Odd, how sudden the boundaries are in a country where you can see until the miles blue away into far distance. To the north where the Two Medicine River carves its canyon through the prairie of the Blackfeet Reservation, flat tops of benchlands tood out as if drawn fresh onto the sky with a yardstick and brownest inks.
Jick has considered computerizing his sheep outfit, but couldn't see that it solved fundamental problems: market prices, weather, hired help.

Maybe better: A Bozeman outfit that (does computer analyses & programming)...

"I had the ranch put through a computer. Animal units, proximity to... etc.

What printed out was that (couldn't compete as dude ranch; cd support about the # of sheep it already had...cd make some money on hay every 00--drought--year, if I wanted to live on other people's misfortune..."
Jick has had the ranch evaluated by a tourism consultant, who tells him it won't make it as a dude ranch, what with the Choteau dude ranches in one direction and Glacier Park in another—"not destination-specific enough."

--no oil rights either
incorporate Leland E. Stuart's info (Mont. Mag of History, winter '88) that while big ranchers suffered grievously in winter of 1886, smaller ranchers who had hay, shelter etc. got by okay.
changed in summer '89 revise, p. 175:

"Odd, though, how sudden the boundaries are in a country where you can see

for a hundred miles" became "can see until the miles blue away into far distance."

(Jick is looking from his house toward the mtns and thus can't see a hundred miles.)
Jick passes eroded reservoir on Breed Butte, where Rob Barclay drowned.
show that the ranch has been Jick's refuge after Marce's death, but he is reaching the point of not being able to run it.
put Jick's thoughts about problem of what to do with ranch—too small for the Japanese to buy, unfarmable for the Hutterites, too much competition to make a "dudist colony"—in his day alone, at beaver dams or wherever.
Choteau, June '89:

Dorothy Perkins said they almost lost the sheep in Memorial Day snow this yr; Earl worked all day building shelter out of straw bales and feeding them in the lee of the bales; with heavy wet snow on them (they were shorn in Feb. or March) "they were starting to go down" until he got them sheltered and fed.

—Jick, Kenny and Darleen thus could have had to push the sheep from where they were grazing, back into the lambing shed at the ranch buildings. Close call, in next day or so the sheep would have been moved onto the North Fork, to be herded by Helen. (or Helen etc. could have already started to move the sheep, or held back a bit because Jick didn't like the looks of the weather; but in any case, he "almost lost the whole damn works, a thousand ewes and as many lambs".)
dudist colony/dudity colony (Jick, says, meaning dude ranch)
Animal Unit Month: "...AUM is pasture sufficient to graze a cow and its young calf for a month." (Billings Gazette, June 19 '88, "Pastures Drying Up," in ag crisis clips box)
Feb '89 temperatures (at Twin weather map) (Cut Bank)

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Jick about the Williamsons:

You could offer them (him) the face of the earth and he'd want bedrock too.
The biggest pain in the butt a rancher has to face, so to speak, is...
possible add to Jick's ire about TriGramites hanging skull as trinket on gate:

They ought to be boiled in their own brainwater, a piece at a time.
In Feb. '89 cold weather, hay wd have been needed for sheep, though drought summer of '88 produced little or no hay. Jick wd have bought hay at high price, that autumn, knowing it was necessary; how much per ton? --if '89 is another dry summer, hay wd be on his mind again.
The good years made up for the bad years, then the bad years turned around and ate up the good years. (nudging)
Kenny and Darleen:

—Any more, if you advertise for somebody to get up at dawn, you might as well ask for $00 while you’re at it.

—It worried Kenny. That is, Kenny worried about the ranch and Darleen worried about Kenny.

—It was unsettling to Kenny that I was maybe going to sell the ranch. Hell, it unsettled me too.

—Kenny wasn’t a guy to buy.

—Kenny hovered.

—Trigram Resources wasn’t concerned with the Kennys and Darleens of this world.

—How long did I want to try to operate the ranch by remote control thru Kenny? How long could I?
two. The old bachelor sheepman Walter Kyle, with just his mustache for company, resided then on Breed Butte at the old Barclay place. (As I savvy it, the Barclay who homesteaded that place was a shirt-tail relation of the McCaskills. Whatever kind of guy he was, his choice way of site far up on the south slope of Breed Butte looks to me entirely I admit too high and dry, though the view from up there is wide and wonderful.)
does Jick give, or at least mention giving, (maybe during the pitch game) Kenny long-distance instructions by phone? (in ch. 1)
in ch. 2, maybe even in ch. 1, be explicit a Jack's grudge
against Riley:
- the life of Noon Creek ranch has always been perilous -
  Isaac had just 1 son, Pete had no children; Alec cd have
  run ranch if he'd lived & straightened up; Jack a stand-in
  for Alec (as Jack sees it), & Riley not solve succession for
  another generation at least, except Riley won't cooperate.
Jick (or Mariah) could make some offhand crack, maybe early in ch. 2, about sending Riley home to his momma (just to get some innocent mention of Leona's existence spaced into the proportions of the book).
What did Jick do with sheep in dry summer of '88--truck them out, west of the mountains?
sheep, from UMont photos (Agriculture-sheep):

--black-nosed yearlings(?) with their ears out straight either side of the head, like small wings on a fat bird.

--operating a cutting gate, with handle sticking up perpendiclar; sawed-off broom handle nailed upright onto gate, half of it sticking above the top of gate, would be adequate.

--notes on back of 1927 shearing pic: "sheared 10# wool average, sold 26\(\frac{1}{2}\)¢ lb; contracted to sell 4 cars (1050) lambs July 1st @ 11¢ lb."
pricetag on the ranch
Kenny and Darleen do Jick's haying?

Jick about Darleen: "She was made of tough stuff."
beaver dam scene: mention lambing and shearing (Jick sleepwalker thru them, Kenny did most of work)
Jick muses on hard winter of 1989, worst of weather coming a few weeks after Marcella’s death, in beaver dam scene.
--Lexa and Marcella come home for her death and funeral?
It also crossed my mind to watch a little bit out, at the slope ahead where the roadtrack sidled up the shoulder of Breed Butte—if I were to tip the Winnebago over, here 15 miles from anywhere, it’d be one fine hell of a mess. The thought of the Bago on its back unwelcomely reminded me of goddamn Riley and turtles all the way down, but I made myself concentrate on gauging the angle of the slope and the lean of the motor home, and at last breathed free as we topped the rise. There I stopped to look, as I always had and always would at this site.
Ahead through the windshield of the motorhome, the arc of Breed Butte grew more pronounced minute by minute as its timbered summit darkened faster than the open slopes around. I concentrated on creeping
I know what an early bird you are," a woman's voice prattled full gallop onto the line. Never Mariah, expending words wholesale like that.
Helen Ramplinger

Maybe more of her brain nodes were singed than I had thought.

--At least the sheep were safe from her knife and fork.
Althea. Next thing, you'll be claiming you don't know what tonight is."

With the help of the Gros Ventre Mercantile calendar on the wall, I hazily responded: "This is the first day of August. Probably tonight is the first night of August."
Brrk brrk.

My waking thought was that the guy who invented the telephone ought to have been publicly boiled in his own brainwater. Outside the bedroom window toward Jericho Reef which always caught the earliest of first light, dawn was just barely prevailing over dark. If manufactured noise at that hour isn't an offense against human nature, I don't know what is.
cut in summer '89 revise

window to get his eyes into restlessness with the rest of him, Darleen

just sloped along. Life seemed to soothe her as much as it made him

fidget.

Right off, I noticed that Kenny now sported muttonchop sideburns—
herder lasted on job such a short time he nearly beat the rancher back to town.
far sound of the bell sheep; standing still
    to listen for clapper of bell
The sheep fluffed out over the brown hills, nosing for new ways to kill themselves. One that was surefire was to lie down, scratch until they got too far onto their backs to be able to get up, and die within minutes as the body gases bloated them. Suicide by gas pain, a sheep's way out of this world.

Al was furious at our losses. Then he took over, and within half a day had lost three ewes.
lambs bucking--disorderly against calm of forest
The sun mothering the green grass, the ewes butting and nuzzling their lambs in the epidemic of affection.
sheep as gray daubs against tan grass
Looking for ewe or lamb in band: I would slie through the sheep, reading #s painted on their backs. Sheep are not easy to work thru, nervous and skittish, but I could do it, moving slowly and lightly—trick was to move evenly, doing nothing sudden—stopping and easing on when sheep began to be frightened. Now that I think about it, the secret perhaps was to never move more quickly than the sheep themselves could.
Don't fill it quite up. (Jack to Darleen.)
30 June '89

Lewistown

- The Empire Cafe - farmers talking with their hands: what a good crop yr Dairis; a Ted Schwinden look-alike, estimating his hay may make 2 tons/acre, held his hands a couple 1 ft apart, then o the same vertically, to show how wide & high his windows are; carried away even more, he put thumb & under fingers at base 7 his opposite index fingers to show "a created wheat grass as long as my finger" & then held hand higher than cafe table to show how high it stands.

- Glum - Egg son-in-law @ table next to us, amid gathering of L.Your mother, sister & spouse & families being treated to lunch by Uncle Bill

- Stage: restoned @ bottom edge c/plage & 1-6-w-v blue balloons
- Millennials under spf-lts
- Song: "Make Me Back Home By I Did"
- Gent's @ also side in big straw cowboy hats
- Drummer in gray play hats
Night of July 2, 89
Dore Schneider
- "travel gravel" (as in, "Well, I've gotta go travel gravel." i.e., muddy)
- "done a round dance"; field work w tractor, around & around
- night hunts, c white bar markings o wings
- peregrine falcons, white underside
- morning of July 3: tremendous span of old, went to east, as if try'n to
  reach over distances 7+ plains
- lights & shadows o breaks 7 Missouri R., s & e, of Dore's farm
- Schowman's Tit - breast-shaped knob m. 7 Dore's - we read by
  shades for signal fires to another new m. of Cerise - 65 mi. or so?
- distances: from nice near Ted Scher's farm farm Dore piled out Poplar,
  20 mi away - it died like 5 mi.
- D farms 2500 a., try spring wheat; can yld 40 bu. (w. a. 4 t, 30 bu.)
Dore wd ordinarily begin harvest 3d week in July. Heat and lack of rain causing stress in his wheat while we were there, heads not filling etc.; pointed to dips in his n'bor's field that are bad sign of stress.

D. told us he's had Japanese businessman as guests on his farm who cry when they see a bit of open space - evidently overwhelmed, awed, c. magnitude of plains

"wet Willy": stick yr finger & strike it in girl's ear?

D. feels his way into day's work; gets up, like @ weather, etc; has no real answer when Tad calls him, might be, asks what he's going to be working at tomorrow?

C: Dore truly lives attuned to the day's cycle: no blinds on his house, so the light of sunrise wakes him up; and he remarked to us about being able to see stars out the windows of his bedroom. Also, he closes the house against the heat of the day, then opens every window in the evening for breeze.

*good wheat field thus wd be of even height;
as I arrived to the valley. Not usual, to come onto this upper end of English Creek from the barren bench country south of it, but I had taken the back road from Pendroy, despite its wicked loose gravel and the half-mile tornado of dust the Bago was kicking up, for the sake of time. The view made me glad I had. The Two Medicine country lay under the sunset outline of the Rocky Mountain Front in soft shadows and sharp horizons. To the north, where the region's namesake river carves through the prairie of the Blackfeet Reservation,
There isn't anything that hangs on forever, I guess (just a possiby of a next generation losing his search).
00 (TriGram mgr. trying to buy Jick's ranch from him) didn't seem like such a bad guy, but that's what people thought about Judas, too.
of time that is the past. The family we had been before that summer, the four of us there at the English Creek ranger station, never truly recovered from that set of months. In spite of ourselves, or because of ourselves—I still do not know which—we dwindled from four to three that summer of Alec’s independence, and although in actual years it wasn’t that swift, it seems to me a foreshortened time from there to the passing of my parents.
I long had a kind of inheritance from him, his sheepherder Pat Hoy. Just as Dode had done, I made myself put up with Pat's twice a year bottle sprees in Great Falls for the sake of what he was when sober, a prodigy at putting grass inside sheep. After these hills became too much for Pat's legs, I missed him like a daily meal.
Bad got worse.

(Manuela's health?)
Story of Tooele County/2

p. 55 - fell of hell
p. 57 - "A sheep, if left to its own devices, will have a tendency to build up rather than to ruin grass."

p. 59 - shepman asked if winter loss was heavy?

"No, I saved some 7. 300 & all of 1st harders."

p. 60 - began to take interest in things
p. 61 - poor lambing after hard winter because ewes lacked nourishment for lambs.

p. 119 - common in Charles Russell

p. 123 - sure, high again
p. 125 - Russell we change things; signify by holding up 1 finger.

Streeter: "Russell, that finger - you is too long already."

p. 132 - hardy house; widdly brother
p. 136 - might repair broken fortunes (section on homesteading)

p. 141 - had all kinds of discouragement
A lot argued for me to sit tight.
(use with Jick during ranch visit?)
the McCaskill homestead before it was Hebnerized...
money musk

musk of money

— ṭṭ
Bygone

221 - 1st combine in Dupuyer, 1914

— me & "white combine" (hail)
bale hooks--like pirate hands
Numbers were math was a language Alec was born knowing
Alec was enough older...

(use with descpntn of Jick's lookout knob above the ranger station; or in intro to friendship with Ray Heaney, where J doesn't know what to show Ray to interest him.)
Bygone
97 - women wel ride to dance with best dress tied behind saddle
- me c Beth ?
...a large gray canker a few feet from the front step where we threw wash water and ashes, I think even emptied the slop pail. The chickens packed away the slops, but the lye of the soap and ashes had killed the ground for good.

— at Habners?
Among the facts that my mother wanted us to face was...(the Depression?)
a shirt tail full of sheep.
rounded white canvas of herder's wagon, standing up out of flat range color like an igloo.
the sheep were broadcast
Dode Spencer and his sheepherder—Pete Hoy—have stormy relationship like that of Ira Perkins and Benny Olsen: D is forever having to get Pete off 2nd Ave. S. in Gt. Falls.
"Aw, that goddamn thing," I said in disgust. "If they want something hung, they ought to hang themselves up by their--"

"No, wait, Riley's right?" Since when? "Pull over and let me get some shots of that against the sunset."
That skull, I knew, was from a boneyard in a coulee near my east fenceline with the Double W, where there were the carcasses of hundreds of head of Double W cattle that piled up and died in the blizzard of 1979. I drove past that dangling skull whenever I went to or from town and it got my goat every single time. Even the Williamsons, who always had more cattle than they had country for and took winter die-offs as part
That time of summer, the most desperate upkeep could only maintain a faint blush of green on the knolltop there overlooking the town and the creek. Nearby a sprinkler was going whisha whisha as it tried to give the ground enough of a drink after the day's hours of sun. I knelt and did a little maintenance against weeds on my father's grave. Beside him, the earth on my mother's was still fresh and distinct.
now from the letters in Helena, one of these Scotch Heaven homesteads was that earliest McCaskill battleground of the heart—the matter is, Angus was in love with my Anna all the years of our marriage. My grandfather Angus and the Anna he never attained. Alec and Jeona.

I thought of Mariah and her daily proximity to Riley, and hoped I wasn't seeing repeated what I thought I was.

I spotted the sheep now, fluffed out across a slope west of the
Mariah and Riley blew in at suppertime, although at first I didn't recognize it as them. Something about the size of a red breadbox buzzed into the yard and parked in the shadow of the Bago, and Kenny and Darleen and I speculated that this had to be some city dry-fly fisherman wanting to see how Noon Creek trout react to pieces of fuzz on the end of a line, but huh uh. Doors of the squarish little red toy opened and she and he unfolded out of it.
But. Life on this place without Marce was not the same life as when I could casually tell Williamson or TriGram or anybody else to go jump. How long did I want to try to operate this ranch by remote control through Kenny? How long could I? Jesus, but I wished for twenty years off my age. Hell, I'd settle for five. Yet even if I had some age off me, would it really do that much good in terms of the ranch? Maybe people from now on are going to exist on bean sprouts and wear
I lifted my coffee cup to the ready position and said the only thing I knew to say:
trees threading west alongside the county road, through patch after

patch of hay meadow until at last thinning into a pair of willow lines

that curved down out of the mountains—English Creek, its main channel

and north and south forks like a handle and tines to uncover the past

with.
in a final review of ms, decide whether Jick wd say this "Actually" or whether it's too much clutter if used with "Kind of, yeah," and "I guess maybe before."

he of course did. "You named Lexa after him."

"Kind of, yeah. Actually, that 'Alexander' has been in the family ever since they came over from Scotland, and I guess maybe before. So Marce and I figured we'd pass it on through one of the girls. You got it right, Lexa's full name is Alexandra."
shadow of the Bago. Our unanimous guess was that this had to be some
city dry-fly fisherman wanting to see how Noon Creek trout react to
pieces of fuzz on the end of a line, but huh uh. Doors of the squarish
little red toy opened and out of it unfolded Mariah and Riley.
Just a world of hay
just worlds of grass
The rutted dirt track was not exactly engineered for a motorhome, if in fact any had ever lurched and swayed its way up this remote cleft of country before, and it crossed my mind what a hell of a sweet fix I would be in if the rig tipped over out here fifteen miles from anywhere. Better not to include the Bago on its back in turtles all the way down.
had been drawn onto the sky with a ruler and blackest ink. Sunset and sunrise compete in tricks of light, I have noticed. Ahead of me Breed Butte, whose slow arc of rise divides the watersheds of English Creek and Noon Creek beyond, always seemed magnified when its timbered summit darkened at the end of day. Onward east from Breed Butte a
The Bago rumbled across the plank bridge of English Creek, its main channel and north and south forks like a handle and tines to uncover the past with. There up the South Fork had lived Marcella's folks, my in-laws Dode and Midge Withrow. Old Dode was a storied practitioner of what he invariably called "the sonofabitching sheep business."