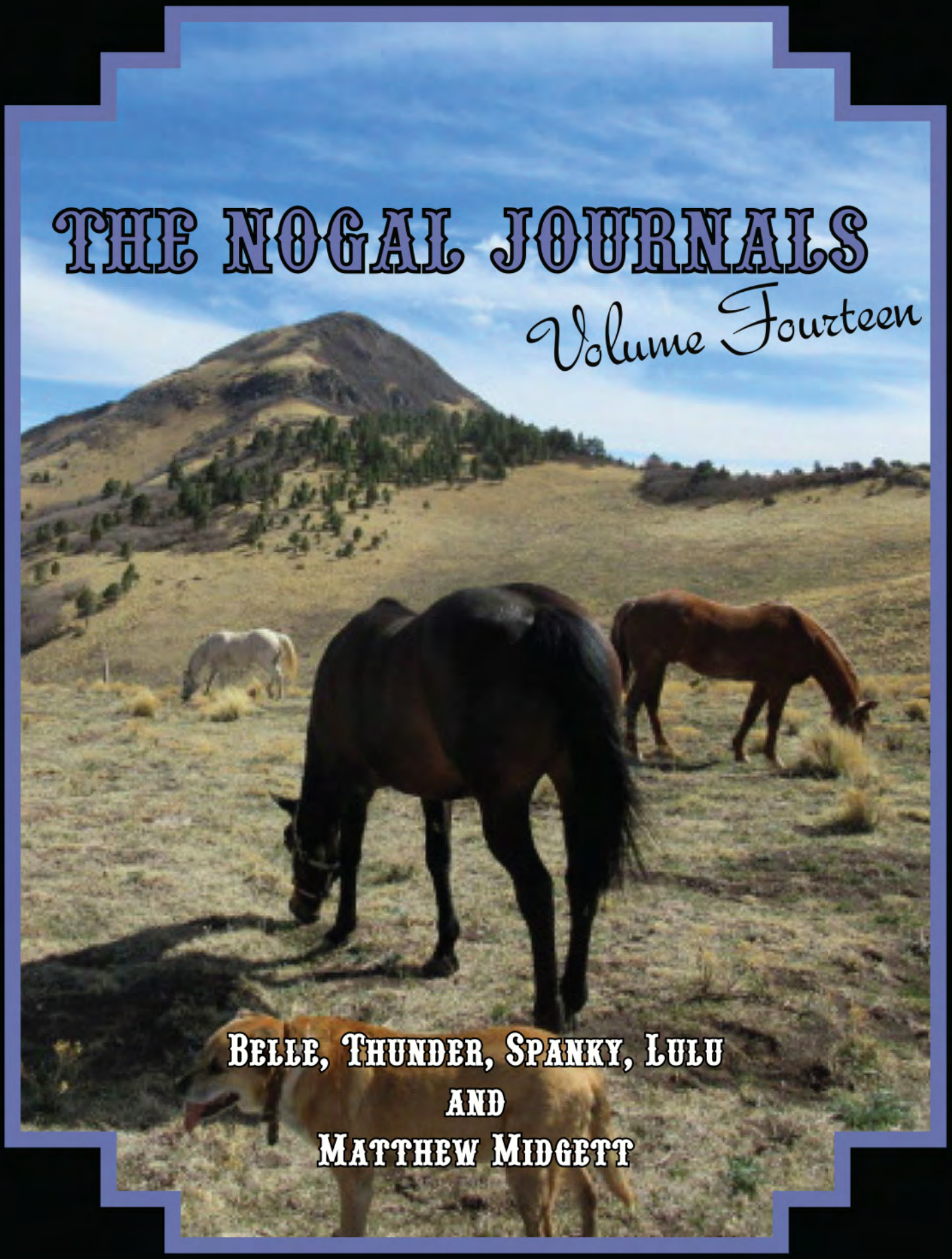

THE NOGAL JOURNALS
Volume Fourteen
Belle, Thunder, Spanky, Lulu
and
Matthew Midgett

THE NOGAL JOURNALS

Volume XIV

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 Printing May 2019
All photographs © Matthew Midgett. All rights reserved.

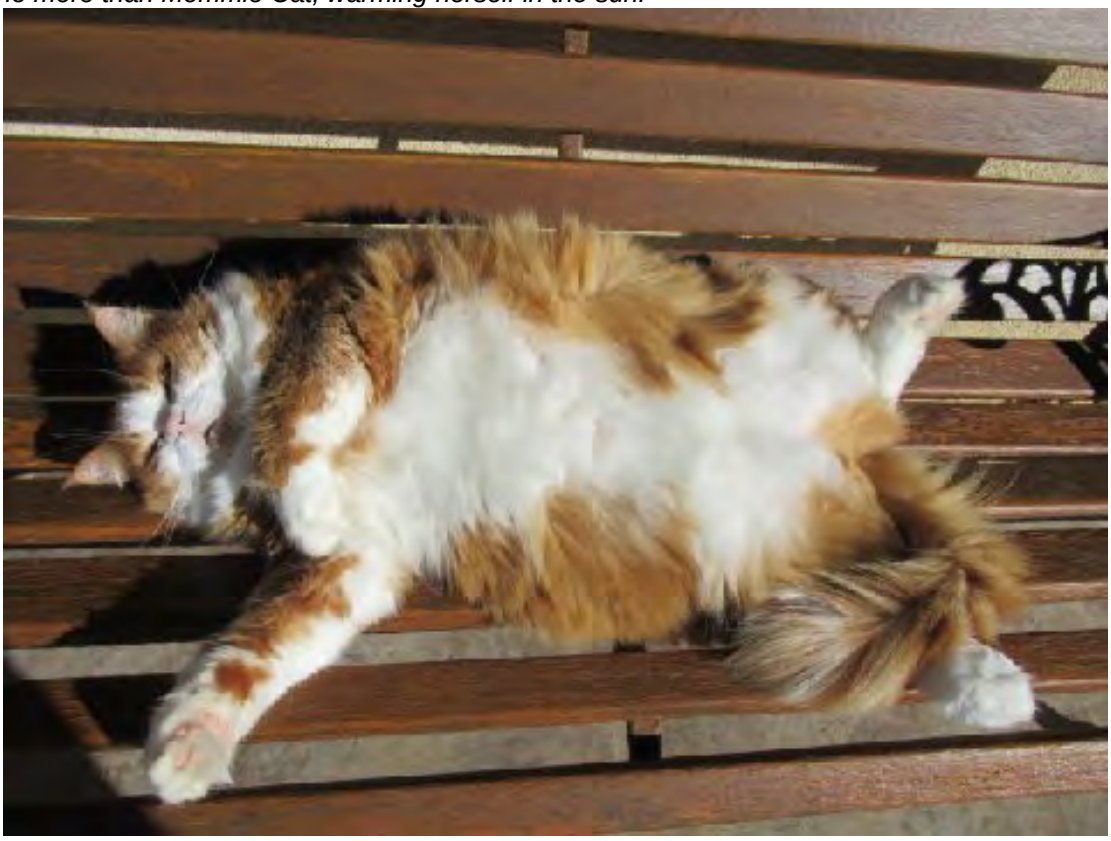
Please use the BOOKMARKS TOOL:

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

2017-10-25 - *Quite A Party*

A beautiful fall day, and everyone was enjoying it.

No one more than Mommie Cat, warming herself in the sun!



The deer came earlier than usual. I am so proud of our Lulu . . .

. . . she naps while the deer nosh.

It is impressive, how she overcame her instinct to chase them (and remarkable that they are so trusting of her).

"Hey mom, is that coyote sleeping?" "Yes, dear (deer?), but it isn't a coyote. Remember? She's our friend Lulu".

"Oh, yeah . . ."

These babies aren't so sure. "Yeah, I know mom says it's okay . . . but if that thing ran after me, I think I would pee my pants".

A little later, Dad has a deep drink.

What's this? Elk visitors coming up the driveway! "Hey guys!"

This one has a chat with his deer cousins. "How's it going? Don't you just hate hunting season?"

"Hmmm . . . I guess they order apples a la carte . . ."

More keep arriving.

Lots of socializing.

This elk mom tells her son, "That buck thinks he has such a big rack. He should see your father's . . ."

2017-10-25 - *Quite A Party*

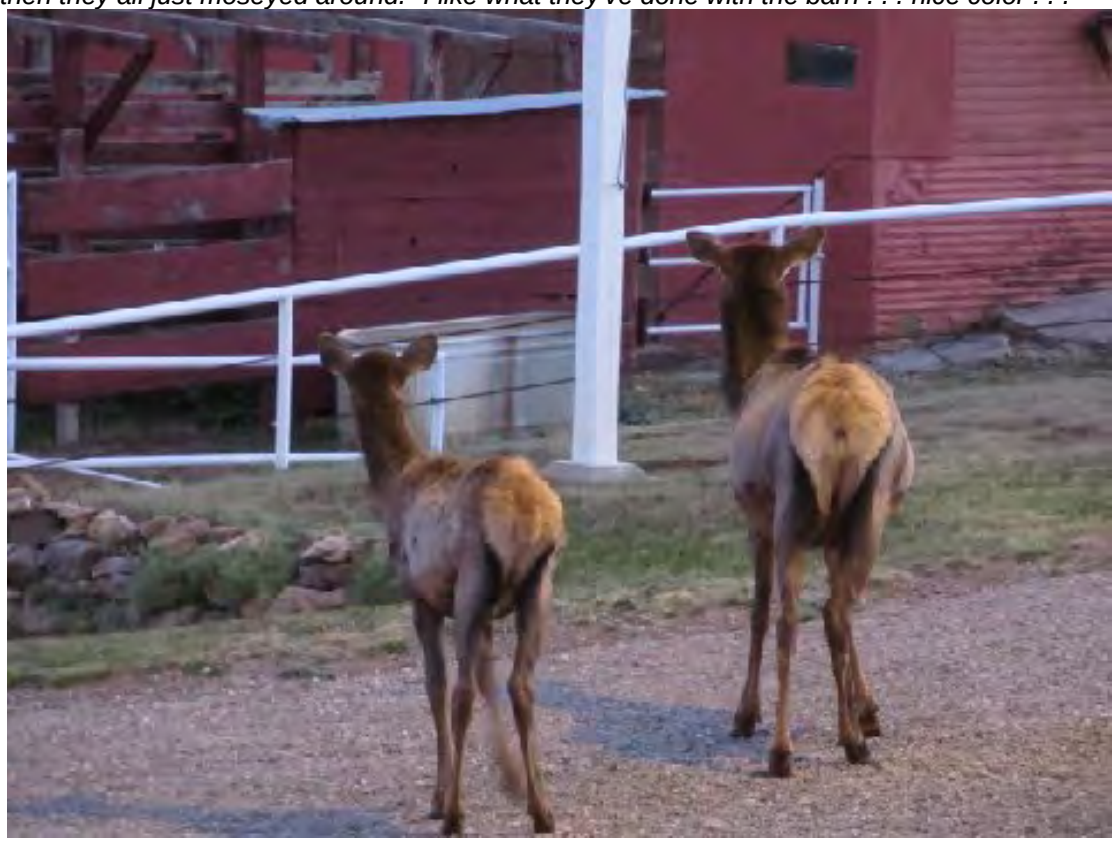
At first, it seemed like the elk were going to stay on "their side" of the pipe fence. Then . . .

. . . through the gate they came . . . right up to the house.

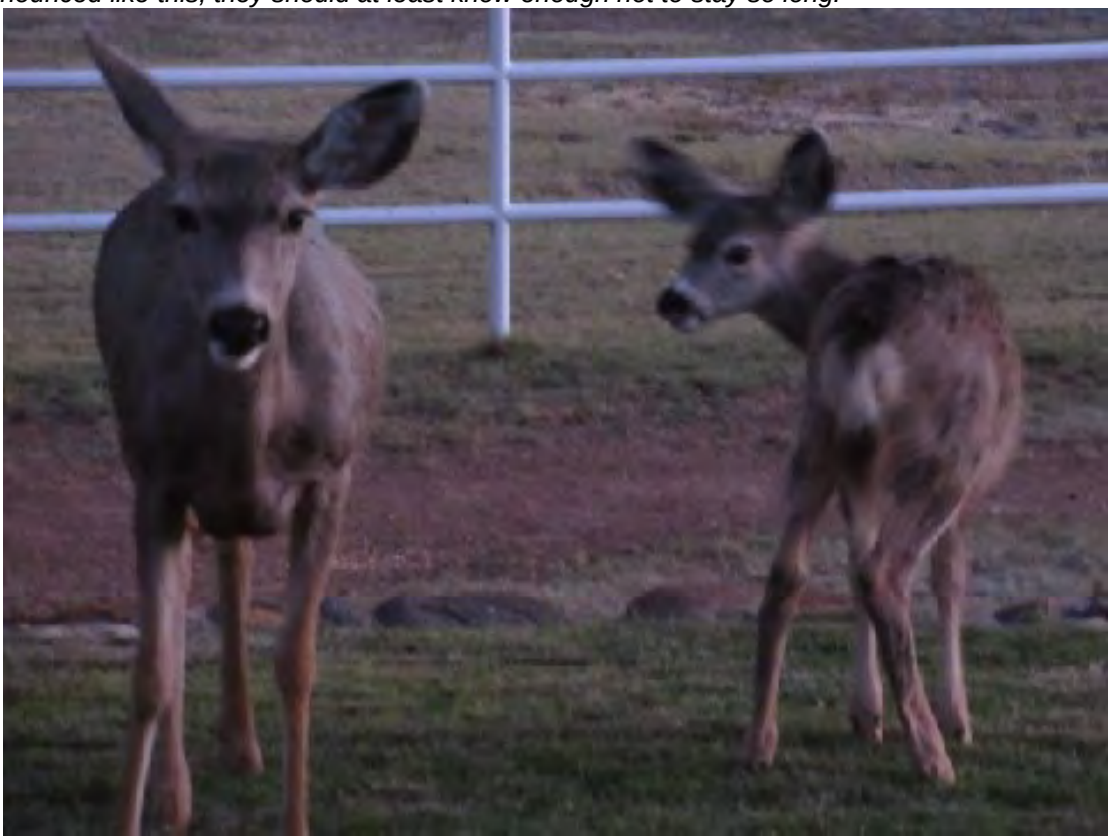
. . . for a nice cool happy hour drink.

So much for "phantoms of the forest" and all that.

And then they all just moseyed around. "I like what they've done with the barn . . . nice color . . . "



The deer seemed a little perplexed. "You know, we really didn't invite them. If they are going to drop by unannounced like this, they should at least know enough not to stay so long."



But they did stay . . . into the night. More and more kept arriving. In the foreground, deer bucks observe them hit the bar. "Man, they sure can put it away!"

The whole herd decided to stay and party. "Who brought the chips and dip?"

They are pretty heavy drinkers.

While this was going on, there were about a dozen more on the lawn, right outside the living room window, eating the apple tree leaves (too little light there for photos - darn!) But the water tank seemed to be the "in" place to be.

"What are those deer staring at? Like they don't hit this bar when we aren't around . . . "

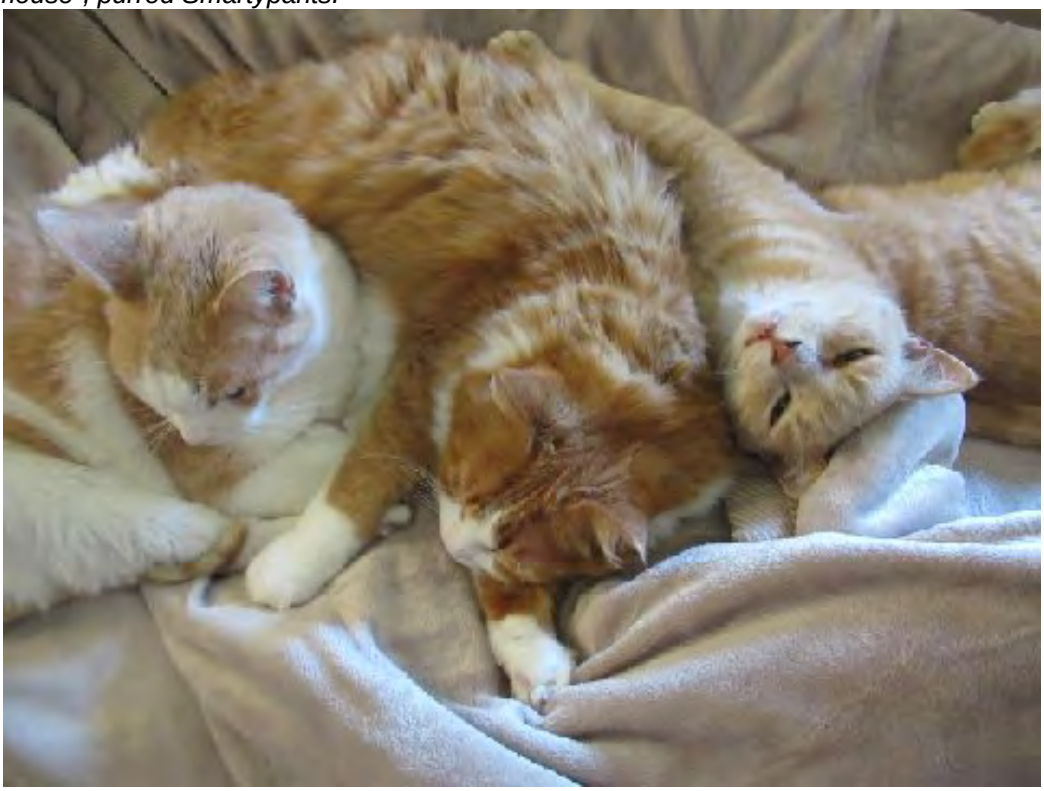
It was quite a party! Glad we could share it with you.
MM

FOLLOWED DREAM RANCH

2017-10-26 - *Closer to Heaven*

Riding the high country will always be special to us - its isolation and majestic views make for unforgettable experiences. This time of year, summer greenery gives way to the fleeting beauty of fall color, as icy winter approaches.

Leaving for our mountain ride, a clump of napping cats bid us a sleepy farewell. "Have fun, and bring us back a mouse", purred Smartypants.



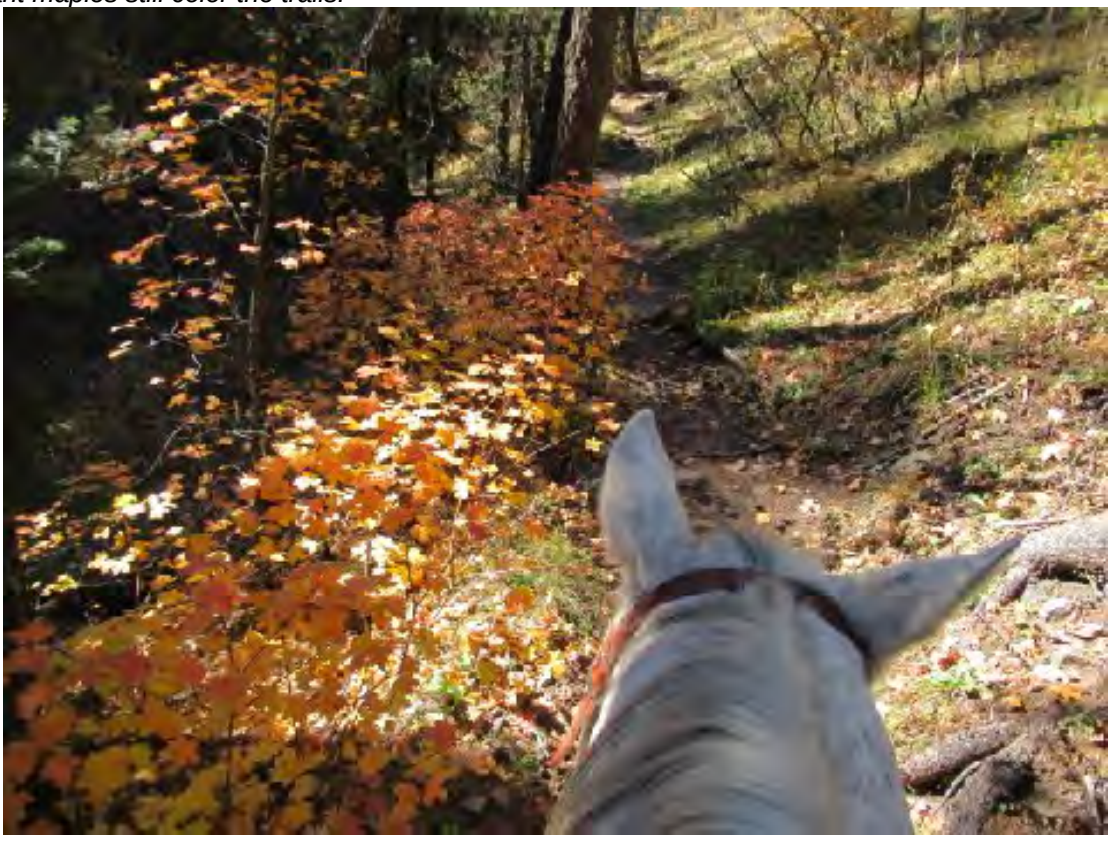
Lulu leads the way through a warm and fragrant forest.

A clear pool . . .

. . . makes for a cool drink.

I've never understood this "Spanish moss" growing in an alpine climate.

Vibrant maples still color the trails.



2017-10-26 - *Closer to Heaven*

We emerge high above, and take a lunch break.

Thunder and Lulu share my sandwich (I think I might have gotten a bite, maybe two).

2017-10-26 - *Closer to Heaven*

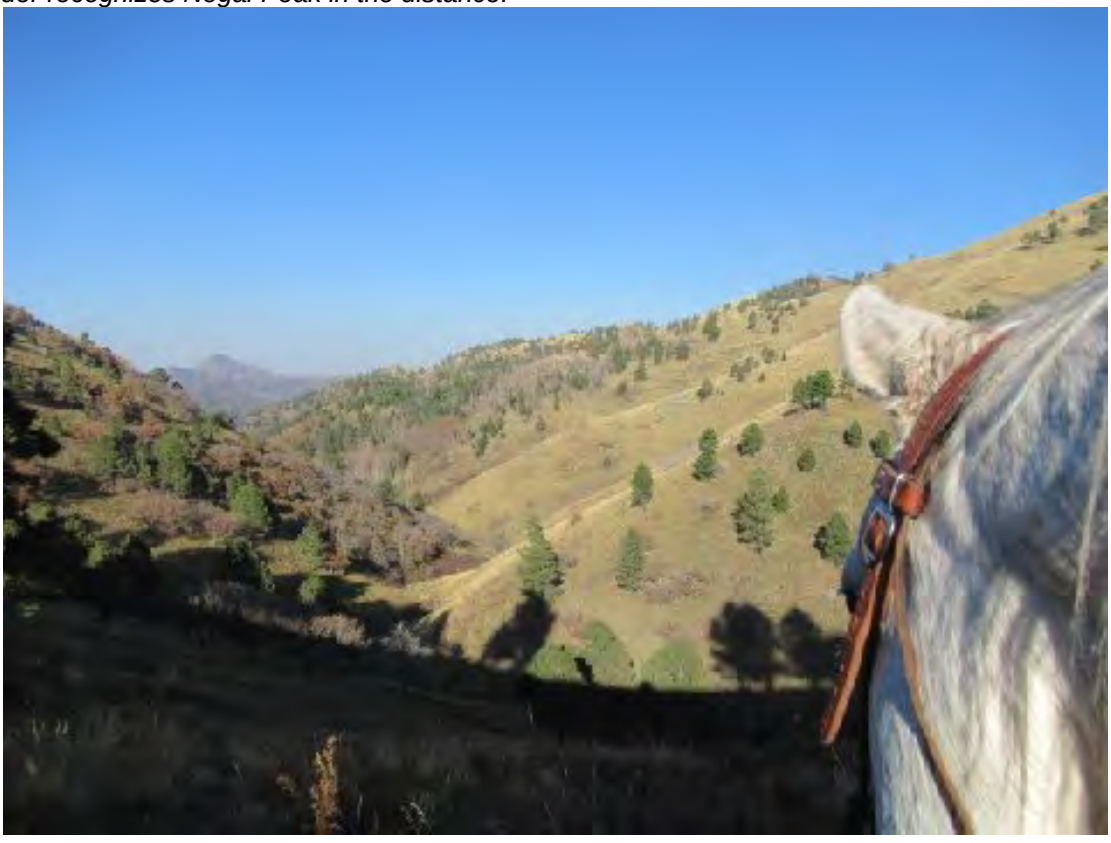
It does feel closer to heaven up here.

This part of the forest opens into still-green meadows, which look an awful lot like golf courses.

In the distance, bald White Horse Hill, our destination.

A peaceful vista at the top of the world (about 10,000 ft.).

Thunder recognizes Nogal Peak in the distance.



Lulu of the mountain! This is a very long and strenuous ride - she's having a wonderful time - as you can see.

Heading down, through silent aspen groves.

2017-10-26 - *Closer to Heaven*

The green ferns of summer have turned gold. They will disappear altogether under winter snow . . . to emerge again in the spring.

Life in the high country of New Mexico.
MM

2017-10-27 - *Grindstone Outing*

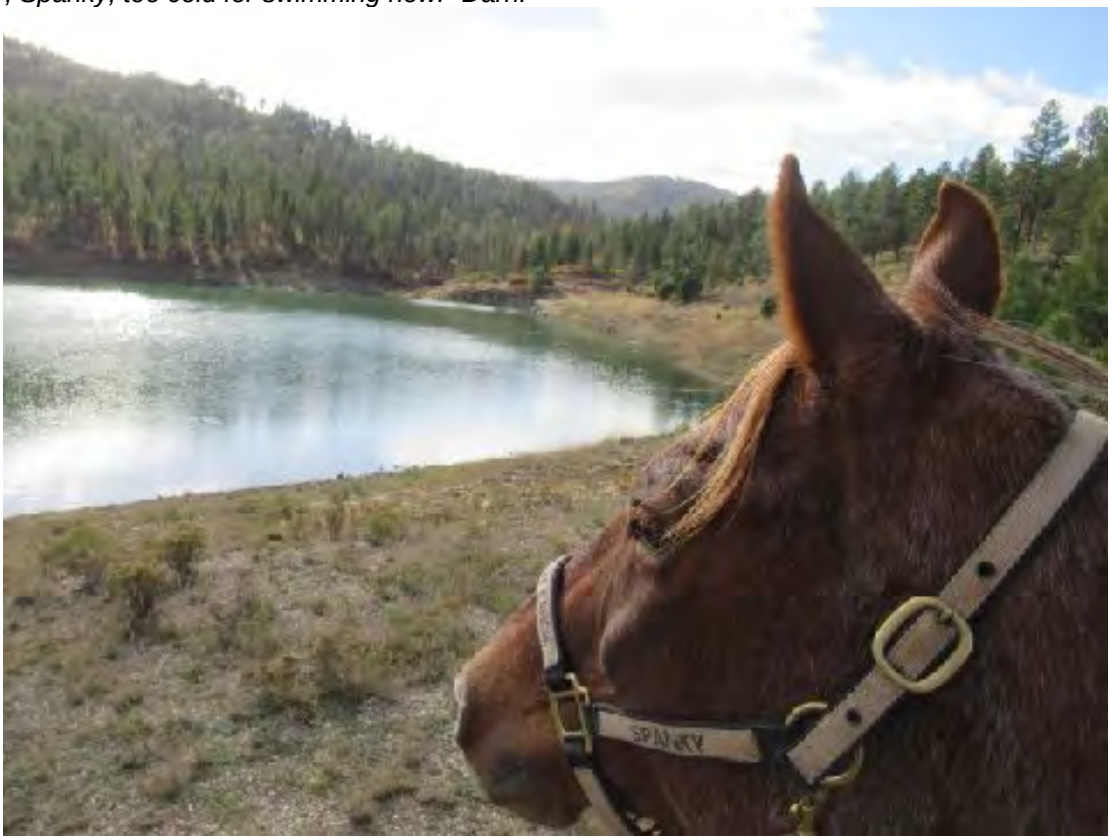
We dropped Belle off at Franklin Clinic this afternoon, where she will be receiving more physical therapy over the weekend. Since Thunder and Spanky always accompany her, for her comfort and theirs (they can see she is in good hands - Spanky always makes certain she is comfortable in her stall . . . seriously!), we decided to take a little ride on the way home.

Grindstone Lake is maintained by the Village of Ruidoso as a multi-use recreational park.

There are many miles of trails around the lake and surrounding hills (some of which are within the National Forest).

2017-10-27 - *Grindstone Outing*

Sorry, Spanky, too cold for swimming now. "Darn!"

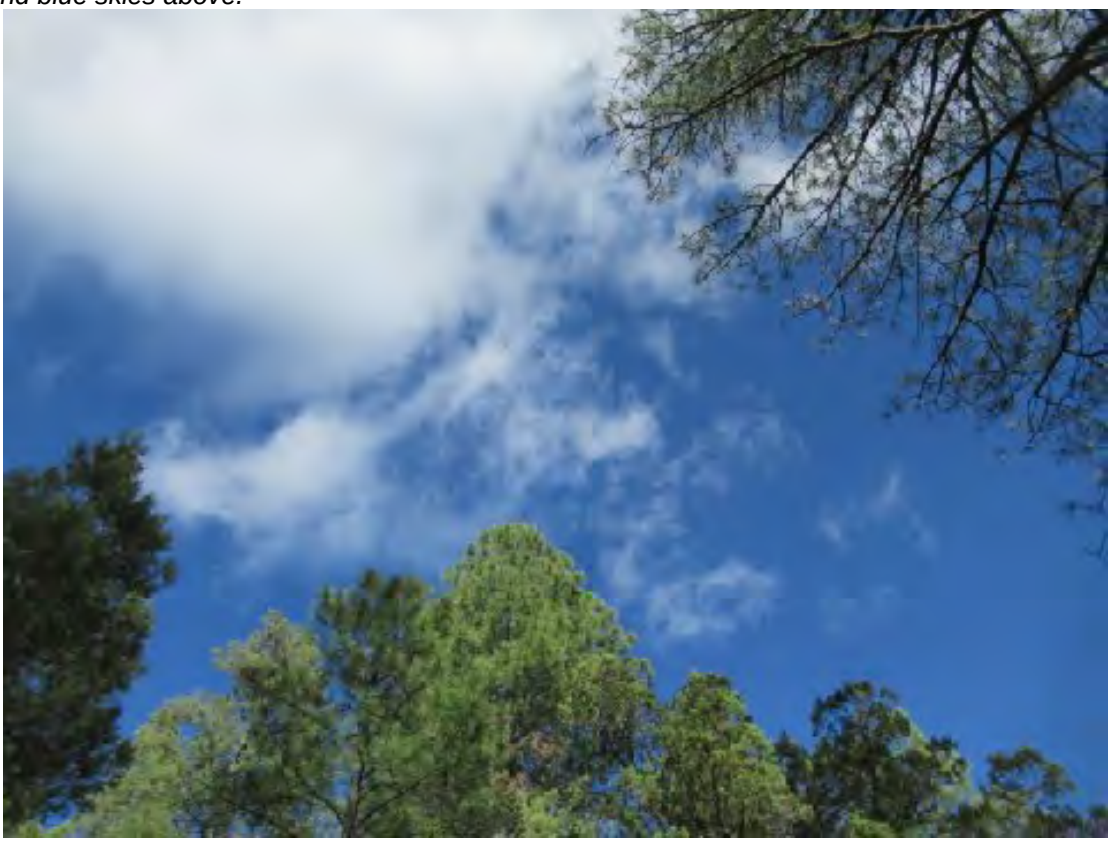


Although within the Village limits, we didn't encounter anyone else on our ride.

This is a lower, and therefore "scrubbier" forest than the high country up the mountain.

Still, there are some big trees, and it is always nice to be surrounded by nature (and a peek of the lake through the trees).

. . . and blue skies above.



Little Lulu tags along.

2017-10-27 - *Grindstone Outing*

Soon, Thunder allowed Spanky to lead and set the pace.

He's a great trail boss.

As we climb, a view of the lake through the trees.

. . . and a curious deer (not one of "ours"!).

We reach the summit.

Nature is a talented artist.

2017-10-27 - *Grindstone Outing*

Spanky had a great time. We all did.

Thanks for coming along!
MM

2017-10-28 - *Dia de Los Muertos in Lincoln NM*

Four years ago, Anne Marie LaMay and several Lincolnians (Lincolnites?) decided to honor the Hispanic traditions of their historic village with a public "Day of the Dead" event (in many Latin American cultures, Día de Los Muertos is a very big deal - celebrating deceased loved ones with colorful decorations, food offerings, and mementos). It was a success, and expanded the community's image beyond Billy the Kid and the Lincoln County War (1878). Each year it has grown, and this year's festivities were the best yet. In past years, Belle was invited to participate - dressing up and socializing is very much in her personality. But since she was unavailable this year, Thunder, Spanky and Lulu offered to go in her stead.

Lulu endures a little friendly tail sniffing by Thunder. She wore a modest black bow for the occasion.

Others opted for the traditional "skull" face painting.

Lulu happily led the way.

We spent lots of time posing for photos in front of the iconic Torreon stone tower.

The horses (and Lulu) were terrific - mingling with the crowds, kissing babies, and patiently waiting for folks to figure out how to use their cell phones and iPads as cameras.

They found all the activity very interesting.

Lincoln is considered the most "authentic" old West town remaining. Much effort has gone into its preservation, without the usual signs of progress. Autumn is a particularly attractive time to visit.

Holding to tradition, there were many "ofredas" - small alters decorated with personal items in memory of loved ones.

The horses thought they might be for them. "Oh, looky . . . "

"No, Spanky, those flowers are NOT for you!"

Folks gathered in front of the historic Wortley Hotel. One of Billy's victims was lunching here when he heard shots of the Kid's daring escape from the jail across the street. The sheriff ran to the scene, where he was gunned down.

This was a decidedly more upbeat day.

Spanky enjoyed a snack and the music . . .

Before doing his own version of a "break dance" on the lawn. "I-Yi-La-Bamba!"

Of course, Lulu greeted friends.

When the horses discovered some picnickers, I knew we were in trouble.

Spanky the mooch was quick to introduce himself. "Gee, are those potato chips, perchance?"

Later, he learned about guitars from a musician. "Darn. I would love to play, but, you know, I guess I would need fingers . . . "

Then he returned to posing on his own.

Later, he checked out one of several Mariachi groups.

It's interesting . . . the horses really seemed to enjoy the music - standing and listening quietly to the violins and horns . . .

. . . and then there was this little girl with an apple, which she did not care to share.

They both tried, but she was not cooperative.

Lulu was pooped, and sensibly found a soft spot on the hand-knit dog coats offered for sale by the Humane Society!

It was a very successful event, and we are grateful to have been included. I am REALLY proud of the way our boys and Lulu took it all in stride - and obviously had a wonderful time, too.
MM

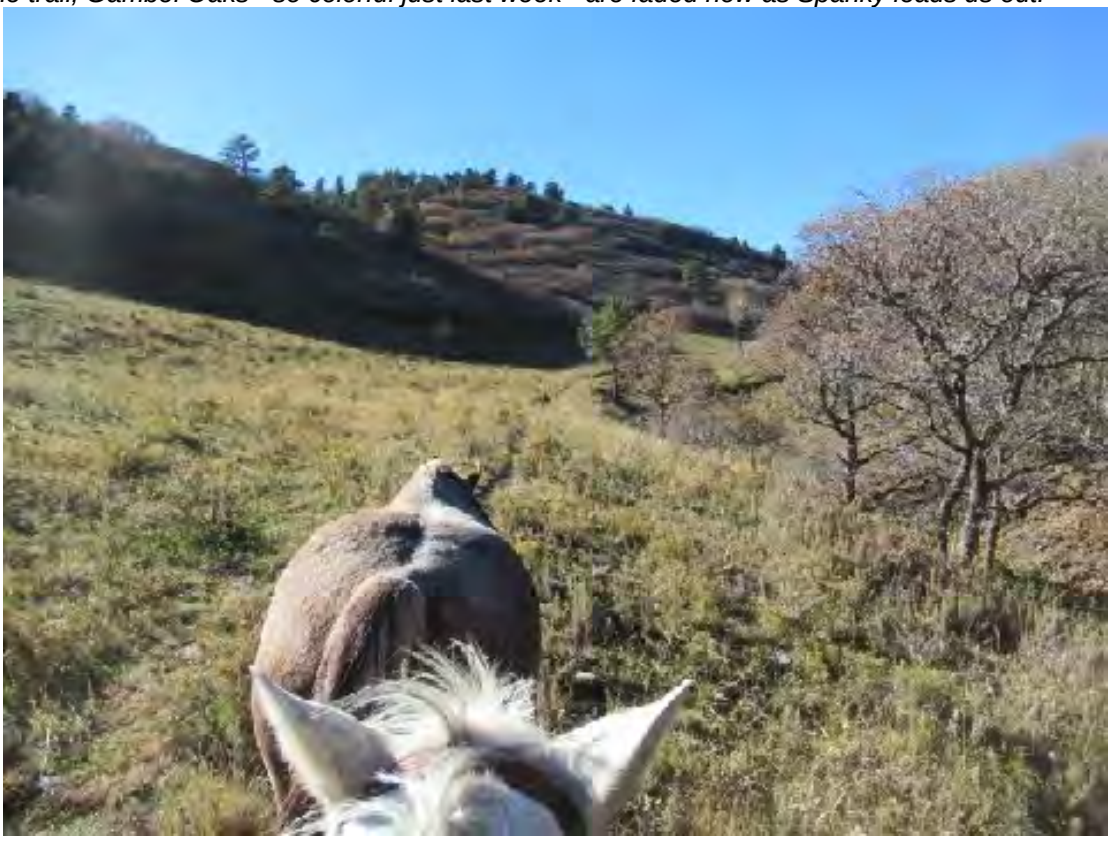
2017-10-29 - *Sky High*

What is it about the high country? Every season has its beauty up there - although before long, snow and ice will make it risky for the horses and we will have to wait until spring to return. So, every visit this time of year seems more precious.

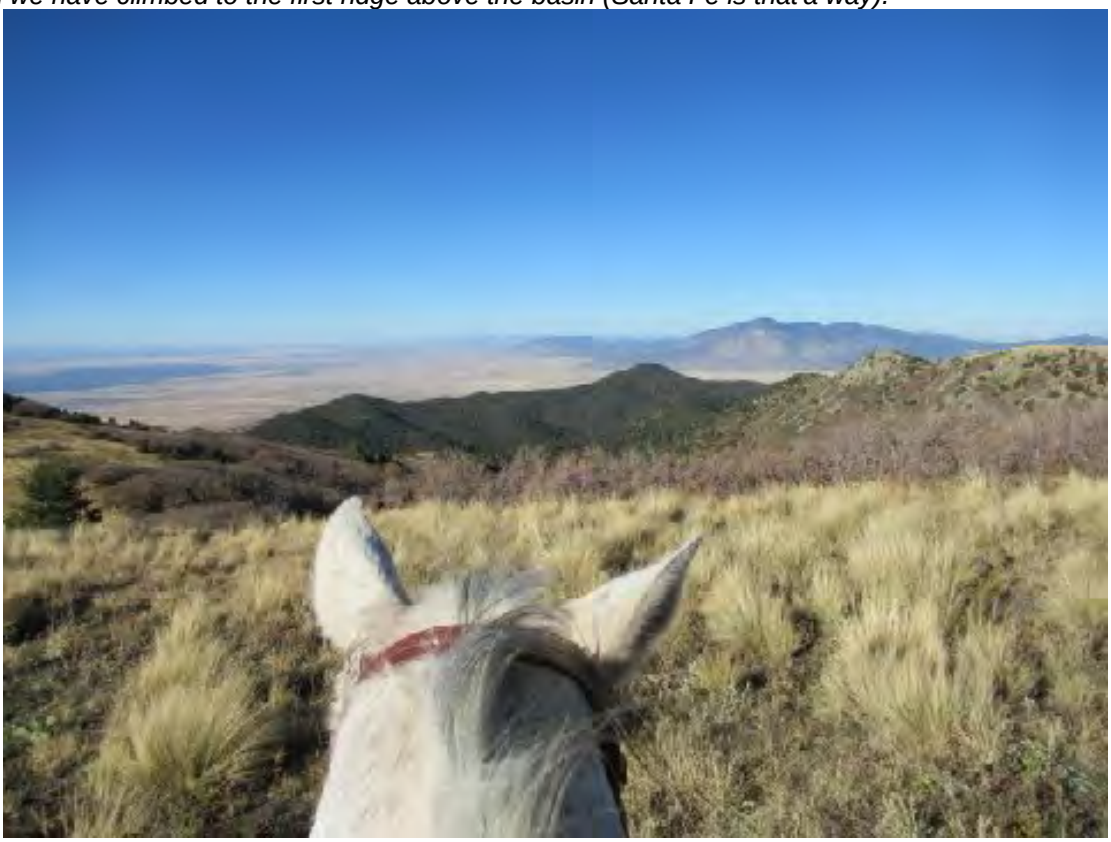
The trailhead at the end of Nogal Canyon is only maybe five miles from the ranch as the crow flies . . . but it's about 12 miles by road, and a beautiful drive this time of year.

The last of the aspen leaves are turning on the lower slopes of Nogal Peak.

On the trail, Gambel Oaks - so colorful just last week - are faded now as Spanky leads us out.



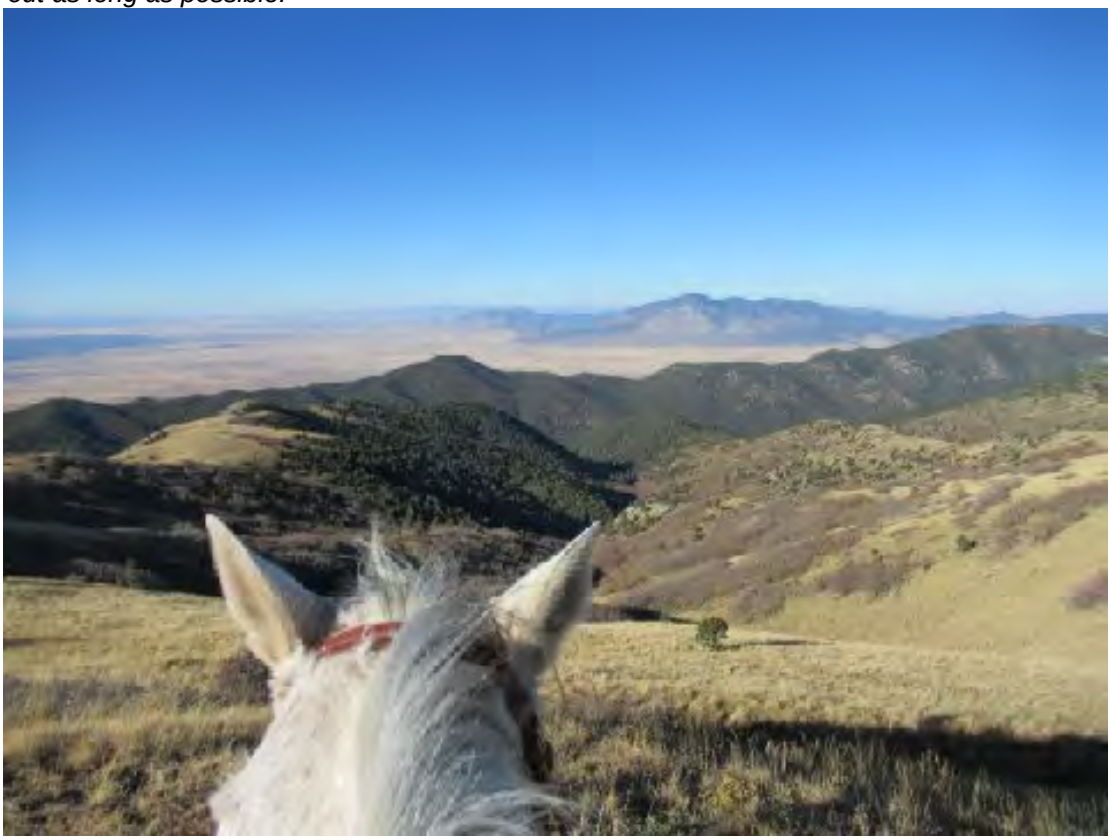
Soon we have climbed to the first ridge above the basin (Santa Fe is that'a way).



The sky seems like a deep blue dome overhead - and as someone once quipped, "the silence is deafening".

Majestic Nogal Peak (a few feet shy of 10,000 ft.) is just across the canyon.

These horses (and Lulu) have always enjoyed a view. Anytime we get vistas like this, they are happy to hang out as long as possible.



I don't blame them. From up here, it almost seems as though we can see the earth's curve.

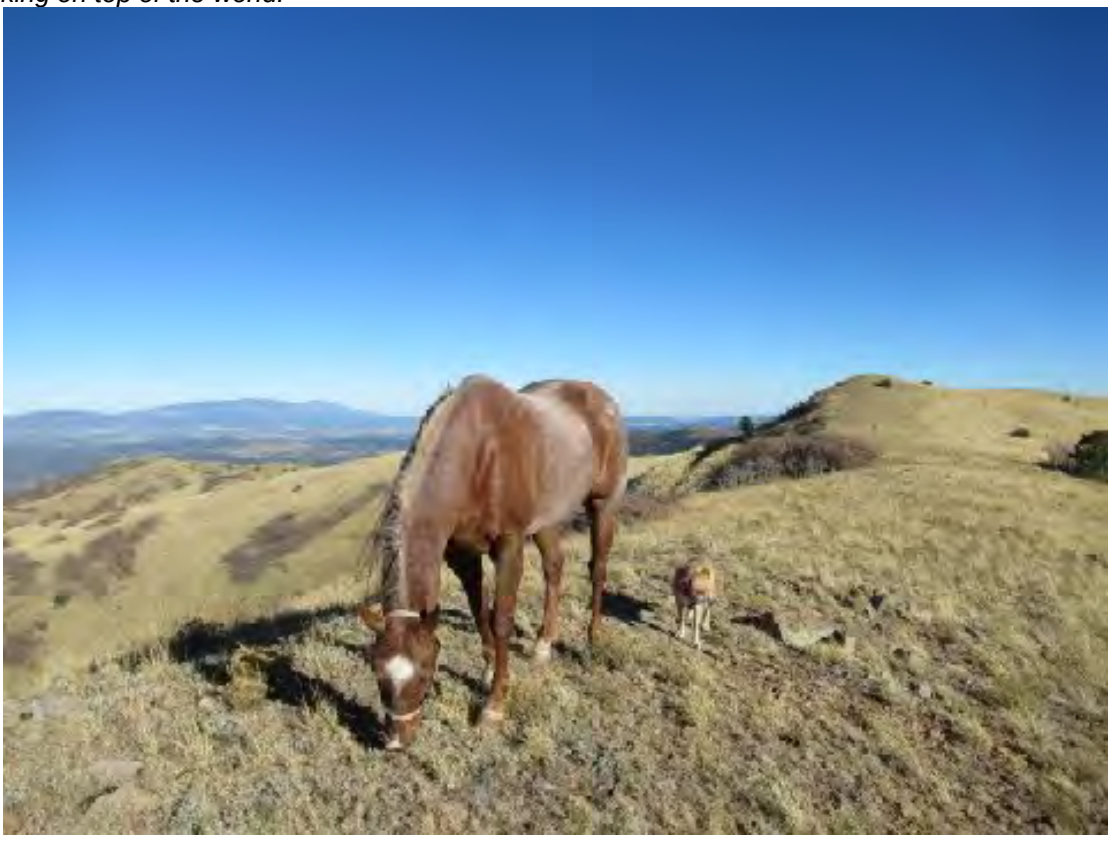
It's a 360-degree experience. Those are the Capitan Mountains in the distance.

Lulu and Thunder talk it over. "Isn't this amazing, Lulu?" "Yeah, and to think we hiked all the way up here . . . Whew!"

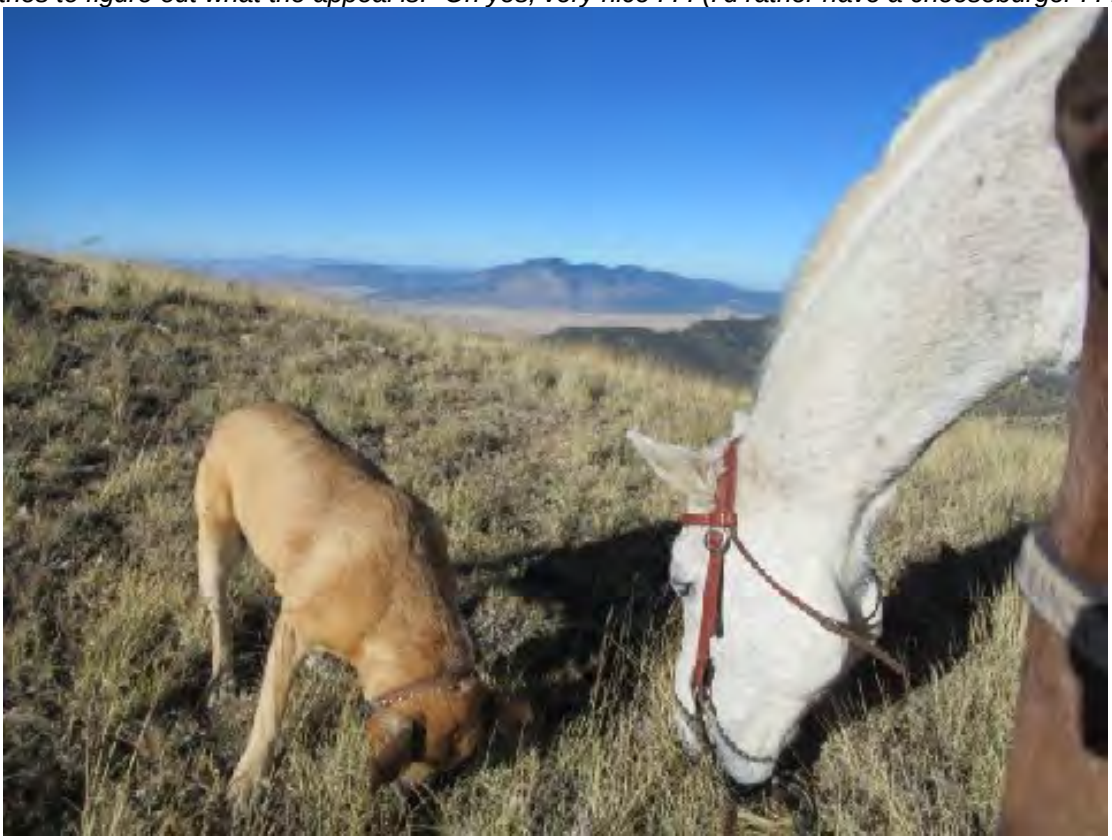
They pause, looking in all directions, taking it in.

To the southwest, it seems like we can see Arizona (maybe we can!)

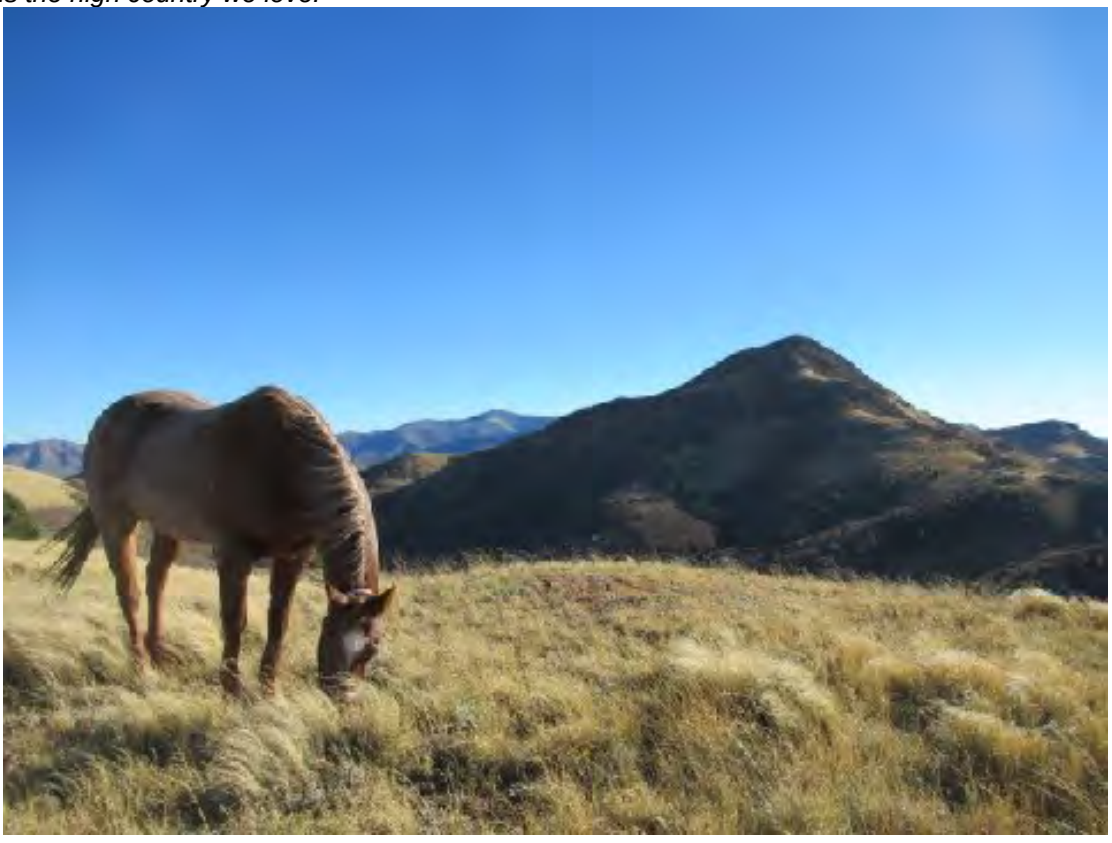
Snacking on top of the world.



Lulu tries to figure out what the appeal is. "Oh yes, very nice . . . (I'd rather have a cheeseburger . . .)"



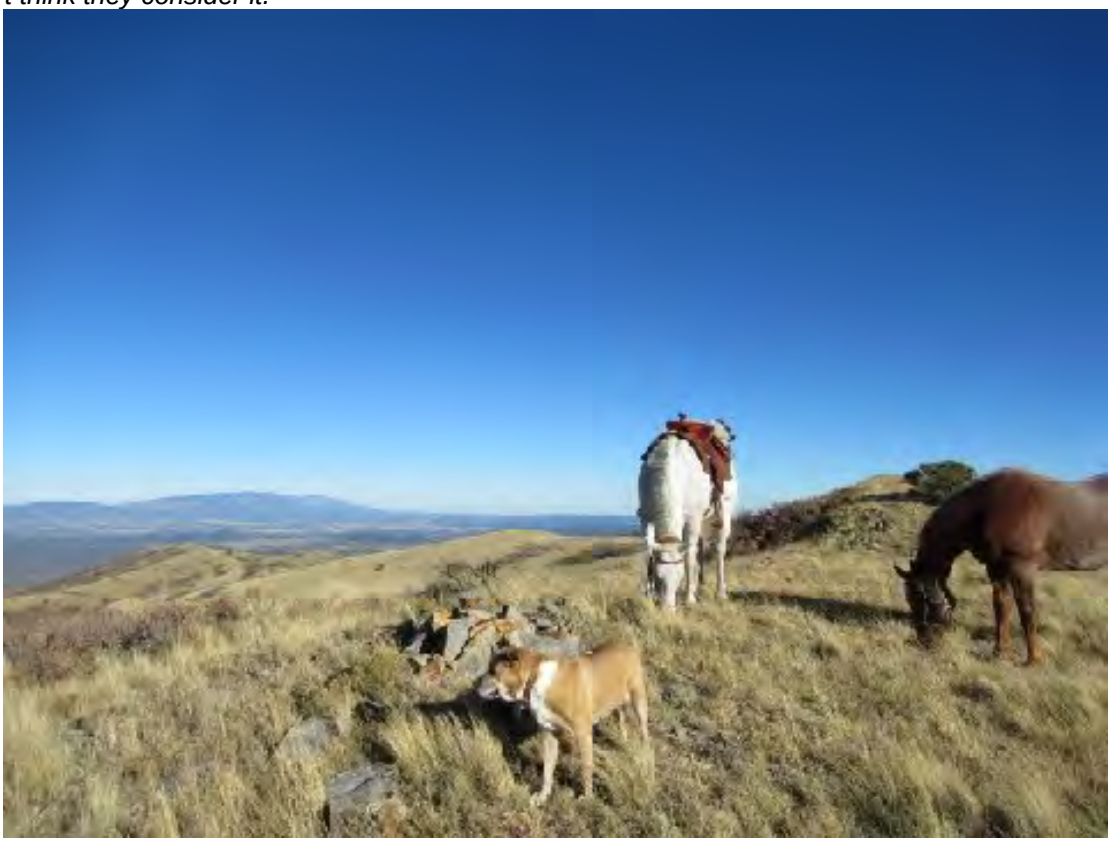
This is the high country we love.



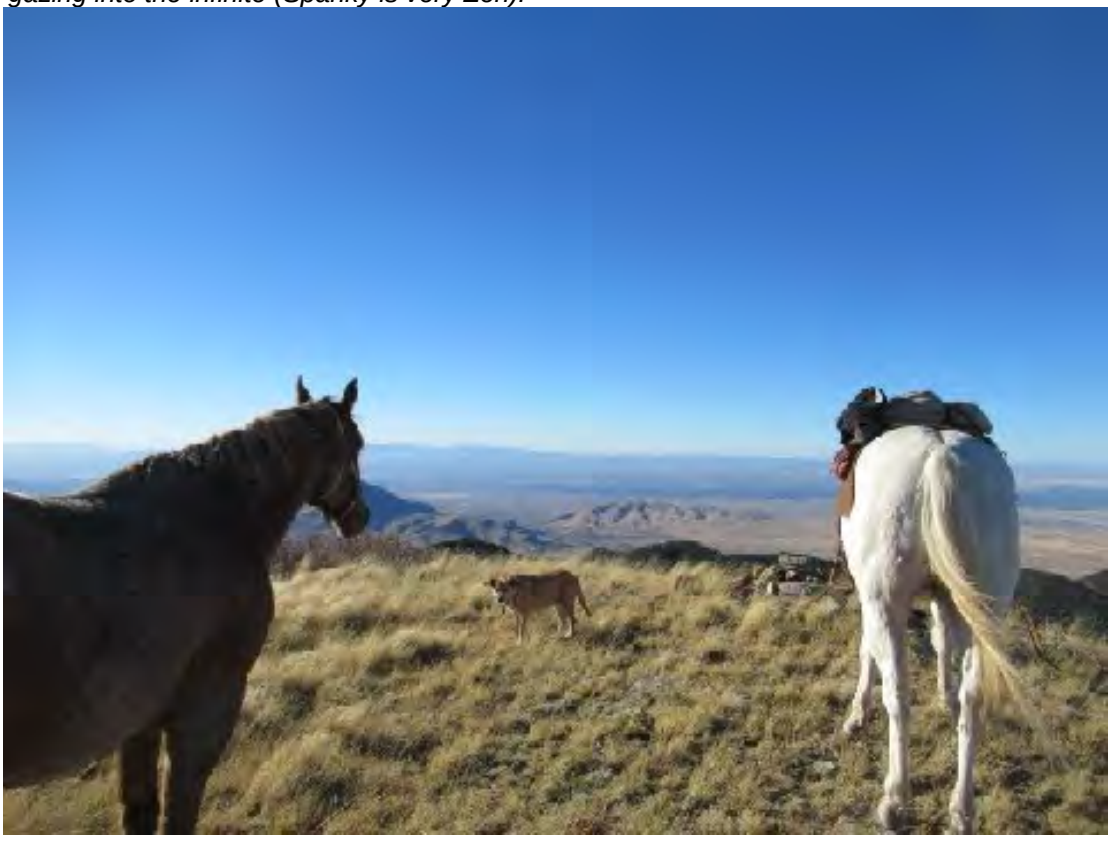
I have to remind myself that not all companions are this loyal.

I mean, they could choose to move on without me.

I don't think they consider it.

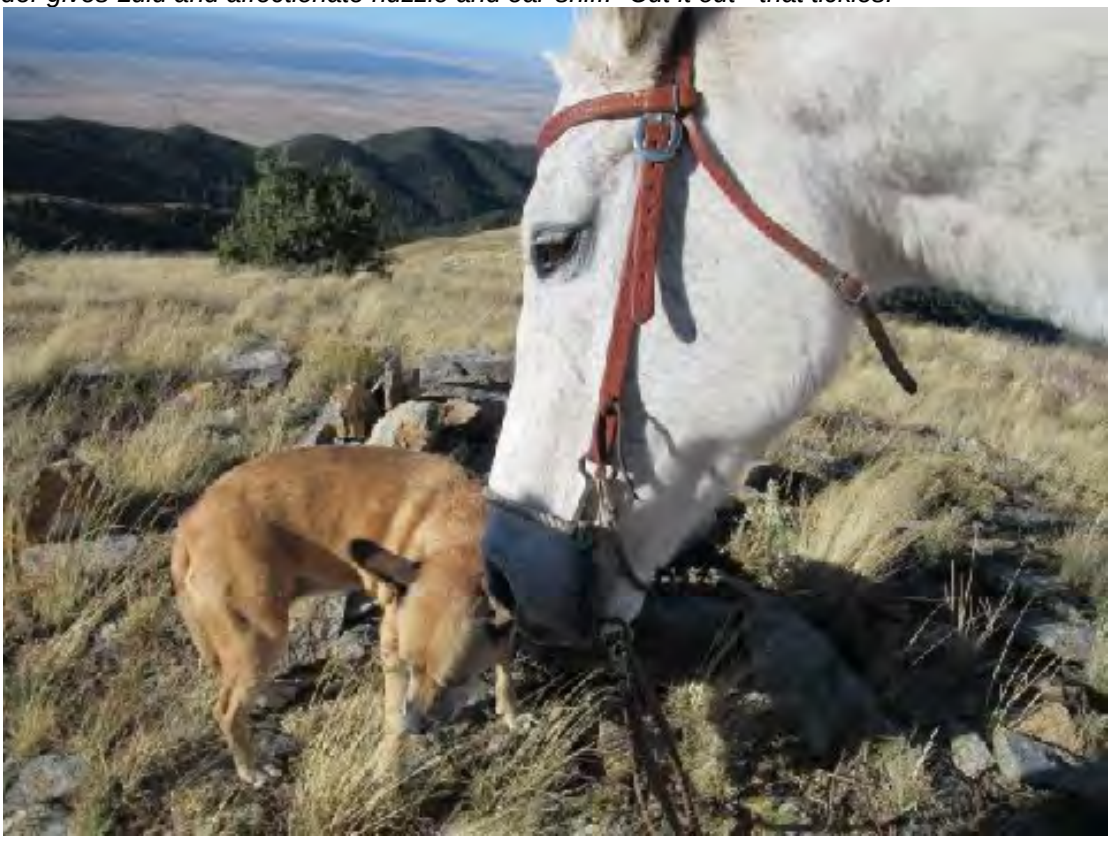


More gazing into the infinite (Spanky is very Zen).



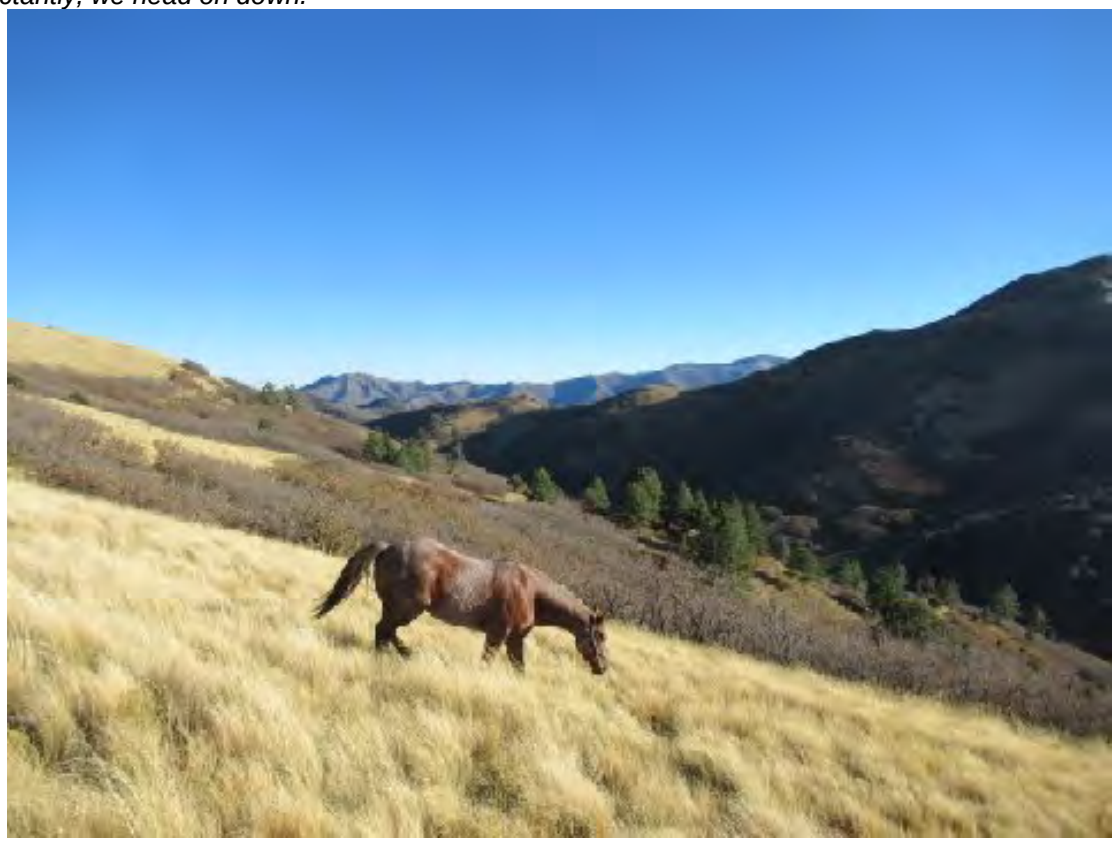
Lulu is very Rin Tin Tin.

Thunder gives Lulu and affectionate nuzzle and ear-sniff. "Cut it out - that tickles!"

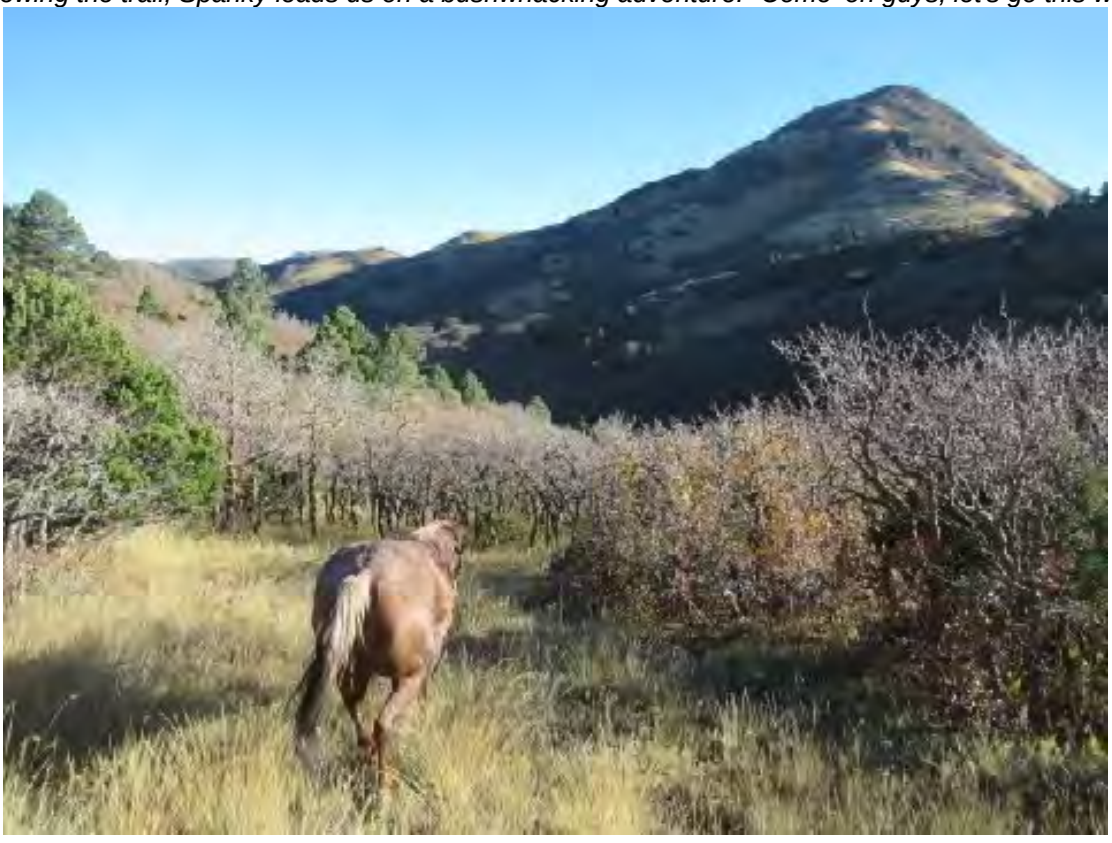


Family time.

Reluctantly, we head on down.



Eschewing the trail, Spanky leads us on a bushwhacking adventure. "Come 'on guys, let's go this way!"



Suddenly, our intrepid trail boss spots some "whatzatts?" in the scrub (they were wild turkeys).

Back home, we were greeted at the barn by the big bull elk and his herd. By the time I got the rig parked and the horses unloaded, they had leisurely wandered into the east pasture - by floating over the pipe fence (it is amazing how these enormous animals can jump like that!)

They were in no hurry. A little calf enjoys a twilight snack.

I think they are a little envious of the horses' room service meal, "Hey! They get stuff in bowls!"

There you have it - another ride in the high country. Each one is special to us. Thanks for coming along.
MM

2017-11-01 - *Good Dad*

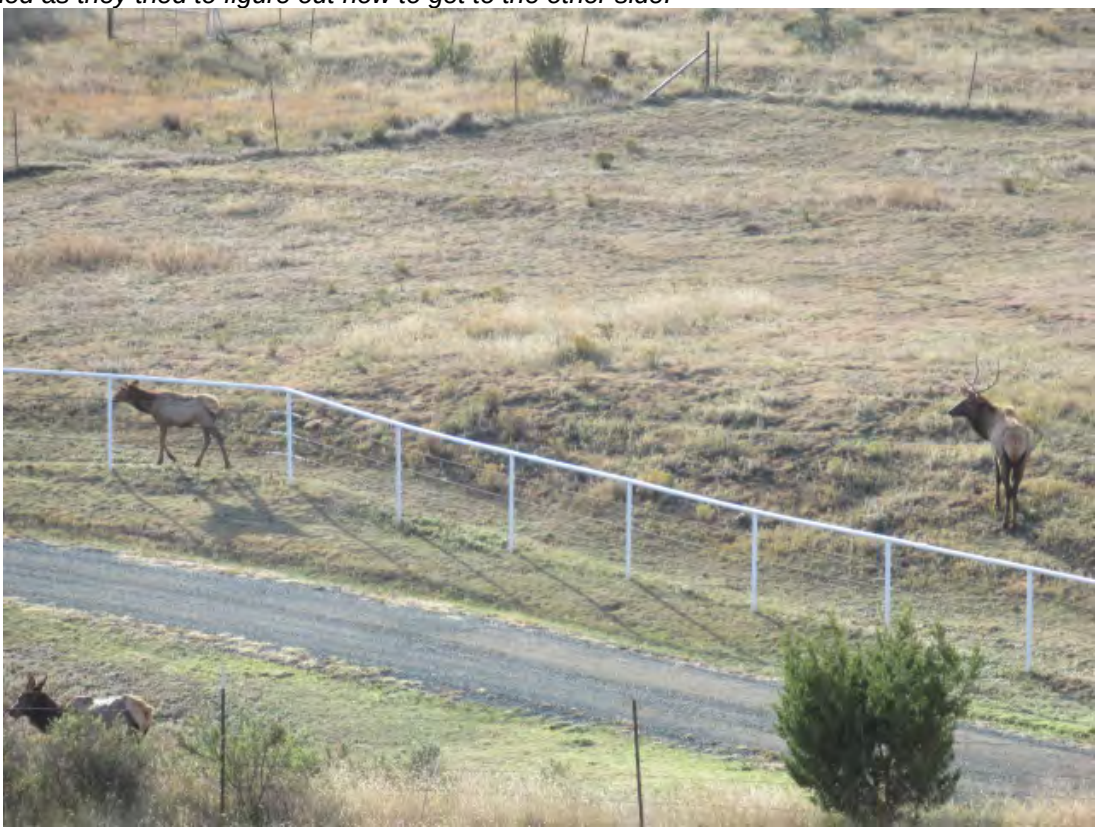
NOTE: AOL has changed their email format, starting today. Unfortunately, it limits the way in which emails with photos can be created. I can no longer alter the size of photos within the email (also, font styles are now extremely limited). We will see how this one goes! (Why can't they leave well enough alone?)

Early this morning, a small herd of elk, led by a young bull unfamiliar to us, passed through the ranch.

Here is dad.

2017-11-01 - *Good Dad*

As the rest of the herd came through, two calves found themselves on the wrong side of the fence. Dad watched as they tried to figure out how to get to the other side.



They paced back and forth . . .

2017-11-01 - *Good Dad*

Dad patiently watched and tried to guide them under the fence (they are too small to jump over).

Finally, one of the calves scooted under . . . but the one remaining just didn't seem to be able to figure it out. Dad waited . . .

2017-11-01 - *Good Dad*

At last, the calve managed to duck under and join the herd.

Lesson over, his dad easily jumped over the fence and off they all went. Good dad!
MM

2017-11-02 - *Kit Carson Trail*

It's hard to beat this part of New Mexico in autumn. Warm clear days and cool crisp nights. Late in the afternoon, we headed Fort Stanton way for a ride along the Kit Carson Trail (named for the Army scout and former commander of the Fort).

The horses are always happy to go!

Little Lulu leads the way.

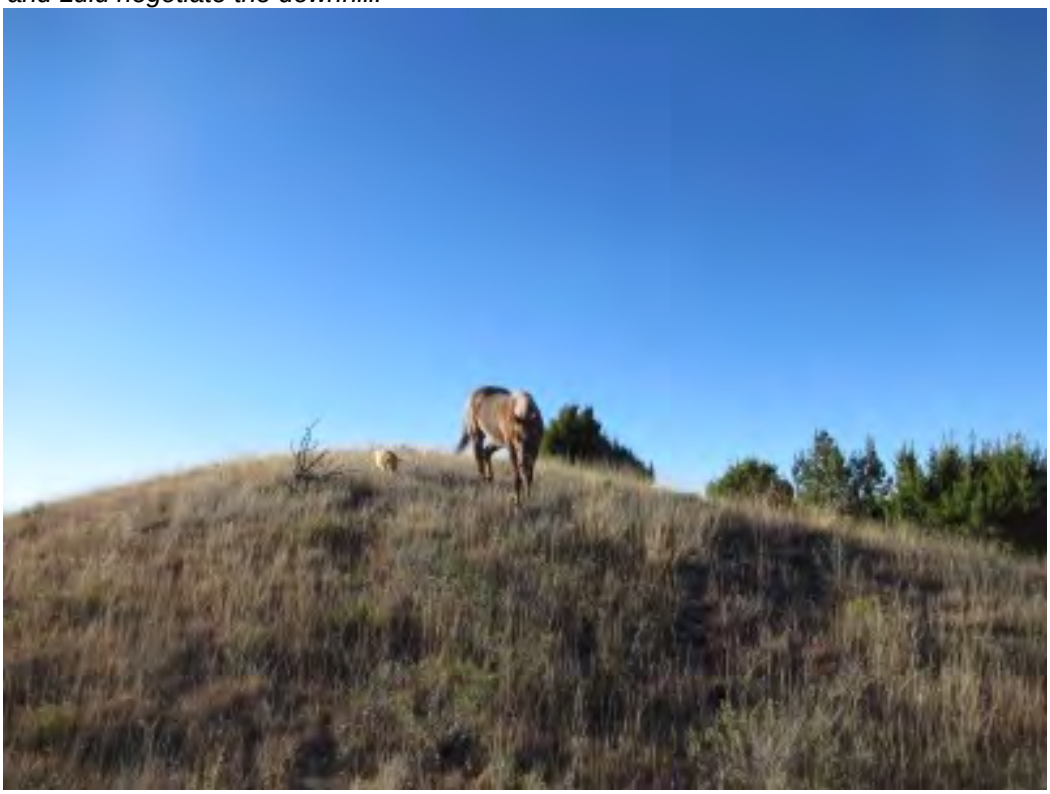
2017-11-02 - *Kit Carson Trail*

Thunder waits for Spanky to catch up.

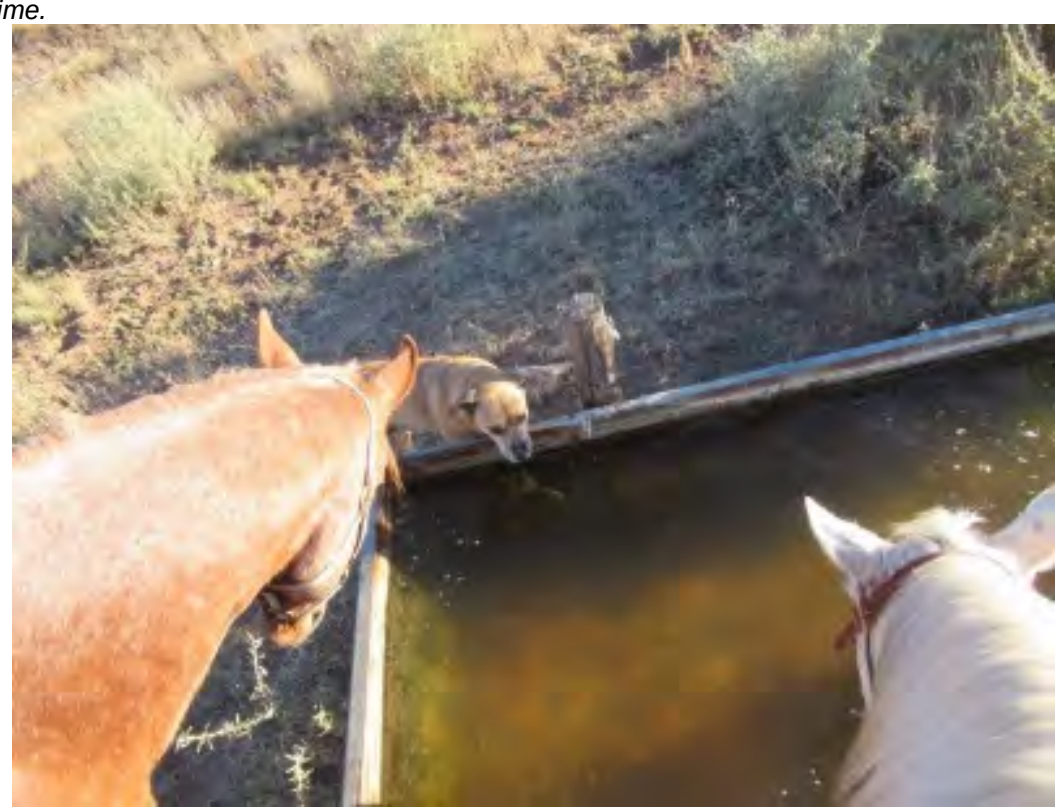
They do love a view.

Capitan Gap, as Kit would have seen it, in the distance.

Spanky and Lulu negotiate the downhill.



Drink time.



Of course, Spanky loves to snorkel . . .

2017-11-02 - *Kit Carson Trail*

. . . and make dust angels.

Thunder gets some free time, too.

Having fun, Lulu?

It was a beautiful ride - happy to share it with you. (The new AOL program is a PAIN; but we are trying to work with it. Although the techs said photos could no longer be reduced in size when inserted into emails, I stumbled around until I discovered a way - takes four additional steps for each photo. "Progress"?)
MM

FOLLOWED DREAM RANCH

2017-11-03 - *The Moon*

When it came up over the Capitan Mountains this evening . . . well, see for yourself.

These were all taken with my little pocket camera from the front lawn - no tampering or altering of any kind.

I don't know what made the camera compensate for the darkness like this - sure is an interesting image, though!

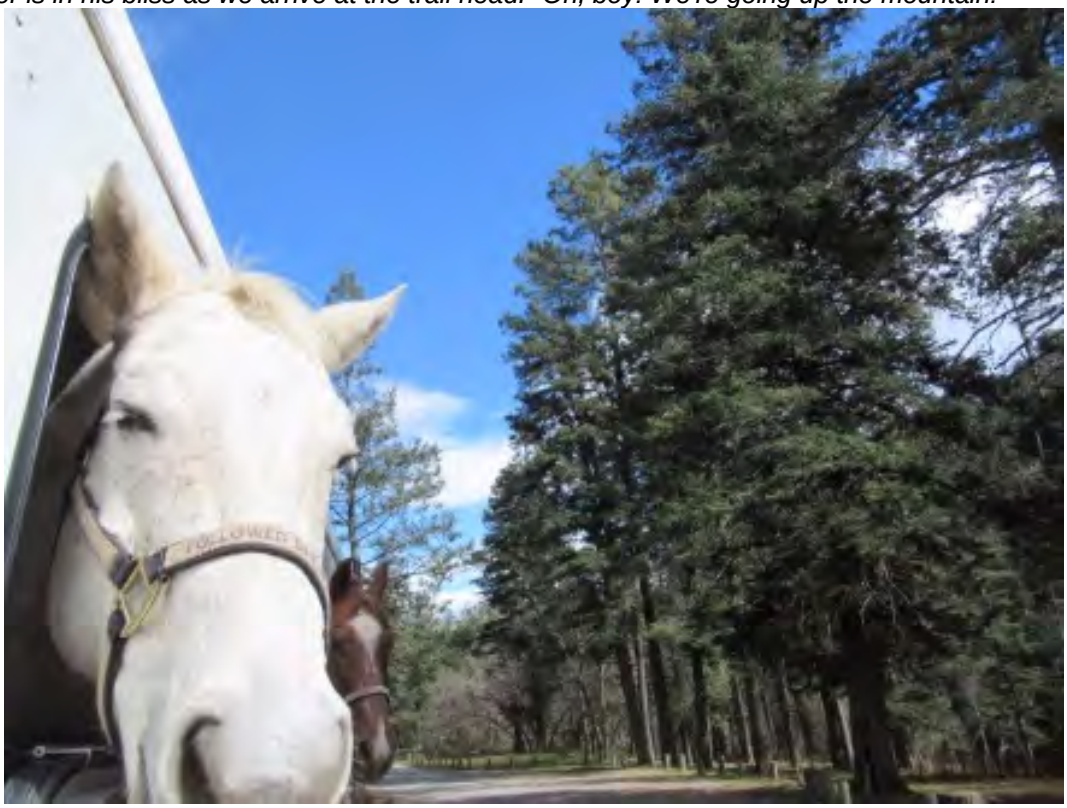
2017-11-03 - *The Moon*

MM

2017-11-04 - *Goodbye to DST*

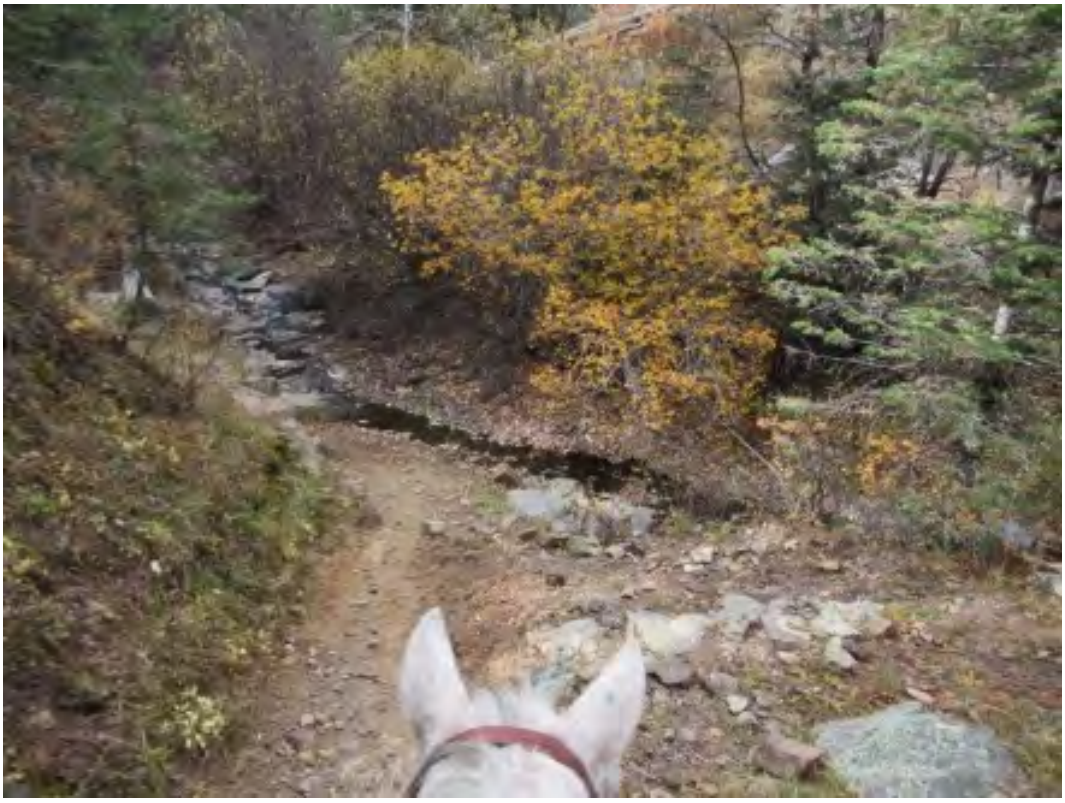
Tonight, we set the clocks back. An extra hour of sleep . . . but dark by 5:30 pm! We take a last ride in Daylight Savings Time.

Thunder is in his bliss as we arrive at the trail head. "Oh, boy! We're going up the mountain!"



Happy horse on the trail.

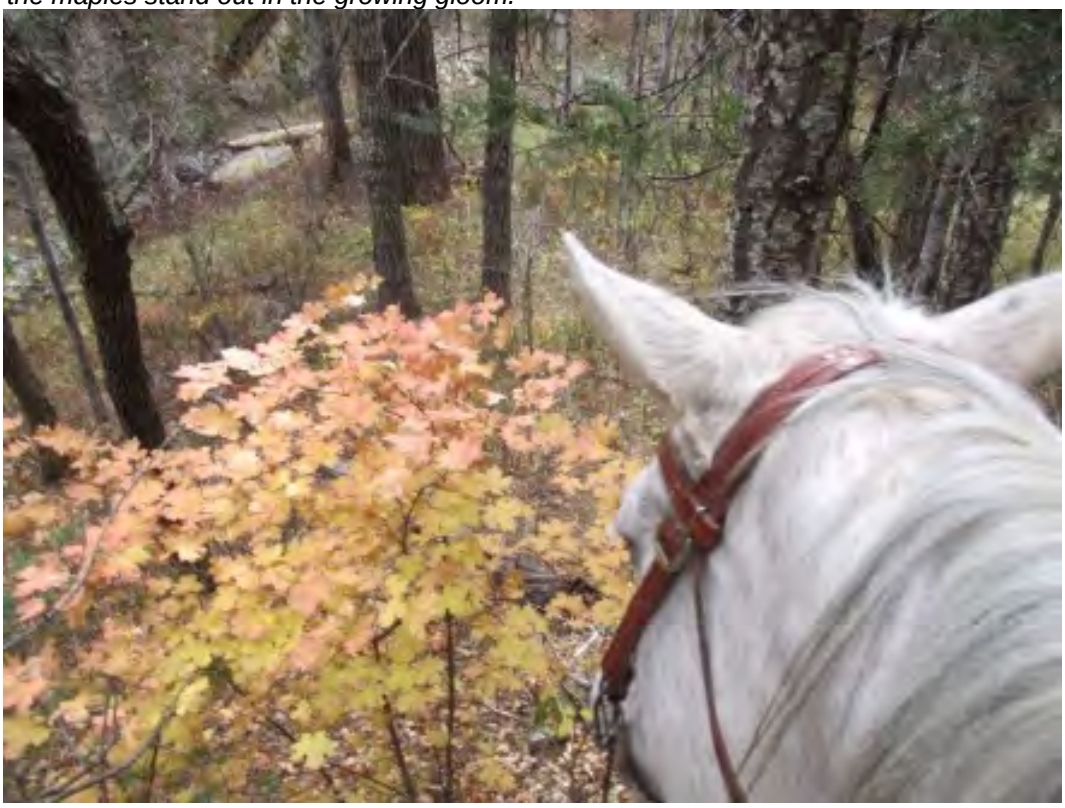
Still some color along the way, as we pass the old Silver Spoon Mine.



Suddenly, heavy clouds swing low across the sky.

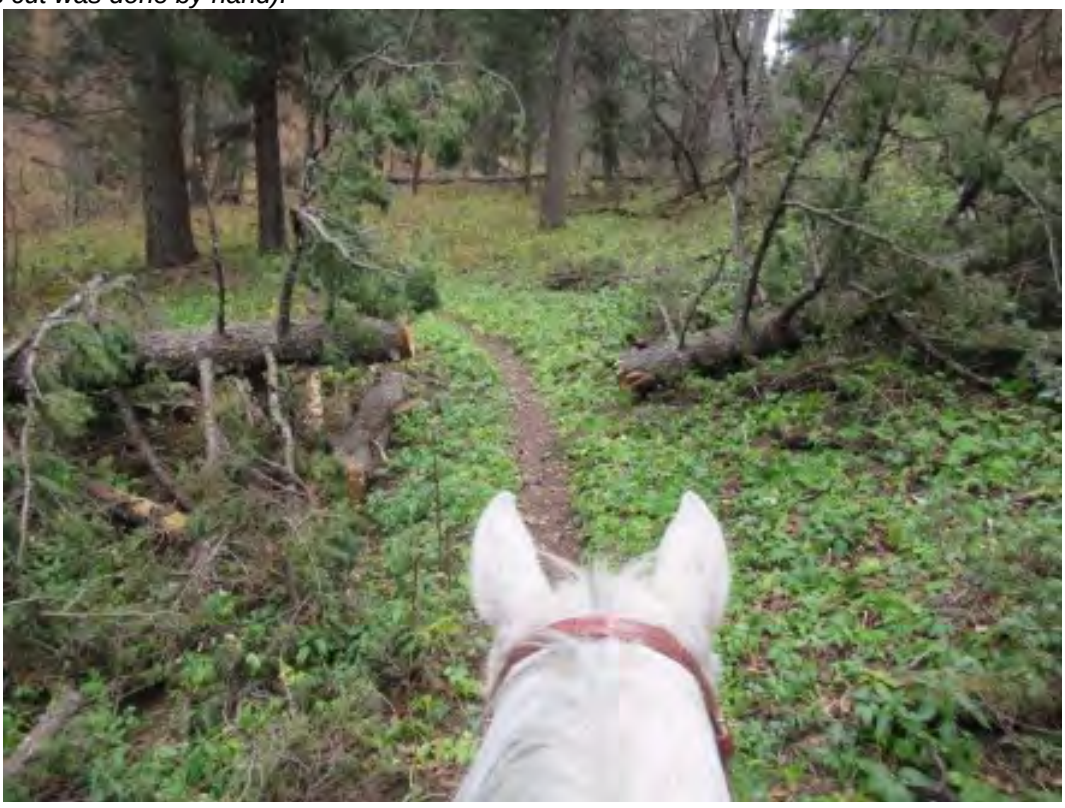
A summer swimming hole has lost its enticement in the gray light . . .

. . . but the maples stand out in the growing gloom.



We gallop across a grassy little meadow.

The Forest Service has sawed through this downed tree (no power chainsaws allowed in the Wilderness . . . this cut was done by hand).



The Golden Rain Tree of legend?

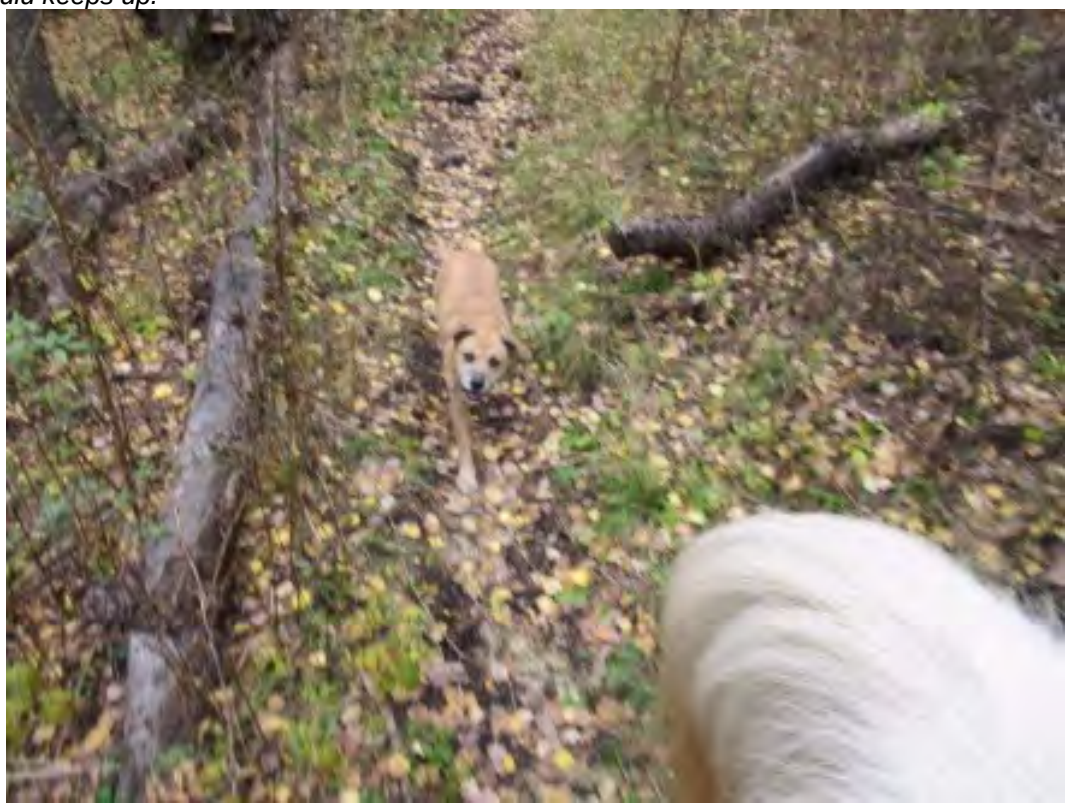
Looking up the slope of White Horse Hill.

Sometimes, Spanky picks the darnedest places to roll!

A stand of young Ponderosa pines . . . like riding through a Christmas tree lot.

In the lead, Spanky jumps a log.

Little Lulu keeps up.



2017-11-04 - *Goodbye to DST*

2017-11-04 - *Goodbye to DST*

A final snack before heading home.

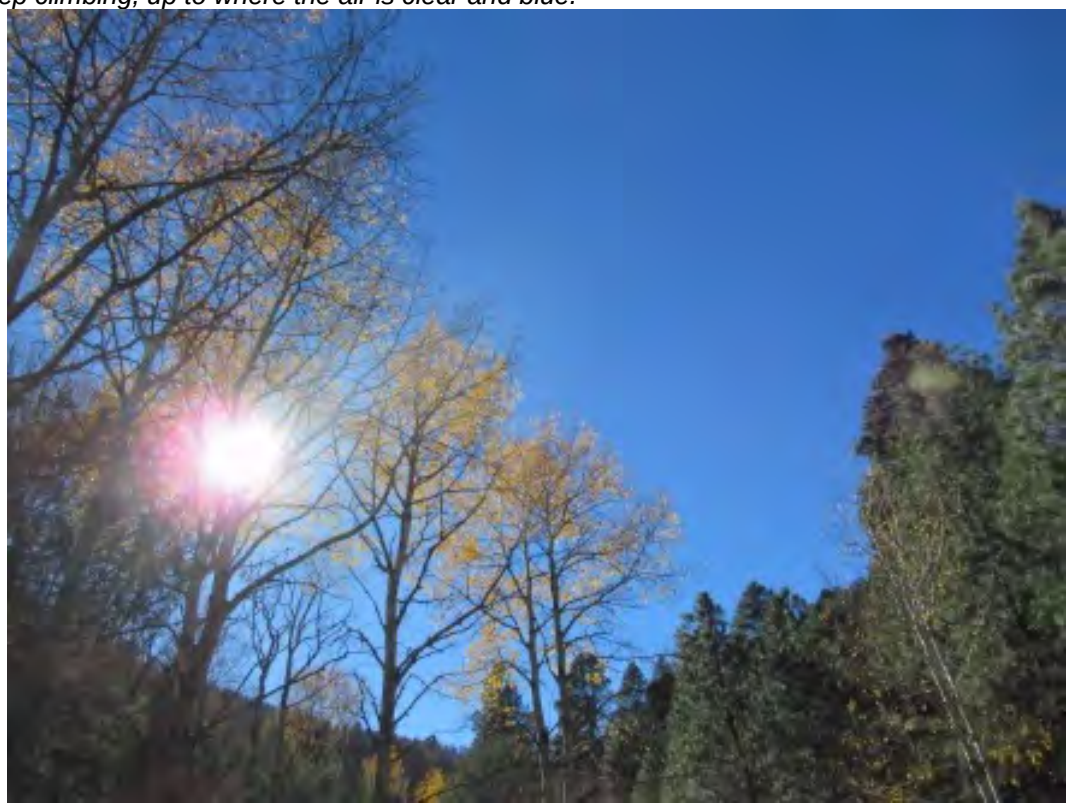
A peaceful ride as we say goodbye to summer hours. Thanks for coming along!
MM

2017-11-07 - *High Country Calling*

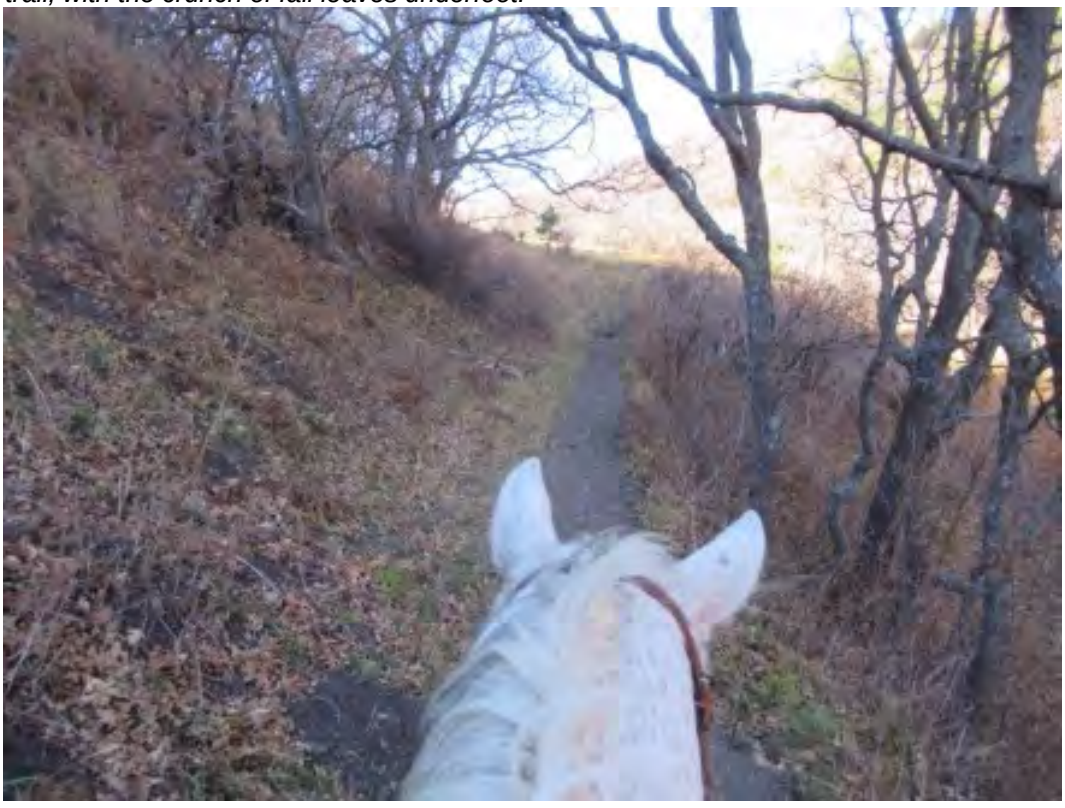
As you know, the horses love a view - and hard to beat the ones from Nogal Peak.

They're even excited on the road. They know where we are headed.

We keep climbing, up to where the air is clear and blue.



On the trail, with the crunch of fall leaves underfoot.



The cattle are so accustomed to us, they just sort of nod a polite "hello" as we pass.

Headed to the top.

Ahhh . . . what we came for.

A place to breathe.

The tall green grass of summer has become golden.

Lulu has a great time!

Noble Nogal Peak.

Spanky pauses to take it all in as we descend.

MM

2017-11-13 - *Deer Shots*

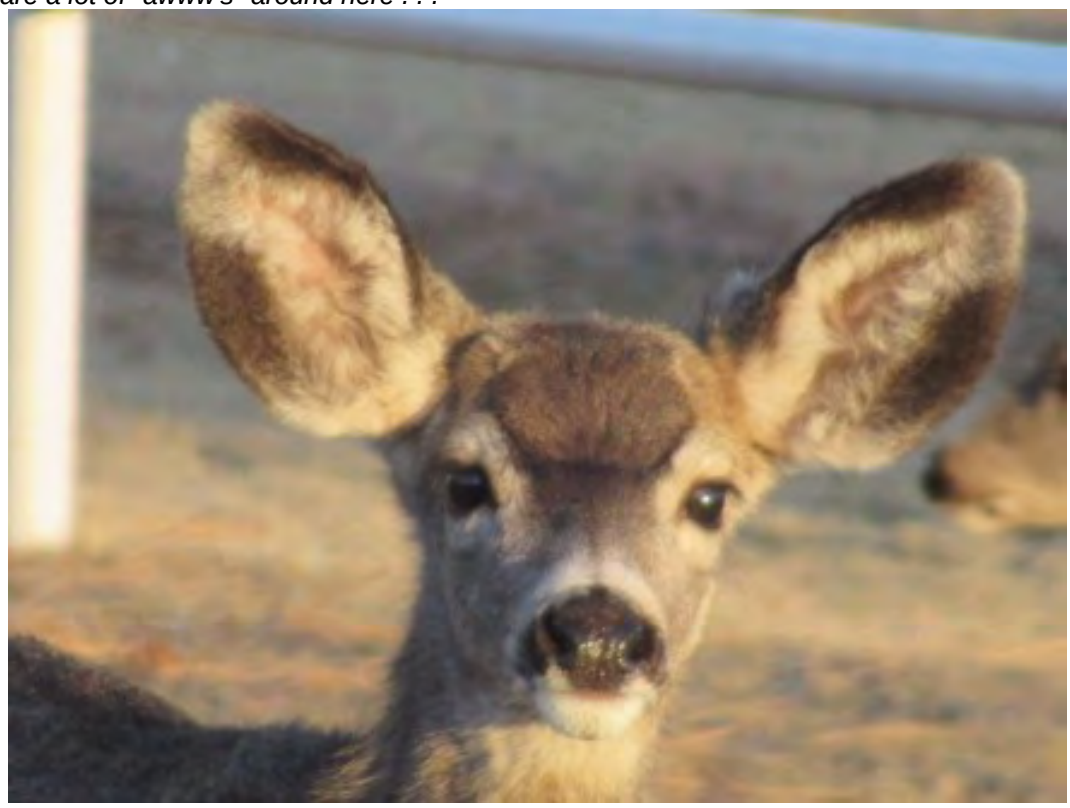
Thought you might enjoy some random shots of our little herd today . . .

They sure are a peaceful bunch.

This guy has been around for several years. I've named him "Big Buck", which he clearly recognizes when he hears me call him.

2017-11-13 - *Deer Shots*

There are a lot of "awww's" around here . . .



Another one.

2017-11-13 - *Deer Shots*

The buck on the right seems to have an attitude.

MM

FOLLOWED DREAM RANCH

2017-11-15 - *Familiar Ride*

A great ride on horseback is never repetitious, even though the route may be the same. Take this one - up to our favorite high point above Argentina Spring. As winter approaches, we know snow (and ice) will make it off limits for a couple of months . . . so we take advantage while we can.

Right off the bat, Thunder spots something on the hillside above . . .

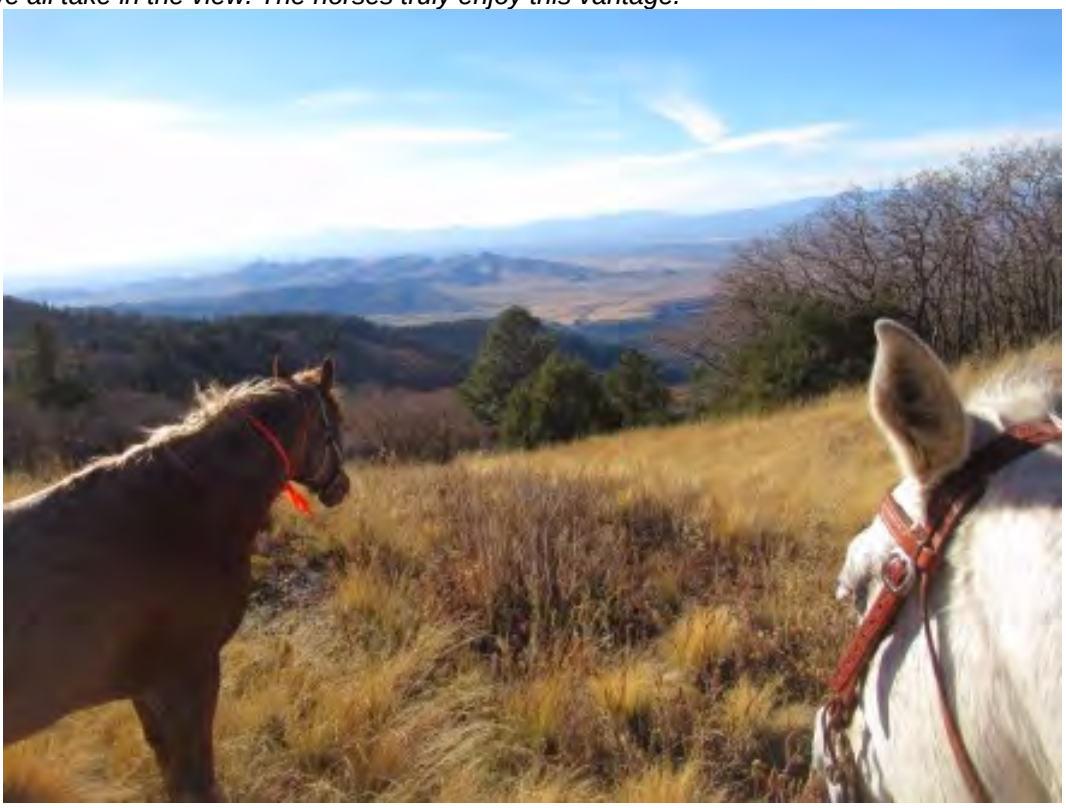
Several bull elk.

They won't be the last we see during this ride (hunters pray for moments like this - glad it's us instead).

As soon as we reach the top, Spanky has his own celebration of the high country! "Whee! Top of the world!"

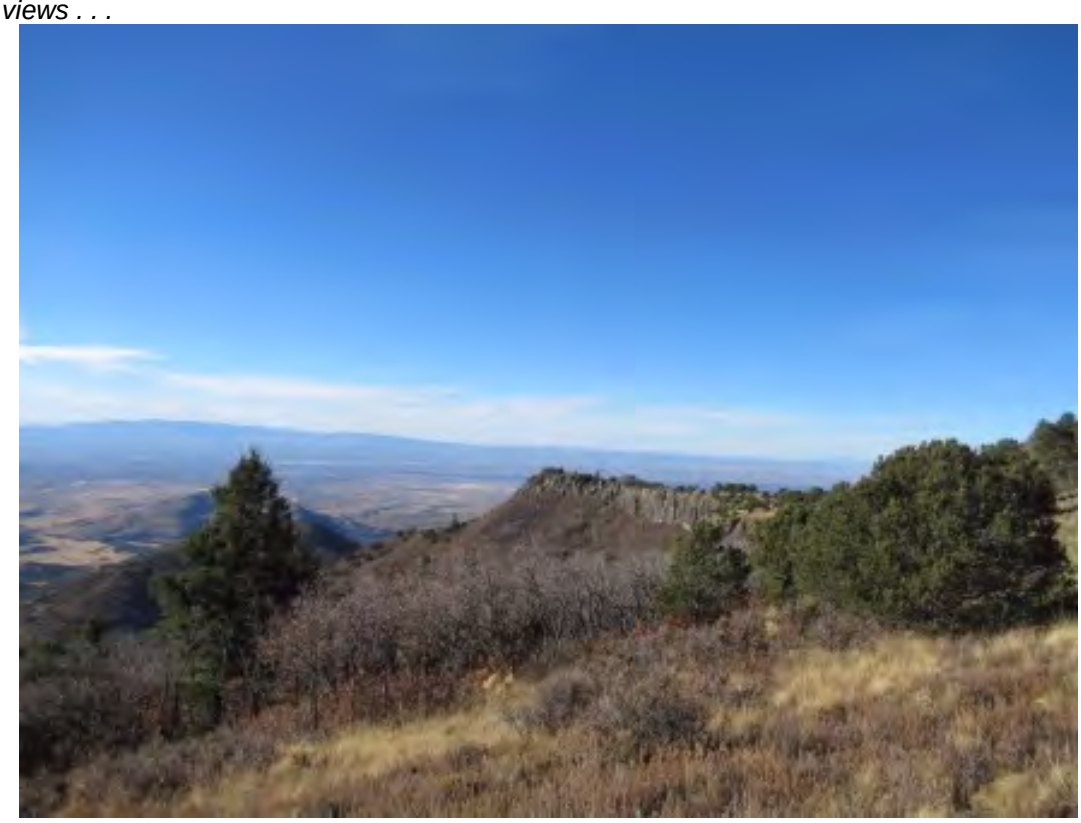
2017-11-15 - *Familiar Ride*

Then we all take in the view. The horses truly enjoy this vantage.

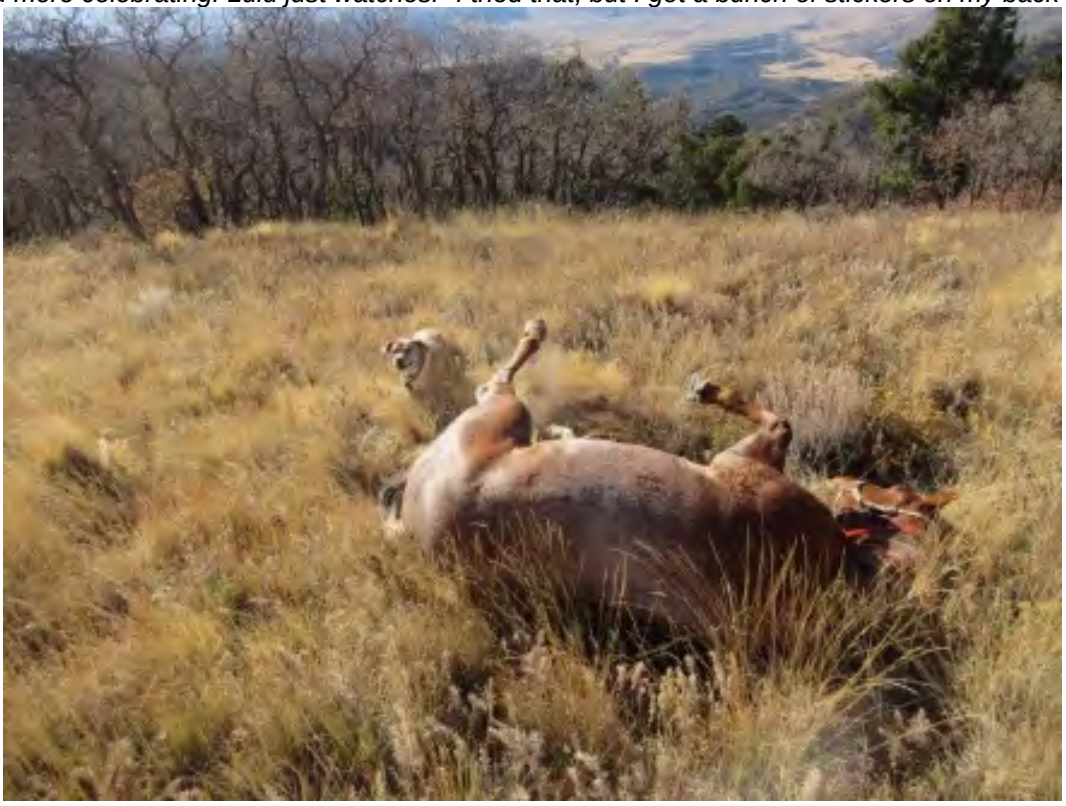


Then, more climbing.

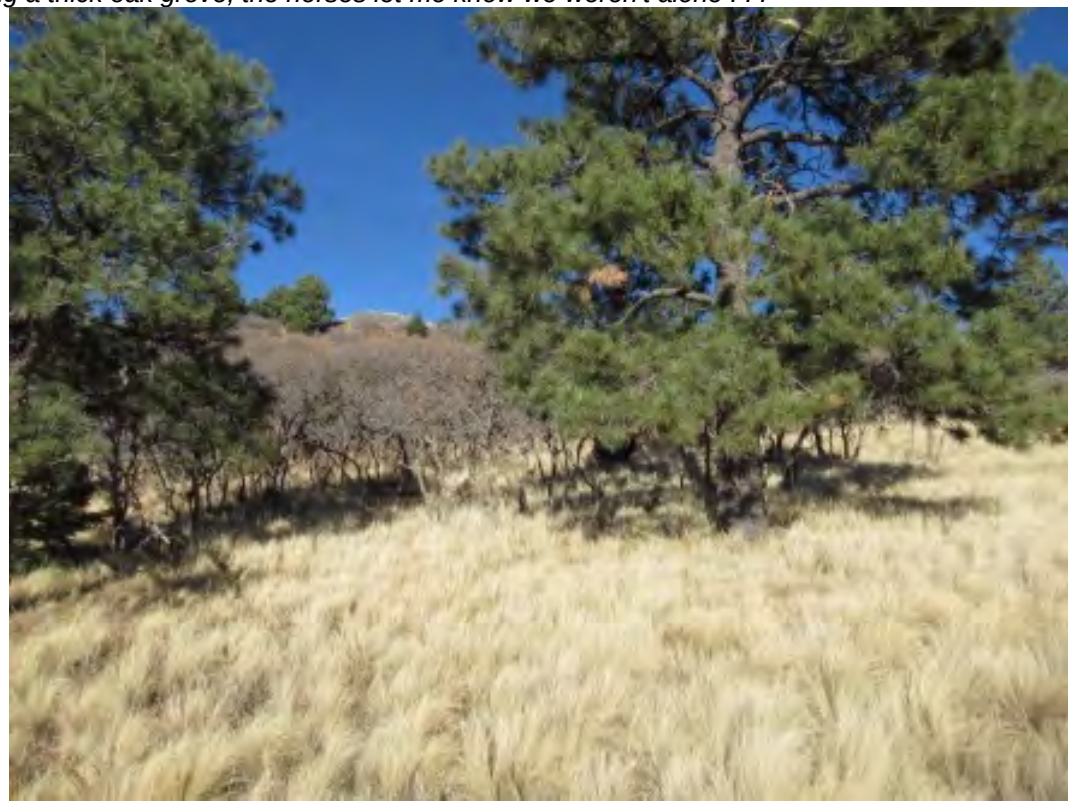
More views . . .



. . . and more celebrating! Lulu just watches. "I tried that, but I got a bunch of stickers on my back . . ."

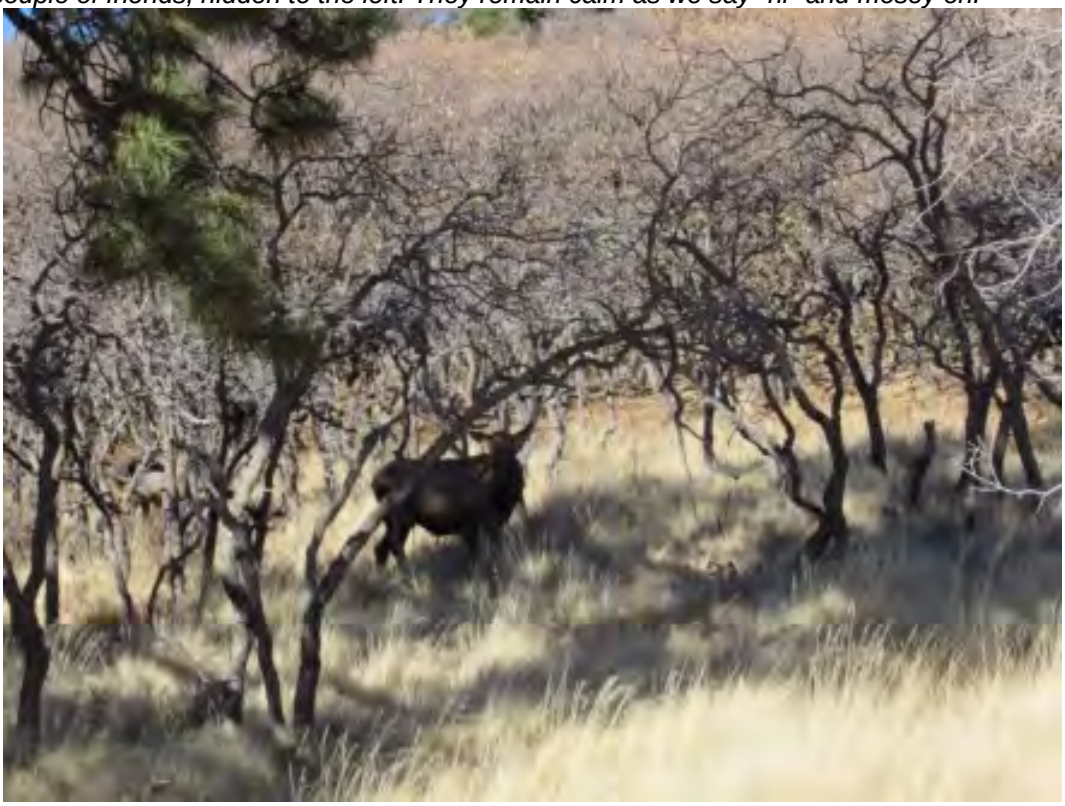


Passing a thick oak grove, the horses let me know we weren't alone . . .



2017-11-15 - *Familiar Ride*

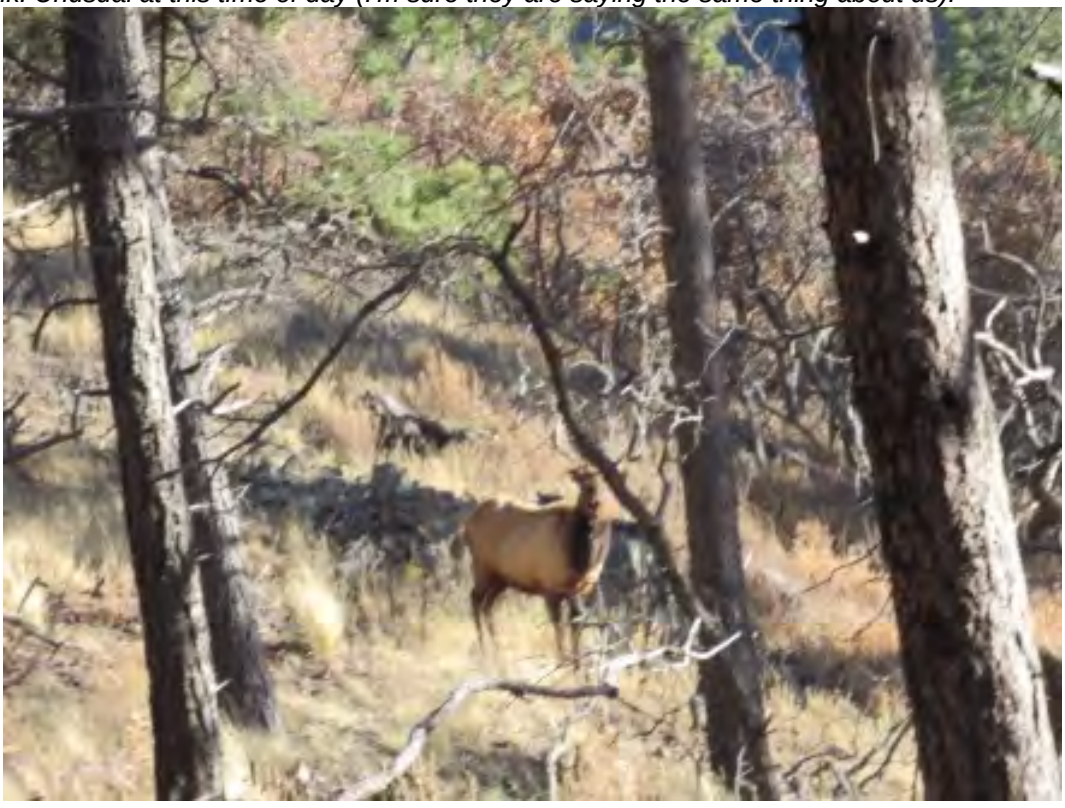
We ride up for a closer look. No telephoto here. The elk seems as curious of us as we are of him; he has a couple of friends, hidden to the left. They remain calm as we say "hi" and mosey on.



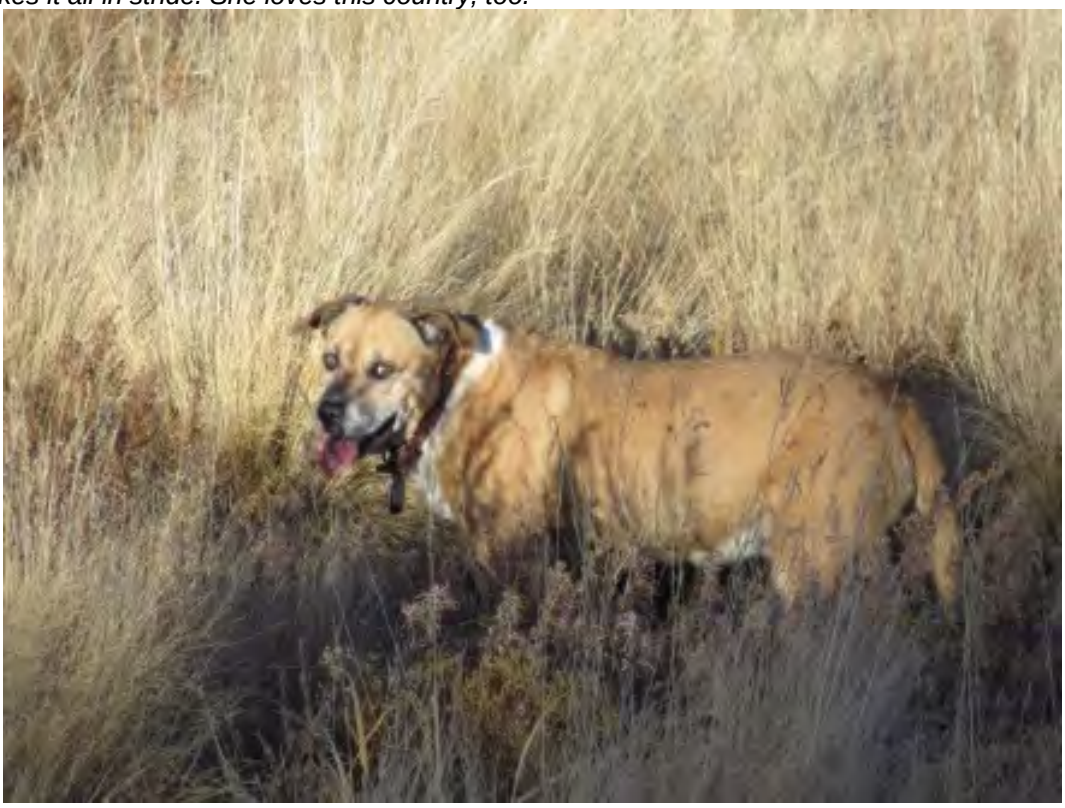
Spanky enjoys running through an alpine meadow.

The tall grass is more challenging for Lulu, who stays on the trail.

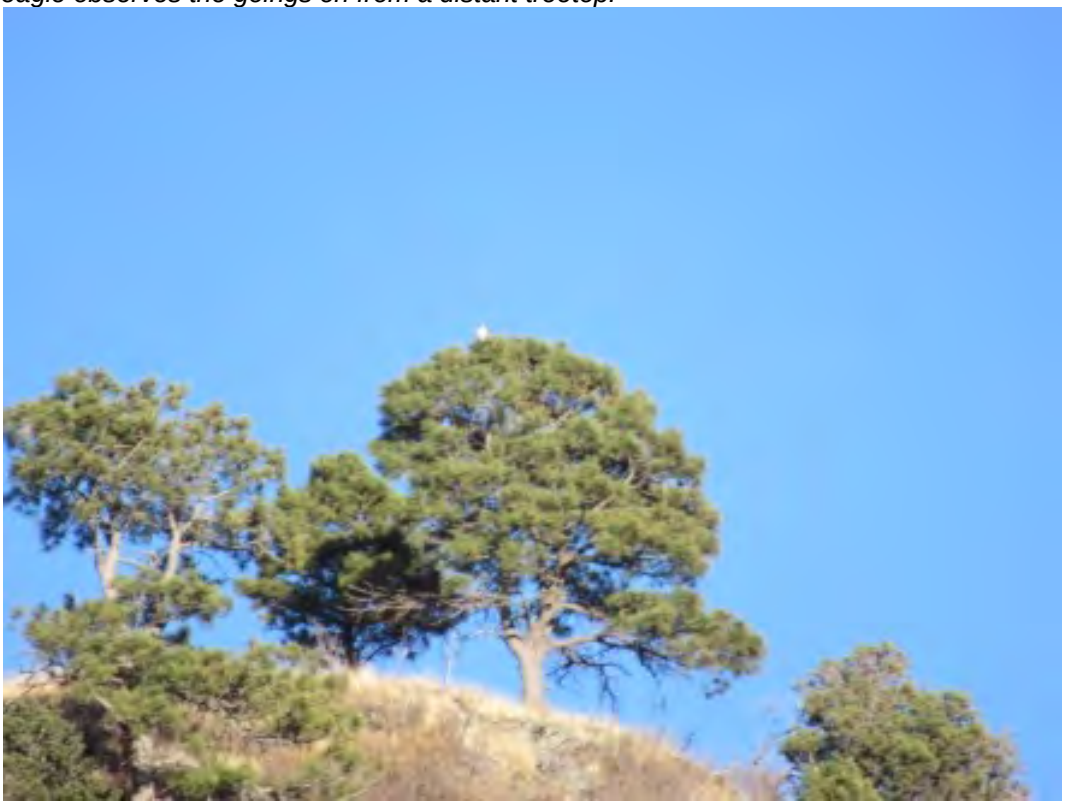
More elk. Unusual at this time of day (I'm sure they are saying the same thing about us).



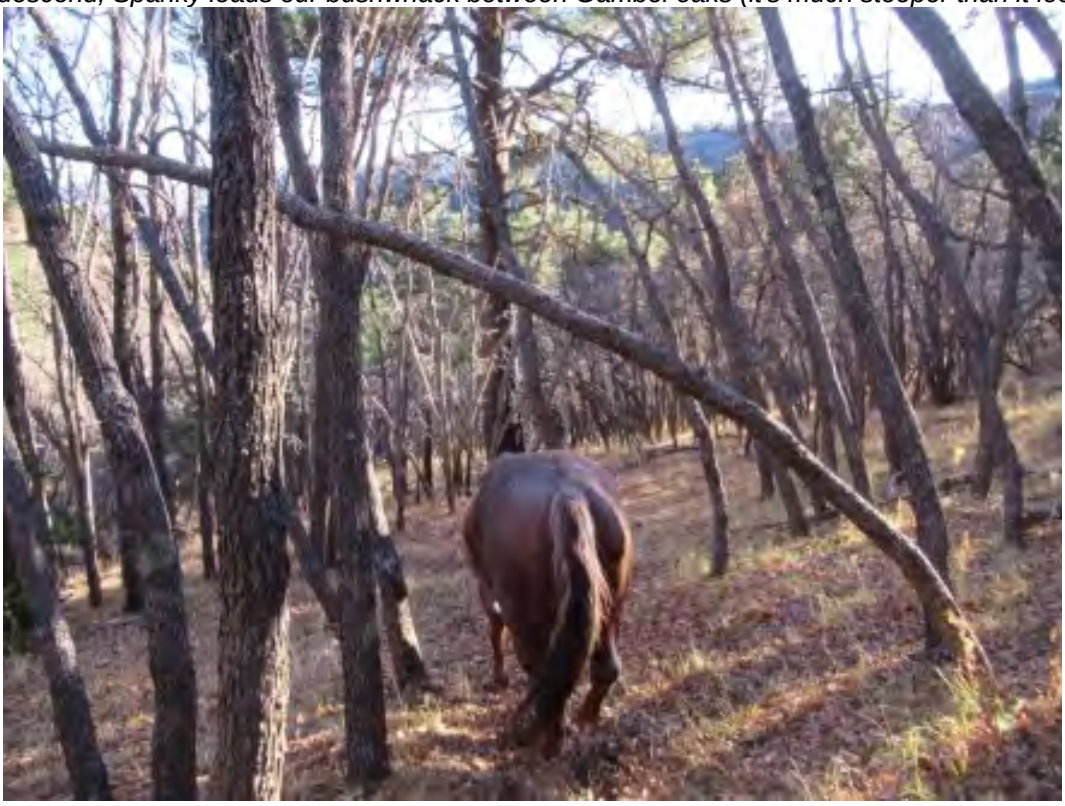
Lulu takes it all in stride. She loves this country, too.



A bald eagle observes the goings on from a distant treetop.

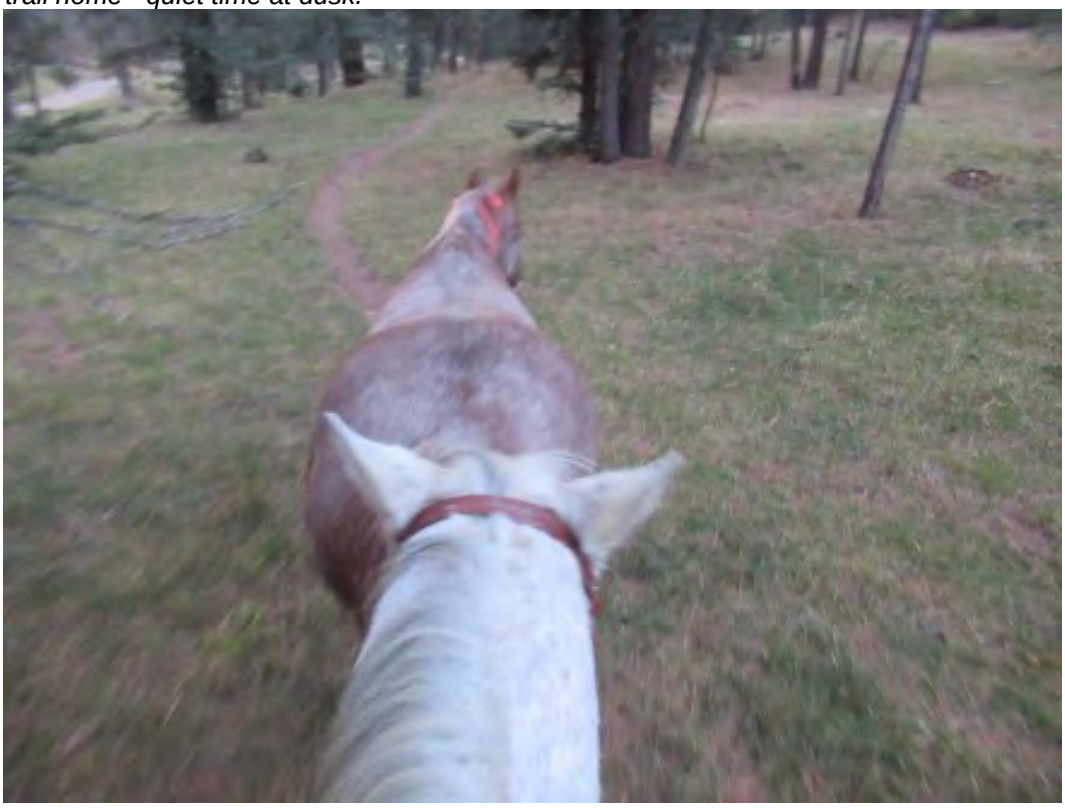


As we descend, Spanky leads our bushwhack between Gambel oaks (it's much steeper than it looks).



2017-11-15 - *Familiar Ride*

On the trail home - quiet time at dusk.

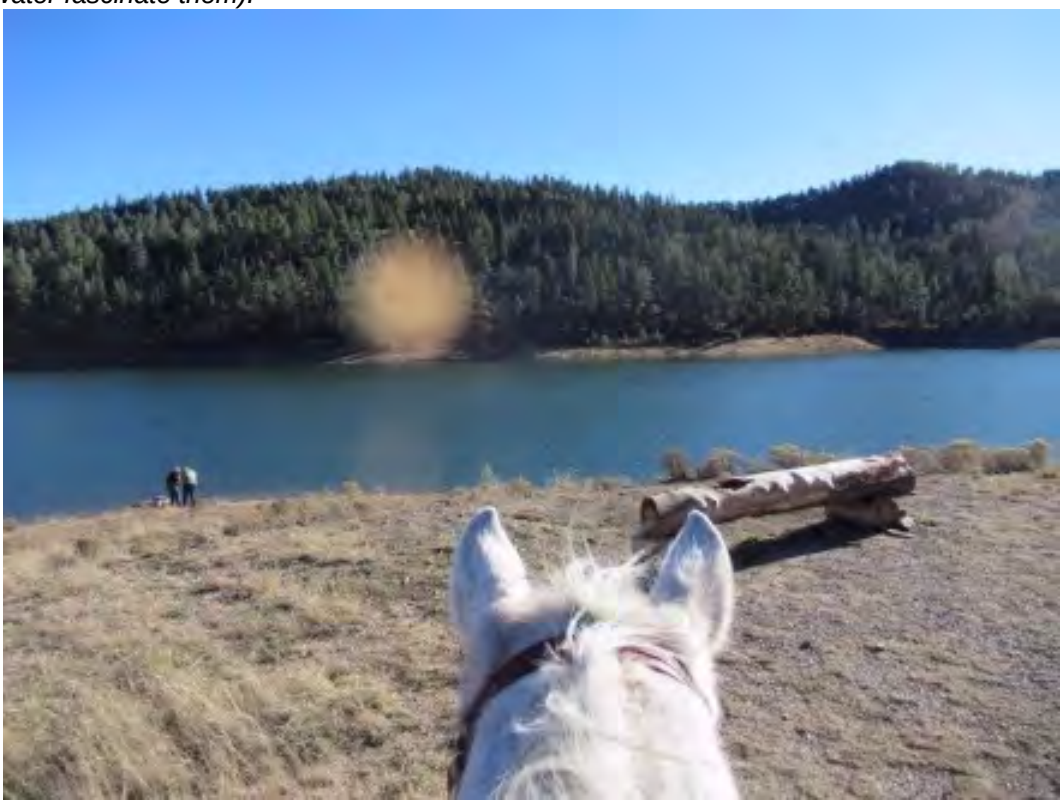


It was a familiar route, and yet still a very special ride. Thanks for coming along!
MM

2017-11-21 - *Nice Little Ride*

Grindstone Lake is within the Village of Ruidoso limits, so it's convenient when running errands in town. And it is surrounded by National Forest, making it beautiful and easily-accessible for quick rides.

The horses are always interested in the goings on of fishermen (and the diving ducks disappearing under water fascinate them).



Various trails lead up from the lake into the forest, offering classic mountain lake views.

A corny shot . . .

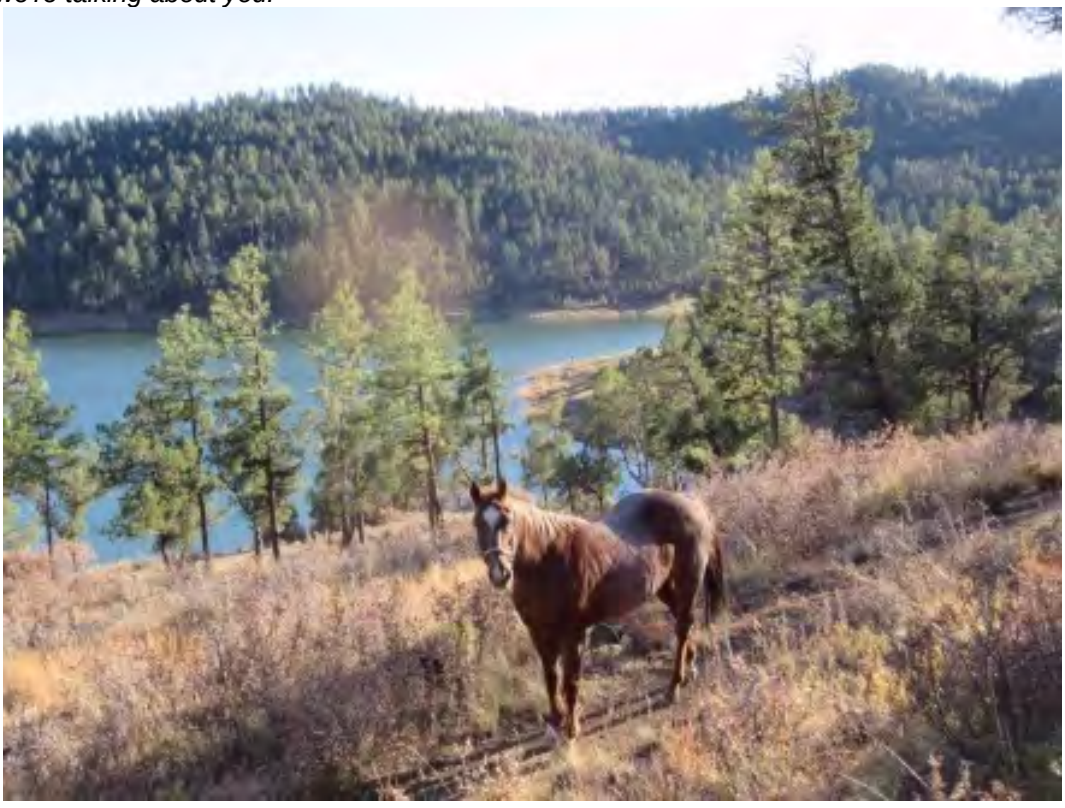
2017-11-21 - *Nice Little Ride*

Spanky and Lulu enjoy their stroll together.

And Spanky gets to snack along the way.

He stops to enjoy the view.

Yeah, we're talking about you.

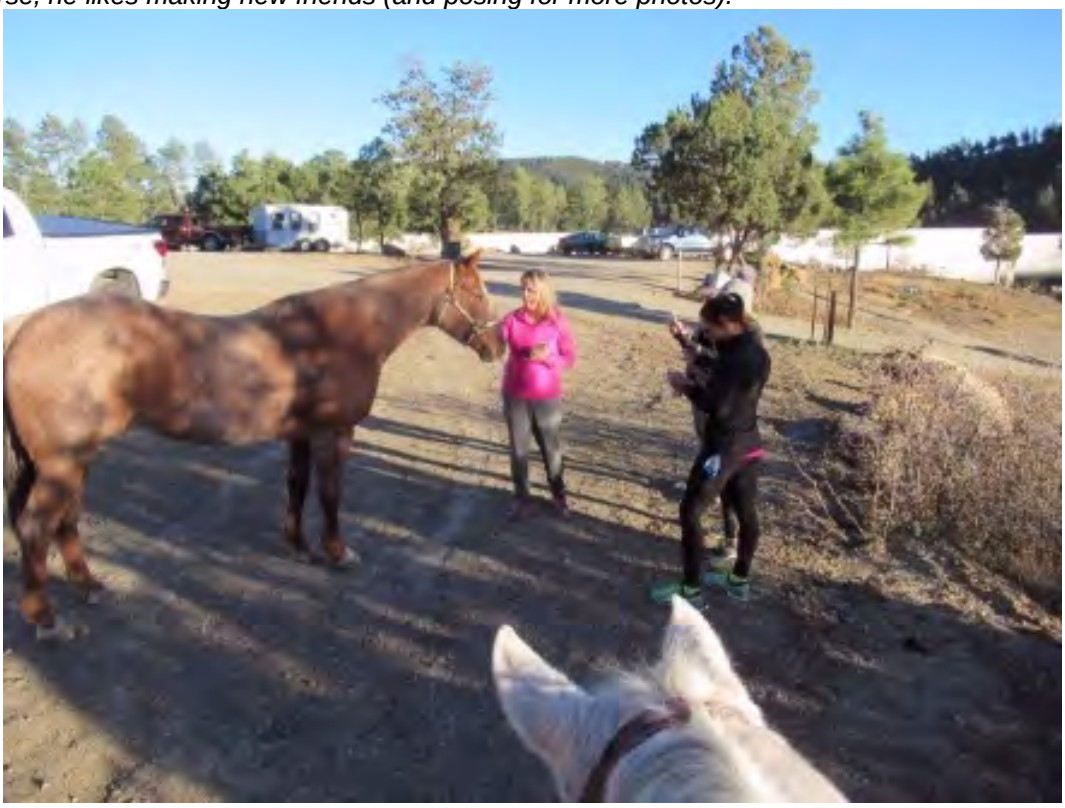


2017-11-21 - *Nice Little Ride*

He did some posing on this ride . . .

2017-11-21 - *Nice Little Ride*

Of course, he likes making new friends (and posing for more photos).



A nice little ride - thanks for joining us!
MM

2017-11-21 - *The Quiet of Dusk*

It really was too late in the day to start out on a ride in shadowy Nogal Canyon, but we are glad we decided to go anyway.
The sun sets very early, here in the deep canyon under the maples and oaks. At dusk a peaceful silence descends. Even the birds seem to be holding their breath, waiting for nightfall.

We explore a new trail. But first, a taste of green grass - a special treat this time of year.

Asks persnickety Spanky, "Is that some late-season clover, with an earthy bouquet and a touch of blackberry overtones?" Sez practical Thunder, "I dunno. It tastes good, though."

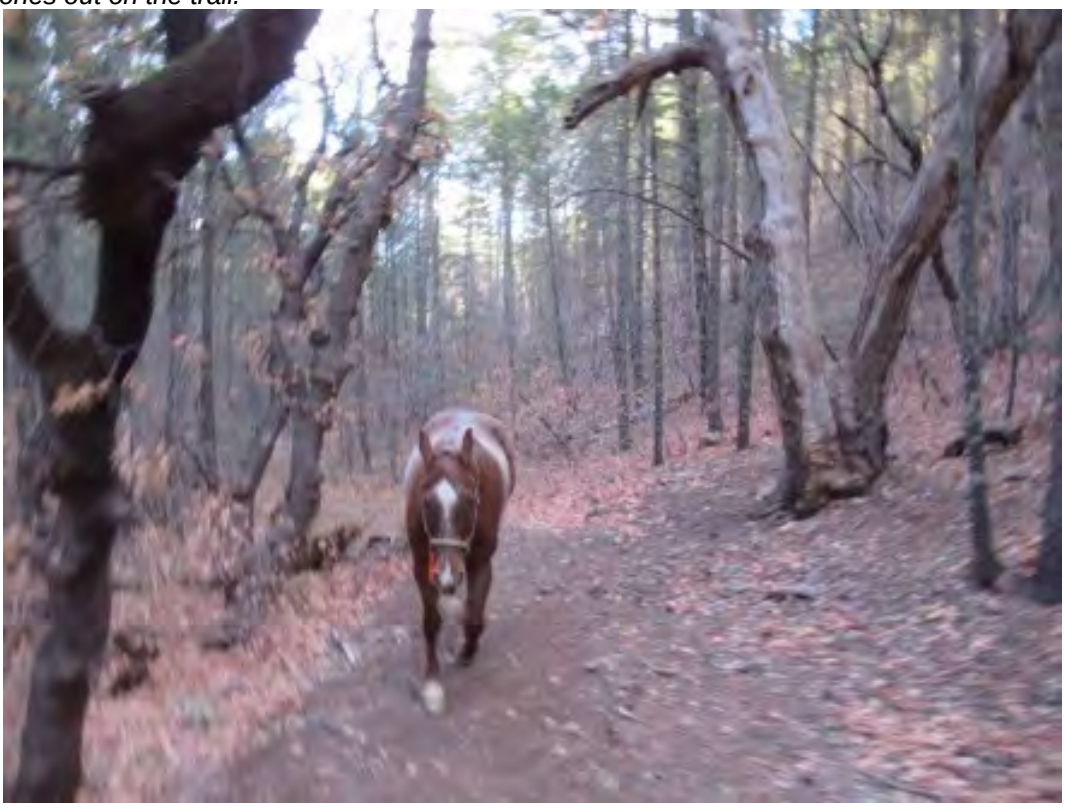
2017-11-21 - *The Quiet of Dusk*

Bushwhacking through the forest, Thunder determines the best way around that. He winds carefully through the gap . . .

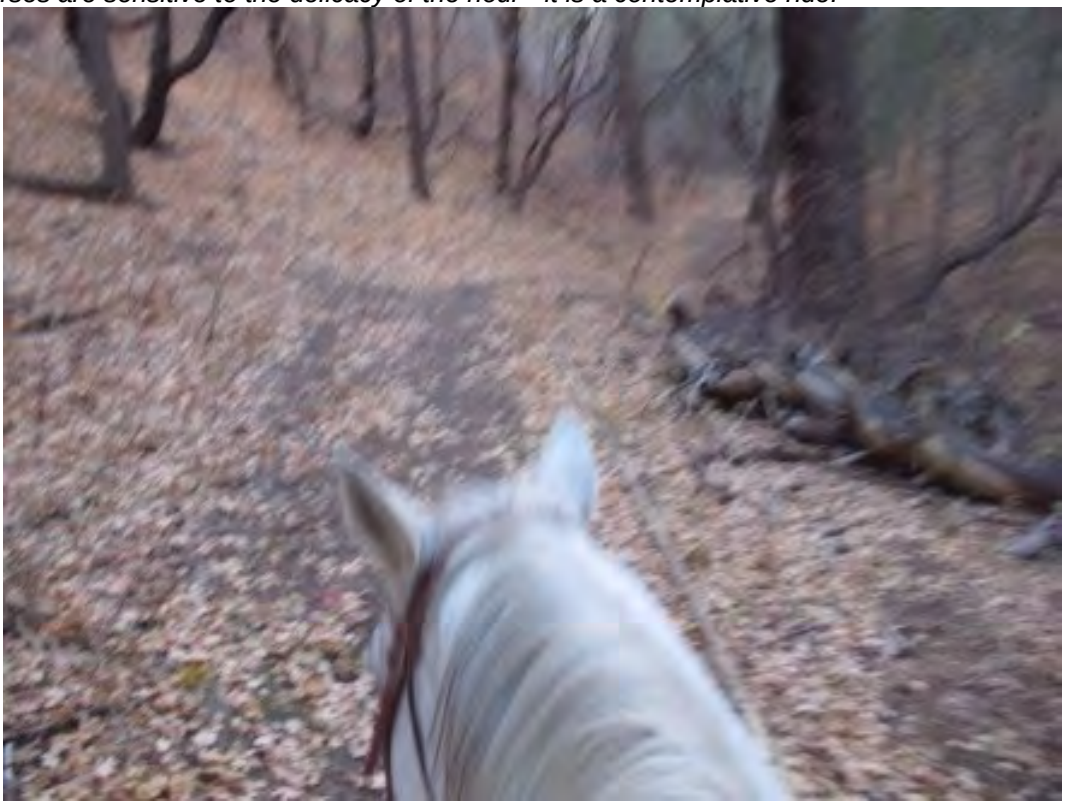
. . . while Spanky steps nimbly over.

2017-11-21 - *The Quiet of Dusk*

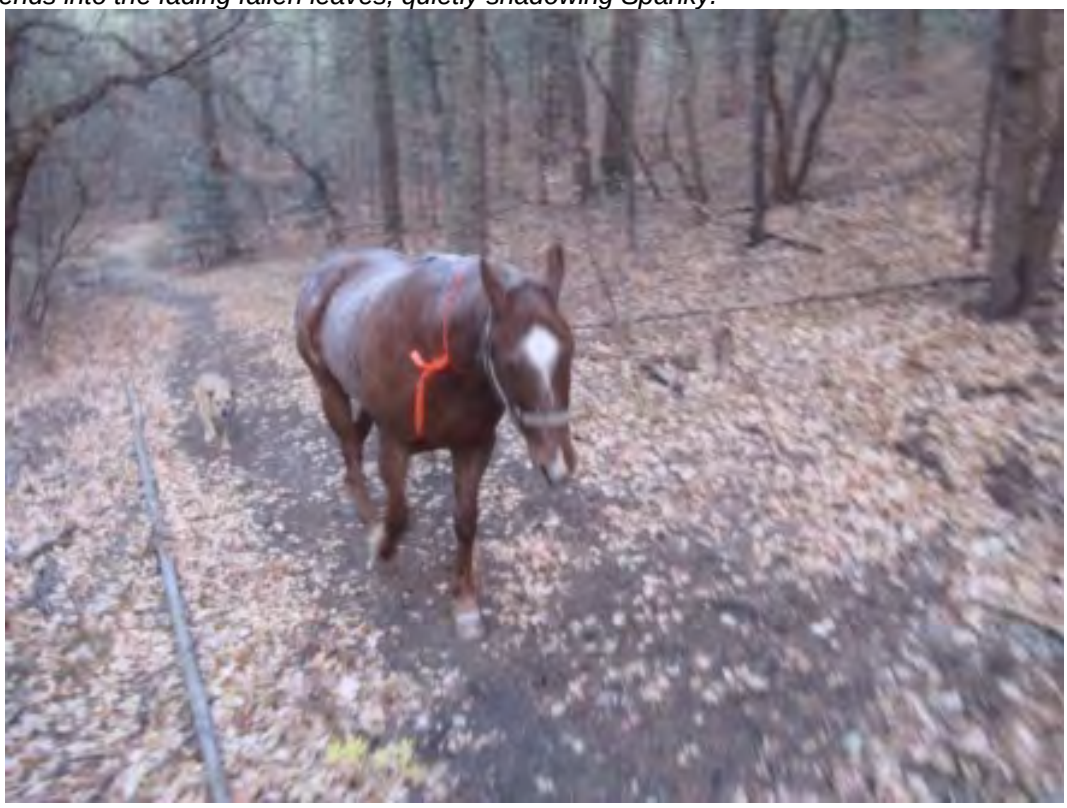
Then zones out on the trail.



The horses are sensitive to the delicacy of the hour - it is a contemplative ride.



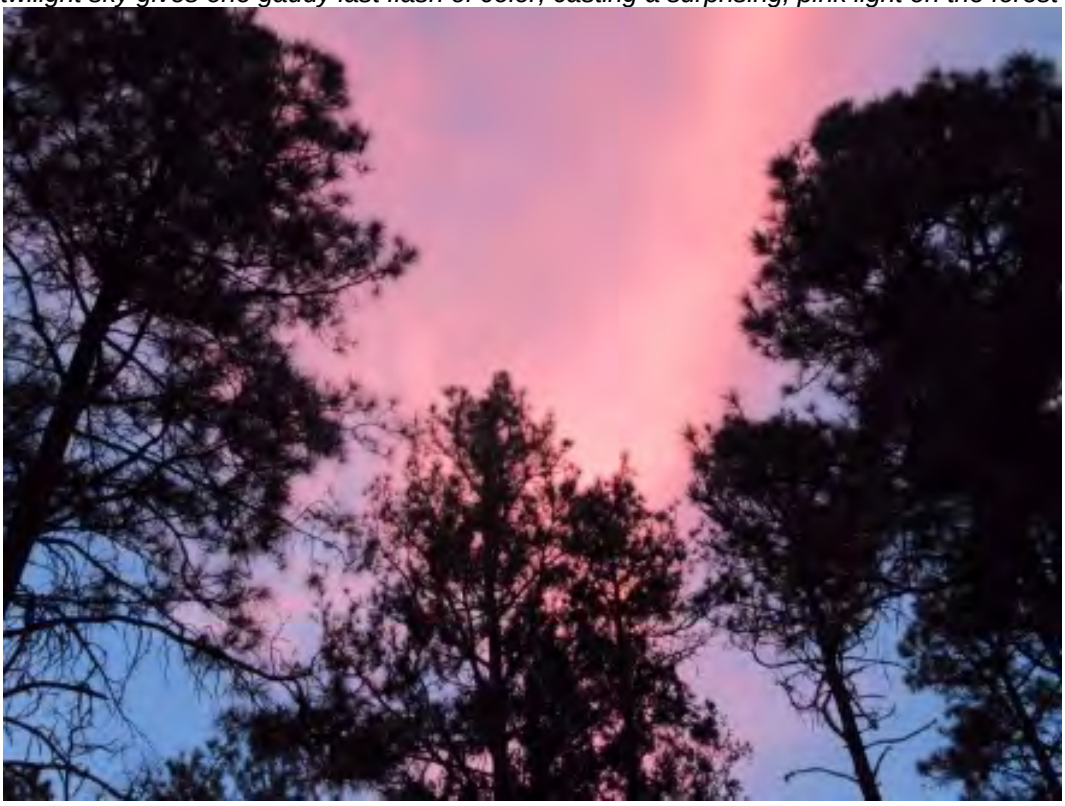
Lulu blends into the fading fallen leaves, quietly shadowing Spanky.



A time for reflection, and appreciation for all that is good.

2017-11-21 - *The Quiet of Dusk*

As the twilight sky gives one gaudy last flash of color, casting a surprising, pink light on the forest below.



MM

FOLLOWED DREAM RANCH

2017-11-22 - *Thanks Giving*

Some things we are thankful for around the ranch:

~To have been born in a nation whose founders established an ideal of liberty for all; and for those who sacrificed their very lives, that our freedom could endure.

~To live in a region where nature still has a place to flourish, and animals remain free to roam; to enjoy open spaces and the freedom to ride to the horizon on land protected for the enjoyment of everyone.

~For the ability to be kind.

~For the realization that "more" is not necessarily "better" in life; that *things* are not always the key to happiness.

~For the simple pleasure of a bird's song, and the bright promise of each golden sunrise.

~For the right to think for oneself.

~For the memories of a lifetime - of happy days, challenges overcome, and love along the way.

~For meaningful, supportive friendship, and a loving family - no matter how it is defined. And always, thankful for the gift of life itself.

For this, and so much more, we give thanks.

2017-11-22 - *Thanks Giving*

Wishing you and yours a very Happy Thanksgiving.
MM & Family

2017-11-28 - *Deer Friends*

Each one has his or her own unique personality - and it is interesting to watch them interact with each other (I suppose hunters would not see it that same way . . .)

"Big Buck" has been coming here for about four years now.

2017-11-28 - *Deer Friends*

He does love his apples.

2017-11-28 - *Deer Friends*

2017-11-28 - *Deer Friends*

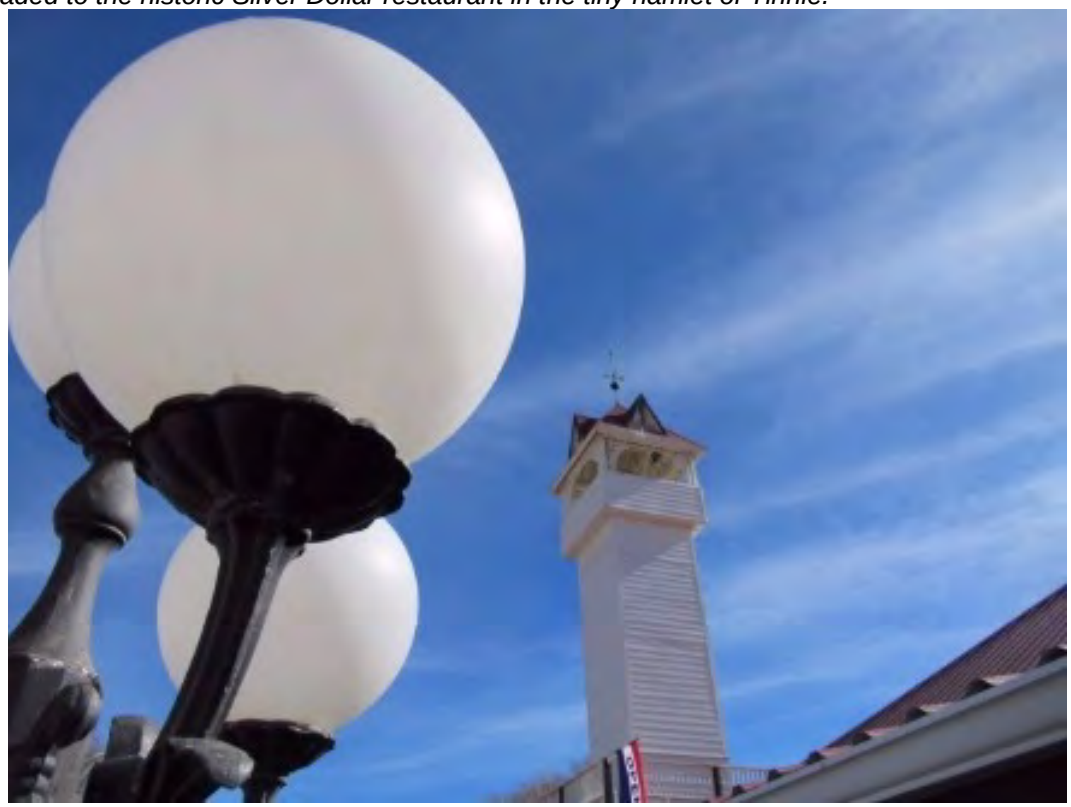
Nice to have friends drop by (every day!)
MM

2017-11-29 - *Lunch with the Kids*

Winter's coming. But the sunny fall day was warm, and the horses gave me that "let's go" look. Belle isn't ready for the trail yet, but she still enjoys a nice outing with her boys.

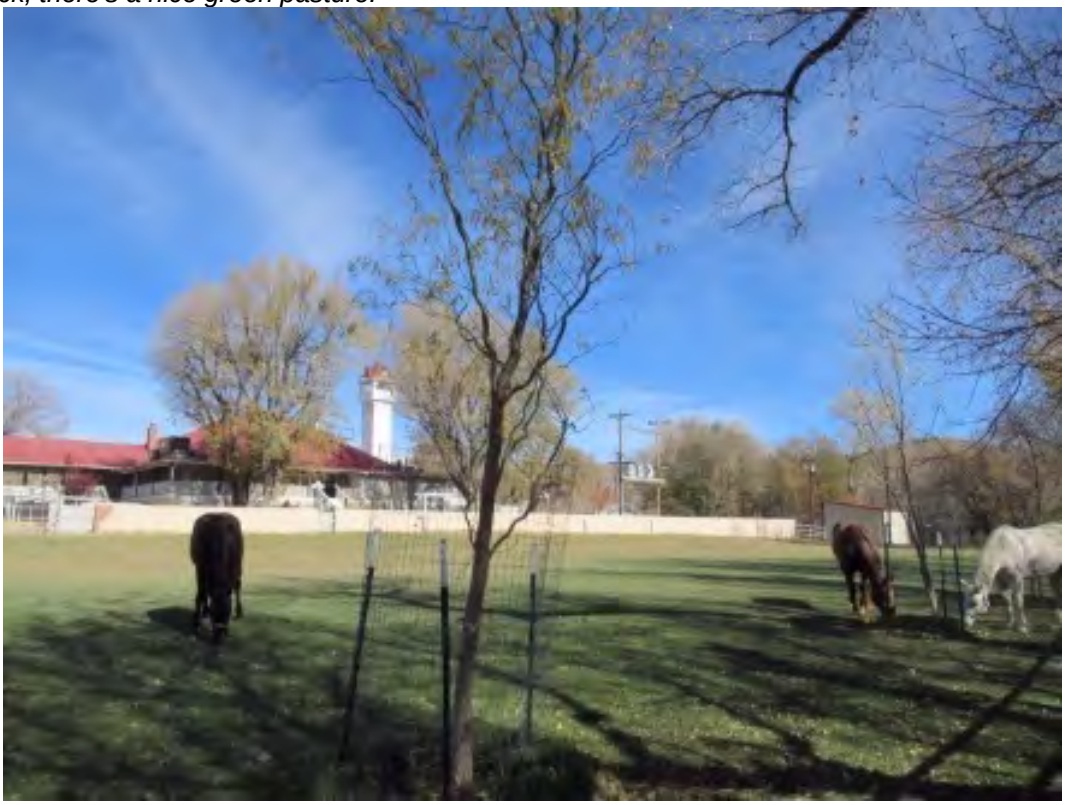
They piled into the trailer, and we set out for the Hondo Valley.

We headed to the historic Silver Dollar restaurant in the tiny hamlet of Tinnie.



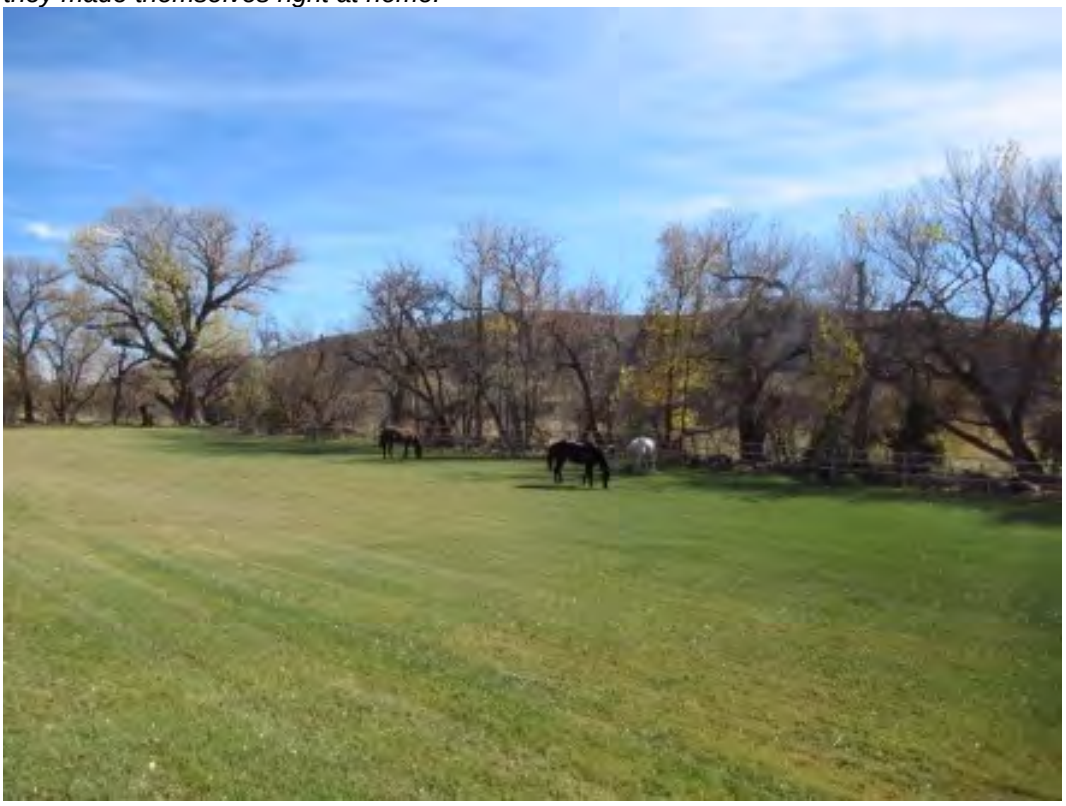
2017-11-29 - *Lunch with the Kids*

Out back, there's a nice green pasture.



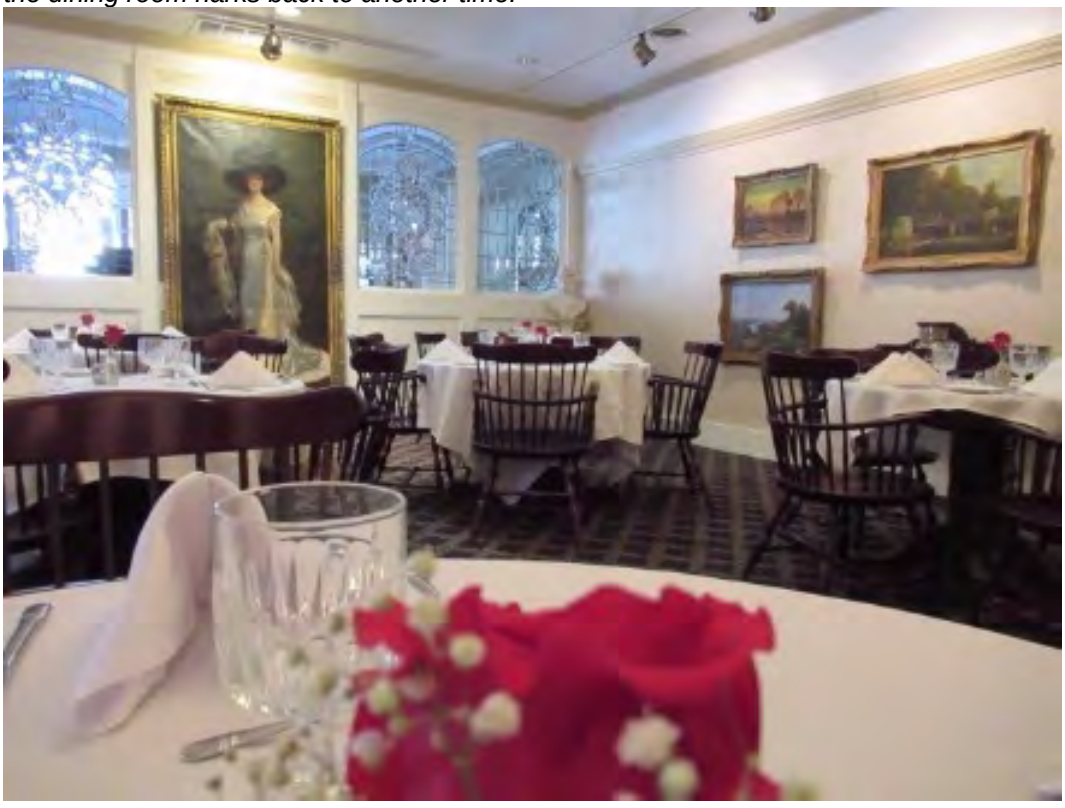
2017-11-29 - *Lunch with the Kids*

Where they made themselves right at home.

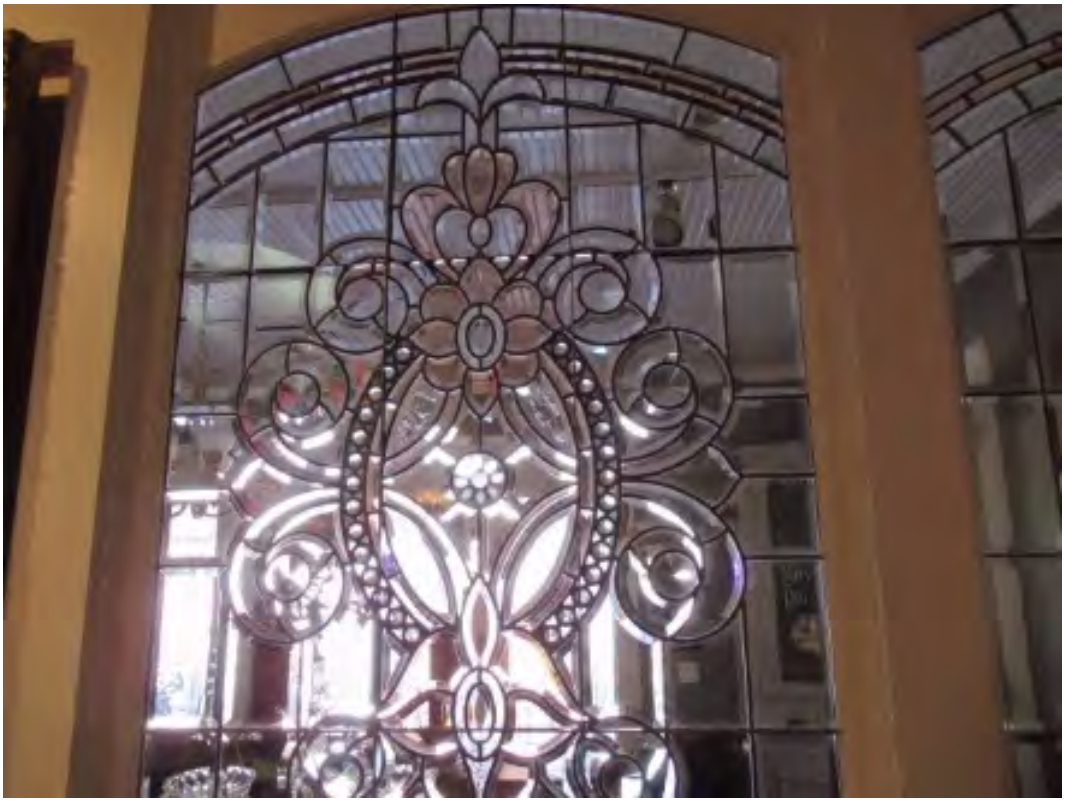


It borders on an ancient acequia still delivering water to the fields in Tinnie.

Inside, the dining room harks back to another time.



2017-11-29 - *Lunch with the Kids*

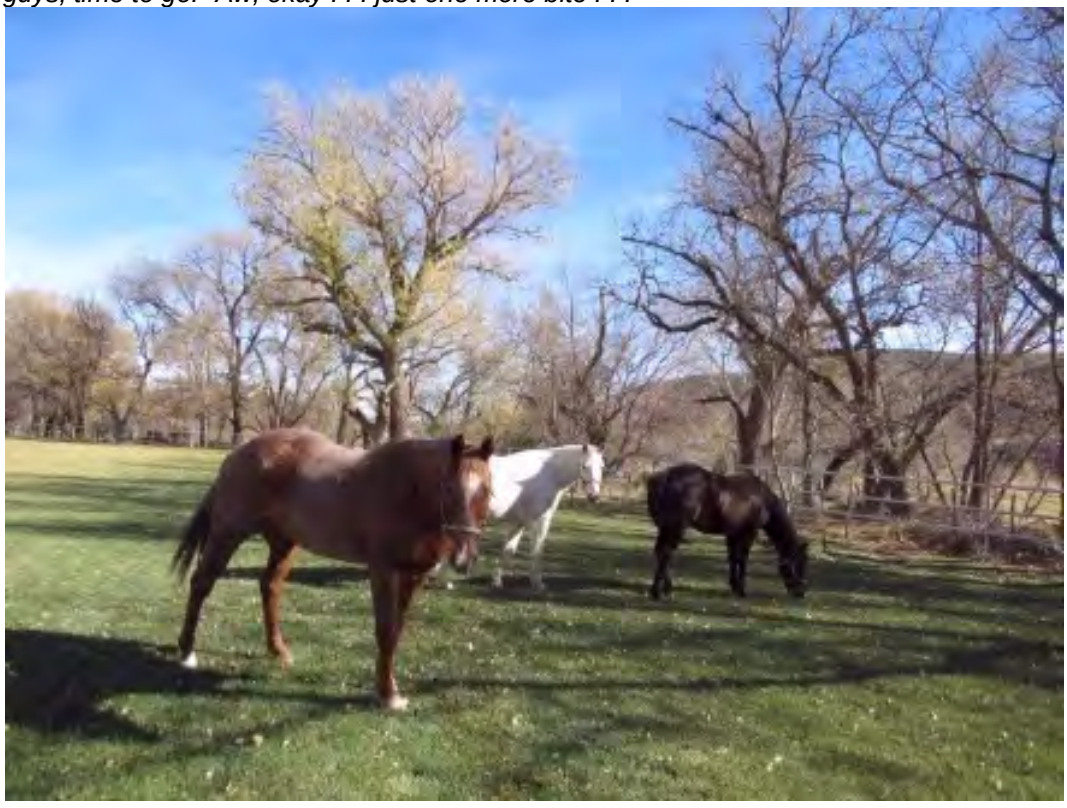


As usual, Lulu settled right in.

2017-11-29 - *Lunch with the Kids*

The kids enjoyed their lunch al fresco.

Alright guys, time to go. "Aw, okay . . . just one more bite . . ."

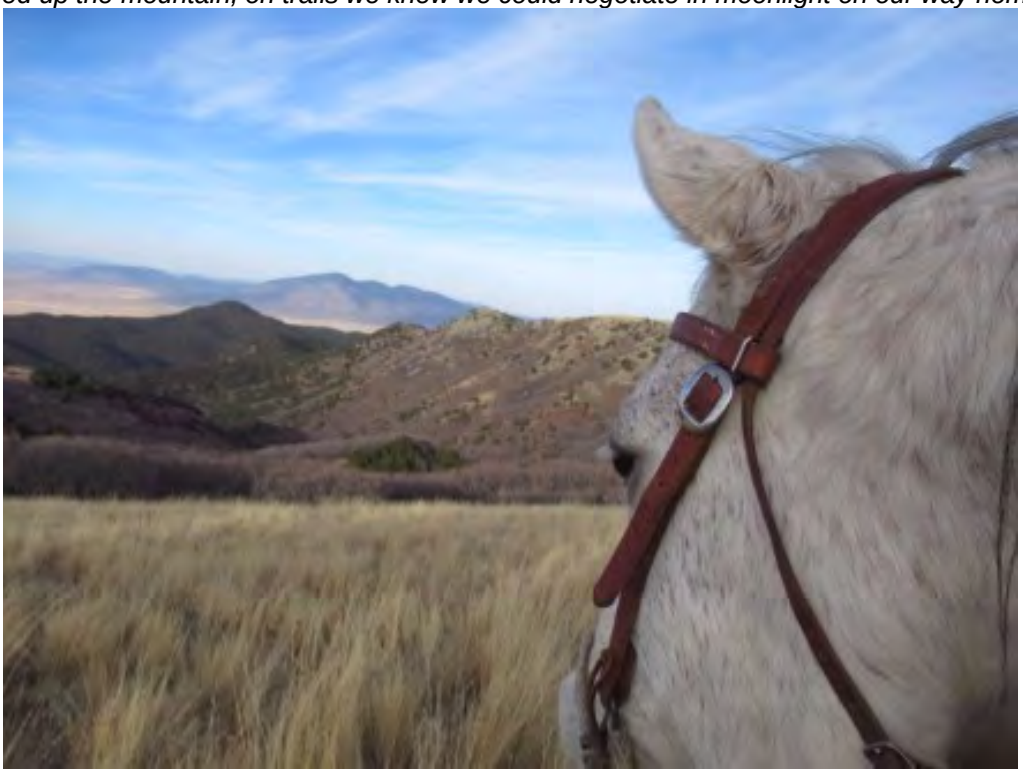


A nice family outing. Thanks for coming along!
MM

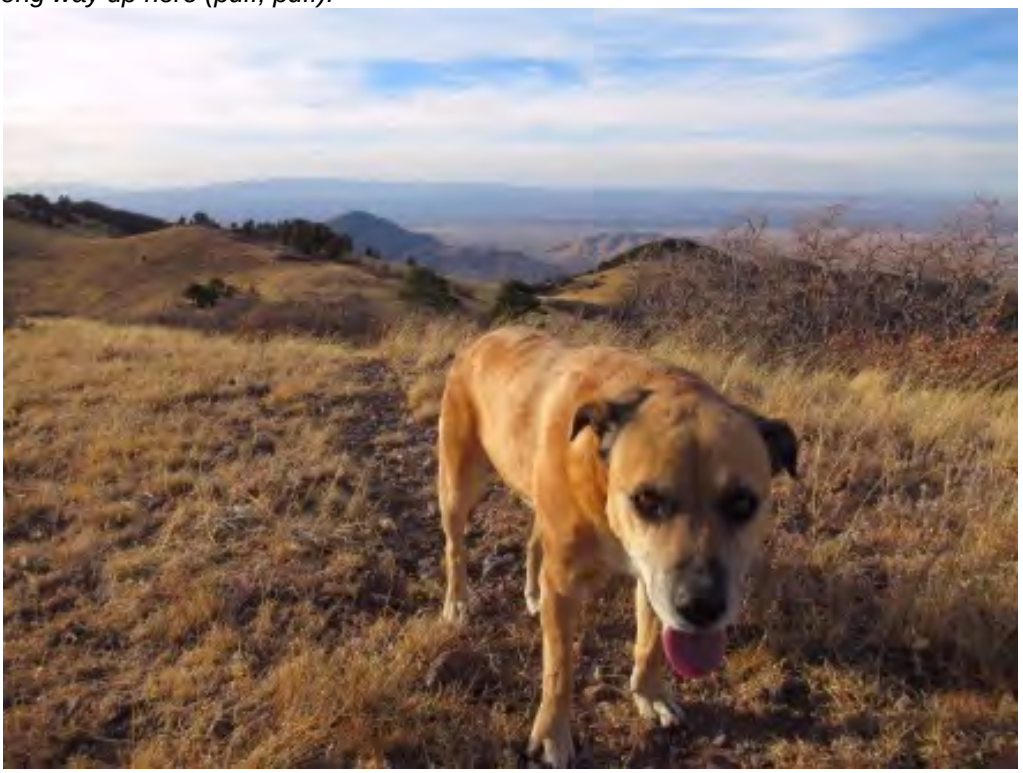
2017-12-04 - *Super Moon*

Lulu, Thunder and I thought it would be cool to take a ride under the last "super moon" of the year (and while evening temps were still comfortable in the high country).

We headed up the mountain, on trails we knew we could negotiate in moonlight on our way home.



It was a long way up here (puff, puff)!



2017-12-04 - *Super Moon*

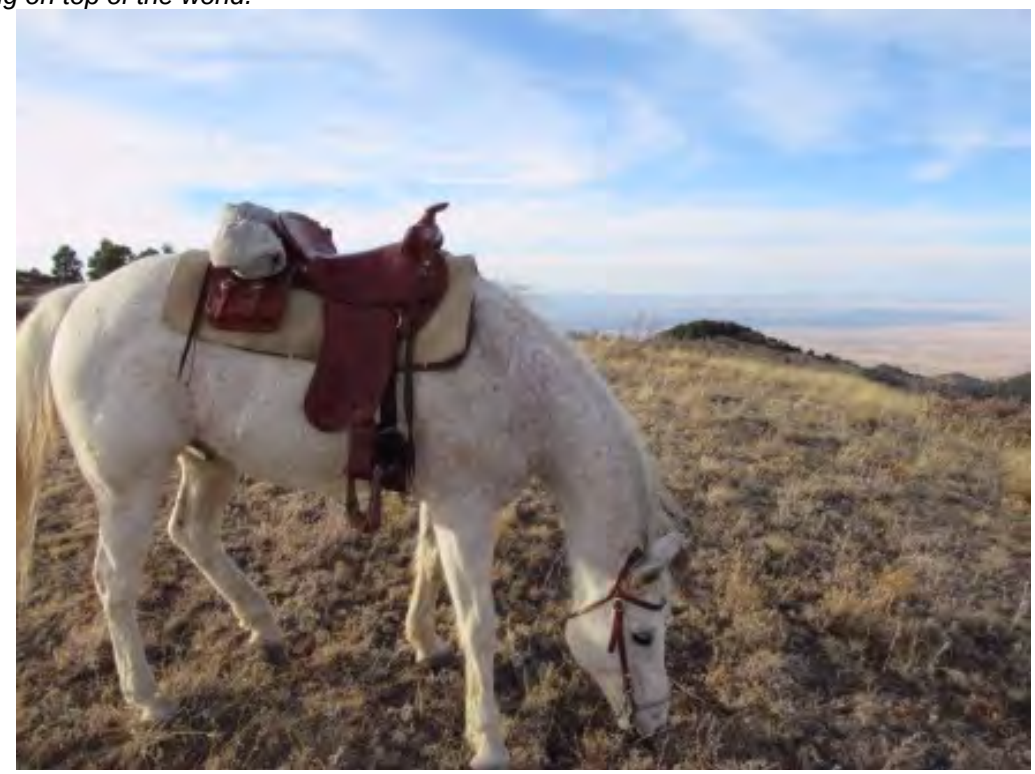
When we reached the top, we bushwhacked over to that knob in the distance.

A quick sip from a little mountain spring.

2017-12-04 - *Super Moon*

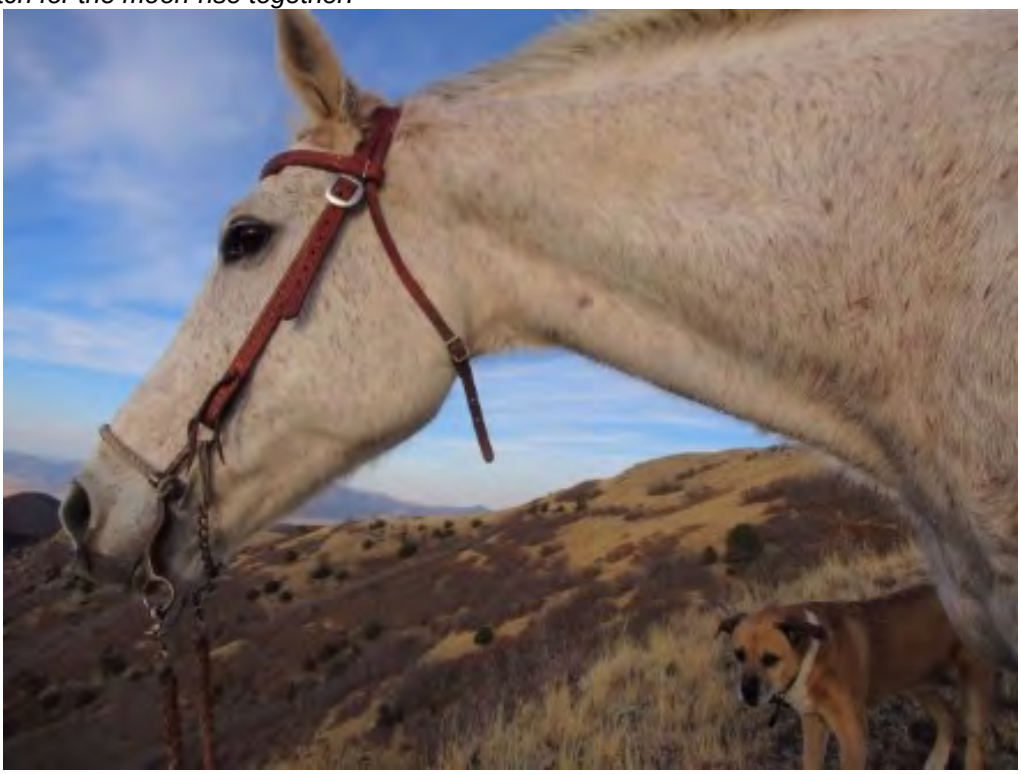
Special friends.

Snacking on top of the world.



2017-12-04 - *Super Moon*

They watch for the moon-rise together.



2017-12-04 - *Super Moon*

"Wow! This is so cool!"

. . . and it was!

2017-12-04 - *Super Moon*

We rode home in the mystical silence of a "super moon" night.
MM

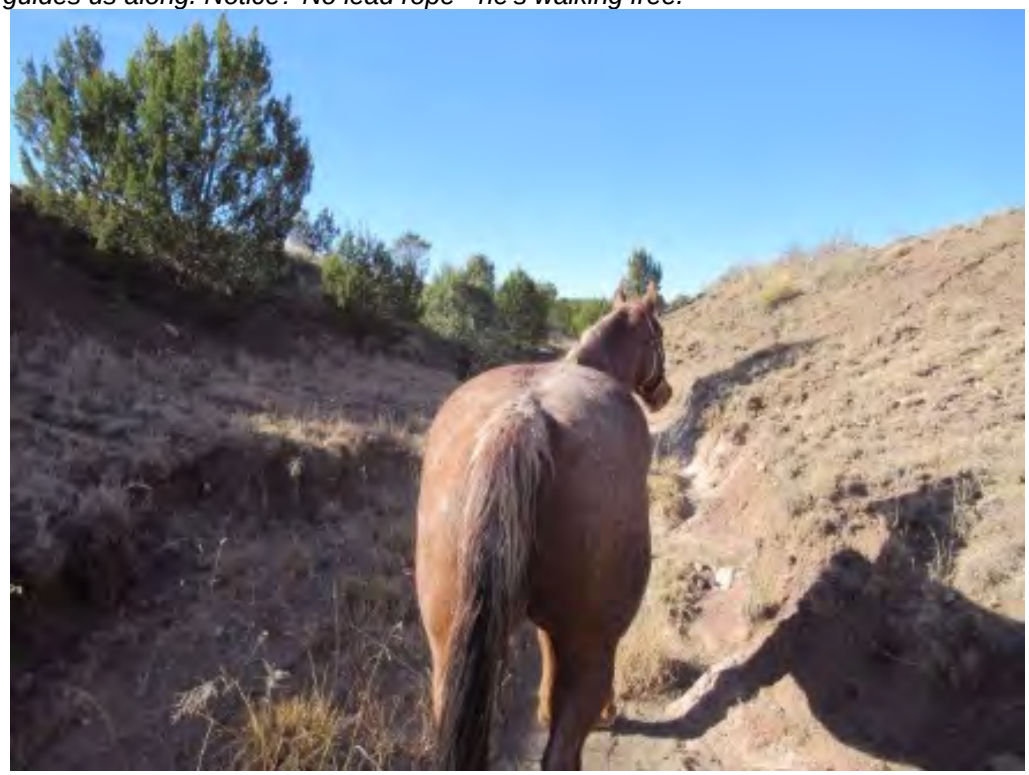
2017-12-06 - *Spanky's Arroyo Adventure*

We spend a little one-on-one time with each of the horses. This time, Spanky got to explore an arroyo near the ranch.

Like many of the arroyos, this one is pretty much hidden until you get right on it. The Sacramento Mountains loom in the background. Wide open spaces.

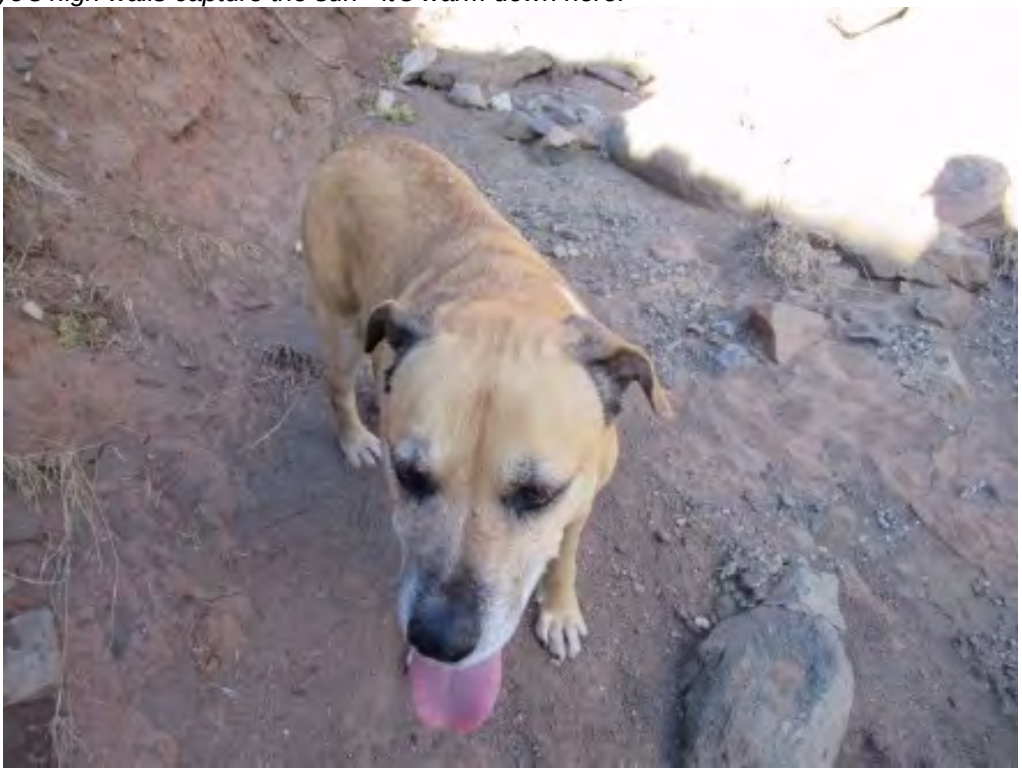
As we start out, some quality time with his friend.

Spanky guides us along. Notice? No lead rope - he's walking free.



2017-12-06 - *Spanky’s Arroyo Adventure*

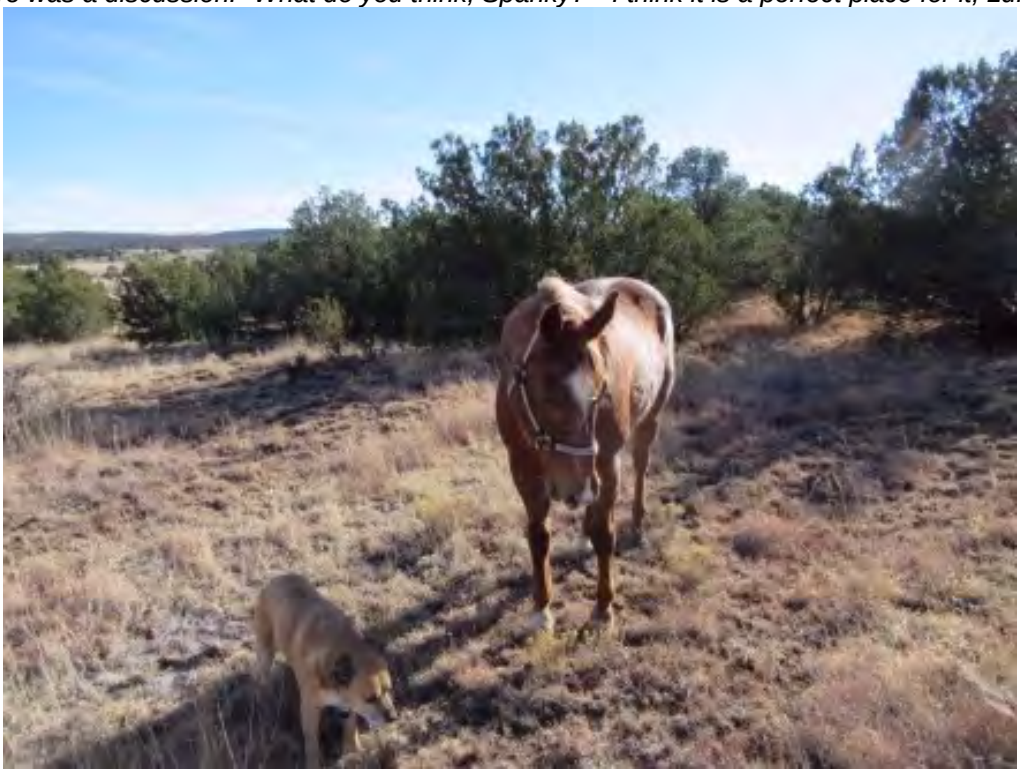
The arroyo's high walls capture the sun - it's warm down here!



"Uhhh . . . what about THAT? . . .", he asks.

Oh . . . We find a way around, climbing out of the arroyo.

Then there was a discussion. "What do you think, Spanky?" "I think it is a perfect place for it, Lulu!"



"Timber!"

Lulu knows to get out of the way.

"That was great! Let's try it again, over there, where it's sandy . . . "

2017-12-06 - *Spanky’s Arroyo Adventure*

"Ahhhh . . . "

"Hey! What's this?"

2017-12-06 - *Spanky's Arroyo Adventure*

The remains of an old ranch dam across the wash - long forgotten. Someone worked hard building it, then a flood came . . .

A piece of natural "art" in the middle of nowhere - like an ancient Trojan mask, tossed into history.

MM

For some reason, all the moms and babies decided to visit at once. They had a great time!

These little ones played tag until they saw me with the camera . . . then it was time to pose.

Sweet mom. They all seem to share duties . . . watching over the little ones, and giving each other breaks to graze on the lawn.

2017-12-08 - *Nursery School*

Mule deer are named for their prominent ears.

2017-12-08 - *Nursery School*

Nap time. Note the dove taking a siesta, too.

An "awww" . . . (this one is keeping a serious eye on Lulu, who ignores them).

They are all weaned by now . . . but once in a while someone tries for a little milk.

Another "awww" moment.

2017-12-08 - *Nursery School*

This really was cute.
Buddy the cat was lying on the veranda, and this fawn was VERY curious of him . . .

He came right up on the cement walkway.

2017-12-08 - *Nursery School*

Buddy just kept quiet, as the fawn checked him out (Buddy is lying under the window, and because of the angle, I could not get him in the photo).

Still curious!

2017-12-08 - *Nursery School*

"Did you see that, mom? What IS that thing?"

A very young and trusting buck.

And the apple budget keeps increasing . . .
MM

2017-12-09 - *Breakfast Club*

When I went out to feed the horses this morning, I was greeted by a sort of deer breakfast club!

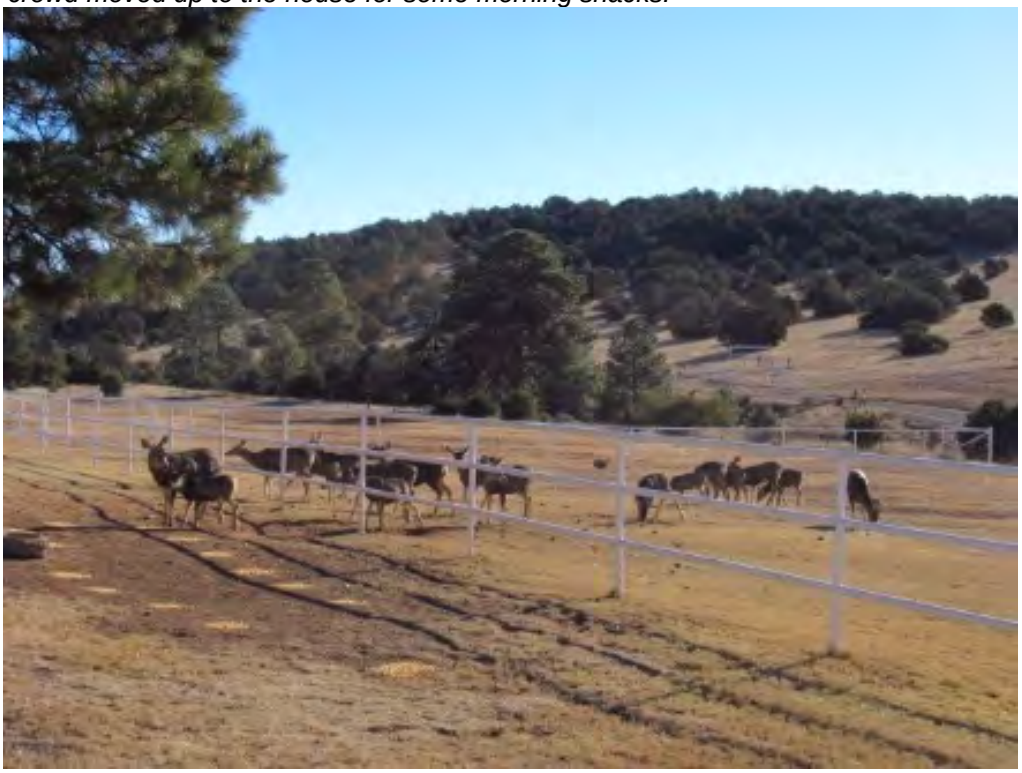
They began with a refreshing drink from the big stock tank.

These two seemed curious about what the horses were having for their breakfast.

Note the buck, keeping an eye on all the little ones.

2017-12-09 - *Breakfast Club*

Then the crowd moved up to the house for some morning snacks.



This big guy seems to be the leader.

2017-12-09 - *Breakfast Club*

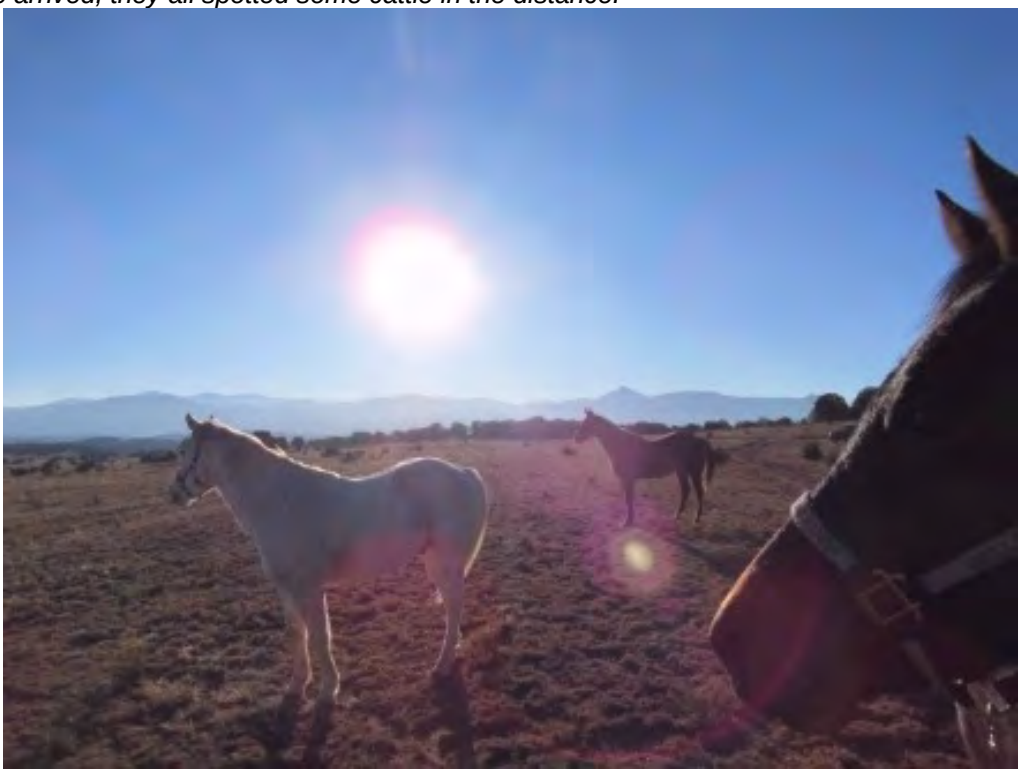
All ears.

A very nice way to begin the day. Thanks for sharing it!
MM

2017-12-17 - *Family Frolic*

Although Belle is not yet ride-able, she and the boys like to go out together. We headed to Ranchman's Camp late in the day.

When we arrived, they all spotted some cattle in the distance.



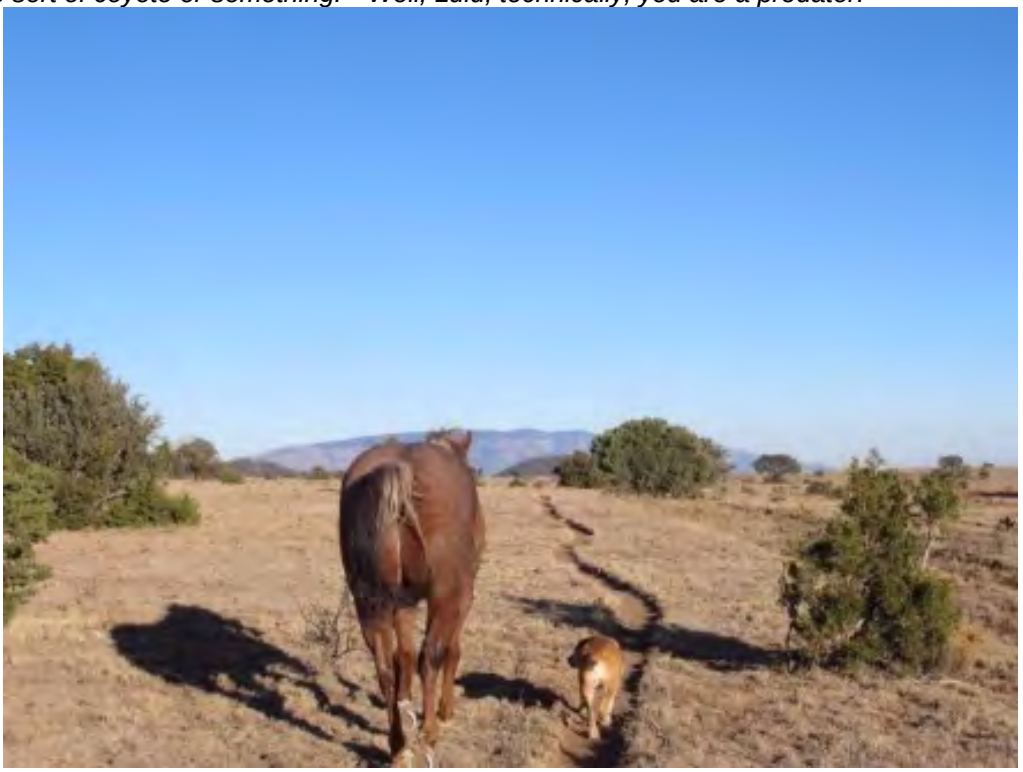
Spanky was pretty interested.

He and Thunder went off to investigate.

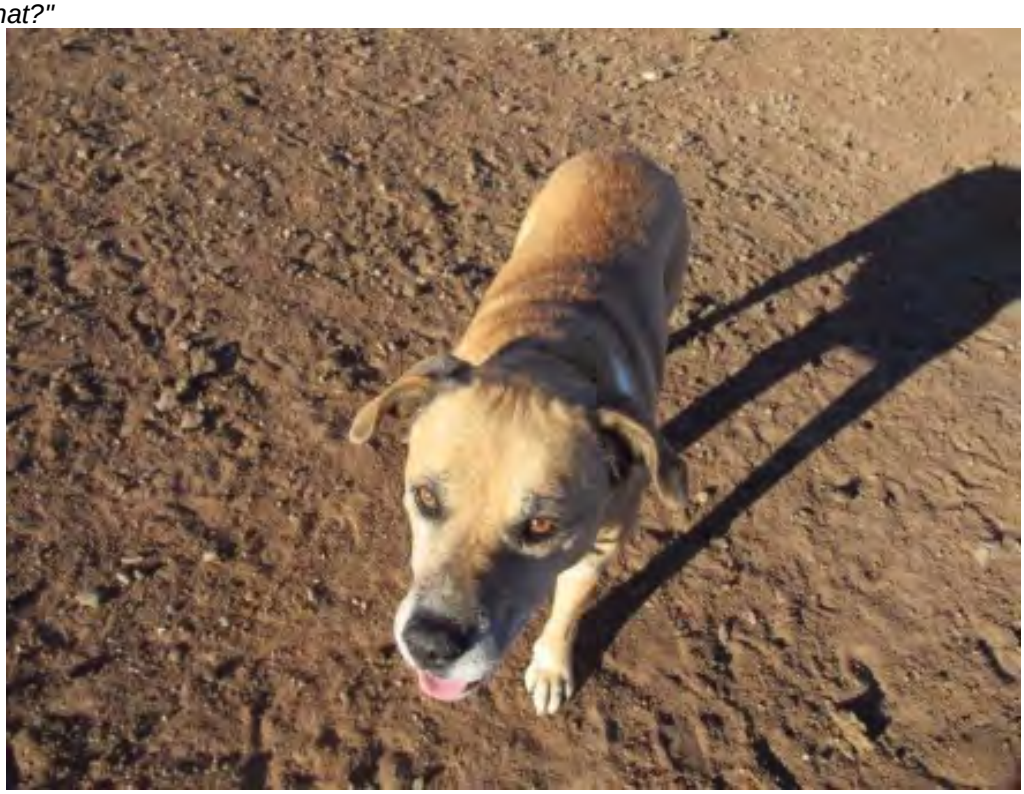
“Oh, yeah, we recognize them!”

Satisfied, we continued on our way.

Lulu and Spanky talked it over. "Yeah, they're nice and all, but sometimes the moms look at me like I am some sort of coyote or something." "Well, Lulu, technically, you are a predator."



"I'm a what?"



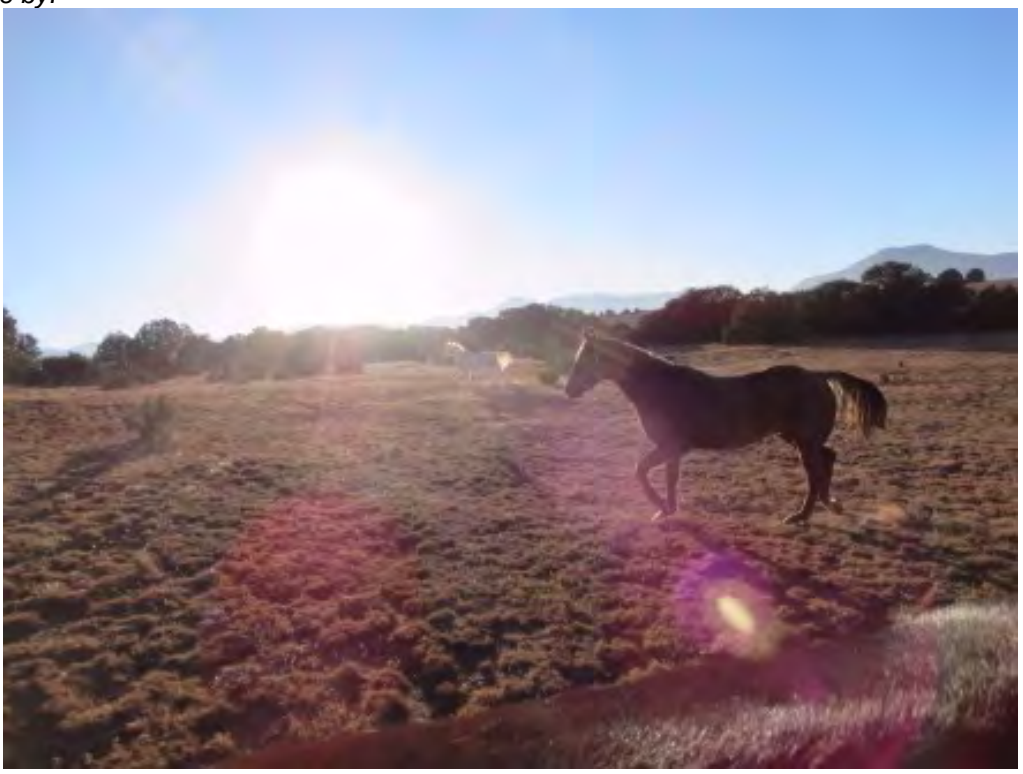
Then they saw some elk in the distance (too far for my camera).

Yes, Spanky, I see them too.

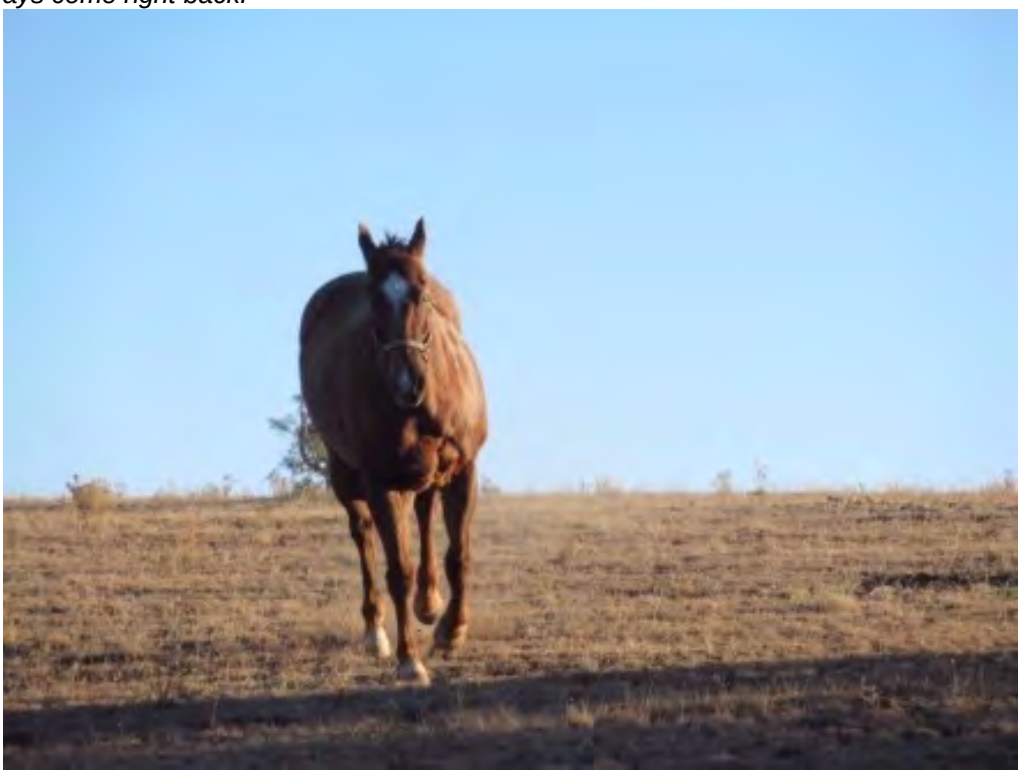
"I am NOT a whatever-that-is you said!"

"I'm not . . ."

Thunder and Spanky run circles around us. They have come to understand that Belle shouldn't, so they stay close by.

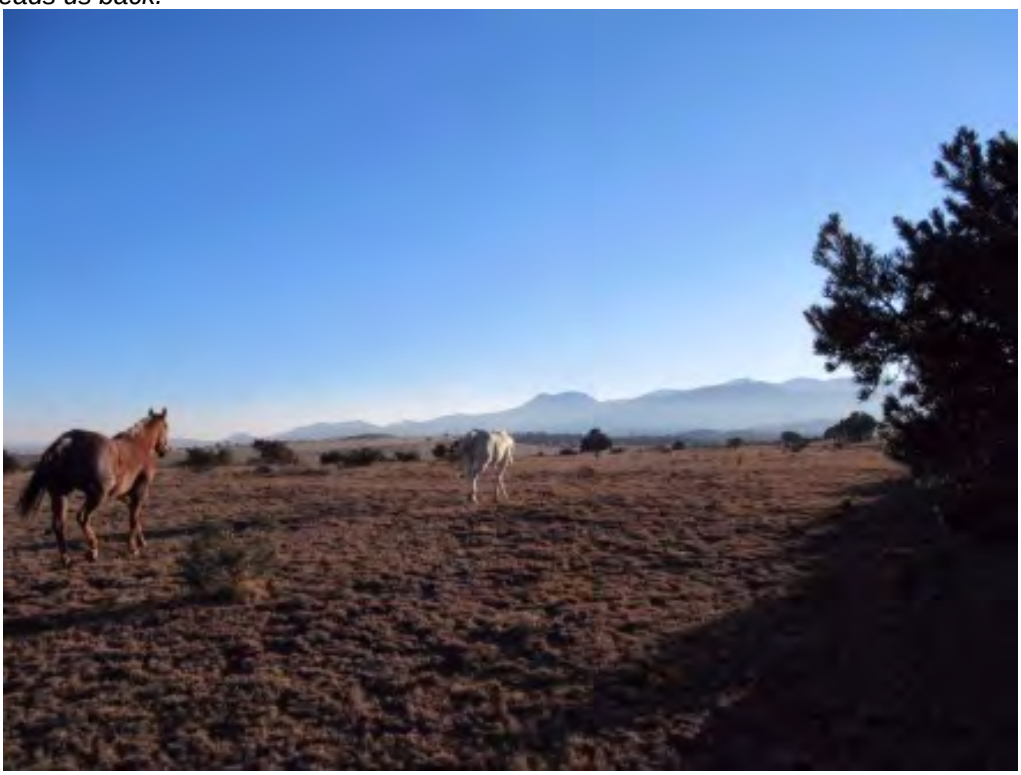


They always come right back.



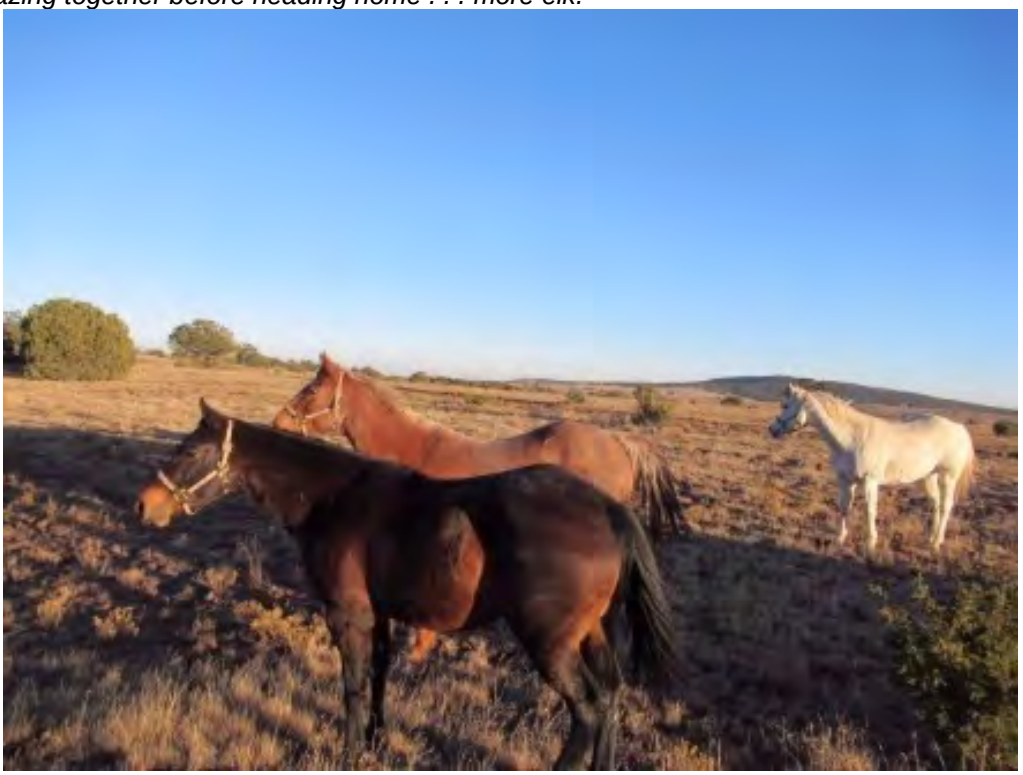
Thunder spots our trailer in the distance.

. . . and leads us back.

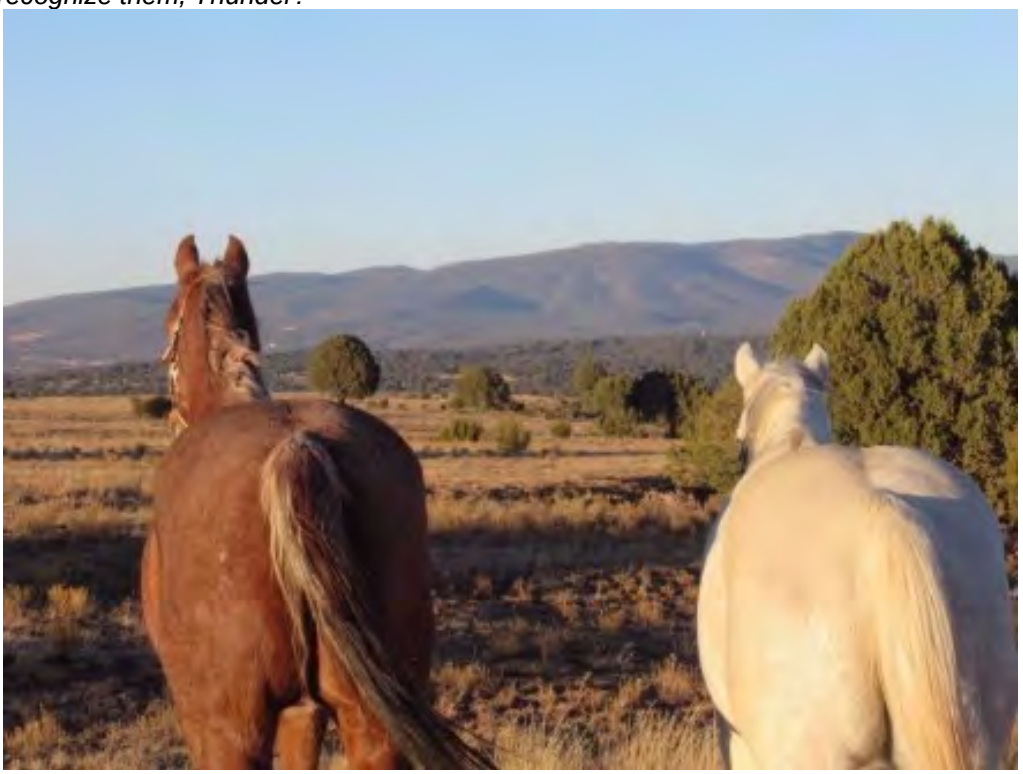


2017-12-17 - *Family Frolic*

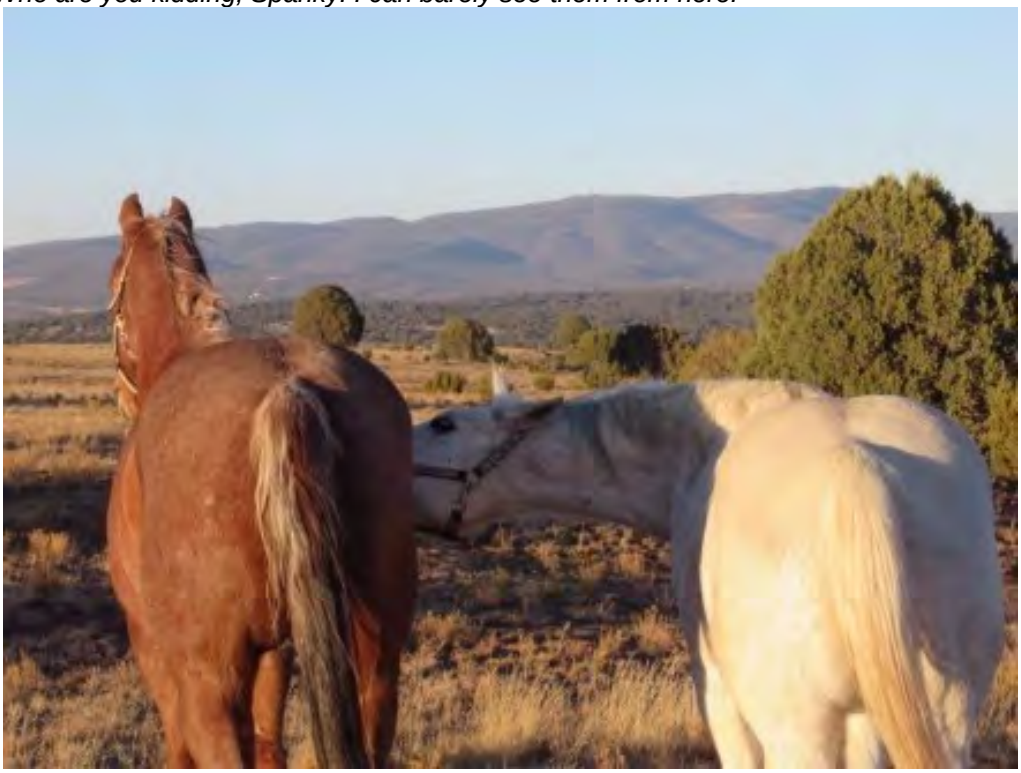
While grazing together before heading home . . . more elk.



"Do you recognize them, Thunder?"



"Go on. Who are you kidding, Spanky. I can barely see them from here!"



"Well, that one bull looks kinda familiar . . ."

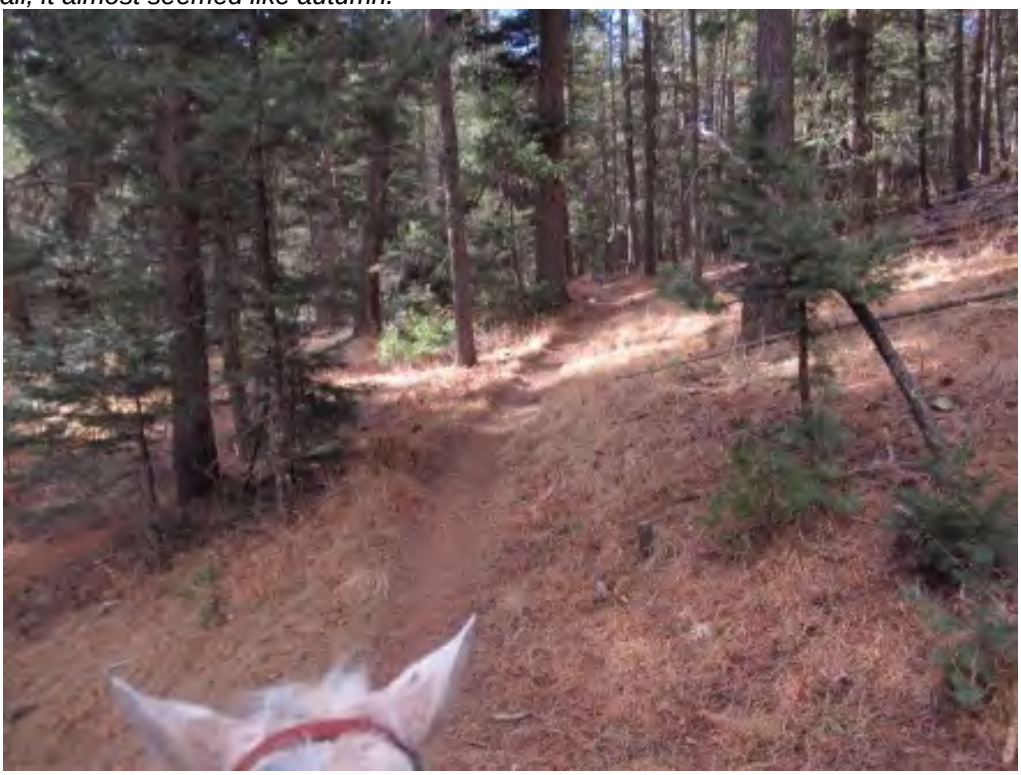
A nice family outing - thanks for coming along!
MM

2017-12-18 - *Solo Flight*

Thunder is a fast and powerful horse (a friend in a car clocked us running at about 50 mph). He has a naturally different pace than the other two. So, when we ride alone (well, Lulu comes along, of course!) we step things up a bit. This time of the year, you never know when winter will close off the high country to us (snow's okay, but ice can be dangerous). So since it was dry, I suggested to Thunder that he might like to take a quick run up Argentina Trail . . . to the top of the mountain.

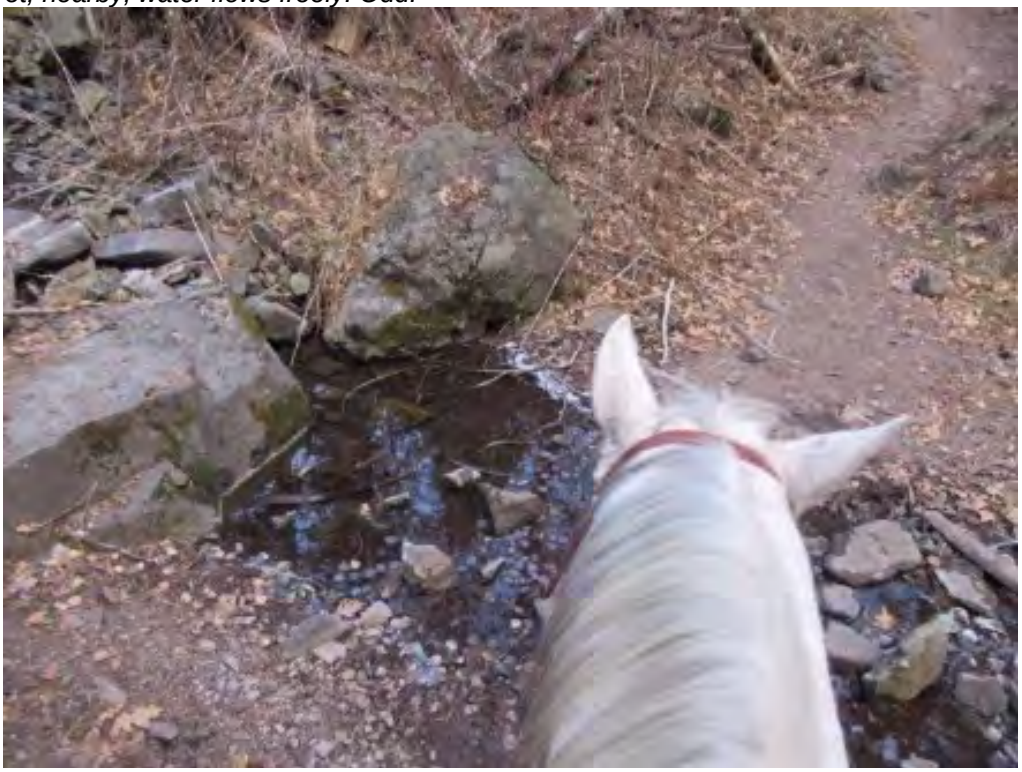
Not a soul around. Thunder looked for other horses at the Argentina camp - but it was just the three of us.

On the trail, it almost seemed like autumn.



Except for the shadowed stretches of frozen streams. Waterfalls become miniature, icy glaciers.

. . . and yet, nearby, water flows freely. Odd.

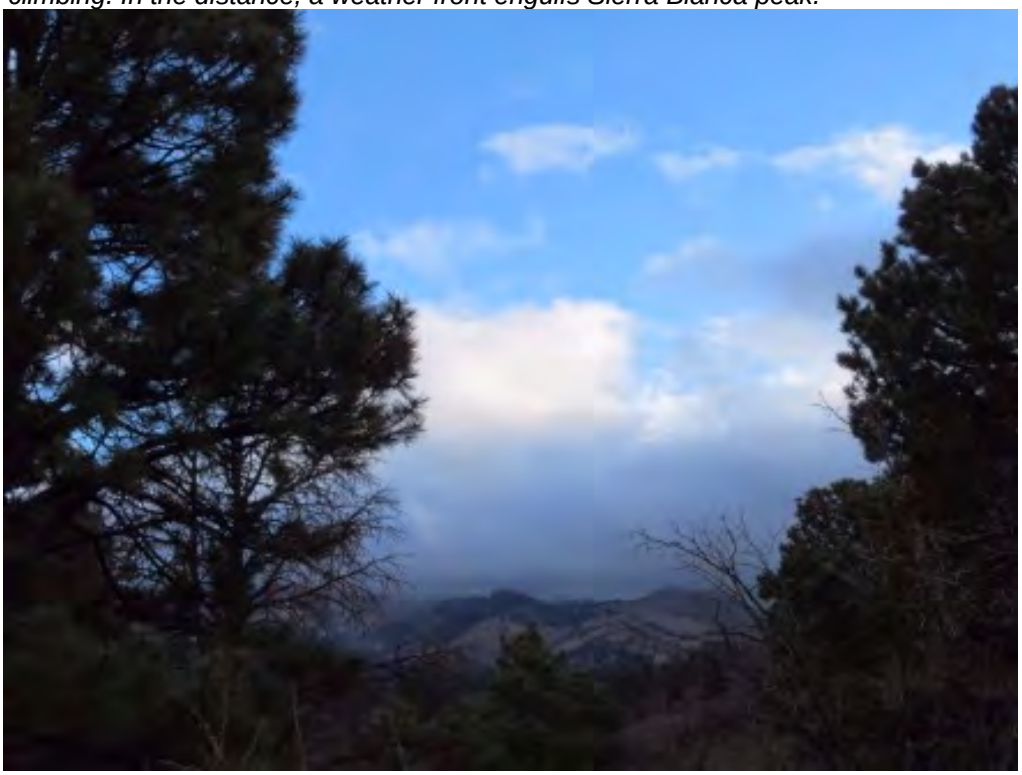


2017-12-18 - *Solo Flight*

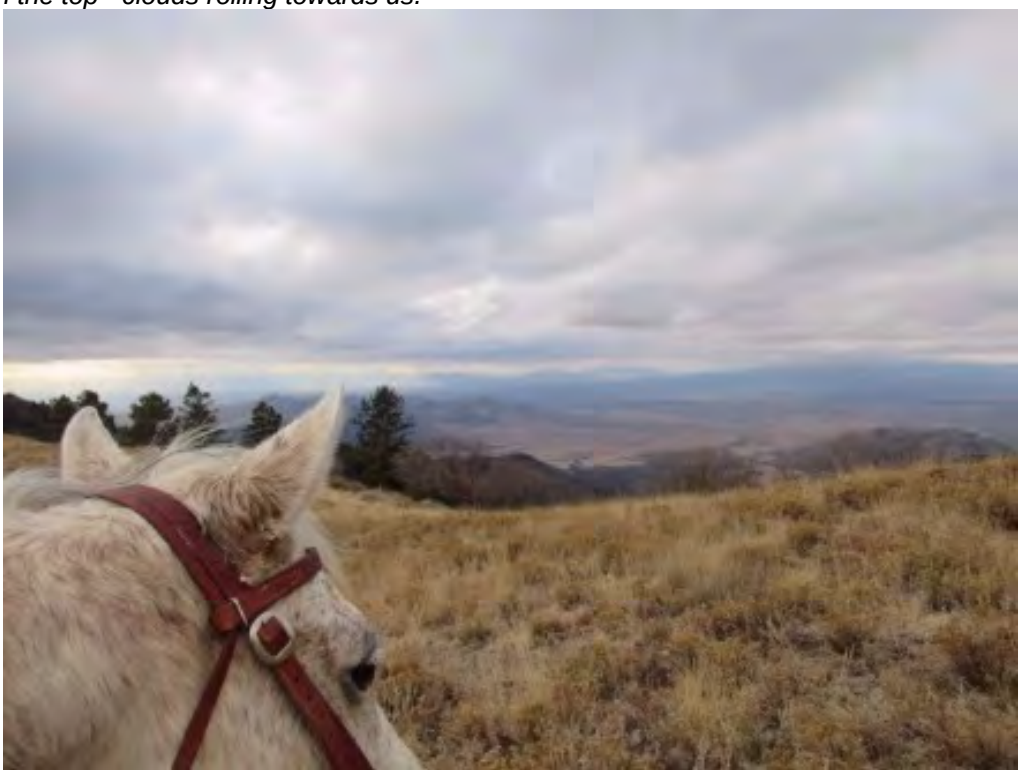
A Christmas tree among the bare oaks. “Oh, Tannenbaum . . .”

As I mentioned, Thunder keeps a faster pace - and I let him go. Lulu keeps up just fine, but appreciates a water break (at a little spring).

We keep climbing. In the distance, a weather front engulfs Sierra Blanca peak.



We reach the top - clouds rolling towards us.



Yet it is calm and still on the mountain. Silent.

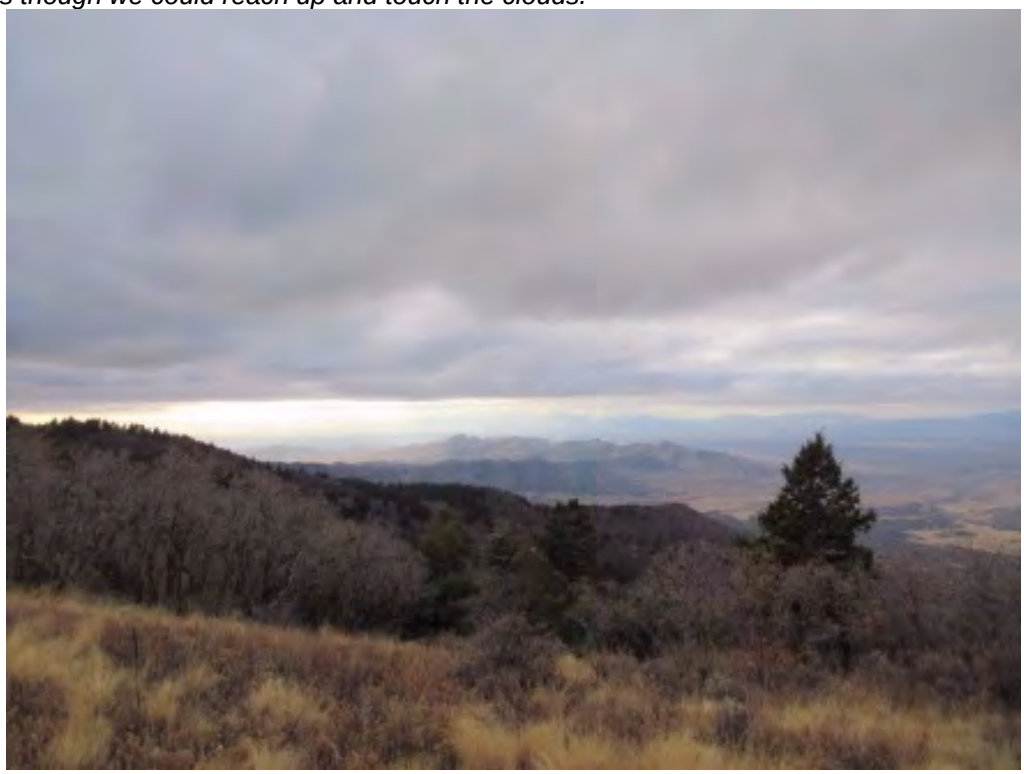
Thunder's sweaty coat tells of his exertion.

This is the high country we love.

Lulu is in her element.

In fact, we all are. This is a favorite spot - on a high knoll, with views in every direction.

It feels as though we could reach up and touch the clouds.



You really are closer to heaven here.

2017-12-18 - *Solo Flight*

We would like to linger - but the winter days are short, and the light is beginning to wane. Thunder has a quenching spring drink, and we head down.

Rides like this one have a simplicity. Whatever else may be going on in the world seems far, far away. Up here, it's just us, and the mountain - and the big sky above. We hope you feel it, too.
MM

2017-12-19 - *Passing Through*

Woke up to the first "heavy" frost of the season (still no snow . . . the skiers are frustrated, but it is nice for the horses) this morning . . . AND a crowd of elk by the main gate.

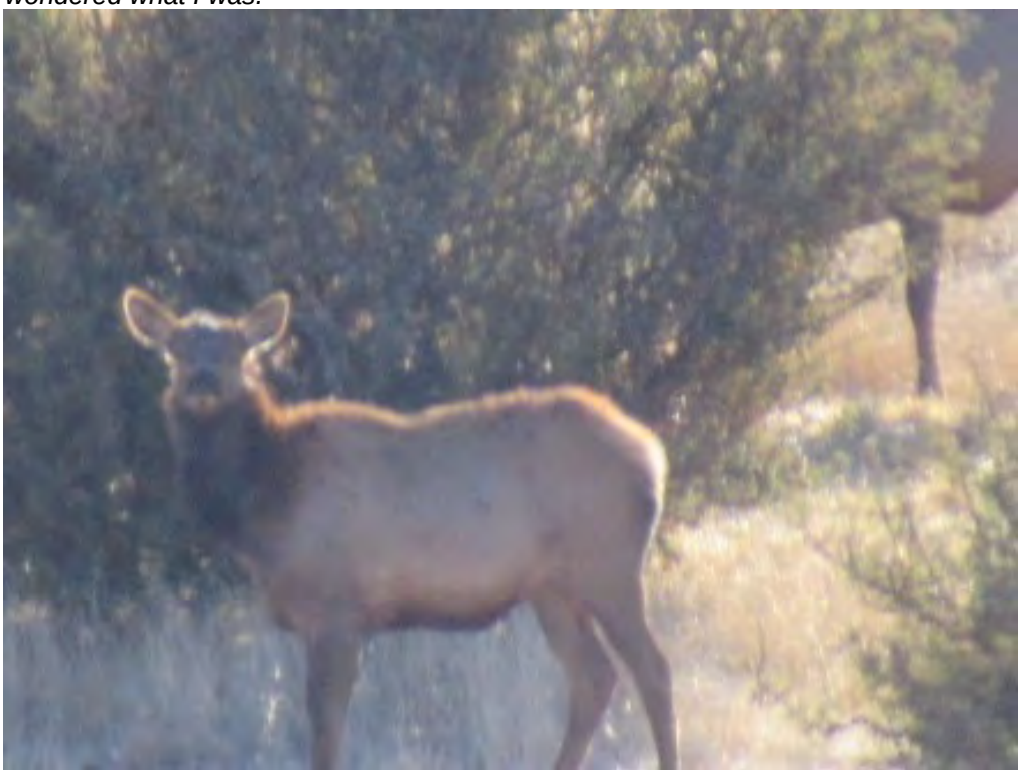
Here they come up the driveway.

Lots more, hanging out (they just sort of "levitate" right over the fences).

2017-12-19 - *Passing Through*

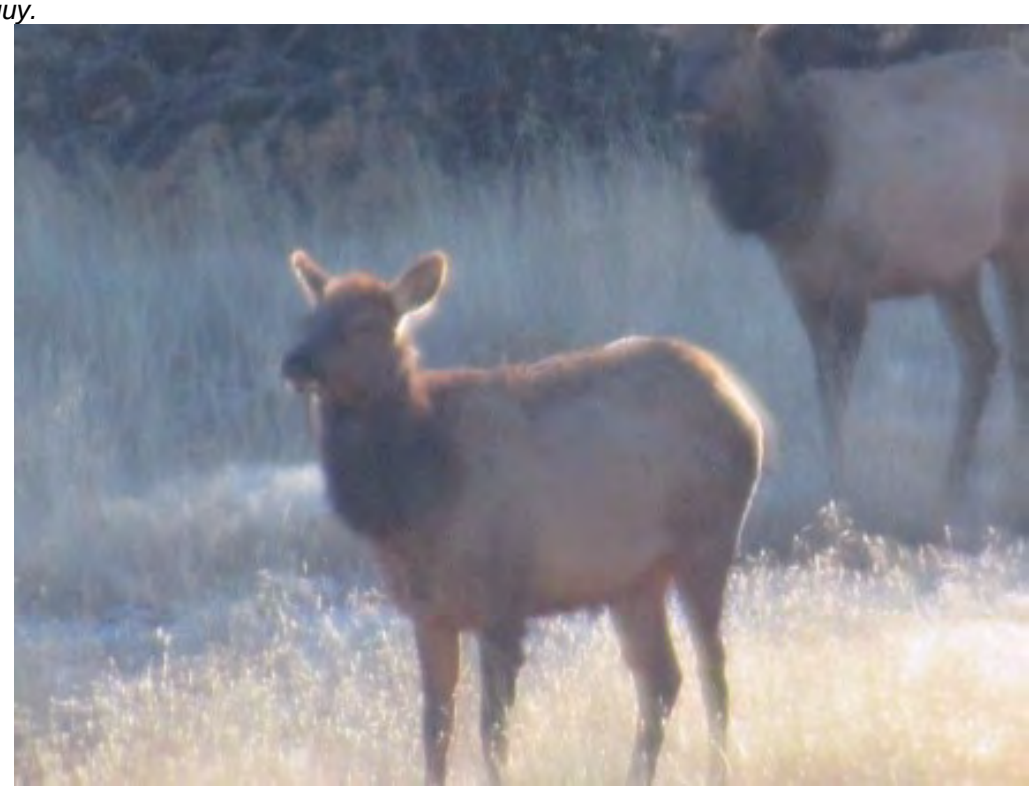
Everyone is busy.

This one wondered what I was.



2017-12-19 - *Passing Through*

A little guy.



2017-12-19 - *Passing Through*

Nice to see - and to share!
MM

End Journal Volume 14
Part 1 of 3

Please Follow Us Some More...

See all the journals.

JUST CLICK HERE!