

Norma G. Haggerty

744 Mader Avenue S.E., Salem, Oregon 97302 503-362-7471



Ans
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Dear Ivan Doig,

Your Heart Earth was one of the Christmas treasures at our house this year, and my husband and I have both read it. We were raised in Montana; his family came from Wisconsin to Montana by train as your mother's family did. Of course, we recognized many of the places you described. My grandfather was foreman on a ranch near Wilsall when I was five years old. I felt very sad reading about your mother's short life. Like her, I suffered from allergies in Montana's dusty environment. Perhaps if she had had the shots and other therapy I was lucky enough to have, she would still be here today--and three years younger than my husband.

But I am writing because of something that has never happened to me before when reading: I knew one of the people in your book. In fact, I had a date with **Horace Morgan** when we were students at Montana State in 1937. He asked me to a fraternity party, where there was the usual drinking. On the way home, he parked on the edge of the campus for a bit of necking--also normal at the time. However, Horace was a bit too amorous and much too drunk to be reasonable. He couldn't understand why an 18 year old would have to be home by midnight. But he didn't know my grandmother or her rigid rules.

Finally, I got fed up, opened the door and trudged around the car in the snow to the driver's side. I shoved Horace out of the way, got behind the wheel and drove the eight or ten blocks home.

So far, the story was not all that unusual, but given the fact that I had never driven a car was. Grandma and I didn't have a car, and I had only watched people drive. I have a vague memory of driving in low gear all the way, and I know I missed the driveway and drove up on the snow-covered lawn. Needless to say, that was my first and last date with Horace Morgan.

Our daughter, who has seven novels (Regencies and mysteries) to her credit, and who gave us your book, thought my story might interest you.

We'll be looking for more of your Montana stories which no doubt we'll enjoy as much as your other works.

Sincerely and with cheers,

Norma Haggerty