winnowed for WORK SONG and MISS YOU 10 March '08
for Dede Withrow's particular anthem of the Two was a lament.

staying on and on in the sheep business. According to hes, sheep and the humans who had anything to do with them would have shown Job true affliction. This one time, the herder had lost the band and was sitting in the wagon quivering that the bear were
gonna get him, so I fired him and then was so hard up for a new herder that I hired a guy right off the street there in Gros Ventre. Never'd herded sheep before, but said he was game to. Well, he must have stood six-six or so, about big enough to eat hay, and I guess I figured that if nothing else he might be good bear-wrestling material. So we got up there onto the range and I happened to look down and see he was wearing oxfords. "Where's your other shoes?" I say. "Got none," he says. I told him to go off along the mountainside and look for the sheep while I rode up to try on top of the reef. Of course it started raining, and fog and cold and miserable. No sheep, any goddamnwhere.

I'd been up there most of the afternoon when all at once my horse stopped dead. Couldn't get him to move. So I climbed off and walked ahead about fifteen or twenty feet to take a look, and here there was a cliff that dropped off about eight hundred feet, right down the north end of the reef onto Billy Creek. If the horse hadn't had good sense we'd've dove right off that. So that was enough hunting sheep for that day, and when I got back to the wagon the big guy was in there feeding his face and he says, "I'm gonna have to have new shoes."

Walking in those rocks up there had just tore those oxfords all to hell. So, okay, I told him I'd go to town in the morning and bring him out some damn shoes. "What size do you take?" "Thirteens," he says. Drove into Gros Ventre first thing the next morning, and do you think there was a shoe in the whole damn town that big? I ended up going all the way to Conrad to get a pair. Got back up onto the range about noon, the guy was sitting in the wagon waiting and eating
up the groceries. So I had this gonna-be herder, with a pair of shoes I'd had to buy him out of my own pocket as an advance on his wages, if he ever stuck with the job long enough to earn that much wages, and still no sheep. So I sent him off around the mountainside the other way from yesterday, and I started working the timber on horseback, and of course here comes the rain again, harder and colder than ever. I kept saying to myself, "This is the end of the sheep business for me. If I ever find those damn sheep this time, this is it." About four hours of that and I finally came onto the sheep. So I got the big guy over there and told him, "All right, now you got something to herd, push the sonsabitches back down toward camp," and I rode down to the wagon to try dry out. I remember standing in there over the stove, all my clothes draped around trying to get some of the water out of them, standing there with goosebumps all over me and saying, "This is it. This does it. I am going to get out of the sonofabitching sheep business." That was about fifteen years ago and yet here I am, still in the sonofabitching sheep business. God, what a man puts himself through.
Busby brothers, Bob and Kenny, grew up in Helena, and when they were big enough to be of any help their uncle, Guy Busby, imported them out here. In about the time he bought his first car, a Model T, he figured it was a wonderful advance, you know. Any time he wanted, now he could scoot in to Gros Ventre and get liquored up. The only thing was, going home there were two bobwire gates between the county road and the ranch, and the old bugger'd be so lit up he couldn't be bothered to stop and open them. Just hit the sonsofguns with that Model T and break them down, and drive on through. And it'd be chore the next morning to have to go out and fix those damn gates up. I finally said to each other, "You know, Kenny, you boys..."

Old Guy gave out before the word's hiskey did — some say the notion of Prohibition sent his blood pressure soaring beyond what the human body can stand...
Yet whichever west it is, it an edge of older America; a cabin to the grid of streets.

There is this, too: an edge can be a brink, and many of us use the west that way. Always have. (Turner’s recitation, which I—

--

Could sit up in the middle of the night and repeat--

That he left out conquistadors, merchant seamen, ladies of the evening, and sundry others does not...)

Commercial, social, even physical; the west even yet has enough near-wilderness that a person can make a brink-like experience of it. Carol and I had ours a few summers ago in the B Marshall: had not been dined on by grizzlies, had not been eluded by the trout of Strawberry Creek, had not lost our heads or other portions of the anatomy when a sleetstorm hit us on the highest pass...
A unique program teaching blind people cross-country skiing will be held in Woodstock, Vermont this coming winter. From January 30 through February 6, 1977, blind people from throughout the United States and Canada will be joined by a contingent of blind skiers from Norway and Sweden in the third annual SKI FOR LIGHT.

Participants in the 1976 SKI FOR LIGHT in Lakeville, Minnesota and the 1975 program in Frisco, Colorado enjoyed the one-to-one aspect of the program; each skier is assigned a qualified instructor who teaches him or her the easy technique of cross-country skiing. From a parallel track, the instructor verbally guides the blind skier through the 5 kilometer (3 mile) course. According to the Norwegians, who developed instruction methods and made the sport accessible to the blind fifteen years ago, "if you can walk, you can learn ski touring."

On Friday, February 4, there will be a cross-country skiing trip in the wooded hills around Woodstock. Equipped with knapsacks with bag lunches, the blind skiers and their guides will spend a few hours skiing at a leisurely pace. At intervals, naturalists will speak on the local environment.

(more)
The morning sun mothering the new grass, and then by mid-afternoon veils of rain...
Melander and Braaf took turns at casual glances down the shoreline to Karlsson's choice. True, the canoe had so sprightly a look that it seemed only to be awaiting the right word of magic before flying off upward. But Melander believed he too knew something of canoes from having paddled a number of times with Kolosh crews to the fishing grounds off the western shorefront of New Sound. Indeed, it can be realized now that those journeys were first filaments in the spinning of his decision that sevenyeardom could be fled by water. The fishing canoes were half again the length of this keen-beaked version singled out by Karlsson, and this question of size balked Melander.

Asked his opinion, Braaf mumbled that any canoe was smaller than he preferred.

Karlsson maintained that his nominee had all the capacity they needed. What did Melander have in mind, to stuff the craft like a sausage?

Melander could not resist asking Karlsson if he was arguing that his wondrous canoe was bigger on the inside than on the out.

No, goddamn Melander's tongue, Karlsson retorted, it simply was a matter of waterworthiness, this canoe would amply carry their cache of supplies and be livelier to steer than a larger canoe and less weight to propel...
The western opinion that generally greeted an eastern-born ranger was that he didn't know his elbow from his other.

[Document text is unclear or partially visible.]
astoundingly in North America as well. The gray-gowned wee queen of England reigned over Ojibways and Athapascans and Bella Coolas, merchants of Moscow and Irkutsk were provided fortunes by bales of Alaskan furs, the United States took unto itself a second broad oceanfront.

But all this atlas of order rested on the fact that it requires acceptance, a faith of seeing and saying, "Ah yes, that is the Great Dipper, and here Pegasus comes flying, and there sits shining Andromeda, exactly so," to make constellations real. So that what the makers of any imperial configuration always had to be most wary of was minds which happened not to be of stellar allegiance.

In the galaxy of frontier enclaves sparked into creation by imperialism, New Archangel was a mapdot unlike any other. Simultaneously a far-north backwater port and capital of more than half a million square miles, a greater territory than France and Spain and England and Ireland combined, the settlement ran on Russian capacities for hard labor and doggedness, and was kept from running any better than it did by Russian penchants for muddle and infighting. New Archangel here fifty years after its founding still stood forth in the image of its progenitor, the stumpy and tenacious Baranov, first governor of Russian America and contriver of the Russian-American Company’s system of fur-gathering. It was said of Baranov, like Napoleon, that he was a little great man, and he it was who in 1791 began to
It was a story I thought

The story I think is too trim to be true, but it was told that late in life 00 married a religious woman who was opposed to drink, pork and tobacco, and the marriage lasted until the first time 00 went to town for groceries and came home drunk, with a caddy of chewing tobacco under one arm and a slab of bacon under the other.
The isolation had bent some of these people, as a prevailing wind will hunch a tree. Cormac 00 would have nothing to do with banks; it was theorized that whatever money he had was planted around his place in Mason jars. ("Although," as my father pointed out, "who's to say he's not just smarter about banks than the rest of us.")

George and Mag Enrich had another of these shirt-tail spreads, living on terms no one else could savvy. Mag did about 95% of the talking for the two of them. Whatever was going on in George's head got translated by Mag: "George figured we'd try lumber on that roof that keeps blowing off..." as if he were dead and being recalled. That might have been habit.

she'd been a widow when she married with Mag, for George was her second husband. George, and her first husband, Tom Felton, she referred to as "the other one."
I carry that in my head each time I ride past Breed Butte. Not all that much of a load, I suppose, but it adds up over time.

MORE TO COME

A spring seeped from under a small brow of the butte, like a weeping eye. But Rob wouldn't hear of building up there by it; the only site that would do for him was a hundred paces below that, a flat shelf of the butteside.

"You'll carry water every day of your life, is that the plan?"

"There'll be a rainbarrel at each corner of the house, to help."

"They'd better be the size of brewery vats."

"Besides, you'll see the day when water runs in a pipe from that spring into the house."

MORE TO COME.

I ran a finger around the inside leather of my hat, wiping the sweat out.
Nearby there was a spring under a small brow of bank, like a weeping eye. I asked Rob, "You're ready to carry water from there every day of your life?"

"You'll see the day I'm piping it direct into the house. And soon."

"You'll eat a lot of wind up here," Ninian warned.

Rob laughed. "Is there somewhere in this country that a man wouldn't have wind in his teeth?"

Even while we three stood talking, the wind was ruffling the tall grass of the valley bottom.
Gros Ventre does not seem to me the town it was, though that may say as much about me as about the town. The Sedgwick House is no longer a hotel; the cafe still exists, although it's called a supper club now, and the senior citizens club has part of the rest of it, and the historical society another part, and the rest just rambles empty, I guess waiting for further groups to be invented. The Lunchery is

when a deep-fryer full long since vanished--immolated in a grease of grease caught

of fire, the most fitting apt departures. You can still go into the Medicine Lodge or the Double Eagle...

A young fellow who had worked under Mel Ruder at the Hungry Horse News now runs the Gleaner, and while he has spiffed the paper up with pictures

I do miss the style of Bill Reinking.
night's shelter. And where one of them is to die.

Their escape from Sitka had been Melander's plan. 

Melander might, under different policy, have earned his way up the ranks of the Russian-American Company like a little boy up a schooner's rigging; become a valued apparatchik of the Tsar's Alaskan enterprise in the manner, let us say, that elsewhere along the fur frontiers of north-east North America occasional young Scotsmen of promise were let to fashion themselves into field captains of the Hudson's Bay Company, learning to lead brigades of trappers and traders, keep the native tribes cowed or in collaboration, deliver a reliable 15 per cent profit season upon season to London and, not incidentally, to hold those far spans of map not only in the name of their corporate employers but for the British crown -- which underlay the company's charter terms like a watermark. But maybe is only maybe, and on the broad map of midnineteenth-century empires Alaska is apart from the Hudson's Bay dominion across Canada-- sharply-- is in fact a great crown tipp'd as if deliberately, in the direction of Moscow rather than London. The fact enough is that Melander despised the life he and the other Swedes found themselves in at Sitka
(During his Missoula year my father had known a logger called Peerless Peterson--called that not because he was without peer as a logger but because he never was without that particular chaw of tobacco.)
"I'll tell you another thing while I'm at it, Jick," and I was all too sure she would. Only one other person was anywhere in the same race with Maria when it came to prescribing behavior for me and I wasn't going to hear from that one ever again. Maria seemed determined to take up the slack right here and now: "You can't keep on the way you've been. Sitting around like your tail is caught in a crack—that's not the usual you. You're going to have to roust so yourself out into life again sometime or other, and here's a chance just being handed to you, so why not glam onto it?" She stopped just long enough to see if any of it was registering on me. Then here it
came again: "You've got to go with me on this, Jick."

I'd already told her no. Three times, N-O. Actually I guess it must have been four, because Maria never even starts to listen until you say it the third time.

"Sitting sounds good enough to me," I tried on her. "The world can use more people who stay sat."

All that got me was the remark that I might as well sit behind a steering wheel where I'd be doing somebody some good, instead of holing up in my own living room like a blind badger. How could I make her savvy it? Everything had changed six months ago, none of it for the better.
Maria, my now and forever daughter, and Riley Wright, my goddamn ex-son-in-law.

"The newspaper will pay for it all."

"Free stuff is generally overpriced."

Maria tackles him about the GV house. Jick responds:

"Everybody's got to be someplace, don't they?"

The hell of it was, she was right considerably more than half the time.

She'd just given me a big blast about....

When Maria got going, you might just as well...

She always did know how to work a person over with those grey eyes of hers,...

Haven't I just spent a whole day watching a video again?

How many ways do I have to say it:

I half expected another pinch. Greg Old Rancher Contemplated, but the was none.

Cool, that grin. He brought back everything I was missing, some man's desire.
Here's the excerpt I talked to you about on the phone the other day. I've trimmed it as hard as I can, down to what I think is about 2100 words. A couple of points about any artwork you might want to use with this: the bull involved in the bull-riding is not a Brahma as would be the case in a rodeo today, but an ordinary bull.
"My name's Shannon," said the girl. "Me, I'm Peter," the boy bubbled.

"Oh dear, I'm called Jack.

"Where're you from?" she carefully putting her cap in chair

"Gros Ventre. How about yourself?"

"Judith Gap. Do you know where that is?" She was like a lank of [X] lariat standing up right. At that age Mariah had been the same, slender and supple as a willow, just before the topography of womanhood to form itself. [X] began. Changeling. [X] Shannon and Peter had to know which rig was mine, and they confided that they were traveling with their grandparents and that their [X] granddad was uptown getting transmission work done because the trailer home he was pulling was too much for his 3/4 ton pickup—"He needs to have a tonner," Petey said expertly.

Shannon swam like a blond minnow, Petey dogpaddled with an energy that would have lit up a ball building.

"Let's do funny dives," Shannon decreed to Petey. She of course went first. "I'm a horse," she announced, tossing her ponytail and making prancing motions with her hands and with a whinny, jumping into the deep end of the pool with a formidable splat!

"I'm a... I'm a..." Petey was squinched with thought until he came up with "I'm a horse,"
"You got a horse on anything yet?"

She shook her head too, halfmoon earrings in and out of the red cloud of her hair as she did. "Not even up to r yet."

The lingo these two worked by made French seem simple. But I'd have perished of curiosity first before asking for another translation, and eventually it came to me on its own. With their long builds Mariah and Riley both had been basketball players in high school, her at Gros Ventre and him at a little place in southern Montana called Clyde Park, and so they each had grown up shooting schoolground games of horse—kids taking turns shooting baskets, a player's first miss counting as ą, his next as _0 and so on until the first shooter to have the whole word spelled on him was the loser. Here and now, it became evident to me that neither Riley nor Mariah had been able to horse Virginia City. One more time, no story had spelled itself out to either of them.

downhill pull. He divulged to us, "Horse."

I was still back on turtles. But Mariah sat up in instant attention and peered at Riley through the bar gloom. "Where?"

"Here." He whomped his hand on the table. "This."
One of the suits said to the other, "Funny, this place didn't seem nearly so goddamn expensive when I was in here last week drunk."
With their solemn goatees and deliberate head-down way of walking, these grassoholics multiplied the oblivious mood the original little bunch had shown us. Of course, even this pepper pattern of a herd across an entire hillside was only a fingernailful compared to the buffalo millions back in the last century, but I thought them quite the sight.

Riley frowned in concentration, Mariah squinted in same. Eventually she offered, more as if thinking out loud than really convinced, "Maybe one alone against the sky?" This time his turn to issue, "Been done."

Their stymied mood prevailed until at last Mariah suggested, her tone considerably perturbed, "Let's go up Red Sleep for a look around, how about," and Riley echoed her state of mind in saying with shortness, "Good as any."

Red Sleep Mountain is not hospitable to 26-foot motor homes, and so it was up to Riley and Mariah to hitchhike us a ride up the mountain with a park ranger. Rather, it was mostly up to Mariah, because any ranger with blood in him would be readier to take along a red-haired woman of her calibre than just Riley and me.
Riley simply ran a list of the 56 counties, out of Montana's total of 56, that had voted for Reagan and put at the end only the words, "How do you like him now?" Or the time he wrote about one of the big farming operators who was plowing up thousands of acres of virgin grassland to qualify for federal land loans and then letting sit fallow and victim to the wind, when he becomes dust himself, the earth will spit him back out. But when Riley wasn't armed with ink, I had better say, he looked like a prime son-in-law. Oh sure, even in his nonwriting mode, any moment of the day or night he was capable of being a smart aleck. But better than a dumb one, I always figured. No, exactly because Riley was the kind of sassypants he was toward life--his natural Rileyness, call it--I made my offer.

An afternoon in April, in the middle of lambing time, this was; I remember that my feet hurt from tromping around in overshoes from daylight to dark the past month, so maybe it was my arches rather than my mind that prompted the proposition to Riley just then. In any case, he and I were sharing coffee from my thermos outside along the sunny south wall of the lambing shed. I had seen Mariah and him arrive
Maybe Maria had the right formula in what she'd given Kevin Frew, a smile and the finger. You don't do that to your own kid, though, even when you sometimes feel like it.
do you think goddamn Riley would see it that way?

"Jick, I can't." He did have the grace to look highly uncomfortable in turning down my offer. "It just--this isn't my country up here."

"Why isn't it?" I knew that his family ranched in a distant part of the state, down on the Shields River not far from Livingston; Riley's father had died, but his older brother was running their cattle outfit. But as I pointed out to him now, "The Two country has got some things to recommend it." I don't care who you are, you cannot doubt the earth's promise on such a spring day.
Mostly, though, we in the Winnebago gawked at the buffalo while the buffalo ignored our existence in favor of grass.

'Buffalo,' I keep saying; 'bison' always sounds to me like something stuffed and mounted. A juiceless word, that icy sound in the middle of it. 'Buffalo,' though, that's got a flow to it; it more resembles the animal, stout and blunt at its head and then tailing off fast.

By whatever name, the ones outside the windshield didn't seem to be inspiring the newspaper pair.

Riley stirred in a suddenly squirmy way, like a kid who's had an icicle dropped down the back of his neck. "Maybe do a Yorick, if we can come up with a good bleached skull?" he suggested to Mariah, meanwhile casting a hopeful look around for a deceased buffalo's cranium.

"Been done," she vetoed.

For all the peeking and peering the pair of them were doing, I was the one whose eyes detected the promising scatter of dark specks on a distant slope. Bank on it, when we trundled over there in the Bago those dots grew and grew to become a herd of a couple hundred buffalo. Dozens each of bulls, cows, calves, all spread out in a nice graze.
"How those people in the cities get by, I don't know," Stanley said. "Not that I'm total sure they ought to. But hell, a country big as this, you'd think everybody could get a living out of it somehow."

"Where's our breadbasket?"

"Go with corn. The bones of great men are not white and other"

"Who's a great winner?"

"We're a great winner"
Melander's voice, deeper for being muffled, resounded from across the room, and in three steps Karlsson could see the hazed man, his body alone in its long-boned angles on the bathing bench. Melander's reed respirator mask all but disappeared in the big hand palmed around it, so that he seemed to be covering a perpetual chuckle.

"Are you tasting it yet?" Melander went on. "Our venture, I mean? I find myself thinking of salt air. Ocean air. Better than fish guts, sniffing morning, I can tell you."

"Where's our pickpurse?"

"He will come. The hours of Braaf's day are not like any other man's."

"How far do you trust him?"

"Ordinarily, only a whisker's width." Melander had known Braaf's clan all too well on shipboard, men with the instinct always to vanish just before a topsail needed clewing up, and of course the armies of all history have known him best, the scrounger, the dog-robber. "He'd steal the milk out of your tea, aye? But Braaf wants to shake New Archangel from his boots as badly as we do. He'll do much to achieve that. Much that neither of us can do, just as he can't canoe himself down this coast. The three of us are like a bundle of rye when your Skane fields are harvested, Karlsson. Together we lean in support of one another. Take any one away and we fall."

"And are trampled by the Russians."
Gang plow and ditcher, work horses and harness, haymow and cream separator: everything on those places was mortgaged except the air.

It's claimed that farmers and ranchers doom themselves through their ignorance of economics. Honyockers maybe couldn't recite the Gross National Product, but they did know that when steers and wheat were selling for half what they had been two years before, that halving had not happened because of their end of matters...
The way one plods the distances of a dream, both of them slogged on to the huge log. Wennberg slumped against it, sagged until he sat with his back to the silvered wood. His knees came up, and his head went down to them.

Karlsson was against the inland edge of the log, propped for rest as he looked north along the bay edge.

... More of it. Got to be a mouth there somewhere. Over those dunes. Find it, figure ...

"Time, Wennberg. We've to get a look, just over there."

tone

"No." The blacksmith's voice was muffled, head still to his knees. "No use to it," he droned. "Just more muck."

"You'll stay to the log, then." Karlsson tried to focus...

instruction. "Just where you are."

... If he goes off into the mire and tide catches him, he'll be a bled pig then...

"Wennberg! Wennberg, hear me! You'll stay to the log. Aye?"

"Stay..." agreed the muffled voice.
When Mac arrived on the Shoestring he rode one day past a sheep wagon
at the head of Ben English coulee and was hailed by the herder. "You the forest
arranger?" Mac told him yes, what could he do for him. The herder said, "I
loosed some sheep and need you look out for them." Mac assured him he would.

Riding back a few days later, Mac stopped at the sheepwagon and asked if the
sheep had turned up yet. "O, yah, them. They kept coming back one in a bunch,
one in a bunch, and then five came up alone."
Some years ago my father was called onto a fire in another ranger's district, and just as he drove in so did two truckloads of men recruited off First Avenue South in Great Falls. With everybody there so promptly, it looked like a dandy chance to get a jump on the fire, and so the fire boss put my father immediately to equipping the fire fighters.

In about two minutes, though, everything slammed to a halt. The fire fighters were demanding to know what the hell the Forest Service was trying to get away with, the fire boss was asking them back what the hell did they mean...it turned out that one of the recruiters from Two Medicine headquarters, knowing that 35¢ an hour could be paid to skilled firefighters, had gone down one side of First Avenue South hiring men at that rate, while another headquarters guy went along the other side conscientiously hiring everybody at the unskilled 30¢ an hour. In the equipment line the two groups naturally had gotten to comparing notes, and now the 30¢ers were not about to work unless they too got 35¢.

The fire boss told everybody to hold their water while called OO, the forest supervisor, for authority to square up this wage matter.

Oh, hell no, Jim, you're right, OO agreed, we can't have that situation.
Go out there and tell them we made a mistake, we had no intention of

hiring at two different wages that way--the 35¢ guys we meant to hire

at 30¢.
Day after day came hot. Too hot. Putting up with heat while you drive a scatter rake or some other job is one thing. But having the temperature try to melt you while you’re just hanging around an existing, that’s a personal insult.

My father was here, there, and everywhere on matters of fire. When he figured I wouldn’t be in the way, I would go with him.
The Depression did the weather out of its job.

Only the leaves were gone where any more were needed.

After they were put away, too, to conserve our forest.

What we needed most was rain, and the weather gave it.

Only the leaves were gone where any more were needed.
Like the single eye of some great watchful creature, each morning at six the stockade gate near the westmost corner of New Archangel winked open, at six each evening it swung resolutely shut.

Only during those dozen hours of day were the Kolosh allowed into the settlement, in scrutinized numbers, and the market area where they were permitted to trade was delineated directly inside the gate, so that they could be rapidly shoved out in event of commotion. Moreover, the first of the four gun-slitted blockhouses buttressing the east-stretching wall of stockade sat close to the area of market and gate on a shieldlike short slope of rock, miniature of the strong knob supporting Baranov's Castle. Scan it from inside or out, here at New Archangel's portal Russian wariness showed its strongest focus.

Except. Except that, bachelor existence on a frontier being what it was, the gate sometimes peeped open in the evenings. Until dusk went into night, it was not unknown that a recreative stay might be made among certain bargainable women in the Kolosh village. For those dwelling within New Archangel rather than without, the second and unofficial--and by order of the governor, absolute--curfew at the big gate was full dark.

"There you are, then," Melander explained to Karlsson. "Free ride on the spotted pony, so to speak."

Karlsson quirked his mouth enough to show skepticism. Melander was one who would have you believe salt for breakfast. But Karlsson
It is one of the stories of this country that Ben once rode up to the homestead shanty in O0 Coulage from far off to check on his cattle and could hear his black bulls bellowing and beloing. He traced the uproar to the homestead shanty in O0 Coulage where there were bulls snorting and romping with their tails high.

In the shanty Ben found a moonshine still, and the mash his bulls had been sampling. At the next election, my father asked Ben if his bulls were going to come into town and vote for repeal.
now and again, don't you, Wennberg? I suggest you have a second look before you wager."

At this Wennberg began to flare again, but Melander beat him to speech once more.

"Be careful of your words, Wennberg. If you're coming with us, we have much time ahead together and don't need the burden of bad feelings. If you're going to the Russians, you don't want your last words to weigh wrongly on your soul."

Wennberg stared at Melander as if the lanky seaman had just changed skin color before his eyes. Then he swung his heavy look to Braaf, at last and longest to Karlsson.

"You set of squareheads may be better at this than I thought," Wennberg rumbled finally. "I am with you. Now you can tell me, if you know, how we are to run on the sea."

Tong the plan around in the forge of his mind as he would, Wennberg could come up with only a splatter of questions when Melander had finished.

"Why all this fuss with old Bilbin? Why not just cut his stupid throat when we're ready?"

"Because if we kill one of his men, Rosenberg will have to have his people chase us. If we leave Bilbin alive, Rosenberg will take it out on him."

"What of muskets? How many can Braaf lay his dainty hands on?"

Melander replied that they had the advantage of two ready at
It was not true—I still believe that Ed Van Bebber started the story—that when Paul and Catherine were going to tie the knot, Paul went to my father and asked for the day off because I'm getting married and I'd kind of like to be there.
Of course the Forest Service pickup was nowhere in sight; like a board you know is going to give way, I had been anticipating that my father wouldn't be on hand to conclude all this...
these Siberian vagabonds had not been encouraged onward to Russian America for habits such as nudging ducks into paddles. Thugs, thieves, hopeless sots, no few murderers, the flotsam of any vast frontier, jostled among them. ("Where," a governor of New Archangel once wrote home to a grandee of the Russian-American Company, "do you get such men?") But so did debtors, escaped serfs, those whose only instinct was to drift. Melander, by now no admirer of anything Russian, saved his contempt for the New Archangel officialdom. These others, the Okhotskans, simply had made humankind's usual blunder, forgot to get themselves hightborn.

Abruptly Melander stood up, a process like staves suddenly framing themselves together into a very large scarecrow. Amid a card game several bunks away, a shipwright from Karlskrona flicked a nervous glance his way. Melander grinned at so easy a giveaway, awarded a mocking nod to his derider, and in galumphing strides went from the barracks.

Outside held another sort of confinement, but at least airier than in. Melander as ever glanced up, as if checking a topsail, at the peak which thrust over all their lives at New Archangel, giant Verstovia. Its summit a triangle of rough rock atop a vaster triangle of firred slope, Verstovia sat up there plump and becrowned, the first presence in your life each morning, the last at every dusk. On both sides Verstovia was attended by other, snowier crags. A threefold Jericho, this place New Archangel, walled first by the
You wanted to be seasonal when you asked them about the virtues of sheep, though. Not, say, toward the end of lambing when every man on English Creek was sore-footed from five straight weeks of wearing overshoes.
... Kept in life this long, I can keep longer. Takes God and His Brother to kill a Smalander...

Now at water edge. Peering out into the bay entrance which the fog had carried them into.

Karlsson squinted to be sure of what he was seeing now.

Instead of surf stacking against the shore three and four and five waves deep as had been happening all along this coast, here the whitecaps flowed and flowed past Karlsson into the bay, as if breaking into stampede. They flashed white for what across the entire neck of entrance. A mile-breadth of whitecaps.

Karlsson looked long at the breakers, willing against what he knew to be the truth written white in them. Even could he persuade Wennberg back to the canoe and they someway summoned muscle to launch into the mud-bay, against such flow as this the two of them were too weary to paddle through to ocean. Never in this lifetime. Whatever candle-end of it was left to them.
I decorated the station with calendars that lumber yards and hardware stores gave out. Except for one, all my calendars featured women.

It can get a trifle lonesome, batching like that. Doesn't hurt to have a reminder of other possibilities. You know what the styles were then, women in hats the size of dishpans, or carrying a riding crop, or sniffing a rose. I had just about every conceivable version.

Then I tacked up one last little calendar, for variety's sake, from Beach and Wellman, General Merchandise, which showed a mare and colt standing in the middle of a pasture. Oo came out to inspect the station and was standing there looking over my conglomeration of calendars and he got to that last one and finally said, "Stanley, I had no idea you was so fond of horses."
This day, different eyes had been set in their heads. Nothing they saw except the beak of the canoe had sharpness, definite edge, to it. This must have been what it would be like to drift amid the mare's-tail of the sky.

Fog, a gray dew on the air. During a rest-pause Karlsson touched a hand to his face in thought, and was surprised that his beard was not wet. Maybe the fog was coming into them.

The Pacific sending mist to sift the shore.
SLOW FIRE ON A UTAH MOUNTAIN

This death mist drifts
   silently
as it will the day it burns the breath from you.

The spring mountain is clotted with dead sheep
retched to death amid the bluebells.
Man's inhumanity to nature . . .
man's inhumanity
poisons the air,
earth streams grass
sheep and hawk
history and future
   all.

The carcass world is in seed here
here at the beginning of our end.
From us with spleen
   world.

Choke as the woolen heaps did
and die on your side
two limbs stiffening into the venomous air.
It is the price we must pay
the khaki men know
the men in white know
everyone knows
for how else can we do unto others
what they might do unto us?

I would burn my right hand in a slow fire
to change the future
a prophet cried
one Hitler one Stalin and three wars ago.
The slow fire is everywhere now
and will sear us all
ending the sheep who are man
dropping the hawk that is life.

###
00 was one of those herders who talks to his dog, to his horse, to the sheep, anything for his voice to go into.
MEicine line

Haven
like a magic arrow
cuts east and west
farther than we can know.
From salt water
past Nez Perce, Piegan,
beyond Sioux and Sac and Algonquin
to the inland seas and on
past the Iroquois land and the Mohican
the medicine line runs.
The medicine line turns
the white father.
North is safety,
red coats where blue
cannot hunt.
Chief Joseph's people
live the invisible fact
for a thousand miles
and die it two suns from haven.

North is safety,
escape from khaki
and the deadly hunt.
From the American Ocean
oddly called Pacific
past Spokane, Mandan,
Chippewa, Saginaw,
through sister lakes Erie and Ontario
past Oswego
northering toward Passamaquoddy
the medicine line runs.
Haven
like a land without armies
draws Viet Nam's heirs
farther than they can know.
The medicine line turns
invisible facts
into the death of sons' love.

Maybe we all live too soon.

###

Ivan Doig
1500, Linden Ave. N.
Seattle, Wash. 98133
The Making of the Medicine Line

From the Pacific to the Rockies in 1858-62,

the wilderness was parted with a boundary.

IVAN DOIG

The Medicine Line, the Indians of the northern plains
dubbed it: the invisible stripe on the earth which held for
the whites some magic—"medicine"—by which the ground on
one side was patrolled by men in coats of red and on the other
by cavalry troopers in blue. To flee across the line was
to step into sanctuary—"a King's-X place," as one historian
said it. Or, better put, a Queen's-X place, for it was
officers in service to the imperial Victoria who had come
and, with their American counterparts, decreed an unseeable
border across the width of the continent.

Surveyors are not heroic figures. They come later than the
explorers, they douse with system what was once the
incandescent excitement of danger and the unknown. They conquer nothing but ignorance, and if they are surveying a boundary they are so compelled by astronomical and geodetic compulsions that they might as well run on rails.

--Wallace Stegner, Wolf Willow

Britain and the United States took the longer part of a century to agree about how to transect North America from east to west. After the American war for independence, it was called in turn international arbitration to resolve the squiggle of boundary between Maine and New Brunswick; then a joint surveying commission and much diplomatic wrangling over the territory between Lake Superior and Lake of the Woods; and ultimately, the straight-as-a-zipper demarcation across the west which fixed the 49th parallel as the U.S.-Canadian boundary. But in all those decades of border-tugging, no set of years featured more intrepid characters and endeavors than the Northwest's chapters—the making of the Medicine Line from Point Roberts eastward 409½ miles to the crest of the Rockies.

Today we resumed the conference & in the evening the Americans gave us a return dinner in excellent style on board the Active, one of their surveying ships....The healths of the Queen & President were drunk with great eclat & we got on very well together.

--Lt. Charles William Wilson of the Royal Engineers,
August 14, 1858
It began in powwow, although the word most likely had no place in the mannered mind of the boundary project's most assiduous chronicler, 22-year-old Lt. Wilson of the Royal Engineers. Wilson, as supply and transportation officer of the British contingent of about a hundred officers and men, was regularly on hand as the Americans, under Commissioner Archibald Campbell, and the Queen's representatives, under Major John Summerfield Hawkins, met in early August of 1858 to consider the most pertinent question of this task which at last would divvy the disputed "Oregon country": exactly how were they to mark the boundary?

The commonsensical decision reached then was to do it with periodic monuments. In the months ahead, however, Major Hawkins had second thoughts, and proposed instead that a swath twenty-feet wide be cut along the entire length of the boundary. The Americans wouldn't agree to that colossal amount of axwork, and nature, not unexpectedly, backed their viewpoint. Along certain intervals where astronomical fixes of the boundary had to be designated, some swaths were cut, mostly by the British, and within two years the undergrowth was obliterating the effort.

Pouring rain the whole time. Yankees certainly are the most provoking men to have anything to do with, you can never get a decisive answer out of them. I hardly ever spent a more miserable time, compelled to be totally inactive, not even
a book to read...

--Lt. Wilson on the Fraser River, October 18, 19 and 20, 1858

That disagreement over several million strokes of the ax foreshadowed a number of others between the two survey parties. Campbell was a firm, perhaps flinty, bargainer and Col. Hawkins had been instructed to avoid friction insofar as possible. Also, the British were at the disadvantage of being newcomers to a region--Hawkins's command was the first British troop contingent to be quartered on Vancouver Island--whose challenges they had considerably underestimated. For one thing, the cost of the boundary survey turned out to be several times the initial estimate. For another, Hawkins no sooner had emerged from his first gingerly conference with the Americans than he had to lead a body of his soldiers into the Fraser River gold fields to impose some peace there.

"Unfortunately being a Jack-of-all-trades & having most of the work to do," Lt. Wilson did not get to go along on the peace-keeping venture. But he was within weeks of plenty of adventure. Wilson's job, which he seems to have done with consistent aplomb, was to provision the British survey party, which besides the military complement of a hundred or so assorted surveyors, topographers and axe-men included Indian work crews and a number of Mexican muleteers. In mid-October, 1858, Wilson began moving supplies from
Esquimalt to the Britons' first eastward camp, on Sumas Prairie.

That initial leg was by steamboat, up the Fraser River to Fort Langley. It was there that the lieutenant jotted his grumble about the provoking Yankees, although the reason for his uncharacteristic snit isn't clear: the two survey parties worked apart from each other, with what one appraiser has termed "only the barest essential minimum of collaboration." But whatever had got crosswise in Lt. Wilson's craw, it was nothing to the provocation offered ahead when he started his supply crew farther upstream by canoe.

At 12 we stuck fast in a large lake which we had partially crossed, so here we were 1½ miles from the shore...This was a climax to our misfortunes. Lord the party's naturalist & I could not help laughing at each other's black faces. However there was not time to idle, as the camp was a 1 mile march after landing, so out I jumped into the water & we all set to work to land the stores. For 1 hours we were all hands in the water, in many places up to our knees, working like slaves, & got everything landed even to the heavy barrels of beef which I slung on the shoulders of 3 or 4 Indians; the Indians are dreadfully lazy but by dint of swearing at them in every language I could think of, & liberal promises of tobacco, I managed to get on.

--Lt. Wilson, still on the Fraser, October 23, 1858
Wilson managed to muscle his supplies through to the Sumas Prairie base, and by the end of November—"having been 17 days without a change of clothes & barely 24 hours of fine weather"—gratefully was back at Esquimalt, where the British party wintered. Then came the spring of 1859 and the genuine start of the British boundary survey. By May 10, Wilson was noting that nearly all of Col. Hawkins' s command were "up the country"; a month later, he was establishing a supply depot at Chilliwack, and beginning to chronicle the summer of travail inflicted by mosquitoes and sand flies.

Wilson and the others found that the British Columbia mosquitoes stung right through their corduroy trousers, while the sand flies "get in everywhere...no part of the body is exempt." Wilson, whose duties included acting as "Money Chief"—the pay officer—recorded that on the night of June 21 he arrived at Sumas with a payroll, & with the money for a pillow was soon asleep having first tied my head in a bag to keep the mosquitoes off."

Capt. Darrah, in charge of the Sumas camp, by late July found himself impossibly beset: his axemen were threatening to quit, his mules were blinded, "& 6 of our horses were so reduced that we had to turn them out on the prairie & let them take their chance of living." In desperation, Darrah moved the survey party higher into the mountains, to Slesse Creek. Working into the winter to make up for mosquito-lost
time, the surveyors managed to line out the boundary to the summit of the Cascades.

The Dalles is the outpost of civilization on this side of the mountains (if it may be called civilized). It is a most strange place & a very motley crowd live in it. American officers, trappers in their buckskin, regular wild men of the plains, who travel thousands of miles with their blanket & rifle & obey no laws but their own inclinations...

--Lt. Wilson en route to Ft. Colville, Washington Territory,

May 24, 1860

Now the British party moved around to the eastern side of the Cascades--up the Columbia River, to The Dalles and Walla Walla and then overland--to sight the 49th parallel on through to the top of the Rockies. On July 1, 1860, Wilson rode into Fort Colville, which was to be the surveyors' headquarters for the next 22 months.

Colville, a Hudson's Bay post, seemed to Wilson a "very pretty" site and he quickly began seeing the new region: riding 15 miles to visit the American survey party--"some of them very decent sort of fellows in their way"; watching the Indians catch salmon in baskets at Kettle Falls; journeying through the Okanogan, to where the surveyors were working through the North Cascades.

And then winter, the Britishers cooped in log cabins near the fort; Wilson papered a wall of his room "with a select
collection (of illustrations) from Punch & the Illustrated London News" and counted the days to his next adventure.

Arrived at Walla Walla, after what the Americans would call 'a hard old trip', snow nearly all the way & on the great Spohan plains about 3 ft deep, over which we had to walk & drive the horses in front of us, whilst the wind, which generally blows there hard enough to take the hair off one's head, cut right to the bone...

---Lt. Wilson at Walla Walla, February 22, 1861

On Valentine's Day of 1861, Wilson set out from Fort Colville for San Francisco. The survey commission's scientific instruments were much the worse for wear after three years in the wilds, and Wilson was assigned to take them in for overhaul. The nine days' ride from Colville to Walla Walla was rigorous, particularly when the lieutenant and his accompanying soldier were caught in a blizzard on the stretch between the Snake River and the Touchet. But after a month of horseback, stagecoach and steamboat, he was passing through the Golden Gate. A week after that, he recorded that "they have made me a member of the San Francisco club, where I am now stopping & which is carried on in a very good style & very comfortable & I have been asked out to various places & I have also paid a very pleasant visit to a gentleman's house at Oaklands, which is the Brooklyn of San Francisco."
On my return I found every one wild with excitement, 'Gold, Gold' the cry in everyone's mouth.

--Lt. Wilson at Fort Colville, April 28, 1861

Back in the country of the 49th parallel with the refurbished instruments, Wilson began one last year on North American soil. A year of rampant rumor it was, with the gold strikes in Idaho and the filtered news of battles as the American Civil War erupted. Wilson and the work parties made their way to the summit of the Rockies; at the site of the final monument, Wilson noted the graffiti of earlier visitors—"sundry Anglo Saxon names engraved on the stones, to which truly English record we refrained from adding ours." Then a second and final "Penitentiary" winter at Colville, with newspapers of "antedeluvian dates." Christmas was the nadir: "Our cook having cleverly contrived to boil up his pipe and tobacco with the soup...everyone went to bed at an early hour, with vastly unpleasant sensation."

As squatters and settlers began to occupy lands on both sides of the boundary line they found in places three lines cut through the woods, as well as two sets of stone cairns, which naturally left them in a quandary as to where the definite boundary line was.

--Geographer Otto Klotz, writing in 1917
The final results of the joint boundary survey could be added in numbers: 158 markers, mostly stone cairns six to eight feet high, had been established in the 409½ miles from Point Roberts to the Continental Divide. The cost to the Americans has been calculated at $1,460 per mile; British expenses probably were at least as much.

Also, Col. Hawkins did bring about a considerable portion of the end-to-end axwork he had proposed: some 190 miles of border swath were cut, mostly by the British. But in places, particularly near the Similkameen River, Hawkins's cherished policy backfired. The British lines sighted in from opposite directions did not meet—indeed, once missed each other by 66½ feet—and when the Americans chopped a third, "definitive" boundary, nobody thought to pull down the cairns from the earlier tries.

Still and all, the boundary was run; the Americans and the British had managed to compromise and coexist; and a little less than four years after their arrival on Vancouver Island, the British surveyors packed for home.

I cannot give three cheers on paper or I would with all my heart on the event of our soon leaving Colville...

--Lt. Wilson, March 6, 1862
Young Lt. Wilson would go on, after his years with a surveying expedition in the Middle East and then with the great ordnance survey of the British Isles, to become Major-General Sir Charles Wilson. But ironically, this capable and observant man is best known in British history as a footnote: he was the officer who arrived just two days too late to save the besieged General Gordon at Khartoum in 1885.

His fellow British and American surveyors who drew the Pacific portion of the Canadian-American boundary made sure of their own footnote, of sorts. Commissioner Campbell and Col. Hawkins agreed to erect a commemorative boundary obelisk, at a cost of $7,590.38 which was split by their governments, at the western shore of Point Roberts. There it pokes up today, a bit pitted and weather-weary, with Campbell's name large on its southern face and that of Hawkins and two other ranking Britishers on its northern. The most significant mark, however, is on the east-facing plane of the stone, and is nobody's name at all. It is simply the latitude figure for this starting-point of the Medicine Line:

49°0.0′
Those religions which feature years of solitude and silence, I have grave doubts about. Sheepherders too spend time alone and in most cases their minds simply tend to unravel. That's maybe not entirely fair assessment. A Pete Hoy
"Are you?"

"I am. Else you and Braaf and Karlsson'll be hung from the top of the stockade for the magpies to feast on."

"Tsk. On all this big island there should be plenty for the birds to feed on without going to that. What makes you think we're kissing goodbye to New Archangel?"

"Don't come clever with me, Melander. I've watched your trained packrat Braaf, these weeks."

"Braaf is his own man."

"Braaf's operated by your jabber. So's that stiff-cock Karlsson."

"Such powers I seem to have. You'll want to watch out I don't command your sidewhiskers to turn into louse nests."

"You're not the high-and-mighty to command anything just now."

"Do you come down with these fevers often, Wennberg? Say we wanted to flee, how would we? Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, saddle the cat and we'll all get on?"

"You'd yatter as long as water runs downhill, Melander. Time we barter. My silence for your plan."

"Silence I don't much believe in. But school me: why are you interested in notions of fleeing from here?"

"My reasons are cousin to yours. Because I'm sick of life under these Russians. Because there are wider places of the world than this stockade." Grudgingly: "Because if anyone here is slyboots enough to escape, it's likely you."

"Flattering."

"Which doesn't mean I wouldn't happily see you hung high for magpie food, if that's your choice. Decide."
"What if your granddad had homesteaded out here on these flats, instead of at the toe of the mountains? Don't you think you'd be as much of a honyocker as any of those guys out on tractors?"

"Hell if I know. You tell me." I meant it, too. This goddamn Riley had known me long enough, he'd married my daughter, he'd spurned my ranch when I offered it to him, he ran Montana through his fingers columns every time he wrote one of his columns: if anybody was in a position to enlighten me about myself, it ought to be him.

"Okay, let's go through the possibilities. You're not the kind who'd have headed off to Minneapolis or Seattle, wherever you started from.

"Too ornery, is what you're saying."

"I'm trying to not to put it that way. You don't make it easy."
"Clark's son was here."

"In Miles' army?"

"Wrong side. "On the other side. He was a Nez Perce, named Daytime Smoke."

I figured the years...(1800-1877)

"It happened plenty, our big heroes leaving little bundles of joy behind them out here. U.S. Grant. Pickett, who led the charge at Gettysburg. His son worked on the Oregonian."

If he was a bastard, yeah, it stood to reason he'd be a newspaper guy.
Bolitho was lucky he wasn't paying us by the mile. We crisscrossed that Bear's Paw country on every road the Winnebago would fit onto, and the last day Riley rented a Jeep in Havre--"We'll see if the expense account guy is awake"--and up into the actual mountains we went.

We could see the 00 hills in Canada, fifty miles away. Two days' ride, with the encampment moving with you.

"Custer was a loser, and he's famous as hell. Chief Joseph fought longer and smarter, and all he's got is a plaque down there. Why'd it turn out that way?"

I don't know if Riley really expected an answer, but I gave it to him. I rubbed the back of my hand, the skin there. "This."
"Surveyors are not heroic figures. They come later than the explorers, they douse with system what was once the incandescent excitement of danger and the unknown. They conquer nothing but ignorance, and if they are surveying a boundary they are so compelled by astronomical and geodetic compulsions that they might as well run on rails." (Stegner)

From here, the invisible stripe on the earth is halfway to the horizon.
I don't quite feel right in country like that. (Havre) No wall of mountains to lean your eyes on. But that's just me.
I'd seen too much of the Junior syndrome, as I've heard it called. Fathers who can't let go of a ranch, even when their sons or sons-in-law as good a rancher as there ever was, start to get long in the tooth. I watched my neighbor, Dill Egan, get that way, not able to turn decisions over to his son Mike even when Dill was in his eighties and Mike was damn near sixty. So my offer to Riley and Maria had been that I would get out of the picture, move into town and do our best to keep our mouths shut. (Lexa and Steve told us what we already knew, that they couldn't be gotten out of Alaska except at gunpoint.) I even argued the matter with Riley, pointing out he could have a setup about like mine with Kenny, having somebody else doing the day-by-day running of the place. He was always wanting to write a book, wasn't he? He could sit up there on the ranch and write until he wore his fingers off.

"It wouldn't work, Jick."

"Why the hell not?"

"I've spent too much of my life getting away from a ranch."

"But this one doesn't have any of that family stuff attached. I mean it, about staying out of your hair if you take the place. That's the way Pete Reese passed it to me, and that's the way I'd want to pass it to you and Maria."