Wolf Point diary | Writings, photographs, ceramics, and paintings

Toni E. Gies

The University of Montana

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THE WOLF POINT DIARY:
WRITINGS, PHOTOGRAPHS, CERAMICS, AND PAINTINGS

By

Toni E. Gies

B.F.A. The University of Montana – 1967

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of
Masters of Arts in Fine Arts, Integrated Arts and Education

The University of Montana

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Approved by:

Chairperson

Dean, Graduate School

Date

8-7-03
The Project grew from my Creative Pulse participation at the University of Montana and my new, first year’s teaching experience in Wolf Point, Montana. It was to be a multi-media presentation that I would show in Missoula at the PARTV building during the Creative Pulse final session, in July of 2003.

After years of teaching, I moved to a new community in the fall of 2002 to teach high school art. It would be a tough place. A high teacher turnover reflected the difficulty of the job. More than an attempt to record an experience, this project became my survival kit. Here was something that gave me perspective, an emotional outlet and a challenge. I wanted to create a story in a body of work. I wanted to show this work. And I wanted to convey some of the problems faced in my new community.

This project was to be my first art show. I would publicly reveal my anxieties and insecurities about personal things as well as reservation life. I would find a meaningful way to incorporate my students into the work.

Specifically, the work included my diary, seventeen black and white photographs, an installation, and three paintings. The work, when presented, would include furniture I had refinished, painted or rebuilt. This setting would invite the viewer to read the diary, interact with the installation and view the photographs and the paintings.

The show was held in the PARTV building at the University of Montana on July 16, 2003 at 5:30 in the evening. Family, friends and supporters watched a video introduction, “Last Stand at the Little Bighorn”, viewed the art work and participated in a beverage and food reception. Many of the guests visited with me about my project. I was delighted with their response and enthusiasm for my work.
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Intent of the Project

The original intent of this project was to create a body of work consisting of a diary, paintings and photographs all reflecting my first year of teaching art at Wolf Point High School. Later I would add an installation using clay and fabric. I wrote in that proposal, “I surely do not have aspirations of saving the Native Americans”. My belief and philosophy, even before I found myself in the middle of a reservation, was that the people there would save themselves in spite of me. My main concerns and goals in my new teaching position were to be a great art teacher and survive, even flourish.

I soon began to see my project as a survival tool. The material I would produce was a way to express and record my feelings and reactions to this new place. Now that the show is over, I can see that it reflects my search for a sense of place and also footprints the ups and downs of being in quite a unique new place.

I have been making art almost all of my life. For much of my life, I have been giving away my art work in many forms. I like doing this for people who are important to me. There is little risk in giving art to people who love you. So, to create a body of work about my own experience in a new place was a risk. It was all about me and I wasn’t making something to give away. During my time in The Creative Pulse classes Dr. Bolton kept repeating, *do something important, about something important, in an artistic way*. My project involved the four commandments of a Creative Pulse Presentation, *risk, cost, irrevocability and rigor*. 
The Beginning, the Diary

Although my project had not been approved I began to journal the very day, July 31, 2002, when I drove to Wolf Point to rent living quarters. I began doing this in my own handwriting which is often ineligible. Thinking about the diary, I made three decisions: 1. The diary would be written and saved on my home computer so that I could read it, store it and compile it in one neat package. 2. Since I had no academic training for journal writing, I would make no rules about content or style. 3. Except for grammatical and spelling errors and exposure of student confidentiality, I would try to keep the content as it stood. There would not be massive editing to please future readers (see appendix 1, p. 19 to 59).

A daily recording did not always take place. The first few months of school, I found myself coming home late and I was unwilling to sit down to write about the day. Or, when I did sit down, the entries were short (see appendix 1, p.30).

Those first months passed, I was getting set up, not much happened. There was more time to write and relax in the evenings. The diary also became more important as the geographical isolation gripped me in the winter months. I began to enjoy recording impressions and events and ponder my reactions, feelings and frustrations. I see the diary now as a great map and sounding board of the first year (see appendix 1, p.59).

When the school year ended I stopped writing the diary. For a while I was relieved to take a break from this activity as I was moving into a different house and getting ready
to put on a show of this work in Missoula. But now I know that I will continue with the
diary next fall. I like looking back at where I was and I also look forward to writing
about where I am going. It was from the diary that I got the idea for the tea set napkins
(see appendix 3, p. 27). Several times I looked back into the diary and re-read my
reactions to the fire, the holdup at the Catholic Church and the racism allegations (see
appendix 1, p. 27, 29, 37, 38, 39). I noticed that I mentioned saving the newspaper
articles. Looking through my desk and papers I found two of the articles. The next week
I asked the librarian for the other article to copy. Some of the Art students had been
making t-shirt transfers on the computer. Perhaps, I thought, I might make some
transfers of these articles onto a tablecloth or napkins and use them with the tea set (see
appendix 3, p. 27).

**The Photographs**

I began to photograph on August 18, 2002, the day I moved into my rented house. At
first I took pictures of predictable things like my new house, the school, the endless road
between Roundup and Wolf Point. Thinking about the photographic process and the eyes
of the viewer, me, brought back memories about James Elkins, a teacher of mine while I
attended the Art Institute in Chicago at the end of my second summer in The Creative
Pulse. Jim had written a book called *How to Use Your Eyes* and instructed my institute
class that summer about learning to see the world around us with more concentration and
patience than one usually does in the ordinary process of seeing/looking. Much of what he said I have forgotten but the very beginning of the preface of his book has always remained with me.

"Our eyes are far too good for us. They show us so much that we can't take it all in, so we shut out most of the world, and try to look at things as briskly and efficiently as possible. (Elkins, 2000, VII)

Taking this to heart I made sure I always had the camera close and took time to look at images I passed by daily and screened out with hardly a thought. So, when I went by the gravel pit on the way to the glass shop I took a good look around and saw the beer bottle in the puddle (see appendix 2, p. 62). On another trip to pick up glass I noticed the General Mills granaries (see appendix 2, p. 66). Sometimes I used color film and sometimes I switched to black and white. After a few months of this I realized I was thinking in color to illustrate the diary and in black and white images for photographs to frame and show. The subject matter also was different. The color photographs were more personal in nature. Many of these included friends, children and grandchildren and family vacations. The black and white photographs were more about place (see appendix 2, p. 60 to 69).

Every morning the local radio station has a program called Wolf Point, City of Destiny. The Program is a historic and nostalgic replay of local, state and national history. I learned a great deal from this program. Also, I became aware of my enormous lack of knowledge about local history. In one school year I could not get a grip on or reflect Wolf Point history in my photographs With these conclusions in mind and while
listening to that radio program every morning I decided I wanted my photographs to show Wolf point just as I saw it going and coming from school, running errands, or driving the area roads when traveling to other towns or visiting new friends. Perhaps there would be community events I would want to photograph. Also, I wanted to photograph students in the school art room making art because they were my focus for several hours every day. I would do this just simply by taking pictures of students engaged in activities in the classroom. When I shot the black and white photographs for the show I would not set out to make a complex pictorial overview of everything I experienced. As I selected images to print I would think again of Jim Elkins and choose ones that just really grabbed me and got my attention, either by irony, beauty or subject matter. They might appear to be ordinary things but I would look hard to see what was extraordinary or interesting beyond the obvious. So, for instance, one day I saw the Yellowjacket’s Baseball bus alongside Water Hole 1. Although the bus was simply stopped at the intersection it appeared to be stopped at the Water Hole for refreshments. Another example is the photograph of an unknown man sitting on the Redstone Monument with the word furniture also in the photograph. (See appendix 2, p. 65, 66).

Photographing students was not as easy as I had thought. My first attempts at this alerted me to the impracticality of this idea. First, I had to stop what I was doing to take photographs. Second, students more often than not stopped what they were doing while I photographed them or others. And, thirdly, they became very interested in the camera. I knew I could not get the camera out and expect class to go on as usual. Neither could I
leave my camera out, on the desk, and risk it being dropped. Finally, one black and white photograph of kids working in the classroom turned out to be interesting and I included it in the show. The photograph shows five students at their tables working with materials. They are planning and drawing while visiting with each other. Only one student is looking up at the camera. The mixture of art materials, posted classroom rules, paintings, decorated ceiling tiles, storage shelves and desks resembles a patchwork quilt. (See appendix 2, p. 67). Still, I concluded that I needed another idea, something more symbolic and deep, that would include students into my work. I tried drawing portraits of my Art 2 class. It seemed to fit as this class of students was also drawing portraits of each other and themselves. As I was drawing I could not come up with a way to incorporate this work into the show in a way that I thought would fit with everything else. I did several of these portraits and just used them in class to discuss style, drawing materials and the use of line and color. Somehow, in some manner, I believed I would be able to include the segment of humanity I strove to nurture five days a week into the body of work I was creating. An idea would come to me; I just had to be ready.

Sometimes, while taking color photographs for the diary, I included the polka-dotted paper mache chicken. It was fun and even when I did this downtown at the movie theatre few pedestrians noticed or reacted. This, I found pretty amusing.

After I had painted Purse Pursuant it seemed interesting to photograph the polka-dotted paper maché chicken using black and white film in the chicken yard at the Schwinden farm. The idea of a chicken in a coop reflected my own dilemma. I like a
secure home and workplace but I am always looking for another adventure. These were wonderful black and white photographs and I included them in the show. My daughter Lyn and I hung three of them on the walls on either side of the *Purse Pursuant* painting. And, I even used one on the card I created to announce my show (see appendix 2, p. 68, 69) (see appendix 5, p. 84).

### The Tea Set

*Reservation Tea*

Students, that’s what teaching is all about. I kept searching for a way to include them in my project, in a meaningful and unique way. At this time I began to feel the pressure from problems in the school and the community that appeared to be unsolvable. Many students seemed to be slipping through the cracks. Many dropped out of school or Art class. Other students were getting past the attendance rules; they skipped classes and then, somehow, received credit. There were more and more meetings and petitions for reinstatement after prolonged absences. Perhaps I was just getting to know students better but, alcoholism, drugs, domestic violence, and stabbings were problems I now got information about from kids who were witnesses, relatives or victims. Not feeling the pain, tension and sorrow in all of this was impossible. I tried to find positive and enjoyable moments with each student, every day. Only by doing this could I continue to have an enriching classroom for everyone. Sometimes it worked, sometimes it did not.
During Thanksgiving vacation Peter Lesperance and Kim Grocholski, teachers I know well, had their apartment burned. The fire was started by students. I was shocked, saddened and I also felt threatened by this act of vandalism.

Things settled down for a while until February 28, 2003 when a local man, Elroy Martin, entered the Immaculate Conception Church just a few blocks from my classroom and held Sister Mary and Linda Johnson, the church secretary, at knife point inside a room. Down the street at the school we were put in lockup which meant that no one was allowed to enter or leave the building. Window blinds were closed and both students and teachers remained inside the classrooms. We were given a continuous update of the situation at the church until Martin was subdued and taken to the hospital. Later, he was jailed. During eighth period class one of the students told me the church secretary was her aunt. When I look back it seems like that whole school building just held its breath until everyone left for the day.

In late February, Christine Rose, a representative from STAR, Students and Teachers Against Racism, came to the reservation and participated in an education forum sponsored by the Wolf Point Community Organization. During her visit she toured the North Side School with some other concerned forum participants. One of those participants was Alice Allrunner who then filed a complaint against the Wolf Point Schools with the U. S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights. In April, articles accusing the school district of discrimination and abuse appeared in both the Wotanin Wowapi (weekly tribal newspaper) and The Herald News (weekly Wolf Point
newspaper). A synopsis of these articles also appeared in other Montana newspapers. In all of my teaching years I had not taught in a school district where racism and neglect had been investigated by the United States Department of Education.

Because these things affected me deeply they were bound to influence my art work. In fact, they would be the focus of much of the work. The tension of the years experiences came to a head one day in the art classroom, for me, when I received a form which required a count, using abbreviations, categorizing all art students. I did not understand these abbreviations. Upon inquiry I learned that this was a known vocabulary amongst existing staff members. Some of the abbreviations stood for registered tribal member and non-registered tribal member categorized as Native American. Why the classroom teacher should or would know this information was a mystery to me. I found out that this classification was about funding. Such information, I thought must be available in higher administrative places and surely not something the classroom teacher would know or even need to know. Should I be asking each child to tell me what category he or she fit into? I was upset and hesitated because I did not really desire to distinguish my students from each other in any manner. I wanted to see individuals, not race or statistics. I equated it to the students as similar to wearing the Star of David. “Setting people apart”, I stated, “is risky business for everyone involved.” Even though I received an explanation for this, it seemed wrong. The counselor agreed to take responsibility for filling out my forms.
At this time one of the art classes was making clay tea pots. It struck me that a tea pot made with student hands traced into clay, red hands, white hands and hands that were both red and white might be a powerful statement. What if the tea pot made with hands leaked, had holes? What if it was not usable, would not hold water? Wouldn’t this symbolize the situation on the reservation and in the school? Quickly I rolled out some clay and asked students permission to trace their hands. Several placed their hands on top of the slabs I had rolled out from red and white clay. I cut out the hands and made a tea pot. The effect was one I did like. The students liked it too. As I worked on the piece, it helped to relieve some of the tension I personally felt about living and teaching in this community. Perhaps it was just the feel of the clay. But I think it was also seeing some beauty emerge. Hands are such a universal thing. We study our own and others on a daily basis. The sheer humanity of hands twisted together to form the tea pot was wonderful to see. I liked it that those hands were ones I had seen struggle to create art. One student even commented about liking her hands being included in the tea pot (see appendix 3, p. 71).

I decided I would keep going and create a whole tea set symbolizing racial mixing, tensions, differences and sameness. I began to trace student hands. Using red clay slabs and white clay slabs and slabs that were mixtures of both colors, I just traced and cut out as many student hands as I thought I would need. I kept the hands in large buckets, each hand separately wrapped in plastic and tightly covered to keep it moist. The hands kept well this way until I needed them. One day a very tiny child passed by
the art classroom door with his mother. Thinking I had no small hands, I recruited him, quickly rolled out a clay slab, and traced his hands too. I had buckets of hands. And I needed them, for some fell apart when I began to shape the clay pieces. I built cups, plates and a cream and sugar set to accompany the tea pot. All of the ceramic pieces were finished with a clear glaze. The use of this glaze gave every piece a finished look without covering up any of the beauty or blemishes. It revealed the bonding, dripping, merging and mingling of colors, fingers and folds (see appendix 3, p. 71 to 77).

I liked the idea of a tea set actually on a table with chairs ready to seat someone. Now, who would be the participants? The idea of an installation took shape. Later I would name this installation, *Reservation Tea*. I would put the tea set on my small round table and place the four chairs in front of each place setting (see appendix 3, p.76, 77). Then I decided to make a muslin tablecloth and place words or images around the tea set. Writing on the table cloth did not work. It looked busy, and I did not like the way people might just pass by or simply look at everything. Viewers were okay but I wanted people to sit down in the chairs. They should do something while sitting around the table. I made muslin napkins and first wrote on them using quotes from treaties from famous Indian Chiefs. These quotes seemed removed from me in this place, and my present. One night, while writing in my diary, I got out my newspaper clippings from the fire, the church holdup and the racism allegations in the schools. These incidents did affect this community, and me, over the past year. I decided to make mirror image transfers from the articles and iron these onto the napkins. Now, people could sit down at the table,
actually take up the napkin at their place, unfold it and read. To continue reading a participant might move or ask someone else to exchange napkins. This process seemed critical (see appendix 3, p. 75, 76, and 77).

The Paintings

Taped to my computer desk is a list of images I might paint. Some things on the list were general like “view from north side of house”. But, as time passed, a few items on the list stuck with me and ideas for paintings began to form. One idea read, “Painted landscape with collaged Indian village using local newspapers for material.” My collage pieces would be cut from the Wotanin Wowapi. Against an acrylic landscape I built an Indian village with the paper pieces. I rebuilt this village several times. This painting did not say anything; it looked terribly busy and way too cute. Putting it aside I picked it up a few months later. During that time I had thought about manifest destiny and what that might really mean, visually. About this time I scraped up a Van Gogh print that was lying around in my art closet. I began to toy with the idea of using it instead of my own landscape, adding images to it from the Wotanin Wowapi papers I had saved. Actually I was influenced in this by another local teacher and artist, Steve Muhs as he often does this in his work. Also, I had students who were doing this sort of work. Creating teepees I arranged them on the Van Gogh canvas and then I added shields to the fence. I experimented with animals, and people, clipping and assembling these from the papers
and arranging them around the teepees. The scene was too complicated. So, I removed everything but one teepee with a shield on its side that said, *Assiniboine-Sioux*. I also left a wolf in the picture. To me, this picture now represented manifest destiny. My belief is that the West became so successfully settled and cultivated by immigrants from Europe, or European ancestry that you might step into many a back yard in Montana, even Wolf Point and think you were in Europe. So onto this Van Gogh painting of some European yard with grass, a tree and a stick fence I had imposed the elegant shape of a teepee and also a menacing looking wolf. This particular wolf is often photographed for the newspapers. It stands, fully stuffed and encased in a glass box, in the foyer of Wolf Point High School. Several times a year the wolf appears in both the *Wotanin Wowapi* and the *Herald News*. Often it is surrounded by students or teachers who have received some kind of honor or recognition. This statement seemed pretty powerful. The image was about some heavy subject matter. After all, in conquering and cultivating the west one civilization dominated another and changed the landscape, the ecology and the remaining people forever (see appendix 4, p. 80).

Another idea I put on my list was “Money and bills along with some kind of self portrait”. The image I visualized would show my obsession with these two things. After all, my decision to teach in Wolf Point was largely based on a substantial salary increase which would boost my retirement and improve my life-style. While I did not yet see a clear image, I knew it would be a self portrait and that the background was important. I gathered a sizeable box of receipts. One day I spotted some paper play
money at a store and I bought it. I also made copies of the different denominations of currency, ranging from a dollar bill to a hundred dollar bill. Placing some diluted glue in a container near a canvas in the living room, I began to cut, glue, and piece together a background of money and receipts. This background started out as largely receipts which were quite uninteresting, so I placed more copies of money on the canvas. I liked the larger copies of currency, best (see appendix 4, p. 81).

An evening bag, cherished for sentimental reasons, kept surfacing in one of my dresser drawers. Finally I took it out of the drawer and placed a close-up photograph of myself in the opening. This, I decided, would make a great portrait. Time, trouble and experience have made me cautious. Once, I never thought much about money. Caution was just a word I read on traffic signs. How could I show this development? On a cold day, looking around my house and seeking answers for an addition to the visual images, I spotted my paper maché chicken. It had been made for me by my friend Sherrill Funk when I explained to her that I wanted a black chicken in my life with big white polka-dots. The chicken, I thought, is like me, I am “chicken”. I painted the chicken onto the canvas right next to the painted purse which contained my eyes staring out from its unzipped opening. These images seemed right. I called it Purse Pursuant (see appendix 4, p. 81).

After Thanksgiving and the fire in Peter and Kim’s apartment, I came home one cold Friday afternoon from school. I got out an old frame I had prepared with a canvas in it and began to paint the butterfly-flower painting that went into my final show.
Outside my small house a storm raged. Inside, I worked through the weekend putting an embryo into the root ball and making the floral part very bright and colorful. I wanted to create a beautiful, magical flower that looked also, like a butterfly. The flower is leaning over, perhaps struggling to stand upright. The background suggests green ground with a blue sky and is pretty plain except for a piece of curtain ruffle that is attached and painted into the landscape (see appendix 4, p. 79). All of this time, as I painted, I was thinking about how Peter and Kim felt when they returned from Thanksgiving vacation to a burnt out home. I wanted them to be safe, and I wanted to be safe too. The painting, of course, made none of us safe. But the process certainly calmed my nerves. And, being symbolically tucked up in a root ball in the warm earth was very similar to me, painting away in my small house cocooned in a blizzard.

The Show

On July 12, and 13, 2003 I loaded up my truck with everything for the show. When I arrived in Missoula my friend Tom Schilke helped me with last minute framing. On the day of the show, Wednesday July 16, 2003, my daughter Lyn arrived early to help me set up everything along with John Bercier and Teresa Heil, two art teachers who had been in my Creative Pulse group the previous summer (see appendix 5, p. 83, 84). At 5:30 that evening I introduced the show to the Creative Pulse students and my invited guests in the Masquer Theatre and I read a short statement about my exhibit. The Wolf
Point Diary, I stated, was a survival tool for me during this past year when I taught Art in Wolf Point. The town of Wolf Point, I explained was surrounded by the Assiniboine-Sioux reservation. Because I could not bring Wolf Point to Missoula I would take the viewers to a reservation via a video depicting the Native American version of the Last Stand at the Little Big Horn. By Paul Stekler and James Welsh. I gave some statistics about the Native American population in the school and started the video.

When the video was over everyone went into the foyer of the PARTV building where the art exhibit was set up. Viewers were enthusiastic and interested in all of the aspects of the show and had many comments about the diary, photographs, paintings and tea set. One young man, whom I did not know, seemed especially interested and explained to me that he was from Wolf Point but was currently living in Missoula. He had been in Wolf Point the previous week visiting his parents and a neighbor had told him about the show and suggested he attend. He said he was glad he had taken her advice. I was pleased with the guests' responses and answered many questions about my experience, the place and the students.

**Conclusion**

This is certainly a milestone in my life. I had risked showing my work. The show was over; it had been seen and could not be taken back. The event, the entire experience, was irrevocable. I had a show in a public place and people I both knew and
did not know had looked it, and me, over. While it is thrilling to have someone like something you do, I find I was more touched by people’s questions and our shared commonalities about some of the writing and the work. Measuring the cost in time, money and stress seems pointless after the fact. Where have I gone with this and where am I going? As I wrote this paper I thought I almost had to complete the entire process of putting an exhibit together, go through the actual event and pack it back up to understand what I had done. In a comprehensive way I have recorded, analyzed, and created a body of work about my experiences.

The important cost, for me, was putting my personal issues, insecurities and ideas out there for other people to see. During the very first week in the Creative Pulse I was almost frozen and could not give that first personal performance. There is also some cost in analyzing what you have done. It is a bit like stripping naked and trying to count one’s bones. The reward, once I held the exhibit and wrote about everything in this very paper, is great. Clarity, about me, my motivation and my goals is a grounding process. As I near the end of this process I feel more centered and ready for what comes next in my life. So, yes, I have come a long way and can now go further with less anxiety and more confidence. I will never be quite as hesitant or unsure when exposing my work, my ideas or myself to others. Rigor, plain and simple, this was work. Finally, I did something important, about something important, in an artistic way. I did it my way!
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APPENDIX 1
7/31/02, Wednesday

It is early, around 8 and I am in my truck en-route to Wolf Point where I will teach high school art. I just stopped to walk around a bit and decided to put my first entry into my diary.

This is the action count as I drive along, eight cars, four trucks, two motorcycles, and a patrol car and then seventy nine miles of nothing finally three trucks passed me. The patrol car pulled me over and issued a courtesy ticket. The official ticket is a Montana Highway Patrol Warning and item two is marked. Below item two the ticket states: Exceeding Posted Seventy Miles per Hour Speed Limit. Officer Stephen Do ID 1499, Det 523. And so it goes.

Now it is 9:45 A.M. and I am in Jordan, en route to Wolf Point to look at an apartment. I got a late start as I overslept. As I left the house I had a headache. Still do. My feelings as I drove down the road were about being disconnected, in a void. I am already missing my home. But there is no turning back, only forward. My jaw hurts and I know I have been grinding my teeth in my sleep and also clenching my jaw. Returning to the homeless and rootless thing is difficult for me to do. I love my house in Roundup. I just don’t like the town.

You would think that I would be less anxious about my first day teaching at a new school. I have a flashback of my first day in first grade at Saint Leo’s Catholic Grade School. I remember looking back at mom and saw her leaving. Then I was swept away in a wash of bodies down the basement steps of the church. This basement became like a culvert filling too fast. It was very dark and I was swept along in a current of kids, noise, and confusion. The big nun leading us all resembled a black monster weaving down the hall. I really felt little, afraid and alone. Actually, my feelings are not so different now as I drive towards Wolf Point and a new teaching position. The change is that I might welcome an in-charge nun leading this parade.

Funny, I never really saw myself as a teacher for so long. I never dreamed I would move around so much. I have become Mrs. Harlow. She was a very tired teacher I had for English my sophomore or junior year in high school. She was probably divorced like me. If I were to research this bit about divorced, over fifty, in the job market, I might find that there are lots of women like me out there. I must remember not to look tired, run down and dull. Hell, I am just old enough that I probably look like all of those things to the kids I teach. No amount of hairdo, bright clothing or whatever can hide the age difference. The aged diva must face the music. Also I need to face the fact that I have more in common with the Mrs. Harlows of the world than I once thought. This might not be all bad. After all, I did not know the woman in a personal way.
Last night my Niece Tonja called and asked if I would go to India with her if she decides. “For what?” I asked. Tonja replied, “To adopt a child”. “Why India?” I queried. “Single women can adopt easily there” she stated. I said, “Yes, just give me three years. I need the retirement.” I think if she is serious, she could adopt a child in Chicago too. Maybe I will be too old to handle a child. She would marry if someone came along. She also said, “To help me.” Gee it is great to be needed. Those words were music to my ears.

About 35 miles out of Jordan I crossed by a dry creek and it brought home the fact that trees disappeared 15 miles out of Grass Range. They appeared briefly in a few foothills and are now gone again. The landscape is beautiful but I can see it will be hell in a blizzard. Civilization crops up occasionally with old tires marking the sides of cattle guards, occasional ranch or farm buildings, a few old shacks and a sparse peppering of grazing or laying down cows.

Jordan looks like an oasis as it has trees, cars and people. Reflecting, I see that I will view an apartment that costs $280.00 a month. It seems cheap. It includes some utilities. I don’t have any idea how nice or terrible such a place will be. What does $280 buy in Wolf Point? What to take? What to leave? How to plan and where to start? These are my nagging questions. And how will it be to teach so many Native Americans? Or, do I say Indians? What have I gotten myself into and out of? My headache is explained and I understand the overwhelming feeling and want it to go away. God help me and I hope my mother Jean is out there somewhere. I long for the life of a trust funded nary-do-well. Working for a living is hell and bothersome.

I have taken three photos between mile marker 222 and 223. This solitary landscape is empty and lonely and I am feeling the aloneness in my entire Id as I drive along. This is not just because I am far from my family. I am now far from almost everything. The day is hot. Construction stops me. A road resurfacing crew is at work here. Presently I am around thirty-five miles from Circle.

I have rented a small house from nice folks, Vern and Pat Weins. The house costs $350.00 a month. There is no shower. Nice yard. The town just ripples with the heat. While looking at possible rentals I saw some real dumps. In desperation, I went up to the nursing home to see if there were any empty apartments there for the interim. The nurse told me about the Wein’s house and came out onto the sidewalk to point it out to me. I am relieved. The house is a bit small but still a roof. It will do.
8/18/02, Sunday

Jay and Karen helped me move. It went real well. Jay drove my truck. Karen drove their truck and I drove my car. All were jammed full of stuff. I came down last week with a load in my truck. It was a nice day. Now I am ready to start school. We went over to school with my files. Jay actually saw someone who remembered him when he was the counselor here back in the sixties.

Back at my house I thank Jay and Karen and wave them off. It is a blessing to have such good friends.

8/19/02, Monday

Today was a PIR day and I spent it getting my room ready.
Steve and Jackie had a party. There were lots of nice people at the party. One, Meg, is the art teacher in Poplar and Jackie’s good friend. The Muhs, Steve and Jackie, are great folks. Steve is the Art teacher for the grade schools and junior high school.

8/20/02, Tuesday

The power went off around eight. We had no ability to see. My room has no windows. It was awful. I had my little headlamp as the power was off at home too. Eerie, the building has no backup power source either. We are supposed to be preparing today so there are no students. Things in the Art room are a mess. We are to use our computers for grades and for attendance but we have had no training. Ugh. I am swamped. The room is swell but a mess and painted with copy art and drug messages. I am supposed to get it painted.

There has been very poor teacher orientation. This puts one into panic mode. The principal is ill. No one is in charge. Nice ladies in both offices have helped me and everyone else. Shit, the room is a mess, there is just lots of stuff and it is all over the place. The crowning blow, kits containing paint and color by numbers projects. I am eliminating them as fast as possible.
8/25/02, Sunday

I went to mass. The Catholic Church is nice and I like the priest. He is Father Steve Zabrocki. I have a bad attitude about the Catholic Church as I do feel it has rules set up by men. Divorce is also an issue. Well, I knew these things before.

I am overwhelmed at school and just keeping my head. I have some real big classes and Some of the kids are real jerks. However, it is similar to Roundup, the same old problems. The room is great except for lack of window. I am in a cave.

Many of the students just appear to want to do nothing. It seems the old teacher just worked on his computer and let the kids do as they pleased. I feel cheated that I have to use precious class time to get on the computer to take attendance. Usually, I get the kids started and then take the attendance.

8/26/02, Monday

I finished my syllabus and submitted it to Principal Morrison. Work is to begin next door from my house to mow down the old shacks, small house and basement. The basement is filling with raw sewage so that has to be repaired. Mr. and Mrs. Patch (from down on the corner) own the lot and want to eliminate the house because the kids who live there are selling drugs. When the dust settles I will have an empty lot next door or as I see it a little park of my own.

9/04/02, Monday

I have gone to Wolf Point Glass to get mirrors cut for the crafts class kaleidoscopes. I also had him cut the square piece of Plexiglas I had saved (from a project for my final personal performance at graduate school) into a round for my little table to protect the top. I think I will take adult education shop class if they have it in the winter. That way, while I am learning to use the shop tools which might come in handy for my art projects, I can re-finish my sewing table.

9/14/15/16, Saturday, Sunday and Monday

I returned to my house in Roundup and finished up moving the rest of the things I would need. I also put away the yard and garden things. Walking around, I said farewell to the first home I have had that I bought for myself, by myself. I have fears that it might be the last one too. Well, at least I did have it, and still do. I have arranged with Vivian Edwards to put the house up for sale.
9/27/02, Friday
Wolf Point Homecoming is today and tonight. I do not miss doing all of the things I did in Roundup except for the Distinguished Alumni Program. That was a great idea and one I am glad I started.

10/01/02, Tuesday
Almost 2 months have gone by since I moved to Wolf Point. I have spent most of the working days at school until 5 or 6, and often went back to school after dinner. I am tired at night. This evening I am lonely and having to face the fact that I am alone a great deal of the time. I measure things by how long I can last now as a worker. I pray for good health but eat butter and get little exercise. I fear becoming unemployable and wonder if I am up to the job of caring for myself. No one else is going to do it so I had better be able to survive and more. God I wish I had more and better resources and was younger. I must let go of all of my worries.

I love my schoolroom but I sure long for some friends. If I could only met someone who was even half as nice as Betsy to have as a friend it would make a big difference. I wish Diane was here. Diane would know so much about this place. Also, we could laugh together. I miss my children and my mom. I am truly blue tonight. So I guess I had better clean house or something. I want to live closer to my grandchildren before they grow up. Right now I am a mess. Well this is the world I live in but I don’t find any of it easy.

10/16/02, Wednesday
It is MEA time and I am off to Billings to ride over to Missoula with Kate and meet up with Betsy. We will have a great time. Spending time with old friends in Missoula for a few days, things just can’t get much better.

10/21/02, Monday
The weather in Missoula was wonderful. Betsy and I walked all over town, ate out, talked and had a real fine time. We went up to the Lubrecht Camp for an overnight stay and workshops. The speakers were awful. I think my opinion of Ted Waddell and Pat Zent has gone down the tubes. Both of these men were drunk and worthless on the group discussion thing. I liked Ted’s dog. But, I could have petted a nice pup in Missoula. It
was worse in the morning when they were hung over. The whole event was a mutual admiration society and not much more.

I had a list of needs from Cousin Bob’s store and stocked up real good. He gave Betsy and me the best Chinese noodles I have ever had. Bob treats me real well and I know he and Cousin FJ talk to my brothers about their concerns for me. I feel nourished.

Betsy seemed real healthy and has long hair. It did not seem like her. She has passed all of the checkups for her breast cancer. But she is taking estrogen again.

10/25/02 Friday

The first 9 weeks ends today. I have done grading on the computer with their program. Okay for an old broad. The grading was actually not that hard. My local telephone does not work real well so I need to get a new battery for the phone and/or figure out what is wrong.

11/07/02, Thursday

I have been mincing around for about 2 months doing a bit of thinking and I know I have to create a body of work for my final project. I have a few ideas. I am putting up a list on the computer desk. Time and energy is of the essence and my panic button is just below the surface of my aging and soft gut.

What can I say about this place where it seems hard to teach? Isolation. Isolation is the big problem and a large part of the essence of the place. Nothingness. When I was a kid I imagined going off to be in The French Foreign Legion. There was an advertisement for that job in the New Yorker. Being here is something like I imagined The French Foreign Legion. However, who would the enemy be? How would I recognize him or her? Would there really be an enemy? I honestly can say that the enemy is probably me. I do not know any more about this community than the day I showed up. Well, that may be stretching it but only by an inch, or teeny bit. I know a few people, I know a few places. But that is it. I can feel the tension of two cultures. There is the wide-open space. There is the lack of much to do. The countryside is surprisingly beautiful. I just don’t venture out into it.

On the third weekend of school I did get out and visit a ranch with some colleagues. We went to a cow bone graveyard. I picked up several skulls and some bones for use in class.
My art room where I teach is just a wonderful room after the one in Roundup. It has space, storage, tables, sinks and pretty fair light. But there is a huge amount of materials and equipment to sort through.

The thing about the school that is odd or difficult is the lack of windows. Hell, to just feel the weather; see the sky or gage the time of day by looking out would be great.

My house is old, drafty and pretty small. Toni, the roof does not leak. I miss odd things like my back deck and the sounds of that old neighborhood. Also, I miss my garage, dishwasher, clean walls, and clear windows. I feel far away from anyone I can be close to and, well, just talk. This is difficult. Life is full of surprise and change. I must see this as an experience, an adventure and a chance to build retirement. Hang on Toni and get the most out of this. What is the most? The book I am reading “Killing Custer is killing me.” I am putting it down.

11/09/02, Saturday

Wolf Point is having a snow storm. I baked great bread but ate too much. I wonder if I have this right. When Columbus arrived it is estimated that there were 73 million Indians on the Americas. 6 million in what is now the population in the good old USA. In 1900 there were 237 thousand Indians in the USA. Our government and people have something in common with Hitler when it comes to wiping out others. Or, is it survival of the fittest? Or is it just history? What the hell is it? Massacre on the Marias on Jan. 23, 1870, 173 people were killed.

I am busy planning to go to Chicago for Thanksgiving. I will drive to Minot or Williston. Then get on a plane and meet my middle child, Ley, in Chicago. I will be so glad to see him and my nieces Tonja, Amy, plus old friends who are just like family, Mary, Len and Dana. It will be great.

11/22/02, Friday

Minot is just about straight down the road forever from Wolf Point. It is so darn windy here that one can hardly stand up. This is a long and boring drive too. The hotel smells like chlorine. The airport is across the highway and I can take a shuttle. But conveniently, they have a place to park the car here and it is free. I just have to leave the keys.

It is good to see Tonja and Amy and Leymo. He looks great and so young. Well, he is. He is as smiling as ever and seems glad to be here. I sure miss him. I brought pasties and I am busy making curtains for the girl’s living room. This is a nice apartment they have moved to but too hot. The girls have no way to turn down the heat.
So far I have run Ley all over the city. We have been to the Art Institute, the Museum of Science and Industry, “Blue Man Group” and “Above the Tavern”. Both were great. I took the girls to the Tavern play and we met Tonja’s friend Michael, his date Linda and Mary and Dana there. The girls had been to the Blue thing so Ley and I went alone on another night One day the girls and Ley and I went to the Mexican Museum and to a coffee shop nearby. We have gone out for music and drinks several nights.

One night we went downtown to look at Marshal Fields Christmas windows. The theme this year was Paddington Bear. Many people visit these windows as they are always special. We later had dinner under Marshal Fields huge Christmas tree. We took the train home. It was raining.

We woke up the next morning to a city covered with about two inches of sparkling white snow. A little bit of snow really cleans up this city and makes it look great.

We ate Thanksgiving dinner at Mary’s and then the kids all went out with Dana and friends. It was an excellent meal. We also spent the night at Mary’s and then went to The Lighthouse Mall to shop. I cannot seem to get Ley to let me buy him anything. Ley is a joy to travel with as he never complains.

The curtains are done and we hung them up in the living room. It is almost time to get on the plane and go home.

12/02/02, Monday

The big news is that Kim and Peter’s apartment was burned while we all were on vacation. When the fire happened someone called them and they returned to Wolf Point as fast as they could. The cats survived, two got out of the apartment and one was still inside when they arrived. Everything, except the pots and pans and kitchen table, is a loss. Students started the fire. I have saved the clipping from the Herald News.

12/03/02, Tuesday

This month I have to finish getting ready for Christmas and also pack and go to Helena and then to Roundup. It looks like I sold my house but the people are difficult. I finally sent their realtor a fax stating that there would be no more repairs or changes.
12/08/02, Saturday

I meet Ben and kids, Lyn too and niece Jennifer and several more of the relatives in Lewistown for the Charlie Choo Chew.

Christmas was so wonderful! We had our family picture taken. Getting this orchestrated was loads of work getting ready but turned out to be a fun thing to do. The antique dress of my mother’s that both Lyn and I have worn for pictures ended up fitting Madison perfectly. I spent last evening washing, starching and mending it. The dress has become very fragile with age. Lyn and I were afraid to try it on Madison until we got to the photography studio. Lyn decided to get herself something else to wear. So we got up early and went to Dillard’s and got her a black velvet suit. Also I got a slip for Madison and some sweaters for Ley. We were barely home in time to get ready to dress and go to DeWalt’s Studio. Ben picked up the kids this morning so we got them ready too.

Lyn and I made rosettes. I am sort of planning what I will do at Easter when I have fewer days here.

12/30/02, Monday

This is Ley’s birthday so he is coming for dinner and we are having spring rolls. Lyn and I cooked and Ley and Ben and Lyn and I had a lovely dinner. This was the first time I have had my children totally all together without friends or grand children for just ages. It was very nice. I gave Ley the sweater he liked best from the picture-taking event. He is twenty-eight years old... I understand now why people say it goes fast. Ley was such a wonderful and easy baby and oh so loving. And he still is those things. Why doesn’t some woman grab him right up?

12/31/02, Tuesday

I returned to Roundup to get ready for the kids to come and help me move out of the house. The weather was good. Ben and his girlfriend, Linda plus Lyn and her boyfriend came to help me pack up and move things into storage.

My God, I opened the door and there was LaDora. She had come to spend the day helping. What a friend. Lyn and Reid arrived first and started loading the trucks. He is a real big kid and can lift anything. LaDora likes him because he is such a good worker. Ben and Linda arrived and she asked what she could do so I suggested the cleaning. She started right in and is a miracle too. This is the first time I have met either Lyn’s boyfriend or Ben’s girlfriend.
LaDora and I finished up around dark. We then went to check out the warehouse where the kids stored the boat and outdoor furniture, mower etc. It was okay. Then we went down to my storage unit. Everything looked good there too. We did some rearranging, laid the hanging clothes on the table and then laced the place with mouse poison and locked up.

I was just running on adrenaline. We went down to the new restaurant for dinner and then left. I took off for Wolf Point. LaDora headed for Lewistown. I figured I would get to Wolf Point around midnight. Singing and driving with the windows open got me home.

1/17/03, Friday

It is time to start writing this experience down on a more than occasional basis. Especially since Randy Bolton called me and gave me a go-ahead on my graduate project tonight. The odd thing is that I have been putting off putting anything on paper because I understand so little. Here is a list of the things that I puzzle over; repeatedly I am told that there are very few racial problems, lots of poverty ones, lots of drugs, drinking and violence. And they usually state, but no racial problems. There are many offices in my school where natives work and I am not real sure what they do. Maybe they are clueless about me? The tribal newspaper reads like the day after the Custer battlefield, hate, resentment and war. I have a native friend but she never goes anywhere with me. Is this an exception? I try not to take this personally but it is personal. My colleagues (in the new teacher group) appear depressed and discouraged. One couple got burned out at Thanksgiving. One guy is sure that the kids are deliberately working at getting him fired. I do have many lowly motivated students. Many students only come to school once or twice a week. Some come to school but never to the art class. The high school staff does not appear to hang out anywhere, or go about together in any kind of groups. My bank held a state of Montana check I had for 7 days. I have banked all over the world and that was a new one for me. The groceries here are expensive and often not fresh. Most of the bars don’t have windows or only small ones that have metal grates with protective iron bars over them. The guys at Black Jacks (Army Navy Type store) stand on a raised area surrounded by walls and a counter that you cannot see over. They might have baseball bats and a shotgun. They look tough.

Well, after the fire at Kim and Peter’s apartment I was somewhat alarmed. My house has been egged; beer cans are sometimes thrown on the lawn. Once beer cans were also around the car in the driveway. My windsock got nabbed. My plastic covered window in the living room got slashed. While these things seemed small they now appear significant enough that I keep my eyes open. Open for what and why and when, that is the question?
What about the fire? Not much said, just mentioned in passing, at a teachers meeting. Then nothing more. Peter and Kim both tell me they knew who did it and the cops know and there will be some kind of federal or tribal action, but they give no specifics and no one else does either. Come on, lots of folks must know who did this and why. The most offensive thing about this couple that got burned out is their blondness. They are mild mannered, sincere, polite and passive. Not the kind you would think to be a hate target. I, on the other hand, am a lippy old broad with opinions. Also, more to the point, I live between two houses where single women abide. The house across the street is empty and a very nice old couple live in the only other house across the street. They have few front windows and would probably be totally unaware of anything happening out on the street. Then there is the backside of a church and, right beside me on one side, an empty lot. The neighbors will not know if I am ever under attack, neither will anyone else. My name is on the mailbox and my car and truck are easy to spot. I am easy to find. God, these things seem pretty paranoid. It seems wise to just fall back on the belief that I am bullet proof.

1/20/03, Monday

Here is an early morning message from a lowly motivated gal facing a week of school, new students and a new semester. The good news is that the year is half way over.

Somehow, despite my best intentions. I come home and just listen to music, read, cook, clean or try to call someone I know, anything that has nothing to do with school. Is this healthy? I do not know. I do know that every day I have students who are either so demanding or so reluctant that I am worn out at the end of the day. There is an apathetic climate here that is quite tiring.

On Saturday I went to second hand stores with Steve and Jackie. They had bought two chairs and a cabinet. I found these stores depressing. Most of the things for sale were not even workable or of much use except for the tools. And, the prices seemed high compared to other second hand or junk stores in Montana. We went to a restaurant for lunch and it was pretty good. There were two families in the restaurant that I knew and whose kids I teach so I got up and went around and greeted both families. Neither made much effort to talk to me and neither talked to Steve or Jackie. Both these families are Native and their (boys) take art from me. They are great kids.

Then I went to Glasgow which is only about 50 miles away to have dinner and stay overnight with Allison Nichols. She is P. E. O. and lives and works in Glasgow. She went to school here in Wolf Point and sure is nice. I met her at a convention last June. At the beginning of the school year she came down to Wolf Point and took me to a
birthday party for one of her great nephews. He is in grade school and his name is Mixel. Allison and I went to a great pizza joint in Glasgow and then to a bar for a drink and then home.

The next morning we had breakfast and I went home. I had thought to go to school and roll over grades for the semester but just slept, read and watched the Golden Globe awards. I also called Mrs. Anderson in Missoula about the graves and agreed to purchase them and then I called Sharee to ask her if she would help me with this deal by suggesting a draft agreement and checking on the numbers and locations of the plots. She cannot get directly involved because she is on the cemetery board. So, there have been no suggestions folks.

Kate wants me to go to Guatemala with her at Easter but I am thinking that I just do not know how I can do this thing. It would mean using money that I should save for my next home. I am thinking it over. Also, I might need to miss some school. And, of course, if I die or something else dire goes on in my life then I might as well have spent the money. Ah money, if only it did grow on trees. I have to figure on wasting some time and funds just getting to Billings. If I fly to save time it is money, if I drive, it takes up lots of precious time.

Steve and I talked about grades on Saturday. I have changed my grading, lowering the requirements for passing the art classes. How do I feel about doing this? Well, most of these kids are not going to get through high school and they are not going to even hold a job as far as I can see so setting them up for failure has already occurred. Also, I am not sure that they put importance or even realize this system. Also, I am not sure that I believe in grading. It all seems arbitrary and valueless for people with little hope to begin with and with no visible appreciation or wish to participate in education. This is the sad thing; almost all of these native kids could and can go to college with tuition wavers. And they can do it without a high school diploma by going to a native college that will help them get a G. E. D.

I have pretty much gone through my mess of papers and school things from the pulse, my desk and my stash from moving out of my house in Roundup. It took about 4 hours Friday night. I am glad to get the boxes out of the living room. The house is looking cozy now but it is still an awfully old dump. My heating bill for last month was ninety dollars. The heat just goes up and out the roof and the windows.

Next weekend I think I will have to go down to Roundup and then I will treat myself to staying over in Lewistown. This will mean lots of driving but the kids mistakenly put my box with Christmas gifts in the Roundup storage and there is a tin of candy which will
attract mice so I had better get it fast and hope that mice are not already into the box. It also contains my new shoes and turtlenecks.

1/23/03, Thursday

This has been a cold week, 23 below zero and up to about 5 below zero all week with some snow. I had the car oil changed and a fuse replaced. Ben is happy, as he is able to get extra money plowing McDonald Pass. I sent gloves to Taylor and Madison and finally went to Radio Shack to replace the battery in the telephone.

I have some new kids and some of the ones that drove me nuts and disrupted the class are gone. My, but I hope I did not dissuade them with my classroom requirement that everyone actively work on their projects.

At home I painted a simple landscape and I have been creating an Indian village with people, animals and activity. Into this I had also placed the words from the police reports, stabbings, diabetes clinics and casino ads. It looks entirely too busy.

Although I seem to feel pretty lonesome here I am going to a party tomorrow night and also to the show on Sunday. The theatre here is nice and clean and even has good movies. It fills the time, and I guess I would not be human if I did not miss the things I like to do such as go out to dinner and dancing and hang out with some fun people in a public place. Are all people past 50 either drunks or home snoring on the couch? I am making pasties a la Maurine Mansfield receipt. They will be good and I can take some to Lewistown to Mama as I have postponed going there until next weekend. It is too cold and snowy for a trip that far this weekend and also Lyn might come down to Lewistown from Helena if I wait.

I still cannot get a good feel for how the other teachers like me or not. I am pretty isolated where I am in the building and only one classroom is in close proximity. But, I am not asked to be on committees and this bothers me. Miss join and do, boo, hoo, hoo. Perhaps I intimidate them, shit, I haven’t a clue.

I still feel awfully cold in the evenings and I am having some trouble with a dry cough which is probably asthma. But I am religiously taking the nose snort every day. However I do not put saline in the snoz several times a day. When does one find the time to do that? When I am really bored I get into my kitchen and cook something marvelous. Then I freeze it and take it to Lewistown.
2/2/03/03, Sunday

The Principal, Mr. Morrison dropped a bomb on me Friday and I am still reeling from it a bit but I must keep my sense of humor and some distance from the thing. As we were chatting before school he stated, “So and So is looking for you and he is very upset”. I said, “Oh, what about?” He said, “I am going to let him tell you”. I said, “What?” in disbelief. Then thought well, I won’t play at such a game and walked away. I have never had a boss play me like that and I do not like it. I work for him and he is there to support me, inform me and nurture me. So I thought. Well, unnamed (school board person) did not ever show up and I am still clueless. It did not ruin my whole day but it crept into my mind whenever I had a quiet moment. I just did not let it in during class. Somehow I need to confront Morrison over this thing.

Last weekend I traveled to Roundup and Lewistown. It is a bloody long trip and takes the wind out of my sails for about a week. I had to go into my storage to get my Christmas box out. The kids put it there by mistake and it has candy from Alice in it. I feared that mice would be attracted and I needed my new shoes and turtlenecks. When it is cold here I even wear long johns. I got to Lewistown around 10 p.m. and Marna was waiting for me. She seems okay. We talked a bit and I went to bed. The next morning we went to Pamida and out to lunch on me for her birthday. It is always fun to be around Marna. We hit the antique store and then the smokes store for her. After the stores she was tired so I took her home and then ran down to brother Jack’s to visit and he and Denise had a Christmas gift for me. I also saw Emily for a short time. Then I went back to Marna’s and we had Karl and Lynn for dinner. It was their 6th anniversary. I had purchased some lottery tickets so I put them in a card I created from the IGA coupon book and put that in the centerpiece on the dining room table. This was a fun gift. It was a great dinner and Karl brought me a video of two movies. They are Treasure of the Sierra Nevada and some far out English thing. We talked quite a bit and then they went home. Joanie insisted that we go to her house for breakfast at 10:30 on Sunday. I left there and went up to Karl’s and also over to Jacks.

2/05/03, Wednesday

We had early out and a teachers meeting. For over an hour we had people griping about things. Mostly it was about student behavior and I must say it was pretty depressing. No wonder folks are gone after one or two years. I am not sure there are any answers. I can tell you that the principal seems unable or unwilling to try for change. He has an answer for everything. However, there seem to be no solutions. I cannot take those meetings. I like to think that I can just hang out in my art room and deal with whatever happens one day at a time. Maybe that is all I can do.
I had a student chewing in class yesterday. He spit into the sink and then I discovered his spit cup back by his desk. So today I will have to deal with that. I have three special needs kids in that class as well so it seems I have my hands full. I could have dealt with the spitting problem yesterday but I was on the opposite side of the room and had something else going on so today I will take the kid out into the hall. First I will go to the discipline person Schriver, and talk it over with him. Chewing is against school policy and against the law. Like most things here I imagine he will go to in school suspension (ISS) and that is about all that can be done. Well, it is pretty wretched to have kids spitting in the sink. Uck. I have to remind myself that I would be concerned if it were my own kid and try to dissuade him. Ben is into chewing and I imagine Ley too, except Ley has always been concerned about his teeth, as they are not so good. God, parenting had a down side at times just as teaching does.

My niece Tonja is coming to visit over Presidents Day weekend. She is lonesome and wanting to come home for a visit. Since she took over the Boeing property she works so hard that I think she does not enjoy work any more.

I have to get dressed and go through another day. Actually yesterday was not that bad. I just seem to see the negative. Especially after yesterday. I think it was the band teacher telling me his problems. A kid is threatening to sue him. However, I think Banks is as paranoid and as odd a person as I have ever met. Life in the far eastern part of the state is weird. Why do they call it the high line? I cut out money (play and paper money) for my painting.

2/06/03, Thursday

I did confront Morrison. It appears that he was clueless about what the guy wanted. Finally I saw the person last evening and asked him and he did not remember? I am thinking either Morrison was setting me up or he just was clueless. I will never know. At this point it does not matter.

My aerobics class is cancelled all week as the gal has a stress fracture. Wood shop is tonight. It is supposed to be cold today. I need to clean my mind out to begin each day. Friday I go up to Glasgow to get a haircut. I am also planning to see a good movie, eat some good food, and visit with Allison.

2/15/03, Saturday

I have been gone to Lewistown to connect with niece Tonja and daughter Lyn. I stayed with Marna on Friday. Marna’s grandson Scott has a girlfriend from Red Lodge. She has a job and seems pretty smart. He would do well to hang onto her. LaDora was
cleaning a house for my brother Karl. The man who owned it committed suicide. I went up to look at the place and take some stretched canvases. LaDora found drug paraphernalia. I told her to let Karl know or just throw it away. There was snow and ice and the streets were bad. Marna and I bought lobster for 5 bucks each and I cooked them for dinner on Saturday. I went over to Karl and Lynn’s in the morning and attended the baptism of Lynn’s granddaughter Haley Elizabeth. It was a lovely service.

It is a long darn drive back and forth but I see so many 2nd and 3rd year teachers burning out that I am sort of running scared. I sent for a video set of twelve tapes called “The Duchess of Duke Street”. I am watching it every evening. I also am taking wood shop but did not go this Thursday as I finished my project and now need a new one. Also, I have joined aerobics but the teacher has been ill. This week I did not go. I am getting chubbier. Middle age spread is spreading and seething and pooling. I had a bad time with two students who snuck two small works into our display that were pornographic in nature. My own fault, I was distracted with the damn banners for the tournaments. Each tournament week we have made banners to line the grand walk to the gym. They look real neat. This is lots of work and a pain because one banner covers each bank of tables in the Art room.

I have arranged the tables in groups of 4. The new arrangement makes more room to move around and enables me to keep a better eye on the students. Lots of kids have dropped art because I am pretty constant about discipline and In School Suspension. There are many native kids who have no people skills, come ill or hung over from drugs, alcohol or life style. Many kids (white too) have special needs status, which makes it possible to fall through all of the cracks. This can be depressing place. It cost $111.00 to heat this place (my house) last month and it is damn small. Thank God that we have had a mild winter.

Ben and the kids are going to Lewistown tomorrow and I will go down to baby sit while the kids go out on the town. Lyn is in Great Falls doing an RV show and will come in the afternoon too. Ben will take Tonja to Great Falls to get her onto the plane.

Diane’s mom came to see me last Friday. I can go up to their farm to do some photographs. Now, after Tonja leaves and before Amy comes home, I need to get busy in my project.

2/23/03, Sunday

I have just watched the last part of “The Duchess of Duke Street”. It was a darn good series and I will miss it. It was only new once.
Lewistown and Tonja very enjoyable. Ben and the kids did not come down, as it was a blizzard. We had continual snow and cold. Tonja is home safe in Chicago. Lyn is back in Helena safe and all is well. The drive home was long and dreary. I listened to a book on tape.

My thoughts on the road. I have been reading Mary Clearman Blue’s latest book, “Bone Deep in Landscape”. The book takes me back as I grew up just up the Judith River from the Hogland place (Mary’s grandparent’s farm). As I sat down to pause this weekend at Marna’s house I read some of it to her as well. I never knew Mary as a child but I know the landscape she speaks of and a few of her relatives. Looking back to my childhood at the Gies ranch and the Sisson place I cannot help but try to make some sense of myself and the landscape and place, my place, this place and the whole universe. There is so much space between Lewistown and Wolf Point that I just think way too much. Thinking becomes a plague. I thought myself an empty headed idiot when I was in college. Now I see myself as a middle aged old spinster with way too much rolling around in my head.

Having so much shit in the belfry doesn’t mean I understand or plan or cope any better. I could blame it on being alone but I would have to say that living with Bob Gray got so boring I found myself drifting off into an escape hatch full, so full it was like exploring a house with lots of rooms. Each room in that house was and is still full of something new or different, or mysterious or thought provoking. It kept me sane and it kept me from letting him get to me. Now I just think of him as a sick, jealous, petty man and see how lucky I am to have escaped. Moving on is, however, like getting new teeth, painful, slobby and messy. I haven’t the energy I once had but I’ve still got plenty, I just don’t seem to know how to use it. Is there a purpose or thing I have yet to do and what the hell is it? I would like the plan in triplicate. What I would really like is some spiritual, visceral connection with myself, and the drama that is my life. I would like a plan, a purpose and a place without threats of nukes and war and the great-unknown horror of modern mess. I would also like less hassle from smart assed rude students. And, petty as it may seem I miss a dishwasher. Trite as all of this appears in print I still wrestle with the fogs and feelings hovering around me in this place and experience. I have the reservation blues and sure do not want this to grow into depression. It is ten below zero and I am just going through some winter blight. The fire sirens are going, as they often do here. What a cold miserable night for a fire. Well, there are no good nights for a fire. I am going to bed.

2/16/03, Sunday

Land and landscape, sense of place and places that make sense. Myth, legend, memory and meaning. I have been steeped in these topics through the Montana Heritage Project, the writings (books, poetry, articles) of Montana Artists, my meanderings amongst the
places that make up Montana plus some experience in the greater world including continents, and I am still trying to make some sort of meaning about how I fit into all of it. Hell, I have read so many explanations and connections my head reels and my gut aches. Sick as it may seem I am beginning to see Montana’s small towns as corpses, memory as trickster, nostalgia as slop and meaning as an elusive commodity, best not pursued.

Don’t get me wrong, I love the past and the stories and find myself wistful for old faces, places and times. But, as I drive along the roads and highways I also imagine a future where these dusty, hangers on, these little small, crumbling towns just sink into an abyss and the landscape scabs over the rubble until, finally even a trace of the scabs disappear and there is just landscape, not modern man, settlers, mountain men or native Americans. No one to muck things up. Not even me. These thoughts seem more than possible as I drive, often seeing only one or two other cars, from the Grass Range junction to Wolf Point. My trusty old car hums along and I tick off the towns like an old nun on her rosary; Winnet, Mosby, Sand Springs, Jordan, Brockway, Circle, Vida. Mostly I listen to music or books on tape but sometimes I think about who the heck named these hamlets. And why, in God’s name or anybody else’s, did those town builders imagine these places would grow and prosper.

Here is Eastern Montana a wild place for weather and animals. Women should have barricaded themselves in their homes rather than move out here. Nomadic peoples moved through these lands with perhaps a feeling and understanding about its wildness. I stop sometimes and feel my smallness in the vastness. Sure there is beauty here, the smells are wonderful, the air is so useable, but my very feet tell me to move on. Could it be I already know my place? Yes, I am more comfortable amongst mountains, and prefer living by a stream or water. But I grew up on the prairie and also remember the wheat and grass moving with the wind and running in it until I dropped. Panting and sweating on my back I would laugh at the freedom I felt and imagine the whole as sea waves which carried me along in an eternal ride of kissing water and caressing cool breezes. You had to be there, August, around 100 degrees, no playmate close by, and no houses on the horizon. No manufactured noise. It is not fashionable to be a romantic but I am one. So why then do I grin at the thought of all humans and their claptrap disappearing from this landscape?

There are problems in paradise. I have had an order into the main office for a while and no news. Perhaps I will approach the powers tomorrow. Preferably, I would just like packages to appear with my name on them. Even in this place of plenty of money the purse holders will hold back from spending it on Art? I hope not, the principal taught art so I hold my breath. Banks, the band director gave me an ear full for over an hour when I drove him home. He showed me his egged house. It has a décor consisting of maybe
several dozen eggs. His time here, he tells me, is short. He tells also about being harassed, followed, and put upon by irate and demanding students, parents and other teachers. The teachers, in question, have children who take or took band. I feel for him and hope to escape these conflicts, the eggs I have already experienced. The parents I have eluded, the other harassments are possibly to come. I fall back on being an eccentric, witty and artsy old fart and hope it is good cover.

3/1/03, Saturday

1:55 p.m. I have spent this day, until now, wandering from task to task just starting something and moving on. First I finished reading “Fall On Your Knees” by Ann-Marie MacDonald; I ate some toast with tea. Called Tonja, Lyn and Marna. Chatted it up. Then I moved onto laundry, ordering videos and partially made my bed. Oh, I sanded my feet (no they are not wood, just barnacled). Then I did some more laundry and opened the blinds that I had forgotten to open on my first foray around the place. I had also watered the front room plants on one of those walks. Hell the whole house is not even a thousand feet. Seeking profound thought I found none. Now I am at the keyboard recording this Saturday of meandering around my house and mind still in my pajamas with no desire to dress. A despot of inactivity and lack of purpose. Several times I have thought of writing to Mary Clearman Blew and correcting her bit about the exact geological center of Montana and also her map of the Judith River. Why haven’t I done this before? Well she did have the courage to write the stories and they are enjoyable so why does this matter?

Well, first of all, lest I forget. We had a hostage situation here yesterday at the Catholic Church. It was a man with a knife holding hostage one of the employees, Linda Johnson, as the police gathered around. I know of this because all of us got a message via the intercom at school (circa 11:30ish) that the place was in temporary lockdown...that is, not to leave the building until further notice. One woman, who was in the center office when I went to lunch, and whom I did not know, was very indignant and ornery about all of this and berated the edict voicing her wish to be treated as an adult. Like being an adult appeared to have anything to do with our ability to leave. Enforced imprisonment in masonry did not faze me for I had nowhere to go. I thought it was about safety. Anyway she sat in the teachers lounge the whole lunch and pouted in a very childish way. I wanted to photograph her there looking like a really pissed possum on the teacher lounge couch. I suggested several things, the most amusing (so I thought) was to just give back the days wages and walk out. It seemed so important for her to leave for lunch. I was led to this by less callous suggestions which she refuted or ignored. Her pout face just got to me. The other teachers eating lunch were more kind than I was (offering to share their food but rebuffed) and less pointed in their remarks. I just could not resist the
wise-crack as it seemed obvious. You either trust those you work for or not. If not, act. Well I can chalk that person off my potential friend list. The siege ended at the church not long afterward. I was back in my classroom and all was not right with the world as usual. And yes, we could leave the building. My only wish was for my camera and a press pass. Do they have such a thing as a press pass in this small town? It might have been a great picture. I will save the newspaper article. Oh, this is what I know of the man; recently paroled from prison, he was not a local and he was taken to the hospital. I do not know if that is what he wanted. This is what I know of the pouting teacher, she needed a cigarette break. See me in church tomorrow. I will get the lowdown from father Steve.

The other big news was an article in the local Native American Newspaper. It was about tribal control of schools. Much in the article was untrue. However, no matter the reasons, it may be that tribal run schools are just a dream. The reality of it is that there are not enough Native American teachers or administrators to run such a thing. Using non-educated staffing could only do this. I do not know the answers to such questions. I only know the questions. Maybe I should voice the view, not necessarily mine, that “In other times and other places, sturdy, creative, and self-reliant minorities have carved out their own destiny; they have compelled acceptance on their own merit; they have demonstrated those qualities of leadership and resourcefulness and disciplined ambition that in the end cannot ever be denied.” From an article in the New Yorker titled The Long March, Feb. 10 2003 but quoted there from a 1962 book “The Southern Case for School Segregation” by James J. Kilpatrick. Well, the history of tribal success with all the pro’s and con’s about government right and wrong doings has yet to produce a successful sub-culture or assimilation and the reality here appears to this white old babe as a questionable evolution for all parties present. If there have been attempts at private school without any government funding and a non-white driven philosophy I am not aware of it.

I look to my own grandchildren and fear for the genetic soup they come from and wonder how they will view and experience their own future. Theirs is a heritage that includes Blackfeet ancestors as well as Swedish, German, Cornish and more. I see them as golden children created out of a mixture so diverse it can only lead to unlimited possibility. I hope they always think that way. I hope their opportunities are only driven by ability and not limitations from either within or without.

3/06/03, Thursday

6:49 in the evening. It has been bitterly cold here, below zero every day. I have had a debilitating headache that only goes away with migraine pills. Damn, I hate headaches. I
can only think it is from the air in my classroom, or the cold, or something to do with the heat and air in my house. I cannot figure it out.

Well, quite a busy few weeks of school. The Catholic Church thing, two fires in the school (student started) and two dandy fights. I did not witness any of this but it makes for real hyper kids. This all following the girls’ basketball team taking state after a 16 year dry spell. Basketball is God here so this was an especially big deal. I helped plenty with banners. Now to deal with the aftermath. I have students who played who have not done a thing in class since they got famous. That was about 5 weeks ago.

It is quite slippery out on the streets still. I lent my truck to Steve and Jackie to go back to Billings to pick up his show.

Marnie’s baby is due this weekend. She is supposed to be having a girl. Joanie is planning on flying down to California on Thurs. or Friday. I have not heard from Ley in two weeks or three that bothers me quite a bit. I am having a crew into the house for dinner on Friday night. I plan to have Mexican soup and cornbread. Guess I will have to swamp out the place tonight.

Andy Holmlund is leaving to go to Ronan to be superintendent. He is a good one and they will miss him here. Our principal appears to have health and capability problems. The high school appears to run itself when he is ill. Surely there is more to the story than I know. Much of the staff is dissatisfied with him. I do not want to get on his bad side but can tell he trusts no one and probably has few folks who are close in the building. He brags quite a bit about himself. And he chews, or did chew in the past. Teeth shot. Quite a presence. I should talk, having two sons who do the same.

I Missed the Ash Wed. ceremony. I just am real tired in the evenings. It is either age or apathy or, just the stress of working with such ungrateful, ungracious, obnoxious kids. I have lots who think that fuck is a noun, verb and adjective, in fact all three and perhaps in the same sentence. It snowed last night. Three above zero in the living room, three degrees below zero in the kitchen.

The Lewistown murder has been solved. Mrs. Gorman died and I sent a letter to Lyle. I watched a movie from Karl and Tonya called

3/08/03, Saturday

Last evening I had the gang over for soup and cornbread. It was very cold outside, about twenty below zero. We visited and drank coke. Steve Muhs is probably a recovering
alcoholic so no one ever seems to bring booze. He was argumentative and negative. I think he likes to start up some discussion this way. Well, we all have our moments. Both he and Peter get going and it is fun.

Meg came down from Poplar too. She brought her son who had to go weigh in for wrestling. He is a cute kid. Peter told a story that made the kid cry. This was not good.

I was so tired on Saturday that I slept, did laundry and read the rest of “Ahab’s Wife” and enjoyed it. I am sending it onto Tonya. I also sorted paper work and called Mrs. Anderson. Her son is working on getting the title to the graves for me. I have already sent the check but she is holding onto it.

3/09/03, Sunday

It is Sunday, I am late for church. I had trouble getting out of my own driveway. I came home and had an omelet, read The New Yorker and then took a bath. Later I Cleaned up my paper work piles except for the Christmas pile, as I cannot find the Christmas scrapbook. Then I stripped the bed and turned the matrice and re-made it after I washed everything. I also called Marna, no baby yet, and no news.

I talked to Lyn and she was babysitting as Ben was plowing. The birthday for Dacia on Saturday was at the bowling alley and a huge success. The horse cake Lyn slaved over was really a hit.

I brought my easel up and worked on a painting. It is still a collage at this point. I talked to Karl and Lynn. It is her birthday today.

3/13/03, Thursday

I am almost ready for school. I took a bath, I miss a shower. It is around seven degrees above zero, not a great warm-up, yet. I am so overwhelmingly tired at night that I am worried. Is this just the weather or me?

All I did last night was drive home, start the truck, get the mail and go down to the lumber company where I had gone during sixth period to pick out lumber for my chest I am making in woodworking class (adult Ed class on Thurs. evenings). Then I went back to the lumber yard after school and hauled it up to the school and put it in my room. It is cherry and I do not want to loose it.
Later I came home, made dinner, watched a little TV, listened to music and painted. Then I tried to read and finally just gave up and went to bed. On, I did stop off at Muhs house and lend Jackie a few movies plus I gave them some hot and sweet mustard that I had made.

My schoolroom creeps along. Mr. Banks, the band teacher quit. It is a blow to all of us new teachers. It is a shame. I feel that a few students and their parents went after him and, according to him; he got very little support from the administration. On the other hand, he would not take the advice of the union representative. And he seemed bent on leaving. I am worried about myself. You know, I could be the next target or even next year’s target. This thing is not good.

I am leaving with Scarlet for Billings after school today. On Wednesday I found out she was going to the city so I decided to call a podiatrist and see if I could get my foot worked on. It is my left foot and I believe I have an ingrown toenail. I finally found one who could take me and so I am frantically getting ready to go. I have gotten the room ready for the sub and I have the quiz out and set up. Mr. Morrison has agreed to sub for me. So, whatever he appears to be, he is darn helpful to me. He will also sub for Scarlet too. I do not know how he can do both? I see the doctor at 11:15 on Friday morning and I am staying with Alice on Thursday and Friday nights and with Kate on Saturday night.

3/16/03, Sunday

I am back and my toe hurts. I did enjoy traveling with Scarlet (nice to have someone to do the driving).

Alice just fed me and fed me and we did crossword puzzles and watched two movies. They were “White Oleander” and “Road to Perdition”. Doctor Wolfe removed part of my left foot big toenail. The toe hurt the first night. I got up in the middle of the night when I discovered that I had taken the bandage off and it was bleeding. I re-did the bandage and went to bed with one of the pain pills. I had to keep it elevated with an ice pack all day on Saturday

Kate came to pick me up at three and took me to her place. She made mussels and had some neighbors in for dinner. This dinner was fun, even with a throbbing toe. I enjoyed being with a group of women. I drank two martinis and Kate and I got silly discussing the “No Child Left Behind” concept.

War is on everyone’s mind.
I returned to Wolf Point around 3 on Sunday with Scarlet.

3/17/03, Monday

The kids seem OK. There is no Art History or sketchbook this week. The floor cloths are all over the place as we are getting started on that project. Grades, I’ve turned over all except 2 classes. Tomorrow I will work on that. I have wrangled with two students in one of my classes for two weeks. Wrestling, mother would call it jockeying for position but I am just getting out of the game well, as soon as I get some movement on their part. They are two reluctant and recalcitrant students. Both of these kids might have miserable home lives. One has a very ill parent. Anyway, they are lazy, resentful and rude. Well, what else is new? Was I once there? Am I there now? Go home and forget this place.

I guess that Superintendent Andy Holmlund asked the high school principal to resign. Mr. Morrison told me this news today. Well, this is lots of change and much too soon for me. There should be a few constants in my life. There are too few to count.

I am more upset by this than I care to admit. Morrison was nice with me except for the one time he went on about the school board member looking for me and one other time when he came into my room and yelled at me about my grade book being rolled over to the main office. His appearance is not real good. I would excuse this because of his health, which is bad. However, it is the consensus of the teacher group that he is inept and ineffectual. He seems to compromise with kids quite a bit. I feel for him. He bought a house here last year.

3/20/03, Thursday

My toe hurts still but I can say that now I do forget about it for a few hours at a time. I drove up to Glasgow for a haircut. I picked up a pizza and some ribs at Eugene’s. It is hell to not have a place to go to eat. I am quite shallow. These are the things I miss: A pretty home, a shower, nice view or any view at all, dishwasher, girlfriends, a boyfriend or date. I have only had a few date inquiries and the material was so frightening that I declined. One was drunk at the time. Spring and thoughts of romance make me, at least, somewhat normal and alive.

School has gone good this day but this week there are not many kids here. Chalk the attendance up to good weather. One of my students who has missed lots of school had a meeting about credit. I spoke out for denial. She went to a funeral for two weeks. But, she was also absent many other times. I do not get it. My parents would move heaven and earth to keep us all in school, even for death and destruction. Well, I must look at that as just one way to view the thing. I feel heartless. She is just one of several with
similar attendance problems who petition for credit. But then most have not done much in the way of work. How can kids like this get on with life, education and the world of work? What and how will schools change to become more effective? How should attendance be viewed? Should I even be a schoolteacher? Do I even believe that the future is our children? Is it possible to just privatize? Should I rethink my idea that what made and makes America great is education? I have more than doubts. I have concern and great anxiety about the state of it all.

WAR WAR WAR. The talk of the Town in the New Yorker is great about the larger scope of this war and afterwards. If there is an afterwards. It talked about triumph and triumphalism and humility. Like me they have grave reservations about Bush and his ability to indulge in peacekeeping and rebuilding without colonialism. His ego and lack of vision scare the hell out of me. I sure hope someone works for him who can see the big picture.

3/21/03, 3/22/03 and 3/23/03, Friday, Saturday and Sunday

I traveled by my own car to Lewistown to stay at Auntie Marna’s and visit with niece Amy home from Chicago. The weather was pretty fair. Although it was a bit cold at night.

On Friday I went out to the Bar 19 with Marna and LaDora. We had a great dinner.

Marnie had a baby girl on Friday morning. Her name is Madelyn Rose and I wrote her a “welcome to this life” poem that was simple but very neat. It even worked out well in form. It was shaped like a diamond.

Amy and I went out for lunch and I told her about our lockdown during the holdup at the Catholic Church. We shopped for a bit and then went up to Karl and Lynn’s.

Saturday night Marna put on dinner and it was just wonderful. The menu for this dinner consisted of boiled ham and cabbage, carrots and potatoes with Marna style cucumbers in sour cream. We talked and visited and had a real fine time.

Tonya was promoted to Assistant Vice-President. Amy and I went to a baptism at the Methodist church. It was friend Chris’s nephew but we really went to connect with Chris.

Shop class is going good. My little sewing table is looking great and I can finish it at home. I also cut out some of the cherry for the chest. I think we wasted too much and pray that we now have enough. The toe hurt when I got home and I am exhausted.
3/28/03, Friday

I went to something called “Schmeckfest” which means German Festival for Tasting. This celebration was held in Lustre, Montana, which is about 30 miles or so away from here. It is a Mennonite settlement created around 1910 to 1930 when reservation land could be homesteaded. The ‘fest’ was a fundraiser for the Mennonite school. I went to this event with the Berry’s. Mrs. B is a grant writer for the school district and her office is across from my Art room. She is very nice. I met her and her husband Jim at their home and then, rode up to Lustre with them. They bought my dinner and were very congenial. I miss good company. These folks went to the U of M and graduated in 1963 but I do not remember them. It seems they have a son and he lives in Msla. I am mentioning this to Lyn tomorrow morning. I took some pictures of the event and resisted buying anything.

More and more I am realizing that I have been in two places, the schoolroom and my house. This is not good.

Angie may come to stay tomorrow night. My house is a mess.

3/29/03, Sunday

Who was Godeau?
Am I waiting for something?

Is this home?
Or is this just an encampment?

I wish my life to be a “schmeckfest”
And it is just “dim sum”

I recall that I need money, health and a plan.
Sounds tedious.

I tread water
Or is it quicksand?

Or am I just resting in some visceral bathtub?
Waiting, wondering, wandering.

Yes, it is Godot. But it sound like Godeau.
3/29/03, Saturday

I put up the chaise and sat outside for lunch, listened to birds and read ‘The New Yorker’. It was so peaceful, how can there be war? What will the cost be? Are there any safe places? I would like to go to a foreign country and do something helpful. What would that be?

I was tired and I missed two calls last night. They were from Tonya and Angie. I went to school early as I forgot my phone there. I recorded grades and put assignments into the computer for all classes. Then I came home had lunch and took a nap. This place is a mess and I need to do my taxes. I think I will go get the mail. I just couldn’t resist the birdcalls, so I went out on the back porch and sanded the rest of the antique sewing table down. It looks good and I enjoyed the sun. Now to put it all back together. I want to get it done so I can cut up the rest of the cherry for my trunk and make the plywood. I look forward to using the wafers to hook the wood together. It is something new to learn. The sewing table is mostly birch and very nice. I hope Lyn will have it long after I am gone and then one of my granddaughters. You never know, Lyn might find someone nice to marry. I want more grandchildren. I still have laundry and some cleaning to do. I am worried about Ley and will call him in the morning.

4/04/03, Friday

Ley is okay. He might go to California or to Bozeman and he might be in Bozeman all summer working at the Yellowstone Club (millionaire place at Big Sky). He would like the latter. I miss him.

The weather is getting nice out and kids restless. Two of my seniors are being a pain in the neck. I have to walk softly with a big stick. Just to entertain myself I keep the hammer on my desk. Actually we are using it to put the lids on house paint. The paint was a donation and I am using it instead of the acrylic I never have received from my order.

4/10/03, Thursday

I am getting ready to go off to Art Interscholastic in Butte. It is a school activity so getting ready is a complicated. I am taking the drivers Ed car and four students, (three girls and one guy). It should go okay. The guy going hasn’t been in class but showed up at lunch to tell me he has been busy “burying my dad.” I asked him about it and he told me his dad lived in a big city and he stated that the cause of death was said to be heroin
but everyone knows he was murdered. I did not go any farther with the thing but did tell him I was sorry and hoped he (the student) would be all right.

Things have been going pretty well. Kim and Peter did get jobs in Japan. I will miss them but cannot blame them for leaving after having their apartment and almost all of their possessions burned. Well my car was spit on the side real good with chew today. Normally I wouldn’t notice but I have had spring fever and both the car and truck have been cleaned and waxed.

Beau Clifford entered the Congressional Art Contest. Gee, it would be nice if he won (Note: He did not win)

My cousin Frida died in March and I just got a letter today. It makes me miss mom. Frida was named after my grandmother Martinson and she sort of looked like Nanny too. Her daughter, Elizabeth, wrote me a nice letter and included a picture.

Part of my paranoia stems from the fact that I owe taxes. How will I pay them?

I just talked to Marna; she wants to call Lynn Eastman because I told her about Lynn’s cancer. I must remember to send something to Lynn and soon. Right now I have a million things to do and get done before I leave tomorrow.

4/16/03, Wednesday
I stayed with Alice on Wed. evening. She was great.

4/25/03, Friday
I have made it through Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday is here. When I left it was Wednesday afternoon before Easter. I got into Roundup around 10 p.m. Karen was still at the Council for Aging Offices so I stopped to chat. She ran down to my storage unit with me and we put the cedar clothes closet up and my clothes in it and then I went onto Billings where I stayed overnight with Alice.

In the morning I waited until ten to run to Ben Franklin where I had to discuss the painting they were framing for the Congressional High School Art Show Contest. The thing cannot be framed as the canvas had been stretched so crooked we couldn’t wrap any frame around the thing. I had discovered about 4 nice stretched canvases in the storage space when I arrived and given them to advanced art students. When I measured the one for Beau’s painting it was an even 23 inches on every side and I just never considered it was out of square so much. Live and learn. I am able to send another one
of his works when I get back. It must go by UPS overnight so we can get it done by the deadline.

Onto Bozeman and Jody’s 59th birthday. I got there in time to check into the Holiday Inn and have a late lunch with Mary, Sally and Diane. After lunch we shopped and I stopped into F 11 for some film. It is pretty cold out so I had changed into winter clothing and a coat. Lyn is coming and then we go to a cocktail party and dinner. Well Lyn arrived; the cocktail party was great, lots of rain. My coat is soaked. We repeated the same activities the next day except for a visit to the Historical Museum. Jody’s mom works there.

Helena weather was great and I just loved being with my grandchildren and Lyn and Ben and spending time with Linda and meeting her kids. Lyn and I also had Dacia at Lyn’s house one evening when we had dinner and cleaned out the shed.

4/22/03, Tuesday

I returned home on Tuesday. The very long drive just seems longer. I was home at 11:20 p.m. Wow, am I tired.

4/23/03, 4/24/03 and 4/25/03, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday

My classroom activities and everything else at school goes well. I miss my grandkids something awful. But I also know it will or would be hard to be in Helena and see them go from Christi to Ben and back again. Not a good situation.

Friday was cleanup day. 8th period class hit the highway and we worked for around an hour and then went back to school. We need a bigger area to clean if we do this again. Next year I need to wear a backpack with water and lots more bags and a few pairs of extra sox for those who wear sandals. The kids were great. The wind blew like heck. I couldn’t find my sunglasses. My eyes got lots of dust in them and are plenty sore. I went home early and to bed.

My next year’s teaching contract is sitting on the dining room table. Can I teach here another year? Is this really any harder than where I was?

4/26/03, Saturday

Saturday It rained and I slept on and off all day. I did do the laundry, cleaning and garbage detail etc. I am just so tired. I did not paint. I did not go to school. I did not do
my orders. I watched a few videos. It is like I just need to do things totally unrelated to school.

4/27/03, Sunday

After church I came home and read and did more laundry and cleaned up the car and truck a bit. Then I painted for awhile. I went to the store and made a salad to go to the P. E. O. salad social in Glasgow. I think the drive will be good for me.

4/28/03, Monday

I am up and getting dressed but taking some time to write. Yesterday I went to Muhs house and got a sack of newspapers. I wanted to read about the Native American who is suing the schools for inappropriate practices etc. Diane Potter is interested in all of this and wants me to e-mail the articles to her. I will do this on Tuesday. I need to call Lynn Eastman and see if she has started some kind of radiation or chemotherapy for her cancer. I just can’t bring myself to do it. Also I did not write to Cousin Elizabeth about her mom dying either. I talked to Lyn and Amy Sunday. This lawsuit is big news to us new teachers. The others seem to think little of it. I

5/03/03, Saturday

I am apathetic and useless on the weekends. You could compare to a mass of flubber, a bowl of jello. Usually I have a headache by Friday and it lasts into Saturday. I watch a movie that I select at the local movie emporium or I immerse myself in a book. The further I get myself from reality, the better I like it. Why do I do this? Does every working stiff do this? I hate the headaches. My schoolroom is not hard to manage. I sometimes enjoy the students. Perhaps it is the pace of things. But, it might also always be the being needed. Can I have this? How do I do that? What should I do? Could you help me? It becomes quite tiring. In all honesty I was pretty tired out from teaching years ago when raising my own children. Even then I fell asleep the minute I let myself sit down. Back then I also escaped into reading and movies.

I got up early and went to a breakfast put on by the Lions at the Elks Club with Muhs and Jenny. It was fun. We hit a few garage sales and then Jackie and I went to look at the Schwinden house. We also went for flowers for her as well as shrubs. All together it was quite an outing and I enjoyed Jackie’s company.

Can I live in the country? After Bob I cannot be sure. I did feel trapped and there were times that I might have gotten frightened and really cracked up if I had let myself. So,
how will I feel out in the country again? This time I will be on my own and totally by myself. I am not sure I can do it. I guess I will just let it lie until the owner calls to have me look at the house. Lyn says the guy is nice and will be a good landlord. At least I know that much. But, the people I rent from now are nice. They are super. It is the place that is depressing or is it me? I think I will go outside and water things and finish up my little sewing cabinet.

When I come inside I will act like a grownup.

I do not want to be an elder. I do not want those I love to die. I just want. No wonder I have a headache. I miss my family something fierce and that just does not go away. I also do not want to do a graduate show. I do not want to clean house. I do not want to do laundry, or letters, or cooking or lesson plans or grades. I just want to run away but not to the circus. I am already in a circus. To beat all, I have another eye infection. Damn and drat. Sick is boring and inconvenient. I cannot get rid of my headache. It might be sinus. Or it might just be self-induced stress.

I will do some painting.

Saturday afternoon, Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday all spent in bed. Shivering and shaking and sneezing and coughing and then blissfully sleeping. Also, I am unable to eat as bad things occur with my plumbing. This is the first time I am happy for small digs and a close toilet.

5/06/03, Tuesday

Finally, I got myself dressed on Tuesday morning and went to the clinic. I got the clinic registration material and took it home. Well I wonder if the nurse thinks I am illiterate. I took the registration back in the afternoon and a doctor gave me some Zithromax. On my return home I realized that I was pretty dizzy and ill and chilled again. This lasted until five even with my electric blanket turned to high. I cannot listen to music either as it makes my head hurt.

At Saint Leo’s Catholic Grade School two oral and then, in higher grades, written themes were handed out yearly: My Summer Vacation and What I Want to Be When I Grow Up. Summer vacations were easy; my mother did magical things all vacation and she took us on wonderful trips...

Here are some of my early childhood choices for what I would be when I grew up, Girl who runs the M&M counter at the Dime Store, Tug Boat Driver, Astronomer, Indian Scout, and Head of The French Foreign Legion.
Nuns, masters at the craft of swaying you toward nun, nurse, saint, mother or teacher slowly planted doubts about ones choices. So, finally in the 4th or 5th grade I hit upon a saint I wanted to be like. She was Joan of Arc. Secretly, you see, I felt she was the founder and head of The French Foreign Legion. It was a great choice and got my teacher’s approval. Joan was in our ‘Little Book of Saints’. I had seen a movie about her. So hadn’t Sister Lambertine. The worst thing Joan did in the movie, according to my teacher, was wear pants. I looked Joan up in the Catholic Encyclopedias. It told that she did directly kill people. The ‘Little Book of Saints’ omitted this fact. She did this killing while wearing some sort of armor over a tunic and, probably, pants. She also liked to have her own way. Everything she did was done with lots of prayer, fasting and planning and the nuns liked that part quite a bit. I kept it a secret about her being in charge of the French Foreign Legion.

So, I was amazed when the Fergus theatre had a Saturday afternoon matinee movie in which Abbot & Costello joined the French Foreign Legion. Should I have shared my information about Joan being in charge with my brothers and friends? Nope, I kept it a secret. I would be in charge some day and my brothers would be the goofy guys I got out of trouble.

Well I grew up, but I am thinking George Bush did not and he probably watches Abbot & Costello movies for geographical information before war briefings. How did I get from Joan of Arc to the French Foreign Legion, to George Bush? Well, I have been reading some pretty heavy stuff in the newspapers and The New Yorker and also some silly stuff in it too about Bush and the war. It seems rather like an Abbot and Costello movie except that real people, just like me, are getting killed. And, I am pretty sure; there are no weapons of mass destruction. Also, I am positive; it is a stretch to have any fun at all in the desert.

If there are any doubts that I am going nuts the above piece just proved it.

5/08/03, Thursday

I attended a dinner at the Elks sponsored by the WPEA, Wolf Point Education Association. It was sparsely attended with only a hand full of high school teachers. Andy and Heather Holmlund were there but Bruce. Morrison was not I had shrimp and it was good but I was just not up to a rich meal. I had two drinks and could not do a third one. The drinks were Bloody Marys. It was good to get out.
5/10/03, Saturday

I have missed the letter carrier and thus have a bag of goodies (food) to deliver to the post office. I painted two or three dabs. I am not thinking of becoming a painter.

I called Rose to report on Jay's health. Karen has probably not had time to contact anyone much in Roundup or possibly she just cannot think of what to say, as they do not seem to know a great deal. Jay was having flu symptoms on Friday or Sat night. He threw up. Sometime during the night he had some type of seizure and lost his speech. Karen called Jennifer and then she called the ambulance and he was taken to Deaconess Hospital in Billings. He regained his speech but has some short-term memory problems. It is attributed to some sort of infection that hit his brain. The doctors have run spinal fluid tests but these tests come up clear for any sign of an infection. They have run some cat scans and MRI's or are these the same? Anyway he will remain in hospital until his memory is improved and or they find some trace of a cause. It all sounds pretty awful. I hope he will be okay and that Karen will get through this thing too. Thank God that Jennifer is nearby.

The weather is cold and overcast here today. I also talked to Betsy last night for quite a while. I am coughing lots less and feeling better and sleeping okay but with some bazaar and unsettling dreams. When I wake up I try to figure them out and then promptly forget most of them. The dreams are all about chase, missing parts of a story, searching running and a bit crazy. I still have the earaches. Will this ever go away? I am attributing the whole sickness to the sewer backup in my basement. It does feel good to blame something.

5/11/03, Sunday

I listen for Meadow Larks but all I hear are Robins, Crows, and Sparrows in the mornings when I open the back door and just leave the screen latched. I do hear train whistles fairly often. The train whistles are the Lark song of Wolf Point.

This morning's mass was a nice service and nice Mother's Day Prayer. They had a breakfast but I cough too much and am too lonesome to attend. I came home and had a message from Ben and called him back and Lyn called. Linda's daughter is in the psych ward in Great Falls so he will go over there today. I do not know what she did but she ended up there this week. She is a darling girl. I am thinking of her. I am also thinking how hard it is to grow up in any times. I am still having trouble doing it.

I called Ley next. He had been working and just quit, circa around ten this morning. His crew was having a breakfast consisting of Eggs Benedict, at Big Sky. A hard life.
Lyn will be Jack’s Godmother today in Msla. at St Francis Church. I told Lyn that it is the church where I was baptized. It is a very small world. I am sad but happy to talk to everyone. Ley and Lyn and I are missing our Mother’s Day breakfast we have been annually doing at the hotel in Big Timber. We eat and go out to the river for the afternoon or visa-versa.

I cannot believe that I have no memories of taking mom out for a meal on Mother’s Day. I do remember giving her gifts and calling but I do not think I took her out for a meal. Memory is such a short thing. Surely I cooked breakfast for her when we lived on Virginia Street and up at Laughing Water. Often I wish I was more thoughtful and took more time with mom even though I did go over to Missoula often and took her places and gave her great gifts. I could have written her more small notes. She sure kept me going with hers. Now, I wish I had gone through her correspondence more thoroughly and kept the letters I did send. Many of the letters she sent to me are gone. I did keep lots, if not all, of the letters and cards she wrote to the kids and I carefully put them in their scrap books.

I am going out to the bridge to photograph. I have taken some here and I am trying to use up my film as I took pictures of Lyn’s new colt.

Then I am driving up to Glasgow after I go over to school to check my clay projects. I need a plastic swimming pool so we can do some serious tie-dye at school the final week. Actually I am looking for strength to get through the last three weeks of school and to get to where I am genuinely feeling better. When I cough I just want to go to bed.

5/12/03, 5/13/03 and 5/14/03, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday

I have drug (yes, medication is wonderful) myself through the week. Yesterday I realized that my headaches are back as is my sinus infection and I am, again, miserable. Again, my ears ache.

School moves along. Getting ready for summer I did clean out all of the books in my room throwing several very old ones away. The janitor just brought them back. I am hiding them under some garbage in a bigger can.

5/16/03, Friday

I am going through some kind of meltdown along with illness and lethargy. Not only am I bone tired at night but I am having bazaar nightmares about dead relatives, ill relatives and things in the past that I thought I had let go of or moved on from. Also the painting goes nowhere and it need to move along. I do not like this. It thundered and lightening
like heck last night and woke me up but I just did not have the energy to get up and watch
the storm. I love a good storm. It is windy today. I dreamt of Betty and Jack last night.
I hope they are doing all right. Both have been so ill for so long that it is a miracle they
continue to live. I also have not heard from Karen or anyone in her family. Jay seems to
remain in the hospital. Lyn called and wanted to meet somewhere over Memorial Day
and then she called back to tell me she thought she could not do it. I do not know how it
will go. Memorial Day is the day I married Jim Tyson.

The wind is blowing like hell and I must end this and get ready for school.

5/17/03, Saturday

I ran up to the clinic last night and got some more antibiotics. I hope they work, I feel
awful.

I went out to Deb’s house for a stamping party. It was nice. She lives in a beautiful spot.
I heard a meadowlark singing as I got out of the car and again, as I got back into the car.
Magic place, magic birds, nice day.

When I returned to town I stopped at the grocery store for potatoes and oil. I returned
home to get the deep fat fryer and some other stuff and ran off to Muhs for a picnic. This
was a great picnic with lots of food and good company.

I talked to Madison and Lyn when I got home. I am so tired and feeling pretty ill again.
Perhaps I overdid things.

5/18/03, Sunday

I dragged myself to church to hear something uplifting. Then I dragged myself home and
slept. I talked to Lyn, Tonja, Marna, Jack and Barbara. I am just not feeling well again.
Gripped by the chills all day long, I had all of the old symptoms back again.

Jay Erdie is back at work, on medication for the seizures. They might wait a month
before acting further. I do hope they get a second opinion.

5/20/03, Tuesday

Pay day. I paid my bills and set my budget. The ear aches have returned. This is getting
so old. I finally have resorted to using eardrops. They are the ones I got to use on my big
toe when I had the ingrown nail job. Thank God I kept them. I drove to Glasgow and
got a haircut, and then I had dinner and shopped for groceries. I was home around 9 p.m. The ear drops are helping.

5/21/03, Wednesday

I have made a card on my computer for each graduating senior. Then I returned to school to close up the kiln. It was a good day except that one student was a poop and I sent him to ISS. I have not had much trouble with this kid before. I painted holes into the walls of the set for the drama play. Mr. Erickson discussed painting the Wolf logo on the center of the basketball floor. I might not be here to do the painting. The things we art teachers do. Or don’t do. Or are asked to do.

5/22/03, Thursday

I’ve gone to dinner at the Golden Dragon place with Scarlet. Dinner was fun except that the beef was so hot (spicy) that we could not eat it. Scarlet complained and we did not get charged for it. Later she explained that you should always ask whether the cook is drunk or not and stay only if he is sober. We did not do that. While he is a wonderful cook sober, he is unpredictable when drunk. We had a couple of beers there and then went to the Elks bar where I had 2 drinks. This is the most alcohol I have had since last fall when Theresa showed up and we went out. Scarlet is a nice kid. She gave our hot beef dish to an old lady sitting behind us at the café who said she could easily handle very, very hot and spicy beef.

5/23/03, Friday

I talked to Jay Erdie. Karen had left me a message that they were going to Seattle for a second opinion about the mass in his brain. Jay said they leave on Monday.

5/23/03, Saturday

I am not sure I should do this to myself but here goes. How many times have I moved since 1994? Here are the addresses: When I got divorced from Jim Tyson I moved from Hauser Lake, 5620 Rainbow Dr. Helena, to a rental at Porter Flats 335 N. Ewing in Helena. Then my first rental house in Roundup 2nd Street West, onto a house/ranchette place on Harshman Rd. towards Billings from Roundup, the brief Bob Gray Marriage (it was harsh). In flight from crazy Bob I went to a rental on 11th Street West a micro-house owned by Jorgenson’s in Roundup. The best of the bunch was 306 4th Street West my house I bought in Roundup; Presently I live in a rented house at 421 Indian Street in
Wolf Point. That makes 7 times. I wonder if house moves go like lives? If so, I have 2 left.

I just cannot let this thing go. To start out my life I was born in Missoula and my parents lived at 645 East Front Street. Grandma, Frida Martinson lived at 643, owned 645 and 641 and had moved and built these three little houses after moving from her home and business of many years at 707 E. Front Street. When I was about one year old my parents moved to 602 West Virginia Street in Lewistown and remained there for 21 years. Then mom moved to Laughing Water on Upper Big Spring Creek in Lewistown. I had several school addresses too: Brantley Hall, The Alpha Phi House at 1107 Gerald Ave., a short summer school stint in Knowles Hall, 1107 East Front was my second senior year apartment. If you are wondering about my second senior year, you have to know I missed part of my sophomore year at college when I went to Spain with Nancy Sasse and her family. Jean and Tony got interested in the trip and met me in London; they had sailed over on the QE2. And somewhere I have to get in that I lived at 505 University Avenue in Honolulu Hawaii while going to summer school.

While I am at it I might as well list my addresses after college and before Helena. I lived in Ballard (Seattle) and cannot remember that address. Then I lived with my cousin Kayel above Alki Point in West Seattle. In Billings I lived on Grand Avenue, like the second or third block. It was an ugly little house divided in half for two apartments. In the summers, I was in residence at Timbercrest Girl Scout Camp, Red Lodge; I was working for the Treasure Trails Girl Scout Council as a District/Camp Director. Then I moved to a little house on Rimrock Road right behind Lissa Baseball fields. When I married Jim we moved across the street to a basement apartment. Then we moved to 2419 Rancho Road, our first house. The Rancho Road house was small but we managed to have and raise 3 little children there until moving to Helena. I loved that neighborhood and our yard and Billings. Whew. I am blown away by how much and often I have moved. And yet, if I were to check statistics I may not be the exception... but I am tired of it. Well, I have written it down and it is a chronicle of my nomadic path in case any of my children ever want to know. I am not quite at the point where I will list my next move as a certain cemetery plot. For starters I don’t have one. Maybe that is a good reason not to get one. The whole thing with the cemetery plots in Missoula has fallen through. It seems that some are actually taken that we thought were empty and the remaining two belong to Gary Anderson and he wants to hang onto them.

What this is all leading up to is the fact that I have been offered the opportunity to rent a house in the country. I went out to view it yesterday and came away defeated. It was Friday and the house has been closed for six months. Should this explain my reluctance? I don’t know?
There is a ghost called Goat Man that the Native American kids take very seriously who lives out by this house but I did not see him so that is not the reason.

I talked to Kate today and she says I should make a list, two columns pro and con. I just used to do these things, make the decision painlessly and move on. Well, maybe that was the problem. I guess I will go out again and look it over one more time. Can I get Jackie and Steve to help me move? This might be the crucial question. The older you get the fewer able bodies there are out there to help. I am too far from the kids.

I have not even been out of the house today and that is one of my rules for Saturday. My new rule when I retire is to have no rules. Anyway, I am off to take the laundry from the dryer and then make my bed and then get out of the house. Well, I have been out to water the flowerbeds.

5/25/03, Sunday

Go to mass, do some housekeeping, do some studio work, get certification materials ready to send for renewal, clean up the kitchen, go back out to farm, and attend the graduation ceremony.

I did all of the above. I called Lyn and said I would try my cell phone when I went out to the farm. The house looked lots better today. When I went into the house I sprayed it with some citrus room freshener and then went back outside. While waiting for the musty smell to improve I cut some rhubarb for a pie. Then, when I went back into the house I tried the radio. Yep, the reception is better but no public radio. Karl has given me some antennas. Then I wandered around, deciding that it is not quite as dirty as I thought it was. I went outside and set up my paints and painted. When I went back inside I tried my cell phone. It does not work. No service.

The real question is how will it feel the first time I drive up to this place in the dead of the night when it is pitch black outside? That is the real kicker here. After all, I will be truly alone when I meet whatever goes bump in the night. Surely this is an argument for a big dog. The trouble is that a dog is just too much trouble and I am never home. So, with this in mind I went back inside and downstairs to look over the shower. I miss a shower and do not want to go two years without one. Then I went upstairs and admired the dishwasher. Laura Ingles Wilder, I am not.

5/26/03, Monday

Today I corrected spelling and grammar in the diary and made fragments into sentences. Because it is so hot I plugged in the fans and also put the screen on the bedroom window.
I planted some flowers, weeded the flowerbeds and made the call to rent the house. This over, I am wrung out but I made a pie with the rhubarb from the farm. It will be good tomorrow at school with my lunch buddies.

For a time I painted.

5/28/03, Wednesday

My classroom is upside down and a mess. We have cleaned out the closet. We tie-dyed shirts today. I did 4 layette sets to put by for baby gifts. Some of the kids helped me with them, as there were all those small sox and onesies. I ran the kiln last night so it was very warm in the room. I am on my way back to do more inventory and studio work.

5/29/03, Thursday

After school we had an end of the year picnic out at Jen and Jim Beery’s farm. It was very nice. The weather was perfect. I took a torte with strawberries and whipped cream and Corona and lime to drink. The beer went down just great. Scarlet and I had fun telling first year teacher stories. Good company.

5/31/03, Saturday

Today I want to mow but Pam tells me her mower will not keep running and so she will call me back. If I can borrow her riding mower for this first time then I can go to Roundup and get my mower and continue the job for the rest of the summer. My hands are pretty sore from all of the cleaning at school. On Monday I go out to open up the house for the carpet cleaners. Also I need to go to school to address the graduation cards I made for each of my seniors from the art classes. I might do that tonight to get it done.

I have slept quite a bit since getting home from the last day of school. On Friday we had students until two. Then checkout for teachers. I did fine. After checkout I finished up the room. I left the building at about 5pm. Then I went home and did some yard work and slept. Saturday was cool and overcast so I did laundry and decided not to mow out at the new house. Instead I cleaned and slept and finished putting the liner back on my truck tailgate.
6/01/03, Sunday

Pam called and I went out and got her mower. It seems to rain every twenty minutes. I waited until late afternoon and mowed. The mowing went okay. I even did a few paths. Then I stored the mower in the garage, which is a real mess. Tomorrow when I come out to meet the carpet guy I will have him help me put the mower back into my truck.

6/02/03, Monday

When the carpet guy did not show up I went home. He called and said he was lost. So, I went back out at around eleven and he had been there for about thirty minutes. I had him clean and disinfect the cement and hardwood floors and bottom cabinets in the kitchen as well as the carpets. I am on a mouse elimination campaign. After he left I put down some mouse poison. Then I put up lots of fly tape. I hate that stuff.

When I got back to town I went to school and finished addressing the graduation cards. Next I went home and finished wrapping the package for Amy’s graduation, and a box of things for Lyn. I also made cards for Taylor and Madison. Then I added a funny one to Karen and Jay plus two more graduation cards. I also made sure I had my teacher re-certification material is ready to go. It was 4:30 so I rushed to the post office. Returning home I called Pam and took the mower back.

6/03/03, Tuesday

Diane has been on my mind so I called her. She is struggling with divorce. But, she did get a lawyer and is ready to file. This brings back things about my divorces. I have only had two. Well, it was two too many but they were also better than staying. Anyway, we talked a bit and my phone quit. I am sending her this diary to read.

CLOSING: Writing this diary became a way for me to either vent my feeling or escape into something other than what was upsetting me at the time. Perhaps it will be something for my children and grandchildren to read. I am moving on. Hopefully, I will have a master’s degree by the end of the summer. For now I am packing up and putting new roots into a country farmhouse. My latest new address is HC37, Box 6060.
Storage space, one in demand the other may have housed farm workers, now replaced with machinery. This old building is near Winnett.
Burp!

Beer bottle, rock and puddle at gravel pit in Wolf Point, MT

Sherman Without a Winter Hat. Sherman on his horse leading the charge, Main Street, Wolf Point, MT. Sherman Park in the background.
Horse herd off highway 200 between Jordan and Winnett.

Weathering the Storm. 421 Indian Street, Wolf Point.
Obsolete machinery rusting near field on Schwinden Farm.
Old machinery rusting next to once plowed and planted fields that are now CRP, subsidy plan, Crop Reduction Program.

"This Old House"
Some settlers dream home long abandoned and slowly settling back into the ground.
Water Hole 1
Water Hole 1 in downtown Wolf Point opens for business and appears to be pulling in customers by the bus load!

Spring storm near Lustre
The wide-open prairie waits as a spring storm gathers and moves across the sky near Lustre.
Monumental furniture
A local fellow uses Redstone’s monument as furniture during the Chili contest at Sherman Park, spring 2003.

Highline Cathedral
Elevators dot the horizon here like cathedrals. General Mills sits across from the Wolf Point gravel pit waiting for more grain to store.
Working and Playing in the Art Room
The Wolf Point High School Art Room with some students working on projects, 2003.

Lustre Smackfest
Smackfest is where folks eat lots of food, visit, and gaze at trophies. Quilts and athletic banners are highly prized! The proceeds for the event go toward supporting the Lustre school.
Polka Dotted Poultry

The polka dotted poultry leaving the security of the coop.

Looking Things Over

Polka dotted poultry gazing at old machinery and the world beyond the coop.
Polka Dotted Poultry, Locked In.
APPENDIX 3
Tea Pot

Cream & Sugar
Four Cups on the Table
Individual Cups
Individual Plates
Individual Napkins
Tea Set With all Four Chairs
Closer View of Tea Set
APPENDIX 4
Painting of Flower with Embryo in Root Ball
Painting/Collage, Vincent Van Gogh Print With Teepee and Wolf
“Purse Pursuant”

Painting Of Collaged Receipts, Money, Purse, Toni, and Polka Dotted Chicken
Flower Picture and Artist’s Statement
Tea set installation at show

Black and White Photographs at show
BIBLIOGRAPHY


