David McCumber, Seattle Post-Intelligencer

15 Jan. '09

Dear Dave--

The saying is that cowboys don’t cry, but bunkhouse refugees like us are surely entitled to mourn when one of the West’s good things passes away. The P-I has been a brave and talented paper under you. Here’s hoping you land well, in the next of life.

All best,
Dear John--

Well, hell. If I was going to review the demise of the P-I, it would be totally thumbs down. The Marshall chapter of covering us word wretches and our output all these years, on the other hand, was as fine as a city ever had. Carol and I hope you land well, in life after the paper.
Pam, hi again. Some words for the nifty piece of work you and Ed have come up with:

"Butte, America" goes far beyond documentary pictorialism to the deepest kind of fidelity, the spoken lives of copperdom’s miners and their families. The struggles of the one-time world capital of copper are a dramatic and tragic chapter of our national life that every American should know by heart."

--Ivan Doig, author of *The Whistling Season*

All good luck with the film.
January 12, 2009

Dear Ivan,

Ed Dobb and I are most grateful for your willingness to review the enclosed screener of *Butte, America*—Rattlesnake Productions’ new feature-length documentary about a remarkable place that has routinely elicited superlatives and invited grand comparisons—“The Richest Hill on Earth,” “the town that plumbed and electrified America,” and “the Pittsburgh of the West.” A labor of love, *Butte, America* has been ten years in the making.

As you may recall, it was a very long time ago when you were kind enough to review *Contrary Warriors: A Story of the Crow Tribe* for Rattlesnake Productions. This film, my first, was made with producers Beth Ferris and Connie Poten and shot on my home ground on the Crow reservation. (I also co-produced and directed an Emmy-nominated film *Ishi, the Last Yahi*. You many have seen this on *American Experience*)

I want to thank you again for taking the time to review Rattlesnake’s new film.

As you know, any number of films could be made about Butte, Montana. The story material is unusually rich and deep. We focused our tale on the working class people and working class culture of Butte—the miners, their families, the community they created amidst constant danger and hardship. These were the men and women who had the least to gain and the most to lose from the struggle between corporate capitalism and organized—and, frequently, disorganized—labor that took place in the Mining City, the people history often caricatures, undervalues, or ignores altogether.

Stylistically, *Butte, America* is a hybrid—historical documentary and character-driven dramatic documentary. We wanted to step back and take in the entire sweep of hard rock mining, from the early 1880s up to the beginning of the environmental era, in the 1980s, telling the sometimes tragically intertwined story of an urban-industrial island on the frontier and U.S. industrialization during that period. The release of the Butte story is timely, and inseparable from the story of America—especially with respect to the globalization of corporations and markets, large-scale resource extraction and its social and environmental costs.

Our end goal, of course, was to make a film that will have universal human appeal, regardless of one’s level of interest in Western history, working class life, and so on. Whether we succeeded is, of course, up to you and other viewers.

Thank you again, Ivan, for your willingness to take a look at the film. I am most grateful for your opinion, and appreciate the precious time it will take to review and comment. We look forward to hearing back as soon as conveniently possible.

Respectfully,

Pamela Roberts, Producer/Director
Rattlesnake Productions, Inc.
[link](pam.rattlesnake@gmail.com)

Cc: Edwin Dobb, Co-Producer/Co-writer
[link](edwincdobb@gmail.com)
Dear Ivan,

Last night I picked up the copy of the letter you sent to Ucross on my behalf. It was more than I could have hoped for. You have gone far out of your way on my behalf and I am honored. It is a lovely letter, extremely persuasive, and highly flattering. I am sure the Ucross residency program staff will be as impressed with this woman Diane as I was reading your words.

But to me it was far more than a letter of recommendation. It was a page of inspiration. In fact it brought me to tears, and I think John too, when I read him the sentence about "any future House of Sky over the phone last night. Ucross cannot begin to understand what that means to us. But then the whole letter was intensely personal to me. These are words I will treasure for years to come, words I will read and reread in those moments of doubt and confusion. It indeed means that much to me, a gift worth far more than a simple reference note. I've tucked it next to my computer and will carry it with me everywhere for courage and for clarity when all seems muddled.

So I humbly thank you for the perfect recommendation and for the treasure of inspiration. You have been more than a friend to me with this page of words. I send you love and very personal thanks for this remarkable gift.

Warmly,

[Signature]

Diane Josephy Peavey
I’m pleased to vouch for Diane Josephy Peavey, a writing colleague who works with her husband, a third generation rancher, on their sheep and cattle ranch in central Idaho. She is known throughout the region for her weekly essays on regional public radio that highlight the changing landscape of the American West; for her lovely and evocative book *Bitterbrush Country*, and for her contributions to numerous western anthologies and journals. Excellent credentials, I believe; she’s been a true citizen of the writing community. I’d say it runs in her blood; I knew her father, the estimable author Alvin Josephy, and I see in Diane his love of the West and passion to put it onto the page.

I first met Diane in connection with the unique festival in the Sun Valley resort area that she, along with her husband, has created: one that centers around the culture of sheep ranching in the west. I lost track of how many times she called before she was able to convince me to participate, several years ago when the festival highlighted the contributions of the Scots to western sheep ranching, but when I consented and went and did a reading to a packed theater (the sheep-trailing section from *This House of Sky*), I was wowed. The town was joyfully involved, things happened when they were supposed to, Diane was on top of all the details. It is a credit to Diane and John Peavey that the Festival’s most lasting legacy is collecting and preserving the stories of sheep ranching families before those are lost; if there are to be any future *Houses of Sky*, it’ll be due to the Peaveys.

So, that is my past with Diane, and now to her writing future. I know she has recently traveled extensively in the Middle East and undertaken serious research into the culture of lives of farm families affected by life under occupation in the West Bank. She sees interesting similarities between those who struggle to hold onto their historic lands and her own life in the west, and this sounds to me like an exciting writing project. I’m always all for it when a writer adds the wider world to our beloved part of the country.

She is weaving these two experiences together into a book, she tells me, but struggling to immerse herself in the complexities of the work amid the constant demands and stress of her family’s ranch operation. What she needs is time alone with her research notes and paper in front of her. Then she’ll get the job done; she always has. Ucross seems to me the ideal place for her while the details of her trip and her interviews are fresh.

I heartily recommend her for your Residency program.

Sincerely

Ivan Doig
Dear Ivan:

First of all, thank you, thank you for your time and advice yesterday. I felt very guilty after I hung up the phone for imposing on your interlude between books, but I am also very, very grateful. You should get an email draft letter tomorrow from me.

In the meantime, I discovered after reviewing the application that there is a “recommendation form” which you can use or simply fill in the information on the bottom and attach to a separate letter. I am sorry I didn’t see this earlier I was using the instruction page which only called for letters of recommendation. Perhaps you’d rather use this form. I enclose it here. I’ll also mention it in the email I send so you know it is coming. Do what is most comfortable for you. Ucross seems very agreeable.

I also noted on the staff that the President is a Sharon Dynak. I assume that is the friend you mentioned. It does look lovely there although today I also sent off an application to Hedgebrook which seems a more mellow climate than Wyoming in winter. Fingers-crossed that one of the two will find a corner for me.

Again thank you for the huge favor of a recommendation. I will repay you somehow and when you least expect it. You are a good friend.

My best to you and Carol,

Diane
From: "Diane" <dianejpv@gmail.com>
Subject: For Ivan with thanks...
Date: September 25, 2009 10:39:49 AM PDT
To: <oddoig@comcast.net>
Reply-To: "Diane" <dianejpv@gmail.com>

Dear Ivan,

Thank you again and again for helping me win the hearts and minds of the Ucross Residency program staff and panelists. I sent you a letter yesterday with a form I found after we spoke. The directions suggest you can either use the form or fill in the information on the bottom of the form and attach the page to your letter. Whatever is easiest for you.

All this must be postmarked by October 1 (preferably before?) and sent to:
Ucross Foundation Residency Program
30 Big Red Lane
Clearmont, WY 82635
Attention: Josephy Peavey application

I am attaching a draft letter but I have added a question mark after a reference to your friendship with Dad. Please choose whether or not to include that reference here. Your choice.

I tried to minimize the subject matter of my writings, aware it is controversial subject. That is the primary reason I need isolation and the opportunity to immerse myself into the material to write these stories with sensitivity and accuracy.

But the good news is I have met and interested a literary agent (she handles Jimmy Carter as well) in this book concept. She was very encouraging and is waiting for 150 pages from me. So it has a chance at publication if I do it right. I have stressfully roughed out two chapters that still need much work but I need immersion to fine-tune these. You can see why I have to get busy and soon.

Enough from me. The letter follows and is sent to you with my deep appreciation for your help. And please thank Carol for her email assistance as well. My best to you both, Diane

LETTER TO UCROSS FOUNDATION – RESIDENCY PROGRAM
ON BEHALF OF DIANE JOSEPHY PEAVEY

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I am writing this letter on behalf of Diane Josephy Peavey an author who also lives and works with her husband a third generation rancher on their sheep and cattle ranch in central Idaho. She is known throughout the region for her weekly essays on regional public radio that highlight the changing landscape of the American West, her book Bitterbrush Country and her writings for numerous western anthologies and journals.

Diane is an acquaintance of mine (as was her father before her?). She, along with her husband, has created an unique Festival in the Sun Valley resort area that centers around the culture of sheep ranching in the west. She was able to convince me to participate several years ago when the Festival highlighted the contributions of the Scots to western sheep ranching. It is a credit to her and her husband that the legacy of the Festival is the numerous stories of sheep ranching families it collects and preserves before they are lost to us.

Diane has recently traveled extensively in the Middle East and undertaken serious research into the culture and lives of farm families affected by life under occupation in the West Bank. She has found interesting similarities between those who struggle to hold onto their historic lands and her own life in the west.

She is weaving these two experiences together in a book however she is struggling to immerse herself in the complexities of the work with the constant demands and stress of her family's ranch operation. If she is to move forward she will need quiet time devoted to this effort alone. UCross is the ideal place for her while her trip details and interviews are fresh.

I recommend her for your Residency program.

Sincerely,

Ivan Doig
Dear Ivan,

I apologize for contacting you out of the blue. My good friend David Williams gave me your address. I did actually meet you once when we both read at the Patagonia shop downtown from *Eating Stone* in Ellen Meloy’s memory.

Your name comes up often when I have coffee with the two Davids (Williams and Laskin). They both hold you up as a paragon of non-neurotic authorhood, and I wish I could take lessons from you. David Williams is a good, solid character, but I have to join David Laskin in the more neurotic corner (and it is a comfort to find such good company there). Though on him it appears charming.

Anyway, I asked my publicist at Little, Brown to send you a copy of my new book, *Crow Planet*. Please don’t feel the least bit obligated to comment in any way. I have just thought about you often since meeting you, see you as a mentor and fellow Seattle author/gardener with mutual friends, and of course I’m a fan (*The Whistling Season* is my favorite).

I hope you and your garden are faring well in this warm Seattle summer.

Sincerely,

Lyanda Lynn Haupt
Dear Mary--

Yikes! Both arms at once? It hurts just to hear that story, Mary! It’s a relief to hear the “completely healed” part, anyway. Watch your step around those garbage bags from now on, okay?

Well, Mary Morgan’s request. I’m just not the guy for short pieces any more, having decided some time ago I’m going to put everything I’ve got into whatever books I can do from here on. (I’m polishing up the next novel right now, and am under contract for the next one pronto after that.) I’ve just turned down similar requests from Lynn Stegner and Russell Rowland and a couple of publishers and so on, so at least the topics of place and the West are in fervent editorial hands these days. Please tell Mary I’m really sorry, but that well has run dry in me and I’m camped at the reservoir.

Lois Welch is visiting us, and Carol and I are about to host her to a drink on the deck overlooking Puget Sound and the mountains and the cruise ships and the ferry boats and the gulls and the bald eagles—you better come sometime and try out this place. Lois is in fine fettle; here’s hoping you are, too, now.

All best,

p.s. Lo brought a copy of Annick Smith’s prairie anthology, so I look forward to your piece in it—batting leadoff, eh? Not bad.
June 28, 2007

Dear Ivan,

I'm writing on behalf of Mary Morgan, a graduate student here who is editing our literary magazine, Fugue. She is putting together an issue that would concern inside/outside writing about place, and of course she would like to solicit something from you. I told her I would write and ask your permission to pass along your address. She is a great student and so serious about what she's doing.

I'm off to a slow start this summer. On May 1 I tripped over a bag of garbage on the sidewalk in front of my house, fell, and broke both arms at the elbows. Emergency room doctors recommended several days in the hospital,
followed by weeks of nursing home care - "I'll take care of her," said daughter Rachel, and we went home, and she did. As it turned out, I was only in splints for about a week (I think it annoyed the doctors that I didn't live up to their expectations) and was pronounced completely healed last week. Stiff, where has the summer gone.

I hope I remembered to tell you I loved

The Eleventh Man - a truism of combining research and imagination. though my sister still holds out for The Whistling Storm as the best of your recent work. Maybe it's her elementary school teaching showing itself.

Love,

Mary
Dear Ivan and Carol,

Enclosed are some of our photos from Saturday and we can send e-mail copies should anyone want one.

We feel honored to be part of a truly great day and want to thank you for the special copy of *This House of Sky*. As we said, our first edition is as well-loved as an old teddy bear but we won’t be parting with it-- no matter how high the bidding war.

As soon as Eric emerges from his cave (the tough slog is on) we’d love to have you over for a nice long visit.

Warmest regards,

[Signature]

[Signature]
I have read and enjoyed all of your fine writing for over twenty years and I feel a bit humbled sending you my first published work.

I'm enclosing a bit of our local paper for you too. I wasn't sure about whether you might be related to the lady who passed away recently. I hope you are well and continuing to write.

With admiration,

[Signature]

Loren A. F.  May 30, 1943
Bozeman, Montana 59571

Dear Mr. Ding,

I met you one day at an airport while traveling about a year ago and we shared a beer. I told you that I was about to publish a book and promised I would send one to you. Well, the book has been out since last May and the paperback is coming out soon so I am finally getting around to sending you one.
©

Sarah Angst
Fine Artist & Printmaker
Bozeman, Montana

www.sarahangst.com
March 28, 2009

Dear Mary Ann--

Between John Marshall and you, I feel more grand and gentlemanly than I’d pictured myself; much more of this and I’ll be shopping for some spats and a cane. Thanks, really, for seconding John’s nice gesture and for the grace of your tribute to him. It’s a damn shame the Northwest book community has lost him. As for you: hang in there, hear?

I’ve just done some cliffhanging myself that turned out okay, having to switch publishers for about the half-dozenth time in my dozen books. As you’d have read, my editor Becky Saletan quit Houghton Mifflin Harcourt in December when the corporate nabobs wouldn’t let the publishing house take on any new manuscripts; I think it was David Streitfeld who pointed out that was like a butcher shop boycotting meat. Becky has landed as editorial director at Riverhead, and I and my two-book contract (the first one nearly done, a kind-of sequel to The Whistling Season) are landing there with her. Interesting times; while print is supposedly going down the drain, most of my buddies--David Williams, David Laskin, Tony Angell, Richard White--all have books coming out and I’m not far behind them. We’re trying to keep book reviewers in business, honest. Here’s hoping all is well with you.

Best,
28 Feb. ‘09

Dear Verlaine--

Good to hear from you; down through the years, your mom has periodically kept me apprised of you. And big congratulations on the book contract. As to your questions:

--"The Red Corner" really isn’t any proprietary phrase of mine in *Bucking the Sun*; I think I picked it up somewhere in my reading about the era. So, you don’t need any permission from my direction or my publisher to use it; I think it’s a good title.

--Although I can’t promise, I’ll do what I can to furnish a blurb. Have Molly send me a set of galleys--I try to avoid manuscripts. If there’s any complication to that, tell Molly to call me; we’ve worked together before, she’s great.

Excuse the brevity, but I wanted to get back to you as quickly as possible. I know you’ve worked long and hard on the topic, and it’s wonderful that it’ll now reach print.

Best wishes,
February 23, 2009

Dear Ivan,

I don’t know whether you’ll remember me, the former Montanan with the dissertation on Sheridan County’s Communists. I moved from Seattle to Kentucky back in 1995 and was last in contact with you when I sent a copy of *Bucking The Sun* for your autograph as a gift to my mom. Thank you for that and for sending Mom several notes and holiday letters over the years. This correspondence has meant so much to her; she actually has one of your notes framed!

It’s been a long road, but I finally signed a contract with Molly Holz at the Montana Historical Society Press to publish (perhaps in 2010) my manuscript on the northeastern Montana Communists. I would like very much to call it *The Red Corner*. I’m writing because I would like to know whether you’d approve of this homage to *Bucking the Sun*. I’m sure Molly would work with Simon and Schuster as necessary to obtain their permission, but I wanted to ask you first.

And I hope you will forgive this next presumptuous question, but would you also consider the possibility of writing a blurb for the cover, if not about the manuscript per se, perhaps about northeastern Montana’s remarkable dalliance with Communism? I’m guessing that you are already at work on your next project, and will understand completely if this is not something you could undertake.

Thanks for considering both of these requests, Ivan.

With warmest regards,

[Signature]

*Investing in Lives of Great Promise*
Dear Ivan,

Wow, thank you! I take it you liked the book. That's such a generous and enthusiastic response, and I'm humbled to have it. Those folks you mentioned were pretty historic folks, thinkers as well as writers, and it's such an honor to have you make that comparison. I can also assure you that my editor, Nicole, is very happy. Thank you again for your kindness.

We are renting a house here in town—Missouri—while The girl's finish school. It's crowded & loud & busy, but actually helps with
the Yaak activism. I can go to 3 or 4 meetings a day, now!
Take good care - & thank you.

Best —

Paul —
1/22/2009

Dear Ivan,

How generous of you to send along your appreciative and heartening words. They meant a lot to me during these gloomy days here under the gloom.

Thanks so much,

[Signature]

P.S. If you happen to hear of a book project that might suit my talents, my home phone is 206-232-2911.