

Alan Dong

San Francisco Chronicle

THE VOICE OF THE WEST

Dear Chronicle Western Hundred honoree:

Hi, I'm the editor of the San Francisco Chronicle Book Review. If I'm already lucky enough to call you my friend, please forgive me for addressing you so impersonally. Those of you who *don't* know me will understandably be wondering by now just what the Chronicle Western Hundred is, why you should be honored by it, and whether this is some polite form of stickup.

First things first. The Chronicle Western Hundred is our list of the best 20th century fiction written in or about - or by an author from - the Western United States. It came about because those Modern Library lists coming out of New York struck me as even more myopically Manhattan-centric than we might have expected. Indignant, I dragooned my readers into a counter-poll. I solicited nominations only for writers from the Rockies westward, since the Modern Library had already obligingly given us a list for the East. The results appeared in the Chronicle last November 11, and again in our annual holiday issue two weeks later. If you're receiving this message, you're on the list, so please accept my heartfelt congratulations. (A copy of the list appears at the end of this letter.)

For this year's holiday issue, which appears November 19, I'm preparing a symposium, and I want all the living Chronicle Western Hundred honorees to serve as its jury. At most, this should entail an hour's cogitation and 100-200 words worth of actual writing.

The premise is this. Every year, it seems, we're treated by the New Yorker or Granta or somebody to another list of the "20 Under 40: The Best American Writers Under 40," or the "30 Under 30: The Best American Novelists Under 30," or some such foolishness. These lists have more to do with the demographics of the magazines in question than with the age of America's best writing talent. With your help, I aim to compile a different kind of list, one I'm calling "50 Over 50: A List of the Best American Writers in Their Prime."

Here's all I need from you: your nominees for the five best American writers over 50 today - fiction, nonfiction or poetry, acclaimed or unheralded - and 100-200 words either making your case for them, weighing in on some aspect of the question, or both. Please write these remarks for readers, not to me. (That is, instead of writing 'David, I reject your premise outright; any fool can see that all

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the best writers are all under 50,' please write 'I reject the Chronicle's proposition outright...') Anything you'd like to address to me personally, whether about the Chronicle Western Hundred or some other matter unrelated to "50 Over 50," please set off from your response to the symposium and I'll be thrilled to read it.

That's it. I'll need your responses no later than Oct. 1, but please call me at 415-777-6232 or email me at Dkipen@sfchronicle.com by Monday, Sept. 15, to confirm your participation.

Yours gratefully,
David Kipen
Book Editor
San Francisco Chronicle
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The Chronicle Western Hundred:

1. "Angle of Repose," by Wallace Stegner
2. "The Grapes of Wrath," by John Steinbeck
3. "Sometimes a Great Notion," by Ken Kesey
4. "The Call of the Wild," by Jack London
5. "The Big Sleep," by Raymond Chandler
6. "Animal Dreams," by Barbara Kingsolver
7. "Death Comes for the Archbishop," by Willa Cather
8. "The Day of the Locust," by Nathanael West
9. "Blood Meridian," by Cormac McCarthy
10. "The Maltese Falcon," by Dashiell Hammett
11. "The Ox-Bow Incident," by Walter Van Tilburg Clark
12. "English Creek," by Ivan Doig
13. "Even Cowgirls Get the Blues," by Tom Robbins
14. "Snow Falling on Cedars," by David Guterson
15. "On the Road," by Jack Kerouac
16. "The Joy Luck Club," by Amy Tan
17. "Lonesome Dove," by Larry McMurtry
18. "McTeague," by Frank Norris
19. "My Name Is Aram," by William Saroyan
20. "A River Runs Through It," by Norman Maclean
21. "The Left Hand of Darkness," by Ursula K. Le Guin
22. "Coyote Waits," by Tony Hillerman
23. "Play It as It Lays," by Joan Didion
24. "The Monkey Wrench Gang," by Edward Abbey
25. "Vineland," by Thomas Pynchon

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26. "Earth Abides," by George R. Stewart
27. "Crooked Little Heart," by Anne Lamott
28. "The Underground Man," by Ross Macdonald
29. "Where I'm Calling From," by Raymond Carver
30. "Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book," by Maxine Hong Kingston
31. "L.A. Confidential," by James Ellroy
32. "The House of the Spirits," by Isabel Allende
33. "Women in Their Beds," by Gina Berriault
34. "Rumors of Peace," by Ella Lefland
35. "The River Why," by David James Duncan
36. "Riders of the Purple Sage," by Zane Grey
37. "Shane," by Jack Schaefer
38. "Stones for Ibarra," by Harriet Doerr
39. "The Big Sky," by A.B. Guthrie
40. "Trout Fishing in America," by Richard Brautigan
41. "The House Made of Dawn," by N. Scott Momaday
42. "The Milagro Beanfield War," by John Nichols
43. "The Last Tycoon," by F. Scott Fitzgerald
44. "Oll," by Upton Sinclair
45. "Mariette in Ecstasy," by Ron Hansen
46. "The Virginian," by Owen Wister
47. "A Yellow Raft in Blue Water," by Michael Dorris
48. "Ceremony," by Leslie Marmon Silko
49. "Hawaii," by James Michener
50. "The Postman Always Rings Twice," by James M. Cain
51. "Mrs. Bridge," by Evan S. Connell
52. "The Golden Gate," by Vikram Seth
53. "Stones From the River," by Ursula Hegi
54. "Tell Me a Riddle," by Tillie Olsen
55. "Rabbit Boss," by Thomas Sanchez
56. "Bless Me, Ultima," by Rudolfo A. Anaya
57. "The Man in the High Castle," by Philip K. Dick
58. "Laughing Boy," by Oliver Lafarge
59. "The Corpus of Joe Bailey," by Oakley Hall
60. "Rose," by Martin Cruz Smith
61. "Fat City," by Leonard Gardner
62. "Montana 1948," by Larry Watson
63. "Yellow Back Radio Broke-Down," by Ishmael Reed
64. "Tattoo the Wicked Cross," by Floyd Salas
65. "The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman," by Ernest J. Gaines
66. "Lying Low," by Diane Johnson
67. "Tales of the City," by Armistead Maupin
68. "Superior Women," by Alice Adams
69. "Field of Vision," by Wright Morris
70. "Nobody's Angel," by Thomas McGuane

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71. "Little Big Man," by Thomas Berger
72. "Budding Prospects," by T.C. Boyle
73. "The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven," by Sherman Alexie
74. "Angel Fire," by Ron Franscell
75. "Cowboys Are My Weakness," by Pam Houston
76. "Love Medicine," by Louise Erdrich
77. "Hondo," by Louis L'Amour
78. "Fools Crow," by James Welch
79. "The Vineyard," by Idwal Jones
80. "Fathers," by Herb Gold
81. "The Loved One," by Evelyn Waugh
82. "Paso Por Aqui," by Eugene Manlove Rhodes
83. "Mistress of Spices," by Chitra Divakaruni
84. "Close Range," by L. Annie Proulx
85. "The Color Purple," by Alice Walker
86. "Rock Springs," by Richard Ford
87. "A Distant Trumpet," by Paul Horgan
88. "Tapping the Source," by Kern Nunn
89. "Ask the Dust," by John Fante
90. "Fup," by Jim Dodge
91. "Friendly Persuasion," by Jessamyn West
92. "The Splendid Idle Forties," by Gertrude Atherton
93. "The Carmen Miranda Memorial Flagpole," by Gerald Rosen
94. "Dune," by Frank Herbert
95. "The Palace Thief," by Ethan Canin
96. "Confessions of Madame Psyche: Memoirs and Letters of Mei-Li Murrow,"
by Dorothy Bryant
97. "Making History," by Carolyn See
98. "The Living," by Annie Dillard
99. "After Many a Summer Dies the Swan," by Aldous Huxley
100. "Johnny Got His Gun," by Dalton Trumbo

The Washington Post

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WASHINGTON, D. C. 20071-7301

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9/8/2000

Dear Ivan Doy,

Did I reply to your kind
note already? I hope so. At
any event, you certainly deserve
bracketing with Fitzgerald and
Conrad (Peversee and Jonathan,
but perhaps Scott and Lewis too).

Friends of mine report hearing
you deliver riveting talks in
California this summer.

All best,

Michael Dukakis

26 July 2000

Dear Richard--

Just wanted to convey hugs and tickles to you for the great time you showed us during the Stanford alumni gig. Seeing your place and eating your food is our idea of a hell of a good time. We came away full of admiration at all you and Beverly have managed, in kicking that house into order (well, maybe with the exception of a few recalcitrant ants); we just now had a fairly simple driveway job done and still are semi-swooning from the gauntlet of cement trucks, guys with wheelbarrows, guys with shovels...first thing this morning, Carol said: "You mean I can go anywhere I want to on my own property this morning?"

Speaking of going, I want to say what a pleasure it always is to watch your head rev up and show us the territory in new ways, there at the front of the classroom. I come away from any session you do feeling more mentally substantial from having been there, Richard. Whatever kind of spooky radar the MacArthur winnowers have, they've been utterly right about the two minds I feel luckiest to have been around, yours and Linda Bierds'. Thanks, in ways that are really more than I can say, for the grace of your friendship with Carol and me.

One last thought: ever considered doing a California book--just let the intellectual artillery rake over whatever terrain interests you? You've known the state, boy and man. Probably you don't need any more ideas piled on your plate, but your aptness for this one has occurred to me a couple of times, on the plane back from Stanford and a day or so ago when Marc Reisner's obit mentioned that he'd wanted to do some sort of California book. Just thought I'd ante this in. After all, if you don't do it, Stephen Ambrose will.

All best to Beverly. Come see us sometime.

JUNE 2000

Dear IRAN DOIG -

Thank you so much for the gift of your kind words to help my book MOUNTAIN CITY find its audience. I've been an admirer of your work since before I ever considered becoming a writer, and I am happy and proud to be participating in some small way in the long tradition that you have participated in for many years. I only hope that I might make as durable and artistic a contribution.

Yours in admiration and gratitude -

Gregory Martin

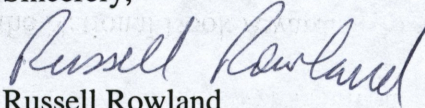
April 3, 2000

Ivan Doig
17277 15th Ave. N.W.
Seattle, WA 98177

Dear Mr. Doig—

How are you? I hope you remember me. I'm the guy from Montana that approached you at Clean Well-Lighted Place for Books in San Francisco about writing a blurb for my novel. I just wanted to give you an update on where the book stands. The novel was bought by William Morrow, which, as you probably know, was acquired by Harpercollins last year. I was not certain for quite some time whether they were still planning to even publish the book, especially with me being a first-time author. But I'm happy to report that Harper is planning to publish it. Unfortunately, because of the merger, they have too many books. It's not scheduled to come out until Oct. 2001. I know you requested to see it in galleys form, so I just wanted to let you know that it's going to be awhile. In the meantime, I'm enclosing the blurbs I have so far, as a slight enticement. Hope all is well with you. And thank you again for considering this. I know how overwhelmed someone in your position is with similar requests.

Sincerely,



Russell Rowland
1202 23rd Ave.
San Francisco, CA 94122
(415) 664-2203

"Russell Rowland's novel, *In Open Spaces*, is a throwback to the days of epic realism. His bumptious family saga of rural Montana in the first half of the century is sage, humane, and immensely readable.
C. Michael Curtis, "The Atlantic Monthly"

"*In Open Spaces* is a strong, dark novel, which vividly describes the harsh lives of men and women of a bygone world. Russell Rowland's earnest prose makes his characters entirely human with their dignity, virtues, guilt, desires. The book is charged with dramatic tension--a joy to read."

Ha Jin, author of *Waiting*, winner of the National Book Award.

TERESA JORDAN

PO Box 581168 • Salt Lake City, UT • 84158

801-201-0278 • tjordan@FieldnotesWest.com

March 4, 2000

Dear Ivan,

I was so sorry to miss you in Salt Lake, and especially for such a frustrating reason. I don't know if Dawn Morano had a chance to relay my message of regret. We moved from Nevada to Salt Lake this fall, into a small cabin that Hal has had for years in the mountains close to the city. We had to do some major renovation before we could move in, and hired a contractor. He turned out to be a dope head, and at the time of the book festival, we'd been homeless for six weeks and were desperate to get settled. He'd let us down once again (and for the last time! We may be slow, but we FINALLY catch on) and we were madly painting, trying to get ready for the carpetlayers who were arriving in the morning, the only time they could fit us in over the next two weeks. Of course the painting took longer than we ever imagined, and as we were working late into the night, all I could think was that this damn dopehead, who also happens to be a bibliophile and a particular fan of yours, was probably sitting there having the time of his life. You may have noticed someone blond and glazed in the back row. If so, I hope you took a dislike to him.

Well, I may have another chance to catch up with you, if you will be in Seattle in mid may. I'm hoping to read there from a new book, FIELD NOTES FROM THE GRAND CANYON, an illustrated journal that I kept going down the Colorado a couple of summers ago. It's a real departure for me, but has been an absolute pleasure to produce. I've asked the publisher to send you a copy when it's out. I'm sure he will hit you up for a blurb, but please don't feel obligated. It's just the most direct way to get a book into your hands...and maybe entice you to the reading if you are around. As soon as the date is set, I'll let you know. Do you have an email address? I promise I'll use it sparingly (and NEVER send you a list of jokes.)

*All best,
Teresa*

TERESA JORDAN

PO Box 58108 • Salt Lake City UT • 84158

801-201-0278 • tjordan@earthlink.net

March 4, 2000

Dear Ivan,

I was so sorry to miss you in Salt Lake, and especially for such a frustrating reason. I don't know if Dawn Morano had a chance to relay my message of regret. We moved from

16 March '00

Dear Teresa---

So, somewhere in my Salt Lake audience was a head case thinking (a) boy, this Doig is something else, and (b) gee, wonder why those shmooks Teresa and Hal ain't done painting yet.... Pretty funny, with a little distance of time, I hope.

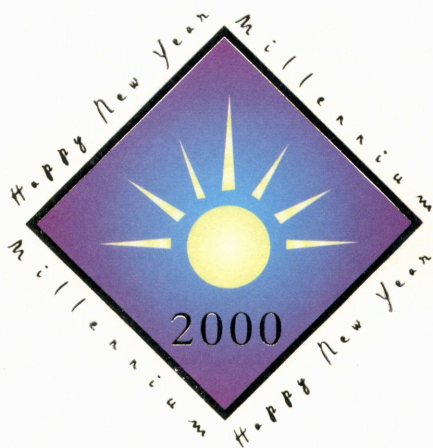
Do drop a line about your mid-May reading here, although if it's at Elliott Bay we'll see it on their schedule. We have some dabs of travel ahead, so don't know yet if we'll be around. Am going slow on blurbs since a Bozeman friend told me, "You know, I picked up 3 books in a row in the Country Bookshelf and your name was on the back," so if I don't manage one this time it's seasonal, not personal, OK? Will be citing you to NCTE types in April, along with other usual suspects in writing "grass-roots" (i.e., Western-born) autobiographies, a category cooked up for us by Richard Maxwell Brown of U. of Oregon. Hope you're thriving, hugs and tickles to Hal, and we'll see you in May if we can.

Probably sitting there having the time of his life. You may have noticed someone blond and plaid in the back row. If so, I hope you took a dislike to him.

Well, I may have another chance to catch up with you. You will be in Seattle in mid-May. I'm hoping to read there from a new book. FIELD NOTES FROM THE GRAND CANYON, an illustrated journal that I kept going down the Colorado a couple of summers ago. It's a real departure for me, but has been an absolute pleasure to produce. I've asked the publisher to send you a copy when it's out. I'm sure he will hit you up for a blurb, but please don't feel obligated. It's just the most direct way to get a book into your hands...and maybe entice you to the reading if you are around. As soon as the date is set, I'll let you know. Do you have an email address? I promise I'll use it sparingly (and NEVER send you a list of jokes).

Will best

Teresa



Another value in 1995 was un-
successful, and he outlived the
doctor's prognosis for him by
quite a bit.

During his last year, he
reorganized his books of and
in, and all of yours are in a
place of honor. We both
enjoy your writing immensely,
but it was he who got me
started with English Luck
which I loved.

I wish you took a
joyous New Year.

Judy

December 30, 1999

Dear Carol and Joan,

After your talk at our
local bookstore, David
wanted to write and tell
you how fine it was,
but he was really too
frail to put pen to paper.
It was a joy for him
to see you and he so
warmly greeted.

You may have heard
that David died on
June 20. An operation
to replace a faulty

GLICK
designs

The Letterpress Range
Designed by Jonathan Glick



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HH

LNK33



Judith Crowell Hawke
16 Deer Run Rd.
Madison, CT 06443-2247

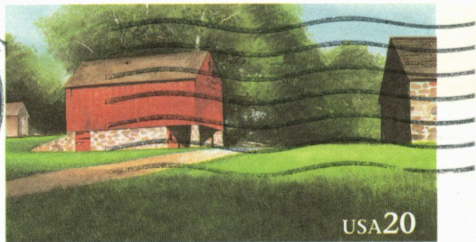
Dear Ivan,

Thanks so much for your kind
words and good wishes. All
continued success to you and
your admirable work.

Best,

DAVID SHIELDS

Shields
1902 N. 46th
Seattle, WA 98103



Ivon Doig
17277 15th Avenue NW
Seattle, WA 98177

7 Feb.. 2000

Dear David--

Shields

Just wanted to say congratulations for *Black Planet* making the finals of the National Book Critics Circle Award. Who knew those people had such smarts, huh? Here's hoping the book goes all the way on March 13.

Best wishes