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Hello folks!

Well it's certainly going to be a white Christmas for us here at the ranch! In taking the pooch out for a walk this afternoon the snow was up to *his* belly and *my* knees in most places. It sure is pretty. Sharon, a guest of ours this week told me that it felt like she had just stepped out of reality and walked into a Christmas card. Yep, it's that gorgeous...see?



There's Nate bringing in the cattle on our tried and true cowhorse, Rascal



This was our largest winter week so far with seven guest total, plus the crew in the indoor arena. We had an array of riders with vastly different skill levels.

Maggie, Al, Thomas and Franziska have been attending Buck clinics for years and wanted some work on the hackamore and two-rein levels. Sharon and Emilie are repeat guests and came to expand on the horsemanship they worked on last time at the ranch. Lastly, Diane came as a complete novice to accompany her friend Sharon—and as Roby predicted early on, Diane had some of the best equitation

of the week! Sometimes it pays to know less when you come into riding horses if you've got good teachers. It means you don't have to unlearn bad habits while getting a handle on new ones!

Shayne kept everyone busy, as he always does. The larger amount of guests we had made it all the more exciting and challenging. With the exercises he comes up with for us to do, we learn to ride REALLY accurately. Each person is accountable. You need to be able to work with your horse as well as be aware of each rider around you and make adjustments as necessary (slow to a trot, leg yield over, etc.)

I've been fortunate enough to ride my mare during this time; as overall, she's fairly easy on my shoulder. One thing I learned from her this week, (via Shayne's explanation) was that braces may come out in layers in a horse. Particularly a horse with a lot of baggage. You pull back one layer and work through it, then you pull back another layer and the horse gives you a whole new set of things to work on. And in my case...maybe some of yours—getting to the core involves going back to the basics.

So, we all worked on basic and advanced moves with our horses this week. Nathan brought in the cattle for the group on Thursday and Friday and just about everyone was swinging a loop, practicing their breakaway roping on the steers!

Nathan has really got the heart to learn and he takes his job seriously. He has shown to be an AMAZING farrier for us! He spends lots of time with each horse, studying its history, keeping records and trimming or shoeing it as each horse needs. Overall, the horses are as sound as they've been.



The ponies are headed in!

Thankfully, the Apocalypse didn't happen yesterday and we were able to celebrate Nate's birthday last night. Dave made lasagna and yummy garlic bread with a delicious plate of fresh cinnamon rolls for dessert for the occasion.

The boys cut us a Christmas tree this year to put into the dining room, and between Erin, Stephanie and Emilie, the tree and the room were decorated in holiday cheer. We received several Christmas cards

from many of you as well! It's so nice to be thought of, and to be able to see how you all are doing and how many of your families are growing! We're so grateful to be able to call you all our friends.



There's the growing wreath of Christmas cards
and our beautiful tree!



Fred Foster said, "The only thing you get to keep in this life is what you gave away." How true and how season appropriate.

From all of us at McGinnis to all of you who are reading this, we hope you have a very Merry Christmas filled with loved ones, a nice meal for your belly and the feel of joy, peace and gratitude all around you.

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