



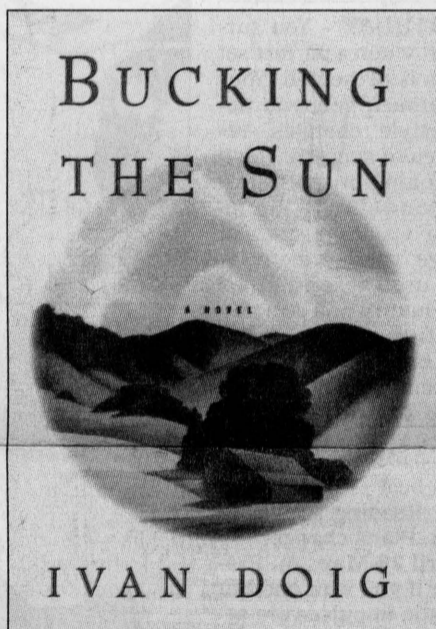
Workers clear cottonwood and brush in February 1937 in the reservoir area about 20 miles upstream from the Fort Peck dam site.

All historic photos courtesy of Montana Historical Society

Sixty years ago, despair had a grip on the nation. Ivan Doig's new novel paints a picture of life during the Depression, when Fort Peck Dam offered hope.

'It was a godsend for Montana'

Below, water pours from pipelines as workers proceed on dam construction dredging operations in 1934. Bottom, how the dam looked about 1938 as forms were readied for concrete pours.



Not many Montanans remember the glory days, and the turmoil, of the Fort Peck Dam project. It was 60 years ago this summer that construction of the world's largest earth dam hit its peak. More than 10,000 people were working there at a time when the rest of the state's unemployment rate was 30 percent.

Newly-elected President Franklin D. Roosevelt authorized the dam not long after taking office in 1933. It became the biggest pick-and-shovel project of the New Deal era.

And it was a godsend for Montana.

Not only for families that were going broke on farms and for truck drivers and clerks thrown out of work when businesses closed. Not only for young people who were too poor to attend college. Not only for hardrock miners with no work available in Butte.

But also for the moribund Great Northern Railway, which delivered about 8,000 trainloads of rock, gravel, equipment and supplies to Fort Peck. Also for the Montana Power and Anaconda companies that built a 300-mile transmission line from Great Falls to Fort Peck and strung it with wire produced in Great Falls.

And also for flood control, electric power and recreation along the mighty Missouri River. The dam cost \$165 million, a chunk of the national budget in those days, but it was a bargain. It's paid for itself 10 times over.

Everything about Fort Peck Dam was gigantic, including waste and sloppy engineering.

Ivan Doig gets that point across remarkably well in his new book, "Bucking the Sun," which is a fictional account but still a very accurate picture of life and times around the dam.

I was a child in Glasgow during the dam days. My late father, Sam Gilluly, was the only newspaper editor who covered the dam project from start to finish. His stories appeared in the Glasgow Courier and Great Falls Tribune and in Associated Press dispatches across the state.

Sam Gilluly wrote an 8,000-word story of Fort Peck Dam that was published by the Tribune in 1977. That, together with Doig's book that emphasizes the human struggles of the time, makes the historical record complete. The two writers met in Helena to compare notes when Doig was doing his research on the book.

There is only one variance in the fictional and real versions.

Doig's family in the novel, the Duffs, are portrayed early on as alfalfa seed farmers in an area that would soon be flooded out by the dam. The impression Doig conveys is that a number of people were thrown off their land by the project.

In truth, there were only a few farmers and ranchers in the remote and rugged Missouri River Breaks served by dirt roads and the solitary Lismas Ferry south of Glasgow during the early 1930s. Some of the ranchers were renegades who seldom paid their taxes and had no use for anything or anybody connected with government. They were philosophical kin of today's Freemen.

Yes, a few ranchers and farmers were dispossessed by the dam project. But they were paid for their land at a time when few could afford to stay with the land. Fort Peck wasn't anything like the Tennessee Valley Authority, where hundreds of dirt farmers were forced to give up their property.



BOB GILLULY
Tribune regional editor

biggest disaster at Fort Peck, a mammoth earth slide in 1938 that killed eight workers. Doig mentions one true-life aspect about the day when 15 percent of the incomplete dam tumbled into the reservoir, yet that incident deserves more detail from the historical record.

It involved longtime Glasgow and Fort Peck resident Gene Tourtlotte, who was employed as a driver for project engineer

Clark Kittrell. On the day of the slide he took Kittrell and other engineers to the upstream face to inspect reports of earth movement.

Just as the car stopped, the ground in front of them began to give way.

Tourtlotte put the vehicle in reverse and backed up, as fast as possible, for several hundred yards as crevasses opened up in front of the car. Quick thinking saved his life and several others.

The slide did not breach the dam. But it required a lot of repair work.

Despite this minor nitpicking, my admiration for Ivan Doig is boundless. He's taken his place alongside Bud Guthrie, Dorothy M. Johnson, Norman Maclean and Dan Cushman. They stand tall as Montana's best story-tellers.

"Bucking the Sun" is not an easy read. But it captures your attention and holds it. The Duffs are a Scottish family with some distant ties to people in Doig's previous books - "English Creek," "Dancing at the Rascal Fair" and "Ride with Me, Mariah Montana" - that became a trilogy of life in Montana.

And this family, like those in Doig's previous books, is beset by tension and turmoil.

The Duffs may not be dysfunctional, but they have all the human weaknesses. The patriarchal father disappears on occasional drunks and the three sons alternately respect and resent each other. Their mother does her best to hold the clan together and get along with her three daughters-in-law.

The book ends in tragedy for the family.

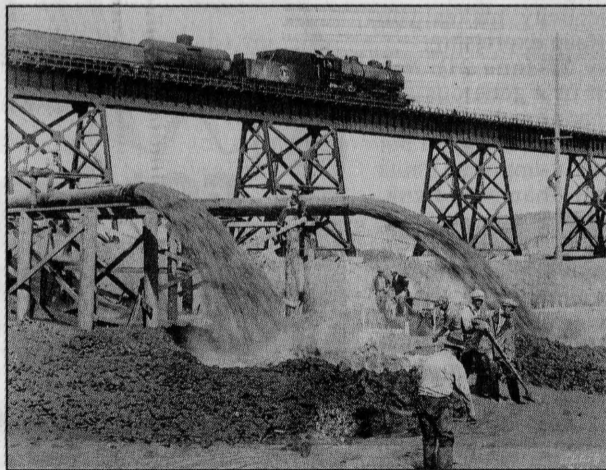
The best part of Doig's work is the wealth of detail about how Montanans lived and related to each other during the project years. They made do in crude shacks at Wheeler, New Deal, Delano Heights and McCone City, but they had steady work and enough money in their pockets to face the future.

A final thought on how tough it was in Montana during the Depression:

During the 1920s drought, about 40,000 homesteaders went broke and abandoned their land.

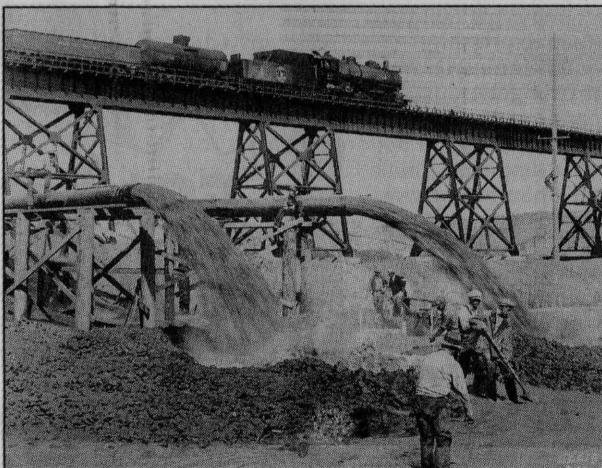
In 1932 the Valley County health nurse reported a number of cases of malnutrition in Glasgow. Farm wives were canning gophers to put meat on the table for their families. And ranchers were feeding thistles to their cattle. It was the only feed available.

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IVAN DOIG



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The novel's final chapters are centered around the

earth movement.

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There was no hope for people in the whole expanse of eastern Montana.

Fort Peck Dam was their salvation.

What's next for Ivan Doig?

By BOB GILLULY
Tribune Regional Editor

Ivan Doig says his next novel will be a contemporary one involving Montanans who left the state for fame and fortune but have a hankering to return to their roots along the Rocky Mountain Front.

It's just the germ of an idea now, Doig said in a telephone interview from his home in Seattle. For the next several weeks he'll remain busy on a bookstore tour promoting "Bucking the Sun," a fictional account of Fort Peck Dam days that's already been acclaimed as one of his best.

"It's time I invented some baby boomers," Doig said of his upcoming project. "They come back for a reunion and run into

Meet the author

- **What:** Ivan Doig autographing his new book, "Bucking the Sun"
- **When:** Monday from 4:30 to 6 p.m.
- **Where:** Hastings Books Music & Video, 1017 10th Ave. S.

trouble on a trip into the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area."

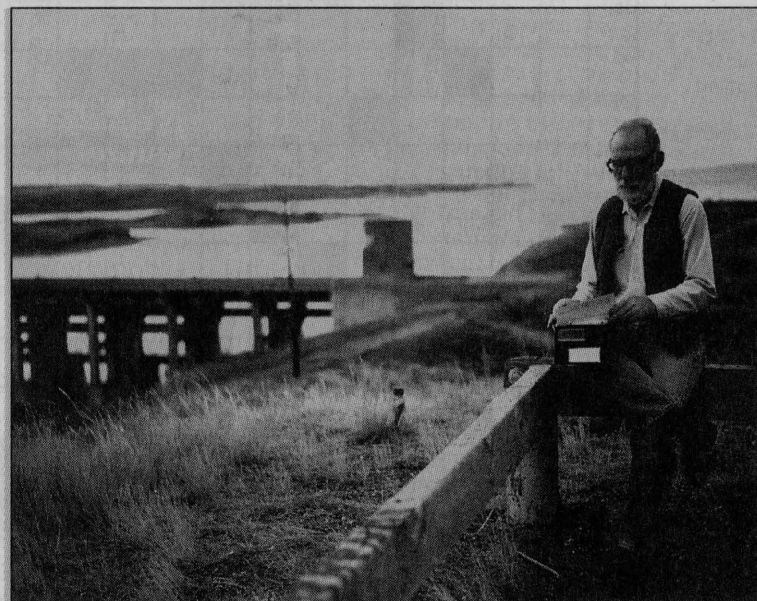
Doig said he's met dozens for ex-Montanans living in Seattle, San Francisco and Alaska who hanker to return to the good life in Montana after pursuing their careers. "They still have this

nostalgic feeling for Montana," he said.

Work on "Bucking the Sun" began in the 1980s, Doig said, and after three years of researching and writing he'd met a number of Montana people who worked on Fort Peck Dam. He also listened to oral histories collected by the Montana Historical Society and read short reminiscences written by workers.

"I even talked to a carpenter who worked at Fort Peck as a young man. He was living about a mile from me in Seattle," said Doig. From that conversation came a passage in Doig's book about laying the floor in a bar that opened in a shack town near the dam. From another interview Doig gleaned a story about a worker who rode a pipe

See DOIG, 4E



Carol Doig photo

Montana-born author Ivan Doig at the Fort Peck Dam site. Doig's latest book, *Bucking the Sun*, is set in Fort Peck during the Depression.

Doig: Years of research worth it

From 1E

"Fort Peck was really big in people's lives," Doig summarized.

"For some reason Grand Coulee (in Washington) and Boulder-Hoover (Nevada) dams got a lot more attention in the West during the 1930s."

Was it worth it, three years of research and writing to produce "Bucking the Sun?"

"I certainly think so. And since the book was published I've become even more convinced," said Doig, 57. "I was in the Twin Cities recently and talked with several people

from Minnesota who had ties to Fort Peck or had worked on the Great Northern Railway. They appreciated reading about their past."

That feeling was echoed in a review by Chuck Robinson of the American Booksellers Association.

"Doig has concentrated the full force of his immense writing talents and his bone-deep feel for the Big Sky country on telling this epic tale ... Nowhere do events long past seem so present," Robinson wrote.

"It's really amazing how many people are still around who remember," the author said.

Great Falls Tribune

A Montanan in the Emerald City

For 30 years, Ivan Doig has written about his native state from a home in North Seattle

story by Nick Heil

Tucked away in a modest North Seattle suburb, not far from the lapping shoreline of Puget Sound, Ivan Doig composes some of our most vivid images of the developing West. His stories, drawn largely from personal experience, have chronicled the Westward migration of his Scottish ancestors (*This House of Sky*) and the perseverance of hard-nosed homesteading families in Montana (*Dancing at the Rascal Fair*). Doig's latest contribution, *Bucking the Sun* (Simon & Schuster, \$23, 1996), revolves around the construction of the Fort Peck Dam — still the largest earthfill dam in the nation — and the Duff family, a clan of transplanted, second-generation, Scots who find love, gainful employment and tragedy among the high plains and coulees of northeastern Montana.

Despite his proximity to Seattle's bustling metropolis, there is a vaguely rural feel to Doig's home, perhaps created by the blazing rhododendron, thick hemlock and Douglas fir separating his house from the neighbors'. Perhaps it is Doig himself, who, in full downy beard and head-to-toe denim, might appear right at home on a Montana ranch, except for the giveaway writer's footware: Birkenstocks. In his home office, seated beside the now-archaic manual typewriter on which he still composes, Doig explains why an author renowned for his depiction of Montana chose to settle in Seattle 30 years ago.

"I always emphasize to audiences when they ask why I don't live in Montana, that I was very much an economic refugee," Doig says. "I imagine it's the reason other writers, like Norman MacLean for example, left too. We were stropic young men. None of us wanted to wear the copper collar.

"At the time, I wanted to go to graduate school in history, particularly frontier history. The University of Washington had a strong program, and my wife, Carol, wanted to get involved in teaching. I'm not sure Montana even had any community colleges at that point. They have a few now, but in terms of where people were going to fetch up and

make a career 30 years ago, it was not Montana."

Born in White Sulphur Springs, along the Rocky Mountain Front south of Great Falls, Doig spent his first 23 years under the Big Sky, shopping himself out as a ranch hand until his journalistic and (short-lived) academic aspirations took him east to Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill., for a degree in journalism and eventually to the University of Washington for a doctorate in history. But what began as a potential career in academia evolved into a full-time occupation as an editor, journalist and now, at age 57, one of the West's most established literary voices.

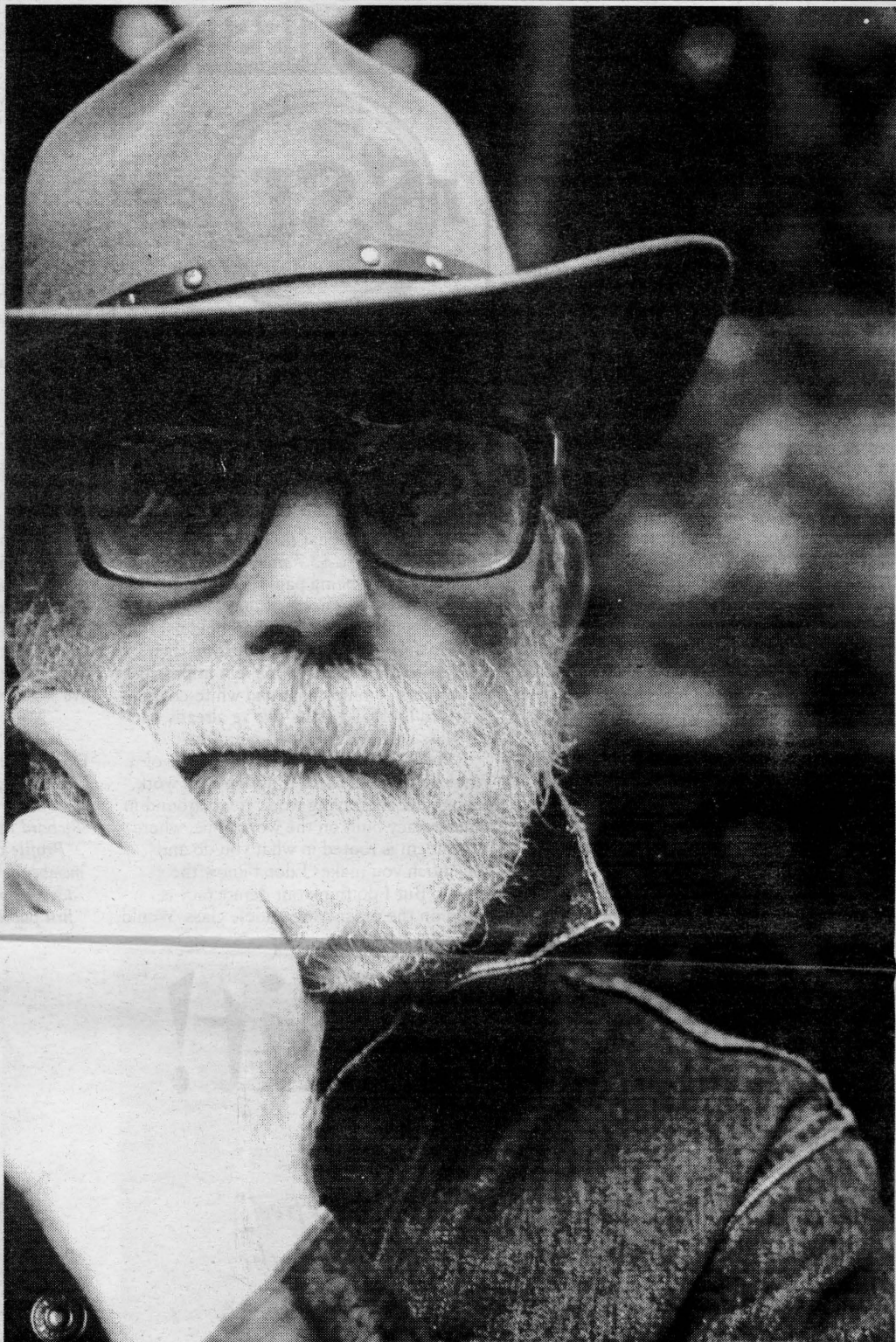
Bucking the Sun, Doig's eighth book, may be his most ambitious yet. Even the author admits his intimidation by the size and scope of the project, the amount of self-education that had to take place before he could authentically recreate the construction of the Fort Peck Dam. He'll read from the

work at Auntie's on Monday.

"This was a very hard book," he says. "It was a book where I would often openly lament, to myself and to Carol, the amount of work this was. Not that it would kill me, but keeping the amount of research and narrative and 11 characters all going. It's by far the biggest, hardest book I've ever done."

To further underscore his point, he slides out a file drawer by his desk, the length of which is packed with folders he calls the Ft. Peck Files.

"The anecdotal side of history is where I look for what I call the poetry of the vernacular — how people talk and how they tell their stories. To me, this is character, this is how people see themselves, how they have crafted their own tongues. I collect files of people who have written me, or talked to me, those who worked at Ft. Peck and told stories of grasshopper poisoning and the like. This drawer is my library research plus stuff gleaned from interviews or picked up from correspondence."



Checking in at 400 pages, *Bucking the Sun* is a manageable tome by most standards, but Doig says he needed to keep reminding himself about the real heart of the book.

"I did quite a bit of research, but I also tinkered along with the language. Ultimately the book has to be about the language, rather than the research. And that's one thing I was very conscious of here. I would tell myself, and Carol would tell me, the book is not about the dam, the dam is one of the characters. This is not a textbook on how to build an earthen dam."

Nor is the book a history of New Deal economics, or a portrait of frontier life in one of the nation's harshest climates, or an

above, dredged earth below.

Working with this setting, says Doig, was second nature: "It's the country I know," he says. "It's in my bones, I guess. On the historical side of things, Montana is interesting because it's been a big stage for a lot that has happened in the American West. It has a colonial story from the economic resource exploitation. And it's got this chesty Western attitude by people who have moved out there and made a life. That landscape is a rich thing, like the sea would be for Conrad, or Dublin would be for Joyce."

Above Doig's desk is a copy of Richard Hugo's *The Triggering Town*; "Good advice," says Doig, "for writers of prose as well as poetry."



Constructing the Fort Peck Dam in 1938. PHOTO COURTESY MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, HELENA

exposé on the inherent problems engineering technology faces when applied to powerful natural forces, like the Missouri River. But all of these themes move through *Bucking the Sun*. They were all part of the fabric of life in the West during the 1930s.

The title of Doig's latest novel comes from an expression heard from his father, meaning to drive headlong into the rising or setting sun, and the image resonates through the family saga with increasing figurative power. As we get to know the Duffs, all 10 of them, we discover how each in their own way "buck the sun," persevering in the often blinding glare of their marriages, politics or work.

Told from a variety of perspectives, *Bucking the Sun* manages to create a 360-degree picture of Ft. Peck and the shanty town of Wheeler, Mont. Owen Duff, an engineer and the most educated of the Duff brothers, is appointed fillmaster at Ft. Peck. When he brings his wife Charlemagne, his siblings Neil and Bruce, and his parents Meg and Hugh, along to fix them up with wage work, the machinery of conflict starts to turn. Eddies of infidelity swirl among the men and their wives. Bruce Duff is a daredevil, and Hugh is a wandering drunk. Hugh's brother, Darius, arrives from Scotland, promptly joins a clandestine socialist group, marries a popular prostitute and puts the moves on Meg.

Beyond the immediate family drama, Doig presents a western landscape that's both familiar and refreshing. We recognize the snowbound, subzero winters of eastern Montana, but the presence of so much machinery strikes a dissonant cord. This isn't the agrarian, cowpoke countryside we might expect, but a full-blown construction site, complete with D-8 tractors, underwater divers, barges and bilge pumps — big sky

Doig might nod at a line from Hugo's book: "Your obsessions lead you to your vocabulary." While Doig's interest in the lives of Montana families may fall short of obsession, it is the subject he returns to deeply and often.

"The first material, the prime material writers have to work with is childhood," explains Doig. "My first 23 years were in the same state and pretty much the same circumstance — the wandering ranch life. In 22 or 23 years you get quite a load of material between your ears. So when I set out to write fiction, the voices I hear are those of my father's generation, and my friends in Montana. They are the people I go back and talk to when I research. It's childhood brought up to date."

That vocabulary creates the rich, authentic, often humorous atmosphere that permeates *Bucking the Sun*. Too much beer at the Blue Eagle tavern might leave a character "plotzed"; an editor's rejection letter is a "billydoo."

Such achievement in craft results from Doig's meticulous work schedule, what he refers to as farm hours: up at 4:30 a.m., at the desk by 6 a.m. By lunchtime, some 400-600 words later, he takes a siesta, perhaps a walk around the neighborhood. But each morning the work begins fresh, a process Doig finds best described by former poet laureate Richard Wilbur. "Every morning you step off boldly into the blank of your mind," he quotes.

Character and language provide much of the foundation in *Bucking the Sun*, but the novel also turns on something of a mystery. The discovery of two bodies (one male, one female, both naked) in the opening pages sustains a simmering tension. And Doig, with deft narrative skill, keeps all

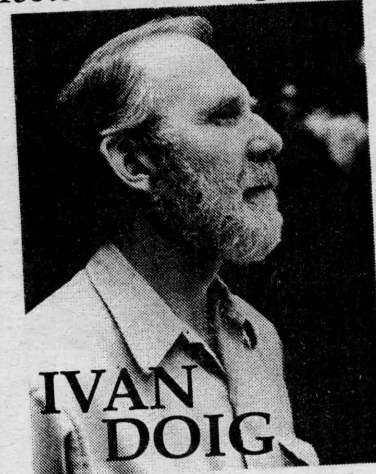
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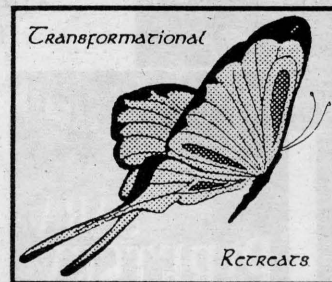


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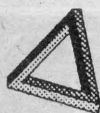
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Doig...

possibilities open until the end.

As western literature, *Bucking the Sun* offers a slice of Americana that symbolizes a common affliction in the West: the control of natural resources, the management and settling of large spaces. But the novel doesn't simply reinforce the West's popular mythology.

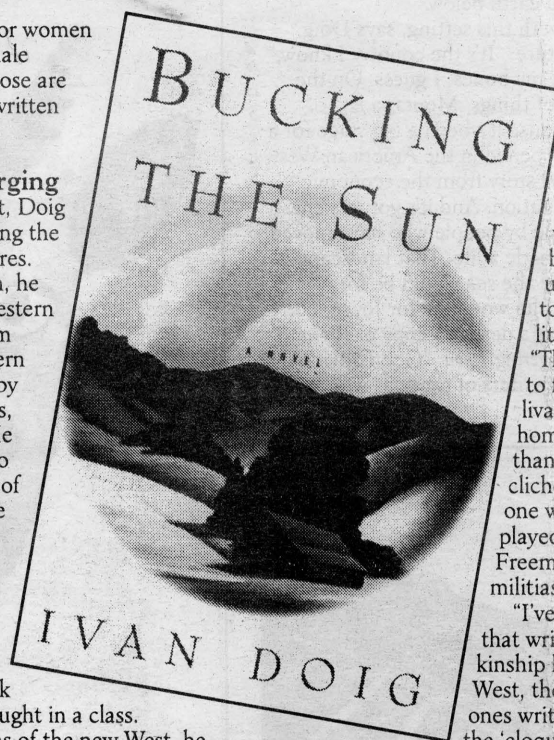
"I'm not a Western writer in the cowboy classic sense," Doig says. "I think that is something I've been consciously working against. The notion of the John Wayne/Louis L'Amour simple answer, that a six gun can solve anything and everything, is far too simple. This is the West where 25 pounds of gut are held up by a pound of belt buckle. You know at some point something has to give way."

"My notion has been to write about a more complicated West. The old mythology, I think, can possibly contain a number of different visions. There's no room in the

loner cowboy West for women homesteaders and male schoolmarm, but those are characters that I've written about."

Among the emerging literature of the West, Doig certainly stands among the most prominent figures. But as its spokesman, he also suggests that Western literature suffers from something of a modern crisis — overlooked by academic institutions, misread by critics. He recalls a reporter who did an online search of references to Wallace Stegner shortly after the Pulitzer Prize-winning writer died, discovering only 5 sources. Grad students, he says, are lucky to find work by Louise Erdrich taught in a class.

It's the historians of the new West, he



hopes, that will bring a broader understanding to Western literature. "They're trying to find a more livable intellectual home in the West than this whole clichéd one, the one we're seeing played out with the Freemen and the militias."

"I've tried to argue that writers have a kinship here in the West, they are the ones writing what I call the 'eloquence at the

edge of the world.'"

His next novel, says Doig, will open with a scene he witnessed in San Francisco during his recent book tour: the weekly parade of in-line skaters racing through downtown on a Friday evening. It's an image, he feels, that sharply represents the region's changing cultural patterns.

"I want to start the next book in the streets of San Francisco mostly because it's one of the West's oldest communities," Doig says. "Part of it will be set in the Rocky Mountains, as well. In essence, I think it's going to be about baby boomers facing the old American question: can we go home again?" ♦

IVAN DOIG READS FROM *BUCKING THE SUN* MONDAY AT 7:30 PM AT AUNTIES, 402 W. MAIN, SPOKANE. CALL: 838-0206.



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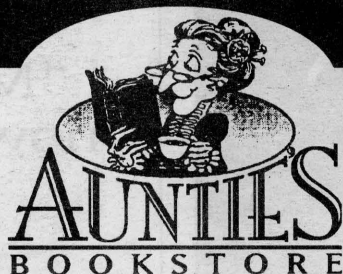
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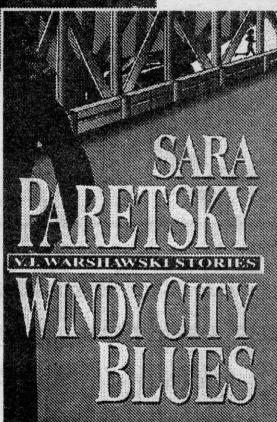
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MONTANA

Fort Peck Dam: Glory, turmoil and salvation

Ivan Doig novel recounts project's woes and wonders

By BOB GILLULY
Great Falls Tribune

FORT PECK (AP) — Not many Montanans remember the glory days, and the turmoil, of the Fort Peck Dam project.

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I was a child in Glasgow during the dam days. My late father,

THERE IS ONLY one variance in the fictional and real versions.

Doig's family in the novel, the Duffs, are portrayed early on as alfalfa seed farmers in an area that would soon be flooded out by the dam. The impression Doig conveys is that a number of people were thrown off their land by the project.

In truth, there were only a few farmers and ranchers in the remote and rugged Missouri River Breaks served by dirt roads and the solitary Lismas Ferry south of Glasgow during the early 1930s. Some were renegades who seldom paid their taxes and had no use for government. They were philosophical kin of today's Freemen.

Yes, a few ranchers and farmers were dispossessed by the dam project. But they were paid for their land at a time when few could afford to stay with the land. Fort Peck wasn't anything like the Tennessee Valley Authority, where hundreds of dirt farmers were forced to give up their property.

THE NOVEL'S FINAL chapters center on the biggest disaster

away as fast as possible for several hundred yards as crevasses opened in front of the car. Quick thinking saved his life and several others.

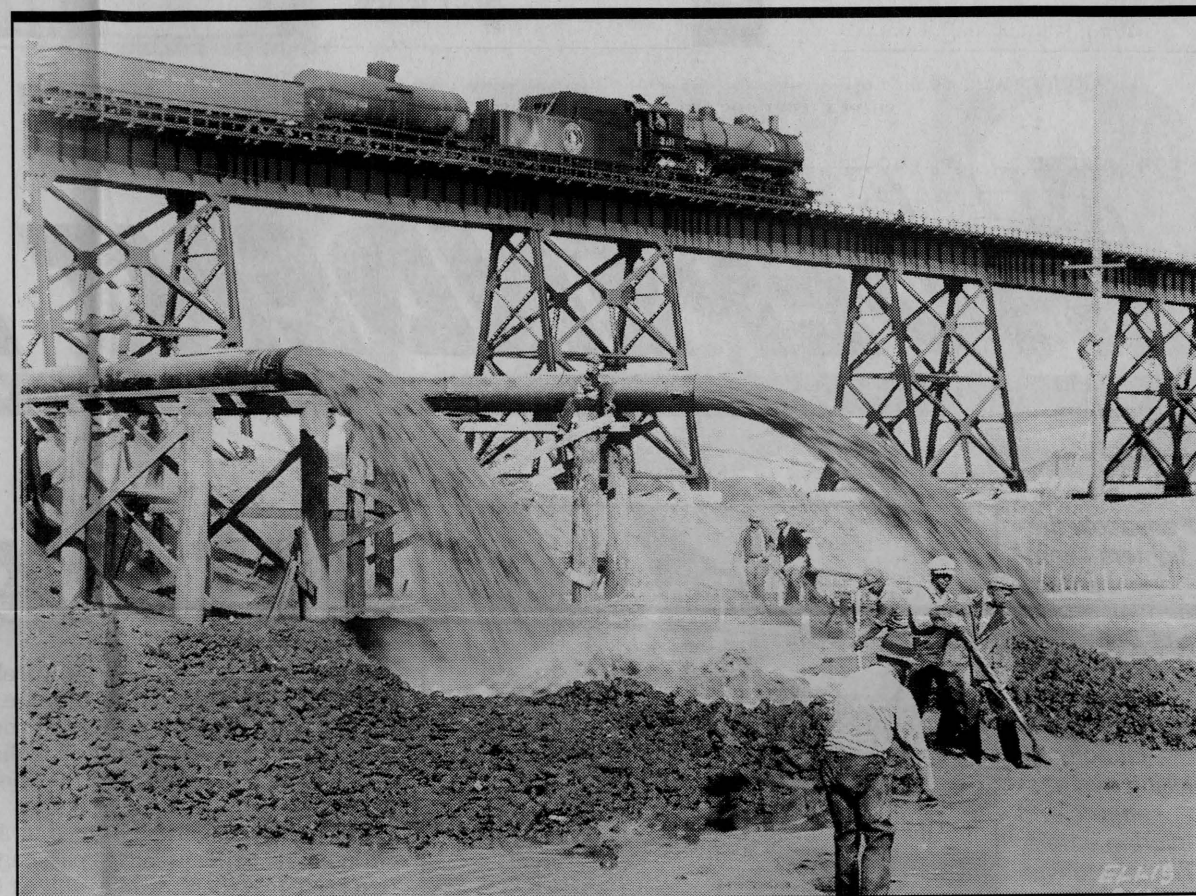
The slide did not breach the dam. But it required a lot of repair work.

My admiration for Ivan Doig is boundless. He's taken his place alongside Bud Guthrie, Dorothy M. Johnson, Norman Maclean and Dan Cushman. They stand tall as Montana's best storytellers.

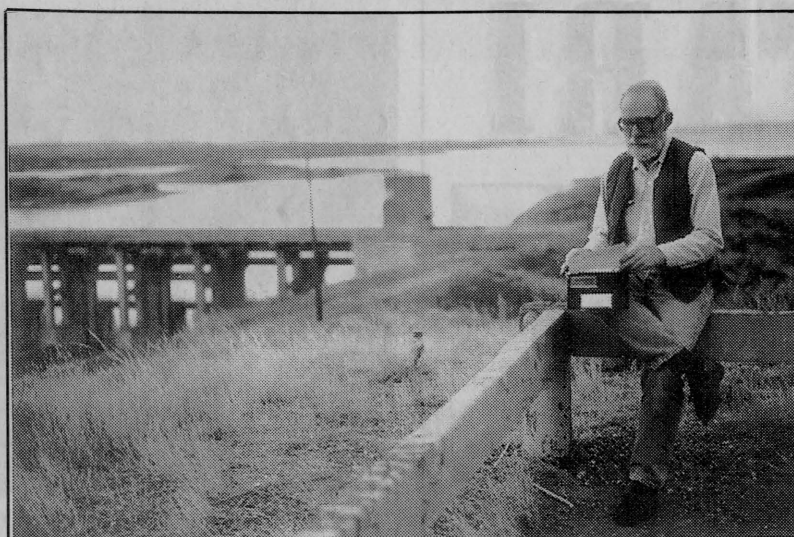
"BUCKING THE SUN" is not an easy read. But it captures your attention and holds it. The Duffs are a Scottish family with some distant ties to people in Doig's previous books — "English Creek," "Dancing at the Rascal Fair" and "Ride with Me, Mariah Montana" — that became a trilogy of life in Montana.

And this family, like those in Doig's previous books, is beset by tension and turmoil.

The Duffs may not be dysfunctional, but they have all of the human weaknesses. The patriarchal father disappears on occasional drunks, and the three sons



The massive Fort Peck Dam in eastern Montana was under construction in this Oct. 15, 1934 photo that shows dredging operations. Authorized the previous year by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the dam was the biggest pick-and-shovel project of the New Deal era. (AP Photo/Montana Historical Society)



Montana-born author Ivan Doig is shown near the spillway of Montana's Fort Peck Dam in this undated file photo.

ter at Fort Peck, a mammoth earth slide in 1938 that killed eight workers. Doig mentions one

Tourtlotte backed the vehicle alternately respect and resent

Franklin D. Roosevelt authorized the dam in 1933. It became the biggest pick-and-shovel project of the New Deal era.

And it was a godsend for Montana.

NOT ONLY FOR families who were going broke on farms and for truck drivers and clerks thrown out of work when businesses closed. Not only for young people who were too poor to attend college. Not only for hard-rock miners without work in Butte.

But also for the moribund Great Northern Railway, which delivered 8,000 trainloads of rock, gravel, equipment and supplies to Fort Peck. Also for the Montana Power and Anaconda companies that built a 300-mile transmission line from Great Falls to Fort Peck and strung it with wire produced in Great Falls.

And also for flood control, electric power and recreation along the mighty Missouri River. The dam cost \$165 million, a chunk of the national budget in those days, but a bargain. It's paid for itself 10 times over.

EVERYTHING ABOUT Fort Peck Dam was gigantic, including waste and sloppy engineering.

Ivan Doig gets that point across remarkably well in his new book, "Bucking the Sun," a fictional but accurate picture of life and times around the dam.

I was a child in Glasgow during the dam days. My late father, Sam Gilluly, was the only newspaper editor who covered the dam project from start to finish. His stories appeared in the Glasgow Courier and Great Falls Tribune and in Associated Press dispatches across the state.

Sam Gilluly wrote an 8,000-word story of Fort Peck Dam that was published by the Tribune in 1977. That, together with Doig's book which emphasizes the human struggles of the time, makes the historical record complete. The two writers met in Helena to compare notes when Doig was doing his research on the book.

of Glasgow during the early 1930s. Some were renegades who seldom paid their taxes and had no use for government. They were philosophical kin of today's Freemen.

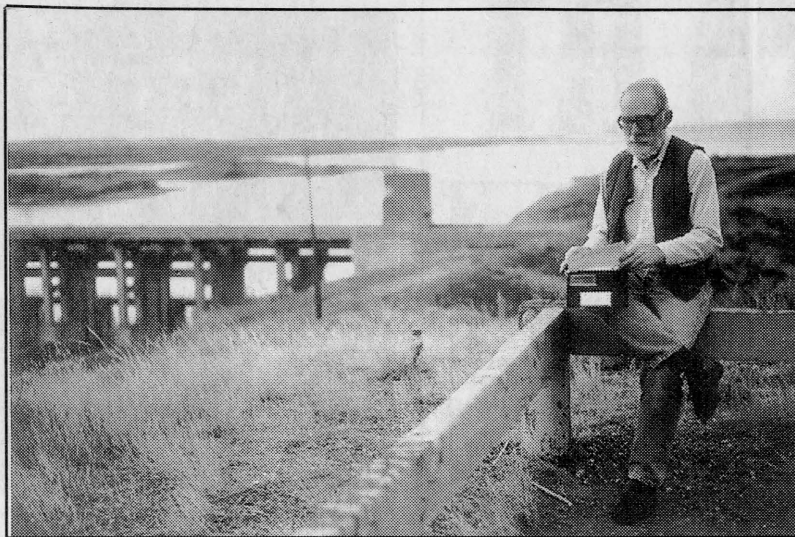
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Montana-born author Ivan Doig is shown near the spillway of Montana's Fort Peck Dam in this undated file photo.

ter at Fort Peck, a mammoth earth slide in 1938 that killed eight workers. Doig mentions one true-life aspect about the day when 15 percent of the incomplete dam tumbled into the reservoir that deserves more historical detail.

Longtime Glasgow and Fort Peck resident Gene Tourtlotte was employed as a driver for project engineer Clark Kittrell. On the day of the slide he took Kittrell and other engineers to the upstream face to inspect reports of earth movement.

Just as the car stopped, the ground in front of them began to give way.

Tourtlotte backed the vehicle alternately respect and resent each other. Their mother does her best to hold the clan together and get along with her three daughters-in-law.

The book ends in tragedy for the family.

The best part of Doig's work is the wealth of detail about how Montanans lived and related to each other during the project years. They made do in crude shacks at Wheeler, New Deal, Delano Heights and McCone City, but they had steady work and enough money in their pockets to face the future.

Big Sky guy

Writer Ivan Doig mines Montana for his evocative historic novels

By JOHN BARRON
STAFF REPORTER

The novelist Ivan Doig didn't mind the Montana jokes at all.

You'd think a guy who had spent his entire career writing gorgeous and evocative stories set in the territory—including his new novel one, which hit stores as the jokes started—might have taken offense. After all, his beloved home state had become an easy national punchline thanks to the Freeman and the discovery there of the alleged Unabomber.

But Doig offers a surprising take on the matter (after providing disclaimers that the huge state is a whole time zone unto itself and that those events were entirely coincidental): "For a lot of us who are around Montana and know and like the place, this has been a sort of useful corrective to the idea that Montana is the hot place to live . . . the Riviera of the Rocky Mountains."

He's referring, of course, to the stream of "ranching" celebrities, especially from the entertainment industry, who have "colonized" the state over the past decade.

Doig, a Northwestern University alum, imagines with some relish "the poignant possible scene of people like Ted Turner and Whoopi Goldberg and Jeff Bridges having to wonder whether their stablehands are members of the Montana militia."

The nouveau Montanans' vision of the place is far removed from that found in Doig's grand, beautifully written, historic novels, which include *English Creek* and *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*, and in his inspiring childhood memoir, the National Book Award nominated *This House of Sky* (1978).

"Until this erupted," Doig says, "I spent a lot of my time being called back to Montana to give speeches. And I was forever warning Montanans to not let the place turn into Georgian England where the rich folks own the big places and the commoners get to stand around and look colorful and do the chores."

Though he probably won't be hired by the Montana state tourism board, Doig's Montana is the real thing.

His new novel, *Bucking the Sun* (Simon & Schuster, \$23), depicts a glorious country that is also hard, temperamental and untamed.

Set during the early and mid 1930s, the novel's unlikely central event is the building of the Fort Peck Dam.

The giant earthen attempt to stop the Missouri River was one of the great "make work" projects of the Roosevelt administration. It offered jobs for 10,000 in the northeast part of the sparsely populated state and attracted an equal number of camp followers.

Doig, 57, vividly recreates the panorama of the boomtown. And into this sort of *Grapes of Wrath* for the employed, he deposits the Duffs, a large clan of headstrong types whose irascible spouses are more than their equals.

To stir the stew the novelist provides an opening "flash-forward" scene in which two of the Duffs are found naked and drowned in the front of a pick-up truck at the dam site. The couple is married, a lawyer explains . . . "only not to each other."

Doig, who received both his undergrad and graduate degrees in journalism from Northwestern, was in town recently for his first real visit since he and his wife Carol (another NU grad) packed up

Chicago Sun-Times BOOKS Sunday, July 7, 1996



Montana's Fort Peck Dam is the centerpiece of Ivan Doig's latest novel. He's shown here at the dam's spillway during research for the book.

their bags and left Evanston to head back West in the mid 1960s.

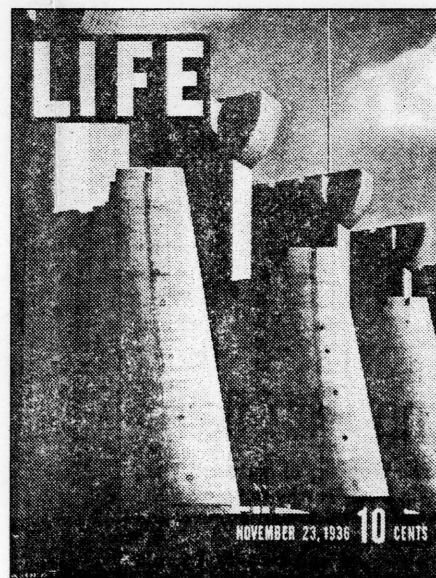
He explained the genesis of the book in a deserted hotel lobby.

"I kept hearing about Fort Peck while researching other novels," Doig says, stroking a thick reddish beard, just going gray. There's not a centimeter of skin visible on the lower half of his face. "Fort Peck kept coming up in the stories. It occurred to me that this was a tremendous launch in life for so many people. It's part of the Montana family album. And I grew up knowing that the Fort Peck Dam—in the Margaret Bourke-White photo—was on the cover of the first Life magazine, the Internet of its time."

To research the new book, Doig, who has lived in Seattle for the past couple of decades, says he turned to old copies of *Engineering News Record* and interviewed a slew of veteran dam builders.

"And the Army Corps of Engineers had people documenting Fort Peck up, down and sideways, more than I could look at," he says with a weary laugh.

Doig relied on his wife's advice when he feared his descriptions of dam building were becoming too



The Fort Peck Dam became part of America's iconography when it appeared on the cover of the first issue of Life magazine.

arcane.

"She kept me on the straight and narrow. I learned enough about dams to eventually know what to leave out."

He succeeds.

By the end of the book, the dam itself has become a character—in much the same way Montana has

become the main character in Doig's body of work.

"It's not Montana per se," he explains. "Rather it's the region authors are so often drawn to—childhood. It's the region where I grew up, what's been long remembered between my ears. The history of the American West has also always interested me as a big readable page. It's not been as populated as much by some of the other main currents of American history."

With the death of Wallace Stegner in 1993, Doig now has to be considered the premier writer of the American West.

And yet he's not sure that people have learned to appreciate or even correctly define the West. He thinks the myth of the six-shooter still prevails.

"In the American West we're closer to the writers out of the old colonial experience," says Doig, not only referring to geography but also to outsider status. "We have the most in common with the writers of Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and so on. I've taken to talking about a group of writing I see as edge of the world writing . . . writing not taking place in the old usual suspects of Manhattan, London

and Paris."

Doig's dedication in *Bucking the Sun* says it all: "To novelists who deliver the eloquence of the edge of the world rather than stammer from the psychiatrist's bin." He includes Roddy Doyle (Ireland), Nadine Gordimer (South Africa) and Thomas Keneally (Australia) in that bunch.

At the same time, however, Doig longs for the day when the West will be truly seen as part of the rest of the country.

"A lot of us writing about the West," he says, "tend to look at what we see as the West as an expression of American community . . . as opposed to the myth of American individuality."

"From our backgrounds and research we know that the lone cowboy didn't play that much of a role in the big historical context of the West. We are also interested in the male schoolmarm, the woman homesteader, about the people who moved from, say, Minnesota and tried to create a community."

"We're trying to write a literary connective tissue to make readers aware that the country is connected beneath the airplanes—beneath that is a helluvalot of history . . . and places where lots of people have their starts."

Doig stops, pondering the absurdity of all these distinctions.

"Everything was the West at one point."

JUN 6, 1996

P5648

LUCE PRESS CLIPPINGS

'Bucking the Sun' revolves around man against nature in Montana

By ALISON ARNETT
THE BOSTON GLOBE

Montana was once mainly famous as Big Sky Country, but lately, what with accused mad bombers in its rugged hills, holed-up anti-government ranchers defying the law and reclusive movie stars, it has gotten attention for tales of fact stranger than fiction.

Now Ivan Doig, a native Montanan who lives in Seattle, has woven an epic-size novel in "Bucking the Sun," and one wonders if there's something about the state's extremes of sky and earth that draw out this rush of plot and character.

One family is at the center of the story. From mettlesome mother Meg and cantankerous father Hugh to their three lanky sons and their colorful wives to Hugh's radical brother Darius, lately arrived from Scotland, each member of the Duff family has a piece of the action.

It's a mystery, a puzzle still haunting a bad-tempered little sheriff toward the end of his days: how a pickup truck containing two Duffs, both nude, plummeted down a ramp and into the vast lake formed by the Fort Peck Dam.

The mystery frames the book, the beginning and the end, a seemingly neat package on which to hang the story. But there's nothing neat and tidy about "Bucking the Sun," an expression signifying pushing on against the glare of the sunrise or sunset. Like the title, the characters, for all their foibles, seem almost dwarfed by the descriptions of nature vs. machinery.

The battle lines form as the family struggles to fight off grasshoppers plaguing its alfalfa farm on the rich Missouri River bottomland. Doig lovingly describes the June green of the fields, the line of rocky bluffs, the curl of the river against the land. He evokes as well the lurking danger and the sounds of munching as the insects inexorably destroy the crop.

With the passage of decades, the horrible sweep of agricultural disasters that set the stage for the Great Depression have been instilled into

BOOK REVIEW

■ Bucking the Sun

By Ivan Doig/Simon & Schuster, 412 pages, \$23.

the national memory, especially images of dusty Oklahoma fields. We tend to forget the other plagues — of grasshoppers, jackrabbits and plunging prices. Hugh Duff is determined to hold on, to fight off nature's villains and reap the green gold. His wife is convinced the battle is lost. When a government agent shows up to tell them President Roosevelt is offering salvation by drowning their land and giving them jobs, he is furious. He is even more furious when he discovers his eldest son, Owen, will design the dam's earthen fill.

This antagonism — the father's stubbornness about agriculture, the brilliant son's belief in technological progress — develops as the clan moves to the site of Fort Peck Dam, a monumental project devised as much to produce jobs and wages, to drive back the national sense of despair, as to protect downstream land from flooding.

The characters multiply as the story moves along, from the original Duffs to lovers in quickly sketched romances, to wives for the dirt engineer and his less talented brothers, who are twins. The clan might well have muddled along with resentments under the surface, couples getting along and sometimes fighting, with jealousies and flirtations, all sticking together in the end.

They might have, except that into the mix comes Hugh's brother Darius, fleeing union trouble in Scotland.

Doig adroitly plays his historical cards as the dam work fills in the years and the landscape. His sense of the drama of the West, of man against nature, of FDR's push to employ a destitute population, of the dark worldview of Darius the spoiler, is effective. His characters, particularly the women, sound modern and believable.

won't guess the ending—it's only half fairy tale. Wilson has made her heroine modern. Alix—no cringing damsel—convinces a shy, self-hating Beast that he is lovable. And so he is, and she is; and the book, in spite of itself, is rather lovable too. **B** —EKC

BUCKING THE SUN Ivan Doig (*Simon & Schuster, \$23*) *Bucking the Sun*—a saga of Depression-era Montana set around the building of the Fort Peck Dam—derives its narrative energy from as tangled a web of familial and psychosexual rivalries as one is apt to encounter this side of *Hamlet* or *The Brothers Karamazov*. In the opening scene, the drowned, naked bodies of a man and woman are pulled from the cab of a truck that rolled into a river

while they were making love. Both named Duff, they're married, as the country song goes, "only not to each other." So which of the 10 Duffs portrayed in the novel—a father, his brother, his three married sons, and their respective wives—are they? Doig attempts to sustain the mystery through a sprawling, digressive tale filled with flashbacks, flash-forwards, and enough engineering data about the construction of earth-fill dams to glaze over the eyes of a civil engineer. At his extraordinary best, he might have brought it off. Not here, though. For all its complex structure and epic ambition, *Bucking the Sun* fails to deliver characters that readers are likely to care about or believe in. **B** —Gene Lyons

LAST CHANTS Lia Matera (*Simon & Schuster, \$21*) Matera's latest Willa Jansson mystery boasts an energetic, though improbable, setup: San Francisco attorney Jansson comes to the rescue of an elderly, gun-toting family friend, whose assistant—a shaman named Billy Seawuit—has just been murdered. Suspects include Willa's septuagenarian pal, the head of a local tech company who hired Seawuit as a consultant and his Amazonian wife, and, oh yes, the demigod Pan. It ends up being much ado about little, all set to a loopy New Age beat (get ready for drumming-induced vision questing). The real pleasure is Willa, who alternates between humor and annoyance at her predicament—and whose love-hate relationship with men strikes a chord with many female fans. If only the plot was as easy to buy. **B-** —EKC

PAPERBACKS

THE CHAMBER John Grisham (*Island, \$7.50, first published in 1994*) This story of a Klansman on death row and his young lawyer grandson is basically a Southern family chronicle (complete with genteel alcoholic aunt). The controlled, even storytelling is a stark contrast to the convoluted plot of *The Runaway Jury*, but what it doesn't offer is a single moment of suspense. **B-**

LITTLE GIRLS IN PRETTY BOXES: THE MAKING AND BREAKING OF ELITE GYMNASTS AND FIGURE SKATERS Joan Ryan (*Warner Books, \$12.99, 1995*) Sports columnist Ryan reveals the horrors behind the graceful vaults and double axels, focusing on fame-crazed parents and relentless coaches. Her engaging but wildly digressive anecdotes, including accounts of notorious gymnastic coach Bela Karolyi, are too often interrupted with old-hat explanations about how our culture expects women to remain girls. **B**

BEST-SELLERS

'MALICE' IN WONDERLAND

BY THE THIRD chapter, *Malice's* heroine has already suffered domestic abuse and imprisonment. Surprising surfside fare, perhaps. But Steel yourself: The fiction list's No. 7 is the 37th best-seller by one of America's most popular novelists. Her foreword rues "this wicked thing called 'fame'"—alas, fame tends to be inseparable from 1,075,000-copy first printings. This is clearly one yellow jacket beachgoers don't mind encountering.



FICTION

- 1 **THE RUNAWAY JURY** John Grisham, *Doubleday, \$26.95*.....3
- 2 **HOW STELLA GOT HER GROOVE BACK** Terry McMillan, *Viking, \$23.95*.....5
- 3 **THE TENTH INSIGHT** James Redfield, *Warner, \$19.95*.....6
- 4 **THE CELESTINE PROPHECY** James Redfield, *Warner, \$17.95*.....118
- 5 **I WAS AMELIA EARHART** Jane Mendelsohn, *Knopf, \$18*.....6
- 6 **MOONLIGHT BECOMES YOU** Mary Higgins Clark, *Simon & Schuster, \$24*.....9
- 7 **MALICE** Danielle Steel, *Delacorte, \$24.95*.....8
- 8 **SUDDEN PREY** John Sandford, *Putnam, \$23.95*.....4
- 9 **THE FOURTH ESTATE** Jeffrey Archer, *HarperCollins, \$26*.....1
- 10 **CHANCE** Robert B. Parker, *Putnam, \$21.95*.....2

NONFICTION

- 1 **BAD AS I WANNA BE** Dennis Rodman, with Tim Keown, *Delacorte, \$22.95*.....5
- 2 **THE DILBERT PRINCIPLE** Scott Adams, *HarperBusiness, \$20*.....7
- 3 **MEN ARE FROM MARS, WOMEN ARE FROM VENUS** John Gray, *HarperCollins, \$23*.....165
- 4 **SIMPLE ABUNDANCE** Sarah Ban Breathnach, *Warner, \$17.95*.....11
- 5 **IN CONTEMPT** Christopher A. Darden, with Jess Walter, *ReganBooks, \$26*.....11
- 6 **THE ZONE** Barry Sears, Ph.D., with Bill Lawren, *ReganBooks, \$22*.....15
- 7 **MIDNIGHT IN THE GARDEN OF GOOD AND EVIL** John Berendt, *Random House, \$23*.....100
- 8 **THE SEVEN SPIRITUAL LAWS OF SUCCESS** Deepak Chopra, *New World Library, \$14*.....68
- 9 **THE FIVE DAY MIRACLE DIET** Adele Puh, *Ballantine, \$22*.....2
- 10 **JOAN LUNDEN'S HEALTHY COOKING** Joan Lunden and Laura Morton, *Little, Brown, \$24.95*.....7

MASS-MARKET PAPERBACKS

- 1 **THE GREEN MILE, PART 3: COFFEY'S HANDS** Stephen King, *Signet, \$2.99*.....2
- 2 **THE GREEN MILE, PART 2: THE MOUSE ON THE MILE** Stephen King, *Signet, \$2.99*.....6
- 3 **TOM CLANCY'S OP-CENTER #3: GAMES OF STATE** Tom Clancy and Steve Pieczenik, *Berkley, \$6.99*.....5
- 4 **ROSE MADDER** Stephen King, *Signet, \$7.50*.....4
- 5 **THE WITNESS** Sandra Brown, *Warner, \$6.99*.....1
- 6 **THE GREEN MILE, PART 1: THE TWO DEAD GIRLS** Stephen King, *Signet, \$2.99*.....10
- 7 **THE EYES OF DARKNESS** Dean Koontz, *Berkley, \$7.50*.....2
- 8 **THE RAINMAKER** John Grisham, *Dell, \$7.99*.....22
- 9 **SHOW OF EVIL** William Diehl, *Ballantine, \$6.99*.....3
- 10 **DANGEROUS TO KNOW** Barbara Taylor Bradford, *HarperPaperbacks, \$6.99*.....5

SOURCE: PUBLISHERS WEEKLY



PARODY OF THE WEEK

As Bad As He Wishes He Were

What hath Dennis Rodman wrought? Chicago's *Windy City Sports* mag shows former Partridge Danny Bonaduce naked on a classic Schwinn bicycle.

COVER PHOTO OF THE WEEK

George Foreman

The rotund-headed boxer tucking into what looks like a cheese-laden burger on the cover of his *Knock-Out-the-Fat Barbecue and Grilling Cookbook*.

ILLUSTRATION BY GLYNIS SWENEY

One dam thing after another

Montana hydroelectric project brings disaster to farm family

BUCKING THE SUN

By Ivan Doig (Simon & Schuster, \$23)

By Philip Montgomery

Ivan Doig's new novel, *Bucking the Sun*, opens with the winching of a truck out of the reservoir of the newly completed Fort Peck Dam on the Missouri River in northeastern Montana. A man and a woman — both nude — are discovered in the front seat. Both are Duff family members and "married — but not to each other." This mystery frames the novel.



Ivan Doig has published four works of fiction and three of non-fiction. His childhood memoirs, *This House of Sky* was a National Book Award finalist. He has received numerous awards for individual pieces and for his life work. His works, set in Montana and the Pacific Northwest, all concern the

DOIG — lives of people from those places. His stories show how the natural conditions, forces and occurrences of a place combine with the heritage and aspirations of individuals to create, shape, and limit the lives of his characters.

After the startling opening, the story begins with the forced purchase of the Duff family farm by a government agent for the Fort Peck reservoir. The sale coincides with the collapsing fortunes of Hugh Duff, the family patriarch, due to forces outside his control: annual plagues of grasshoppers and declining alfalfa seed prices. The Duffs — Hugh and Meg and their fraternal twin sons, Neil and Bruce — work as day laborers building the Fort Peck dam. Son "Goin'" Owen, an engineer with drive and an Please see NOVEL on Page 9J.

Novel is a reservoir of family intrigues

Continued from Page 8J.

absolute faith in progress, had already landed the plum engineer's post as dam fillmaster.

The action of the book unfolds during the Great Depression through construction of the dam, boom-town conditions and the complex interplay of the family members' drives and frustrations. Neil and Bruce, financed by brother Owen, advance to truck driving and diving and marry Rosellen and Kate.

Hugh's bachelor brother, Darius, arrives unexpectedly from Scotland, secures a job, marries a pep-

perry local "taxi driver" (prostitute), by his mere presence reopens rivalries between himself and Hugh for the affections of Meg, and secretly becomes active in the Communist Party. Rosellen writes an unending stream of stories that publishers reject, but she maintains faith in progress and her abilities. Kate waits tables, bears a son and, as do all the Duff women, works to manage the family dynamics.

Mr. Doig writes in a beautiful and singular style that combines narrative, dialogue and the thoughts of his characters. He can capture the essence of a sentiment

Dallas, TX
MORNING NEWS
Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington
Met Area
SUN 821.894

JUN 2 1996

LUCE PRESS CLIPPINGS

P5188

or sensation and re-create that same feeling in readers. This skill and the graceful rhythm of his storytelling give his work rare emotional richness. They give what might otherwise be overly schematic themes vivid personal expression.

Bucking the Sun refers to relentless and sometimes dangerous pushing against the glare of the sun at sunrise or sunset. The tension conveyed in this image suffuses the novel. Mr. Doig uses the backdrop mesh of family and dam-building to weave his multiple themes. As in his Montana trilogy, especially *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*, he creates rivalries between brothers over women and marriage of circumstance and necessity in the face of unrequited love, tragedy born of a drive to do more than nature will allow, death by drowning that tragically resolves family strife, conflict between agrarian life and man-made progress, and a fascinating epic of the 19th-century Scotch settlers, their relatives and descendants from Mr. Doig's *English Creek* region of central Montana.

The novel concludes with a series of near-tragic accidents from natural causes. The reader learns on the final page that the novel's ultimate tragedy is man-made, and that despite optimism and progress "life ambushed all hopes." Mr. Doig's richly woven work marks the latest evolution in the work of a master.

Philip Montgomery is a Dallas businessman.

Boulder, CO
CAMERA
Denver-Boulder-Longmont
Met Area

Friday

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MAY 17, 1996

P1578

LUCE PRESS CLIPPINGS

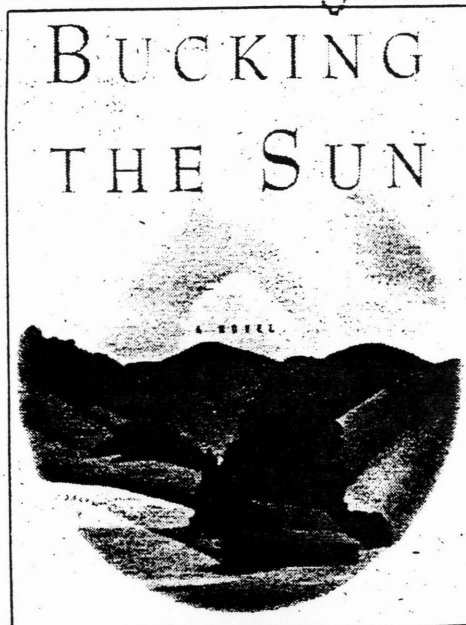
BOOKS

Writer of Western lore

Montana isn't known only for outsider groups like the Freemen. It's also home to some of the best fiction writers today. Ivan Doig, a longtime Montana resident who now lives in Seattle, is one. Nominated for the National Book

Award in 1978 for his acclaimed "This House of Sky," Doig has continued to retell the history of the West through his spare, realistic fiction.

"Bucking the Sun" (Simon and Schuster, \$23) is his newest chronicle, which traces a family against the backdrop of New Deal politics and the building of the Fort Peck Dam in Montana. He will read and sign his novel at 7:30 tonight in the Boulder Book Store, 1107 Pearl St. Call 447-2074.



MONTANA MEMORY: In his new book, Ivan Doig investigates the politics of the New Deal Era.

— NIKI HAYDEN

MAY 28, 1996

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LUCE

PRESS CLIPPINGS

EXPLORING FAMILY

Montana's Big Sky, huge dam become writer Ivan Doig's canvas

By LOIS BLINKHORN
of the Journal Sentinel staff

An interview with Ivan Doig is measured and thoughtful — just what you might expect from this highly regarded writer who has rarely disappointed his readers since "House of the Sky" was nominated for the National Book Award in 1978.

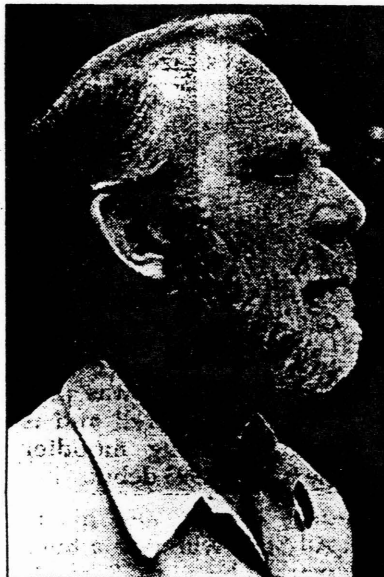
On a recent visit to Milwaukee to promote his latest book, "Bucking the Sun" (Simon & Schuster, \$23), Doig talked about how he came to be a writer whose work is grounded in the Big Sky country of Montana.

"I grew up in the high plains — Black Foot Indian country — of Montana," said Doig, 56. "My father was a ranch hand. My mother, who died when I was 6, and grandmother were ranch cooks. It was a nomadic life. I usually boarded in town in order to go to school. I counted up 22 different roofs by the time I was out of high school."

Not an easy life, to be sure, but Doig has no sense of deprivation.

"I hesitate to call it poor," he said. "We didn't see ourselves as ground-down poor. But we didn't own anything, either."

Doig was taking vocational agriculture courses in high school when "one more catastrophe with sheep" hit during a bad winter. Profits were down and Doig switched from agriculture to typing and Latin, then



Ivan Doig

headed east to Northwestern University, where he earned a journalism degree in 1961. After a few years of newspaper work, Doig began freelance writing and returned to school at the University of Washington for a doctorate in history.

Although Doig didn't work long in daily journalism, it gave him one big strength as a writer:

"I don't believe in writer's block," he said with a slow smile. "That must go back to journalism. Can you imagine telling an editor, 'Sorry, I'm blocked today.'"

Doig writes nearly every day, usually on a typewriter. (the computer screen caused an eye

problem), by hand when traveling. He likes the idea of "getting the story in the fingers," as he puts it. He is a careful and exhaustive self-editor, working and reworking his material until he is satisfied.

In "Bucking the Sun," Doig tells the story of a family against the background of one of this country's most gigantic engineering undertakings, the building of the Fort Peck Dam across the Missouri River in northeastern Montana. Begun in 1934, the public works project was said to be the biggest earthen dam in the world. In 1938, eight workers were killed in a huge dam slide.

"I kept hearing about the dam when I was researching earlier novels in Montana. I heard people say, 'When we were at Fort Peck...' as though it was obviously a big deal in their lives. And there was a famous Margaret Burke White cover and photo essay on the dam in Life magazine in November 1936."

Curiosity piqued, Doig began research on the dam and was hooked. His story revolves around the Duff family — parents, three sons, their wives, an uncle who arrives from Scotland — along with the vast assortment of hangers-on drawn to a massive project of this kind.

The family dynamic isn't autobiographical — Doig is an only child — but it is familiar territory.

5/27/96 / 'Bucking the Sun' tries too hard

The Plain Dealer
BUCKING THE SUN. By Ivan Doig. Simon & Schuster, 412 pp., \$23.

By TIM WARREN

Ivan Doig aims high in his fifth novel, and while ambition can be a virtue in a writer, "Bucking the

BOOK REVIEW

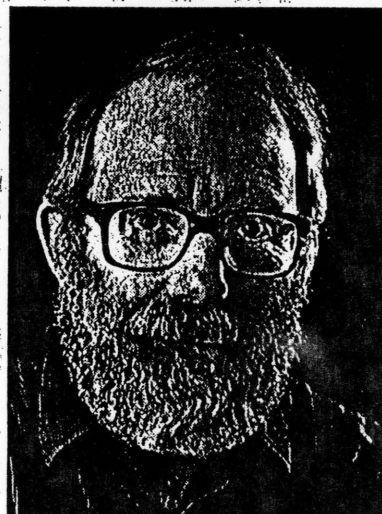
'Bucking the Sun'

"Sun" tries to do too much. It's a historical novel; it's an intergenerational saga; it's grand and sweeping like the Montana landscape that provides the setting. And it carries too much weight as it plods along, which is a pity because "Bucking the Sun" has some terrific elements.

Doig grew up in Montana, and has written the "Montana Trilogy" of novels and two excellent memoirs. In "Bucking the Sun," his familiarity with the state no doubt played a part in imagining a plot device that allows for all kinds of possibilities: the reshaping of Montana in the mid- to late 1930s through the massive, government-built Fort Peck Dam.

New Dealers in Washington decided that Montana had to have a relief project to move it out of the Depression. Overnight, the state was changed. Thousands of jobs were created — people were needed to clear and dig and transport and lay concrete. With them came other folks plying less respectable trades, such as prostitutes and robbers.

In the midst of this was the Duff family, of proud Scottish heritage but just making a living growing alfalfa. As the book opens, Hugh Duff, the irascible, boozing father, is told by a gov-



Ivan Doig returns to the Montana of his youth in his new novel, which deals with the reshaping of the state brought about the construction of the Fort Peck Dam.

ernment agent that the family farm is being taken over because it sits in the middle of the projected dam. So Hugh and his twin sons, Bruce and Neil, and his wife, Meg, all get jobs with the dam. Hugh's oldest son, Owen, had come aboard earlier as an engineer.

The state's social fabric is ripped asunder. Farmers were going

broke, but at least they had some dignity and independence. Now they are swinging axes at underbrush on government salary and throwing away their money in bars and brothels that have sprung up in nearby towns. One such instant city is Wheeler. Doig writes:

"Squalid, flinty, hopeless, hopeful, nocturnal and red-eyed, Wheeler almost immediately grew to 3,000 strong (1,500 dam workers and 1,500 camp followers, the demography was usually given as) and burgeoning." The prevailing wisdom was simple: "When the dam was done, Wheeler's population would pick up and move anyway."

Doig is perhaps best at depicting this massive social dislocation — he has a great eye for detail and amusing set-pieces. But he's also giving us a chronology of the building of the dam and the myriad details of the family warring and loving. He constantly cuts from one character to another, and all these viewpoints don't allow him to develop the characters fully.

When "Bucking the Sun" is working, it's a splendid rendering of a turbulent Montana in rapid transition. When it's not, though, it's unbearably slow. Reading about the Fort Peck Dam should not be as laborious as building it.

Warren is a writer who lives in Silver Spring, Md.

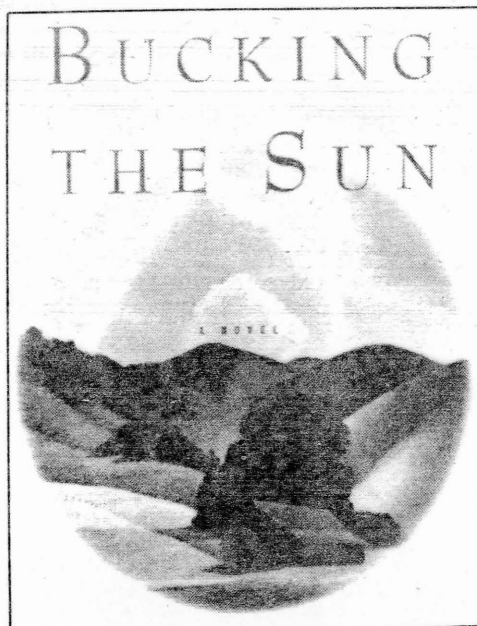
BOOKS

Writer of Western lore

Montana isn't known only for outsider groups like the Freemen. It's also home to some of the best fiction writers today. Ivan Doig, a longtime Montana resident who now lives in Seattle, is one. Nominated for the National Book Award in 1978 for his acclaimed "This House of Sky," Doig has continued to retell the history of the West through his spare, realistic fiction.

"Bucking the Sun" (Simon and Schuster, \$23) is his newest chronicle, which traces a family against the backdrop of New Deal politics and the building of the Fort Peck Dam in Montana. He will read and sign his novel at 7:30 tonight in the Boulder Book Store, 1107 Pearl St. Call 447-2074.

— NIKI HAYDEN



MONTANA MEMORY: In his new book, Ivan Doig investigates the politics of the New Deal Era.

THEATER

Going to the dinosaurs

Is the American family going the way of the dinosaurs? Playwright Nicky Silver seems to think so in his darkly funny comedy, "Pterodactyls," being given its area premiere at 8 tonight by Actors Ensemble at the Guild Theatre in Boulder. Denial has a way of catching up with us — look at what happened to those dinosaurs of long ago. Silver's contemporary clan uses everything from alcohol to selective amnesia to avoid dealing with painful realities. But their days of denial are numbered when son Todd starts digging up the back yard, unearthing metaphorical fossil bones and more than a few family skeletons. Show time, at 4840 Sterling Drive, is 8 p.m. Fridays through Sundays through June 8; tickets \$12, with discounts for students and seniors. Call 449-3296. There will be a special performance at 7 p.m. May 30 to benefit the Boulder County AIDS Project; tickets \$25, call 444-6121.

— DIANNE ZUCKERMAN



JEEPSTER: "You remind me of my Jeep," sings R. Kelly on "You Remind Me of Something," from his latest album. For the rest of that tender couplet, you'll just have to head to Fiddler's Green on Monday.

MUSIC

Grooves and 'Grove'

Fiddler's Green plays host to a couple of big package shows this week: one for up-to-date R&B fans, the other for retro-minded rockers.

At 6:30 p.m. Monday, bedroom groover R. Kelly, who's currently in the Top 10 with "Down Low," teams with veteran rapper LL Cool J. They're joined by harmony-makers Xscape and Solo. Tickets are \$18.50-\$23.50 (expect service charges).

At 7 p.m. Wednesday, it's an 8-Track flashback with Lynyrd Skynyrd and the Doobie Brothers. If you've gotta hear "Free Bird" and "China Grove" just one more time, here's your chance. Tickets are \$18.50-\$22.50 (expect service charges).

For both, call Ticketmaster, 830-8497.

— JAY DEDRICK

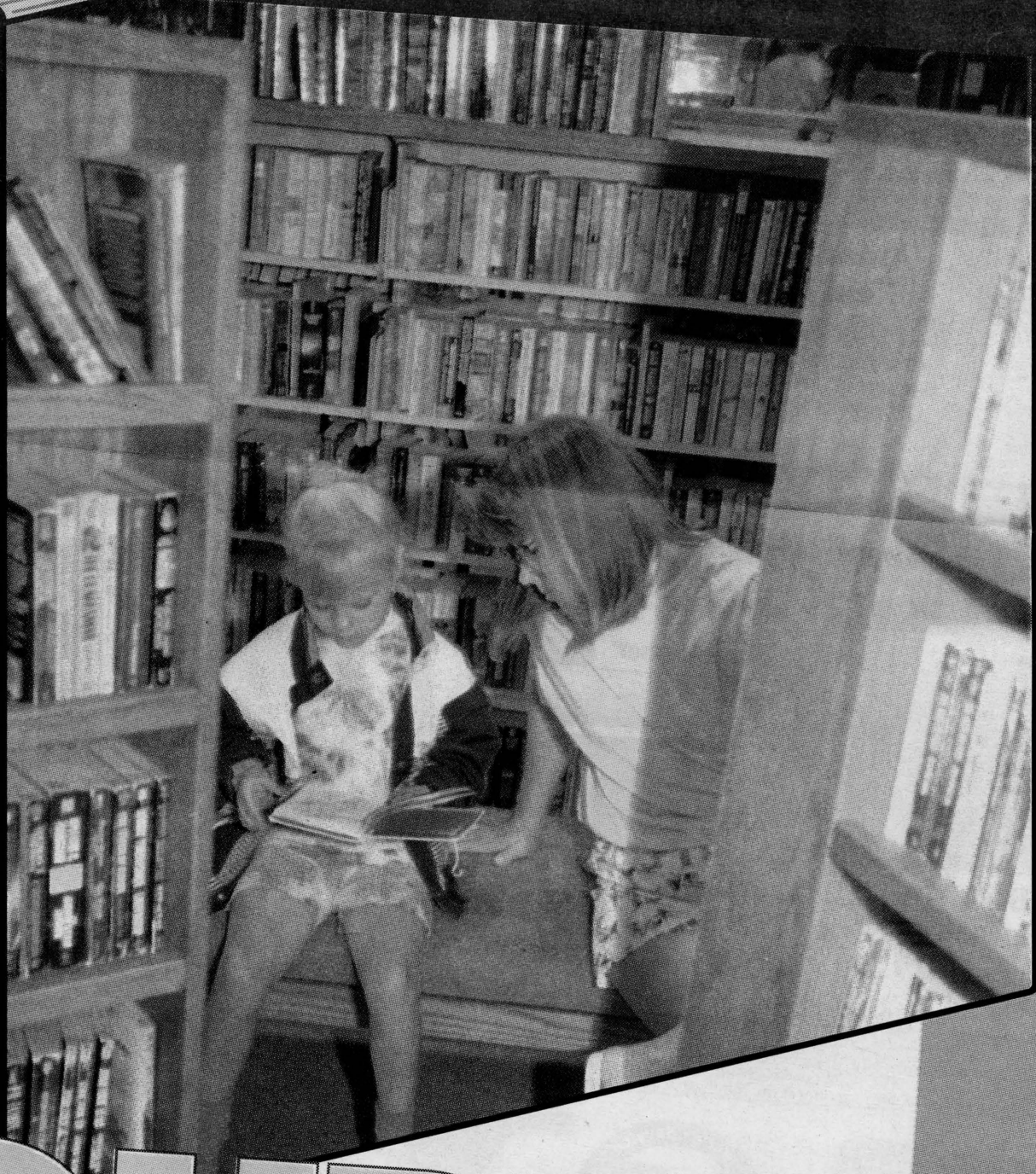
INSIDE:

Summer reading for
kids
— page 10

Downtown
street dance
— page 3

Ivan Doig
— page 6

Wildflower Watch
— page 7



YOURTIME

Helena Independent Record, Friday, June 28, 1996

HARD-COVER FICTION

1. "The Runaway Jury" by John Grisham
2. "A Crown of Swords" by Robert Jordan
3. "How Stella Got Her Groove Back" by Terry McMillan
4. "The Tenth Insight" by James Redfield
5. "The Fourth Estate" by Jeffrey Archer
6. "I Was Amelia Earhart" by Jane Mendelsohn
7. "The Celestine Prophecy" by James Redfield
8. "Accordion Crimes" by E. Annie Proulx
9. "Moonlight Becomes You" By Mary Higgins Clark
10. "Primary Colors" by Anonymous

HARD-COVER NONFICTION

1. "Bad as I Wanna Be" by Dennis Rodman
2. "The Dilbert Principle" by Scott Adams
3. "Outrage" by Vincent Bugliosi
4. "The Zone" by Barry Sears and Bill Lawren
5. "Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus" by John Gray
6. "Simple Abundance" by Sarah Ban Breathnach
7. "Undaunted Courage" by Stephen E. Ambrose
8. "In Contempt" by Christopher Darden
9. "The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success" by Deepak Chopra
10. "No Shirt. No Shoes ... No Problem!" by Jeff Foxworthy

MASS MARKET PAPERBACKS

1. "The Green Mile, Part 3: Coffey's Hands" by Stephen King
2. "Beach Music" by Pat Conroy
3. "The Witness" by Sandra Brown
4. "The Green Mile, Part 2: The Mouse on the Mile" by Stephen King
5. "The Eyes of Darkness" by Dean Koontz
6. "Tom Clancy's Op-Center 3: Games of State" created by Tom Clancy
7. "The Green Mile, Part 1: The Two Dead Girls" by Stephen King
8. "The Rainmaker" by John Grisham
9. "Rose Madder" by Stephen King
10. "Shades of Twilight" by Linda Howard

Doig to sign 'Bucking the Sun'

Montana-born author Ivan Doig will sign copies of his new novel "Bucking the Sun," at the Montana Book Company this Saturday, June 29, from 1 to 3 p.m.

Acclaimed since his first book, "This House of Sky," a finalist for the National Book Award in 1978, Doig has emerged as one of the nation's foremost storytellers.

In "Bucking the Sun," Doig weaves a story around the building of Montana's famous Fort Peck Dam.

To "buck the sun" means to push on against the glare of sunrise or sunset. The book revolves around a "pushful" family, the Duffs, who are driven from the Montana bottomland to relief work on the New Deal's most audacious project — to stop the mighty Missouri with earth.



cious project — to stop the mighty Missouri with earth.

Throughout his career Doig has received critical acclaim for his ability to combine history with story telling.

"Doig the historian gives this saga an authentic structure, while Doig the novelist lifts it to great heights with his portrayal of the five Duff men and the women they loved," an April review in the San Francisco Chronicle says.

Montana Book Company owner Judy Flanders said 350 books are in stock for the signing.

"He's probably one of our biggest draws," Flanders said.

Flanders said several of her staff members have read the book including herself.

"It's just a really good read," she said.

Flanders said she always looks forward to book signings with Doig.

"He's probably one of the nicest men you'll ever want to meet and he always tries to be helpful," she said. "We always enjoy having him."

At the library

These and other new books are available at the Lewis and Clark Library this week.

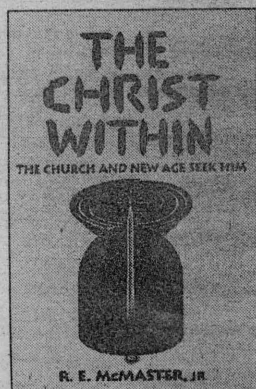
How to Draw Comic Book Heroes and Villains by Christopher Hart. This book contains everything you need to know about creating super-powered images. It even gives you the inside scoop on the comic book biz. Well-known comic book artists reveal the secrets of drawing heroic anatomy, designing powerful and convincing fight scenes, inventing really bad villains, using special effects techniques, depicting advanced weaponry and much, much more.

The Magic Globe: An Around the World Adventure Game by Heather Maisner. On beyond Waldo, geography hounds, puzzle fiends, and eagle eyes are off on a journey around the world. Readers travel through the deserts and forests of Africa, across the plains and rivers of North America, to far off Japan and even farther. Kids learn amazing facts about each extraordinary place and the people who live there, as they seek the cleverly hidden magic globe and other objects. But be careful, follow the clues and find the hidden globe or you may be lost in a faraway place forever.

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June 27,— July 3, 1996

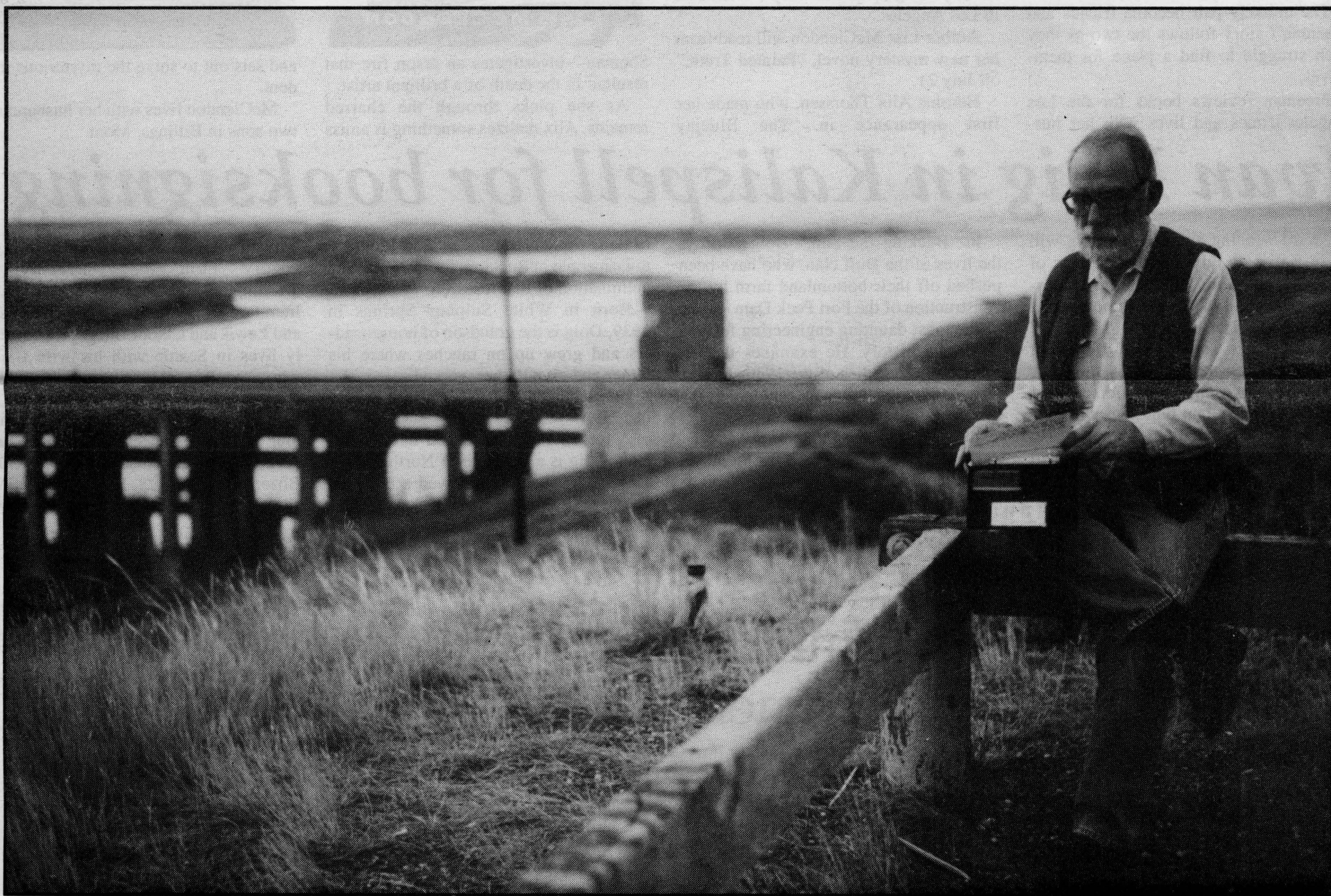
Area entertainment

Free

Glacier Country

Good times guide for the Flathead Valley

Writer of the Purple Sage



Doig's latest book focuses on the construction of the Fort Peck Dam and its effects on Montana homestead families.

Montana writer Ivan Doig swings through Flathead on statewide "Bucking the Sun" booksigning tour

See Page 2

INSIDE:

Page 9:

Picnic in the Park provides live music

Page 11:

Lodge goes hog wild with craft show

Freeman joins Whitefish reading series

Novelist Judith Freeman and mystery writer Lise McClendon are the latest authors scheduled to appear on the Whitefish Reading Series' summer line-up.

The readings, sponsored by the Rocky Mountain Lodge, begin at 7:30 p.m. and admission is \$3.

On July 9, Freeman will read from "A Desert of Pure Feeling," her new novel about a woman struggling to make peace with herself as a mother, a lover, an artist and a friend.

Lucy Patterson travels to an isolated motel in the desert outside of Las Vegas to find herself and meets a distraught young woman working as a stripper and prostitute.

The unlikely pair become friends and Freeman's story follows the two as they each struggle to find a place for themselves.

Freeman reviews books for the Los Angeles Times and lives with her husband,



Judith Freeman

band, photographer Anthony Hernandez, in Los Angeles.

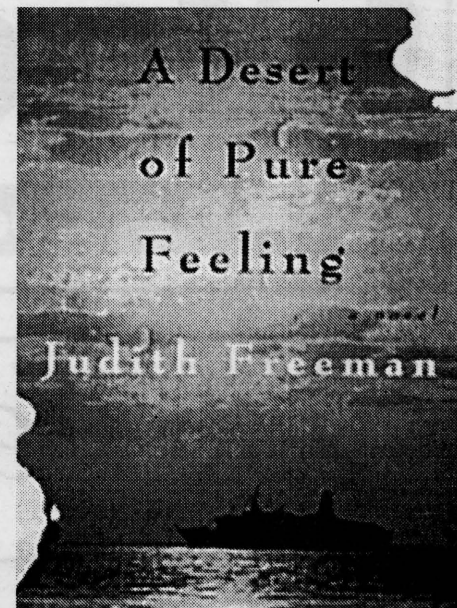
Author Lise McClendon will read from her new mystery novel, "Painted Truth," on July 21.

Heroine Alix Thorssen, who made her first appearance in "The Bluejay



Shaman," investigates an arson fire that resulted in the death of a brilliant artist.

As she picks through the charred remains, Alix realizes something is amiss



and sets out to solve the mysterious incident.

McClendon lives with her husband and two sons in Billings, Mont.

Ivan Doig in Kalispell for booksigning

Award-winning author Ivan Doig will be in Kalispell July 3 to sign copies of "Bucking the Sun," his new novel centered around Montana's famous Fort Peck Dam Project.

Books West and Village Books of Kalispell will be the final stops on Doig's statewide booksigning tour. Books West, in the First and Main building, will play host to Doig from noon to 1:30 p.m., and Village Books in Gateway West Mall will play host from 4 to 5:30 p.m.

In "Bucking the Sun," Doig portrays the lives of the Duff clan, who have been pushed off their bottomland farm by the construction of the Fort Peck Dam — one of the most daunting engineering feats in American history. He examines the triumphs and tragedies of the 1930s family, a passionate, disturbed lot who are trying to deal with the hardship and changes dealt to them by the Depression.

Doig conducted research for the novel for several years, interviewing hundreds

of dam workers, engineers and Montana townspeople. "Bucking the Sun" is the culmination of that research.

Born in White Sulphur Springs in 1939, Doig is the grandson of homesteaders and grew up on ranches where his father and grandfather worked.

He graduated from Valier High School in 1959.

A former ranch hand and newspaperman, Doig is a graduate of Northwestern University where he received a B.S. and

M.S. in journalism. He holds a Ph.D. in history from the University of Washington and honorary doctorates in literature from Montana State University and Lewis and Clark College. He currently lives in Seattle with his wife Carol, who teaches the literature of the American West.

Doig embarked on his booksigning tour with appearances in Missoula June 25-26. His others scheduled stops include Bozeman on June 28, Helena on the 29th

'Hard Twist'

Photographer documents Montana ranching women

Photographer and Montana native Barbara Van Cleve will be on hand June 30 at the Rocky Mountain Lodge to read and sign "Hard Twist," her new book documenting ranching women in the American West.

Van Cleve, a full-time photographer for 15 years, was raised some sixty years ago on a Montana ranch she still works and manages.

Her words and pictures describe that life along with the lives of other ranching women throughout the Western United States.

The subjects range from those who were born into ranching families to women who fell in love with ranching men and learned to adapt — including the '50s debutante who married a dashing Nevada cowboy who eventually deserted her and the ranch.

The title and subject for the book comes from the Western expression

"hard twist," which refers to the old-time Manila hemp, tightly twisted lariat rope.

It also refers to a compact, physically strong person with resilience, somewhat like rawhide, which expands when wet and tightens up when dry, but rarely breaks.

Van Cleve received her M.A. in English literature from Northwestern University and taught Victorian literature at universities in the Chicago area for many years.

She currently divides her time between managing the family ranch and her studio in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Admission to the reading is \$3 and begins at 7:30 p.m. at the Rocky Mountain Lodge, 6510 Highway 93 South, Whitefish.

The June reading is sponsored by Bookworks, Great Northern Brewing Company, Java Joe's and Rocky Mountain Lodge.

Western Montana Fair arrives in Missoula

August means fair time in Missoula, and this year's Western Montana Fair takes place Wednesday through Sunday, August 7-11, at the Western Montana Fairgrounds.

Tickets will go on sale approximately two weeks before the fair and will cost \$5 for adults, \$3 for senior citizens and high school students, and \$1 for grade school students.

Following is a schedule of events during fair week:

■ Horse racing is set for Tuesday through Sunday, August 6-11. The race post time 2 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and 1 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

■ The Bull-Riding Blitz is Tuesday, August 6, 8 p.m. The Bull-Riding Blitz is exactly what the name implies — nothing but bull riding.

■ Rodeo bucks into town

Wednesday through Friday, August 7-9, at 8 p.m.

■ Michelle Wright appears in concert on Saturday, August 10, at 9 p.m. Canadian country music star Michelle Wright, the Academy of Country Music's New Female Vocalist of 1993, will be the fair's featured performer. Her albums include "Now and Then" and her latest successful CD, "The Reasons Why."

■ The Demolition Derby bangs into gear Sunday, August 11, at 8 p.m. The cost is \$8 general admission for all seats. Buy your tickets early — only 3,500 are available. Last year, more than 1,000 people were turned away from this event.

For more information, call the Western Montana Fair office at (406) 721-3247.

Doig in Kalispell for booksigning

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MONTANA

Fort Peck saved thousands in Depression

With Ivan Doig's book, the historical account of the world's largest earthen dam is complete

By **BOB GILLULY**
Great Falls Tribune

FORT PECK (AP) - Not many Montanans remember the glory days, and the turmoil, of the Fort Peck Dam project.

Sixty years ago this summer construction of the world's largest earth dam hit its peak. More than 10,000 people were working there when the rest of the state's unemployment rate was 30 percent.

Newly elected President Franklin D. Roosevelt authorized the dam in 1933. It became the biggest pick-and-shovel project of the New Deal era.

And it was a godsend for Montana.

Not only for families who were going broke on farms and for truck drivers and clerks thrown out of work when businesses closed. Not only for young people who were too poor to attend college. Not only for hardrock miners without work in Butte.

But also for the moribund Great Northern Railway, which delivered 8,000 trainloads of rock, gravel, equipment and supplies to Fort Peck. Also for the Montana Power and Anaconda companies that built a 300-mile transmission line from Great Falls to Fort Peck and strung it with wire produced in Great Falls.

And also for flood control, electric power and recreation along the mighty Missouri River. The dam cost \$165 million, a chunk of the national budget in those days, but a bargain. It's paid for itself 10 times over.

Everything about Fort Peck Dam was gigantic, including waste and sloppy engineering.

Ivan Doig gets that point across remarkably well in his new book, "Bucking the Sun," a fictional but accurate picture of life and times around the dam.

I was a child in Glasgow during the dam days. My late father, Sam Gilluly, was the only newspaper editor who covered the dam project from start to finish. His stories appeared in the Glasgow Courier and Great Falls Tribune and in Associated Press dispatches across the state.

Sam Gilluly wrote an 8,000-word story of Fort Peck Dam that was published by the Tribune in 1977.



Associated Press

Montana-born author Ivan Doig is shown near the spillway of Montana's Fort Peck Dam in this undated file photo. Doig's new book, "Bucking the Sun," is a fictional account of life and times around the dam during its Depression-era construction.

That, together with Doig's book that emphasizes the human struggles of the time, makes the historical record complete. The two writers met in Helena to compare notes when Doig was doing his research on the book.

There is only one variance in the fictional and real versions.

Doig's family in the novel, the Duffs, are portrayed early on as alfalfa seed farmers in an area that would soon be flooded out by the dam. The impression Doig conveys is that a number of people were thrown off their land by the project.

In truth, there were only a few farmers and ranchers in the remote and rugged Missouri River Breaks

served by dirt roads and the solitary Lismas Ferry south of Glasgow during the early 1930s. Some were renegades who seldom paid their taxes and had no use for government.

They were philosophical kin of today's Freemen.

Yes, a few ranchers and farmers were dispossessed by the dam project. But

they were paid for their land at a time when few could afford to stay with the land. Fort Peck wasn't anything like the Tennessee Valley Authority, where hundreds of dirt farmers were forced to give up their property.

The novel's final chapters center on the biggest disaster at Fort Peck, a mammoth earth slide in 1938 that

killed eight workers. Doig mentions one true-life aspect about the day when 15 percent of the incomplete dam tumbled into the reservoir that deserves more historical detail.

Longtime Glasgow and Fort Peck resident Gene Tourtlotte was employed as a driver for project engineer Clark Kittrell. On the day of the slide he took Kittrell and other engineers to the upstream face to inspect reports of earth movement.

Just as the car stopped, the ground in front of them began to give way.

Tourtlotte backed the vehicle away as fast as possible for several hundred yards as crevasses opened in front of the car. Quick thinking saved his life and several others.

The slide did not breach the dam. But it required a lot of repair work.

My admiration for Ivan Doig is boundless. He's taken his place

alongside Bud Guthrie, Dorothy M. Johnson, Norman Maclean and Dan Cushman. They stand tall as Montana's best storytellers.

The best part of Doig's work is the wealth of detail about how Montanans lived and related to each other during the project years. They made do in crude shacks at Wheeler, New Deal, Delano Heights and McCone City, but they had steady work and enough money in their pockets to face the future.

A final thought on how tough it was in Montana during the Depression:

During the 1920s drought, about 40,000 homesteaders went broke and abandoned their land.

In 1932 the Valley County health nurse reported a number of cases of malnutrition in Glasgow. Farm wives were canning gophers to put meat on the table for their families. And ranchers were feeding thistles to their cattle. It was the only feed available.

There was no hope for people in

the whole expanse of eastern Montana.

Fort Peck Dam was their salvation.

Everything about Fort Peck Dam was gigantic, including waste and sloppy engineering.

June 23, 1996



Author Ivan Doig at the Fort Peck Dam Spillway.

CAROL M. DOIG

A dam fine book

Doig pleased with Fort Peck-set 'Bucking the Sun'

By GINNY MERRIAM
of the Missoulian

The Fort Peck Dam has held back the Missouri River for more than 50 years. But Montana-born writer Ivan Doig has long suspected there was still much novelistic dirt to be moved around in the 1930s setting of its construction.

The result of that notion, percolating in the Doig brain for 15 years, is his new novel, his eighth, "Bucking the Sun," just published by Simon & Schuster.

Doig, who became acclaimed for his first book "This House of Sky" in 1978, lives in Seattle but returns often in mind and body to his native landscape for the territory and people of his fiction. While he was researching his trilogy of novels about the historical, Scottish, sheep-ranching McCaskill family of the Two Medicine country — "English Creek," "Dancing at the Rascal Fair" and "Ride With Me, Mariah Montana" — he kept hearing "Fort Peck."

"Time and again, I'd be up on the Hi-Line or in Missoula with some old ranger, and the guy — usually a guy — would say, 'Then when I got on at Fort Peck,' or, 'When I met and married Molly at Fort Peck,'" he said in a phone interview this week. "I heard it often enough that it began to chime with me that it was a real turning point for that part of Montana."

The dam project, the result of a deal between President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Montana Senator Burton K. Wheeler, offered 1930s eastern Montanans a bootstrap lift out of the Depression. For many homestead farmers, it was the first real wage of a lifetime. It was also the first taste of life in the raucous boom towns that sprang up, full of liquor and taxi dancers and the paychecks to buy them.

"It truly did seem a wide-open place," Doig said, "by everybody's description."

The result, for a novelist, is major history in synch with major personal drama, Doig said.

"It just seemed to me a big, potent backdrop for the Duff family," he said.

The Scottish Duffs, big and



The dam under construction in 1938.

Montana Historical Society



potent themselves, are 10 strong in the story. One, Owen, is a dam engineer, married to a Bozeman-by-way-of-Toston girl. The patriarch and Owen's twin brothers and mother are displaced from a farm slated to be under water. The history is large, and the result is a big novel — "nearly Russian in size," Doig thought during the process — in an enormous landscape.

Doig, who earned undergraduate degrees in journalism and a doctorate in history, spent three years at his research. It took him to the four-mile-long earthen dam at Fort Peck twice, through the oral histories and photographs of the time, old letters, old newspapers, even to the trade magazine Engineering News Record.

"That's where I went away into the 1930s for three years," Doig said.

Then, Doig was three years in the writing. It took about a year of immersion in the subject before he knew what he could leave out.

Preview

■ Ivan Doig will autograph copies of his new novel, "Bucking the Sun," on Tuesday, June 25, 5-7 p.m. at Fact & Fiction bookstore, 216 W. Main St. in Missoula; Wednesday, June 26, noon to 1 p.m. at Costco, 3220 Northern Pacific in Missoula; also on Wednesday, June 26, 6-7 p.m. at Waldenbooks in Southgate Mall; and on Wednesday, July 3, noon to 1:30 p.m. at Books West, in the First & Main building in Kalispell; and also on Wednesday, July 3, 4-5:30 p.m. at the Village Book Shop in Gateway West Mall in Kalispell.

"I didn't want the dam to take over the book," he said. "I just wanted it to be another character."

"You take just the bones and muscle of the story," he said. "You don't want to waste time on the skin tone and what jewelry it's wearing. You want to keep it muscular."

Doig, who'll be in Montana next week as part of his 40-city book tour, grew up in Ringling and Dupuyer in a very Scottish sheep-ranching family. He played football and threw the javelin at Valier High School, graduating in 1957. Then he took the train to Northwestern University and two journalism degrees, his family's equivalent of a moon shot, he once said. The history doctorate came later, at the University of Washington, after work as a reporter.

Like his other historical novels, "Bucking the Sun" drew on Doig's skills both as a historian and a writer. The resulting novel is a marriage of fact and invention.

"You can believe all the historical laws of gravity," he said. "I will tinker with the fictional components of my characters."

For instance, Doig researched Roosevelt down to the way he stood up from his wheelchair and who was on the presidential traincar on the trip to Montana.

But, Doig said, "When Roosevelt makes his speech, half of it is Roosevelt and half is a speechwriter named Doig."

Doig is most proud of the novel's style, which is "almost theatrical arrangement of short and long scenes."

"I think what pleases me most about it is synecopating so many scenes into one big story," he said. "There are 350 scenes in this story. And there are 11 central characters — the 10 Duffs and the sheriff. That was a helluva lot of work. I'm pleased with that synecopation."

Here readers will see Doig's newspaper experience hard at work.

"Three hundred and fifty scenes, you've got to write 350 pretty damn good leads," he said. "And 350 pretty good exit lines."

Doig, whose research companion is his wife of 31 years, Carol, a professor of mass communications at Shoreline Community College, will hit 40 stores in 30 cities on his book tour. It began in San Francisco April 24 and will end in Kalispell July 3.

His venues in Missoula are somewhat different this time: an independent bookseller, a chain bookseller and an enormous discount store. The Costco stores were the biggest single purchaser of his book, with a buy of 6,000 copies.

"I see this as distinct reading constituencies," he said. "This is a kind of combination I can't object to much."

Doig has an innate loyalty to independents, but their share of the book-selling market is declining as the market gets divided by other outlets as retailing changes.

"We may be trying to write great literature," he said, "but we've got to sell books, too."

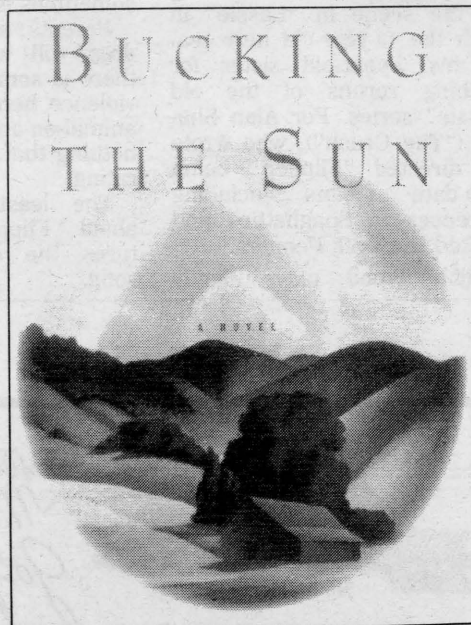
BOOKS

Writer of Western lore

Montana isn't known only for outsider groups like the Freemasons. It's also home to some of the best fiction writers today. Ivan Doig, a longtime Montana resident who now lives in Seattle, is one. Nominated for the National Book Award in 1978 for his acclaimed "This House of Sky," Doig has continued to retell the history of the West through his spare, realistic fiction.

"Bucking the Sun" (Simon and Schuster, \$23) is his newest chronicle, which traces a family against the backdrop of New Deal politics and the building of the Fort Peck Dam in Montana. He will read and sign his novel at 7:30 tonight in the Boulder Book Store, 1107 Pearl St. Call 447-2074.

— NIKI HAYDEN



MONTANA MEMORY: In his new book, Ivan Doig investigates the politics of the New Deal Era.

THEATER

Going to the dinosaurs

Is the American family going the way of the dinosaurs? Playwright Nicky Silver seems to think so in his darkly funny comedy, "Pterodactyls," being given its area premiere at 8 tonight by Actors Ensemble at the Guild Theatre in Boulder. Denial has a way of catching up with us — look at what happened to those dinosaurs of long ago. Silver's contemporary clan uses everything from alcohol to selective amnesia to avoid dealing with painful realities. But their days of denial are numbered when son Todd starts digging up the back yard, unearthing metaphorical fossil bones and more than a few family skeletons. Show time, at 4840 Sterling Drive, is 8 p.m. Fridays through Sundays through June 8; tickets \$12, with discounts for students and seniors. Call 449-3296. There will be a special performance at 7 p.m. May 30 to benefit the Boulder County AIDS Project; tickets \$25, call 444-6121.

— DIANNE ZUCKERMAN



JEEPSTER: "You remind me of my Jeep," sings R. Kelly on "You Remind Me of Something," from his latest album. For the rest of that tender couplet, you'll just have to head to Fiddler's Green on Monday.

MUSIC

Grooves and 'Grove'

Fiddler's Green plays host to a couple of big package shows this week: one for up-to-date R&B fans, the other for retro-minded rockers.

At 6:30 p.m. Monday, bedroom groover R. Kelly, who's currently in the Top 10 with "Down Low," teams with veteran rapper LL Cool J. They're joined by harmony-makers Xscape and Solo. Tickets are \$18.50-\$23.50 (expect service charges).

At 7 p.m. Wednesday, it's an 8-Track flashback with Lynyrd Skynyrd and the Doobie Brothers. If you've gotta hear "Free Bird" and "China Grove" just one more time, here's your chance. Tickets are \$18.50-\$22.50 (expect service charges).

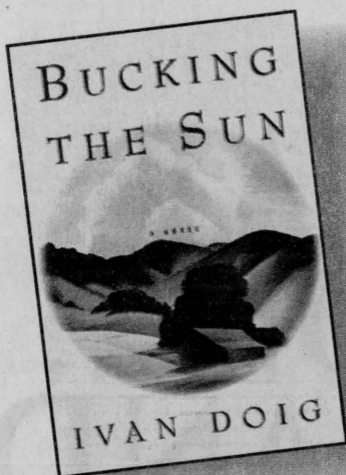
For both, call Ticketmaster, 830-8497.

— JAY DEDRICK

SECTION

D

MAY 12, 1996



Ivan Doig's epic dam

The novelist's sprawling tale set beneath a giant dam hammers to the core of Northwest culture

By ROBIN CODY

In the 18 years since his best book, "This House of Sky," Ivan Doig has written some of the finest Northwest fiction and nonfiction. Mining much the same ground, he has come up with smaller and smaller nuggets. He's so damn good, you want him to go for it. You want him to drill into the mother lode and blast away.



DOIG

INSIDE

■ **DAM HISTORY:** The building of a Montana dam, a massive public works project of the '30s, gave Ivan Doig the right stuff for his latest novel — a pivotal point in history and working-class characters. See Ellen Heltzel's "Writing in the Rain." / 7

moving engineer, believes in the nature-busting destiny of Western Man. Hugh's other sons, twins, bring to the job polar opposites of quiet reliability and ram-bunctious stunts. And here, fresh from Scotland, comes the old man's brother, Darius Duff, after bashing a guy's head in for trying to snuff a communist shipyard rally.

To this explosive mix, add wives. In addition to Hugh's long-suffering partner, we get a social-climbing beautician, a savvy waitress, a dreamy novice writer and a hooker with the proverbial heart of gold.

Doig lights the fuse on this powder keg right away.

In a flash forward, we learn that a

With "Bucking the Sun," Doig does just that.

This is his most ambitious novel, an epic tangle of Montana sod-busters turned dam workers — all in the Duff family — in the mid-1930s. They're building Fort Peck Dam, a massive earthen plug on the upper Missouri River.

These Duffs have range. The patriarch, Hugh Duff, leaves the soon-to-be drowned homestead for a job at the construction site, slipping off on drunken jags. His son Owen, the chief dirt-



DOIG

INSIDE

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Doig lights the fuse on this powder keg right away.

In a flash forward, we learn that a naked man and a naked woman — both Duffs, not married to each other — have rolled in a truck to their deaths off the dam.

Four hundred pages later, we learn why. And who they were.

It doesn't really matter who they were. Of the 20 possible pairings of unmatched Duffs, at least 12 would have made as surprising and satisfying an ending as the pairing Doig chose.

No, the real story — Doig at his best — is about people moving earth. It's about men and women carving a landscape, dredging the river bottom to stopper a great waterway with its own stuff. It's about the river, fighting back. It's about the weather. Nobody writes the

tangle of Montana sod-busters turned dam workers — all in the Duff family — in the mid-1930s. They're building Fort Peck Dam, a massive earthen plug on the upper Missouri River.

These Duffs have range. The patriarch, Hugh Duff, leaves the soon-to-be drowned homestead for a job at the construction site, slipping off on drunken jags. His son Owen, the chief dirt-

**Please turn to
DOIG, Page 7**

BUCKING THE SUN

Ivan Doig

Simon & Schuster, \$23

BOTTOM LINE

From one of the Northwest's leading writers, a new novel about Montana during the Depression demonstrates the author's skill with language and as a chronicler of the working class.

Doig tackles 'sizzle point' of Depression

Montana, 1996. The Unabomber case and the Freeman stand-off make Americans wonder what the world is coming to.

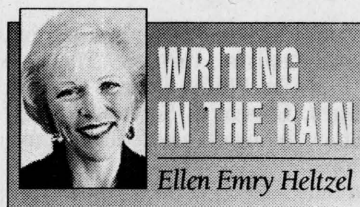
Montana, 1936. The Fort Peck Dam, which graces the cover of the first issue of *Life* magazine, gives Americans a sense of pride and hope as the country surfaces from the depths of the Depression.

Two competing visions of the nation: one alluding to the social disintegration and distrust of government that now swirls at our feet, the other celebrating the stubborn optimism and abundance of resources that once seemed our salvation.

Seattle writer Ivan Doig, a historian by training, has made Montana his backdrop of choice and become the leading chronicler of its history through both his fiction and nonfiction. In his latest book, "Bucking the Sun," he returns to Big Sky country during the 1930s. His particular focus: the building of the Fort Peck Dam.

"Bucking the Sun" is Doig's first novel with a specific historical event at its center, one that both serves his working-man impulses well and spotlights the huge public works projects that not only helped lift the country out of the Depression but also forever altered the face of the West.

Dams have lost their luster these days, in the face of diminishing



WRITING
IN THE RAIN

Ellen Emry Heltzel

salmon runs and the emphasis on keeping nature natural. But across the West they remain mammoth testimonials to human will and to the important role the federal government has played and still plays in this part of the country.

Unlike the more familiar Hoover and Grand Coulee, those massive constructs of concrete along the Colorado and Columbia, the Fort Peck is a dirt-filled barrier four miles long and 25 stories high that was built to control the flow of the Missouri River. Beyond the story of its construction is the disaster that struck there in 1938, when a 2,000-foot-long section of it broke off, burying eight men. An "engineering misunderstanding," Doig explained in what seems like a classic of understatement, during a phone call to his home in Seattle: Water seeping into the shale foundation created a crack that sent tons of earth and rock plunging downstream in one of those made-for-the-movies disaster scenarios.

Doig, who comes to Portland May 21 for a 7:30 p.m. appearance at the Audubon Society of Portland, says

he got the idea for a novel about the dam while doing research for his previous books during the 1980s. Struck by how many old-timers used the Fort Peck project as a reference point, he began investigating its construction, which employed 10,000 workers.

"A lot of those people got their first radio at Fort Peck, their first car, their first truck or motorcycle. In other words, they entered our century through the building of that dam."

Doig says he also was interested in building a novel around the Depression because it's one of those "sizzle points" in American history and one that has particular relevance to contemporary politics: The New Deal, he points out, not only created huge public works projects but also welfare reform, specifically the safety net that's now being so hotly debated in Washington. (That net, by the way, included both guarantees of support for the poor, which everybody seems to have an opinion on, and for the elderly, in the form of the politically taboo topic, Social Security.)

Those familiar with Doig's work — most notably "This House of Sky," his memoir of growing up in Montana — can sense his allegiances in his writing. One is to the working class, the other to historical detail. He took his wife's hairdresser to lunch in order to figure out what techniques one of his char-

acters, a beautician, used to create the waves and curls of the time.

As for another character, a prostitute, Doig says he did field work on that one, too: He went to the Oasis Brothel Museum in Wallace, Idaho.

The 57-year-old Doig traces his preoccupation with "the labor and craft angle of life" to his own upbringing, as the grandson of Scottish immigrants and son of Montana sheep farmers. Growing up in a sparsely populated, remote pocket of north-central Montana, Doig saw his family's profits wiped out by bad weather and decided he wanted a different kind of life.

With his parent's encouragement, he became the first in his family to graduate from high school and go to college. He earned a bachelor's degree in journalism from Northwestern University and his doctorate in history from the University of Washington.

True to his roots, however, Doig values the lessons of a hard-working childhood and says they played a part in shaping his successful writing career. "When a chance comes up, you know how to grab it and put it in your pocket," Doig says. "As Branch Rickey told Jackie Robinson, 'Luck is the residue of design.'"

Ellen Emry Heltzel writes weekly for Arts & Books. She may be reached by phone at 221-8066, by fax at 294-4026 and by mail at 1320 S.W. Broadway, Portland, Ore. 97201.

Doig: Novelist penetrates heart of Northwest Anglo culture

■ Continued from Page 1

extremes of Montana weather better than Ivan Doig.

A truck driver "bucks the sun" when hauling straight into the glare of sunrise or sunset. Likewise, the Duffs buck cosmic forces in the doomful shadow of the rising dam. Through shifting points of view, we see Fort Peck — a Depression-era beehive — from several angles. Everybody works, on the dam itself or in the squalid shantytown nearby.

They're stubborn Scots. Nobody grows much, or even questions beliefs. They stay in their roles, trading witty barbs and colorful sayings.

Had Doig not artfully broadened the scope, the Duffs might have been

pathetic, rather than tragic. But he brings the global Communist movement into play. Franklin D. Roosevelt delivers a ringing speech at the dam. Even Hitler and Stalin play bit roles.

"Bucking the Sun" is a big book.

It might also have been a great book, if not for the stiffness of language. Doig, with his odd sentence structure, is never easy. Wooden dialogue, especially, slows things down. He is curiously reluctant to use the simple verb "said." Instead (to pick just one exchange) he writes "chortled out," "hazarded," "decided to contribute," "intoned," "plunged on to," and "made himself confine to." But Doig fans put up with the rubble for the gems re-

vealed. The reason he is so widely, and rightly, admired is because of his gift for writing *Man* against the elements. People work the land.

And every once in a while Doig just nails it. Listen to this:

"The hammer sounds racketed into the Wheeler night ... *WHAM wham-am WHAM-am*. While the hammers hit those higher notes, a pile driver gave bass *whumps* beside the river. The bluffs of the Missouri here had heard din before — the bawling rumble of buffalo herds, the last-stand discourse of Sitting Bull's winter camp before the summer of the Little Big Horn, the axes of steamboat woodhawks — but there had been half a century of comparative silence since any of those. Now

and for years to come, a river of sound waited to drown down onto the site of Fort Peck — the opera shrieks of shale saws, the incessant comings and goings of locomotives and bulldozers and trucks, the false-to of steam whistles, the attacks of jackhammers."

In "Bucking the Sun," Doig hammers straight to the core of Northwest Anglo culture. His is the voice of a major writer. He's one of the best we have on what it is to live in, and to change, a place.

Robin Cody is the author of "Ricochet River," a novel, and "Voyage of a Summer Sun," winner of the 1995 Oregon Book Award for literary non-fiction.

► THE BOOKMONGER

Family saga is 99 percent great reading

"Bucking the Sun" by Ivan Doig, Simon & Schuster - \$23

Seattle writer Ivan Doig returns to his cherished Montana roots for the setting of his new Depression-era novel, "Bucking the Sun." Using the massive Fort Peck Dam construction site as backdrop, Doig introduces us to the Duffs, a family long riven by injured pride and cross-purposes. But when the death of two of them under curious — even suspicious — circumstances brings the sheriff snooping around, the family draws together in reflexive self-protection.

In real life, when the Fort Peck Dam straddled the throat of the Missouri River in the late 1930s, it drowned scores of family farms behind it. The people displaced were thrown life rings, however, in the

way of jobs with guaranteed wages, as the government hired them as laborers to complete the ambitious project. This is just one of the ironies Doig exploits in "Bucking the Sun," when patriarch Hugh Duff, his wife Meg, and their twin sons are uprooted by the land buy-out. When they, like the rest, go downriver to find work at the dam site, they come across Owen Duff, the estranged eldest son, who had abandoned farming some years before to go to college. He now works as one of the engineers masterminding the dam's construction.

On top of this, throw in the sons' marriages to three spirited young women with agendas of their own and the arrival from Scotland of Hugh's brother — a brooding man with Communist sympathies, a

long-smoldering desire for sister-in-law Meg, and a dark secret that has precipitated his appearance in Big Sky Country.

Those problematic relationships are complicated even further by ramshackle housing, alcohol abuse, violence and prostitution in the temporary and freewheeling settlements where the workers live. The plot becomes as thick as porridge.

Doig is such a gifted writer — the vast Montana landscape and the boundless overarching sky are painted to perfection with his masterful prose. His account of the brutal yet magnificent dam construction reflects painstaking historical and technical research. And when it comes to plot, he threads through the intricacies of ever-changing human relationships with perfection.

But then, after 400 pages of purely delicious story developments, complex characterization, wonderful scene-setting and suspense, Doig falls down on the job in the closing pages of the book. While the ending is a surprise, the character motivation behind it is lame: one player makes an unconvincing sacrifice while another, who formerly had operated with an interesting set of flaws, suddenly transforms into a completely villainous boor.

While the conclusion to this family saga is a disappointing fizzle, everything leading up to it makes for an immensely satisfying read.

The Bookmonger is Barbara Lloyd McMichael, who writes this weekly column focusing on the books, authors and publishers of the Pacific Northwest.



Photo: Susan Lippman

MEET HAL SIROWITZ
TUESDAY, APRIL 30

AT
7:30 P.M.

**MOTHER
SAID**
POEMS
BY

HAL
SIROWITZ



Crown, \$15.00

Hal Sirowitz, who has performed his poems on MTV's *Spoken Word Unplugged*, will be at Borders to read from his new collection, ***Mother Said***.

BORDERS

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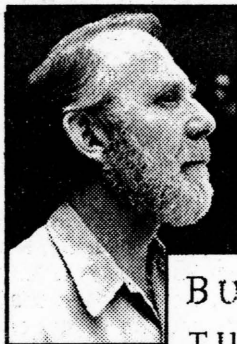


Photo: Carol M. Doig

MEET IVAN DOIG
THURSDAY, MAY 2

AT
7:30 P.M.

**BUCKING
THE SUN**



IVAN DOIG

Simon & Schuster, \$23.00

Ivan Doig, author of *This House of Sky and Heart Earth*, will be at Borders to read from and sign copies of his new novel, ***Bucking the Sun***.

BORDERS

BOOKS • MUSIC • CAFE

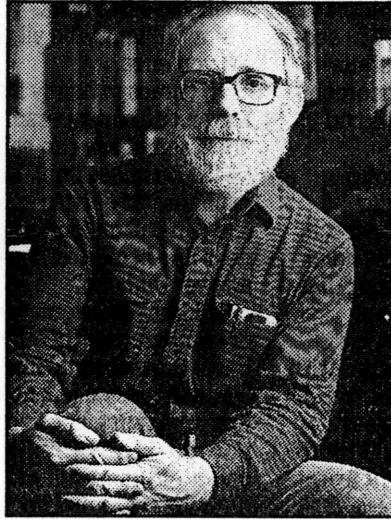
612 E. Liberty near State
Mon-Thurs 9-10 • Fri-Sat 9-11
Sun 10-8

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Ann Arbor News 4/28/96

their lives and literary work

Other readers will include Betty Bell, U-M faculty member and author of "Faces in the Moon." Golden also will read from her short-story collection, "Acts of Love," which appears in "Crimson Edge: Older Women Writing," edited by Sondra Zeidenstein.



Ivan Doig, author of the new novel "**Bucking the Sun**," will be at Borders at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, May 2. The Montana-born storyteller writes in this book about members of the Duff family, who were put to work building a New Deal dam on the Missouri River.

Doig, born in Montana and now living in Seattle, researched the book for several years, conducting hundreds of interviews with dam workers, engineers and Montana townspeople.

The author has been described "one of the best we've got, a muscular and exceedingly good writer who understands our hunger for stories." That description comes from author E. Annie Proulx, who wrote "Shipping News."

Doig's first novel was the "**The Sea Runners**," published in 1982. He also wrote "**This House of Sky**," a finalist for the National Book Award in 1978.

A publication party for "**Becoming National: A Reader**," edited by Geoffrey Eley and Ronald G.

Suny, is coming up 4-6 p.m. Friday, May 3, at Shaman Drum Bookshop. The book is a discussion of nationalism informed by the emergence of cultural studies. Suny teaches political science at the University of Chicago. Eley teaches history at U-M.

Poet **Sandra Steingraber** reads from "**Post-Diagnosis**," in the After Hours Poetry series at 8 p.m. Friday at Shaman Drum Bookshop. The series is co-sponsored by poet Bob Hicok and the store. Steingraber's poems move from a cancer patient's hospital bed to the atomic bomb test sites. Steingraber, a poet, survived cancer in her 20s and now is an activist biologist.

BOOK ENDS

"**How to Help Your Child Overcome Your Divorce**" has been published by American Psychiatric Press, Inc. The book is for separated, divorcing, and divorced parents with children ages 12 and under. One of the authors is **Dr. Elissa P. Benedek**, who teaches psychiatry at U-M, MSU, and Wayne State University, and also is director of research and training at the Center for Forensic Psychiatry. Benedek worked on the book with Catherine F. Brown, assistant managing editor of Psychiatric News.

If you find yourself at Barnes & Noble, pick up the form, "**How to Win Books and Influence Others**," and use it to nominate your favorite book. If the store uses your pick, you win a hardcover book of your choice (up to \$30).

"**Standing Your Ground: Territorial Disputes and International Conflict**," has been published by the University of Michigan Press. The author is **Paul Huth**, who teaches political science at U-M and does research for the Center for Political Studies at the Institute for Social Research.

In the book, Huth examines 129 territorial disputes between 1950 and 1990, analyzing causes and resolutions. The book looks at issues including the impact of domestic politics on national security policy.

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NEW BOOKS AT THE LIBRARIES

*Ann Arbor
News 4/29/76*

New books at The Ann Arbor District Library:

"Bucking The Sun: A Novel," by Ivan Doig. The acclaimed author of "This House Of Sky" returns with an American saga set in Montana during the construction of the Fort Peck Dam. This epic tale centers on the troubled Duff family whose turbulent lives strain with the challenges presented by work on this ambitious project.

"False Impressions: The Hunt For Big-Time Art Fakes," by Thomas Hoving. The best-selling author and former director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art introduces a delightful examination of the history of art forgery. Hoving's engaging style and wit highlight this intriguing new non-fiction work.

"The Good Society: The Humane Agenda," by John Kenneth Galbraith. The famous economist presents a blueprint for a more economical society. In this intelligent new essay, Galbraith explains how we could establish a more humane world with changes in education, taxes, immigration and environmental responsibility.

"Low-Fat Living: Turn Off The Fat-Makers, Turn On The Fat-Burners For Longevity, Energy, Weight Loss, Freedom From Disease," by Robert K. Cooper; with Leslie L. Cooper. The Coopers, who reside in Ann Arbor, offer new advice for reducing fat. This book identifies 10 steps to trim fat as well as recipes from the Cooper home, for delicious brunches, snacks and desserts that can be made in minutes.

"Tumbling," by Diane McKinney-Whetstone. This debut novel, set in 1940's South Philadelphia, focuses on a close knit African American community. When a city proposal to put a road through the area threatens community life, one woman and her family become the unexpected leaders in a struggle to keep family and friends intact.

New books at the Ypsilanti District Library:

"Underdog. A Melaine Trav-

is Mystery," by Lauries Berenson. Connecticut teacher and single mother, Melaine Travis and her son Davey have acquired a Standard Poodle puppy, Faith. They sign up for a breed-handling class, which is cut short by sudden death, and Melaine smells murder.

"Harm's Way," by Stephen White. Peter Arvin is found bloody and dying on the stage of a Colorado theatre, and it is assumed that he has become the victim of a serial killer. The police ask Dr. Alan Gregory, Peter's friend to put together a psychological profile, and Peter's widow also asks for help.

"With Child," by Laurie King. San Francisco homicide detective Kate Martinelli agrees to take care of twelve-year old Jules when the girl's parents go on a trip. Kate decides to drive with Jules to Northern Washington to visit her friend Lee. During the trip, in a rural area where a serial killer has been victimizing young girls, Jules disappears.

"Mrs. Malory Wonders Why," by Hazel Holt. Mrs. Sheila Malory resides in Taviscombe, a scenic seaside town in England. When Miss Graham, a very elderly lady, is killed with her favorite dessert. Mrs. Malory begins persistent enquiries that may also get her killed.

"Central America on the Loose, On the Cheap, Off the Beaten Path," by Berkeley Students in cooperation with the Associated Students of the University of California. A well-organized and well-written guide that is thoroughly up-to-date. Also included are 40 pages of detailed maps.

"The Olympic Games. 100 Years of the Games," by Susan Wels. This is a beautifully illustrated history of the modern Olympic movement beginning with the first Olympiad in Athens in 1896. Featuring more than 350 color photographs and illustrations, it shows the greatest performances, the evolution of Olympic equipment, and records of past Olympic equipment, and records of past Olympic champions.

Building Lives In Montana

The power of geography
in a big, roistering novel

MONTANA NOVELIST IVAN DOIG sets himself a challenge in his big, roistering new novel, *Bucking the Sun* (Simon & Schuster; 412 pages; \$23). His subject—not just the book's setting but also the presence that rules its composition—is a monstrous, chancy construction project in the mid-1930s, the huge Fort Peck dam across the Missouri River in Montana bottomland.

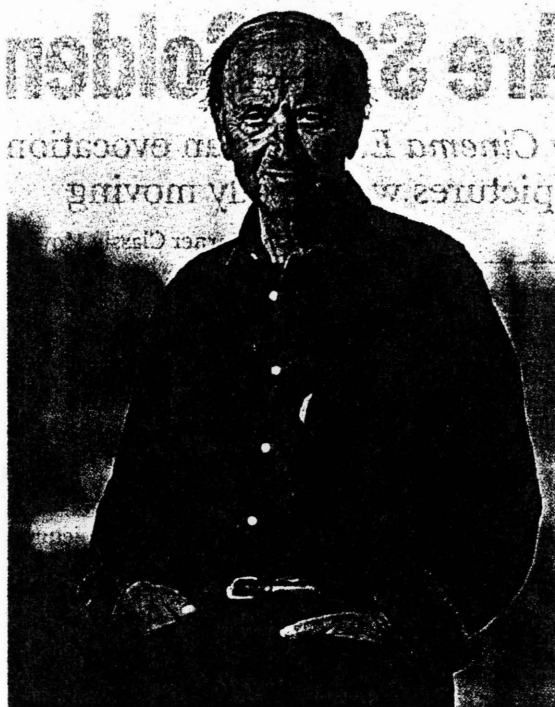
To save his novel from the curse of what used to be called socialist realism, Doig must come up with characters large enough to symbolize the unruly river and the vast dam in combat as construction proceeds, but sufficiently strong and gritty

in their own right so that they can't be yawned away as costumed actors posing in front of a diorama.

He finds effective protagonists in the Duff clan, Scottish immigrants and hard-scrabble farmers losing their battle with drought and grasshoppers in the river valley until the dam project lurches into motion. Owen, the bookish eldest son, is an engineer. His twin brothers Neil, a truck driver, and Bruce, a diver, work in the river's murk. Father Hugh is a reluctant laborer and enthusiastic boozier, and Uncle Darius, a union organizer on the run. The younger men marry and risk lives and livers as they watch the river slowly pool up behind the growing dam.

The reader is pulled into their story by a puzzle the author has set: What two Duffs—man and woman, naked, married but not to each other—are extracted drowned from a submerged truck as the construction winds down? This is skillful manipulation, the novelist as conjurer ensuring that the reader's first thought is of human beings, not power shovels and spillways. The device works beautifully, and so does Doig's roguish novel. Though not well enough—perhaps never that well, if your characters wear jeans—for its author to escape the tag “regional.”

—By John Skow



MAKING A STATEMENT:
Moore plays tricks with the
notion of poetic justice

ed statement identifying the intended victim as “Pierre Brossard, former Chief of the Second Section of the Marseilles region of the Milice, condemned to death in absentia by French courts, in 1944 and again in 1946.” The statement goes on to say that Brossard was charged with the massacre of 14 Jews on June 15, 1945. The document, which the old man realizes was to be pinned on his body, concludes, “The case is closed.”

Not true, of course, because the old man—who is indeed Brossard, although he has called himself Pouliot for many years—survives. But who, in 1989, still wants to punish him for his past by killing him? Brossard assumes that Jewish money is behind this attempt on his life. That belief, a measure of his reflexive anti-Semitism, will have fatal consequences.

The Statement may have a classic thriller's plot—a character on the run, private power plays behind public façades—but it unfolds in a moral universe infinitely more complex and

To Avenge or to Forget the Past?

A provocative thriller is set in a
complex moral universe

GIVEN A SCENE IN WHICH AN ASSASSIN stalks a potential victim, most readers will, in the absence of other evidence, instinctively root for the quarry. In the opening pages of his new novel, *The Statement* (Dutton; 250 pages; \$22.95), Brian Moore provides just such a scene: in a village in the south of France an old man is being tailed by a hired killer. The murder, the assassin decides, will take place when his target drives back to the monastery where he has been staying. Feigning engine trouble along the route, he waits for the old man to stop, then approaches as if to ask for a lift, pulls out a pistol and is fatally shot twice in the chest by the man he planned to kill.

This sort of narrative turnaround usually provides the pleasure of surprise, the sense that poetic justice has foiled a malevolent act. Moore quickly cuts off such easy certainties. He shows the old man examining the possessions of his would-be murderer. They include a print-

compromised than the white hats vs. the black hats so typical of the genre. The novel asks not only who is trying to murder Brossard but also why Brossard has been able to remain in France for 44 years, receiving asylum from various Roman Catholic monasteries, and a 1971 presidential pardon for the crimes he committed during the German occupation and the Vichy regime.

“It is hard to pass judgment on what people did back then,” says a French army colonel who is also looking to bring Brossard to justice. This remark is the crux of the novel. Does a time come when people must be forgiven for doing what they mistakenly believed was right or unavoidable? Or should evil never be forgiven or forgotten? By challenging the reader to confront these questions, *The Statement* is ultimately unforgettable. —By Paul Gray





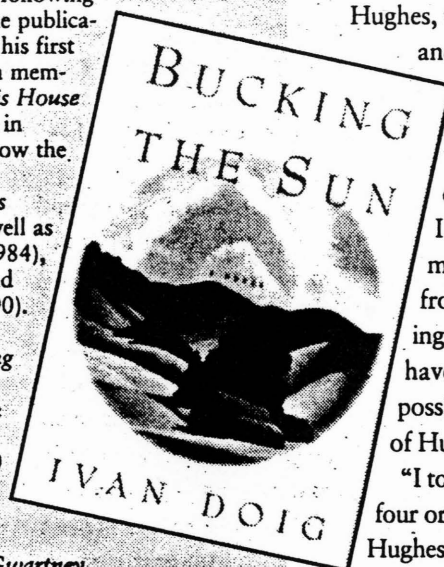
Montana writer to read

Ivan Doig, who was born in White Sulphur Springs, Montana, and grew up along the Rocky Mountain front, writes about his homeland. Doig gained a huge following after the publication of his first book, a memoir, *This House of Sky*, in

1978, and fans have continued to follow the Montana adventures found in Doig's work—books such as *Winter Brothers* (1980), *The Sea Runners* (1982), as well as his trilogy of novels *English Creek* (1984), *Dancing at the Rascal Fair* (1987), and *Ride With Me, Mariah Montana* (1990).

Doig revisits his old stomping grounds with his newest book, *Bucking the Sun*, published just this month by Simon & Schuster. He'll read from the novel at Soreng Hall at the Hult Center for the Performing Arts on May 20 as part of the acclaimed Voices of Place reading series. The event begins at 7:30 pm; tickets are \$11.

—Debra Gwartney



the glove compartment. I used to go out in the semi-desert around Rock Springs, Wyo., and fire it at rocks, pretending they were newspaper publishers or book publishers." It was vintage Hughes, the whole letter,

and it made me smile widely. I had forgotten over the years how much I cherished this man. I had forgotten how much I had learned from him. Even owning a television might have been justified, possibly, on the merits of Hughes Rudd alone.

"I took Ann to Oxford four or five years ago," Hughes wrote, "so she could see the Faulkner

house, and the ole burg didn't look the same at all: they were remodeling the courthouse! Insanity. When they get started they don't leave a fellow nothing, as Hemingway said somewhere."

Hughes knew that I knew that in many ways that old courthouse, with its Confederate monument facing stubbornly South, had been a symbol of Faulkner's world and Faulkner's central idea. But of course the civic beavers who give face-lifts to historic courthouses can't obliterate the essence of recollection, and in even his cynical moments Hughes would admit it. "I've lost track of all the Faulkner relatives and friends I knew in those days," he added.

People come into our lives and then they go out again. The entropy law, as applied to human relations. Sometimes in their passing, though, they register an unimagined and far-reaching influence, as I suspect Hughes Rudd did upon me. There is no scientific way to discern such effects, but memory believes before knowing remembers. And the past lives coiled within the present, beyond sight, beyond revocation, lifting us up or weighting us down, sealed away—almost completely—behind walls of pearl.

"The Siphuncle" (c) 1987 David Quammen. All rights reserved. This story originally appeared in Outside Magazine.



Book News from The
King's English Bookshop
Volume 4, Number 2
June 1996

The Inkslinger

Who's Reading What

What Writers We Love to Read Are Reading

by Kathy Ashton and Betsy Burton



John Mortimer after a hair-raising ride
with chauffeur Betsy Burton

Ed. Note: Thank you John Mortimer
however you are; we loved having
you at TKE—and we likewise loved
Corelli's Mandolin.

JEANETTE HAIEN: Joseph
Rodsky's essays, *On Grief
and Reason*, are an
absolute glory. Here in N.Y.C.,
Books and Co. is the New York
equivalent of The King's
English, a great private bookstore with
great newsletter. The owner, Jeanette
Watson, has begun her own imprint.
The first books will be reprints—
Annah Green's *The Dead of the
House* which *Publisher's Weekly*
called "a rare specimen of almost per-
fect writing"; and *Joan of Arc...in
Her Own Words* (the actual tran-
script of Joan of Arc's own testimony at
her trial). Finally, I've been reading
Mark Strand's newest poems, which are
absolutely transcendent—the best he's
done. They're suffused with wonderful
humor about the way things are and
what we have to overcome.

JOHN MORTIMER:
Corelli's Mandolin by
Louis de Bernieres is a book
which restores your faith in
life, love, the value of fiction,
and the insanity of war.

MARK STRAND: I read *The Following Story*, this tiny little book by
Nooteboom, so now I want to read his new one. I loved Jorie Graham's *The
Dream of the Unified Field*, and thought it was terrific. I recently bought
Francette Pacteau's *Symptom of Beauty* which looks intriguing. I'm teach-
ing, I'm alone in Chicago surrounded by books, and life is good. *Ed. Note:* Mark
is teaching a class on Wallace Stevens at the University of Chicago. He hasn't

lost his sense of humor. When asked
how he was, he said, "I'm much
diminished—I have a couple little
sperms swimming around in the
sac waiting for extinction, and a
couple poems still rattling around in
my head, but that's about it."

CLYDE EDGERTON: Clyde called
from the University of Mississippi,
where he and his wife are teaching.

Robert Wright's *The Moral
Animal* is Clyde's current
reading matter: "It's a book
on evolutionary psychology.
I'm seeing how this fits
into everything I write.
I'm also reading a lot of short stories

15th East Arts Festival



June 6, 7, 8, 9

Kids' Day: Thursday, June 6

Face painting, balloons, stories, sidewalk art

May We Have Your Autograph Please?

During our summer sale on **Thursday, June 6**, we will have
some of our favorite children's authors on hand to sign your
book purchases. **Lesley DuTemple** will be in the store from
10:00 to 11:00, **Pat Bagley** will be in residence from 11:00 to
12:00, and **Mark and Caralyn Buehner** will sign on at 1:00.
The King's English also has signed copies of books by Demi,
Will Hobbs, and Debra Frasier.

30% off all hardbacks
40% off if you buy 3 or more
10% off everything
in the store!

30% off framing at The Framery



Clyde Edgerton

from writers like Rick Bass, Larry
Brown, and Jill McCorkle for the class-
es I'm teaching." Clyde is delighted
with his wife Susan Ketchin's latest

Continued on page 2

NEW BOOKS

A Bumper Crop of New Fiction



Bucking the Sun, Ivan Doig

In *Bucking the Sun*, a work of astonishing mystery and passion, Doig bucks his own

boundaries. Departing from his typical lush, lyrical prose, he skillfully transposes the mannered dialogue of a '30s film into the street argot of a small Montana town. With the building of a great dam as backdrop, Doig creates the sweeping saga of a family, from the moment they lose their own land to their work on the enormous structure that shadows what once was theirs. Simultaneously, he documents the birth of a town from the empty prairie.

Bucking the Sun is a haunting work, the kind we remember long after the last page is turned, transcending its setting to become a metaphor for the birth of our country in all its greed and glory.—KA, Simon & Schuster, \$23.00

A Fine Balance, Rohinton Mistry

A Parsi seamstress, two village tailors, and a student from the partitioned area of the Himalayas—this ragtag household melds into something like a family, as



outside the "State of Emergency" that was 1975 India executes its barbarous and senseless policies. Beggars, thugs, 'family planning' officials, an ex-lawyer proofreader—high caste and low—an unforgettable cast of characters set in a lacerating social context make the reader cringe, then hope, sick-en, anger, then hope again. *A Fine Balance* is a breathtaking, utterly memorable novel that maintains a perfect balance between the dictates of history and of the human heart.—BB, Knopf, \$26.00

Babel Tower, A. S. Byatt

Babel Tower is a towering edifice of language, built on a foundation of infor-

Continued on page 3

Continued from Page 1

book, *The Christ-Haunted Landscape: Faith and Doubt in Southern Fiction*.

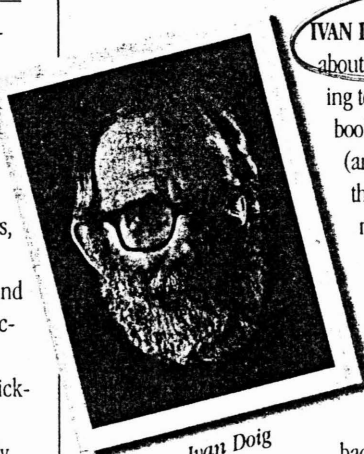
RICHARD DOOLING: I just finished *CivilWarLand in Bad Decline* by George Saunders, an ironic, dark, satiric novella and five short stories that manage to be tender and sensitive at the same time, the best thing I have read in months. *Ed Note:* Dooling, author of *White Man's Grave*, is working on a new novel involving neuroscience, the law, and hate crimes. He has promised to visit TKE when it comes out.

DENNIS LEHANE: *Very Old Bones* by William Kennedy, *How the Irish Saved Civilization* by Thomas Cahill, *Dancing After Hours* by Andre Dubus, and *Money* by Martin Amis.

KATIE COLES: I have been teaching fiction this year, and my favorite of all the books I taught was Alice Munro's *Open Secrets*.

JON HASSLER: I just finished John Updike's new book (*In the Beauty of the Lilies*) and loved it.

ROD DECKER: Last week I read *Story of My Life* by Jay McInerney which was pretty good, this week I read *Bomber's Law* by George V. Higgins which was middling, and *Plausible Prejudices* by Joseph Epstein which is wonderful. I have continued to read the *History of Utah* which is in three (thick) volumes, and is not very good. No one should read it unless they're writing a book on Utah—which I am.



Ivan Doig

IVAN DOIG: Ivan was just about to set off on the reading tour for his newest book, *Bucking the Sun* (an extraordinary work that we can't recommend too highly). His current reading list:

"The Ten Thousand Things" by Maria Demoût, an old

Vintage paperback set in Indonesia, a

wonderful novel of the post-colonial experience. Demoût is a writer's writer, a truly magical voice." He has also returned to an old favorite, Roddy Doyle, re-reading *The Commitments*. He's reading Doyle's newest book, *The Woman Who Walked into Doors* as well, mostly to see what Doyle is doing as a writer. Finally, because he is just setting out on a reading tour, he has been reading Laurence Olivier's book on acting. "After all," he says, "writing is a performance art."

JAMES HALL: David Guterson's *Snow Falling on Cedars*, *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* by John Berendt, *The Blue Wall* by Kenneth Able, Robert Crais' new novel *Sunset Express*, and *A Man's Game* by Newton Thornburg, his seventh novel. *Ed Note:* James Hall liked Thornburg's earlier novel *Cutter and Bone* so much he named his own protagonist Thorn in honor of Thornburg. Hall is also planning to pick up a copy of Robert Crais' new novel *Sunset Express*. The bad guy in Hall's own new mystery is into etymology, and he loves to play around with words. Set on a cruise ship, Hall's latest book is called *Buzz Cut*, and it's great.

JOHN DUFRESNE: I've just read *The Romance Reader* by Pearl Abraham, *Objects in Mirror Are Closer Than They Appear* by Katharine Weber, *Under the Feet of Jesus* by Helena Maria Viramontes, *A Feather on the Breath of God* by Sigrid Nunez, and *Native Speaker* by Chang-Rae Lee.



John Dufresne

ADEN ROSS: I've been reading *Virgin in the Garden*, by A.S. Byatt, which I didn't like as much as *Possession*. I'm also reading *Language and Art in the Navajo Universe* by Gary Witherspoon, who feels that you can't understand a culture until you understand its language. And I'm reading *Vienna*

READINGS



KLANCY DE NEVERS

will read from *Cohasset Beach Chronicles*
Friday June 7, 7:30 pm, TKE Patio

New Deal backdrop for mystery

Dam project in 1930s lures Duff family members to new way of life — and death

By Melissa Hill
Wisconsin State Journal

Sheriff Carl Kinnick isn't expecting a mystery he won't be able to solve when he peers into the Ford truck his men have just pulled out of the Missouri River.

Inside the truck are two naked bodies, a wet wad of clothing and a gearshift stuck in neutral:

"They're married people, right? You said their names are both Duff. The undersheriff hesitated. . . . 'That's the thing about this Carl,' the undersheriff said at last. 'Married, you bet. Only not to each other.'"

And thus begins Ivan Doig's "Bucking the Sun," a tale of some 10 or so of these Duffs. In 1933, one Duff son gets a job engineering at the Fort Peck Dam, an FDR New Deal project for the out-of-work men of Montana. At about the same time, his parents, Hugh and Meg Duff, get told their alfalfa farm is scheduled to become part of the new lake, so they and their two other sons head out to find jobs — and in the sons' cases, wives — at the dam.

The mystery of which Duff died sleeping with which Duff serves to focus the book, and it's a convincing question in light of the fact that lunchtime sex and breast size seem to be the central concerns of

the male characters. Even when Darius Duff, Hugh's estranged brother from Scotland, shows up with his communist politics, he spends as much of his energies reminiscing on his younger days with Meg and his current dalliances with Fort Peck's most peroxidized taxi dancer, Proxy Shannon, as he does participating in rallies at the Temple of Labor.

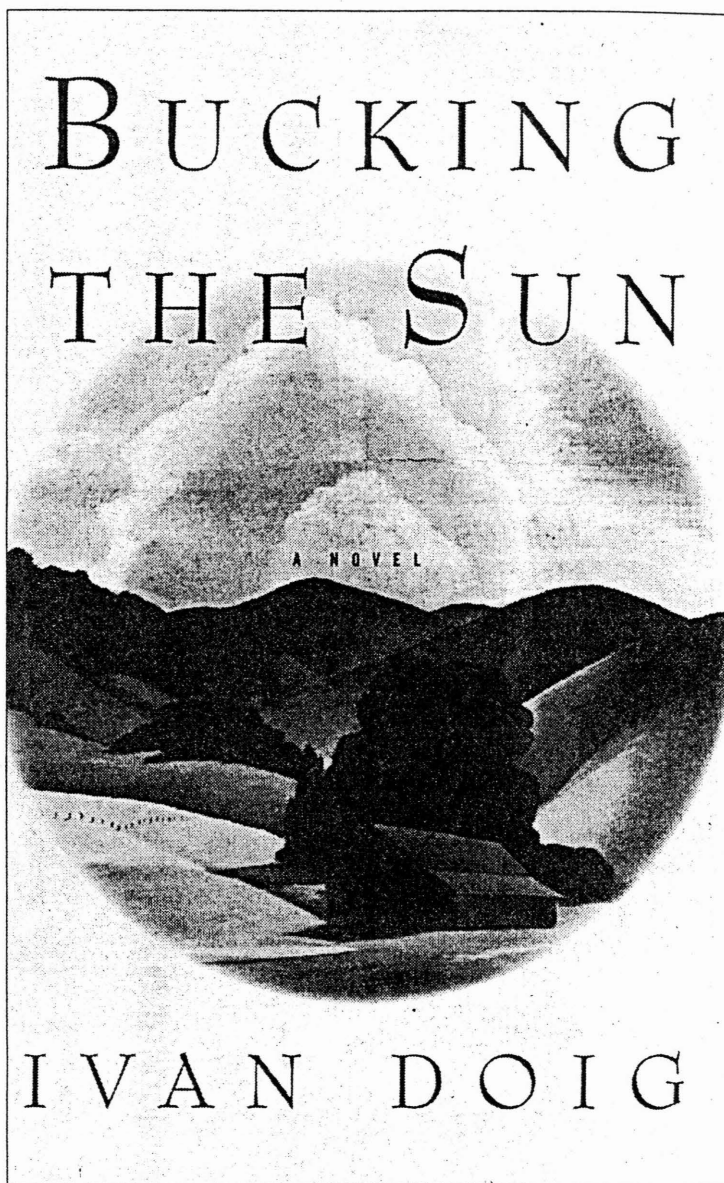
After a big and somewhat suspicious mud slide kills eight dam-workers, the book runs rapidly toward its murkily staged ending.

Doig gives an impressively detailed sense of what it's like to work on and live with such a huge project, but instead of spending more of this novel's time exploring the political history that would make this book really substantial, Doig is content to deliver only pieces.

As we revisit Sheriff Kinnick one last time in the present-day frame of 1991,

we see him in his nursing-home-property wheelchair, staring at the immensity of the dam and still wondering why two of the Duffs perished under the water. And, even though we are finally let in on the secret, the story of these two Duffs rolls as easily as those of the others into the swell of people who formed one of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's great social constructions.

■ The mystery of which Duff died sleeping with which Duff serves to focus the book, and it's a convincing question in light of the fact that lunchtime sex and breast size seem to be the central concerns of the male characters



Wisconsin State Journal 5/12/96

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LUCE PRESS CLIPPINGS

Ivan Doig's latest — dams, land, death

"Bucking the Sun," by Ivan Doig. *Simon & Schuster*. 412 pages. \$23.

By CHRIS KRIDLER
SUN STAFF

"Bucking the Sun" is named, aptly, with a phrase that means pressing on against the glare of sunset or sunrise, but in its stubborn, ambitious journey, it meanders a little too long.

By Ivan Doig — whose many books include "This House of Sky," a National Book Award finalist in 1978 — this latest novel is an old-fashioned American epic about one family's involvement in the building of the Fort Peck dam in Montana during the Depression. The story's sprawl is impressive, from family squabbles to

lovers to labors to wonders of engineering, but when it comes to the latter, there's too dam much: too much dam, not enough character.

The characters are an intriguing lot, at first. Members of the tough Duff family go to work on the dam when the government takes away their farm, which is to be flooded by the New Deal project. Hugh Duff is a stubborn old goat with a penchant for liquor, and his wife still bases her worth on her ancestors' glories in Scotland. Their sons are Owen, an engineer with a major role in the enormous task of stopping the Missouri River; the more down-to-earth Neil; and brash Bruce. They all end up with spirited wives, even Hugh's brother Darius, a Communist and, perhaps not so coincidentally in the

context of this red-white-and-blue tale, a bad lot who flees trouble in the Old Country.

The story opens with the local sheriff investigating the mysterious deaths of two of the Duffs, a naked man and woman who end up in a truck in the depths of the dammed waters. You have to wait a whole book to find out which two, and why, as the story goes back and forth in time to fill in the details — and fill in the river.

The book is tellingly dedicated "To novelists who deliver the eloquence of the edge of the world rather than stammers from the psychiatrist's bin." But more psychological insight would have made these characters more interesting and engaging. It also probably would have made the resolution of the death-in-the-truck mystery more plausible; as

it is, the motivations of the dead naked couple, as Doig explains them, are strained. Still, he deserves credit for the mystery-novel hook — although keeping the pair's identities a secret till the end is a thin point upon which to hang 400-odd pages, it's intriguing enough to make you want to know the outcome.

Although "Bucking the Sun" has vast scope, fascinating historical details, realistic characters (despite occasional clunky dialogue) and even some enthusiastic sex, the novel lacks passion. Sometimes it seems as mechanical a feat as the dam itself.

Chris Kridler is assistant arts and entertainment editor at The Sun. Her work has appeared in The Sun, the Miami Herald, Premiere, BOING BOING, Indie File, the Charlotte Observer and the Charlotte Poetry Review.

BOOKS

Epic Story Pushes Envelope

Bucking the Sun

By Ivan Doig

(Simon & Schuster, \$23)

Ivan Doig, in four previous novels and three works of nonfiction, has chosen Montana as his primary setting.

"Bucking the Sun" is no different. Set amid the Fort Peck Dam project (the WPA project to dam the Missouri River in northeast Montana during the 1930s), the novel focuses on the Duff family: patriarch Hugh and his wife, Meg, eldest son, Owen, and fraternal twins, Neil and Bruce, and as the story progresses, wives and other relatives.

Hugh and Meg had come from Scotland around the turn of the century with 2-year-old Owen. They had been farming in Montana ever since, fighting grasshoppers and drought on good bottom land, but their land was destined to be flooded by the new dam. Owen is head engineer, the "fillmaster" for the earthen dam project. His position of authority ensures that all the Duffs will be on the dam payroll, but does not always make for the most harmonious family relations.

The author details the springing to life of a dozen slapdash communities which arise around the dam as work progresses, home to around 10,000 people dependent, in one way or another, upon the now steady paychecks issued from Uncle Sam, courtesy of FDR and the WPA.

And each community has its full allotment of bars, saloons and other places where with pockets bulging on payday, men tend to congregate to spend their money. The main focus throughout the story is the Duff family, all even-

tually married, including Darius, Hugh's brother from Scotland, who found it expedient to be in America after a labor incident during a strike in Scotland.

The plot device the author uses to trigger the characters' actions is a double murder, revealed in the first chapter, of a Duff man and a Duff wife, neither married to the other. The identity of these two characters is not revealed until the final chapter, and is really anticlimactic. The driving force in this book is the story itself.

The author sets himself a daunting task: following 10 or more distinct characters through five years of work on vast scales, described at times in excruciating detail, and making everything stay interesting and come together at the end in a satisfying manner.

With few exceptions, Doig succeeds handily. The exceptions are primarily in the area of differentiating between and among the various Duff wives, and the use of too technical engineering terms when describing the details of dam engineering; however, I'm sure any engineers in the reading audience probably would not agree on that point.

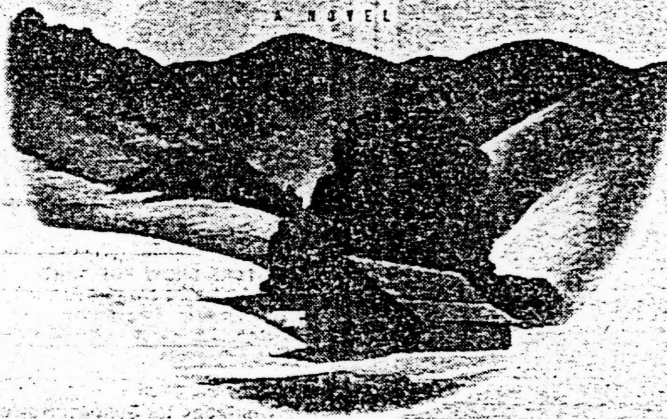
"Bucking the Sun" is a story of epic proportions, set in a geography with a natural grandeur, about a big family that lives life with grand gestures and great travail. Each of the Duffs is in some way "bucking the sun" — pushing on against the glare of sunrise or sunset — which, like life, is at the same time both dangerous and glorious.

Gary Himes

Himes is a Tulsa businessman and owner of Books, Inc.

BUCKING
THE SUN

A NOVEL



IVAN DOIG

Ivan Doig Writes a Note to the Readers

"When Charlotte Bronte lifted her pen from 'Jane Eyre' and bequeathed us that most intriguing

of plot summaries — 'Reader, I married him' — she also was saying what writers always must do to the eyes on our pages: 'Reader, my story is flirting with you; please love it back.' Where, though, do

these suitors in their printed jackets and composed pages come from? With 'Bucking the Sun' my list of literary 'begats' has reached eight books, and a biographical browsing of me customarily brings up such phrases as these:

'Ivan Doig was born in White Sulphur Springs, Mont., in 1939 ... grew up along the Rocky Mountain Front where much of his writing takes place ... first book, the highly acclaimed memoir 'This House of Sky,' was a finalist for the National Book Award ... former ranch hand, newspaperman, and magazine editor, Doig is a graduate of Northwestern University where he re-



Doig

SIGNINGS

Ivan Doig will be signing copies of his books from 7 to 9 p.m. Thursday at Novel Idea, 7103 S. Sheridan Road.

ceived bachelor's and master's degrees in journalism ... he also holds a Ph.D. in history from the University of Washington ... in 1989 the Western Literature Association honored him with its Distinguished Achievement Award for his body of work ... he lives in Seattle with his wife Carol, who teaches literature of the American West. ...

"Taking apart a career in such summary sentences always seems to me like dissecting a frog — some of the life inevitably goes out of it — and so I think the more pertinent Ivan Doig for you, Reader, is the red-headed only child, son of ranch hand Charlie Doig and ranch cook Berneta Ringer Doig (who died of her lifelong asthma on my sixth birthday), who in his junior year of high school (Valier, Montana; my class of 1957 had 21 members) made up his mind to be a writer of some kind.

"At the time, my motivation

seemed to be simply to go away to college and break out of a not very promising ranchwork future in Montana. Jobs in journalism followed — as an editorial writer in Decatur, Ill., (where I truly grasped Keats' meaning of 'amid the alien corn') and as assistant editor of 'The Rotarian' magazine in Evanston. Then, starved as we were for mountains and ocean, Carol and I left the Chicago area in 1966 and came to Seattle, with the notion that I would get a Ph.D. in history as background to bring to journalism teaching.

"What graduate school taught me, though, was that I didn't want to be on a university faculty. I was continuing to free-lance magazine articles during grad school and I also began, to my surprise, writing poetry, which I had never even thought of attempting before.

"My eight or nine published poems showed me that I lacked a poet's final skill, the one Yeats called closing a poem with the click of a well-made box. But still wanting to work at stretching the craft of writing toward the areas where it mysteriously starts to be art, I began working on what Norman Maclean has called the poetry under the prose — a lyrical language, with what I call a poetry of the vernacular in how my

characters speak on the page. (In 'Bucking the Sun,' for instance, a character thinks to himself: 'The weight of life is what holds us to this world, eh?') One of my diary entries, midway through the half dozen years of effort on 'This House of Sky,' shows me trying 'to write it all as highly charged as poetry.' Twenty years and these eight books later, that's still my intention.

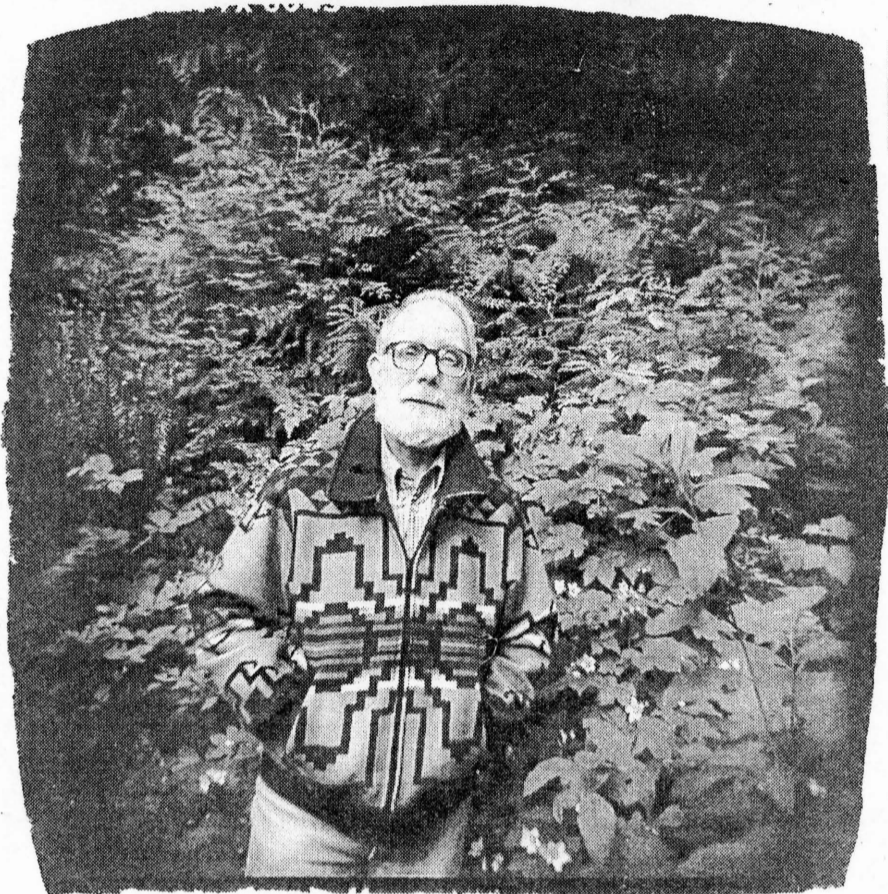
"One last word about the setting of my work, the West. I don't think of myself as a 'Western' writer. To me language — the substance on the page, that poetry under the prose — is the ultimate 'region,' the true home, for a writer. Specific geographies, but galaxies of imaginative expression — we've seen them both exist in William Faulkner's postage stamp-size Yoknapatawpha County, and in Gabriel Garcia Marquez's nowhere village of Macondo dreaming in its hundred years of solitude.

If I have any creed that I wish you as readers, necessary accomplices in this flirtatious ceremony of writing and reading, will take with you from my pages, it'd be this belief of mine that writers of caliber can ground their work in specific land and lingo and yet be writing of that larger country: life."



BOOKSQ

Northwest Bookshelf



MICHELLE BATES

Seattle writer Ivan Doig dared to write an epic family saga.

Duff dam family

BY BRUCE BARCOTT

Thick in the postmodern age, Ivan Doig has written a pre-modern novel. A pretty good one, too. In *Bucking the Sun*, Doig announces his dislike for metafictionalists and experimen-

Bucking the Sun

by Ivan Doig
Simon & Schuster, \$23

tal writers up front, dedicating the book to a group of writers—Roddy Doyle, Nadine Gordimer, Ismail Kadare and others—“who deliver the eloquence of the world rather than stammers from the psychiatrist’s bin.” (Somewhere Philip Roth and Kathy Acker are reeling.) Doig then delivers the 400-page saga of the Duff family, a hardscrabble Western clan that abandons a dead-end homestead in Eastern Montana to take up wage work on the Fort Peck Dam, then the biggest earthen river-plug ever constructed. It’s a novel of the 1930s written in the straight-ahead style of the 1930s. Doig doesn’t want to share shelf space with hipsters William Vollmann and David Foster Wallace; he’s more comfortable next to dusty storytellers like Vardis Fisher and H.L. Davis.

Doig’s previous novels (*English Creek*, *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*) and nonfiction works (*This House of Sky*, *Heart Earth*) traded heavily on history, and *Bucking the Sun* is no exception. The Duff family’s meager homestead existence and its migration to the big WPA project sites of the 1930s is close to family history for a lot of Northwesterners, who still listen to a grandfather’s or great-uncle’s stories of working on Fort Peck, Ross Dam, or the Grand Coulee. It’s so close, in fact, that it took me a hundred pages before I realized that Doig’s cornball dialogue only sounds like rubespeak to contemporary ears. A barber is a “scissor merchant,” a handsome man “a dish,” a bad cook a “beanburner,” a crazy idea “dopey,” and a wedding party a “shivaree.” The words kept nagging until I realized where I’d heard them before: From the mouth of my own grandfather, who ran refrigeration lines into concrete at Ross Dam and into secret rooms at Hanford. Doig did his homework.

The feuding Duffs seem familiar, too. We saw their type in Ken Kesey’s 1964 classic, *Sometimes A Great Notion*. Like Kesey’s Stamper family, the Duffs nurse all sorts of sibling and paternal rivalries, hatreds, and secret histories; they covet each others’ wives and occasionally

sleep with them, envy each others’ (rare) successes, fight the forces of nature, and generally view with disgust the college education of the family bookworm, Owen. Doig scatters the Duffs all over the Fort Peck project, so we see the rise of the dam from the point of view of a fretting chief engineer (Owen), a diver walking in the muddy swirl (his brother Bruce), a taxi dancer lightening the wallets of the bachelor dammers (aunt Proxy), and others: a snake-wrangler, a beautician, a gravelmaster, and an old Communist who throws a wrench into the works now and then.

Sixty years sit between the building of the Fort Peck Dam and *Bucking the Sun*. The technology gap is obvious, of course; Owen’s most valuable tool is a slide rule. But the most interesting difference that emerges in Doig’s novel is the change in attitude. Irony and cynicism are almost absent. A quaint faith in engineering know-how hasn’t yet been scuttled by the mixed blessings of postwar science. Dams are electricity, irrigation, and bright futures, not the present-day salmon-chokers. It was still possible to think, as Owen says, that we can “[get] this river whipped. Top to bottom.” We don’t whip rivers anymore.

Noteworthy Northwestern books are so rare it’s a shame I don’t have five more columns to give these recent arrivals their proper due. Instead, a summer reading list: *Salt of the Earth* (St Martin’s, \$24.95), Bainbridge writer Jack Olsen’s work tracking four generations of a violent American family; *I Am Secretly an Important Man* (Zero Hour, \$12.95), collected writings from Seattle’s late great street poet Jesse Bernstein; *Homeground* (Blue Heron, \$12.95), an excellent essay anthology edited by Kathryn Trueblood and Linda Stovall, and featuring Pico Iyer, Ishmael Reed, Colleen McElroy, Frank Chin, and Naomi Shihab Nye; *The Jewish Wars* (Southern Illinois University, \$29.95), UW professor Edward Alexander’s controversial polemics on politics, Israel, and Judaism; and *Our Bones Are Scattered* (Holt, \$30), Bainbridge author Andrew Ward’s massive history of the 1857 massacre at Cawnpore, India. ■

Bruce Barcott is co-editor of *Seattle Weekly’s Books Quarterly*.

Seattle Weekly BOOKS QUARTERLY

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COVER ILLUSTRATION
Debbie Hanley

Doig Stays Ahead of the Pack With 'Bucking the Sun'

Bucking the Sun

By Ivan Doig; Simon and Schuster; \$23

Bucking The Sun is a glorious piece of writing. Ivan Doig shows no signs of fading. It is another step forward for a novelist already yards ahead of the pack.

The novel is a sweeping story of an ill-fated family and its involvement in one of the most complex engineering feats in U.S. history, the construction of the Fort Peck Dam in Montana in the 1930s. The family, named Duff (think rough), is the heart and

soul of the story. Its longing and despair, tinged with hope, drives the emotional narrative.

Doig wastes no time engrossing the reader in the story. By page 13, the overriding mystery of the novel is set in place. Two members of the 10-strong Duff clan are found together, naked and dead, in a submerged truck.

"Married, you bet," the sheriff investigating the deaths is told. "Only not to each other."

Next, the novel flashes back to five years earlier without divulging the identities of

the dead. You'll fly through the next 400 pages wondering which Duffs were the unlucky ones.

The novel is immensely intricate, yet it easily carries the reader through the story. Doig's loving portrayals of the Duff family members are entrancing, even though few of the Duffs are lovable.

Even the mundane comes alive in *Bucking The Sun*. Never really cared about how an earthen dam was constructed? Neither did I. But Doig made me want to know.

— Scott Coy Lommers
Gannett News Service

The Anniston Star

A dam brings changes to Doig's people

"BUCKING THE SUN," by Ivan Doig: Simon & Schuster, New York, 1996, \$23.

Montana has always been Ivan Doig's special country, his own world of mountains and sky, but in his new novel, "Bucking the Sun," he unexpectedly moves from the wind-swept peace of that state's ranch land to the man-made artificiality of its Fort Peck Dam, an inconceivably vast structure holding back the Missouri River and changing the face of an untouched land.



Doig

Two stories join here — the building of the dam itself (a structure which actually exists, ranking as the world's second largest in volume) and its influence on the Duff family, settlers on their own small, precious bit of Montana, but now dispossessed by the water destined to cover a huge area of the region.

Fort Peck is to be an earthfill dam, one of the most exacting to engineer and build, but this is son Owen Duff's engineering specialty. His appointment as fill-master, a civilian expert working with the Army Corps of Engineers, is the pride of his life, a challenge he knows he can meet.

But the rest of the family has never had his high ambition.

Hugh Duff, their farmer father, is stubbornly content with his traditional role, and when bought out by the government, he feels his life is shattered.

The two younger sons, Bruce and Neil, are twins in their early 20s, naive boys neither expecting nor welcoming such a change, wishing only to carry on with the farm. And their beautiful, capable mother, Meg, like her husband an immigrant from Scotland, deals with whatever comes her way.

It is the early 1930s, the heart of the Depression, when dam construction begins, and 1938 when, after trials and setbacks, the work is completed.

And a beneficent New Deal government has seen to it that no one in the area is left without an income. Suddenly, the dam is a whole industry in itself, and workers swarm over the site like ants — any and all skills are needed, and no applicant is turned down when applying for the low-paid but steady jobs.

The Duffs, asking no favors because of Owen's position, are soon part of the work force, Meg as an assistant cook, the menfolk in an assortment of tasks ranging from brush cutter to carpenter to diver. There's no great pride here, but there is security.

In no time, a megalopolis of small, ugly boom towns has sprung up around the damsite, as boisterous as the Old West, as sleazy as the new, ruled over by Sheriff Carl Kinnick.

And newly settled there are the Duffs and their wives — Owen with his well-bred Charlene; Neil, with Charlene's sister, Rosellen; Bruce, with his pretty waitress, Kate Millay, the first to become a mother.

And new among them is Hugh's brother, Darius, fresh from Scotland, an old suitor of Meg's and an enigmatic Marxist with a dangerous secret on his soul. He eventually marries a dance hall hostess, Proxy Shannon, raising eyebrows all around.

"Bucking the Sun," so full of so much living, centers on the Duffs, their love affairs, their triumphs and their disappointments.

And running as a worrying thread through the book is the shocking tragedy of the first few pages, the discovery of the naked bodies of a man and a woman in a truck in the river some years hence, both named Duff and married — but not to each other. Their identity, revealed only at book's end, mirrors a many-sided story of frustration, passion, and rivalry.

The research behind this latest of Ivan Doig's brilliant novels is staggering — the dam is built before our very eyes, a highly technical and infinitely detailed process orchestrated from beginning to end with painstaking skill, constantly being readjusted to unexpected difficulties, controlled cruelly by weather and geology, and haunted by frightening possibilities for error and bad luck.

A living presence in itself, Fort Peck Dam is at once a god and a monster, and the know-how that built it is matched here by a gifted writer's skill in describing the process every step of the way.

But yet, it is Montana and her men and women who rule the book, the human beings from whose stories Doig builds his incomparable fiction, and the Duffs are as unforgettable as the dam that towers above them through these crucial years.

—BARBARA HODGE HALL

THE CURE FOR DEATH BY LIGHTNING

Gail Anderson-Dargatz. Houghton
Mifflin/Jaffe, \$21.95 (297p) ISBN 0-
395-77184-6

The year is 1941. For the Weeks family on their frontier farm in Western Canada, life is brutally hard, with moments of joy few and far between. Fifteen-year-old Beth Weeks narrates this coming-of-age story, which is sprinkled with recipes, home remedies and useful homesteading advice (e.g., how to kill and clean a chicken: keep it calm, since "there's nothing as frustrating as trying to kill a panicked chicken"). Though the inventory of authentic period detail is evocative, make no mistake: this is no warmhearted tale of pioneer life. Forget square dances and barn raisings; think bestiality and incest. Beth's tortured, demanding father, mentally ill following a traumatic bear attack and the lingering effects of a head injury he received in WWI, goes on one rampage after another. Beth, meanwhile, does her best to fight off various sexual predators, finding solace of sorts in a tentative love affair with Nora, a troubled half-Indian girl. But Coyote, a sinister shape-changing spirit, stalks them and others, infusing the plot with a weird mystical aura at odds with the hardscrabble realism of the descriptions of day-to-day life. A dysfunctional *Little House on the Prairie*, this bleak, violent saga is a disturbing mixture of period minutiae and grim supernatural phenomena. (May)

FYI: *The Cure for Death by Lightning* is based on a short story that won the Canadian Broadcasting Company's literary competition in 1993.

☆ OPEN HEART

A.B. Yehoshua, trans. by Dalya Bilu.
Doubleday, \$24.95 (499p) ISBN 0-
385-26793-2

The irrational, untamable power of love becomes almost palpable in Israeli novelist Yehoshua's intense novel of forbidden passion, obsession and spiritual yearning. Its introspective, ironic narrator, Benjamin Rubin (Benjy), an internist in surgery at a Tel Aviv hospital, is asked by the hospital director, Dr. Lazar, to accompany him to a remote town in India where Lazar's college-dropout daughter, Einat, is suffering from acute hepatitis and urgently needs medical care. Benjy, 29, falls madly in love—not with Einat, whose life he saves, but with Dori, Lazar's matronly, spoiled, ordinary, 50-ish wife, whom he beds once. When she rejects his passion as impossible and silly, Benjy hastily marries hippie-like, Lubbock-raised Michaela, who espouses Hindu religious concepts and works with

the "sidewalk doctors" of Calcutta. They have a daughter, Shivi, but, despite their sexual rapport and mutual affection, theirs is not a marriage of love. When Lazar requires open-heart surgery, Benjy, who takes part in the operation, must ask himself whether he truly wants to save the man or whether he wishes Lazar dead so that he can pursue his impossible love for Dori. At times, Benjy's minute self-analysis is wearying, and it's tempting to dismiss his problems as a passing Oedipal fixation. Mostly, however, Yehoshua (Mr. Mani) mingles fascinating medical detail with the story of one man seeking to open his own heart to life's possibilities, including pain. *Author tour. (May)*

BECAUSE WE ARE HERE

Chuck Wachtel. Viking, \$21.95 (231p)
ISBN 0-670-83887-X

Sophisticated and enigmatic, the short stories and novellas in this second short fiction collection (after *The Coriolis Effect*, 1985) from novelist Wachtel (*The Gates*, 1994) can at times be so subtle as to approach the opaque. Two bachelor brothers living together on a farm offer help to a passing female stranger and find their lives unexpectedly altered; a high-school senior trains for his final gymnastic meet and wonders about his future; a woman waits out her brother's bloody confrontation with the police and hopes for a better life for her son. Reflections on fate, consciousness and identity permeate each character's musings, although Wachtel's prose remains limpidly colloquial throughout. The strongest tales cohere around a clear central metaphor—as in the delightful "St. Raphie," whose middle-aged protagonist, preoccupied with mind-body duality, is rendered invisible by a lightning bolt. At other times, Wachtel's avoidance of dramatic resolutions results in pieces that feel unfinished. Always, he leaves the essential mystery of life inviolate, offering hints and suggestions instead of answers. But even the lesser stories here exhibit a high level of craftsmanship and intelligence. (May)

FYI: Wachtel's first novel, *Joe the Engineer*, won the 1983 PEN/Hemingway Citation.

☆BUCKING THE SUN

Ivan Doig. Simon & Schuster, \$23
(384p) ISBN 0-684-81171-5

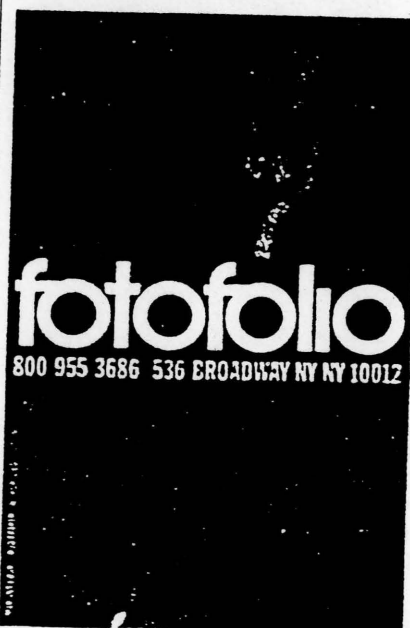
As in Doig's Montana trilogy (*Dancing at the Rascal Fair*, etc.), here American history forms the vivid backdrop for a flinty family drama. Once again, a group of hardheaded, Scotch-descended Montanans struggle with each other and with nature, this time during the building of the Fort Peck Dam from 1933 to 1938.

Hugh Duff hasn't spoken to his eldest son, Owen, since the young man abandoned the family farm to study engineering. Owen is hired to oversee Fort Peck's earth fill just as his father learns that the dam will flood their fields. Hugh simmers, but his wife, Meg, and their twin sons, reckless Bruce and sensible Neil, are happy to get jobs on the New Deal project, though Neil asserts his independence by "bucking the sun" (driving into its head-on rays) for his after-hours trucking business. The brothers' wives—Owen's socially ambitious Charlene; her sister Rosellen, an aspiring writer married to Neil; and Bruce's terse, tough-minded Kate—increase the volatility of the Duff family mix of love and loyalty tempering profound differences of personality and belief. Among the other well-drawn characters is Hugh's Marxist brother Darius, a striking portrait of political extremism. Doig's trademark, minutely detailed evocations of physical labor are present here, as is a bravura description of a disastrous collapse of the unfinished dam. The novel is more plot-heavy than Doig's previous work: the mysterious deaths that bookend the main story are contrived, and the narrative often whipsaws among various Duffs. Not quite as magical as *English Creek*, but much better than the sketchy *Ride with Me, Mariah Montana*, this is still vintage Doig. *Author tour. (May)*

I WAS AMELIA EARHART

Jane Mendelsohn. Knopf, \$18 (144p)
ISBN 0-679-45054-8

Past and present, fact and fiction, first-person and third blend into a life of the celebrated aviatrix—both before and after her



other publisher's book by the same author. Be prepared for the worst. —Ilene Cooper

Doig, Ivan. *Bucking the Sun*. May 1996. 384p. Simon & Schuster, \$23 (0-684-81171-5).

Through nearly 20 years of writing, Doig has established Montana as his literary turf with the same authority that William Faulkner laid claim to Mississippi or Bernard Malamud annexed the Lower East Side. Moving away from the mountainous Two Medicine Country that provided the setting for his Montana trilogy (completed in 1990 with *Ride with Me, Mariah Montana*), Doig now turns to the Missouri River region of the state to chronicle the building of Fort Peck Dam from 1933 to 1938. This massive New Deal project put thousands of drought- and Depression-ravaged Montanans to work while giving birth to a rough-and-tumble shantytown society on the banks of the Missouri. Mixing fascinating technical details regarding the building of the world's largest earthen dam with the saga of an extended family of fictional dam workers, the Duffs, forced to work on the project whose existence cost them their farm, Doig gives life to a special chapter of Depression-era history. The novel begins with the death of two unnamed Duffs engaged in an adulterous affair and then backtracks to tell the story of the dam and ultimately reveal the identities of the clandestine lovers. This premise proves a bit artificial as Doig coyly strews red herrings along the way; another problem is the Duffs themselves, whose personal stories drift perilously close to melodrama. In the end, though, the dam itself and the significance of the historical moment are more than enough to hold our interest. Not Doig at his best, then, but an intriguing chapter all the same in the history of the West. —Bill Ott

★Grimes, Martha. *Hotel Paradise*. May 1996. 368p. Knopf, \$24 (0-679-44187-5). **YAM**

Billed as a mystery, Grimes' latest has all the right elements: eerie suspense, creepy old houses where ghosts linger, murky lakes, deserted lanes, cobwebby memories of past tragedies, love, and murder. The real appeal of this superb book, though, is beyond genre. Grimes has written a quirky, bittersweet coming-of-age story that is as full of laugh-aloud humor as it is of the angst only a dreamy, lonely 12-year-old can feel when the world around her is ripe, promising, and full of tantalizing questions. Emma Graham, who works as a salad girl at the decaying resort hotel where her mother cooks, loves her mother's food almost as much as she loves investigating situations that stimulate her active imagination—like the mysterious death 40 years earlier of young Mary-Evelyn Devereau, who lived with three ugly aunts and drowned, silk-clad and sad, in nearby Spirit Lake. Emma pursues the Mary-Evelyn mystery with single-minded determination, and during the course of her investigation, finds answers to questions she didn't even know she wanted to ask. Emma is a delight and a wonder as she pursues the secrets behind Mary-Evelyn's untimely demise, and Grimes' delicately pithy perceptions of Emma's puzzling and wonderful world and the yearning, often sidesplittingly funny musings of a wise-beyond-her-years, one-of-a-kind heroine make for an enchanting read. One of the year's best! —Emily Melton

Higgins, George V. *Sandra Nichols Found Dead*. May 1996. 256p. Holt, \$23 (0-8050-3747-0).

George V. Higgins keeps upping the ante. He's proved again and again that he can write novels driven solely by dialogue—not snappy exchanges between people who are engaged in doing something (like the characters in *Pulp Fiction*, for example) but conversations between individuals reporting on events that have already happened. It's no easy trick to make such reportorial talk compelling, but Higgins has mastered it. Here he goes one step further. He's written a novel in which the lion's share of the "action" comprises lawyer Jerry Kennedy reading the transcripts of a cop's testimony at an inquest. We read over Jerry's shoulder, and suddenly this veteran Boston cop's monologue unlocks a multifaceted family drama about a white-trash woman with guts and dignity who endures a series of bad relationships before parlaying her sexual gusto into marriage with a genuine New England blue blood. Unfortunately, the blue blood is also a lout who eventually chooses

to have his wife killed rather than pay off on a prenuptial contract. His alibi is airtight, but Kennedy is enlisted to put together a wrongful-death civil suit (shades of O. J.). The most amazing thing about this novel is that it works at all. It's as if Andre didn't show up for dinner, and his friend simply read the paper while he ate. Face it: Higgins isn't a novelist, he's a magician. —Bill Ott

★McCrumb, Sharyn. *The Rosewood Casket*. May 1996. 320p. Dutton, \$23.95 (0-525-94011-1). **YAM**

The versatile, talented, and always surprising McCrumb returns to Appalachia, scene of *She Walks These Hills* (1994). What's most striking about this engaging, deeply moving story is not the plot or even the vividly rendered setting; it's the aptness of McCrumb's observations about people and life. Old man Stargill is dying, and his four grown sons are called home to the small mountain town where they grew up to say good-bye and carry out their daddy's dying wish: that his "boys" build him a rosewood casket. But a dying man's wishes aren't the only problems the splintered Stargills are forced to face. Emotions ride high, and tempers flare because if it isn't a vulture-like land developer going after the family farm, or old lady Bonesteel delivering a mysterious box she insists must be buried with Stargill, or a small child disappearing, it's a neighbor going berserk or a shocking, long-forgotten tragedy resurfacing to add more pain to the family's grief. McCrumb's love for the mystical beauty of modern Appalachia, her deep affection for the rugged people who live there, and her fascination with the history of the region add depth and charm to a story that's warm without being sentimental. A best-seller in the making! —Emily Melton

McInerney, Jay. *The Last of the Savages*. May 1996. 320p. Knopf, \$24 (0-679-42845-3).

The ravages of a self-destructive lifestyle have taken their toll on music mogul Will Savage. The son of wealthy Tennesseans, he is the last in his family line. A born rebel, he is the kind of person who is destined for great things. He socializes with Negroes on pre-gentrified Beale Street, smokes marijuana with Mick Jagger in Morocco, records old blues singers (à la Alan Lomax) and new ones, and bows to no authority, especially his father, an eccentric patriarch whom Will is convinced had something to do with the assassination of Martin Luther King. McInerney's sprawling new novel, encompassing three decades and various regions of the U.S., is a bit schizophrenic and hard to categorize. Is it an East Coast prep-school coming-of-age novel or a southern family drama featuring a classic Oedipal struggle? A '60s tale of excess or an '80s tale of success? Anyway, it demands a sure hand to make it work. Although never heavy-handed or pretentious, McInerney touches on too many ideas and covers too much ground to be entirely successful at the task; for instance, he draws connections between the

Late Arrivals

Two titles have arrived too late for our timely coverage, and both are on subjects people can't get enough of—drugs and celebrities.

Bugliosi, Vincent T. *The Phoenix Solution: Getting Serious about Winning America's Drug War*. 1996. 288p. Dove; dist. by Penguin USA, \$22.95 (0-7871-0682-8). DDC: 363.4.

Bugliosi, former prosecutor for the Los Angeles District Attorney's office who was in charge of the Charles Manson trial and derived a bestseller from it, *Helter Skelter*, has fashioned a new book, this time out of the tradition of Paine's *Common Sense*, to call the people to arms against drugs—the sound bite favorite of every fledgling politician and the basis of the new prison economy.

Drescher, Fran. *Enter Whining*. Mar. 1996. 285p. Regan, \$22 (0-06-039155-3). DDC: 791.45.

Drescher, the hot television star of *The Nanny*, turns on the charm—"We were now ready to shoot the pilot (I just hope I'm not ovulating)." Already on bestseller lists, this book epitomizes a national thirst for personal narratives—"my mother laughed till she wet her pants"—the commoner the better.

—Bonnie Smothers

KIRKUS REVIEWS

In quoting or excerpting, please refer to
KIRKUS REVIEWS
Date of Issue: March 1, 1996

Dolg, Ivan
BUCKING THE SUN
Simon & Schuster
(384 pp.)
\$23.00
May 1996
ISBN: 0-634-31171-5

The sprawling tale that Dolg, author of the Montana trilogy (*English Creek*, 1984; *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*, 1987; and *Ride with Me, Moriah Montana*, 1990), has been working on for years.

Dolg grew up in eastern Montana during the Depression, when the Roosevelt Administration built the world's largest earthen dam high on the Missouri River, at Fort Peck. After impressive quantities of research, he has fashioned a Scotch-American family named Duff to tell the dam's story. There are Hugh and Meg, who will be displaced from their hardscrabble farm by the dam's water; their sons Owen, Bruce, and Neil, whose careers and marriages will be shaped by the dam; and the contentious women the sons marry: Charlene, Kate, and especially Rosellen, a frustrated writer who, along with Owen, forms the novel's consciousness. Older brother Owen schools himself as a civil engineer and writes a thesis that lands him the job of chief fill officer even though he's still in his 20s. Through Owen the reader gains a sense of what a massive undertaking the five-year project was, akin to an American great pyramid. The dam is the largest character here, sharing the drama with the ten thousand men and women the project employed; Owen and Rosellen are merely their admirable symbols. Owen becomes obsessed with the river's whims, the treacherousness of steel and gravel and shale, and he loses contact with his wife, Charlene. He falls for Rosellen then—but only briefly, for it is the dam, the great endeavor of his life, that he really loves.

The Duffs are believable but not memorable; Steinbeck this writer is not. Dolg's real achievement is to chronicle—with empathy and precise, lyrical authority, down to the last load of gravel hauled in a sturdy Ford truck—the magnificent Fort Peck project and the desperate times out of which it arose.

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Evans, Richard Paul
TIMEPIECE
Simon & Schuster
(240 pp.)
\$18.00
Lg. Prt. \$20.00
Spanish \$18.00
Apr. 24, 1996
ISBN: 0-634-81575-1
Lg. Prt. 0-634-82346-2
Spanish 0-634-82426-4

The prequel to Evans's mega bestseller, *The Christmas Box*, is longer than the earlier book, has its same cartoony thinness, is just as creaky at the joints—and reveals, if anything, a considerable rise in the tears-per-page ratio.

We go back to Salt Lake City, this time to 1903, when David Parkin—thoughtful and sensitive person, millionaire head of Parkin Machinery Co., and collector of clocks—hires as his secretary one MaryAnne Chandler, the young woman (originally from England) destined to become David's wife, to live in his big mansion, and, in time, to become the benevolent, devout, mysteriously wise widow of *The Christmas Box*. How MaryAnne achieved such wisdom (quick answer: through suffering a lot) is the real subject of this book, and Evans out-Dickenses Dickens in his facile uses of melodrama in getting to his desired end. In Evans's world of tears and truth, people are by and large either all good or all bad, and if MaryAnne's perfections include being attractive, spunky, quick, principled, courageous, loving, and morally unwavering, the qualities of the base and degenerate villains who reduce her life to ashes are her perfect opposites not in some but all ways ("The men entered clumsily, growling in foul and guttural tones, drunk with whiskey and hatred"). In the beginning, there will be marriage, birth, and immeasurable happiness; and then, with purest villainy as its catalyst, there will be profound and equally immeasurable sorrow. But the healing spirit of human love and hope and goodness will not be destroyed entirely, living on in the muted but unquenchable goodness of MaryAnne's heart; in Evans's perfectly choreographed little flurry of symbols at the close; and even in the transformation of one of those pure villains into purely sensitive penitent.

Certain handkerchief heaven for many, while others may experience the stirring of—well, let's just say other feelings. (First printing of 500,000; author says)

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Library Journal
New York, NY

SEMI-MONTHLY

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LUCE PRESS CLIPPINGS

Doig, Ivan. **Bucking the Sun.**

S. & S. May 1996. 384p. ISBN 0-684-81171-5. \$23. F

Doig begins this saga with adultery and death, then moves backward to examine the causes. Just as the building of the

mammoth Fort Peck Dam transforms the Montana countryside, it radically alters the lives of its Depression-era inhabitants. In particular, members of the Duff clan abandon subsistence farming and move to the construction boomtowns. There a father, three brothers, and their wives confront the task of building the largest earthen dam in the world, brave the dangers of such labor, and battle among themselves. Doig has published memoirs of his Montana youth (National Book Award finalist *This House of Sky*, LJ 9/15/78) and a novel trilogy set in the same area. His latest novel continues this regional emphasis, carefully constructing a semidocumentary frame for an intense family drama. This richly detailed narrative offers comedy, passion, and adventure. Recommended for public libraries.—Albert E. Wilhelm, Tennessee Technological Univ., Cookeville



Village Books in Fairhaven

Book Club Banner

Spring 1996
Vol. 4, #2



An Exclusive Publication for Village Books BookClub Members



Ivan Doig at Mount Baker Theatre

Saturday, May 11

Ivan Doig became a literary giant first here in the Northwest and in more recent years throughout the country. His memoir, *This House of Sky*, has become a classic, and his Montana trilogy (*English Creek*, *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*, *Ride with Me*, *Mariah Montana*) has won the hearts of thousands of readers.

Now Doig returns to his native Montana with a powerful and brilliantly imagined American saga, *Bucking the Sun* (Simon & Schuster). Set around the building of the Fort Peck

Dam, Ivan has concentrated the full force of his immense writing talents and his bone-deep feel for the Big Sky country on telling this epic tale. Nowhere have fictional characters come so fully alive. Nowhere have events long past seemed so present. This is Ivan Doig at his best, and writing just doesn't get any better.

Village Books and the Mount Baker Theatre are pleased to announce a special evening to celebrate the publication of *Bucking the Sun*, a book with which the publisher, Simon & Schuster, believes "Doig is poised — like Pat Conroy, with *Prince of Tides* — for success on a grand scale, not only with the largely Western audience who treasure each new book of his, but with readers coast to coast."

Please join us on **Saturday, May 11, at 8:00 pm** as Ivan delights us with tales about his writing and reads from his new work. Following the presentation, a reception and booksigning will take place in the theater lobby. **General admission tickets for the reading and reception are \$8 and are on sale at the Mount Baker box office and at Village Books.**

BUCKING THE SUN



IVAN DOIG

National Poetry Month

*"Poets live the lives all of us live,
with one big difference.
They have the power to make the
experience of life both magical and real.
The life they reveal is our own."*

(Bill Moyers from *The Language of Life*)

During April Village Books will join bookstores, universities, libraries, publishers and other organizations across the country to celebrate National Poetry Month. The special designation was made by the Academy of American Poets to bring together a wide variety of individuals and groups to support and promote the reading and enjoyment of poetry.

In conjunction with the national celebrations, we've scheduled several special poetry events, including:

- **"Open Mike"** readings by local poets on Tuesday, April 2 and Tuesday, April 16, 7:30 pm—SIGN UP TO READ!

- **Thomas Centolella**, San Francisco poet, former Stegner Fellow and teacher of writing, reads from *Lights & Mysteries* Thursday, April 11;

- **David Lee**, who according to bookseller friends gives the best readings they have ever attended, reads from his Western States Book Award-winning collection, *My Town* on Wed., April 17;

- **Susan McCaslin**, a BC poet of *Locations*, reads on Friday the 19th;

- Seattle author **Linda Marlinson** reads from her book that touches sufferers of chronic pain, *Poetry of Pain*, Tuesday, the 23rd;



- **Chrystos**, a Bainbridge Island award-winning writer, poet, and Native Rights activist, returns on Friday, April 26 to read from her newest works, *Fire Power* and *Fugitive Colors*.

- Because National Poetry Month is intended to promote the reading and—one might assume by extension—the purchase of poetry, Village Books will add an incentive for you to put on your shelves

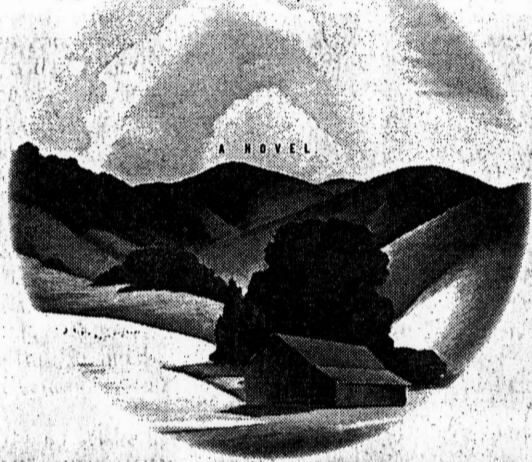
your favorite or newly-discovered poetry at a **20% savings throughout the month of April—adult and children's poetry!** ●



photo by Lonnie Behunin

BOOKS

A cantankerous clan

BUCKING
THE SUN

IVAN DOIG

Family conflicts
make a lively saga**"Bucking the Sun"**by Ivan Doig
Simon & Schuster, \$23BY NICHOLAS O'CONNELL
Special to The Seattle Times

"Bucking the Sun" represents Ivan Doig's most ambitious work to date, a novel nearly Russian in scope that brings to life one of the most controversial chapters in modern Western history: the damming of the region's major rivers during the New Deal years of the 1930s.

Like the subject it treats, Doig's new novel is, among other things, an impressive engineering feat. The Seattle author sets in motion a vast array of characters to tell the story of the building of the Fort Peck Dam, an earthfill structure nearly four miles long and 25 stories tall, on the Missouri River in eastern Montana.

As in all of his best fiction and nonfiction — the novel "English Creek" and the memoir "This House of Sky" come to mind — Doig organizes this book around a family. In this case, the fictional Duffs serve as the lens through which he views this signal event in Western history.

at the drop of a hat, but stand together if the world so much as looked cross-eyed at them." They come to work at Fort Peck after the government buys and condemns their family alfalfa farm in preparation for the dam.

The conflicts between three generations of Duffs fuel much of the drama in "Bucking the Sun." Family members seem to define themselves as much in opposition to each other as in relation to their rough-and-tumble society or to Montana's vast open spaces, which seem barely large enough to contain them all. Family may be the most important thing to the Duffs, but it often proves nettlesome and complicated, and there is nothing sentimental in Doig's portrayal of the loving but cantankerous clan.

Though their livelihood comes to depend on the Fort Peck project, the Duffs include a range of personalities holding wildly differing opinions about the dam. Hugh Duff, the family patriarch, hates the dam for displacing him from his farm and making him dependent on what he considers make-work government construction work.

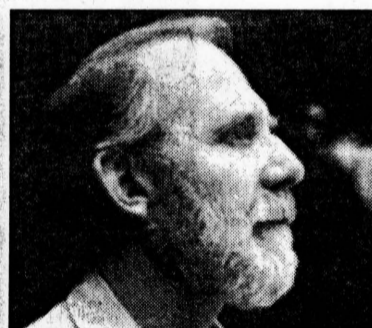
Son Owen, however, sees the dam as an opportunity to prove himself as an engineer, and he ends up in charge of the entire project. Brothers Neil and Bruce also make their living by working on the dam or trucking

the story, for he's a communist sympathizer and suspected industrial saboteur.

There also is a full complement of strong women. Meg, Hugh's long-suffering wife, has always hated farm life and is greatly relieved to be working on the dam. She also tries to keep peace between Hugh and Darius, who both had once vied for her affection. Their rivalry soon resumes, further complicating the story until Darius marries Proxy, a sharp-tongued and vividly drawn prostitute.

When Meg's sons marry, their wives don't fit easily into this tight-knit family. The women and their husbands, all living in close proximity to each other, make for a lively and unpredictable story — they are always getting into each other's hair, sometimes into each other's beds.

Typical of Doig's work, "Bucking the Sun" is a character-driven story, but this time he adds an element of suspense, baiting a juicy hook in the



Ivan Doig

opening pages by describing efforts to pull two bodies from the river. The reader is left wondering exactly who they are and how they got there — questions that Doig waits until the end to answer.

The novel's ambitious scope, however, sometimes proves its weakness as well as its strength. In contrast to his other fiction, Doig uses an omniscient point of view, often shifting rapidly from one character's thoughts to another's, sometimes giving a wonderfully rounded sense of events, at other times confusing and disorienting the reader. And by tracking so many characters, the treatment of individuals can suffer: Bruce, Neil and their wives often seem interchangeable.

Yet Doig's approach works remarkably well at key points, especially the surprising ending, where he registers catastrophic events through the consciousness of a number of characters. At these times, "Bucking the Sun" fulfills its large ambition, powerfully rendering life and death in one family, and through them the people and places of the American West in the 1930s.

The Sun May 5, 1996

BOOKS

Ivan Doig's latest — dams, land, death

"Bucking the Sun," by Ivan Doig. Simon & Schuster. 412 pages. \$23.

By CHRIS KRIDLER
SUN STAFF

"Bucking the Sun" is named, aptly, with a phrase that means pressing on against the glare of sunset or sunrise, but in its stubborn, ambitious journey, it meanders a little too long.

By Ivan Doig — whose many books include "This House of Sky," a National Book Award finalist in 1978 — this latest novel is an old-fashioned American epic about one family's involvement in the building of the Fort Peck dam in Montana during the Depression. The story's sprawl is impressive, from family squabbles to

lovers to labors to wonders of engineering, but when it comes to the latter, there's too dam much: too much dam, not enough character.

The characters are an intriguing lot, at first. Members of the tough Duff family go to work on the dam when the government takes away their farm, which is to be flooded by the New Deal project. Hugh Duff is a stubborn old goat with a penchant for liquor, and his wife still bases her worth on her ancestors' glories in Scotland. Their sons are Owen, an engineer with a major role in the enormous task of stopping the Missouri River; the more down-to-earth Neil; and brash Bruce. They all end up with spirited wives, even Hugh's brother Darius, a Communist and, perhaps not so coincidentally in the

context of this red-white-and-blue tale, a bad lot who flees trouble in the Old Country.

The story opens with the local sheriff investigating the mysterious deaths of two of the Duffs, a naked man and woman who end up in a truck in the depths of the dammed waters. You have to wait a whole book to find out which two, and why, as the story goes back and forth in time to fill in the details — and fill in the river.

The book is tellingly dedicated "To novelists who deliver the eloquence of the edge of the world rather than stammers from the psychiatrist's bin." But more psychological insight would have made these characters more interesting and engaging. It also probably would have made the resolution of the death-in-the-truck mystery more plausible; as

it is, the motivations of the dead naked couple, as Doig explains them, are strained. Still, he deserves credit for the mystery-novel hook — although keeping the pair's identities a secret till the end is a thin point upon which to hang 400-odd pages, it's intriguing enough to make you want to know the outcome.

Although "Bucking the Sun" has vast scope, fascinating historical details, realistic characters (despite occasional clunky dialogue) and even some enthusiastic sex, the novel lacks passion. Sometimes it seems as mechanical a feat as the dam itself.

Chris Kridler is assistant arts and entertainment editor at The Sun. Her work has appeared in The Sun, the Miami Herald, Premiere, BOING BOING, Indie File, the Charlotte Observer and the Charlotte Poetry Review.

BOOK BRIEFS

The *Baltimore Sun* calls it, "A 'page-turner' in the best sense... Both madcap and genteel, Anne Tyler knows as well as anyone that 'human beings lead many lives.' Casually, delightfully, *Ladder of Years* will tell you just how we humans manage this trick."

BUCKING THE SUN

by *Ivan Doig*

Simon & Schuster, \$23

In *Bucking the Sun*, Doig takes on three generations of the paradoxical Duff clan, who have been pushed off their bottomland farm by the construction of the Fort Peck Dam, only to take relief work on the gigantic project. Hugh, the family patriarch, sees nothing good coming of the endeavor. To him, the dam is a pointless exercise in hubris that has destroyed everything he has worked for since his emigration from Scotland decades ago. But for Hugh's oldest son, Owen, the dam is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. A brilliant young engineer, "Goin' Owen" has staked his personal and professional future on the unprecedentedly vast earthen dam, although his socially ambitious wife, Charlene, wants a better career for him than "this pile of dirt."

Hugh's two younger sons, the fraternal twins Neil and Bruce, are as different in temperament as a Montana summer and winter. Yet both the reserved Neil and the reckless Bruce are

thrilled by the prospects of fat wages and pretty, high-spirited wives, which they acquire in short order. Neil's marriage to Charlene's younger sister, Rosellen, an aspiring writer, makes the family dynamics even more intricate. Meanwhile, Hugh's handsome wife, Meg looks on the doings of her tall, knobby men with love and irony, thoroughly glad of the chance of productive employment of the whole family, and occasionally wondering why she puts up with Hugh's terrible drinking and the distance he imposes between them.

Just before the dam is completed, two of the Duffs are found together naked and dead in a truck that has slid off the dam into the water behind it. "Married, you bet," the sheriff who investigates the deaths is told. "Only not to each other." As Ivan Doig charts the relationships among the Duffs, he reveals how and why this terrible incident could have happened.

WHEN CHRIST AND HIS SAINTS SLEPT

by *Sharon Kay Penman*

Ballantine, \$14

A.D. 1135. As church bells tolled for the death of England's King Henry I, his barons faced the unwelcome prospect of being ruled by a woman: Henry's beautiful daughter Maude, Countess of Anjou. But before she could claim her throne, her cousin Stephen seized it. In their long and bitter struggle, all England bled and burned.

Sharon Kay Penman's fifth novel summons to life a spectacular medieval tragedy whose unfolding breaks the heart even as it prepares the way for splendors to come—the glorious age of Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Plantagenets that would soon illuminate the world.

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A Big Story Under the Big Sky

FICTION

BUCKING THE SUN

By Ivan Doig

(Simon & Schuster: \$23; 412 pp.)

Reviewed by Judith Freeman

One of the strangest things about Ivan Doig's new novel, "Bucking the Sun," is also one of the first things one encounters upon opening the book—the epigraph. Doig dedicates his book "To novelists who deliver the eloquence of the edge of the world rather than stammers from the psychiatrist's bin" and goes on to list six writers—Roddy Doyle, Nadine Gordimer, Ismail Kadare, Thomas Keneally, Maurice Shadbolt and Tim Winton—as being

Judith Freeman's most recent novel, "A Desert of Pure Feeling," has just been published by Pantheon Books.

among those who qualify for his odd encomium.

It is worth mentioning this because what Doig's novel lacks is precisely the thing he seems to admire in those to whom he has dedicated his work—namely a sense of an edge. This is a novel about the building of a dam, and the only real edge is the one created by millions of cubic feet of dirt piled up to capture the Missouri River.

"Bucking the Sun" (the title refers to working against the glare of sunrise or sunset) is a big historical novel, set in the 1930s in Montana. It tells the story of a contentious family named Duff whose farmland is taken as part of the construction of the massive Fort Peck dam. Bitter about their loss, the Duffs—like thousands of other Montanans—find jobs working on Fort Peck, a New Deal project that was the largest earth-fill dam ever attempted.

The story begins promisingly, rather like a murder mystery. A sheriff from the

little town of Fort Peck is called to the scene of an accident. A truck containing the drowned bodies of a man and a woman has been pulled out of the lake created by the dam. The bodies are naked. They are identified as two members of the Duff clan. The only thing is, they are each married to someone else. What were they doing in that truck, naked, their clothing wadded into a bundle? And how did they end up in the lake?

The story moves backward in time from this point to four years earlier, when construction on the dam is just beginning. Not until the end of the book do we find out who died in that accident and why. In between we learn a good deal about the Duffs—the hard-drinking patriarch, Hugh, and his scrappy wife, Meg, and their three sons, Neil, Bruce and Owen (the only educated Duff, an engineer overseeing the construction of the dam).

One by one the Duff boys marry, and their stories of courtship, of settling

down and of confronting dangers on the job form much of the narrative. When Uncle Darius arrives from Scotland and marries a local prostitute, he brings to the story a political sensibility as a socialist and saboteur who challenges the established order. These themes are all woven into the narrative—the theme of family members at odds with each other, of men struggling against the forces of nature, of politics that favor rich over poor and the New Deal policies that attempted to change that balance. All this is set against a backdrop of the harsh conditions in the economically depressed little shantytowns that sprang up almost overnight to house the workers.

Much of the drama comes from the strife within the Duff clan—the little jealousies and divisions, the resentments and betrayals. The Duffs are said to be "like nine radios going at once. Every Duff a different station." Yet it doesn't always feel that way to the reader. The

Please see Page 5

Bucking the Sun

LUCE

PRESS CLIPPINGS

P1328

MAY 12 1996

Los Angeles, CA
TIMES
Los Angeles-Long Beach
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CAROL M. DOIG

Ivan Doig

In the introduction to a new edition of his very moving 1978 memoir, "This House of Sky," the author talks about how, when he

began the writing of that book, he already felt like "a relic"—the son and grandson of other relics, all of whom performed tasks and knew things that now seemed out of date. This, perhaps, helps explain why much of his later fiction is set in the past. It's a time he clearly appreciates, with values he quite possibly misses. But even historical novels need something that cannot be confined to relic-hood. And that is a feeling that a character's interior life is as worthy of investigation (and ultimately is as dramatic, if not more so) as external events.

Maybe it's asking too much, in a work that is so narrative-driven, to hope that an author will lift the curtain and let us peek behind it for a glimpse of the soul, no matter how tormented or sane. This is what is missing here. After all, we do not lead mythological lives but psychological ones and characters who speak from the depths, even if it means stammering at times, can nonetheless forge the way. ■

MAY 5, 1996

P1608

LUCE PRESS CLIPPINGS



Giant dam anchors Doig's family saga

By Robert Johnson

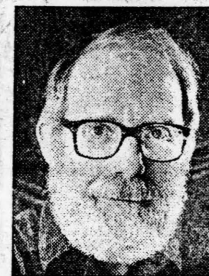
Ivan Doig has become a leading voice in fiction for that great hunk of the country west of the midlands and north of the cactus patch. Doig's "This House of Sky" (1978) and "Montana Trilogy" novels (1984-90) speak in deep tones to the rugged individualism and suffering that built his part of the nation. One critic notes that while Doig "doesn't exactly own the Pacific Northwest," his love for the place has made him its ultimate "regional writer."

Doig's new novel captures a time and place that hungers after epic descriptors. Researching his trilogy, Doig notes, he often heard Montanans confess that they got their start working on the Fort Peck Dam project, which is the foundation of the new book's plot.

The world's largest man-made earth structure, the Fort Peck dam blocks off the Missouri River. Twenty-five stories deep, miles across, cradle for a vast reservoir, the dam was a brainchild of the New Deal, offering

BUCKING THE SUN

By Ivan Doig
Simon & Schuster, \$23



Ivan Doig

real wages and steady work to thousands of down-and-out Americans. Begun in 1933, not fully complete until 1940, the dam attracted a broad swatch of humanity, from bright-eyed engineers looking to launch their dreams to tired laborers on the run.

Around the dam site in its boom days sprang a horizon of shanty towns, bars, brothels and businesses bent on supplying technical and emotional support for the army that descended on Montana during

the project. Earth stacked and jammed to create the dam was dredged from the river's bank or hauled overland, in some cases for miles. Muscle and backbone lifted the project as much as did Depression-era engineering.

Doig plants the feisty saga of the Duff family in the middle of this commotion. Hugh and Meg Duff produce three sons: Owen, college educated and head engineer for the landfill; Bruce, who finds dangerous work as a diver in the riverbed; Neil, a carpenter by trade.

In the course of the novel, Meg and Hugh weather the storms of a long-settled relationship, the boys all take mates, and from the resulting welter of hope, egos and passion churn the conflicts of Doig's episodic tale.

Holding the whole shebang on the road is an enveloping murder mystery. On page three, a wrecked truck is winched from the river, and in it are found the naked, entwined bodies of two of the Duffs — married, both of them, "only not to each other." A consequent inves-

tigation snakes through the book by way of flash-forwards, all the way to 1991, when an ex-lawman begs off from a tour of the dam made annually by his retirement home, rolls his wheel chair to water's edge, and tries to fathom the answer to the riddle of how the Duffs died so many years before.

Doig is a relentless and polished story teller. Deftly he orchestrates this challenging jumble of engineering history and family journey, holding readers squarely and solidly to the page. His novel demands attention.

Along the way readers pick up a part-time education in western social history, Montana politics, hydraulics, and the remarkable resilience of family.

One Fort Peck eatery advertises: "Meals 50c. Big feed 75c. Hell of a Gorge \$1." Doig's novel earns its honest buck — and more.

Former book editor of *San Diego Magazine*, Robert Johnson teaches and writes in Wichita Falls, Texas.

Monday, June 24, 1996

The Spokesman-Review
Spokane, Wash./Coeur d'Alene, IdahoINLAND NORTHWEST
IN
LIFE**Doig: 'Bucking the Sun'**
reaches beyond Montana

Continued from B1

Missouri River.

In addition to flood control, the dam — which took six years to build (1933-39) — provided some 10,500 jobs during the middle years of the Great Depression.

Doig explores the project, and examines his themes, through the family Duff. A brood of Scottish ancestry, the Duffs are headed by proud Hugh, whose industrious nature has been doubly wounded. The first injury came courtesy of a seeming betrayal by his eldest son, Owen; the second involved losing the family farm to the very dam project that Owen is helping honcho.

Owen is the one who left, deserting his demanding and needy father in the search for more education and a better chance to make his mark.

Owen's younger brothers, twins Bruce and Neil, are the ones who stayed. The first is a wild sort who speeds through the boomtowns surrounding the impending dam on his motorcycle; the second is more sober and unafraid to work double shifts if it means a better life.

And there are the women who live with, and all in their own way love, these men. Mother Meg endures Hugh's occasional drunken benders while overseeing the lives of her children. Charlene is bound to Owen, her pride in him matched only by her resentment of Meg. Spirited Kate and bookish Rosellen are the respective wives of Bruce and Neil.

Into this mix comes Darius (pronounced Da-rye-us), Hugh's brother and a socialist with a shady past. And the complicating factor here is that Darius marries a saloon doxy named Proxy (short for peroxide) but maintains his torch for Meg.

All of this family tension is heightened by the fact that Doig reveals early on that two of the Duffs, each married to someone else, have been found not only in a compromising situation but also dead, drowned by the very water held hostage by the new dam.

The rest of the book, told in flashback, is a guessing game as to who these individuals are, with Doig revealing clues as the pages pass by.

The backdrop against which this literary melodrama plays out,

though, is what provides "Bucking the Sun" its special feel. The Fort Peck project was something that has intrigued Doig since his youth.

It was as a boy that the 56-year-old White Sulphur Springs native read the first issue of Life magazine, whose cover featured Margaret Bourke-White photographs of the eastern Montana site. Later on, he was fascinated by stories of "the big slide of 1938," an accident that killed eight dam workers.

Years later, long after he had moved away, earning college degrees at Northwestern University and working as a journalist at various Midwestern spots, he again heard about Fort Peck while working on his trilogy.

"It's bound to be like this in Spokane and other parts of the West," Doig said. "Whenever you talk to somebody, you only talk for a few minutes before you find that you know somebody in common."

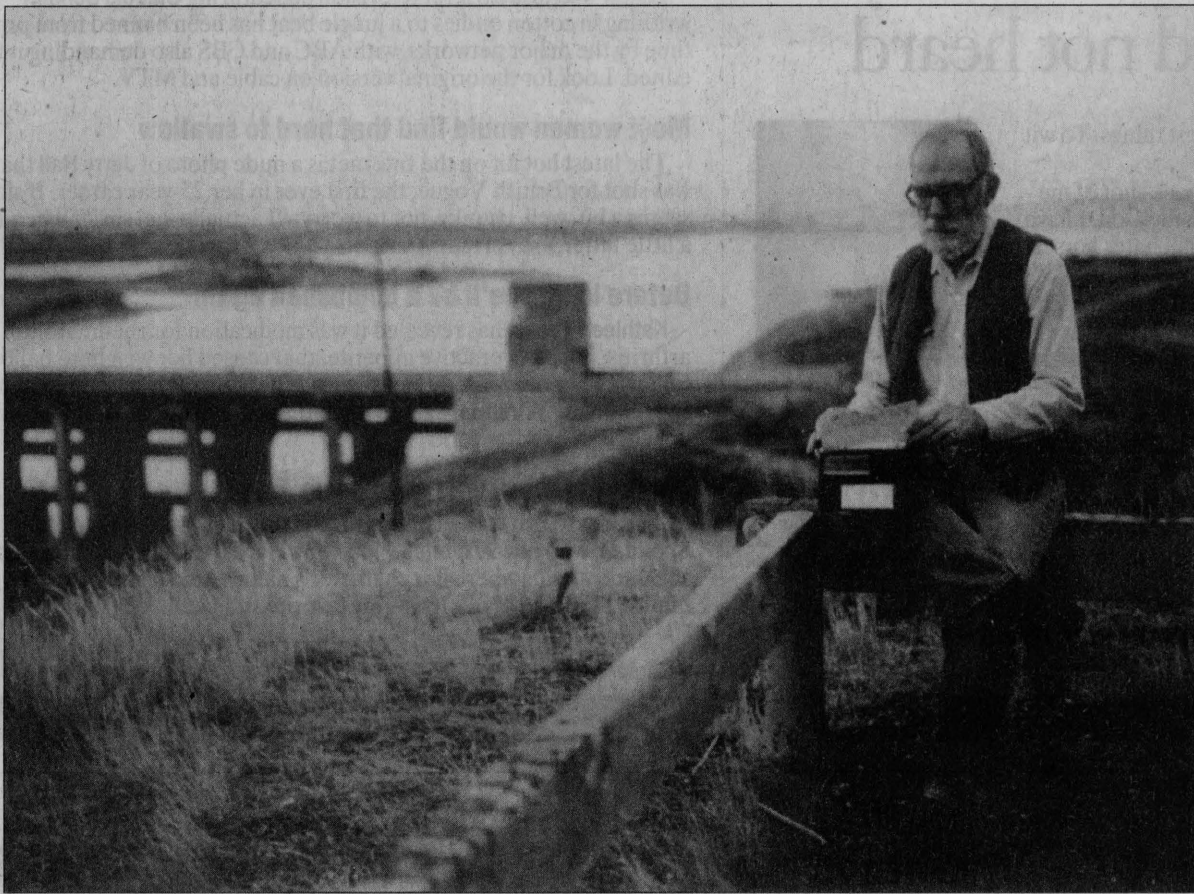
That was how Fort Peck came up again and again. "Everybody had a relative who worked there or something of that nature," he said.

Doig spent three years on the book, the first 12 months doing nothing but research. He found the technical information he needed in an obscure trade publication, and he buoyed this both with interviews of 50 Fort Peck veterans collected by the Montana Historical Society and by finding other dam vets on his own.

Doig admits that he might have set his story somewhere else, maybe even putting the Duffs to work on another well-known Roosevelt-era project, the Grand Coulee Dam. But, he said, "That would have lost all the earthen dam aspects and some of the other shimmering elements like the Life magazine cover and people being driven out of this particular Missouri River valley."

Ultimately, it may not matter. In the end, "Bucking the Sun" ends up being pure Doig — at once Montanan and Western, coexisting parts of the same geographic pie.

"That's what I'm always after," he said. "And it's not just the West of America: It's west of the places that run things. . . . That's the kind of writing that interests me, and that's what I think we're trying to do in the West. We're out beyond the usual suspects in the literary and power centers."



Carol M. Doig photo

Ivan Doig at the Fort Peck Dam Spillway. Below, President Franklin D. Roosevelt visits Glasgow, Mont., in 1934.

More than
Montana*Ivan Doig aims for a new dimension with his latest book*By Dan Webster
Staff writer

Few contemporary novelists are more closely associated with Montana, the state *and* the mystique than Ivan Doig. Certainly his literary output, which includes the Montana-based trilogy "English Creek," "Dancing at the Rascal Fair" and "Ride With Me, Mariah Montana," suggests that.

Especially Montana-like is his 1978 memoir, "This House of Sky."

In fact, each of these books alone bears more of a feel for the Big Sky state than do a whole shelf of self-styled reminiscences of what it's like to pass a season or two in the wilds of Libby, Livingston or Wisdom.

Yet Doig, reflecting a sensibility that has been tempered by years of living in such non-Montana locales as Chicago and Seattle, doesn't define his work as "inherently Montanan."

And that goes particularly for his newest novel, "Bucking the Sun," Doig's fifth work of fiction (and his eighth book overall). For despite having a trademark Montana setting, the Fort Peck Dam building project of the 1930s, "Bucking the Sun" is Doig's attempt to capture something bigger.

"I kind of wish, in fact, that the dam was not set in Montana," Doig said during a recent phone interview from a Chicago hotel. "It might have given the book a different dimension. It might not have been seen so much as a Montana novel as what I see it as — which is an American West novel."

Trouble is, it's difficult to separate what is specifically Montana from what is traditionally the West.

The themes in "Bucking the Sun" are certainly emblematic of the West as a whole: the struggle between those who work their own land vs. those who see the land as something to use for the greater good of society; the spirit of individuality

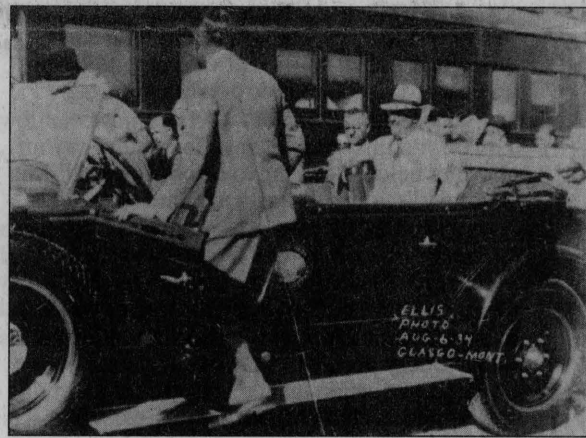
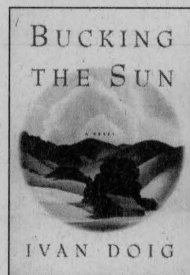


Photo courtesy of the Montana Historical Society, Helena

**Reading**

Ivan Doig will read from his novel "Bucking the Sun" at 7 tonight at Auntie's Bookstore, Main and Washington.

vs. the power of government; family closeness vs. the prevailing tensions inherent among self-reliant family members.

Yet those same themes apply perfectly well to Montana, too. Thus it's only natural for Doig to center his story on the Fort Peck Dam, Roosevelt's New Deal project that still ranks as one of the most amazing engineering feats ever imagined, much less accomplished. It entailed building an earthen dam 25 stories high, four miles wide to hold back the waters of the

Continued: **Doig/C3**

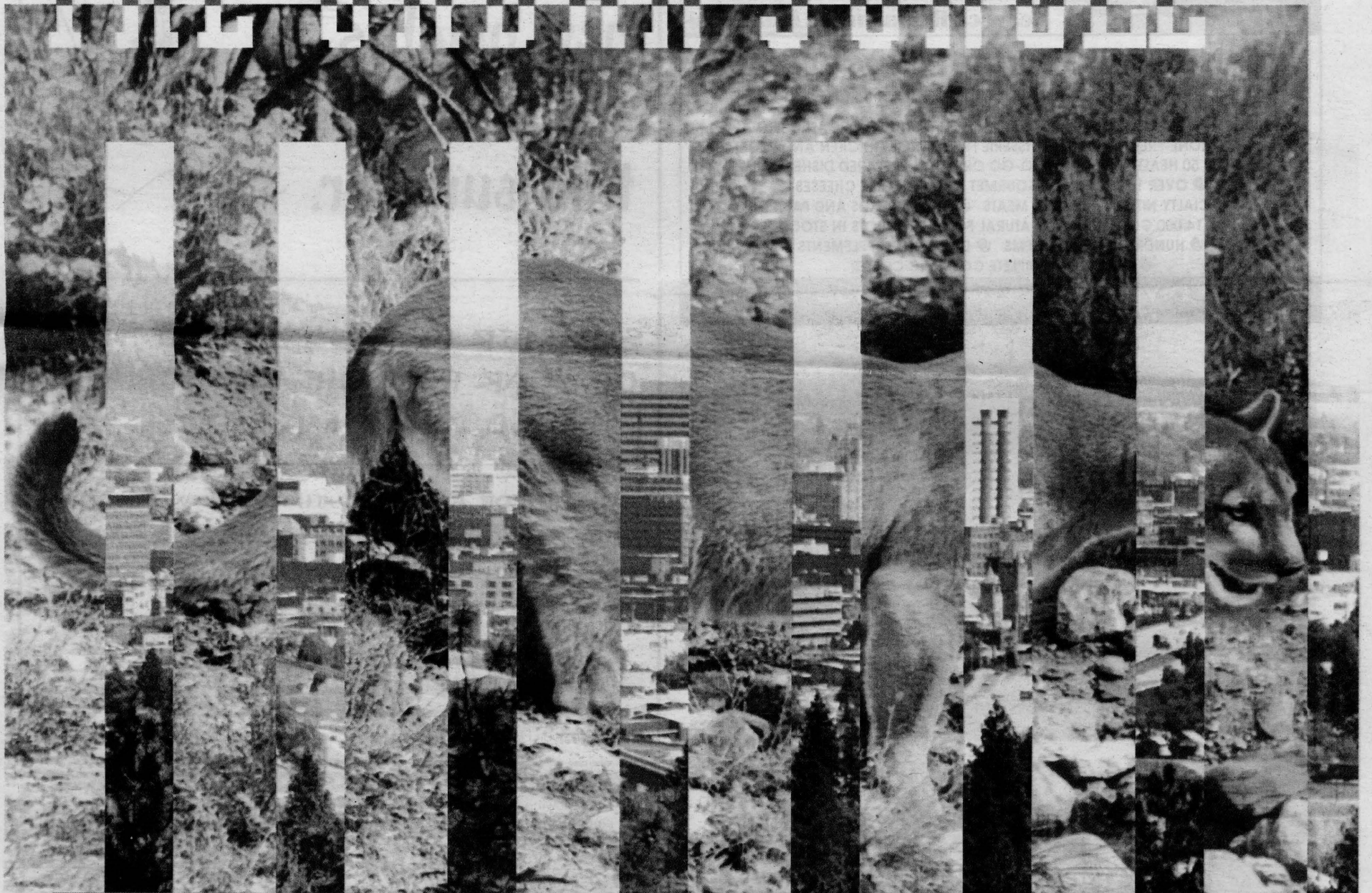
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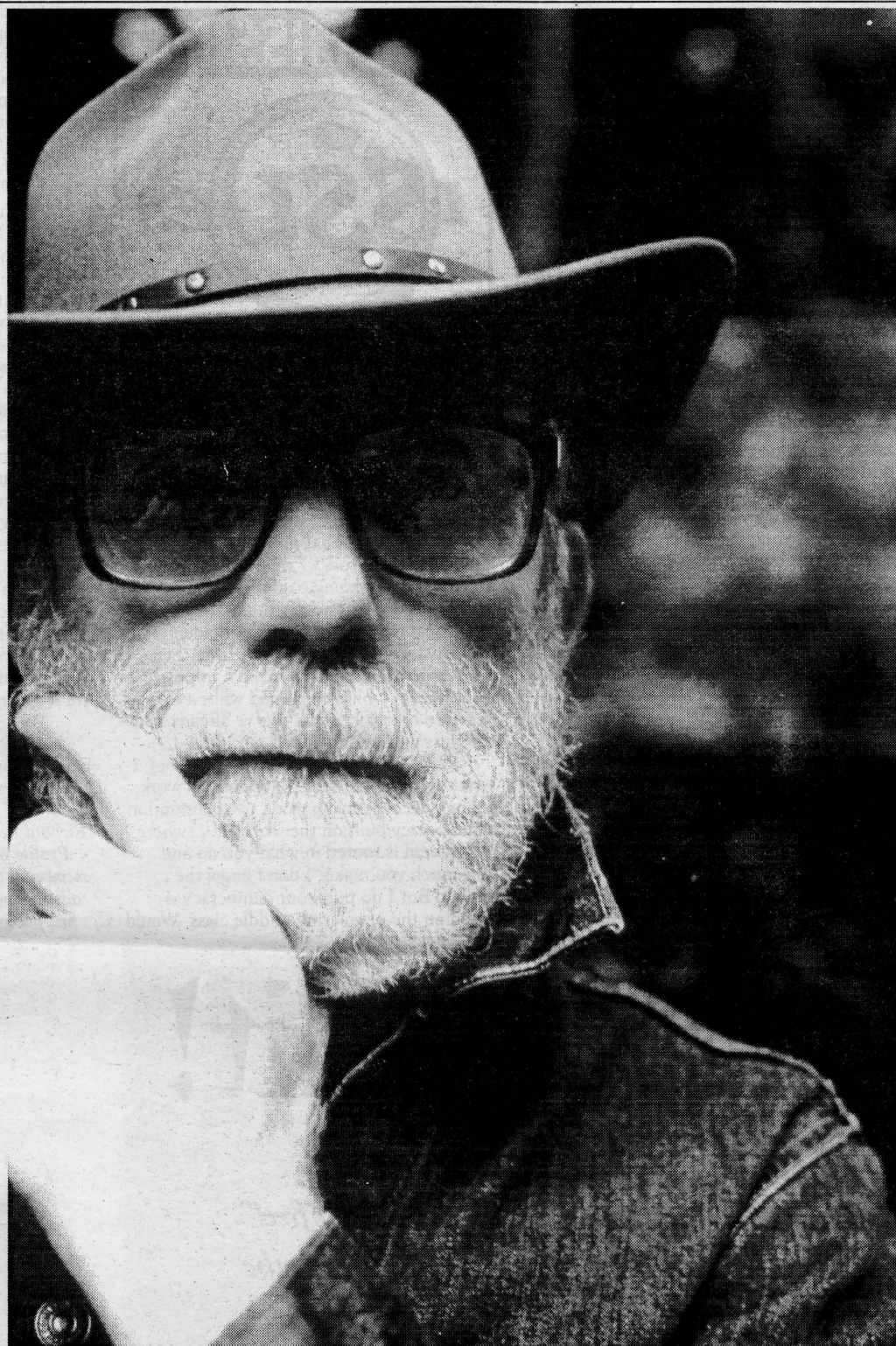
INSIDE: MONTANA'S MUSE IVAN DOIG

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A Montanan in the Emerald City

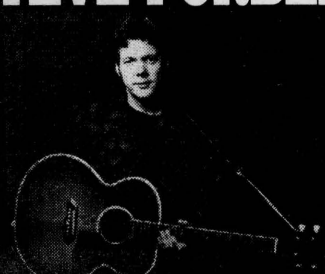
For 30 years, Ivan Doig has written about his native state from a home in North Seattle

story by Nick Heil



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Tucked away in a modest North Seattle suburb, not far from the lapping shoreline of Puget Sound, Ivan Doig composes some of our most vivid images of the developing West. His stories, drawn largely from personal experience, have chronicled the Westward migration of his Scottish ancestors (*This House of Sky*) and the perseverance of hard-nosed homesteading families in Montana (*Dancing at the Rascal Fair*). Doig's latest contribution, *Bucking the Sun* (Simon & Schuster, \$23, 1996), revolves around the construction of the Fort Peck Dam — still the largest earthfill dam in the nation — and the Duff family, a clan of transplanted, second-generation Scots who find love, gainful employment and tragedy among the high plains and coulees of northeastern Montana.

Despite his proximity to Seattle's bustling metropolis, there is a vaguely rural feel to Doig's home, perhaps created by the blazing rhododendron, thick hemlock and Douglas fir separating his house from the neighbors'. Perhaps it is Doig himself, who, in full downy beard and head-to-toe denim, might appear right at home on a Montana ranch, except for the giveaway writer's footwear: Birkenstocks. In his home office, seated beside the now-archaic manual typewriter on which he still composes, Doig explains why an author renowned for his depiction of Montana chose to settle in Seattle 30 years ago.

"I always emphasize to audiences when they ask why I don't live in Montana, that I was very much an economic refugee," Doig says. "I imagine it's the reason other writers, like Norman MacLean for example, left too. We were stropic young men. None of us wanted to wear the copper collar.

"At the time, I wanted to go to graduate school in history, particularly frontier history. The University of Washington had a strong program, and my wife, Carol, wanted to get involved in teaching. I'm not sure Montana even had any community colleges at that point. They have a few now, but in terms of where people were going to fetch up and

make a career 30 years ago, it was not Montana."

Born in White Sulphur Springs, along the Rocky Mountain Front south of Great Falls, Doig spent his first 23 years under the Big Sky, shopping himself out as a ranch hand until his journalistic and (short-lived) academic aspirations took him east to Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill., for a degree in journalism and eventually to the University of Washington for a doctorate in history. But what began as a potential career in academia evolved into a full-time occupation as an editor, journalist and now, at age 57, one of the West's most established literary voices.

Bucking the Sun, Doig's eighth book, may be his most ambitious yet. Even the author admits his intimidation by the size and scope of the project, the amount of self-education that had to take place before he could authentically recreate the construction of the Fort Peck Dam. He'll read from the

work at Auntie's on Monday.

"This was a very hard book," he says. "It was a book where I would often openly lament, to myself and to Carol, the amount of work this was. Not that it would kill me, but keeping the amount of research and narrative and 11 characters all going. It's by far the biggest, hardest book I've ever done."

To further underscore his point, he slides out a file drawer by his desk, the length of which is packed with folders he calls the Ft. Peck Files.

"The anecdotal side of history is where I look for what I call the poetry of the vernacular — how people talk and how they tell their stories. To me, this is character, this is how people see themselves, how they have crafted their own tongues. I collect files of people who have written me, or talked to me, those who worked at Ft. Peck and told stories of grasshopper poisoning and the like. This drawer is my library research plus stuff gleaned from interviews or picked up from correspondence."

Checking in at 400 pages, *Bucking the Sun* is a manageable tome by most standards, but Doig says he needed to keep reminding himself about the real heart of the book.

"I did quite a bit of research, but I also tinkered along with the language. Ultimately the book has to be about the language, rather than the research. And that's one thing I was very conscious of here. I would tell myself, and Carol would tell me, the book is not about the dam, the dam is one of the characters. This is not a textbook on how to build an earthen dam."

Nor is the book a history of New Deal economics, or a portrait of frontier life in one of the nation's harshest climates, or an

above, dredged earth below.

Working with this setting, says Doig, was second nature: "It's the country I know," he says. "It's in my bones, I guess. On the historical side of things, Montana is interesting because it's been a big stage for a lot that has happened in the American West. It has a colonial story from the economic resource exploitation. And it's got this chesty Western attitude by people who have moved out there and made a life. That landscape is a rich thing, like the sea would be for Conrad, or Dublin would be for Joyce."

Above Doig's desk is a copy of Richard Hugo's *The Triggering Town*; "Good advice," says Doig, "for writers of prose as well as poetry."



Constructing the Fort Peck Dam in 1938. PHOTO COURTESY MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, HELENA

exposé on the inherent problems engineering technology faces when applied to powerful natural forces, like the Missouri River. But all of these themes move through *Bucking the Sun*. They were all part of the fabric of life in the West during the 1930s.

The title of Doig's latest novel comes from an expression heard from his father, meaning to drive headlong into the rising or setting sun, and the image resonates through the family saga with increasing figurative power. As we get to know the Duffs, all 10 of them, we discover how each in their own way "buck the sun," persevering in the often blinding glare of their marriages, politics or work.

Told from a variety of perspectives, *Bucking the Sun* manages to create a 360-degree picture of Ft. Peck and the shanty town of Wheeler, Mont. Owen Duff, an engineer and the most educated of the Duff brothers, is appointed fillmaster at Ft. Peck. When he brings his wife Charlemagne, his siblings Neil and Bruce, and his parents Meg and Hugh, along to fix them up with wage work, the machinery of conflict starts to turn. Eddies of infidelity swirl among the men and their wives. Bruce Duff is a daredevil, and Hugh is a wandering drunk. Hugh's brother, Darius, arrives from Scotland, promptly joins a clandestine socialist group, marries a popular prostitute and puts the moves on Meg.

Beyond the immediate family drama, Doig presents a western landscape that's both familiar and refreshing. We recognize the snowbound, subzero winters of eastern Montana, but the presence of so much machinery strikes a dissonant cord. This isn't the agrarian, cowpoke countryside we might expect, but a full-blown construction site, complete with D-8 tractors, underwater divers, barges and bilge pumps — big sky

Doig might nod at a line from Hugo's book: "Your obsessions lead you to your vocabulary." While Doig's interest in the lives of Montana families may fall short of obsession, it is the subject he returns to deeply and often.

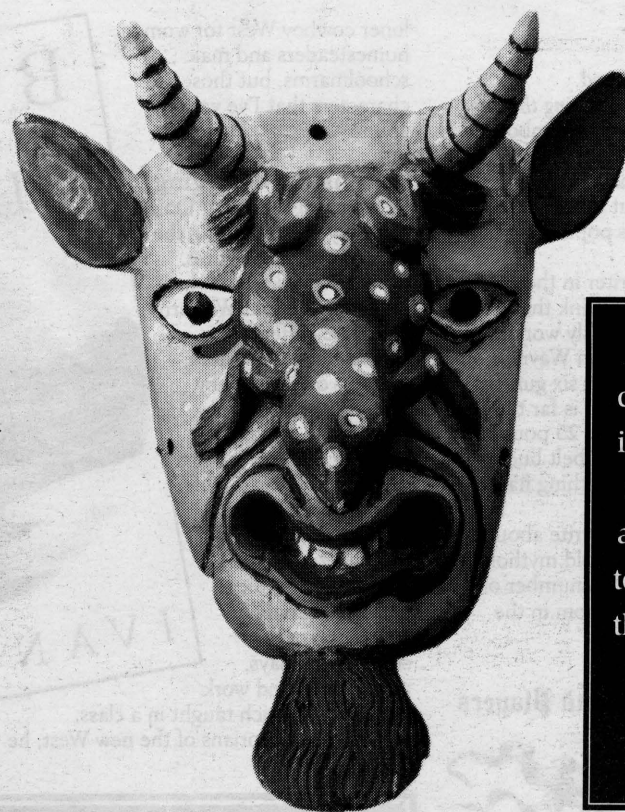
"The first material, the prime material writers have to work with is childhood," explains Doig. "My first 23 years were in the same state and pretty much the same circumstance — the wandering ranch life. In 22 or 23 years you get quite a load of material between your ears. So when I set out to write fiction, the voices I hear are those of my father's generation, and my friends in Montana. They are the people I go back and talk to when I research. It's childhood brought up to date."

That vocabulary creates the rich, authentic, often humorous atmosphere that permeates *Bucking the Sun*. Too much beer at the Blue Eagle tavern might leave a character "plotzed"; an editor's rejection letter is a "billydoo."

Such achievement in craft results from Doig's meticulous work schedule, what he refers to as farm hours: up at 4:30 a.m., at the desk by 6 a.m. By lunchtime, some 400-600 words later, he takes a siesta, perhaps a walk around the neighborhood. But each morning the work begins fresh, a process Doig finds best described by former poet laureate Richard Wilbur. "Every morning you step off boldly into the blank of your mind," he quotes.

Character and language provide much of the foundation in *Bucking the Sun*, but the novel also turns on something of a mystery. The discovery of two bodies (one male, one female, both naked) in the opening pages sustains a simmering tension. And Doig, with deft narrative skill, keeps all

Continued on next page...



"We are condemned to invent a mask for ourselves and afterward to discover that the mask is our true face."

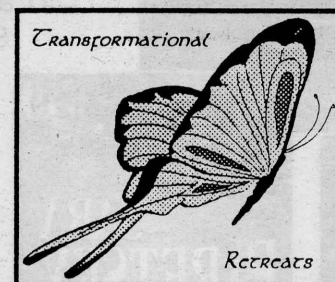
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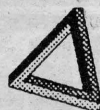
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Doig...

possibilities open until the end.

As western literature, *Bucking the Sun* offers a slice of Americana that symbolizes a common affliction in the West: the control of natural resources, the management and settling of large spaces. But the novel doesn't simply reinforce the West's popular mythology.

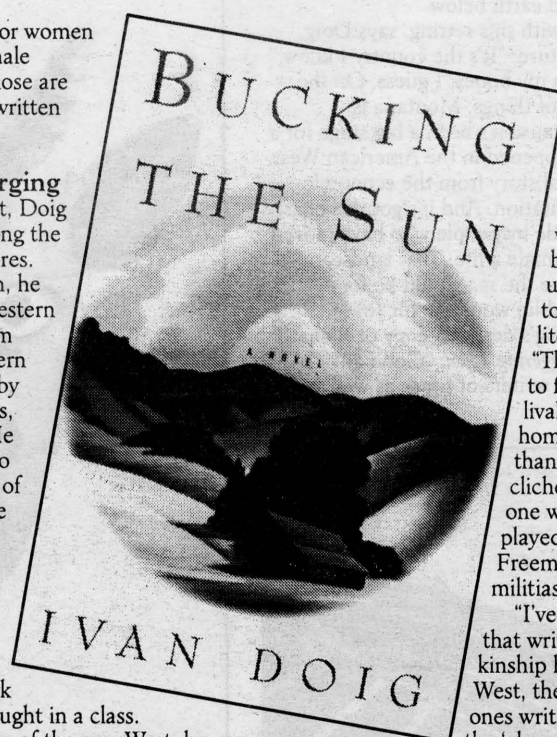
"I'm not a Western writer in the cowboy classic sense," Doig says. "I think that is something I've been consciously working against. The notion of the John Wayne/Louis L'Amour simple answer, that a six gun can solve anything and everything, is far too simple. This is the West where 25 pounds of gut are held up by a pound of belt buckle. You know at some point something has to give way."

"My notion has been to write about a more complicated West. The old mythology, I think, can possibly contain a number of different visions. There's no room in the

loner cowboy West for women homesteaders and male schoolmarm, but those are characters that I've written about."

Among the emerging literature of the West, Doig certainly stands among the most prominent figures. But as its spokesman, he also suggests that Western literature suffers from something of a modern crisis — overlooked by academic institutions, misread by critics. He recalls a reporter who did an online search of references to Wallace Stegner shortly after the Pulitzer Prize-winning writer died, discovering only 5 sources. Grad students, he says, are lucky to find work by Louise Erdrich taught in a class.

It's the historians of the new West, he



hopes, that will bring a broader understanding to Western literature. "They're trying to find a more livable intellectual home in the West than this whole clichéd one, the one we're seeing played out with the Freemen and the militias."

"I've tried to argue that writers have a kinship here in the West, they are the ones writing what I call the 'eloquence at the

edge of the world.'"

His next novel, says Doig, will open with a scene he witnessed in San Francisco during his recent book tour: the weekly parade of in-line skaters racing through downtown on a Friday evening. It's an image, he feels, that sharply represents the region's changing cultural patterns.

"I want to start the next book in the streets of San Francisco mostly because it's one of the West's oldest communities," Doig says. "Part of it will be set in the Rocky Mountains, as well. In essence, I think it's going to be about baby boomers facing the old American question: can we go home again?" ♦

IVAN DOIG READS FROM *BUCKING THE SUN* MONDAY AT 7:30 PM AT AUNTIES, 402 W. MAIN, SPOKANE. CALL: 838-0206.



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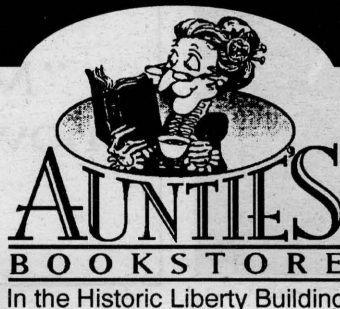
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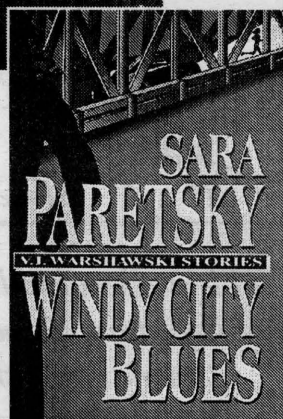
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Doig in Kalispell for booksigning

Award-winning author Ivan Doig will be in Kalispell this afternoon to sign copies of "Bucking the Sun," his new novel centered around Montana's famous Fort Peck Dam Project.

Books West and Village Books of Kalispell will be the final stops on Doig's statewide booksigning tour. Books West, in the First and Main building, will play host to Doig from noon to 1:30 p.m., and Village Books in Gateway West Mall will play host from 4 to 5:30 p.m.

In "Bucking the Sun," Doig portrays the lives of the Duff clan, who have been pushed off their bottomland farm by the construction of the Fort Peck Dam — one of the most daunting engineering feats in American history. He examines the triumphs and tragedies of the 1930s family, a passionate, disturbed lot who are trying to deal with the hardship and changes dealt to them by the Depression.

Doig conducted research for the novel for several years, interviewing hundreds of

dam workers, engineers and Montana townspeople. "Bucking the Sun" is the culmination of that research.

Born in White Sulphur Springs in 1939, Doig is the grandson of homesteaders and grew up on ranches where his father and grandfather worked.

He graduated from Valier High School in 1959.

A former ranch hand and newspaperman, Doig is a graduate of Northwestern University where he received a B.S. and

M.S. in journalism. He holds a Ph.D. in history from the University of Washington and honorary doctorates in literature from Montana State University and Lewis and Clark College. He currently lives in with his wife Carol, who teaches the literature of the American West.

Doig embarked on his booksigning tour with appearances in Missoula June 25-26. His others scheduled stops include Bozeman on June 28, Helena on the 29th and Great Falls on July 1.

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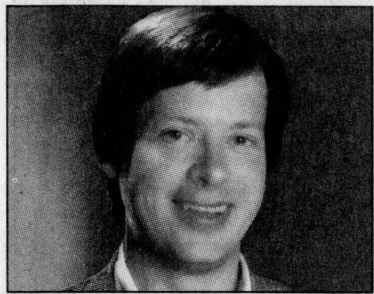
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BARRY FUNNY

Dave Barry

Abominable abdominals are appalling

What I want to know is: Why is it important to have visible stomach muscles?

I grew up in an era (the Paleolithic) when people kept their stomach muscles discreetly out of sight. Most of us didn't even realize we HAD stomach muscles; the only people who ever actually saw them were courageous surgeons willing to cut through fat layers the thickness of the Cleveland white pages.

I'm not saying we weren't in shape; I'm just saying we had a different concept of what the shape should be. Our idea of a stud-muffin male was somebody along the lines of George Reeves, who starred in the black-and-white TV version of "Superman," playing the role of the mild-mannered newspaper reporter Clark Kent, whom nobody ever suspected of being Superman because he disguised himself by wearing glasses. (It is a known fact that if you put on glasses, even your closest friends will not recognize you; that's why, despite all the eerie similarities, nobody has figured out that Sally Jessy Raphael and Mike Tyson are actually the same person.)

The TV Superman, who was more powerful than a locomotive, did not have visible stomach muscles. In fact, he didn't have much muscle definition at all; he pretty much looked like a middle-aged guy at a Halloween party wearing a Superman costume made from pajamas, a guy who had definitely put in some time around the onion dip. From certain angles he looked as though he WEIGHED more than a locomotive. But he got the job done. He was always flying to crime scenes faster than a speeding bullet in a horizontal position with his arms out in front of him.

When Superman arrived at the crime scene, he would knock down the door, played by a piece of balsa wood, and confront the criminals, who were usually suit-wearing men with harsh voices

Sunday, June 30, 1996

Montana Parade

Great Falls Tribune

Section F

QUESTIONS OR TIPS?

Call Associate Editor

Tom Kotynski:

791-1477, 1-800-438-6600,

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SUNDAY

INSIDE:

Weddings

Montana album

Dear Abby

Crossword



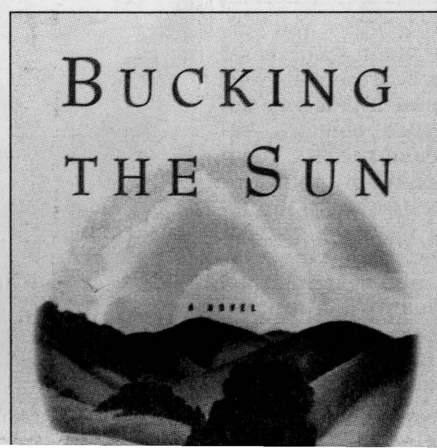
Workers clear cottonwood and brush in February 1937 in the reservoir area about 20 miles upstream from the Fort Peck dam site.

All historic photos courtesy of Montana Historical Society

Sixty years ago, despair had a grip on the nation. Ivan Doig's new novel paints a picture of life during the Depression, when Fort Peck Dam offered hope.

'It was a godsend for Montana'

Below, water pours from pipelines as workers proceed on dam construction dredging operations in 1934. Bottom, how the dam looked



Not many Montanans remember the glory days, and the turmoil, of the Fort Peck Dam project. It was 60 years ago this summer that construction of the world's largest earth dam hit its peak. More than 10,000 people were working there at a time when the rest of the state's unemployment rate was 30 percent.

Newly-elected President Franklin D. Roosevelt authorized the dam not long after taking office in 1933. It became the biggest pick-and-shovel project of the New Deal era.

And it was a godsend for Montana.

Not only for families that were going broke on farms and for truck drivers and clerks thrown out of work when businesses closed. Not only for young people who were too poor to attend college. Not only for hardrock miners with no work available in Butte.

But also for the moribund Great Northern Railway,



BOB GILLULY

Tribune regional editor

biggest disaster at Fort Peck, a mammoth earth slide in 1938 that killed eight workers. Doig mentions one true-life aspect about the day when 15 percent of the incomplete dam tumbled into the reservoir, yet that incident deserves more detail from the historical record.

It involved longtime Glasgow and Fort Peck resident Gene Tourtlotte, who was employed as a driver for project engineer

Clark Kittrell. On the day of the slide he took Kittrell and

crime scene, he would knock down the door, played by a piece of balsa wood, and confront the criminals, who were usually suit-wearing men with harsh voices.

"Superman!" the criminals would say. This was the signal for Superman to put his hands on his hips so the criminals could shoot their revolvers at his chest, an effort that always caused Superman to adopt a bemused expression because, as a native of Krypton with special powers, he knew that the criminals were shooting blanks. Then Superman would turn the criminals over to the police, played by Irish character actors, after which he would fly in a horizontal position back to his secret Fortress of Onion Dip.

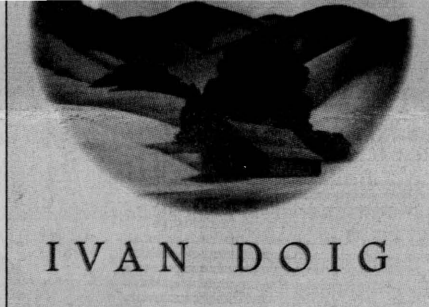
The point is that, in my era, Superman did not have visible stomach muscles, and neither did Hercules or Tarzan, who needed steel-reinforced vines. But now, suddenly, everybody is supposed to have rippling abdominals. They are hot. If muscle groups were rock bands, the abdominals would be Hootie & the Blowfish. Turn on your television, and if you do not see a commercial in which a leading economist such as Candice Bergen, Michael Jordan or Whoopi Goldberg explains which long-distance carrier is best for your individual case you will see the Abdominals People – and I do not wish to generalize here, but these people display the intelligence of sherbet – selling abdominal devices, demonstrating abdominal exercises, and of course proudly showing off their abdominal muscles, which bulge and writhe beneath a thin sweaty layer of skin, so that the people look as though they're smuggling pythons down there.

What I want to know is, why is this considered attractive? And how important, really, are abdominal muscles? I mean, I'm sure they serve some medical function, such as keeping your intestines from falling into your lap, but do they have to be HUGE? Do these people who spend 17 hours a day building up their abdominals ever use them for any practical purpose? What? Moving furniture?

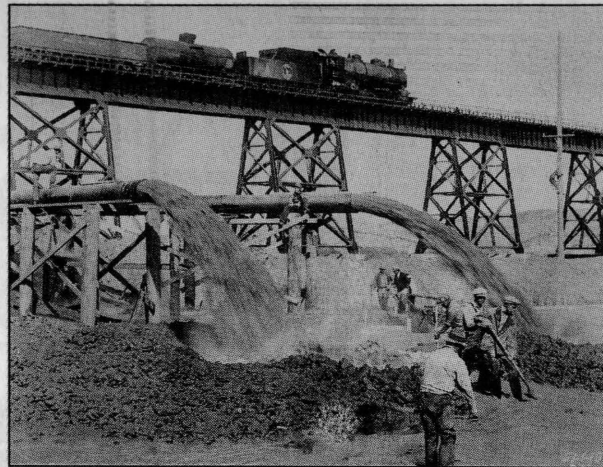
What I also want to know is: What's next? I mean, when the Abdominals People – formerly the Biceps People; formerly the Thighs People; formerly the Buns People – have made all the money they can from our stomachs, where will they go? Are they going to work their way through ALL of our muscles? Will there come a time, say 10 years from now, when they're going to announce that we all need to build up, say, our eyelid muscles? Will we turn on the TV and see commercials for the Lid-A-Cizer, featuring enthusiastic men and women with form-fitting workout outfits and bulging eyelids the size of golf balls?

Barry is a columnist for the Miami Herald. He can be reached at 1 Herald Plaza, Miami, FL 33132

Bottom, how the dam looked about 1938 as forms were readied for concrete pours.



IVAN DOIG



and for truck drivers and clerks thrown out of work when businesses closed. Not only for young people who were too poor to attend college. Not only for hardrock miners with no work available in Butte.

But also for the moribund Great Northern Railway, which delivered about 8,000 trainloads of rock, gravel, equipment and supplies to Fort Peck. Also for the Montana Power and Anaconda companies that built a 300-mile transmission line from Great Falls to Fort Peck and strung it with wire produced in Great Falls.

And also for flood control, electric power and recreation along the mighty Missouri River. The dam cost \$165 million, a chunk of the national budget in those days, but it was a bargain. It's paid for itself 10 times over.

Everything about Fort Peck Dam was gigantic, including waste and sloppy engineering.

Ivan Doig gets that point across remarkably well in his new book, "Bucking the Sun," which is a fictional account but still a very accurate picture of life and times around the dam.

I was a child in Glasgow during the dam days. My late father, Sam Gilluly, was the only newspaper editor who covered the dam project from start to finish. His stories appeared in the Glasgow Courier and Great Falls Tribune and in Associated Press dispatches across the state.

Sam Gilluly wrote an 8,000-word story of Fort Peck Dam that was published by the Tribune in 1977. That, together with Doig's book that emphasizes the human struggles of the time, makes the historical record complete. The two writers met in Helena to compare notes when Doig was doing his research on the book.

There is only one variance in the fictional and real versions.

Doig's family in the novel, the Duffs, are portrayed early on as alfalfa seed farmers in an area that would soon be flooded out by the dam. The impression Doig conveys is that a number of people were thrown off their land by the project.

In truth, there were only a few farmers and ranchers in the remote and rugged Missouri River Breaks served by dirt roads and the solitary Lismas Ferry south of Glasgow during the early 1930s. Some of the ranchers were renegades who seldom paid their taxes and had no use for anything or anybody connected with government. They were philosophical kin of today's Freemen.

Yes, a few ranchers and farmers were dispossessed by the dam project. But they were paid for their land at a time when few could afford to stay with the land. Fort Peck wasn't anything like the Tennessee Valley Authority, where hundreds of dirt farmers were forced to give up their property.

The novel's final chapters are centered around the

Tribune regional editor

Glasgow and Fort Peck resident Gene Tourtlotte, who was employed as a driver for project engineer

Clark Kittrell. On the day of the slide he took Kittrell and other engineers to the upstream face to inspect reports of earth movement.

Just as the car stopped, the ground in front of them began to give way.

Tourtlotte put the vehicle in reverse and backed up, as fast as possible, for several hundred yards as crevasses opened up in front of the car. Quick thinking saved his life and several others.

The slide did not breach the dam. But it required a lot of repair work.

Despite this minor nitpicking, my admiration for Ivan Doig is boundless. He's taken his place alongside Bud Guthrie, Dorothy M. Johnson, Norman Maclean and Dan Cushman. They stand tall as Montana's best story-tellers.

"Bucking the Sun" is not an easy read. But it captures your attention and holds it. The Duffs are a Scottish family with some distant ties to people in Doig's previous books – "English Creek," "Dancing at the Rascal Fair" and "Ride with Me, Mariah Montana" – that became a trilogy of life in Montana.

And this family, like those in Doig's previous books, is beset by tension and turmoil.

The Duffs may not be dysfunctional, but they have all the human weaknesses. The patriarchal father disappears on occasional drunks and the three sons alternately respect and resent each other. Their mother does her best to hold the clan together and get along with her three daughters-in-law.

The book ends in tragedy for the family.

The best part of Doig's work is the wealth of detail about how Montanans lived and related to each other during the project years. They made do in crude shacks at Wheeler, New Deal, Delano Heights and McCone City, but they had steady work and enough money in their pockets to face the future.

A final thought on how tough it was in Montana during the Depression:

During the 1920s drought, about 40,000 homesteaders went broke and abandoned their land.

In 1932 the Valley County health nurse reported a number of cases of malnutrition in Glasgow. Farm wives were canning gophers to put meat on the table for their families. And ranchers were feeding thistles to their cattle. It was the only feed available.

There was no hope for people in the whole expanse of eastern Montana.

Fort Peck Dam was their salvation.

What's next for Ivan Doig?

By BOB GILLULY
Tribune Regional Editor

Ivan Doig says his next novel will be a contemporary one involving Montanans who left the state for fame and fortune but have a hankering to return to their roots along the Rocky Mountain Front.

It's just the germ of an idea now, Doig said in a telephone interview from his home in Seattle. For the next several weeks he'll remain busy on a bookstore tour promoting "Bucking the Sun," a fictional account of Fort Peck Dam days that's already been acclaimed as one of his best.

"It's time I invented some baby boomers," Doig said of his upcoming project. "They come back for a reunion and run into

Meet the author

- **What:** Ivan Doig autographing his new book, "Bucking the Sun"
- **When:** Monday from 4:30 to 6 p.m.
- **Where:** Hastings Books Music & Video, 1017 10th Ave. S.

trouble on a trip into the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area."

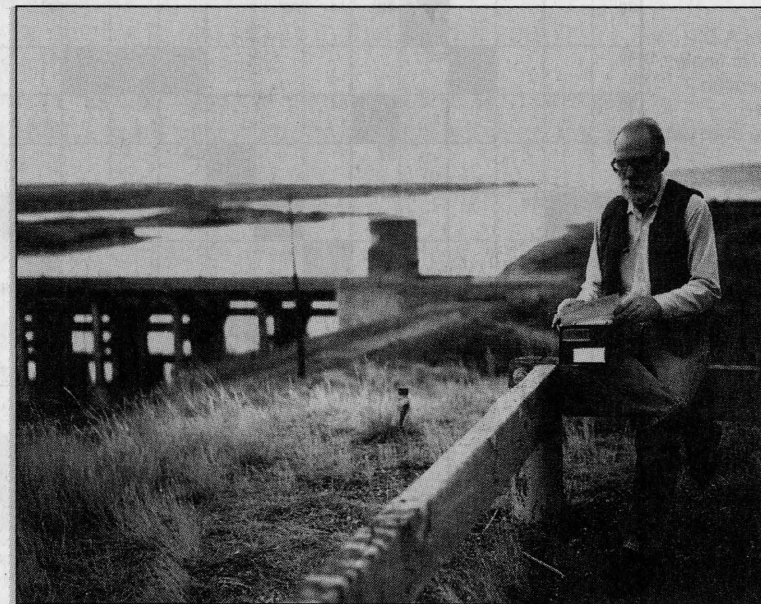
Doig said he's met dozens for ex-Montanans living in Seattle, San Francisco and Alaska who hanker to return to the good life in Montana after pursuing their careers. "They still have this

nostalgic feeling for Montana," he said.

Work on "Bucking the Sun" began in the 1980s, Doig said, and after three years of researching and writing he'd met a number of Montana people who worked on Fort Peck Dam. He also listened to oral histories collected by the Montana Historical Society and read short reminiscences written by workers.

"I even talked to a carpenter who worked at Fort Peck as a young man. He was living about a mile from me in Seattle," said Doig. From that conversation came a passage in Doig's book about laying the floor in a bar that opened in a shack town near the dam. From another interview Doig gleaned a story about a worker who rode a pipe

See DOIG, 4E



Carol Doig photo

Montana-born author Ivan Doig at the Fort Peck Dam site. Doig's latest book, Bucking the Sun, is set in Fort Peck during the Depression.

Doig: Years of research worth it

From 1E

"Fort Peck was really big in people's lives," Doig summarized.

"For some reason Grand Coulee (in Washington) and Boulder-Hoover (Nevada) dams got a lot more attention in the West during the 1930s."

Was it worth it, three years of research and writing to produce "Bucking the Sun?"

"I certainly think so. And since the book was published I've become even more convinced," said Doig, 57. "I was in the Twin Cities recently and talked with several people

from Minnesota who had ties to Fort Peck or had worked on the Great Northern Railway. They appreciated reading about their past."

That feeling was echoed in a review by Chuck Robinson of the American Booksellers Association.

"Doig has concentrated the full force of his immense writing talents and his bone-deep feel for the Big Sky country on telling this epic tale ... Nowhere do events long past seem so present," Robinson wrote.

"It's really amazing how many people are still around who remember," the author said.

Opinion

Bucking . . .

I received a copy of an especially appropriate new book this week.

Ivan Doig's "Bucking the Sun" is set in the 1930s against the backdrop of Montana's Fort Peck Dam Project — "one of the most daunting engineering feats in American History," note Simon and Schuster publicists Erin Marut and Elizabeth Hayes.

The timing of the book's arrival in my mail this week is significant in that it coincides with the beginning of a new effort to reach a consensus on the management of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Missouri River projects to provide a fair distribution of benefits.

That goal, if accomplished through the new approach that begins Thursday, will require, like the building of the dam, another feat of great magnitude.

Past efforts to reach a fair agreement have been extensive and expensive, with little result.

Each state, and the regions that can roughly be divided into "upstream" and "downstream" have jealously fought for what they see as their fair share of benefits.

Traditionally, the conflicting uses of navigation and recreation have been at the center of the controversy.

In Montana, we have argued that the federal government failed to keep their promises that included the development of important irrigation projects associated with the construction of Fort Peck Dam.

We point out that much productive (and taxable) land was lost when Fort Peck Reservoir filled behind the dam that was built in the '30s.

In Doig's book, one of the early scenes depicts a farmer's incredulous reaction when a government land buyer stops by to make him an offer because of the plans to construct a new dam more than 100 miles away.

Montana remembers what the pre-dam Missouri River represented — and the readers of Doig's novel will probably come away with a new understanding when they finish the book.

"Bucking the Sun" is mainly about people, but in eastern Montana, it's hard to separate people from the land.

As various groups — including the old Missouri River States Association and the newer Missouri River Basin Association — have negotiated for agreements on how the Corps could best manage the river, Montana has returned time and again to the argument that promises were not kept and much of our valuable land was lost.

It would only be fair if recreation on the big reservoirs in Montana and in the Dakotas were given a higher priority in terms of management decisions, we have argued.

But the political division between "upstream" and "downstream" has remained and little has been accomplished.

This week, a new approach will be launched.

Instead of convening a gathering of government officials, representatives of various user groups will sit down to discuss their perspective on the river during a two-day conference in Bismarck.

What is different about this approach?

Well, for one thing, there is apt to be more discussion about what we need instead of focusing simply on what we deserve.

The difference may seem subtle, but the users' shared perspectives promise a different look at the situation.

Maybe there's hope.

If the users in the Missouri River basin can, in fact, reach a general consensus and use their combined political power in a focused effort to benefit the entire basin, much could be accomplished.

In the past, I have been a little skeptical of the states' efforts attempts to reach their own consensus.

Today, I am hopeful that the users of the Missouri River system may, because they are the ones who will be directly affected through the give-and-take process, stand a better chance of finding the beginning of a path toward an agreement.

I'm excited to join a delegation that will include local residents Diane Brandt, Chuck Carlson, Jim Rector, Ron Miller and Steve Page and Sidney resident Tom Huntley to travel to Bismarck with Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Director Bud Clinch to represent Montana's interest in the Missouri River basin.

Ivan Doig called his book "Bucking The Sun".

I call the new consensus effort "Bucking The Status Quo."

We'll find out quickly if there is progress to be made through this new approach.

Scott Ross

1996

Bellingham (WA) Herald,
May 10, 1996

LIFESTYLE

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Inside

Ivan Doig's latest novel is a marvel of construction

Bucking the Sun

By Ivan Doig (Simon & Schuster)
\$23, 412 pp.

The amazing variety of novels today brings to mind thoughts of concerts, mostly down-home shows in small venues with horrible acoustics and overpriced drinks.

Most of the works seem like warm-up bands. They're a little off-rhythm. They feature eight-minute drum solos for no apparent reason. The fit of applause you give at the end stems more from relief than appreciation.

By contrast, Ivan Doig's new "Bucking The Sun" is a headliner. It is tight and assured. Each narrative song builds on the last, reaching new heights. Any and all encores are blessings.

The Montana author already is deemed among the few great living



Scott Coy
Lommers

U.S. writers. He has received praise from all sides and stirring reviews for all of his books. Little can be added to raise his stature.

That said, "Bucking The Sun" is a glorious piece of writing. Doig shows no signs of fading. It

is another step forward for a novelist already yards ahead of the pack.

The novel is a sweeping story of an ill-fated family and its involvement in one of the most complex engineering feats in U.S. history, the construction of the Fort Peck Dam in Montana in the 1930s. The family, named Duff (think rough), is the heart and soul of the story. Its longing and despair, tinged with

▼ In person

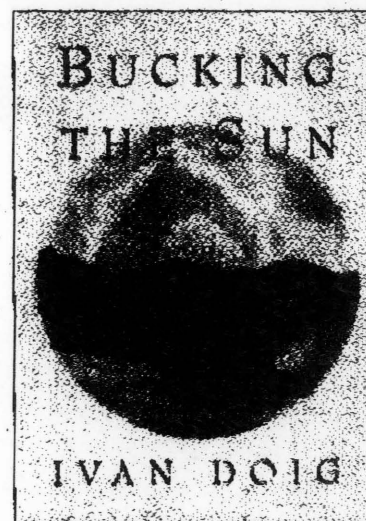
PERFORMANCE: Ivan Doig will appear for a literary performance and reception at 8 p.m. Saturday at Mount Baker Theatre. Purchase tickets — \$8 — Mount Baker Theatre, 734-6080, or Village Books, 671-2626.

hope, drives the narrative.

Doig wastes no time engrossing the reader in the story. By page 13, the overriding mystery of the novel is set in place. Two members of the 10-strong Duff clan are found together, naked and dead, in a submerged truck.

"Married, you bet," the sheriff investigating the deaths is told. "Only not to each other."

Next, the novel flashes back to



five years earlier without divulging the identities of the dead. You'll fly through the next 400 pages wonder-

ing which Duffs were the unlucky ones.

The novel is immensely intricate, yet it easily carries the reader through the story. Doig's loving portrayals of the Duff family members are entrancing, even though few of the Duffs are lovable.

Even the mundane comes alive in "Bucking The Sun." Never really cared about how an earthen dam was constructed? Neither did I. But Doig made me want to know; I was constantly intrigued.

If there is any downside to such a magnificent book, it is that the novel makes other works seem less worthy by comparison. But then, without marginal opening bands, how can you judge the excellence of the headliners?

Scott Coy Lommers is a Birch Bay writer who reviews books for The Bellingham Herald.

Dancing with language

Ex-ranchhand, newspaperman
Ivan Doig captures spirit
of Depression-era Montana

By Margaret Carlin

Rocky Mountain News Books Editor

When Ivan Doig was researching his novel, *Bucking the Sun*, based on the construction of the Fort Peck Dam in Montana during the 1930s, he was struck by the happy memories of the people who worked on the giant structure.

"There are taped oral histories, so I could listen to the actual voices. These people felt lucky... it was the Depression, you know, but they were young, they were learning new skills, they had money in their pockets, they were meeting new people, there were bars and lots of high jinks... the people remembered that period as the apex of their lives, exciting times."

Doig will be in the Denver area Friday and Saturday to discuss *Bucking the Sun* (Simon & Schuster, 412 pages, \$23). Speaking by phone from his home in Seattle, the author traces the genesis of his novel to a Montana newspaper article.

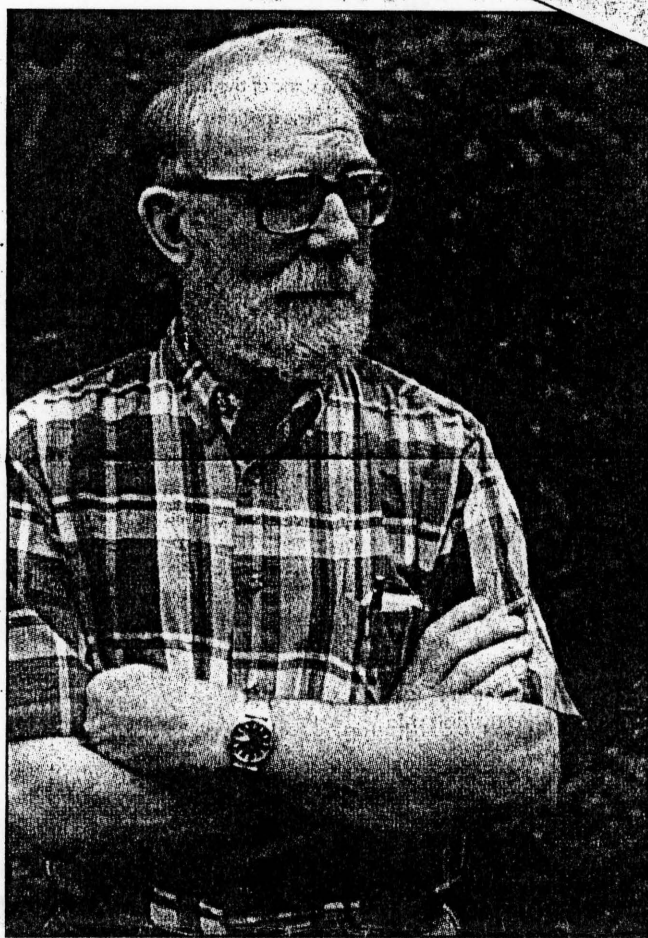
"The story was about a couple found dead in a truck in a compromising situation. I decided to use the couple as a plot turn — two people in the same family, married, but not to each other."

Doig, 57, who grew up on a Montana sheep ranch, chose the title of his book from one of his rugged father's frequent laments: "We'd be driving early in the morning or late afternoon, and he'd always say, 'Oh, we've got to buck the sun all the way til we get there!'"

The title also refers, of course, to the contentious Duff family which bucks the world, playing out adventure and tragedy against the building of the giant dam and the taming of the mighty Missouri River.

The story involves Hugh Duff, the hell-raiser; his wife, Meg, "who peers at you as if clerking for God"; and their sons, Owen, an engineer, and twins Neil and Bruce.

Owen marries social-climbing, "panther beautiful" Charlene Tebbet; Neil marries her sister, "cute as a wink" aspiring writer



Carol M. Doig

Ivan Doig will be in Denver Friday and Saturday to discuss *Bucking the Sun*.

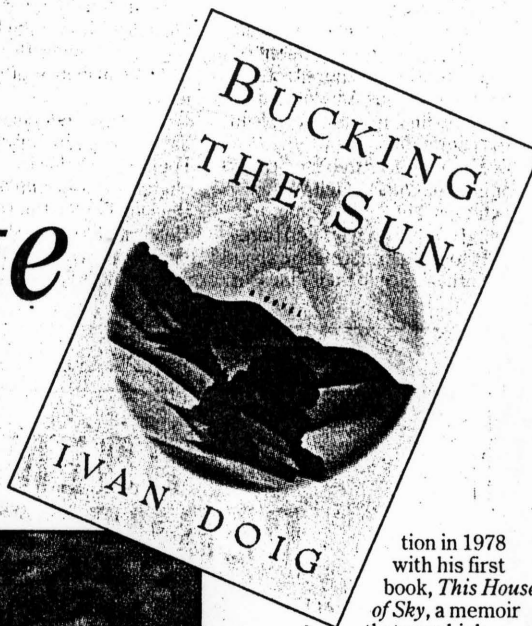
Rosellen; daredevil Bruce marries Kate Millay, a tall, saucy redheaded waitress. Into this scene comes Hugh's brother, Darius Duff, a "bachelor curio" on the run from Scotland, who's long been in love with Meg, but has a go with the delectable Susannah (nicknamed Proxy, "short for peroxide") Shannon, a prostitute and taxi dancer.

Doig's favorite character is Sheriff Carl Kinnick, a diminutive, ornery "fierce doll of a man" who tries to keep law and order in the rambunctious boomtowns that grew up around the dam. "Kinnick

is a short, fine-boned man who looks out of place in big sprawling Montana — his physique is at odds with his landscape and at odds with his personality."

Interspersed with the family brawls is Doig's historically accurate detailing of the construction of Fort Peck Dam, the enormous man-made earth structure in remote northern Montana. He also depicts the Dust Bowl days, with its despairing people clinging to hope.

Doig, a former ranchhand and newspaperman, gained recogni-



tion in 1978 with his first book, *This House of Sky*, a memoir that won high

praise. He followed

that with his dazzling Montana trilogy, *English Creek* (1984), *Dancing at the Rascal Fair* (1987) and *Ride With Me, Mariah Montana* (1990). He's also written the novel, *The Sea Runners* (1982), as well as two non-fiction books, *Winter Brothers* (1980) and *Heart Earth* (1993).

There have been numerous prizes, but Doig says that for him, the ultimate pleasure is building a story on yellow legal pads, word by carefully crafted word. He's an admirer of literary fiction and in fact, dedicates *Bucking the Sun* to six writers around the world: "Roddy Doyle (Ireland), Nadine Gordimer (South Africa), Ismail Kadare (Albania), Maurice Shadbolt (New Zealand), Thomas Keneally and Tim Winton (Australia)."

"I like their eloquent writing of the edge of the world," he says. "They use true experiences, in contrast to so much contemporary writing that comes from the author's own psyche."

Writing for him, Doig says, is a kind of dance with the language. "I keep polishing. If I get stuck in one part, I leap to another section, until I think it works."

This, his fans can be assured, Doig does with distinction in *Bucking the Sun*.

IF YOU GO

Ivan Doig will be in Colorado this weekend to sign copies of his novel, *Bucking the Sun* (Simon & Schuster, 412 pages, \$23): Friday from noon to 1:30 p.m. at Stone Lion Book Store, 107 N. College, Fort Collins (970-493-0030) and 7:30 to 9 p.m. at Boulder Book Store, 1107 Pearl St. (447-2074); Saturday from noon to 1:30 p.m. at McKinley-White Book Store, 8005 N. Academy, Colorado Springs (719-590-1700) and 7 to 9 p.m. at Tattered Cover Book Store, 2955 E. First Ave., Cherry Creek. Information: 322-7727.

Who's Who won't touch Doig's cast of people

By FARIS CASSELL
For The Register-Guard

IVAN DOIG'S new novel, "Bucking the Sun," an epic of the New Deal era in Montana, is bursting with the kind of people he most admires.

The 10 lead characters are the Duff clan: sweaty, sooty, hardscrabble folks — cooks, farmers, truck drivers, beauticians and even prostitutes. You won't find them in a "Who's Who."



485-2000

To hear Ivan Doig reading from "Bucking the Sun," call GuardLine and enter 2665.

This is the sprawling, boisterous story of a family displaced from their grubstake farm on the Missouri River bottomland by construction of the Fort Peck Dam. The Duffs move to the boom town construction site where they each find work.

To "buck the sun" is to drive head-on into its rays, pushing against its power. This is a "pushful" group, rowdy and fiercely loyal.

Doig's literary career has focused on giving a voice to these men and women, moving us with stories of their day-to-day heroism, love and tragedies in an economic system that is often beyond their control.

They are, in a sense, Doig's extended family. "My family appears in my books only in my attitudes," Doig says, but these are "my people."

"These are the people who have the background I'm from, people like my parents, with the same levels of work and craftsmanship that I identify with. They are ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances."

Doig grew up in Montana, arguably America's most impressive and desolate region. Winter storms there can be so fierce that ranchers and sheepherders sometimes lose their entire year's profits overnight. It's not a place that caters to the weak.

Doig grew up in White Sulphur Springs, a small town in the shadow of the Rockies several hundred miles west of the Fort Peck Dam. He was an only child, born in 1939. His father was a rodeo rider, ranch hand and sheepherder. His mother died of asthma on Doig's sixth birthday.

His grandmother ultimately came to live with them, helping to raise Doig and finding work on the ranches.

"It was an American nomadic life," Doig said during a recent interview. The family moved with

Books

DOIG

Continued from Page 1F

the work, seeking jobs on the same ranch so the family could stay together.

"We raised sheep, too," Doig says. "We would do the work of raising the animals for their owners and then share in the profits, if there were any, like an American share-cropper family in the South.

"During the winter of my senior year, we made our living by baby-sitting — even my father, who had been a bronc rider, cowboy and a lot of other Western things.

"If we weren't poor, we could see it from where we were," Doig says. "It was always right in front of my face."

Young Doig labored along with the family, tending sheep, bucking hay and driving tractors and grain trucks. However, from an early age, he was a precocious student.

"There's quite a reverence for education in my father's Scottish background," he said. "He believed that I had a future and (that) I should get an education so I wouldn't have to live the way he had. The family agreed that my most important work was school. I always had my nose in a book."

Doig does not use the word "work" casually. Learning was the easy part of getting an education. Much of Doig's youth was spent on school buses, traveling 1½ hours each way to a small consolidated school in the north. Some years he boarded with families near the school.

Education of another sort came

from tagging along with his father to the local saloons. There, he says, he was treated as an "honorary adult" and could sit back and listen to the tales of ranching, weather and work.

Doig absorbed the language and lore of the West that would later become a trademark of his books.

But for the most part, he says, much of his youth was spent alone.

A commitment to leave the life he had grown up with was made at age 15. Guiding sheep blindly through a blizzard, he realized that there had to be a better way to make a living.

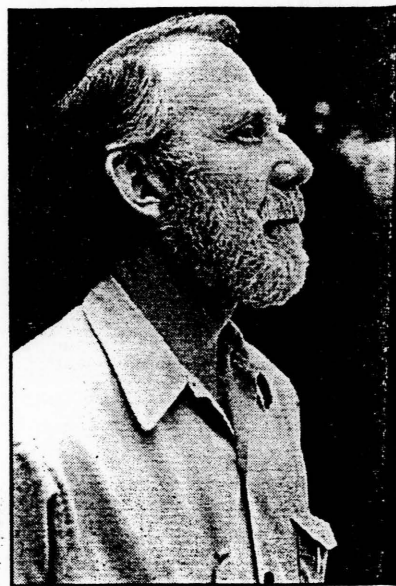
"I knew someone in the family needed to earn a regular wage."

Worries about how to manage higher education were resolved when a teacher showed him how to apply for college scholarships. His way out of the ranching life became clear. He would go to college.

Doig earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in journalism from Northwestern University, finishing in 1962. He stayed in Illinois, working at newspapers and magazines.

A few years later, Doig and his wife, Carol, were drawn to the Western mountainous landscapes that they loved. They moved to Seattle, where he earned his doctorate in history from the University of Washington, thinking he would then teach. By the time he finished in 1969, however, he had had enough of academia.

He worked as a magazine freelancer for several years before he decided to finish a manuscript that



Ivan Doig

New novel is a Montana epic

had moldered in a drawer for years. "This House of Sky," his groundbreaking memoir about his family and life in Montana, was published in 1976, a bold gamble by Harcourt Brace.

Most memoirs at that time featured only the lives of the rich and powerful, luminaries in science, politics or the arts. This book about the hardheaded Montanans who scraped out a life from an unforgiving landscape captured the imagination of an age disillusioned with their leadership and searching for a connection to the land. Here were real-life heroes struggling to survive in a

landscape of heroic proportions.

Ivan Doig to appear at the Hult

"Voices of Place: An Evening with Ivan Doig" will be presented at 7:30 p.m. Monday in the Soreng Theatre, Hult Center for the Performing Arts.

The reading and conversation will be a benefit for the Lane Arts Council. A book signing will follow in the lobby.

Admission is \$11.

For information, call 687-5000.

landscape of heroic proportions.

The book was a literary and popular success. It was a National Book Award finalist and sold well enough to give Doig the financial independence to work full time on his books.

Eight more books followed over the next 20 years: novels and memoirs. Set in Montana and the coastal Northwest, they all show the landscape looming in the lives of ordinary folks who are engaged in their daily struggle to earn a living.

During that time, Western writers were starting to develop a

unique voice and gaining stature with the lofty Eastern literati. University of Oregon Professor Richard Maxwell Brown identifies Doig as the first to write American "grass-roots biography."

Doig has said that the West offers writers a unique opportunity. "It's a big canvas with hard lives being lived against it." Montana began to usurp California as a symbol of the new West.

His new book tells "a story that people kept handing to me over the years," Doig says. "I'd be talking with people from Montana, and time and again I would hear the Fort Peck stories. It was such a big project, and so many people got their start in life from it, they remembered it vividly.

"Here was the biggest dam project in the world, hourly wages, boom towns with saloons, dance halls, movie houses, brothels and you name it. The first real sharp experiences in their lives happened at Fort Peck."

The questions rising from the Duff family's experience at Fort Peck have to do with the interplay of ordinary people struggling, as Doig's own family did, with forces, man-made and natural, that would always be beyond their control.

Doig presents no easy answers: "I want my stories to be complicated, as life is. We need to look at what's gained and what's lost."

Doig is known for his ability to tell a wonderful story, meticulously crafted and woven with historical

fact.

The research on this book was immense, he says. It included 200 color photos of the Missouri River country taken by his wife. And there's an entire file drawer in his study devoted just to facts about the dam.

He revised the opening scene nearly 50 times. "I didn't change it entirely, but I smoothed it and smoothed it and smoothed it. At times I thought it was going to kill me."

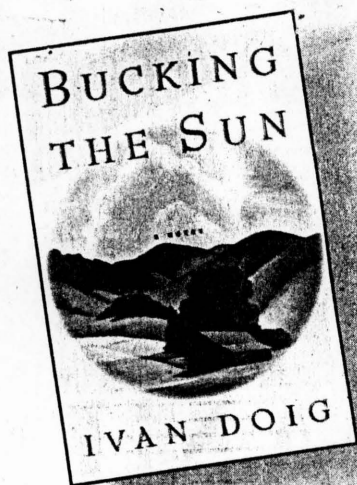
He says keeping up with the large cast of characters, many drawn from real people, also made the work especially demanding. Occasionally, they are too much even for Doig and seem to slip away.

But Doig is an eloquent storyteller, often poetic and inventive. In the end, we are pulled into the Duffs' lives as they themselves are swept along by the tumultuous currents of the times.

This has been his goal from the beginning. He recalls being upset when the Watergate conspirators wrote books about their experiences, but when Spiro Agnew received a fat contract, he was outraged.

"On that great day, I thought: Why should these guys have the right to trumpet out their version of history, when the people I came from don't get a chance? By God, I'm giving them that chance."

Faris Cassell, a Eugene writer, regularly reviews Northwest books for *The Register-Guard*.



Ivan Doig's epic dam

The novelist's sprawling tale set beneath a giant dam hammers to the core of Northwest culture

By ROBIN CODY

In the 18 years since his best book, "This House of Sky," Ivan Doig has written some of the finest Northwest fiction and nonfiction. Mining much the same ground, he has come up with smaller and smaller nuggets. He's so damn good, you want him to go for it. You want him to drill into the mother lode and blast away.



DOIG

INSIDE

■ **DAM HISTORY:** The building of a Montana dam, a massive public works project of the '30s, gave Ivan Doig the right stuff for his latest novel — a pivotal point in history and working-class characters. See Ellen Heltzel's "Writing in the Rain." / 7

moving engineer, believes in the nature-busting destiny of Western Man. Hugh's other sons, twins, bring to the job polar opposites of quiet reliability and ram-bunctious stunts. And here, fresh from Scotland, comes the old man's brother, Darius Duff, after bashing a guy's head in for trying to snuff a communist shipyard rally.

With "Bucking the Sun," Doig does just that.

This is his most ambitious novel, an epic tangle of Montana sod-busters turned dam workers — all in the Duff family — in the mid-1930s. They're building Fort Peck Dam, a massive earthen plug on the upper Missouri River.

These Duffs have range. The patriarch, Hugh Duff, leaves the soon-to-be drowned homestead for a job at the construction site, slipping off on drunken jags. His son Owen, the chief dirt-

To this explosive mix, add wives. In addition to Hugh's long-suffering partner, we get a social-climbing beautician, a savvy waitress, a dreamy novice writer and a hooker with the proverbial heart of gold.

Doig lights the fuse on this powder keg right away.

In a flash forward, we learn that a naked man and a naked woman — both Duffs, not married to each other — have rolled in a truck to their deaths off the dam.

Four hundred pages later, we learn why. And who they were.

It doesn't really matter who they were. Of the 20 possible pairings of unmatched Duffs, at least 12 would have made as surprising and satisfying an ending as the pairing Doig chose.

No, the real story — Doig at his best — is about people moving earth. It's about men and women carving a landscape, dredging the river bottom to stopper a great waterway with its own stuff. It's about the river, fighting back. It's about the weather. Nobody writes the

Please turn to
DOIG, Page 7

BUCKING THE SUN

Ivan Doig

Simon & Schuster, \$23

BOTTOM LINE

From one of the Northwest's leading writers, a new novel about Montana during the Depression demonstrates the author's skill with language and as a chronicler of the working class.

MAY 1 2 1996

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LUCE PRESS CLIPPINGS

Doig: Novelist penetrates heart of Northwest Anglo culture

■ Continued from Page 1

extremes of Montana weather better than Ivan Doig.

A truck driver "bucks the sun" when hauling straight into the glare of sunrise or sunset. Likewise, the Duffs buck cosmic forces in the doomful shadow of the rising dam. Through shifting points of view, we see Fort Peck — a Depression-era beehive — from several angles. Everybody works, on the dam itself or in the squalid shantytown nearby.

They're stubborn Scots. Nobody grows much, or even questions beliefs. They stay in their roles, trading witty barbs and colorful sayings.

Had Doig not artfully broadened the scope, the Duffs might have been

pathetic, rather than tragic. But he brings the global Communist movement into play. Franklin D. Roosevelt delivers a ringing speech at the dam. Even Hitler and Stalin play bit roles.

"Bucking the Sun" is a big book.

It might also have been a great book, if not for the stiffness of language. Doig, with his odd sentence structure, is never easy. Wooden dialogue, especially, slows things down. He is curiously reluctant to use the simple verb "said." Instead (to pick just one exchange) he writes "chortled out," "hazarded," "decided to contribute," "intoned," "plunged on to," and "made himself confine to." But Doig fans put up with the rubble for the gems re-

vealed. The reason he is so widely, and rightly, admired is because of his gift for writing *Man against the elements*. People work the land.

And every once in a while Doig just nails it. Listen to this:

"The hammer sounds racketed into the Wheeler night ... WHAM wham-am WHAM-am. While the hammers hit those higher notes, a pile driver gave bass *whumps* beside the river. The bluffs of the Missouri here had heard din before — the bawling rumble of buffalo herds, the last-stand discourse of Sitting Bull's winter camp before the summer of the Little Big Horn, the axes of steamboat woodhawks — but there had been half a century of comparative silence since any of those. Now

and for years to come, a river of sound waited to drown down onto the site of Fort Peck — the opera shrieks of shale saws, the incessant comings and goings of locomotives and bulldozers and trucks, the falsetto of steam whistles, the attacks of jackhammers."

In "Bucking the Sun," Doig hammers straight to the core of Northwest Anglo culture. His is the voice of a major writer. He's one of the best we have on what it is to live in, and to change, a place.

Robin Cody is the author of "Ricochet River," a novel, and "Voyage of a Summer Sun," winner of the 1995 Oregon Book Award for literary non-fiction.

St. Petersburg, FL

Times

Tampa

Met Area

Sunday

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MAY 19, 1996

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LUCE PRESS CLIPPINGS

Hard labor in Montana

BUCKING THE SUN

By Ivan Doig
Simon & Schuster, \$23

Reviewed by Tim Warren

Ivan Doig aims high in his fifth novel, and while you like to see ambition in a writer, *Bucking the Sun* tries to do too much. It's a historical novel; it's an intergenerational saga; it's grand and sweeping like the Montana landscape that provides the setting. And it carries too much weight as it plods along, which is a pity because *Bucking the Sun* has some terrific elements.

Doig grew up in Montana, and has written the "Montana Trilogy" of novels and two excellent memoirs. In *Bucking the Sun*, his familiarity with the state no doubt played a part in imagining a plot device that allows for all kinds of possibilities: the reshaping of Montana in the mid- to late 1930s through the massive, government-built Fort Peck dam.

New Dealers in Washington decided that Montana had to have a relief pro-

ject to move it out of the Depression.

Overnight, the state was changed. Thousands of jobs were created — people were needed to clear and dig and transport and lay cement. With them came other folks plying less respectable trades, such as prostitutes and robbers.

In the midst of this was the Duff family, of proud Scottish heritage but just making a living growing alfalfa. As the book opens, Hugh Duff, the irascible, boozing father, is told by a government agent that the family farm is being taken over because it sits in the middle of the projected dam. So Hugh and his twin sons, Bruce and Neil, and his wife, Meg, all get jobs with the dam. Hugh's oldest son, Owen, had come aboard earlier as an engineer.

The state's social fabric is ripped asunder: Farmers were going broke, but at least they had some dignity and independence. Now they are swinging axes at underbrush on government salary and throwing away their money in bars and brothels that have sprung up in nearby towns. One such instant city is Wheeler. Doig writes:

"Squalid, flinty, hopeless, hopeful, nocturnal and red-eyed, Wheeler almost immediately grew to 3,000 strong (1,500 dam workers and 1,500 camp followers, the demography was usually given as) and burgeoning." The prevailing wisdom was simple: "When the dam was done, Wheeler's population would pick up and move anyway."

Doig is perhaps best at depicting this massive social dislocation — he has a great eye for detail and amusing set-pieces. But he's also giving us a chronology of the building of the dam and the myriad details of the family warring and loving. He constantly cuts from one character to another, and all these viewpoints don't allow him to develop the characters fully.

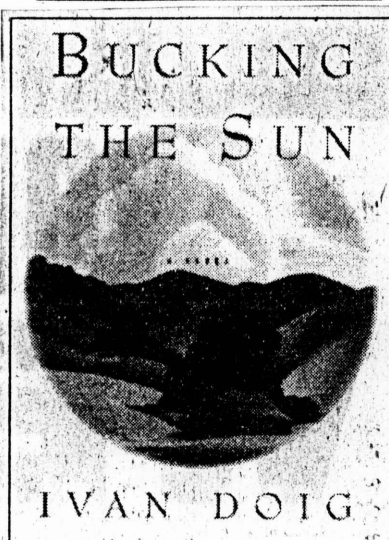
When *Bucking the Sun* is working, it's a splendid rendering of a turbulent Montana in rapid transition. When it's not, though, it's unbearably slow. Reading about the Fort Peck dam should not be as laborious as building it.

■ Tim Warren is a writer who lives in Silver Spring, Md. ■

MAY 19, 1996

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LUCE PRESS CLIPPINGS



Quirky style keeps this waterlogged novel afloat

■ **Bucking the Sun.** By Ivan Doig. Simon & Schuster. 412 pages. \$23.

By MAUDE MCDANIEL
Special to the Journal Sentinel

Ivan Doig himself puts his finger on the difficulty partway through this problematic book when a character says, "This family is like nine radios going at once. ... Every Duff a different station."

Despite the din, this fine Big Sky country chronicler sometimes succeeds in his goal of grounding archetypal human follies and achievements within one family against the constant background noise of the building of the Fort Peck Dam.

In the end, though, it's the dam that comes through, loud and clear.

Begun in 1933 on the Missouri River in northeastern Montana, it was the largest earthen dam in the world, built by more than 10,000 men over five years.

This New Deal vision, intended to prevent flooding downstream and provide jobs through the Depression, is awesome and commands the story, for better or worse.

Dam fillmaster Owen Duff, who operates on the principle that Americans "could solve anything if they could get enough traction," is the brains of the family.

He hires on his twin brothers and his father, alfalfa farmers displaced by the dam, and later his uncle, a troublemaker with Communist sympathies fresh from Scotland.

Delving far too disjointedly into their lives and those of their wives, Doig sets up two mysteries that help hold readers to the end: who is the mystery saboteur, and more puzzling, which two of the Duffs were carrying on an adulterous affair?

Doig's eccentric literary style always takes some getting used to. Especially offputting here is the kind of struggle for synonyms for "said" (like "pronounced," "imparted," "resorted to") usually

associated with the awkward writer.

Still, this is Doig's calculated choice, not his ineptitude showing, so best relax and appreciate the often amusing riches of the rest of his prose.



Doig

"born of listening to the land and its people."

A tad spicier than Doig's earlier novels, but lacking their character warmth, "Bucking the Sun" (which refers to driving into the glare of sunrise or sunset) is just not as compelling as any of his first three ("The Sea Runners," "English Creek," "Dancing at the Rascal Fair").

A great deal is said, sometimes beautifully, never less than originally - but the story often seems to go nowhere at considerable length. I don't care.

To the end of my life, I'll pick up a new Doig book with a shiver of anticipation. And if it doesn't shiver back - well, I keep the old ones ready in my bookcase to do the job.

Maude McDaniel, who lives in Cumberland, Md., has reviewed books for many newspapers, including the Baltimore Sun and the Washington Post.

512744 / 'Bucking the Sun' tries too hard

BUCKING THE SUN. By Ivan Doig. Simon & Schuster, 412 pp., \$23.

By TIM WARREN

Ivan Doig aims high in his fifth novel, and while ambition can be a virtue in a writer, "Bucking the

THE PLAIN DEALER

BOOK REVIEW

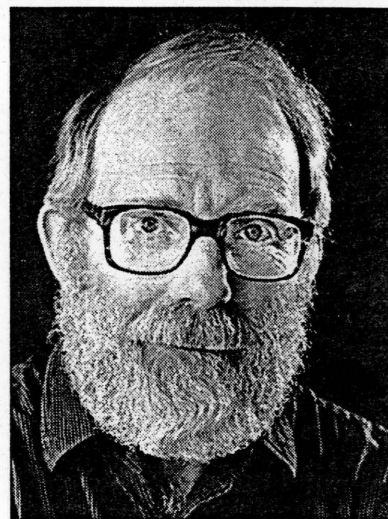
'Bucking the Sun'

Sun" tries to do too much. It's a historical novel; it's an intergenerational saga; it's grand and sweeping like the Montana landscape that provides the setting. And it carries too much weight as it plods along, which is a pity because "Bucking the Sun" has some terrific elements.

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Ivan Doig returns to the Montana of his youth in his new novel, which deals with the reshaping of the state brought about the construction of the Fort Peck Dam.

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broke, but at least they had some dignity and independence. Now they are swinging axes at underbrush on government salary and throwing away their money in bars and brothels that have sprung up in nearby towns. One such instant city is Wheeler. Doig writes:

"Squalid, flinty, hopeless, hopeful, nocturnal and red-eyed, Wheeler almost immediately grew to 3,000 strong (1,500 dam workers and 1,500 camp followers, the demography was usually given as) and burgeoning." The prevailing wisdom was simple: "When the dam was done, Wheeler's population would pick up and move anyway."

Doig is perhaps best at depicting this massive social dislocation — he has a great eye for detail and amusing set-pieces. But he's also giving us a chronology of the building of the dam and the myriad details of the family warring and loving. He constantly cuts from one character to another, and all these viewpoints don't allow him to develop the characters fully.

When "Bucking the Sun" is working, it's a splendid rendering of a turbulent Montana in rapid transition. When it's not, though, it's unbearably slow. Reading about the Fort Peck Dam should not be as laborious as building it.

Warren is a writer who lives in Silver Spring, Md.

5/22/96
Detroit Free Press

BOOKMARKS

A dam and a family

Tale revisits Montana of the '30s

'Bucking the Sun'

★★★
out of 4 stars

By Ivan Doig

Simon & Schuster, 412 pages \$23

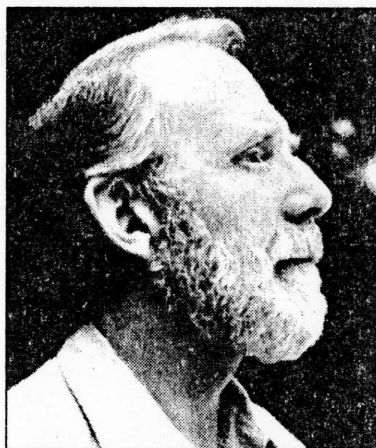
Review by Barbara Holliday

Unless you are a U.S. history student, a dam engineer or a Montana native,

you may never have heard of the Fort Peck Dam, built in the 1930s. Good enough reason to read Ivan Doig's new novel, "Bucking the Sun." It is as readable an account of what was then the largest earthen dam ever attempted that you are going to find outside of working texts.

Doig, whose most memorable novel is "The House of Sky," has written a book almost as unwieldy as the 123 million-plus cubic yards of dirt ordered in the 1930s by the Corps of Engineers to harness the Missouri River. That is part of the story. The other part is an engrossing account of boomtown shanty living, everlasting mud, raucous workers, the Depression and a remarkable family of Scots named Duff who give the tale its humanity.

Doig begins with a teaser. A nude couple are found dead in a truck pulled from the bottom of the river. Doig gives nothing away. We



Novelist Ivan Doig

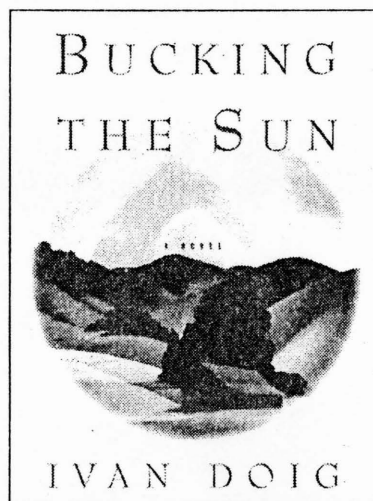
read the entire novel trying to decide which of the Duffs (we guess that much) has been so careless or so victimized. In the meantime, we are treated to a full history of each member of the family.

Hugh and Meg Duff came from Scotland to a homestead in Montana and lost it when the dam was built. Hugh is a binge drinker, Meg an admirable, rather prickly wife "with a little nock in her chin."

Son Owen, who becomes fill master of the dam, is a bright, earnest fellow with a rather uppity wife, Charlene; the twins, Bruce, wild, and Neil, quiet, have restless wives, Rosellen and Kate. Hugh muses, "Were there no jolly, neutral unsharpened women that the Duff men could ever find?"

Finally, there is Darius (accent on the middle syllable with a long "i"), Hugh's brother, who has retained from his shipbuilding days on the Clyde a messianic hotheadedness against authority. Darius hankers after Meg but finally, under duress, marries a prostitute.

The atmosphere reeks with the smell of the river, bad whiskey and



10,000 souls trapped in back-breaking labor. It is a real broth of emotions and ambitions along with the tactical logistics and inevitable mishaps of earthen dam building.

Bruce gets the job of diver, checking pilings in the river. Hugh hates the whole scene and takes it out in liquor. Neil strives. Owen, after his fashion, holds everything together until everything slips. Darius worries himself and us.

Doig toys a little with the reader at the end. The characterizations to that point do not necessarily match the people in the truck.

But Doig, a native of Montana, has given us a slice of Americana as authentic as the Western trek, as troubling as the newsmaking Freeman of today. Add the ways of men and woman and you feel the pulse of lives "blindfolded and raw," in, to borrow a word from one of the rough-edge characters, a "rangu-tang" of a novel.

Barbara Holliday is a retired Free Press book editor reading many hundred miles south of the Fort Peck Dam in Arizona.

JUN 6, 1996

P5648

LUCE PRESS CLIPPINGS

'Bucking the Sun' revolves around man against nature in Montana

By ALISON ARNETT
THE BOSTON GLOBE

Montana was once mainly famous as Big Sky Country, but lately, what with accused mad bombers in its rugged hills, holed-up anti-government ranchers defying the law and reclusive movie stars, it has gotten attention for tales of fact stranger than fiction.

Now Ivan Doig, a native Montanan who lives in Seattle, has woven an epic-size novel in "Bucking the Sun," and one wonders if there's something about the state's extremes of sky and earth that draw out this rush of plot and character.

One family is at the center of the story. From mettlesome mother Meg and cantankerous father Hugh to their three lanky sons and their colorful wives to Hugh's radical brother Darius, lately arrived from Scotland, each member of the Duff family has a piece of the action.

It's a mystery, a puzzle still haunting a bad-tempered little sheriff toward the end of his days: how a pickup truck containing two Duffs, both nude, plummeted down a ramp and into the vast lake formed by the Fort Peck Dam.

The mystery frames the book, the beginning and the end, a seemingly neat package on which to hang the story. But there's nothing neat and tidy about "Bucking the Sun," an expression signifying pushing on against the glare of the sunrise or sunset. Like the title, the characters, for all their foibles, seem almost dwarfed by the descriptions of nature vs. machinery.

The battle lines form as the family struggles to fight off grasshoppers plaguing its alfalfa farm on the rich Missouri River bottomland. Doig lovingly describes the June green of the fields, the line of rocky bluffs, the curl of the river against the land. He evokes as well the lurking danger and the sounds of munching as the insects inexorably destroy the crop.

With the passage of decades, the horrible sweep of agricultural disasters that set the stage for the Great Depression have been instilled into

BOOK REVIEW

■ **Bucking the Sun**

By Ivan Doig/Simon & Schuster, 412 pages, \$23.

the national memory, especially images of dusty Oklahoma fields. We tend to forget the other plagues — of grasshoppers, jackrabbits and plunging prices. Hugh Duff is determined to hold on, to fight off nature's villains and reap the green gold. His wife is convinced the battle is lost. When a government agent shows up to tell them President Roosevelt is offering salvation by drowning their land and giving them jobs, he is furious. He is even more furious when he discovers his eldest son, Owen, will design the dam's earthen fill.

This antagonism — the father's stubbornness about agriculture, the brilliant son's belief in technological progress — develops as the clan moves to the site of Fort Peck Dam, a monumental project devised as much to produce jobs and wages, to drive back the national sense of despair, as to protect downstream land from flooding.

The characters multiply as the story moves along, from the original Duffs to lovers in quickly sketched romances, to wives for the dirt engineer and his less talented brothers, who are twins. The clan might well have muddled along with resentments under the surface, couples getting along and sometimes fighting, with jealousies and flirtations, all sticking together in the end.

They might have, except that into the mix comes Hugh's brother Darius, fleeing union trouble in Scotland.

Doig adroitly plays his historical cards as the dam work fills in the years and the landscape. His sense of the drama of the West, of man against nature, of FDR's push to employ a destitute population, of the dark worldview of Darius the spoiler, is effective. His characters, particularly the women, sound modern and believable.



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MEET THE AUTHOR

Sandra Scofield

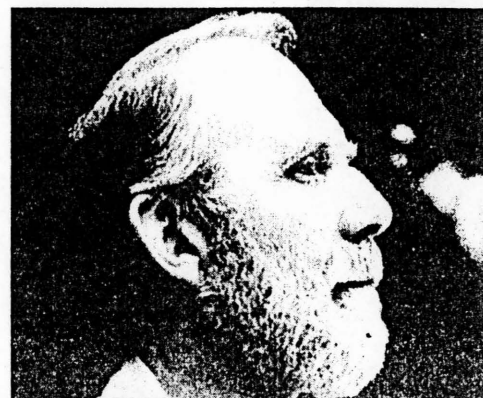


A fanciful tale of love's charms and an illustration of the mystical in an ordinary man, *A Chance to See Egypt* is a novel that proves the story we choose to tell is the life we choose to live. The death of Tom Riley's wife left him "tilting out of balance." He travels to Mexico, where they honeymooned, as a pilgrimage to love's memory... Come meet Ms. Scofield and hear about her "new characters."

APRIL
26

FRIDAY
7 p.m.

Ivan Doig



Ivan Doig is a writer whose work makes readers recall why they love to read. Now he gives us *Bucking the Sun*. A grand saga set against the making of an inspired and tragic American monument, Fort Peck Dam. To "buck the sun" is to push on against the glare of sunrise or sunset. The "pushful" family at the center of this story are farmers driven from their land to relief work on the dam. Around them swirls the epic struggle that is the making of the dam, and the river seeking escape.

MAY
1

WEDNESDAY
7 p.m.

Jack Porter

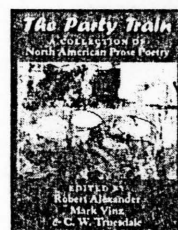


According to Orthodox Jewish faith, a woman who has not been issued a get — a bill of divorce from her husband — remains unable to marry anyone else. Mr. Porter presents the plight of these "agunah," the pros and cons of agunah-law reform and solutions to the agunah dilemma.

APRIL
25

THURSDAY
6:30 p.m.

The Party Train



The prose poem is thriving. Join us at our exciting monthly "Espresso Poetry night" — meet area poets Ellen Kort, Paula Goldman, and Terry Spoltn. They will read poetry included in a new collection entitled *The Party Train*. Featured poet followed by "Open Mile."

MAY
2

THURSDAY
7 p.m.

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-Milwaukee Magazine

June 16, 1991

The Dammed

Ivan Doig's Montanans take part in a huge construction project.

BUCKING THE SUN

By Ivan Doig.
412 pp. New York:
Simon & Schuster. \$23.

By Timothy Foote

UNLIKE most Scots, Ivan Doig wears his heart on his sleeve. He is a man more than half in love with history, his own included. His best book, "This House of Sky," is a nonfiction ticket to the author's boyhood in the Montana of the 1940's, with his mother, who died when he was 6, his ranch-hand dad and his unforgettable grandmother. In matters of work and grief, of place and kinship, he can make you remember with him and sometimes weep — unless, of course, you have a heart of stone and come from the efete East.

Doig novels can be something else again. A historian and journalist by training, he has nonetheless striven for years to bear witness to Montana history in fiction, and to become if not the Homer at least the Virgil of generations of Scots who migrated to northwestern Montana before and after it became a state in 1889.

Mostly they are sheepmen, like his father and grandfather, predictably plagued by coyotes and big cattlemen, small grazing allotments and savage weather. (Doig books rarely spare us a description of a mile-high Montana blizzard; after one of these, few readers will blame him for living in Seattle.) His Scots are stubborn, enduring and reticent, not exactly ideal subjects for popular fiction in an age of tell-all talk shows and whiny therapy.

Like any novelist, especially a novelist bent on giving history lessons, Mr. Doig is obliged to throw a bone to readers who may find themselves in need of fluffy things like romance, suspense and plot. The last time out, in "Ride With Me, Maria Montana," he smuggled a centennial celebration of Montana's past under a fig leaf of fiction. The story involves a rancher father banging around the state with his divorced daughter, who is a photographer, and his former son-in-law, a journalist. The two are collaborating on a series of newspaper articles, so they teach us a lot about Montana. But what is supposed to keep laggards reading is whether or not (as the dad fears) the daughter will fall for the ghastly former son-in-law again and once more ruin her life.

The good news about "Bucking the Sun" is that here Mr. Doig artfully seasons the history lesson by serving it up with an intricate case of murder. This helps with the occasional *longueurs* of what is otherwise a wide-screen, Depression-era narrative largely devoted to the problems of building the Fort Peck Dam. This was a time when 17 million people (in a population of about 140 million) were out of work. When Franklin Roosevelt was pouring Government money into jobs through the W.P.A. and the P.W.A. When Harry Hopkins scored over the less generous Harold Ickes with the line "But Harold, people don't eat in the long run, they eat every day." The Fort Peck Dam (which made the first cover of *Life* magazine in November 1936) put 10,000 people to work. When finished, it created a reservoir 135 miles long, provided

flood control and was the biggest earth-fill dam in the world.

To shovel this construction epic into narrative as painlessly as possible, Mr. Doig mixes fact and fiction, filtering as much history as he can through the lives of the Duff family, whose members all labor on the dam, often under the tutelage of Owen Duff, one of its chief engineers. An elder brother looking out for his kinfolk and constantly at odds with Hugh, his tippling father, Owen manfully commands fleets of dredges and legions of workers, directs earth-moving miracles and fends off disaster from flood and ice during the inevitable Montana blizzard. His mother, Meg, cooks for workers in a mess hall — and puts up with Hugh. Owen's reckless, feckless younger brother Bruce moves from job to job, finally becoming a diver in the murk of the Missouri. Careful Neil, Bruce's twin, bushwhacks and drives a truck.

Along the way, all three boys get married. We also hear a speech by F.D.R., "the big gravy spreader himself," learn about Fort Peck's shantytown housing and the prevalence of prostitution (remarked upon even by *Life*) and are taught the difference between "tunnel muckers," "catskinners" and "shovel runners." Loads of rock hauled in from the nearby hills to reinforce the dam bring in piles of angry rattlesnakes — so many that workers make money selling souvenir rattles.

IF the Duff men are not exactly from central casting, at least central casting would have little trouble placing them. The women they marry are more interesting — especially one called Proxy (from peroxide blonde), a whore not quite with a heart of gold. Mr. Doig somehow manages to make her believable even though she marries Hugh's long-lost brother, Darius, while still taking on anybody with cash who pleases her down at the Blue Eagle tavern. It is Darius, though, who brings a measure of complexity to the novel. A shipyard union organizer from Scotland with a "need to chew at the heels of the powers that be," he turns out to be a man who actively wishes the dam project ill.

If, while reading the above, you've been wondering about that murder, that's exactly what happens to readers of "Bucking the Sun." With the guile of a Montana coyote, the author lures you through his romance with the big dam with teasing hints and guesses. Bit by bit, he lets you realize that the dead bodies (of two of the Duff clan) are no accident, and that more Duffs seem to be involved. But, full of Scottish family loyalty, how could they be? And so, out of 10,000 workers on the dam, Mr. Doig reduces his suspects to 10 — creating a neat, excruciating Agatha Christie country-house murder set down in sprawling Montana. And even when the who of it becomes clear, the how of it remains a mystery that will hold any summer reader to the very last sentence. □

Timothy Foote is a senior editor and writer at Smithsonian magazine.

One dam thing after another

Montana hydroelectric project brings disaster to farm family

BUCKING THE SUN

By Ivan Doig (Simon & Schuster, \$23)

By Philip Montgomery

Ivan Doig's new novel, *Bucking the Sun*, opens with the winching of a truck out of the reservoir of the newly completed Fort Peck Dam on the Missouri River in northeastern Montana. A man and a woman — both nude — are discovered in the front seat. Both are Duff family members and "married — but not to each other." This mystery frames the novel.



DOIG

His stories show how the natural conditions, forces and occurrences of a place combine with the heritage and aspirations of individuals to create, shape, and limit the lives of his characters.

After the startling opening, the story begins with the forced purchase of the Duff family farm by a government agent for the Fort Peck reservoir. The sale coincides with the collapsing fortunes of Hugh Duff, the family patriarch, due to forces outside his control: annual plagues of grasshoppers and declining alfalfa seed prices. The Duffs — Hugh and Meg and their fraternal twin sons, Neil and Bruce — work as day laborers building the Fort Peck dam. Son "Goin'" Owen, an engineer with drive and an

Please see NOVEL on Page 9J.

Ivan Doig has published four works of fiction and three of non-fiction. His childhood memoirs, *This House of Sky* was a National Book Award finalist. He has received numerous awards for individual pieces and for his life work. His works, set in Montana and the Pacific Northwest, all concern the lives of people from those places.

Dallas, TX
MORNING NEWS
Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington
Met Area
SUN 821,894

JUN 2 1996

P5188

LUCE

PRESS CLIPPINGS

Novel is a reservoir of family intrigues

Continued from Page 8J.

absolute faith in progress, had already landed the plum engineer's post as dam fillmaster.

The action of the book unfolds during the Great Depression through construction of the dam, boom-town conditions and the complex interplay of the family members' drives and frustrations. Neil and Bruce, financed by brother Owen, advance to truck driving and diving and marry Rosellen and Kate.

Hugh's bachelor brother, Darius, arrives unexpectedly from Scotland, secures a job, marries a pep-

pery local "taxi driver" (prostitute), by his mere presence reopens rivalries between himself and Hugh for the affections of Meg, and secretly becomes active in the Communist Party. Rosellen writes an unending stream of stories that publishers reject, but she maintains faith in progress and her abilities. Kate waits tables, bears a son and, as do all the Duff women, works to manage the family dynamics.

Mr. Doig writes in a beautiful and singular style that combines narrative, dialogue and the thoughts of his characters. He can capture the essence of a sentiment

or sensation and re-create that same feeling in readers. This skill and the graceful rhythm of his storytelling give his work rare emotional richness. They give what might otherwise be overly schematic themes vivid personal expression.

Bucking the Sun refers to relentless and sometimes dangerous pushing against the glare of the sun at sunrise or sunset. The tension conveyed in this image suffuses the novel. Mr. Doig uses the backdrop mesh of family and dam-building to weave his multiple themes. As in his Montana trilogy, especially *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*, he creates rivalries between brothers over women and marriage of circumstance and necessity in the face of unrequited love, tragedy born of a drive to do more than nature will allow, death by drowning that tragically resolves family strife, conflict between agrarian life and man-made progress, and a fascinating epic of the 19th-century Scotch settlers, their relatives and descendants from Mr. Doig's *English Creek* region of central Montana.

The novel concludes with a series of near-tragic accidents from natural causes. The reader learns on the final page that the novel's ultimate tragedy is man-made, and that despite optimism and progress "life ambushed all hopes." Mr. Doig's richly woven work marks the latest evolution in the work of a master.

Philip Montgomery is a Dallas businessman.

won't guess the ending—it's only half fairy tale. Wilson has made her heroine modern. Alix—no cringing damsel—convinces a shy, self-hating Beast that he is lovable. And so he is, and she is; and the book, in spite of itself, is rather lovable too. **B** —EKC

BUCKING THE SUN Ivan Doig (*Simon & Schuster, \$23*) *Bucking the Sun*—a saga of Depression-era Montana set around the building of the Fort Peck Dam—derives its narrative energy from as tangled a web of familial and psychosexual rivalries as one is apt to encounter this side of *Hamlet* or *The Brothers Karamazov*. In the opening scene, the drowned, naked bodies of a man and woman are pulled from the cab of a truck that rolled into a river

while they were making love. Both named Duff, they're married, as the country song goes, "only not to each other." So which of the 10 Duffs portrayed in the novel—a father, his brother, his three married sons, and their respective wives—are they? Doig attempts to sustain the mystery through a sprawling, digressive tale filled with flashbacks, flash-forwards, and enough engineering data about the construction of earth-fill dams to glaze over the eyes of a civil engineer. At his extraordinary best, he might have brought it off. Not here, though. For all its complex structure and epic ambition, *Bucking the Sun* fails to deliver characters that readers are likely to care about or believe in. **B** —Gene Lyons

LAST CHANTS Lia Matera (*Simon & Schuster, \$21*) Matera's latest Willa Jansson mystery boasts an energetic, though improbable, setup: San Francisco attorney Jansson comes to the rescue of an elderly, gun-toting family friend, whose assistant—a shaman named Billy Seawuit—has just been murdered. Suspects include Willa's septuagenarian pal, the head of a local tech company who hired Seawuit as a consultant and his Amazonian wife, and, oh yes, the demigod Pan. It ends up being much ado about little, all set to a loopy New Age beat (get ready for drumming-induced vision questing). The real pleasure is Willa, who alternates between humor and annoyance at her predicament—and whose love-hate relationship with men strikes a chord with many female fans. If only the plot was as easy to buy. **B-** —EKC

PAPERBACKS

THE CHAMBER John Grisham (*Island, \$7.50, first published in 1994*) This story of a Klansman on death row and his young lawyer grandson is basically a Southern family chronicle (complete with genteel alcoholic aunt). The controlled, even storytelling is a stark contrast to the convoluted plot of *The Runaway Jury*, but what it doesn't offer is a single moment of suspense. **B-**

LITTLE GIRLS IN PRETTY BOXES: THE MAKING AND BREAKING OF ELITE GYMNASTS AND FIGURE SKATERS Joan Ryan (*Warner Books, \$12.99, 1995*) Sports columnist Ryan reveals the horrors behind the graceful vaults and double axels, focusing on fame-crazed parents and relentless coaches. Her engaging but wildly digressive anecdotes, including accounts of notorious gymnastic coach Bela Karolyi, are too often interrupted with old-hat explanations about how our culture expects women to remain girls. **B**

BEST-SELLERS

'MALICE' IN WONDERLAND

BY THE THIRD chapter, *Malice's* heroine has already suffered domestic abuse and imprisonment. Surprising surfside fare, perhaps. But Steel yourself: The fiction list's No. 7 is the 37th best-seller by one of America's most popular novelists. Her foreword rues "this wicked thing called 'fame'"—alas, fame tends to be inseparable from 1,075,000-copy first printings. This is clearly one yellow jacket beachgoers don't mind encountering.



FICTION

WEEKS ON LIST

- 1 **THE RUNAWAY JURY** John Grisham, *Doubleday, \$26.95*.....3
- 2 **HOW STELLA GOT HER GROOVE BACK** Terry McMillan, *Viking, \$23.95*.....5
- 3 **THE TENTH INSIGHT** James Redfield, *Warner, \$19.95*.....6
- 4 **THE CELESTINE PROPHECY** James Redfield, *Warner, \$17.95*.....118
- 5 **I WAS AMELIA EARHART** Jane Mendelsohn, *Knopf, \$18*.....6
- 6 **MOONLIGHT BECOMES YOU** Mary Higgins Clark, *Simon & Schuster, \$24*.....9
- 7 **MALICE** Danielle Steel, *Delacorte, \$24.95*.....8
- 8 **SUDDEN PREY** John Sandford, *Putnam, \$23.95*.....4
- 9 **THE FOURTH ESTATE** Jeffrey Archer, *HarperCollins, \$26*.....1
- 10 **CHANCE** Robert B. Parker, *Putnam, \$21.95*.....2

NONFICTION

- 1 **BAD AS I WANNA BE** Dennis Rodman, with Tim Keown, *Delacorte, \$22.95*.....5
- 2 **THE DILBERT PRINCIPLE** Scott Adams, *HarperBusiness, \$20*.....7
- 3 **MEN ARE FROM MARS, WOMEN ARE FROM VENUS** John Gray, *HarperCollins, \$23*.....165
- 4 **SIMPLE ABUNDANCE** Sarah Ban Breathnach, *Warner, \$17.95*.....11
- 5 **IN CONTEMPT** Christopher A. Darden, with Jess Walter, *ReganBooks, \$26*.....11
- 6 **THE ZONE** Barry Sears, Ph.D., with Bill Lawren, *ReganBooks, \$22*.....15
- 7 **MIDNIGHT IN THE GARDEN OF GOOD AND EVIL** John Berendt, *Random House, \$23*.....100
- 8 **THE SEVEN SPIRITUAL LAWS OF SUCCESS** Deepak Chopra, *New World Library, \$14*.....68
- 9 **THE FIVE DAY MIRACLE DIET** Adele Puhn, *Ballantine, \$22*.....2
- 10 **JOAN LUNDEN'S HEALTHY COOKING** Joan Lunden and Laura Morton, *Little, Brown, \$24.95*.....7

MASS-MARKET PAPERBACKS

- 1 **THE GREEN MILE, PART 3: COFFEY'S HANDS** Stephen King, *Signet, \$2.99*.....2
- 2 **THE GREEN MILE, PART 2: THE MOUSE ON THE MILE** Stephen King, *Signet, \$2.99*.....6
- 3 **TOM CLANCY'S OP-CENTER #3: GAMES OF STATE** Tom Clancy and Steve Pieczenik, *Berkley, \$6.99*.....5
- 4 **ROSE MADDER** Stephen King, *Signet, \$7.50*.....4
- 5 **THE WITNESS** Sandra Brown, *Warner, \$6.99*.....1
- 6 **THE GREEN MILE, PART 1: THE TWO DEAD GIRLS** Stephen King, *Signet, \$2.99*.....10
- 7 **THE EYES OF DARKNESS** Dean Koontz, *Berkley, \$7.50*.....2
- 8 **THE RAINMAKER** John Grisham, *Dell, \$7.99*.....22
- 9 **SHOW OF EVIL** William Diehl, *Ballantine, \$6.99*.....3
- 10 **DANGEROUS TO KNOW** Barbara Taylor Bradford, *HarperPaperbacks, \$6.99*.....5

SOURCE: PUBLISHERS WEEKLY



PARODY
OF THE WEEK

As Bad As He
Wishes He Were

What hath Dennis Rodman wrought? Chicago's *Windy City Sports* mag shows former Partridge Danny Bonaduce naked on a classic Schwinn bicycle.

COVER PHOTO
OF THE WEEK

George Foreman

The rotund-headed boxer tucking into what looks like a cheese-laden burger on the cover of his *Knock-Out-the-Fat Barbecue and Grilling Cookbook*.

ILLUSTRATION BY GLYNIS SWEENEY

UNIVERSITY BOOK STORE BESTSELLER LIST

(as of May 1996)

Hardback Non-Fiction

1. Piano Lessons, *Adams*
2. Dilbert Principle, *Adams*
3. Undaunted Courage, *Ambrose*
4. Shelter Each Other, *Pipher*
5. Rush Limbaugh Is a Big Fat Idiot, *Franken*
6. Future of Capitalism, *Thurrow*
7. Dinosaur in a Haystack, *Gould*
8. Evening at the Garden of Allah, *Paulson*
9. How Could You Do That, *Schlessinger*
10. Demon Haunted World, *Sagan*

Paperback Non-Fiction

1. God - A Biography, *Miles*
2. Java In a Nutshell, *Flanagan*
3. Seattle's Best Places - 7th edition, *Brewster*
4. Origin of Satan, *Pagels*
5. Anthropologist on Mars, *Sacks*
6. Reviving Ophelia, *Pipher*
7. When Elephants Weep, *Masson*
8. We're Right They're Wrong, *Carville*
9. Brief History of Everything, *Wilber*
10. No Ordinary Time, *Goodwin*

Hardback Fiction

1. Bucking the Sun, *Doig*
2. Runaway Jury, *Grisham*
3. How Stella Got Her Groove Back, *McMillan*
4. Tenth Insight, *Redfield*
5. In the Presence of Enemies, *George*
6. Tales of Burning Love, *Erdich*
7. Name Withheld, *Jance*
8. Slowness, *Kundera*
9. Trying to Save Piggy Sneed, *Irving*
10. Passing Through, *Kunitz*

Paperback Fiction

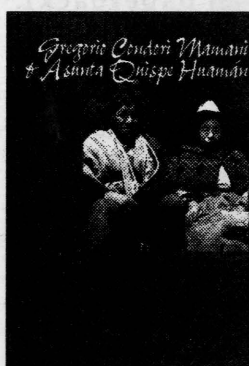
1. Snow Falling on Cedars, *Guterson*
2. Moo, *Smiley*
3. Independence Day, *Ford*
4. Sophie's World, *Gaarder*
5. Ladder of Years, *Tyler*
6. Stone Diaries, *Shields*
7. There's Treasure Everywhere, *Watterson*
8. Sleeping at the Starlite Motel, *White*
9. Rainmaker, *Grisham*
10. Still Pumped from Using the Mouse, *Adams*

Walking Paths Of...

Continued from page 1

Chrisostomos Choque, a local shaman, allows Kolata a glimpse into the complicated spiritual world of the Aymara. The Aymara belief system is an intricate fusion of the ancient and the modern, blending elements of Catholicism with ancient thought and ritual. The book chronicles the daily struggle the Aymara face to survive in the barren mountain landscape of the highlands.

Kolata describes his experiences as an outsider and participant with depth and sensitivity. More than once he is allowed to accompany the group on religious pilgrimages and is invited to participate as well as observe. In his introduction, Kolata reveals that *Valley Of the Spirits* is not



University of Texas Press

their life stories.

Gregorio and Asunta live in Cuzco, Peru. Cuzco is a thriving, modern city built on what was once a central city of the Inca empire. They both migrated to Cuzco from traditional highland villages and

struggles indigenous highland people face while trying to adapt to the modern world. Two native Quechua speakers, Gregorio and Asunta, tell

Faculty Shelf

Professor of English Edward Alexander is the author of *Reflections by One of the Belligerents* (\$29.95, South Press), which is described as a "counterattack in the Zionism." He responds to the major figures who have shaped the peace process in the last ten years, including Michael Lerner, and Alexander Cockburn.

Warren Guntheroth, Professor of Pediatrics, has written *Sasha, a Washington Husky* (\$15.00, Husky Books), a book that features climbing with the dog of the title. In addition, it describes Sasha's life at home, including her relationship with her owner.

Marietta S. Millet, Associate Professor of Architecture, has written *Revealing Architecture* (\$59.95, Van Nostrand Reinhold), a book that presents how lighting effects are created and uses examples from ancient times to the modern day.

The Clock of Ages (\$24.95, Cambridge University Press) by Bioengineering John Medina, is a scientific examination of the aging process. Written for the layman, it explains why we age and what we may be able to do to slow down the process.

Kathi J. Kemper, Associate Professor of Pediatrics, has written *Holistic Pediatrician: A Parent's Comprehensive Guide to Therapies for the 25 Most Common Childhood Illnesses* (HarperPerennial), which combines herbal medicine, acupuncture, and treatments, with mainstream medical advice for parents.

Stephen Harrell, Professor of Anthropology, is the author of *Counters on China's Ethnic Frontiers* (\$17.95, University of Texas Press), which examines ethnic minorities in China and attempts of missionaries to "civilize" and define them. The book covers include the Mongols, Naxi, Yi, and Miao.

Sabrina Ramet, Professor of International Studies, has written *Balkan Babel: the Disintegration of Yugoslavia* (Tito to Ethnic War) (\$19.95, Westview Press). This remarkable work includes four new chapters and a new preface by an observer of the Eastern European political and social changes.

Associate Professor of American Ethnic Studies, has written *The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as the New Normal* (Sage Publications), an examination of what it means to be biracial in the U. S., where the Bureau of Census statistics are being exclusively of one race.

Walter C. Parker, Associate Professor of Education, has written *Building the Democratic Mind* (18.95, SUNY Press), which examines how to teach children so they can function well in a democratic society. Schools encourage diversity and a cooperative ideal while at the same time? The forward is written by U. S. Representative James Banks.

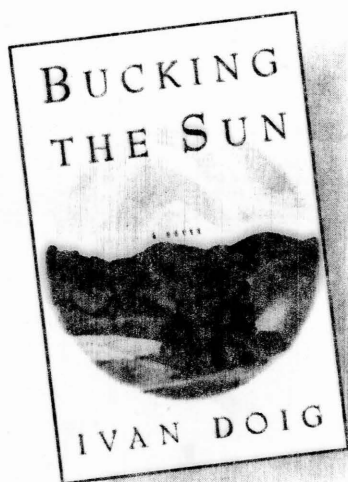
Laurie Sears, Associate Professor of History, has written *Shadows of Empire: Colonial Drama in Java* (\$16.95, Duke), which examines colonialism and its impact by focusing on Javanese shadow theater. Sears writes that shadow theater has been affected by colonial influences to the point of being viewed separately from this context, and how it has been influenced by other cultures. Sears is the editor of *Feminine in Indonesia* (\$17.95, Duke), which examines Indonesian women by others—Indonesian men and women—and how these representations have come to be expected of the women. These portrayals have extended

SECTION

D

MAY 12, 1996

ARTS & BOOKS



Ivan Doig's epic dam

*The novelist's sprawling
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a giant dam hammers
to the core
of Northwest culture*

By ROBIN CODY

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With "Bucking the Sun," Doig does just that.





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BUCKING THE SUN

Ivan Doig

Simon & Schuster, \$23

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Doig: Novelist penetrates heart of Northwest Anglo culture

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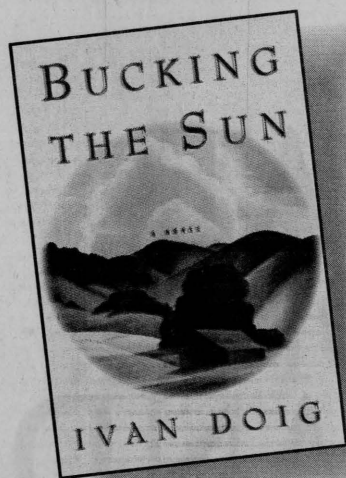
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Doig tackles 'sizzle point' of Depression

Montana, 1996. The Unabomber case and the Freemen stand-off make Americans wonder what the world is coming to.

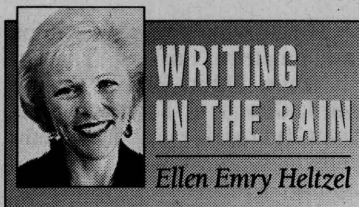
Montana, 1936. The Fort Peck Dam, which graces the cover of the first issue of *Life* magazine, gives Americans a sense of pride and hope as the country surfaces from the depths of the Depression.

Two competing visions of the nation: one alluding to the social disintegration and distrust of government that now swirls at our feet, the other celebrating the stubborn optimism and abundance of resources that once seemed our salvation.

Seattle writer Ivan Doig, a historian by training, has made Montana his backdrop of choice and become the leading chronicler of its history through both his fiction and nonfiction. In his latest book, "Bucking the Sun," he returns to Big Sky country during the 1930s. His particular focus: the building of the Fort Peck Dam.

"Bucking the Sun" is Doig's first novel with a specific historical event at its center, one that both serves his working-man impulses well and spotlights the huge public works projects that not only helped lift the country out of the Depression but also forever altered the face of the West.

Dams have lost their luster these days, in the face of diminishing



salmon runs and the emphasis on keeping nature natural. But across the West they remain mammoth testimonials to human will and to the important role the federal government has played and still plays in this part of the country.

Unlike the more familiar Hoover and Grand Coulee, those massive constructs of concrete along the Colorado and Columbia, the Fort Peck is a dirt-filled barrier four miles long and 25 stories high that was built to control the flow of the Missouri River. Beyond the story of its construction is the disaster that struck there in 1938, when a 2,000-foot-long section of it broke off, burying eight men. An "engineering misunderstanding," Doig explained in what seems like a classic of understatement, during a phone call to his home in Seattle: Water seeping into the shale foundation created a crack that sent tons of earth and rock plunging downstream in one of those made-for-the-movies disaster scenarios.

Doig, who comes to Portland May 21 for a 7:30 p.m. appearance at the Audubon Society of Portland, says

he got the idea for a novel about the dam while doing research for his previous books during the 1980s. Struck by how many old-timers used the Fort Peck project as a reference point, he began investigating its construction, which employed 10,000 workers.

"A lot of those people got their first radio at Fort Peck, their first car, their first truck or motorcycle. In other words, they entered our century through the building of that dam."

Doig says he also was interested in building a novel around the Depression because it's one of those "sizzle points" in American history and one that has particular relevance to contemporary politics: The New Deal, he points out, not only created huge public works projects but also welfare reform, specifically the safety net that's now being so hotly debated in Washington. (That net, by the way, included both guarantees of support for the poor, which everybody seems to have an opinion on, and for the elderly, in the form of the politically taboo topic, Social Security.)

Those familiar with Doig's work — most notably "This House of Sky," his memoir of growing up in Montana — can sense his allegiances in his writing. One is to the working class, the other to historical detail. He took his wife's hairdresser to lunch in order to figure out what techniques one of his char-

acters, a beautician, used to create the waves and curls of the time.

As for another character, a prostitute, Doig says he did field work on that one, too: He went to the Oasis Brothel Museum in Wallace, Idaho.

The 57-year-old Doig traces his preoccupation with "the labor and craft angle of life" to his own upbringing, as the grandson of Scottish immigrants and son of Montana sheep farmers. Growing up in a sparsely populated, remote pocket of north-central Montana, Doig saw his family's profits wiped out by bad weather and decided he wanted a different kind of life.

With his parent's encouragement, he became the first in his family to graduate from high school and go to college. He earned a bachelor's degree in journalism from Northwestern University and his doctorate in history from the University of Washington.

True to his roots, however, Doig values the lessons of a hard-working childhood and says they played a part in shaping his successful writing career. "When a chance comes up, you know how to grab it and put it in your pocket," Doig says. "As Branch Rickey told Jackie Robinson, 'Luck is the residue of design.'"

Ellen Emry Heltzel writes weekly for Arts & Books. She may be reached by phone at 221-8066, by fax at 294-4026 and by mail at 1320 S.W. Broadway, Portland, Ore. 97201.

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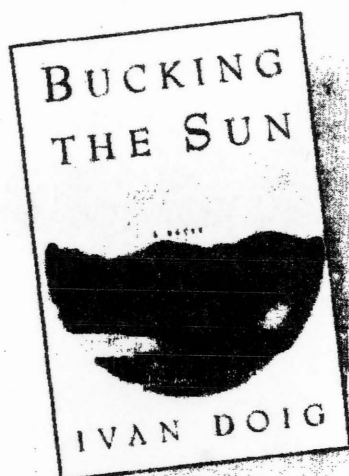
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UNIVERSITY BOOK STORE BESTSELLER LIST

(as of May 1996)

Hardback Non-Fiction

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2. Dilbert Principle, *Adams*
3. Undaunted Courage, *Ambrose*
4. Shelter Each Other, *Pipher*
5. Rush Limbaugh Is a Big Fat Idiot, *Franken*
6. Future of Capitalism, *Thurow*
7. Dinosaur in a Haystack, *Gould*
8. Evening at the Garden of Allah, *Paulson*
9. How Could You Do That, *Schlessinger*
10. Demon Haunted World, *Sagan*

Paperback Non-Fiction

1. God - A Biography, *Miles*
2. Java In a Nutshell, *Flanagan*
3. Seattle's Best Places - 7th edition, *Brewster*
4. Origin of Satan, *Pagels*
5. Anthropologist on Mars, *Sacks*
6. Reviving Ophelia, *Pipher*
7. When Elephants Weep, *Masson*
8. We're Right They're Wrong, *Carville*
9. Brief History of Everything, *Wilber*
10. No Ordinary Time, *Goodwin*

Hardback Fiction

1. Bucking the Sun, *Doig*
2. Runaway Jury, *Grisham*
3. How Stella Got Her Groove Back, *McMillan*
4. Tenth Insight, *Redfield*
5. In the Presence of Enemies, *George*
6. Tales of Burning Love, *Erdrich*
7. Name Withheld, *Jance*
8. Slowness, *Kundera*
9. Trying to Save Piggy Sneed, *Irving*
10. Passing Through, *Kunitz*

Paperback Fiction

1. Snow Falling on Cedars, *Guterson*
2. Moo, *Smiley*
3. Independence Day, *Ford*
4. Sophie's World, *Gaarder*
5. Ladder of Years, *Tyler*
6. Stone Diaries, *Shields*
7. There's Treasure Everywhere, *Watterson*
8. Sleeping at the Starlite Motel, *White*
9. Rainmaker, *Grisham*
10. Still Pumped from Using the Mouse, *Adams*

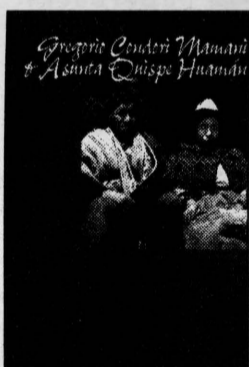
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Continued from page 1

Chrisostomos Choque, a local shaman, allows Kolata a glimpse into the complicated spiritual world of the Aymara. The Aymara belief system is an intricate fusion of the ancient and the modern, blending elements of Catholicism with ancient thought and ritual. The book chronicles the daily struggle the Aymara face to survive in the barren mountain landscape of the highlands.

Kolata describes his experiences as an outsider and participant with depth and sensitivity. More than once he is allowed to accompany the group on religious pilgrimages and is invited to participate as well as observe. In his introduction, Kolata reveals that *Valley Of the Spirits* is not a passive study, but an account of the Aymara people as he has come to know them.

Andean Lives (\$11.95, Texas, paperback), edited by Ricardo Valderrama Fernandez and Carmen Escalante Guttierrez, is the first English translation of a Quechua/Spanish classic which was originally published in 1977. This book is an amazing testimony of the daily



University of Texas Press

struggles indigenous highland people face while trying to adapt to the modern world. Two native Quechua speakers, Gregorio and Asunta, tell

their life stories.

Gregorio and Asunta live in Cuzco, Peru. Cuzco is a thriving, modern city built on what was once a central city of the Inca empire. They both migrated to Cuzco from traditional highland villages and speak Quechua, the language of the ancient Inca.

Orphaned as a child, much of Gregorio's life is spent trying to find a place for himself. After running away from his village as a young boy, he works his way to the city, driving cattle, guarding sheep, and performing other odd jobs. Often his progress is hindered by language and cultural differences, but he re-

lays his story with strength and humor.

During his adult life, Gregorio works as a "strapper," carrying cargo through the city as a human pack animal. It is a wearying, low status job, but he is able to survive

for many years on the meager pay, supporting his wife, Asunta. Her story is striking in that it offers a rarely heard feminine perspective. Both of the narratives are touching, humorous, and often tragic.

Faculty Shelf

Professor of English Edward Alexander is the author of **The Jewish Wars: Reflections by One of the Belligerents** (\$29.95, Southern Illinois University Press), which is described as a "counterattack in the war of ideas against Zionism." He responds to the major figures who have written about Israel and the peace process in the last ten years, including Noam Chomsky, Michael Lerner, and Alexander Cockburn.

Warren Guntheroth, Professor of Pediatrics, has written **Climbing with Sasha, a Washington Husky** (\$15.00, Husky Books), the story of his adventures climbing with the dog of the title. In addition to their climbs, he describes Sasha's life at home, including her relationship with a cat named Snidely.

Marietta S. Millet, Associate Professor of Architecture, has written **Light Revealing Architecture** (\$59.95, Van Nostrand Reinhold), a fully illustrated book that presents how lighting effects are created by architecture. She uses examples from ancient times to the modern day.

The Clock of Ages (\$24.95, Cambridge University Press), by Professor of Bioengineering John Medina, is a scientific examination of the human aging process. Written for the layman, it explains why we age and what science may be able to do to slow down the process.

Kathi J. Kemper, Associate Professor of Pediatrics, is the author of **The Holistic Pediatrician: A Parent's Comprehensive Guide to Safe and Effective Therapies for the 25 Most Common Childhood Ailments** (\$18.00, HarperPerennial), which combines herbal medicine, homeopathy, and other treatments, with mainstream medical advice for parents.

Stephen Harrell, Professor of Anthropology, is the editor of **Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers** (\$17.95, University of Washington), which examines ethnic minorities in China and attempts of Chinese governments and western missionaries to "civilize" and define them. Some of the groups covered include the Mongols, Naxi, Yi, and Miao.

Sabrina Ramet, Professor of International Studies, brings us the second edition of **Balkan Babel: the Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to Ethnic War** (\$19.95, Westview Press). This new edition of the acclaimed work includes four new chapters and a new epilogue from this observer of the Eastern European political and social scene.

Associate Professor of American Ethnic Studies, Maria P. Root, is the editor of **The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as the New Frontier** (\$26.95, Sage Publications), an examination of what it means to be biracial or multiracial in the U. S., where the Bureau of Census still records people as being exclusively of one race.

Walter C. Parker, Associate Professor of Education, has edited **Educating the Democratic Mind** (18.95, SUNY Press), which asks how it is best to teach children so they can function well in a democratic society. How can schools encourage diversity and a cooperative idea of American citizenship at the same time? The forward is written by UW Professor James A. Banks.

Laurie Sears, Associate Professor of History, has two new books out. She is the author of **Shadows of Empire: Colonial Discourse and Javanese Tales** (\$16.95, Duke), which examines colonialism and indigenous traditions by focusing on Javanese shadow theater. Sears writes about how the shadow theater has been affected by colonial influences to the point that it cannot be viewed separately from this context, and how European histories have been influenced by other cultures. Sears is the editor of **Fantasizing the Feminine in Indonesia** (\$17.95, Duke), which examines representations of Indonesian women by others—Indonesian men and Dutch men and women—and how these representations have come to control what is expected of the women. These portrayals have extended from traditional roles through the Dutch colonial era to policies of the current Indonesian government.

By: Jason Bott

June 16, 96

The Dammed

Ivan Doig's Montanans take part in a huge construction project.

BUCKING THE SUN

By Ivan Doig.

412 pp. New York:

Simon & Schuster. \$23.

By Timothy Foote

UNLIKE most Scots, Ivan Doig wears his heart on his sleeve. He is a man more than half in love with history, his own included. His best book, "This House of Sky," is a nonfiction ticket to the author's boyhood in the Montana of the 1940's, with his mother, who died when he was 6, his ranch-hand dad and his unforgettable grandmother. In matters of work and grief, of place and kinship, he can make you remember with him and sometimes weep — unless, of course, you have a heart of stone and come from the elfete East.

Doig novels can be something else again. A historian and journalist by training, he has nonetheless striven for years to bear witness to Montana history in fiction, and to become if not the Homer at least the Virgil of generations of Scots who migrated to northwestern Montana before and after it became a state in 1889.

Mostly they are sheepmen, like his father and grandfather, predictably plagued by coyotes and big cattlemen, small grazing allotments and savage weather. (Doig books rarely spare us a description of a mile-high Montana blizzard; after one of these, few readers will blame him for living in Seattle.) His Scots are stubborn, enduring and reticent, not exactly ideal subjects for popular fiction in an age of tell-all talk shows and whiny therapy.

Like any novelist, especially a novelist bent on giving history lessons, Mr. Doig is obliged to throw a bone to readers who may find themselves in need of fluffy things like romance, suspense and plot. The last time out, in "Ride With Me, Mariah Montana," he smuggled a centennial celebration of Montana's past under a fig leaf of fiction. The story involves a rancher father banging around the state with his divorced daughter, who is a photographer, and his former son-in-law, a journalist. The two are collaborating on a series of newspaper articles, so they teach us a lot about Montana. But what is supposed to keep laggards reading is whether or not (as the dad fears) the daughter will fall for the ghastly former son-in-law again and once more ruin her life.

The good news about "Bucking the Sun" is that here Mr. Doig artfully seasons the history lesson by serving it up with an intricate case of murder. This helps with the occasional longeurs of what is otherwise a wide-screen, Depression-era narrative largely devoted to the problems of building the Fort Peck Dam. This was a time when 17 million people (in a population of about 140 million) were out of work. When Franklin Roosevelt was pouring Government money into jobs through the W.P.A. and the P.W.A. When Harry Hopkins scored over the less generous Harold Ickes with the line "But Harold, people don't eat in the long run, they eat every day." The Fort Peck Dam (which made the first cover of *Life* magazine in November 1936) put 10,000 people to work. When finished, it created a reservoir 135 miles long, provided

flood control and was the biggest earth-fill dam in the world.

To shovel this construction epic into narrative as painlessly as possible, Mr. Doig mixes fact and fiction, filtering as much history as he can through the lives of the Duff family, whose members all labor on the dam, often under the tutelage of Owen Duff, one of its chief engineers. An elder brother looking out for his kinfolk and constantly at odds with Hugh, his tippling father, Owen manfully commands fleets of dredges and legions of workers, directs earth-moving miracles and fends off disaster from flood and ice during the inevitable Montana blizzard. His mother, Meg, cooks for workers in a mess hall — and puts up with Hugh. Owen's reckless, feckless younger brother Bruce moves from job to job, finally becoming a diver in the murk of the Missouri. Careful Neil, Bruce's twin, bushwhacks and drives a truck.

Along the way, all three boys get married. We also hear a speech by F.D.R., "the big gravy spreader himself," learn about Fort Peck's shantytown housing and the prevalence of prostitution (remarked upon even by Life) and are taught the difference between "tunnel muckers," "catskinners" and "shovel runners." Loads of rock hauled in from the nearby hills to reinforce the dam bring in piles of angry rattlesnakes — so many that workers make money selling souvenir rattles.

IF the Duff men are not exactly from central casting, at least central casting would have little trouble placing them. The women they marry are more interesting — especially one called Proxy (from peroxide blonde), a whore not quite with a heart of gold. Mr. Doig somehow manages to make her believable even though she marries Hugh's long-lost brother, Darius, while still taking on anybody with cash who pleases her down at the Blue Eagle tavern. It is Darius, though, who brings a measure of complexity to the novel. A shipyard union organizer from Scotland with a "need to chew at the heels of the powers that be," he turns out to be a man who actively wishes the dam project ill.

If, while reading the above, you've been wondering about that murder, that's exactly what happens to readers of "Bucking the Sun." With the guile of a Montana coyote, the author lures you through his romance with the big dam with teasing hints and guesses. Bit by bit, he lets you realize that the dead bodies (of two of the Duff clan) are no accident, and that more Duffs seem to be involved. But, full of Scottish family loyalty, how could they be? And so, out of 10,000 workers on the dam, Mr. Doig reduces his suspects to 10 — creating a neat, excruciating Agatha Christie country-house murder set down in sprawling Montana. And even when the who of it becomes clear, the how of it remains a mystery that will hold any summer reader to the very last sentence. □

Timothy Foote is a senior editor and writer at Smithsonian magazine.

ONGER

mentalist's essays chronicle plight of the wilderness

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Wildlife." In the book they are gathered together in thematic chapters, and Frome supplies prefatory comments which put things into historical context. Frome's style is pugilistic with a touch of old-fashioned ornateness. While few of his earlier writings sound naive from our vantage point in 1996, many pieces (those regarding dam-building, for instance, or national parks) are prescient — discouragingly so. The issues that Frome raised in the past have reached crisis proportions today — why wasn't more done when troubleshooters like Frome were pinpointing problems 10, 20, 30 years ago?

The answer, in a word, is politics. In a high dudgeon kindled by what he sees as needless despoliation of

wilderness, Frome rails against "politically acquiescent pseudo-management clothed in mumbo-jumbo." He charges that when it comes to stewardship of resources, good science has been overridden too often by politicians who are bankrolled by powerful commercial interests. In addition, Frome accuses the government agencies entrusted to protect our natural resources, particularly the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, of botching the job more often than not, citing decimation of grizzly populations, wolves and the spotted owl.

This is hardly a yes-man for liberal environmental organizations, however. Frome, for years a columnist for "Field and Stream Maga-

zine," also is vociferously dismayed by self-proclaimed conservation watchdog groups which have become bloated with comfortably-salaried managers who don't necessarily have a firsthand understanding of the wilderness.

And as the victim of a couple of job dismissals due to his controversial views, Frome berates the media, too, for being ineffective and complacent.

The real hope for wilderness preservation, Frome contends, lies in individuals and grass-roots organizations. In one inspiring chapter, his collected articles spotlight the Americans of this past century who, through the sheer force of their convictions, successfully have fought to safeguard natural areas

from commercial exploitation. The author does a good job of capturing the various personalities of these champions of wildlife and wild lands, and maintains that the lesson to be learned from their experiences is this: "The great calamity is not to have failed but to have failed to try."

Composed as it is of formerly published pieces, this book has a certain connect-the-dots quality and lacks cohesive depth. "Chronicle of the West" is an opportunity to sit at the knee of one of our elders and learn from his embattled wisdom.

The Bookmonger is Barbara Lloyd McMichael, who writes this weekly column focusing on the books, authors and publishers of the Pacific Northwest.

► REVIEW Newest from Grisham loses steam

Gannett News Service

John Grisham's new novel possesses a spectacular title, a timely topic, the handsomest cover of his career. And some problems of plotting and suspense.

"The Runaway Jury" isn't a bad book. But it lacks the sardonic hero of, say, "The Rainmaker." Nor does it display the gravity of "The Chamber" or the menace of "The Firm." Grisham has chosen to pillory cigarette companies in "The Runaway Jury."

"The Runaway Jury" does have a marvelously clever set-up, however. A mystery man is selected to serve on a Biloxi, Miss., jury. It will decide whether the widow of a smoker deserves to get damages — legal beagles for big bucks.

To guide them, the companies have turned to Rankin Fitch, a ruthless schemer and security expert. Rankin employs every device possible: jury consultants, lawyers by the bushel, surveillance equipment, private investigators, fraud, blackmail, arson. But now, he's ready to buy a jury. A mysterious young woman named Marlee appears to be helping him with this, the ultimate corruption of justice.

Although he is famous for writing about lawyers, in fact, Grisham is one of the few writers who accurately and empathetically describes working-class Americans of all races and both sexes.

try and marriage get little respect in Hunter's writings

SKIPTRACER



IT'S A MYSTERY

i.e., psychiatry and marriage, which are frightening enough without one of America's best fiction writers spinning a demented tale for impressionable young minds, e.g., Skip's.

The psychiatrist hero of "Privileged Conversation" (call him Ward

Cleaver; some names have been changed to protect the pathetic) thinks he can hang onto his neat little family unit even while he plays daddy dearest to a very sick but very cute 20-something dancer. She heaps on him the best sex he's ever had or is ever likely to have while June and the kiddies are away for the summer at Martha's Vineyard. You know what they say about some guys' brains.

This bad girl's name is Katie, which seems real sweetheart-next-door, but let's not mince syllables. If Katie lives next door, move. Sell your home at a loss. Relocate to Cleveland. Today.

She is not Ward's patient, at least. But the schlump colleague who calls himself Ward's best friend (Ward loathes him) is doink-

ing a 19-year-old patient and asks Ward to be his beard, which Ward does because he needs a cover story himself. So only 50 percent of the shrinks in the story are committing the profession's most blatant breach of ethics.

Into this already ungodly mess comes a stalker, a psychotic geek who sends flowers to Katie and then leaves increasingly sick and nasty notes that let her know he knows all about her. If she ever needed ol' Ward's help, she needs it now, but Ward plays ineffectual because he's not really involved here at all, is he?

So anyway, meanwhile, back at

the beach, June is having ... is doing ... well, gee, that would be spoiling it. It's enough to say that just because you're paranoid doesn't mean your wife's not out to get you. Oh honey, hurry back, I miss you so much, just don't come for another week, OK?

Rest assured you won't catch Skip risking his narrow little routine and trashing his marriage just for some fancy boofing. As if he'd ever get married.

Skip says send your complaints, questions and recommendations to him care of The Olympian, P.O. Box 407, Olympia, Wash. 98507 or via e-mail at Olympian@olympia.wa.com.

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7. "The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success" by Deepak Chopra (New World Library, Amber-Allen)
 8. "Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil" by John Berendt (Random House)
 9. "Undaunted Courage" by Stephen E. Ambrose (Simon & Schuster)
 10. "Emotional Intelligence" by Daniel Goleman (Bantam)
 11. "The Five Day Miracle Diet" by Adele Puhn (Ballantine)
 12. "Rush Limbaugh Is a Big Fat Idiot" by Al Franken (Delacorte)
 13. "Blood Sport" by James B. Stewart (Simon & Schuster)
 14. "Hitler's Willing Executioners" by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen (Knopf)
 15. "How Could You Do That?!" by Laura Schlessinger (HarperCollins)
- Mass market paperback**
1. "The Green Mile, Part 3: Coffey's Hands" by Stephen King (Signet)
 2. "The Green Mile, Part 2: The Mouse on the Mile" by Stephen King (Signet)
 3. "Tom Clancy's Op-Center 3: Games of State" created by Tom Clancy and Steve Pieczenik (Berkley)
 4. "The Green Mile, Part 1: The Two Dead Girls" by Stephen King (Signet)
 5. "Rose Madder" by Stephen King (Signet)
 6. "The Rainmaker" by John Grisham (Dell)
 7. "Let Me Call You Sweetheart" by Mary Higgins Clark (Pocket)
 8. "Show of Evil" by William Diehl (Ballantine)

9. "Dead Man's Walk" by Larry McMurtry (Pocket)
 10. "After Dark" by Phillip Margolin (Bantam)
 11. "Dangerous to Know" by Barbara Taylor Bradford (Harper-Paperbacks)
 12. "The Apocalypse Watch" by Robert Ludlum (Bantam)
 13. "The Eyes of Darkness" by Dean Koontz (Berkley)
 14. "Riding the Rap" by Elmore Leonard (Dell)
 15. "Iced" by Carol Higgins Clark (Warner/Dove)
- Trade paperback**
1. "Snow Falling on Cedars" by David Guterson (Vintage)
 2. "A 3rd Serving of Chicken Soup for the Soul" by Jack Canfield and Mark Hansen (Health Communications)
 3. "Chicken Soup for the Soul" by Jack Canfield and Mark Victor, eds. (Health Communications)
 4. "Dr. Atkins' New Diet Revolution" by Dr. Robert C. Atkins (M. Evans)
 5. "Independence Day" by Richard Ford (Vintage)
 6. "Reviving Ophelia" by Mary Pipher (Ballantine)
 7. "Ladder of Years" by Anne Tyler (Fawcett/Columbine)
 8. "There's Treasure Everywhere" by Bill Watterson (Andrews & McMeel)
 9. "7 Habits of Highly Effective People" by Stephen R. Covey (S&S/Fireside)
 10. "Moo" by Jane Smiley (Fawcett/Columbine)
 11. "The Liars' Club" by Mary Karr (Penguin)
 12. "Ten Stupid Things Women Do to Mess Up Their Lives" by Laura Schlessinger (HarperPerennial)

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"Ivan Doig is a writer who makes readers recall why they love to read...."

"His novels lay whole worlds at your feet and invite you to make them your own."
-THE WASHINGTON POST*

Bucking the Sun
By Ivan Doig
Book Signing - June 6
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THURSDAY 6

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Ivan Doig at Fireside Books



Doig

Author Ivan Doig will be on hand from noon to 1 p.m. Thursday, for a book-signing at Fireside Books, 116 E. Legion Way, Olympia. Doig has written sev-

eral books, including "This House of Sky," his first critically acclaimed novel, about a Montana ranching family. His newest book, "Bucking the Sun," was recently released by Simon & Schuster. Call 352-4006 for information about the signing.

'King Lear' with

► COMING UP

- **Book signing with Ivan Doig**, author of "Bucking the Sun," noon to 1 p.m. Thursday, Fireside Books, 116 E. Legion Way, Olympia. Free. 352-4006.
- **"Murder at the Howard Johnsons,"** Lakewood Community Theatre, 10101 Plaza Drive, Friday through June 29, free opening night party 8 p.m. Friday. 8 p.m. Fridays-Saturdays, 2 p.m. June 23. Reservations encouraged. (206) 588-0042.
- **Olympic Peninsula Water Adventures**, offered by Olympic Park Institute, Friday through June 23. Participants sail the San Juans, kayak Dungeness Spit, canoe Lake Ozette. \$135-\$255. (800) 928-3720.
- **Hoss and the Hit Kickers**, 9 p.m. Saturday, Littlerock Posse Hall, Highway 121 about three miles off the I-5 Maytown Littlerock exit. \$5. Bring your own beverage. Doors open at 7:30 p.m.
- **Capital Area Youth Symphony**, 7 p.m. Sunday, The Worthington Center, Saint Martin's College, 5300 Pacific Ave., Lacey. Chamber ensemble music. Free. 956-1892 or 754-3951.

□ □ □

To submit items to the calendar, bring or mail them 10 days prior to publication to Calendar, The Olympian, P.O. Box 407, Olympia, Wash. 98507. Photographs become the property of The Olympian. Questions? Call 754-5434.

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WEEKDAY SPECIALS

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Sprawl by Fiat p. 9 Rx for High-Tech Gridlock p. 12 New Wine Bars p. 30

SEATTLE WEEKLY

JUNE 5, 1996 FREE

SUMMER BOOKS

DIVE INTO FICTION

Southern Belles from hell

Rebecca Wells'
Louisiana love story

Ecstasy made me do it

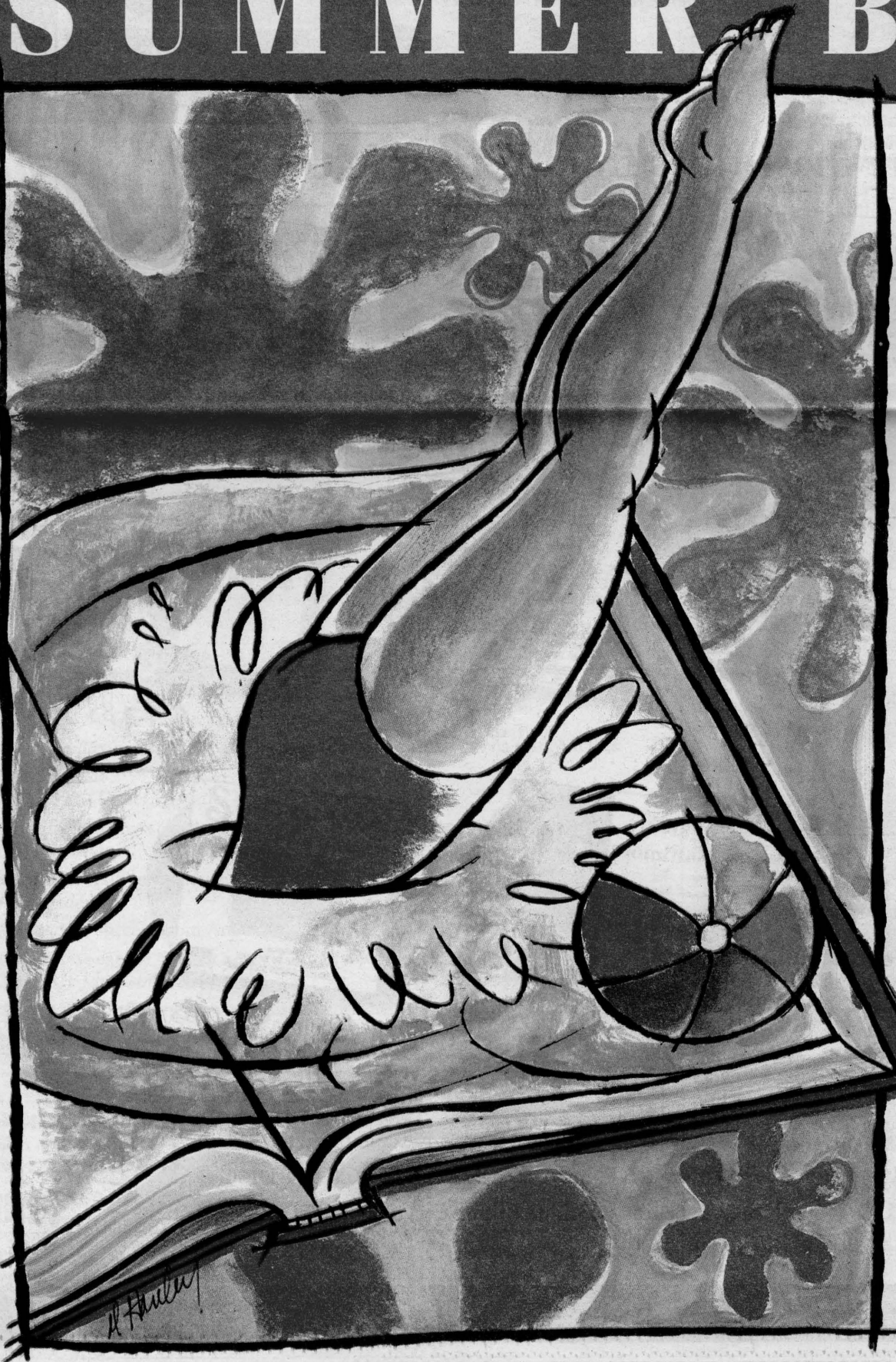
Irvine Welsh's
breakthrough psycho-
fantasy

The Duffs' dam

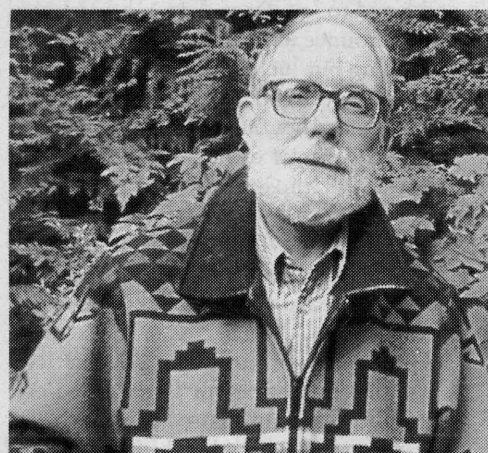
A family epic from
Ivan Doig

Comedies of manners

Sharp social comment
from gay men



CONTENTS



"The words in 'Bucking the Sun' kept nagging until I realized where I'd heard them before: From the mouth of my own grandfather, who ran refrigeration lines into concrete at Ross Dam and into secret rooms at Hanford. Ivan Doig did his homework..." (page 43)

MICHELLE BATES

FEATURES

COVER: Summer Books Quarterly

41

Escapes into fiction for long summer days: Ivan Doig's 'Bucking the Sun' chronicles a Western family in a premodern novel, by *Bruce Barcott*. Why Scottish writer Irvine Welsh is about to become a household word, by *Jennifer Fiore*. Gay men rule the province of comedies of manners in a slew of humorous novels, by *Claire Dederer*. Bainbridge novelist Rebecca Wells heads for Louisiana territory in 'Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood,' by *Katherine Alberg*. Plus: new poetry, a caffeine fix, wallpaper music, a list of books for sun seekers, and other reviews.

COLUMNS

Quick & Dirty Seattle schools join the Pepsi generation; the city's homeless may lose their Commons lockers. By *Eric Scigliano* 7

At Large A bicyclist's rules of the road. By *James Bush* 107

NEWS & COMMENT

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High Tech Local leaders go flying to the land of cotton to find how to keep the Silicon Forest growing. By *Glenn Pascall* 12

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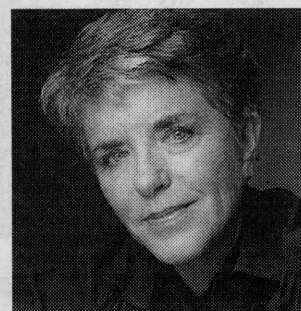
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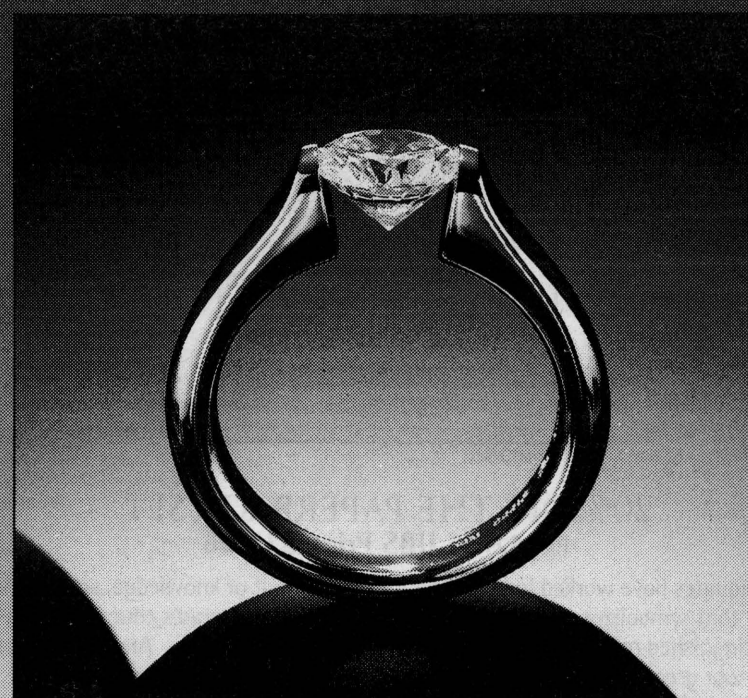
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BOOKSQ

Northwest Bookshelf



Seattle writer Ivan Doig dared to write an epic family saga.

Duff dam family

BY BRUCE BARCOTT

Thick in the postmodern age, Ivan Doig has written a pre-modern novel. A pretty good one, too. In *Bucking the Sun*, Doig announces his dislike for metafictionalists and experimen-

Bucking the Sun

by Ivan Doig
Simon & Schuster, \$23

tal writers up front, dedicating the book to a group of writers—Roddy Doyle, Nadine Gordimer, Ismail Kadare and others—"who deliver the eloquence of the world rather than stammers from the psychiatrist's bin." (Somewhere Philip Roth and Kathy Acker are reeling.) Doig then delivers the 400-page saga of the Duff family, a hardscrabble Western clan that abandons a dead-end homestead in Eastern Montana to take up wage work on the Fort Peck Dam, then the biggest earthen river-plug ever constructed. It's a novel of the 1930s written in the straight-ahead style of the 1930s. Doig doesn't want to share shelf space with hipsters William Vollmann and David Foster Wallace; he's more comfortable next to dusty storytellers like Vardis Fisher and H.L. Davis.

Doig's previous novels (*English Creek*, *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*) and nonfiction works (*This House of Sky*, *Heart Earth*) traded heavily on history, and *Bucking the Sun* is no exception. The Duff family's meager homestead existence and its migration to the big WPA project sites of the 1930s is close to family history for a lot of Northwesterners, who still listen to a grandfather's or great-uncle's stories of working on Fort Peck, Ross Dam, or the Grand Coulee. It's so close, in fact, that it took me a hundred pages before I realized that Doig's cornball dialogue only sounds like rubespeak to contemporary ears. A barber is a "scissor merchant," a handsome man "a dish," a bad cook a "beanburner," a crazy idea "dopey," and a wedding party a "shivaree." The words kept nagging until I realized where I'd heard them before: From the mouth of my own grandfather, who ran refrigeration lines into concrete at Ross Dam and into secret rooms at Hanford. Doig did his homework.

The feuding Duffs seem familiar, too. We saw their type in Ken Kesey's 1964 classic, *Sometimes A Great Notion*. Like Kesey's Stamper family, the Duffs nurse all sorts of sibling and paternal rivalries, hatreds, and secret histories; they covet each others' wives and occasionally

sleep with them, envy each others' (rare) successes, fight the forces of nature, and generally view with disgust the college education of the family bookworm, Owen. Doig scatters the Duffs all over the Fort Peck project, so we see the rise of the dam from the point of view of a fretting chief engineer (Owen), a diver walking in the muddy swirl (his brother Bruce), a taxi dancer lightening the wallets of the bachelor dammers (aunt Proxy), and others: a snake-wrangler, a beautician, a gravelmaster, and an old Communist who throws a wrench into the works now and then.

Sixty years sit between the building of the Fort Peck Dam and *Bucking the Sun*. The technology gap is obvious, of course; Owen's most valuable tool is a slide rule. But the most interesting difference that emerges in Doig's novel is the change in attitude. Irony and cynicism are almost absent. A quaint faith in engineering know-how hasn't yet been scuttled by the mixed blessings of post-war science. Dams are electricity, irrigation, and bright futures, not the present-day salmon-chokers. It was still possible to think, as Owen says, that we can "[get] this river whipped. Top to bottom." We don't whip rivers anymore.

Noteworthy Northwestern books are so rare it's a shame I don't have five more columns to give these recent arrivals their proper due. Instead, a summer reading list: *Salt of the Earth* (St Martin's, \$24.95), Bainbridge writer Jack Olsen's work tracking four generations of a violent American family; *I Am Secretly an Important Man* (Zero Hour, \$12.95), collected writings from Seattle's late great street poet Jesse Bernstein; *Homeground* (Blue Heron, \$12.95), an excellent essay anthology edited by Kathryn Trueblood and Linda Stovall, and featuring Pico Iyer, Ishmael Reed, Colleen McElroy, Frank Chin, and Naomi Shihab Nye; *The Jewish Wars* (Southern Illinois University, \$29.95), UW professor Edward Alexander's controversial polemics on politics, Israel, and Judaism; and *Our Bones Are Scattered* (Holt, \$30), Bainbridge author Andrew Ward's massive history of the 1857 massacre at Cawnpore, India. ■

Bruce Barcott is co-editor of *Seattle Weekly's Books Quarterly*.

Seattle Weekly BOOKS QUARTERLY

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JON KATZ

signs his fourth "suburban detective" novel
The Father's Club

Wed., June 5 Noon

Seattle true-crime writer

JACK OLSEN

signs his new bestseller
Salt of the Earth

Thurs., June 6 Noon

KAREN KIJEWski

signs her new P.I. novel
Honky Tonk Kat

Wed., June 12 Noon

Seattle author

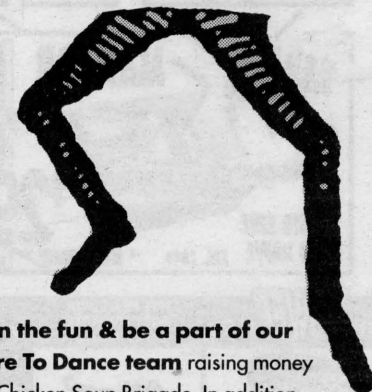
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Seattle Mystery Bookshop ?

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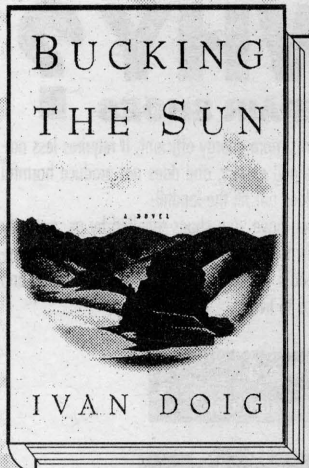


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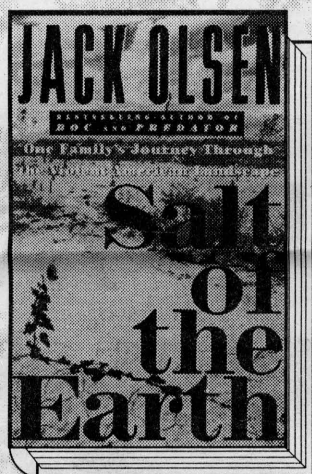
**Wednesday,
June 5
at 5:00 pm**

Ivan Doig will sign copies of his new novel, *Bucking The Sun*, a story set against Fort Peck Dam.

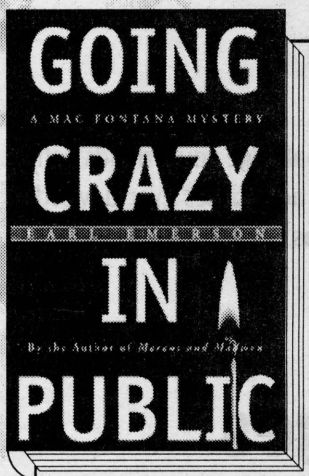
**Don't Miss
JACK OLSEN**

**Friday,
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at 6:00 pm**

Jack Olsen will sign copies of his new novel, *Salt of the Earth*.



**Meet
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Sound objects

BY GLEN HIRSHBERG

Critic and experimental music composer David Toop's *Ocean of Sound* comes with a discography and a warning: "Needless to say, no correspondence can be entered into regard-

Ocean of Sound: Aether Talk, Ambient Sound and Imaginary Worlds

by David Toop
Serpent's Tail, \$16.99

ing the author's record collection." The fact that Toop deemed the warning necessary indicates he understands his readership: that restless fringe of the new music audience generally found crouched under bins at the local record shop or knee-deep in boxes at garage sales, seeking out new (as in non-familiar) sounds from anywhere and everywhere.

The fact that Toop then includes unreleased tapes and extremely limited editions in his discography indicates he's spent his share of time under bins himself. That passionate obsessiveness makes *Ocean of Sound* a stirring and at times frustratingly elusive piece of new-music writing.

Pinning down the parameters of Toop's subject matter is a daunting task. The book's subtitle—*Aether Talk, Ambient Sound and Imaginary Worlds*—helps only marginally. Present-day ambient music—the synthesized sound washes mixed with samples and found tapes that evolved for use in the chill-out rooms at rave parties—receives considerable examination, as does Brian Eno's experiment with near-silent sound paintings meant to subtly transfigure environments in the mid-1970s. But here, too, are the 1950s *musique-concrète* composers and their recordings of bird calls and insect hums.

And those first humpback-whale records. And Edgar Varèse, the pioneering Frenchman whose *Poème électronique*, played on 400 loudspeakers in Le Corbusier's *Philips pavilion*, became the most ferociously argued over exhibit at the 1958 Brussels World's Fair. And a New Guinea tribe whose members wedge hardwood disks into the pit of their stomachs during certain ceremonies, open their mouths, and wait while other tribal members gently tap the disks, so that "the sound appears to reverberate from the distended lungs." Plus Jimi Hendrix, European serial/electronic composer Karlheinz Stockhausen, and anyone else Toop believes shares a fascination with sound-as-texture.

In this century, Toop suggests, "the sound object has been fractured and remade into a shifting, open lattice on which new ideas can hang, or through which they can pass and interweave." He ties this new thinking about what constitutes music (or a music-listening experience) to the development of global communications systems, arguing that "an aethereal culture, absorbed in perfume, light, silence and ambient sound, developed in response to the intangibility of twentieth century communications."

Less a history of related musical subcultures than a *Through the Looking Glass*-style tour, Toop's book is most absorbing when he pauses to discuss the social, cultural, and personal ramifications of music meant primarily to slow our sense of time, to encourage metaphysical meditation in an increasingly earthbound age, to drown out the clatter of contemporary living. Examining new-jazz eccentrics like Sun Ra and Leo Smith, he quotes Valerie Wilmer's seminal, furious book of jazz criticism, *As Serious as Your Life*, in which Smith denies the oft-assumed connection among new music critics between the develop-

best,

Pacific Pipeline Bestsellers

A listing of bestselling titles by category, based on actual sales for the previous week.

NONFICTION CLOTH

1	Simple Abundance	0446519138	Breathnach S	Warner	\$17.95
2	5 Day Miracle Diet	0345402812	Puhn A	Ballantine	\$22.00
3	Bad As I Wanna Be	0385316399	Rodman D	Delacorte	\$22.95
4	I Lived To Tell It All	0679438696	Jones G	Villard	\$23.00
5	A Cloister Walk	1573220280	Norris K	Riverhead	\$23.95
6	The Zone	0060391502	Sears B	Harper	\$23.00
7	Emotional Intelligence	055309503x	Goleman D	Bantam	\$23.95
8	Men Are From Mars Women Are	006016848x	Gray J	Harper	\$25.00
9	Beckett/Ken Griffey Jr	067660028x	Beckett J	HC	\$15.00
10	Dream Fish & Road Trips	1558214291	Thomas E	Lyons	\$22.95

FICTION CLOTH

1	Runaway Jury	0385472943	Grisham J	DD	\$26.95
2	Bucking The Sun	0684811715	Doig I	S&S	\$23.00
3	The Tenth Insignit	0446519081	Redfield J	Warner	\$19.95
4	Slowness	0060173696	Kundera M	Harper	\$21.00
5	I Was Amelia Earhart	0679450548	Mendelsohn J	Knopf	\$18.00
6	Neanderthal	0679449787	Darnton J	RH	\$24.00
7	Sudden Prey	0399141383	Sandford J	Putnam	\$23.95
8	Absolute Power	0446519960	Baldacci D	Warner	\$22.95
9	How Stella Got Her Groove Back	0670869902	McMillan T	Viking	\$23.95
10	Floater's	0553103512	Wambaugh J	Bantam	\$22.95

NONFICTION TRADE PAPERBACK

1	Sleeping At The Starlite Motel	0679770151	White B	Vintage	\$12.00
2	7 Habits Of Highly Effective People	0671708635	Covey S	S&S	\$14.00
3	How The Irish Saved Civilization	0385418493	Cahill T	Anchor	\$12.95
4	Chicken Soup for the Soul	155874262X	Canfield J	Health Com	\$12.95
5	It's Obvious You Won't Survive By	0836204158	Adams S	Andrews	\$12.95
6	The Liar's Club	0140179836	Karr M	Penguin	\$11.95
7	Paula	0060927216	Allende I	Harper	\$12.50
8	Reviving Ophelia	0345392825	Pipher M	Ballantine	\$12.50
9	The Artist's Way	0874776945	Cameron J	Tarcher	\$13.95
10	Spontaneous Healing	0449910644	Weil A	Fawcett	\$12.95

FICTION TRADE PAPERBACK

1	Snow Falling On Cedars	067976402x	Guterson D	Vintage	\$12.00
2	Ladder Of Years	0449910571	Tyler A	Fawcett	\$12.00
3	Independence Day	0679735186	Ford R	Vintage	\$13.00
4	Moo	0449910237	Smiley J	Fawcett	\$12.00
5	Country Ahead Of Us Country Behind	0679767185	Guterson D	Vintage	\$11.00
6	Two Old Women	0060975849	Wallis V	Harper	\$10.00
7	Postcards	068480087x	Proulx E	S&S	\$12.00
8	Regeneration	0452270073	Barker P	Plume	\$10.95
9	Little Altars Everywhere	0060976845	Wells R	Harper	\$12.00
10	The World's Shortest Stories	1880284111	Moss S	JD&Co	\$9.95

MASS MARKET FICTION & NONFICTION

1	The Tree People	0812535103	Stokes N	Tor	\$6.99
2	The Green Mile # 03	0451190548	King S	NAL	\$2.99
3	Op Center III: Games Of State	0425151875	Clancy T	Berkley	\$6.99
4	The Green Mile # 02	0451190521	King S	NAL	\$2.99
5	The Rainmaker	044022165x	Grisham J	Dell	\$7.99
6	Riding The Rap	0440214416	Leonard E	Dell	\$6.50
7	Sophie's World	0425152251	Gaarder J	Berkley	\$6.99
8	The Glass Lake	0440221595	Binchy M	Dell	\$7.50
9	Rose Maddler	0451186362	King S	NAL	\$7.50
10	Star Wars X Wing 2: Wedge's Gamble	0553568027	Stackpole M	Bantam	\$5.99

REGIONAL

1	Alaska's Accessible Wilderness	0882404717	Sherwonit B	Alaska	\$21.95
2	Northwest Best Places 96-97	1570610398	Brewster D	Sasquatch	\$19.95
3	Seattle Best Places 7e	157061053X	Leson N	Sasquatch	\$16.95
4	Plants Of The PNW Coast	1551050404	Pojar J	Lone Pine	\$19.95
5	Great Alaska Nature Factbook	0882404547	Ewing S	Alaska	\$14.95
6	Milepost 1996	1878425285	Edited	Vernon	\$21.95
7	Daughters Of The West	0961908858	Seagraves A	Wesann	\$11.95
8	Frontier Physician	094539750X	Strohmeier N	Epicenter	\$14.95
9	Fishing In Oregon 8e	0916473104	Sheehan M	Flying	\$19.95
10	Portland Best Places 3e	1570610045	Carlson K	Sasquatch	\$14.95

CHILDREN'S CLOTH

1	Falling Up	0060248025	Silverstein S	Harper	\$16.95
2	Mama Do You Love Me?	087701759X	Joosse B	Chronicle	\$13.95
3	Good Night Gorilla Board Book	0399230033	Rathmann P	Putnam	\$6.95
4	Guess How Much I Love You	1564024733	McBratney S	Candlewick	\$14.99
5	Tom	0670866652	Torres D	Viking	\$15.99
6	Supper For Crow	0517593785	Morgan P	Crown	\$15.00
7	The Library Dragon	156145091x	Deedy C	Peach	\$16.95
8	The Children's Book Of Virtues	068481353x	Bennett W	S&S	\$20.00
9	Goodnight Moon Board Book	0694003611	Brown M	Harper	\$6.95
10	Stellaluna	0152802177	Cannon J	HB	\$15.00

CHILDREN'S PAPERBACK

1	Goosebumps # 44: Say Cheese & Die	0590568817	Stine R	Scholastic	\$3.99
2	Shiloh	0440219914	Naylor P	Dell	\$2.49
3	Give Yourself Goosebumps # 06: Beware	0590673203	Stine R	Scholastic	\$3.99
4	Summer Of The Monkeys	0553298186	Rawls W	Bantam	\$4.99
5	Goosebumps # 43: Beast Fr East	0590568809	Stine R	Scholastic	\$3.99
6	Goosebumps # 42: Egg Monsters Frm	0590568795	Stine R	Scholastic	\$3.99
7	Ira Sleeps Over	0395205034	Waber B	HM	\$4.95
8	Bunnicula	0380510944	Howe J	Avon	\$3.99
9	Pioneer Cat	039482038x	Hooks	RH	\$3.99
10	Redwall	0380708272	Jacques B	Avon	\$5.50

Media and Public Appearances

Triumph Over Fear/Jerilyn Ross
(Bantam) 0553374443, \$12.95p, Psychology
National, 6/3, NBC-TV/The Today Show

Prostate Cancer: A Guide for Women and the Men They Love/Dr. Barbara Wainrib, et al.
(Dell) 0440506409, \$10.95p, Medicine
San Francisco, 6/3, KQED-Radio/Forum

→ Active Faith/Ralph Reed
(Free Press) 0684827581, \$25.00c, History
National, 6/3, ABC-TV/Good Morning America; NPR/
Talk of the Nation; PBS-TV/Charlie Rose
National, 6/4, NPR/Diane Rehm
National, 6/5, CNBC/Equal Time; Mutual Broadcasting/
Jim Bohanon
Denver, 6/11, KOA-Radio/Mike Rosen Show

→ Hot Publicity ♦ Buyer's Picks

The Pleasure Police/David Shaw
(DD) 0385475683, \$23.00c, Sociology
National, 6/5, NBC-TV/The Today Show
National, 6/7, CBS-TV/The Late, Late Show

→ Final Jeopardy/Linda Fairstein
(Scribner) 0684814897, \$23.00c, Mystery
National, 6/5, ABC-TV/Good Morning America

→ How Stella Got Her Groove Back/Terry McMillan
(Viking) 0670869902, \$23.95c, Fiction
Seattle, 6/6, author tour
National, 6/14, ABC-TV/20/20: interview with
Barbara Walters

Recipes for Change/Lissa Deangelis & Molly Siple
(Dutton) 052593894X, \$27.95c, Health
National, 6/6, NBC-TV/Today Show

→ Rush Limbaugh is a Big Fat Idiot/Al Franken
(Delacorte) 0385314744, \$21.95c, Humor
National, 6/10, Syndicated TV/Oprah Winfrey Show

→ My First White Friend/Patricia Raybon
(Viking) 0670859567, \$22.95c, Biography
National, 6/10, NBC-TV/Today Show
National, June, Syndicated TV/Oprah Winfrey Show

→ What Women Want/Patricia Ireland
(Dutton) 0525938575, \$23.95c, History
National, 6/17, NBC-TV/The Today Show

→ Accordion Crimes/E. Annie Proulx
(Scribner) 0684195488, \$25.00c, Fiction
Denver, 6/20, author tour
Vancouver, 6/21, author tour
Seattle, 6/22, author tour
Portland, 6/23, author tour
San Francisco, 6/24, City Art & Lectures; author tour
Denver, 10/5-10/6, Rocky Mountain Book Festival



Large Quantity Titles

Breakthrough: The Next Step by Whitley Strieber (Harper) \$6.99 *mass* **006100958X** The bestselling author of *Communion* continues to elaborate on the message of hope passed on to him in an encounter with aliens. *Now in paper, New Age*

◆ **The Deus Machine** by Pierre Ouellette (PktBks) \$5.99 *mass* **0671536494** The year is 2005. An economic downturn has sent the United States into a depression. An international paramilitary cabal is plotting to spread an apocalyptic bio plague via an artificial intelligence called DEUS. *Now in paper, Fiction*

Drink with the Devil by Jack Higgins (Putnam) \$24.95 *cloth* **0399141545** In this latest military thriller by bestselling author of *The Eagle Has Landed* and *On Dangerous Ground*, the United States, Britain, and Irish extremists race to find a cargo of gold that may finance a civil war in strife-torn Ireland. *Fiction*

The Eyes of Darkness by Dean Koontz (Berkley) \$7.50 *mass* **0425153975** In this reissued horror novel by the author of *The Key to Midnight*, Tina Evans begins receiving messages from her son—a boy who had died a year before. *Reissue, Horror*

Family Secrets by John Bradshaw (Bantam) \$12.95 *paper* **0553374982** The author of *Creating Love* and *Homecoming* gives readers the tools they need to understand their families—and themselves—in an entirely new way. *Psychology*

The Fourth Estate by Jeffrey Archer (Harper) \$26.00 *cloth* **0060175184** In this novel reminiscent of his blockbuster *Kane & Abel*, Archer gives us the epic tale of two clashing media titans. *Fiction*

◆ **Gods and Generals** by Jeff Shaara (Ballantine) \$25.00 *cloth* **0345404920** In 1975 Michael Shaara won the Pulitzer Prize for his classic Civil War novel *The Killer Angels*. Now Shaara's son brilliantly sustains his father's vision in an epic novel that follows the main characters of *The Killer Angels* through the tumultuous, bloody decade leading up to the battle of Gettysburg. *Fiction*

Home Cookin' with Dave's Mom by Dorothy Letterman (PktBks) \$20.00 *cloth* **0671000608** Letterman's mom has charmed viewers with her patient appearances on her son's show. Now Dorothy offers a collection of homestyle recipes and family anecdotes—how can you miss with recipes like Uncle Earl's Creamed Chipped Beef on Tater Tots? *Cooking*

How to Argue and Win Every Time by Gerry Spence (StMart) \$12.95 *paper* **0312144776** The celebrity attorney who defended Karen Silkwood and Randy Weaver teaches readers how to compose a winning argument. *Wyoming author, Now in paper, Psychology*

The Intruder by Peter Blauner (S&S) \$23.00 *cloth* **0684810948** The Edgar Award-winning author of *Slow Motion Riot* and *Casino Moon* presents this edge-of-the-seat thriller in which a psychiatric patient stalks his therapist's family. *Fiction*

Let Me Call You Sweetheart by Mary Higgins Clark (PktBks) \$7.50 *mass* **0671568175** Prosecutor Kerry McGrath discovers that a plastic surgeon is giving his patients the face of a woman killed ten years ago—in this bestselling thriller from America's Queen of Suspense. *Now in paper, Fiction*

Like Father, Like Son by Hunter S. Fulghum (Putnam) \$21.95 *cloth* **0399141421** The son of bestselling author Robert Fulghum illuminates his own quixotic generation in this warm, witty, and wise collection of stories on being a man at midlife in America. *Introduction by Robert Fulghum, Biography*

◆ **Meditations for People Who (May) Worry Too Much** by Anne Wilson Schaeff (Ballantine) \$12.00 *paper* **0345394062** Meditations on inner rhythms and intuitive wisdom from the bestselling author of *Meditations for Women Who Do Too Much*. *Psychology*

◆ **Messages from My Father** by Calvin Trillin (FSG) \$18.00 *cloth* **0374208603** The acclaimed *New Yorker* staff writer and author of *Too Soon to Tell* and *Deadline Poet* gives us this fond, wry, and affecting memoir of his father—a Kansas City grocer who passed on plenty of pithy advice including his almost lackadaisical maxim “you might as well be a mensch.” *Biography*



Mission: Impossible by Peter Barsocchini (PktBks) \$5.99 *mass* **0671549219** A novelization of the potential summer blockbuster movie starring Tom Cruise. *Fiction*

The New Vegetarian Epicure by Anna Thomas (Knopf) \$19.00 *paper* **0679765883** *The Vegetarian Epicure* became the bible of vegetarian cooks in the seventies. Now author Anna Thomas returns with an exuberant cookbook that reflects the way we eat today. The 66 menus are geared to busy, health-conscious families who are drawn to good fresh foods and lighter fare. *Cooking*

Out of the Blue by Mark Victor Hansen & Barbara Nichols (Harper) \$20.00 *cloth* **0060173769** The coauthor of the phenomenal bestseller *Chicken Soup for the Soul* shares 52 stories of how experiences of delight open us to compassion and spiritual awareness. *Psychology*

Star Trek: The Klingon Way by Marc Okrand (PktBks) \$12.00 *paper* **0671537555** Words of wisdom and warfare from the baddest of the bad aliens in the universe: the Klingons. *Science Fiction*

The Turner Diaries by Andrew Macdonald (Barricade) \$12.00 *paper* **1569800863** The incendiary white supremacist novel that has served as a manifesto for the militia movement and possibly a blueprint for the Oklahoma City bombing. *Fiction*

Twister by Michael Crichton and Anne-Marie Martin (Ballantine) \$10.00 *paper* **0345408330** The screenplay to the hit movie about tornado-chasing starring Helen Hunt and Bill Paxton. *Fiction*

INSIDE PIPELINE

From
Page 1



The popular Arts & Lectures series in Seattle and Portland has announced its lineup for next season, to begin in September, 1996 and run through May, 1997. Included are bestselling crime writer Elmore Leonard, British biographer Lady Antonia Frazier (author of *Mary Queen of Scots*), Mary Karr of *The Liars' Club* fame, Booker Prize-winning author Michael Ondaatje, Maya Lin, the sculptor and architect who designed the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, and a dual lecture by African novelist Chinua Achebe and Seattle photographer Robert Lyons. For more information, contact Seattle Arts and Lectures at (206) 621-2230 or Portland Arts and Lectures at (503) 227-2583.

Pacific Pipeline has autographed copies of the following titles:

Sudden Prey by John Sanford (0399141383, Putnam, \$23.95c, Fiction)
Beyond Ritalin by Stephen & Marianne Garber (0679450181, Villard, \$23.00c, Health)
Motel Nirvana by Melanie McGrath (0312143729, Picador, \$22.00c, New Age)
Street Soldier by Joseph Marshall, Jr. (0385314302, Delacorte, \$22.95c, Biography)
Vegetarian Way by Mark Messina (0517882752, Crown, \$24.00c, Cooking)
The Flaming Corsage by William Kennedy (0670858722, Viking, \$23.95, Fiction)

Pacific Pipeline will no longer carry titles from Easel Publishing. Returns of titles from this publisher will be accepted until July 3. Easel Publishing's ISBN prefix is 0-964345.

Author tours don't usually involve covered wagons, but Ben Kern, coauthor of the forthcoming book *Wagon Wheels* (0931271363, High Plains, \$14.95p, Travel) will be retracing the route of the Mormon trail by wagon train this summer. His book describes a previous trek along the Oregon Trail, and he'll be promoting the book as he makes his journey from Illinois to Salt Lake City in commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the trail. *Wagon Wheels* is due later this month.

Censorship alert: Opposition to Oregon's Measure 31, a ballot measure that would amend Oregon's constitution to allow banning of books some people deem obscene, is now getting underway. Measure 31 is similar in word and intent to Measure 19, which failed to pass in 1994. Bookstores, music shops, art galleries, and other arts organizations could face criminal or civil penalties under new laws allowed by this new amendment. For information on volunteering or making a contribution to the No on Measure 31 Committee, call (503) 229-0132 or write PO Box 40407, Portland OR 97420.



INSIDE PIPELINE

by
Andy
Engelson



According to my ABA calendar, June 3 is officially "Repeat Day." How appropriate—because I'm beginning to sound like a broken record talking about Pipeline's Spring Break Discount Special. That's Pipeline's Spring Break Discount Special. Okay, I'll make it short: through June 30, you receive a **43% discount** when you order multiple copies of a title (short titles excluded, single copy orders receive standard 40% discount, minimum qualifying order is 50 books).

A perfect opportunity to take advantage of the Spring Break Special is Pacific Pipeline's Summer Reading promotion. In this week's newsletter you'll find a sample of the consumer piece to be inserted in *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, *Private Eye Weekly*, *Willamette Weekly*, *Seattle Weekly*, and *Eastside Week* on June 12. You'll also find an order form listing all of the featured titles. Summer Reading will reach over 400,000 readers and book buyers throughout the West, so backorder and stock up on such winners as *The Country Ahead of Us*, *The Country Behind*, *Accordion Crimes*, *Of Love and Other Demons*, and *I Was Amelia Earhart*.

Bestsellers are back! On the back page of *New Book Highlights* you'll find lists of the top ten bestsellers in fiction, nonfiction, children's, and regional categories. Our computer inventory system is now roaring ahead at full speed and providing you with the information you need. Soon to come—rotating specialty bestseller lists in a variety of categories, from mysteries to cookbooks, poetry to true crime. Stay tuned!

Oprah News: Al Franken, author of the phenomenal bestseller *Rush Limbaugh is a Big Fat Idiot* (0385314744, Delacorte, \$21.95c, Humor), will be appearing briefly on Oprah on June 10. Also lined up for June: Robin Ryan, Seattle author of *60 Seconds and You're Hired* (1570230099, Impact, \$9.95p, Jobs) and Patricia Raybon, author of *My First White Friend* (0670859567, Viking, \$22.95, Sociology).

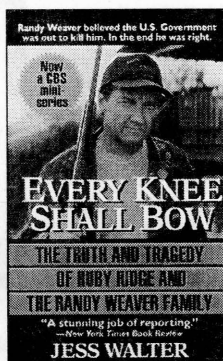
continued on page 5

The West



\$ Early Hiking in the Olympics 1922-1942 by Paul Crews (Crews) \$14.95 *paper* 0897166027 This memoir by an avid hiker of Washington's Olympic Mountains is filled with anecdotes of climbing, camping, and mountaineering in the pristine wilderness of the Pacific Northwest before the onset of World War II. **Alaska author, Biography/Hiking**

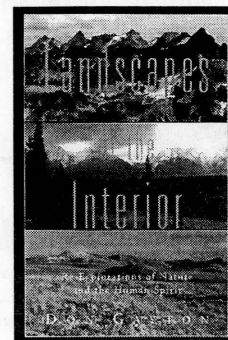
\$ Every Knee Shall Bow: The Truth and Tragedy of Ruby Ridge and the Randy Weaver Family by Jess Walter (Harper) \$6.99 *mass* 0061011312 Adapted into a CBS-TV miniseries, this is Pulitzer Prize-finalist reporter Jess Walter's account of the FBI's assault on Randy Weaver and his family at their home in Ruby Ridge Idaho. This detailed book chronicles Weaver's isolationist beliefs, the shootout, the FBI cover-up, and the U.S. government's \$3.1 settlement with the Weavers. **Washington author, Now in paper, History**



Grand Canyon by Gary McCarthy (Pinnacle) \$5.99 *mass* 0786002727 As vast as the Grand Canyon itself, this historical novel traces the lives of two people: William Dunn, a member of John Wesley Powell's historic expedition down the Colorado and a champion of Indians' rights, and Kate Callahan, a woman on a trail of vengeance for the murder of her family at Utah's infamous Mountain Meadow Massacre. **Fiction**

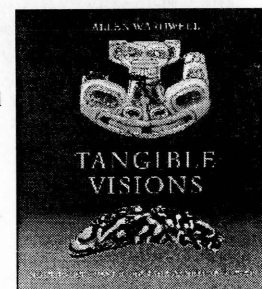
How to Rent a Fire Lookout in the Pacific Northwest by Tom Foley and Tish Steinfeld (Wilderness) \$12.95 *paper* 0899971954 Did you know you can rent a fire lookout in Oregon and Washington and experience some of best views in the state for around \$25. This informative guide lists scores of lookouts and rangers cabins—from luxurious sites just off the highway to Spartan towers deep in the wilderness. **Hiking**

\$ Landscapes of the Interior: Re-Explorations of Nature and the Human Spirit by Don Gayton (New Society) \$14.95 *paper* 0865713448 This book is an eloquent antidote to the separation that people are feeling between themselves and nature. In seventeen essays, Gayton traverses landscapes as diverse as the tall-grass prairie, the semi-desert Okanagan region of Washington, Puget Sound, and the mountains of British Columbia. "Don Gayton deserves a place with the finest of our nature writers." —Thomas Berry, author of *The Dream of the Earth*. **British Columbia author, Nature**



Paddling the Payette by Stephen Stuebner (Boise Front) \$16.95 *paper* 0964434318 This comprehensive guide to flat-water and whitewater rafting in Idaho's Payette River Basin includes detailed descriptions and maps for 24 paddling trips. Also includes historical notes, local lore, and over 75 photos. **Idaho author, Boating**

Tangible Visions: Northwest Coast Indian Shamanism and Its Art by Allen Wardwell (Monacelli) \$85.00 *cloth* 1885254164 This beautifully produced art book explores the shamanic significance of a wide variety of Tlingit and Tsimishan objects—from rattles and totems to talismans and masks. Hundreds of color images and archival photos, as well as well-researched text take readers inside the deeply spiritual world of Northwest Coast Indian shamans. **Art**



Tee Off British Columbia edited (Market Force) \$24.95 *paper* 1896020070 This unique golf guide includes over 100 free rounds of golf at courses throughout British Columbia. Each description includes a course map, a par chart, a list of services, and color photos. **Sports**

Thin Moon and Cold Mist by Kathleen O'Neal Gear (Forge) \$6.99 *mass* **0812536576** Robin Heatherston, a former spy for the Confederacy, flees to the untamed reaches of the Colorado Territory, where she raises her five-year-old son, works a gold-mining claim, and evades an Army Major sworn to vengeance. Another addition to the *Women of the West* series by the author of *This Widowed Land*. **Western**

Twilight on the Lighthouses by Jim Gibbs (Schiffer) \$29.95 *cloth* **088740930X** This is a fascinating photographic history of the lighthouses of the West Coast—from British Columbia to Southern California. Dramatic vintage and contemporary photos complement the story of these lonesome sentinels of the coast. **Washington author, History**



Fiction

Beauty from Ashes by Eugenia Price (StMart) \$6.99 *mass* **0312959176** For four decades Eugenia Price has shared her love and knowledge of the American South with millions of readers. Now she tells the story of a head-strong woman caught between loyalties to North and South during the Civil War. **Now in paper**

Black Eagles by Larry Collins (Signet) \$6.99 *mass* **0451188535** This engrossing conspiracy novel follows the conflicting paths of an idealistic DEA agent and a hard-edged CIA operative who clash over drug smuggling and covert actions in Panama. **Now in paper**

Body of Knowledge by Carol Dawson (PktBks) \$12.00 *paper* **0671535722** Victoria Grace Ransom is the reclusive 600-pound narrator of Carol Dawson's brilliant, beguiling novel. Victoria unfolds the story of her family's history and fortune and in the process uncovers her own secrets with wit and eloquence. **Now in paper**

The Cable Guy by Harriet Grey (StMart) \$5.99 *mass* **0312960824** A novelization of the new comedy starring Jim Carrey and Matthew Broderick.

Two novels by bestselling author **Barbara Bickmore** are now in stock from Kensington:

Deep in the Heart by Barbara Bickmore (Kensington) \$22.95 *cloth* **1575660393** This sweeping saga by the author of *Homecoming* ranges from a small town in 1960s Texas to the heady elegance and jet-set society of Houston in the money-worshipping 1980s.

Homecoming by Barbara Bickmore (Kensington) \$6.99 *mass* **1575660059** The heir to a newspaper fortune, Sydney Hamilton defies her family and heads to Hollywood to follow her love. **Now in paper**

Highways to a War by Christopher J. Koch (Penguin) \$12.95 *paper* **0140247572** The author of *The Year of Living Dangerously* tells the story of a man who searches for his friend—a risk-taking combat photographer—who never returned from a clandestine assignment in Kmer Rouge Cambodia. "*Highways to a War* ranks among the best of the . . . literature that has come out of the agony of the wars in Southeast Asia." — *Orlando Sentinel*. **Now in paper**

Like People in History by Felice Picano (Penguin) \$12.95 *paper* **0140245251** Felice Picano captures American gay life and subculture over the last half of the twentieth century in this brilliantly written, extraordinarily entertaining saga. Through the lens of a complex, destructive, madcap, yet enduring relationship, Picano chronicles and celebrates gay history from the 1950s through Stonewall, Vietnam, and AIDS. **Now in paper**



Novel Without a Name by Duong Thu Huong (Penguin) \$11.95 *paper* **0140255109** This novel sees the Vietnam War through the eyes of a North Vietnamese soldier as he fights and returns home to figures of his past—his angry father, his childhood sweetheart, and his boyhood friends now maimed and dead. **Now in paper**

Rising Wind by Dick Couch (Naval Institute) \$24.95 *cloth* **1557501335** The author of *SEAL Team One* gives us another military thriller—this time a right-wing Japanese organization has stolen some of the United States' chemical weapon stockpiles and is holding the nation hostage.

See How They Run by Marilyn Campbell (Onyx) \$5.99 *mass* **0451406915** A woman who has escaped an abusive relationship just wants to raise her 9-year-old son—but those who want to hurt her and steal her child are coming after her with every trick of the law.

Trophy Wife by Kelly Lange (NAL) \$5.99 *mass* **0451188128** This delicious new novel of sex, power, and suspense in L.A. is the story of an intelligent and beautiful "trophy wife" whose husband turns up murdered—and she's the prime suspect.

Windswept House by Malachi Martin (DD) \$24.95 *cloth* **0385484089** Bestselling author and Vatican insider Malachi Martin lays bare a saga of unthinkable realities in this new novel. With betrayal, scandal, and murder as their ready weapons, an unlikely international alliance is using the power of the Vatican for geopolitical control. By the author of *The Jesuits*.

Wooden Fish Songs by Ruthanne Lum McCunn (Plume) \$12.95 *paper* **0452273463** In 19th century China, "wooden fish songs" were the laments sung by the Chinese women left behind by husbands, sons, and brothers looking for a better life on "Gold Mountain"—America. This fascinating historical novel tells the story of one such real-life pioneer, Lue Gim Gong. After years of virtual indentured servitude, Lue puts his genius for plants to work in Florida—and his story is told by three women who know him best. **Now in paper**



The World at Night: Paris, 1940 by Alan Furst (RH) \$23.00 *cloth* **0679413138** The author of such stylish World War II-era spy thrillers as *Night Soldiers* and *The Polish Officer* gives us this story of love and resistance in German-occupied Paris in 1940.

Mystery

Dead in the Dirt by Connie Feddersen (Kensington) \$4.99 *mass* **1575660466** In this latest Amanda Hazard whodunit by the author of *Dead in the Melon Patch*, the rural amateur sleuth investigates the death of a farmer who was secretly the richest man in Vamoose, Oklahoma.

Mortal Remains by Rick Hanson (Pinnacle) \$4.99 *mass* **0786002840** The author of *Spare Parts* is back with another hilarious mystery about an exclusive clinic for assorted flakes and crazies, an asylum where the doctors are dropping like flies.

PACIFIC PIPELINE

Serving the book trade since 1974

New Book Highlights lists a selection of titles new to Pacific Pipeline that we feel are particularly interesting, noteworthy, and/or have high sales potential. This list represents only a portion of all the books received each week—a complete list of new titles can be found on the last frames of Pipeline's weekly microfiche. Subscriptions to *New Book Highlights* are \$55 per year, and \$99 per year with weekly microfiche.



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Proofreading Joanne Jones
Printing by Advent Business

Pacific Pipeline Bestsellers

NONFICTION CLOTH

- 1 Simple Abundance
- 2 Undaunted Courage
- 3 Blood Sport
- 4 5 Day Miracle Diet
- 5 Bad As I Wanna Be
- 6 Oh The Places You'll Go
- 7 From Mother To Daughter
- 8 Garda
- 9 A Cloister Walk
- 10 Hitler's Willing Executioners

0446519138	Breathnach S	Warner	\$18.95
0684811073	Ambrose S	S&S	\$30.00
0684802309	Stewart J	S&S	\$25.00
0345402812	Puhn A	Ballantine	\$22.00
0385316399	Rodman D	Delacorte	\$22.95
0679805273	Seuss D	RH	\$16.00
0312134983	Appel S	StMart	\$10.95
0316754498	Rolling Stone	LB	\$29.95
1573220280	Norris K	Riverhead	\$23.95
0679446958	Goldhagen D	Knopf	\$30.00

FICTION CLOTH

- 1 Runaway Jury
- 2 Floaters
- 3 The Fourth Estate
- 4 Bucking The Sun
- 5 Neanderthal
- 6 The Tenth Insight
- 7 The Flaming Corsage
- 8 Slowness
- 9 Sudden Prey
- 10 How Stella Got Her Groove Back

0385472943	Grisham J	DD	\$26.95
0553103512	Wambaugh J	Bantam	\$22.95
0060175184	Archer J	Harper	\$26.00
0684811715	Dolgi	S&S	\$23.00
0679449787	Darnton J	RH	\$24.00
0446519081	Redfield J	Warner	\$19.95
0670858722	Kennedy W	Viking	\$23.95
0060173696	Kundera M	Harper	\$21.00
0399141383	Sandford J	Putnam	\$23.95
0670869902	McMillan T	Viking	\$23.95

NONFICTION TRADE PAPERBACK

- 1 3rd Serving Chicken Soup for the Soul
- 2 The Liar's Club
- 3 Paula
- 4 The Artist's Way
- 5 Reviving Ophelia
- 6 The Journals Of Lewis & Clark
- 7 Still Pumped From Using Mouse
- 8 How The Irish Saved Civilization
- 9 It's Obvious You Won't Survive By Your Wits
- 10 Ten Stupid Things Women Do

1558743790	Canfield J	Health	\$12.95
0140179836	Karr M	Penguin	\$11.95
0060927216	Allende I	Harper	\$12.50
0874776945	Cameron J	Tarcher	\$13.95
0345392825	Pipher M	Ballantine	\$12.50
039500380X	Devoto B	HM	\$14.95
0836210263	Adams S	Andrews	\$9.95
0385418493	Cahill T	Anchor	\$12.95
0836204158	Adams S	Andrews	\$12.95
0060976497	Schlessing L	Harper	\$12.00

FICTION TRADE PAPERBACK

- 1 Snow Falling On Cedars
- 2 Turner Diaries
- 3 Ladder Of Years
- 4 Country Ahead Of Us Ctry Behin
- 5 Independence Day
- 6 Moo
- 7 Of Love & Other Demons
- 8 Stone Diaries
- 9 Sportswriter Reissue
- 10 Stones From The River

067976402X	Guterson D	Vintage	\$12.00
1569800863	MacDonald A	Barricade	\$12.00
0449910571	Tyler A	Fawcett	\$12.00
0679767185	Guterson D	Vintage	\$11.00
0679735186	Ford R	Vintage	\$13.00
0449910237	Smiley J	Fawcett	\$12.00
0140256369	Marquez G	Penguin	\$11.95
014023313X	Shields C	Penguin	\$11.95
0679762108	Ford R	Vintage	\$12.00
0684800357	Hegi U	Scribner	\$12.00

MASS MARKET FICTION & NONFICTION

1 The Green Mile #3	0451190548	King S	NAL	\$2.99
2 Rainmaker	044022165x	Grisham J	Dell	\$7.99
3 Op Center III: Games Of State	0425151875	Clancy T	Berkley	\$6.99
4 Rose Maddox	0451186362	King S	NAL	\$7.50
5 Every Knee Shall Bow	0061011312	Walter J	Harper	\$6.99
6 The Green Mile #2	0451190521	King S	NAL	\$2.99
7 The Green Mile #1	0451190491	King S	NAL	\$2.99
8 Dead Man's Walk	0671001167	McMurtry L	PktBks	\$6.99
9 The Bookman's Wake	0671567829	Dunning J	PktBks	\$3.99
10 Practical Magic	0425152499	Hoffman A	Berkley	\$6.99

REGIONAL

1 Milepost 1996	1878425285	Edited	Vernon	\$21.95
2 Seattle Baby Resource Guide 2e	0963377752	Edited	Im Exp	\$10.95
3 Northwest Boat Travel 19e	0945989303	Cole P	Andersons	\$19.95
4 Down The Hill	1885221282	Silver R	Bookp	\$14.95
5 Hidden Oregon	1569750378	Lenhart M	Ulysses	\$12.95
6 Strange Sites	1550171313	Christy J	Harbour	\$24.95
7 Plants Of The PNW Coast	1551050404	Pojar J	LonePine	\$19.95
8 Seattle Best Places 7e	157061055X	Leson N	Sasquatch	\$16.95
9 Northwest Best Places 96-97	1570610398	Brewster D	Sasquatch	\$19.95
10 Oregon Atlas & Gazetteer	0899332358	Delorme	Delorme	\$16.95

CHILDREN'S CLOTH

1 Falling Up	0080248025	Silverstein S	Harper	\$16.95
2 Hidden Pictures	1562942670	Wood A	Millbr	\$12.95
3 Carnival By The Sea	0964918102	Johnson R	Beach	\$24.95
4 Guess How Much I Love You	1564024733	McBratney S	Candlewick	\$14.99
5 Mama Do You Love Me?	087701759X	Joosse B	Chronicle	\$13.95
6 Goodnight Moon/Board Bk	0694003611	Brown M	Harper	\$6.95
7 Amelia's Notebook	188367218X	Moss M	Tricycle	\$14.00
8 Good Night Gorilla Board Bk	0399230033	Rathmann P	Putnam	\$6.95
9 Outcast Of Redwall	0399229140	Jacques B	Putnam	\$19.95
10 The Giving Tree	0060256656	Silverstein S	Harper	\$13.95

CHILDREN'S PAPERBACK

1 Goosebumps #44: Say Cheese & Die	0590568817	Stine R	Scholastic	\$3.99
2 Charlie & Chocolate Factory	0140328696	Dahl R	Puffin	\$4.99
3 Roll Of Thunder Hear My Cry	014034893X	Taylor M	Penguin	\$4.99
4 Hatcher	014032724X	Paulsen G	Puffin	\$4.99
5 Lost In The Barrens	0553275259	Mowat F	Bantam	\$3.99
6 Goosebumps #43: Beast From East	0590568809	Stine R	Scholastic	\$3.99
7 Shabanu Daughter Of The Wind	0679810307	Staples S	Knopf	\$4.99
8 Give Yourself Goosebumps #6: Beware	0590673203	Stine R	Scholastic	\$3.99
9 Island of the Blue Dolphins	0440220211	O'Dell S	Dell	\$2.49
10 Redwall	0380708272	Jacques B	Avon	\$5.50

Media and Public Appearances

→ **Rush Limbaugh is a Big Fat Idiot/Al Franken** (Delacorte) 0385314744, \$21.95c, Humor National, 6/10, Syndicated TV/Oprah Winfrey Show

→ **My First White Friend/Patricia Raybon** (Viking) 0670859567, \$22.95c, Biography National, 6/10, NBC-TV/Today Show National, June, Syndicated TV/Oprah Winfrey Show

Active Faith/Ralph Reed (Free Press) 0684827581, \$25.00c, History Denver, 6/11, KOA-Radio/Mike Rosen Show

Independence Day/Richard Ford (Vintage) 0679735186, \$13.00p, Fiction National, 6/11, CBS-TV/Tom Snyder

→ Hot Publicity ♦ Buyer's Picks

→ **Terry/George McGovern** (Villard) 0679447970, \$21.00c, Biography San Francisco, 6/11, KPX-TV/Noon News; KTVU-TV/Mornings on Two; KQED-Radio/Forum Portland, 6/13, KOIN-TV/First Edition; KATU-TV/AM Northwest; KXL-Radio/Book Page & News; KXL-Radio/Bill Gallagher Show Seattle, 6/14, KOMO-TV/Northwest Afternoon; KPLU-FM/News feature; KIRO-TV/Seven Live

→ **Father & Son: The Bond/William Hanson** (Bright) 1880092190, \$29.95c, Biography National, 6/14, Syndicated TV/The Oprah Winfrey Show; CNN/Feature

→ **George Foreman's Knock Out the Fat/George Foreman** (Villard) 0679771492, \$13.95p, Cooking National, 6/14, NBC-TV/Tonight Show

Does Anybody Have a Problem W/ That?/Bill Maher (Villard) 067945627, \$20.00c, Humor National, June, CBS-TV/60 Minutes National, 6/14, ABC-TV/Good Morning America; NBC-TV/Conan O'Brien

→ **How Stella Got Her Groove Back/Terry McMillan** (Viking) 0670869902, \$23.95c, Fiction National, 6/14, ABC-TV/20/20; interview with Barbara Walters

→ **What Women Want/Patricia Ireland** (Dutton) 0525938575, \$23.95c, History National, 6/17, NBC-TV/The Today Show

→ **Accordion Crimes/E. Annie Proulx** (Scribner) 0684195488, \$25.00c, Fiction Denver, 6/20, author tour Vancouver, 6/21, author tour Seattle, 6/22, author tour Portland, 6/23, author tour

6 June '96

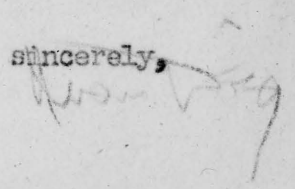
Bruce Barcott
SEATTLE WEEKLY
1008 Western, Ste. 300
Seattle 98104

Dear Bruce---

Alas, a significant part of my book dedication got dropped when you quoted it in your Bucking the Sun review, and I wonder if a dab of correction could be run. The actual phrase is not "To novelists who deliver the eloquence of the world..." but "To novelists who deliver the eloquence of the edge of the world..." As this is a belief I've constantly cited in talks ~~and~~ interviews the past several years (as per the attached Publishers Weekly interview in '87), that writers based in the American West might best chime with those in the old outposts of empire--jugglers of the language out there away from the traditional literary centers, writing about societies trying to come to terms with themselves--it's not a set of words I take lightly, and one that a lot of my readers know by now.

While I'm at this, I don't know if it's grist for your literary-notes coverage or not, but I'm one of four writers chosen by the American Booksellers Association to talk at a massive "literary luncheon" presided over by the Poet Laureate, Robert Hass, at the ABA Convention in Chicago on June 16. The others are Donald Hall, Susan Power, and John Edgar Wideman, and the topic is "Poetry and Literature in Everyday Life." I'll use my time to talk about how I try to attain a poetry of the vernacular in my characters' dialogue and lingo, natch.

Appreciated the attention to the book. Maybe see you at the ABA if you're covering that, or the Northwest Bookfest this fall.

sincerely,


In the news

The first Seattle Antiquarian Children's Book Fair & Symposium is Saturday and next Sunday at the Good Shepherd Center, 4649 Sunnyside Ave. N. (information: 632-7075).

BOOKS



A battered life

Roddy Doyle explores the pain of a woman caught in a violent marriage.
NEXT SUNDAY in BOOKS

'Prizes' are showcases for quality

"The Pushcart Prize XX: 1996 Best of the Small Presses"

Edited by Bill Henderson
Pushcart Press, \$16

"Prize Stories 1996: The O. Henry Awards"

Edited by William Abrahams
Doubleday/Anchor, \$27.50/\$10.95

BY IRENE WANNER

Special to The Seattle Times

The Pushcart Prize anthology, celebrating its 20th year, and the O. Henry Award story collection, now edited for 30 of its 76 years by William Abrahams, appear annually to showcase the work of both new and established writers.

Pushcart, originally launched on a tiny budget and giant ambitions, restricts itself to small-press and "little magazine" publications. It accomplishes its goal: to help fill the "spiritual vacuum" created by profit-hungry commercial publishing.

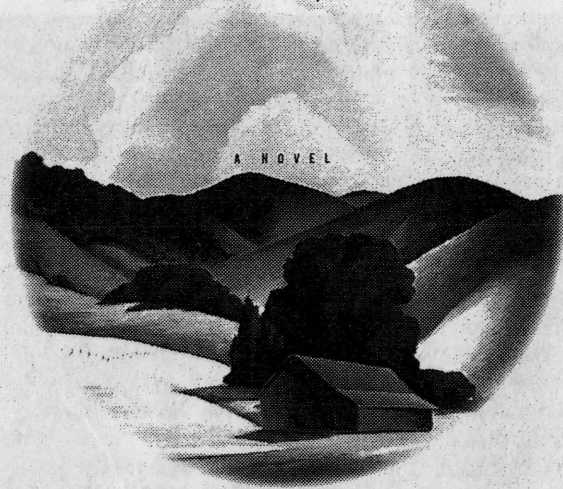
The 1996 Pushcart, at 570 pages and a price you can't beat, offers poetry, essays and stories nominated by a large panel of writers and magazine editors, then selected by Bill Henderson with several co-editors. A few big names appear, but it's the variety, inventiveness and quality — no matter how obscure a piece's pedigree — that make this book noteworthy every year.

"Wilma Bremer's Funeral," by Marie Sheppard Williams, is a touching, deeply layered story about blind and sighted people — and learning not only to see but to pay attention whether or not vision is involved. In "Pity," Avner Mandelman, too, wrestles with seeing clearly, as his Jewish narrator questions revenge.

"My Father's Chinese Wives," by Sandra Tsing Loh, is hilarious and heartbreaking. The narrator's

A cantankerous clan

BUCKING THE SUN



IVAN DOIG

Family conflicts make a lively saga

"Bucking the Sun"

by Ivan Doig
Simon & Schuster, \$23

BY NICHOLAS O'CONNELL
Special to The Seattle Times

"Bucking the Sun" represents Ivan Doig's most ambitious work to date, a novel nearly Russian in scope that brings to life one of the most controversial chapters in modern Western history: the damming of the region's major rivers during the New

at the drop of a hat, but stand together if the world so much as looked cross-eyed at them." They come to work at Fort Peck after the government buys and condemns their family alfalfa farm in preparation for the dam.

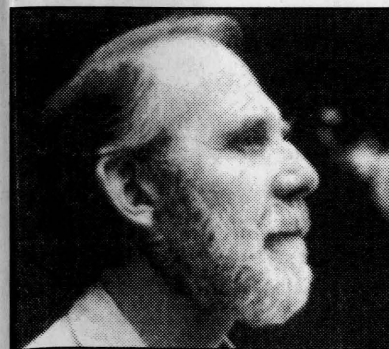
The conflicts between three generations of Duffs fuel much of the drama in "Bucking the Sun." Family members seem to define themselves as much in opposition to each other as in relation to their rough-and-tumble society or to Montana's vast open spaces, which seem barely large enough to contain them all. Family may be the most important thing to the Duffs, but it often proves nettlesome and complicated, and there is nothing sentimental in

the story, for he's a communist sympathizer and suspected industrial saboteur.

There also is a full complement of strong women. Meg, Hugh's long-suffering wife, has always hated farm life and is greatly relieved to be working on the dam. She also tries to keep peace between Hugh and Darius, who both had once vied for her affection. Their rivalry soon resumes, further complicating the story until Darius marries Proxy, a sharp-tongued and vividly drawn prostitute.

When Meg's sons marry, their wives don't fit easily into this tight-knit family. The women and their husbands, all living in close proximity to each other, make for a lively and unpredictable story — they are always getting into each other's hair, sometimes into each other's beds.

Typical of Doig's work, "Bucking the Sun" is a character-driven story, but this time he adds an element of suspense, baiting a juicy hook in the



Ivan Doig

opening pages by describing efforts to pull two bodies from the river. The reader is left wondering exactly who they are and how they got there — questions that Doig waits until the end to answer.

The novel's ambitious scope, however, sometimes proves its weakness as well as its strength. In contrast to his other fiction, Doig uses an omniscient point of view, often shifting rapidly from one character's thoughts to another's, sometimes giving a wonderfully rounded



YOUNG READERS

BY KARI WERGELAND
Special to The Seattle Times

It may look like I'm trying to take over Adam Woog's Scene of the Crime column by writing about mysteries, but my real inspiration is the reading program sponsored this summer by both the King County and Seattle Public libraries. Honest.

Designed to encourage a love of reading and lifelong learning, the program has something for everyone — even adults. So, all you Sherlock Juniors, pull out those magnifying glasses and get ready for a Mysterious Summer; signups begin June 15.

Kids who are just getting the hang of reading longer stories will like "The Three Blind Mice Mystery" (Bantam), by Stephen Krensky and illustrated by Lynn Munsinger. Simple Simon, the ace detective in this whodunit, is backed by an all-star cast, including Jack and Jill, the Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe, the Three Little Pigs, Mother Goose, Old Mother Hubbard, and the Big Bad Wolf. Which one of these suspects knows the fate of two lost mice?

There's also "Something Queer at the Scary Movie" (Hyperion), and Gwen and Jill must crack the case. The intrigue begins when Gwen decides to direct her own frightening flick but is foiled when someone sabotages the set. This title in the popular mystery series, written by Elizabeth Levy and illustrated by Mordicai Gerstein, will keep fans entertained while teaching them about the art of moviemaking.

Cam (short for Camera) Jansen is a young detective with a fantastic photographic memory. In her latest adventure, "Cam Jansen and the Triceratops Pops Mystery" (Viking), by David A. Adler and illustrated by Susanna Natti, our heroine fingers a CD thief with the help of friend Eric.

Newbery Award-winning author Phyllis Reynolds Naylor has put together a humorous mystery series for older readers which is set in the tiny town of Besseldorf, Indiana. Her

Forensic Anthropologists Solve Crimes and Uncover Mysteries of the Dead" (Little, Brown), by Donna M. Jackson with photographs by Charlie Feltenbaum, is bound to draw readers with its dynamite cover. Kids will learn how a few old bones can shatter a murderer's secrets and shine a light on history. Not for the fainthearted.

Barbara Brooks Wallace tosses her orphaned, 11-year-old heroine into a soup of eerie characters in "Cousins in the Castle" (Atheneum). Young Amelia finds herself abandoned on the docks of New York City by her dour cousin Charlotte, who was supposed to deliver her to another mysterious cousin — Amelia's new guardian. Alone in a strange country, Amelia is at the mercy of strangers, not all of whom are trustworthy.

Part science fiction, with a dash of historical fiction and a lot of mystery, Margaret Peterson Haddix's debut novel, "Running Out of Time" (Simon & Schuster), begs to be read in one sitting. Jessie has always believed that she is living in 1840 — until there is a diphtheria outbreak in her village. Her mother then breaks the news that they are living in a historical preserve, and the year is 1996. With many questions unanswered, Jessie ventures into the 20th century in a brave attempt to save her friends and family.

Local author Willo Davis Roberts has spun a "Twisted Summer" (Atheneum) that will make readers wonder whether they really want to go on vacation. At 14, Cici was looking forward to spending time at Crystal Lake with friends and family — especially Jack, the boy she has adored since childhood.

But when she gets to Crystal Lake, she is shocked to learn that Jack's brother is in jail for murdering a girl. Jack doesn't believe she is guilty, so Cici decides to

penally-punching. When this 70-year-old writes to China, advertising for a wife, his two daughters dread the outcome but cheer a success their father might not consider a bargain.

Irma Wallem's short, evocative "Sex" is set in a retirement facility. The jazzy title symbolizes many kinds of affection. "Milk," by Eileen Pollack, puts two new mothers — one white, one black — together in a hospital room. Deftly, Pollack shows how each is treated, leaving us to make our own judgments.

Cornelia Nixon's prose in "The Women Come and Go" is absolutely elegant, while the voice of Reginald McKight's narrator of "The More I Like Flies" is in-your-face obnoxious.

Such strong contrasts, enabled by Pushcart's many nominators, is something the O. Henry collection usually lacks; last year I was underwhelmed by Abrahams' choices. This year, first prize goes to Stephen King's story, "The Man in the Black Suit" — another strange choice — and Alice Adams returns for her zillionth appearance. Jane Smiley and Joyce Carol Oates each contribute competent, dull pieces — and names that sell books.

But once again, Abrahams also uses some wonderful work. Akhil Sharma's thoroughly charming "If You Sing Like That for Me" is set in New Delhi and offers the observations of a shy newlywed woman in an arranged marriage.

"Stones," by William Hoffman, pits a white male narrator and all his assumptions against an educated black man who dismantles a plantation house. The narrator's questions become our own in a highly affective story.

T.M. McNally's young woman who tries to escape dead-end parents in "Skin Deep" is poignant and powerful. The middle-aged, middle-class teacher who finds himself in wealthy company in "Influenza," by Daniel Menaker, mixes humor and intelligence.

And Julie Schumacher's "Dummies" makes us think about retardation, while Tom Paine's "Will You Say Something, Monsieur Eliot?" pits the fate of Haitian boat people against a privileged white American.

Each of these new collections offers well-written, thoughtful stories. Both mark anniversaries and a long record of great reading.

Irene Wanner is features editor of The Seattle Review.

impressive engineering feat. The Seattle author sets in motion a vast array of characters to tell the story of the building of the Fort Peck Dam, an earthfill structure nearly four miles long and 25 stories tall, on the Missouri River in eastern Montana.

As in all of his best fiction and nonfiction — the novel "English Creek" and the memoir "This House of Sky" come to mind — Doig organizes this book around a family. In this case, the fictional Duffs serve as the lens through which he views this signal event in Western history.

Like many of the Montana-born author's other characters, the Duffs are a tough, hardbitten bunch of Scots — "the damndest bunch to try to figure out. Tear into each other

depend on the Fort Peck project, the Duffs include a range of personalities holding wildly differing opinions about the dam. Hugh Duff, the family patriarch, hates the dam for displacing him from his farm and making him dependent on what he considers make-work government construction work.

Son Owen, however, sees the dam as an opportunity to prove himself as an engineer, and he ends up in charge of the entire project. Brothers Neil and Bruce also make their living by working on the dam or trucking supplies to it, "bucking the sun" by driving from sunrise to sunset to get all the work done. And when Hugh's brother, Darius, shows up from Scotland, he adds yet another wrinkle to

the treatment of individuals can suffer: Bruce, Neil and their wives often seem interchangeable.

Yet Doig's approach works remarkably well at key points, especially the surprising ending, where he registers catastrophic events through the consciousness of a number of characters. At these times, "Bucking the Sun" fulfills its large ambition, powerfully rendering life and death in one family, and through them the people and places of the American West in the 1930s.

Seattle writer Nicholas O'Connell is currently working on a history of Northwest literature.

SPOTLIGHT

'Blake' places poet as radical dissenter

"Blake: A Biography"
by Peter Ackroyd
Knopf, \$35

BY MICHAEL DIBDIN
Special to the Seattle Times

Two difficulties face any biographer of William Blake. The first is that despite having recently been the object of a vigorous academic cottage industry, the work of the British poet, painter and printmaker (1757-1827) remains relatively unknown. Many people will have read "Tyger, Tyger" in school, while others may own a framed copy of one of Blake's more famous engravings.

But the core of his work — the so-called "prophetic books," notably "Jerusalem" — is extremely complex, obscure and largely unread. Hence the academic interest.

The second problem is the raw material itself. For many readers, biography has become a surrogate form of fiction: If a diet of fat-free, self-regarding minimalism doesn't work, get a life — even a life like Blake's.

But although Blake lived with an almost terrifying intensity, it was not of this world. His intellect ranged time and space like a spiritual Captain Kirk, yet he never traveled further than 70 miles from London; he conversed on familiar terms with

Jesus Christ, Michelangelo, Socrates and various angels, but knew almost no notable contemporaries; and his work is filled with apocalyptic catastrophes and cataclysms, but with the rather farcical exception of his arrest for sedition, he led an industrious and uneventful life, happily married, poor but not impoverished.

Peter Ackroyd, the well-known British novelist ("Hawksmoor," "Chatterton"), was criticized in his earlier biography of Dickens for personal cameo appearances and other intrusive fictional devices. His "Blake" is much more traditional, combining his powers of imaginative empathy with exhaustive scholarship to provide us a sympathetic portrait of the man, his work and his age — especially Blake's London, at once a historical metropolis and the City of God.

The biography also places the poet firmly in his social and political context as a radical republican dissenter who, like many of his contemporaries, supported the American revolutionaries and envied them the luxury of having the Atlantic Ocean between them and the hated Hanoverians.

Blake's artistic works — such as "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," "The Book of Urizen" and "Jerusalem" — were conceived not as text-with-illustrations but as organic

wholes in which both elements played an equal role. Each copy was hand-colored and therefore unique. Ackroyd is extremely adept at demonstrating how this concept functions, and reproductions of the art work are included.

Blake is not only a difficult writer, but he could be a difficult man: proud, stubborn, resentful, dogmatic, suspicious. But he was loved by his wife



and a circle of faithful friends and patrons, and he has overcome his initial obscurity to attract an ever-growing readership.

William Blake would probably have regarded any biographer with the contempt he reserved of all those who take the material world at face value. But, like any writer, he wanted to be read, and the ultimate effect of Peter Ackroyd's fine book is to send the reader eagerly back to the original material.

Michael Dibdin, a British-born mystery writer living in Seattle, is the author of "Dark Specter," a novel published this spring by Pantheon.



BESTSELLERS

Current national bestsellers, as reported by Publishers Weekly.

Hardcover fiction

- "How Stella Got Her Groove Back"
Terry McMillan
- "The Tenth Insight"
James Redfield
- "Moonlight Becomes You"
Mary Higgins Clark
- "Malice"
Danielle Steele
- "The Celestine Prophecy"
James Redfield
- "Neanderthal"
John Darnton
- "Sudden Prey"
John Sandford
- "Primary Colors"
Anonymous
- "I Was Amelia Earhart"
Jane Mendelsohn
- "The Horse Whisperer"
Nicholas Evans

Hardcover nonfiction

- "Bad As I Wanna Be"
Dennis Rodman with Tim Keown
- "Simple Abundance"
Sarah Ban Breathnach
- "In Contempt"
Christopher A. Darden with Jess Walter
- "Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus"
John Gray
- "The Dilbert Principle"
Scott Adams
- "The Zone"
Barry Sears and Bill Lawren
- "The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success"
Deepak Chopra

- "Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West"
Stephen E. Ambrose
- "Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil"
John Berendt
- "Rush Limbaugh Is a Big Fat Idiot and Other Observations"
Al Franken

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On the local scene

Current bestsellers at Queen Anne Avenue Books, 1629 Queen Anne Ave. N., a small independent bookstore serving the community atop Queen Anne Hill.

Hardcover

- "The Runaway Jury"
John Grisham
- "Hotel Paradise"
Martha Grimes
- "Simple Abundance"
Sarah Ban Breathnach
- "Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West"
Stephen E. Ambrose

- "Bucking the Sun"
Ivan Doig

Paperback

- "Ladder of Years"
Anne Tyler
- "Independence Day"
Richard Ford
- "The Liar's Club"
Mary Karr
- "The Information"
Martin Amis
- "Paula"
Isabel Allende

'May Out West' Proves Our Claim to Swenson

May Out West

By May Swenson;
Utah State University Press; \$15.95

BY SUSAN ELIZABETH HOWE

SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

Utahns claim May Swenson as one of the state's most important literary figures, despite the fact that she left Utah soon after graduating from Utah State University and lived the rest of her life on the East Coast.

The new volume of poems *May Out West* is evidence that our claim to Swenson is legitimate. The poems of this fine collection, all of which in one way or another explore Western landscapes and people, offer proof of Swenson's lifelong attachment to and affection for her old home.

In "Cumuli," she wonders how Blake or Shakespeare would have responded to a Utah sky and then says,

*This Western field under the summer noon
with sibilant lucerne sown
columned with poplars is my Parthenon.*

In fact, Swenson used Western subjects in poetry throughout her career. An interesting feature of *May Out West* is its Index of Dates, which indicates when, and in most cases where, each poem was composed. The dates of the poems range from the 1930s ("Goodnight," "A Day Is Laid By") to the last spring of Swenson's life, 1989 ("Night Visits With the Family II"). Although Swenson herself came only for brief visits, her poetry often returned home.

The poems in the collection also show a broad range in Western geography. "Haymaking" was begun as Swenson drove across Canada, en route from Utah to New York. "Polygamous bulls guarding their families" and "honey-

brown calves trotting head-to-hip by their mothers" are the subject of "Bison Crossing Near Mt. Rushmore." "The North Rim" traces a journey from Zion National Park to the Grand Canyon, and "Saguars Above Tucson" imagines those giant Arizona cacti as "fuzzy and huggable . . . Prickly person[s]." Reaching the West Coast, "Morning at Point Dune" is set on a California beach.

Among these poems are scattered 18 set specifically in Utah. Swenson's poems are noted for their precise observation and exact detail, and it is a pleasure to read images that give our own country and culture imaginative intensity. In "Above Bear Lake," the reader joins Swenson in a hike along the rim trail, seeing "Greeny white poles of aspen," smelling the "bloom of sage" crushed under boot, and hearing "Olive-sided Flycatcher . . . fierce-whistle, 'Whip! Whip three bears! Whip, whip three bears!'"

"Memory of the Future? Prophecy of the Past?" describes the Mormon Tabernacle as "An edifice of/hollow wood" and the pipes of the organ as "thick pillars hatted black,/their heads of puffed charcoal or caps/of soot." The music of the Tabernacle Choir becomes "Broad-striped/skywide harmonies" and "Phalanxes/of rainbows, transparent tender colors" that "bloom on the ear's horizon." There is a poem about the demolition by explosion of the old Hotel Newhouse in Salt Lake City ("Summerfall") and another about the ceremony at Utah State at which Swenson was awarded an honorary doctorate ("My Name Was Called").

Many of the Utah poems are memory poems, often of Swenson's childhood. "The Centaur," one of her best-loved and most-anthologized poems, is included, but so are several previously uncollected poems about her child-



Salt Lake Tribune archives

The poems in "May Out West," by the late May Swenson, reflect a wide range of Western geography, with 18 set in Utah.

hood. She writes of her first memory, before she could walk, in "Memory of the Future? Prophecy of the Past?" when she sat on the floor looking at a cloth book with pictures of animals. "There is a warmth around me/I am not alone./The legs of my parents encase me where they sit/together on a couch behind me."

In "Something Goes By," Swenson remembers "Pushing a stick, with a wooden wheel at the end," a toy made for her by her father. This toy also appears in the never-before-published "The Seed of My Father," a wonderful poem about the deep bond between Swenson and her father, who, the poem indicates, loved his daughter with a godlike love. "His breath he gave me, he gave me night and day. His universe is in

me fashioned from his clay."

Though many of the poems come from other collections, two have never before been published, and six others have not previously appeared in a Swenson book. And these are important poems, some of Swenson's most accomplished work. Furthermore, these poems have never before been brought together to show a picture of how rooted Swenson was in the West, how its landscapes touched her imagination, and how her family was a sustaining center in her life. *May Out West* is a collection no Utah poetry reader should miss.

Susan Elizabeth Howe is a professor of English at Brigham Young University.

Doig Stays Ahead of the Pack With 'Bucking the Sun'

Bucking the Sun

By Ivan Doig; Simon and Schuster; \$23

Bucking The Sun is a glorious piece of writing. Ivan Doig shows no signs of fading. It is another step forward for a novelist already yards ahead of the pack.

The novel is a sweeping story of an ill-fated family and its involvement in one of the most complex engineering feats in U.S. history, the construction of the Fort Peck Dam in Montana in the 1930s. The family, named Duff (think rough), is the heart and

soul of the story. Its longing and despair, tinged with hope, drives the emotional narrative.

Doig wastes no time engrossing the reader in the story. By page 13, the overriding mystery of the novel is set in place. Two members of the 10-strong Duff clan are found together, naked and dead, in a submerged truck.

"Married, you bet," the sheriff investigating the deaths is told. "Only not to each other."

Next, the novel flashes back to five years earlier without divulging the identities of

the dead. You'll fly through the next 400 pages wondering which Duffs were the unlucky ones.

The novel is immensely intricate, yet it easily carries the reader through the story. Doig's loving portrayals of the Duff family members are entrancing, even though few of the Duffs are lovable.

Even the mundane comes alive in *Bucking The Sun*. Never really cared about how an earthen dam was constructed? Neither did I. But Doig made me want to know.

— Scott Coy Lommers
Gannett News Service

BOOKS

Epic Story Pushes Envelope

Bucking the Sun

By Ivan Doig

(Simon & Schuster, \$23)

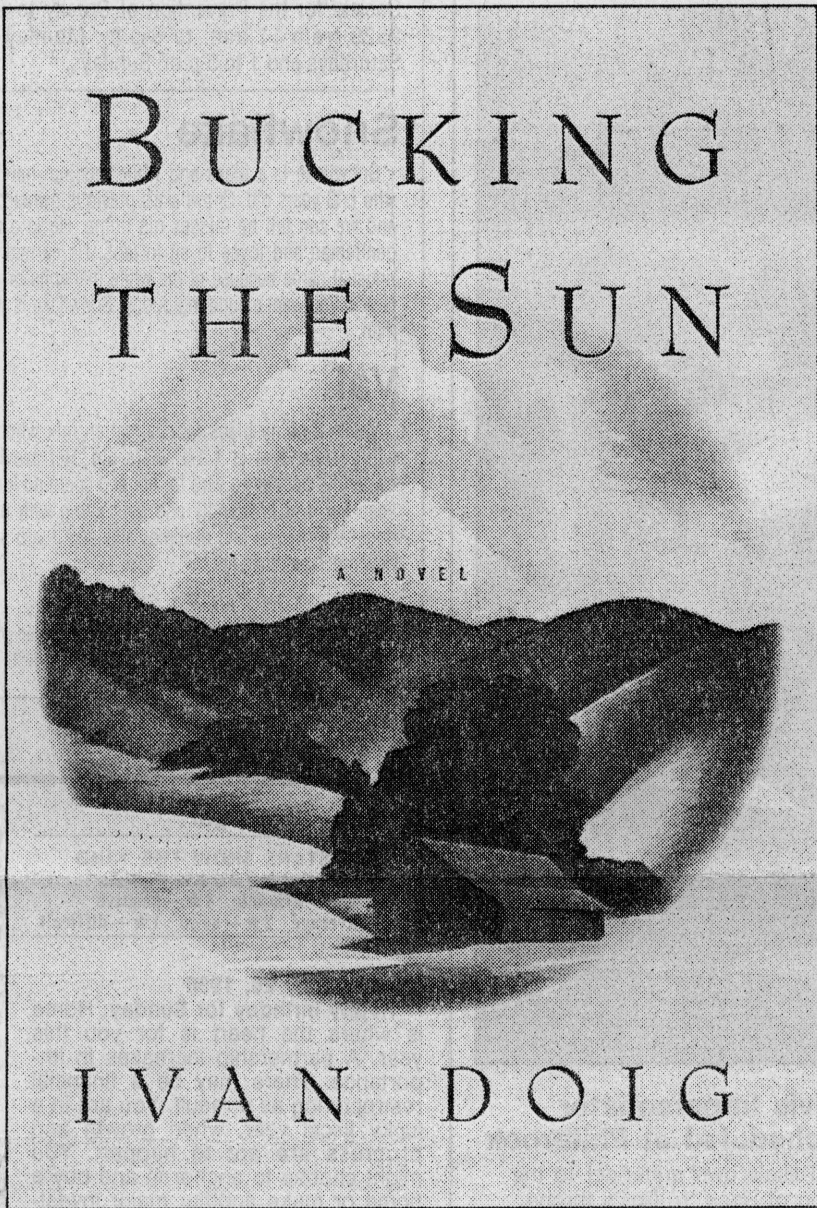
Ivan Doig, in four previous novels and three works of nonfiction, has chosen Montana as his primary setting.

"Bucking the Sun" is no different. Set amid the Fort Peck Dam project (the WPA project to dam the Missouri River in northeast Montana during the 1930s), the novel focuses on the Duff family: patriarch Hugh and his wife, Meg, eldest son, Owen, and fraternal twins, Neil and Bruce, and as the story progresses, wives and other relatives.

Hugh and Meg had come from Scotland around the turn of the century with 2-year-old Owen. They had been farming in Montana ever since, fighting grasshoppers and drought on good bottom land, but their land was destined to be flooded by the new dam. Owen is head engineer, the "fillmaster" for the earthen dam project. His position of authority ensures that all the Duffs will be on the dam payroll, but does not always make for the most harmonious family relations.

The author details the springing to life of a dozen slapdash communities which arise around the dam as work progresses, home to around 10,000 people dependent, in one way or another, upon the now steady paychecks issued from Uncle Sam, courtesy of FDR and the WPA.

And each community has its full allotment of bars, saloons and other places where, with pockets bulging on payday, men tend to congregate to spend their money. The main focus throughout the story is the Duff family, all even-



tually married, including Darius, Hugh's brother from Scotland, who found it expedient to be in America after a labor incident during a strike in Scotland.

The plot device the author uses to trigger the characters' actions is a double murder, revealed in the first chapter, of a Duff man and a Duff wife, neither married to the other. The identity of these two characters is not revealed until the final chapter, and is really anticlimactic. The driving force in this book is the story itself.

The author sets himself a daunting task: following 10 or more distinct characters through five years of work on vast scales, described at times in excruciating detail, and making everything stay interesting and come together at the end in a satisfying manner.

With few exceptions, Doig succeeds handily. The exceptions are primarily in the area of differentiating between and among the various Duff wives, and the use of too technical engineering terms when describing the details of dam engineering; however, I'm sure any engineers in the reading audience probably would not agree on that point.

"Bucking the Sun" is a story of epic proportions, set in a geography with a natural grandeur, about a big family that lives life with grand gestures and great travail. Each of the Duffs is in some way "bucking the sun" — pushing on against the glare of sunrise or sunset — which, like life, is at the same time both dangerous and glorious.

Gary Himes

Himes is a Tulsa businessman and owner of Books, Inc.

Ivan Doig Writes a Note to the Readers

"When Charlotte Bronte lifted her pen from 'Jane Eyre' and bequeathed us that most intriguing of plot summaries — 'Reader, I married him' — she also was saying what writers always must do to the eyes on our pages: 'Reader, my story is flirting with you; please love it back.' Where, though, do these suitors in their printed jackets and composed pages come from? With 'Bucking the Sun' my list of literary 'begats' has reached eight books, and a biographical browsing of me customarily brings up such phrases as these:



Doig

Ivan Doig was born in White Sulphur Springs, Mont., in 1939 ... grew up along the Rocky Mountain Front where much of his writing takes place ... first book, the highly acclaimed memoir 'This House of Sky,' was a finalist for the National Book Award ... former ranch hand, newspaperman, and magazine editor, Doig is a graduate of Northwestern University where he re-

SIGNINGS

Ivan Doig will be signing copies of his books from 7 to 9 p.m. Thursday at Novel Idea, 7103 S. Sheridan Road.

ceived bachelor's and master's degrees in journalism ... he also holds a Ph.D. in history from the University of Washington ... in 1989 the Western Literature Association honored him with its Distinguished Achievement Award for his body of work ... he lives in Seattle with his wife Carol, who teaches literature of the American West. ...

"Taking apart a career in such summary sentences always seems to me like dissecting a frog — some of the life inevitably goes out of it — and so I think the more pertinent Ivan Doig for you, Reader, is the red-headed only child, son of ranch hand Charlie Doig and ranch cook Berneta Ringer Doig (who died of her lifelong asthma on my sixth birthday), who in his junior year of high school (Valier, Montana; my class of 1957 had 21 members) made up his mind to be a writer of some kind.

"At the time, my motivation

seemed to be simply to go away to college and break out of a not very promising ranchwork future in Montana. Jobs in journalism followed — as an editorial writer in Decatur, Ill., (where I truly grasped Keats' meaning of 'amid the alien corn') and as assistant editor of 'The Rotarian' magazine in Evanston. Then, starved as we were for mountains and ocean, Carol and I left the Chicago area in 1966 and came to Seattle, with the notion that I would get a Ph.D. in history as background to bring to journalism teaching.

"What graduate school taught me, though, was that I didn't want to be on a university faculty. I was continuing to free-lance magazine articles during grad school and I also began, to my surprise, writing poetry, which I had never even thought of attempting before.

"My eight or nine published poems showed me that I lacked a poet's final skill, the one Yeats called closing a poem with the click of a well-made box. But still wanting to work at stretching the craft of writing toward the areas where it mysteriously starts to be art, I began working on what Norman Maclean has called the poetry under the prose — a lyrical language, with what I call a poetry of the vernacular in how my

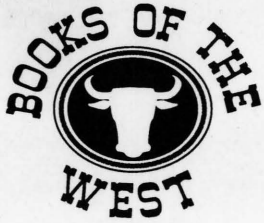
characters speak on the page. (In 'Bucking the Sun,' for instance, a character thinks to himself: 'The weight of life is what holds us to this world, eh?') One of my diary entries, midway through the half dozen years of effort on 'This House of Sky,' shows me trying 'to write it all as highly charged as poetry.' Twenty years and these eight books later, that's still my intention.

"One last word about the setting of my work, the West. I don't think of myself as a 'Western' writer. To me language — the substance on the page, that poetry under the prose — is the ultimate 'region,' the true home, for a writer. Specific geographies, but galaxies of imaginative expression — we've seen them both exist in William Faulkner's postage stamp-size Yoknapatawpha County, and in Gabriel Garcia Marquez's nowhere village of Macondo dreaming in its hundred years of solitude.

If I have any creed that I wish you as readers, necessary accomplices in this flirtatious ceremony of writing and reading, will take with you from my pages, it'd be this belief of mine that writers of caliber can ground their work in specific land and lingo and yet be writing of that larger country: life."

p.s. Passed along to Victoria the quote from the U. of Oregon bookstore manager in her thank-you note for my reading/signing in Eugene: "We've sold a lot of your books. When I reported the sales to the woman at the New York Times, she said, 'That guy sure gets around.'"

Quon



6-1-96

Ivan: I hope the enclosed review-interview helps move your novel off shelves all over the country, as well as the west.

Best regards,

Cody Bell

BOOKS OF THE WEST

(syndicated column in western & southwestern
dailies and weeklies)

Cody Bell

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Cascade, CO 80809

(719) 684-8193

Bucking the Sun

By Ivan Doig

409 pp. New York:

Simon & Schuster. \$23

Montana native Ivan Doig's superb fifth novel moves him to the front ranks of American fiction writers.

A master of non-fiction (This House of Sky, Winter Brothers, Heart Earth) dealing with his family's hardscrabble western experience, Doig has explored broad historical themes in his four previous novels (The Sea Runners, English Creek, Dancing at the Rascal Fair, and Ride With Me, Mariah Montana.)

Bucking the Sun, his most ambitious work yet, dramatizes the

building of the vast earthfill dam at Fort Peck, Montana, in the late 1930's. The Duff clan, Scottish immigrants forced off their land to make way for the dam, play a key role in building it. Owen Duff, the oldest son and the dam project's chief engineer, oversees nine other Duffs and a total workforce of thousands.

Owen's father Hugh drinks too much. Hugh's wife Meg has eyes for his older brother Darius, whose leftist politics threaten the social order and the dam itself. The younger brothers, Bruce, a river diver, and his twin, Neil, marry lively women--one of whom figures in the mystery that energizes the novel's dark heart.

Doig begins his story in 1938, when a truck pulled from the dam site reveals the naked bodies of a man and a woman. Both are Duffs, both are married, but not to each other. This dramatic hook propels Doig's muscular narrative forward.

The identification of the bodies 400 pages later ends a saga that mines the elements of fine historical fiction: strong narrative, compelling characters, crackling dialogue, rich sense of place, and dramatic action set against sweeping social change.

As always, Doig's characters interest us by taking risks. They commit themselves energetically to work, marriage, love affairs, business ventures, even politics. They use themselves up in causes larger, and sometimes smaller, than themselves. With them we live through an epic period in western history.

Bucking the Sun is a big novel expertly plotted in brief dramatic scenes, few longer than a page or two. The deceptively

complex structure draws the reader in. Doig handles historical subjects as well as any American living novelist. And he dares to explore political themes most writers avoid.

In person, Ivan Doig resembles one of the leathery characters he might have created for his fiction. A slender man with piercing eyes set in a weathered face, his hair and full beard have been silvered by middle age. He has a surprisingly professional voice, deep and measured in tone, like the broadcast journalist he studied to be at Northwestern University.

I visited with him during his recent book promotion tour to Colorado. We discussed the creation of *Bucking the Sun* and his growing body of work, as well as plans for his next book. The following excerpts were taken from our discussion:

Q. How do you decide whether a project will be fiction or nonfiction?

Doig: I've done it contrary to the way writers generally do. The more family-oriented the book, I make that non-fiction rather than a fictionalized version of the family. I've seen my five novels as ways to explore big historical topics.

Q. Which element--character, plot, theme--got you going?

Doig: I started by securing the stories of Fort Peck from people who had been there. It was obvious the Fort Peck project gave many people their launch in life. Growing up in Montana,

I'd known the dam was famous at that time. It starred on the first cover of Life magazine in November, 1936. That issue had Margaret Bourke White's famous cover photo-essay.

I guess you'd say the life-changing aspects of it tugged me. Those of us in the west, I think, are always interested in these big projects that come along and transform a whole area. So I thought: let me invent some people, and put them in the middle of this, and let the plot start cooking.

Q. How extensively did you plot the action before starting?

Doig: I had long wanted to use that opening scene, where a couple of people in a family--in-laws--would be found together in compromising circumstances. I tend to use drownings because I very nearly drowned once myself, as I've told near the end of This House of Sky. It's something I've hung onto as a useful fear for a writer to exploit. What would it do to a family to have two of its members revealed this way--in fatal, compromising circumstances. Then I invented the little sheriff who starts tracking this down, and that begins the loop back towards the end of the book.

Q. The sheriff, described early as a "fierce doll of a man," comes across very powerfully in the book. Where did you get him?

Doig: He and the taxi dancer, Proxy Shannon, are actually my two favorite characters. The sheriff's delicately-boned build I

took from a rancher I worked for before I went off to college. A tough little rancher, way up by the Canadian border. I drove a truck for him. His build is at odds with his surroundings, and yet he's tough enough to persevere.

Q. Which elements of this novel gave you the most trouble?

Doig: That's a great question. Well, keeping it moving, I guess. I was aware that I had my largest cast of characters ever: ten members of the Duff family and the little sheriff. And, of course, the dam. I had to keep reminding myself that the book was not about the dam. I had to learn enough about dam building to know what to leave out. The thing that kind of crept up on me, that I added in the final go-through, was the Scottish politics: Darius Duff coming over with his leftist politics.

Q. You've moved recently from Montana to Seattle. Do you plan to write about Seattle and the Pacific Northwest?

Doig: Yes, I do. I've signed a contract for the next book with Simon and Schuster. I intend for this one to take place partly in Seattle. It'll have some Alaskan settings--probably in connection with the Exxon-Valdez oil spill.

Q. Who were your earliest literary influences--and how did the idea of becoming a writer emerge in your mind?

Doig: As to literary influences, it was a lot of the usual

cosmic suspects: Faulkner, Isak Dinesen, and Turgenev, when I was in college. Then George Orwell and, ultimately, Joseph Conrad, who I came to in my thirties. I like language maximalists, writers who really use the language.

I got into writing, as I'd guess you might have, through journalism. I went off to college at Northwestern University to become a broadcast journalist--another Edward R. Murrow. I eventually took a job as an editorial writer for a newspaper. Then I did free-lance writing for magazines before getting into writing books full-time.

Q. How did you research the Great Depression, and how much do you rely on historical materials in creating your fiction?

Doig: The depression and World War II had frozen ranch life and small town life pretty much into place by the time I came along. We were still putting up hay with horses out there in the late 1940's. The town I was born in and went to grade school in was pretty much intact. The interstate road system had not hit the country yet. I started grade school in the autumn of 1945. The next half-dozen years things were pretty much done the way they had been since the depression and war years. That's the kind of stuff that stays between a person's ears.

On the historical research: the Montana Historical Society has a wonderful lode of stuff. This was the sixth time I've used their materials for a book. The Montana State University Library

in Bozeman--the Special Collections there--have the Federal Writer's Project files from the 1930's. That's where people were hired and sent out to interview their neighbors about how they did things. How do you run a cattle branding, for example.

For Bucking the Sun specifically, the records of the dam were still at the dam, in the basement of the lake manager's office. I found an absolutely priceless description of what a diver wore on the Missouri River, which Bruce Duff becomes in the novel. So the historical research and photos from the 1930's were a terrific treasure chest for me.

Q. You dedicate Bucking the Sun to six "novelists who deliver the eloquence of the edge of the world rather than stammers from the psychiatrist's bin." What did you mean by that?

Doig: Those novelists, with one exception, are all out of the old British Empire. I've been interested for probably ten or a dozen years in writers operating from a post-colonial experience, who are dealing with the problems of a society trying to come to terms with itself. The writers I cite are not terminally introspective--they aren't dwelling on their own problems so much as looking at how figures in their societies try to cope. And they're all expert handlers of language, jugglers of the language. That's the kind of stuff I like.

Q. The Duff family is one of the most memorable in recent

American fiction. Which family member came to you first--or did you have them all in mind before starting?

Doig: No, I had to make them up as I went along. I kind of knew the number I wanted. It seemed that about ten people, five couples, would give me a lot of possible combinations but not too many. Owen Duff was on my mind first, because I had to handle the dam somehow. Then, pretty quickly, I was skipping over to Darius and Proxy, both of whom I saw as rich, eccentric ways to give readers unexpected views of the period and of the dam.

Q. What's your vision of western writing as it is emerging at the end of the twentieth century?

Doig: Western writing is thriving. There's a historian at the University of Oregon, Maxwell Brown, who thinks there's a rich grassroots autobiographical movement in the west. He thinks that's characterizing western writing. He cites me, Bill Kittredge's *Hole in the Sky*, Terry Tempest Williams's *Refuge*, Mary Clairman Blue's *Balsam Root*, Theresa Jordan's *Riding the White Horse Home*, and others. All of us at an age where we turn to memoir or autobiography to tell our stories here in the west.

OregonLife

3 *Curious George is alive and well after six decades of simian misadventures /* **Books**

4 *An azalea festival and a sand castle contest are among holiday events on the Oregon Coast /* **Travel**

GUARDLine
485-2000

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■ Best-selling
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SUNDAY, MAY 19, 1996

The Register-Guard

SECTION F

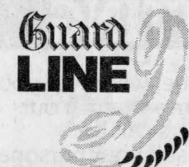
Who's Who won't touch Doig's cast of people

By FARIS CASSELL
For The Register-Guard

IVAN DOIG'S new novel, "Bucking the Sun," an epic of the New Deal era in Montana, is bursting with the kind of people he most admires.

The 10 lead characters are the Duff clan: sweaty, sooty, hardscrabble folks — cooks, farmers, truck drivers, beauticians and even prostitutes. You won't find them in a "Who's Who."

This is the sprawling, boisterous story of a family displaced from their grubstake farm on the Missouri River bottomland by construction of the Fort Peck Dam. The Duffs move to the boom town construction site where they each find work.

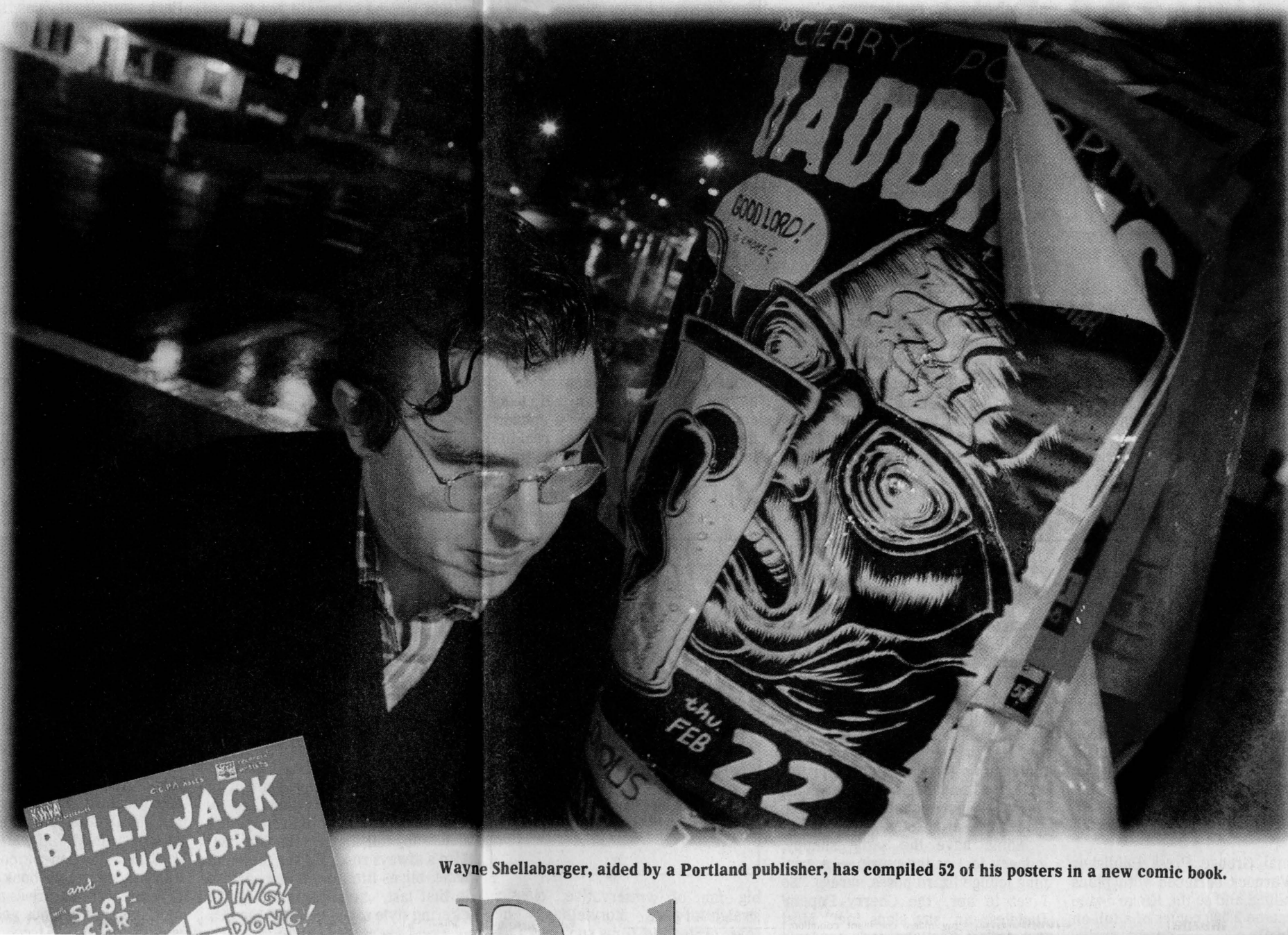


485-2000

To hear Ivan Doig reading from "Bucking the Sun," call GuardLine and enter 2665.

To "buck the sun" is to drive head-on into its rays, pushing against its power. This is a "pushful" group, rowdy and fiercely loyal.

Doig's literary career has focused on giving a voice to these



Wayne Shellabarger, aided by a Portland publisher, has compiled 52 of his posters in a new comic book.

stories of their day to day heroism, love and tragedies in an economic system that is often beyond their control.

They are, in a sense, Doig's extended family. "My family appears in my books only in my attitudes," Doig says, but these are "my people."

"These are the people who have the background I'm from, people like my parents, with the same levels of work and craftsmanship that I identify with. They are ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances."

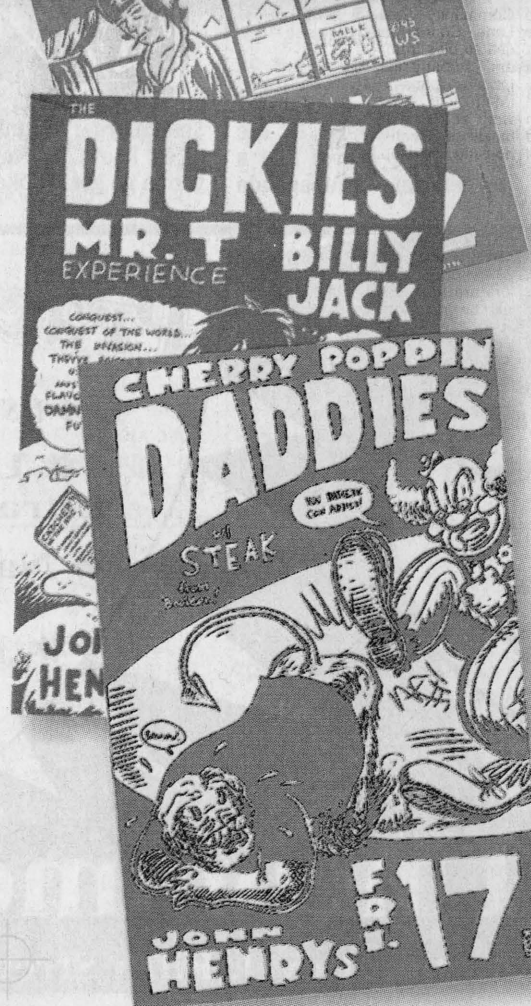
Doig grew up in Montana, arguably America's most impressive and desolate region. Winter storms there can be so fierce that ranchers and shepherders sometimes lose their entire year's profits overnight. It's not a place that caters to the weak.

Doig grew up in White Sulphur Springs, a small town in the shadow of the Rockies several hundred miles west of the Fort Peck Dam. He was an only child, born in 1939. His father was a rodeo rider, ranch hand and shepherd. His mother died of asthma on Doig's sixth birthday.

His grandmother ultimately came to live with them, helping to raise Doig and finding work on the ranches.

"It was an American nomadic life," Doig said during a recent interview. The family moved with

Turn to DOIG, Page 2F



Poles apart

A new comic book celebrates Wayne Shellabarger's tacked-up, standout, double-taking poster art

ART APPRECIATION at 30 miles an hour? Try it. In the patchwork of posters on the average phone pole, Wayne Shellabarger's drawings stand out.

Drive by, and they all get their message across: "BUCKHORN — BILLY JACK — GOOD Times . . ."

But among cookie-cutter band fliers hot off the Mac, Shellabarger's bold hand-lettering has character. And the clever single-panel cartoons — dark, a little twisted, pop-culture savvy — demand closer attention.

Easter Island statues tumble from a UFO.

A gleeful farmer with the two-headed goat, primed to win best of show at the 4H Fair.

A creature with Richard Nixon's head on a chicken's body stalks a child: "I'm alive again, and I need your help, Timmy!"

Those who've pulled down his posters for posterity, decoration or sheer humor value now can enjoy them without staple holes and rips. With a young Portland publisher, the 27-year-old cartoonist has compiled 52 of his posters in an 8½- by 12-inch comic book, titled "I'm Totally Helpless" (Primal Groove).

A video store clerk these days, Shellabarger grew up in Ashland and Hood River, moving to Eugene to study art at the University of Oregon. His art entered the phone pole milieu with fliers of what he calls "ridiculous, inflammatory, apocalyptic messages, just to be funny."

Local band the Cherry Poppin' Daddies called the artist to draw their posters five years ago, and he's been doing it part time ever since.

This includes working knowledge of a staple gun.

"I'm the well-rounded poster guy, the one-stop poster shopping place," he says, laughing. For the record, Shellabarger packs a Stanley and prefers Arrow ⅝-inch staples.

Though his most prominent work graces phone poles, Shellabarger cartooned for the biweekly music magazine The Rocket for a year, and did a page for the Top Shelf comics winter '96 anthology.

But he enjoys the poster format. "The wonderful thing is that you don't need a gallery," he says. "Anyone

Turn to POSTERS, Page 2F

BY ELAINE BEEBE PHOTO BY PAUL CARTER The Register-Guard



TOM PENIX/The Register-Guard

Did a vacation turn into a horror story worthy of Stephen King? Well, tell The Register-Guard.

Vacation horror stories — we want the gory details

■ **Memories:** We're looking for true stories that are funny after the disaster is finally over.

WE'RE LOOKING for true horror stories that started out as family vacations.

Yep, now that summer vacation is almost upon us, it's time to dredge out all those musty memories that never made the photo album.

When another Northwest newspaper did this a few years ago, the best (worst?) entry was from a camper who became stuck in an outhouse on a 100-degree day only to find that she had company: a wasps' nest.

Can you top that? Or how about Register-Guard reporter Joe Mosley's Baja trip last New Year's that involved Maalox, five mechanics, a tow truck, a U-Haul rental, a near-blizzard and the purchase of a 1986 Ford LTD that blew smoke?

Or any of columnist Don Bishoff's vacation stories.

We're not looking for the best and brightest — we want the worst and dimmest. We want rain, wind, lost reservations, food fights, flat

tires, boat motors that won't start and baggage sent to St. Paul on that trip-of-a-lifetime to Bermuda . . .

You get the idea. Vacations that are funny once they're over and the Visa bill has finally been paid and the stitches are out.

In 250 words or less — yes, we're looking for *succinct* vacation horror — tell us your nightmare.

Send to: The Register-Guard, P.O. Box 10188, Eugene, OR 97440-2188. Drop by: 975 High St. Fax to: (541) 683-7631. Or e-mail to: RG20Below@aol.com.

Deadline is May 31.

We'll publish the best of the bunch in Oregon Life in June.

Thanks.

Books

DOIG

Continued from Page 1F

the work, seeking jobs on the same ranch so the family could stay together.

"We raised sheep, too," Doig says. "We would do the work of raising the animals for their owners and then share in the profits, if there were any, like an American share-cropper family in the South.

"During the winter of my senior year, we made our living by baby-sitting — even my father, who had been a bronc rider, cowboy and a lot of other Western things.

"If we weren't poor, we could see it from where we were," Doig says. "It was always right in front of my face."

Young Doig labored along with the family, tending sheep, bucking hay and driving tractors and grain trucks. However, from an early age, he was a precocious student.

"There's quite a reverence for education in my father's Scottish background," he said. "He believed that I had a future and (that) I should get an education so I wouldn't have to live the way he had. The family agreed that my most important work was school. I always had my nose in a book."

Doig does not use the word "work" casually. Learning was the easy part of getting an education. Much of Doig's youth was spent on school buses, traveling 1½ hours each way to a small consolidated school in the north. Some years he boarded with families near the school.

Education of another sort came

from tagging along with his father to the local saloons. There, he says, he was treated as an "honorary adult" and could sit back and listen to the tales of ranching, weather and work.

Doig absorbed the language and lore of the West that would later become a trademark of his books.

But for the most part, he says, much of his youth was spent alone.

A commitment to leave the life he had grown up with was made at age 15. Guiding sheep blindly through a blizzard, he realized that there had to be a better way to make a living.

"I knew someone in the family needed to earn a regular wage."

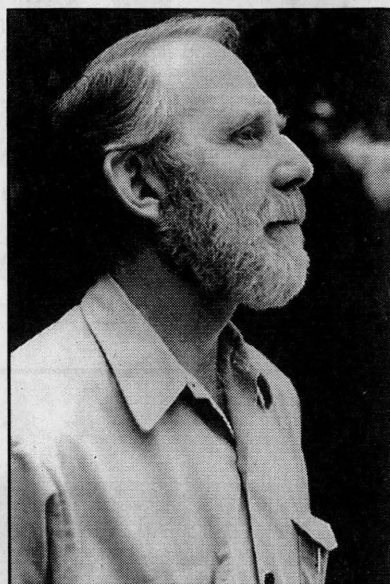
Worries about how to manage higher education were resolved when a teacher showed him how to apply for college scholarships. His way out of the ranching life became clear. He would go to college.

Doig earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in journalism from Northwestern University, finishing in 1962. He stayed in Illinois, working at newspapers and magazines.

A few years later, Doig and his wife, Carol, were drawn to the Western mountainous landscapes that they loved. They moved to Seattle, where he earned his doctorate in history from the University of Washington, thinking he would then teach.

By the time he finished in 1969, however, he had had enough of academia.

He worked as a magazine freelancer for several years before he decided to finish a manuscript that



Ivan Doig

New novel is a Montana epic

had moldered in a drawer for years. "This House of Sky," his groundbreaking memoir about his family and life in Montana, was published in 1976, a bold gamble by Harcourt Brace.

Most memoirs at that time featured only the lives of the rich and powerful, luminaries in science, politics or the arts. This book about the hardheaded Montanans who scraped out a life from an unforgiving landscape captured the imagination of an age disillusioned with their leadership and searching for a connection to the land. Here were real-life heroes struggling to survive in a

Ivan Doig to appear at the Hult

"Voices of Place: An Evening with Ivan Doig" will be presented at 7:30 p.m. Monday in the Soreng Theatre, Hult Center for the Performing Arts.

The reading and conversation will be a benefit for the Lane Arts Council. A book signing will follow in the lobby.

Admission is \$11.

For information, call 687-5000.

landscape of heroic proportions.

The book was a literary and popular success. It was a National Book Award finalist and sold well enough to give Doig the financial independence to work full time on his books.

Eight more books followed over the next 20 years: novels and memoirs. Set in Montana and the coastal Northwest, they all show the landscape looming in the lives of ordinary folks who are engaged in their daily struggle to earn a living.

During that time, Western writers were starting to develop a

unique voice and gaining stature with the lofty Eastern literati. University of Oregon Professor Richard Maxwell Brown identifies Doig as the first to write American "grass-roots biography."

Doig has said that the West offers writers a unique opportunity. "It's a big canvas with hard lives being lived against it." Montana began to usurp California as a symbol of the new West.

His new book tells "a story that people kept handing to me over the years," Doig says. "I'd be talking with people from Montana, and time and again I would hear the Fort Peck stories. It was such a big project, and so many people got their start in life from it, they remembered it vividly.

"Here was the biggest dam project in the world, hourly wages, boom towns with saloons, dance halls, movie houses, brothels and you name it. The first real sharp experiences in their lives happened at Fort Peck."

The questions rising from the Duff family's experience at Fort Peck have to do with the interplay of ordinary people struggling, as Doig's own family did, with forces, man-made and natural, that would always be beyond their control.

Doig presents no easy answers: "I want my stories to be complicated, as life is. We need to look at what's gained and what's lost."

Doig is known for his ability to tell a wonderful story, meticulously crafted and woven with historical

fact.

The research on this book was immense, he says. It included 200 color photos of the Missouri River country taken by his wife. And there's an entire file drawer in his study devoted just to facts about the dam.

He revised the opening scene nearly 50 times. "I didn't change it entirely, but I smoothed it and smoothed it and smoothed it. At times I thought it was going to kill me."

He says keeping up with the large cast of characters, many drawn from real people, also made the work especially demanding. Occasionally, they are too much even for Doig and seem to slip away.

But Doig is an eloquent storyteller, often poetic and inventive. In the end, we are pulled into the Duffs' lives as they themselves are swept along by the tumultuous currents of the times.

This has been his goal from the beginning. He recalls being upset when the Watergate conspirators wrote books about their experiences, but when Spiro Agnew received a fat contract, he was outraged.

"On that great day, I thought: Why should these guys have the right to trumpet out their version of history, when the people I came from don't get a chance? By God, I'm giving them that chance."

Faris Cassell, a Eugene writer, regularly reviews Northwest books for *The Register-Guard*.

POSTERS

Continued from Page 1F

can put up anything they want. It's a completely public arena."

The artist says he likes the containment of a single-panel cartoon as well: "They give an unexplained moment in somebody's life. You have to fill in all the blanks, what's happened up to this point, the aftermath."

Last year, Shellabarger noticed that he'd amassed quite a body of these single-panel posters, so he thought about self-producing an anthology: "A la Kinko's, and not expect to make any money off it," he says.

Primal Groove Press Publisher Brett Warnock surfaced with plans and funding, and so the Kinko'd-zine idea became 2,000 copies of a full-on comic book.

posters down from the poles," he confesses.

"He's got a great sense of natural balance and design; it was the balance that first really turned me on," Warnock says. "Plus, the humor was really crisp."

Warnock says he hopes to publish a full-length comic of Shellabarger's in the future.

Most of the book's posters promote shows for the Daddies: in Eugene, Portland, Seattle, San Francisco and the occasional out-of-the-way place like Portchester, N.Y.

Some have the same snappy, loungey feel as the music — a grinning lounge lizard poses, shrugs, "So I sez to her, 'the Cherry Poppin' Daddies,' an' she slaps me!" Most just reflect Shellabarger's sardonic

Release party is Thursday

The "I'm Totally Helpless" release party will feature a gallery-style hanging and sale of Shellabarger's posters and music by the Cherry Poppin' Daddies.

It happens Thursday, 9 p.m., at John Henry's, 136 E. 11th Ave.

big fan of conservative, classic, straightforward storytelling," he says, preferring films such as "Citi-

secret life of clowns. Turn-of-the-century technophobia. "Four posters involved sexual relations with baked goods," he muses, "but I didn't find that out till later."

When it comes to music poster artists, he'd take Raymond Pettibon over Frank Kozik. Definitely not '60s Fillmore posters, with their swirly lettering: "Too hard to read," he says.

Readability is a key element in designing the posters, which take 70-90 minutes to complete, from pencil sketch to full India ink. The top third's always reserved for the band name, big as life for passing cars: "I do that last," he says, tailoring the lettering style to the mood of the art.

poster. O.J. Simpson's Faustian fella-tio of the Devil. A naked, fairly hairy rear view of a frolicking policeman, aping the convention where New York's Finest ran amok.

"His sense of humor is a lot like mine, it's really bawdy in a lot of ways, it's dry and dark," says Daddies frontman Steve Perry, who wrote the forward to the book. "There are a lot of guys who do flashy graphic type stuff, but not the humor and insight." And a sly sense of caricature, as figures on posters for the Daddies and the Guardians of American Morality attest.

The collection of posters reads like a good comic book. But somehow, the work surprises and delights more when it catches you off-guard, walking down the street

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work, Warnock lived in Eugene from 1985 to 1994. "For the last five years, I've been tearing Wayne's

"They really have nothing to do with the Daddies' music," says the cartoonist, who's done posters for other local bands and for the national tour stops of acts such as Frank Black, Urge Overkill and the Dickies.

"I'm a fan of film noir, and I'm a

er big influence: the directness of anonymous World War I and II German and Russian proletariat propaganda posters.

Recurring themes? The artist only notices them in retrospect, but they're there. "Planet of the Apes" imagery. Sinister glimpses into the

acy of his craft. It's just that, and it probably benefits from that because I don't overthink them," he says. "They can literally be out on the poles within a few hours."

Topical posters surface in the book: Lorena Bobbitt drawn like a Russian proletariat propaganda

catch a wonderfully warped detail, like the box of "Hello Kitty Syringes" in a trash can.

Those details are for pedestrians, as large lettering is for motorists. Shellabarger mimics a passer-by: "You know, 'Ha ha ha.' Then, 'I'm gonna go get a Coke.'"

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What's the Dumbest Crime This Week? GuardLine
485-2000, #4391

Best Sellers

The overall best-selling books last week, according to USA Today:

1. **The Green Mile, Part 2: The Mouse on the Mile** by Stephen King

2. **How Stella Got Her Groove Back** by Terry McMillan

3. **The Tenth Insight** by James Redfield

4. **Bad as I Wanna Be** by Dennis Rodman with Tim Keown

5. **The Green Mile, Part 1: The Two Dead Girls** by Stephen King

6. **Simple Abundance** by Sarah Ban Breathnach

7. **Moonlight Becomes You** by Mary Higgins Clark

8. **The Beast From the East** by R.L. Stine

9. **Let Me Call You Sweetheart** by Mary Higgins Clark

10. **A 3rd Serving of Chicken Soup for the Soul** by Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen

Authors plan readings

BOOK NOTES

NATURE WRITER David Quammen, author of "The Song of the Dodo," will read from his works at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday in the Church Browsing Room, Knight Library, 1501 Kincaid St. Admission is free.

For information, call 346-3944.

READINGS AT POWELL'S City of Books in Portland will include Louis Masson, author of "Reflections: Essays on Place and Family," at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday; and Randall Sullivan, author of "The Price of Experience: Power, Mondy, Image and Murder in Los Angeles," 7:30 p.m. Thursday.

For information, call (503) 228-4651.

The Book Notes deadline is noon Monday for publication the following Sunday. Mail to Book Notes, Register-Guard, P.O. Box 10188, Eugene, Ore. 97440 or fax to (541) 683-7631.

GuardLine Hollywood Interviews:
485-2000 category 4370



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Library Journal
New York, NY

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LUCE PRESS CLIPPINGS

Doig, Ivan. *Bucking the Sun*.

S. & S. May 1996. 384p. ISBN 0-684-81171-5. \$23. F

Doig begins this saga with adultery and death, then moves backward to examine the causes. Just as the building of the

mammoth Fort Peck Dam transforms the Montana countryside, it radically alters the lives of its Depression-era inhabitants. In particular, members of the Duff clan abandon subsistence farming and move to the construction boomtowns. There a father, three brothers, and their wives confront the task of building the largest earthen dam in the world, brave the dangers of such labor, and battle among themselves. Doig has published memoirs of his Montana youth (National Book Award finalist *This House of Sky*, LJ 9/15/78) and a novel trilogy set in the same area. His latest novel continues this regional emphasis, carefully constructing a semidocumentary frame for an intense family drama. This richly detailed narrative offers comedy, passion, and adventure. Recommended for public libraries.—Albert E. Wilhelm, Tennessee Technological Univ., Cookeville

THE SUN MAY 5/1996

BOOKS

Ivan Doig's latest — dams, land, death

"Bucking the Sun," by Ivan Doig. Simon & Schuster. 412 pages. \$23.

By CHRIS KRIDLER
SUN STAFF

"Bucking the Sun" is named, aptly, with a phrase that means pressing on against the glare of sunset or sunrise, but in its stubborn, ambitious journey, it meanders a little too long.

By Ivan Doig — whose many books include "This House of Sky," a National Book Award finalist in 1978 — this latest novel is an old-fashioned American epic about one family's involvement in the building of the Fort Peck dam in Montana during the Depression. The story's sprawl is impressive, from family squabbles to

lovers to labors to wonders of engineering, but when it comes to the latter, there's too dam much: too much dam, not enough character.

The characters are an intriguing lot, at first. Members of the tough Duff family go to work on the dam when the government takes away their farm, which is to be flooded by the New Deal project. Hugh Duff is a stubborn old goat with a penchant for liquor, and his wife still bases her worth on her ancestors' glories in Scotland. Their sons are Owen, an engineer with a major role in the enormous task of stopping the Missouri River; the more down-to-earth Neil; and brash Bruce. They all end up with spirited wives, even Hugh's brother Darius, a Communist and, perhaps not so coincidentally in the

context of this red-white-and-blue tale, a bad lot who flees trouble in the Old Country.

The story opens with the local sheriff investigating the mysterious deaths of two of the Duffs, a naked man and woman who end up in a truck in the depths of the dammed waters. You have to wait a whole book to find out which two, and why, as the story goes back and forth in time to fill in the details — and fill in the river.

The book is tellingly dedicated "To novelists who deliver the eloquence of the edge of the world rather than stammers from the psychiatrist's bin." But more psychological insight would have made these characters more interesting and engaging. It also probably would have made the resolution of the death-in-the-truck mystery more plausible; as

it is, the motivations of the dead naked couple, as Doig explains them, are strained. Still, he deserves credit for the mystery-novel hook — although keeping the pair's identities a secret till the end is a thin point upon which to hang 400-odd pages, it's intriguing enough to make you want to know the outcome.

Although "Bucking the Sun" has vast scope, fascinating historical details, realistic characters (despite occasional clunky dialogue) and even some enthusiastic sex, the novel lacks passion. Sometimes it seems as mechanical a feat as the dam itself.

Chris Kridler is assistant arts and entertainment editor at The Sun. Her work has appeared in The Sun, the Miami Herald, Premiere, BOING BOING, Indie File, the Charlotte Observer and the Charlotte Poetry Review.

BOOK BRIEFS

The *Baltimore Sun* calls it, "A 'page-turner' in the best sense... Both madcap and genteel, Anne Tyler knows as well as anyone that 'human beings lead many lives.' Casually, delightfully, *Ladder of Years* will tell you just how we humans manage this trick."

BUCKING THE SUN

by Ivan Doig

Simon & Schuster, \$23

In *Bucking the Sun*, Doig takes on three generations of the paradoxical Duff clan, who have been pushed off their bottomland farm by the construction of the Fort Peck Dam, only to take relief work on the gigantic project. Hugh, the family patriarch, sees nothing good coming of the endeavor. To him, the dam is a pointless exercise in hubris that has destroyed everything he has worked for since his emigration from Scotland decades ago. But for Hugh's oldest son, Owen, the dam is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. A brilliant young engineer, "Goin' Owen" has staked his personal and professional future on the unprecedentedly vast earthen dam, although his socially ambitious wife, Charlene, wants a better career for him than "this pile of dirt."

Hugh's two younger sons, the fraternal twins Neil and Bruce, are as different in temperament as a Montana summer and winter. Yet both the reserved Neil and the reckless Bruce are

thrilled by the prospects of fat wages and pretty, high-spirited wives, which they acquire in short order. Neil's marriage to Charlene's younger sister, Rosellen, an aspiring writer, makes the family dynamics even more intricate. Meanwhile, Hugh's handsome wife, Meg looks on the doings of her tall, knobby men with love and irony, thoroughly glad of the chance of productive employment of the whole family, and occasionally wondering why she puts up with Hugh's terrible drinking and the distance he imposes between them.

Just before the dam is completed, two of the Duffs are found together naked and dead in a truck that has slid off the dam into the water behind it. "Married, you bet," the sheriff who investigates the deaths is told. "Only not to each other." As Ivan Doig charts the relationships among the Duffs, he reveals how and why this terrible incident could have happened.

WHEN CHRIST AND HIS SAINTS SLEPT

by Sharon Kay Penman

Ballantine, \$14

A.D. 1135. As church bells tolled for the death of England's King Henry I, his barons faced the unwelcome prospect of being ruled by a woman: Henry's beautiful daughter Maude, Countess of Anjou. But before she could claim her throne, her cousin Stephen seized it. In their long and bitter struggle, all England bled and burned.

Sharon Kay Penman's fifth novel summons to life a spectacular medieval tragedy whose unfolding breaks the heart even as it prepares the way for splendors to come—the glorious age of Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Plantagenets that would soon illuminate the world.

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Village Books in Fairhaven

Book Club Banner

Spring 1996
Vol. 4, #2



An Exclusive Publication for Village Books BookClub Members



Ivan Doig at Mount Baker Theatre

Saturday, May 11

Ivan Doig became a literary giant first here in the Northwest and in more recent years throughout the country. His memoir, *This House of Sky*, has become a classic, and his Montana trilogy (*English Creek*, *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*, *Ride with Me*, *Mariah Montana*) has won the hearts of thousands of readers.

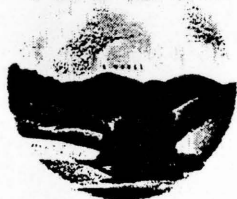
Now Doig returns to his native Montana with a powerful and brilliantly imagined American saga, *Bucking the Sun* (Simon & Schuster). Set around the building of the Fort Peck

Dam, Ivan has concentrated the full force of his immense writing talents and his bone-deep feel for the Big Sky country on telling this epic tale. Nowhere have fictional characters come so fully alive. Nowhere have events long past seemed so present. This is Ivan Doig at his best, and writing just doesn't get any better.

Village Books and the Mount Baker Theatre are pleased to announce a special evening to celebrate the publication of *Bucking the Sun*, a book with which the publisher, Simon & Schuster, believes "Doig is poised — like Pat Conroy, with *Prince of Tides* — for success on a grand scale, not only with the largely Western audience who treasure each new book of his, but with readers coast to coast."

Please join us on **Saturday, May 11, at 8:00 pm** as Ivan delights us with tales about his writing and reads from his new work. Following the presentation, a reception and booksigning will take place in the theater lobby. **General admission tickets for the reading and reception are \$8 and are on sale at the Mount Baker box office and at Village Books.**

BUCKING THE SUN



IVAN DOIG

National Poetry Month

*"Poets live the lives all of us live,
with one big difference.
They have the power to make the
experience of life both magical and real.
The life they reveal is our own."*

(Bill Moyers from *The Language of Life*)

During April Village Books will join bookstores, universities, libraries, publishers and other organizations across the country to celebrate National Poetry Month. The special designation was made by the Academy of American Poets to bring together a wide variety of individuals and groups to support and promote the reading and enjoyment of poetry.

In conjunction with the national celebrations, we've scheduled several special poetry events, including:

- **"Open Mike"** readings by local poets on Tuesday, April 2 and Tuesday, April 16, 7:30 pm—SIGN UP TO READ!

- **Thomas Centolella**, San Francisco poet, former Stegner Fellow and teacher of writing, reads from *Lights & Mysteries* Thursday, April 11;

- **David Lee**, who according to book-seller friends gives the best readings they have ever attended, reads from his Western States Book Award-winning collection, *My Town* on Wed., April 17;

- **Susan McCaslin**, a BC poet of *Locutions*, reads on Friday the 19th;

- Seattle author **Linda Martinson** reads from her book that touches sufferers of chronic pain, *Poetry of Pain*, Tuesday, the 23rd;

- **Chrystos**, a

Bainbridge Island award-winning writer, poet, and Native Rights activist, returns on Friday, April 26 to read from her newest works, *Fire Power* and *Fugitive Colors*.

- Because National Poetry Month is intended to promote the reading and — one might assume by extension — the purchase of poetry, Village Books will add an incentive for you to put on your shelves



photo by Lonnie Behunin

your favorite or newly-discovered poetry at a **20% savings** throughout the month of April — adult and children's poetry! •

In Alan Parker's film "Evita," starring Madonna and Jonathan Pryce and set to open in November, every word of dialogue is sung.

Ivan Doig's Dam Novel

Author digs deep, but leaves a lot out, too

By Glenn Giffin
Denver Post Book Editor

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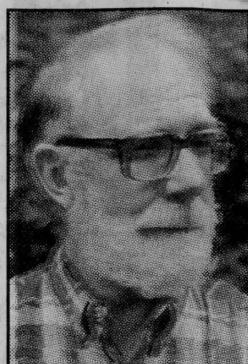
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BUCKING THE SUN

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Simon & Schuster, \$23

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DOIG from Page 8E

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BOOKS

Giant dam anchors Doig's family saga

By Robert Johnson

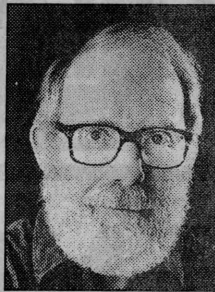
Ivan Doig has become a leading voice in fiction for that great hunk of the country west of the midlands and north of the cactus patch. Doig's "This House of Sky" (1978) and "Montana Trilogy" novels (1984-90) speak in deep tones to the rugged individualism and suffering that built his part of the nation. One critic notes that while Doig "doesn't exactly own the Pacific Northwest," his love for the place has made him its ultimate "regional writer."

Doig's new novel captures a time and place that hungers after epic descriptors. Researching his trilogy, Doig notes, he often heard Montanans confess that they got their start working on the Fort Peck Dam project, which is the foundation of the new book's plot.

The world's largest man-made earth structure, the Fort Peck dam blocks off the Missouri River. Twenty-five stories deep, miles across, cradle for a vast reservoir, the dam was a brainchild of the New Deal, offering

BUCKING THE SUN

By Ivan Doig
Simon & Schuster, \$23



Ivan Doig

real wages and steady work to thousands of down-and-out Americans. Begun in 1933, not fully complete until 1940, the dam attracted a broad swatch of humanity, from bright-eyed engineers looking to launch their dreams to tired laborers on the run.

Around the dam site in its boom days sprang a horizon of shanty towns, bars, brothels and businesses bent on supplying technical and emotional support for the army that descended on Montana during

the project. Earth stacked and jammed to create the dam was dredged from the river's bank or hauled overland, in some cases for miles. Muscle and backbone lifted the project as much as did Depression-era engineering.

Doig plants the feisty saga of the Duff family in the middle of this commotion. Hugh and Meg Duff produce three sons: Owen, college educated and head engineer for the landfill; Bruce, who finds dangerous work as a diver in the riverbed; Neil, a carpenter by trade.

In the course of the novel, Meg and Hugh weather the storms of a long-settled relationship, the boys all take mates, and from the resulting welter of hope, egos and passion churn the conflicts of Doig's episodic tale.

Holding the whole shebang on the road is an enveloping murder mystery. On page three, a wrecked truck is winched from the river, and in it are found the naked, entwined bodies of two of the Duffs — married, both of them, "only not to each other." A consequent inves-

tigation snakes through the book by way of flash-forwards, all the way to 1991, when an ex-lawman begs off from a tour of the dam made annually by his retirement home, rolls his wheel chair to water's edge, and tries to fathom the answer to the riddle of how the Duffs died so many years before.

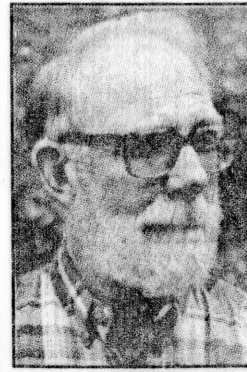
Doig is a relentless and polished story teller. Deftly he orchestrates this challenging jumble of engineering history and family journey, holding readers squarely and solidly to the page. His novel demands attention. Along the way readers pick up a part-time education in western social history, Montana politics, hydraulics, and the remarkable resiliency of family.

One Fort Peck eatery advertises: "Meals 50¢. Big feed 75¢. Hell of a Gorge \$1." Doig's novel earns its honest buck — and more.

Former book editor of *San Diego Magazine*, Robert Johnson teaches and writes in Wichita Falls, Texas.

Denver Post May 16, 1996

(p. 1 of 3 pp.)



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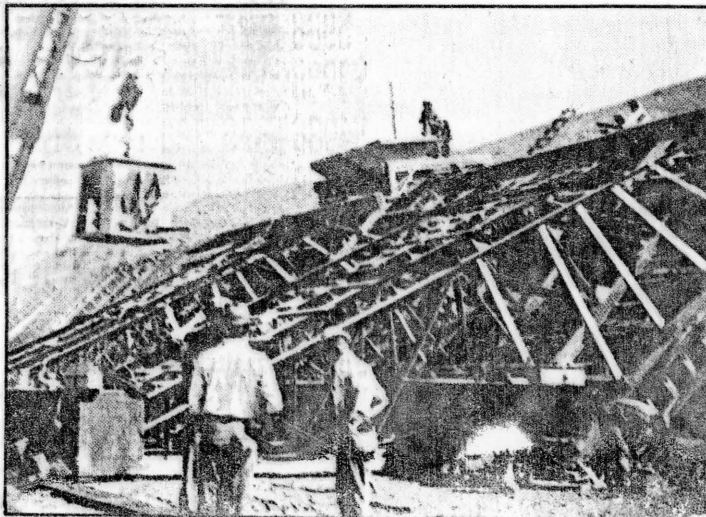
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BUCKING THE SUN

A NOVEL

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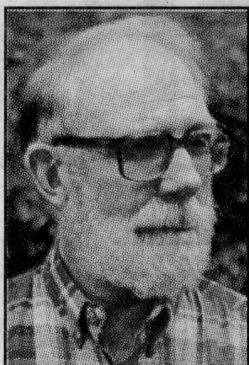
Photo courtesy
Montana State
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BACKSTAGE

TV LISTINGS ON PAGE 5E

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

THE DENVER POST Thursday, May 16, 1996



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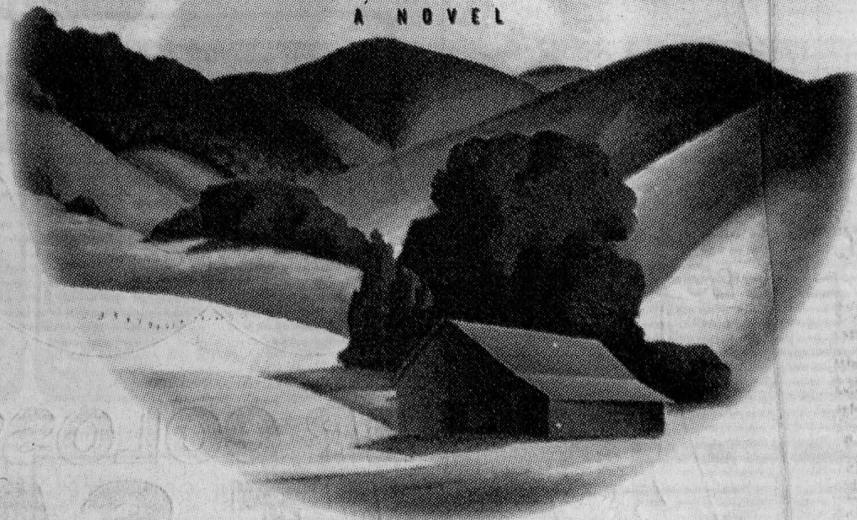
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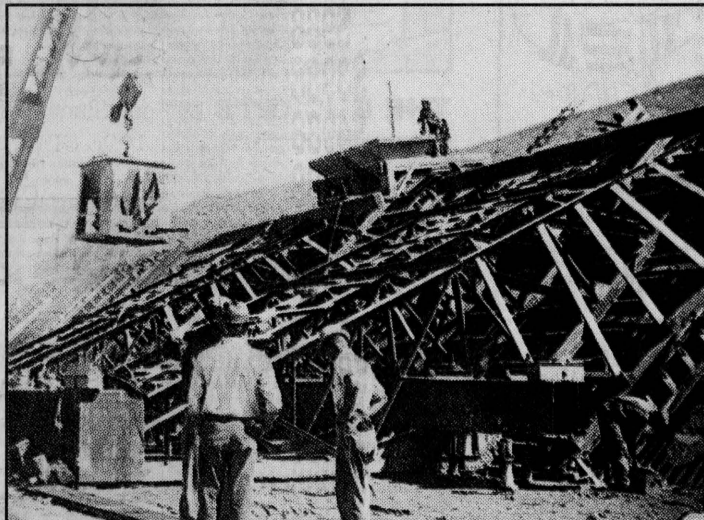
Please see DOIG on 4E

BUCKING THE SUN

A NOVEL



IVAN DOIG



Construction of the Fort Peck Dam, left, the fourth-largest earth-fill dam in the world, was a much photographed event.

Photo courtesy
Montana State
Historical Society

THE CURE FOR DEATH BY LIGHTNING

Gail Anderson-Dargatz. Houghton Mifflin/Jaffe, \$21.95 (297p) ISBN 0-395-77184-6

The year is 1941. For the Weeks family on their frontier farm in Western Canada, life is brutally hard, with moments of joy few and far between. Fifteen-year-old Beth Weeks narrates this coming-of-age story, which is sprinkled with recipes, home remedies and useful homesteading advice (e.g., how to kill and clean a chicken: keep it calm, since "there's nothing as frustrating as trying to kill a panicked chicken"). Though the inventory of authentic period detail is evocative, make no mistake: this is no warmhearted tale of pioneer life. Forget square dances and barn raisings; think bestiality and incest. Beth's tortured, demanding father, mentally ill following a traumatic bear attack and the lingering effects of a head injury he received in WWI, goes on one rampage after another. Beth, meanwhile, does her best to fight off various sexual predators, finding solace of sorts in a tentative love affair with Nora, a troubled half-Indian girl. But Coyote, a sinister shape-changing spirit, stalks them and others, infusing the plot with a weird mystical aura at odds with the hardscrabble realism of the descriptions of day-to-day life. A dysfunctional *Little House on the Prairie*, this bleak, violent saga is a disturbing mixture of period minutiae and grim supernatural phenomena. (May)

FYI: *The Cure for Death by Lightning* is based on a short story that won the Canadian Broadcasting Company's literary competition in 1993.

☆ OPEN HEART

A.B. Yehoshua, trans. by Dalya Bilu. Doubleday, \$24.95 (499p) ISBN 0-385-26793-2

The irrational, untamable power of love becomes almost palpable in Israeli novelist Yehoshua's intense novel of forbidden passion, obsession and spiritual yearning. Its introspective, ironic narrator, Benjamin Rubin (Benjy), an internist in surgery at a Tel Aviv hospital, is asked by the hospital director, Dr. Lazar, to accompany him to a remote town in India where Lazar's college-dropout daughter, Einat, is suffering from acute hepatitis and urgently needs medical care. Benjy, 29, falls madly in love—not with Einat, whose life he saves, but with Dori, Lazar's matronly, spoiled, ordinary, 50-ish wife, whom he beds once. When she rejects his passion as impossible and silly, Benjy hastily marries hippie-like, kibbutz-raised Michaela, who espouses Hindu religious concepts and works with

the "sidewalk doctors" of Calcutta. They have a daughter, Shivi, but, despite their sexual rapport and mutual affection, theirs is not a marriage of love. When Lazar requires open-heart surgery, Benjy, who takes part in the operation, must ask himself whether he truly wants to save the man or whether he wishes Lazar dead so that he can pursue his impossible love for Dori. At times, Benjy's minute self-analysis is wearying, and it's tempting to dismiss his problems as a passing Oedipal fixation. Mostly, however, Yehoshua (*Mr. Mani*) mingles fascinating medical detail with the story of one man seeking to open his own heart to life's possibilities, including pain. *Author tour.* (May)

BECAUSE WE ARE HERE

Chuck Wachtel. Viking, \$21.95 (231p) ISBN 0-670-83887-X

Sophisticated and enigmatic, the short stories and novellas in this second short fiction collection (after *The Coriolis Effect*, 1985) from novelist Wachtel (*The Gates*, 1994) can at times be so subtle as to approach the opaque. Two bachelor brothers living together on a farm offer help to a passing female stranger and find their lives unexpectedly altered; a high-school senior trains for his final gymnastic meet and wonders about his future; a woman waits out her brother's bloody confrontation with the police and hopes for a better life for her son. Reflections on fate, consciousness and identity permeate each character's musings, although Wachtel's prose remains limpidly colloquial throughout. The strongest tales cohere around a clear central metaphor—as in the delightful "St. Raphie," whose middle-aged protagonist, preoccupied with mind-body duality, is rendered invisible by a lightning bolt. At other times, Wachtel's avoidance of dramatic resolutions results in pieces that feel unfinished. Always, he leaves the essential mystery of life inviolate, offering hints and suggestions instead of answers. But even the lesser stories here exhibit a high level of craftsmanship and intelligence. (May)

FYI: Wachtel's first novel, *Joe the Engineer*, won the 1983 PEN/Hemingway Citation.

☆ BUCKING THE SUN

Ivan Doig. Simon & Schuster, \$23 (384p) ISBN 0-684-81171-5

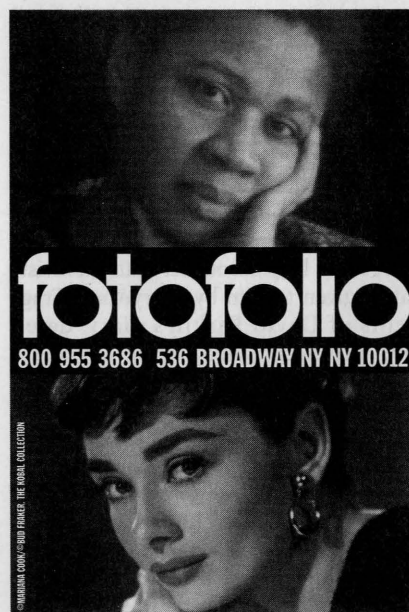
As in Doig's Montana trilogy (*Dancing at the Rascal Fair*, etc.), here American history forms the vivid backdrop for a flinty family drama. Once again, a group of hardheaded, Scotch-descended Montanans struggle with each other and with nature, this time during the building of the Fort Peck Dam from 1933 to 1938.

Hugh Duff hasn't spoken to his eldest son, Owen, since the young man abandoned the family farm to study engineering. Owen is hired to oversee Fort Peck's earth fill just as his father learns that the dam will flood their fields. Hugh simmers, but his wife, Meg, and their twin sons, reckless Bruce and sensible Neil, are happy to get jobs on the New Deal project, though Neil asserts his independence by "bucking the sun" (driving into its head-on rays) for his after-hours trucking business. The brothers' wives—Owen's socially ambitious Charlene; her sister Rosellen, an aspiring writer married to Neil; and Bruce's terse, tough-minded Kate—increase the volatility of the Duff family mix of love and loyalty tempering profound differences of personality and belief. Among the other well-drawn characters is Hugh's Marxist brother Darius, a striking portrait of political extremism. Doig's trademark, minutely detailed evocations of physical labor are present here, as is a bravura description of a disastrous collapse of the unfinished dam. The novel is more plot-heavy than Doig's previous work: the mysterious deaths that bookend the main story are contrived, and the narrative often whipsaws among various Duffs. Not quite as magical as *English Creek*, but much better than the sketchy *Ride with Me, Mariah Montana*, this is still vintage Doig. *Author tour.* (May)

I WAS AMELIA EARHART

Jane Mendelsohn. Knopf, \$18 (144p) ISBN 0-679-45054-8

Past and present, fact and fiction, first-person and third blend into a life of the celebrated aviatrix—both before and after her



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And after arriving as a penniless foreigner to go to graduate school at Columbia, Kosinski really did live out the American dream, marrying a millionaire socialite (from whom he was subsequently divorced, and who later committed suicide), earning national awards and huge sums of money for his books and a screenplay, on the way achieving that greatest of dreams, to be a movie star, playing a small but important role

Julia Frey's recent biography, *"Toulouse-Lautrec: A Life,"* won the 1995 Pen Center West award for nonfiction and was a finalist for a 1994 National Book Critics Circle Award.

crim or sociopathic behavior ranging from mere megalomania to brutal sexual coercion, fraud and plagiarism. Yet he was so convincing that his powerful supporters (including Yale University and the New York Times) believed his side of these accounts for 25 years before evidence was finally published in the *Village Voice* showing the depth of his cons and dishonesty.

According to Sloan, Kosinski couldn't help being a pathological liar and a control freak. Born Jerzy Nitodem Lewintopf in Lodz in 1933, this son of well-to-do secular, intellectual Jews learned by the age of 9 that to live, he must not be himself. At the beginning of World War II, his father carefully in-

for to be found out was death. The central metaphor of Kosinski's first novel, *"The Painted Bird,"* elaborates a medieval Polish legend: If a captured crow is beautifully painted and released to go back to its flock, the other crows will attack and kill it because it is different.

No wonder Kosinski lost track of truth. Truth was dangerous. Survival depended on play acting and lies. So he became an expert actor and storyteller. Paradoxically, since his father had chosen Kosinski, the Polish equivalent of Smith, as the family's new name, Kosinski could tolerate disguise, but not anonymity. Thereafter, he created many selves, each more beautifully painted than the last, and although his gloss and shimmer attracted

rumors about his plagiarisms and ghostwriters were rampant for at least 10 years before a 1982 article in the *Village Voice* revealed that Kosinski, who won the 1969 National Book Award for *"Step"* and whose novel and prize-winning screenplay *"Being There"* became a hit movie, couldn't write English well enough to put his words on paper. The striking stylistic differences apparent from one novel to another can be explained by the fact that he often changed the poorly paid, never-credited "editors" with whom he would sketch out a story line and collaborate as they filled in the details.

As rumors of this practice spread, some
Please see Page 5

A Big Story Under the Big Sky

FICTION

BUCKING THE SUN

By Ivan Doig

(Simon & Schuster, \$23, 412 pp.)

Reviewed by Judith Freeman

One of the strangest things about Ivan Doig's new novel, *"Bucking the Sun,"* is also one of the first things one encounters upon opening the book—the epigraph. Doig dedicates his book "To novelists who deliver the eloquence of the edge of the world rather than stammers from the psychiatrist's couch" and goes on to list six writers—Roddy Doyle, Nadine Gordimer, Ismail Kadare, Thomas Keneally, Maurice Shadbolt and Tim Winton—as being

Judith Freeman's most recent novel, *"A Desert of Pure Feeling,"* has just been published by Pantheon Books

among those who qualify for his odd encomium.

It is worth mentioning this because what Doig's novel lacks is precisely the thing he seems to admire in those to whom he has dedicated his work—namely a sense of an edge. This is a novel about the building of a dam, and the only real edge is the one created by millions of cubic feet of dirt piled up to capture the Missouri River.

"Bucking the Sun" (the title refers to working against the glare of sunrise or sunset) is a big historical novel, set in the 1930s in Montana. It tells the story of a contentious family named Duff whose farmland is taken as part of the construction of the massive Fort Peck dam. Bitter about their loss, the Duffs—like thousands of other Montanans—find jobs working on Fort Peck, a New Deal project that was the largest earth-fill dam ever attempted.

The story begins promisingly, rather like a murder mystery. A Sheriff from the

little town of Fort Peck is called to the scene of an accident. A truck containing the drowned bodies of a man and a woman has been pulled out of the lake created by the dam. The bodies are naked. They are identified as two members of the Duff clan. The only thing is, they are each married to someone else. What were they doing in that truck, naked, their clothing wadded into a bundle? And how did they end up in the lake?

The story moves backward in time from this point to four years earlier, when construction on the dam is just beginning. Not until the end of the book do we find out who died in that accident and why. In between we learn a good deal about the Duffs—the hard-drinking patriarch, Hugh, and his scrappy wife, Meg, and their three sons, Neil, Bruce and Owen (the only educated Duff, an engineer overseeing the construction of the dam).

One by one the Duff boys marry, and their stories of courtship, of settling

down and of confronting dangers on the job form much of the narrative. When Uncle Darius arrives from Scotland and marries a local prostitute, he brings to the story a political sensibility as a socialist and saboteur who challenges the established order. These themes are all woven into the narrative—the theme of family members at odds with each other, of men struggling against the forces of nature, of politics that favor rich over poor and the New Deal policies that attempted to change that balance. All this is set against a backdrop of the harsh conditions in the economically depressed little shantytowns that sprang up almost overnight to house the workers.

Much of the drama comes from the strife within the Duff clan—the little jealousies and divisions, the resentments and betrayals. The Duffs are said to be "like nine radios going at once. Every Duff a different station." Yet it doesn't always feel that way to the reader. The
Please see Page 5

Continued from Page 3

writers in his stable were even required to sign a document saying that they had never given more than superficial "editorial assistance." The Voice also made public the 1975 discoveries by Barbara Tapa (now Lupack), a bilingual doctoral candidate whose unpublished doctoral thesis revealed that in many cases, long passages of Kosinski books were more or less directly translated from Polish sources unknown to English speakers.

The importance of scrupulously recognizing authors and secondary sources in works of fiction has long been questioned by writers, and today's postmodern novels have rendered the issue so fluid that Kosinski's borrowings are moot, from a "moral" point of view. Sloan correctly points out that the measure of Kosinski's creativity will be how his books survive as literature, even if their "author" can best be described as a committee. Sloan compares Kosinski to Balzac, whom he calls another "congenial, incorrigible liar." Although he documents that most if not all the accusations leveled at Kosinski are true, Sloan devotes his meticulous research and careful scholarly readings of Kosinski's work to explaining why Kosinski was a compulsive liar and to ferreting out the truth, comparing it to the elaborate and multiple personal mythology Kosinski wove into his life as well as his "autobiographi-

cal" fiction.

Even without the lies, Kosinski was a seriously eccentric man. Unable to maintain close friendships, he most often played the role of trickster, showing off symbolic skills like his uncanny ability to hide himself in a room so that others were completely unable to find him. His stories and pranks repeatedly enchanted and confounded the revolving groups of prestigious social, intellectual and political acquaintances he ushered in and out of his life about every two years. "Once he went through his repertoire," Sloan writes, "it was time to move on. He tended to use up his stories, or perhaps more accurately, to use up his audience."

Given his charismatic, self-destructive subject, Sloan writes with a peculiarly flat affect. He manages to remove the emotional tension from even the most dramatic events, balancing and defusing the most scandalized criticisms and delicately euphemizing all references to Kosinski's obsessive sadomasochistic sexual behavior, described in elaborate detail in Kosinski's own writing. Sloan's studiously neutral position ends up sounding like an apology for Kosinski. A former National Book Award finalist himself, Sloan, a professor of English at the University of Illinois, knew Kosinski for 20 years. This biography at times seems like a justification of the misdeeds of a brilliantly flawed friend.

Continued from Page 3

writing occasionally levels their differences so that the sons, for instance, seem temporarily indistinguishable, as if only their names truly set them apart.

What Doig is so good at is capturing a sense of a certain period of Montana history and telling a big, whopping sort of story. As he has done in his previous novels, he creates a real feeling of the West and the often harsh, hands-on nature of existence. He gets the raw feeling of the bars and bordellos where sex is simply business. He knows the language of these people, with all the rich aphorisms ("sigh like a punctured philosopher," "tense as a cat at a fur show," "could dampen spirits at a funeral"). And he certainly invokes the awesomeness of the forces of nature against which the Fort Peck workers struggle. It has often been said that the story of the West is the story of water, and this is certainly one of those stories, told in great detail.



CAROL M. ERIC

Ivan Doig

In the introduction to a new edition of his very moving 1978 memoir, "This House of Sky," the author talks about how, when he

began the writing of that book, he already felt like "a relic" — the son and grandson of other relics, all of whom performed tasks and knew things that now seemed out of date. This, perhaps, helps explain why much of his later fiction is set in the past. It's a time he clearly appreciates, with values he quite possibly misses. But even historical novel need something that cannot be confined to relic-hood. And that is a feeling that a character's interior life is as worthy of investigation (and ultimately is as dramatic, if not more so) as external events.

Maybe it's asking too much, in a work that is so narrative-driven, to hope that an author will lift the curtain and let us peek behind it for a glimpse of the soul, no matter how tormented or sane. This is what is missing here. After all, we do not lead mythological lives but psychological ones and characters who speak from the depths, even if it means stammering at times, can nonetheless forge the way.

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KIRKUS REVIEWS

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KIRKUS REVIEWS
Date of Issue: March 1, 1996

Doig, Ivan
BUCKING THE SUN
Simon & Schuster
(384 pp.)
\$23.00
May 1996
ISBN: 0-684-81171-5

The sprawling tale that Doig, author of the Montana trilogy (*English Creek*, 1984; *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*, 1987; and *Ride with Me, Moriah Montana*, 1990), has been working on for years.

Doig grew up in eastern Montana during the Depression, when the Roosevelt Administration built the world's largest earthen dam high on the Missouri River, at Fort Peck. After impressive quantities of research, he has fashioned a Scotch-American family named Duff to tell the dam's story. There are Hugh and Meg, who will be displaced from their hardscrabble farm by the dam's water; their sons Owen, Bruce, and Neil, whose careers and marriages will be shaped by the dam; and the contentious women the sons marry: Charlene, Kate, and especially Rosellen, a frustrated writer who, along with Owen, forms the novel's consciousness. Older brother Owen schools himself as a civil engineer and writes a thesis that lands him the job of chief fill officer even though he's still in his 20s. Through Owen the reader gains a sense of what a massive undertaking the five-year project was, akin to an American great pyramid. The dam is the largest character here, sharing the drama with the ten thousand men and women the project employed; Owen and Rosellen are merely their admirable symbols. Owen becomes obsessed with the river's whims, the treacherousness of steel and gravel and shale, and he loses contact with his wife, Charlene. He falls for Rosellen then—but only briefly, for it is the dam, the great endeavor of his life, that he really loves.

The Duffs are believable but not memorable; Steinbeck this writer is not. Doig's real achievement is to chronicle—with empathy and precise, lyrical authority, down to the last load of gravel hauled in a sturdy Ford truck—the magnificent Fort Peck project and the desperate times out of which it arose.

Evans, Richard Paul
TIMEPIECE
Simon & Schuster
(240 pp.)
\$18.00
Lg. Prt. \$20.00
Spanish \$18.00
Apr. 24, 1996
ISBN: 0-684-81576-1
Lg. Prt. 0-684-82346-2
Spanish 0-684-82426-4

The prequel to Evans's mega bestseller, *The Christmas Box*, is longer than the earlier book, has its same cartoony thinness, is just as creaky at the joints—and reveals, if anything, a considerable rise in the tears-per-page ratio.

We go back to Salt Lake City, this time to 1903, when David Parkin—thoughtful and sensitive person, millionaire head of Parkin Machinery Co., and collector of clocks—hires as his secretary one MaryAnne Chandler, the young woman (originally from England) destined to become David's wife, to live in his big mansion, and, in time, to become the benevolent, devout, mysteriously wise widow of *The Christmas Box*. How MaryAnne achieved such wisdom (quick answer: through suffering a lot) is the real subject of this book, and Evans out-Dickenses Dickens in his facile uses of melodrama in getting to his desired end. In Evans's world of tears and truth, people are by and large either all good or all bad, and if MaryAnne's perfections include being attractive, spunky, quick, principled, courageous, loving, and morally unwavering, the qualities of the base and degenerate villains who reduce her life to ashes are her perfect opposites not in some but all ways ("The men entered clumsily, growling in foul and guttural tones, drunk with whiskey and hatred"). In the beginning, there will be marriage, birth, and immeasurable happiness; and then, with purest villainy as its catalyst, there will be profound and equally immeasurable sorrow. But the healing spirit of human love and hope and goodness will not be destroyed entirely, living on in the muted but unquenchable goodness of MaryAnne's heart; in Evans's perfectly choreographed little flurry of symbols at the close; and even in the transformation of one of those pure villains into purely sensitive penitent.

Certain handkerchief heaven for many, while others may experience the stirring of—well, let's just say other feelings. (First printing of 500,000; author tour)

HINTERBERGER'S TABLE: HALE'S DOES PUB GRUB

GATELESS IN SEATTLE: DT AND LILY SHARE A ROOM

FITNESS: NEW GADGETS

PACIFIC MAGAZINE



Spring
93 books
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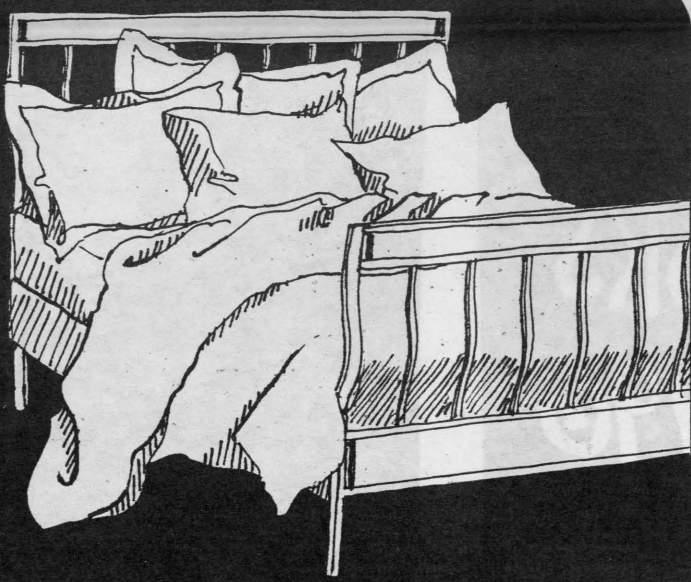
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On the Cover

Get in the spirit of the season for the books of spring and summer.

Next Week

In a company known for employees consumed by work in the high-tech industry, Microsoft's Nathan Myhrvold, 36, breaks the mold.

When he's not working as a top executive he's into nature photography, bungee jumping, formula-car racing, mountain climbing, skydiving, cosmology, fossil collecting, gourmet cooking and fine wines.

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PAGE 22

Spring Books 1996

WRITTEN BY DONN FRY

PHOTOGRAPHED BY HARLEY SOLTES

Settle in with a roundup of new titles for the publishing season ahead, plus an introduction to new-to-Seattle crime writer Michael Dibdin.

PAGE 10

> Gateless: Princely Pleasures

WRITTEN BY TERRY MCDERMOTT

ILLUSTRATED BY PAUL SCHMID

In Part 23, after 15 hours in the air and a \$250 taxi ride, DT and Lily find themselves sharing a room.

PAGE 14

> Hinterberger's Table: Eat and Drink

WRITTEN BY JOHN HINTERBERGER

PHOTOGRAPHED BY STEVE RINGMAN

Hale's Brewery & Pub serves some better-than-average pub food with its boutique brews.

PAGE 32

> Northwest Living: Every Book has Its Place

WRITTEN BY LAWRENCE KREISMAN

PHOTOGRAPHED BY BARRY WONG

There's nothing better on a rainy afternoon than to curl up on a cozy sofa for some quality time with a book. And Faye Allen's library is just the place to do it.

PLANET NORTHWEST

ON FITNESS

SUNDAY PUNCH

NOW & THEN

PAGE 4

PAGE 12

PAGE 18

PAGE 38

CALLAHAN



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go, across a treacherous strait from Orcas Island.

Sleight Island is the refuge of a band of vacant-eyed followers of a psychopathic guru, the self-styled "Los," who has based a hare-brained theology on his own eccentric interpretations of the prophetic epics of the late-18th-century poet William Blake. While Los keeps his flock sedated with ranting, three-hour sermons, his minions fan out across the country to oversee a series of murderous rites for young initiates into "the Secret."

If some of this sounds familiar, as if drawn from a news story datelined Waco, it's no coincidence. After all, America's constitutional tolerance of deviant "religions," no matter how loony, has incubated generations of charismatic charlatans and their willing disciples.

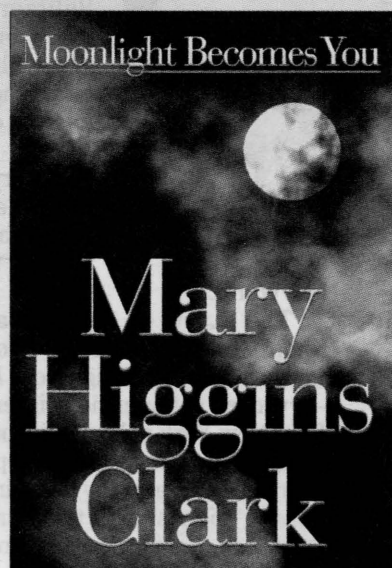
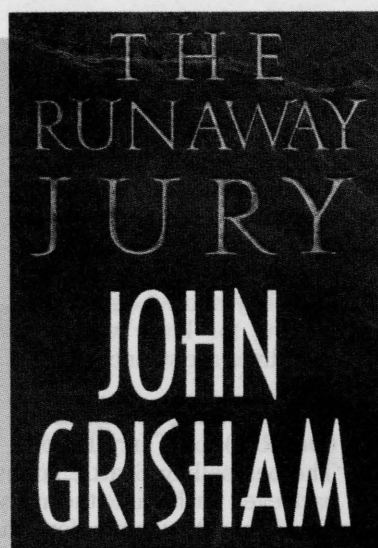
"That search for meaning is something much more common over here than in Britain," says Dibdin. "After all, this is a country that invented itself, and not very long ago, and it encourages its citizens to constantly reinvent themselves in all kinds of ways — cultural, political, religious.

"So (in creating 'Dark Specter'), I had the sense that those quests for meaning seem particularly valid here — and important."

Dibdin's own personal quest began as an only child whose father was a Cambridge-educated physicist and mother a hospital-trained nurse. But the young parents were restless and for a number of years pursued his father's passion for folk music, moving about the country, collecting material for the English Folk Dance and Song Society.

Young Michael was 7 before his father finally accepted a college lectureship, and they settled in a small town near Belfast, Northern Ireland. The village, Dibdin recalls, was a "very calm,

Continued on page 28 ➤



Spring Titles

Romance or tragedy.

Found love or lost lives.

There's something new for everyone to read this season.

BY DONN FRY

Hundreds of new titles will be released by publishers this month through June, with most arriving in stores no later than mid-May. Here is a wide-ranging selection of books you might want to watch for:

POPULAR FICTION

Brand Names and Middle Brows, Aimed for the Bestseller List

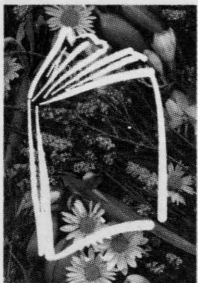
"**Her Own Rules**" (HarperCollins), by Barbara Taylor Bradford. The publisher is cranking out a half-million copies in the first printing of this new novel by the doyenne of slick romance. A trip to the therapist helps successful hotelier Meredith Stratton begin unraveling the mystery of her childhood in an English orphanage.

"**The Runaway Jury**" (Doubleday), by John Grisham. In his new thriller, the reigning King of the Courts takes a look at the jury system up close and personal, going behind the locked door of the jury room — after deliberations have begun.

"**The Tenth Insight**" (Warner), by James Redfield. In "The Celestine Prophecy," which is rounding out two years on the national bestseller list with no end in sight, author James Redfield offered nine "insights" drawn from an ancient manuscript found in Peru. Well, he finally completes his Top 10 list. Woo-woo.

"**Anything Considered**" (Knopf), by Peter Mayle. An English expatriate, hoping to improve his sorry station in life, goes to work in Monaco for a truffle merchant, but soon runs afoul of the Mafia, an order of bibulous monks, a very experienced lover and the usual French-village busybodies in this latest offering from the creator of "A Year in Provence."

"**Moonlight Becomes You**" (Simon & Schuster), by Mary Higgins Clark. In the Queen of Mystery's new novel, young photographer Maggie Holloway ➤



Spring Titles

becomes the target of a twisted killer when she investigates the death of the long-lost stepmother who willed her a Victorian home in Newport, R.I.

"How Stella Got Her Groove Back" (Viking), by Terry McMillan. Their appetites whetted by the success of the movie version of "Waiting to Exhale," Terry McMillan's many fans should eagerly embrace this story of a woman who unexpectedly finds love — only to worry that she's lost her mind.

"Lost Laysen" (Scribner), by Margaret Mitchell. The late creator of "Gone With the Wind" left behind only a single unpublished work — this novella about a tempestuous love triangle. It's being released for the first time, along with a special 60th-anniversary edition of Mitchell's great middle-brow classic, "GWTW."

"Rose" (Random House), by Martin Cruz Smith. Though his normal milieu is the bleak world of espionage in the drab, cold war-era Soviet Union, the author of "Gorky Park" and "Red Square" turns to the story of a mining engineer in the coal fields of 19th-century Lancashire whose hopes of returning to West Africa depend on locating a missing curate.

"Mischievous" (Bantam), by Amanda Quick. Seattle author Jayne Ann Krentz, writing under her most frequent pen name, offers yet another Regency romance with yet another of her patented sound-alike, one-word titles. Yet another bestseller, no doubt.

"Nathan's Run" (HarperCollins), by John Gilstrap. High hopes rest on this first novel ("bought for film by the producers of 'Die Hard' and 'Lethal Weapon,'" enthuses the publisher), which centers on a 12-year-old boy who is wanted for murder and being sought by both the cops and a vicious hit man.

"Spring Collection" (Crown), by Judith Krantz. The veteran schlockmeisteress of soon-to-be-a-miniseries fiction probes the adventures of three "fascinating, rebellious" rookie models, as well as the behind-the-scenes intrigue at a new Parisian house of couture backed by a Swiss billionaire with a secret.

"The Last Sanctuary" (Delacorte), by Craig Holden. A Gulf War veteran, living on the margins of society, plunges into the world of armed militias and terrorist cults after being falsely accused of murder — and chased across the Alaskan wilderness by a female ATF agent.

"The Deep End of the Ocean" (Viking), by Jacquelyn Mitchard. When a young woman's 3-year-old son disappears, it sends her life, her marriage and her other young son into prolonged, suppressed agony — until nine years later, when a neighborhood boy knocks on the door looking for lawn work, and their lives are wrenched apart again.

"First King of Shannara" (Del Rey), by Terry Brooks. The bestselling Seattle fantasy writer turns back even further into the misty past for a "prequel" set 500 years before the events in his popular novel, "The Sword of Shannara."

"West of Dodge" (Bantam), by Louis L'Amour. The late master of sagebrush soap opera left behind many unpublished manuscripts, including these 14 "newly discovered" tales of the Old West.

LITERARY FICTION

Distinguished Authors Trying for Lasting Literature

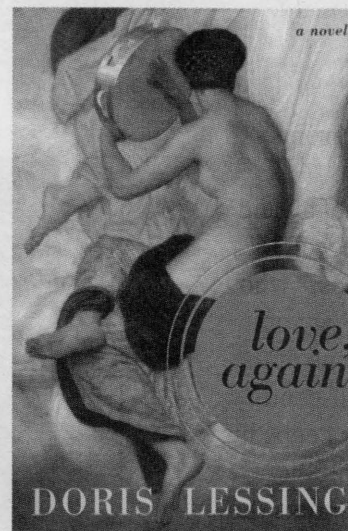
"Tales of Burning Love" (HarperCollins), by Louise Erdrich. The much-loved creator of "Love Medicine" and "The Beet Queen" leaves the reservation for a rich novel told in the voices of four women — all former wives of larger-than-life Jack Mauser and all stranded together in a North Dakota blizzard.

"Accordion Crimes" (Scribner), by E. Annie Proulx. The Pulitzer-winning author's first novel since "The Shipping News" views the American immigrant experience, beginning with the story of a Sicilian accordion-maker's journey to the

New World.

"The Last of the Savages" (Knopf), by Jay McInerney. Following his last novel, "Brightness Falls" — a wicked yet humane evisceration of the New York publishing world — Jay McInerney traces the sweep of an American generation by following the evolving friendship of two very different men, from prep school in 1965 to the present.

"The Wrecked, Blessed Body of Shelton Lafleur" (Houghton Mifflin), by John Gregory Brown. An el-



derly artist, famous for his scenes of black Southern life, recalls how he tumbled from a tree at age 8 and was crippled for life, only to be taken in by the family of a wily guardian angel named Minou, in this second novel by a Virginia creative-writing professor.

"Love, Again" (HarperCollins), by Doris Lessing. In her first novel in seven years, the author of "The Golden Notebook" explores grief, longing and sexuality in the life of

65-year-old Sarah Durham, who falls in love with a 28-year-old actor, then a 35-year-old director.

"Bucking the Sun" (Simon & Schuster), by Ivan Doig. This new novel by the respected Seattle novelist and memoirist ("Dancing at the Rascal Fair," "This House of Sky") once again visits his native Montana for a boomtown epic of the Duff family, who leave the bottomlands to work on one of the New Deal's most audacious and tragic projects, the Fort Peck Dam.

"Beaming Sonny Home" (Crown), by Cathie Pelletier. The author of "A Marriage Made in Woodstock" examines the complications and poignant humor in a mother's love for her child when Mattie learns that wayward Sonny has taken two women and a poodle as hostages in his ex-wife's trailer.

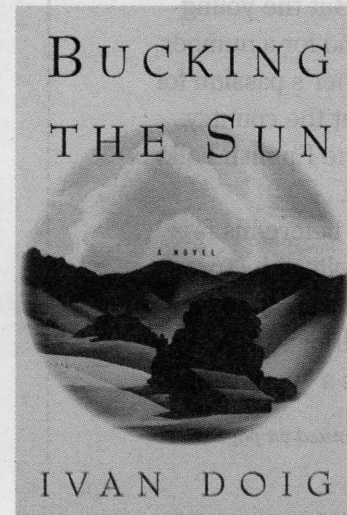
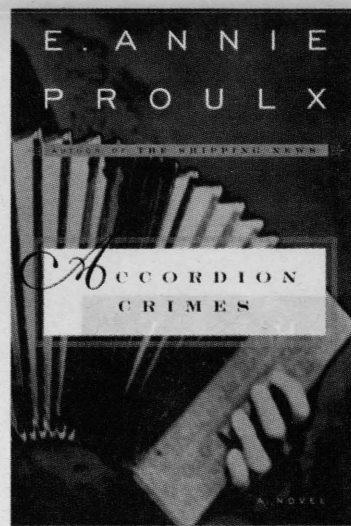
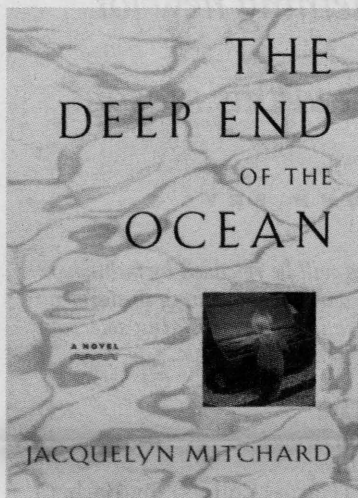
"Tiger's Tail" (Knopf), by Gus Lee. A Korean-American military lawyer is asked to go to Korea to locate a missing Army colleague, a disappearance linked to an enigmatic senior officer stationed for a decade on the DMZ — by choice — in this new novel by the author of "China Boy" and "Honor & Duty."

"The Pull of the Moon" (Random House), by Elizabeth Berg. The author of the haunting "Talk Before Sleep" and last year's "Range of Motion" follows a middle-aged woman who, on the spur of the moment, begins driving cross-country by back roads, encountering people,

confiding in her diary, and communicating with her husband by letter in ways she never has before.

"Edisto Revisited" (Henry Holt), by Padgett Powell. The author's fourth novel is a sequel to his much-praised first novel in 1984, "Edisto," and picks up the life of young Simons Manigault, now out of college and moving uncertainly into the future at the family home in coastal South Carolina.

"Babel Tower" (Ran-



Book Reviews By LeDoux Malchik

These three writers talk about place, continuity, and family. They examine the place of these human themes in our past and in our future. "As always," says realtor Frank Bascombe in Richard Ford's *Independence Day*, "I'm moved by the displacement wars of other Americans."

Our displacement wars and their consequences are the common themes running through these three books. Smith's book is a memoir; Ivan Doig's is an historical novel; Richard Ford's book continues the life of his historical hero first encountered in *The Sportsman*. Yet each of these books looks at accident and chance, juxtaposes the blueprints we think we are reading from against the political, sexual, physical and economic forces that actually shape our lives, and leaves us to wonder: what are our chances? Not missing from the mix is the trickiest pattern of all: the way in which we rearrange words and images to shape the stories we want to tell.

Annick Smith, *Homestead* (Milkweed Editions, 1995)

Montana author and producer Annick Smith was born in Paris, but lived in Montana most of her life. Her memoir, *Homestead*, deals not only with the choices that brought her to a homestead near Ovando, but with the lives of her parents.

The Deutsches met in Paris in the 1930's. Her mother, Helene Beck, studied at the Sorbonne for two years, later working as a fashion photographer before meeting photographer Stephen Deutsch. Annick was born in 1936.

In 1937, the family moved to Chicago, where they opened the Deutch (an "s" was dropped) Studio. In some ways, the America of the young Deutch sisters represented a rare distillation of the new country's national myths: "Celebrities came to be photographed. Sonja Henie, Barbara Rush, Joe Louis and young Lena Horne. Duke Ellington signed an autograph for Kathy and me, and he kissed us full on our mouths. I had my picture taken at the circus with the Lone Ranger. Jackie Robinson signed a baseball for me at Wrigley field the year he joined the Dodgers." Woody Guthrie and Josh White sang at a fundraiser in their living room; friends of the family included Studs Terkel and Nelson Algren.

Most vivid of all was the magic of

photography, "...so potent," Smith writes, "that it eventually led all three of us sisters into filmmaking." Her enchantment with images allowed Smith to yield to the incantations of western names and myths, while the photographer's vision saw behind them. When Annick Smith writes that "Henry Kissinger once likened himself to the Lone Ranger," the child who stood beside the real-life fabrication takes the measure of politicians who model themselves on art.

Lives of movement are not easy lives. Smith's mother, Helene, missed Paris, and the graceful cities of her childhood. "Chicago," she recalls, "was like Siberia. The



Terry McGrath

wind and the cold. The streets were so dirty." After moving to the affluent suburbs, the family broke apart, only to come together again.

Homestead speaks of the ways in which we deal with loss. Smith's grandmother, Serena Beck, continued to mourn her husband fifty years after his death; Annick, widowed at thirty-eight, chose to re-enter life. "I am sorry I judged my grandmother too harshly," she sums up in reflection, "but I hold to my belief that it is safer to weep for the past than to create a new persona and try to take charge of your life."

Two of the most moving chapters in Annick Smith's book are "Andalusia, Again," and "The Importance of Dunes." Both speak of returns. In "Dunes," Smith visits the Lake Michigan beaches of her childhood, where her parents now "spend most of their days," and finds her mother has become the child in their relationship.

In "Andalusia," she returns to the Spanish and Andalusian coasts that she and her husband, Dave Smith, travelled through years before: "Raw and yearning, poor and full of romantic notions, we rented a tiny trailer on the Costa Brava, north of Barcelona...and headed southwest along the

Mediterranean. The twins had diarrhea. They took turns crying at night...Dave and I took turns at the wheel, so hair-trigger exhausted we fought until my eyes were red with perpetual tears." It is Smith's gift to grasp and to make us understand the beauty of these days; so un-Hemingwayesque in their detail, so full of mundane quarrels and childhood sicknesses. Like Thornton Wilder, she brings us to some appreciation of the miracle we are living as we wipe noses, quarrel with our mates, and try to find a room for the night.

With the poet Richard Hugo, she visits Ronda, home of Rainer Maria Rilke from 1912 to 1913, and she photographs Hugo next to a statue of Rilke. Years later, revisiting the same country with Bill Kittridge, Smith writes, "In my fantasy of return, I come back to Zahara with Bill, maybe with my sons and their wives, my aging, laughing sisters. When the sun sets and the day cools, we will...sit on the balcony to eat tapas of chorizo and morcilla. We will remember our dead and praise our living as we drink the strong red wine."

Ivan Doig, *Bucking The Sun* (Simon & Schuster, 1996)

Taking charge of one's life and defining accountability are two themes that recur in Ivan Doig's latest novel, *Bucking The Sun*. The Duffs, whose relatives settled the English Creek country of Doig's earlier novels, homesteaded on the high plains of northwestern Montana. They are about to be evicted from their land by Franklin D. Roosevelt's major project, the Fort Peck Dam. Hugh Duff and his younger sons, the twins Bruce and Neil, are given priority on blue-collar jobs at the Dam site as displaced landowners. This represents an opportunity for the young men, but offers little for Hugh. The oldest son, Owen, who left home years before to study civil engineering in Bozeman, will be one of the chief engineers on the Dam, holding the position of fillmaster. He has responsibility not only for the stability of the Dam, but for his family, his father and his brothers.

Hugh Duff cannot accept his displacement, either from the land or from his position of authority in the family. "Working for wages" is poor compensation for the loss of even a marginal homestead. "Simple it down for me," he challenges his son. "Tell your old daftie of a father where this is



GOLDEN EAGLE

Aquila chrysaëtas

Photographed by Barbara Thomas

going to lead to, this work that doesn't need doing except so people can be paid for doing it." That is the rub, of course. The direction of Hugh's life has changed; he has come to the point where, as Richard Ford will put it "...it becomes almost impossible not to see yourself as a puny human oxymoron, and damn near impossible to recognize who your self is at all."

Meg Duff, his wife, high-chinned daughter of a Scottish minister, is pulling for all her sons, and welcomes this opportunity for them to extend their talents; she has no illusions about their future on the homestead. But Hugh, who escapes into alcoholism, is right on some counts: with the loss of a central cause, centrifugal forces pull the family apart; loyalties are tested and they snap. Like Owen's dam, built on Bearpaw Shale, the underpinning will give way. However, Doig suggests that in families as in earth-filled dams, the best course may be to go back and rebuild.

Every novel needs a destabilizing factor. Doig provides his through the most interesting characters in the book: Hugh's older brother Darius, fresh from the Clydeside shipyards and the socialist movement, and his bride Proxy, whom he discovers working as a full-time taxi-dancer and part-time prostitute in the Blue Eagle. The book needs these two characters badly for the sexual tension; in spite of the manly pursuits and stated lustiness of the Duff men, we don't feel this electricity and loss of equilibrium until Darius strides on the scene. He once courted Meg (and possibly seduced her) in Scotland, a fact of which Hugh is well aware.

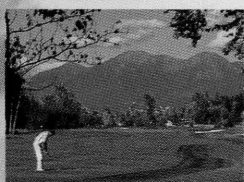
In need of marital status (what we would call a Green Card), Darius turns to Proxy, who is thoroughly realistic about the proposition and continues to work as a bar girl after her marriage. Proxy is as hard-edged and likable, as Darius is edgy, sexual, and dangerous. I found it hard, however, to buy the attempts of Hugh and his sons to bed their kinsman's wife. Much of the book hinges on our acceptance of this kind of betrayal, but we are told everything about the bonds that bind the Duffs together and shown very little of the attractions that break down these bonds.

Owen begins an affair with his other brother's wife, whom we know mainly through her passion for stories. She is Doig's alter ego, a budding writer. Doig makes us tingle over her rejection slips, but, perhaps wisely, he doesn't try to flesh out the affair.

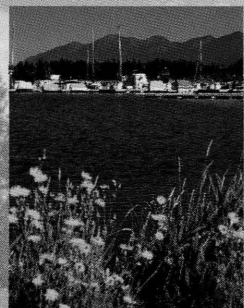
A story hinges on what is worth losing, what is at stake. It would be unfair to this novel not to give full credit to Doig's

(continued on page 66)

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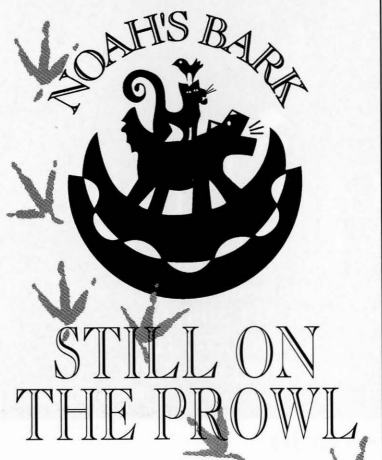
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Fairway Food

By Gail Jokerst and Dave Reese

Whether you're stepping off the greens or stepping out for the evening, you'll find the golf course restaurants in the Flathead Valley offer some of the finest dining in the northwest. Serving meals made with both skill and creativity, these golf-course eateries range from comfortably elegant to the casually avant-garde. Their entrees might arrive traditionally prepared like you've come to expect. Or they might show up at your table with a subtle blend of global flavors or a unique Montana culinary spin. The choice is yours.

The Grill at Eagle Bend Eagle Bend Golf Course Bigfork

From the minute those "mmm..."s and "aaah..."s drifted over from the people at the next table, it didn't take a Julia Child to figure out that dessert would be hard to pass up. The decadent silken *creme-brulee* which captivated these diners, along with the rest of the fare at The Grill at Eagle Bend, comes courtesy of Chef Steve Schulz and his talented kitchen staff who bring a deft international touch to the restaurant's diverse menu.

The Grill's offerings take diners on a tempting trip around the world without leaving Bigfork. You'll find Asian-over-toned entrees, including Wok Charred Ahi (yellowfin tuna) and Thai-inspired Grilled Chicken dressed with a "sneaks-up-on-you-slowly" hot peanut sauce.

More sedate tastes might opt for the T-bone steaks or the 14-ounce smoked pork chop served with a homemade mango or plum chutney. The Grill's prime rib, an herb-crusted version of the American classic, comes nestled on a mound of whipped garlic potatoes and topped with crispy fried onion strings.

To take full advantage of seasonal provender, Chef Schulz varies the menu selections regularly. Summertime meals highlight tasty locally-grown vegetables and the subtle Mediterranean flavors of the fresh basil, thyme, and rosemary which grow in terra cotta pots along the dining room's terrace. During the wintry non-golfing months, the restaurant

features weekly Italian and Mexican nights with inviting fare such as marinara-sauced meatballs and chorizo-stuffed quesadillas.

Should you have a special request any time of year, speak up. If the ingredients are available, The Grill at Eagle Bend will do its best to prepare the dish. This is one place where they hate to say no. G.J.

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Reservations: Recommended for
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Sunset Grille Meadow Lake Golf Resort Columbia Falls

Normally neon signs and smoked salmon don't share the same restaurant space. But they do at Meadow Lake's Sunset Grille, an eatery with attitude. An upbeat "let's-have-a-good-time" attitude. Montana memorabilia—antlers, horse collars, and wooden skis—line the restaurant's walls while a grocery scale dangles from the raftered ceiling. Fully-windowed views show off Big Sky sunsets at their best, which account for the restaurant's name.

You'll also find three televisions tuned in to baseball games, boxing matches, and other sports events. You won't, however, hear any sportscasters. Owner Dave Aumand cuts the sound, replacing it with mellow jazz tunes or reggae. "I will turn up the sound," he explained, "but only for special events."

Because Aumand wanted everyone to feel welcome, he eliminated the white tablecloths and he designed his menu to suit a wide spectrum of tastes. You can chow down on a half-pound hamburger here, as well as a veggie garden burger. Or you might opt for some of the Grille's outstanding Pacific Rim and Southwestern-flavored fare.

Kids of all ages zero in on the micro-brewed root beer floats. The after-work crowd goes for appetizers, especially the

brilliant recreation of the Fort Peck Dam story. Here is where Owen, and Doig, come into their own. Take this evocation of one of the early stages of the dam: "The core pool—there was no getting around it: Owen Duff's unruly core pool—was phenomenal no matter how you looked at it. The dredged material that was being spewed in to form the core of the dam needed time to settle, needed to have the water drained off it at a judicious pace, needed in other words this artificial basin in the top of the damfill. On a blueprint it could not have looked more clever and neat, a settlement pond that gradually worked itself out of existence as more and more fill jelled in it. In reality...the core pool was a wind-whipped, sloshing, leaky, fickle body of water half a mile long, up in the middle of the pile of earth which was supposed to become Fort Peck Dam."

Bucking the Sun is rich with this kind of close up: the younger son Bruce working as a driver in the silty Missouri; men dumping gravel, trying to out race the eroding fill; the bump and grind of a boomtown bar; and even the front lines of a workers' strike in Scotland.

There are some indelible set pieces, like the funeral in Plentywood of a secret Communist Party member's child. The communist gives away the whole show by draping his son's coffin with a red flag. During this event, Proxy muses, "Stiff, cold, blood; these Bolshies were as grim as Baptists."

Bucking the Sun is a wonderful read, full of light and space, a feel for the land and weather, and the authentic use of historical sources at which Ivan Doig excels. In scope, it truly deserves the term "epic." If it falls short of the books some of us consider masterpieces—the first two volumes of the English Creek trilogy (*English Creek*, *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*), *This House of Sky*, and Doig's memoir of his mother, *Heart Earth*—it is only because the latter are trimmed so well that every inch of canvas grows taut with the passion of their protagonists' lives.

**Richard Ford, *Independence Day*
(Alfred A. Knopf, 1995)**

Prize-winning novelists should probably be classed as migratory birds; otherwise, how can small towns in Montana's highline ever hope to compete with metropolitan giants? Both Chinook, Montana, and New Orleans, Louisiana, claim themselves as the residence of author Richard Ford. Chinook goes so far as to boast that Ford's *Independence Day*, which was awarded the Pulitzer Prize, was written largely in the

town's public library. It makes a good story; it even seems like something Frank Bascombe, first-person narrator of *Independence Day*, would approve of.

If *Homestead* and *Bucking the Sun* are rooted in questions that came to light in the 1930's, in the middle of the Great Depression, *Independence Day* seems to find its baseline in the awakenings of the 1960's. "The strongest feeling I have now," admits Frank Bascombe, "is that holding the line on the life we promised ourselves in the sixties is getting hard as hell. We want to feel our community as a fixed, continuous entity,...as being anchored in the rock of permanence; but we know it's not, that in fact beneath the surface (or rankly all over the surface) it's anything but. We and it are anchored only to contingency like a bottle on a wave, seeking a quiet eddy. The very effort of maintenance can pull you under." On the other hand, Bascombe feels, "...being a realtor...makes you come to grips with contingency and even sell it as a source of strength...."

Is it any wonder so many reviewers hailed this as a great American novel, or even The Great American Novel, and Frank Bascombe as a Willy Loman of our times? Bascombe, first encountered in Ford's earlier novel, *The Sportswriter*, is unsurprisingly divorced, but still lives in his ex-wife's house in Haddam, New Jersey, and has entered what he terms "the Existence Period, the high-wire act of normalcy, the part that comes after the big struggle which led to the big blow-up, the time in life when whatever was going to affect us 'later' actually affects us, a period when we go along more or less self-directed and happy, though we might not choose to mention or even remember it later were we to tell the stories of our lives...."

Readers familiar with Richard Ford's early collection of short stories, *Rock Springs*, will recognize some of the sources of Frank Bascombe's detachment. His recent novels have added some deeper tones, both a greater sense of failure and a greater sense of the longing that drives us to try to circumvent it: "...Most people, once they reach a certain age, troop through their days struggling like hell with the concept of completeness, keeping up with all the things that were ever part of them, as a way of maintaining the illusion that they bring themselves fully to life.... Most of these, you just have to give up on, along with the whole idea of completeness, since after a while you get so fouled up with all you did and surrendered to and failed at and fought and didn't like, that you can't make any progress. Another way of saying this is that when you're young, your opponent is the

future; but when you're not young, your opponent's the past and everything you've done in it...."

When his ex-wife announces her remarriage and moves away, Frank finds himself "...as lonely and inessential and exposed as a lighthouse keeper in broad daylight." He counters by purchasing her house and forging a new existence in real estate. "In Haddam, in my new circumstances, I felt I was perhaps becoming the personage I least wanted to be and, in the years since my divorce, had feared being: the suspicious bachelor, the man whose life has no mystery, the graying, slightly jowly, slightly tanned and trim middle-ager, driving around town in a cheesy '58 Chevy ragtop polished to a squeak, always alone on balmy summer nights, wearing a faded yellow polo shirt and green suntans, elbow over the window top, listening to progressive jazz, while smiling and pretending to have everything under control, when in fact there is nothing to control."

Books were invented for sentences like these, paragraphs you can lick all the way down like a double-dipper fresh peach ice cream cone in summer. You want it on the printed page so you can catch that last drip; a cassette tape just won't do.

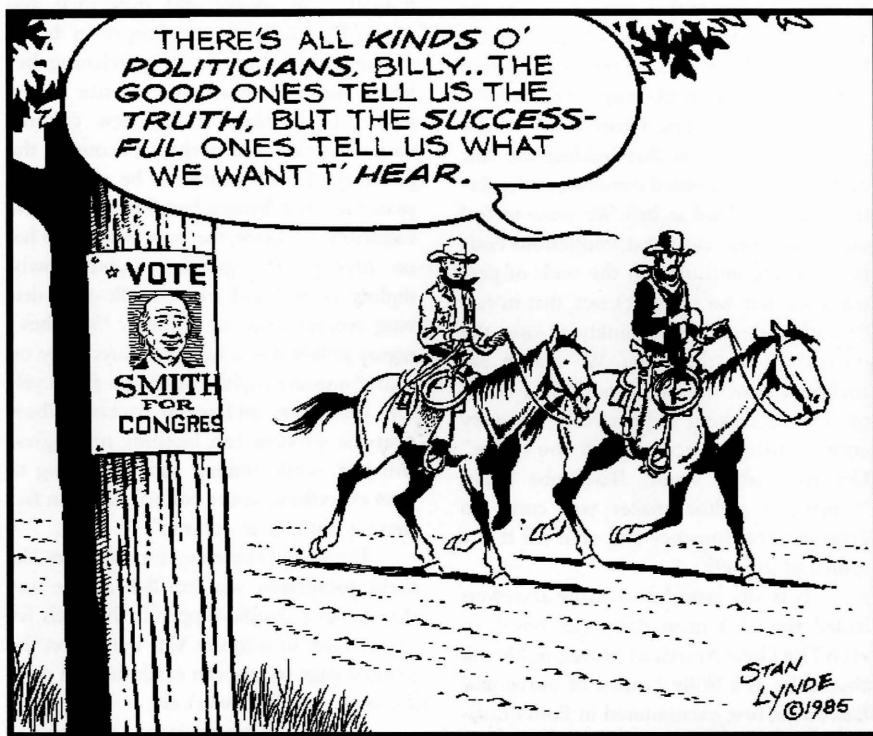
And this, of course, is the secret advantage that Frank Bascombe, like Annick Smith and Doig's Roselen bring to our fragmented search for unity: if the version of reality we are presented with is too damning, too heartrending, or simply too boring, we can rearrange the words. Frank's son is facing a court hearing; Frank is still attached to his ex-wife and is unable or unwilling to commit to his new companion, Sally. On the Fourth of July weekend, father and son take off on a trip to the Baseball and Basketball Halls of Fame, the quintessential father and son bonding experience. Or is it? Ford's prose brings irony out of expectations, and compassionate humor out of potential tragedy. As in a Shakespearean comedy, characters re-emerge beside one another when they are least expected, most needed, and when their act is apparently over.

Each of these books, in its own way, addresses our need for reinventing ourselves and for forgiving ourselves for past and present hubris. Like the purchase of real estate or the construction of a dam, our embarkations are based on partial knowledge, and our acts are mostly without the wisdom or control we think we possess. Still, Doig, Smith and Ford each manage to convey (and this is certainly wisdom), happiness as we know it is for those who let themselves be swept into the parade. ♠

Grass Roots

by Stan Lynde

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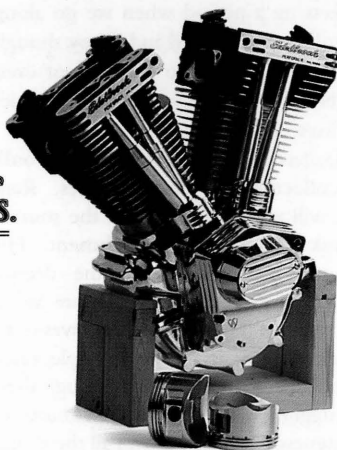
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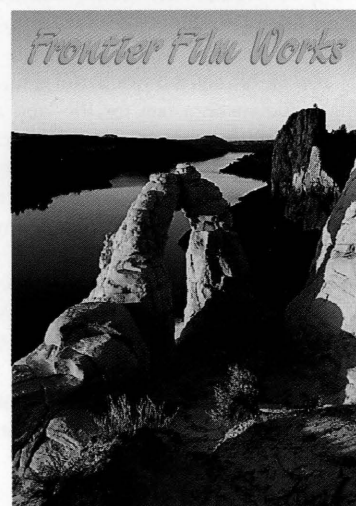
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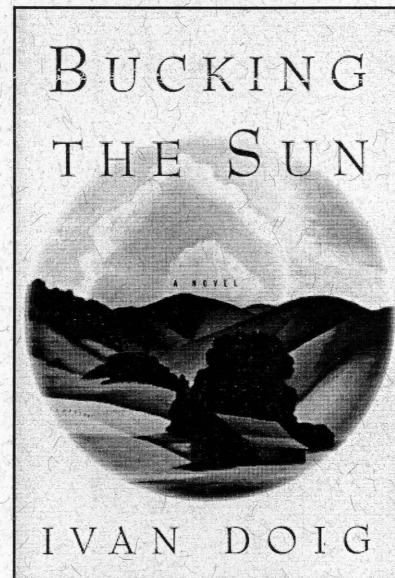
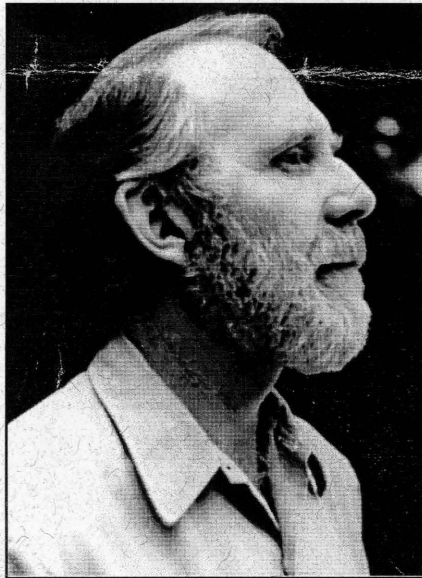
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Reading & Book Signing

IVAN DOIG

*Author of **Bucking the Sun** and **This House of Sky***



Friday, May 17, 7:30 pm

This event is free and open to the public.

Join us as **IVAN DOIG** reads from and signs his new novel, *Bucking the Sun* (Simon & Schuster hardcover, \$23.00). In *Bucking the Sun*, Doig takes on three generations of the Duff clan, who have been pushed off their bottomland farm by the construction of the Fort Peck Dam, only to take relief work on the gigantic project. With masterful prose and keen psychological insight, he explores the rewards and the pitfalls of trying to bend nature's will to our own; the heroism and cynicism behind a grand and visionary enterprise; the ties that bind families together and the forces that split them asunder.

"Doig has concentrated the full force of his immense writing talents and his bone-deep feel for the Big Sky country on telling this [*Bucking the Sun*] epic tale. Nowhere are fictional characters so fully alive. Nowhere do events long past seem so present. This is Ivan Doig at his best, and writing just doesn't get any better."

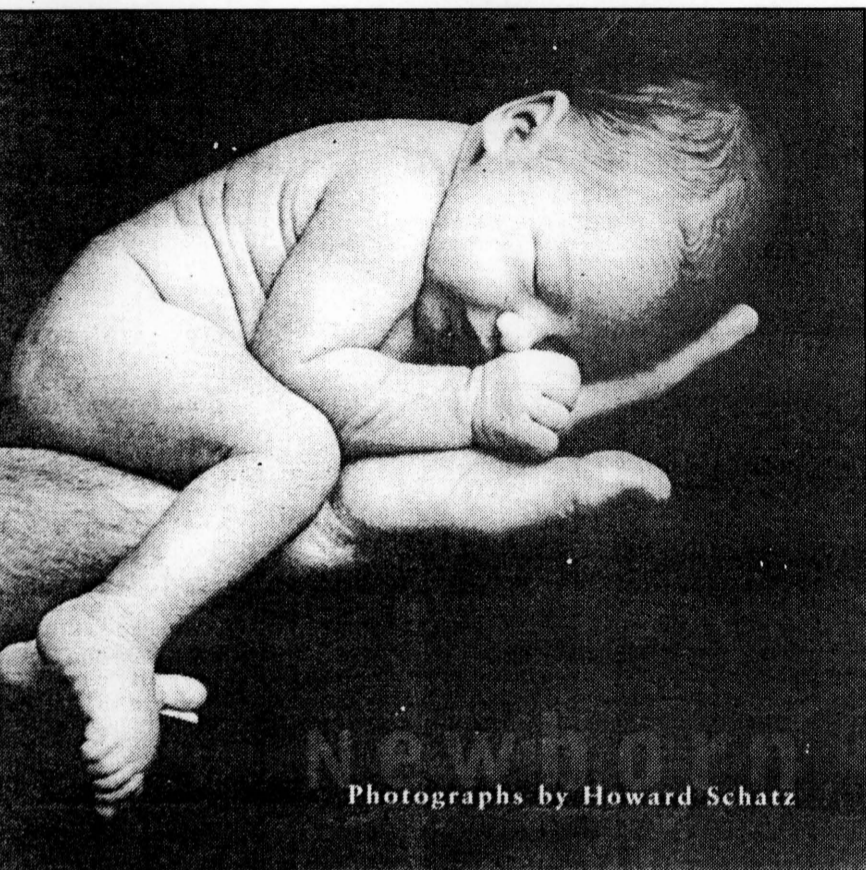
— *Chuck Robinson, Past President of the American Booksellers Association*

IVAN DOIG has emerged as one of our nation's foremost storytellers. His books include *This House of Sky*, *Heart Earth*, *The Sea Runners*, and *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*. He has received numerous writing awards such as the *Pacific Northwest Booksellers Award for Literary Excellence*, *Governor's Writers Day Award*, and was a finalist for the National Book Award in 1978. Although a Montana native, Doig and his wife currently live in Seattle.

For more information on this event, please call Lisa Gesner at 447-2074.

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born" by Howard Schatz is a little gem of a picture book.

rs of fiction under 40 just selected
anta, the trendy literary magazine
in Britain.
lexie, the multitalented author of
rvation Blues," and Guterson, the
r of the best-selling "Snow Falling
dars," are the only Northwest writers
anta's list. Both are certainly
ving, and no great surprise either.
son was even named this week as
f the "50 Most Beautiful People in the
l 1996" by People magazine.
he other West Coast writers tabbed
anta are Ethan Canin ("The Palace
' of San Francisco, Mona Simp-
'Anywhere But Here") of Santa
ca.
ther Granta picks are Madison
t Bell ("All Souls' Rising"); Edwidge
cat ("Krik? Krak!"); Tom Drury
End of Vandalism"); Tony Earley
e We Are in Paradise"); Jeffrey
nides ("The Virgin Suicides").
Also: Jonathan Franzen ("The
ty-Seventh City"); David Hayes
ht by My Side"); Allen Kurzweil
ase of Curiosities"); Elizabeth
acken ("Here's Your Hat, What's
Hurry?"); Lorrie Moore ("Who Will
he Frog Hospital?"); Fae Myenne
Bone").
Also: Chris Offutt ("Kentucky
ht"); Robert O'Connor ("Buffalo Sol-
"); Stewart O'Nan ("In the Walled
"); Malanie RaeThon ("Iona Moon");
Wheeler ("Not Where I Started
").

ned among the 20 best U.S. fiction writers under 40.

Cartoonist at heart

Mike Peters ought to play a cartoon-
ist in a TV sitcom. The Pulitzer Prize-
winning editorial cartoonist and creator
of the comic strip "Mother Goose &
Grimm" (which runs in the P-I) was a
bundle of ebullience during a recent Seattle
visit, zipping off sketches, engaging
strangers, boiling over with various enthu-
siasms. Peters seemed 52 going on 15.

Promoting his latest collection of
cartoons, "Grimmy: The Postman Always
Screams Twice" (Tor, \$10.95), and the
showing of some of his work in the
Animation USA gallery in Pioneer
Square, Peters was insistent that he has
found the best of both worlds in his
hectic career.

"The political cartoons give me the
most satisfaction," Peters related, "primari-
ly because in political cartoons, you're
doing two things — you're not just using
humor, you're making a point. In a
comic strip, you're just trying to be funny.

"I've been doing the strip now for 11
years and I love doing it. The strip is what
most people see of my work — it's in
over 700 papers, while my editorial carto-
ons are in 250. What gives me the
most satisfaction of all is when Newsweek
or the Washington Post Magazine uses
one of my editorial cartoons. My week is
happy or sad professionally if a cartoon
has made it into one of the major maga-
zines. Magazines are the great refrigera-
tor door for editorial cartoonists."



Top books

Here is The New York Times
best-seller list for the week end-
ing April 20, 1996.

This week	Fiction	Last week	Weeks on List
1	MOONLIGHT BECOMES YOU , by Mary Higgins Clark. (Simon & Schuster, \$24)	1	3
2	MALICE , by Danielle Steel. (Delacorte, \$24.95)	2	2
3	PRIMARY COLORS , by Anonymous. (Random House, \$24)	3	13
4	THE CELESTINE PROPHECY , by James Redfield. (Warner, \$17.95)	4	114
5	SHADOWS OF THE EMPIRE , by Steve Perry. (Spectra/Bantam, \$22.95)	6	3
6	THE HORSE WHISPERER , by Nicholas Evans. (Delacorte, \$23.95)	7	33
7	NEANDERTHAL , by John Darnton. (Random House, \$24)	—	1
8	ABSOLUTE POWER , by David Baldacci. (Warner, \$22.95)	11	13
9	IN THE PRESENCE OF THE ENEMY , by Elizabeth George. (Bantam, \$23.95)	10	7
10	FIRST KING OF SHANNARA , by Terry Brooks. (Del Rey/Ballantine, \$23.50)	8	5

This week	Nonfiction	Last week	Weeks on List
1	IN CONTEMPT , by Christopher A. Darden. (Regan Books/HarperCollins, \$26)	1	5
2	BLOOD SPORT , by James B. Stewart. (Simon & Schuster, \$25)	2	6
3	THE SEARCH FOR JUSTICE , by Robert Shapiro. (Warner, \$24.95)	5	4
4	UNDAUNTED COURAGE , by Stephen E. Ambrose. (Simon & Schuster, \$27.50)	3	9
5	RUSH LIMBAUGH IS A BIG FAT IDIOT , by Al Franken. (Delacorte, \$21.95)	4	14
6	MIDNIGHT IN GARDEN OF GOOD AND EVIL , by John Berendt. (Random House, \$23)	6	105
7	HITLER'S WILLING EXECUTIONERS , by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen. (Knopf, \$30)	12	3
8	THE DILBERT PRINCIPLE , by Scott Adams. (Harper, Business, \$20)	—	1
9	EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE , by Daniel Goleman. (Bantam, \$23.95)	8	31
10	THE RANTS , by Dennis Miller. (Doubleday, \$21.95)	11	4

This week	Advice/how-to/misc.	Last week	Weeks on List
1	SIMPLE ABUNDANCE , by Sara Ban Breathnach. (Warner, \$17.95)	1	5
2	MEN ARE FROM MARS, WOMEN ARE FROM VENUS , by John Gray. (HarperCollins, \$20)	3	154
3	THE ZONE , by Barry Sears with Bill Lawren. (Regan Books/HarperCollins, \$23)	2	7
4	JOAN LUNDEN'S HEALTHY COOKING , by Joan Lunden and Laura Morton. (Little, Brown, \$24.95)	4	2

The listings are based on computer-processed sales figures from 3,985 bookstores and from representative wholesalers with more than 50,000 retail outlets.

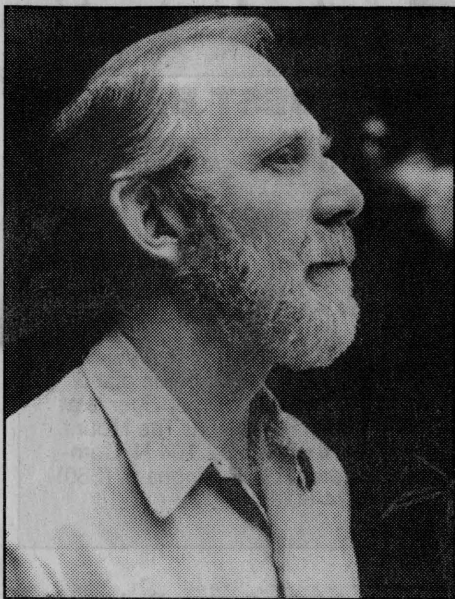
Northwest bookshelf

Brief summaries of recent books by Northwest authors and publishers, as well as books about regional topics.

■ **Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood**, by Rebecca Wells (HarperCollins, \$24). The Bainbridge Island actor and author pens a lively multigenerational novel about mothers and daughters, with action taking place in both Louisiana and the Olympic Peninsula.

■ **Scrambled Eggs & Whiskey**, by Hayden Carruth (Copper Canyon Press, \$25 hardback, \$15 paper). One of America's pre-eminent poets offers a masterful collection of new poems, haunting with its insights from a long and busy life; from the Port Townsend publisher.

■ **Bucking the Sun**, by Ivan Doig (Simon & Schuster, \$23). The much-beloved Seattle writer provides a powerful family novel set against the backdrop of an epic Northwest event in the 1930s — the building of the Fort Peck Dam across the Missouri River in Montana.



Ivan Doig

Writer makes Montana dam's history come alive

By MARY EVITT
Staff Writer

MOUNT VERNON — Ivan Doig tells a whopper of a tale in his newest book "Bucking the Sun."

In his latest Montana saga, Doig recounts the drama of lives drawn together in the historic building of Fort Peck Dam on the Missouri River. Peck, in northeastern Montana, is one of the largest earth-filled dams in the world. It stretches 4 miles across the Missouri.

Doig plays out the saga between 1933 and 1938, spanning the dam's construction from inception to completion. The story follows the Duff family, driven by the Great Depression from fertile Montana farmland to the federal earthworks.

Thousands flocked to work on the dam with picks, shovels, dredges and engineering skills. Many were construction experts from as distant as the Clyde Shipyards in Scotland. The dam offered the first living wage that many young people had earned. Saloon keepers, prostitutes and con men were part of the mix, a revelation to sobersides, teachers, nurses and matrons.

"It was a lip-smacking taste of life," he said.

Readings

■ Ivan Doig reads from "Bucking the Sun" at noon Saturday at Scotts Bookstore, 120 N. First St., Mount Vernon. For information call 336-6181.

Laboring in sweltering heat and frigid winters, the colorful horde fought to control the mighty Missouri while edging toward a tragedy that would entrap

some and free others.

A masterful storyteller, Doig makes history live. He grew up in White Sulphur Springs and Dupuyer, Montana. He now resides in Seattle. His nationally acclaimed books include "This House of Sky" and "Dancing at the Rascal Fair," stories enlivening Montana to folks who live outside its vast borders.

Doig invested three years in "Bucking the Sun." He sifted oral, written and pictorial accounts of the dam for at least 12 months. The original records are still kept in a basement at the dam, he said in an interview from Seattle.

Research led Doig to unearth a Skagit County connection to weave into his story. He examined the sternwheeler W.T. Preston in an Anacortes dry dock. The Preston regularly dredged the Skagit River before retirement. Doig needed detailed information about dredgers. "There is a plot turn in one of the cabins," Doig said.

This story is Doig's biggest scope of work in terms of characters, numbers of scenes. It's kind of cinematic in technique, he said. The characters' lives follow the dam's chronology, the key phases of construction.

The workers traveled from distant parts, bringing foreign accents and terminology. Doig learned distinctive lingo for the jobs. For instance, "tension spiders" was a term for a cobweb of bolts built to hold a culvert inside the dam, he said.

One of Doig's characters is a hairdresser. To learn about women's hairdos in the 1930s, Doig interviewed his wife Carol's hairdresser. And, of course, Doig interviewed construction workers who built the Peck and other dams. A Bellevue widow told Doig about her husband's work ethic, his sacrifices to learn welding, a skill worth hefty pay on construction projects such as the Grand Coulee Dam. The eager student drove a truck, slept a few hours and served as an apprentice welder until he was proficient.

Doig was born in 1939. A former ranch hand and magazine writer, he is a graduate of Northwestern University, with undergraduate and graduate degrees in journalism. He holds a doctorate in history from the University of Washington.

Although embarking on a national promotion tour for "Bucking the Sun," Doig's literary wheels are spinning toward the next novel. Next time, he promises a contemporary West Coast saga.

Doig is intrigued by pioneer and modern migrations, the cultural and environmental effects. He said "Americans have always been nomads and continue to be mobile."

A few years ago, Ivan Doig began researching what will surely be seen as one of the most remarkable novels to come out of the western literary landscape in some time. *BUCKING THE SUN*, a historical work set during the building of the Fort Peck Dam, opens with two bodies in a drowned truck. Two naked bodies.




GRAVEL DUMPING INTO UPSTREAM TOE OF FORT PECK DAM, JULY 19, 1935.

They're both named Duff, and they're both married... just not to each other.





The plot turns the pages, but Doig's history of the dam—the remarkable, precise documentation of what it was to work and eat and sleep and drink around the largest earth-filled dam in the world—gives this novel breath and life.

We have excerpted one of the later chapters.

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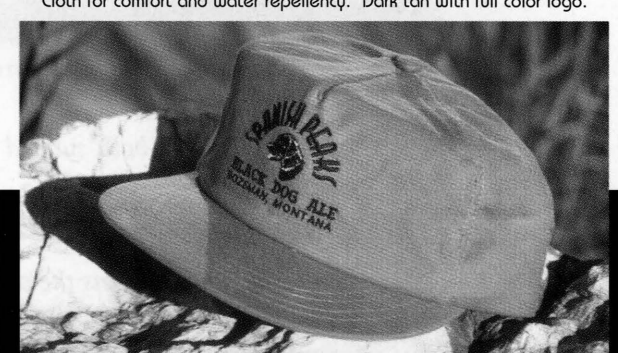
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BUCKING THE SUN

BY IVAN DOIG

To be published in May, 1996 by Simon & Schuster

Four days before the river was to be closed off, in the middle of an already complicated enough afternoon of jigsawing the dredgelines back together downstream from the dam, Owen was called to the field telephone.

"Sangster. Sounds like he's got a hair crosswise," the pipehaul fore-

man warned before handing him the phone.

"Owen," said the thin voice on the other end, "you better come see something."

"What, at the trestle again? I'll be right—"

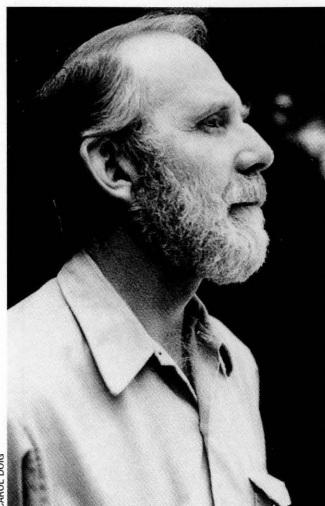
"Huh uh," the fieldphone voice now sounded as if it was having trou-

FORT PECK DAM, CHANNEL CLOSURE, JUNE 24, 1937.



WRITERS WEST: IVAN DOIG

BY WILLIAM KITTREDGE



CAROL DOIG

Back in the winter of 1978, I was hanging around in a Missoula bookstore, and the woman who owned it handed me a copy of the galleys of a book called *This House of Sky: Landscapes of a Western Mind*. I stayed up late and loved the reading—a memoir which starts with the death of Doig's mother, Berneta, in 1945, and tells the hard story of Ivan growing up with two full-scale westerners—his father, Charlie Doig, and his grandmother, Bessie Ringer. It was a narrative which rang of emotional accuracy and the difficult dead-right details of life on the blue-collar end of the stick out east of the Montana Rockies.

There had been *Winter in the Blood* in 1974, and *A River Runs Through It* in 1976, and now this book. The northern West was indeed going to have its own literature.

Reviewers agreed with me. *The Christian Science Monitor* said "This extraordinary, eloquent memoir heralds a powerful new American writer. Doig poignantly traces his Montana boyhood...As the land has haunted and shaped him, so his movingly beautiful prose haunts us."

Literary people in Montana got a chance to meet Ivan and his wife, Carol, when they came through on a book-signing tour, Ivan autographing copies with green felt-tipped pens until his fingers were blistered (literally), taking his time, enjoying the talk, a country man come home.

The next year, Doig was nominated for the

National Book Award. Like *A River Runs Through It*, his book had been well-rejected by the publishing establishment in the East, and then enjoyed great success (it sold something like 130,000 hardback copies).

In the spring of 1979, Bob Reid and I staged a literary conference in Missoula called "Who Owns the West." One of my proudest memories is of introducing Dorothy Johnson, Bud Guthrie, Norman Maclean, Ross Toole, and Ivan Doig to one another—had my heroes in one place for a weekend.

Since those days, Ivan has published a whole line of books: *Winter Brothers* (1980); *The Sea Runners* (1982); the McCaskill family trilogy, *English Creek* (1984), *Dancing at the Rascal Fair* (1987), *Ride With Me, Mariah Montana* (1990), and *Heart Earth* (1994).

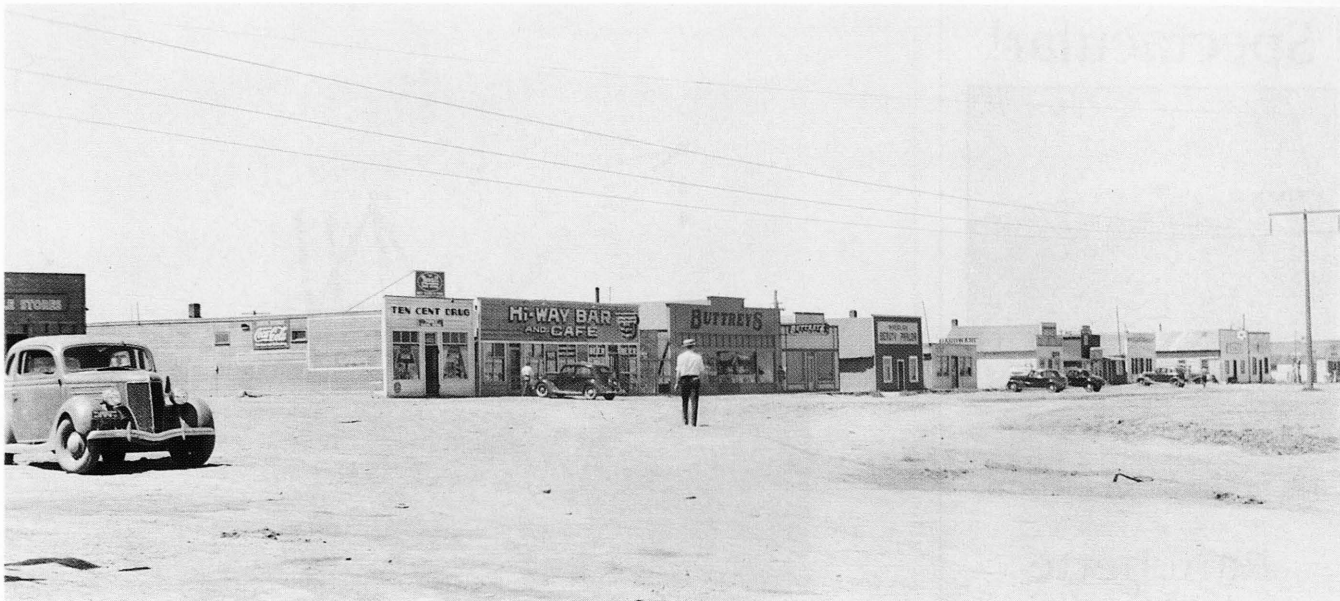
Literary people in the northern West owe a considerable debt to Ivan Doig. He helped prove to agents and editors in the East that books about this part of the world could sell, and sell very well. I owe him a personal debt—he and Carol were among those responsible for encouraging me to write my own memoirs.

But his most important gift is his ability to find significance in the texture of our lives. In the West, many of us live far way from the self-importance of the so-called "Great World." It's easy to feel cut off from things. Ivan Doig takes us seriously, reminding us that our doings—cooking, plowing, fixing fence, caring for the kids—are of consequence. In Doig's books we see ourselves and our society as in a mirror, defined, inherently complex and difficult, interesting and valuable

from
THIS HOUSE OF SKY: LANDSCAPES OF A WESTERN MIND
HARCOURT BRACE & COMPANY, 1978

Soon before daybreak on my sixth birthday, my mother's breathing wheezed more raggedly than ever, then quieted. And then stopped.

The remembering begins out of that new silence. Through the time since, I reach back along my father's tellings and around the urgings which would have me face about and forget, to feel into these oldest shadows for the first sudden edge of it all.



WHEELER, MONTANA: A WORKER'S VILLAGE BY THE DAM.

ble believing itself. "This is at the truss bridge again."

His first look at the slumped earth, within spitting distance of the truss bridge, sent Owen white-faced. Sangster's was whiter.

The slipped section of fill resembled a muddy scallop shell perhaps two hundred feet long and a hundred high. It had slid, still in one arched piece, several feet down into the river channel. Scoured away underneath by the flood, loosened by the rapid fall of the floodwater, who knew what the precise cause was: it had slid. The arc of gap where the shell edge had pulled away from the dam was spookily neat, as if a hill had just taken an innocent step forward from the mountain of earthfill. There was nothing innocent about it. The shifted heap of fill was throwing enormous weight down against the main pier of the railroad bridge.

"It holding okay?" Owen tore his eyes away from the sickening dam slippage to ask about the health of Sangster's bridge.

"Not really." Sangster even still sounded pale. "Out of line about a foot already, and more to come. That pier's cracked."

FOUR YEARS OF CALM PLANNING
AND TEMPERATE ENGINEERING
ABOUT HOW TO MOST HANDILY CLOSE
OFF THE MISSOURI RIVER HAD
TO BE FED INTO THE MEATGRINDER
OF THE NEXT TWELVE HOURS.

Owen spoke six or eight expletives, rapid-fire.

"I agree," Sangster said. "But we've got to do something besides cuss at it."

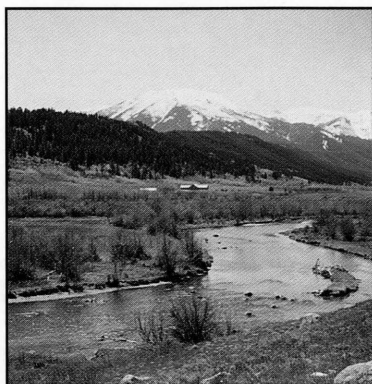
They knew they had only minutes before the official car delivered Colonel Parmenter and Major Santee and general hell.

They already had the gravel cars going by the time the Ad Building contingent descended. First thing first, everyone could see that much. If they lost the truss bridge they lost the railroad loop, the key to plugging the river; they would lose the entire dam schedule, they

from
DANCING AT THE RASCAL FAIR
ATHENEUM, 1987

West. West, the mountains as steady as a sea wall. The most eminent of them in fact was one of the gray-rock palisades that lay like reefs in the surge of the Rockies, a straight up-and-down cliff perhaps the majority of a mile high and, what, three or more miles long. A stone partition between ground and sky, even-rimmed as though it had been built by hand, countless weathers ago.

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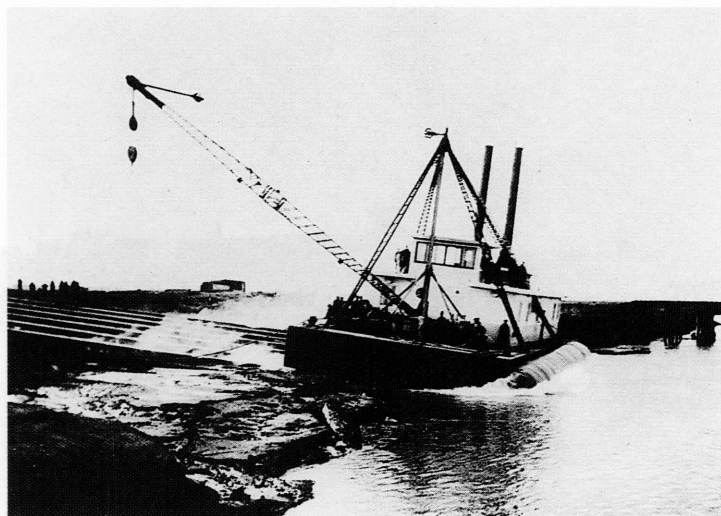
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DERRICK BOAT BEING LAUNCHED, FORT PECK DAM.

would lose all advantage over the river for Christ knew how long. Thirty timely railcars of gravel, dumped on the weak side of the cracked concrete pier to temporarily shore it up, saved them from that at least for the moment. But now came the question of holding together both the bridge's underpinning and the channel shoulder of the dam until they could get the river plugged.

Owen and Sangster and everybody in the vicinity nervously sized up the Corps officers as the briefing was convened there at the river. Colonel Parmenter appeared to be wishing for the Philippines. Major Santree looked a little smirky, as he often did when things went wrong.

The colonel made short work of discussion. "What about this, Duff?"

What about what? What the floodwater did along here, so that neither I nor God Almighty can guarantee you that chunk of earthfill won't move some more, won't cave off and take the bridge with it, in the next four days or the next four minutes? That there was only, what, one chance in five that we'd get the highest water of the whole project this spring, but that's exactly the thing we did get? Or that what I most want right now, the one thing I can think of to maybe stabilize the fill that's slipped, is to have high water up against it again? What are you going to think of any of my whats, Colonel?

Owen took the deep, deep breath needed to go for broke.

Fort Peck woke up to dynamite at dawn.

The detonation, at 4:20 a.m. sharp, breached the dike which had been holding back the riverwater above the tunnel portals. That quick, with one *ka-BOOM* and a dirt geyser of blown dike, the map of the Missouri River changed. Now the river forked at the dam, the main flow still tumbling through the channel but an easternly eddy swirling its way into the tunnel inlets. It was a bit past dawn when the first riverwater made its passage through the tunnels and surged into the outlet channel below the dam, frothing white against the confining concrete.

At the main channel, at the truss bridge, four years of calm planning and temperate engineering about how to most handily close off the Missouri River had to be fed into the meatgrinder of the next twelve hours. Improvising every inch of the way, they were going to make the river into the counterweight proposed by Owen Duff, by backing the water up against the sloughed section of fill like a liquid retaining wall. Which meant plugging the river here and now, at the downstream end of the channel, instead of upstream at the

trestle the intended three days from now.

"Owen, where the hell's that dispatcher, we got to get rolling on—"

Which meant that the forty-five-car trainload of plugging boulders could not be jauntily dropped straight into the river—the side girders of the truss bridge were in the way—but needed to be unloaded at both ends of the bridge, spilled down onto gravel approaches to the river.

"I know, I know, Colonel, it's not the greatest field office there ever was, but it's all the ready-built crew could skid over here to us in a hurry. What exactly is it? Well, sir, it's a two-holer."

Which meant that the crane barge laboring in the middle of the river current had to grapple the boulders from the gravel banks one by one, to build a rough sill out into the channel.

"Okay, Max, so this is slower than the wrath of God, but we don't have any choice but to keep that crane boat at—"

Which meant that the rail fleet of gravel cars couldn't let fly with their massive plug of gravel until the boulder sill was firmly there to keep it from washing away.

"Oh, Jesus, it won't be done until WHEN?"

To the engineers, this was like being trapped in a very long game of checkers when they had been all set to play bombs-away.

Hold, you so-and-so. There's no damn reason for you to be falling into the river.

Owen wasn't addressing this thought to the truss bridge although, heaven knew by the blue smoke of invective and energy he was lending in support of Sangster and it, he did not want to see the steel span hit the water either.

Either nobody savvies or nobody's saying—not even you, Max—that the truss

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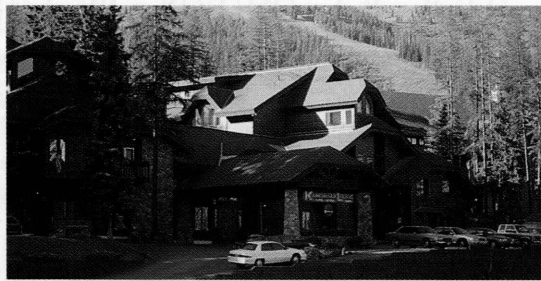


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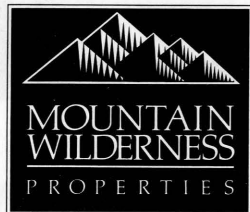
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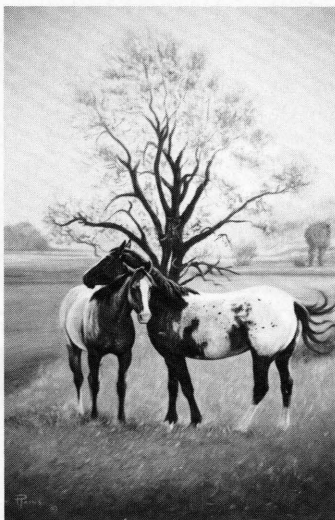


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bridge could be only the first symptom here.

Whatever else he was at, through this longest day, Owen kept the slipped section of damfill guardedly in sight, forever in mind.

Just hold. That's not asking such a hell of a lot, is it? Sit there, another few hours is all, and then I can tend to you. If he ran the arithmetic of the situation through his head once this day, he ran it two hundred times. The site of the slippage, the core pool, the distance between: by every calculation he could think of, the core pool sitting dumb, fat and happy up there in the east half of the dam should be safely far enough from where that odd shell of fill had given way; look, millions of other cubic yards there in the channel shoulder supporting the core pool hadn't given way. Result: the slippage as it now stood didn't necessarily mean that the core pool was going to start leaking out of it any minute and the leak would increase to a gush in less time than it took to tell about it and the gush would speedily grow to be a breach and the breach majestically would cave away and the entire sonofabitching core pool would rush out in a 150-foot-high avalanche of water and fill, tearing the guts out of the dam.

Owen Duff, engineer, knew the slipped spot didn't necessarily mean that.

Owen Duff, alarmed member of the human race, Fort Peck sub-group, was not so sure. This version, the one he had to traipse around in while big rocks got fumbled into place beneath the bridge, would not breathe easy until he had the plugged Missouri and a Niagara of freshly piped dredge material both at work shoring up that slipped spot.

So hold, damn it, okay?

The bridge pier needed helpings of gravel every so often, and so Sangster at least had spurts of being



FORT PECK DAM, NOV. 25, 1936, WORKMEN, ENGINEERS
AND FOREMEN.

BY MIDAFTERNOON, OFFICERS
AND ENGINEERS WERE RUNNING
ON COFFEE AND HABIT.


busy at that, having the train dispatcher roll another thirty-car cut of dumper cars in, which Owen envied him. He himself had the pipeline crew hauling and installing along the channel shoulder and had called in the bullgang to help out with the last needed section of the strutworks there, and all four of his dredges were standing ready downriver, so that as soon as the river was safely plugged they could pour material like mad into this neck of the channel and backfill the slipped slope. Begin to end the dam, as well. Oh, there'd be another full year, fifteen months maybe, of building it up and topping it off. But the vee of the river channel was the last gap, the four mile valley between the chosen bluffs had shrunk down to it. Owen had ready or was getting ready everything he could think of to throw at the channel. But for now he was reduced to scenery inspector, standing watching the ungodly slow progress of the rock sill under the bridge.

The river boiled around the crane barge, which stood there in mid-stream like a patient broad-butted fisherman, its long boom swinging as it brought a ton-and-a-half boulder into the water, going back for another.

Reporting for pipeline work, the bullgang watched the scurry and commotion around the truss bridge with envy.

"Not much call for guys with hammers in that, is there?" someone asked wistfully.


"Afraid not," answered their foreman, Jepperson. "No, most of you, just whack away at setting up the next section of struts. I goddamn well know you're going to spend most of your time gawking over there, but try and look



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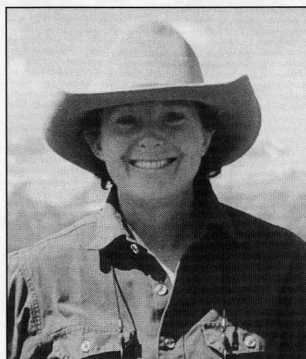
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busy once in a while." Jepperson shifted his weight. "But four of you get to be gravelmasters."

A silence settled on the crew.

"What this is," Jepperson went on, "they're gonna double up on the gravel dumping. Constantly run trains until they get the river held. The four guys up there," he jerked his head in the direction of the railroad bridge, "who're used to doing it will show you how. Oh, and you'll draw an extra two bits an hour." Someone sang out "Our chance to be big rich!" and there was a little laughter.

"So, let's say—" Jepperson made a show of looking around "—Morrie...Livingston...Duff..."

Not I, said the man named Me.

The expression on Darius put a sourball look on the foreman as well. "Not you, Bonnie Prince Darry. Other Duff, Neil there."

Neil bit a corner of his mouth, but stepped forward.

"And..." Jepperson shopped through the crew for one more. He stopped as Birdie Hinch moved indicatively. The three the foreman had named so far were all much younger, fitter. "Birdie, sorry, but I'm supposed to send guys who can run like chicken thief—" He broke off, then grinned. "Yeah, okay. And Birdie."

By midafternoon, officers and engineers were running on coffee and habit. They had all been up through the night, pitching in on the final readying of the inlet channels and the tunnels for the river diversion, and ever since early morning they had watched boulder by boulder as the sill gradually grew, and they were close to becoming zombies before Sangster cured them with:

"That's as much as we can do with rock. Hadn't we better go to gravel, Colonel?"

The quartet sent to be apprentice gravelmasters were at the end of the bridge, receiving the fastest education of their lives. The four men already working the gravel cars which periodically shored up the ailing

THEY FINISHED THE FIRST
TRAIN, TWO THOUSAND
TONS OF GRAVEL GONE
TO THE RIVER BOTTOM,
AND THE NEXT TRAIN
IMMEDIATELY CAME.

bridge pier were showing them the routine. There was a catwalk between the truss girders and where the train ran. Scrambling along that, you had to keep pace with a given dumper car and when the shout of "Pull!" came, reach down and yank the big springpin which opened one of the two hopper doors beneath the railcar. Your partner on the other side of the train opened the other hopper door at the same time and the dumper car was emptied of fifty tons of gravel, falling with an appalling roar and hellish cloud of rockdust into the river. This had to be done constantly at a trot—the trains were not to stop, not for anything—and the newcomers' respect for the gravelmasters rapidly rose by hundreds of percent.

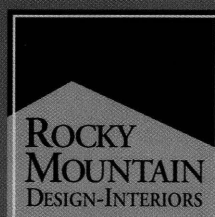
This was Sangster's show now, the gravel plug to be dumped down through the bridge car by car and train by train, and Owen caught a fleeting look of gratitude on the bespectacled man when he told him he was clearing out of his way, going up to a perch in the bridge girders for a ringside seat.

He was startled to see Neil, below on the catwalk, then wished he'd thought of that himself, getting Neil assigned out of the bullgang to perform this. With a little softsoap and pressure, he could have wangled Bruce onto the gravelmaster crew too. Wouldn't that have been something, Owen thought to himself, twin Duff brothers plugging the Missouri.

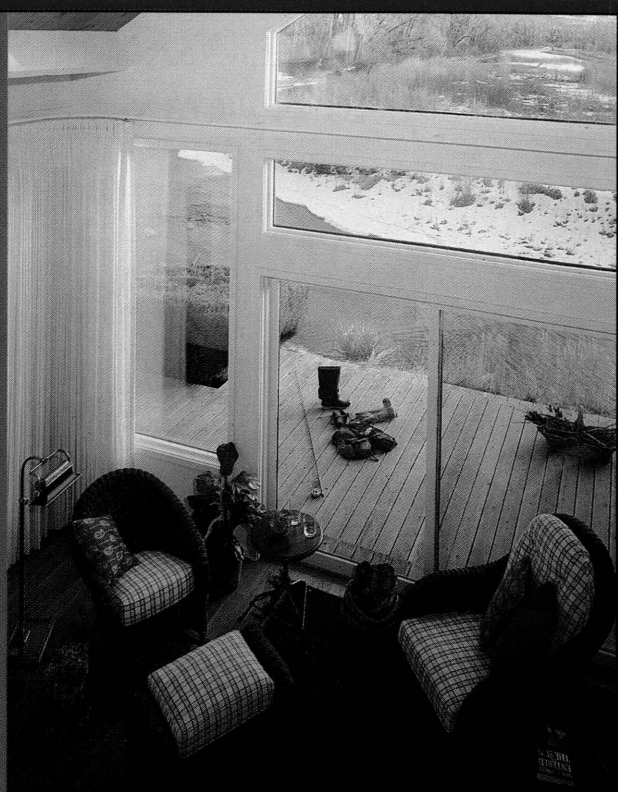
Neil developed a lope to keep up with the dumper cars, although Birdie Hinch somehow managed simply by scampering. The four pairs of men ran a strange looping race, the lead pair dumping their car of gravel

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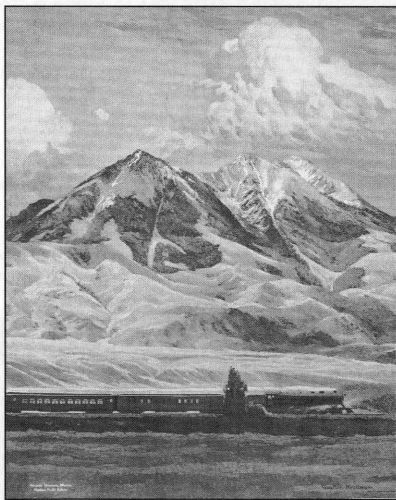
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and turning to run back past the other three sets of men to the fourth dumper car back in line, following beside it until the "Pull!" signal again. They finished the first train, two thousand tons of gravel gone to the river bottom, and the next train immediately came...

Every time a carload was dumped now, some gravel was swept away in the current as if the Missouri was determined to deliver it to St. Louis, but some stayed, a loose and shifting pyramid there under the water.

Neil, sprinting and wondering along with the other seven gravelmasters how much more of this there would be, how much more they could take, glanced up at Owen whenever he could. Braced there in the girders like a spiffed-up steelworker in a Stetson and pressed khakis, Owen looked somehow distracted, gazing off at the channel shoulder instead of watching the bombardier-bursts of gravel into the river. *What do I expect, though, that he's going to act like some kind of radio announcer up there calling a fight? "Here's a haymaker from Neil Duff...followed by a wallop of gravel from Birdie Hinch...but the Missouri is absorbing all the punishment they can throw at it so far." Huh uh. Owen is going to go about it his own way, whatever it is.*

Catching himself at this, knowing he was going a little giddy from exertion, Neil concentrated on his running, staying exactly even with the next dumper car, the little hop-skip when "Pull!" was shouted again and the thunder of gravel.

He could feel it all, Owen could, through the bridge. The slow rumble of the train, the concussive force as each carload was dumped: the incessant rhythms came up through his shoes, and sideways out of the girders into his gripping hands. Owen knew better but he could wish, couldn't he, that he and the bridge were taking into themselves all the tremble of plugging the river, that none could reach and dislodge the slipped area of fill. So far, the wishing had worked.

In the half-dusk, the gravel dumping slowly but unstopably gained, the hail of pebbles building up in a rough slurry which would show for an instant above the river-water and then slip from sight.

Tired as they were, the gravelmasters worked like acrobats now, bouncing to the catwalk railing to peek down at the effect of each dumpload, then back into the rhythm of catching their next dumper car, yanking the springpin—

In the end it was a carload dumped by Birdie Hinch and a very tired Neil that brought the shout:

"That one's staying dry!"

Neil scooted to the railing beneath Owen's perch and the two of them stared down. In the vast wallow of gravel mush below, a low conelike heap—as Darius would have said, "Not two hands higher than a duck"—was a drier gray. The Missouri, by just that much, was captured now.

BSJ

which effectively soothes her fears. The enigmatic Mrs. Brown enters the lives of Debbie and Robin in "Art Work," the story of a two-income family in need of a maid. Robin is a painter who confines himself to only one bright splash of color per large, neutral canvas. He is repelled by Mrs. Brown in her wildly-printed and conspicuously-stitched clothing. His wife Debbie despairs at his "resolute attempts to unsettle, humiliate or drive away Mrs. Brown." The intimate yet distant relationship the women maintain, plus the neat turnaround at story's end made this my favorite.

The final story, "Chinese Lobster," depicts two professors in a restaurant trying to deal with an unbalanced, suicidal student who hates Matisse, even though her degree focuses on his work.

If this collection of Byatt's incisive, complex writing leaves you hoping for more, she has just released a novel, **Babel Tower** (\$25.95 hardback).

- Lois Hughes -

city of common business subjects. These include marketing, pretending to work, Machiavellian tactics, and swearing your way to success. **The Dilbert Principle** doesn't pull any punches in its cynical inquiry into the corporate sector and, to help illustrate his position, Adams incorporates a sea of Dilbert cartoons to add more humor to an already hilarious book.

When the absurdity of **The Dilbert Principle** seems to go too far, Adams includes a wealth of personal experiences and e-mailed testimonies from fans across corporate America. These true stories certainly prove that fact is funnier than fiction, and serve as the inspiration and foundation for the cartoonist's vision.

Though **The Dilbert Principle** is Adams' eighth book, it is his first textual account of the world he created in his comic strip *Dilbert*. Fans should not fear the new format; if you are looking for a fast and funny read, **The Dilbert Principle** is the book for you.

- Hans Isaacson -

stroke, but Siddalee and her mother Viviane are the central characters.

The narrations in the first half of the book happen in the early 1960s, those in the second half date from thirty years later, and the umbrella over them all is the extraordinary character of the ordinary.

Early in the novel, the pre-adolescent Siddalee describes a dream she sometimes has during the summer, and her dream constitutes a kind of mystical experience. In her dream Siddalee finds herself mysteriously sharing the same body space with Edythe Spevey, a girl Siddalee and her friends ridicule, although secretly Siddalee feels compassion for Edythe. In her dream Siddalee and Edythe swing high in Siddalee's back yard swing. Below her she sees all the ordinary things, but they all "have holy sparks in them." If people could only see those sparks. "Somehow the whole world looks like little altars everywhere."

- Mitch Finley -

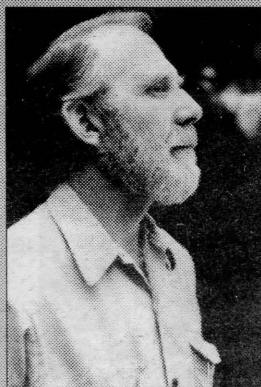
When psychologist Howard Gardner introduced the theory of multiple intelligences with **Frames of Mind** in 1983, he assumed his theory would have limited interest, and that interest would be among those in his field.

He was wrong. Psychologists barely acknowledged the book, but educators and the general public made him a star. The idea that people have varying capacities that rate as intelligences as much as those traditionally measured through the IQ test is particularly egalitarian and fitting to an American philosophy of education.

In addition to linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligence, Gardner names musical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, inter- and intra-personal as equally important intelligences. Educating in "the spirit" of multiple intelligences takes time and teachers and money. Every child needs special education. It's not competency tests. It's not uniform education. It's an individual thing—an American thing.

- Catherine Merritt -

IVAN DOIG INTERVIEW: "THE MONTANA IN MY MIND"



An Interview by Mitch Finley
Montana-born and bred Ivan Doig is well known at Auntie's, having packed the house for readings here on several occasions. Doig has been a ranch hand, newspaperman, and magazine editor and writer. The author of five novels and three works of nonfiction, he received the Distinguished Achievement Award from the Western Literature Association in 1989, and **This House of Sky** was nominated for the National Book Award.

Ivan Doig lives in Seattle. He will visit Auntie's Monday, June 24, at 7 p.m. to read from and discuss his new novel, **Bucking the Sun**. On May 5, Doig spoke

from Washington, D.C. with Auntie's publicity director, Mitch Finley.

Auntie's: Good morning, Ivan! How is the book tour going?

Ivan Doig: Oh fine, I think. It started in San Francisco—geez, I'm losing track—a week or ten days ago, and the book had already been on the *San Francisco Chronicle's* bestseller list for two weeks before I even showed up. Things went great down there, and I've been going to classy independent bookstores.

Auntie's: We're looking forward to having you back at Auntie's in June.

Doig: Yeah, that's always fun, and I

haven't read there since you moved into the new store. I've been in, but not to do a reading.

Auntie's: Perhaps you could say something about your new book, **Bucking the Sun**. Some of your earlier books were closely related to your own experience growing up in Montana...

Doig: That's true in terms of the general ranching experience, and the general Scottish experience, but the earlier books didn't have that much to do with the Doigs and what happened to them. The Duffs, in this new book, are even more a family of my imagination, I guess.

(continued on page 5)

Ivan Doig -continued-

I kept hearing about the Fort Peck experience when I was researching the earlier books. I'd be talking to people—well, all across the northern tier there, in Montana, but also in Washington—and time and time again I'd be asking about the 1930's, and they'd say something like, "Well, when I got on at Fort Peck," and I realized that Fort Peck Dam, and that first wage, or that first drinking spree, and that first love affair, maybe, is all a kind of talisman for that generation. So many of them look back on it as where they got a starting point, got a launch into life. I had known that the dam had been famous in its time. From my journalism background, I knew it had been on the first cover of *Life* magazine. In comparable terms today it was like the first thing to show up on the Internet. There was that famous photo essay by Margaret Bourke White.

Then I got to looking at the dimensions of the Fort Peck Dam project. . . and it was even bigger than I had known or guessed. The actual dimensions of the thing are four miles long and as high as a twenty-five story building. I got to looking at the dredging equipment in the old issues of a weekly magazine for engineers, *Engineering News Record*.

I had wanted to use this plot turn, of people within one family who weren't wearing wedding bands from each other, being found in fatal and compromising circumstances. I had wanted to use that plot for awhile, so five couples seemed to be enough to have a lot of possible combinations on the mystery element, but yet be handle-able. Then you have the wild card of the sheriff, who is actually one of my favorite characters that I've ever written about, and it all added up to a book that I had been building my writing muscles for.

Auntie's: What did you find most satisfying about writing *Bucking the Sun*?

Doig: I am really pleased that people are reading it, and they're interested in the dam, and they're not overwhelmed. I was able to learn enough about the Fort Peck dam project to know when to quit talking about it. A writer can easily get too wound up on a topic like that. . .

I counted it up, and there are 350-some scenes in this book, and when I was doing that count, *The New Yorker* came out with a profile of Martin Scorsese on editing his newest movie, supposedly the most sophisticated, most difficult movie, called "Casino." He had 260 scenes to deal with, and I thought, well hell! I had 350

Authors and Events

Saturday, June 1, 7:30 p.m.....	Patrick Howell
Monday, June 3, 7:30 p.m.....	Jack Olsen
Tuesday, June 4, 7:00 p.m.	Women's Words
Thursday, June 6, 7:30 p.m.	Don Gayton
Saturday, June 8, 7:30 p.m.	William Kittredge
Monday, June 10, 7:30 p.m.....	Kim Barnes
Tuesday, June 11, 7:00 p.m.	Auntie's Book Group: <u>Like Water for Chocolate</u>
Wednesday, June 12, 7:00 p.m.....	Time to Travel Travelogue, Thailand
Thursday, June 13, 7:30 p.m.	Blaine Harden
Saturday, June 15, 1-4 p.m.	Sarah Hall: piano
Saturday, June 15, 7:30 p.m.	Florence Boutwell
Tuesday, June 18, 7:00 p.m.	Spokane Open Poetry Association
Wednesday, June 19, 7:30 p.m.....	Paul Meyer
Thursday, June 20, 7:30 p.m.	Jeff Shaara
Monday, June 24, 7:00 p.m.....	Ivan Doig
Wednesday, June 26, 7:30 p.m.....	Jeffrey Schwartz, M.D.
Thursday, June 27, 7:30 p.m.	Michael Frome
Monday, July 1, 7:30 p.m.	Rebecca Wells
Tuesday, July 2, 7:00 p.m.	Women's Words
Monday, July 8, 7:30 p.m.	Gary Ferguson
Tuesday, July 9, 7:00 p.m.	Auntie's Book Group: <u>Stones For Ibarra</u>
Wednesday, July 10, 7:30 p.m.....	David Quammen
Thursday, July 11, 7:30 p.m.....	Randall Clifford
Tuesday, July 16, 7:00 p.m.	Spokane Open Poetry Society
Thursday, July 18, 7:30 p.m.....	Sondra Shulman
Saturday, July 20, 1-4 p.m.	Sarah Hall, piano
Saturday, July 20, 7:30 p.m.	James Lee Burke
Wednesday, July 24, 7:30 p.m.....	Stimson Bullitt
Thursday, July 25, 7:30 p.m.....	Assoc. for Dev. of Human Potential
Saturday, July 27, 7:30 p.m.	Hanneke Ippisch
Tuesday, August 6, 7:00 p.m.	Women's Words

so far the reviews say that has gone fine. Well, I'm tickled with that.

Auntie's: Where exactly did the title, **Bucking the Sun**, come from?

Doig: It was a saying I picked up from my dad. When we'd be driving in the pickup against sunset or sunrise, you know, he might cuss a little and say, "Dammit, we've gotta buck the sun here." I took it to be at least a Montana-ism, if not a Western-ism, as in "bucking the odds," or "bucking the tide," persevering against an obstacle.

Auntie's: What did you find most difficult or challenging as you wrote this book?

Doig: Well, . . . probably learning the engineering, and the politics of the period, the 1930's. Trying to savvy the dam project, because there were several huge but intricate construction projects which eventually fit together to make the dam. To keep abreast of what the engineers were doing, I think that was certainly the trickiest part of the research.

Auntie's: Did you consult engineers on this?

Doig: Yeah, I did. . . Particularly, I have a friend who's an electrical engineer. He could keep me abreast on the electrical dredging, things of that nature.

Auntie's: When exactly was the dam being built?

Doig: 1933 to '38.

Auntie's: So this is contemporary with the construction of Grand Coulee?

Doig: They were going on at the same time. I think Grand Coulee had a little head start. Hoover Dam had just been completed. Bonneville was being built at the same time. Shasta, down in California, was being built at the same time. It was an era of colossal dam building.

Auntie's: What is it like, writing about Montana while living in Seattle?

Doig: Well, it means I can just hole up and get the job done. The language is still in my head, a lot of it, from a generation or two older than I am. And I can always go back and take a look at what I'm writing about and talk with people, and so on. It's not that great a remove, it doesn't seem to me. Most of the time I'm writing about the Montana in my mind. I think that's what writers tend to do. Joyce wrote, "as far as we know, the best book about Dublin after he went to Paris. He has his own Dublin in his head."

Auntie's: In **Ride With Me, Mariah Montana** you

Tuesday, August 20, 7:00 p.m. Betty J. Eadie

Tuesday, August 27, 7:00 p.m. Spokane Open Poetry Association

Bulletin Board

Events of Interest

Inland Northwest Pride Art Show : June 1-16

Expressing the feelings and life experience of regional artists on what it is like to be gay, or lesbian, bisexual, or transgender, this show will be on display at Galaxy Gallery on the second floor of the Liberty Building. You are most welcome to view and to buy!

"Working Writers" Seeks Members

Two members of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators are starting a new writers' critique group. Known as "Working Writers," they invite writers of all genres to come and help create a supportive and professional atmosphere in which to hone writing skills. They will meet the fourth Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. in Auntie's conference room, with the first meeting to be held June 25. If you are actively seeking publication, bring copies of your work in progress and plenty of creative energy. Call Mary (838-5992) or Meaghan (448-5356) for information.

included quite a bit of humor. Is there much humor in this new one?

Doig: Often, not so much with other audiences, but with university audiences, people are a little afraid to find my stuff as funny as I hope it is. So I sometimes tell 'em, "Look, don't be afraid to laugh!"

There is some pretty funny stuff in **Bucking the Sun**. In this one, part of what the New Deal bureaucrats were aiming for was to put people to work even if they could only handle a pick and shovel, or run a wheelbarrow. So here were people who had been droughted out, or somehow forced out of farms and ranches across the Montana Highline, northern Montana there, and working one of the biggest construction projects in the world. Very often they find themselves in over their heads on the work.

So I have a scene early in the book where two of the younger brothers in the Duff family have this attitude that, "We haven't met anything yet that can stop us." They offer to take on a carpentry job

of laying the floor of a saloon in this boom town that grew up around the dam project. . . Then after they've shaken hands on the project, it occurs to them, how long have they got to do this? The owner looks at them and says, "Tonight!" So there's a scene of these guys absolutely pounding their arms off. They discover that the floor is hardwood because it's going to be a dance hall, which makes it harder to hammer the nails, and on and on. . .

Auntie's: Does Spokane appear in **Bucking the Sun**?

Doig: There is a scene where my engineer characters, facing terrific pressures at Fort Peck, stop overnight in Spokane and make love in an auto court. These are the ones with auto stalls on either side of the room, like they had in the 1930's, so you had this privacy. So Spokane figures as a great opportunity for Owen and Charlie and Duff. They go on to Grand Coulee, and Owen plans to send a telegram: "COULEE DAM UNPASSABLE UP."

Author ! Author !

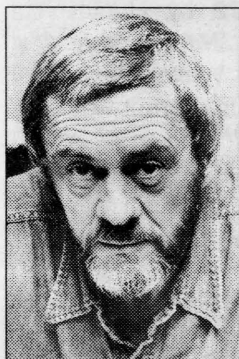
Patrick Howell

Saturday, June 1, 7:30 p.m.

In his new book, **A Spiritguide**, author Patrick Howell, S.J., enables the reader to undertake or continue his or her own spiritual journey, especially after undergoing a life crisis. Howell explores themes such as courage, conversion, and desire as avenues to mystery and personal forgiveness, and imagination as a source of hope.

Jack Olsen

Monday, June 3, 7:30 p.m.



Well known in the Spokane area for his bestseller, **Son**, the gripping narrative of the Kevin Coe/South Hill Rapist story, Jack Olsen returns with another true account. **Salt of the Earth** is about a family's tragedies and a mother's indomitability. It is a dramatic and cathartic elegy to those whose lives are transformed by violence.

Don Gayton

Thursday, June 6, 7:30 p.m.

How many take the time to ponder deeply the impact of nature on our busy lives? In **Landscapes of the Interior: Re-Explorations of Nature and the Human Spirit** Canadian range ecologist and writer Don Gayton deliberately set out to reexplore key natural landscapes in his life, and to open himself to their essences, resonances and mythic connections—their effect on his inner landscape.

William Kittredge

Saturday, June 8, 7:30 p.m.



In his new book, **Who Owns the West?** William Kittredge offers a sustained meditation on what it means to be a Westerner today. The book is both a celebration of the new West and an elegy for an old West that is fading. Kittredge describes growing up in the highland desert country of Eastern Oregon, "an ancient horseback world that is mostly gone." Terry Tempest Williams says: "When I think about our beloved American West and the chal-

Jeff Shaara

Thursday, June 20, 7:30 p.m.

In 1966, Jeff Shaara's father, Michael Shaara, took his family to visit the battlefields of Gettysburg, Penn. There he was inspired to write his 1975 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, **The Killer Angels**, which sold more than 2 million copies. In **Gods and Generals**, Jeff Shaara brilliantly sustains his late father's vision in an epic novel that follows the main characters of **The Killer Angels**—Robert E. Lee, Winfield Scott Hancock, and Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain—through the decade leading up to the Battle of Gettysburg.

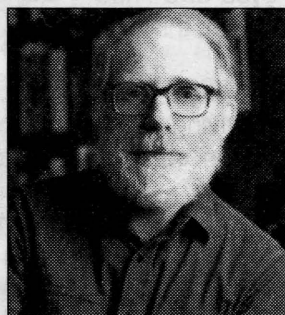
Rawdon Tomlinson

Saturday, June 22, 7:30 p.m.

In his new collection of poems, **Deep Red**—which won the 1996 Colorado Book Award for poetry—Denver poet Rawdon Tomlinson finds his place among big names of western poetry such as Philip Levine and William Stafford. A poetry reviewer for Booklist wrote: "This is a powerful collection, not to be missed."

Ivan Doig

Monday, June 24, 7:00 p.m.



The author of some of the most popular books written in the last ten years, including **This House of Sky and Dancing at the Rascal Fair**, Ivan Doig checks in with a novel that is already a bestseller—**Bucking the Sun**. Doig takes on three generations of the Duff clan, who have been pushed off their bottom land farm by the construction of Fort Peck Dam,

only to take relief work on the gigantic project. **Bucking the Sun** examines the lives of an extraordinary American family caught up in a monumental national undertaking in "the fever time of history."

Jeffrey Schwartz, M.D.

Wednesday, June 26, 7:30 p.m.

From Howard Hughes to Howard Stern, more than 1 out of 40 Americans are afflicted with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), a disease more common than diabetes or asthma. In **Brain Lock: Free Yourself from Obsessive-Compulsive Behavior**, Jeffrey M. Schwartz, M.D., outlines a new, scientifically proven program which utilizes a drug-free psychotherapy technique known as cognitive-behavioral therapy to cause systematic chemical changes in the brains of people

phy. Based on Quammen's eight years of global research, his book is an extraordinary blend of science, adventure, travel, history, and even detective work.

Randall Clifford

Thursday, July 11, 7:30 p.m.

In his novel, **Castling**, Spokane author Randall Clifford tells an exciting tale about Jim Ludwig's plan to give back to the people the most valuable of natural resources. Hemp. This is a novel of ecology, environmental conscience, responsibility, and love, not to mention government corruption, corporate greed, and the manipulation of America by entrenched powers.

Sondra Shulman

Thursday, July 18, 7:30 p.m.

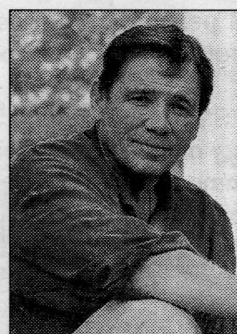


Seattle author Sondra Shulman's new novel, **Moon People**, is an entertaining study of Jewish people in Miami and those who care for them, prey on them, and murder them. The main characters serve only Mammon. Reenie is a compulsive gambler who takes

advantage of elderly people. Zauberman has murdered for money and violated the grave of a friend to get a platinum watch.

James Lee Burke

Saturday, July 20, 7:30 p.m.



In his new Dave Robicheaux crime novel, Montana/Louisiana author James Lee Burke hits another home run for his legions of fans. At the center of **Cadillac Jukebox** is Aaron Crown, a piney-woods anachronism who made his living poaching deer, before he murdered—everyone thought—the most famous NAACP leader in Louisiana. Twenty-eight years later, Crown insists he's innocent. Enter: Dave Robicheaux. Resist

going to the lake or plan to come back into town from the lake for this one! Beautifully designed new **Dave Robicheaux tee-shirts and hats** available now!

Stimson Bullitt

Wednesday, July 24, 7:30 p.m.

All his life, the author has belonged to Seattle with

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SIDE, TOO

SHERIDAN COUNTY NEWS

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Cattle Women

By Dorothy Bergh

Already into June. 'Tis the season for sports. Baseball, the NBA Finals, golf tournaments, races and rodeos and vacations. all of these should see a lot of beef getting the grill treatment all over the country. There are a lot of stir-fry combinations to try. If my sugar pod peas bear fruit, I intend to make use of them, or see that somebody does.

Looking at the last three issues of the Beef Business Bulletin, the National Cattlemen's Beef Association has been busy on a lot of issues and meeting with congressional leaders.

over a lot of markets.

In their office in Washington, D.C., the Center for Public Policy keeps abreast of Property rights legislation, rangeland management reform, environmental concerns like waste management incentives, to name a few. When legislative action is called for they are there to inform us when particular bills need support or opposition from the grassroots at home on the range.

This week is the mid-year gathering of the Montana Stockgrowers in Missoula. There will be some interesting sessions during the three days. Cattle

—Editor's Notes—

In their book "Montana: A History Of Two Centuries", histories Michael Malone and Richard Roeder wrote this: "At the time of its completion, Fort Peck stood as the greatest earthen dam in the world: 242 feet above the river bed, over 9,000 feet across, backing up nearly 20 million acre-feet of water. It was and is, quite simply, the greatest single alteration man has ever made on the Montana landscape...It symbolized the entire New Deal effort: jobs for the unemployed, over \$110 million pumped into the local economy, and a harnessing of the forces of nature."

That era is vividly recalled in a new book by Montana author Ivan Doig, "Bucking The Sun." Doig creates the fictional Duff family. Their farm becomes part of the property covered by the massive Fort Peck Lake. And in various capacities, the Duff family members become part of the life and lifestyle of Wheeler and Fort Peck of the mid-1930s.

Among those who helped Doig with his research were Myrtle Waller of Plentywood; and Verlaine (Stoner) McDonald, daughter of Vernon and Helen Stoner of Outlook.

News and Notes of Interest

Great Falls--Montana cattle ranchers are invited to participate in a special National Farmers Union Legislative Fly-In June 22-26 to Washington, D.C., to talk directly to congressmen and senators about the high concentration of ownership in the American meatpacking business and its effects on both supermarket shoppers and livestock producers. Participants will visit several congressional offices during mornings and afternoons to give their views to both Republican and Democratic senators and congressmen or their staff. The small-group appointments are prearranged by the National Farmers Union Washington office. For more information, call 1-800-234-4071.

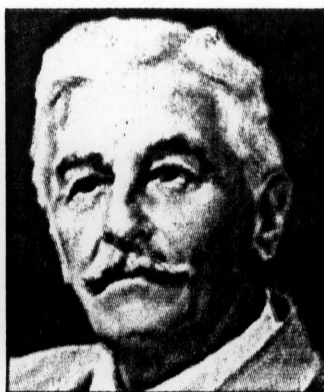
Polson--Richard Bowers, president of the University of Montana from 1974 to 1981, died at his Polson home May 26. One of his lasting legacies as a university administrator is this--he was one of the earliest administrators to demand equal financial support for women's intercollegiate athletics, commensurate with men's intercollegiate sports.

Billings--Six Castle Rock Middle School students who were caught at school with a stolen gun have been suspended for the

Can today's authors live up to these?



Ernest Hemingway



William Faulkner



Willa Cather



Langston Hughes



John Steinbeck

Literary Lions

An endangered species

In the land of million-dollar advances,
the pop celebrity author is king.

John Grisham and Anne Rice are pale successors
to William Faulkner and Willa Cather.

Will anyone remember these authors?

Future lions?

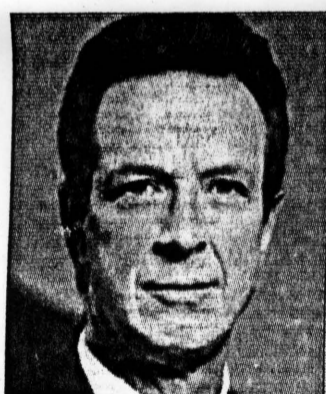
- > Maya Angelou
- > Pat Conroy
- > Robertson Davies
- > Ivan Doig
- > Richard Ford
- > John Gardner
- > David McCullough
- > Toni Morrison
- > Larry McMurtry
- > Reynolds Price
- > Alice Walker

Almost forgotten

- > Margaret Atwood
- > E.L. Doctorow
- > Joseph Heller
- > John Irving
- > Norman Mailer
- > Anne Tyler
- > John Updike

Past popular

- > William Peter Blatty
- > Grace Metalious
- > Mickey Spillane
- > Jacqueline Susann



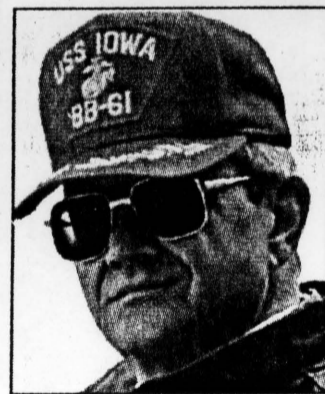
Michael Crichton



John Grisham



Anne Rice



Tom Clancy



Stephen King

By Jeff Guinn
Fort Worth Star-Telegram



Dave Barry

HUMORIST DAVE BARRY dreads this hypothetical moment in a high school or college classroom.

"It terrifies me that a teacher might someday ask a student, 'Explain how Mr. Barry utilizes the word 'booger,'" he says. "I don't know that my writing should be studied by future generations."

Yet it's entirely possible that around 2010 Barry's name will be included on reading lists of classes focusing on popular authors of the late 20th century. In alphabetical order, the Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist might be joined by Tom Clancy, Patricia

Cornwell, Michael Crichton, John Grisham, Stephen King and Anne Rice.

If fiction on current bestseller lists seems so lightweight it could float, the nonfiction list looks no better. The days when history-making, if not history-making, tomes such as William Shirer's "The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich," Theodore White's "The Making of the President 1960" and Will and Ariel Durant's epic 10-volume "The Story of Civilization" set high literary standards are long gone. So far in 1997, those ubiquitous "self-help" books (Sarah Breathnach's "Simple Abundance," Suzanne Somers' "Eat Great, Lose Weight") comprise more than three-quarters of the nonfiction bestsellers.

Turn to WRITERS on E7

Are these statements true?

- > Book publishers don't promote quality.
- > Television takes up time people once devoted to reading.
- > Modern lives are so stressful that readers want mind candy, not challenge.
- > Authors used to be celebrities in their own rights, but not anymore.
- > More readers of earlier generations appreciated good writing.
- > Teachers aren't introducing students to new writers.
- > There aren't any more great writers.

Read on to find out

Nonfiction bestsellers, then and now:

"The Making of the President 1960"
by historian Theodore H. White



"Eat Great, Lose Weight"
by sitcom star Suzanne Somers



WRITERS from E1

The art/commerce crossover may be a casualty of the times

Meanwhile, survivors among the previous generations of greats are in their unremarked dotage. Joseph Heller, Norman Mailer, John Updike and a few others still publish. But, like ex-presidents, their past achievements get all the attention. Quick, what's the title of Heller's recent sequel to "Catch-22," and what was its highest position on the bestseller list? ("Closing Time," and it didn't even make it.)

The best-known authors among the current crop might sell millions of books, but their collective talent pales when compared to the American literary lions immediately preceding them — Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck, William Faulkner, Langston Hughes, Willa Cather. It's painfully obvious that when future scholars judge the reading habits of late-20th-century Americans (and, by direct inference, our relative intelligence) their verdicts aren't likely to be kind.

The question is no longer whether the modern era will produce writers whose present excellence guarantees them future re-

nown; instead, it's necessary to ask why it didn't. There are several prevalent theories.

► **Book publishers don't promote quality.** According to American Bookseller Association figures, more books are published annually — approximately 50,000 new titles each year — than ever. This means, in theory, that bookstore browsers have a much wider range of selections.

In reality, fewer than one in 100 of those books will sell in significant numbers. Sales of 45,000 to 60,000 usually are required to make the bestseller list.

"The way publishers market their books has radically changed," says Rob Harvey, manager of Borders Books and Music in Fort Worth, Texas. "The publishers are backing fewer and fewer books with more and more money, and those are the so-called star authors. The more literary writers who are published get left by the promotional wayside. When a Grisham or Clancy has a new novel, we get 150 to 300 copies to display in our store. We only get seven to 10 copies of books by

what we call 'midlist' or good but unknown authors. So it's hard for the great unknowns to get noticed because of how much [display] space the Clancys take up."

The bottom line is, of course, money. For publishers to recoup the \$4 million advances on earned royalties paid to the likes of Clancy, they must sell a million copies of his latest book. They have far less financially at stake with the anonymous, better writer whose advance was \$5,000.

► **Television takes up time people once devoted to reading.** If it's true the average American watches almost 30 hours of TV each week, it follows that there's little time left to spend with well-written, challenging books.

"It can be hard work reading a good book," says Judy Alter, director of Texas Christian University Press and the author of more than a dozen novels. "It's not as easy as watching a TV show. Let's face it: TV shows are more intellectually accessible."

Fort Worth psychologist Richard Citrin agrees, but only in part. "It's also true that TV has now been with us for around 50 years, and in the '40s many of the most famous authors, the ones who sold the most books, were also the best writers," he says.

"People no longer rely on books for information. We've got cable television channels devoted to news and biographies of the great and near-great. The Net offers immediate access to data on every conceivable subject. Radio talk shows debate the most minute political maneuver. . . .

Why would someone spend three days or even three weeks reading a book when he could learn a lot about the same subject with just an hour of watching TV or working on a home computer?"

► **Modern lives are so stressful that readers want mind candy, not challenge.** Critics claim that Grisham rehashes essentially the same trial-based plots in every novel, with just names and locations changed. Cynthia Hiatt of Arlington, Texas, agrees — and says that's why she snaps up each Grisham potboiler.

"I'm a single parent raising two children under 6," Hiatt says.



Mickey Spillane

"After work I have to run to day care, fix supper, pay bills. When I sit down for half an hour with a book, I want it to be fun, and maybe be able to figure out who's guilty or whatever. I can count on John Grisham for that. I don't want some book I have to study."

► **Authors are no longer celebrities in their own right.** If writers who toil in anonymity share one gripe, it's the attention and sales furor that accompany the release of autobiographies of TV celebrities and sports stars. In Dallas, a book-signing by the Cowboys' Emmitt Smith attracted 1,500 eager fans; a few weeks later at the same bookstore, Norman Mailer sold about 25 books at his signing. The difference between today and

"I'm a single parent raising two children under 6. After work I have to run to day care, fix supper, pay bills. When I sit down for half an hour with a book, I want it to be fun, and maybe be able to figure out who's guilty or whatever. I can count on John Grisham for that. I don't want some book I have to study."

— Cynthia Hiatt of Arlington, Texas

"Escapist fiction, particularly, is what readers seem now to be looking for, but it's been that way for a long time."

Take a genre like mysteries. You had Dashiell Hammett being published, but also Mickey Spillane. Spillane outsold Hammett by a lot, but there was never any question that Hammett had the better quality of writing."

— Elmer Kelton, western writer



Dashiell Hammett

a generation ago might be that a select few authors are still famous; it's just that they no longer are famous for "quality" writing.

► **More readers of earlier generations appreciated good writing.** This is probably correct, but we miss the point entirely if we assume slick literary trash is a sales phenomenon of the late 1990s.

"Escapist fiction, particularly, is what readers seem now to be looking for, but it's been that way for a long time," suggests Elmer Kelton, who writes westerns. "Take a genre like mysteries. You had Dashiell Hammett being published, but also Mickey Spillane. Spillane outsold Hammett by a lot, but there was never any question that Hammett had the better quality of writing."

In 1956, Grace Metalious' low-brow "Peyton Place" was the runaway literary hit, outselling Edwin O'Connor's "The Last Hurrah" and James Thurber's "Fables for Our Times" combined. Jacquelyn Susann's "The Valley of the Dolls" was fiction's bestseller of the '60s.

In the past, however, books such as O'Connor's and Thurber's were also bestsellers, if in fewer numbers than "Peyton Place" or William Peter Blatty's "The Exorcist."

► **Teachers aren't introducing students to new writers.** True and false. Fort Worth's Paschal High's top-flight honors English classes read a smattering of recent works — Barbara Kingsolver's "The Bean Trees," Maya Angelou's "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings," John Gardner's "Gren-

del." But the bulk of the list remains tried-and-true classics: "Heart of Darkness," "Lord of the Flies," "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn."

A teacher who asked not to be identified (and who is not on the Paschal staff) said her reason for sticking to the classics is simple: "There are now always some parents who come down on you for requiring a book they somehow decide is bad or religiously incorrect."

When she tried to have her class read Alice Walker's "The Color Purple," several parents called the principal to complain that certain scenes — mostly involving sex, though a few with modestly coarse language — were inappropriate. If the book wasn't removed from the class reading lists, these parents threatened, they would complain to the school board or withdraw their children.

► **There aren't any more great writers.** Yes, there are. Most of them are just unknown.

"There's Ivan Doig, there's Reynolds Price, or David McCullough, or Stephen Ambrose," Alter says. "Sometimes the best writers are stereotyped as regional. Robertson Davies in Canada is one example. John Graves here in Texas is another. I couldn't tell you which modern writers with worthwhile work will be studied by students in the future or remain widely read in the future."

"But I'm confident there will be some, and not those names like John Grisham or Anne Rice from the top of the bestseller lists."