

West Creek Ranch

1971, parked on a one-car-wide
Gravel road nestled in the Flint Hills of Kansas
Dad decided to buy West Creek Ranch.

West Creek Ranch

Rides high on a
Hilltop, Greenwood County.

Prairie grasses grow
Chestnut-brown and
Chest-high along the drive.

The drive
a steep, rock path, slopes toward the creek bed
and the Verdigris.

The Verdigris
Entwines itself through that 99-acre wood,
East of Eureka, North of 54, then down
Through the gorge.

Gorgeous
Green valleys swoop,
Wind through the hills.

Creek beds slither
Over forgotten countryside,
Tangle with thick Oaks, Pines,
Walnuts,
Top-notch, side-by-side.

MaryFran, once queen of this castle
Reining every weekend.
When every weekend
was a family reunion.

22 years of reunions, over weekends. Rain-or-shine.

Mini-vacations

Drinking, hunting, eating
drinking, fishing.
Drinking.

33 years, stripped away:

Paint flakes flutter in the south wind.

Perot for President still resides, lengthwise on

The flagpole.

The flag,

battered back to the stars.

But, today,
Today,

Fresh plastic seals the windows.

Winter-prepped, readied yet
Barren.

Mice, rats, raccoons help themselves to shelter
Leave heaps of their hanta-shit behind.

Squirrels store thousands of acorns, stockpiling
their winter dinners in The twin bed.

 The twin bed

We once made love in. (*I miss you*)

 The twin bed

now covered in their hanta-shit.

~

33 years ago, I challenged that killer-hill
up the road, by the drive,
I challenged it with nothin' but a baby-blue
Schwinn bicycle and boyhood guts.
Cowboy boots and balls, 15-miles-per-hour,
Fishtailin'
Layin' it sideways at the corner.

 At the corner,

That old Oak whispers stories:
Scrapes, cuts, bone fragments,
Their markers, on me across a trinity of decades.

~

Dad's cabin-shoes went into the fire tonight.
Reminded of the mouse who hid in them in '88,

I have to smile.

The shoes drifted off to be with dad.

Down the creek bed, deep in the thicket

Two owls scream insults, Bickering,

back and forth

back and forth

back and forth.

Hawks ride the air currents.

Meanwhile,

Kellogg and Hillside Avenues, Sedgwick County,

Under their headstones,

Dad and MaryFran, reunited, reclined and relaxed,

side-by-side.