

# Happiness...

Everyone defines their own “Happiness” in different terms. What is happiness? Are you ever truly happy? I do believe we all want to be happy... everyone has moments where they are truly happy in life.

When I was younger, almost a teenager nearing twelve years old, On one special afternoon I met Carl Watson, a sheep herder, that worked for the Cherry Creek Sheep Company being run by my two Uncles, Sivert Mysse and Merton Mysse, My Grandfather had passed away several years before this point and time in my life. I missed my Grandfather Mysse very much by then. Let me explain how my day of meeting Carl Watson unfolded. I will start by explaining a little bit about where Carl was located, the special prairie day when we met, and a few of the hazards of the open prairie.

Carl ran a band of sheep or 1000 ewes. These sheep were temporarily stationed at the northwestern part of the Mysse family ranch. The Cherry Creek Sheep Company ran up to twelve bands or ewes (approximately 12,000 ewes and 1000 rams) from season to season. The process of raising sheep for wool and lambs was an extremely time consuming and a very lonely existence for anyone involved. Carl’s band of sheep roamed the area near a local landmark called Yoakum Springs. Yoakum Springs was the only source of clean, fresh artesian spring water for 50 to 100 miles within the boundaries of Rosebud or Garfield Counties. You could drink the water from the local ponds, but the alkali would eventually plug your kidneys. Kidney stones plagued many of the ranchers in the area. All the locals who lived in Rosebud and Garfield Counties would travel hours to just refill their drinking water jugs and water tanks with Yoakum Spring

water. Locals would fill up the back of their pickup beds with 5 gallon jugs. Filling the pickup beds until the bed almost touched the rear axle. Sometimes following behind the rancher's pickup was a water tank. Water tanks were as big as you dared to pull over the gumbo/gravel roads. After all water is very heavy... the bigger the tank the greater the chance to puncture a tire on the trailered water tank. The usual water tank would be a 100 or 500 gallon tank. Yoakum Spring water was a very essential and a valuable commodity for all healthy, happy ranch families. All who drank Yoakum Spring water knew it was a local status symbol. To say you were drinking Yoakum Spring water instead of store bought, rain cistern water or home distilled drinking water was like saying in today's world I am drinking San Pellegrino... the status symbol of snob water drinkers throughout Europe and America. Yoakum Springs was definitely a popular spot with the early American Indian tribes also. Families would bring their kids so they could hunt for arrowheads and to find other ancient artifacts. As soon as you stepped out of your pickup you knew the American Indians loved this prairie oasis due to the amount of arrowhead chips and broken arrowhead points one could find near the hidden water hole. In fact there were still pieces of buffalo horn, partial buffalo skulls, deer horns and all sorts of animal bones near the ancient fire pits that could be found on top the sandstone bluffs that surrounded the old artisan spring site. A person could walk the sandstone bluffs for days finding everything from trade beads to burial stands if they knew what they were looking for.

It was early spring in 1962 and the prairie grass looked like a lime-green ocean as the never ending prairie winds blew across it. As the waves of grass disappeared in the distance, a chorus of Meadow Larks sang their prairie songs while harmonizing with the clicking sounds made by the dancing red and yellow winged flying grasshoppers. Standing... looking... feeling the sounds, smelling

the alkaline prairie and enjoying nature's symphony was a must and a total visual delight. Looking around... a person would never guess that all this beauty was because of the almost daily "intense" ("a frog strangler" as GrandDad Mysse would call it) rain-thunder storms that were mixed with a multitude of well drilling lightning strikes and glass shaking thunder. The rain water settled into every rut and pot hole making the county ranchers, sheep men, and farmers very happy that day and everyday it rained. All welcomed a "slow start day". After all the locals were all grass merchants. Grass was money... the more rain... the more grass... the better the prospects for every farmer and rancher to make some money at harvest or in the fall with the sale of the lambs and calves. Later in life I grew to absolutely love "frog stranglers" or any rainstorm... rainstorms made it impossible to work and it meant some time for me to recuperate from ranch life's hard knocks.

On a wet day like the one I described my Uncle Merton was going to pick me up from GrandDad Mysse's old house. My parents were leaving for a day trip to Billings to meet and visit with my mother's sister, Marie. Travel by vehicle back then was so slow due to narrow roads and because cars and pickup trucks just didn't handle that well on the extremely narrow, chuck hole ridden, roller coaster asphalt roads. My parent's Billings trip would take a minimum of six to seven hours... back and forth. No matter what direction you traveled the roads contained new hidden dangers with blind tops, and curves that weren't there the day before and other dangers around every corner.

Mother Nature was being very compassionate to the wildlife and locals that year. To say it was a great spring for the wild life would be a total understatement. The Sage Hen Grouse had tons of babies... as did the deer and antelope. With the abundance of spring moisture the entire prairie was a blanket of yellow sweet

clover and hungry wildlife babies. Danger mixed in perfectly with the beauty of the prairie flowers. The prickly pear cactus were displaying their yellow blooms and were camouflaged due to the cover of the yellow clover blooms. If you walked anywhere on the prairie you had to place your steps carefully while watching for either the spikes of the prickly pear cactus, tall grass that harbored ticks, and for the ever prowling rattlesnakes.

The most concentrated areas of sweet clover would be right next to the road's edge. Next to the road pavement was the greatest amount of runoff and therefore the thickest, sweetest clover. The sweet clover attracted the bees and insects. The bees and insects attracted the Sage Hen grouse and other prairie wildlife. The Sage Hens would forage all day long next to the road's edge. The noise of approaching cars or pickups would startle the Sage Hens causing them to fly in fear of being hit. The birds needed open air to fly... and the road was the only take off area... birds and speeding vehicles never mixed well. It was so sad that the Sage Hens could not figure that simple dynamic out. Not only would the Sage Hen mothers smash into your windshields, but the baby Sage hen chicks would love to fly low into your headlights or knock out your radiator. Roads were littered with the bodies of all sorts of animals that year. Speed limit signs and the speed limits weren't needed or heeded in Eastern Montana by anyone who drove the secondary roads. People always drove as fast as the vehicle could possibly go. This made for an unbelievable Sage Hen Grouse massacre in the spring of 1962. To make matters even worse Sage Hen chicks attracted bull snakes and rattle snakes were looking for an easy, satisfying meal. Once a snake found its meal, swallowing it whole; the snakes would sun themselves on the paved roads digesting their tasty little tidbits. I am not going to explain how, but even one or a small group of rattlesnakes or bull snakes could cause a car or pickup to slide off the road into a deep, slippery gumbo ditch. Once you are stuck in

gumbo mud you are there until someone picks you up, pulls you out, or the gumbo dries up enough where you can drive out of the ditch yourself. There was always one accident waiting for another to happen around the little city of Ingomar Montana. Even the most careful driver, driving on Eastern Montana roads, would find suicidal wildlife at every turn or a sun crazed farmer pulling a bailer at 20 mph taking up 2/3s of the road. If one critter didn't get you in the ditch; another critter would find a way to disable your vehicle and leave you stranded in the middle of no where. Black angus cows at night, horses, skunks, raccoons, deer, antelope, hawks, owls, golden eagles, jack rabbits, the occasional porky pine, grass hoppers plus too many others animals of destruction to count. Each critter making driving a thrilling, death defying adventures each and everyday. In my lifetime I think I hit and killed at least one of each of these critters. Not intentionally trying to kill them, but all by accident. Well... except for one rattlesnake I tried to kill by skidding over it... yes there was a big accident, but that's another story for another time.

I waved goodbye as my parents left for Billings that morning. After that I waited patiently for my Uncle Merton. I sat on the back porch of Granddad's old house. Merton finally arrived to pick me up. Merton proudly sported his white Stetson straw cowboy hat. A freshly lit cigarette causing him to squint his eyes and with a friendly giggle Merton greeted me by saying... "Get in... daylight is a burning... we need to get lunch at the Lilly and then head out... I got all the camp supplies in the back of the pickup from Sivert's yesterday... come on now let's get!". Merton's and my adventure started at the Jersey Lilly Bar and Cafe in Ingomar Montana.

Ingomar's population in 1962 was around 25 to 30 people with each family owning at least two to three working dogs. As we drove up the road the two city blocks from GrandDad's old house

we could see the Milwaukee Road Railway engine had just finished dropping off a water tank of fresh water for the town. The rail road tracks were just a block north of the Jersey Lilly Bar and Cafe. On the tracks that day with the Milwaukee Road Railway engine were about ten or twelve rail transport cars, four passenger cars partially filled with travelers and a caboose. As the train slowly left Ingomar the train engine's diesel plants were leaving behind it a huge plume of thick, black diesel exhaust. The train was headed East and would eventually find itself in Forsyth Montana. The train's engineer loved to blast the train's horn and continued to do so until the entire train was completely out of sight from Ingomar. The brightly painted Milwaukee Road Railway engine and its air horn echoed into nothingness as it disappeared behind the eastern bluffs that surrounded Ingomar. The only thing a person could still see was the long cloud trail of black, diesel smoke still evaporating into the clear blue prairie sky.

The Jersey Lilly Bar and Cafe was originally an old brick bank that Bob Sr. and Bill Seward turned into a Montana legendary cafe. Bob Seward originally came from Texas. The Lilly was best known for its cowboy hors d'oeuvres and its pinto bean soup. Tourists loved the fact that all the extra cases and boxes of beer and alcohol were stored in the bank's old safe. The Jersey Lilly Bar and Cafe was the hub, the meeting spot, the safe haven to escape from the everyday harshness of prairie life. The Seward Family, Bill, Bob Jr, and their Bob Senior, in the early days were rumored to be horse rustlers or horse thieves. Community rumors echoed this fact repeatedly... some accounts of their stealing were justified by locals saying that the Swards only stole horses from time to time in order to survive and to feed family members. None of the Swards were ever convicted of stealing horses or cattle... only suspected of it. Back in the 1920's and early 1930's rumors were enough to convict anyone of any sort of crime. Serious enough at times a cottonwood tree and a sturdy jute rope

were used to settle ownership disputes from time to time. People had to be very careful of what they told their neighbors and friends even in private, whether or not the backdoor gossip was true or not. There was always the chance a small white lie, a rumor or someone's loose lip could come back to bite the teller in the ass of such local factoid. I have to believe there must have been some truth to the horse theft rumors surrounding and Bob Seward due to the fact that the tale was told and retold throughout my years living in Ingomar. The rumors persisted even while Bill and Bob Sr were both alive. Some how the Seward family, who were dirt poor, got just enough money to buy the old bank and then turn it into the Jersey Lilly Bar and Cafe. As time went on the Lilly expanded into two more adjacent buildings turning it into "THE" local meeting-dance hall, eating and "watering hole" for the all the locals in Rosebud and Garfield County.

Working dogs, old pickups with stock trailers and saddled horses were a daily sights surrounding the Jersey Lilly. Tourists loved to stop in and to drive the twelve city blocks of Ingomar. Seeing the old west flare and studying the old and dying buildings and homes that still remained standing... all these things peaked a tourist's interest in Ingomar. So of course the tourists or outsiders would have to stop off for food or refreshments at the Lilly and then walk the town on foot. All the while with cameras drawn and shooting. All this activity showed the world that Eastern Montana life and Montana "Old West" living were alive and well for one more day in little city of Ingomar, Montana.

Merton parked his pickup next to the Bull and Heifer Pens. The Bull and Heifer Pens were outhouses that provided bathroom facilities to the Jersey Lilly customers. Into the stinky Bull Pen we strolled. Monkey see... monkey do... I followed Merton's example of aiming at the rain gutter. Both of us now refreshed and having a new lease on life... we walked up the wood plank sidewalk to the

Jersey Lilly entrance. All the while Merton was smoking his morning cigarette and yelling cuss words at the dogs sunning themselves as they blocked the walkway. Pulling on the rope which hung through the missing door knob hole of the heavy wooden screen door... we step up onto the porch with the screen door making a loud, abrupt bang announcing our arrival at the Lilly. The Jersey Lilly had cigarette smoke hanging down to the bar level... not quite down to the bar stools yet. The locals barely turned their heads because they were more interested in their coffee and cigarettes or finishing their breakfasts or playing a few last hands of cribbage before work. Some of the locals yelled their "Hellos" to Merton as Merton put out his cigarette In the spittoon located next to the wash basin. Facing his friends... Merton tips his cowboy hat slightly. Merton was first to wash his hands and then tells me to do the same. At that moment I learned I did not like Lava soap... a soap everyone used for their everyday washing needs. Afterwards I was instructed to take the used pan of wash water and throw it off the porch on to the gumbo ground located at the south side of the Lilly. Putting the pan back on the wash stand and putting fresh water into it... I immediately head to the phone booth to check the coin return. Unfortunately kids today will never get to experience the joy and thrill of finding money which was accidentally left in the coin return on a pay phone. Every street corner and every business store had a pay phone... not so in today's wireless world. The morning was turning out to be a good day... I found a quarter and a dime. Thirty five cents could buy me three bottles of pop and five pieces of penny candy. Smiling ear to ear I continued my search looking and probing my fingers into the coin returns at the juke box and at the pool table. Nada... nothing... but I was still smiling and thrilled I found somebodies lost change. Merton yells at me to "get over here!". I snapped to attention and hurried back to Merton so I am once again standing next to him.



Looking over the glass, which enclosed the kitchen cooler-display, Merton asks Bill Seward to make us a couple of ham and cheese sandwiches to go. Bill, as long as I knew him, wore a white sailors cap and a sweat stained yellow cotton string tied around his head and forehead. The butchers string would leave a deep mark in his forehead. The thick, cotton butcher's string kept Bill's glasses from traveling down his nose. Bill would from time to time proudly announce he had never lost a pair of glasses because they were permanently attached to his head and how he needed to patent his invention so no one could steal his incredible idea. Really??? Steal his idea? Merton told me to go over to the candy counter and pick out a couple of bags of chips to accompany the sandwiches that we would eat later in the day. Two bags each of Cheetos and Lays Potato Chips. Merton yells at me to get two Snicker Bars while I was over at the candy counter. Both were my favorites.

Bob Seward, Bill's father, had just crawled out a his sleeping space which was located somewhere in the dark, damp basement of the Lilly. Bob Seward's given name was Robert Francis Seward and as I was told he was born and raised in Texas. His dark brown hair was greasy and matted... his hair was spiked in every direction. His dirty cowboy shirt was buttoned in the wrong order... so it was gapping... thus showing off his hairy belly button and his dirty-white Fruit of the Looms. The red and black checkered cowboy shirt was only partially tucked in on one side, while showing sweat and salt stains around the neck area. After looking at himself in front of the mirror next to the Lilly's front door above the wash basin... Bob proceeded to splash some soapy, dirt filled water from the wash basin on to his face. Others had used it since Merton and I had washed our hands and I had refilled it with fresh water. No Matter! Bob was ready for the world dirty wash water or not. Bob being a true cowboy grabs his sweat stained gray felt Stetson with the colored braided horse hair hat

band and slowly screws it onto his head. As he looks into the mirror as he licks a finger and straightens out each of his eye brows... then he tilts his hat all the way to the back of his collar. Bob proceeds to wipe the extra water off his face with his hands and almost smiles a bit as he turns around and faces life and the people enjoying the hospitality of the Lilly. Bob then proceeds to slide the knot on his sweat stained bandana around to his Adam's apple. All the while making sure his bandana was still loosely tied around his neck. Bob was more than a bit grumpy in his demeanor and was definitely still hung over from the night before. After tilting his head back slightly Bob slowly surveys the room. Loudly Bob greets everyone in his gravel-like voice "Mornin' Y'all!". Repeating himself to each of the locals sitting at each the four dining tables where they were eating their breakfasts. Breakfasts which Bill had served up earlier that morning before Bob's arrival. Seeing me standing next to Merton, Bob decides to have a little fun and asked if I would like share in a "breakfast eye opener" with him. After all the emphasis was on the word *breakfast*. I have always trusted others (I have learned not to.). Plus being young and stupid... I smiled and said "Sure!!!". Bob proceeded to take from the bar glass rack two double shot whiskey glasses. Half chuckling he goes to the cooler next to the Lilly entrance door and grabs two eggs. One brown and the other white. Holding back a laugh-coughing attack... Bob asked me if I had a preference to eating white chickens or brown chickens? Being a bit puzzled by the question I asked Bob whether it mattered or not? As Bob lights his third or fourth unfiltered, morning Camel from a dying cigarette left burning a brown line into the bar counter. Bob then squints as he looks around the bar. Taking aim... Bob flicks the spent Camel some ten to 12 feet into a half filled brass spittoon next to the bar. The spent cigarette hisses. With the successful toss came a tight lipped smile. All the while Bob was looking at the crowd of locals eating their breakfasts hoping for the slightest recognition of his great athletic

achievement. No one broke away from their morning conversation nor looked up from their coffee, eggs and morning cigarettes. Everyone had seen or had done that feat a million times before. Besides the morning breakfast goers were still digesting their own cigarettes, swisher sweets, or a carefully crafted one-hand roll your own. Even the non-smoking cowboy or cowgal would “occasionally” spit out their tobacco so they could enjoy their morning eggs and toast before heading out for a day of work out on the open eastern Montana prairie. Down to every last person, after breakfast each would take a quick trip to the Bull or Heifer pen before starting their work day. Each would once again fill their lips with either fine cut or Copenhagen or just light up their next cigarette. Every cowboy would say their goodbyes and then proceed to climb onto their saddles or into their pickups as they whistled at or grumped at their dogs to get moving or load up. The real cowboys and cowgirls left the Lilly riding the same horses they road in on. Each prompting their horse by the use of a quick nudge or a slight kick of their heel and the mandatory click of the their tongue. Finding themselves once again riding into the blinding morning sun into the empty, flatlands of Rosebud County to straighten out all the messes and wrecks the cows made of themselves that night or from a few days before.

Those locals who had really had nothing planned for the day remained in the Lilly. Most were chuckling to themselves about local gossip and topics picked out from that days Billings Gazette newspaper. As they interacted with each other they added to the head-high-layer of cigarette smoke that always hung in the Lilly. Some were washing their own cigarette smoke down with the ink black Jersey Lilly coffee as they were trying to finish off their morning breakfast and trying to get a start to their day doing whatever or just nothing. All those years of cigarette smoke had left a thick yellow, gooey stain of nicotine on the walls of the Jersey Lilly. No amount of soap, 409 cleaner, water and elbow

grease could even touch it. Even the stuffed moose head with Merton's cigarette hanging from its mouth, the stuffed antelope, and the numerous other deer trophies were covered in a thick layer of cigarette tar. Oil portraits of Sitting Bull and Custer's Last Stand painted by Bill's daughter (Seena) were barely distinguishable through the thick paste of tar.

Bill and a few of those sitting at the tables watched as Bob cracked each egg and carefully placed the liquid contents and yolk into the bottom of each shot glass. The bright yellow yoke in each glass stood out like a morning sun on a clear day. I was wondering how Bob was going to cook the eggs once they were in the shot glasses? "Do you have a preference in heart starters?", Bob asked? Or do you want your eye opener straight up? As Merton calmly smoked his next morning cigarette, the expression on his face suddenly changes. Loudly Merton chimes in stating that the only eye opener I had ever had was a Grape Nehi soda and that Bob would be on his own if he tried to give me one of his morning eye openers. Bob sobers up a bit, then agrees with a nod of his head. Bob then heads behind the bar and grabs a Grape Nehi soda from the chest cooler from the back bar counter and opens it. In the other hand he grabs a bottle of Wild Turkey whiskey from the back of the shelf that held fifty or so bottles of liquor. Bob then proceeds to fill the void of each of the shot glasses to the brim with the caramel-colored liquid. With no fan fair, with no announcement Bob places the Grape Nehi soda on the bar counter next to his smoldering Camel. Clearing his throat two or three times, while Bill is shouting out a list of things Bob needed to get done before noon, Bob tries to stop his hands from shaking by squeezing them one after another. Bob looks down at his morning pick me ups and takes the last drag off of his Camel. Without exhaling Bob downs both breakfast shots using only one swallow for each... both egg-whiskeys disappear with a loud swallow-gulp. Then Bob lets a guttural belch come out of

his mouth as cigarette smoke leaves his nostrils and mouth. Like a boxer just tagged with a left hook, Bob turns around to face Bill in the kitchen. Almost falling, he then grabs the ham and cheese sandwiches Bill had finished making in the back kitchen. With his calloused, grimy hands Bob carefully wraps each sandwich with waxed paper and marks one with an “M” and announces that fact to Merton and myself. Merton not saying anything to Bob looks at me and says, “That solves nothing...” being one ham sandwich was made with Mayonnaise and the other Mustard? Bob then puts the wax paper wrapped sandwiches into a used, grease stained brown paper bag. Bob belches again with less smoke escaping from his face while turning around. Bob then hands me the sandwiches saying “Here!”. Bob then proceeds to walk out the Jersey Lilly screen door with a loud bang once again announcing the coming and going of customer going to the Bull Pen or elsewhere... still hacking cigarette smoke as he slowly walked on the Jersey Lilly wooden plank boardwalk to the outhouses. Maybe to pee, but in my mind I thought he was going outside to throw up that mornings breakfast. What do I know?

Bill Seward smiling tells me to have a fun day with Merton out north... then hands me the Grape Nehi soda that was still sitting on the bar counter from where Bob had left it next to Bed’s dying cigarette. With a wink Bill says it is compliments of the Jersey Lilly Bar and Cafe. I had a puzzled look on my face. So Bill follows up by saying, “I’m paying for your soda... dad is a bit out of sorts this morning...” I politely said “Thank You!”, but in truth I hated Grape Nehi. My preference was Orange Crush. Oh well... after all it was a pop in a bottle and even at that age I was addicted to sugar, salty things and chocolate. It was finally time to head North to outfit the shepherd camps. One of the local cattle ranchers throws a dig at Merton as we are walking out the Lilly. The cowboy yells when are you going to quit raising those prairie maggots and become a real rancher? Merton squints his eyes to

see who made the off comment and with a hand gesture tells the cowboy he is still number one. As we walk to Merton's pickup Merton calmly says to me, "Don't tell my sister... your mother... I flipped off someone and never do what I just did around your dad either." I smiled and flipped off Merton not knowing better. Merton laughed.

We are not even a quarter mile out of Ingomar (still on pavement) where we happen upon a family of four that had just wrecked their car by hitting some sage hens. The old Cadillac four-door looked like a blue turtle on its back as it settled into the wet gumbo ditch on its roof. No one was hurt... only shaken up from the accident... even though no one was wearing a seat belt. In fact seat belts hadn't been invented yet in 1962. Merton stopped and offered them a lift to the Jersey Lilly so they could have some phone access for help and "groceries". The family agreed. Merton told all of them to take what was valuable and to pile into the back of his pickup. Merton warned them not to open any of the coolers or food boxes or their car problems would be the least of their worries for the day. Merton had warned them. As we turn around Merton looks at me and tells me "*not to trust anyone in the world except for family!*". That thought has stuck with me all my life. We head back to Ingomar and drop off the family. They were so stunned by the accident not one of them thanked Merton for their lift to safety. Merton honked at them as we headed out once again for the north country. The one girl my age turned around and waved back at us. I waved back at her. Merton smiles and tells me, "Not to get any ideas..." I had no clue what he was talking about again. We finally make it to the gumbo cutoff road which went north to Cohagen. We were finally on our way to a new adventure. I was excited. All this reminded me of my travels with Granddad Mysse on the ranch.

As we headed North on the cut off road out of Ingomar my eyes were still burning from all of the cigarette smoke I had inhaled at the Jersey Lilly that morning. My clothes smelled of dead cigarettes. Merton adding to my misery would light up one of his Pall Malls and then another. Not only would the cigarette smoke burn my eyes more and more, but his ashes would blow back into the pickup cab and would spread like a snow storm getting into and covering everything. Cigarette ashes even floated into my Grape Nehi. Very gross! Driving the 40 miles to Carl's wagon meant that certain sections of the road were almost impassible due to the the slick gumbo roads caused by the rain storm that happened the night before. I was more than just a bit worried when my Uncle would drive off the county road through the wet-gumbo ditch and onto the prairie bouncing the Kelly green rear-wheeled drive Dodge pickup over and crushing the yellow blossoming prickly pear cactus, road side trash and the occasional road culvert. My heart stopped because I felt like we could have had a flat tire at any moment. Merton told me that the driver never changes a flat tire or opens and closes a wire gate. It was the responsibility of the passenger to do that. Are you kidding me... I had no clue how to change a flat tire. Of course Merton just laughed. I hoped he was joking around with me, but I wasn't sure.

The goal for the day was for my Uncle Merton to replenish the food supplies, bring any medicine a sheepherder needed (which was not to include any hard liquor or beer), and to provide mail services for the eight sheep herders hired by the Cherry Creek Sheep Company. After two or three pee stops and one stop to shoot at a coyote that was so far away I could hardly see it. As Merton explained to me, "It was a duty of a sheepman to kill any coyote they see in order to save the life of a ewe or lamb." A coyote was trotting on the horizon with the sun blinding its view from from us, but just the same Merton decided to empty his rifle

attempting to dispatch the poor coyote. Afterwards Merton was smiling ear to ear and chuckling to himself. I asked Merton why he was smiling and laughing about shooting at and not hitting the coyote? Merton smiled at me as he tells me, "I was only trying to scare him... if I wanted to kill him I would have..." I know I sat there in the passenger seat looking at him dumbfounded... I didn't believe him.

Finally we arrive at Carl Watson's Sheep Camp with my ears still ringing from the rifle shots. Carl was a very picturesque man standing in front of his sheep wagon with his white Appaloosa saddle horse. I instantly fell in love with Carl's horse. The beautiful mare stood there with her dark gray rump spots highlighted on her white body while she calmly grazed next to his ever alert sheep dogs. Cootie was a small female Australian sheep dog. Cootie was named such because she liked to visit coyote males in the middle of the night while Carl slept. As Carl stated it wasn't if but when Cootie would bring home fleas or ticks from her male companions or worse become pregnant because of her midnight sexual encounters. Carl's other dog was named Little Jimmy. Little Jimmy never left Carl's side. Merton explained to me that the dog was named Little Jimmy because if you pet or played with him you would get a dose of his fleas. Cootie provided these coyote fleas every time Little Jimmy and her slept together. In addition Merton added that "I could possibly go blind if I played with my own "Little Jimmy." Really? I had no clue what Merton was talking about. Later on that day Carl explained to me what Merton was trying to say and that he was telling me this as a joke. Where do people come up with crap like that?

Carl was a tobacco chewer and loved plug tobacco or molasses soaked leaf tobacco (a tobacco twist). The first question asked by Carl was, "Merton did you bring me "my twist?". As Merton inhaled his Pall Mall he responded with a smoke filled exhale saying "Yes



I did!". Merton gave Carl his accumulated mail which he had picked up at the Ingomar Post Office the day before. Yes, there was a post office in Ingomar. Carl in turn gave Merton his mail that needed to be mailed when Merton got back to Ingomar. After each of the new supplies were carefully placed into Carl's sheep wagon... placed in mouse proof lockers... Carl then carefully takes a bite off of the rolled up piece of tobacco. With a huge smile and a long sigh Carl was happy with life. At that moment Merton announced he had to leave me with Carl for an hour or two so he could deliver the rest of his supplies to several more sheep camps near Cherry Springs and at Beer Bill's. Carl reluctantly said he would watch me for a while. I know I was more than a bit nervous losing my security with Merton to someone I did not know. As Merton started to walk away to get into his pickup Carl loudly states to Merton to be back in three hours or he would ride out and find him. Merton chuckled and leaves the two of us watching him as he disappears into the horizon in a cloud of gumbo dust.

Carl, being gentle in nature, asks me if I would like to ride with him to check the sheep. I said sure. Carl saddles his horse. Carl asks me a stupid question, "What was the color of Grant's white horse?" "White..", I replied. He laughed and then said, "Then what is the name of my horse?" I thought for a second and replied, "Grant?". Carl let out a short belly laugh and said, "WRONG... it's Ryan!" "Ryan?" Why did you name a mare Ryan I asked. I named her after the sheep herder I bought her from... "Patty Ryan." Patty Ryan was another sheepherder that worked for the Cherry Creek Sheep Company. Patty's job was tending to the yearling ewes. I was totally brain numb at this point. I asked Carl, "Why didn't use Patty which is a girl's name?" Carl's response was, "I am not going to confuse my horse by giving it a different name... what is done is done." Carl was still laughing and chuckling about his

dumb joke. For the life of me I couldn't figure out why he was laughing so hard... I felt like I missed something.

So the two of us hop on Ryan and head north to a fence next to the Brooks Ranch. As we came over a hill Carl points out a group of circular rocks formations scattered over the flat area near a bluff and asks me if I knew why the rocks were there and why they were in large circles? I stated proudly that they were Indian tepee rings. Carl spit a streaming goober of tobacco into the wind. To my disgust the slim-spray lands on my light blue cowboy shirt staining it a coffee brown color. Carl half turns in his saddle and asks me, "Do you want to look for some arrowheads?". Of course I said... sure... but what about the sheep. .. I though we needed to check on them? He told me the sheep could wait. Carl looked back one more time to admire the new tobacco stain I displayed on my left shoulder and chuckled to himself.

After getting off Ryan we started walking down a water torn alkaline gully. I was as I always did... ever watching and listening for the occasional hiding rattle snake. Trying not to be distracted by anything Carl was saying. Carl states that occasionally he would find Indian artifacts like arrow heads, drills, a few trade beads and other "stuff" in this area. As we slowly walk down the gully with our heads pointed to the center of the earth, Carl started talking about the Indians who once lived and thrived here. His stories painted a clear picture of what life was like for the multiple Indian tribes that would wander through the Cherry Creek area. Carl said we were standing on their land... Indian land that we took from them. As Carl talked about the Indian tribes that inhabited the area I could almost hear Indian children laughing and playing as they ran between the camp teepees. As we walked Carl kicked at a blackish object I thought was a piece of dead sage brush. Instead he had found an 10 to 12 inch section of a buffalo horn which was in really good shape. He

smiled and Carl's buffalo horn find gave me incentive to look even harder for Indian artifacts. After an hour or more of finding more horned toad lizards than arrowheads we head north again to check the sheep. In the valley next to a man-made dam was a water hole where the sheep had collected for their late afternoon drink and siesta. Carl made a quick head count and everything looked calm and as it should be. I wished we could have looked for arrowheads for the rest of the day, but Carl said Merton should be returning shortly.

As we were riding back to Carl's sheep wagon Carl asked me if I was "Happy?". I told him that I thought so. He stated that I didn't smile as much as other kids my age. So this worried him. Why should I smile more?" I asked Carl. Carl cleared his throat and spit out his chew. After my question Carl had nothing more to say until we got back to his sheep wagon. His first words were "That damn Merton... he took your lunch with him didn't he? I should have known better." Carl fixes us a quick late lunch from some reheated Spam. We just looked at each other as we waited for Merton. The Spam was terrible... but I ate little pieces of it trying to be polite to Carl. What pieces I couldn't eat I snuck to Cootie and Little Jimmy. To this day I absolutely hate Spam.

After we were done eating there was an uncomfortable silence separating the two of us. Out of this silence Carl quips to me, "Are you thankful for anything; happy about anything?" I thought for a moment or two and said "Yes...". "For what?", Carl asked. I said for starters I guess because it is a beautiful day and we are eating outside. I told Carl I was thankful that we had been arrowhead hunting, even though I did not find anything. Carl repeats that I am still not smiling. I told him I was very aware of what I was eating because it didn't smell right and due to that fact the Spam didn't make my tummy very happy. I told Carl that I hoped I

wouldn't get sick and that's probably why I wasn't smiling like he wanted me to.

Carl laughed and said with great affirmation. "Every person on this Earth wants to be happy. Desperately to be happy. My suggestion to you is to make a list. A list of those things that make you happy and a list of those things that do not make you happy. Stay away from things that make you unhappy. Carl stated if you ever write down alcohol on your Happy List I want to leave you with this one thought... Alcohol can enhance and make your life something beautiful... it can... but just so you know... it can completely destroy your life just as easily." Carl further says, "**I know the things I am saying to you are gospel facts!**" Then Carl looked to the sky with sad eyes. Look what booze is doing to your Uncle Merton. I didn't know what to think about Carl's statement. Merton seemed perfectly normal to me. I guess it was because I had been around drunks and alcoholics all my short life and didn't know any better. Life as I was living it seemed normal to me.

At that moment Carl starts looking around his sleeping area at the back of the sheep wagon. He pulls out a can of Copenhagen chew. Inside the tin were some arrowheads that Carl had found. Carl picked out one that was constructed of a white rock of a style and size which I had never seen before. Carl states I have only found one arrowhead like this one in my 35 years of looking for them. It is perfect... very different from all the rest that I have found. Probably made by a special Indian in a special place in this world. In any case Carl handed me the white Indian arrowhead. With a smile on his face Carl tells me if this arrowhead makes me happy then this should be the first thing I write down on my Happy List. Carl finished by saying, "It's yours so you can remember me for as long as you live." The arrowhead did make me happy and it was the first thing I wrote down on my Happy List. For a second

time Carl asked me to keep it forever and to think of him from time to time. I still have that very arrowhead. It means a lot to me and is very special to me. Even though I asked to visit and wanted to see Carl again for another fun day hunting arrowheads and hanging out... our future meetings never happened in the way I imagined or wanted. I rarely got to see or even talk to Carl even though he worked for my Uncle Sivert for another 10 or 12 years. Our special afternoon with each other only happened that one time.

In later years on four or five occasions when I was legal to drive I had to pick up Carl in Forsyth at the Howdy Bar or in Miles City at the Bison Bar. Carl never wanted to talk after being picked up after his blind drunken binges. Carl only wanted to stare out the pickup window while he occasionally nodding off trying to sleep off his hangover. I came to the conclusion Carl was living with some very dangerous demons... like most or all sheep herders do. None of those drunken times were pretty times nor happy times in Carl's life from what I could see. Carl Watson was nominated by Sivert Mysse in 1966 for a sheep herding award. Carl and Sivert actually had to travel to Washington D.C. for Carl to receive his award. The American Sheep Industry Association honored Carl with its top award for shepherders. The Camp Tender Award. The Camp Tender Award is given to the herder from a list of 50 nominees (one from each state) that show a strong commitment and a significant contribution to the sheep industry, its organizations and its producers by going above and beyond that which is called for in his/her professional capacity as a camp tender or shepherd. It was the proudest moment of Carl's life... he felt like he was someone who was "fairly important in life." Even so Carl could not handle reality. Carl would send his paychecks to his family only saving enough money for a two or three time yearly drunk bouncing around Garfield and Rosebud Counties. I didn't know what to do to help Carl... I tried to talk to

him, but he never reciprocated. All I could do was feel sorry for him and hope for the best.

I kind of realized what Carl meant when Merton returned that afternoon. Merton didn't make all the camps that day, but instead got into some hard liquor with one of his sheep herder friends whom I never met. Merton was stupid drunk. Merton could hardly keep his pickup on the trail road as he drove up to Carl's sheep wagon. After Merton parked his pickup he almost fell out of the driver's seat onto the prairie while accidentally honking the pickup horn. The world was spinning faster than Merton could walk so he almost fell down a few times as he hung on to his pickup bed. Ryan tried to run away from all the ruckus. Fortunately Carl had hobbled Ryans front feet... so his escape was futile. Ryan's eyes were popping out his head but resumed his grazing. Carl shook his head and told me my day was just starting. Merton gave me the task or the responsibility of driving (aiming as Merton called it) the both of us back to Ingomar in his Kelly green Dodge rear wheel drive pickup. Merton parks himself in the passenger seat with Carl's help. Then in his huge booming voice yells, "Point this bitch south and take me home. I damn well hope your aiming is good!" I crawled into the driver's side of his pickup. Me being nervous was an understatement.

I had not ever driven a clutch pickup with 4 on the floor before. I had driven and operated a tractor with help... so I assumed the experience would be similar. As I stated I was very nervous, but in another sense so excited in trying to drive a pickup for the first time in my life. I told Merton I had never driven a pickup before. Merton smiled and tells me that today will be a good day to learn how. Thank goodness the roads had pretty much dried out. My biggest fear was getting stuck in a gumbo rut or hitting a wild critter. Thank goodness Merton let me shift the gears without using the clutch. Merton could see both my legs while sitting

would not quite fully touch the pedals. Merton just babbled some crap at me as I was grinding gears.. Stretched out I could press the gas pedal and steer the pickup. I was just grateful Merton didn't yell at me as I ground the pickup into the granny gear. It is hard to yell at someone when they are almost passed out. Thank goodness Merton was so drunk he didn't smoke even one Pall Mall on the trip back to Ingomar. One cigarette did hang and jangle from his lips for the forty miles on our slow, bumpy journey. Off and on Merton would try singing a song which he proudly stated he had written and had copyrighted. He stated he would definitely make millions of dollars on the song when he and his song were discovered someday. I asked him who is suppose to discover his song? He would just laugh in that unique Merton laugh and start singing again. Merton's singing voice was terrible. Somewhat like fingernails on a chalk board; very much like my voice. Thank goodness Merton hadn't eaten the sandwiches... but all four bags of chips and the two Snicker candy bars were gone... eaten by Merton I assumed. Not even the empty bags or the candy wrappers remained. Merton liked to litter... something I despised. I told him repeatedly to quit throwing garbage out the window, but he never, ever listened to me... he would tell me the prairie winds would take care of the "crap". It is hard to believe Merton liked Lays BBQ Potato chips and Fritos more than I did. I ate both of those delicious cheese and ham sandwiches while I "aimed" the pickup towards Ingomar. The ham sandwich marked with an "M" by Bob was the one with mayonnaise. I felt like the world's foremost daredevil. As daring as Evel Knievel jumping the Grand Canyon I imagined. I devoured each sandwich one bite at a time as I hit every bump and lump in the road. I was as happy as I could be driving back to Ingomar that day. I drove incredibly slow, but deliberately focused on the road. Especially through the Devil's Dancing Ground Gorge canyon road. That ultra scary section of road had huge cliffs or deep canyon areas positioned on each side of the road. I imagined if I made a mistake it would

be like driving off of the edge the Grand Canyon into a bottomless pit. Merton called the Devil's Dancing Ground Canyon a "pucker up area!" It would bring awe and respect to anyone who came close to the edge. Especially for someone who was driving for the first time in his life.

Driving by the gorge for the first time with me piloting Merton's truck and with Merton mostly passed out... my heart was racing. I carefully aimed the pickup without hitting a thing or getting near the cliff edges. I had tears in my eyes and could breath again when I finally had the Devil's Dancing Gorge far behind me in the rear view mirror. Yes my butt was still puckered up and life went on.

Onward to the next prairie hazard or hazards. Even though I missed a few Sage Grouse chicks, my proudest moment may have been when I scared an antelope as it buzzed past the front of the slow moving pickup, I honked and it didn't even wake Merton up or make his cigarette fall out of his mouth. I was smiling ear to ear. Happy that neither of my parents ever caught on or knew about my happy day and the small details associated with Merton and Merton's drinking. I was also very happy about my visit to the Cherry Creek Sheep Company sheep camp and meeting Carl Watson. My "most happy moment" was when I crested the final hill and saw the lights of Ingomar to the West. I was so proud and totally beside myself with relief. I did it... I made it to Ingomar. It was late evening and almost dark.

After helping Merton into his trailer... Merton smiled. To ensure my silence Merton gave me a ten dollar bill and stated to me, "The tangle I had with the bottle this afternoon is between you and I. Don't tell your parents anything and definitely don't tell them I got a little tipsy today...OK?" I told him it was our secret. Merton was lighting up another cigarette as he staggered to the



refrigerator freezer. Merton found his Lewis and Clark vodka bottle. Merton had carefully placed the bottle of vodka in his refrigerator freezer for safe keeping. Lewis and Clark whiskey and other hard liquors were always kept in the cupboard above the refrigerator with his cartons of cigarettes. I keep this tradition alive today in Merton's memory by keeping my liquor above the refrigerator., but without the refrigerated vodka and cartons of cigarettes. Life was good for Merton once again with his bottle of vodka in hand. Before I could leave... Merton heads to his bedroom. After returning he places the largest arrowhead on the kitchen table I had ever seen. Merton stated he found it "out in the middle of no where near the Porcupine Bluffs near the home ranch." He stated it was an atlatl point made from Miles City silt stone. I stood over the point with my mouth open. I had no clue what an atlatl point was... but it didn't matter. I knew I loved it. Merton tells me to close my mouth and put the arrowhead into my pocket. I did just that. After my goodbyes to Merton I walked up from Merton's trailer to the Jersey Lilly Bar and Cafe to find my parents. Everything seemed normal to me nothing was out of place in my world.

As I walked up to the Lilly I could see Bob Seward had either passed out or was sleeping on a the long bench that sat next to the Jersey Lilly screen door entrance. A dog was licking Bob's hand... I guess it had food or something tasty on it. As I walked into the Lilly of course the screen door loudly announces my arrival over the loud jukebox music which was occasionally being drowned out by pool balls crashing into one another. The first person I see is Bill Seward talking to his customers with his soft voice making everyone listening straining to hear him over the community chaos that had erupted during that night's supper time. The cowboys and locals were all shouting in their loudest voices from the tables and bar stools in order that each person

could be heard by the person next to them. The Jersey Lilly Bar and Cafe was alive and well.

My parents were sitting at a dining table with my brother next to the old phone booth talking to people I did not know. I peeked into the phone booth to see someone putting the last of their change into the pay phone, then sliding the folding door open, and screaming she needed more change and for me to get it for her ASAP... NOW! Someone at the bar gave me change for the bills that she had handed me and I rushed back and placed the change into her hand. In return she said thanked me and gave me a dime for my troubles! Yes a whole dime. It was more profitable being bribed by my Uncle Merton than getting handouts from strangers in phone booths, but money is money. My parents seemed to be enjoying their conversation with the locals they seemed to know. My mother was drinking a beer while my father smoked a Salem cigarette in between his sips of creme de menthe... his preferred after dinner drink. Both of my parents seemed like they didn't have a care in the world. As I walked to the table my brother asked my dad for some quarters so he could play a game of pool. My brother was barely tall enough to reach the balls with his cue stick, but he was having fun hitting the balls all by himself.

Bill Seward saw me proudly showing off to my mother my new white arrowhead from Carl Watson and the large gray atlatl or spear point Merton gave me. My mother looked at them and stated, "They were nice..." and continued her conversation to someone at the adjacent table. My brother returned to the table and I showed him my new Indian artifacts. I was truly proud of both of these treasures. Bill interrupted my "show and tell" standing in front of our table with a fairly large canvas bag filled with "something" which he placed carefully on the table in front of me. Bill said "by the smile in my eyes" that I must have absolutely

loved my new treasures. I truly did! Bill stated that every so often a cowboy or shepherd would come into the Lilly without any money and he would give them a shot of whiskey in exchange for what the cowboy or herder found out in the prairie. Bill placed a towel on the table and proceeded to display about 50 artifacts on the table. Everything from prairie fossils to all sorts of Indian artifacts. Every item was absolutely perfect. Bill smiled and said to my brother you get the first choice and you get to pick only one item from those items that are placed on the towel. My brother looked over the priceless items and chose a very large fossilized shark's tooth. I couldn't believe he passed up on the incredible Indian arrowheads and other artifacts. I carefully looked over every item and finally chose a red colored Minnesota pipestone "peace pipe head". Bill smiled and said "good for the both of you." I was actually in tears due to my happiness. I must have sat in my chair for over an hour just staring at my new treasured gifts. I occasionally drank a sip of my Orange Crush soda, but I never took my eyes off of my treasures. I am sure I had a smile on my face that gave all my happy feelings away. I was truly "Happy."

Everyone who was in the Jersey Lilly that night was overly cheerful and all were smiling. Of course there was two cowboys that had had too much to drink and started to fight at the bar. Bill took out his "equalizer" (the cut off large end of a pool cue stick) and threaten the two and told them to take their problems outside. The two cowboys did leave because they had seen Bill straighten out "misunderstandings" in the past with Bill's "equalizer". Perhaps the state of happiness was due to the amount of alcohol everyone had consumed, but none the less everyone was jolly and joking. The cigarette smoke choked the air after being mixed with the greasy smell of hamburgers being grilled in the back of the Lilly. All I could do is smile. Wow this was a really was a good day... a happy day. Little did I know Merton and I would share a few more adventures like this in the years to come. And we did.

Just so you know Merton... I never told my parents about our adventure that day... the ten dollar bribe has kept my lips sealed throughout all these years. As I went to sleep that night in Granddad's old house I smiled... I had a new precious white arrowhead given to me by Carl Watson... I had a new fantastic Miles City Silt stone atlatl point Merton gave me... Bill Seward gave me an incredible Minnesota Pipestone peace pipe head... I had ten dollars and forty five cents in my wallet... and I drove for the first time in my life by myself from Cherry Creek to Ingomar. As I tried to fall asleep... I couldn't... I was breathless every time I thought about what happened that day. No kid my age could have ever had a better day. Yes I was truly happy. And I didn't want to ever forget how I learned how to tell people they are number one in my life.

I miss you Merton Mysse and think about you and our adventures often. I hope you found some happiness in life. Thanks to you I did. Love you!

Craig

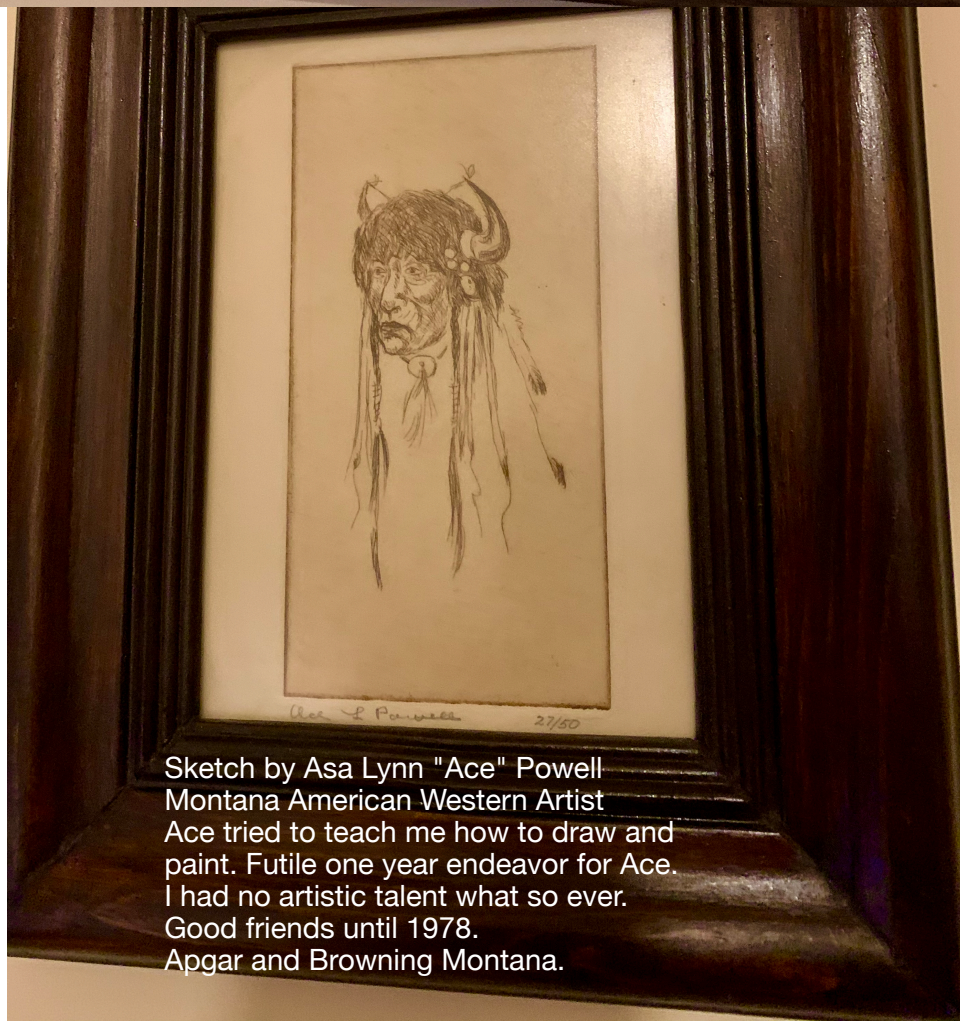
Taneal: The pictures on the next page show you who gave me which artifacts and items that hold so many memories for me. Little treasures that I hold so dear. As I promised you I would write up the stories behind these particular life treasures. My hope is that this story and these treasures are passed down in our family to someone who will love and cherish them during their lives as much as I have during my life.

XYZ - Love Papi - December 15, 2020






A Diana M. Davis original Watercolor.  
Diana frequented the Jersey Lilly Bar and Cafe  
in the middle 1980's. Diana loved the Jersey Lilly  
bean soup. I asked her to do a watercolor for me  
from a picture I had taken while out and about  
with Julius Sebulsky in 1971.




Sketch by Asa Lynn "Ace" Powell  
Montana American Western Artist  
Ace tried to teach me how to draw and  
paint. Futile one year endeavor for Ace.  
I had no artistic talent what so ever.  
Good friends until 1978.  
Apgar and Browning Montana.





Pottery Shard  
Found on Sand Stone Bluffs  
Next to fire pit  
Overlooking the Mysse Ranch  
On the Big Porcupine Creek



Two Miles City  
Silt Stone Arrowheads  
Julian N. Sebulsky  
Ingomar Montana

White Arrowhead  
Carl Watson  
Ingomar Montana

Green Arrowhead  
Granddad Mysse  
S.O. Mysse  
Ingomar Montana

Atlatl Point  
Merton C. Mysse  
Ingomar Montana

Peace Pipe Head  
Bill Seward  
Ingomar Montana