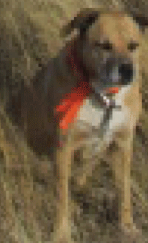


THE NOGAL JOURNALS

Volume Nine



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

THE NOGAL JOURNALS

Volume IX

Part 1 of 3

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

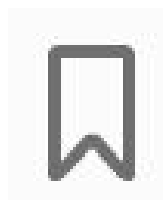
Cover Design: Laura Reynolds

Printing: PrintStar San Diego

First Edition January 2018

All photographs (c) Matthew Midgett. All rights reserved.

Please use the BOOKMARKS TOOL:



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



FOLLOWED
DREAM
RANCH

Just a simple ride, this one around old Nogal Lake (the reservoir was created for the Bonito Pipeline in 1907. It never held water very well and was finally abandoned in 1987).



Spanky surveys the dry lake bottom. It collects water during the monsoon.



Our family in silhouette.



A "whatzit" from the old days; none of us could figure it out.





Quiet grazing on the mesa.

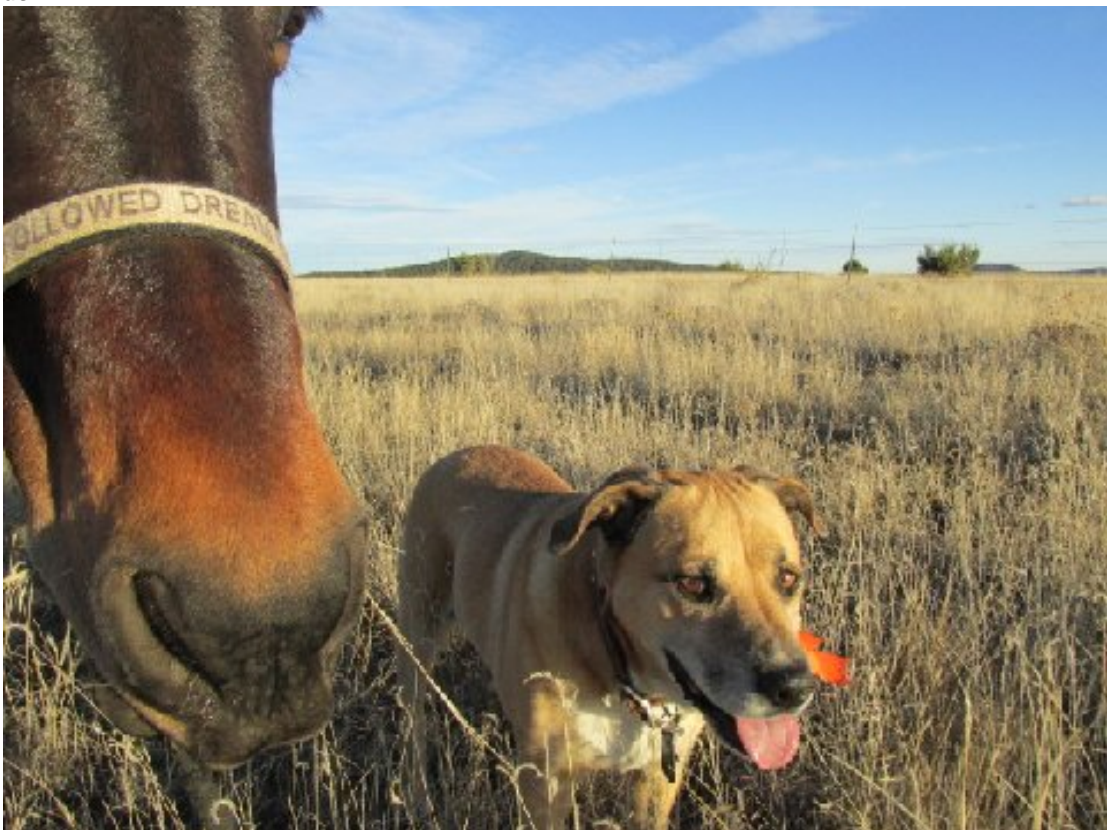




Awww...



Friends.



A kiss from Thunder (Lulu seems to be saying "yuck").





Just a simple ride. Nothing much to talk about . . . but a great deal to be thankful for.
Happy Thanksgiving to you and yours.
MM



FOLLOWED
DREAM
RANCH

2015-11-28 – ***A Birthday***

Page 1 of 5

Onyx and Wilcox are five years old today!

They were born moments apart.





First snow.







This morning - still Mommie's babies!



MM



FOLLOWED
DREAM
RANCH

We had our first snow storm of the season . . . a little early, so maybe the predictions are right. Time will tell.

It was sure pretty to wake up to.



2015-11-29 – ***So Long, Summer***

Page 2 of 9

Wilcox was the first to go exploring this strange, white world (he wasn't bothered by it).



While the horses enjoyed a cozy breakfast.



Very quickly the snow began to melt and come sliding off the roof - Plop! Plop!



Out back, the elk came for a visit - just beyond Maverick's resting place. They look nice and fat to start the winter.



Then a mysterious fog began to move in. Beautiful, but odd.



Didn't stop the deer from arriving on schedule! The twins and mom . . .





The fog continued creeping in.





"Yum!"



Family resemblance.



See the little bumps on the forehead? Bet this is a baby buck.



They are so danged cute.





MM



FOLLOWED
DREAM
RANCH

Some of our riding destinations are the result of other purposes; today we needed to run an errand to Ruidoso Downs. The horses came along, and we found a place ride nearby.

Wilcox bid us farewell from on high. Still lots of apples on this tree.



After our business in town, we ventured south of Ruidoso.



A different view of Sierra Blanca (skiers are happy - about three feet of snow on the runs at the top).



That's Hale "Lake" (more of a pond) in the distance. Paranormalists claim the area around the lake is haunted.





We didn't find any improved trails in this part of the National Forest. So we bushwhacked across wide meadows, and up steep and rocky slopes through the trees.



2015-11-30 – *High On A Hill*

Page 4 of 10

Whew! This was a tough climb. It's fun to see the horses' enthusiasm for exploration.



Things leveled out on the plateau.



Still, there was plenty of rough stuff in places.





We picked up little deer and elk trails wherever we could.



An ancient tree (and distinctive Nogal Peak in the far left distance).



Capitan Gap to the north.





We let Thunder lead us back to the trailer, cross-country.



He's right on the mark! Our trailer is the white dot, down in the valley.



Thanks for coming along!
MM

*There is something special about riding where the sky is so big above . . . and the horizon so far away.
Sierra Blanca one way . . .*



. . . Capitan Gap in the other.



"Let's head in that direction".



Freedom.



A little tank in the hills.



We haven't ridden in this area before, and spot some interesting stone palisades.



Another tank. Bigger, this one. Lots of elk tracks.



The palisade.



Thunder greets some new friends.



We had wandered much farther than we planned, in a big and irregular pattern. I told Thunder it was time to head for the trailer. We were very far from our departure point.



He led us into the trees.



Tight going here.



When we emerged on the other side, we could see the trailer in the far distance.



Thunder knew the most direct route.



We still had plenty of bushwhacking to go . . .



... and open meadows, too. Under that big sky.



A cool drink along the way.



Running the home stretch.



A snack before heading home.



Rides like this one don't offer much excitement, but that's okay with us. We'll just enjoy the peace. Hope you felt it, too.

MM

We returned to Capitan Mesa. More big sky - more open country . . . and something else.

I asked the horses if they wanted to go. "Are you kidding?" they seemed to say as they lined up in perfect order at the gate.



Once again, Spanky loaded himself into the trailer.



"Well, come on. What are you waiting for? Let's get going!"



Last night, a cow elk chewed the new red bow off the gate . . . can't think of why.



On the mesa.





Thunder spotted something, and led us to it.



"Hmmm . . ."



"What is that?"



"I don't know . . ."



A fragment of the past - an adobe ruin in the middle of nowhere.



Long forgotten.



... and now nearly gone. Did Billy the Kid know this place?



On our way home, another surprise.



Pronghorns.



The second-fastest land mammals in the world (after the cheetah); and the fastest animals in North America (they can maintain their remarkable speeds - up to 60 mph - much longer than the cheetah's sprint) . . .



. . . Stopped to take a look at us.



There's always something to appreciate.

MM

As we were leaving for a quick ride this afternoon, someone was watching us from on the hill behind the house.



We headed up the trail . . .



... and sure enough, they seemed to be waiting for us.





There were elk in every direction.



They sort of tagged along with us for a bit.



Finally, we had to move on.



Off we went. Lulu stayed right with us. I think she may figure elk are just odd-looking horses.



The horses were in a fast mood.





It was nice seeing the elk up close.

MM



FOLLOWED
DREAM
RANCH

It was an oddly-warm, and strangely-gray day. We thought it might be a good chance to sneak one more ride to the top of the mountain, before the real snows come. Maybe the recent warm spell would have melted any ice on the trails (snow is okay for horses; ice is NOT!)

"Our" buck intently watched as the horses loaded into the trailer. Does he wonder where we go - and why?



Nearly all the snow is gone above Bonito Lake . . . maybe the trails will be okay.



So far, so good. The snow from the early storm has melted . . .



. . . filling every little brook and creek with rushing water.



Gray skies don't make for very pretty photos.



As we climb higher, some little patches of snow remain on the shady portions of the trail - but warm temps kept it soft underfoot.



Our favorite Christmas tree.



The ground up here is saturated with snow melt; many healthy trees have fallen from inadequate root systems in the muddy soil.



Fallen old aspens are a challenge - lying on the trail like giant chop sticks. The horses take them in stride.



Quick drink from a little spring along the way.



Running cross-country, Spanky races towards the top.



So much for New Mexico's famous blue skies! Thunder takes in the view, as a Pacific storm glowers from the west.



Off we go - the horses were in an energetic mood.





Spanky races by the fence around Turkey Spring.



Little Lulu loves these rides - she has no trouble keeping up.



We did a lot of running on this ride.





Another spring along the way, for a thirsty little girl.



The gray skies drained color from the photos (not like the sunny, green days of summer), but it was a real treat to enjoy the mountain one more time. Thanks for coming along!

MM

Sure am glad we went up the mountain *yesterday*. Because today . . .



I'm dreaming of a white Christmas . . .

MM



FOLLOWED
DREAM
RANCH

Snow. Melt. Snow. Melt . . . and so it goes this time of year. All that melting snow can make the local trails awfully muddy in places. So we headed down the mountain to the high desert for a ride in dry sand.

Here are some examples of the "snow" part.



Spanky has taught Thunder how to make snow angels.





Nogal Peak, hidden in "snow clouds" - formed at high elevations.



This time of year does make for some beautiful sunsets.



Okay, here we are just 30 minutes away, near Carrizozo (about 1,000 ft. lower than the ranch) for our "dry ride". "Hey, Thunder, where's all the white stuff?" "I don't know, Belle, but this looks good to me".





In the distance, the west side of Nogal Peak resembles the Matterhorn,



On the left is White Horse Hill . . .



. . . we were riding there just a week or so ago.



No snow down here. That little dot in the middle of the photo is Lulu, enjoying the warm sand.



I think Thunder knows we live up there. Or maybe he is remembering our ride on White Horse Hill . . .



Leaving the mesa, we descend into a labyrinth of arroyos.





We run through the sandy stretches. This is a treat.



Spanky pops up to have a look. "Yup. I think the trailer is thataway".



Headed back.



When we got home, there was a welcoming committee on the lawn.





*The little ones are growing up (those are Nacho's twins on the right).
"Where are our apples?!"*



MM

They sure are cute!







They are a little tough on the lawn, this time of year . . .



... but how can we say "no"?



2015-12-21 – *The Shortest Day*

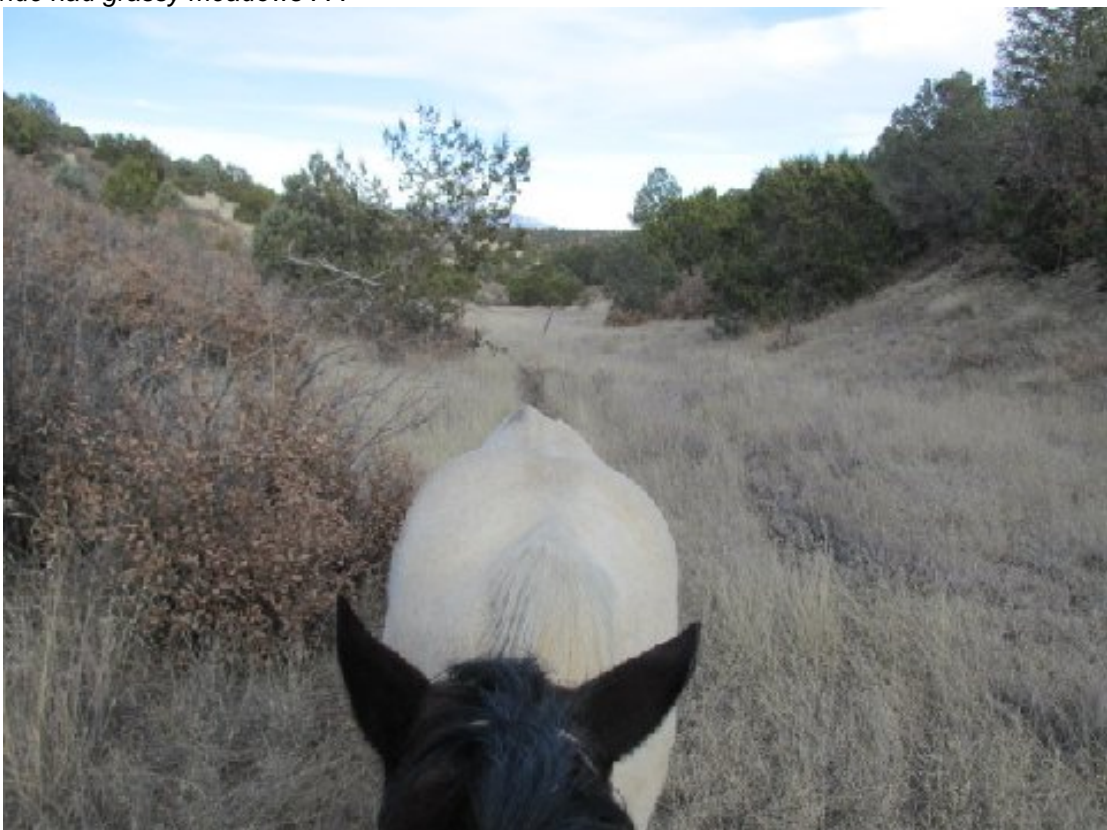
Page 1 of 6

A late ride on the shortest day of the year. Starting tomorrow. . . the days get longer!

Hurry, Lulu! Not much time!



This ride had grassy meadows . . .



... and rocky arroyos.



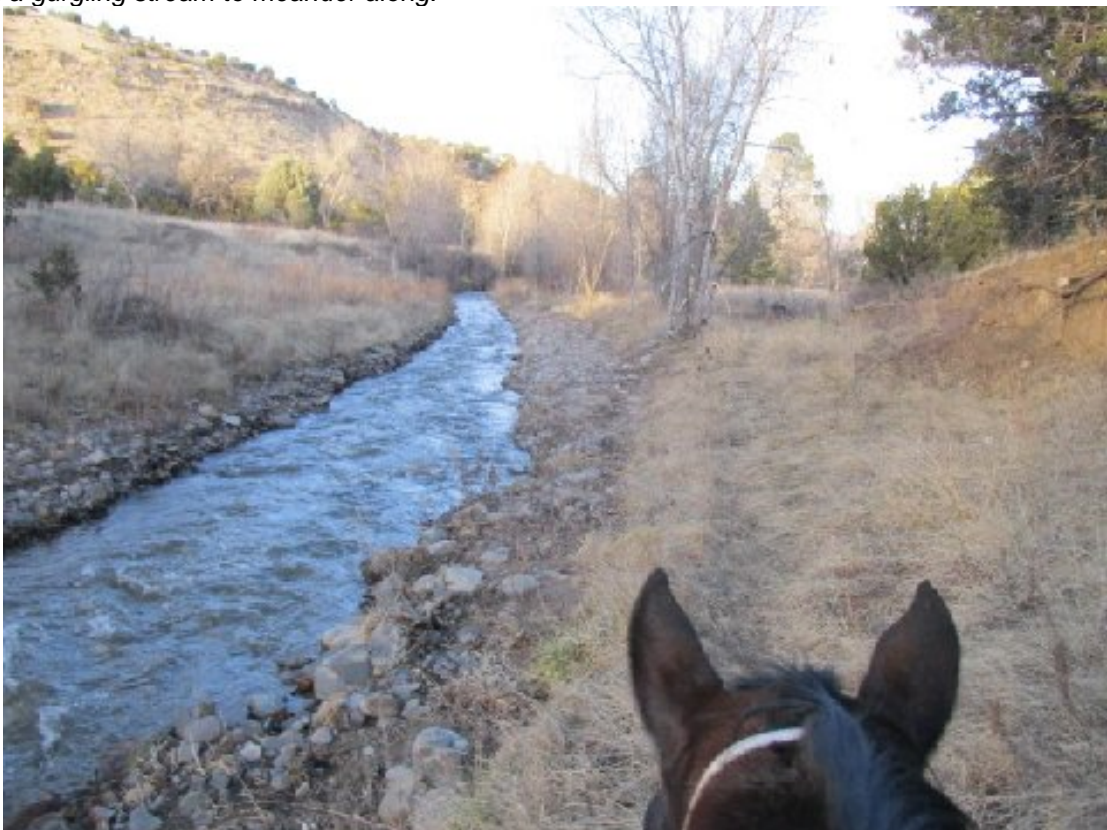
Beautiful vistas . . .



... and ancient trees.



Even a gurgling stream to meander along.



But best of all . . .



It had the earliest sunset of the year . . . to ride into.





"You mean the days start getting longer again now?"



Yup.
MM

When I was a kid, I was allowed to open one gift on Christmas Eve (Santa brought most of them overnight). This year the gift came early in the day.

Doesn't look like a White Christmas this year (of course, that isn't until tomorrow - we're in New Mexico - anything is possible).



No ice on the stock tanks.



Belle is ready. "I don't care if there is no snow; I am in the Christmas spirit (does this hat make my butt look big?)"



I had to make a quick run to the little grocery store in Capitan (forgot to get whipping cream for tomorrow . . .). Since it was such a beautiful day, I asked the kids if they would like to come along. They did. "Let's go, guys!"



We had spotted a little two-track road veering into the forest on the way to town, but we had never checked it out - until today.



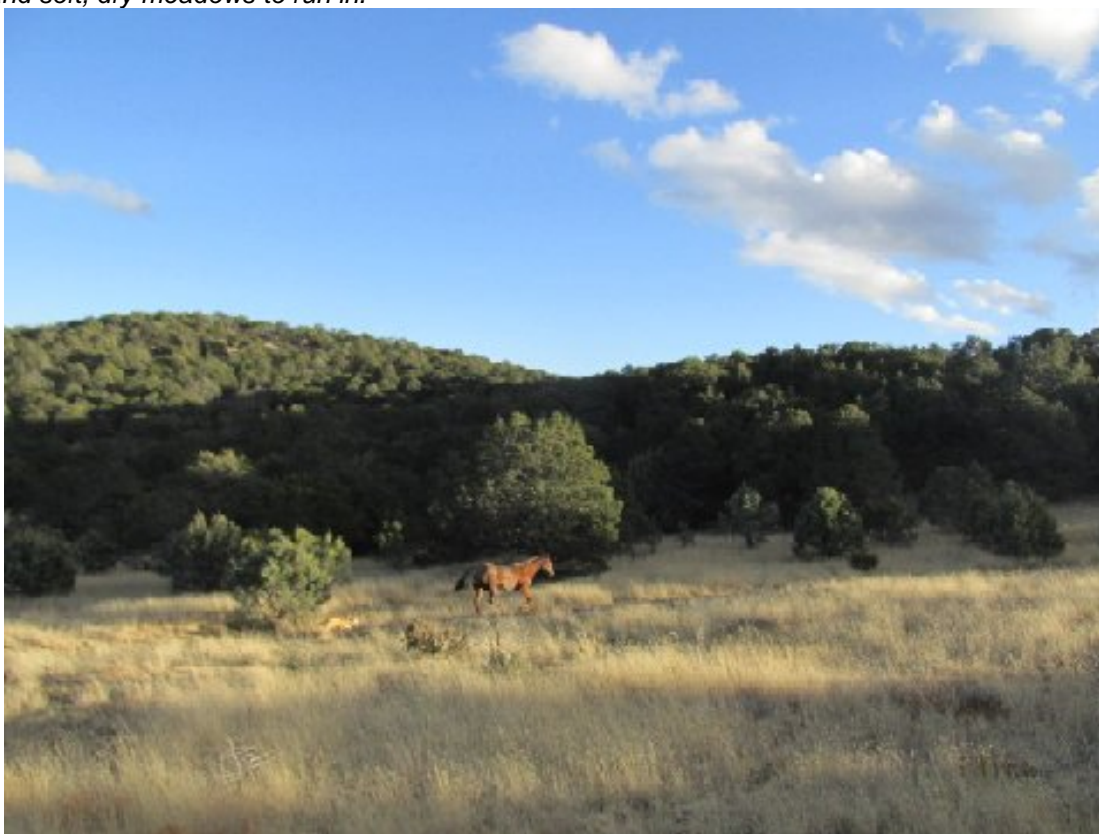
"Oh, boy! A new place to explore!"



It turned out to be a real gift. Wonderful views.



. . . and soft, dry meadows to run in.





This was a real find, only minutes from home!





As the sun began to set, clouds glowered above the mountains in the distance (skiers are very happy this season; lots of snow up high).





Then, magic. The moon came over the Capitans, looking like a Japanese watercolor.



There are many kinds of gifts. Some of the best aren't "things" at all. Thank you for joining us for another wonderful ride - each one special.

Wishing you and yours a very Merry Christmas!

MM

PS: Yes, I remembered to get the whipping cream.

2015-12-25 – ***A White Christmas – Sort Of***

Page 1 of 8

The Christmas Day weather was beautiful, but Spanky said (rather quietly, under his breath), "It won't be Christmas without snow angels". Thunder and Belle just looked at me, and I knew what we would do.

Into the trailer they went. Not much snow around Bonito Lake. Hmmm.



. . . but higher up, fresh snow had fallen over the past couple of days.



Oh, boy! Spanky has to find just the right spot.



Snow Angels! Happy horse.



... and more ...



Riding through the Aspens, with snow on the ground, is a wonderful thing.



"Ha Ha! I got to do them! Merry Christmas, everyone!"



A drink of cool (cold) fresh snow melt.



... and a run through dry grass.



Friends walking in the snow.



2015-12-25 – *A White Christmas – Sort Of*

Page 6 of 8

We are enjoying this - knowing a big winter storm, named "Goliath" (that can't be good) may be heading our way.



Christmas with the family.



... and back at home, Nacho and her twins enjoy their Christmas treats.



PEACE ON EARTH
MM

"Goliath" is being called an historic storm. For an area which typically receives a couple of feet of snow all season (and just a few inches at a time), this was a real blizzard.

It began late last night, with the horses snug in their barn.



Lulu looked bewildered this morning "What happened?" (I think we all were).



We've never seen snow like this, here.



Poor Lulu.



. . . but she took it in stride.



Well, kinda . . . "Wait a minute! What happened to the dry ground?"



Out the barn door, a winter scene (although more like winter in Minnesota).



We had to dig a trench in order to remove manure from the barn. This was a first!



It even blew into the loafing area, filling the mangers.



This is New Mexico's famous "dry powder" snow.



Of course, the cats were curious. Wilcox checks out a new path to the garages.



That was far enough for him!



Sister Onyx is braver (or more foolhardy) . . . "I think I'll take a shortcut back".



Oops!



She looks like a whale breaching!



She keeps plowing through. "Phooey!"



"I meant to do that".



All is well.



MM

2015-12-27 – *Snow Ride*

Page 1 of 8

With so much snow on the ground, I wasn't sure about a ride, but the horses were ready to lose their blankets for a bit, and have some exercise.

Thunder takes a look. Interestingly, they were not in a hurry to leave the barn.



Spanky checked out the depth.



2015-12-27 – ***Snow Ride***

Page 2 of 8

. . . and, of course made an angel right away (this is the aftermath - don't know what is up with his tongue!)



We took a quick ride up our hill, just to see . . .





"What do you think, Belle?" "I think it is a lot of fun!"



Let's race!



2015-12-27 – **Snow Ride**

Page 5 of 8

That was so cool, we decided to try a forest trail. At first, Lulu thought it would be nice to lead . . .



. . . but then she figured out that the back of the pack had the snow tramped down.



Fresh snow is like some sort of new beginning.



. . . and running through it at a full gallop is wonderful! (Although trying to press the tiny camera trigger, while running, with heavy gloves, and numb fingers despite the gloves, is a challenge).



That snow is deep!



These horses are smart. Despite more than two feet of snow, they know the trail underneath.



Headed home.



They had a great time!



Is it summer yet?

MM

After the storm - peace.







Little Onyx is a "snow cat"!



She is everywhere!



About to start her run.



She has learned to run on deep, powdery snow! (Those are her bouncing tracks).



MM

Having horses at liberty gives them more than physical freedom - it allows them to better express their personalities. Belle seems pleased that she is "special" carrying me around, and tends to mother the other horses and Lulu; Spanky is the clown, always keeping close to his friends, and doing things like the snow angels; Thunder revels in his role as leader and "GPS". Between us all, there is a wonderful camaraderie. I felt it especially on this ride.

The snow has stayed fresh in the forest behind the house. Thunder got his bearings, and followed the usual trail, though it was deeply buried.





The "Currier & Ives" forestry barn.



Special.



The cold air and powdery snow gave them lots of energy.



Thunder takes off at a Quarter Horse gallop!



Spanky tags him. Wonderful to see him doing so well.



They raced to the top of the hill at full bore - snow flying.



Belle and Lulu took a slightly more leisurely pace.



Later on, another fast dash - we all ran together this time.



This is the powder skiers dream of.





There were LOTS of snow angels! "Jeez. He's doing it again!"



Another one.



Oh, Spanky!



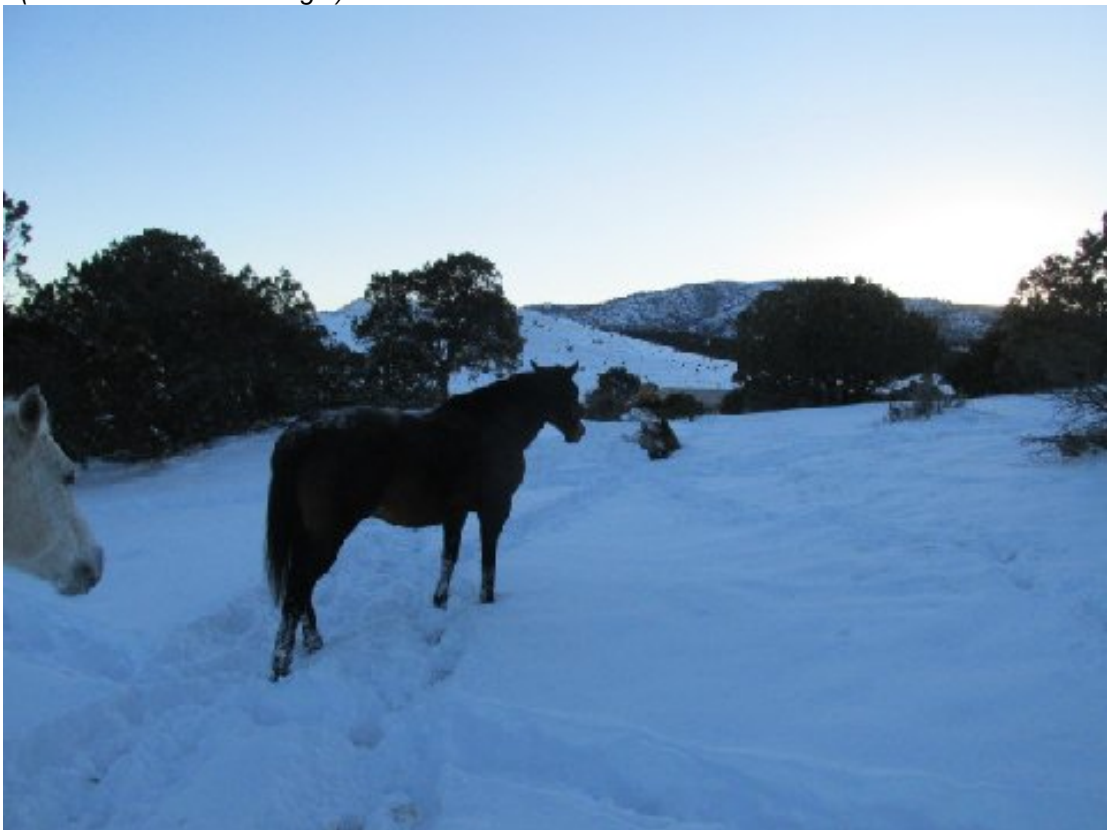


About this tree: Every year we spot a pinon pine in the forest above the house, to cut for Christmas. This time we found a beauty, but somehow, we never got around to it - kept thinking it just wasn't right to destroy a living thing for two week's decoration. Now we will continue to enjoy it just as it is.





Home (and one more snow angel).



MM

We've been taking rides out the back gate, but melting snow has made for some muddy spots ("Yuck!", says Belle). So, once again I promised them a ride down in the dry high desert. And once again, just as we loaded into the trailer, the sunny skies turned cloudy and ominous.

We headed down to the Tularosa Basin anyway (at least it wasn't foggy).



By the time we reached the desert, heavy gray clouds cloaked the mountains of home. We parked by some old stock pens.



The horses were happy - the ground was dry, and the air a toasty 48 degrees!



To the west, an approaching front had already begun creating snow flurries. We'd best keep an eye on that.



So we charged on - racing over the desert between creosote and mesquite.



Down into mysterious arroyos . . .



... where soft sand made for comfortable riding.



This is an eerie world on a cloudy day. Quiet, and nearly subterranean. Eroded walls expose ancient roots, as if we were in a giant rabbit den.



"Ooh! What was that sound?"



In lieu of snow, Spanky makes some sand angels . . .



. . . before trotting on with his pal.



The skies were getting darker, and a brittle cold wind had come up.



We figured we better skedaddle back to the trailer - running cross-country.



Frustrating our path were countless deep arroyos - it was fun to watch the horses find ways across them.



At last, the trailer was in sight, a tiny white dot on the horizon.



When we got back to the trailer, a squint-eyed old rancher stood by his rusty pick-up truck. Was this trouble?

He had seen us riding across a distant ridge, then disappear into an arroyo. He figured the trailer must be ours, and waited it out until we returned. Bob introduced himself with a firm handshake, and asked, "How do you keep those ponies from run'nin off?" I explained as best I could - that they enjoyed exploring the country together. He nodded his head in understanding, "Guess they know they've got a friend", he said with a grin. Bob was impressed enough to invite us to ride on his private land, next time we are in the area. That'll be fun!

MM

2016-01-04 – *Winter Moments*

Page 1 of 7

Just some random shots from "snow country"!

Brrrrr . . . before the sun came out!



Soft advection frost clings to the trees.



Ah . . . the sun!



If you look closely, you will see green grass under the retreating snow. The horses are happy about that.



Ice on Bonito Lake.



Lulu is cautious.





Don't get your tongue stuck!



Note that she only has one paw on the ice -- smart girl!



At home, the deer enjoy some snacks (you probably recognize Nacho on the left).



It's a New Year's party!





. . . and so, a new year begins.

MM



FOLLOWED
DREAM
RANCH

In our typically dry climate, fog is so rare it was considered sacred by the Apaches and other native peoples. This morning was sunny, and I promised the horses an outing in the dry high desert near Carrizozo. By the time the trailer was hitched up, a deep and heavy fog descended. We figured we would be able to drive down and out of it at a lower elevation - but that is not how it worked out. It became so dense, we found ourselves creeping along at 25 mph with the emergency flashers going. Not fun. As soon as we hit a place I knew we could safely pull off the highway, we did.

"This is your idea of a nice dry, sunny ride?", they seemed to say.



We had pulled off the road into a former cattle ranch near Carrizozo. The area is being developed into smaller "ranchettes", and features a nice park with gazebo.



My camera compensates for the dim conditions pretty well -- visibility was more limited than it appears. In a short while, we were immersed in gray clouds -- no sense of direction.



Can you spot Thunder in the distance?



Where are our blue skies?



They all craved some exercise, and we did a lot of running.



Oddly, Spanky stayed right behind Belle the entire time. It was as though he was worried about being lost in the fog.



Thunder decided this would be an ideal place for a nice, muddy, roll.



After a couple of hours, the fog began to lift, and we returned to the little park for some grazing before heading home.



It wasn't the ride we had planned, but the grass snacks made up for it!



MM

It snowed most of the night. A light, fluffy snow - like a Christmas card.

By morning the storm had passed. It was peaceful. Horses having breakfast in the barn; cats napping in the warm squares of sunlight coming through the windows.



In the afternoon the sun was out. Birds were happily eating the broken corn left by the deer. The horses and Lulu were ready for a ride behind the house.



Just about the time we got through the gate into the forest, it hit. Snow. Coming down hard. Lots of it.



All of a sudden, Lulu - who was in the lead - saw something.



She telegraphed to Thunder, who saw it too.



Then we all stopped for a look. We were being watched. The elk must have been thinking, "I wouldn't be out in this if I had a nice cozy barn . . ."



They paced along with us, still curious. "Why in the heck are they out here?"



Finally, our paths meandered in separate directions. The snowfall got heavier.



The snow was really coming down. Since we were headed into it, the hard clotted flakes hit my eyes like needles. I pulled the muffler over my head like Jeremiah Johnson. I had trouble seeing, and depended on Thunder to find the way.



He waited patiently for us to catch up.





Lulu didn't mind in the least.



She loves to run in the snow - she is joyful.



. . . and, of course there was time for Spanky to do his angels.



Heads down, we bent into the oncoming storm.



Although they were having a great time, no one lingered on this ride. We kept moving.



Oh . . . except for more snow angels by guess who . . . (that's him in the center of the photo). Come on, Spanky, we're leaving!



In the lead, Thunder recognized the trail beneath drifts.



It certainly was pretty.



Like a Currier & Ives painting come to life.



When we got home, we were greeted by an odd sight.



The real deer were herded with the metal ones on the driveway. "I don't know what to do. Do you think they are frozen stiff?", they seemed to fret.



Time for some apple pie - hot out of the oven.



Magazine Ad



**LIFE IS SHORT
ENJOY THE RIDE**

Ruidoso
NEW MEXICO

www.DiscoverRuidoso.com



FOLLOWED
DREAM
RANCH

Fresh snow sure is pretty!



A quiet walk in the forest.



A nice COLD drink.



You can see that Lulu is a happy girl!







Seems like the deer are enjoying it, too.







MM

The old roadster took a nostalgic journey back to Bavaria . . . or so it seemed.



Actually, it was a drive to Cloudcroft, New Mexico, and the Lodge there. With the snow, it sure did look like Germany. Willkommen!



We had lunch . . .



. . . Lulu had a great time.



SNOW volleyball, anyone (see the net)? Actually, that might be fun . . .





I think the car felt right at home.



On the way back, we stopped at a big cattle tank, so Lulu could have a drink (don't know why it is not frozen).



Now, this cattle chute looks like New Mexico!



We spotted some wild horses.



Don't worry - they have acclimated to these winters for generations.



They seem to be eating well!



Auf Wiedershen.
MM

We had business in Carrizozo today - which provided a perfect opportunity to accept Bob's invitation to ride on his ranch.

We sure picked a beautiful day for it - no jacket, no gloves!



The west face of the Sacramento Mountains (our place is just on the other side).



The horses sure enjoyed this warm, dry country. Thunder made some sand angels in celebration.



Oh, boy! Cows!





Spanky's photobomb.



Hanging out at the water hole.



Veal anyone? (Sorry . . .)



We gotta go now - say good-bye, Thunder.



He and Spanky lag behind . . .



In the middle of nowhere . . . relics of times past.





Glass insulators - from a telegraph line?



"The Great Majestic" wood stove.



No one has enjoyed a good night's sleep in this bed for many a moon.



Time for a snack. Three cooperative horses.



Come'on, boys.



An image of the West.



Some arroyo bottoms are sandy and soft - this one isn't.



We pass an arroyo sphinx.



Time for a run!



Hard to frame a photo, when you are hanging on for dear life.





Thunder and Spanky beat us back to the gate - and wait patiently.



It was a great ride, and a real privilege - glad we could share it with you.

MM

End of Volume 9 - Part 2 of 3

Please Follow Us Some More...

See All the Journals.

JUST CLICK HERE!

