

'86

6 Jan.--This late first Monday makes a tardy start to the year, but I'm steadfastly staying sanguine a full 2 hours after the commencement of it. A gathering day, this; will lunch with Carstensen at UW, then see Linda Bierds for her reaction to 1st 2 chs. of *Dancing*. Likely will do my own re-read of those 2 tomorrow, and revamp whatever necessary, rest of this week, for sending them on their way to NY. Have toyed with going there myself, to take in the PEN conference next week--a PEN letter from Mailer his very self last week, inviting me and undoubtedly other farflung members to come as "special guests"--and see Liz and Tom. But I think I've rejected the notion, as I don't have anything substantive yet to talk over with them, and the immensity of travel and the hassle of NY and its lodging situation daunt me; I much want this year to get underway less hectic than the last half of '85 went, and NY doesn't seem to square with that.

Again we made our New Year's Dungeness trip, again we hit heavy weather--wind, on Jan. 1, this time--and had our moments of telling each other to think about Monterey next Xmastime. The Spit was closed on the 31st but open on the 1st and 2nd, and both days we went out, against high tides, a mile or two and found no oil on beaches. Wind-driven waves were terrific, oceansize, on 1st, ~~but not on the 2nd~~ so there wouldn't have been any diving birds seeable on w. side of the Spit anyway, but on the 2nd, when wind switched around was stiff from the east, leaving the west side calm, still no birds whatever there--evidently all killed or displaced by the oil spill. That, and possibility of the spill affecting the tidelands food chain, still has me gulping hard, though C has tried to reassure me that things were greatly better than we expected.

Xmas Eve, Frank spent with us, all 3 going across to Lankford's annual shindig. While we were there I was on All Things Considered, interviewed earlier by phone by Noah Adams about Seattle's persistent soup of fog. The weather of Nov. and Dec. truly was crappy, the snow first and then the hovering soiled-smelling fog. We've been back to rain now, along with a big wind last night.

6 Jan. cont.--Xmas Day we went to Doug Smith's for dinner; Hazel had come for the holidays, and she's a great favorite of both C and me. Indeed, when C's mom was alive we had to learn to muzzle ourselves a bit about what a good time we had with Hazel whenever she hit town, as it was plain we were drawing a contrast. A bunch on hand there at Doug's: Jill and Jeff, his youngest daughter Dawn sulkily (abt Doug's live-in lady, Carol) here from Duke, Carol's two sons, a friend of Jeff's. We arrived into the middle of their opening of gifts, and were all 3 quite boggled, as givers ~~of~~ to each other of books, calendars, etc., to be looking on water skis, box after box of clothing, etc. C wondered after if we'd seen a typical American Xmas, and maybe we had. Though I don't seem to have any grounds for it except the country of the moral high horse, I'm a bit edgy around Doug's lifestyle (I actually like him pretty well), which with a big country club house, Porsche, Mercedes, hot tub etc. seems to me like the toy dept. of life. The edginess may be mutual, as a year ago when I said something about it to C, she said part of the situation is that they (Doug, Hazel, and the other Smiths) know we know.

2nd business call of the yr just came--no, the 3rd, as Tim Appello rang me for anything arcane I might know about Walla Walla, y'day, for a Pac NW piece he's doing. Sat. I turned down, or rather put off until new book in '87, the Women's University Club, and this call was for the UW Library alum group dinner, May 30. Might do a reading for them.

Other holiday season stuff; C and I both did considerable work--among hers, a sabbatical proposal--at trying to clean off our desks and generally catch up. I think we both needed a month instead of 2 weeks, but it helped. ~~And~~ Also, both feeling pretty good, no colds for a change this ~~holid~~ holidaytime. Life does stay busy, though; have almost forgotten already Nancy Reeburgh was here for 2 days, on her way back to U. of Oregon from ~~sabbatical~~ autumn in Denmark with Bill, Carelyn and Pete on Bill's sabbatical. I was sorting old letter files, and read N one from Bill as they were readying to move to Alaska in '68, about his plans to buy a hunting rifle immediately.

7 Jan.--Good, good, good. Linda Bierds' appraisal of 1st 2 chs. of Dancing was high--her only real qualm was the "you" address to Rob so immediately in the book--and as I read over ~~the~~ ch. 1 this morning it ~~is~~ sounds just dandy. Will do a bit of tinkering, maybe cut a few lines, but not much massage needed before it can go to NY.

Lunch y'day with Carstensen, almost all history faculty gossip--dawning golden age at Yale, with Lamar and the prodigy Cronon (~~and~~); odd vendetta at UW against Runte, turned down for tenure by College Council despite work which ought to qualify him. C'sen is where I'd likely end up, agreeing Runte is the last guy in the world we'd want to go on a fishing trip with but the academic rules ought to be the same for him as anybody else. Then I met Linda Bierds at College Inn for the go-over of the chs. After, I asked if she'd come up with poem ideas while Xmas in Texas with her mother, she said yes, one, from a news pic of the icicled aftermath of firemen hosing down a burning house--the transfer of energy there interests her. The other time we met I asked her where she came up with idea for Child in the Wagon, which I think is superb. Said she'd heard at a Bellingham conference on Native American folklore, I think it was, description of westering wagons ~~are~~ coming abreast across the prairie so as not to eat each other's dust, and that wavelike scene fascinated her. Then she had the thought one day of what it would be like never to hear a certain sound again; from her own childhood she had that memory of blowing madrona leaves on the street sounding like running dogs--so she put that together with the wagon train.

10 Jan.--Whoof. Gutcurdling phone call last night from Dave Ringer. Reported that Wally, in Denver VA cancer hospital, has come down with pneumonia, and that when the time comes he and Wally want me to be a pallbearer. I'd more than half-expected the request, but now that it's here so is the dread of burying one more person there at WSS. My discomfiture isn't a pea to Dave's situation just now, though; as we talked on, he suddenly told me he thought he and Nellie were splitting up, that she's depressed all the time. One fine hell of a time for that to happen, we agreed. When I shared the bad news with C--we'd been on the phone so long she was wondering--she was considerably upset

10 Jan. cont.--for Dave; as she said, he's managed to grow up into a good guy. Anyway, Holy H. Christ; Dave ~~doesn't~~ ~~deserve~~ or anybody else doesn't deserve two such kicks in the gut at once.

Probably due no little to that phone call, I had a hard night, no sleep until after midnight. Time was on my mind; ironically, just after I'd installed some time ruminations for Angus into the Dancing revise, including the line that I think sings--"a shadowless truce while light speaks to time." I've been vying hard to hang onto this year for the ms, but as a result of Dave's call and one a little earlier from Chuck Robinson asking me to be on their B'ham tv book program, I suddenly had about a week bitten from my schedule; another major gulp is waiting in Tony Angell's request that I write the intro to his Gilcrease Museum show catalogue, and those Tulsa bastards make that worse by not getting in touch with me so I can know whether that work will happen or not. So, I need to watch my step even sharper than I thought I was.

What has gone well this week is the revise of the 1st 2 Dancing chs. for sending to NY, maybe even this afternoon. I must have tinkered with 40-50 pp., out of the 127 total, and while there still are some woes, such as Rob's character, some of it I think reads damn good; 1st half dozen pp. even sound kind of majestic, in my prejudiced opinion.

Possible good news on C's workfront, though I urged her not to get her hopes up, was sparkling performance by NJan named Barbara Adams,* in y'day's faculty evaluation of 5 candidates to succees Geo. Douglas as Sh'line vp.

13 Jan.--Y'day's NY Times had a pic of Wm. L. Shirer sitting at what the article called "his old Royal typewriter"--which C and I studied out to be abt 2 generations newer than mine. Tsk. I suppose that ought to tell me something.

Saturday was one of the fullest and grandest days of our lives. Began at 8, when we went to the Angells'; Tony then drove us, daughter Brionwy, and his foundryman Tom Jay and Tom's wife Moll and 5-yr-old son Drew on a day of bird-seeing. First, trumpeter swans n.e. of Mt. Vernon, near Barney Slough; 50 of them in a field, their long necks pumping down and up as they make their several-note sound;

greatly like the Concorde

Jan. 13 cont.--coming in for a landing, they simply sail in, wings steady in a slightly bowed "flaps down" position, somehow supporting that 25-30# body in the air. From there to lunch at the Skagit R. eagle refuge. The most visible eagle was one calm old baldie sitting on a snag-limb on our highway side of the water; we all got long looks at him through Tony's gunstock-mounted spotting scope. But what I thought lovelier was the sight of the eagles using the thermals to soar in circles until they could clear the mountain ridge between the Skagit and the Nooksack drainage to the north; ten or so brevets at a time, circling and circling against the blue. Then we went on up the river to a side channel of the Skagit to see spawned-out salmon; a couple of hundred dead ones, a dozen or so live. Every dead one eyeless; crows and gulls are the extractors, Tony says. Then back down the road toward Bow-Edison, in hope of seeing snowy owls. Detour to Blau's oyster place, which C and I account a terrific find--a new oyster source. Then hawk spotting--a couple of redtails, a roughlegged, and the sighting that most excited Tony, a short-eared(?) owl.

Eventually we did see a snowy owl, but more than a quarter mile off, not very seeable even with the scope. Heading home along the Conway road, Tony stopped us at a farmer's place where injured birds are nursed; pen~~full~~ of about a dozen swans, trumpeters and whistlers.

Along with all this came conversation with Tony and Tom Jay, about their instantaneous act of creation--casting a bronze--compared with the way I work. Tom is wonderful company: big burly black-and-gray bearded guy ~~was~~ about Tony's size--C and I have noticed that both of them are not really all that tall, a few inches more than I am, it's just that they're thick everywhere you look on their bodies--who made me hoot in delight and hey-here's-somebody comprehension during lunch when he remarked that he'd just told his foundry apprentice after a patina of the app's had failed, "bronzing is a koan of suffering." It turns out that Tom was a philosophy student at Claremont until a day when he wandered into the art dept.'s foundry room and saw a prof casting something. "You saw the hot eye of God right then?" I asked half-joking but interested too. "That was it," he said.

13 Jan. cont.--Tom also provided uproarious entertainment for Tony when the stick he was pole-vaulting a brook with at the salmon-spawning stop broke, and he fanned into the edge of the water and mud. Tony declared he'd never forget the mid-air but descending vision of Tom in his red shirt; "a maroon balloon," Tom agreed with colossal good nature.

Then came the day's second shift for us, Robin McCabe's concert at UW; Mortarboard benefit which a friend of McC's in NY, turned onto my books by Robin, arranged for us to have comp tickets for. Robin in turn arranged for us to come to the ~~champagne~~ champagne reception in Laurelhurst afterwards. A cram of people there, but we managed briefly to thank Robin. As C pointed out, what cool hand she is: amid that crowd, with somebody periodically tugging at her sleeve to come to some ceremony in the next room, she simply kept saying pleasantly, "Yes, I'll be right there," and continued to talk to us; not knowing we'd managed to get the tix and be on hand, she nonetheless reeled off the titles to all 4 of my books, said something about Swan and me, asked for our address and phone, etc. Both by her look on stage and in person, she seems to be a Yeats one--"Cast a cold eye", get the job done. At the concert, after she and her sister Rachelle took a short encore together, back out came Robin, said "I'd like to play you a little Gershwin," and played the hell out something, possibly Slaughter on Fifth Ave. She mentioned it to us, in a thinking-out-loud kind of way, maybe a little amused at herself; but entirely conscious, as we were, ~~that~~ that it was quite one little ~~bit~~ extra dash of brio.

18 Jan.--A big rain. Now, at 9:40, it's ~~sm~~ moderated to heavy; all night it drummed a downpour. And what, two nights ago?, wind gusts up to 70 mph. The woodpecker snag next to the little viaduct south along our street broke off and fell into the road; C had to drive onto curb around it on her way to the college.

Three-day weekend--ML King Day, Monday--commences now, and we both feel we need it, though this week didn't go awry at all. C came out of it with two Shoreline bits of good--any is rare: she's evidently to get 1/3 sick leave spring qtr,

18 Jan. cont.--recompense for her voice strain, and her choice Barbara Adams was hired as new exec vp. My own gain in the week was 13 pp. written, spotty stuff, but accumulating toward a spate of revise and editing come spring. I continue to feel this had better be a mighty book, to justify the load of work it's asking; but what the hell, & maybe it will be.

Am still quite leery of the schedule ahead, the continuing tussle for my time. Turned down two talk-to-classes invites this week, UW library school and Ev State art class, and at last managed to register to the Gilcrease Museum a do-it-or-get-off-the-pot message as to my writing an intro for Tony Angell's show; but even dealing with the Gilcrease, which really was only dealing to see if we're gonna actually deal, took more than 2 hours out of a day. As to the prospect of going to Montana as a pallbearer for Wally, whenever his end comes in the next days or weeks or months, I'd about as soon take a beating.

21 Jan.--Emerging from the 3-day (ML King) weekend in somewhat better shape than usual; did 3 pp. today, the Gilcrease Museum called with a decision (yes) on my doing the catalogue intro for Tony Angell's show. C is showering, about to go back to campus for her interview by the sabbatical committee. Dave Ringer is to come by, this evening, with some books for me to sign, but I'm even a bit more sanguine about Wally-the Mont. funeral trip--etc. today.

Terrific rain, I guess 4", the early part of the weekend; poured down for most of 24 hours on Sat. So, we went nowhere in particular and neither seemed to mind much. Dinner at Amy's Sun. night, with Bob and Edie Burke, John and Kathrin Maloof. Didn't get much chance to talk with Bob--he doesn't manage to put in much, with Amy and Edie on hand--but did learn he's working on biog of Hiram Johnson, good news. At dinner talk turned to eye problems, and Bob said it was during his spate of it a few years ago, when he had a detached retina, that his one eyebrow turned white--the other is still mostly gray and darker gray; said a small stroke can cause that. And last night C and I went to movie of A Chorus Line, which wasn't as good as All That Jazz (but wasn't as bad as ~~pink~~ the phenomenal ATJ either) but we both thought it was nifty enough, truly entertaining.

27 Jan.--Another gutwork day; 1st-drafting on 'Steaders ch. of Dancing, while ~~gax~~ groggy all morning. Finally got 2 pp. done, more or less. Besides feeling crummy, I'm having to absorb the crummy fact that my eyelid problem is coming back. Main indication is that the eye is showing a tendency to tire; the bump caused by the troublesome gland seems definitely bigger again, interfering with blinking.

All this despite a good weekend. Fine bright weather on Sat., so we went up to the ~~Skagit~~ Skagit flats; had our best view ever of snow geese, about halfway down the dike into the bay at S. Fork of the Skagit, not much more than $\frac{1}{4}$ mi. from us; heron in the foreground, and on the bowed limb of beached log out in the bay, two bald eagles. After ~~an~~ an hr. or so of watching, went on into LaConnor and had a terrific meal at the Black Swan; said hello to Molly in the bookstore, called up Jack Nisbet and went to see him, Claire and their new Emily. Y'day, good weather again--it's been warm for some days now, mid-50s; trees are starting to bud--and we did ~~the~~ some yard work, oblivious to the Chicago-NE Super Bowl which must have been one of the duller games ever. Supposedly America does nothing but watch the S Bowl, but I don't think we ever have, and we noticed a few other people out and around y'day afternoon.

30 Jan.--On Tues. the 28th, C got home about 1:30, asked "Have you been listening to the news?" I hadn't, spending the day until then in grinding out 4 ms pp--though while walking the n'hood I had noticed a flag in Doggy Acres, the cul-de-sac beneath the road as I walk down from the bluff, at half-staff and vaguely wondered what that was about. The space shuttle blowing up, while a goodly portion of the country's schoolkids watched on tv ~~on tv~~ to see teacher Christa McAuliffe go into space, was the about. By now NASA is getting ~~some~~ heat about the p.r. ploy that instead turned into catastrophe, but as ever, nothing sticks to Reagan--no mention that a-teacher-into-space was thought up and announced during his '84 campaign. C dropped me at Tony Angell's, 2nd session with Tony towards the Gilcrease piece I'm to write on him, and Tony noticed in the tv coverage that while a NASA Houston guy droned and mumbled during outdoors press conference, a mockingbird sang merrily in bush behind him. Tony was mentioning this as a sign of the flow of life

30 Jan. cont.--going on; that is, he wasn't citing it because it was a mockingbird. But maybe I do. That teacher died not of pioneering, as the editorial gush has it, but of government p.r.

4 Feb.--The morn of Jan. 30, phone rang about 7:30, it was Jean, about the sabbatical decisions (C knew hers had been turned down, and didn't really mind). Few minutes later, another call, and I grumbled "gonna be one of those days." This one was Dave Ringer, saying Wally had died the previous afternoon. And so the gap in this diary, and a space in my life, was the funeral trip. Will try put down some of it in a letter to Paul and put a copy here; but now some of the rest:

J&J took us on Sat. to the exhibit of Fred Miller's photos of the Crow Tribe (at Sand Pt records center), even providing lunch before and walk after. recreation we needed after Friday's dogged hours of my getting ready to go to Mont. I went on 7 a.m. flight Sunday, nothing eventful except the iffy landing thru Missoula murk which always gets on my nerves, until I stepped into the Helena airport, looking around for the red Datsun the Langs were lending me, and very nearly taking a skull-cracking fall backward on the black ice. The suitcase in one hand and suitcase in other balanced me, like an almost-lost-it tightrope walker, and by the time I got both feet firm again I was focused on Montana road and weather conditions, thoroughly. Went up to Roeder's newly-bought house, took Rich to lunch. He was considerably impressed with the recent Montana lit conference at Havre; Bill Lang later echoed Rich's appreciation of Jim Welch's reading from ~~the~~ his Blackfeet novel and of Wayne Uge's reading from Homeplace; indeed, Homeplace sounds like a terrific piece of work, according to those two. Rich was in a good mood, having finally achieved a house and some space for himself. I then went out to Langs, knowing they were ski racing at MacDonald Pass until mid-afternoon, had a shower, read the GF Trib, clipped Wally's obit. Langs were home well before 3, disgusted with poor ski conditions (temp was a pretty steady 36; I could hear melting off the roof all that night) and with Sue and Joel flu-ridden besides. Bill and I talked until 10, and I'm hard-pressed to think of anyone else--since Tom Holden of college days--I'd be at ease with for so long a time. But Bill's combination of being genuinely funny

4 Feb. cont.--and having a nimble but serious mind, I enjoy greatly. He asked me if I'd read Lonesome Dove, I said no, he said he spotted long swatches from Andy Adams' and Teddy Blue's stories in there, plus Charlie Russell's saying that a woman wasn't wearing enough to pad a crutch. And we hooted about Havre, or specifically about Harrison Lane at that Havre lit conference; as the panelist who discussed me, ol' Harrison evidently was disgusted with me. Bill had already reported this to me in a hilarious letter I got the day before; among other stuff, Lane told the conferees I was self-destructively indecisive about where I want to live--Seattle or White Sulphur! Having gotten exactly backwards the influence of two "homes" on my work--I see them as the productive motive force of Sky and Eng Crk--he did the same with Eng Crk's rodeo scene, saying the book was just my excuse for wanting to write about a rodeo. The poor dumb old shithead; that was the part of the book I was most reluctant to have to do, because of the difficulty of making a rodeo sound interesting. So, with Lang's impressions of Lane and other entertainments, Bill and I both by 10 o'clock were half-asleep and laughing steadily.

Bill went to work early the next morn, and I talked with Sue, another gem, until just before 8.

11 Feb.--Since the above, I've been hoof and soul into the piece about Tony Angell, for the catalogue at his Gilcrease Museum show. Spent the full four last days of last week on it, and y'day as well, but it seems to be done, except for seeing what Tony thinks of it. C said she's never seen me so absorbed in anything other than a book ms of my own, and quite possibly so; I nearly thought myself into a daze a couple of times--locked my keys in the house one afternoon as C and I started out to walk the n'hood; luckily and rarely, she had hers with her--trying to shape the piece, extract from almost 4 hours of Tony on tape, make the piece evocative.

Ann and Dick invited Tony and Noel and us for supper on Sat. night, and I told Tony quoting him is a subtractive art, which is what he'd been telling me stone sculpture is. One hilarity of that evening was when I asked the name of the Angells' pygmy hare whom Tony has modeled his "Snowshoe" sculpture on for the Gilcrease show, ~~Johnny~~ explaining that I wanted to mention the bunny and the ferret in my piece.

11 Feb. cont.--"Oh, Jesus," moaned Tony. Noel, next to me, turned and said radiantly, "Foo Foo." "Say again?" say I. "Bunny Foo Foo," she elaborated. "The girls named him for the song, don't you know the song? 'Little Bunny Foo Foo, hopping through the forest...' The rest of us, possibly excepting Tony, laughed up a storm, and Noel upon reflection offered that maybe they'd have named the bunny more classily if they knew he was going to be in a museum catalogue, "maybe something like Richelieu." All this gave me a chance when I phoned Tony y'day to check some facts, to say seriously, "Tony, I'd like to see what you think of this lead sentence I've come up with. Ready?" "Yeah, sure!" Me: "When Bunny Foo Foo comes out to play, right there with him is his friend in frolic, Tony Angell." Another moan from Tony, protestation that he didn't think Foo Foo really was quite right for the Gilcrease--then a pause and the cautious question, "Were you really gonna use that?" I whooped.

Going toward 10:30 now, my first morning supposedly back at the Rascal ms, I'm proving reluctant to get underway; mucho filecardery awaits, not to mention every other task of ms work I can think of. In the next 6 weeks I need to get chs. 3-6, and 7 if possible, into readable completeness.

13 Feb.--During y'day's tugs on my attention--Wash. Times called for more pics with the piece about me, I was trying to buy us some stock (Niagara Shares) for the first time in years, felt I'd better call Jim Welch and tell him of Frank Herbert's death, they were buddies--I decided by lunchtime I had to get rid of all stray stuff so I could focus back onto the Rascal ms. So in a grinding afternoon I got rid of Tony's piece, biblio stuff for Eugene Smith's book about me, stray correspondence, photocopying, a bank stop, a post office stop; and it's all out of here. Today I did concentrate on Rascal, which keeps on being a book that takes braincracking thought. I've been laboring since Tuesday to ~~smoothen~~ and smoothen the first half dozen pp. of ch. 3, Angus and Rob beginning to homestead, and in the shower a few min. ago--4:10 now--I think I finally figured how to do it.

14 Feb.--A better stint of work, at last. Y'day's end-of-day notion of how to get ch. 3 rolling--enfold their differences about homestead sites and the difficulties of sheep--seems to hold up, and while this homesteading chapter still needs a hellish amount of rewrite, it finally feels underway.

Books from Penguin the past two days, first a few copies of Scorpio Rising from its editor Stacy Schiff, with my intro--which still seems to me to sing surprisingly--and then Gerry Howard sent Winter in the Blood and Silko's Ceremony. Gerry also reported 22,600 Eng Crks sold, which as he said ain't bad. When I talked with Jim Welch on Wed., he was just about to go downtown and mail the last of ~~this~~ Blackfeet ms to Gerry; title is Fools Crow, Jim said somewhat against his own inclination in the matter; he'd had the title The Lone Eaters, but says everybody else likes Fools Crow better. I dunno; I think I like Jim's version, and better yet The Alone Eaters, though I guess that wouldn't actually derive from the Blackfeet band he's writing about.

What else. Had word the other day that the German edition of Sky is finally coming, in April--Das Haus des Himmels, sweet everloving readerdom. Have not had word, a bit perplexingly, from Liz or Tom on the Rascal chs. I sent in a month ago; I did talk with Liz's ass't Abby while L. was in Hollywood and Abby knew of no wrong with the ms, said she liked it a lot. I think I'll just wait and see--or at least I'll try to--on the basis C sees this: she points out that Ath'm simply sent me \$25,000 automatically, never having seen a word of this book, nobody's worrying about whether I'm getting it done, you've got it made, Doig, advises she.

20 Feb.--Somewhere the past week went down a gopher-hole. C had a holiday Monday, Prez's Day, and on Tues. it snowed. She walked to work these 3 days; snow now mostly gone, in fact it's begun to rain, but the house is still chilly. I had a tough day Tues. on the ms, still trying to figure how to align the first 6-8 pp. of the Homesteading ch.; C read them for me that night, suggested dropping a graf of dialogue--something I hadn't thought of, going against the grain of the rest of the book--and letting the material about sheep go until

20 Feb. cont.--later, and those maneuvers got me going on the ch. again. Y'day was considerable progress, today was slower but I think some nice stuff about 1890-1 winter.

Phone call last night from Donn Fry of Seattle Times wanting me to review Barry Lopez's Arctic Dreams; told him I'd already turned down the Wash. Post on that, on basis that the Arctic is far beyond my ken. He is trying to make something of that book page after the years of snore inflicted by Larry Rumley, and I may try do a review for him sometime. Day or so ago a big galley of Oakley Hall's Apaches flowed in here from Herman Gollob at S&S, I hefted it and sent it right back with an apology, still chary of my eye situation (a bit of aggravation now down amid the eyelashes, though I'm not sure it had anything to do with the gland mess) and of my stamina. Sat. night we went to Linda Sullivan's for supper--us, Buff Wainwright, Eric and Jan Nalder--and saw Linda's terrific slides from her Europe trip, landscape gardens of all imaginable kinds.

Not much else to report, just trying to steady down, get the next chunk of ms to respectability.

4 March--Took John and Jean to airport this morn at 5:40, on their way to funeral of John's mother in Houston. About 11 hrs later now, it's becoming a long day. Worked hard on ending of ch. 3, but didn't see the best way to do it until about 2 this afternoon, too late in the day's energy to muster the somewhat fancy writing it needs. Am still fighting to get chs. 3-5 into one reasonable flowing readable portion, and may not yet this week. Ch. 6, which needs considerable writing from scratch, simply sits there and looms, waiting for me to ever get there. Maybe next week I'd better hack out some pp. on it, whether the preceding stuff is done or not.

23 Feb.--Ruminations on the funeral trip to WSS, to what end I'm not sure except to try see myself and the others. My Ringer cousins, I found, have all turned out better than I would have bet; and at the same time, all 4 have portions of their lives totally foreign to me, I think to my nature. Begin with Dave, who simultaneously with his father's death has been going through the death of his marriage. Naturally it shook him, caused some teary times--he remarked to me that when he called his mother to tell her of the marital breakup, he and she "cried a lot together and laughed a lot together"--but what is most striking to me is that he already has his next wife candidate picked out, indeed has had for a couple of years, whether or not having admitted it to himself; as was the case with Nellie, he again is smitten with a small-town girl, this one actually from WSS; as was the case with his father, he evidently will leap right on into the next marriage. The remarkable glibness there, which I have always attributed to his mother's McAfee family; talking this over with C, trying to think out what had always bothered me and Dad about the time spent, on Grandma's behalf, with Wally's household and Bud's, I said it seemed to me our antsy attitude was that among those folks particularly Joyce and through her Wally, when all was said and done, a whole helluva lot more had been said than done. And you the storyteller for a living, she pointed out to me. Yes, but not with my lips, I guess. In any case, the sustaining ability of the McAfee/Ringers to get by on gab and the spells they create for themselves with it, may indeed be the better way to get by in Montana than the exert-every-nerve style of my father and me; Dad pounded himself to death with work and the work-worrisome situations he put himself in, I had to leave Montana to learn to use the values it put in me.

Dave's brother Dan, whom I hadn't seen since Grandma's funeral in '74. At 34, gray in his ~~black~~ black hair--he and his wife Charlene a few years ago went through a hideous time with a baby born with a hole in its heart, doomed child that lived long enough to harrow their lives--and a red near-handlæbar mustache; as he said to me, and I could see it behind that rather splendid cookieduster, without the mustache his face still looks sixteen. It's

23 Feb. cont.--impressive to me that he now knows that, has purposely tried to move on from the mischievous kid he was.

(Dave, when he came here to have me sign a few books just before his dad died, was gabbing on in his way and remembered, bringing the many memories of hearing it back to me, how his dad would warn about his pesky behavior: "Dave, you're not cute." But as Dave said, "I knew I was, though." Saying it disarmingly and funnily, but truth was there; both Dave and Dan as little kids, when I was around them most, thought they were the hottest invention since spotted pups.) Dan remarked to me--interestingly, maybe significantly Dave never mentioned this, in any of our considerable conversations around the time of Wally's death--the difficulty of trying to console Wally's third wife Delores, not really knowing her, not knowing what to say, how to quite go about it. He had the awareness that he was in over his head, as any of us would be; the entire his-hers-ours--those-whose situation of the funeral made itself most evident in Dan, so far as I could see. What his own life is like, I don't really know; he and Charlene have a couple of small kids, and Dan introduced me to his stepson, a fat bespectacled guy who looked about 20. When I asked Dan if he still was working for Wally Buckingham, he said yeah, he was pretty much his own boss, nobody around on that job to tell him he was doing it wrong; and I suppose that is what he has wanted not to hear in his life.

Ray, who like me was a pallbearer; to my startlement, he has a squarish beard much like mine--though I'm greatly grayer, Ray's has enough of his blondness in it that we looked surprisingly similar. He seemed more serious, again maybe just more grown-up, than I was used to in him; what little chance we had to talk, he answered gravely, solidly. Ray I think has always had enough imagination to know he ought to amount to more than he seemed to; I remember some mutually distressing times when we were kids and he would come visit with us, at Higgins' or at Dupuyer, and he would always want to know what I was going to do that day, how I was going to keep the two of us entertained, really; and I know he was frustrated that I could make that up for myself, through reading or thinking, as I went through the day, and that I was damn little interested in doing it for him.

10 March--I hope not but spring~~m~~ ills have maybe found us again, C getting up this morn with sore throat and weak voice, perhaps from all the pollen of this so-early spring or perhaps worse. If life had let us alone another week we could have gritted thru to spring break, but we may be in for a helluva hectic two weeks now. We spent some time last night struggling with money decisions, the current declining interest rates rough on us put-it-under-the-mattress types; the bathroom remodeling is impending, or supposed to be; I have to get the income taxes over the brink into final form and make some IRA-SRA decisions; ~~and~~ on and on, while both of us are supposed to be full tilt on our work as well.

The good news of the weekend, and it's damn good, is that Tom Stewart likes the first 2 chs. of Dancing, seems genuinely to appreciate the voice.

12 March--8 A.M., C recuperated enough that she's just left for work (stayed home y'day and slept much of the afternoon); I still have a headfull of sinus or semi-demi-flu or some other glop, but don't feel too bad. What I want to get down here is the evident turn the Dancing ms took on Monday, soon after the previous diary entry. In the shower, literally a fount of ideas for me, I thought of combining chs. 4-6 into one, bringing Adair into the picture while Angus is still courting Anna. I'm such a linear thinker I hadn't seen this prospect before, and I'm still not sure it'll work, but y'day I photocopied the chs. and began moving the stuff into a weave and it seems to make sense, to give the book the propulsion it needs here in the middle. Quite a bunch of transition and other material has to be spliced in, and I'm in that mood where I can sense what the work is and what its completion will look like, impatient with the labor hour-by-hour to get it there. On mornings like this, it's as if I can feel this book trembling to be great.

13 March--Ai-yi-yi, we both have the flu. It waxes and wanes so that we're usually not at our worst at the same time, but it's still damn tough on the household.

14 March--C is not just flu-struck, she's about as wiped out as I've ever seen her. Has spent the day on the couch, feverish and dizzy when she gets up. We ~~were~~ checked with Grp Health, hers sounds like a 7-10 day influenza, which this may be the 5th day of. Myself, a bit light-headed but I whacked thru the income tax and my NEA Fellowship report.

17 March--11 a.m. and I feel weary to the bone. I haven't come down with C's flu, at least her all-out version of it, but have had something lesser, maybe a mere cold; between that and coping with the house while she's been afflicted and the usual workload, I'm just plain ~~kind~~ tired. A week to spring vacation.

Spent Sat. morn on figuring this year's estimated tax and trying to think through our finances, where as usual we're being left behind by the skyrocketing economy. Sun. was sunny, so I planted the first lettuce and the 1st third of the sugar pea rows. Also spent an hour or so battling the toilet, which in the midst of C's sickest began not shutting itself off after a flush.

21 March--Now to wind down to our week at Cannon Beach. I spent the morning greensheeting the needed additions and transitions into the big 4th ch. of Dancing, and it looks as if it'll shape up nicely, though it'll likely take a solid 2 weeks--which with this book usually means 3 weeks--to do it. Bothersome not to be at a logical stopping point, a chapter end or some other, when time for a break comes; before Xmas it was the eye problem, ~~the~~ now it's been the flu or whatever I had, probably will be something else this spring. Unless some section of this ms suddenly zooms --not impossible, because the Forest fire section of Eng Crk took off that way--I'm going to have to plug on in this never-quite-space-to-draw-a-real-breath way until end of the year. The book may well turn out to be worth it, but tired as I am just now I yearn for some quickness in the writing.

23 March--Incident of last night. Just before 6 we were listening to Prairie Home Companion as usual; an inept show, as happens every so often now since Keillor jilted his producer, married someone else, has had the tide of bestsellerdom and fame, and now he began a segment on folk songs of early 60's. First an overearnest Cumbayah, which C called from the kitchen that she's sure as hell heard better versions of; then a dippy version of a pop song of that time, maybe Barbara Sue, and one of the Sloop John B. What is all this about, C wondered, and indeed if Keillor was intending to parody the folk songs his choice of Pop Wagner, with his nasal hillbillyish nonvoice, was instead mocking them. I was mildly annoyed and bothered but was reading at the same time and paying minimal attention. When a mockingly dolorous Michael, Row the Boat Ashore began, C came from the kitchen saying, Do we have to listen to this? She was near tears. I said of course not, shut the damn thing off, and went to her. She said, ~~y~~ that offends me, and goddamn it, she's right. That was balladry that meant much to us, in our summers with the high school kids at Northwestern, and it was no less valid to them and us than rock music became a few years later, or Keillor's own predilections for hymns.

This is Sunday, turning out to be a day of rain, and we are simply easing our way toward leaving for the week in Cannon Beach tomorrow. I'm trying to clean out notebook entries onto file cards, and came across notes abt Norman Maclean that I may or may not have filled out after our visit with him at Seeley Lake last summer. So, here, briefly: Maclean hums, what I don't know, maybe nothing identifiable, as he goes about household tasks. I could hear him in his kitchen, like a distracted bee, going here and there as he gathered the ingredients for the gin and tonics he was fixing us. He remarked that he'd recently ~~been~~ gone up the ladder onto his roof, to clean pine needles off, I think it was; ~~he~~ I don't think he was telling us about it to seem dramatic, but he does have a realization of the use of his age, so to speak. Told us, when the topic of movie producers came up, that his age and his do-the-movie-my-way-or-else-I-don't-let-you-do-it attitude gives him a kind of power--he used that exact word--in dealing with guys who think only money counts.

23 March--Maclean cont'd: He also spoke to us, and we later that day heard from Annick that it's almost word-for-word something he's told her and maybe a lot of others, about the "divided life" he lives, between Chicago (and family and where his career was) and Montana (and his youth and family past). Said he's going to have to decide, move back to Montana or give up the Seeley Lake place; but I think age will beat him to it, I think it's not really a decision he wants to make or should--a talking point, a thinking out loud, it actually is.

--When we told him of our trip to Scotland, he said he's never been there, got as far as London once, I think, and took sick. His family is from the Isle of Mull, he says.

--When we went to lunch, I noticed in the cafe the way Norman walks: from the waist down, penguin-like. Distinctive in all things.

Quick version of the past weeks when flu and work made this diary go to hell. Wed. the 19th I read the school-house section of dancing to Kirkland-Redmond AAUW, favor to Kathi Lucia; C and I had dinner with the group at the Bravo, a good audience. Going to the bar beforehand, saw a guy stand up and wave at us--Doug Smith, ~~there~~ there with Carol whom he's to marry in a few weeks. We joined them for a drink, they urged us to come to the wedding; another twist in this episode, in which C's dad got an invitation, we didn't (almost surely through mistake), he then got ticked off about that and declared he doesn't want to go. Where all this will float to earth on April 4, I dunno; I'm to go to Bellingham to be on tv that day, so at least I have a legit excuse. Other than that night, we haven't been out of the house much; C had flu the week of the 10th, so bad she missed a couple of days of classes, then had to grind through finals last wk. I had either a cold or minor version of her flu, and have noted that the Dancing ms continued to shape itself promisingly but slowly. About the only world-at-large news was that I agreed to review Sue Hubbell's ~~book~~ Book for the Wash. Post, ~~book~~ and to think toward a "neglected classic" review for them too.

April 1--New month, and I hope by the end~~of~~ of the day a damn near new bathroom. C and I came back at the end of Fri. afternoon from our good beach week at Cannon Beach, feeling recuperated and zesty, and walked into the bathroom refurbishing that looked like WWII Berlin propped together by braces from wall to wall. C had expected the job would be nearly done, I wasn't that hopeful but didn't expect the raw scene we found; but it turns out--or should turn out--that the job was mostly done, the braces were holding the new shower walls overnight for the glue to set, etc. Supposedly the trim and painting are to get done today and it'll be less like living in a Bedouin tent around here.

Rich Berner just called for advice abt finding a pub'r for his 4-vol. history of Seattle. While we were away all of last ~~wk~~ wk the phone machine took only 2 messages, but this seems to be a wk of jangle. Eugene Smith called y'day while I was mowing grass out back, to confirm a biblio ref'ce in his book on me; I no sooner went back out than the Drexel broker called to confirm his Thurs. apptmt, which C handled--trying to deal with brokers on this matter of a single-premium insurance plan has been incredible, they're the most inefficient handlers of time I've contended with since the goddamn roofers. And other calls as well y'day. At least I'm feeling better today, improved from a thunderous, wracking spell of sneezing early y'day afternoon. C meanwhile came home absolutely perking, pleased as hell with her reduced spring load of 2 courses. I'm taking this week, because of the bathroom project, to do bk reviews--Sue Hubbell's for Wash. Post, and Deborah Tall's for S. Times--and then go be on cable tv in Bellingham on Fri. If I can parse through the week with some efficiency, I can get back to whipping the big ch. 4 of Dancing.

Spent much of weekend planting Walla Walla onion sets--two small flats, abt 250 plants. Sat. just before noon,

Duvall Hecht of Books on Tape called, wondered if we cd come downtown for lunch, we did and may get a Bks on Tape deal for Sky (and maybe other~~x~~ bks) out of it. Sunday, we went to Mad. House for Easter brunch with Frank, then took flowers to Lucie's grave with him. He's chugging through life very well just now.

4 April--What has been a tricky dance-of-the-tasks week is finally about to go away. The bathroom carpenters have been in and out randomly--except y'day, when a couple of them were sick and they weren't in and out, worse yet--and I've Wanged out a Wash. Post review (lively and spiffy) of Sue Hubbell's A COUNTRY YEAR and a S. Times review (quick & glib) of Deborah Tall's ISLAND~~KN~~ OF THE WHITE COW, plus desk-cleaning, tending to my Wells Fargo SEP-IRA (bought \$8500 in zero coupon bonds) and to the Single-premium insurance investment we're evidently going to make with Drexel Burnham, etc. Interesting about the goddamn Seattle Times; I decided I'd pitch in with an occasional review to encourage the new books editor, Donn Fry, as he tries to build the page from the slum it was in Runley's time, and so after we came back from Cannon Beach, where I read Kate Simon's A WIDER WORLD and was much taken with it, I called Donn and offered to review it. Well, uh, he'd assigned it and something else to somebody for a joint review. Okay, I said, what about Kim Williams' book, though I've given it a blurb. Well, umm, he'd be a bit bothered by the fact of that ~~kind of crazy~~ blurb. Okay, I said, one last chance, Deborah Tall's book, but it's from my own publisher and that kinds of bothers me. No, no, he wouldn't be bothered at all by that, and so, by some kind of scout's honor I still don't quite fathom I went ahead and gave the Tall book what I thought it deserved, a favorable but not raving review and some defense from the NYTBR snippery it got from ~~some~~ a Britisher.

In abt an hour I head for Bellingham, to be on ch. 10 cable tv book show as a favor to Chuck Robinson. Dark rainy day. Tomorrow is Boat Day, which I'd kind of like to go to for the first time in years. We're also going to have a hell of a weekend of catch-up chores, after this week of bathroom disruption. C has been in a terrific mood all week, pleased with teaching just 2 classes instead of 3 this spring. I'm feeling pretty good, though plump and out of shape, and am hoping life will let me settle into the Dancing ms equably next week.

April 7--One last (I hope to Christ) day lost to the bathroom renovation, and I'm baleful about it. A Monday, a re-start on the Dancing ms after 2 wks away, and the carpenter's noise, made it a tough SOB of a day, very little revise done; and C now is vacuuming up after the carpenters, so I'm about to capitulate and go join the cleanup. Life is going to have to settle down for me a bit, if I'm ever to get real progress on this hard mid-part of Dancing.

April 14--Did make reasonable progress on the ms the rest of last week, and promptly hit the stone wall again today. The Monday problem is tough; we had little time off on the weekend, with Bob Franke here most of Sat. trying (and not quite managing) to finish last details on the bathroom and then our wallwashing, other cleanup and getting re-established in there. Am greatly annoyed, disgusted really, with myself that I can't, or don't, manage to sit down and bat stuff out on days like this. I'd be a whole helluva lot better off if

I did. I still need desperately to get this midsection of Dancing into full draft--this book seems to shape reasonably when I reach that point--and as ever have days and days of gaping work to get there. Will see how things are ~~with~~ by Friday.

I can't really account for my personal low pressure area today--although the weather, a bit hazed and heavy, may be contributing--because I had a fine high time y'day afternoon when we went to the Angells' open house, preparatory to Tony Tulsa Gilcrease show. Among those on hand, Bill Holm, the painter Tom Jones, Jim McDermott, Dick Nelson; people I admire greatly, the red blood of this region.

28 April--Tiring now; 2:45 of a day when I've written 3 fresh Dancin' pp., rejigged the mss's chapters and sorted a lot of pages and ideas, handled some correspondence, made a dump run; but it's at last a good tiredness, the finale of the work buzz I've been in since y'day. C read the ms y'day morn, seeing ch. 4, Anna and Adair for the 1st time, and thought it was all terrific; I then talked thru plot possibilities with her, and as we did the 4 chs. needed to finish the book--The 'Steaders, Two Medicine, 1918, 1919--came into place for me, along with the fates of all the major characters. This is the payoff for the tussle I've been waging the past several weeks, trying this and that in ch. 4, veering it one way and then another, to make it find its logic. I now have about a hundred page ch., with some fill-in scenes to come, to serve as the heart of the book. More to the point in work terms, I now can write the needed fresh ms pp. day by day wherever the hell I want in the next 4 ch.--today's were in Two Medicine, Anna arriving to Angus's shearing camp; it also means the arithmetical glory that dabs of pp. and raw "maybe" pp. that I've accumulated can be sited into the next 4 chs. and become a legitimate, meaningful progress count. By Jesus, it's about time.

Stray bits before I find time to catch up on past 2 wks: \$500 royalty on Winter Bros today, surprising (1,150 copies sold, last 6 mos. of '85) and nice; had a bk review in S. Times (Deborah Tall, Island of White Cow) wk ago Sun., have one forthcoming--or maybe it appeared y'day--in Wash. Post.

5 May--Before Wally died he told Dave and Dan there was a packet of WWII letters my mother had written him, and I was to have them. I've been greatly curious about them, the look they would provide into the life of my family then, and so y'day I drove to White Center--Frank along for the ride--to fetch them from Dave. When I got home and opened the small box I found about 20 letters, most by my mother, several by Grandma, and what hit me hard, my dad's handwriting on two envelopes. The postmarks told the rest of the story: all of them 1945, the time up to and just after my mother's death. I most definitely had letters on my hands, all right; words abruptly across the 41 years since that detonation of death and grief in Dad's life, my life, Grandma's life, that we all spent the next quarter century trying to cope with. We were going to supper at Ann and Dick's--his 50th birthday--and so I read only a few of the letters, but had to begin facing those of Dad, written two and three months after my mother's death. I told C the portent of the postmarks, so she knew I was in for some emotion; I think I got through the b'day party okay--liked the other guests okay, and Dick is maybe the best man I know--but was quiet, keeping control, on the way to and from. When we got home and started to bed, C asked if I'd got through the evening okay; I said yes, and started for the bathroom. Then I thought I'd better tell her the full impact of the letters, the pair by Dad, and so I came back around the corner and began, "There are..." and couldn't go on; tried again, "There...", C watching me as I tried to get it out; then managed to half-sob it, "There are a couple of heart-rending letters from Dad." She understood instantly: "After your mother's death." I nodded, teary. She held me and I pulled myself together. This morning I've read through the rest of my mother's letters, and the sorrow I can't help feeling for those people, who seem so far and spookily so near too, is immense. The details ~~excite~~ bring the grief: my mother, whom I have imagined as being so perilous in health, wan and ill, sounds full-blooded, ample with life. A little more than a week before her death she herded the sheep while Dad and I took a ~~weekend~~ herder into Bozeman, we came back with cowboy boots and a hat for her, she was greatly pleased, looking ahead to the mountain summer, and

5 May cont.--in that final letter to Wally remarking that I would have a birthday in a few days. Then my father's letters, which tell that she slipped from life, gently really; they'd stayed up until 11 talking, about ~~2:30~~ 2:30 she died in his arms, still ~~saying~~ saying what he called "sweet messages." ~~Then~~ His second letter is written from September, just after I've begun school, and he tells Wally of our frequent visits to the cemetery--we were staying on the ranch next to it--to put flowers on her grave; he says "soon it will be winter and no more flowers to take to her."

So, a weepy morning, my grief at what those people had to go through. The letters with their cross-currents of family--I haven't even gone through Grandma's yet, but Dad's second one frankly tells Wally he can't get along with Grandma--confirm what an extraordinary thing Dad did in allying with Grandma for me. And this: I have wondered, as friends of our age deal with the death of aged parents, what my mother would be like had she lived. Unquestionably, much of what I am is because of her death; so the wonder is there, was she someone I now would prize, to the same extent her absence had such a powerful effect on my life? No knowing, but I do find from these letters, the first and only ones I have of hers, that I like how she sounds, I like her occasional turns of phrase and what seems to be her forthrightness. Grief and fondness, in this packet from the past that I never knew existed.

7 May--A day of Chernobyl rain. God, it's depressing, not to know what the effect of the radioactive cloud will be, what to do against consequences. When C came home y'day with news that radioactive traces had been found in this state, we put on the radio, listened to a UW Nuc Physics lab guy give tight-lipped assurances there was "no risk," and I at once went out and covered as much of the garden as I could with plastic. What it is about scientists that they prefer to risk us rather than prof'l embarrassment about seeming alarmist--they were the same before Mt. St. Helens blew up--I can't fathom, but it seems to me intellectually criminal.

9 May--Quick notes while waiting for John Krull of Indnpls News at 4 o'clock int'view. Despite the emotional load ~~that~~ at the start of this week, this has been a steadier set of days than C and I have had recently. Both paced thru our week's work, the world didn't overwhelm us, so far so good.

--Sat. was Boat Day, we went down behind UW Fisheries bldg. to where the crew shells end up, hugely enjoyed the spectacle of the shell traffic/log jam as dozens of the long lovely craft fetched up. Some sun--rare, these weeks--and we walked up to Worners' for lunch and on up to buy seafood for supper. As we went along the Ave., updating ourselves on the everchanging business face of that street, C said she considers it a signal fact of the past 20 years that when we arrived here nobody had ever heard of me, and now ~~in~~ my name is permanently blazoned in a U Bk Store window. I'll take it.

--Tony Angell is back from his Gilcrease show in Tulsa, it was, as he puts it, A SELL-OUT! All but a few small pieces sold, anyway, and the thrill of walking into the gallery there and seeing the 40 or more pieces gathered from what he's done down thru the years was, he says, magnificent.

--Monday night, Linda Bierds came by with 3d ch. she read for me, 1st time she and C & had met. C said after, she is a head, isn't she; yeah, I said, a lot like that other brainy Linda, Miller. Calling her the next day with something I'd thought of for her reading of the next ms piece, she said she got home that night to find she's won a Pushcart Prize. So it's very fine indeed, to watch Tony, her, Craig Lesley with his NEA and a sizable ms sample in to Houghton M, rise and rise, carrying us and this corner of the country with them.

--Early in the week came this Sunday's piece of mine in the Portland Oregonian mag, "The Timeweavers." I still find it a strange incident and a good piece.

May 19--74 degrees at 2:45. And I made a decent start on what has to be a rigorous 2 weeks of hashing the 'Steaders chapter into revised and consecutive order. Have felt good and steady today after a miserable groggy 1st hour this morning, consequence of lost sleep when we had the Angells and Damborgs here for supper last night. Entertaining is just damn near beyond the energy C and I can muster, and we do very little of it. The coming of hamburger grilling season will help some.

Fri. night Craig Lesley read at Elliott Bay bookstore--the fine Celilo Falls scenes from W'kill and his short story Mint, good jobs of reading butx to an audience of only about 15 of us friends--and the next morn we went to the Edgewater for coffee with him, Kathy and their 2 girls. Craig has just got the contract from Houghton Mifflin for his next book, on basis of 120-pp. ms sample. He seems to me to be doing everything right--a reason I like him so much is that he works hard for his books by doing signings, etc., and is interested in the whole publishing process, dismally rare among our writing friends; Joyce Thompson, whom I met and talked to considerably at Craig's reading, remarked that after 4 novels she sees that her assumption that all she should have to do is write them ~~xx~~ hasn't panned out--and yet is scraping by in a schedule of teaching-writing-fathering that C and I agree would capsize either of us. Thank god he got an NEA this year.

Not a whole hell of a lot else to report. I ~~examined~~ eased up on work a bit last week, both to try recuperate some energy and to begin pacing myself through this month, but managed some pp. on the Steaders revise and some mild touching-up of the opening of the book, which for the first 4-6 pp. ~~xxx~~ still seems to me majestic. Whether it's the best idea to have majestic prose up front there is another matter.

21 May--This is one of those stints when I hope to christ I turn out to know what I'm doing. Pacing thru the 'Steaders ch. of the ms at a stately 5 pp./day of revise, this week and next; I seem to hang on to more energy this way, but am I moving the ms strongly enough? It continues to boggle me that this big ch. keeps needing and needing from me; at least the recent work has solved such problems as a decent first line and last line, and the arrival of Stanley.

Went to the U Dist for lunch, again part of the deliberate pacing. Am going to settle in for the hour before All Things Considered and start Jimmy Breslin's Table Money; NYTRR review impressed me, as did the opening pp. I skimmed in U Bk Store. Told C I bought Breslin for me, Matthiessen's 9-Hearted (Headed?) Dragon River for her.

Bad news in mail edition of GF Trib y'day, death of Stan Davison. At some logistical strain last summer C and I got ourselves to Dillon to tape him, and I'm devoutly glad now we did, for he wasn't so old as to seem imminently dead--

75, the Trib story says. I guess he was politically somewhere off the right-hand end of the world--Malone I think particularly had no use for him because of his politics; Lang seemed a bit more appreciative, though remarking too how far apart he and Stan were politically--but he never broached any of it around me, and I simply goddamn liked him, recognized in him a lot of the Montana that interests me. He was not nearly the historian or writer that Malone, Roeder, Lang etc. are, but what I prized in him was the fact that he was a homegrown historian, a guy who grew up in E. Helena, was in the CCC, spent most of his teaching life in Dillon; he had angles I don't find in my higher-powered history buddies. One of those odd mother-smothered bachelors, who for all his foibles watched and listened and tucked away. My enduring memory will be of Stan in the Mont. His'l Society library, standing talking to me with his tractor cap on, C arriving through the door to join us, Stan saying "Oh!" in confused pleasure at meeting her and lifting his tractor cap like a Victorian schoolboy

29 May--Glorious weather, temp maybe into high 70s but a cool light breeze, sheer blue sky. That and the rework of ch. 1 I did today make me feel better than I have in a helluva while. I slogged on the 'Steaders ch. on Tues., first workday of this week, and did the scheduled; y'day morning I was drowsy, with so much of the Steaders looming yet, and so I began again on ch. 1, borrowing future work to pay for the present. After tomorrow I think Ch. 1 will have nearly the fullness and resonance I want, though I realize I'll tinker again later on.

Memorial Day weather was showery and uncertain, so we called off the L. Union hike with Linda Sullivan and Buff Wainwright, they instead came for lunch--burgers to initiate our new Weber charcoal grill--and Linda led us on a low-tide walk at Norma Beach n. of Edmonds. Our next big social note is the Reeburghs, plus their new sheepdog, probably here on June 4-6. Last night on rare spur of the moment C and I went to Hannah and Her Sisters wonderful damn performances even though it's a strange Manhattany view of life--Hannah's 4 kids virtually unseen and unheard in a NY ~~xxx~~ apartment, Thanksgiving after Thanksgiving blithely achieved ~~with the same magnificent~~ ~~not that~~ by sisters who stop squabbling only long enough to be kind to the black maid, nobody really spending any time at making a living. This is the kind of life that makes Woody Allen worry?

2 June--Exquisite weather continues. Bright and blue and just enough breeze. I must have stepped on a stone during gardening or choring, something to give me a tender inside of my right heel, so I haven't been able to walk the n'hood during this fine stint of weather. Feeling good even so.

Revise of ch. 1 I did the last 3 days, and a bit on Sat., I think has that portion of the ms to where I want it. C liked it greatly. I told her that strangely enough, the opening of this book somehow seems majestic. She said she didn't know if she'd choose quite that word, because of the subject matter, but we likely both mean it sounds distinct.

June 2 cont.--I kept on with revising this morning, beginning ch. 2, and am gratified at how little major stuff is needed so far. Will try achieve it while Reeburghs are here, then go on to shaping up either ch. 3, which needs a middling amount of work, or ch. 4, which needs a bunch. Either case, what I'm aiming for is to get these 1st 4 chs. revised and the book's final ch., probably 7, roughed, this summer. Locking up chapters, as I'd just done with 1 and am marching toward on 2, is just what I need on this demanding book.

Friday night, I read the schoolhouse section to UW Library alumnae group at the Windjammer. That and a question session went fine; the group's business meeting afterward, though, was glacial, with Marian Gallagher, ex-head of UW law library painfully (for me; I dunno about her) dragging through an endless intro of the distinguished alumna award winner. J&J went with us, which I somewhat regretted afterward, given the Gallagher boredom quotient of the evening. Otherwise, the occasion went okay.

June 11--11 a.m., of what must be a regrouping day. It had better be, because I show no real signs of tackling the ms (though I may do some reading of ch. 3 this afternoon toward the revise of it next week). I very nearly have the 1st 2 chs. revised to publication-readiness; Rae Ellen came last night and Wanged ch. 1. The ms perks up pretty nicely in revision, I think; it's turning out that what the chs. most needed was bravura sections, so I lengthened and intensified the storm scene in ch. 1--it's now ~~like~~ considerably the longest single scene in the ch., as it would be in Angus's memory too--and did the same, daubing in what Tom suggests as "lyricism," for Angus's landfinding scenes in ch. 2.

Life outside the book has been busy too. Reeburghs were here from suppertime on the 5th through mid-morning of the 8th; with them, Pete's 10-wk-old Sheltie pup Callie, aka Pete's Caledonian Lass. Pete was scrupulous about tending and watching her, so no big problem. Only real glitch of the visit, and a minor one really, was my effort to cook hamburgers on our new Weber charcoal grill, after a decade of Bill, a near-ultimate gear freak, preaching virtues of a gas grill to me; never did get the SOBs done beyond medium raw. I guess I can take consequences of hubris in doses that size.

June 11 cont.--Sat. night, the Angells angelically told us to bring R'burghs along to their place for supper. First look at Tony's tundra swan, nice white piece with black bill inlaid. Tom and Carrie Jones were on hand too, and I had my first chance to talk to Tom, lanky and shy. Told me, on my asking, that he begins a painting with an image in mind, "maybe how the light hits that table over there," and works on just that one until he has it done. He's from somewhere south of Cleveland, must ask him about Medina, Hinkley Ridge, etc. where I've been, sometime. Everyone got along swimmingly--Pete liked the Angells' new ferret and a new spotted rat that lives atop the unused cookstove in a mod highrise cage--and Bill Reeburgh, one of the most interesting if occasionally wearying-to-keep-up-with minds I know, came away from talking with Tony with a mild conundrum. Bill told Tony of the U. of Oklahoma biologist/artist he'd studied under, name maybe Manning or something like, and Tony said yeah, he knew of his work and he'd corresponded with him a bit, but what was wrong with the guy was that he'd never risked his work in the real world, always sold his prints or whatever to people who happened to know him. The UO guy had been quite a hero to Bill, so Tony's estimation, which I find entirely casual and understandable, perplexed Bill: until he told me at b'fast he thought he had it figured out, Tony saw the UO guy as Bill sees scientists who don't publish their work. As people tell us fairly often these days, we sure as hell have interesting friends.

Quick notes on two others, I hope to be added to later: Gretel Ehrlich was in town Mon., to read at Elliott Bay, and we took her to dinner at Mitchell's beforehand. She's 5'2", honey-blond, and retains, C thought, considerable Bennington despite 10 yrs in Wyoming ranch work; for ex, while reading, which she does in a pleasant deft voice, she has the mannerism of running both hands occasionally thru the honey-blond mane of hair. Both of us liked and enjoyed her, and were impressed with the amount and quality particularly the imaginative quotient, of the work she has underway. C and I agreed that Western ~~young~~ writer guys like David Long, of her generation, better ~~get~~ get down to work or Gretel gonna eat their lunch.

26 June--The diary gap of last week represents an enormous stint of achievement on Dancing, and this week's void represents some time off for me. Mon-Tues. we spent at Dungeness Spit, ~~xxx~~ hiking beside great minus tides of more than 3 feet. Wind and fog along the bluff on Mon.--we went into Sequim to a movie, Down and Out in Beverly Hills, rather than try to put up with the weather all evening--but Tues. was sheerly beautiful. We walked the entire length of the Spit, saw 50 or so seals in a bunch at the very tip, also saw oystercatcher and guillemots. Both felt dandy, after some stiffness on the 1st day, but C turned an ankle ~~and~~ in the last mile or two on Tues. and is going in to Gp Health this morning for X-ray to be sure nothing is torn. She's limping sharply this morn. I'm pretty sure she regards as the direst consequence of it that it may interfere with our hiking Ebey's Landing tomorrow on my birthday. We'll sort that out after her medical visit.

Wk of the 16th, and I guess the one or two before, I brought the first 2 chs. of Dancing into virtually finished shape; indeed, have printed them out, 108 pp. so far and Rae-Ellen has another 25-30 to finish next week. I'm considerably pleased with how they read by now. Still a crunching number of deadlines ahead in this summer--completing ch. 3, which I originally thought of as ch. 4 (~~rough~~ original ch. 3, 1st yr of home-steading, now is simply the beginning of the enlarged ch.), roughing out the final ch., and completing ch. 4, The 'Steaders, which may be almost as long and chockfull as ch. 3.

On the 15th, C and I went to Elliott Bay bookstore for lunch with Louise Erdrich and Michael Dorris. Michael spent some growing-up time at Hays, Mont., and wrote me an admiring letter abt English Crk, all of which led to this lunch as they passed through here on a see-the-country trip with their 4 kids. We liked and enjoyed them; no airs put on by Louise, who certainly earned the right to some by the success of Love Medicine. She is a bit short of being as beautiful as the back jacket pic on Beet Queen--Michael mentioned it's a Jerry Bauer pic, "seamless" because of air-brushing,--but is more

26 June--interesting and ~~lively~~ alive in her looks than that photo shows. Slim, blue-jeaned, simply dressed except for maybe an Indian belt. Michael is tall and sizable, his face a countrified and again more interesting version of Tony Roberts', the actor who was at NU when I was. Michael adopted 3 Indian children ~~who~~ as a single parent--the oldest, a boy 18, was on a canoe trip in Minn.--and his and Louise's are girls, abt 18 months and 3 yrs. The baby presented a diaper problem, and after Michael's son Savva went several blocks to the car to fetch a remedy, Louise disappeared to the john, came back with the baby not only changed but with washed slicked-down hair. I laughed and said something about clean from end to end, Michael said that really was a dirty diaper--Louise reported the baby had got hold of the soap dispenser and dumped it on her own head during the changing, suds billowing as Louise tried to wash it out.

C asked Michael what he meant by their "collaboration" when he mentioned it, he said they've worked together back and forth on the books, one writing a piece and giving it to the other to work over, then rewriting, etc. and they put the name of whoever does the plot line on the cover as author--so far, that'd be Louise for Love Medicine and Beet Queen, Michael for next spring's A Yellow Raft in Blue Water, and maybe for the book they're doing on fetal alcohol syndrome among Indians. We asked who does the titles, Louise said Michael. He also acts as their agent; when I asked her how much she'd travel this fall for Beet Queen, she nodded to Michael and he said about 10 days. All in all, interesting to see them take on the world in this confident do-it-our-way manner--bless them a bunch. C and I wonder how they manage to do all they are, raising the kids, writing as rapidly as they are; C has read our bound galley of Beet Queen, says she thinks it falters about midway, maybe as a result of working so fast; I've only looked at the lead, which is terrific. Louise is to come out here over Labor Day and we invited her to stay with us if she'd like.

30 June--More eyelid trouble, this time in the other eye, the right eye. Though I don't have the nubbin in the middle of the lid I had with the left-eye chalazion, this is similar trouble, infection of the gland in the middle of the eyelid. The lid is sore, aggravated--hurt every time I blinked on Saturday, 1st day of it. Mike Stewart not on hand at Gp Health today, I saw Dr. Taplan, he prescribed soaking, of course, and antimicrobial salve which he says ought to take the swelling and aggravation down in 2-3 days.

So, that trashed what I'd intended to be peaceful weekend, to cap my week off from ms work. Friday, my birthday, we went to Ebey's Landing and I hiked while C propped up her sprained achilles tendon (done in last mile or so of our Dungeness hike, when her ankle turned over on a rock). Lovely day; I jumped a deer midway, blacktail doe; south end of bluffs were purple with lupine; crow chased a redtail hawk across the sky just in front of me as I sprawled at the knob at the n. end of the hike; the Princess M'rite steamed past, out of the past.

Now to try figure how to work hard enough to get ms achieved, without stressing myself (Taplan suggested today there's a lot they don't know about how immune system works and what stress does to it). Seems to me I'm only stressed when the goddamn eyelids are acting up and scaring the bejesus out of me.

Called Linda Bierds a few minutes ago to be sure she knew the current New Yorker has her poem The Klipsan Stallions in it, and by god she didn't know. The poem is a very nifty piece of work; she's writing at a steady high standard these days, it seems to me.

July 4--The great and bloody ground of ch. 3. My Gettysburg of this book, sprawling, intricate, unwilling to end itself. Working as hard as I've dared this week, with the eye infection, I now have this big chapter (probably half as long in itself as Sea Runners) down to 5 unfinished scenes. Worked today, because of time lost to the eye problem, on sheepshearing episode, while C and John and Jean went to Kirkland for the Madison House barbecue with Frank.

July 25--The eve of Vail: C and I fly to Denver early the day after tomorrow for my gig with the Methodist college prezs. Pretty effectively today is the end of July work, except for any dabs I can manage at the end of next week. Am now on the last scene of ch. 3, with luck (and a lift in energy beyond what I've had this morning) I may get it roughed, and outline of a small bridge of rhetoric to link across Angus' and Anna's summer apart, by the time Jan Bateman and Joyce arrive for the night. Since the last ~~entry~~ entry here, I did a week on the book's final chapter, got some version of the other 4 or so scenes ch. 3 was lacking; and on other fronts, I've had the eye problem (receding now), Jim and Lois Welch visited, I shared a UW session with Bill Stafford at his request, we hiked Ebey's Landing last Sat. and spent C's birthday (y'day) at the Skagit amid incredible flower color--on it goes.

4 Aug.--A tremulous time, starting again on the ms after the week of Vail and more-or-less rest. I at least faced the day like a grownup, listed the scenes that are needed in ch. 4 and made myself begin doing a couple a day. Stickiest trouble I see so far is that I still don't know what to make Adair.

5 Aug.--4 pm, I'm printing out 7 pp. (Angus & Rob at Toussaint's) Rae-^Ellen did last night. Today's fresh work on ch. 4 was still iffy; I have a feeling the whole damn chapter's going to be that way until I get a ~~whole~~ full draft done by the end of the month. Am trying carefully, carefully, to pace myself, not easy to do with this pulled muscle next to my right knee cap; can't really garden, can't exercise, can't get us out for hikes can't even walk very far. Nonetheless I make myself get up every so often and do breathing and cord-stretching, and plop myself in a lawn chair on the patio. Weather has been cooperating, blue and beautiful and unhumid.

6 Aug.--Shit. Kim Williams has died, and Reagan, Meese, Weinberger go on and on.

Aug. 7--Four straight days long, calm, warm. Weather in the 80's, but generally some bit of breeze or another. Today I got out the oscillating fan for the ~~fix~~ first time this summer. Another first, ever, C had me help her put up the Lois Welch Memorial Super-Table on the patio and she's used it part of this afternoon as an outdoor desk. Out in the garden, spinach seeds I had C put in last weekend are already up almost an inch. Formidable, August so far.

I've had steady if careful progress on ch. 4 this week, no inspired stretches--maybe one, the count-by-years-but-live-by-days section about Adair's final pregnancy--but pages achieved. Virtually everything in this chapter so far is two rewrites away from being goodly but I'll have to worry that later.

11 Aug.--Baez and her voice like the flag of glory. On our way to the 5th Ave. Theatre last night, I still had some trepidation about my impulse that we should catch this chance to hear her. C, though, said it'd be interesting even if Baez had changed. She came onstage in a rainbow-striped shirtwaist, ~~manly~~ thigh-long; square-shouldered slightly stocky woman, noticeable gray in her hair; she stood shorter than the five green geysers of ferns and fronds around her. Joking early in the show that we were going to be subjected to her repertoire, and occasionally she'd sing something we wanted to hear, she sang about 50-50 old and new. With light shooting off her guitar, and her closing gesture of letting her hand fly high up off the strings from her last chord, she sang, among others: Candle in the Wind (Elton John's song about Marilyn Monroe which I unexpectedly liked immensely; its chorus, "I believe you led your life/like a candle in the wind/Not knowing who to cling to/when the rain came sliding in."); Little Darlin' (the old r-&-R song with its ohwoewoes, which she said she first did when ~~was~~ was 12 or so, and did hilariously now; joked of herself--as she did throughout the eve--that she resuscitated this song for her early coffee house gigs when it at last dawned on her that

11 Aug--Baez cont.-- her audiences got bored with relentlessly sad songs and her attitude of "be-quiet-out-there-the Virgin-Mary-is-singing"); Sweet Sir Galahad, first of the requests called out from the audience in what became a random tumult after each song; Diamonds and Rust, the guitar mike oddly picking up some skreek of the strings on the fret but nobody seemed to mind; Amazing Grace, which she ~~lead~~ led the audience in singing, including a hummed verse; song about Steve Biko by current rock singer Peter Gabriel, a powerful ~~tone~~ beating tune she emphasized with drumlike thumps on her guitar box; Gracias a la Vida; Warriors of the Sun, with its line that brought knowing, or maybe rueful, laughs from the audience--"One of these days the apple's gonna hit the fan"; No Woman No Pride, a Bob Marley song she dedicated to Corazon Aquino; at a called-out request, Where Have All the Flowers Gone, doing 1st and last choruses in German--her monklike slender young pianist Cesar Cincino was quietly sitting it out, gazing down at the keys, when she ~~exited~~ turned and urged, "You can play too if you want":~~he~~ startled--he usually sat out the impromptu requests--he joined in with beautiful improvised accompaniment; another "new" song, which made me wish she were doing more of them, Pink Floyd tune Let It Rain; amid the next storm of requests, she said she'd do one that usually gets requested although she hadn't happened to hear it tonight--Rosemary, Lily and the Jack of Hearts (long and lovely, that astounding narrative and she did the hanging judge verse in a devastating parody of Dylan's voice); a sassy black song she did with no guitar or piano, Do Right All Night Man; Let Us Break Bread Together on Our Knees, telling first the story of having learned that from Marian Anderson's record of it and then singing it in a Birmingham black church during the civil rights drive--audience clapped along in unison as she sung; finale, Let It Be; a single encore, The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down. May she live forever and the songs never die.

9 Sept., Fairbanks, the Reeburghs' library-- Summer's end in Alaska, the weather drawing down almost day by day; 38, damp and foggy today. We did hit the weather we needed on Saturday, when C and I took off for Denali. It's 127 miles from the Reeburghs' front door to entrance of the park at Riley Creek--3¼ hrs drive, given the 40 miles of road construction near Nenana--and the colors of the country were splendid: golden veins of birch foliage through the spruce forests, the Alaska range on the horizon with peaks like very white icebergs, and then at Denali the reds and purples of the groundcover were mixed with yellows of the low-growth willows. A vast tapestry, wonderfully dyed.

Denali is the reverse of all other national parks we've been around; there's virtually no visitor center, cars are allowed in only 12½ miles to the Savage River and otherwise the sightseeing has to be done on tour-bus trips of up to 10 hours, but you're allowed to hike cross-country anywhere, no restrictions whatever on striking off across the fragile-looking flats. We did two forays, one along a small almost-dry creek bed where we spotted a willow ptarmigan about 20 feet from us. Wonderful bird, half brown and half white as it goes to winter color, with feathered feet like mukluks; I managed to see it by the blink of its eye, otherwise it blended nearly invisibly. On the other small hike we simply set off through the low brush and bushes to a nearby small rocky ridge; much like walking through muskeg, though the springiness underfoot was like ~~lik~~ens, low berry bushes, etc. The valley there between the park entrance and, in about 15 miles, a ridge which leads on toward the interior of the park, is a wide flat slanting slightly up toward the ridge; the valley must be 4 or 5 miles across, with bare peaks reminiscent of the Organ Mtns in New Mexico rising out of the purple and yellow plaids of the ground cover, on the north; and

Fairbanks cont.--to the south, big humped ridges with groundcover all the way to their tops and occasional thin lines of spruce. There's occasional spruce on the valley floor, always one tree at a time, survivor of the combat to live.

As to the mountain, we could see most of the summit from near Savage on our first day there, the wide walls of the peak shoving through the clouds. We thought the trip was amply worth doing just for the fantastical fall colors we ~~were~~ were amid.

Other events of Denali trip: sled dogs at park hq lying atop their kennels, and setting up a chorus of howls, surprisingly melodious; we stayed at Denali Cabins a few miles south of park entrance, pretty good place, \$65/night, but noticed Crows Nest Cabins near the Chalet have the best view in the area, looking from a ridge-side across to the entrance valley of the park; ate all our meals at the Chalet, around the edges of tour groups, watching the sociology of young tour leaders exercising their charm on AARPerS, etc.

We lit here a week ago, and have been royally provided for by the Reeburghs ever since. The housing, meals and loan of their Dasher must be saving us something like \$250-\$300 a day, Alaska prices; in short, we'd likely never do this without their place as a base. First day after we came, Bill showed us around his Institute of Marine Sciences, introduced us to his post-doc Steve and his last student, Mark Alperin, I re-met Vera Alexander and Tom Royer from my Alpha Helix trip, C and I did the museum, and so on. To her dismay, Carelyn was trapped in a second week of work with the election certification committee, waiting for computers to work etc.,

and she didn't get done until midday Friday; when she did, she and Bill took us to Chena Hot Springs where we soaked and lolled in the ~~pool~~ pool; beautiful ridge country up there, with vivid yellow slopes of birch and aspen, and C and I went back up y'day as far as the N. Fork of

Fairbanks, cont.--the Chena R. and hiked for a while on the Granite Tors trail. Today, we're waiting out the rain which began while I've been writing this, will go in to Fairbanks with Carelyn for some mild shopping after a bit.

18 Sept.--We both brought colds, odd small ones in the sinuses and throat, home with us from Alaska; and Sunday night I found ~~another~~ trouble recurring in my left eyelid, while the right one isn't yet quite healed. So there has been a spate of snuffling, hotpacking and general cus^ssing.

And of headlong first-drafting on the final third or fourth or whatever the hell it proves to be, of Dancing. My Alaska intenti on, of storing up ease and calm in order to hit the work running when we got back--C and I both remarked we were ready ~~for~~ a few days before leaving Fairbanks, a few days before the colds--has had to go glimmering in favor of just whacking out whatever comes wherever. Maybe I can get this 5th ch roughed enough to do some revising on it next week--I'd dearly love to get it into sketchy form by the end of next week--but so far I haven't had time to get my head up far enough to judge.

Our last full Alaska day literally brimmed over; after flying 5½ hours with Scott Reeburgh, then doing an hour&½ signing at Waldenbooks, then going with Bill and Peter to Pete and Callie's next dog-training class, I was in pjs and C was getting into hers when Pete knocked on the bedroom door and said there were northern lights. We pulled ~~in~~ clothes over ourselves, went out on the lawn with him--vast waving bands of greenish aurora over most of the sky, like long banners slowly ~~rising~~ unfurling and waving. And sparks of a meteor shower through the aurora.

The bush flight, Sept. 11: Scott thought the night before he might be able to take each of us, separately, on a freight run to Ft. Yukon, and so we got ready and hung around the house the next morning for his call. Just past 8:30 he phoned that he'd gotten a longer flight, to

Anaktuvik, and he'd try to cram us both in, but we had to be at the airfield by 9. We were there 10 min. ahead of that, trying to be inconspicuous in the parking lot until Scott could sneak us aboard past his boss, eponymous Larry of Larry's Flying Service. A little after 9, I was in the co-pilot's seat and C was in the lone passenger seat behind Scott in a white and yellow Cessna 207, and we

18 Sept. cont.--were away, taxiing past what must be at least a few hundred single-engine planes moored on the small-craft side of Fairbanks airport (I estimated more than 75 in ranks to north of us as Scott taxied to the runway), with float planes nearly as thick around a rectangular lake-runway. Good bright weather, Mt. McKinley out, far on the horizon beyond the end of the Tanana R. valley, and the Alaska Range ~~in the background~~ like a long line of icebergs off the end of McKinley. Mud bars below as we ~~flew~~ took off, the wheel of the plane below me as I looked out the window simply stopping and sitting motionless in the air, moments after takeoff. Scott headed out over the Chena R. and then Ester Dome; great streaks of yellow birch and aspen foliage down the slopes of spruce all around, and everywhere the long, long ridges, like what I imagine the Blue Ridge Mtns might be. Freight boxes were packed tight behind my seat, and C was all but amid them in her seat--when this was over, Scott told us he'd taken off overweight by however much C weighs. The plane went along at about 4000', Scott constantly looking around without being ostentatious about it; at home, first thing in the morning when he appears upstairs, he goes around to the windows in all directions and peers out, yawning, to see the weather. Hard to talk in the Cessna, which I thought actually has two noises: the steady force of the engine and a kind of vibrating thrum of the plane behind and around the cockpit. But Scott managed to point out the White Mtns. off my wing (the right wing) and to say our 1st stop would be about an hr. 40 min. flying time. At 20 min. out, we were across most of the long ridges around F'banks and dozens of pothole lakes were strewn below. Now there were round and blotchy patterns of birches on the hillsides instead of the long golden streaks of them; the more we flew, the more the foliage color was confined to riverbanks. At 25 min., some broken clouds.

Below, the Alaska pipeline was climbing some ridges, disappearing into others, a silver worm going north as we did. (Bill says that during the local hearings debating the pipeline, the most eloquent statement he heard was from a Joe-Blow Alaskan who simply got up and said, the pipeline amounts to a thread across the carpet of Alaska.)

4 Oct.--Once more unto the Alaska trip, which I'd wanted to get back to a day or so after the last entry. The Dancing ms, as ever, takes more than full time.

Also, last Wed., a hell of a scare. About 7:45, after my first 3/4 hr of writing, a day when the work was perking and felt good, just as C was leaving for the college I noticed I was having some trouble reading the typing on the ms page I was revising. I thought I must have glanced into a light, but after C was gone and I set back to work, the unreadable blob at the center of my focus was bigger, about the size of a thumbnail or a marble with a chunk out. Closed my eyes and there it was on the inside of the lid too; couldn't blink it away, didn't know what the hell to do, Group Health not open for more than half an hour yet. Decided to go up to the park and walk, hoping to rest the eye. The void place always there in the middle of my focus, I was damned panicked. The second round of the park, it began to move slowly to the left--I'd found by then, by closing one eye and then the other, that it was in the left eye--and gradually went "out" the eye in fuzziness at upper and lower outer corner. Phoning Gp H as soon as they opened, and going down there at the late afternoon emergency apptmt they gave me, I found out it evidently was only cells that broke loose in the eye, not as my panicked imagination cast around at--minor stroke? cataract? (I didn't think of the really serious thing it could have been, a retina tear.) So, it amounted to nothing, but was one more inning in the eye laments I've had this past year.

Okay, across the Arctic Circle with Scott Reeburgh: At about 35 min. out of Fairbanks, the gold of the birches was only in the river valleys, all else was spotty spruce and tundra. At points along the pipeline haul road, side roads ran out a few hundred yards to flat graded ovals--like frying pans, with the side road the handle. Helicopter pads? I asked Scott. No, borrow pits, wherever there was a gravel ridge to take stuff from for the ~~xxx~~ haul road. (This and all else I saw with the white angle of the wing strut coming up through my sidewindow of vision--windshield is too high to see the ground through, at angle of flight--like a waiter's arm supporting a tray, the wing.)

4 Oct. cont.-- At about 40 min. out, lowering ceiling ahead. At 45 min. the Yukon River, broad and gray-brown, immense and wandering. Scott pointed to a place near where the pipeline crosses and said the famous ice bridge during construction was there; construction man Al Bryce, dad of Scott's best buddy Sam, dropped a Cat through there, lived to tell it, and even snaked the Cat out a few days later.

I took notes into my pocket jotbook as steadily and quickly as I could during this early part of the flight, on the ~~old~~ theory of getting down everything I could ~~before~~ before any air sickness. Inventorying the Cessna instrument panel that Scott had to be conversant with, I counted approximately this: 8 banks of switches amid the panel, 3 banks of dials in front of Scott, Loran and gauges for oil, amps and cylinder head temp in front of me, and a panel of switches and buttons by Scott's left knee. Scott said at the end of the trip that we'd flown between 700' and about 6,000'--usually in the vicinity of 4000',

I think--and that the Cessna's airspeed was 145 mph.

Below us now were wiry leafless little birches. At 55 min. out, Scott veered from the pipeline and went down to 750' to sneak around the weather ahead. I caught a look at a black bear, standing and pawing. At 1 hr out, We flew through a rocky pass, still under weather. The ground was carpeted with yellow leaves, silvery wire-like trees rising out of them. Then a valley of what seemed to be gray lichen. At 1:10 hr out, back to the pipeline, amid a broad brown flat, with polygon patterns of growth. One of the many cockeyed rivers below, twisting back on itself. We went across the pipeline now, up into a blue eyelet on the horizon. At 1:15 out, white-tan bald tops of hills. Then we were over an area of lakes, and I spotted another black bear. Scott yelled that he hadn't seen one all summer, let's have a look at him--and stood the plane on a wingtip to turn, erasing the lake I'd had as a reference point to the bear. Good Christ, I thought as we zoomed in the circle back, I found a bear once amid all this Siberia of sameness and now I've got to find him again? But by God I did, managing to sight him along the tip of wing until Scott could pick him out. A couple of swoops, so we could see him out of each side of the plane; all 3 of us agreed he was one damn big black bear.

4 Oct. cont.--Pothole lakes with lily pads now. A twisty river with yellow banks of foliage, I think the Koyukuk.

At $1\frac{1}{2}$ hr out, Scott pointed to a B1M smokejumper plane crash, a flying boxcar smeared on a river bar. Before long we landed at Allakaket, a native village of, what, maybe a couple hundred people. An industrious native named Fred who's the agent or rep or something there came out on a 3-wheeler, put 2 cases of 7-Up--virtually all our cargo was soda pop--on seat behind him and took a couple more cases in his arms, drove off with them.

Next stop was Bettles, a slightly more substantial village with a trading post and guiding services. C and I went around behind the trading post to use the outhouse, passed haunches of moose hanging from cabin eaves, all around the ululating howls of sled dogs. Scott refueled, C and I hurriedly bought apples at 65¢ each, bananas @ 45¢, then we were off to the Brooks Range and Anaktuvuk Pass, final destination.

My notes peter out here, because of roughness of the flight and my airsickness, which stayed with me almost all the way from Bettles to Anak'k and back to Fairbanks, about $3\frac{1}{2}$ hrs out of the $5\frac{1}{2}$ hr trip. The Brooks Range was stormy, so Scott flew a river valley, rain and eventually the snowy slopes of the range all around us. Very bumpy--Scott later explained that wind flows thru the valleys and makes "waves" when it hits a turn in the valley such as we made. I kept a Sick Sack handy, and both C and I hung on to ~~the~~ bottoms of our seats. The country was spectacular huge, dun and wintry. Eventually, in the center of a big U of valley, with slopes going out of sight into the clouds on both sides, was Anaktuvuk, small village and gravel strip of airfield. We landed a bit before 1, nobody around; as Scott explained, they all take the ~~late~~ noon hr off. We packed the 6 or 8 boxes of cargo into the post office, after a bit the postmistress showed up and Scott handed her the mail, and off we went, back thru the bumpy weather. It had been cold and windy at Anak'k; Scott said in winter there is snow-blowing wind up to about 4' off the ground.

The flight back, I kept my eyes closed much of the time to ease the airsickness. A few final random notes: C reports that at one point of the flight, Scott turned

Oct. 4 cont.--around to her, gave her a big grin, and went back to his flying. Each morning at home, I noticed Scott arrive upstairs and, yawning, go to each window to glance out at the weather in all directions. He said during the flight the Cessna he flies is the pickup truck of Alaska. And the end of the flight, the Tanana and Chena rivers near Fairbanks, river bends flashing out of low clouds like scimitar blades.

25 Oct.--Rainy Sat., first rain in no small while. Have spent the morning banging away at chores, mail, etc. The writing week was the first in a helluva while that seemed to make an appreciable difference in the ms--ch. 4 finally began to seem whole, and I improved ch. 5 in the little time I had for it. If I can get an equally decent week this next one, that chunk of ms should be good enough to leave until final brushing in late Nov. or early Dec. The miracle to be incanted between here and there is ch. 6-7, a lot of it to be written from scratch or what might about as well be ~~scribble~~ scratch.

2 Nov.--Fog today, both outside and in me. I'm in a letdown after the month of work on ch. 4-5, even though C's reading of them y'day makes me think they're OK, not far from final version. My body refuses to adjust to the Daylight Savings Time change in clocks a week or two ago, waking me about 3:30 and for good by 4:30; some mornings I've been up by 4:45 or 5. Which makes for a longer workday, but also helps the weariness accumulate.

We've purposely gone out nights, etc., so~~x~~ that neither of us gets too sunk in the work rut; went to Tony Angell's for supper a week ago Friday, bought a print of Caspian terns as thanks to the Reeburghs, Tony gave us one for ourselves; went to Linda Bierds' UW poetry reading, hearing for the first time the ~~a~~ batch of 3 new poems Howard Moss bought for the New Yorker--among them "Strike," which C gave Linda ~~the~~ some of the idea for, the shriek of handcart wheel hubs as people trekked west; Wed. night, went to reception for NU journalism dean Ed Bassett, out to dinner with him and Ann and Marshall after; couple of movies, Crocodile Dundee and Gospel According to Vic.

2 Nov. cont.--This is a good day in one respect, auguries and rewards for Jim Welch and Fools Crow; it's #1 on Pac Pipeline list today, and gets a prominent nonharmful review in NYTBR. Huzzah for Jim, because that book was a bugger to achieve, a broad jump of the imagination.

5 Nov.--Working on last 2 chs. of Dancing now, y'day noon I looked over the rough idea for book conclusion and wondered how I was going to get to the closing line I want to us: "Tell me, tell me that, whoever can." After lunch I put myself down for a nap or at least a rest, my mind still going; suddenly thought of making the next-to-last line "Rob's is the remembrance that will appear in the clear ink of the Gleaner next week, but where are the boundaries, the exact threadlines in the weave, between his life and ours?", thought about it for a moment, yelled to myself "WRITE THAT FUCKER DOWN!" and thundered down the hallway in my stocking feet to do so.

17 Nov.--A truly tough day, during which I've been headachy, stiff, dull. Whether it's sinus or allergy--the headache feels like one of those--or work catching up with me or what, I just don't know. Simply will try to tough it out and see if a night's sleep won't do away with it.

Last week was a big one, in a lot of ways. On Dancing, I got much of the final ch. done, including the final scene. (Intention was, however, that I get another big week this week, to do the remainder of the 1918 ch. that fits before the final one.) Jim Welch was in town on behalf of Fools Crow, and we went to hear him read at Elliott Bay bookstore on Wed. night, then went to the poets' reading at Uw Fri. night, in connection with the Hugo conference Jim was participating in, then on Sat. we picked Jim and Lois up at 10 in the morn, fed them a salmon-and-champagne lunch here to celebrate F Crow, took them down to Pike Place Market, then that night went out with them for dinner on the tab of Viking, Jim's publisher. More of that anon, though maybe not today. What I want to get down before it seeps from memory is last Th-Fri, and

17 Nov. cont.--what I hope it may mean for the career of Linda Bierds as a poet. Th. I called Tom Stewart, to ask him if I can get by with a decent draft but not a prof'ly typed one, on the last couple chs. of Dancing (so as to have more time to work on the words), and he said, don't worry about it. Then while we were chatting--it was the aftermath of Pub's Wkly story on "acmillan cutbacks; Tom said, "we had some blood on the floor here, but luckily most of it wasn't ours"--I thought, what the hell, I'll get a line on why Harry Ford hasn't said aye or nay on Linda's poetry ms, The Stillness, The Dancing, that I muscled onto him by way of Tom. So I said, I suppose the cutbacks put the kibosh on that? Not at all, says Tom, the poetry line is outside the target total of trade books that's been announced, it's just that the Bierds ms "is driving Harry nuts. He says she's a wonderful poet. He called Howard Moss, he says she's a wonderful poet, he buys everything she sends him for the New Yorker. But Harry just doesn't have room for her, we only do 6 poetry books a year. But he says he can't let her go, either." Back and forth this went, with Tom eventually saying he figured it was 75-25 against Harry signing her, but adding that she ought to know that Harry is on the board of the Ingram-Merrill Fndtn, i.e. \$\$\$ for poets. I said yes, indeedy, she would shortly know that, and when I called her that evening with the full report, she said she'd be more than glad to wait out this yr's Athm poetry list and be on their '88 list, if that's all that was involved in Harry's quandary. I urged her to sleep on it--waiting a yr with a book sounds to me like one of the Dantean circles of hell--but she said no, most definitely, she was dead sure and would I call Tom pronto in the morning and tell him that? Of course I would, and did, closely along the lines of these notes I typed~~m~~ out beforehand: "Tom, I've got something I thought I'd better pass along to you and Harry Ford about that Bierds ms. Called her last night to tell her she's still under consideration with you guys, and it dawned on me that she's really willing to wait and be on your '88 poetry list, if that would help Harry's decision any." When I told her you guys do only about 6 books of poems a year, she just outright said, hell,

17 Nov. cont.--it'd be worth it to her to wait a year for the sake of being pub'd with Ath'm; she says she waited that long for her first book to come out from some goddamn teeny little press out here. And she's got stuff coming out in the N Yorker all next year, and other poems are gonna show up other places, and she's still ~~not~~ writing them all the time, so she says it's not like she'd drop off the edge of the earth if she didn't get the book pub'c in '87. It never occurred to me any writer would be willing to wait an extra year for ~~now~~ a book to come out, but I guess poets are patient as goddamn turtles, huh?" All of which Tom took in good grace, said he'd be sure to pass to Harry, then he told me: last night he'd been reciting our y'day's conversation, and the situation, to Amanda at home, and she said--direct quote from Tom--"well, shit, tell Ivan to send the book to me if Harry doesn't take it." All in all, Linda B. in 24 hrs went from not having had a book done by a major pub'r to serious consideration at Ath'm, a possible "in" at the Ingram-Merrill Fndtn, and automatic consideration at Viking if Ath'm falls thru. As I told C, that all was kind of fun.

Dec. 25--Just before noon y'day I ~~wasn't~~ went up to Edmonds and mailed Liz's copy of the DANCING ms. Will mail Tom's on Monday, when ~~not~~ I can be sure there'll be somebody there at Ath'm to receive express mail. So it is over, 672 pp. and most of three years on this demanding book. I feel pleased, as who the hell wouldn't; more than that, I feel steadied, able to look forward to a more measured pace of life. Although it's been a continuing gauntlet of work to finish the book this month, the past week or so went at a reasonable rhythm of work--with the exception of an upsetting day around the 15th, when my other eye began swelling, which meant both of them were going to have goddamn chelayzions; managed to soak it back to respectability last week--and I finished writing the last piece of patch, opening scene of the coming of the 1919 winter, about 2 on Monday afternoon.

Dec. 25 cont.--I don't know what kind of a mark of this book it is, but every ch. except maybe the 2nd took greatly more effort than it seemed it would at first. So it went with the final ch., 1919, with the blizzard scene becoming probably the longest in the book.

We came through Dec. till now with considerable luck, Frank functioning pretty well, none of us with flum or even a cold, a minimum of social obligations and the couple we did go to--Ann and Marsh's, and Lankford's traditional open house last night--were more enjoyable than usual. That luck maybe played out about 15 min. ago, when Frank called to say he's laid up with diarrhea. We'll likely have to recalculate today, which was nicely set up for the 3 of us to go over to the Rodens' for an hour or so, come back here and open presents and have a roast beef dinner; unless he mends miraculously in the next hour, C and I probably had better load up gifts and head over to Madison House to him this afternoon.

THE YEAR OF LIVING STRANGELY

starring in alphabetical order:

* Carol Doig *

* Ivan Doig *

Scene One: Ivan is writing, frantically aware he has only 52 weeks left in 1986 to finish his next novel, Dancing at the Rascal Fair. Phone rings, reporter from the Washington Times asks to interview him. Ivan's gulp, upon realizing this is the newspaper of the Rev. Moon, is audible to the other end of the house, where Carol, passionate First Amendment defender professor type, says it'd be reverse censorship to snub it just because it's the Moonington Times. Ivan trades the gulp for a sigh, reporter flies from her Washington to our Washington, interviews Ivan relentlessly, writes the longest and best story ever written about Ivan. Moonington Times decides to re-run interview in its Sunday magazine, asks for color pics of Ivan. Carol sends 3; Moonington Times sends her \$500. Ivan begins to sense he is in the wrong business.

Scene Two: Ivan is writing, frantically aware he has only 23 weeks left to finish Dancing at the Rascal etc. Carol inveigles him to accept speaking invitation at Vail gathering of presidents of Methodist colleges. Three days at Vail convince them both that Vail is in actuality The Planet of the Yuppies, but the Rockies are still incomparable, and Bill Harris, prexy of Paine College in Atlanta, provides them the best line they hear all year by beginning his invocation to assembled prexies: "I would remind you, Our Lord so loved the world that he did not send a committee to save it."

Scene Three: Ivan is writing, frantically aware he has only 18 weeks left to finish Dancing at etc. Carol colludes with longtime Alaska friends, the Reeburghs, and the next thing Ivan knows he and Carol are on a 10-day visit to Fairbanks. The next thing after that, they are in a single-engine Cessna flying across the Arctic Circle with the Reeburghs' bush pilot son Scott, delivering mail and cases of soda pop to mapspecks such as Anaktuvuk; on 5 1/2 hour flight, Ivan sets Guinness world record for airsickness--3 1/2 hours, nonstop--and still thinks he's having the greatest time of his life.

Scene Four: Ivan is writing, frantically aware he has only one week left to finish Dancing etc. Carol beguiles him with news that this time of year is something more than just one week left to finish etc.; he looks up, grins wearily, and together they chorus:
MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Ivan and Carol



Note: This poem is dedicated to Ivan Doig, Northwest Author

THE DIAMOND CUTTER

Meticulously,
He makes his first cut,
On this idea slice, this theme,
Rests the beauty of the stone.
Months spent, bent over, brain aching,
Faceting with words, lazer sharp,
The diamond.
Angles exact, meanings precise,
Polished radiant reflections
To catch the critics' light,
He achieves a final brilliance--
Unmatched.

--Marilyn Ridge

December 1986

Dear Paul, Joyce and all--

I know Dave called you with the news of Wally's death, and that you'll be hearing from him again, but I thought you might want an account of the funeral and so on. Before the details begin to fade from my memory, here goes:

Dave and I took the plane from Seattle at 7, the morning of Feb. 2; even though he was in First Class (thanks to Nellie's job; and riding free, too!) I managed to go forward and sit with him until I changed planes in Seattle for Helena--Dave was going to Bozeman, where his mother was to meet him. He admitted what a strain it had been, the past three weeks or so, waiting for his father to die; I don't know how much Dave told you on the phone, but Wally was hopelessly stricken with cancer, and the best any of us could hope for him was that he would go without endless lingering pain. But Dave stood up well through it all. As Carol says, he has grown up into someone considerable. I stayed overnight in Helena with friends, greatly mindful of the Montana weather--walking out of the airport, I stepped on a patch of unseeable black ice and very nearly tumbled (excuse an old Montana expression Paul may recognize) ass over teakettle, before catching myself. Fortunately the roads weren't bad with winter, the temperature stayed above freezing all night, and the morning of the 3d I set out for White Sulphur in a borrowed red Datsun. I don't know if it was some tribute to Wally from the weather or what, but in Deep Creek Canyon was a fresh snowfall of about two inches; even though the current highway sectionman had done some sanding, I grumbled what all of us will always ~~grumble~~ grumble when driving Deep Creek, "Wally would've had this road in better shape." Then, as I came over the divide from the section house, there where you first look down into the Smth River Valley and see White Sulphur in the distance, I suddenly was in a cloud. Good lord, I wondered, is the whole valley filled with this fog? Luckily it wasn't. As I went on, the clouds lifted a bit, just enough to make the Castle Mountains look cold and storm-filled. Thinking back to the cold bleak days on which Grandma and my dad and anybody else I could think of had been buried, I later asked the White Sulphur undertaker, Ken Twichel, whether anyone ever dies in good weather in Montana. No, he solemnly assured me.

The crowd for the funeral was large, I think filling the funeral home chapel. As someone said to me, "Everybody liked Wally." Some of the names you may know who were there--Lucas, McAfee, Buckingham, Shearer. The ~~xx~~ pallbearers were Ray Ringer and me; Don and Larry Johnston, who are nephews of Joyce and were always favorites of Wally's; and two local young men, Kevin Brewer and Justin Massey. I was bemused, as a 46-year-old, to be far and away the oldest pallbearer (though I have the graying beard for the role). I asked Justin Massey, quiet young man who didn't own a suit and was wearing the nearest he had, a red-checked sport jacket, how he knew Wally. "Kevin and me used to take him fishing," he explained simply. So Wally harkened, at the end, to the youngsters (present company excepted) he liked.

I am not much for religion, but as small-town preaching goes I thought the local minister did not do too badly, making a comparison of the way Wally kept the Deep Creek road cleared, prepared, with Jesus having cleared our way etcetera; at least an attempt at an idea there, I thought. And then it was the motorcade to the cemetery, all those cars with their lights on, in long line behind the hearse. Spatters of sleet as everyone gathered at graveside. Military honors by the local Veterans of Foreign Wars--four rifles pointed up across the valley, three salvoes. Those bursts of rifle flame, yellow against the backdrop of Mount Baldy, are the picture I will take away of that funeral.

I believe there's not much else to tell. Wally had a trunk which had some letters in it, and Dan is to dispense those--as I savvy it, my mother's letters to Wally while he was in the Navy are there, and I'm sure Dan will watch for anything you might like to have.

As to Carol and me, we are doing well. I'm writing an article for a museum exhibition of bird sculptures by a friend of ours who is becoming a famous sculptor, and as I ponder his bird forms I think of you birdwatching in your Australian mornings, Paul. And we do hope, Viv and Joyce, you've both recuperated and, in one last Montana phrase, ~~are~~ as ornery as ever."

all love

Wan