05-02 – *Wide Open Spaces*

*And... what the heck is this? Like something from another planet, this concrete "building" is precisely built, impressively sized (it's huge!) . . . and in the middle of nowhere.*



*Because of New Mexico's extremely low population density (more cows than people), the State is used for some very odd things (like the first Atomic bomb). This one has us totally baffled. Here's the inside; it goes straight down into the ground for about 100 ft., where there appears to be a network of underground passages. (If Osama bin Laden hadn't been eliminated in Pakistan yesterday (yes!), I might have wondered...)*



## 2011-05-02 – *Wide Open Spaces*

*Well, we just couldn't figure that out, so we kept riding (and grazing on sweet tufted grass).*



*Here's something we understand. An abandoned cattle outpost right out of a Peter Hurd painting.*



## 2011-05-02 – *Wide Open Spaces*

*A little light rain comes down in the distance.*



*Belle and Spanky linger over the grass (there is soft green stuff in every depression).*



## 2011-05-02 – *Wide Open Spaces*

*Here they come! I could practically here the theme music from "The Magnificent Seven"!*





*By the way, Buddy and Onyx have become very good friends.*





FOLLOWED  
DREAM  
RANCH

## 2011-05-04 – *White Sands*

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The last time we were here, Belle, Thunder and I were tourists from California, searching for a new home. Now we are locals - with New Mexico license plates to prove it (the only state to include "USA" on them, to avoid confusion . . .)

White Sands Monument was designated the first "year round" National Park in 1933; in 2008 it was nominated as a World Heritage Site - but that was opposed and eventually declined by the US government due to concerns that it might eventually curtail military operations as the classified bases that surround it.

The last several weeks have already been hot at White Sands (it can get to 100 in the summer). But our recent cool spell made it a perfect day to visit - 72 windless, cloudless degrees.

*Here it is seen in the distance, on the way from Ruidoso. The white sand is trapped in the Tularosa Basin.*



## 2011-05-04 – *White Sands*

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*Within the Park, the road turns to white sand. Actually, unlike common quartz (beach) sand, this stuff is gypsum. It is water soluble, and does not heat up with the sun's rays, so can be walked on in bare feet no matter the temperature. It is the whitest natural substance, and is virtually unique to this place. Surprisingly, the area gets an average of 10 inches of rain annually (and occasional snow!); when the gypsum gets wet, it turns to a crude form of plaster of Paris, until the elements break it down into fine sand granules again. The dunes are constantly moving. Some animals have adapted by becoming white; plants somehow speed up their growth to stay ahead of the drifts. As I told the ranger at the gate, we feel privileged to ride here.*



*The Park Service provides a special place for horse trailers; we can ride everywhere but in the picnic areas. Oddly, the ranger said few equestrians ever visit. Too bad. It is an extraordinary experience.*



## 2011-05-04 – *White Sands*

*The kids check it out. Thunder and Belle explain to Spanky that it is not cold like snow.*



*I can't help but hear the theme to "Lawrence of Arabia" in my head... "Da da. Da Da Da Da, Da da" (Copy or type this link to a browser for a reminder) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MHQuaEdRtZo>*



## 2011-05-04 – *White Sands*

Page 4 of 12

*It is so white, the horses (and I) have difficulty with depth perception; it is hard to know how steep the dunes are.*



*Spanky has a ball in this new stuff - he rolls and rolls . . . he had the best time!*





*"Come on, Belle. This is great!"*  
*"No thanks. Have fun."*



*"How about we use one of these sled things?"*  
*"I don't think my big, uh, tail would fit . . ."*



2011-05-04 – *White Sands*

*"Come on, Belle, this is a perfect place"*



*"No. It'll mess up my mane. You go ahead."*



*It looks like Thunder is squinting; but he is just blinking. I am squinting!*



## 2011-05-04 – *White Sands*

*I'm a lucky guy. (Why does Spanky like to chew my hat?)*



*After our long ride through the dunes (I can't look at these photos without hearing that music!), Thunder got to play, sans saddle. I think T. E. Lawrence would like this shot.*



## 2011-05-04 – *White Sands*

*And I think this photo of Thunder is a "Wow".*



*A moment to think of Maverick. We know he is okay now.*





*Whenever you feel discouraged . . . just think about the tenacity of this fellow. There are life's lessons everywhere . . .*



... and magic, too.



MM

## 2011-05-06 – **Forest Closure**

The unusually mild winter made it easier for us to get settled in. But although it is green in our part of the forest (by my old southern California standards), some areas are now very dry. Because several unattended campfires have been found (they have been prohibited altogether as a precaution), the Forest Service has decided to close the Lincoln National Forest next week to all visitors until we get some Summer rain (most of our precipitation comes from monsoon storms). Probably not a bad idea. Still . . . it looked pretty green to us today!

*Here's the approach from the ranch . . .*





... past Bonito Lake.



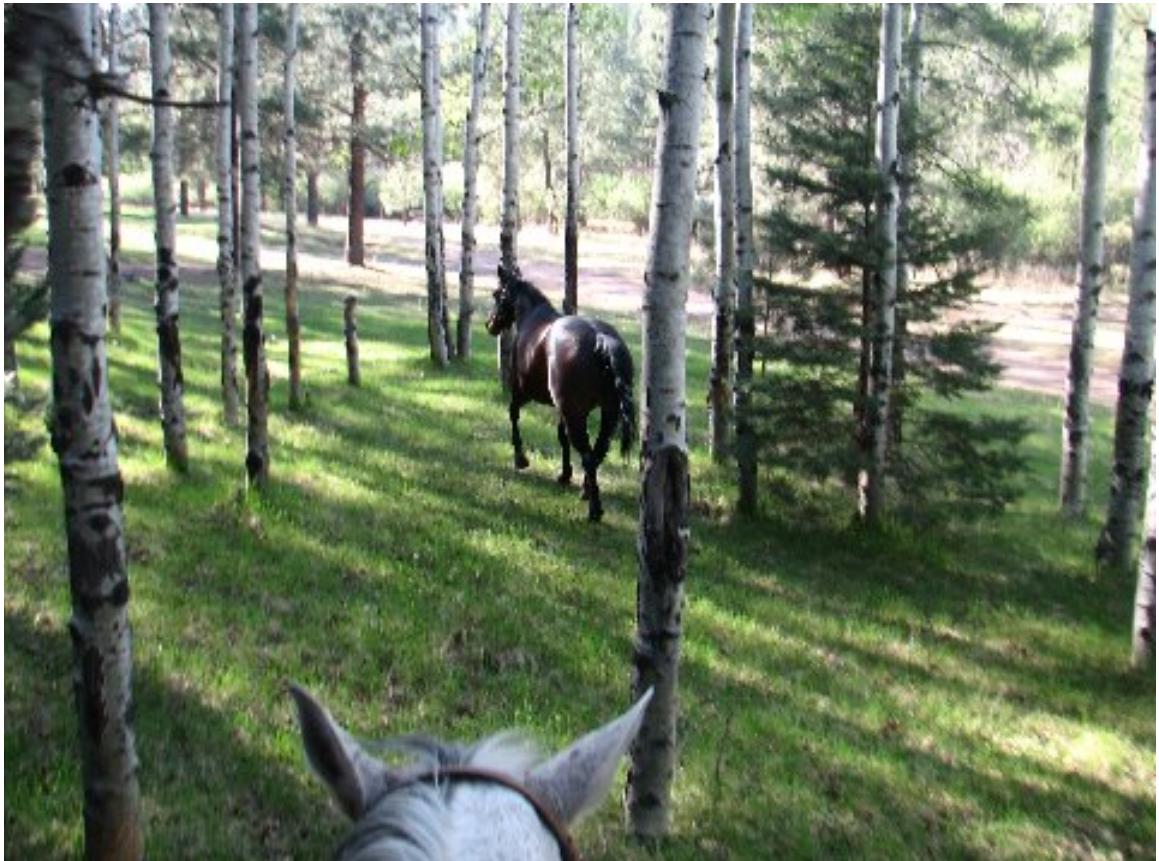
## 2011-05-06 – *Forest Closure*

*We found a nice place to park. One of the dangers comes from people parking hot mufflers on dry weeds. We're careful about that.*



## 2011-05-06 – *Forest Closure*

*Belle strolls under Aspens sporting their new spring leaves.*



# 2011-05-06 – *Forest Closure*





*Far up on a hill is this grave. Whose? Why here? Someone has left clues . . . a "Gone Fishing" sign, and tiny beer bottles chilling in a little bucket . . . with an angel of peace floating over stars, and a brass temple bell.*



## 2011-05-06 – *Forest Closure*

*Thunder spotted an elk. I wasn't fast enough, and just saw its tail bouncing away.*



*Peaceful.*



## 2011-05-06 – *Forest Closure*



*When we got home at dusk, Onyx was visiting with her young friend . . . the deer have worn the area around their corn bowl down to bare dirt.*



## 2011-05-06 – **Forest Closure**

... and Mommie Cat looked like she wanted to go for an evening ride in the roadster!



MM



FOLLOWED  
DREAM  
RANCH

## 2011-05-08 – *Elk At The Top Of The World*

At just under 12,000 ft., Sierra Blanca is the highest peak in southern New Mexico. As the weather warms up, it is considerably cooler than the surrounding areas (it was nearly 80 at the ranch today; but in the mid-60's on the mountain).

*The horses don't mind the very steep trip up. We take our time, and they enjoy the view. Although it was a beautiful day, we only saw a couple of other vehicles.*



## 2011-05-08 – *Elk At The Top Of The World*

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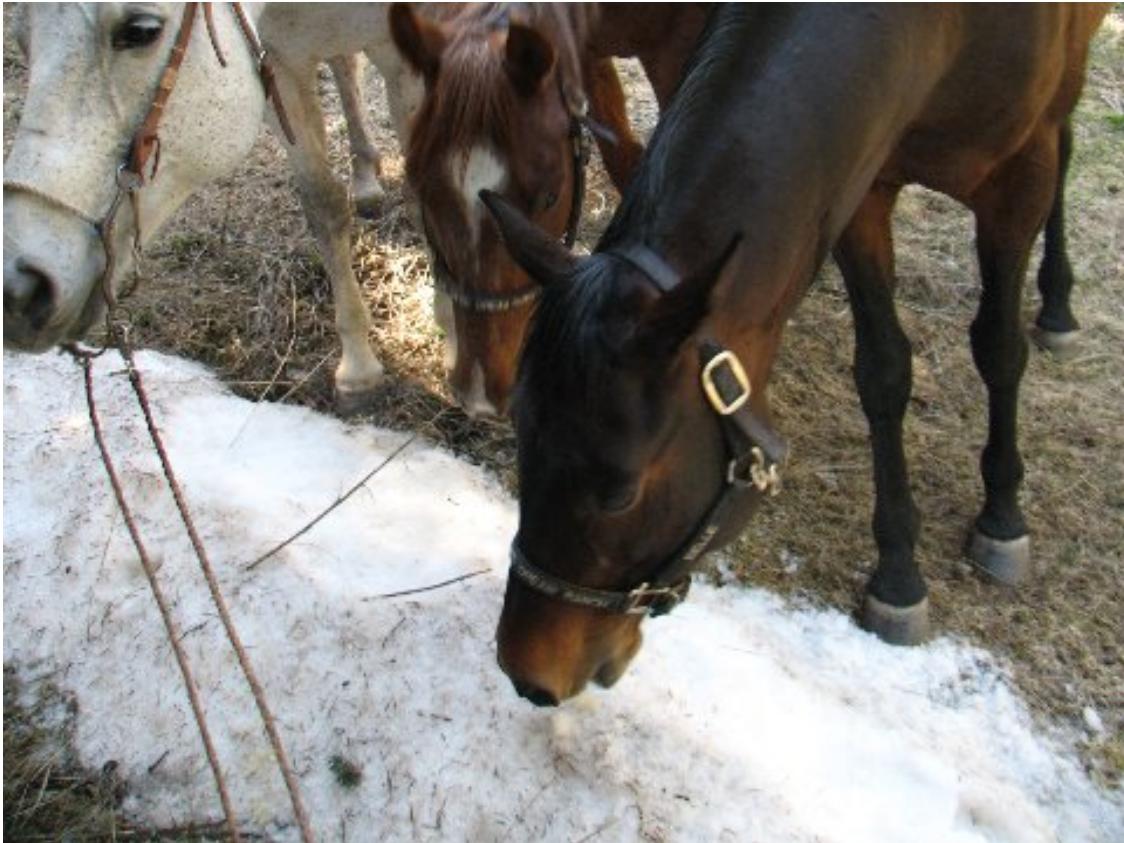
*It's a true alpine forest here . . . the southernmost in the US. At this high elevation, the Aspen trees are just now beginning to bud out - tiny green bumps crowd their branches. The horses have to work harder in the thin air.*



*Despite the very mild temperatures, there are patches of snow in the shade. Thunder eats it like Hawaiian shave ice.*



*And he teaches the others.*

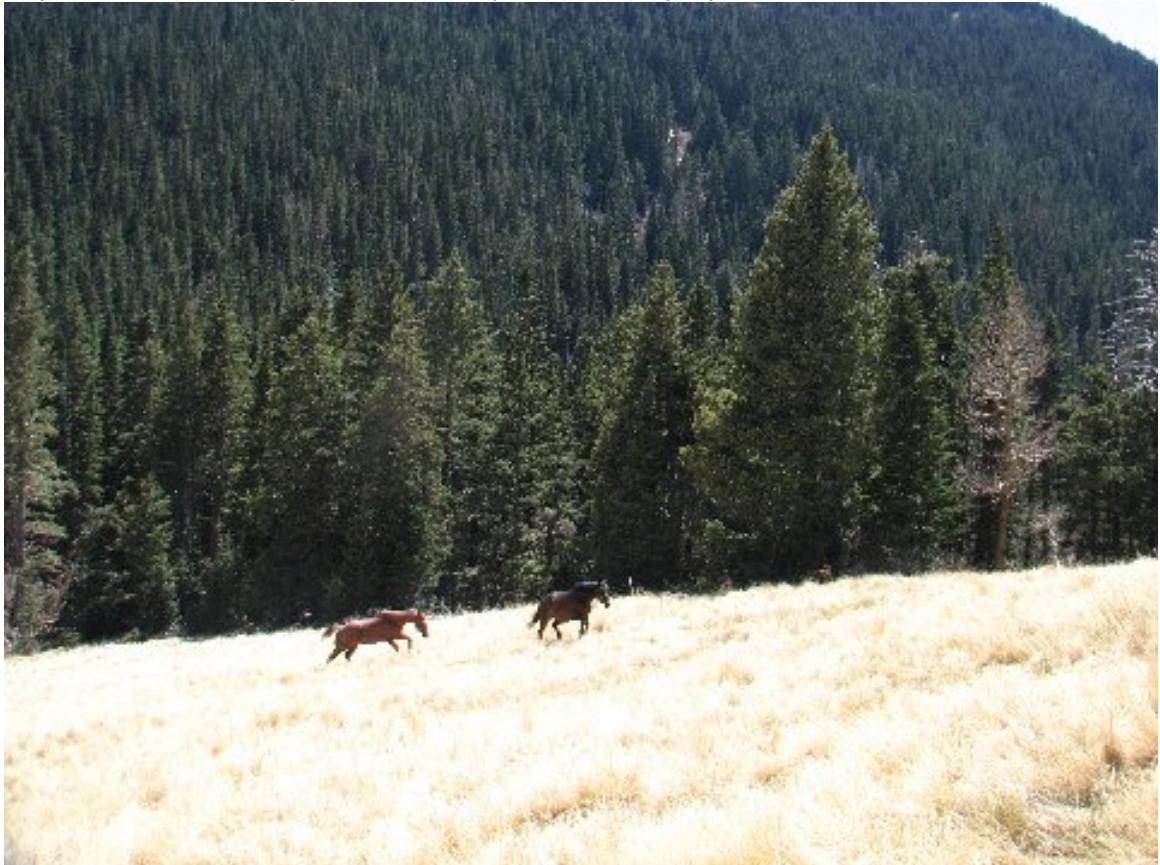


*I wonder what these corn-like plants are? They are just starting to come up. Fields of wild irises are appearing, too.*



# 2011-05-08 – *Elk At The Top Of The World*

*Spanky and Belle run through the meadows (don't know why my camera made it look almost like snow!)*



*Pretty spot.*



*The ride up to this ridge is much steeper than it looks. Those are some of the highest runs at Ski Apache Resort behind Spanky.*



2011-05-08 – *Elk At The Top Of The World*

*It does feel like the top of the world - with nearly unlimited visibility.*



"What?"



# 2011-05-08 – *Elk At The Top Of The World*

*FINALLY! Although we often see elusive elk on our rides, they usually are too quick for my camera. Today we got lucky.*



## 2011-05-08 – *Elk At The Top Of The World*

*All of these seem to be young cows (female elk).*



*The horses are used to seeing them; they are mutually curious. But Belle seemed particularly interested today.*





*Especially when she spotted a calf joining its mother. I think she wants a baby of her own.*

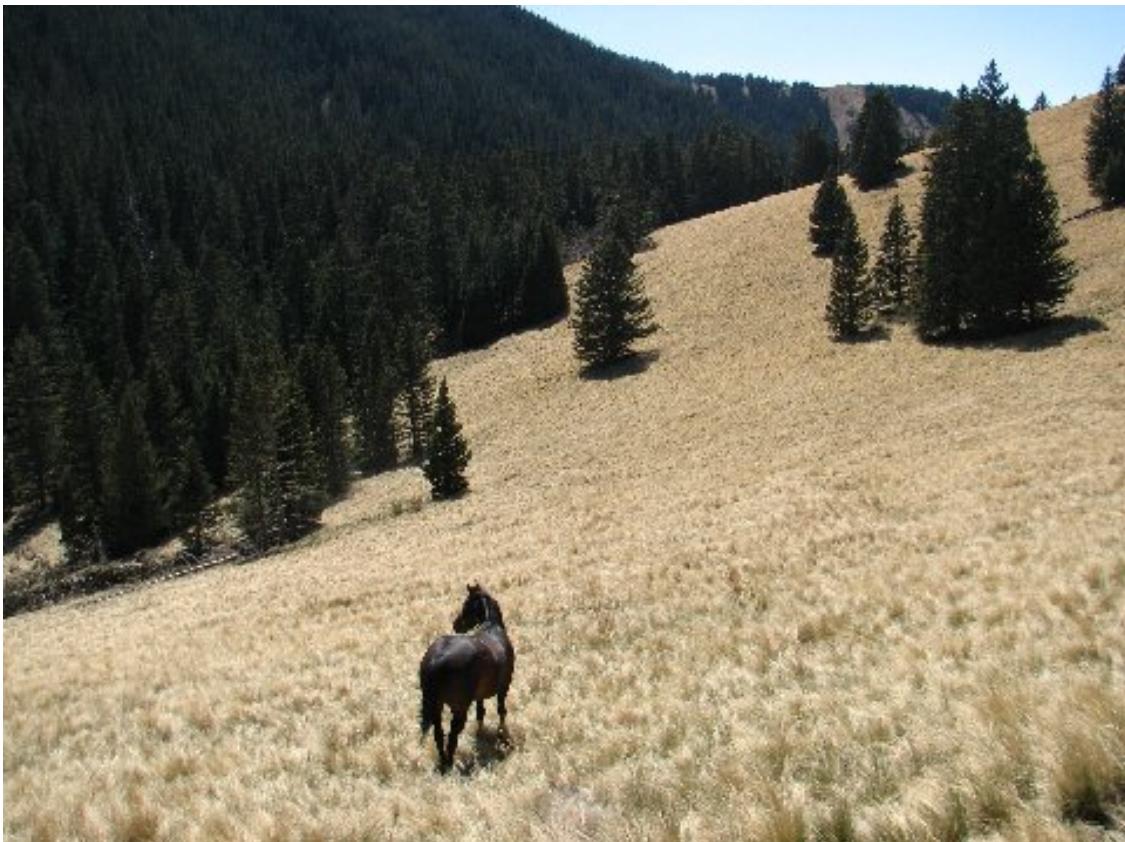


# 2011-05-08 – *Elk At The Top Of The World*

*She headed their way (Thunder kept an eye on her); but as they continued into the trees, she came back to us.*



*Good Belle!*



# 2011-05-08 – *Elk At The Top Of The World*

*Homeward bound, with Belle back there bringing up the rear.*



*I'm proud of Spanky. He has become more assertive; he led most of the way to the trailer.*



# 2011-05-08 – *Elk At The Top Of The World*

*Back at the trailer, they find a cool brook and green grass to snack on.*



*On the way home, I found a church charity enchilada dinner - delicious!*



*When we arrived home, this little deer was having a drink. He is used to our comings and goings.*





MM

**Our Journey Continues . . .**

End of Volume 1 - Part 3 of 3

Please Follow Us Some More...

See All the Journals.

JUST CLICK HERE!



*"It still isn't clear what inspired us to move from the Golden State of California, to the Land of Enchantment – New Mexico.*

*But whatever the reason, it was compelling and definite."*



**Come along the trail that leads the horses  
and Matt to a new home-- as their journey continues...**