

2 Feb. 2001

Director of Admissions  
Northwestern University  
1601 Hinman Avenue  
Evanston IL 60208

I've been asked by Josette Wohlers, a fine student from a western background that I share and write about, to say something in support of her application to Northwestern, and it's a role I do gladly. She comes from a family background of hard and attentive work; the restaurant that bears her father's name has won its way in the world through a reputation for service and mastery of details. There has been the first-hand example of adversity; when a fire swept its neighborhood and the restaurant, Josette's family rebuilt the enterprise more strongly than ever. She, I believe, is the reflective sort of person who can take such lessons of life and add them into Northwestern's sumptuous educational mix. As a professional writer who got my own start at Medill, I recognize a promising combination of expressive traits in Josie--her outward calm consideration of the world and her imagination and intensity when she explores on paper.

There's one other aspect of Josie's yen toward Northwestern that I hope I'm qualified to comment on. She's a bright kid from the American outback, as I was those decades ago when I set foot into Evanston from a Montana village with a population of less than a hundred. A chance at Northwestern, and at Chicago, would be an opportunity not wasted on her. I know from visiting with Henry and Leigh Bienen, who first made contact with me after reading the story of my western upbringing and arrival at Northwestern in my memoir *This House of Sky*, that the university still has a keen interest in unearthing non-suburban kids who know how to do the chores and don't flinch every time the weather of life turns against them. You'd be making a good bet by admitting Josette Wohlers as one made of that durable material.

Sincerely,

Ivan Doig  
BSJ '61, MSJ '62



# Alfred·A·Knopf

P U B L I S H E R O F

Telephone: (212) 751-2600

Facsimile: (212) 572-2593



B O R Z O I B O O K S

299 Park Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10171

[www.aaknopf.com](http://www.aaknopf.com)

September 6, 2001

Ivan Doig  
17277 15th Ave. NW  
Seattle, WA 98177

Dear Mr. Doig,

You may have heard about Judy Blunt's forthcoming memoir, *Breaking Clean*. It's an extraordinary book, and one that I thought might be of interest to you. I've taken the liberty of sending you a bound galley, hoping you might find the time read it, and if you feel so inclined, offer words of support we might use in promotion. Your remarks would obviously be quite meaningful in helping this book receive the attention it so richly deserves.

Should you wish to get in touch with me, you can reach me via the following: address above, phone (212) 572-2153; fax (212) 572-2593, or e-mail [rdesser@randomhouse.com](mailto:rdesser@randomhouse.com).

Thank you very much.

Yours,

Robin Desser  
Senior Editor





**San José State**  
UNIVERSITY

**Martha Heasley Cox  
Center for  
Steinbeck Studies  
Wahlquist Library North 316**

One Washington Square  
San José, CA 95192-0202  
Voice: 408-924-4588  
Director: 408-924-4487  
Fax: 408-924-4718  
E-mail: [shilling@email.sjsu.edu](mailto:shilling@email.sjsu.edu)  
[www.sjsu.edu/depts/steinbec/srhome.html](http://www.sjsu.edu/depts/steinbec/srhome.html)

November 1, 2001

Ivan Doig  
17277 15th Ave. NW  
Seattle, Washington 98177

Postcard No  
11/13/01

Dear Mr. Doig,

Joy Passanante at the University of Idaho gave me your address through, I believe, Mary Blew. I am editing a small keepsake volume of writers' comments on Steinbeck for his 2002 Centennial. If you could possibly contribute a few words, I would greatly appreciate your participation. If you received this letter ten days ago, my sincere apologies; I'm swamped with Centennial activities--a major conference, NEH grants to libraries, and two edited books, this the third, and I'm a little scattered. Frankly, this volume is the most enjoyable project, and as it nears completion, I'm very excited about what authors have said, and how this little book might help many students, teachers, and readers look at Steinbeck in new ways.

This volume that will be distributed at various Centennial events. In March there will be a centennial conference at Hofstra University, "Steinbeck's Americas"; I'm also working with the Mercantile Library in New York City to plan a series of events in New York and in libraries across the country. (We were awarded an NEH library grant for this purpose.) As the co-chair of both, I am compiling this volume of writers' brief comments on Steinbeck: his importance as a twentieth-century literary and cultural figure; his significance to your own work; his impact as a writer. Any length comment would be most appreciated--to date comments run from a paragraph to 3 pages. I am writing to you as well as to other distinguished men and women of letters, and I have received positive responses so far from Russell Banks, Cynthia Ozick, Arthur Miller, Norman Mailer, Barry Lopez, Edward Albee, Louis Owens, Peter Matthiessen, Harper Lee and others. I am collecting all responses for a keepsake volume which will be distributed at the conference and at participating programs and libraries during the year 2002; it will be designed by the SJSU designer who has long worked on *Steinbeck Studies*, and printed privately. I hope to give this as a gift or charge very little; it is not a money-making venture, but a tribute to a writer of consequence. There seems no better way to commemorate the importance of Steinbeck than to show how he influenced other writers. Copyright will revert to the authors after publication of the volume.

This project has the full support of Elaine Steinbeck, the author's widow. Both she and Steinbeck's agents, McIntosh and Otis, are enthusiastic about the volume. Thank you for your consideration. I would like to have all comments, if possible, by December 10.

Sincerely,



Susan Shillinglaw  
Professor of English Director, Center for Steinbeck Studies

The California State University:  
Chancellor's Office  
Bakersfield, Chico, Dominguez Hills,  
Fresno, Fullerton, Hayward, Humboldt,  
Long Beach, Los Angeles, Maritime Academy,  
Monterey Bay, Northridge, Pomona,  
Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego,  
San Francisco, San José, San Luis Obispo,  
San Marcos, Sonoma, Stanislaus

"Shiva Dancing" & "Sharmila's Book"  
& the upcoming "Darjeeling"

**Bharti Kirchner**

---

- asked me to read galley for blurb

(206) 547-8027

5217 Keystone Place North  
Seattle, WA 98103



Center of the American West

Mackey 229  
Campus Box 282  
Boulder, Colorado 80309-0282  
(303) 492-4879  
Fax: (303) 492-1671  
E-mail: centerwest@colorado.edu

October 8, 2001

Ivan Doig  
17021 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue, N.W.  
Seattle, Washington 98117

Dear Ivan,

I am writing to presume again on your kindness in autographing books for good souls who share, among many fine qualities, a fanhood for you and an interest in supporting the Center of the American West.

I enclose two books, and a ~~self-addressed, stamped mailing envelope~~. One book should be signed for Cole Finegan (an attorney at a law firm in Denver and a central player in Colorado Democratic Party politics), and the other for Alan and Carol Ann Olson (he is an attorney, managing partner of a law firm with offices in Chicago and D.C.; both are CU graduates; when I had dinner with them in Chicago in August, I was just knocked over by how well-read they are in Western American literature).

FEDEX Box with an airbill addressed to Patty, already paid, just date it and drop it off at a FEDEX location.

As this letter indicates, we are continuing to go about our tasks and activities, even though national and international events can make it difficult to keep a grasp on the relevance of regional studies. I hope you and Carol are well and in possession of as much equanimity as circumstances permit. I wish I could be in your company; I was fortunate to see quite a bit of Richard and Bev at the Western History Association this last weekend, and found that anchoring and comforting.

Yours,

Patty

Patricia Nelson Limerick  
Chair of the Board of the Center of the American West



13 Oct. '01

Dear Patty--

OK, here are the signed books. You are going to have to perform some kind of systemic magic, though, and get my current address into your outfit's computer or pencil--the box reached here only by virtue of the veteran Fed Ex driver who knows we don't live there any more,

These are stinky times, unquestionably. Warships are on patrol out past our vegetable garden, and on Sept. 12 a military jet screeched in overhead and ominously tailgated some ninny private pilot in a small plane. It takes me back to where I never wanted to go, November '62 when I was in Air Force basic training during the Cuban missile crisis. But Carol and I have fastened in, as much as we can, to keeping on with what we do. The garden, the birds, the tides, the making of words and the delving into other times--it has all helped. We know the Nelson Limerick paths of mind will carry you through. It was pleasing to hear you've been in the company of Richard and Bev. We miss having them around. We'll have to try to do a better job, in this tilted world, of seeing the treasured likes of them and you.

All best from us both.

A handwritten signature, possibly "Alan", followed by a long horizontal line.



# Wausau Daily Herald

800 Scott Street • P.O. Box 1286 • Wausau, WI 54402-1286 • Telephone (715) 842-2101

wausaudailyherald.com

**Mark F. Baldwin**

Executive Editor

email: mbaldwin@wdhprint.com

Sept. 12, 2001

Ivan Doig  
17277 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue N.W.  
Seattle, WA 98177

Dear Ivan:

Thanks for tipping me off to your gifted friend Tony Angell. The paper, of course, had reported his selection as Master Wildlife Artist and had previewed his appearance at the museum.

But your letter prompted me to herd the family to his lecture, and it was terrific. He's a great raconteur. Talked with Tony for a few minutes afterward, and he seemed as kindly as he is knowledgeable.

Don't know how well you know Kathy Foley, but she's a peach, too. She's passionate about what she does and has the gift of being able to draw even an artistically challenged guy like me into her passion.

Hope you enjoyed St. Petersburg, and next time we're in Seattle, we'll definitely come by.

All the best,

*MARK*





[Washington, D.C.; August 2, 2001]

Dear Ivan Doig:

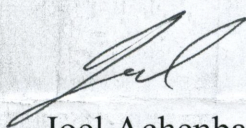
A quick note to tell you that I greatly enjoyed *This House of Sky*, which I read on vacation in Montana (I'd never been there before). I have commended it to my mother, who grew up on a farm in Indiana, and I'll surely look for your other memoirs and novels. I see that Dirda, our critic, has many times praised your work.

I'm writing a book for S&S on the Potomac River and its history, and your book reminds me of a general fact of modern life: That "place" plays a diminishing role in our culture, sad to say. As everything is homogenized and standardized, we find ourselves living nowhere in particular, rootless, ignorant of our surroundings, and thus perhaps less cognizant of the tragedy of environmental destruction. I live far from where I was born, far from my parents -- so does everyone else around DC. My book, in a sense, is an attempt to discover where I live, what surrounds me. Among the many pleasures of *This House of Sky* is its evocation of a place, and of a time when geography and climate and place really mattered.

If you're ever in town and want to give a younger writer some advice, I'll buy you lunch or better yet show you some pretty cool trails along the Potomac... I'm at 202-334-7261.

Anyway, I wish you many more great books and happy times.

Best regards,



Joel Achenbach

The Washington Post

Dear Joel Achenbach--Appreciated your words about *This House of Sky*, and the invitation to perambulate the Potomac--wouldn't that pep up a book tour, the only thing that ever seems to bring me to DC. Will keep the idea in mind. Meanwhile, all best wishes in navigating both the Potomac book and our mother pond, S&S.

Regards,



July 23, 2001  
5007 Chappel Hill  
Missouri City, TX 77459

Dear Ivan,

The return address on this letter is our new home address here in the Houston area. I am having you send the book back to my office address, though. That way the mailman won't try cramming it into our little mailbox at home.

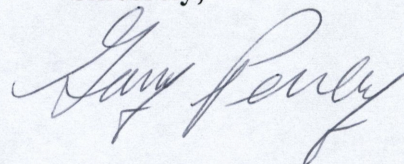
I found this mint-condition original of *This House of Sky* in a vintage book store in Vermont. The jacket is also perfect; I did not send it to prevent wear and tear. I also enclosed a return envelope already filled out.

My second book, *Della Raye: A Girl Who Grew Up in Hell and Emerged Whole*, will be out in hardback possibly as early as November 1. I'll send you a copy.

It's hotter than hell here in Texas. Keeps me dreaming of that mountaintop in Colorado.

Thank you much, Ivan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Gary Perley". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".



Ivan,

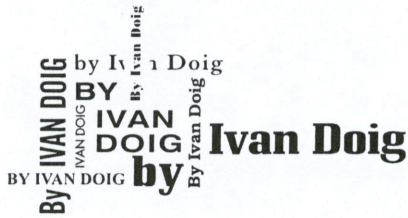
Ivan & I & the pup  
recently wandered across  
The Going-to-the-Sun Road  
and traversed Ivan Dory  
territory down the  
eastern skirts of the  
Rockies.

Picked up this newspaper  
in a town you seemed to  
be familiar with

-valder

P.S. - I'll be busy  
until mid or late  
July but would  
love to have you  
over then  
around July 20  
Will?  
call





17277 15th Avenue N.W., Seattle, Washington 98177  
(206) 542-6658

20 June 2001

one-page **FAX** to Ron Franscell

Ron, hi--

Gonna have to say huh-uh on pitching in with your road anthology. It cuts too close to one of my own possibles, some kind of sense of the West book. I don't know if you crossed paths with the Bozeman historian Mike Malone, but Mike used to practically get me by the lapels urging me to do such a book. Not sure I can ever get to it, but I want to keep the idea open and as you just know, anything that particularly tries to get at the West that way is going to involve some kind of essay done behind a steering wheel. It shouldn't get in the way of what you're thinking of, because I'm an eon from being able to get to anything like that and mine wouldn't be a thoroughgoing road book like yours. Bang away with it, but without me this time.

Other nominees: Dagoberto Gelb is a wild and crazy prose guy whom Annie Proulx once cited to me. I've heard Mary Clearman Blew speak some good material about driving between Montana and hew new life in Idaho, but by now she may have committed it to print.

Re Edmonds this fall: there are some good eating places there and Carol and I are ten minutes away, so feel free to give us a shot some evening when the writing students aren't licking your boots.

Appreciated the tearsheet. All best wishes,



## RON FRANSCELL

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P.O. Box 458  
Idaho Springs CO 80452  
303-567-2633 / Cell: 720-560-2180  
Fax: 801-838-0521  
franscellr@aol.com

June 15, 2001

Ivan Doig  
17277 15th Ave NW  
Seattle WA 98177

Dear Ivan:

I've been thinking of you for weeks. Not just because I keep bumping into Ivan Doig readers wherever I go, but because of this crazy new idea I had. My best ideas tend to start crazy. And one of the first people I thought about was you (but not because you are crazy, you understand.)

As you might know, my new day-job for the Denver Post propels me down the various highways of the American West (at a clip of about 6,000 miles a month). Along one lonely stretch of Nevada pavement recently, I was blessed with one of those brain-farts that has a certain merit: An anthology of essays about the roads of the West, featuring well-known Western writers such as you, William Kittredge, Sherman Alexie, Patty Limerick, Tom McGuane (all at least casual acquaintances or better) ... and some new voices. (And I'd love to have Annie Proulx of the Bluest Highways, too.) It's not a travelogue, but an exploration of metaphoric journeys through the vast spaces of the American West, musings on distance, geography and place. The best essays would be personal and engaging, of course, but more about life than asphalt.

The reason I thought of you is obvious.

The essays would be 2,000-8,000 words, and more importantly, I'd be looking for poetic prose couched in creative non-fiction, contemplating the abstraction of Western "roads." I would leave you a wide berth.

Now, at this point, I need no commitment to participate. I wouldn't expect such a thing without a serious discussion of how (and how much) you'd get paid. That's one of the business-end items that I must learn more about from my agent. BUT ... if this sounds like something that you'd like to do in a general, non-committal way, just tell me it interests you. That's all. I am making similar contact with other writing pals in hopes I can say, early on, "So-and-so is interested, as is so-and-so and so-and-so ..."

Whaddya think? Also, any other writers you'd like to read on this topic, new or veteran?

I'll be teaching workshops in Edmonds WA in October. I'd love to buy drinks, dinner or both if it works into your schedule.

All my best,



Ron Franscell



# PHOTOGRAPHY BY DON KIRBY

19819 REDBEAM AVE., TORRANCE CA. 90503-1137

310-542-7068 email: donjoan@gte.net

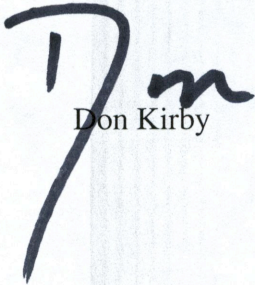
[www.donkirbyphotography.com](http://www.donkirbyphotography.com)

June 9, 2001

Ivan Doig  
17277 15th Avenue NW  
Seattle, Washington 98177

Dear Ivan;

Last year you were kind enough to consider writing a piece for my anticipated *Wheatcountry* photography book, but couldn't do it. The book is out, and I thought you might be interested to see it--so here it is. I hope it says something worthwhile.

  
Don Kirby

18 June '01

Dear Don Kirby--

Appreciated the copy of *Wheatcountry*; it's more that I deserve! I thought your essayists did well by you. All best wishes for continued success in your work.

Ivan Doig



ALLEN MORRIS JONES

3/25/01

Dear Allen--

March 20, 2001

Ivan Doig  
17021 10th Ave NW  
Seattle, WA 98177

I'm swamped. There's not enough of me to go around, in the bazaar of blurbs, reviews etc. and still manage to peck out my own pages, so I have to cast a terrible amount of good stuff aside unread. But I have been where you are, in the book starting line, and the vital thing is good vibes from your publisher, which it sounds like you have. Congrats, and all good luck in the kind of career that made a friend look at me call it "self-unemployed." Maybe will cross paths with you on the bookstore trail one of these times.

Best,

Dear Ivan,

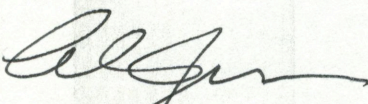
As you may have already noticed, I stepped down as Editor of *Big Sky Journal* last year, hoping to make a go of a fledgling freelance career. Fortunately, things are more or less working out. My first novel sold to Houghton Mifflin, and will be released this coming October as one of their lead titles in the fall catalogue. That's the good news.

The bad news is that, after three rounds of rewrites, a case of good scotch and a few pints of blood, I'm now faced with the uncomfortable task of imposing on friends for favors . . .

It is with trepidation, apprehension and no small amount of chutzpah that I come to you with hat twisted in hand, wondering if you might have a few free hours to take a look at this manuscript with an eye toward a possible blurb. If this is an imposition (if you're well into the momentum of another project for instance) please feel no hesitation about saying no. And if indeed you do have the time and inclination for a reading but then it turns out that the book doesn't ring your bells, please feel no hesitation about tossing it aside. No explanations necessary. Above all, I don't want it to be any sort of hassle.

I hope things are well, and thank you for considering this. I sure appreciate it. (And no need to return the manuscript.)

My best,



Allen Jones



Judy Blunt  
1421 Eaton Street #22  
Missoula, MT 59801  
(406) 728-0741

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March 16, 2001

Ivan Doig  
17277 15<sup>th</sup> Ave. N.W.  
Seattle, WA 98177

Dear Mr. Doig,

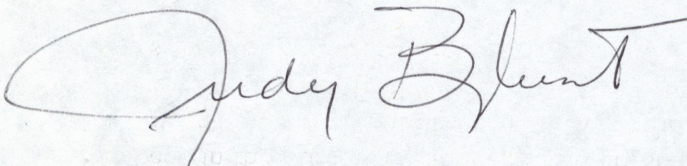
I was one of the many "young" writers to whom you were introduced at Fact and Fiction bookstore on your various swings through town—I use the term young to imply 'new' as I was pushing 40 even then. I remember talking with you about the difficulties of being a writer who was also a single parent of three and sole support of a household. You were very encouraging, though also completely accurate about the long stretch ahead of me.

Finally, after years of working construction, teaching for slave wages at U of M and writing on the side, it's my turn. I've finished my book of nonfiction essays about growing up in the sagebrush of southern Phillips County, Montana. *Breaking Clean* will be published with a bit of a drum roll by Random House/Knopf in January of 2002. My editor, Robin Desser, has asked that I contact other writers who have offered in the past to read my work. She's looking for writers willing to read it in manuscript form so that any positive comments forthcoming might be included in the galleys and likely in the hard cover edition.

I've been in the Missoula writing community surrounded by the big guns for 15 years, so I'm absolutely, humbly, dreadfully aware of what I'm asking and of how many requests you must receive. These are difficult letters for me to write. But if there's no harm in the asking, there's no harm in the answer—be it yes or no.

Thank you for your time. I'm sending a card along to assist your reply. If you have any questions, or wish to contact me directly, please do.

Sincerely,



Judy Blunt

E-mail address: [jblunt@selway.umt.edu](mailto:jblunt@selway.umt.edu)  
Work phone: (406) 728-0741



3/25/01

Dear Judy--

I have the impression you've paid your writing dues. I'd normally rather eat dirt than have one more manuscript populating this place, but it sounds as if your editor has a reasonable strategy, and so yes, I'll read the ms and do my best to come up with a blurb. Have Robin Lesser send it as pronto as possible and give me as much time as she can, OK? And truly, congrats on the breakthrough with the book. You'll do fine now.

all best,