

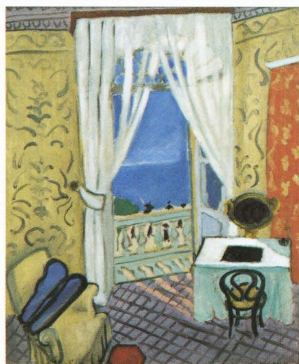
10 May '06

Dear Ted--<sup>Kooser</sup><sub>λ</sub>

Well, thanks to you, I'll never look at a refrigerator the same way. Doig and Kooser and Frigidaire, separted at birth.

Other than that, Carol and I had a splendid time with you in Beatrice and were glad to have had a chance to save you from the chain gang of chicken breasts and get that most fundamental food group, Mexican grub, into us. Our thoughts have stayed in Nebraska this week, hoping Kathleen and you have fared as well as possible out of the Monday medical session. May you both be granted the fullness of years that you have so earned.

Sincerely,



*Interior with a Violin Case, 1918/19*  
 Oil on canvas, 73 x 60 cm  
 The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photo: AKG-Images  
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I KNEW WILCOX MORRIS A LITTLE. HE  
DID A SEMESTER'S RESIDENCY WORK IN  
MAYBE 1975 OR '76. HE WOULD HAVE BEEN  
AS FAMOUS AS ROTH AND UPDIKE IF  
HE'D LIVED IN THE EAST, OR SO I THINK.  
STERNAL SUFFERED LIKEWISE.

ONE OF MY LATE FRIENDS, BILL  
GAFFNEY (WILBUR) WAS CLOSE TO  
EISELEY. THEY WERE COLLEGE STUDENTS  
TOGETHER AND WITH A CROUP OF  
OTHER FRIENDS (RUST UNLAND, WHO  
EDITED THE NEBRASKA FEDERAL WRITER'S  
GUIDE, AND PRESUM HODDER, AN AN-  
THROPOLOGIST) USED TO TAKE 20-  
AND 30-MILE HIKES, FROM LINCOLN  
DOWN TO CRETE, AND SO ON.

I AM OPTIMISTIC JEFF CAN  
BEAT ALCOHOL IN TIME. I HAVE  
BEEN SOBER 21 YEARS AND RECOMMEND  
IT IF A POET WANTS TO BE POET LAUREATE.

ALL THE BEST,

150

10/7-

DONALD IVAN-

THANKS FOR YOUR LETTER. THERE  
WERE LOTS OF PEOPLE AT DEADWOOD  
I'D HOPE TO SEE, YOU AND DAVID AT  
THE TOP OF THE LIST.

ON THAT FRIDAY MY SON PHONED  
ME WHILE I WAS IN OMAHA GETTING  
READY TO DO AN EVENING READING  
AND HE WAS IN BAD SHAPE, SCARED,  
DRUNK. HAD GOTTEN IN TROUBLE WITH  
BIG ERRORS AT WORK. I GOT HIM  
TO CALL MY WIFE, KATHY, AND SHE  
GOT WITH HIM THAT NIGHT. ON  
SUNDAY HE WAS ADMITTED TO  
DETOX, BLOOD ALCOHOL 3.49  
AND IS NOW IN A 30-DAY PROGRAM  
AND DOING WELL, CONSIDERING  
HE'S BEEN FISHED AND HAS A DEEP  
DEEP HOLE TO DIG OUT OF.

**TED KOOSER**

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May 30, 2006

Dear Ivan:

Thanks so much for the novel, which I look forward to reading soon. It was a pleasure to get to spend a little time with you, and in such a good setting.

Kathy had her lumpectomy but on Friday will have a second surgery to take out a little more tissue, since the surgeon didn't get a clear margin in one area. He feels pretty sure he won't find any more cancer cells because the cautery wire from the first surgery would have killed all such cells within 7 mm. The tumor is classed as Stage I, which is good, and there is no spread to the lymph nodes. It does look as if she'll have to have some chemo because the thinking is, today, that even in "node negative" patients, there is a chance that some breast cancer cells got carried into the system by the blood. Radiation has always been indicated, and a certainty. But all in all this was an early find, with a small tumor, and we are optimistic.

Today is the last day of my laureateship, and I am to speak briefly at an event in Omaha tonight. This doesn't mean that I am done with road trips, of course, but I can now be more discriminating in the obligations I take on. While I was laureate I felt I had to say "yes" to just about every invitation.

Cool and overcast here today. We have been having a lovely spring.

My best from Nebraska,



1 Oct. '07

Dear Ted--

You were missed in Deadwood. (Now there's a line that sounds like you survived a shootout over aces and eights, right?) I buttonholed Sherry DeBoer immediately after she made the announcement that you couldn't be there at the Book Festival, and so I know it was a family matter, a generation down--Carol and I fervently hope that has come out okay. David Laskin was there at the Deadwood literary shindig too, and we mutually lamented not having a chance to see you again. I think Sherry was going to have Bill Holm pinch-hit in your session, so the next time we're sharing chicken tamales you'll have to indicate with an eyebrow lifted or not how you feel about box elder bugs in poems.

Laskin, thinking big after South Dakota, headed on to North Dakota, I guess to Medora and such, in research for his World War I book. I headed home to work on my World War II novel (between us, Laskin and I are going to crowd Ken Burns off the face of the earth) as Carol and I had been in Boulder for a couple of days of festivity as the U. of Colorado gave me their Stegner Award. Getting that felt nice, but a little geezer-like, too.

You *genus Nebraskianus* types have been on my mind lately, as I've been doing a small piece on Wright Morris, whom I knew a bit, and Loren Eiseley, whom I admire colossally. They chummed together--ever hear that?--in Philadelphia in 1945, and the thrust of my piece is how worlds-apart they were, within that literary camaraderie. I wind up saying, somewhat alas, that although I cherished Wright, I've ended up in Eiseley's camp, believing it right to wear the heart there on the writing sleeve.

And I suppose that's about all I'm really saying here, that the Doigs and Laskin are pulsing in unison as we think of Kooser with concern. We very much hope things have cleared up, and that Kathy is thriving, too. No need to respond, Ted, this isn't meant to flint up a correspondence--just wanted you to know you're in our thoughts and wishes. All best, until we cross paths again somewhere, probably not in Deadwood.