



Julius and the Mysse Curse 1971

Craig R Milam

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the Mysse
Curse 1971

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Written for my nephews Russell Milam and Bradley Milam. Just on the outside chance they may want to know the reality and the absolute truth of what really happened in the past concerning the corporate collapse of the Cherry Creek Sheep Company - Ingomar Montana and the collapse of the Mysse Family unit.

Julian N. Sebulsky was a very special person who never graduated from the eighth grade. Yet, this man knew more about things and life than anyone I have ever met. Julius was extremely intelligent and pragmatic in applying his “smarts” to survive in the everyday world. Because of Julius’s keen intellect and penetrating mind, he could make anyone feel like they were a special somebody.

Everything written in Julius and the Mysse Curse 1971 and The Final Payback - Erased and the Milam Curse came directly from my personal journals that I started writing when I was a Freshman in high school in Bigfork Montana. I wrote my personal journals as record of my observations, feelings, and reflections on my daily experiences never expecting to have anyone else read what I had wrote. My writings and photos helped me create order in my life when my world felt it was in chaos because of the absence of Truth. The Truth does not cease to exist just because it is ignored nor does Truth disappear after the lie has been told more than three times.

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One family's history can be lived by multiple individuals who lived the same story with each telling a different tale about the past. The only individuals that get pissed off and mad about hearing the truth about their stories... are those telling the lies.

I think the stories of the Mysse and the Milam families are very disturbing. You can close your eyes to the reality in both stories but not to the actual events that made each story a reality... if my father, mother and brother weren't such liars I probably would not have written about either "Julius and the Mysse Curse 1971" nor "The Final Payback - Erased and the Milam Curse"!

C.R. Milam - February 9, 2003

Prologue

No one knows how much time you have on this earth. There is no way to open an app on your iPhone and check the balance... to see the days remaining on your time account. The most precious and finite resource we have is time. With each passing day and minute our account balance approaches zero.

Time does not heal everything. Someone lied about that being a fact of life. After any loss, whether it is a member of your family, a promise not made, a promise not kept, a lost love, or something dear to you which is lost and forever missing in your life. No matter what... there is always a void in one's heart, one's mind, and one's soul that is present to your last day. Even though we wait for the pain to go away and once again feel whole... sadly it will never happen. In time we come to the realization that the missing pieces are gone forever. Every one of us is damaged in one way or another with bits and pieces of us missing... never to be replaced nor to be made whole again. Lies no matter how many times they are told do not become the truth. Lies are still lies no matter how much time passes on this Earth. One does not cancel out the other. All my experiences and my adventures... the happy and the not so happy... are a part of me and have made up my life... made me. Nothing remains as it once was in life... everything and everyone change with time. Sometimes your life experiences, your stories, your pain, your triumphs are so valuable they need to be shared... or do they?

❖ June 1971 ❖

I decided that it was in my best interest to transfer from Montana State University in Bozeman to the University of Montana in Missoula for the Fall Quarter of college in 1971. It would have been my Junior year. I was still intent on becoming a medical doctor with my Pre-Med college pathway.

I knew from a young age that both my mother and father were happiest when they were or thought they were able to control situations and/or individual people. My thinking was that they cared and just wanted the best for their children and others. As the years went by I came to the realization that Paul and Bernice did not feel bad or have any emotions about anything they did. Both had a huge sense of entitlement because they believed they were superior in many ways to others. Paul and Bernice's relationships with family were based on manipulating others for their own benefit. My mother, Bernice, needed to find out why dividends and/or distributions were no longer being issued by

the Cherry Creek Sheep Company operated by her brother, Sivert Mysse. Not a dividend had been made since early 1969. Paul was a school teacher and Bernice a stay at home mother. This made the Cherry Creek dividend checks an extremely important source of money to keep harmony and life normal within the Milam family at Bigfork. Many promises had been made by Sivert Mysse (Bernice's brother) about the issuing of a dividend, but no one in the Cherry Creek Sheep Company partnership had received a penny. The "Mysse Curse" was in full bloom in front of everyone's eyes but not one person recognized it. Interestingly I think (I know!) my Uncle Merton Mysse did. Not only could Merton see what was happening, but what was going to happen between the remaining partners of the Cherry Creek Sheep Company. Merton warned me of future things that were to come concerning the ranch. Merton told me that the day of large scale sheep ranching was dead and eventually would become a part of Eastern Montana history. The new future of Rosebud and Garfield county ranching was operating with cow-calves and maybe wheat.

Unfortunately I did not believe Merton. I was taught that to be a successful rancher you needed to raise sheep... not cattle. I wasn't involved in the day to day operations nor the decision making of the Cherry Creek Sheep Company... my involvement was my yearly, temporary physical labor provided to the Cherry Creek Sheep Company on orders of my parents. Paul and Bernice were slowly training my brother and I to think and to act in a certain way by using temporary rewards and emotional manipulation by stating we had to learn everything about sheep ranching... *"because one day this would be our life."* This was the blue print for the "Milam Curse" which became the most toxic family collapse ever envisioned by me some 30 years later. (Read: **"The Final Payback-Erased and the Milam Curse"**)

In the spring of 1971 (early June) there was a meeting of the partners of the Cherry Creek Sheep Company. The partners in the Cherry Creek Sheep Company were Marie (Mysse) Straw, Bernice (Mysse) Milam, Sivert Mysse, and myself. My involvement was mandatory because of my five shares in the

corporation given to me by my Granddad Mysse as a gift when I was born. The meeting was to be held in Granddad's old abandoned house in Ingomar. Even though I had five shares of Cherry Creek Corporation stock given to me by my Granddad Mysse, my voice or opinion was not recognized because both Sivert and Bernice considered my five shares to be included in Bernice's shares of the corporation. Bernice stated to me I was not mature enough to understand the complexities of a corporate meeting concerning finance and the ranching business operations. I was 20 years old. Looking back I think I had a better grasp on reality than either parent realized or they had themselves. The partners of the Cherry Creek Sheep by their very nature wanted only one thing that smoky afternoon and that was money from the ranch to maintain their acquired lifestyles. No family member seemed interested at all in the day to day operation or what was actually happening on Cherry Creek. Their only care was for the gravy train to continue. It was very evident... even to a 20 year old.

I was “allowed” to attend the Cherry Creek Corporate meeting that day. The five shares of corporate stock became a means by which Bernice could manipulate me and control my life in the name of “**Family**”. This control by Bernice would continue until the Cherry Creek Sheep Company was sold and divided up some eight years later and would continue throughout the history of the Milam Basin Creek Ranch operations. The Milams and the Straws gathered at Granddad’s Old House after having a very long lunch. Many alcoholic beverages and an over abundance of cigarettes at the Jersey Lilly Bar and Cafe were the primary lunch indulgences. Marie and Paul perhaps (definitely) had too many beverages, but this was the Mysse family and it was Ingomar... so it was OK. The Old House was a bit warm for June, but it was definitely going to get more heated. The corporate meeting was to take place at 1:00 PM sharp. Bill and Marie Straw, Paul and Bernice Milam and myself waited for the arrival of Sivert. The normal chit chat bantering went on between partnership members. As usual the cigarette smoke in the house became unbearable for me. I looked

for any excuse to get outside into the fresh air. Paul was the first one to start losing his cool. It was approximately 1:30 PM and Sivert still had not arrived for the 1:00 PM meeting. At last fresh air. I was instructed to walk the two blocks up to the Jersey Lilly and see if Sivert had left a message with Bill Seward. (There were no cell phones only land lines in 1971.) Quickly walking up the gumbo dirt road, talking to Bill Seward, buying a Diet Pepsi... I returned with no news about Sivert. It was now 2:15 PM. Bill and Marie are talking about returning to Forsyth as the bang of the back porch screen door and the boot room door's creaking loudly announces Sivert's arrival. Sivert was suppose to bring Janet, his wife, but stated instead she had business in Forsyth. Janet needed to attend a family gathering concerning her father, who was a doctor practicing medicine in Forsyth.

Sivert, presiding as the President of Cherry Creek Sheep Company, opened the meeting of the 1971 Cherry Creek Sheep Company Partner's meeting at 2:25 PM. Stating the time as he wrote notes in his

yellow legal tablet to chronicle the meeting. Sivert asked if anyone was interested in him reading the minutes from the last partnership meeting which was held in 1969. Everyone was silent for a brief moment. Then Marie states “We were all at that meeting... can’t you see that Sivert?... We want to know why we haven’t received our distributions?” Ignoring Marie... Sivert explains how Merton Mysse had returned his shares in Cherry Creek in exchange for the 22 and 1/2 section horse pasture located in Garfield County called “Basin Creek”. Sivert also explained to everyone that he, Sivert, still had controlling interest with his one extra share of the corporation stock. The Cherry Creek Corporation held 2500 shares (from Merton’s buy out), Sivert’s 2501 shares, Marie’s 2500, and Bernice with my five shares equalling a total 2500 shares. Sivert also pointed out he was made president and gifted the extra share by his father, S.O. Mysse, thus putting Sivert in charge of all day-to-day operations concerning the Cherry Creek Sheep Corporation. The first question by both Marie and Bernice was why there was a total absence of dividends or distribution checks

from the corporation since late 1968. Sivert stated since it was harder and harder to obtain Mexican shearers in the spring to shear the 8 bands (8000 ewes and 1000 rams), because finding sheep herders who would stay through the entire year to tend to the sheep bands was almost impossible, because the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad had abandoned all rail line service to Ingomar making it impossible to profitably ship the wool bags from the Ingomar wool house, and because Merton was no longer a Cherry Creek Partner thus no longer tending the sheep herder camps. He (Sivert) had decided to diversify and to purchase a large number of steers to feed through the 1971 season on the North pastures surrounding Cherry Springs. Everyone's faces dropped in disbelief. The question became why weren't the share holders notified and given a chance to vote on this change... vote on the purchase of the steers? Sivert had taken a large amount of the Cherry Creek cash reserves plus sold off approximately 2000 head of ewes to purchase 1500 head of Black Angus steers. At this point everyone was yelling over the

“Family Member” next to them. Questions like: Who gave you permission... Sivert? How much did this cost the corporation? How much money is left? Are you, Sivert, still being paid? If so how much are you paying yourself? When will the next distribution be? And in the case of my father, **Paul yells at the top of his voice, “It is time to divide up the GOD DAMN ranch!”** Sivert was visibly shaken and taken back by Paul’s outburst. Then Sivert asked for “*civility*”. Civility... are you kidding me? The family meeting only calmed down when Sivert yelled in his loudest voice that everyone would get a “very large” distribution that fall (1971) when the steers were sent to market and the corporation liquidated or sold off 4 more of the remaining 8 bands of ewes and one half of the rams to make the ranch manageable by Sivert and those individuals (herders or cowboys) who would work for Cherry Creek. With a promise of money coming into everyone’s pockets without any concern about the prospects of future revenues... all “Family Members” were happy... the meeting was adjourned. I had no clue I was watching the beginning of the end of the Cherry Creek

Sheep Company and like the two stories of two related families... the end of the Mysse Family and the beginning of the end of the Milam Family.



❖ July 1971 ❖

Looking back I guess Bernice did not trust her brother, Sivert, and started making her own plans about her future in the Cherry Creek Sheep Company. I did not realize I would be **“the”** key player in her plans... until after it happened. I was not working for the Forest Service that summer because of trusting so called “friends”, but that is another story for another time. I was working part time for the Bigfork Summer Playhouse and its owners Don and Jude Thomson. It was the last few days of June when my mother, Bernice, came to me and asked me to do her a big favor **“in the name of family and because I had a “duty to our Family” all because of my five corporate shares in the Cherry Creek Sheep Company.”** The big favor was to go to the ranch and be an **“*observer*”** to the progress of the construction of a huge 160’ by 80’ lambing barn at the Cherry Springs corrals. The Cherry Springs corrals were located in the middle of no where in the upper part of

Rosebud County. I was a bit shocked by her announcement to say the least. Bernice stated that I would be helping with “*maybe some*” of the work. ***A construction boss-owner who developed these log buildings out of Thompson Falls, Montana (that Paul knew personally) and his crew would be doing ALL of the work. The boss and his crew would be in charge of the construction of the log lambing shed from start to finish.*** My primary job would be to get lambing jugs built and installed in the log lambing shed with the help of a sheep herder who worked for her brother, Sivert. I was to report via land phone all progress concerning the construction of the new log lambing shed for Bernice and Paul. I was instructed to use “only” the Jersey Lilly phone booth and not Sivert’s private phone when reporting back to the parents in Bigfork. The project would take some ***30 days... no more than 45 days tops.*** Paul, my dad, supposedly knew the construction boss, who’s name was Dean, “*on a close personal level.*” Paul interrupted Bernice with a loud voice stating, “***Don’t question your Mother... After all you are a***

share holder!”. WHAT???. I hadn’t said a word one way or another at that point. I was a bit shocked because I stated to Bernice that I was transferring to the University of Montana to start the Fall Quarter. Bernice paused a bit and knew exactly what to say to me. Bernice looked sternly at me and stated she would help me buy a “new” car if I agreed to do this for her. Thinking about it... I agreed. The only vehicles I had were a 1929 Model A Cabriolet and a 1921 Model T. Neither of which were everyday vehicles to take to school. **I had no idea what I was getting into at the Cherry Creek Sheep Company in the summer of 1971.** But as my parents promised, I would be there only 30 to 45 days... TOPS! Bernice definitely knew which buttons to push of mine and what she was doing to get what she and Paul wanted. Both Bernice and Paul lied to me even when it would have been better to tell me the truth about what they truly wanted and what my real role at the ranch would be. Their life long desire to control and manipulate me in the name of **“Family using their lies.”**

I was instructed to pack what I needed for “*maybe*” a month or a month and a half stay at the “Old House” in Ingomar. Bernice promised if I kept on top of things I may still be able to attend Fall semester at Missoula. Paul and Bernice were graduates of Montana State University. They were Bobcats to the core. A fact that both of them were extremely proud of. Bernice, more so than Paul, was still miffed that I had become a turn coat and transferred to the “other” university... “*that hippy, dope smoking university*” as she called it. I had to wonder why this spur of the moment action was sprung so suddenly on me? Was it because of the University I chose? Neither Paul or Bernice showed any regard for my future educational plans... what was I missing?

I was told I could use Granddad’s “Old House” in Ingomar as a place to stay as I observed the happenings on the Cherry Creek Sheep Company. I had a lot of fond memories from my times with my Granddad Mysse in my early years. Granddad’s house had no running water for showers or no flush toilet; so this was going to be a bit

challenging. And so all the world knows...*I absolutely hate outhouses and pooping in the wild.* I had stayed at the old house in Ingomar many times before with family, but not alone for 30 to 45 days in Granddad's old abandoned house. But I figured it would be an adventure and I would survive. Remember... I was doing this for "Family!"... and a new car. (A used pickup is what I had in my mind.)

In the next two days I gathered everything I thought I would need. I had my sleeping bag and a wool blanket to put underneath it as padding just in the remote chance I had to stay out in the country. After all neither Bernice or Paul indicated I would have to camp out in the middle of no where. I had my large fire orange backpack filled with all the clothes I would need for three or four weeks. I packed my prized Buck folding knife and my Leatherman tool, four boxes of .22 shells for my single shot open site rifle. The Remington bolt action single shot was stored at the Old House in Ingomar for safe keeping... Paul felt it was safer than keeping the rifle at Bigfork. I packed my red Jersey

Lilly baseball hat that Bill Seward had given to me along with my long underwear in case of cold weather and all the toiletries I thought I would need for 30 plus days. Fresh toilet paper has always been important to me so I packed four rolls of the precious squares. A roll per week should be perfect until I got back to civilization. For food I packed a box of Pop Tart Breakfast bars... I figured I would be eating at the Jersey Lilly in Ingomar most of the time... being able to put my food bill on the Milam Tab. Finally I was packed and ready to leave. After all I was an Eagle Scout... always "Be Prepared"... well I wasn't. Why the hurry and urgency of my presence on Cherry Creek... I did not fully understand nor was it fully explained to me. It was the third day since when I had been asked to go to the ranch. At no point did either Paul or Bernice state when I was to leave... only it would be "soon." Paul was very unpredictable in his actions... part of the way he dominated the actions of others and "got his way." Very early the morning of the third day I was awoken by Paul with no prior warning. Paul in a loud voice stated that I was headed to the ranch. I think it was like at

4:30 AM or 5 (Paul and Bernice never got up this early)... was there something they were not telling me? Paul standing in my bedroom tells me to get ready to leave in 20 minutes. Paul decided he was ready to take me to the ranch... NOW! (He had been on the phone the evening before and I believed the two events were connected.) I could not focus or think, but stated "OK?" and gathered my stuff. Then I asked if I could shower... Paul quipped back, "Make it a quick one then." Paul always wanted people to think he was in charge and everything was an emergency or a hurry up situation.

I loaded my gear into Paul's powder gold 1968 Oldsmobile Delta 88 two door. Paul absolutely loved new vehicles. A minute later Paul arrived with a cigarette in his mouth with him asking me if I had everything. I said "I thought so?". I stated I wanted to say goodbye to Mom, Bernice, but then Paul stated she was not feeling well and I could call her from the Jersey Lilly when I got to Ingomar. I found this to be a bit odd and to this day still wonder why? Was she hiding because she knew she did not tell me the the

whole truth... I have to wonder. So down the road we went. Paul did not say a word to me from Bigfork to Missoula. All he did was smoke one cigarette after another. Chain smoking at its finest. I asked him if there was something wrong and to please roll his window down. His cigarette smoke was killing my eyes and nose. He said NO to my request. I tried to roll my window down with an abrupt, "Close that damn window now!" Paul further states that it was his car and his to do as he liked. I decided to get some sleep and so I napped until Deer Lodge. It was at Deer Lodge I was awoken by Paul laying on his horn as the Oldsmobile headed towards the right ditch. It scared the crap out of me. A car tried to swerve into us on the Interstate. Shaken up... Paul decided he needed breakfast. So we stopped in Deer Lodge to eat at the 4B's restaurant. Paul's favorite restaurant across the state of Montana. I had my normal two eggs, bacon and rye toast with a Diet Pepsi. Paul had biscuits and gravy, coffee, and more cigarettes. As we ate breakfast Paul started to explain what was happening in between bites of food and inhales of his cigarettes. (Yes you could

smoke in restaurants in 1971.) Paul stated whether I knew it or not Sivert was “screwing us.” Sivert and Janet, Paul figured, were using the ranch profits to build up Janet’s business called “Janknits” and living an exorbitant life style with new buildings, cars, and such for their kids and themselves. **“This was our money and not Sivert’s to spend!”**, Paul exclaimed. I sat there stunned and said “What am I suppose to do about it?” Paul stated that I was to meet with a sheep herder that very afternoon in Harlowton and he would take me to Ingomar. The sheep herder would tell me all that I needed to know. I asked Paul, “Does this sheep herder have a name?” Paul replied, “You will find out later this afternoon.” Paul loved to tell only small parts of the real story. It was his form of mental manipulation and physical control. I didn’t realize my father was a professional liar, but I was young. Paul finished by saying, “Besides you have been drinking and partying with your playhouse friends way too much this summer!” Another in your face surprise statement. I wasn’t legal to drink yet... so why would he say that? I replied by stating, “Mom said I was going to the Old

House in Ingomar.” Paul stares at me and pushes his breakfast to the side and states “Those plans have changed and for me to live with it.” What? At that moment I had to wonder whether or not even Bernice knew what was really going on? Being always told to do as I say and not question anything my parents said.... I said nothing more and just stared out the restaurant window until we were ready to leave.

Paul and I arrived in Harlowton around 2:00 PM on July 2nd by driving North from Big Timber and finally stopping at Shep’s Antiques on the East side of town. This was where I was to meet the sheep herder that Paul knew. My last question to Paul was, “What is this sheep herder’s name?” Paul looked at me and said you have never met him, but his name is Julius. Why in the heck couldn’t he have told me this in Deer Lodge? As I got my things from the trunk of Paul’s car Paul exclaims, “Try and call your mother and I at least once a week. We want updates on everything you find out!” We want to know everything that is going on at the ranch concerning Sivert and Janet.

At this point I knew nothing... I was to observe a crew build a large lambing building out of logs... I was to report on all the happenings at the ranch.... Sivert was screwing us... and I was to meet a sheep herder by the name of Julius. What was I missing from this story? A huge piece of the true story as it turned out! Why in all get out was this so important to Paul and Bernice?

As Paul lights up another cigarette he shouts from his open car window, **“That bastard Sivert is not going to steal another damn cent of our money. You make sure he doesn’t!”** I was stunned... how was I to stop Sivert from spending money? At that moment Paul rolls up the driver side window of his car and speeds off leaving me outside Shep’s Antiques in Harlowton, Montana. I stood there for about 2 or maybe going on 3 hours. It was really hot and I had sweat out a few buckets before I finally went inside Shep’s Antiques. Why didn’t Paul wait with me to see and meet this sheep herder with me?

Shep's Antiques was a second hand store with many items that were worthless or should have been thrown out. Shep's Antiques did have some authentic American Indian artifacts such as bead necklaces, old Indian clothing and a couple of sun bleached buffalo skulls. I asked the guy at the counter if I could leave my stuff by the door... so I could get out of the hot sun. The guy at the counter stated "Why Not! It is stupid to stand outside with it being as hot as it is today!" I looked around the store for about 30 or 40 minutes and I started wondering what the "F..." my parents had gotten me into. I was actually getting more than a bit pissed off about the whole situation and feeling quite abandoned. The guy behind the counter had a gray-black beard, wore a dirty green work shirt covered with a pair of Sears Big Mac powder blue coveralls and on his head a filthy, felt Stetson cowboy hat adorned with a rattlesnake hat band and a feather. (The feather looked to me like an eagle feather, but it was illegal to have any eagle parts in your possession in the United States. So it could not possibly be an eagle feather.) In a quiet voice the guy behind the counter asks

me what I was doing in Harlowton. I explained a few of the facts to him... giving him the short version without hopefully telling too much. Laughing Julius sucks loudly something out of his beard. Then with a giggle and in a quiet voice states, "Well I guess you must be that Milam kid!" Stunned... I looked at him and in disbelief I state, "And who might you be?" Looking at me, while standing up, Julius proudly proclaims, "I'm Julian N. Sebulsy. You can call me Julius. Paul hired me to help you to spy on your Uncle Sivert." "Spy on Sivert?"... I echoed with a puzzled look on my face. I was so pissed off at this point... Why in Hell didn't Paul tell me that Julius would be inside the store?.... Why did Paul tell me to specifically wait and stand outside? If Julius was a friend of Paul's why didn't Paul go inside Shep's Antiques and say hello to Julius? ***Another one of Paul's setup to fail situations***... something Paul loved to do. I bet Paul was laughing his ass off all the way back to Bigfork. At this moment nothing was funny in the least to me.

Julius then states he can close up the shop at 6:00 PM for Bill “Shep” Shepard, the owner of Shep’s Antiques. Then we can head to Ingomar. Julius and I basically just stared at each other for the next 40 minutes. Not a customer had entered the shop for over 3 hours... I just wanted to get to Ingomar. I don’t know what Julius was thinking, but I know what I was... “What the hell did I get myself into?” Finally Julius told me to load my “SHIT” into his 1970 3/4 ton blue Chevy Pickup he passionately called the “Skunk Wagon”. Oh my God... did it live up to its name. I sat in the passenger seat... along with one of Julius’s rifles that was pointed at the floor board and a layer of assorted garbage including discarded bones. By the time we made it to Roundup I asked Julius where that God awful skunk smell was coming from... after all it was a fairly new pickup? Julius simply stated he had killed a few skunks, skinned them, and put them into his sleeping camper until he could get them tanned for hats. Julius followed up by saying thank God it doesn’t smell as bad as it use to. Julius said, “The smell use to be so bad I could hardly stand it and I definitely couldn’t

sleep in my camper!” The skunks were gone now and being made into invaluable skunk caps. All I could say to myself once again was... What the Hell did I get myself into?!!!! OH CRAP... Julius had me put my back pack and sleeping gear into the back of his camper... would I ever get the smell out? Crap. Crap. Crap. Little did I know none of this would ever matter in the coming days, weeks, and months.

It was about 8:00 PM as we crested the Ingomar hills. I could see in the far distance the street lights of Ingomar twinkling as the sun was disappearing in the West. Ingomar seemed lost in the middle of the Montana prairie. In reality it was. As the years passed by, while I lived off and on in Ingomar, Montana... I came to believe that the isolation that surrounded the little city including Rosebud and Garfield Counties could quickly destroy a normal person's sense of reasoning and their sense of what is normal in the reality of life. Isolation like this destroys normal trains of thoughts to a point I watched people go crazy. I guess the question is to what degree of crazy and how

it affected one's life whether it mattered or not. I admit I must include myself in this Ingomar affliction. I would find myself repeatedly trying to test my own sense of reality to make sure I felt that in my own mind ... I was Okay. The ever present intense weather, every hour bringing a new challenge, the isolation and solitude of the open prairie acted on each of the inhabitants of Ingomar to a point no one could any longer trust their senses, their feelings and their reactions to people or their environment. The longer people existed in these conditions the more it changed them mentally and physically. The Jersey Lilly Bar and Cafe in a small way buffered the craziness when it got too much for the locals. Whereas the solitude Ingomar offered to those who lived there... seemingly improved one's mind about common sense items and gave each person a true appreciation for living life and the gravity of death. What amazed me was that the people of Ingomar knew there was something more... something maybe better... just beyond the confines of Ingomar... yet they were like prisoners and seemingly could never leave? I know I was afraid of leaving

pieces of myself in Ingomar when I left. When I finally did leave Ingomar for the last time... all I left behind was the loneliness... I know because the sunsets aren't as intense and the night air isn't as crisp and scented with sage brush. There are so many people who don't know anything about small towns... or even that small towns exist... maybe this is the reason...

As we pulled into the Ingomar access road Julius stated that Paul told him he would get free meals while he was working for the "Milams" and at the same time he would be working and getting paid by Sivert. Julius was proud of himself because as he stated... "He was double dipping in the feed bag." Julius stated he felt a bit like a double agent, 007 like... then looks at me and says you know... a spy. Julius never told me what Paul and Bernice had agreed to pay him in addition to his wages from Cherry Creek or the specifics of his and my parents agreement. As usual I was only being told a small part of the actual story.

At last we stop at the Jersey Lilly Bar and Cafe. Bill Seward was the owner, operator, cook, and maintenance man of the Jersey Lilly Bar and Cafe. Bill was working alone that night with a few cowboys smoking their cigarettes and drinking their “night caps.” Julius and I ordered a pot of Jersey Lilly pinto bean soup and a plate of Sheep Herder Hors D’oeuvres (soda crackers, onion, cheddar cheese, and thin cut orange wedges) to share. I ordered my usual bacon cheese burger with a Diet Pepsi and a bag of chips (Crunchy Cheetos were my favorite!). Julius states... since the Milam’s are buying... he would have potatoes and a pork chop. Then Julius stares at Bill with one eye slightly closed and asks Bill, “The beans aren’t sour this time are they?” Bill never replied. He just took our order and headed to the kitchen. After 40 minutes Bill gives us our orders and suggests to Julius when he had time they needed to talk. Julius looked a bit puzzled and just nodded his head. We both began to eat like we had not seen any food for months. Julius not only made some of the most unique-gross noises while eating I have ever heard from a human, but also a slurping

sound which no normal person could duplicate. Julius loved slurping his pinto bean soup stating that if you slurp it you can better appreciate the flavor of what you are eating and you will feel fuller. Yes the cowboys at the bar casually turned around and looked, but no one said a word. The people who lived in the area around Ingomar just minded their own business in true cowboy fashion. Of course those individuals who were sitting on the tall stools at the bar and were nursing either a beer or a hard liquor cocktail and were occasionally spitting their tobacco chew into the spittoons at the ends of the bar or were enjoying smoking their roll your own cigarettes... were ignoring our presence entirely. We had not gotten our main meal yet, but Julius's noises were getting louder and louder. Finally Bill brings us our main meal. Julius was like a little kid at Christmas when he got his fried potatoes and pork chop. Smiling ear to ear he smothers the potatoes with virtually an entire bottle of ketchup and an equal amount of mustard on the pork chop. Jokingly I asked him if he had enough ketchup and mustard... and if he liked I would get him another bottle or two of each. My

humor did not amuse Julius in the least. At that point he squinted one eye like Festus Hagen did on the TV show Gunsmoke, snarled a bit and stated you eat your food your way and I will eat my food my way. I did not say another word while eating supper that night. A local cowboy and ranch manager, Donald John Cameron, walked into the Jersey Lilly, looked around, saw me, walked over to the table and stared a moment and said... Craig, What the hell are you doing running with Julius? Before I could say a word Julius told Donald John what “WE” were doing was none of his “God Damned Business!” At that moment even though Julius had just finished the meat on his pork chop he then places the bone up to his mouth and made the most horrendous sucking sound on the bone. Donald John looks at him (shaking his head) and states “Why do you have to suck the marrow out of a bone... isn’t the meat good enough?” Julius follows Donald John’s statement by saying, “I never stole your gas can and you can quit spreading those “untruths” and lies around town about me or I will really steal something of yours one day. Maybe something bigger

than a gas can!” Again I was stunned... WHAT? Donald John was still sitting at the bar when Julius and I finally decided it was time to leave the Lilly. Even though he was staring straight at us... it was as if his mind was elsewhere... Donald John said nothing more. Julius drops me off at Granddad’s Old House and I asked him where he was sleeping. He stated I have places... then says, *“None my business is any of your business... maybe I will tell you later!”* Once again I am thinking what the hell did I get myself into. Julius is “F”ing nuts! NO... WHAT THE HELL DID PAUL AND BERNICE GET ME INTO? Julius tells me he will pick me up at 9:00 AM and we will head out to Sivert’s house on the Big Porcupine Creek. We would leave earlier, but Sivert and Janet rarely got up before 9 or 10 in the morning. His final statement: “Donald John has always had it easy... he doesn’t understand what it is like to survive on nothing... sucking out all the marrow in a bone could be the difference between life and death out here.” Thinking to myself... this guy is certifiable. OMG!!!

Julius drives me to Granddad's Old House. I gather my things from the back of the Skunk Wagon. We say our good nights, Julius drives off in the direction of the Jersey Lilly to see Bill Seward... I was guessing. With the Skunk Wagon lights gone everything goes dark. I feel my way up the back porch and proceed to unlock the back door of the old house on my fourth or fifth try with an old skeleton key. I was surrounded by total pitch black darkness. I could not see my hand in front of my face. I did not bring a flashlight with me. Stupid me. The breaker box for the electricity and lights was inside the house next to the stairway leading to the dirt basement. So opening the back door was a must if I was going to sleep in the house that night. Also I had to be careful not to step too far forward towards the stair case which could lead to a disastrous fall into the basement of the Old House. With the lights finally on I head to the outhouse. Even though the outhouse had not been used in months... the smell was still deafening. Then thinking to myself as I crawled into my sleeping bag that I had laid out on the old mattress in the back room ... I wondered if I

was being punished for something? Why were the parents not telling me 100% of the story... why was this such a spur of the moment deal... when did either parent ever meet Julius?... why wasn't Paul telling me everything he knew... why didn't Bernice say goodbye?... why didn't Paul go inside Shep's Antiques and see Julius? Is all of this really for "Family" or something else?... would all this be worth while for a pickup (perhaps a car)? Why were Paul and Bernice being so deceitful? Why were they lying to trick me into getting what they wanted? What in fact did they really want? Why lie to me when it should have been better to tell the truth? In 45 days I will be back in school and none of this will really matter.

The Old House was very hot that night and all I did was sweat until I fell asleep thinking that the skunk smell was in everything I owned. I knew the smell would never go away. I had to keep reminding myself not to touch my face until I could wash my hands again with soap and water... as I rubbed my eyes.

I did not sleep very much that night. Partly because of the hot house, the skunk smell that had permeated through everything I owned, and because my mind would not shut off. Once again I had to wonder what the parents, especially Paul, were not telling me and why Mom, Bernice, never said goodbye to me that morning I left. I woke up early and watched an Eastern Montana pink sunrise blossom as I headed to the outhouse listening to the Meadow Larks singing to each other. I hadn't taken more than a step off the back porch and there comes Julius driving up like a mad man to cut me off from my quest to relieve myself. He rolls his window down and says he will be back after he fills the "Skunk Wagon" with gas and to make sure I bring everything I have with me. I stated to Julius, "I'm staying the night at the Old House aren't I?" Julius shakes his head and says, "Not tonight!" In a cloud of dust Julius drives off to get gas. I had no idea he was stealing gas from around the neighborhood of Ingomar and not buying it from the Jersey Lilly.

I go back into the house, gather my things, take them to the back porch, turn off the electricity to the house, lock the back door after two or three tries with the skeleton key and wait for Julius as I sat on the back porch. Eventually he returns and we head out to Sivert's place. While driving Julius once again starts to suck on his beard trying to get pieces of last night's meal out of his beard. Then he looks at me in a weird way and says "What... what did you have for breakfast?" I didn't tell him I had a cold Pop Tart. All I said was the same as you... Two could play this game I thought. Julius gives me that Festus Haggren wink once again.

It was 20 plus miles of really bad roads to Sivert's because of the gumbo ruts from an earlier rainstorm, but finally we make it to Sivert's home ranch complex on the Big Porcupine Creek. Julius drives to the new Quonset building Sivert had just had built. The Quonset was huge! The Quonset housed a multitude of large pieces of fairly new farm equipment. The first thing I noticed was that all the old haying equipment that I was use to seeing and working with in the past was

parked outside... seemingly abandoned to rust into nothingness. In the Quonset building was a new tractor, bailer, rake, tool bars, and front end attachments. Julius proceeded to tell me to inform Paul on my next call home that I have now seen most of the new equipment with my own eyes. Not only a new tractor, but a new 1971 split shift Chevy stock truck with less than 100 miles on it. I took pictures of the all the equipment. Then Julius looks at me and says, "What the hell... if you are going to take pictures then take some pictures of me!" So I did. Julius loved having his picture taken. Julius states it is almost impossible to take selfies with a 35mm camera timer, but instead he now has his own personal photographer who could take pictures of him when ever he wanted. As it turns out I would be continuously asked to take pictures of Julius the entire time we were together. After taking a picture or two of Julius as I turn around and there comes running up to me an old friend, Rink. Rinky Dink was an old red and white sheep dog that Sivert kept around the main house. At one point in time Rink was Patty Ryan's sheep dog. Rink was Mr. Love Child with his huge smile and soft,

persuasive disposition. Rink had long been retired as a working dog. A couple years earlier Sivert tried to give Rink to me and my brother, but my mother refused to incorporate a new pet into our household at Bigfork. Rink was a very loving dog, who's nose was constantly peeling due to sun exposure and skin cancer. The only problem with Rink besides his ugly peeling nose was when you gave him any attention... he would roll on his side and expect someone to pet him. If you did pet him he would get overly excited and start to pee. A very strong stream of pee, that if you weren't careful, would reach a person head high. Yes I petted Rink and Yes he peed and Yes he peed on Julius up to his belt line. The only thing Julius said was, "I should have shot that damn dog months ago when started working for this outfit, but I didn't have the heart. Do not ever pet that damn dog again while I am around or there will be Hell to Pay!" Was that a real threat or just talk by Julius? Julius and I waited for Sivert to come out of the house... Sivert finally did around 1:00 PM even though he knew the both of us were in the Quonset because of the Skunk

Wagon standing guard outside the Quonset door.

At that point only talking to Julius, Sivert makes it perfectly clear that I was not welcome on Cherry Creek nor did he think building a log lambing shed was necessary at Cherry Springs. It was just Bernice and Paul trying to divide up “his” ranch and it would never happen while he and Janet were alive. Sivert was repeating exactly what Paul yelled out at the June Partnership meeting. None the less Sivert hands me the keys to a new 1971 3/4 ton gold-orange colored Chevy pickup and tells me “NOT to wreck it! It’s new! I just brought it home from Boggs Chevrolet in Forsyth a month ago. I haven’t had time to take it to Billings to have a short wave radio installed, but it is good enough the way it is!” (Sivert communicated by way of short wave radio transmissions from Sivert’s house base station to each of the ranch’s 6 pickup mobile stations. Short wave radios were how both Sivert and Janet kept in communication with his “fly-by-night cowboys” and shepherders... in addition both the

suburbans that Uncle Sivert and Aunt Janet used were equipped with ranch radios. Julius states we needed some food and he was going over to the house to pick up some meat from the freezers. Reluctantly Sivert says "Fine!" At that point Janet is yelling at Sivert that the three boys Sivert Jr., Richard and Jonathan (Jonathan was just born in 1969) had to get into Forsyth... NOW! Sivert and his gang head off to Forsyth. Julius and I put some frozen meat into a cooler with some blocks of ice to take up to the North Country. While I am putting away the cooler into "my" new pickup Julius goes into Janet's sheep herder pantry at the North wall of the garage and fills a flour sack full with canned goods. (I still have the flour sacks we used on this adventure.) I look at him and before I can say a word Julius states loudly, "It's not stealing... Janet or Sivert didn't say we couldn't take the canned goods... and besides we are saving Sivert a trip up North to supply us." I learned that day that when you said UP it meant to go North, DOWN meant South, OUT meant West, and BACK meant East. Even though I have only heard directions referred to like this one other time in my life it is a very common

direction reference used widely in Eastern Montana. So you have to listen very carefully to an Eastern Montanan's sentences. The final things we loaded into my truck were some tools, shovels, and other items Julius thought we might need to repair the corals, chutes, and sheep pens at the Cherry Springs corrals. I had no idea that almost every tool at Sivert's including a generator would end UP at Cherry Springs by the time this project finally got started. Before we left the Quonset Julius proudly shows me the portable panels he was making for lambing jugs. These panels would interconnect without any hardware into a perfect square. Perfect for ewes to lamb in! He had finished about fifty of them and still needed about one hundred and fifty of them to fill the new log lambing building that was to be built at the corrals located at Cherry Springs. Julius planned that we would load them on the new blue stock truck with the non matching red panels to transport them to their eventual home at the new log lambing shed. That is when all 200 plus were completed. Each of us now in our own pickups... we head UP to

the north pasture of the Cherry Creek Sheep Company.

I had been to Cherry Springs many times helping with loading wool bags into semi trailers, working the sheep, and watching the overall processes of counting the sheep in each band, paying and feeding the Mexican shearers, banding the male lambs, cutting tails and paint branding the ewes and lambs. The corrals and pens looked empty except for an over abundance of jack rabbits and black birds. The first thing Julius and I did was put all the tools we had gathered at Sivert's into a sheep wagon that was waiting there by the corrals next to a portable water tank. It hadn't been used for a very long time so the interior was packed full of mouse pellets, dust and a few spiders and a huge amount of assorted trash. I was happy I "acquired" a box of 55 gallon black trash bags from Sivert's place. Julius had outfitted the sheep wagon with as much "stuff" as he thought the two of us would need. My only wish and hope was that the very old canvas roof on the sheep wagon would protect me from the rain and wind and

not get ripped or torn apart in a future wind storm. Julius yelled as we opened the door of the sheep wagon "Welcome to OUR new home!" I replied "OUR new home? The two of us are not sleeping in this sheep wagon together!", I stated. Julius replied, "OK then I will sleep in the Skunk Wagon, but I am going to have to put some of my things in your sheep wagon...otherwise I won't have room to sleep in my bunk!!!" I had heard about gay people and had to wonder... but I said it anyway, "Julius are you Gay?" Julius gave me a strange look and said, "GAY... not right now, but I am happy most of the time... especially when I have had a snort off of my Tipple bottle!" I knew he had no clue what I was talking about and I had no clue what a Tipple bottle was. Later that afternoon a parade of sheep herders came to visit and to give Julius their "two cents" about the going ons related to Sivert, Janet, and the Cherry Creek Sheep Company. My first moments on the Cherry Creek Sheep Company were interesting to say the least. I spent most of the day cleaning out my new prairie home. Hand washing every dish, all the glasses, silverware, an aluminum soup pot, and one

iron skillet. I wasn't accustomed to walking on, sleeping on, or living with a ton of mouse turds, spiders, and an empty bird's nest. The iron skillet had mouse turds imbedded in the old grease that still clung to the center of the pan. I cooked hamburger that night. Yes I washed the pan and everything else with soap and water once again before I put it on the tiny camp stove. I was lucky when I found out there was no can opener in the sheep wagon. So I used my P-38 can opener that came with the 1942 can food rations they gave us when I had worked for the US Forest Service. Julius had never seen one and loved mine. Julius said it worked way better than using his hunting knife. I had an extra one and so I gave it to him. Julius immediately put it on his key chain for the skunk wagon and smiled. Julius was full from our supper and showed his first weakness. As soon as he ate anything his body forced him to fall asleep or take a nap. As it turns out this would give me an advantage as we worked on projects at Cherry Springs.

I slept good that first night in my new sheep wagon. Fresh air and a full tummy. I

remember looking up at the canvas covering from my bed area at the back of the sheep wagon and seeing nothing but blackness... my thought for the day was, "Is Uncle Sivert really trying to make sure Julius and I can not find out what is happening with day to day operations concerning the sheep herders and his hired cowboys. Maybe that's why we were given a pickup without a radio." As I would find out my assumption was completely wrong. Sivert was playing his own games and things were not as transparent as they seemed to be.

We spent the next week at Cherry Springs waiting for instructions on what to do concerning the new log lambing shed from Sivert. We had no radio in my truck so the plan was for Sivert to call and talk to Julius' brother, John, (Who worked for Sivert on Cherry Creek as a sheep herder.) as a means of communication to keep us updated on what was happening. (I had no clue that Sivert and Janet were screening any and all phone calls from Bernice or Paul by using a cassette phone call recorder... the Mysse Curse was in full bloom... Sivert only

answered or replied to missed calls if he felt like it. I only figured this out later!) Sivert did not use the short wave radio to keep in touch with us by talking to John Sebulsky. Instead Sivert “promised” he would bring us any “news” in person when he brought Julius and I our weekly food and water supplies. Sivert never came North... not even once to supply us with food or water like he promised. Sivert did come UP North two times in the late Fall. Once to oversee the tagging and the sale of 2000 ewes. The second time for the shipping of the steers. Neither time did he bring us food, give us instructions or help on the building or anything else.

Julius had started to make a huge windbreak for the main corral under the direction and orders of Paul and Bernice. (News to me... neither parent had uttered a word to me about this.) Julius had been working on this shelter for about five months prior to my arrival. As Julius stated this is the half of the North Pasture the Milam Ranch will be on in the near future. His progress was minimal at best. Julius had only removed about 10% of the old wind break boards. A

huge amount of work remained. Julius said it was during that time he had talked to Paul and Bernice multiple times over the phone... and had met Paul on two or three occasions in person. (What? Where and When?) It was from the phone conversations between the three of them Paul concocted the overall plan to spy on Sivert and to eventually split up the North Pasture between Marie and Bernice... interestingly the new wind break and the log lambing shed were both supposedly Bernice's ideas. Julius stated that Paul had shown him a map of how he and Bernice were going to divide the entirety of the ranch up between Marie, Sivert and Bernice. As I find out the building of the new log lambing shed and the wind break were just a few of the projects Paul and Bernice assigned Julius to do on the land Paul and Bernice anticipated they would get from the division of the ranch. There were many future projects discussed by Paul when the final division of the ranch happened, but Julius did not want to share them with me. I assumed all these meetings and conversations between Julius and my parents happened while I was attending college in Bozeman.

Julius stated multiple times he was promised by Paul that when the Cherry Creek Sheep Company was split up he would be guaranteed a lifetime job on the Milam Ranch. Julius would be in charge of all ranch operations and would be the “Ranch Manager”. ***“Julius felt he had found the prairie home he had always wanted by being promised lifetime employment on the new Milam Ranch... Julius stated he absolutely knew it would happen as soon as Paul and his “High Priced” lawyer in Billings could make the division of Cherry Creek happen!”*** I knew nothing about any of this, but realized that all this had been in the planning stages way earlier than before the June 1971 partnership meeting. Julius revealed to me that Sivert was not happy in the least; when Bernice told Sivert Julius would be working for the Cherry Creek Sheep Company. In fact Julius was hired by Bernice and not Sivert. Incredible!

Julius and I spent our first week waiting for instructions and for food from Sivert. That first week we worked every day on the new wind break. Our first job was to take down all

the old wind break boards. We had a stack of boards which was twice the size of my sheep wagon. The boards were too old, brittle, and warped to be reused. One after the other I took them down and piled them off and away from the corrals, but close enough to my sheep wagon so I could use them as fire wood for my camp stove. After I had chain sawed a huge amount of them to length Julius laughed at me and stated that I would have to be at Cherry Springs for a year or two before I used up all that old wood. Little did Julius know by the time I would be fired by my Uncle Sivert from the Cherry Creek Sheep Company and kicked off the ranch property I would have used all the old slabs for cooking and keeping warm in my sheep wagon. Not to mention all the “others” who conveniently stole (appropriated) wood for their sheep wagons. Using what new wood and posts Julius and I had on site we started the construction of the new wind break. I talked Julius into modifying his original plan so the structure not only acted as a wind break, but as a temporary shelter for whatever animals were being corralled. Julius agreed with my new wind break plans, but

was sure they would take a considerable amount of time to build. We worked tirelessly throughout the remainder of July on the new wind break drilling and digging holes for the posts. Our posts were in place and we started the sides and roof of the wind break. It was coming together beautifully. I was so tired of hand sawing the slabs... insuring each board fit perfectly in their place as Julius screw nailed them into place... I could have screamed. After running out of slabs, lag bolts and nails with no sign of Sivert to re-supply us we head DOWN South. I was tired of Julius supplying us with sage hens, deer, and antelope to eat for supper each night.



❖ August 1971 ❖

Our first stop was at Sivert's to find out what he knew. Sivert was home that morning. Sivert's first words to Julius was he might need the pickup I was using back. Julius told Sivert to take that up with Bernice or Paul because "***He was getting his orders from them!***" and I was to have the pickup. Sivert got a curious look on his face and said nothing. Julius was hired and following the parents orders and yet still under the direction of Sivert? How could he hold this over Sivert? To me a bit confusing. At that point I told Sivert that Julius and I had run out of slabs and ring nails. Sivert made it perfectly clear that it was not his problem. That was it was "Paul's and Bernice's project" and Paul or Bernice should be working on it... "Not YOU!" Again I had to wonder what I was missing? Sivert obviously knew more about what I was doing on behind the scenes of the Cherry Creek Sheep Company than I did. I started doubting the "SPY" crap my parents and Julius were throwing at me.

Looking back... Mom and Dad were making promises to Julius when they had to know they would never be able to keep them in the event they could not split up Cherry Creek. Why would they do that to someone? Why would they use Julius or any person like that? Sivert had to know that Paul and Bernice plus Marie were not happy in the least when the money ran out for the ranch distributions to each partner in 1969. Both Sivert and Janet were obviously out of control spending ranch money and not using their own personal money for new buildings, new equipment, a new addition to Sivert's house, a new swimming pool for Sivert and the kids, Janet's new building and the wool supplies it held, new vehicles, and whatever Sivert or Janet felt they needed at the spur of the moment. At an ever increasing spending pace... all items, equipment and buildings were being placed or located on what Sivert perhaps thought his third of the land split might be if lawyers were involved and prevailed. I had to wonder when the ranch division would ever happen. **I could see this was a total, all out family war.**

There was absolutely ***no trust*** between Mysse family members. Merton told me this was the exact reason he got out of the ranch in addition to his total hate for Janet... Sivert's wife. "***No member of the Mysse family trusted any one of the other Mysse family members and to make it worse... everyone was lying to each other.***" This was when I coined the term "The Mysse Curse." Julius and I were smack dab in the middle of it. Paul and Bernice had one set of rules for themselves and a different set for everyone else. These rules were apt to change without notice. Bernice and Paul wanted me to control a situation which was out of everyone's control. How in the heck could I stop either Janet or Sivert from spending "ranch" money? To make it even worse... Sivert and Janet had their own set of rules which did not match or correspond to Paul and Bernice's. I was put into an impossible situation where the rules kept changing daily by both parties. The only hard fact I knew for certain was Sivert and Janet were just as narcissistic as Paul and Bernice were concerning the ranch.

Julius and I would have to go to Melstone and pick up a huge load of slabs and get some ring nails. Julius asked Sivert where the trailer was. Sivert told us that the trailer was broken and we couldn't have it. Julius told Sivert that "we" could fix it and if there were any problems in doing that... once again to call Paul or Bernice. Julius would use the Paul and Bernice as a threat a lot in the coming months with Sivert. That became Julius's "go to statement" to keep Sivert in check whenever we needed something. It worked. Why... I am still not convinced why? I started feeling very uncomfortable with the whole situation. Sivert left without saying another word to either of us that day. So Julius and I proceeded to check the trailer over; finding the trailer had two flat tires and the tongue was cracked from carrying too many heavy loads. Julius and I jacked the trailer up and took the tires off of it under the cover and shade of the Quonset. Even in the Quonset it was still *"Hot as Hades"* as Julius would mutter over and over. Julius stated he could weld and would repair the tongue making it "Good as New!". My job was to go to Melstone and have two new tires put on

the rims. I asked him how I was going to pay for the new tires. Julius stated to me to tell Jake and Larry to put the tires and repairs on Cherry Creek's tab. I was kind of shocked that a gas station would put tires on an account similar to what the Jersey Lilly did for food and gas. Not knowing what I was getting into I headed OUT (Yes... West) for Melstone. As soon as I parked my pickup at the Melstone Texaco station Jake Zaharko (Larry's father) came out and yelled in a very loud, raspy voice, "What the hell can I do for you?... Who in the Hell are you?" I explained I was Sivert Mysse's nephew and I was there to get new trailer tires. Jake explained he was in the middle of a repair and Larry his son would "Fix Me Up!"

Larry was reading the Billings Gazette while leaning back in his chair behind the desk next to the pop machine. Larry looks up and says the same thing... what can I do for you... then laughs and says I hear you met my dad, Jake!" "Don't worry he sounds like a grizzly bear, but he really is just a pussy cat." I said yes we did meet. Larry continued to sit in his chair behind the desk reading his

newspaper leaning even further back in his captains chair. He was reading the comic section. Giggling to himself about the Garfield comic strip saying under his breath... who doesn't love Garfield. Like a light switch going off Larry looks up at me and says, "Sivert's nephew....? I knew your mother, Bernice." Then Larry states "She was the prettiest of the Mysse girls. It's hard to believe you are her son." What that comment meant... I had no clue. "Oh well... let's put some tires on those rims of yours." Larry proceeded to find the correct tires on the overhead tire rack. Larry looks at me and says, "You're damn lucky I had these in stock. I got these for C.M. Coffee and he never picked them up. Oh well... guess I will order another pair of them in case he comes around." It took Larry a good hour and a half to remove the old sun dried tires and mount the new tires. While I was at Melstone I took the liberty to fill "my" pickup with gas and to get two Diet Pepsi's and a few Salted Nut Roll candy bars to go. All on the Cherry Creek Sheep Company's tab. Sivert would feed me in one way or in another. By the time I got back UP to the Big Porcupine home ranch Julius indeed had

finished repairing the trailer tongue. Julius was a master welder who had worked for the railroad in Harlowton. It was late in the afternoon but Julius insisted we head DOWN to Ingomar so we could have a burger at the Jersey Lilly. I shared one of my candy bars with him... Julius did not like the Salted Nut Bar (a Pearson's Nut Bar) but ate it anyway. Then our plans were to go to Gebhart's to get all the slabs and six inch square posts we needed to complete the windbreak. After a quick burger at the Lilly for the each of us OUT to Melstone we head. At Gebhart's we loaded as many slabs and posts as the trailer and tires could possibly handle and BACK to Ingomar and UP to Cherry Springs we went. We didn't get much done that evening because the both of us were dog tired after bouncing over 175 plus miles of bad roads that day. As we unloaded the slabs and posts Julius decided he needed to "**do something**". Julius ordered me to finish unloading the trailer and if "need be" start cooking something for us to eat for supper. I started cooking our supper which primarily was hamburger once again instead of wild game. Hamburger would become a

breakfast, lunch, and dinner staple, that is if we ate three meals. Usually two meals was our standard because Julius never wanted to wash dishes. The old hamburger was getting a bit ripe. Julius always said, *“If you cook any food well enough it will never hurt you.”* Some how I believed Julius about that fact... why I believed Julius?... I have no clue. The burgers were definitely done as Julius comes back in the Skunk Wagon. Julius was like a proud peacock proclaiming he went out in the middle of no where and dug up one of **“hundreds” of gallon jugs** of homemade wine he had hidden through out Rosebud County and in parts of Garfield County. Whether he actually got the gallon jug of the homemade wine from somewhere out in the middle of the Cherry Creek prairie or whether it came from the camper of the Skunk Wagon I did not really know. I never verbally disputed any of Julius’s statements, but I think any sane person would have to wonder about Julius’s truthfulness concerning the glass gallon jug containing wine... one of hundreds? Julius brushing off the gumbo mud clods from the brownish glass gallon jug (a recycled Clorox Jug maybe?)... looks at

me and asks me if I have a weak stomach? I stated I didn't think so but I was curious why he would ask. Well... he says... this wine is made from the local choke cherries he had picked... like those DOWN on the creek next to the banks by the corrals on Cherry Springs. Julius looks up to the sky and says... *"My wine hasn't killed me yet!"*... but because I fermented the choke cherries with broken seeds there is a lot of potassium cyanide in it. Try some and give it a "little" while and see how it affects you. My first statement was, "Thank you, but no thanks... potassium cyanide is used to kill coyotes... the Germans used cyanide as a suicide pill you know!... I will pass!" Julius ate his burger and canned vegetables grumping and slurping the entire time. Finally with a raised voice he says, "Try the God Damned wine... will you? Don't insult my ass!" Not the best English, but I understood... Yes I was intimidated... so politely I took a glass out of the cupboard and he poured me about a half of a glass of his red-purplish poison wine. I took a sip and it tasted like a blend of Mad Dog 40-40 and Ripple. Yes I drank in college... and Yes I was not quite twenty one

yet. I wasn't impressed with Julius's wine but it was drinkable. Out of nowhere comes two guys riding in the ranch's patrol. A road grader Sivert bought to make the gumbo roads of the ranch passable after being rutted from truck tires sinking down to their axles in the gumbo mud due to rainstorms. In the patrol was Julius's brother John Sebulsky and Jack Rumdahl. (Everyone just called Jack by his nickname "Rummy".) The first words out of Julius's mouth was "F..." they must of seen me digging and knew I had found one of my jugs. Damn that John I can not believe he brought someone with him... there's hardly enough wine for the two of us let alone two more god damn alcoholics." Then Julius looks at me and says, **"Don't give me that God Damn look of yours... you know damn well you come from a long line of Proud Alcoholics!"** I was speechless. A gallon was not enough wine for two people? I took out two more glasses, Julius poured, and the entire jug was empty in less than 15 minutes. Meeting John and Rummy for the first time saved me from both the mental and the physical damage Julius's wine could have caused me from the first

time drinking it. As John and Rummy drove away in the patrol; Julius screams at them as they go over the South hill... you two are the scum of the Earth... Dumb Bastards!" As if they could hear him anyway over the roar of the diesel engine of the patrol? It was getting dark and bed time. As Julius heads to the Skunk Wagon he trips over the tongue of my sheep wagon and cracks his head wide open. It was getting very dark and Julius was definitely drunk. Bleeding and grumping Julius screams something out I couldn't understand. Then he crawls into the skunk wagon for the night. As Julius looks back from the door on the Skunk Wagon Julius utters, "*I think I am Sufficiently Drunk?*". Looks back at me and loudly asks... Do I need stitches? I couldn't tell because of all the blood and the darkness... so I said, "I don't think so!" Julius climbed into the Skunk Wagon for the night. Myself... I had so little of the wine it really did not affect my stomach or anything else like my brain. As I closed my eyes to go to sleep... I was amazed at how much a head wound could bleed... even more so how unconcerned Julius was about the damage he inflicted upon his self... my

last thought was “God... I told him he didn’t need stitches... what if he bleeds to death during the night? Then I wondered what Julius had screamed about? My last thought before I fell asleep that night was “We should not be drinking on the open prairies of Cherry Creek ever again! It is too dangerous!”. Ya’ right...

The next morning when I woke up I felt like I had swallowed a large rock or multiple rocks. It was like the hamburger or nothing else had digested during the night. Then I realized it was that damn wine of Julius’s. I hoped that the wine had not killed all the bacteria I needed for digestion in my stomach. Julius stumbles out of the skunk wagon and proclaims we have to go DOWN to Billings to get more ring nails and to outfit me properly. I was relieved that Julius was still alive. As Julius banter on he tells me he could NOT for the life of himself figure out what Paul and Bernice were thinking by sending me out here without the proper gear and equipment to survive in the North country of Rosebud county. ***“It was God Damn Criminal and I will tell them that you know!”***

Shit... You only have a single shot .22?... What the F...!", Julius slurs on. I thought Julius must still be under the influence of his poisoned wine.

I drove my pickup as Julius and I headed DOWN to Billings. On our way to Billings we were going DOWN following the Bull Mountains and Julius spies an extension ladder that had fallen out of or off of someone's commercial repair truck. Julius screams at the top of his lungs... "Stop.... God Damn It Stop... Now!". I came to a screeching halt locking both the rear wheels and leaving tire rubber on on the asphalt. Julius dives out of my pickup hitting his head on the passenger door causing his head wound to drip blood once again on his shirt adding to the multitude of other stains he had awarded himself. I was sure he was going to throw up from the look in his face. I wasn't even sure whether or not he was sober yet? Instead he bee lines UP the road and retrieves a huge sliding aluminum ladder. With a grin reaching from ear to ear he put the ladder into the pickup bed. Julius now realizes the ladder stuck out from the back of

the bed a good 7 or 8 feet. Julius stated this would never work and we would have to “fix it” over the cab. “We do not want to get picked up or look conspicuous do we?” I couldn’t believe Julius said that. Julius turned the ladder around and then wired the ladder to the pickup bed so that “it would not scratch up the new paint on the pickup cab TOO BADLY!”. (Julius used my Leatherman tool to cut the bottom strand of wire from a rancher’s fence... Julius had cut the wire before I could make any of my protests.) I loudly shouted, “Julius, you are never to cut apart another man’s fence and the ladder is scratching the cab of Sivert’s pickup!” Julius screamed back at me, “Got any better ideas? **One Share!**” I explained once again I did not want to scratch up the “ranch” pickup – Sivert’s pickup. Julius says, “Screw it... I am doing it whether you like it or not... you can tell on me if you want...I don’t give a shit. Whether you know it or not, we have job to do. “I need this ladder... besides possession is 9/10’s of the law you know... if the “F...”ing rancher wants his wire back I will give it to him... if the idiots who lost the ladder want the ladder back... I will give it back to them!” Paul and Bernice

want the building done as soon as possible so they can divide up Cherry Creek... I want the job Paul and Bernice promised me! Secondly this is your God Damn ranch too if you haven't figured it out yet... **Mr. One Share.**" All I could think is how much does Julius know.... This is the second or third time he has called me Mr. One Share... What has Paul really told him? Did Paul tell him the truth? Obviously not the truth because Julius didn't even know the correct amount of shares I owned in Cherry Creek! WHAT? Maybe Paul didn't know how many corporate shares I had in Cherry Creek?

It is very hard to see what is going on in any situation when you are in the middle of it. Paul was controlling Julius with a promise... Julius never said Bernice made the ranch foreman promise to him only Paul had. I hoped Paul and Bernice were not lying to Julius. Quietly I continued driving DOWN to Billings. All the while wondering if I would clip off or hit an overhanging stop light once I started driving in the city limits and how long it would be until I got picked up by the city police. I checked and I did have my drivers

license and it wouldn't expire until after my birthday at the end of October in 1971... but I would be back home before that happened.

The first place we stopped in Billings was a place I believe was called "Butler's Kitchen" located on Grand Avenue. Julius let me know he had no money... (This wouldn't be the first time Julius would be moneyless or without his wallet which was always safety pinned into his left shirt pocket.) "I would have to pay, but the taste of the chicken was worth it.", Julius repeated. Imagine Julius walking into an eating establishment not having showered for over... maybe three months... or more... with a bloody beard with who knows what lodged and interwoven into it... wearing filthy powder blue Big Mac Sears work coveralls adorned with sweat stains which had not been washed since the coveralls had been purchased (*Julius stated you can not wash Levi pants nor coveralls because it weakens and ruins the fabric*)... with fresh blood stains on his shirt and coveralls from his head wound which was still weeping blood... and Julius wearing his sweat covered Stetson cowboy hat with a

rattle snake band on it. (Where was his feather?) Myself... it had been at least three weeks since I had shaved nor had a shower... so I was not a pretty sight either.

As we walked into the restaurant it occurred to me that I didn't smell the rankness of Julius's body odor as much as I did when I first met him. As we stood in front of the counter waiting for our turn to order... there were a few heads turning and looking at the two of us... while Julius grumped and ran his fingers through his beard... I was feeling totally out of place. Our turn had come at last to make our order... Julius loudly blurts out "We want two buckets of the extra crispy chicken... we don't want any of your damn potatoes or gravy, but we would like some drinks." And to help Julius I said, "Please!" Julius looks back at me and does that squinting thing once again. The gal taking our order just stood there and stared... almost frozen in time... and then starts to rub her nose blinking her eyes in disbelief. Doing an abrupt turnaround she goes into the kitchen area and returns with (I am guessing) the manager. (Actually it was the owner as I

would find out later.) The gentleman in charge stated he appreciated us visiting and buying chicken at his restaurant.... BUT he would appreciate it if the both would leave the premises and wait in our pickup for our order. They would bring the chicken and drinks out to us. Julius was fuming. He tipped his hat back and just at that moment the manager states he will give us one bucket of chicken free if we would “just wait quietly” in our pickup (as the owner looks at Julius’s bleeding head and the few blood drops on the restaurant floor; he stares but says nothing to Julius about his head wound or blood on the floor).... then the owner continues by saying whatever drinks we want will be FREE. Julius didn’t even respond... he just turned around and let me pay for our two for one buckets of chicken and the FREE drinks. I am just starting to breath a sigh of relief when all of a sudden Julius turns around as he opens the entrance door and shouts in his loudest voice, ***“I’ve been served in better shit holes than this one... one God Damn thing you can be sure of is I will never be back... Craig make sure they give you a big bunch of those***

barbecue sauce packets for my chicken and I want a root beer!. I stood there in shock and totally speechless. As I finished paying I thought things could have been worse, but really wasn't sure how? It felt like it was a scene out of the movie "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest." I stated to myself... "Remember I am doing this for FAMILY!" I look around and every person in the restaurant is staring directly at me. Then thinking, "I wonder when the Billings police will arrive." As sick as it sounds a part of me almost enjoyed the entire scenario at the chicken restaurant. Butler's Kitchen was a very popular spot in Billings. Everyone loved their chicken and family meals. In later years I ate at Butler's Kitchen many times over... I was showered, shaved, and wore clean clothes... so no one ever connect me with the time Julius and I ate there. (Unfortunately about five years after Julius's and I ate our chicken dinner there in the parking lot of the restaurant, the restaurant was closed due to it's chicken being contaminated by bad lettuce... A true Story!)

We ate our chicken in the parking lot as the owner or manager requested us to do. When Julius was done sucking on all his eaten chicken bones... yes cracking the bones in half and doing his sucking thing... again he shouts, "We need to get out of this damn town now". I asked him what were the things I supposedly needed as Julius throws the bones he had licked and sucked onto the parking lot pavement. Julius asked what things?... **WHY? I lost it!** I told Julius to never ever throw litter of any sort out my vehicle or any vehicle ever again... especially in front of me... then I told him to pick up his mess and throw the litter and bones in the back of my pickup. Julius hesitated and finally grudgingly did. And I stated I didn't plan on coming back to Billings until the job was finished at Cherry Springs so we are getting what things we need **NOW. I was still waiting for the local Billings police to arrive.** So we head Down to Scheel's Sporting Goods from Butler's Kitchen. At each intersection where there was a hanging stop light I pulled over to make sure the ladder would fit under the hanging wires.

At Scheel's I purchased a sleeping bag which was rated to 10° below zero (I still have that very sleeping bag to this day.). Only on the advise of Julius because he said I would be at Cherry Spring probably until Christmas. What the "F..." did Julius know that I didn't ? I did not believe Julius's statement about Christmas in the least, but agreed with him a warmer sleeping bag for myself was needed. My sleeping bag was used and was a very old hand me down from Paul. I knew the bag would not provide much warmth if it did indeed get cold; so I agreed. Paul's sleeping bag wasn't very warm to sleep in and the nights were getting cooler because Fall was coming. I also agreed to buy a new goose down coat and a down vest. Julius found a Leatherman tool like the one I had... yes I paid for all of it. As I headed to the check out register I found a green teflon cooking pot which I figured I could definitely use cooking at the sheep wagon. This beautiful green teflon pot would save me time in cleaning dishes over the old, heavily used sticky aluminum pots. I paid for everything with my check book (Yes businesses would take non local checks in 1971) and I loaded everything

into my pickup bed mixed with the ladder and chicken bones that stood out like a sore thumb. Julius was smiling.... then Julius says we need to head UP North to Judith Gap. "What? Why?", I asked. All Julius says "is you need some protection and I want you to meet a friend of mine... Fred Wiefrich. He's a gun dealer." All I could think was... "What did a gun or rifle matter to me? I have my .22 single shot!" Little did I know of what was to come. With more than a half a bucket of the extra crispy chicken left over we get gas at a station located in the Billings heights and head UP to the Judith Gap. Before we can get out of the Billings heights Julius exclaims, "We could never make Judith Gap until after midnight... Fred might shoot us." ***I absolutely hate it when people change their minds fifty times on the same subject... something I will never get over until I die... make a damn decision and stick to it... Right or Wrong!***

"Fred would shoot us?!!!" I was done thinking about the Judith Gap... instead I decided we would head UP to Ingomar for the night. As soon as we were out of the

Billings city limits Julius was snoring like a bear. I was relieved because the ladder never clipped a traffic light and the police were not involved, no rancher confronted me about his missing fence wire, no one saw and claimed the ladder...but I was still pissed off at Julius. When the time was right I would have a talk with him about his stupid outburst in public. We get to Ingomar and the snoring bear awakens from his brief hibernation. At the Old House I drop off the ladder. The ladder that Julius so desperately needed. I carefully put the ladder on the dirt floor in the tall garage. Julius points to and shows me where he had a very small trailer and a fairly large garage just a 100 yards from the Granddad's old house. Incredible? "There wasn't enough room for two of us to sleep in my tiny trailer!", Julius stated, "But we could have breakfast at his house in the morning." Was Julius finally trusting me a small bit? I wondered? My last thought of the day was, ***"Does Julius know the difference between right and wrong? Do my parents know the difference between right and wrong? Or is it... None of them care about what is right and what***

is wrong in life!? Or do they only care about themselves!?”

Because I was so dirty and filthy I did not want to use my new sleeping bag that night. Besides it was still too hot in the old house for a bag with that much insulation. That night I slept between two bed mattress pads with my clothes on. All my gear was up at Cherry Springs. All I could think about that night is getting control of this situation. What was the parent's end game? I had to get some control of Julius's lack of social graces or was that even possible? It was the third week in August and we hadn't even started the log lambing shed made out of logs. What were Paul and Bernice planning?... what was my role in this master plan?... surely more than spying on Sivert and watching a log lambing shed be built? I knew better than to press Paul's "blowup" buttons or Bernice's. Both parents could make me feel bad in an instant, even with a look, or a tone of their voices. And each would and could do it for the least little thing! I had been raised and conditioned to react like that. I was on an emotional roller-coaster the majority of my life

and now Julius was adding to this out-of-control feeling.

The next morning I got up early and went over to Julius's small trailer that looked like a miniature AirStream. He was trying to make biscuits and coffee. I tried to be polite and indulge, but I had to tell Julius that his coffee was the worst coffee I had ever tasted. It was not drinkable. (In fact so terrible I have never drank coffee ever again.) I told Julius it tasted like a soapy, moldy dish cloth. Julius popped the top on the aluminum coffee pot and guess what? Need I say any more... a damn dirty-moldy dish cloth! As Julius baked some biscuits he proudly proclaims I got all this property (A tiny RV trailer and a garage with two huge chest freezers in it... and multiple gas cans.) for back taxes. No one else wanted this piece of "heaven", but I did. The biscuits were black, smoke filled the trailer, and at that point I told Julius to meet me at my pickup and we were headed UP to the Jersey Lilly. We ate breakfast on the Milam tab. A real breakfast. Digesting his breakfast Julius parked "his butt" on the benches outside of the Jersey Lilly while I

retrieved the new ladder from the tall garage at the Old House. Returning to the Lilly I tried for a third time to call the parents in Bigfork. My mind was racing and full of questions. Paul answered. I stated that I had not heard a word from anyone about the person who was suppose to be in contact with me to build the log lambing building. No messages at the Jersey Lilly and Sivert stated no one had called him. *Paul blew up on on the phone... shouting, “Can’t you do one damn thing right... do I have to do everything myself... what are the two of you doing there... if anything!”* Paul continued by saying he was tied up teaching at the high school and there was no way he could drive over to Ingomar to straighten out the God Damn mess I made. “I MADE!” After maybe three or four extra loud “Son of Bitches” to drown my questions out... Paul calmed down when I said, “**Then give me the name and number of the contractor from Thompson Falls and I will call him from Ingomar and straighten out this “Damn Circus I supposedly created.”** I could press Paul’s button just as well as he could press mine! Just one of many of the blowups between my

Father and myself over his incompetence in trying to control a situation, his lies, and his intentional lack of factual communication. Paul was a school teacher and more importantly a father figure to be respected... maybe I expected too much from him. He gave me the phone number and name of the contractor. Then Paul demanded to talk to Julius... "NOW!" What was said between the two of them... Julius never told me. After Paul's and Julius' conversation Julius changed his mannerisms and stared constantly at me for the next few days. Now I did not trust Julius. I suspected that Julius did not respect nor trust me either because of his conversation with Paul and what Paul had said to him about me. ***I truly believe Paul talked crap about me behind my back my entire life.***

That day I stayed at the Jersey Lilly in the phone booth until I finally got a hold of the log contractor from Thompson Falls. The entire situation became a he said... she said.... shit show... so I tried to get the ball rolling... I thought? I asked Dean when his crew was arriving? Dean said, "What crew?".

Paul was suppose to supply a crew of at least five people for a building that size... I explained the situation; that it was just the two of us... Julius and myself. Dean stated that he would drive over the next day with a set of blueprint plans and a schedule of what was needed to be done before the logs and roofing materials were to be delivered. Then he'd straighten out things with Paul!

Dean drove most the night and stayed in Billings. Early that morning we met with Dean at the Jersey Lilly, discussed things, and the three of us drove UP to Cherry Springs. Dean was staggered by the remoteness of the project. It wasn't as Paul described it... not at all like Paul stated... not at all what I expected... Paul did not tell me everything... Obviously! Dean repeated to himself muttering the statement, "What a "F..."ing mess!" multiple times. Dean asked if either of us knew how to read a set of blue prints. Julius stated that we would have to learn in short order in order for us to get "Paul and Bernice's Project" done. Dean had written out a list of "What to Do's". We then took Dean DOWN to Ingomar. Dean's last words were "I

hope this project comes together... I had no clue! Paul definitely did not tell me everything I needed to know! Why would he do that?" We said our goodbyes. Julius stated **"Damn that Paul... if you don't tell the whole story it is the same as lying... Screw Paul... Screw Bernice... You and I can do this... We will get this project done... no matter how long it takes!"** At this point I was in total shock... all I said was Okay? In reality I was ready to give up and head back to Bigfork or back to Missoula and start school at the University of Montana. My last question that day was "Why are the parents being so deceptive and lying about what we are to do at Cherry Creek... What have they lied about and what can I believe... my parents shouldn't be doing this. No parents should ever do this to their child or anyone!"



❖ September 1971 ❖

Julius and I had to get the log walls up and the roof on by the third week of October. That is when my Dad (Paul) could get over to Cherry Springs to help Dean with the installation of the barn doors. The barn doors would be the final item to complete the log lambing shed. The third week of October was during the Montana Teachers Convention. Julius and I put our noses to the grind stone and dug by hand with shovels and with the use of a digging bar the foundation holes needed for the footings of the log building. A very large task for a 80 foot by 160 foot log building. Unless you have dug into the dry concrete texture of gumbo clay with a hand shovel you haven't experienced real work. Even with leather gloves each of our hands were covered in blisters. As Julius stated, "I have never had blisters layered upon blisters in the entirety of my life... but I definitely do now!" For the record our personal hygiene was getting worse too... and I did not care!

After getting a load of rough lumber from Gebhard's in Melstone we set our forms for the footings. That was a very exciting day. To get all the forms perfectly level... we needed Sivert to help us by using his transit. Julius and I squared the forms and waited for Sivert after talking to him on John Sebulsky's radio. After a few hours... no Sivert. Julius and I made a new rule... If something did not happen in two hours we would make it happen... time was running out! Finally we went to visit Sivert at his home and to get more food and the leveling transit to level our forms. More importantly to me... I had convinced Julius to take a shower and to change or at least to wash his clothes. Sivert was no where to be found. Of course! So we used the trailer adjacent to the main house to shower in. Julius had other clothes, but chose not to wear them. Even though Julius had never spoken of church, some of Julius's clothes that were hidden in the back of the Skunk Wagon were his "Sunday-Go-To-Meeting Clothes"... a wool, double breasted suit coat with matching pants. Julius wanted to be buried in his wool suit someday. He had only worn the suit two other times for friends

that “he had buried.” I had to wonder about that statement.

None of Julius’s other clothes were clean either. I put all our dirty clothes in Janet’s laundry room and started to wash our work clothes. I told Julius we could take his suit to Billing and have it dry cleaned. The suit would look like it was new... Julius gave me that Festus wink again. It took me all afternoon and 6 loads of shirts, pants, and coveralls. I worried the gumbo would plug the drains at Sivert and Janet’s. After we had both showered I was taken back a little bit because Julius’s beard was way whiter than I ever perceived it to be. At least his beard did not have all the coagulated blood and food caked in it anymore. Julius stated to me that my Head and Shoulders shampoo was much nicer to use on his body and hair than the Lava soap which he normally used... but he still was worrying about getting a rash or breaking out from the Head and Shoulders. Are you kidding me?... he didn’t really use Lava soap with pumice to shower with?... To wash his body, his private parts and hair with?... why not just use sanding paper! I

didn't want to think about it! After our complete make over and clean up we headed UP to Cherry Springs to level our concrete forms. I had used a transit working for the U.S. Forest Service so I had a clue what to do. It took a few hours, but we were done with leveling the concrete forms. As level and as sturdy as we could make the concrete forms.

Returning that afternoon to Ingomar I called Dean to find out how to figure the yardage of concrete we needed to complete the project. Dean stated he would be there the next day to help us. Dean wanted to be absolutely sure the forms were constructed as he had written down in his instructions and that the forms were squared up and level to his specifications and to the blueprint specifications. Dean promised he knew how to get to Cherry Springs after we had previously showed him the project site.

After returning to Cherry Springs that evening Julius and I ate a quiet supper. Julius decided we needed to go shooting Jack Rabbits that night. The Jack Rabbits had

taken over and eaten everything in the North Country. With Julius's spot light all you could see were thousands of pink eyes covering the prairie. I shot Jack Rabbits until I ran out of bullets with Julius's semi-automatic .22 with a scope. Julius stated because the trappers had poisoned all the coyotes under orders from Sivert and other ranchers... the Jack Rabbits had no predators thus they took over everything and ate everything except for the prickly pear cactus making it super hard to raise sheep or cows for any of the ranchers in the 6 surrounding counties let alone Sivert's ranch on the Porcupine and on Cherry Creek.

One full day went by and no Dean. Once again we head DOWN to Ingomar. Stopping off at Sivert's we find Sivert being yelled at by Janet. Supposedly Sivert had found out Janet was having a sexual relationship with one of the people Sivert had hired to watch the steers. This cowboy bunked at Beer Bill's... the other cow hand had a sheep wagon next to Beer Bill's. Beer Bill's was a shack in the middle of no where about a mile and a half DOWN from where

Julius and I were constructing the log lambing shed. I had never met nor seen the two of them, but Julius had. Sivert made an accusation... Janet went ballistic in front of all three of the kids... then Janet started taking meat packages out of the freezer and throwing them at Sivert and his blue suburban as Sivert was trying to escape to who knows where? Janet's aim was pretty bad... she managed to miss Sivert, but definitely hit the blue suburban which now proudly displayed its new dents. As soon as Sivert drove off Janet grabbed the kids and escaped in her brown suburban. Julius and I stood there in total shock. This wouldn't be the last time people would see Janet throw items from the freezer at Sivert. I proceeded to go into the house and call Dean to find out what his status was? Finally I did get a hold of him. Dean states he will be leaving Thompson Fall after he hangs up and would be at the construction site by that evening. What the Hell... doesn't anyone keep their word anymore? Meanwhile Julius has "borrowed" a very large cooler and picked up all the meat packages that were laying on the garage floor and on the gumbo prairie.

Grinning he shouts, "We are eating steaks... T-Bones...we are in heaven." Julius's thinking was if we didn't salvage the meat the dogs located around the house would have eaten it and the meat would have been worthless sitting in the sun. After all both Sivert and Janet left the house without even trying to pick up the meat packages. Besides the butcher paper was torn and the meat was exposed... thus contaminated. Smiling Julius says, "We did Cherry Creek a huge favor in salvaging this food!" Everyone that came to our camp ate well for the next 7 to 9 days.

Dean finally did show up, but two days later than we expected. How did Paul and Bernice meet up with Dean? Dean was pissing me off... crap the world was pissing me off at this point!

My frustration with this damned circus grew and when I saw Dean I think I almost screamed, "Why can't you tell me the truth... why are you always two or three days late? What is your story this time? As it turns out by Dean's own account he was picked up somewhere outside of Lewistown for

speeding. He showed me the ticket as proof. To add insult to misery Dean had also been drinking beer in his cross Montana trek. He made some unsavory comments to the local sheriff of Lewistown and had to "sit his ass" in jail over night and part of the next day or face getting a DUI. Things were different back then. Dean figured the amount of concrete we would need. Dean double checked the forms for being level and being being absolutely sure they were sturdy enough to hold the concrete and that they would not move up or down. Then Dean showed us how a concrete truck could not deliver or drop its concrete on the back side of the forms because the corrals were in the way. It was my decision to take out the boards, posts, and panels on the fence so a concrete truck could slide through and dump its load. After all Julius and I had plenty of practice taking out and putting in posts doing the new wind break. When the concrete trucks came it worked. Julius was against it because he felt "Sivert would lose it seeing the corrals and posts down!" I said "Tuff shit... I own one share of the Cherry Creek Sheep Company and it's my decision and we are doing it. After

all I am Mr. One Share... am I not? Further more since when has Sivert been out here to see what we were doing anyway?" Julius was not I amused with me in the least. Deep down I was done... ready to get out of that desolate nut house in the prairie I was placed in. The longer I was there the more I distrusted what everyone was telling me... especially Paul and Bernice... now Dean and Julius.

The concrete trucks came and delivered their concrete all the way from Forsyth, Montana. Interestingly Kevin and Jo Ann Brewer supplied the gravel for the concrete. Kevin and Jo Ann would eventually buy out North pasture or 2/3's of the Cherry Creek Sheep Company land holdings using monies they derived from their gravel business and from defrauding the government of farm subsidies through fictitious land partnerships. The concrete drivers were very nice in that they helped us screed off the wet concrete to make it level. The concrete drivers could tell none of us had much strength or endurance left. Dean placed all the steel anchors into the wet concrete where he wanted them. Julius and I troweled the concrete one final time and

Dean said it was beer time. Dean pulled out some hot beers out of his truck. Dean opened one and said it was boiling hot and terrible. Julius to the rescue. Julius headed out in my pickup driving into the open prairie going into nowhere... Again hunting down a gallon jug of his poison choke cherry wine. To my amazement in about 40 minutes once again Julius returns with another gallon jug of his potassium cyanide poisoned choke cherry wine. This time the jug was a clear A & W Root Beer gallon jug still with remnants of its original A & W label on it. I remembered what one glass did to me the first time I drank it; so I warned Dean to be very, very careful. Then I thought to myself... Julius wasn't in the Skunk Wagon!???

Neither Dean nor Julius listened to me when I said to go slow on the wine and not drink a large quantity of the ruby red wine poison from Hell. In an hour or two the wine was completely gone. I once again got my bad stomach... I knew better... maybe this was my first insincere attempt at suicide... or numbing my brain from thinking too much... with as little as I drank I am so glad I didn't go

through the total hell that Dean and Julius went through that night. The sounds and agony each experienced is pretty hard to explain unless you were there listening. The sounds those two made drown out the howls and cries of the coyotes. I think the coyotes were upset because of all the vomiting going on and vocal grumping that broke the silence of the prairie midnight air. Even the coyotes couldn't sleep that night. The next morning Dean wanted to get back to Thompson Falls ASAP to make sure his semis were loaded properly with all the needed logs, 1 x 4's, steel roofing, and fiberglass for the sky lights. As he left in his pickup he yelled back at Julius "He would never drink any of that shit with Julius ever again. You poisoned me... Damn you Julius Sebulsky!" Julius yelled back "Your loss you ungrateful piece of shit!"

It was the third week of September and Julius and I are finished with the Cherry Springs wind break... only waiting for logs and roofing materials to arrive so we can finish the log lambing shed. One project down... What a relief! But I also knew I definitely wasn't going to college that fall. The

nights were definitely getting colder. I started wearing my one piece thermal underwear to bed for warmth. The Canadian Geese were flying South in formation. My new sleeping bag was safely locked in my pickup during the day to protect it from the fabric eating mice and from Julius. As it turns out I could never get rid of the mice in the sheep wagon I was staying in. Every so often Julius would unroll my new bag and use it to sleep on in the back of my pickup. When I would catch him he would always promise he would never do it again. One night I woke up and I could feel something gnawing on my big toe nail. It was one of the damn mice. The little munchkin ate through Paul's old sleeping bag and through my sock to get to my tasty big toenail. My toe hurt like all get out and it was bleeding... Julius told me a mouse bite wouldn't hurt anyone. What I didn't know back then! By this time the sleeping bag had so many holes in it... it was worthless except for the extra padding it provided on the bed boards. My wool blanket was eaten to a point that the total amount of fabric left would not make a good large bathroom hand towel. I threw the blanket under my sheep wagon

hoping the mice would leave everything else I owned alone. No chance.

Bored with life... Julius once again announces we need to go to the Judith Gap. First we would have to stop in Ingomar and I would have to cash a check for \$400.00. All I could say is what? Julius said we would have to take the Skunk Wagon because Fred Wiefrich's roads were so bad it would probably damage my pickup. After stopping in Ingomar, cashing a check, calling the parents with no one picking up the phone, we head off to the Judith Gap. On our way Julius wanted to stop in Harlowton to see and visit with his friend Bill Shepard, the owner of Shep's Antiques. We did. Introductions were made and Julius was content to bullshit with "Shep" for the remainder of the afternoon drinking Shep's beer (Great Falls Select and Brown Derby) with both of them sitting behind the counter where I had first met Julius. Then Julius proceeded to ask Shep if he wanted to go see Fred. Shep said he was in for an adventure and that Fred was making some more knives for his antique shop and hoped they were done. Julius clears some crap out

of the front seat and puts those items into the back of the Skunk Wagon. On the way to Fred's Shep wants to "burn some black powder". Julius agrees that we were sufficiently on Fred's land to "do some damage" to a couple or so of Julius's empty gallon wine jugs. I had never shot a black powder rifle before... so Julius loaded the barrel with some black powder... a lubricated patch and rammed a .50 caliber round lead ball home... all the while explaining every detail of what he was doing. Julius added a cap and then made a rest for me on the hood of his pickup and by using "my blanket I had thrown away" under the sheep wagon weeks earlier. I could not believe that Julius salvaged that used up, worn out old wool blanket. Shep walks out about 100 to 110 yards from the pickup and places the three jugs next to a barbed (bob wire as Eastern Montanans say) wire fence. I do my best to get a bead on a jug using the open sights on the rifle. Julius says, "Gently squeeze the trigger.... And". All of a sudden I am thinking this is another set up to fail situation and people would be eventually laughing about my actions and my stupidity when my ass hit

the ground. So I ask Julius... how hard is this thing going to kick? Shep laughs and says it will push you... hard sometimes depending on the amount of powder, but you and your shoulder will be just fine. So I pull the hammer back and squeezed the trigger.... listening to the roar of the miniature canon... only to see a huge white cloud of smoke in front of me. By the time the wind has cleared my view to the jugs I could see nothing on the prairie had changed. No evidence that my .50 cal rifle ball did any damage to anything. All we could hear was the sound of meadow larks laughing on all sides of us. Then Julius swabs the barrel's bore and reloads his rifle. Once again the roar of the black powder rifle interrupts the silence of the prairie. Shep laughs at Julius and says, "Shit if it was a buffalo you would have had to shoot at the herd in order to hit anything! Even then you would have only hit prairie dirt!" Julius did not see the humor in Shep's comment in the least. Then Shep tried his hand at shooting the long rifle. Still the jugs were perfectly safe, glistening in the Fall sun. Shep was laughing his ass off when Julius had had enough. Julius hops into the back of the

Skunk Wagon and returns with his M-14 rifle. Julius was red in the face and yelled plug your ears.... you F...ing assholes. Julius proceeds to insert a huge clip into the rifle. Standing to the side... points at the jugs, pulls the receiver back and loads the first round. Not aiming... just standing there bracing himself... he unloads the M-14 on the three one gallon glass jugs with one pull of the trigger. The M-14 was in full automatic mode. I wish I could say Julius hit at least one of the three gallon jugs, but he didn't. He did hit a fence post because the top section exploded and shattered and then blew away in the wind. Shep laughing uncontrollably... falling to his knees... Julius grabs one more clip and pulls the receiver back... Yelling that "No ONE makes fun of him... Fuck all of you!" Julius's state of mind and attitude was making me somewhat nervous. Julius then walks within 10 yards of the jugs and shoots until the M-14 is out of ammunition. Yes he "sufficiently" destroyed all three of the innocent glass gallon jugs. I never wanted to shoot that rifle because of the way it kicked. I am surprised and yet not surprised this was the go to weapon of the Vietnam War. Putting

away the M-14 and the black powder rifle... Julius returns with a quart jar of "Water?" Stating it was for Fred... then we load up in the Skunk Wagon and head to Fred's house.

Fred's house was out in the middle of nowhere. A small one room house with a corral, no horse, no electricity, with a small barn which seemed to be collapsing in on itself. Surrounding the barn were maybe 15 or 16 abandoned vehicles and one very old Model A Ford tractor. As we drive up to the house the sun is going down in the horizon. Once again I think it looks like a Charlie Russell painting. Fred greets Julius's pickup with a rifle in his arms... Fred's face was so wrinkled from the sun you could see gumbo dust between the creases. Fred asks, "Were you the idiots I heard shooting... as soon as I heard the M-14 I knew it was you Julius!" As we look OUT towards the sunset Julius hands the quart jar to Fred. Fred smiles... unscrews the jar... and proceeds to take a "long hard swig". Showing no emotion with no obvious facial changes... Fred wipes his lips and thanks Julius for the "pick me up!". Fred then asks who's the "Green Horned Pilgrim?"

and without missing word... “God Damn it Shep where is the God Damn money you owe me from the last knives I made for you?” I introduced myself and then Fred asks us into his house. As Fred is closing the door on his prairie home... he takes another swallow of “Julius’s Tipple.” as he called it. Fred sighs, “The best moon shine in all of Montana... bar none.” Fred yells (seems like everyone in Eastern Montana yells to talk... Why?... you take a guess?) (My guess is no one uses ear plugs when they fire their rifles... I know my hearing was impaired that day), I have some more knives for you in the workshop, Shep... pay me first for the ones you took last time... and I will get them for you in the morning. Fred looks at Julius... Julius what do I have the pleasure of your presence in my house once again for? Julius tells Fred he wants him to sell me a rifle with a scope on it. Julius says it is for the kid and he is a “green horn.” (At this point I am thinking these guys have watched way too many John Wayne movies.) Fred doesn’t respond to Julius instead takes away the moon shine from Shep and takes another large swallow. Then Fred starts to cook up some canned chili for everyone after

lighting the gas lantern which hung over the table. After the chili was thoroughly heated on his propane stove he pulled some bread from the cupboard and told everyone to sit at the table. We each had a bowl of chili and a slice of bread. It tasted wonderful even if the bread had become slightly green with mold and mostly hard. It softened up a bit if it soaked in the chili. After much prompting from the three of them I decided to take my first half swallow of Julius's Tipple. It burned my eyes, it burned my nose, made my ears ring even worse than the M-14 did earlier that afternoon, and then it hit my stomach.... I thought I was going to throw up... instead I realized I could no longer take a normal breath and I thought I was going to pass out. Fred, Shep, and Julius were all laughing their asses off at me. Shep finished off the jar of Tipple and I felt a true sense of relief that I would not have to prove my manhood one more time in front of.... "real Eastern Montanan People? Real Men!" But crap no.... Julius goes back to the Skunk Wagon and locates one more quart jar of his Tipple. I had one more swallow and that was it. I swear on a bible... The last thing I remember is Fred

telling Shep to let his dogs inside for the night. Shep opens the front door and two dogs and an antelope come running into the kitchen. Yes I saw an antelope! Fred puts a bowl of food down for each of his pets. Fred yells at the antelope, “Damn it Buck quit gulping your food or you will throw up again... God Damn mental defect is what you are...” No one is to pet Buck in my house... got it? That was the last thing I remember... It seemed like the start of a bad dream.

The next morning I wake up with the most vial smell in my nose. I open my eyes and see someone’s gray socks with holes in them. I raise my head and hit the roof of the Skunk Wagon’s roof. Julius was past out snoring like a grizzly bear. All I wanted was to get out of the Skunk Wagon and get some fresh air. As I open the camper door there stands Fred with this huge smile on his weathered face and a cup of coffee in his hand. The first thing I could think of was.... so why is Fred smiling like a Cheshire Cat... what is he up to? I knew Julius was not gay... but did Fred know that fact? It all didn’t matter. Fred continued to smile and then said

Julius never has been one to hold his liquor very well... but interestingly he is much better at it than you are by far. Fred then says come on in and tell Shep to get up also. I turn around a bit confused and look into the Skunk Wagon camper... at that point Fred states that Shep slept in the front seat of the pickup. I wake Shep up and then tell him to get Julius up. The three of us once again are at the table looking at two empty quart glass jars of "Julius's Tipple". All Shep could utter was "I tippled a lot last night! I feel terrible... why is it when you poison a coyote once... if the coyote lives... that coyote will never makes that same mistake ever again... we as humans never learn... not until it puts us into our graves! God Damn us for being so stupid... and Damn you Julius for doing this to me once again!" Julius responds proudly that the Tipple had no Potassium Cyanide in it because he distilled it three times in his copper still and that should have cleaned all the "crap and poison" out of it. As I ate toast (Yes the moldy bread) and jam with Fred's coffee which tasted strangely like Julius's wash cloth coffee... I kept thinking to myself "Did I do some brain damage to myself last

night? I definitely damaged my stomach... or was it the canned chili? ***Was that an antelope sleeping in the corner of the kitchen?***”

Paralyzed in both mind and body we stayed the day with Fred. Early that morning Fred took me out to his “Shop” at the barn and showed me how to make a knife. We started the charcoal on fire... I got to operate the bellows which made the coals super hot. Fred smiled and heated the metal... stating to me he had been working on his piece of Damascus for about a week... by folding three different metals over and over on each other. After sufficiently heating the Damascus Fred started pounding the metal bar into the shape of a knife on his huge anvil. Repeating the heating process multiple times. Finally, as Fred stated, “Giving it its final heat, checking with a magnet, and then letting it air cool.” Fred states that it’s almost a knife. Then he proceeds to take it to a peddle powered belt grinder and flatten the entirety of the blade on both sides. We worked on the knife for the majority of the day. I loved it. The knife was ready for its handle or scales after it was

heated again and hardened. Fred looks at me and tells me this is one of his sanity hobbies. Fred then says, *“Look closely at every human being and you will see that every one of us is a bit crazy... some of us looking for a way to become insane... some of us looking for a way to regain our sanity.”* Making knives for Fred kept him sane because he had to totally concentrate on the knife he was making and “not let life’s demons, which drive us all crazy and then insane, get to him.” Fred showed me a black powder rifle he was making from scratch. Fred bought the octagonal barrels for his rifles... but every item needed in the construction of his master pieces was hand made in his “shop”. Fred goes over to a rack of wood and pulls it out and places this long heavy block of wood on his work counter. This black walnut has been drying in my shop for over five years and is ready for someone to make a rifle out of it. Fred stated he liked me and then gave me the huge piece of wood. I fell in love with knives and black powder rifles that day. “Julius’s Tennessee long rifle... I made that rifle you know... Julius loves that rifle as much as he loves me... he doesn’t share that rifle with just anyone... you

were lucky!” (I did make a black powder rifle out of that piece of beautiful walnut... a Hawken rifle based off the Jim Bridger’s Hawken rifle displayed at the Montana Historical Museum in Helena Montana... I gave my Hawken to my son Jake... in hope he will someday be able to give it to one of his son’s... Levi or Weston... I have one more black powder rifle I made called an “Astorian - named after Jakob Astor who was a fur trader in Oregon and Washington and the first millionaire in the United States... my wish is for Jake to give this rifle to my other grandson.”

At that point we both went into Fred’s house to find Julius and Shep still paralyzed and laying around from last night’s bout with the Tipple. Fred pulls out about 8 knives for everyone to see. They were wonderful... things of true beauty and art. At that moment not only was I in love with knives, but I wanted to make them like Fred did. Don’t ask me why or how, but I did. To this day I still love knives and love to make knives. No two of my knives are ever the same... I love trying to create the perfect all around knife. Fred

told me I could order one from him and he would make it for me... I did order a knife. Unfortunately Fred passed away about a year later before I could see him again and pick up the knife of my dreams. After Shep paid Fred for the knives he had had previously sold in his "antique" shop.... Fred once again gave Shep four of the knives he had shown us... stating.... "Now God Damn it... put a price on these things so both of us can make a profit on... these knives are worth it." Shep just nodded his head and took the knives. I told Julius we were leaving and at that moment Fred says not so fast" Cochise!"... we have to set you up with a rifle. So Fred then goes over to a safe he had next to his bed and opens it. Inside are about 8 or maybe more new rifles. He pulls one out of the safe and then grabs a box which contains a rifle scope. Fred says... I want \$175 for the rifle and \$25.00 for the 4X scope and for as many shells as you want or need. The rifle was a .243 Winchester bolt action. Fred proceeded to mount the scope, bore sight it, and tell me that the rifles barrel was embedded in fiberglass resin so the barrel would be more stable with repeat firing when the barrel

heated up. (Not that it mattered to me or I hadn't really understood what Fred had done.) I bought 50 factory shells and Fred gave me 100 more of his reloads for my new rifle. I never thought I needed a rifle, but I knew this rifle would become a part of me and mean the world to me. Julius needed more ammunition for his M-14 and for his Winchester 300 Magnum bolt action Winchester with the 6 power scope. Julius had me pay for his shells with the promise he would pay me back as soon as we got him back to Forsyth and to his bank. I reluctantly paid for his shells with Fred telling me to watch Julius.... that squeaking you hear is from Julius's wallet which he safety pins inside his coveralls... the squeaking is actually wallet screams! Don't let Julius take you for a penny... he will do that if you give him even the slightest chance... believe me!... it is all a game to Julius. Before leaving Fred's place Julius decides we should spend some time playing with Buck. Buck loved putting his head on a person's leg and pushing the person over on to their butts. For a little antelope he had a lot power. Fred laughed and smiled as we played with his pet

“dog” antelope. Later that afternoon I have to drive Julius and Shep back to Harlowton in Julius’s Skunk Wagon. Julius had flared his gout up and still couldn’t hardly walk or see straight. Back in Harlowton Shep thanked Julius for the “prairie adventure” as he put the new knives into the display cases at Shep’s Antiques. Shep looks at Julius and states he needs more Indian artifacts or buffalo skulls from Cherry Creek ASAP. Julius just weakly nods his head. From there I drove BACK to Ingomar in the Skunk Wagon. Julius slept the entire way.

That evening sitting by myself in the Old House I did not want to call the parents and tell them that I had been out in the middle of no-where somewhere South of the Judith Gap drinking Julius’s Tipple, shooting a M-14 and a black powder Tennessee long rifle, slept with Julius who wasn’t gay and watched a master knife and black powder rifle maker at his best... even worse I spend my money on a new rifle, scope and bullets... and I didn’t even hunt... I had never even killed a large wild animal bigger than a Jack Rabbit... played push with an antelope named Buck

that thought he was a dog... but I did get a huge piece of black walnut for free from Fred so I can make a black powder rifle someday. All I could think was Bernice would not be happy, not happy at all. We had a log sheep shed to build and after it was completed I was done... I wanted to get away from Julius, Ingomar, Sivert and Janet, and Cherry Springs... as long as I could survive and live through all this bullshit. As I lay in bed I looked over to the wall where my prize piece of walnut leaned... all I could think about was that someday I would build knives and try my hand at making a black powder rifle. I couldn't think about anything else. Obviously the Tipple and Buck withdrawal with a small iota of brain damage was affecting me.

The next morning I called Dean from the Jersey Lilly. He promised the semi would be arriving on site within two or three days... he would be driving the semi and to expect him then... but Dean had lied to me before? I asked what about the crew he was to provide... Dean informed there was never a crew... some shit Paul made up... and that Julius and I would have to be his crew to

construct the log sheep lambing shed. After talking to Dean I called the parents at Bigfork. The only one that answered was mom, Bernice. I explained that Dean had promised the logs and roofing were coming to Cherry Springs within the next two days. Instead of being excited... she replied by saying OK... then asking me how many trucks Sivert had on the ranch including those trucks used by the hired men... plus she wanted the ages or when the trucks were purchased... plus pictures of all the buildings and if I could get pictures of all the wool and processed wool Janet had in her business building in Janknits. I told her I would do my best. I asked her how her and Dad were doing and she simply replied "Fine." She never asked me how I was doing.... which I guess it was all for the better. I told her I would call the next time I got to Ingomar... she replied OK. Bernice was very quiet that day on the phone.

As Julius and I headed UP to Cherry Springs... Julius decided he wanted to show me "something." Julius was finally feeling better from his Tipple Hangover and was

driving the Skunk Wagon himself by this point in the day. After passing by the Black Sea Reservoir about a mile to the West of us and, then crossing the West Blacktail Creek (This creek crossing is where Merton killed his huge bobcat... shooting it out of a cottonwood tree.. the creek crossing where Johnathan Mysse died when he got drunk and rolled his pickup. Johnathan's second roll over in his life time. In high school Johnathan was drinking and rolled his pickup and permanently paralyzed himself from the waist down.) and a few more miles UP the road from the bridge we turned left. Julius has me open a gate and we follow a road which hadn't been apparently used in many years. We drove North about three miles and I see an abandoned large two story house appearing over the horizon. Julius has tears in his eyes... I was thinking it was from his Tipple hangover still. We go through another wire gate and there are pieces of metal rods, wood, and parts of an instrument panel laying on the open prairie. Julius gets out of his pickup and start crying for real. I asked him what is the "Problem?" Julius looks at me and asks me, "What do you think this wreck is

from?"... I have no clue... Julius states these were the good old days. This is where my Mom and Dad homesteaded and made a home and a family for us kids. I lived here with my three brothers, two sisters and my parents. After my parents passed away it was just Dominick and I who lived here. John, my other brother, was always a bit slow, maybe a bit crazy.. well John really didn't like Dominick and me.... John and my other brother, Walter, moved to Alaska... John then moved back... but my other brother still lives in Alaska. My sisters Estelle and Edna moved to the Hamilton area. Someday Walter and I are going to the Great Slav Lakes in Canada and "see what we can see... another great adventure just over the horizon!" You are standing on Dominick's grave. I jumped back closer to the Skunk Wagon and said I was sorry and didn't know Dominick was buried there. Julius stated that he and Dominick had flown the airplane they had built together many times over... all over Rosebud County... but one day Dominick was flying over the property and just crashed.... Still crying Julius stated, "I buried him where he died." Then Julius turned around stone cold

sober, looked at me and asked me if I would like to see where his parents were buried or his copper still that he makes Tipple from next? Out of respect I said I wanted to see where his parents were buried. At this point I felt like I was in a bad horror movie and all I want to do is run in any direction... this was like a really bad movie... and I had to get out of the movie theater. We visited Julius's parents... but I had to ask him why was there a garden planted over the top of them with their markers in the middle of the garden. The granite markers showed that his parent's names were John and Valentyne Sebulsky. Julius simply said he didn't want to have to carry water any further than he had to for his garden when he was living at the house. Besides Julius thought maybe his parents would "fertilize and sweeten the ground for the vegetables and blue potatoes." I was pretty much speechless. With a series of keys Julius opens three or four padlocks on the front door under the cover of the front porch. Julius explains he had boarded up the rest of the house and no one could break in if they tried. The door opens and the first thing I see is the floor and it is carpeted in sheep

pelts... all with the bar two dot brand of my Granddad Mysse's or from Cherry Creek. My first words were, "Are all these from Cherry Creek?" Julius laughs and says hell no... majority are but some come from Benny Olsen's, Eric Erickson's, Galt's or wherever one damn sheep or another runs into my bullet. I didn't know whether to be pissed off or what.... so I said nothing. Julius grabs an iron skillet and says we can use an extra fry pan at Cherry Springs. Then Julius takes me outside and tells me I am going to have to blind fold your eyes. My trust for Julius was very shaky at best. I asked why? Julius stated that in order for him to show me his 1890's era 20 gallon copper-brass still he had to blind fold me so I could not find where it was hidden. After blind folding me Julius leads me to the Skunk Wagon. My actual thoughts at that moment were... is he really taking me to his precious still... why is he so proud of a still that makes moon shine that almost kills people... is he going to shoot me or bury me in the prairie?... and then steal my new rifle? I couldn't think anymore as we bounced over the prairie being even further disoriented because of the blackness of the

blind fold. Finally the Skunk Wagon stops. Julius orders me to take off the blind fold. I was sincerely relieved to have the blind fold off my eyes. The first thing I did when I got out of the Skunk Wagon was look around for Julius's house for a bearing... no house... nothing I recognized... we were in the middle of no where. We walked maybe a quarter of mile and we were over looking from the sand stone bluffs into what I thought was Art Hagen's property adjacent to Sivert's on the Big Porcupine Creek, but I couldn't be sure. DOWN off the rim rocks was a trail. We followed it for about 100 feet and came to an sandstone overhang. Julius started digging and pushing dirt aside with his gloved hands... lamenting you never know when a "rattler might strike between the boards." I helped him a little bit, but I was happy to be alive and didn't want to change that aspect with an unsuspecting rattlesnake bite either. About 15 minutes later Julius has unearthed the opening to reveal a fairly large dug out area under the sandstone rim. Inside was his prized 20 gallon copper still. On the copper topped still it had a plaque with Chicago Copper Foundry, 1890, USA stamped in it.

Julius proudly exclaimed this still makes the world's best Montana Lightning and Gin anywhere to be found. "My parents made the best alkyl spirits around... that's how Dad supported the family in the 1920's during prohibition you know"... Now get my shovel from the pickup so we can close "her" up again. Julius showed true affection... even a sense of love for that copper pot. Julius's last words to me as the copper still disappeared under the boards, dirt, and dead sage brush was, "My God she is a thing of beauty isn't she?" Julius worked himself into a sweat covering up the evidence of his prized copper still. As we walked to the Skunk Wagon he informs me that he has probably distilled over a hundred or so gallons of the bad Choke Cherry wine into his "Julius's Tipple" over the years. "That's why my Tipple is so damned Good!" I still had a headache from his Topsy "Tipple" and I wanted this day to be over with. He blind folded me again until we got to the main road just past Swede Slazenger's place UP from Sivert's. I slept most of the way to Cherry Springs. That evening I was feeling numb about life. Should I be mad, should I be scared (After all Julius wasn't exactly on the

same planet as the rest of us or in the same plane of sanity for that fact.), should I.... I just couldn't think about it any more. I put my new rifle in my pickup, locked it as I always did, and then I crawled into my sheep wagon falling asleep not wanting to think about anything anymore.



❖ October 1971 ❖

The next morning I woke up early and told Julius I would make breakfast. Julius was tired of real eggs and powdered eggs... so he told me he would be back in an hour. What the hell was he up to now? An hour later he returns with a dozen Sage Hens. Young Sage Hens. (How in the heck could they be young Sage Hens... this October and the birds were born in May?) Julius tells me to help him clean and prep them for breakfast. Julius knew what he was doing. He had to show me exactly what needed to be done. This wasn't the first time we had done this but still I was a bit slow in comparison to the speed Julius cleaned birds. So I only cleaned two or three of the twelve birds. Julius put half the dressed birds into a bread bag and places them into the cooler which still had ice in it. I proceeded to fry the rest of the bird parts according to Julius's instructions which I probably had heard maybe two dozen times. Amazingly once again they tasted wonderful and were a special treat. Julius decided that I needed to

practice with my new .243 so we headed UP to a pond that he knew that had muskrats in it. My rifle had never been “formally” sighted in (only bore sighted by Fred) so we were going to use the muskrats as our targets. “Fine Tuning it”... as Julius put it. We arrive at the pond (Mud Lake) and Julius paces off 100 yards. We set up a rest on the hood of my pickup and I simply fired at one of the muskrats floating on the surface of the pond. After my first shot Julius is beside himself. Who taught you to shoot a rifle or anything for that matter? It was like being in the First Grade again with Miss Reep at the Bigfork Elementary. I didn’t do anything correctly. I didn’t feather the trigger... I jerked... I pressed the butt too hard into my shoulder - my breathing would effect my shot... I didn’t check for windage... my eye was too close to the scope...quit being afraid of your weapon... this rifle will save your life someday if you treat it like your girlfriend... REALLY? I went through 50 rounds of reloads (I was to save the factory loads for real critters) that morning as the muskrats came to the surface of the pond. According to Julius I never hit a single one... even worse “I

didn't even scare one to death!" That 's how badly I missed each muskrat with my new .243 with the 4X scope that I was so proud of. But at least it was sighted in according to Julius. No matter whose rifle had been fired we always picked up the empty brass. They could always be reloaded by Fred some day in the future. More important to Julius was that no one would ever know we had been at that spot by not leaving any evidence.

That afternoon I wanted to explore all of Cherry Creek... Julius always loved exploring and "burning gas... especially other people's gas." We went back to Cherry Springs and Julius stated we were going to go corner to corner to corner on the upper part of Cherry Creek. Both of us taking some food and our rifles. I drove. We first ended up at the North Eastern most corner of Cherry Creek next to the Albert Brooks ranch. As I was driving down to the South East corner I could smell this rotten egg smell in the air. Julius states, "It was "Halverson Hot Springs... it is haunted you know!" All I could say is "Really... I have never really believed in ghosts, but I have been spooked a few times by things. We

drove over to the springs and walked the rest of the way up to the spring's edge. It looked like a page from the hot springs you see in Yellowstone National Park. The cottonwoods that grew too close to the water's edge had died from what I am guessing is all the sulfur and other minerals the water contained. Not conducive to the growth of a healthy cottonwood tree I would guess.

We continued our trek to the South East corner of the ranch in my pickup. As we dipped into a cottonwood coulee; there stands a group of three hunters (poachers... it wasn't hunting season yet) dragging a huge mule buck back to their pickup. Julius yells at me that they have no business being on Cherry Creek property and that I am to immediately tell them to "take their business and 'git' off 'our' land." My first words from me was "What? Our land?" Julius responds by yelling, "Do it... Do it now... One Share!" So I get out of my pickup and walk slowly towards the three individuals. I announce my presence by saying I am Craig Milam and I am one of the owners of Cherry Creek... which is the land you are on. The bearded

one became the spokesman and said, "We are sorry, but we thought this was Brook's pasture land and Albert had given us permission to hunt on his property. We will just load up the buck and get off your property... if that is OK with you?" I said it would... but to make sure you get off Cherry Creek property... I and my friend would follow them all the way to the gate they came in from. I noticed that one of the three was not very happy and was talking under his breath. As this unhappy poacher finished getting the buck into the truck he turned with his rifle pointing straight at me. I stood there once again thinking "What the "F..." did I get myself into now? I am not going to see the daylight of tomorrow." I said nothing and turned around to head back to my pickup. My thinking was in the movies a real cowboy never shoots another man in the back... damn am I stupid. The first thing I see is Julius with his 300 Mag Winchester draped across my pickup hood. Julius had a smile on his face and he coined a phrase I never heard again until I watched a "Terminator Movie"... "Make my Day! Mother Fucker! Make my Day!" Looking back at the guy with

the raised rifle... I see his eyes are as big as dollars and he was white as a ghost. All three turned white, got in their pickup, and headed to the East gate as fast as they could drive over the rutted gumbo roads. If I hadn't peed at Halverson Hot Springs before seeing the three poachers... I would have wet my pants that day when the poacher pointed his rifle at me. We did indeed follow them to the gate. My heart was still racing and my hands and legs were shaking as we watched the poachers disappear over a bluff into the Brooks ranch pasture. All I wanted was to get back to the safety of my sheep wagon at Cherry Springs. I didn't say a word to Julius... but he just kept saying things to me like: "I had your back... I would have shot that dirt bag... those three didn't know who they were fucking with... you handled things perfectly.... Paul and Bernice would be proud of you... I'm proud! Really!!!!? I just didn't want anything like this to ever happen again in my lifetime. I just wanted all this bullshit-ranch crap to go away. NOW! My hands and body still shook for the rest of the day. I felt very lucky to be alive... Julius states to me at dinner, "This is the kind of day you know you

are truly alive... I love it! In my mind all I could think was..."F... You Julius!"

The next morning the sky looked as if it was going to dump a huge load of moisture everywhere. I decided after the happenings from yesterday I wanted to go back to the safety of Ingomar and sit forever in the quiet and peace of the Jersey Lilly drinking Diet Pepsi. I asked Julius if he wanted to leave the Skunk Wagon at Cherry Springs and go DOWN with me to Ingomar? He said sure... I told him I did not want or need anything to get my blood pressure up again... so no "F..." ups today... OK!? My "bell" was full of all the bullshit that went on from the day before with the poachers. Julius's reply was, "FINE!" As we drove to Ingomar we were approaching the wheat fields at the North end of Acorn Flats. The Cherry Creek fence line was about 300 yards to our East. As I approached the cattle guard leading to Acorn Flats. Julius goes into one of his hissy fits and screams at the top of his lungs, "Stop the truck!" As fast as I could stop... Julius was out the pickup almost falling because I was still moving. Julius throws his coat on the hood of my

pickup, lays the .300 mag across the hood, takes a huge deep breath, and my hearing has not been the same since. I had no clue what had just happened. In my mind I briefly thought maybe Julius shot at one of the poachers we exited from the ranch the day before or better... I hoped... a stray coyote. I finally I got my senses about me and I walked away from the pickup putting a bullet in the chamber of my .243 rifle. Shit... I was becoming like Julius... Julius looked in both directions to see if there was any traffic possibly coming DOWN or UP the Cohagen Cut Off Road. Then Julius looks into the sky and states "that those state game warden bastards watch you from air planes you know." I still did not know what was going on... and smartly replied "DO they take pictures from the air of you shooting people?" With no change of expression Julius looks at me and says "Shooting *"animal"* people"... shit no... only if I was forced to... it is way better than that.. we both could go to jail for life for what I just did! (Julius referred to animals as "antelope people" or "deer people") I looked up into the sky and said out loud, "God... Please Save me!... I have to

get out of here now!” Julius gave me a strange look and his Festus wink. Totally frustrated I turn around and start heading back to my pickup. I absolutely did not care what Julius had shot. Julius huffs out over the sage brush and prickly pear cactus and retrieves the largest bird I have ever seen... then yells at me, “Take a look at this sucker!” As his voice echoes over the prairie... then to my shock (if that word accurately describes how I felt) Julius holds up an enormous Golden Eagle. Yes a Golden Eagle... the national symbol of America. I couldn’t breath. I was pissed off, mad, had tears in my eyes, and I kept repeating the phrase from “The Wizard of Oz.”.... There’s no place like home... there’s no place like home... Please God get me out of here! NOW!

Julius carries the dead eagle back to my pickup and puts the bloody carcass on the floor board of the passenger side of my pickup. “What are you doing... Julius?”, I asked. He looked at me and simply says, “Change of plans... I need to get to the Skunk Wagon so I can go DOWN to the Crow tribe to sell some eagle claws and feathers. I

need to do it today... while the eagle is fresh... so turn your "ASS" around and get me back to Cherry Springs. I respond by telling Julius, "I didn't care what he was doing with the bird because I wouldn't be a part of his antics... but why is this damn dead Golden Eagle bleeding on the floor of my pickup?" Julius frowns and say, "Don't you listen to anything I say... so the game wardens don't see it from their spotting planes." Why did I say anything to Julius. Just let me get Julius to his Skunk Wagon so I can go back to Ingomar. "Keep in mind that you are "an accessory to the fact" so if I go down for killing this "Eastern Montana Buzzard".... you go down with me!", Julius emphatically states. So I drove as fast as I could until Julius told me to slow the damn pickup down. I made it to Cherry Springs. I dumped Julius and his Eastern Montana Buzzard off by the Skunk Wagon. Before I leave Julius insists I take a picture of him and his illegal eagle with my camera. I did.

Afterwards I never looked back and headed to Ingomar. I ate lunch at the Jersey Lilly and Bill Seward asked how it was going

UP North? All I could say was that Julius and I were still waiting for the load of logs and roofing supplies for the log lambing shed. Bill smiled as only he could with that damn white cotton string holding up his glasses. I ate a real steak that afternoon with potatoes. I did not feel like drinking a Diet Pepsi... instead I wanted a Root Beer. I wanted something with a lot of sugar in it. Bill, concerned, stated he had lots of Diet Pepsi if I wanted one? I just smiled and said "No thank you!" As I looked down and I see all the Eagle blood on the side of my right pant leg. I didn't give a crap whether anyone noticed or not. Bill makes my day by telling me... Root beer is Julius's favorite flavor of pop you know? I really didn't need to hear that at all. I just sat at the counter of the bar watching the people who came in and out of the Jersey Lilly. I fell asleep that night in the Old House and did not move a muscle, but as soon as I woke up I could not wonder what trouble Julius would get my butt into next!? That is if I stayed around... but I made a "promise" to Mom and Dad that I would see this thing through until the log sheep lambing shed was completed at Cherry Springs. And Damn it I was going to

do what I promised. (Promises became very important to me at this point in my life... if you make a promise and do not keep it... you were a liar in my mind. Making the liar not worth the dirt he or she was made of.) My thinking has always been, “A person is measured by how well he or she keeps their word and maintains their dignity!”

The next morning I head UP to the Jersey Lilly to have breakfast. The first thing I do is call Dean. “Please tell me the semi is loaded, Dean? When are you going to be here?” (I was asking Dean these questions, but in truth I did not really care anymore.) Dean responded by saying he had gotten the steel for the roof but the corrugated fiberglass light panels had not arrived yet and it might be a day or two yet before he could get on the road with “all the semis”. All the semis?... how many semis were we talking about? After calling Dean I had no stomach to call the parents. My thinking was that I would call them when the logs and roofing materials arrived. I wasn’t going to call them and say, “Hey... guess what... went to Julius’s house. Julius’s house is full of Cherry Creek sheep

pelts. Sivert bought Julius's house and the section or the 640 acres it lies on for his personal self and not the ranch. Julius gets to live there until he dies according to the written agreement. I saw Julius's mom, dad, and brother's graves on the property. I saw Julius's Tipple making copper still from Chicago. I almost-could have been shot by a poacher. Don't worry about me.... cause... Julius almost shot the poacher, but didn't. Julius shot a Golden Eagle and now is Down South on the Crow reservation selling eagle parts to a member of the Crow tribe he knows. Ya' right... Just the things not to tell your parents... Paul and Bernice would poop their pants. After the phone call I went DOWN to the Old House and slept for the majority of the afternoon. That evening I watched the most gorgeous sunset while listening to the buzzing sounds of night hawks that were flying all around me. Another of the many Charlie Russell sunsets I saw and cherished that fall. I wanted to leave Ingomar, but if I used the pickup Sivert loaned me to escape from the ranch... more likely than not Sivert would report it stolen to the police! Again I did

not want to think about it and so I read an old book for a while and then went to bed.

The next day I decided once again I would complete the building as I promised Paul and Bernice in the name of **“Family”** and to keep my **“Promise”** to the both of them. With renewed determination I filled both tanks in my pickup to the brim with Jersey Lilly gas. I put a six pack of Diet Pepsi, several bags of Cheetos, and the gas on the Milam Tab. Off I head to Cherry Springs with the hope I would see Dean within the next two days. A huge part of me never wanted to see Julius ever again... but a part of me did... maybe I was craving the adrenaline rushes associated with “bumming around with Julius.” I hoped not!

Back at the safety of my sheep wagon far from any trouble that Julius could make for me... I finally felt at ease with the world. Finally! That didn't last very long! Maybe it was a bit over an hour of feeling human again... What comes over the hill from Beer Bill's?... John Sebulsky and Rummy. John with his wild eyes big as hockey pucks jumps

out of his ranch pickup and screams “Rummy cut off his Fuck Finger.” I yell back, “His Fuck finger? What?” John pulls Rummy next to me and shows me Rummy’s right hand and yes his third finger was missing no matter which way you looked at it. John follows by shouting, “His Fuck finger... you know the one you use to screw a woman with to get her hot!” Exactly John’s words... I have no reason to lie about it. So I asked John what he wanted me to do about it? John, still yelling, tells me... “Take Rummy to the Doc Whitney in Forsyth.” I asked Rummy how it happened? Rummy tells me he closed the tailgate latch on his hand on the pickup John and he were driving... the latch handle snapped down and cut the finger off... plus the two adjacent fingers were cut also, but not severed off. I should have never asked my next question, “Rummy where is your finger... the doctor might be able to sew it back on... we need to keep it moist so it doesn’t dry out.” Instantly tears come to Rummy’s eyes as John screams, “Rummy’s fucking dog ate it!” “Ate it?”, I repeated in total disbelief. John screams, “Are you deaf... get Rummy on the road.” So DOWN the

Porcupine Cut Off Road to Vananda I head... hoping to cut off some time driving to Forsyth. Just as we clear the rim rocks and see the Vananda brick bank. I have a flat tire. Rummy is saying over and over... I am going to bleed to death... I am going to bleed to death... I am going to die while you are changing that damn tire. I changed the tire as fast as I could. In fact it was only the second tire I had ever changed in my life. I did it with directions coming from a sheepherder who lost his "F" finger closing the tailgate on his pickup with his beloved sheep dog eating his severed digit. "Shit... I don't need Julius in this "F"ing nut house... I just need to find a way out of here."

I drive as humanly fast as I can to get to Forsyth. Then I successfully found the hospital in Forsyth. I do not know if Dr. Whitney worked on Rummy or not... Rummy never said. Whoever the doctor was never revealed himself to me either. As it turns out the hospital does NOT do medical work and put the costs on a Tab like the Jersey Lilly and the gas station in Melstone. So I paid the initial charges with my check book which was

luckily in my pickup. Enough of a payment so the hospital would bill the rest to the Cherry Creek Sheep Company and Sivert... who's mailing address was Ingomar Montana. Oh no folks... it doesn't stop here. Rummy being still shaken up, Rummy still unsure whether he can go on with life without his middle finger... says to me, "Shit Craig... we need to get a meal and drink or two at the Howdy Bar on Main Street." What the Hell.... things could not get any worse could they?

So I take Rummy to the Howdy Bar in Forsyth, Montana. We each have a shot of Jack Daniels to "steady our nerves." Order some sandwiches for dinner (mine was a BLT with French fries). I decided a beer would be great to go with the sandwiches so I ordered two draft beers. (Keep in mind I am not 21 years of age yet... and thus not legal to drink alcohol in the state of Montana.). I ordered everything like I knew what I was doing and had done it before. The waitress never questioned me about my age.

Rummy starts to get "more than a bit strange in the eyes" and starts slurring his

words. Why was he getting so blitzed? The hospital gave him some pain medication before he was discharged... during dinner Rummy takes a hand full or more pain pills. Remember this is a person who doesn't know how many pain pills or shots he had taken or had at the hospital to numb his throbbing middle finger while the doctor fixed it. The same person who decides to take more than half of his prescription of pain pills with a shot of Jack Daniels and a beer chaser. Rummy was getting real stupid fast and it was time to leave and head back to Cherry Springs. I go to the Men's room and then return to our table. No Rummy! I repeat NO Jack Rumdahl to be found anywhere. I asked the bartender where Jack (Rummy) went? The bartender says, "Didn't he tell you? He went with Albert Neuman to the Bison Bar and Cafe! Jack said to tell you, "Not to worry and pick him up tomorrow and he would be safe with his friend." I was pissed and mad and going out of my head. With a controlled, elevated voice I asked the bartender where the Bison Bar was in Forsyth. I was going to find him and leave Forsyth. The bartender gives me that "dumb look" and points East saying as he

chuckled, “In Miles... Miles City!” The last thing the bartender said when I was leaving the Howdy was, “You are going to kill that poor bastard aren’t you?” Believe me I wanted to. I was not going to drive anymore that night... let Rummy have his night out on alcohol and pain killers at the Bison Bar in Miles City with his finger missing... do what an Eastern Montana sheepherder does best by getting wasted and stupid. Then eventually running out of money and trying to find a way back to his sheep wagon.

I wanted a shower and a clean bed. So I took a room at the Rails Inn for the night in Forsyth. I instantly hopped into the shower and used up all the sample soaps, shampoos, and conditioners in the bathroom... the shower was the best shower I ever had in my life... it washed away all the bullshit of the past few days off of me and I was squeaky clean. Strangely I slept very well that night... nothing was going to keep me from sleeping... except my beard. It was itching to beat all get out. Did I catch some of Julius’s cooties? I had to stop somewhere

and buy some new shaving blades... Julius had used all that I had some time back.

The first thing I did the next morning was call my parents from the Rails Inn in Forsyth, Montana. Why? Because I realized I had probably spent everything and more remaining in my checkbook by paying for Rummy's hospital bill. I probably had an overdraft with my checking account. Yes I gave them the sanitized version of Rummy losing his middle finger... And me paying the initial bill with a check from my checkbook. No I didn't tell them I had lost Rummy at the Howdy Bar in Forsyth with him drunk and on pain killers. The biggest concern in our conversation was from my mother asking me, "Has Sivert bought anything new since you've been there?" As I said to my knowledge... no Sivert has not... crap Julius and I have been stuck up at Cherry Springs for the majority of my stay at this circus. Paul said very little... Bernice ended the conversation stating they would put some money in my account to cover the outstanding check or checks. After the phone call with my parents I headed to Miles City, Montana to find Rummy at the

Bison Bar. It was about 10:00 AM... cowboys were still having their hang over breakfasts when I went up to the bartender at the Bison Bar and asked, "By chance do you know Jack Rumdahl? Do you know where he is?" The bartender smiles a bit and says he was here last night until we closed. He and his friend, Albert Neuman, headed to Jordan intending to stay the night. They said they would probably eat lunch at the Hell Creek Cafe in Jordan. So guess what? I leave Miles City and head to "where else?" 100 miles to the Hell Creek Cafe in Jordan, Montana. It is about 12:30 heading closer to 1 o'clock... when I step through the door of the Hell Creek Cafe in Jordan Montana. There was not a soul in the establishment... only the waiter-bartender. No Rummy... the inside of my head went off like an atomic bomb... are you shitting me... then Rummy is on his own... he can bleed to death for all I care. I have to quit giving a shit and caring about these idiotic people or I will go crazy. The bartender-waiter seeing I wasn't having a good day speaks loudly to me as I head to the bathroom. "How do you spell WELCOME in Jordan Montana?" I looked back at him

with a totally dumb look on my face.... the bartender smiles and slowly spells the letters... B.... A.... R... I smiled and told him I wanted a BLT, chips and a can of beer. Olympia... my Uncle Merton's go to beverage of choice... after all I do come from a long line of "Proud Alcoholics". Oh my God... was I turning into an alcoholic like Merton and I hadn't seen my 21st birthday yet. I just kept saying to myself. Keep it together Craig... Keep it together! I am done with my quick lunch. My beer tasted wonderful. I pay my bill by leaving money on the table. The bartender at the Hell Creek tells me goodbye as I walked to the front door... then says I wouldn't have served you a beer, but lucky for you there was no one else in my bar... he supposedly knew I wasn't 21. I just smiled and ignored his comment.

I drove to the end of Main Street in Jordan Montana and then back the entire two blocks to find my way to Cohagen, Montana. As I drove to Cohagen I kept thinking to myself "there has to be somewhere in the world I can run away to where there is some infinitesimal sense of sanity." I turn right at

Cohagen and DOWN to Cherry Springs I go. I drove slowly... trying not to think about one Damn thing.

I finally arrive at Cherry Springs and decide I will drive down to Beer Bill's then to the Brown's Gulch Gate where Rummy is suppose to have his sheep wagon and a band of sheep. As I pull up to Rummy's sheep wagon John Sebulsky steps out of the sheep wagon and walks up to me as I get out of my pickup. Before I could say anything... John thanks me for "saving Rummy's Life. And the both of them were forever in my debt... because after all Rummy was John's best friend and a good drinking buddy... you are a "F..."ing hero!" John saying everything by breaking all social distances... half spitting... with breath which was a combination of kerosine, whiskey, and cigarette smoke. My eyes watered and my nose burned. I stood there, slightly dazed, not saying a word when who pokes his head out of the sheep wagon... yes... you guessed it... Jack Rumdahl in the flesh... with a huge smile on his face... then he waved with his bloody, bandaged right hand and went back

into his sheep wagon. Not even a polite “Thank You or anything else from his mouth... Really!” Was Rummy still high on pain pills and alcohol? Who knows... really I didn’t want to know what happened... I just know it happened exactly as it is written.

UP to Cherry Springs to my sheep wagon and to continue my wait for Dean and the load or loads of logs. As I drive past Beer Bill’s for the second time that morning... was I seeing things correctly? ***What was Aunt Janet’s brown suburban doing at Beer Bill’s? What is Janet doing on the shaded west side of Beer Bill’s with Mexican Pete?*** I was like Hans Schultz... saying over and over on Hogan’s Heroes... “I see nothing! I know nothing!” I saw no one and no one saw me. End of story. I went out that evening and shot my .22 open site until I used up all my bullets except for maybe 6 or so. As you will see everything I did on the Cherry Creek Sheep Company property had its own very unique consequences.

No semi with logs and roofing yet... but I am sure you already have guessed what is

coming. Yup... the blue Skunk Wagon over the hill from Beer Bill's. Julius took the Porcupine cut off road from Vananda coming back from the Crow Reservation... same road I traveled two days before. Julius was all smiles... good with the world... not care anywhere... then he asks..."Want to do a favor for a friend of mine in Forsyth?" Reluctantly I agreed stating, "As long as it doesn't get me my ass into trouble!..." Why in the Hell did I say that? ... I knew better... this was Julius after all. Of course Julius was in need of gas so we took my pickup. Julius said that he had a friend of his who needed food in Forsyth. The old friend worked with him on the railroad. He was a "section engineer" and Julius was his metal worker and a master welder. In my mind Julius and I were going back to Sivert's to "appropriate" (a term coined by Julius for stealing) canned goods, meat and such for the friend of his. Was I not going to be a part of a stealing plot by Julius from a company that I was owner of with my five shares of interest? Poke me in the eye with a red hot poker and throw me to the sharks. Here were go again!

As I start to turn into Sivert's residence Julius gets all excited and exclaims, "Where the Hell are you going?" With me responding with a dumb look Julius states... we need to go to my house above the rims. I turn around the pickup and head DOWN to Julius's. As we leave Sivert's road to the Ingomar road Sivert is coming down the road in his suburban. Sivert stops and waves us down to stop. All I can think is..."WHAT NOW!" I explained briefly about Rummy and his finger. Unfazed Sivert tells me he will pay the bill when he gets it. Sivert did not seem the least bit compassionate about Rummy's loss of finger... not in the least. Sivert did not even offer to reimburse me for what I paid at the Forsyth hospital on behalf of the ranch. The reason he stopped us was to give us a bundle of florescent orange signs that state " NO HUNTING ALLOWED ON CHERRY CREEK SHEEP COMPANY PROPERTY" and a stapler with an unopened box of staples. After all, as Sivert states, hunting starts in a week and a half and every year the hired hands and sheep herders report to me all the poaching that goes on up North. I want you two to put No Hunting signs at every gate

on the North Pasture. Hunters have not been getting permission from me to hunt on Cherry Creek property and hopefully the signs will make them do that. I realized Sivert did not have a flipping clue what was going on UP North... even with the use of his short wave radios which he was so proud of... not a clue. In fact as I found out he hadn't been North since the steers were delivered and for shearing that previous spring in 1971. It was the the first week in October... the cottonwood leaves were starting to turn yellow... my how the time flies when you are having fun. Sivert looks into my pickup and spies all the blood on the pickup bed floor... with a strange look on his face he states, "Did Jack bleed that much when you took him into Forsyth?" All I could say was, "Yes... Yes he did." Julius starts laughing then turns his laugh into a coughing fit to cover his social faux pas. Sivert part ways with the two of us. I was in total disbelief how totally clueless Sivert truly was about the happenings going on at the Cherry Creek Sheep Company.

Julius and I continue on with our mysterious food gathering trip. Before we got

to the Ingomar turnoff Julius has me turn OUT or go West at the old feed storage barn which passes by my Granddad Mysse's train car-like building which he built from a Sears and Roebuck Kit. The Sears building kit was delivered by the train to Ingomar in the 1930's.

Scooting along the rim rocks above the Big Porcupine Creek in the distance was Julius's house. Julius yells at me to STOP. I simply state: "WHAT?" Julius looks at me and says, "Do you want to see where the Indians made their arrow heads and stuff?" I said I would love to. So far we haven't stolen anything and I didn't think we could get into trouble standing from the rim rocks overlooking Sivert's place and the Big Porcupine Creek. Julius showed me, as we looked down in the valley... where the buffalo "people" bone collectors using horse drawn freighter wagons... pulled their brimming full freighters containing bleached out-buffalo bones along a trail to Miles City to be made into bone meal. Julius stated that the buffalo hunters must have killed "millions" of buffalo to fill that many freighter wagons and to make

that deep of a rut and trail in the open prairie. The trail was still as visible as it was when it was made a hundred years earlier. As we walked the rim rocks Julius picks up a four inch piece of buffalo horn. He looks at me and says, "I think the last wolf in Montana was killed at Deep Creek... close to Jordan, but I am not sure. It was for the best... the wolves had nothing to eat with the "buffalo people being all killed off anyways." Looking over the vastness of the prairie Julius states, "I should have been born 100 years earlier and I would have maybe fit in with other human beings a bit better... maybe?" Julius stated to me that you should always look for ant hills... if you find chips of Miles City Silt Stone or yellow stone from the Yellowstone River or black chips from obsidian from Yellowstone National Park or the green flint chips then you know "throw away points and stuff won't be far away." That's where the Indians loved to watch and make their tools. I found three perfect arrow heads that day plus an atlatl spear point. All of which are displayed in my bedroom next to the red Minnesota Pipe Stone Peace or spirit pipe head Bill Seward gave me once upon a time.

Julius picked up a half of a buffalo skull still with the outer black horn attached. Then states he should be able to get 50 to 75 dollars for it at Shep's Antiques. With a smile and a brag Julius states he had probably found over a hundred buffalo skulls in his time... most of which he sold at Shep's. I hope my daughter-in-law Taneal appreciates the arrow heads and peace pipe head... and loves them as much as I do.

On with the story... yes there is much more to that day. We are walking back to my pickup when Julius spots a pronghorn antelope buck. Julius tells me to quietly take out my .243 and to take a rest with my down coat on the pickup hood. I did. Finally Julius says, "Let's make some meat!" I squeezed the trigger and the buck antelope crumpled where he stood. I couldn't believe I had shot the animal. Julius was grinning ear to ear. Julius almost screaming exclaims, "We have to dress it as fast as we can... after all it isn't hunting season yet.. not that neither of us are legal and carrying antelope hunting tags." I stood over the buck antelope with my Buck knife open... I had never field dressed an

animal. Because of the dumb look on my face, Julius takes my knife and starts to dress the animal... explaining every detail on the correct way to do it. In a matter of a few minutes the buck antelope was bled out. We washed the blood out of the cavity with a jug of water we had in my pickup. Julius smiling, "You shot it perfectly... just as I taught you... good job!... if you can't kill a human people or an animal people with just one shot you shouldn't carry a weapon... you just made me flat ass proud of you... you know?" For the moment Julius's praise made me feel good. "One shot to kill a fellow human being?"... my mind echoed? Whaaaat?

Off to Forsyth the three of us head. Julius, an antelope buck and myself. As we pass by Julius's family house he wants me to stop by the garden fence. I do. Julius jumps out of the pickup and takes one of the Cherry Creek No Hunting Posters and the stapler Sivert gave to us with him. He staples the "No Hunting Sign" to the fence then yells at me to get out of the pickup and bring my .243. Now what is going on? Julius tells me to help him drag the antelope over to the fence and place

it under the sign. Julius tells me to get my camera and I take a picture of Julius holding the buck. "Did you get a good one of me?", Julius yells. I did. I state that it is as good as the one I took of you holding the Golden Eagle next to my sheep wagon. I really didn't know how the pictures would turn out, but I had four rolls of 36 slide pictures ready to be processed by this point. Then Julius got a worried look on his face. "Pretty damn incriminating some of these pictures you have taken... don't you think?", Julius laments. "Please don't have them developed until you hear I have passed away... even then you should be careful if the authorities associate you with me and the things I have done... Understand?" I did and never had my rolls of slides processed until December of 2019. (In part I hoped they were too old and could not be developed... only a few pictures of the five rolls came out perfectly.) Julius was probably right. In any case after our picture taking session Julius and I headed to Forsyth Montana.

After getting to his friend's house Julius had his railroad friend open his garage door

and I backed my pickup into the garage. Julius partially closed the doors on the garage. Julius's friend helped me hang the antelope... proclaiming that it was the biggest buck antelope he had ever seen and he "had seen plenty in his lifetime. Huge ivory's... huge!", he kept repeating. Julius had me pull my pickup out of the garage and park in front of his railroad friend's house. After about 20 minutes Julius states we have to go to the Forsyth Bank. I park on Main Street and Julius wants to go into the bank by himself. He did and returned with an envelope in his hand. We returned to his railroad friend's house and Julius walked up to the front door and handed him the envelope. Julius told his friend if he needed more money or if he needed more food to "get the word out to him and he would do what he could." How much money did Julius give his friend? I knew because Julius left the withdrawal slip in my pickup. How could someone be so kind-generous and yet be such a common criminal in so many ways? That night at Cherry Springs the waiting for Dean continued.

Two weeks to the day remained until Paul and Bernice would arrive to see the progress of the log lambing shed at Cherry Springs and to get their report on what Sivert was spending ranch money on for personal items. In truth I had not a clue what Sivert and Janet were spending ranch money on for themselves buying personal items... I had some strong ideas, but they could only be confirmed by me being present when they spent money on themselves and not with my photos of ranch item purchases. My photos only showed the huge amount of money Sivert and Janet had spent in the name of improving Cherry Creek at the home ranch on the Big Porcupine Creek. All I knew for sure was the foundation for the log lambing shed was done at Cherry Springs and ready for logs.

As I walked around my sheep wagon that next day I could not figure where the terrible a smell was coming from. I opened the huge meat cooler that Julius appropriated from Sivert and found the Sage Hens had disintegrated into a horrible, yellow liquid bone soup... plus whatever else was hidden

in there. Nothing was usable in the cooler and there was nothing left in the sheep wagon's cooler that was usable either. I decided to use up the remaining can goods and later head back to Sivert's to resupply the camp. I used my green teflon pot-pan to cook some cans of Van Campen beans in. I took a bowl over to the Skunk Wagon so Julius could eat. Julius was in a world of hurt that day... his gout had flared up again and he couldn't walk a step. Julius had pills, but they were not helping with the pain in the least. I explained I was headed to Sivert's to resupply the camp and he agreed he was in way too much pain and agony to go anywhere. After we ate our beans sitting on the tail gate of the Skunk Wagon Julius offers to wash and clean the dishes. Julius wash and dry dishes... since when? There weren't very many dishes and even though he wasn't as particular about cleanliness as I was... I told him, "GREAT! See you in a while!

DOWN to Sivert's I head hoping to get some bleach so I can eliminate most of the smell in the big cooler we had appropriated.... and maybe to take a shower

and shave while I was there. Everyone was gone at Sivert's except for Janet. Janet was very nice to me and said she did indeed have some bleach for the cooler and understood after smelling the need for it. Actually Janet said she wasn't sure if the cooler or I smelled worse. What? I showered in the trailer for the third time I had been living on the ranch. My fourth in total counting the Rails Inn in Forsyth. The shower as always smelled strongly of sulfur... but it was hot and felt wonderful. I shaved with Sivert's razor and then changed all my clothes. I noticed my boots were starting to have a strong odor, but there wasn't anything I could do about it. Afterwards Janet offered to wash all my clothes? Again she was being very nice. As my clothes were being washed Janet smoked a few menthol cigarettes and finally got up the courage to ask and tell me what was on her mind. The first words out Janet's mouth were the following: *"Sivert and I know why you are here and what you think you are doing. It doesn't matter if you build ten barns let alone the one you are working on... it won't change a thing. You have to understand that Sivert and I are the ones working this*

*ranch... not Bernice and Paul... not Marie... in fact they do not have clue what it takes to be successful as ranchers. Sivert and I got rid of Merton and eventually with enough time... we will get rid of Bernice and Marie too. No matter what you have been told... **this is Sivert's and my ranch! Not Bernice's... Not Marie's... Not Paul's... Not one of them will ever own a square inch of the Cherry Creek Sheep Company!***" (Janet was correct... the only one to have any ownership of the remaining Cherry Creek ranch after the sale of the North Pasture and Cherry Springs to Kevin Brewer was Janet and Sivert)

I sat in the kitchen with a stunned look on my face. I kept on having flashbacks to the Wizard of Oz as I looked at Janet expecting my Aunt Janet to finish her sentence with a statement like: "I'll get you, my pretty, and your little dog, too!" Janet didn't say a word but her facial expressions did.

Then Janet smiled and said, "*In fact Craig since you are technically working and getting paid by Sivert and I... we want you*

and Julius to spit roast three or four lambs for my annual fall party. We have invited quite a few friends of ours from Rosebud and Garfield Counties. Just so you know... if you say no or Julius says no... you can go home this very afternoon and not look back." I am sure I sat there with a stunned look on my face... my clothes were done drying in the dryer... saying nothing I went to the dryer and stuffed the clean clothes into my very dirty not so bright orange back pack. I turned around and looked at Janet and said, "Julius and I would love to BBQ the lambs. How many people are there going to be?" Janet took the longest drag off of her cigarette and simply said, "A lot!... Maybe 30 or more!" I told her I was grabbing some canned goods, eggs, and some frozen meat for the week. Janet just nodded her head. At that moment Sivert arrives with the older two boys. Sivert never said a word to me... not even a Hello. I packed up what I needed and headed back to Cherry Springs. Had Janet just made a power play with me? Of course she had. Really? Janet was trying to dominate me with the threat of firing me... then exploiting Julius and I for her own gain and uses... so she will look

good for her neighbors and friends. Could Janet fire Mr. One Share? What was the real reason she wanted to fire Julius and I? I had to wonder? I was going to get a check from Cherry Creek?

Unloading my goods at my sheep wagon I go off looking for Julius. He is sitting on the tailgate of the Skunk Wagon with a Brillo pad, sand paper, and his Buck knife scraping off the green teflon from the insides of my beautiful new... hardly used green teflon pan-pot. "What the Hell are you doing Julius?", I exclaimed. Julius looked up and smiled stating that the pan was finally usable. "What are you talking about... I have used it multiple times for the both of us!", I replied. Julius says, "Can't you see that someone used green paint in this pot and the pot should have never sold it to you at that sporting goods store in Billing... those idiots should be shot... at least you should get your money back!" I just stood there... I did not and could not say a word... I was in total shock... how could this man not hear or know about teflon coatings on pans and pots... how can Julius be so smart and yet so utterly

dumb at the same time? At that very moment I hear the sound of a semi's air horn in the distance. Finally, Dean's semi and two other semis with full loads have arrived with the logs and roofing materials saving me from thinking about being fired and me killing Julius for destroying my beautiful teflon pot.

Dean, as soon as he shut down his semi, was ready to leave. Dean started shouting orders to Julius and myself. Dean did not bring a single helper/worker like he promised... only the two individuals that drove the other semis... life goes on. I spent the afternoon unloading each semi with the help of Dean and the other two semi drivers. Everything had to be taken off the flat beds of all three of the semi trailers which included their logs, bolts and such. Julius and "Jack" (my pet Jack Rabbit) watched and listened from the back of the Skunk Wagon. All the while Julius whining about the misery he was going through with his gout. Dean wanted everything placed just exactly to his liking. Dean got down right cruel in his language to the other two semi drivers, but they worked for him and did not seem to mind. I did the

best I could, but after five full hours of unloading I was done. The other two drivers, Dean and I were “dog dead” at this point. Even so the other two semi drivers who were also just as tired as I was decided to leave while there was just enough daylight to drive the gumbo back roads... and so they said their goodbyes.

Julius cooked the meal that night with the new items I had gotten from Sivert’s. Both Dean and I appreciated and applauded Julius’s efforts. As we ate Dean repeated over and over again, “Julius never... ever... bring a jug of that God Damn wine of yours around me ever again!” Julius smiled and eventually laughed. I think in truth Julius loved the attention. As soon as the sun went down we were all asleep. I could hear Julius snoring with Dean answering with his snoring from the cab of his semi... I joined in minutes later.

There were ten (10) days until Bernice and Paul would arrive at Ingomar. For the next seven days all three of us were up at dawn and in bed by sunset... totally

exhausted. The construction was going on without a hitch. All the walls were up on the log building and we were finally ready to start placing the purlins and rafters in their place. The rafter logs were laying just off the ground by using two of the long logs as supports OUT on the West side of the log lambing shed. On the eighth day we wake up to the sounds of Julius yelling... grumping... pissing and moaning. Julius runs into my sheep wagon and grabs my single shot .22... yelling where are your God Damn bullets? I hand Julius my six remaining bullets and he runs over to the table top of logs, lays down on his belly and shoots my rifle repeatedly until he runs out of .22 shells. Then jumps up and screams at me, "God Damn you... you keep at least a box of shells around at all times. I can't be caught short ever again around you. Understand!"

Julius had shot four skunks that had taken up residence under the logs that night. Two or three of the skunks got away or were wounded, but by the way they waddled out of sight I think they were healthy. I looked at Julius straight into the eyes and said, "Don't

you ever blame me ever again for your Damn poor shooting skills. Didn't you say to me one bullet is sufficiently enough to kill any one animal? Maybe you should be using a weapon you can handle!" Not another word was said... Dean was trying to get in between the two us stating he needed the both of us healthy to finish this "God damned building from Hell!" Julius goes off into a corner and skins the four skunks that he had killed... incredibly the smell did not seem to phase Julius... then he places the skunk skins into... you guessed it... the Skunk Wagon. There was skunk spray all over the entire bottom of every rafter log. Oh yea! Dean and I were better at positioning the rafters so Julius got to operate the bucket on the tractor lifting the rafters... smiling all the while knowing he was not touching any of the skunk spray on any of the rafter logs. Dean yelled and cussed at him with every new skunk greased rafter or purlin we put in place. Finally all the rafters and purlins were set and secured. Now we could start screwing in the 1 x 4's for the roof panels. Every time you touched a rafter or a purlin the skunk oil would rub off on your gloves or onto your

clothes... it all just added to the frustration Dean and I were feeling. I couldn't take it any longer and asked Julius to take the three of us to Sivert's to shower and change clothes. Julius refused... I had hurt his feelings. So Dean and I changed into dirtier clothes without skunk oil on them and headed to Sivert's to shower. I wasn't going to turn my pickup into the Skunk Wagon II.

At Sivert's Dean was showering first while I was washing clothes once again. I knew Janet was not going to appreciate the smell from her washing machine, but she had the option to close a door separating the washer and dryer from the rest of the house. Sivert and Janet both came out to get an update on the happenings at Cherry Springs and to meet Dean. I tried to tell them as little of the happenings as possible. Dean did likewise... after all Paul had prepped him about Sivert and Janet. Then Janet asks, "So you and Julius are going to cook my lambs for Sivert's and my Fall party?" I forgot to even mention it to Julius, but instantly said, "Yep!" I knew something was up and the two of them wanted me gone... long gone?

Something told me that if I refused... Sivert or Janet or both would send me packing... even though everyone associated with the ranch knew I had ownership in the ranch with my five shares... after all I was “Mr. One Share!”

The next morning Dean and I started putting up the corrugated steel roofing sheets. Dean stated as much as he hated to we had to open up the ends of the building with a chain saw to make openings for our barn doors. I had had a lot of experience with chainsaws working for the Forest Service so I volunteered to do the sawing. Two sheep herders showed up to lend a hand with the roofing. (More so to see what was happening... not to work.) Dean was happy and told everyone what a relief it was to finally get some help from someone other than the two of us. One sheep herder was Jimmy Mulholland... an Irishman who's sheep dog was named “Rover”. Rover was the most mental dog I had ever met. Fantastic sheep dog... 90% insane (I was coming to the realization almost 100% of the animals and people in either Rosebud and Garfield County were crazy to one degree or

another)... all the same Jimmy absolutely loved Rover. I watched Rover dig at the shadows of sage brush as the wind blew for hours on end... until Jimmy rescued him from too much sun and a lack of water. I watched Jimmy give the dog mouth-to-mouth resuscitation after it drown in a pond trying to bite and kill the white capped waves. I had watched Rover chase bird shadows and try and bite the shadows to kill the birds instead biting into prickly pear cactus. In short the dog was just a little bit crazier than the rest of us.

On with the story. Dean set up guide boards and bolted them to the logs for stability and so I would hopefully cut out the two doors cleanly. I sharpened the saw chain, refueled the saw and fired up the machine. I started at the top of the door corner and pushed my saw blade through the 12" logs. Dean was watching from the bucket of the tractor so he could see the angle at which I was cutting through the logs. Dean kept yelling over my chainsaw's roar "KEEP IT PERPENDICULAR... DON'T ANGLE IT." I did my best. I had made one cut all the way

down to the concrete footing and sparked my chain a small bit. Half way down on the other side of the door Dean is yelling “GOOD... GOOD...” when all of a sudden I am being splattered with blood. I am horrified... somehow I thought I had cut Dean but knowing better because I was seeing the entirety of him leaning over the tractor bucket next to the log wall. What the Hell just happened? I stepped up the ladder and reached the top of the wall. I jumped from the top log of the wall expecting... I did not know what? There was Jimmy holding one of my dish towels in Rover’s mouth. Yes... Rover left the safety of the back end of Jimmy’s pickup and decided to chomp down on my chain saw blade running at full speed. I was just sick about the whole situation. So was Jimmy. Jimmy takes his friend and puts Rover bleeding like no-get-out into the middle of them and heads to the veterinarian in Forsyth in a cloud of dust. Julius, Dean, and I all just stood there “stunned at what just happened.” Of course I blamed myself for the accident and was hoping the best for Rover. I knew how much Jimmy loved that dog. No one said a single word. I was done for the day!

I was packing up all the tools and the generator into my pickup when Dean walks up to me and says, "*Fuck that shit... get the chain saw and finish what you started... We have to secure the walls or the all the walls will buckle in or out and the entire building will be a loss.*" I fired up the chainsaw once again and finished all the cuts while Julius and Dean pounded in the door opening supports. Then we finishing supporting the doors with bolts that went through the door supports through the logs. We had the walls up, the roof beams were all in place, we had the 1 x 4's all in place on the roof and screwed in. We had the door openings cut out and secured and we had about 8 sheets of corrugated steel roofing in place with one sky light panel screwed down. I announced I was done. Adding Paul and Bernice would be coming in tomorrow afternoon and I wanted to get a shower and air my brain out after the Rover incident. Dean told me to "have at it and he and Julius would do what they could without me."

I drive to Sivert's and as usual no one was around except Patty Ryan. I knew Patty

from way back when. I told Patty I was going to clean up and head to Ingomar. Patty sparkled and asked if he could get a ride into Ingomar with me. I told him, "Sure!" I showered and put on clean clothes one more time. Patty and I knew each other, but never really spoke to each other on a personal note. On the way into Ingomar Patty tells me that after Janet's Fall Party, Sivert and Janet are bringing in a huge 72' x 16' trailer for him to live out his retirement in. The "Brand Spankn' New" trailer was going to be parked over by the stockades where they keep the yearling ewes until they are ready to be bred. I asked Patty if he was buying the trailer? Patty responds by saying, "Hell No! I could never afford a huge home like that... all I have ever lived in is a sheep wagon all my life and I haven't saved a dime of my salary. Sivert and Janet are buying the trailer for me because I have worked all these years for Cherry Creek and they didn't want me to go to a retirement home. Shit... besides that I don't have any money so I could never afford to live in a retirement home." Patty proudly announces he will be in charge of watching the yearlings plus Sivert and Janet's kids as

repayment for the trailer he would be living in at the stockades.

Almost to Ingomar I spot a huge Bull Snake. The snake had been run over by someone else's vehicle. The snake was overly huge and beautiful. So I picked it up and put it into my pickup. Arriving at the Jersey Lilly... Patty and I walk in and wash our hands at the wash basin pan. I was polite and took Patty's dirty wash water and threw it off the porch into the dirt street by the Jersey Lilly. Then I washed up. We sat down at a table. Patty and I were about to order some food when Sivert and Janet came in and sat down with us. Two of Mysse boys were playing on the porch of the Jersey Lilly. Janet was holding the youngest. "Sivert was my Uncle and Janet was my Aunt.. remember they are "Family"... that fact went through my head repeatedly. Janet's first question was when Paul and Bernice were arriving tomorrow? How did Sivert and Janet know my parents were arriving tomorrow? Paul or Bernice must have told them! I told Janet probably tomorrow afternoon. Sivert asked when Paul and Bernice planned on leaving

and I stated I did not know. The four of us ate our supper and not much else was discussed. Sivert asked if his presence was required at Cherry Springs while Paul was visiting? I stated to Sivert you would have to ask Paul... all I knew was Paul was interested in seeing the progress of the log lambing shed construction. Then Janet says, (Still reminding me exactly of the Wicked Witch of the East on the Wizard of Oz.) “I hear through the grapevine you tried to kill Jimmy’s dog, Rover?” I felt like throwing up. I replied, “It was an accident and I wish Jimmy would have kept the dog in the cab of his pickup.” Sivert, Janet, and Patty all turned away shaking their heads as they walked to the Jersey Lilly door. Putting everyone into their two suburbans. Sivert and Janet head back to the Big Porcupine home ranch.

I couldn’t believe how bad they made me feel about Jimmy’s dog. I thought I was becoming numb to all this crap, but once again all I wanted was to crawl into the safety of my bed at the Old House. My final question of the day was... “Why do Sivert and Janet

always without exception drive separate rigs no matter where they go?”

The next morning I looked at my “new” loaner pickup from the Cherry Creek Sheep Company assigned to me by my Uncle Sivert. As I walked around the pickup I could not believe how “used” the pickup looked. Being dinged up and being totally covered in gumbo doesn’t exactly describe how used the new pickup looked... maybe I worked the pickup to an early grave? I have always tried to keep my possessions in perfect shape... this pickup was no different. “My” pickup had some side dents that I had no clue where they came from. The interior mats and the pickup bed were caked in multiple layers of gumbo covered with blood streaks. The cab had a long dent and scratches from a ladder. The hood had a few unexplainable dents and scratches from rifles being shot from its surface. Mechanically it needed new tires... including the spare tire. The engine needed its oil to be changed and whatever other maintenance was required. I did add oil as I used the pickup. At this point in my life I was not very well versed on these mechanical

things... I was becoming my father concerning mechanical devices... use the machine until it quits then figure out what is wrong with it or just buy a replacement. My love and care for vehicles and engines came later in life.

Out of no where Uncle Merton shows up parking behind my pickup at the Old House. Merton was in a very happy mood. He was living part time in Three Forks, Montana with his wife Audrey Kinchlow. Merton asked if I wanted to have breakfast with him. I always loved Uncle Merton and had a real soft spot for him. All I asked is that he didn't smoke while we ate breakfast. Merton laughed and said he could do that for me. It was great talking to Merton... he was funny... and seemed very happy. Merton was like a flat rock skipping across the water of a pond. He went from one subject to another... asking me a million questions about nothing. Finally Merton stated he wanted to check his trailer house and to make sure everything else was as it should be. His last words were, "Life could not be any better getting away from that F...ing Janet. You know Craig that when

a man marries a woman he inherits a shit pot full of the woman's problems..." Merton continues by saying, "What happens is the new wife alienates the rest of the family (Audrey hated Janet and likewise Janet hated Audrey), like what is happening with Bernice and Marie vs Janet, then the old family disappears because of a lack of trust... families are no more. Remember that when you or when Gary get married... the women you marry will change and screw up everything... and I can almost guarantee it won't be for the better or for the good." I then had to ask Merton how Audrey and he were getting along? Merton smiled and said, "Audrey thinks I drink too much... but eventually she will get over it. After all she owns a bar so what is it to her anyway?" Lighting up a cigarette Merton pays for our breakfast with a one hundred dollar bill. A Ben Franklin as Merton called it... saying his Hello's to everyone he knew in the Jersey Lilly while tipping his cowboy hat. Then Merton gets his change from Bill Seward, makes a quick stop at the Bull Pen outhouse, and then he heads back to Three Forks Montana. (Merton and Audrey did get a

divorce... because of Merton being an alcoholic and his excess drinking.)

My first duty was to clean up the Old House after Merton left the Jersey Lilly. I swept and put everything back the way Bernice liked it. Waiting for my parents that afternoon I decided I needed to skin out the beautiful Bull Snake I had put in my pickup bed from the day before. I found a long sheep hook pole which was the exact diameter to stretch the snake. As taught to me by Julius I made my cut around the head and wired the head to a ceiling rafter. Then I proceeded to pull the skin down the length of the snake and then cleaning the tail piece. Then I slid the snake down the pole inside out to dry. Just as I was finishing stretching the snake Paul and Bernice arrive in Paul's Oldsmobile. Behind them is Les White, our family Dentist from Kalispell, in his white Ford 1/2 Ton pickup and a friend of Dad's from his coffee group named Ernie Wells who was driving his own car. Paul had invited these two friends to go hunting on Cherry Creek and to stay with them in the Old House at Ingomar. The first thing that crossed my mind was that there

was not enough beds in the Old House for everyone. Everyone walked up to the Jersey Lilly and we had an early supper. After eating Les White and dad's friend, Ernie Wells, went exploring on the back roads towards Froze to Death DOWN to Hysham.

Mean while back at the house Mom and Dad started their interrogation of me. Questions like: "How much time did Sivert spend with you guys helping with the construction of the *log lambing barn*?" I thought about it and asked my own questions, "Was Sivert suppose to help with the construction of the lambing shed?" "Where was the crew of construction people Paul promised Dean?" I could tell this was going to be a losing proposition for myself no matter what I said to the two of them... after each my questions Paul was like a pressure cooker gaining steam. Finally Paul couldn't take it anymore and explodes. Starting one of his blowup, baby yelling tantrums, "***Som' Bitch.. why can't you just answer the damn question... som' bitch! It is a simple question... anyone can understand. No one wants to listen to your God Damn***

questions! You and your big damn mouth!" Then Bernice interjecting asks another question as if I didn't understand or hear her first time she asked it. Bernice repeats, **"Was my brother a part of the building of the lambing shed... you know your Uncle Sivert."** I simply stated the truth and said Sivert had not been on site once. I flipped the switch on an Atomic Bomb. Paul is beyond ballistic.. Bernice is giving me that disappointed look... like it was my fault for Sivert's actions... and then the last question I could stomach was by Paul. He asked me in a very trite manner a question which I had answered over the phone multiple times talking to them in Bigfork. **"Tell me why in the hell this project has taken so long to complete and why isn't it done now... what have you people been doing?... just sitting on your asses all this time?"** I had had enough and out of respect to my parents I said I had to get back to Cherry Springs so I could get up early and help Julius and Dean with the roofing of the lambing shed. Paul immediately yells, **"Answer the question damn it!"** I ignored both of them at this point moving to the back door. Then Paul then gets

into a real huff and says, ***“Then how in the hell am I suppose to get to Cherry Springs?”*** Not wanting to deal with Paul’s cigarette smoke I simply stated, ***“Get a ride with Les White or your friend!”*** Bernice agreed and Paul started to pout with a cigarette dangling from his lips. Bernice’s last words to me were, ***“We (Paul and Bernice) are doing this for you and your brother.. don’t you understand... our family.”*** Seeing only red and my mind was on fire... still I said absolutely nothing. All I could think to myself was... ***“REALLY? Who in the F... is doing all the work?”*** I left for Cherry Springs in the dark... in my pickup without even turning on the pickup lights. I was totally confused about what had just happened and why all this emotion and disappointment was being directed directly at me. I was the one doing all the work and burning my brains out in the hot sun. I had a long time to think about these things driving back to Cherry Springs. I decided that Bernice and Paul were using me to trying to manipulate a situation that was out of everyone’s control. Especially Paul and Bernice’s control. I was just a pawn in the game. Sivert and Janet had all the Aces.

The next morning Dean and I were on the roof of the log lambing shed... the generator was going full bore... Julius was getting the corrugated roofing steel sheets into position to be pulled up on the roof. Les, Paul and Ernie arrive around 10:00 AM in Les's white pickup. Dad jumps out of the pickup and immediately takes Julius off to the side and starts up a private conversation. The conversation is taken into my sheep wagon. "Top Secret Shit" was going on. On Paul and Julius's return Paul orders me to take all my "crap" out of front seat of "my" pickup. (Who put Paul in charge anyway?) (Remember the mouse problem?) I asked Paul, "What was the plan?" Paul states that Les, Julius and I would head UP North hunting in the Skunk Wagon because Les had two antelope permits. Paul and his friend, Ernie would go DOWN South past Beer Bill's to hunt in "my" or the Cherry Creek Sheep Company pickup. Maybe I was getting too attached to the pickup but I reluctantly agreed stating, "But I thought the lambing shed was the priority? After all "you" would be leaving Dean alone to do the work and it is at least a three person job. Finally Paul reluctantly agrees with some

prompting from Les White that I was correct in my thinking.

Julius, Les, and I would head out first and be gone no longer than three (3) hours hunting. When we got back then Paul and Ernie could go DOWN hunting. It was agreed. Julius, Les and I stuffed ourselves into the cab of the Skunk Wagon. Les's first comment... being as polite as he possibly could was, "When is the last time either of you have showered?" I explained I showered the night before last, but my clothes were a bit soiled from working. Les kept repeating the "B.O. is deafening... please roll the windows down!" It was the end of the third week in October and the mornings were very chilly. Julius asks Les what he wants for an antelope. Of course Les states he wants a buck antelope(s) with the world's largest horns and he wants to shoot them himself. Julius chuckles and says, "A done deal then."

We come over a ridge about four miles UP from the Cherry Springs corrals and there is a fairly large group of antelope grazing about a half of a mile below us. Julius checks

the group over to see what bucks are present. Julius points out that there are two super nice bucks to the right of the bunch with huge horns. Julius reminds Les to take a breath between shots to steady himself. Les uses my old blanket as a rest, looks through his scope, and studies the situation for about three minutes. Finally Les raises his head and tells Julius they are too far away and he can barely make them out in his scope. Julius makes his hissy sounds and asks Les if he can ***“take a stab at shooting those antelope people?”*** Les laughs, further exciting Julius, and says “go for it! You won’t be able to see them any better than I can.” Julius strolls back to the Skunk Wagon, not excited, not hurrying in the least and retrieves his 300 mag Winchester with the 6X scope. Returns, fluffs the blanket to the height he wanted on a piece of sage brush, stares through his scope for about two minutes, breaths and the first shot rings out. In a moment Julius breaths, sets, and the second shot is fired. Julius raises his head up and smiles as he looks at Les. Then Julius stands up and pretends to blow the smoke from his rifle barrel. As Julius speaks he gives Les the

Festus wink, ***“Les you have never seen two better shots in your life... and you never, ever will see another person in the world who is a better shot with a rifle than me... I am the one and only Julian N. Sebulsky!”***

Les is looking from his rifle scope blurts out he can't see a thing down there and exclaiming to Julius, ***“Are you sure you hit anything?”*** Les takes it a step farther and asks Julius for his rifle and looks through Julius's scope and still can't see the two targeted antelope Julius shot. Still smiling Julius tells me to drive the Skunk Wagon and to follow Les and him as they walk to the two buck antelope. During the walk Les kept repeating over and over, ***“There is no way you could have hit anything from that distance”***... that is until everyone sees the two beautiful, magnificent buck antelope laying not 10 feet apart from each other. They looked like perfect bookends. Both buck antelope matched each other perfectly. Julius smiles and says they will make perfect head mounts. Then Julius asks me for my Buck knife and tells me to give it to Les so he can dress out the “critters.” Les still can't get over the distance in which Julius shot the antelope

and states that Julius shot both of them from well over 600 yards. Julius did not correct Les in the least. In my mind the distance was well over 350 yards or maybe 400 yards, but even at that I could not be sure. All I knew it was a damn long distance and I have never seen anyone shoot and make a perfect kill twice at that distance ever again. Especially with a 6X power rifle scope. As it turns out Les had never really dressed out an animal before... so Julius once again is in teacher mode instructing Les how to properly dress out one of the antelope saving the neck for a wall mount. I used Julius's new Buck knife and worked on the second antelope. Les is almost speechless and he is over the top excited about his trophies. Les kept repeating over and over, ***"I just can't believe you made those shots... they were perfect shots... the bullets couldn't have been an inch or two difference in where they hit the bucks. How many animals have you shot in your lifetime Julius?"*** Julius smiled and said, ***"Maybe a couple more than a few..."*** At that moment I notice Julius had a huge black and blue ring around his right eye. Julius put the scope too close to his eye and

the 300 mag tagged him for it. Julius would wear this eye bruise for the next two weeks. I never said a word to my “hunting instructor.”

Les, Julius, and I were back at the log lambing shed within an hour from our departure. Of course Paul and Dean had been talking the entire time and not “ONE” sheet of roofing material had been installed on the roof even though they had three able bodies to push sheets of tin onto the roof. I was boiling mad, but I couldn’t show it. Paul and the group were making their strategy for the remainder of the day while I was hanging the two antelope bucks in the shade of a tall loading chute at the South end of the corrals. Paul decided to take my pickup, because he was worried Les’s pickup had too soft of tires for the rocks and gumbo. Probably a smart move. Les, Paul and Ernie would hunt the South area DOWN from Beer Bill’s until that evening. So work resumed on the lambing shed with Julius handing up the sheets of steel and fiberglass while Dean and I held and screwed the pieces in place. Dean did not say a word about what was said between Paul and himself. Neither did Julius... I did

find out later that Julius was not happy with Paul and the discussion they had... Julius exclaimed, ***“There is a huge difference between liar and a bullshitter... Paul is a rotten liar.”*** In truth I did not care anymore... something had changed inside of me and because of that day I have never been the same concerning my trust in the Milam family, especially for any trust I had in my father.

The MEA teachers break was over. Dad had taken Les and Ernie over every part of the upper part of the ranch in my pickup. Even though they had *“ran out of bullets”*, as Julius put it, *“Not a hair on a critter was molested by the three of them.”* Les went home with his two trophy buck antelope for his dentist office. Ernie and my parents left Ingomar at the same time to get back Bigfork and Kalispell in their individual vehicles. I think back because the only thing really spoken to anyone was Les thanking Julius over and over for getting him the trophies he always wanted all his life. Les was going to display them at his dentistry office in Kalispell Montana. Julius assured Les that Les could say he shot them... it wouldn't matter... the

two of them would probably never see each other in their lifetimes anyway. Paul's friend, Ernie, fell in love with the Bull Snake skin that I had dried. I was using my knife and cutting the skin down the midline. The skin shined in all its beauty in the sunlight. Dad's friend offered to buy it from me... but I gave it to him for a Thank You and explained to him how to tan it.

It was Sunday, October 24th, 1971. After saying goodbye to my parents and their friends I returned to Cherry Springs and the three of us worked for the next four days completing the roof.

It was October 26th, a Tuesday, 1971... my 21st birthday. I told no one. I was finally legal to drink alcohol in Montana. If I said anything Julius would have surely found some of his poisoned choke cherry wine or that Tipple moon shine crap. Tipple would cure the most committed alcoholic from ever drinking again. I wasn't sure how much damage I had already done to myself the first time I drank Tipple. So my birthday was my secret. Not that it mattered at this point in my

life but I was finally 21. As I sat in my sheep wagon before I planned on going to sleep, I wished myself a Happy Birthday while remembering my drivers license expired the next day.

Turning 21 was a huge milestone in my life in which I realized that there are so many possibilities - choices or decisions I still had to make in my life which would affect me the rest of my life. Whether they were good or bad decisions I wanted to make them for myself... not having them made by my parents. I knew this to be fact as I wrote this statement in my journal that night in my sheep wagon: **“Along with the trust issues I had just experienced with Mom and Dad a couple days before, one of the hardest parts to deal with was the feeling of not being believed or supported by either of them, especially when I am doing this for FAMILY and I was doing all the physical work on the ranch. It broke my heart!”**

The plan was on the October 28th Dean would be on his way to Thompson Falls to make the doors and the hardware needed to

complete the log shed. Dean would return within a week with everything we needed to finish the project. The log lambing shed would be no more than two weeks away from completion after. Dean promised this multiple times. Then I could head back to Bigfork. I could get ready for Winter Quarter at the University of Montana. I couldn't wait. I was ready to get away from this huge nut house on the prairie. I had to put all my efforts into finishing the log lambing shed and leaving with my head held high. I did not realize the next day on October 27th, 1971 something incredible would change my mind forever about the impossible.

Dean was ecstatic that the building was as close to total completion as it was. On October 27th the three of us had finally completed the roof installation on the log lambing shed. Tightened all log bolts and installed all the roof wind breaks. We had been up at the crack of dawn and worked without lunch or an afternoon nap. Now all Dean had to do was measure the door widths and take those measurements back to Thompson Falls so he could construct the

sliding doors perfectly for the openings I had cut out and then get back to the project site and help us put the doors up.

It was getting late that evening on October 27th after the three of us had measured for the barn doors. It proved to be an evening not one of the three of us would ever forget nor talk about ever again. (Read: **A Secret Never Forgotten**) As I have stated before Dean also had to make custom rails upon which the doors would move. Interestingly Dean stated, as we ate our T-Bone steak supper that evening, “***He hoped he would never have to say another word or see Paul Milam ever again after their last private talk they had in my sheep wagon...***” Dean stated to Julius... he would only trust what Julius or I had to say concerning the happenings with the log building from this point out. Dean felt bad the two of us were stuck out in the middle of nowhere. Dean was correct in his thinking. No matter what Dean, Julius, or I did we could not get a grip on what was happening because the three of us were stuck in the middle of a family war between Sivert-Janet

and Paul-Bernice in the ownership of the Cherry Creek Sheep Company. A nightmare of lies, deception and greed destroying the last remnants of good in both families. As it turns out even though I loved everyone in the Milam family each of them would leave deep wounds which would last my lifetime as a result of my experiences with them.

October 28th was a beautiful fall morning. Once again Dean promised Julius that he would be back on site within the next two weeks with the custom doors and hardware. Being as gullible as I am... I believed Dean one more time. Dean crawled into the cab of his semi, honked the air horn two or three times, and disappeared into the West with a cloud of dust following him as he left Cherry Springs for the last time as it turned out. Julius yells, "**Stay out of the Hoosegow!**" Dean puts his left arm out his cab window and flips Julius off and then Dean yells, "**I hope the two of you live to see another day in this Hell Hole! *F... you and whatever we saw in the sky last night, Julius!***" I think Dean and Julius were developing a bond... maybe even a

friendship. I have to admit what the three of us saw the evening of October 27th is permanently tattooed into my memory until the day I die.

The only time I got to speak to my parents was on that first evening when they arrived in Ingomar on October 21st, 1971. The conversation was like an interrogation in which no matter what I said it did not satisfy a single question by either parent. More frustrating to me was that I was not allowed to voice my opinion nor ask any of the questions I had. My answers did not matter even though I had seen everything with my own eyes and described the situation exactly as it was. What I said absolutely did not matter. **I came to the epiphany even though I tried to manage the situation with my parents using the normal, polite rules of society; I would lose every conversation... every time! It was that simple. With Paul's vicious temper that would flare up at the slightest provocation... conversations were like trying to avoid stepping on a mine in an endless mine field.** I had to rethink how it

was possible to have a constructive conversation with either or both Bernice and Paul. As it turns out I never did and never could.

I had to wonder what Bernice did all that time at the old house being totally alone and spending those three days by herself? I would find out later that she met with Sivert at the Jersey Lilly for two of the three afternoons, while everyone was at Cherry Springs. What was discussed was never told to me by either Sivert or Bernice. After all Bernice could not or would not drive a vehicle. She would be that way all her life.



❖ November 1971 ❖

Reality sets in... whether I was 21 years old or not Julius and I had to prepare things for Janet's Fall BBQ as I had promised her. Or I would probably be fired... I wasn't afraid of being fired, but I was curious what this Fall Party of Janet and Sivert's was all about? Julius and I had to get two 100 pound wether lambs and construct the hardware needed for the spit out of rebar, dig a cooking pit, and get enough wood "*to sufficiently crisp*" (Julius's words) the lambs to perfection. We were in Ingomar at Julius's place. Julius had made his own AC welder from a coil he had procured. Politely put... Julius stole the coil from someone, but he didn't remember from whom. As Julius was busy welding the pieces of rebar as I walked into his garage. There were two huge chest freezers. Both were completely full of wrapped meat... some of which came from the freezers at Sivert and Janet's. There were perhaps six gas cans neatly placed in one corner. One of which had "Cameron" written on it in black

permanent marker. Julius really had stolen Donald John's gas can after all. I wasn't surprised, but I was definitely disappointed in Julius. Parked in the garage was an old late 1950's Ford delivery wagon and a 1946 Indian Motorcycle. The Ford Delivery wagon was just like those you see being used as patty wagons on the cop shows. Every inch of the garage, including the rafters, had "goodies" stored in it. Julius knew I saw Donald John's gas can... instead of addressing it... Julius says let's go into my trailer I want to show you something. Inside the trailer behind a door was a huge panel of gauges and dials. Julius proudly proclaims, "This is my short wave radio outfit I built from scratch myself! I am a HAM radio operator. Let "make a shout out to a friend of mine in West Virginia one night." I can shout out to anyone in the United States... why I even have a radio buddy in Alaska who knows my brother. Adjacent to Julius's shed was a very large stack of old cotton wood. I piled every piece of the cotton wood into the bed of my pickup. Julius stated he would never use the wood because he installed an oil stove into his trailer to replace his wood burning stove.

With everything we needed for the BBQ we head to Sivert's to locate two wether lambs. We had just turned into the Big Porcupine Creek Road near the stockades and Julius screams this is your chance to prove yourself. A coyote... A coyote!!!... do you see it? Get the .243 and shoot that critter. Indeed I did see the coyote. I took out the .243. Placed the rifle across my down coat and squeezed the trigger... the coyote stood at about 85 to 90 yards from me. He was a ball of fur because of his winter coat coming on, but I managed a perfect shot even though a gust of wind blew my beautiful down coat in front of the muzzle of the barrel. Yes... the bullet melted two perfect holes into my fairly new jacket. (Later I would use duct tape to repair the holes so all my down stayed in the jacket.) Julius proudly exclaimed, "He never felt a thing!" I had to wonder...? Julius said let's let the coyote cool and it will be easier to skin later. *"Damn I am proud of you! You are a natural!"*... and by his face... he was. We will "skin the critter" later after we "harvest" some wethers. Patty Ryan shows us a group of wethers and Julius uses his knife to kill and bleed them out while they stood in the pens

with their fellow neutered brothers watching on nervously. We take the two wethers to Sivert's Quonset building and hang them on the rebar hangers that Julius had made that morning. The days were very cool and the nights were even cooler so there was no chance of the lambs spoiling.

The coyote needed to be skinned. We found some boards to stretch the hide with. Under the instructions of an expert hunter and trapper I guided my knife around the back end of the coyote and had finally "pelted out" the coyote to Julius's satisfaction. "I never nicked or "clipped" the pelt"... which made it invaluable when the fur buyers would come in December to the Jersey Lilly to buy furs. Then we stretched the coyote and placed it in a corner of the Quonset. Thinking we were done for the day Julius proclaims we need bricks and lots of them. One of Julius's rules of appropriation or stealing was never to take anything until you absolutely had a need for the item. Once the stolen (excuse me... appropriated) item is put into use it automatically becomes yours. After all possession is 9/10's of the law. We drive

DOWN to the main highway from the cut off road. Julius has me turn every which way until I come to a very old house which had fallen down or collapsed on itself. Off to the side of the house was the remains of a brick chimney. Julius proclaims, "Exactly what we need for the BBQ." The two of us load "only as many bricks as we will need." After loading my pickup we head back to Sivert's place. On the trip back Julius states we have the lambs, the hardware to BBQ them, cottonwood, bricks, and now we have to find a electric motor that can turn two 75 pound lambs on a spit. In the shop he finds a discarded clothes dryer of Sivert's and Janet's and has me take it apart. Once the motor was out of it Julius states it will rotate the lambs way too fast and says he will "have to step the motor down two notches." What specifically he did I did not ever see, but he definitely slowed down the motor and it would work perfectly for "crisping the lambs."

Wednesday we spent the morning making our fire pit and testing the electric motor on the spit. Then we started a fire using the cottonwood wood we had gathered.

Julius stated it was very important to get the ground under the bricks extremely hot so it would dry the ground out and keep an even heat for when we did make the final fire for the BBQ. Wednesday we both went to the “buffalo jump bluffs” by Sivert’s and hunted arrowheads. Julius found maybe 4 or 5 perfect arrowheads. I admit I was jealous. Myself... I found mainly chips and a few broken arrowheads made out of Miles City silt stone. I did find a shard of pottery which made me smile ear to ear. I put it with my cherished perfect arrow heads once back at my sheep wagon.

Still it was a fun relaxing day, but I still could not get out of my mind that Julius stole Donald John’s gas can... even worse he didn’t even try to cover up the Cameron name printed on it. Making things all the more worse... all the frozen meat Julius had stolen. I confronted Julius about the stolen meat. Julius stated the meat was not for him, but instead he had collected it for his friends... like Shep, Fred, his friends in Forsyth and in Harlowton. By Christmas Julius states, “I will have given everything in both freezers away

to people who are worse off than me.” I don’t know if his explanation made things any better... but thinking about Julius as a Robin Hood figure was better than thinking of him as a common thief. Dismissing Julius’s actions of appropriation... I felt a sense of calm because I (We) were almost done with the log lambing shed at Cherry Springs... and then I could go home... I could go back to school. I was tired being held hostage to a promise in the name of “Family”. That night we head back to Cherry Springs. I load up the entire back end of my pickup with the discarded log pieces left over from the log building. Julius agrees that they will make a good initial fire, since we were low on cottonwood. As the sun went down I was feeding Jack, my pet Jack Rabbit. Jack had gotten quite roly-poly eating his fill of lamb pellets during my stay at Cherry Springs. Julius looks at Jack and states he will make some coyote one hell of a meal.

Thursday came. We would start the BBQ fire late Thursday evening to ensure hot coals and for the ground to dry out. Once again Julius comes up with a new plan after

looking at the coyote I had “dispatched” and pelted out. “We should set up a trap line. We could make a good amount of money if we worked it together. It is better than just sitting around waiting for Dean to show up with the doors for the log lambing shed. You and I are headed to Billings in the morning.” I told Julius to “hold his horses!” It was the end of October and a new month was few days away. November! Dean promised me that the two shed doors would only take a week... maybe two at the most to construct. As soon as they were built they would he would be back to deliver and help us install them. That could be any day now. We spent the evening feeding the BBQ fire we would be using the next day... all the while Julius was dreaming of his trap line idea and trying to convince me to go to the Great Slav Lakes with him the next summer.

It was Friday... Janet and Sivert’s BIG Fall Get Together with friends and neighbors was just hours away. A certain sense of excitement was in the Fall air. Janet had gone to Forsyth and picked up copious amounts of hard liquor, wine and beer in her

brown suburban. Julius and I had the final duty of unloading box after box of “beverages” and ice from the back of Janet’s suburban. Then Julius and I were put in charge of putting all the beer and some of the ice into a small stock watering tank. Janet wanted the bottles of beer to be “ice” cold. Janet and a few neighbors prepared the food that morning and into the early afternoon with the help of caterers out of Billings that Janet had hired. Julius and I had the two lambs slowly “crisping” on our rebar spit. The two lambs in all their glory turning over and over under the red glow of the red hot embers filling the roasting pit. Our part of the party was to “cook to perfection” the lambs. Everything was going as Julius planned. Julius and I took turns cleaning up and putting on clean clothes. The guests were to start arriving at 4:30 PM for cocktails and toddies. It was 2:00 PM and Sivert comes out of the house to check on how Julius and I were doing with the lambs. We both smiled and gave Sivert a thumbs up. Sivert said he needed to make a run to Forsyth to get some items for Janet and the party. A few early guests started to arrive just as Sivert was

headed DOWN the Ingomar road to the Venanda road. This is the one party you absolutely do not want to miss stated one set of guests as they passed by our cooking station. Swede Slazenger and his wife from Las Vegas, Artie Hagen, Bobby Olsen, the Brooks', the Gaults, Walt Secrest and his family... and the guests just kept on coming throughout the afternoon. I was actually surprised at the number of people arriving. My best estimate was there was at least 50 people in attendance... maybe 65 people total.

As I watched the lambs “crisping” I got a bit concerned because of the amount of dust all the vehicles were making as they came down the road to Sivert’s and due to guests parking as close to the lambs as they could. At first the dust didn’t bother Julius... “Just extra minerals to digest!”, he would say. Everyone wanted to see the lambs “crisping”. Julius loved the attention. I have to admit I did also. Julius finally got a bit worried about all the dust so he grabbed a few beers for the two of us to drink... I thought. Instead of handing me a beer Julius proceeded to wash

the lambs off by drizzling beer on them. I don't think it accomplished much but it did put an amazing aroma into the air. Now the onlookers not only stood in awe of our perfectly cooked lambs... but they would put their noses in the air and murmur "Heavenly". At 6:30 Janet had Julius and I start carving the lambs and putting the meat on platters. By 7:00 PM everyone was eating, laughing and really having a fantastic time.

My first big party experience. Julius decided he wanted to drink a few beers and "get happy". At 7:30 Janet asked me to meet a few of her "special" friends. I went inside the house and introductions were made. After meeting a few of her friends Janet stated I was needed back at the BBQ pit. I got the feeling no one really cared whether they met me or not. Just as I get back to the BBQ pit there is Sivert walking to the house carrying nothing. I asked Julius if Sivert needed help in getting the supplies to Janet that Sivert said she needed. Julius looks at me and says, "It was all a smoke screen... Sivert brought home a new suburban from Forsyth and parked it behind the Quonset." All I could

say, "Are you sure?" I walk to the back of the Quonset and yes it was a new suburban... still with the sticker attached to the side window with no current Montana license plates. I proceeded to go back to my pickup and get my camera. After all Julius and I were spies. Before I could get a picture of the new suburban Janet piles out of the house and stops me. She tells me that Julius's and my help with the party is over and we were to get our things and head back to Cherry Springs... now... directly. And don't look back.

Janet's last statement to me was, "**You may think you see and know things... like that day at Beer Bill's... but it is not what you think... Got it? If not... your time on Sivert's and my ranch is over right now!**" Her exact words... I wrote them down that night in my journal. I was stunned. I didn't think they did... but Janet and Mexican Pete did see me drive by Beer Bill's that day after I had checked on Rummy and his missing finger. (Mexican Pete would tell everyone he was from Spain and Spanish men were the greatest lovers in the world! What a crock of

crap that was.) My last thought about the subject was: *“Would the image burned into my mind that Fall sunlit prairie day of two amorous individuals embracing each other’s pale white butts, passionately kissing... ever go away?”* **Nope it never has! Janet was my Aunt...**

Julius and I dropped everything and left our BBQ pit as it was. On our way to Cherry Springs Julius tells me, ***“What the “F...” did you do to piss your Aunt off?... Boy!... Was she mad!... Sivert got caught with his hand in the cookie jar... didn’t he? The whole thing stinks. What did you do to have Janet threaten you like that?”*** I told Julius everything and he responded, *“That is total bullshit... everyone working on Cherry Creek has been talking about Janet and her tipi crawling episodes with Pete and others... I have enough money... so let’s buy and operate this chicken shit operation ourselves? You and I can do it... you know!...”* I was stunned and didn’t say another word. Julius had money? Where was I going to get money like that? *My Aunt Janet*

was doing "it" with others besides Mexican Pete? My brain was on fire!

It was Saturday and the frosty November nights were getting very cold. I was making a fire in the sheep wagon camp stove so it was comfortable enough to go to bed and sleep. I would wake up when it got too cold and never could get back to sleep or even nap during the day. With all the things racing through my mind and the weather changes I was sleeping very little each day. I had been spending night after night gazing at the prairie sky ever since October 27th, 1971.

I was just going to start breakfast when John Sebulsky and another guy show up. The two of them tell me that Sivert informed them to get the word out to all the hired help. The steers were being rounded up and herded to the corrals starting Monday. Julius and I were assigned to make sure the scales for weighing the cattle were in perfect working order and cleaned up. Orders from Sivert. Remember I could not confirm any of this because my pickup did not have a radio. Julius and I checked the entire corral

system... pounded up some boards... redid the section next to the log lambing shed... and did our best to clean up the weighing scales. No one had cleaned out all the sheep and cow crap from the scales from its last few uses. A terrible, dirty job... everything was dried on clinging to everything like a brown plaster, but we got it done. Monday morning the steers started to gather around the corrals and in the area of Cherry Springs. One semi after another was being filled with steers after they were weighed and stuffed into each semi trailer. All the steers look incredible after spending their spring and summer grazing on the meager offerings on the Cherry Creek Ranch in 1971. Even with a lack of abundant grass to feed them with all the steers looked in perfect shape. I lost count of the number of loaded semis that came and went. All I knew was the loaded weight was 48 to 50,000 pounds which equated to a few over 60 steers loaded on each semi that day.

Sivert was there for the entire operation... counting each steer... making sure the weight was exactly correct for each

group of steers that were weighed... and that each group was wrangled properly into the semi trailers in short order. By sundown we were done with a very long, dirty day of moving each and every steer. There were at least two extra semi's waiting for steers. Sivert gathered the two cow hands he had hired to watch the well-being and safety of the steers for the summer of 1971. They had lost exactly 253 steers out of the 1500. A huge financial loss... easy to figure out... even for simpletons like Julius and I. Sivert told the cow hands (one of which was Janet's so called "friend") to get on their horses and to find the missing steers. Both "cowboys" stated there was nothing to find, the entire North Pasture was ridden and there were no more steers in the North Pasture of Cherry Creek pasture... PERIOD. Sivert ordered them to ride the pasture again and not to "back talk him" about the subject again. They both told Sivert "to go to Hell and to "F..." himself". Sivert fired them on the spot. Sivert was now occupied with getting the two of them off the property without them stealing Cherry Creek gear or wrecking their assigned pickup. Sivert stated he was taking them to

his house to pay them the wages they were owed and to get them off of Cherry Creek property. Sivert looked at Julius and I... then ordered Julius to put the word out to every Cherry Creek worker to look for the missing steers as long as there was daylight and not to quit until they were all found. I could feel the stress that Sivert felt that day. It wasn't pretty...

That evening no one found anything... not even a dead body. The next morning Julius and I split up. I was going to check the East part of the Cherry Creek pasture. Julius was going to get the word out to everyone and check the West part of Cherry Creek. I just got to the South Gate near Brown's Gulch and the front end of my pickup was howling. The steering was pulling to the right. I get out of my pickup and check the front wheel hubs. Crap... someone had put the truck into 4-wheel drive and then turned only one hub out on the drivers side. I figured I would not get much farther unless I took it into Bogg's Chevrolet in Forsyth for immediate repairs. I did. While I was waiting I started to think when Julius and I last had to

put my pickup in 4-wheel drive. The last time was when we hit a rainstorm going to Ingomar. I remember specifically Julius watching me engaging the 4-wheel drive by turning the hubs in. And I watched Julius turn the hubs out for 2-wheel drive. I knew it wasn't us. I first thought maybe it was sabotage... but Paul and his friends were the last ones to use my pickup when they were hunting. I had to wonder? The mechanics at Bogg's told me that they got everything repaired, oil changed, fluids added... in short told me to take better care of my pickup. That it was a stupid rookie mistake not to unlock both hubs on a pickup, especially a fairly new pickup. The repair people billed Cherry Creek for the pickup repairs.

From that day forward I have taken complete responsibility for all of my equipment. That evening Julius and I meet up at our Cherry Springs camp... no one had found any steers... or as Julius put it "any dead bodies proving they were even on the place."

It took about three days with Julius and I staying together using my newly repaired pickup when we finally found approximately 100 steers inside the fence of the Brook's ranch. Mr. Brooks was very kind and offered to have a family member herd them down to the corrals at Cherry Springs. With a smile on his face Mr. Brooks tells Julius, "*I'm glad you didn't pull the trigger the other day!*" Julius turns around and says, "What are you talking about? Mr. Brooks states, "You ran in to my brother-in-law and his gang who was hunting on Cherry Creek... I heard all about it...I can't blame you for your actions... I have thought a few times myself about shooting the bastard... you would have done me a favor if you would have... probably best you didn't." Then Mr. Brooks smiled and said, "I think you got him to brown his britches!" Mr. Brooks smiled and chuckled. Julius responded with his Festus wink.

Julius and I headed DOWN to the Vananda cut off road. Julius goes, "Let's check the North end of Sivert's Porcupine pasture at Brown's Gulch." We did and guess what another hundred plus steers! How did

they get in there? There were two sets of sheep proof fences that the steers would have had to jump across. Julius came to the conclusion someone had stashed them there to be retrieved at a later time. It was definitely intentional. Julius was sure Sivert never did it because he never, ever came that far North from the home place on the Big Porcupine. Julius's thinking was the two hired cattle hands had stashed them there. The two of them were planning on coming back and doing whatever with the steers and that was why they told Sivert that they were sure there were no more steers to be found on the North pasture. Conjecture with no proof, but I couldn't come up with a better explanation to dispute Julius. We let Sivert know. Sivert was visibly feeling better... stating, "I took the both of them (his hired cattle hands) and dropped them off in Roundup after paying them what they were owed. I hope I never see them again." We were still 38 steers short. We had checked everywhere. No dead carcass's anywhere... no sign of the remaining 38 steers.

Sivert had Julius and I put all the all the new found steers into the one mile section pasture of Beer Bills so that John Sebulsky and Rummy could hold them there until they could be shipped. Sivert had the sheep herders round up all the sheep from all the bands. The next week everyone was going to be working the sheep... mainly culling out the old ewes. Sivert was selling off the worst of the remaining 8,000 sheep to make 4 bands of ewes or a total of 4000 ewes. Sivert told both Julius and I that he needed the sheep money to pay some old and new bills. Sivert had to to pay the shipping costs of the steers, make payments to the feed lot the steers would be fed at for the next month or so in Nebraska, plus ***“money to pay for a log lambing shed that the ranch didn’t need”***, and so he could pay out a dividend check to each of the Cherry Creek partners. I smiled inside because I felt in part I helped Bernice get the distribution check she so desperately wanted. Both Julius and I were happy because our new wind break was used for shearing tags and the removal of wool around the eyes of the ewes. Shipping went perfectly. All Sivert had to do was sit in the

scale house, weight the ewes and watch them get loaded on the semis. Julius was organizing and telling everyone what to do... just like a ranch manager is suppose to do. Sivert was keeping a relatively few of the ewes... mostly only the very young ones. Selling the ewes went well without a hitch. Sivert even thanked Julius and I. We were both in total amazement.

Afterwards Sivert was content with Julius and I just working on jug panels for the log lambing shed on Cherry Springs in the Quonset when we had extra time. We were still waiting for the doors to the log lambing shed.

Julius and I discussed moving my sheep wagon down to Sivert's so we would not have to drive DOWN everyday to the home ranch to work on lambing jugs. But we both decided against it because of the heat Janet put on the both of us (mainly me) that night of her Fall Party. We were hard at work early one morning when Sivert came out of the house and almost sprinted to the Quonset to see Julius. Sivert took Julius off to the side for a

few moments. Then Julius waves me over to the private conference when Julius says, "What Sivert has to say to you can't repeat to your parents... Understand!" I simply nodded my head yes. The two cowboys that Sivert fired had come back and stolen a ranch pickup, two saddles, and emptied out a sheep wagon of its contents... then burned the sheep wagon to the ground at Beer Bill's. Then they scattered the remaining 112 steers all over the north pasture. Sivert was relieved that they didn't burn down the shack at Beer Bill's. Julius and I were to drive Sivert to Reed Point where Wishbone Miller and Santiago "Pete" Rodriguez were being held by the local sheriff at the Reed Point bar. After hearing this... I had a hard time believing that Julius nor I had absolutely no clue of what had happened being that Beer Bills was no more than a mile and half South of us. The three of us get into my pickup and we drive to Reed Point. Sivert said very little, but by how incredibly red his face was I thought Sivert may have a heart attack or stroke out before we could get him there.

Arriving at the big city of Reed Point Sivert stated that he would handle it from that point forward after we dropped him off at the local bar. In today's world it is called the Waterhole Saloon. Sivert said he would gather what gear was salvageable and then drive the stolen pickup back to the ranch. Julius and I offered to follow Sivert back, but Sivert refused. So Julius and I head back to Ingomar and then to the ranch house on the Big Porcupine. Julius and I talked about what we would do with the two thief's if we would have caught them. We both agreed that "hanging someone upside down by their big toes, naked and filling their butts with sand and waiting for the rope to break" seemed a bit inappropriate as a proper punishment for what they had done. As I promised Sivert... I never mentioned the incident to my parents ever. Paul did find out about the incident a year or so later at the Jersey Lilly over coffee at the gossip table... which brought about another point of contention between my father and I why neither Bernice or Paul were never informed by Julius or I about the incident. Maybe I should have... I really don't know?

Some 25 years later I am talking the Superintendent of Schools of the Plains High School in Plains, Montana where I worked as a teacher and some how the conversation came about that my Uncle was Sivert Mysse. The Superintendent of the Plains High School, who's name was Ken Miller, stated he knew the name Mysse. He proudly touts that his brother, Wishbone Miller, and his friend, Pete, had a misunderstanding with Sivert. I explained it was more than a misunderstanding and told him the exact story. Instead of disputing the facts that I had stated... Ken Miller laughingly states, "Just one of those Eastern Montana cowboy misunderstandings... they straightened it out between themselves... Sivert never pressed charges did he..." Ken then laughed about it again and said, "My brother was a pistol... did you actually meet and get to talk to Wishbone?" I refused to answer. I did not know what to say or think. Later that year I should have turned a drunk Ken Miller into the Montana Fish and Game for poaching a moose calf which he tried to give to me one afternoon. I guess I was no better than Sivert. I told Ken to go home and sober up and to

think about what he had done and not to waste an ounce of the moose calf. I'm sure he dumped it into the barrow pit on his way home. You never know when the past will catch up to you and repeat itself! Ken Miller had the same Eastern Montana demons like his brother Wishbone Miller had.

So Julius and I were content to finish building the lambing jugs and explore Rosebud and Garfield counties while trying to stay out of Janet's ever watchful, evil eye. We had built in excess of 150 portable lambing jugs. Julius and I felt relieved, but we were still waiting for the log lambing shed doors. Julius decided "it was a must" to set up a trap line so we could trap coyotes and "other critters" for pelts. Pelts were going for "big money that year." Besides he wanted to teach me something new. Finally I gave in and bought my own traps at Clark's Hardware in Forsyth, Montana. About 30 traps... all I could afford. We smoked the traps to get all our scent off of them. Julius showed me the proper way to set and cover all the traps I had bought. We used my traps and the traps that Julius owned which were

stored in his garage in Ingomar. About 70 traps in total. Every trap was put into use on our trap lines. We were doing well. It was miserable walking the trap lines in the cold and snow. In some obscure way I actually enjoyed walking the trap lines... I felt the two of us were free of all the ranch interplay between Julius and I. Then I would come to my senses... CRAP... the doors for the log lambing shed... I wanted the job over with and to be back in school. In school?... anything to get away from Eastern Montana's life of gumbo dust, ticks, rattlesnakes, Sivert, Janet, stupid cowboys and all the rest of the insane stuff it contained. It was the end of November and still no doors or hardware. My work boots had holes in them and every time I walked in the snow my attitude went to shit. I wanted the job finished. I called Dean from the Jersey Lilly for the umpteenth time. Another big song and dance with a promise the doors and hardware would be shipped to Ingomar the next week by truck and left at the Jersey Lilly. Shipped and not delivered in person? It was the best Dean could do... what could I say?... so I agreed. In truth I had to wonder if Dean actually would ever build

and deliver the doors and hardware. I decided I was going to leave Ingomar even if Julius had to put me on a bus in Forsyth.

Julius and I decided to “pull” all our traps. It was the last day that we would maintain the trap line and I was checking some traps we had placed along the rims by Sivert’s place. I come around the corner of a sandstone outcropping, not paying enough attention, and there it was. A huge skunk with it’s butt pointed straight at me and its tail pointed towards the heavens. As mad as mad as the skunk could be. I am sure my eyes got as big as silver dollars. The trap was at waist height to me and it was a perfect shot for the skunk to spray me directly into my face. The last thing I saw was a yellow mist coming from the fluffed skunk tail. I could not call out to Julius for help. If you have ever been sprayed, like I was (I truly hope not)... you absolutely can not get a breath... I was dying. I was gasping for the tiniest breath of air thinking I would never breath again. My eyes were on fire. I was blind and could not make out a single object. I figured it all didn’t matter anyway. I would be dead from a lack of

oxygen in a few minutes anyway. Finally Julius finds me on the ground and runs back to my pickup. He grabs a jug of water and proceeds to wash my face with the water... all the while telling me to take small, short breaths. He knew cause it happened to him once or maybe twice. After an eternity which probably was 15 to 20 minutes I could stand up. All the while Julius is repeating over and over again, "You poor Bastard!" Julius guides me to my pickup and we go to Sivert's. I still can not see the hand in front of my face. I get into the shower running the sulfured infused water over and into my eyes. My... my... did it burn. Never again would a skunk spray me... my trapping career was over. Once again we are washing skunk oiled clothes at Janet's. I finally was breathing fairly normal again and even though my vision was blurry... it was a really good feeling knowing I wasn't going to be blind for the rest of my life. Thank goodness for me having to wear glasses!

I am dressed and ready to head back to the comforts of Ingomar and the old house. Julius starts laughing, "***God Damn it Craig...***

quit your whining... you stared Death down today... and won! Crap we can't run from Death... it is inevitable... today was just the "Big Guy" letting you know to live life now... today!... live each day like there is no tomorrow... eventually you and I will be together again... you know that don't you?" I wrote this in my log at the old house that night as I sat in front of the two electric heaters trying to stay warm in my winter clothes and coat. I was tired and ready for bed. The duct tape on my coat and vest kept sticking to my sleeping bag. My last thought was "Julius and I together? would we both be in Heaven or would we both be in Hell?"



❖ December 1971 ❖

It was the first week in December 1971 and Bill Seward flags me down by the Jersey Lilly as Julius and I were going up North to “see what we could see.” The pickup was the most comfortable place in either Rosebud or Garfield Counties. A comfortable seat and a pickup heater that kept me toasty during the frigid December days. It was officially winter judging by the miserable cold, snow and the never ending blowing prairie winds. We stop my pickup and Bill hands me a note written on a sheet of the billing tab paper. On it Bill has scribbled a note that I could not read. Bill tells us that on the note is the address and name of the place they delivered the shed doors and hardware to in Billings. In Billings? Are you kidding me? Julius and I drive to Sivert’s place and politely I ask permission to borrow the stock truck to retrieve the shed doors in Billings. Sivert was not thrilled with the idea that either Julius or I would be driving the new stock truck, but finally decided to let us have the “new” stock truck

for the day. We drove down to Billings in this huge stock truck. It took me some getting use to concerning the stick shift using the “8-on-the-floor” with the splits. A 16 speed transmission. Especially getting up to speed in traffic. But we made it to Billings and I barely ground a gear... double clutching. As I drove Down the Billings Heights.... Yes... Julius has a craving for crispy chicken from Butler’s Kitchen. I agreed as long as he stayed in the truck and he would let me bring the drinks and food to him. After pouting for a spell... finally Julius agreed. Julius ate like there was no tomorrow and loved every suck of marrow from his chicken bones. After eating we had the doors and hardware loaded on the truck. I was surprised at the weight of each door and each doors matching steel hardware. A pickup... even a 3/4 ton would not have survived the weight. I drove with the clarity of a Zen Master back to Cherry Springs. My goal was to retrieve those “damn doors”, install them and go home. Finally....

We arrive at Cherry Springs with the shed doors. It’s December 15th a

Wednesday. The instructions from Dean were perfectly clear. We fired up the generator, drilled the holes, and set the hardware. We hung the doors. We attached the hardware so the doors would open-close and latch. The new doors were safe from the super intense winter prairie winds. Oh My God! What an incredible feeling! Julius and I stood there briefly looking at each other while chomping on another piece of very cold chicken. Julius was the first to speak... ***"I had my doubts... Paul set up the both of us for failure... we did it in spite of him... we did it!"*** ***"One Share do you know why?"*** I just looked at him, "Why?" "Because neither of us knew how to spell ***failure***." I told Julius to stop talking because he was being stupid again. I thought to myself I know how to spell "failure", does Julius?

The two of us loaded up every tool and the generator we had stored at the Cherry Springs Log Lambing Shed. Then locked up the "Finished Log Lambing Shed" for the winter of 1971. I took one last picture of Jack and fed him the last of his lamb pellets. I always wondered what became of Jack,

whether he lived a long happy life and had many baby jack rabbits or was a plump meal for some wandering coyote. No matter what... I always wished the best for Jack no matter what happened.

As we drove past Acorn Flats and looked over Devil's Canyon Julius says to me that you should give your journal to someone so they can write a book or make a movie about what we did at Cherry Springs. I looked at him and said, "Why would anyone go to a movie to watch two people working and sweating themselves to death in the middle of the prairie in Montana?" Julius laughed and said, "You never know... stranger things have happened in life." Julius and I parked the stock truck at Sivert's and unloaded everything from it. We put every tool back in its place on the wall and on the shelves as if they had never left the Quonset at all. I even made Julius properly dispose of his chewed up bones and garbage into a burn barrel. Sivert met us at my pickup as we were heading back to Ingomar by the driveway of his house. Sivert informed us we were invited to Patty Ryan's house warming party the next

night... Thursday night. Julius states we would be there wearing our finest. At the Jersey Lilly I make a call to Bigfork. Both parents are on the line and I announce that Julius and I have finished the log lambing shed. Mom says, "**Good!**" Dad asks me, "***How are you going to get back to Bigfork?***" with no emotion in his voice. I couldn't answer and said I didn't know. I incorrectly thought my parents would pick me up in Ingomar. Paul asks for Julius. Julius was in the Jersey phone booth for about 30 or 40 minutes (It was a long time because I continuously had to get dollar bills changed into quarters to keep Julius connected with the parents.). The muffled conversation got quite heated and loud even with the phone booth door closed. Heads were turning as Ingomar locals passed by the phone booth heading out to the Bull and Heifer Pens. Julius hangs up and tells me we will be heading to Harlowton this coming Saturday. We would meet Paul there. I was over the top excited to "get out of Ingomar!" I could tell by Julius's loud voice something had happened between my parents and him. What? I had no clue. But by the sounds of it... it was not

good! I asked him why the conversation was so heated? Julius just sucked on his beard and softly said, “***You need to walk away from this bullshit as fast as you...***” He never finished his sentence.

The next night both Julius and I drove our individual pickups. I found this a bit odd, but did not question Julius’s request. I figured Julius would use my ranch pickup instead of his since he worked for Sivert. I knew something was up... but had no clue what to expect. We arrive at Patty’s new 72’ trailer parked at the stockades. It had power, water, and a new septic... it was a fully functioning home. People who knew Patty from the ranch were there, some of Patty’s family and Patty’s friends, people from Ingomar and surrounding areas, plus Janet and Sivert. Normal introductions were made. A huge store bought cake was brought out. The cake was being served with three different flavors of ice cream. I had a scoop of the strawberry, the rocky road chocolate, and the vanilla ice cream with my frosted cake. I could not believe how good the three scoops tasted. It had been months since I indulged in a “big

chunk of sugar Heaven!” Everyone was sitting around in the kitchen and living room talking as Janet and Patty talked to one and all. Sivert quietly asks to see Julius and I outside. We meet by our pickups and Sivert looks at the both of us and says, “Everything Janet and I have purchased for our personal needs has been paid for by myself and Janet with our own personal money... not Cherry Creek Corporate money. Bernice has been misinformed by you... Craig. You need to quit lying about stuff you know nothing about. Craig give me the pickup keys and anything that is yours which does not belong to the ranch... put it into Julius’s pickup.” With Sivert standing there I asked Julius, “What did you tell Bernice and Paul?” Julius said nothing... Julius then looks away from me... then Julius says, “I did mention the Janet’s Fall Party and tonight’s party at Patty’s new trailer. Maybe I shouldn’t have! Oh... I guess I said a bit about the lost steers...” As I handed over my keys to Sivert. Sivert states, “***You are both fired and you can pick up your checks from me tomorrow.***” Uncle Sivert further states, “***Remember Trespassing is punishable by the law and I will enforce it.***”

Craig you really disappointed me even if you are my nephew! After all.. we are... we were family.” I was brain numb. All I could think was... “I am getting a check?” “We were family?” I transfer all my belongings into the Skunk Wagon located under the farm street light installed by Mid-Yellowstone Electric for Patty.

Julius and I drove back to Ingomar that night in the Skunk Wagon. Julius apologized to me stating he didn't think that Paul and Bernice would have confronted Sivert with what he had said to them in the Jersey Lilly phone booth. Julius thought everything he had told them was everyday knowledge or confidential since he was a spy. But even if it wasn't, Paul and Bernice should have kept it private. I told Julius I would have told Bernice and Paul my thoughts on the happenings when I would have gotten back to Bigfork... in Julius spilling the beans it only proved the “Mysse Curse” was alive, well, and growing in intensity. The two of us had been tip toeing through a mine field ever since we set foot on Cherry Creek... trying not to upset the apple cart between Sivert and my parents. And Yes... I did call this family situation the

“Mysse Curse”. I still do to this day. I had to ask Julius in the form of a statement, “I hope you didn’t mention anything about Janet and what I saw... or did you?” Julius smiles and say Paul and Bernice will have to find out about Janet on their own from you or someone else.

I carefully packed my things Friday, shut everything down at the Old House and got ready to leave Ingomar that coming Saturday, December 18th. I stored my unused traps in the old house and the memories that they would forever bring back. Earlier in the week a fur broker did arrive at the Jersey Lilly and Julius and I made about \$900.00 for the furs that we trapped and dried. Of course Julius kept the three skunks we had trapped, plus the one that sprayed me. Julius got the money from the fur trader and put it in the glove box of the Skunk Wagon. We celebrated that last Friday night... yes with a pot of pinto bean soup, a plate of Sheep Herder Hors D’oeuvres, a bacon cheeseburger, Cheetos, and Diet Pepsi for me and of course potatoes and a large pork chop for Julius. The same meals as we ate

the first day we met. We put both meals on the Milam tab even though Julius wanted to put it on Sivert's tab.

Super early that Saturday morning we drove out to Sivert's so Julius could get his final check from working on the Cherry Creek Sheep Company. Julius figured it would piss Sivert off showing up so early... but "tough nuggies." After we had parked at Sivert's Julius told me to take my share of the fur money and that he had put it in an envelope in the glove box. Julius goes into Sivert's house. I open the glove box and split out the money according to what we both agreed. In Julius's glove box was three savings account books, a stuffed envelope full of railroad warrants, and Julius's checkbook. At first I wasn't going to... but I did just the same. I looked. In the envelope with Julius's retirement warrants there were a couple of years worth collected and they amounted to \$50,000.00, in the first savings book from Forsyth was a total savings of a little over \$110,000.00 dollars, the next savings book from Harlowton had \$85,000.00 dollars, the third savings had about \$160,000.00 in it...

again I could not hardly breath... I felt like the skunk had sprayed me once again... I didn't look at his checking amount... just quickly put the rubber band around the group hoping it was the way I found it. Julius had all this money and could not pay the money he had borrowed from me? I expected my Uncle Sivert or my Aunt Janet or both to come out and say their goodbyes to their favorite nephew. I guessed wrong. I guess 8:00 AM was too early for them. It never happened. In fact I only talked to Sivert and Janet maybe 3 or 4 times more the entire time they were alive over the next 60 years. My only thought... "That Damn Mysse Curse." On the way back to Ingomar I asked Julius when are you going to pay me back for the money you owe me. He was quick to respond that he would make up for the difference from his share of the fur money and after he cashed his final check at the Jersey Lilly. I think Julius knew he was had... then again maybe he had no clue... I still do not really know. Julius was true to his word and he did pay me back all the money he owed me.

It is still early Saturday morning. I am feeling relieved. No more emergencies... no more lost fingers... no more lost steers... no more the stress of me keeping my family promise to build a “log lambing shed on Cherry Springs.”... no more Sivert and the “Wicked Witch of the East”... as Julius drove to Harlowton I tried to relax, but Julius was the world’s worse driver. His favorite saying was, **“When I pay taxes I pay good money to use both sides of the road... so damn it... I use which ever side I choose... whenever I choose!”** Eight miles out of Harlowton Julius spots a “Paul Bunyan” sized raccoon. Julius has to drive to the other side of the road to hit the raccoon, but he is successful in his hit and run. Julius almost tips over the Skunk Wagon hitting the raccoon and missing the ditch. Julius definitely stunned the raccoon... as Julius dives out of the pickup with his hardwood skull cracker in hand... he gives the raccoon two or three huge “wacks” with the hickory stick. It wasn’t quite dead, but between a hit and run and the hickory stick (club) the raccoon was “dispatched sufficiently.” Julius grabs a black garbage-lawn bag out of the

back of the Skunk Wagon and places the bagged raccoon back into the back of the camper. Julius had appropriated the box of black lawn bags that I had appropriated from Cherry Creek. Can you actually steal any item twice? Julius was so proud of himself... Julius was smiling... and then announces the raccoon is yours... it's worth big bucks... so we're even... I don't owe you any money... not a penny... but we are now "even in life." I helped Julius double bag the raccoon... that is all I needed is for it to bleed out in Paul's Delta-88. We park in front of Shep's Antiques. The sign on the door says, "**Closed.**" Julius jumps out of the Skunk Wagon... exclaiming, "***That Damn Shep... no wonder he can't make a cent in life. Shep is worthless!***" Julius retrieves a brown paper bag from the back of the camper of the Skunk Wagon. He walks up to me and presents the bag to me and says, "I got this for you... I think it is your size or a bit larger than you are... we had some good times didn't we? Next spring I am going to find you and we are going up to the Great Slav Lakes... it is a done deal." I thanked him for the Big Mac powder blue coveralls. Then asked Julius if he would like

my green teflon cooking pot. Julius loved cooking in the forever destroyed-ruined pot ever since he had cleaned it. With a big smile he snatches it from me and puts it in the front seat of the Skunk Wagon where I had been sitting. Julius then asks me if I would like a quart jar or two of his Tipple... I said, ***“Thank you, but really...NO THANKS!”*** Julius smiled as he giggled. Then with his Festus wink he tells me, *“Daylight is a burnin’ and I need to see Fred UP at the Judith Gap.”* Julius’s last words to me were a warning.

“Life has taught me that you can’t control someone’s loyalty with money or promises like with the promises and lies Paul and Bernice have been making to you... no matter how much you love them as family it doesn’t mean they will treat you the same... Listen to me... Julius grabs my shoulder... the ones you love and trust the most, will turn out to be the people you can trust the least. Believe me... I know... your parents are physically and mentally manipulating you.... don’t you see it... I speak the Gospel. Your personality is serving your mother’s and

father's purposes perfectly. That's what sociopaths do: they draw in others and use them towards their own ends – ruthlessly and efficiently, with no tolerance for dissent or resistance. Your voice... just like mine will never be heard by your parents. Paul and Bernice just tried to do the same thing with me as they did to you these past 6 months. I told them the truth and I doubt if either of them will ever speak to me again! Thank God they're not my family!"

Julius slaps me on the back with tears in his eyes. With a weak, shaky smile and his Festus Haggan wink he jumps into his beloved pickup and drives off with the snow swirling on the road behind him. As the Skunk Wagon disappears into a white cloud of snow I have to wonder what adventures wait for Julius over the next hill. I wished nothing but the best for Julius in his future.

I stood there not knowing what I was feeling... Julius and I had been together for almost every day for five and half months... we slept together one night even though he

wasn't gay... is this what it feels like to lose someone to death... no I have experienced that, it's not the same... would I see Julius ever again... ? One part of me never wanted to see or talk to him again... another part of me wanted to run away with him to the Great Slav Lakes to get away from my parents, school, and life's responsibilities. But I did what I promised in the name of "Family". All the projects were done! I was extremely proud of what Julius and I had accomplished.

An hour plus later Paul drives up. I was freezing to death standing in front of Shep's Antiques. At last a warm car. Nope...as I expected Paul was not very happy having to transport a huge raccoon in the trunk of his car, nor my not so brilliant orange backpack (yes it smelled like skunk), nor my blue sleeping bag (yes it smelled like skunk), nor my .243, nor my .22 single shot, nor my huge block of black walnut for my future black powder rifle and my new Sears powder blue Big Mac coveralls. My coat and vest looked like they were stolen from some homeless person (both had been repaired with silver Duct Tape multiple times), but I carefully

placed each item one after another in the trunk of Paul's Delta 88. I was lucky the pelted coyote fit perfectly in the back seat. Paul asked if it was a dog.... I said no a coyote... never the less Paul was very disgusted with me. Paul's disgust showed on his face, but he stated he was still going to take me home even though I was, ***“Too ripe for his comfort.”*** I didn't care what Paul said after that statement. With each mile on the way to Bigfork Paul just stared at the snowy road, smoking cigarette after cigarette as he drove... saying absolutely nothing. I was not going to disturb the unusual peace and quiet. I was just going to let him smoke his cigarettes without saying a word back to him... all the while I kept thinking over and over, ***“I kept my promise to my family... to Bernice. The log lambing shed at Cherry Springs was finished.”***

But no... Paul knew what he was doing... Paul finally with stoic resignation states, *“Your Mother and I can not figure out why it took you and Julius as long as it did for the **“two”** of you to build the log building? Can you explain yourself? Just so you know*

we said nothing to Sivert which would have gotten Julius fired from Cherry Creek?" I asked him, "**What did the two of you say to Sivert?"** Paul totally ignoring my question replied, "***Why couldn't you find out where all the money is going to on the ranch?"***"

I was done... in a calm steady voice I told Paul the following: "I am tired of all the constant criticisms, the insults to Julius and I, the constant belittling, the humiliation I endured due to your lies that you made to Julius, Dean, Sivert, and myself... ***never, ever speak on the behalf of someone else and lie about it to me ever again...*** I am tired of both yours and Mom's verbal abuse. Please stop it... stop it now! It is time the both of you take ownership of what you say and ownership of your actions. I can't believe the two of you would promise Julius lifetime employment on the new family ranch and then say you didn't make that statement! Why don't you and Mom call for a Cherry Creek partnership meeting, look at the books, and figure the money problem out for yourself... I think you will find all the answers there. Better yet just stand and look around Sivert's

place and you tell me where you think the money has gone... new house additions, new buildings, a new swimming pool and all the new ranch equipment... they are definitely not cheap!” Paul looks at me and yells! I had pushed that magic tantrum button of his again. Paul screaming over my voice, ***“I should drop your smart ass off on the side of the road right now... I am tired of your smart ass comments... Som’ Bitch... don’t you ever open that God Damn big mouth of yours in front of your mother or I ever again... and I never want the name of Julius Sebulsky to come out of your mouth ever again! You just don’t get it... your mother and I are doing this for you and Gary!”*** Paul had spoken. He continued to chain smoke his cigarettes the entire trip back to Bigfork without saying another word. It was for the best... it would take me another 25 years before I would truly learn that a leopard can never really change his or her spots.

I learned a very important lesson about my father and people like him that cold December day. Paul would deny the truth

even when the Truth was in front of him. Paul, my father, would lie, change the truth with one of his on the spot gaslighting stories, then twist all the facts around turning everything around making me center of the problem or putting the blame on me. Punishing me for telling him that Bernice and he did something totally wrong. Telling him the truth. Then getting mad at me for me getting mad at him. Only to have Paul twist all the facts around and then play the victim.

This one day set the tone for our relationship or lack of one for the rest of our lives together as father and son. I trusted my father, Paul, implicitly as a child and through my teenage years. I was blind to the fact that my father was a narcissist even though the proof was right in front of me as a naive 21 year old.



❖ That winter Paul and Bernice found out that not only did Sivert lose 38 steers, but he hadn't shipped all the remaining 112 steers that still remained on Cherry Creek.

Unfortunately the steers which had been shipped to Omaha, Nebraska that had been put on the feedlots were worth less money once they were sold than what Sivert paid for them earlier that spring in 1971 at the auction rings. Sivert had to sell the steers at a loss, pay the feed lot bills using up a large amount of the profits from the liquidation of the ewes that fall. Bernice and Marie were beyond mad. But Sivert did pay out one last distribution check as he had promised in the June Partnership Meeting, which led to a lack of liquid cash for the Cherry Creek Sheep Company, new incredibly large bank loans in excess of a million dollars... such a huge debt load that it eventually led to the sale of the Cherry Creek Sheep Company.

❖ Even though Bernice and Paul had promised Julius a salary in addition to the salary he received from the Cherry Creek Sheep Company, Julius did not receive a penny from the Milams. Paul stated, “Julius never got the job done which was asked of him...”. Really? Not exactly Julius’s story, but Julius kept their agreement pretty much to

himself. I know that my parents received at least three letters to Box 18 from Julius requesting a payment of the salary he was promised. The letters were addressed to both Paul and Bernice. Even though I was never given permission to look at the letters (Bernice stated it was private ranch business), I did take one of Julius's letters from Bernice's desk and read Julius's polite request for the salary owed with the exact amount he was promised for the work he did for Paul and Bernice.

❖ Yes my driver's license had expired... Bernice "let" me retake the test and get a new license using Paul's Delta 88 just before Easter of 1972.

❖ To my disappointment neither Paul nor Bernice ever called a meeting of the partnership to review the books of Cherry Creek. Bernice was an accountant so if the books existed she would have seen where the money was really spent.

❖ Easter vacation of 1972 Paul, Bernice and I drove to Ingomar and then to Sivert's. My parents said, "You have unfinished business at the log lambing shed." Another out of nowhere, do it now project where my parents took no responsibility for what they had started. Not one word was spoken to me about the project until they ordered me to oil seal the entire log lambing shed that day as we arrived in Ingomar. My old powder orange Chevy pickup was loaded with a 55 gallon drum of Outlast Q8 log oil. Paul and Bernice "made-asked" me to spray the entire log lambing shed with the log oil while Bernice and Paul explored and made plans for dividing up the Cherry Creek Sheep Company. After all the log building was my project and "I needed to finish it." I successfully oiled the entire log building inside and out by myself... I wished Julius would have been there to help me. It took me most of the day... at least five hours... being both Paul and Bernice think I work too slow... yet neither even tried to help me... neither wanted to get oily or dirty... both drove around the ranch and explored while I

worked... I'm not really sure whether either Paul or Bernice even cared whether the log lambing shed job was "finally" done with the spraying of the log oil. I know I was. It was almost an impossible job spray oiling all the support timbers high over head in the roof structure without a ladder. The walls inside and out were easy to spray except for that occasional super gust of wind blowing the oil back in my face. I was covered from head to toe with log oil. My friend and pet, Jack, was no where to be found. It was a sad realization.

❖ My Cherry Creek pickup looked the same as the day I left, but now it had a ranch radio and someone had cleaned out the interior so the blood and gumbo were gone. The dents and scratches were still there.... and the pickup sported a new set of tires.

❖ Julius and I left the tall ladder in the log lambing shed... never to be seen ever again... who would "appropriate" that big of an aluminum ladder in the middle of no where beside Julius and I?

❖ The log lambing shed Dean, Julius and I built on Cherry Springs ***was never used for lambing***. As far as I know it was only used for storing a few saddles and some bagged feed. I tried to visit Julius's home and my log lambing shed multiple times in the following years, but was turned away by my Uncle Sivert or by one of Sivert's hired men. Likewise the log lambing shed was also off limits when Kevin Brewer purchased the north pasture of Cherry Creek and started operating the property. I did try on multiple occasions try to see my building but was turned away. Kevin Brewer's men made sure of that. I have not seen the log lambing shed or Julius's home since Easter of 1972.

❖ Julius did drive all the way to Bigfork that next spring sometime in June and tried talking the parents into letting me travel with him to the Great Slav Lakes in Canada for a "few" months during the summer of 1972. I think Julius's real reason for going to Bigfork was to collect the wages that were owed and that Paul had promised him. When Julius was in Bigfork I was at Ingomar and Paul told him

that I was working for Sivert again. Julius told Paul, "It would never happen..." Julius knew Sivert. After that encounter Paul had with Julius... Paul stated to me that he never wanted me to see, talk or associate with Julius ever again. I said nothing to Paul... but Paul was definitely hiding something... being this was the second time he commanded me to stay away from Julius. I was being punished for something Paul had done and said once again.

❖ Bernice was good to her word and "we" purchased a new car (not a pickup) for \$3,000.00 the last week of May in 1972. Bernice did not want to be seen in a pickup. As it turned out I would have to drive her to her appointments for the majority of the next 20 years. I never realized the total amount of strings that would be attached to the "Vehicle Promise". After the purchase of the car Bernice asked me to sign over my five Cherry Creek corporate shares so **"she could divide her shares equally between Gary and I some day."** Time finally revealed the truth about what Bernice's true intentions

were concerning my shares. After I signed over the five shares to Bernice I was no longer Mr. One Share.

*** Interestingly “Bernice in keeping things perfectly the same between the boys”; she paid for Gary’s new vehicle which was an el Camino for \$3000.00... an almost pickup... but Gary never got to experience the wilds and hardships of Cherry Creek like I did. Gary was never held to the same standards of hard work on the ranch as I was. A friend of Gary and Réene’s once stated to me that all their success in getting and finally owning Milam Basin Creek Ranch was “due to all Gary’s and Paul’s hard work on the Cherry Creek Ranch”... I asked them... “Who’s hard work and who told you that?”

❖ I left on the first day of the second week of June in the summer of 1972 to work for Sivert. Bernice stated Sivert would pick me up and I would be doing odd jobs for him and Janet on the ranch. I stayed at the old house waiting for Sivert to pick me up. I waited every day in Ingomar as dictated to me by Bernice without Sivert or Janet showing up in

Ingomar or at the Jersey Lilly or even leaving a message at the Jersey Lilly. I finally had enough... I thought Julius would find me, but he didn't. I checked his trailer every day that I stayed there that June in 1972. I left Ingomar on July 3rd, 1972 to enjoy the 4th of July in Bigfork with my Playhouse friends. Yes we drank on the 4th... and maybe to excess... but I was frustrated with life and its responsibilities to my family. There was no doubt in my mind the Mysse Curse was in full flower. Unknown to me the Milam Curse was just starting with the collapse of the Cherry Creek Sheep Company.

❖ Sivert called Bernice on July 27th, 1972. Sivert acting concerned about my well being and telling Bernice that I was not at the Old House and no one had seen me at the Jersey Lilly for quite a while. Did she know where I was? What was discussed between Sivert and Bernice... I do not know... really Sivert? Nice try. I never spoke directly person to person with Sivert ever again except once at the Jersey Lilly forbidding me on Cherry Creek property. Correctly stated: I should say

Sivert never spoke to me even though we crossed paths continuously. That is until the year before Sivert past away. We were both at a function at the Jersey Lilly and we came face to face. The only reason Sivert spoke to me was because he didn't recognize me and thought I was someone else. He called me Carl?

❖ Now I hated school with a passion... too many reasons to count... Bernice wanted me to finish college... more importantly to become a high school teacher... so I could work eventually on the ranch and not become a doctor. Cherry Creek was eventually sold off to Kevin Brewer 5 years later. Sivert and Janet had put Cherry Creek into such severe debt from his mismanagement and Janet's spending... there was no hope for the Cherry Creek's survival. Cherry Creek never saw a profit once it quit raising sheep and wool. Marie Straw sold her 1/3 interest and minerals to Kevin Brewer. Bernice did the same a year later selling only the land interest. Julius and I should have bought Cherry Creek.

❖ My first teaching job was in Jordan, Montana in 1974 as a school teacher. My second job was trying to find out everything going on at Cherry Creek for Bernice. The herders and people who worked for Sivert had strict instructions not to let me wander anywhere on Sivert and Janet's ranch. I got caught only a few times on Cherry Creek luckily without anyone getting shot. Julius taught me well. Once again I was following hollow promises made to me from Bernice again. I never learned... Family meant too much to me.

❖ Interesting Note: I found out while I was teaching school in Jordan what "more than likely" happened to the 38 missing steers from Cherry Creek. Rumor had it that Walt Secret found the steers on the Brook's ranch next to his. Walt herded them into a corner pasture on his place and made a deal with Ryan's Grocery in Jordan, Montana. Walt supplied the beef, Ryan's Grocery did the final processing and packaging of the beef carcass's. The money from the local

private sales were split between Ryan's Grocery and Walt Secret. Merton was threatened with his life trying to cross the Walt Secret's place to gain entrance to Basin Creek. The reason was... Walt did not want Merton to see the stolen steers. Merton would have recognized the M Lazy M brand of Cherry Creek. Not a body nor a hair was ever found from the missing 38 steers... any where. My source of the information was from Walt Secret's very own son, Cotton Secret, bragging to one of his friends about it. Cotton had no idea I was related to the Mysse clan. I was his 8th Grade teacher in Jordan. My thinking was that Sivert and Janet should be a bit more careful in choosing who their friends were.

❖ I never wanted to do anything ever again for Bernice and Paul in the name of Family. I even ran away to Saudi Arabia to get away from the continuous demands made by the two of them only to be sucked into another losing family situation once again for another 18 years of my life. The only reason I signed on to work as a partner for the Milam Basin

Creek Ranch was because Bernice promised me that Paul would never be a partner in the ranch and that Paul would have absolutely no say in its operation. Only the three partners would have any say. There are ways of getting around any solemn family promise as I found out. I should have drunk an entire jar of Julius's Tipple and hopefully it would have cured me of my stupidity... but thank God I didn't.

❖ Julius passed away in the spring of 1973 at the age of 55 working at Shep's Antiques from a massive heart attack. Julius never made it to the Great Slav Lakes... his final dream in life. I didn't find out about Julius's death until a year later when I talked to Bill Shepard when I visited Shep's Antiques. Julius and I never spoke another word to each other even though I left messages for him to call me with Bill Shepard and at the Jersey Lilly. I guess Julius thought it was "the Best for both of us." Bill Shepard told me that Julius never forgave Bernice or Paul for the promises and lies they made to him concerning him operating their ranch.

❖ When I told Paul and Bernice that Julius had passed away their reactions spoke volumes. Bernice stated, “Obviously it was what he wanted... otherwise he would have taken better care of himself.” Paul said nothing and did not acknowledge what I said about the passing of Julius in anyway shape or form. Only looked at me and walked away.

❖ I still have the powder blue Big Mac coveralls. They are hanging in my garage... they have shrunk over the years in my belly area... and yes I have washed them.

❖ Russell Milam has my .243 Winchester that I purchased from Fred Wiefrich.

❖ I love shooting black powder rifles. Building two black powder rifles was enough for me in my life.

❖ My traps (the new traps I never used) I are still hanging around at the old house in Ingomar. My used traps Julius kept.

❖ I still love looking at, making and fondling knives. I think about Fred and my adventures with Julius every time I build one. The first hunting knife I ever made I gave to my nephew, Michael Tarbert.

❖ Every time I listen to Marty Robbins, George Strait, Johnny Cash, Charlie Pride, Willie Nelson, Jim Reeves, Bobby Bare, Sony James and the rest of the songs I listened to at the Jersey Lilly Bar and Cafe with Bill Seward singing along off key, butchering each and every note of every song ... It brings back the memories of my days with Julius Sebulsky and the lessons Julius taught to me about life in 1971. A “True Father Figure” who never had any children of his own.


❖ During my months working at Cherry Springs I learned how truly important toilet paper is to every civilized human being, especially when there wasn't any. Toilet paper became so important I became “The Keeper of the Squares!” Since I was the primary individual buying and appropriating


the toilet paper I finally had to put a limit on the number of squares people could use at any one sitting at the stink pit. The sheep herders would drive five miles to use our outhouse at Cherry Springs. Between the mice (When the roll was not properly put away.) and “others” appropriating toilet paper... when Julius and I were gone... I realized why gas stations require a key for people to visit their bathrooms.

❖ After I returned to Bigfork that December I was asked why my clothes did not fit me. I had gone from 216 pounds to 178 pounds eating off the land with Julius.


❖ I have to wonder just how many quart Mason Jars of Tipple (Julius’s prize moonshine) and gallon jugs of Julius’s poison choke cherry wine are still buried on Cherry Creek Property, around the Sebulsky homestead, in and around the town of Ingomar. I also wonder if anyone ever accidentally happened onto Julius’s greatest pride and joy... the item he coveted most... his Chicago Copper Foundry, 1890, USA

moonshine still. When people die there are no happy endings... endings are the saddest part of life... a part of Julius is still a part of me, wherever I go Julius is still there with me... every second of every day I spent with him was precious.

 Just so you know Julius... you were “spot on” in what you told me about the Milam Family that last day at Shep’s Antiques in that Eastern Montana ground blizzard. I wish I would have taken your words of wisdom to heart and listened to you instead of just writing them in my journal and not acting on them. Like you told me... I am a slow learner... Family would always mean too much to me... I have never forgotten your words, **“Yesterday’s do not matter anymore... only your tomorrows.”** No truer words were ever spoken. A beautiful goodbye.

 Julius... You were more than a friend, but in so many ways you were the father I never had. As I told you once: /

would try to never box myself into ideas of what others (family) thought I should become... on that point I failed. I did accomplish being true to myself and I was always hopeful that someday I would find someone who would support and love me... just as I am. Just so you know Julius.. I did!

 I hope you (I know you will be!) are still waiting for me on the other side... I will explain to you how the bad things in life will open your eyes to the good things in life!





About the Author

I was inspired to write about my six months on the Cherry Creek Sheep Company in 1971 by two things. The first due to all the lies and promises made to me by my family throughout my lifetime in my association with them in our family ranching enterprises. I wanted the true story about my six months with Julius to be told and to be told accurately to keep a promise I made to Julius Sebulsky some fifty years ago. My second being after I was forced out of the Milam Basin Creek Ranch by my mother, father, and brother and his wife in 2001. I felt a need for these two major truths about the Mysse and Milam history to be known if anyone was truly interested. Not surprising to me... no one really cared about the truth... only the money. That is why I wrote these moments in history... "*Julius and the Mysse Curse 1971*" and its sequel "*The Final Payback-Erased and the Milam Curse*". **The only true value of money is in the history that made it.**