

THE SENSUAL SEASON: TRAVELING IN WINTER

WASHINGTON

The Evergreen State Magazine ■ December 1988 ■ Volume Five Number Four ■ \$2.95

SEASON'S READINGS

Robert Fulghum Exclusive:
A Tale of Christmas Pageant
Trauma, by the Man Who
Learned It All in Kindergarten

Plus Award-Winning Fiction
by Ivan Doig and Carol Orlock

SEASON'S FEASTING

John Doerper Invites
Us to a Country
Christmas Dinner

The Washington
Wine of the Year
Award Winner Is...

AND THREE WISE MEN

Political Wisdom from
Dan Evans, Tom Foley
and John Spellman





1988 EVERGREEN ANTHOLOGY

Are the national media kidding when they report that the circles of writing fame are only now beginning to spread? That authors from Savannah to Seattle are finally diluting the power and glory that was once jealously guarded by the inksmiths of Manhattan? That pockets of regionally focused prose and poetry are cropping up everywhere? Where have these media people been for the last 20 years?

Or for the last 22? It was back in 1967 that Washington held its first Governor's Writers Awards program, touting the most noteworthy books composed by Evergreen State authors. Each year the staff of the State Library's Washington/Northwest Room recommends new works to the governor's office, those books to be judged by a group of five or six academics, book dealers, librarians and reviewers. There are no cut-in-stone criteria for choosing winners; in some years, the voting has swung heavily in favor of poetry, in others fiction has claimed most of the honors.

What easier way to understand the diversity and value of local writers than to page through the award-winning books in any given year? From them, and so many other books by

Writers' Bloc

Our second annual read on the Governor's Writers Awards.

1988 AWARD WINNERS

CAROLINE W. BYNUM

Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women

WILLIAM H. CALVIN

The River That Flows Uphill: A Journey from the Big Bang to the Big Brain

IVAN DOIG

Dancing at the Rascal Fair

KATHRYN HEWITT

King Midas and the Golden Touch

BILL HOLM

Spirit and Ancestor: A Century of Northwest Coast Indian Art at the Burke Museum

CHARLES JOHNSON

Being & Race: Black Writing Since 1970

ANN LOVEJOY

The Year in Bloom: Gardening for All Seasons in the Pacific Northwest

COLLEEN J. McELROY

Bone Flames and Jesus and Fat Tuesday and Other Short Stories

NICHOLAS O'CONNELL

At the Field's Edge: Interviews with 20 Pacific Northwest Writers

CAROL ORLOCK

The Goddess Letters: The Myth of Demeter & Persephone Retold

WILFRED P. SCHOENBERG, S. J.

A History of the Catholic Church in the Pacific Northwest, 1743-1983

Washingtonians, we derive extra levels of understanding about this place in which we live. Nonfiction—such as Charles Johnson's excellent new examination of black writing, *Being & Race*, or William Calvin's trip down a river and into the mind, *The River That Flows Uphill*—opens doors wider to the outside world. Poetry and fiction allow us to enter still more secure passageways. As many a magazine has learned through its publication of fiction—and as Washington will demonstrate, as it begins to print original high-quality short stories in 1989—what writers make up about the world and the people around them tells as much about their place as could any 10,000-word investigative report that claims to tell "just the facts, ma'am."

Most of the writers we showcase in this year's Evergreen Anthology are new to our pages; only Ivan Doig has been with us before (see "Stone Spirits," September/October '86). All but Robert Fulghum were award winners this year. And the next time you read about the Rise of Regionalism, how folks outside of the Eastern publishing nexus *can really write*, you're invited to roll your eyes. There isn't anything "new" in that "news."—Ed.



Oh Rest Ye, Merry Gentlemen

By Robert Fulghum

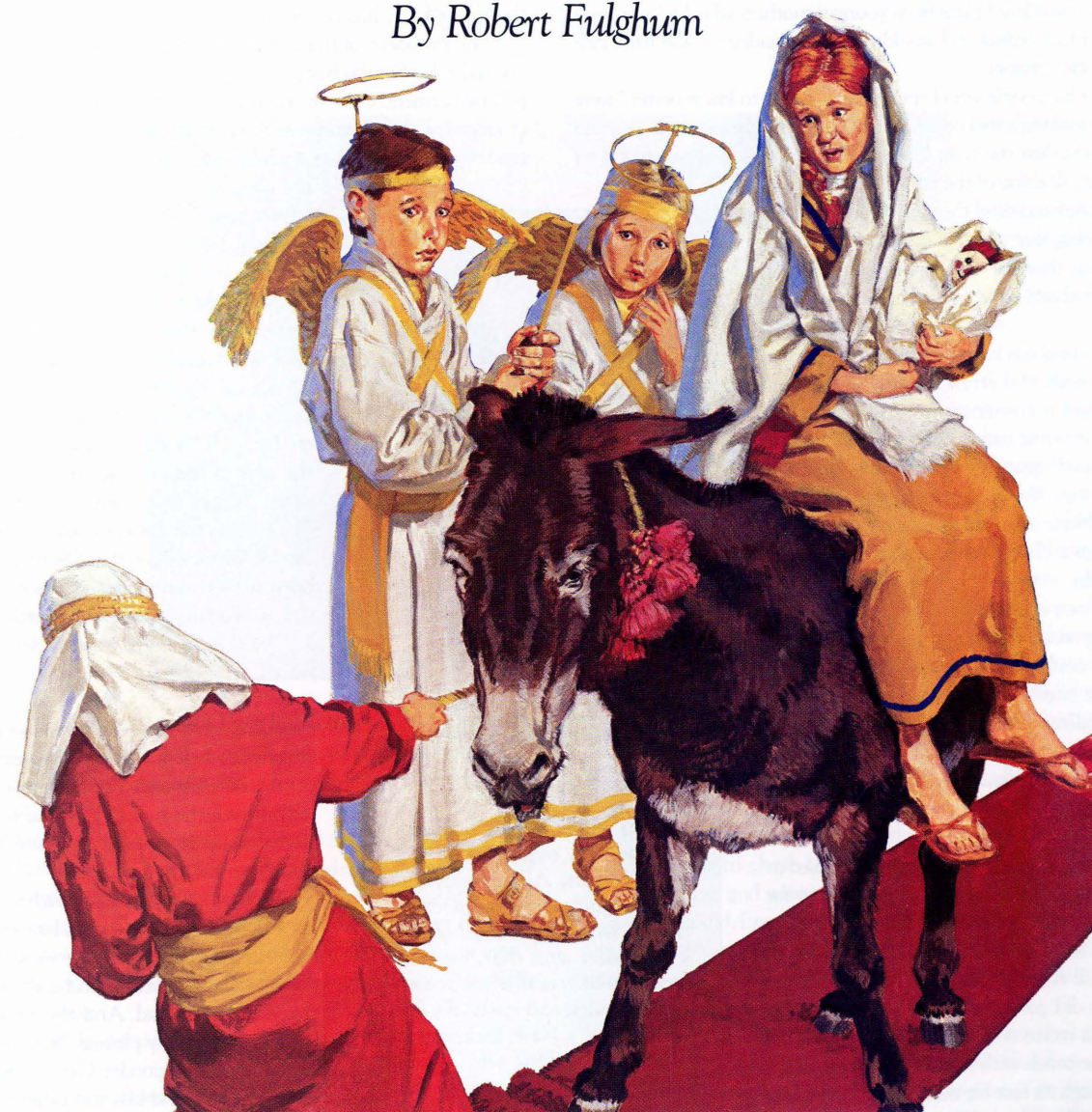


Illustration by Chuck Pyle

Our church had not had a full-blown Christmas pageant in years. For one thing we had become fairly rational and efficient about the season, content to let the Sunday School observe the event on its own turf in a low-key way. Then, too, there was the last time we had gone all out.

That time the week of the Christmas pageant coincided with an outbreak of German measles, chicken pox and the Hong Kong flu. The night of that pageant there was a sleet storm and a partial power failure that

threw some people's clocks off, and one of the sheep hired for the occasion got diarrhea. That was about par for the course, since Joseph and two Wise Men upchucked during the performance, and some little angels managed both to cry and wet their pants. To top it off, the choir of teenagers walking about in an irresponsible manner with lighted candles created more a feeling of the fear of fire and the wrath of God than a feeling of peace on Earth. I don't think it was really all that bad, and maybe all those things didn't happen in the same year, but a sufficient number of





senior ladies in the church had had it up to here with the whole hoo-ha and tended to squelch any suggestion of another pageant with tales of grief, pain and anguish. It was as if cholera had once been amongst us and nobody wanted to go through *that* again.

But nostalgia is strong and it added the brains of some of the wiser heads as they considered pleas from younger mothers who had not been through this ritual ordeal and would not be dissuaded. It was time *their* children had *their* chance.

In short order, people who kept saying "I ought to know better" were right in there making angel costumes out of old bed sheets, cardboard and chicken feathers. Just the right kind of bathrobes could not be found for the Wise Men, so some of the fathers went out and bought new ones and aged them. One of the young mothers was pregnant and it was made clear to her in loving terms that she was expected to come up with a real newborn child by early December. She vowed to try.

An angel choir was lashed into singing shape. A real manger with real straw was obtained. And while there was a consensus on leaving out live sheep this time, some enterprising soul managed to borrow two small goats for the evening. The real coup was renting a live donkey for the Mother Mary to ride in on. None of us had ever seen a live donkey ridden through a church chancel and it seemed a fine thing to do.

We made one concession to sanity, deciding to have the thing on a Sunday morning in the full light of day so we could see what we were doing and nobody in the angel choir would get scared of the dark. No candles, either. And no full rehearsal. These things are supposed to be a little hokey, anyhow, and nobody was *about* to go through the whole thing twice.

The great day dawned and everybody arrived at church. Husbands came who were not known for regular attendance, probably for the same reason they would be attracted to a nearby bus wreck.

It wasn't all that bad, really. At least not early on. The goats did get loose in the parking lot and put on quite a rodeo with the shepherds. But we hooted out the carols with full voice and the angel choir got through its first big number almost on key and in unison. The Star of Bethlehem was lit over the manger, and it came time for the entrance of Joseph and Mary, with Mary riding the rented donkey, carrying what later proved to be a Raggedy Andy doll (since the pregnant lady was overdue). It was the donkey that proved our undoing.

The donkey made two hesitant steps through the door of the chancel, took a look at the whole scene and seized up. He locked his legs, put his

whole body in a cement condition well beyond rigor mortis, and the procession ground to a halt. Now, there are things you might consider doing to a donkey in private to get it to move, but there is a limit to what you can do to a donkey in church on a Sunday morning in front of women and children. Jerking on his halter and some wicked kicking on the part of the Virgin Mary had no effect.

The president of the board of trustees, seated in the front row and dressed in his Sunday best, rose to the rescue. The floor of the chancel was polished cement. So with another man pulling at the halter, the president crouched at the stern end of the donkey and pushed—slowly sliding the rigid beast across the floor, inch by stately inch. With progress being made, the choir director turned on the tape recorder, which blared forth a mighty chorus from the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, accompanied by the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra.

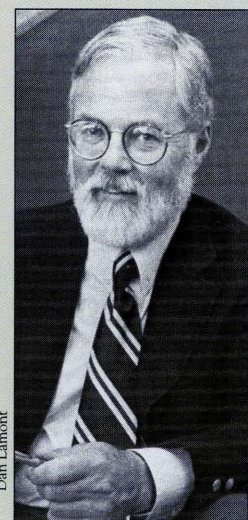
Just as the donkey and his mobilizers reached mid-church, the tape recorder blew a fuse and there was a sudden mighty silence. And in that silence an exasperated voice came from the backside of the donkey. "Move your ass, you son of a bitch!" Followed immediately by a voice from the rear of the church—the donkey pusher's wife—"Leon, shut your filthy mouth!" And that's when the donkey brayed. If we had held an election for jackass that day, there would have been several candidates mentioned. And the vote would have been pretty evenly distributed.

We're such fun to watch when we do what we do.

Although it has been several years since the church has held a Christmas pageant, we have not seen the last one. The memory of the laughter outlives the memory of the hassle. Hope always makes us believe that *this time, this year we will get it right.*

That's the whole deal with Christmas, I guess. It's just real life—only a lot more of it all at once than usual. I suppose we will continue doing it all. Get frenzied and confused and frustrated and even mad. And also get excited and hopeful and quietly pleased. We will laugh and cry and pout and ponder. Get a little drunk and excessive. Hug and kiss and make a great mess. Spend too much, and somebody will always be there to upchuck or wet their pants. As always, we will sing only some of the verses and most of those off-key. We will do it again and again and again. We are the Christmas Pageant, the whole damn thing. Someday we may get it right.

I think it's best to just let it happen. As at least one person I know can attest, getting pushy about it is trouble.



Dan Lamont

ROBERT FULGHUM

This former Seattle teacher's life story sounds like every writer's fantasy. As a divinity student, Fulghum composed a reflection on what he'd learned of life. For decades after that, he massaged the essay until it was as concise as possible and was finally discovered by a New York agent. That piece, along with many other of Fulghum's essays on life, is included in a new book called *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten* (Villard Books/Random House). We asked Fulghum for a work suitable for our Christmas issue. The result is "Oh Rest Ye, Merry Gentlemen," which appears in *Washington* for the first time anywhere.



The Goddess Letters

By Carol Orlock

In her first novel, Orlock sifts the Greek myth of Demeter and Persephone through a decidedly contemporary and feminist screen. Students of mythology will remember that, after Persephone's rape and abduction by the underworld lord Hades, a remorseful Demeter began to neglect her duty of keeping Earth fertile. The other gods and goddesses were disheartened as well, feeling less needed than before, losing their influence as other religious beliefs rose in prominence. Orlock's version of the tale follows

Demeter's daughter as she discovers herself, both emotionally and sexually, in Hades' company—much to Demeter's dismay. In our excerpt from chapter two, Persephone recalls her abduction and takes her first good look at Hades.

Where are the soft winds of spring, the gentle zephyrs? Are they blowing? I sleep in this dark, closed-up place, but I dream about hotness and warm winds. Maybe wind off a fire. I have felt cold ever since I left earth. This can't be earth. Or Mount Olympus either. I'm not sure where I am any more, if I'm anywhere at all, or even if I'm Persephone any more. I dream of warm wind and fire, then I wake up all cold and shivering.

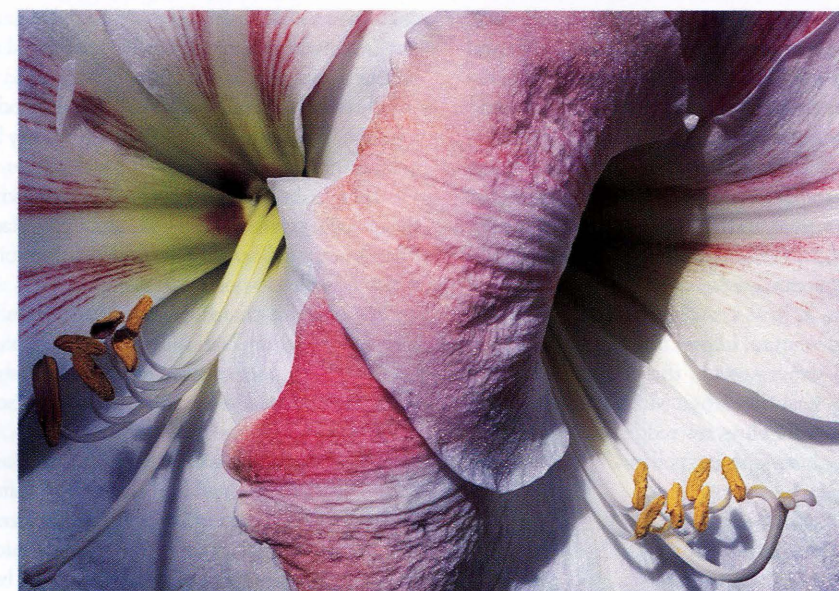
I tell him he keeps it too cold. He smiles and says I'll get accustomed. I won't. I've decided.

When zephyrs blow, flowers wave. I want to go back to the flowers. He says I can't. He says he'll make a flower for me.

I think he made the flower that I wanted to pick in the field at Nysa. No, it was pretty, so he couldn't have made it. But the flower was the trap that took me in. Ge makes the flowers, but she wouldn't have made this one, not her.

Could she? No, she wouldn't make a flower to trick me.

But what if she did. Then who else was in on the trick? Oceanus' girls? Eurynome? What big breasts Eury has. I want breasts like hers some day, but then everybody says Mother Demeter is perfectly formed. One



Ken Lans

day I'll be like her.

Today I miss her. He says Mother Demeter gave permission for me to be here, but I don't understand why she didn't tell me. She'll be coming, so I wait.

I don't feel well. I don't like it here. I feel so, so what? So tricked. What have I done to make anyone spiteful?

Maybe we should have invited Mother to go with us to Nysa, but Eury and Clymene agreed we could go by ourselves, and they are my friends after all. I'm not a child any more and shouldn't have Mother Da

everywhere I go. Yes, Mother likes flowers, but I like flowers too and have a right to look for my own. As I did. And saw one, only one like it. And wasn't it the most beautiful? Oh, but that's why I'm here. And chilly.

I felt afraid even before I saw that flower growing all by itself. Eury and Clymene wanted to stay up the field a ways, near Mount Olympus, but I saw no reason to chase their leavings, half-wilted ones, several with crumpled petals and twisty stems, so I went on by myself. I felt afraid, but of course I would, first time out by myself, and of all places in a field where they grow grapes for wine belonging to Dionysus. The stories they tell about Dionysus, so handsome, a god who brings wine and makes women go mad! I felt afraid and I looked back.

I had gone so far that Oceanus' girls, big as they are, looked as small as little nymphs. Was Dionysus near? I wondered off and on. Anyway, I told myself, he plays tricks—Dionysus, the gaping one—he plays his tricks on women especially. But nobody says he's cruel. And besides, if I was going to let a little fear send me running back to my friends...

Well, maybe more than a little. All over me I felt thin sweat and my wrist shook until I dropped my basket. And then when I stooped to pick up the flowers, I saw that special one. He came right after that.

I wonder. Feeling afraid like that. Mother says I'll know the future when I get older. I am growing. Everybody agrees I am. Maybe I knew a little future.

Now I'm stuck. What was I thinking? Oh, the flower. So then I knew





if I was going to let a little fear send me running for the others, I would never grow up. Oceanus' girls would laugh at me—when they laugh their breasts jiggle. I wonder how that feels? So then I knelt to get my flowers, and wasn't it lucky having them drop right there? Just a reach away from that one flower?

No, I think again now. Maybe it was unlucky. I feel so tricked.

But what a flower. Its stem was a fat fertile tube, bright as the rind of a lime. Its two leaves arched, pale and slender, and they looked so soft, lined by a furry, funny down of hairs. And then the flower, right in the middle of those pale leaves, a hundred blossoms. The outer ones burst pale pink, but their lips folded, lapping like rose petals, layer and layer of pink and then purple and then red. Each petal was outlined with moisture, the way a valley can be by fog. Wet silver dew circled every petal as if a snail had traced its edge and left silver filaments, frothy and moist.

Then, just at the center, I saw the tiniest, most hidden bud—a ruby-colored thing, single and small. I smelled a fragrance, not too sweet, but fertile as sea water trapped in a tide pool, and it promised the sweetest sleep.

And I had to have it. That flower was mine—Persephone's alone. I'd discovered it. I didn't need Mother or Clymene or Eury to point it out to me. My hand got moist, wanting it. Will it wilt, I wondered. But somehow, perhaps already knowing the future, I knew it wouldn't. It seemed that at my touch, just like at Mother's touch, this thing would grow. Everything grows and becomes beautiful when Mother touches it. It would swell, becoming large and its blossoms redder, and when the moment came maybe burst—yes, burst spraying pollen all pink and purple-silver and red.

Oh damn.

Aren't I getting a temper, just like a goddess?

I never even touched it. And, of all things, when I'm thinking of it again, here he himself comes. To interrupt me.

I must think it through again. I must remember it all from the beginning. I must be calm. He's left now, and I should be calm. But how can I when I feel so empty? I was thinking of something when he came. The flower, yes. And he came in, that's it.

I asked him something, what was it? I asked, what does he do when he's away from me.

I make decisions, he said.

I remember now. I could see he wouldn't lie, but he didn't want to tell me the truth either.

I said that sounded just like a human, taking ages to make a decision.

I carry out decisions others make, he said then.

Like a slave, I asked, afraid to think for yourself? That really upset him, but he wouldn't show it. He just said I knew perfectly well that he wasn't human, that he was a god.

So I started playing. I said, if you're immortal, prove it, change your shape and turn into something.

He couldn't decide, probably wanted to impress

me. He took so long, I made suggestions.

But the oddest—no, the saddest thing was: they were all him. First I asked him to turn into a valley and try as he might, the closest he came was a chasm. Then I switched and said I wanted a mountain, not a jagged one like he first made, something soft and rolling, a big ball of hills. But for all my explaining I couldn't get anything from him but a cliff. So I switched to animals.

His monkey looked more like a gorilla, his mouse had the sharpest teeth and wasn't any good to pet. Likewise his cat—and did it spit! His dog was a cur, almost a wolf. His bird was nothing but a starving nighthawk.

I'm sure he saw my disgust, so he changed right out of it and became himself again.

He is dark and tall, like a wort, a long mandrake root. I'm sure I never met him. Especially I don't like his eyes. They look as sharp as a thunderbolt order from Zeus.

Then he began to talk, very fast as if he knew how bad he'd been at the changing game. He walked around this place that I'm in, and while I hadn't bothered noticing it before, as he pointed out its traits to me, which he called its qualities, I saw it.

How like his changing game it was! Each thing as he praised it was nice-as-nice to him, but I only saw pale copies of actual things.

"You have space to move here," he said, showing how wide the walls spread around us. I saw walls. This was a place, only one place and no other. It wasn't everywhere, like I'm used to.

"Over there," he said, "your bath." A lukewarm pool, with alabaster sides that should be marble. "There you'll refresh yourself." It's filled up with a liquid that pretends to be water, but I knew already it wasn't.

I might have said, "I bathe in rivers and waterfalls, not your brackish seepings from the sea," but what was the use? According to him, it would make me feel clean, but I'd already tried it, and I didn't feel clean. I still felt the film of his breath all over myself.

"A couch. For your rest." He pointed out this place where I'm lying now, a long smooth stone, curved over at the edges and lined with a fur of moss. It's pretty to look at, but when I lie down it always gives the thinnest edge of pain wherever I touch it.

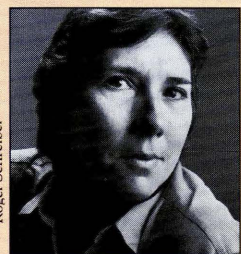
"And ambrosia, of course."

Here I should have disagreed. We eat ambrosia on Mount Olympus and it has the sweetest flavor, tart as good stinging rain but gentle as a spring wind. His ambrosia had none of that, only the ghost of its smell. Everything here, now that I think of it, reminds me of the drawings humans make—of the sea, for instance, which isn't the sea at all, and much worse for trying to look like it.

I could have objected on the ambrosia, and won my point by insisting we go to Olympus to compare. Assuming he was, in fact, immortal.

(Continued on page 74)

Roger Schreiber



CAROL ORLOCK

With a master's degree in creative writing from San Francisco State University and teaching positions at the University of Washington and Shoreline Community College, Orlock coedits the *Crab Creek Review*, a Seattle-based publication of fiction, poetry, essays and artwork. Her work has appeared in several anthologies, as well as in magazines such as *Ms.* and *Calyx*.



Dancing at the Rascal Fair

By Ivan Doig

In his latest novel, Doig introduces us to Angus McCaskill and Rob Barclay, Scottish immigrants setting off for a new life in Montana. In this excerpt, the young McCaskill recalls his Atlantic voyage and how it reminds him of his great-grandfather, a stonemason.

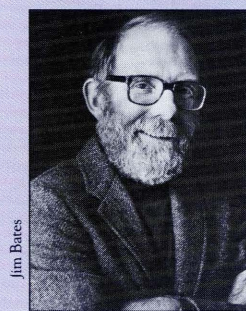
My first night in steerage I learned that I was not born to sleep on water. The berth was both too short and too narrow for me, so that I had to kink myself radically; curl up and wedge in at the same time. Try that if you ever want to be cruel to yourself. Too, steerage air was thick and unpleasant, like breathing through dirty flannel. Meanwhile Rob, who could snooze through the thunders of Judgment Day, was composing a nose song below me. But discomfort and bad air and snores were the least of my wakefulness, for in that first grief of a night—oh yes, and the *Jemmy* letting forth an iron groan whenever its bow met the waves some certain way—my mind rang with everything I did not want to think of. Casting myself from Nethermuir. The drowned horse Ginger. Walls of this moaning ship, so close. The coffin confines of my beddamned berth. The ocean, the ocean on all sides, including abovehead. *Dark Neptune's labyrinthine lanes/Neath these savage liquid plains.* I rose in heart-rattling startlement once when I accidentally touched one hand against the other and felt wetness there. My own sweat.

I still maintain that if the Atlantic hadn't been made of water I could have gone to America at a steady trot. But it seems to be the case that fear can sniff the bothering places in us. Mine had been in McCaskills for some 80 years now. The bones of the story are this. With me on this voyage, into this unquiet night, came the fact that I was the first McCaskill since my father's grandfather to go upon the sea. That voyage of Alexander McCaskill was only a dozen miles, but the most famous dozen miles in Great Britain of the time, and he voyaged them over and over and over again. He was one of the stonemasons of Arbroath who worked with the great engineer Robert Stevenson to build the Bell Rock lighthouse. On the clearest of days I have seen that lighthouse from the Arbroath harbor and have heard the story of

the years of workshops and cranes and winches and giant blocks of granite and sandstone, and to this moment I don't know how they could do what was done out there, build a 100-foot tower of stone on a reef that vanished deep beneath every high tide. But there it winks at the world even today, impossible Bell Rock, standing in the North Sea announcing the Firth of Forth and Edinburgh beyond, and my great-grandfather's toolmarks are on its stones. The generations of us, we who are not a sea people, dangle from that one man who went to perform stonework in the worst of the waters around Scotland. Ever since him, Alexander

has been the first or second name of a McCaskill in each of those generations. Ever since him, we have possessed a saga to measure ourselves against. I lay there in the sea-plowing *Jemmy* trying to think myself back into that other manhood, to leave myself, damp sackful of apprehension that I was, and to feel from the skin inward what it would have been like to be Alexander McCaskill of the Bell Rock those 80 years ago. A boat is a hole in the water, began my family's one scrap of our historic man, the solitary story from our McCaskill past that my father would ever tell. In some rare furlough from his brooding, perhaps Christmas or Hogmanay and enough drinks of lubrication, that silence-locked man my father would suddenly unloose the words. *But there was a time your great-grandfather was more glad than anything to see a boat, I'm here to tell you. Out there on the Bell Rock they were cutting down into the reef for the lighthouse's foundation, the other stonemen and your great-grandfather, that day. When the tide began to come in they took up their tools and went across the reef to meet their boat. Stevenson was there ahead of them, as high as he could climb on the reef and standing looking out into the fog on the water. Your great-grandfather knew there was wrong as soon as he saw Stevenson. Stevenson the famous engineer of the Northern Lights, pale as the cat's milk. As he ought have been, for there was no boat on the reef and none in sight anywhere. The tide was coming fast, coming to cover all of the Bell Rock with water higher than this roof. Your great-grandfather saw Stevenson turn to speak to the*

(Continued on page 75)



Jim Bates

IVAN DOIG

Son of a Montana cowboy, this author often writes about the rich and rugged Montana country of his youth. Doig's writings—among them *This House of Sky*, *English Creek* and *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*—mix a flavor of American Western history with lively and tender fiction. The past is something he knows well. After receiving his bachelor's and master's degrees in journalism at Northwestern University, Doig earned his Ph.D. in American frontier history at the University of Washington. He and his wife currently live in Seattle, where he is at work on his next novel, *Ride with Me Mariah Montana*, scheduled for release in 1990.



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THE GODDESS LETTERS

(Continued from page 40)

Only goddesses and gods are allowed on Mount Olympus. But then he does seem to be a god, what with the changing. I could have objected, but I didn't.

First, I expected him to say I wasn't allowed to go to Olympus. I'm not sure why I thought that, but I didn't want to ask since then I'd know. But most of all, there was his way, his telling me how nice-as-nice his place could be, his wanting me to like it, then to owe him so I'd give him something in return. I couldn't figure what I was supposed to give.

Then I had a thought. "I'll change for you."

"No!" He turned red, angry like that, but I kept on.

"I could be a green shoot, a bird—I've never been good at birds. I could be a stream, a brook..."

He cut me off.

"You're lovely now, Persephone." That was the first time he used my name. He didn't speak it, he handled it the way a human lifts a seed puff, afraid she might break it. "No," he said. "I don't want you to be other than you are. And please stay just as you are, I must be sure of that."

I asked why, of course. He started to answer, then stopped and thought before going on. "Mother Demeter asked me to be sure you did not change," he said.

Now that subject interested me. I didn't believe him and he saw my doubt. "I had to bring you here," he said. "It was a decision made in a Boule. That's why I looked for you at Nysa."

A Boule! I almost laughed. Think of it—little me, maid Persephone—for me well-counseled Zeus, the mighty god of the sky, made a Boule decision. I mean, the inevitability of it! All the goddesses and gods sat down together and argued it out, and then the great Zeus made a decision, about me! Whatever comes out of a Boule becomes so, which meant this was decided for me.

"Demeter let you bring me here?" I asked. Everyone has to be invited to a Boule, except Eros and me, of course, we're too young. But I know, whether by nodding or by absenting so as not to disagree, all immortals, everybody—Mother Da included—must vote in Boule. I know about Boules.

I know most of the rules. I'm quicker than Eros at naming my relatives. I name them—Ge is the earth and makes the firmness of things. She is earth, but she can be shaken. There's Poseidon, earth-shaker who is also the sea. He loves horses. Mother likes him.

Once long ago the immortals threw stones to decide who got what, and Poseidon won the sea. Mother got the fertility on earth—definitely best. And Zeus got sky. Zeus is my father—but he's married to Hera. I never actually met her, but I don't like her.

There are so many, I can't remember them all. Another one was there when they threw

the stones, too. Sounds like Helios. Or like Hekate. Not the sun, though, not the moon. What was it?

And where was I before I thought of my relatives? And who's he? That's it. He said my coming here was decided in a Boule and I asked him then if Mother Da agreed too.

He's strange. He didn't say yes right out. He stood thinking. He looks like a mandrake root that got up on its two legs and just walked. Then instead of saying yes right out, he asked why Mother wasn't with us at Nysa.

"We didn't invite her," I replied.

But then, he said, wasn't Mother Demeter with Persephone always? Until that very afternoon?

He was right, of course, but I didn't nod. I was beginning to feel, with all his questions, like some human that Doubt has taken hold of. Doubt flusters them so completely with his questioning, questioning—all of it silly—until they're upset enough to admit Ge herself didn't even exist—they've never in their lives stood on firm earth. That's how I felt. But it got worse with what he asked next.

"You were at Nysa. Where was Demeter?"

Think of it. I hadn't thought of it. I didn't know where Mother was and that was strange. Mother and I are always together, like twins in the sac, neither one moving, not dreaming, not thinking without the other one part of it. If Mother takes ambrosia, sweetness fills me. If I swirl underwater, Mother feels refreshed.

That's how things go. They've always... but no. Not now. I feel different. I felt it at Nysa but never noticed, never thought about it. I was alone at Nysa, finding flowers for myself and I didn't know where she was. But I only realized it when he asked me.

I looked at him and he stared. His dark eyes stared hard, hard at me, as if he hated asking.

I felt awful, split open and empty like a seed husk. I felt all set apart and afraid.

So then I asked who first came up with the idea of bringing me here, who asked for this Boule of goddesses and gods that decided it.

He didn't answer. He didn't have to answer because I knew. I knew what frightened me, too.

He could come over me, come into me. He could take me over, invade this half-me left without Mother Da, change me somehow, like lightning changes the shape of a tree, the way earthquakes change mountaintops, like that—I was scared.

I thought maybe the changing game could help. I might change to a river. Then I saw that if I did, he'd turn into a huge gray ocean. If I were a rock, he'd be a landslide. If I'm a tree, he's the wind. He'd come over me as a storm takes over a field and flattens it. I started to shiver with how he looked at me.

I wanted him to leave and I said so, but before he went out, he turned. "I'll make you a Queen," he said. Just that.

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DANCING AT THE RASCAL FAIR

(Continued from page 41)

men. "This I'll swear to, Alexander the Second," your great-grandfather always told me it just this way. "Mister Stevenson's mouth moved as if he was saying, but no words came out. The fear had dried his mouth so." Your great-grandfather and the men watched Stevenson go down on his knees and drink water like a dog from a pool in the rock. When he stood up to try to speak this time, somebody shouted out, "A boat! There, a boat!" The pilot boat, it was, bringing the week's mail to the

*I could not see myself doing what
Alexander McCaskill did in his Bell
Rock years, travel an extent of
untrustable water each day to set
Arbroath stone onto reef stone.*

workshop. Your great-grandfather always ended saying, "I almost ran out onto the water to hail that boat, you can believe."

"You ask was I afraid, Alexander the Second?" My father's voice became a strange, sad thunder when he told of my great-grandfather's reply to him. "Every hour of those three Bell Rock years, and most of the minutes, drowning was on my mind. I was afraid enough, yes. But the job was there at the Bell Rock. It was to be done, afraid or no afraid."

The past. The past past, so to speak, back there beyond myself. What can we ever truly know of it, how can we account for what it passes to us, what it withholds? Employ my imagination to its utmost, I could not see myself doing what Alexander McCaskill did in his Bell Rock years, travel an extent of untrustable water each day to set Arbroath stone onto reef stone. Feed me first to the flaming hounds of hell. Yet for all I knew, my ocean-defying great-grandfather was afraid of the dark or whimpered at the sight of a spider but any such perturbances were whited out by time. Only his brave Bell Rock accomplishment was left to sight. And here I lay, sweating steamage sweat, with a dread of water that had no logic newer than 80 years, no personal beginning, and evidently no end. It simply was in me, like life's underground river of blood. Ahead there, I hoped far ahead, when I myself became the past—would the weak places in me become hidden, too? Say I ever did become husband, father, eventual great-grandfather of Montana McCaskills. What were they going to comprehend of me as their firstcomer? Not this sweated night here in my midnight cage of steamage, not my mental staggers. No, for what solace it was, eventually all that could be known of Angus Alexander McCaskill was that I did manage to cross the Atlantic Ocean.

If I managed to cross it.

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Your Holiday Music Station.

*la la
de fa la la la da la la la
la fa la la de da fa la
la la fa la la hum
hum fa la la de la
la da da de da
rump a pum pum
fa la la hum
la de da
la*



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All your dance favorites from the 40's through the 80's to help you ring in the New Year. December 31st, 8pm to 1am.

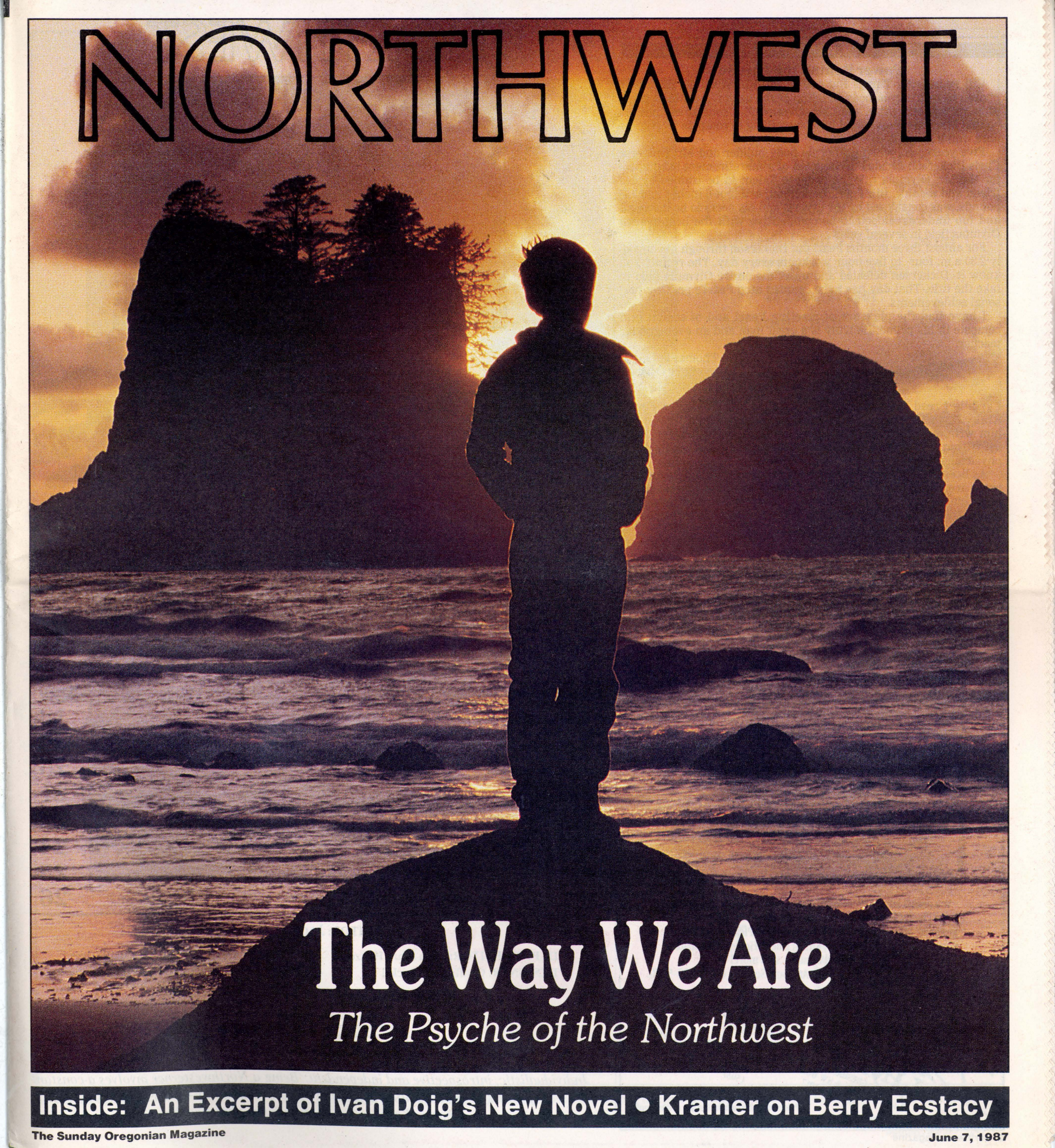
Happy Holidays

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AA
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NORTHWEST

A person stands on a dark rock in the foreground, their silhouette facing away from the viewer towards the ocean. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow that reflects on the water and illuminates the clouds. In the background, several large, dark rock formations rise from the sea, some topped with silhouettes of trees. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

The Way We Are

The Psyche of the Northwest

Inside: An Excerpt of Ivan Doig's New Novel • Kramer on Berry Ecstasy

The Sunday Oregonian Magazine

June 7, 1987

McCoy

Written by Ivan Doig

Illustrated by Rene Eisenbart

The place is the Two Medicine country of northern Montana. The time is late summer of the war year 1917. The narrator, Angus McCaskill, and his son, Varick, long have kept away from each other because of a bitter family dispute, but now with "the war reaching over the horizon to find us" Angus can't resist watching Varick perform in the Sunday bronc riding at a ranch on Noon Creek.

He was there atop a corral pole with the other young Sunday heroes when I arrived. Varick, whom I had come to lay eyes on before the 11th day of the next month made him 18 years of age. Before he became war fodder.

He saw me across the corral as I dismounted. I gave him a hello wave, he nodded the minimum in return, and with public amenities satisfied, we left it at that. Maybe more would eventuate between us later, but I did not really expect so. No, today I simply was bringing my son my eyes, the one part of me he could not turn away from on such a public afternoon as this.

Quite a crowd in and on the corral by then, and I found a place on the opposite side from Varick. Men *helloed* and *Angused* me in surprise as they passed.

"Angus, good to see you here," Pat Egan called out as he came over to me. "Heard about our special attraction, did you?"

When my blank look said I'd heard no such thing, Pat told me that after the bronc riding there was to be a bucking exhibition of another sort. "Some guy from Fort Benton brought over this critter of his. Claims he's trained the thing to toss any rider there is. Our boys are going to have to show him how real riding is done, don't you think?"

Away went Pat, as he said, to get the circus started. Across the pole arena from me, the Withrow lad had climbed onto the fence beside Varick. "How you doing, Mac?"

"Just right, Dode. How about you?"

"Good enough, if they got some real horses here for us."

"They're rank enough, probably. I see you're dressed for the worst they can do, though." Dode Withrow was always the dressiest in a crowd, and for today's bronc riding he sported a pair of yellow-tan corduroy trousers with leather trim at the pockets, new as the moment. Except for his habit of dressing as if he owned Montana he was an engaging youngster, of a sheep-ranching family that had moved to the South Fork from the Cut Bank country in the past year or so. I perched there, watching Varick and Dode, listening to their gab of horses. Aching at the thought of how much of Varick I had not been able to know, these years of his climb into manhood.

Shortly the afternoon began to fill with horsehide and riders. Even just saddling each bronc was an exercise in fastening leather onto a storm of horse. The animal was snubbed to a corral post by a lasso tight around his neck while the saddlers did their work. Any too-reluctant horse or a known kicker was thrown onto his side in the corral dirt and saddled while down. The rider would



poise over him and try to socket himself into the saddle and stirrups as the horse struggled up. It looked to me like a recipe for suicide.

My throat stoppered itself when I saw that Varick had drawn one of the saddle-in-the-dirt rides.

"Watch out for when this bugger starts sunfishing," I heard Dode counsel him, "or he'll stick your head in the ground."

Varick nodded, tugged his hat down severely toward his eyes, and straddled with care across the heaving middle of the prostrate pinto horse. Then said to the handlers: "Let's try him."

The pinto erupted out of the dirt, spurts of dust continuing to fly behind his hooves as he bucked and bounced, querously twisting his spotted body into sideway crescents as if determined to make his rump meet his head. While the horse leapt and crimped, Varick sat astride him, long legs stretched mightily into the stirrups. My blood raced as I watched. What son of mine was this? Somehow this bronc rider, this tall half-stranger, this Sunday centaur, was the yield of his mother and me. I was vastly thankful she was not here to see our wild result.

When Varick had ridden and the other braves of the saddle tribe had taken their turns at rattling their brains, Pat Egan hollered from beside the coral gate: "Time for something different, boys!"

Pat swung the gate open, and in strolled a man and a steer.

At first glimpse the Fort Benton critter looked like standard steer, red-brown, haunch-high to a horse. But when you considered him for a moment, this was a very veteran steer, indeed — years older than the usual by not having gone the route to the slaughterhouse. An old dodger of the last battle, so to say. He was uniquely calm

around people, blinking slow blinks that were halfway toward sleep as the onlookers gathered around him. The circle gave way considerably, however, when he lifted his tail like a pump handle and casually let loose several fluid feet of manure.

For his part, the Fort Benton man was a moon-face with spectacles, a sort you would expect to see behind the teller's wicket in a bank instead of ankle-deep into a corral floor. The fiscal look about him was not entirely coincidental. He was prepared, he announced, to provide \$25 to anyone who could ride this steer of his. He also would be amenable, of course, to whatever side bets anybody might care to make with him about his steer's invincibility.

At once, everybody in the corral voted with his pockets. All the young riders wanted a turn at the steer, or professed to. But the Fort Bentonian shook his head and informed the throng that was not how steer riding worked; it was strictly a one-shot proposition. One steer per afternoon, one rider per afternoon: What could be more fair? Then he set forth the further terms of steer riding, Fort Benton mode: The rider had to stay astride the steer for a total of three minutes in a 10-minute span.

Somebody spoke up: Surely the steer impresario didn't mean three minutes straight, uninterrupted, aboard the animal, did he?

He did not. The rider could get off and on again any hundred number of times he wanted to during the overall time span. Did he need to add, he added, the steer would be glad to help the rider with the offs?

What about a hazer, to even the odds for the rider getting back on?

The eyebrows lifted above the moon-face in surprise. But the Fort Bentonian allowed that one man hazing on foot maybe wouldn't do lasting harm to his cherished pet.

At last the terms of the contest were as clear as tongue could make them. Someone called out the next conundrum:

"Who's gonna climb on the thing?"

Faces turned toward Varick and the Withrow lad. Varick looked at young Withrow, and young Withrow at him. "Toss you for him, Dode," offered my son.

"Heads, Mac. Let her fly."

The silver dollar that spun into the air, I tried to exert to come down heads — not to send danger toward another man's son, simply away from my own. Name me one soul who could have done different. But I had my usual luck where Varick was concerned.

"You got on the wrong pants for riding a male cow, anyway," Varick consoled Dode after the coin fell tails. Then, "I guess I'm ready for this if your steer is, Mr. Fort Benton."

Varick and his adherents gathered around the steer. The steer blinked at them. As Dode Withrow approached with the saddle, someone moved from behind the steer to watch. The steer's right rear leg flashed, the hoof missing the pedestrian by an inch.

"Now, now, McCoy," the Fort Bentonian chided his pet. "That's no way to act toward these boys." He scratched the steer between its broad eyes as if it was a gigantic puppy, and it stood in perfect tranquility while Dode and the others saddled and trussed. The kick had done its work, though, as now both Varick and Dode, who was going to be his hazer, knew they would have to avoid the steer's rear area during the corral contest.

Dode Withrow gripped the halter with both hands at the steer's jaw while someone passed the halter rope up to Varick. He took a wrap of it in his right hand and put his left into the air as if asking an arithmetic question in a classroom. He called to Pat Egan and the Fort Bentonian, the two timekeepers:

"Let's try him."

The moon-face boomed out, "Go, McCoy!" and the

steer writhed his hindquarters as if he were now a giant snake. A giant snake with horns and hooves. Varick's head whipped sideways, then to the other side, like a willow snapping back and forth. Then the steer lurched forward, and Varick whipped in that direction and back.

MURRRRAWWWW issued out of McCoy, half-bellow, half-groan, as he and Varick began storming around the circle of the corral. It was like watching a battle in a whirlwind, the steer's hooves spraying the loose minced dirt of the arena 20 feet into the air.

I watched in agony, fear, fascination. So I wanted to know about Varick's Sunday life, did I? We spend the years of raising children for this, for them to invent fresh ways to break their young necks?

At about McCoy's dozenth MURRRRAWWWW, Varick continued left while the steer adjourned right.

"That was 51 seconds!" Pat Egan shouted as Varick alit in the corral earth.

His words still were in the air when Dode dashed beside the steer to grab the halter rope. As he reached down for it, the animal trotted slightly faster, just enough to keep the rope out of reach. Dode speeded up. McCoy speeded up even more, circling the corral now at a sustained pace that a trotting horse would have envied. As the seconds ticked by in this round race between Dode and McCoy, it became clear what they used for brains in Fort Benton. Before the considerable problem of climbing onto McCoy and staying on there was going to be the trickier problem of catching him each time.

Varick by now had scrambled to his feet and joined the chase. "I'll cut across behind the bugger, you run him around to me," Dode strategized in a panting yell.

He started his veer behind McCoy. Sudden as a clock mechanism reaching the hour, McCoy halted in his tracks and delivered a flashing kick that missed Dode by the width of a fiddlestring.

But while McCoy was trying to send his would-be hazy into the middle of next week, Varick managed to lay hands on the halter rope and hold the steer long enough for Dode to gain control of the halter. Time sped as Dode desperately hugged McCoy by the head and Varick remounted; then the writhing contest was on again. The steer bounced around the arena, always in the same direction, with the same crazy seesaw motion, and I thought Varick was beginning to look a bit woozy. Then MURRRRAWWWW again, and my son flew into the dirt another time.

"Another 46 seconds!" shouted Pat. "That's 5½ minutes," chimed the Fort Bentonian.

Away went McCoy, away went the puffing Dode after him, in a repeat race until Varick managed to mount again and the bucking resumed.

They rampaged that way, McCoy and McCaskill, through three further exchanges, man onto steer, steer out from under man. Each time, Varick's tenancy atop McCoy was briefer; but each time added precious toward the three-minute total of riding, too.

Now McCoy sent Varick cloud-chasing again, and I half hoped my stubborn son would find enough sense to give up the combat, half-wished his heavy plummet into the arena would conk him hard enough that he had to quit. But no, never. Varick was one long streak of corral dirt, but he was onto his feet again, more or less. Gasping as if he'd been running steadily in tandem with McCoy ever since their bout began, he cast a bleary look around for his adversary. Over by the corral gate Dode

Withrow had McCoy by the halter again, snugging the animal while urging Varick: "Now we got the bugger, Mac! One more time!"

The steer casually studied young Withrow, then tossed his head and slung Dode tip-over-teakettle into the expanse of fresh green, still-almost-liquid manure he had deposited just before the riding match commenced. The dazzling corduroy trousers and most other fabric on Dode abruptly changed color. While he slid and sloshed, the steer started away as if bored. But Varick had wobbled close enough to grab the halter rope as it flew from Dode, and now somehow he was putting himself aboard McCoy again.

The steer shook him mightily, but whatever wild rhythm McCoy was cavorting to, Varick also had found. The clamped pair of them, creature and rider, MURRRRAWWWW and gritting silence, shot around the corral in a steady circle, if up-and-down isn't counted. Varick grasped the halter rope as if it was the hawser to life. McCoy quit circling and simply spun in his tracks like a dog chasing its tail. Varick's face came-went, came-went. . .

"Time!" yelled Pat Egan. "That's three minutes' worth! And still half a minute to the limit!"

"Whoa, McCoy," the Fort Benton man called out sourly. At once the steer froze, so abruptly that Varick pitched ahead onto its neck. With a great gulp of air, Varick lowered himself from McCoy's back, held out the halter rope and dropped it.

Blearily my son located the figure, manure-sopped but grinning, of young Withrow.

"Dode," Varick called out, "You're awful hard on a pair of pants."

NW

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Home Plan

Vaulted ceilings, a raised master suite and individually covered garden patios highlight this 1,557-square-foot single-level house.

The formal living and dining rooms directly off the main entry hall offer 10-foot-high ceilings, stained glass windows and garden surroundings.

A two-car garage, with an optional half-bath/utility room, leads directly into the kitchen area. The kitchen and breakfast nook provide direct access to the

centrally located family room.

The raised master suite includes a spacious walk-in closet, a large private bathroom and a hot-tub deck. The additional two bedrooms also have access to a covered patio.

Address inquiries about plan No. 7599-2A to Knight's Building Design, 2932 N.E. Broadway, Portland, OR 97232. A set of four professionally designed plans is \$200. Extra copies ordered at the same time as the original set are \$25 each; a material list is \$30. Please add \$5 postage.

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