

## WinkWorld June 2003

As you read this, I will be driving across Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming en route to the ranch. The trip is 1431 miles, and I do it in 2 days. If I drive for 15 hours the first day, then I only have 12 hours to drive the second day. It is always amazing to me to see the difference in people, as I travel. Ginny, my 7-year-old lab accompanies me. We stop at all of the rest stops, which look safe, and play and exercise.

As I have nothing prepared for Prairie Pedagogy this month, I dug into my computer to find something I wrote in the spring of 1999, when I was on sabbatical on the ranch. I am copying a part of it here.

3-29-99

Our first 60-degree day  
40 MPH winds

Today I felt a hint of spring. The silence of winter seems to have passed. I decided to celebrate spring in a special way. Wink took Ginny and me to the radar hill, which is about 3-4 miles north of the ranch house. He dropped us off, and we walked back cleaning the ditches as we walked. I filled large black garbage bags with trash and left them along side the fence as we went, for Wink to pick up on his return trip from Faith.

Before long I realized that millions of ants had come out to celebrate spring also, and I was covered. On the prairies there are simply no trees or ditches to hide, but I needed to get the ant parade off of me and my clothes. Ginny and I ran to the spillway of the second dam north of the house so I could hide and shake off the ant celebration.

Ginny enjoyed her time swimming in the dam and swimming after the **buffle-head** ducks. These are black and white coot-looking ducks, which have a white patch on their cheek and a little crown of feathers. I had only learned of this type of bird this a.m. when my friend, Mary Kay, told me on email. I thought she was talking about a **buffalo-head** duck, a strange-looking bird I was sure.

After this, Ginny and I walked back to the ranch house. Before I knew it, I was right in the middle of a large hardpan area filled with cactus. I had cactus on my boots and jeans. Ginny tried to walk delicately to avoid them, but her paws were covered. Finally, it became apparent that she could go no farther, so I picked up my wet Ginny and carried her out of the cactus field. She did not fight me and seem to know that I was trying to help. She weighs about 60 pounds, so I had to stop and rest a time or two before we got to the prairie land again. Then we stopped to pull all of the cactus out of her paws and my boots.

We arrived back to the ranch with tired feet and paws and more stories of how not to celebrate spring.