

cut in Dec. '89 revise:

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 wky 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 have 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 ~~recreation~~ 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.

Choteaux, ~~W~~ 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. (G# Trib weather map) (Cut Bank)

	high	low
1st	-19	-20
2nd	-28	-31
3rd	-26	-34
4th:	-19	-33
5th:	4	-31
6th:	13	-6
7th:	23	9

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 ~~took~~ ate up the good years. (ranching)

Kenny and Darleen:

--Any more, if you advertize for somebody to get up at dawn, you might as well ask for OO 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 ~~much~~ 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 of site far up on the south slope of Breed Butte looks to me entirely <sup>way</sup> 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 o 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 wd. solve succession for  
another generation at least, except Riley won't cooperate.

Jick (or Mariah) cd make ~~some~~ 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 perpendicular; 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  $26\frac{1}{2}\text{¢}$  lb; contracted to sell 4 cars (1050) lambs July 1st @  $11\text{¢}$  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.

changed in summer '89 revise

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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

changed in summer '89 revise

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.

arrived  
@  
bill  
the gallop.

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.

changed in summer '89 revise

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."

*change*

unused in summer '89 rewrite

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 <sup>idgeting alone</sup> into ~~restlessness~~ with the rest of him, Darleen  
<sup>matter-of-factly</sup>  
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 last@d on job such a short time he nearly beat the rancher back to town.

Lady

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.

Lady

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.

Lady

sheep as gray daubs against tan grass

Lady

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. (just to Darleen?)

30 June '89

## Lewistown

- The Empire Cafe: farmers talking c their hands c what a great crop yr this is; a Ted Schwiden look-alike, estimating ~~how~~ his hay may make 2 tons/acre, held his hands a couple 7 ft apart, then c the same vertically, to show how wide & high his windows are; carried away even more, he put thumb & index finger at base 7 his opposite index finger to show "<sup>heads on</sup> crested wheat grass are <sup>as</sup> long as my finger" & then held hand higher than cafe table to show how high it stands.
- gum-kg son-in-law @ table next to us, amid gathering of L'Youn brother & sister & spouses & families being treated to lunch by Uncle Bill.
- stage: festooned @ bottom edge c flags & r-b-w-b & blue balloons
- millers under spt lts
- song: Merle Hays - "Sing me back home by & die"
- guitarists @ either side in big straw cowboy hats
- drummer in gray plug hat

night of  
July 2, 189

Dora Schweniden

- "travel gravel" (as in, "Well, I've gotta go travel gravel." (i.e., <sup>country</sup> roads))
- "doing - round dance": field work c tractor, around & around
- night hawks, c white bar markings o wings
- prairie falcons, white underside
- morning of July 3: tremendous spans of fld, west to east, as if try'g to arch over - distances of plains
- lights & shadows o breaks of Missouri R. s & e. of Dora's farm
- Schoolmarm's T - breast-shaped knoll n. of Dora's - was used by Indians for signal fires to another rise n. of circle - 65 mi. or so?
- distances: from rise near Ted Scher's farm / farm Dora plod out Poplar, 20 mi away - it read like 5 mi.
- D farms 2500 a., fly spring wheat; can yld 40 bu. (w. wnt, 30 bu.)

OVER

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 businessmen as guests on his farm who cry when they see . amt of open space - evidently overwhelmed, awed, c. magnitude of plains  
- "wet Willy": lick yr finger & stick it in girl's ear?

D. feels his way into . day's work; gets up, lks @ . weather, etc; has no real answer when Ted calls him, . night before, & asks what he's going to be working at tomorrow.  
- apply em. to Jack or Kenny, on . ranch?

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; ~~the~~ Jack cal comment

cut from p. 2 of ch. 2

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

cut

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

all of

lay under the sunset outline of the Rocky Mountain Front in soft shadows

and sharp horizons. To the north, where the region's namesake

Two Med

<sup>widder</sup>  
river carves through the prairie of the Blackfeet Reservation,

The Mentions

There isn't anything that hangs on forever, I guess  
(fuck a possibility of a next generation losing his ranch)

Shaun

OO (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.

<sup>1</sup>  
originally

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 shepherd Pat Hoy. Just as Dode had done,

I made myself put up with Pat's twice a year bottle srees in Great Falls

for the sake of what he was when sober, a prodigy at putting grass

*Eventually*  
inside sheep. After these hills became too much for Pat's legs,

I missed him like a daily meal.

*expand?*

*as a Amie  
miss a  
whistle*

Bad got worse.

(Marcella's health?)

## Story of Blaine County 12

- p. 55 - full of hell
- p. 57 - "A sheep, if left to its own device, will have a tendency to build up rather than to ruin grass."
- p. 59 - sheepman asked if winter loss was heavy:  
"No, I saved some 7. drops & all of 10p headers." *have Dode say?*
- p. 60 - began to take interest in things
- p. 61 - poor lambing after hard winter because ewes lacked nourishment for lambs.
- p. 119 - conversation - Charlie Russell
- p. 123 - sure high sign
- p. 125 - Russell wd change things; ~~by~~ signify by holding up 1 finger.  
Stretcher: "Russell, that finger 7 yrs is too long already."
- p. 132 - hundy-house: swiftly brotchel
- p. 138 - 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 <sup>M</sup>cCaskill homestead before it was Hebnerized...

money musk

musk of money

- ww

Bygone

221 - 1st combine in Dupuyer, 1914

- use a "white combine" (hail)

bale hooks--like pirate hands

Numbers were

math was a language Alec was born knowing

Alec was enough older...

(use with descptn 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.)

Rygone

97- women used ride to dance with best dress tied behind saddle  
- use 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 Hebners?

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.

changed in Dec. '88 revise

"Aw, that <sup>bastardly</sup> 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."

rearranged and left out 1st line in Jan. '89 revise.

for thinking something like that is cute.)

*I needed  
more  
to*

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

*?*

changed in Feb '89 revise

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.

changed in Feb. '89 revise

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 Beona.

{ 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

*in the  
malfunctioned  
romance  
change?*

changed in Feb. '89 revise

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 hñh 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:

*Mavis's  
phone  
call  
interrupts.*

changed in Feb. '89 revise



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."

changed in summer '89 revise

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.

'89 summer

Just a world of hay

dialogue  
(Facing North)

just worlds of grass

cut in Dec. '89 revise

[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 *e*  
over out here fifteen miles from anywhere. Better not to include the  
Bago on its back in turtles all the way down.]

insert some of this, either into their  
drive into GV committee night or in  
Jick's drive up English Crk the day  
before

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." I