



... what to do about a coming midterm or quiz. The Hut's coffee and the never quiet juke box attract many informal planning sessions.



Latham House

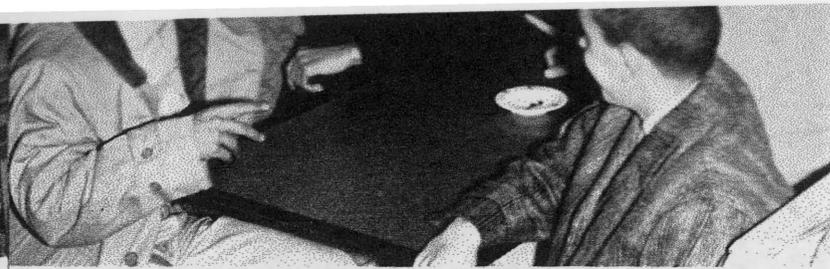
The Hut was just like an annex for the men of Latham house. Having Hank and Irv as neighbors, a south campus location, and continued hi fi concerts helped Lathamites forget about leaky ceilings, drafty windows, and squirrels in the walls.

Sharing official duties with Ed O'Connor, president, were Ron Dawe, vice president; Jerry Ackerman, secretary; Tom Holden, treasurer; Dick Tilden, social chairman, and Ivan Doig, IM chairman.

During the year, Latham sponsored two informal dances and a picnic. The men were the guests of alumnus Warren Cordt at a Homecoming open house.

With many members in speech or music, activities centered around rehearsals, plays, concerts, and debates. In sports, Bill Vermillion captured the IM golf crown.

Latham House



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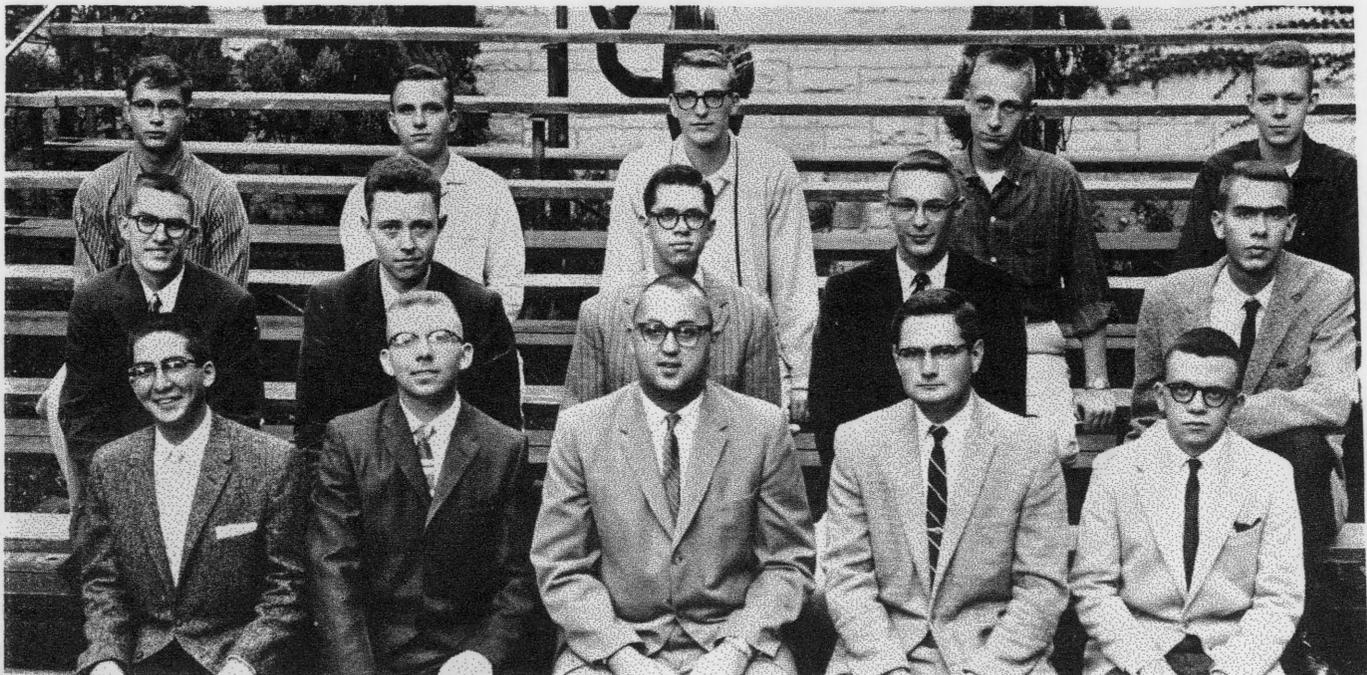


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Top Row: Stan Petzel, Rich Kretschmer, Mike Strah, Dallas Niermeyer, Bruce Lyon. Second Row: Bill Woerz, Dick Tilden, Ken Lowenberg, John Soukup, Charles
First Row: Fred Ehrlich, Ivan Doig, Tom Grant, John Salkowski, Tom Holden.



... what to do about a coming midterm or quiz. The Hut's coffee and the never quiet juke box attract many informal planning sessions.

*Hi Carol,
 I'm so glad to have
 found you at home
 and had a chance to
 chat with you. Wish
 the Syllabus pages had
 been a bit smaller.
 This was the 1959 edition.
 Big Hugs,
 Midge*

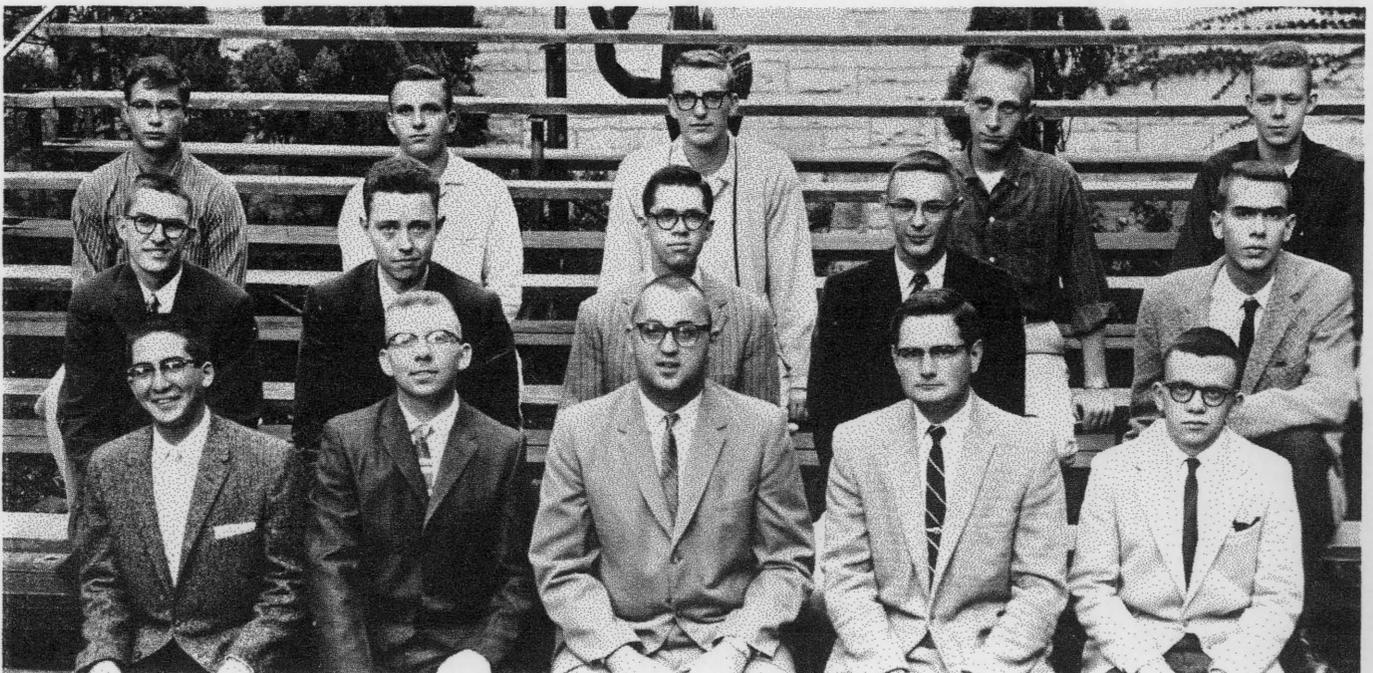
Latham House

The Hut was just like an annex for the men of Latham House. Having Hank and Irv as neighbors, a south campus location, and continued hi fi concerts helped Lathamites forget about leaky ceilings, drafty windows and squirrels in the walls.

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With many members in speech or music, activities centered around rehearsals, plays, concerts, and debates. In sports, Bill Vermillion captured the IM golf championship.



NORTHWESTERN

PERSPECTIVE

January 22, 1992

Ivan Doig
17021 10th Ave., N.W.
Seattle, WA 98177

Dear Ivan:

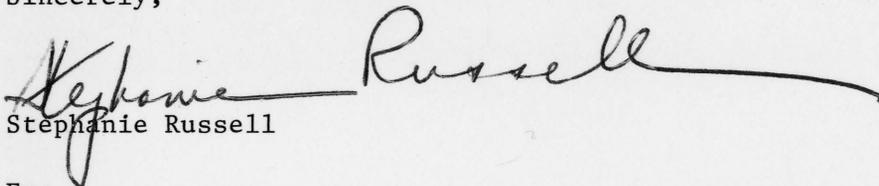
Well, the Winter Issue of Perspective is out and your profile looks great. Carol's slide of the Rocky Mountains really made the opening spread. You both were so helpful in providing us with some good photos. Many, many thanks!

I'm enclosing one copy of the magazine with these photos that I'm returning. Under separate cover I'm sending you some additional copies. If it's not enough feel free to ask for more because we usually have quite a few extras lying about.

I hope your reading at Barbara's Bookstore back in November went well; I'll look forward to catching you the next time you're in town.

It's been a pleasure getting to know you and your work; now my job is to introduce your work to the rest of my family. Here's wishing you all the best for 1992.

Sincerely,

 Stephanie Russell

Enc.

30 Jan. '92

Dear Stephanie--

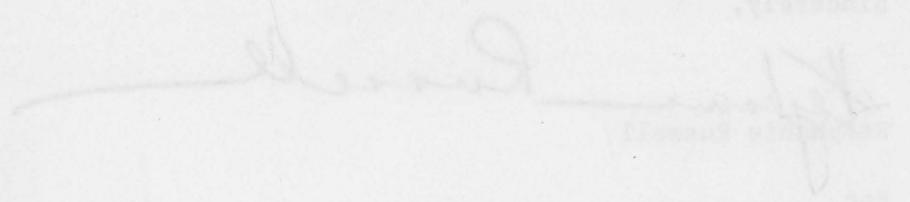
The piece about me was very handsomely done. I appreciate Caroline's enterprise on it (I'm writing her separately to say so) and your great care with it. Some NU alum friends have already contacted me about the piece; they were knocked out by Carol's horse pic and the railroad shot.

Thanks for the offer of more copies, and I think I'll take you up on it--maybe four more, could you spare?

All is well here. The Perspective piece came amid a week of another good piece in the Washington Post, an inquiry from the USIA as to whether I want to do an overseas reading tour, etc. Meanwhile I'm slogging away at the next book.

I hope our paths will cross sometime again.

all best,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, likely belonging to the sender of the letter, is located at the bottom of the page. The signature is written in dark ink and is somewhat stylized.

Sept. 13, 1991

OVER

Dear Ivan:

Thanks for the kind note! I'm glad you found the story substantially accurate and careful. Stephanie sent me a copy of your suggested changes, and they all look like improvements to me. She did ask me to whack out about 20 lines, so what turns up in print may well be a little shorter than what you've seen so far. And yes, according to my limited experience, *Northwestern Perspective* pays nicely. I just did a shorter profile for *Old Oregon*, the alumni magazine of the University of Oregon, and the pay was peanuts. The editors have just pitched their readers for money by explaining that they pay more in postage to mail out one issue than they do on writing and photography for the whole year. Is that backward, or am I naive? But it's a good magazine and a nice staff, plus probably the only time any while soon that I'll show up in the same publication as Barry Lopez (we're both alums). So. I am amazed to think you freelanced 200 articles in 10 years. Somehow, it's comforting, when I'm plugging away on chilly, gray afternoons, to think northward a few miles and know that just over the city limits you are cooking steadily along on some project or another, living proof that it all adds up if you use your head and persist in the face of life's unremitting distractions. Now, if only we could all do something about the lousy economy ...

Will your paperback-plugging trail run through Seattle? I'll keep an eye on the Elliott Bay calendar. Stephanie and I (along with numerous friends and loved ones) are happily looking forward to your next book. By the way, I hope one of these days you do get to meet Stephanie. She's truly one of those people where you can't decide if she's as smart as she is nice or vice versa.

In the meantime, please give my best to Carol and enjoy your home improvements! It's been a delight to write about you. Safe touring and happy autumn!

Best wishes,

Caroline

Caroline Green

Sept 18 1991

30 Jan. '92

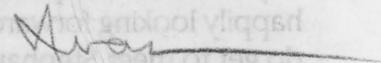
Thanks for the kind note! I'm glad you found the story substantially accurate and careful. Stephanie sent me a copy of your suggested changes and they all look like improvements to me. She did ask me to whack out about 20 lines, so what turns up in print may well be a little shorter than what you've seen so far. And yes, according to my limited experience, Northwestern Perspective pays nicely. I just did a shorter profile for Old Oregon, the alumni magazine of the University of Oregon, and the pay was peanuts. The editors have just pitched their readers for money by explaining that they pay more in postage to mail out one issue than they do on writing it.

Dear Caroline--

The Northwestern Perspective piece came out pure wonderful, at least from my point of view; I know the wait for it to get into print must have been heavy going for you. Anyway, now that it's actuality, thanks again for all the care and craft you put into the article. When I read it over, I honestly couldn't where (if) you made cuts from the manuscript version.

I hope you're thriving. Everything is actually great here in this household, but this is one of those years I have to spend fulltime and then some on this next book. If Carol and I ever get out of an evening, maybe we'll cross paths with you at an Elliott Bay reading.

all best,



p.s. I passed through Chicago in Nov. on the Mariah Montana paperback tour. Times there, at least in bookstores and hotels, looked t-o-u-g-h.

Best wishes
Caroline
Caroline Green

November 12, 1990

Ivan Doig
17021 10th Ave., NW
Seattle, WA 98177

Dear Ivan:

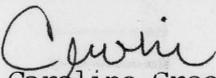
I hope you and Carol didn't have to row home from Skagit County the other day.

I thought you'd like to know that I've gone through the interview tapes and am very happy with the material. Your thoughts from last Thursday will easily provide the meat of the profile. As for the lettuce and tomatoes, I haven't yet started tracking down Baldwin, Walter, Kittredge, Harmon and so on. But with some luck, your ears should be burning soon. Elliott Bay is already sold out of tickets for the Friday reading, but the nice man who answered the phone when I called said they'd shoehorn me in provided I showed up early.

Once again, thank you for so graciously submitting to almost two hours of questioning "two months and four days" into a time when an awful lot of us "scribblers" are bleating questions at you. I know, however, from being associated with a program that was reported on in Northwestern Perspective, that people really do read the magazine, and in all sections of the country, too, so perhaps a few new readers will come of this.

In the meantime, I look forward to again being a listener of yours soon.

Best wishes to you and Carol.


Caroline Green
1061 25th Ave. East
Seattle, WA 98112
206.322.0491

27 Aug. '91

Dear Caroline--

Many thanks for the Northwestern Perspective piece you did on me; Stephanie Russell just sent me a typescript, and I found only a few places where I swallowed a word during the interview or shortcut my way through a phrase too much, nothing at all substantial. I recognize the care and work you put into the article; I hope the pay was commensurate, but...?

Back on the bookstore trail, luckily a shortened version, this fall for the paperback of Mariah Montana. Carol and I have spent the summer trying to bang this house into shape, so we figure maybe we're ready for teaching and writing again. We hope your own writing is thriving.

all best,

N O R T H W E S T E R N

P E R S P E C T I V E

October 23, 1991

Dear Ivan:

Well, we are enjoying our second round of Indian Summer here, so the bees have buzzed back to life and a confused purple rhododendron bush nearby is blooming -- again. It certainly won't last, so we're trying to make the most of it.

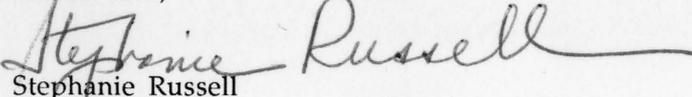
I just wanted to let you know that I have been in touch with Chris Bennion to get permission to use the wonderful photos he took of you that you sent me copies of for the profile in Perspective.

Because of the cancellation of our summer issue due to these difficult financial times, the stories slated for summer were moved to the fall issue. So now the fall issue (with the Ivan Doig profile) becomes the winter issue. The long and short of it is that this story won't be out til January, after your book tour is over. I'm sorry about the delay but I hope the story will still rustle up some interested readers for you. I, for one, plan to buy my mother your trilogy for Christmas!

In an attempt to find a photograph of the beautiful Montana landscape you write about, I've been in touch with the Montana State Promotion office in Helena. But then I reread a 1987 story about you in Publishers Weekly and noted that your wife Carol has taken many photographs of your Montana homeland. I wonder if she might allow me to use one of her photos for this story? I am interested in a photo that would give readers the sense of openness and vastness of Montana, perhaps with a solitary sheepherder or cowboy in the background and maybe distant mountains thrown in for good measure. I know you must be in the midst of your book tour by now, so please don't trouble yourself with this request if it proves to be too much. If, however, Carol has something we could use, I've enclosed a Federal Express form, charged to my account at Northwestern, that you could use to ship some photos back to me. I promise to return all the photos and credit any that we use.

Thanks again for your patience and understanding. Here's wishing you luck and much fortitude on your book tour.

All the best,


Stephanie Russell

Enc.

NORTHWESTERN
P E E R R E V I E W

2 Nov. '91

Dear Stephanie--

Hey, no sweat about the delay in running the article. Not a bad idea for me to have the ink about me spread over time.

Carol looked through her photo collection and thinks the enclosed four slides are the best bets if you want some sense of the actual country I'm writing about. The one in plastic relates to This House of Sky-- it's of my grandparents' homestead, Wall Mountain in the background--and the other three are of the country of the trilogy, the Rocky Mountain Front near Dupuyer, Montana. Hope they help.

quickly (the book tour beckons),

NU Dept. of U Relations

(312)

(708) 491-5000

Oct. 17, 1990

Ivan Doig
17021 10th Ave. NW
Seattle WA 98177

Alum Profile:

- can I provide pics? or photos etc in public?
- or Miriam O'Keefe

Dear Mr. Doig:

Here's a proposal: would you be willing to be profiled in Northwestern Perspective, Northwestern University's alumni magazine?

I'm a sometimes freelance writer, recently transplanted to Seattle from Chicago and arriving with instructions from Northwestern Perspective editor Stephanie Russell to sound you out about being a profile subject. We're both very hopeful you'll agree -- she, because you present a nice opportunity to keep the magazine lively with news of remarkable alumni from beyond Chicago, and I, because your books have been favorites of mine ever since I read English Creek.

In case you don't already get the magazine, you'll find a copy enclosed. And since you're probably busy right now promoting the new book, this letter will suffice as notice that I'll be trying to track you down by phone in a few days for an initial chat at your convenience. If you're so bowled over by the prospect of showing up in Northwestern Perspective that you want to call me to set up an interview, my number is below. Either way, I hope you are persuadable. It would be a delight to meet and write about you.

Best wishes and many thanks for hours of good reading.

Caroline Green
Caroline Green
1061 25th Ave. E
Seattle WA 98112
206.322.0491

Nov. 8, 2-4 interview

NU Dept of U Relations

(218)

0002-1P1 (507)

all photos of ...
5 photos in ...
photo album

25 Oct. '90

Dear Stephanie--

Following up on our phone conversation earlier today about the possible Alumni Profile of my very own self, here are the photo possibilities (enclosed) I told you about. The portrait shot by Chris Bannion you can keep, although as we discussed you'll need to negotiate a fee with him. I found another shot by Chris, of me typing in a train compartment on my way to Montana for research on my latest book; I can provide you the original, or Chris will have the negative, if that one interests you. As to the Mock Political Convention one, it has an element I hadn't even ~~remembered~~ remembered; Latham House, my domicile at NU, formed the Montana delegation. I'm the beardless youth in the light suit in the foreground, and I photocopied the faded LIFE Magazine info on the back; their "set no." looks to me like 59851, although the blurred middle digit could be something else. I'm game to loan you the photo if LIFE can't come up with one, okay? You can let me know, when the time comes, what you need to reproduce one of my book covers--photostat, high definition photocopy, or loan of a book jacket?--

pic inside
big fam.
photo album

I had to check with my publisher tomorrow about some other interviews that are looming, and then either I'll call Caroline Green or she'll call me on Monday, Oct. 29th, as we pretty much have to do the interview in November--I'll be away the first part of next year.

Enjoyed talking to you, and I hope this piece works out for all of us.

best wishes,

[Handwritten signature]

N O R T H W E S T E R N

P E R S P E C T I V E

November 1, 1990

Dear Ivan,

I just received your envelope with the photos and want you to know that they'll be perfect for Perspective. I think the portrait that Chris Bennion took is really lovely and it has such clarity. I also love the shot of you working on the railroad. Since both of these were taken by Chris, I'll just call him in the near future to see if he can send me a copy of the train shot. Then I'll also work out any stock fees and credits we need to arrange. In the meantime, I've contacted LIFE Magazine about getting a print of the mock convention, so I'll let you know if they can come up with that.

Last night Katherine Fanning came to address Medill and communication studies students about press freedom in Eastern Europe today. She gave a wonderful speech and the entire cast of Medill professors, deans and the like turned out for it.

I certainly enjoyed speaking with you last week and appreciate your taking the time to deal with us on the profile. I hope your new book does well after all the hard touring you've done. I'll be in touch once I receive the finished story from Caroline Green so I can send you an edited copy before publication, sometime in the Spring. Thanks for your cooperation.

Sincerely,


Stephanie Russell

N O R T H W E S T E R N

P E R S P E C T I V E

August 21, 1991

Ivan Doig
17021 10th Avenue, NW
Seattle, WA 98177

Dear Ivan:

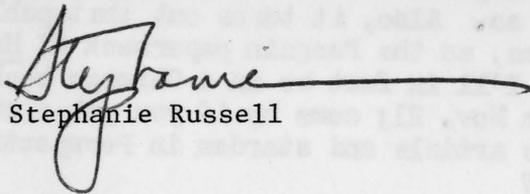
Thanks so much for your call yesterday and for your help in tracking down the photos we need for the profile.

I've enclosed a copy of Caroline Green's story for you to review. I hope it's ok with you but would appreciate your pointing out any factual discrepancies.

It was good news to hear about your "prequel." I'll be looking forward to it!

One of these days your profile really will appear in Perspective. I'll keep you posted. And, do take your time with the corrections -- I don't need them for a couple weeks.

All the best,


Stephanie Russell

27 Aug. '91

Dear Stephanie--

Many thanks for the chance to look over Carolyn Green's profile of me. It's certainly a handsome job from my point of view, and I found only the following few places where I swallowed a word or a western phrase needs slight fixing:

p. 2, line 10 from the bottom--the phrase would be "digging postholes" or "digging holes for fence posts". In that same line, if you want a further particularizing detail for your readers it could read "quit the Northwestern Apartments dish room".

p. 3, line 4 from the top--insert "the" to make it "words coming out on the page,".

p. 3, line 11 from the bottom--my intention in that quote, though I may have underspoken the word "have" so that Carolyn's recorder didn't pick it up, was to say the "kind of person Medill loved to have show up"--i.e., come to Medill as a student of the sort I was, task-oriented and intent on craft instead of interior philosophy.

p. 4, line 10 from the top--my nonconsecutive writing method maybe is clearer if we expand my phrase to "and I'll fill in between the chunks."

p. 5, line 8 from the bottom--similarly, my final sentence in that graf might mean more if we make it "A lot of things you're not supposed to do with wordforms just never occur to me."

p. 6, line 10 from bottom--"it's" instead of "its"?

p. 7, line 10 from top--the phrase should be "the grain has been combined."

So, a very fine piece; I recognize how much work went into it, and I'll drop Carolyn a line to say so. Also, it turns out that publication this autumn is good timing for me, as the Penguin paperback of Mariah Montana comes out in November. I think I'll in fact be in a Chicago bookstore--Barbara's? is the name of it?--on Nov. 21; come by if you get a chance. Meanwhile, thanks again for this article and stardom in Perspective. Could I get half a dozen copies?

best wishes

Wan

IVAN DOIG PROFILE

By Caroline Green

Listeners pack the Elliott Bay Book Co. reading room to its brick-and-bookcase walls this rainy Friday evening in Seattle, Wash., and the overflow crowd spills cheerfully into the cafe beyond. Cafe lattes and bottles of ale are carefully balanced on knees and laps, as audience members wedge closer to see, to hear. This reading has been sold out for days and looked forward to for months, for the simple joy of listening to tonight's reader, writer Ivan Doig (J61, GJ62).

Standing amid a sea of upturned faces, Doig holds the expectant crowd's attention by the very surprise of his unprepossessing manner. Lights glint off his glasses, making him appear a little nearsighted. Pens fill his shirt pocket, ever handy to make a note. His coat, unlike the high-tech weatherproof outerwear most of his Pacific Northwest listeners sport, is made of scholarly corduroy and lies neatly folded beside him. Doig's hands smooth the edges of the lecturn as though willing its encouragement, and his beard, which pokes out toward his audience, gives him an air of amiable inquiry.

The Elliott Bay Book Co., Doig tells his listeners, "is the Carnegie Hall of literary readings." If so, then Ivan Doig is the Vladimir Horowitz of readers --- a master of his art and shamelessly entertaining. For the next 30 minutes Doig has more than 200 listeners laughing over the exploits of the geriatric Baloney Express from his latest novel, [ital]*Ride with Me, Mariah Montana*[rom] (Atheneum Publishers), and aching for its curmudgeonly hero, the newly widowed Jick McCaskill. The reading, delivered with relish by its author, is quintessential Doig. The dialogue is wryly hilarious, the landscape a vision informed by the daily lives of its residents, and its theme is a gentle lesson in, as Doig puts it, "the task of turning loss into change."

Sums up one admiring listener, "Ivan Doig's work keeps writers writing and readers reading."

Doig profile/Fall Perspective
1st edit-2
8/21/91

Ivan Doig is perhaps best known these days as what one headline writer dubbed him, "The Master of Montana." [ital]Mariah Montana [rom] completes a trilogy of novels chronicling four generations of the Scottish McCaskill family as their lives play out against the front range of Montana's northern Rockies. (The other two McCaskill books are [ital]English Creek [rom] and [ital]Dancing at the Rascal Fair.[rom]) Two works with a Pacific Northwest setting precede the trilogy, [ital]The Sea Runners [rom] and [ital]Winter Brothers. [rom] His first book, [ital]This House of Sky: Landscapes of a Western Mind, [rom] is a reflection on his own remarkable boyhood in Montana and journey toward the writing life. Published in 1978, the memoir was nominated for a National Book Award.

[ital]This House of Sky [rom] also details Doig's five years of study at the Medill School of Journalism -- an opportunity he clearly views as pivotal in saving him from the economic uncertainties of a life on the land in Montana.

"My presence at Northwestern was our equivalent of a moon shot, a launching project which for four years took most of our family's resources and then some," Doig has written. The "then some" included relentless dishwashing and utter frugality on Doig's part, but he knew it beat baling hay and digging fence posts. (A \$2,500 fellowship for his master's in 1962 enabled him to quit the dish room and live, as he puts it, "like the Aga Khan.")

After a brief stint in the military, Doig returned to Illinois, working first as an editorial writer at the Lindsay-Schaub newspaper chain in Decatur, then, back in Evanston, as assistant editor of [ital]The Rotarian. [rom] He put his time in Illinois to further good use, marrying Medill graduate Carol Muller (J55, GSJ56.)

In 1966, the couple "yearned our way out of the Midwest," Doig recalls, back to the mountains, beyond Montana to Seattle. There at the University of Washington, Ivan earned a doctorate in American history and, in the process, concluded a career in higher education was not for him. "Spending three years around a graduate school watching how much time is eaten up by committee work and other

Doig profile/Fall Perspective
1st edit-3
8/21/91

necessary evils of academia, I decided I really wasn't cut out for that," he says. "I've never really worked happily in situations where the extraneous parts of the job began to overwhelm the parts I've been hired to do."

✓ Instead he concentrated on "words coming out on page" free-lancing 200 articles in 10 years, "which I now realize is about twice too long by any standard," he laughs. Inflation in the mid-70s convinced him "to take the total cure from magazine free-lancing." He tightened his focus to the writing of [ital]This House of Sky. [rom]Twelve years and six critically acclaimed books later, Doig has polished his distinctive blend of historical authenticity and delightful wordplay to a high shine.

To read Doig is to step confidently into genuine scenes of Western life. His meticulously researched books are built from the facts he records as oral histories, searches out from original documents, and jots down through first-person observation.

✓ "I'm not much of a believer in what I'm packing around within myself," Doig says. "I'm probably the kind of person Medill loved to show up. It ain't particularly real to me until I pound it out of a keyboard, until I hear somebody say it, until I go out and take a look at it for myself."

He describes himself as "an absent-minded person with a pretty good memory." Raised by a father and grandmother easily as preoccupied and original as himself, Doig grew up making notes for reliability's sake, a habit that helped form the foundation of his commitment to factual honesty. Beyond accuracy, though, he possesses the rare ability to transmit the humanity of his sources across the decades and onto the modern page.

Dave Walter, research director of the Montana Historical Society in Helena, Mont., where Doig digs regularly through primary sources, says the author is a rarity among researchers. When Doig walks through the door, says Walter, he knows what he wants, knows where to find it, and then "just disappears into the stuff."

If Doig excels at research, he thrives on what he calls "working with the words." This is, after all, a man who tunes up before writing by reading [ital]*The Dictionary of American Regional English* [rom]just "to see how the language is putting itself together."

On a usual day, Doig wakes before dawn, makes his wife breakfast, and then proceeds to write whatever needs to be said.

"I'm methodical, but I'm not consecutive," he says. "I write so many words a day. I think it was 800 on [ital]*Mariah Montana*. [rom]Some books it's been a thousand. I will do whatever I have to to get that 800 words on the paper. Maybe write a page of dialogue to get the characters talking. Maybe I'll visit the landscape or the weather. Maybe I'll try to describe somebody more fully than I have. Then it goes into a ring binder in what I think is an approximate order, and I'll fill in the chunks. It's not nearly as tidy as it could be, but it keeps a lot of possibilities in the air that I might otherwise bypass by having my head down in consecutiveness."

Doig lives and dies by the manual typewriter and the index card. He tried a computer, but the screen hurt his eyes. The manual typewriter, on the other hand, emits no glare and sits in soothing silence as the writer gazes at the cedars and hemlocks outside his study window.

As for the index cards, Doig estimates he uses between 3,000 and 5,000 per book. Onto each one he types a bit of research or reflection, then files it by character or topic. When it's time to write, the author builds scenes and conversations dense with detail out of these cards, spreading them on a large table and grouping them associatively. The study cupboard groans with boxes holding Doig's published books in file card form, and material for four future books sits patiently on a shelf behind his desk, waiting their turn.

Doig profile/Fall Perspective
1st edit-5
8/21/91

What of sort of mindset produces such solid, historically specific prose? Says Doig, "I just go at it like a homesteader chopping down a tree."

He also maintains a perpetually expanding category called "phrasing" in which reside his own word sketches — distinctive combinations of thought and vocabulary recognizable to regular readers as hallmarks of the Doig style. When, in [ital]Mariah Montana,[rom] Jick McCaskill catches an unexpected, unsettling glimpse of his first wife in a Missoula grocery store, he muses, "The firefly thoughts of the mind. Why should memory forever own us the way it does?" A perfectly reasonable, poetic rumination by a crotchety sheep rancher in Ivan Doig's Montana.

Doig's art is a heartening mix of the dogged and the lyrical, his discipline fired by his delight in the bottomless paintbox called English.

"Why am I doing this? Because I love dancing with the language. Dehydrated minimalism has never appealed to me either as a writer or a reader," he says. "I try to approach writing as a craft. And if you perform it well enough, maybe it begins to shade into art. But all you can do is perform it in all its increments in that direction and make it add up as much as you can towards the ultimate creation you want. I've always been an enthusiast of language. A lot of things you're not supposed to do just never occur to me."

Carol Doig, a warm and exuberant woman who is a successful writer and teacher in her own right, serves as her husband's companion in adventure. As such, she helped him research [ital]Mariah Montana[rom] — much of which takes place in a Winnebago — by rattling around the state in a motorhome just "seeing how it worked." (Not too well, it turned out, once the thermometer hit 105 degrees. Assorted mechanical systems broke down on the Doigs in prompt order, recalls Carol. The couple, she dryly notes, prefers backpacking.)

Doig profile/Fall Perspective
1st edit-6
8/21/91

While Carol is involved to her eyebrows in much of Ivan's research and serves as his first reader, she laughingly, but firmly, refuses to be termed a literary collaborator. "When he has a scene to the point where he thinks it's a good, readable draft, than I get to see it," she says. "So, I read it, and I say, 'That's nice, dear,' and he says, 'Well, it'll be better after I revise it.' And I don't see how he can revise it. But then later he shows it to me, and he has improved it. And that's what I mean by not being a whole lot of help."

Bill Kittredge, editor, writer, and professor at the University of Montana, describes Doig's work as the antithesis of the standard American "western." Rather than teaching us to solve our problems with guns, says Kittredge, Doig's books tell of people who solve their problems by taking care of each other and of the land. "He gives you a world in all its textures and all its sacredness."

"The guts and power and wonderfulness of people's lives are what I think are worth writing about," Doig says. "It ain't no picnic for people in my books, but nobody ever promised us a picnic. All we're ever promised is life." Doig's books push no overt political agenda beyond asking readers to reflect on the toll that shifts in fiscal policy and distant markets can exact from rural families. Instead, he gently advocates the qualities of perseverance, hopefulness, kindness, and humor. "I don't know that its any great message I have to deliver, but it seems to me you have to go on in life."

No matter where this going on occurs, be it the borough of Manhattan or Manhattan, Mont., (population 988), authentically rendered experience compels our consideration. William Faulkner and Gabriel Garcia Marquez, says Doig, created "locally focused books that speak out into the cosmos. That's what the writers I know --- many of whom happen to live out here [in the Pacific Northwest] --- are trying to do too. The inflections of our lives are simply the hallmarks that nonwriters have on their tongues, instead of in their fingers." For writers and readers then, rural Montana is every bit as valid a literary stage as urban America. "You don't have to live at the epicenter of the empire to be great.," Doig says. "You can create your own center."

Doig profile/Fall Perspective
1st edit-7
8/21/91

Every two years or so, Doig throws himself into one more aspect of the writer's life --- that of selling his wares. With the diligence that characterizes the creation of his books, he shuttles for weeks across the U.S., giving readings, signing books, and sitting for interviews.

"It is simply part of the harvest of having done the writing," Doig says. "This is not a country where we're electing our leading playwright president of the republic, or where we will fill soccer stadiums to hear poets read, ~~as has happened in Russia and elsewhere.~~ American society simply has so many ways of entertaining itself and occupying its mind, that books have a kind of small niche in that. And if you're going to be a writer of books you simply have to work at making that niche as efficient as possible. Out of a rural background, it's really not news to me that you're not done 'til the lambs are shipped or the grains have been combined."

And to those familiar with his work, it's really not news either that this imaginative and thoughtful man is making his literary mark with such distinction. Whether it's enterprising research or an artfully delivered reading, Doig's artistry and success stem from his own tenacious sense of identity.

Says Doig, "I've always considered myself simply a writer."

Carolyn Green is a free-lance writer based in Seattle, Wash.

DOIG SIDEBAR

Reprinted with permission of Atheneum Publishers, an imprint of Macmillan Publishing Co., from *English Creek* by Ivan Doig. Copyright © 1984 by Ivan Doig.

Jick McCaskill is almost 15 and is having the summer of his life in 1939. This describes his August morning ride on his way to harvest hay.

Doig profile/Fall Perspective
1st edit-8
8/21/91

Where morning is concerned, I am my father all over again. "The day goes downhill after daybreak" was his creed. I don't suppose there are too many people now who have seen a majority of the dawns of their life, but my father did, and I have. And of my lifetime of early rising I have never known better dawns than those when I rode from English Creek to my haying job on Noon Creek.

The ford north of the ranger station Pony and I would cross; if there was enough moon the wild roses along the creek could be seen, pale crowds of them; and in a few minutes of climbing we came atop the bench of land which divides the two creek drainages. Up there, at that brink of dawn hour, the world revealed all its edges. Dark lines of the tops of buttes and benches to the north, towards the Two Medicine River and the Blackfeet Reservation. The Sweetgrass Hills bumping up far on the eastern horizon like five dunes of black sand. The timbered crest of Breed Butte standing up against the stone mountain wall of the west. What trick of light it is I can't really say, but everything looked as if drawn in heavy strokes, with the final shade of night penciled in wherever there was a gulch or coulee.

The only breaks in the stillness were Pony's hooves against the earth, and the west breeze which generally met us atop that broad benchland. I say breeze. In the Two country any wind that doesn't lift you off your horse is only a breeze. My mountain coat was on me, my hat pulled low, my hands in leather work gloves, and I was just about comfortable.

Stephanie Russell

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20 Aug. '91

Dear Stephanie--

Miriam Berkley's pic is identified by her label on the back. The other three are by Wayne Arnst of the Great Falls Tribune (406)761-6666; home phone (406)727-2041.

And the October 2nd reading will be at Seattle Center, in the Rainier Room, 3:15-3:45; if you end up hiring a photog, he can check further details with the person in charge, Betty Richardson (206)684-6674.

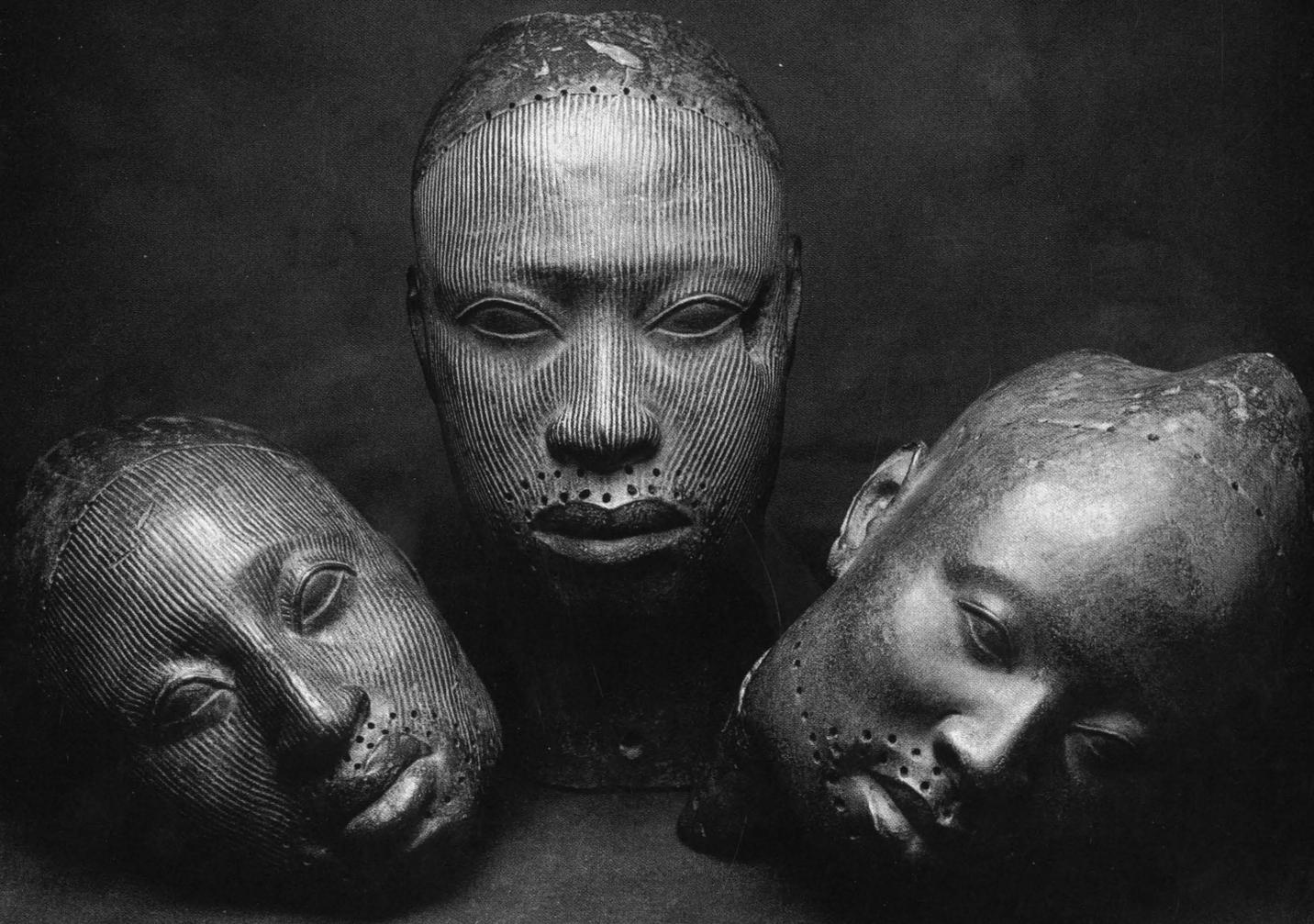
best,
Wan

enc: 4 photos

N O R T H W E S T E R N

P E R S P E C T I V E

WINTER 1992





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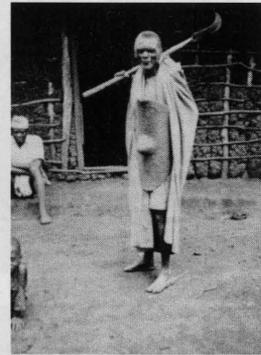
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Cover: Reproductions of the famous Ife brass heads, unearthed in 1938 near the palace of the Oni of Ife, Nigeria. Former anthropology professor William R. Bascom purchased two of the heads and brought them back to Northwestern. When he later returned the artifacts to Nigeria he was allowed to take castings of the heads that date between the 12th and 15th centuries.
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2 Out of Africa

From Algeria to Zimbabwe, the Program of African Studies takes an interdisciplinary look at the people and cultures of Africa.

By James North

8 Fighting Poverty

Economist Rebecca Blank uses the tools of her trade to wage war on U.S. poverty.

By Debra Shore

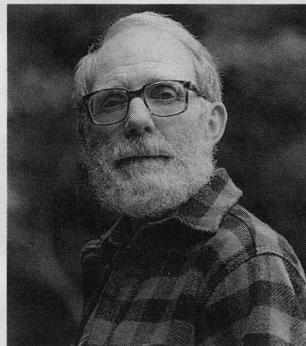
12 Son of the Big Sky

Writer Ivan Doig weaves tales of the old and new West set against Montana's northern Rockies.

By Caroline Green



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17 Alumni News

34 Married — with Tenure

NU faculty couples balance their books and teaching with marriage.

By Cate Plys

38 In Review

39 Books and Authors

42 Northwestern News

48 Commentary

How far back must we look to find The Good Old Days?

By Bernard Beck

By Caroline Green

SON OF THE BIG SKY

*Writer Ivan Doig weaves tales
of the old and new West
set against Montana's northern Rockies.*

Carol Doig has photographed the land from Montana to Scotland to help her husband visualize the places he writes about.

SKY

Listeners pack the Elliott Bay Book Co. reading room to its brick-and-bookcase walls this rainy Friday evening in Seattle, Wash., and the overflow crowd spills cheerfully into the cafe beyond. Cafe lattes and bottles of ale are carefully balanced on knees and laps, as audience members wedge closer to see, to hear. This reading has been sold out for days and looked forward to for months, for the simple joy of listening to tonight's reader, writer Ivan Doig (J61, GJ62).

Standing amid a sea of upturned faces, Doig holds the expectant crowd's attention by the very surprise of his unprepossessing manner. Lights glint off his glasses, making him appear a little nearsighted. Pens fill his shirt pocket, ever handy to make a note. His coat, unlike the high-tech weather-proof outerwear most of his Pacific Northwest listeners sport, is made of scholarly corduroy and lies neatly folded beside him. Doig's hands smooth the edges of the lectern as though willing its encouragement, and his beard, which pokes out toward his audience, gives him an air of amiable inquiry.

The Elliott Bay Book Co., Doig tells his listeners, "is the Carnegie Hall of literary readings." If so, then Ivan Doig is the Vladimir Horowitz of readers—a master of his art and shamelessly entertaining. For the next 30 minutes Doig has more than 200 listeners laughing over the exploits of the geriatric Baloney Express from his latest novel, *Ride with Me*,

Mariah Montana (Atheneum Publishers), and aching for its curmudgeonly hero, the newly widowed Jick McCaskill. The reading, delivered with relish by its author, is quintessential Doig. The dialogue is wryly hilarious, the landscape a vision informed by the daily lives of its residents, and its theme is a gentle lesson in, as Doig puts it, "the task of turning loss into change."

Sums up one admiring listener, "Ivan Doig's work keeps writers writing and readers reading."

Ivan Doig is perhaps best known these days as what one headline writer dubbed him, "The Master of Montana." *Mariah Montana* completes a trilogy of novels chronicling four generations of the Scottish McCaskill family as their lives play out against the front range of Montana's northern Rockies. (The other two McCaskill books are *English Creek* and *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*.) Two works with a Pacific Northwest setting precede the trilogy, *The Sea Runners* and *Winter Brothers*. His first book, *This House of Sky: Landscapes of a Western Mind*, is a reflection on his own remarkable boyhood in Montana and his journey toward the writing life. Published in 1978, the memoir was nominated for a National Book Award.

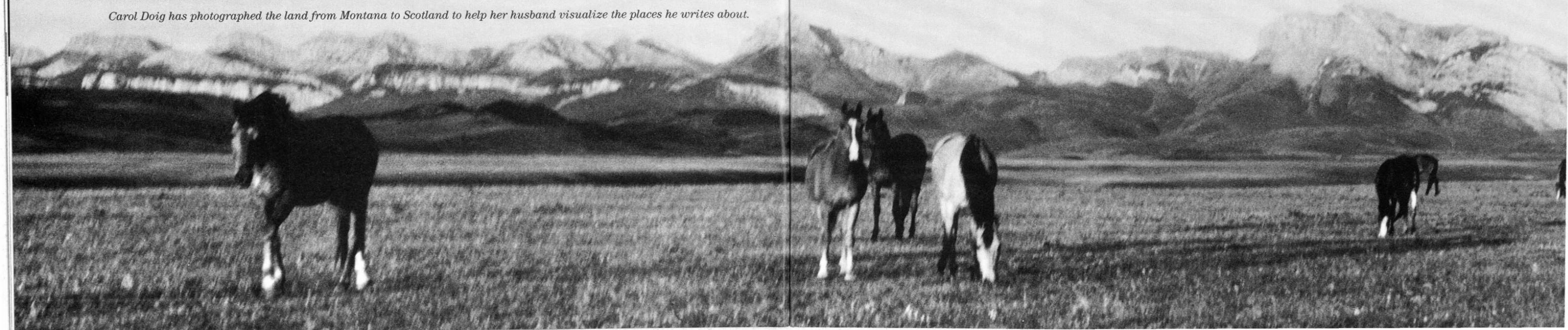
This House of Sky also details Doig's five years of study at the Medill School of Journalism—an opportunity he clearly views as pivotal in saving him from the economic uncertainties of a life on the land in Montana.

"My presence at Northwestern was our equivalent of a moon shot, a launching project which for four years took most of our family's resources and then some," Doig has written. The "then some" included relentless dishwashing and utter frugality on Doig's part, but he knew it beat baling hay and digging postholes. (A \$2,500 fellowship for his master's in 1962 enabled him to quit the Northwestern Apartments dish room and live, as he puts it, "like the Aga Khan.")

After a brief stint in the military, Doig returned to Illinois, working first as an editorial writer at the Lindsay-Schaub newspaper chain in Decatur, then, back in Evanston, as assistant editor of *The Rotarian*. He put his time in Illinois to further good use, marrying Medill graduate Carol Muller (J55, GJ56).

In 1966, the couple "yearned our way out of the Mid-

Photo © Carol Doig

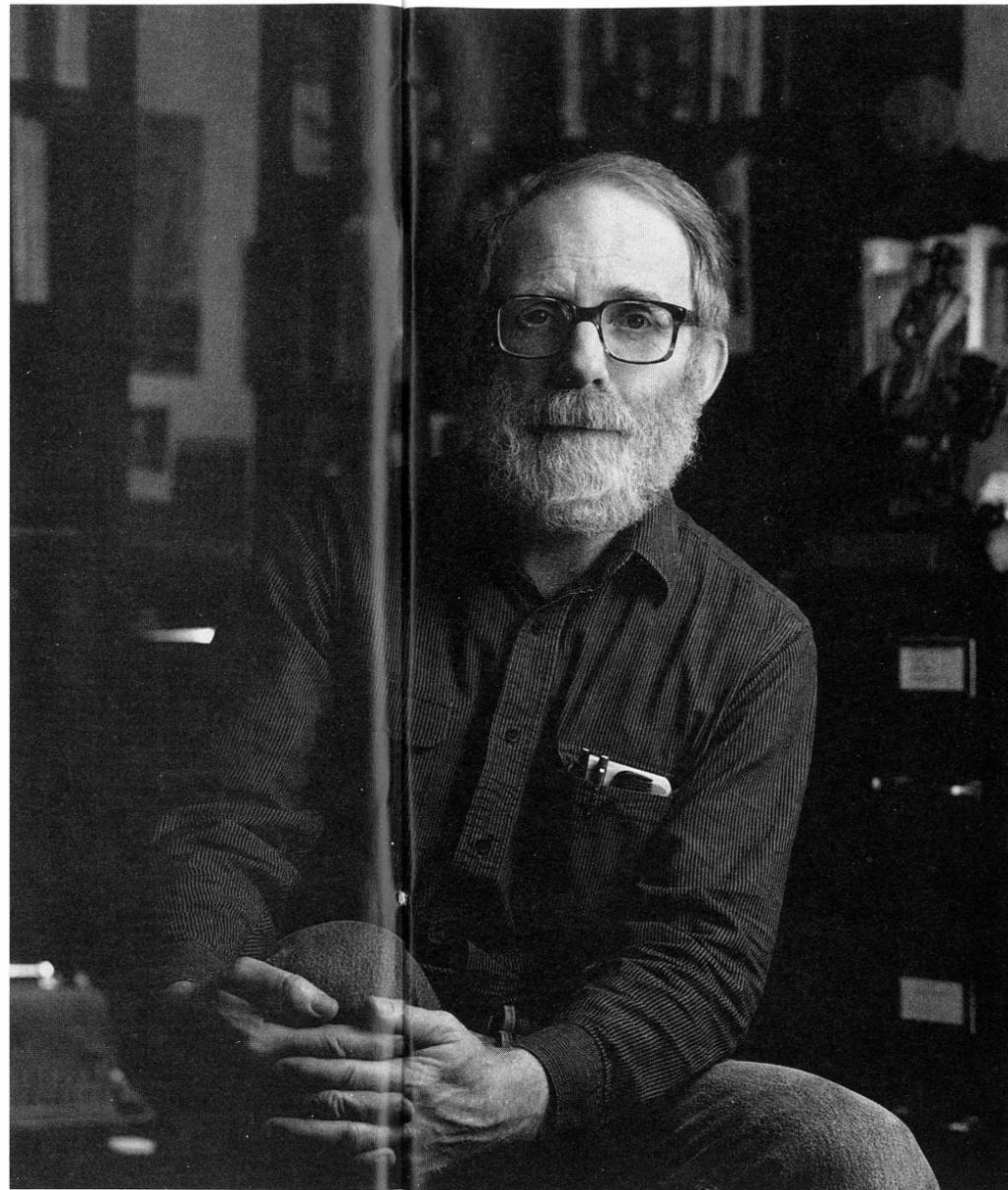


west," Doig recalls, back to the mountains, beyond Montana to Seattle. There at the University of Washington, Doig earned a doctorate in American history and, in the process, concluded a career in higher education was not for him. "Spending three years around a graduate school watching how much time is eaten up by committee work and other necessary evils of academia, I decided I really wasn't cut out for that," he says. "I've never really worked happily in situations where the extraneous parts of the job began to overwhelm the parts I've been hired to do."

Instead he concentrated on "words coming out on the page," free-lancing 200 articles in 10 years, "which I now realize is about twice too long by any standard," he laughs. Inflation in the mid-70s convinced him "to take the total cure from magazine free-lancing." He tightened his focus to the writing of *This House of Sky*. Twelve years and six critically acclaimed books later, Doig has polished his distinctive blend of historical authenticity and delightful wordplay to a high shine.

To read Doig is to step confidently into genuine scenes of Western life. His meticulously researched books are built from the facts he records as oral histories, searches out from original documents, and jots down through first-person observation. "I'm not much of a believer in what I'm packing around within myself," Doig says. "I'm probably the kind of person Medill loved to have show up. It ain't particularly real to me until I pound it out of a keyboard, until I hear somebody say it, until I go out and take a look at it for myself."

He describes himself as "an absent-minded person with a pretty good memory." Raised by a father and grandmother easily as preoccupied and original as himself, Doig grew up making notes for reliability's sake, a habit that helped form the foundation of his commitment to factual honesty. Beyond



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800 on *Mariah Montana*. Some books it's been a thousand. I will do whatever I have to to get that 800 words on the paper. Maybe write a page of dialogue to get the characters talking. Maybe I'll visit the landscape or the weather. Maybe I'll try to describe somebody more fully than I have. Then it goes into a ring binder in what I think is an approximate order, and I'll fill in between the chunks. It's not nearly as tidy as it could be, but it keeps a lot of possibilities in the air that I might otherwise bypass by having my head down in consecutiveness."

He also maintains a perpetually expanding category called "phrasing" in which reside his own word sketches — distinctive combinations of thought and vocabulary recognizable to regular readers as hallmarks of the Doig style. When, in *Mariah Montana*, Jick McCaskill catches an unexpected, unsettling glimpse of his first wife in a Missoula grocery store, he muses, "The firefly thoughts of the mind. Why should memory forever own us the way it does?" A perfectly reasonable, poetic rumination by a crotchety sheep rancher in Ivan Doig's Montana.

Doig's art is a heartening mix of the dogged and the lyrical, his discipline fired by his delight in the bottomless paintbox called English. "Why am I doing this? Because I love dancing with the language. Dehydrated minimalism has never appealed to me either as a writer or a reader," he says. "I try to approach writing as a craft. And if you perform it well enough, maybe it begins to shade into art. But all you can do is perform it in all its increments in that direction and make it add up as much as you can towards the ultimate creation you want. I've always been an enthusiast of language. A lot of things you're not supposed to do with word forms just never occur to me."

Carol Doig, a warm, exuberant woman who is a successful writer and teacher in her own right, serves as her husband's companion in adventure. As such, she helped him research *Mariah Montana* — much of which takes place in a Winnebago — by rattling around the state in a motor home just "seeing how it worked." (Not too well, it turned out, once the thermometer hit 105 degrees. Assorted mechanical systems broke down on the Doigs in prompt order, recalls Carol. The couple, she dryly notes, prefers backpacking.)

While Carol is involved up to her eyebrows in much of Ivan's research and serves as his first reader, she laughingly but firmly refuses to be termed a literary collaborator. "When he has a scene to the point where he thinks it's a good, readable draft, then I get to see it," she says. "So I read it, and I say, 'That's nice, dear,' and he says, 'Well, it'll be better after I revise it.' And I don't see how he can revise it. But then later he shows it to me, and he has improved it. And that's what I mean by not being a whole lot of help."

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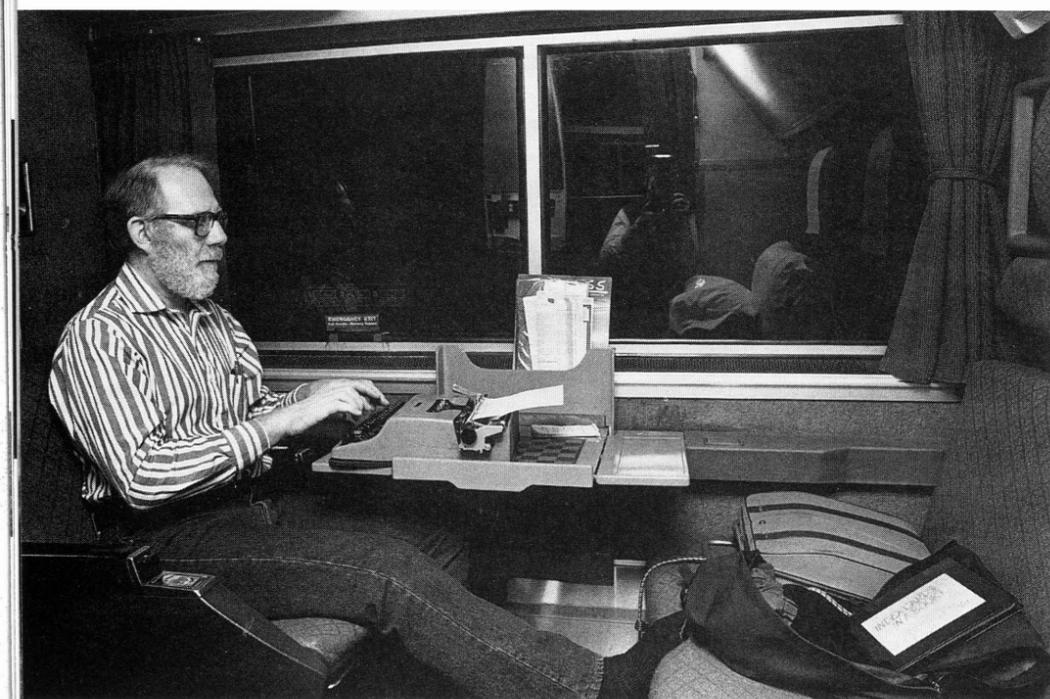
"The guts and power and wonderfulness of people's

accuracy, though, he possesses the rare ability to transmit the humanity of his sources across the decades and onto the modern page.

Dave Walter, research director of the Montana Historical Society in Helena, Mont., where Doig digs regularly through primary sources, says the author is a rarity among researchers. When Doig walks through the door, says Walter, he knows what he wants, knows where to find it, and then "just disappears into the stuff."

If Doig excels at research, he thrives on what he calls "working with the words." This is, after all, a man who tunes up before writing by reading *The Dictionary of American Regional English* just "to see how the language is putting itself together."

On a usual day, Doig wakes before dawn, makes his wife breakfast, and then sits down at his manual typewriter to write whatever needs to be said. "I'm methodical, but I'm not consecutive," he says. "I write so many words a day. I think it was



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Ivan working on the railroad: Homeward bound to Montana on a research trip, Doig doesn't lose an opportunity to write.

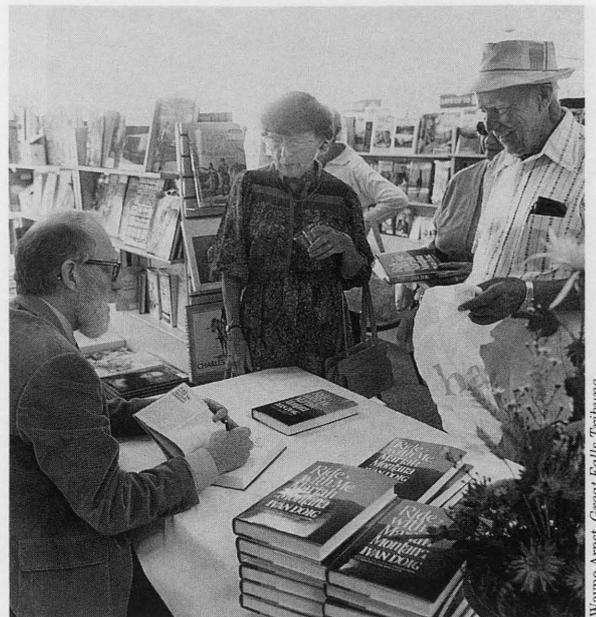
A Passage from *English Creek*

Jick McCaskill is almost 15 and is having the summer of his life in 1939. This describes his August morning ride on his way to harvest hay. Reprinted with permission of Atheneum Publishers, an imprint of Macmillan Publishing Co., from English Creek by Ivan Doig. Copyright © 1984 by Ivan Doig.

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Wayne Arnst, Great Falls Tribune

Doig says signing and selling books are "simply part of the harvest of having done the writing."

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