BOOKS AND AUTHORS

War games

Loyalty, fate and sacrifice are in play in Ivan Doig's sweeping World War II epic about the members of a legendary Montana football team who all enlist

"The Eleventh Man"
by Ivan Doig
Harcourt, 406 pp., $26

REVIEWED BY MARY ANN GWINN
Seattle Times book editor

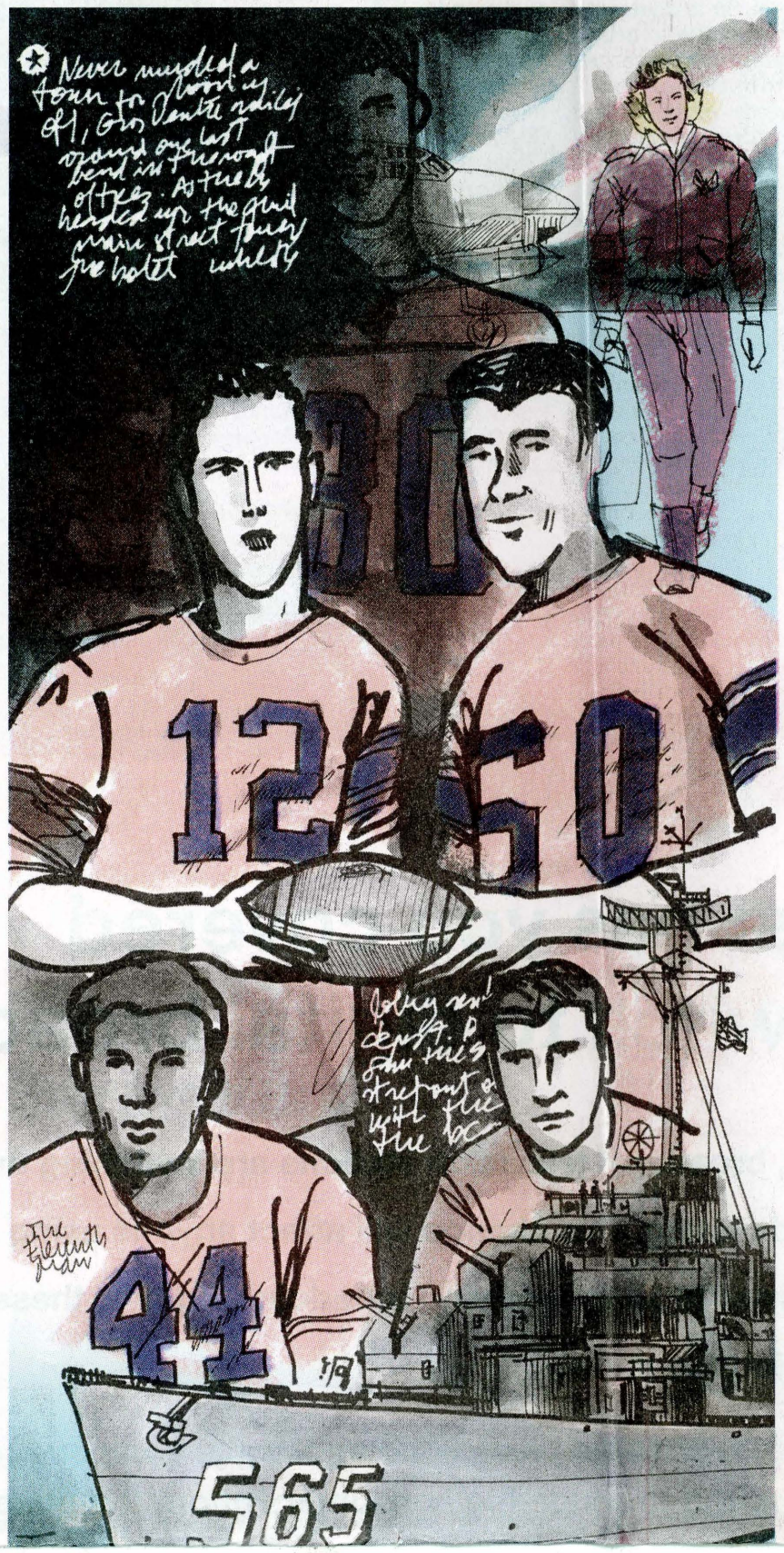
Ivan Doig is a fearless storyteller. The Seattle author, an icon among writers of the American west, has set his novels and memoirs against our region's natural grandeur and has put hundreds of characters in play on its outsize stage. Now, in his novel "The Eleventh Man," Doig has taken on the largest of backdrops: the entire theater of World War II.

"The Eleventh Man" is the story of Ben Reinking, the son of a newspaper owner in Gros Ventre, a small town in Montana. Ben, out of college just two years, is fighting the war in a peculiar way: Yanked from an assignment as a combat pilot, Ben has been pressed into service as a journalist/propagandist for the Threshold Press War Project, a government-backed press service that feeds heroic stories to midsize and small newspapers that can't afford their own war correspondent.

In college, Ben was a member of Treasure State University's legendary "Supreme Team," which fought to an undefeated season after one of their players ran himself to death in a workout (who's at fault is one of the unfolding mysteries of the book). Every surviving member of the football team has joined up. Ben's assignment is to tell their war stories, all over the globe.

Right from the get go, Ben resists; the odds are that at least a few of these stories are going to be obituaries. His handler, a shadowy figure called the Colonel, insists that the awful arithmetic of wartime still tilts toward the team's survival: " 'Statistically speaking, in this war we are looking at a nine percent mortality rate for active combatants such as your teammates. Rounding that off to a whole man, as we must' — Ben stared at a human being who could use the law of averages to measure dirt on a grave — 'that is one in ten, isn't it.' " Not to give too much away, but things don't quite turn out that way.

Ben, not having any choice in the matter of wartime duty, throws him-



AUTHOR APPEARANCE

Ivan Doig

The author of "The Eleventh Man" will read at these locations:

- 7 p.m. Monday at Third Place Books, 17171 Bothell Way N.E., Lake Forest Park (206-366-3333 or *www.thirdplacebooks.com*).
- 7:30 p.m. Thursday at the Eagle Harbor Book Co., 157 Winslow Way E., Bainbridge Island (206-842-5332 or *www.eagleharborbooks.com*).
- 7:30 p.m. Saturday at Seattle's Elliott Bay Book Co., 101 S. Main St., Seattle (206-624-6600 or *www.elliottbaybook.com*).
- 7:30 p.m. Nov. 12 at Town Hall Seattle (sponsored by University Book Store), 1119 Eighth Ave., Seattle; $5 (206-634-3400 or *www.ubookstore.com*).
- 7 p.m. Nov. 13 at Parkplace Books, 348 Parkplace Center, Kirkland (425-828-6546 or *www.parkplacebookskirkland.com*).

hit: "He felt the shudder up from the water. Astern, explosions bloomed white in the darkness. Knowing this to be one of the sights of a lifetime, he watched with an intensity near to quivering. Not often is it given to you to stare away death, see it go instead in search of your sworn enemy."

While "The Eleventh Man" is a showcase for larger-than-life characters and scenes, at times it threatens to founder under the weight of its structure. Readers are parachuted into the lives of each teammate, then yanked up again and set on the road to somewhere and someone else. The book is a stage chockablock with interesting characters who speak their lines — bluff, hearty, lyrical, ironic — then get snatched away.

And a key concern of the novel — whether a malign *deus ex machina* is dictating the assignments, and fates, of the team — was never quite resolved to this reader's satisfaction. Would a government agency really thrust these young men into hazardous assignments for the purpose of creating dead heroes, or is Ben's pre-

BEST-SELLER

As reported by Publishers Weekly

Hardcover fiction

1. **The Story of Edgar Sawtelle,** *David Wroblewski*
2. **Heat Lightning,** *John Sandford*
3. **The Given Day,** *Dennis Lehane*
4. **Hot Mahogany,** *Stuart Woods*
5. **The Other Queen,** *Philippa Gregory*
6. **One Fifth Avenue,** *Candace Bushnell*
7. **The Host,** *Stephenie Meyer*
8. **The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo,** *Stieg Larsson*
9. **Tsar,** *Ted Bell*
10. **The Book of Lies,** *Brad Meltzer*

Hardcover nonfiction

1. **The Last Lecture,** *Randy Pausch with Jeffrey Zaslow*
2. **Hot, Flat, and Crowded,** *Thomas L. Friedman*
3. **A Bold Fresh Piece of Humanity,** *Bill O'Reilly*
4. **Before You Do,** *T.D. Jakes*
5. **Breakthrough,** *Suzanne Somers*
6. **The War Within,** *Bob Woodward*
7. **Pieces of My Heart,** *Robert J. Wagner with Scott Eyman*
8. **Guinness World Records 2009,** *Guinness Publishing*
9. **The Secret,** *Rhonda Byrne*
10. **Dewey,** *Vicki Myron with Bret Witter*

McClatchy Newspapers

LOCAL SCENE

***Current best-sellers** at Wide World Books & Maps, 4411 Wallingford Ave. N., Seattle (206-346-3453 or www.wideworldtravels.com).*

Hardcover

1. **The Anglo Files,** *Sarah Lyall*
2. **Chefs on the Farm,** *Shannon Borg and Lora Lee Misterly*
3. **Babar's World Tour,** *Laurent de Brunho*
4. **India,** *DK Publishing*
5. **When You Are Engulfed in Flames,** *David Sedaris*

Paperback

1. **Wanderlust and Lipstick,** *Beth Whitma*
2. **Walk the Blue Fields,** *Claire Keegan*

dramatic contrast of the Supreme Team's stories: Vic Rennie, the Blackfoot Indian who lived in a relative's shack while attending Treasure State, has already stepped on a land mine and is consigned to a wheelchair. But Dex Cariston, scion of a moneyed Montana family, is sitting out the war in a camp of conscientious objector-status smoke jumpers (as with many details in this book, this one is based on historical fact; there really was such a unit).

Meanwhile, Ben's blood is aboil over Cass Standish, a married female pilot assigned to the same Montana air base. Cass is head of a squad of all-female pilots charged with ferrying planes from one North American location to another. Some of the best scenes in "The Eleventh Man" convey the crackling "From Here to Eternity"-style passion between these two: Cass is wild about Ben, but she's married, her husband is slogging out the war in the jungles of New Guinea and she's not about to write a Dear John letter addressed to a soldier in green hell.



GABI CAMPANARIO / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Doig's way with a sweeping scene is on display in "The Eleventh Man's" evocation of the awful grandeur of war. Standing on the deck of a destroyer as it attempts to bomb a Japanese submarine into oblivion, Ben watches his own death postponed:

"Sea air rushed by, there on the steel promontory into the dark. A mane of moonsilver flowed back from the destroyer's bow ... As his eyes adjusted, Ben could just make out the long narrow deck below, armaments jutting ready if they only had a target, faces of the gun crews pale patches foreshortened by helmets."

Then the submarine takes a direct spelled out. Ben's minders are manipulative and heartless, but they never really step from behind the curtain.

With Doig's warm regard for his Supreme Team characters, his disdain for his story's villains and his way with the heart-stopping action scene, in "The Eleventh Man" he has created a wartime epic, but with a difference. Though its marketing suggests it will resonate with the "Greatest Generation," "The Eleventh Man" trembles with the weariness of the modern age toward carnage — a war novel with an anti-war heart.



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4. Elephanta Suite, *Paul Theroux*

5. Washington, Oregon & the Pacific Northwest, *Lonely Planet*

New books with local ties

"Crossings: On the Ferries of Puget Sound" *by Michael Diehl* *(Island Earth, $32.50)*. A handsome photo-essay on ferry travel around the Sound. Diehl has a good eye for both the bright and brooding light of our maritime environs.

"Paul of Dune" *by Brian Herbert and Kevin J. Anderson* *(Tor, $27.95)*. The Bainbridge Island writer and his long-time collaborator deliver another novel in the "Dune" series, exploring what happened between "Dune" and "Dune Messiah," two science-fiction classics written by Herbert's father, Frank Herbert.

New West or Old? Men and Masculinity in Recent Fiction by Western American Men

David J. Peterson

Works Reviewed

Arcia, Alberto. *Cut & Run: The Misadventures of Alex Perez.* Houston, TX: Arte Público Press, 2009. 236 pages, $15.95.

DeFrain, Darren. *Inside & Out.* Charlotte, NC: Main Street Rag, 2008. 197 pages, $14.95.

Doig, Ivan. *The Eleventh Man.* Orlando, FL: Harcourt, 2008. 406 pages, $26.00.

Foreman, Stephen H. *Watching Gideon.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009. 264 pages, $14.00.

González, Rigoberto. *Men without Bliss.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008. 206 pages, $24.95.

Greer, Robert. *Spoon.* Golden, CO: Fulcrum Press, 2009. 248 pages, $24.95.

Miller, Jim. *Drift.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007. 208 pages, $24.95.

Phillips, Marc. *The Legend of Sander Grant.* London, UK: Telegram, 2009. 240 pages, $13.95.

Scholars of western literature and culture have spent a good deal of the past thirty years or so analyzing and critiquing traditional representations of western masculinity. As Jane Tompkins put it so well in *West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns* (1992), "what is most interesting about Westerns ... is ... the way they create a model for men who came of age in the twentieth century. The model was not for women but for men: Westerns insist on this point by emphasizing the importance of manhood as an ideal. It is not one ideal among many, it is *the* ideal, certainly the only one worth dying for. It doesn't matter whether a man is a sheriff or an outlaw, a rustler or a rancher, a cattleman or a sheepherder, a miner or a gambler. What matters is that he be a *man*" (17–18). As writers such as Tompkins show, much of what it took to "be a man" involved the often violent assertion of white male privilege and dominance—over

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women, ethnic and sexual minorities (male or female), over animals, and over the land.

This essay considers the eight books under review in this light, with particular attention being paid to how this model of dominant white masculinity has (or in some cases has not) shifted in response to sociocultural change. And I'll start with a caveat: these books comprise a mixed bag in terms of literary quality. Were it not for this review's thematic interest—representations of men and masculinity in some current fiction by western men—I'd just as soon not bother with some. From an aesthetic perspective, several are simply wanting, whether owing to the writers' level of experience or lack of creative depth. Be that as it may, taken together, these works provide a useful barometer for measuring how contemporary male writers are imagining and reimagining western masculinities. Some, such as Robert Greer, Marc Phillips, and Ivan Doig, return to legendary forms of masculinity—the cowboy and the war hero—to experiment with these models' evocative powers and to explore their nature and effects (sometimes positive, sometimes negative) on modern western men. The difficulties, frustrations, and failures associated with boys' initiations into manhood are also considered by Greer, Phillips, and Doig, a theme shared by several of the stories by Rigoberto González and Darren DeFrain as well. Still others demonstrate in both positive and negative ways how men respond to the "crisis of masculinity" created by shifts in gender and sexuality norms as well as by socioeconomic change in the era of globalization. Here I find the men separated from the boys—fictively and authorially. Writers such as Greer, Phillips, Doig, and González acknowledge these changes and explore how men can still be men without needing the traditional presumptions of dominance and privilege. Other writers, particularly Alberto Arcia and Stephen Foreman, retreat into what seems to me to be reactionary forms of heteronormative masculinity, producing fiction where men frequently behave more like macho adolescents than men who can cowboy up and meet the challenges of contemporary life without resorting to misogyny or homophobia.

LEGENDARY MEN

Cowboys are alive and well in Robert Greer's *Spoon* and Marc Phillips's *The Legend of Sander Grant*. In these narratives, men face seemingly insurmountable odds, as cowboys must. Greer's territory is the conflict between traditional ranching and the exploitation of mineral resources in the intermountain West, a familiar theme to many readers of contemporary western literature. In Phillips's case, the stakes are higher and more mythic: Texas ranchers pitted against the enmity of a seemingly implacable God.

Greer is perhaps most familiar to readers as the author of the C. J. Floyd mysteries (now comprising seven novels), and *Spoon* reflects the narrative skills Greer has rightly been praised for in terms of genre fiction—tight, engaging dialogue along with tight, engaging plot. The novel pits "Old West" values and lifeways against "New West" politics and greed, creating an ecological thriller that will please most readers. The story concerns the struggles of the Darley family—Bill, Marva, and their son, TJ, owners of the Willow Creek Ranch in Hardin, Montana—to prevent the Acota Energy Corporation from grabbing their land, ranched by the family for generations, to strip-mine low-sulfur coal. Told through TJ's perspective, the narrative follows the ranchers' fight against a stable of enemies bearing all the hallmarks of traditional western baddies, though tweaked for modern times: "There's somethin' else at stake here. ... Somethin' bigger than petty fines for trespassin', or the fact that Acota's primed to forever scar up this valley. And that's the fact that we're dealin' with bullies. Flat-out, second-grade, kick-sand-in-your-face kind of bullies. Arrogant asses who think they can do anything they please" (199).

If the enemy is familiar, their methods have changed to suit the times, as TJ notes regarding Acota Energy's leading "scout," Ed Koffman: "He'd snookered them not with a six-gun and the intimidating Old West skills of a land-grabbing bully, but with his well-honed New West skills as a corporate lawyer" (51).

Greer's men are passionate: for ranching, for justice, for the land. As TJ's father, Bill, declares at a meeting of ranchers: "what binds us together ... is our desire to keep Acota from turning this valley into a string of strip-mining pits, a concentration camp of dust and fumes," to which he adds, "What I'm holdin' out for ... is a way to preserve my way of life. A way of life I love and one I damn sure don't intend to let go" (101). Another cattleman asserts, "I'd kill over this land. No question about it" (103). Given such a set-up, readers would be forgiven for expecting a traditional shoot-'em-up ending. But just as the bad guys have changed with the times, so, too, have the heroes. TJ's father plans to meet New West lawyering with New West lawyering. And though guns do get drawn (it is genre fiction, after all—there needs to be some action!), they're more likely to be aimed at earth-moving vehicles' tires than people.

The Darleys are assisted in their fight by the drifting ranch hand Arcus Witherspoon, a.k.a. Spoon, "a part-black, part-Indian cowboy searching for his roots," a search that has taken him across the country and led him to the Darley ranch (1). Indeed, with Spoon, Greer has transformed that most mythic of western heroes, Shane, into an engaging model of minority masculinity that reminds readers that not all heroic

western men are white. Like Shane, Spoon rides in from out of nowhere to help save the day, and, again like Shane, he rides out when the job is done. Unlike Shane, he relentlessly pursues answers to his past, and unlike Shane, he relies more on his wits and the gift (literal) of foresight than his fists or the gun. Men need to be prepared for action, but that preparation now takes the form of using wit and wisdom to succeed in a fight rather than drawing first and asking questions later.

Similar to Greer's *Spoon*, Phillips's *The Legend of Sander Grant*, set in northeast Texas, considers legendary forms of western manhood. The novel's opening paragraph tells us its eponymous hero

> is a giant. But people around Dixon are used to that. His daddy was a giant, and his daddy's dad, and so on. Back when other whites had just arrived, Sander's people were already there, and nobody knew where in hell they came from. Those who used to trouble themselves about it, of course, they've grown old and died. Locals now remark on Sander Grant in the same way they do the August heat. Like a mother tells her kids Jesus is love. (7)

But *giant* here is not a sobriquet à la Edna Ferber's novel *Giant* (1952) or George Stevens's film interpretation of it (1956)—Sander and the men in his family are literally giants, looming large in the narrative and in our imaginations. Phillips's clever, albeit fantastic, explanation for these larger-than-life men and their history is that they descend from the giants mentioned in an arcane passage from Genesis, which recounts that once upon a time, there "were giants in the earth ... ; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown" (Gen 6:4 KJV). Phillips spins this passage into a wondrous novel, his first, written clearly in the tradition of the western tall tale wherein God renews his fight with the giants through violent attacks on their ranch, their family, and their friends. It's certainly magical in terms of narrative and in the creation of characters who are hard-working western ranchers and deep, mystical, philosophical thinkers who, like the Darleys and Spoon, survive more by wit and wisdom than by brawn.

Like the men in Greer's novel, the Grant men are independent-minded, hard workers and hard dealers—all very traditional western masculine attributes. These heroes, then, are "real men" in that western tradition of mythic masculinity, all with a touch of the extraordinary. Ivan Doig's *The Eleventh Man* takes up legendary men, too, though not in so literally mythic a fashion. The hero of his eighth novel is Ben Reinking, a World War II military correspondent working for a mysterious Pentagon agency known

as the Threshold Press War Project (TPWP, or Teepee Weepy). The son of the editor of the *Gleaner*, the newspaper from the small town of Gros Venture (which readers will recognize from Doig's Montana trilogy), and captain of a legendary 1941 Treasure State University football team, Ben is recruited by TPWP having been pulled from combat-pilot training school. His job is to cover, for the duration of the war, his football teammates, all of whom, with the exception of one, are serving in various branches of the armed forces. All he knows is that his stories serve the military's propaganda efforts. TPWP wants heroes, and the young men of the '41 team are made to serve—regardless of their moral character or role in the war—as national icons of heroic masculinity. Some of them are truly heroic, some seek to further themselves through the crass manipulation of the system; others are frustrated by not being allowed to serve at the front (Ben included), and one is a conscientious objector. One by one, his former teammates die, and Ben is required to produce accounts of their deaths that will transform them into legends.

While Greer and Phillips present us with men who are ultimately certain of their abilities, men who are, in essence, inherently heroic, Doig examines how men become heroic, in terms of sense of self and of how culture both requires and produces legendary figures. Regarding the first, many of the men in the narrative must struggle with uncertainties, particularly when facing the battlefield and loss. As for the culture's desires for heroes, Doig explores that great statement of how Western heroes are made from the film *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence* (1962): "This is the West, sir. When the legend becomes fact, print the legend." Indeed, a large portion of the novel concerns the manipulation of "facts" to produce heroic narrative, a potent commentary on the tradition of western men's writing itself. Such manipulation comes in multiple forms with multiple motives. There's sportscaster and writer Loudon's manipulation of language to produce legend in order to aggrandize his own career, Ben's frequently forced manipulation (which he often tries to resist), and finally TPWP's manipulation to produce heroes the nation can believe in in order to support the war. Doig seems to suggest that readers, too, desire such manipulation, and he reveals the cost of such desire through violence and loss.

BOYS TO MEN

While focused on the conflict between ranching and mining in the New West, Greer's novel also considers another enduring theme in western literature: the initiation of boys into manhood. TJ's father plays a role in this

regard, but Spoon has a stronger influence on TJ's emerging masculinity. Much of this instructional work is done through Spoon's example-setting work ethic and ingenuity, along with a healthy dose of folk wisdom encapsulating the essentials of manhood: "Don't never forget that preparation's as important as patience and persistence when it comes to most things in life, TJ. If a man's gonna survive, he best understand that" (27). And "Guessin's for stockbrokers and politicians, son, not for us cattle-ranchin' types. When you're facin' a real problem, it's best to steer clear of guesswork" (66). Such sayings become a bit cloying at times, particularly given their regular appearance. Be that as it may, Spoon enacts his own advice, and TJ learns to do so as well, demonstrating that for Greer and his characters words need to be backed by action. At the same time, Spoon's advice stresses the need for men to control more negative emotions and fears in order to achieve success as men.

Phillips's novel is also concerned with the initiation into manhood, tracing Sander's growth (physically and intellectually quick) from his birth, adolescence, and early adulthood. Various individuals participate in Sander's transition into manhood, including his mother and father, the local Unitarian minister, his bisexual art instructor, and even his male ancestors (all of whom, stretching back to the beginning, can communicate through the most recently deceased ancestor). As with TJ in *Spoon*, the young giant is given the responsibility of finding his way on his own terms—with guidance, of course. Sander, under age eighteen (which is practically middle-aged for giants), takes over as ranch foreman, and his foray into improving the herd pays off through increased herd size and profits. When a struggle of biblical proportions unfolds under Sander's watch, the Grants band together to engage God in an old-fashioned standoff to save the ranch and themselves from destruction.

Greer's and Phillips's messages are clear: it takes family and community to raise boys up into productive masculinity. Doig's Ben, too, must come to terms with his transition into manhood. But here the struggle unfolds without the benefit of much familial guidance (Ben frequently cannot reveal the exact nature of his work to his father), without the benefit of communal support, and, to complicate matters, his struggle unfolds within the theater of war. While TJ and Sander are guided in their journeys by strong men, Ben mainly encounters feckless, manipulative men, causing him to question the nature of the heroic models the nation values as well as his own abilities to discover for himself an authentic masculine identity grounded in truth, not legend. One way he negotiates this quandary is to write a screenplay that will, though fictive, present the truth behind the manufactured legends.

Rigoberto González's *Men without Bliss* contains numerous stories focused on boys' transitions into manhood. González, whose 2006 memoir, *Butterfly Boy: Memories of a Chicano Mariposa,* won the Before Columbus Foundation's American Book Award, arranges this collection in two parts. The first eight stories, "Men in the Caliente Valley," can be considered a short-story cycle—all the men are residents of a housing project in Caliente Valley, an agricultural town edged by irrigated fields of onion, lettuce, and grapes somewhere in southern California. Its residents are primarily Mexican farm laborers. In this setting, González's men, young and old, struggle against the poverty that entraps them in seemingly dead-ended lives. The second part contains five stories about "Men in Other Places"; some have escaped Caliente Valley, but in seeking new lives in other places, they still find they must confront their pasts, their demons, and all else that stands in the way of achieving bliss as men.

For the young men stranded at the edges of California dreaming, effective models of masculinity are largely absent. For González, the loss of fathers and other male role models, as well as other forms of family dysfunction, are problems as serious as, if not more serious than, economic and cultural marginalization. Consider the collection's opening story, "Mexican Gold," where Marcos, the central character, confronts his lack of maturity as he stands in the local video arcade, the popular after-school hangout:

> Marcos suddenly feels self-conscious, as if his presence here means that he hasn't grown out of his childhood. But he's a man now at eighteen. ... He wishes he were still in those days when all he had to do was long for the freedom from school. But those moments of puffing on cigarettes with urgency between classes and the defiance of sitting in the back of the classroom, making the substitute teachers nervous, seem so stupid now. Now. The present—this was a terrible place to be in. (18)

That present is defined by a vicious cycle of anger at his ineffectual mother and guilt over the death of his brother Roger. Because he lacks emotional maturity, he is unable to release either and thus remains, through most of the story, in a state of paralysis.

Emotional maturity and the ability to make positive choices, important in the transition into manhood, are taken up again in "Plums," the story of a young, gay Latino, Abismael, who frequents a motel near the projects to escape home and indulge in fantasy. As he bathes in the motel tub, he "imagines sailors drowning, their beautiful muscular bodies washing ashore weeks later, and eyes on the beach looking on with that sadness that comes to a face when it sees such loss—or waste. He has caught

his own mother staring at him that way while she's ironing in the corner of the room and he's flipping through magazines, pausing to gaze at the men" (41–42). Abi dreams particularly about a macho neighbor, Gilberto, "his make-believe lover, fantasy boyfriend" (43). Though Gilberto regularly abuses his wife, Abi is drawn to this figure of hypermasculinity: "He imagines his head against Gilberto's tight torso, his warm breath drying the wet hairs on Gilberto's sternum. And when Abi tries to give him a hickey on that muscle-swollen chest, Gilberto will nudge him away with a heavy hand and a sleepy warning: 'No plums'" (43). Abismael's challenge is different from that which characters such as Marcos face: the struggle to embrace real men and the potential for real love rather than the stereotyped gym-body, hyper-masculinity that dominates so much of American—and as González reveals, Mexican American—gay culture. In this sense, the machismo of Mexican-American culture, represented by Gilberto, merges with homonormative models of desire—both of which prevent men from achieving bliss. So when he meets the "geeko" Tony-Raúl, the motel clerk, Abi's maturation into manhood involves choosing between fantasy and the real (50).

As these writers remind us, young men's transitions to positive forms of manhood involve painful struggles with doubts and fears, with moving beyond fantasies of masculine desire and identity, and with making good moral choices—often without strong guidance from other adult men.

MASCULINITY IN CRISIS

The concept of a crisis affecting masculinity (particular that of Euro-American males) emerged in the 1990s as changes in gender roles, identity politics, and socioeconomics began threatening male dominance and privilege. Unlike some writers under consideration in this review, the works of Greer, Phillips, and Doig create male characters who positively adjust to these changes. While their works still associate western masculinity with often violent conflict (ranchers forced into an armed stand against a rapacious corporation, ranchers fighting against a vindictive God, men struggling in the theater of war) and socioeconomic marginalization, their men negotiate these conflicts without needing to shore up their manhood by oppressing women or other marginalized groups.

Indeed, women play a vital part in the action and thinking of all three writers. Doig, for example, uses his character Cassie (a pilot and Ben's lover) to recover the history of women who served as ferry pilots, transporting aircraft from the factory to various US bases. Ben fully supports Cassie's desire to contribute to the war effort. He can maintain his sense of mascu-

linity without the need to dominate women; although his dream of being a fighter pilot did not come to fruition, he does not respond to that disappointment by attacking women who fly, as do other characters in the novel.

Time and again, you think Phillips's *Legend* will fall into age-old stereotypes of western masculinity, as seems to happen as Dalton, Sander's father, contemplates the family's various contributions to the ranch's success: "He preferred Jo rule the house and matters thereabouts in the manner which had thankfully become her custom, as an unyielding matriarch, benevolent but noticeably absent due process. This, he was certain, was the bedrock of their strength as a family. Meanwhile, he plied the land which fed them, his domain and birthright, with fathoms of understanding from Grant generations. ... It seemed the proper order of things" (19). This sounds like the familiar gendered division of labor on ranches and farms as recounted by Cynthia Culver Prescott in *Gender and Generation on the Far Western Frontier* (2007). But Phillips invokes the stereotypes in part to undercut them; while the division of labor seems traditional and firmly set (woman in house, man in the field—the "proper order of things"), Jo is not relegated to secondary status. Though not a giant, she looms large nonetheless. She plays an equal role in raising Sander. She has no qualms confronting God after several years of falling herd numbers caused by drought, lightning, and other disasters: "You look here! You will step up and do Your job. Help my man. Are You listening to me?" (15). God apparently doesn't answer, leading Jo to create plans instrumental to saving the ranch. After she instructs her husband on what she thinks should be done, she adds, "And don't look for God around here for a while. We're on the outs, but He'll get over it" (16).

At another point in Phillips's novel, Sander's parents learn that Jason, Sander's art instructor, who has a strong influence on the young giant, is rumored to be bisexual. As we'll see in a moment, in a less thoughtful writer's hands such a plot twist can devolve into heteronormative males asserting their masculinity through disparagement of sexual minorities. But Phillips chooses instead to subvert the stereotype of intolerant rural men. The narrator informs us that rather than berating his son and attacking the "pervert," Sander's father acknowledges that "the differences between people," including sexuality, "were things Dalton and all his kin were very tolerant of, for obvious reasons"—they are, after all, giants persecuted by God (56). The issue isn't Jason's sexuality; it's the family's wish to keep Sander open to all possibilities (sexual, religious, intellectual, artistic) without undue influences from any direction, including his own family: "Sander needed to figure out for himself what was important enough to strive for and what sacrifices must be offered to achieve it" (58).

González's *Men without Bliss* more directly examines Latino masculinity in crisis, frequently represented as resulting from characters' economic and cultural marginalization. But while some of his men are trapped by place and poverty ("Good Boys"), others are trapped by tradition and family ("Your Malicious Moons," "The Call," "Men without Bliss") or haunted by regret for what they did or did not do ("Mexican Gold," "Nayarita Blues," "The Abortionist's Lover"). Still others struggle with desire and sexuality ("Plums"), and some are trapped by machismo and similar models of normative masculinity ("Confessions of a Drowning Man") that ultimately prove as damaging to men as economic and ethnic marginalization. In "Your Malicious Moons," for example, Jesse struggles for a sense of independence from a dead, though still domineering, mother, who was formerly mayor of Caliente Valley. While powerful, domineering women appear with some frequency in *Men without Bliss* ("Mexican Gold," "Road to Enchantment"), González is not exploring, à la the crisis of masculinity, how women emasculate men as much as he is exploring how men fail because they embrace an identity based on self-pity, anger, victimhood, becoming their own worst enemies. Jesse, for example, seeks revenge against his mother and his brother, Víctor, by planning to come out publicly as Víctor announces his mayoral candidacy.

> You're anxious, not about Víctor, but about your mother—dead four years and you still carry her coffin on your shoulders. ... Each time Teresa Talamontes Remembered comes around, you feel like the rebellious boy she criticized for being self-absorbed. You must admit she was right. ... But who else is there to think about when you're boyfriendless, fatherless, motherless, and most of the time brotherless. You refuse to change because you want to spite her, and even with this firm conviction you can't help but wonder if it's still her power and not yours. (25)

As González makes clear, it's Jesse's self-pity and anger that's holding him back, as much as he wants to blame his mother.

The rich complexities in the representations of masculinities embodied by the work of Greer, Phillips, Doig, and González make the rest of the books under consideration less than satisfying. The central character of Jim Miller's *Drift*, for example, encounters challenges to manhood at the leading edge of postmodern ennui. While the men in the works reviewed thus far endure conflict with themselves and others, Miller's presentation of the problems contemporary western men face takes a decided theoretical turn—indeed, in terms of producing engaging narrative, too theoretical a turn. Miller's thematic concerns—such as the struggle to find human

connection in an urban landscape that seems constructed to deny such connection, or the erasure of a cityscape's radical, working-class past and its replacement by venues catering to tourists and the rich—are valid and pressing. Yet his love of high theories (the novel opens with epigrams from Guy Debord and Walter Benjamin), as well as of his literary antecedents (especially Walt Whitman and James Joyce), frequently get in the way of creating an engaging, insightful narrative.

For much of the novel's first half, we follow Joe Blake, frustrated poet and community college English instructor, as he wanders the postmodern cityscape, disaffectedly ruminating on how the metropolis, with all its simulated facades and alienated people, fails to nurture the masculine soul with true sustenance. What's a western man to do? Herein lies the heart of my problem with Miller—the solutions. They entail us watching Blake find a companion, his former student Theresa Sanchez, through whom he might gain some sort of poetic insight into modern life. This retreat into the heterosexual male's fantasy of the exotic minority woman who will provide the white man with spiritual insight through sexual fulfillment is certainly tried and true, but it's also troubling and seems incommensurate with the heightened crisis spawned by the age of simulacrum. Witness their first time together and I think you'll see what I mean: "Joe turned and touched the side of her face, gazed long into her eyes and thought, who is this other, this living mystery?" (98); "Joe watched her undress slowly, peeling off her T-shirt, unclasping her bra, and letting her shorts and panties fall in a graceful dance. It filled him with desire but also reverence. Her naked body made the room sacred" (98).

Readers won't get much beyond such clichéd connections between men and women. Compare the rather worn "wonder" here with Abi's, in González's "Plum," once he lets go of hypermasculine fantasy to embrace Tony-Raúl: "When the music starts playing, Abi rests his head against the tattooed cushion of Tony-R's shoulder, and breathes in the musk of a cologne that probably didn't cost very much, but for Abi, it's quite valuable and deliciously real" (57). While Joe Blake certainly resembles another man without bliss (at least until he finds Theresa), Miller never seems to rise to the level of understanding that González achieves with his characters.

Such forms of arrested development masquerading as insight into the problems men face in the contemporary West plague the fiction of Alberto Arcia, Stephen H. Foreman, and to some extent Daniel DeFrain. Both Arcia and Foreman seem to address the crisis of masculinity by bolstering their characters' manhood through misogyny and homophobia. DeFrain is a bit more complicated in this regard; at times, he appears

aware of the need to critically engage with men's reactionary heteronormativity, but the results are uneven.

Identified by the back cover blurb as "a satirical take on the clash of cultures between north and south of the US border," the first novel by Panamanian-born writer Alberto Arcia serves up what I can only describe as a perfect example for what machismo-riddled adolescents might imagine real manhood to be. If Miller's Joe falls into rather clichéd representations of how men find life's meaning through relationships with women, Arcia's hero, Alex Perez (an aspiring writer like Joe Blake—is there a pattern here?) is nothing short of crass without any clear satirical purpose:

> I sat in my car wondering how Ramona was going to react to me getting fired. Will she smile and give me pussy? Hell, she should kiss me. The damn woman had repeatedly admonished me for my choice of profession and I was now fired. ... What was probably in store for me would be the dreaded out-of-a-job-again look. I hated that. ... [S]he did believe in kicking a dog when it was down, so I expected to be chastised. What a pain in the ass she had become. (76)

In the novel, women are represented as either castrating bitches who use men for sex (his girlfriend Ramona and his mother-in-law), whores (mostly women in Mexico and Guatemala), or women the narrator and other males desire to "poke."

The novel's misogynistic narrator relies on homophobia as well in order to bolster his sagging sense of manhood. But, as with misogyny, there doesn't appear to be any satirical point to the homophobic statements made by many of Arcia's characters. "Hero" and author seem to savor the chance to use the word *maricon* (the Spanish equivalent of *faggot*). At one point, Alex is arrested and sent to prison in Guatemala. There he is put in charge of a lucrative business whereby prisoners pay to visit a bordello: "The Guatemalans were not draconian in the manner in which they treated their prisoners," we read. "There was a bright ray of sun shining upon the jailhouse; all I had to do was grab it. These people were not at all like the gringos, whose prison system is designed to breed *maricones*" (140). This is just one example among many, along with derogatory uses of *faggot, homo,* and *queer*. I suspect that Arcia believes that using *maricon* and similar terms to get a laugh is his idea of playful satire. But that's not the effect it produced for this reader. Arcia's novel, read through the lens of masculinity in crisis, reveals a retreat into a puerile, hyperheterosexual masculinity to meet the challenge posed by shifts in gender relations and sexuality.

Stephen H. Foreman is better known as the screenwriter of *The Jazz Singer* (1980) than as a novelist. His second novel, *Watching Gideon* promises to explore the deep, vital connections between fathers and sons and to do so in an interesting, fresh way. Set in the 1950s, the novel presents the story of Jubal Pickett and his son, Gideon, who, due to "lazy tongue," has never spoken (11). Despite this, the father and son share a strong communicative bond, and Jubal can intuit what the boy wishes to say. The setup promises an intimate, insightful exploration of the relationships between fathers and sons—particularly in terms of emotional nurturance. When Gideon is stricken with appendicitis and may die, for example, Jubal's reaction testifies to the strength of their bond: "His job had been to take care of the boy, and look what he let happen. ... Now the stricken man lacerated himself without mercy. In his mind he begged to be beaten. If his son died, he would die, too, would take his hunting knife and eviscerate himself in the same room, die with eyes fastened on his dead boy's body" (17).

In order to better their lives, Jubal decides to join the uranium rush unfolding in the Southwest. So father and son head for Edom, Utah, and along the way meet up with Abilene Breedlove. As her last name suggests, the narrative here takes a turn into clichéd gender representations typical of sexual thrillers. Much of the novel is concerned with Gideon's burgeoning sexuality (which Abilene seeks to exploit), Jubal having sex with Abilene, and Abilene having sex with Jack (her employer in Edom) and finally with Gideon (in an attempt to gain possession of the claim stake). Jubal's and Gideon's dreams and lives are ruined by Abilene's sexual machinations—Jubal dies as a result, and Gideon then kills Abilene because she betrayed his father sexually. Read as commentary on the crisis of masculinity, Foreman's novel seems to suggest that women's power (troped here as sexual) represents a direct threat to male power and privilege, which is met by the age-old western male response of extreme violence.

The characters who experience the contemporary crisis of masculinity in DeFrain's short-story collection *Inside & Out* share misogynistic and homophobic attitudes similar to Arcia's. The collection is quite uneven in terms of DeFrain's exploration of how men rely on these to protect and bolster their masculinity. The weaker stories in this regard tend to be those focused on adolescents' sexuality and their transition to manhood ("The Butcher's Dog," "Stomp," "At the Window"), their plots seeming to suggest that there are few issues bigger than the discovery of sex and loss of adolescent freedom on the trajectory toward manhood. The collection's first story, "The Butcher's Dog," has the following opening line: "Beyond a place for me and Victoria to screw, the cooler has other important functions too" (1). The narrator works for the local butcher (hence the

convenient cooler) and suspects that Victoria, his girlfriend, is sleeping with other boys in town. His reaction is unsurprising jealousy, which he processes through homophobic references to her other partners: "How could I understand Victoria—a few drinks in her and she's wrapping that blonde hair around Curtis Gunderson? Geoff Burgiss before that. Then Mike Wells, and Baxter Knutson, that faggot" (6).

While many of his subjects are adolescents, and their concerns and language understandably are meant to reflect their lack of maturity, DeFrain struggles with presenting any great insights into the formation of masculinity. There are gestures toward Joycean epiphanies, as in "Stomp," where a high school boy courts the girl of his dreams—predictably a cheerleader—kisses her, and is subsequently beat up for it—predictably—by members of the football team on the orders of her boyfriend, who's on an LDS mission in Italy (okay, less predictable). The story ends with the beating, the lesson for the narrator being that getting the kiss was worth the assault: "It hurt, sure, and I'd take it so bad it would continue to hurt for a couple of weeks later. But what I remember finding out, in fact, is that something in me kind of liked going at it" (62). One would hope we've moved beyond the facile macho pairing of sex and violence. DeFrain is actually at his best when writing about adult men and their struggles with loss ("Snake," "The Monolith"), with raising sons ("Big Mike," "Why Oshkosh"), and with relationships ("The Canyon," "The Tree"). But with the exception of "Snake"—about a gentle giant of a man from Omaha, Nebraska, who takes in a woman who has been violently abused by her husband—few of these manage to move us beyond traditional, stereotypical understandings of masculinity.

No one expects western fiction writers to account for what the New Western scholarship has discovered regarding dominant representations of men and masculinity. So when we encounter genre writers such as Greer, emerging writers such as Phillips and González, and established writers such as Doig, all of whom produce works that take representations of western masculinity in new directions that respond positively to sociocultural changes in gender relations, sexuality, and so forth, we have cause to celebrate. We can only hope that writers such as Arcia, Foreman, Miller, and DeFrain are paying attention.

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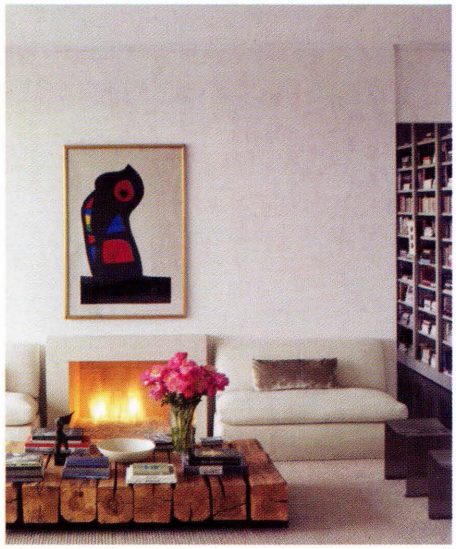


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JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2010 VOLUME 21 NUMBER 1



Far left: The living area of Monica Mandelli and Marco Valla's Manhattan apartment. Below left: Contemporary and vintage artworks and glassware in the New York City home of Juan Carlos Garcia-Lavin. On the cover: The living room of an Upper East Side duplex designed by Daniel Romualdez. "Clean Living," page 104. Photography by Pieter Estersohn; produced by Wendy Goodman.

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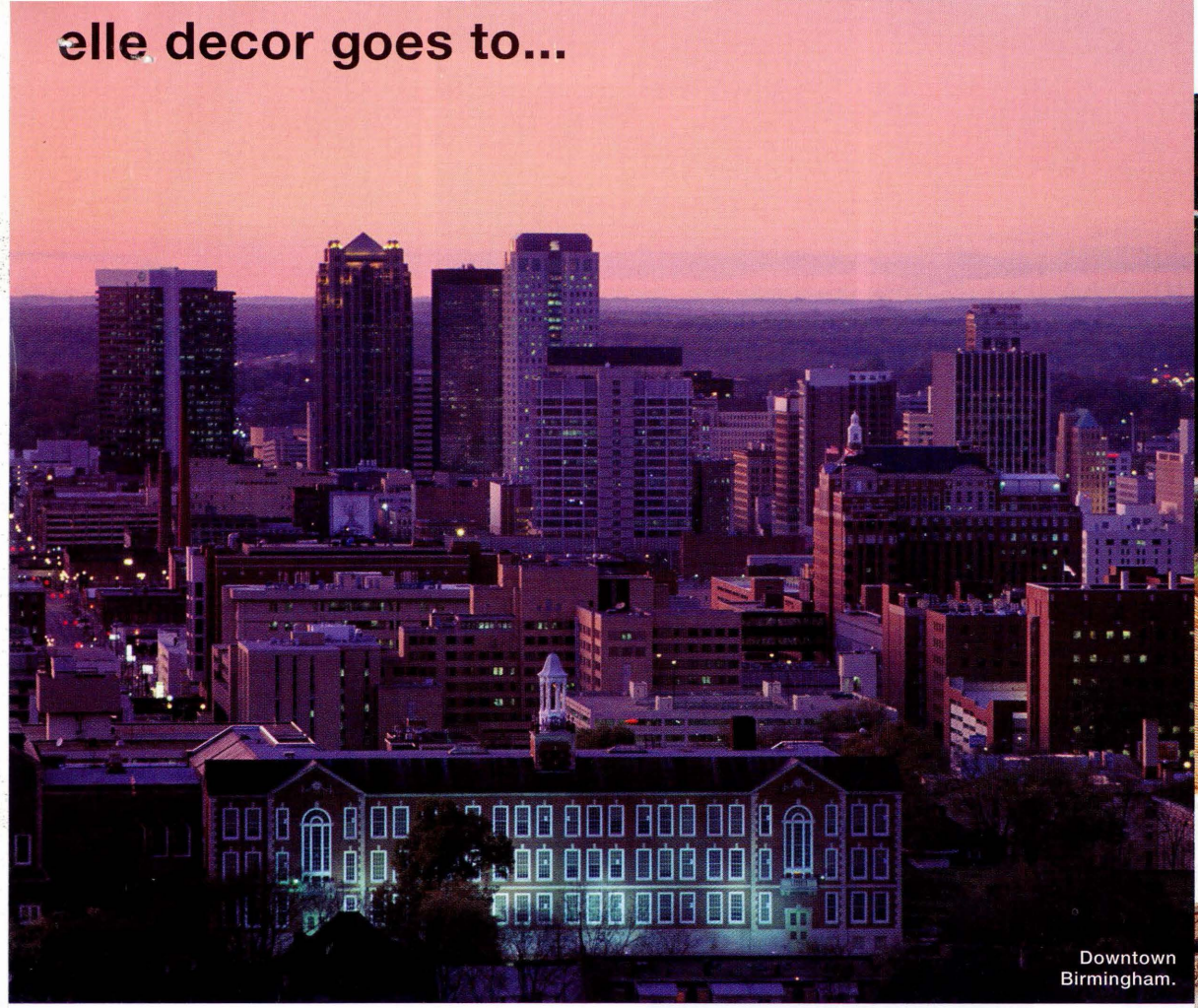
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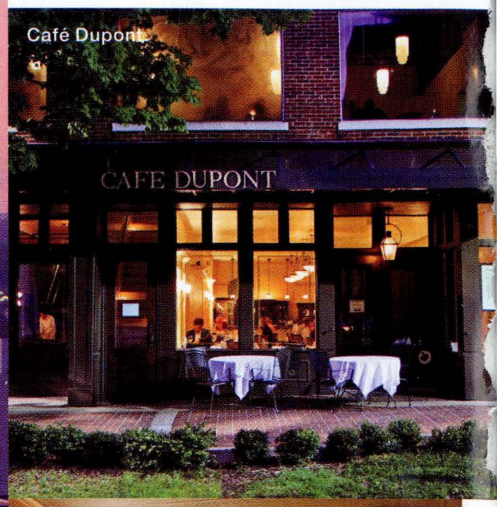
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Please Recycle This Magazine

TOP LEFT: JOSHUA MCHUGH; BOTTOM: SIMON UPTON



Downtown Birmingham.



Café Dupont.



Ashford Hill for Henhouse Antiques.

Birmingham

Forged from an unlikely mix of Anglo influence and industrial might, Alabama's largest city is in



Birmingham Botanical Gardens.

Call it a city of Anglophiles, if you will. Streets named Canterbury, Cambridge, and Balmoral wind through neighborhoods of classic Tudors with lattice-paned windows and steeply pitched roofs. Lawns are manicured and edged with neatly trimmed boxwood hedges. In the villages that border the downtown area, antiques stores seem to spring up around every corner. The trial of the controversial, thoroughly entertaining, and recently convicted former mayor, who talked of reincarnating Trafalgar Square downtown, forced citizens to adopt yet something else from the Brits—a dry sense of humor.

The name itself, taken from a flourishing city across the pond, Birmingham, England, during the Industrial Age, is a fitting moniker. In the late 1800s, the three raw materials needed to produce steel—coal, iron ore, and limestone—were discovered in and began being extracted from the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, a phenomenon that transformed what had been a cornfield into the South's booming industrial epicenter: Birmingham, Alabama. In fact, at the turn of the century, steel and iron production generated such an explosion in population and wealth—think Silicon Valley in the 1990s—that the town garnered the nickname the Magic City.

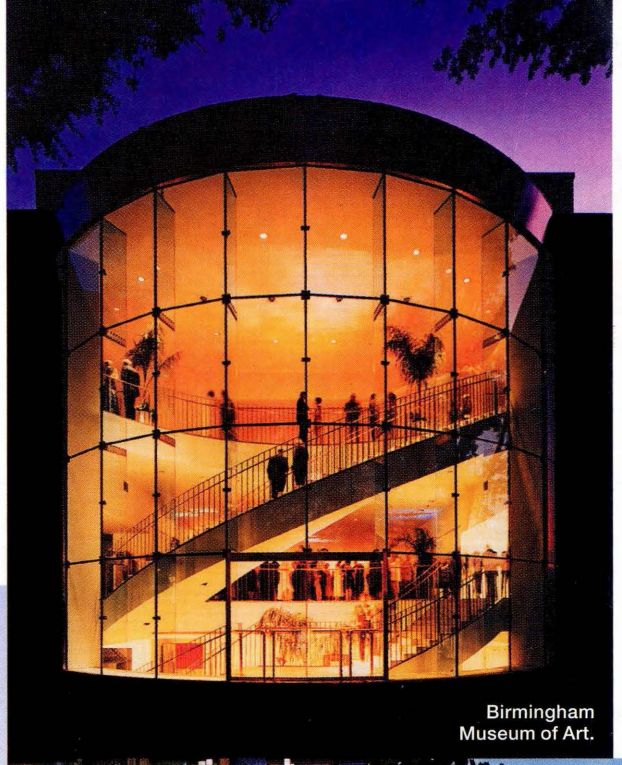
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: © HEEB PHOTOS/ESTOCKPHOTO; BEAU GUSTAFSON; HOWARD LEE PUCKETT (2)

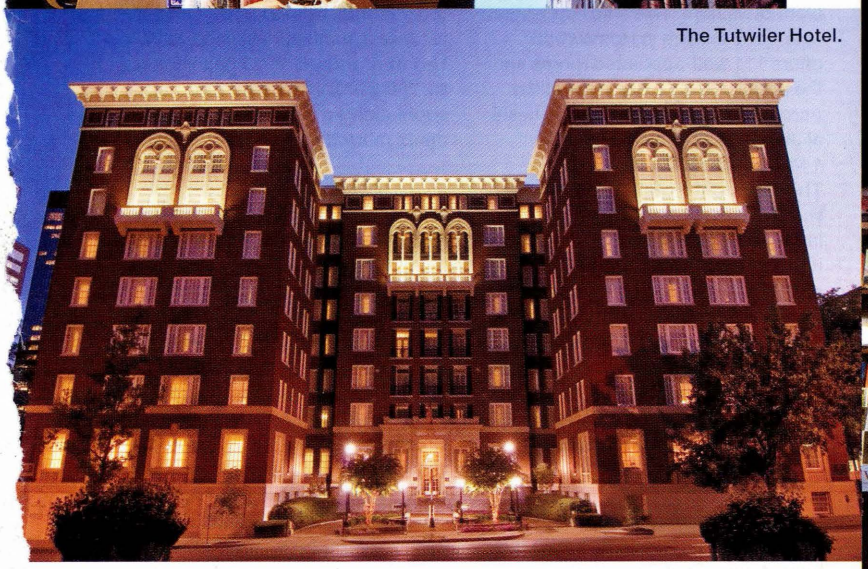


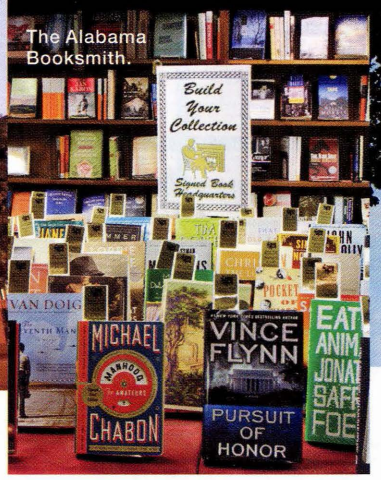
Saw's BBQ.



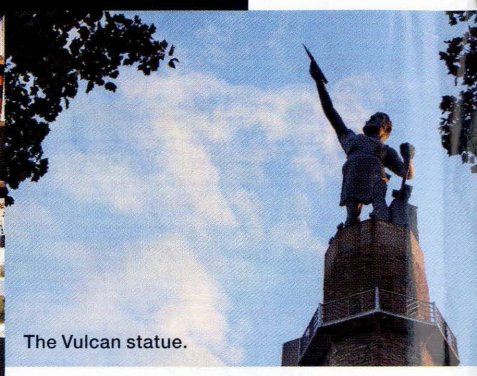
Alabama Theatre.


Birmingham Museum of Art.


The Tutwiler Hotel.



The Alabama Booksmith.


The Vulcan statue.

the midst of a downtown revival, even as it retains its small-town Southern charms. By Beaty Coleman

As the iron and steel trades prospered and subsequently mellowed over the past 120 years, the once-smokestacked landscape (which earned Birmingham a far less attractive nickname: Pittsburgh of the South) gradually morphed into high rises filled with bankers, lawyers, and doctors. And, more recently, vacant 1920s buildings have been converted into lofts, accommodating professors and medical students at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), the enormous engine—college, research center, and teaching hospital all in one—that occupies 86 city blocks and drives the economy.

"Right now all the seeds planted by so many progressive people over the past 20 years are coming to fruition," says downtown advocate and developer Robert Simon. The new loft dwellers have upped the hip factor, reviving the café and restaurant scene, so now it's easy to partake of both lively nightlife and early-morning cappuccinos. In addition to the mainstays that Birmingham's enormously wealthy families have bequeathed to the city, including a world-class art museum and a top-notch music and entertainment facility, the Alys Robinson Stephens Center, the redeveloped areas are drawing residents of the surrounding suburbs downtown on a daily basis—something virtually unheard of in the '80s. The city's north side, around Third Avenue North, bursts with industrial spaces that have been converted into stores and restaurants. Lakeview, to the east, is studded with watering holes for thirtysomethings and young professionals; the old Dr. Pepper factory there has become a destination for design enthusiasts, with stalls and shops offering antiques and furnishings, architectural firms, plus a community theater. In a town where antiques stores thrive, dealer Robert Hill's converted industrial space nearby stands out as one of the best, divided into a series of vignettes filled with religious artifacts, tapestries, and furnishings from all over Europe. "If you're looking for something in Birmingham you can find it, whether in my store or another," Hill explains. "We're all friends and we know who has what—we'll send you to the right place."

Downtown properties that fell into decay in the '70s and '80s are finding all kinds of innovative new uses. The biggest surprise is a block-long community garden, Jones Valley Urban Farm, that grows and sells organic produce and flowers to local groceries, farmers' markets, and restaurants. "They've helped the community understand the importance of knowing where your food is *(text continues on page 60)* ▷

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: HOWARD LEE PUCKETT; © JEFFREY BLACKLER/ALAMY; COURTESY OF THE BIRMINGHAM MUSEUM OF ART; HOWARD LEE PUCKETT (2); ENRICH MEDIA



Essential Birmingham

The area code is 205.

Explore Mountain Brook. Four charming villages—English, Mountain Brook, Cahaba, and Crestline—make up this bucolic enclave southeast of downtown.

Hike it or bike it. Follow the creeks along Jemison Trail or escape to the nearby Oak or Ruffner Mountains for miles of wooded trails. A guided tour of the old railway tracks that circle Red Mountain (redmountainpark.org) might yield a mining relic or two.

Make your trip ironclad. Visit the largest cast-iron statue in the world, Vulcan (visitvulcan.com), the Roman god of the forge, a symbol of the city's industrial past, or tour Sloss Furnaces National Historic Landmark (slossfurnaces.com), where iron was produced for nearly 90 years.

Indulge in barbecue. You'll have to eat your way through more than 80 spots—including stalwarts Miss Myra's (967-6004) and Full Moon (fullmoonbbq.com) as well as newcomers Moe's (moesoriginalbbq.com) and Saw's (sawsbbq.com)—to decide the best.

What to See

Alabama Ballet, alabamaballet.org: One of the South's best companies, with repertory from the classical to the contemporary.

Alys Robinson Stephens Performing Arts Center, 1200 Tenth Ave. S., 975-ARTS; alysstephens.org: Its four venues, including Jemison Concert Hall, an acoustical marvel, are the place for music—classical, jazz, and pop.

Birmingham Botanical Gardens, 2612 Lane Park Rd., 414-3950; bbgardens.org: Stop to smell the roses at the Dunn Formal Rose Garden; mark your calendar for the "Glorious Gardens" Mother's Day weekend tour of the city's finest private gardens.

Birmingham Museum of Art, 2000 Reverend Abraham Woods Jr. Blvd., 254-2565; artsbma.org: Standout collections include French furniture and the largest array of Wedgwood china outside of England.

Jones Valley Urban Farm, 701 25th St. N., 322-0542; jvuf.org: A downtown block converted into a community garden and farm that provides organic produce to area green markets, restaurants, and stores.

Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, 1530 Sixth Ave. N., 251-9402; 16thstreetbaptist.org and the **Birmingham Civil Rights Institute,** 520 16th St. N., 328-9696; bcri.org: Attend a service at the historic church, site of the tragic 1963 bombing; then tour the Institute across the street to immerse yourself in the struggle for equal rights.

Where to Stay

Aloft, 1903 29th Ave. S., 874-8055; alofthotels.com: This chic new retreat near Soho Square in Homewood offers 111 well-appointed rooms and the popular W XYZ Bar in the lobby. Across the street, sample great sushi at Jinsei (1830 29th Ave. S., 802-1440; jinseisushi.com).

The Redmont Hotel, 2101 Fifth Ave. N., 324-2101; theredmont.com: Its landmark sign lights up the skyline, it has 114 guest rooms and suites, and its new rooftop bar has become a see-and-be-scene spot for locals.

The Tutwiler Hotel, 2021 Park Place, 322-2100; thetutwilerhotel.com: This historic downtown icon opened in 1914, and each of its 149 rooms was completely redone two years ago.

Where to Eat

Bottega Restaurant and Café, 2240 Highland Ave. S., 939-1000; bottegarestaurant.com: Chef Frank Stitt merges a penchant for Italian (try the café's roasted-pepper-and-tomato-chutney pizza) with his Southern heritage.

Bottle Tree, 3719 Third Ave. S., 533-6288; thebottletree.com: The only excuse for passing on a PBR tallboy ($3) is their ginger margarita. Soups, salads, tacos, and some of the best live music in town.

Café Dupont, 113 20th St. N., 322-1282; cafedupont.net: Fresh foods, mostly organic, served in an 1870s storefront. The winter menu boasts cassoulet and short ribs.

The Garage Café, 2304 Tenth Terrace S., 322-3220; garagecafe.us: Enjoy sandwiches and ales amid an eclectic assortment of antiques.

GianMarco's, 721 Broadway St., 871-9622: This Italian restaurant on a quiet residential street is a neighborhood favorite for its seafood specials.

Gilchrist Drug, 2805 Cahaba Rd., 871-2181: The ladies who lunch come for the BLTs; after school, kids on bikes pull up for the old-fashioned soda fountain. Birmingham native Courteney Cox orders the tuna-egg-salad sandwich with a limeade.

Highlands Bar and Grill, 2011 11th Ave. S., 939-1400; highlandsbarandgrill.com: Frank Stitt's first restaurant put Birmingham on the culinary map by transforming humble Southern ingredients—baked grits and bitter greens—into haute cuisine.

Hot and Hot Fish Club, 2180 11th Ct. S., 933-5474; hotandhotfishclub.com: Sit at the chef's counter to watch Chris Hastings deftly navigate the kitchen, creating his signature South Carolina low country–inspired cooking.

Niki's West, 233 Finley Ave. W., 252-5751; nikiswest.com: Meat and three (Southern slang for meat and three sides) served cafeteria style has lured lawyers and bankers since 1957.

Rojo, 2921 Highland Ave. S., 328-4733; rojobirmingham.com: Place your order (ideally fish tacos) at the counter, take a number, then find a seat.

Urban Standard, 2320 Second Ave. N., 250-8200; urbanstandard.net: A sophisticated café where UAB students mix with movers and shakers.

Where to Shop

The Alabama Booksmith, 2626 19th Pl. S., 870-4242; alabamabooksmith.com: An unpretentious sanctuary with its own Signed First Editions club.

A'Mano, 2707 Culver Rd., 871-9093; amanogifts.com: Quirky handmade artworks, many by locals.

AMW, 1829 29th Ave. S., 870-3588: Estate jewelry and sterling silver plus vintage and contemporary photography tucked into an old antiques store.

Ashford Hill for Henhouse Antiques, 1900 Cahaba Rd., 918-0505; shophenhouseantiques.com: Primitive pieces juxtaposed with fine antiques.

Circa Interiors and Antiques, 2831 Culver Rd., 868-9199; circaonline.net: New furniture and fabrics mixed with 18th- and 19th-century furnishings.

Mary Evelyn, 2815A 18th St. S., 879-7544; maryevelyn.com: Elegant furnishings and works of art selected by designer Mary Evelyn McKee.

Peanut Depot, 2016 Morris Ave., 251-3314; peanutdepot.com: Supplying roasted, salted, Cajun, and raw peanuts for more than 100 years.

Pepper Place, 29th St. S. at Second Ave. S., 802-2100; pepperplace.com: A former Dr. Pepper factory is now a mecca for interior-design fans, with home-furnishings shops, antiques, rug dealers, and more.

Robert Hill Antiques, 3029 Third Ave. S., 326-0088; roberthillantiques.com: Exquisite Continental antiques, formal and ecclesiastical—a favorite among the city's design cognoscenti.

Theadora, 2821 18th St. S., 879-0335; theadora.com: Edgy women's apparel with timeless appeal.

Tricia's Treasures, 2700 19th Pl. S., 871-9779: Prepare to spend hours sifting through this huge warehouse chock-full of everything from sterling silver to old door frames and shutters.

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November 10, 2008

Dear Dr. Doig,

Thank you for agreeing to talk with me about your writing and your new book, *The Eleventh Man*, by phone this Thursday, November 13, at 4 PM. Congratulations on this new World War II epic. Also, from the bit I heard, it sounded like you did a great interview on KUOW last week.

Articles based on our interview are set to appear on the History News Network website (hnn.us), and in Seattle's weekly, *Real Change*. Since I'll be writing for HNN, I thought it would be a good idea to talk with you about your views as a historian and novelist.

I apologize for dragging you through territory you've covered with other interviewers, but I think readers would be interested in some of these areas:

1/ How did you evolve from a historian to a novelist? _ 74 Pieces

2/ Are your novels usually sparked by historical events or details? Some examples. Can you talk about the intersection of history and fiction in your work?

3/ What inspired *The Eleventh Man*?

4/ What was your research process for *The Eleventh Man*?
Esp. on MSU football team, WASPs, OWI, CO's, combat on Guam, etc.

5/ How did your WWII childhood in Montana bear on the novel? Your work as a journalist? Did you play football in MT?

6/ Was there a wartime soldier /writer on whom Ben Reinking was based? No Was there a unit like TWPW?

7/ Mary Ann Gwinn called Eleventh Man "an war novel with an anti-war heart?" Was that what you intended?

8/ Did the current Iraq and Afghanistan wars help prompt this work, or affect your writing?

This is probably a lot more than we can cover in 30 minutes, but I'm sure whatever you can discuss will be stimulating and insightful. If you ever have time, I'd like to talk with you more about your life as a writer and your storytelling technique.

Thanks again for your thoughtfulness and generosity.

Best wishes,



Robin Lindley, J.D.

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Seattle, WA 98165

Phone: (206) 523-3399
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8/5/09

Dear Iran,

Here's version of our interview from History News Network website (hnn.us). It's about the same as Real Change piece with a bit more on you background in history - and, alas, no photo of you.

Hope all is well and that you're making progress on your next opus.

Thanks again for your patience, generosity, and kindness.

Best wishes,

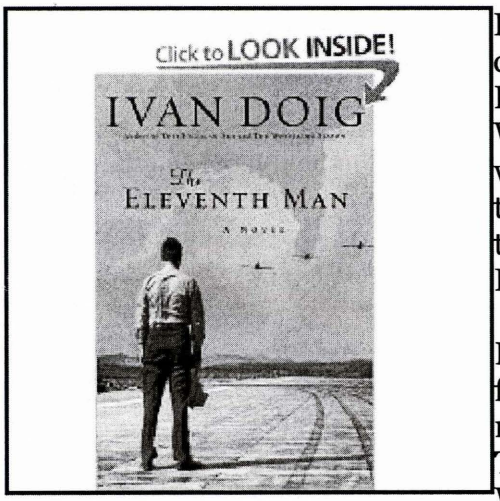
Robin Lindley
206-523-3399

2-02-09

How a Historian Turned Novelist and Wrote a Book about World War II: An Interview with Ivan Doig

By Robin Lindley

This interview was conducted by Robin Lindley for Real Change, a Seattle newspaper. Mr. Lindley, an attorney, is a contributing writer for HNN. He is a past chair of the World Peace through Law Section of the Washington State Bar Association, and has worked as a law teacher and as an attorney with federal and local agencies, and investigated the death of Dr. Martin Luther King as an attorney with the Select Committee on Assassinations, US House of Representatives.



In his epic new novel, *The Eleventh Man,* celebrated Seattle writer-historian Ivan Doig tackles the huge maelstrom of World War II. The book follows the wartime odyssey of Ben Reinking, one of thousands of Montanans who enlisted in the military after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor.

Ben wants to fly, but the Army pulls him from pilot training and assigns him to a military public relations unit, the Threshold Press War Project ("Tepee Weepy"), to churn out stories on the fortunes of his fellow football players from the undefeated "Supreme Team" of Treasure State University. As he collects news material from combat zones and distant outposts, Ben romances a married female pilot, Cass Standish, while her husband slogs through the jungles in the South Pacific.

Doig recounts Ben's war experience with a novelist's eye for telling details and a historian's revealing research on little-known units and events such as the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP's), conscientious objector camps, and Coast Guard patrols of the Pacific coast, to the invasion of Guam, the brutal fighting in New Guinea, the Alaskan front, and the German aerial assault of Antwerp.

The novel was inspired by the actual wartime loss of the players on a legendary Montana State College football team. Doig spent three years researching and writing *The Eleventh Man* with the assistance of his wife Carol. The novel has been praised for its compassion, humanity and generous spirit. From *Kirkus Reviews*: "Doig, as always, brings American history alive in a rousing narrative that doesn't airbrush the past; questions

of loyalty, courage and conscience, he shows, were just as complicated during World War II as they are today."

Doig, a historian by training, has a doctorate in western history from the University of Washington. He wrote his dissertation on pioneer Seattle attorney and judge John J. McGilvra (1827-1903), who was appointed US Attorney for Washington Territory by Pres. Abraham Lincoln.

Before graduate school, Doig served in the United States Air Force and also worked as a journalist and freelance writer. Doig has written three acclaimed works of nonfiction notably his evocative Montana memoir, *This House of Sky: Landscapes of a Western Mind*, and *Winter Brothers*, a unique account of the life of early settler and ethnologist James G. Swan who lived on the Washington coast with the Makah and Haida tribes.

His eight previous novels include the acclaimed Montana trilogy: *English Creek, Dancing at the Rascal Fair* and *Ride with Me, Mariah Montana.* Each of his novels is enriched by impeccable research from digging in dusty libraries and archives to collecting oral histories and folklore. Biographer Elizabeth Simpson wrote in *Earthlight, Wordfire: The Work of Ivan Doig*: "Historical detail adds layer upon layer the texture of Doig's work and provides the fabric of the daily lives of his characters."
Doig's honors include a Lifetime Distinguished Achievement Award from the Western Literature Association.
Doig recently discussed *The Eleventh Man* and the art of blending of history and fiction from his Seattle home.

Robin Lindley: Was your main character, Army reporter Ben Reinking, based on a real soldier?

Ivan Doig: No. Ben is my own fictional creation, as my characters always are. No prototype there.

Lindley: Ben wants to fly but he's assigned to write stories for the Threshold Press War Project. Was there a TPWP unit during World War II?

Doig: There was not a unit like TPWP or "Tepee Weepy." I made that up as well, although the Office of War Information was a big operation that did a lot of domestic propaganda. I've been aware of it through the years knowing, from my journalism background, about Elmer Davis the fine journalist who became the head of [OWI]. I've noticed that Gordon Parks, the famous black photographer, and Jane Jacobs, and quite a list of people worked for them. Tepee Weepy is an invention of my own for plot purposes. It's somewhat an exaggeration of so-called military public information, which is something of an oxymoron.

Lindley: You were a pre-school boy during World War II, but did your childhood bear on the novel?

Doig: I was aware of the war, especially in the aftermath. When I was a kid growing up in Montana, I was aware of how many people had been in the war. Two of my mother's brothers were in the war. One was on a destroyer in the South Pacific for much of the war, and the other one was in the Montana National Guard and was called up early on, and he spent much of the war in Australia in a unit that was sent to New Guinea in the terrible fighting there.
I was always aware within the family and in the ranch crews that my dad would hire in the bars of White Sulfur Springs, there were a lot of people who had been in the war. That stuck with me.
When I was working on the book about my mother's life, *Heart Earth*, I got to researching this. That book is set in late 1944 and early1945. I came across the list in the little weekly newspaper. The county was Meagher (pronounced "Mar"), named after an Irish Civil War general who became the governor of Montana Territory. Meagher County in the 1940 census had a population of 2237, and 273 people served in the war. It was a high percentage, and higher than the national percentage by quite a lot. Montana in both World Wars took an inordinate proportion of the death toll. That came in part from ranch guys who knew how to use a weapon [and] to do chores, so they were looked on as good, ready-made soldiers, and often put into harm's way promptly. So that did bear on me as a kid.

Lindley: Ben is a reporter, a collector of stories. How did your work as a journalist bear on the book?

Doig: My work as a journalist comes out most dramatically in the use of Teletype. The teletypes are almost a character of their own [with] their own dialog, a sort of bullet-like way that things are expressed and boiled down. When I started in the newspaper business in 1963, teletypes were still in use, and one of the echoes of those days are the teletype bells going off constantly after the Kennedy assassination as those news details broke across that long weekend.

Lindley: Football is prominent in the novel. Did you play football in Montana?

Doig: Yes, I did play football. I was the 150-pound fullback on my high school team.

Lindley: That's a small fullback.

Doig: Yes. A small fullback for a small team. I was the biggest man in the backfield. I had enough high-school football to hint at what Ben and the TSU team might have done.

Lindley: Did you draw on your military experience in the Air Force in the book?

Doig: I certainly did, particularly the active duty during the Cuban missile

crisis. I think some of the book's inflections of life in uniform are drawn from my own watching and waiting. B-52 bombers regularly roared off from our Texas airbase. We all knew we were within range of those Russian missiles in Cuba. During my six years of reserve duty, I did put in some time in public information.

Lindley: Were you on "high alert" during the Cuban missile crisis?

Doig: Yes. It was high alert on the worst day of the Cuban missile crisis, October 27, 1962, the day a U2 plane was shot down over Cuba and another U2 plane strayed deep into Russia, and the US Navy was depth-charging Soviet submarines in the Caribbean, and Russian troops in Cuba were maneuvering tactical nuclear missiles toward Guantanamo. All this is going on, and I'm at Lackland Air Force Base outside San Antonio writing home to my folks in Montana. I report our sergeants are telling us, "We are now in condition three. Defcon three." Condition four is normal, condition three is a serious threat, condition two is war, and condition one was every man for himself. (I think that was apocryphal myself.) The Kennedy Administration was not going to back down easily, and fingers were on triggers on the American side. In retrospect, I was inescapably right to recognize this was a life and death situation for all of us.

Lindley: Did the war in Iraq and Afghanistan affect your decision to write the book?

Doig: No. I was drawn to the story originally because of a football team being lost in the war, and it was the impulse to tell the story.

Lindley: And that was based on the Montana State College team?

Doig: Yes. A librarian friend, Dave Walter, at the Montana Historical Society helped me on so much of my research. He was an absolute fount of Montana history, and he tipped me on this Montana State team, and gave me a file. There was fact and lore in the file, but the basic story was that the team goes into combat and they all end up lost.
Dave was also my source on the conscientious objector part of the book. He researched the Montana conscientious camps and interviewed the CO's. They were called civilian public service camps. They [CO's] worked in national parks primarily as trail builders and maintenance men. A minority were fire fighters.

Lindley: Was the starting eleven of the Montana State football team killed?

Doig: It's not clear whether it was the starters of one year or starters of a couple of years combined. The National Guard was called up in 1940. It's possible some were called up then and didn't get to start with the others of 1941, then went on into the war. There's some records missing, mostly at the college end. I frankly did not go too far into this because I didn't want

my fiction touching that close to the actual guys.

Lindley: Did you follow any of the stories of the actual team members in creating your characters?

Doig: No, I decided not to do that. I simply wanted my own characters in chosen parts of the war, and have the plot develop from there. Out of that came episodes like the Coast Guardsman [on the Washington coast] with a dog. Twenty-five years ago or more, a guy told me he had done that. So, serendipity: that had been tucked away in my memory, and I went to the Coast Guard Museum of the Northwest on our waterfront. They have a good research library, and Carol and I pulled out all the material I needed on patrolling the coast. The primary thing they did was watch for Japanese submarines or Japanese coming ashore for water.

Lindley: Was there evidence that Japanese came ashore?

Doig: There were submarines off the coast. One surfaced and shelled a beach in Oregon, and some shipping was sunk. They [Coast Guardsmen] were also on watch for invasion. It turned out to be not at all likely, but Pearl Harbor got everyone's attention.

Lindley: I appreciate the little known details you bring in such as lives of the conscientious objectors, the WASP's--the women pilots, the National Guard in New Guinea, and other obscure aspects of the war.

Doig: I got to researching on the Marines for the character of "Animal" Angelides and there's a terrific book on *With the Old Breed* by a Marine. There's the story in there about the invasion of Peleliu, one of the bloodiest invasions, and a total waste. No strategic value. Like the battle on Biak [New Guinea].
I researched the Montana National Guard through the newsletter of the 41st Division Association, which had a diligent editor. Up through the seventies, he got reminiscences of guys who had been in on various actions during the war like Biak, the Philippines, and New Guinea.

Lindley: The story of the women pilots is very compelling, and I don't think many people now are aware of their role in the war. What sparked you interest in the WASPs?

Doig: In my research in Montana, I learned about the Lend-Lease Program to the Soviet Union, and somewhere in there the WASPs contribution to that was mentioned. They were based in Great Falls, and that gave me a chance to include a hotshot woman fighter pilot.

Lindley: And their job was to ferry planes around the US to airbases where they were needed?

Doig: Yes. Actually, women were not allowed to fly beyond the US, so

they flew from factories to northern tier bases in the US.

Lindley: *Seattle Times* book critic Mary Ann Gwinn called *The Eleventh Man* a war novel with an anti-war heart. Do you agree?

Doig: I suppose it is. I didn't intend it so deliberately, but war novels, if they have any kind of a heart, it has to be an anti-war heart. Otherwise, they're simply glorifications of gore and slaughter.

Lindley: Your book captures the misery of prolonged war and a sense of war weariness as it dragged on.

Doig: Yes, it just grinds on and on. The depressing thing is that Iraq has ground on longer than that war.

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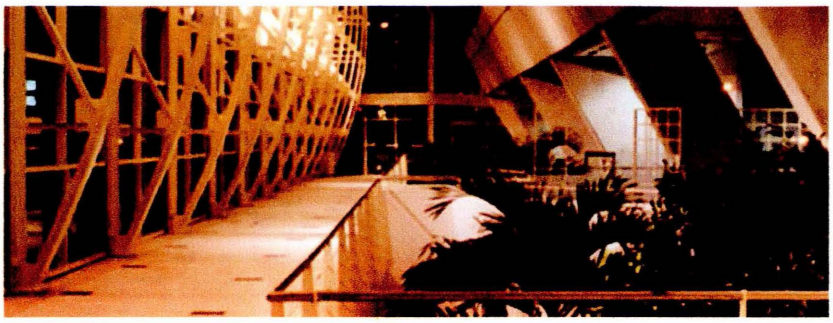
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The Eleventh Man

Home » Fiction

Submitted by smaner on 5:18 pm, Monday, November 2



The Eleventh Man
Ivan
Doig

Review:

Author Ivan Doig takes readers on a fascinating voyage through two years of World War II, as seen through the eyes of Ben Reinking, quarterback of Treasure State University's undefeated "Supreme Team". As Ben follows in the footsteps of his 10 teammates reporting on their adventures, triumphs and loss, he searches for purpose in his life, always wondering what might happen to that life if the odds don't go his way.

Although the action occurs during WWII, this book is not about the war. This story is one of strong men and women struggling against events that do not bend to individual will. You will root for each character as you follow their life from that glorious time on the gridiron to what awaits on the battlefields of WWII. This intriguing read will bind readers to their chair until the last page is turned and the book is closed.

Related Websites

Author's Website
Book Page interview with Ivan Doig

Related Books

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The Rising Tide

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Book Club Meetings

Tuesday Morning Literary Discussion Group

10:00 am, Tuesday, March 9

Join RCPL Literary Resident Dr.

St. Andrews Book Banter

7:00 pm, Tuesday, March 9

Join us for a discussion of *The Other Side of the Sky* by Farah Ahmedi. New members welcome. Please call 772-6675 to register.

Sandhills Wednesday Book Group

7:00 pm, Wednesday, March 10

Join us for a discussion

"You behave like the wife of a clerk who has risen above her station."

The sensual release with Margaret opened up Naipaul's most creative period, in the 1970s. "And thereafter I thought if that thing hadn't occurred in my life I probably would have shriveled and died as a writer," Naipaul told French. "All the later books in a way to some extent depend on her. They stopped being dry." Compare Naipaul's two Africa novels — the taut, austere "In a Free State," published in 1971, and his full-bodied masterpiece "A Bend in the River," published in 1979 — and it's impossible to deny that having sex with Margaret (they did little else) was good for his writing. But so was living with Pat — for Naipaul didn't leave her, nor she him. Instead, he split his life in two — the cerebral and the sexual, "Mama at home, a whore in South America," in French's harsh summation — and went back and forth between them with the knowledge, if not exactly the consent, of both.

Pat acceded to the arrangement because she had no idea of any possible life without Naipaul, and because her only sense of pleasure or worth came in his continued dependence on her steadying presence and judgment. Margaret became the new traveling companion (though Naipaul usually sent her away out of pique before the trip was done), while Pat, drugging herself with Quaaludes and Valium, waited at home in Wiltshire to provide literary advice. Rough sex with Margaret would be directly rendered in key passages of "Guerrillas" and "A Bend in the River"; then Pat would listen to the write-up, flinch, leave the room, return, express admiration, make suggestions — without ever daring to "ask herself to what extent Vidia's writing is drawn from life, and specifically from his life with Margaret."

The triangle, composed of two variations on sadomasochism, lasted a quarter-century. But it was not a stable balance. "Many years later, he acknowledged that his relationship with Margaret effectively undid Pat's life," French reports. "'I was liberated. She was destroyed. It was inevitable.'" Note the passive voice. Also note the hand of fate. Naipaul's confessions to French are like those of a man who leads an investigator to the freshly dug earth in his backyard, and even points out the pieces of human flesh and bone, without ever saying, "I killed her."

When she learned about her husband's affair, Pat resumed a diary that she had kept intermittently over the years. French's access to these words raises this miserable woman above the merely pathetic and gives the book a badly needed second point of view: "Increasingly, these days, I regret the loss, the damage of Vidia's rages and quarrels. Simple losses — of the beautiful food I have cooked, happy days, days of one's life. It was my fault. . . ." The diary, French writes, "puts Patricia Naipaul on a par with other great, tragic literary spouses such as Sonia Tolstoy, Jane Carlyle and Leonard Woolf." Pat's voice is faltering and uncertain where Naipaul's is relentlessly in command, but its small observations, evasions and sudden bolts of understanding haunt the reader up until her death of cancer, which gives this story its heartbreaking end. Naipaul, keeping a journal of his own, finally sees his wife as if for the first time: "I to her: 'Are you content?' Yes. Would you say you have had a happy life? No direct answer. 'It was perhaps my own fault.' ... The 'patch' is working together with the Zudol tablets. She sleeps. But when she wakes up she feels 'stunned' by what she has been through. Her bad — jaundiced — color comes and goes. She is pure grace." He scatters Pat's ashes deep in the Wiltshire countryside, accompanied by the woman he had already decided to marry once Pat was dead, having jettisoned Margaret a final time.

Naipaul's code of accountability lies in facing the truth, but it's a limited truth, with no sense of agency. He cannot begin to see himself as his biographer or reader sees him, for the pain of others always reverts back to his own. And yet this bottomless narcissism, together with the uncompromising intensity of his vision, holds the key to Naipaul's literary power. He had the capacity in his writing to project himself into a great variety of people and situations, allowing him to imbue his work with the sympathy and humanity that he failed to extend to those closest to him in life. □

Elevating the Fallen

In Ivan Doig's new novel, a World War II military journalist is ordered to make heroes of his doomed comrades.

BY MIKE PEED

IVAN DOIG may not have pioneered Montana literature — that honor belongs to Lewis and Clark — but since "This House of Sky," his memoir of growing up along the Rocky Mountain Front, was nominated for the 1979 National Book Award, Doig has been considered the literary equivalent of Gary Cooper, another of the Treasure State's favorite sons: good and decent, emblematic of an honored past. Doig's fiction is often labeled old-fashioned, but although he trades in nostalgia it's rarely of the Hallmark variety. His McCaskill trilogy dissects the intricate relationship between a landscape — Montana's Two Medicine country — and its colonizers. In "Bucking the Sun," construction of the monumental Fort Peck Dam, begun in 1933, mercilessly displaces both water and tradition.

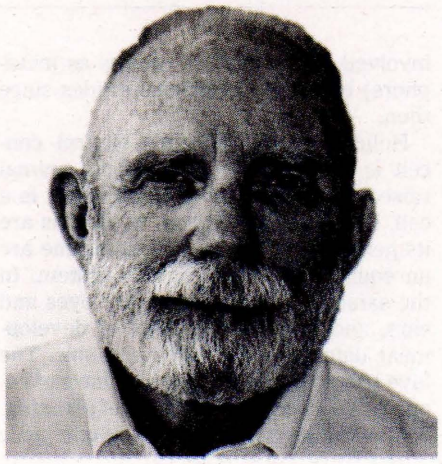
THE ELEVENTH MAN
By Ivan Doig.
406 pp. Harcourt. $26.

***Mike Peed** is on the editorial staff of The New Yorker.*

Like those novels, Doig's new book, his 12th, takes its inspiration from yesteryear. (The author, in fact, has a Ph.D. in American frontier history.) In World War II, only New Mexico's death rate outranked Montana's, and among the fallen were 11 starting players from the Montana State College football team. In "The Eleventh Man," Doig reimagines them as members of a fabled 1941 team at the fictional Treasure State University.

The novel opens in 1943 with the former teammates flung across a warring globe, from the Pacific Northwest to Guam, from Antwerp to New Guinea. The Threshold Press War Project, an armed services propaganda outfit, has ordered Ben Reinking, the team's left end and son of a small-town newspaper editor, to write a series of articles called "The 'Supreme Team' on the Field of Battle." Though the purpose of his task is never fully illuminated, Ben deploys, "lock, stock, and typewriter," to profile his former teammates and, as instructed, elevate them to a hero status above what an athletic field might bestow.

The members of Doig's cast speak an easygoing 1940s vernacular, more imagined, one hopes, than real. Soldiers drink "skunk juice," receive the "galoot salute" and look forward to a "rub a dub dub." "In bed and out, he was unbeatable company," Ben's inamorata, a female pilot, thinks of him, "bright as a mint silver dollar ... a first-class passion ration." ("And," Ben says in return, "how baboon lucky I am to be with you.") These incessant wisecracks overwhelm, yielding characters who become less individuals than accomplices in parody. As ever, Doig seems most comfortable with hushed descriptions of Montana's landscape and its way of life. "Gros Ventre," Ben reminds himself on a brief home leave, "was the same age as the tree rings in the mature cottonwood colonnade along its streets, and altered itself as slowly."



As Ben visits his football buddies (a conceit that lends the plot a tidy arc) and as a colonel's statistics ("In this war we are looking at a nine percent mortality rate for active combatants") repeatedly fail to safeguard them, the novel emanates a sense of unavoidable ruin. And yet most of the fighting and the inevitable dying — what Ben labels "the creeping wall of oblivion" — occurs off the page. The narrative itself remains paradoxically peaceful.

The strength of "The Eleventh Man" comes in its exploration of larger subjects — the nature of heroism, and of propaganda. Which enlistee is more heroic, the one stationed in the remote reaches of the Pacific or the one fated to patrol the Washington coast? Ben is never sure whether he's a victim or a perpetrator of the Army's war of words, and he feels guilty about "dodging bullets from the teleprinter" rather than the real thing.

It is, nonetheless, an old-world sense of loyalty and duty — a Doig trademark — that keeps Ben and his comrades on guard. "The team and its mortal dangers were a mere handful compared to the innumerable slaughtered in the vaster jaws of war," Doig writes of Ben's assignment. "But they were his handful." □

PHOTOGRAPH BY A. WAYNE ARNST

Novelist-historian Ivan Doig on his wartime epic *The Eleventh Man*

Back to mountain wartime

By ROBIN LINDLEY,
Contributing Writer

In his epic new novel, *The Eleventh Man*, celebrated Seattle writer Ivan Doig tackles the huge maelstrom of World War II. The book follows the wartime odyssey of Ben Reinking, one of thousands of Montanans who enlisted in the military after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor.

Ben wants to fly, but the Army pulls him from pilot training and assigns him to a military public relations unit, the Threshold Press War Project ("Tepee Weepy"), to churn out stories on the fortunes of his fellow football players from the undefeated "Supreme Team" of Treasure State University. As he collects news material from combat zones and distant outposts, Ben romances a married female pilot, Cass Standish, while her husband slogs through the jungles in the South Pacific.

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Doig, a historian by training, has a doctorate in western history from the University of Washington. Before graduate school, he served in the United States Air Force and worked as a journalist.

Doig has written three acclaimed works of nonfiction including his lyrical memoir, *This House of Sky*, and eight previous novels, notably a Montana trilogy: *English Creek*, *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*, and *Ride with Me, Mariah Montana*. The Western Literature Association honored him with a Lifetime Distinguished Achievement Award.

Doig recently discussed T*he Eleventh Man* and the art of blending history and fiction from his Seattle home.

Was your main character, Army reporter Ben Reinking, based on a real soldier?

No. Ben is my own fictional creation, as my characters always are. No prototype there.

Ben wants to fly but he's assigned to write stories for the Threshold Press War Project. Was there a TPWP unit during World War II?

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You were a preschool boy during World War II, but did your childhood bear on the novel?

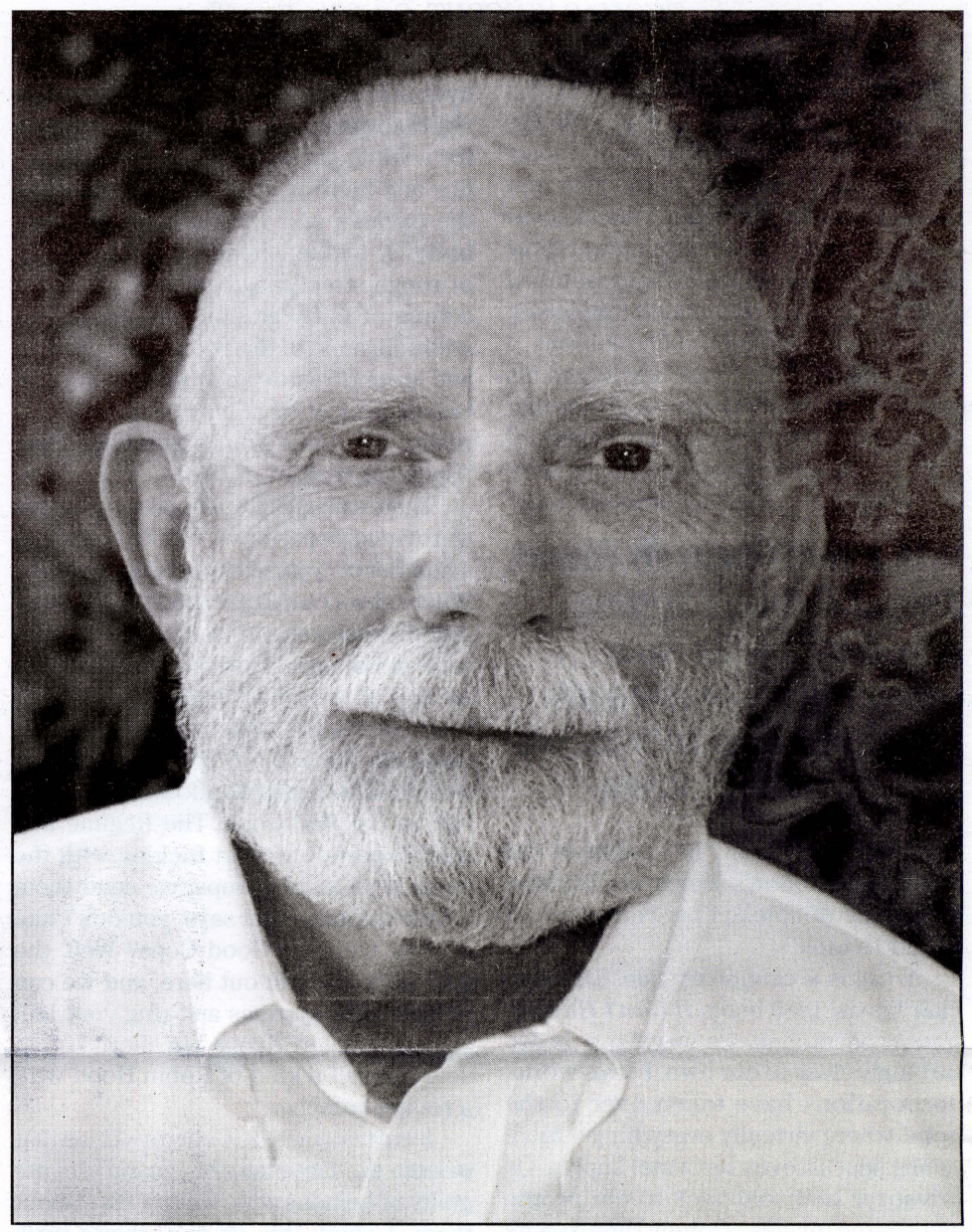
I was aware of the war, especially in the aftermath. When I was a kid growing up in Montana, I was aware of how many people had been in the war. Two of my mother's brothers were in the war. One was on a destroyer in the South Pacific for much of the war, and the other one was in the Montana National Guard and was called up early on, and he spent much of the war in Australia in a unit that was sent to New Guinea in the terrible fighting there.

War novels, if they have any kind of a heart, it has to be an antiwar heart. Otherwise, they're simply glorifications of gore and slaughter.

I was always aware within the family and in the ranch crews that my dad would hire in the bars of White Sulfur Springs, there were a lot of people who had been in the war. That stuck with me.

When I was working on the book about my mother's life, *Heart Earth*, I got to researching this. That book is set in late 1944 and early1945. I came across the list in the little weekly newspaper. The county was Meagher (pronounced "Mar"), named after an Irish Civil War general who became the governor of Montana Territory. Meagher County in the 1940 census had a population of 2237, and 273 people served in the war. It was a high percentage, and higher than the national percentage by quite a lot.

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Local author Ivan Doig uses the story of a Montana football team that didn't return home after World War II as the basis for his newest work, *The Eleventh Man*. *Photo by Wayne Arnst*

Ben is a reporter, a collector of stories. How did your work as a journalist bear on the book?

My work as a journalist comes out most dramatically in the use of Teletype. The teletypes are almost a character of their own [with] their own dialog, a sort of bullet-like way that things are expressed and boiled down.

When I started in the newspaper business in 1963, teletypes were still in use, and one of the echoes of those days are the teletype bells going off constantly after the Kennedy assassination as those news details broke across that long weekend.

Football is prominent in the novel. Did you play football in Montana?

Yes, I did play football. I was the 150-pound fullback on my high school team.

That's a small fullback.

Yes. A small fullback for a small team. I was the biggest man in the backfield. I had enough high-school football to hint at what Ben and the TSU team might have done.

Did you draw on your military experience in the Air Force in the book?

I certainly did, particularly the active duty during the Cuban missile crisis. I think some of the book's inflections of life in uniform are drawn from my own watching and waiting. B-52 bombers regularly roared off from our Texas airbase. We all knew we were within range of those Russian missiles in Cuba. During my six years of reserve duty, I did put in some time in public information.

Were you on "high alert" during the Cuban missile crisis?

Yes. It was high alert on the worst day of the Cuban missile crisis — Oct. 27, 1962 — the day a U2 plane was shot down over Cuba and another U2 plane strayed deep into Russia, and the U.S. Navy was depth-charging Soviet submarines in the Caribbean, and Russian troops in Cuba were maneuvering tactical nuclear missiles toward Guantánamo. All this is going on, and I'm at Lackland Air Force Base outside San Antonio writing home to my folks in Montana. I report our

See DOIG, Continued on Page 11

DOIG, Continued from Page 7

sergeants are telling us, "We are now in condition three. DEFCON 3." Condition 4 is normal, Condition 3 is a serious threat, Condition 2 is war, and Condition 1 was every man for himself. (I think that was apocryphal myself.) The Kennedy Administration was not going to back down easily, and fingers were on triggers on the American side. In retrospect, I was inescapably right to recognize this was a life and death situation for all of us.

Did the war in Iraq and Afghanistan affect your decision to write the book?

No. I was drawn to the story originally because of a football team being lost in the war, and it was the impulse to tell the story.

And that was based on the Montana State College team?

Yes. A librarian friend, Dave Walter, at the Montana Historical Society helped me on so much of my research. He was an absolute fount of Montana history, and he tipped me on this Montana State team, and gave me a file. There was fact and lore in the file, but the basic story was that the team goes into combat and they all end up lost.

Dave was also my source on the conscientious objector part of the book. He researched the Montana conscientious camps and interviewed the CO's. They were called civilian public service camps. They [CO's] worked in national parks primarily as trail builders and maintenance men. A minority were fire fighters.

Was the starting eleven of the Montana State football team killed?

It's not clear whether it was the starters of one year or starters of a couple of years combined. The National Guard was called up in 1940. It's possible some were called up then and didn't get to start with the others of 1941, then went on into the war. There's some records missing, mostly at the college end. I frankly did not go too far into this because I didn't want my fiction touching that close to the actual guys.

Did you follow any of the stories of the actual team members in creating your characters?

No, I decided not to do that. I simply wanted my own characters in chosen parts of the war, and have the plot develop from there. Out of that came episodes like the Coast Guardsman [on the Washington coast] with a dog. Twenty-five years ago or more, a guy told me he had done that. So, serendipity: that had been tucked away in my memory, and I went to the Coast Guard Museum of the Northwest on our waterfront. They have a good research library, and Carol and I pulled out all the material I needed on patrolling the coast. The primary thing they did was watch for Japanese submarines or Japanese coming ashore for water.

Was there evidence that Japanese came ashore?

There were submarines off the coast. One surfaced and shelled a beach in Oregon, and some shipping was sunk. They [Coast Guardsmen] were also on watch for invasion. It turned out to be not at all likely, but Pearl Harbor got everyone's attention.

I appreciate the little known details you bring in such as lives of the conscientious objectors, the WASP's — the women pilots, the National Guard in New Guinea, and other obscure aspects of the war.

I got to researching on the Marines for the character of "Animal" Angelides and there's a terrific book, *With the Old Breed* by a Marine. There's the story in there about the invasion of Peleliu, one of the bloodiest invasions, and a total waste. No strategic value. Like the battle on Biak [New Guinea].

I researched the Montana National Guard through the newsletter of the 41st Division Association, which had a diligent editor. Up through the '70s, he got reminiscences of guys who had been in on various actions during the war like Biak, the Philippines, and New Guinea.

The story of the women pilots is very compelling, and I don't think many people now are aware of their role in the war. What sparked you interest in the WASPs?

In my research in Montana, I learned about the Lend-Lease Program to the Soviet Union, and somewhere in there the WASPs contribution to that was mentioned. They were based in Great Falls, and that gave me a chance to include a hotshot woman fighter pilot.

And their job was to ferry planes around the US to airbases where they were needed?

Yes. Actually, women were not allowed to fly beyond the U.S., so they flew from factories to northern tier bases in the U.S.

***Seattle Times* book critic Mary Ann Gwinn called *The Eleventh Man* a war novel with an anti-war heart. Do you agree?**

I suppose it is. I didn't intend it so deliberately, but war novels, if they have any kind of a heart, it has to be an antiwar heart. Otherwise, they're simply glorifications of gore and slaughter.

Your book captures the misery of prolonged war and a sense of war weariness as it dragged on.

Yes, it just grinds on and on. The depressing thing is that Iraq has ground on longer than that war. ■

Robin Lindley *is a Seattle writer, attorney and visual artist. He writes about history, politics, law, and the arts.*

A Neighborhood Rewritten

Capitol Hill is a poem rewritten
The dives, the fast food, the mom and pops
Erased
Replaced by
Lego condos
Hotspots with smooth floors
And sturdy stools
Or buildings
With empty windows

Broadway blocks
Crossed out
The culture's disappearing
Like cigarette butts after a hard rain

Baristas and bartenders
Sent packing
Their studio apartments demolished
The Vietnamese family
Who served hangover soup for years
Deleted
Along with
The gay bar that filled the air with laughter
And Madonna classics from noon till midnight

Capitol Hill is a poem
Written on a bar napkin
At 2 AM

Now that napkin is torn
The ink smudged
It's almost unrecognizable

—*Steve Barker*

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HOME ALIVE

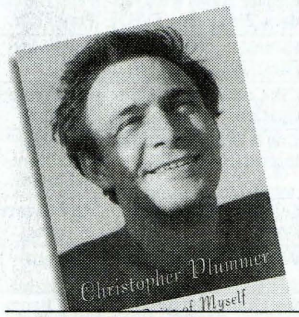
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Plummer gets wordy, naughty and nice 'In Spite of Myself'



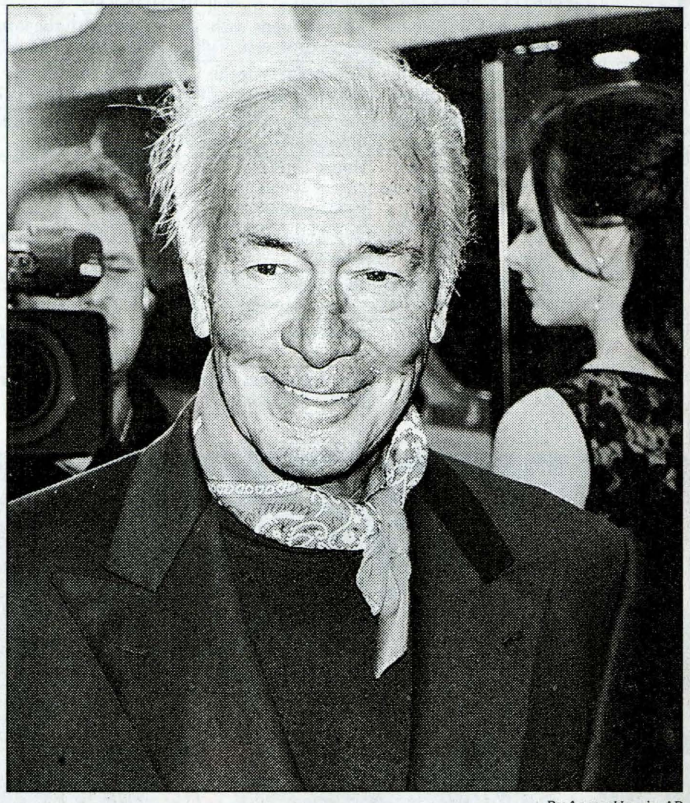
In Spite of Myself
By Christopher Plummer
Knopf, 648 pp., $29.95

By Elysa Gardner
USA TODAY

Review

For some public figures, the memoir can be a means of self-defense or catharsis, an attempt to either justify or come to terms with one's failings and foibles.

Not so Christopher Plummer, bless his heart. No one reading *In Spite of Myself*, the veteran actor's delightfully sprawling account of his life and career, could accuse him of being a withholding guy. He is candid to a fault, and many faults are acknowledged here.



By Aaron Harris, AP

An actor with stories to tell: Christopher Plummer, 78, shares his passions, both professional and personal, in his memoir.

But Plummer isn't begging our forgiveness or courting our affection and admiration. He has a loftier goal: offering access to the world of a tireless working artist and bon vivant, someone gifted and lucky enough to be able to fully engage his passions and inspire others in doing so.

Plummer, 78, paints that world in almost exhausting detail.

Recalling his early years in theater, he lustfully drops names, iconic and obscure, and embellishes their exploits with effusively captioned photos: "Roddy (McDowell), the welcome court jester!" or "Jean Gascon, Renaissance figure who brought all of life to the stage."

The writing is robust and unapologetically florid, littered with exclamation points, bawdy slang and French. (Plummer was raised outside Montreal.) There's plenty of self-deprecating humor and reports of naughty and gory escapades, a few involving hospitals, that can be mercilessly graphic.

But there also are moments of unfettered poignancy. Plummer doesn't dish on his most famous role, that of Captain von Trapp in the beloved screen version of *The Sound of Music*, until nearly 400 pages in; but his witty musings and heartfelt appreciation of the film — and its golden star, Julie Andrews — are worth the wait. "The picture belongs to Julie," he writes. "Her optimism, delicious humor and selfless nature were always on parade. ... She held us together and made us a team."

His complex and redeeming relationships with two other British actresses — his daughter Amanda Plummer and his third and current wife, Elaine Taylor — are addressed with frankness and tenderness.

"How lucky I have been to have made the acquaintance of such an extraordinary collection of vagabonds," Plummer writes. "And how fortunate that the same century sent such remarkable women to show me the way."

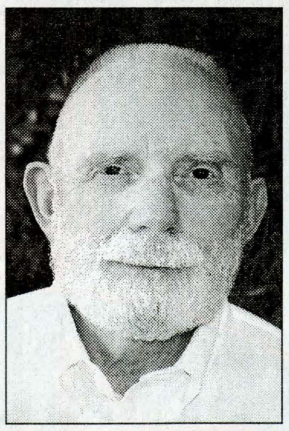
And how nice that we can now share in that bounty.

Add 'Eleventh Man' to Ivan Doig's best yarns

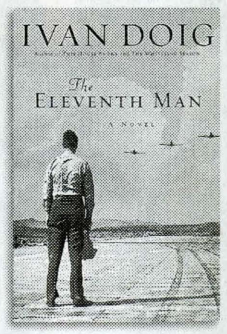
The Eleventh Man
By Ivan Doig
Harcourt, 406 pp., $26

By Bob Minzesheimer

Review



By A. Wayne Arnst



Doig: *Eleventh* is his ninth novel.

Ivan Doig, who blends the skills of novelist and historian, was researching another book when he lucked onto a forgotten but stunning scrap of history:

In World War II, the 11 starters on the football team at Montana State College in Bozeman joined the military. All 11 died.

That "breath of actuality," as he puts it, inspired Doig's ninth novel, *The Eleventh Man*. It's his most ambitious and one of his best.

In the novel, a small-town newspaper editor says, "History writes the best yarns."

Doig has been doing just that in books such as *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*, set in his native Montana, as literary as it is sparse.

His new novel employs his usual brand of characters — prickly, quotable Westerners — and throws them into a world at war.

His fictional hero is Ben Reinking, the newspaper editor's son, and a talented writer in his own right.

As a football star, Ben was part of that championship season at fictional Treasure State University, undefeated in 1941. Two years later, he's yanked from pilot training to become a military correspondent.

The brass, eager for heroes, orders him to write a series of articles about his former teammates scattered around the globe. But Ben is no propagandist, which means hinting at the complexities between the lines, as his ex-teammates are killed one by one.

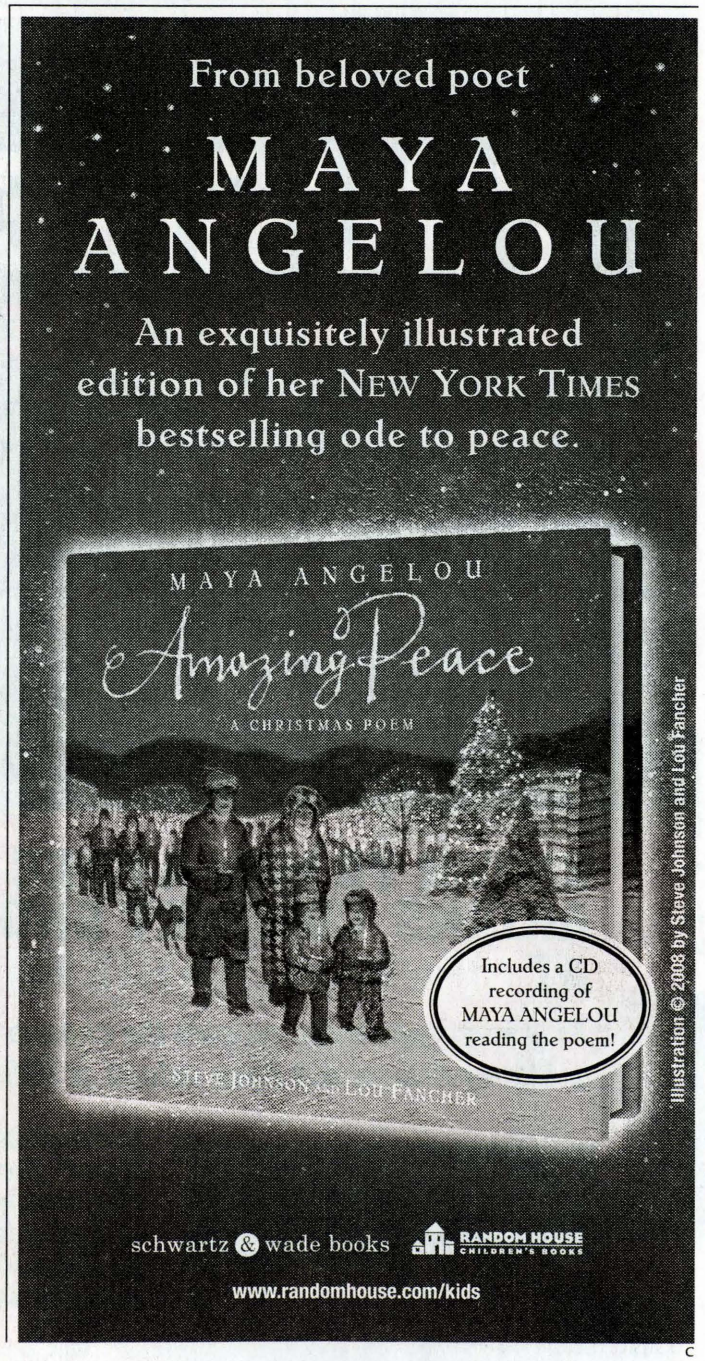
Doig is at his best exploring little-known crannies of the war: work camps for conscientious objectors and the role played by WASPs (Women Air Force Service Pilots), one of whom Ben falls in love with. She's smart, pretty and married.

The former football players and a mysterious 12th man who died in a team practice are hard to keep straight, at least early in the novel. Readers may wish for a scorecard to refer to.

But Doig's language is a joy to read. His accounts of combat and the home front take on new resonance in the context of the current war, which seems to have no home front, at least for most Americans.

Near the end of World War II, Ben comes to realize that "The world was more complicated now, but he also knew that every era makes that excuse for tripping over itself."

True then; true now.



The Pacific Northwest Indie Bestseller List, as brought to you by IndieBound and PNBA, for the week ended Sunday, November 23, 2008. Based on reporting from the independent booksellers of the Pacific Northwest Booksellers Association and IndieBound. For an independent bookstore near you, visit IndieBound.org.

HARDCOVER FICTION

1. The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society
Mary Ann Shaffer, Annie Barrows, Dial, $22, 9780385340991
2. The Eleventh Man
Ivan Doig, Harcourt, $26, 9780151012435
3. The Private Patient
P.D. James, Knopf, $25.95, 9780307270771
4. The Hour I First Believed
Wally Lamb, Harper, $29.95, 9780060393496
5. A Mercy
Toni Morrison, Knopf, $23.95, 9780307264237
6. The Story of Edgar Sawtelle
David Wroblewski, Ecco, $25.95, 9780061374227
7. Ender in Exile
Orson Scott Card, Tor, $25.95, 9780765304964
8. The Host
Stephenie Meyer, Little Brown, $25.99, 9780316068048
9. The Art of Racing in the Rain
Garth Stein, Harper, $23.95, 9780061537936
10. A Lion Among Men
Gregory Maguire, Morrow, $26.95, 9780060548926
11. The Christmas Sweater
Glenn Beck, Threshold Editions, $19.99, 9781416594857
12. A Most Wanted Man
John le Carré, Scribner, $28, 9781416594888
13. The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo
Stieg Larsson, Knopf, $24.95, 9780307269751
14. The Brass Verdict
Michael Connelly, Little Brown, $26.99, 9780316166294
15. Anathem
Neal Stephenson, Morrow, $29.95, 9780061474095

HARDCOVER NONFICTION

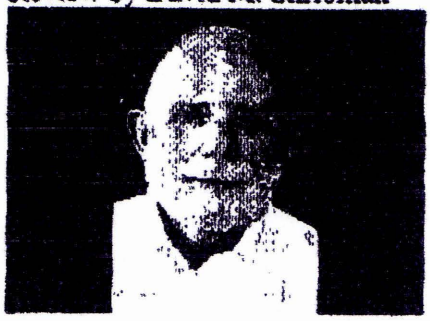
1. Dewey
Vicki Myron, Grand Central, $19.99, 9780446407410
2. Outliers
Malcolm Gladwell, Little Brown, $27.99, 9780316017923
3. Hot, Flat, and Crowded
Thomas L. Friedman, FSG, $27.95, 9780374166854
4. American Lion
Jon Meacham, Random House, $30, 9781400063253
5. The Last Lecture
Randy Pausch, Hyperion, $21.95, 9781401323257
6. Goodnight Bush
Erich Origen, Gan Golan, Little Brown, $14.99, 9780316040419
7. Annie Leibovitz at Work
Annie Leibovitz, Random House, $40, 9780375505102
8. Barefoot Contessa Back to Basics
Ina Garten, Clarkson Potter, $35, 9781400054350
9. Letter to My Daughter
Maya Angelou, Random House, $25, 9781400066124
10. Dog Blessings
June Cotner (Ed.), New World Library, $16, 9781577316169
11. Holidays on Ice

Bloomberg.com

October 13, 2008

Winning Football Team Loses Its Luck on WWII Battlefield: Books

Review by David M. Shribman



Oct. 13 (Bloomberg) -- An undefeated 1941 football season. A town scratched into Montana's northern plains. A war with many fronts, including the home front. A small-town newspaper editor. A willowy female pilot who's in love with our hero while her husband is fighting in the Pacific. Damn good raw materials for a novel, no?

``The Eleventh Man'' draws from three of the hardiest genres in the American canon: the sports book, the war novel, the story set in the great West. The author of this hat trick is Ivan Doig, who is a genre all his own.

The setting is Gros Ventre, the fictional community in Two Medicine country that Doig has mined much the way Thomas Hardy did with Wessex. They're not on the map, but they occupy our interior landscape. And though on the surface this novel revolves around one resilient American theme (that championship season), it's really about honor, loyalty, and the character and courage that war creates -- and reveals.

The book begins with one of the great opening sentences of the season: ``Never much of a town for showing off, Gros Ventre waited around one last bend in the road, suppertime lights coming on here and there beneath its roof of trees.'' Thus starts the tale of the storied Golden Eagles of Treasure State University, who swept through their entire '41 season and then were swept into the war that began as the season ended.

All 11 starters enlisted in the war effort, but one of them, Ben Reinking, is plucked by Washington to chronicle the heroics of the other 10 -- making them fodder for the propaganda effort before, grimly but inevitably, they become fodder for the Axis forces and the fortunes of war. Through their stories we learn their secrets and shame, their valor and bravery.

`War and Peace'

For Ben, who is our periscope into World War II, watching the conflict was ``like reading `War and Peace' standing up.'' But for the reader it is a glimpse into the heartbreaking caprice and cruelty of war: ``Sure, you could believe for all you were worth that you were too young and fit and lucky to be chased down by death, but all of accumulated history yawns back, why not you?''

The Golden Eagles died in the customary ways, which is to say the worst ways possible; in, as Doig puts it, ``the black fire of nightmare.'' They died in New Guinea, or in a kamikaze raid at Leyte Gulf, or in some forgotten field. It was a team ``betrayed by the law of averages, with something that amounted to a moving wall of oblivion hinged to the war for them.''

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Landlocked Navy

Indeed, the war reached deep into faraway Montana; almost 900 trainees were sent to the Montana School of Mines in Butte in the V-12 program, which in one of the most rugged landlocked states prepared young men ... for the Navy.

All this is a reminder that the Greatest Generation was far more complex than we often think. In a way that's the message of this book, stuffed full of the standard wartime heroism but seasoned, too, with the moral agonies of the conscientious objector, the adulterer and the opportunist who uses war as a step on the career ladder.

This may have been a good war -- and this is surely a good war novel -- but in the end this story, like all war stories, is mostly a sad one. The Golden Eagles landed in a mess of trouble and tragedy.

``The Eleventh Man'' is published by Harcourt (416 pages, $26).

(David M. Shribman is executive editor of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. The opinions expressed are his own.)

To contact the writer of this column: David M. Shribman at dshribman@post-gazette.com.

Rocky Mountain News

The Eleventh Man

By Jennie Camp, Special to the Rocky

Published October 16, 2008 at 7 p.m.

Fiction. *By Ivan Doig. Harcourt Books, $26.*
Grade: A

Plot in a nutshell: Many authors peak with a second or third book and then dwindle in their later years, but Doig just keeps getting better.

His exceptional new novel opens in 1941, when Montana's Treasure State University boasts an undefeated starting lineup that makes football history. Two years later, World War II intervenes and the 11-member lineup is scattered across the globe.

When the hero-starved U.S. military pulls Ben Reinking out of pilot training and assigns him to follow his teammates, writing their stories for small-town newspapers, Ben is tested nearly beyond his limits.

Statistics suggest that all but one of the "Supreme Team" will survive the war, but, as Reinking chronicles the experiences of one man after another, we watch those conclusions overridden by the harsher realities of war.

Sample of prose: When the U.S. Navy destroyer Ben is on begins evasive maneuvers to avoid a Japanese submarine, the tension onboard is palpable and dramatic:

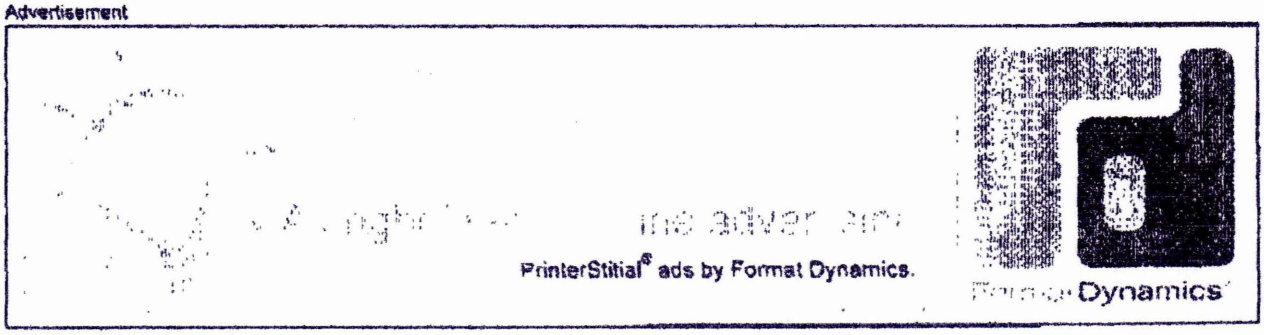
"Sea air rushed by, there on the steel promontory into the dark. A mane of moon silver flowed back from the destroyer's bow, and a marching tail of wake behind it. As his eyes adjusted, Ben could just make out the long narrow deck below, armaments jutting ready . . . . Standing there witnessing the might of a fully armed vessel turning on its nagging foe could have been thrilling, Ben was duly aware, except for the distinct chance of being blown out of the water at any second. Drowned like a kitten in a sack. He tried to swallow such prospects away, down a throat dry as paper. The lack of any least sign of the enemy out there in the total surround of ocean seemed to him the worst part. On land he had been shot at by experts and never felt this much fear."

Pros: Doig incorporates all the elements of a good novel: an intensifying love interest, the drama of war, repeated moments of life-or-death intensity, the complexity of multiple story lines, historical curiosities, seamless prose and even a winning football team.

Cons: None.

Final word: *The Eleventh Man,* Doig's 12th, is his best thus far.

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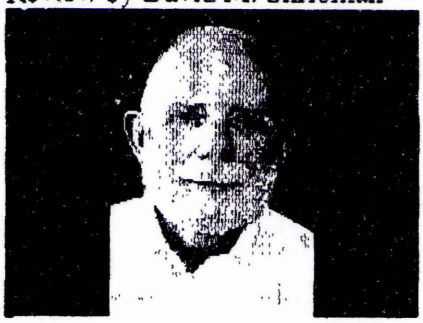
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All this is a reminder that the Greatest Generation was far more complex than we often think. In a way that's the message of this book, stuffed full of the standard wartime heroism but seasoned, too, with the moral agonies of the conscientious objector, the adulterer and the opportunist who uses war as a step on the career ladder.

This may have been a good war -- and this is surely a good war novel -- but in the end this story, like all war stories, is mostly a sad one. The Golden Eagles landed in a mess of trouble and tragedy.

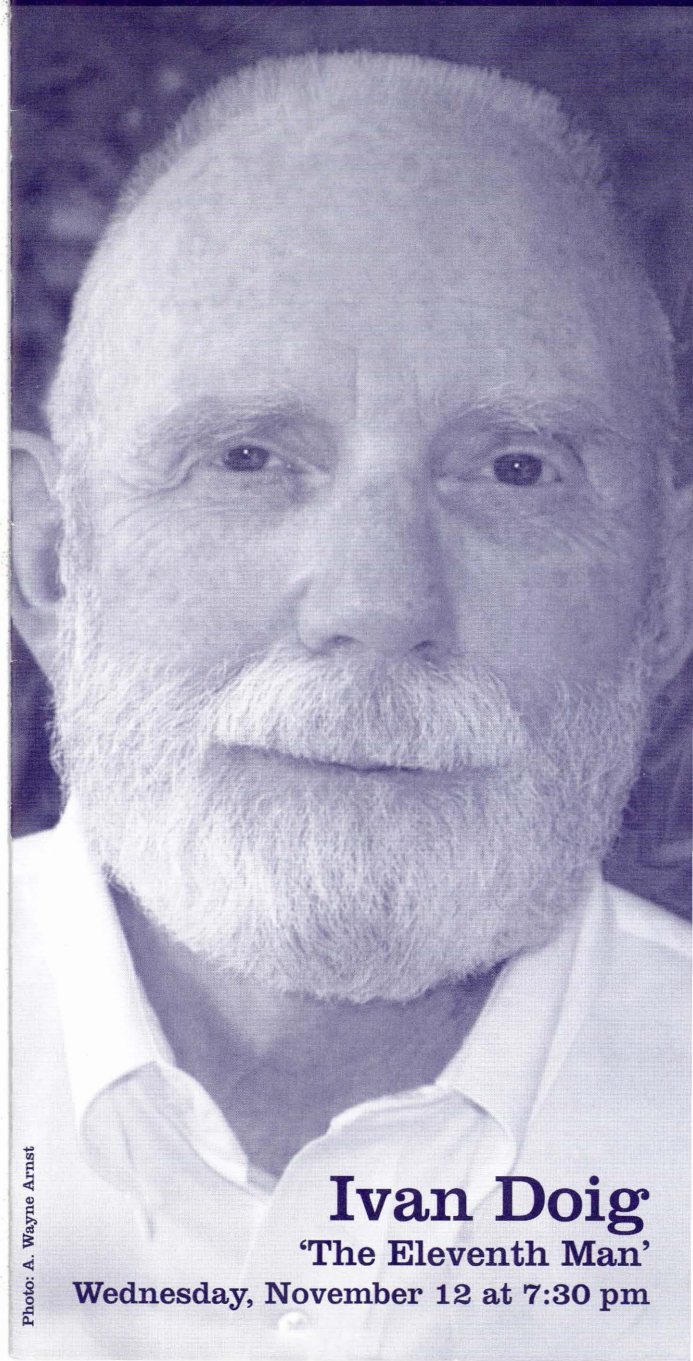
``The Eleventh Man'' is published by Harcourt (416 pages, $26).

(David M. Shribman is executive editor of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. The opinions expressed are his own.)

To contact the writer of this column: David M. Shribman at dshribman@post-gazette.com.

NOVEMBER 2008

TOWN HALL CALENDAR



Ivan Doig

'The Eleventh Man'

Wednesday, November 12 at 7:30 pm

Photo: A. Wayne Arnst

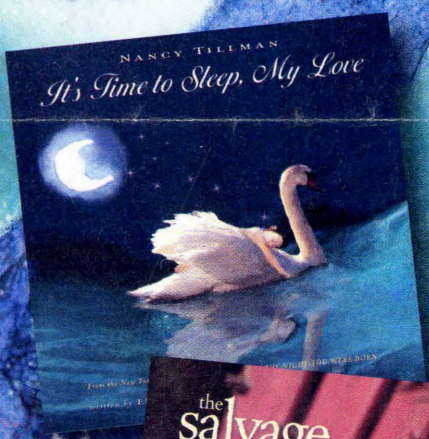
NOVEMBER 12 WEDNESDAY AT 7:30 PM

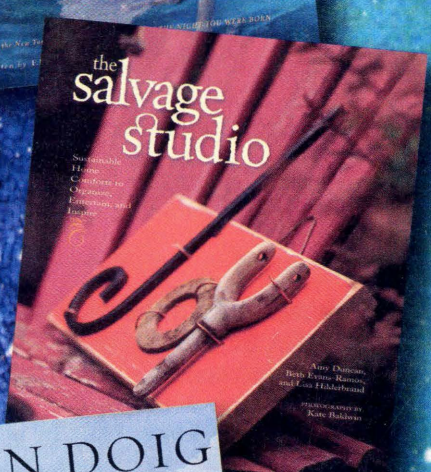
Ivan Doig: 'The Eleventh Man'

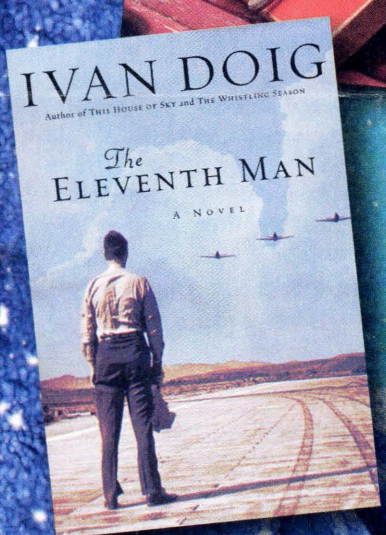
Ivan Doig grew up along the rugged rims of the Rocky Mountains in Montana where much of his writing takes place. His first book, the highly acclaimed memoir *This House of Sky*, was a finalist for the National Book Award. He comes to Town Hall to read from his latest novel, *The Eleventh Man*, the story of a close-knit Montana college championship football team, all of whose members enlist as the U.S. hits the thick of WWII. Presented by Town Hall, with University Book Store. ★ *Tickets are $5 and are available at www.brownpapertickets.com, 800/838-3006 and at the door beginning at 6:30. Town Hall members receive priority seating.*

Holiday Books

THE BEST OF THE INDEPENDENT NORTHWEST 2008





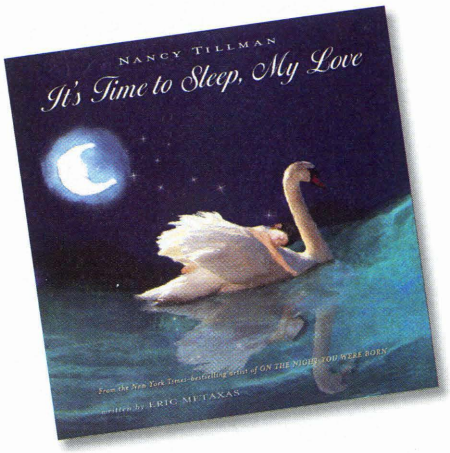


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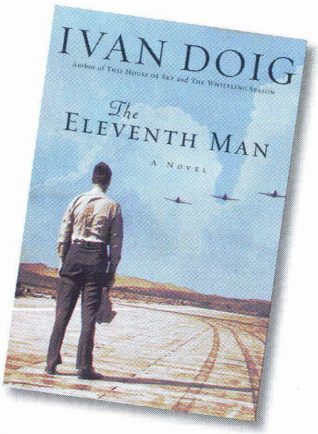


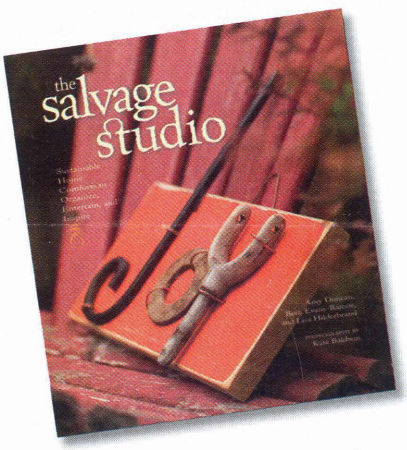
It's Time to Sleep, My Love

Written by Eric Metaxas
Illustrated by Nancy Tillman
As warm as a good-night hug, this lullaby is lovingly brought to life by *The New York Times* bestselling artist—and Portlander—Nancy Tillman, whose illustrations celebrate the wonders of the natural world and the bonds of family.
$16.95 (ages 0–3) Feiwel and Friends

The Eleventh Man

Ivan Doig
From the Pacific Northwest #1 bestselling author of *The Whistling Season* and seven-time Pacific Northwest Book Award-winner comes the WWII story of a Montana football hero plucked from pilot training by the propaganda machine to chronicle the adventures of his teammates, scattered throughout the war's lonely and dangerous theaters.
$26.00 Harcourt





The Salvage Studio: Sustainable Home Comforts to Organize, Entertain, and Inspire

Amy Duncan, Beth Evans-Ramos, Lisa Hilderbrand; photos By Kate Baldwin
Using "reduce, reuse, and recycle" as their mantra, the Salvage Studio ladies of Edmonds, Washington, show how simple it is to have a green and comfortable daily life. Included are 35 sustainable and cost-effective craft projects for any skill level, and most use items that people often throw away!
$21.95 Skipstone



This ***Holiday Books*** guide is a project of the Pacific Northwest Booksellers Association and its member stores. PNBA supports independent bookselling in Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington and British Columbia.

**Post production changes in price and on-sale date, as provided by the publisher prior to publication, are beyond the control of PNBA stores.*

A look at war, sacrifice, and the uses of fiction

By David Liss

As he does with his many preceding novels, Ivan Doig roots "The Eleventh Man" in rural Montana of the past, but this book, set during the years of American involvement in World War II, is much more wide-ranging than the author's previous work. Here Doig focuses on the exploits of a monumentally successful football team, but lest the combination of college football and the Second World War make the book sound like a parody of Father's Day marketing, let me state right away that Doig has bigger fish to fry than pressing the hot buttons of American masculinity. This is a tale almost entirely devoid of nostalgia, and one that wishes to celebrate the valor of the greatest generation while viewing it with skepticism and even cynicism.

The novel centers on Ben Reinking (I feel like there is something metaphorical happening with this name, but I haven't figured out what exactly), a war correspondent working for the vaguely mysterious Threshold Press War Project, a government news bureau that specializes in providing stories to small-town papers. Ben was once part of the "Supreme Team," an undefeated Montana university football team, and when the entire starting lineup enlists following the attack on Pearl Harbor, Ben is assigned to write inspiring profiles on the other 10 men.

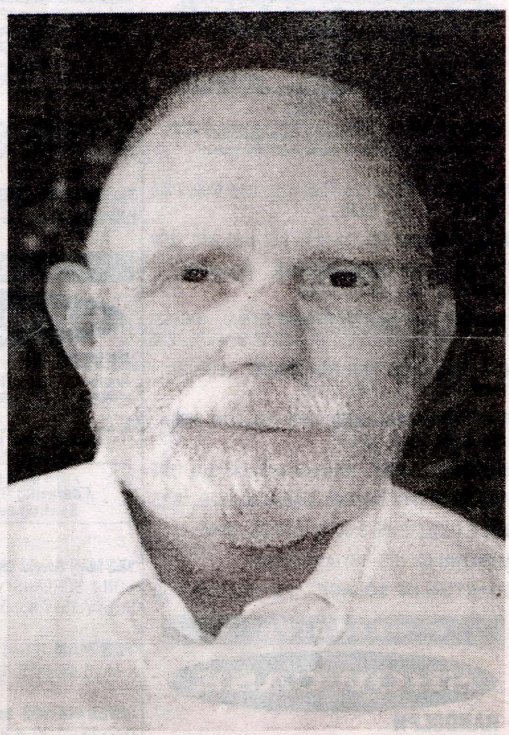
It seems like a straightforward project, and one the son of a small-town newspaper man ought to embrace, but Ben has plenty of doubts and resents having been forced out of pilot training to pursue the family business. He also has plenty of problems, not the least of which is his romance with a married female pilot, an affair that provides much fodder for musings on personal responsibility and loyalty in wartime. If this weren't enough, Ben hates the fact that his stories are consistently altered to make the details more patriotic and uplifting. These redactions grow increasingly troubling as a disproportionate number of the former teammates are injured or killed in action, leaving Ben to wonder if perhaps they are being put in harm's way deliberately so the propaganda machine might generate more heroes.

"The Eleventh Man" is, at its core, a novel about the uses of narrative, about the ways in which we construct fictions to inspire bravery, loyalty, and sacrifice. The Supreme Team itself was built on such a narrative, that of a 12th man who died unexpectedly and to whom the team dedicated its season. That narrative — which turns out to be far more sinister than it seems — serves as a microcosm for Ben as he finds himself forced to sign off on one reworked story after another. As the novel circles from the history of the undefeated season to the soldiers and back again, it insistently chews over the notion that great powers will always be willing to sacrifice some men to inspire others to make even more sacrifices.

To make this point, Doig takes Ben through some of the major European and Pacific battles, and the novel is full of exciting set-pieces: firefights, battles against the elements, kamikaze attacks. Doig's prose is generally engaging, though sometimes the writing becomes bogged down with awkward and convoluted descriptions: "The painted stones spelled the way down the steep sidehill, the enormous lettering ghost-white in the bunchgrass." More troubling, the characters themselves, including Ben, remain perpetually at an alienating distance. Reading about their exploits often feels like watching characters portrayed through black-and-white newsreels. Everything is urgent and immediate and present, and yet strangely difficult to embrace.

Nevertheless, the book remains always compelling and accessible. It's hard not to read some kind of contemporary analogy into this historical tale about a government's willingness to manipulate truth and lies to further its own ends. On the other hand, such manipulation is fairly universal in times of war, and if there is anything Doig has shown himself adept at over his career, it is accessing the universal through the particular.

David Liss is the author of five novels, most recently "The Whiskey Rebels."



A. WAYNE ARNST

Ivan Doig returns to rural Montana in his latest novel.

BOOK REVIEW

THE ELEVENTH MAN
By Ivan Doig
Harcourt, 406 pp., $26

Robin Lindley
PO Box 27007
Seattle WA 98165
Phone: 206-523-3399
E-mail: roblindley@yahoo.com

January 12, 2009

Dear Ivan,

I hope you're doing well.

Thank you for the great interview on The Eleventh Man. An article based on our conversation appeared in *Real Change* this week. I'm enclosing a copy, and you can get more copies of the issue by calling Real Change editor Adam Hyla at 441-3247, x 207.

A similar article—with a bit more on your background in history—will be posted on the History News Network site this month. I'll send on a copy of that article too when it appears.

Thanks again. I look forward to your next book.

Best wishes,



Robin Lindley

Pacific Northwest Independent Bestseller List for April 13, 2008

PACIFIC NORTHWEST BOOKSELLERS ASSOCIATION

The Pacific Northwest Independent Bestseller List, as brought to you by Book Sense and PNBA, based on reporting from the independent booksellers of the Pacific Northwest.

Hardcover Fiction

1. Unaccustomed Earth
Jhumpa Lahiri, Knopf, $25, 9780307265739

2. Lush Life
Richard Price, FSG, $26, 9780374299255

3. The Hearts of Horses
Molly Gloss, Houghton Mifflin, $24, 9780618799909

4. Red Bird
Mary Oliver, Beacon, $23, 9780807068922

5. A Thousand Splendid Suns
Khaled Hosseini, Riverhead, $25.95, 9781594489501

6. The Appeal
John Grisham, Doubleday, $27.95, 9780385515047

7. Small Favor
Jim Butcher, Roc, $23.95, 9780451461896

8. World Without End
Ken Follett, Dutton, $35, 9780525950073

9. Girls in Trucks
Katie Crouch, Little Brown, $21.99, 9780316002110

10. The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao
Junot Diaz, Riverhead, $24.95, 9781594489587

11. Winter Study
Nevada Barr, Putnam, $24.95, 9780399154584

12. Change of Heart
Jodi Picoult, Atria, $26.95, 9780743496742

13. An Incomplete Revenge
Jacqueline Winspear, Holt, $24, 9780805082159

14. The Girl with No Shadow
Joanne Harris, Morrow, $24.95, 9780061431623

15. Compulsion
Jonathan Kellerman, Ballantine, $27, 9780345465276

Paperback Fiction

1. Water for Elephants
Sara Gruen, Algonquin, $13.95, 9781565125605

2. The Memory Keeper's Daughter
Kim Edwards, Penguin, $14, 9780143037149

3. The Shack
William P. Young, Windblown, $14.99, 9780964729230

4. The Good Husband of Zebra Drive
Alexander McCall Smith, Anchor, $12.95, 9781400075720

5. The God of Animals
Aryn Kyle, Scribner, $14, 9781416533252

6. Loving Frank
Nancy Horan, Ballantine, $14, 9780345495006

7. Suite Francaise
Irene Nemirovsky, Vintage, $14.95, 9781400096275

8. The Book of Air and Shadows
Michael Gruber, Harper, $14.95, 9780061456572

9. No Country for Old Men
Cormac McCarthy, Vintage, $14, 9780375706677

10. The Road
Cormac McCarthy, Vintage, $14.95, 9780307387899

11. The Thirteenth Tale
Diane Setterfield, Washington Square, $15, 9780743298032

12. The Gathering
Anne Enright, Black Cat, $14, 9780802170392

13. The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears
Dinaw Mengestu, Riverhead, $14, 9781594482854

14. The Whistling Season
Ivan Doig, Harvest, $14, 9780156031646

15. The Tenderness of Wolves
Stef Penney, S&S, $15, 9781416571308

Mass Market

1. Bad Luck and Trouble
Lee Child, Dell, $7.99, 9780440243663

2. The Pillars of the Earth
Ken Follett, Signet, $7.99, 9780451166890

3. Simple Genius
David Baldacci, Grand Central, $9.99, 9780446618731

4. Spanish Dagger
Susan Wittig Albert, Berkley, $7.99, 9780425220887

5. The Woods
Harlan Coben, Signet, $9.99, 9780451221957

6. The Name of the Wind
Patrick Rothfuss, Daw, $7.99, 9780756404741

7. The Other Boleyn Girl
Philippa Gregory, Pocket Star, $7.99, 9781416556534

8. Atonement
Ian McEwan, Anchor, $7.99, 9780307388841

9. The Catcher in the Rye
J.D. Salinger, Warner, $6.99, 9780316769488

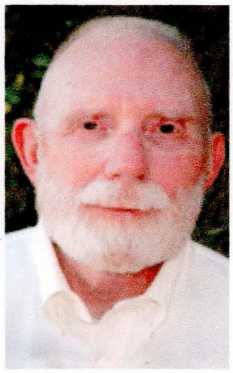
10. 1984
George Orwell, Signet, $9.99, 9780451524935

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To: rycaldwell@comcast.net
Subject: Meet The Author Newsletter
Date: November 17, 2008 9:24:48 AM PST

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Meet the Author: Ivan Doig



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Teammates in arms

A winning football team finds tragedy in war

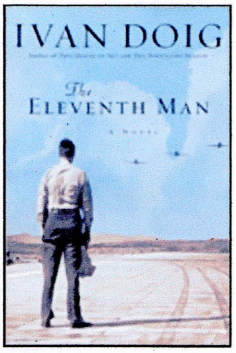
Review by Alden Mudge

Since the publication of his beautiful memoir of growing up in Montana, *The House of Sky* (1979), Ivan Doig has been hailed as a great Western writer. That reputation was burnished by the publication of his marvelous Montana trilogy, *English Creek* (1984), *Dancing at the Rascal Fair* (1987) and *Ride With Me, Mariah Montana* (1990), which masterfully portrays the lives of four generations of the McCaskill family in Two Medicine country, Doig's lovingly invented landscape near the Rockies in Montana.

But like many ambitious writers who find their subjects and locales beyond the bright lights and big egos of the East Coast publishing world, Doig bristles just a bit at being pigeonholed as a Western writer.

"I find that's kind of an odd fence that's put around those of us who happen to live out here on this side of the

Mississippi River," Doig says during a call to his home high on a bluff over Puget Sound, just north of downtown Seattle. "Writers of my generation are always described as writers of place. Maybe that's true as far as it goes. But what about the poetry under the prose? What about the fact that when readers raise their hands at book signings or readings, it's the characters and the language they tend to mention?" Doig says. "It seems to me the 'Western writer' tag shortchanges the pretty sophisticated literary effort that's gone on among my writing generation out here. It's going to be interesting to see after the publication of **The Eleventh Man**, am I still going to be a Western writer after taking these characters to Guam, New Guinea, Fairbanks, Alaska? "



Interesting indeed. **The Eleventh Man**, Doig's ninth novel and 12th book, is a panoramic page-turner about World War II as seen mostly through the eyes of Ben Reinking, a GI reporter assigned by the government's propaganda machine to write about the exploits of his former teammates, who comprised the starting lineup of the "Supreme Team," a championship Montana college football team that went undefeated in 1941.

"My imagination works best when it has a jumping off place of fact," Doig says, explaining the seed of his novel. "Somewhere in **The Eleventh Man**, the newspaper man Bill Reinking [Ben's father, an appealing small town newspaper publisher] says 'history writes the best yarns.' I thoroughly agree with that. Quite a number of years ago in the library of the Montana Historical Society in Helena I came across the half-lore and half-proven story of an entire Montana college football team that had gone into World War II, and the starting 11 had all perished in the war. The library is the greenhouse of the imagination for me. I suppose I tucked that away and my mind worked on it and at some point wondered, what if you were the 11th man while the war was taking its toll on all the others?"

The toll of war is widely and deeply felt in **The Eleventh Man**. As a war correspondent, Ben travels to every theater of World War II to write about the experiences of his former teammates, allowing Doig to work his magic over a much wider landscape than in his previous novels.

Some of that magic derives from the language Doig deploys in telling his tale. He has often used the phrase "poetry under the prose" to describe the effect he is looking for, by which he means "an interior rhyme or chime of language, something in a sentence which you hope will surprise and delight the reader, at least a little bit. I work at it also in the vernacular that my characters will talk, whether it's military, here in **The Eleventh Man**, or forest rangers in *English Creek*. I try to get a shimmer of how people will talk about their work or because they are in their work," Doig says. "I've often warmed up for the morning's work by reading 10 pages of the *Dictionary of America Regional English*, which is the great University of Wisconsin project to capture how people say things in various parts of this country."

Doig's cast of characters here is large and vivid. And although this a novel of war and football, his women characters—a Russian woman pilot ferrying bombers from Fairbanks to the Soviet Union, for example, or Cass Standish, an American flyer in the WASP (Women Airforce Service Pilots) with whom Ben develops a complicated wartime romance—are among his most interesting characters.

"I sometimes take more pleasure in writing the female characters than male characters for some reason," Doig says. He adds: "I did have great good luck here. Everybody who saw this piece of writing before it emerged into galleys was a woman, starting with my wife Carol."

In fact, Doig and his wife have an unusually close working relationship. They came to Seattle together in 1966, when Doig entered a Ph.D. program in American history at the University of Washington. She has always been the first reader of his writing, his co-researcher and his research photographer. They sit across from one another at a trapezoidal desk they designed for the large converted family room where they work, looking out over Puget Sound from a bluff some 300 feet above the water. "We're both old newspaper people," Doig says.

"In our newspaper and magazine past both of us shared space with people we didn't particularly choose to. You learn to have a cone of concentration over you. So it's never been an issue with Carol and me."

Turning reflective, Doig adds, "I've always seen writing as a profession. I have been, I suppose, kind of prickly proud about being a professional, all the way back to being a magazine freelancer here in Seattle, during and after graduate school. I spent much too long at that kind of life before *This House of Sky* took me out of it. But I came out of college and into journalism as what I saw as a serious wordsmith and a serious journalist. Producing language and story to the best of my ability has always been what I see that I'm up to."

With **The Eleventh Man** (Harcourt, $26, 416 pages, ISBN 9780151012435), Doig demonstrates once again that his ability remains deep and wide.

Alden Mudge writes from San Francisco.

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Indie Next

Recommendations From Independent Booksellers

"A football team that makes the papers in 1941 goes to war in 1943, its players deployed from Europe to the Pacific -- all but the quarterback, who, son of a journalist, is assigned to chronicle their exploits for the wartime propaganda machine he loathes. Indelibly wrought characters and a plot that mixes love, treason, heroism, and history make this a blissfully good read."

--Betsy Burton, The King's English, Salt Lake City, UT

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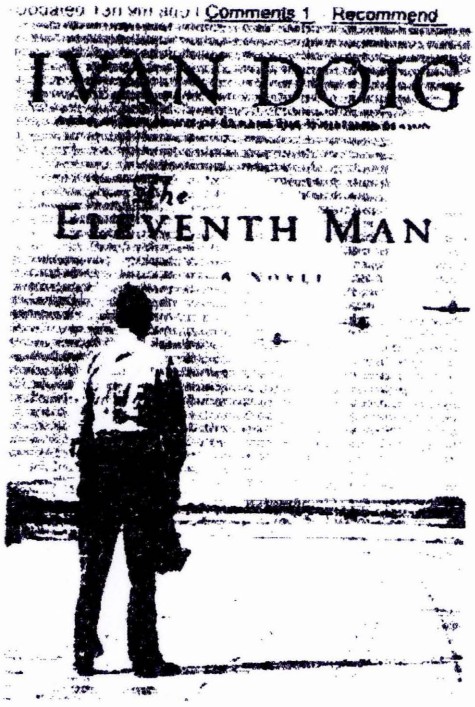
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Add 'Eleventh Man' to Ivan Doig's best yarns

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Enlarge

Great review!
I've always loved
Bob Minzesheimer!
-Liz D.

ABOUT THE BOOK

By Ivan Doig
Knopf, 648 pp., $29.95

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Newsvine
Reddit
Facebook
What's this?

By Bob Minzesheimer, USA TODAY

Ivan Doig, who blends the skills of novelist and historian, was researching another book when he lucked onto a forgotten but stunning scrap of history:

In World War II, the 11 starters on the football team at Montana State College in Bozeman joined the military. All 11 died.

That "breath of actuality," as he puts it, inspired Doig's ninth novel, *The Eleventh Man*. It's his most ambitious and one of his best.

In the novel, a small-town newspaper editor says, "History writes the best yarns."

Doig has been doing just that in books such as *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*, set in his native Montana, as literary as it is sparse.

FIND MORE STORIES IN: World War II | Westerners | Dancing | Bozeman | WASPs | Ivan Doig

His new novel employs his usual brand of characters — prickly, quotable Westerners — and throws them into a world at war.

His fictional hero is Ben Reinking, the newspaper editor's son, and a talented writer in his own right.

As a football star, Ben was part of that championship season at fictional Treasure State University, undefeated in 1941. Two years later, he's yanked from pilot training to become a military correspondent.

The brass, eager for heroes, orders him to write a series of articles about his former teammates scattered around the globe. But Ben is no propagandist, which means hinting at the complexities between the lines, as his ex-teammates are killed one by one.

Doig is at his best exploring little-known crannies of the war: work camps for conscientious objectors and the role played by WASPs (Women Air Force Service Pilots), one of whom Ben falls in love with. She's smart, pretty and married.

The former football players and a mysterious 12th man who died in a team practice are hard to keep straight, at least early in the novel. Readers may wish for a scorecard to refer to.

But Doig's language is a joy to read. His accounts of combat and the home front take on new resonance in the context of the current war, which seems to have no home front, at least for most Americans.

Near the end of World War II, Ben comes to realize that "The world was more complicated now, but he also knew that every era makes that excuse for tripping over itself."

True then; true now.

P.1

him. Instead, he split his life in two — the cerebral and the sexual, "Mama at home, a whore in South America," in French's harsh summation — and went back and forth between them with the knowledge, if not exactly the consent, of both.

Pat acceded to the arrangement because she had no idea of any possible life without Naipaul, and because her only sense

tions on sadomasochism, lasted a quarter-century. But it was not a stable balance. "Many years later, he acknowledged that his relationship with Margaret effectively undid Pat's life," French reports. "'I was liberated. She was destroyed. It was inevitable.'" Note the passive voice. Also note the hand of fate. Naipaul's confessions to French are like those of a man who leads

Jane Carlyle and Leonard Woolf. Pat's voice is faltering and uncertain where Naipaul's is relentlessly in command, but its small observations, evasions and sudden bolts of understanding haunt the reader up until her death of cancer, which gives this story its heartbreaking end. Naipaul, keeping a journal of his own, finally sees his wife as if for the first time: "I to her:

verts back to his own. And yet this boundless narcissism, together with the uncompromising intensity of his vision, holds the key to Naipaul's literary power. He had the capacity in his writing to project himself into a great variety of people and situations, allowing him to imbue his work with the sympathy and humanity that he failed to extend to those closest to him in life. ☐

Elevating the Fallen

In Ivan Doig's new novel, a World War II military journalist is ordered to make heroes of his doomed comrades.

BY MIKE PEED

IVAN DOIG may not have pioneered Montana literature — that honor belongs to Lewis and Clark — but since "This House of Sky," his memoir of growing up along the Rocky Mountain Front,

THE ELEVENTH MAN
By Ivan Doig.
406 pp. Harcourt. $26.

was nominated for the 1979 National Book Award, Doig has been considered the literary equivalent of Gary Cooper, another of the Treasure State's favorite sons: good and decent, emblematic of an honored past. Doig's fiction is often labeled old-fashioned, but although he trades in nostalgia it's rarely of the Hallmark variety. His McCaskill trilogy dissects the intricate relationship between a landscape — Montana's Two Medicine country — and its colonizers. In "Bucking the Sun," construction of the monumental Fort Peck Dam, begun in 1933, mercilessly displaces both water and tradition.

Mike Peed is on the editorial staff of The New Yorker.

Like those novels, Doig's new book, his 12th, takes its inspiration from yesteryear. (The author, in fact, has a Ph.D. in American frontier history.) In World War II, only New Mexico's death rate outranked Montana's, and among the fallen were 11 starting players from the Montana State College football team. In "The Eleventh Man," Doig reimagines them as members of a fabled 1941 team at the fictional Treasure State University.

The novel opens in 1943 with the former teammates flung across a warring globe, from the Pacific Northwest to Guam, from Antwerp to New Guinea. The Threshold Press War Project, an armed services propaganda outfit, has ordered Ben Reinking, the team's left end and son of a small-town newspaper editor, to write a series of articles called "The 'Supreme Team' on the Field of Battle." Though the purpose of his task is never fully illuminated, Ben deploys, "lock, stock, and typewriter," to profile his former teammates and, as instructed, elevate them to a hero status above what an athletic field might bestow.

The members of Doig's cast speak an easygoing 1940s vernacular, more imagined, one hopes, than real. Soldiers drink "skunk juice," receive the "gaboot salute" and look forward to a "rub a dub dub." "In bed and out, he was unbeatable company," Ben's inamorata, a female pilot, thinks of him, "bright as a mint silver dollar ... a first-class passion ration." ("And," Ben says in return, "how baboon lucky I am to be with you.") These incessant wisecracks overwhelm, yielding characters who become less individuals than accomplices in parody. As ever, Doig seems most comfortable with hushed descriptions of Montana's landscape and its way of life. "Gros Ventre," Ben reminds himself on a brief home leave, "was the same age as the tree rings in the mature cottonwood



PHOTOGRAPH BY A. WAYNE ARNST

colonnade along its streets, and altered itself as slowly."

As Ben visits his football buddies (a conceit that lends the plot a tidy arc) and as a colonel's statistics ("In this war we are looking at a nine percent mortality rate for active combatants") repeatedly fail to safeguard them, the novel emanates a sense of unavoidable ruin. And yet most of the fighting and the inevitable dying — what Ben labels "the creeping wall of oblivion" — occurs off the page. The narrative itself remains paradoxically peaceful.

The strength of "The Eleventh Man" comes in its exploration of larger subjects — the nature of heroism, and of propaganda. Which enlistee is more heroic, the one stationed in the remote reaches of the Pacific or the one fated to patrol the Washington coast? Ben is never sure whether he's a victim or a perpetrator of the Army's war of words, and he feels guilty about "dodging bullets from the teleprinter" rather than the real thing.

It is, nonetheless, an old-world sense of loyalty and duty — a Doig trademark — that keeps Ben and his comrades on guard. "The team and its mortal dangers were a mere handful compared to the innumerable slaughtered in the vaster jaws of war," Doig writes of Ben's assignment. "But they were his handful." ☐

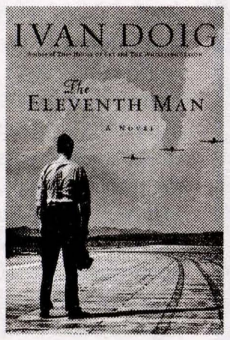
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FICTION

The Greatest Sacrifice

A young army reporter chronicles the harrowing lives of his football buddies in World War II.

THE ELEVENTH MAN
By Ivan Doig
Harcourt. 406 pp. $26



Reviewed by Molly Gloss

The 11 men alluded to in the title of Ivan Doig's new novel compose the starting football team for fictional Treasure State (Montana) University in its much-heralded undefeated 1941 season. Now, in 1943, 10 of those men are scattered in far-flung theaters of a world war, and the 11th, Ben Reinking, is writing up his teammates' exploits for a military propaganda machine called the Threshold Press War Project — TPWP, sardonically known as Tepee Weepy.

The story occasionally jumps back to earlier events in Ben's life and to the 1941 football season, in particular a pivotal week before the opening game when the sudden death of a teammate was the catalyst for the so-called "season of the Twelfth Man." But the bulk of the novel follows Reinking as he chronicles his teammates' war experiences — and, when necessary, their deaths — for publication in newspapers around the country.

It's a shapely premise for a novel, allowing Doig a broad canvas on which to paint the breadth and scope of World War II: Carl is bogged down in the forests of New Guinea; Jake pilots Lend-Lease planes from East Base, Mont., north to Russia; "Animal," on a Marine troop ship, hopscotchs from one island beachhead to the next; Sig, in the Coast Guard, patrols the Puget Sound shore; Moxie bosses an anti-aircraft gun pit in Antwerp; Nick serves on a destroyer in the Pacific; and Dexter is confined to a conscientious objector camp in the north Montana woods. Add to these a squadron of Women Air Force Service Pilots — WASPs — assigned to East Base, ferrying military aircraft north to Canada, and nearly every military operation is in play.

Scenes range from the jungles of Guam to the Butte du Lion of Waterloo, but the story returns again and again to East Base, Mont., where Doig, not surprisingly, is at his most lyrical, evoking the landscape of Ben Reinking's (and Doig's own) childhood. "Wheatfields winter-sown and fallow stretched below like checkered linoleum laid to the wall of the Rockies. There to the west he could pick out the long straight brink of Roman Reef and its dusky cliff, and the snake line of watercourse that would be English Creek. Gros Ventre, though, held itself out of sight beneath its cover of trees."

English Creek and the town of Gros Ventre are familiar place names in Montana's Two Medicine country that Doig first imagined for his trilogy about the McCaskill family, novels that are still perhaps his best-known works: *English Creek*, *Dancing at the Rascal Fair* and *Ride with Me, Mariah Montana*.

The Eleventh Man is more wide-ranging and plot-heavy than those earlier works. Statistical probability means nine of the 10 on the "Supreme Team" should survive, but those odds are neither a guarantee nor a consolation; as the novel opens, two of the team are already in their graves, and another has lost a leg, fighting in Sicily. Soon, Ben Reinking is writing a third obituary, and then a fourth. As one by one the men perish, the novel takes on a growing sense of doom and inevitability.

Ben, on temporary assignment at East Base, falls for the WASP commanding officer, Cass Standish, and their love affair casts its own dark shadow: Cass is a married woman with a husband serving in Guam. Mysteries underlie both the season of *The Twelfth Man* and the fateful roll call of deaths reported in Ben's Tepee Weepy dispatches. There are lengthy scenes of battle: the invasion of Guam, the battle of Leyte Gulf, the bombardment of Antwerp, all described in historical detail.

Yet this is not a novel with a strong sense of suspense or dramatic complication. Most of the deaths befalling the "Supreme Team" happen off stage, relayed to Ben and to us after the fact; and we're almost halfway into the book before something occurs that puts Ben himself in peril. For a war novel taking place on such a wide, dangerous field, the book is remarkably quiet. Doig is known for his rich imagining of local American history and the nuances of human relationships, and this is a book that deliberately keeps its attention on the places where war intersects with those less dramatic themes.

He is also sometimes called old-fashioned, which can be either criticism or approbation, depending on your point of view; and granted, it's sometimes hard to distinguish nostalgia from careful, thoughtful avoidance of cynicism. There are a few cringe-inducing moments in *The Eleventh Man*, especially in the romance between Ben and Cass. "She flicked him the urgent smile that showed the irresistible tiny gap between her front teeth, and he melted like a schoolboy and knew it. Deeply and rigorously they kissed again, running their hands silkily here and there, as if keeping track of everything in the book of hotel-room romance."


LAMBERT / GETTY IMAGES

A 1940s-era football team huddles on the field during a game.

But *The Eleventh Man* vividly evokes a prior time and way of being. It takes a serious view of war and the practitioners of war, and looks hard at the meaning of heroism. And not incidentally, it contains enough loose threads to hint at a sequel, which will be good news to Doig's many loyal readers. ■

Molly Gloss is the author of several novels, including most recently "The Hearts of Horses."

Tainted Treasure

THE KING'S GOLD
By Arturo Pérez-Reverte
Translated from the Spanish
By Margaret Jull Costa
Putnam. 287pp. $24.95

The fourth novel in the immensely satisfying Captain Alatriste series by Arturo Pérez-Reverte opens with a Spanish galleon sailing into a home port that is festooned with English corpses. The slain enemies, fruit of a failed Anglo-Dutch attack on Cádiz, "hung from gallows erected on the shore, along the edge of the vineyards . . . bunches of grapes ripe for harvesting, except that these grapes had been harvested already." Such carnage is a welcome sight to Spanish eyes in 1626, even eyes as jaded as those of our hero, Alatriste.

For us, though, the scene is unsettling. Instead of action, we find action's putrefied aftermath. The tone is not triumphant but exhausted. Alatriste, his young protégé Íñigo and his battered comrades are tired of adventures. But they need another one that pays well. An air of cynical resignation pervades *The King's Gold*. Pérez-Reverte, even as he stages exhilarating scenes, darkens the mood, making this novel one of his finest.

"War is at least clean," Alatriste observes, whereas the business of empire is extremely grubby. The gold at the center of this novel has been smuggled from the West Indies and is destined not for King Philip's treasury but for "private pockets," perhaps even for the coffers of Spain's enemies. Pérez-Reverte succinctly explains the political and economic background, which we discover along with Alatriste as he learns the details of his mission: to recover the king's treasure from a ship off Seville. Not for glory or patriotism — both sullied terms in Alatriste's world — but for the gold itself. "Spain is going to the dogs," a courtier reflects. "Everyone steals, cheats, and lies and no one pays his debts."

Except for Alatriste, whose dented moral compass still steers him toward loyalty and a man's word. "Since there were no old gods in whom one could trust," Íñigo observes, "no great words that could be bandied about during combat, it was a salve to everyone's honor — or, at least, better than nothing at all — to have a king for whom one could fight." A wistful narrator, Íñigo recalls not only their daring escapades but also his youthful self, hopelessly in love with the manipulative Angelica. Even stock scenes of romantic assignation, swordplay, torture and execution appear fresh and profound in these pages, tinged as they are with longing for a time that never was as glorious as other swashbucklers would have us believe.

—Anna Mundow *is a literary columnist for the Boston Globe.*

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Hooray! Best, Taryn

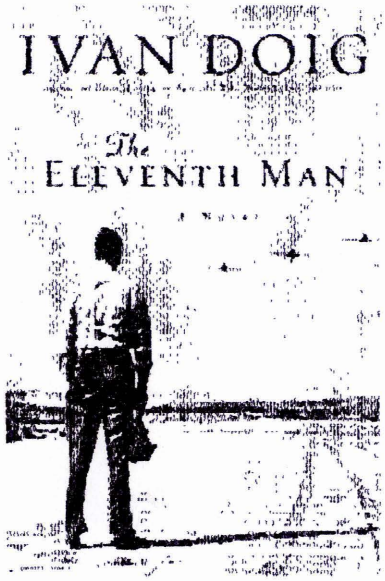
NEW WEST BOOK REVIEW

Love and War: Ivan Doig's The Eleventh Man

Ivan Doig's new novel, inspired by the story of eleven members of Montana State's football team who died in World War II.

By Jenny Shank, 10-31-08

The Eleventh Man
By Ivan Doig
Harcourt, 406 pages, $26



Montana native Ivan Doig returns to his home state for his ninth novel, using East Base in Great Falls as the launching pad to send his characters to every part of the globe, including Guam, New Guinea, Belgium, and Alaska. *The Eleventh Man* is an engrossing World War II epic, centered around newspaper reporter Ben Reinking, who is removed from pilot training and given orders to write articles for a U.S. government propaganda agency called the Threshold Press War Project (or TPWP) that provides frontline stories to run in newspapers that are too small to support correspondents. Besides being the son of a Montana newspaper editor, Reinking has another valuable qualification for this duty: He played football for Montana's Treasure State University in 1941, when the team went undefeated and became known as the "Supreme Team."

Two years later, all of the starting eleven have enlisted, and Reinking is assigned to chase them around the globe, hopping from airplanes to boats to jeeps to capture the individual stories of his former teammates—and penning their obituaries when necessary. A colonel tells him, "'Statistically speaking, in this war we are looking at a nine percent mortality rate for active combatants such as your teammates. Rounding that off to a whole man, as we must'—Ben stared at a human being who could use the law of averages to measure dirt on a grave—'that is one in ten, isn't it.' "

But the job quickly turns gristlier than predicted as more of Reinking's friends are felled. In the acknowledgments, Doig writes that this story was sparked in his mind when he was researching at the Montana Historical Society in Helena and discovered that "eleven starting players of Montana State College in Bozeman did perish" in World War II.

Reinking would have preferred to continue on his path to becoming a pilot rather than serve as a journalist at the mercy of his commanding officers, who ruthlessly edit his pieces to convey a portrait of the war that is acceptable to the government but increasingly clashes with his own war-weary views.

But Reinking finds a way to distract himself from the anguish of war, beginning a passionate affair with Cass Standish, a married Women's Airforce Service Pilot who leads a group of women flying planes north to help hand them off to Russian soldiers as a part of the Lend-Lease arrangement. Cass is a brash, confident woman who loves to fly and doesn't know what she'll do about her husband when the war is over. Whenever their schedules match up to land them both in East Base, Cass and Ben enjoy fleeting trysts. Reinking thinks of her as a woman who came "with all manner of peril attached."

As the body count among his teammates rises, Reinking wonders if his superiors are purposely giving his friends dicey assignments in order to generate a story of a team of dead heroes, or if he's merely a colossal jinx.

The Eleventh Man combines an action-packed plot, a red-hot love triangle, and suspenseful war scenes with the fine writing for which Doig is known, vividly conveying a huge cast of characters in such detail that the reader has little trouble keeping them straight. The dialogue is a particular strength, crackling with sardonic wit, subtext, and plenty of 1940's slang, although occasionally the repartee seems more like movie dialogue than believable speech, such as when Reinking's friend introduces him to a woman named Inez Mazzetti, adding, "But that's all the z's a guy ever catches around her, right, sugarpuss?" Still, this snappy talk steeps the reader in the period atmosphere.
The Eleventh Man is a vivid account of a complex tale, and in it Doig displays all the gifts of a writer seasoned to perfection.

[End of article]

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The Pacific Northwest Indie Bestseller List, as brought to you by IndieBound and PNBA, for the week ended Sunday, October 26, 2008. Based on reporting from the independent booksellers of the Pacific Northwest Booksellers Association and IndieBound. For an independent bookstore near you, visit IndieBound.org.

HARDCOVER FICTION

1. The Story of Edgar Sawtelle
David Wroblewski, Ecco, $25.95, 9780061374227
2. The Eleventh Man
Ivan Doig, Harcourt, $26, 9780151012435
3. The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society
Mary Ann Shaffer, Annie Barrows, Dial, $22, 9780385340991
4. A Most Wanted Man
John le Carré, Scribner, $28, 9781416594888
5. The Brass Verdict
Michael Connelly, Little Brown, $26.99, 9780316166294
6. A Lion Among Men
Gregory Maguire, Morrow, $26.95, 9780060548926
7. The Art of Racing in the Rain
Garth Stein, Harper, $23.95, 9780061537936
8. Rough Weather
Robert B. Parker, Putnam, $26.95, 9780399155192
9. The English Major
Jim Harrison, Grove, $24, 9780802118639
10. Home
Marilynne Robinson, FSG, $25, 9780374299101
11. The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo
Stieg Larsson, Knopf, $24.95, 9780307269751
12. The Host
Stephenie Meyer, Little Brown, $25.99, 9780316068048
13. Anathem
Neal Stephenson, Morrow, $29.95, 9780061474095
14. The Given Day
Dennis Lehane, Morrow, $27.95, 9780688163181
15. Extreme Measures
Vince Flynn, Atria, $27.95, 9780743270427

HARDCOVER NONFICTION

1. Dewey
Vicki Myron, Grand Central, $19.99, 9780446407410
2. The Limits of Power
Andrew J. Bacevich, Metropolitan, $24, 9780805088151
3. Hot, Flat, and Crowded
Thomas L. Friedman, FSG, $27.95, 9780374166854
4. My Stroke of Insight
Jill Bolte Taylor, Viking, $24.95, 9780670020744
5. Goodnight Bush
Erich Origen, Gan Golan, Little Brown, $14.99, 9780316040419
6. The Wordy Shipmates
Sarah Vowell, Riverhead, $25.95, 9781594489990
7. The Last Lecture
Randy Pausch, Hyperion, $21.95, 9781401323257
8. The Snowball
Alice Schroeder, Bantam, $35, 9780553805093
9. Bad Money
Kevin Phillips, Viking, $25.95, 9780670019076
10. More Information Than You Require
John Hodgman, Dutton, $25, 9780525950349
11. A Bold Fresh Piece of Humanity

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October 20, 2008

Ivan Doig
17277 15th Ave. NW
Seattle, WA 98177

Dear Ivan,

A bunch of reviews and roundups have come in recently—here's everything recent that I know of. Hope all's well with you.

All best,

Tom

Tom Bouman
212-592-1176

The Eleventh Man

By Jennie Camp, Special to the Rocky

Published October 16, 2008 at 7 p.m.

*** Fiction.** *By Ivan Doig. Harcourt Books, $26.* **Grade: A**

Plot in a nutshell: Many authors peak with a second or third book and then dwindle in their later years, but Doig just keeps getting better.

His exceptional new novel opens in 1941, when Montana's Treasure State University boasts an undefeated starting lineup that makes football history. Two years later, World War II intervenes and the 11-member lineup is scattered across the globe.

When the hero-starved U.S. military pulls Ben Reinking out of pilot training and assigns him to follow his teammates, writing their stories for small-town newspapers, Ben is tested nearly beyond his limits.

Statistics suggest that all but one of the "Supreme Team" will survive the war, but, as Reinking chronicles the experiences of one man after another, we watch those conclusions overridden by the harsher realities of war.

Sample of prose: When the U.S. Navy destroyer Ben is on begins evasive maneuvers to avoid a Japanese submarine, the tension onboard is palpable and dramatic:

"Sea air rushed by, there on the steel promontory into the dark. A mane of moon silver flowed back from the destroyer's bow, and a marching tail of wake behind it. As his eyes adjusted, Ben could just make out the long narrow deck below, armaments jutting ready . . . . Standing there witnessing the might of a fully armed vessel turning on its nagging foe could have been thrilling, Ben was duly aware, except for the distinct chance of being blown out of the water at any second. Drowned like a kitten in a sack. He tried to swallow such prospects away, down a throat dry as paper. The lack of any least sign of the enemy out there in the total surround of ocean seemed to him the worst part. On land he had been shot at by experts and never felt this much fear."

Pros: Doig incorporates all the elements of a good novel: an intensifying love interest, the drama of war, repeated moments of life-or-death intensity, the complexity of multiple story lines, historical curiosities, seamless prose and even a winning football team.

Cons: None.

Final word: *The Eleventh Man,* Doig's 12th, is his best thus far.

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Drawing on history - Ivan Doig spins people's lives in 'Eleventh Man'
By GINNY MERRIAM for the Missoulian



Writer Ivan Doig researched World War II aircraft as part of his work on "The Eleventh Man."

As a kid growing up in the sheep-ranching country along the northern Rocky Mountain Front, Ivan Doig sat beside his dad in the bar in White Sulphur Springs and listened to men talk about World War II.

Meagher County alone sent

273 people, more than 10 percent of its 2,237 residents in 1940. "That's a high damn percentage," Doig said in a recent interview from his home in Seattle. "If we had that today, we'd have 30 million people in uniform."

Doig went on from those childhood stories to earn degrees in journalism and a doctorate in history, work as a newspaper and magazine writer and editor, and become a novelist. He became friends with the late historian Dave Walter of the Montana Historical Society in 1982 when he was working on his novel "English Creek" and researching 1930s Montana. A few years ago, knowing Doig's penchant for the stray fact in Montana history, Walter gave Doig a file on a Montana State College football team; 11 of its players died in World War II. The novelist's imagination ignited the embers in his memory, and the result is his 12th book and ninth novel, "The Eleventh Man," coming this month from Harcourt Inc.

"I immediately leaped on it as a novelist," Doig said. "What if you were the 10th or 11th guy on that team? It's late in the war, and fate has done its work on eight or nine of your teammates? That triggered the idea of the 11th man."

Doig kept turning it over: Does that 11th man try to dodge it somehow? What if he were a military war correspondent?

"Then you'd have their story and his story," Doig said. "This is head bone-connected-to-the-neck bone, down to the spine of the story."

Doig invented Ben Reinking and made him the son of newspaperman Bill Reinking, owner and editor of the Weekly Gleaner in the town of Gros Ventre, Montana, who appeared in Doig's trilogy "English Creek," "Dancing at the Rascal Fair" and "Ride with Me, Mariah Montana." He made Ben captain of the winning 1941 football team at fictional Treasure State University in Great Falls.

The whole team enlists after the Japanese bomb Pearl Harbor. Ben trains as a pilot, but against his wishes is ordered into war reporting for the military's Threshold Press War Project - "Tepee Weepy" - meant to chronicle the war in glorious stories for small-town newspapers. Ben's central duty is writing stories about his teammates, made into the "Supreme Team" by the military promotional machine. He approaches the job with dread of being the only one spared.

Novelists have to complicate things, Doig said, so he made up Cass Standish of the Women Air Force Service Pilots. WASP Standish is married to someone else who's fighting in the Pacific islands, but she accidentally falls in love with Ben. And she gives the novelist a chance to comb WASP memoirs and to show the skills of women pilots when the role was unconventional.

"That tugged at me right away, the chance to have a woman fighter pilot," Doig said. "For Cass, the war is a chance at the cockpit, complicating things. She and her squadron are the temporary beneficiaries of luck and fate."

Doig's research rolled on, through post-war newsletters at the Montana Historical Society that offered priceless details and archival reminiscences. He and his wife, Carol, returned to Seattle from Helena with more than 300 photocopied pages on a single trip.

"A lot of it was where Google doesn't go," Doig said. "Dusty archives ... Some of these letters at the Historical Society just squeeze your heart."

Some things Doig picked up by ear. A pilot friend who bailed out of a plane in Korea helped with description. And Doig's own six years in the Air Force Reserve, which included a stint on active duty during the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, contributed.

Doig spent considerable time trying to understand a Naval destroyer.

"A lot of what a novelist does is get people in and out of rooms," he said. "So how do you do that on a ship, credibly?"

Doig resorted to schematic drawings.

"I'd make photocopies and then trace the paths that Ben and his teammate Danzer would take in the ship," he said.

Widely known for his memoir "This House of Sky" and recipient of the lifetime Distinguished Achievement Award from the Western Literature Association, Doig draws on his trinity of vocations as journalist, historian and novelist in his work. But the spinning out of people's lives is most important to him.

"I see myself as a storyteller," he said. "I think my imagination rules these books. But it does so still having some respect for the historical laws of gravity.

"On the other hand, once in a while I sneakily make things up."

It's Doig's characters who are his continuing body of work. Many of them hail from the country of his youth, and they're nearing 500 in number across nine novels. Doig keeps track of them.

"These characters do have a country of their own in my mind," he said. "I can add to or subtract from them through the years. That has been a deliberate strategy. There will be this continuing trove of characters for me to draw from."

As a storyteller, Doig saw "The Eleventh Man" as a chance to give readers a fresh take on a couple of questions, he said.

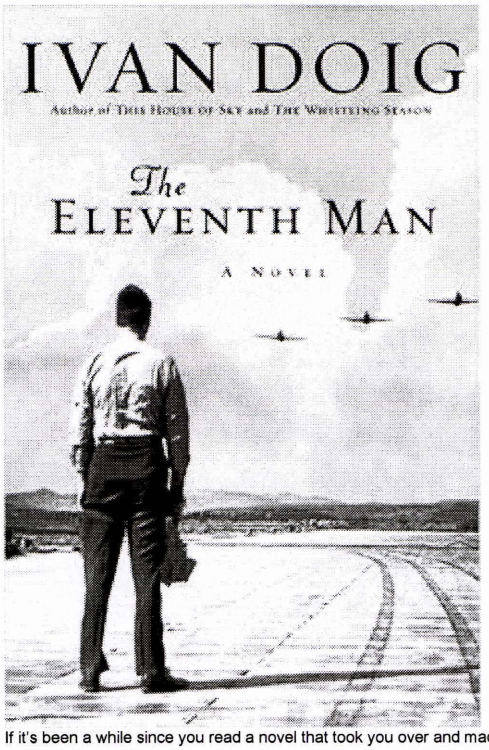
"During a time of war, how do you hold yourself together?" he said. "We're still facing that. And what do you do when love sneaks up on you, sometimes inconveniently?"

With this book, Doig will not do a tour. He was prepared for a "chorus of moans" from booksellers, but he's found them supportive. His last novel, "The Whistling Season," brought him a new wave of readers, and he's at work on a sequel. A book takes three or four years. And a book tour takes three or four months.

"One of the things I do constantly is fight for my time," he said. "I'm in a productive period. The best thing I can do for people who like my books is to write more books."

Missoula freelance writer Ginny Merriam is a former Missoulian reporter and books page editor.

Human striving set in real history will make you fear for characters' lives
By GINNY MERRIAM for the Missoulian



If it's been a while since you read a novel that took you over and made you cry, visit your bookseller today for a copy of Ivan Doig's "The Eleventh Man."

Doig's 12th book and ninth novel gives Doig loyalists what they expect: a story of human striving set in real history and, in part, in the writer's heartland in Marias River country. It also delivers a tightly wound plot and characters who make you fear for their lives.

Ben Reinking of Gros Ventre, Montana, is not long out of Treasure State University, where he was captain of the lordly football team of 1941. Then the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, and all 11 varsity starters enlisted. Ben is trained as a pilot but is yanked away from flight by the military news machine, ordered to cover war's glory in stories sent to small-town newspapers across the country. He is a writer and son of Gros Ventre newspaperman Bill Reinking, but he's uncomfortable with the non-combat role while his teammates serve in battle. Ben is even unhappier when his military bosses order him to cover his teammates as the "Supreme Team," traveling to profile them in the combat theaters of World War II. His life is further complicated when he meets Cass Standish, a WASP fighter pilot. She's married to someone else, and they try not to fall in love but fail in a classic case of swept away.

No slow start here: The story launches and builds relentlessly, and the reader becomes invested with Ben in the outcome. We get to know each teammate as Ben writes about them all. The law of averages says that one of the 11 won't make it home. But will that law hold? Who will be left at war's end? What if something happens to Cass?

Doig matches the tempo and rhythm of his writing to the story and the characters. There are no meandering rivers here, and the writer drives the story down the middle of the narrative field. His omniscient narrator takes us from Pacific island battlefields to the air base of Great Falls to bomb-riddled Antwerp to the small-town newsroom of his father's weekly Gleaner in a way that sometimes evokes Scrooge's spirit guide in Charles Dickens' redemption story "A Christmas Carol."

We still get the uncanny Doig ability to put us in the Montana landscape, as when Ben and his aide drive in a ragtop Jeep along the bluff south of Shelby: "The fields along the shimmering highway the next couple of hours to Great Falls, they well knew, would be the cooked results of summerlong sun, the waiting grain baked golden, the mown hayfields crisp and tan, the distant dun sidehills further tinted with broad scatters of sheep. Behind them were a good many miles of the same."

And we feel the tension of being Ben, here in nerve-wracked Antwerp: "Beer helped, luckily. Trying to force yourself to relax is much like pouring into the wrong end of a funnel, but sip by sip in the vaulted concrete room full of strangers' racket, he took refuge in that sensation of a place where nobody knows you're you. Yet."

"The Eleventh Man" is a lusty novel, male in its sensibility and its treatments of football, war, dangerous flying, sex and old-time newspapering. The cover blurb is by lawyer novelist Scott Turow, who calls it "intensely suspenseful and moving throughout." Harcourt is touting it as "Ivan Doig's most powerful novel to date."

In nearly 30 years of book writing, Doig has rarely disappointed his readers. "The Eleventh Man" gives us the 12th link in that satisfying literary chain.

Kitsap Sun

Bookmonger: The Difficult Task of Crafting War Stories

Master storyteller Ivan Doig is back. The Seattle-based novelist, who often returns to his Montana roots for inspiration, situates his latest book at an air base in World War II-era Montana.

But in "The Eleventh Man," Doig also sends his lead character, Lieutenant Ben Reinking, ranging across half a world's worth of time zones to cover the exploits of 10 men.

Reinking, the son of a small-town newspaper editor, had been training as a pilot. But once his aptitude for wordsmithing is discovered, as well as his connection with a legendary college football team, he is plucked out of flight school and assigned to the Threshold Press War Project.

Teepee-Weepy, as it is called, is a military propaganda unit that churns out morale-building human interest stories about military activities, and distributes them to newspapers across the country. Back in Washington D.C., Reinking's superiors have sniffed out a compelling story line.

In 1941, Treasure State University's football team had had an undefeated season that was extolled in the press far beyond the Great Falls stadium where they had sealed their glory. But following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, every member of the starting lineup, including Reinking, had enlisted in the military.

Now Reinking has been ordered to follow these All-American heroes as they pursue their individual careers in military service. He chases about from Antwerp to Fairbanks to Guam as his former teammates fight for their country, and his "Dream Team" reports become immensely popular with the readers of America's small-town weeklies.

But Reinking grows to hate his assignment.

As the war drags on, writing the inevitable obituaries doesn't come easier with experience. And as the death toll continues to rise, he begins to suspect that something beyond the mere law of statistical averages is coming into play.

Compounding Reinking's disconsolation is his infatuation with Cass, a Women Air Force Service Pilot stationed at his base. The attraction is mutual, but there is a stinger — this WASP inconveniently happens to be married. Cass's husband is fighting overseas.

As with his other books, Doig's research is impeccable. This venerable author, who boldly ventures "where Google doesn't go," always digs up intriguing information to incorporate into his stories. It is uncanny how his keen eye for historical authenticity brings with it a moral authority that has a distinct bearing on current events.

The military's propensity for spinning stories from the battlefront may be nothing new, but shouldn't the endurance of the practice be questioned?

Those who expect another smooth-as-butter read such as the one offered by Doig's marvelous "The Whistling Season," are setting their hopes for "The Eleventh Man" too high.

From the bumpy first few chapters, to the hyperbolic love scenes, and dialogue that snap-crackles out of characters' mouths to jarring effect, this work on love, loyalty, luck and the toll of war feels worked upon, fretted over, and wrangled into place.

The final result isn't perfect — but no one can say Doig hasn't given it his all.

The Eleventh Man

By Ivan Doig

Harcourt. 416 pages. $26.



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Seattle Post-Intelligencer
http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/books/383592_book17.html

Seattle writer Ivan Doig enlarges his canvas in 'The Eleventh Man'

Last updated October 16, 2008 11:10 a.m. PT

By JOHN MARSHALL
P-I BOOK CRITIC

Ivan Doig is usually as reliable as the tides.

Book after book, the longtime Seattle writer illuminates some distant corner of the past with empathy, humanity and resonant details of life. His books usually revisit his native Montana -- Doig has claimed the area as his own fictional territory, like Faulkner's Mississippi. Whatever the setting, Doig's books are filled with genuine characters who walk off the page and into the reader's heart.

COMING UP

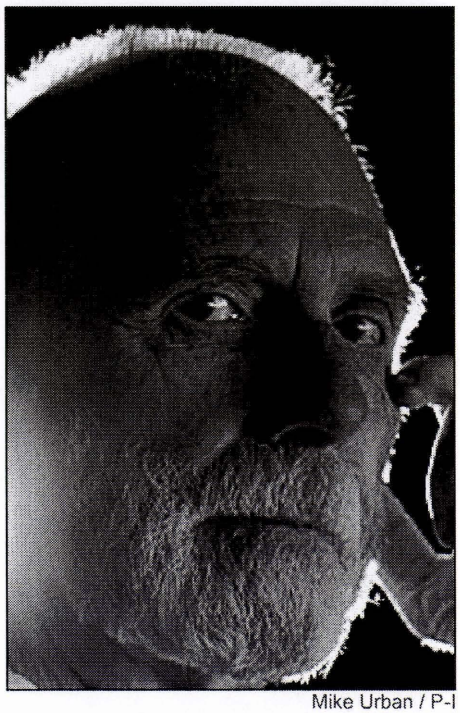
IVAN DOIG DISCUSSES 'THE ELEVENTH MAN'

WHEN/WHERE: 7:30 p.m. Saturday, The Elliott Bay Book Co., 206-624-6600; 7:30 p.m. Nov. 12 at Town Hall, 206-634-3400; 7 p.m.; Nov. 13 at Parkplace Books in Kirkland, 425-828-6546.

He does it again with his ninth novel, but with a significant difference. "The Eleventh Man" (Harcourt, 402 pages, $26) is set against a much larger canvas -- spanning the globe during World War II.

This is Doig's version of an epic, still filled with fine characters and details, yet displaying some problems on this wider scale, including a far-fetched plot premise with the main character.

That appealing, well-drawn character is Ben Reinking, a former college football star at a Montana school that Doig calls Treasure State University. Reinking was the starting end on the 1941 "Supreme Team" that captured national headlines when, after the death of a teammate in a grueling practice, it rallied to an undefeated season.


Mike Urban / P-I
Ivan Doig

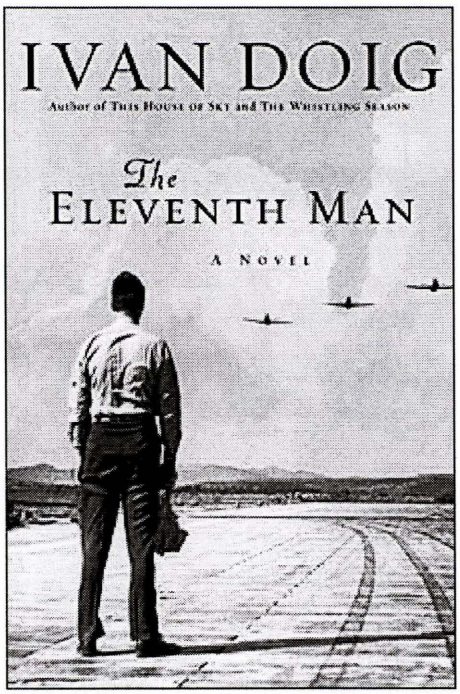
All of the players, except one, have enlisted in the service after graduation. Reinking was in pilot training when he was pulled away for special war duty. His new assignment: chronicling the war experiences of his Supreme Team cohort for local newspapers across America.

Reinking is a reluctant draftee in these high-level government efforts. He has the necessary writing talent, since he is the son of a small-town newspaper editor. But he also is an independent sort who chafes at being used, and at using his teammates, as part of the hero-making Threshold Press War Project. Reinking's reticence only grows as more of his teammates become casualties. The war statistic is that 9 percent of those in combat will be killed, but members of the Supreme Team have been dying at a much higher rate.

Reinking's only real solace comes in the embrace of a member of the Air Force Service Pilots (WASPs) who fly new combat aircraft from their manufacturers to a huge base in Montana on their way to delivery in Alaska to Soviet allies.

Capt. Cass Standish is a perfect match for Reinking's mix of courage, resolve and sensitivity, but there is one major problem -- she is married to a soldier fighting in New Guinea. Divorce is unthinkable under those circumstances, but so is ignoring the sizzling affair with Reinking. As Doig writes, "Nothing prepared a person for this. The way he and Cass had fallen for each other was as unlikely as a collision of meteors."

The surviving Supreme Team members dwindle to a precious few until there is just one left to chronicle -- Moxie Stamper, the quarterback, now serving in an anti-aircraft unit in Belgium. Will he survive as American forces storm toward Germany? Or will Reinking be an eyewitness to the last hero's demise?



"The Eleventh Man" races to its dramatic conclusion with a sense of urgency not present in the rest of the novel because Reinking hopscotches between so many different assignments.

Doig covers many areas of operations in his epic war story, both stateside and overseas. But there are too many in brief relief to build much momentum in this long novel. Readers can feel as yo-yo'd as Reinking does.

Doig, an Air Force reservist during the Kennedy era, roots many elements of "The Eleventh Man" plot in actual World War II experience. He brings welcome attention to WASP pilots, conscientious objectors and the terrible casualties suffered by members of one football team (Montana State College).

But Reinking's assignment is pure invention, which undercut the book's effectiveness for me, a veteran of the armed forces' officer training in journalism/public relations during Vietnam. That Reinking would be whisked off to various combat zones to write feel-good stories about members of one little football team from the distant West stretches belief, especially after he is wounded himself.

The military has long supplied hometown stories for the stateside press. But Reinking's special assignment seems too grandiose in scale and too narrow in focus, as well as cynical and even Machiavellian.

It is a rare misstep for Doig, but a crucial one in this novel. It is even more disappointing after the mastery of his previous novel, "The Whistling Season," one of his best books.

P-I book critic John Marshall can be reached at 206-448-8170 or johnmarshall@seattlepi.com.

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The Dallas Morning News

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Fall books preview: A few pages to leaf through this season

11:45 AM CDT on Thursday, October 2, 2008

FROM WIRE REPORTS and The Dallas Morning News

There's a tradition in publishing that says the reading public gets distracted during an election season – best to stay away from major book releases. Like so much else, this crumb of conventional wisdom has been swept under the rug.

There's new fiction out this fall by Stephen King, Julia Glass, Toni Morrison and John le Carré; and new nonfiction by best-selling prognosticators Thomas L. Friedman and *Tipping Point* author Malcolm Gladwell. Michael Lewis, the *Liar's Poker* author, wins the Perfect Timing Award with *Panic: The Story of Modern Financial Insanity*, about the five most violent financial upheavals of recent history. Get going on that update, Michael!

And like a bird-parent pushing the strongest fledglings out of the nest first, many of this fall's books have already been released. Here's a sampling: Fiction

Available now

When Will There Be Good News? by Kate Atkinson (Little, Brown). A new Jackson Brodie mystery from the author of *Case Histories* and *One Good Turn,* in which three disrupted lives come together in unexpected and deeply thrilling ways.

The China Lover by Ian Buruma (Penguin Press). A rare excursion into fiction by the cultural commentator (*Anglomania*, *Murder in Amsterdam*), tracing the curious career of Japanese film star Yamaguchi Yoshiko. Under a number of aliases (including Shirley Yamaguchi in the U.S.), Ms. Yoshiko weathers all the twists and turns in the history of modern Japan.

Deaf Sentence by David Lodge (Viking). The esteemed British novelist, twice a finalist for the Booker Prize, delivers a tale about a linguistics professor vexed by his encroaching deafness and at loose ends in his personal life.

The English Major by Jim Harrison (Grove). A novel about a man in his 60s who, robbed of his farm by his late-blooming real estate shark of an ex-wife, takes a road trip to San Francisco to visit his movie-producer son. By the author of *Legends of the Fall* and *Dalva.*

October

The Brass Verdict by Michael Connelly (Little, Brown). *The Lincoln Lawyer*'s Mickey Haller and Detective Harry Bosch form an uneasy partnership as they investigate a case involving Walter Elliott, a prominent LA film executive accused of murder.

A Partisan's Daughter by Louis de Bernieres (Knopf). The author of *Corelli's Mandolin* takes 1970s London as his backdrop, in a novel about a bored, lonely married man who invites a Yugoslavian prostitute into his car. Only she's not a hooker – and she is one heckuva storyteller.

The Eleventh Man by Ivan Doig (Harcourt). Mr. Doig's latest novel tells a World War II story of a journalist and former member of a championship Montana college football team who is tapped by a government "press" agency to tell the wartime stories of 10 former teammates.

Lulu in Marrakech by Diane Johnson (Dutton). The doyenne of American expatriate fiction (*Le Divorce*) moves the action from her usual Paris setting to Morocco, where her undercover CIA heroine navigates the complex interface of Islam and the West.

Death with Interruptions by Jose Saramago, translated by Margaret Jull Costa (Harcourt). In his new novel, the Portuguese Nobel laureate (*Blindness*) posits a world where no one dies.

The Widows of Eastwick by John Updike (Knopf). Mr. Updike's sequel to his 1984 novel, *The Witches of Eastwick*, finds his three heroines contemplating a reunion in their Rhode Island hometown after divorce, remarriage and widowhood have carried them to the far corners of the world.

November

2666 by Roberto Bolano, translated by Natasha Wimmer (Farrar, Straus and Giroux). The acclaimed masterpiece – all 900 pages of it – by the late Chilean writer (*The Savage Detectives*) involves academics, convicts, an American sportswriter and others all converging on a U.S.-Mexican border town where factory workers keep vanishing.

Just After Sunset by Stephen King (Scribner). Short stories from the horrormeister.

A Mercy by Toni Morrison (Knopf). A new historical novel by the Nobel Prize winner (*Beloved*) about an Anglo-Dutch farmer reluctantly acquiring a slave girl in 1680s colonial America. "I really wanted to get to a place before slavery was equated with race," Ms. Morrison has said.Nonfiction

Available now

The Hemingses of Monticello by Annette Gordon-Reed (Norton). An epic saga of the Hemings family, whose bloodline has been mixed with that of Thomas Jefferson since our third president took slave Sally Hemings as a mistress.

Acedia and Me: A Marriage, Monks and a Writer's Wife by Kathleen Norris (Riverhead). The author of *The Cloister Walk* wrestles with the phenomenon of acedia, a term used since the Middle Ages to describe the phenomenon of soul weariness.

The Snowball: Warren Buffett and the Business of Life, by Alice Schroeder. (Bantam.) This is as close as readers are likely to get to a memoir from the Oracle of Omaha. He hand-picked Texas native Schroeder to do the writing.

Titanic's Last Secrets by Brad Matsen (Twelve). Mr. Matsen follows the investigations of legendary divers John Chatterton and Richie Kohler (chronicled in *Shadow Divers*) as they search through the wreck of the Titanic and its sister ship, Britannic, to try to answer the enduring mystery of the Titanic tragedy: Why did the ship sink so quickly?

October

The Shadow Factory: The Ultra-Secret NSA From 9/11 to the Eavesdropping on America by James Bamford (Doubleday). Mr. Bamford, author of two previous books on the National Security Agency, tells how the bureau transformed itself after Sept. 11 to turn its almost limitless ability to listen in to friend and foe alike over to the Bush administration in the service of the war on terror.

Emily Post: Daughter of the Gilded Age, Mistress of American Manners by Laura Claridge (Random House). The life of America's premier arbiter of manners, from her Gilded Age social life to her scandalous divorce to her fateful decision to switch from society novels to a book about social behavior.

Gerard Manley Hopkins by Paul Mariani (Viking). A biography of the Jesuit priest who used his journey out of loneliness and despair to write some of the 19th century's most innovative poems.

Mosaic: Finding Beauty in a Broken World by Terry Tempest Williams (Pantheon). Essays on various subjects, from the mosaics of Ravenna, Italy, to the prairie dogs of the American Southwest, from the author of *Refuge*.

Chagall by Jackie Wullschlager (Knopf). The story of one of the world's best-known artists. Born poor in Russia, Chagall took as his inspiration the lost world of the shtetls of Eastern European Jews, even after he became a political exile and made his new home in America.

November

Outliers: Why Some People Succeed and Some Don't by Malcolm Gladwell (Little, Brown). Mr. Tipping Point looks at this question: What makes high-achievers different? Answers apparently lie in their culture, family, generation and the idiosyncratic experiences of their upbringing.

Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North by Thomas J. Sugrue (Random House). The story of the struggle for racial equality in the northern states, from the desegregation of northern Jim Crow schools to the integration of the suburbs.

December

American Buffalo: In Search of a Lost Icon by Steve Rinella (Spiegel & Grau). This look at the buffalo and man, the species that drove it to the edge of extinction, has been getting great pre-publication reviews.

Mary Ann Gwinn and Michael Upchurch of the Seattle Times and staff writer Michael Merschel contributed to this report.

washingtonpost.com

The Greatest Sacrifice

A young army reporter chronicles the harrowing lives of his football buddies in World War II.

Advertisement



Reviewed by Molly Gloss
Sunday, October 19, 2008; BW04

THE ELEVENTH MAN

By Ivan Doig

Harcourt. 406 pp. $26

The 11 men alluded to in the title of Ivan Doig's new novel compose the starting football team for fictional Treasure State (Montana) University in its much-heralded undefeated 1941 season. Now, in 1943, 10 of those men are scattered in far-flung theaters of a world war, and the 11th, Ben Reinking, is writing up his teammates' exploits for a military propaganda machine called the Threshold Press War Project -- TPWP, sardonically known as Tepee Weepy.

The story occasionally jumps back to earlier events in Ben's life and to the 1941 football season, in particular a pivotal week before the opening game when the sudden death of a teammate was the catalyst for the so-called "season of the Twelfth Man." But the bulk of the novel follows Reinking as he chronicles his teammates' war experiences -- and, when necessary, their deaths -- for publication in newspapers around the country.

It's a shapely premise for a novel, allowing Doig a broad canvas on which to paint the breadth and scope of World War II: Carl is bogged down in the forests of New Guinea; Jake pilots Lend-Lease planes from East Base, Mont., north to Russia; "Animal," on a Marine troop ship, hopscotchs from one island beachhead to the next; Sig, in the Coast Guard, patrols the Puget Sound shore; Moxie bosses an anti-aircraft gun pit in Antwerp; Nick serves on a destroyer in the Pacific; and Dexter is confined to a conscientious objector camp in the north Montana woods. Add to these a squadron of Women Air Force Service Pilots -- WASPs -- assigned to East Base, ferrying military aircraft north to Canada, and nearly every military operation is in play.

Scenes range from the jungles of Guam to the Butte du Lion of Waterloo, but the story returns again and again to East Base, Mont., where Doig, not surprisingly, is at his most lyrical, evoking the landscape of Ben Reinking's (and Doig's own) childhood. "Wheatfields winter-sown and fallow stretched below like checkered linoleum laid to the wall of the Rockies. There to the west he could pick out the long straight brink of Roman Reef and its dusky cliff, and the snake line of watercourse that would be English Creek. Gros Ventre, though, held itself out of sight beneath its cover of trees."

English Creek and the town of Gros Ventre are familiar place names in Montana's Two Medicine country that Doig first imagined for his trilogy about the McCaskill family, novels that are still perhaps his best-known works: English Creek, *Dancing at the Rascal Fair* and *Ride with Me, Mariah Montana.*

The Eleventh Man is more wide-ranging and plot-heavy than those earlier works. Statistical probability means nine of the 10 on the "Supreme Team" should survive, but those odds are neither a guarantee nor

a consolation; as the novel opens, two of the team are already in their graves, and another has lost a leg, fighting in Sicily. Soon, Ben Reinking is writing a third obituary, and then a fourth. As one by one the men perish, the novel takes on a growing sense of doom and inevitability.

Ben, on temporary assignment at East Base, falls for the WASP commanding officer, Cass Standish, and their love affair casts its own dark shadow: Cass is a married woman with a husband serving in Guam. Mysteries underlie both the season of *The Twelfth Man* and the fateful roll call of deaths reported in Ben's Tepee Weepy dispatches. There are lengthy scenes of battle: the invasion of Guam, the battle of Leyte Gulf, the bombardment of Antwerp, all described in historical detail.

Yet this is not a novel with a strong sense of suspense or dramatic complication. Most of the deaths befalling the "Supreme Team" happen off stage, relayed to Ben and to us after the fact; and we're almost halfway into the book before something occurs that puts Ben himself in peril. For a war novel taking place on such a wide, dangerous field, the book is remarkably quiet. Doig is known for his rich imagining of local American history and the nuances of human relationships, and this is a book that deliberately keeps its attention on the places where war intersects with those less dramatic themes.

He is also sometimes called old-fashioned, which can be either criticism or approbation, depending on your point of view; and granted, it's sometimes hard to distinguish nostalgia from careful, thoughtful avoidance of cynicism. There are a few cringe-inducing moments in *The Eleventh Man*, especially in the romance between Ben and Cass. "She flicked him the urgent smile that showed the irresistible tiny gap between her front teeth, and he melted like a schoolboy and knew it. Deeply and rigorously they kissed again, running their hands silkily here and there, as if keeping track of everything in the book of hotel-room romance."

But *The Eleventh Man* vividly evokes a prior time and way of being. It takes a serious view of war and the practitioners of war, and looks hard at the meaning of heroism. And not incidentally, it contains enough loose threads to hint at a sequel, which will be good news to Doig's many loyal readers. ·

Molly Gloss is the author of several novels, including most recently "The Hearts of Horses."

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The Seattle Times

Thursday, October 9, 2008 - Page updated at 11:10 AM

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"The Eleventh Man": The fates of legendary football teammates play out in WWII

By Mary Ann Gwinn
Seattle Times book editor

"The Eleventh Man"

by Ivan Doig

Harcourt, 406 pp., $26

Ivan Doig is a fearless storyteller. The Seattle author, an icon among writers of the American west, has set his novels and memoirs against our region's natural grandeur and has put hundreds of characters in play on its outsize stage. Now, in his novel "The Eleventh Man," Doig has taken on the largest of backdrops: the entire theater of World War II.

"The Eleventh Man" is the story of Ben Reinking, the son of a newspaper owner in Gros Ventre, a small town in Montana. Ben, out of college just two years, is fighting the war in a peculiar way: Yanked from an assignment as a combat pilot, Ben has been pressed into service as a journalist/propagandist for the Threshold Press War Project, a government-backed press service that feeds heroic stories to midsize and small newspapers that can't afford their own war correspondent.

In college, Ben was a member of Treasure State University's legendary "Supreme Team," which fought to an undefeated season after one of their players ran himself to death in a workout (who's at fault is one of the unfolding mysteries of the book). Every surviving member of the football team has joined up. Ben's assignment is to tell their war stories, all over the globe.



Author appearance **Ivan Doig**
The author of "The Eleventh Man"

Right from the get go, Ben resists; the odds are that at least a few of these stories are going to be obituaries. His handler, a shadowy figure called the Colonel, insists that the awful arithmetic of wartime still tilts toward the team's survival: " 'Statistically speaking, in this war we are looking at a nine percent mortality rate for active combatants such as your teammates. Rounding that off to a whole man, as we must' — Ben stared at a human being who could use the law of averages to measure dirt on a grave — 'that is one in ten, isn't it.' " Not to give too much away, but things don't quite turn out that way.

Ben, not having any choice in the matter of wartime duty, throws himself into the task; he's got the genes of a newspaperman and can't resist the dramatic contrast of the Supreme Team's stories: Vic Rennie, the Blackfoot Indian who lived in a relative's shack while attending Treasure State, has already stepped on a land mine and is consigned to a wheelchair. But Dex Cariston, scion of a moneyed Montana family, is sitting out the war in a camp of conscientious objector-status smoke jumpers (as with many details in this book, this one is based on historical fact; there really was such a unit).

will read at these locations:

• 7 p.m. Monday at Third Place Books, 17171 Bothell Way N.E., Lake Forest

Park (206-366-3333 or *www.thirdplacebooks.com*).

• 7:30 p.m. Thursday at the Eagle

Harbor Book Co., 157 Winslow Way E., Bainbridge Island (206-842-5332 or *www.eagleharborbooks.com*).

• 7:30 p.m. Saturday at Seattle's

Elliott Bay Book Co., 101 S. Main St., Seattle (206-624-6(or *www.elliottbaybook.com*).

• 7:30 p.m. Nov. 12 at Town Hall Seattle (sponsored by University Book Store), 1119 Eighth Ave., Seattle; $5 (20(634-3400 or *www.ubookstore.com*).

• 7 p.m. Nov. 13 at Parkplace Books, 348 Parkplace Cent Kirkland (425-828-6546 or *www.parkplacebookskirkland.com*).

Meanwhile, Ben's blood is aboil over Cass Standish, a married female pilot assigned to the same Montana air base. Cass is head of a squad of all-female pilots charged with ferrying planes from one North American location to another. Some of the best scenes in "The Eleventh Man" convey the crackling "From Here to Eternity"-style passion between these two: Cass is wild about Ben, but she's married, her husband is slogging out the war in the jungles of New Guinea and she's not about to write a Dear John letter addressed to a soldier in green hell.

Doig's way with a sweeping scene is on display in "The Eleventh Man's" evocation of the awful grandeur of war. Standing on the deck of a destroyer as it attempts to bomb a Japanese submarine into oblivion, Ben watches his own death postponed:

"Sea air rushed by, there on the steel promontory into the dark. A mane of moonsilver flowed back from the destroyer's bow ... As his eyes adjusted, Ben could just make out the long narrow deck below, armaments jutting ready if they only had a target, faces of the gun crews pale patches foreshortened by helmets."

Then the submarine takes a direct hit: "He felt the shudder up from the water. Astern, explosions bloomed white in the darkness. Knowing this to be one of the sights of a lifetime, he watched with an intensity near to quivering. Not often is it given to you to stare away death, see it go instead in search of your sworn enemy."

While "The Eleventh Man" is a showcase for larger-than-life characters and scenes, at times it threatens to founder under the weight of its structure. Readers are parachuted into the lives of each teammate, then yanked up again and set on the road to somewhere and someone else. The book is a stage chockablock with interesting characters who speak their lines — bluff, hearty, lyrical, ironic — then get snatched away.

And a key concern of the novel — whether a malign *deus ex machina* is dictating the assignments, and fates, of the team — was never quite resolved to this reader's satisfaction. Would a government agency really thrust these young men into hazardous assignments for the purpose of creating dead heroes, or is Ben's presence more a sort of jinx? Both possibilities are suggested but never spelled out. Ben's minders are

manipulative and heartless, but they never really step from behind the curtain.

With Doig's warm regard for his Supreme Team characters, his disdain for his story's villains and his way with the heart-stopping action scene, in "The Eleventh Man" he has created a wartime epic, but with a difference. Though its marketing suggests it will resonate with the "Greatest Generation, "The Eleventh Man" trembles with the weariness of the modern age toward carnage — a war novel with an anti-war heart.

Mary Ann Gwinn: 206-464-2357 or mgwinn@seattletimes.com. She is The Seattle Times book editor and a director of the National Book Critics Circle.

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Bloomberg News

Winning Football Team Loses Its Luck on WWII Battlefield: Books
2008-10-13 04:01:00.70 GMT

Review by David M. Shribman

Oct. 13 (Bloomberg) -- An undefeated 1941 football season. A town scratched into Montana's northern plains. A war with many fronts, including the home front. A small-town newspaper editor.
A willowy female pilot who's in love with our hero while her husband is fighting in the Pacific. Damn good raw materials for a novel, no?

``The Eleventh Man'' draws from three of the hardiest genres in the American canon: the sports book, the war novel, the story set in the great West. The author of this hat trick is Ivan Doig, who is a genre all his own.

The setting is Gros Ventre, the fictional community in Two Medicine country that Doig has mined much the way Thomas Hardy did with Wessex. They're not on the map, but they occupy our interior landscape. And though on the surface this novel revolves around one resilient American theme (that championship season), it's really about honor, loyalty, and the character and courage that war creates -- and reveals.

The book begins with one of the great opening sentences of the season: ``Never much of a town for showing off, Gros Ventre waited around one last bend in the road, suppertime lights coming on here and there beneath its roof of trees.'' Thus starts the tale of the storied Golden Eagles of Treasure State University, who swept through their entire '41 season and then were swept into the war that began as the season ended.

All 11 starters enlisted in the war effort, but one of them, Ben Reinking, is plucked by Washington to chronicle the heroics of the other 10 -- making them fodder for the propaganda effort before, grimly but inevitably, they become fodder for the Axis forces and the fortunes of war. Through their stories we learn their secrets and shame, their valor and bravery.

`War and Peace'

For Ben, who is our periscope into World War II, watching the conflict was ``like reading `War and Peace' standing up.''
But for the reader it is a glimpse into the heartbreaking caprice and cruelty of war: ``Sure, you could believe for all you were worth that you were too young and fit and lucky to be chased down by death, but all of accumulated history yawns back, why not you?''

The Golden Eagles died in the customary ways, which is to say the worst ways possible; in, as Doig puts it, ``the black fire of nightmare.'' They died in New Guinea, or in a kamikaze raid at Leyte Gulf, or in some forgotten field. It was a team ``betrayed by the law of averages, with something that amounted to a moving wall of oblivion hinged to the war for them.''

Doig is a master of fiction, to be sure, but his story has a bitter root of truth. Eleven members of the football team from Montana State College in Bozeman did die in World War II, and for his story Doig drew on oral histories, memoirs and other research material.

Landlocked Navy

Indeed, the war reached deep into faraway Montana; almost 900 trainees were sent to the Montana School of Mines in Butte in the V-12

program, which in one of the most rugged landlocked states prepared young men ... for the Navy.

All this is a reminder that the Greatest Generation was far more complex than we often think. In a way that's the message of this book, stuffed full of the standard wartime heroism but seasoned, too, with the moral agonies of the conscientious objector, the adulterer and the opportunist who uses war as a step on the career ladder.

This may have been a good war -- and this is surely a good war novel -- but in the end this story, like all war stories, is mostly a sad one. The Golden Eagles landed in a mess of trouble and tragedy.

``The Eleventh Man'' is published by Harcourt (416 pages, $26).

(David M. Shribman is executive editor of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. The opinions expressed are his own.)

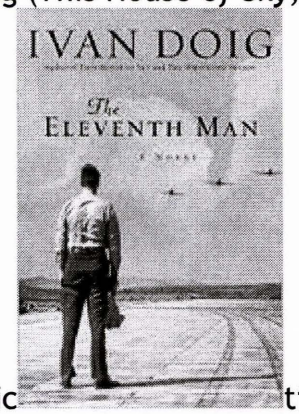
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FROM *JANUARY MAGAZINE* (ONLINE)

MONDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2008

New Today: *The Eleventh Man* by Ivan Doig

There's something sweetly sentimental in all the testosterone lurking not far beneath the covers of *The Eleventh Man* (Harcourt), a football novel that melds into World War II from Ivan Doig (*This House of Sky, The Whistling Season*).



That would seem a contradiction in terms -- sweet sentiment. Masses of testosterone -- but somehow it's not. Somehow it works in a book that manages to be epic in scope and fact.

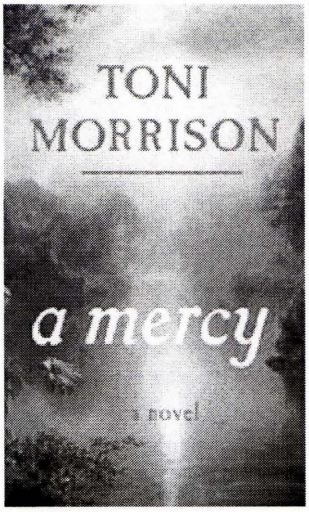
The war licked its chops over the battle of Leyte Gulf, as it came to be called, with the inevitability from day one that history would speak of such a gang-fight of fleets in the same breath with the Spanish Armada, Trafalgar, Jutland, and Midway. Ben all but moved into the wire room at East Base to follow reports of the military struggle shaping up around the Philippine Islands. It proved to be like reading War and Peace standing up.

Ben Reinking *is* the 11th man, left behind to chronicle the exploits of his former football teammates as they make their way through various theaters of war. An exciting book with all the right stuff. *The Eleventh Man* might well be the very best thing Doig -- an acclaimed and respected author -- has done to date. I loved every word.

LABELS: FICTION, LINCOLN CHO

Fall foreword, or the big books of autumn

Posted by mnorman October 04, 2008 19:09PM



Book-clubbers will tell you that their best attendance invariably comes in the fall. The reason, I think, is that echo, like an old circadian rhythm, we carry from our school days. It nudges us to place a short stack of good books on the nightstand each autumn, and it compels publishers to roll out their marquee titles then.

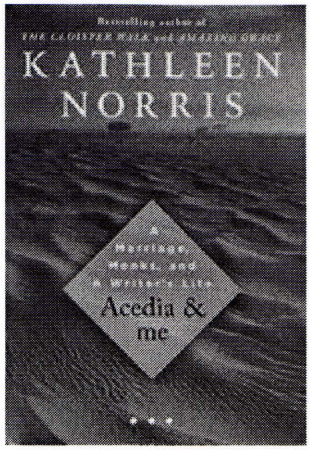
Publishing houses also line up trophy books in anticipation of brisk holiday sales in two months, hoping to catch a well-timed best-seller wave. But the industry is also queasy, as markets roil and Joe Lombardi, chief financial officer of Barnes & Noble Inc., pronounces this the harshest book-selling environment in 30 years.

Visits to the library tick up during inclement economic weather. The Cleveland Public Library reports circulation of books alone is up 6.4 percent over last year's pace. And branches of the Cuyahoga County Public Library calculate that readers have checked out 341,847 more books through August this year than they did through August 2007.

From wherever you pluck your books, the fall contains plenty of lip-smacking titles, including new fiction from that chiseled Mount Rushmore of American literature: Toni Morrison, John Updike and Philip Roth. Readers looking for less lofty fare will be sated, too, with a new memoir from John "Marley & Me" Grogan and some fresh Stephen King short stories.

Quentin Tarantino once observed that "You can't write poetry on the computer." True enough, but check out our list of 33 worthy authors who gave it a try.

OUT NOW



"Acedia & Me" by Kathleen Norris is a meditation on world-weary lethargy from the revered author of "The Cloister Walk" and "Amazing Grace." The North Dakota-raised editor at The Christian Century mixes memoir, monks and spiritual classics to consider her own ennui. (Riverhead Books, 334 pp., $25.95)

"American Wife" by Curtis Sittenfeld is a fat, engaging novel that presumes to explore the interior life of Laura Bush, here called Alice Lindgren. The young Cincinnati-raised author has much empathy for her central character, and very little for Charlie Blackwell, who becomes president of the United States. (Random House, 558 pp., $26)

"Angler" by Barton Gellman examines Vice President Dick Cheney's uses of power and his rarity in the realm of American politics -- a man who has sought influence not to promote himself, but his ideas. Gellman won a Pulitzer Prize for his Washington Post reporting on Cheney, and his meticulously researched nonfiction is riveting. (Penguin, 483 pp., $27.95)

"Ballistics" by Billy Collins collects a new batch of poems from the popular former U.S. poet laureate, who packs auditoriums and pleases audiences with his wry, accessible work. Writing in The Plain Dealer, critic Dave Lucas found Collins stretching his repertoire to good effect here. (Random House, 112 pp., $24)

"Fine Just the Way It Is" by Annie Proulx is the third book of Wyoming short stories from the fiction writer who created "Brokeback Mountain." It comes as a shock that the "Shipping News" novelist moved to Wyoming as recently as 1994 -- her writing here carries the grit and wallop of generations. (Scribner, 221 pp., $25)

"The Given Day" by Dennis Lehane is a thick historical novel five years in the making from the Boston-saturated author of "Mystic River" and "Gone Baby Gone." Instead of murder, Lehane focuses on Babe Ruth when he played for the Red Sox and the 1919 Boston police strike. Ambitious, and garnering mixed reviews. (William Morrow, 704 pp., $27.50)

"The Good Thief" by Hannah Tinti is a debut novel that has generated terrific word of mouth for its balance of tenderness and peril in the story of an orphan boy who is "rescued" by a young man pretending to be his brother. Cleveland Heights writer Dan Chaon calls it "Tim Burton doing Dickens." (Dial Press, 327 pp., $25)

"The Hemingses of Monticello" by Annette Gordon-Reed, a historian and law professor, is a doorstop

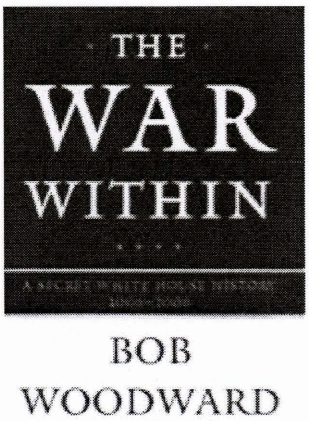
corrective to early American history, painting a composite portrait of a family that stood at the wellspring of the nation's beginnings. These pages on Thomas Jefferson, slave Sally Hemings, their children and kin fascinate and surprise. (Norton, 798 pp., $35)

"Home" by Marilynne Robinson is a companion novel to the quiet, lyrical Pulitzer-winner "Gilead." This time, a prodigal Iowa son returns to a dying father, where a stymied sister abides. The Plain Dealer and The New Yorker lauded it, but Michiko Kakutani in The New York Times was dismissive. (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 325, $25)

"Hot, Flat and Crowded" by Thomas L. Friedman is "The World Is Flat" author's missive on global warming. The New York Times columnist subtitles this book "Why We Need a Green Revolution -- And How It Can Renew America." Facts are illuminating and well-framed, but the tone is sermonizing. (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 438 pp., $27.95)

"Indignation" by Philip Roth finds the dyspeptic author telling the story of a new character, the intense butcher's son Marcus Messler, enrolled in an Ohio college in 1951, worried about his sex life and the Korean War draft. Roth, who attended Bucknell College in Lewisburg, Pa., in the 1950s, concisely conjures a lost era. (Houghton Mifflin, 233, $26)

"A Promise to Ourselves" by Alec Baldwin is the actor's roar against U.S. family courts that he describes as cruel and unfair. Declaring this the book he "never wanted to write," Baldwin blames the system more than his ex-wife, Kim Bassinger, in the custody fight over their daughter, Ireland. (St. Martin's, 224 pp., $24.95)

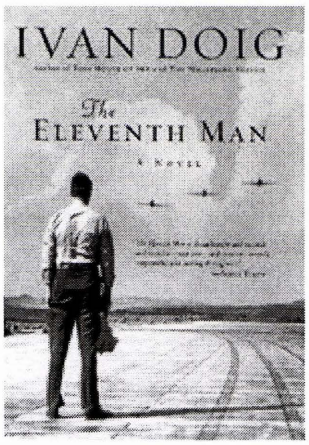


"The War Within" by Bob Woodward is the finale of the author's authoritative, exhaustive and exhausting four-part series on the administration of George W. Bush. Like its predecessors, it features exclusive investigative sources and documents. This time, the president granted Woodward two sit-down interviews. (Simon & Schuster, 512 pp. $32)

THIS MONTH

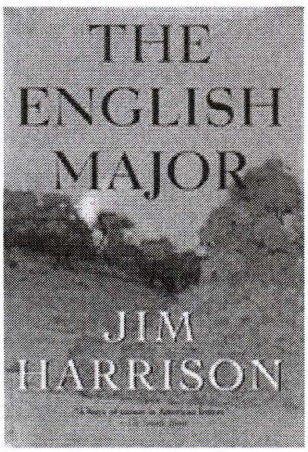
"The Blue Cotton Gown" by Patricia Harman is a frank, absorbing memoir from a midwife at a tiny West Virginia health clinic. The book recounts the sexual, financial and family histories of her patients, and of the author herself, who struggles with her marriage to the clinic doctor and her own burnout. (Beacon Press, 289 pp., $24.95)

"Chagall" by Jackie Wullschlager is worthy of an art lover's gasp, a biography of the great figurative painter, born poor in Russia, who wandered Europe during its upheaval and took the shtels of his youth as inspiration. With 40 full-color reproductions and original research from the chief art critic of the London Financial Times. (Knopf, 592 pp., $40).



"The Eleventh Man" by Ivan Doig is a novel in which the entire starting lineup of a 1941 Montana college football team enlists after Pearl Harbor. The title figure is the former player pulled out to write war propaganda on his teammates and is unhappy with the job. Doig, a Montana sage, expands nicely from his Western base. (Harcourt, 406 pp., $26)

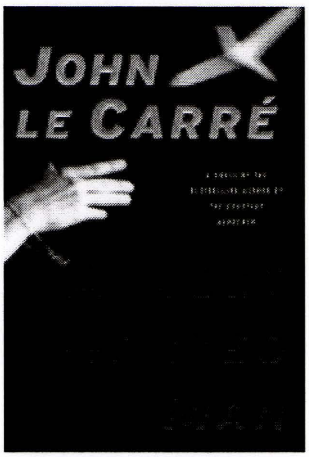
"Emily Post" by Laura Claridge is a biography of the woman whose sharp advice has followed us into the 21st century -- Joan Didion called Post's writing on grief the most useful she read. The author does deft, intriguing work in the book, subtitled "Daughter of the Gilded Age, Mistress of American Manners." (Random House, 525 pp., $30)



"The English Major" by Jim Harrison is a road novel about the 60-year-old title character's attempt to start over when his dog dies, his wife of 38 years dumps him and then maneuvers the Michigan family farm out from under him. The author of 25 books is known for his *joie de vivre* and his wit. (Grove Press, 2542 pp., $24)

"I See You Everywhere" by Julia Glass is from the Manhattan novelist who won the National Book Award for "Three Junes." Her latest femme-centric book evolves over 25 years between two sisters -- one a wildlife biologist and a rebel, the other a responsible arts editor who chafes against her more conventional life. (Pantheon, 287 pp., $24.93)

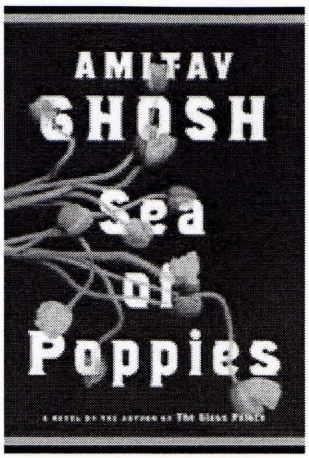
"The Longest Trip Home" by John Grogan is the author's attempt to bring lightning down into the sweet spot that sold over 4 million copies of "Marley & Me." This new memoir tells of Grogan's Catholic, Detroit boyhood, his parents' woe when he leaves the faith, and how he faces their mortality. (William Morrow, 331, $25.95)



"A Most Wanted Man" by John le Carre is the latest novel from the master who gave us George Smiley in "The Spy who Came in from the Cold." The new story starts with a half-starved young Russian Muslim smuggled into post 9/11 Hamburg with an improbable amount of cash, triggering the interest of multiple spy agencies. (Scribner, 323 pp., $28)

"Poe's Children" edited by Peter Straub, is an anthology of cutting-edge horror writers, featuring a chilling story from Clevelander Dan Chaon, "The Bees," about a man haunted by past mistakes. The 24 tales include work from Kelly Link, Stephen King, Neil Gaiman, Jonathan Carroll and Elizabeth Hand. (Doubleday, 534 pp., $26.95)

"Roads to Quoz" by William Least Heat-Moon, who made his mark with "Blue Highways," the 1982 meander along the America less traveled. Here he traces the southern half of the Louisiana Purchase, watching for "quoz" -- anything out of the ordinary. He collects stories and eccentrics, as he did in earlier books. (Little, Brown, 563 pp., $27.99)



"Sea of Poppies" by Amitav Ghosh is the epic novel predicted to wow lovers of the English language. Ghosh, best known for "The Glass Palace," sets his new story just before the Opium Wars that roiled India in the 19th century, and he places his characters aboard a ship transporting "coolies" and outlaws. (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 512 pp., $26)

"The Shadow Factory" by James Bamford, whose first book, 1982's "The Puzzle Palace" unlocked secrets of the National Security Administration. This time, he probes the agency's activities "from 9/11 to the Eavesdropping on America." Embargoed until Oct. 14. (Doubleday, 416 pp., $27.95).

"To Siberia" by Per Petterson, the Norwegian whose 2007 book in English, "Out Stealing Horses," became an international triumph. Now, he turns his spare, deliberate prose to the story of a brother and sister, whose grandfather has committed suicide and whose village is imperiled by oncoming Third Reich planes. (Graywolf, 245 pp., $22)

"Tried by War" by James McPherson, the historian who won a Pulitzer for his Civil War classic, "Battle Cry of Freedom," turns his eye toward Abraham Lincoln as commander in chief, an idea McPherson argues that Lincoln essentially invented. Full of humanizing touches and fluid prose. (Penguin, 329 pp., $35)

"The Widows of Eastwick" by John Updike catches up with the trio of characters he created for his 1984 novel, "The Witches of Eastwick," as they outlive their subsequent husbands and return to the Rhode Island seaside town where they made mischief three decades ago. Early word has been lukewarm. (Knopf, 303 pp., $24.95)

NOVEMBER

"Gone Tomorrow" by P.F. Kluge is the ninth novel from the gifted Kenyon College writing professor. It tells of a literary executor trying to make sense of the life of a small-college Ohio writing professor killed in a hit-and run. From the author of "Eddie and the Cruisers," which is being reissued as well. (Overlook, 288 pp., $24.95)

"The Hour I First Believed" by Wally Lamb is the first novel in a decade from the author of "She's Come Undone." It is an ambitious book about a couple who move to Colorado and take jobs at Columbine High School before the massacre. The husband is away, but the wife, who survives, is traumatized. (HarperCollins, 739 pp., $29.95)

The Salt Lake Tribune http://www.sltrib.com

Books: The List: 3 new takes on familiar stories

The Salt Lake Tribune
Salt Lake Tribune
Article Last Updated:10/19/2008 11:19:10 AM MDT

Mrs. Woolf and the Servants: An Intimate History of Domestic Life in Bloomsbury
By Alison Light
Bloomsbury
$30 » 376 pps

Let us pause for a moment and imagine literature without Bloomsbury. That group of writers, philosophers and artists occupies a fertile spot in our minds. Do we really need another book on Bloomsbury? The answer is, resoundingly, yes. Especially "Mrs. Woolf and the Servants." Light's aim in writing the book is "to give the servants back their dignity and the respect they deserve."

- Susan Salter Reynolds, The Los Angeles Time

Madeline and the Cats of Rome
John Bemelmans Marciano
Viking Juvenile
$17.99 » 48 pp

John Bemelmans Marciano, grandson of "Madeline" author-artist Ludwig Bemelmans, has written the first entirely new Madeline storybook since the author's 1962 death. It's in the spirit of the originals, even if it doesn't try to emulate every detail. Marciano wanted to play up some of his grandfather's love of comic books and graphic design, but he knew longtime readers wanted the new book to be as close to the midcentury originals as possible.

- Scott Timberg, The Los Angeles Times

The Eleventh Man
By Ivan Doig
Harcourt
$26 » 352 pp

"The Eleventh Man" draws from three of the hardiest genres in the American canon: the sports book, the war novel, the story set in the great West. The author of this hat trick is Ivan Doig, who is a genre all his own. Though this novel revolves around one resilient American theme (that championship season), it's really about honor, loyalty, and the character and courage that war creates - and reveals.

- David M. Shribman, Bloomberg News

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Taryn Roeder/Trade/hmco
10/20/2008 04:26 PM

To Rebecca HTP-NYC Saletan@HMH
cc Thomas H. HTP-NYC Bouman@HMH, Erika Wise/Trade/hmco@HoughtonMifflin
bcc
Subject More Doig reviews

Hi Becky-

Some more nice reviews for Ivan Doig!

A RAVE in the Rocky Mountain News, 10/16:
http://www.rockymountainnews.com/news/2008/oct/16/the-eleventh-man/
A highlight: Doig just keeps getting better....Doig incorporates all the elements of a good novel: an intensifying love interest, the drama of war, repeated moments of life-or-death intensity, the complexity of multiple story lines, historical curiosities, seamless prose and even a winning football team...THE ELEVENTH MAN, Doig's 12th, is his best thus far.

A mixed review in the Oregonian, 10/17
http://www.oregonlive.com/O/index.ssf/2008/10/fiction_review_the_eleventh_ma.html
A highlight: "Doig's book is really about our strong history of storytelling, and the variety of ways we spin out words, especially during and about war times....it feels quite right to call Doig's writing a part of Americana." *Oregonian*

Bloomberg pickup in the 10/19 Salt Lake Tribune:
http://www.sltrib.com/news/ci_10755066?source=rss

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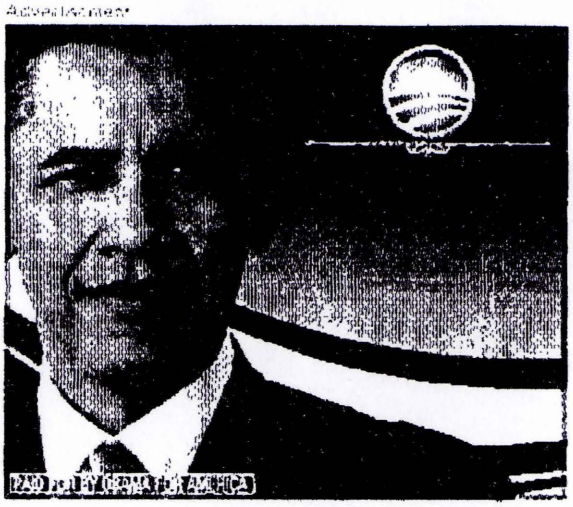
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*****

washingtonpost.com

The Greatest Sacrifice

A young army reporter chronicles the harrowing lives of his football buddies in World War II.



Reviewed by Molly Gloss
Sunday, October 19, 2008; BW04

THE ELEVENTH MAN

By Ivan Doig

Harcourt. 406 pp. $26

The 11 men alluded to in the title of Ivan Doig's new novel compose the starting football team for fictional Treasure State (Montana) University in its much-heralded undefeated 1941 season. Now, in 1943, 10 of those men are scattered in far-flung theaters of a world war, and the 11th, Ben Reinking, is writing up his teammates' exploits for a military propaganda machine called the Threshold Press War Project -- TPWP, sardonically known as Tepee Weepy.

The story occasionally jumps back to earlier events in Ben's life and to the 1941 football season, in particular a pivotal week before the opening game when the sudden death of a teammate was the catalyst for the so-called "season of the Twelfth Man." But the bulk of the novel follows Reinking as he chronicles his teammates' war experiences -- and, when necessary, their deaths -- for publication in newspapers around the country.

It's a shapely premise for a novel, allowing Doig a broad canvas on which to paint the breadth and scope of World War II: Carl is bogged down in the forests of New Guinea; Jake pilots Lend-Lease planes from East Base, Mont., north to Russia; "Animal," on a Marine troop ship, hopscotchs from one island beachhead to the next; Sig, in the Coast Guard, patrols the Puget Sound shore; Moxie bosses an anti-aircraft gun pit in Antwerp; Nick serves on a destroyer in the Pacific; and Dexter is confined to a conscientious objector camp in the north Montana woods. Add to these a squadron of Women Air Force Service Pilots -- WASPs -- assigned to East Base, ferrying military aircraft north to Canada, and nearly every military operation is in play.

Scenes range from the jungles of Guam to the Butte du Lion of Waterloo, but the story returns again and again to East Base, Mont., where Doig, not surprisingly, is at his most lyrical, evoking the landscape of Ben Reinking's (and Doig's own) childhood. "Wheatfields winter-sown and fallow stretched below like checkered linoleum laid to the wall of the Rockies. There to the west he could pick out the long straight brink of Roman Reef and its dusky cliff, and the snake line of watercourse that would be English Creek. Gros Ventre, though, held itself out of sight beneath its cover of trees."

English Creek and the town of Gros Ventre are familiar place names in Montana's Two Medicine country that Doig first imagined for his trilogy about the McCaskill family, novels that are still perhaps his best-known works: English Creek, *Dancing at the Rascal Fair* and *Ride with Me, Mariah Montana*.

The Eleventh Man is more wide-ranging and plot-heavy than those earlier works. Statistical probability means nine of the 10 on the "Supreme Team" should survive, but those odds are neither a guarantee nor

a consolation; as the novel opens, two of the team are already in their graves, and another has lost a leg, fighting in Sicily. Soon, Ben Reinking is writing a third obituary, and then a fourth. As one by one the men perish, the novel takes on a growing sense of doom and inevitability.

Ben, on temporary assignment at East Base, falls for the WASP commanding officer, Cass Standish, and their love affair casts its own dark shadow: Cass is a married woman with a husband serving in Guam. Mysteries underlie both the season of *The Twelfth Man* and the fateful roll call of deaths reported in Ben's Tepee Weepy dispatches. There are lengthy scenes of battle: the invasion of Guam, the battle of Leyte Gulf, the bombardment of Antwerp, all described in historical detail.

Yet this is not a novel with a strong sense of suspense or dramatic complication. Most of the deaths befalling the "Supreme Team" happen off stage, relayed to Ben and to us after the fact; and we're almost halfway into the book before something occurs that puts Ben himself in peril. For a war novel taking place on such a wide, dangerous field, the book is remarkably quiet. Doig is known for his rich imagining of local American history and the nuances of human relationships, and this is a book that deliberately keeps its attention on the places where war intersects with those less dramatic themes.

He is also sometimes called old-fashioned, which can be either criticism or approbation, depending on your point of view; and granted, it's sometimes hard to distinguish nostalgia from careful, thoughtful avoidance of cynicism. There are a few cringe-inducing moments in *The Eleventh Man*, especially in the romance between Ben and Cass. "She flicked him the urgent smile that showed the irresistible tiny gap between her front teeth, and he melted like a schoolboy and knew it. Deeply and rigorously they kissed again, running their hands silkily here and there, as if keeping track of everything in the book of hotel-room romance."

But *The Eleventh Man* vividly evokes a prior time and way of being. It takes a serious view of war and the practitioners of war, and looks hard at the meaning of heroism. And not incidentally, it contains enough loose threads to hint at a sequel, which will be good news to Doig's many loyal readers.

Molly Gloss is the author of several novels, including most recently "The Hearts of Horses."

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Books: The List: 3 new takes on familiar stories

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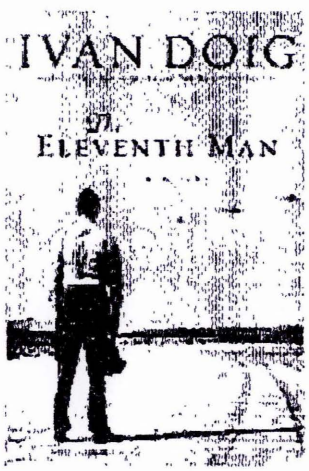
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TELEVISION

Fiction review: "The Eleventh Man"

by Kristin Thiel, special to The Oregonian
Friday October 17, 2008, 11:31 AM



In 1943 Ben Reinking is two years past college and solidly in the middle of an affair with a married woman, a deadly mystery from his past and World War II, for which he's been unwillingly made a cog in the American propaganda machine.

"The Eleventh Man," Ivan Doig's latest novel, carries readers along on its promise of political conspiracy and fateful meetings, but it drops us before we reach an expected conclusion. In war, one must be on-target; in a good story, ending slightly off-target is more important.

Thanks to the bravado of a celebrity-seeking reporter, all of Montana knows of the legendary college football team Reinking was a part of; after the players' graduation from school and into the war, the American government can't pass up such an opportunity, and Reinking is assigned to chronicle the missions of each of his 10 teammates for the Threshold Press War Project.

Reinking "understood that the name was meant to invoke the doorstep homefront, the breadbasket America ... with its sons and daughters in the war. But it never left his mind for long that a threshold also was where people wiped their feet on something." As with that description, Doig does a fine job at keeping most of the third-person narrative from Reinking's perspective, which lends a readable touch to such a serious situation. This is a story from a young man, so its voice is wide-eyed and moved as well as sardonic and on guard.

After his experience with untrustworthy media during his football days, Reinking is determined to slip things by "the red pencil of the invisible copy officer back in Washington," things such as the uninteresting realities of some of his teammates and the true heroics of people the government would rather not dwell on. One of the latter is Reinking's lover, Cass Standish, a member of the Women Air Force Service Pilots, which really existed and included 916 women, 38 of whom were killed during the war.

Standish's story is an interesting one, and "The Eleventh Man" might have been better if it had included more chapters from the points of view of her and others in her squadron. Instead, Doig's narrative cuts away from Reinking to other characters, from a Montana senator to Reinking's father to a couple of players on his old team. None of those characters gets his due, and it feels like a forced way to fit in plot updates.

Still, Doig has definitely written a different kind of American war novel by including in relatively prominent ways characters such as Standish and her crew -- and others, such as Reinking's Blackfoot teammate, Vic Rennie, and members of the Civilian Public Service. Beyond that, Doig's book is really about our strong history of storytelling, and the variety of ways we spin out words, especially during and about war times. When Reinking was struggling to report, "a script turned out to already exist in him. ... The lore of war." In this way it feels quite right to call Doig's writing a part of Americana.

Details: *THE ELEVENTH MAN*
Ivan Doig. Harcourt
$26, 416 pages

Idiot Box: Television by Peter Ames Carlin
- "Mad Men" episode 12: My eyes are vague blue...
- Democracy in Action: Hey Joe, Whaddaya Know?
- "Mad Men" episode 11: Ode to Joy

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{ SEQ CHAPTER \h \r 1}**Here in Spirit: An Interview with Ivan Doig**

by Betsy Burton

Because we loved Ivan Doig's new novel ***The Eleventh Man*** so much, we tried to talk him into visiting TKE to read from it. Deep in his next novel, he couldn't leave home, but (we hope because he has a soft spot for TKE) he agreed to this interview and to signing copies for our customers—for which we are infinitely grateful.

BB: The subject of propaganda, which must be anathema to a former journalist such as you, is one of the moral—or I guess I should say immoral—centers of ***The Eleventh Man***. Without giving away too much of the story, were there propaganda projects you uncovered in your research on WWII that had such dark undersides as The Threshold War Project or names as imaginative as Ben's mangled acronym for it, Tepee Weepy?

ID: No, I made up Tepee Weepy *and* its dark side, but we've seen that dark side in Iraq and Afghanistan in particular, seen the Pentagon's dark side. It's been said that the first casualty of war is truth and that's the journalist's truth, I guess, Ben's truth. We've seen it recently with the Pentagon coaching the so-called military "analysts" who gave us their war commentary just this spring—coaching them about what to say. Ben constantly has to contend with the heavy hand of wartime journalism. I don't know that there was anything like Tepee Weepy during WWII, but the Office of War Information certainly had an effective machine. *Any* military operation tries to make itself look as good as it can so everyone will hear what they say about themselves and believe it. They insert themselves between the public and the actuality of war.

In the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan we don't even see the coffins come home as we did in Vietnam. It's becoming harder and harder for journalists to work. It really does go back to that old journalistic saying I mentioned, that the first casualty of war is truth.

BB: In the acknowledgments you make it plain that the idea for your Supreme Team was based in part on fact. Was the discovery of the Bozeman team you cite what started

you on the trail of the plot for your novel? Or, did you begin wanting to tell a tale of Montana's involvement in WWII and fold the Supreme Team into that tale when it surfaced?

ID: Two things converged when a librarian friend—librarians are research utility infielders, something that writers *so* badly need—gave me the information [on the Bozeman team] and I immediately thought, What if you were the eleventh man and had seen everything that had happened to your teammates in the war—you'd feel that fate was *looking* for you. That was one story line. The other was women pilots ferrying planes in the Lend-Lease program. These two story lines came together pretty promptly and then spread into the plot. It was the history, those two *pieces* of history, rather than Montana, that started the book up in this case—if they had occurred in Washington or Utah I'd have set it there. It was history that drove the story. In the novel, Ben's father says, "History writes the best stories."

BB: To pursue the idea of The Supreme Team, the members of which figure so prominently in your book, the camaraderie that members of a great football team develop, coupled with a fierce competitiveness directed at the other team, is perfect training and perhaps a perfect metaphor for war. Although you never underline this, your journalist/team captain Ben has a pretty clear-eyed view of both. Can you talk a bit about the similarities for good and for ill?

ID: There's an undercurrent in the Supreme Team's football history, particularly under their coach, that *is* a metaphor for combat or at least for organized conflict. The iron-butt training the coach demanded is a metaphor for the kind of training that occurs in war. And they're physically fit, big, Western, outdoor guys who can handle rifles, do the chores they need to do—their training singles them out as prime soldier material.

I think that is part of what happened in Montana and New Mexico during WWII and probably the rest of the West, although I don't have the statistics on Utah or Wyoming. But the guys from Montana and New Mexico took the most deaths of WWII. The national guard of Montana was sent to New Guinea; that meat grinder happened long

before the other troops were deployed to places like Africa. It was early 1942, defenses were thin in that part of the world and we needed to protect Australia. So guys who had never seen a palm tree were up to their armpits in jungle.

Football training is a metaphor for good *and* for ill. It helped them cope with what the military wanted, train for conflict, but the difference is in the kind of conflict. This kind [war] is deadly.

BB: Cass, the wonderful, wiry WASP pilot and squadron commander, is an inspired character, one who knows what she's doing and why and has a pretty strong moral compass—as does Ben. The situation you put them in forces them to examine in a haunting way what is and isn't moral, what they can and can't live with. You've had plenty of strong female characters in your novels before—in all of them, as nearly as I can recall. But you've never created anyone as amazing as she is. Is she modeled on anyone you found in your research or do you think it was the extraordinary time, the extraordinary opportunities women had during the war, opportunities that they had never had before, that made her possible, believable?

ID: Cass is not modeled on anyone (laughs). My life is FULL of strong women from my wife to my agent to my editor to my sales director. But one of the things I tried to do in the book was to give the reader that eternal question, What do you do when love sneaks up on you inconveniently? I was interested in having Cass deal with it as a *man* would have—she doesn't back off from her right to have Ben Reinking in her life. Cass is meant to show a Shakespearean or Conradian "what if," but with a woman instead of a man. She's a great intuitive leader when she's in command, but what about when she's *off*-duty? She's terrific in the cockpit, she's at home in the cockpit, and she's up against a lot on the ground, especially in late 1944 when the Air Force says, 'We don't need you anymore.'

So, Cass had had an odd turn of luck—the war was her chance at the cockpit, which was male territory up until then. She and her WASP Squadron were temporary beneficiaries. I wanted that complication too, that while the war is doing its *worst* on some characters, it's

doing its best on others.

Cass is made up out of my mind, though. She's small and wiry because the cockpit *required* it. There was a—perhaps apocryphal—story about the P39 Bell Aircraft. Eddie Bell was a little guy and when his engineers brought him a 2/3 size mockup of the plane he got in it and looked around, said, "This is great!" and sent it off to production.

Joking aside, the Russians loved that plane, and used it for strafing. Your customers at The King's English are literary. They should like this story—Kurt Vonnegut was strafed by one of these planes. It was after he'd escaped from that nightmare in Dresden. He and his company were on the run, on the ground, and the Russians figured they were Germans and strafed them. They were flying P39s. One of the oddities of the war.

BB: Finally, fierce irony and a fiendish plot that mixes love and treason, integrity and treachery, heroism and history with the kind of social realism, social commentary that comes so naturally to a journalist; characters with names like Moxie Stamper, Sig Prokosch, and Animal Angelides; acronyms like Teepee Weepy—it's all so Dickensian, in the best sense. I've never thought of you in connection with Dickens before since your voice is so surefootedly Western. Has Dickens been an influence on your writing, and if not, who has?

ID: ***The Whistling Season*** reviews mentioned Dickens every so often (laughs). It's not conscious, I'd say, but the richness of description and life in Dickens is up my alley. I'm *with* Dickens in thinking you ought to use the whole orchestra when you write. And names are a big part of it with me. I've got a computer printout of my characters from my novels—there are over 500 of them. I work *consciously* on their names. The women's names in the Montana trilogy all ended in vowels and the guy's names in consonants. This was deliberate. In ***Dancing at the Rascal Fair*** Angus says, "Montana, America, those words with their ends open." Women have that open outlook more than men do. Cass is the exception. She's more masculine. Although her real name is Cassia. Cassia Standish. I've wanted to use the name Cass for the last several novels.

To get back to your question, I'm marching to the drum of Dickens and

Conrad— characters with full-blown names are a part of that.

BB: Before we go, can you give TKE readers a teasing fact or two from your next book?

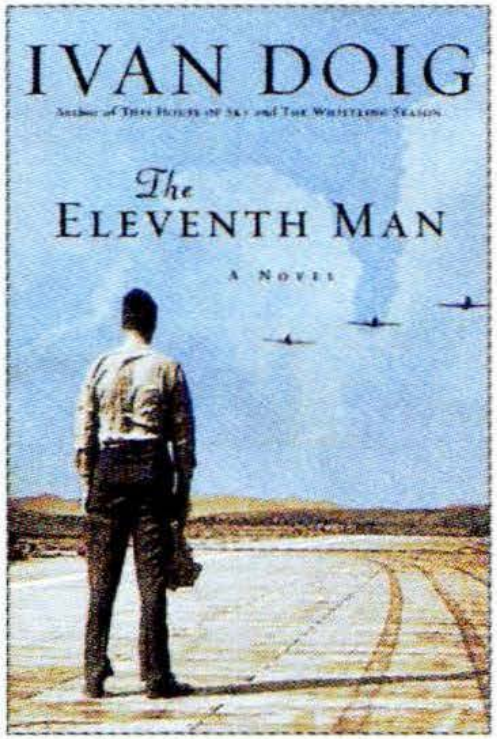
ID: While we're still on names, the kids in *The Whistling Season* seem to have stuck in people's minds. In the new novel there's a kid so skinny he's nicknamed Russian Salmon. Morrie [the teacher from *The Whistling Season*] makes his way to Montana to do battle during the heyday of the copper mining and the miners' struggle with Anaconda Copper Company—the giant of the day. You have had quite a history in Utah, too, but Butte was known as the copper king of its day. Butte offered, short of Henry Ford's assembly line, the best-paid jobs available. Also the most dangerous. So, for immigrants, the best and the worst. Risking your neck and also risking mine silicosis. So, I'm dropping Morrie into Butte with references back to ***The Whistling Season***. I've been telling people that one of the school kids from ***The Whistling Season*** is in the next book, too.

BB: Booksellers at TKE are clamoring for pre-release copies of ***The Eleventh Man***. Soon everyone in the country will be. We're sad that you couldn't come to the store this year, but thank you so much for taking the time to talk about your extraordinary new book. And best of luck on the next one!

ID: From your mouth to God's ear. I wish I could teleport myself to The King's English. Thank you so much, Betsy

Juan, Betsy's interview for your review. Thanks again for signing stock for us. You are a gem!

Anne Dalman



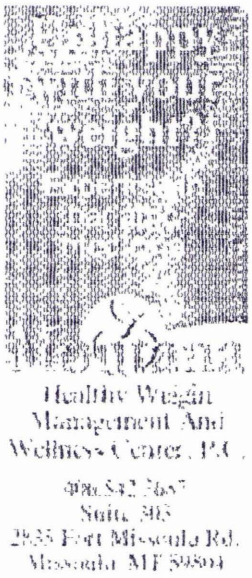
The Eleventh Man

A Novel, by Ivan Doig

(Harcourt, $26, 9780151012435/0151012431)

"A football team that makes the papers in 1941 goes to war in 1943, its players deployed from Europe to the Pacific—all but the quarterback, who, son of a journalist, is assigned to chronicle their exploits for the wartime propaganda machine he loathes. Indelibly wrought characters and a plot that mixes love, treason, heroism, and history make this a blissfully good read."

—Betsy Burton, The King's English, Salt Lake City, UT



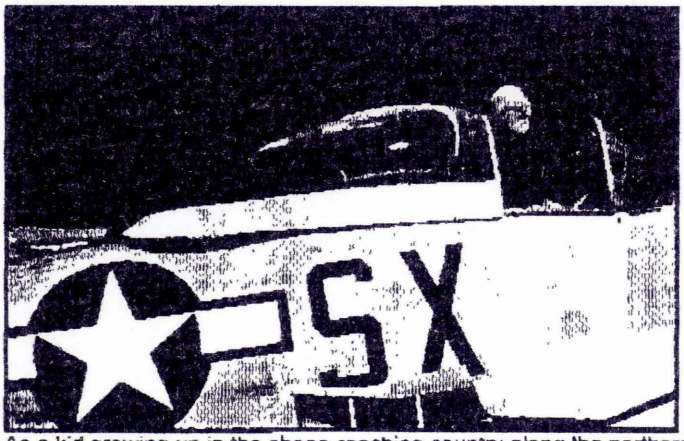
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Archived Story

Drawing on history - Ivan Doig spins people's lives in 'Eleventh Man'
By GINNY MERRIAM for the Missoulian



Writer Ivan Doig researched World War II aircraft as part of his work on "The Eleventh Man."

As a kid growing up in the sheep-ranching country along the northern Rocky Mountain Front, Ivan Doig sat beside his dad in the bar in White Sulphur Springs and listened to men talk about World War II.

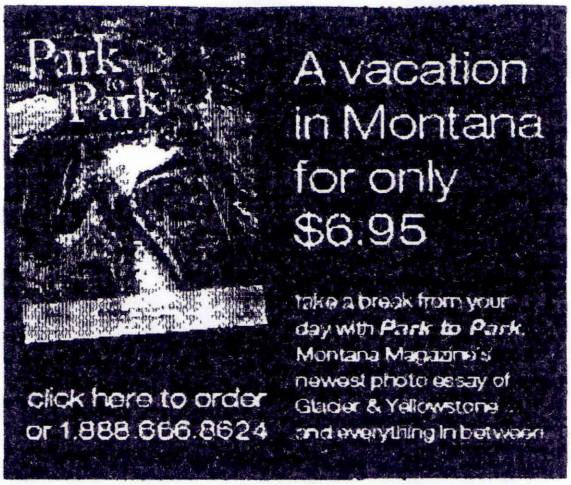
Meagher County alone sent

273 people, more than 10 percent of its 2,237 residents in 1940.

"That's a high damn percentage," Doig said in a recent interview from his home in Seattle. "If we had that today, we'd have 30 million people in uniform."

Doig went on from those childhood stories to earn degrees in journalism and a doctorate in history, work as a newspaper and

magazine writer and editor, and become a novelist. He became friends with the late historian Dave Walter of the Montana Historical Society in 1982 when he was working on his novel "English Creek" and researching 1930s Montana. A few years ago, knowing Doig's penchant for the stray fact in Montana history, Walter gave Doig a file on a Montana State College football team; 11 of its players died in World War II. The novelist's imagination ignited the embers in his memory, and the result is his 12th book and ninth novel, "The Eleventh Man," coming this month from Harcourt Inc.



"I immediately leaped on it as a novelist," Doig said. "What if you were the 10th or 11th guy on that team? It's late in the war, and fate has done its work on eight or nine of your teammates? That triggered the idea of the 11th man."

Doig kept turning it over: Does that 11th man try to dodge it somehow? What if he were a military war correspondent?

"Then you'd have their story and his story," Doig said. "This is head bone-connected-to-the-neck bone, down to the spine of the story."

Doig invented Ben Reinking and made him the son of newspaperman Bill Reinking, owner and editor of the Weekly Gleaner in the town of Gros Ventre, Montana, who appeared in Doig's trilogy "English Creek," "Dancing at the Rascal Fair" and "Ride with Me, Mariah Montana." He made Ben captain of the winning 1941 football team at fictional Treasure State University in Great Falls.

The whole team enlists after the Japanese bomb Pearl Harbor. Ben trains as a pilot, but against his wishes is ordered into war reporting for the military's Threshold Press War Project - "Tepee Weepy" - meant to chronicle the war in glorious stories for small-town newspapers. Ben's central duty is writing stories about his teammates, made into the "Supreme Team" by the military promotional machine. He approaches the job with dread of being the only one spared.

Novelists have to complicate things, Doig said, so he made up Cass Standish of the Women Air Force Service Pilots. WASP Standish is married to someone else who's fighting in the Pacific islands, but she accidentally falls in love with Ben. And she gives the novelist a chance to comb WASP memoirs and to show the skills of women pilots when the role was unconventional.

"That tugged at me right away, the chance to have a woman fighter pilot," Doig said. "For Cass, the war is a chance at the cockpit, complicating things. She and her squadron are the temporary beneficiaries of luck and fate."

Doig's research rolled on, through post-war newsletters at the Montana Historical Society that offered priceless details and archival reminiscences. He and his wife, Carol, returned to Seattle from Helena with more than 300 photocopied pages on a single trip.

"A lot of it was where Google doesn't go," Doig said. "Dusty archives ... Some of these letters at the Historical Society just squeeze your heart."

Some things Doig picked up by ear. A pilot friend who bailed out of a plane in Korea helped with description. And Doig's own six years in the Air Force Reserve, which included a stint on active duty during the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, contributed.

Doig spent considerable time trying to understand a Naval destroyer.

"A lot of what a novelist does is get people in and out of rooms," he said. "So how do you do that on a ship, credibly?"

Doig resorted to schematic drawings.

"I'd make photocopies and then trace the paths that Ben and his teammate Danzer would take in the ship," he said.

Widely known for his memoir "This House of Sky" and recipient of the lifetime Distinguished Achievement Award from the Western Literature Association, Doig draws on his trinity of vocations as journalist, historian and novelist in his work. But the spinning out of people's lives is most important to him.

"I see myself as a storyteller," he said. "I think my imagination rules these books. But it does so still having some respect for the historical laws of gravity.

"On the other hand, once in a while I sneakily make things up."

It's Doig's characters who are his continuing body of work. Many of them hail from the country of his youth, and they're nearing 500 in number across nine novels. Doig keeps track of them.

"These characters do have a country of their own in my mind," he said. "I can add to or subtract from them through the years. That has been a deliberate strategy. There will be this continuing trove of characters for me to draw from."

As a storyteller, Doig saw "The Eleventh Man" as a chance to give readers a fresh take on a couple of questions, he said.

"During a time of war, how do you hold yourself together?" he said. "We're still facing that. And what do you do when love sneaks up on you, sometimes inconveniently?"

With this book, Doig will not do a tour. He was prepared for a "chorus of moans" from booksellers, but he's found them supportive. His last novel, "The Whistling Season," brought him a new wave of readers, and he's at work on a sequel. A book takes three or four years. And a book tour takes three or four months.

"One of the things I do constantly is fight for my time," he said. "I'm in a productive period. The best thing I can do for people who like my books is to write more books."

Missoula freelance writer Ginny Merriam is a former Missoulian reporter and books page editor.

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WEEK IN REVIEW

MONDAY

• Boeing, Machinists call off

LIVING

Published: Sunday, October 12, 2008

Read all about it: Authors visit, sign books

Stranger in a strange land: It's free film day at the Everett Public Library. Head on over at 2 p.m. todayfor a showing of "Choking Man," a drama about an extremely shy dishwasher from Ecuador in a Queens, N.Y., diner who is trying to find connection in an unfamiliar world. Mandy Patinkin plays Rick, the owner of the diner.

The library is at 2702 Hoyt Ave. Call 425-257-8000 or check their Web site, www. epls. org, for more information about the Second Sundays Film Series.

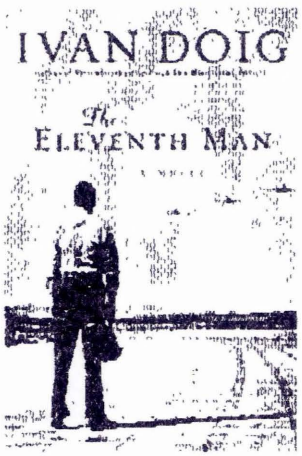
In harm's way: Seattle author Ivan Doig will read from and sign copies of his newest book, "The Eleventh Man," at 7 p.m. Monday at Third Place Books. The novel, set during World War II, is about 11 members of a college football team who enlist in memory of one of their own who was killed in action. One is chosen by a secret war-propaganda agency to track down and write about his teammates' exploits and their fates. The book lists at $26, but can be found cheaper.

Third Place Books is at 17171 Bothell Way NE, Lake Forest Park. Call 206-366-3333 or go to www.thirdplacebooks.com for more information.

Storied romance: Whidbey Island writer Nancy Horan will talk about "Loving Frank," the shocking (for its day) love story of architect Frank Lloyd Wright and Mamah Cheney, at 2 p.m. Oct. 19 at the Everett Public Library. Horan will sign copies of the book following the discussion. Marysville Bookworks will sell copies at the library event. The paperback copy of the book lists at $14.

See library location and information above.

Herald staff



(click to enlarge)

"The Eleventh Man" by Ivan Doig

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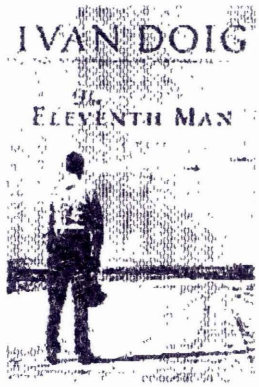
CONTACT THE HERALD

Melanie Munk, Features Editor
munk@heraldnet.com

MONDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2008

New Today: *The Eleventh Man* by Ivan Doig

There's something sweetly sentimental in all the testosterone lurking not far beneath the covers of *The Eleventh Man* (Harcourt), a football novel that melds into World War II from Ivan Doig (*This House of Sky, The Whistling Season*). That would seem a contradiction in terms -- sweet sentiment. Masses of testosterone -- but somehow it's not. Somehow it works in a book that manages to be epic in scope and fact.



> *The war licked its chops over the battle of Leyte Gulf, as it came to be called, with the inevitability from day one that history would speak of such a gang-fight of fleets in the same breath with the Spanish Armada, Trafalgar, Jutland, and Midway. Ben all but moved into the wire room at East Base to follow reports of the military struggle shaping up around the Philippine Islands. It proved to be like reading War and Peace standing up.*

Ben Reinking *is* the 11th man, left behind to chronicle the exploits of his former football teammates as they make their way through various theaters of war. An exciting book with all the right stuff. *The Eleventh Man* might well be the very best thing Doig -- an acclaimed and respected author -- has done to date. I loved every word.

LABELS: FICTION, LINCOLN CHO
POSTED BY LINCOLN CHO AT 12:00 AM

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Bookmonger: The Difficult Task of Crafting War Stories

Master storyteller Ivan Doig is back. The Seattle-based novelist, who often returns to his Montana roots for inspiration, situates his latest book at an air base in World War II-era Montana.

But in "The Eleventh Man," Doig also sends his lead character, Lieutenant Ben Reinking, ranging across half a world's worth of time zones to cover the exploits of 10 men.

Reinking, the son of a small-town newspaper editor, had been training as a pilot. But once his aptitude for wordsmithing is discovered, as well as his connection with a legendary college football team, he is plucked out of flight school and assigned to the Threshold Press War Project.

Teepee-Weepy, as it is called, is a military propaganda unit that churns out morale-building human interest stories about military activities, and distributes them to newspapers across the country. Back in Washington D.C., Reinking's superiors have sniffed out a compelling story line.

In 1941, Treasure State University's football team had had an undefeated season that was extolled in the press far beyond the Great Falls stadium where they had sealed their glory. But following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, every member of the starting lineup, including Reinking, had enlisted in the military.

Now Reinking has been ordered to follow these All-American heroes as they pursue their individual careers in military service. He chases about from Antwerp to Fairbanks to Guam as his former teammates fight for their country, and his "Dream Team" reports become immensely popular with the readers of America's small-town weeklies.

But Reinking grows to hate his assignment.

As the war drags on, writing the inevitable obituaries doesn't come easier with experience. And as the death toll continues to rise, he begins to suspect that something beyond the mere law of statistical averages is coming into play.

Compounding Reinking's disconsolation is his infatuation with Cass, a Women Air Force Service Pilot stationed at his base. The attraction is mutual, but there is a stinger — this WASP inconveniently happens to be married. Cass's husband is fighting overseas.

As with his other books, Doig's research is impeccable. This venerable author, who boldly ventures "where Google doesn't go," always digs up intriguing information to incorporate into his stories. It is uncanny how his keen eye for historical authenticity brings with it a moral authority that has a distinct bearing on current events.

The military's propensity for spinning stories from the battlefront may be nothing new, but shouldn't the endurance of the practice be questioned?

Those who expect another smooth-as-butter read such as the one offered by Doig's marvelous "The Whistling Season," are setting their hopes for "The Eleventh Man" too high.

From the bumpy first few chapters, to the hyperbolic love scenes, and dialogue that snap-crackles out of characters' mouths to jarring effect, this work on love, loyalty, luck and the toll of war feels worked upon, fretted over, and wrangled into place.

The final result isn't perfect — but no one can say Doig hasn't given it his all.

The Eleventh Man

By Ivan Doig

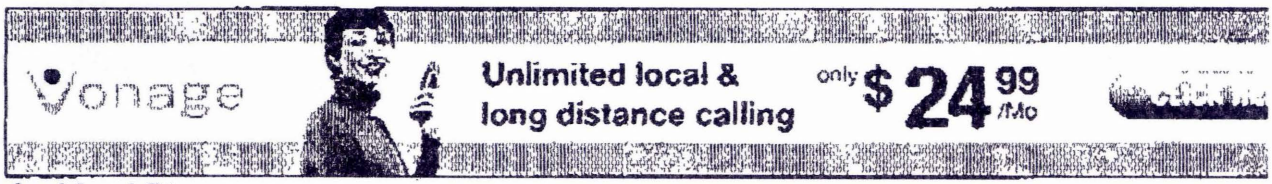
Harcourt. 416 pages. $26.



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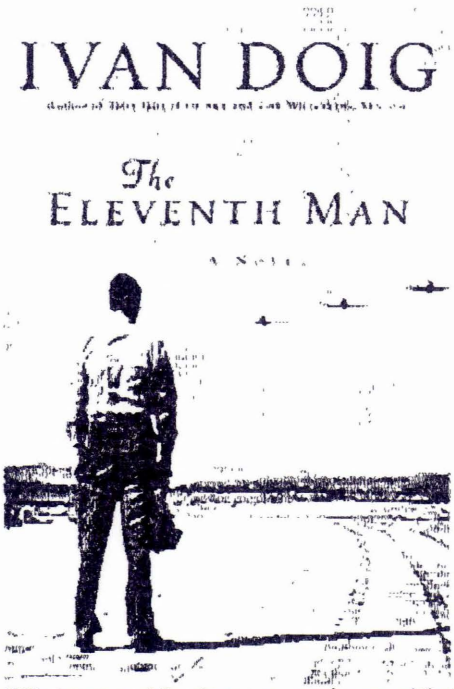


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Archived Story

Human striving set in real history will make you fear for characters' lives
By GINNY MERRIAM for the Missoulian



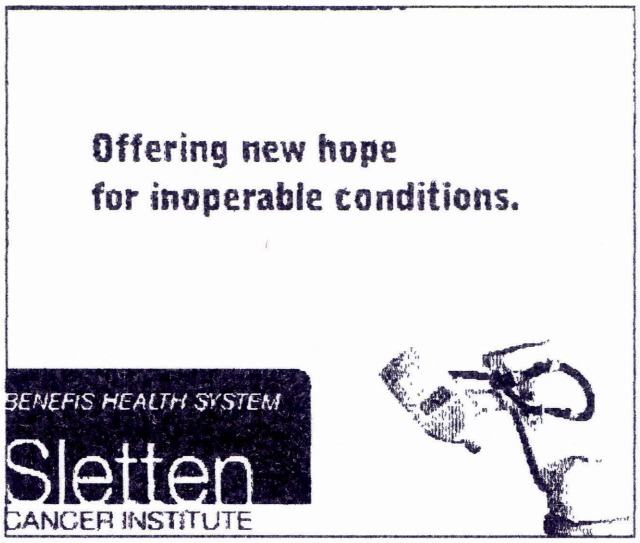
If it's been a while since you read a novel that took you over and made you cry, visit your bookseller today for a copy of Ivan Doig's "The Eleventh Man."

Doig's 12th book and ninth novel gives Doig loyalists what they expect: a story of human striving set in real history and, in part,

in the writer's heartland in Marias River country. It also delivers a tightly wound plot and characters who make you fear for their lives.

Ben Reinking of Gros Ventre, Montana, is not long out of Treasure State University, where he was captain of the lordly football team of 1941. Then the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, and all 11 varsity starters enlisted. Ben is trained as a pilot but is yanked away from flight by the military news machine, ordered to cover war's glory in stories sent to small-town newspapers across the country. He is a writer and son of Gros Ventre newspaperman Bill Reinking, but he's uncomfortable with the non-combat role while his teammates serve in battle.

Ben is even unhappier when his military bosses order him to cover his teammates as the "Supreme Team," traveling to profile them in the combat theaters of World War II. His life is further complicated when he meets Cass Standish, a WASP fighter pilot. She's married to someone else, and they try not to fall in love but fall in a classic case of swept away.



No slow start here: The story launches and builds relentlessly, and the reader becomes invested with Ben in the outcome. We get to know each teammate as Ben writes about them all. The law of averages says that one of the 11 won't make it home. But will that law hold? Who will be left at war's end? What if something happens to Cass?

Doig matches the tempo and rhythm of his writing to the story and the characters. There are no meandering rivers here, and the writer drives the story down the middle of the narrative field. His omniscient narrator takes us from Pacific island battlefields to the air base of Great Falls to bomb-riddled Antwerp to the small-town newsroom of his father's weekly Gleaner in a way that sometimes evokes Scrooge's spirit guide in Charles Dickens' redemption story "A Christmas Carol."

We still get the uncanny Doig ability to put us in the Montana landscape, as when Ben and his aide drive in a ragtop Jeep along the bluff south of Shelby: "The fields along the shimmering highway the next couple of hours to Great Falls, they well knew, would be the cooked results of summerlong sun, the waiting grain baked golden, the mown hayfields crisp and tan, the distant dun sidehills further tinted with broad scatters of sheep. Behind them were a good many miles of the same."

And we feel the tension of being Ben, here in nerve-wracked Antwerp: "Beer helped, luckily. Trying to force yourself to relax is much like pouring into the wrong end of a funnel, but sip by sip in the vaulted concrete room full of strangers' racket, he took refuge in that sensation of a place where nobody knows you're you. Yet."

"The Eleventh Man" is a lusty novel, male in its sensibility and its treatments of football, war, dangerous flying, sex and old-time newspapering. The cover blurb is by lawyer novelist Scott Turow, who calls it "intensely suspenseful and moving throughout." Harcourt is touting it as "Ivan Doig's most powerful novel to date."

In nearly 30 years of book writing, Doig has rarely disappointed his readers. "The Eleventh Man" gives us the 12th link in that satisfying literary chain.

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daily enlightenment for the book trade
October 10, 2008

Book Brahmins: Ivan Doig



Ivan Doig was born in Montana in 1939 and grew up along the Rocky Mountain Front, the dramatic landscape that has inspired much of his writing. A recipient of a lifetime Distinguished Achievement Award from the Western Literature Association, he is the author of eight previous novels, most recently The Whistling Season, *and three works of nonfiction, including* This House of Sky. *His latest book is* The Eleventh Man, *to be published October 18 by Harcourt. He lives in Seattle.*

On your nightstand now:
The King's English by Betsy Burton. Adventures in bookselling by Salt Lake City's La Pasionara of literature.

Favorite book when you were a child:
Comic books. When we would come to town from ranch work on Saturday night, my dad would empty all the dimes and nickels out of his pocket, and I would race to the drugstore to buy "funny books." Funny or outlandish ("Amazing!" usually blood-red on the cover), they lit my imagination in the total absence of children's classics in our tumbleweed way of life. And I can still tell when a comic-strip cartoonist is vamping it and when the drawn lines thrum with blood from the heart.

Your top five authors:
William Faulkner, for the unvanquished audacity of his language and characterizations. Isak Dinesan: her delicately sly handling of magic and romance brings out the fabulous in human fables. Ismail Kadare, who outlasted the Iron Curtain nightmare that was Albania to give us such profoundly universal novels as *Chronicle in Stone*, *The Palace of Dreams* and *The Three-Arched Bridge*. Pablo Neruda, poet of Chile and the world, for showing us what an infinite prism is metaphor. Linda Bierds, blessed poet not of self but of selves, with an uncanny ability to rove history in bell-clear tones.

Book you've always meant to finish reading:
Burger's Daughter by Nadine Gordimer. This epic of political involvement during the apartheid era in South Africa is intricate at all levels and at its most intense and Dostoevskian. I tend to put the book down like something glowing mysteriously and vow to come back to it when it and I have cooled.

Book you're an evangelist for:
The All of It by Jeannette Haien. It's a pocket miracle, partly an Irish *A River Runs Through It*, partly a love story of the most heart-aching sort, and thoroughly stunning in its command of language.

Book you've bought for the cover:
Wind, Sand and Stars. The Paul Bacon Studio's 1967 paperback artwork for Antoine de Saint Exupery's meditations on flying, a lone small biplane in the center of the cover with a swatch of the Andes emerging above, still seems to be perfect. No way could I have guessed that Paul later would become part of American consciousness with a very different piece of art, that ever-rising shark on the cover of *Jaws*, and that starting with my first book, *This House of Sky*, his inimitable inventiveness would grace five of my covers.

Book that changed your life:
Solitude by Anthony Storr. One of the oddest aspects of being a writer is having to sit around in your own

TO: IVAN
FROM: TARYN
5 PAGES TOTAL

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"The Eleventh Man": The fates of legendary football teammates play out in WWII

By Mary Ann Gwinn
Seattle Times book editor

"The Eleventh Man"

by Ivan Doig

Harcourt, 406 pp., $26

Ivan Doig is a fearless storyteller. The Seattle author, an icon among writers of the American west, has set his novels and memoirs against our region's natural grandeur and has put hundreds of characters in play on its outsize stage. Now, in his novel "The Eleventh Man," Doig has taken on the largest of backdrops: the entire theater of World War II.

"The Eleventh Man" is the story of Ben Reinking, the son of a newspaper owner in Gros Ventre, a small town in Montana. Ben, out of college just two years, is fighting the war in a peculiar way: Yanked from an assignment as a combat pilot, Ben has been pressed into service as a journalist/propagandist for the Threshold Press War Project, a government-backed press service that feeds heroic stories to midsize and small newspapers that can't afford their own war correspondent.

In college, Ben was a member of Treasure State University's legendary "Supreme Team," which fought to an undefeated season after one of their players ran himself to death in a workout (who's at fault is one of the unfolding mysteries of the book). Every surviving member of the football team has joined up. Ben's assignment is to tell their war stories, all over the globe.



Author appearance
Ivan Doig

The author of "The Eleventh Man"

Right from the get go, Ben resists; the odds are that at least a few of these stories are going to be obituaries. His handler, a shadowy figure called the Colonel, insists that the awful arithmetic of wartime still tilts toward the team's survival: " 'Statistically speaking, in this war we are looking at a nine percent mortality rate for active combatants such as your teammates. Rounding that off to a whole man, as we must' — Ben stared at a human being who could use the law of averages to measure dirt on a grave — 'that is one in ten, isn't it.' " Not to give too much away, but things don't quite turn out that way.

Ben, not having any choice in the matter of wartime duty, throws himself into the task; he's got the genes of a newspaperman and can't resist the dramatic contrast of the Supreme Team's stories: Vic Rennie, the Blackfoot Indian who lived in a relative's shack while attending Treasure State, has already stepped on a land mine and is consigned to a wheelchair. But Dex Cariston, scion of a moneyed Montana family, is sitting out the war in a camp of conscientious objector-status smoke jumpers (as with many details in this book, this one is based on historical fact; there really was such a unit).

will read at these locations:

• 7 p.m. Monday at Third Place Books, 17171 Bothell Way N.E., Lake Forest Park (206-366-3333 or *www.thirdplacebooks.com*).

• 7:30 p.m. Thursday at the Eagle Harbor Book Co., 157 Winslow Way E., Bainbridge Island (206-842-5332 or *www.eagleharborbooks.com*).

• 7:30 p.m. Saturday at Seattle's Elliott Bay Book Co., 101 S. Main St., Seattle (206-624-6t or *www.elliottbaybook.com*).

• 7:30 p.m. Nov. 12 at Town Hall Seattle (sponsored by University Book Store), 1119 Eighth Ave., Seattle; $5 (20(634-3400 or *www.ubookstore.com*).

• 7 p.m. Nov. 13 at Parkplace Books, 348 Parkplace Cent Kirkland (425-828-6546 or *www.parkplacebookskirkland.com*).

Meanwhile, Ben's blood is aboil over Cass Standish, a married female pilot assigned to the same Montana air base. Cass is head of a squad of all-female pilots charged with ferrying planes from one North American location to another. Some of the best scenes in "The Eleventh Man" convey the crackling "From Here to Eternity"-style passion between these two: Cass is wild about Ben, but she's married, her husband is slogging out the war in the jungles of New Guinea and she's not about to write a Dear John letter addressed to a soldier in green hell.

Doig's way with a sweeping scene is on display in "The Eleventh Man's" evocation of the awful grandeur of war. Standing on the deck of a destroyer as it attempts to bomb a Japanese submarine into oblivion, Ben watches his own death postponed:

"Sea air rushed by, there on the steel promontory into the dark. A mane of moonsilver flowed back from the destroyer's bow ... As his eyes adjusted, Ben could just make out the long narrow deck below, armaments jutting ready if they only had a target, faces of the gun crews pale patches foreshortened by helmets."

Then the submarine takes a direct hit: "He felt the shudder up from the water. Astern, explosions bloomed white in the darkness. Knowing this to be one of the sights of a lifetime, he watched with an intensity near to quivering. Not often is it given to you to stare away death, see it go instead in search of your sworn enemy."

While "The Eleventh Man" is a showcase for larger-than-life characters and scenes, at times it threatens to founder under the weight of its structure. Readers are parachuted into the lives of each teammate, then yanked up again and set on the road to somewhere and someone else. The book is a stage chockablock with interesting characters who speak their lines — bluff, hearty, lyrical, ironic — then get snatched away.

And a key concern of the novel — whether a malign *deus ex machina* is dictating the assignments, and fates, of the team — was never quite resolved to this reader's satisfaction. Would a government agency really thrust these young men into hazardous assignments for the purpose of creating dead heroes, or is Ben's presence more a sort of jinx? Both possibilities are suggested but never spelled out. Ben's minders are

manipulative and heartless, but they never really step from behind the curtain.

With Doig's warm regard for his Supreme Team characters, his disdain for his story's villains and his way with the heart-stopping action scene, in "The Eleventh Man" he has created a wartime epic, but with a difference. Though its marketing suggests it will resonate with the "Greatest Generation, "The Eleventh Man" trembles with the weariness of the modern age toward carnage — a war novel with an anti-war heart.

Mary Ann Gwinn: 206-464-2357 or mgwinn@seattletimes.com. She is The Seattle Times book editor and a director of the National Book Critics Circle.

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The Eleventh Man, by Ivan Doig (Harcourt, Oct.). By the author of *The Whistling Season*, the story of football teammates thrust into the battlefields of World War II.

The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo, by Stieg Larsson (Knopf, Sept.). A punky goth girl from one of Sweden's wealthiest families goes missing, and Uncle Henrik wants to know why.

The Given Day, by Dennis Lehane (Morrow, Sept.) The author of *Mystic River* turns his skills to a historical novel about an American family caught in the closing calamities of World War I.

Goldengrove, by Francine Prose (Harper, Sept.). One transformational summer in the life of a grieving 13-year-old girl.

The Ghost in Love, by Jonathan Carroll (FSG, Oct.) Ben Gould falls, hits his head on the pavement and should die, but his body lives on — to hilarious consequences.



Guernica, by Dave Boling (Bloomsbury, Sept.). A story of love and family unfolds in Basque country, until the Luftwaffe rains death and destruction from the skies.

Home, by Marilynne Robinson (FSG, Sept.). By the author of *Gilead*, a novel that takes place in the house of Rev. Robert Boughton, the best friend of *Gilead*'s hero.

I See You Everywhere, by Julia Glass (Pantheon, Oct.). A portrait of two very different but very close sisters, by the author of *Three Junes*.

The School on Heart's Content Road, by Carolyn Chute (Grove, Nov.). The author of *The Beans of Egypt, Maine* offers a novel about a disaffected boy and his life on the American fringe.

Sea of Poppies, by Amitav Ghosh (FSG, Oct.) In the early 19th century, a mighty ship called the *Ibis* makes its way across the Indian ocean to fight in China's Opium Wars.

The Sealed Letter, by Emma Donoghue (Harcourt, Sept.) Based on a real case, this novel by the author of *Slammerkin* involves a married woman, a scandalous affair and a trial that rocked Victorian England.

Songs for the Missing, by Stewart O'Nan (Viking, Nov.). When a popular high school student in a quiet Midwestern town disappears, the community is changed forever.

Testimony, by Anita Shreve (LB, Oct.). Sex, lies and videotapes in a tony New England boarding school.

To Siberia, by Per Petterson (Graywolf, Oct.). The Norwegian author of *Out Stealing Horses* gives us a novel about two siblings in wartime brought closer by a family suicide.

The Toss of a Lemon, by Padma Viswanathan (Harcourt, Sept.). A bride at 10, a widow at 18, our Brahmin heroine moves back to her dead husband's village to raise her two children alone.

The Widows of Eastwick, by John Updike (Knopf, Oct.). The witches of Eastwick — widows now — revisit their wicked deeds in a small Rhode Island town.

Night of Thunder, by Stephen Hunter (S&S, Sept.) Bob Lee Swagger chases a malevolent villain through the dizzying swirl of NASCAR.



SHORT STORIES

Happy Families, by Carlos Fuentes (RH, Sept.). The author of *The Old Gringo* offers 16 wildly different family dramas.

Just After Sunset, by Stephen King (Scribner, Nov.). Recent tales from the king of horror.

Yesterday's Weather, by Anne Enright (Grove, Sept.) Winner of the 2007 Booker Prize for *The Gathering*, Enright now offers stories about longing and loss.

POETRY

All One Horse, by Breyten Breytenbach (Archipelago, Sept.). Fables and watercolors by the prize-winning South African writer.

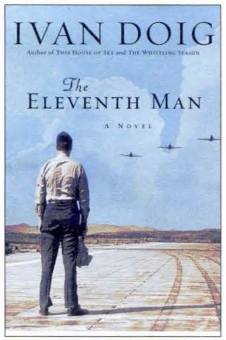
Ballistics, by Billy Collins (RH, Sept.). His last was his bestselling *The Trouble with Poetry*.

The Truro Bear and Other Adventures, by Mary Oliver (Beacon, Oct.). Poems and essays devoted to the world's creatures.

Marie Arana is the editor of Book World. She can be reached at aranam@washpost.com.

"THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO" BOOK JACKET: JOHN LENNON / MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES / GETTY IMAGES; MAYA ANGELOU: MARY ALTAFFER / AP

When war came home



The Eleventh Man
Ivan Doig
416 pages, hardcover: $26.
Harcourt, 2008.

In our collective memory, World War II happened "over there." But of course it also happened here — to soldiers' families, to women who went to work for the first time outside their homes, to the planters of victory gardens.

The war hit home particularly hard in Montana, which lost more than its fair share — its death rate was second only to New Mexico's, according to Ivan Doig. In his ninth novel, the celebrated Western writer brings that inequitable distribution of tragedy to life through Lieutenant Ben Reinking, who grew up along the Rocky Mountain Front — Doig's childhood home.

The son of a newspaperman and former captain of a legendary football team that went undefeated during the 1941 season, Reinking is pulled from fighter pilot training and assigned by the Threshold Press War Project, or "Teepee Weepy," to spend the war following his teammates, writing military propaganda about Montana's "Supreme Team" in combat.

One by one, Reinking's comrades fall, and he struggles with the guilt of having been handed a position of privilege. Meanwhile, he falls in love with a pilot who ferries airplanes to Canada — a married woman whose husband is fighting the Japanese in far-off jungles. Emotional entanglement ensues, in prose sometimes thick with romantic clichés:

"The two of them imbibed it all," writes Doig, "wanting to be nowhere else and in no other company. *Why can't it be like this,* they shared the thought without having to say so, *on and on*?"

The plot feels contrived, as the unseen powers behind Teepee Weepy yank Reinking around the globe without explanation. In shuttling among the war's theaters, Doig deprives himself of a signature strength: his deep roots in Montana's Two Medicine country, and his ability to evoke that place with integrity.

As in his other books, Doig, himself a self-described "relic," excels at recreating the past. Brief moments in history become fully textured and difficult to forget.

When the Marines invade Guam, Reinking is there to narrate for broadcast back home, describing the "terrible hail" of Japanese bullets bouncing off armored tanks, mortar shells exploding as soldiers slog shoreward, and the "dark blobs of bodies in the water." The scene, inspired by an actual recording made by Doig's friend, the late historian Alvin Josephy, is more powerful than any history lesson.

At 69, Doig still doesn't shy from love, nostalgia and the tension between fate and chance. In an age of endless irony, the venerable chronicler of the West's bygone eras remains a fearlessly earnest storyteller.



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BY EMMA BROWN



post-gazette NOW

John Updike, Pittsburgher Stewart O'Nan have new novels on fall list

Sunday, July 13, 2008
By Bob Hoover, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

After a two-week break, I'm resuming the hunt for the interesting books of the fall. It's shaping up as the busiest season for new releases ever.

The list of upcoming fiction is both broad and deep, particularly in new titles by old names. Here's the list, starting with a very familiar name:

"The Widows of Eastwick" by John Updike (Knopf, $24.95). Oct. 31.

A writer comfortable with sequels (the "Rabbit" novels), the 76-year-old Updike resurrects the story of "The Witches of Eastwick," his scandalous and sexy 1984 best-seller, by sending his coven back to the town of its misdeeds.

"Songs for the Missing" by Stewart O'Nan. (Viking, $23.95). November.

A year after his "Last Night at the Lobster" was received with high praise, Pittsburgh's O'Nan, 47, comes right back with his 11th novel set closer to home, the Lake Erie shore in Ohio. Some echoes of Calvary Camp are in this story of a missing girl, a place well-known to kids who grew up in the East End, like O'Nan.

"Golden Grove" by Francine Prose (Harper, $24.95). Sept. 16.

The place is a lake in summer, the main character a teenage girl, the action the loss of a sibling. Shades of O'Nan's novel, but Prose ("Blue Angel") is sure to bring her own subtle approach.

"The Whiskey Rebels" by David Liss. (Random House, $26). Oct. 2.

Also close to home (our back yard, as a matter of fact) is the new historical novel by Liss ("A Conspiracy of Paper"). The Western Pennsylvania rye distillers are up in arms over a federal tax, creating drama on the frontier.

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"The Given Day" by Dennis Lehane. (Morrow, $27.95). Sept. 28.

The publisher's betting the farm on the latest from Lehane ("Mystic River"). This 700-page fictional account of Boston is set in 1919, when the police force went on strike, Babe Ruth was still with the Red Sox, a flood of molasses paralyzed the town and postwar unrest sparked violence. Publicity campaign is massive.

"Fine Just the Way It Is" by Annie Proulx. (Scribner, $25). September.

Is there another "Brokeback Mountain" in her latest short-story collection? A selection I read in a recent New Yorker, "Tits-Up in a Ditch," was under-whelming.

"I See You Everywhere" by Julia Glass (Pantheon, $24). October.

Glass ("Three Junes") has mastered the novel of manners, American-style. Her new one also deals with two sisters a la O'Nan and Prose, but covers 25 years in their lives.

"American Wife" by Curtis Sittenfeld (Random House, $26). Sept. 2.

Noses are allegedly twitching at the White House in dread of Sittenfeld's novel about a first lady who sounds a lot like Laura Bush, including a fatal car accident, a president who reads children's books, and religious fundementalism. Sittenfeld's first novel, "Prep," was a popular success.

"The School on Heart's Content Road" by Carolyn Chute. (Atlantic Monthly Press, $24). November.

With "The Beans of Egypt, Maine" in 1985, the sad-faced Chute proved that rednecks flourish north of the Mason-Dixon Line, too. The book was a surprise hit and now she's back with another weird tale in the Maine woods.

"The Eleventh Man" by Ivan Doig (Harcourt, $26). October.

Teammates on a Montana college football team go off to World War II with one of their own ordered to follow their fates. Doig has become the modern-day Stegner of Western literature in some camps, a skilled soap-opera writer in others.

"The English Major" by Jim Harrison. (Grove Press, $24). October.

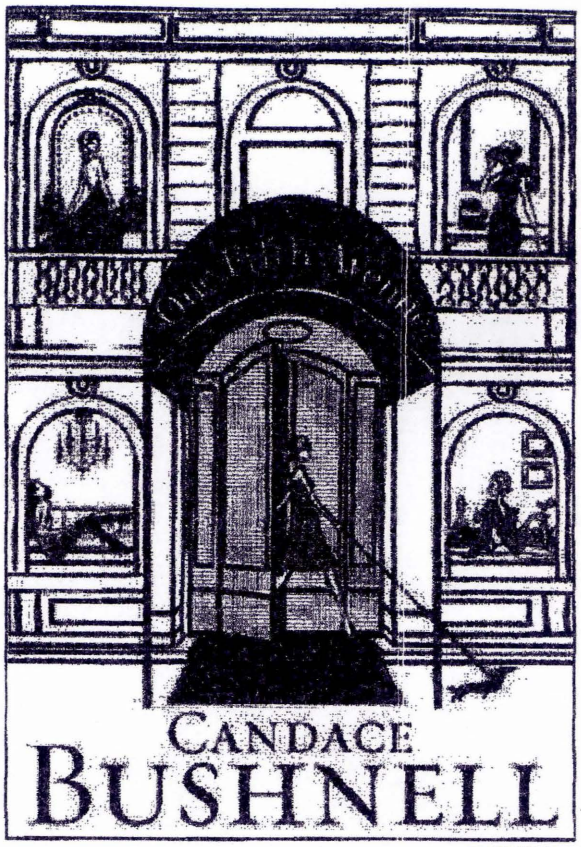
A self-publicizing foodie dilettante specializing in the game of his native Michigan when he's not writing fiction or poetry, Harrison has fans in several camps. Here he sends his 60-ish hero on the road after his wife dumps him.

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Yamaguchi Yoshiko. Under a number of aliases (including "Shirley Yamaguchi" in the U.S.), Yoshiko weathers all "the twists and turns in the history of modern Japan."

"One Fifth Avenue" *by Candace Bushnell* *(Hyperion)*. Bushnell ("Sex and the City") takes a "Grand Hotel" approach to a ritzy Lower Manhattan apartment building where "the lives of New York City's elite play out."

"Deaf Sentence" *by David Lodge* *(Viking)*. The esteemed British novelist — twice a finalist for the Booker Prize — delivers a tale about a linguistics professor "vexed by his encroaching deafness and at loose ends in his personal life."



HYPERION

October

"Flight: New and Selected Poems" *by Linda Bierds* *(Marian Wood/Putnam)*. A retrospective of the Bainbridge Island poet's work, addressing "the things that unite us in our common humanity — art, science, music, history." Bierds teaches at the University of Washington.

"The Brass Verdict" *by Michael Connelly* (Little, Brown). "Lincoln Lawyer" attorney Mickey Haller and Detective Harry Bosch form an uneasy partnership as they investigate a case involving Walter Elliott, a prominent L.A. film executive accused of murder.

"A Partisan's Daughter" *by Louis de Bernières* *(Knopf)*. The author of "Corelli's Mandolin" takes 1970s London as his backdrop, in a novel about a "bored, lonely" married man who invites a Yugoslavian hooker into his car. Only she's not a hooker — and she *is* one hell of a storyteller.

"The Eleventh Man" *by Ivan Doig* *(Harcourt)*. Seattle resident Doig's latest novel tells a World War II story of a journalist and former member of a championship Montana college football team who is tapped by a government "press" agency to tell the wartime stories of 10 former teammates.

"Sea of Poppies" *by Amitav Ghosh* *(Farrar, Straus and Giroux)*. A saga set in India during the 19th century Opium Wars, with a cast of characters thrown together by colonial upheaval. A finalist for the Man Booker Prize by the author of "The Glass Palace."

"I See You Everywhere" *by Julia Glass* *(Pantheon)*. A novel about two sisters, one a risktaking rebel, the other more quiet and responsible but yearning for something more. By the winner of the National Book Award-winning "Three Junes."

"The English Major" *by Jim Harrison* *(Grove)*. A novel about a man in his 60s who, robbed of his farm by his "late-blooming real estate shark of an ex-wife," takes a road trip to San Francisco to visit his movie-producer son. By the author of "Legends of the Fall" and "Dalva."

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Fall Arts Guide | Literary highlights



PAUL GILMORE

By Mary Ann Gwinn
Seattle Times book editor

Seattle Arts & Lectures. It's a mystery how SAL maintains such an A-list lineup in these tight times; you'd be lucky to spot this critical mass of authors and artists in Manhattan. The fall roster includes novelist **Richard Russo** (Sept. 17); essayist **Terry Tempest Williams** (Oct. 7); poet **W.S. Merwin** (Nov. 7); novelist, essayist and New Yorker critic **John Updike** (Nov. 12); and photographer **Annie Leibovitz** (Nov. 19). *Benaroya Hall.*

Alexander McCall Smith. The King County Library System brings the elegant and witty Smith, author of the bittersweet Botswana-based Precious Ramotswe mystery series, to town. *Sept. 28, Meydenbauer Center, Bellevue.*

Marilynne Robinson. Author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel "Gilead," Smith returns to Seattle to read from "Home," her new novel that looks at the "Gilead" story through the eyes of different characters. *Oct. 2, Seattle Public Library.*

Richard Hugo House's 2008-09 literary series. This clever and provocative series, which invites selected authors and artists to produce new work around a particular theme and then discuss it with audiences, has two installments: Oct. 24's "Road Trip" and Nov. 21's "Personal Injury." Of the two, "Personal Injury" looks particularly toothy, featuring poet and performer Allen Johnson, social critic and memoirist Richard Rodriguez, essayist Sallie Tisdale and the singer Laura Veirs. *Hugo House.*

Dexter Filkins. The New York Times war correspondent's new book, "The Forever War," is based on his Afghanistan and Iraq reporting experiences, and advance reviews are calling it some of the best war reporting ever. *Sept. 22, Town Hall Seattle.*

Dennis Lehane. The author of "Mystic River" and screenwriter for HBO's "The Wire" will read from his new historical novel "The Given Day." It's a 720-page doorstopper that interweaves stories of the Boston Police Strike of 1919, the Spanish flu pandemic, red-baiting, anti-union violence and the Catholic Church. Whew. *Oct. 8, Third Place Books.*

Local authors. Look for these talents as they appear at bookstores around town: Neal Stephenson, reading his new novel "Anathem"; Ivan Doig reading "The Eleventh Man"; and Robert Clark discussing "Dark Water," his new book about a 1966 flood in Florence, Italy. *Numerous dates and locations, see listing.*

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INTERVIEW

Teammates in arms

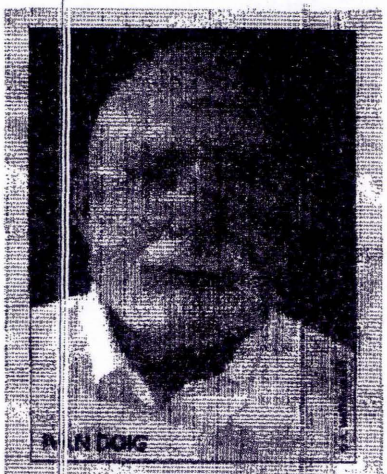
A winning football team finds tragedy in war

BY ALDEN MUDGE

Since the publication of his beautiful memoir of growing up in Montana, *The House of Sky* (1979), Ivan Doig has been hailed as a great Western writer. That reputation was burnished by the publication of his marvelous Montana trilogy, *English Creek* (1984), *Dancing at the Rascal Fair* (1987) and *Ride With Me, Mariah Montana* (1990), which masterfully portrays the lives of four generations of the McCaskill family in Two Medicine country, Doig's lovingly invented landscape near the Rockies in Montana.

But like many ambitious writers who find their subjects and locales beyond the bright lights and big egos of the East Coast publishing world, Doig bristles just a bit at being pigeonholed as a Western writer.

"I find that's kind of an odd fence that's put around those of us who happen to live out here on this side of the Mississippi River," Doig says during a call to his home high on a bluff over Puget Sound, just north of downtown Seattle. "Writers of my generation are always described as writers of place. Maybe that's true as far as it goes. But what about the poetry under the prose? What about the fact that when readers raise their hands at book signings or readings, it's the characters and the language they tend to mention?" Doig says. "It seems to me the 'Western writer' tag shortchanges the pretty sophisticated literary effort that's gone on among my writing generation out here. It's going to be interesting to see after the publication of *The Eleventh Man*, am I still going to be a Western writer after taking these characters to Guam, New Guinea, Fairbanks, Alaska?"



IVAN DOIG

Ivan Doig finds inspiration in the real-life story of a college football team that fought in WWII.

Interesting indeed. *The Eleventh Man*, Doig's ninth novel and 12th book, is a panoramic page-turner about World War II as seen mostly through the eyes of Ben Reinking, a GI reporter assigned by the government's propaganda machine to write about the exploits of his former teammates, who comprised the starting lineup of the "Supreme Team," a championship Montana college football team that went undefeated in 1941.

"My imagination works best when it has a jumping off place of fact," Doig says, explaining the seed of his novel. "Somewhere in *The Eleventh Man*, the newspaperman Bill Reinking [Ben's father, an appealing small town newspaper publisher] says 'history writes the best yarns.' I thoroughly agree with that. Quite a number of years ago in the library of the Montana Historical Society in Helena I came across the half-lore and half-proven story of an entire Montana college football team that had gone into World War II, and the starting 11 had all perished in the war. The library is the greenhouse of the imagination for me. I suppose I tucked that away and my mind worked on it and at some point wondered, what if you were the 11th man while the war was taking its toll on all the others?"

The toll of war is widely and deeply felt in *The Eleventh Man*. As a war correspondent, Ben travels to every theater of World War II to write about the experiences of his former teammates, allowing Doig to work his magic over a much wider landscape than in his previous novels.

Some of that magic derives from the language Doig deploys in telling his tale. He has often used the phrase "poetry under the prose" to describe the effect he is looking for, by which he means "an interior rhyme or chime of language, something in a sentence which you hope will surprise and delight the reader, at least a little bit. I work at it also in the vernacular that my characters will talk, whether it's military, here in *The Eleventh Man*, or forest rangers in *English Creek*. I try to get a shimmer of how people will talk about their work or because they are in their work," Doig says. "I've often warmed up for the morning's work by reading 10 pages of the *Dictionary of America Regional English*, which is the great University of Wisconsin project to capture how people say things in various parts of this country."

Doig's cast of characters here is large and vivid. And although this a novel of war and football, his women characters—a Russian woman pilot ferrying bombers from Fairbanks to the Soviet Union, for example, or Cass Standish, an American flyer in the WASP (Women Airforce Service Pilots) with whom Ben develops a complicated wartime romance—are among his most interesting characters.

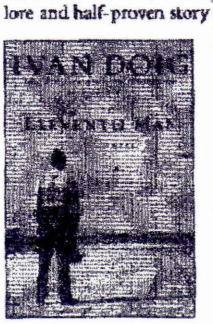
"I sometimes take more pleasure in writing the female characters than male characters for some reason," Doig says. He adds: "I did have great good luck here. Everybody who saw this piece of writing before it emerged into galleys was a woman, starting with my wife Carol."

In fact, Doig and his wife have an unusually close working relationship. They came to Seattle together in 1966, when Doig entered a Ph.D. program in American history at the University of Washington. She has always been the first reader of his writing, his co-researcher and his research photographer. They sit across from one another at a trapezoidal desk they designed for the large converted family room where they work, looking out over Puget Sound from a bluff some 300 feet above the water. "We're both old newspaper people," Doig says. "In our newspaper and magazine past both of us shared space with people we didn't particularly choose to. You learn to have a zone of concentration over you. So it's never been an issue with Carol and me."

Turning reflective, Doig adds, "I've always seen writing as a profession. I have been, I suppose, kind of prickly proud about being a professional, all the way back to being a magazine freelancer here in Seattle, during and after graduate school. I spent much too long at that kind of life before *This House of Sky* took me out of it. But I came out of college and into journalism as what I saw as a serious wordsmith and a serious journalist. Producing language and story to the best of my ability has always been what I see that I'm up to."

With *The Eleventh Man*, Doig demonstrates once again that his ability remains deep and wide. ❦

Alden Mudge writes from San Francisco.



The Eleventh Man
By Ivan Doig
Harcourt
$26, 41[illegible] pages
ISBN 9780[illegible]51012435
Also available on audio



Sep 24 2008 3:34PM HP LASERJET FAX p.2

Attached is the interview with Alden Mudge from the October issue of BookPage.

On or before the first of October, 460,000 copies of this issue will arrive in more than 3,000 subscribing bookstores and public libraries nationwide.

This review will also be available to the websites of more than 380 public libraries subscribing to BookLetters. Please note that these 380 libraries represent more than 15 million active patrons.

Teammates in arms

A winning football team finds tragedy in war

BY ALDEN MUDGE

Since the publication of his beautiful memoir of growing up in Montana, *The House of Sky* (1979), Ivan Doig has been hailed as a great Western writer. That reputation was burnished by the publication of his marvelous Montana trilogy, *English Creek* (1984), *Dancing at the Rascal Fair* (1987) and *Ride With Me, Mariah Montana* (1990), which masterfully portrays the lives of four generations of the McCaskill family in Two Medicine country, Doig's lovingly invented landscape near the Rockies in Montana.

But like many ambitious writers who find their subjects and locales beyond the bright lights and big egos of the East Coast publishing world, Doig bristles just a bit at being pigeonholed as a Western writer.

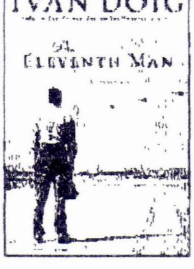
"I find that's kind of an odd fence that's put around those of us who happen to live out here on this side of the Mississippi River," Doig says during a call to his home high on a bluff over Puget Sound, just north of downtown Seattle. "Writers of my generation are always described as writers of place. Maybe that's true as far as it goes. But what about the poetry under the prose? What about the fact that when readers raise their hands at book signings or readings, it's the characters and the language they tend to mention?" Doig says. "It seems to me the 'Western writer' tag shortchanges the pretty sophisticated literary effort that's gone on among my writing generation out here. It's going to be interesting to see after the publication of *The Eleventh Man*, am I still going to be a Western writer after taking these characters to Guam, New Guinea, Fairbanks, Alaska?"



Ivan Doig finds inspiration in the real-life story of a college football team that fought in WWII.

Interesting indeed. *The Eleventh Man*, Doig's ninth novel and 12th book, is a panoramic page-turner about World War II as seen mostly through the eyes of Ben Reinking, a GI reporter assigned by the government's propaganda machine to write about the exploits of his former teammates, who comprised the starting lineup of the "Supreme Team," a championship Montana college football team that went undefeated in 1941.

"My imagination works best when it has a jumping off place of fact," Doig says, explaining the seed of his novel. "Somewhere in *The Eleventh Man*, the newspaper man Bill Reinking [Ben's father, an appealing small town newspaper publisher] says 'history writes the best yarns.' I thoroughly agree with that. Quite a number of years ago in the library of the Montana Historical Society in Helena I came across the half-lore and half-proven story of an entire Montana college football team that had gone into World War II, and the starting 11 had all perished in the war. The library is the greenhouse of the imagination for me. I suppose I tucked that away and my mind worked on it and at some point wondered, what if you were the 11th man while the war was taking its toll on all the others?"



The Eleventh Man
By Ivan Doig
Harcourt
$26, 416 pages
ISBN 9780151012435
Also available on audio

The toll of war is widely and deeply felt in *The Eleventh Man*. As a war correspondent, Ben travels to every theater of World War II to write about the experiences of his former teammates, allowing Doig to work his magic over a much wider landscape than in his previous novels.

Some of that magic derives from the language Doig deploys in telling his tale. He has often used the phrase "poetry under the prose" to describe the effect he is looking for, by which he means "an interior rhyme or chime of language, something in a sentence which you hope will surprise and delight the reader, at least a little bit. I work at it also in the vernacular that my characters will talk, whether it's military, here in *The Eleventh Man*, or forest rangers in *English Creek*. I try to get a shimmer of how people will talk about their work or because they are in their work," Doig says. "I've often warmed up for the morning's work by reading 10 pages of the *Dictionary of American Regional English*, which is the great University of Wisconsin project to capture how people say things in various parts of this country."

Doig's cast of characters here is large and vivid. And although this a novel of war and football, his women characters—a Russian woman pilot ferrying bombers from Fairbanks to the Soviet Union, for example, or Cass Standish, an American flyer in the WASP (Women Airforce Service Pilots) with whom Ben develops a complicated wartime romance—are among his most interesting characters.

"I sometimes take more pleasure in writing the female characters than male characters for some reason," Doig says. He adds: "I did have great good luck here. Everybody who saw this piece of writing before it emerged into galleys was a woman, starting with my wife Carol."

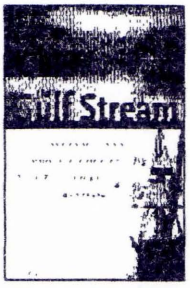
In fact, Doig and his wife have an unusually close working relationship. They came to Seattle together in 1966, when Doig entered a Ph.D. program in American history at the University of Washington. She has always been the first reader of his writing, his co-researcher and his research photographer. They sit across from one another at a trapezoidal desk they designed for the large converted family room where they work, looking out over Puget Sound from a bluff some 300 feet above the water. "We're both old newspaper people," Doig says. "In our newspaper and magazine past both of us shared space with people we didn't particularly choose to. You learn to have a cone of concentration over you. So it's never been an issue with Carol and me."

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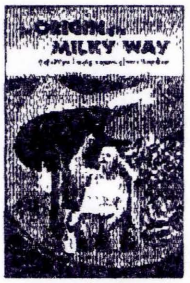
Alden Mudge writes from San Francisco.

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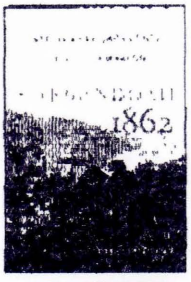
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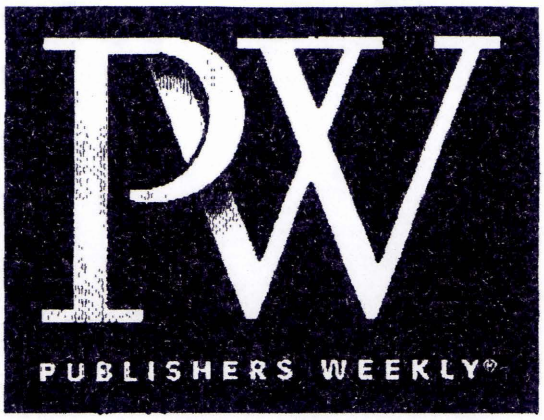
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University of North Carolina Press



June 16, 2008

The Eleventh Man
Ivan Doig. Harcourt, $26 (416p) ISBN 978-0-15-101243-5
In the solid latest from veteran novelist Doig (The Whistling Season), 11 starters of a close-knit Montana college championship football team enlist as the U.S. hits the thick of WWII and are capriciously flung around the globe in various branches of the service. Ben Reinking, initially slated for pilot training, is jerked from his plane and more or less forced to become a war correspondent for the semisecret Threshold Press War Project, a propaganda arm of the combined armed forces. His orders: to travel the world, visiting and writing profiles on each of his heroic teammates. The fetching Women's Airforce Service Pilot who flies him around, Cass Standish, is married to a soldier fighting in the South Pacific, which leads to anguish for them both (think Alan Ladd and Loretta Young). Meanwhile, Ben's former teammates are being killed one by one, often, it seems, being deliberately put into harm's way. Doig adroitly keeps Ben on track, offering an old-fashioned greatest generation story, well told. (Oct.)

LIBRARYJOURNAL.

August 15, 2008

Doig, Ivan. The Eleventh Man. Harcourt. Oct. 2008. c.416p. ISBN 978-0-15-101243-5. $26. F

This inspiring World War II novel features a large cast of skillfully drawn characters and celebrates the many sacrifices made by anonymous soldiers during the war; fans of Doig (This Whistling Season) will welcome his characteristic warmth and generosity. The narrative follows the members of an undefeated high school football team from Montana after the war casts them all over the globe. At the center is Ben Reinking, who has been selected by the army to report on his teammates in various theaters of the war. These reports quickly become popular, but as the losses mount, Reinking is increasingly pressured by the government to report information selectively or in ways that are misleading. In the end, Doig has important things to say about our thirst for heroes and heroic stories and where we might find them. He also shows great sympathy for the unheralded men and women who fought this war. Recommended for all libraries.—Patrick Sullivan, Manchester Community Coll., CT

KIRKUS REVIEWS

August 1, 2008

Doig, Ivan
THE ELEVENTH MAN

The members of a legendary Montana college football team become grist for the World War II PR mill in this latest from Doig (*The Whistling Season*, 2006, etc.).

Ben Reinking isn't thrilled to be yanked out of pilot training and told that his assignment for the duration is to write about his former Treasure State University teammates for the Threshold Press War Project (TPWP), which provides ready-made stories for local newspapers across America. Despite their undefeated season at TSU in 1941, Ben has bad memories of their bullying coach, indirectly responsible for the death from overexertion of the squad's 12th man, and he despises Ted Loudon, the smarmy sports columnist who dubbed them the "Supreme Team" and now thinks their collective story will be a propaganda bonanza. In the war's far-flung theaters, from the jungles of New Guinea to bomb-blasted Antwerp, Ben struggles to write honestly about his teammates, including one who's a conscientious objector, under the constraints imposed by the TPWP, which wants heroes, not the truth. His other major preoccupation is Cass Standish, a crackerjack pilot confined by her gender to ferrying fighter planes to bases. Ben and Cass are having a torrid affair, but she's married and too honest to pretend she knows what will happen when her husband comes home from the Pacific. Doig, as always, brings American history alive in a rousing narrative that doesn't airbrush the past; questions of loyalty, courage and conscience, he shows, were just as complicated during World War II as they are today. He offers several scenes with his trademark blend of high drama underpinned by technical know-how: Ben and a buddy struggling to get a tired old plane in the air from a soft gravel runway; Ben reporting into a microphone attached to an unwieldy tape recorder as he lands with the Marines at Guam. Montana remains important as home ground, for the main characters and their author, but it's a pleasure to see Doig expanding his horizons.

Another fine effort from a veteran writer who knows how to play to his strengths while continuing to challenge himself.

ENTERTAINMENT

October holds hope of good reads

BOOK NOTES
Dan Webster

We're approaching the halfway point in July, so there's still plenty of time left to complete that summer-reading list.

A couple of books that have landed on my desk lately, though, are uncorrected proofs of volumes that won't arrive on bookshelves until October. Even so, both seem well worth waiting for.

One is "Bretz's Flood: The Remarkable Story of a Rebel Geologist and the World's Greatest Flood" (Sasquatch Books, 320 pages, $21.95) by John Soennichsen. The book tells the story of J Harlen Bretz, the man who first theorized – arousing much controversy – that the unique scablands of Eastern Washington were caused by massive, ancient flooding.

Soennichsen, by the way, is the author of the ongoing online novel "Valley of the Shadow" that is being presented, chapter by chapter, at www.spokesmanreview.com/blogs/shadow.

The other book coming in October is Ivan Doig's novel "The Eleventh Man" (Harcourt, 416 pages, $26). His ninth novel, and 12th book overall, is set during World War II and tells the story of one man's attempts to document the wartime exploits of his 10 teammates on a legendary Montana college football team.

Doig is the Seattle-based writer of Montana roots whose previous works include "This House of Sky" and "Dancing at the Rascal Fair."

None less than novelist Scott Turow has his name emblazoned on the cover of my review copy: " 'The Eleventh Man,' " Turow wrote, "is about loyalty and survival and sacrifice – and love – and remains intensely suspenseful and moving throughout."

Mark your literary calendars for both.

What is genre?

Genre writing is the great misunderstood literary conundrum. When something is labeled "genre" – as in "mystery" or "science fiction" or even "romance" – it's immediately considered, in some corners, as less than literary.

Yet some great writers of the 20th century, from Graham Greene to Raymond Chandler to Ursula K. LeGuin, toiled in various genres. And no one credible would question these writers' literary abilities.

A discussion about genres will take place at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday at Auntie's Bookstore. The Inland Northwest Writers Guild, which is open to published and unpublished writers, is the host.

For information, e-mail Bonnie McDade at communiqueink@hotmail.com, or call Lind Bond at (509) 838-0206.

Book talk

- Inland Northwest Writers Guild, 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Auntie's Bookstore, Main and Washington. Call (509) 838-0206.
- Auntie's Youth Book Group ("Airman," by Eoin Colfer), 2 p.m. Saturday, Auntie's Bookstore.

The reader board

- Michael Farley ("Dreamscapes"), Amber LaParne and Jasmine Paul ("Ghosts of Anne and Sylvia"), readings, 1 p.m. today, Auntie's Bookstore.
- Kathleen O'Brien ("Northwest Green Home Primer"), reading, 7:30 p.m. Monday, Auntie's Bookstore.
- Dale Soden ("Historic Photos of Washington State"), PowerPoint lecture, 7 p.m. Tuesday, Auntie's Bookstore.
- Ken Bryan ("My Brother's Eye"), Scott Melville ("The Scent of These Armpits"), readings, 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Auntie's Bookstore.
- T. Dawn Richard, Ed Muzatko, Charlotte McCoy, Mark J. Bessermin, Rosie Belisle, Jeff Lewis ("Northwest Tall Tales, Short Stories and Other Rare Ramblings"), group reading, 7 p.m. Friday, Auntie's Bookstore.
- Kelly Milner Halls ("Dinosaur Mummies"), Verla Kay ("Rough, Tough Charley"), 11 a.m. Saturday, South Hill Library, 3324 S. Perry St. Call (509) 444-5385.

Dan Webster can be reached at (509) 459-5483 or by e-mail at danw@spokesman.com.

KIRKUS REVIEWS
August 1, 2008

Doig, Ivan
THE ELEVENTH MAN

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Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

Issue: July 1, 2008

The Eleventh Man.
Doig, Ivan (Author)
Oct 2008. 416 p. Harcourt, hardcover, $26.00. (9780151012435)

Doig constructs an elaborate premise for his latest venture into Montana history: the entire starting lineup of Treasure State University's 1941 football team—undefeated and known as the "Supreme Team"—enlist in the armed services shortly after Pearl Harbor. One of those players, Ben Reinking, finds himself pulled from pilot training and given a peculiar assignment by a special branch of the military whose charge is, in effect, creating heroes for the war propaganda machine. Ben, a journalism major whose father runs a small-town paper in Gros Ventre, Montana, is ordered to follow in the footsteps of his 10 teammates throughout the war, reporting on their adventures, triumphs, and, inevitably, their deaths. His mission, which he comes to abhor as its ghoulish side becomes dominant, takes him from flight-training school in Great Falls, where he falls in love with a married female pilot, to the invasion of Guam, the jungles of New Guinea, and the Battle of the Bulge. As always, Doig writes with impressionistic flourish—his style can

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TO: IVAN

COMPANY: reviews!

FAX NUMBER:

PAGES (INCLUDING COVER): 12

FROM: Some good.. some bad

TELEPHONE NUMBER:  - some mixed - but

MESSAGE: best news is to be reviewed in this TOUGH climate and shrinking coverage!

Detroit Free Press

November 2, 2008

Book review: 'The Eleventh Man'

BY DAVID M. SHRIBMAN
BLOOMBERG NEWS

An undefeated 1941 football season. A town scratched into Montana's northern plains. A war with many fronts, including the home front. A small-town newspaper editor. A female pilot (a WASP who ferries P-39s) who's in love with our hero while her husband is fighting in the Pacific. Good raw material for a novel, no?

Ivan Doig's "The Eleventh Man" draws from three of the hardiest genres in the American canon: the sports book, the war novel, the story set in the great West.

And though on the surface this novel revolves around one resilient American theme (that championship season), it's really about honor, loyalty and the character and courage that war creates -- and reveals.

The book tells the tale of the storied Golden Eagles of Treasure State University, who swept through their entire '41 season and then were swept into the war that began as the season ended.

All 11 starters enlisted in the war effort, but one of them is picked by Washington to chronicle the heroics of the other 10 -- making them fodder for the propaganda effort before they become fodder for the fortunes of war. Through their stories we learn their secrets and shame, their valor and bravery.

The Golden Eagles died in the customary ways, which is to say the worst ways possible; in, as Doig puts it, "the black fire of nightmare." They died in New Guinea, or in a kamikaze raid at Leyte Gulf, or in some forgotten field. It was a team "betrayed by the law of averages, with something that amounted to a moving wall of oblivion hinged to the war for them."

Doig is a master of fiction, but his story has a bitter root of truth. Eleven members of the football team from Montana State College in Bozeman did die in World War II, and for his story Doig drew on oral histories, memoirs and other research material.

• Winnipeg Free Press
books

Winnipeg Free Press

Wartime characters made flesh and blood

Updated: November 2, 2008 at 02:50 AM CST

The Eleventh Man

By Ivan Doig

Harcourt, 416 pages, $29

FOR his ninth novel, *American West* novelist Ivan Doig returns to his roots in rural Montana before tra to the global theatre of the Second World War.

The 11th man is Ben Reinking, local hero of the Golden Eagles football team, who along with 10 other brought Treasure State University victory in the fall of 1941.

Months later, following the attack on Pearl Harbor, the U.S. enters the war, and the 11 young men are c of another sort.

Ben chronicles the fate of his teammates for the Threshold Press War Project (nicknamed Teepy Weep of the U.S military. Ben is ordered to submit a series of articles cutely titled The Supreme Team, which HQ and then proudly dispatched to small-town papers across the U.S.

It's the type of dreck Ben's newspaperman father calls "PhD writing": Piled higher and deeper.

Ben, who trained as a pilot, is grounded for the express purpose of turning out this sentimental copy. B DNA and rural stubbornness soon have him resenting the task, and locking horns with his commanding

Dogging the 11 men through the war is the often-cited law of averages, a cynical but accurate formula, each man has a one in 10 chance of not returning home. As Ben profiles each man, the suspense mount who will die?

Ben also confronts a moral dilemma when one of his teammates, thought to be working on a secret mis turns up at a pacifist camp run by the Quakers close to his hometown. This is not a story Ben's bosses v

The Eleventh Man takes the reader into new corners of the war. Younger readers will not likely know tl infested trenches of New Guinea, Japanese advances threatened Australia, or that in Alaska, Soviet and side by side.

We meet a compliment of female pilots and mechanics who fly the North. These brave, and all but forg women served their country proudly, but unlike their Russian sisters, were forbidden from combat.

Ben has a love affair with one of these spunky fly girls, Capt. Cass Standish, whose husband is fighting away and likely, she surmises, having his own romantic trysts.

Description and dialogue make each character flesh and blood. You can almost hear the fast-talking bai

perfume. Tommy Dorsey music mysteriously plays in your head.

Doig always has a gift for conjuring up time and place. He is the master of a nostalgic realism uniquely

On Ben's 11 companions: "Those we were left, ticked through Ben's mind like split seconds on a stop v

Rowboat docks on a pristine lake were "spaced the distance of a fly cast apart." A particularly garish ac described as "visual braille."

The Eleventh Man, although panoramic in scope, is filled with these tiny details. By the novel's satisfyi comes richly to life.

Fans of Larry McMurtry and Annie Proulx will enjoy Doig's work. Story, character and setting are the novels. Doig tends to set his novels in decades past (*The Whistling Season, English Creek*), and this ch his style.

His work is always refreshingly scrubbed of irony. Doig, on rare occasions comes within spitting distar never succumbs.

Ditto on puns and cliché. He makes writing look easy and perhaps this is why international fame has el

Hopefully, this rich and enjoyable new novel will change that. Oprah, you listening?

Al Rae is a Winnipeg comedian.

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'The Eleventh Man' by Ivan Doig

War is hell, but there's always Montana

Sunday, November 02, 2008
By Bob Hoover, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

The current bard of the wide, open spaces, Ivan Doig has built a solid following with his steady, straightforward fiction about the "real America," the mythical land that Sarah Palin locates somewhere in the sticks.

Doig hails from that vast emptiness along the Canadian border called Montana, where men are expected to be men, and as for the ladies, "Montana men did not believe that a woman's grasp in life included the steering wheel" of a car.

With all that Blue Sky Country canvas around him, the novelist limited his previous works to the lives of a few hardy folk, earning himself the endearing tag of "storyteller." Yet, he always seemed to be using a small artist's brush to paint on a small corner of that big blue blank.

"THE ELEVENTH MAN"

By Ivan Doig
Harcourt ($26)

He's become more ambitious in his new one, taking on World War II as his backdrop, but he insists on using that little brush rather than taking a broad sweep. The result is a story confined to his Montana as the war flashes by like a newsreel.

It's an intriguing setup: Ben Reinking, member of the undefeated 1941 Treasure State University football team, the "Supreme Team," is fighting as a propagandist for the War Department.

His assignment is to bat out inspiring patriotic stories about the other 10 starters who are in various battle stations around the world as he works for something called the Threshold Press War Project. To move things along, three are already dead at the book's start.

While this structure gives Doig permission to send Reinking globe-trotting, the author continually returns him to Montana, where there's an air base used to ferry American-made planes to the Soviet Union, flown largely by the Women's Air Force Service.

Ben himself takes frequent flights in bed with pilot Cass Standish, whose husband is stationed in the Pacific, before shipping out to chronicle another tragedy.

Doig seems to have most of his research watching Hollywood war films, picking up that "gee-whiz" dialog that only Ronald Reagan made believable and giving us average-Joe characters straight out of Warner Bros. central casting.

With his adulterous ways and willingness to sell out the truth for the war effort, Ben remains a half-formed hero whose emotions and purpose are muted. There's no vividness to Doig's hero, or the rest of his characters.

The storyteller takes precedence here, and Doig crafts a clutch of fine descriptive passages, but overall, the novel feels artificial, imitative and forced.

Contact book editor Bob Hoover at bhoover@post-gazette.com or 412-263-1634.

First published on November 2, 2008 at 12:00 am

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The Eleventh Man by Ivan Doig (Harcourt, $28.95) draws from three of the hardiest genres in the American canon: The sports book, the war novel, the story set in the great West. It begins in 1941, the Golden Eagles football team has swept through the entire 1941 season and now all 11 starters have enlisted in the war effort, with one of them going to Washington to provide fodder for the propaganda effort. David M. Shribman, reviewing the book for Bloom-berg News, says, "Doig is a master of fiction, to be sure, but his story has a bitter root of truth. Eleven members of the football team from Montana State College did die in the Second World War, and, for his story, Doig drew on oral histories, memoirs and other research material." Buy it.

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Queen's College Knight News

Eleven Isn't the Magic Number, But It's Pretty Close

By: Justin Sloboda

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World War II is one of the most frequently used backdrops in fiction. It's been used and abused by writers to the point where it's rare to see someone do something new or different with it. Ivan Doig, however, manages to pull off such a feat with The Eleventh Man.

The Eleventh Man follows the journey of Reinking, the 11th member of a college football team whose other 10 members fought in World War II. Reinking, who has journalistic talent and experience, is chosen to visit his 10 former teammates and record their stories. He does this as part of a propagandist assignment he is given by the Threshold Press War Project, a government-funded press outlet that funnels propaganda news stories to smaller newspapers.

The narrative throws us into the story of a man uniquely positioned during the war - the propagandist.

This seemed like it was going to be a story rife with compelling newsroom drama where we would see Reinking struggling against the censoring nature of propaganda as he tries to report the truth. We would see him go through these moral dilemmas while dealing with the situations that arise from his surroundings. Sadly, this only comes in small, limited doses throughout the novel.

The story primarily centers itself around the individuals he follows while reporting. At some points in the book, the narrative focuses entirely on the individual characters he visits.

It is at these points that we start to see the typical World War II stories emerge. The narrative tends to leave these supporting characters just as their stories get interesting. Once one story piques our interest, we are whisked away from their world and thrust haphazardly into another.

When we return to Reinking's story, we focus on his relationship with Cass, a married woman whose husband is off in the war. This has been done before, and in better ways. There's no weight to this plot line, rendering it arbitrary in comparison to the rest of the narrative.

The key twists in the narrative remain unresolved. Reinking's suspicion that there is some sort of conspiracy under the surface is totally removed from the rest of the narrative and feels out of place. Moreover, these suspicions are never validated or denied. Doig only lays out several possible explanations.

In many ways, the book has the artificial feel of a World War II novel written in 2008. Instead of being a seamless narrative that transports the reader to its own time, it constantly reminds us that time separates us from the narrative.

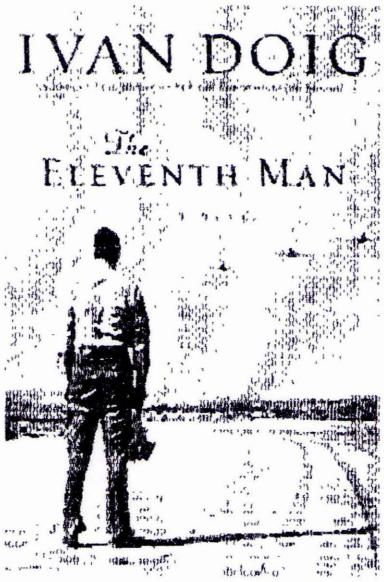
Despite these flaws, however, The Eleventh Man does have its moments. The stories of the 10 teammates are interesting, even if we are with them for too short a time. Additionally, the narrative twist is interesting and thought provoking, even if it is never properly resolved.

Overall, The Eleventh Man is average. There is nothing in the text to earn it high praise or strong criticism.

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By John Broening
Special to The Denver Post

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(The Denver Post)

Toward the end of "The Eleventh Man," Ivan Doig's galumphing World War II novel, the hero, an Army misnaming two stars of Army's football team ("It's Blanchard and Davis, kamerad."), he pulls out a pistol and shoots them.

Sure enough, they turn out to be German secret agents, saboteurs thwarted in their mission to cut vital communication wires.

The scene in which the shrewd American soldier uses sports trivia as a code language to detect enemy agents was a staple of the WWII drama for so long that it eventually became fodder for a "Saturday Night Live" skit 30 years ago. It's a sign of what's wrong with "The Eleventh Man" that the novelist plays this scene, and many other too-familiar moments from WWII dramas, completely straight.

"The Eleventh Man" tells the story of the fictional Treasure State starting football team, undefeated regional champions from a university in Montana. With one exception, they all enlist in the war effort.

A former tight end on the TSU team, Reinking is conscripted by the Threshold Press War Project (loosely modeled on FDR's Office of War Information) to report on the wartime activities of his former teammates. Reinking's assignments takes him from bombed-out Antwerp to a submarine in the Pacific to a surveillance post in Washington state.

In the most interesting section of the book, he visits a teammate who's opted for conscientious objector status. Doig gives us a vivid description of a camp

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for smoke jumpers, where "conshies" are trained in the fearsome skill of parachuting into forest fires.

Reinking takes up with the fiery Cass Standish, a pilot in the all- female WASP air corps who's married to a soldier stationed in the Pacific. She is, of course, his female counterpart, and, like him, fearless, sharp-witted and larger than life.

After a halfbreed Indian teammate is killed in a bombing raid on a military hospital, Reinking figures that the rest of his buddies are safe: The law of averages dictates that only one of the 11 should die in the conflict. As more of his former teammates start dying, "The Eleventh Man" turns into an unlikely combination of "Saving Private Ryan" and "Ten Little Indians."

It's clear what attracted Doig to this story, which, as he acknowledges in an afterword, was based on the unlucky fate of the wartime Montana State College football team. It allows the writer to give us a number of Greatest Generation set pieces: a bucket-of-bolts airplane crash-landing in the middle of the wilderness, a marathon drinking session involving American and Russian soldiers, a kamikaze raid on a naval ship.

Unfortunately, there's the problem of the prose, which stands between the novelist and his vision like a dirty flyscreen. With writing that's full of bizarre diction, clunky rhythms and unintentional rhymes, "The Eleventh Man" reads like it was hastily translated from an obscure foreign language:

"Silently he wrung the neck of the words he had just heard."

Or:

"The ginger hair was briskly cut in a way he must have caught from being around Marines, a curt bristle her fingers wanted into whenever they weren't otherwise engaged in the cabin out back a half hour ago."

Doig considers himself a bit of a stylist, the kind who finds it difficult to compose a straightforward declarative sentence. Instead of writing, "He realized he was still alive," Doig gives us, "It took some moments for this unexpected lease on existence to register on him." Instead of using the perfectly adequate "he said" for dialogue, he prefers "he lamented huskily" or "he reported bashfully" or any number of variations out of the Boys' Life fiction writer's handbook.

"The Eleventh Man" is based on a great deal of original research, and there are some interesting passages about lesser-known aspects of the war. But the true-to-life- story, rather than giving the novel some dramatic arc or momentum, tends to flatten it out.

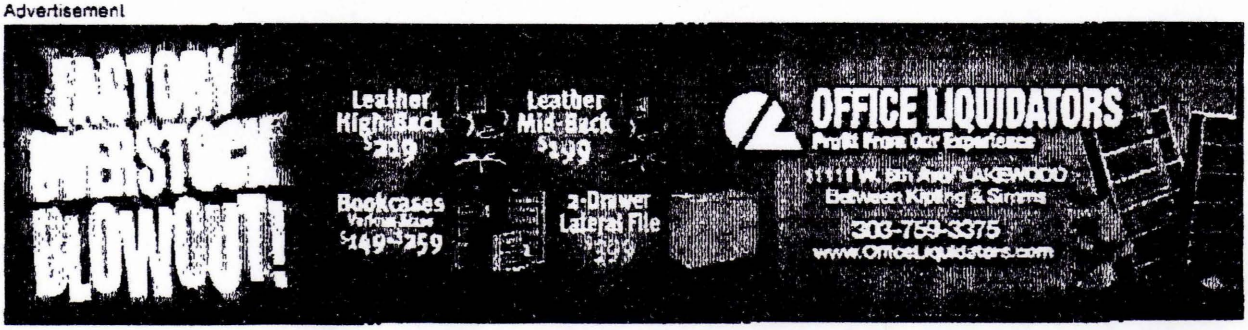
Doig has built a small, solid reputation as a regional writer. "The Eleventh Man" reads like a self-conscious effort to discard this constricting label and produce a work with a larger sweep and a broader appeal. Like most such efforts, it will probably land in the vast trough that exists between popular fiction and literature, where most novels seem to end up.

John Brening is a Denver-based freelance writer.

Nonfiction

The Eleventh Man by Ivan Doig, $26

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