

dedication for Last Bus to Wisdom

To Tony Angell  
for friendship as enduring as stone

## Acknowledgments

As ever, through sixteen books and fifty years of marriage, Carol Doig has been my incomparable companion, cheerleader, and keen-eyed first reader. As I say every time a book is born in this household, I couldn't have done it without you, darling.

This novel and I have had the great good fortune to enlist the skills and enthusiastic backing of our longtime Montana friend, Marcella Sherfy Walter. Marcella worked research magic in reconstitutng 1951 Manitowoc, Greyhound bus travel of the era, historic features of Crow Fair, and many other details that enrich a work of the imagination such as this. She's also served as a first-rate commentator on the manuscript-in-progress, saving me from errors large and small many a time.

Katharina Maloof wonderfully fulfilled the big job of keeping me straight, insofar as an author intent on lingual mischief can be steered, on the capricious lingo of Herman the German. John Maloof was a terrific bonus as an early reader, encouraging me with his own boyhood experience of being put on a bus to he knew not what.

Once again, Ann McCartney, trusted friend and eagle-eye reader, lent her savvy to the manuscript. The further priceless loan was from her treasure trove of *National Geographics*, so Donny could peruse faraway places where people wore surprisingly little.

The marvelous poet and friend Linda Bierds kept a straight face and helpful mien as I tried out some of the verses for Donny's autograph book--I am still skyhigh that my line about memory, "Roses in the snow of long ago," met with her approval.



Ann and Marshall Nelson, fresh from the Pendleton Roundup, lavished rodeo material on me which went a long ways toward Rags Rasmussen's immortal ride of Buzzard Head.

I'm indebted to my college classmate and friend ever since, Kay Pride, for telling me about her joyous childhood adventure of turning breakfast toast into outlines of countries under the fond tutelage of her geography teacher grandfather. It sounded to me like one of the talents Herman the German had to have.

My fellow enthusiast for lingo and sayings, John W. Grubbs, provided the slang gem, "I slipped on a banana peeling and hit the ceiling," which cried out to be part of a comedic inscription in Donny's autograph book.

How fortunate to have as a friend Tony Angell, through his art an expert on all things avian, to teach me the eagle screech.

And what a bonus of luck to have a tried-and-true wordmaster, my writing buddy David Laskin, as an enthusiastic early reader.

Once again, a manuscript does not become a finished tome without the skills and wiles of my blessed team of makers of books: Becky Saletan, Liz Darhansoff, and Michelle Koufopoulos.

A few words and confessions about the settings of this novel:

While I have striven to evoke the city of Manitowoc and the town of Wisdom as they might have appeared to a youngster more than sixty years ago, I have taken liberties whenever needed for plot purposes. Similarly, my version of Crow Fair is largely imaginary, and I apologize for the story's necessity that the great gathering coincide with the Fourth of July, when in actuality Crow Fair takes place the third weekend in August. I can't resist adding that my own experience at such a gathering dates back to the mid-1950's when my family and I, residents of the Blackfeet Reservation in seasonal sheepherding for three years, never missed

attending “North American Indian Days” in Browning. Some memories take deep root.

At the time of this story, 1951, the small Blackfeet Reservation community of Heart Butte had no high school, and hence no Heart Butte Warriors team of famous basketball proficiency as I portrayed. But since then, Heart Butte has attained a high school and the Warriors have twice been Class C state basketball champions, an example of life copying art that can only make an author grin.

While Highpockets, the Jersey Mosquito, and the other haymaking hoboes are creations of my imagination, their tradition of following the crops derives from the magisterial study of transient harvest workers in American society, *Hoboes: Bindlestiffs, Fruit Tramps, and the Harvesting of the West*, by Mark Wyman.

Donny’s on-the-bus session with Jack Kerouac is of course of my own making, with the exception of the first paragraph in his inscription for Donny (“You think about what actually happened” et al), which can be found on p. 36 of *Writers on Writing*, edited by Jon Winokur.

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