

THE NOGAL JOURNALS

Volume Twenty-two

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

“You're bringing so much light into the world through your horses, cats, other animals -- and your own generous heart. Thanks for doing this wonderful service to us all... so much love you send!”

Gail Raborn



Come along and ride with us!

THE NOGAL JOURNALS

Volume XXII

Part 2 of 3

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for your active TABLE OF CONTENTS
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window).

Because of our big skies and open vistas, we 'see' rain differently than in most places.

We had a nice little rain last night - nothing to brag about, but every drop is appreciated. It didn't look like rain was likely again today . . .



. . . but by the time we left for an afternoon ride, it was clouding up fast.



As always, Thunder was keeping his eye on things. "I think we ought to move along . . ."



Belle was, too. ("My hair!")



Yeah.



Rain coming down in the distance.



More rain, reflecting the sunlight over Nogal Canyon.



We seemed to be in a dry spot, and the horses enjoyed their grazing as curtains of water deluged the Tularosa Basin below.



This is how we 'see' rain here.



"It's pretty cool!", exclaims Spanky.



Yes, it is . . . and always a blessing - especially this time of year.



That big, beautiful mess was headed toward us . . .



Ten minutes later, we were home - and greeted by a spectacular 'pink' rainbow at sunset. It was raining. Wow.



MM

Typically, this time of year is clear and dry (our monsoon rains usually start around the first week in July). But . . .

Those sure look like monsoon clouds.



A very cloudy sky for our ride.



Belle admires some desert verbena, glowing in the gray light.



They would enjoy some rain (we all would).



Thunder sees something of interest.



Recent rains have created some patches of green on the prairie.



"Oh, boy! Green grass!" (The sky is getting darker).



Of course, Spanky has some ideas of his own.



*He and Thunder commiserate, as Belle eavesdrops. "Maybe we should start heading home . . ."
"Good idea", Belle chimes in.*



It certainly was a good idea. "Whaddya mean?", asks an unsuspecting deer.



Then it hit!



Yessir, a real monsoon downpour.



Even some small hail.





Onyx doesn't like the sound of hail. "There, there, it's alright", comforts Mommie Cat.



It rained (more gently) off and on all afternoon.



But by sunset it was nearly over.



Oh, what a beautiful morning.



Confused summer-blooming red hot poker plants are starting to send up their torch-like flowers now.



It may have been unusual - but it sure was welcome.

MM

"For still there are so many things that I have never seen; in every wood in every spring there is a different green." J. R. R. Tolkien

It's true - always a different green. Maybe we appreciate that more in the dry Southwest.



Of course, the horses do - especially the sweet green grass along a stream . . .



... and the dappled shade beneath a leafy grove.



The arched branches are nature's cathedral.





Thunder has a reflective moment.



Belle concentrates on lunch.





"This is delicious!"



Everyone agrees.





A balm for the soul.





MM

2021-05-29 - *Unexpected Friendship*

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Sometimes, unexpected friendships happen here at the ranch.

As when our wild turkey decided to join the deer at breakfast. "Good morning!"



"Lovely day. Is that corn?"



Mind if I have some, too?"



"Uh - no, go right ahead."



"Thanks!"



"It's nice to have company at mealtimes."



"Well, yeah, I guess so . . ."



"Oh, look at that corn over there . . ."



"Dee-da-dee."



"Oh, yeah. This corn is much better . . ." "Huh?"



MM

With our mild four-season climate, each time of year has something different to offer - from white snowy winter days, to bright fall colors. But there is something special about the first green days of late spring (and Belle would add that it is an edible season).

There were some dramatic clouds - but we were willing to risk a possible downpour.



The horses were eager to explore . . .



. . . and sample the green treats. "Oh, boy, Thunder, isn't this tasty?" "Yeah, honey."





"You know Spanky, this might be my favorite time of year!"

"You say the same thing during every season, Belle - remember how you love the lush late-summer grass . . . and rolling in fresh snow" "Yeah, that's true . . ."



"... but this is - - just one more bite."



They meander along the stream, lost in their own thoughts.



It's a peaceful season.





One of the first wild roses begins its summer bloom . . .



... and here and there, the Indian paintbrushes are in flower.



Thunder thinks it would be fun to visit Petroglyph Rock again. "Come on - it's a short cut."



The ancient stone still offers its cryptic (to us) messages. Could the carvers imagine we would be here, one day . . .



"What does it all mean?", wonders Spanky.



So much effort - to be heard through the centuries. I wonder, too . . .



. . . and above is one of the most momentary beauties in nature - a magnificent, ephemeral thunder cloud.



MM

Our weather continues to be cooler and wetter than usual (can't complain about that).

We chose a sunny spell for a ride.



The cooler temps made Spanky a little friskier.



It's great to see him having fun like this.



Running full out, he and Thunder left Belle and me in the dust (literally).



These clouds can drop a lot of rain in short order.



This is the normally dry Salado Creek.



A brief cloudburst filled it to overflowing.



Clearing skies leave flowing water behind.



Nearby, a large expanse of meadow suddenly became a shallow lake.



Here's the same area just a week ago.





Even this pronghorn seems confused. "Where did that come from?"



MM

It started out as a pleasant outing along a quiet stream.



With lots of green grass . . .



... and beautiful skies.



But as we left the stream and headed into the valley ...





THEY suddenly appeared.



The little band of feral horses we have seen before. A stallion, his mare and two youngsters - a two-year-old and a one-year-old.



This time they were much more curious of us - especially the youngest one (note the protective father keeping an eye on things).



Awww . . .



The rest of the family observed the interaction. These situations can become nerve-wracking if anyone gets aggressive.



Fortunately, Thunder kept his cool. "He seems okay . . .", the family agreed (I kept Spanky and Belle with me).



In an unusual move, they followed us all the way back to the trailer and watched me load the horses. "Are they going to come, too?", wondered Spanky.



I explained that there wasn't room for them (it was tempting), and the wild ones watched with great interest as I fed my guys their treats.



In fact, although they are feral, one by one they approached to see what that 'treat thing' was all about (all except for the stallion, who remained aloof). And then the little one approached for a taste, right out of my hand.





Even mom decided it looked good.



It was a special moment. We left them to their solitude.

MM

After postponing our rides for a couple of days due to rain showers (without complaint!), we decided to take a chance.

Looked pretty good as we set out near Fort Stanton.



The gravel road was eroded in places due to recent thunderstorms (2" of rain in a short period). Then we came upon another rain-filled 'lake' which lapped the edge of the road (you can just see our truck and trailer, far right).



"Whew! We're glad we made it past THAT!"



Here's a view of the lake (actually, a usually dry stock tank) from high above.



Things are greening up - the horses enjoyed a snack before setting out on our ride.



We were surprised to find a full pond at the top of Elk Meadow trail. "Was this here before . . .?"





Uh-oh. Better keep an eye on those building clouds . . .



This is a long trail, winding through canyons and open country.



If you look closely, you will see the low remains of rock corrals (close up and in the distance). Were they built by Indians or homesteaders? Not sure. It was a long time ago . . .



The reward - a cool drink and a green lunch.



Even some sweet, fresh mint. Julep, anyone?



This was worth the wait.



An 'extended lunch break'.



Fortunately, those clouds stayed away from us (we could see rain coming down in the distance).



Thunder knows the way back to the trailer and enjoys a little run (then he patiently waited for us to catch up).



More rain, over the Capitan Mountains.



Things are starting to green up a bit.



At home, the happy hour crowd . . .



MM

The early rains have given us some green areas to enjoy.

A tasty buffet for the horses.



Thunder spots some old cattle pens - which from a distance resemble a fort on the prairie.



We move on . . .



Here comes Spanky, catching up after a quick snack break.



"Boy, Thunder, this sure is pretty!", says Belle.



It is.



Bet these cows think so, too.



"Where did you come from?", wonders this one.





The horses are given time to enjoy their grazing (it sure is nice that they don't run off!).





Sunset brings a close to a beautiful day.



Time to head home.



Those rains also encouraged the 'red hot poker' to bloom early . . .



. . . and the fragrant 'Scotch broom', too.



MM

Areas that received those early rains have shown their gratitude with a beautiful 'thank you'.

Less than five miles from home, we found a green oasis.



Belle, especially, was pleased.



"Don't bother me now - I'm busy."



"Ah, I'm in my zen!"



Of course, Spanky enjoyed the grass in his own way. "It ain't snow, but it sure is soft!"



Shared bliss.



It's a special world, here.



Where wild roses bloom . . .



. . . and cool water flows.



Belle takes a moment to appreciate the beauty of this Eden. "Golly . . ."



(We all did.)



"Spring reminds us that resilience is only a season away." *Angie Weiland-Crosby*



MM

About twice a month, Chile-the-barn-cat has an important job - to inspect all the feed as it comes into his barn!

"Hmmm . . ."



"Nope. Don't smell no mousies in this hay . . . gotta be on guard . . ."



"Okay, you can unload it now! (I still don't understand why they eat this stuff.)"



"I think you better hurry. My superior feline weather sense tells me it's going to rain." (None was forecast, and there was plenty of blue sky.)



Soon, there were some gathering clouds hovering overhead . . .



They grew and grew.



That's rain coming down, just over the hill.



Then, it hit us.



"Ahem . . . I thought so . . . Thanks, Chile!"



MM

Bonito Canyon, with its precious water, was known to the ancient Jornada Mogollon people who called it home a millennium ago. Much later - after the Civil War - pioneer families carried treasured sapling apple trees in the back of wagons over the treacherous miles from back east. They scratched out farms and planted orchards which still bear fruit today. Then, gold and silver were discovered, and mining camps and small towns appeared seemingly overnight. We sometimes come across the remains of a foundation, or a crumbling stone wall - but nothing more. Most of the canyon is public land now, and full of history and the memory of those who knew it so long ago.

Water always has been the canyon's most precious resource.



It makes for a splendid place to ride on a warm afternoon.



Along the way, we pass Blue Pond - and Belle enjoys a snack next to some wild pink roses.





Ahead lies one of those historic apple orchards.



Long abandoned, but still bearing fruit - the living legacy of those brave pioneers.



We cross little brooks.



As Thunder leads us along the canyon bottom . . .



Occasionally breaking into a joyful run.



We spot some wild turkeys under the trees.



Busy doing whatever turkeys do all day . . .



. . . and for the horses, another snack . . .



The boys lag behind, for "just one more mouthful . . ."



But they soon catch up. "Okay! We're coming!"



It's getting later.



Time to head home.



The history of this place surrounds us . . .



. . . and its timeless beauty.



MM

Some of the places we ride are small and feel intimate - like Blue Pond. Some, like the desert near Carrizozo, are immense - the horizon seemingly going on forever . . . and then there are the iconic places, which appear like they could perfectly fit onto a CinemaScope movie screen.

Such is the rolling country between Capitan and Fort Stanton.



It's the upper steppes of the Bonito Valley.



Traversed by seasonal streams . . .



. . . and gouged by steep-walled arroyos.



It makes for cinematic riding.



"Did you bring the popcorn?"



Riding here is the stuff of a John Wayne movie.



Without the menace of stage robbers or hostile Indians.



There is some drama, however - like this challenging descent. "Uh . . .", ponders Spanky.



"Okay, whose bright idea was this?", he wonders . . .



. . . but there is beauty, too - like this single yellow cactus flower.



Belle waits for us on the other side of an arroyo.



She found the best way across.



Thunder and Spanky make their own way. "You know, we should have stunt doubles for this..."



The long shot.



You can barely make out Thunder and Spanky in the distance.



. . . and here they come.



Spanky suggests we head back - it's getting close to supper time.



"How about some appetizers first?", proposes Belle.



"Okay, but I'm ready for my close-up."



MM

Now that it's officially summer (and the days are starting to get shorter -), late afternoon rides in the shade are a comfortable treat.

A sure sign of summer - fragrant 'Spanish' broom in full glory.



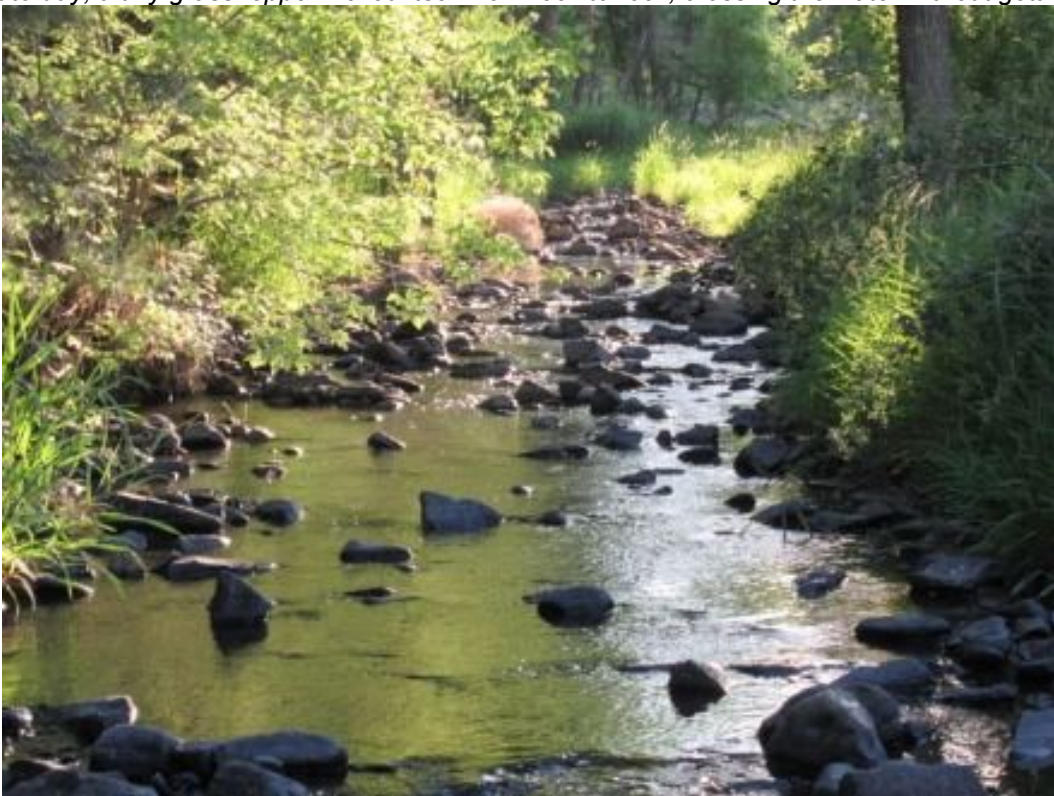
Another harbinger of pre-monsoon summer - green stream banks, and quietly murmuring water.



Thunder knows a good thing!



In the late day, a tiny grasshopper flicked itself from rock to rock, crossing the water without getting wet.

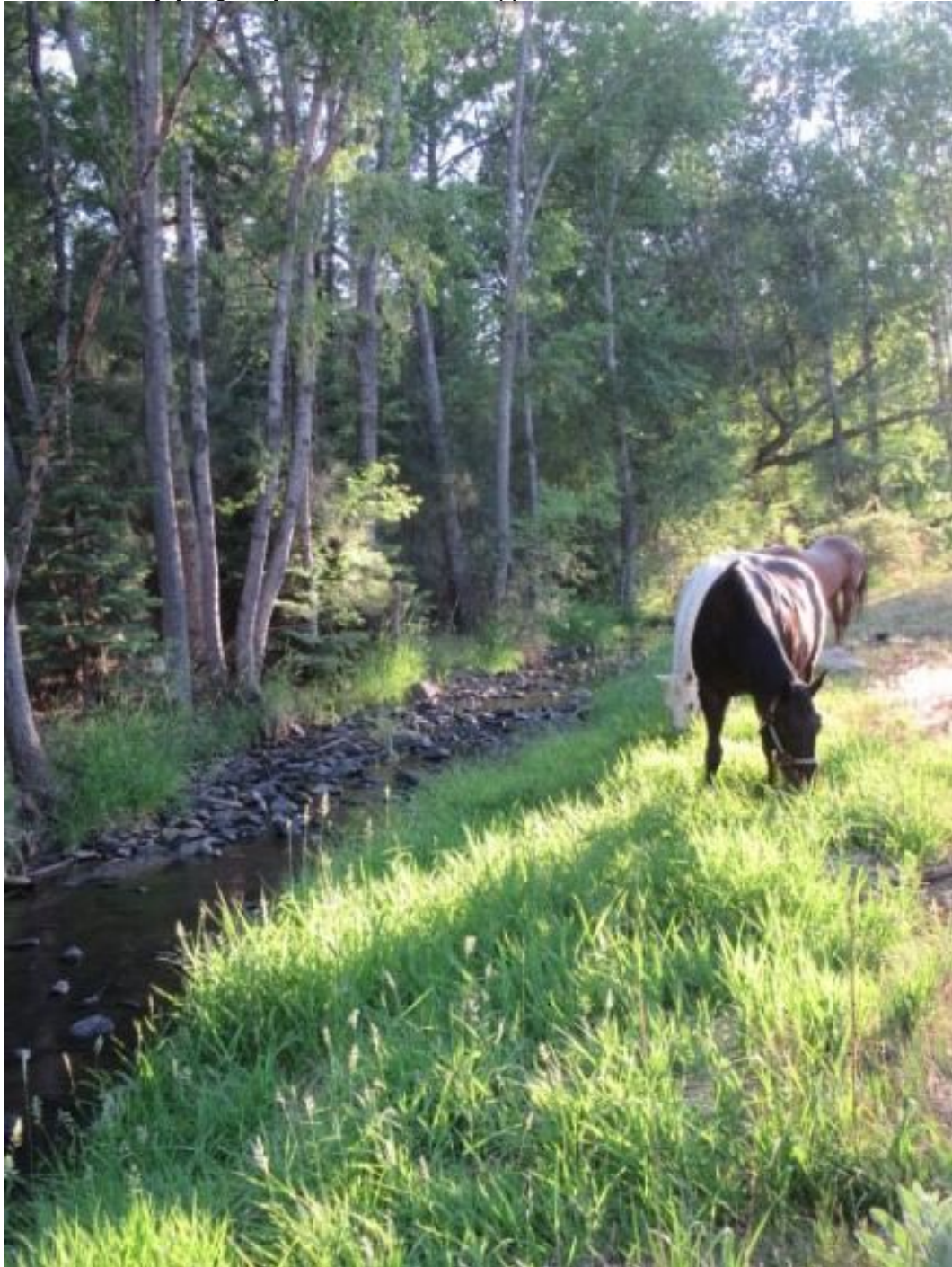




The waning sun slants beneath the forest canopy, just before it sets . . .



. . . and the horses enjoy a grassy treat before their supper.



*Golden light,
Infusing green leaves -
A kind of paradise,
On warm summer eves.*



MM

A warm summer day - perfect for bathing the horses (some compare it to washing a car, but Belle objects to that inference).

After a bath, most horses like to roll in the dirt - it's a little joke they play. So . . . I took them immediately to Fort Stanton, where the grassy parade ground at least gives them a cleaner surface. "Where's the dirt for my dust angels?"



"Foiled again", grumbles Thunder.



"Oh, well . . . it is nice and soft . . ." (Please note his fluffy white tail.)



Of course, there is a bonus with all that grass (and Belle felt especially pretty as she ate).



"I don't care if he did trick us - this is a good idea!", observed Spanky.



Naturally they caught the attention of picture takers.



A nice shady spot in front of the Officers' Quarters.



While they were snacking, I checked out the nifty new Quartermaster's Warehouse exhibit.



Lots of cool historic stuff.



Just as it would have been in the 1860's (even bolts of fabric for making uniforms).



Next door is a recreated barracks (which was tempting for a cool nap).



By then the horses were dry and ready for a little ride (Don't get dirty!) . . .



. . . and a cool drink.



"Yup, this turned out alright!"



MM

We've been doing quite a bit of entertaining lately.

The horses had a young elk friend over for drinks at dusk. "Hi!" "How's it going?"



"Good, good. Have a drink?"



"Don't mind if I do. Thanks!"



"Um, that's refreshing!"



Then . . . "Hi! I'm Belle (he's cute!)"



"Sorry, I gotta run."



"(This always happens . . .)"



"Good thing Thunder didn't see me flirting . . ."



"See ya!"



Oops. Is that his wife? "Oh." (Belle didn't know.) . . .



. . . and with a brand-new baby! "Hmmm . . . is that the hussy who was talking to my guy?"



"Hurry up and finish your supper, Junior."



Baby stays real close.



It trots right along, on its wobbly new legs. Awwwww.



"Come on, Junior!"



They left during a very dramatic sunset.



MM

Wilcox has always had a special connection to our deer. Even as a kitten, he would approach them without fear.

He was just four months old during this typical encounter. "Hi! I'm Wilcox. I'm a kitten, but someday I am going to be a big cat! Are you friendly?" "Huh?"



"Yeah, whatever.", said the deer, returning to eating the lawn . . .



. . . and so it continues today. In the evening, Wilcox enjoys spending time quietly watching his friends.



And they like to come up to him for a visit.





*As 'new' deer come along, they are always curious. "What's that?" "I don't know, but it looks friendly."
"You go first . . ."*



Wilcox just goes about his grooming routine. "He's licking his feet!" "Ewwwww . . . that's gross"



"Hey! What are you?"



"I'm a cat, and I am in charge here. If you get too close to me, I'll swat your nose! That's close enough."



"What's everyone looking at? Oh - him again . . ."



"I'll bet I can get him to move!" "I dare ya."



"Hey, cat. There's a big mouse right behind you!" (Yawn.)



"It's HUGE!"



"Hmmm. This cat is way cool."



Yeah.



He sure was a cute kitten (at eight weeks, with Mommie Cat) . . .



... and then there is Orca, a former feral who just wants to be a house cat. "Deer? No thanks. What's for dinner?"



MM

2021-06-28 - *Muddy Blessing*

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Our midsummer-like heatwave was forecast to be interrupted by an unseasonable week of cool temps and rain.

So, we decided to visit the high country, before roads became deep with mud. The kids were ready in a flash. "See those clouds? Let's go!"



Dry roads - for now.



Grass is dry and waiting for rain, but the trees and shrubs are happily green.



Looks like a bumper crop of delicious elderberries this year (you can see some developing berries, at the bottom of the photo below the flowers).



Up we climb.



Spanky stops to make some dusty angels (you can just spot him in the center of the photo).



"Boy, I can't wait until it is green up here!"



Still, they find some tasty things to chow down on. Are those rain clouds in the distance?



Happy horses.



We traverse a long, narrow, high ridge. Belle takes in the view below.



It's worth appreciating.



More snacking for them, as I explore.



"Hey, do you see those clouds?"



They're forming fast.



We head down the mountain in cool shade.



Along the way, Spanky spots an elk in the thick oaks. Alert horse.



We made it home before the sky opened up.



Gloomy and wet - but no one's complaining. Unlike our typical monsoon downpours, this steady rain is the result of a 'stalled front' and predicted to continue most of the week. A muddy blessing.



We did get a peek of the last 'super moon' of the year.



MM

2021-07-01 - *Rain & Other Unusual Things*

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After four consecutive days of steady rain (pretty much unheard of around here), the horses were ready for a ride somewhere dry. Problem is, the stalled weather front covers a huge region, so there's no easy way to escape the mud.

The lawn sure is enjoying the rain. Pastures are already greening up. (The mower is ready.)



Lots of water at times.



2021-07-01 - Rain & Other Unusual Things

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The horses had a pow-wow and decided we should give the desert down by Carrizozo a try. "Even if it's raining there, at least the sandy ground won't be as muddy as here", reasoned Belle. Mommie Cat was not convinced. "Are you sure you want to go out in this?", she fretted. ("But if you do go, would you please take Onyx and get her off my back!")



We waited for a little break in the deluge, and then took off. It didn't look promising on the road down.



But a few miles south of Carrizozo we discovered a dry spot! "Oh, boy! Hurry up, let's go!", encouraged Thunder.



Off we went. The soil was still damp, so we must have just missed the rain here (we can see it coming down in the distance).



Really dark clouds threatened . . .



But they allowed us to pass without a drop.



And occasionally, the sun would come out. What a treat!



Spanky took advantage - making some soft sand angels.



We made sure there was an escape route from the arroyos, just in case.



Then something special. We spotted these cool little guys - Red Velvet Mites, or 'rain bugs'. They live underground until significant rain brings them to the surface. Completely harmless to humans, animals, and plants, they feast mostly on termites and grasshoppers brought out by the rain.



They have some really interesting characteristics. When conditions are right, they come out of their underground burrows to eat, and engage in a remarkable mating ritual.

"The male mite builds a 'love garden' of small twigs and grass stems. He deposits sperm packets in bubble-like dollops on the twigs. Then he goes out and lays a trail of silken fibers leading to the 'garden'. He waits for a female mite to happen by and be charmed by the silken trail. If the trail is not enough to entice the female to enter the bower [it would seem wearing a bright red Beany Baby suit would get him noticed!], he does a special little dance. When she is convinced that he is a suitable mate, the female mite follows the silken trail to the 'garden'. There, she sits on one of the bubbles and fertilizes her eggs. She soon lays the eggs in the soil. When the eggs hatch, the tiny larvae begin to feed on small insects in the soil." *Texas Master Naturalist*



After that fascinating encounter, we had another surprise. Thunder was in the lead when we heard a strange noise - kind of like a hose running on concrete.



"What the heck!", exclaimed Thunder. A cloudburst miles away had forced a slow-moving stream of rainwater down the arroyo towards us.



2021-07-01 - *Rain & Other Unusual Things*

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It was only a few inches deep, but we decided not to ride through the mud (that's what we came here to escape) and rode in front of it as we climbed to higher ground.



"That was cool!" said Spanky.



We still had one more usually dry stream to cross. Water is always special in the desert.



2021-07-01 - *Rain & Other Unusual Things*

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While we were on our ride, the rain had continued to fall on our mountain. It rained all the way home.



2021-07-01 - *Rain & Other Unusual Things*

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This morning gave us a beautiful little break . . . but not for long. More rain is predicted daily into next week.



MM

2021-07-05 - Independence Day Holiday

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The 4th of July holiday is a big deal around here (both ABC News and Yahoo Travel list Capitan, New Mexico as among the top 10 small towns to celebrate it). It's a patriotic community, and every flag is waving. There's a parade, lots of rodeos and events, and the monsoon rains always make it interesting.

As Belle left for the parade, her boys saw her off - "You look really pretty!" - "Don't talk to strangers!".



She was all dolled up, with flowers in her hair . . .



". . . but there are no strangers here!" She was right - lots of folks greeted her by name.



It was a beautiful morning for the parade.



Then, in traditional fashion, the monsoon rains arrived in time for the festivities.



It would be sunny and dry at the afternoon rodeo . . .





. . . and then it would open up and douse us.



Quickly turning the arena into a muddy mess.



This was during the youth ranch rodeo, where teams of youngsters compete in events based on actual ranch work.



One of the contests requires the kids to remove their saddles, and then lead their horses into a pen. This little feller managed to get the saddle off, but he was trying hard not to drop it into the mud.



Always, the flag stood in honor.



Noble symbol of our great country, for which much has been sacrificed.



The "Star Spangled Banner" is played beautifully by a young fiddler on horseback, making her dad proud and bringing tears to many eyes - as the audience sang along. The real deal.



During the various rodeos over four days and nights, the cowboys generally got the short end of the stick.



"There's mud in your eye!", taunts the bronc.



2021-07-05 - Independence Day Holiday

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Fourth of July rodeos seem timeless. Rodeo-type competitions have been around as long as men (and women) have ridden horses . . . but on July 4, 1888, the first professional rodeo was held in Prescott, Arizona, when a group of merchants and businessmen inaugurated a formalized 'cowboy tournament' and offered cash prizes. Capitan's 'Smokey Bear Stampede' rodeo is the nation's largest open rodeo weekend.



In this ranching land, it's a great family tradition - generation after generation.





Thanks for joining us! God bless America.

MM

After all the fun 4th of July hoopla, it was good to have some quiet time in the middle of nowhere.

We head out of town a bit, along the normally dry Salado Creek.



"Wow!", thinks Spanky, "It sure is green!"



Thunder enjoys grazing next to some early summer flowers.



Then, off we go.



Thunder knows where we are headed.



During some brief monsoon downpours, Salado Creek rose to flood levels - now it's back to a nice meandering stream.



Belle has a dainty sip along a rocky offshoot - avoiding the mud. "I just had a manicure for the parade"



The boys are excited about all the fresh grass, and lag behind. WAY behind. They don't even show up in this photo (they're on the other side of the creek, back in the trees) . . .



. . . but here they come!



Spanky doesn't like to get too far from his Belle. "Oh-oh - better catch up!"



He crosses the water at a gallop. He managed to stay ahead of Thunder, who stopped for one more bite.



Thunder races too. They love to put on the speed.



"Did you miss us, Belle?" She knows how to handle him. "Oh, were you gone? I hadn't noticed . . . is that clover over here? . . ."



Yup, more water than usual - still silty from the earlier torrent.



In the distance, a 'new' lake appears. Salado reservoir, a rarely needed flood control measure is filling up.



Time for a leisurely graze.



Some monsoon rain is coming down over the mountains to the south.



Spanky views the reservoir. "Hmmm . . . was that here before . . . ?"



We're sure grateful for the water . . .



. . . and for the peace.



MM

When a day is forecast for no rain during monsoon season, the high country always beckons.

Clear skies during morning chores seem promising.



A few clouds over the mountain - it looks like we will be okay.



The lower streams are running strong again, even eroding the sandy banks . . .



. . . and all along the trail, every little brook and rivulet runs clear and cool - which is much appreciated by the horses on a sunny day.



Ah, summertime in the forest.



A little spring wells up among vines.



Lots of flowers along the way.



"These are pretty! (But they taste terrible!)", says Belle as she trots along in the wooded shade.



At the top of the mountain, Spanky does his customary grass angels.



Skies to the west are hazy with warmer air. The horses are alert - we are surrounded by several mother elk and their very noisy babies making their bird-like calls.



Thunder spots some in the Gambel oaks below.



They are too fast for me, and I only get blurry shots of the spotted fawns dashing for cover.



Thunder checks out a muddy 'elk wallow', where the big animals come to drink and bathe in the wilderness.



A horsey conference. "Sure is a beautiful day!" . . . "Yeah, and lots of grass." . . . "It was nice of us to bring him along, too."



Then a special treat - as we traverse an alpine meadow . . .



A bobcat ambles along - and pauses . . .



. . . and then plops down in the grass to watch us. Maybe he's waiting to see if we'll spook up some lunch. "A mouse would be nice . . ."



In the waning light, the rest of our ride is peaceful and serene - water frequently crossing the trail.



Or pooling as though created by a landscape designer.



Tiny waterfalls coursing between stones.



Belle is happy. "Munch, munch. Gee, it's getting close to supper time!"



The soothing sound of water gently cascading in the soft illumination of dusk.



MM

The North American Monsoon is an annual weather phenomenon caused by the seasonal flow of warm, moist air from the south. As the air moves north, some cooling occurs, and the moisture condenses into thunderstorms and rain. Many factors can determine the strength and location of each year's monsoon season in New Mexico. At our proximity to the Sacramento Mountains, the rain can be soft and gentle - or come in heavy torrents.

Typical monsoon clouds form over the mountains to our west - they continue to grow as the afternoon warms up, and ground evaporation accelerates. Throughout the Southwest, this can be a frequent occurrence from July through September.



Then 'boom!' - a deluge. Most of the rain is at higher elevations on the mountain, which then flows down our usually dry Cherry Creek (which normally runs underground) right through the ranch.



This abundant water replenishes wells and irrigates the pastures (we never complain about the mud!).



Spanky watches from the barn's protection. "I'm not going out in THAT!"



Good thing the barn is on high ground!



Water courses by the lower stock tank.



It's not unusual to receive an inch or more of rain during a storm like this one.



Fortunately, our driveway holds up well under the flood.



Among the benefits, is an almost instant greening up of the countryside.



We're on a late afternoon ride near Fort Stanton. The sky is hazy with lingering monsoon moisture.



Dry rolling hills have been transformed. "Wow!", enthuses Belle over all the new grass.



Thunder likes to run on the soft carpet.



The horses are tempted along the trail. "Just a quick bite . . ."



Wildflowers are in bloom.



Ponds - known as 'dirt tanks' around here - spring up overnight. You can see a new one in the distance beyond Spanky.



Another new pond in an isolated valley.



Belle enjoys a snack near yet another one. This water will slowly drain into the aquifer (note the stranded tree).



Later, the setting sunlight sparkles on the surface.



So grateful . . .
MM

For the epic 1963 film "How The West Was Won", Sammy Cahn wrote lyrics for the traditional "Greensleeves" melody:

*"Away, away, come away with me.
Where the grass grows wild,
And the wind blows free."*

Some rides take us to just such places. Thunder checks it out.



*"Come, come, there's a wondrous land,
For the hopeful heart,
For the willing hand."*

It is a wondrous land. A stock tank (pond) offers refreshment for cattle and wildlife.



We cherish this grand country.





Open to explore.



With monsoon rains, arroyo bottoms have become rivers of grass.



*"Away, away, come away with me,
And I'll build you a home in the meadow."*

There was a 'home in the meadow' here once. Hand-set foundation stones are all that remain of this old homestead. It's easy to forget what guts and effort it took to establish a life here, back then.



*"The stars, the stars,
Oh, how bright they'll shine,
On that home we will build in the meadow."*

Oh, what a setting.



Ahhh . . .





From the film's title song:

"Nothing stopped them, no wind nor rain nor sun.

Side by side these pioneers from every land,

All pulled together - that's how the West was won.

Dream by dream, they built a nation from this land.

Forged in freedom for every mother's son.

Here is the beautiful, the promised land."



The film's famous final epilogue (narrated by Spencer Tracy):

"The West that was won by its pioneers, settlers, adventurers . . . it is theirs forever, for they left tracks in history that will never be eroded by wind or rain - never plowed by tractors, never buried in a compost of events. Out of the hard simplicity of their lives, out of their vitality, of their hopes and sorrows grew legends of courage and pride to inspire their children - and their children's children.

All the heritage of a people free to dream, free to act, free to mold their own destiny."



May we be inspired by this, today.

MM

Song montage (image compressed from the original Cinerama extreme widescreen):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ey3jM5qXh9Y>

There's an old saying that 'good fences make good neighbors'. Not sure how that applies here, as our neighbors jump right over!

It doesn't matter when they are as cool as this guy. He's growing a big rack of antlers.



Sometimes our neighbors do stay on 'their' side of the fence.



Thunder wonders if the grass is greener over there?"



This elk lounges in the National Forest as Spanky grazes at home.



Nothing distracts Belle from her snacking.



Nothing.



These trespassers join Spanky on our property.



He doesn't mind.



They kinda look like distant relatives (they aren't).



"Could we get some more corn over here? Oh, and some apples would be nice . . ."



Sure!



MM

End Journal Part 2 of 3

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