

THE CATTLEMAN,
THE WIND PROSPECTOR,
AND A WAR OUT WEST

THE
CRAZIES

AMY GAMERMAN

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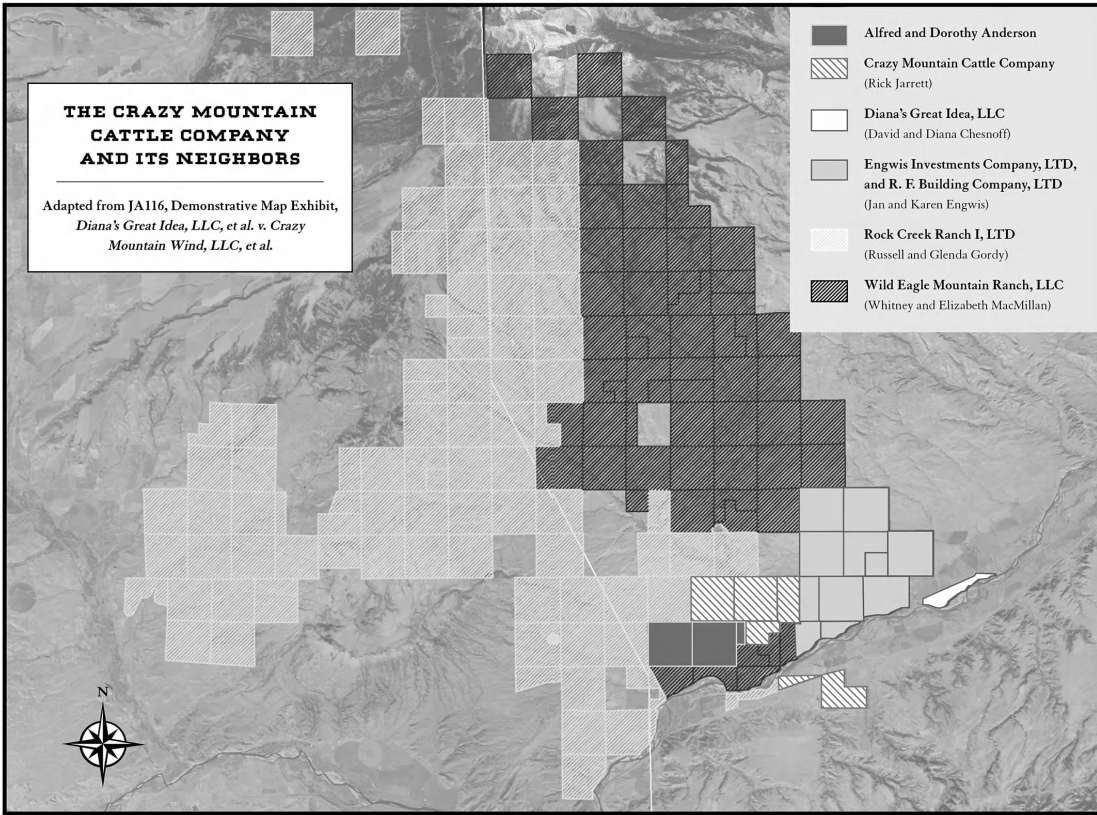
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»————— THE —————«
CRAZIES

THE CATTLEMAN,
THE WIND PROSPECTOR,
AND A WAR OUT WEST

AMY GAMERMAN

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*For my father, Kenneth Gamerman
July 5, 1932–February 8, 2024
My mountain.*

My favorite state has not yet been invented. It will be called Montana, and it will be perfect.

—ABRAHAM LINCOLN

A NOTE ON SOURCES

The Crazies is a work of nonfiction. The thoughts and feelings attributed to the people in this book are drawn from their own words. In addition to interviews conducted over the course of nearly five years of reporting, I relied on transcripts and recordings of court hearings, public meetings, county commission hearings, Public Service Commission work sessions and hearings, and well over a thousand pages of court filings. Other sources include letters and email exchanges released through Freedom of Information Act requests, interviews with media outlets, and social media posts.

PREFACE

This story began on the ruins of an old hot-springs resort in the mountains of Montana.

Or maybe it began forty-nine million years ago, when the earth's crust turned itself inside out, its restless plates shifting and sliding, a volcanic arc spewing lava at the sky. The magma cooled and hardened into a forty-mile chunk of igneous rock. Eons passed. The world was hot, then it was cold. Slow-moving glaciers scooped out cirques and valleys, carving the rock into ridges. Millennia of ice and wind whittled those ridges into thirty-odd jagged peaks. Locals call them the Crazies.

The Crazies towered over wind-raked tundra where the first Americans chipped stones into spear points. They towered over shimmering grasslands where the Crow people hunted bison. Their frozen peaks shone through the summer haze as pioneers trundled along the Bozeman Trail in covered wagons, drawn west by dreams of gold. Now they look down on rangelands dotted with cattle and sheep.

It can seem like a mirage, this island of mountains rising from a sea of rolling hills. Your eye travels from the banks of the Yellowstone River to gray-green and gold-brown foothills as neatly humped as the model scenery on a child's train table, then sharply upward to the Crazies' splintery snow-frosted pinnacles, a chiaroscuro vision in pure white and midnight blue. People from the nearby town of Big Timber sometimes pull over on the frontage road that runs alongside the train tracks to take pictures of the Crazies at sunset or sunrise, or under a full moon. Those posts always get a lot of likes on the *Big Timber Buzz*, the community Facebook page.

The Crazies stand in magnificent isolation from the landscape they dominate, set apart by topography and by deed. The mountain range is as splendid as any national park, but for the most part it's private property. Crazy Peak, the loftiest of them all, is privately owned. So is Conical Peak, and Granite Peak and Kid Royal. The owners of those mountains are among the richest people in America.

The hot springs were part of a forty-four-thousand-acre mountain ranch owned by Russell Gordy, a Texas oil and gas billionaire. It was late spring in 2017 and I was writing a profile of Mr. Gordy and his \$96 million collection of trophy ranches for the *Wall Street Journal*. Gordy owned so many ranches that he couldn't keep track of them all. There was a big ranch in East Texas, and a bigger one in South Texas. He had an eighty-thousand-acre spread in Wyoming, and a place in Colorado that he never visited—"It's a beautiful ranch, but I already got a bunch of gorgeous places." Later in our conversation, Gordy remembered that he owned a second ranch in Wyoming. He went goose hunting there sometimes.

Gordy's Montana ranch, some fifteen miles west of Big Timber, would be my first stop on a limited tour of his domain. He bought it in 2002 for over \$40 million, a state record at the time. It was very windy that day; I had to borrow a hat to keep the hair out of my face. I'd learn that Big Timber is one of windiest places in the country. Wind, like water, flows faster downhill: the steeper the hill, the harder it blows. Big Timber is wedged between some very steep hills. Winds speed up as they're funneled through the Absaroka-Beartooth Range to the south. Chinooks from the west, honed by the sharp-toothed Crazies, double and redouble in force as they pour down the mountains' eastern slopes. It's a phenomenon called mountain gap wind, and Big Timber gets it from both ends. Crosswinds regularly hit gale-force speeds, nudging semitrucks sideways on Interstate 90 before shutting it down altogether. When the town makes the news, it's usually in the form of a high-wind advisory.

Gordy picked me up at my hotel in a muddy Land Rover. Tall, with a neatly trimmed gray beard, he wore shorts, a baseball hat, and a fly-fishing vest. He pointed out the sights as he drove. "You're on the ranch now. That's a buffalo jump rock—the Indians used to herd them off a cliff. That's the Yellowstone River—my boundary line." He turned onto a narrow, unpaved road that wound along a sandstone cliff. Prisoners from the state penitentiary in Deer Lodge had blasted the road in 1913; you could see scoring marks left by the sticks of dynamite they'd used on the cliff walls.

"I always tell folks that I live on Convict Grade Road in the Crazy Mountains," Gordy said with a grin, rocks spraying from the tires as we sped toward his \$15 million lodge. A herd of startled pronghorns sprinted past. Gordy loves to hunt—elk, deer, grizzly bears. The antelope didn't get a rise out of him. "I could lean out my window and shoot one,"

he said. Gordy much preferred to hunt Hungarian partridges on his Montana ranch. The birds were delicious, he told me. “I like ’em fresh.”

He pulled over at a creek wreathed in white steam. We got out of the Land Rover, the wind tearing at the pages of my notebook. Cows ranged across the rolling hills, a rumped carpet shaken out at the mountains’ feet under a heavy white sky. All that remained of the Mission-style hotel that once stood at the springs was a crumbling stone wall. A small blue above-ground pool with a ladder, the kind you see in suburban backyards, sat incongruously amid the sagebrush and cow pies.

“We were going to build a boutique hotel here,” Gordy said, leaning hard on the first syllable in *boutique*. But then he found out that the owner of a small ranch south of his boundary line had leased his land for a wind farm. Gordy grimaced at the prospect of towering windmills next door. He had made the rancher an offer, tried to buy him out. But the man was set on doing that wind farm. “It’s going to kill all the birds,” Gordy said grimly.

In the years that followed, I thought about Gordy and the nameless rancher across his border—his neighbor. “We have no neighbors,” Gordy had said during my visit, by way of describing the ranch’s expansiveness, its absolute privacy. And yet, somehow, this one had made an impression. I wondered who that rancher was.

I didn’t know that an epic story was unfolding in the Crazy Mountains, a story centuries in the making, with millionaires and billionaires, cattle barons and Crow warriors, prospectors and politicians, meat-packers and medicine men. It reached from the muck of Montana calving barns to the gleaming C-suites of Manhattan skyscrapers. It was a modern-day range war in a warming West—a fight for power in its most elemental form. It was a ghost story haunted by generations of dreamers and strivers, those drawn to the land and those who lost it, the dispossessed, the exiles. At its heart was an old cowboy in suspenders, and the all-American spectacle of neighbors suing each other.

Then I found out that my profile of Mr. Gordy had surfaced in the discovery for a lawsuit—the lawsuit to stop that cowboy from building Crazy Mountain Wind.

PROLOGUE

FEBRUARY 19, 2019

LIVINGSTON, MONTANA

Montana's Sixth Judicial District Court sits on a quiet street in Livingston, some thirty miles west of Big Timber. The court, which has jurisdiction over cases in Sweet Grass and Park counties, occupies the footprint of the city's first courthouse, an imposing brick pile erected in 1896 as the last prairie schooners trundled through Yellowstone country. Livingston's fortress of justice was razed in the 1970s and replaced by a low-slung Ford-era box of pebbly gray concrete with smoked glass windows. Its best architectural feature is the free street parking. It's hard to imagine a less picturesque setting for the three-day showdown that was about to begin at high noon one gray winter day.

It had been brutally cold, the coldest February on record, with sub-zero temperatures in the double digits and gusting snow. But the first day of the hearing dawned clear, and it was a balmy eight degrees Fahrenheit as the plaintiffs and the defendants in the case of *Diana's Great Idea et al. v. Crazy Mountain Wind et al.* parked their battered pickup trucks, gleaming Escalades, and F-450 Super Duty Lariats on East Callender Street. They picked their way across the ice and frozen snowdrifts, stepped inside the county building's skylit lobby, and filed up the stairs to a courtroom painted the bright blue of a child's drawing of the sky.

Like guests at a wedding, they arranged themselves on opposite sides of the aisle; defendants to the right, plaintiffs to the left. Every time the heavy wooden doors to the courtroom swung open, people twisted in their seats to see who had arrived. Sometimes a newcomer would sit down, look around, realize they had picked the wrong side, and quickly scoot across the aisle.

Rick Jarrett removed his wool hat as he entered the courtroom, patting down his hair. His belly was round, his beard unruly. Rick had taken care with his appearance that

morning. He wore a Western shirt with all its buttons, a leather vest, and clean, pressed jeans, secured with his good suspenders. There was a hitch to his step as he made his way to a royal blue bench a few rows from the front. Rick, sixty-eight, had been recently diagnosed with Parkinson's disease.

The cows were calving. Rick was out at all hours in the biting wind at this time of year, pulling calves and hustling the slick newborns into the warmth of the calving shed to dry off and suck before they froze to death. But lately, he had turned over more of this work to his daughter, Jami, and her companion, Harv. He was getting old too quickly, it seemed. He hoped the kids would be able to take over the ranch someday, buy him out so he could retire.

His land was worth millions, but Rick Jarrett was not a wealthy man. No IRA, no savings account. He drove a thirty-year-old Cadillac with a broken headlight, kicked out by one of his cows. Land rich, cash poor, that's how it was. The cows couldn't pay the bills anymore, which was why Rick had been fighting for fifteen years to get some wind development on his ground. A few years back, he mortgaged the ranch's two thousand acres for close to a million dollars. If Crazy Mountain Wind didn't get built, there might not be a goddamn ranch to pass on.

Four generations back, Rick's ancestor Cyrus B. Mendenhall might have rolled over the very ground where the courthouse now stood in his ox-drawn wagon on his way to the Montana goldfields. Like his great-great-grandfather, Rick Jarrett was an enterprising fellow with grit and ingenuity, determined to claim his share of Montana's rich resources. The wind that flowed over Rick's land was his treasure—a valuable crop ripe for harvest.

Wind turbines would scoop gold from the air, turning slashing westerlies into electricity that would power Big Timber and rain down money on Rick Jarrett and his kin. With his share of the profits from Crazy Mountain Wind, Rick could pay his debts, gift the ranch to his kids, and retire, secure in the knowledge that the place would be there for his grandchildren. The wind would provide for them all.

In the front row, Rick's neighbors Jan and Karen Engwis looked the other way as he settled on a seat across the aisle. Jan owned a 5,500-acre ranch on the Yellowstone where he ran a small herd of Black Angus cows and grew alfalfa. A former cop who made his fortune in the rock-blasting business, he saw it as his duty to preserve and protect his piece of Montana's sagebrush Eden from Rick Jarrett's obsessive wind development

efforts. Jan grew up in Midland, Michigan, home of the Dow Chemical Company. Maybe people who grew up in Big Timber stopped noticing its natural beauty and open vistas. Maybe they'd been there too long.

The Engwises greeted David and Diana Chesnoff, who owned a two-hundred-acre ranch just east of theirs. The Chesnoffs had flown in from Las Vegas for the hearing. A criminal defense attorney, David was as much a celebrity in some circles as the pop stars, poker players, and mobsters he defended. Montana was his place to relax and enjoy the beauty, to get away from the work he did, because what he did was pretty stressful.

But not today. David was dressed for court in a tailored dark suit. The other wealthy litigants wore jeans, including Diana, who had paired her skinny denims with wedge-heeled Chanel snow boots. The Chesnoffs positioned themselves directly behind the table where the plaintiffs' team of lawyers would sit, the better to pass them notes, as David would do throughout the three-day hearing. Diana did not remove her oversized sunglasses.

Russell Gordy hunkered down on a pew at the back of the courtroom. He was sixty-eight, same age as Rick Jarrett, but he wore his years more lightly. February wasn't ordinarily a month you'd find Gordy in Montana. You might find him hunting quail at La Ceniza, his sprawling ranch in South Texas, or at one of his ski homes in Utah's Deer Valley. Or maybe you'd find him sea fishing for tarpon at the oceanfront retreat in the Bahamas that he bought as a surprise birthday gift for his wife, Glenda, who was more of a beach person. In any event, Gordy was due back in Houston on Friday, when he and Glenda would be honored at a black-tie gala. The Gordys had given \$5 million to endow a new three-theater complex—The Gordy. There would be toasts and video tributes, and a three-course banquet served under trellises of tulip magnolias.

But first, there was this court deal to get through. Gordy had never met Rick Jarrett. But the prospect of Jarrett's giant windmills had loomed like a blight over Gordy's Montana ranch for well over a decade. It was a beautiful piece of land, a small kingdom that stretched from the Yellowstone River to the Crazy Mountains. Gordy just loved the place.

Alfred Anderson entered the courtroom with his granddaughter and looked around for Rick, his business partner and codefendant. Alfred was eighty-seven and he didn't see so good, particularly at night, so his granddaughter would drive him home after the

hearing. He'd gotten up at dawn to chop up the ice on the cows' frozen water tanks and throw square bales of hay to the buck sheep, and he still wore his square-toed work boots. Alfred found a seat near Rick and settled beneath the gaze of past Sixth District Court justices, whose black-and-white photographs lined the walls. Although Alfred had come to the courthouse to pay his taxes and serve his jury duty over the years, he had never been involved in a legal proceeding before. It didn't sit right. You should be able to do what you wanted to do with your land, Alfred thought. It was a free country.

Rick did not share his old friend's uneasiness. He was glad to finally take the fight to these neighbors of his. "The Oligarchs," his lawyer called them. They wanted to stop Rick from harvesting his million-dollar wind. They wanted to control what he did on his land. Well, Rick Jarrett knew his goddamn property rights. All right, he thought, eyes shining as he surveyed the courtroom. Let's start this son of a bitch.

RANCHING IT

February 20, 2019

Park County Courthouse

Livingston, Montana

RICHARD JARRETT, *having first been duly sworn, testified as follows:*

Q: Mr. Jarrett, did you decide to lease your ground to Crazy Mountain Wind?

MR. JARRETT: I did.

Q: Okay. And can you tell the Court why?

MR. JARRETT: It's tough to make a ranch, by itself, make ends meet.

Big Timber, Montana, population 1,650, is a railroad town. Like many small Western towns, it exists because someone put his thumb on a map and decided it would make a good spot for a train station. The Northern Pacific Railway Company laid track through the area in 1882, tracing the route of the Lewis and Clark Expedition along the Yellowstone. A year later, a railway surveyor platted a site at a bend in the Yellowstone for a town to go with those train tracks, and named it for the tall cottonwood trees that Captain William Clark had noted in his journal.

Big Timber's rail yard forms the top line of the town grid: twelve principal streets crisscrossed by nine numbered avenues. Turn-of-the-century buildings of rough-edged sandstone and weathered brick line its tiny business district; modest mid-century bungalows and carports dot its cross streets. The town's central axis is McLeod Street, a broad thoroughfare that dead-ends in the train tracks and a spectacular view of the Crazyes.

When Big Timber was the wool capital of the world, a river of sheep flowed down McLeod Street every September, trotting back from summer grazing leaseholds in the mountains past the saloon of the redbrick Grand Hotel. The Grand still anchors McLeod Street, one of the few old buildings to survive the great fire that incinerated a third of the town in 1908. It sits opposite Cole Drug, Little Timber Quilts & Candy, and the Timber Bar, whose neon lumberjack lights up, red-faced, when the sun goes down. Many of the old storefronts are empty now. It's been more than a decade since anyone played pool at the Madhatter Saloon. Big Timber doesn't get as many visitors as the larger city of Livingston to its west, or the rodeo town of Red Lodge to its south. Mostly, it's a place you pass through on your way to Bozeman or Billings.

But it's a picturesque old town, with a weekly summer rodeo, huckleberry milkshakes, and some of the best fly-fishing in the state. Every summer, the Grand's fourteen rooms fill up and the Sorry sign switches on, in loopy neon cursive, at the Lazy J Motel. All through the night, guests hear the whistle of Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) freight trains hurtling past town. Each train stretches a mile or more, a conga line of hoppers, boxcars, tankers, and gondolas loaded with coal, crude oil, plastics, and fertilizers. The sound of the heavy cars juddering over the train tracks fills the quiet streets for a minute or more, when the wind doesn't drown it out.

The wind touches every aspect of life in Big Timber. It rattles plate-glass windows in their frames on McLeod Street, where tourists shop for T-shirts and tractor caps at Gusts department store and the old-timers gossip over coffee at Cole Drug. Golden eagles and red-tailed hawks use it to hunt, catching a gust as it bounces off a ridge and surfing it like a wave as they scope the prairie dog towns below. Townies joke about the wind, the way it will pluck the dollars from your hand and steal the lawn chairs from your yard. The uninitiated have been locked out of their vehicles when the wind slammed shut car doors left carelessly open.

But for cattle and sheep ranchers, the wind is an affliction. It sucks every drop of moisture from the soil, tosses thousand-pound bales of hay across pastures like tumbleweed, whips up brushfires into blazes that can consume thousands of acres in a night. Most people in Big Timber learn to live with the wind. Rick Jarrett sought his fortune in it.

Rick was a rancher. He never had the imagination to be anything else, he said. His people had ranched in Big Timber since 1882—cattle first, then sheep, then cattle and some sheep. Any Montanan who makes his living off livestock will tell you that what he really does is raise grass. Rick raised fields of alfalfa and orchard grass and timothy hay and forage winter wheat, to be cut and baled for the long winters. When spring came in April or May, he'd turn the calves and the mother cows out on fresh green grass. Everything came in cycles on a ranch, just as it had for Rick's grandparents and his great-grandparents.

Being a rancher meant knowing how to do things. How to brand a calf, dock a lamb, break a colt. Mending a barbed-wire fence, cleaning out a clogged irrigation ditch so the water could flow clear and cold to your hay fields, knowing when to cut the hay and how many days to let it cure in the sun before you baled it—those were essential skills, along with a basic grasp of cattle futures, soil science, and veterinary medicine. You preg-checked your cows by sticking your arm up the rectum and giving a squeeze. If a calf got stuck in a heifer's birth canal, you'd loop a chain over its fetlock and slowly tug it free. Then you'd get some suture thread from the floor of your truck and stitch up the torn mother cow.

Not every calf lived, not every heifer survived. You saw a lot of death on the ranch. So you adapted. You'd skin the dead calf, then tie its pelt to the orphan, fooling the bereaved bovine into suckling it like it was her own.

It took a lifetime to acquire such knowledge. Rick could kill a rattlesnake with a rock or a rein, drive a fence post, cook beef goulash. If it busted, he fixed it. Rick always had a bit of wire or baling twine on hand if a gate didn't hook right or his suspenders snapped under the strain. When his tractor sputtered or the muffler fell off his 1987 Cadillac Brougham, he'd scavenge a spare part from one of the many junked vehicles that dotted his land. To be a rancher was to be a master of the work-around—to make do with what you had and get on with it. This was called ranching it. The corollary to ranching it was that your ranch looked like shit, because you never threw anything away. Rick's ranch was an open-air museum of historic farm machinery in various stages of decay, with the serrated white and blue peaks of the Crazy Mountains for a backdrop. He called it the Crazy Mountain Cattle Company.

Rick's connection to the place was earthy, sweat-stained, prideful. He took pride in the grass crops he grew on the land, pride in the cattle and sheep it sustained. The land gave him independence. He had the freedom to do what he wanted with it, to manage it how he saw fit, and that was more valuable to him than whatever he earned from it. Not everyone could find happiness in this life, one of punishing physical labor without much money or time off. But ranching suited Rick Jarrett. It wasn't a hard life if you'd never done anything else.

One July afternoon, Rick took me on a tour of his hayfields in his side-by-side—an open-sided, two-seat Yamaha Rhino built for rough terrain, like a Hummer crossed with a golf cart. Ten minutes earlier, over coffee at his kitchen table, Rick had seemed listless, his hazel-green eyes dull. I was asking him questions about the past and there were gaps in his memory. "I'm not exactly able to recall stuff," he said.

Now, at the wheel of his side-by-side, jolting across his domain at twenty miles per hour, Rick straightened and brightened like a cut plant dropped in a glass of water. We passed low fields of alfalfa sprouting tendrils of clustered purple flowers, and timothy hay whose nubby plumes nodded back and forth with the wind. The cows and their calves had moved to a summer grazing lease up on the Boulder River. Rick seemed infused with vitality by the sight of all the green things shooting up from his earth, their juicy vegetal fragrances mingling with the smell of warm dirt and sage crushed under the wheels of the Rhino.

"Holy shit, this is good!" he said as we drove through a pasture of orchard grass and smooth brome, so tall and lush that it completely concealed a startled deer, which leaped sideways and bounded away, vanishing again in the ocean of grass. "This'll be cut for hay, this is way too good to graze. Goddamn, holy shit. It's beautiful," he exulted. "Isn't it something? Isn't it goddamn something?"



Rick was born in 1950 on land that his great-grandfather Ralph Jarrett, the son of homesteaders, bought in 1908. The ranch sits in the foothills of the Crazy Mountains on Duck Creek, which winds through its sandstone bluffs under a canopy of silvery-leaved

cottonwoods and golden willows, fringed with chokecherry bushes heavy with purple-red berries that generations of Jarrett women boiled into syrups and jams. Duck Creek is both the spine of the ranch and its main artery, gushing with fresh snowmelt from the Crazies every spring. The Jarretts rely on the mountain snowpack for water to irrigate their hayfields and water their livestock. Their rights to that water date back to Big Timber's earliest days.

In Montana, owning land doesn't confer ownership of the water that flows through it, the rivers, creeks, and streams. Ranchers must own a deeded right to draw that water, and the amount they can draw is measured to the inch. Those with the oldest recorded water rights have priority—"first in time is first in right," or so the doctrine goes. The Jarretts' deeded water rights are older than many of the higher-elevation mountain ranches above theirs—the trophy ranches with the best views—because their land was homesteaded first, in the 1880s. The growing season is longer in the valleys, the land more productive, which once made it more valuable. They were practical in the old days, Rick said. Today, people valued the scenery more.

Rick grew up in a farmhouse with a Northern Pacific boxcar pushed up against one side of it that had been repurposed as living space for his grandparents. He was the youngest of four boys. A fifth brother, Donald, died in his crib in 1941 at the age of six months. An old photograph shows the four surviving Jarrett brothers in a row, tallest to smallest: Billy, Ron, Ray, and Rick, a grinning, tow-headed toddler. The boys are dressed in Western shirts with pearly snaps sewn by their mother, Betty, who has wetted down their hair and brushed it neatly to the side. Rick's father, Bob, whippet-thin, his face shadowed by a white hat with a high, narrow crown—a gentleman's hat, for special occasions—smiles down at his sons from the top of the line.

Bob Jarrett was a sheep man; he didn't give a shit about cattle. He ran two thousand mother ewes on a ranch that sprawled across both sides of the Yellowstone River, some eight thousand acres in all. Rick's mother, Betty, was a Halverson, the granddaughter of the Norwegian sheep rancher who built the Grand Hotel. She was small enough to sit on a child's chair, with a short temper to match. They fought a lot, Rick's dad and mom. Ranch life could be hard on a woman.

From the time he was five years old, Rick went everywhere with Bob, one small hand tucked in his father's hip pocket. He tagged along when Bob irrigated the fields and

tossed square bales to the sheep and drove the 1950 Studebaker truck high up Mendenhall Creek with provisions for the shepherd, an old Norwegian who spent winters there in a humpbacked aluminum wagon with a sleeping bunk and a potbellied stove. The shepherd would make them coffee on the stove, boiling the water with the grounds, maybe cut up some salt mutton. Rick sipped his coffee from a tin cup and felt like one of the men.

In the late winter, they sheared the sheep and Rick helped tromp the wool, stomping the gritty balls of fleece down into sacks with his feet. The Jarretts brought the year's clip to the wool house, a brick warehouse at the railroad depot near the stockyards, where the sacks were weighed and numbered and piled up to the rafters. The younger, spryer ranch hands clambered up the towering bales of wool to scrawl their names—and the occasional bit of smutty graffiti—on the warehouse's brick walls with the fat, ink-filled tubes they used to label the sacks. The names reached all the way to the wooden rafters, which had been salvaged from an older wool house that burned down in one of the fires that swept through Big Timber on a regular basis in the old days. All it took was a few sparks from a passing locomotive and a gust of wind to fan them into a blaze. The Northern Pacific Railway rebuilt the wool house in the 1880s, then built it again. Then built it twice more.

The town was busier, livelier, when Rick was a boy. Big Timber had a movie theater and a bowling alley, five churches, and five bars. Bob Jarrett would head for one of those bars, his little boy's hand tucked in his hip pocket, when he wanted to hire a shepherd for the summer. Bars were a good place to find shepherders, many of whom were drunks in the off-season. Bob rarely drank at home, but once he'd walked inside a bar and gotten himself settled, he could drink for a day and a night. He drank to get drunk; that's just the way it was. "I was too little, sometimes," Rick said, remembering. But somebody had to get the tough son of a bitch home.

From first grade through eighth grade, Rick and his brothers attended a one-room schoolhouse on Duck Creek with robin's-egg blue wainscoting and a Braumuller upright piano shipped by rail from New York City. The schoolhouse sat on the lower end of the Jarretts' ranch near the county road, which had once been a stagecoach road, and a Pony Express route before that. Rick rode his horse to school, stabling him in an ancient barn, a relic of the saloon that once stood at the stagecoach stop. The Jarrett boys nailed a basketball hoop under its eaves. Over the years, the barn slowly crumpled to the ground,