

When I began in the writing trade, as a young western workhorse harnessed to a newspaper job, I dreamed ahead to somehow joining one or another of the literary lineages aboard Shakespeare's ark--the lions of narrative, the foxes of mystery, the griffins of science fiction and fantasy, the watchful herons of history, the gazelles and dolphins of poetry, the badgers of biography, the lop-eared leopards of memoir. Little did I imagine that going up that gangplank would have me voyaging in to Des Moines, with my thirteen books in my seabag, for a night like this.

My job on deck here, for the next forty minutes or so, is to think out loud to you about some of the makings of books--how a writer, at least this one, tries to bring fictional characters to life on a page; how the research is gathered from the nooks and corners of history and experience; how to spend the necessary time, by yourself, to create a piece of writing; and finally some thoughts about the craft of putting words on a page.

Maryan Petty asked me here tonight as a writer, but you'll be relieved to know that I'm not going to stand up here in front of you and write--writing is not a great spectator sport. No, what I want to do instead is to simply sashay in here as a lover of libraries and sing under their windows for a while.

I don't usually think of myself as a wandering minstrel, yet when I count up the libraries I have been to for the sake of my work, and the literary melodies that have been put into my books by this old loved library and many others, something like minstrelsy it seems to be. In the course of this talk I hope to show you how some of the makings of my nine books have come from libraries, but first you should know the stirrings of that music of the stacks.

So now, as quick as this, you are eighteen years old. You have come by train--which tells how long ago this--from a Montana town with a population of 75, to begin college at Northwestern University, in suburban Chicago. And you set off to walk this campus you have never laid eyes on before, and there on a slight rise atop a wide green sweep of spotless lawn stands the university library,

Deering Library. Deering was a library like they don't build 'em any more--similar to the original portion of Suzzallo, here--with tall stained-glass windows and a lofty long roof with a pair of gothic towers poking up at each end. Deering has architectural fame of a sort. The story was that Frank Lloyd Wright had driven past the Northwestern campus one day, looked at Deering Library with those gothic towers nobly poking into the air, and said, "It looks like a pig on its back."

I think what he really didn't like about it, though, was that Deering Library so much resembled a cathedral. And there's where Mr. Wright was wrong. There was nothing inappropriate about that resemblance, that library was a kind of cathedral, in several ways it behaved like a cathedral. You step now into the reading room of Deering, you find that the banks of lights hang just above the tables, they hang all the way from the vaulted ceiling, they hang down what seems to be thousands of feet just for your reading convenience, they hang there like the watchfobs of the gods. You sit with your book there in the golden pool of reflection, the lens of light brings the printed words up into your eyes. The diarist Bruce Frederick Cummings has written of "the desire every book has to be taken down and read, to live, to come into being in somebody's mind." Passing by out there, Frank Lloyd Wright is not listening to the desires of the books. But you are there in the great reading room, and you do listen to that desire.

The clock of earth now spins a dozen years, to Seattle and the late 1960's--I am going to mercifully pass over my stint here as a Ph.D. student: "Get that union card," my Ph.D. advisor, Vernon Carstensen, would urge, and I did--and we are now at the point where the thirty-something writer I have become is working on a book of remembering called **This House of Sky**, trying to bring to life from memory the boyhood nights when I was about as tall as my father's elbow as he judiciously bent it in the nine taverns of our town. Those saloons, where I was lucky enough to tag along with him, were his hiring halls for his haying crews, and while those nights were a kind of northern lights in my childhood memories, much had faded, even the names of all the wondrous saloons of White Sulphur Springs, Montana.

So, let me first take you "dancing at the rascal fair"--a wallflower researcher's idea of a good time--and now it is summer, July, and this is Scotland. St. Andrews. The oldest university in Scotland, one of the most venerable in all of Great Britain, so venerable it takes a couple of days to do a graduation ceremony, with all the customs and the tented, champagne-fueled traditions to be observed.

Be that as it may, the St. Andrews library turns out to be a modern one only a few years old and going through a summer of teething pains. I walk in the first morning and on floor after floor, I pass white-haired maintenance men in blue dustcoats, staring silently forlornly down at the electrical trenches in the floor, into the mysterious entrails of wiring to which they are going to have to figure out how to hook up the new-computer-terminals.

I step over to learn the catalogue system. Its basic fact is that all books before 1906, whatever their topic, are in the basement. I venture down, and immediately learn that the basement is a good ten degrees cooler than the floors above; so whenever I want a book that was published before 1906, it's a signal I had better put my coat on.

I return to the catalogue system. There is a set of bound volumes which catalogues some books. There is horizontal microfiche which catalogues other books. There is vertical microfiche cataloguing still others.

The back-and-forthing between the fiches has my eyes swimming. In none of the systems can I deduce how to find what I am after, material about the Scottish working class in western Scotland in the late 19th century. Somehow I stumble onto a promising book with "toil" in its title. Ahah! There is a catalogue computer terminal by now, added atop the three prior systems, though I have been warned that only a fraction of the library's holdings are in it yet. But at least I have the magic word "toil," and at the punch of a few buttons I'll get every title about the Scottish working class in whatever holdings have been computerized.

I punch those buttons, and the screen fills, with the promise of more screenfulls to come. I begin joyfully to take down the titles--"Technology and Toil in 19th Century Britain"; "Toilers of the Linen Trade."

But the third title--the third title is "The Lady at Her Toilet"--and it is all toiletry, cosmetic and other modes, after that.

Eventually, perseverance and a saintly librarian did help me track down the books I was after, and next, in this Scottish dance of research, down to the St. Andrews archives, in another part of the basement--I put my coat on--in search of letters of working class emigrants who left that region of Scotland in the late 1880s, as the main characters of my novel **Dancing at the Rascal Fair**, were to do. The archivist produces some letter collections for me, leads me into the reading room, and as I begin to sit down at a capacious table nicely lit by a window, he says: "Eh--there's the matter of the airrr."

The airrr, in his thick Fifeshire burr. Does he mean “error,” is this some Scotch Calvinist probing of my scholarly soul? Can he somehow mean the Scottish town Ayr, A-Y-R, that Robert Burns wrote of--”Old Ayr, whom never a town surpasses, /for honest men and bonnie lasses”? That’s cryptic, even from an archivist.

But no, the airrr proved to be the air conditioning, which was blowing a gale at the end of the room I had contemplated sitting at. I took the archivist’s point, and established myself at the opposite end of the room, noticing as I did that there was a heavy tartan lap robe in the chair beside me. Within minutes I was using that lap robe, and at lunch time I went home and--despite the fact that Scotland was sweltering under its hottest summer in a century--I put on a sweater under my sport jacket, came back and got under the lap robe again. All the while cursing the St. Andrews theory that the best method of preserving archives is to refrigerate them

But all the while, too, beginning to hear. Hearing the letters in front of me:

“During the storm our ship swung like a cork. The screaming of the bosun’s whistle, the yells of women and children when she swung over on her side, and tins, trunks, barrels, everything movable flew from side to side...We poor human things held on to the bedside like grim death.”

David McNeil, that voice, writing to his family in Scotland about his voyage to America as a steerage passenger in 1889. Another letter, McNeil so wonderfully described the impromptu shipboard bazaar when the ship pulled in to the Irish harbor of Cork and a fleet of Irishwomen in small boats clambered aboard with foodstuffs and other wares to sell, I was moved to put the title scene of my book there. It is there, thanks to that well-chilled correspondence in the St. Andrews archives, that my narrator, Angus McCaskill, sings the old traditional Scottish song that I made up for the occasion:

“Dancing at the rascal fair,
 Devils and angels all were there,
 Heel and toe, pair by pair,
 Dancing at the rascal fair.”

But books such as ours don't simply pop out of us every so often. It's not as if writers live in an aquarium--the writer floating dreamily all day long in the fluid of thought and word, and at suppertime the figure of God--in the unlikely disguise of a literary critic--drops in the fish food. No, we writers often have to hang out around those singing walls of other books, to find what's needed for our own. Probably every writer here has similar library tales to tell, but in my own case, every one of my books--on the brink of being ten, now--has had to have research done under this roof. A lot of it in the kind of library holdings that don't come cheap, because they take up space almost out to infinity.

I slipped into the stacks to grab off this piece of show-and-tell. In the novel I've just written--**Prairie Nocturne**--some of my characters alight into New York in the period between the world wars. I needed to know what details of New York city life would have made the strongest impressions on newcomers. Snoozing right out here on the shelves are memoirs and impressionistic works which were the perfect forgotten eyewitnesses I needed. This one happens to be **The Silent Traveler in New York**, by a Chinese poet, Chiang Yee--full of scenes from Central Park and Harlem and all the rest, with detailed sketches and prints. I was the first person to check this book out in seven years, and only two other users before me back to about 1990. Hardly any demand for books like these, until I or one of the other of this literary gang of fourteen shows up needing precisely books like these.

Other material I've used here would make financial bean-counters faint away because they require specialized caretaking just short of black magic. To give you my most boggling example, although just one of many, when I was writing what became the memoir **This House of Sky**, I told Bob Monroe I was working on a passage about being with my father, when I was about as tall as his elbow as he judiciously bent it in the nine saloons of White Sulphur Springs, Montana, back when he hired haying crews in those dives in the late 1940's--but my memory had come up short on a couple of the names of the saloons. Bob nodded, and led me down into his Special Collections stacks, into the bibliophilic equivalent of a wizard's cellar, and handed me the 1948 phone book for the town.

But, try justifying caring for a 1948 phone book, or this little non-bestseller, to a legislative budget committee in these tattered economic times. I will frankly tell you, as a devout user of the place, there have been times in past years and years of budget cuts when I

thought the pulse of this library was slipping dangerously. It's little short of a miracle that Betsy and her predecessor managed to squeeze out of Olympia and elsewhere the funding not only to shore this building up against earthquake threat, but to bring back logic, elegance and convenience in its use. Of course now the place needs to be kept going, in something like the style to which we all want to stay accustomed, which is a need that you as supporters of this library are well familiar with. And just on the outside chance that you might ever be in for a pounce from Betsy and Marjan, I can assure you it's a positively life-enhancing experience.

Let me just leave you with this, and the living evidence of literary perseverance sitting there with you at each of your tables. All books are rare books. Each one comes from a curious, one-of-a-kind combination of writerly determination and available lore. When that lore isn't adequately preserved, in a community trove such as Suzzalo, the consequent muteness--the gaps of silence as budget cuts take away and take away--costs us as writers and you as readers in ideas and eloquence and possibilities for directions of our lives. But when the lore is kept alive and ready, and you turn the pages of what we write, the miraculous whisper of the paper begins here. Perhaps because my own father came out of the candlelight of the early twentieth century--born on a homestead to parents from Scotland--and my own upbringing had spates of reading by gas lantern in my family's sheepcamps in the Two Medicine country, the quests here on the American earth keep being linked to light and language in the words that come out of my fingertips. The most current example is in the novel I'm writing now where one of the main characters, a woman who comes out of a homestead background, also is a singer--a musician of language--who some years before had been a leader in the campaign for the right of women to vote. As I imagine it, she and a handful of other suffrage crusaders travel the rural immigrant areas, the overshoe counties, of Montana for vital voters before the crucial state referendum on suffrage in 1914--doing so in a trio of Model A's dubbed the Nina, the Pinta, and the Susan B. My character is aware that she is not nearly of the social class of the other suffragist leaders such as Jeannette Rankin, but she reads her destiny and that of her cause in some familiar glows on the prairie:

"...As the carloads of the crusade trundled past isolated gulches where kerosene lamps glowed yellow, puddles of light such as she had come from, she felt singled out by some circular law of the draw."

In the first fiction I ever wrote, **The Sea Runners**, and trying to make their way, naturally, to Oregon--I played with the notion that empires existed "on the principle of constellations in the night sky--pattern imposed across unimaginable expanse--and the New Archangels of the planet at the time, whether named Singapore or Santa Fe or Dakar or Astoria or Luanda or Sydney, were their specific scintillations of outline. Far pinspots representing vastly more than they themselves were."

The lines of star web that once were put out across this planet with the slow white wakes of sailing ships are virtually instantaneous, but allegiances...

Call them Ishmael, Heathcliff, Hester Prynne, Swann and the Duchess de Guermites, Huck and Tom, Antonia Shimerda, Molly Bloom, Puck, Hamlet, Goneril, Regan, Cordelia, Flem Snopes, Lord Jim, Anna Karenina, Eugene Gant, Mrs. Dalloway: they answer, faultlessly, each time by making us a gift of all their wordly possessions.

Flaubert sends notes tinkling from Emma Bovary's piano and at the other end of the village the bailiff's clerk, "passing along the highroad, bareheaded and in list slippers, stopped to listen, his sheet of paper in his hand" and we listen there with him ever after.

Cather prompts an anxious young Santa Fe seminarian to say, "One does not die of a cold," and the Archbishop in the winter of age responds, "I shall not die of a cold, my son. I shall die of having lived," and we accept that as true for us, too.

Mayakovsky, Russia's cloud in trousers, jots to Lili Brik from his Crimean tour, "Lilik, I go off in all the directions there are!" and from London she postcards to him, "Volosik, I kiss you right in the Parliament!" and we believe with them, there in those everlasting fevers of correspondence, their creed that love is the heart of everything.

Writers and the written, they haunt us as we most want to be haunted, in fogs of ink.

This award honors not me so much as all those notecards of mine, from which--along with the scribbles of the mind--came the almost uncountable cast of characters in *Bucking the Sun*. As a writer of fiction and memoir, I work from the belief that every life, everyone's story, has vital content--that Proxy Shannon, the taxi-dancer and occasional prostitute whom I invented to help tell the story of what it was like in the New Deal boomtowns of the Fort Peck Dam project when there were ten thousand damworkers and about the

same number of camp followers, that Proxy Shannon can be as complex and intriguing in her life as the grand and glorious Franklin Delano Roosevelt in his.

No, the writer has to get out and hunt, beyond the glass bowl of everyday.

--The nine bars of a Montana town where my father judiciously bent his elbow as he hired his haying crews, while the boy that was me watched from the generous vicinity of that elbow...

--The diary of a man who came west with the California gold rush, found out that mining is sweaty work, and turned north to a life of oystering and roistering at Willapa Bay and farther up our Northwest Coast...

--an 1853 newspaper article, to the effect that, "Dear Editor, I thought you might like to know that last Sunday, as some of the settlers were crossing the bay, they found, drifting in a canoe, men nearly starved to death...They have completed a journey of escape from New Archangel, more than a thousand miles, in winter..."

--The imagined voice of a shepherd saying to a teenage boy, "Don't just stand there in your tracks, kid--We've got all these dead sheep to skin."

--A valley of homesteader's cabins vest-pocketed in the Rockies, regularly put upon by tough weather barreling down out of those glorious mountains...

--A woman with a camera and an attitude, and a pesty ex-husband working for the same newspaper she does...

--A packet of World War II letters, lost to sight for some 40 years...

--A chorus of voices, chiming out of years of tape recorded interviews, finding their common note in Depression-era jobs on the construction of the biggest earthen dam in the world: ""When we got on at Fort Peck..."

--A "high lonesome"--a week of solitary backpacking into the wilderness area named for the bat-eared Mozart of the Forest Service who thought up the wilderness system, Bob Marshall...

It sounds like the list for a lifelong scavenger hunt, doesn't it.

It is. These nine items--some actual and some imagination-induced--are the first footsteps in the mind toward my now nine books. Then the clock takes over--twenty-five years' worth of crafting those pieces of idea into fullness of stories, dimensions of characters, and galaxies of language.

Friends of Library:

PACE

Maryan Petty asked me here tonight as a writer, but you'll be relieved to know that I'm not going to stand up here in front of you and write--writing is not a great spectator sport. No, what I want to do instead is to simply sashay in here as a lover of libraries and sing under their windows for a while.

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/I think what he really didn't like about it, though, was that Deering Library so much resembled a cathedral. And there's where Mr. Wright was wrong. There was nothing inappropriate about that resemblance, that library was a kind of cathedral, in several ways it behaved like a cathedral. You step now into the reading room of Deering, you find that the banks of lights hang just above the tables, they hang all the way from the vaulted ceiling, they hang down what seems to be thousands of feet just for your reading convenience, they hang there like the watchfobs of

the gods. You sit with your book there in the golden pool of reflection, the lens of light brings the printed words up into your eyes. The diarist Bruce Frederick Cummings has written of “the desire every book has to be taken down and read, to live, to come into being in somebody’s mind.” Passing by out there, Frank Lloyd Wright is not listening to the desires of the books. But you are there in the great reading room, and you do listen to that desire.

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called **This House of Sky**, trying to bring to life from memory the boyhood nights when I was about as tall as my father's elbow as he judiciously bent it in the nine taverns of our town. Those saloons, where I was lucky enough to tag along with him, were his hiring halls for his haying crews, and while those nights were a kind of northern lights in my childhood memories, much had faded, even the names of all the wondrous saloons of White Sulphur Springs, Montana.

But I knew where to go, and this is the place. When I sashayed up to Bob Monroe, then head of the Northwest Collection here, and asked if he happened to have a 1947 phone book for White Sulphur Springs, Montana, lying around, Bob said: "Let's go see." Deeper into the bowels of this library than I had ever been, we went. And there on a

storage shelf waited the ⁶ skinny old phone book, and the names, the names, of those saloons--Stockman, Mint, Melody Lane, Maverick, Pioneer, Grand Central, Sherman Hotel, Ham and Eggs', and the Rainbow.

The names then began to bring back the personalities of those saloons, and here's a quick sample of my boy's-eye tour of them in **This House of Sky** --which has become one of my most anthologized pieces of writing:

/"Politest of any in town was the saloon tucked away at the rear of the big brick hotel. Always near-empty, it seemed to have given up to the pack of busy competition down the street and simply forgotten to tell the bartender to stay home. Dad and I dropped in only when he wanted

to telephone long distance to a livestock buyer in Bozeman or Great Falls. The hotel lobby had the only phone booth in town, and it did a business steadier than the house saloon ever seemed to have done.

“A block or so from there stood a mix of saloon and short-order cafe, as if the owner was absentminded about just what the enterprise was supposed to be. The town long since had supposed that the size of his stomach meant he really preferred the cafe side, and so had nicknamed him Ham and Eggs. Ham and Eggs’ shabby little building stood almost squarely across from the Grand Central”--the Grand Central was the grimmest place in town, a combination of bar and flophouse frequented by shepherders on a spree--”and (Ham and Eggs’ enterprise) seemed to have caught a pall from over there. Night in, night out, there never

ASIDE

would be anyone on the bar side of this place except Ham and Eggs himself and a few blank-eyed old shepherders as unmoving as doorstops, and the short-order side made your stomach somersault just to glance in through the fly-specked window at it. Dad and I generally steered clear, as did anybody who had standards about saloons.

“Close by, but a mile further up in likableness, stood the Pioneer. Oldfangled but not coming-apart-at-the-heels like the Grand Central, earnest enough but not as hard drinking as the Maverick, the Pioneer felt and looked most like a cowtown saloon. Its enormous dark-wood bar and breakfront had been carved and sheened like the woodwork for a cathedral, and at the back, poker tables caught the eye like pretty wheels of green velvet. A small, sad-faced bartender stood on duty at the row of

beer taps. Hullo, Charlie; hullo, Red, he would murmur as we stepped in, silently pull a glass of beer for Dad, and say no more until a quiet Take it easy, Charlie; take it easy, Red, as we went out the door.”

/Some years ago I was asked to speak to the state library association at its annual gathering, and perhaps carried away by the memory of those good old bad days when I down there in the vicinity of the elbow, I enthused to all the librarians in the state that I thought of them as the bartenders of information. Behind their polished wood, don't they deal with all manner of customers who step in through that door from the street? Don't they, too, preside over shelves of intoxicating items? And don't they see almost every sort of human behavior, and learn to regularly recite that ancient prayer that must have originated with some

beleaguered bartender somewhere back in antiquity--"Please, Lord, not on my shift"?

Well, with advancing wisdom, I won't use that same analogy here tonight, but I think I can safely characterize libraries as "pantries of research" for someone like me. I want to take you through, with some specificity of example, a number of the library ingredients in what is now my best-selling book, **Dancing at the Rascal Fair**, and my most recent one, **Mountain Time**.

So, let me first take you "dancing at the rascal fair"--a wallflower researcher's idea of a good time--and now it is summer, July, and this is Scotland. St. Andrews. The oldest university in Scotland, one of the most venerable in all of Great Britain, so venerable it takes a couple of

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HORIZONTAL
GESTURE

UP + DOWN GESTURE

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century. Somehow I stumble onto a promising book with “toil” in its title. Ahah! There is a catalogue computer terminal by now, added atop the three prior systems, though I have been warned that only a fraction of the library’s holdings are in it yet. But at least I have the magic word “toil,” and at the punch of a few buttons I’ll get every title about the Scottish working class in whatever holdings have been computerized.

I punch those buttons, and the screen fills, with the promise of more screenfulls to come. I begin joyfully to take down the titles--

”Technology and Toil in 19th Century Britain”; “Toilers of the Linen Trade.”

But the third title--the third title is “The Lady at Her Toilet”--and it is all toiletry, cosmetic and other modes, after that.

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But all the while, too, beginning to hear. Hearing the letters in front of me:

INTENSE “During the storm our ship swung like a cork. The screaming of the bosun’s whistle, the yells of women and children when she swung over on her side, and tins, trunks, barrels, everything movable flew from side to side...We poor human things held on to the bedside like grim death.”

David McNeil, that voice, writing to his family in Scotland about his voyage to America as a steerage passenger in 1889. Another letter, McNeil so wonderfully described the impromptu shipboard bazaar when

the ship pulled in to the Irish harbor of Cork and a fleet of Irishwomen in small boats clambered aboard with foodstuffs and other wares to sell, I was moved to put the title scene of my book there. It is there, thanks to that well-chilled correspondence in the St. Andrews archives, that my narrator, Angus McCaskill, sings the old traditional Scottish song that I made up for the occasion:

“Dancing at the rascal fair,

Devils and angels all were there,

Heel and toe, pair by pair,

Dancing at the rascal fair.”

While I am so busily quoting from myself—I once heard my late great friend, the poet William Stafford, say: “Who better to plagiarize from

than yourself?"--let me lay out for you the promised passage from **Rascal Fair** with specific library ingredients.

This is Scotland, yet and again. My narrator, Angus, and his chum Robert Burns Barclay are ready to emigrate to America, to Montana. They are in line with the other steerage passengers, a morning in 1889, on a dock at the port city of Greenock, near the mouth of the River Clyde. They're waiting to board the steamship *James Watt*--which is not a namesake of the unlamented former Secretary of the Interior, but of the Scottish inventor of the steam engine. The standing in line is tedious, Angus and his buddy are "both of us nineteen, and green as the cheese of the moon, and trying our double damnedest not to show it," Angus himself is afraid of water, cannot swim, and there's ten days of the

Atlantic Ocean ahead. And here is what begins running through his mind:

“Awful, what a person lets himself do to himself. There I stood on that Greenock dock, wanting more than anything else in this life not to put foot aboard that iron ship; and wanting just as desperately to do so and do it that instant. Oh, I knew what was wrestling in me. We had a book--Crofutt's Trans-Atlantic Emigrants' Guide--and my malady was right there in it, page one. Crofutt performed as our tutor that a shilling was worth 24 American cents, and how much postal stamps cost there in the big country, and that when it came midnight in old Scotland the clocks of Montana were striking just five of the afternoon. Crofutt told this, too. I can recite it yet today: ‘Do not emigrate in a fever, but

consider the question in each and every aspect. The mother country must be left behind, the family ties, all old associations, broken. Be sure that you look at the dark side of the picture: the broad Atlantic, the dusty ride to the great West of America, the scorching sun, the cold winter--coldest ever you experienced!--and the hard work of the homestead. But if you finally, with your eyes open, decide to emigrate, do it nobly. Do it with no divided heart.'

“Right advice, (Angus himself, speaking again) to keep your heart in one pure piece. But easier seen than followed.

“I knew I oughtn't, but I turned and looked up the river, east up the great broad trough of the Clyde. East into yesterday. For it had been only the day before when the pair of us were hurled almost all the way

across Scotland by train from Nethermuir into clamorsome Glasgow. A further train across the Clyde bridge and westward alongside mile upon brown mile of the river's tideflats and their smell. Then here came Greenock to us, Watt's city of steam, all its shipyards and docks, the chimney stalks of its sugar refineries, its sharp church spires and high, high above all its municipal tower of crisp new stone the color of pie crust. A more going town than our old Nethermuir could be in ten centuries, it took just that first look to tell us of Greenock. For night we bedded where the emigration agent had advised, the Model Lodging House, which may have been a model of something but lodging wasn't it; when morning at last came, off we set to ask our way to the Cumbrae

Line's moorage, to the *James Watt*, and to be told in a Clydeside gabble it took the both of us to understand;

'The Jemmy, lads? Ye wan' tae gi doon tae the fit of Pa'rick.'

"And there at the foot of Patrick Street was the Albert Harbor, there was the green-funneled steam swimmer to America, there were the two of us."

So, I am often asked, where does stuff like that come from? Where, indeed, but here's where at least some of those turns of phrase had their origin:

"We had a book--Crofutt's trans-Atlantic Emigrants' Guide--
Edinburgh, the National Library of Scotland, had emigration guides of the late 19th century, not all of them as bombastic as the version I've

given my young voyagers--but one of them does have that most lovely
line, "Do it with no divided heart."

-- "The pair of us were hurled almost all the way across Scotland by
train"--St. Andrews, the basement, an old Ordnance Gazeteer of Scotland
told me that my young men of 1889 would have ridden the Caledonian
Railway to the port of Greenock.

-- "Here came Greenock to us, Watt's city of steam, all its shipyards
and docks, the chimney stalks," and so on--Greenock itself, the Watt
Library there, with its historic photos of Greenock in its heyday before a
channel was dredged in the River Clyde upstream to Glasgow.

--"We bedded (in) the Model Lodging House"-- St. Andrews, the basement again, a Pocket History and Guide to the Scottish town of Brechin, which had such a seductively named place to stay.

--"which may have been a model of something but lodging wasn't it"--That same Pocket History provides the information that out of 3,276 men who stayed overnight sometime during that year, quote: "No fewer than 1,100 went to bed under the influence of liquor."

--"Off we set to ...the (steamship) *James Watt*"--Glasgow, the Mitchell Library, where from the old Lloyd's Registers of Ships, Carol put together for me the dimensions and speed and deck layouts and even the color scheme of a typical emigrant steamship of the time.

--"To be told in a Clydeside gabble... 'The Jemmy, lads? Ye wan' tae gi doon tae the fit of Pa'rick.'"--Glasgow and the Mitchell Library again. Here I was trying to get at the fact that as soon as you leave home, the world begins to sound different. And in Scotland, the residents of Glasgow and the nearby towns along the River Clyde have the reputation of sounding hard to penetrate even to other Scots--which is saying a lot. You may recall that some years ago, the Glasgow film "Gregory's Girl" was dubbed with a new soundtrack for American audiences.

Anyway, in trying to hear the Glaswegian tongue for the sake of this scene in my novel, I came onto a study of Scottish dialects which told me that a distinctive Glasgow sound is what's called a "glotal ^t stop"--a

kind of swallowing of the letter T. The example given was what happens when a Glaswegian who happens to be named, say, Pat Patterson introduces himself to you: “My name is Pa’ Pa’erson--with two T’s.”

And so, from visiting nearby Greenock and finding in the library material there that the Clydeside steamships for America had left from the Albert Harbor at the foot of Patrick Street, I had my chance to put that half-baffling bit of dialect into my characters’ ears.

// ~~Well,~~ that’s the series of **Rascal Fair** library episodes, and to close tonight, let me spend my last ten minutes or so here on one of the LIBRARY-ENGENDERED holy ghosts of my current book, **Mountain Time**.

He is Bob Marshall, a Forest Service figure who was one of the founders of our federal wilderness system, and a personality who has

long intrigued me. Not so incidentally, the Forest Service Wilderness Area along the Rocky Mountain Front in Montana where I grew up is named for him.

Born in New York city in 1901 to considerable wealth and privilege, Marshall first developed his passion for the outdoors as a grade-schooler when he and his brother played Lewis and Clark in their backyard, which was Central Park.

Bob Marshall arrived out here as a young forester--I once came upon an oral history with an old forester at the Wind River Forest Experiment Station, south of Mt. St. Helens, who recalled that Marshall didn't know even how to use an axe when he got here.

But the attribute he did bring with him might be called a magnificent mania for the mountains--when he hiked in the Cascades, and the Rockies, and the Sierra Nevada, and the Brooks Range in Alaska, he would average about 35 miles a day. When he was assigned to Missoula, to the Northern Rocky Mountain Experiment Station from 1925 to 1928, the Montanans found him such a demon hiker that they called him "the Rocky Mountain greyhound." There in Missoula he took a creative writing class at the University of Montana and began a career of eloquent articles that ultimately led to his famous wilderness credo, and his place in the pantheon of environmental holinesses: "How much wilderness do we need?--how many Brahms symphonies do we need?"

I became interested in Marshall when Carol and I backpacked into the Bob Marshall Wilderness in 1977--an unforgettable set of days, utterly alone with ourselves and the Bob, as the Wilderness Area is called locally, which was the basis for the climactic journey my characters take in **Mountain Time**, and which you'll hear just a bit of, in this excerpt. I ultimately tracked down ~~his~~ ^{MARSHALL'S} notebooks in the Bancroft Library at the University of California at Berkeley, and ~~was~~ ^{-PARTICULARLY AFTER GOING THRU THEM-} determined to use him in a book sometime, somehow--Marshall was a weird and wonderful combination of geek and poet and rich and socialist and overachiever on the trail and bureaucratic string-puller--I just find him a character nobody would believe if I made him up.

So, here's a swatch of fiction he and his library-held notebooks make a bit of an appearance in. The main characters here, though, are:

Mitch Rozier, who is the environmental reporter for a Seattle newspaper called "Cascopia"--one of those urban weeklies for people concerned to know the difference between tofu and futon--and he writes a column called "Coastwatch," a kind of ecological watchdog column.

Mitch at age fifty--when the ~~book~~^{NOVEL} takes place in 1996--is jelly-sandwiched between the grown children he lost in an early divorce and an aging parent back in his hometown. He is, in other words, that not unknown specimen in our land, a Baby Boomer beginning to feel the pressure of the years.

Mitch at this point in the book has been joined in that hometown of his, back along the Montana Rockies, by the McCaskill sisters, who've been helping him in trying to fend with his father's illness. Lexa McCaskill is Mitch's "spousal equivalent," with whom he has been living, over here in Ballard; and Mariah McCaskill, her older sister, is still a highly intense photographer for a Montana newspaper. The three of them here are in the midst of a weeklong hike into the Bob, for a reason I can't tell you without giving away the plot wholesale. They're at their campsite, after supper and after a tiff between Lexa and Mitch when she discovered he has brought his laptop along in his backpack.

Okay, from **Mountain Time:**

I think there, with a library-kindled figure who certainly made the difference for this writer in inspiring a book, is a good place to stop.

Thank you, and I'll be glad to take some questions.

#

James G. Swan: as I ultimately calculated, some two and a half million
(longer-version insert--slugged that way for FIND command on computer)--for UW Friends of Library speech abt library making for my books)

ultimately calculated, some two and a half million

And for my first novel, **The Sea Runners**, I once again came upon

that great truth about libraries, that you can find things there you're not

looking for. I was up in Juneau, at the Alaska History Library, slogging

away trying to find details of Russian America, as Alaska was

mid-19th Century. I'd been there nearly a week, and apparently

reached that point a researcher does with librarians, that you've

around long enough that they either figure you know what you're doing,

or they just want to at last get rid of you, but in either case they bring out

the good stuff.

FILE W/
Friends open

In this instance, the librarian sized me up about noon of my last day in Juneau and said, "Maybe you ought to look at the Tebenkov maps."

She put the archival gloves on me--those nifty spanking-white ones that any magician puts on to pull the rabbit out of the hat--and brought out for me magnificent old shoreline and channel maps, done by the Russian mapmaker Tebenkov in the 1850's, of the Northwest Coast from Sitka all the way to the mouth of the Columbia. One look at their exquisite cartography and beautiful copperplate engraving, and I knew those ^{MAPS} would not only make an appearance in my novel, they would become pivotal characters.

/I promised to take you "dancing at the rascal fair"--a wallflower researcher's idea of a good time--and so now it is summer, July, and this

(longer-version insert--1 of 2,
 slugged that way for FIND
 command on computer--for UW
 Friends of Library speech abt
 library makings for my books)

perseverance and a saintly librarian did help me track
 was after, and now began the photocopying. The St.
 Andrews library machine took only five-pence pieces, which are about
 the size of an American fifty-cent piece. I had hundreds of pages to do,
 so my wife Carol said she'd go to the bank and get me some rolls of
five-pence pieces. Back she came not with rolls of coins, there was no
 such Scottish thing, but with bulging plastic/bags/of coins--sort of like
 overloaded Baggies, a hundred five-pence pieces in each, a truly
 substantial sum of coins.

I tried to get used to walking around lopsided with these coin bags in
 my pocket and started feeding the five-pences to the photocopy machine.

About every other one, it-spat-back-out. The problem here was that

DELIBERATE

there were two kinds of five-~~cent~~^{PENCE} pieces, new ones minted when Britain went onto the decimal system, and the old shilling pieces which were simply declared to be worth five pence from then on.

My heart sank along with my pockets. Were we going to have to double this bulk of coinage to do my photocopying? Sort out the hundreds of old coins from the hundreds of new?

Well, my abiding belief is that machines are at least as eccentric as any of the rest of us. I looked around to be sure no one was watching-- this is not meant to strike dread into the hearts of any librarians who happen to be here tonight, but it might--and I began trying different deliveries of shilling pieces into the coin slot. I pretty quickly found that if I gave each shilling piece a little extra body english--kind of snapped

it into the slot--the photocopy machine would gulp hard and swallow it.

Of all the sounds that have ever come to me in libraries, that mechanical gulp of dismay was one of the most gratifying.

Next, in this ~~long~~ Scottish dance of research, down to the St. Andrews archives, in another part of the basement--I put my coat on--in search of letters of working class emigrants who left that region of Scotland in the late 1880s, as the main characters of my novel **Dancing at the Rascal Fair**, were to do. The archivist produces some letter collections for me, leads me into the reading room, and as I begin to sit down at a capacious table nicely lit by a window, he says: "Eh--there's the matter of the airrr." (ROLL THE RRRs)