

Opposites clash under the vast Western sky

Master writer Doig sends a son and his dying father on Montana explorations

Mountain Time

By Ivan Doig
Scribner, 316 pp., \$25

The new West confronts the old West in Ivan Doig's new novel when Mitch Rozier, brooding environmentalist, comes home from Seattle to tend to his rainbow-chasing Montana father, a "sonofabitching guy who is always out to make a killing instead of a living."

Mountain Time is a rich, resonant read, crafted out of Western talk and terrain. It deals with the history we're given and the history we make for ourselves in a story about three sets of relationships: between lovers, between sisters and be-

BOOK REVIEW

By Bob Minzesheimer

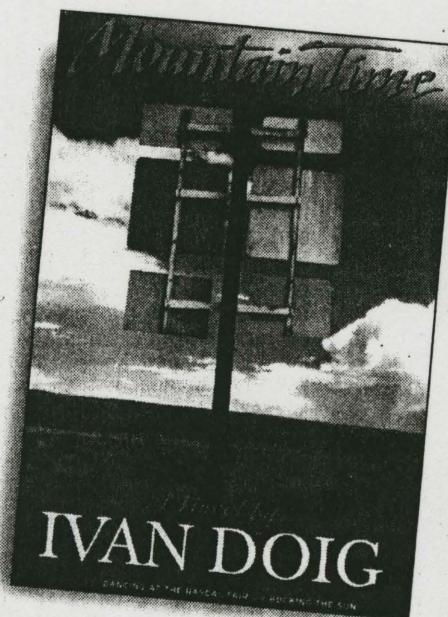
tween father and son.

The son left Montana more than 30 years ago, a big kid from a small town, banking his football scholarship as if it were a bingo jackpot. At the University of Washington, he grew "incurably curious about the insides of sentences and would rework a piece of writing until the paper gave out."

He ends up as an environmental columnist for a weekly newspaper in Seattle. But the paper is dying, and Mitch is haunted by "the ghost chorus of his trade": Wallace Stegner "magisterially whipping the nail on the head in every sentence of his hallowed 'wilderness letter.' Feverish Bob Marshall, the Thomas Wolfe of the Forest Service, writing and hiking himself to death in the mountains he so adored, his epitaph theirs: 'How much wilderness do we need? How many Brahms symphonies do we need?'

The father, never asking that question, never makes a killing. He barely makes a living on land whose natural crop is cantaloupe-size rocks. His back yard is a rust museum of dead equipment when he summons his son home for a final, environmentally dubious get-rich-quick scheme and to reveal he's dying.

The son is targeted, Doig writes, for the



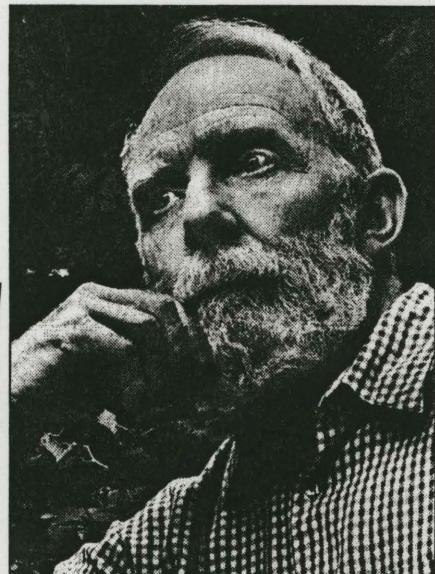
Excerpt

Up there along the Divide of the continent extended the Bob Marshall Wilderness, named for that bat-eared Mozart of the national forests, roaming and rhapsodizing. Right now Mitch wished that more people had seen along with Bob Marshall that this neck of the earth was always going to be a country of great mountains and mediocre human chances.

"involuntary clerkwork of closing down a parent's life. The time came; it always came. The when of it was the ambush."

Doig likes those zinger sentences. He has written two family memoirs, including the heartbreakingly *This House of Sky*, and five previous novels, including a sweeping Montana trilogy that covers three generations of the McCaskill family.

In *Mountain Time*, Mitch lives with Alexander (Lexa) McCaskill, a fellow refu-



By Marion Ettlinger

Doig: He grew up in a family of Montana sheep ranchers and now lives in Seattle.

gee from Montana who, after cooking on fish boats in Alaska, turned to fancy catering for Seattle's software crowd. Both are divorced and sorting out their relationship "a hilly day at a time, sometimes bumpy minute to minute." At 40, Lexa has "adjusted to a lot of life's double talk, but modern living-together still took some tip-toeing through the terms."

Adding to "the dose of family," as Lexa puts it, is her overpowering photographer sister, Mariah ("highly cameraed up," their father said of her approach to life). The three of them — Mitch, Lexa and Mariah — end up in an adventure that threatens to alter everything and revolves around an accident of history.

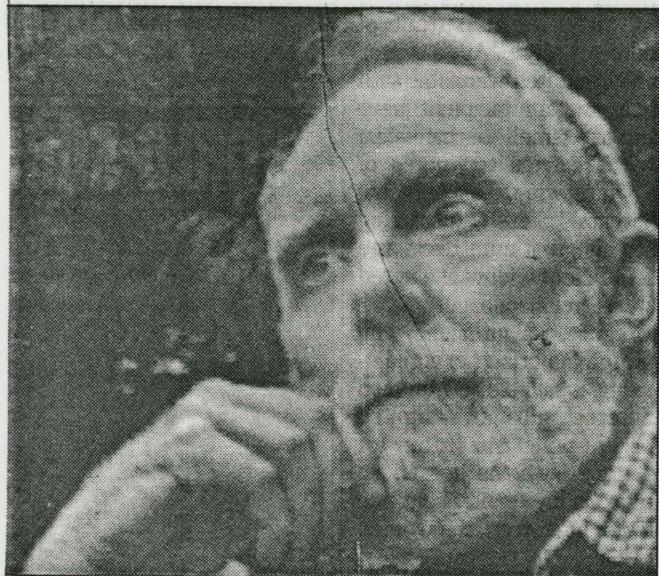
Doig writes playfully about the pretensions of the cyber-frontier and of the baby-boomer West, but he is at his best recreating the past and linking past and present. The only problem is that the McCaskill sisters, strong, independent women, are richer and more enduring characters than the illusive Mitch.

Doig is a writer who deserves wider recognition. *Mountain Time* is for readers who admire novelists who treat the landscape with as much affection as their characters (think Stegner or David Guterson).

Here's hoping Doig's next novel brings the legendary Bob Marshall, in a cameo appearance here, fully back to life.

E-mail bminzesheimer@usatoday.com

A return to mountain roots



Ivan Doig

"Mountain Time"

by Ivan Doig
Scribner, \$25

By TIM McNULTY
Special to The Seattle Times

Seattle writer Ivan Doig's popular Montana trilogy, which follows four generations of the spirited McCaskill clan, might just have to become a quartet.

"Mountain Time," Doig's sixth novel, returns to the enduring themes and expansive landscapes that inspired his most memorable work: the complexities of love, loss

and family loyalties played out against the rugged Montana land.

The characters in this novel find their way back to their mountain roots by way of contemporary Seattle. Along the way, Doig gives us some delightful takes on the city, including the '60s, city newsrooms, old neighborhoods, new "cybernaires," and characters we feel we already know.

Mitch Rozier's life on the coast is coming unraveled. An aging and somewhat jaded environmental columnist for a Fremont-district alternative weekly, he is no longer at the top of his game. A final blow

comes when he learns that, after 25 years, his paper is going free, becoming, in his words, street litter. Things are not faring well at home either.

His relationship with his partner, Lexa (of the aforementioned McCaskill clan, featured in the Doig books "English Creek," "Dancing at the Rascal Fair" and "Ride With Me") is rocky at best, and his grown children from an earlier marriage want nothing to do with him. When the call comes from his father, a hard-bitten Montana ranch hand from whom Mitch himself has been estranged for much of his adult life, he heads back to his boyhood home to help sort out the old man's tangled affairs.

Mitch's father, Lyle, is a working study of the last gasp of the Old West. Surrounded by rusting farm equipment, junked trucks and stocks of old newspapers, he squints at a rapidly changing world through a haze of tobacco smoke. His latest get-rich scheme, selling the family's scant landholdings to a gravel company that plans to lace the Rocky Mountain front with mining roads, is put on hold by his son's arrival. The novel seems poised to take off in the direction of environmental journalism, but Doig has other veins to probe. Soon after his

'Mountain Time' by Ivan
Doig

arrival, Mitch finds that his father is dying of leukemia, and the tangled affairs confronting the son are now of his own making.

Readers of Doig's earlier novels will recognize the looming scarps of the Jericho and Roman reefs that frame the tiered ridges of the Two Medicine River country. Doig has fashioned a mythic landscape as memorable and real as Faulkner's. The same affections, betrayals and wars of the heart that propel his earlier novels endure here, along with the weathered limestone hills. Doig is at his best when sketching human frailties against the broad historical sweep of the mountain west, and Mitch's desire to understand the rift between him and his father sends the novel back through the Montana of the 1930s, as well as the hard-worked fields of his own youth.

To add to the emotional mix, Lexa arrives to help with Lyle and confront her relationship with Mitch. With her is her sister, Mariah, a photographer, who stays on to document Lyle's last days as a human-interest story for her paper, the Montanian. If the cast is beginning to sound a bit crowded, it is. Mariah whirled through the earlier novel, "Ride with Me, Mariah Montana," and her presence here seems superfluous. But Doig's storytelling thrives on the emotional entanglements between kin and kindred and the uneasy resolves to which they lead.

Doig also loves to brush his characters against historical disasters. Lexa's father just missed being sent out to fight the disastrous Mann Gulch fire, which took the lives of 12 young firefighters; her great-grandfather barely survived the deadly 1918 influenza epidemic. Mitch, too, seems to have caught the family penchant for the near-miss. Chance alone kept him from Coldwater Ridge the morning Mount St. Helens erupted; his partner, who was also covering the story, was less fortunate. History figures strongly into Lyle's story, too — the Depression and World War II helped harden his mind-set. But Lyle's battles were largely self-generated, and the only fatalities were his relationships with his wife and son.

"Mountain Time" clearly moves away from the bulky historical scaffolding of Doig's most recent novels: Montana's centennial in "Ride with Me," and the building of Fort Peck Dam in "Bucking the Sun." The history shaping the lives of these characters is written into their own hearts.

In what seems a final irony, Lyle asks his son to spread his ashes on a remote mountain in the heart of the Bob Marshall Wilderness, a place, in life, he would as soon have seen logged and mined to eviscerated heaps. Mitch is galled by the request, but his search for the reason behind it leads him to the truth of a family secret, the source of his own estrangement from the embittered old man, and possibly, a key to his own self-knowledge.

In "Mountain Time," Doig has delivered us another classic.

Tim McNulty's most recent book, "Washington's Mount Rainier National Park, A Centennial Celebration," is published by Mountaineers Books.

Tale of Family Turmoil Set in the Rugged West

Book Review

By MICHAEL FRANK
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

MOUNTAIN TIME
By Ivan Doig
Scribner
\$25, 316 pages

Ivan Doig's new novel, "Mountain Time," his sixth work of fiction, quickly announces itself as a story concerned with the West. Third are the abundant references to the big names (and hearts) of Western—or naturalist—literature: Thoreau, Edward Abbey, Aldo Leopold, Wallace Stegner and Bob Marshall, inspiration behind Montana's Bob Marshall Wilderness Preserve.

Doig also turns his attention to the Western cataclysms—the Valdez oil spill, the eruption of Mt. St. Helens—and tucks them into the characters' back stories, sometimes credibly, sometimes with the creaky sound of a theme being spliced into a life. Inevitably, he captures the landscape, which is majestic and beautiful but at the same time corrupted, abused, endangered. Out of these bricks much Western fiction has been built, not a little by Doig himself.

Painstaking brickwork does not always lead to felicitous storytelling, however, and although there is much to admire in "Mountain Time," especially in the relationship between its protagonist, Mitch Rozier, and his cantankerous, dying father, Lyle, there are also stretches of narrative that feel under-imagined and mechanical.

A man of substantial physical bulk, Mitch Rozier has, at 50, put in 25 years at Cascopia, an alternative Seattle paper where he writes a column called "Coastwatch." Thinking back over his life's work during an airplane journey, Mitch reflects that he has "tried his utmost to grope his way among all of it sprawled down there—the seafaring coastal capes, the snake routes of rivers, the strangely serene cliff-faces of dams, the faltering forests, the valleys going to suburbs, the shuddering but restless earthquake faults, the cloud-high mountains made of internal fire."

A 50-year-old man reviewing his life's work is bound to be thrown into some kind of crisis, as indeed

Mitch eventually is. It takes rather a while for Mitch—and "Mountain Time"—to reach the true provocations provided by the senior Rozier. Along the way, the reader meets Mitch's girlfriend, Lexa McCaskill, a caterer to the latest Seattle cyber-millionaires, and the estranged children from his first marriage, Jocelyn (who, by moving West, becomes a somewhat more vivid, though still underexplored, presence in Mitch's life) and Ritz (who is estranged from his father). Also on the scene are Bing, Mitch's employer, whose paper is losing money, and Mariah, Lexa's sister, a photojournalist who accompanies Lexa and Mitch to Lyle's bedside to document his dying.

Mariah, unfortunately, brings out some of Doig's less elegant writing. There is the therapy-facile motivation for her photo-essay (she did not have a chance to grieve for her mother's death); she and her sister speak in dialogue that is arch and unconvincing; and she and Mitch engage in a wholly implausible flirtation that Doig concocts to add tension to the novel's slack last lap.

Mariah does succeed in taking some moving photographs of the expiring Lyle, and it is no wonder. He also brings out Doig's most honest work: Lyle, with his "drill-bit way of looking at you," is the philosophical and psychological opposite of his son. He is preoccupied with his experiences of World War II; as the owner of gravel pits in the Rocky Mountains, he is an abuser of the Western landscape who intends to abuse it further, by selling out to a company that wants to put roads down next to the Bob Marshall Wilderness in order to drill for oil; he has little illness with or feeling for nature, people and his only child.

Yet he is capable of surprises too: Lyle has established a relationship (by e-mail) with Mitch's estranged son that Mitch knew not; as he dies, he changes his mind about nature and asks that his ashes be scattered over the wilderness that, his son maintains, he wanted "carved up into money."

In these conflicts between father and son, Doig has found implausible marriage between theme and character, setting and sentiment; they stand out as the most memorable interludes in this otherwise uneven book.

LA Times Book
Review

• Mountain Time

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NPR

An eloquent coda to a family trilogy

BY RON FRANCELL

IN MONTANA, not far from where Ivan Doig grew up beneath the big sky that still haunts him, three rivers flow together to form the deep, wide Missouri, lacing through time and landscape, the old West and the new.

Like the brawny Missouri, Doig has channeled three deep literary tributaries into "Mountain Time," a coda to his McCaskill family trilogy. Mitch Rozier is flotsam, a 50-year-old environmental columnist for a post-hip alternative Seattle weekly paper. He's a Baby Boom-

BOOK REVIEW

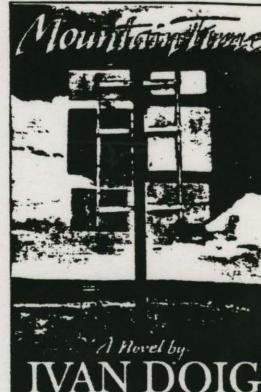
"Mountain Time"

Author: Ivan Doig

Publisher: Scribner

320 pp.

Price: \$25



The reigning master of new Western literature delivers a new novel.

landscape.

Doig's poetic prose remains intact here, but for the first time in his literary career he's pretty funny, too, especially when he's satirizing the foibles and excesses of the Pacific Northwest "Cyberia": "the Cascopia (newspaper) building was in Seattle's Fremont district, where the Sixties still roamed. The hempen necessities of life were available there, as were cafes with good rowdy names such as The Longshoreman's Daughter, plus deluxe junk shops, plus bars that were museum pieces from the days when hair was Hair."

Together, they are caught in the undertow of Lyle Rozier, Mitch's father. Lyle is dying of leukemia, and Mitch is summoned back to his childhood home in Montana, where he's caught up in the ordeal of his filial obligation: "You can't not go home again when someone is sitting there dying."

Mitch faces an ancient question unearthed by a new generation and twisted to fit a new sensibility. Dare we go home again? That's what Mitch asks himself when his father calls from Montana:

"The old hated tone of voice. Lyle Rozier proclaiming he had the world on a tow rope and a downhill pull at last. Rubbing his opposite ear as if the words had gone right through him. Mitch winced into the phone that next morning. How many times had he heard this, or something an awful lot like it?"

But Mitch's reluctant reunion with his crusty old dad is flooded with lingering family disappointments and secrets — and the revelation that Lyle wants to sell the family land to a gravel company, and rewrite his own life history in the process. Lexa comes along for moral support but brings her sly sister, world-weary photographer Mariah McCaskill, who documents Lyle's deathwatch and proves a bitter reminder of Lexa's unrooted angst. Lyle and Mitch, Mitch and Lexa, Lexa and Mariah: their disparate, desperate lives flow together when they hike into the mountains on a sad journey to scatter Lyle's ashes, with passages among the most stirring pieces of Western nature writing you'll find.

Three people, three intense relationships, three rivers. "Mountain Time" is the confluence: the very real familial clash between Lyle and Mitch echoes the clash between the historic and contemporary West, where exploitation has always been at odds with environmental anxiety. But the reader also stands on the near bank of a dynamically flowing history in which men have both protected and profaned the Western

Or this description of Mitch's "lactose-intolerant" cubicle mate: "Shyanne had gone on and on in an avid whisper about corporately responsible non-lactic vegan dietary rules until it dawned on the (staff) that no milk in the office meant no lattes in the office, and she was rudely hooted down."

Humor aside, "Mountain Time" is still a serious story from the reigning master of new Western literature. It is a story about moving forward by going back. For Doig, now 60 and living in Seattle, the long journey home started with the autobiographical "This House of Sky," and has continued through fiction ("English Creek," for example) and nonfiction ("Heart Earth," his 1993 memoir and sequel to "This House of Sky.") It's not necessary that the reader be able to recite McCaskill family history from memory to enjoy "Mountain Time," just more fun.

"Mountain Time" will not dissuade those who rank Doig among the best living American writers, and one might even begin making comparisons to some of the best "dead" ones, too.

Like Faulkner, Doig is not just another regional writer with an ear for the perfect-pitch of parochial rhythms and shallow roots in the Rocky Mountain Front. He looks homeward, and he sees a place in all our minds, not just in those of us who live in and write about the West.

So it is with rivers. They move on, gaining strength as they go, to some bigger water. Then someday, whether in rain or snow, they come back. Doig keeps coming back, undiminished.

A Wyoming novelist and newspaperman, Ron Franscell is the author of "Angel Fire" and the upcoming mystery "The Deadline."

~~Doig + Ivan - Indeed! Comart have chosen a new name to reprint!~~

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FICTION

Doig again weaves masterful Western tale

Ron Franscell
Special to The Denver Post

In Montana, not far from where Ivan Doig grew up beneath the big sky that still haunts him, three rivers flow together to form the deep, wide Missouri, lacing through time and landscape, the old West and the new.

Like the brawny Missouri, Doig has tamed three deep literary tributaries to "Mountain Time," a coda to his McCaskill family trilogy. Mitch Rozier is jetsam, a 50-year-old environmental columnist for a post-hip alternative Seattle weekly newspaper. He's a baby boomer eading water amid tenuous job security, strangement from his grown children and the company of his scrappy lover. Lexa McCaskill is jetsam, an earthy, divorced Montana expatriate catering wacky Seattle software soirees, also going nowhere.

Together, they are caught in the underworld of Lyle Rozier, Mitch's father. Lyle is dying of leukemia, and Mitch is summoned back to his childhood home in Montana, where he's caught up in the ordeal of filial obligation: "You can't not go home again when someone is sitting there dying."

Mitch faces an ancient question unearthing by a new generation and twisted to fit a new sensibility: Dare we go home again? That's what Mitch asks himself when his father calls from Montana:

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MOUNTAIN TIME

By Ivan Doig
Scribner, \$25



Doig

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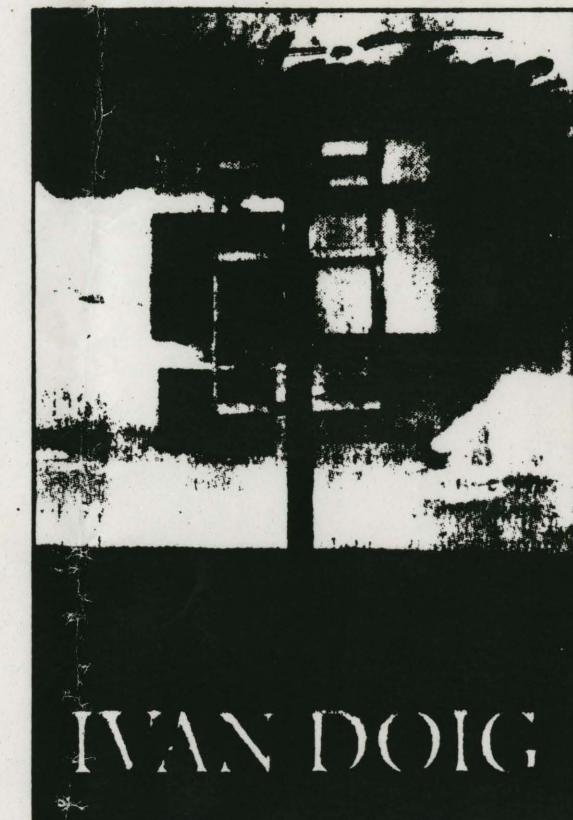
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"Mountain Time" will not dissuade those who rank Doig among the best living American writers, and one might even begin making comparisons to some of the dead ones, too. Faulkner comes most readily to mind: The Snopeses of Yoknapatawpha County are no more troubled or human than the McCaskills of Montana's Two Medicine country — two great rivers in different landscapes.

But like Faulkner, Doig is not just another regional writer with an ear for the perfect-pitch of parochial rhythms and shallow roots in the Rocky Mountain Front Range. He's bigger than the Big Sky. He stands upon the shoulders of Wal-



IVAN DOIG

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Ron Franscell is a Wyoming novelist and newspaperman. He is the author of "Angel Fire" and the upcoming mystery, "The Deadline."

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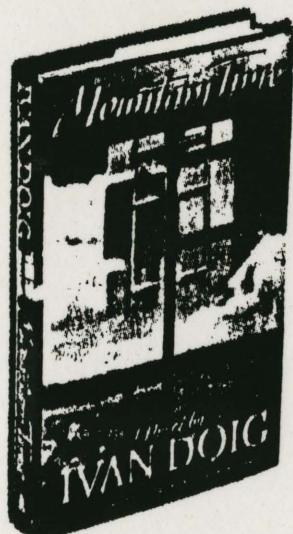


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LUCE PRESS CLIPPINGS

NOVEL

'Muscular' author fails in attempt to lift reader into action



Mountain Time

★ Author: Ivan Doig.

Publisher: Scribner.

Price: \$25.

Pages: 316.

Star ratings: ★★★ excellent, ★★ good, ★ fair, * poor

By Dan Carpenter
BOOK EDITOR

I tend to drift in the opposite direction when I come upon a novel whose protagonist is a writer. When the writer is a newspaper writer, I tend to break into a trot.

An exception is Annie Proulx's *The Shipping News*, whose forlorn menagerie of smalltown ink-slingers is so far removed from my experience, and just about anybody else's, that I have no fear of the familiarity that breeds contempt.

Odd, then, that the estimable Proulx provides one of the jacket blurbs for Ivan Doig's latest novel of

the great outdoors, *Mountain Time*.

Her praise for this "muscular and exceedingly good writer" derives from his overall oeuvre and not specifically this entry, and I have a feeling politeness would compel her to leave matters vague.

Whatever authority and stylistic power may have earned the National Book Award finalist his high stature as a chronicler of the West are as sparse here as spreading oaks in his native Montana.

Though he hustles us to Seattle, San Francisco and Alaska as well as the home territory in this rather compressed story, none of those landscapes is conjured anew.

Nor is there much freshness to the characters, particularly the main one, Mitch Rozier, a 50-year-old environmental columnist for a failing Seattle alternative newspaper who hears "the ghost chorus of his trade keening at him. Ed Abbey smoldering in his grave in the slickrock desert, Stegner magis-

terially whopping the nail on the head in every sentence of his hal-ed wilderness letter."

Of course Mitch Rozier wishes he could write even faintly like Edward Abbey and Wallace Stegner. The reader only wishes Ivan Doig could; alas, his "muscular" prose, at least in *Mountain Time*, reads more like your local sportswriter trying to make a preseason exhibition game seem like an epic. And whoever left him alone with a love scene should be forced to judge the next 10 Raymond Chandler parody contests.

"Mitch enwrapped her, jolting her off her footing, seeming to stagger a little himself as he gave her a kiss that could have been felt in France. After the maximum visitation back and forth by their tongues, he pulled his head back and said thickly: 'She wasn't anybody. You're it.' "

Things get said thickly a lot in this book, with less justification than love-drunk Mitch has.

Perhaps Doig, following Stegner

and Jim Harrison and Ken Kesey and so many other sensitive, leathery guys, is just mining a played-out vein. When a middle-aged man returns home to his estranged dying father in the rugged beauty of the West, accompanied by two women who are rivals for his affection, and undertakes a quest to learn the old man's Dark Secret, we have more potential for a feature film than a piece of original literature. When Sundance does this one, the question will be whether Robert Redford will give in and play the old man or try to pull off the maximum visitation thing as a romantic lead one more mountainous time.

"Life is unfair, I can take," Mitch Rozier says in reference to a handsome cyber-millionaire who's one of the novel's many stereotypes. "But this guy has more going for him than Jesus did."

Lord knows Ivan Doig has a lot going for him also. He needs to get going, in some new directions.

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LUCE
PRESS CLIPPINGS

Summer book capsules

From Staff/AP reports

Here are some capsule descriptions and mini-reviews of recent books:

■ **"A Very Strange Trip"** (Bridge Publications) by L. Ron Hubbard and Dave Wolverton.

This story, based on an unpublished story by the late Hubbard, is about an offbeat road trip and is a mixture of science fiction, adventure and light-hearted comedy. Everett Dumphee joins the army to avoid prison, but activates a time machine while transporting a truckload of experimental weapons. His romp through time while trying to return to the 20th century takes him to such eras as the Ice Age, the Mayan civilization and the Native American climate of the late 1800s. Humor is derived from slapstick situations and references to popular culture.

■ **"Gabriella"** (Forge) by Earl Murray

Gabriella Hall is a young English artist who, accompanied by her fiance, Sir Edward Garr, travels along the Oregon Trail in 1846 to paint portraits of the Indians. Also headed west is Quincannon, a young man hoping to re-establish a fur-trading company there. His and Gabriella's journal entries tell the tale of their journey, of Quincannon's growing love for Gabriella and of his bitter rivalry with Edward, a strong opponent of U.S. expansion into

the Northwest.

■ **"Mountain Time"** (Scribner) by Ivan Doig

Three types of relationships — father-son, sisters and lovers — figure into this tale about Mitch Rozier, 50, a journalist who returns to Montana to tend to his cantankerous dying father, Lyle. Joining Mitch is his girlfriend Lexa, who longs to settle down, and her sister, Mariah. When the three hike into the mountains to scatter Lyle's ashes, their lives and relationships undergo profound changes.

■ **"Sharpe's Triumph"** (HarperCollins) by Bernard Cornwell

This 15th in the series featuring Sgt. Richard Sharpe has the 19th-century British soldier playing a pivotal role in the Battle of Assaye, one of the great victories for the future Duke of Wellington and a milestone in Britain's colonization of India. Sharpe is at Fort Chasalgao in 1803 when it is attacked by a band of mercenary soldiers led by Maj. William Dodd. Sharpe, the only surviving witness, heads the search for Dodd and his army.

■ **"A Certain Age"** (Doubleday) by Tama Janowitz

This darkly comic novel follows Florence Collins, a single woman in her 30s, as she searches for a rich husband and affluent lifestyle. Florence, a low-salaried jewelry appraiser at a minor New York auction house, attends every social event possible,

and spends her small paycheck and her mother's inheritance on designer clothes and on expensive cosmetics and beauty treatments, all in the hope of meeting Mr. Rich.

■ **"Expose"** (Mira) by Laura Van Wormer

Sally Harrington has left her writing job at a Los Angeles magazine for a job at a local newspaper in Connecticut. After she helps a man who thinks he is having a heart attack, his wife, Verity Rhodes, editor of a high-end magazine, gratefully gives Sally a plum assignment: profile Cassy Cochran, TV network president. Sally's research reveals Cassy to be an upstanding professional, but Verity isn't pleased: She wants Sally to dig up some dirt.

■ **"Lady Bird"** (Scribner) by Jan Jarboe Russell

This biography of former first lady Claudia "Lady Bird" Johnson traces her childhood, success in business and role in LBJ's life, career and presidency. When LBJ unexpectedly assumed office in 1963, the Johnsons were thrust into the Vietnam War, the Cold War and the war on poverty, and Mrs. Johnson had the unenviable task of replacing Jackie Kennedy, one of America's most popular first ladies. Russell, a Texan who has covered the state's politics and culture for 25 years, draws upon interviews with Mrs. Johnson and with Johnson family members, friends and advisers.

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PRESS CLIPPINGS

From Doig, a coda for the McCaskills

BY RON FRANSCELL

In Montana, not far from where Ivan Doig grew up beneath the big sky that still haunts him, three rivers flow together to form the deep and wide Missouri, lacing through both time and landscape, the old West and the new.

And like the brawny Missouri, Doig has channeled three deep literary tributaries into *Mountain Time*, a coda to his McCaskill family trilogy. Mitch Rozier is flotsam, a 50-year-old environmental columnist for a post-hip alternative Seattle weekly paper, a Baby Boomer treading water with his own past and present: estrangement from his grown children, tenuous job security and his scrappy lover.

Lexa McCaskill is jetsam, the earthy and divorced Montana expatriate swirling in Mitch's eddy, catering swanky Seattle software soirees, also going nowhere.

Together, they are caught in the undertow of Lyle Rozier, Mitch's father. Lyle is dying of leukemia and Mitch is summoned back to his childhood home in Montana, where he's caught up in the ordeal of his filial obligation: you can't go home again when someone is sitting there dying.

Mitch faces an ancient question unearthened by a new generation, twisted to fit a new sensibility: Dare we go home again? That's what Mitch asks himself when his father calls from Montana: "The old hated tone of voice. Lyle Rozier proclaiming he had the world on a towrope and a downhill pull at last. Rubbing his opposite ear as if the words had gone right through him. Mitch winced into the phone that next morning. How many times had he heard this, or something an awful lot like it?"

But Mitch's reluctant reunion with his crusty old dad is flooded with lingering family disappointments and secrets . . . and the revelation that Lyle wants to sell the family land to a gravel company, and rewrite his own life history in the process. Lexa comes along for moral support but brings her sultry sister, world-weary photographer Mariah McCaskill, who documents Lyle's deathwatch and proves a bitter reminder of Lexa's unrooted angst. Their

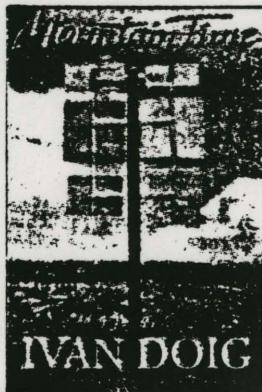
desperate and disparate lives flow together when they hike into the mountains on a sad journey to scatter Lyle's ashes.

Three people, three intense relationships, three rivers. *Mountain Time* is the confluence: The very real familial clash between Lyle and Mitch echoes the clash between the historic and contemporary West, where exploitation has always been at odds with environmental anxiety. But the reader also stands on the near bank of a dynamic, flowing history in which men have both protected and profaned the Western landscape, which is as much a character in Doig's work as any McCaskill.

Doig's poetic prose remains intact here, but for the first time in his literary career he's pretty damned funny, too, especially when he's satirizing the foibles and excesses of the Pacific Northwest "Cyberia": "The Cascopia [newspaper] building was in Seattle's Fremont district, where the Sixties still roamed. The hempen necessities of life were available there, as were cafes with good rowdy names such as The Longshoreman's Daughter, plus deluxe junk shops, plus bars that were museum pieces from the days when hair was Hair."

Mountain Time will not dissuade those who rank Doig among the best living American writers, and one might even begin making comparisons to some of the best *dead* ones, too. Faulkner comes most readily to mind: The Sartoris of *Yoknapatawpha County* are no more troubled and no more human than the McCaskills of the Two Medicine country in Montana. Two great rivers in different landscapes.

Ron Franscell is a Wyoming newspaper editor and novelist.



Mountain Time

By Ivan Doig. Scribner.
\$25.

BOOK REVIEW



BILL RUSSELL / The Chronicle

MOUNTAIN TIMEBy Ivan Doig
Scribner; 316 pages; \$25

Reviewed by Ron Franscell

In Montana, not far from where Ivan Doig grew up beneath the big sky that haunts him, three rivers flow together to form the deep, wide Missouri, lacing through time and landscape, the old West and the new.

Like the brawny Missouri, Doig has channeled three deep literary tributaries into "Mountain Time," a coda to his acclaimed McCaskill family trilogy. Mitch Rozier is flotsam, a 50-year-old environmental columnist for a post-hip alternative Seattle weekly paper. He's a Baby Boomer treading water amid tenuous job security, estrangement from his grown children and the company of his lover. Lexa McCaskill is jetsam, an earthy, divorced Montana expatriate catering swanky Seattle software soirees, also going nowhere.

Together, they are caught in the undertow of Lyle Rozier, Mitch's father. Lyle

NORTHWEST PASSAGES

A father-son clash
mirrors changes
between the old frontier
and the new
in Ivan Doig's latest novel

is dying of leukemia, and Mitch is summoned back to his childhood home in Montana, where he's caught up in the ordeal of his filial obligation: "You can't not go home again when someone is sitting there dying."

Mitch faces an ancient question unearthed by a new generation and twisted to fit a new sensibility: Dare we go home again? That's what Mitch asks himself when his father calls from Montana:

"The old hated tone of voice. Lyle Rozier proclaiming he had the world on a towrope and a downhill pull at last. Rubbing his opposite ear as if the words had gone right through him, Mitch winced into the phone that next morning. How many times had he heard this, or something an awful lot like it?"

But Mitch's reluctant reunion with his crusty old dad is flooded with lingering family disappointments and secrets — and the revelation that Lyle wants to sell the family land to a gravel company and

► "PASSAGES": See Page 8

Wyoming novelist and journalist Ron Franscell is the author of "Angel Fire" and the forthcoming mystery "The Deadline."

PASSAGES

From Page 1

rewrite his own life history in the process. Lexa comes along for moral support and brings her sultry sister, world-weary photographer Mariah McCaskill, who documents Lyle's deathwatch and proves a bitter reminder of Lexa's unrooted angst.

Lyle and Mitch, Mitch and Lexa, Lexa and Mariah: Their disparate, desperate lives come together when they hike into the mountains on a sad journey to scatter Lyle's ashes, with passages among the most stirring pieces of Western nature writing a reader will find.

In "Mountain Time," the very real familial clash between Lyle and Mitch echoes the clash between the historic and contemporary West, where exploitation has always been at odds with the environment. But the reader also witnesses a dynamic history, in which men have both protected and profaned the Western landscape.

Doig's poetic prose remains intact here, but for the first time in his literary career he's pretty funny too, especially when he's satirizing the foibles and excesses of the Pacific Northwest's "Cyberia":

"The Cascopia [newspaper] building was in Seattle's Fremont district, where the Sixties still roamed. The hempen necessities of life were available there, as were cafes with good rowdy names such as The Longshoreman's Daughter, plus deluxe junk shops, plus bars that were museum pieces from the days when hair was hair."

Or this description of Mitch's "lactose-intolerant" cubicle

mate: "Shyanne had gone on and on in an avid whisper about corporately responsible non-lactic vegan dietary rules until it dawned on the [staff] that no milk in the office meant no lattes in the office, and she was rudely hooted down."

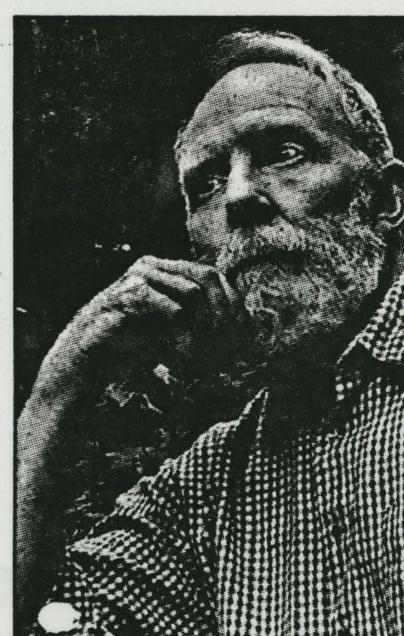
Humor aside, "Mountain Time" is still a serious story from the reigning master of new Western literature. It is a story about moving forward by going back. For Doig, now 60 and living in Seattle, the long journey home started with the autobiographical "This House of Sky," one of The Chronicle's 100 best Western nonfiction books of the 20th century, and has continued through fiction ("English Creek," for example) and nonfiction ("Heart Earth," his 1993 memoir and sequel to "This House of Sky.") It's not necessary for the reader to be able to recite McCaskill family history from memory to enjoy "Mountain Time," just more fun.

"Mountain Time" will not dissuade those who rank Doig

among the best living American writers, and one might even begin making comparisons to some of the best dead ones, too. Faulkner comes most readily to mind: The Snopeses of Yoknapatawpha County are no more troubled or human than the McCaskills of Montana's Two Medicine country — two great rivers in different landscapes.

But Doig is not just another regional writer with an ear for the parochial rhythms and shallow roots of the Rocky Mountains. He's bigger than the Big Sky. He stands upon the shoulders of Wallace Stegner and A.B. Guthrie, taller than Edward Abbey and Tom McGuane, and sees much further. He looks homeward, and he sees a place in all our minds, not just in those of us who live in and write about the West.

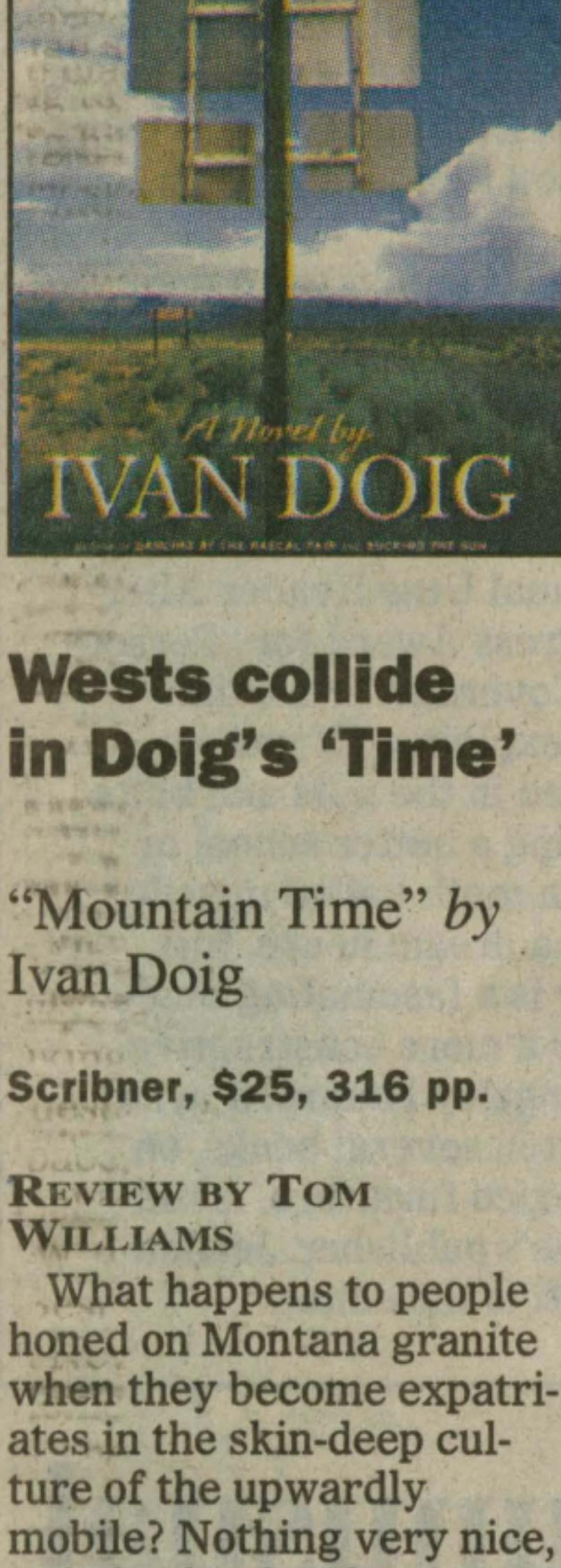
So it is with rivers. They move on to some bigger water, gaining strength as they go. Then someday, whether in rain or snow, they come back. Doig keeps coming back, undiminished.



BOOK RE

albuquerque journal

Dec. 29, 1991



Wests collide in Doig's 'Time'

"Mountain Time" by
Ivan Doig

Scribner, \$25, 316 pp.

REVIEW BY TOM WILLIAMS

What happens to people honed on Montana granite when they become expatriates in the skin-deep culture of the upwardly mobile? Nothing very nice, to judge by the characters in Ivan Doig's newest novel, "Mountain Time."

A substantial departure from his earlier work, Doig's new book may disappoint fans of his lyrical tales of the rugged Montana Rockies and the men and women who match them.

"Mountain Time" spends at least half its pages following ex-Montanans Mitch Rozier and Lexa McCaskill through their lives in different versions of Seattle hip culture.

The dialogue Doig puts in these characters' mouths is gratingly terse in-crowd: These folks are from Two Medicine country? Apparently even a Montanan can be overlaid with triviality.

The imminent demise of Mitch's father brings Mitch and Lexa, together with her sister Mariah (of Doig's "Ride with Me, Mariah Montana"), back to Montana.

Events conspire to bring Mitch and the McCaskill sisters to Phantom Woman Mountain and a rough, nominally cleansing adventure that resolves the unstable balance between their Old West roots and New West survival modes.

Doig's premise is worthy and interesting. It involves a confrontation of the values of the old and the new West. Unfortunately, the characters who carry the new west into the contest are thin and unlikable; pivotal events are unconvincing.

While "Mountain Time" isn't up to Doig's usual high standard, it is pleasing to note that he is bringing his considerable literary skills to new territory.

Tom Williams is working on his doctorate in astrophysics at UNM.

REVIEWS

Love and Grace

by Thomas Fleming

Una vita in fabbrica:
itinerario spirituale
by Mario Marcolla

Milano: Maurizio Minchella Editore;
101 pp., Lire 18,000

This is a remarkable book by a remarkable man. Mr. Marcolla is well known to many conservatives in Europe and the United States for his observations on modern philosophy contributed over the years to *Osservatore Romano*. He is a keen student of Anglo-American conservative thought as well as having been a friend and translator of the late Russell Kirk. Dr. Kirk and the editor of this magazine are only two of many Americans whom Marcolla has served as *cicerone* in their explorations of Italian political and intellectual life.

Despite frequent bouts of ill health, Mr. Marcolla exudes an air of benign understanding, though not complacency. What this little book reveals, however, is the long and hard road that has been traveled on this spiritual itinerary. Born into a family reduced to poverty, Marcolla watched his father trying to preserve his dignity working in the factories of Torino. The young Mario was sent to work in a bakery. As he grew older, he drew up plans for his self-education, only to see them founder for lack of time and energy. He found time to study Italian literature, and learned German and English eventually.

After studying some accounting, Marcolla went into the textile industry and by the time of his retirement had worked his way up to plant manager. His real life, however, was intellectual and spiritual. As a working man, he took an eager interest in Marx and the Russian Revolution, eventually finding in it a "Luciferian rebellion" of matter against form. Working among the looms and shuttles, he contemplated the great problems of existence and came to regard the factory as "a place of pain and sorrow, a nursery of men and women devoid of deep relations, without spiritual roots."

Factory work, he realized, was inher-

ently dehumanizing:

The influx of machines modeled on scientific reasoning appeared . . . to be diabolical: assembly-line work mortified the personalities, creating psychological dissociations which were noticeable in the old workers, in their worn-out look, in a kind of inattention which was the sign of an unconscious crisis, of the impossibility of being whole men like the old-time artisans and peasants from which they were descended.

Much of this memoir is devoted to Marcolla's progress through books, from leftists to Nietzsche and Evola and finally to the wisdom of the great Italian philosopher Augusto del Noce. The higher truth is to be sought, he concludes, in the human work that "binds each and every person to a supernatural destiny of love and grace." This is not the mysticism that flees the everyday world of hope and fear, but an appreciation of the mysteries woven on the loom of life. "Every man has his talents and spends them not by himself but, in his liberty and autonomy, in harmony with a providential plan that hangs over him and protects him."

Thomas Fleming is the editor of *Chronicles*.

Our Time

by Bill Croke

Mountain Time
by Ivan Doig
New York: Scribner,
316 pp., \$25.00

In a regional literary world ripe with poseurs, Ivan Doig may be the true descendant of Wallace Stegner. Unlike the typical carpetbagger who begins with pre-conceived notions as to the nature of the "real" West, Doig actually grew up here during an unforgiving time when the place was good for nothing except for what could be physically extracted from it. The two authors have led somewhat

parallel lives, their work growing out of their Western roots, each accepting a necessary flight from beloved surroundings to an academic life lived in cities west of the West.

In Doig's new novel, *Mountain Time*, Mitch Rozier—at 50—is at loose ends. His career as an environmental journalist in politically correct Seattle ("Cyberia") is in a nosedive because of the financial restructuring of his paper, *Cascopia*. His ex-wife hates him, and his two now-grown children ignore him as he did them while they were growing up; his aged father is tormenting Mitch long distance with tangled business affairs that directly affect him. Mitch's girlfriend, a caterer and native Montanan like himself, is the glue that holds his life together.

Mr. Doig—author of the National Book Award nominee *This House of Sky*—is on familiar ground. In novels such as *English Creek*, *Ride With Me*, *Mariah Montana*, and *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*, he has created a Montana Yoknapatawpha, complete with multi-generational interrelated families and mutually remembered local history. A native, Doig knows the terrain of working-class Montana: the ranchers, farmers, and small-town businessmen who struggle to adapt to life in a changing West.

Mitch returns to Twin Sulphur Springs, "a country of great mountains and mediocre human chances," ostensibly to deal with his father's financial difficulties. There, Lyle Rozier nonchalantly tells him of the leukemia that is slowly killing him: "The doc says it's about got me. Why I called you." Lyle—a World War II veteran of the South Pacific—is a member of that great generation of Americans who expected nothing from life except the fruits of hard work, pain, and ultimately death, a generation—unlike their progeny—for whom whining and complaining were anathema. While sticking around to care for his ailing father (and forced to tolerate the annoying Donald Brainerd, a new New West high-tech neighbor constantly complaining that Lyle's yardful of rusting farm machinery and "tractor carcasses" is spoiling his bay-window view of the Rockies), Mitch is reminded—through flashbacks to his childhood growing up in "the Springs"—what kind of man Lyle really is: a taciturn survivor of a life typically fraught with contradictions and emotional turmoil, including the guilt left over

from his estranged wife's death in a car wreck years before.

Complicating all this are the McCaskill sisters, Mariah and Lexa. Mariah, the elder, is a successful globe-trotting photojournalist. She is middle-aged, divorced, but still retains a wild, red-haired beauty that can "cloud men's minds." Mariah talks the reluctant Mitch into permitting her to photograph the willing Lyle's last days for a newspaper photo series. Lexa McCaskill, Mitch's live-in companion, patiently awaits the passing of his mid-life difficulties so that they can get on with their lives.

The central theme of *Mountain Time* is the baby boomer generation's reaction to two inescapable facts: the passing of their parents, the realistic and hardworking World War II generation, and their relations with their own children, the alienated products of divorce, mindlessly groping their way through a seemingly nihilistic turn-of-the-millennium high-tech consumer society. Mitch spends a lot of time contemplating his dying father and his own out-of-reach kids, for which the idealism he acquired during his coming-of-age in the 1960's doesn't seem to be of much help.

Sigmund Freud wrote that the most poignant day in a man's life is the day of the death of his father. When Lyle finally passes on in his sleep, Mitch sees the event as anticlimactic and is merely numbed. He, Lexa, and Mariah set out on a backpacking trip into the stunning Rocky Mountain Front backcountry of the Bob Marshall Wilderness, with the idea of honoring Lyle's wish to have his ashes scattered—and the ritual photographed by the journalistic voyeur Mariah—atop the (fictional) Phantom Woman Peak. In 1939, the 18-year-old Lyle had helped build the Phantom Woman fire tower while employed by the Depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps, in the course of which he met—unbeknownst to him—the renowned conservationist Bob Marshall (about whose legendary tramps in the Northern Rockies Mitch is researching a piece). On that summer day in 1939, Bob Marshall almost broke a leg on an unnailed step on the tower; in 1996, Mitch Rozier does so after a row with Lexa and the professionally minded Mariah over changing his mind about the ash-scattering ceremony, because "My father never cared a whoop about any of this [the Bob Marshall Wilderness] . . . He wanted it carved up into

money. Just never quite managed to figure out how." Mitch's broken leg forces Lexa to hike out for help, leaving Mitch and Mariah to a contrived love affair in the fire tower cabin: a forced and predictable device designed to make for a happy ending when Mitch and Lexa reunite in Seattle at the novel's conclusion. Ivan Doig should know better.

He does know his Rocky Mountains, and he paints his landscapes well. He knows his ranchers and Hutterites too, and has a sharp ear for the nuances of colloquial Montana speech. But as the critic-poet Randall Jarrell once observed, "A novel is a long narrative with something wrong with it." *Mountain Time* is at once a beautiful and a flawed thing.

Bill Croke writes from Cody, Wyoming.

Damn Lies—or Statistics

by David B. Kopel

**More Guns, Less Crime:
Understanding Crime and
Gun Control Laws**

by John R. Lott, Jr.

Chicago: University of Chicago Press;
225 pp., \$23.00

The most important book ever published about firearms policy is John Lott's superb *More Guns, Less Crime: Understanding Crime and Gun Control Laws*. No other firearms book has reshaped the political debate so profoundly or its author been subjected to such a determined campaign of lies and libels. The intensity of the campaign against Lott is a powerful confirmation of his book's importance and one reason why it should be read by everyone who cares about firearms policy, which is literally a matter of life or death: Lobbyists who are trying to prevent the public from discovering John Lott's research are indirectly responsible for the deaths of hundreds of innocent people every year.

Throughout the 19th century, "the right to keep and bear arms" meant exactly what it said: The right to carry a gun was protected just as firmly as the right to own a gun. Some states, particularly in

the South, enforced laws against carrying handguns concealed, but the right to open carry was almost universally respected. By the 1970's, however, the right to carry had been restricted in most jurisdictions. America was well on the way to treating guns like cigarettes: permissible in private but completely banned from public spaces.

In 1988, however, Florida—thanks to the energetic support of the Florida Chiefs of Police Association and Unified Sportsmen of Florida—initiated a national trend by enacting a "shall issue" handgun permit law, allowing any adult who has a clean record and has taken safety training to obtain a permit to carry a concealed handgun for protection. Now, 29 states have a law similar to Florida's, while Vermont and Idaho (outside of Boise) require no permit.

Before John Lott came along, a few researchers (myself included) had studied the effects of these laws. Clayton Cramer and I (in the *Tennessee Law Review*) had analyzed changes in murder rates in "shall issue" states compared to national trends and found tentative evidence that murder rates fell after enactment of "shall issue" laws. David McDowall (in the *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*) had analyzed murder rates in five counties and reported that they rose. These efforts, nevertheless, proved far inferior to Lott's.

John Lott has blown all the previous research away: His work amounts to the most thorough criminological study ever performed. Lott collected data from every one of the 3,054 counties in the United States over an 18-year period and, in contrast to the Kopel and McDowall homicide-only studies, examined changes in the rates of nine different types of crime. He also accounted for the effects of dozens of other variables, including variations in arrest rates, in the age and racial composition of a county's population, in national crime rates, and in changes made to gun-control laws, including the adoption of waiting periods. Lott's findings show that concealed carry laws significantly reduce violent crime. On average, the murder rate falls by ten percent, that of rape by three percent, and aggravated assault by six percent.

While crime begins to fall off immediately, the benefits of concealed handgun laws take about three years to make themselves fully felt. This is not surprising: In most states, a flood of applications occurs in the first few weeks the law is on the

THE ARTS

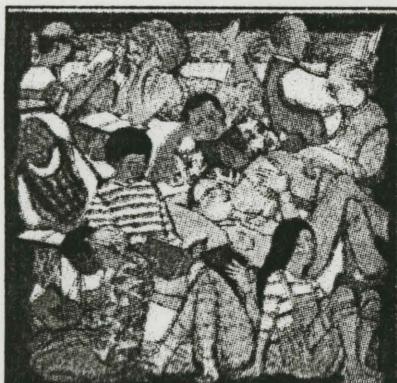
SECTION
D
SUNDAY

■ JACK GOODMAN, D-2

■ BOOK REVIEWS, D-5

■ ARTS LISTINGS

SEPTEMBER 12, 1999



The Great Salt Lake Book Festival opens Friday at Westminster College.

No Fences: The New Breed Of Western Writers

BY JOAN O'BRIEN

THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

The titles alone reveal a special relationship to the land. *This House of Sky: Landscapes of a Western Mind*, *The Solace of Open Spaces*, *Crossing Open Ground*, *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place*, *Arctic Dreams*, *The Canyons of Grace*.

Whether in fiction or nonfiction, memoirs or nature writing, authors like Ivan Doig, Cormac McCarthy, Barry Lopez, Terry Tempest Williams, Gretel Ehrlich, William Kittredge and Levi Peterson are producing work with what Wallace Stegner called the great theme of Western literature: the interplay between people and the land.

These lonesome cowboys of the New West — laboring in the most solitary of professions — evoke grand, natural landscapes and populate them with characters shaped by those spaces.

Doig, who will be in Utah this week to kick off the 1999 Great Salt Lake Book Festival, identifies that as a theme running through his books, whose characters "are, by and large, working people trying to find their way on the great and sometimes baffling landscape."

His keynote address Friday evening, "Trying to Place It: The Western Writer and the Geography of Imagination," opens the two-day festival at Westminster College. Admission to Doig's

See WESTERN WRITERS, Page D-5

■ BOOK FESTIVAL

The Great Salt Lake Book Festival will bring some 60 authors and book artists for lectures readings, book signings, storytelling and more. The event, sponsored by the Utah Humanities Council, opens with a lecture Friday at 7:30 p.m. by writer Ivan Doig in the Jewett Center at Westminster College, 1250 E. 1700 South, Salt Lake City. Cost is \$5. On Saturday, the festival continues with dozens of events, all at Westminster College, 1840 S. 1300 East. See schedule, page D-5.

THE WEST UNDER COVER

Reviews of books of regional interest

Mountain Time

By Ivan Doig; Scribner; \$25

BY MARTIN NAPARSTECK

SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

A little less than half way through his sixth novel, *Mountain Time*, Ivan Doig digresses to tell us about the time one of his key characters was 18 years old in 1939 and working at a Civilian Conservation Corps camp along the Great Divide in Montana: Lyle Rosier, a Montana native, and Joe Ferragamo, an 18-year-old from New Jersey, become friends while working on a fire tower atop Phantom Woman Mountain. The seven-page digression forms a wonderful short story of its own, about how two young men learn to take pride in building something, even when they don't do the job quite right.

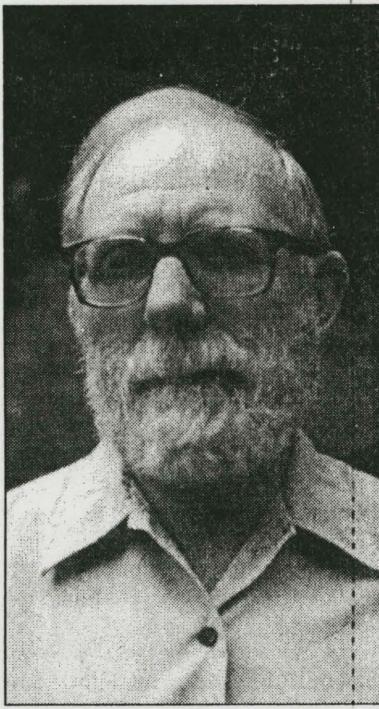
It's typical about what's right with *Mountain Time*. It's not so much a novel with occasional digressions, but rather a string of wonderful digressions knitted together with a strong plot line. It's as if the lives of his characters are the accumulation of the intersections of the digressions.

Mitch Rosier, a 50-year-old environmental writer living in Seattle returns to visit his father, Lyle, in Twin Sulphur Springs Mont. It's a trip filled with bad memories and unpleasant truths. Mitch learns that his father is dying from leukemia. His writing career seems to have dead-ended. His girlfriend Lexa seems at times to be distancing herself from him. His girlfriend's sister, Mariah, a world-traveling professional photographer decides she wants to photograph Lyle while he's dying. Lyle runs over Mitch's leg with a Dodge truck. And worst of all, the dying Lyle insists Mitch scatter his ashes from atop Phantom Woman Mountain. Mitch doesn't feel particularly close to his father: "Why can't people divorce their parents?" he wants to know.

Every few pages Doig stops his narrative to describe the environment, whether it's the rollerbladers zipping around him in San Francisco or the looming mountains ever in the background once the heart of the story moves to Montana. The technique provides a constant reminder that we are shaped by our surroundings.

Sometimes those surroundings are people, as when Lyle, Mitch, Lexa, and Mariah visit The Springhouse Supper Club, a night-club, in Twin Sulphur Springs, and see a group of men enter, men they never expected would visit such a place: "the Hutterites dwelled in their farm colonies of a hundred or so people, talking German among themselves and following their Anabaptist communal religion. They had kept their way of life by avoiding things of the world that might infect it—television, radio, the camera's eye, public schools—and it might have been supposed that supper clubs would be prominent on that list."

Early in the novel we learn that Lexa helped Mariah start her photography career by getting goats to pose in interesting places: "That summer the promontory



Ivan Doig

rock turned into Grand Central Station for mountain goats, goats sniffingly curious, goats profoundly bemused, goats in win: some family groupings, goats in spectacular horned solo glory against the cliff line of the Rockies, roll after film roll of perfect posing goats. Mariah had pictures all summer long in the Gros Ventre Gleaner, the Hungry Horse News, the Choteau Acantha, and ultimately when the Associated Press picked one up, statewide." Not until the end of this two-page digression do we learn how Lexa helped Mariah: "Lexa's formula for making mountain goats line up and sniff with curiosity consisted of squatting here and there on that particular rock and" urinating.

At another point, Doig takes us to World War Two and the American invasion of New Guinea: "Some idiot on his last cigarette had crumpled the empty pack and tossed it onto the floor of the landing craft instead of over the side and the wad went into the sump pump like silk drawers up a vacuum cleaner," and the soldiers almost drown before they reach shore; they do reach shore, where Lyle is almost killed by a Japanese soldier, only to be saved by his buddy from their CCC days, Joe Ferragamo, with a quick burst from his Browning Automatic Rifle.

When Lyle dies Mitch, Lexa, and Mariah climb Phantom Woman Mountain, and during a brief argument between Mitch and Lexa, Mitch falls down the steps of the fire tower his father had helped build decades earlier, again breaking his leg. He's holding the container with his father's ashes during the fall.

Near the end, the New Guinea digression, the story about building the fire tower, the Hutterites, and a group of other digressions intersect to form a single plot. It's a masterful bit of plotting, revealing the characters more fully, justifying episodes that earlier seemed merely interesting, and turning the collection of digressions into a single story. It's Ivan Doig, one of the West's best writers, at his best.

Martin Naparsteck is a novelist.

Western Writers Explore a Vast Landscape

■ Continued from D-1

7:30 p.m. speech is \$5. The scores of readings, panels and lectures from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday are free.

The festival celebrating Western writing, sponsored by the Utah Humanities Council, will bring together writers known nationally and regionally, including Ellen Meloy, author of *The Last Cheater's Waltz: Beauty and Violence in the Desert Southwest*; Californian David Mas Masumoto, who just published *Harvest Son: Planting Roots in American Soil*; Lawrence Coates, the Southern Utah University professor who just published *The Blossom Festival*; Mark Spragg, the Cody, Wyo., author of *Where Rivers Change Direction*; Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Maxine Kumin, author most recently of *Quit Monks or Die!*, a novel set in the Southwest; and several others.

Critics tend to call the new generation of Western authors gaining ever greater respect and popularity "the writers of the purple sage." That rankles Doig, who says "it is simply a more rich and complex set of writers than those taglines imply."

It is not even geographically accurate. After all, there is little sagebrush where Doig now lives — Seattle. Some cannot even agree on what defines the West itself, much less its literature. There is the West of American Indian writers, of Latinos, of Japanese Americans, of Mormons, of activist environmentalists and others. There is the New West, the romantic West, the mythical West.

But there is no denying that landscape looms large in Western writing, perhaps because there is so much of it.

"Utah contains more BLM acreage than any other state with the exception of Nevada and Alaska," notes author Dawn Marano, acquisitions editor at The University of Utah Press and a presenter at Saturday's festival.

"However uninspired it seems to start with something as quantifiable as acreage, it serves to provide an immediate perspective on this thing we call the literature of the West. That is to say, how can one live here in the West where so much land is public, is available to be explored and experienced directly — in a way not possible in the East — and not be drawn into having or assessing one's relationship to it?"

University English professor François Camoin agrees.

"One of the things that Western writers tend to be more aware of is that people don't exist abstractly and separately from where they live. It makes a whole lot of difference whether you are growing up in Torrey or growing up in Philadelphia."

Camoin, who is helping to stage a "Writing From the Land" workshop this month in Torrey, says that even Western city dwellers have a heightened sense of nature. The West may be the most highly urbanized area of the country, but at least its residents have easy access to open space.

To Marano, whose parents moved West from St. Louis when she was a child, that open space meant more than recreational opportunity.

"Even though my dad's livelihood was what brought us West, I understood that the more important opportunities here had to do with what was intangible: In the West there seemed to be enough space for an individual to reinvent or reimagine himself or herself and to feel attachment to that space and place in a direct, organic sense."

Of course, Western writing is not the only literature with a strong sense of place. Southern writing evokes the landscape

powerfully, as does Northeastern local-color writing.

But the fact that Western landscape is not only scenic but contested also makes it inspiring. In Doig's latest book, *Mountain Time*, one of the tensions is the conflict between the main character and his father over construction of a gravel road into a natural area in Montana.

Like Mitch Rozier in *Mountain Time*, Doig was born in rural Montana, the son of a ranch hand. Both Doig and his character left Montana to seek an education and work. Doig earned his doctorate from the University of Washington before launching his writing career. His first success was *This House of Sky*, followed by *English Creek*, *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*, *Ride With Me Mariah Montana* and *Bucking the Sun*.

If landscape is a dominant theme of Western life, so is the leaving of it. The Montana economy could not support Doig, nor could it the characters in his book. And Doig says he encounters similar economic refugees throughout the country when he is out on book tours.

The landscape is not the only space in Western writing. University of Utah English professor Steve Tatum has detected an evolution in what he calls "the tremendous amount of quality writing going on" in the West.

The authors evoke a sense of place in their writing, but not just one of landscape and nature. It is what Tatum calls "social space" where "people are moving and living." Ethnic writers, in particular, are creating work with that strong sense of social space, where different cultures interact and conflict.

Such writing pays more attention to the social realm, he says.

The social interactions are what people remember of Doig's books. "When people come up to me at signings, it's not about landscape," Doig says. "They identify with the characters."

FESTIVAL SCHEDULE

The following is the schedule of events for the Great Salt Lake Book Festival Saturday at Westminster College, 1250 E. 1700 South, Salt Lake City. All are free:

All Day

The University of Utah's Marriott Library Preservation Department will operate a children's-book hospital for worn and torn volumes (no popup books or heirlooms, please). Limit of three per family. Outdoor canopy.

10 to 10:50 a.m.

■ Joel Long, "Attic Triggers in Poetry."

■ Madelyn Garrett, "A History of the Book, from clay tablet to artist book."

■ Margaret Rostkowski, "Diving into the Story."

■ Aden Ross and Kaye Terry, "Collaboration: Text as Art, Art as Text."

■ Helen Cox, "Jump Start Your Book Group; Latino Literature and Stories from the Land."

■ Jim Weiss, "Storytelling Workshop for Parents and Teachers."

■ "Writing the West" Panel with Timothy Egan, Ann Walka and Steve Trimble.

■ Dawn Marano, "The Writing Life."

11 to 11:50 a.m.

■ Bibliotherapy, Salt Lake City Public Library Travel Books.

■ Kinde Nebeker, "Artistic Collaboration with a Poet."

■ Lawrence Coates, "The Blossom Festival."

■ Graciela Thomas & Linda Oda, "Multi-cultural Child."

■ Kent Powell & Miriam Murphy, "Mining the Gold in Local History."

■ Jim Weiss, "Storytelling for Children."

■ Poetry Panel with Donald Revell, Katharine Coates, Ken Brewer, Natasha Saje.

■ Hal Cannon & Teresa Jordan, "Writing and Producing for Public Radio."

Noon to 1 p.m.

■ Stephen Trimble, *The Sagebrush Ocean* slide presentation.

■ Morning presenters sign books, outdoor canopy.

1 to 1:50 p.m.

■ Pat Coleman, "What Shakespeare Knew."

■ Tony Weller, "Rare Books, The Whats, Whys and Hows of Collecting."

■ Bea Williams, "Sailing with the Titanic."

■ Ellen Meloy, "Deep Maps of Place: Landscape and Memoir."

■ Jackie Osherow reading *Dead Men's Praise*.

■ Ron Carlson, "My Fictional Utah."

■ Neal Kramer, Marilyn Young, Dean Hughes, Darius Gray, "Contemporary Mormon Fiction."

■ Luis Urrea, Stories from *Nobody's Son*.

2 to 2:50 p.m.

■ Gloria Skurzynski, "Writing for the Mass Market."

■ Ann Cannon, "What's So Funny?"

■ Kathy Peterson & Peggy Fletcher Stack, "Creating A World of Faith."

■ Tom Alexander, *Utah: The Right Place*.

■ Rob Van Wagoner, reading from

Dancing Naked.

■ Leslie Norris, Poetry Reading.

■ William Kittredge & Annick Smith, Readings from *Balancing Water*.

■ Joan Nabors, "A Story, A Story."

3 p.m.

■ Early afternoon presenters sign books, outdoor canopy

3 to 3:50 p.m.

■ Michael Dorrell, "Writing Plays for Radio."

■ Robin Hemley, "Family Secrets: Writing the Forbidden."

■ Pippa Keene, "Motheread/Fatherread — Multi-cultural Literacy."

■ Allan Engen, "Skiing: A Historical Snapshot."

■ Charlotte Freeman, "In media res: The Path to Publication."

■ Maxine Kumin, Interview.

■ Michael Lacapa, "Native American Storytelling."

■ David Mas Masumoto, "Peaches & Raisins, Harvests of Family Stories from the Land."

4 to 4:50 p.m.

■ Susan Gunter, "Henry James: Epistolary Relationships."

■ Jim Fergus, "Making the Transition from Fiction to Non-Fiction."

■ Victor Martinez, "A Parrot in the Oven."

■ Trent Harris, *The Wild Goose Chronicles*.

■ Randy Silverman, "Judging the Book by Its Cover."

■ David Lee, Poetry Reading.

■ The Science Fiction Century: Shayne Bell, Susan Kroupa, Michaelene Pendleton.

■ Mark Spragg, "Speaking a Life in Pictures: From Film to Memoir."

5 p.m.

■ Late afternoon presenters sign books, outdoor canopy.

"A Power Spot in My Memory"

Ivan Doig recalls Bob Marshall, the West and growing up Montanan

By ANDREA THOMPSON

Say the words "Bob Marshall" and the immediate association for most would be the spread of wilderness north of Missoula. For Ivan Doig, the name conjures a semi-mythical figure of an insatiable hiker and outdoorsman, a poetic conservationist with the tragic aura of an early death.

It's this presence that infuses Doig's latest book *Mountain Time*, lurking behind the journeys and encounters between characters, acting as the binding thread that invisibly links one to another. The story follows eco-journalist Mitch Rozier from Seattle to his childhood home near Choteau, an area Doig knows intimately from his own childhood in Dupuyer. The climactic and most stirringly written section of the novel concerns a three-day hike into the Bob Marshall Wilderness, which Doig based on his own backpacking excursion there that spurred his interest in the man behind the name.

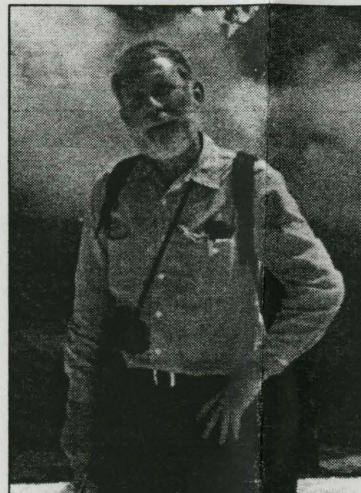
"I started doing some research on Bob Marshall," explains Doig. "The more I did, the more I realized what a marvelous, spooky, but effective figure he was."

That inspiration touched Doig, whose enthusiasm for the poetry of landscape—particularly Montana and Alaska in *Mountain Time*—is translated in passages of lyrical passion.

"I see the landscape as the stage for the lives of my characters. Those of us writing in the West have these memories of the Big Sky, outdoor experiences and the feel of the weather," explains Doig. "But within that I'm prompted to go further, I'm interested in whatever poetry I can find, metaphors, descriptions, clouds coming over the Rockies. It's a setting for my characters, but it's a setting for my language as well."

While Doig credits his life in the West as the inspiration for his fiction, he passionately argues against using the accident of locality to lump a group of disparate writers under the term "Western fiction."

"We're much better than that," he argues. "For example, James Welch in *Fool's Crow*, making that leap into the mind of a people. That's beyond a place, that's just hellish good writing. Or Mary Clarence Blew. Again, this is potent literature. While it takes place within, it also goes beyond a geo-



graphic determinant. We're a full orchestra, we're not just toodling an Old Susanna, some Western tune out here."

Doig also dismisses the appellation of "historical fiction" that many critics have affixed to his work. While a few of his novels draw from historical settings and even his contemporary novels, including *Mountain Time*, call up the shades of history to provide a textured background, Doig points out that the past has also been an essential part of fiction from Tolstoy to Faulkner.

"I mainly just consider myself a writer," he says. "I'm always aware of characters and language, and I've always thought history is just part of our lives. The trick is to touch it with a magic wand and make it good, imaginative reading."

Doig manages to do just that in his latest offering, deftly weaving the past into the narrative of the present. Focusing on the crisis of career and relationship catalyzed by a return home, Doig illuminates how each character's actions are affected by prior events in their own lives and even in the lives of generations before them. Following Mitch in his tension-fraught journey home to his father are Lexa and Mariah McCaskill, part of the family Doig created in his earlier "Montana trilogy." The ever-shifting dynamics between the two Rozier men and the McCaskill women play out against the conflicts of Western expansion and environmental concerns, the dusty poverty of the pioneer families and the wealthy new settlers.

While *Mountain Time* incorporates characters from his earlier books, Doig describes his latest offering as springing from outside the blueprint

of the series. "It partly came from seeds here in Seattle—of the rampant money with the software boom, looking around and seeing people try to lead their ordinary lives among skyrocketing property values and Starbucks popping up on every corner," he explains. "I find it a fascinating scene as a writer to watch, and thought it would be interesting to set Montana exiles against this scene of Seattle becoming a 'hot.com' place."

Fundamentally, Doig translates his love of Montana into compelling stories of relationships and landscapes. Despite his own residence in Seattle, his imagination is fed by the country of his youth, a place he calls a "power spot in my memory." Although he moved from Montana in 1962, his tender treatment of the wilderness and his insistent fictional returns to the Montanan landscape attest to his rejoinder, "I think the question is more, did I ever leave?"

Ivan Doig will appear at Chapter One on Aug. 17 at 7:30 p.m., Fact and Fiction on Aug. 18 at 7 p.m. and at Waldenbooks on Aug. 19 at 6 p.m.

AUDIO FILE

Stuart Kaminsky, the Edgar-winning author of three series to date, has added a new character to his extensive repertoire. Florida-based detective Lew Fonseca, a depressed, balding Italian-American widower with a kind heart and a sardonic attitude, takes on a couple of missing-person cases in "Vengeance" (Dove Audio; abridged fiction; six hours; four cassettes; \$25; read by Joe Barrett).

Fleeing Chicago for Key West after his wife was killed in a car accident, Fonseca sets up shop in Sarasota, Fla., after his elderly Toyota dies in a Dairy Queen parking lot. Though officially working as a process server, he is working on two cases, one involving a runaway teen-ager and the other a missing trophy wife.

Much like the writer of an old film noir, Kaminsky begins near the end of the story before bringing us back to fill in the details. An old hand at telling tales, Kaminsky creates a believable and suspenseful world, then surrounds his protagonist with enticing secondary characters. Narrator Joe Barrett further enhances material that is already addictive.

Fonseca sounds like the world-weary, depressed man he is.

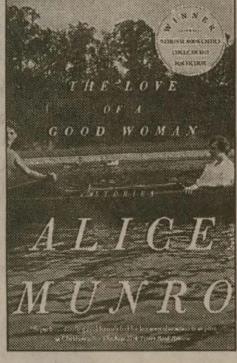
◆
Robert Parker has been branching out in different directions for the past couple of years.

—Rochelle O'Gorman

NEW IN PAPERBACK

THE LOVE OF A GOOD WOMAN
Alice Munro
Vintage, \$13

Alice Munro is to short stories as John Keats is to verse: well-crafted, imagistic and poetic. "The Love of a Good Woman," which won the National Book Critics Circle Award for Fiction, is a collection of eight short stories. "The Children Stay," a story about a family's relationship, takes place



while the family is on vacation. Munro writes, "What perfect weather. Every morning, every morning it's like this, the first pure sunlight falling through the high branches, burning away the mist over the still water of Georgia Strait." Her proclamation about a simple morning sets the tone for her narrative style, which is precise and painfully real.

—Nicole Chvatal

Though he has broken away from his Spenser character at other times during his lengthy career, Parker's first foray into another series began a couple of years ago with Jesse Stone. Now he is trying his hand at the distaff side of detecting with his first female detective, Sunny Randall, in "Family Honor" (Dove Audio; unabridged fiction; six hours and 30 minutes; six cassettes; \$30; read by Andrea Thompson).

Parker created Sunny for actress Helen Hunt, who is to star in the movie version of this book next year. Basically, Sunny is Spenser with two X chromosomes. She has the same moral code as Spenser, is also childless and also dotes on her dog. Sunny's sidekick is named Spike, not Hawk, but both men are tough and rather unusual cohorts in the anti-crime game.

The minimalist plot involves a missing girl and her creepy parents. As with most of Parker's novels, characterization and dialogue count for more than the story line. It is also a short piece of fiction. Not a bad thing for the listener, as it was brief enough to be released onto audio unabridged and reasonably priced.

Thompson, a television actress, has a strong understanding of irony. She captures Sunny's slightly cynical intelligence and does so with flair.

—Rochelle O'Gorman

Chronicle is antidote to nuclear fog

A Pulitzer winner expands on her award-winning series to the government's ongoing "culture of secrecy"

By RICK HARMON
SPECIAL TO THE OREGONIAN

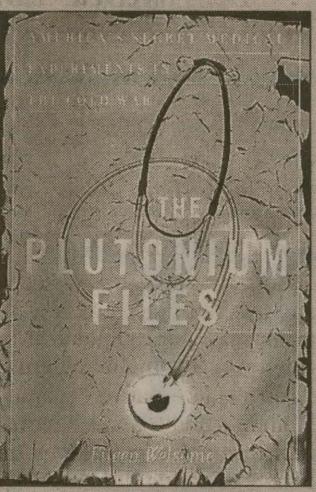
When it comes to America's ongoing joy ride with atomic power, burying and unburying, in one guise or another, seem to be the current fashion.

Last summer, Portland General Electric oversaw the removal and transport of the Trojan Nuclear Plant's decommissioned nuclear reactor from its location near Rainier for burial on the Hanford Nuclear Reservation in southeastern Washington. Meanwhile, on the national stage, scientists and politicians continued their farcical, not-in-my-back-yard debate about the "ideal" long-term burial site for the nation's deadliest radioactive wastes.

As for the burdens of unburying, Eileen Welsome's "The Plutonium Files: America's Secret Medical Experiments in the Cold War" joins an already impressive groundswell among journalists, historians and activists, a many-pronged effort to pressure the U.S. government into greater openness and honesty about its decades-long sponsorship of nuclear science and technology.

Welsome, an investigative reporter for the Albuquerque Tribune, won a Pulitzer Prize in 1994 for her newspaper series on 18 people who unknowingly were injected with plutonium between 1945 and 1947 by doctors associated with the Manhattan Project, the U.S. Army's top-secret World War II mission to build the world's first atomic bomb.

Welsome might easily have written a much shorter book that simply expanded on her newspaper series and detailed her own 12-year relationship with the story. Such a book would have included her current prologue (if you read these 11 riveting pages, you will likely read the rest of the book) and about 150 of the published book's 564 pages. However, by placing her dramatic account of the 18 plutonium injectees in the context of the government's larger program of human radiation experiments be-



THE PLUTONIUM FILES

Eileen Welsome

The Dial Press, \$26.95

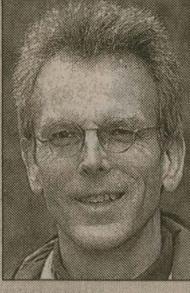


WELSOME

BOTTOM LINE

A Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter examines the U.S. government's human radiation experiments.

Secrecy and intimidation at Hanford



O'ROURKE

Even though the Clinton administration has done more to loosen the Department of Energy's grip on the facts about the country's nuclear past than all nuclear-era presidential administrations combined, the work of a Portland oral historian and journalist, Michael O'Rourke, has shown that the agency's security apparatus has by no means retreated from its secretive activities.

O'Rourke's 1995 article in Cascadia Times, "Blowing the Whistle on Whistleblowers: How Hanford Violates the Civil Rights of Its Employees," detailed a shocking record of repression and intimidation suffered by employees who dared to speak out about environmental and safety problems within the Han-

ford complex.

O'Rourke points out that, among the "security and investigative agencies" responsible for the civil-rights assaults on whistleblowers, the Department of Energy's Office of the Inspector General, which reports directly to Congress and is free of the energy secretary's authority, has been the most notorious.

O'Rourke has been interviewing people on the subject of Hanford's past and present since the early 1980s and plans to turn over his tapes and transcripts to the Oregon Historical Society's oral history collection. Currently, he is recording interviews on the theme of public involvement in operations and decision-making at Hanford.

—Rick Harmon

and Willard Libby, come about as close to the "mad scientist" profile as we are likely to get). But the overarching villain in her story is government secrecy.

The "culture of secrecy," as Welsome calls it, was born as a result of the legitimate security precautions of the Manhattan Project, flourished under the unbridled ambition of the succeeding Atomic Energy Commission and fully hardened amid the paranoid workings of the contemporary Department of Energy. Giving rise eventually to both bad ethics and bad science, the culture of secrecy became more of a bureaucratic preservation reflex than any sort of useful adjunct to national security.

Welsome's narrative takes a somewhat unexpected turn in several chapters at the book's end. Even though most of us lived through and read newspapers during this period, the author's accounts of former Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary's groundbreaking "Openness Initiative" press conference in December 1993, of President Clinton's Advisory Committee on Human Radiation Experiments of 1994-95 and of Clinton's October 1995 formal apology for the government's historical radiation experiments greatly clarify and intensify our dim recollection of those landmark events.

Welsome excuses us somewhat with the reminder that the president's admission and apology were vastly overshadowed by the verdict in the O.J. Simpson murder trial on the same day and that media coverage of the Clinton speech consisted of "sound bites on the evening news and stories on the inside pages of the nation's newspapers."

The author makes a convincing case that at the end of the 20th century — in the wake of decades of nuclear-weapons testing and an assortment of other significant releases of radiation into the environment — we are all, to some extent, "downwinders." We should keep in mind, though, that the plight of some downwinders (for example, those in our own region who have for decades lived immediately downwind from the Hanford Nuclear Reservation) has been dramatically more perilous than that of most others.

Despite the efforts of Welsome and others to unbury these shadowy episodes in our history, con-

frequently supported grandly by government largesse, doggedly sought during those years to define the limits of "safe" radiation exposure for humans. Implicit in their striving was a kind of faith (and hope) in the existence of demonstrably "safe" doses of radiation. Otherwise the public could call into question the integrity of their work, not to mention the nation's entire atomic program. In the end, though, most scientists have acknowledged what just a few argued at the time: Any amount of radiation exposure is potentially harmful.

LITERARY CALENDAR

Events listed are open to the public at no charge unless otherwise indicated. The area code for all phone numbers is 503 unless otherwise indicated.

LECTURES

Russell Banks: Portland Arts & Lectures presents an evening with the author of "The Sweet Hereafter" and "Affliction," 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall, 1037 S.W. Broadway. Cost: \$5-\$18, details: 227-2583.

READINGS

Doris Baines: The author reads from her book "Christmas Traditions & Legends," 3 p.m. Sunday, Barnes & Noble Jantzen Beach, 1720 N. Jantzen Beach Road.

"Don't Forget to Die": Margaret Chittenden reads from her new Charlie Plato mystery, 5 p.m. Sunday, Murder by the Book, 3210 S.E. Hawthorne Blvd.

Geromino Tagatac: The author will read and discuss his work, 4 p.m. Monday, Hatfield Room in the Mark O. Hatfield Library, Willamette University, Salem.

Portland poets: Three poets read from their works; Dan Raphael reads from "isn't how we got here," Douglas Spangle reads from "2½ Bridges" and David Elsey reads from "Green Water Tower," 7:30 p.m. Monday, Powell's City of Books, 1005 W. Burnside St.

Craig Lesley: The author reads from his works, including "River Song," 7 p.m. Tuesday, The Alameda Cafe, 4641 N.E. Fremont St.

Willamette Writers: The winners of the Kay Snow writing contest read from their entries, 7 p.m. Tuesday, The Old Church, 1422 S.W. 11th Ave. Details 452-1592.

Richard Burdin: The author reads from his book "Fear of Blue Skies," 7 p.m. Tuesday, Looking Glass Bookstore, 318 S.W. Taylor St., and speaks as part of The Catlin Gabel School's Jean Vollum Distinguished Writers Series, 9:55 a.m. Wednesday, Cabell Center Theater, The Catlin Gabel School, 8825 S.W. Barnes Road.

Frank McCourt: The author reads from his book "Tis," 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, First Congregational Church, 1126 S.W. Park Ave. First come, first served.

Michael Henderson: The author reads from his book "Forgiveness: Breaking the Chain of Hate," co-sponsored by the World Affairs Council of Oregon, 7 p.m. Wednesday, Borders Books & Music, 708 S.W. Third Ave.

"River, Cross My Heart": Breena Clarke reads from her novel, 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Powell's City of Books, 1005 W. Burnside St.

David Neiwert: The author reads from his book "In God's Country: The Patriot Movement and the Pacific Northwest," 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Powell's on Hawthorne, 3723 S.E. Hawthorne Blvd.

"The You That Is Everywhere": Gary Rosenthal reads from his collection of love poems, 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Powell's on Hawthorne, 3723 S.E. Hawthorne Blvd.

Gumball poets: Gumball Poetry is a mix of literary journal and gumball machines; the gumball poets read their work, 8 p.m. Thursday, Cafe Lena, 2239 S.E. Hawthorne Blvd.

Izzy Covalt: The author reads from her autobiography, "My Name Is Izzy," 6 p.m. Friday, Tower Books, 1307 N.E. 102nd.

Blue Begonia Press: Editor Jim Bodeen and three other poets read from their work.

Bodeen reads from "This House." Charles Potts reads from "Lost River Mountain." Lee Bassett reads from "Poems of Lee Bassett 1973-2000," and Jody Aliesen reads from "Loving in Time of War," 7:30 p.m. Friday, Powell's City of Books, 1005 W. Burnside St.

Jay W. Nicholas and D.M. Beach: The two children's book authors read from their books; Nicholas reads from "Down to the Sea," and Beach reads from "Sydney Kangaroo's Christmas," 1 p.m. Saturday, Jackson's Books, 320 Liberty St. S.E., Salem.

Kay Allenbaugh: The author reads from her book "Chocolate for a Woman's Spirit," 1 p.m. Saturday, Barnes & Noble Jantzen Beach, 1720 N. Jantzen Beach Road.

OTHER EVENTS

Northwest Authors: Join 75 authors, photographers and artists, including Ivan Doig and William Sullivan, at the 33rd annual Holiday Cheer and Authors' Party, noon Sunday, Dec. 5, Oregon Historical Society, 1200 S.W. Park Ave.

Christine Barnes: The author gives a slide show on her book "Great Lodges of the Canadian Rockies," 7 p.m. Monday, Powell's Travel Store, 701 S.W. Sixth Ave., and at 4 p.m. Saturday at Paulina Springs Book Company, 252 West Hood St., Sisters.

Caprial Pence: The chef and author is joined by chef Mark Dowers as she shares recipes from her latest book, "Caprial's Soups & Sandwiches," 7 p.m. Monday, Borders Books & Music, 708 S.W. Third Ave.

"Oregon Golf": Author Paul Linnman and photographer Rick Schafer sign and discuss their book, 6 p.m. Wednesday, Oregon Sports Hall of Fame and Museum, 321 S.W. Salmon St., and 11 a.m. Saturday, Barnes & Noble Lloyd Center, 1231 N.E. Broadway.

Christopher Leebrik: The storyteller performs "How the Grinch Stole Christmas," by Dr. Seuss, 7 p.m. Wednesday, Clackamas Corner Library, 11750 S.E. 82nd Ave., Suite D.

M.K. Wren: The author discusses her book "Neely Jones" as part of the Mystery Lovers Book Group of Borders Beaverton, 7 p.m. Wednesday, Borders Beaverton, 2605 S.W. Cedar Hills Blvd.

National Writers Union: The union presents a panel on "Surviving the Publishing Industry in the 21st Century" that includes publisher Dennis Stovall and author Ed Goldberg. Doors open at 8:30 a.m. Saturday, Friendly House, 2617 N.W. Savier St., cost: \$15 members, \$25 nonmembers; details: 232-9212.

Cheryl Mack and Rick McClure: The authors read from their book "For the Greatest Good: Early History of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest," 11 a.m. Saturday, Waucoma Bookstore, 212 Oak St., Hood River.

Joe Bianco: The author signs his books, including "Oregon Rediscovered," 1 p.m. Saturday, Waldenbooks Lloyd Center, 976 Lloyd Center.

Fund-raiser and silent auction: Bid on items donated by Portland area restaurants, businesses and organizations to support the Mountain Writers Series, 8 p.m. Saturday, Mountain Writers Center, 3624 S.E. Milwaukie Ave.

CLASSES AND WORKSHOPS

Liz Nakazawa: The published writer offers a class on beginning free-lance writing, 10:30 a.m. Saturday, 282-5343.

has done much more. The shorter book might have been more aptly titled "The Plutonium Files," but the longer book does a greater service.

What were these nuclear doctors up to, anyway? At the University of Chicago's Metallurgical Lab, at the University of Rochester Medical School's Manhattan Annex, at Vanderbilt University Hospital's

benefit to their health (and certainly from potentially harmful procedures). For a few decades in the middle of the 20th century, however, those traditional constraints were crushed beneath the rationale of a "higher cause": the need to gather any and all information of conceivable value in the struggle against world communism.

Scientists and medical doctors,

ful, and most of what physicians needed to know about the onset of radiation sickness in humans already had been chronicled in the immediate aftermath of the atomic bomb explosions in Japan.

Welsome's descriptions of the supporters and perpetrators of the radiation experiments reveal plenty of arrogance and opportunism (and, in the cases of Edward Teller

certed efforts to bury and cover up continue, inevitably so among those responsible for disposing of (via burial) the nation's still-growing supply of dangerous radioactive wastes, but also among those still seeking to keep the full truth about the country's nuclear past from public scrutiny.

Rick Harmon is a Portland freelance writer and editor.

McMurtry: West has yet to yield 'great book'

Continued from Page E5

the nature of storytelling and whether it might be different in time, space and Texas:

"My question to Walter Benjamin would be, what kind of stories arise in a place where nothing has ever happened except, of course, the vagaries and vicissitudes of individual life?" McMurtry writes.

Indeed, the Pulitzer Prize-winner defines his own writing (23 novels, three essay collections and more than 30 screenplays) as an exploration of frontiers, both of the land and the spirit. Taken in that light, "Walter Benjamin at the Dairy Queen" is about the frontier called Larry McMurtry, and this self-portrait is likely to be the closest thing to an autobiography we'll ever see out of tiny Archer City, Texas.

In the book, McMurtry extols the virtues of everything from a lime Dr. Pepper to rodeo queens, laments the decline of oral storytelling and cowboys, and paints a portrait of a landscape so vast and empty it hardly seems possible it could be filled to the brim with the spirit of its inhabitants. McMurtry writes poignantly, occasionally humorously, about his own cloistered childhood, spent largely in fear of shrubbery and poultry, and his surprising distaste for the cowboy life. He is most eloquent when writing about his own passion for reading and books, two entirely different subjects for a man who is not only a prolific writer and reader but also a rare-book dealer and collector.

And from the most recognized name in Western literature, a man who long ago sensed a need for "some congruity between prose and landscape" and who admits he has liked "not a word" in a couple of his novels, comes a somewhat sullen assessment of the region's writing: "The American West has so far produced depressingly little in the way of literature. Out of it

may have come a hundred or so good books, a dozen or so very good books; but it has not, as yet, yielded up a great book."

In the end, "Walter Benjamin" is about growing up and growing old.

McMurtry slyly weaves his personal story with the story of a ripening frontier that has been washed by repeated waves of people, ideas and industries, but survived. The Western small town — whether it's the fictional Thalia or his real hometown of Archer City, or any of a thousand others — is losing some of its dreams but goes to sleep each night hoping for new dreams to come along.

For those towns and their people, the future is a frontier all its own, with its own vagaries and vicissitudes. For McMurtry, too.

"I'm now in my 60s, which means that I'm looking at a maximum of about 30 more years of

life," he writes. "Which should I do? Read or write? Though I have now read a lot of books, the range is still green with thousands of potentially interesting books yet unread."

McMurtry doesn't directly answer his own question. But fear not: By the time you read this, his next manuscript will already be in the hands of his editors.

At the crossroads of either impermanence and the "urge to leave a track," McMurtry chooses both ways. He knows he can't precisely describe the beauty of prairie sunlight, but he continues to try, anyway.

Sam the Lion must be looking over his shoulder.

Ron Franscell, a Wyoming novelist and newspaperman, is the author of "Angel Fire" and the upcoming mystery "The Deadline."

JOIN THE ALAMEDA CAFE

IN WELCOMING CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED NORTHWEST WRITER

CRAIG LESLEY

in an evening of Literary Pleasure

Craig will read selections from "River Song", "The Sky Fisherman", as well as "Storm Riders" which will be published by Picador in February.

Tuesday, December 7th at 7pm



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Books

PICK
OF THE
WEEK

Frank McCourt

The author of "Angela's Ashes" and "Tis" returns to Portland for a 7:30 p.m. Tuesday reading at the First Congregational Church, 1126 S.W. Park Ave. First come, first served. Free.



"When the MS Irish Oak sailed from Cork in October 1949, we expected to be in New York City in a week. Instead, after two days at sea, we were told we were going to Montreal in Canada."

◆ Frank McCourt, from "Tis"

Woman, Victorious

"AHAB'S WIFE" RETELLS "MOBY-DICK" FROM A WOMAN'S POINT OF VIEW,
SUBSTITUTING LOVE FOR VENGEANCE

By ELLEN EMRY HELTZEL
THE OREGONIAN

Early in Herman Melville's classic novel, "Moby-Dick," we learn about the origins of one of the men who will sail on Captain Ahab's voyage with destiny.

"Queequeg," Melville writes of the tattooed and tomahawk-toting sailor, "was a native of Kokovoko, an island far away to the West and South. It is not down in any map; true places never are."

It is with this same spirit of discovery that you should approach "Ahab's Wife," Sena Jeter Naslund's version of "Moby-Dick," as a story written in the style of the 19th century but with a wholly 20th-century sensibility. This is a place you won't find on any map because it is neither firmly rooted in its time nor in ours. But that shouldn't diminish the pleasure of reading a story that's both ambitious and full of little treasures that pay homage to the book that inspired it.

The full title is actually "Ahab's Wife, or, the Stargazer," in obvious imitation of "Moby-Dick, or, The Whale," as Melville called his novel. "Moby-Dick" of course, is the story of a fatal obsession, of the limited vision of human perspective.

In contrast, "Ahab's Wife" imagines the story of "Moby-Dick" from a woman's perspective, and what a different story it is. Here is a tale of the importance of community, of love and caring in constant search of a home. It celebrates traditional feminine ideals while also jettisoning the notion that women are lesser actors on the stage of life.

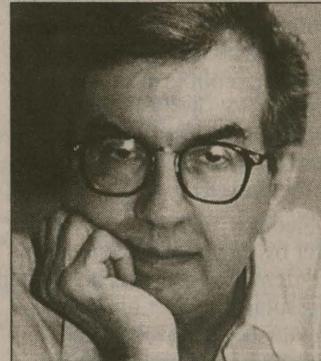
Naslund, a novelist and professor of writing at the University of



AHAB'S WIFE
Sena Jeter Naslund
William Morrow, \$28

BOTTOM LINE

An exhilarating novel based on Melville's "Moby-Dick." Following the traditions of 19th-century literature, Naslund has created a heroine who will charm modern readers.



DIANA OSSANA

**Larry
McMurtry
explores
his inner
frontier**

By RON FRANSCELL
SPECIAL TO THE OREGONIAN

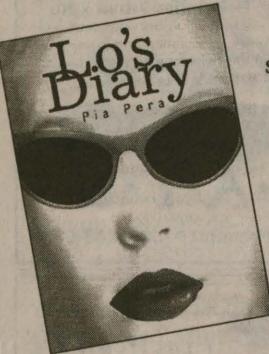
In "The Last Picture Show," Sonny tests his manhood by relieving himself from the top of a high, sloping dam, trying unsuccessfully to hit the water below. Sam the Lion, the character whose spirit infuses Larry McMurtry's 1971 novel, is secretly watching over his shoulder and understands.

A few moments later, as the man and boy talk about growing up and growing old, Sam the Lion tells Sonny, "Oh, it ain't necessarily miserable. . . . About 80 percent of the time, I guess."

It's not Sam the Lion peering over McMurtry's shoulder in "Walter Benjamin at the Dairy Queen: Reflections at Sixty and Beyond," however. Instead, it's the ghost of Walter Benjamin, a long-dead German essayist and cultural theorist whose own life experiences couldn't have been further removed from the life of a ranch kid who'd never even heard of Hemingway, Faulkner or T.S.



Lolita's account of past, present adds little to Nabokov tale



Women's voices seem to be everywhere these days. Besides "Ahab's Wife," another current attempt to put a woman's perspective on a masterpiece is a first novel by an Italian short-story writer, Pia Pera. Pera's "Lo's Diary" (Foxrock,

\$22.95), a retelling of Vladimir Nabokov's "Lolita," came out after a legal wrangle between the author and Nabokov's estate, which ultimately allowed the book to be published this fall with a preface by Nabokov's son, Dmitri.

"Lo's Diary" features a Lolita for the '90s: This is a girl who knows what she's doing, deliberately arousing the fusty old professor who from the start is discombobulated by her presence. She is a wicked child, who not only treats her mother horribly (understandable, giv-

en her age) but also fries her hamster on a light bulb just to see what will happen (psychopathic, at any age).

In "Lo's Diary," Lolita did not die in childbirth but instead has survived into her middle years and now wants to publish the diary that covers the years of Nabokov's original book. Names have been changed (she is Dolores Maze, not Haze, etc.), but the plot is the same, with embellishments intended to help us understand Lolita's dysfunction. Besides the loss of her father, Lolita now has a baby brother who died

when she was 4.

The perils of walking in the steps of a great master are everywhere apparent in this book. Although Pera has created a spirited narrator, the girl is neither sympathetic nor deep (and Humbert, for all his flaws, is a man of complexity who tells his story with all the confusion that is rife in the human experience). Lacking the subtlety that makes "Lolita" such a great novel, "Lo's Diary" looks even paler in comparison than it would if it had been a free-standing work.

— Ellen Emry Heltzel

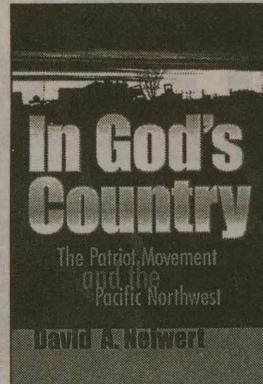
NEW IN THE NORTHWEST

IN GOD'S COUNTRY

David A. Neiwert

Washington State University Press,
\$19.95 paperback

When the Oklahoma City bombing occurred in 1995, rumors of militia involvement immediately began circulating. Timothy McVeigh was, indeed, a follower of the militia movement. David A. Neiwert's book "In God's Country: The Patriot Movement and the Pacific Northwest" defines such militia mind-sets as the Patriot movement and describes how it has spread across the country. Neiwert, a Seattle journalist, writes, "The Patriot movement is an American political ideology based on ultra-nationalistic and selective populism which seeks to return the nation to its 'constitutional' roots — that is, a system based on white Christian male rule. . . . Patriot movement beliefs are deeply held with religious fervor. They



promote a fearful, paranoid world view that isolates believers from the mainstream of society."

How does this apply to the Pacific Northwest? According to Neiwert, the Patriot movement has substantial roots here, especially in Montana. There, frustrated farmers, millworkers and loggers look for a solution to their economic problems and sometimes turn to the Patriot movement. Neiwert says that while most members of the movement are blue-collar workers, they are not stereotypical "beer-bellied louts and loudmouths who (like) to bellyache about everything in sight." Instead, they "are often Joe and Mary Smith from next door."

Neiwert reads at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Powell's on Hawthorne, 3723 S.E. Hawthorne Blvd.

— Nicole Chvatal

LITERARY SNAPSHOT

Who: Christine Barnes

Residence: Bend

Author: Barnes has written three books: "Central Oregon: A View From the Middle," "Great Lodges of the West" and the new "Great Lodges of the Canadian Rockies" (W.W. West, Inc., \$35).

What are they about? The titles are self-explanatory. "Great Lodges of the West" came out in 1997 and was a smash hit, selling about 30,000 copies and winning the 1998 Benjamin Franklin Award for best history book. "Great Lodges of the Canadian Rockies" is a sequel of sorts as Barnes, watercolor artist Fred Pflughoft and photographer David Morris moved north to Canada.

Stunning visuals: The parks and lodges get most of the credit, and Barnes is quick to give the rest to Pflughoft and Morris, whose work makes both "Great Lodges" books into coffee-table keepers that appeal to anyone planning a vacation in the West.



Another audience: Barnes did a bang-up job researching the construction of these beautiful lodges and included architectural plans and drawings that enhance the history behind the buildings. Architects noticed and have responded enthusiastically.

Previous writing history: Barnes started as a journalist and was the features editor at three Bay Area newspapers: the Contra Costa Times, the Oakland Tribune and the San Francisco Examiner.

Public appearances: Barnes will sign her books from 12 to 5 p.m. today at the Holiday Cheer and Authors' Party at the Oregon History Center, 1200 S.W. Park Ave. At 7 p.m. Monday (her birthday), she will give a slide show at Powell's Travel Store, 701 S.W. Sixth Ave. At 4 p.m. Saturday, she will give a slide show at Paulina Springs Book Company, 252 West Hood St., Sisters.

— Jeff Baker

Why Benjamin? Because, as McMurtry explains in this 204-page essay about reading, writing and life, his inspiration for this book came from "Illuminations," a collection of Walter Benjamin's essays on storytelling, which McMurtry read 20 years ago as he was preparing to write a history of his home country in Texas. The essays made the writer wonder about

Please see **MCMURTRY**, Page E6

LARRY MCMURTRY

Walter Benjamin
Dairy Queen



WALTER BENJAMIN AT THE DAIRY QUEEN

Larry McMurtry

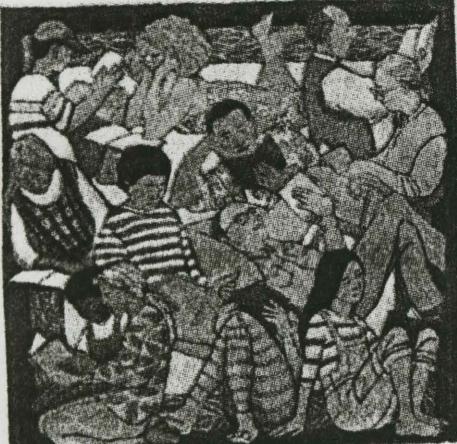
Simon & Schuster, \$21

BOTTOM LINE

In this memoir and meditation on aging, the creator of "Lonesome Dove" reveals himself as a highly self-critical writer and devotee of European literature.

ARTS

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 1999



Book Festival poster by Kathleen Peterson.

Book festival is back next week for 2nd year at Westminster

By Dennis Lythgoe
Deseret News books editor

Last year's experiment was a winner, with 45 writers, poets, book dealers and historians conducting panels and workshops for 900 enthusiastic participants. As a result, "The Great Salt Lake Book Festival" for 1999 will be held once again the weekend of Sept. 17 and 18 at Westminster College.

And although the Utah Humanities Council is bringing in several heavy-hitters, this is a festival intended not for the literary elite but for all lovers of books.

Ivan Doig – a noted Western writer and author of numerous Western-based novels, including his latest, "Mountain Time," just published by Scribner – will be the keynote speaker on Friday, Sept. 17, at 7:30 p.m. in Westminster's Jewett Auditorium. He will discuss the nature of his work – "Trying to Place It: The Western Writer and the Geography of Imagination," and will then sign copies of his book. (There is a \$5 charge for this lecture.)

On Saturday, from 9 a.m.-5 p.m., more than 60 writers will make presentations, ranging from nature writing in the West; poetry and contemporary fiction; Hopi, Apache, African and English storytelling. (All Saturday events are free.)

There will be a number of demonstrations, including medieval book illumination, papermaking, letterpress printing, decorated paper, gold tooling, bookbinding and children's bookmaking workshops by Utah bookmakers throughout the day. Attendees may make their own paper from old blue jeans and shredded U.S. currency or watch as ink is made from iron gall. There will even be a children's "book hospital" to provide free "emergency treatment" for a favorite book. (Not more than three per family and no elaborate pop-ups or family heirlooms, please.)

Traditional music will be provided by the Beehive Band, many booksellers will offer displays of current books and visiting writers will sign their own books.

Please see BOOKS on E5

DESERET NEWS, SUNDAY, SEPT. 12, 1999

BOOKS

Continued from E1

Writers who will be signing as well as speaking include Lawrence Coates, author of "The Blossom Festival"; Maxine Kumin, author of "Quit Monks or Die"; David Lee, author of "Legacy of Shadows"; Timothy Egan, author of "Lasso the Wind"; Dawn Marano, author of "When We Say We're Home: A Quartet of Place and Memory"; and Mas Masumoto, author of "Harvest Son, Planting Roots in American Soil."

Charlotte Freeman, whose book, "Place Last Seen," will be published in March 2000, and Susan Gunter, with two upcoming books: "Dear Munificent Friends: Henry James's Letters to Four Women," to be published in October, and "Dearly Beloved Friends: Henry James's Letters to Younger Men," scheduled for next year – will also appear, as well as several other authors.

Some of the topics considered during the conference include "A History of the Book," by Madelyn Garrett; "Stories in Your Car," by Hal Cannon and Teresa Jordan; "Utah: The Right Place," by historian Tom Alexander; "Balancing Water," by William Kittredge and Annick Smith; and "Mormon Fiction," by Neal Kramer and Marilyn Arnold.

There will be sessions on Shakespeare, humor, writing plays for radio, poetry reading and storytelling. Jim Weiss, who has been telling stories for more than 25 years, will tell some of his original stories as well as retell some ancient and modern classics.

The festival is sponsored by the University of Utah's Marriott Library, Signature Books, Sam Weller's Books, Utah Arts Council and the Salt Lake Tribune, with volunteer support from the Friends of the Salt Lake City Library.

Has Doig filled role as premier Western American writer?

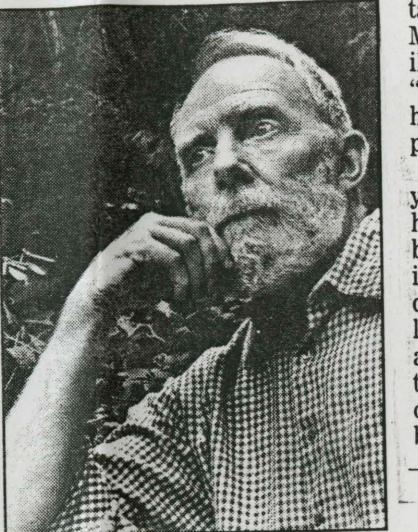
By Dennis Lythgoe
Deseret News staff writer

Although he writes rich Western novels based in the Montana landscape of his boyhood, Utahns can identify with Ivan Doig because he has been compared so often with their own Wallace Stegner. Since Stegner's death, some critics have said Doig is now the premier Western American writer.

"That's for someone else to say, I guess," said Doig, good-naturedly, in a phone interview from his home overlooking Puget Sound in Seattle. "Wally managed to fill so many roles — novelist, biographer, conservationist, professor and lots of others — I just concentrate on fiction, and I'm a fairly deliberate worker at that. That's the only portion of Stegner's shoes I would try to step into."

Doig's writing is prolific, and he has won awards for many of his beautifully written books, including "This House of Sky," "Winter Brothers," "The Sea Runners," "English Creek" and his most popular seller, "Dancing at the Rascal Fair." More recently, he has written "Ride with Me, Mariah Montana," "Heart Earth," and "Bucking the Sun."

His newest book, "Mountain Time," is hot off the press, pub-



Ivan Doig

lished by Scribner's.

"The male protagonist," said Doig, "has turned 50 in 1996, a classic baby boomer, and it's about this generation, coming out of the 1960s, reaching one of those generational times of reckoning, sandwiched between growing children, who have gone their own inexplicable route in life, and aging parents who are starting to lose control over their lives." The story begins in Alaska, Seattle and San Francisco. Then the characters are reluc-

tantly pulled back to their Rocky Mountain roots in Montana by family obligations. In one case, a man "has to tend to a father of whom he has said, 'Why can't we divorce our parents?'"

It has been a busy year for the 60-year-old Doig, including not only his finishing "Mountain Time" but buying a new house and undergoing two knee operations. "I'm just catching my breath," he said. Following some speaking obligations and book promotion, he will return to Seattle to start work in October on a new novel, this one harking back "to the homestead community

of 'Dancing at the Rascal Fair,'" his 1987 book that sold 200,000 copies.

Although a Montana native, he has come to love Seattle as well. "I claim dual citizenship in the Puget Sound area and Montana. Right now, as I look out the window, I see pretty little clouds perched on the Olympic Mountains and ships passing by. But I'm just back from two weeks in Montana, a visit that was glorious and triumphal with about 500-600 people at my talks there — and it's only a day's drive from Seattle to Missoula."

Doig is not new to Utah, having

visited here several times to talk about his books and his ideas about the West. At the Great Salt Lake Book Festival, his subject will be "Trying to Place it: The Western Writer and the Geography of Imagination." Doig said he will be reacting to "the shorthand notion that where we come from on the map accounts for our books. That claim makes what hair I have left stand up on end. I think Western writing uses a lot more of the literary orchestra than simply that kind of one-note description. Character is

Please see DOIG on E12

DOIG

Continued from E5

very powerful in Western writing."

Historian Richard Maxwell Brown told Doig that such books as his "This House of Sky," and others written by William Kitteredge, Terry Tempest Williams, etc., are "grassroots biography and autobiography. They are about the universals of human life." According to Doig, he and other Western writers "have grown up in the sagebrush, but we're all trying to write beyond those outback roots — about love, family, work, life and death — and I think doing it damn well."

Although trained as a journalist, Doig also holds a Ph.D. in history, which he mines considerably for his books. By and large, he says, historians have been generous in evaluating his work. "Reviewers get snippy sometimes. William Faulkner has been praised for getting into Mississippi history, so it never occurred to me that the past should not play a role in my novels. Some reviewers have not been happy to wade through historical background or flashback when they want a nuclear submarine surfacing or something."

As far as comparisons to Stegner are concerned, Doig says, "I think

mine and Stegner's fiction is different. Mine is maybe funnier. I don't see myself using some template of me as my male characters. Wally himself would have fessed up to doing a little of that. Characters change when you put them on the page, but I think I'm trying to make up a broader cast of characters, with more women than he did. Those are shades of difference between us."

Writing has never come easy to Doig, but he doesn't believe in writer's block, either. "A person can be blocked, but I'm not sure the writing is the culprit. I'm from a journalism background, and I never met an editor who would say, 'OK, we'll just run a blank space there.' I don't necessarily work consecutively through a book. If I don't know what comes next, maybe I'll skip ahead and write. You have to create characters and incidents. Some of them may come out by the time the manuscript is finished, but it gives me a critical mass to work with."

Doig recalls a sign he used for a long time that said, "Anybody can write on a good day." He has discovered that writers have to write on bad days, too. "It's part of being a professional. As I look back over my manuscripts, I find it pretty hard to tell the difference between the bad and the good days."

ARTS & LEISURE

BOOKS

Life Stories

Two sports stories that transcend the genre.

Ivan Doig tackles everything from the environment to terminal illness in his new novel "Mountain Time." (Scribner, \$25). After hiking 20 miles into Montana's Bob Marshall Wilderness Area and seeing bear tracks, the protagonist of "Mountain Time" takes a weary seat, opens his backpack, and pulls out — what else? — a laptop computer. The digital notebook isn't just incongruous, it's extra weight, but Mitch Razel is carrying a lot more baggage. At 50, he's out of work, sorting through his father's life, and trying to understand where things have gone wrong with his live-in girlfriend, Lexa McCaslin. A former sheepherder, Lexa is making the rugged life look easy, and her beautiful sister, Marah, isn't breaking much of a sweat either.

Doug is building a lot more than a triangle with Mitch and the two McCaslins. As with his earlier novels and nonfiction, the environment, especially along the Continental Divide, dominates this story. But when we learn that Mitch's father, Lyle, has leukemia, the novel takes another turn. Marah, a photographer, wants to record Lyle's final days. She puts it to him bluntly: "How you face death is worth telling readers. There's this aging population, and a battalion of us left-free Baby Boomers who've never had to deal with anything more serious than burying the class hamster ... people need to see your kind of emotion."

If that dialogue sounds a little forced, it's a side effect of Doig's prose. He works hard — sometimes too hard — at packing information into every sentence. Still, when it comes to the heart, Doug is much more subtle, and Mitch's struggle with his dying father and his attempts to reconnect with Lexa are touching. So is the pain and yawp of Lexa and Marah's sisterhood. The lives in this book are rich with nuance — characters managing to do exactly the wrong thing, usually with the best of intentions — which keeps them thoroughly real and engrossing. And Doug never lets up. His men and women constantly push forward, one rocky step at a time. — Jeff Livingood

They're the best basketball players you never heard of. Guys like John Staggers, James "Speedy" Williams and Earl "the Goat" Managault are inner-city playground legends who never made it to an NBA court.

Their stories bounce around courts in Harlem, Brooklyn, Philadelphia and Los Angeles like tall tales, but word of mouth is the only way their stories spread. Until the recent publication of "Pickup Artists," (Vernon Books paper, \$15) that is.

Lars Anderson, who writes for Sports Illustrated, and Chad Millman, an editor at ESPN Magazine, have compiled an informal, loose, scintillating history of the game that glows with portraits of would-be stars who never made it past the playground, and frequently, tragically, wound up in jail.

But while the highlights of the book are the profiles, complete with vivid descriptions of legendary blacktop moves and couacs, "Pickup Artists" does more than just shine a light on unknown individuals. Anderson and Millman trace the roots of the playground game, beginning in the 1920s and '30s, when basketball belonged to Jewish and Irish inner-city kids. They describe the rising influence of black street players, who came to dominate the game in the middle part of the century.

The authors tell how money, drugs and crime began to infiltrate the playgrounds, fueled by bigtime college programs and bigtime urban dealers. Along the way, they also fascinatingly describe how Converse and then Reebok and Nike rode the nationwide enthusiasm with inner-city chic to billion-dollar athletic apparel profits.

It's a massive mosaic, but the authors never lose control of the material. They jump from era to era, but keep the narrative personally-driven, so the story never drags.

"Pickup Artists" is about basketball, but only on the surface. It's about the lure of money, the temptation of crime and ephemeral fame. It's a rare book, a story about sports that transcends the genre. — Mark Sroka



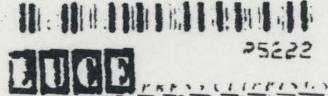
MOUNTAIN TIME
IVAN DOIG

Dear Ivan and Lex,
I want save it has
a "goats story,"
but love the
praise.
J.W.

Ft. Worth, TX
MORNING STAR-TELEGRAMCables - Fort Worth - Kansas City
Tel Area

Sunday SUN 344 126

OCT 17, 1989



A ROCKY JOURNEY

Lyrical language inspires high-country longing

By BOB DAVIS
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

With the exception of Tom Wolfe, I don't really like the snappy banter, made-up dialogue or inner monologues of most current fiction. Which brings us to Ivan Doig's latest book, *Mountain Time*.

It has snappy banter that seems so foreign to real life, at least my boring life. It has moments of introspection with such seemingly

clear insight
for our
characters.
And, unless
Doig is
eavesdropping
on some really

perky, yet morose, people at his local Starbucks, it has made-up dialogue.

It also has some interesting characters. *Mountain Time's* Mitch Rozier should be appealing to this reviewer. Like me, Mitch is an environmentally conscious journalist who is a former college football player. Unfortunately, that wasn't enough for me to suspend disbelief and actually care about Mitch.

Unlike me, Mitch is a divorced fifty-something who has been writing a weekly environmental column for more than two decades. He lives in Seattle with Lexa, his girlfriend, who is also divorced. He is estranged from his grown-up kids. He has a bad relationship with his cantankerous father, whose health is fading.

That's a lot of drama for 300 pages.

Despite his flaws, it would be easy to like this guy. But to be honest, a collection of Mitch's weekly environmental columns might be a better read than following the twists and turns of his (1) midlife crisis, (2) strained relationship with Lexa, (3) weakened job prospects with his financially troubled employer.

Ivan Doig, who has been characterized as a great writer you've never heard of, can and does paint beautiful pictures with *Mountain Time*. His description of life in Montana along the Rockies is amazing. It makes one desire to be in the shadow of a mountain.

Here's a sample: "It was only midafternoon when they came to the clear rush of water. Aspens pintoed the opposite bank, their leaves exquisitely trembling in the least whiff of breeze. From not far upstream poured the more industrious sound of a waterfall, twenty or thirty feet high, a toboggan of white water."

With writing like that, even this fiction-phobic reviewer can offer praise for *Mountain Time*.

I would suspect that readers who have never been on the trail might get a desire to strap on a pack and start hiking after reading this book. That alone is worth a recommendation.

Bob Davis is OpEd/Sunday editor for the Star-Telegram

+12126324918

T-728 P 01/01 F-182

Dear Ivan,
One is one of
the windsor
review live ever
read, but in
thrilled, that
they're still
coming.
How all's
well.
Dan.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

'Libraries are oxygen,' says writer Ivan Doig

Author to speak at library benefit

BY GALE FIEGE MANN
American staff writer

For novelist Ivan Doig, a consummate journalist and historian, libraries are "pantries of research" where treasure hunts are sure and characters rise from the archives.

From his Seattle home on Monday, the celebrated writer of the American West said he's happy to be a part of the "Great Beginnings" event next month that will help raise money to build a new public library in Anacortes.

The library is certain to create new pride in the community and probably will become a civic centerpiece — not to mention the benefits to Anacortes readers and researchers, Doig said.

"Libraries are oxygen for me," he said.

For his autobiographical first book, "This House of Sky," Doig wanted to write about his father's visits to the saloons in their hometown of White Sulphur Springs, Mont., because it was in those establishments that his dad hired his haying crews. Being a boy back then, Doig couldn't remember the names of all the bars, but down in the depths of the University of Washington library he found a 1947 telephone book.

"There were the names, and then I began to bring back the personalities of these saloons," he said.

For his non-fiction book "Winter Brothers," Doig said he "practically lived in the (UW) library" to read the diaries of James Swan, who was the federal Indian agent to the Makahs at Neah Bay in the 1880s.

"And sometimes, what's best about libraries is that you find things you're not looking for," he said. For his first novel, "The Sea Runners," beautiful old Russian maps offered up by a librarian at the Alaska State Library actually became a character in the book.

The Montana trilogy of "English Creek," "Dancing at the Rascal Fair" and "Ride With Me, Mariah Montana," took Doig to libraries in Scotland and to the archives of the Montana Historical Society.

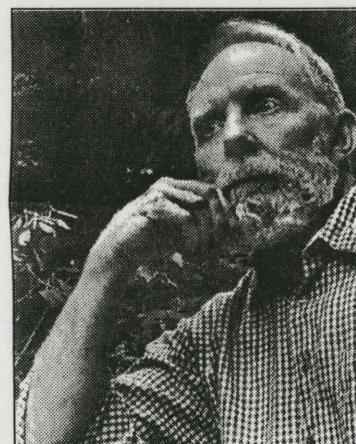
Plenty of research also went into the new novel, "Mountain Time," from which Doig will read at the Anacortes fund-raising event.

The Bob Marshall Wilderness, a million acres of magnificent landscape high in the northern Rockies, plays a big part in the book, which Doig calls a "cousin" to the trilogy.

A 1977 backpack trip with his wife, Carol, into high lonesome of the Bob Marshall Wilderness triggered in Doig an interest in the Forest Service recreation director for which it is named. And that meant a trip to read Marshall's papers at the University of California at Berkeley.

Set in Seattle, Montana and Alaska, "Mountain Time" is the story of the intense relationships between a father and his son, the son and his girlfriend, and the girlfriend and her sister.

And as he does so well, Doig writes about the land and the people bonded to it — even if they no longer live in Montana. Many



Ivan Doig

What's best about libraries is that you find things you're not looking for."

Ivan Doig

expatriates live in the Puget Sound region and many of them will relate to the characters of the new book.

"Yes,...the Montana Diaspora, the scattered tribe who, such as in my case, went out to find work," Doig said.

"Mountain Time" is receiving favorable reviews from critics who enjoy Doig's humor and dialogue, and the author said he works hard to deliver a good "reading" of these colorful scenes to his audiences.

"Writing is a performance art. I work from a script and mark it up the way a symphony conductor or choreographer would make notes on a score. Different scenes work for different audiences. I'm not an actor, but readers have come to expect a good performance, and I've seen in action other writers who one would think had never even heard of a bookmark."

On hearing that the theme of the fund-raising event next month is "Great Beginnings," Doig said that just like a good newspaper story, the opening line — the great beginning — of a novel has to immediately capture the reader's attention.

"The first dozen or so have to be pretty goddamn good words. Sometimes I'll work long and hard on the lead of the story. I probably rewrote the start of "This House of Sky" 75 times. But it's worth it, because great beginnings are remembered," he said.

Here's the new one: "Lexa McCaskill ran both hands through her coppery hair, adding up the appetites."

Doig tells us more about Lexa and the other characters of his new novel at "Great Beginnings," the Anacortes Public Library Foundation's fund-raising kickoff for a new library building, Saturday evening, Oct. 2, at the Anacortes Port dock warehouse. The event includes an art auction, local food and drink, dancing to The Atlantics and Doig's reading. Tickets — \$30 each — are available now at Watermark Book Co., 612 Commercial Ave.

Change of seasons

Poignant *Mountain Time* looks at lives in time of loss

By David Cummings

MOUNTAIN TIME, by Ivan Doig; Scribner, New York, 1999, 352 pp., \$25.

For the past few months I've been wrestling with accepting and reconciling the need to establish my father in an extended-care facility in another city. I thought I wasn't in the mood for a "relationship book," particularly one dealing with this topic. The review copy of *Mountain Time* lay untouched for a couple of weeks. I started reading it the same day as the funeral of my last remaining grandparent. This background, of course, affected my reaction to this book. I was fascinated by watching a man about my age deal with his dying father, and seeing him go back to his childhood home and deal with the memories and emotions that were all too familiar.

All over America, adults just entering middle age are realizing something with alarm. Dealing with aging and dying parents makes their comfortable lives quite different than expected, at least for a while.

Doig is a well-respected expert at making the outdoors real and understandable to the reader. His skills at writing dialogue equal his ability to describe the American West.

at least for a while. In *Mountain Time*, Mitch Rozier, age 50, finds that his life is moving sideways at best, not advancing. He is soon to lose a second-class job at a small newspaper, his two children of a failed marriage can't stand to be around him, and he is drifting apart from his love interest, caterer and outdoorswoman Lexa McCaskill. Just as he realizes the need to lower expectations for his future, he gets a totally unexpected call for help from his father, Lyle. Rushing from Seattle to his boyhood home in Montana, Mitch thinks that he's just going to talk his father out of a harebrained scheme to sell the homestead for quick profit. He soon learns that the real task is to help his father gracefully die from leukemia.

Mitch and Lyle have a complicated relationship, and writer Ivan Doig makes their awkward reconciliations at the end of the father's life ring true to anyone who has already had occasion to deal with these matters. Learning of his father's serious illness, Mitch soon realizes that his already-complicated life has taken on this unwelcome intrusion for its duration. He is joined by his girlfriend Lexa and her older sister Mariah, just back from a globe-trotting photographic tour. They give Mitch and his father both comfort and aggravation, having been drawn to this cluttered Montana homestead by a sense of duty and compassion.

Mariah, ever the photojournalist on the make, gets grudging permission to record Lyle's last days as a photo essay to be published after his death. Mitch just hopes that the estrangement in his relationship with Lyle doesn't show. Author Doig masterfully draws the backstory of this relationship. His skill in making these characters

seem real gives the reader a sense of being involved in a true family drama as it unfolds.

Mitch is puzzled by his father's last request — to have his ashes scattered to the wind at Phantom Woman peak. It is the deep wilderness site of a fire tower that Lyle built as a young CCC worker during the Great Depression. This is quite uncharacteristic for the father that Mitch thought he knew so well. By the end of *Mountain Time*, we see that figuring out this puzzle is the key to Mitch's being able to reconcile his relationship with both his father and the women in his life.

On the week-long wilderness hike to Phantom Woman with Lyle's ashes, the relationship between Mitch and the sisters McCaskill takes unexpected and dangerous turns, and near-tragedy occurs in more than just one way. This sad, dutiful hike will change all of their lives forever. The reader is intrigued as all of the threads of the story, past and present, weave together into an outcome that is quite rewarding. Doig is a well-respected expert at making the outdoors real and understandable to the reader. His skills at writing dialogue equal his ability to describe the American West.

Anniston, AL
STAR
Anniston
Met Area

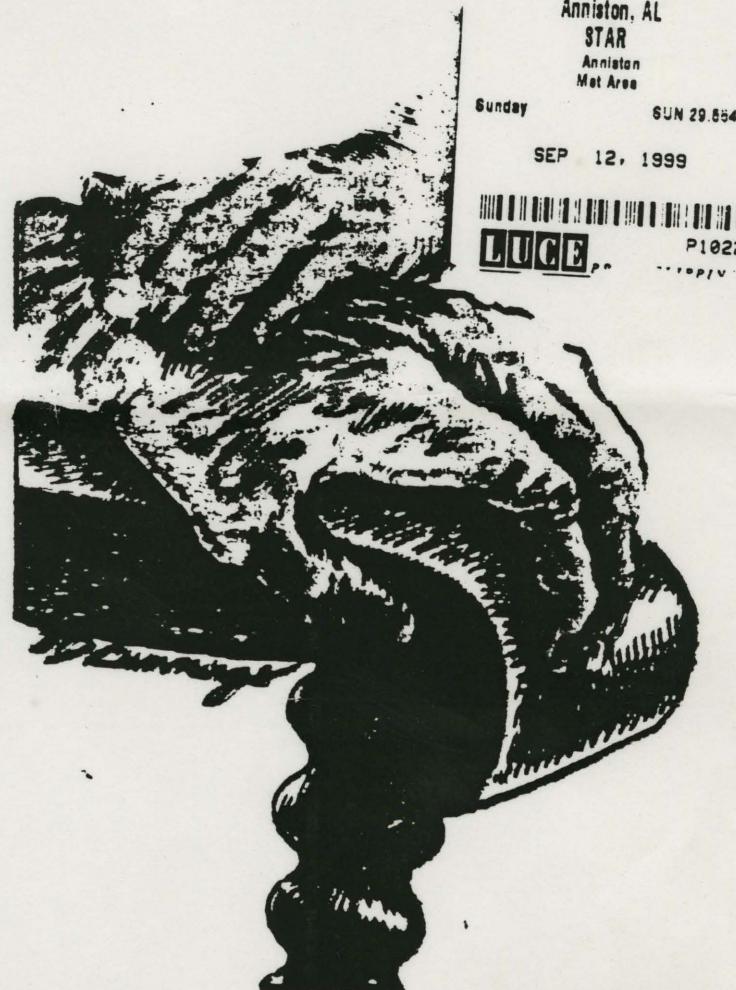
Sunday

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LUCE

P1022



Mountain Time is highly recommended to any middle-aged person who is soon to be dealing with the reality of aging parents. Doig skillfully makes you relate to his story, and makes you understand how other people deal with this issue that can't be avoided in our lives:

"America's airport concourses were constantly crisscrossed with Baby Boomers trying to nerve up for the waiting bedside consultation, the nursing home decision, the choosing of a casket. Mitch could generally pick out the stunned passengers home in airport waiting lounges, the trim business-woman who lived by focus sitting there now with a doll-eyed stare, the man celebrating middle age with a ponytail looking down baffled now at his compassion-fare ticket. Targeted from here on, for the involuntary clerkwork of closing down a parent's life. The time came; it always came. The when of it was the ambush."

These characters and their relationships seemed totally real. I felt that I was reading about people I knew doing things that seemed eerily familiar. It is rare to be so taken in by a work of modern fiction. That is the best indicator of its worth to the reader.

David Cummings is an Anniston dentist.

'Mountain Time' is new Ivan Doig novel

Mountain Time
Ivan Doig (Scribner, \$25)

Celebrated Seattle author Ivan Doig twines together past and present, West Coast and interior West, documented history with fictive invention and the perplexing vagaries of kinship and partnerships in his new novel, "Mountain Time."

In this tale of generational conflict and romantic insecurity, aging environmental columnist Mitch Rozier is summoned from Seattle by his father, a tough old Montana ranch hand, to look over some papers. Lyle Rozier has set up a deal to sell the family's modest Rocky Mountain real estate holdings. A gravel company plans to churn up as much of the landscape as it can get away with.

This is just the latest in a long line of Lyle's half-baked, get-rich-quick schemes. As Mitch complains to his live-in lover Lexa, his dad is "always out to make a killing instead of a living."

But when Mitch arrives in Montana, he discovers that his father may be playing his final hand — he has been diagnosed with terminal leukemia. To help the old man through his final days, Mitch and Lexa orchestrate a clumsy tag-team commute back

BOOKMONGER

BARBARA LLOYD McMICHAEL

and forth between their lives in Seattle and Lyle's impending death in Montana. They are joined by Lexa's photographer sister, Mariah, who secures Lyle's permission to capture on film his journey toward death!

The environmental concerns that at the outset seem like the obvious point of conflict for this book instead take a back seat to Doig's investigation of human vulnerability. The elasticity of loyalty is central to these characters.

This is Mitch's chance to gain crucial insight into the troubled relationship he has had with his father, and perhaps apply those lessons to the estranged relationship he has with his own children by a failed marriage years before.

As in his other books, Doig shuffles actual historical events into the mix. There is no escaping the fact that a couple of the pivotal plot points in "Mountain Time" are shaped by foolish peccadillo, not tragic inevitability, but Doig's characteristically nimble prose (he describes it at one point as the "playful curlicues" of language) goes a long way to-

ward smoothing over some of the improbable or entirely too convenient developments in this tale.

But even the go-for-broke inventiveness with story construction and language can wear thin, and Doig's snappy dialogue, particularly his attempts at Gen-X lingo, seems forced at times. (When Mitch snubs the young co-worker with whom he shares a cubicle, she huffs, "We are over being cubular together.")

When he turns his attention to the landscape, on the other hand, Doig cannot go wrong. Seattle, San Francisco, Eastern Washington and especially Montana — all of them ably explored as literary settings by other authors — simply gleam with newfound clarity under the pen of this master. In "Mountain Time," of course, the landscape is much more than a setting. It also is a player.

While this may not be Doig's strongest work, it still is no disparagement to note that this time out, the author's reach has exceeded his grasp.

The Bookmonger is Barbara Lloyd McMichael, who writes this weekly column focusing on the books, authors and publishers of the Pacific Northwest.

► THE BOOKMONGER

Doig roams from Emerald City to Big Sky country

"*Mountain Time*" — by Ivan Doig; Scribner — \$25

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The Bookmonger is Barbara Joyce McMichael, who writes this weekly column focusing on the books, authors and publishers of the Pacific Northwest.

BREMERTON SUN or 8/1/97

Tale ably, entertainingly takes emotional journey

Bremerton Sun

8/6/99

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Barbara Lloyd McMichael writes about the books, authors and publishers of the Pacific Northwest.



The
Bookmonger

'MOUNTAIN
TIME'
by Ivan Doig
Scribner, \$25

Boulder, CO
CAMERA

Denver-Boulder-Longmont
Met Area

Sunday

SUN 41,558

SEP 12, 1998



LUCE P1578
PRESS CLIPPING

Nature wins in 'Mountain Time'

By Halle Shilling

Camera Staff Writer

Mountain Time by Ivan Doig.
Scribner, \$25. 316 pp.

The characters in Ivan Doig's latest novel aren't good at dealing with people. They are much better with landscapes, preferably those with large open spaces and mountains.

Doig, the critically acclaimed author of "This House of Sky" and other novels, tackles the contemporary West with an expansive story about two middle-aged baby boomers — a generation "jelly-sandwiched between grown children who've gone their own way and aging parents who are losing control of their lives," Doig writes — trying to understand their roots.

The book opens with Lexa McCaskill, a 40ish woman trans-

planted from Montana sheep country to Seattle, where she lives not so happily with her lover, Mitch Rozier.

Lexa is obsessed with her past and still trying to comprehend her failed marriage. Mitch is a 50-year-old environmental columnist for a failing weekly newspaper. He has virtually no relationship with his two grown children and he winces when his father, Lyle, leaves a message on his answering machine, which prompts him to return to his hometown.

"When the middle name of your hometown is sulphur, there is not much you can do about the smell of your childhood," Doig writes, introducing Twin Sulphur Springs, Mont.

Mitch discovers two problems back home. His father has terminal leukemia, and has concocted

a terminal scheme to get rich quick: He's going to sell the family ranch to a corporation that will mine gravel to pave roads into the nearby Bob Marshall Wilderness Area — the only thing about Montana that remains sacred for Mitch.

Lexa arrives at the ranch to await Lyle's death with her sister Mariah, a photojournalist who convinces the other three to allow her to document the patriarch's last days for a photo essay. As Lyle lies dying, Mitch turns over every rock of his past, including

Please see NATURE on 6F

Old Firehouse
Art Center
667 Forth Ave.

The Visual Arts Center
Serving the St. Vrain Valley

September Events

Friday, Sept. 7, 6-9pm

Artwalk in downtown Longmont

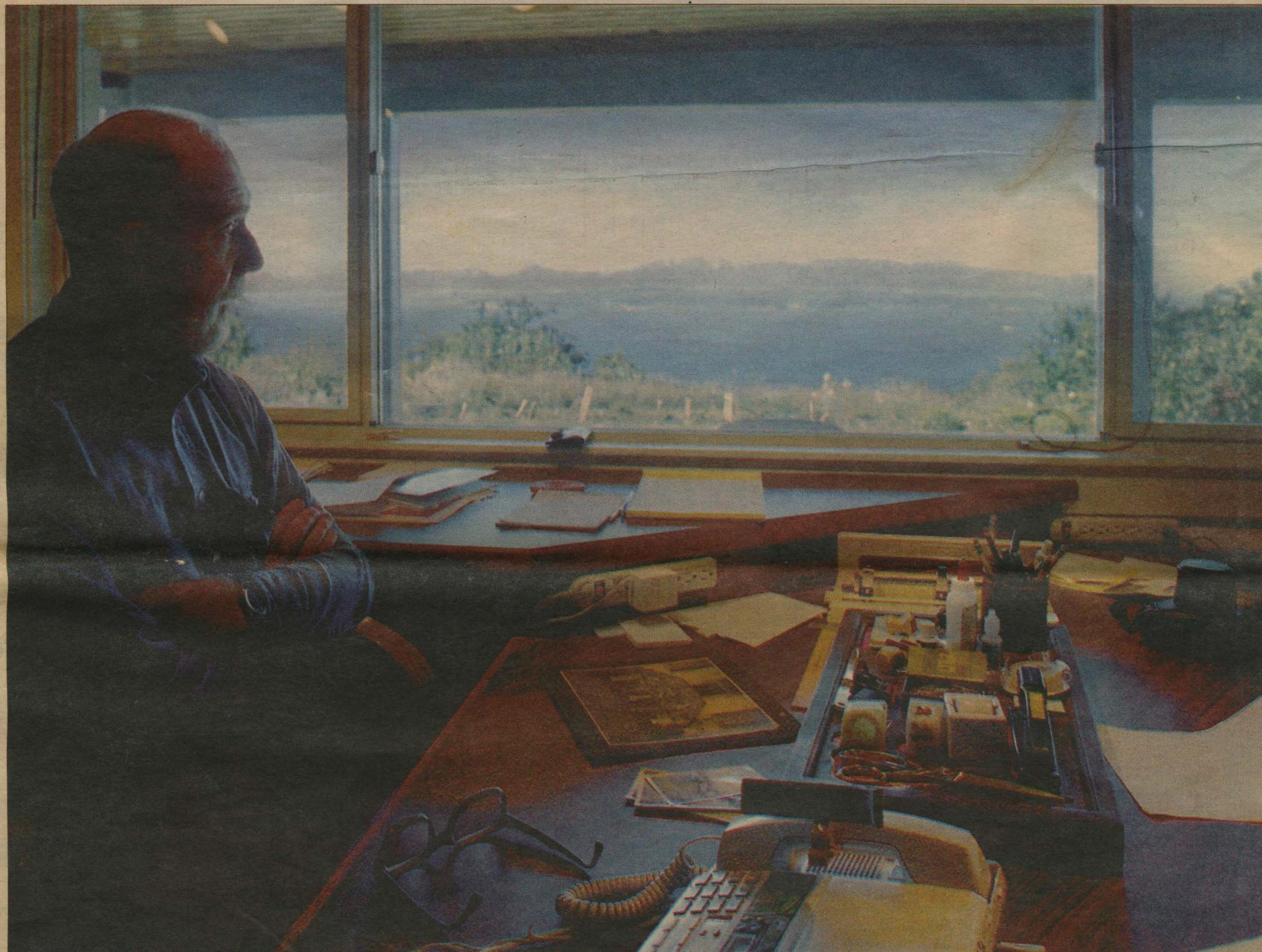
Opening: Artist Candace Shepard presen

Growing Concerns

THE NEWS TRIBUNE

SoundLife

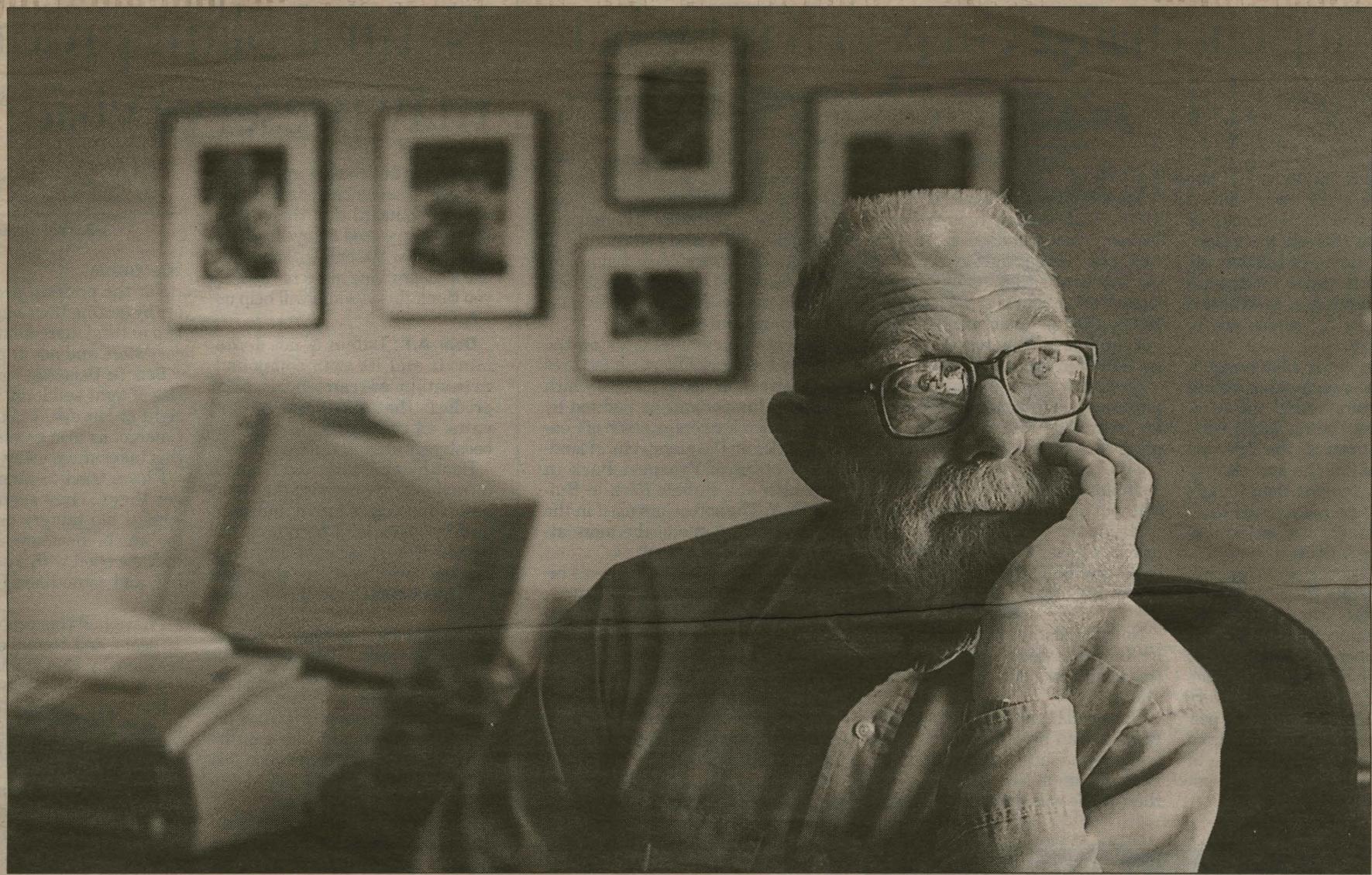
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 1999



Living on 'Mountain Time'

Novelist Ivan Doig's Montana roots run deep in his life and his latest novel

- Susan Gordon, Page 3



PETER HALEY/THE NEWS TRIBUNE

Novelist Ivan Doig still takes notes with pen and paper, but he uses a computer to write and says, 'I'm not entirely the Luddite I'm sometimes portrayed as.'

Doig draws on Northwest lore, people

PREVIEW

Author utilizes his Montana heritage in 'Mountain Time,' a book 'meant to ring your baby-boomer chimes'

By SUSAN GORDON
THE NEWS TRIBUNE

Financial success has blessed Ivan Doig with a picture-postcard view of the snowy Olympic Range.

He got it a year ago, about the time he finished his ninth book, "Mountain Time." The novel, a tale of Seattle baby boomers who return to their Montana roots, appeared in bookstores last month.

The writer and his wife, Carol, had lived in the same Shoreline neighborhood, north of Seattle, for about 25 years before moving to their present waterfront home. With nine books still in print, Doig has earned the wherewithal to move up in the world.

When he's not promoting his books, or doing research elsewhere, Doig rolls out of bed before dawn. By 6:30 a.m., he's in his basement office — facing the mountains — trying to make words dance.

"My internal clock runs on ranch and farm time," Doig explained.

At 60, he no longer rises early to haul water from a neighbor's pump, the way he did in Montana when his family lived in a house without running water. In

his youth, Doig cleaned ashes from the kitchen stove, chased sheep across the Rockies' flanks, hoisted hay bales, drove tractor.

He was born in White Sulphur Springs, Mont., east of the Continental Divide. His father was an itinerant sheep rancher. His mother died of asthma the morning Doig turned 6. Doig was the couple's only child.

His grandmother helped raise him. A fount of proverbs who quit school after third grade, she introduced Doig to the power of colorful language. His dad was a storyteller who took Doig to the bars, where he heard more.

The story of Doig's hardscrabble upbringing is the heart of "This House of Sky." Published in 1978, the memoir was a finalist for the National Book Award and remains Doig's most highly acclaimed work.

Other books have added to Doig's following. Most are fiction, some are not, but all deal with the people and the landscape of Montana and the Pacific Northwest.

"He's one of the most important writers the Northwest has ever produced," said fan J.C. Mutchler, an assistant professor of Western U.S. history at Pacific Lutheran University.

Doig writes authentically about the West's beautiful, but harsh, realities because he's been there, Mutchler said. "I don't think he romanticizes. ... He has that love of the land that any Western-

er with a big W has."

Doig earned a doctorate in history at the University of Washington, but academia held no appeal. Still, even his fiction is woven around facts. "He definitely does his homework," Mutchler said. "He knows his history as well as anybody."

Doig's trilogy "Dancing at the Rascal Fair," "English Creek," and "Ride with Me, Mariah Montana" follow Montana families from the turn of the century through the Depression to the present day.

Elizabeth Simpson, a Lopez Island High School English teacher, compares Doig to William Faulkner. "He's mapped out his own Yoknapatawpha County in Montana," Simpson said. In 1992, her doctoral dissertation on Doig was published as a book, "Earthlight Wordfire: The Work of Ivan Doig."

In "Mountain Time," Doig brings back some old characters. The new book hinges on two connected crises, but it's mostly about family. "What do we do when a parent suddenly becomes our child?" is how Simpson put it. The second issue is environmental. The dying dad wants to sell his land to an outfit that seeks to find gas and oil near a wilderness preserve.

"It's meant to ring your baby-boomer chimes," Doig explained. "You can't not go home again when these family obligations come and seek you out. ... I wanted to explore that generational tussle."

One of "Mountain Time's" characters is a writer, Mitch, who went to the University of Washington in the 1960s, when Doig was in graduate school. A minor scene in the book recalls Mitch's presence at what hip Seattle then called "the piano drop": The real thing was a Country Joe & the Fish concert on a farm near Duvall, where 3,000 people gathered in April 1968 to see a helicopter drop a piano to the ground.

"I wish I'd gone to the piano drop instead of staying home writing my dissertation," Doig joked. Still, he got it in the book, plus a lot of other Seattle col-

or. Doig has called Seattle home since 1966. He goes back to Montana frequently: on book tours, for research, and to pick up memorabilia that bring stories to mind.

Doig owes much to his wife, who last year retired after 30 years teaching at Shoreline Community College. "I think a working partner, a working spouse, is necessary when you start out to be a self-unemployed writer," Ivan Doig joked about his and Carol's marriage. "But she now points out that I now support her and bought her this house."

The Doigs share a custom-made desk in the downstairs office, where Ivan puts down words on both yellow legal pad and a computer. "Pen, pencil, notebook, whatever it takes," he said. "Dialog often comes better by pencil on pad

ON THE COVER

Novelist Ivan Doig enjoys a view of Puget Sound and the Olympic Mountains from his office in his Seattle home (photo: Peter Haley/The News Tribune).

Please see Doig, Page 9

Doig

continued from Page 3

the first rough draft."

Doig doesn't like the computer; he says the screen bothers his eyes. It the Royal Standard typewriter once regularly used isn't set up now. "I'm not entirely the Luddite I sometimes portrayed as," Doig id.

At his desk, Doig fingered tiny antique black-and-white snapshots, pictures of 1920s ranch hands: his dad, uncles and a family friend. Nearby lay another photo, a anonymous group of students and teachers who posed for a portrait outside a turn-of-the-century Montana school.

Doig said his next book will likely look back to that era. When he's writing, he uses such pictures to stimulate his imagination. He also writes on notes, filed neatly on 5-by-8 cards. He pulled one out. Typed neatly in the middle was a single sentence. "Susan Duff knew that the apters of her life sat uneasy with each other." She will probably be the protagonist of his next book, Doig id. But how those words will fit in, he can't say.

For Doig, the hardest part of a book is writing the first draft. He often doesn't outline plots beforehand. Part of writing any book is seeing where it's going to lead," he said. He prides himself on his workmanlike approach: his early rising, his daylong persistence. Since 1978, publishers have come out with a new Doig book every several years. When he's working on one, Doig writes between 400 and 1,000 words a day. "Mountain Time" took him two years complete.

Some of Doig's characters are heroic in stature, but the writer is an average-sized guy: 5-foot-9, 168 pounds, with gray beard and hair. These days, only his eyebrows recall his red-headed youth.

He left Montana when he won a full scholarship to Northwestern University in Chicago and studied journalism. For a time, he wrote editorials for a chain of newspapers based in Illinois. He never worked as a reporter, but "unashamedly takes notes" wherever the fancy strikes him. That's part of being a writer, hanging onto the good stuff and using it sometime."

He keeps a tiny, wire-bound notebook tucked in a pocket of his light blue chambray shirt, his "dairy chic." In the other pocket is a pair of glasses. (Doig switches among three prescriptions, including one for the computer.) At home, he also wears jeans and comfortable-looking shoes. He takes an afternoon break for a long walk with Carol and quits writing about 4 p.m.

After that, he and Carol have a drink — he likes bourbon, she likes scotch — and listen to National Public Radio news.

"There's a kind of dailiness of grace in maintaining a routine," he said. "Writing leads to burnout, he figures. "Steadiness is the way to go."

Reach staff writer Susan Goron at 253-597-8281 or at susan.goron@mail.tribnet.com

MOVIE TIMES

Tacoma

AMC NARROWS PLAZA 8, 2208 S. Mildred St.

- 1-Blue Streak, 1:30, 2, 4:50, 5:30, 7:20, 7:50, 9:35 (PG-13)
- 2-For Love of the Game, 1:20, 4:10, 7, 9:45 (PG-13)
- 3-Stigmata, 1:35, 5, 7:30, 9:55 (R)
- 4-The Sixth Sense, 1:45, 4:40, 7:10, 9:25 (PG-13)
- 5-Stir of Echoes, 1:50, 5:10, 7:25, 9:30 (R)
- 6-The 13th Warrior, 1:40, 5:20, 7:40, 9:50 (R)
- 7-Mickey Blue Eyes, 5:35, 8 (PG-13)
- 8-Love Stinks, 2:05 (R)

BLUE MOUSE THEATRE, 2611 N. Proctor St.

- 1-Buena Vista Social Club, 6 (unrated)

GENERAL CINEMAS' LINCOLN PLAZA 31 Montana (South 38th & I-5)

- 1-Blue Streak, noon, 12:50, 2:20, 3:10, 4:40, 5:30, 7:10, 7:50, 9:30, 10:15 (PG-13)
- 2-For Love of the Game, 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10 (PG-13)
- 3-The Sixth Sense, 12:10, 2:40, 5:15, 7:45, 10:20 (PG-13)
- 4-Stir of Echoes, 12:30, 2:50, 5:20, 7:50, 10:10 (R)
- 5-Stigmata, noon, 2:30, 4:50, 7:15, 9:45 (R)
- 6-The 13th Warrior, 11:45, 2:10, 4:30, 7:20, 9:40 (R)

GRAND CINEMA, 606 S. Fawcett Ave.

- 1-An Ideal Husband, 5, 7 (PG-13)
- 2-Tea With Mussolini, 5:10, 7:25 (PG)
- 3-Twin Falls Idaho, 7:15 (R)
- 4-The Red Violin, 4:50 (unrated)
- 5-TACOMA CENTRAL, 3102 S. 23rd
- 1-The Muse, 3:10, 5:30, 7:40, 9:40 (PG-13)
- 2-The Astronaut's Wife, 1:50, 4:20, 6:40, 9 (R)
- 3-Bowfinger, 2, 4, 6:10, 8:30 (PG-13)
- 4-The Thomas Crown Affair, 2:10, 4:40, 7, 9:20 (R)
- 5-Runaway Bride, 2:40, 5:10, 7:30, 9:50 (PG)
- 6-A Dog of Flanders, 2:20, 4:50, 7:10 (PG)
- 7-Deep Blue Sea, 9:10 (R)

TACOMA MALL TWIN, 4302 Tacoma Mall Blvd.

- 1-Dudley Do-Right, 2:20, 4:45, 7:10, 9:30 (PG)
- 2-An Ideal Husband, 1:30, 4, 6:10, 8:30 (PG-13)

TACOMA SOUTH CINEMAS, 7601 S. Hosmer

- 1-A Dog of Flanders, 2:30, 5 (PG)
- 2-The Astronaut's Wife, 7:30, 9:40 (R)
- 3-In Too Deep, 1:50, 4, 6:10, 8:15 (R)
- 4-Bowfinger, 3:15, 5:25, 7:20, 9:20 (PG-13)
- 5-The Thomas Crown Affair, 2, 4:20, 6:35, 9 (R)
- 6-Inspector Gadget, 2:45, 4:45, 7 (PG)
- 7-Deep Blue Sea, 8:40 (R)

Lakewood

LAKEWOOD MALL CINEMAS 10509 Gravelly Lake Drive S.W.

- 1-For Love of the Game, 12:25, 1:45, 3:25, 4:35, 6:15, 7:45, 9:15, 10:40 (PG-13)
- 2-Stir of Echoes, 1:35, 4:15, 7:15, 9:45 (R)
- 3-The 13th Warrior, 12:35, 1:55, 2:55, 4:25, 5:25, 6:55, 7:55, 9:25, 10:25 (R)
- 4-Outside Providence, 1:15, 5:55, 10:35 (R)
- 5-An Ideal Husband, 3:35, 8:20 (PG-13)
- 6-Bowfinger, 1:25, 2:25, 3:55, 4:55, 6:25, 7:25, 8:55, 9:55 (PG-13)
- 7-The Thomas Crown Affair, 2:35, 5:05, 7:35, 10:05 (R)
- 8-Deep Blue Sea, 12:55, 3:15, 5:35, 8:10, 10:45 (R)
- 9-Dudley Do-Right, 1:05, 3, 5:15 (PG)
- 10-The Haunting, 7:05, 9:35 (PG-13)
- 11-Inspector Gadget, 12:45, 2:45, 4:45, 6:45, 8:45 (PG)

LAKEWOOD CINEMA 15

84th Street South and Tacoma Mall Blvd.

- 1-Blue Streak, noon, 12:30, 1, 3:30, 4, 4:30, 7, 7:30, 8:30, 9:30, 10, 10:30 (PG-13)
- 2-Love Stinks, 10:25 (R)
- 3-Stigmata, 12:25, 12:55, 2:45, 3:25, 6:30, 7:20, 9:35, 10:10 (R)
- 4-Chill Factor, 12:35, 3:45, 6:15, 9 (R)
- 5-In Too Deep, 6:55, 10:20 (R)
- 6-Mickey Blue Eyes, 12:40, 4:05, 7:05 (PG-13)
- 7-Mystery Men, 12:05, 3:05, 6:50, 9:45 (PG-13)
- 8-The Sixth Sense, 1:10, 12:45, 3, 3:50, 6:45, 7:25, 9:25, 10:15 (PG-13)
- 9-Runaway Bride, 12:20, 3:40, 7:10, 9:40 (PG)
- 10-The Blair Witch Project, 7:15, 9:55 (R)
- 11-The Iron Giant, 12:15, 2:25, 4:35 (PG)
- 12-American Pie, 1:50, 4:10, 7:35, 10:05 (R)
- 13-Tarzan, 12:50, 3:15, 5:15 (G)
- 14-Star Wars: Episode I - The Phantom Menace, 12:10, 3:10, 6:10, 9:10 (PG)

Puyallup

PUYALLUP CINEMAS 1200 Fourth St. N.W.

- 1-Big Daddy, 5:30, 7:30, 9:35 (PG-13)
- 2-The General's Daughter, 4:40, 7:05, 9:25 (R)
- 3-Eyes Wide Shut, 4:45, 8 (R)
- 4-Wild Wild West, 7 (PG-13)
- 5-The Mummy, 4:30, 9:15 (PG-13)
- 6-Tarzan, 5:20, 7:15, 9 (G)
- 7-Arlington Road, 4:35, 7:10, 9:30 (R)



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BLUE STREAK (PG-13) On 2 Screens

Digital Stereo

FOR LOVE OF THE GAME (PG-13)

Digital Stereo

STIGMATA (R) Digital Stereo

1:35 (5:00) 7:30, 9:55

THE SIXTH SENSE (PG-13)

145 (4:40) 7:10, 9:25

L0921711621

Tuesday, September 21 Only

SOUTH HILL MALL SIX, 3500 S. Meridian

- 1-Love Stinks, 2:45, 4:45, 7:20, 9:30 (R)
- 2-Outside Providence, 2:40, 4:45, 7:10, 9:25 (R)
- 3-Mystery Men, 4, 7, 9:35 (PG-13)
- 4-The Iron Giant, 2:55, 4:50 (PG)
- 5-Deep Blue Sea, 7:05, 9:15 (R)
- 6-Dudley Do-Right, 3, 5, 7:25, 9:10 (PG)
- 7-Inspector Gadget, 2:50, 5:05, 7:15, 9:20 (PG)

LONGSTON PLACE, 13373 Meridian E.

- 1-Blue Streak, 12:45, 1:15, 3, 3:30, 5:15, 5:45, 7:30, 8, 9:45, 10:15 (PG-13)
- 2-For Love of the Game, 12:50, 1:20, 3:50, 4:20, 6:50, 7:20, 9:50, 10:20 (PG-13)
- 3-Stigmata, 12:30, 1, 2:45, 3:20, 5, 5:35, 7:15, 7:55, 9:30, 10:10 (R)
- 4-Stir of Echoes, 12:35, 2:55, 5:45, 8, 10:20 (R)
- 5-The Sixth Sense, 12:30, 3:15, 5:40, 8:10, 10:30 (PG-13)
- 6-Bowfinger, 12:40, 3, 5, 7:25, 9:10 (PG-13)
- 7-The 13th Warrior, 12:30, 2:55, 5:15, 7:45, 10:20 (R)
- 8-The Thomas Crown Affair, 2:40, 4:40, 7:15, 9:30 (R)
- 9-Star Wars: Episode I - The Phantom Menace, 12:40, 3:30, 6:30, 9:25 (PG)
- 10-The 13th Warrior, 12:45, 3:05, 5:20, 7:40, 10 (R)
- 11-Mickey Blue Eyes, 2:05, 6:55 (PG-13)
- 12-Chill Factor, 4:35, 9:20 (R)

Bonney Lake

REGAL TALL FIRS 10, 20751 Highway 410 E.

- 1-For Love of the Game, 4, 7, 10 (PG-13)
- 2-Blue Streak, 5:15, 7:35, 9:50 (PG-13)
- 3-The Sixth Sense, 5, 7:30, 9:55 (PG-13)
- 4-Stigmata, 4:45, 7:10, 9:40 (R)
- 5-Stir of Echoes, 4:55, 7:05, 9:25 (R)
- 6-The 13th Warrior, 5:05, 7:30, 9:55 (R)
- 7-Chill Factor, 7:35, 9:50 (R)
- 8-The Thomas Crown Affair, 4:10, 7:15, 9:30 (R)
- 9-Runaway Bride, 4:20, 7:05, 9:35 (PG)
- 10-Bowfinger, 7:25, 9:45 (PG-13)
- 11-Dudley Do-Right, 4:30 (PG)
- 12-Love Stinks, 5:10 (R)

Gig Harbor

REGAL GIG HARBOR CINEMAS 3 5401 Olympic Drive N.W.

- 1-For Love of the Game, 4, 7 (PG-13)
- 2-Stigmata, 4:15, 7:15 (R)
- 3-The Sixth Sense, 4:30, 7:30 (PG-13)

Port Orchard

PLAZA TWIN CINEMAS, 822 Bay St.

- 1-The Muse, 4:30, 6:45, 8:45 (PG-13)
- 2-The Red Violin, 6:30, 9 (R)
- 3-Wild Wild West, 4:15 (PG-13)
- 4-REGAL SOUTH SOUND 10, 1435 Oinely Ave. S.E.
- 1-For Love of the Game, 3:30, 6:55, 9:40 (PG-13)
- 2-Blue Streak, 4:15, 7:35, 9:45 (PG-13)
- 3-Stigmata, 3:55, 7:25, 9:45 (R)
- 4-Stir of Echoes, 4, 7:30, 9:55 (R)
- 5-The Sixth Sense, 3:45, 7:10, 9:35 (PG-13)
- 6-The 13th Warrior, 3:50, 7:15, 9:10 (R)
- 7-Bowfinger, 4:10, 7:20, 9:15 (PG-13)
- 8-Chill Factor, 4:05, 9:50 (R)
- 9-Love Stinks, 7:40 (R)
- 10-The Thomas Crown Affair, 3:35, 7, 9:25 (R)
- 11-Runaway Bride, 3:40, 7:05, 9:30 (PG)

Eatonville

ROXY THEATRE, 115 Mashell

- 1-The Sixth Sense, 7:30 (PG-13)

SOUTH KING COUNTY

AMC SEATAC NORTH 31600 20th S., Federal Way

- 1-For Love of the Game, 1:15, 1:40, 4:10, 4:40, 7, 7:30, 9:50, 10:15 (PG-13)
- 2-Blue Streak, 1:20, 2, 4:20, 5, 7:15, 7:50, 9:30, 10:05 (PG-13)
- 3-The Sixth Sense, 1:50, 4:50, 7:40, 9:55 (PG-13)
- 4-Stigmata, 1:30, 4:30, 7:30, 9:40 (R)
- 5-REGAL SEATAC SOUTH 2000 S. SeaTac Mall, Federal Way
- 1-Mickey Blue Eyes, 5:40, 8:05 (PG-13)
- 2-Love Stinks, 5:50, 7:55 (R)
- 3-The Muse, 5:30, 7:40 (PG-13)
- 4-An Ideal Husband, 7:45 (PG-13)
- 5-In Too Deep, 5:45, 8 (R)
- 6-The Iron Giant, 5:55 (PG)
- 7-Mystery Men, 7:35 (PG-13)
- 8-Tarzan, 5:35 (G)

CHALET THEATRE, 1721 Wells St., Enumclaw

- 1-Chill Factor, 7:30 (R)

MARTIN LAWRENCE

BLUE STREAK

PG-13

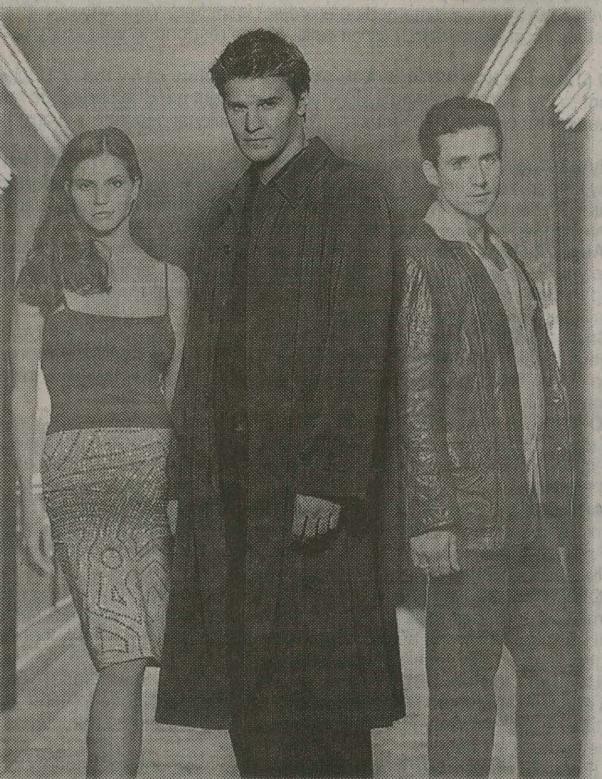
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[www.sony.com/bluest](http://www.sony.com/bluestreak)

fact she was a high school girl who killed vampires.

And yet, to be out of the Buffy loop was in many ways akin to

Buffy had to have a love interest. After all, making jokes about "The X-Files" ("I cannot believe [See GOODMAN, B-4]



"Angel" features Charisma Carpenter, left, David Boreanaz (as the title character) and Glenn Quinn.



EXAMINER / CHRIS HARDY

Marilyn Horne is joined by tenor Jerry Hadley to sing "You're Just in Love" from Irving Berlin's "Call Me Madam."

ra's artist development program, a cause close to Horne's heart. The afternoon featured an abundance of songs and opera excerpts (including a few from the honoree, who hasn't appeared here in a production since 1992), propelled more than one patron down memory lane, and reaffirmed General Director Lotfi Mansouri's knack for throwing a whale of a party.

As he escorted Horne to a chair on a stage (decorated with elements from the production of Vivaldi's "Orlando Furioso" mounted for Horne in 1989), Mansouri was absolutely correct to say that he felt like Ralph Edwards; this really was Horne's life. Numerous San Franciscans honestly felt that they had shared it with her. So have a lot of singers, for whom, in both word and action, she has served as counselor and guide.

They paid tribute in abundance. The guest luminaries, all of whom donated their services, included soprano Renée Fleming, tenor Jerry Hadley and bass Samuel Ramey (who delayed their departures after Saturday's final "Louise" for this gig), sopranos Ruth Ann Swenson

[See HORNE, B-7]

Big changes in Big Sky

Novel looks at boomers' shifting lives, landscapes

By Edvins Beitiks
OF THE EXAMINER STAFF

WHEN YOU TALK about the gradual pounding-down of the American landscape, you can start with the fat-wallet colonies that have settled in the heart of Montana, former stomping grounds of author Ivan Doig.

"The Montana Riviera," Doig calls it, pointing toward Bozeman and other towns taken over by the literati and glitterati. "All these people coming out from Hollywood, all this money from the movies and the arts. But it's not the first time it's happened... my great-grandparents used to milk cows for John Ringling of Ringling Brothers Circus, the kabilionaire of his time."

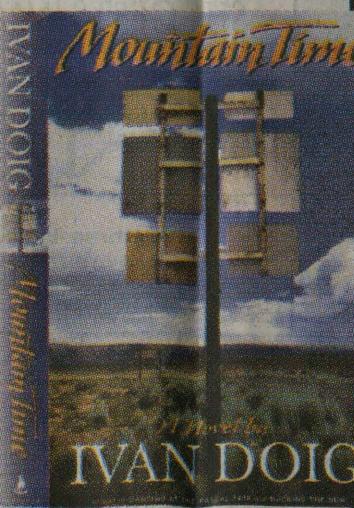
Doig, 60, on a western tour to tout his newest novel, "Mountain Time," just out

from Scribner's, said, "It's an old story, a very familiar story. There's a sense the West is being loved to death by these people. As Wallace Stegner said, 'You can love a place and still be dangerous to it.'

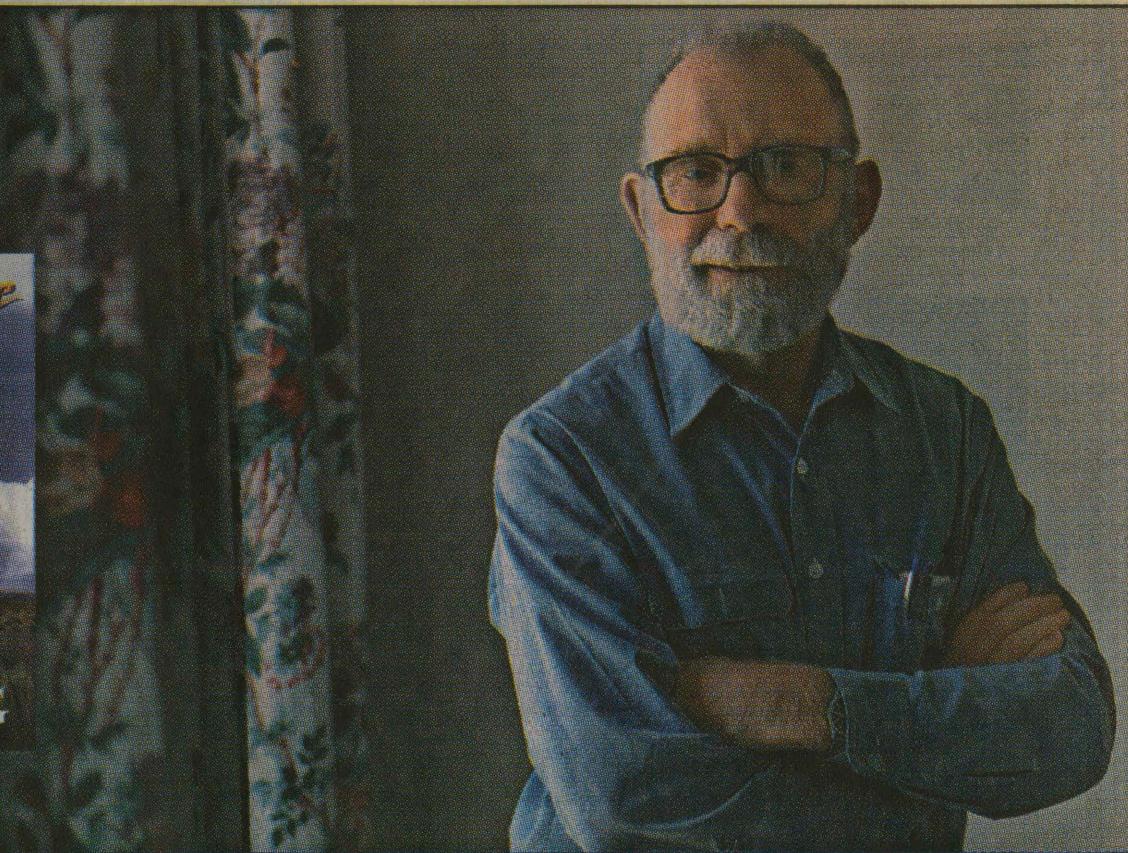
That's the theme at the heart of "Mountain Time," a story of aging baby boomers trying to deal with the deterioration of their parents' lives and the complications of their own lives in a changing landscape. Doig — author of novels "Bucking the Sun" and "Dancing at the Rascal Fair" as well as nonfiction works "Heart Earth" and "This House of Sky" — sees "Mountain Time" as a study in eternal questions being forced on a specific generation.

Mitch Rozier, 50-year-old writer for a militant environmental magazine, returns to his home in Montana to deal with the scrap ends of his father's life.

[See DOIG, B-6]



Ivan Doig: "I think we've pounded the earth pretty hard out here. It's untidy, it's destructive what we're doing, but there's still some hope."

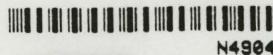


EXAMINER / CHRIS HARDY

PROVIDENCE, RI
Journal-Bulletin
Providence
Met Area

Sunday SUN 237,786

AUG 29, 1999



N4904

LUCE PRESS CLIPPINGS

Eloquent landscape, but thin characters

MOUNTAIN TIME, by Ivan Doig. Scribner. 316 pages. \$25.

By SAM COALE
Special to the Journal

Baby Boomers in Seattle. Mitch Rozier, 50, writes Coastwatch, a column on environmental issues for a weekly newspaper that's about to close. He's divorced, living with Lexa McCaskill, 40, who's divorced, a former rodeo champion, a feisty hiker who works as a caterer. His father Lyle, living like a "Swamp Yankee" in Twin Sulphur Springs, Montana, has leukemia. Lexa's beautiful sister Mariah, 42, who's divorced and a world-hopping photographer, shows up and decides to shoot Lyle's last days.

Mitch, Lexa and Mariah spar with Lyle at his rockbound ranch. Lyle has always been full of schemes that have never worked out. The latest is a collection of branding irons to sell. And he wants to sell his place to gas-and-oil interests who need gravel to build roads into the mountains.

Ivan Doig has written several novels about the West as well as non-fiction. He writes eloquently about landscape, in particular about the Rockies and other mountains: "You could see out over a dozen watersheds and headwaters, out to the dark pelt of pine on a hundred mountains, out into supple valleys, out all the way to the half-mile-high walls of stone that fronted the mountain range." And about light, weather conditions, rivers.

But Doig's characters are hip, one-liner-spouting creatures who pass through ephemeral moods and whims and leave no trace or shadow. They are arch and thin and drift or coast ineffectively from place to place or person to person.

The trouble is that Doig seems to like this would-be-casual humor. He writes the way his characters talk. "At best, Mitch could write a column with a skateboarder's eye for odd angles and fast surfaces." Doig quotes Robinson Jeffers, than quips, "It was a time when zinger sentences walked the earth."

A "blonde and tawny woman" is quickly summed up: "Sheena@jungle.com." Mitch's dying dad Lyle thinks that the sisters, Lexa and Mariah, "had the sort of mouths that needed holders." Great line, but not much depth there.

Consequently, though Lyle and Mitch joust and feint ("Maybe in error, but never in doubt — that was my father"), and though inevitable death lurks in the wings, you don't feel anything. It must be those "odd angles and fast surfaces" that Doig skates so well around and across. It makes for a sluggish, superficial book.

At one point Mitch thinks "that this neck of the earth was always going to be a country of great mountains and mediocre human chances." Maybe that's the problem. At another "Mitch reminded himself this was a how occasion, not a why."

Doig is fine at hows — action, description — but not at whys — character, depth of emotion. There are some splendid set pieces: the trek through the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area in Montana; the flight up the pipeline from Valdez in Alaska; Mitch at 16, working for his father, picking rocks out of a field and getting his leg run over; Lyle's memories of the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1939 and fighting the Japanese in New Guinea; the final journey up a lookout tower to scatter Lyle's ashes.

But the characters fade in and fade out, no match for the gnarled, knotty prose that works wonders on mountain vistas. Doig has a great eye, but it works best in solitary moments, observing the world around him, when nobody else is talking.



MARION ETTLINGER

IVAN DOIG:
Hip one-liners.

Sam Coale of Providence is a frequent reviewer.

Ivan Doig's flowing tale of family

A son returns to Montana and his dying father in the latest McCaskill book

BY RON FRANSCELL
SPECIAL TO THE OREGONIAN

In Montana, not far from where Ivan Doig grew up beneath the big sky that still haunts him, three rivers flow together to form the deep and wide Missouri, lacing through both time and landscape, the old West and the new. And like the brawny Missouri, Doig has channeled three deep literary tributaries into "Mountain Time," a coda to his McCaskill family trilogy.

Mitch Rozier is blossam, a 50-year-old environmental columnist for a post-hip alternative Seattle weekly paper, a baby boomer reading water with his own past and present: estrangement from his grown children, tenuous job security and his scrappy lover, Lexa. McCaskill is jetsam, the earthy and divorced Montana expatriate swirling in Mitch's eddy, catering swanky Seattle software soirees, also going nowhere.

Together, they are caught in the undertow of Lyle Rozier, Mitch's father. Lyle is dying of leukemia, and Mitch is summoned back to his childhood home in Montana, where he's caught up in the ordeal of filial obligation. There, he faces an ancient question confronting a new generation and twisted to fit a new sensibility: Dare we go home again? That's what Mitch asks himself back in Seattle, listening to his father: "The old hated tone of voice. Lyle Rozier proclaiming he had the world on a towrope, and a downhill pull at last. Rubbing his opposite ear as if the words had gone right through him. Mitch winced into the phone that next morning. How many times had he heard this, or something an awful lot like it?"

Mitch's reluctant reunion with his crusty old dad is flooded with lingering family disappointments and secrets — along with the revelation that Lyle wants to sell the family land to a gravel company and rewrite his own life history in the process. Lexa comes along for moral support, bringing her sultry sister, world-weary photographer Mariah

Please see **DOIG**, Page E5

Doig: Men have protected and profaned the West

Continued from Page E3

McCaskill, who documents Lyle's deathwatch.

Their desperate and disparate lives flow together when they hike into the mountains on a sad journey to scatter Lyle's ashes.

Three people, three intense relationships, three rivers. "Mountain Time" is the confluence: The familial clash between Lyle and Mitch echoes the clash between the historic and contemporary West, where exploitation has always been at odds with environmental anxiety. Their story also reflects the dynamic, flowing history in which men have both protected and profaned the Western landscape, which is as much a character in Doig's work as any McCaskill.

Doig's poetic prose remains intact here, but for the first time in his literary career he's funny, too, especially when he's satirizing the foibles and excesses of the Pacific Northwest "Cyberia": "The Casco-pia [newspaper] building was in Seattle's Fremont district, where



IVAN DOIG

Taking the whole cake

"All right, all right," Mitch said with a hard swallow. He rubbed his forehead as if trying to start things moving in there. "If I'm going across the mountains to stop that father of mine from screwing up royalty, I need to call Bing for time off. If there's still anything to have time off from." But he turned back from the phone to Lexa. "I don't suppose you could come along? Ride shotgun down the avalanche?"

"Can't. Mariah."

Mitch blanched on that.

"My sister is flying in," Lexa said with red-letter emphasis. "Tomorrow."

"I knew that." He sneaked a glance toward the refrigerator message center.

"Only child." Lexa shook her head. "You guys always got the whole birthday cake to yourself."

— "Mountain Time"

the Sixties still roamed. The hemp-necessities of life were available there, as were cafes with good rowdy names such as The Longshoreman's Daughter, plus deluxe junk shops, plus bars that were museum pieces from the days when hair was Hair."

"Mountain Time" will not dis-

suade those who rank Doig among the best living American writers, and might even beg comparisons to some of the best dead ones, too. Faulkner comes most readily to mind: The Sartoris of Yoknapatawpha County are no more troubled and no more human than the McCaskills of the

Two Medicine country in Montana. Two great rivers in different landscapes.

Wyoming novelist and newspaperman Ron Franscell is the author of "Angel Fire" and the upcoming mystery "The Deadline."

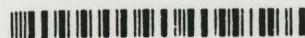


AUG 29, 1999

Sunday SUN 436.061

Portland, OR
OREGONIAN
Portland - Vancouver
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N5734

LUCE
PRESS CLIPPINGS

Doig at his best in masterful 'Mountain Time'

Mountain Time. By Ivan Doig.
Scribner. 320 pages. \$25.

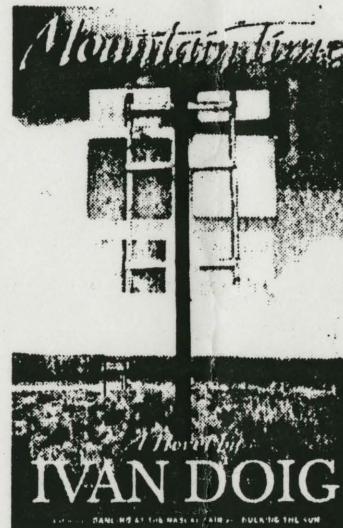
By RON FRANSCELL
Special to the Journal Sentinel

In Montana, not far from where Ivan Doig grew up beneath the big sky that still haunts him, three rivers flow together to form the deep, wide Missouri, lacing through both time and landscape, the old West and the new.

And like the brawny Missouri, Doig has channeled three, deep literary tributaries into "Mountain Time," a coda to his McCaskill family trilogy.

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hood home in Montana.

Mitch faces an ancient question unearthed by a new generation, twisted to fit a new sensibility: Dare we go home again? That's what Mitch asks himself when his father calls from Montana:

"The old hated tone of voice. Lyle Rozier proclaiming he had the world on a towrope and a downhill pull at last. Rubbing his opposite ear as if the words had gone right through him, Mitch winced into the phone

that next morning. How many times had he heard this, or something an awful lot like it?"

But Mitch's reluctant reunion with his crusty old dad is flooded with lingering family disappointments and secrets, and the revelation that Lyle wants to sell the family land to a gravel company and rewrite his own life history in the process. Lexa comes along for moral support but brings her suffocating world-weary photographer Mariah McCaskill, who documents Lyle's deathwatch and proves a bitter reminder of Lexa's unrooted angst. Their desperate, disparate lives flow together when they hike into the mountains on a sad journey to scatter Lyle's ashes.

Three people, three intense relationships, three rivers. "Mountain Time" is the confluence: The familial clash between Lyle and Mitch echoes the clash between the historic and contemporary West, where exploitation has always been at odds with environmental anxiety. But the reader also stands on the near bank of a dynamic, flowing history in which men have both protected and profaned the Western landscape, which is as much a character in Doig's work as any McCaskill.

Doig's poetic prose remains intact here, but for the first time in his literary career he's pretty damn funny, too, especially when he's satirizing the foibles and excesses of the Pacific Northwest's "Cyberia." The Cascopia [newspaper] building was in Seattle's Fremont district, where the Sixties still roamed. The hempen necessities of life were available there, as were a few good, rowdy names like "Lester the Lampshademaker," "Duke the Dog," "Delilah," "Junk Shopper" and the "Wet and Slim Pickens" from the day when hair was hair.

"Mountain Time" will not dislodge those with rank Doig, a Northwestern University graduate, among the best living American writers, and one might even begin making comparisons to some of the best "dead" ones, too. Faulkner comes most readily to mind: The Snopeses of Yoknapatawpha County are no more troubled and no more human than the McCaskills of the Two Medicine country in Montana. Two great rivers in different landscapes.

A Wyoming novelist and newspaperman, Ron Franscell is author of "Angel Fire" and the upcoming mystery, "The Deadline."

-town r Makes



Ivan Doig novel depicts a people going downhill

MOUNTAIN TIME: A NOVEL

By Ivan Doig
Scribner, 1999
\$25, 316 pp.

"Mountain time" refers to that part of the country where the landscape has been whittled less by culture than by geophysical phenomena.

Travel into its rural areas and time seems to go backward. Relics of the past literally litter the land.

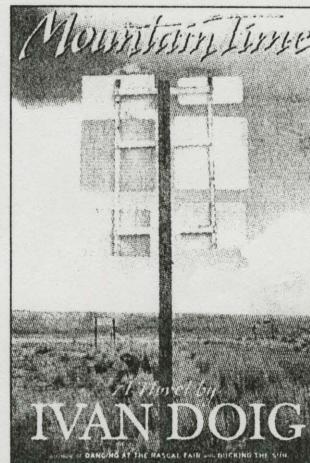
The Continental Divide is hard to stay on top of.

Rugged men and women worked to settle the American West. Their children flowed away from its slopes like water. Dreams are one thing, living another.

Nobody knows this better than Ivan Doig, born and raised in mid-century Montana. Son of a rancher and grandson of a homesteader, he witnessed rough life from a pioneer perspective. His Montana memoirs, published in 1978, became an immediate Western classic. "This House of Sky" detailed with devastating eloquence the passing of culture through land known best as "God's country." Subsequent novels have continued his theme of exploring soul growth in relationship to environment.

"Mountain Time," his newest novel, is a study in declination. Everyone and everything is going downhill; health, work, passions, land, even relationships.

Mitch Rozier is a man in midlife crisis when his cantankerous father summons him home again. Siphoned from Montana in the early 1960s by a University of Washington football schol-



▼ Reading



Ara
Taylor

AUTHOR: Ivan Doig reads from "Mountain Time: A Novel" at 7:30 p.m. Friday at Fairhaven Middle School Auditorium. Tickets are \$3 at Village Books, 1210 11th St., and the door. Proceeds benefit Bellingham Food Bank.

arship, he has not been back to Twin Sulphur Springs except for an occasional visit. An environmental columnist for an alternative Seattle weekly, his job security is dubious. He hates writing anyway, dreads making the words up, does not enjoy his compatriots.

A failed early marriage and estranged relationships with his children make him feel older than 50. Lexa McCaskill is a light in his life, but even their romance is dubious. Together five years, both are perplexed, still holding out on each other.

Mitch leaves Seattle and heads straight for home when his father announces plans to sell the family ranch to a gravel company. Lyle's issues are bigger than

ing before launching the strip.

"I always drew as a kid," he says. "I had fantasies of drawing Batman and all the super heroes."

Doig

Continued from Page C1

real estate, however. He is dying of advanced leukemia.

Lexa arrives with her photo-journalist sister in tow, and Mariyah begins shooting Lyle on his

I need help.

"That's it!" one of them responded.

Lee holds out hope the syndi-

death march. Complications arise, and a crisis ensues when Mitch fails to come to peace with his exasperating father.

Montana takes over, teaching Mitch the lesson he needs to jump-start his passion for life.

Ivan Doig is a fine writer — a master writer — even a tender writer, but "Mountain Time" is

cartooning."

Reach John Harris at jharris@bellingham.gannett.com or 715-2207.

not his best effort.

Luminous prose is a craft, but even the best craft needs water and a pilot who can sound deep revelations. Doig's endeavor this time is ambitious but fallow, softened by too much solemnity, constraint and decorum.

Ara Taylor reviews books for The Bellingham Herald.

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DATEBOOK

THURSDAY, MAY 27, 1999

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THEATER LISTINGS B2

MOVIE LISTINGS B6, B7

COMICS B8

B1

West-Side Stories

Readers rank the 20th century's best nonfiction this side of the Rockies

The trouble with compiling any best-of list is that the compiler never gets to take part in what makes lists so much fun, i.e., complaining about the omissions afterward. Nonetheless, it's with great pride that The Chronicle hereby surrenders its list of the 100 best nonfiction books of the 20th century written in English about — or by an author from — the Western United States.

The Chronicle Western 100 owes its existence to precisely the kind of griping it may now inspire. One year ago, the editorial board of a major New York publisher disseminated its list of the 100 best novels written in English and published in the 20th century. Critics promptly called the list too old, too white, too male and too representative of the publisher's back-list.

A month ago the same house promulgated a follow-up list of the 100 best *nonfiction* books written in English and published in the 20th century. They took care this time to change their editorial

board until it looked more like America. Sure enough, the nonfiction

DAVID KIPEN
Books

The Chronicle Western 100 lets 20th century English-language nonfiction off the leash. It was devised on the nervy assumption that an unscientific, self-selected sampling of interested Western readers could pick just as viable a list as the editorial board of a venerable Manhattan publisher. That faith has since been amply repaid, with Chronicle readers coming out of the woodwork to write, e-mail and buttonhole their smart, opinionated nominations.

The top vote-getter on the Chronicle Western 100 is Mary Austin's "Land of Little Rain," her classic 1903 account of the terrain between Death Valley and the High Sierra — a book Edward Abbey called "a small, tender, old-fashioned and engaging book, a part of the basic literature of American nature writing."

Hard on its heels were Wallace Stegner's "Beyond the Hundredth Meridian," Abbey's "Desert Solitaire" and Ivan Doig's "This House of Sky."

Let no one blame himself for not having read all, or many, or perhaps even any of these

list wound up looking more like America, too — if only America ran westward from New York to the Rockies and then stopped, like a frisky dog at the end of its leash.

books. Blame instead an East Coast literary establishment that tends to get the West wrong only when it isn't ignoring it completely.

Look at the top 10 magnificent writers and reflect that none of them, not one, made New York's nonfiction list. Not Austin, who blazed the trail for a century of writing about the wild. Not Stegner, whose Stanford writing program has nurtured generations of distinguished writers in the West. Not Abbey, whose comic novel "The Monkey Wrench Gang" helped radicalize environmental thinking in America. Not Doig, the Montana-born, Seattle-based master whose impatiently awaited new novel, "Mountain

Time," hits bookstores this summer. And not Evan S. Connell either, the San Francisco mailman-turned-novelist whose landmark examination of Custer and the Little Big Horn was not only written in the West but published here as well by the late, much-lamented Northpoint Press.

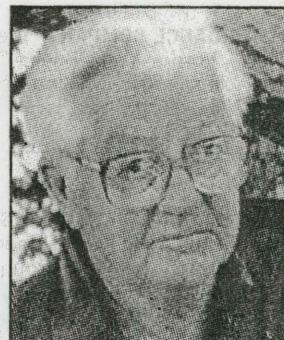
Connell's "Son of the Morning Star" also has the distinction of getting a vote from the man to whom it's dedicated, the gifted San Francisco writer Curt Gentry. "Helter Skelter," Gentry and Vincent Bugliosi's harrowing book about the Charles Manson murders, missed joining "Son of the Morning Star" on the list by the narrowest of margins.

So did books by Mary McCarthy and Susan Sontag, whose origins in Seattle and the San Fernando Valley, respectively,

► KIPEN: Page B5 Col. 1



Mary Austin



Wallace Stegner



Edward Abbey

The Top 10

1

"Land of Little Rain"
Mary Austin

2

"Beyond the
Hundredth Meridian"
Wallace Stegner

3

"Desert Solitaire"
Edward Abbey

4

"This House of Sky"
Ivan Doig

5

"Son of the Morning Star"
Evan S. Connell

6

Western Trilogy
Bernard DeVoto

7

"Assembling California"
John McPhee

8

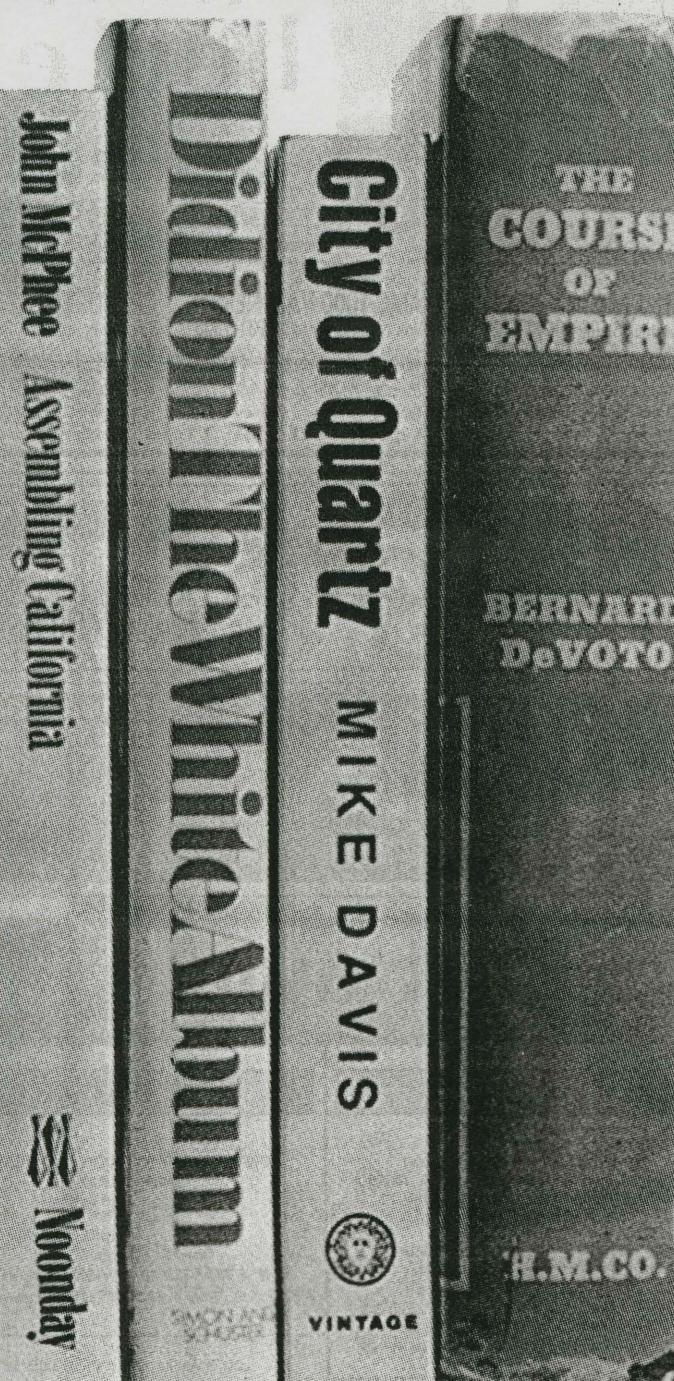
"My First Summer
In the Sierra"
John Muir

9

"The White Album"
Joan Didion

10

"City of Quartz"
Mike Davis



John Muir

MY FIRST SUMMER IN THE SIERRA

Sierra Club Books

EVAN S.
CONNELLSon
of the
Morning
Star

John McPhee Assembling California

Moondog

CITY OF QUARTZ MIKE DAVIS

VINTAGE

THE COURSE OF EMPIRE BERNARD DEVOTO

H.M.CO.

THIS HOUSE OF SKY IVAN DOIG

HARVEST BOOKS

DESERT SOLITAIRE EDWARD ABBY

HARVEST BOOKS

Readers Rank Doig, Didion Works Among Best Nonfiction

► BOOKS

From Page B1

did not go unremembered. Even Harold Ross, the founding editor of the New Yorker, got a vote via James Thurber's uproarious biography of him, which never quite manages to conceal the quintessential New Yorker's birthplace: Aspen, Colo.

But The Chronicle Western 100 fields too strong a team for us to dwell on its bench, however deep. Better to single out the joy of finding Ursula K. LeGuin's essay collection "Dancing at the Edge of the

CHECKING IT TWICE



Did we blow it? Send your opinion of The Chronicle Western 100 to Book Review, San Francisco Chronicle, 901 Mission St., San Francisco, Calif. 94103, or weigh in via the Web at sfgate.com. Just type "good books" in the keyword box.

World" just a few slots below "Ishi in Two Worlds," the story of the last Yahi Indian as written by LeGuin's mother, the Berkeley anthropologist Theodora Kroeber. Or the ghoulish thrill of seeing Joan Didion's "The White Album" on the list cheek by jowl with George Stewart's "Ordeal by Hunger," his superior reconstruction of what befell the Donner Party, which included some of Didion's forebears.

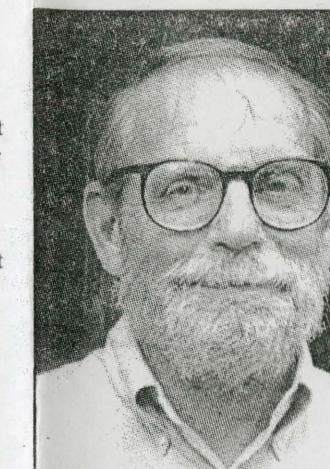
Didion owes her high place on the list in part to the intercession of Cyra McFadden — herself no mean writer of nonfiction, as anyone who's read her memoir "Rain or Shine" can attest. McFadden took time to drop a postcard on behalf of Didion's "White Album" ("still her best book"), Herbert Gold's "Fathers" (not nonfiction and therefore ineligible but "a modern American masterpiece" just the same) and Norman MacLean's "A River Runs Through It" (outpolled by his more frankly nonfictional "Young Men

and Fire").

Both MacLean books had votes enough to make the list, as did multiple books by other writers, but a decision was made early on to adopt a one-book-per-author proviso. One hundred sounds like a lot, but it's not, and too many worthy writers came up short as it is, even without having to compete for a spot against five different John Muir titles.

Ties were broken, rules bent and the continent Solomonically divided at the Rockies.

Tiebreaker discretion also allowed for the placement of Joseph Henry Jackson's "Anybody's Gold" — duly nominated by the readership, *not* the editor — in the inevitably conspicuous No. 100 slot. The Chronicle's book editor from the 1930s through the 1950s, Jackson championed John Steinbeck and other Western writers when the East Coast wouldn't give them the time of day. He reviewed a book every morning in these pages for almost



John McPhee
His "Assembling California" was No. 7



John Steinbeck
Co-wrote "Sea of Cortez," at No. 28



Maxine Hong Kingston
Her "Woman Warrior" came in No. 42

dite readers who made this list possible. The Chronicle Western 100 is gratefully dedicated. To those readers who missed their chance to vote, be patient: Nonfiction is only half

the story.

David Kipen is The Chronicle's book editor. He can be reached at kipend@sfgate.com.

The Chronicle's Western 100

1. "Land of Little Rain," Mary Austin
2. "Beyond the Hundredth Meridian," Wallace Stegner
3. "Desert Solitaire," Edward Abbey
4. "This House of Sky," Ivan Doig
5. "Son of the Morning Star," Evan S. Connell
6. "The Western Trilogy," Bernard DeVoto
7. "Assembling California," John McPhee
8. "My First Summer in the Sierra," John Muir
9. "The White Album," Joan Didion
10. "City of Quartz," Mike Davis
11. "Ordeal by Hunger," George Ripley Stewart
12. "Ishi in Two Worlds," Theodora Kroeber
13. "Americans and the California Dream" (five volumes), Kevin Starr
14. "Cadillac Desert," Marc Reisner
15. "A Sand County Almanac," Aldo Leopold
16. "California: The Great Exception," Carey McWilliams
17. "Arctic Dreams," Barry Lopez
18. "Farewell to Manzanar," Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, James D. Houston
19. "Young Men and Fire," Norman MacLean
20. "Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee," Dee Brown
21. "Bad Land," Jonathan Raban
22. "The World Rushed In: The California Gold Rush Experience," J.S. Holliday
23. "The Art of Eating," M.F.K. Fisher
24. "And the Band Played On," Randy Shilts
25. "The Big Four," Oscar Lewis
26. "The Solace of Open Spaces," Gretel Ehrlich
27. "In the Spirit of Crazy Horse," Peter Matthiessen
28. "Sea of Cortez: A Leisurely Journal of Travel and Research," John Steinbeck, Edward F. Ricketts
29. "The Practice of the Wild," Gary Snyder
30. "Dancing at the Edge of the World," Ursula K. LeGuin
32. "Great Plains," Ian Frazier
33. "The Great Plains," Walter Prescott Webb
34. "Land of Giants: The Drive to the Pacific Northwest, 1750-1950," David Sievert Lavender
35. "Crazy Horse: The Strange Man of the Oglalas," Mari Sandoz
36. "City of Nets," Otto Friedrich
37. "Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place," Terry Tempest Williams
38. "The Content of Our Character," Shelby Steele
39. "High Tide in Tucson," Barbara Kingsolver
40. "Winter," Rick Bass
41. "Undaunted Courage," Stephen Ambrose
42. "The Woman Warrior," Maxine Hong Kingston
43. "The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test," Tom Wolfe
44. "I Lost It at the Movies," Pauline Kael
45. "The Devil's Dictionary," Ambrose Bierce
46. "Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas," Hunter S. Thompson
47. "The Book: On the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are," Alan Watts
48. "The Hunger of Memory," Richard Rodriguez
49. "Caught Inside: A Surfer's Year on the California Coast," Daniel Duane
50. "This Boy's Life," Tobias Wolff
51. "Books in My Baggage," Lawrence Clark Powell
52. "The California Dream," anthology edited by Dennis Hale, Jonathan Eisen
53. "Men to Match My Mountains," Irving Stone
54. "Love and Will," Rollo May
55. "The Language of the Goddess," Marija Gimbutas
56. "The Air-Conditioned Nightmare," Henry Miller
57. "T. Rex and the Crater of Doom," Walter Alvarez
58. "The Way to Rainy Mountain," N. Scott Momaday
59. "The Man Who Walked Through Time," Colin Fletcher
60. "John Barleycorn," Jack London
61. "Strangers From a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans," Ronald Takaki
62. "Dirty Truths: Reflections on Politics, Media, Ideology, Conspiracy, Ethnic Life and Class Power," Michael Parenti
63. "The Executioner's Song," Norman Mailer
64. "The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West," Patricia Nelson Limerick
65. "Living Up the Street: Narrative Recollections," Gary Soto
66. "The Captive Mind," Czeslaw Milosz
67. "California Fault: Searching for the Spirit of a State Along the San Andreas," Thurston Clarke
68. "Lonesome Traveler," Jack Kerouac
69. "The Ohlone Way," Malcolm Margolin
70. "An Autobiography," Ansel Adams
71. "The Great Thirst: Californians and Water, 1770s-1990s," Norris Hundley
72. "Hole in the Sky: A Memoir," William Kittredge
73. "Twentieth Century Pleasures: Prose on Poetry," Robert Hass
74. "Skid Road: An Informal Portrait of Seattle," Murray Morgan
75. "My Wilderness," William O. Douglas
76. "The Klamath Knot," David Rains Wallace
77. "Sweet Promised Land," Robert Laxalt
78. "The Sexual Outlaw: A Documentary," John Rechy
79. "Additional Dialogue: Letters of Dalton Trumbo, 1942-1962"
80. "Final Cut," Steven Bach
81. "The Decline of the Californios: A Social History of the Spanish-Speaking Californians, 1846-1890," Leonard Pitt
83. "It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own: A New History of the American West," Richard White
84. "Communalism," Kenneth Rexroth
85. "I, Candidate for Governor: And How I Got Licked," Upton Sinclair
86. "And a Voice to Sing With," Joan Baez
87. "Miles From Nowhere: In Search of the American Frontier," Dayton Duncan
88. "Winter in Taos," Mabel Dodge Luhan
89. "The Voice of the Desert," Joseph Wood Krutch
90. "Where the Wasteland Ends: Politics and Transcendence in Postindustrial Society," Theodore Roszak
91. "Traveling Light," Bill Barich
92. "The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and Its History," Leo Braudy
93. "Stepping Westward," Sallie Tisdale
94. "Money and Class in America: Notes and Observations on Our Civil Religion," Lewis H. Lapham
95. "Coming of Age in California: Personal Essays," Gerald Haslam
96. "Sinclair Lewis," Mark Schorer
97. "Dashiel Hammett: A Life," Diane Johnson
98. "The Town That Fought to Save Itself," Orville Schell
99. "Hide and Seek," Jessamyn West
100. "Anybody's Gold," Joseph Henry Jackson

Generational bloodlines converge like Western waterways in 'Mountain Time'

By RON FRANSCELL

COX NEWS SERVICE

In Montana, not far from where Ivan Doig grew up beneath the big sky that still haunts him, three rivers flow together to form the deep and wide Missouri, lacing through time and landscape, the old West and the new.

And like the brawny Missouri, Doig has channeled three deep literary tributaries into "Mountain Time," a coda to his McCaskill family trilogy ("English Creek," "Dancing at the Rascal Fair" and "Ride With Me, Mariah Montana").

Mitch Rozier is flotsam, a 50-year-old environmental columnist for a post-hip alternative Seattle weekly paper, a baby boomer treading water with his own past and present: estrangement from his grown children, tenuous job security and a scrappy lover.

Lexa McCaskill is jetsam, the earthy and divorced Montana expatriate swirling in Mitch's eddy, catering swanky Seattle software soirees, also going nowhere. Together, they are caught in the undertow of Lyle Rozier, Mitch's father. Lyle is dying of leukemia, and Mitch is summoned to his childhood home in Montana, where he's caught up in the ordeal of his filial obligation: "You can't not go home again when someone is sitting there dying." Mitch faces an ancient question unearthed by a new generation, twisted to fit a new sensibility: Dare we go home again?

That's what Mitch asks himself when his father calls from Montana:

"The old hated tone of voice. Lyle Rozier proclaiming he had the world on a towrope and a downhill pull at last. Rubbing his opposite ear as if the words had gone right through him, Mitch winced into the phone that next morn-

BOOK REVIEW

■ Mountain Time

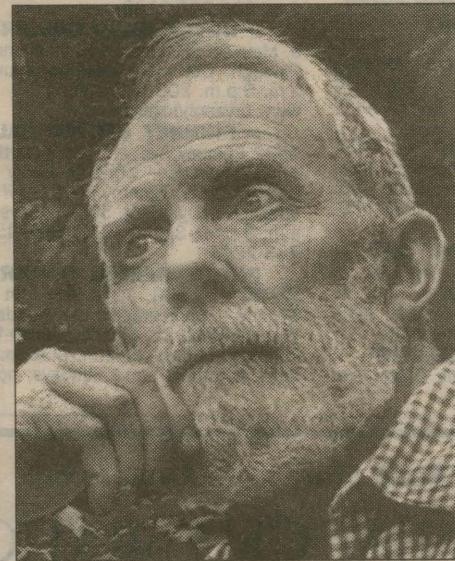
By Ivan Doig. Simon & Schuster, 316 pages, \$25.

ing. How many times had he heard this, or something an awful lot like it?"

But Mitch's reluctant reunion with his crusty old dad is flooded with lingering family disappointments and secrets — and the revelation that Lyle wants to sell the family land to a gravel company, rewriting his own life history in the process. Lexa comes along for moral support but brings her sultry sister, world-weary photographer Mariah McCaskill, who documents Lyle's death watch and proves a bitter reminder of Lexa's unrooted angst. Their desperate and disparate lives flow together when they hike into the mountains on a sad journey to scatter Lyle's ashes.

Three people, three intense relationships, three rivers. "Mountain Time" is the confluence: The very real familial clash between Lyle and Mitch echoes the clash between the historic and contemporary West, where exploitation always has been at odds with environmental anxiety. But the reader also stands on the near bank of a dynamic, flowing history in which men have both protected and profaned the Western landscape, which is as much a character in Doig's work as any McCaskill.

Doig's poetic prose remains intact here, but for the first time in his literary career he's pretty funny, too, especially when he's satirizing the foibles and excesses of the Pacific Northwest "Cyceria": "The Cascopia (newspaper) building was in Seattle's Fremont district, where



COMING UP

■ **Ivan Doig.** Seattle writer reads from "Mountain Time," 7 p.m. Monday, Third Place Books, 17171 Bothell Way N.E., Lake Forest Park. 206-366-3333.

the Sixties still roamed. The hempen necessities of life were available there, as were cafes with good rowdy names such as The Longshoreman's Daughter, plus deluxe junk shops, plus bars that were museum pieces from the days when hair was 'Hair.'

"Mountain Time" will not dissuade those who rank Seattle's Doig among the best living American writers, and one might even begin making comparisons to some of the best dead ones, too. Faulkner comes most readily to mind: The Sartoris of Yoknapatawpha County are no more troubled and no more human than the McCaskills of the Two Medicine country in Montana. Two great rivers in different landscapes.

■ A Wyoming novelist and newspaperman, Ron Franscell is author of "Angel Fire" and the upcoming mystery "The Deadline."

Readings and signings

206-545-0744.

NATASHA SAJÉ — German-born writer from Salt Lake City reads 'Red Under the Skin,' 7:30 p.m., Elliott Bay. 206-624-6600.

SUNDAY

THALIA ZEPATOS — Travel author reads 'A Journey of One's Own,' 2 p.m., Wide World Books & Maps, 1911 N. 45th St. 206-634-3453.

ZACHARY MARCUS — Former Elliott Bay Book Co. bookseller gives a slide show and talk on 'Experiences on the Eastern Front: A First-Hand Account of the War in Kosovo,' 2 p.m., Third Place Books. 206-366-3333.

FOUR POETS AND AN OPEN MICROPHONE — Shari Miller, T. Clear, Nicky Ducommun and James Gurley read from their works, 3 p.m., Barnes & Noble, 1530 11th Ave. N.W., Issaquah. 425-557-8808.

SUSAN BRADLEY — Reads 'How to Be Irresistible to the Opposite Sex,' 7:30 p.m., Barnes & Noble, 300 Andover Park W., Suite 200, Tukwila. 206-575-3965.

MONDAY

DAVID M. KENNEDY — History professor at

Stanford reads 'Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945,' 5 p.m., Elliott Bay. 206-624-6600.

CARLENE CROSS — Bainbridge Island writer reads 'The Undying West: Stories From Montana's Camas Prairie,' 7 p.m., University Bookstore. 206-634-3400.

IVAN DOIG — Seattle writer of the American West reads 'This House of Sky,' 7 p.m., Third Place Books. 206-366-3333.

RICHARD BACH — San Juan Island author reads 'Out of My Mind: The Discovery of Saunders-Vixen,' 7:30 p.m., Elliott Bay. 206-624-6600.

TUESDAY

ROBERT D. KAPLAN — Reads 'An Empire Wilderness: Travels Into America's Future,' 5:30 p.m., Elliott Bay. 206-624-6600.

CECILE ANDREWS — Seattle columnist reads 'The Circle of Simplicity,' 7 p.m., Third Place Books. 206-366-3333.

LARRY BRAMMER AND MARIAN BINGEA — Read 'Caring For Yourself While Caring For

CONTINUED on Next Page

A check mark indicates a recommendation by the P-I's John Marshall.

TODAY

JOHN MARSHALL — Photographer presents a slide show and discussion of 'Washington II,' 6:30 p.m., Third Place Books, Lake Forest Park Towne Centre, 17171 Bothell Way N.E. 206-366-3333.

JAMES HILLMAN — Reads 'The Force of Character: And the Lasting Life,' 7 p.m., The Elliott Bay Book Co., 101 S. Main St. 206-624-6600.

SATURDAY

BILL SCHULTHEIS — Local author and commentator reads 'The Coffeehouse Investor: How to Build Wealth, Ignore Wall Street and Get on With Your Life,' 10 a.m., Pages: Books, News & Web, 432 15th Ave. E. 206-324-1000.

CHRIS DUFF — Port Angeles writer/kayaker reads 'On Celtic Tides: Around Ireland By Sea Kayak,' 4:30 p.m., Elliott Bay. 206-624-6600.

STEVE CRESON AND DARRIN DANIEL — Editors of the book 'Think of the Self-Speaking: Harry Smith Selected Interviews' read excerpts, 7 p.m., Confounded Books, 3506 Fremont Ave. N.

**MOUNTAIN TIME**

By Ivan Doig
Scribner. 316 pp. \$25

Montana has become the In Place among certain members of the cognoscenti, and as an unhappy consequence has suffered a small invasion of writers, film makers, movie stars and other undesirables. But one does not have to be a native to know that the environment they inhabit is a long way from the "real" Montana. A far more accurate depiction of it is to be found in the writing of Ivan Doig, who grew up in that desolate, beautiful state in a family of sheep ranchers and who has devoted himself to celebrating (and preserving) the Montana he knows in the pages of his books.

He has now published nine, of which *Mountain Time* is the sixth work of fiction. Here as before, his best writing is about landscape and place; he has more trouble with people, especially when he fills their mouths with stiff dialogue, but his abiding love for his home ground carries the day in *Mountain Time*, as it almost always does in his work.

Not surprisingly, given its central subject, that work has a strongly autobiographical cast, as certainly appears to be the case with *Mountain Time*. Doig doesn't do fictional autobiography as it's commonly practiced these days—navel-gazing, mercifully, is not among the tricks of his trade—but he uses the raw material of his own life as the starting point for exploring the lives of other people and the places where they live. Thus the protagonist of this novel, Mitch Rozier, is a Montanan now living in Seattle, as Doig himself does, and a man deeply concerned about the preservation of his home state's natural environment, as Doig himself is.

Mitch is, by his own reckoning, "a fifty-year-old unfeathered biped carrying too much weight," including "a marriage behind me that I wouldn't wish on an alimony lawyer," "grown children who maybe are what they are because I didn't wage a fifteen-year war over them with their mother, and they don't care spit about me," a job with a marginal Seattle newspaper that's teetering toward extinction, and a crotchety old father, Lyle, who has summoned him back to Montana for a renewal of their eternal standoff.

Mitch lives in Seattle with Lexa McCaskill, an earthy woman a decade younger than he who runs a small catering operation while trying to keep their loving but fragile relationship on a more or less even keel. Mitch is a big, athletic guy—he played football at the University of Washington until the temptations of the 1960s counterculture

got the better of him—whose size disguises a soft and vulnerable heart. He writes a column called "Coastwatch" for a newspaper called Cascopia, and he writes mostly about the environment; he is no tree-hugger, but he loves nature and would just as soon that it not be turned into one gigantic parking lot.

He's been called back home to Twin Sulphur Springs on what turns out to be a pretext: His father claims to have it in mind to sell off the rocky land on which he has perched for years to Aggregate Construction Materials, Inc., the managers of which think "there's going to be oil and gas wells" in the vicinity. But it soon develops that Lyle has been told he has a terminal illness, and is wrapping up the loose ends of his life. When he tells Mitch the news, everything changes:

"One diagnostic word, all it took. The space of a breath had brought Mitch his turn in the gunsights of obligation. . . . Like the flyways of rattled birds, America's concourses were constantly crisscrossed with

Mitch is . . . "a fifty-year-old unfeathered biped carrying too much weight," including "a marriage behind me that I wouldn't wish on an alimony lawyer."

Baby Boomers trying to nerve up for the waiting bedside consultation, the nursing home decision, the choosing of a casket. Mitch could generally pick out the stunned journeys home in airport waiting lounges, the trim businesswoman who lived by focus sitting there now with a doll-eyed stare, the man celebrating middle age with a ponytail looking down baffled now at his compassion-fare ticket. Targeted from here on, in featureless waiting rooms the color of antiseptic gloves, for the involuntary clerkwork of closing down a parent's life. The time came; it always came. The when of it was the ambush."

Mitch goes to Twin Sulphur Springs by himself, but when Lexa asks if he'd like her to join him, he immediately and gratefully says yes. Then, suddenly, they are joined by her

sister, Mariah, a noted photographer, "a woman who cut trails through life as brisk as a comet, and as unfollowable." She ingratiates herself with Lyle, and tries to persuade him that she should make, and publish in newspapers, a photographic record of his final days. "There's this aging population," she tells him, "and a bazillion of us Baby Boomers who've never had to deal with anything more serious than burying the class hamster, back in first grade. I hate to say it, but people need to see your kind of situation."

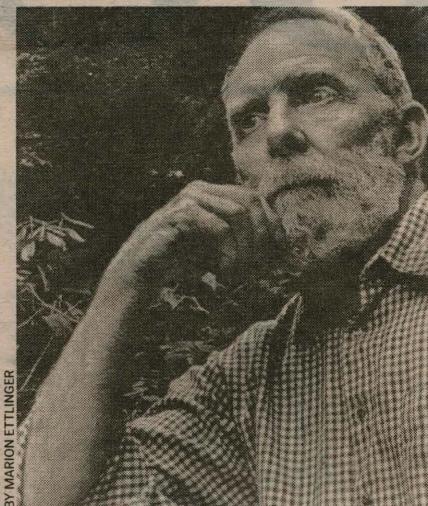
Lyle really doesn't take much persuading, being not just contrary but egotistical in the bargain, with the result that a number of interconnected subplots are created: Mitch and Lyle, Mitch and Lexa, Lexa and Mariah, Lyle and Mariah, Mitch and Mariah, and, looming forever in the distance, Montana, "a country of great mountains and mediocre human chances." In addition, the story is freighted with a heavy burden of memory, as Mitch recalls his contentious dealings with his father, his own unhappy marriage, and the meeting in Alaska with Lexa—herself then married to someone else—that marked the beginning of the end of his old life, and hers.

These are a lot of balls to keep in the air, but by and large Doig is up to the challenge. If human speech presents formidable obstacles for him—the phrase "wooden dialogue" has rarely been more apt—human emotions do

not; he understands his characters well, and manages to make them all the more interesting not in spite of their flaws but because of them. Lyle in particular is complex and surprising, especially as he struggles to disguise the fear that the disease inflicts upon him, fear such as he has not felt since he was a young man fighting in the South Pacific.

In *Mountain Time* as in life itself, people are more interesting than causes. Doig is an environmental true believer whose fiction often teeters along the narrow line between story and tract, but this time he successfully resists the temptation to preach. He lets the story tell itself, which is what stories are supposed to do. ■

Jonathan Yardley's e-mail address is yardley@twp.com.



Ivan Doig

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Writer finds discipline in farming, journalism roots

Author Ivan Doig, born in Montana and raised on a farm, finds the land still inspires him and draws him back for research. He is on a Montana book tour for his newest effort, "Mountain Time."



Farm-boy roots and the discipline of chores gave writer Ivan Doig the ability to rise each morning and work.

The native Montanan and ex-ranch hand says his early days of helping on the farm coupled with his fortitude in graduate school at Northwestern University and later as a book reviewer to teach him deadlines.

"It doesn't matter if you're not in the mood to feed the cows or herd the sheep," Doig said in an interview from his Seattle home. "Do the work."

And "doing the work" has been a matter of course for the 60-year-old Doig since he started work half a lifetime ago to become an author.

He is usually up by 5 a.m., taking a walk or weeding his lettuce patch while drawing inspiration from Puget Sound. "I've been known to return phone calls at 5:30 a.m.," he chuckles, noting that not everyone rises with the sun. "But I break the work into portions and if I'm having trouble moving the plot forward, I move to a different section of the book and work on weather passages, descriptive parts, or the dialogue."

Doig was 39 when "This House of Sky," his first effort, was greeted with bravos and rapturous reviews. That was a finalist for the National Book Award in contemporary thought and the language of the book was praised as coming from "the hands of an artist...it touches all landscape and all life," said the Los Angeles Times.

Since then he has accomplished a trilogy of novels — "Dancing at the Rascal Fair," "English Creek," and "Ride with Me, Mariah Montana." The book tour for his latest novel, "Mountain Time," kicked off this week and ends in Portland, Ore., Dec. 11, after more than three dozen readings and book signings.

"I make sure they take me home after four or five readings, though," he says. "Otherwise, it gets daunting, and I miss the writing part."

Writing nine books and more than 200

articles and book reviews has given Doig a pride in his dedication. "I've never missed a deadline and I think my habit patterns from journalism have served me well in the book writing," he said. But he no longer does book reviews, as he did for

years for the New York Times, Washington Post and USA Today. "They simply take too much time from the rest of my writing."

Doig, married to teacher Carol, encourages would-be journalistic writers to take the leap into fiction and novels if that's their hearts' desire. "But I tell people to get the financial part secure first. Have a partner who can help you with insurance. My wife supported me for many years while I was working on the first book — it was actually just over six years in the making and two and one-half years at the keyboard."

The latest effort, "Mountain Time," contrasts mountain time with human time. Doig says it deals primarily with three relationships: father and son, sisters, and lovers. The book is, he says, "a novel of the Baby Boom generation jelly-sandwiched between grown children who've gone their own way and aging parents who are losing control of their lives."

The action takes place in Alaska, in Montana's Bob Marshall Wilderness Area, and in San Francisco, among other places. The attempt, he says, was to connect human and geographical qualities and vulnerabilities.

"I work very hard to make my characters and situations convincing," he says. "In this latest book, I have a very large character — a big guy — whose extra physical dimensions tie him in with the larger-than-life landscape."

Doig works a lot with rhythms in his characters' dialogue, and linguistic trademarks, and he works hard to make his names memorable. "I keep files on names, faces, characteristics gleaned from life and observation," he says. "And of course, I make things up too. You have to draw on your own imagination."

Journalists, he says, sometimes have trouble making the transition to novels

because "they try to be even-handed, which is a basic principle of journalism. But in fiction, your characters have to have passions and obsessions and you can't be afraid to hold back."

The much honored author also likens his work to that of a sculptor, watercolorist or jazz musician. "I've talked with all of those artists and they all try to make their work real by 'getting it in the fingers' — whether it's the feel of the rock, the effectiveness of the sketch or the feel of the keys under the fingers. I'm trying to do that with my characters, landscape and language."

Doig also has tart observations about being pigeonholed, as many before him have been, "as a western writer."

The best writers often come from regional roots, he says. "Eudora Welty was pegged as a southern writer and she wrote wonderful books about life. Wallace Stegner fought the pigeonholing. On and on," he says. "Everybody is a regionalist. Tolstoy is a regionalist."

Years ago, he says, the New York Times did a roundup piece on what they stereotyped as "Writers of the Purple Sage." They misspelled Wallace Stegner William Stegner. Doig laughs at another writer's comment that "Out here, West of the Hudson, we've always pronounced the name 'Wallace'."

He is fond of quoting poet William Carlos Williams who said, "the classic is the local fully realized." Doig says he "rocked back in my chair when I first came across that. The finest words of many a good writer are marked by place."

Ivan Doig Readings, Signings

Saturday, Aug. 21, Museum of the Rockies sponsors at Country Book Shelf, 1-3 p.m.

Monday, Aug. 23, Miles City Town and Country Club, 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, Aug. 24, Alberta Bair Theater in Billings, 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, Aug. 25, Great Falls, Hastings Books and Music, 4-6 p.m.

Friday, Aug. 27, Kalispell, Books West, 5-7 p.m.

Park: Ball's in DEQ's lap

(Continued from Page 1)

els of iron and manganese throughout the area, "which might be correlated more with the old landfill," he said. At this point, he added, it doesn't appear that the petroleum contamination is reaching the river.

According to Butler, testing so far indicates that perhaps five to 10 acres near the center of the park are affected by the petroleum-based pollution. Additional testing slated for early September may reveal more details, but for now officials are going on the assumption that the contamination is not widespread.

"I feel like we have the extent fairly well isolated," she said. The city and state have imposed no restrictions on use of the park.

Initial funding for contaminant testing in the area was a \$45,000 grant from the federal Environmental Protection Agency's "brown fields" program, which helps state and local governments study sites that could be listed under EPA's Superfund cleanup program. Another \$32,000 for studies was issued to the city last year by EPA, but now that gas-related contamination has been found, new "brown fields" money will not be available because of a petroleum exemption in Superfund regulations, said Denise Martin, supervisor of DEQ's Site Response Section in Helena. That decision by EPA has left city officials footing the bill to complete the next three rounds of initial

testing, but the cost should only be about \$3,000, Butler said.

"It's worth getting that information," she said of the sampling, which is expected to continue on a quarterly basis until early next year under this phase of the investigation. Depending on what further sampling shows, she and Stagner said, more testing may be needed later. More decisions will also need to be made about finding the party responsible for the contamination, and what to do — if anything — about cleaning up the site.

"That is a ball that is completely in DEQ's lap," Butler said. "The city feels we've done our share."

Recent pressure testing on Conoco's nearby pipeline didn't show any leaking, Butler added, and other refineries with lines in the area haven't yet been asked to test their equipment. She added that a 1976 spill in the vicinity is being investigated as well.

Meanwhile, Butler said the city, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and MSE-HKM Inc., a city-contracted engineering firm, are moving ahead with plans to lay riprap and other stabilization materials along the park's riverside banks to keep more garbage and soil from eroding into the Yellowstone. Earth moving in the \$1 million project, for which the Corps has committed to pay 65 percent, could get started in late October or November, she said.

People in Billings

Insurance agent recognized

Mark D. Sorlie of Billings received the Emerald Award in July during the 119th annual meeting of agents of the Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Co. in Milwaukee.

Mr. Sorlie was recognized for selling more than \$9.3 million in insurance for Northwestern. He is associated with the company's Samuel P. Peila District Agency in Billings, of the Mike M. Anderson General Agency in Bozeman.

Community Band picks conductor

Ken Boggio, longtime band conductor in Hardin, has been chosen to direct the Billings Community Band in the coming year.

Rehearsals begin at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 1, in band room at Senior High School. No auditions are required to join.

Call Carmen Galt at 259-3476 for information.

Billings teacher honored

Richelle R. Selleck, a kindergarten teacher at Poly Drive Elementary School, has been selected for a Disney's American Teachers Award.

Ms. Selleck and Glasgow High School teacher Gordon P. Hahn were among 39 teachers selected from more than 75,000 nominations. They will be honored in Los Angeles in an awards show that will be shown on the Disney Channel on Nov. 15.

Doig rewrites until work 'starts to dance'

By JIM LARSON

The Billings Outpost

"Low grade fishing," the author called it. Real "tin and bait fishing," he said.

These were the words that author Ivan Doig used to describe the passage that he was about to read from his new novel, "Mountain Time." He added, "I tremble to read this scene in the home of Norman McLean."

Mr. Doig speaks as well as he writes. He amused and entertained a large group of admirers last week at the Alberta Bair Theater.

Before plunging into the reading, Mr. Doig spoke of the things that "fuel" his writing. Often praised for his excellent ear for

dialogue, the author noted that "every work has its own vocabulary." He said that he works consciously at developing the vernacular of each book. He listens for "the poetry of the working class."

When asked if he knew how his stories would end when he started them, Mr. Doig said that he knows when the story will begin and end, but not the exact plot. He said that he works within an "arc of time."

"I have a notion of where the plot is going, but I am often guided by the language," he said. He also noted that the characters provided some of the plot.

An audience member asked Mr. Doig how he felt about rewriting. He answered, "I am a ferocious rewriter. I'm more of a rewriter

than a writer." He said that he revises until he makes the work "start to dance."

Looking the part, the writer from White Sulphur Springs mentioned that too much is made of the geography that a writer chooses to set his stories in. All writers are regional writers, he said. All use a sense of place as a tool of their trade. He argued that place is "a seasoning, not the whole recipe."

Mr. Doig said that the setting of his reading was drawn from a trip that he and his wife, Carol, had made into the Bob Marshall Wilderness in 1977. The author read the passage like a seasoned actor and left listeners wishing for a little "Mountain Time" of their own.

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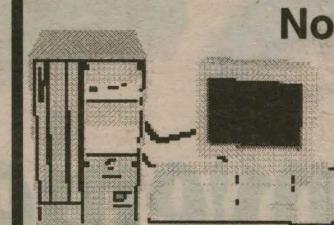
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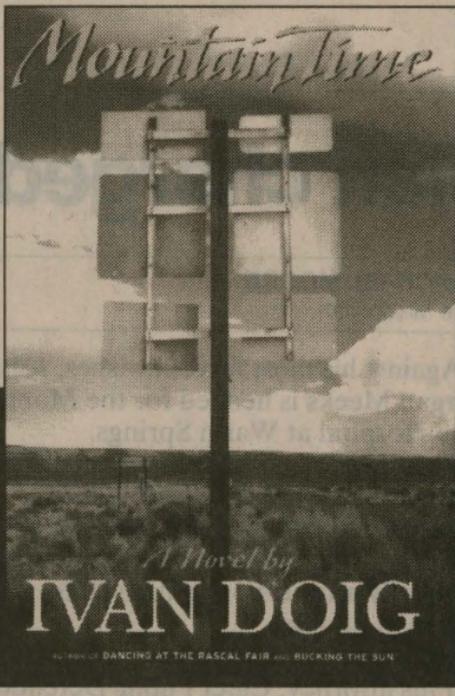
IVAN DOIG

at a book signing of

Mountain Time

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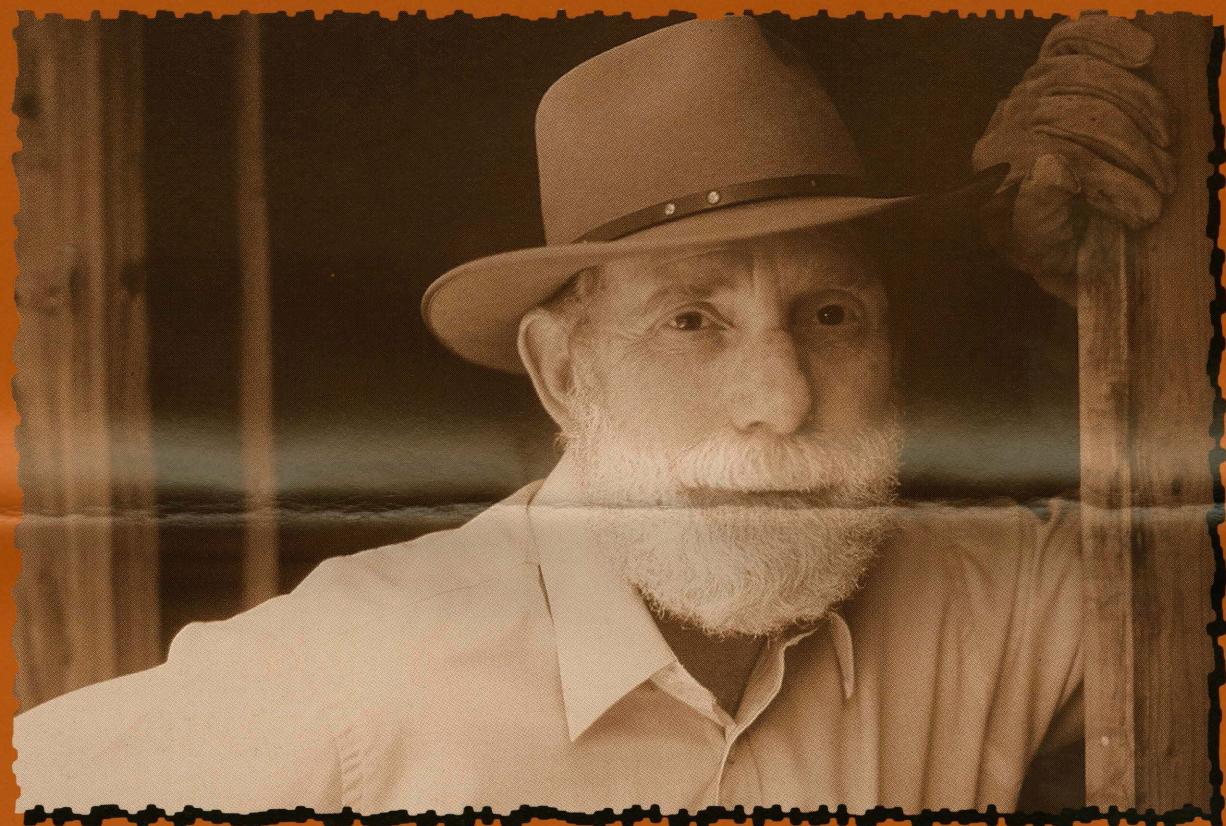


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Ivan Doig



Speaking & Reading From His New Book

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COUNTRY BOOKSHELF

This Week

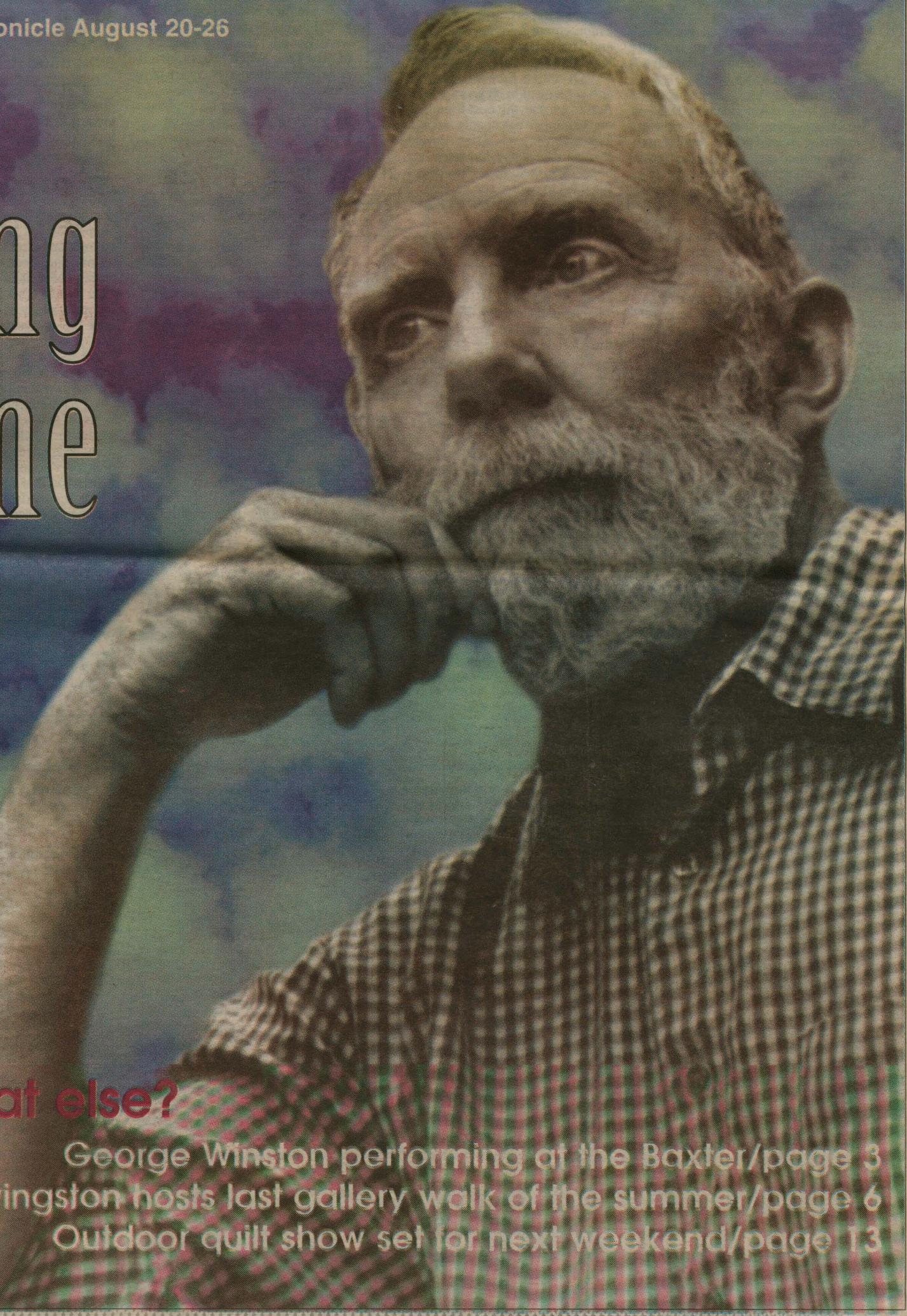
The Bozeman Daily Chronicle August 20-26

Coming Home

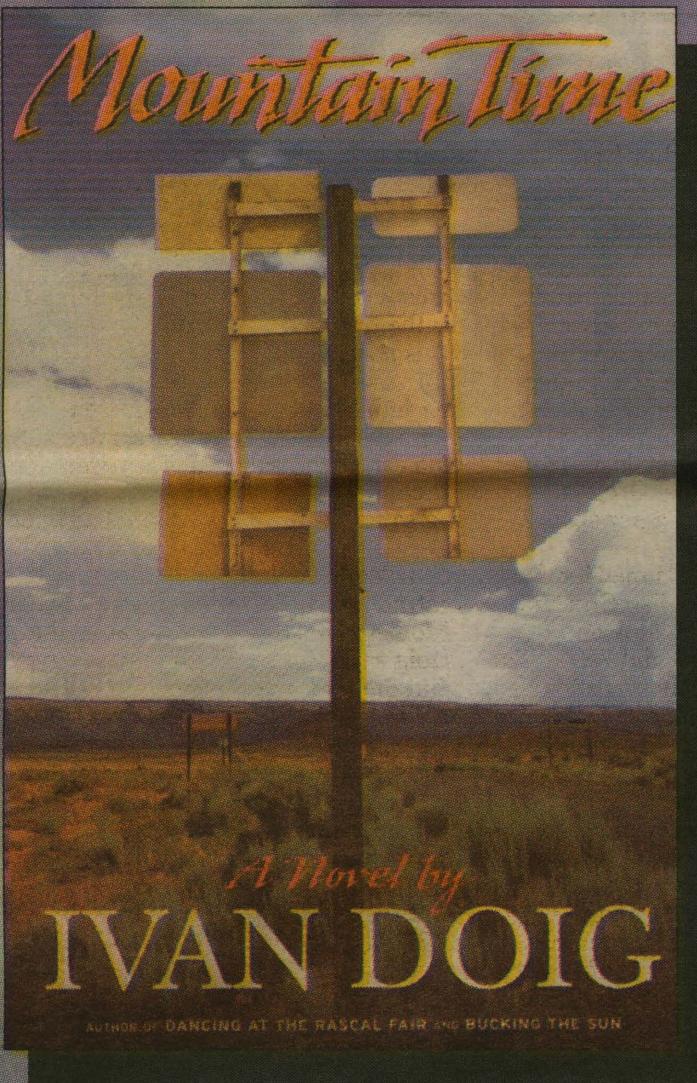
*Author Ivan
Doig returns
to his native
Montana
with a new
book*

what else?

George Winston performing at the Baxter/page 3
Livingston hosts last gallery walk of the summer/page 6
Outdoor quilt show set for next weekend/page 13



Living on Mountain t



stories by Karin Ronnow
of the Chronicle

Ivan Doig is coming home, well almost.

He's coming to Bozeman, which is, as the crow flies, just about 68 miles short of White Sulphur Springs, where he was born 60 years ago, and where generations of his family are buried.

Driving into the Gallatin Valley from the west, the first thing he and his wife, Carol, will see is the Bridger Range.

"The Bridgers come on the horizon as we come down that valley. I can't not see them," he says. "There is a lot of the story of my life there, great turns in my life, of my mother dying back there in the mountains and my dad beginning to raise me. And two books. I've been born of events there."

But Bozeman is about as close as he'll come to home on this trip.

"White Sulphur Springs is a bit of a different case for me," he says, his voice slowing. "It is striking, the power of the land where your people lie, under those headstones. It is a place you don't go back to lightly when you're trying to do some other stuff."

And this time, the "other stuff" includes a book tour. He will be here to read from his newest book, "Mountain Time," and deliver the Stegner lecture at Montana State University.

He will be greeted by an extended family of fans and friends who have felt the tug of his tales about the Montana landscape, a place that has forever stayed with him "in terms of the material in the powerspot of my memory," he says.

"The people I heard tell stories, my father and my grandmother and my dad's buddies in the bars in White Sulphur Springs and so on, all this forms a very vivid landscape of the mind for an impressionable child, which I guess I must have been."

The grandson of Montana homesteaders and son of Montana ranch workers, Doig left Montana for college at Northwestern University, where he

earned a journalism degree. Over the years, he has been a ranch hand, a newspaperman, a magazine editor and a writer. He earned a Ph.D. in history from the University of Washington and settled in Seattle with Carol, whom he met at Northwestern.

But his memoirs and novels draw on his personal history, the seductiveness of pioneer independence peppered with an honesty about the ups and downs of real life.

"He is important here because he writes so eloquently about a place that means something to us," says Cindy Christin, a librarian at the Bozeman Public Library. "He writes about a way of life and people that, if we are not familiar with people like that, we would like to be; people who work really hard, on ranches, with sheep, that struggle with daily life on a regular basis. He brings those people to life for the rest of us. There are a bunch of people who are important to Montana but get kind of lost sometimes."

"Mountain Time," his sixth novel, starts in Seattle's coffeehouse and computer culture, but is an epilogue of sorts to his earlier fictional trilogy about the McCaskill family. The protagonist this time is Mitch Rozier, a Montana-born, divorced, 50-something environmental columnist for an alternative newspaper. His partner, Lexa McCaskill, is a Montana-born, earthy, divorced caterer.

Doig takes the two back to Montana, where Lyle Rozier, Mitch's exasperating father, wants his environmental son's help with some exploitative endeavor before he dies of leukemia. The two inevitably clash.

Mike Malone, MSU's president and Doig's friend for nearly 20 years, says, "He's one of the great observers of the West, of people and place, that's the fundamental thing. ... In his books you learn what was happening, in many ways, but you also get the meaning of

ime

Author Ivan Doig continues his observance of the West in new book

everyday life. He does that whether he's writing fiction or nonfiction."

Readers say his characters, and their hard-won lives carved from the rugged landscape, are believable. His narrative can be densely poetic, filled with turns of phrase and local cadence, drawn from his own library of dialogue and phrasing, recorded on file cards, a bit he purloined from another American author.

"I once read that the novelist Ann Tyler, the Baltimore novelist, was doing it," Doig says. "I can still remember the example that I read that she would keep these file cards on these characters. I thought, 'I could do that.'"

He says he now has "a pretty good amateur collection" of American slang, drawn from things he overhears, as well as tape-recorded interviews he has done over the years.

"Sometimes when I go to write dialogue, I spread out the cards to see if I can get the cards talking to each other," Doig says.

The result is characters that are remarkably real, especially to readers who grew up speaking the same language.

"That's the idea," he says. "All this meant to be something like Norman Mailer used to call 'the poetry under prose,' getting the right sound under the prose."

After he wrote "This House of Sky" in 1978 — a memoir about growing up in Montana with his mother's mother and his father after his mother died of complications from asthma — he said he heard from a reader.

"I think it was only a week or so after the book tour for 'This House of Sky,' when this guy called, he said he was calling from a lambing shed in Idaho somewhere," Doig recalls. "He didn't want to say that, by God, it sounded right to him."

Christin points out: "A lot of the things about his life, I think, were really

hard. He is sort of a relic. He had a kind of childhood that not many people were able to experience. And the fact that he was able to articulate it into books for the rest of us" is his gift.

Doig has used the word "relic" himself.

"My grandmother, living as a ranch cook, lived right to the brink of time when hired men no longer sat down at that long table in the cookhouse. They lived in town with a family of their own and microwaved their dinners. My dad is a cowboy and sheepherder and hay-feeding contractor and he had to constantly shift to accustom to machinery. Along with that goes the way of life, the land-based way of life, which was pretty much gone by the time I came along."

Now he has brought these stories through to the end of the 20th century with "Mountain Time." He will be here this weekend to tell his stories in his warm, intelligent style.

"He is the kind of person you read about in his books, a very traditional man, in the sense that his characters are traditional," Malone says. "But he is a great observer, one of the best observers the West has ever produced. There is a bevy of writers from Montana and you'd have to say he is the leading one of this generation."

But he remains approachable, Christin says.

"You don't find that author stand-offishness," she says. "You get the sense that when he returns to Montana, he's back home."

Author Ivan Doig will be speaking and reading from his new book, "Mountain Time: A Novel," at 8 p.m., Saturday, at the Museum of the Rockies. The event, the latest in a series of ongoing lectures by the Stegner Committee for Western American Studies at MSU, is free and open to the public. Prior to the reading, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., the Country Bookshelf will host a book signing with Doig.

The books of Ivan Doig

The author Ivan Doig, Montana-born and bred, has written six books of fiction and three non-fiction titles — all of which have a taste of Montana or the pioneer adventure. Listed in chronological order by date of publication, they are:

- "This House of Sky" (1978) is a memoir. Doig has said he wrote the book because he felt his family had become relics of a culture that had disappeared. Nominated for the National Book Award.
- "Winter Brothers" (1980) is nonfiction.
- "The Sea Runners" (1982) was his first novel. Story of four Swedish men who fled from their indenture to the Russian-American fur trade. They had signed on for seven years' service at Sitka, Alaska, but stole an 18-foot Indian canoe and escaped. They were found near Astoria, Oregon, three of them nearly starved to death. He was inspired by a newspaper clipping saying only that the three had been found.

His acclaimed Two Medicine trilogy:

- "English Creek" (1984) introduces Jick McCaskill as a 14-year-old boy and the look and mood of Montana ranch country between the Depression and World War II. Doig says McCaskill is not his literary alter ego, "not by a long shot," but the Two Medicine country of Montana "for an important time was mine." English Creek and its valley are actually the Dupuyer Creek area on the Rocky Mountain Front where Doig lived during high school and was a ranch hand for several summers.

■ In "Dancing at the Rascal Fair," (1987), he goes back in time to the homesteading era. Angus McCaskill and Rob Barclay emigrate from Scotland to forge new lives as sheep farmers in the Two Medicine Country. The book begins in 1889, Montana's year of statehood.

■ In "Ride with Me Mariah Montana," (1990) the final volume in the trilogy, Jick is back, crusty and widowed at 65 years. He winds up chauffeuring his daughter, Mariah, and her obnoxious ex-husband Riley Wright on a three-month driving tour of the state in honor of the 1989 state Centennial celebration.

■ "Heart Earth," (1993) is a prequel to "This House of Sky," written after Doig found letters his mother had written to her brother, Wally, while he served in the Pacific theater during World War II. "I wrote once, of the pull of the past and childhood landscape, that you can't not go home again. The story I found compressed there in that half-year of my mother's last letters proved that to me again."

■ "Bucking the Sun," (1996) deals with the building of the Fort Peck Dam over the Missouri River in the 1930s. He introduces a family of men, the Duffs, and wives, all of whom live in the dam town of Wheeler. And he tells their stories of near-death experiences, love, childbirth, pain alongside the dam construction.

■ "Mountain Time," (1999), Doig's sixth novel, is an epilogue of sorts to his earlier trilogy.