- Generated my fiction from historical set points - in this case, pivotal
and 2 years of 1943-44 - while making up my plot & people.

- Cuban missile crisis letter: Alamo!

- 163rd Regiment of 41st Infantry Division in New Guinea Dec. '42

- Grace of gravity that kept a propelled object aloft
- Substantiality of air

Hall 57 - generations of landless Native Americans

Michael - Wasp
in this time of artificial dissemination (definition of public relations)
"We need to sit on the rim
of the well of darkness
and fish for fallen light
with patience."

--Pablo Neruda, quoted by Patrick Dillon, Lost at Sea, p. 111
from a wall list @ Auntie’s in Spokane, of "why books make great entertainment":
--You always have somebody else's life to live when you can't handle your own.
--Won't electrocute you if it falls in the tub.
HOW RAINBOWS ARE FORMED
Rainbows result from the refraction and reflection by raindrops of the various colors that make up a ray of sunlight. Because different colored components are refracted, or bent, different amounts when they enter and leave a raindrop (see inset diagram), the original ray is split up into all the colors of the spectrum, with each resulting colored ray leaving the drop at a different angle. As a result, drops in the innermost band of a rainbow reflect violet rays toward an observer, those in the outermost band reflect red rays, and intermediate drops reflect intermediate colors of the spectrum. Angles are not drawn to scale.

RAIN FOREST, a tropical woodland with an annual rainfall of at least 100 inches (2,500 mm) and usually more. One of the earth’s major biomes, the rain forest is characterized by lush vegetation, including lofty, broad-leaved trees that form a canopy and numerous epiphytes. Rain forests usually have abundant animal life.

RAINBOW, an arc of colored bands formed in the sky by reflection and refraction of sunlight by drops of rain or mist, or a similar arc formed in any spray of water. Rainbows always appear in the part of the sky directly opposite the sun. The bands of the bow have colors resembling those of the spectrum, ranging from red through orange, yellow, green, cyan, and blue to violet. Rainbows often have two arcs: a brilliant primary bow with red on the outside and violet on the inside, and a larger, dimmer secondary bow with red on the inside and violet on the outside.

Primary Bow. The primary arc is formed by rays that reach the observer after two refractions and one internal reflection by each raindrop. Rays are refracted, or bent, once as they enter near the top of a spherical drop; reflected from the opposite side of the drop; and refracted again as they leave near the bottom of the drop, as shown in the inset of the figure. Besides bending the ray, refraction disperses it into all the colors of the spectrum. Thus refraction is the source of the rainbow’s colors.

The angle between the ray of sunlight that enters a spherical raindrop and the colored rays that leave it range from 42° for the red ray to 40° for the violet, as shown in the figure. Thus red rays are reflected toward the observer only from the outer (42°) band and violet rays only from the inner (40°) band. Rays of other colors are also reflected from the same bands, but because they are not reflected toward the observer they are not seen.

The size of the rainbow arc depends on the altitude of the sun. If the sun is more than 42° above the horizon, no rainbow can be seen. Below an altitude of 42°, the lower the sun the larger the arc of the rainbow. If the sun is on the horizon, the rainbow will be a semicircle, and if the sun is below the horizon the rainbow will be larger than a semicircle. Rainbows in the shape of complete circles are sometimes seen from airplanes because they are not cut off by the horizon.

Secondary Bow. A secondary rainbow is formed by rays that enter near the bottom of each drop and are reflected twice internally before being refracted downward as they leave near the top of the drop. The angle between the existing colored rays and the incoming ray of sunlight ranges from 51° for the red rays to 54° for the violet. Because the double reflection results in much greater loss of light than does a single reflection, secondary rainbows are much less brilliant than primary rainbows.

RAINBOW BRIDGE, the world’s largest known natural arch, situated in southern Utah. Formed by wind and water action, the bridge is a 278-foot (85-meter) span of pink sandstone arching 309 feet (94 meters) over a rugged gorge. It was explored in 1909 by Dr. Byron Cummings of the University of Utah, W. B. Douglass of the U.S. General Land Office, and a Paiute Indian guide, Nasya-begay. The bridge was declared a national monument by President Taft in 1910. With the formation of Lake Powell in 1964 the bridge became easy to reach by boat.

RAINBOW TROUT, one of the most popular freshwater sport fishes, prized as food. Native to the Pacific area of North America, the rainbow trout, Salmo gairdneri, has been widely used for stocking ponds and streams and is now found in many parts of the world. Adults vary in color but often have a pinkish sideband. Two-year-old fish often migrate to the sea where they become silvery and known as steelhead trout. See Trout—Well-Known Trout.

RAINES’ LAW, New York state law passed in 1896 regulating the retail sale of liquor. The law, sponsored by state senator John Raines, imposed high taxes on liquor sales and prohibited the sale of liquor on Sundays and after business hours on weekdays. However, the law exempted hotels and inns, and the result was a proliferation of new hotels. Many of them, popularly called “Raines Law hotels,” were thinly disguised houses of prostitution.

Raines defended the law in the face of rising public criticism, arguing that it produced revenue and served to regulate the liquor trade. But he eventually agreed to cooperate with public groups urging the elimination of abuses of the law, and appropriate changes were made.

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The yellow folder in the Bancroft Library on the Berkeley campus of the U. of California. This is the farthest of the several libraries the era in Alaska.

I've been to for research on Russian America, in my writing of The Sea law of Runners, and by the perverse percentage ratio that governs such research, I am finding details of 1853 Sitka I had not been able to find in Sitka itself. The American merchant who visited the Russian America Company headquarters there for three weeks noticed that in the governor's garden, pansies and fuschias bloomed. Good: I put those flowers into my manuscript. He reports that champagne was served at almost every meal.

Astounding: it sometimes takes a voyage of more than a year to supply Sitka, and the Russians are bringing in champagne. I put the champagne into my manuscript. And then the American visitor said, "The population of Sitka lived with great regularity. All night long, at every hour, the sentries called 'Attention!' That detail, the call of the sentries, takes over the entire middle of my manuscript. My four characters, Swedes, are going to escape from their indentured life at Sitka, and will get out the gate by subduing a sentry and mimicking that Russian cry of 'wafted to me was "Attention!" But just what is that cry, in Russian, that my heroes had to imitate? I was in touch with some scholars of Russian America, and so I began to check with them about the sentry cry. The first wrote back it sounded logical to him.

It was that he saw nothing wrong with Vnimanie. The second wrote back and said that he didn't know what the cry might have been but he was dead sure it wasn't Vnimanie, which was too awkward for sentries to go around crying out.

The third scholar said she didn't know, but she would try to get in touch with a former Russian colonel she knew. And there the matter stalled. The Sea Runners ms was at my publisher...I was finishing revisions when a letter came from the third scholar, saying she had heard from the colonel, he had remembered a long forgotten couple which translates to "From afar the dog howls, and beyond the wall the sentry calls"—and what the sentry called, he further remembered, was the Russian word "slushai"—"Harken"
Jick, that's every secret of it." Harking back to my Bubbles experience
I thought to myself, don't I know it.) Then Isidor was not much more than
out of sight with his pack string when here came my mother's brother,
Pete Reese; English Creek was getting about as busy as Broadway.

Pete had driven into town from his ranch on Noon Creek on one errand
or another, and now was looping home by way of English Creek to drop off
our mail and see how we were faring. He stepped over and admired my
progress on the outhouse hole--- "Everybody on the creek'll be wanting
to patronize it. You thought of charging admission?" -- and handed me
the few letters and that week's Cleaner. His doing so reminded me
I was the temporary host of the place and I hurriedly invited, "Come
on over to the house."

We no sooner were through the door of the station than my mother
was saying to Pete, "You're staying for dinner, aren't you," more as
declaration than question. So Pete shed his hat and offered that he
supposed he could, "if it's going to be something edible." Pete got
away with more with my mother than just about anyone else could,
including my father. "Park your tongue then," she simply retorted,
and went to work on the meal while Pete and I chinned about the green
year.

That topic naturally was staying near the front of everybody's
mind. By now the weather service was declaring this the wettest June in
Montana since 1916, news which was more than welcome. In Montana too
much rain is just about enough. All the while the country had been green-
ing and greening, the crop and livestock forecasts were flourishing, too.
You librarians tend to be polite people, and every so often that's a momentary drawback to me. What will happen is that I will arrive in a library for a stint of research, and the librarian or archivist will assume I know what I'm doing. You've heard enough here tonight

maybe
to realize differently—to realize that what I'm doing is listening.

Trying to hear the possibilities, there in the collection. And so the
it is often about noon of my third day at a library, when a librarian
who has been advising me will say, "Maybe you'd like to see the so-and-so

material. It's awfully anecdotal, but--" And I say yes, maybe.

I guess I would like to that material. And I do, and it's often what
I was listening for.

At that point I do not say what is running through my mind—"Don't pay
any attention to my Ph.D., I take it all back, I'm a writer, a fiction
writer, anecdote is the blood and breath of my work now"—but instead murmur

Most of it is my own fault, for having a Ph.D.
mind is going to sneak off somewhere on its own. As the rest of me
dug, mine was on that wagon journey with my mother and Pete and their
mother.

There wouldn't have been the paved highway north to Browning and
the Park then, just the old road as the wheels of the freight wagons
had rutted it into the prairie. Some homesteads must have still existed
between Gros Ventre and the Reservation boundary at Birch Creek, but
probably not many. Those were the years when the Valier irrigation
project was new and anybody who knew grain grew on a stem was over there
around Lake Francis trying to be a farmer. Mostly empty country, then,
except for livestock, all the way to Birch Creek and its ribbon-line of
trees. Empty again from there north to Badger Creek, where I supposed
some of the same Blackfeet families lived then as now. There near Badger
the Reese wagon would have passed just west of the place where, a century
and some before, Meriwether Lewis and the Blackfeet clashed. That piece
of Reservation country to us was simply grass, until my father deduced
from reading in a book of the Lewis and Clark journals that somewhere
off in there near where Badger flows into the Two Medicine River was the
place Lewis and his men killed a couple of Blackfeet over a stealing
incident and began the long prairie war between whites and Indians.

Passing that area in a pickup on paved highway never made that history
seem real to me. I would bet it was more believable from that wagon.

Then up from Badger, the high benches to where the Two Medicine trenched
deep through the landscape. Maybe another day and a half of travel
beyond that, through Browning and west and then north across Cut Bank
I suppose the voice I've spent most time listening to was James Swan, for the writing of Winter Brothers. Swan was a

As the saying goes, he may have been a headache but he never was a bore.

He had several handwritings, or at least several sizes and qualities.

—2½ million words instead of 1½ mil.

I knew I could never hear him entire; how do you do that except by spending 40 years experiencing what he spent 40 years writing down?

So, the bulk of Swan's work—the librariness of it, the fact that his diaries were a kind of library within a library—meant that this book had better be a day-by-day one.
"So you do, Bet. But the number isn't all of it. You might try keep that in mind."

My mother reached to pass Pete some more fried spuds. "I'll try," she allowed. "I Will Try."

When we'd eaten and Pete declared "It's time I wasn't here" and headed home to Noon Creek, my mother immediately began drowning dirty dishes and I meanwhile remembered the mail I'd been handed, and fetched it from the sideboard where I'd put it down. There was a letter to my mother from Mr. Venman, the Gros Ventre principal—even though Alec and I were gone from the English Creek school my mother still was on its school board and so had occasional dealings with the education muckymucks in Gros Ventre and Conrad—and a couple of Forest Service things for my father, probably the latest Kelleygrams. But what I was after was the Gleaner, thinking I'd let my dinner settle a little while I read.

I'd been literary for maybe three minutes when I saw the names. "Mom? You and Pete are in the paper."

She turned from where she was washing dishes and gave me her look that said, you had now better produce some fast truth.

I pinned down the newsprint evidence with my finger. "See, here."

25 Years Ago
in The Gleaner
It is the luxuriant green binding of the 0 volumes of the 0000 Harriman expedition to Alaska...which provided the chapter illustrations for my novel The Sea Runners.

red: Chateau with paper borders, painted on wood prices
Dodo W. Lamb

blue: Day over Bogen

yellow/orange: Benson

gray: archival boxes of Swan's diaries
"How come Cut Bank Creek? Why not in Browning?"

"My mother held the opinion that the prairie was a more civilized place than Browning."

"What did you do for food?"

"We ate out of a belly box. That old one from chuckwagon days, with all the cattle brands on it. Mother and I cooked up what was necessary, before we left."

"Were you the only ones on the road?"

"Pretty much, yes. The mail stage still was running then. Somewhere along the way we met it."

She could nail questions shut faster than I could think them up. Not deliberately, I see now. That was just the way she was: a person who put no particular importance on having made a prairie trek and seen a stagecoach in the process.

My mother seemed to realize that this wasn't exactly flowering into the epic tale I was hoping for. "Jick, that's all I know about it. We went, and stayed a few days, and came back."

Went, stayed, came. The facts were there but the feel of them wasn't.

"What about the road camp?" I resorted to next. "What do you remember about that?" The St. Mary's area is one of the most beautiful ones, with the mountains of Glacier National Park sheering up beyond the lake. The world looks to be all stone and ice and water there. Even my mother might have noticed some of that glory.

Here she found a small smile. "Just that when we pulled in, Pete began holloing all the horses."
If novelists do have an advantage in getting at anybody's souls, I believe it's there in the million-element experiment called language. The process is far from automatic—a writer can't simply lens in on the people of Reno or Provo or Choteau like a frontier photographer and become an instantaneous soul-stealer; the money isn't that easy, I regret to report—because the alchemy of language carries with it the high probability of fizzle. Faulkner's own townspeople, after all, were being plenty clever with the language when they took a look at their squirely author, concluded there was only a letter or two of difference between that and squirely, and dubbed him Count No Account. But their characterization of him has fizzled, while his of them burns on and on. Faulkner's sentences "advanced like armies," one critic put it (Anatole Broyard); they had "a rage of history in them."
- Eccentric sources
  - WPA Fed Writers Project @ MSU
  - used some in story; UW WSS phone book
  - McGraw's thin: hard; schol. like file
  - McCallum: scads
- stacks: Cry, Have My Bones

- Access to stacks
  - Huntington's John Hope thin
  - JNA 5
  - serendipity of UW; see adventure, 910
  - Runners source cards: Malachi
  - quarter arms: part arms
  - novel: gone home etc., Life, SEP, Sunset
  - Mark's quote

- Staff
  - consistency in cataloging
  - things in same place: e.g. Partridge in K Marx's seat
  - don't hesitate to mention: obvious! HRAF
  - don't "bother" Phyllis DeMuth
  - it's awful anecdote, but...
My business is to turn days into words. Whether this is a worthwhile proposition is not definite, but the days would turn into something else anyway.
In these ways, the West as "heart earth" is given some
by writers--the literary community, let's say--but it also
community honeycombed in your libraries. The community of
to give us their slow poetry. Like it or don't, the past, and the present
that keeps enlisting in it, amounts to more than our personal sums. We
have a collective memory, we really do. Sometimes in spite of ourselves.
And much of it, as you maybe too well know, ends up on your shelves.
I'm honestly not going to dwell on Doig's Law, to you—that the more obscure a holding seems to a librarian, the more valuable it is to me as a writer—but I do need to tell you that your stashes of old newspapers and dust-gathering volumes of local histories and other shelving headaches are part of the arithmetic of particulars, from which our stories get told.
Call it more than that, in fact. Go into French and call it Annales, the mosaic type of historiography that has brought forth masterworks such as Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie's recreation of a fourteenth-century village, Montaillou. It is not inconceivable, given the American West's lengthening strands of cultural geography, folklore, literary narrative, archival enterprise, and historical insight, that we are going to see western Montaillous woven. Shelby, Montana, and Little America, Wyoming, and any number of our other western map dots, we may not generally think of as candidates to become a classic. And yet, to put it in one of the Montanan terms my tongue still has the habit of, just why the hell not?
As I hope you will have begun to suspect by now, in tonight’s fairly quick kaleidoscope of how this writer--at least--goes about his work, both fact and fancy inspire the words onto the printed page. Like twin magicians, each has some of the powers of the other.

There’s the story that is told about Vladimir Nabokov when he was teaching his course on the novel, at Cornell. (Incidentally, back there in the Eisenhower years, that course of Nabokov’s was nicknamed “dirty lit”--Anna Karenina! Madame Bovary!)
Nabokov evidently was the Cyrillic-alphabet equivalent of a ring-tailed wonder in the classroom, one minute confiding to the class in heavy Russian accent, "By the way, Joyce made only one error in English usage in 'Ulysses,' the use of the word 'supine' when it should have been 'prone,'" and the next moment handing back, with evidently genuine horror, the test papers on which half the class blithely discussed somebody's "epidramatic" style when Nabokov all semester had actually been saying "epigrammatic."
And so comes the day when the author of "Lolita" and "Pale Fire" and "Speak, Memory" and other linguistically highly-honed books peers over the rims of his glasses at the class and cries out his summary of the writing life: "You must write with the passion of the scientist and the precision of the artist."

Pausing as if he hasn't heard himself quite right, Nabokov says in a baffled tone: "But wait--have I made a mistake? Don't I mean 'the passion of the artist and the precision of the scientist?'"
Then like the verbal acrobat he was, he gleefully completes his act: "No! I mean, you must write with the passion of the scientist and the precision of the artist."

In my own somersaults through the world of words, I keep coming back to those three main elements I’ve cited, those three hearts of writing--

--The dance of the language.

--The home country we speak from.

--And the day-by-day push into unexplored white space.

It’s that last blood-central urge that keeps writers a living species, I believe.
When I was about as tall as my father's elbow as he judiciously bent it in the nine taverns of our town, I saw a lot of the makings of the West. Among his own many Western aspects—he'd been a homestead kid, broncbuster, shepherder, short-order cook—my father was a haymaker: a haying contractor, a kind of free-lance foreman, who would hire his own crew and put up the hay for a rancher for so much per ton. Those saloons, where I was lucky enough to tag along with him, were his hiring halls, and as he would sound out a hayhand on
whether the guy had ever run a power buckrake and where, there would be the ritual of the men fumbling into their shirt pockets for the little white tobacco sack and book of "rolling" papers—Bull Durham and a "Bible," as they called the cigarette papers—the makings of the hand-rolled cigarettes they smoked as they talked of haystacks and summer wages.

\textit{Social} ingredients are the \textit{butter cookies} of memory, and just as that famous nibble into a bit of French pastry set
the values which we should want to show forth in our literature, our arts, our educational system. They haven’t had it easy. Year after year in the congressional reckoning of time which is called the budget process, the National Endowment for the Humanities--and the National Endowment for the Arts, and National Public Radio, and just about the national
anything that isn’t a military base in a
Sunbelt state--have been under attack,
budgetary and otherwise, by certain
members of Congress.

Those members of Congress are
They’re lucky ignorance isn’t painful.

The one big thing utterly evident on this
blue marble of a planet is that the human
mind has been something like a nuclear
event amid the evolution of earth’s living
things; how can we possibly chart our proper place in what the writer William Kennedy has reminded us is “the only cosmos in town” except by humanity’s collective intellectual conscience, the values that we call the humanities.
Finally,

We come now to the phone-in request portion of our program. Don’t reach for your cell phones, because the request has already come in, from Rick Ardinger when he called me up and asked me here for this occasion. Rick told me about the Humanities Council’s new awards to
immediately, and the book’s opening sentence reads:

“That month of June swam into the Two Medicine country.”

/And now, in this run of hearts, we come to the last vital pulse on the page, the one I don’t
Or, to put it more poetically, as the late great Oregon poet William Stafford did: "They call it regional, this relevance--the deepest place we have: in this pool forms the model of our land, a lonely one, responsive to the wind. Everything we own has brought us here: from here we speak."
Brought here tonight to speak at a literary "Happy Birthday" to the Idaho Humanities Council and its quarter-century of good works for the mind and the soul, I've been asked to talk about some of my own makings as a writer born and brought up in
the Mountain West, and I’ll be salt-and-pepper ing some of that in with some of the other ingredients that I think gives literature its particular flavors.

To start, as writers are supposed to start, at the beginning: with the Big One,
No, art comes by way of craft, of working and reworking those sounds that come off the page. The heart of the language must beat there. Three hearts, really. The rhythms and tides of the bloodstream we all share, words, constitute the first. The late Richard Hugo, the bigger-than-life poet of Washington and Montana, gave the world one of the canniest books on the craft of
Before I leave the neighborhood of the heart, in this talk, let me just say that the absolute blood-central reason why I am here tonight is contained in the word that pulses within the name of this organization. That distinguished middle name of the Idaho Humanities Council.

This state council and the others—and I have been around nearly the Rocky Mountain ones by now—and their parent, the National Commission for the Humanities, have become a life force and a wallet, too, for
Then came the thought that, after all, it was no less an eminence than the great English poet Shelley, taking a moment out from his skyrocket life of lyric verse—"Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair"—who once declared, "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world." Maybe a prose writer like me could come down here and at least be a legislative aide. But then you get to thinking about poets as a kind of celestial congress, trying to deal with, say, minor housekeeping legislation such as what color to repaint their meeting room.

"Like a red, red rose," proposes the gentleman from the farming constituency of Dumfries, Robert Burns.

"Violet blue as your eyes," objects the honorable Lord Tennyson.

"Orange bright," pipes up the lustrous Andrew Marvell, "like golden lamps in a green night."

As you can imagine, disagreement rapidly runs all over the spectrum, so of course the matter is handed off to a committee. Time passes and time passes, until at last the poetic committee’s decision on the paint job is read out by its chairman, John Keats. It is to be, Keats reports,

"Of dazzling hue--
Vermilion-spotted, golden, green, and blue;
Striped like a zebra, freckled like a leopard.
Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson-barred."
One dusk, back a lot of years ago in Montana, I squinted across the land where I was growing up and saw that the prairie had turned into a seascape.

The wind was blowing, as it did day and night that summer, and the moving waves of rich-yellow wheat could just be seen in the settling dark. A harvesting combine cruised on the far side of the field. I had never been within a thousand miles of an ocean, but in the sudden shadow-play of my mind, I could see that the combine, with its running lights just flicked on, was a freighter bound through the night. Bench hills rose to the north, surely a
fair coastline. The expanse of it all, hills and fields and wind in
the wheat, ran out far beyond-oceanic-to where the sky and the
flat horizon fitted together.

The magic of place is indelible. I was seventeen, a restless
farmhand with my nose in a book whenever I wasn’t atop a tractor
or grain truck, there at that found sea which was both fictional and
real, and now at sixty-one I still write about both the rim-of-the-
prairie along the Rockies there where I grew up and the green
jigsawed Pacific Northwest coastline where I live now. Perhaps
because I’m thought to have dual citizenship in those two high,
wide, and handsome territories, I get freighted in to conferences
and other speaking occasions to talk about "place"--a Western writer's "sense of place." I tend to always just say the obvious, that I think quite a number of us writing in and about the West are simply trying to do what writers have always done, and pay homage to our native place in our words. We're not the first to sit around inside our heads all the time and monkey away at that. I've always liked Paul Horgan's saying whenever he'd get too tired of always getting called a Southwestern writer--"Everybody is a regionalist," he replied. "Tolstoy was a regionalist."
So, it seems to me that the “region” I’m always trying to write about is simply the one called life, and within that are these indelible spots of place and time that we all carry in our memories. In that spirit, I want to read a section to you tonight that takes place in Montana, but I don’t see why it couldn’t have taken place in, say, Iowa—that is, if Iowa had any rocks, because the scene does involve that essential prelude to Montana farming, picking rocks out of the field.

This piece from Mountain Time is about Mitch Rozier, one of the four central figures of the book. Mitch 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 takes place in 1996--is jelly-sandwiched between the grown children he lost in an early divorce and an aging parent back in his Rocky Mountain hometown. He is, in other words, that not unknown specimen in our land, a Baby Boomer beginning to feel the pressure of the years.

At this point in the book his father--Lyle Rozier--has just died for any of you who know Northern Montana there along the rivers, the town is between Choteau and Augusta, where it seemed to me there's
plenty of room for a town. Briefly at the start of this scene you'll hear mention of the McCaskill sisters who've been with Mitch in trying to fend with Lyle's illness--Lexa McCaskill, Mitch's "spousal equivalent," with whom he has been living, out on the Coast; and Mariah McCaskill, still a highly intense photographer for a Montana newspaper.

One bit of background you need--Mitch is a big guy, a former athlete, played fullback in college, and now he has to exercise ruthlessly, or as he says, watch himself inflate enough to leave the earth. Out on the Coast, he's used to going to the gym and doing some weightlifting.
I came to a scene where the Puget Sound pioneer I was writing about was in an Indian canoe along the Strait of Juan de Fuca in 1860, the northern lights were illuminating the night sky, and the pioneer records in his diary the story told him by a young chieftain of the Makah tribe to explain the mysterious sky display:

Under that star, many snow's sail from here in a canoe, live a race of little men, very strong, who are dressed in skins. They look like Indians, but they are not taller than half the length of my paddle. They can dive down into the sea and catch a seal or a fish with their hands. Their country is very cold, and they live on the ice where they build great fires, and that light is the fires of those little people...
The Makah

Small as tutor about Eskimo life puts light on something else as well. Along the wilderness that was the North Pacific coastland, more than five hundred thousand miles of broken shore from Neah Bay even to southernmost Alaska and greater distances beyond that to the people of the ice, ideas of that sort must have traveled like thistledown on the breeze: canoeing tribe in wary touch with canoeing tribe, a seed of story deposited, to be carried along by the next barter-trip southward. By the time the Makahs had the story of the miniature ice-men of the north, lore had been nurtured into legend. I recognize such wafts of alchemy, for I live with them as well. A morning in the nineteen-twenties a dozen riders are returning to their home ranches after a weekend rodeo. Whenever the horses' hoofs strike the dryness of a Montana country road, dust drifts up until from a distance the group looks like men of smoke. Most of the journey, however, cuts across open sageland, and the slap of the gray tassels of brush against leather chaps competes with their talk of the rodeo broncs. Unexpectedly the loose troop reins to a halt. Across a stretch of pasture they have always ridden through, a fresh barbed wire fence glints. The owner of the land emerges from a nearby cabin to explain that he intends to plow the ground, that they can no longer go across it. A rider with a notch-scar in the center of his chin—he was my father—grins down at the man and says in his style of half-joke, half-declaration: "We never saw any place yet we couldn't go." Turning his horse to the fence he touches spur to flank, and mount and man pass through the air above the blades of wire. One after another the others soar after him, like boys on great birds of sorrel, roan, dapple gray.
The story and its impromptu anthem of the west's last horseback generation have come down to me, on embellishing lips, very much as legends of the Eskimoos must have arrived south to Swell. "The same winds blow spring on all men's dreams," I read once from a folklorist. Whether there were a dozen rodeoers or just four; whether they all lofted themselves in the barbwire steeplechase or just the rider with that starred chin: in it has whiffed to me, the tale as they are twelve and they soar.

So that's the kind of mulling about the magic of stories that has been going on when I'm at my typewriter as I ought to be. I'm intrigued with that phrase—"the same winds blow spring on all people's dreams"—from a Midwestern professor of classics named Frank Kramer. It nicely says that there is a common perpetual urge toward storytelling, to have our lives freshened by stories—as if storytelling is a kind of chinook of the soul, thawing the cold routines of life, promising us warmth and a new green horizon and maybe the first laugh we've had since the thermometer hit thirty below.
On the 4th of July, 1826...the 50th anniversary of American independence.

The very heavens seem to cut loose. At 00, Thomas Jefferson dies at Monticello.

At 00, the second old titan of young America, John Adams, dies in 00. Amid those thunderclaps of history, Robert Owen rises before a crowd of 00 at New Harmony and delivers the Declaration of Mental Independence. (The day lacks only the trumpets of herald angels.)
Growing up, print was my escape—and it hooked me.
I suppose that one reason people climb mountains is that it gives little tastes of eternity, in the gasping moments when time passes with agonizing slowness.

--T.S. Eliot line: the still point of the turning world (check it in The Archivist)
like best the words of one of the very first American writers here in the Pacific Northwest. It was the early spring of 1806, and just south of the mouth of the Columbia River the Lewis and Clark expedition was breaking camp. They had wintered nearly four months in the tiny log stockade they called Fort Clatsop, and it had rained every day but twelve. It had been a winter of smoke, and fleas, and immemorial monotony, and uncertain native neighbors, out here at the final rough end of the continent, 2300 miles from their starting point at St. Louis. Yet what comes through in the journal entry of Captain William Clark is the simple pride of having stuck to the task. William Clark wrote: "(We) have lived as well as we had any right to expect, and we can say that we were never one day without 3 meals of some kind."
James Swan led me on to another regional ingredient, the native art of this coast.

In trying to think about the power of the art of the Northwest coastal tribes—some brilliant examples of it we've all just seen in the Soft Gold exhibition—I've wished that writing could truly capture that magic. Every so often you'd like to re-weave time and bring forth a writer from his own years to a era where we need his particular eye and skill. Shakespeare, for instance, to write about the massive murderous idiocy of the trench warfare of World War One. Joseph Conrad to be aboard a moon voyage and tell us of the ocean of space. Jonathan Swift, to do satiric justice to [name].
The power of how the land looks is mostly still there; the power within it—as the ecosystem it has been for 00—is going.
A peasant's habits in a micro-chip society. Actually, I admire the energy...
like
I prize a fluid society. Without one, I would still be herding sheep.
In a guidebook published in 1875 to encourage settlers into the Puget Sound country, the Board of Immigration of Washington Territory included this warning: "Literary men and loiterers are not wanted and had better keep away."
In a guidebook to encourage settlers
lines from a Thomas Hornsby Ferril poem, quoted (p. 36) in Robin Winks' booklength essay, The Myth of the American Frontier:

...I wasn't here, yet I remember them,
That first night long ago, those wagon people
Who pushed aside enough of the cottonwoods
To build our city where the blueness rested.

They were with me, they told me afterward,
When I stood on a splintered wooden viaduct
Before it changed to steel and I to man.
They told me while I stared down at the water:
If you will stay we will not go away.
material on from Western Australia about regionalism and concepts of the West is in History/Frontier filefolder in bottom drawer of green file cabinet. The material:

--Bruce Bennett's U. of Western Australia syllabus for "Contexts of Regionalism in Australian and Canadian Fiction"

--Bennett's July '84 article in WESTERLY, "Concepts of 'the West' in Canadian and Australian Literary Studies"

--"Regions and Regionalism" chapter, overview of many Australian writers as of 1988, from The New Diversity: Australian Fiction 1970-88, by Ken Gelder & Paul Salzman

other material about literature of the Australian West is in books shelved with our Australian/NZ novels: Bennett's An Australian Compass: Essays on Place & Direction in Australian Literature

Impressions: West Coast Fiction 1829-1988, ed. Peter Cowan
Recently I have been throat-deep in the prose of Norman Maclean...

--idiosyncratic paragraphing; take-it-or-leave-it

Cantankerousness: (Which is a reason I loved him. He once told my wife and me...only power left in old age)

--(Which is a reason I knew we could not last as friends if we were semi-together more than, say, annually.) Norman would find something to resent, such as my prolific output. We went about it differently...

I do not grant that Brodkey's 27-years-in-the-making novel is a greater work than Joseph Conrad's output in an 18-month span: Ht of Dkness etc.

--great wrong-headed man quote

--Norman got wonderfully full of himself (abt theories of writing, design of story, etc.) even though he himself chuckled over the student's definition in that River, "They go fishing, they go fishing, then they get drunk and go fishing." (get exact quote off tape)

--Surprisingly, or perhaps not, for somebody who was so canny about fishing, he didn't rise readily to bait. He told me he'd liked my novel ECK, even though I had deliberately put in chicken-gut fishing and lost no chance in my subsequent books to intimate that dry-fly fishing could be regarded as grown men playing with their food.
The McCaskills have love troubles, down through the generations...
(They're probably like our own generations, in those storms in the heart.)

Angus McCaskell and Anna Ramsay, in Dancing at the Rascal Fair
Jick's brother Alec and his ill-fated blonde romance—Leona Tracy—in English Creek.
Jick himself has had a spasm of it, too—early first marriage to Shirley Havely—
("Only snakes and bugs were meant to live under rocks!")

Mariah and Riley twisted apart, because they were only in love with each other's talents.

Jick: "as if there were funeral bells behind my brow, intarid (p.56) unabled to match the traks of age across my forehead..."

-spams of memory; memory storms
memory comes back to him mericulously
"If the book we are reading does not wake us, as with a fist hammering on our skull, why then do we read it? Good God, we would also be happy if we had no books, and such books as make us happy we could, if need be, write ourselves. But what we must have are those books which come upon us like ill-fortune, and distress us deeply, like the death of one we love better than ourselves, like suicide. A book must be an ice-axe to break the sea frozen inside us."

--Franz Kafka (before using in print, find original source and check wording.)
"Civilization exists by geological consent—subject to change without notice."

--attributed to Will Durant
I have been chased by machines all my life. (farm equipment...computer...)
the straight lines of empire-building vs. the sinuous bends of river
in old notebook, quote from Sierra Club Bulletin piece or poem by Wm Everson:
the world was not meant to be our zoo.
American cathedrals are outdoors. (still true?)
Is it in Billington?—Peel off successive layers of wealth: furs, mining, timber, grazing, farming (now subdividing). I think we're beginning to get close to the bone (of the planet)
the ever-receding good old days.
the medical equipment dealer, with oxygen supplies for the emphysema sufferers.

And making hay? I incongruously was an eyewitness to the change of that, as a college kid. By then, the early 1960s, the days of the contractor were gone—at least in our part of Montana where stacks of loose hay like giant bread loaves on the prairie had long been the method—and ranchers had bought their own swathers and balers. But hay still was being stacked in bales, and crews still were
hired, of young summer muscle such as I was then, to do that bale-piling. The two other bale-pilers whom I worked with, and I, all caught a kind of fever of pride that summer, and we worked our proverbial tails off trying to build the tightest, prettiest bale stacks in the Smith River Valley. Our boss, the rancher, kept telling us that's what he wanted. On that same ranch the very next summer, I saw the arrival of a "self-piling" trailer which hitched behind the bailing machine. The cost of it no doubt would have paid a
piling crew's wages for many summers, and it dumped its accumulated bales into wobbly un-weatherproof heaps which would have got us mere mortals fired by noon of the first day. But here the contraption was, religiously being used because it eliminated hired men. That taught me a lot about what the mechanizing world thought of the human ingredient.

// The list is long. That's what history is for. An evening speaker's timespan is supposed to be finite, however,
and so I'm mostly going to talk as a working writer, someone who sits around in his own head all the time and fumbles with the makings.

*DEAN SPEAR*

Fatty spilled the beans that I do have a degree in history—but I'm actually only a tourist in the stuff. (Just passing through, honest.) A fascinated tourist, I admit. And one with a funny straddle between hanging around with Fatty and the other "New West" historians, as they get so sick of being called, and the prior generation who had Western history in
their custody when I was a student. As an undergraduate at Northwestern, I used to sit in occasionally on the Western history course taught by Ray Allen Billington, one of the traditionalists whose version of history Patricia Nelson Limerick, say, is an adversary of. (Patty takes on adversaries living and dead.) Ray Allen Billington wrote the textbook we used when I was in graduate school, so that we got to read about the construction of the transcontinental railroads this way:
"Nightly dissipation did not slow down the workers who, by the spring of 1868, realized they were not mere laborers on a railroad but participants in the greatest race in history. The Central Pacific was winging across the level deserts of Nevada. The Union Pacific was battling through South Pass."

Now, a writer really ought to go for that. "Winging," "battling"—active verbs. But I remember even then being troubled by the fact that, battling or otherwise, the Union Pacific railroad never passed within a good many miles of
South Pass, Wyoming.

So, when the New West historians are accused of de-glamorizing the West, we do need to consider what version of the West they're kicking the glamor out of. Remember, it's fairly recent in our past that the cultural images of the West were guys like Louis L'Amour and John Wayne, with a pound of belt buckle trying to hold up 25 extra pounds of gut. Something had to give way.

Well, writers---what are they up to.
Let me just give you some idea of the makings of books, of how at least some of us as writers, Western-born—others, fervent adoptees of the region—try to put the West together, make its stories and characters speak up in our pages.

"They call it regional, this relevance—the deepest place we have: in this pool forms the model of our land, a lonely one, responsive to the wind. Everything we own has brought us here: from here we speak."
I can hear that, in our own western pages. To me, that is the ultimate "region," the true home for a winter—that vast alance. For if we alance them right, our words and stories, they are something more than words and stories about the West—they are heartbeats of the world.

#
ell, “they call it regional, this relevance— as Bill Stafford so poetically said. But there’s an element by which writers move the central power of literature to where they are in the world.

P. 47 follows
I said a moment ago there's an element by which writers move the gravitational poles of the world to where they're writing from. That element we can identify and name—by our own lights, here in the West, naturally—as the crocodile factor.
I ultimately have them file for homesteads in a valley right up under those mountains. (Slide 22)

The timbered butte there on the right I used as Breed Butte in this and subsequent books, and Rob Barclay chooses that site to build his homestead house in this selection from Dancing at the Rascal Fair:
By the way, when you saw those little individual junkyards all over the rural West, out back of the barn or somewhere, they weren't just rusty junk and signs of the decline of western civilization--they were also a kind of equipment supply. Many of the homemade power buckrakes used in western hayfields, which brought automotive speed to a harvest done for centuries by hand or by ox or by horse, were contrived from car carcasses and other old pieces of equipment sitting around out there, for instance.
We of course know a lot of the horrific side of women’s lives on homesteads—the loneliness, the miserable housing, the endless chores, the awful perils of childbirth and children’s illnesses without doctors near. This early twentieth-century Montana homestead crowd, though, shows a few other angles. You find single women homesteading; the historian Richard Roeder, looking at the World War I years, figured at least one of every ten homestead filings were by unmarried women or widows—schoolteachers who might

In any case, the old-country burr of Dundee and Carnoustie was on the tongue of these homestead-born buckaroos.
Adaptations are made. One you sometimes see in such shovel-resistant circumstances is the jackstay fence (Slide 1), to escape the digging of postholes.

Any of you who have traveled in Britain may have had the experience where you’ll be driving, through Blackheath or somewhere, and all of a sudden there’s a straight stretch, a Roman road like a spear through the muddle of English streets; well, that’s a different pattern, a different experience, isn’t it.
Another historian of the American land system, Vernon Carstensen, has had this to say about the American process of dominion over the land:

"Men wanted and obtained individual ownership of land, and although they may never have heard of Blackstone, what they did illustrates his declaration that 'There is nothing which so generally strikes the imagination and engages the affections of mankind, as the right of property; that sole and despotic dominion which one man clais and exercises over the external things of the world, to the total exclusion of the right of any other individual in the universe.'" Carstensen continues: "It was understood and accepted that a 'set of words upon parchment' served to 'convey dominion on land,' or at least that it
should. This view stood in sharp contrast to the Indian attitude toward land, an aspect of which is suggested by the perplexed declaration of the Cayuse Indian chief, Pee-o-pee-o-mox-a-mox, at the Walla Walla treaty council of 1855. He complained that he could understand the talk by I.I. Stevens and the others there about giving goods for Indian lands. ‘Goods and the Earth are not equal: goods are for using on the Earth. I do not know where they have given land for goods.’ Pee-o-pee-o-mox-a-mox’s words,” Carstensen figured, “were probably as unintelligible to the government negotiators as Blackstone would have been to the Indians.”

For the vast tapestry of history to mean as much to us as it should, we need to look for threads of ourselves in the long weave of time and
event. The American land system produced a lot of us who are Westerners. In the case of my home state, Montana, settlers there took up more land under the various public land laws than any other state, more than thirty-two million acres. The great majority of homesteaders there, however, ended up in some version of my grandfather's attempt to claim dominion over a piece of the American earth—badly outgunned by geography, climate, economics, and human limits of endurance. Time after time, the homesteads which were parceled out by that ingeniously arithmetical survey system proved to be seed acres not of generations of yeoman agriculturists, but of families who scattered to other landscapes and livelihoods like thistledown on the wind. We did take root, but not always where intended.
Take myself as an example, as writers are prone to do. My family’s history, by the time I was ready to go to college and choice of occupation, was melancholy and desperate enough that a strange kind of hope for me was pulsing under it. To radically sum up that situation, our lack of actual owned acreage freed me into the land of language. Away I went, from Montana, from a rural past, from the obligation or opportunity to make a living out of ancestral property, to a more self-created world of writing.

Maybe what it comes down to is that bit of inadvertent poetry all the way back there in my grandfather’s first piece of paperwork as he undertook his Montana land claim: there amid all the legalisms, that description, before the surveyors showed up, of pacing off from the west
branch of Spring Creek and around in a 160-acre square, back, as the
descriptive lingo breaks into a lilt, to "the place of beginning."

I'm in the business of catching stories. Hunting them, corralling them,
looking them over--trying to pick out the best of the herd, and break it
into print. It's a strange occupation, I suppose--pre-occupation, anyone
might say who has caught a glimpse of me sitting around in my own
head all the time, watching things flit through the twilight of the mind as
I try to figure out--was that the whispering ghost of Plato that just flew
past? Or merely a bat? As a writer, you have to be able to stand your
own company--and not need company from much of anybody else--long
enough to figure out those shadowy patterns in the mental cave. Which can take two or three years per book.

About all I can say in defense of an occupation that is best described as self-unemployed is that at least it deals in one of humankind's better urges instead of the wide market of humanity's worst urges. The urge to know all the shapes and sizes and colors life comes in; that, I think, is why stories are told, and get listened to.

All the while, too, the footings of a considerable family--six sons and eventually even a daughter--were being created there in that high, harshly beautiful basin in the Montana mountains.

The land calls the last question: "Do your lines run to the heart's quiet, as mine do?"