# MULLAN CHRONICLES



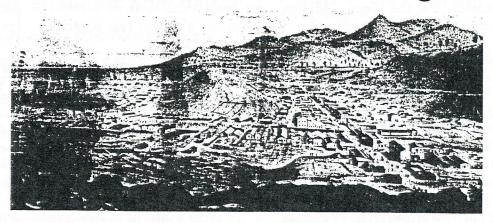
Volume Six

Winter 1995

# The Northern Overland Route to Oregon

In May this year we received some materials from avid Mullanite Robert Dunsmore. Included was an article that originally was published in the July 1950 *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* entitled "The Northern Overland Route in 1876: Journal of Henry Lueg." This piece was written by C.S. Kingston and concerned the diary made by Lueg, a German immigrant, ashe traveled west with a group headed for the Montanamines.

Lueg, Kingston writes, was 37 when he made the trek during his sixth year of living in the United States. He had put in two years of military service and knocked around awhile before arriving in St. Paul, he writes, adding "He decided to go on to the Far West, as he says in an opening paragraph, because of 'bad times and sorrow' which he had experienced in St. Paul, but gives no hint in the narrative



Panorama of Helena, Montana Territory, in 1865, drawn by G.R. Bechler.

regarding the nature of his grief." Kingston writes further: "The expedition was organized by a 'so-called Captain Davy' (Lueg's words) who agreed to carry passengers with 50 pounds of baggage from St. Cloud on May 25, but was held up by bad weather and did not leave until June 25. To protect the expedition against hostile Indians, the passengers were required to provide themselves with arms. Lueg had a repeating Spencer carbine and

Number One

He also had a dog which he took along as a companion—a "medium-sized" half-Newfoundland dog he called Jeff.

Colt army revolver but had no occasion to use the weapons. He also had a dog which he took along as a companion—a "medium-sized" half-Newfoundland dog he called Jeff.

"The wagons in which Davy's 77 passengers rode were drawn by teams of four oxen, and the one to which Lueg was assigned carried eight men and two women."

The party of mostly Americans, but which also included a few Germans such as Lueg, some Scandinavians and French, were bound along the northern route that would eventu-

(See "Northern" on page four)

### Wagon ruts into the past

### Rediscovering the first federally built road in the West

### By Andrew Tarica

y journey along the historic Mullan Road began in a dusty corner of a used bookstore in Colorado. There, I came across an antique handmade map from the late 19th century of the territorial Northwest.

The map was intriguing. It had no major roads, and listed only a few scattered towns and western forts.

Indian nations and major rivers were clearly laid out, as was a solitary wagon road—called the Mullan Military Road—that extended across the unexplored land north of the Oregon Trail.

Completed in 1862, it stretched

over the Continental Divide a total of 624 miles, and served as an overland connection between Fort Walla Walla, Washington, on the Columbia River and Fort Benton, Montana, on the Missouri River.

Weeks later, map in hand, dry sage crackled under my boots as I walked along a piece of nearly forgotten American history in eastern Washington. Mt friend Scott DeSimone and I had just taken a four-wheel path over a small, barren hill that led deep inside an ocean of rolling, brown scablands.

At the crest of the hill, we saw an abandoned pioneer home that had

(See "Wagon ruts" on page two)



# Wagon ruts still show the way

been invaded and taken over by mangy, loud crows. Off to the side of the eerie home, behind a rundown windmill, was the vintage Mullan Road—in all its beauty and mystery.

"Our first confirmed sighting," said Scott, who like I, was aching for an adventure.

We hiked along the road for awhile, taking note of old wagon ruts and overgrown bushes that covered much of the path. It was hot and sunny, and the pungent smell of dirt permeated the dry air.

We were trampling over someone else's private property, so we eventually headed back to my truck and continued on...through a number of tiny towns where the Mullan Road nal Mullan Road.

The trail was mostly hidden behind scrubby hills or off to the side of the main road, behind barb-wire fences, with wagon ruts stretching into the distance.

In other places, we saw only fragments of the original road. For example, just north of Walla Walla, Highway 25 crosses the Touchet River near the town of Prescott. Underneath the new, concrete bridge we found the half-buried, wooden remains of the bridge Mullan and his crew had built nearly 140 years ago.

It was the winter of 1853-54 when Mullan—who was part of Isaac Stevens' transcontinental railroad survey—first discovered a wagon route . So off we started, and found my expectations fully realized."

DeSimone and I also found our expectations fully realized following Mullan's footsteps. Just past the small town of Avon, Montana, we turned onto a dirt road leading over Mullan Pass original wagon ruts leading the way.

The path rose gradually over the Continental Divide. At the top DeSimone and I were rewarded with spectacular views looking down into the wide-open valley carved by the Missouri River.

Though the Mullan Road never achieved the popularity of the Oregon Trail (mainly because spring floods washed trees over much of its path), it did become a travel route for thousands of settlers, gold miners and other fortune seekers.

Some emigrants used the road to settle sparsely populated areas of the Northwest, such as the Palouse and Spokane regions. Mostly, though, the Mullan Road was used as a supply route for the gold camps of Montana in the mid-1860s and the mines of Idaho's Silver Valley in 1880s.

As for the geography of the road, Mullan summarized the route in his 1861 book *Report on the Construction of a Military Road from Fort Benton to Fort Walla Walla*. He wrote: "Our road involved 120 miles of difficult timber-cutting . . . the remainder was either through an open, timbered country, or over open, rolling prairie."

It took roughly 55 days for the early settlers and prospectors to travel the entire length of the road. DeSimone and I took five.

A fishable route to the past Although one of the main goals for building the Mullan Road was to transport federal troops to the Pacific, it was only used once for this purpose.

In May of 1860, under the direction of Major George Blake, 300 new

To the day, 134 years later, DeSimone and I left Seattle to retrace their route. Armed with our camping gear, maps, and fly rods—rather than wagons, oxen and shovels—we spent a week on this back roads mission.

passed during the frontier era—Benge, Lamont, Spangle, the road led on.

Construction of the road began on June 25, 1859, when a group of approximately 100 United States soldiers—under the command of an ambitious, 28-year-old captain named John Mullan—began blazing a trail east fro Fort Walla Walla.

To the day, 134 years later, DeSimone and I left Seattle to retrace their route. Armed with our camping gear, maps and fly rods—rather than wagons, oxen and shovels—we spent a week on this back roads mission. On the road

In the barren and unforgiving high desert country that stretched between Walla Walla and Lake Coeur d'Alene, we found several stretches of the origiover the Continental Divide in what is now Montana.

Asked by the Sunday Oregonian in September 1883, to reflect on his discovery, Mullan explained he was a bit northofthepresentcity of Billings when he approached the three forks of the Missouri, Gallatin and Madison rivers.

"Here was an open plain that enabled me to take in the Rocky Mountain range for a distance of 40 or 50 miles," he said. "Looking almost due westward from the point where I crossed the Missouri, Inoticed marked difference in the range, and I thought that if I could get through them early, and strike any water course of the Columbia from the sea through welldefined valleys or canyons, that this might be the proper course to take...







# on parts of Captain Mullan's Road

Near the end of Kautz' 57-day journey on the Mullan Road, he wrote about his final day of fishing which took place on the North Fork of the Coeur d'Alene River: "Camping in a small opening in the timber. Some of the officers tried fishing, but the stream at this point seems nearly destitute of fish."

recruits left St. Louis by steamer on the Missouri, and arrived at Fort Benton about two months later.

At the urging of Mullan, who was eager to have his road tested before he proclaimed it finished, the troops then moved toward Walla Walla on the trail.

August V. Kautz was a member of that expedition, and he recorded his experiences in a diary. On July 12, he wrote about a fishing trip he took with two fellow soldiers and a member of the Blackfeet tribe. The group traveled by wagon for four hours, from Fort Benton—over the prairie—to Highwood Creek.

"We immediately commenced fishing," Kautz wrote. "And in two hours I had captured 18 small trout with flies. I think, however, that grasshoppers are better, as I found upon examination that that is their principal food."

The next day he caught 45 fish.

From Fort Benton to Fort Walla Walla, Kautz fished for catfish in the Missouri, fortroutinthe Dearborn River, Little Prickly Pear Creek, Rock Creek, Gold Creek, and the Bitterroot River.

Near the end of Kautz' 57-day journey on the Mullan Road, he wrote about his final day offishing which took place on the North Fork of the Coeurd' Alene River: "Camping in a small opening in the timber. Some of the officers tried fishing, but the stream at this point seems nearly destitute of fish."

Arriving at the North Fork of the Coeur d'Alene on a drizzly day more than 130 years later, DeSimone and I hoped for better luck. At a local restaurant called the Evaville Resort (formerly a brothel named the Snake Pit), we hooked up with owner Joe Peak, the self-proclaimed resident fisherman of the river.

We asked him about the best fishing spots. His advice was reassuring. "The thing about fishing the Coeur d'Alene," he said, shaking his head, "is that if it looks good, fish it."

With that in mind, we found a beautiful hole just upstream from the tiny outlet creek called Yellow Dog. The river bank was extremely lush, and heavily forested mountains surrounded it on both sides.

It was also packed full of western cutthroat trout, the only game fish native to the Rocky Mountain area. For all anglers, the lure of catching natives is always great. But for DeSimone, it was especially pleasing since he had never caught a fish on a fly rod before.

When he finally made his first catch, he wore that goofy smile of all novice anglers who lose their fishing "virginity." And in keeping with tradition, he immediately immortalized the fly for future generations to revere by sticking it in his baseball cap.

The flies we fished with were mostly Renegades, Grey Wulffs and a light blue mayfly called a Coeur d'Alene Special. At one point of the late afternoon, as the rain beat down, the fish became extremely active. I've heard this part of the day referred to as "Magic Time," when the sun is nearly set and the fish come alive in a magical feeding frenzy, as they rise through the threshold that separates their world of water and our world of air.

Hooking into a pesky 14-inch fish, I marveled at its golden color and large evenly-spaced spots. DeSimone was nearby when I reeled the creature in. "Man, they are just so beautiful, " he said. "Even if I wanted to kill them, I don't think I could."

I was pleased to witness the birth of a full-blooded catch-and-release fisherman.

Leaving the river that night, I recalled something I had read in the *Morning Oregonian*, dated Aug. 28, 1862, which was written by the first party of emigrants that traveled the Mullan Road. In describing the voyage, they wrote, "The streams are filled with trout, weighing one to six pounds, which have afforded us rare pleasure in their capture."

The end of the road

Our fifth and final day on the Mullan Road began in Great Falls, Montana.

On Highway 87 we headed northeast toward Fort Benton. After traveling more than 800 miles through the back roads of Washington, Idaho and Montana, we were finally on the home stretch of our trip.

The views along this road were expansive; countless layers of clouds and distant mountain ranges stretched toward the horizon. We could plainly

(See "Wagon ruts" on page seven)

### MULLANCHRONICLES



### Northern overland route to Oregon follows



panorama of Helena, Montana, was discovered in family memorabilia by Mrs. Annette Broadbent This1865

ally link up with the Mullan Road at the mouth of the Yellowstone, Fort Benton.

Lueg gives a detailed weather and left the train. geographic report of the group's travels. At Fort Abercrombie (Minn.) the "they covered 991 miles from St. Cloud post commander ordered 100 soldiers to Fort Benton in 85 days; they were to escort the travelers who had been 66 days on the road and spent 19 days joined by some other private parties at different places along the way." He for safety.

Dissatisfaction with Davy erupted during a sojourn at Fort Ranson where they were traveling on the (Northern the army was building a new post. Overland route) that Captain (James Kingston writes: Lueg says that he L.) Fisk laid out in 1862 ... At this was drunken and careless and that an time the buffalo that had been so attempt was made to elect a new scarce in Dakota appeared in large leader. But apparently the trouble herds, and many were killed-again a blew over, for on the 24th (of July) the welcome addition to the daily rations. emigrants continued on their way The train had been traveling in one under Davy's management" encoun- long line, but now it was decided that tering the usual hardships of prairie the more compact arrangement of a travel. On Aug. 8 they arrived at Fort double line would be safer ... Stevenson on the Missouri River "On (Sept.) 13 they met a detachwhere they saw steamboats travers- ment of 25 mounted soldiers. They ing and had a chance to speak to were approaching Fort Benton, and travelers from the west.

"One of these," Lueg writes, "the numerous. Voila, returning from the upper river was carrying 100 passengers who expedition reached Fort Benton. Lueg brought news that times were bad in says that the place contained six large the mining country, and some of the and many small stores, also half a men decided to stay at Stevenson and dozen saloons. The fort was at the do government work....

north side of the Missouri opposite had difficulty in getting up the river.

Kingston wrote, the military escort

"According to Lueg's log," he adds, continued:

"On August 26 Lueg notes that

white people were becoming more

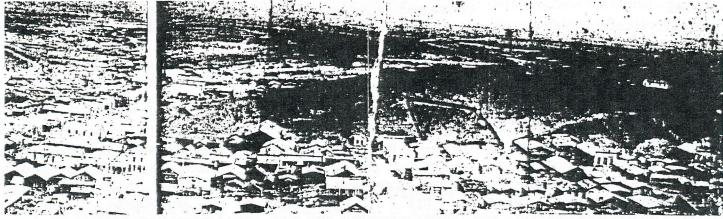
"On the 17th of September the head of navigation on the Missouri, At Fort Buford which sat on the and when water was low steamboats

At this time there was a steamboat a short distance below Fort Benton that had left St. Louis May 25 with heavy freight and 90 passengers and was unable to make the last few miles to its destination.

"At Fort Benton there was more trouble with Captain Davy. The people of one wagon had consumed the provisions allotted to them for the trip, and Davy was about to sell the wagon and oxen and declared that he was going to leave these passengers behind. Apparently Davy was out of money, as Lueg writes that he had borrowed from several members of the party. Finally, after much excitied talking, punctuated with threats of violence, the difficulty was adjusted, and the entire party started off toward Helena City.

"They were now on the Mullan Road and met many, many heavy freight wagons on their way to Fort Benton, where merchandise and machinery would be loaded for Helena City and the mining camps. Freight hauling was done with ox teams, and some of these wagons were drawn by as many as 12 oxen. They could travel now with a feeling of safety, as there was no longer any danger from Indians. Along the way were log cabins and at least one blacksmith shop; they

### Mullan Road to Montana's capital city



of Sussex, England, niece (and adopted daughter) of Bob Stanley, who discovered gold in Last Chance Gulch

met families setting out on their way east; and as they came nearer to Helena, small irrigated farms were seen; in many cases these farms were offered for sale—an indication of unsatisfactory economic condition...

"At Fort Shaw, a new four-company army post built mainly of adobe bricks, some two dozen passengers left the train to take construction jobs. Carpenters received \$100 a month in greenbacks, and masons, \$125. At that time in Montana a dollar in greenbacks was worth 75-cents in gold. Six other men from the train took a contract to cut wood for the fort at \$2 a cord in gold.

"In some places the Mullan Road was extremely steep, and here detours on longer and easier grades had been built by private individuals to whom the Montana legislature had granted the right to charge toll. Freighters with their heavy loads used these roads, but the Davy party, with lightly loaded wagons, kept to the original route on which there were no toll charges. Eleven days were spent on the way to Helena City, and about the only disagreeable thing that happened centered around Lueg's dog, Jeff. As Lueg tells it, 'my faithful dog and his companion found a stink-cat (skunk) and killed it, which caused a furor and displeasure in camp by their return, because of the uncommonly sharp and deep-seated smell which the stinkcat sprays on whomever comes in its proximity of contact.'

"The experience of the party as it approached Helena are told graphically in Lueg's narrative and may best be recounted in his own words. The German families camped at Greenhorn Gulch about 12 miles from Helena for a short rest, but were detained for 14 days by more trouble with Captain Davy;

"Just as soon as the train was in camp, there appeared the leader of the train, P.B. Davy, together with the sheriff from Helena, and made a demand for \$612.00 levied on the train as money promised for leading the train over the plains. This demand was earnestly considered by our people and refused as irregular and unjust ...

Toward evening of the same day the sheriff appeared in camp with 20 mounted and armed men and drove off 40 oxen as security for Davy's demand and brought them to Helena the next day and turned them over to a man to keep. This provoked great unrest and fear among the Germans who were destined for Oregon, and who now felt themselves hampered in the journey. They had visions of costs and troubles. Steps were taken against this presumptuous and unjust demand and a delegation from the train presented the whole matter publicly in Helena. The procedure excited strong protests among the inhabitants of Helena against Davy.

"The suit of Davy against the German settlers was set for Wed., Oct. 2, but was postponed to Thursday and then to the coming Mon., Oct. 7. In the meantime various rumors circulated about the notorious Davy; among them, one that he had disappeared notwithstanding that a few of his friends stood bail for him for \$2500. Many people from whom Davy had borrowed money during the journey were waiting for him in Helena City. Finally Davy's suittook place on Mon., Oct. 7; it was continued Tuesday and Wednesday evening the verdict was rendered in favor of the Germans.

"October 5, Saturday. During the past week I have paid out considerable money in Helena as I have decided to move to Oregon with the other Germans, and so I purchased an ordinary riding horse, including saddle, bridle and spurs for \$80 in paper money which passes here for 75-cents for a dollar in gold. For a buffalo robe I paid \$11, shirts \$3, watch repair \$7.50. I

(See "Northern" on page seven)

MULLANCHRONICLES

### "Northern..." from page 5

cashed a certificate of deposit on a St. Paul bank for \$309 for which I received \$280.

"Helena City is a closely built city and lies in a quite narrow valley which opens on a valley bench, 6-8 miles wide and 12-15 miles long; it widens out toward the east and northeast and is coursed through by several large streams. This valley has very picturesque surroundings. The principal business street in Helena runs southerly along a small creek and contains nothing but stores and saloons of every sort.

"Business at present is very poor in Montana, of which Helena City is the principal trading place. The revenue from the mines is very small. Clothing, cattle, horses and provisions are very cheap. There is little demand for labor. Drinks in the saloon are 50-cents. Haircut \$1, shaves 25-cents. Board without lodging is \$8 per week which people here call cheap. The weather is very warm in the daytime, at night it is quite cold. The road near Helena is settled with ranches (farms) most of which are irrigated by water ditches. Most of the farms are offered for sale.

"Several of those intentioned for Oregon remained behind in Montana. On account of severe sickness (Mountain fever) of his three grown daughters, a Bohemian, Rossman, was obliged to move to Helena, where a tourth, yet younger girl, died. The grown daughter of my friend Dueber, Josephine, likewise remained in Helena. Our German girls were in great demand there and high wages (40-50 dollars per month) were offered them. Yet, no others accepted offers and remained with the train. A number of milk cows of the train were sold in Montana at good prices."

In the next issue, we will pick up the narrative as Luegand his party left Helena and continued west as the weather begins to turn.

### "Wagon ruts..." from page 3

see why Montana is called Big Sky Country.

As we approached the end of our journey, a sign indicated it was only 10 miles to Fort Benton. I thought back to an encounter we had earlier on the road with a man named Steve Mullan, owner of the Rose Lake General Store in Idaho's Silver Valley.

After telling him our reason for driving through his town—to retrace the Mullan Road—he looked at us with a puzzled, confused grin, and asked, "Why?" It was a good question. I guess the answer is, well, why not? We had a great time. It was basically a trip with a purpose: A road trip to find a "road."

And though the Mullan Road has been largely forgotten, some people still believe it has an important place in the history of the Northwest. Perhaps Deb Davis of Superior, Montana puts it best.

"We feel the Mullan Road doesn't get enough notoriety," said Davis, who co-edits *Mullan Chronicles*, a newsletter committed to preserving the road and educating people about what Mullan and his crews accomplished.

One of the current projects of the museum is keeping a running list of the men who worked on the Mullan Road. "We've researched it as much as we can," she said. But every once in awhile we come across a name we haven't seen before." The list had the names of roughly two-thirds of the original crew who blazed the road.

"Here in the Inland Northwest," Davis added, "this road is really kingpin. Without Mullan's engineering and road construction in the 1850s and 60s, there wouldn't have even been a railroad or an Interstate 90 through here."

She was referring to the fact Mullan surveyed thousands of square miles of uncharted land before choosing the optimal path for his road. And so, in some areas of Idaho and Montana, I-90 and the rail line follow the same mountain passes and coulees that Mullan originally chose between 1859-62.

As we pulled into the small, sleepy city of Fort Benton, the so-called birthplace of Montana, traces of the community's rich past—which included a visit by Lewis and Clark during their 1805 voyage to the Pacific—could be seen all over town.

A hotel built in 1882, which used to boast the finest accomodations between Minneapolis and Seattle, stood vacant along Front Street. Behind the dilapidated building, the oldest bridge in the state spanned the mighty Missouri. At the far end of town, ruins of the fort recalled the first permanent settlement in Montana. And a statue of Capt. Mullan explained his road was the first federally built "highway" in the west.

In the offices of the Museum of the Great Plains, we met Joel Overholser, who recently retired after serving as editor of the local paper, *The River Press* for nearly four decades.

We told him about our mission, and asked if we could look through his extensive files and map collection for a few more bits of information. A story he wrote for his paper back in November 1974 caught my attention.

"The Mullan Road," Overholser wrote, "has faded into historical oblivion, and indeed its somewhat visionary purpose was largely nullified with the opening of the first transcontinental railway in 1869.

"Yet hundreds of its 624 miles are today retraced by modern highways and railroads, so the route can be credited a pioneer forerunner, and one of the great historic trails of America... a few traces and ruts even remain here and there."

And a lot of potential adventures lie in between.





July 1, 1995

#### Dear Cathryn & Deb,

We have just come from the funeral of one of Gustav's two remaining granddaughters. Dorothea Cromlin O'Connell was the daughter of Antoinette Sohon Cromlin. Dorothea had four children and numerous grandchildren. The conversation eventually turned to Gustav and what, if anything, any of us might have found. All the cousins are very interested in your museum and the work you are doing. We gave them information that we gained through you, and promised to pass their addresses on to you. Unfortunately, we did not have any of your publications with us, a real oversight! (She then lists several names.)

How can we reach you by computer? Do you have a fax or an Internet connection? We can be reached by ARELL @AOL.com We can send fax, but not receive. Looking forward to hearing from you ... Hope to make some connections with Dr. Hugh Mullanthrough Dr. Dan O'Connell. Will let you know how it comes out. All for now.

Nancy Sohon.

Nancy and all you other hackers, We're slugs. We have a computer but are not linked up with Internet or any other part of the world. We're not only slugs, but we are poor slugs and do not have the budget

for it so we'll have to stick with ATT and U.S. Postal Service.

We're glad that you are making more Mullan contacts via the Sohon tribe. We're always growing and love it. My question is, however, is whether anyone has a special Mullan topic or angle we can look into. It's hard to come up with ideas for the newsletter that will be of interest to everyone so we grab what looks interesting and go with it. Thanks to all of you for your previous ideas and support over these past few years.

—Deb

### From Kay:

I recently had to upgrade my computer from 60Mb to 1.2Gmb as I ran out of room. This new machine (being a machine) has a mind of its own and doesn't recognize commands I used for many years. Thank goodness for Van! As far as going any further into the electronics age, no, I don't think that will happen very soon.

#### July 4, 1995

### Dear Folks,

I have a subscription to the *Montana Magazine* and I had noticed a listing in the classified ads of a place in Helena—The Golden Hill Antiquarian—offering rare and fine

MULLANCHRONICLES

books for sale. I am always interested in any information about the Mullan Trail ever since I saw some old signs near the Monida Ranger Station where we lived in 1939-49. My husband had shown them to me. At the time he said someone will take these signs for souvenirs. He was so right, they were gone the next time we drove by!

I wrote to Helena, to Margaret Summers who runs this book store and asked for a list of books. It came in a few days. There was a listing of *Mullan, Capt. John— Construction of Military Road from Fort Walla Walla to Fort Benton,* Govt. Printing Office, 1863 Blue Cover, Very bad condition, Maps in back of book \$15.00

I couldn't believe it. I hurried and put my check in the mail, hoping it would get there before the book was sold. In a few days it came! It is in poor shape. Only two maps were in the book. The Montana map had been cut out. The one I especially hoped for. The 10 pictures were there, tho.

Yesterday, Frances helped me get copies of them for you. It was printed in 1863. There are other reports in book. I know you will be happy to get these copies. They are wonderful.

Anna M. Lukens

#### Dear Anna,

Thank you so much for the color reproductions of the Mullan Book photos. They are beautiful and we will proudly add them to our collection.

Our museum was fortunate to also secure one of the books several years ago but the plates had





## from the mail pouch (cont'd)

faded and did not have the color we have seen in prints you sent us or elsewhere. A couple years ago Ye Galleon Press (Box 287, Fairfield, WA, 98012, 509-283-2422) reprinted the report putting the maps in the back and using duotone for the prints. The material is exact and having a reprint is great as you don't worry about having something happen to the original. Our copy we obtained from a bookstore in Seattle for many, many dollars.

Again, I'm a slug, Anna. You called this summer to make an appointment to visit the museum and I tried but never could get hooked up with you. I now have lost your number, a casualty of my frantic lifestyle. But if you try to contact me again, we'll try and set things up for a tour with either Kay or me in the nearfuture. Until then, I apologize. And thanks for thinking of us. —Deb

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