decision made between the thighs
like most decisions made between the thighs
this one had after shots
She still is a mystery to me—unlike other ranch cooks
Dad whistling tunelessly: Wee Doch and Doris, Squaws Along the Yukon, Springtime in Rockies
one of them dreaming of NY and second fame, the other fumbling for his next bottle of whiskey
you were so damn bashful, a friend of my father's grunts. Hard to get a word out of yuh.
the kids' dad
the first word of a secret, and no more
The railroad in its townless run across the county
Pete McCabe call over to cafe for steaks: Save us three.
a man who talked as some peple sing
from Ann Hubenthal, 7/18/77:

of Dad's marriage to Fern: "I couldn't see that, with that little child....She thought everything should come in a cloud for her... But she had hate in her, she was full of hate..."

(called "Ann Hoop")
Finnigan's some where-beyond-Helsinki accent as if he was breaking glass with his teeth.
kerosene light of campsite--like star on mountainside
shepherdess 2 at Camas
three people corded together by bloodline
Rudy: walked with all his stride from waist down, like soldier marching

With *shovel* on his soldier, he had a very military look
Someone about me, to Dad: 'That kid's smarter than he knows what to do with.'
Mickey Allen's funny, wadded face
sheep: their long clown faces in ruffs of wool
pushing in clutch of pickup so I could move gearshift and lie down on seat
of Grandma: "There was some that said they didn't see how she could take over the daughter's husband, and the child too. But I said there was love there, that was the way of it."

feeling the light which glimmered to the foot of my bed, straight from the two of them and their charged talk
She told me once of a neighbor, a homesteader, with a head huge and twisted as an ogre's. He had left his skull to medical science after his death. As I squirmed a bit at the story, she chuckled and said in her declaring style: "Headless Man into heaven."
too deep for me
it was like a bosun’s mate and opening a candy store
p. 30 of 1st draft: add reading material from SatEvePost and Life, maybe Collier's.
Shep did not survive the winter, but the Camas had endless other dogs.
And so Dad stayed on with McGrath not as his foreman, but his right-hand man, one of those odd relationships my family seemed to invent.
Shep's death
outhouse
behinder (rump)
I see, said the blind man
bouncing a ball between bedroom and kitchen
manful coffee
sour tarry coffee
(Dad's cooking for us)
G'ma: I deaded him
Even her looks changed to defy that life. The one luxury of the cows was unending butter and cream; her cooking feasted on them, and she broadened and squared.
The two of us pondered the fuzz on my upper lip. At the precise age when my other boys were praying for whiskers, I was trying to get rid of a downy shadow. As with everything else, G'ma had been thru it before: she came up with a white salve called a depilatory which took off the fuzz, all right, and felt as if my lip were going with it.
That displeasure corked each sentence.
The grownups had their own game of imagination, which was gossip. On our side of the tracks—I had little idea of how people lived on the other side of them—Kate Badgett kept her tongue at a steady courier's gait.
The two of us pondered my first beard, a pale rim of fuzz on my upper lip.
Deviling in us
rewardful
sitting silent as doorstops
G'ma and dogs: she would break into rough-house play with them, setting off wild barking and jumping which always ended with scratched and bleeding arms. In time, the skin between wrist and elbow looked like a torture victims, white nicks of scar all the length...
with a hatchet nose and an ax of a jaw
She despised magpies: GIT!
G'ma provided me delayed memory of childhood; how she dandled me and read to me, how I said "poor me," raced down the hill from big tree, asked her, "Sing, Gramma: ah-ah-ah. . ."
Tom Ringer would stop Mrs. Holmes on street, concerned about how I was doing in school; stop her on his slow rounds uptown; he lived then in cabin behind motel (?), a kind of charity. I was his one grandchild at the time.

Dad made me visit Tom Ringer: he was gray, bent, colossal nose, musty, everything of the cabin gray.
things under beds as if ballasting the house
mewls of wind came in under the bedroom window

When I woke in the mornings, fine drifts of snow would be on the sill like a spill of sugar.
the scrushing sound of boots on silk-dry snow
July 4, 1923: Dad played baseball at Sixteen as relays from telegraph office brought round-by-round account of Dempsey-Gibbons fight at Shelby.
She was born when a man named Grover Cleveland was President. That she did not know what who that was bespeaks her upbringing. She was perpetually baffled that there had been two Presidents Roosevelt.
my pingponging life: # of places I had lived, such as house with Wally and Joyce where toilet was in cellar, trap door was in middle of kitchen.
It was noticeable that McGrath's bluster did not hit on Dad or Grandma; he had a clever bully's instinct about who to leave alone.
poor me
ideas in place like logs of a stockade—upright, pointy and entirely wooden.
Mrs. Snider's mention of Roosevelt sons, S asking what that had to do with anything
snoose: Rudy chewed it, claimed mosquitoes never bothered him while he irrigated
Dad's naming of me: wanted to avoid juniors
--had no idea the name was Russian
Snider's potato story: "blaze, damn ye!"
I began to be dismayed about the way my hair forever parted in the middle of my head, draping away to both sides like fountain flows: was I going to go through life like that? Not if Grandma could help it. She took a nylon stocking...
G'mas thunderous snoring, waking herself up, mad at herself
riding with McGrath to open gates

I was expert gate opener, running up to wire,
6 seconds saved pleased him.
Mickey-and-Rudy vanish to ranch on Sun River.
The one annoyance I could do was to see her with her teeth out. After a time or two I respected this, and would veer away or turn my back if I saw it happening.
In that time, when I was a ten-eleven-twelve-year-old,
six-seven-eight
Walter Badgett: a hand as big as my face
Badgetts: those two serene old outlaws
Mrs. Badgett pillowed in the fat of her body
They were in the sort of outliving contest which a very old couple sometimes seem to be having, each aging against the other instead of against time. Naturally, Kate would win.
I am the bonus child, son of her daughter and promising in my own right—How much was I the shadow of my mother? Not much, as it turned out.
I was a gift, a bonus chance to raise
G'ma wore bib overalls only when no one could see her.
the smoke hue of moss agates
husked

Lady

used
Spots of light came in around the gear-housings and driveshafts...
Ringling dimensions: (7/22/77)

70 paces from G'ma's house to Badgetts

150 yds to depot
Trailing to reservation: wire rings of cans (tin dogs)
All and, ranges 7 mist hazy to a thin blue, as if behind smoke. Mts 4 miles & mls 8 mls.
C's arrival b 3 Forbs
Fred Buckingham on Rankin cattle:

"He had cattle, oh we were all afraid of 'em. A storm would come and they'd come up the road from Rock Creek, and they were reaching through the fences eating weeds and willows; people were scared of 'em 'cause if they broke in they'd eat you out in one night."
I can see her toughening in those years, the salt of sweat toughening her personality.
As if a fifth season had been added to the year
C'ma driving jeep on. resvitn
my notion for me to become pharmacist: Dad talked himself around to it
Reservation grass had been reason luring Dad to north.
Dad and I listened to baseball games on battery radio; G'ma to morning soap operas.
I took an awkward straddle of classes, Latin on the one hand and vocational agriculture on the other. They melded only when I came across the textbook narrative, Galba est agricola...
Trailer house about 20 feet long (?)  
Dad and I shared bed across one end, G'ma made down ledge of bed hear the table.
death of Tip and Kitten in last reservation summer: Tip from running with dog pack, Kitten apparently to an eagle. (Earlier describe Kitten's finding us after trailer moves)
detail of reservation life: G'ma crocheting, getting thread mixed "six ways to Sunday"
Description of daily life in trailer house on reserv--listening to baseball games, the heat, the lack of space in one of world's expanses, slow hours, sunsets
did not want to move during my senior year in high school; if there were no solid timbers in their life, there should be one in mine... (contrast with WSS)
Seagulls were her new nemesis, as seagulls had been magpies.

Seagulls, the first she or I had seen; Dad recognized from his winter on the coast. I thought they were remarkable, sailing in all this distance from the ocean to pick over the fields; she disliked them at once, recognizing that they scavenged as avidly (still disdainful of gulls when she visited us in Seattle; as called them "sharks").
Resvtn: bunchgrass like quivers of tan arrows with slim white tips
Kitten: never around when we moved camp, but either that night or in morning would come purring in to the new site.
For good measure, she added a cat, and without asking opinions named it Kitten.
As ever, we were neither one situation nor the other. On the other reservation allotments, ranchers supplied the herding camps. We were both rancher and herder, and so did our own scrabbling.

A makeshift family that lived in half a house for 2/3 of a year and then trooped off onto the prairie to live more oddly still. (yet)
an army of mountains, drawn in battalions south to north as far as could be seen
the mastering mountains
the carom-line of mountains
Dad's cooking: white gravy
Collins scored on 89-yd run on 1st play of season
Mrs. Tidyman: at news of disaster, would begin to wish it involved no one from a town she knew, then a state, and on up until the wish was that no one at all had been involved.
Frances Tidyman: walked leaning forward from waist, like ship's figurehead prowing through sea of life.
As J. Churchman says, this place is 'back of the neck of the world' (Jensen ranch).
Mrs. Tidyman told me the man had been a Rhodes Scholar, an honor so vast I didn’t entirely understand what it was. He walked across the plowed field toward where I was running the harrow. “What is this, a discer?” he asked, and I learned at once that Rhodes Scholars didn’t know everything.
the Old Auditorium
hot water well
Weird winter. My dog fell thru the ice and drowned before any of us missed him. Dad led snowplow in circle. His and Fern's best time together. Going to town by sled. I rode off a cutbank on my sled and opened a knee. Dad at JB's, saw the chinook break winter.
The quickest parts of his brain, as they were several
Standing as if his strut had stopped mid-stride
He was, as I have said, only about five and a half feet tall. He weighed only 135 pounds or so. But his width...like a playing card.
I'd rather scratch c. chickens than work for that bastard.
six sons, named like the rollcall of a Highlands regiment
2 young half-strangers, like past neighbors
glimpsed years after
it must have been the 1st time he laid hands on death
to the bone
like much else in this country's history, homesteads worked to an end, but not the one expected. They were not the makings of yeoman farms and ranches, but the quarters which held people until something else happened—like the apartments in immigrant ghettos.
when you don't know how you know
rodeo 1928: they took the town
It was like look from hot eye of a hawk.
Gertie: "You know how Dupuyer is. Once a year, everyone gets at each other's throats." (My point: rest of time, Dupuyer remarkably friendly and even-tempered.)
my hair made me stand out, when I wasn't sure I wanted to
Hnnf! Balloon ascension
Some folks say they get tired of their own cooking.

I never have (and would dig into her meal)
There was a sheen to her talk, like the nap of very old and odd-colored velvet. Anything which lay lengthwise was longways to her. The stanchions of a barn were stanchels, and the cows themselves were a child's word of my mother's, merseys.
drift of snow thru Ringling bedroom window like spilled sugar bowl
He's quite the Snider.
a wand of a woman

My mother had been a wand of a woman, but this grandmother was an oak stump.
On arriving in WSS to teach just after WWII:
"The town didn't look too perky. It had been through a Depression and a world war, and obviously nobody had built anything or painted anything or cleaned anything for twenty years."

On arriving, off the bus at old Sherman Hotel, S asked hotel man Joe Buckley if there were lockers he could check his baggage into. "Just throw it there in the corner," he was told. "But I'd like to check it..." "Just throw it there in the corner!" When he came back for it in a day or so, it was there in the corner.

Learning that S had taken a job in WSS, people said to him, "Oh, that's the place with a hotel in the middle of the street." He came expecting to see a hotel athwart the street, with traffic divvying around it on both sides.

Notes that WSS, rough looking as it is in most respects, has had two points of pride: its cemetery and its schools.
Carlton arrived, with his stories of the girl he had left in the last town. A rancher's daughter, she had been given a Jeep to herd her father's sheep with. C began meeting her, and they would get naked in the Jeep; he would take her; then they would roar after the straying sheep and round them in. "Run right over those woolly bastards if they didn't move fast enough." I didn't know whether to be more astonished at the notion of a girl naked in a Jeep or at running over a sheep.

fondle one another until she could straddle his lap - (until one could straddle other)

("in a jeep?" "Can crud")
the river of my boyhood flowed in the sky. (Weather, bearing storms like foam, or cargo: extended analogy)
We found that the neighbor to our east was an Indian, and a solid respectable rancher. Dad was amazed that an Indian could work and prosper.
Driving the Reservation ridgelines was like traveling over short grass islands, in a long grass sea.
Facing North

Rockies twining up into storm clouds w. I Depoyer
Rockies neepline of continent, surf of storm breaking over them & flooding toward us...
Years later I interviewed a man who had become famous in forestry, first as a chemist and then for his administrative skills. I asked how he had gone into the work, and he told me of deciding one day in an Indiana field that he would become a chemist. He looked at me belligerently (bellicosely; challenging) after telling me the abrupt story. But I only smiled and nodded, because it rang true with my own deciding....
Dupuyer had 00 houses, 00 people, 00 feet of sidewalk, 0 barns, 0 gas stations, 1 store, 0 restaurants, etc.
Splitted tongue of silence that comes when you first know a parent is dying, and it begins to croak all that has been unsaid...

...Then it declares, as it did then to me, "We're got to get you some doctoring."
At a canasta table, a heart attack comes to McGrath; he flings his cards as if blasted by lightning, and topples backwards dead.

(use concatenation of these--McGrath, Nellie, Badgetts--in final prism scene?)
told her.

My heart's just hanging by a th'ead, he said. I looked at him in surprise. The load on his heart was great, but its continuing strength was the one soundness in his health.
As we chose a tombstone for Dad, she said she wanted to be buried beside him, and to have her name on the same stone. Then she said No, not together on the stone; mm right alongside him.

...twin humps of granite against the walling mountains beyond the valley. (Use as last line of Endings?)
Changes: Dogie owned by gooddamn KC paper box company; sage plowed
Always startled by plume of smoke over W55
G'ma at the funeral home: OH Charlie, why did you have to die?
Charlie Doig, survivor of broncs and bear and all else, had begun to die
Dad's chest built up, the muscles stretching out to squeeze air into the failing lungs.
Breath dragged in and out of Dad grudgingly
Impossibly, he had become both thinner & larger—
exertions of his lungs building his chest to a shell.
he could scarcely have put breath on a mirror
he was everlastingly weak now
In twenty years, I had watched the two of them wear grooves into each other until at last the fit of their lives was a mutual comfort, a familiar necessity. It passed through acceptance, then beyond affection, and became love. My father came to lean his very life on my grandmother. And when he died, a presence went out of her life like something lacking in the air she breathed.
Endings

Oxygen had become all. - it all had thinned to. Whips holding him to life, like a breeze rwaddling a druid leaf along a fence.
It was not a time of steady gloom. I think that is true grief of it — that the four of us
Dad fishing with Leo

Endings used
One story more
(bear story prism)
Rumor went through its entire prism and **off both ends.**

(Cuban missile crisis)
I was neither a good soldier nor a poor one, only the outline of a soldier, like the targets on the firing range.
Holden, my closest friend and most opposite, ambushing his course work in a last blazing week after I had laid steady grinding siege to mine.

When I had begun to write fillers for magazine and was the sole undergraduate to have an article in the J school quarterly, he said: You're gonna be bigger than any of us, aren't you? I thought it over, as I did everything, and answered: No, Thomas, not necessarily so.
looking for house in Shelby, oil-field workers town. Next up to guy at urinal, finally ask him. His advice: There'll be a nigger maid at the door. Tell her you want Estelle. She's got legs like 00, will squeeze the daylight out of you. Squeeze... what was that all about? I tried to give him a dollar. Naw, spend it at the house, it'll be worth it.

He was right. And so was Carleton.

One thing I could not go back to NU without solving.
Ira Hayes from poetry file
If I was going to be bookish, I might as well do it in earnest & become a prof'.' (make a job of it)
If you had said you were going to run an opium den, she would have come around to the side of opium dens, C said once.
becoming father to my father

it found it to wrestle with, to deal it.
There was all grief on earth in that verdict, with its fearsome memory of my mother's long agony.
breastbone
memory as a kind of homesickness
where

Spaced as I am between having been young and not quite yet middle-aged
Dad and Jehovah’s Witnesses, after his death scene
final line: Of where, now, my outline meets the air that knew theirs.
a two-day rain, which was all the rain we could imagine
If it would come and go cleanly, like the day-night turn of the earth.
Kin, clan. son. Where do the words come from?
In my mind, I mean; I know that in the language, they arrive from the clangs and soughs of tongues now silent a thousand years into the past—sound arriving, in its way, like the light from a gone star.

blood & breed, beauty & death

grandson & grandma
grand of
Unaccountably, the clubbings in Chicago sent Dad furious: I thought this was a country where the police weren't supposed to beat up on people. About Vietnam, he had two attitudes: he wanted his country not to lose the war, and he wanted his son not to get over there and be blown to bits. I was most sure about the second part of that
Dad's joking: dialect stories, most of them still burred with his Scots. How many critters on that side. Five? As the Dutch fellow says, as many as the thumbs on the end of mine hand.
prism before North: Noon was the magic time. The day changed then, in heat, quality of light, outlook, work. It was not an exact hour, but when lunch was eaten. Reckoned the day by it: "After noon we'll..." "Let's get this done by noon..." "better noon up, I guess"
As disease wore at him, he seemed to resent his own country's ailments: "I thought this was a country where police weren't supposed to beat people."
G'ma's quilts: colored squares small as crackers.

Like fields of flags from all the universe; or semaphores: tartans
The dying of a parent is a baffling time.
I was plugging away in graduate school, the only way I have ever known to get a thing done.
Vet apex entering house & playing Nola:
doo-tee-doo-tee-dooty-doo...
They always assumed I knew what I was doing, which was a tremendous assumption.
I have no instinct for the deep waters of my profession
I had read somewhere of a writer who liked to claim that he was better than anybody who was faster, and faster than anybody who was better, and that was the brag I made in my head...
(at Decatur, TR)

My editorials never went far or deep, but they sang off the mark (quote some of best leads)
Begin with letter from G'ma; use as counterpoint throughout ch.
Her expressions were taut: the usual one was a quick disgusted
hmmph. But a surprise flick of humor mould come with it.
When the wind would swirl her dress up, there would be: hmmph!
Balloon ascension!
The nation was in wars I despised and feared—in Asian rice paddies, in its own streets—but the obliteration raging in my father was more vital to me.
when the spirit is homesick—homesickness of the spirit
waves flipped me like a tiny plaything
I said afterward that my face had a deeply resigned look, composed, accepting. (consigned)
As a boy, I heard this story from Dad a hundred times, and never enough.
"Kin" prism: change "points of light" to "pulses of light"?
tink--'48 winter, sound of team harness: ching tink, ching tink
Grandma called me "boy", especially after solitaire triumphs: I got a game, boy, what do you think of that?
Dad's color blindness
Margaret Doig a family talisman
It is a dark secret of our family that Dad feared G'ma would take me.
he gave you opinions like a man paying out rope
The half-dark of a winter day
where the whips of wind had cut in
rainbarrel (esp. in Ringling, for soft water and to save carrying)