2 Jan. 2012--So we have had at least two quiet productive days of this year. Y'day was surprisingly mild, so mush so that bees buzzed in the heather, and we put in a big day in the yard, with C giving the hydrangea its annual trim and also doing some pruning out front, particularly the sprawly redtwig dogwood in the middle of the yard, while I finally got all the raspberry canes trimmed and tied into order, sprayed the two peach trees with copper sulfate against peach curl (the day was not windy, a rarity), and fought blackberry vines in various spots. To top it off, the day stayed so benign I barbecue grilled salmon with no weather problem.

And today I've gone back to work on Sweet Thunder, after the weekend off. (Saturday I spent on finances, which are going to need considerably more work.) I have something over 50 pp., maybe over 60, in chunks of ms now, 34 pp. continuous at the start of the book, quite a good launch of this one, I think. The year is bound to turn choppy with the publication of Bartender's Tale, as always happens, but there seems a good chance I can get a lot of Thunder drafted if our health holds out. Always an if--especially given that I have to swallow hard and check my latest blood protein readings two days from now, to prepare for seeing Dr. Chen the day after that--but at the moment C and I are both feeling pretty good. Her sets of exercises has helped her balance and her shoulder, and I'm feeling calmer and steadier than sometimes, although it still doesn't take much to get on my nerves. (i.e., the Christmas fiasco. Jean Roden did come over to report a few days later. John did not remember any of his drunken gaucherie, to use the mildest term I can, and at first insisted to Jean none of that could have happened. As she kept at him, he conceded it must have happened, and inasmuch as he has no memory of it, he had maybe better (a) write Mark a letter of apology and (b) see his doctor. We await with interest to see if either of those happens). And so, until something terrible happens--Newt Gingrich becoming a viable candidate for president, for instance--we're sidling into the new year in decent shape.

Jan. 3--A good phone call with Becky today, the ostensibl topic the MLA gig I'm to do for the Pearson academic outfit this Saturday. We cleared the air about my Xmas newsletter, which I had avoided sending her because of its Amazonian contents until she heard about it from Andre Bernard and asked where hers was. The main and good news was that the title, The Bartender's Tale, evidently has passed muster with the marketing and sales people, and in fact the ms is being looked over by the Young Adults editor for possible crossover sales.

And it's been a satisfactory day of writing--Morrie's introduction to the newspaper office--after a tough morning when I worked at getting a graf from y'day fixed and right. C went online to look up a printing press for the Butte Thunder for me. Quiet and orderly around here, so far.

Jan. 4--We've just checked my protein test results online always a gulping experience, xx this time baffling as well, since the light chains measurement has been changed from milligrams per liter to I guess decaliter. So I have a greatly lower reading, and the graph of the crucial lambda reading plummets, which would be good news. I suspect, though, that the readings need to be multiplied by ten, and if so, that would mean that both the lambda and the urine protein are up somewhat, not good although not catastrophic on the face of it. We'll find out from Dr. Chen at 8:20 in the morning.

Jan. 5--Now to turn the corner and try to whistle for a while. The medical appointment did not produce bad news, although there is a possible hint of upward creep in the light chains result, enough so that Dr. Chen is having me go back to the tried and true urine protein measurement of peeing in the jug. Will do so early next week and again before seeing him next, in May. Meanwhile, I'm at least ostensibly no worse off than I was. And as I reported in my record of the visit, I told him I can't tolerate worse neuropathy--ie. as a stronger dose of Thalidomide might cause--and he took that into account. And so, onward.

No sooner were C and I trying to get these medical notes down this afternoon than the publishing house began

Jan. 5 cont.--flagging us. First, Elaine, e-mailing that the Seattle Times won't sell the Ken Lambert pic of me that we want to use for a publicity shot--that is, they'll license it for online use but not book jacket etc., whatever the hell that's about at a print-based outfit. I dove into our old photo file and came up with Carol's pic of me at our old woodhouse, good enough in a pinch. Then Becky called, wanting a 400-word piece for the back of the catalogue; I can probably cannibalize something out of q'airre stuff etc. She said most of her office time now goes to something of this sort, trying to get books above the horizon.

Jan. 10--Rather hectic start to the week, with the 24-hr urine test wanted by Dr. Chen, and various phone calls etc. to be dealt with. Those are out of the way, and I think I've managed 3 pp. of ms so far these 2 days. Also tweaked the Bartender's Tale catalog copy for Becky this morn. And we've just had a walkthrough of the house from Jean Corr, the King County Medic 1 counselor about preventing falls. Couple of useful ideas from her, and many things we turn out to be doing right.

Sat. night the 7th we went down to the convention center to the Modern Languages Assoc'n huge gathering--7600 English profs and the like--at the request of the Penguin/Pearson sister depts. of Riverhead, and I signed copies of Work Song at the booth for an hour and then did a reading at the reception at the Dragonfish Asian Cafe. Both went well, a lot of airplane reading given away. I was paired at the reading with Dana Gioia, whom we got to visit with only briefly but seemed highly interesting and accomplished. He "reads" his poems from memory, performing them really, excellently done. He's a New Formalist, so there's meter and rhyme, and he has one showpiece--"I might as well read you one you won't understand"--about surrealists and Dadaists that ultimately brings together two of their deliberate nonsense lines: "There is a skeleton on the buffet; I came, I sat down, I went away." Fun.

15 Jan.--This the day we would have left for Tucson if we were going this year, sigh. Instead, we're back from walking 3 rounds of the clubhouse soccer field and grounds, between snow showers and in 34 degrees. The main point is, we don't have horrific airplane colds, either.

I spent y'day grinding out a pair of writings I could have done without, the Riverhead catalogue essay asked for by Becky and the writing-process material for Elena Hartwell's blog, arcofawriter.com. Together, they amounted to a couple of thousand words. Other than those do-gooderisms, I had an okay but not great week on the Thunder ms. When I fully settle back to work, either later today or more likely tomorrow, I'll need to set a goal for when to hit 100 pp., and then another for a second 100. Those should be the bulk of this book, and it'd be well to have them in hand as far ahead of The Bartender's Tale coming into the world as I can.

18 Jan.--Snowbound, sorta. Although just now the lights blinked, and if the power goes off, all bets are off about riding this out here in the house. Probably 4-5" have fallen, very fine and steady since before daylight, all calm and covered now at 4. We did not get our daily walk in--the past few days we've driven to the clubhouse and walked 3 rounds of the soccer field and grounds there to be on unslick ground--but otherwise we're faring okay. I've advanced Sweet Thunder by a couple of pp. today, and one y'day despite an outbreak of calls. C remarked what an odd effect snow has, it makes the phone ring. Out of that spate I dealt with brokerage questions about my IRA distribution, talked with Becky to no real benefit about the cover (she has a favored version she won't tell me about, wanting me to just see it), handled getting Elena Hartwell's blog q-&-a to her despite last night's Book-It rehearsal being canceled--a loss, that, as C and I were really looking forward to it.

Should also note that y'day I checked the urine protein results on-line, and thankfully there was a message from Dr. Chen saying "the results are better compared to 2009"

18 Jan. cont.--and we'll need to see how the next one is. That bolstered me, because I was not sure the numbers were that good. I'll take his opinion over mine.

And C has just now answered the door and lo, the copy-edited ms of Bartender's Tale has alit.

19 Jan.--And no sooner had I gone upstairs for us to celebrate the ms arrival than C offered to help me pull it out of its tight packing, she tugged and lost her balance, and to my horror and dismay, went over backwards nearly into the kitchen island. The impact, as it's turned out, was mainly on the muscle mass above the left buttock. With difficulty I got her up leaning against the island, but she got too woozy to stand and I couldn't hold her upright. There she was on the floor, hurting and woozy, and after a bit of desperate trying to get her into a chair, I called 911, time number three in a year. Again, wonderfully fast response, and the medics quickly had her in the chair and determined this was just a really bad bruise. With me supporting her whenever she got out of her easy chair, she got to a dining room chair to instruct me in making ham omelettes for supper--incredibly, that same day I'd been writing about Morrie doing the same for Grace--and we made it to bed and through bathroom stops and so on. Then came this morning, when she was terribly stiff and hurting getting up out of bed. The Advil must have worn off entirely. Got her to the toilet, that went okay, but then she sagged to the floor while getting up. There she was on the icy slate bathroom floor until I could get a bathmat under her, and managed to scoot her out against a wall in the bathroom hall. While I was wildly trying to think of a method to get her up, she began blanking out, eyes open and not responding to my waving hand in front of her. I spoke loudly and slapped her cheek a little, and miracle, she came out of it (just as I was this close to calling 911 again, even though I was sure it would mean a hospital stay this time, or resorting to David Laskin or Tiffany Kopec to come help me lift). Getting her into a chair, through main strength and

19 Jan. cont.--ignorance, I then got all the dining room chairs and made a line of them for supports to get her back to the bed. She had tea and breakfast in bed, and by then I'd found the kitchen stool stashed in the furnace room that has a high rounded back, to serve as a crude walker, and we navigated her into clothes and her living room easy chair okay. By now, 4--god, what a long day--she's been able to stand in the kitchen and prepare the carrots for supper. Another round of Advil can begin at 8 to take her thru the night, and we'll see how quickly she recuperates past the point of me hovering within grab at her every step.

All this has happened in the midst of the worst snow of the past 15 years, 7" worth, ice along with it. The hell of the thing is, in this episode, that we decided against going to Phoenix, which we would have done just ahead of the storm and this tumble of hers, to have a quiet more healthy winter, no plane colds. I am at quite a loss to know how perilous our situation is, since this tumble was such a freak occurence, as was her stumble on the road last summer, and her balance exercises have seemed to help her a lot. I suppose we will go on as we are in this house, until something happens and we can't. That seems heart- and soul-rendingly close when things like this happen.

26 Jan.--What a week. C rebounded quite fast from her tumble and now is fine again, good, good. The snowstorm became an ice storm--worst in 15 years, entirely missed by the weather forecasters--and a couple hundred thousand people lost power, fortunately not us among them. Then came the copy-edited ms, full of aggravating tin-eared changes which I spent virtually an entire week fixing. Today brought something we were highly apprehensive about--the cover design--and it's really a good one, the best since Whistling Season. Ups and downs, and we're on top at the moment.

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1 Feb.--C has noted in her diary how rugged January was for us, this year and last, with her mishaps. These episodes are terrifying. The recent one, from the sun dazzle and subsequent exercise, gave her a kind of temporary aphasia that again had me fearing a stroke. And again she came out of it shortly. It's not as if I'm a tower of physical strength myself--my right hip has been bothering me, and I see Dr. Kato on the 3rd to begin whatever is the medical path ahead on that. So, I'm worried a lot.

And while our bodies alarm us, the rest of life is going fairly well. We have a good cover for The Bartender's Tale and I think a good book to put under it, and meanwhile Prairie Nocturne is making its way to the stage--tomorrow night we go to the Book-It rehearsal where the costumes are donned for the first time. And I'm making progress on Sweet Thunder. So, fingers crossed for our health for February and beyond.

3 Feb.--Whew, things are damn busy, but in a promising way. This morn I went to see Dr. Kato about my nagging right hip, mentally chomping about deterioration which could lead to something really nasty like an eventual transplant, and her diagnosis blessedly(!) was bursitis, which I'll take in trade any time. Rest, ice, aspirin, exercise, all right. After that, C and I went to KING FM to be interviewed by Marta Zalek for their on-line Arts Channel, along with Jane Jones from Book-It. That went really well, Jane very veteran and fluent at presenting Book-It's story and style, and I felt good about how I handled my part of the interview. And last night we sat in on 2 hours of a tech rehearsal, 1st night the cast had costumes, and saw, oh, maybe a quarter of the 1st act as the cast went over and over things. The director, Laura Ferri, is obviously under considerable tension/ pressure with Jane on hands as, I don't know what, artistic director? founding mother? and Book-It's other power, Myra Platt, in the lead role. However it works, they made a big right decision in cutting the 1st couple of pp. of script, which echoed my lead into the book, and just put Faith Russell up there, Bib Mama-style, in

3 Feb. cont.--dramatic outline and turned her loose on my song Mouthful of Stars. Most of the rest of the cast seems quite good, although the actor doubling as Ninian has to tone down his Scottish burr and become more audible, and the 2nd male lead, playing Wes, does not fit the book as well as the others. But itss looking good, and now we're about off to our next adventure of the day, David Maxwell of Drake University meeting us for dinner downtown at the Brooklyn. And if this sunny weather holds, tomorrow the Skagit and (we hope) the snow geese for the first time this winter, and lunch at the beloved Rhodie. This is better.

11 Feb.--Re last night's opening of Prairie Nocturne at Book-It Theatre. First, the rough part. Just as we were getting ready to leave, after having been lionized by the wowed audience and having had a helluva good time, Carol grew woozy and after Patricia Britton and I steered her to a chair, blanked out on us. At that point I had them call 911, and Seattle Center security had already been called, bringing a hefty guard named Lisa who knew what she was doing. By then Patricia had the idea, which I have got to get foremost in my mind, to get C onto the floor and she was already reviving. The 911 crew, 4 strapping guys, probably weren't really needed, although it's a relief to have the repeated blood pressure readings they take and their general savvy. The upshot was, C was soon able to sit up and then get up, and the guard Lisa drove us to the parking garage and we made it home without further incident. And this morning and all day--it's now 1--Chas been perfectly fine. There in the warm lobby after the show she'd been wearing a sweater jacket, had a half a glass of wine and no water for a long time, and so that seems to have brought on the spell. These things tear skin off my soul, seeing her go vacant and fade away from us. And yet she comes back, for which I'm more thankful than I know how to say.

That after-show drama aside, the play seemed to us quite wonderful. What a pile of work the cast must have put in between the laborious tech rehearsal we saw on the 2nd and last night's click-click-click performance. The one cast member we had reservations about, Shawn Belyea as maybe not

11 Feb. cont.--the commanding baronial figure of Wes, did a vigorous all-of-a-piece performance which served well. And Myra Platt and Geoffrey Simmons as the other two leads, I could not have been more pleased with, nor really, more honored, with the work that had to go into those marathon roles. And Geoffrey provided one of the best things ever said to me, when in the lobby afterward I congratulated him on his performance as Monty and he looked me in the eye and said, "Thanks for understanding me." With everything in me, this writer who had seen his character come to life looked back at him and said, "And vice versa."

I'll try come back to more of this as the weekend goes on, but for now should note the added joy of having Linda Bierds and Sydney Kaplan with us for dinner--another top mark for 10 Mercer--and the play. Linda, with that mind as keen as any we know, remarked on how complicated a stage production it was, with the frequently changing scenes and flow of cast. Good capsule description.

14 Feb.--Prairie Nocturne, take two, is probably going to occur tomorrow night with Carol, due to a cold which is worsening in her all day today. Although she's been perfectly fine ever since the opening night swoon, I've been apprehensive about putting her through this next Book-It visit--there's a book club session I've agreed to attend before the play, so with dinner (with the Damborgs) and that and the performance, it's a stretch of 6 or 7 hours--so her bowing out is maybe the wiser course. In the unlikelihood she feels good enough to go, we'll fend somehow, I guess.

Good day of writing today, couple of fresh pages, better than the page or page and a half I'd been managing. With luck I may finish the Burns Birthday set piece tomorrow.

16 Feb.--The second visit to Book-It was as predicted, solo by me, and other than C's absence, it went grand. First I met Mark and Lou at Ten Mercer, and had another top-notch meal--smiling to myself as they both chose the the night's special, lobster stuffed with crab and cheese and I don't know what else. They are so classy, carrying on with poise even though they were burglarized last weekend and all their computers etc. taken. Then I headed

16 Feb. cont.--for Book-It while they waited for coffee, to participate in Book Club night. 15 or so people at first, but as time went on, and I went on about what I do in making books, I looked up and there were a hundred or more people standing around listening, playgoers who had filtered in. Among them, Betty & Roy Mayfield, and Jean Walkinshaw, who I ended up sitting next to for the performance. Friends to gladden the heart. The performance itself was slicker than opening night, touches added, including a more attractive wig for Myra/Susan with a nice auburn cast.

Other news, I by damn did finish the Robt Burns scene y'day and left the ms for C to read, who tells me to not touch it, just move on. And so I will, although I am more than likely coming down with the household cold, right on schedule.

22 Feb.--Windy and raining, as February seems destined to go out as a lion. I'm making the pickup run to Group Health for Thalidomide this morn, then gassing up the CRV, having old financial statements shredded at Office Max--there goes the front half of the day. Fortunately I've had reasonable writing days on Sweet Thunder, I think staying within reach of the goal of 100 pp. by the end of this month. It has helped that so far I've escaped catching C's cold, and for that matter, she's been getting over it much quicker than usual. So, we're steady at the moment.

24 Feb.--Friday afternoon, of which there are a helluva lot more than are on the calendar, somehow. So it is the end of another writing week--except it isn't, the inhospitable weather indicating I may as well keep on through the weekend--and I am tired enough to quit now at just past 2:30. I can say it's earned, though, as I've reached the 100-pp. point, 90 in consecutive ms and ten or so in rough draft for later in the book. So, as Russian Famine has just told Morrie, that's good. In the fuller household report, C is about over her cold from the sound of it, and we've arranged with the priceless Sandy for the painting we need done, as well as starting Mike Guenther on an added stair railing and so forth. We are functioning, currently. In that mode, I've inscribed paperbacks of Prairie Nocturne for the entire cast and tech crew, couple of dozen in all, and hardbacks for the principals, Myra, Jane, Patricia et al

27 Feb.--I think C may have put this same jubilant line in her diary: Aug. 21 publication date for The Bartender's Tale!

29 Feb.--Leap Day, and I celebrated it by reaching 99 pp. of Sweet Thunder, with another several roughed and ready ahead for fitting in.

Chilly blustery weather, snow squall this morn, overall gray now at 4:30. I've just put in some on-line time looking for useful info about holistic stuff for neuropathy. So far a slog, but will put in other stints.

March 4--At week's end I reached another chapter end--110 pp.--and couldn't resist doing a total word count. Good news/bad news, it's 31,000. I suppose that's a pretty healthy sum at this stage of the game, but as I said to C, the plot is getting pretty far along, so things are going to have to bulk up eventually. There's also the point that it's damn near impossible to get any real writing done when a book comes out. The more I can get done this spring, the better.

Today, Sunday, which has been forecast for days as warm and sunny, is overcast and breezy instead. C is going to try some yardwork even so, and I may tinker with seedlings a bit (pepper plants!), but thank goodness we seized the chance y'day and planted small heathers etc. in the front yard and I planted the potato crop.

Tonight will be bittersweet. Out for dinner with the Laskins--their turn, David claims--and then to final night of Prairie Nocturne at Book-It, on our comp tickets. Later: it turned out purely bitter. Patricia Britton just called, wondering if we're okay, stuck in traffic or what--the final performance is a matinee! I'm terribly disappointed to have missed it. We'll regroup at the Laskins'. David said they have food but no booze, we said we'll bring scotch, so we'll drown our sorrows.

5 March--3:07, the aircraft carrier Stennis is passing, shadowy in a snowsquall, an all-too-real phantom out there in the elements.

This morning C asked me how I was after y'day's flub of the finale of Prairie Nocturne, saying she was glum, and I agreed that was the best description. We've both grimaced and got on with things, she at the laundry etc. and me at the ms, banging out I think not too bad a day's allotment of words.

9 March--This has been a mixed week. The writing went well, thank goodness; I'm now at p. 123 of the Sweet Thunder ms. It was so surprising, though, how sad I was--we were--about missing the final performance of Prairie Nocturne, due to the inexplicable misunderstanding about the show-time. I had my mind set to think about the performance, the stagecraft, the cast, and so on--and wham, that was thwarted. Whether it's related or not, I also came down with neuropathy blues, although just y'day, breaking down to Carol as I tried to talk out my frets about doing something like the Missoula book festival gig. Fortunately I'm steadier in all ways today, and I've scheduled a phone talk with Dr. Chen about any holistic tactics I might resort to--although my hunch is he'll steer me toward a neurologist, which might not be a bad idea either. In any case, life is going on. C reminded me y'day of her dad's saying: "Yesterday's gone, tomorrow isn't here, today is all we have," and I must keep reminding myself of that. On the unquestionably brighter side, Sandy the painter spruced up a lot of the house under C's direction, and the refinished dining room table is a dazzler to sit up to now.

14--WWe're having a good time, each reading a set of first-pass proofs of The Bartender's Tale. I'm very pleased with the voice, which seems to me confident and easy. C says she feels a sense of accomplishment just being around the book-to-be.

15 March, 7 a.m.--In the dark of morning, I have just finished reading the proofs of The Bartender's Tale practically in tears. It seems to me a fine, forgiving piece of work, and oh am I grateful to have a book of this size and dimension at this age and state of medicated health.

19 March--Back at work on Sweet Thunder, a bit of a slow start but any progress is good. There've been some nit chores to dispose of, one of the oddest the invitation to the UW "Timeless Alums" Gala at the Four Seasons hotel. I called in according to the mailed invite to RSVP that it would be Carol and me, and was told the invitation was for me, it would be $150 to bring "anyone else", i.e. her. That ticked off both of us, and I withdrew. We'll see if I'm now decommissioned as Timeless.

The weather has been nasty, snow last night even though spring is supposed to arrive tomorrow. I did get in an afternoon in the veg garden over the weekend, luckily.

Now to turn to the final task of the day, prepping for a phone visit with Dr. Chen about trying anything holistic to ameliorate Thalidomide side effects.

20 March--Holy smoke, there's no staying ahead of Dr. Chen. I didn't even get to holistic matters, he cut directly to Thalidomide, saying the toxicity seems to be outweighing the benefits, let's try life without it. So, I'll do a blood test and 24-hour urine test tomorrow, for him to gauge against the 4-month one in May. And I now get to see--if the new tests don't hold something dire enough to make him change his mind about shelving Thalidomide--if my feet, hands, and brain respond any better.

The first day of spring has howled in, strong winds all damn day. It does make a person hunker in and write.

25 March--Possibly, possibly, this marks my first day away from Thalidomide, having taken the last 50 mg capsule of the last prescription last night. On the 22nd I did blood tests and handed in a 24-hr urine sample, as a benchmark for how I'll do medication-free from now until I see Dr. Chen in May. That is, if the current readings don't show a spike in protein in either of those tests; I'll

25 March cont.--have a look at the test results, always a hairy experience, tomorrow afternoon and watch for any e-mail from Chen. However this turns out, it seems to be worth a try to lessen the numbness in my feet and cramps in my hands, as well as the uncertain sense of balance. There is the worry that I'm giving up one of the weapons in the arsenal, as Chen once described Thalidomide and the other myeloma drugs. But the truism was never truer, he's the doctor, and when I reached the point of asking him about holistic measures and mentioned that the numbness is starting to affect my driving, he didn't hesitate to try this medication suspension.

We're at last having a weekend of good weather, although we'll see if today's sunny morning holds and warms up enough for C and I to finish our latest patch of lawn eradication and putting in plants.

30 March--Whew, tired. 3 p.m. on Friday, end of a varied week with house chores mixed in, but the 7 page chapter I was working on wrapped up. By squinting, I can count to the 150 pp. of ms I was aiming for at this point of the year. More anon.

31 March--Sat. morn. C and I have just had a talk about my improved, what, sense of myself since going off Thalidomide a week ago. We both think it's made a big difference--I'mkeeping track wk by wk with a checklist in the neuropathy file--and agree we should put our minds to possibilities, travel or whatever, between now and when I see Dr. Chen in late May, as this may be the best stint I can ever have.

April 3--Just quick at the end of a big day, I must put down that y'day and today I feel better than I have in years. Had never thought I could feel so good again. Am trying to use this stint, both in making headway on Sweet Thunder and starting to think toward a next book proposal.

April 5--The writing is going really well, I have amazing energy and can think clearly. C and I are both feeling good. Oh, if it could last and last.

April 6--This is such a signal day. Opening the door at 4:20 this morn for the newspapers, I found a box of The Bartender's Tale reader's copies, bound galleys as we used to say. Then this forenoon's work rounded off the chunk of Sweet Thunder I was getting ready for C to read, 146 pp. That done, this afternoon I pitched in with her in spreading back etc. in our lovely new front yard plantings. Through it all, I have felt steady and fine. This is like being 60 again.

April 8--The 6th, in previous entry, was Good Friday, and C and I joked that it was a good Friday, all right. The writing results seem to us to hold up perfectly well--C has now read the Sweet Thunder chunk with nothing but enthusiasm, and I'm well along in Bartender's Tale and liking it thoroughly--and our health and energy has rebounded so much that we've finished the homemade landscaping in the front yard, ~~putt~~ eradicating lawn by putting in small junipers, heathers etc. and then spreading bark over the beds. The weather has cooperated, y'day sunny and lovely with just enough crispness in the air to make us feel really good. Today is supposed to be a lot warmer although cloudier, and we intend to wash the deck, a chore I always dread but not nearly so much this year.

It should be noted, too, that besides the two works on their way into bookdom, I've begun thinking about what book proposal to offer next. (This might turn out to be crazy, if my May checkup necessitates dire cancer treatment but damn it, until it does, I want to give life as much full throttle as I can.) So far, a novel about the sheep rancher Dode Withrow seems to be shaping as the best bet.

13 April--Not sure I have much steam left at 4:15 on a Friday, but to try to get down some of this crammed week:
--this afternoon, I knocked out the My Bookstore anthology piece about U Book Store, about 900 words worth.
--this morn, I muscled my way (Ihope) into the PNBA's Monday b'fast at the fall trade show, with a phone call to Thom Chambliss as I've done more than once in the past.
--y'day I muscled my way into the San Francisco Arts & Lectures series with a call to Sydney Goldstein.
--both of the above were to kick-start promotion of The Bartender's Tale, which the Riverhead publicity team of Matthew and Glory will be taking up next Tuesday, a wee bit late by this household's calculations. Sydney G. for instance had a choice of 3 dates to slot me into, by my calling as early as I did.
--and amid all this, I keep forgetting, the Hollywood agent Mike Cendejuis called to say he's passing along The Whistling Season to some TV muckymucks, in hopes Hallmark or somebody will make it into a MOW. What's a MOW, I dumbly asked. Movie of the Week. Oh.
--Sandy the painter was here two days of all this, sprucin up bits of the house just wonderfully.
--and lest I forget, I did get 5 pp. (tough ones) of Thunder written, although I'd rather have had 8.

16 April--Good grief, even quiet days load up. I was back at work on Thunder when Becky called in response to my request to talk about promotion of Bartender's Tale ahead of tomorrow's conference call with the publicity people, and damned if she didn't have 20 pp. copy editor's queries to pass along. Got'em by fax, and C and I sat down side by side and dealth with them, making fixes on ten that had repetitions or something else wrong with the language, and stetting the others.

We threw a fine hilarious dinner last night for the Davids and spouses, David Williams bearing a nice cover for his cairns book and David Laskin still flying high with the pre-Holocaust letters he's having translated for his family book. Cold salmon, salad from our garden, drinks on the deck in mid-April, great friends and much hilarity--our idea of a really good time.

April 17--47 years ago today, our married life began. The weather of the day is holding true to the date, cool and graying, but C and I are in good spirits about how far we've come and where we've ended up. Dinner tonnight at Poppy with Ann and Marshall Nelson, who were at our wedding. C and I have spent our day, with what I think is damn admirable aplomb and forbearance, dealing with the Riverhead publicity dept. and, rats, Sydney Goldstein at San Francisco Arts & Lectures, who is reneging on the speaking gig because, she was honest to say, I'm a white man. So that nice prop to the Bartender's Tale season apparently has collapsed--C thinks because R'head wasn't quick enough last week to nail down a date with Sydney--and this morn's conference call has us rolling our eyes at each other as it became apparent that attrition at the Penguin Group is pushing matters farther and farther down the ranks. First, Michael Barson, the really capable and enjoyable majordomo from last time is gone off to (the bigger commercial imprint) Putnam, now his second-in-command, Matthew Venzon, is leaving for an MBA at Northwestern in July, and so publicity for the Bartender's Tale is in the hands of Glory Plata, who was the flunky in charge of mileage expenses etc. last time around. Maybe Glory will do okay, but they're off to a shaky start.

Yet, as I say, we're in a good mood, we have each other, a promising book coming out, a book contract for the next one, and on we go.

April 24--These are large days, a lot happening, both of us trying to use to advantage my medical furlough. Our anniversary dinner with the Nelsons was just right, my high spirits enough to buoy them after the loss of their oldest dog. Marsh, ever keen, suggested dropping the article from the book title I tried out on him and Ann, and hell yes, Great Divide sounds perfect. We've also been to Book-It from the premiere of Garth Stein's Art of Racing in the Rain, which was a bit longish but memorable for the sensational performance of David Hogan as Enzo the go, nearly 2½ hours on all fours. And we got to Dungeness Spit last Saturday, the 21st, in good weather. Our first time to that beloved spot in a helluva while, and we were happy we still could do it, handle the hiking etc. Along

April 24 cont.--that line, I have been noting in my weekly self-report since going off Thalidomide my improved mood, greater calm, and so on, but haven't yet said one of the real benefits of this medication-free time: it lifted some of the worry that effects I was feeling--absent-mindedness, dumb small things I'd do, physical clumsiness--were age-caused. It turns out that when I'm unmedicated, I'm still a pretty good version of myself.

May 1--Things remain steady in this medical recess, as C aptly calls it. I'm pegging away at Sweet Thunder, as ever trying to make pages add up. The weather has turned chilly, but C and I seized a sunny chance this afternoon and cut the grass, and I did a bunch of transplanting of lettuce seedlings. Sunday night, the 29th, we were at the Angells for dinner, an especially fine time as Tony and I are both physically reconstituted at the moment (he with both hips replaced). And Glory Plata, the Riverhead publicist whom C and I feared was, well, a glorified flunky proves to know what she is doing and doing it swiftly and surely, so far. She has the booktour schedule lined up, and in our conference call y'day closed by saying she had a couple of pieces of good news--Publishers Weekly is evidently going to do a 2-page interview of me, and Shelf Awareness, Marilyn Martin Dahl's book biz baby, will also do an interview, by old hand Valerie Ryan. Good omens; we'll see if there are any more.

5 May--Boat Day, which of course means overcast and damp. In the spirit of getting out and doing things during this medical interval of mine, we're going to try to outwit the weather by having lunch at Ivar's Salmon House and watch the boat traffic from there. Also intend a stop at the U Book Store beforehand, which may or may not be a good idea, given potential traffic. And Linda Sullivan and Jeff are coming for dinner, opportunity to catch up with good friends we don't seem enough of.

The work week did not produce as many pp. as sometimes with a fairly tough scene of Morrie teaching Russian Famine to box getting underway. It has to be winsome, funny, and serious all at the same time. But elsewhere

5 May cont.--on the book front, $7300 in royalties of Whistling Season and House of Sky looked good.

I haven't yet done my weekly medical journal, but I ought to put down here one great reward of this medicatio -ffee interval. It shows me I don't have chemo brain, as I'd been pretty sure I did, as well as taking away the fret that aging might be at fault in forgetfulness etc. Somewhere I have a phrase noted down about meeting myself on the long road, and I seem to be a sounder character than I'd thought.

14 May--A choppy day, as these next 2 weeks are going to be. In particular, I'm doing the 24-hour urine test, coping with one of the first hot days on the veg garden, going to the dentist this afternoon, and trying to think ahead to the Thunder plot, the PW interview this Fri., and next week'd Portland talk. Too many directions for quick progress in any of them.

On top of it all, one of my publishers, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, declared a structured bankruptcy Friday afternoon, and I've called Liz (who first heard the news from me, of all people) and heard Becky's take on the situation, which was very useful. Either HMH will be able to stagger on now that it's debt is reduced or it'll be sold, which this bankruptcy deal makes easier, she thinks.

On the better and brighter side, y'day we went to the ACT matinee of The Pitman Painters, about the Ashington coal miners turned painters; it was talky and schematic, and I adored it. As I told C, my emotional reactions are closer to the surface any more, possibly because of medication history, and there were a couple of times during Pitmen when I nearly cried--the oldest miner, Jimmy, played by Allen Galli on some kind of rotating basis with another actor, telling of his start in the mines at the age of ten, and the most talented of the painters, Oliver, conflicted over leaving the mines and his fellows for a painting stipend or staying. And he stays, a heartbreaker to me, visions of bunkhouses and the shotgun shack in Ringling and all else I managed to leave behind.

18 May--This an interim, a holding pattern until I receive Dr. Chen's medical evaluation on the 22nd. Still, it's busy, with the Publishers Weekly interview this afternoon at the U Book Store, and the Portland Bella Voce speech to be worked on, as I did y'day and will have to get back to tomorrow. All this has slowed work on Sweet Thunder, which I probably can't get back to very strongly until the last few days of the month. But meanwhile, nice things have been happening. I'm still feeling good, first of all. And this week brought a couple of nice examples of buzz for The Bartender's Tale, the Costco buyer e-mailing that she "Loved--LOVED" the book and stayed in the hotel one night during a Chicago trip to keep reading it. Then came a call from Thom Chambliss of the PNBA enthusing that it's my "best fiction yet...movie written all over it" and asking to come up from Eugene and interview me for the PNBA's book club website. Now if the book could only get a similar break or two nationally...

22 May--Whoopie! That's the medical report. "Insignificant" change in my blood and urine protein readings, and Dr. Chen declared the best thing to do is to leave me alone, off Thalidomide, off <u>everything</u>. This is, as ever, a hiatus until the next tests, in 2 months, but boy, will I ever take it, feeling as good as I do.

C and I immediately began talking about a possible trip to Pacific Grove; we'll see.

We had a week of glorying in friendship, Mark and Lou Damborg here for supper on Sat. as Mark worked and worked to get us hooked up on wi-fi and then our freebie Kindle Fire from the Santa Fe trip to function as a radio for our cherished FM stations, jazzy KPLU, All Things Considered KUOW, and if we possible can, CBC2 for its classical music. So far so good--we listened to KPLU last night at news time static-free for the first time in months. As it turned out, the Damborgs returned for supper on Sunday as Mark delivered a set of speakers and laobred over the Kindle some more, he and Carol hunkered over it while Lou and I made fruit salads for supper. Earlier on Sunday. C and I met Linda Bierds and Sydney for brunch at the Rhododendron, another hilarious get-together which left us saying we have more fun with them than just about

22 May cont.--anybody. Linda had just participated in the LaConner Poetry Festival, so there were stories of that. Significant one to the four of us was that she once again was in a session with Caroline Forche, as she was 25 or more years ago when we first became aware of the wondrous talent of Linda B. And Syd has had good news on her Middleton Murray book, coming into p'back, going on-line in a university consortium of 900 university libraries (which had the drawback of her having to write an abstract for the book and also one fo each of the ten chapters), and she's going to Katherine Mansfield meetings in Vienna and Banska Bystrica, Slovakia. Good stuff all around.

28 May--Memorial Day, and much in our recent doings to try to remember and get down. First and foremost, the terrifically successful speaking gig in Portland, at the bank-sponsored Bella Voce Book Club. First-class all the way, from being carted around in black town cars to the setting at the Multnomah Athletic Club, banquet room set up for 350 and the place filled. Luckily, although not accidentally, I was on the beam with my talk. Discovering during rehearsal that it was running long, I cut the examples citing other writers--bye bye Flaubert, Faulkner, Conrad, Flannery O'Connor, compatriots of my heart--and stuck with my own and it all clicked; a discovery indeed. The "discriminating women" of the book club are of course the marketing target of the bank, First independent which ironically has been taken over by the Stirling chain out of Spokane, and there must have been 350+ sets of crossed fingers besides mine, Carol's, and the Lyceum Agency's Kate Gannon and Hannah, that the new management will be smart enough to keep the all-woman team that's produced Bella Voce. I sat at the banquet table between Nancy and Jeannie, last names lost, one youngish and one veteran, both impressive. Not only was the response to my talk more than I could have asked for--Jeannie, the veteran honcha, said "we'll have you back"--but there were muffled roars at one side of the room, albeit for the Portland Timber in the soccer match where they were beating the Pumas, whoever they may be, 4-0.

28 May cont.--It turned out the soccer stadium abuts the west side of the Multnomah Athletic Club, providing great viewing which was shown to us by Kate and Hannah on the way out, and Hannah had a hilarious footnote to soccer Portland style. She pointed out way at the far end of the stadium a big log on wheels--trundle of some kind--and told us the Timber mascot is a guy dressed like a lumberjack. So, said she, while the other team's mascot after a goal prances around like a teddy bear, after a Timber goal the l'jack brandishes a chainsaw, fires 'er up, and saws a disc off the end of the log, sawdust flying, then holds up the emblematic round chunk to the Timber coterie going crazy.

C has done a nice entry on the half hilarious, half exasperating stylization of the Heathman Hotel, which will not win our ned again either for overnight or food. The morning we left, we were part of a breakfast drama in which, after 20 minutes, in a dining room where there were only 3 other customers besides us, there was not a sign of our meals, but all of a sudden there was a convergence of the entire staff around the serving window and what seemed to be the lone chef on duty, with our worthy waiter very audibly saying 20 minutes between orders (none of which were in evidence yet) was unacceptable. Shortly a suit from somewhere in management joined the fray, and damn quick the chef was cheffing at top speed. And who could predict, C's salmon hash and my biscuits and gravy were the best food we had on the entire trip.

We've been scrambling ever since we got home, things in the yard and garden having grown remarkably in the couple of days we were away (especially weeds), while things in the house were going flooey--the Kindle radio scheme painstakingly set up by Mark Damborg quit, and C's printing procedure on her iMac had transmogrified. And again, who can tell; today both those are functioning. As am I, determinedly back at Sweet Thunder, a short page done but one with a necessary transition; good enough.

29 May--Today's mail brought the $10,000 check for the Bella Voce speaking gig, most welcome. In y'day's entry about the Portland trip, I didn't get to the social side, dinner with Craig and Kathy Lesley and then with Bill Lang and Marianne. C's diary entry captured the visit with Craig and Kathy, she quite her warm self and Craig somewhat hesitant and unsure, to the point where he asked our advice about teaching the sole course offered him at Portland State this fall. He likes to teach and admits to not knowing what to do with himself without it, so C and I, I think with Kathy concurring, recommended trying to cut a deal where he'd do strictly the course and none of the departmental stuff that drives him crazy. Mixed report there, on my longstanding Gold Dust Twin who's had so many hard things happen to him. On the other hand, Bill and Marianne both looked and sounded good, both putting in for retirement (semi- in Marianne's case, 10 hrs/wk for the UW Press in handling Bill Cronin's Weyerhauser series of books) and Bill more relaxed--medicated?--than we've maybe ever seen him, not dwelling at all on the heart condition as he was the last time we saw him.

As to the home front here, I got off to a start on the next scene of Sweet Thunder first thing this morn, then sat down with C to go over some ideas I'd been percolating on behalf of Bartender's Tale, then called Becky about them and surprisingly soon got her on the phone. Upshot is I will likely try some kind of NYTimes piece, maybe (her suggestion) an essay on love of the theater seeping into my work rather than (mine) a reminiscence of Norman Maclean and Bud Guthrie. Also mailed a personalized ARC to Betsy Burton of the hallowed King's English bookstore in Salt Lake, thanked Mary Ann Gwinn by email for her mention of Bartender's Tale in y'day's Seattle Times, and so on.

11 June--Well, this has been a day, nowhere close to the expected sort. Friday and through the weekend, we made gains on the property, netting over the blueberry patches and planting catmint and salvia out front and so on. I fully anticipated just going back to work on Thunder this morn, and did a dab before our 7 AM walk of the n'hood, but we wanted Tiffany Kppec to take some pics that might help Riverhead in its pitch to the NY Times and there she was as usual where we meet up with her most morns, free on her first day after leaving one job and before starting another. So she came down with her cameras to send pix on-line--we don't have that capacity--and shot me posed in the veg garden--grinning over a vivid collander of lettuce is the favorite of all of us--and we'll see if the NYT Homes section will bite at all. Before Tiffany showed up, there were emails from Becky and Glory exclaiming over the starred review in Publishers Weekly, which called The Bartender's Tale "highly textured and evocative" and "a poignant saga of a boy becoming a man." Plenty good enough.

And the day has been lovely, the first true summer one, 70ish and sunny. I simply kept at the garden after Tiffany left, a surprise day off from the wordmaking. And tonight we're going to Third Place books for Tony Angell & John Marzluf's show & tell for their new crow book, which should be entertaining.

13 June--Things continue to look promising, both in the way I feel and the apparent health of The Bartender's Tale. To take that one first, Becky emailed today the sales dept. report from the telephone rep that it's "by far my bestselling title west of the Mississippi with most accounts starting with 10 copies or more. And I am noticing an uptick in purchases from my eastern accounts." I was just on the phone with Thom Chambliss of the Pacific Northwest Booksellers Association and he said 10 copies is BIG for independent stores these days, they initially do just 2 or 3 to have the book on hand and resort to just-in-time ordering beyond that. I did my tiny bit for trying to levitate the book today with an interview by Butch Larcomb of Montana Magazine. It seems to go well and I was feeling loose and ruminative with him, an old

13 June cont.--Great Falls Trib hand who is now managing editor of the Helena Indepdent-Record as well as editor of the magazine, for gawd's sake. He certainly has his own interview style--I'd talk into his silence after he asked a conversational question, then when I'd finished the silence would stretch on, while he did whatever he was doing with my answer. I'll be interested to see if I recognize my quotes.

And in other publishing biz, y'day I got on the phone with Claudia Howard, producer at Recorded Books, to go over pronunciations for their audio of Bartender's Tale. Two funny bits: What song is this? was the query after my made-up blues stanzas. And after clarifying whether Montanans say Missouree or Missouruh, Claudia said her husband, who's been an actor, does voice-overs, and lately got paid twice for a Missouri political ad because it had to be done Missouruh in some county or another.

Talking with her also brought the realization I have not seen nor heard of any advance for this audio, and in emailing Liz, sure enough, there's $7500 coming, which is going to make me adjust our estimated tax payment next time.

As to the typist of these words, I continue to have much energy and level-headedness. Put simply, since going off Thalidomide I'm glad to be around myself, a much better person than I'd thought I was. My feet seem to be still slowly losing numbness, my hands are quite a bit less stiff and crampy, and leg cramps have really diminished, in addition to the mental gain.

Workwise, I'm now at page 98 of Sweet Thunder revision. It has been going pretty well, I think, ~~xaiming~~ adding about a page a day. I'm now at a point, though, where the plot needs a sizable alteration, so that'll likely slow matters down for possibly the rest of this month. On the topic of getting things done, I called Tony Angell y'day to congratulate him for the standing-room only crowd at Third Place--C and I didn't stay, since I can't take standing for that long--and he sounded reflective and tired, saying what he really wants to do is get back to his art, the evident takeoff success of Gifts of Crows notwithstanding.

23 June--The main bulletin recently is that the Doigs took time off and went somewhere, a lovely sunny drive across the North Cascades highway on the 20th and an overnight stay in Winthrop, at the Rio Vista Hotel practically awash with the sound of rushing water, there at the junction of two rivers. We worked it out to have lunch at the Rhododendron on the way home the next day, a delicious bonus.

And since being back here at the desk, I've written 4 goodlooking fresh pp.--2 per day--to add what felt missing in the first ½ of the ms, something dire at the mines; it's going to happen to the new arrival to the pages, Quin, poor fellow.

Considerable water under the social bridge. Betty & Roy Mayfield were here to celebrate their new Tucson house, to which we've significantly been invited. The next day, the 17th, Craig Johnson blew through town on his motorcycle, on that annual marathon bookstore he does for each new Walt Longmire mystery. This time he has hit it big outside the going-dry field of publishing, with the A&E TV series "Longmire". Craig said it's another world--$10 million in advertising, so he said, and when the tv/film folk would ask what could be done to promote the series and his books, he'd say something like posters and they'd say, "what else?...what else?...what else?" And we've been to the Laskins and seen the pics of their fantastic coastal cruise of Turkey, featuring Roman and Greek ruins.

So, all is well, as of now. At this moment we're sitting across the desk from each other, C writing checks for political contributions while I'm at this, Mary McCann playing inspired jazz on KPLU on the downstairs TV' upper stratosphere of cable channels. It all feels good.

27 June--And so I am 73, and amazed at how good I feel about that and everything else. It no doubt helps that the sunny blue day, with a cloud meringue over the far shore from Whidbey to Bainbridge, is the best weather since our week-ago fine drive over the North Cascades, and that besides my odd combination of pep and serenity, C happily reports that her balance feels better. We both

27 June cont.--look forward to dinner at Poppy tonight with the Nelsons, longest-standing friends.

I'm taking the day to dabble, as I told C--duck as well, she said, meaning avoidance of book biz--and I've wanted to get down some details of this gift phase of life, as I see it. Mornings, I'm awake or at least my unignorable body is by 4:15, and while C sleeps in until 5, I get up to the incessant robinsong out there in the first hint of daylight. Mug of coffee, magazine to read or the newspapers (NY Times and Seattle Times) if they've arrived, while watching the passing castle of light, daily cruise ships that come carelessly ablaze along the still fundamentally dark Sound. When C awakes I make a mug of tea for her and take in the front section of the NY Times, and if the timing is right, we catch the local weather forecast--often only approximate to what really happens--at 5:07 or so. She reads the paper in bed, I fix breakfast--three kinds of dry cereal, our own glorious raspberries and strawberries at this time of year--and have mine, and head down here to write. Just after 7, we walk the neighborhood, the same nearly 2-mile loop we've done since, what, 1974? Nearly every morning we meet Tiffany Kopec, neighbor in her mid-40s, all electric reddish hair and bounce, probably good for us ~~in that~~ insomuch as conversation rattles along when she's around. I go back to work as soon as we get home--if the daily harvest of lettuce or more from the garden doesn't have to be done ahead of the warming day--and so it goes until an early lunch, around 10:30, given our early rising. This day, if the thermometer will just creep up enough, we may precede lunch as we occasionally do in summertime with a beer on the deck, and the Sound and scenery spread before us.

10 July--The main great news: Carol's MRI results look to us as if there's no change in her memingioma. Whew. Now if I can get past my protein tests in a couple of weeks in as good a shape...

The other perfectly dandy development of the day was the arrival, by email from Glory in publicity, of the Publishers Weekly profile. Jordan Foster, bless her, blows right by the Western writer corral. A really good job of interviewing and writing, with one funny glitch; she has me talking about Norman Maclean's "beautiful ruefulness" when I actually said "ruthlessness."

Boy, lots has happened since the last time I made it to the diary. Along these lines:

--my birthday was lowkey and pleasant, and at Poppy that night the Nelsons gave me a really handsome Pendleton wool shirt.

--Book-It the next night, for a not-great mini-show on the lead-up to the Seattle World's Fair, but a nice chance to reconnect with Patricia, Myra, and Jane.

--And then the Damborgs, back from Oregon and cooking up another delicious storm in their kitchen as we perch on our stools and drink scotch. Not even the best restaurants offer anything so cozy.

--Last Sunday, the 8th, Pennie Clark Ianniciello, the full-of-clout book buyer for Costco and oh so luckily an old friend from her beginning at Pacific Pipeline, came for lunch on one of the first true days of summer--deck time, salmon salad, a nice light wine she brought. Pennie is very savvy about publishing, had 4 or 5 suggestions toward promotion for the Bartender, and most of all, thought I shouldn't take any cut in advance on my next book(s). Like us, she can't see that the publishers are figuring out a road ahead, and is keeping an eye on Amazon as the possible route of us all.

And that night, we suppered at the Angells, Tony and Lee and the girls all in good fettle.

Along the way, on top of the writing--really good days on Sweet Thunder last week, slower this week because of the patch of plot I'm at--C and I worked the nets of what networking we can think of for the Bartender's Tale, shipping off a reading copy ourselves to the Diane Rehm

10 July cont.--producer Nancy Robertson, maximizing the Missoula trip for the Montana Book Festival by arranging signings in Helena and Bozeman which could account for another 300-500 books, and so on. And while we've been at it, about $5400 in backlist royalties came in. Life is more than OK, just now.

17 July--What a day. Pair of days, really. Y'day early, I called Elaine in Becky's office to ask when we'd have actual books, and before I could, she said brightly, "Did you get a package this morning?" Chuckling, I told her no, but probably it had to do with the reason I was calling. "Oh, I spoiled the surprise," she wailed. Indeed, the first finished copy of The Bartender's Tale was on its way--I was able to transfer the surprise to C, fetching the package when I heard the UPS truck just before we were about to have a 5 o'clock drink on the deck--and we were both bowled over by the loveliness of the book. The night-scene jacket--who ever knew I'd be thrilled with a black cover?--is richer, more velvety than the reading copy cover, and the whole design outside and in is, as C says, exquisite.

Well, that was yesterday, and this morn when C and I settled at her computer to email grateful thanks to Elaine and Becky, we were beat to the email punch by the Kirkus review, sent by Glory. Starred, superbly summarizing the plot, and concluding "Possibly the best novel yet by one of America's premier storytellers." Wow, we thought, and went about our business, coming back later for some other email task, and there was the Booklist starred review, calling the book "essential reading for anyone who cares about western literature." Plenty good enough.

So, things seem to keep rolling well for this book, and meanwhile I'm doggedly at Sweet Thunder, about a page a day with all else that's going on but they seem to be good damn-near-done pages.

26 July--Whew. Do I keep whewing in these pages? If so, it's because things keep happening at a terrific pace. C and I have just been through a whirl of emailing and phoning with Becky, aimed at polishing a piece I'd intended for my website, about why I hang onto a manual typewriter--loyal to my Royal! While we were at that, the proof of my bookstore piece was emailed, and as soon as I finish this hurried entry, I'll look over the corrections C did on that. Meanwhile I'm trying to write tooth and nail on Sweet Thunder, at a point--the Butte parade--where dabs of rewriting can gain me nearly 20 pp. in word count, hallelujah. Also, we've marked C's birthday, nicely low-keyed with a visit to the ship canal locks and then I grilled sinfully good cheeseburgers, and we had Mark and Lou Damborg here for salmon salad supper and presentation of a copy of Bartender's Tale and the dedication to them, flooring them. Oh, and I did an interview with Valerie Ryan, one of the great mouths of the western world, for Shelf Awareness; Val is crazy for the book, really gets everything about it, and prospects look really good there. And so it goes.

4 Aug.--The next me starts after this weekend, Monday or Tuesday, depending on when Dr. Chen's order of Revlimid for me comes in at the Capitol Hill pharmacy and I take that unknown pill and the known one, Dexamethasone. My wonderful 4-month medical furlough is over, the blood and urine protein tests show telltale rises, and so the next phase of living with myeloma ensues. I'm going to terribly miss the person I was since going off Thalidomide--everything!--in March; calm, decisive, energetic, not bothered by dumb little mistakes. What Revlimid holds for me--supposedly not neuropathy, but declines in blood counts of various kinds, likely decreased resistance to colds etc. at minimum--remains to be be found out, but I checked back in my diary and medical emails from my Dex experience during the runup to the stem cell transplant and the dispiriting side effects were plenty--constipation, sleeplessness, fretfulness, weight gain. For all that, Dr. Ginsburg at the time told me I was tolerating Dex (and for that matter, Thalidomide) "really very well." So I am going to have to try

4 Aug. cont.--for a new viewpoint on how I'm getting by. I am trying to arm myself with sleeping pills, stool softener, laxative and so on to be better prepared this time, and I'll also be on much lower Dex dosage and only once a week instead of the rollercoaster ride of 4 days on, 4 days off, of the earlier experience. Also I negotiated with Chen to take Dex for these 1st 2 weeks ahead of the booktour, then lay off it until after the last event in late Oct. Ideally he'd have had me on both medications all the way through, but he is quite a minimalist--and as C said, heard me about how rough the side effects became during the Thalidomide regiment; I was afraid my feet were becoming too numb to drive with--and said we'd try this and see how the Oct. blood tests are.

And that's the state of me, one more weekend of freedom before medically wrenching my life to save my life. Not the worst bargain at age 73, I must remind myself. This weekend is the hottest of the year, heading into the upper 80s, and after a morn of work in the veg garden I'm holed up in the comparative cool of downstairs, at this and reading. The medical news aside, I should report that the book biz news continues good, increments of attention to Bartender's Tale this week in Seattle Mag, BookList online, and so on. And by god and by damn, I wrote 5 pp. of Sweet Thunder this week despite the medical disruptions.

5 Aug.--A bit of further reflection on what I was trying to get at in yesterday's entry. These past 4 months, I simply have liked myself--my self of that time, I suppose--better than at any time I can remember in these past six years of cancer care. When my head cleared of Thalidomide, fairly quickly, it was a tremendous relief to find that the mental fumbling and apprehension was not permanent chemo effect nonsage, but medically induced. And so the melancholy goodbye to that me, for at least a while, and next the effort to come to terms with the next self.

6 Aug.--Payday. Surprisingly--I can't remember an on-publication chunk of advance ever coming through this far ahead of pub date, if ever ahead at all--Liz's agency has wired $67,500 into our brokerage account. This adds to the day's good news of Val Ryan's sparkling review on ShelfAwareness; and an extraordinarily moving letter from Kathy Ashton, formerly one of the glorious women of The King's English in Salt Lake. The book does seem to have a life, if only the buying public will sustain it.

The other event of the day, the arrival of Revlimid--21 tablets for $7640, which thanks to our Group Health insurance cost us a grand total of $40--into my life. Tonight I take the first one, tomorrow breakfast I go on Dexamethasone. Brave new druggy world.

7 Aug.--This morning I downed 5 little green meanies, 20 mg. of Dexamethasone. I've first felt the distant edge of a headache, a slight queasiness, drying of voice, some loss of thinking sequnetially, although I've plodded thru the day carefully(?) doing this and that, and got a decent page+ written besides. Also took a stool softener this morn, and will hold off on any more until after I see ~~about~~ whether constipation sets in. Last bowel movement was this morn ahead of pill-taking. I weigh 151--sigh, my high school weight which felt so good and prideful these past 4 months--here at the onset.

Greatly better news: David Laskin called to say he'd written those magic words, The End, to his ~~his~~ big book of his forebears. He's really, really pleased with it, which I don't remember him being on previous books, so here's hoping this one is terrific.

8 Aug.--Day 2 report: really rugged, at least last night was, when I doubt I got any sleep at all. Felt OK, sleepy enough, when I went to bed, but didn't manage to drop off right away and that's usually trouble. After a couple of hours I moved downstairs to read. Still no sleep after that, and while I lay there trying the only trusted tricks I know, regulated breathing and concentrating on the word sleep, my left leg began spasming, a slight but regular jerk every minute or so. My neuropathy feet also had some tingling. I finally get up and read in the TV room--read all of The Laughing Policeman last night, thank goodness

8 Aug. it's a good one. Tried bed again, left leg spasm quit after a couple of hours, right leg spasm started. I simply got up soon after 3, and have managed to hang on through the morning, in fact getting a couple of ms pages finished. Lunch and a nap try ahead. I'm switching to take the Revlimid capsule at breakfast instead of bedtime after this experience, in fact did so this morn when I maybe should have waited until tomorrow, but I really did not want to mess up a calendar schedule ~~that~~ by colliding with Labor Day weekend. As to the Dex, I'm really glad I'm not taking it again today--I am blessedly on 1/8 of the dosages that led up to the stem cell prodedure--as being strung out from the winkless night is plenty to handle.

10 Aug.--Another Revlimid adventure y'day, when my stomach began to bother me about 2 in the afternoon, and from there until bedtime with a sleeping pill in me, I felt pained, half nauseous, gassy. Thank goodness today is going better, although as I suppose I'm always going to say under treatment, I don't feel like myself. At least I'm functioning, with C's noble help. Have kept at the ms and am producing a page or more a day, plus handling the necessaries ~~of~~ that go with publicity for Bartender's Tale. The hoot of y'day was that it's in V, some Glamour-like slick magazine evidently for teen/between girls, as one of the summer's five must-reads, along with Martin Amid and Kurt Anderson. This caused the publicist Glory to declare me Riverhead's hippest author.

Well, onward. Ten to four, it's time for a shower and a shave, and see if I can solve a last sentence or two of the day's writing.

16 Aug.--~~The hottest of weather, 90 on the downstairs deck~~ now at 4. Have just finished the day's writing, 2 fresh pages ~~and some fixes dabbed in elsewhere~~, good enough. Have been very ~~productive~~ this week, partly--mainly? I hope not--because of my ~~2nd~~ Dex pulse, starting on the 11th. Have had no real troubles this time around, just some spaciness the first day. So far so good, I suppose.

17 Aug.--I wasn't thinking when I grogged my way through y'day's entry at the end of the day, so have cashiered it. I missed retrieving what actually happened during my 2nd pulse of Dex, starting on the 14th, which was leg cramps that night--not the spasms of the first time around, but genuine cramps--which finally drove me to soaking in hot water in the bathtub, and it worked. Maybe by the same token, C's home remedy that she read somewhere--Vicks VapoRub on the soles of the feet-either calmed things down the next night or they'd eased off ~~my~~ of their own accord. In any case, I must be aware of these side effects when I go on Dex for real after the booktour.

The rest of y'day's try bears repeating, the hottest of weather, 90 on the downstairs deck at 4 then and 86 today. The writing week has been very productive, I'm on the last few scenes, gaining at least a couple of pages a day, although that's about to hit the barrier of the booktour. Continued good buzz for Bartender's Tale--my PW interview was posted on the PW Tip Sheet today, and here came an exclamatory message from Pennie of Costco, which C and I gleefully forwarded to Becky and Glory. Still can't get the rain dance going on a national level, though (the curse of Stegner, I told C today)--the typewriter essay that was tried on the NYTBR is ending up in the Portland Book Review. Ah well, at least I'm veteran enough to be unsurprised. One solid piece of good news was sale of the large-print rights, $4000 split with the publisher. And hell, did I ever manage ~~t~~ to note that English Creek is going into Spanish?

22 Aug.--Things are whirring by at dizzying speed, but to try to catch up a bit. Today brought:
--A quite good NPR.Org online review.
--A rave review, declaring me fully the successor to Stegner, in (O brave new world) The Daily Beast.
--The video trailer, a musically nifty succession of shots of Montana bars etc. from C's slides ~~thumm~~ taken in our research roamings.

Meanwhile Will has been trimming the bejesus out of the big south hedge, Sandy has been painting last dabs of work around the house, C is out at the front blueberry

22 Aug.--patch picking doggedly, and I have by god whaled away at Sweet Thunder. Which leads to yesterday:
--As it was publication day--at last; I'm going to try to use C's line that the gestation period of this book was longer than any pregnancy--I wanted to be in touch with editor Becky and know 2 things: print run, and when she would need to have Sweet Thunder in order to get it on next fall's list. First, though, to call Liz in Maine.
--She was sharp and agently, saying she was "good" in the aftermath of Tony's drowning at the start of summer, and said she'd ask Becky about the print run. Thought it OK to broach Sweet Thunder to Becky, and my next step off into air, we could try for the next book contract "whenever you want." C and I think we should refine that a bit, gauge by whether Bartender's Tale really takes off or not. In any case, there is a prospect of four sizable paydays next year: advance payable on paperback of Bartender, advance payable on acceptance of Sweet Thunder and another on publication, and advance on next contract signing. Whew.

Meanwhile, I was readying for the first event of the booktour, and evidently I was ready at Third Place, my reading going comfortably and well. Sales could have been better--59--but they're happy at the publishing house. The blessed Davids, Laskin and Williams and wives Kate and Marjorie, took C for a beer at the Lake Forest Park Grill while I signed books, and I then caught up with them, hilarious conversation as ever with those four bright quick people.

Healthwise, I seem to be holding up, although on not much sleep, about 4 hrs a night. It's a sleeping pill tonight, to try to catch up a little. Otherwise, Revlimid's effects are some tingling in hands and feet, some lack of spatial sureness, leg cramps...On the other hand, my mind must be indeed revved up, the way I'm writing.

26 Aug.--A boountiful time, in more ways than one. The last week was a good one for the book, the rave Daily Beast review and Costco's reorder and so on. Both book-signings went well, 59 sold at #rd Place and 63 (store had 80) at Edmonds. And C and I are harvesting in the real term, 6 or so quarts of bluebs today, some red plums Will the yard guy spotted, and the rest of my best peach crop ever, awaiting freezing. Our garden potatoes, lettuce, and chioga beets for supper tonight, along with salmon we have not figured out how to grow.

So it has been a good time, which I'm able to say easier today than in the last couple, when the Revlimid buildup--tomorrow is my last pill in this 21-day stint--was giving me enough leg cramps at night that I was getting by (quite well, actually) on about 4 hrs of sleep, getting up at 3 or so if that's what the body wanted. Last night I took not a Temazapam sleeping pill but the relaxant Lorazapam--and made sure to try the Em home remedy C had come up with, of rubbing Vicks VapoRub on the soles of my feet--and I slept through until after 4. I also was tired as hell after the Edmonds book-signing, which careened on for about an hr and a half, but whatever worked, worked. And meanwhile I've been making almost giant steps on Sweet Thunder, within sight of getting a full ms for C to read over the Labor Day holiday. I'll want to tinker with it after that, but barring catastrophe, I should be able to shoot it in to Becky in time for her to get it on next fall's list. If that happens, it'll be the first time I've had a mere year between books--not bad for a 73-year-old on cancer medication.

29 Aug.--As C so rightly noted, late Monday afternoon (the 27th) I went upstairs from a big day's writing and with a blank look told her "I think it's done." Sweet Thunder is not a seamless finished piece, there were a few short fill-ins I've been working on since, but the storyline is complete enough I intend to give it to C to read over the Labor Day weekend.

And meanwhile, back at the ranch, the Penguin spread, I have a national bestseller. Becky's email y'day read: "Wow, straight onto the indie list, right out of the gate

29 Aug. cont.--A lot of years of missionary work in the independent stores thus is paying off--today's message was that the book is #2 on the PNW bestseller list and #3 on the Mountains & Plains. And in the other world of bookselling, Glory today emailed that I'm featured in the Barnes & Noble Review and on Amazon's Hot New Releases list (on there with such gems, C and I found when we had a look, as Viper of the North). All this is very fine, although the book still needs something national to happen to--

This is quite incredible. As I was typing those words, the phone rang, woman's voice on it, likely cell phone, babble in the background, I guessed it to be Marjorie Kittle reporting something David had found online, but no, it was Becky. "We have everybody ~~xxxx~~ together here to tell you." There was a ragged barely hearable chorus of something about "New York Times list!" Becky spelled out that it's the NYT extended bestseller list, a week from Sunday, showing The Bartender's Tale at # 35. The staff, it turned out, was editorial and publicity gathered to celebrate a couple of birthdays "and you!" sez my editor. Told her to tell 'em hugs and tickles all around, then I went outside to where C was watering the new plantings with a hose and said, "It has taken us 14 books, but..."

And I do believe that's enough of a report for one day.

4 Sept.--There has barely been time to catch my breath, let alone catch up on all that's happening. C and I spent Labor Day weekend going over the Sweet Thunder ms, she giving it a full (and enthusiastic) read while I revised, filled in, and so on. I am only ½way thru with my abracadabra, and looking desperately ahead at the booktour-clogged calendar for time to tinker with the rest of the ms, the part of writing I really love and am best at. We'll get 'er done somehow, I hope by the end of this month.

Meanwhile the winsome Bartender had a great week, 5 bestseller lists--Indie, Pnba, Mtns & Plains, that NYTimes virtuous 35 (lengthened from the usual fab 15), and NPR, whatever Nat'l Public Radio is doing with a book hit list. And it survived the Washtn Post, with an odd-angled review

4 Sept. cont.--from a novelist named Jim Clinch who must think he's a hundred years younger than I am, but who gives in with a nice pull quote at the end. That's a big one down. I'm going to be surprised if the wunderbook can keep flying so high nationally, with a bunch of big books no doubt coming now in the fall season. But at least it's been an attention-getting start, and the book lists evidently don't tell the whole story by far--email from Becky this morn says "your Amazon digital ranking is higher than your print ranking (and both quite good)."

So, since the last diary entry, C and I have done the Eagle Harbor event--full house, but just 31 books sold, continuing a trend of downward results at that classy Bainbridge I. store; we think because of online buys by those upscale commuters ~~to~~ ferry-riding to downtown Seattle--and today the Tacoma taping of TVW's "Well Read" interview show, which went well, we survived the traffic jimjams of an express-lane crawl on the way down and came home in top time, with a terrifically enjoyable lunch at the funky Swiss.

Now to me and Revlimid. About 2½ hours ago when we got home, I took the first Rev pill of the second go-round, and can't identify effects yet, although sure they'll come. On my week off between pills, I finally felt like the me I want to be (albeit still short on sleep; more on that) the last day or so, which I guess gives me the prospect of a nice day once out of every 28. Muscle cramps at night-~~xxxx~~ usually setting in enough to wake me up and make me get up around 2:30-3--have been enough to send me to Dr. Kato for a referral tp phys therapy, where I'm to go tomorrow morn to see if some stretching exercises might alleviate this. And 2 days from now, Dr. Chen evaluates my bloodwork, i.e. how this stuff is working, by phone. Till then, old pal diary.

7 Sept.--What a mix life is, just now. The past couple of days brought word from Riverhead that the Bartender hung in there on the NYt extended bestseller list, moved up 2 notches on the Indie list (11th, from 13th), hit the Southern California regional booksellers list(an absolute first), stayed # 2 on Mtns and Plains, and became #1 on the PNBA list. And a rave review came in from the AP,

7 Sept. cont.--courtesy of reviewer Rob Merrill who so liked Work Song. So the book stayed a hit, ahead of the elephant stampede of bigfoot novelists all scheduled into Sept. (oboy, there are going to be some casualties among folks accustomed to big sales and b'seller lists--there just ain't room for all that's coming). And I have made huge strides on the Sweet Thunder ms, 40 pp. to go, 2-3 days work with a little luck. And Liz and I are agreed I should send her the next book proposal--to be conjured this weekend: The Dog Bus)--pronto, to see if she can wangle a good contract out of Riverhead while I'm well thought of. Meanwhile, here at 4:15 on a Friday, I'm within minutes of hearing Dr. Chen's verdict on my Revlimid stint, which by our reading of the lambda light chains result stopped the protein spike but still went up. (and there was just a false alarm, phone ringing bang on schedule when the doc is to call, and it was one more political solicitation.)

But oh my gosh, was the news ever good. Chen sees my blood readings as stable; no need to go on Dexamethasone; I'm free to fly; no urine test needed for the Oct. phone consultation. Far better result than I could have counted on.

13 Sept.--I am almost too weary to type this, at ten to four of a day that began about twelve hours ago and has been busy all the way, but I have just finished correcting and polishing Sweet Thunder.

14 Sept.--I only have a bit of time to add to y'day's big news, as I get picked up by limo at 11 for the Portland booktour trip, but the full skinny is that the ms is 95,000 words, amply over the contract's 80 thou, and in working it over after C and I went thru it I heightened some things, especially Morrie's acrophobia on the headframe. I am now on the go almost steadily for the next 10 days, so I intend to let the ms sit until I can give it a full read, the last week of the month, and then ship it to Becky and Liz.

Sept. 17--Ten after 3, C and I almost--almost--catching up with ourselves in a chore-filled ~~xx~~ day. She's finishing off the laundry, I've watered fruit trees in this extraordinary dry spell, and we're drawing a deep breath after having Wendy Smith and Joe Mobilia and college-bound son Luca as guests the past couple of nights. C said it was fun having them here, and indeed it was--Luca a really nice kid, Joe as pleasant as they come, and Wendy very bright, a gale force talker but she knows her stuff. They're looking at all the colleges that interest Luca--C and I are bowled over by such parental generosity; they'll have seen something like 13, across the country--and out here it's UW, Seattle U., and Reed in Portland. We fed 'em a fine and successful beans & burger crockpot dish the night they arrived, and they took us to Chinooks last night, where the food was resoundingly good.

Speaking of Portland, my book trip there was about as good as these things go, standing-room crowd at Powells and 80 sold, plus 26 beforehand, and a steady hour at Grahams in Lake Oswego that sold 30. The highly competent escort Kevin Sprager, another gale force talker who knows what he's talking about, came through again, good company and great help. And tomorrow it's Spokane.

27 Sept.--Good grief, there's been so much booktour water under the bridge since I managed to get to this diary. Thank heavens C caught up with most of our doings, during the rude surprise of a power outage on the 24th, during which our old manual Royal typewriters came through like heroes. Since her report we've had dinner at Marcello with Linda Bierds and Sydney, catching up on their summer. The main news, though, is the completion of Sweet Thunder, and on the last go-through it seemed to me to read very nicely. We're still waiting to hear what Becky can come up with for the Dog Bus idea, and meanwhile the Bartender hangs in there, if not, in her words, "blowing out of stores" with what must now be 34,000 in print.

On the health front, I'm in my 3rd day off in the 2nd regimen of Revlimid, and last night had plenty of leg cramps. Will see how good I get by the time I start taking it again, sigh, on Oct. 2, ahead of the MT trip.

Oct. 2--Back onto Revlimid today, round 3, and so far (4pm I felt it most a couple of hours after taking it. Will see if the night is full of leg cramps, which I'm trying to ameliorate with calf- and ~~m~~leg-stretching exercises.

Have just done the cover letter for the Sweet Thunder ms, to send a copy to Liz for safekeeping while we go to Montana. This trip is the last big leg of the book tour, and I suppose worth doing, although I'm less happy with it all the time as it's supposed to start snowing there tomorrow. Meanwhile we've been to the old stalwart Bellingham and Anacortes stores, doubling their total sales of the Bartender; as Chuck Robinson ~~in~~ of Village Books remarked, the conversion rate of books sold ~~to~~ vis a vis size of audience has declined greatly--I estimate by more than half in my case, harking back to whichever book is was that averaged 70-75 sales per signing. I actually did very well at Village Books, as they'd just had T.C. Boyle there, on their radio show and all, and sold a grand total of 8 books.

The weather continues dry, dry, dry, actually quite nice if the prperty wasn't so parched, and I've caught up somewhat in the veg garden the past 3 days, getting spinach and kale seedlings in the ground and nursing lettuce along. Beyond that, I'm not accomplishing much I can point to, a void I never like, as I clean out the office and tend to booktour chores before proceeding to the next writing project, sometime after Montana.

11 Oct.--The phenomenal Montana trip is over, and amid all the bits and pieces we have landed back into--13 phone messages await, plus emails--I'll try to work away at commemorating it here. By the time it was over at the 3 prime bookstores, I could not have done much more, according to how I was received by Montans, except to walk on the waters of the Clark Fork, Missouri, and Gallatin. I've just now got the numbers together, ~~it~~ and it looks like 507 sold at the signings, all by way of my tortured crampy hands. C will be downstairs in a few minutes--it's 5:35 AM; I got up at 3 after 7 hours of sleep--and we'll launch the email report to Glory and Becky, copying to Liz, as this is a tender time when the negotiations on the Dog Bus contract are still hanging

11 Oct. cont.--fire, and it can't hurt, could help, to have that sales figure ante'ed in.

I'm going to start the recollections in the middle, Helena, the high point of the trip:

Everything beyond the Montana Festival of the Book in Missoula (which produced a paltry signing as I knew it would; more on that later) was my invention, hoping to sell an added 500 or so books by adding Helena and Bozeman to the trip, and it worked to formula. I contacted Kat Imhoff, director of the Montana Nature Conservancy, to offer a speaking gig if she'd buy 100 books. It turned out that Kat handed the book-buying off to the local indie, and I wondered if I'd been snookered, but not to worry--the store-owning sisters, Jan & DeeDee Peschia, were there at the event in the Holter Art Museum with boxes and boxes of books, and indeed we sold 98 books at the signing there. That already validated the Helena leg of the trip, but there was more to come. Commerce aside, my talk/reading about C's and my 40+ years of Conservancy membership and excerpts from Sky and Bartender about the Rocky Mountain Front went over extremely well, the only glitch Kat's use of my intended concluding quote from the Bartender, "Nature. Damn hard to beat."

12 Oct.--We're both panting through chores--mine y'day when this left off was to get kale and spinach seedlings into the ground and other garden tasks, which took nearly all afternoon--but things are going well. Liz left a phone message about the Sweet Thunder ms, saying it was too bad she couldn't tell me in person what a genius I am (her very words), as the ms was "pure pleasure--I ate it right up." Meanwhile the bartender has hung in there on the regional bestseller lists despite the load of new books just out, #8 on PNBA and #9 on Mtns and Plains. And with all our financial statements accumulated in the mail while we were away, I've used the chance to tot it all up and it looks like $6,750,000. Huzzah.

Back to the trip. In Missoula we stayed with Lois Welch and much enjoyed the time with her, although her domicile proved even riskier than the hairs at the back of my neck had tried to tell me. The good news was that her new Labradoodle, Cassie, was much more polite than the burly

12 Oct. cont.--lineage of Bill-Frank-Ned golden retrievers that would just as soon fling themselves at you as look at you. On the other hand, the stairs and other uneven surfaces of her old farmhouse were even more perilous to the balance-challenged pair of us than imagined. And, humorous in respect, the furnace in the guest quarters went dead our first night, when it was 28 out.

Logistics be what they may, the ostensible reason for the trip, the Festival of the Book, went really well at the reading in the ever-deteriorating Wlima Theater, with David Quammen and Pam Houston and mineself all in top form and minding our manners in time allotment etc. And then, predictably, there was a badly bottlenecked signing in the cramped lobby where, as ever, the writers are squashed against hot radiators while people struggle to get books. In this case it was a losing struggle, as the guy in charge was the Shakespeare & Co. owner and decided to do everything himself, which meant s-l-o-w. And he unpardonably ran out of Pam's books after 8 or 10 copies. So Quammen and I sold a couple of dozen each and that was that. The signing at Barb Theroux's Fact & Fiction the next day, though, which I muscled into the trip, was dandy, 63 sold and 82 or so of Barb's 126 gone, overall. What was not so dandy was a cramp in my left hand, that drove me off to the restroom for some hot water on my poor achy mitts. Anyway I got it done, and we were free to indulge in Lois's end of things, first a sampling of Alex and Andrew Smith's movie-in-the-making of Winter in the Blood and then the quite dissonant cantata based on Heartsong of Charging Elk. Along the way we managed a drink in the Top Hat with Bill Kittredge and Annick Smith. I may have said here after our prior trip(s) that there's a feel of "this is likely the last time," and that was very much in the air, as Ripley Hugo was in hospice care and Kittredge looked like hell, badly bent forward by sciatica (although he otherwise seemed sharp enough, at 80 still teaching creative writing at UM and a cushy winter job at UCal Irvine).

13 Oct.--A few more notes on the Fact & Fiction signing. One of the welcome, and poignant, personalities in line was Carol Jimenez. Now in old age and worn down by cancer, she wax was Carol Wall, the best-looking woman in the Dupuyer country when she returned from a period in California, perhaps the start of her married life, and was in the same community play I was, as a teenager who could only look at her and admire. She became the postmistress in Choteau, where C and I crossed paths with her a number of times (it just occurs to me she was following the footsteps of her father John, who was the Dupuyer postmaster when I was there) and has always been a vibrant presence, as she was there in the bookstore.

In the Missoula signings I've always been gratified to visit with someone like Carol J, as there's a tendency in that university town for folks from the UM to give me their windy opinions on things. But this time, to C's and my astonishment, the only real pests in the otherwise heart-warming line of bookbuyers were two separate guys at the very end, both of them Northwestern alums. The first one was particularly off-putting, sidling up as I was getting ready to leave and without preamble announcing, "First question." "Next question" followed that a couple of times, and my impatience must have begun to show, as the guy's adult daughter put in that he was an NU grad too. As to why the hell he couldn't just say so, it turned out he was a lawyer. I'm assuming he didn't mean to be as clumsy as he was when he asked how someone like me, from small-town Montana, ever got to Northwestern. I merely pointed to my head, which had him gaping for a moment, then I reenforced, I hope, the IQ with the fact of having won a full-tuition scholarship and a board job. He said as if amazed, "Me too!" leaving the distinct implication that he thought only he was smart enough to have done that. I packed up to go and he drifted off, only to be replaced by another guy, this one a bit blustery, who wanted to tell me about having gone from Missoula to NU. As C pointed out as we made our escape, neither one had bought a book!

13 Oct. cont.--Helena was the high point of the trip, with 340 of the Montana Book Company's 350 books sold by my hard-pressed hand. The first event was the Nature Conservancy speaking gig I was donating, in the deal with state director Kat Imhoff that the Conservancy buy 100 books. I discovered she'd handed that book purchase off to the MT Book Co., which made me wonder if I'd been snookered, but sure enough, the bookstore sisters Jan & DeeDee Peschia and I sold 98 copies there at the Holter Art Museum after my talk. The talk went well, scuffed a little by Kat swiping my concluding line from the Bartender--"Nature. Damn hard to beat."--in her intro of me, but I adjusted in mid-air. Standing-room crowd of 250 or so, and the Q&A seemed to go okay, although for I think the 3rd time of the booktour a questioner asked if I was ever going to write anything about the Metis, whatever is in the air to bring that on. I advised this guy, maybe not gently, to do some closer reading, as Toussaint Rennie is a character in at least 4 of my books, and I went on about the Prairie Nocturne section where the buffalo soldiers are rounding up the Metis and herding them into Canada. On the other hand, my Conservancy-themed part of the talk blithely went back to Dr. Carlson and her partner, and whether or not anyone was ruffled by that, Marcella reported that a local state legislator who's taken flak about her sexual orientation and her partner looked at each other as if gratified by what I was doing. I never have toned things down for Montanans, bluntly saying I left the state because of the job situation and wanting to climb out of the lariat proletariat, and I seem to be appreciated for straight talk. Indeed, somewhat embarrassingly, as I was trying to hustle up the aisle to get out to the signing table, Cher Giusto of the Montana Preservation Alliance, the Conservancy's co-host, was citing me as a national treasure. If only, eh?

15 Oct.--It's over! As C is putting into her diary right now, we finished the booktour this morning at the PNBA breakfast, to evident great success. And came home to the nice surprise of nearly $3800 in royalties from the Spanish version of Whistling Season. Tomorrow we start life anew, when maybe, maybe, there might be a contract offer on The Dog Bus.

16 Oct.--The triumphant book season resulted in a thud with Becky's contract offer today, $150,000 for The Dog Bus, a $100,000 haircut from the last contract. I'm not really surprised, although disappointed, as part of her justifying message is that The Bartender's Tale is actually running a bit behind Work Song in total sales, despite the ideal reviews, all the bestseller lists, and the terrific effort we all put into it. C and I have squinted as hard as we can at the situation, and figure we're simply caught in the bind publishing is in. Liz is not encouraging that she could better the offer anywhere else, and her hypothetical that we pull Sweet Thunder from Riverhead if I do want to try elsewhere endangers the $187,500 owed us on that contract, for what is after all a sequel to a book that did not earn out. We're going to mull it at least the rest of today--Becky, smarter than hell, held off for weeks on this offer until the booktour was over--but unless a real brainstorm strikes, it appears we're going to have to take the offer. We'll still be making $200,000+ this year and next, and may as well count ourselves lucky with that, given age and health considerations that I've managed to shoulder aside so far.

17 Oct.--The bullet has been bitten, the deed is done, I called Liz a little while ago to tell her to take the contract offer. And to tell Becky ~~xxxxxxxxx~~ well played, damn her. I asked for the signing advance this tax year, and Liz said I'll be getting the Sweet Thunder acceptance this year as well, which I hadn't counted on. We're in for a thumping tax bill, but we've already paid a lot of it and so might as well lump it into this year instead of next.

This has been a varied morning. I just now called Linda Bowers, exec director of the Seattle Arts & Lectures series, to give her gentle hell about asking me to keynote their 25th anniversary fundraiser when the series has not included me, ~~xxx~~ ever, as a speaker. She hemmed that local writers by and large are not asked because people have other chances to hear them here, which I countered with the point that it's usually not actual lectures, and I find it a curious policy given that

17 Oct. cont.--locals are passed up when there are no travel expenses etc. involved at all. In the end, I told her since I evidently have no stake in the series, I'm turning down her request (which ~~xxx~~ offered a $500 fee, and that also smarted), and she said she understood and wished me luck, and I told her the same.

On the more cosmic scale, I dealt with the brokerage this morning to take 500 shares of AmeriGas and about $10,000 cash as the remainder of my Profit Sharing Plan minimum distribution, the AmeriGas in there because it's trading high and fits with the shares C and I already have and must deal with on the tax forms anyway.

And maybe this afternoon I can get back ~~the~~ to the Montana trip here in the diary, and resume re-reading Sweet Thunder.

18 Oct.--Better news from Becky today, an email that we ought to be able to publish both Sweet Thunder and the Bartender paperback in August, which I have plumped hard for. Finished reading back over the Thunder ms today, and it seems fine, except for one humorous misstep where I have Butte in snow in summertime. Not that it couldn't happen.

The other good news of the day is that my blood tests remain stable, as Dr. Chen put it in an email, "which is good." I'm awaiting a phone visit from him yet this afternoon, to talk over side effects as usual; hand cramps are currently the worst problem.

20 Oct.--Much of the morning has been quite a scuffle to deal with chores--C has a lot of them in her role as executor of Margaret Svec's estate--but now at 10, things are perhaps patting into place and I can resume with the diary and ultimately finish off the Mont. trip expenses to submit to Riverhead, the only two things I really need to do today.

Sharp change in the weather overnight, from a hard rain to a cold front moving in, ~~xxx~~ thermometer at 46 when I got up versus 60 y'day morn. First fresh snow on the Olympics, lovely sight, and it was downright chilly walking the n'hood ~~xxx~~ as usual.

Dr. Chen's phone visit in essence produced our agree-

20 Oct. cont.--ment to continue with the devil we know, Revlimid, rather than quit it and chance my test numbers creeping up as they inevitably do and then having to resort to Velcade, which causes neuropathy and is a cumbersome injection every couple of weeks anyway. My hands, which really gave me hell y'day, aren't bad yet today, and I have only 2 more days of pill before the week of respite from Rev. It's hard to track progress in combatting the side effects inasmuch as the current nag takes all the attention, but looking back, I am sleeping better than I was earlier in the Rev regimen and the leg cramps seem to have lessened thanks to the phys therapy stretching exercises and maybe the leg cramp pill Lois Welch alerted me to. So, My'day had its miserable periods, and today ain't bad; so it's going to go, apparently.

Back to the Montana trip: After what we thought was a terrific booksigning at the Conservancy gig, the one at the Montana Book Company the next day was staggering--a constant double line the full 2 hours, well over 200 books sold. All in all, the pair of signings sold 340 of the 350 the store had on hand. Given that it was Columbus Day and state employees weren't around as usual-Marcella, from her stints working for the state, had advised skipping the day and staying on an extra day for a better shot as a crowd--the turnout was phenomenal. Also very touching, as person after person thanked me for coming (this happened in Bozeman the next day as well), and shared with me some little story or remark about what my books meant to them. A practically alarming number tell me some book of mine helped them make up their mind to move to Montana. The story of the day, though, was saltier than any of that. Early in the line, a sixtyish woman, with a nice haircut but from her attire plainly a local housewife sort, nobody fancy, leaned in and said she had something to tell me. As that happens a lot, I sat and waited, but she <u>really</u> leaned in to whisper in my ear. She's told a friend she was coming to have me sign her books, and the friend, in whatever mode, said "While you're at it, better have him sign your butt cheek." My confidant said, "I told her, I'll do that, and then you can kiss my [redacted]ass."

20 Oct. cont.--The Helena turnout was boosted immeasurably by the entertainment supplement of the local paper, the Independent Record, which ran a full-cover mug shot of me with the headline "Hot diggity Doig" and then an excellent attentive accurate interview, another full page, by staffer Marga Lincoln. Whatever fates conspired, the bookstore result was right in line with the record ones I used to do there when Judy Flanders was the owner.

Meanwhile we were spending mealtimes and much other time with Marcella Walter, longtime friend and fund of interest and enthusiasm, and lodging with the Conservancy director, Kat Imhoff, and her husband Jeep, gracious hosts Their place is in the Scratchgravel Hills northwest of town, and it took us a couple of stabs to find it, amid the gravel roads. Charlotte Caldwell of the splendid Montana one-room schoolhouses book and her husband Jeff were also staying there the first night, and while I usually don't like being in a moneyed atmosphere, both Kat and Charlotte have pitched in on great work for Montana to the extent that C remarked it takes southern women to get things done, evidently (Kat is of all things a Virginia fox hunter), and both husbands are low-key and supportive of these go-getting wives. So that was all fine, and el cheapo for the publishing house--I just figured our total expenses, mostly meals and some gas: $479--justifying me in having extended the trip from the Missoula book festival; I just could not see making that trip and selling the inevitable couple of dozen books after the Wilma reading. Instead we accounted for more than 500.

The final batch of those came in Bozeman, at the hallowed Country Bookshelf, now under its new owner Ariana, handpicked by Mary Jane DiSanti to sell to. We sold out of their 55 books and signed half a dozen bookplates, again a heartwarming crowd thanking me for coming etc. One of the people who showed up in line was my cousin Jay, perhaps the relative who most resembles me physically, although he's taciturn where I'm not. Jay is 3 years older, 76, and showing some dimming in his manner, but he wanted address and phone number to get in touch if he and Linda visit her nephew in Edmonds, and he hung out

20 Oct. cont.--with C and Marcella on the balcony of the store for quite a while. (They said it took some effort to drag conversation out of him.) While Jay was up there, here came a great-looking guy with flowing gray hair and nifty hat, William "Gatz" Hjortsberg. As an up-and-coming Harcourt author at the time of This House of Sky, he provided ablurb, along with Edward Hoagland, for the then unknown me. We'd crossed paths only once since, on a plane, and he had with him a Sky to be signed and my lette: of thanks to him from all those years ago. Up he went, too, too, to visit with C and Marcella and for that matter, Jay

Ahead of the signing we had a really good lunch at Starkey's, and with Marcella driving us in her car, the Bozeman trip was about as painless as we could make it. Not that it was entirely so, with my hand cramps, but Marcella's rice bags helped some with even that. We had dinner at her place--crockpot roast which had had dried out, hilarious in light of my line in the Bartender about the Top Spot featuring pot roast "nice and done"--and then it was back to Kat and Jeep's for a nightcap, and back to Missoula--with lunch at the terrific El Cazador--the next day to turn in the rented Chevy SUV and fly home. We were triumphant, but also damn tired.

22 Oct.--Becky called, both of us being old-pro diplomatic and simply getting with the business of creating books. She said she has a week and a half of other projects to clear away before getting to Sweet Thunder, but thinks she can get the ms back to me by Thanksgiving, although not sure if it can be much ahead of that. Reiterated that they should be able tp publish it as a Sept. book, getting it out in August, along with the p'back of Bartender. Good enough. I meanwhile have been turning my imagination toward the Dog Bus, tinkering toward a lede, though I'm not very sharp this last day of Revlimid regimen. Y'day was quite tough, hand cramps early on and lack of drive; luckily it was Sunday and nothing really wrong with taking a day to read. Finished The Leopard, which even with a couple of extraneous chapters is a masterpiece, outdoing even Tolstoy's description of the Shcherbatsky's ball in the evocation of the Sicilian one the Prince goes to.

22 Oct. cont.--The weather has really turned, cold and rainy, and we put the electric blankets on our beds this morn. Now I am about to take a break and try out the warming mitts C rush-ordered from Amazon for my beleagured hands.

23 Oct.--On this first day of a Revlimid-free week, I'm struggling with aftereffects, sideeffects, effects of some damn kind that have me somewhat murky in the head and threatened another onset of hand cramps at the usual time, after breakfast. Soaking the hands in alternate hot and cold water headed that off, and the warming mitt I tried on my right hand maybe helped a little. And I'm feeling somewhat depressed, without the book tour and/or Sweet Thunder to take my mind off how I feel. Here's hoping these symptoms will clear away as the Rev wears off. Meanwhile I'm trying to force myself to get things done.

25 Oct.--I felt much better y'day (although the day went to picking up the next Revlimid, which wipes out the morning with the trip to the Capitol Hill pharmacy, and then to garden work--getting the 3rd coldframe of lettuce going and pulling up the tomato vines)-and seem even clearer in the head today. After y'day's entry, harkening to C's concern about my low mood, I laid down for an hour and whether or not I napped, I never stirred from the same position; the period of rest seemed to help. Today is an open opportunity--with a forecast of dry weather that should let us grill salmon for supper--and I'll see if I can put my imagination to work on the Dog Bus.

Meanwhile the Bartender is #11 on the PNBA bestseller list, #13 on Mountains & Plains.

26 Oct.--Big black cloud on the publishing horizon. Random House and Penguin are talking merger. That always kills off imprints, jobs, alternatives for agents and authors to go to. But meanwhile, I've found the lede for The Dog Bus Life in the book biz lurches on.

28 Oct.--I have felt really quite good today, though maybe with less energy than I'd like. This is my next to last day before resuming Revlimid, and knowing this was about as good as I get, I went back to the Dog Bus this morn and made a few nice bits of progress. It's taken not quite a week to find the form and voice of the opening, but it is getting there. The weather, while stubbornly overcast, warmed enough this afternoon that I went out and did garden work, most particularly taking my leisure with pruning my grafted portions of the old apple tree. Now in about half an hour, we pick up Kate O'Neill and head for the party at Lynda Mapes' house to celebrate five of us with books or manuscripts done.

30 Oct.--First day in this Rev round, and while I don't feel too bad--a little queasy--I've had a few small stupidities--forgetting to set the timer on the tea, misspeaking--that are such effects, and much be watched out for. Still and all, it's been a useful day on the minor crx on Sweet Thunder, plus a couple of needed fixes; Laskin came through heroically when I asked for help on how my Italian boarder would speak in broken English, emailing his Italian teacher in Italian. I wish I had some work on the Dog Bush to show for the day but it's heading toward 4 and I'm running out of energy, simply erasing some floppy disks to try to use in bumbling along with my old PowerMac.

Meanwhile the East Coast is getting clobbered with the Sandy storm, and we're glad to just have rain. And in the other atmospheric disturbance, Penguin is merging with Random House.

31 Oct.-- Haloween, pretty much a daylong rain. I just now asked C if she wanted to read the latest book, 3 pages long, so she is looking over the Dog Bus at this moment. The 3rd page is today's work, likely a little stiff but it finished off the opening scene.

Revlimid report: I've had twinges of leg cramps in the night, but nothing severe enough to vault me out of bed. My hands are feeling the stiffness more than y'day. I'm about to see if they'll stand exercises.

3 Nov.--Rainy or at least damp chilly Saturday. I'm still noodling with the opening scene of the Dog Bus, more than I should but that seems to be what it takes, for this one. I reached Becky by phone y'day just as she and family were heading out to the Berkshires to check on hurricane damage or hopefully not at their cabin there--Sandy is having a hell of an aftermath, the publishing house shut down without power all week--for her take on the news of the Penguin-Random House merger. She said if it had to happen, this was the partner to do it with. All the rhetoric has been about clout and flexibility, she said, not the deadly "economy of scale" preachment that she and I know translates to layoffs etc. In essence, I guess, so far so good; she said I'll be able to tell from her voice if things go bad. I did ask her to do me the favor of shepherding the Dog Bus contract and advance into actuality before the end of the year--told her Liz still is peerless but has distractions like two postponed memorials to Tony--and she said she would, she may have a favor or two in the contracts area she can call in.

Well, that's the book biz, hurricane of another sort for, what, the fourth or fifth time in my writing career. Makes me very, very glad to have the ~~Sweet~~ Sweet Thunder ms in existence so far ahead of schedule.

We've socialized considerably lately, really successfully last night when we ~~last~~ last-minute called the Damborgs to come and share the copious salmon we were about to grill. Before that, met the Nalders at Demetri's by the Edmonds ferry dock, insistently their treat. They both had good news--clear results--on ~~xx~~ their cancer situations, not what we're accustomed to hearing among our age-group friends. Eric retires from Hearst investigative reporting at the end of the year, has some sort of book idea. He's working on a series about the increase in power outages--2% annually, he says--since deregulation of the industry, and the corresponding escalation of executives' incomes. And ~~the~~ on the 29th we met the Nelsons at Poppy, where poor Marsh in asking if there was really any difference in the Seattle Times taking out a political ad for McKenna for governor and endorsing him editorially ran into a storm of argument from Ann, C, and me, residual journalists all.

5 Nov.--Rev report: had to contend w/ hand cramps after breakfast, even though I'm experimenting with taking the pill at lunch instead of xhxn with cereal etc. Gripping the mug as I have a cup of tea may cause the onset, as it's happened before at about that time. Managed to hot-and-cold soak it x away, along with another experiment--teaspoon of mustard. Dispiriting to have it hit this morn, as y'day I felt so good, and the hands better than in days, there at the start of day.

Later: things got better as the day went on, as I put in a reasonable writing day--still tinkering with the Dog Bus opener, but will now move on from it.

Other matters: after another campaign that seemed to go on forever, tomorrow is the presidential election. This time around, C and I hope we have found a remedy to the media's horse-race coverage, in Nate Silver's 538 blog. He crunches poll numbers--heaven grant that he's crunching them somewhat right--that consistently show Obama with an electoral college lead, courtesy of swing state tendencies that haven't budged much. It is another rugged election for this sadly divided country, with Romney the Republican candidate almost by default after the clown-carfull of primary opponents. He seems to be blindered by his own wealth and privileged upbringing, to the extent that not even the Citizens United-unleashing of fatcat contribution seems able to save him. Meanwhile Obama's response to Hurricane Sandy looked, well, presidential. Here's hoping on tomorrow's outcome, although every sign is for continued bitter Republican congressional opposition if Obama wins.

7 Nov.--One of the best election results of our lifetime, the sweetest since the Watergate crapstorm came down on Republicans in '74, for sure. Obama won sizably in both popular vote and Electoral College, the swing state rhythmically falling to him. Astonishingly, the Democrats seem to have picked up Senate seats, by virtue of the Tea Party oafs who were the Republican candidates in Indiana and Missouri. This morn C was picking through election aftermath on-line, and I came and watched over her shoulder for a bit, eventually suggesting the Great Falls Tribune

7 Nov.--website to see how Tester had run in Montana. Lo and behold, the breaking news was that he'd beaten Rehberg, another rightwing oaf, despite the tons of money the conservative attack groups spend on TV against him. If we really want to press our luck, I said, try the Fargo Moorhead News, and damned if Heitkamp, who we also thought was a dead duck, hadn't won that seat, although it's close enough for a recount. And gay marriage, which seems to us a simple matter of society adjusting its rights and conscience, seems to have won in this state. To top the day off, Becky emailed that the Bartender had climbed on the PNBA bestseller list--indeed, all the way to #4--and as we emailed back, good results all around, with the Left Coast having done itself proud in the election.

12 Nov.--Veterans Day observed, so lots of things are shut down, quite possibly any crowd for the extraneous U Book Store gig I'm doing tonight, for the My Bookstore anthology. Unclear if and how the store has been able to get the word out--Mary Ann Gwinn paid it no nevermind in the Seattle Times. And, something C is very dubious about, I'm sharing the evening with a musical group called the Bushwick Book Club, so we'll have to see how that goes. Also, it's chilly and showery; all in all, we'd just as soon stay home.

I'm at work on a piece for the Dictionary of American Regional English newsletter, as requested by the longtime editor there, Joan Houston Hall. I've used DARE a lot and probably more to the point, they've used me a lot, to the tune of 67 entries on the printout Joan sent. The newsletter's circulation is so small there's not much in this for me except to get my marker in, in the linguistic community.

Y'day we attended the knighting of our neighbor, Kaare Ness, down at Shilshole--Commander of the Norwegian Order of Merit, by His Majesty King Harald V, with the Norwegian consul doing the honors. About 130 of us at the Shilshole Bay Beach Club, Kaare evidently very pleased we came when we congratulated him afterward. Naturally the crowd was as Scandinavian as expected--we ate at a table with a couple named Larson and a woman banker named Larson

12 Nov. cont.--and they were not related. As the consul reeled off Kaare's good works--i.e., contributions to Norwegian causes--and mentioned things like the Ness Chapel at Pacific Lutheran University, C and I realized that what we knew was a lot of money next door is really a lot of money, likely hundreds of millions to afford that kind of giving. It came from the sea, Trident Seafood, and it very nearly vanished early there when Kaare, as he's told us, was swept overboard on the Grand Banks and was floating unconscious when the fishboat skipper jumped in and saved him.

And we have entertained, Tony Angell and Lee here for a crab feed on the 10th. Pleasant enough evening, good to catch up with them, although I have a bit of disturbing feeling that Tony and I aren't connecting quite as well as usual. Maybe it's some temporary circumstance, maybe it's my medication glooming me.

On that, I'm finishing my 2nd week of this Revlimid round, and the hand cramps that were bedeviling me a few days ago seem to have calmed down. Anyway, I damn well hope they have.

14 Nov.--Just a quickie: the Bartender still on the PNBA bestseller list, #9.

17 Nov.--Big news today, by way of sainted Linda Miller: the Washington Post named the Bartender a best book of the year--#2 on its fiction list, alphabetical but what the hey.

20 Nov.--Blustery day, following y'day's record rain of 2+ inches. It's been a medical one for me, picking up the next dose of Revlimid, taking the monthly blood test, and being fitted for new glasses. I seem to be in a spate of repair work, the standard teeth-cleaning the other day revealing a couple of fillings that need replacing, and beyond that I see the skin doctor again as I periodically do. This is the first day off Rev, and a particularly good one, hand cramps this morn during my Gp Health run and a low mood. This afternoon is better, maybe due to some tonic water (quinine) intake at lunchtime.

We're in the runup to Thanksgiving, both Julia the house cleaner and Korie the window washer here this morn, and C has brought in the 18½# turkey. I'm hoping to pull out of

20 Nov. cont.--Rev effects enough to truly enjoy myself, although I'm going to watch myself not to let a guest (reluctantly invited) or two get under my skin.

On the brighter side, just had a phone call from Joan Hall of the Dictionary of American Regional English extolling the piece I did for their newsletter. I still seem able to do shiny short pieces. And the Dog Bus ms seems to be opening up, stirring my imagination, so that's promising whatever my medical nags. Also, $5700+ in Whistling Season and Sky royalties came y'day.

Nov. 26--Already it is the Monday after Thanksgiving, and although dancing as fast as I can, I'm only now catching up minimally with this and quite a number of other things. The holiday meal went very well, as C's diary entry attests, with the turkey we had been dubious about turning out to be first-rate, and so much good food brought by everyone that we've been having a feast of leftovers. For the record, the guests this year were old stalwarts such as Mark and Lou Damborg; Ann McCartney and Norm Lindquist; John and Katharina Maloof; Frank Zoretich; Peter Rockas, reluctantly asked back after missing the past 3 years; and more recent prize additions such as Betty and Roy Mayfield, Bill Calvin and Katherine Graubard and Marjorie Kittle and David Williams and David's mom, Jackie. David and Marjorie volunteered to come early and help with the setting up, and I jumped at the offer, glad to have them rolling up hefty rugs and packing chairs up from downstairs. We absolutely lucked out on the weather, dry and nice, just ahead of the next day*s deluge.

And as C noted, we've since sat down and worked out a reasonable conclusion for The Dog Bus, and I'm back at the ms this morn, although this afternoon I must switch to David Williams's Guggenheim recommendation. The other writing buddy David--Laskin--and Kate had us over for turkey pot pie last night, a greatly welcome night out after all our Thanksgiving preparing.

And so it goes, right now, with the not insignificant addendum that I'm doing a 24-hour urine test today--hopefully, just as Dr. Chen's means of double-checking on the protein level.

27 Nov.--Well, this day improved in a hell of a hurry when I checked the e-mail just before lunch and found:

--Becky saying she'll send the edited Sweet Thunder ms probably tomorrow with "just a few tweaks," and the Dog Bus contract should reach Liz and us by week's end.

--The Bartender chosen for the ALA Booklist's Editor's Choice, another best-of-the-year list.

--The Bartender ascending, boosted by Black Friday shopping the day after Thanksgiving, to #2 on the PNBA bestseller list. C and I guessed the top spot was still held by J.K. Rowling on her broomstick, but lo, 'tis Barbara Kingsolver.

So, good news on all three fronts, in this unusual juggling of three books--past, present, and future. I've just written Becky some material toward catalogue copy etc. and will fax it in in the morning.

Also today, I finished writing a recommendation for David Williams for a Guggenheim. This week has been all bits and pieces of that sort, and I really look forward to diving back into Sweet Thunder.

29 Nov.--Damned if the list luck didn't continue today, with Becky's email saying the Bartender was chosen as one of "best adult books for teens" by School Library Journal. This certainly doesn't hurt my standing at the publishing house and the kind of year-end notice the book is getting ought--ought--to be helping sales.

Unwelcome phone call today from Peter Atwood, longtime friend, calling to cancel out on a Dec. social date because his Weger's disease, a nasty one of the auto-immune system, is flaring and he's in for a month-long series of chemo infusions.

As for me, this 3rd day of this Revlimid round has been better than the first 2; my hands still are too full of sensation and are stiff and clumsy, but they haven't been cramping.

30 Nov.--Damn it, though, leg cramps at 2:30 this morn, nasty ones in both calves making me flounder out of bed to stand up in relief. Am going to keep up with stretching exercises, pills, etc. to see if I can keep the legs quiet.

So, a bad night, but strong day of work on the Dog Bus.

3 Dec.--The Revlimid chronicle. Night before last and the one before that, I had leg cramps in bed; the 2nd night's were severe, waking me up every 20 minutes or so, until I tried Vicks VapoRub on both calves. It worked, thanks heaven. Last night I tried a Hylands leg cramp PM pill which has quinine among a lot of mysterious homeopathic ingredients, along with a sleeping pill, and no cramps came and except for 2 bathroom visits (3 is usual) and being awakened by a cloudburst against the bedroom windows (first time we can remember that happening) I got 8 hrs sleep. And feel better this morn than I have the past two or three. For the record, the terrific leg cramps came on days 3 & 4 of this Rev cycle.

David Williams and Marjorie came y'day to electronically (PDF) send in my recommendation of him for a Guggenheim, and stayed for crockpot soup lunch. Valuable friends, in a relationship that seems to thrive in both directions.

5 Dec.--This is going to be some day. Dental work at 2--two fillings, one of them big. Phone consultation with Dr. Chen @ 4:40 about my latest test results. And the edited Thunder ms is supposed to arrive from Becky. I shall be glad when it is all over.

C and I have just looked at the test results on-line, and it appears I have a fighting chance of being judged stable by Chen. The kicker is the free light chains, maybe, which keep creeping higher in each time, but the figures are not nearly as high as times in the past. Anyway, we'll see, with fingers crossed that Chen doesn't see reason to put me on Dexamethasone or some such to bring those numbers down. Ginsberg probably would have, but Chen is a cooler hand at medications.

Later: well, I have survived the dentist, a solid hour of grinding and filling, which produced a back tooth that looks like a lead mine (though it's amalgam, I guess). Now to see how I fare with Dr. Chen.

6 Dec.--I scraped through again, another blessed medical reprieve, Chen's phone call (around 6, although it was scheduled for 4:40) saying the test results are "pretty stable," the Revlimid is working, we must keep doing what we're doing. And he put me on a 2-month basis instead of monthly blood tests, yay!

6 Dec.--Well, this has been a day of surprises. First C checked the PNBA bestseller list and there was the Bartender still at #2, right behind Barbara Kingsolver. Then came our catalog-ordered Xmas gifts to ourselves, nifty Greek fisherman's cap for Carol and a roll-up-in-a-suitcase Pendleton hat for me, and a really handsome schoolhouse clock, silent pendulum and all, for the living room. Then comes Beck's ARGH email saying she's doing lots of things and pleasing nobody with them, but will send me the Thunder ms and tracking # tomorrow, and meanwhile the Dog Bus contract went to Liz today. All good, but she added that her boss Geoff is not dold on the title of.. the Dog Bus. I would have bet money there's be some doubt about Sweet Thunder as a title (there may be yet) and the Dog Bus is a natural, but there we are.

Anyway, this has been a good day of work on The Dog Bus or whatever the hell it turns out to be, and I'm in a good mood from the medical news, so we're perking along.

10 Dec.--Health note: y'day was an experience not to be repeated, I hope. Daylong struggle with constipation, a colossal bowel plug at the same time the rectal muscles strained for a bowel movement. This started just after breakfast, and went on until late afternoon, when Milk of Magnesia recommended by Gp Health consulting nurse (and C's emergency run to drugstore for some) finally cleared things out. My bottom is really sore, but things are functioning again. Evidently I let myself get dehydrated, not remembering to drink enough water the couple of days I was doing office-cleaning chores. Despite drinking a lot of liquid all day, I wasn't able to pee until about 4 in the afternoon. So, new vows: more roughage in the diet, more regular liquid intake.

On a better note, this seems to be the day things are finally happening in NY, Liz having signed off on the Dog Bus contract and vowing to send it to me as soon as she has the hard copy, Becky saying the Sweet Thunder ms is really really being sent today, and later saying she presented it at the launch this morn "and it sailed--smiles and nodding heads all up and down Sale Row across the table" from her.

13 Dec.--Y'day I finished what I hope are repairs on myself--the new glasses, the molar filling replaced in a practically total rebuild by the dentist, and y'day the skin spritzes by Dr. Shorrs and the removal of a pea-sized purple eruption (if I heard the term right, it's a hemogioma, I guess a blood vessel gone wrong) near my groin. My forehead looks like I've been mauled, from the liquid nitrogen spritzes of suspect spots, but I'll take it if that's the end of this kind of thing for a while.

C and I have had our patience tried by the publishing world, its slow gears just possibly turning out the advance monies I've long since requested before the end of the year, and for whatever reason, Becky's promises that the Sweet Thunder edited ms is on its way have not come through. Called her assistant Lily this morn when again it did not arrive, and sounding exasperated herself, she xxx vowed to get it to me tomorrow.

Meanwhile, with that causing a gap in the work schedule, I've gone back to the Dog Bus, which I hadn't intended to. Not a great morning of work, but it's an advance. Have looked over finances and taxes, some, the past couple of days. We have a lot of dough, and we're going to pay a lot of taxes on it.

14 Dec.--Vagaries of the writer's trade. With xxx the Thunder ms hung up somewhere in xxx Penguin channels, I went back to work on the Dog Bus.xxx Y'day was tough, gearing up again, but today was a good writing day, squaring Donal away on the Greyhound. The ms package was waiting on the doorstep when C and I came back from our late morning walk--she nobly fetched the next supply of Revlimid for me from the Capitol Hill pharmacy--but I didn't open it, going back to the day's work on the Dog Bus after lunch. I've just now run out of ommph on that, a few minutes before 3, and so have opened the ms packet but haven't read the dover letter until now, only noting that it's surprisingly short, half a page. Well, here's xx hoping.

15 minutes later: And the news is so good. Becky's letter calls it "this most excellent of manuscripts. Honestly, very little here to tinker with--the pacing is near-perfect, and it's genuinely suspenseful..." She has one quibble that's likely easily fixable, and beyond that it looks like her canny line editing. As I just read this aloud to C and said, Whew.

16 Dec.--Well, this had been a different manuscript experience--turned it around, done and shipped, in about 48 hours. Becky's suggested tweaks were really only a couple, her usual superlative line editing was easily transposed onto the computer, and Sweet Thunder simply feels like a tidy book. So, hallelujah, it's off to NY to arrive mid-week, and I've gained the couple of weeks I expected to spend on revision.

We're having a weather spate, rain since early afternoon and high winds forecast after 11 tonight. So amid our merry ms work, C and I have been making what preparations we can for a power outage.

19 Dec.--We're minorly snowed in for a little while--a small fall of slushy stuff that's being rained on--but the day has gone exceedingly well:

--I banged out the Sweet Thunder catalogue essay Becky wanted, in under 2 hours.

--Liz e-mailed that she's negotiated $10,000 advances each for audio rights on Thunder and Dog Bus, OK with me? Holy smokes, yes, we replied.

--Lily, Becky's swuft new assistant, reported the Thunder ms arrived back in NY this morn and has already(!) been converted from my archaic floppy disk to electronic file.

21 Dec.--End of the work week, maybe, and on high notes. Chuck Verrill emailed the sched for $ to be wired, $56,250 for Sweet Thunder acceptance on the 24th and $31,387 for Dog Bus signing on the 28th, finally achieving the payments I've been leaning on everyone to cram into this year. Whew. And meanwhile the Bartender is #3 on the PNBA list. Coincidentally or not, the sun even shined this afternoon for the first time in what seems like weeks.

24 Dec.--A Christmas Eve gift from the scenery this morn, the mountains out stunningly in fresh snow, a cloud lid just at or below their peaks holding the band of sunlight into such clarity that the tree-texture of the slopes can be seen, like the substance of fabric. Also, a wee giftie from us to us, I gleaned a collander of lettuce from the coldframes and a leftover bed, for tonight's meal of chicken salad.

Xmas Day--And a rainy blowy one. No snow in sight, at least, which ought to mean our old-buddy guests, Linda Sullivan and Jeff Saeger and Mark and Lou Damborg, can get here in timely fashion for roast beef dinner.

Our report at the moment is very good, C in good fettle as she putters together this dinner for our favorite people, and I'm noticeably better after a week off Revlimid--this is the 8th day, actually, gift from Dr. Chen who told me, sure, delay the next sequence until tomorrow, enjoy the holiday. So far, the past 2 days my hands have not been so prone to cramping, and the leg cramps at night, which haven't been as severe as in the past, have eased off. I do look like I've had a frontal lobotomy, with scabs on my forehead where Dr. Shorrs sprayed karitoses, but even those represent the recent repairs on myself, new glasses, a couple of teeth filled. Still, we are getting tentative enough about some things--driving at night is no fun, although we can still do it, and we're wary enough of airplane colds (by me) that we're holding off on any plans to go to Tucson--that it's starting to mark a change in our lives.

Be that as it may, the household has had a better year than expected at the kind of things that mean most to us. --The Book-It staging of Prairie Nocturne was a great experience. I was overcome when the play opened with Faith Russell in a solo spotlight belted out my lyrics to "Mouthful of Stars," Mahalia and Aretha style. And another surprisingly nice musical tribute came when the Bushwick Book Club set of musicians did songs they wrote about The Bartender's Tale, at the otherwise mundane My Bookstore event at the U Book Store.

**I keep telling people this is a quirk of scheduling, and it is, but here at age 73½ I have a tighter cluster of books --3!--than I've ever had in my life. It took slugging away at Sweet Thunder while The Bartender's Tale was in the eternal production process, but I managed it and it seems to have worked, a fairly slick novel with plot twists neither my veteran editor nor my veteran wife saw coming at all. And now it'll take slogging at The Dog Bus while Thunder makes its way into the world, but I pretty much feel up for that, too. Dog Bus has been a little stiff and

Xmas cont.--slow getting underway, but I've steadily been seeing ways to enliven it and I think it'll be all right.

--Meanwhile, financially we also seem to be all right, with nearly $90,000 in book advances here at the end of the year, and 2 big ones ahead next year from the Bartender paperback and publication of Sweet Thunder.

--And I'll sign off with some sweet smaller stuff, such as The Bartender's continued ranking near the top of the PNBA bestseller list, and the arrival this week of cultural geographer Bill Wykoff's comprehensive piece on my books, in the Journal of Cultural Geography where they do such pieces on Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha and Hardy's Wessex. Getting there, maybe I am.

26 Dec.--This was the best Christmas within menory, inasmuch as we did not have to contend with John Roden and his conniptions. It's a bit of a guilty pleasure, as we were excused from what has been the obligatory Xmas with the Rodens by Jean's ailing hip, about to be replaced, and she leapt (figuratively) at C's suggestion that she did not have to host us this year, their turn. I hope, and think, the Dewell clan would have pitched in to provide some kind of occasion for John and Jean, but in any case we haven't heard nor are we likely to ask, and meantime we had terrific roast beef dinner here with the Damborgs and Linda and Jeff, comfortable friends all. Carol and I looked at each other as we got up this morn, admitting we both were still delighted.

And it was back to work on the Dog Bus--"And I worked at the writer's trade," the lovely line I'm invoking in the Sweet Thunder dedication which I intend as a surprise to David Laskin and David Williams--and to cope with Revlimid, the next 21 days of pills starting today. Life as she is lived.

29 Dec.--I'm having a rough day, combo of Revlimid and I guess the aftereffct of the Temazapam sleeping pill I took last night. This morn I was jangled and as can happen on Rev, deficient in sequencing, doing one thing and then maybe having to undo it to fit in the next, as in changing clothes to walk the n'hood in this chilly dank weather and then realizing I hadn't put on my knee braces. C has been patient with me, though communication has been less than smooth. I think I'm shaping up, now at 2:45, having focused on Dog Bus work, and tonight ought to bring me to life at dinner at Laskins.

For all that, things have been going basically OK, with a scene of Donal and Herman encountering Jack Kerouac on the bus to Butte, which I read to C y'day afternoon and she enthusiastically agreed it's a keeper. Today, while walking the 'hood, we were stopped by a guy pulled over in a car, neighbor Eric Johnson, who asked me talk to his chapter of Mystery Writers of America in March. I'm thinking I may do it. On the 27th I spent nearly an hour on the phone with Bert Hitchcock, retired Auburn U. lit prof who's doing a paper on me for the Thomas Wolfe Society gathering in Boise next spring. Earlier in the week came Bill Wyckoff's cultural geography paper that I already noted, a comprehensive tribute. And once again, the Bartender stayed high on the weekly PNBA bestseller list, at #3.

So, if I can just get hold of myself past the mood shroud of medication, I'm in pretty good shape for the shape I'm in.

31 Dec.--The year is going out actually looking pretty good, in all ways. The gray of the day has lifted now, at 3:40, there's some tangerine sunset color blushing the southwest, and the snowy tops of the Olympics are out above a ruff of cloud or fog, just enough to make their points, so to speak. And we finally, finally, got a successful conclusion--$88,000 worth--to the past week's struggle to have my Sweet Thunder and Dog Bus payments wired from the literary agency into our brokerage account. Murphy's Law hit us in about every conceivable way, starting with the brokerage, RBC, changing banks a couple of months ago on its checkwriting accounts and sending

Dec. 31 cont.--printed slips with new info for electronic funds transfer. I accordingly cursed and sent it in to the agency, where Chuck and the office help, Eric, both missed the point, as had I, that wired money is different from EFT (as the brokerage sees it; damned if I do) and we shouldn't have touched a thing. First the agency (Eric) flubbed on the new bank listing, foiling Chuck's lst wire try, then the transmitting bank evidently wouldn't recognize our account number, and so on and so on until finally Juliana Lee, the office whiz at the Kirkland RBC office we use, straightened matters out directly with Chuck--and even that took 2 tries, with some bank in the middle demanding the street address of RBC, whatever the hell that has to do with all the electronic numerical formulae which are supposed to transmit money instantaneously. Anyway, as C said, with 11 hours and 11 minutes to spare before 2013, Juliana informed us the wire transfer had come through.

Other than that, I put in a long hard day on Dog Bus, winnowing file cards and organizing rough draft into chunks. What I'm supposed to be doing in life. I pretty well reflected back on the year in my Xmas entry, and so with one last desk chore, putting the new leaves into my desk calendar, I'll now call it a day, and a year.

Dear Mr. Doig 3/7/12

I write to let you know how deeply touched and honored I was by your closing night gift of an inscribed "Prairie Nocturne."

In my career as an actor I have performed in dozens of world premiers. It's a great joy to work with a director and playwright in finding a new character and bringing that character to life on stage. The wonder of Book-it is the addition of the author's work. Here we start with a complete work of art, deep, textured and nuanced, to build the play and the characters from. And with Angus we had not only one book but two to mine. What a joy.

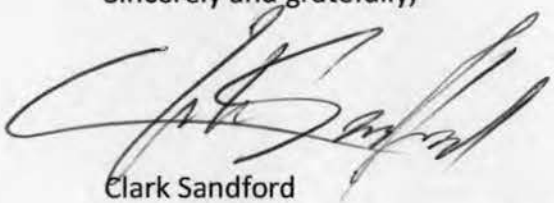
It is also clear to me from the audience reaction that Angus is a character loved not only by you, but also by a great many readers. For a simple actor that is a mighty responsibility. If, as your inscription indicated, I managed to capture "the soul and spirit of Angus" I am happy. I have never received such a kind and generous compliment. Nor do I expect to again. Thank you.

I also thank you for your words. An actor's approach to words is different than that of a poet's. Our job is to interpret and let the words sing out in a full voice. So we know words. Yours are wonderful and were a thrill to speak.

Once in a great while there is a theatre production in which everything gels. Productions that have a great script, great ensemble, director and crew. Productions where the collaborative ideal of theatre is realized. These productions are the crack cocaine of theatre that hooks artists on the art and keeps them coming back for more. After 35 years as a professional actor, I can count those experiences on one hand. (OK one and a half hands.) Prairie Nocturne was one of those productions. You and your work were part of that whether you knew it or not. You and your work were always in the fore of our thoughts. The experience of this production is etched on our souls. And, I suspect, the souls of a number of audience members. For that I thank you again.

Please give my warmest regards to Mrs. Doig. It was a great pleasure to meet her. And thank her for me as well. I have been married for 33 years and know what a profound if unacknowledged contribution a supportive spouse makes to one's art.

Sincerely and gratefully,



Clark Sandford
1020 NE 170th Shoreline 98155

A.Word.A.Day
with Anu Garg

chin-chin

PRONUNCIATION:
(CHIN-chin)

MEANING:
noun: A chat.
verb intr.: To chat.
interjection: Used as a toast, greeting, or farewell.

ETYMOLOGY:
From Chinese ching-ching (please-please). Earliest documented use: 1795.

USAGE:
"Let's have a chin-chin about what's wanted of you."
Ivan Doig; The Eleventh Man; Harcourt; 2008.

"'Chin-chin,' Simic said and clinked Casson's glass."
Alan Furst; The World At Night; Random House; 1996.

A THOUGHT FOR TODAY:
What is to give light must endure burning. -Viktor Frankl, author, neurologist and psychiatrist, Holocaust survivor (1905-1997)

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From: carol doig <cddoig@comcast.net>
Subject: **Re: Ivan's on Word a Day!**
Date: August 9, 2012 4:50:16 PM PDT
To: Lois Welch <lowelch@bresnan.net>



Lo. hi--

My chin-chin made the list of reduplicatives? Goody-goody!

Saw the pic of Jim in WAL Qtly. Great piece you had in there on Mary Blew a while back, incidentally.

Perking along here; looking forward to mooching the Welch guest room in Oct.

Best,
Ivan

On Aug 9, 2012, at 12:37 PM, Lois Welch wrote:

> Begin forwarded message:
>
> > From: "Wordsmith" <wsmith@wordsmith.org>
> > Subject: A.Word.A.Day--chin-chin
> > Date: August 8, 2012 10:16:41 PM MDT
> > To: lowelch@bresnan.net
> >
> > Wordsmith.org The Magic of Words
> >
> > Your message here?
> > MooT - the Semantics and Etymology game
> > The world's toughest language game.
> > mootgame.com
> >
> > Aug 9, 2012
> > This week's theme
> > Reduplicatives
> >
> > This week's words
> > chop-chop
> > froufrou
> > chichi
> > chin-chin
> > Discuss
> > Feedback
> > RSS/XML

From: carol doig <cddoig@comcast.net>
Subject: **publishing news**
Date: August 29, 2012 3:52:15 PM PDT
To: david laskin <laskin.david@gmail.com>, David Williams <wingate@seanet.com>



Hi, both Davids and spouses. Wanted to share the news. My editor Becky called this afternoon, office hubbub in the background, celebration of some kind going on (champagne may have been involved). Sez she, we're all here together to tell you -- then there's a ragged shout of "You're on the New. York. Times. Bestseller List!" Not exactly at the top of the heap, on the Extended (online) List, #35, a week from Sunday. But you know the drill, the publisher and I will describe The Bartender's Tale from here to eternity as t he New York Times bestseller.... I'm breaking the trail for you, buddies.

Best,
Ivan