

01/01/01, which has already been met with at least one thumbsucker (NY Times op-ed) about how close we are or aren't to Kubrickian visions of 2001. We're trying to take a more down-to-earth approach, doing yr-end numbers crunching (\$262,000+ betterment of ourselves last year, not bad in worst NASDAQ stock market ever) and getting ourselves out into the scenery. The 30th, we went up to the Skagit flats to see the snow geese with Peter & Margaret Atwood, then lunch @ the Brew Pub in LaConner, then food shopping @ Haggins, which produced spectacular farmed steelhead for 2 nights' meals. Today dawning dry and clear, we got ourselves to Salmon Bay by about 10 and did the industrially grubby walk to the Locks, then had a fine lunch (chowder for C, cioppino for me) @ Chinooks. As to the Eve, last night, we had champagne along with that glorious steelhead, then watched The Milagro Beanfield War on video, then had a final dab of champagne and went to bed as usual.

A sight during the Skagit birding that should be noted: dunlin lined up thick as fur on a log floating in the tideflat at the snowgeese field, their reflection perfectly doubling them.

4 Jan.--Given how much of our holiday season went to snuffling and nose-blowing, I've gone slow on immersion back into Prairie Nocturne, a re-read of the ms-to-date eventuating today or more likely tomorrow. And so, y'day we vamped off onto an intended ~~Am~~astime excursion to the Experience Music Project. Liked it quite a lot, starting with the surprise that the Gehry amoebas of architecture look much better up close, with wonderful plays of color moving on the mteal skin as you walk around it, and on into the tech-trek through the displays, athen not least, fine food (potato pancakes w/ caviar for C, scallop salad for me) in the Turntable restaurant. The tech part of the experience you sling on like a postman's bag--I know, I know, it's supposed to suggest carrying a guitar--and we readily enough caught on to the scanning etc., but found the info bits all too short. Anyway, we got a kick out of it all, ended up buying a year's membership, and will look for candidates among visitors to take there.

Jan. 4 cont.--The weather: we managed to time the EMP trip nicely y'day, doing it in overcast and then a sturdy rain arriving by the time we were home and napping. Quite a cycle of showers, lately, without big meaningful moisture.

8 Jan.--Finished the re-read of the Prairie ms and it seems to me really pretty damn good, with the caveat that there's still the tantalizing notion of having the "bone harp" voices as a narrating device. It would add an extraordinary dimension to the book, but also would complicate it a great deal, and so far I'm sticking with straight-forward. Tomorrow I either start sorting file cards or try to make some actual daily wordage, but onward in either case. Also I'll soon need to call ask Liz and ask why my editor is conspicuously AWOL on any reaction to the ms sample, so far. Nan's silence has bothered me remarkably little--consequence of our siting ourselves here, and our sturdy finances; I don't have to do this for anyone any more--but just in terms of general strategy, it's time to ask her, wassup?

Sat. night we had Sarah and Nile Norton in for roast beef and Website tinkering. We are progressing on the damn thing, though there are a few more innings ahead, and it appalls me at the high-priced talent we're all putting into this, but the hairs on the back of my neck tell me this has to be persevered with, the Internet is here and "content" is going to be drawn to it like bugs to flypaper.

On the home front, managed a little weed digging y'day, and have some sacks of soil and compost ready out there on the veg beds, waiting for a warm day. If this 50ish weather and its dribblets of showers continue, I'm going to be very tempted to plant a first row of spinach in a week or two, well ahead of last year's more standard start-of-Feb. sowing.

9 Jan.--Exquisite pink light of sunrise on the snowcaps of the Olympics, at 8 and a little before. The Sound is a lovely diluted blue, lightly patterned as a skating rink in a clear dusk. There was a brief phase of purple light, which royally shows off our little line of heather and the attendant Sunshine Blue blueberries that keep their leaves through the winter.

12 Jan.--End of another not great week of ms page-making, although the raiding of previous yellow pads (Rascal Fair's) into file cards and the thinking and ~~xx~~ plotting of the past couple of days should, in the immortal locution of Major Kelley of the Forest Service, be a dividend-payer. I about thought myself around various bends today, working out the Prairie plot beyond the appearance of the Klan, and I think the key brainwrinkle was to have Wes buy Fort Assiniboine. Will see, but at this instant it feels as if that sets up a goodly amount of set scenes and flashbacks.

Otherwise, this has been a week of taking the body into the garage--triennial phys checkup by Dr. Kato, thus far yielding suspicion that I may be a bit anemic (went back y'day to have more blood drawn for iron tests), and teeth cleaning y'day. Also fumbled a little further in the direction of info for Website, by way of Harcourt's on-line mktg guy.

And last evening provided a nice episode, when I wandered out of the shower about a quarter to 5 and realized C was talking to someone down the hall. Kaare Ness had come over from next door, under marching orders from Sigrunn to give us the fancy candies they'd brought back from Hawaii, and to ask us to handle their mail again when they go to Norway for a month. By the time I came out C had him in a living room chair and telling her about the fishing boat that'd been going "forth and back," as Kaare says, the past some days and nights; it's blue & white, and C had remarked that it's been like having a Marine guard out there. It's the Starbound, says Kaare, buddies with its owner, trying to work computer glitches out of its engine speeds with the help of wizards from Louisiana and Norway; factory ship which takes 150 people, it's readying for the Alaska season that's about to open--crabbing on Jan. 15, bottom-fishing on the 20th. The day of the fishboats had Kaare in a talkative mood--he'd been down to Ballard twice during the day to see boats off, and had called the skipper of his boat, the Royal Atlantic, as it passed our houses, and we gleaned:

--he's from the island of Karmoy off southern Norway, where he and S have his folks' place; about 25 mi. long, 6 wide, it's produced enough fishermen that they're planning a memorial to the 70-some who've died just in American waters.

12 Jan. cont.--Kaare said he's never lost anyone in his own crews, though he himself was knocked overboard by a big wave on a snowy day in April '58. In the water in full oilskins and boots, he watched the boat, thinking "Aren't they going to turn around?" When they got back to him and threw a life ring, he was out cold and the skipper jumped in and saved him. He fished from '43 to '82, first in this country out of New Bedford, then Seward in Alaska. 'Retiring' then, he's partnered in a fish plant at Yakutat, if we deciphered his accent right, and in fishing boats--including the Viking Explorer, same type of vessel as the famous doomed pair of Anacortes boats that flipped over; Kaare says they had no trouble with theirs, the Anacortes losses were blamed on skippers' loadings--and, lo, even in one of the apartment complexes down here on 143rd between Greenwood and Aurora. (One result of conversations w/ Kaare is that our guess on how much money he must have goes up sharply every time.) Told us, with a laugh, of buying a burned boat that was another of the Anacortes type--the hull was okay, and so he had another of his boats, the Viking Explorer, towing it down here after the season for rebuilding. "Twelf miles off Flattery!" it turned over and went under, i.e. on the doorstep of safe waters after that long tow. As to the fish plant, 750 work there, not a Native among them, he says, although the kids sometimes will come down to the rec hall. And so, after about 45 minutes of regaling us, he headed home, doubtless to catch hell from Sigrunn for leaving the house standing open for the few minutes he was to be over here.

Addendum: Kaare said there are about 40 boats working for his fish plant, half of them fishing boats.

17 Jan.--Yow, talk about a gray day. Temp hasn't nudged above 40, there's a persistent blurring fog that makes the far shore look like only a painterly suggestion, and now, before we could start our afternoon with a walk, it's starting to rain. Could be worse: in that golden state California, it's rolling blackouts.

Have been back at ms making this week, 5 pp. roughed

17 Jan. cont.--so far, though the work feels pretty shaggy. I know and know and know that I just have to get sufficient draft piled up, then do the shaping, which I'm best and most comfortable at.

22 Jan--Can't dance either. Bush's tanglefoot propensities were borne out physically when he was onstage w/ Ricky Marin and again at the inaugural balls, and meanwhile we get this melange of rightist ideologues for 4 years, if not beyond. Perhaps for the first time, or at least since Reagan, this household watched none of the day of inauguration, holing up with good books instead.

We're midway through a social spate, Mark & Lou Damborg having been here for crab dinner on Friday and last night we went to Demetriou's Jazz Alley w/ Nile and Sarah Norton. Nancy Wilson was the attraction, troupering through a case of the flu. Tonight, Sahib w/ the Laskins.

I enter this week, as I just diagnosed myself to C, feeling achy and stupid. My left knee is acting up, consequence of working in the garden Friday afternoon and straying onto the downhill slope for a matter of minutes (just long enough to trim raspberry canes) without my knee braces on. Have just looked back in the diary to my grounded 4th of July, and a similar unthinking chore caused that, although it's my left knee that's nagging this time. Off the history of that one, I probably have most of a week of babying this knee out of its snit. Each time this happens, of course, there's the worry, Jesus, what if it doesn't let up. But face that if and when it comes. In last July's trough of mood, 2 weeks later I hiked Ebey's Landing for Jean Roden's birthday.

23 Jan.--An exquisite morning, the mountains blue up to their canopy of snow, very white in this start of morning light, and broad approximate spokes of cirrus pink-lit over it all. This pink-purple cast of light puts a bit of a lavender sheen on the Sound, and makes our backyard heather rank all but glow, like amethyst creatures coming to life. All of it, of course, underlain with the reprise in today's NY Times of the quake quagmire waiting in the earth, but we've long known that.

23 Jan. cont.--On the social side, once again, we went to Sahib in Edmonds with David and Kate Laskin (their treat; our turn next). They are fine company for us, the talk of writing and teaching and the neighborhood flowing and flowing.

As to the war of the wounded knee: it is better this morning, down to being tetchy instead of the nagging discomfort along the inside of the knee hinge. I have gritted and made myself restrain from being on it much--the last time I walked the n'hood was back around the 18th and I'll likely ~~fix~~ lay off again today--and it seems to be working. One reminder for the next time it happens: this left knee doesn't necessarily want the straight-out position of rest on a footstool that I think worked for the right one on the last of these episodes, the infamous 4th of July spent planted in my easy chair. Sitting with the knee at almost right-angle bend some of the times seems generally better, and cocking it slightly over the right leg when I do have my feet up similarly seems a gingerly helpful position. Ice has sometimes helped, during this stint, but not every time. Such lessons as there are, this time around:

--The gloom this brings on, the worry as to whether I've torn cartilage in there again, was worst on the 3rd morning, about half a day before the nagging began to ease.

--I utterly must be wary of working on any slope (it would help even to do a better job of assembling tools and cut down on trips up and down the ramp from the backyard to the garage) and remember to wear the knee braces during any yard stint that's strenuous at all.

Addendum to the knee report, 26 Jan.: the knee was feeling better by the afternoon of the 23rd, i.e.  $3\frac{1}{2}$ -4 days after the onset. As on some previous aches, it did not act up as I was doing the actual gardening on the 19th but was there as a steady nag when I got up the next morn. Y'day I gardened for a couple of hours, w/ knee braces on, and the knee--both knees--have slight twinges but are OK.

26 Jan.--A fine-looking morning, three freighters passing early with glow of sunrise on their side paint, and we're going to scoop up the chance ~~ix~~ to go to the Skagit.

27 Jan.--Still in the afterglow of a sensational holiday y'day, a quick-decision foray to the Skagit. The sunshine was glorious (today's start of a "clear" weekend by contrast is woolly along the edges with ~~fog~~ shoreline fog), Mt. Baker's massif was in maximum detail, the greening fields practically sting the eye, and the birding, oh the birding was bliss. Besides the snow geese, 30' off the road in a field midway out on Fir Island, there were constant eagles and hawks, and lo, when we made one of our once-in-a-while reconnaissances of the road's-end marsh w. of Blake's resort, our reward was a pair of short-eared owls hunting away, atop the Wyeth-like grass. Lunch in LaConner, where the Brew Pub has solved our exasperation with the ~~xx~~ chronic cutesiness and amateurism of a long succession of would-be eating places, and then on our usual Indian Slough walk, we were treated to a constant carpet pattern of pintails on the water and the ooze flats. Bought steelhead at Hagen's, another magnificent tradition, and came home to a cloudless evening.

And on the medical front, Dr. Kato left a phone message that my recent tests prompted by her finding of slight anemia in me were negative (hurrah) and she'll call me at start of the week about "what we have to do next" (hmm).

30 Jan.--This day, chilly, swirly, brooding, is the day Dr. Kato called me back to tell me she wants the hematologists to run tests on me.

2 Feb.--Biding time, trying to nudge the Group Health process toward the appointment that would be a start toward an answer. (It causes a deep gulp in the psyche when the phone number for <sup>hem</sup>atology turns out to be in the oncology department.) Meanwhile, the weather is swirly, more wind than we've generally had this winter. Y'day we squeezed in a day of yard cleanup, ahead of this squally weather, by the yard crew of Dave and Pat. And at the manuscript, I produced about 20 pp. in January, good enough. Am taking today to regroup at the desk, try to draw a breath on this damn health question.

5 Feb.--Neither a good day nor a bad, this has been a comfortable enough Monday, lightly pasted over with clouds until dabs of brightness now in mid-afternoon, the day's writing slow to start but then enough rough passages conjured to make the quota. To the extent I can I'm putting aside medical frets until the hematology appointment on the 14th; as C said, the unknown is always a worry, but...

We managed considerable work outside on Saturday, C battling weeds while I installed rhubarb and tried to coax early spinach w/ fertilizer. Y'day was blowy, steadily; 15 windsurfers off Richmond Beach by afternoon, their bright translucent sails like a kaleidoscope of waterbugs. Both nights we happily ate salmon and watched sunsets, and cherished our luck of being here.

6 Feb.--A brilliant million-faceted day, fresh snow on every cutface of the mountains and white flashes of blown water everywhere on the Sound. Just past 1:30 now, two small tugs are trying to wrestle a log boom southward; they have a following wind, but it appears to be gradually angling the boom too near to this shore. Earlier, a hawk absolutely parked on the wind, hovered motionless in one spot long enough for me to call to Carol to look, surely 15 or 20 seconds of standing tiptoe on the wind.

Here at the skunkworks, I'm having an unusual writing day, much stuff popping to me--I'm thinking toward a final bravura piece for Angus--and all of it down in notes yet, not a word entered into the ms until now. Betwixt weather-watching, though, I think I'll manage to splay enough words yet today.

6 Feb.--Colossal moon, between silver and gold, the mottles of its surface very clear, directly over the Kingston ferry dock now @ 7 a.m. Through the binocs C just brought me, it is like a close look at an agate-patterned marble. The night was cold and clear, 32 when I got up a little after 5.

7:05, C just called downstairs that the thermometer now is 30. Meanwhile there's come a thin, thin smoke of cloud, precise as a postage stamp, across the moon, deepening its tone toward copper.

8 Feb.--Snowbound. Actually not, except in the binding curiosity of watching it feathersift down. There is a thin white blanket now on all the veg beds and the ground around, and the scalloped edges of the birdbath are outlined, but it is not sticking to the foliage. The far shore is blanked out.

17 Feb.--On the 14<sup>th</sup>, Valentine's Day, the initials MGUS came into my life. Monoclonal Gammopathy of Unknown Significance. Would that the significance remain unknown, for the 2 indicators of what Dr. Ginsberg thinks is MGUS--a slight anemia and a spike in a monoclonal protein in my blood count--are among the 7 symptoms of multiple myeloma: bone cancer. Ginsberg gave me my choice of waiting to see how a repeat set of tests in June would come out (the 2 other readily measurable indicators, calcium and creatinine levels, were normal this time around) or to have further tests for myeloma. Told him I'd have to sleep on it, came home and talked to C, and ultimately I decided I'd rather have as much definite info as possible now--so, more tests. The surprise 8" snowstorm shut me off from going to Northgate Group Health y'day morning for X-ray of all my bones, but it should mean I can do that on Tuesday and at the same time take in a 24-hour urine sample. In what now looks to me like a reassuring decision, Ginsberg decided not to do the third of the myeloma test procedures, taking a sample of bone marrow from my hip, at this point.

So, there it goddamn is: mortality, from a direction I naturally had no hint of. The apprehension, jittery wondering, of the diagnostic day and day after have eased a lot by now, perhaps as the realization seeps in that Ginsberg ~~was doing enough~~ did his down-to-earth best to unalarm me ~~in~~ by tracing out ~~the~~ ~~tracing~~ ~~out~~ the factors (the OK levels of calcium and creatinine, my historically borderline anemia indications in past bloodcounts) that make him think it's MGUS instead of flaring cancer; or perhaps the human mind, at least my stuttery version, has only such day-by-day focus that the FUD factor--fear, uncertainty, doubt--doesn't hang on constantly. In any case, on to the tests. And then onward from those, because 25% of MGUS cases do eventually become bone cancer cases.

17 Feb. cont--On the more cosmic level, here came the dump of snow the night of the 15th and on until about 10 the morn of the 16th. C put in her diary our outside measures, and I'm now about to go out and uncover the early veg tries (peas and radishes) I'm making. Also, my Dutch coldframe w/ lettuce rows inside sits there with a patient bonnet of snow on it.

Social note, on the 10th we were @ Damborgs' for dinner, along w/ Tony and Lee, and Ben and Margaret Hall. Ben is UW chemist turned botanist, founder of Zymo-genetics; Margaret was UW history Ph.<sup>D.</sup> after me, working w/ Pease. Good eve of talk. It was Tony's first time @ Mark and Lou's, and they seated him at dinner directly in front of David Barker's spectacular diptych of a Copper River-type point of shoreline, and I noticed Tony taking it in time and again. In our latest phone call I asked him what he'd learned from it to do or not to do, and he said Barker's handling of patterns on the water was intriguing, as well as the patterns, but there was an element of the scene--part of the beach topography--that he couldn't figure out, it didn't seem to be either berms or driftwood, and if Barker had been there he'd have asked him what he was up to with that.

What else. On y'day's snow day, I mainly slogged through income tax. Today we're going to Sky Nursery to a pruning seminar, preparatory to the spring binge we've been working on.

21 Feb.--Y'day every bone in my body from ankles to cranium was X-rayed, in an hour and 20 min. on the X-ray table or flattening myself against the upright "bucky" board. As the young technician who started the "bone survey" procedure said, "This is a huge exam. What's going on?" It's the 2nd of Dr. Ginsberg's diagnostic tests--the 1st was the 24-hour urine sample I contributed from Monday--to try to verify MGUS in me rather than bone cancer. I hit it lucky in the X-ray lab when an old hand named Marry Ellen took over from the younger tech and made sure my various portions were sized onto the film properly and that the films developed OK. Now if the diagnosis will be substantiated as well. I've felt pretty calm about all this, indeed physcially am feeling better than I have in months or maybe years,

21 Feb. cont.--my knees and back not really complaining even after considerable afternoons of yardwork; the most nagging thing currently is the psoriasis in my beard, another story.

Anyway, onward. We've had delicious weather the past 2 or 3 days, into the 50's each sunny afternoon, and C and I have exulted in the yardwork, getting areas ~~retreated~~ cleared of weeds by the yard guys Dave and Pat, and planting new fruit trees. So far we've had an immensely useful month outside, much of the dross cleared from both the N and S property lines downslope, weedy areas in retreat, and spinach sprigs already up and the pea crop about to be.

On the writing front, I have been delayed--excusably, I believe--by this week of health diagnostics. Today I'll do a final tinkering on the Nature Conservancy speech for March 1--if the weather holds, C and I will resume on yard stuff this afternoon--and maybe be able to take the next two mornings to reorient into Prairie Nocturne.

28 Feb.--A very busy time, some of it brought on by good weather (we're trying to get a jump on yard chores every way we can) and some by the Website project, of which more anon. The ms still has not surfaced well through this--2 pp. Monday is the week's work thus far.

Amid the busyness: y'day I did a short Denver Post piece on "What Every Westerners Should Know," at behest of Ron Franscell in his shiny new gig as their Rocky Mtn reporter. Said he's asking people like "Redford and Cheney and you" about the topic.

LATER: @ 10:55, the big-enough one hit--7.0 earthquake. To beat the evidently changing weather, a definite edged cloud cover which came from the west and covered the sky except for the eastern quadrant where the early sun still was shining through, immediately after we walked the n'hood we did our next stint of yardwork, digging crab-grass clods away from the north edge of the lawn. C then worked at shaping things up there some more, while I went to the downslope and shoveled dirt away from bottoms of the couple of fence panels we'll try to paint first. The weather was warm--I now realize it squares with what Californians have told me is "earthquake weather"--but uncertain overhead, so we went in ~~about~~ the house about

28 Feb (quake day) cont.--10:45 to start toward lunch.

I had changed clothes and was standing by the big living room window, probably contemplating the fence project, when a shuddering began and I could immediately feel it build. I said a fervent "Oh, shit" and Carol called from the hallway "What is it?" I answered the obvious, "It's a earthquake, get in a doorway" as I hurried to the big arch to the dining room. With better presence of mind she said, "Get under the table?" and I said "Yeah!" We were under there until the shaking quit; there was a definite feeling of the house lurching, and one ominous little clatter of something falling, which turned out to be our nuts-and-bolts ~~rock~~ cowboy singer figurine which had been on the north windowsill in the living room. We decided to get out of the house, so we scrambled together our coats and hats, popped open the garage door, then put our shoes on outside, and backed the CRV into the driveway. Stood outside a few minutes, shortly joined by Sigrunn Ness who was shaken in more ways than one, then came back in and looked around. No damage that we can find, and we've both been calm about it all. An odd footnote: 3 or 4 nights ago I ~~am~~ had an earthquake dream, a long two-parter which began with some kind of city damage but no real involvement of me, distant scenes of whatever was going on, then a loopy scene set in a forest somewhere, where I (or the scenario, for again I can't remember any role for myself in it) went because of the damage. When I woke up that morning I thought to myself, analytically more than anything else, I ought to put that in my diary to see if ~~it's~~ it's in any way premonitory. Didn't get around to doing it, and I'm still not one for premonitions, but this spate of wonderful and spooky warm weather may have been tickling something inside me?

2 March--Aftermath, in more ways than one. On the significant side of work, went and did my speech to the Nature Conservancy last night to good result; a very intent audience, everything went fine, and this morning we're banking \$3,000. But y'day had a rocky start when I felt a little lightheaded while fixing b'fast, and found my pulse was up a bit--80, 82 at rest and into mid-90s when I'd walk across the room--and after lying down for a while I had to level with C that I didn't seem right. Got an 12:10 Gp Health appointment w/ Dr. Grimlund, young doctor who probably is a fill-in on days when Dr. Kato doesn't

2 March cont.--work, and she ran an EKG on me (which proved perfectly OK) and bloodtests (my borderline-anemic hemacrit count was 39, actually a point higher--better--than last time), and after considering me and my little case of spaceyness, she said it might be a case of earwax, both my ears totally plugged, the stuff pressing on eardrums, maybe affecting my balance. The nurse, Judy, gave a try at cleaning me out but found the stuff too dry and packed; but she then had the inspiration to put the softening liquid in my ears and plug me up with cotton wads while I went off to my EKG and blood work. By the time I came back, 20-25 min. later, she was able to flush out my ears, and by damn that seemed to promptly help. And, reassured that I didn't have what they call "a ~~maxima~~ cardiac concern," on I went with day, reshearsing the speech etc. I still don't feel as keen as I think I should, but allergy sometimes clouds me that way. So, onward.

13 March--Lo, the poor diary. Some of the constancy has gone into the garden diary instead, where I've felt we utterly need to keep track of the day-by-day yard chores to get a grip on this property over the years. But, from a look back to the '84 diary when I was browsing into our stay near the Castle in Edinburgh, some of the hell-bent get-it-all-down has gone from me. Too, this is a time of year when there are exasperating drains of energy --taxes, actuary, the Website project and the truly appalling tar baby of trying to get anything done via the Internet--that send me mentally blotto by what used to be daily diary time. Anyway, there it is. Time now to note that we had one of the biggest winds of the winter this morning, three-deep rollers coming onto Richmond Beach even at low tide; that we had our first dab of garden salad--spinach, a few color bits of brunia--the other night; and tonight C is fixing corned beef, with an eye toward sandwiches for us if we can get to go, weather-wise, to Dungeness tomorrow.

15 March, and at last a new typewriter ribbon. 4:30 now, after a hard but yieldful day of writing--on the "Soldiers" episode, Ninian and Donald gunning down the WW rustlers--and it rained most of the day, but now enough sun is coming through to silver all the water and lowest clouds.

We chose rightly y'day by lighting out for Dungeness. A worthy trip in more ways than one, because the crush of ferry-line traffic and then the constant highway caravan--on a Wednesday morning in March! C said she might as well be six years old again and on a two-lane road to the Jersey shore with her folks--and the mushrooming of sprawl on the Olympic Peninsula showed us our yen for over there is about over. That great prow of geography served us, often marvelously, for more than thirty years, and now it's simply time to say the hassle is no longer worth the going; once or twice a year to Dungeness probably is it, from here on. Our time on the Spit y'day was not vintage, birdlife not on hand as much as usual because of sharp surf that roiled the water for quite a ways out, but still it was fine. We ate corned beef sandwiches while nestled against a big driftwood log and thought yes, we have done a lot of this right.

Earlier in the day, hilariously unlike ourselves, we went on a shopping spree @ Swain's we-got-everything emporium in Pt. Angeles, and came home with an array from a carton of BBs to new belts.

A note on the home ground here: the place is drenched in color, red quince, forsythia, cherry tree, the enduring heather(!), and white and purple plum trees all ablossom.

19 March--A bright blue and blowy day, after y'day's warm rainforest-type daylong moisture. Here at the start of the afternoon I'm trying to deal by Internet w/ the Website project, and per usual, it's slow, aggravating and devilish.

And elsewhere on the perseverance front, today I nudged Dr. Ginsberg's office on my Feb. test results, and was told:

- the urine sample shows a "tiny amount" of protein;
- the bone survey shows OK (i.e., by my interpretation, no myeloma-riddled bones) except for age-related

March 19 cont.--degenerative changes in places such as my lower back. All in all, Dr. G passes word that the next step is a bone marrow exam at my discretion.

But when I'm not trying to homestead on the Web or deciphering doctors, life is pretty damn good. This is the last day of winter, we've survived an earthquake and Wall Street's ongoing avalanche, and so we look ahead. The house and property are outperforming themselves this time of year, and our get-at-it push on outside chores has resulted in early starts on vegetables and all else--the pruned branches shaping for the future, the fertilizer down doing its work after the good rain.

March 27--A better day at the manuscript, finally. It's been rainy, and the hunkering in no doubt helped.

On Sunday, the Website designer Jennifer Shepherd came over for about an hour and a half in the afternoon, and we made considerable progress. The story is different, though, any time I make an on-line venture myself into what proves to be a lengthening sequence of tasks that need to be done to get the thing onto a site. Thwarted y'day, for example, when our chosen site provider, Brinkster, demanded a password of me to let me get to its "join" on-line forms: what password?

Saturday, a peaceful and pleasant evening at the Rodens', replete w/ Jean's best dish, tamale pie.

What else? Much yardwork, chronicled in the garden diary.

March 31--The month is going out with bluster, enough so that I went out first thing this morn and cinched down my coldframe w/ a bungee cord. Weather by and large has been showery and sputtery, and have had to slow the accelerated veg garden planting accordingly.

As to the imprint of one more of my antique ways of life on these pages--the Olivetti Lettera portable, veteran of the Alaska trip for The Sea Runners--it's because I'm propping my left leg straight-out under the desk to nurse the knee, which took a mild but definite fit after I stood on it a bit off-balance y'day while putting up the pea trellis; La Lettera here on the main desk lets me fit the leg under better than in my usual typing low-desk slot.

March 31 cont.--So, if I have to be laid up this is the weather for it, and there's always plenty to be pecked away at. To catch up on some of the odds and ends that haven't managed to reach the diary until now:

--The 28th we went to the Provinces w/ Eric & Jan Nalder, 1st time we'd seen them since Eric's ascension to the San Jose Mercury News. 18 years and 2 Pulitzer @ the Seattle Times, but the strike--the performance of Frank Blethen and his forces during and after--ended it all for him. So he draws his Times pension--on early retirement meant as a way for the Blethenites to cull the staff, not him!--& he's teamed w/ a high-powered investigative set of reporters working under George Judson, a byline I recognize from the NY Times. Eric never tells us what assignment he's on, but he's been going to Sacramento, and if that ain't the epicenter of California power shenanigans, I dunno where. He mentioned that there's a greatly keener sense of journalistic competition in California, w/ the Merc up against the SF Chronicle, and the LA Times and Orange County Register in the picture, the very good Sacramento Bee, and on its home Silicon Valley turf it's even up against the Wall St. Journal. The Merc, he says, has about 425 in its newsroom, compared w/ about 345 @ S. Times; a bureau here, as well as Eric, and I think he said 45 people assigned to the Silicon Valley tech scene.

--And another Eric, well-met during our Home Depot outings: Eric Magellsen, the cerebral house inspector who did such a great job for us in sizing up this place. Naturally we asked him where he was during the earthquake, and he was on the job: a house in the Roosevelt district, not far from the reservoir, where the transplanted-from-the-East-Coast owner literally ran in circles until Eric reached out and got her by the elbow and said, You've got to stand under this doorway. Looking out, he said, he could see the power poles of the n'hood whipping almost like fly rods, and the quake made a sound like bulldozer treads on pavement. He'd been thru the '65 quake in a grocery store with stuff avalanching off shelves; he, like us, did think this one went on for a helluva long time.

March 31 cont.--And an addendum to earthquakery, from the other Eric: Nalder was on the phone to somebody @ the Merc when the quake hit, and so his conversation companion's yell of alert across the newsroom must surely have been the absolute first news of the Seattle quake '01.

--Further backing up into our social life: the 22nd, we went to our delayed dinner @ the Walkinshaws, and there from Portland and their inherited Hansville place were Tom and Joan Buell, who we'd met in my first gig @ Portland St. We'd taken Walt W'shaw a belated b'day gift, paperback of The All Of It, and since Tom had been an English prof and Joan comes of a Lakeside School family (her father was head of ~~it~~ the place), talk went literary pretty fast. For whatever reason I mentioned Terence O'Donnell, and the Buells reported that he'd died about 10 days before, @ 76, of throat cancer. They'd both been friends w/ him, Tom a member of a geezer foursome, along w/ Terry, who met for lunch every month or so, and Joan, who's been a hospice administrator, dropped by his apartment not long before he died. I asked what had accounted for Terry's wrenched, rather gnomish physical appearance, and they said osteomyelitis when young. They didn't seem to know any more than I'd gleaned on my own as to what he was doing in Iran in that time that wondrously produced ~~ixtix~~ Garden of the Brave in War--some teaching, some USIA; but did that mean CIA at the time? probably. Tom said Terry had mentioned not being far from finished with another book, which I figure might ~~be~~ involve that droll irresistible Tualitan boyhood stuff C and I heard him read at PSU. Anyway, he, or at least the best of his words, was one of distant loves; a mind and a tongue set on a crooked body, and he flinched not.

Here closer to home, I should report that forsythia and plum and heather and quince all dance in the breeze as I look out, and when I sat down to write this, for the first time in weeks a hummingbird parked itself in air at our feeder and tanked up.

April 4--Feel like I'm out on a day of parole, as<sup>we</sup> intend to head to the Skagit ~~fox~~ hoping for a glimpse of tulips, after devoting y'day to trying to conquer Website chores and coming out of an exhausting day having made only minimal gains (a site host arranged--Webburner--maybe). Between that and the thwacking the stock market is taking and the fumbling Bushies--all thumbs, all off to the right--it hasn't made for a great mood. Will try to turn that around with this outing.

April 5--Splendid day y'day, the snow geese at roadside along the Fir Island backroad and ducks (either American wigeons or green-winged teal, plus pintails) dabbling for us @ Indian Slough. Good lunch again at the LaConner Brewery. Occasional eagles. Got home about 2:30, the day still sunny and warm, so we mowed the lawn and I did a few veg chores. Then steelhead, done on the BBQ grill, for supper, along w/ our first full garden salad. Way to live.

Today I've buckled down to planning on the ms, doing a fresh run of pages and doping out what chunks need finishing to have a continuous run of ms of about 50,000 words by the time we go to Oregon in a month.

April 10--The little red pilot boat, which shows up perhaps seasonally on some kind of training or testing maneuvers, just made another of its loops to us and turned back south, just as a hummingbird crossed passages with it in a blink-quick up-and-down loopedy-loop of its own. Such a place.

Turned rainy just after lunch, and is still drizzling now @ 3:30. I've had a good quiet hunkered day, making progress in the ms on the section after the Klan's cross-burning. Salmon for supper tonight and next, and one of our own salads again tomorrow.

None too much else to report. C invited David & Marjorie last Sunday, and we walked the last loop (lots of inspired going in circles lately) of this n'hood we hadn't done w/ them.

11 April--6:47, tugs and barges going past on the blue clear water, bright as new toys on carpet.

16 April--A Monday of file-card tinkering, toward resumption of writing later in the week--tomorrow is a holiday, our 36th anniversary. A particularly fine Easter y'day, @ the Damborgs' along w/ Linda & Jeff, & Steve & Kay Frank. It was very like a first day of summer: we sat out back on Mark and Lou's patio much of the time, and when we got home, I checked the temp @ 7:45--63 degrees. (Just now, @ 4:25 and clouding in w/ possible rain, it's 64.) Linda & Jeff regaled us w/ their Kenya trip where they bought Kikuyu wares for the African village the zoo is installing.

We got into the yard this afternoon, and along with the blessed leftovers Mark & Lou lavished on us we have a fine fat salad from our garden.

17 April--Anniversary #36, on a day with sufficient showers and bluster-gusts to commemorate the chill wedding day back there in far-gone Evanston, but with enough sunbreaks that we'll get out for a walk and a U Book Store indulgence and lunch in the bar of Ivar's on Lake Union. The day is full of life, prim sparrows calling at the birdbath like Victorian tourists wondering whether to take the waters, sun lighting up the white bouquets of blossoms on the elderly pear tree we invigorated by pruning, and the veg bed mounds, dark with last night's rain, offering up the green of their spinach rows, lettuce, fledgling peas, and my bean venture in its coldframe lightbox.

A year ago we were in Helena, determinedly holding our tongues about the day being our anniversary so that Dave & Marcella Walter wouldn't exert themselves to anything special, busy to max as they already were. And we worked like hell all that day, grabbing off research at the Historical Society. This year, in contrast, we're in a veritable anniversary festival, as y'day Jean Roden e-mailed us an astonishing invitation to Canlis, to mark both our anniversary and their 50th. A gift certificate, she says, that they have to use by May 3, so... It came as immensely good news to us, as we were trying to figure out how to be adequate stand-ins for family on their 50th, after they nixed a couple of initiatives offered by their kids. On somebody else's tab, we all ought to do fine.

19 April--We had ourselves a fine day on the 17th, marking our 36th year together by, not surprisingly, treating ourselves to a bunch of books at the U Book Store, then a traditional lunch at our traditional table (SE corner window, of the bar) in the traditionally early-empty bar @ Ivar's Salmon House on Lake Union. Took the afternoon off, spiced up our supper with salad from our garden, then migrated to the couch for further spicing up. A good, good day, in life with this good woman.

Just now <sup>U</sup> has gone out for a session w/ Jean with the new camera. It's now 9, and I've spent the past 2 hours getting one thing (transfer of the domain name "ivandoig.com" to Webburner host site) ~~on the internet, which seems about par.~~ accomplished on the Internet, which seems about par. Couldn't even get on to Amazon.com to work on the next chore! Will now kill off a few phone calls--detritus, detritus--and turn to ms work.

28 April--Detritus, did I say? I start this weekend by trying not to let the Website project drive me to despair. This was to be the end of the beginning, so long to the tedious chores of accumulating text, pics and setting up ivandoig.com, as Jennie Shepherd is to do the final edits in time for the May 1 deadline we agreed on. Lo, last night there was a phone message from Jean saying the site more than fills her screen and her printer cuts off part of each page; have just tried printing out the Audio Bks pages on our iMac and so far, yes, the SOB is cut off in the printed version. So, I'm trying to peg away at troubleshooting something I know parlously little about, on a day when I want to be doing anything else.

A bit later: on the blessedly unWebby part of the scene a sailboat regatta has just wafted out of the Sound and the first ice-cream-palace of a cruise ship has migrated in.

29 April--Lord, I should be so lucky, but maybe the Website spasm of concern has passed and the goddamn thing will be there on the Web for better or worse. Spent much of y'day gritting all the way, on the situation, and the upshot was that phone calls to Sarah Norton @ home and to Tom Orton @ 2nd Story bookstore proved that the site's pages were fitting onto their computer screens OK, and with a bit more tinkering I was just able to squeeze it onto

29 April cont.--our IMac screen. Went over to Jean's after she got home in late afternoon and found that indeed her old Shoreline-begat Komodo computer has a screen resolution--640x400--below the minimum (800x600) that Jennie has chosen to work with, but it was adjustable in her settings and all of the page from my site could be brought onto the screen. I nonetheless lobbied Jennie to bring down the typesize a bit for better fit onto the screen; at the end of today or tomorrow I'll take a look at what should be her final result.

Onward, am I ever ready ~~for~~ for onward: blustery weather today which is actually laying down some needed moisture. The veg beds, led by the spinach, look absolutely burgeoning on a day like this. I've spent the morning tinkering at garden plans and other unintimidating chores, determined to get as relaxing a day as I can.

Catching up a bit on last week: on the 25th, one of unlikeliest social outings we've done in a long while, dinner at Canlis w/ the Rodens in joint celebration of their upcoming 50th annvsry and our just-past 36th. Their daughters had given them a gift certificate for the meal, but naturally the bill was beyond that, whatever it was--Jean handled it without flinching and John kept his mouth shut, so a good time was had.

Previous day, 24th, I pro bono'ed a talk to the NW history class @ Shoreline--the prof, Adam Sowertz (sp?), is using WBros as one of the texts.

Back before that, 21st, Tony & Lee came for supper.

And on the writing front, I've made real strides on the "Over There" chapter, but am not going to finish it off before the May 6 Oregon trip as I'd hoped.

5 May--Actually the "Over There" marathon did get done, y'day, by my lopping a few laps off the course. The more I looked at it, the more that section seemed to end with a kick on Wes's line, "Sam was my runner." So I'll now try to feather in the rest of the story of their Continental-and-Edinburgh affair as interior flashbacks in the picnic scene. That'll be tricky work, but could add texture to the picnic and modulation to the plotline.

So, we are at Saturday, choring our way into the car tomorrow. Things seem less fraught than before most trips, perhaps because it rained during the night and the day is crisp and promising, letting us move in and out

5 May cont.--on the various tasks; I'm looking forward to a stint in the veg garden, for instance, before I have to focus on packing.

We were visited by C's cousin Barbara Harper from April 30-May 3; Barbara, who has been self-sufficient in some of the nastiest places of Africa, makes a good house-guest, perfectly capable of keeping herself occupied when we're at our own stuff. She's 9 years older than C--C says that age difference was just great when she was 9 and had this spiffy 18-year-old cousin--so we know there may not be many more chances to see her now that she's tucking away in a Florida retirement compound. The two of us were between bemused and appalled at her African baggage train style of traveling, even now that she's back in this country and has a bone-frailty problem; I persuaded her to let me ship home her heftiest of 3 suitcases, a 35-pound hardsided old lunker, and so from here she went off to a 3-day visit to Walla Walla with only a pair of suitcases each heavier than we'd be game to wrestle in and out of airports. But salud, Barbara: keep on truckin' while you can. She brought along an array of gifts to sprinkle among the month's worth of visited folk, and we came out of it with a quite handsome pair of carved African heads (Kenyan; and heavy!) which now grace the garden room.

It's a time of year when we're starting to eat in the style we want to--perfect salads from our garden every night, couple of nights of Columbia R. salmon done on the barbecue grill, our own first WWalla onions in the green bean dish last night... And, why we get such a kick out of them we don't know, but the onset of the cruise ships--first of them I think on the 29th or 30th--tickles us. Maybe it's the scale of them, the preposterous lengths the world will go to try to have a good time: they come in the Sound as I'm getting up, 5 a.m. or so, and as C remarked, lit up to a faretheewell they look like state capitols.

13 May--Now that was a vacation. Our trip down the Oregon coast was sun-blessed every day. (Now that we are home, rain is fuzzing down, as if the bluff is wrapped in a cloud.) True, the afternoons were also wind-whipped--our second hike of Nehalem's wondrous beach, on the 11th, meant coming back into the teeth of a vigorous blow, the kind where you can't quite walk straight)--but by getting out promptly in the mornings we caught calm in most of the places we wanted to hike, most particularly the dunes just south of Florence. I'd been a little leery of the dunes portion of the trip, dreading wind there and not sure how my knees would take the sand. But G and I agree that was the best set of hours of a magnificent week, the set of dunes out to the ocean all to ourselves--except for the black bear tracks we intercepted halfway out, quite dramatic in the clean sand--and the sandform horizon against the blue sky a perfection. The lodgings were a chart, up and down: the architecturally ideal room 206 @ the Waves in Cannon Beach the first night, where we both unaccountably had a wretched night's sleep; the Embarcadero the 2 nights in Newport, sited like a charm with views along the fishboat waterfront and out through the ball-bounce arches of the long bridge to the mouth of the bay with fishcraft always coming or doing, but the room aging and clunky--we used the white plastic deck chairs and shin-high table to function comfortably inside; then the freebie of the trip, the Sea Rose cottage about 6 miles south of Yachats. The Sea Rose came of a gift certificate dropped on us 5 or so years ago by Graham Lewis of Eugene, who runs the place by kind of remote control from Eugene w/ his wife Beverly, and it is cottagery as all hell: floors, ceilings, counters all with slightly out-of-plumb leans, accumulated furniture in which no piece is related to any other, and instruction lists on everything. Ah, and the elevated bed, about sternum-high, which provided a slice of view of the surf and constant logistical monkeying, all of it up and down the two-step climb that you had to be very sure of your footing on. But the place served us well, sheltered from the wind as it is by the jutting house to its north and considerable trees, and we sat out in the sun and read and then had drinks, as the wind ripped overhead. First night there, we backtracked 20+ miles to the beach house

13 May cont.--5.8 mi. south of Newport shared by Judy & Fred Flanders and Judy & Roger Rosenthal. The Judys met when they were both Little Professor bookstore owners, and Judy R. still has her store --now the Oregon Book Company-- in Oregon City, though she's trying to sell it. The pair of couples ~~don't have~~ have a knockout house, open, bright, airy, a bit off the road, that they went in together on 3 years ago, about as we were buying this one. We had wine and commonality--Judy R. turned out to be from Miles City, and a master's in history from Montana State, student of Malone and Roeder--then into Newport for supper at about the third choice, after one place was closed and a new one looked pricey. The restaurant I think was in the Hallmark resort--one of those barriers-by-the-sea--and I had an OK seafood stew, but C wisely went against the drift and got a helluva good ribeye steak. The next night the two of us ate at LaSerre in Yachats, where the food was terrific. (Likewise our 2 meals at the Bistro in Cannon Beach. And we ate well at the Newport pizza place, Izzy's, which the Atwoods had tipped us has one of the best views along the coast.)

--Breaking the trip down into moments:

--Trying to get ourselves to pronounce Yachats correctly as YAW-hots after decades of saying Yah-HOTS.

--The lighthouses, o the lighthouses, for we two lovers of Stevensonia and the northern lights of any coast. We only went through the stubby octagonal one at Cape Meares, barely room for us and another couple and the docent in almost a hugging match with the bodacious Fresnel lens. But more or less to kill time, we went out to the Yaquina Head light from Newport and were richly entertained by the characteristic pellmell wind and the consequent whitecaps in the aqua-green and the sets of surf, and the gulls and cormorants airlifting nest material into niches on the cliff face. And maybe the single greatest sight of the trip was of the Heceta Head lighthouse and keeper's house, from the viewpoint about a mile south: the white-and-red structures standing out in the

13 May cont.--sun, on their little cleared shelves partway up the timber-thick headland.

--Our visit among tufted puffins and rhinoceros auklets and murrelets and pigeon guillemots, in the aviary at the Newport aquarium. What a chance that was, to watch the birds up close.

All in all, the week could not have treated us better. About 4 days into the trip, I told C I hadn't had a useful thought throughout, proof that I was relaxing. On the bodily front, my knees did OK--which is to say, up to an hour, total, of walking--at the dunes and Nehalem; less well at Cannon Beach, where there's an almost indistinct ripple to the beach even when the sand looks flat and dry; and the knees were bothered by more than a few blocks of sidewalk at a time in Newport, but managed the boardwalk and fishboat docks there all right. Now that we're home, I do indeed feel better, heartened and calmer, than when we left; the one nag I do have is a somewhat sore ball of the right foot, which I hope is merely from gardenwork we did as soon as we arrived back, y'day.

16 May--I've been determined to hang onto the mood improvement the Oregon trip gave, and so far I'm doing pretty well, although feeling the sum of the day's work by now, 4:40. Started this week w/ diagnostic reading of the ms, found it really pretty good but improvable, and now have deepened some of the character paragraphs and am looking at a way to thread the Wes-Samuel-Susan story through an existing scene. Outside, we've managed some good garden work despite unsettled weather: we keep marveling to each other, how did we know to choose last week for our trip instead of this swirly set of days? Something pretty close to a winter storm romped through late y'day and last night, 30-40 mph wind.

On the how-am-I-ever going-to-get-things done front, today brought a letter from the governor of Oregon wanting me to keynote a Sustainability conference in Sept. Ai-yi-yi: big opportunity, big work.

22 May--Although this may turn into a broiler of a day--85, for May--the morning has been exquisite, blue with a bit of a breeze; shirtsleeve walking weather when we did our n'hood round @ 7.

I've edged up on the next ms chunk to be conquered--working the onset of the Susan-Wes affair into flashback in the picnic scene--but am not going to be able to get all the way on top of it today. Have spent the worktime since coming home from Oregon on touching up the ms, making inserts, and the stuff is looking pretty good to me by now.

With this warm clear weather, we have jumped all over yardwork projects, zapping weedy areas w/ Roundup, sprucing up the veg plantings (I'm right now babying 2 more tomato plants toward planting, by hardening them in "bright shade" etc.), fertilizing away. And we're eating magnificently, big garden salads w/ prawns or, as we'll do tonight, w/ leftover salmon from what I've grilled; last night's stunning sockeye was the first of the Copper River season for us.

28 May--Memorial Day, rainy and blowy, natch. Showers had been forecast, but I was so skeptical we chose y'day to tune up the watering system and also to handwater the beleaguered red flowering currants etc.; anyway, things are now incontestably getting a strong soaking.

Y'day was a decent day for outdoor work, as the weather was undecided but unbothersome, and the previous day, the 26th, was lovely. Again we simply went from job to job in the yard, exulting in this place. Y'day, for instance, as I was getting in some last minutes of enjoying a drink on the deck before BBQing halibut kabobs, @ 5:20 the cruise ship Norwegian Sky was outbound directly in front of us, with three sailboats in the foreground, three powerboats in the background, and the Edmonds-bound ferry aiming directly my way as it steered to cut behind the N'iam Sky, and I thought, where else could there be such a tableau? If fate falls on us in the next minute, we've had nearly three years in this glory that we had the verve and nerve to reach out and pull ourselves to.

On the writing front, by noon on the 25th I reached a point on Prairie where I could put a little handful of

28 May cont.--"To come" ligatures near the end of the long and tricky "Ninian's "Land" chapter and declare it all readable so far, about 50,000 words' worth. C will undertake an assessment for me mid-week, after she makes tomorrow's trip to Hood Canal w/ Margaret Svec, and I'll dabble back into it myself, probably. Am at a point now where I need to scope out, pretty precisely, the scenes that will carry the arc of plot I have in mind. Most specifically, I have to decide whether Monty--and the book--goes to the Harlem Renaissance as originally intended.

On the thinking/making side of things, was dismayed early last week at the suicide of Susannah McCorkle, whose jazz singing has been one of our delights in the musical resurgence we've had these past 3-4 years. Craft, she had it in spades: "The Waters of March" knocks me out every time I hear it.

Our social side: the Rodens came for supper--immense salads from our garden makings, w/ remainder of the Copper River salmon we'd BBQed the night before, on the 26th, an evening when blessedly we could sit on the deck and give them some sun. On the 24th, we expended the gift certificate the furniture maker Bob Spangler gave us by taking the Damborgs to the Wild Ginger. A good evening as ever with them, though the wildly popular Wild Ginger isn't really the Doigs' kind of place, with its deliberate decibel level and its play-it-safe menu of grilled grub.

30 May--Wintry morning, gray and cool. We are hunkered in after excursions y'day--Carol's the much more considerable, taking Margaret Svec to Hood Canal to close out 40+ years of her cabin there. As C said, some day of endings for Margaret; while they were over there, Margaret's husband Jerry, so badly stricken that he'd been taken off life support, died. My day at the UW, while busy enough, was not so fraught. Tracked down some research and fact-checking for Prairie, a la the routines I've followed in that library for 35 years, but the big fact is that I've about reached an end there on that sort of things, being able to plunge into the stacks and intuit my way into relevant stuff within a certain set of call numbers. The library is amid a two-year renovation, which from the looks of it will provide more study area, less shelving for the kind of obscuriana my work thrives on. Also, my knees told me I'd had a helluva long day.

1 June--Sluggish damn day, distended for me by afternoon trip to Gp Health hematology and my 2nd checkup on my MGUS case. News was good enough: status quo shown in my blood tests, indicating the protein spike isn't increasing. I'm to see Dr. Ginsberg in 4-month spans the next 2 times, then every 6 months. So be it.

One of the grayest days imaginable today, after y'day's lovely 80ish version, but it finally did produce some moisture, a pretty good deep watering. The veg beds look vivid and refreshed. We're eating marvelously from them--lettuce, radishes and onions for salads, spinach, and now peas and small carrots are about to come.

C read ms for me the past couple of days, and found it quite fine. We both think I'm about 2/3 done, which I'll gladly take.

Going out to dinner tonight, which we can both use after this blah day--the Atwoods are picking us up, we're heading to Chinook's for Copper River salmon.

Note on today's degrees of gray weather: about 10:15, an actual cloud, round-nosed as a glacier and its rainsack underside perfectly visible, came down to 150-200' above the Sound: well below us and our bluff. An outbound Evergreen vanship, probably the Ever Uranus that we saw come in y'day, was met by it, the ship in the clear one minute and the perfect picture of a vessel in a storm the next.

4 June--Yow, what a shipwreck of a day. Whatever tides converge at these times, off the map we went to "Here be Maintenance." The Atrium guys--usual Dave and a helper--installed the new big outside blind over the living-room window in good style, but it still took 2 hours of our being on hand. First thing this morning, when we came back from our walk, the front door latch quit working. The locksmith promised for 2 got here at 7:30+. Brad Hembree showed up to leave us the new ~~new~~ deck post-tops he'd milled, discovered the pattern he'd used is for a  $\frac{1}{4}$ " accent instead of the  $\frac{1}{2}$ " they actually are; he thinks he can re-mill them OK, but we'll see... Then we fought the sewer gas problem in the hall bathroom... So it went, fortunately with some outside time for both of us. And tonight we eat a stir-fry w/ first sugar peas and carrots from our blessed garden.

9 June--An uneven week of getting things provably done. After the maintenance maelstrom--which didn't entirely let up: 3 bolts fell out of the groaning medieval draw-bridge that is the garage door, and I spent a portion of y'day afternoon tightening--I sorted filecards for Prairie and had a couple of useful days at that, although not a goddamn countable word of ms achieved, of course. Finally managed some thinking and planning time y'day morning, and the final 1/3 of the plot began to seem better.

Outside the book, I am in one of those periods which sneak up and dump a bunch of things I don't really want to do. Foremost is the talk/article for Tony Angell's night of honor @ the Wausau Museum; I'm going to try to bang that out in blurblike rhetoric, maybe as soon as Monday. The Oregon speaking invite is on hold for another week while they try to raise more \$ to meet my \$8000 stipulation; I absolutely batted aside the guy's phone message this week wondering if I'd do it for \$5000. Geez, let them try Cronkite for 100 grand or Steve Ambrose for 40 G's. It has occurred to me that this is the same old regional stuff--hey, he's a guy right here, bet we can get him for X dollars--that I had to fight as a freelance magazine writer. There's also the prep'n to be done for the UW July 5 gig, where I did manage to tell 'em to double the original \$2000 offer.

Housewise, C made a real gain for the place by painting the deck post caps delivered by Brad Hembree. With a little luck, there's a maintenance problem we may get whipped by the end of this month. The garden, meanwhile, is glorious: 1st sugar pea batch for supper last night, good bunch of strawbs for b'fast this morn, carrots are avbl, so is spinach, lettuce endless...

17 June--One never do know what will come along next, do one. Y'day, postman comes to the door, I think for the first time since we've lived in this house. Package the size of a breadbox, no way the mailbox can swallow it. I notice it's addressed to us at the old place, am glad the postman seems to catch these mis-addressings on the fly and just bring 'em to us--as, indeed, does the UPS guy, the Fed Ex blonde, the Airborne Express guy... something to be said for living in the same neighborhood

17 June cont.--for an eon. So, I fetch the mystery box (no discernable return address) and other mail to the living room, where we're having the Saturday noon drink before lunch, and jackknife it open. Fancy foam padding, over another box: wooden, sumptuous. I promptly think Paul Allen, but even when we're blinking at the embossed red Russian egg-shaped glass thing that is nested in the box, I figure it's one more memento of the Alaska trip. Not even close: it's the invite to a St. Petersburg trip this August.

So, since that giddy unpacking, we have scooted to the U Book Store--slam dunking our acceptance form and our rapidly reasoned out choices for excursions: Tallinn! the Hermitage! into the post office on the way--for a St. P guidebook and some Russian-language refresher books and a Literaturnya Gazeta for me. As soon as we were back from that I phoned Betty Mayfield, the good elf behind all this in her guise as Faye Allen's librarian. Once again, the invited writers are me and Jack Vance--maybe others, we'll see. So, thanks to the literary streak in the Allen bandwidth of wealth, this ought to be a mind-expanding experience.

Back on the planet Earth, I luckily--in the sense that luck is the residue of design--plowed through some of the looming non-book stuff last week. Conjured the 1100-word piece for Tony Angell's museum catalogue on Monday & Tuesday, pretty efficiently. Then re-read, in preparation for the July 5 UW gig, The Sea Runners. Figured I would still like the book, but I wasn't set for how deft and distinctive I found it to be. Be that as it may, what a cosmic coincidence that for the first time in years I would be thinking back over the work on that book, going over my notes and files about the 1980-82 immersion into Russian America, and a day or two later here comes the Allen magic carpet with a samovar on it.

And just before all this, we had a fine heart-stirring visit from Linda Miller. She's facing a remainder of life (she's 57, is all) with multiple sclerosis, and doing it with greatest guts. In the early Seattle years when the Millers and the Doigs were close as a clan, I sometimes chafed at Linda's buttonholing questions about, well, damn near about anything I was doing or thought I

June 17 cont.--was doing. C always told me Linda just wanted to know, and while I agreed there was nothing wrong with a searching intelligence, there were times when I just didn't want to be frisked. But the past several times I've seen her, in D.C. during booktours, that's all faded out of me and I've come to the point where C started, just enjoying the hell out of Linda's smarts and the elbows and knees she's thrown back at life's assaults. I see C has put in her diary the details of going to Port Townsend on the 9th to fetch Linda from Jack Gordon's Rosewind community, and so I won't re-describe that. But it felt good to have her come across the continent to see us and Jack, and how I wish her mettle could/would give her a break in life, remission from the MS. That is not the likelihood. Anyway, I see it as an anthem of Linda that, of all our skyrocket friends--the three or four McArthurite geniuses, the Pulitzer winners etc.--she's the one in the Smithsonian, for the Golda poster she did for NOW. But can she type? Yes, and all else that can be expected of a human, as it turns out.

Ground-level: we're eating fabulously, the garden pouring forth lettuce, spinach, peas, carrots, straws, onions, more to come. June has been a dabby month of weather so far, a lot of morning cloud, some showers, a true rain or two, but we've headed outside any afternoon that was bearable at all, and the place is in greatly improved shape because of that.

June 25--On the social side, the Walkinshaws came for dinner on the 22nd, noble folks as ever. Workwise, I've just called Kris Puopolo back about her proposition for me to write the intro for her Scribner p'back reissue of The Yearling, and told her if she'd go for 1500 words instead of a 3,000-worder, I'll do it, but if she wants to go long she'd probably hit up somebody like David Quammen.

Weather has been iffy; enough showers y'day to post-pole use of the water system anyway.

27 June--62 years on this earth, which is marking the day for me with a festive, or at least somewhat antic, drench of rain spates. So far--9 a.m.--the weather has ranged from real drilling-down rain to intense, clear, Alaska-like light on the far shore and the clouds cottoned down onto Hood Canal. A nicely mellow day, even though the blurts of rain are not going to enhance our celebratory excursion to Linda and Syd and the Bloedel Preserve on Bainbridge this afternoon. Linda and I are to rev up their BBQ--I'm to show her how to get in the habit of an electric starter instead of the hated charcoal fluid--to do salmon for supper. Gonna be fun, whatever the elements try on us. Here on the home front, C gave me "Easy Answers for Great Gardens" for piquant reading, and as she pointed out, the maritime scene has also been producing for me--the Corps of Engineers workboat Puget came in so close under the slope, just down from us, it half-disappeared into the trees, evidently fishing out floating logs w/ its crane; and an old-style tramp freighter went past, verily like those in the Howard Pease sea stories I read as a kid. While on the ever-wondrous topic of ships: we've developed the hobby of trying to pick the names off the daily Evergreen van ships that parade through, all of them dubbed as if by somebody whose English comes ~~up~~ out of some combination of dictionary, theory, and blind guess. The all-time prize steamed in and out a few days ago, the Ever Unific.

28 June--A fine and various birthday, y'day. C drove us to the waterfront for lunch in the bar at Ivar's through a quite terrific rain. It had let up by the time we crossed the Sound on the 12:25 ferry to Bainbridge, and gave us barely a spritz as we were led through the Bloedel Preserve by Linda and Sydney. The Bloedel wowed C and me; much more extensive than we thought, and about as deft as money can make gardening look "natural." It's as if the forest never knew a weed or a slug. We came across a crew of 8, grooming away on the forest floor. Downright incredible to us now-and-then planters of things was the moss garden sprung from a quarter million implants. So, a fine time there, then the tour of Linda and Syd's own 4-acre forest, including the MacArthur Genius pond, and onward to a supper of sockeye. My gift

28 June cont.--was a treasure, a signed reader's copy of Linda's soon-to-be-book of poems, The Seconds. Then the day closed with that usual frenzy of island living, the rush to get to the ferry--C and I sprinted on after the departure whistle blew.

The rain was a valuable deep-watering, particularly as the forecast now is for warming weather, 80 by July 2.

Writing news from Linda: brilliant three-year machine she is at producing books of poetry, she's already into the first poem of the next collection, which will be about velocity.

29 June--Added reflection on the Bainbridge trip of the 27th, which occurred to me as I thought back on it: how much we--C and I and our circle of friends--are threaded into the tapestry of this region by now. Before we went downtown to catch the ferry to Winslow, I was on the phone w/ Tony Angell, telling him we were looking forward to the Bloedel Preserve, had never been, etc. Tony at once said what I already had in mind, that that's where Theodore Roethke died, and added that he was to play badminton w/ Roethke that weekend but R. had called and canceled, saying as Tony remembers they were going to see Morris Graves instead. I checked the perpetual calendar and yes, Aug. 1, 1963, was a Thursday; the Seager biog of R. says he was visiting the Bloedels/Bagley Wrights for the day while Beatrice shopped in Seattle, but I doubt that--he'd been in a manic phase and I wouldn't think she would leave him on his own getting to and from the Bloedel place, which is toward the north end of Bainbridge; seems to me she was probably going to join him there. In any case, there was Tony's piece of the jigsaw puzzle that was Roethke, and there were we at the swimming pool that's now filled and become a Japanese sand garden, w/ the Roethke and then some of her day, Linda Bierds. And when we went in to what is now the visitors center, the Collins/Bloedel French chateau, there over the fireplace was a Kenneth Callahan painting such as we'd never seen but of a scene Callahan had told me about--the forest of the Cascade Mountains, where he worked as a CCC young guy.

29 June cont.--On another front: I came home from an afternoon of spilling money everywhere--2 pair of new glasses ordered after my eye exam, new socks and underwear from Nordstrom, outlandishly priced Levis from the Bon--to learn that Carol had bagged a crow. Whether he was fixated on the garden--the new beans?--or just a dim member of the species, he would not budge from the rain-gutter over the front window as she walked past under him with the BB gun, got him in profile, and dropped him. She's now just about an ace, with a kill and a probable.

2 July--Another tree-cutting day, which is to say another frazzling day. But Mike Lampers just now had his lunch on the downstairs deck and cheerily said he thought they'd get the downslope big alder--after about an hour of chainsawing their way to it through blackberries etc.--and there's not that much to be done in the topping closer to the brink. So, fingers crossed, we may be out of this by the end of the day.

I've spent the day in run-through of the reading I'll give at the UW on the 5th, and a few other mild desk chores. It's another gorgeous day, blue, blue, blue.

Night of the 30th, Jim and Lois Welch came ~~x~~ for supper, first time they'd seen the house since we all stood in tiptoe and peeked in when we'd just bought it and were keyless. Enjoyed them greatly; C said afterward what a fine long friendship this has been, where we all just pick up where we left off, however long ago it was. Jim and Lo just had been to France and Britian, for publication in those places of The Heartsong of Charging Elk. Funniest story: it's already been published in Italy, where the title was changed to The Lovesong of Impetuous Elk.

3 July: By damn, Mike Lampers did get the trees whacked, and shaggy and aggravating as the job was--he must have spent nearly an hour chainsawing his way through blackberries etc. to the big alder--C and I think it made a dramatic difference downslope, letting the eye register the dimension of the downslope where before it was hazed out by the alder.

And it's been exquisite weather, turning a bit milky now but lovely this morning, so that I sat out on the deck reading the newspapers.

6 July--Gorgeous afternoon, which I've spent much of just sitting on the deck, watching the ships go by, the air gun handy for any passing crows (we spend an inordinate amount of time shooting at crows; a bit like presiding at Yosnaya Polyana, this), and, oh, browsing over the details of our forthcoming weekend in St. Petersburg.

It truly is so wonderful it's a bit unreal, life here lately. Y'day I was paid \$4,000 for a day on campus (although it being a university, the check is not only in the storied mail, it's in the campus mail), and all went well. The NW History & Literature class team-taught by John Findley and Dan Lamberton had alert students with good questions, and the afternoon reading, the world premiere of *Prairie Nocturne*, drew about 100 people at 2 on a sunny afternoon. So, I couldn't ask for better.

On the home front, tonight we eat crab and fresh salad from our bountiful garden.

9 July--The weather has stayed delicious, the weekend passed in wonderful mid-70s temperatures with the Sound a lovely blue and diversions every little while--the Budweiser.com blimp, sudden squadrons of painted-up WWII planes, Kenmore floatplane pilots dabbling high or low as the mood moved them, and a gem-spill of boats on the water all day long. Today is heading toward 80, but still seductive. I primped the garden some this morn, and have flailed at a few desk chores, but am producing nothing that can be called writing. That's maybe OK for a little while longer, but... Anyway, exult in it while we can.

16 July--The sunny weather passed, and we've had actual rain, at times y'day & earlier today. Now it's simply cottony and heavy, and I face a dental auguring--semi-annual cleaning of teeth--in a couple of hours, after a morning of another least favorite, speechwork. All in all, this is not our favorite point of the summer, what w/ any plant that can catch anything catching it, crows aswarm, the moles moling, and so on. I intend to grind away this week and come out of it with the Oregon speech needed for Sept. 6, which at least will be some financial progress.

Over the weekend we did any dabs of gardening we could, and overall we're both reading our way toward St.

16 July cont.--Petersburg, C having gone through a Pushkin biog and now on Salsbury's 900 Days, my immersion the Bruce Lincoln biog of the city, Sunlight at Midnight.

On the 12th, Mary Clearman Blew did the UW summer course gig I'd done the week before, and I picked her up after her talk and fetched her here for supper w/ us and then C drove her to the airport. A fine visit w/ her, as Mary and I can talk almost a kind of shorthand about western stuff, from our likenesses in age and country of growing up. She told a funny story of having been w/ Kittredge and Ralph Beer on a panel about ranching once, Kittredge leaning over to her and saying, "I don't know about you, but my ranching credentials are getting a little dusty" and Beer telling the audience that from the rancher point of view he was born into, the Kittredges would have been called a big outfit but Mary's folks would have been "legitimate operators." We talked a bit about our mutual favorites by Kittredge--"Breaker of Horses" and "Phantom Silver", we ~~met~~ single out in unison --and Mary speculated that Bill's closeness w/ Carver maybe worked against him as a writer, turning him stylistically in that direction. I hadn't thought about this for a while, but I remember shaking my head huh-uh, wrong, after Bill told me Carver had edited "Phantom Silver" out of some collection of Bill's, maybe "We Are Not In This Together." Anyway, the talk jogged along that way, some of the sharpest shoptalk I get to do.

22 July--Not my best mood, from having to hang loose on a Sunday, dancing attendance on Scott Reusser to see if he'll show up and reseal the driveway. He blew our earlier arrangement, to get it done while we were gone for a week to Oregon, apparently through his habit of never writing anything down. I'm trying to grit through this driveway sealant project, the odor of which C can't take and so we need to clear out of here while it's applied, and get the last little retaining wall installed by Scott, and then no have to deal with the will-o'-the-wisp SOB for another year.

This comes on top of what was my least favorite kind of week anyway, writing a speech. It's quite simply like being in a swamp for a week and knowing you've just got to stay there until it's done. But it's an \$8000 fee on this

22 July cont.--one, not to be sneezed at.

Other than that, we've been in a social spate. The Provincines w/ the Nelsons on the 18th, first time we'd seen them since they've begun their turn toward life on Bainbridge--they move over there in Sept.; @ the Nalders the next night, reprising Montana after their trip thru the Dupuyer country; and Jean and John here on the 20th, <sup>C</sup> fixing a pork roast and sauerkraut supper for Jean's 71st birthday celebration. Tonight, to the Damborgs.

Wow, life here amid the birds. Half an hour ago I was being driven batty by crows, and just now a goldfinch alit in the garden, like a poem written in feathers. Had another terrifically privileged moment y'day afternoon, when I was looking over the tomato crop, and over the blueberry patch--about 20' away--something passed w/ a sound a lot like a playing card against bicycle spokes. My eye caught them as they started up--two hummingbirds, possibly in some kind of courtship, one making that sky-rocket straight-up ascent we've seen them do, but the other zooming around and around it in a helix pattern. Up and up they went, to what I could ~~clearly~~ clearly gauge was at least 30' above Kastners' bigleaf maple which we figure is between 80 and 90 feet high. It was an astonishing performance--like human figure skaters covering a rink the length of a football field in a few seconds. Not long after, I did see one of the hummers tank up a little on our sugar water, in the feeder that's otherwise not much visited in summer, and sit for a while on a branch over their favorite dining place, the fuschia. And after a little, although it was mostly blur, I'm pretty sure I saw a robin chased out of that area by a hummingbird hot on its tale.

27 July--One more project, w/ an attractive fee, I'm going to have to get some quick traction on: Kris Puopolo called from Scribner p'backs the other day to take me up on my notion of doing a shorter intro for The Yearling re-issue than she'd proposed, for same \$5,000 fee. At about the same time, here came an airy offer from Modern Library asking me to do intro for Stegner's WHERE THE BLUEBIRD... for "standard Modern Library fee" of \$1,000. Relished faxing them back just now blandly saying, Nope.

27 July cont.--Weather has murked up, this morn, and forecast for weekend is showery. We're going to watch for a chance to get out and try to encourage the candytuft along top of the new retaining wall, which, miracle of abso-goddamnute miracles, Scott Reusser's crew installed y'day while we were on a Fidalgo Island outing with the Atwoods. Never laid eyes on the guys: they weren't here yet when we left @ 9, there the wall stood when we got back a bit past 3! C and I feel celebratory, as that should be the last of the summer's projects we have to have somebody come and do.

And we had exquisite weather for y'day's outing, Peter & Margaret choosing the Anacortes quiet<sup>y</sup>-kept<sup>t</sup>, damn near secret, park called Cap Sante, and then we drove up Mt. Erie. On the way, we dallied at the WSU experimental gardens just W of Mt. Vernon.

The night before, the 25th, the Rodens & John's nephew Sherwin and his lady Carlene Wagner came here for drinks and view off the deck, then we went to the Rodens' for tamale pie supper and ice cream cake in honor of C's b'day the day before.

30 July--A fine crisp dawn, though I now see (7 a.m.) a long low cloudbank asserting itself over the far shore. Rained on the 28th, which was welcome, and weather lifted enough y'day afternoon for us to work outside. For the first time in quite a while my back is nagging me, I think traceable to sitting in the back seat of Atwood's car on the Anacortes trip. It plays hell with me when I wake up, then loosens some during the day, but I've plainly got to give it the old back-cure exercises, damn it.

War against the garden varmints peaked y'day, when there was a mole in the trap in the pea bed and I downed a crow out of the Kastners' tree. For all my frets about incursions on the garden, ~~the~~ our eating is glorious--veg stir-fry last night w/ fresh beans, peas, carrots & onions from our own miniscule farm. Also harvested blueberries, strawbs and first few blackberries.

Spent much of the weekend reading The Yearling, for sake of the intro I'm to write. Intend to do so before the Russia trip, trying hard to keep decks clear for resuming on Prairie this fall.

Odd household note: y'day Tony Angell dropped off the substitute sculpture he's loaning us while our Bird at Sea

30 July cont.--goes off to the Wausau museum show. It's a big bronze raven, and try it wherever we do in the living room we thought was so capacious, it takes up about half the place, too much of the place.

5 August--The weather turned gloppy the past week, clouds and bluster but no moisture, yet we're glad enough to have this grayed version rather than the heat wave from Billings to, I don't know, the Equator.

And actually it was a week that lent itself to the chore at hand, the intro I've done for the Scribner re-issue of The Yearling. This, and the speech for the Oregon conclave, and the museum catalogue copy on Tony Angell's work--it turns out I still have a notable knack at prescribed stuff, even though I don't much like the day-by-day hammering in my head that it takes. Taking these on has produced an earnful summer--the Scribner job is for \$5,000, for about 1,500 words--and given the tending of the place and other seasonal tasks, I'm not sure I'd have advanced much on the Prairie ms anyway.

The next turn of the head is toward the Bronze Horseman, the St. Petersburg long weekend on Paul Allen's more than magical carpet. By clearing away the writing assignments and the house projects--except for some deck-rail stripping and caulking and painting: that looms--there is some honest time to think ahead to what I want to get out of the trip, to try to tune in on the Russian language as she is writ, and generally live like we oughta. Made a bemusing start on that y'day when C and I hired Bryony Angell to decorate the matryoshka dolls we're to kick in to the Allen side-charity of the trip, ~~xxxxxx~~ and are coughing up \$600 for her to do it. Well, hell, just pass along to her that goddamn gimmick tax rebate from George Duk-blyu, we figured.

We also managed to whip--or, more like, lay siege to and triumph by grinding attrition--sundry other chores last week. C did in a number of them on an afternoon to Edmonds, including taking out a \$100,000 CD for us. We made a foray to the Big 5 store in Ballard to try for a companion to our BB-pellet gun--crows are so constant now we need both upstairs and downstairs modes of blasting 'em

5 Aug. cont.--out of here--and came home in triumph with what seemed to be an identical weapon. Except when, after I had painstakingly put the scope on it etc., I went to put BBs in and found it had no magazine: a single-shot breech-loader pellet gun only, that model. Told C it was about enough to make me cry--I'd tracked down this gun with a marathon ~~phases~~ of phone calls that afternoon--but she simply took it back the next morning and, by god, came home with the combo model we wanted (it was tucked away, escaping us and the clerk, because it's now sold scopeless) and a scope thrown into the deal.

The crows and the outdoors life here remind me: I am having one of the great vegetable struggles yet, since we left the maw of slugs at our previous house, in trying to grow some autumn peas. The possibility of this showed up in a column in the NW gardening magazine we're taking, and we thought, great! This coolish weather is at least good for starting peas, and so I got up the first portion of the row, only to have the mole plow under them repeatedly. Since then, one marauder or another--likely birds, likely cutworms, maybe sowbugs, maybe slugs--one way or another ~~assassinates~~ assassinates 2, 3, 4 plants a night. So, I keep flinging peas in the ground, they thrive by day and catch hell by night.

13 Aug.--Well, the mind better get concentrated: on the 16th we leave for St. Petersburg. Last week mostly went to sprucing up the deck railing, a gauntlet of paint-stripping, sanding, caulking and painting that had me grumbling midway through--some of the worst chores my body gets put through, in what is always the best weather of the year. Luckily C, an astute painter, is more patient with the deck task than I am, and we came out of it Friday morning with the deck ready for another year of weather.

Had a social doubleheader y'day, Sunday, spending the morning w/ Linda Sullivan and Jeff Saeger, then to dinner @ Betty & Roy Mayfields', along w/ their visiting parents from Calgary, Alex & Emily Hemstock. Linda and Betty are in exotic jobs w/ truly distinctive cultures to parse through, and herewith a few of their tales:

--Linda, as project manager for the zoo, says she has to be cognizant of the fact that a lot of the hands-on staff--keepers etc.--are not interested in the projects

13 Aug. cont.--she's ramrodding, correctly seeing that anything she asks of them is simply extra work for them and from their point of view, not to any particular benefit of the animals. She said she's just had a welcome perspective added to her staff, a retired keeper who knows the animals and their personas; when it came up that the elephants are almost always viewed in the confinement of their Thai-style barn, he said that's the way the elephants want it--when they're fed at the far end of outdoors enclosure to lure them out, they hightail right back into the barn as quick as they can. It has struck Linda how farm- or ranch-like the zoo is for a lot of its staff, chores that have to be done on time, over and over. She said from that kind of agricultural level, there's then the overlay of architectural and construction people she works with, on projects such as the evocative African village she's just done. Budgets are fantastically lower than on the West Point sewage plant or Sound transit stuff she worked on: the African village cost only \$2 million, ponied up by Bill and Melinda Gates. Consequently, without high-priced consultants or talent, projects can hit some screw-ups, but they also draw newcomers trying to launch into their field--Linda said the young woman doing the wild dog enclosure has been working 80-hour weeks, nearly wrecking herself. Add to that, she says, the zoo staff has its own ideas about some of the stuff that's to be fabricated.

--And Betty Mayfield last night filled us in a bit on this St. Petersburg gig, after we asked how it had come to be. Paul Allen's planner in charge of hoopla of this sort came up with St. P, Morocco, and a third choice Betty couldn't remember, and Paul A. designated St. P. The Allens they get their guest lists together; interestingly, and we hope promisingly for Betty's future career, she herself is on the trip via Jody Patton's list, not Faye's. Faye was reluctant to buckle down and do her list, so Jody sicced Betty on her, and got her going w/ the "Christmas tea list," evidently old friends of Faye. Then, says Betty, the suggestion to invite some writers drew "But last time they didn't come!" from Faye; why in god's name I wouldn't know, but Lee Smith didn't even respond to the invitation to the Alaska trip. Madeleine L'Engle couldn't come that time because of an injury, but she didn't get

13 Aug. cont.--asked this time around; and I think we heard Charles Johnson had been asked last time, too, but for some reason didn't or couldn't. Anyway, according to Betty it devolved that Faye eventually said, "The Doigs came last time. Do you think they'd have any interest in Russia?" So it goes. Of others that Betty knew have been asked, the pairing that boggles us all is Charlies Simonyi, the Word/Excel programmer and his date, Martha Stewart. Betty says the members of Paul's band, the Crown Men, are coming, and Dave Stewart of the Arhythmic again, Dan Ackroyd again, UW library types Betty Bengston, Betsy Wilson, Maryan Petty, Liz Stroup again...

Betty told of a couple of Paul A's characteristics: one is that he might send a staff member an e-mail at 2 a.m., and another at 8 a.m. wondering if it's been tended to yet. She says his trademark phrase is, "I don't understand. I thought I told you to..." Thus, Betty says she is able to strike terror in the sundry techies she has to work with by turning down her mouth and letting out: "I don't understand."

Another ploy she uses on them is to wave a Paul e-mail wanting to know why thus and such hasn't been done and asking, "Who would like to answer this?" From her description, it sounds as if schedule glitches can occur when the techies get carried away--"But if we get this piece of equipment, we can really..." Something she's up against currently is the digitizing of movies for Paul A, which tends not to happen as quickly as he thinks it should, and she's taken to telling the techies, "Just do what he wants," i.e. don't get fancy. Ah, and the finale story: Betty and her staffer in charge of keeping the various libraries in the various Allen mansions up to snuff went to, I think she said the LA one, and found that library in very puzzling shape--arranged not by their usual Library of Congress classification, but by the length of the spines of the books i.e. symmetry stepping-down in size. Aghast, they get hold of the mansion manager, who wails, "Betty, I didn't do it! Those books are just wallpaper to me!" Didn't take her long to figure out the re-arranger: some Paul A girlfriend, being bored, useful, or whatever, thinking "Hey, wouldn't it look neat if..."

15 Aug.--2:45 p.m., we are all but ready for tomorrow's 10:30 a.m. takeoff to Helsinki and ultimately "Piter." By taking it easy this week, not trying to cram in undone chores before departing, we're in pretty good shape. During today's packing, dug out the whopping leather Filson backpack, most unusable "outdoor" item either of us have ever seen, and by god in it were 2 little pair of gift binocs which will be fine for this trip. This jaunt is going to be a marathon on our bodies, given the long plane flight and the pace, but if we don't stretch for this, what is worth stretching for?

Went to the Provinces last night w/ Nelsons, who are in their own fantastic whirl just now--to their 2 new-home projects, this week they added wedding plans for Sarah and Travis and 2 pregnant dogs--and a good time was had.

And so we're about to be up and away, slungshot once again with half the money in the known world. Cry havoc!

16 Aug - Bound for Helsinki,  
Tallinn, St. Petersburg - & Newark! The  
fruit-salad-painted-up ATA charter is going  
to pick up NY contingent, adding probably  
2-3 hours to the trip (sigh). Those of us on  
the Tallinn excursion are seated near the  
middle door for quicker exit to the helicopter.

The terminal moil was familiar to us  
from the Alaska trip, a couple of hours of  
sitting & talking. We in fact grabbed the  
same chair & footrest as last time. The  
Mayfelds are in plane seats ~~before~~ behind us,  
& the UW library contingent nearby - Maryan  
Petty, Betsy Wilson, Betty Bengsten & their  
spouses. Bob Whitwell & wife are in front of us.  
Bill & Catherine Calvin, Liz Stroup & partner  
Maxine, Cheryl Chou, we've already con-  
nected with.

It's a gray day in Seattle, i.e. a good one  
to be leaving on.

Off the ground @ 11:10. Supposed  
to be 4 hrs 40 min. to Newark.

3:25 - In holding pattern for Newark, match.  
Crew-cape appetizer & salmon lunch, then I  
had a pretty decent nap, C resting. PA system  
just said there's a cocktail party & jazz band  
waiting for us @ the airport. One lo-o-o-ong  
trunk, this is shaping up to be.

16 Aug. cont. - 6:40 takeoff from Newark,  
2 hrs & 15 min /ft time to Helsinki. Crowded  
cocktail party @ Newark, but Vernon & Gabri  
were there, hallelujah. Also visited w/  
Mrs. Mike Holmgren & another Seahawk coach's  
wife - those guys are working. Women say  
they aren't missed. & Maryann Petty's husband  
turns out to have a Phoenix background from  
near Arizona Park, where we alit in '44; he's  
a sculptor, did the Fishermen's Terminal  
memorial. So, we're mixing & mingling, & the  
real party is still hours & hours away.

- Morning, somewhere over Scandinavia.  
I should land within the hour, & then  
we're told we'll be on the 1 p.m. heli-  
copter to Tallinn, the 12 o'clock - shades  
of Geneva - not eventuating.

20 Aug. - St. P'burg airport, plane loaded &  
ready to go. We're cushioned between Pettys  
& Bengtsons, for quiet's sake - the Tracy Ullmans  
of the entertainment merry-go-round do bits  
to each other non-stop. Given that we went to  
bed @ 3 a.m. & got at best 3 hrs sleep, we're  
doing pretty good. No customs hassle here -  
Paul's people doubtless having greased  
the way - so we're racing for Newark.

20 Aug cont. - hitted off from Russia  
@ 10:15. The land below is astonishing in  
its apparent lack of agricultural pattern.

Fields are cut into the forest in all sizes of  
chunks & varying angles; it must reflect  
the times of royal estates, when each was  
used according to whatever whim, & I  
suppose to encompass whatever serfs. There  
is no sign, from this aerial view, that the  
80 years of communism managed to imprint  
any kind of "efficient" blocs of fields - it's an  
absolute jigsaw-puzzle spill, with none of  
even the discernible customizing of the  
land you can see in Ireland, the UK, the  
American east & south...

So, it's now this 8 hour + recessional to  
Newark - 3 in-flight films announced, as  
e says the flying equivalent of a 3-day  
night.

- More on land! Below now is the Finnish/  
Scandinavian pattern, where every inch is  
thriftily used - tidy freeholdings, quilted onto  
one another until they reach to a town, which  
is situated on some arm of the Gulf of  
Finland.

21 Aug.--Home from it all, in surprisingly good shape given the 26+ hours in the air across the 5 days we were gone. The return trip from Pulkova, St. Petersburg's airport, went surprisingly slick: right thru customs there in "Zone A"--i.e., VIP--but more astonishingly, we were also zipped through dreaded Newark customs, and as a finale, the TAG Aviation bunch got our baggage arrayed in front of our waiting vehicles at Boeing Field in wondrously short time. Carol jockeyed us home without even any traffic glitches, and so we were soon showered--I told C at one point of the going-to-Russia flight that I hadn't felt this grubby since herding sheep--and sitting on our beloved ~~awk~~ deck with drinks in hand, reflecting back over the sumptuous experience, which a la Alaska I'll try to sluice back from notes and memory into these pages over the next days. And so to begin, back where we never thought we would be, Estonia:

--17 Aug., in we came, after the Seattle-Newark leg which added the NY contingent to the trip, to Helsinki: the buildings below a striking mix of the functional and the traditional, red tile roofs perhaps atop but the structures fitting into the contours of the landscape or the bend of civic intent. (In the airport, as we sat waiting for the copter trip to Tallinn, sculptor Ron Petty patted the arm of the comfortable and yet stylish chair and said, "The Finns know how to make a unit.") Forest and rock ledges extended in right to the edges of the airport. The green-uniformed Finns didn't even look at our passports at that point, waving us off to the Estonia trip, and pretty quick we were off--our group, 2nd on the schedule, going first because we were so late. Eleven of us in the helicopter, which lifted off tail up and whirred out over the Gulf of Finland, over rockpatch islands, each with a lighthouse. Bright haze over the water, and we couldn't really see the Estonian side until we were within a mile or two, on the 18-min. 175-knot-per-hour ride. Landing pad is at a big harborfront swimming facility, evidently something like a natatorium. As soon as the Estonian Border Guards had stamped our passports, it became evident who our 11th member was, the only singleton along with the 5 married couples--head of our security detail. Introduced himself, first name only, pointed to the modest identifying button he and the others (there to meet us) wore. In essence,

21 Aug. cont.--Tallinn cont.--the 10 of us went through the Tallinn walking tour with a security detail of 6, I think not counting the couple of Finnish (if I heard right, the Estonians probably are not set up to do this sort of thing) security men. More on the extraordinary craft of guarding the 4th richest guy's guests later, but suffice it here to say that the security team--at least to my eye--blended pretty much into the weave of tourism, innocent-looking backpacks on them, and as Jan Whitsitt noticed, the very latest trendy casual clothing their generation wears. As we moved along in a group, it was like a loose version of a military patrol, a guy out on point, the detail chief always with us, a bit like a straggler, and the other guards around and behind us like sightseers. (One of them spoke Russian or Estonian or both, besides his slightly German-accented English.) All of them were very trim and strong, without bulking out in a crowd.

And so we were delivered over to our guide Mariliis, a tall late-20ish blond blond blond, elegantly dressed in a silvery sheened dress to her ankles, almost like a prom dress in this country but more simply tasteful. She spoke with a kind of fetching overbite, excellent English (which she'd had since 1st grade), and an accent I'd have called Finnish if we weren't in her country. Started showing us around the old limestone city--we'd wanted to see Tallinn for its taste of medieval times: 14th century tower called Tall Herman, the Dome Hill, the cobblestone streets from Old Town down to New--one street cants one direction and is called Long-Legged Street, the other cant the opposite and is called short-legged street; Mariliis says the historic joke is that all Tallin is lame. We were shown the pink palace which has become Parliament, and House 10 where the European Union offices are, Estonia banking on joining the EEU. And we went through the Orthodox Cathedral, with surprising candy-shade stripes on its columns--mint, peppermint, etc.--and elaborate decoration everywhere, then next to the Lutheran St. Mary's Cathedral, the oldest in Estonia (14th c.), with its 100 coats of arms of well-to-do families on the walls and not much other decoration. Looking at its white-washed walls and dark wood, and the Orthodox whimsams of decoration on every inch of the previous one, it's just plain as hell, or maybe it's heaven, that those cultures

21 Aug. cont.--Tallinn cont.--could never be made to meld, and so they haven't in centuries of Estonia passing in and out of Russian rule. The guide made the point a number of times how proud the Estonians are to have freedom now--we calculated that she must have been a teenager when the Soviet Union fell apart, it must have been an unimaginable thrill to see your life open up ahead that way--and while Tallinn has a lot of shabby buildings etc. to deal with, it was nothing like the overall decay we were to see in Russia. The Estonians also looked a hundred times healthier than the Russians; striking young women in short skirts or other mod wear, negotiating the cobblestone streets in high heels.

Ultimately, after looking down onto Old Town and its picture-book red-tiled guard towers of its old wall, we headed there, and this 150 yards or so down a narrow street with a wall on one side the security guys plainly did not like, their eyes roving everywhere. When we hit the town square down there, it was lunchbreak for us, and so we sat at an umbrellaed table with Jan and Bob Whitsitt--it was a plenty warm day, particularly when tromping up and down on cobblestones--and C and I had what we called our basic food groups of the day, the only food since breakfast on the plane, Estonian beer (Saku; very good) and Estonian ice cream. Bob picked up the lunch tab, and I tipped \$3 for the for of us, on the tab of around \$22; that and the eventual \$20 tip to the Russian guide Elena Kyrdova were our total trip expense. (If we don't count the \$600 we paid Bryony Angell to do our matryoshka painting chores.)

After lunch the tour disintegrated into shopping, and since C and I weren't interested, we wandered a bit to take pics (staying cocooned within the shopping street with security men at either end) and then sat on steps and watched life. Young workmen unenthusiastically pulling up cobblestones of a little square by hand and tossing them onto a mounting pile; Japanese tourists, with a boy about 12 years old wearing the sharpest mod red footwear and a Detroit Tigers ballcap; the German security guide and Mariliis standing chatting and comparing how many languages they knew, which came out to a total of ten or a dozen. Then in a kind of straggle--naturally our group was divided into those of us who were starting to fade and

21 Aug. cont.--Tallinn cont.--those who wanted to shop until they and we dropped--we hiked back to the heliport, and were whisked back over the Gulf to a landing spot near where the ship was docked. Two or three Finnish newspaper photographers were waiting for us, so we started accusing each other: okay, here, who is it who's secretly famous? I got a lot of the shots I think by dint of being the only one with a hat and a beard.

We got aboard in spiffy fashion, champagne in hand and a maid carrying our hand luggage, and at once established ourselves on the balcony of our suite (816) to watch the incredible traffic in Helsinki harbor: it's small and narrow, but the Finns with their tidy tendency run colossal maritime traffic, including our big ship and some whopping hydrofoil ferries to Sweden, plus all manner of pleasure craft and comely little wooden excursion boats, in and out of there like there's nothing to it. As we were leaning on our rail gawking, taking pics and generally feeling on top of the world, the woman in neighboring 814 came out to her railing, and I stuck my hand around to introduce ourselves and to ask her--Sondra, it turned out--what auspices brought them on this trip. She said her husband's ~~isidimant~~ name in identification, and I asked, "Oh, Michael Kammen the historian?" She paused a bit, it evidently sinking in that this was a different league than she is used to, and said ~~no~~, Michael Kamen the composer. In a minute or so he came out, bare-chested, with a wonderful gray-tangle head of hair and one of those beards slightly longer than scruff but not full like mine, and proved to be a goldmine of grace and congeniality. I then asked ~~him~~--C and I are not abashed, even if we are running with the big dogs on something like this platinum-plated excursion--what his connection to Paul A. is, and it's that ~~he~~ <sup>house</sup> he and Sondra bought Dave Stewart's (guitarist of the Arhythms) in Malibu or wherever, Stewart had told Paul about the place and Paul wanted to see the architecture, so the Kamens ~~through~~ threw a party which concluded with sundry guests including Paul and the singer-actor who played Sullivan in Topsy-Turvy going into the wee hours singing Gilbert and Sullivan. I told Michael the movie

Aug. 21 cont.--Helsinki--had charmed our socks off and we particularly loved seeing the backstage craft of putting the Mikado together, and he said yes, yes, him too he'd asked the singer-actor if they had filmed all the opera in rehearsal and couldn't he see it? More good talk, which led to Michael telling of a visit to Moscow and Rimsky-Korsakov's house, where he noticed that the room where R-K wrote music had no piano. Where, he asked the babuska in charge, is the piano? Is in the other room. May he see it? Oh, yes. ~~He~~ Looks it over; may he play it? Babushka shrugs, why not? He then spent three hours ~~with~~ deliciously playing Rimsky-K's piano.

And then it was time to cast-off, the Radisson Seven Seas Navigator being pulled sideways from the dock by the tugs Neptun and Poseidon, into the heavy traffic of the harbor. With just enough leeway, and the Neptun being dragged off the port side of the stern as a counterweight, the ship rotated itself and headed out for St. Petersburg.

Aug. 22--A blessed rain, an overnight soaker. We got through y'day in quite good shape, C saying she felt a bit spacey and me perhaps feeling it more today, but we functioned fine. Back to the trip reprise.

--To St. Petersburg: woke up a little before 7 with the cruise ship skimming east through the Baltic, and @ 7:15 we began to pass Kronstadt, an astounding naval junkyard, the first trash heap of communism on our route into Russia. Rusting hulks (some smaller ones dragged up on top of breakwaters, shades of Novo Arkangelsk in Sea Runners), monster cranes standing idle, apartment blocks which even from a distance exude shabbiness--decay, decay. Stunned at having all this delivered into my writing lap as soon as I was out of bed, I alternated jotting things down and snapping pics. It went on and on the pall of the Soviet era and its collapse--@ 7:35, a nuclear power plant seething on the eastern horizon, its pair of gigantic fork-legged transmission towers like evil Eiffels. When we went up to breakfast--more about that anon--the ship passed a breakwater that was the outermost point of St. Petersburg but still marked with a massive set of heavy freestanding social<sup>ist</sup> realism lettering that said Leningrad; and a dilapidated

Aug. 22 cont.--St. P cont.--watchtower right behind the letters and a uniformed guard down there on the break-water, god knows to what end.

As the Navigator went on in through the channel of the Bol Neva, our portside cabin gave us a view of the caving-in concrete slabs of the channel bulkhead--every sixth or eighth one, seams had given way and a slab or two tilted down as if into a sinkhole. A few fishermen trying their luck--they looked like they needed it--off the slabs. Behind, onshore, it looked like a country of scrap metal. Rusting ships moored alongside dilapidating buildings, in a dockworks area. Example: on the hulk Pobechi of Murmansk, two guys, total, were grinding here and there on the scaffolded flaking vessel the size of a city block, while moored in front of their hopeless jobsite was a sleek spotless ship from Limassol. Oh, and a further note on that caved-in bulkhead: those cratered slabs were growing not weeds, but small trees.

We quickly saw that scaffolding was a theme of the city, the Gazprom building under renovation, the highest Orthodox dome on the Vasilevsky Island side honeycombed with scaffolding.

Now comes docking, and security. The ship edged ~~quay~~ sideways into a quite tight berth along Angliskaya ~~Street~~ the bow all but touching the Lt. Schmidt Bridge. C and I went back up to the top deck, ~~we~~ propelled by our love for watching people work their craft, to see how all this was going to unfold. Three Russian dockhands, oddly in camouflage military uniforms, ~~but nothing~~ or rather bits and pieces of them, handled the hawsers, and then we started counting the deadly backpacks, nervous suits, and real uniforms below. I later asked Bill Moyers if he had seen anything like this security since his LBJ days, and he said nothing even close. Ultimately, the Angliskaya scene was roughly this:

--The street ends were blocked off.

--Nobody appeared, then or ever, in any window above the first floor on that entire block; obviously the only living things permitted in there during the ship's stay were the houseplants behind the curtains.

Aug. 22 cont.--St. P cont.--

--A barge on the other side of our finger pier had been brought in as the chokehold of access: everybody getting on or off the ship had to pass through there, passports inspected every time.

--Sleek new dark blue Volvo busses, their Baltic Travel lettering bright and fresh on them, were backed into file at the gangway from the barge. Throughout our time there, these busses drew stares from people in the St. P streets; the contrast with their own peeling rickety streetcars and busses was beyond palpable.

--Along cordoned-off Angliskaya, at any given time now there were between forty and fifty security people in sight. Three different Russian uniforms, and then ultimately a <sup>\*</sup>militia powerboat continually out in the Neva on the other side of us. At one point, 8 beefy dark suits, very akin to our FBI geeks, arrived, ~~and~~ got orders, and planted themselves here and there, hands clasped over their crotches.

\*i.e./  
police

--Beyond all this, we noticed when we were out on our bus excursions, was a helicopter periodically over us, and Paul A's security guys, or a mix of them and some Russians waiting for us when we got to the first site of any excursion.

First folks off the boat, indeed first herd-quitters because we'd been advised not to wander St. P by ourselves? We hooted, it was of course Charles Simonyi and Martha Stewart. Thereby hangs the breakfast tale.

On the Alaska trip, one of our lunchtimes of randomly sitting down with people delivered us into the company of not only Dennis and Victoria Hopper, but Charles S. and his date, a quite beautiful blond movie producer named Kara. His date this time was the distinctly unbeautiful Martha Stewart. This trip, we ended up next to Charles in some early forming-up, and I reminded him we'd met in Alaska, which he plainly had no memory of. "What did we talk about?" "The people at the next table, of course," I told him, <sup>\*</sup>"Ben Rozin." Mental agility gives you at least some kind of momentary validation with Charles--as I savvy it, he's the programmer behind Word and Excel. So, while the Navigator was approaching the Bol Neva that morn

\* Campag Billionaire

Aug. 22 cont.--St. P. cont.--and G and I were meeting up at breakfast with the also chronically early Calvins, Bill and Catherine, lo, here was Charles, circling the neighboring table by himself in uncertainty. (He later told us Marthia was "beautifying herself.") The four of us offered to squeeze together so he could join us--G had him pegged, I think; he ~~is~~ simply doesn't possess any social graces--and he did, packing his Russian-lessons book. It turned out luckily that his level of Russian wasn't a hell of a lot better than mine, and so as we gingerly tested each other with a few phrases, it somehow reminded him of the hilarious scene in Casablanca where the refugee couple are blithely showing off their ability to tell time in English. "Such much?" I quoted to him, "What watch?" he laughed. It turned out that one of his passions is etymology, and he laid on us a couple of pieces of good stuff--curfew is from French words to cover the fire, bylaws derive from the Scandinavian word ~~by~~ by for village. But something he said about the nature of the Russian language got me going on how much more intrinsically poetic it is than English. When he was dubious, I laid on him the Mayakovsky I'd been re-absorbing on the plane--the stanza in "Cloud in Trousers," which translates flat as a floor in English: "I'll come at four," Maria promised. Eight. Nine. Ten. But in Russian, it's v chitirih, skazala Maria--the verb and the name rhyme, and there's the interior half-rhyme they make with the Russian way of saying "at four"; and in English, the hours of waiting don't carry a bit of rhyme, but in Russian they do--vocem, devyats, desyats...for Christ's sake, Charles, even the numbers rhyme, of course it's a more poetic language! So it went, another trip with Charles S. frequently on our radar screen. The one advantage I have among these people with scads of brains or skillions of dollars or both is that I fairly quickly see their storyline of the moment, and they don't get ours or even know how to. So, I at least know of the life of Charles S. that he chose to spend this trip with another difficult human being--Martha S., not aging well, no warmth there to carry her into an experience like this one --and that as we sat in one of the airport venues on the

Aug. 22 cont.--St. P. cont.--way back, his oscillating coffee cup and rattling newspaper were those of a man with the shakes.

So, to conclude the Simoryi chapter, after what must have been an interesting ten minutes of pulling strings in the control barge, off along Angliskaya toward downtown St. Petersburg strolled Charles and Martha. She stopped to take a pic of the ship, focusing on us as the only people in sight, and resisting giving her the finger, we waved.

Now to start on the St. P "highlights" tour. Superb guide, Elena Kurdova, natty in a pinstripe pants suit, always carrying a telescoped black umbrella (i.e., collapsed, not up) which was her Disneyland-like "flag" for us to keep her in sight. When she wanted to talk with her hands, she simply put the umbrella between her legs. Had been to this country as guests of Mennonites she once had toured around the city, moved on from them to be hosted by Mormons, and ended up with Florida Episcopalians. The bus started off for the Peter and Paul Fortress, across Lt. Schmidt Bridge, along Universitskaya Quay, grand old buildings along the route rundown and faded, graffiti on the embankment; a bearded painter doing a canvas at the Dvortsovyy Bridge; then we crossed to the Petrogradskaya side on the Birzhevoi Bridge and were in the fortress. It's scaffolded every which way, and tons more of it needs scaffolding, renovation, repair or mere upkeep. Into the Cathedral we go--our group of 32 included, as I recognized from the Alaska trip, George Lucas; and it dawned on me that the guy who looked like an older Robin Williams was Robin Williams; he was a serious blended-in tourist for most of this <sup>excursion</sup> ~~trip~~, except once when he simply couldn't resist imitating, committing the motion to his repertoire, Elena's quick upthrust of the folded umbrella to signal us to move on--as she would say, in the tagline of the American movie Dave about a White House tour somebody had told her about, "Now we are ~~are~~ walking." Predominant colors of the Cathedral interior were mint green and chocolate, in the great arches; all manner of Orthodox decoration, including gold figures climbing the central column.

Aug. 23--My internal clock seems to be skewing rather than correcting itself after all the time-zone zapping it's been through. Woke up at 2 this morning, gave up on trying for more sleep about ten to 3, it's 4:45 now.

To make a start on the St. Petersburg jaunt today, here is the list of people we know were on the trip--not many out of the supposed 300, but then we never see a manifest and there are no nametags:

Bob & Jan Whitsitt, of the Seahawks

Cathy Holmgren, Seahawks' coach's wife, and Nancy, wife of someone on Mike H's coaching staff

Bill Calvin, UW neurobiologist, and Catherine Calvin, marine biologist researching crabs' nervous systems

James Watson, of the double helix

Lisa and John Hall of Oxygen Media, recently bought by Paul A.

Dan Dunnett, Tufts philosopher, & wife Susan

Cheryl Chow, ex-city council member

Sarah Morningstar

Bill Savoie, Vulcan prez

Bill and Judith Moyers

Nancy McCoy, UW Bothell history prof, and sister Cathy there in stead of Nancy's hubby Paul Dorpat

Paul A's high school chums, Rick w/ partner Ben, and another Ben (I think), accountant who works on Seattle city water planning, and his wife, a King Co. libr'n

David Halberstam and wife

Tom Stoppard, unaccompanied as far as I could tell

Dan Ackroyd and wife Diana Von Furstenberg

Susan Greenfield, English thinker about the brain, and chemist husband Peter

Jeff Goldblum     Eric Idle

Susan Sarandon     Harry Shearer

Meg Ryan     Quincy Jones

Tracy Ullman     Barry Diller

Liz Stroup, ex-head of Seattle Public Library

Maxine Lee, Microsoft research analyst

George Lucas & wife

Robin Williams & wife

Aug. 23 cont.--trip list cont.--

Laurence Fishburne

Vernon Reid of Living Color & dancer-choreographer wife,  
Gabri Christa

Sonny Robinson, Martina Navratilova's masseuse, working 11  
over on the plane

Donna Gogerty, of Seattle political consulting outfit,  
and friend/neighbor Gloria, Marty Loken's ex-wife  
the aforementioned Charles Simonyi & Martha Stewart

" " Michael Kamen & wife Sondra

Alan Israel, Paul A's lawyer

Bill Conyers, " " engineer

Jim Dolmeyer & Michelle

the UW librarians who were our blessed cocoon of down-  
to-earthness: Betsy Wilson & husband Dean, Maryan Petty  
& sculptor (Fisherman's Terminal memorial) husband Ron,  
Betty & Pete Bengston; Betty Mayfield, the Allens'  
librarian, and Roy

Back now to the Peter & Paul Cathedral: Elena the guide  
umbrellaed us past the main hall's 32 tombs of carrera  
marble and we shuffled to the chapel--clots of people  
milling everywhere around us--where the Romanovs were,  
still are, entitled to be buried--Kirilov was laid away  
there in 1992! Jasper tombs there--the examples of stone  
here and on other excursions were outsize magnificence.  
Next, the pulpit, from where Tolstoy was excommunicated.  
Then at the altar, the 66' icon stand of linden wood. Then  
the place where the czar could sit, thereby proving he was  
mightier than God because no other mortal ever sits down  
in an Orthodox church.

Out of the cathedral, Elena led us to the oddly playful  
and deprecatory statue of Peter the Great--done by Michael  
Shamyakin--now of Seattle--and told us it's a custom that  
you can get good luck by once a year saying "Privyet"--  
How you doing, regards--to the statue and sitting in its  
lap. Other visitors' kids were doing it, and somebody  
from our group did, but nobody else moved forward--George  
Lucas, who is about as private in his way as Paul A,  
stood planted there in the front row but making no move--  
so I said to Betsy Wilson, "Come on, we can do this."

Aug. 23 cont.--Peter & Paul cont.--Our faithful spouses gleefully snapped pics, so we'll see if Betsy and I in Peter's lap show up in the UW library bulletin.

Onward, next highlight was the cruiser Aurora, looking surprisingly spruce and freshly painted. In the curious mix of hanging onto historical artifacts of regimes that they've renounced and damn near killed everybody--another of the excursion guides pointed out that Leningrad/St. P. did not get around to wiping out Lenin statues as Moscow and other places did, and even the arch-sonofabitch Dzerzhinsky of the Bolsheviks' Cheka still stands in place--the Russians put naval cadets aboard this cruiser that signaled the assault on the Winter Palace and the Kerensky government, and it blithely flies the blue-Xed white flag of the navy. Elena and the other guides, incidentally, referred to the 1917 revolution as "the October uprising."

Onward again, to photo op at the weirdly opulent blue-and-white Smolny Cathedral. Then the bus circled a couple of times, right out there in the street, in front of the Smolny Institute, the Bolsheviks' hq; the equivalent, I thought, of doing wheelies on Lenin's grave.

Next on the tour, the Church of Spilled Blood; here, as in the courtyard of the Winter Palace the next day, I found it intriguing to be on the event's actual ground, in this case the canal intersection where the Narodnya Volya hardcore nitro-grenaded Alexander II. This church is literally mosaic heaven--big biblical scenes, three high on the columns and walls. Again, Orthodox decoration everywhere, embossed faces even at corner of window alcove. The play of light is wondrous clever, something being warmed to prominence by a shaft here, something else by a shaft there... Elena called our attention to "all possible floral designs" on the columns, wherever there was room. Images of Christ or the Madonna stared straight down on us from the stained-glass lens of each of the 4 domes--one was Christ the teenager! According to Elena, the Communists in '39 had decided to blow up this church, total symbol of czarism that it is; WWII saved it. It became a morgue during the siege years, then the backstage storage for a theater.

23 Aug.--St. P cont.--Next stop was the Bronzed Horseman statue of Peter the Great, where the wind was blowing, the dust was flying, and wedding parties were rampant. They would pop out of tiny cars, be serenaded by guys in work-clothes playing a very battered tuba, similar trombone and trumpets, and leave their bouquets at the head of the garden in front of the statue. Heartstopping literary moment, Tom Stoppard jinking through the traffic that we wouldn't dream of attempting without our guide and a security guy playing traffic cop/.

Back on the bus, counted one more time, out loud and by finger, by Elena. We were constantly counted on these excursions, the Russian women guides doing it audibly and then the security man making his own silent count; if we were all there, away we would go.

As we did now to St. Isaac's, the real whopper of this trio of churches/cathedrals. 24 styles of architecture, says Elena, 14 kinds of marble; here, in the central dome lens directly overhead, was a stained-glass dove.

End of tour, superbly narrated by Elena, and back at the boat, while half the money in Hollywood strolled away with its hands in its pockets, we bestowed \$20 on her.

That night, to the Tauride Palace for endless rounds of food and Russian-style entertainment, neither of which translated on our American ~~ex~~ sensibilities absolutely perfectly--a guide, that night, would have helped. It was another thought-provoking site--Prince Potemkin's place, seat of the first Duma, and of the Provisional Government--but we were there for Russian gaiety. This one, I can only reconstruct by moments and acts:

--Elena explained to us on the bus that we were to get the khleb ee sol, bread and salt, welcome, and so we should each take a little piece of the loaf proffered at the bottom of the steps. Simply enough done, although there was already on hand what was probably the Robin Williams of Russia, dressed as the skinniest babushka imaginable, swabbing wildly with a mop. Drawing a considerable breath--just inside the door were 2 more clowns, dressed like Revolution sailors, hazing us through a mock airport metal detector; just how much audience participation was this night going to be?--on in we went, ~~rock~~ balalaika

Aug. 23 cont.--Tauride night cont.--music roaring. Servers were thick as a forest, but once things got settled down--the clowns bent their attention to Robin Williams--it turned out to be a time when we could talk at some length to people. Promptly met the Halberstams, then Betty and Roy Mayfield got us together ~~xxx~~ with Bill and Judith Moyers. It took Bill a minute, but then he had me pegged as somebody who had been mentioned to him when he was researching something out here and asked about Seattle writers. Good conversation with him, mutual lamenting about the trends in journalism--says he tells young people interested in his line of work they better have a fire in their belly, because nobody is going to give them the training. After a while Bill was called over to compare Oklahoma birthplaces with Faye Allen--his, it devolves, was Hugo, OK; I accused him of being a ringer Texan all this time--and we talked on with Judith. Asked her what's forthcoming, and it's an update of a show they did on the environment, and one on the Hudson River. Couple of intriguing angles emerged as she talked about their work: they don't take any money from PBS, but do stipulate times of showing, i.e. they can't be dumped into the late-night ghetto. And she told us, in any overseas filming, they always have a "fixer," who makes things work locally, whether it's greasing palms, getting clearances, whatever. Cited a South African example where they were going to film at a certain TV transmitter site, were told they couldn't, they put the fixer on it and the next day they could.

While conversation was going on, the clowns were clowning, the band had switched to goathead bagpipes, booze floated by on clouds of platters. Eight acts were on the program; the Licedei Theater Clowns were threaded through it all, and I'm assuming it was the Children's Television and Radio Folk Chorus that sang us into the dining area, lit with red and green, 30' red velvet swags on the walls. We and the Mayfields found a table at one end of the stage. Overhead, double-headed eagle emblems roosted on every candelabra. Down the table from us were George Lucas and wife--the skinny clown soon found him and in a kind of bug-eyed patronizing way shouted, "Your movie is good!"--and across from us, shades of the Alaska trip where we hadn't much liked his Bambi-of-the-sea

Aug. 23 cont.--Tauride night cont.--lecture about captured whales, was Jean-Michel Cousteau and his tall blond ladyfriend Nan. This night, C, seated directly across from him at the end of the table, received vodka lessons, much more felicitous.

The clowns again: too bad we didn't have the full reference, or a brain implant or something, to get all the humor. The skinny guy at one point showed up as a war veteran, a few medals clanking, hobbling around on a crutch. That's funny, in the city that underwent the siege? Similarly, the sailor clowns had elaborate routines of waving naval signal flags to each other across the length of the room. The one routine that did bring down this American house, so to speak, was a stage act in which a guy came out with a matador's cape, the Carmen music a-blare, and, cape whirling, he looked expectantly at our wing of the stage. Out came about a ten-foot fish, dopily wobbling on its belly across the stage. Matador adjusts to the situation, does some whirls and passes, leaves the fish vanquished and starts taking proud bows. Fish isn't quite vanquished, though, and as it nibbles the guy's foot into its mouth, the American crowd goes up in guffaws, we can see it all coming. He bats the fish in annoyance with his cape, it swallows his leg to the knee. It's ingestion all the way after that, with the fish finally wobbling off the other side of the stage with the matador vanished inside it. Na beese, bravo!

Meanwhile, sample after sample of food was coming; the only item we thought notable was that we learned, thanks to Jean-Michel, that some sour-cream-like stuff under caviar improves it a lot.

Acts rocketed on: the Kalinka dance group, the Double Duet of musicians from the Rimsky-Korsakov Conservatory, the folk troupe called "Sve te" (evidently "shining") Golor. I think it was this last one that Laurence

Fishburne bounded onto the stage to dance with, along with the sailor clowns--they had him using their mock-heavy anchor chain as a feather boa.

Aug. 23 cont.--Tauride night cont.--A stiltwalker went through the room at one point, and Cossacks danced, and three women did a hilarious bit as washerwoman sloshing and pounding out laundry onstage in tune with the Anvil C chorus, and a gymnastic group used a colossal (10' high or so) triangular box to fly around on while some of them held it in configuration and altitude wanted. Food and vodka and sundry wines meanwhile is flowing, flowing (although not into me; the only way I could keep track of things was to choose one wine and sip cautiously, don't be mixing that firewater). Ultimately there were two show-stopping acts:

--Out onto the stage came a piano, accompanist, and a slight shorthaired woman dressed in white, with what looked like a shortened electronic keyboard with a thick antenna on it. Lydia Kavina, playing the Theremin, invented by her uncle Leo--as my Am Heritage dictionary says, "an electronic consolelike musical instrument often used for high tremolo effects; pitch and volume are 'space-controlled' by movement of the player's hands over and between the two antenna oscillators." The sounds, as she moved her hands through empty air, were eerie but weirdly entrancing. (Even with one engineer among us--Roy Mayfield--our table was baffled how all this worked. Jean-Michel Cousteau, a bit deep into the vodka, at first proclaimed: "She is doing nothing.") As she went into a second number, a crowd began to gather in front of the stage, and my antenna went up. Michael Kamen, intent, arms folded, as close to her as he could get at the stage apron, watching, listening; Bill Calvin, big bearded head cocked in curiosity; Gabri Christa, taking it in, ~~lithely~~ lithely poised as if working on how to dance to it. Check this out, I told myself; if heads as various as those three are into this... I made my way through the crowd to Kamen's shoulder and was there to hear, in her next break between pieces, his explanation to somebody that this music has been used for sci fi pics, it works thus and so, it's unique... I stayed through the next number or two, and told C when I got back to the table that I could damn near feel the heat

Aug. 23 cont.--Tauride night cont.--of all the brainwaves interested in Kavina's performance.

Aug. 24--Weather is toning down, after the good soaking everything got. Woke at 2:20 this morn, but got back to sleep until almost 4, so maybe the skew from the journey is slacking. Back to the Tauride evening:

--The night's impossible act, to us, was one of the Russian Cirque performers: his entire performance was done while standing on his hands, or often, one hand, on 2' high steel rods (with an endpiece he could grip onto) atop a revolving table. His white-clad body doing gymnastics while he held this handstand, at one point he stayed on one hand with the other picked up the other support rod and moved it to another slot.

As the show moved on, C said they had overstepped the natural ending, with that guy, but onward came a woman who did flips into the air and landed on a pole held by two men, and a pair of women who twirled coolie-hat-like cloths on their toes and fingers while lying on their backs or in gymnastic positions, and then more Cossacks.

At probably about three-fourths of the way through the performances, giant balloons, roughly 3' in diameter, were let into the room, and for the rest of the evening we were all in a kind of giddy slow-motion volleyball game, keeping those babies up in the air. Our table seemed to get more than its share of balloon visits, so we all got to practice technique, my punching the balloon lightly off with a full flick of all fingers, Jean-Michel Cousteau giving his a soccer butt of the head. Over at Faye Allen's table, her brawny bodyguard--remindful physically of the obsidian-chunk running back Jim Brown, although not facially--every little while would retrieve a balloon and ever so gently present it to Faye or one of the elderly ladies around her, to let her launch it into the festive air.

The next day--Aug. 19--it was the Hermitage in the morning, the KGB/military's shooting club in the afternoon, Catherine the Great's palace that night: what more can I say? I'll try:

Aug. 24 cont.--Hermitage day--The light, the light: Sunday brought clear northern light onto the pastry colors of the buildings along the embankments opposite the ship--pastels and yellows of facades, and above, golden glints off the Peter & Paul spire. Sparse traffic on the lattice of bridges (we could see ahead to three, from balcony of our suite) over the Neva.

Again it was into the busses and relentlessly counted, this time by Katherina, a guide with that Russian seen-it-all guardedly mournful expression on her face. We piled out into Palace Square--vast! The sun pouring down, a cool perfect day, over there the General Staff Building where the Cossacks charged Father Gapon's followers on Bloody Sunday of '05: I was in researcher's ecstasy.

Katherina flag-led us in through high-ceilinged arches, past immediate exhibit cases of antiquities, up worn stair treads. Faye Allen was in our group, and her muscular black bodyguard would deliver her by wheelchair to the next set of stairs, up she would hike, back into the chair--not a wheelchair ramp evident anywhere, and it's not clear there's even an elevator in whole damn place. Of all the trip, Estonian cobblestones, cathedral stone floors, my knees felt ~~it~~ most in the Hermitage room-to-room trek. We made the early and valuable discovery that there were red velvet chairs and benches standing around, too many to be something on exhibit, and when I asked Katherina if it was okay to sit in them, she shrugged and said, "Any without a stripe"--that is, a strip of warning cloth across it. That pretty well saved the day, letting me get weight off my legs fairly often. The tour was something like a fast-food snack of the offerings, even though it took 3 or so hours--in the hall of Rembrandts, "Ten minutes!" (It was there that we could most graphically see the effects of having all these treasures in these old un-airconditioned buildings, sunlight streaming in on them through ordinary plate-glass windows; the Rembrandts have darkened drastically. To a person, this hit our group on the tour: this great art, these shabby

Aug. 24 cont.--Hermitage cont.--facilities. Bill Moyers told Betty Mayfield it was an "atrocitY," and said if the world saved the pyramids, why couldn't it save this? Go to it, Bill, we figure.) From my notebook bits & pieces:

--plaster decorations riot everywhere

--@ main staircase, colossal gray granite columns, carrera marble in the staircase, pilasters no longer plaster but gold

--in the Field Marshals' Hall, gilded carriage of Peter the Great used for coronation; satyrs etc. romp in panels on it. White velvet walls.

--gold columns next, in Armorial Hall; 7' diameter fountain of gorgeous stone in center of hall

--galleries of Impressionists: man in white shirt & tie (all other staff in sight are standard babushkas) dusting a Matisse with a multi-colored featherduster. 20 rooms of Impressionists; we like Derain's work, hadn't known of him before. Glare of glass on Monets, just like on our Copper River triptych.

--Main Throne Hall: lapis lazuli urns, jasper and malachite abounding--the stone pieces in the museum I find most amazing, perhaps because they're immune to the ailing physical facilities.

--Small Hermitage, Pavilion Hall--the Peacock clock! As I savvy it, the actual clockface is only on a mushroom that pops up in front of the elaborate Frankensteinian bird.

--The Rembrandt Hall: all is clamor, group after sweaty group, clotting in front of "Return of the Prodigal Son," dissolving, clotting at the next pic.

--The Old Hermitage, and Hall of DaVinci. I notice, amid all this, Faye's bodyguard wearing dark glasses, giving away no eye movements. Onward through a hall of replicas of all the Vatican Raphaels, really damn stunning, and through the New Hermitage, and back out to Palace Square, where now at least 3 dozen busses stand in ranks.

Some lunch, back on the ship, with Betty & Roy Mayfield, and then C & I were off to our gunpowder afternoon.

Aug. 24 cont.--Military Shooting Club--Gathering in one of the ship's lounges, C aside, there were five successive comments from the other women that "I'm glad I'm not the only..." Paul A. himself chose to go on this one, and his brother-in-law Brian Patton; also Robin Williams, Charles Simonyi, Laurence Fishburne, and our chums Vernon Reid & Gabri Christa; 30 in all. Not very long busride, all of it I think on Vasilevski Island across from the ship. The Shooting Club proved to be a very long semi-decrepit brick facility. ("This is different," said Paul A.) We were split into 2 groups, to fire automatic weapons and pistols and then swap. All of this, ~~was~~ at least in our group, was funneled through our heroic guide Nina. (I asked her if she had ever been to the Shooting Club before and her eyes got big and she said a historically expressive "No!") She had to translate instructions from Alexander, the rifle-range instructor, and then the picture-book handsome young major at the pistol range, into instant English and pick up firearm nomenclature along the way.

The rifle range was 6 stations wide, the targets at least 50 yards away. C chose to fire a Kalashnikov, something like an AK-47 although Paul A's security guards weren't sure of its exact calibre. I decided to try the one sniper-scope rifle, drastically overreaching myself (but then I thought later, overreaching is probably what got us to the point where we got to come along on this trip). I shot abysmally, unable to deal with the scope properly through my glasses--even though I did remember the correct prone form from Air Force days--and it was the same later on the pistol range. In our riflery group, Paul A. himself scored best in the first round; crossed my mind whether they'd cooked the results, but I'd watched them bring in the targets in correct station sequence. His brother-in-law Brian Patton outshot him in the 2nd round, drawing apparently sincere "Way to go" from Paul. Then at the very last, the oldest guy with us, unsteady on his legs, shot from a table setup and drilled the hell out of the bullseye; he was a former Marine. The rest of our results brought the grinning comment from the instructor, Alexander, that he was relieved to see how we shot. I

Aug. 24 cont.--Shooting Club cont.--told him "Mir ee drooshba"--the old "peace and friendship" party line--which Charles Simonyi caught and laughed conspiratorily at.

Through all this, our security guys really got into trying to help us, as C observed it was their one opportunity to be more than robots, and to pitch in on something they really knew. There were at least 7 of them with us, including a couple who seemed to be native Russians and a Russian-speaker. That last one, we noticed as he stood in the bus aisle beside us, wore a knit shirt with a stitched legend across the bottom of the sleeve--the Hewlett Packard ad tagline, "Take dead aim."

Dead aim had not always been taken ~~at~~ there on the ranges; there were bullet holes up in the ceilings just in front of the shooting stations, by the lights; lots of bullet holes.

Onto the bus to leave, Vernon Reid reeled aboard and moaned, "My wife is a stone-cold killer!" Never having held a gun before, Gabri with her dancer's sense of balance and instant ability to mimic the right stance and breath control and muscle steadiness and all the rest had put 3 pistol shots into the center of the target that I could cover with the palm of my hand.

Other good stuff kept erupting. Laurence Fishburne, who like Vernon and Gabri had been in the other group, got aboard with a bandage across his forehead where the big rifle's scope had kicked him. It kicked me in the nose similarly on one shot, so as we walked back onto the ship together we laughed about taking incoming fire from our own weapons. Laurence and Robin Williams meanwhile started to work on Vernon's situation with a marksman wife, Robin starting a rap about "Not tonight..." and Laurence doing a Gabri voice, "Vernon, behave. Don't make me get it out." Funnier yet when the guy across the aisle from Robin Williams was showing him a ballcap he'd bought from a stand, misspeaking it into a "KBG" cap. Robin was into an instant routine with that morsel: "You must be from the dyslexic branch. 'I am from KBG. Is like your American FIB and CAI. Do not be messing around with me or I will send you to frozen wastes of Australia."

Aug. 24 cont.--Shooting Club bus trip back-- That final double-flip, geographically dyslexic as well as playing on the endings of Siberia and Australia, I thought was a hell of a piece of instant craft.

And so to the final night, the banquet at Tsarskoe Selo, Catherine the Great's vast palace. Forty-minute or so bus ride out to suburb of Pushkin from the ship, and our bus, the first in the convoy, at one point took a left turn and left the others behind. Within about half a block, phones began ringing in the ears of the security folks. Our driver got us back into convoy, and then on a long straight stretch, galloped us past the others, back into our premier position.

Which meant that the Doigs were among the first half dozen to stroll into the Palace scene: music drifting to us as we went through a small woods from where the busses parked, then we strode through the receiving music, the musicians in black-and-red military 18th century costumes drawn up in ranks on either side of us, and up a gentle ramp to waiters with trays of champagne or wine and serving-women with hors d'oeuvres. A right-hand turn into the Cameron Gallery, like an extruded Parthenon--long extent of Ionic columns, classical busts periodically spaced along the structure, a whopping ice-sculpture mimicking the central facade outline of the palace at the champagne-cooling area, views out over the Great Pond to the buildings of the baths and other pavilions. And costumed characters below, here strolling there a pair of fencers, carriages circling.

C and I did our own circling, along the Gallery portico, and so got to meet brain theorist Susan Greenfield and her chemist husband Peter and to tell Jeff Goldblum as he squinted this way and that through a camera trying to frame the pic that he was obviously on the wrong side of the thing.

Came then the group pic, all of us stairstepped at the pond end of the gallery, the tall goateed photographer who had earlier worked through the crowd shooting us couple by couple now ~~at~~ atop a metal scaffolding. We ended up at the top of the first flight of stairs next to the Moyers--the four of us agreed that way we could pick ourselves out by the field of gray we'd make--but most of the Hollywoodites straggled onto the next flight

Aug. 24 cont.--of stairs up, and were uncontrollable. Some one of them popped out in front and choirmaster-like led them in "Noel, Noel..." The photog, seeming unflappable but surely with concern about the oncoming darkness, at last got everybody more or less patted into place, and started shooting. "One more," he yelled, and got back a chant of "Di-gi-tal" from the choirsters. He took a number of shots with his big fixed camera, and then backup shots with I think two other cameras.

Then it was the march through the front gardens into dinner, and we fetched up with Vernon and Gabri. Vernon was resplendent in a bright green suit and I said I'd always wanted to march into a palace with someone dressed like that. Carol linked arms with Gabri at the other end, and as we went across the considerable grounds, the period-piece band was on hand again. "What would be so cool," Vernon said dreamily, "is if they would go into, like, a bar or two of Ellington, then right back out. We'd be, like--Huh?" "Has to be 'Take the A Train,'" I specify, laughing. His mind carries him next to, What if you were an apprentice ~~carpenter~~ artisan put onto a place like this, and messed up, and I said, Never mind that, what if you're an apprentice musician... Something odd happened amid this, the skinny blond woman walking in front of us at one point turning half around, looking quite spooked--it was the actress Meg Ryan. She was alone--the bust-up of her marriage or whatever was on the cover of the issue of People that had the titillation snippet, mostly wrong, about this shindig--and whether she was simply unnerved by solo status, or wondered who the hell Vernon and I, dreadlocks and Civil War beard, could be, or she was hit by our confidence in this situation and her lack of it, I don't know. But it wasn't pretty, there in those scared eyes.

We were wound through a considerable U of Palace halls and rooms before finally debouching into the Great Hall. One further odd bit along the way: a guy named I think Larry Wainberg, whose company had lately been bought by Allen's, fell in step beside me and wanted to talk about the afternoon at the Shooting Club. Said he'd heard I was a philosopher--only later did I realize he had me confused with similar graybeard Dan Dunnett of Tufts--

Aug. 24 cont.--Catherine's Palace--and told C and me he was proud of us for trying the shooting.

Vernon and Gabri were to hook up with Laurence Fishburne, and C and I decided to keep the obviously long, long night ahead as uncomplicated as we could by dropping ourselves into chairs at an early table. Tablemates turned out to be all Seattleites--Cheryl Chow and Sarah Morningstar, Donna Gogerty and her guest Gloria, and damned if out of all that number of people, Gloria wasn't the one who bid on (and ultimately got) our matryoshka doll. Some seats stayed open at our table--Charles Simonyi fluttered down briefly and it looked like C's dinnermate would be Martha Stewart, but when Charles went to fetch her she had found bigger-league seating than with us, to our relief. Ultimately those seats were taken by the guys from Paul Allen's own band, Douglas, Nathaniel and Mark, and so we got to watch the working folk--they and Dan Ackroyd were to conclude the evening with the Beatles' "Back in the USSR," and we noticed that Ackroyd in workmanlike fashion took a seat near the door with other ordinary folk, didn't hunt down fancy chums to sit with. The musicians all went out for a tactical meeting at one point, and Paul's guys came back miffed at being nastily snubbed by the featured band, The Black Crows. (Next day at the Newark baggage carousel, couple of the Crows, who are pasty white guys, planted themselves in hovering fashion next to us and our cart, ignoring us except for preempting all the air-space they could and making nice to Michael Kamen on the other side of them--he's after all a film composer. When Sondra Kamen suddenly began talking to Carol, saying we must go to St. Petersburg for Christmas sometime, the Crows' attitude in C's direction smartened up radically.)

Crab cakes came, the 50-piece or so Andreyev Balalaika Orchestra blazed away, another course arrived, Viacheslav Lukhanin sang some opera over the rising hubbub of talk, and the violinist Sergey Stadler was in real trouble with the noise level by the time his turn came. In a noble gesture Donna and Gloria and <sup>a</sup> bunch of

Aug. 24--cont.--Catherine's Palace cont.--others went and stood at the stage apron where he could see them and know he was appreciated. (On the bus back, Robin Williams said of the violinist's outing, "That was rough.")

27 Aug.--Blessed weather over the weekend, clear and comfortable, and we concentrated on outside work, trimming the lavender, planting spinach & onions, enjoying the deck... The Damborgs came for supper and our St. P show-and-tell on the 25th, a fine mellow evening with those classy easy friends.

And now to finish the night at Catherine's palace. The banquet and entertainment went on for no few hours, always with ganglia of bathroom-goers trekking off on the two-hundred-yard roundtrip to the toilets. (Coming back from my journey, I encountered Bill Moyers starting his and told him he had only about a football field to go. "The Long March," he said with a grin.) By whatever crowd chemistry, the rising fug of boisterous noise that had nearly done in the beleaguered violinist shut right down, into attentive quiet, when Ballet Academy students came into the Great Hall like a delicate string of Christmas tree paper-cutout dolls. They danced nicely, to enthusiastic applause, and then came two principals from the Mariinsky Ballet--the Russians apparently are determined to scrap the old politically slapped-on "Kirov Ballet" name--Irina Tchistiakova and Alexander Klimov, to give us moments from Swan Lake on that small flat-footed stage.

The endless banquet at last did end, and as the whole schmeir of us promenaded out to the gardens where fireworks and rock music awaited, the order of descent down the steps in the coterie we ended up in was Tom Stoppard, followed directly by George Lucas and spouse, followed directly by us. Again the period-piece band was playing, as colossal fireworks went off and off--starbursts, sprays, end-<sup>OVER</sup>~~X~~-end curlicues. The smoke thickened against the Palace outbuildings until it looked eerily like a Napoleonic battlefield, and as C and I stood there spectating, we noticed a person by himself just in front of us, gesticulating, muttering, purely to himself--it

27 Aug. cont.--Catherine's Palace cont.--was Robin Williams, working out a routine from the spectacle.

We knew a down note was ahead now--it was past 1 a.m.--or rather an ear-reaming cacophony of them, as the chosen rock band, The Black Crows, were to play now in the big pavilion tent set up in the gardens. They were even louder than I expected, and indeed Paul A's own musicians and seasoned rock-concert goers we ~~we~~ talked to the next day were stunned at the volume. Anyway, the Black Crows erupted, we sat and watched two or three numbers, at least getting a kick out of Laurence Fishburne's ice-breaking dance moves as first one onto the floor. C fashioned earplug-wads out of a napkin and I figured we were in for greatly more blast and blare, as the finale of the night was to be this group, Paul's, and Dan Ackroyd all doing the Beatles' "Back in the USSR," but fortunately C's New Jersey smarts kicked in--"There've got to be busses," said she, and by damn if we didn't get out of there and onto the second one scooting back to the ship. Also aboard were Robin Williams--who did not make that long march to the toilet before leaving and ~~we~~ couldn't get the bus driver to let him into the kind of sidepocket port-a-potty while the bus was moving and the driver had been ~~of~~ of course told to make that bus move; some moments of routine, but mostly really wanting to go, for Robin--Tracy Ullman, the Lucases, sundry Hollywood types, so the Crows kind of bombed out, it seemed. Back ~~around~~ on the ship around 2 a.m., then to finish packing and put our bags in the hallway by 3. Managed it OK, but it is one of those times you're aware that if you're not damn careful what you're doing, you could end up with nothing to wear home to Seattle but the pajamas you have on.

A few hours' sleep, departure from the ship soon after 8 that morning, the blue Baltic bus fleet taking us to Pulkovo airport and "Zone A" treatment, i.e. VIP. No problem at Customs, and to our astonishment, none at that circle of Hell, Newark, either. The flights back were softened by champagne, good meals, plenty of elbow room, a sensational veteran flight crew, ultimately by

27 Aug. cont.--St. Petersburg trip concluded--a massage for each of us from Sonny Robinson, Martina Navritalova's own masseur. And on the way home, from this merry-go-round weekend trip half around the world, from the part-Potemkin Village, part-treasure vault of history that is St. Petersburg, we flew directly over the Dupuyer country where, as C pointed out with tickles and kisses, I started.

28 Aug.--The St. Petersburg trip has been dutifully captured here, our pics were ready y'day and more vivid than we'd expected, and the glow of it all hasn't quite worn off yet. We have been wondrously content this past week, doing yardwork in fine weather, propping up on the deck and watching the water traffic at the end of each day. We still are wowed every day by living here.

My knee report, after the Estonian cobblestones and the long hours of sitting on the plane and now the work in the yard: things feel pretty good. Decent weather, possibly the glucosamine tablets I'm trying? I did have a spate of backache soon after I got home, brought on by kneeling and picking vegetables, which I'd been doing all damned summer without real problem. That too has alleviated, mostly.

3 Sept.--Labor Day, & traditionally blah weather. Some moisture fell this morning, although not enough to do any real good for the garden and the rest of the place. I have felt, with considerable remorse, an autumnal turn this weekend, doubtless brought on not just by the weather but the day-plus of rewrite I had to do on the Portland speech to get it down to size and, beyond it, the rest of *Prairie Nocturne* to conquer. C has pointed out to me that it is the home stretch of the last book I ever have to write, if that's what I want, and I must keep trying to think of it that way.

11 Sept.--An eerily lovely serene day, while the carnage waits to be counted at the World Trade towers. We were on an early walk of the neighborhood, so C could visit Margaret Svec promptly at 8, when we passed Gene Lewis coming into his driveway and he asked if we had heard about the tower coming down. The 2nd hijacked plane meanwhile must have hit the other tower, the Pentagon attack happened and the Pennsylvania plane crash, etc. All planes are grounded, and just now as I stepped out

11 Sept. cont.--onto the garden porch, the only sound is the almost indiscernible thrum of a Victoria Clipper heading north. It would be preposterous at this point to even try to guess what hell lies ahead, as this dismal Bush administration reacts to this. On the personal gut level, I worry for Tony Angell and Bryony and Gilia, who were driving onward to NY after Tony's award ceremony in Wausau at the end of last week. And it certainly crosses my mind that this was the week I once singled out for us to go to NY, for Harlem Ren'sce research and shmoozing with the publishing types; odd, the accidental courage of ignoring the NY niceties as I have so long done. Other thoughts: had these attacks preceded the St. P'burg trip, that likely would have been scrapped. And it verifies those security efforts we saw, in Paul Allen's backpackers and all.

To try to push this aside until the news clarifies, I'll get to what I originally intended here in today's entry, catchup on last week. On the 5th we drove to Portland, had dinner that night @ Langs'. Others there were Jacqui Peterson of WSU/Vancouver, and Barbara Brower, who teaches geography @ Portland State, and her carpenter husband Jan Olsen. As C said, you could see intelligence written all over Barbara B., and she and Jan had tales of trying to get her father's papers together. She said it's like stratigraphy--piles, ~~of~~ covering various durations, which Jan said they can sometimes date from the TV Guides caught in the middle. Said her brother--I assume she meant Kenneth--wants to write the David Brower biog, and the papers are ending up at the Bancroft. Next day, mid-morning, Craig Lesley came down to the Hilton and visited with us for about an hour. It was all too evident Storm Riders didn't come close to the sales level he'd hoped for. If he can put together a less hectic life, he now has a chance open ahead of him, retiring at the end of this school year on the same salary he had been making at Clackamas CC. That night, the 6th, came my actual piece of work, the speech to the Sustainability Forum, and while it was

11 Sept. cont.--a tough venue, speaking to a crowd that had been in meetings all day and before they had any food or drink in them, it worked out okay; C judged that the audience was quite rapt. And so I've made it to the \$8000 level for a speech, and we'll see if there ever is another one with that price tag.

Friday the 7th, we went on out to Cannon Beach; hiked @ Nehalem, beautiful weather, the ocean dark-colored and dramatic and the surf magically bright, and of course a ripping wind from the north to hike back into to the car. My right hip was bothering me, from the walking we did in downtown Portland, so I went only as far as the little creek-trickle north of ~~Kymah~~ Haystack Rock the next morn, while C hiked down as far as the southmost motels, in gorgeous weather.

The weather stayed perfect--is forecast to, the rest of this week--through the weekend, and we harvested madly in the garden. Sunday night, the 9th, went to dinner @ the Walkinshaws; Jean, visutally-oriented TV producer that she is, went through our St. P pics twice. A good evening with those graceful friends.

12 Sept.--Scenes from the aftermath. A Navy ship offshore from our house this morning when we went for our walk a little after 7. Just before supper last night, the roar of a jet in what had been the silent sky; I was on the deck and called C out, to see the fighter jet come in behind and tailgate a propellor plane, Piper Cublike, that was flying north, inland of us, fairly high and in breach of the general grounding. The fighter tagged along threateningly, then rolled away.

Remarkably, or maybe not, given the attuning to surroundings that animates us, the magnificent weather seems to help to anneal us against the news, and the inadequate cliches that is bound to be true, that our lives will be changed because of the terrorists' success. The earthly patterns somehow reassure, while the human ones are so horrific. The two of us know of nothing to do except go on with what we've got; do the chores, savor what we have of life.

15 Sept.--Fog has moved in (8:50 a.m. now), closing down the sweet weather of the past week. The superb days, on a scale beyond human mental fumbings, have sustained us wondrously. I've been saying in the recent speeches that nature is an ultimate form of memory, and we seem to be finding the details, the rhythms, that keep us going, in it.

The trick next is to manage our way back into the avenues, few as they are for us, to the world beyond our tended patch of earth. Finances. My book. Another medical checkup for me in a few weeks. We'll have to use some of this weekend to contemplate finances, and if there are no more national eruptions--a helluva if--I need to immerse into my manuscript again. I got in a reasonable day of re-reading last Monday, but attention to the news naturally sapped all focus and time after the morning of the 11th. By and large, we have checked CNN for breaking news and stayed with ABC news for more extended periods; all the old ironpants news anchors--Brokaw, Rather, Jennings--are notably better on this massive story than they've been on, say, election nights. We're particularly impressed with Jennings, doing some managing editing on his news staff right there during their reports--"I know you'll want to get back to your sources," he typically might say--and C pointing out his ability to edit himself ~~wkxk~~ while speaking, clairifying, distilling as he goes, hour upon hour. Other details of these past days:

--the trio of Navy ships one by one pulled back out of Elliott Bay, heading north, on the 13th.

--the first resumption of small plane traffic we noted was a floatplane passing over @ 5:17 p.m. on the 13th. Even yet there is no regular jetliner noise--indeed, I think we've only seen one in the air, an inbound which took an unusual route, over us and staying high until it was considerably east, then starting its descent--but across the days, particularly the first few, there was the frequent roar of fighter jets invisibly high.

19 Sept.--Have finished re-reading the Prairie ms, prelude to resuming writing, and some of it looks quite fine and some of it needs more heft on its bones. About as usual at this state of a book, I hope.

Weather is a little better just now, at mid-afternoon, after a gray spate of days. The stock market is taking a predictable wallop, the aftermath of the World Trade Center disaster is still radically unsettled--not a pretty time. We are sticking to our basics: making applesauce and, less successfully, a pear version, and just now I resumed biz with the publishing world, faxing in the intro for the Yearling re-issue. Tomorrow, I hope to start making words on Prairie again.

28 Sept.--The Friday end of a workweek where, inexplicably, the writing kicked in decently y'day morning, and kept producing well today--three pages, two good smooth ones y'day. I had trudged, dragging the necessary pp. out of myself, until then. Maybe can't last, but this Fort Assiniboine chapter is standing up and saluting more sharply than I ever thought it could.

Company coming for supper, Betty & Roy Mayfield. On the 26th, Linda and Sydney similarly came, a glorious hilarious evening in which we spun our St. Petersburg yarns and they spun theirs of Breadloaf. There may be a reprise of theirs, as The New Yorker depth-charged a reporter, Rebecca Meade, into that there writing school this time around. We figure Linda will come off okay by virtue of being Linda, but some guts are bound to be spilled; Linda and Syd gigglingly told of seeing Rebecca M. sitting around "the barn" where teachers and students confer, on the final day, notebook pages flying as she listened to Vivian Gornick kvetch. Fun.

Weather has turned iffy, but of course without significant rain. We're still eating out of the garden--will manage to eke into October. I'm feeling greatly better, the past couple of days, with the improvement in the manuscript work. The world remains in a lousy time.

30 Sept.--The last of the month, a Sunday morning over-banded with low cloud and fog. Suppertime last night was an unexpectedly glorious onset of evening, after a day that had been at first overcast and then oddly warm (74) and stuffy, and as we sat down to a meal of crab and our homegrown salad, leaves almost literally burst from the Kastners' nearest bigleaf maple, descending, ~~itting~~ kiting past the west windows almost like a bird flock. They continued to come down, as if all of a sudden there was a law of autumn gravity, batting against the deck railing and windows with audible thwacks, so dramatic a season change we had to think it hilarious.

Friday night, the 28th, good fun of another kind, Betty and Roy Mayfield here for rib roast supper. Like Linda and Sydney and the Damborgs, they're reilably grand company to be around, full of wit and verve. Betty had a super addendum to my Robin Williams notes from the St. Pete trip. At the final banquet at Catherine the Great's place, everybody was getting seated there in the jaw-dropping gilt-dripping Great Room, lavish beyond most stretches of the word. Robin's wife, apparently his first and last, longtime and steady and as Betty said someone you don't hear from much in the backwash of his creative outbursts, took a look around and thought out loud: "See, honey, I didn't overdo the ranch, did I." "No, no, I like the ranch," Robin assures her, as Betty thinks to herself, Hey, you don't get it, people revolted over the posh of this place... In the course of the conversation, we ribbed Betty that we'd read in the NY Times that morn that she now has another library to tend, Paul Allen having bought Craig McCaw's whopper yacht Tatoosh. Little do we know, wails she: there's a bigger third yacht (beyond the extant Caprice and now Tatoosh) a-building in Germany. Betty reports that Paul's mother, Faye, asked her: "Betty, why did he buy that? We don't need it." Carol wondered if Paul A. was pitching in to help Craig McCaw out of what looks like a cash squeeze, but Betty said she didn't know, Paul just seemed to like the boat. It came with 700 books already board and Betty recommended they just leave those in place; Paul looked at her and asked, "What did you see that was interesting?" His mom had thought they looked pretty good, she got off the ---

30 Sept. cont.--hook with, and promised that she and Faye would work over that collection, so the books were re-prieved. Meanwhile, Betty had spent Friday cataloguing the Shakespeare holdings of Paul's sister Jody Patton. What a remarkable curlicue of life this is, this family with money that won't quit, all of it ginned into creation by the software revolution, every one of them coddling books and libraries as potentates used to do with gems and gold. Paul A. has never even unpacked the couple of varieties of e-books people gave him for Christmas, Betty says. On the other hand, a good deal of her current work is overseeing the digitizing of the Allen collection of movie videos, so he can get 'em on his computer. What a job she has, C and I marvel each time. Tentatively she's to bring Faye over here for tea this coming Thursday.

As to the wider world, second and third shoes have not yet dropped in the aftermath of the World Trade Center massacre. The Bushies have not reflexivly bombed camel trains in Afghanistan, though god knows what they will hit upon as reprisal. I should try here, in this probably temporary interval between national spasms, to capture a little the process of an event such as those towers going down as it recedes in the emotions, in the avidity toward the journalism, etc. There's long been a pretty evident rule of thumb that this country's attention span is about a week long, in terms of riveting onto a news topic. This is obviously fantastically exceptional, to the point that there's no guessing at how long terrorism and U.S. ploys against it will be near the front of the national forehead. Yet, functioning, in terms of receding or perhaps it's proceeding to accustomed routines, seems to insist on happening, much the way skin heals whether or not we put our mind to that.

6 Oct.--Mornings of moon, we had all week until today; we'll hope it's not 6 months of clouds that have moved in. Every morning at awaking, between 4:30-5:30, there the big bright button of moon would be, and a wash of moonlight the width of Puget Sound; once it was tornado-shaped, other times it spilled out in varying tiers. When I would go out on the front walk to fetch the newspapers, the stars were exceptionally clear. Along with this we had days in the low 70s, gorgeous enough for sitting out

6 Oct. cont.--or spates of yardwork (C more so than me; I've had to turn back into a writing drone, alas).

Beyond the piquant weather, some notable stuff: Had the 2nd massage of my life (the other on the plane home from St. Petersburg under the formidable fingers of Sonny Robinson) here y'day @ 4, Linda Ricks of Home & Office Massage setting up \$85 shop in our tv room and working on me for an hour. On the plus side, quite a few parts of me have felt better, particularly as she was kneading me from head to toe. A drawback which my nose didn't catch, until maybe the middle of the night when sneezing and runny nose started, is that the lotion she used has an aroma, and one thing this household doesn't need, with my susceptibility to being blindsided with allergic reaction if that's what this was, and C's very sharp sense of smell, is aromatherapy.

And last night, we took Tony Angell & Lee Rolfe to the Provinces as celebration of Tony's Master Artist honor at the Wausau Museum of nature art. Tony showed us pics from the trip, which Gilia and Bryony went on with him, and ~~that~~ told us tales, most intriguingly of the art trove left behind with the death of Don Eckelberry, whom Tony thinks if one of the 20th century's geniuses of the field. Ah, and travels with Tony: they had time to come back here to the house a little while after the meal, so off Lee went with Carol and I rode with Tony to navigate him here the back way from Edmonds. Rather, endeavored to ride with Tony, because it transpired that they'd brought with them their newest creature, a big adolescent golden retriever. We get to the car, the dog is occupying the front seat, damn near all the front seat. That's okay, I tell Tony, looking at the head the size of a tiger on this thing, just strap me across a fender and let's get going. Tony is determined the pooch-to-end-all-pooches is going to learn a lesson about seating, so he leans in, gives him stern orders, eventually tries to shove him over the seat; even Tony cannot dislodge this eighty-pound dog. All right, says Tony, c'mere, and opens the side door and the rear panel for the dog to hop out and go around to the back and up and in. The dog hops out, and goes like a shot north up the main street of Edmonds, fortunately looping back just before rounding the civic gazebo. He then gallops back hellbent, aiming straight for me,

6 Oct. cont.--and just as I am bracing for a football-like hit, he kind of pirouetted onto his back, right at my feet, offering his tawny tummy up for me to tickle. I got hold of his collar then, and Tony came and horsed him into the back of the car, and we finally got out of town.

C has done a fine full account of our event of Oct. 4, Faye Allen's visit, and I'll simply try to tack on anything loose I remember. Blessedly, we had a dazzler of a day for her and Betty Mayfield to come, bluest sky and the mountains marching grandly in place, and the Sound lightly combed with little whitecaps; for all that, maybe the most gratifying moment of scenic appreciation was when Faye exclaimed over our front yard, the battleground C has wrestled with every which way these past 3 years.

Faye has great charm and makes conversation easily, so as C indicated, it was a kick to sit her and Betty down and take them through a bit of my working methods. Faye's tale of the overall strap breaking her collarbone, it sounded to me as if she fell and the strap buckle was unluckily right atop the bone when she hit. And the family moving from Oklahoma to California had an unexpected angle--they, particularly her mother, did so because her brother was going through a divorce in Calif. and hoped he'd have a chance to claim the kids if his own mother was on hand to provide 'em care; it didn't work. Faye, incidentally, doesn't show a trace of Okie accent in ordinary speech. Other spots of detail:

--The few anecdotes about "my son" point to Paul as a straight-ahead rationalist all his life. C got down the story of his picking up "perceived" as a kid ~~was~~--Faye thought it was from Swiss Family Robinson--and putting it right to use; she also said when she took him to see the movie of that favorite book, two girls had been added to the story, he said "There weren't any girls in it!" and didn't even want to see the pic. He had been similarly rationally incredulous the day he came home and reported, of ~~was~~ the to this day dorky accountant guy who was along on the St. P trip, "Mom, there's a kid in my class who doesn't believe in evolution."

After we went upstairs and had tea and our glowing

6 Oct. cont.--raspberries on sherbet, conversation went this way and that, and all at once Faye said something about "Bill," which it took me a blink or two to realize was Gates. C has the essential anecdotes down; the only refinements I can think of are that Paul, reporting Bill's presence in the computer lab, said "there's this little kid" but "he's really smart." And the story of Bill repeatedly telling the Hodgkins-stricken Paul, "Paul, you're not sick" she told in full good humor, but it obviously still smarts there on Mom. Early in this particular tale-telling, Faye had said as if it would surprise the world, "You know, Bill doesn't get along with people."

So we had a ball, and Faye and Betty packed off home to Mercer Island billionaire land apparently as happy as kids with the pair of books I gave them. Godalmighty, this is a long way from the three-room shack in Ringling.

10-Oct.--What is it going to be? Sound of military jets has been almost constant, infection of thunder in the night. After the bombings of Afghanistan that began on the 7th, the virtual certainty of more attack within this country ramified into certain. I spend the first hour after getting up by reading around in the NY Times and Wall St. Journal, have b'fast, and only then go down to the tv to see if anything has transpired yet.

16 Oct.--"Life is being good to us." So said Carol after my 3rd quarterly consultation y'day with Dr. Ginsberg, and the blood test results showing no change--i.e., the protein spike is not accelerating, nor are the other myeloma indicators. Dr. G plainly treated this as good news, talked ahead to diminishing schedule of testing if the Feb. exam stays level.

Thus we are havened, for however long or short, while the country is going through the epidemic of unease about anthrax. So far, this terror tactic has the government pretty badly thrown: no arrests, contradictory test results on the anthrax strain, a dollop or two of bad news day by day about more mailings. In all this, we are at one probably small edge of the military palette: at supertime last night, an aircraft carrier we don't remember seeing before--#72--came down the Sound, i.e. probably from Bremerton. Older, bulkier than the Vinson

16 Oct. cont.--that we've seen several times in these waters, before it was sent off to the Mideast; is this one coming out of mothballs?

On a non-crisis note, which we're working at maintaining: walked Green Lake Sun. morn w/ David Williams & Marjorie Kittle, catching up w/ them for first time in a while. They're quarter-owners of new Arches bookstore being put into Moab; going to be interesting to see if that can be made to work. Meanwhile David was turned down by Sasquatch on his urban natural history book, a bleak break which doesn't sound reparable to me as a freelance who's been there; I'm not sure David has a hole card, such as my family's story was for House of Sky, or the way a novel sometimes gives a writer a chance to keep on.

23 Oct.--I've been deep into ms work, am now in the vicinity of 9-10,000 words gained since resuming writing schedule this fall; about that many more should give me a full draft. The "Medicine Line" chapter is coming out endless, but I do think of the scenes to make it hang together, one immense minuet if I do it right.

Meanwhile the news ever since my last entry has been thoroughly nasty, the mailed-anthrax sabotage spreading day by day. If the terrorists manage some sort of bulk mailing, or simply enough names chosen at random, we're in for a conflagration of panic. Perhaps naively, C and I don't feel at imminent physical risk from whatever the next big atrocity turns out to be, but we are leery of mass disruption of society--the water supply? power? Went out and looked at portable generators Sunday morn, and as they were when I last shopped them years ago, before we put in the battery-powered emergency power system at 17021, they're noisy, inefficient, bastardly machines. We're still mulling 'em.

Socializing: Eric and Jan Nalder here for supper on the 20th. Eric has been on the Knight-Ridder investigative team for some big swipe at the FAA that's to run maybe this coming weekend; given the terrorist teams' Sept. 11 successes, the FAA deserves all the swiping they can give it. When he was in DC on the story, among other things he was able to wander his way into the FAA

23 Oct. cont.--head's office unchallenged if not unnoticed; on the other hand, he said the FBI guys coming to the FAA for some kind of meeting arrived under protective escort! Ai yi yi. Eric and Jan are house-hunting, making noises like the they'll be the next of our friends to move out of the city.

4 Nov.--Considerable social water under the bridge since the last entry, and another 9 or so pp. of ms as well. The war or whatever it is was another week of the dismal with no clues to the anthrax seepage through the mail nor any discernable advances on Bin Laden's supposed trail in Afghanistan. The West Coast is purportedly on high alert after threats to Calif. bridges. Scabrous times.

So, to the household front. To go backwards in order, we have seen:

--the Laskins on the 2nd, when we took them to the Provinces to celebrate David's winning a Gov's Writers Award for Partisans. They are a funny and disparate couple, and we ought to see more of them. Around the edges of our tabletalk I think I detected freelance malady/melancholy in David, as in our other David-the-freelance friend, David Williams. David L. was voicing displeasure with the NY Times travel section, which had been a prime venue for him and where he'd done some good work for them. He also hasn't quite rounded in on the next book project, though he says he's nearly made up his mind--he's one who won't jinx it by disclosing it, Kate says.

--the Atwoods, on the 30th; I think C did a fine full entry on the beef stroganoff night there. We literally dined out on Russia, Peter and Margaret having urged us to bring pics and tales,

--and on the 27th, over the hills and through the wood and in and out of the fog and way to hell and gone, to Tom and Carrie Jones'. Another premier meal, in that house that Carrie has looking like it's posing for a catalogue, with an exhilarating quick tour through Tom's latest paintings, but goddamn, it is a haul out to their place. C and I calculate this was only our 2nd time there in the ' years they've been there.

4 Nov. cont.--Other stuff: rain marched up the Sound from Point No Point about 2 this afternoon, and it's solidly socked-in out the office window now. Y'day was glorious, 64 in late afternoon, and we did a ton of garden chores, taking out some tomato vines and yanking weeds. We are enjoying the turn of season here; autumnal as all get out, and today mid-day there was a sprawling sailboat race, spinnakers blooming north and then the boats tacking in here under us--we do love it.

On the work front, C witnessed Margaret Svec's new will the night of the 1st, putting the final dot on considerable advising and counseling as Margaret set her wavery financial affairs to rights. And I've plowed diligently week by week on the big Medicine Line chapter; not sure I can get the damn thing done by Thanksgiving, even. The writing in this section does seem to me pretty shapely, and I am getting the pace and scene-shifting nattered into place; made a considerable revamping decision about 2 o'clock on Friday, which is not the recommended way to end a week. And this afternoon, despite this being Sunday, I went to the computer enough to generate an alternate opening for the book, the "Overture" device of leading with lines from flyleaf of Susan's diary. Will let that idea age for awhile, and see how it seasons.

Just realized I haven't made an entry on the best recent news: Sky was chosen as the best book about Montana, in the repeat of the poll Harry Fritz did 20 years ago when it edged into the top 5. Dave & Marcella called with the news on the 27th, after the Montana History Conference. As we've said more than once around here, I've come a long way from Ringling.

11--Helluva mixed week, just past. I slogged along satisfactorily M-T-W, putting finishing touches on a short scene each day, then on Thursday I developed a considerable pain under the inside point of my left shoulder blade. Got little done that day, and didn't even try on Friday, just went down to Gp H--where Dr. Shauna Smith told me it sounded to her like a pinched nerve and put me on Neoproxin--and took it easy the rest of the day. Oh, yes--with exception of getting a massage, in the back room at the Hair Brokers, where C has her hair done and no enterprise known to woman is left untried. The

11 Nov. cont.--shoulder has eased, the shoulderblade pain gone as mysteriously as it came, what discomfort there is now has migrated out to the point of the shoulder; this I think tends more toward my diagnosis--that this is an aggravation of my 3-year-old sternoclavicular joint lesion--rather than Dr. Smith's. The <sup>U</sup>p H internists never have grasped the sternoclavicular woe, it was one of the physical therapists who figured out the textbook set of symptoms and then the restorative exercises, the docs clueless as to why the joint kept hurting as it did for 6 months until Charlie Jung said "Let's make it go away" and shot cortisone in there. So, I'll give the shoulder this week to see if the Neoproxin will get it to normal, then see if I have to resort to exercises. The only thing I can account for causing this is the yanking I did on the defunct tomato plants, and the amount of hose-coiling etc. I did the day before, last weekend.

Other Friday news: we made a foray to the U District--Scarecrow video, to pick up some rare ones we wanted to see: Tall Blonde Man with One Black Shoe, Topkapi, Mon Uncle--and then on to U Book Store for annual calendar shopping. Note for next year: our annual quest for Chas Wysocki calendars for our kitchen and Xmas gift to Linda and Syd was stymied until I spotted them standing on end in the "Americana" clump of calendars, not with "Artists" or any other damn thing we could think of. Mission finally accomplished, off we went to dinner at Bryony Angell's, w/ Gilia and Aaron also on hand. Bry did a fine job, good homemade bread and kale-potato soup and chicken sausages, a fine and pleasant evening for gray folk like us among the 28-year-olds.

Addendum, now that I've seen today's Seattle Times and its coverage of the death of Ken Kesey. About mid-afternoon y'day the phone machine went off, C went to the stairwell to monitor, and called to me where I was comfortably settled in to read ~~fox~~ that it was somebody from the Seattle Times and the machine had cut her off. Before she--Sarah Jean Green--could provide her phone number, natch. Went down, looked up the Times' number in phone book--City Desk--called, and got, yup, a phone machine. No prob, I try their automated service for "numbers not listed": no Ms. Green. Screw it, I wearily decide, and call the sports department, knowing there'll

11 Nov. cont.--be live bodies there on a football day. "Sports department, this is Dan," comes the voice. "Dan, hi, this is Ivan Doig, trying to--" "Ivan Doig the AUTHOR? You're one of my favorite writers!" We blab a bit, Dan says he'll try to connect me to the City Desk and call him back if it doesn't work. "Metro," says the next voice shortly. "This is Ivan Doig, trying to--" "Oh, hi, this is Sarah Jean Green." After all that way around the barn, she asks me about Kesey, and by the notes I made as I talked to her, I told her:

--Sometimes a Great Notion is an epic of the Northwest... the down-and-dirty lives, the laughter and cussing, of loggers along the rivers...Melvillean ("Mephistophelan?" she ~~xx~~ asks, having trouble hearing)...

--Along with Richard Hugo, William Stafford, and Murray Morgan ("Who was that second one?" she asks), Kesey was one of the writers raised on the Northwest ground who transformed it into literature...

--She asks, "Was he a cultural icon?" I tell her that was just the comet phase ("comic?" she asks; NO, c-o-m-e-goddamn-t! "Oh."), it's his books that are the lasting stars we'll remember him by.

--So this goes for a while, me trying to craft strong sentences and having the feeling they're going down the rainbarrel, when Sarah J. finally says, "That ought do do it, do you have anything you want to add?" I say, just that I think it's too bad we didn't have more books from him, but the ones we have are great gifts, pried from a sprawling life. And of course, only that last little dry tidbit makes it into the sidebar of comments, and all the obits, S. Times to NY Times (the S. Times actually used the LA Times wire piece), treat Kesey as a cultural icon, every sonofabitching one of them missing the point that they wouldn't be looking at him at all except for what he wrote. Further bit of weirdness from NY Times: the obit is by Prissy Lemon Drops himself, Christopher Lehman-Haupt, who never ever no not once mentions the Merry Prankster who happened to be his own brother, and by other accounts inveigled Kesey into various druggy doings.

14 Nov.--Big rain, all night and little letup through the day, couple of inches worth. We suited up like the old days of hiking in the rainforest and did our n'hood walk. Then went to the garden and harvested salad makings, possibly the year's last.

The workweek has been fairly tough, but productive enough, about a scene a day wrestled to for-now completeness. "Medicine Line" is turning out to be a near infinite chapter, so I'm going to be lucky to finish it by the end of the month, let alone Thanksgiving.

This week started with news of the Rockaway plane crash, and inevitable thoughts of more terrorist acts. By now the evaluation has slid toward accident, though the breakup of the plane in the air doesn't handily square with that. Yesterday the Taliban pulled out of Kabul. The stock market has bounded up at this as if it had good sense. Who the hell knows, where this is headed.

Dutiful foray out into the world y'day afternoon, both of us. Group Health for our flu shots, then returned videos to Scarecrow--Tall Blonde Man & Topkapi still great, Mon Uncle alternately hilarious and glacial--and around to Larry's Market for our salmon fix, 2+ pounds of fine New Zealand farmed king, last night's feast and tonight's glorious salad. Reward is in the details.

16 Nov.--This morning just after I woke, 4:30, a jewelbox of lights floated in under our deck; ferry on its way down the Sound, likely to begin its day at Kingston. And last night as I fairly often do, I just wandered our downstairs for some minutes, visiting the loved things on our walls: my ever-aspiring Mariah atop the Bago with the buffalo about to charge it; Tom Lea's lovely Sarah in the Summertime whose legginess and composure was some of my inspiration for, yes, Mariah; Duane Hoffman's old Winter Brothers illustration of me and Swan and a totem pole, still the best catch of me in any kind of portrait; the Spirit of the West award; the Sky calligraphy above the fireplace. It is all fine almost beyond belief, this wondrous house and all it holds for

16 Nov. cont.--us. Today, after the usefully serious moisture of most of the week, has some sun, whetting the white tops of the Olympics and ~~and~~ making passing ships look newly painted; we're going to grab the middle of the day for a trip to the Skagit, possibly to snow geese, and come home with salmon for supper.

The world, through America's war aperture, keeps ricocheting week to week. The Taliban crumpled out of most Afghan cities this week. Whatever malign force is behind the anthrax mailings--incredibly, the FBI keeps dropping heavy hints it's a Ted Kaszynski-type--has slacked off for now. The stock market is bulling ahead, out over thin air. More and more we feel confirmed in keeping to our patterns--the zigzags of mood would ~~be~~ totally addle a person otherwise.

And the book, the book: I had a strong week of writing, making scene after scene serviceable, and am back to the possibility, still a bit of a long shot, that I could have a full version of the "Medicine Line" chapter by Thanksgiving.

20 Nov.--To try to tumble an entry onto paper before Thanksgiving is upon us:

Weekend of fine weather, some garden work, before sheets of storms began moving in. We're in the second of three drenchers, pretty much the 24-hour variety. But the sky was clear enough on the 18th for us to see, in our morn that begins in the dark, traces of the Leonid meteor shower: like a very quick match strike and fizzle.

Also on the 18th, we girded ourselves and headed for Recreational Equipment to buy new rainpants--this after an absolute soaking for both of us in walking the n'hood in our old ones, in the previous rain spate--and due to a genius of a sales clerk in the men's dept., we both came home with properly-fitting women's versions he dug up after nothing else came close on either of us.

On the book, unless I pass a miracle tomorrow I won't make the "Medicine Line" completion tomorrow, but I have come within one scene of that, and also revised the opening chapter to where I think it's quite a sweet singer.

21 Nov.--Eve of Thanksgiving, and big weather coming in. High wind tonight, high wind tomorrow--we've made every preparation we can think of, including a ham which can be served cold, in case the power goes out and we have a dozen people to feed. Tried the living room fireplace draft for the very first time with a taper of newspaper, and ~~by~~ damn it seems to draw fine. C has been doing chores endlessly, bless her. I've hacked away at some, and on the ms front, spent today doing quick fixes on early portion of the book, which will gain me time later. And so, onward into the weather.

25 Nov.--C has done a fine full report on Thanksgiving in her diary, so I'll do just basics here. The weather veered south of us--as did today's storm which is putting snow across quite an area--and so we did not end up feasting on cold food by candlelight. This year's crowd: Tom Orton for the first couple of hours, in deep conversation for part of that with Carla Maloof; John & Katharina Maloof, bearing the rather hilarious techno-academic-military e-mail exchange they did with the West Point library in trying to answer my question, what did German soldiers call American soldiers in WWI; Mark and Lou Damborg; Peter Rockas; Ray and Priscilla Bowen; Ann McCartney and Norm Lindquist, overnighting with us per custom. As C noted, a tidier crowd than ~~usual~~ usual. A bit creakier than we've been, too: Mark with a patch on his temple where a skin cancer had been taken off, and a bothersome neck that had him ask me if I had any Ibuprofen (from my own recent bout with my shoulder, alas, yes, I had a kindred anti-inflammatory, Neaproxin, to hand out), Peter not walking the n'hood because he'd dinged a knee, Norm on a new medication regimen for the next 6 months to combat Hepatitis C. Yet for all that, the day's one casualty was our youngest member, Carla, who one minute was in conversation at the meal-laden card table with me, Ann, and her dad, and the next was in the hallway with, I guess, a numb arm that had the Maloofs rush her to Northwest Hospital. Yikes. It behooves me to note that I'm feeling pretty good at the moment, my knees remarkably good although of course unpredictably finicky.

28 Nov.--Snow! Sneg, in my rusty Russian parlance that St. Petersburg revived in me. Rain turned white about 6:30 this morn, is turning merely wet again now two hours later. Wind whistling in the fireplace. C went to Hair Brokers for her haircut, reported that the CRV performed nobly on slick streets. We're invited to Linda & Jeff's for soup tonight, so we hope this weather grants that.

Am making good revision progress on the ms, taking 20-30 pp. chunks at a time and doing all the unarbitrary fixes. Feels good. I still have to go back and finish up the Medicine Line finale scene, but am working on the assumption that it might come better with the setting-up I'm doing in these revisions.

Dec. 2--Big weather blew through. Considerable wind for about 12 hours, quitting around 2 this morn. November produced rain 3" above normal.

For all that, a reasonably calm weekend--though Ann & Marsh just called, from shopping downtown, and so we'll all hie off to the Provinces--that mainly featured getting our Xmas letter written, designed and photocopied. Good event last night, at Maryan and Ron Pettys', when they threw a photo reunion for a few of us who had the magic carpet to Piter--Betty and Roy Mayfield, and Betsy Wilson and Dean Pollack, besides us. A fine meal and ample talk--both the Mayfields and Pettys have been to Fiji; Maryan had the hilarious detail from their typhoon-wracked vacation there of mammoth Fijians delivering coffee and food during the storm, wearing football helmets against falling coconuts--and we pored over each others' photo albums for pics to order, from the St. Petersburg jaunt.

Early mornings in this churning weather have been a fascination. I'm waking up about 2:30--my body still utterly refuses to believe in changing the clock--and I climb ~~me~~ out by 3:30 or 4. Y'day there was just the right amount of scrim of cloud over and around the moon, being blown at a steady quick pace, to make it seem the moon was speeding across the sky, as were isolated stars in holes in the cloudcloth. This morn's stage effect was cast by the blown-clear sky, full moonlight shining

2 Dec. cont.--into the living room strong enough to make things, including me as I went to the big window to look out, throw solemn long shadows.

9 Dec.--Last week was another of puttying and sprucing up the first 260+ pp. of the ms. I think I greatly improved some patches of the book, and I'll see how others look with a little more time on them. It is the kind of work I'm infatuated with, and am best at, and under its sway I am putting in the long days I used to, down here about 5:40 to catch a TV weather forecast, then settling in to the words until mid-morn walk or lunch at 11, then back at this after our daily nap, small fixes in the ms often presenting themselves readily enough about 1:15 and beyond for an hour or so, then it's slobby going until about 4. Results are adding up, as they damn well ought to from the amount of labor.

We managed to do some yardwork, mostly honing the raspberry bushes' runaway tendencies, on the 6th and 7th. And we've socialized nicely. Night of the 7th, to Elliott Bay for Linda Bierds' reading from her new book of poems, *The Seconds*. Our splendid Lin, as jazz folk say when some soloist takes the music out of sight, is in another profession. She commands vocabulary, is a magician at imagery, ingests research for each poem that would stagger a biographer or novelist, and has a trapeze artist's skill at form. Mark and Lou Damborg sat with us, and Mark commented afterward how much more he gets out of Linda's poems by hearing her read them, with the brief explanations that she excels at. There was a fine crowd--more chairs had to be set up, always the sign of a top turnout--and she sold out of books, as she says she consistently has. Wouldn't it be remarkable if this daring book, almost daunting in its premise of Philip II listening to the castrato sing to him through the wall and all the poems taking resonance from there, became her volume with best sales.

And last night, a plentiful evening at the Walkinshaws. To get rid of the single downer first: Betty and Ed, whose last <sup>name</sup> night I've lost, but while he's just fine to talk to, she's a bit of a grande dame. Used to be married to Bill Jenkins, of Seafirst Bank brief

Battler

9 Dec. cont.--financial barony, and a little of her goes a long way. The other couple, Brooks and Susie Ragen, were dandy; he's had some kind of investor big-bucks career and owns a ranch southeast of Prineville, OR, and is interested in the area's and indeed the West's history. I said to C on the way home, I liked talking to them because when you say something they get it, you don't see them treating as punctuation before they seize the conversation again. Also on hand, and I wish the party mix hadn't been quite so large as to keep us from ~~talking~~ talking with them more, were the W'shaw's son Charlie, wife Vicki, and teenagers Brady and Lena, sweethearts all. And a nifty touch by Jean and Walt: they hired folksinger Carl Allen, who's sung on at least Jean's Mount Rainier Channel 9 production, to do his Woody Guthrie show. He is quite damn good, gets the role under his skin, never falters in pace or accent and the songs of course absolutely reach in and caress your heart. Talked with him a few minutes before he headed home and he said he not only does the Guthrie performances but one of Depression songs; I told him it was holy work.

Back to the Linda evening: I skipped past the after-event, the party at Sydney's son Fred's place. Fred has found himself a classy fiancée, Rebecca, a looker who seems to have a good head on her in more ways than one, so the evening began with a bonus right there. I visited some with Rick Kenny, Linda's fellow poet and McArthur genius, and the lady in his life, Carol; and while C delightedly caught up with Chris Fisher of the Shoreline faculty, I talked with her partner Judy, new head of women's studies at UW. Amid it all, during my pass thru the kitchen to say howdy to Fred and Rebecca, here arrived Ed Kaplan, Sydney's ex-, Fred's dad. So I sat him down to the kitchen table to talk about the house he and his partner, Roger, have bought together. When we were leaving, Linda, with that cosmic radar of hers, was grinning exultantly with all the unlikely connections of strands of her and Syd's life she'd just witnessed: Ed and me like alte kockers (my version, not hers) at that table chiming away, C in a tight triangle of conversa-

9 Dec. cont.--tion with Chris and Judy, Roger talking to Rick Kenny... I hugged her and told her, yeah, a lot of good cross-pollination goes on around her.

Now it's 7:50 of a Sunday morn, pastel clouds over the Peninsula, and I'm probably going to immerse into some income tax prelims for a while. (Y'day it was addressing Xmas cards--bah--and ordering my vegetable seeds from Territorial--yay!) This holiday season, impending, I'll more than likely be more prone than ever to take refuge in chores. With the confluence of the end of Ramadan and the onset of Christmas and Hannukah coming up, this could turn into a season of murder, if Al Qaeda or any of its cousins have the capability left. Their past pattern has been bombs, including turning the Sept. 11 planes into explosive packages. We'll see if they have anything left in their quiver.

13 Dec.--Yikes, the weather has turned stone-ugly. Wind all night, and driving rain with it this morning. We waited until about 1:30 to walk, and it actually did moderate quite a lot; we're both staying nicely dry, these days, with our nifty new rainpants.

Here at the word factory, I pretty much decided today I've hit a wall, and am going to wind down into some time off from the book, somehow, someday. I had to resort to TO COME notations in the Striper section, which is one of the book's trickiest, but I have about 370 ms pp. in reasonably decent shape to that point. Now to have C look it over, and get myself lined out at the start of the New Year to do the Harlem Renaissance section, if that's where the book still wants to head. Have been working very hard on the book, essentially straight thru since around mid-Sept, and I have a much more burnished and extended ms to show for it. My days have lengthened in a way I don't like, from the morning end when I wake up around 2 or 2:30 and get up about 3:30; still going to sleep 9:30 or 10.

And it's busy around here beyond the book, mucho financial maneuvering toward year-end. So it goes.

16 Dec.--Solid liquid weather, 2nd day of rain and gusts. We revved up to a notion of making the best of all this moisture and going out to the rain forest at the start of the coming week, but the big winds that have accompanied the past couple of storms have given us pause. We can be flexible about this and go if the weather lets up on the whooping, but otherwise we'll do things around the city. In the meantime, hunkered in, we're getting to some chores--took advantage of a Bon Marche sale y'day to get me a couple more pair of Levis (I at last have a new generation of Levis and khaki pants to meet the world in) and the household a new set of bath linens; C right now is out in the storm returning a new blanket that proved to be tentlike on her bed. And today I've re-packed the backpack and killed off the old camping equipment box that's been in the furnace room since we moved in. So we're trucking along okay.

Later, 4 p.m.: this<sup>is</sup> one king hell bastard of a weather system, the rain still heavy, as it has been all day, and the wind picking up now. Swells to 25 feet off the Coast tonight. With our new raingear we walked the n'hood just before lunch, I picked some salad makings, took the garbage out and so on. Otherwise, the day has gone to reading the Timeses, NY and Seattle, and letters to Dave and Marcella Walter and Mark Wyman.

17 Dec.--The big weather blasted through--some 16½" of rain Oct-Dec. so far, as much as all of last winter--and when I got up there were stars brilliant. By the time C got up, we had an owl, probably a barred, hooting in the nearest big branch of Kastners' big-leaf maple; just enough light we could make him out, watch him turn his head. Owl presence was the one bit of birdlife I missed from the previous house. Daylight came with enough sun to put a pink wash on the snowy peaks of the Olympics, and while we were watching that, a heron flew south along the bluff, veered between Kastners' downslope tree and Barney's and came right at us, flying along the roof-lines. Even that wasn't the end of the day's big birds; with the sunshine as rare as it's been lately we went to the marshfront walk at the Arboretum and a pair of eagles were roosting in the shore trees on Foster's Island.

As all this eyeballing of birds likely indicates, I'm

17 Dec. cont.--a guy of leisure at the moment, off the writing treadmill for a couple of weeks. Am reading Don Worster's biog of John Wesley Powell, which majestically swamps Stegner's long-ago Beyond the 100th Meridian.

Out in the world red in tooth and nail, there's considerable likelihood Osama bin Laden slipped into Pakistan, another vast can of worms.

20 Dec.--Every possible forecast was for a dry day which we could use to go to the Skagit, and so we woke to rain. We revamped, and now will try for Nutcracker matinee tix this afternoon. We're keeping busy at year-end chores, a helluva bunch of them financial, and C has looked over my ms to date and done a dandy marketing memo for when the time comes. I got outside a little bit, a day or two ago, tinkered w/ moving the pea patch for this year and put a few garden-room-sprouted Brunia seedlings in the coldframe to see if they'll take.

24 Dec.--A sublime morning, the white peaks of the Olympics coming up out of the darkness in a slow glow of white, then the cirrus clouds turning pink and peach with sunrise, and finally that light washing onto the peaks. The high-pressure area that's in place over the region has cleared the weather spectacularly; We went to the Skagit y'day and Mount Baker was breathtakingly detailed. It's hunting season and so our only view of the snow geese was a distant line of them on the water and a few flights undulating distinctively, but other birdwatching was good: three kingfishers, including one at the SW corner of Fir Island who perched on a power line long enough for us to study him with binocs; a rough-legged hawk, perched; constant redbills and a few peregrines cruising the grainfield along the Indian Slough dike hike; many herons, out stalking the ditches and fields because the tide was high. The day was chilly, but virtually windless, and traffic of all kinds was light, so we had a marvelous walk of the dike in the low clear cast of light. Pizza and stout for lunch at the LaConner brew pub, then farmed king salmon--done on our charcoal grill, in our new approach of cooking

24 Dec. cont.--in mid-afternoon while there's some warmth and daylight, doing the salmon just short of done and then finishing it in the oven at supertime--for a fine meal to end the day.

Since the last entry, we did indeed at last get to the Nutcracker--after, oh, thirty or so years of intending to--and very much liked the spectacle of it. As the Opera House ~~is~~ is to be renovated, this likely was the last chance to see the Maurice Sendak set in its full whimsical glory, too. And the night of the 21st, we went up the hill to Lageshultes' to their block party to welcome Mike and Anastasia--last names to be provided on some later occasion--to homeowning on 14th Ave. They indeed seemed like people we'll enjoy, but the find of the evening seemed to be Jim and Yasko Harris, whom we had a terrific gab with. She's Japanese, born in Harbin, Manchukuo as it was then, near the end of WWII; her family was repatriated to devastated Japan on a Liberty ship. Jim was a Dow Chemical exec in the Far East, and I think through a family connection knows Robert Boyle, the old Sports Ill'd writer whose stuff I've liked. From talking with them it becomes clear there's a vibrant little Japanese network here in the neighborhood--either Yasko or one of her siblings attended the same school in Montreal as Ako Shimozato, and it sounded as if Jim had alerted the couple who bought the \$1.8 million Panos house of its availability; they were referred to only as "Yoshi and Niyomi", but Jim recounted a phone call which Yoshi had to cut short because his regular tennis match was coming up on the/clock--with the Emperor of Japan.

All in all, we're so far having a fine holiday season. On the world front, the terrorist attempt that would have damaged if not downed a Paris-to-Miami flight was foiled when the perp couldn't get his explosive-laden shoes to catch fire.

26 Dec.--A change in the weather is arriving, the first sheath of clouds now--4 p.m.--across the sky as far north as Pt No Point, after fine clear days. We did some pruning on the staggy old apple tree today, and I prepped the earliest garden bed the past couple of afternoons. Sunsets have been gorgeous, especially a rich golden one yesterday just as I was bringing Margaret Svec here for Xmas dinner.

Due in no small part to Margaret's presence, bringing out John Roden's gallantry and keeping him off political rants, Christmas went swimmingly. C did a 3-rib roast, baked tomatoes, spuds, lime salad, and Jean brought pecan pie and whipped cream. Ah, and we went through 3 bottles of champagne.

27 Dec.--Further Xmas thoughts. We had the CBC on the radio almost daylong on the 24th and 25th, and the music was superb, better than the BBC of yore. But best of all was the "Take Five" host Shelly Soames' decision to play Dylan Thomas's reading of "A Child's Christmas in Wales," one noonhour. It is still flabbergasting, both for its tumbling tricks of language and Thomas's reading, which either through performance or skillful recording is a seamless piece of bravura.

And, back to Margaret Svec's presence, at Xmas dinner and in our lives. C remarked how astonishingly calibrated Margaret is. With John Roden on hand, who doesn't seem to fully get it about the mix of genders in Margaret's spectrum of relationships, and for that matter Jean who doesn't want to get it, Margaret was the widow, saying what a hard year this was with Jerry's death. At other times, with just C and me, she's freely talked about Pat. What a wonder she is, and as she is 89, I'm particularly glad we had her here for a holiday dinner that may not come again the same way.

31 Dec.--8:30 a.m., New Year's Eve, the first rain of the holidays having passed through in the night, and cloud and drizzle now on hand. Regardless, we intend to walk the n'hood at 9, and Linda and Sydney are to stop by on their way to Camano about 10:30. C is at washing and ironing, and I'm patting this diary and the garden one into shape and fixing up next year's set. On the social

Dec. 31 cont.--side, went to the Damborgs' for supper on the 28th, met there Jacquie and Walt Williams, parents of David of David-and-Marjorie weekend walks we make every 6 weeks or so. Walt has major artery problems and a heart attack in his history, it seems, so Mark and Lou rose to the occasion with a no-salt no-fat no-anything meal of sea bass done with citrus.

Here on the home front, the pleasures of the past few weeks of holidaying contend with the strew of an ominous year. Saturday's mail brought Pete Steen's edited volume of Gifford Pinchot's diaries, and Pinchot wrote in 1939: "The New Year opens like a set trap." This one proved to be baited treacherously enough: the earthquake, my MGUS diagnosis, the teetering economy, the terrorism calamity, the insidious anthrax trial run...the erosion, perhaps pretty quickly, of the values of governance we're devoted to. (Civil liberties are openly taking a hit, but under cover of the war news the Bushies are gutting environmental gains.) In daily dollops of not-great mood the past some days, I've had added in some knee achiness and now the goddamned right-groin muscle nag, both of which afflict my utter hunger to get outside and do physical work. Yet it has been a fine little set of weeks, replete with what we're good at (in this morning's cleanup of Xmas gifts and our own U Book Store run late last week, I counted 11 new books strewn by our reading sites) and good food and drink and precious each other.