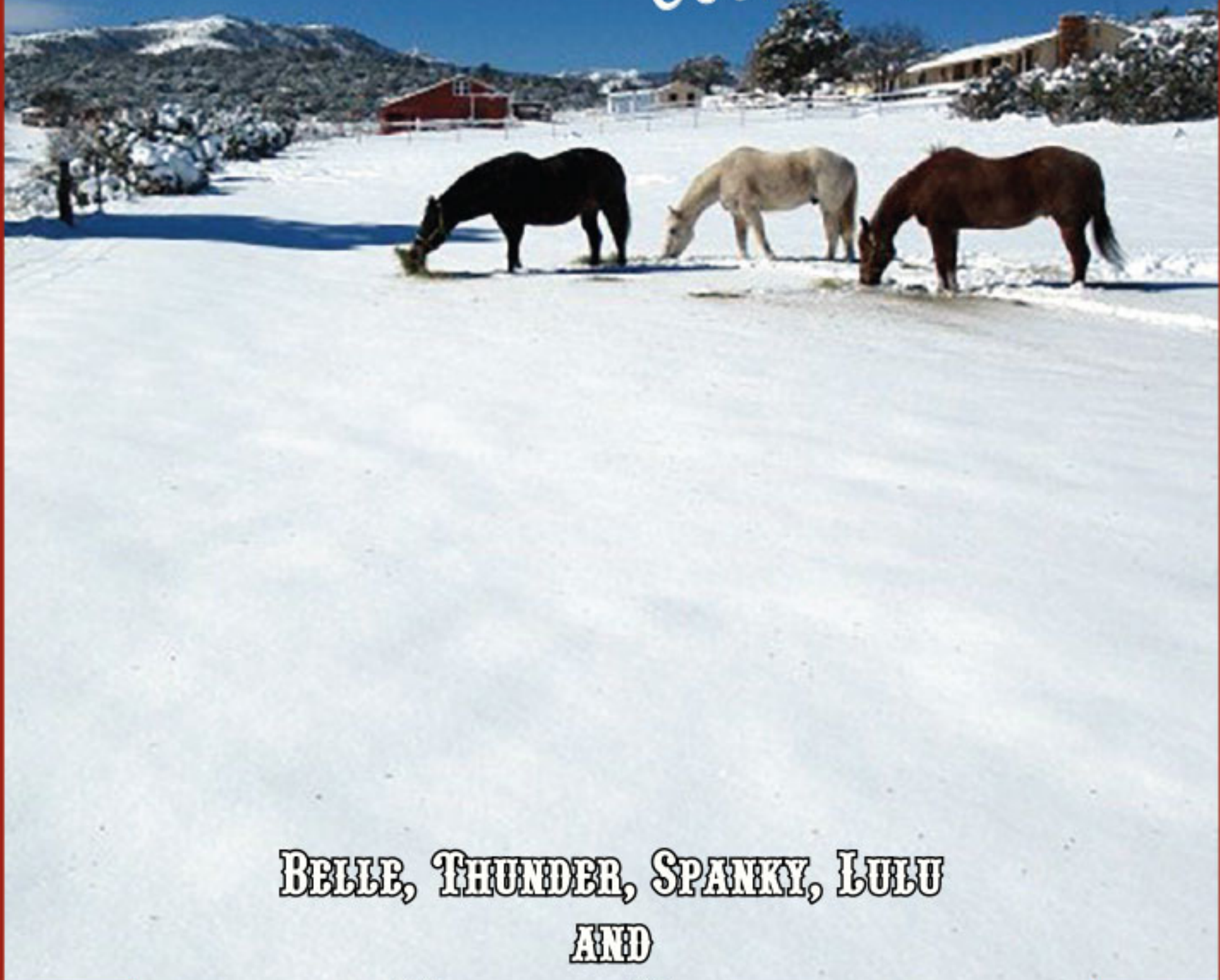


THE NOGAI JOURNALS

Volume Nineteen



BELLE, THUNDER, SPANKY, LULU
AND
MATTHEW MIDGETT

“Every time I think you couldn't find
a more beautiful place to ride, you surprise me!

The colors and views are stunning! ”

—Jan Hershenhouse, DVM MPH MPVM



Come along and ride with us!

THE NOGAL JOURNALS

Volume XIX

With sincere gratitude
to Randy Clarke-Ianiero and Clem Ianiero-Clarke
whose technical expertise and tireless efforts
made this publication possible.

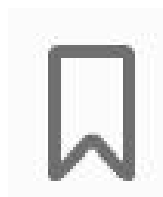
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2020-01-01 - *Bright Start*

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Our first day of the new year (and new decade!) was clear and bright. Perfect for a ride near Capitan Gap.

No place better for us to start the new year, than in the open country - under a wide, blue sky.



Oh yeah. Let's go!



Spanky takes in the view to the horizon . . . but sticks with his family.



Dry down here, but snow is building on the mountains - the skiers are happy.



We head up a 'secret' canyon.



Riding shotgun, Thunder stretches out.



While Spanky takes the 'low road' in an arroyo bottom.



Your tax dollars at work - Bureau of Land Management (BLM) crews have been clearing invasive plants, which guzzle ground water and compete with beneficial vegetation. The removed materials are piled, for later burning.



The BLM workers have cleared many miles of this area. Impressive progress.



In a remote valley, Belle admires (look at that corner joint) the ruins of an old stone homesteader cabin. Lots of history here.



The work it took - to build out here in this isolated place. American pioneering spirit.



An antique livestock tie-up post and ring makes a modern sculpture in the sun.



The boys mosey along. We're following a deer path across the grasslands.



They catch up . . .



... and have some fun, negotiating a dry arroyo.



"Just" a peaceful ride in beautiful open country, with loyal companions.



We're grateful for this first ride of the year - and appreciate you coming along.
Happy New Year!
MM

Yesterday's storm transformed the land to a sparkling fresh snowscape this morning.



The horses are snuggled in the barn, enjoying their breakfast.



It was our famous light, fluffy snow - which makes nearby Ski Apache Resort world-class.



Nogai Peak is cloaked in a powdery mantle of white.



The elk enjoyed the morning sunshine.



A couple of snooty cows and a calf.



Mommie Cat found a warm sunny windowsill, with a view of the white wonderland.



While Wilcox, undaunted, goes about his morning routine.



MM



FOLLOWED
DREAM
RANCH

As the snow rapidly melted at home, we thought we would take a ride down in the dry arroyos near Carrizozo.

But first . . . "Whee!" . . . Spanky is in bliss.



Thunder, too. Even Belle made snow angels. I was so surprised, I forgot to get the photo of her!



As we head to the arroyos - looking back toward our mountain home.



A quick drink at an old cattle pen.



Thunder leads us to the arroyos.



A covey of quail scurry in front of us.



2020-01-05 - Snow Arroyos

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We were surprised to find that the high desert had received more snow that we did during the recent storm.



Sure is pretty against the red soil of the badlands.



We've only discovered one access to the mystical arroyos. Thunder takes a cautious short-cut.



We didn't expect to find snow here, but it is soft and pleasant (no ice!).



It's a lovely day, in a beautiful setting . . .



. . . and they still manage to find some grass along the way.



Always fun, when yours are the only tracks on a snowy trail.



Spanky sneaks in a quick angel . . .



. . . and they enjoy some snow cones.



"Yum! Now if we just had some hot fudge . . ."



A 'snowy river'.



Drier in the warm late-afternoon sun.



We really had a great time on this ride.



Climbing back out as the sun began to set, they willingly accepted my direction to head home.



Near the trailer, Belle investigates an incredible find - an ancient stone mortar in the desert floor. Its depth speaks to countless years . . . of grinding seeds, and gossip while working . . . summers and winters . . .



We view the colorful sunset, from a place in time.



MM

Riparian zones (transitional areas between aquatic features such as streams and lakes; and adjacent dry land) are precious anywhere - but especially in semi-arid climates like much of New Mexico. Our local Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has conducted numerous studies concerned with how to preserve, restore, and protect these important resources. Once such effort was the Salado Riparian Project, begun a decade ago near Fort Stanton. The study is long over, but its research analyses continue to inform conservation nationwide. We had remarkable weather (more like spring than winter) and wanted to take advantage of it ('winter' is sure to return!). So we headed to the former Salado Project site to have a look.

Nearly all the snow is gone at home - the deer enjoy a snack as we prepare for our ride.



Riparian zones are typically green - but not at this time of year.



Cottonwood trees are common along waterways in New Mexico - lush and green most of the year, they look dry and stark in winter.



2020-01-06 - *Change of Itinerary*

Page 3 of 8

"Where's the snow for angels?", asked Spanky. "Where's the green grass? This is boring", complained Belle. Kids. So we left the riparian area in search of something they would find more interesting.



It didn't take long. On a high plateau, the horses spotted something.



Pronghorn in the distance.



"Hey! That's cool!", Spanky said. "You know, they're way faster than horses", Thunder explained. I was just glad they were having a good time.



As we got closer, the pronghorns kept moving.



They circled us in curiosity - at a safe distance. It was like a kind of wildlife dance.



Then Belle spotted something else. "What the heck is that round patch of grass? It looks like a putting green!" (Belle has been to golf courses . . .)



Just a random patch of grass in the middle of nowhere. "Well, it may not be green - but it's tasty!" They all enjoyed a nice afternoon snack.



On the way to the trailer, she admitted that it had been an interesting ride, after all.



I recounted the ride to Wilcox (cradled inconveniently in my arm as I tried to type), who only wanted to know if we had seen any mice . . . No, no mice, I told him. "Too bad (yawn). Sounds boring."



It really wasn't.
MM

The area around Ranchman's Camp is named for an annual Christian revival gathering which began in 1940 (and continues each summer). It's a combination of federal, state, and open private land - so vast that we have yet to explore it all. We like it because of the seclusion, views, and soft meandering trails (created by cattle and wildlife), and it's just minutes from home.

The deer were napping on the lawn as we left the ranch.



The horses enjoy exploring new directions at Ranchman's Camp.



A 'peek-a-boo' view of Church Mountain, and the valley below.



Mild days have left just a little snow from our storm. The horses do love eating their refreshing 'snow cones'!



Belle spotted an elk darting through the trees.



"There goes another one, Thunder!" "Where? Dang, I missed it."



Classic arroyos under New Mexico skies.



Although Spanky is generally happy to let Thunder lead, if the pace is too slow, he prods with a gentle nip.



"What?"



"Stop that, Spanky!"



It worked - we speed up.



Traveling together at a good clip.



Then slowing . . .



There he goes again.



"SPANKY, DON'T YOU DARE!"



MM

It was time for the old '48 truck to get a new exhaust muffler (I replaced the last one about 25 years ago . . .)

We had an appointment with the welder, so even though it had begun to snow, we headed out early in the morning.



It helps to have a hoist that can lift a 2-ton vehicle (just barely . . . see that back tire?).



Job done, we headed back to the ranch . . . but in the intervening time, the weather had changed. We were glad to get home!



Storm over. This morning is clear and bright - horses munching breakfast in the barn.



The bucks are happy with their apples and corn.





And the truck sounds great.

MM

Belle and I were invited to participate in the production of a new music video titled, "Keep Your Eyes Low". We haven't heard the music yet, but it has something to do with a cavalry soldier (and his horse), who is returning to the woman he left 19 years earlier. It was nice to be asked, and fun to do . . . and it was shot on the historic Bar W Ranch, near Carrizozo.

The first legal description of the legendary Bar W Ranch dates to 1869, when the United States made New Mexico a territory, and Lincoln County was created (then the biggest in the country). Cattle were raised there to feed the soldiers at Fort Stanton. Later, it was owned by William C. McDonald - who would become the new state's first governor. The ranch often had 3,000 head of horses, and 20,000 cattle would be driven in a single herd from the ranch to the railhead in Carrizozo. It remains in the same family today.



Photo courtesy Marc Cohen

2020-01-13 - Keep Your Eyes Low

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The film's director, Julia Danielle; and producer, Marc Cohen, confer with their star. Spanky offers some quiet advice to Belle, "Be sure you get top billing . . ."



We galloped long tracking shots on the open range, with the camera truck using the road. Belle was uncomplaining, as we repeated the scenes over and over (she did, however, fret about her hair in the wind).



Belle has her close-up. "Now, be sure and get my best side!"



After the long day's shoot was finished, we took off to explore part of the famous ranch - as far as the eye can see - which still runs cattle (Thunder and Spanky had come along as part of Belle's entourage).



Spanky made do with a little patch of snow. "Hey! Do you think they might make a film about snow angels? I'd be great in that!"



It was such a beautiful afternoon, we decided to stop by historic White Oaks ghost town on the way home.



The old schoolhouse is now a museum and community center.



As usual, visitors enjoyed seeing the friendly horses.



Speaking of the famous Belle . . . our girl recently received an award by the State Historic Sites, for her contributions to so many public events - and I was asked to provide her autograph for a young fan (I accepted the award on her behalf - Belle was unable to attend the gala evening, due to 'space limitations').



Photo courtesy Tiffanie Owen

MM



FOLLOWED DREAM RANCH

2020-01-17 - Drop Ins

Page 1 of 6

Our snow has come and gone several times recently.

We had a nice ride along a snow-decorated stream, before it melted again.



Temps have been too warm for the snow to stick around much at the lower elevations.



2020-01-17 - Drop Ins

Page 2 of 6

Which certainly hasn't bothered the deer. Occasionally, our resident herd seems to host a group which is passing through.



They mingle and socialize (and share some corn snacks). It's fun to watch.



This doe was asking for some more corn, "please".



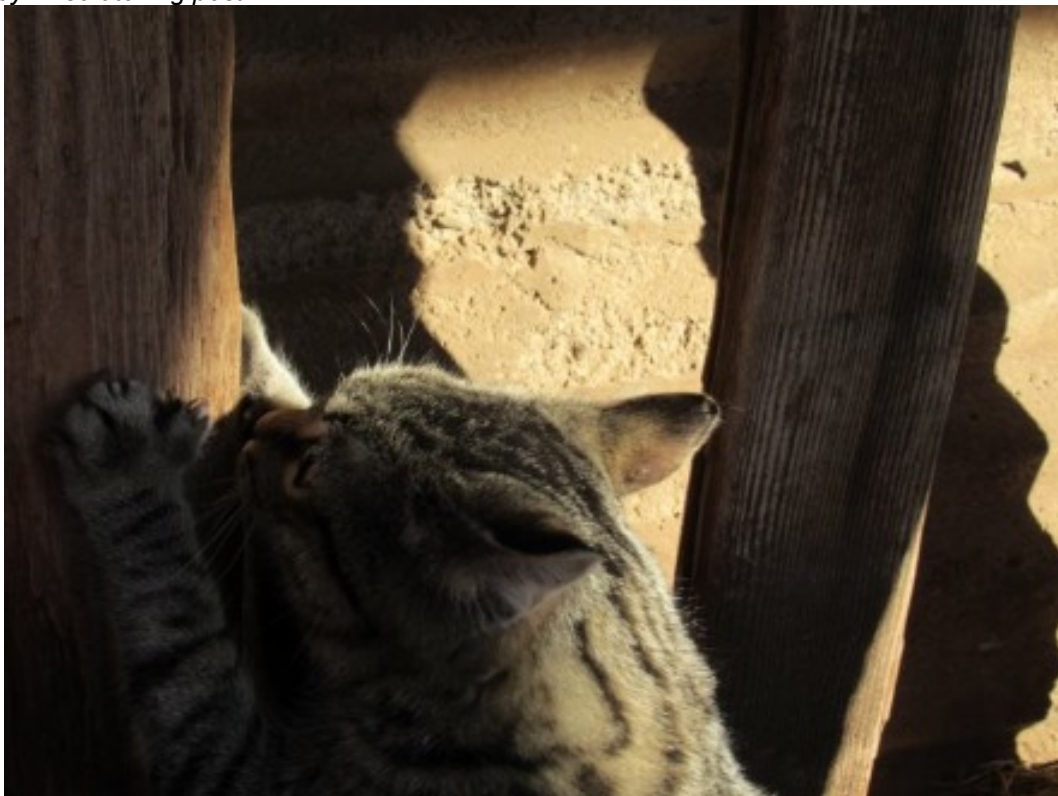
With the warmer weather, little Chile is exploring outside his barn home.



Everything seems interesting to him. "What's that?"



"Oh, Boy! A scratching post!"





He's growing up.



MM

We're enjoying a mid-winter warm-up and taking full advantage of it.

Snow on the mountains, but not down here!



Clear, soft trails . . .



... 'snow cones' in the shade.



... and curious friends along the way.



Moseying in the sunshine.



Belle enjoys a peaceful sip from a fresh, rocky spring.



I'm not sure, but I think Spanky may be admiring his reflection . . .



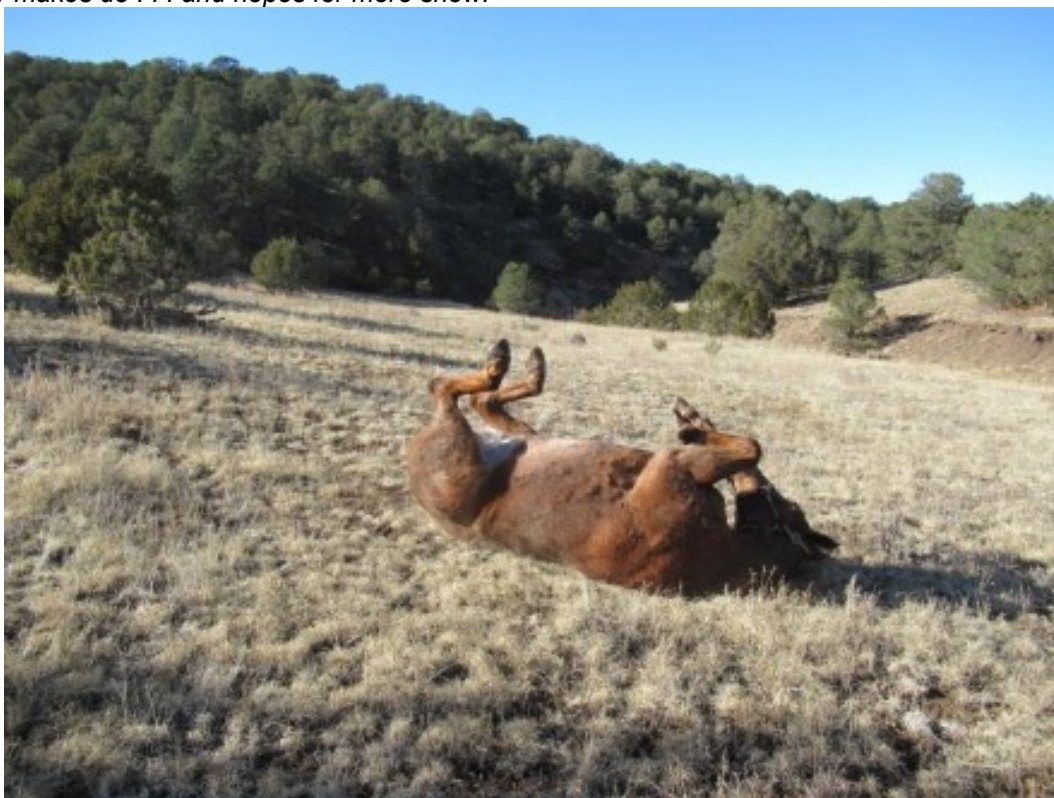
"Hey. Did you know I have a white star blaze on my face?"



The boys have a frolic (maybe a bit of "spring fever" . . .)



Spanky makes do . . . and hopes for more snow.



Just following along.



Belle was TRYING to have another drink. "For gosh sake, Spanky, STOP IT! You're getting us all wet, you moron!"



"I just don't know what gets into him sometimes . . ."



"Race you home!"



The welcoming committee.



"Yeah, we love this weather, too!"



MM

Our good friend Bill reminded us of this ride on January 20th, a couple of years ago . . . and we thought it might be nice to revisit it! Thanks, Bill!

Sixty-five degrees in mid-January? Gotta take advantage of that! So the horses (with Lulu, of course) piled into the trailer. "Where we go'in, dad?" Hmmm . . . let's just hit the road.

Wide open possibilities. We had the road all to ourselves.



We passed this 1940's casualty . . .



. . . and these pronghorns (note that they are gingerly eating the dried fruit of the nasty cholla cactus!)



We ended up at the famously isolated Gran Quivera.



Gran Quivera is one of the most important ruins in all the southwest. Likely begun by indigenous peoples around 1300 A.D., much of this special place remains un-excavated in order to preserve it for future, and more advanced, discovery. Most prominent today is a 226-room apartment complex - and a later mission church - both constructed of native stone.



The sounds of a vibrant culture once echoed off these walls.



In their quest for gold, the Spanish arrived here about 1600 (20 years before Plymouth Rock), and the conversion of the pueblo to a Catholic mission began. By 1629 construction of the great stone church was completed. The immense thickness of the walls gave it permanence.



The horses were subdued and respectful as we entered the once-holy place.



Not a sound. We were the only visitors.



We stood solemnly, imagining drumbeats of centuries ago - now long silent.



Then calmly moving on.



There is a profound sense of human history in this isolated site. By 1672, a combination of European disease, drought, famine, and Apache raids led to the abandonment of Gran Quivera. It is now a National Monument.



Heading home in the late afternoon, we saw classic scenes of central New Mexico.



A mid-1920's truck sits forgotten . . .



. . . complete with its old flathead engine. How far away this country was back then.



Nearby, a late-30's sedan (apparently victim of a pre-war rollover) has kept it company through countless years.



More pronghorns!



The horses are always fascinated by these agile - and much faster - mammals . . .



. . . and visa-versa.



On the plains, a pair of well-fed wild horses (I wonder what they thought of mine, seemingly "captive" in the trailer . . .).



They would have no way of knowing (or even imagining) the experiences we enjoy, together on the road.



It's a different perspective, in the Land of Enchantment.



As always, grateful to share with you.

MM

Our beloved Lulu passed away today,
of age-related natural causes, peacefully in my arms.

I think of her now, scouting the trail ahead of us . . .
just as she has done countless times.

Please join her family in celebrating the inspiring life
of this extraordinary, loving companion.



Oh, for just one more ride together.

MM



FOLLOWED DREAM RANCH

A quiet ride at nearby Fort Stanton on a beautiful day.

This little deer gave us a curious send-off. "Where you going?"



Quick drink before hitting the trail.



Riding the ridge toward Capitan Gap.



In the distance, Nogal Peak is shrouded in passing clouds.



A snack at the top.



Spanky can always find a place for an angel . . .



Of course, we miss Lulu. The horses know.



At home, the elk made themselves comfortable, under Nogal Peak's snowy gaze.





2020-01-23 - *Thoughtful Ride*

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Shared by a friend (thanks, Dianne):

"Grief never ends, but it changes. It is a passage, not a place to stay. It is not a sign of weakness nor a lack of faith. It is the price of love."



MM

A few weeks ago, on a ride just west of old Lincoln town, we spotted a trail we hadn't seen before (really just a cattle, or wildlife, path). So, on a beautiful day we decided to go back and check it out.

As usual, Thunder knew just what I was thinking, and headed right for the trail head.



We crossed a meandering stream, muddy with melting snow run-off.



There was snacking along the way - tasty dry Carrizo grass.



Spanky chugged up a steep hill.



Although the trail faded a bit, we didn't give up. Thunder was on to something.



The trail opened up, and bisected a long, smooth valley.



2020-01-26 - *Mystery Trail*

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We were surrounded by classic Southwestern terrain, as we imagined Apaches on horseback lining the top of the ridge.



"Whaddaya mean? I don't see no Apaches . . . I hope!"



We kept climbing up, and soon reached a forest of Ponderosa pines in the mountain foothills.



Another stream to cross.



We came upon this relic . . . and were glad we weren't here when it came crashing out of the sky! Ah, New Mexico . . .



"Come on, you guys, let's head back", Thunder urged.



He led us past a spring being used to water a herd of cattle on the range.



Headed home . . .



Where we found green-eyed Onyx, and Mommie Cat cuddled up. "Did you have a nice ride? It was quiet around here . . ."



It's remarkable, to still find new trails to ride - and this is a good one. Thanks for coming along!

MM

It's interesting. Many people would say we live in the middle of nowhere . . . and yet . . . things happen here! We were contacted by the director of a new contemporary horror-thriller movie, who asked if it would be possible to film several key scenes here at the ranch (I had already appeared in a bit part - as a cop - when they were filming locally last summer; and Wilcox was featured in a scene!) It would include using house interiors, the old barn, paddocks, and the horses. Belle was thrilled. But I know how disruptive having 40 cast and crew on your property can be. I agreed to do it because I admire the guts and vision it takes to create a motion picture and the horses thought it would be fun!

Chile was moved from the barn into the tool shop during filming. He watched from his perch and was fascinated by all the goings on.



The garage was converted to a commissary and make-up department.



Publicity stills of the cast (including the dog) were taken on the lawn.



A camera boom was set up outside the gate, for high angle establishing shots.



The deer didn't seem to mind. "Hey. Do we have to be in the union?"



A young actress goes over her lines with mom.



Filming begins in earnest, as Belle receives her direction. "Now be sure and catch my best side . . . and about my billing . . ."



*All the horses were remarkably cooperative (as was the weather throughout the days of shooting).
"Okay, so when you yell 'action!', we do what again?"*



In fact, they really seemed to enjoy all the activity.



Filming moved into the house for some dramatic interior scenes.



Final touches are added to a prop, by the special effect's technician.



Lighting in the barn is adjusted - enhanced by a 'hazer' smoke machine.



Spanky receives some tips from a cast member. "So, what is my motivation . . . ?"



Thunder prepares for his close-up. The horses behaved as though they did this all the time. "I think my key light should be a little higher . . .", he suggested.



Belle has her makeup adjusted. "Could you make me look a bit more . . . slim?"



We've been asked not to give too much away . . . but these shots will give you an idea.





It will be interesting to see how it all turns out. The title is "13 Fanboy". Soon at a theater near you! (No release date has been set).

MM

We were fortunate to meet LaMoyne and Opal Peters not long after we moved here. They were born and raised in the area and were married for 72 years at the time of LaMoyne's death. The great stories they told! Over time, they amassed a large amount of land. In fact, they donated the property for Ranchman's Camp, in 1940. Their range is some of the best riding around . . . and we are grateful to have access to it.

A beautiful day for a special ride. The view of Nogal Peak was breathtaking.



We decide to head for that hill out yonder, on the Peters' ranch. Belle leads us along a well-worn cattle trail . . .



. . . But soon, Thunder takes the lead (as usual).



The ranch has several wells, springs, creeks, and ponds.



Thunder takes in the view from the big old water tank. We're still headed to that hill.



He lags behind, just so he can run to catch up. Sharp eyes will notice his white 'dot', galloping towards us in the center of the photo.



The ranch borders the National Forest, and we ride freely over them both.



We finally reach that hill. Some pretty terrific views from up here . . . !



. . . and just enough lingering snow, for some nice cool treats.



The horses always appreciate a vista like this.



What's that? A big herd of elk ahead. The horses hardly seem to notice. "Oh, them . . ."



. . . and the elk don't to mind us in their backyard.



They seem to know that we are friendly.



*Don't know what they think of Spanky's angels . . ."I never see them doing this. I wonder why not?"
"They have antlers" . . . "Oh, yeah . . ."*



Thunder and Spanky move us along at a good clip. Such wonderful open country. Room to roam and breathe. (It's nice that they don't just keep going!)



We came upon a big pond - sort of a Club Med for elk - and another herd. Moments like this make us feel like we are on safari. In a way, I guess we are.



They were having a wonderful time, frolicking in the water. We don't disturb them. "Besides", says Belle, "That water is just too darned cold for me!"



. . . and one more big herd in the meadow - it must be an elk holiday!



Thunder and Spanky wander up a ridge for a better view (or maybe just tastier grass).



They enjoy racing down to join us.





Whew! Time for some refreshment at the trough in the old cattle pens.



. . . and a quick trip back to the trailer.



Nature's totem pole.



Great companions.



A very special ride, in a very special place.



Thank you for joining us.
MM

There is a 'secret' little canyon, off Cora Dutton Road near the ranch, which we rarely visit this time of year, because its creek can ice up and become dangerous for the horses. First, about Cora Dutton. The late Cora was a true pioneer. Her homestead is still the only house along the road named after her. Until recently, the road was gravel - and was dusty as all get-out in dry weather. Although there is no posted speed limit, Cora felt that she knew the appropriate speed folks should go, so as not to raise too much dust. She would sit on her front porch, this sweet little lady, with a double-barrel shotgun in her lap. She would fire warning shots over vehicles she felt were going too fast. It worked.

Our weather has been unusually mild, so we thought we would give the canyon a try.

Mommie Cat didn't like the sound of 'ice creek' at all. "You be careful, and don't go near it!", she advised.



. . . But the day was warm and bright, and we continued on our ride. Belle wasn't too thrilled about the 'secret' entrance to the narrow canyon. "I better not mess up my nails", she warned.



The boys, not concerned with such things, were having a great time. "Ha! Ha! I'm ahead of you!", Spanky taunted.



. . . and yet, Thunder made it to the top first.



We were following cattle trails, which are terrific - soft and meandering. Until they go into the forest. You see, cows are much lower than me on horseback. So, I finally gave up and dismounted, walking under the trees with the horses.



We were getting close to 'ice creek', in the perpetual shade of the deep canyon.



There it is. The horses took Mommie Cat's advice and stayed well away from the slick surface. They know.



Oddly, spring-fed water troughs right next to the creek have not frozen. The boys wait politely, as Belle enjoys a cool drink. "Hurry up!"



We continue on.



Finally, we break out of the forest, onto a beautiful little meadow.



Time for a snack.



There they are - our 'cow pathfinders'.



Open rangeland in front of us. Boy, did we want to keep going . . . but the sun was setting, and we needed to get back.



Wild turkeys, enjoying the last of the day's sun.



We gingerly passed the ice creek once more. "Next time, I'll bring my skates", Belle quipped. "I have the cutest little outfit . . ." "The ice isn't THAT thick", Thunder retorted. I ducked.



MM

We are grateful for an abundance of beautiful places to ride - most of which are enjoyable in any season. Among our summertime favorites are the waterfalls just west of Fort Stanton. Even without greenery, it is a great ride this time of year.

The beckoning road ahead, and snow-capped Sierra Blanca.



"Oh, boy!"



Spanky thinks he's being sneaky - mooching some tortilla chips out of the bag. "Oh, uh, hi! Got any guacamole?"



Along the trail to Petroglyph Rock.



Among the ancient carved drawings is a stylized 'lightning bolt' snake.



Belle takes in the river view from above. "Remember that scene in 'Butch Cassidy', when Newman and Redford jumped off the cliff into the river? That's not going to happen here."



Beautiful scenery in any season.



Nice spot for a snack . . . (somehow, Belle always finds green grass.)



. . . and a refreshing drink.



Belle checks out some adobe ruins along the way - portal to the past.



We reach the falls. Flowing beauty - splendid in winter's soft sunlight.



The cascading music is nature's rhapsody - an endless crescendo . . .



... before slowing, placid and still, along a massive wall of stone.



Peace.



One of our favorite places, in any season.



Thanks for joining us.
MM



FOLLOWED DREAM RANCH

After weeks of spring-like weather, a big change was predicted. I told little Chile that he might be seeing something special in the morning. He was very excited.

"What? Cold white stuff everywhere? Where does it come from? Are you pulling my leg? Is it scary?"



Yesterday was clear and mild.



Then, overnight . . . fluffy, wet snow!



Nearly a foot of it.



Utterly quiet.



View from the barn loft, through a frosty window.



Oh, Chile . . . take a look! "Are you kidding me? Where'd . . . it come from?"



"Hee hee hee! Those cold white things are like tiny mousies from the sky!"



"I got one! Wait! Where'd it go?"



Brave little kitty.



He tried to get the horses' attention. "Hey! You won't believe what happened!"



But they were busy with breakfast. "Yeah, yeah. It's snow . . ." (It wasn't cold enough in the barn, for their blankets).



"Wait a minute. I gotta see this again!"



"That is so cool! Ha ha I made a joke!" He stood in the door for a while, not sure . . .



... but after all, he is a cat ... and they are curious. "Hmmm ..."



"Okay, just one more step."



"This is amazing!"



Orca and Smarty Pants took a quick stroll, too . . . but then, back in the house (and to bed).





Thunder asked, "So, what do you think, guys?"



2020-02-04 - Chile's First Snow

Page 11 of 12

Spanky was quick with an answer. "I think it is PERFECT! Wheeeeeeeee! Snow angels! Snow angels!"



"Now will you read me a snow-time story, please?"



MM

This was a wonderful snow. Soft, and powdery - and generous (we received more than a foot!) . . . and beautiful to ride in.

We even rode while it still was coming down, and I could barely feel the camera in my hand from the cold. Thunder thought it was a great idea.



It's difficult to describe just how dead-silent it was, with snow floating and swirling all around us.





Running through the deep powder (on familiar trails) was a thrill.





Brushing up against a snow-covered branch left us covered in gossamer-light flakes.



"This is great, Belle!" "Yeah, but just wait, honey, until tomorrow when the sun is out!"



She was right - it was like something from Currier & Ives.





"Just like you said, Belle, this is amazing!" "And ours are the first tracks!"



It was a "wow" alright.



Like dancing along on a cloud.



Nature's ornaments on the trees.



Under a bright, blue sky.



LOTS of snow angels!



"Phooey! I really need to remember to keep my mouth closed when I do that!"



Another and another . . . Spanky had the best time.



Running to catch up after another angel. "Now there are lots more angels in heaven!"



Après-ride snack on the snow. It was a truly beautiful family outing.



MM

Just yesterday, the horses were enjoying some snow behind the barn . . .



Thunder makes an angel . . .



... then off he goes!



By this afternoon, most of the snow had disappeared! The lawn was clear, except for a 'snow dune' which had slid off the house roof.



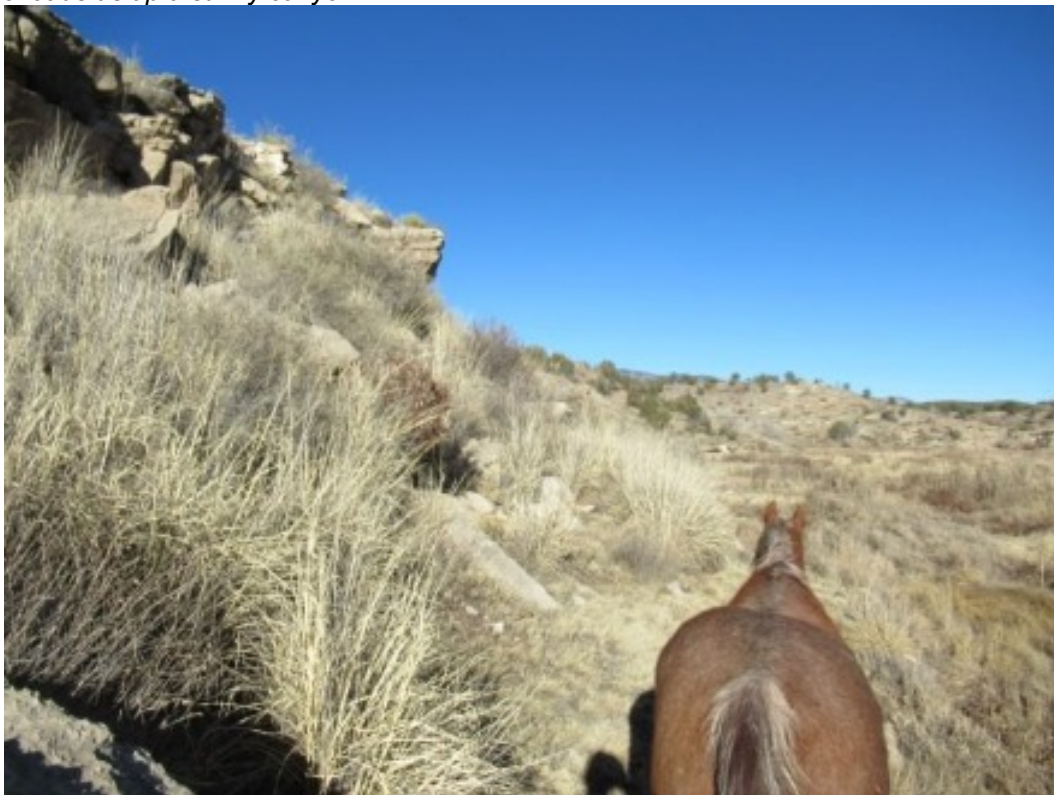
All that melted snow made a lot of water . . . and mud! We lit out for drier country, near Capitan Gap (you can see that Thunder already found a dusty place to roll).



Only a few scattered patches of snow here - and mostly dry ground. Spanky missed the snow but enjoyed making grass angels just the same. "Well . . . I admit it is warmer . . ."



Then he leads us up a sunny canyon.



"Oh no you don't!", Says Thunder, as he races to the front.



His ear position says, "Don't mess with me!" . . . as he zips by.



Our little family travels on. ("That's better", thinks Thunder. "Whatever" says Spanky).



Happy-go-lucky Spanky just does another angel. "It's all good." . . .



. . . but he was feeling frisky, too, and suddenly took a fast run around us.



So, Thunder decided it was time to go. We were all galloping across the prairie.



Quick stop. Time for another angel. Can't blame him - it was a beautiful day for it.



Then, back to our run.



I think they had a touch of spring fever. Everyone wanted to go fast (it was nice to be on dry ground).



Thunder tosses up some snow, as he crests an arroyo.



Not to be outdone, Spanky puts on the speed (he is doing really well, overcoming his ring bone/arthritis).



He slams on the brakes as he approaches Belle (note Thunder gaining on him).





Yup - this was a 'speedy' day!



MM

The last couple of days, super mild temps have melted most snow from our recent storm . . . but more may be on the way.

Hard to believe - all that snow is gone (and the water is now in the ground, which is good).



Since I had to be down in Carrizozo, the horses lobbied to come along. "Come on. It's a beautiful day - we want to go too!", they said in unison. So, of course, we went.



Nice dry riding - we headed for a park on the outskirts of town.



Belle waited for the boys to catch up.



Spanky gave me the bigeye. "Are those treats I see???"



Every once in a while, they found tasty clumps of green grass.



The park's little lake is full.



The horses are always intrigued by ducks on the water. "How do they do that?", wondered Belle. "They always look so calm. I always make a big splash when I swim".



"Don't tell her that they are paddling like crazy under water . . . " . . . "Or that they have less draft than she does!"



White geese, paddling along . . .



. . . and chatting with mallards on the water. "So, do you think they'll be more snow?"



It is a pretty spot . . .



. . . but I still had my stuff to do in town. Let's go, Spanky.



"Well, okay . . ."



It was a nice break. Maybe this is the next storm, coming in



MM



FOLLOWED DREAM RANCH

As forecast, another snowy front came racing through the region. It was nice to enjoy the sunshine (nearly all the snow had disappeared), before this one arrived.

"Gee, this looks familiar!", says Wilcox the cat, as he heads home from visiting Chile in the barn.



"Yeah, well, it is pretty", offers a characteristically optimistic Spanky. "But I'm glad we had our sunny rides!"



Comfy in his warm blanket, Thunder enjoys a snow-day frolic.



"Enough of that. Come on, Spanky. Let's go back in the barn with Belle." . . . "Okay."



Meanwhile, Chile luxuriates under his heat lamp. "I'm pretending I'm on Waikiki Beach - Aloha!"



"This sure is cozy . . . now if someone would just rub my belly . . ."



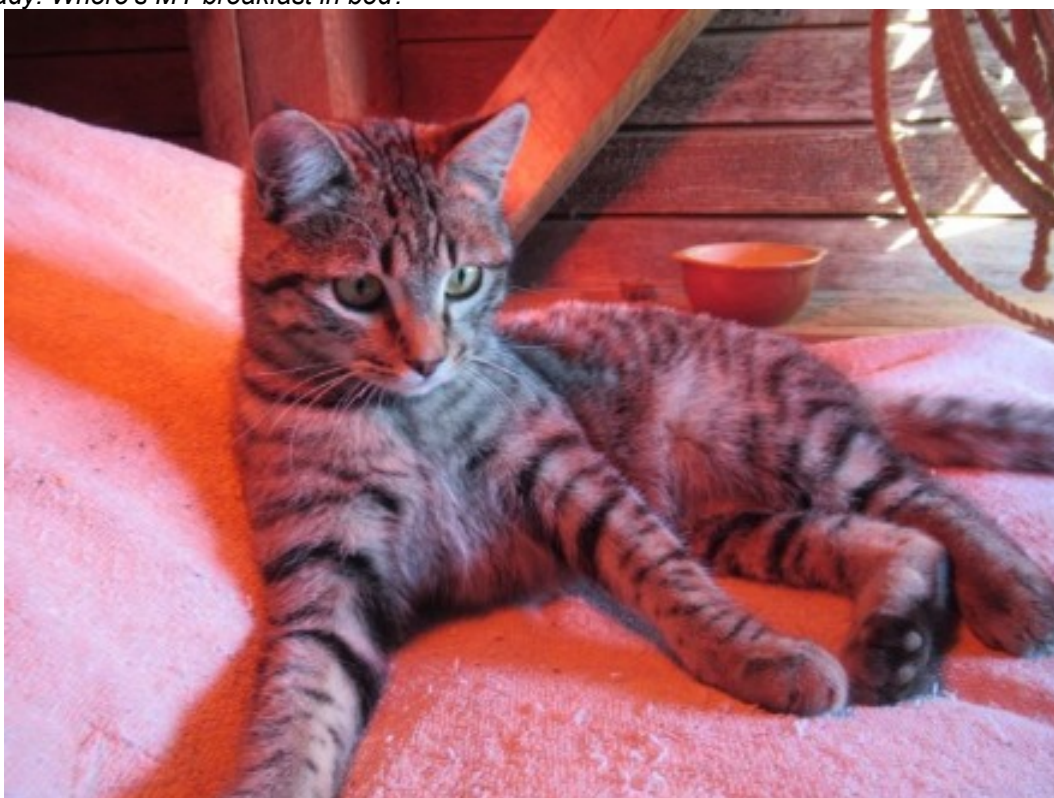
Storm over. A beautiful morning.



The horses enjoyed their "breakfast in bed".



"I'm ready. Where's MY breakfast in bed?"



Lots of snow on the mountain.



MM

It was busy around here this morning. The elk seemed to be having a convention in our pastures.



"Hey! The elk are here!", shouted Wilcox, from his apple tree lookout.



"Say 'Hi' from me", said Mommie Cat, in her boudoir.



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Still wearing their blankets, Thunder and Spanky went to say, "Good morning".



"Okay. Now it's time for my breakfast . . ."







Another herd gathered to the west . . .



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. . . and along the driveway . . . "Where do you want to go now?" "I don't know. It's too early for lunch."



Friendly way to start the day.

MM

Our winter weather can sometimes visit us right through April - but the warm gaps between the snows make it nice.

The wildlife takes advantage of clear days.



The happy hour line-up is back . . .





... and the elk hang out, too.





The one on the left seems to have an attitude.





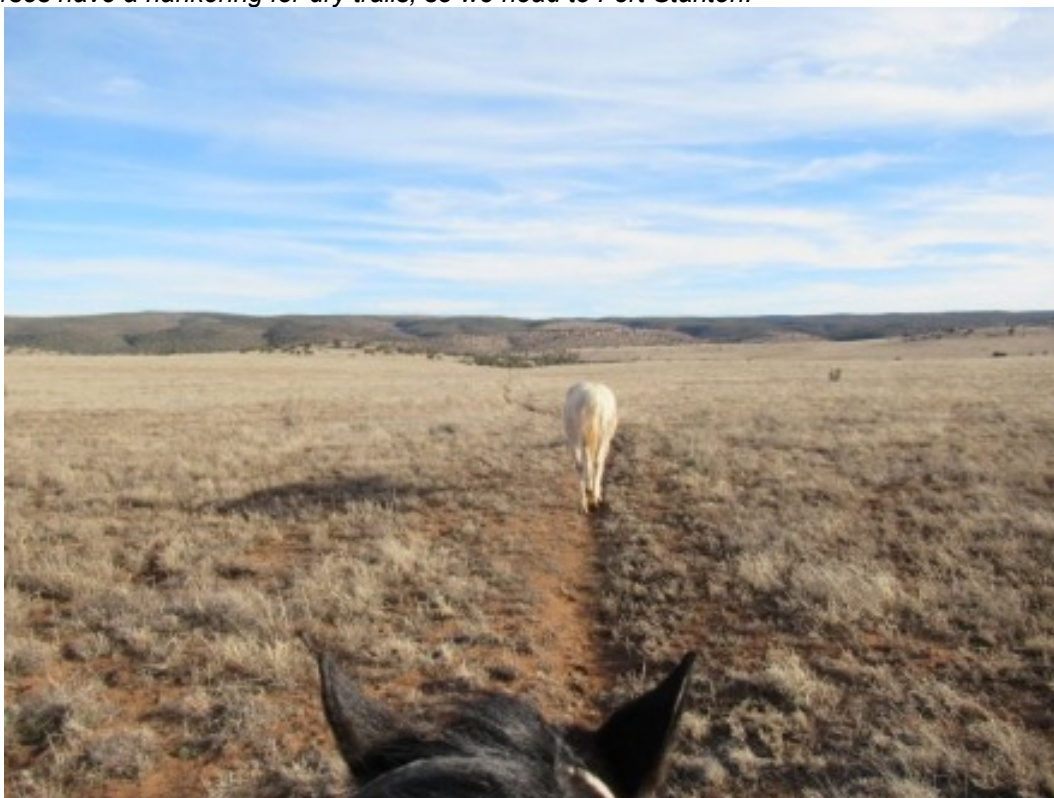
Even little Chile ventures out of his barn, to explore the possibilities of a tree . . .



... and strikes a heroic pose.



The horses have a hankering for dry trails, so we head to Fort Stanton.



Snow or no snow . . .



We climb a steep meadow . . .



. . . for a vista of the Capitan Mountains.



MM

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