

[2000]

3 Jan.--Classic winter when I did my first pre-dawn chore out of the house this morning, a run to the mailbox outside the QFC to mail \$42,000 in checks--rain with spits of snow in it, dense darkness, temperature around 40, bareheaded schoolkids waiting for their bus. The first indoor chore was also financial, a 6:20 a.m. call to Piper Jaffray to cancel a stock buy (on Snap-On Tools), and since then C and I have each made a stock buy in our IRA accounts there. So, the great lapping wave of finances carries over into this year, from last year's gain of half a million dollars in the fortunes of these two children of the 1930's. Spent considerable weekend time working on investment possibilities, well aware that there's possible downturn ahead, but we still think there's enough rewiring of the world, not to mention humanity itself, ahead that we can try to chip in some bets.

As to the New Year/Millennium/YOK, we deliberately stayed home on the Eve, wanting to view the doings from time zone to time zone as the clock turned. Watched NY's Times Square celebration at 9 our time, which struck me as the weirdest and most foreign of all, a cram of people inside neon/electronic walls of ads. ~~And~~ The PBS-transmitted hula dancers of Easter Island, the let's-put-everything-in-a-parade prancers of Mexico City, the musical revue in which Venezuela's leading singers each stepped out and sang a stanza, any of that I felt neurally at home with. We then took a break and went upstairs to have champagne and look out into the velvet night of the Sound, the lights of the Kitsap Peninsula over there in sharp clarity and, hilariously throughout the hours before the big midnight, occasional solo spritzes of firework going up about a mile apart over there--it seemed to us like ~~the~~ Scandinavian geezer enthusiasm, "By golly, Olaf set one off, think I will, too." To go along with our sipping and spectating, we put on the Paul Desmond CD which has "Take Ten" and "Romance de Amor" and ~~Horowitz~~ "Skylark," so we could revel in mellow, our style. (I had greatly wanted to play the Brubeck-Desmond "Take Five" at the coming of midnight, but that CD self-destructed this past week; this one which features more of Desmond's solo magic

3 Jan. cont.--was probably a richer choice anyway.) About the time we intended to go back downstairs and watch the Space Needle fireworks on TV, one of the neighbors about four houses south and up the hill from us let loose his own fireworks show, which was spectacular enough that we simply pulled up chairs to the south window of the living room and watched the starbursts.

On a social note, the Damborgs called with a can-you-come-tomorrow? dinner invite for the 30th. We were fillin in for somebody who'd come down with the flu, and we said here we are, emergency eaters, depend on us. Fine mellow evening there, too, spectating in their kitchen as they fixed roast chicken etc. and we tried out Mark's latest champagne and wine choices.

And y'day, as on so many Sunday mornings, we got ourselves out early and walked the Shilshole Bay marina.

6 Jan.--Y'day was a delight, a day we decided to take off, before rain settles in. Walked the arboretum trail for the first time in ever so long, and were reminded of its allure--in our time in Seattle, we've probably done that walk and the route to Foster's Island hundreds of times. Then to the U Book Store, C browsing travel guides toward our intention of going to NY later this year; I picked up a tide guide and a copy of Michael Cunningham's The Hours, which proves to be really written. Then went over to Tower Records to buy a Paul Desmond CD and replace the Brubeck-Desmond one which we thought inexplicably went blooey--C, watching me change a CD, pointed out that you're not supposed to put your fingers on them, a la phonograph records, a modern fact which I'm probably the last person in America to find out. On the way home, we stopped at Larry's Market for our salmon and prawns fix. Lunch at home, nap, read and did small chores in afternoon.

Today, though, resumed writing; worked on the "Whiteface" scene of Monty asrodeo clown. Not a bad day's work. C is meanwhile watching the wobbling stock market, picking out buys for us.

10 Jan.--What wobbling stock market was that? Things went up like hell today, leaving behind our carefully guessed-at "buy" prices. We can't actually mind, since stocks we already own--Immunex, Icos--leapt some \$20,000 worth on a day like this.

The weather seems to be graying into traditional winter, rain promised for the days ahead. We haven't yet had big roaring storms, so we're due, we're due. C and I got ourselves out of the house Sat. noon w/ lunch at Ray's Boathouse, first in quite a while, the ~~fish~~ food still good and big fishboats parading out of the locks and into Shilshole, so close they seem to be coming out of the bar at the south end of Ray's. A good time. Other than that, we walk the n'hood each day, do what we do. I am making regular pp. on Nocturne, although they're rough.

Mmm, y'day morn: an early break in the weather, first light of day reaching down the Sound and lighting up certain spots, the cliffs of Whidbey, the ridge above Richmond Beach, and then a vivid rainbow formed right out in front of us on the Sound. C took pics and we watched it a while as it moved closer across the water, until fading. Along with that, the weekend was a cavalcade of fishboats, tugs and barges, van ships.

16 Jan.--Waiting out the storm. Wind came up while we were trying to nap after lunch, and C wisely decided to get up and put the potatoes in the stew she had simmering. At 2, the power went off. It's 2:45 now and we're both making diary entries in what light is available here in the office, not a helluva lot. Likelihood is the power will be out all night, as the wind is supposed to last another 2-4 hours and the City Light recorded message said they can't even start on the problem until then. So, for the first time in about a decade we are without juice, emergency or otherwise, having let our golfcart battery-inverter setup go with the old house. This should be a smugger, less hazardous house, but now we'll see for sure.

The white rollers are so thick the Sound seems to be honeycombed with them, and another spate of rain is moving in now. We've watched the sailboarders out there flying along the curls of the waves in this, but even they call it quits every so often and come in for what looks like a shore rest. Here in the house we've made what preparations we can think of against the main fret, the huge living room windows blowing in: plastic sheeting, traps, and blankets over the leather couches as precautions. We're listening to the windup radio I bought about a month ago--today it will pay for itself.

Dinner at the Angells' last night, a good chance to visit and laugh. Tonight, we hunker.

18 Jan.--Ten vessels on the Sound a few minutes ago, in the not many miles between Point Jefferson and the Edmonds ferry lanes; both ferries had to do a wide sashay, with a fish boat and a tug and barge between them. Wonderful, this place.

And the weather has been splendid ever since Sunday's big blow. To our surprise, the power came back on not long after we had our candle-lit supper (the outage was 2-6:30, and the house did quite well, dropping only 4 degrees in those hours, to 68) and we headed on downstairs to watch "Tender Mercies" on the VCR, the better not to hear the wind bluster.

Y'day dawned with promise, and in my effort to live like a human being as well as a writer, I declared I was taking the day off and we were going to the Skagit to see the

18 Jan. cont.--snow geese. I had what proved to be a fortunate grumbling session with the state refuge ranger, me perturbed that the wildlife department now demands a parking permit but doesn't sell them there, him perplexed at my reluctance to drive to Mt. Vernon to get one, for then we abandoned the notion of hiking the refuge trail and went out onto the flats for all the birdlife we could imagine. The snow geese were feeding in a field north of the road, and they were a stunning mass--now that I can sit down with a pencil and paper and look up the square footage in an acre, I calculate there were between 6 and 8 acres of geese (based on the 3-power-poles' distance they extended along, and at least as deep to the north). But it was the individual little intuitive hunts that really paid off. At the farthest west dike access, beyond where the road turns toward the Skagit bridge, we got up on the dike just in time to hear geese barking somewhere--and realized they were coming right over us, three undulating vees. Some dunlin turning in the sun there, too, and throughout this day, Mt. Baker was massively beautiful, with fresh snow down into the timber base all around it. We then turned off onto the road that goes north at the Skagit bridge, toward a bed-and-breakfast, because we'd seen trumpeter swans in the distance there. Trying to get closer to the swans, we headed back south on what turned out to be Dry Slough road, and creeping along to glimpse the swans past some farm buildings, we realized a golden eagle was sitting in the top of a small tree nearby. Watched him contend with crows a little bit, then damned if he didn't fly onto a power pole directly in front of us. I eased the car (our beloved CRV, actually) ahead while C kept the binocs on him, and we stopped right beneath him, that hot eye looking down at us every so often. Then when we eventually headed on down Dry Slough road, there in a field sat a bald eagle--sitting, we quickly figured out, because he was gorged from the nearby remains of a swan; it looked like a bloody pillow fight had occurred. Just beyond the mature bald were 4 immature eagles, spaced along a drainage ditch bank. So, a wealth of bird sighting there on the flats, and we think we've figured out that all these birds must have taken

18 Jan. cont.--shelter inland during the windstorm--in ditches, for example.

Onward to LaConner and ploughman's lunch^hapiece in the Calico Cupboard, then we drove on up to Indian Slough to do our hike there.

Today began with a big copper moon, blazing in the bedroom windows at 5 this morning. As I got up and did the coffee and fetched the newspaper, it set directly behind Kingston, for all the world like a harvest moon. Its track on the water was a solid path of reflection (although not the full width of the Sound), so bright that there dark banks of contrast beside it--as if the moon-path was a glowing rod charring into the surface. We walked the n'hood about 8:30 to be sure to take advantage of the weather, I wrote until lunch, and C has read over Prairie's first 2 scenes for me. The sunshine is such a lure to me that I went out and trimmed old growth off straws and herbs, then we walked the loop up the hill. To our pleased surprise, I also harvested while I was dinking around in the garden--a couple of onions that felt firm, to be added to our green-bean dish tonight.

20 Jan.--6:40 a.m., just now the moon dolloped thru the clouds over Kingston, its glow finding a slit in the lowest long skinny strata. Now it has taken the plunge, the full bright ball of it above the lights of the town and the ferry dock; they're clustered under it like embers it has dropped. This is the fourth night/morning with some moon to it, a remarkable bonus to mid-January; told C y'day morning, when for the third time in a row I got up a'round 5 to moonlight blazing in, that it's as if we're in New Mexico.

A hallmark payday y'day--it could be the biggest I'll ever have again--of \$49,670 (2nd Prairie advance and evidently some Rascal Fair royalties), which caused much less stir in me than usual because it was simply wired by Chuck Verrill into our Piper account: nothing in hand, to register the achievement of the moment. But as Dolph tells Monty in the scene I've just done, "It all spends." As to the ms, C read the first 2 scenes with praise, and I'm going to spend today and tomorrow gathering and plotting.

24 Jan.--A Monday that started off the week better than usual, marred only by the prospect that I have to go have the dentist drill on my front teeth, within the hour.

The moderate weather probably accounts for much of our mood. Actually got to work outside a bit y'day afternoon, C planting primroses in a big pot beside the front door while I trimmed old growth off strawbs and went to Sky Nursery for a few sacks of topsoil and makings for organic fertilizer.

We've even been mildly social, having the Atwoods here for drinks Friday dusk and the Kastners from next door on the same basis Sat. night. Also Sat., we took a look at the new Central Market, over on Aurora, and think it will add greatly to our grocery wants; C has been juggling between our nearby QFC that is declining in quality, the classy Larry's which is quite a way south on Aurora, and the lumbering giant Safeway.

On the Sound, with the help of the P-I semi-weekly mention of incoming vessels we were able to pick out one of the most unlikely vessels we've seen yet, the Sowcomflot Senator. With that name, it surely must be a USSR relic, and in profile it's a winningly gawky oldfangled ship, w/ a stack of cabins and bridge on the very stern, then three big booms that look like they mean business spaced along the deck. We're hoping, tomorrow, to get a look at the next intriguingly named one, the Direct Kookaburra.

31 Jan.--We were favored with mild weather until noon y'day, Sunday, when clouds took the mountains and some rain followed. But Friday and Saturday afternoons we both did yardwork in spring-like conditions. C rehabilitated overgrown areas along the path down the hill and on the face of the little bank beneath our periwinkle-heather area, while I snipped major blackberry vines out of the south hedge and around the tumbledown garden shed.

Wrote on the Gates of the Mountains scene last week, I think getting it decently framed, at least. On the social side, we:

31 Jan. cont.--went to the Provinces w/ Nelsons on Wed;
--had dinner @ the Rodens the next night;
--had Midge McGillivray as overnight guest here Sat. night;
--walked Richmond Beach, both the park and the town, Sun.
morn w/ Midge, David Williams and Marjorie Kittle.

This is a day, January's end, that I'm taking to try to think ahead: put in calls to yd crews about expanding the veg garden and one to a landscape contractor about the downslope slumping area, and so on.

3 Feb.--7:15 a.m., the mountains are a beautiful streak of white in the combined field of blue made by the water and the sky. A promising day.

6 Feb.--The weather has beguiled us into afternoons of working outdoors the past several days, and this morning looks mild. We've already had a pileated woodpecker entertaining us with rhythms on the Kastners' big maple tree, and a couple of days ago there was a frenzy of birds around the birdbath--the proprietary robins, a mongol horde of starlings, juncos, roseate finches which fearlessly plop in there next to the bigger birds.

Tomorrow is supposed to bring the transformation of the yard outside the office window, the yard crew of Dave & Pat to skin the scabby, dandelion-infested patch of lawn away and wheelbarrow in 3 yards of fresh garden dirt for my new trio of raised beds. We're also going to have them make a monumental dump run with the stuff from the dilapidated garden shed and, if they're available on Tues., haul away the tumbled remnants of the retaining wall west of the shed and also lay a path of stepping stones along the southwest border of the veg patch. If we can honcho all this into happening, it'll be a considerable launch toward ~~bringing~~ spiffing up that poor neglected back yard and downslope. As to our own efforts these past afternoons, C had weeded considerable swathes and, in what is either an adaptation to global warming or Doig's Folly, I sowed a couple of rows of spinach, on Feb. 3 & 4.

On Nocturne: worked hard, immersed, all the mornings of last week, and finally got a nearly-done decent draft of the Gates of the Mountains scene.

10 Feb.--Now that I'm getting around to focusing into the week, it's damn near over. But we do have a transformed backyard, 3 fresh raised beds of veg garden out the office window now where the Lawn From Hell was generating weeds and general slovenliness. The yard crew of Dave and Pat did a painstaking job (at the cost of a miffed confrontation w/ Paul Drollinger, whose crew did so much work here our first 2 summers; Paul must have had visions of fishing trips, financed by our unflinching ponying-up for his pricey work, suddenly evanescing), installing a paving-stone path thru the veg garden and tearing out the defunct small retaining barrier near the old garden shed and hauling away the pickupload of mishmash gardening junk from the shed, as well as the dirtwork for the veg beds. We have now reworked this top level of the backyard from end to end--the rhodie glen and spruced-up rose garden along the north property line, the blueberry plantings along the original downslope path, the heather and periwinkle area C and I put in, the 40' or so of veg beds, and the rr tie bulwarking and new plantings (rock roses and more quince) along the south property line.

So, we are feeling good about the property. I did considerable foremaning of the yard guys--showing them what was to be done; they didn't need standing over, they're good workers--besides the weekend of work at cleaning out the garden shed, and my knees felt it by Tues. night. Took y'day off, sitting around, reading, icing the left knee a few times, and they seem standard again this morning. The discomfort, thankfully, was across the top back left of the left kneecap, probably a slight pull, nothing like the old pains in the inter-medial area.

I managed to do some desk chores in interims between yard supervising, dealing w/ questions from the UK student doing her dissertation on me, blurbing for Becky Saletan, etc. Meanwhile C has been doing the vital work of the enterprise, making careful buys in our new discount brokerage account to build us a tech/biotech portfolio. The stock prices are often heart-stopping--our Immunex stock bounces up or down 8% or so, some days--but w/ the RealNetworks purchase she made this morning, we've now made the effort we felt we had to, in this old pig-iron world of finances.

14 Feb.--A socked-in Valentine's Day, at least good for work. Have tackled the Gates of the Mtns scene again this morning, and it's starting to take defensible shape now.

The weather is chilly, along with the variations of rain. Y'day, though, we hit it lucky, a fine bright afternoon for walking the north Capitol Hill n'hood with Mark and Lou Damborg after they fed us brunch. On these eating occasions at their place, we happily sit at the counter in their kitchen and spectate while they chef away, Mark y'day carefully breaking six eggs atop the baked dish that was the main course. And the night before, we did our version of creative dining by taking Eric and Jan Nalder to the Provinces. Eric said that when the Seattle Times ran some kind of a form or ballot soliciting readers' opinions about the paper going to morning publication, the responses totaled 60,000! A little more than half preferred the paper to stay in the afternoons, he said, a lot less than the Times Management expected. What's in the wind, it seems, is the Times giving the Hearst chain an opportunity to close down the P-I--there's some kind of payoff to ~~the~~

Hearst, in the event of the P-I declining sufficiently, in the revised Joint Operating Agreement. Hasn't escaped the P-I staff's attention, says Eric, that the new publisher brought in by ~~Heard~~ the Hearstlings is a corporate lawyer, the kind of guy they'd want if they're going to close things down.

15 Feb.--Fresh snow in the Olympics, and old back pain in Doig. Enjoy the one and endure the other.

The back recurrence was simply there when I got out of bed y'day, no exertion I ~~am~~ can account for. Tried to put it aside, through what was a pretty good day of ms work, but it was still nagging this morning, especially, god damn it, when I sit in my favorite living room chair; so, I'm reluctantly trying a regimen of the face-down-on-the-floor exercises and careful selection of where and how long I sit. I'm particularly ticked off that this had to cut loose, after some years of relative quiescence in the lower back, now that spring and gardening are about here.

17 Feb.--Day 4 of the back attack. It began to lessen y'day midmorning--i.e., the proverbial 48 hours when things of the body are supposed to start getting better--after some diligent ministrations of the McKenzie "lordosis" set of exercises (#1-3) throughout Tuesday and to start y'day morn. After a call to Gp H consulting nurse, I also began taking Naproxen anti-inflammatory y'day morning and using ice (instead of heat, although the nurse said I could "alternate"), and her advice to sleep with a pillow between my arms as well as my knees (which I'm not doing, but am positioning my arms in bed, concentrating on straight-spine posture, as if I were) seems to have helped my sleep the past two nights.

The back spasm raised hell with the work schedule. The main pain came from getting up out of a chair, so I couldn't migrate between my desk and the computer as I'm accustomed to. And there's also quite a mood crash, in these woes of my body; spend a lot of time getting a grip of myself, figuring out how to slope through the day without maximum pain. Today I'll see if I can do some reading and desk research toward Prairie.

On another book front, y'day brought the first copy of the repackaged This House of Sky from Harcourt, and Winter Bros similarly arrived on Friday; they're very handsome, in their new cover garb.

21 Feb.--A week has made a world of difference in my damnable back. Over the weekend I even was able to work in the garden, with care and a lot of C's help. We planted the first half-row of peas, and there the first sign of millennial gardening progress stands, the trio of steel posts w/ wire between and the trellis cascading down. Today, that is this afternoon, I went to Sky Nursery--the customary \$50 trip--and bought Olympia blueberries, to be interspaced w/ Sunshine Blues (if I can get that very pretty species, which kept its coppery leaves all winter, at Swanson's again) between the north path and the veg plot. This morning I resumed on Prairie, the work going better now that I don't have to be half-aware of my back every moment of the day.

2 March--Presto, there went about the past 10 days, diaryless. I ~~was~~ cleaned up the Gates of the Mtns ch., late last week, and C has read it and finds it good. Amid all that, we were busy trying to get projects launched: 2 estimates on the watering system and the new driveway, and Brad the carpenter looking over the garden shed rebuild. We also:

--went to Craig Lesley's reading at El Bay, whereat his editor, Diane Higgins, surprised him by flying in from NY for the event; good to see Craig get some breaks.

--fed Mark and Lou Damborg here Sat. night, a good sound rib roast-red wine evening.

--took delivery of my new, more lumbar-supportive Ekorness chair, and on Sunday Linda Sullivan and Jeff Saeger came for a drink and to pick up the old upholstered chair and hassock that have been displaced beside the north window by my old Ekorness, still in excellent shape.

--had Dave and Dale from next door over for drinks Monday night. Dave apparently is affluently adrift, has put the house on the market for a million and a half, and they're about to pinball along the California coast from Monterey to San Clemente in search of their next site. We predict they're in for big sticker shock, and maybe a dose of cultural shudder too, but most likely off they'll go--Dave does not seem to have had to accommodate to much in life, and so he'll go through the house-project process again despite the great weather machine of the Pacific Ocean everywhere along this coast. He's the third of our friends who cannot accept that the climate isn't going to mutate to suit them.

--voted for McCain in the primary, in hopes of throwing a monkey-wrench into the Bushies. Confusion to our enemies!--but it didn't work in this state.

Also have to note that my back got all right, and I promptly wracked it again, y'day. Went out for garden work during a break in the weather, and was very mindful of how anything I did felt to the back, so far so good. But in transplanting a rose bush, the smallest of efforts--reaching around to my left to shake the last few handfuls of dirt out of a bucket--sent me a sharp pang. I've sighed, and gone right back to the regimen of exercise and Naproxen.

3 March--An extraordinary blush of light @ 6:35 this morning, the low cloud cover catching daybreak and diffusing a mix of red and purple over everything: the blue sky over the Olympics intensified, the purple of our heather turned deeply darkly Highlandish, the ~~blooming~~ just-opening cherry blossoms on our tree and the further-along one in the Kastners' yard went vivid, the living-room floor went from blond to almost cherrywood. Since then the day ~~has~~ has grayed, and now, just before 9, we're poking and prodding at it, trying to fit in a walk and see if we can do a stint of yardwork.

And, as of about 10 minutes ago, we sold $\frac{1}{2}$ our Immunex stock (500 shares; a 3 to 1 split is coming, so we'll still have 1500 by month's end) into the surge of a market rally: bot it originally @ equivalent (w/ splits) of 5 5/8, sold that baby @ 231. Whether this is like selling Microsoft too early in years past we'll see, but it feels right to both of us to land that chunk of money before Greenspan messes up this NASDAQ rally. Always bet on the butcher: ~~we~~ our pot today is \$115,500.

7 March--First light on the Olympics, 6:40. Pink blush which only the snowy summits pick up, i.e. it doesn't take effect below timberline. The entire crest of the range now sits up there in the sky ~~in~~ with no visible means of support, the lower slopes blending closely with the wash of high clouds behind.

Y'day was a strong useful Monday. I plowed back into Prairie, winnowing and reprinting the rough material I have for the chapters ahead, and some of it looks better than I had remembered. In the afternoon, C and I power-trimmed and fertilized and ironized the front hedge of Portugese laurel, a 60'-long comundrum to us, burgeoning green at the north end and waning toward yellow at the south.

Just this quick, the blush is off the mountains, lasting less than 10 min.

8 a.m.--Ships are marching past this morning, 5th & 6th of the past hour easing downSound in light so clear you can imagine seeing the hull rivets. Tugs & barges just passed, too--it's like living at the throat of the Bosphorus.

8 March--The downslope garden shed is no more, torn down by Brad Hembree in a workmanlike couple of hours today. He fetches lumber this afternoon or tomorrow, begins building on Friday. Monday, the yard crew of Dave & Pat cleared away the caving bank above the shed foundation, in about 50 min. of dogged shoveling. Almost anybody we've had in here to work, on the yard or house or drainage system or whatever, works harder than the ranch crews I was around. So much for the gumption of the old days.

This garden shed is a peculiar tight pocket on this spacious piece of property, a puzzle I haven't wanted to face. The east and south sides of it were built atop the thigh-high retaining wall of concrete blocks, which thus serve as its foundation; the wall, naturally, leans and there's the cutbank as high as the shed on those two sides, crumbling dirt down onto the sides of the shed. Also, the shed was a crypt of the gardening years of the Slopers, the original family on this property: hundreds of old pots, decaying gardening supplies of various kinds, and, woe, rotting areas where the leaky roof and corners were doing in the shed. Even now, having flung a good carpenter and a diligent yard crew at it and excavated its contents myself ~~as~~ as best I could, the shed project has a ship-in-the-bottle aspect because I'm having the rebuild done now, while Brad is available, and the retaining wall inserted behind it in May when the driveway gets replaced and the broken-up concrete becomes the wall material. We're striving, is about the best I can say for the project.

This morn, went back to building the ms, after last couple of days of sorting file cards and notes.

13 March--3:40, have just printed out fresh pp. of Prairie, 78 of them in rough, about 4 dozen of those pretty close to good. Added 2 pp. to the running total today, as I'll try to do this week and next. Then comes time for the Big Sky speech, and in less than a month now, the actual trip, which C and I scoped out on Sat.

A power saw does gruff song just outside the office every few minutes, ~~and~~ as Brad Hembree cuts siding for the garden shed. The structure is looking very spiffy, and stout enough--Brad framed it w/ 2x6s, so that

13 March cont.--he could fit the framing onto the retaining-wall concrete blocks of that width--that we joke we could use it as a bomb shelter.

Since the last entry, C has excavated back into our photo collection, a remarkable trove by now, and dug out homestead pics for the Stanford slide show I've decided to do; previewed it on John and Jean Roden when they came for supper last Friday. And, more social yet, y'day we went adross the water to Linda and Sydney's w/ Mark & Lou Damborg, who hadn't been to their place. Hearty "brunch" at about 1 p.m., tour of the house which plainly intrigued Mark, from his farm-country background--Ralph Monroe built the house as a kind of exaggerated dream of an old farmhouse, 20 years ago--and then out to Linda's new pond, the John D. MacArthur Pond. A fine day, but by the time ~~like~~ we of the mainland quartet had ridden a couple of ferries and driven and been driven hither and yon, we agreed ~~wasn't~~ we were playing out.

28 March--Alas, the poor diary. It went down a black hole of the sort I have to avoid in the future, writing a speech. Spent last week--and indeed y'day as well, backtracking from a Chet Huntley/Big Sky riff that didn't work--on the talk for the NCTE in midApril. C pointed out that speechwriting takes more out of me than my customary writing schedule does, and that's ridiculous to have going on, in our life now. I'm going to boost the minimum fee to \$7500, use existing stuff, and simply not take on any more of these unless there's some compelling reason to go somewhere.

And, in those Reaganesque words, where's the rest of me? Aching, damn it. My left knee has been a glum piece of work lately, the occasional attention-getting twinge in it now having the company of a low-grade burnlike feeling; I'm back to always being aware of the knee, although it doesn't have the needle-like pain of before the operation. I have today and tomorrow left on a 10-day Naproxen regimen which doesn't seem to have made any difference in the knee. Will see if the Montana trip rests the knee, as one car trip did, or aggravates it, as another trip once did. Then will try a regimen of glucosamine, and after that, if need be, start resorting to Dr. Jung, cortisome, whatever.

28 March cont.--The other bodily nag is an inflamed fingernail-edge on the middle finger of my right hand; I'm typing this with BandAid pad, but probably can't do a day's work this way. Will try strenuous soaking with Boric Acid.

Beyond the damnable precincts of my body, all is well. The property looks gorgeous, plum trees and forsythia and quince and red flowering currant all in full bloom. My veg garden is superb, spinach already with first large leaves, lettuce seedlings producing their second leaves.

4 April--A quiet useful rain--more like a cloud dragging wetly along the ground--this morning after a spate of warm days that let us be out at yard work. Testing the boundaries of global warming, I planted beans on the last day of March, when the forecast called for 4 warm days in a row. Spinach is up gloriously, headed into salad in a night or two. I spent the weekend installing shelves in our rebuilt garden shed, and y'day C and I affixed screening along the eaves (bird prevention). The property has looked gorgeous, with forsythia, quince, plums, heather, cherry and perwiwinkle all in bloom, and even the magnolia having its 36 hours of glory.

10 April--Packing for Montana: how many times have those words migrated into this diary? We are leaving advanced spring weather--some mist and fog these mornings, but Friday night, the 7th, we had the first (small) salad from our garden (robust spinach leaves and thinnings from lettuce rows, and we'll have another salad tonight) and the first dinner (salmon, natch) of the year done on the barbecue grill.

We've done steady yard work, although not as strenuous as earlier in the spring; I'm trying to be mindful of my knees and back before this car trip. We're being ruthless on dandelions and morning glory, with Roundup, and today will have to water everything thoroughly.

At the desk, I've been merely treading water, fending w/ Scribner publicity about the Mtn Time p'back tour they want me to make: I managed to pry it out of the July-August dog days of summer they'd intended, and to tidy it into Mnpls/St. Paul-Madison-Milwaukee--Ann Arbor-Iowa City. Also have had to spend a lot of time simply

10 April cont.--mulling the research needs for Prairie, trying to get focused for this trip.

Another weather footnote I'd intended: last Thurs. & Fri., April 6-7, we were able to sit outside on the deck before lunch, greatly earlier than last year.

And on the pageant-of-nature side of things, Sat. eve we watched flickers courting in the branches of Kastners' big-leap maple over our north property line. It went on for at least an hour, the birds faced off on a branch 2/3 way up the tree, the male (?) periodically swinging his tailfeathers in her direction and fanning them out, then doing a 45-degree bob to each side, the other bird doing a couple of vigorous nods. What a show, life is on this wooded bluff.

14 April--Big Sky, where we have conference-gone tooth and nail these past 2 days. It's been a good chance to catch up with friends--drinks here in our room with Jim and Lois Welch, and attending both the panel about Fools Crow's censorship problems and Jim's reading from Heartsong at last night's banquet; and a drink w/ Mary Blew, again in our room the hospitality suite, last night. Met Rick Bass today before his talk and enjoyed him; his talk/slides, centering on the environment of the Yaak Valley, was a lovely essay and he's a good funny speaker besides. So far the NCTE program has been hitting on all cylinders, Dan Kemmis's opening talk/slides also a good workmanlike job.

Big Sky Resort itself, we're never gonna get. It's an awkward enterprise, queer in its way as a North Sea oil platform, in a beautiful place. The skiing must be slushy--sunshine is pouring in over my shoulder as I type this--and the coldest snowiest weather of the year 2000 veered east of here into the Dakotas y'day. Makes one wonder if the financial types who bet big on this and the other zillion ski resorts post-WWII are beginning to ~~be~~ sweat from global warming.

As to this conference, we've gone to some sessions--a good idea inadequately prepared by Helen Cameron of Helena Vo-Tech, a really nicely done one by Sue Hart on Montana mystery writing--and I did a strong book-signing this morning. Have been told various times by the conference organizers what a bonus to them it is to have me wandering the hallways with everybody else, perfectly accessible, and while I hadn't thought along that line beforehand, it probably is a good idea. God bless these teachers, they have to put up with every kind of damn thing in their jobs, and evidently a conference like this is meant to re-charge their batteries.

21 April, Choteau--We're about to make the turn toward home. Prairie light is forging through the seldom-washed windows of the Stage Stop Inn. We've had splendid weather for our purposes--mostly clear, warm, dry--but it's the tooth of drought, the usually duck-laden pothole lake on the ~~hards~~ bench between Augusta and Choteau a dry dip of alkali, small creeks already almost dry. When we were looking at scenery y'day afternoon, driving the crossroad from the airport bench to the feedlot north of town, we met dust devils and, more ominously, bigger clouds of dust off not particularly bare fields.

Meanwhile Choteau is getting its dose of the New West, David Letterman installing a getaway on a ranch bought along the road to ~~Parkview~~ Pishkun Reservoir, an heir to The Buckle clothing chain (I think named Woodall) color-coordinating his cattleguards with the tones of his house out near Teton Canyon. Then there's the

Somewhere-in-Between West of Bob & Sue Facklam, whom we visited with a little while y'day at their place on Airport Road: Bob's enterprise, Teton Welding, is the only business of its kind in the world, making aluminum culvert-type bear traps--50-some so far, including one on pontoons for a bear biologist dealing with 1500-pound Kodiaks on Kamchatka. Bob has refined and refined the traps--there are vents, built-in water dish, dart ports--and he showed us the sophisticated two-parter he's working on, to trap a sow and cub at the same time. The 2nd component of the trap has to have a treadle-trigger which is activated only after Mama Bear is trapped in the front segment, and the cub will step on the treadle in trying to get to her!

On the work front, we went right on up to the Valier-Conrad country, to trek as best we would along that branch-line railroad, as soon as we got here from Helena Wed. morn. (Took a look, and C took pics, at the mouth of the Gates of the Mtns on the way.) Research went well at the Mont. Historical Society--330 pp. of photocopy--and we had a good time catching up with the lives of Dave and Marcella Walter, Marcella now in effect the deputy director of the Society and Dave tucked in the basement on a 3/4 job and driving the state to give talks.

25 April--Rain came after midnight, the veg garden mounds now blackly wet outside the office window. Y'day afternoon was cool but fair, and we pressure-hosed and scrubbed the deck--took only an hour, C assured me, though it seemed longer--and I then worked on the vegetables, transplanting "thinned" beans to what will be the tomato bed, and putting in more lettuce. We are happily having salads every night now, and last night had our 1st cooked spinach. The garden looks quite wonderful, with something growing in every mounded bed now.

This to be the Day of the Shades, the rain of course less welcome for that. The Atrium crew should be here any time, to install the next half dozen shades in our effort to keep the house cool.

In Montana at the last of our trip, it was shirt-sleeve weather in the Choteau country. Glorious for us, but I'll be surprised if it isn't the harbinger of a terrific drought. Pothole lakes along the highway on the bench between Augusta and Choteau were already dry, as were some small creeks, and I don't remember that even in the '88 drought at this time of year. Socially, Montana was as much a kick as ever, and I must keep in mind, here at the winsome homestead, that we should go there very so often in the future simply because it does jazz us up.

Yet we were thrilled to be home, a bit bowled over by all the intense green and blossoming that had come in the dozen days we were gone.

27 April--Went out and ground through chore after chore y'day: music research books @ UW, Dolack print to Artform for framing, got my glasses straightened, ran the CRV through the carwash...Spent this morning at my desk, going through Montana research trove. Weather has turned dour, chilly and overcast, sprinkly.

One of the leftover bits and pieces from the Montana trip: when we had lunch w/ Kate Malone in Bozeman, she told us Mike's last trip was to Pullman, to be interviewed for the WSU presidency. The money would have been triple his MSU salary, she said, and he wanted to do it for a few years. After Mike's death, WSU president Sam Smith, who had urged Mike into trying for the job, wanting him as successor, gallantly put out a press release saying that while WSU had much wanted Mike, he'd turned them down because his heart was with Montana.

May 1--Resumed writing on Prairie this morning; not a very well geared-up mood for it, but I've hacked out the needed two pp. On other fronts, I sold 500 shares of Cisco @ \$70.75 (bot @ \$25.30) into what looks like a suckers' rally this morn after the Microsoft breakup news of Friday; and watered my vegetables, in this spell of weather that's neither really moist ~~warm~~ nor comfortably warm. We did get a good patch of hours in the middle of y'day, to have a drink on the porch before lunch and then to install bungees to batten down our new canvas shades on the outside of the bedroom windows. Also managed some gardening. Then supper at the Nalders. Eric reported that the head-to-head contest now that the Seattle Times joins the P-I as a morning paper is about over before it started, the P-I circulation down enough --while the Times' is up--that their combined circulation has a net loss, dipping below the 400,000 they want to offer advertisers under the joint operating agreement.

May 3--Classic rainy day, the vegetable mounds looking dark and rich and the adolescent beans and the lettuce rows vibrant atop them, the water of the Sound and the rainfall merging in the distance. We're pleased to have the property ~~thoroughly~~ thoroughly watered. Weather luck of a different sort y'day, when we went to Dungeness Spit w/ Peter and Margaret Atwood and caught a windless day of no rain. Hiked out about 3 mi. on a good low tide that provided my knees a sandy surface for walking, and I came out of the day feeling okay. This was our first outing w/ Peter and Margaret, who proved to be good company.

May 5--Tough week of writing, but began to feel some progress by today. Closing down the desk, mail, etc. now at 4 on Friday.

Meanwhile, the changing of the guard next door, Dave Spangenburg and his lady Dale moving out y'day and cleaning the place up today. We've watched with incomprehension as Dave has blithely tossed away this rebuilt house after 16 months in it, happily occupied with building packing crates and then bossing his stuff into the rental van, while Dale and son Tom alight for 6 weeks in a

he

May 5 cont.--rental apartment and then head off to California, houseless down there. Tom, who thus far seems like the least troublesome teenager on the planet, does not appear happy with all this: off to his father for the summer, then to the unknown of deepest California affluenza next school year. I think back to what a room of my own, before I finally attained one my junior year in college, would have meant to me in those teen years.

13 May--Dogged week on Prairie, some of the time gone to cumbersome research--ph'copying pages from books on music teaching and then (Tues.) lugging the books back to the UW libraries in a drenching rain--and some to rearranging the rough material of the "Ninian's Land" ch. and beyond. The rest of this month is looking very ragged, with the irrigation/driveway project probably no more than getting underway toward the end of next week, if we're lucky; grumbled to C y'day, before making what I think is my 6th schedule-checking phone call to Scott Reusser across the couple of months since we picked him to do the job, that I'm already tired of the project and we haven't even started it.

Weather has been tough to take this past week, too; cloudy, some rain (which was welcome), quite chilly. I've been achy and groggy w/ allergy as well.

We were visited y'day afternoon by Margaret Svec, who C and I agree is the most remarkable, nay, the most un-inventable person we know. At 87, Margaret is feeling physical deterioration--ringing in her ears, perpetually bad back--but still manages her twinkle. She talked more of her past y'day, and of her companion Pet Vessie's, than we'd ever heard before. To get some of it down: --Margaret asked about our Montana trip, and in telling her of the MHS research, I said I'd been looking up stuff about women's suffrage, which I knew ~~her~~ would interest her from the angle of her women's-studies knowledge, and on the Ku Klux Klan in Montana because they were a presence in the 1920's of my novel. To my surprise, it was the Klan mention that triggered Margaret, who recounted that her father and uncle had been Klansmen in Des Moines, she could recall as a child sleeping in the car when they would take her to cross-burnings, and she recited a Klan song she'd memorized then as she pedaled

13 May cont.--the family's player piano; I ran downstairs for my filecard notebook and jotted it down as she went through the words again. Her father died when she was 14, she said--of a burst appendix--and her mother took herself and Margaret to live with his people, which Margaret thinks was a lucky break; her mother's people were conservative German farmers in Ohio and instead of falling under their influence Margaret had the advantage of good schools in Des Moines. It was either in high school or college, I'm not clear which, that Margaret won a national poetry contest judged by Frederick Lewis Allen, who wrote that she possessed "a natural lyric gift." Certainly that is so in her immersion into life, which has included the marriage to the WWII serviceman Jerry which still endures, the later coterminous companionship with Pat, her fairy godmother role for the female Western swing band "Ranch Romance," and now new friendships she strikes up on the Internet by way of her WebTV.

Ah, and then Pat. I prodded a little--it didn't take much--and Margaret laid out the basics of Pat's family background. Her father's side, the Vessies, came from Germany, Margaret thinks because of political differences with Bismarck's government, and Pat's grandfather hit it rich with the Otis Elevator Company--as Margaret recalls the story, he invented the floor-by-floor lighted numbers! --and then lost it all in the Depression. Pat's mother's side, the Armstrongs, were doctors of the mentally ill, or at least Pat's grandfather was. The favorite story there was that when Frances Perkins was asked to be FDR's Sec'y of Labor, she ~~consulted with/asked Dr. Armstrong~~ asked Dr. Armstrong's advice about leaving her husband, a patient in the sanitarium, there while she served in the Cabinet; Dr. A encouraged her to do so, and thereafter boasted that he had kept Frances Perkins in Labor for 12 years. But it is with Pat's father that the shaping of Pat's life twists beyond what would be plausible in fiction: he ran the sanitarium for mental cases in Greenwich, Conn., and Pat grew up on the grounds listening to those screams. Margaret thought out loud to us, too, recounting this, that probably lesbians were brought there to be "cured," and the growing-up spectre of that pushed Pat to rebellion against the family. Margaret offered only one story of

13 May cont.--Pat's "wild" past with other women, but it was one more than ever before: once in Key West, Pat and her woman friend of the time encountered Ernest Hemingway's wife of the time in a bar, and were invited over later, when H'way would be there--they declined, asking each other "who wants to see Ernest Hemingway?" All in all, it brought back the great gift of our friendship with Pat. Talking this over w/ Carol afterward, as to why Pat and I chimed so, in the research assignments she did for me and her insights into my books, C said she thought it was a mutual regard for brains and doing something well. Whatever the case, having Margaret and Pat in our lives has been a wonder we never could have predicted.

16 May--The morning after the "Port Orchard Reads 'This House of Sky'" event, and I'm in a comfortable puttering mood. The night in PO went well, Dave Nelson of Harcourt headcounting the crowd at 156, the bookstore owners DeDe Teeters and Ruthanne Devlin and assorted library ladies having done their utmost. C and I and Dave caught the 4 o'clock ferry to Bremerton, were met there by DeDe, Dave took the "Reads" organizers to dinner with us, and we went to the Givens Community Center for the event. In piquantly small-town fashion, an exercise group still had the gym where we'd be, so about a hundred people were patiently stacked up in the hallway waiting, and I used the time to do a strolling booksigning, going down the line from person to person. The talk itself went well, and the questions, thanks in part to the prepping by the library ladies, were good. About a third of the crowd had some kind of Montana background; I'm sometimes chastened that so much of my turnouts depend on the Montana diaspora, but the fact is they provide a reliable core group in almost any of my bookstore gatherings. DeDe then rushed us to the 9:24 Southworth ferry, and we did that hop across the Sound, to Vashon and then in at Fauntleroy, and way above and beyond the call of duty, she drove us to our starting places in Seattle and then somehow got herself back home, likely by driving around to the Narrows Bridge.

The weather showed off for us last night, a balmy

16 May cont.--evening on the Kitsap Peninsula, and it's clear and pleasant today. Ships have been frequent, half a dozen van ships already between the time I got up and breakfast. The past few days the cruise-ship season has started, the humongous lit-up porpoise shapes coming and going at dawn and earliest evening. We got a close-up look at a docked one on our way to the ferry dock y'day, the Vission of the Seas, which hadn't looked all that big passing by us on the water but towered over the Bell St. dock buildings and, when we looked back toward Seattle from the ferry, looked improbably huge there under the city skyline.

20 May--A gauzy day, with some moisture, after a TV and radio drumbeat of forecasts heralding a sunny warm weekend. The media forecasters' strained tendency to look on the bright side is a problem in our trying to get any feel of what may be on its way; we're still resorting to the phone forecast for a little better grounding in reality. In any case, it's a cloudy Saturday and I have grumbled my way downstairs with the week's accumulated mail and other inflow, a task I hate on weekends. Will plow through the stuff for a while and then see if we can get outside.

A further note from Margaret Svec, in her thank-you card for her visit that got her going on the KKK and on Pat Vessie: "I enjoyed talking about my childhood memories of the 1920s, especially since I could do so in the context of what was happening in the country in those years. I am always embarrassed to remember the ties my family had to the KKK. Interestingly, the only time I was ever on a horse was during a Klan parade when a Klansman reached down and picked me up to ride along with him. I must have looked very lost and forlorn, maybe even frightened...." And on Pat: "...the man responsible for Pat's coming west was Ralph Gleason, music critic." I had asked what brought Pat west, and M said she'd come to Calif. to help out, healthwise, with the wife of somebody prominent whose name M couldn't recall: Gleason!

The past 3 weeks we've been biting the insides of our mouths as Scott Refusser has been delayed and delayed on our supposedly May 1 irrigation/driveway project. He's now promised us a start the coming Tues., so we'll

20 May cont.--embark into what will doubtless be a very shaggy couple of weeks, hectic with construction work and general disruption. I've saved a number of desk chores that I hope I can peck away at during it all. And there will be our on-line future; C persevered this past week and set us up w/ Earthlink as a provider and ordered a new iMac, to be set up on the financial affairs desk.

Meanwhile, on Prairie, this past week was a lot of trying to organize draft material, and research salients, in the long and tricky 4th chapter, "Ninian's Land." Made myself grit through a doubleheader of work y'day, still putting stuff onto the computer at about 4 on a Friday. The language of the section, I will say, is getting good, but there's a lot of weaving of plot to do in this chapter, probably all summer's worth.

30 May--The cloudy tag-end of a chilly Memorial Day weekend, which fortunately cleared and warmed enough at the end of y'day that we could have drinks on the deck and then do Copper River sockeye on the grill.

I whacked away at the Stanford homestead slide show for a couple of days of the three-dayer, and as ever the framing of a talk takes a numbingly long time. I'm putting the last of it into the computer this morning--the reading selection from Rascal Fair--and then onward to other tasks.

Meanwhile the property is trenched all to hell; the second time in two years, which gives me pause about our planning foresight. But there really was no way to piggyback a watering system, this project, onto the desperately needed drain system, a year ago. So, we dig, or are dug. As I write, the last main trench is being dug by one of Scott Reusser's crew, along the path between the hedge and the lavender bank, and maybe by sometime tomorrow some dirt will go back into the holes. We're likely in for another couple of weeks of upset, before the driveway and retaining wall projects are joined onto this one.

2 June--We are slinging water now. This morning was the first cycle of the new Rainbird watering system, 2 hrs of consecutive 10-min. sprays gravitating around the property. Scott Reusser's crew chief, Rhett, put in the control box about noon y'day, capping the shovelwork and pipe-laying that began on May 23. Scott's crew is still to put in a new driveway for us and use the crumbled-up old driveway to build a retaining wall, but plainly that's going to be weeks, maybe weeks weeks weeks, down the road. The main thing was to get the watering possibility in place before full summer, and here it blows.

This week's other valiant attempt to install a new system, C's buy of an iMac to put us on-line, is stalled because of a small but piercing flaw in the computer's screen. She dealt w/ Mac Warehouse and then Apple by phone, tooth and nail, and y'day morn the computer was picked up on Apple's say-so by a Green Lake computer store, for their service manager to contemplate.

The weather has moderated from the 10 days or so of cloudiness and sprinkles, although the sunshine that has been loudly forecast isn't here yet this morning, and we're both looking ahead to a more leisurely day, probably of yard work. C has had a lot of Group Health runs this week and last, dermatology (good news on her skin blemishes) and pulmonology (her breathing capacity tested quite good, but her occasional symptoms can be read as low-level lung disorder; she feels it's allergy-induced). I've pecked away at desk chores, getting a few letters written, some surfaces cleared.

9 June--And now we have the watering system on five-day rainhold. This week sputtered along in showers, with us darting in dabs of yardwork when we could. I did manage to finish laying weedblock on the last southern stretches of the path between the house and the veg garden. A stray benefit of this weather is that the lettuce holds well; we have gorgeous salads nightly, and I've given provender away to Dorothy Kastner, Margaret Atwood, Sigrun Ness... And we've had breakfast helpings of strawberries, from the bigger plants in the center of the periwinkle patch;

9 June cont.--more berries are on the way, if they can ever get some sun.

Back at the ms, I've had a fairly hard week of gearing up and trying to make steady wordage; the long and tricky "Ninian's Land" chapter is beginning to find its way.

Rare for us, we went on the town last night. Jazz Alley, to hear Marian McPartland. It's four years, pretty close to the day, since we heard her at the Jazz Showcase in Chicago, and while she inevitably looks more ageworn--she's 82!--once she's at the piano she's nimble as ever. We in fact thought last night's show was more spirited than the Chicago show, which we lapped up at the time. The "Marian McPartland Trio," consisting as I guess it necessarily does of her and pickup musicians wherever she travels to gigs, perhaps was some of the difference; the drummer here, Scott Morris, is a stunner. But her own playing was richer and more playful--the bassist, Bill Douglas, a number of times was left shaking his head and grinning as she went somewhere with a piece. They played the hell out of Chick Corea's "Windows," which is either a great piece or was goosed up by their inspiration last night.

And for the record: C this week...

--got us on-line, with her brave new iMac.

--and tendered her resignation from her fill-in post on the Innis Arden board; enough, she says.

On our two-track technology around here (19th century and 21st century, it seems), my triumph of the week was getting two Royal manual typewriters fixed up at Richards Business Machines; Chuck, the Buddha-like repairman, was so taken with working on them--"Best machines Royal ever made"--that he actually smiled and joked with me and lugged one of the backbreaking machines to the car for me.

14 June--An odd muggy cloud came up the Sound from Pt No Pt at the start of this afternoon, just before we walked, and by now it's wrung itself into rain. The week so far has been fuzzy and damp. I've hunkered in at the ms, finally today capturing a version of the Angus and Susan scene that I can live with. Slow, goddamn, is the mill of fiction.

We've managed scarcely any yard work in this weather,

14 June cont.--but we did socialize tooth-and-nail over the weekend. Salmon dinner at Linda and Jeff's Fri. night, along w/ Merry Nye. We got to look over the plans for L&J's Port Townsend place, and hear about Merry's guest garden, done for her by a city guy who just loves to garden.

Saturday night, the wedding of Gilia Angell, whom we've known since she was probably eight, and Aaron Abrams, her office romance at Amazon.com. Fittingly for a covey of Tony's, they're a sculpted pair, Gilia all cheekbones and slick gown, in command enough to wink at her mother during a classical guitar interlude, Aaron a tousle-haired looker. It was a wedding with all the makings of grudge gridlock, four sets of parents/step-parents involved, but Tony reported later that he got through it by keeping at oblique angles with his ex- and her usurping consort, and he found a true gain in his new in-laws, he said. Aaron's father Ron hit the dancefloor next to Tony with the declaration, "Hell, I can't let an Irishman outdance a Jew." We concentrated on staying out of lines of fire, tickled Tony and Lee in the ribs when they seemed to need it, and had a good time at dinner w/ Megan Kelso--short-story comic-book writer, how could I not thrive around that?--her fiance Michael, mother Katy, Bob and Dee Simmons, and Aaron's sparrow-like charmer of a grandmother, who had declared the wedding-party room too cold, marched over and deposited herself amid us.

27 June--Likely my hottest birthday, unless some broiling one in Evanston has escaped my memory. The forecast is near 90, middle day of 3 hot ones, and now at just after 3 I've gone out and watered the lettuce seedlings for the second time today, trying to keep them cool. Worked in the divine veg garden this morning, when it was comfortable: planted a row of beans in the new south-end planting area I boxed in, for tidiness' sake, w/ 4x4s. Then C and I put netting over the blueberry and raspberry patches, a tedious job but our only hope of every wresting a berry from our omnipresent avian flock around here.

Other than that, I am not doing a helluva lot today, beyond bracing a little for the unexpected presence of John and Jean Roden tonight at what I intended, in this

27 June cont.--heat, to be a quiet solo meal, just C and me. This came about when I called Jean y'day to offer her some lettuce and passed along C's offer to cook dinner for Jean on her birthday, next month; when Jean came for the lettuce, she asked if she could bring a bottle of white wine tonight, and there we were! No problem if John is sanguine, and if he's in an off mood I'm going to tell him it's my goddamn birthday, give me a break.

Since the last diary entry we've been tri-level social:

--Taken to dinner at the Provinces by Dave Spangenburg & Dale on the 20th, a neighborly fare-ye-well. We don't get it, why Dave has bailed out for California after building that new house next door, but early on I told C that it was hard to see what he was going to do with himself once he ran out of projects over there. New projects is the answer to that.

--Jim & Esther Moore from our old street, 10th, here for supper on 24th, our reciprocating for a meal invitation from them quite a while ago.

--And on Sunday the 25th, baseball! Betty Mayfield called to see if we could join her and Roy in Paul Allen's box; you betcha, we said. Our first time in Safeco Field, a good-looking ballpark; perfect weather; and a deft game, Seattle over Baltimore 4-2 on catcher Tom Lampkin's first-ever grand slam home run. It was notable to C and me, of Yankee Stadium and Cubbie days, that all the ~~the~~ runs came on home runs (Lampkin's followed 2 walks and a hit batter)--I think there were at most 2 singles in the whole game. Betty & Roy are a delight; we had great fun.

On the work front, I got into Monty's father's life as a black cavalryman, which ultimately is to lead to the episode of his death at the hands of Ninian Duff. I hope this patch of material isn't too long a way around the barn, but it does feel to me a needed part to show what this little family of blacks were doing in the Two Medicine country. I'm quite taken with my research file on Ft. Assiniboine, where Mose Rathbun was stationed; a kind of vast Flying Dutchman of a fort, never amounted to much except on the chore Mose is assigned to, chasing the poor raggedy-ass Crees back over the Medicine Line into Canada. But John J. Pershing made astute use of his year there; took Nelson Miles prairie-chicken hunting and lo, orders were quickly cut lofting him to Wash'n, D.C.

3 July--Weather continues showery, as it's been since the hot spate around my birthday, but starting on Friday and on through the weekend we darted out whenever we could and transformed the hayfield-like weedpatch between the lawn and the driveway into a small formal garden, centered with the sundial the Nelsons gave us for Xmas, and soundly Rounduped, weedblocked, and bark mulched beneath. The sprucing-up, which cost around \$175 in plants and materials helps the view of the front yard to an astounding extent; the eye now has someplace to rest and savor, in any glance out there, instead of the wince-inducing spectacle of the weedpatch that C labored over for almost 2 years.

I overlooked, in my birthday entry, the NYT headline of that day--the "solving" of the human genome code. So, our wiring is out into our own hands now. Where that will lead I can't even guess, but I'll use the occasion to try to record what it's like to inhabit this body of mine now. The first couple of days of work on the yard project, above, I grudgingly put on knee braces, and was able to do long hard days, wrestling bags of bark and soil, digging out and bucketing and wheelbarrowing dirt and transplanting feeling tired and achy by ~~the~~ night but not really hurting. Then came a short afternoon stint, mostly transplanting a redtwig dogwood from its failing spot down by the brink of the bank, and I scorned the knee braces. The knees howled, that night and the next morning, especially the (stronger) right one I'd used in what I thought was mild shoveling, to spare the left one. Y'day morning, the aftermath of that, I felt very dull and miserable, and when we set out on our daily 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ mile walk of the n'hood (with my knee braces on, which I rarely do for just walking) I wondered if I was going to be able to make it on the right knee. But it loosened up and alleviated, and by the time we were back I was feeling okay enough to turn to the finale of the yard project. All in all, I continue to suspect that my body is more aged than its years, whether because of ranch work, high school football, the quarter-century of dogged yard work at 17021... There's quite a day-by-dayness to how I feel, and within that swatch of aches the consolation that there's nothing major wrong with me, yet.

As to the other corners of life around here, the house and garden and view and general tenor of things couldn't

3 July cont.--be better. This morn, which soon maundered into brief showers, came with sunlight on the interior peaks of the Olympics and clouds bulked up around, making the mountains seem massive. Directly out my window is the veg bed with maximum lettuce, the rows of Redcurl with leaves 9-10" long and 4" across. Besides the lettuce abundance we've been eating carrots, peas, onions, strawbs and the first few raspberries from the garden, beans and tomatoes and blueberries to come.

And here at the desk, this quiet day, we each bought a dab of stock this morning, Novell by C, SanDisk by me, in our try at extending our financial good fortune.

8 July--Y'day was the prettiest of weather, blue and bright and in the 70's, and we happily dabbled around on the property all afternoon. Today is murky and cool.

Since the last entry, I provided a true dud of a 4th of July, laid up with aching knees. First thing that morning I canceled us out of Carlene Cross's holiday gathering on Bainbridge, a 6-8 hour outing of that sort more than I could handle. Determinedly sat and read, all that day, and took it somewhat easy the next, and the knees one more time came around okay.

Have been banging my head on the Mose Rathbun scene this week, the language getting better every day but the scene not stringing itself together the way I want, yet. Now I have to turn my head toward the Stanford gig, which pretty well consumes next week.

21 July--Good god, it's been busy around here, and none of it on Prairie Nocturne, alas. This has been the week of the driveway project, which began Tuesday and will run into next week. And we dedicated y'day to Jean Roden's 70th birthday, taking her and John to hike Ebey's Landing and then feeding them a prawn salad dinner. A grand day, with the fog luckily lifting by the time we were up on the bluff at Ebey's Landing; and, to our surprise, after our lunch of champagne splits and ham and cheese sandwiches, John touchingly read us a poem inspired by an earlier hike we'd all done there; a pretty damn good poem, at that, from our most remarkable vexing friend.

22 July--Evidently nothing is sacred: this statistically sure-fire weekend of good weather is overcast and blowy, triggered by thunderstorms last night. The evening was spectacular, with more layers of the Olympics than ever as washes of light angled between mountains, and a great array of clouds ranging from frou-frou fringes north and south of the Olys to cumulus boiling white out of bruise-colored cloudbanks towards the Cascades. We had a glorious evening, beginning with sockeye the Kastners gave us in thanks for the garden produce we've been giving them. And inspired by our bane, the crows, I broke out one of C's b'day gifts earlier than intended, an air rifle with a scope. Thus, for her b'day on Monday, her gifts include a rifle and concrete pour, as the driveway project culminates.

The hectic project week kept me from getting the Stanford trip into the diary. Suffice to say it went perfectly well except for the slide projector, pretty much as expected. The problem is that it's impossible to anticipate just how the inevitable will rear its head: having insisted on plenty of time before my talk to get the slides loaded and rehearsed, I got there and handed over my sleeve-pages of carefully numbered slides and the young techie Ashok said: "Oh. I thought you'd have your own carousel." It took the Stanford staff 20 min. to scavenge a carousel, so there went rehearsal, and along came the next inevitability, that the carousel refused to drop 3 of the 30 slides on command. I felt better the next day when Richard White's sequence of slides on Buffalo Bill's Wild West show utterly went to hell, starting off backwards and then going blank, leaving Richard literally in the dark trying to cope with it. Anyway, the stuff I showed, the combo of C's pics of the Sixteen and Two Med country and the Doig homestead pics from the family albums, seemed to go over very well with the Stanford Alums.

Richard and Beverly had us out to their place for dinner the second night we were there, and so we got to marvel at California housing prices and their dauntless attitude in taking on a house that needed both drainage work and repair of termite damage. It was splendid to be around them again; Richard's mind is one of the ~~best~~ wonders I've encountered about twice in a lifetime--Linda Biers' is the other. I just feel like a better human being when I'm around them.

22 July cont.--The Stanford gig was one where we figured we couldn't help but learn something, and that was amply borne out, all the faculty members press-ganged into the 3-day session were smarter than hell. The first morn, of Gary Ernst on the geologic underpinnings of the West, David Freydenberg on its water, and Buzz Thompson on the shaping effects of the Endangered Species Act, was particularly mind-expanding. The one groaner of a session ~~for~~ was, to our surprise, David Kennedy's, he of the fresh Pulitzer for history: his take on Western Lit was to recite the old dirge about the individual vs. nature, machine-in-The-Garden sort of thing. Henry James is his favorite, and he subscribes to the Jamesian view down the nose that it takes a "thickness" of society and history to produce a literature--I simply don't see why a life such as mine, and countless others in the West, isn't as thick with complications and events as HJ's nattering over manners and doomed American innocents abroad. So I stuck into my talk the line that those of us writing in the West are aware we often bite off more than we can chew, in contrast to Henry James and his East Coast literary progeny who often chew more than they can bite off.

25 July--C's birthday, y'day, coincided with the concrete pouring for the driveway, alas. We had champagne and exquisite hamburgers done on the BBQ grill, but I told her I owed her something like a trip to San Francisco next year. Today, Scott Reusser has a crew of 5 here, plus his bear-size dog, as this project is just possibly maybe going to be finished off.

Neglected to report that one day's mail last week, I think last Friday, brought two theses about my work--one from the U. of Hull, the other from the U. of Nebraska--as if I was the most studied writer on the planet.

31 July--A brief entry, because the weather is too nice to expend inside. I resumed toward Prairie this morn, if not actually into. Re-read the opening scenes, which seem quite good. Now to see if I can make some more wordage, perhaps back at that by Wed.

Made a trip to Grp Health today, 2nd one for the sake of my pulled rib muscle. It at last is plaguing me less, although it's probably a couple more frustrating weeks before I can do anything really physical.

We entertained on Sat. night, Tom Orton and Carlene Cross, whose 4th of July shindig I had to cancel us out of because of my protesting knees.

C has been doing yeoman work on the property, pulling weeds and spraying Roundup. I've tinkered a bit with the veg garden, which has been producing wonderfully--beans, peas, carrots, strawberries, lettuce...

2 Aug.--Gorgeous weather, and in the course of the fine day the Goodyear blimp has potted up and down the shoreline, silhouetted over the mountains, and the Navy sent in its customary SeaFair flotilla, including a hovercraft that churns water like a maddened eggbeater. Also: an eagle coming in close, as one did the other day, a line of flight just out over our downslope plum trees.

Got some stray lines done on Prairie today, helping it if not curing it. And so to a supper of salmon.

7 Aug.--Day of convergence. Dave and Pat's yard crew are on the last details (@ 2 p.m.) of spiffing up the sides of the driveway, moving the blueberries to the front of the property, re-laying path stones, etc. At 10 this morning, Brad Hembree brought Herb Johnson, a sheetmetal master craftsman, to contemplate our need for deckpost "hats". And, if he shows, Mike Lampers is to prune the place for us yet this afternoon. Whew. It's all lovely progress, in effect shaping the place up now that the driveway is done, but as I told C this morn on about my tenth trip outside to the yard crew, it does take thinking about all day long. Needless to say, writing got postponed, today.

14 Aug.--A Monday of sorting, trying to feel ahead into the process of Prairie Nocturne and living with my naggy body. The pulled muscle on the left side of my ribcage is ever so slowly mending, and the hampering that has come in its place is the old catchy spot where my right inside thigh meets the groin--have to be careful getting out of chairs, out of bed, no squatting, no kneeling, while I try to get it calmed down. How to stay physical enough to dab away at this intriguing property is a continuing wrestle, especially since any overdoing doesn't show up until the next day, when some quadrant of me says it's wracked up again.

But the place, this house, the big jigsaw of yard, the sense that C quoted from Dinesen the other day that here we are where we ought to be, remains glorious. Evenings on the deck are beguiling almost beyond words--the palette of water tones, the mountains amended by cloud or sunshaft, the ships that pass. Bill Lang stayed with us the night of the 8th and, out of what C and I regard as ~~his~~ his self-imposed predicament of living below the means he was born to, asked how we've liked it here. Glorious, I told him with a grin.

As to the work of the household, last week I lightly worked-over the first 70 pp. of ms and achieved a fresh printout (after the mother of all paper jams) in the printer); C & I cashiered the first crop of bean plants and the last dab of pea vines and put in spinach and lettuce etc., and she weeded assiduously, as she's done enthusiastically all summer.

19 Aug.--Summer on a dimmer switch last Thursday, the 17th. The Dave & Pat yard crew put in the last dab of necessary enterprise--hauling 2 cubic yards of crushed rock to the lower path, past the garden shed, when it belatedly ~~dawned~~ dawned on me that rain would eat into that area ~~now~~ after its summer of pounding by wheelbarrows--by noon, and by late afternoon C and I were ensconced on the deck watching the weather change. It truly was gradual but measurable, autumn light suffusing Point No Point and then the water of the ferry lanes and then Richmond Beach while we still were in the last pearly light of summer; then the aura of the changing season moved over us by supertime, and by y'day morn

19 Aug. cont.--we had rain. We're unsure when the prior rain was, but somewhere back toward the 4th of July.

So, while we hope to have dabs of good weather yet, we feel the seasonal shift and look back on a set of months of fixing the place up: the new garden shed, the retaining wall around it and the path and ramp now leading to it, the watering system, the driveway, our own primping up of the front yard with the sundial area and the pavers in the triangle by the front door... And the whole place got a great haircut on Monday and Tuesday when Mike Lampers and his helper Keith came and pruned both boundary hedges and the downslope plum trees.

We are happy campers. I managed some dabbing at the manuscript during the week, despite having to grit away from it and honcho the Thursday yard work; C did most of the supervising of Mike's pruning, blessedly.

28 Aug.--Hiatus, during which we seem to have done damn near everything except make time for things such as diaries. Began last week by planting escallonia for a hedge along our south property line (between rhodies and quince), went on to stripping the deckpost caps and railings that needed it, C patching and painting, myself caulking. Pretty much stayed busy working on the property, to the point where I am now feeling autumn and the need for ms pages breathing down my neck. Next week is the Midwest booktour for p'back of Mtn Time, which I'm not enthused about--booktour # 18, I believe.

An odd blip of last week: we put our big compost bin out last Thurs. night for Fri. morn pickup as usual, and it vanished. We reported it stolen, then later in week noticed an out-of-place compost bin far down the street by the Stays' house. Sure enough, ours, so C and I loaded it into the CRV (just barely fit) early Sun. morn.

One mark of how well we're doing is the way we began today: both took about \$20,000 profits (i.e., each) in our IRA stock accounts, C on Intel and I on Icos.

5 Sept. - Sea Tac, the brink of book tour #18. A classy trip to airport, at least, in a Carey tourcar driven by a butler type named Keith - who said he had been a butler!

Spent the holiday weekend by gardening, desk-cleaning, and some socializing. Fri. night we went to Everett golf club - the unknown for north, for us - at behest of Doug Smith, who was being visited by his brother & sis-in-law Wayne & Nancy, plus Nancy's VT cousin Beverly & her husband Vinny. Carol's long history with Smiths, all way back to childhood, was re-warmed & a good time was had. Sat. night we invited Lee & Roger Hageshuelte to share crab dinner with us, to show us their pics of trip to Prague etc.

6 Sept. - Mpls/St Paul airport, amid inescapable background TV yatter. 35 min. yet ~~not~~ before take off to Detroit. Last night's reading at B+N in Edina went well: 35-40 people, most of them then buying books. B+N's events coordinator Peg Reilly was very professional & competent, & I was in the hands of the consummate literary escort, Isabel Keating. She drove me around to 3 other B+N's and a Borders to sign stock beforehand, then I sacked out in the hotel-

6 Sept. cont'd - the once-again mediocre Whitney - then walked. Stone Bridge @ St. Anthony Falls overlooking Mill & Miss park project. Had dinner with Isabel at the hotel - food is good there, at least. So, a smooth Twin Cities visit, albeit with the usual booktour shyness of killing time & trying to make hotel room function.

8 Sept. - Madison, aboard NW #19 waiting to leave for Mpls. A goofy maze-like suite (4 rooms, I think) at the aging Edgewater; sweeping along in wake of tall rangy escort Mary Gielow; terrific duck dinner @ a place Mary knew of; and an OK (30-35 in audience) reading/signing @ winsome Canterbury bookstore: that was y'day. Today so far, a stretch time ~~to~~ (surely the one classy thing about the Edgewater) to airport, to find that NW ticket counter had no record whatsoever of my supposed electronic ticket. Thank god this happened in low-key

8 Sept. cont. - Madison, where
baffled clerk called over a more
veteran one, who finally intimated
that this leg of my trip must ~~be~~
involve a schedule change, & indeed
United, original on schedule,
must have my electronic ticket.
So, I'm now ticketed thru to Cedar
Rapids, & resolve to lay hands on
tomorrow's set of American Eagle
(ugh) tix as soon as I get there.

The day before, 6th, Detroit
escort, aptly named Shirley Corp -
she's a world-class kvetcher,
fighting her new cell phone all day
long & giving me her ~~own~~ lament
every time - drove me in a
marathon of 9 "drive-by" stock
signings in Borders & B&N stores
in sprawling suburbs. Then we at
last went to Ann Arbor for our
day's work. "You're a trouper,"
Shirley announced at about our

8 Sept. cont. - 8th hour in car together. Luckily we ground our way thru it all & I got to the genial Red Hawk Bar & Grill by 5, grabbed a window table to watch student scene go by, and sipped a life saving draft beer until Tom & Beth Holden arrived for supper about 5:30. They are portly - except for the fitness-club-sculpted Mary Gielow, the whole Midwest seems portly - but seemed in good fettle at the moment, & Tom & I had another of our craft-orientated quadrennial conversations. It strikes me how immobile Midwesterners seem; I've given up on ever getting Tom to visit us, & neither Shirley Carp nor Mary Gielow have ever been to the Northwest nor are much interested in it. Too rainy &

8 Sept. cont. - chilly, they told me,
amid the Midwest humidity.

The Ann Arbor signing & crowd
was the best of trip - standing room
only - & they've all been quite good
as these things go. The assistant events
person, Amber, was proficient, & spilled
beans to me that I'm a "national
event," i.e. bestowed into local store's
schedule by national office of Borders.
The Ann Arbor crowd as usual
produced some high-powered questions -
a pair by a Mich St prof named Ron
Don who had come over from E. Lansing
for the evening were: what book do I
want to be remembered by in history
(I chose Sky) & why do I keep writing
(I likened it to aboriginal "long
dreaming," where stories & in-
volvement in them is a skein we
follow without knowing where it'll
end).

15 Sept.--Friday already, of a week when I did manage to scramble back to ms wordage--5 pp. or so--after the previous week when I scrambled from airport to airport, hotel to hotel, bookstore to bookstore. It constantly seems there's a hell of a lot to do in life besides what I'm ostensibly at, the conjuring of *Prairie Nocturne*.

Last night we caught the 4:40 ferry to Bainbridge, were met by Linda and Syd, given a sample of island ~~transit~~ traffic in the 20+ minutes it took to make a couple of left turns and circle town to the Four Swallows restaurant, then settled down for a very fine meal with the dynamic duo. Linda essentially has her next book of poems done, about ready to pack it to NY and hand it over to Marian Wood at Putnam; Syd is about to begin a year away from the UW, on a grant and I guess sabbatical, to pursue Middleton Murray. After we ate and gabbed, I had a good crowd of 80+ for my reading and signing at Eagle Harbor Books. A first: as I was signing up copious stock afterward, a bodacious transvestite--sweater filled out to the horizon and almost a circus mask of lipstick on--presented himself. Linda, who misses nothing, said: "You could have had a date!"

Wed. night, dinner at the Provinces w/ the Nelsons, the ritual nicely resumed after a summer off.

The weather? Yow. Yesterday was warm and vaguely tropical, remnant of a Mexican hurricane wandering up here.

21 Sept.--Tough weather and hard work, and vice versa. Humidity hung on at the start of the week, then came today's wind, banking maple leaves onto the veg garden, even swirling them in through the bathroom skylight and into the garage whenever the door is up. I'm feeling the weather in my sinuses, especially at the start of the day. As to trying to garden, perseverance is about all there is to be done--covering the best hanging clumps of ripening tomatoes when it looks like rain, gleaning the strawberries and raspberries before they go.

And as to the ms, some days I just don't know. I have such a hell of a lot of *Prairie Nocturne* to write yet, and while I seem to be able to tune it up into strong scenes,

21 Sept. cont.--the snailish pace of rough drafting is difficult to put up with. I suppose I'll make it, on this book, but here near the end of my second week back at it full-time, I haven't hit a reassuring stride yet. Really was despairing the past couple of days when I didn't manage to button up the scene of Monty meeting Angus, but today I at least achieved a reasonable version of the odd little Holy Rollers scene. Come on, Doig. Anybody can write on a good day, remember.

26 Sept.--This is a day of statecraft, tending to the duchy of Doig within the republic of letters. Spent the morn on SF Chronicle's "50 over 50" nominees, tonight we go to Parkplace Books in Kirkland for me to do a dab of reading from Mtn Time and join in a melee of reading groups' discussion. Tomorrow I hope to Christ to get back to the ms, having seen--y'day--a way to goose along the plot by moving Monty's beating to later in the book, and also have his driving trip w/ Wes be to Ft. Assiniboine. Both mean some revising, but they have the feel of right moves.

After last week's muzzy weather, the days now are sumptuous, sunny, 70ish. I'm about to drop desk chores and go outside--before we have to hie to Kirkland, alack--to consider my raspberry crop and start to harden off the 5 spandy new blueberry bushes which arrived from Rain-tree today.

29 Sept.--At 2:20 this afternoon, at last came the rain. I'm now closing down (4:15) for the day, the week, and for that matter September, the month when I had to both get out to sell books and renew the writing of the next one. The ms of course goes more slowly than I'd like; today was bumpy but I kept at it this afternoon, sprucing up sentences and adding bits, and the gain is at least measurable. Tonight we go to the Damborgs' for supper, bless their ark of good food and wine and talk.

Back to the weather: the Sound is smudged with ragged clouds, rain silver and steady now. C and I cut our outdoor chores very fine, the first drops beginning just as I finished putting out poison for our everlasting mole-nature's demonic plow--and ~~xxx~~ had finished picking the latest of our hefty raspberry crop. She had just snipped

29 Sept. cont.--the buds and blossoms off the white roses we moved back to the south side of the house. Along with three cheerful deepest red floribunda Europeana we put with them, and the five new blueberry bushes we planted there y'day, that barren set of ~~xxx~~ planter boxes at last looks like something.

4 Oct.--Quickies, at end of a full day, ebullient with the cool crisp weather but tired:

--News last week that Scribner went back to press for another 10,000 Mtn T p'backs; 36,000, that makes, goddamn good.

--Night of the 2nd, we went to the UW to hear Bill Holm talk about his art; showed a kind of ~~xxxx~~ retrospective in slides. He's a wonder, blithely achieving ~~ix~~ across a stunning spectrum of art having to do with American Indians, Kodiak to Cody. Became evident from a couple of the Puget Sound slides that he uses the weather we look at; goes to Richmond Beach, sees a sky that intrigues him, rushes home and dabs it onto canvas. Told C on the way home, that wondrously deepens our experience of living here and examining this ~~xxxx~~ view, even more.

16 Oct.--A drizzly Monday, by now into mid-afternoon, but it's been a better start to the week than usual, boosted by last Friday's printout of the ms afresh. Have been noodling with it today, continuing small word changes and touches that I would ordinarily do much later in the process, but I'm trying the tinkering much earlier in this one on the premise that it's best to leap into Nan Graham's attention with slick work. Ve zhall zee.

Pleasant enough weekend, even given the damp turn of the weather. Sat. night we had the Rodens here on quick dinner invite, to get them out of cabin fever--John has had a blood clot in his right leg, diagnosed 2 weeks ago, and they've also been thru the loss of Amy Mates, a pillar of what socializing they do. Friday night I did the reading/signing at Third Place, an invitation I'd accepted reluctantly because I was there a year ago for the hard-back. Damned if 125 people didn't turn out, and bought pretty heavily; and further in-spite-of-it-all, on a night when I was tired after a day of writing and Third Place

16 Oct.--was rocking with people having supper at the food-circus sites adjoining the bookstore, I did one of my best readings, and probably the very best q-&-a. The need to get on top of the mike to conquer the general noise level paid off, I guess.

20 Oct.--A toughish week of work, made no easier by a computer freeze just now--3:30 on a Friday--as the printer was merrily breezing through the Website material C and I have cranked hard at ~~it~~ the past some days. Have made progress on Prairie, solving a couple of short scenes and getting some good lines into the surprisingly tricky scene of Susan doing her diary and fretting over her stalled operetta.

Meanwhile, the stock market has gyrated--lost its breakfast on Wednesday, then soared y'day and went up solidly today--and we've dabbled, managing to buy or add to some stocks we've wanted. Not our favorite occupation, but as Willie Sutton said about why he robbed banks, 'tis where the money is.

24 Oct.--Fog has built through the morning; when we did out n'hood walk @ 9, there still was sunshine on the east side of the house, but not now.

Yesterday was a pure bonus of good weather, a shirt-sleeve afternoon which C used to trim the lavender and make war on weeds, while I rebuilt--with planting mix, compost and chicken manure from Sky Nursery--the garden bed for the peas, come February. Before the outdoor splurge, I spent the morning doing some organizing and sorting of the ms work needed to get a chunk off to Nan G. This morn (nearly lunchtime now) I've hacked away at scene of Susan trying to write Prairie Tide at the Duff homestead, and think I see my way out of it this afternoon.

Saturday night, Nile and Sarah Norton came for crab dinner and Website making. Bless them, they had roughed out a possible site design for me, and I had persevered throughout the afternoons of last week in getting readers' group questions and other stuff for each of the 9 books onto a disk. So, onward to some photos etc, and thence cyberspace.

30 Oct.--Fantastic sunset last evening, the south quadrant of our view with just enough swaths of clouds, of just the right translucence, to catch a New Mexico-like painted sky. Slimmest shard of moon was in the mix, somehow showing through scrim of clouds like a bit of shell caught in a net. Meanwhile the mountains looked jagged and dramatic, fresh snow on peaks frothing up out of cloudbanks in back of them. The moon continued its show, the slender curve of it very orange as it descended, finally going behind the horizon like a curved flame drawing down. All of that capped a bonus afternoon of good weather, in which C managed to hose off the downstairs deck and I installed steel posts to trellis our new raspberry patch within the nook of the downslope ramp.

Night before, we made a rare venture into the city, to dinner at Etta's near Pike Place Market at invitation of Ray and Priscilla Bowen, who've become part of our Thanksgiving crowd by way of the Damborgs. C & I walked in pronto at 6 and there the Bowens and Damborgs already sat, giving us the rare pleasure of not being the earliest. Couple of bottles of wine were already open, and I was trying to figure out the economics of what was plainly going to be a pricey evening, but noticing that Ray B. was sitting there with little grin of the legendary Christian holding four aces. Turned out he had a gift certificate from Japanese TV network NHK, whom he'd helped out during some filming at UW, and while we ate and drank our way through that and on into Ray's credit card, nobody was wounded in the wallet too much, evidently. A good evening, C and I each rapt with our meals of halibut cheeks on bed of white beans and artichokes.

Well, what else. I'm still slogging at the first 150 pp. of Prairie, another half dozen scenes needing sizable work before I can send the sample in to Scribner. Made a lot of headway in October, but there's still quite a clump of work and as we head into November, social stuff is going to take some navigating.

7 Nov.--A gray, chilly election day, fitting the mood of foreboding about this outcome. All the tea leaves seem to spell out Bush--Gore not able to nail down states he should have automatically, his politicoes edgy and noncommittal, the stock market y'day betting against him and for drug stocks. If Bush wins, we're in for another swampy time of Reaganesque "morning in America," and possibly worse with all the Supreme Court appointments looming. I suppose Bush can't be as feather-light as he seems, but he's provably a mere crammer--just enough of anything, semi-digested, to get by--and he'll bring more of the pall of religiosity that infects this country. We'll watch the coverage tonight, hoping--but also bracing ourselves.

All in all, this is an iron week, C right now washing the stairs in prep'n for the surprise bash for Tony Angell we're hosting on Saturday, while I've whacked out a talk for the Cascade Land Conservancy and am about to go back to ginning up "content" for the Website-to-be. Bring on next week.

8 Nov.--Groggy day, both of us heavy with allergy and depleted by TV blather and the topic thereon: Gore is likely to lose the electoral college as the Florida recount slips away from him tomorrow. Tennessee did him in; he'd have the 271 electoral votes if he could have carried his home state. One of the laments I've had about Clinton, and Gore shares in some of this, is the lack of interest in building up party machinery.

So, C and I are using today to chore away, get things done that don't need too much concentration. Tonight we go to the Rodens to celebrate John's 80th birthday, and there have been big health woes there, another blood clot--this one in his bladder--discovered on the weekend. Ragged times, near and far.

14 Nov.--Bright chilly day with the aftermath of the election still, well, after the math. Court struggles over recounts in Florida are the current combat for the Presidency, and all I know for sure is that I don't know what will happen. C and I, with our journalistic wirings, find this much more interesting to watch as it plays out than we did ~~the~~ putting up with all the blathering speculation around election day. We also made use of yesterday's national fluster--we hope to god it'll prove

14 Nov. cont.--of use--by buying stocks during the Nasdaq's early morning plunge. Diligence paid off when we had our buy in on Novellus @ \$28, the plunge took it to \$27.84, then it went back up to around \$32; we missed buying SanDisk by a similar 16¢ margin, and came close enough on some other stocks that we think we felt sensitively ~~enough~~ as we could toward bottoming-out prices. (C put ths stock list into her diary entry. I'll just add that we both felt we'd done a hard day's work after riding herd on these stock decisions. We're about tapped out now, thankfully, in investment money and can put our patience to work. Neither of us cares a hell of a lot for this stock market making-of-bets, but we've done okay with it for ten years and can see that our finances would be a lot weaker if we hadn't gone into stocks. We're grownups; we'll lose some, win some.)

Tony's party! He was either speechless with surprise or with astonishment at the size of the gathering, either of which suits me fine. C's diary entry gives the party picture; as best I can reconstitute the guest list from the backs of envelopes that Bry and Gilia worked from: Chris & DeeDee Demotis; Russ Hanby; Doug & Maggie Walker; Nan Netherton (about-to-be ex-wife of Elliot Marks, who was also on hand with the new lady in his life); Mike & Gretchen Daiber and winsome son Tarn; Bob & Dee Simmons; Ron & Marina Abrams; Bob & Nancy Scott; Kate Laroque; Fen & Helena Lansdowne & daughter Emma; Dan & Elena Lamont; Anyo Domoto & Judy Bezy; Ruth Childs; Greg & Lisa Krogstad; Tom and Mol Jay; Mark & Lou Damborg; the 9 of us in the Angell-Doig conglomerated clan of party epicentrists; Jean Rolfe; Bo & Susan Peck; and a few I may have missed? 46 definitely counted, anyway, and we kept running out of plates, glasses, silverware, in what were supposed to be sets of 50.

And now on this scrumptious day, we're going to look at going somewhere, the Skagit or around town.

16 Nov.--Another chilly clear day, and as I gardened this afternoon--we revitalized the SE veg bed for next spring, and I gleaned tonight's salad of small lettuce leaves and a smattering of old little spinach, which all will fit nicely with y'day's gleaned yellow pear tomatoes--a hummingbird siphoned his way through the entire red-ablaze lemon sage plant beside the house, while a hawk screeched in flight overhead. Garden nirvana, this place.

The election that won't end hasn't ended, Gore's lawyers scoring well in the Florida courts on recount arguments. Bush's bunch was caught flatfooted y'day by Gore's offer to accept a statewide recount and the loser just go home. Bush himself seems to be giving off Harding- or Coolidge-like signs, letting his puppeteers plummet him down in front of the teleprompter once in a while but otherwise holing up on his big-hat ranch. Perhaps perversely, C and I have found this more interesting the more legally intricate it gets, and in theory we don't have much problem with all the weakening that can be inflicted on a Bush presidency.

Prairie Nocturne: by damn if I haven't whipped a couple of scenes these past two mornings, and am down to only a couple--although they're tough ones--before I'll have 30--35,000 continuous words. Maybe by Dec. 1.

Good god almighty, what a day we made for ourselves on Tuesday with a trip to the Skagit. C has done a fine full diary entry on the astounding birding; I'll only add the magical Escher crisscrosses the birds make, dunlin when the front of a flight circles back across the main shroud of shimmering birds, the snow geese when they circle in wavery concentricities.

26 Nov. Thanksgiving has come and gone, and customary November seems to be here with its rain. The fine dry weather, which gave us remarkable southwestern sunsets--the sun going down as a red-copper ball, vivid feathers of cloud here and there--began drifting away into showers on Thanksgiving, and the rain was heavy for awhile this morning.

The annual gathering was at the Maloofs' this year,

26 Nov. cont.--Lou Damborg having taken the initiative in seeking to get the event shared out beyond the Doig-Damborg orbit it's had, and Kathrin with great grace took on the logistics of one of the biggest bunches of us ever C & I, Mark and Lou, Ray Bowen (Priscilla at home sick), Peter Rockas, Ann and Norm, and a record flock of Angells--Tony, Lee, Gavia, Larka, Bryony, Gilia and hubby Aaron.* We provided the champagne (8 bottles went, of the 10 we took) and roasted asparagus which C conjured by giving it 6 min. @ 500 degrees. Everybody was pretty mellow, and there was a nice generational blend for a change with Bry, Gilia and Aaron on hand (after he'd worked the day at Amazon.com). Ann and Norm stayed the night with us, though they didn't get me to commit to canal-boating in Britain with them next August; don't think so. *and of course Kathrin, John & Carla.

On Prairie, I have one more scene to do before this ms chunk can go off to NY. Has to be a bravura one, of Monty running to build up his breath, but at least it's one instead of the dozen I was despairing over a month or ~~so~~ so ago.

The election dispute: all I know for sure is that I don't know what will happen. It looked for a while as if Gore would be up against public pressure if he didn't gain in the recount by the end of today, but the Bushies have kicked matters into the Supreme Court, at the end of next week. Meanwhile the stock market has been taking a thrashing, and I've had some spasms of chiding myself for buying oversoon; we now have some real heft of shares in quite a number of stocks, but we'll have to hunker until they pay off.

27 Nov.--Tired, tired, tired. But I think I have done it in this big day of work--closed the circle on this first major chunk of Prairie Nocturne.

30 Nov.--A shaggy damn day, even though it is undergirded with the excellent news that I've shipped the 1st 30,000 words of the ms to NY. ~~Chores~~ Chores in the outer world seem to get stickier as everything conglomerates into techiedom--Minuteman Printing was defunct Y'day when I went there to have the ms photocopied, so I ended up doing it myself at Kinko's, on an overworked machine

30 Nov. cont.--which promptly ate 4 pp. of pristine ms; today the overnight express mail to NY turns out not necessarily overnight, despite costing \$21.25 to try-- and it makes me newly aware of how much better off I am here at my desk, reigning over my file cards. And the stock market took another kicking, which triggers too much of a tendency in me to kick myself. On the scale of things that really count, life is still OK.

Spent part of y'day winnowing file cards from the other books' file boxes (if nothing else, found one gem of mountain description I'd cut from Rascal Fair), and today I did a duplicate disk of the ms so far and set up a Prairie 2 disk to resume on. More vitally, C listened to my plot description from this point in the book on, and thought it all sounded good. What a boon it would be if the rest of the book would go easier, from here.

1 Dec.--This is one of those days, often pre-storm, when our birdbath turns into the only waterhole on the desert. The contention swashes on and on: 5 robins in or on the bath a minute ago, then a starling barged in and scattered them, and it was immediately crowded by sparrows and juncos. Everything gets into the act: so far today, robins, towhees, finches, sparrows, jays, flickers, and at one point, a solo wren flitted around on the deck over it all, apparently curious.

It has been a morning of remarkable light (11 a.m. now), with clouds lit in the west like a sunset when the sun rose this morning. The peaks were rosy-tinted, the Brothers with a wreath of cloud making them look Vesuvian. Then showers moved onto the mountain skyline from the west while the sunlight ~~shrank~~ shrank eastward across the Sound, until the last patch left was on the big maples next door and our rim of bluff.

I've spent this easeful morning (after a drudgy afternoon of chores y'day which included mailing the ms sample off to Liz) editing down the extra material at the back of the ms disk and working on file cards and notebook entries. Useful puttering.

4 Dec.--Fresh snow on the Olympics, though not nearly enough. So far it's a dry anteroom of winter, no big storm in Nov., the rest of this week also forecast as dry. We've just mulled how to spend this day, deciding against the Skagit--maybe try it on Wednesday--and instead to investigate the ship canal walk via Fremont, this afternoon; trying to milk as much warmth out of the day as possible, I guess.

Somewhat surprising myself, I seem to be taking Dec. off from writing. May be lured away from that resolve before Jan. 1--chores in the outerworld and such are so charmless I pretty promptly feel I might as well be spending my time at my desk--but at the moment I'm pleasantly tinkering. Got my Terr'll Seed order ready this morning, for ex.

Mild socializing y'day, when David & Marjorie came and we walked our n'hood and had coffee and muffins. Tomorrow night, Linda & Syd, as we do our bit for their 25th anniversary of being together.

18 Dec.--Past pair of weeks went to a morass of politics-watching, dogged chores, and an out-of-nowhere cold. Politics first: I wonder how we will look back on the presidential election outcome, which as it unfolded had every evidence of amounting to a Supreme Court ~~complicit~~ coup d'etat. The stopping of the Florida counties' recount, the absolute alignment of the 5 right-wingers, Scalia's cynical triumphalism as early as the issuance of the stay, it constitutes SCOTUS electing POTUS of their own politics. The best that can be hoped for is that future Senate confirmations will be yardsticked by this, and the outside chance that Scalia may have overplayed his hand and not be fed the Chief Justiceship.

So we have Bush and his father's apparatchiks. During the post-election predicament, Bush seemed almost inoperative, and his own staff has shown it can be incredibly thick-fingered--Karl! Rove thought the election was going to be theirs by 330 electoral votes and a 6% bulge in the popular vote, and Karen Hughes didn't managed to tell the Dub that Cheney's excursion to the hospital was a heart attack. Ai yi yi.

On other fronts: littlest things befog life, as I found last week when I looked at life through my nose. At the start of the week the affliction seemed to be sinuses, and it wasn't until Wednesday or Thursday that it

18 Dec. cont.--exploded into sneezing and constant nose-blowing. My energy dwindled with it; it was noticeable this morning that I was thinking more sharply--dwelling on David Malouf's "Great Day" piece that I'd read last night--and felt like tackling this diary entry and other desk stuff.

Chores of the past days: moved the collection of 1st editions and signed copies out of the bookcase nearest the sunny windows, winnowed a number of books that had merely been plopped somewhere when we moved in, and all in all bought us some more time against the constant flood of books. Also, hankering toward spring, I puzzled my way through the Dutch schematic drawing of how to assemble my little coldframe from Territorial Seed.

First big storm--wind and rain--came on Saturday, the 16th.

22 Dec.--This morning, finally, I have settled into some pleasant mulling at my desk--strolling in the white fields of file cards, making mild sortings. My mood has been shabby across the past some days, my cold dragging on and C coming down with it, the putrid aftertaste of Bush being wangled into the presidency, the souring stock market, and lo, the rains of winter. Yet we're fundamentally healthy and wealthy and not unwise, so I have nothing to validly complain about. Having said that, there remains the nagging feeling that there should have been some way to spruce up this holiday season more than we've managed--would a trip somewhere have helped?

A note on the winter scene: the Sunshine Blue blueberry bushes have kept their leaves, giving us a tiny purplish forest at the north end of the dormant vegetable beds, with the heather plants robust (they evidently think they're in beloved Scotland) along the garden's westward edge.

24 Dec.--These pages tend to sop up my mutters and enumerated chores, so I really should put into the record a few of my mind's preambulations, such as y'day's: spent about half the morning going through Raymond Williams' The Country and the City, underlining and

24 Dec. cont.--making notes and percolating some of his insights, such as the welcome one which illustrates what Joyce managed to bring off in Ulysses; then went to Lost Country Life, Dorothy Hartley's grab-bag--prettier than it is deep, but damn pretty--of medieval rural life; then came lunchtime, C tentatively offering that she was recuperated enough to go out somewhere if I'd like, and off we went to Ivar's Salmon House for the view of Lake Union, draft beer and salmon sandwiches, with the bar entirely to ourselves and the lazing staff Psych 101-ing each other about habits of their (mostly step-)parents and how ~~themselves~~ they're inflicting them on their own kids; then home for a nap, which I'd discovered in Hartley was standard in olde harvest fields as "the noon sleep"; then another stint of her book, until time to shower, come out and have a dusk drink and begin listening to Marian McPartland on "Piano Jazz"; crockpot soup, then both of us cold-menders read on into comfy old potboilers, C revisiting The Cruel Sea as I'd done a few weeks ago and my re-read The Eye of the Needle.

And now, before I sink back into medieval farming w/ Hartley, another mental nudge that comes from Eye of the Needle, a sudden paragraph about the wind on the Scottish isle where Follett is writing way over his head, greatly better than he's fashioning his cardboard characters. The same thing happens in The Cruel Sea when Monsarrat describes the surfacing of the U-boats when Germany has surrendered, and I have a note around somewhere about a landscape description by Tony Hillerman that leaps out of the procedural trudge of one of his mysteries. In all these cases it's some kind of force of nature that turns these building-blocks jugglers into poets for a few paragraphs.

25 Dec.--A Christmas backdrop of noble mountains. The Olympics are cloud-girt, looking very tall where they chunk through the strata, and the Sound is quiet except the shuttles of ferries. We've had a calm and pleasant day, replete with Bach-based jazz CDs and a six-sampler of scotch from the Nelsons, and at dark it's mealward to the Rodens and their clan gathering. Amply sufficient unto the day.

26 Dec.--The day after a perfectly pleasant Xmas dinner at the Rodens'. Cindy and David's elfin girls, Abigail and Natalie, were in black velvet finery, birthstone necklaces on, and Lisa and Jerry, a.k.a. Aunt Sticky and Uncle Spike, were their ringmasters, dancing them in long gallivanting waltz steps. All was merry, by damn.

Today I've mildly fussed at my desk, producing little to point to but staying absorbed in the start of year-end financial chores. (Did sell Puget Sound Energy stock-- @ 40% profit, first thing this morn, on basis that the electricity supply problem on this Coast has some nasty prospects and Puget doesn't have any appreciable generating capacity any more.) C was more usefully employed, writing year-end charitable checks.)

Tuesday

Monday, Sept. 5. Picked beans and strawberries for Margaret & had a nice visit with her. Advised her about possible sale of Hood Canal properties.

Watered lettuce and spinach. The day was lidded with clouds & stayed cool.

Wrote Linda Miller. A copy is in her letters file.

Monitored stock mkt. Intel & other chips down on a Piper analyst's downgrade. Bloomberg analysts think mkt will be choppy for a while but up by end of year or early in 2001.

Wednesday

When I turned over at 2 a.m. I heard rain, but when I went to fetch NYT at 6:30 a.m. it had stopped. No great amount; no puddles on walk or deck. But it did some and the watering system had served the garden, so I did no more watering. And I turned the system to OFF for today, figuring the front yard would be OK.

I did get the lawn mowed in the afternoon, thank goodness.

As I reported, Linda B. called and we decided you and I would take the 4:40 ferry on the 11th. They'll make dinner reservations at a new place they haven't been yet. We should get in touch before leaving to determine where we'll walk to, for a pickup. Apparently there's a construction mess.

I cleaned out the third file drawer, throwing out about half and shredding piles of grade records in the process.

Thursday

Foggy and cool this morning. I shopped Larrys, delivering our wedding gift, then walked the neighborhood. At 10:30 the fog lingers.

Friday

Thunder, lightning & some rain circa 2 p.m. So the lettuce got watered and I elected to keep Rainbird OFF, although a close call. Property will need a soaking soon, from nature or Rainbird.

Saturday. Morning got increasingly cloudy and blustery, so I was glad I took an early walk. Picked berries. Watering system still on OFF.

In the afternoon I turned the watering system ON, since the gray skies and occasional showers (none today) haven't provided enough water. I did gather berries in the morning.

Rain in afternoon & evening. Rainbird is OFF again.

You brought
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