



The University of New Mexico

Center for the American West
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Dear Ivan:

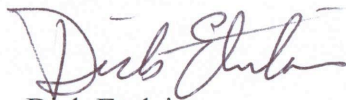
7 March 2001

I would be pleased to do the conversations with you whenever (and if) your schedule allows. If all goes as we plan, we'll sell our house here by midsummer and be in Portland by late summer or early fall. I'll write to you after that happens. OK?

Hope the new novel continues to scamper along.

I have to admit that one of the reasons I'd like to do the book of conversations with you is to bend your ear on herding and such—and for your Carol to meet my Joyce. They're in a special sorority of having to put up with shepherders' sons.

Regards,


Dick Etulain



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Ivan Doig
17277 15th Ave NW
Seattle, Washington 98177

16 January 2001

Dear Ivan:

Joyce and I have recently returned from a six-months exchange teaching position at the University of Canterbury in Christchurch, New Zealand. We saw many Doigs there—Ivan's books in the libraries and other Doigs running the public gambling systems, and maybe even a sheep rustler or two on the South Island. I hope your editor/agent/publisher pushes your books there. We much enjoyed the influence of the Scots in Dunedin and Invercargill areas—way down on the South Island.

I've sent in my official resignation here, effective 1 July 2001. Some time in late summer or early fall we hope to be relocated in Portland, where our married daughter lives and most of Joyce's relatives are situated.

Since I'll now have more time for my own projects and not be so tied to students' blue books and their theses and dissertations, I'm thinking about projects for the future. One I've thought about a great deal over past two or three years is a book of conversations with you on western literature and history, one something like I did with Wallace Stegner in the 1980s and 1990s. Would that be a project that might interest you, or has someone else already broached the subject with you? If it is something that might interest you, I'll send along more details. All right?

What are the current Doig projects?

Best regards,

Dick Etulain
Dick Etulain

31 Jan. 2001

Dear Dick--

Appreciated your New Zealand report of Doigs who went to the bottom of the world to make good. When Carol and I were there (and Australia) several years ago on the reading tour the USIA chose me for, we hit the coldest South Island spring in fifty years, dead lambs visible on those baize-green fields as we flew into Christchurch. Rained and blew like billy hell most of our time there, and still we had a glorious time. Glad you and Joyce had the chance to savor that part of the planet.

Your conversations proposal: could we revisit it later in the year, perhaps this fall when you get relocated up here in the moss? I'm deep at work on the next novel--set mostly in the 1920's, but with flashbacks as far as the 1880's--and while it's going as well as my books ever do, there's just a lot of research for me to sop up yet as well as work on the writing. Sorry to give you at best a "maybe," but I need to poke my head out of this current manuscript before figuring out how I want to parcel myself out next. (Right now there's also a bit of tired-of-myself fatigue factor, from fairly recently having been through a similar conversation for *Seattle Review's* forthcoming "retrospective" issue on my stuff.) By no means should you save my place in line, Dick, if you've got other notions you'd like to act on instead. My conscience is at least salved that there's never been a shortage of Etulain elbow grease!

Let's see, what else to pass along. One of the big Montana fires of last year went through the Doig homestead country of *This House of Sky* and *Heart Earth*, but I haven't been out there to look. Been another mild winter here, plants already budding like crazy.

All best,

19 Jan. '99

Dear Dick--

I always knew the sheep business must make sense in *some* language, and it might as well be Scotch instead of Basque or, heaven forfend, the tongue spoken by that Finnish herder my dad's lambing crew so fondly called Finnigan. Joyce obviously has tuned in, bless her. Appreciated the book report, and hearing from you generally.

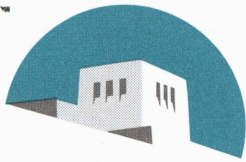
Bill Robbins, bless his deanly head too, has a bit of misplaced faith in how un-technological I'm able to remain. Computer, I got. Fax, I got. E-mail, though, is a genuine conundrum, as to whether I dare to let it into what little available time the days hold. I suppose it's inevitable, yet I notice that I'm perfectly available, without it, to anyone who really wants to reach me.

Pretty quick now I'm going to have to come up with a prompt and plausible recital to that question of yours, what's the next book *about*? It'll be published in August by Scribner (the house of Hemingway! Fitzgerald! Thomas Wolfe! Stephen King! *The Joy of Cooking*!) and it's titled *Mountain Time*. It has in it rockpicking, cattle brands, the Internet, the *Exxon Valdez* spill, Bob Marshall, rollerblading in San Francisco, and the thematic undertow that mountains have affected the lives of all the characters, one way or another. Not quite the western tale Louis L'Amour would shake at the world. (Hey, you're a literary sleuth: how does Louis keep writing those books despite the handicap of being dead?) Anyway, to me it seems to be about human mortal time meeting up with geological (mountain) time, as Baby Boomers begin to weigh the old family stuff against the old planetary stuff. Will ask Scribner to send you a copy, so you can see for yourself.

Only a few weeks now until I go do Bill Robbins' regionalism conference at OSU and some other speaking gigs fore and aft of that. Carol and I bought a new house last summer, and the delight/terror of working on it has kept us from making any Southwestern plans for the foreseeable future, drat. We had a great time at Moab, Chaco, Hovenweep and lots of others last May, though we didn't get to Albuquerque. I hope you're continuing to thrive there, although didn't I once hear you pine for coming back to the Northwest?

Greet Joyce for me, and assure her I like her taste in writers.

best,



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

11 January 99

Dear Ivan:

A story for you.

My wife Joyce and I belong to a book club in our church. I suggested This House of Sky for this month's selection. We've been at it over the holidays.

I told Joyce she would really enjoy the content, mood, and characters of your book. She's an elementary school librarian with a fond sense of family, the rural West, and, maybe reluctantly, the joys of being married to a sheepherder's kid.

Once into your book, she was no wife or companion for two or three nights. Couldn't get her out of it. She thinks, now, she understands something about trap wagons, jacketing, and such. My explanations were like Basque to her. Most of all, she took to your descriptions of your dad and grandmother. Her pride of family reared up and took over. I got dozens of comments about that Doig sure knows how to describe people--to love them too. I also pointed out the parallels of your early life to Stegner's.

Well, Ivan, she couldn't get her nose out of your book and now your others are awaiting her. She stays up with yours. Only way she catches any sleep is to try her hand at mine. Snoring in a few minutes.

Got your address from Bill Robbins. I asked Bill first for your email address, and he said no email address--not even a computer. Whatever it takes to keep turning out your books, stick to it. What's the next one about?

Best regards,

Dick Etulain

Ivan:

2 October 2006

Sorry I couldn't talk you into the "conversations" project. I would liked very much to have done that. Besides, how are we mutton munchers going to hold off the cowboys without a Hampshire-Suffolk combination?

Thanks for the Lincoln-McGivra-Anson G. Henry connections in your dissertation. I will do a bit of shearing there.

Well, I'll be at the Arch in St. Louis to peddle a few books in about ten days—along with our mutual friends Bill Robbins and Bill Lang. Surely do miss Mike Malone in those yearly roundups. I guess it's the right place to try to sell a few copies of a volume entitled Beyond the Missouri.

I hope someday that you'll write the text for a grand picture book of picture books about sheep and sheepmen in the American West.

Dick
Dick Etulain

And send Carol off to do the photo work.

If you change your mind on the conversations book, let me know. Promise?

18 Sept. '06

Dear Dick--

Got your letter--I knew to a certainty I'd be hearing from you about now. That ranch-kid habit we so much share of doing the chores, on time, in season and out...

But mine is in the way of the project. You have things scoped out admirably, the table of contents, the possible interview schedule, everything to make it as easy as you can on me. Even so, I get an awful sense of foreboding when I contemplate trying to add it to the perpetual sum of things around here. I think what it comes down to--and the expenditure of time on *The Whistling Season* book tour and the other non-writing aspects of being a writer this past year or so has hardened me on this--is that I've resolved to put all I can into day-after-day wordwork until health or something else dire makes me drop it. This Montana-related WWII novel I'm writing now is big and tricky--full of fate and raw deals from the law of averages--but I know perfectly well that if personal fate will let me, there'll be some other ornery manuscript notion occupying me full-time after that, and so on. All in all--and how I dislike saying this to a friend and someone whose own work I esteem--I have to opt out of the conversations; I just don't see when I'd ever have time. If there's any spot of salve in this, it's that I know there are other Etulain worthy projects lined up in the chute, right?

As, for instance, holy smoke and wow, Abraham Lincoln and the West. I am not sure whether to feel flattered or complicitous at the news that Doris Kearns Goodwin is resorting to my grad school stuff; have there not been instances where her homework has been called into question? Anyway, no such problem with any of yours: I just looked and I do have a dab about McGilvra re the patronage tussle between Henry and Victor Smith of the Salmon Chase faction, and McG. fulminating against Reb sympathizers and so on, roughly p. 83 onward. There's also some earlier material there about what I, in my grad student wisdom, perceived to be rather wan Republican recommendations for McG. back in Illinois, before he headed west. Be warned that I don't consider the dissertation to be any great shakes; I worked on McGilvra to dodge what Carstensen wanted me to do, a history of the Colville reservation, a Federal Records Center wall of research which I'm convinced I would still be trying to get a dissertation out of.

Anyway, good luck with Abe, have what fun you can on the booktour next month, and appreciation again, for my candidacy for conversations. I wish it fit.

All best,

Dear Ivan:

11 September 2006

When you were in Portland for your latest reading—a good one indeed—we spoke again about the possibility of doing a book of conversations. I mentioned to you that I would like very much to do that book. You asked me to write “after Labor Day” about that possible project. Hence this letter.

I do want to do the conversations. Still, if after you read what I suggest below and you prefer not to be tied up with the taped interviews and resultant book, let me know. I will try, in all ways, to fit everything around your schedule since you are the writer earning a living, and now as a retired professor of history my schedule is likely a bit more elastic than yours. At any rate, allow me to lay out some possibilities for the project.

I have in mind, of course, something like the book of conversations I did with Stegner. That seemed to work well, got strong reviews, and sold between 5-10,000 copies for the University of Utah and Nevada presses with a minimum of advertising.

I am thinking of a book of about 6 to 8 conversations or chapters. Here might be something of a tentative table of contents:

1. The Beginning Years (up to This House)
2. This House of Sky
3. The Early Works—up through English Creek, Dancing, and Riding.
4. The Later Works—starting with Bucking the Sun
5. A Career in Perspective
6. The Novelist as Historian (and maybe a section here or another chapter on The Historian as Novelist)
7. The Sheepman's Region
8. Ivan Doig's West

Maybe we could follow a taping format like this: I would drive up and stay in Seattle for a week at a nearby motel. We could do the interviews—one each day for about 1-2 hours for the interview—working them around your writing schedule. I can also do some needed research each day at the UW Library. Then, I would transcribe the first interviews—say about four—and we could build on or tinker with what we had done with the first interviews before conducting the remaining set a few months later. But if you wish—and your schedule allowed—we could try to cram all the eight or so interviews into one period of time. I would then transcribe them and send them back for any revisions. Again, flexibility reigns.

In preparation for the interviews, I would send you a sheet of questions—about 10 to 15—for each interview. We could begin with some of those questions but branch out quickly to others so the interviews are more conversation than interview.

I don't have a specific publisher in mind for this book of about 150 to 200 pages. Perhaps your publisher would be interested. If not, maybe the University of Washington

Press for local interest, or the University of Oklahoma Press where Chuck Rankin would be enthusiastic about a book of conversations with Ivan Doig.

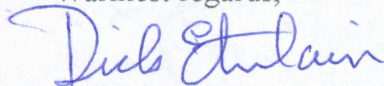
If you are interested in carrying out this project, I would need a few weeks to re-read all your books. But I could do the rereading quickly after 1 November.

I'm headed off to Wyoming to make presentations on my new book: *Beyond the Missouri: The Story of the American West* (U of New Mexico Press). It was published a couple of weeks ago. Next month I'll be doing presentations and signings in New Mexico (UNM and Page One books), St. Louis (the Arch), and Denver (Tattered Cover).

My next project is Abraham Lincoln and the American West. I notice, by the way, that Doris Kearns Goodwin cites your essay on the man (McGilvra) on whom you did your dissertation in her recent book on Lincoln, *Team of Rivals*. Do you recall whether your dissertation deals some with Lincoln's friends Anson G. Henry and Simeon Francis, who came to Oregon and Washington as Lincoln appointees? I see where Bill Lang's book on Winton Miller (right person?) deals some with Henry and Francis and McGilvra.

Look forward to hearing from you.

Warmest regards,



Dick Etulain

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