The Art of Writing
An Interview with
Wallace Stegner

by James R. Hepworth

On June 12, 1987, Tom Watkins, the vice president of the Wilderness Society in Washington, D.C., submitted Wallace Stegner's name in nomination to the Permanent Secretary of the Swedish Academy, Professor Lars Gyllensten, in Stockholm. Whether the Nobel Prize for literature remains within or beyond the grasp of any American writer in this century, however, is beside the point here. It is past time that readers in the United States (critics in particular) stop thinking of Stegner in regional terms and recognize him for what he is—a world class American writer in the tradition of Henry James, Mark Twain, and William Faulkner.

For one thing, as Nancy Colberg's forthcoming *Wallace Stegner: A Descriptive Bibliography* (Confluence Press, 1990) reveals, Stegner's books have traveled an international circuit. In England, Stegner has enjoyed a strong following for nearly thirty years. As early as 1961, for example, one of the century's greatest stylists, C.P. Snow, wrote of Stegner as follows: "You are in the presence of a master . . . One of the deepest, truest, and most likable writers in America." Meanwhile, Stegner's books have been translated at a steady clip into French, German, Greek, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish, and Japanese.

For another thing, as Wendell Berry observes, Wallace Stegner has become a new *kind* of American writer, "one who not only writes about his region, but also does his best to protect it, by writing and in other ways, from its would-be exploiters and destroyers." During those times in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, for example, when other American writers slipped away into metafiction, magical realism, mysticism, fantasy, and historical romance, away from what Thomas Walters calls the "tragically distorted emotional landscape of mid-Vietnam War America," Stegner "lowered his lance and charged." Among other things, he wrote a series of powerful novels whose complex themes confronted the social problems of the day: race and gender, the annihilation of the American family, the realities of marriage and divorce, sexuality and promiscuity, cancer, and apocalypse, youth and identity, age and faith, environmental disaster, and political chaos. Three of the novels—*Angle of Repose* (1971, Fawcett, 1985), *The Spectator Bird* (1976, University of Nebraska, 1979), and *Crossing to Safety* (Random House, 1987)—incorporated transcontinental settings, most notably Mexico, Denmark, and Italy. The other two novels—*All the Little Live Things* (1967, University of Nebraska, 1979), *Recapitulation* (1979, University of Nebraska, 1986)—made use of cosmopolitan settings: San Francisco and Salt Lake City, two of the most worldly and materialistic cities in the United States. What goes on trial in all five novels, however, has most to do with the profound questions left along the staggering but constantly accelerating course of Western civilization: Who is this New Man? And this New Woman? Indeed, who are these Americans? And what, if anything, do they hold sacred?

If Stegner were only a novelist, of course, then we might more easily accept the defensive chest-beating of his regional champions and the persistent but grudging acknowledgement on the part of a more elite group of critics. But it took the letters of Stegner readers and a Pulitzer Prize in fiction, for example, to finally goad the *New York Times* into publishing a review of *Angle of Repose*. Six years later, the *Times* completely ignored *The Spectator Bird*, although the same novel earned the National Book Award in fiction. But as his readers know, Stegner is also a master of the short story, an American form if ever there was one. This spring, Random House will release Stegner's collected opus in that genre. Among the thirty stories in the book are four that won O. Henry Awards and seven that ended up in *Best American Short Stories*.

In fact, Stegner has always been a highly regarded fiction writer, beginning with his first novella, *Remembering Laughter* (OP), which won a Little Brown Prize in 1937, and culminating perhaps in *Crossing to Safety* fifty years later, a book that was short-listed by the National Book Critics for their Circle Award. At any rate, at the age of eighty-one, Stegner *says* he plans to write no more novels—but then, that's what he told me off the record in 1982. "I don't know if I have another novel in me," he said, as he looked out into the oaks that surround his hilltop home. "Maybe. But I think I'm finished." Those pale blue eyes, combined with his natural reticence, can be very convincing.

Looking into them, few people might guess that in addition to his career as a fiction writer, Stegner has distinguished himself in at least four other careers: those of historian, biographer, conservationist, and teacher. As historian, his primary achievements may

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The Bloomsbury Review: *Could you say something about the dichotomy that is said to exist between creative writing and literature?*

Wallace Stegner: It seems to me—and I accept the exaggeration in what I may be about to say—that many of the people teaching writing at the colleges that I know are actually teaching more about love of literature, about how to read, even, than the people who pretend to teach literature courses and put you through all the marginalia of Gabriel Harvey and all the other clutter that you get when you undertake a graduate degree. It used to be literary history, and now it is literary theory in the English departments. Both of them seem to me moderately pernicious.

Writing classes are something else. When you sit down to write a story—whether under guidance or by yourself—you're putting everything you know into that one little toothpaste tube, and you're squeezing it out at the end. That's good. That's synthetic in the best sense. It's not analytic. It's putting things together rather than taking them apart. English departments seem to take things apart, and they sometimes breed book-haters. I have known some graduate students who read books in order to despise them, in order to be able to put them down. To hell with that. I don't really believe in that one bit.

TBR: *But you've edited and written English department textbooks, haven't you?*

WS: Not really, no. Two or three courses that I gave at Stanford I put into books from the notes. One of them is in a Rinehart Edition, *The Rise of Realism in American Literature* (OP). I've had a hand in a couple of writing texts, but they don't really amount to much. I much prefer teaching writing without a text. People ought to be reading all the time when they're writing, or while they are learning to write, because they are going to learn a lot of what they write from other writers. That's the only place you can learn how language is used plasticly to make new things. I don't think you can learn it as rules or anything of the kind.

TBR: *What's the most difficult thing to teach about writing? And what's the most difficult thing for students to learn?*

WS: That's a hard question. I can guess. Assuming that the student is at a stage where he is still teachable—there *is* a time when you shouldn't try to teach him, when he is as technically proficient and subtle as you are, or more so, and has his own ways of going about what he wants to say, and what he wants to say may not be what you would say—one of the hardest things to teach him is *Revise! Revise! Revise!* And they won't revise, often. Many of them would rather write a new book than revise the old one. Revision is what separates the men from the boys. Sooner or later, you've got to learn to revise.

> If you aren't a reader, you might as well forget trying to be a writer.

TBR: *If you were to outline a course of study for a writer at the outset of an undergraduate career, what would it include? Or is the question too broad?*

WS: That's pretty broad. It might be different for every individual. I would ask some questions. I suppose I would say, "Are you a reader?" If you aren't a reader, you might as well forget trying to be a writer. I don't think that it's necessary to take a lot of courses in English literature. I sound prejudiced against the English departments, but in a sense, if you had some kind of guidance, if you had a tutor who could suggest books for you to read, it would be better, I think, than taking regular English department courses. And to know something substantive, to have some kind of skill, some body of knowledge, is terribly useful. I don't care what it is. It will be useful in writing sooner or later. If you only play tennis well, if you're a doctor—whatever you do. I know what I would do if I were doing it again. I would take courses in biology and anthropology, but that's my particular bias. Other people might think I ought to take psychology, which I don't trust as much as I do biology. Whatever your choice, there's no substitute for knowing something. As Benny DeVoto once said in a dour martini-lit moment, "Literary people always tend to overbid their knowledge." At the same time, while you're learning something, I suspect that you should keep writing. Use it or lose it. Creation is a knack which is improved by practice, and like almost any skill, it can be lost if you don't practice it.

So you have to write and read, you should spend quite a lot of time learning some substantial body of knowledge, breaking your brain upon a problem which will let you incorporate in your own head much that is known about some little corner of the human tradition. With a whole university at your command, you can do it any way you want. You're very fortunate to have the university. A lot of people don't. Think of Tillie Olsen.

I don't know whether you know Tillie Olsen or not. She's written only a few things in her life, but she's made those few things carry her farther than a whole string of camels. She has ridden fifteen or twenty years on those few titles. Each of her short stories is a small gem, and her signature is so small you have to read it with a magnifying glass. Strange, intense, indrawn person. Well, she didn't have the university. She was the wife of a labor organizer in San Francisco in Harry Bridges' Longshoremen's Union. Eventually her husband quarrelled with Harry, and Harry gooned him off the waterfront. He had to leave the labor movement, and so he apprenticed himself to a printer. Tillie was feeding four or five daughters on an apprentice printer's wages, and for years she had no way of making contact with the literary world at all. She just had the San Francisco Public Library, essentially, and she became what the IWW's used to call a "bughouse philosopher." A bughouse philosopher was somebody who spent a lot of time

Women Writers Talk

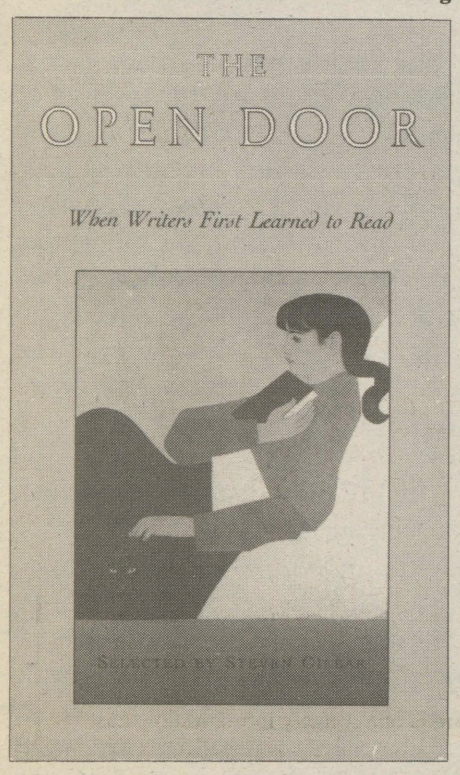
Interviews with Ten Women Writers

Edited by OLGA KENYON

Carroll & Graf, $18.95 cloth, ISBN 0-88184-522-1

Editor Kenyon set out on this project, in part, as a way to "assess women's achievements, two decades after the rebirth of the women's movement." The English fiction writers interviewed are Anita Brookner, Margaret Drabble, Alice Thomas Ellis, Eva Figes, Nadine Gordimer, P.D. James, Iris Murdoch, Michelle Roberts, Emma Tennant, and Fay Weldon. The range of topics discussed is broad and varied from interview to interview. The writers, all with extensive publication histories, are engaged in detailed discussion of their own work as well as their views on general writing and social concerns, with particular emphasis on the role and position of women in modern fiction. For the American reader, these informed, intelligent conversations may serve as introductions to the writers, some of whom are not widely known in the U.S. In addition to the interviews, Kenyon includes a bibliography of contemporary and feminist criticism.

— Patricia Dubrava Keuning



The Open Door

When Writers First Learned to Read

Selected by STEVEN GILBAR

Godine, $14.95 cloth, ISBN 0-87923-809-7

The twenty-nine authors collected in this slender volume—from Benjamin Frankin to Gertrude Stein to Stephen King—celebrate their first memories of reading and books in excerpts from previously published work. Beautifully designed and illustrated with photographs of the writers, many of them as children, *The Open Door* presents the beginnings of remarkable writing careers of some of the world's greatest scribes. M.F.K. Fisher writes:

> *I lay voluptuously on my stomach on the big bed, blissfully alone, and I felt a thrill which has never left me as I realized that the words coming magically from my lips were mine to say or not say, read or not. It was one of the peaks of my whole life. Slowly my eyes rode across the lines of print, and the New World smiled . . . The door opened, and without hesitation I walked through.*

The World Almanac Guide to Good Word Usage

Edited by MARTIN H. MANSER

With JEFFREY McQUAIN

World Almanac/Pharos Books, $19.95 cloth, ISBN 0-88687-570-6

If words are your business, using the right word is paramount, and avoiding wrong words and improper usages can be the difference between getting your message across or not. More than 1500 words are listed here with advice on how to avoid misusing, misspelling, and mispronouncing them. In his foreword, Edwin Newman says the book reminds us "how marvelously interesting and entertaining our language is."

Manser has written, edited, and compiled many reference books, including the *Penguin Wordmaster Dictionary* (OP). McQuain is a research associate for the nationally syndicated language columnist William Safire.

The Writer's Lawyer

RONALD L. GOLDFARB and GAIL E. ROSS

Times Books, $19.95 cloth, ISBN 0-8129-1744-8

Like everyone else, writers can be sued. Unlike most workers in other lines, however, writers must daily negotiate their way through one legal tangle after another, whether to secure permission to use copyright material, protect their ideas, persuade government agencies to surrender important documents, or steer clear of libel actions.

Surprisingly few writers ever master the laws that affect their work, perhaps because of the mind-numbing arcane language in which they're written. *The Writer's Lawyer* offers itself as a plain-language guide to such tricky issues as copyright, libel law, publication contracts, and the Freedom of Information Act, among others, that a working writer simply has to know. The authors, two Washington attorneys, write with common sense and wit, and their book belongs on every writer's shelf.

—Gregory McNamee

Everything You Needed to Learn about Writing in High School—but . . .

BETH MEANS and LINDY LINDNER

Libraries Unlimited, $10.95 paper, ISBN 0-87287-711-6; PO Box 3988, Englewood, CO 80155-3988

The authors—one a writer, the other a teacher—have assembled a primer for those who either slept through or ditched their high school grammar and composition classes. Although the book is intended primarily as a guide for college students who now need to write term papers (and letters home for cash), it will also help anyone who understands the value of being able to put words together and wants to polish up rusty writing skills. Complete with cartoons, exercises, and diagrams, the book's visual format should ease the road for those who fear the printed page.

Best Stories from New Writers

Edited by LINDA S. SANDERS

Writer's Digest Books, $16.95, ISBN 0-89879-367-X

Twelve authors on the rise—Deborah Joy Corey, Jeanmarie Epperly, E.S. Goldman, Sally Herin, Amy Lippman, Regina Marler, David Nicholson, Dale Ray Phillips, Jim Pitzen, Richard Plant, Abrahma Rodriguez, and Alice Ryerson—share their first published short stories and notes about how publication came about. How they worked with their respective editors, rewriting, rejection, and dejection are all part of these stories which first appeared in *Atlantic, Breadloaf Quarterly, Antioch Review, Gargoyle*, and eight other literary publications.

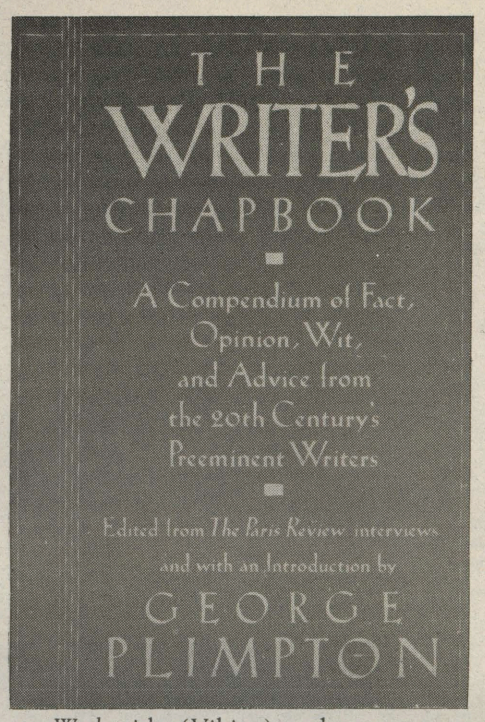
The Writer's Chapbook

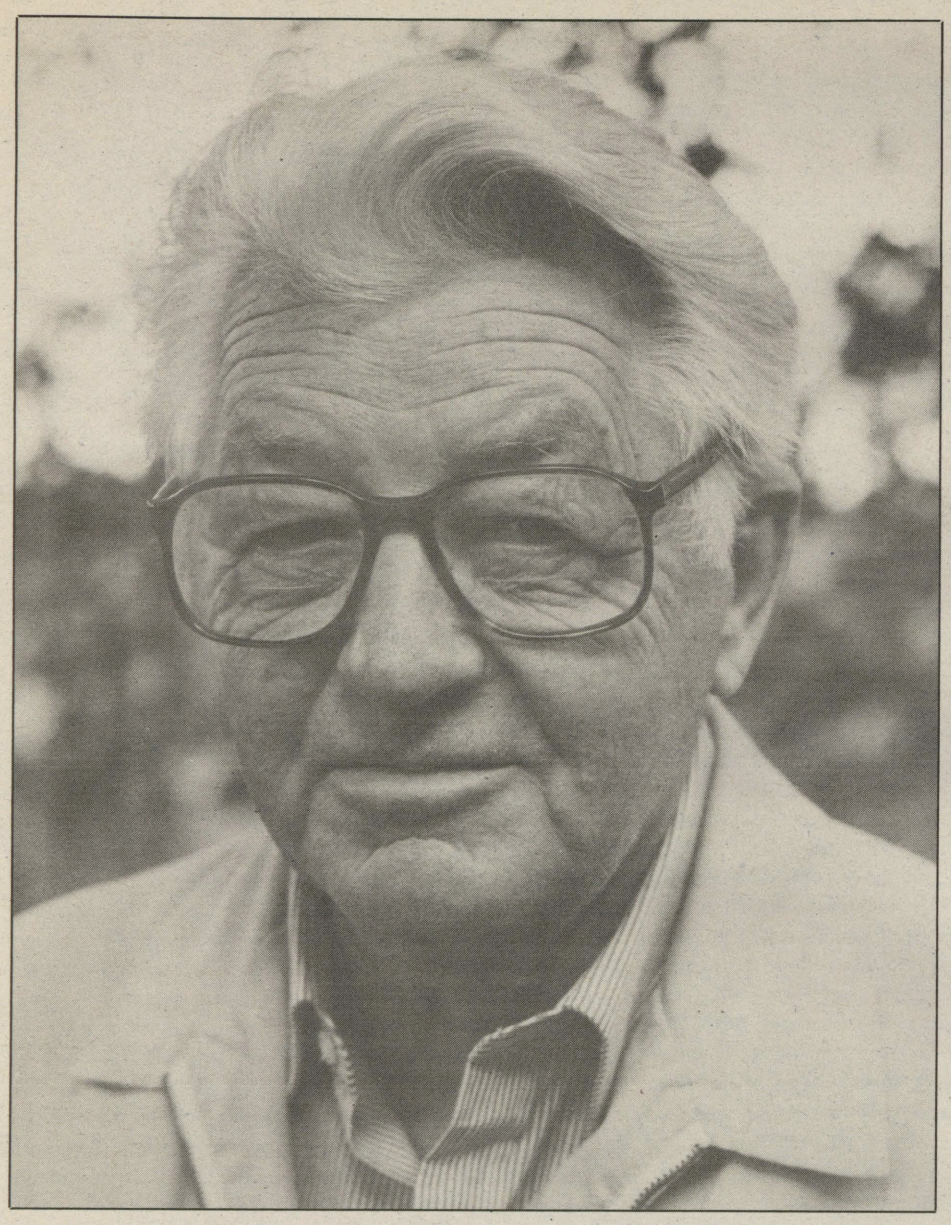
A Compendium of Fact, Opinion, Wit, and Advice from the 20th Century's Preeminent Writers

Edited by GEORGE PLIMPTON

Viking, $19.95 cloth, ISBN 0-670-81565-9

For more than thirty-five years, *The Paris Review* has been publishing some of the best (and longest) interviews with significant, contemporary writers. These are now collected in ten volumes: eight under the *Writers at Work* title (Viking) and two recent editions, *Poets at Work* and *Women Writers at Work* (both Viking, 1989). *The Writer's Chapbook* presents some of the best snippets from all this material, divided into four sections: The Writer: A Profile; Technical Matters; Different Forms; and The Writer's Life. From the nitty-gritty of the craft to dealing with writer's block, the influence of drugs and alcohol, and what life is really like for real writers, the book is full of wit and wisdom that aspiring writers and avid readers will enjoy.





be *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian* (1954, University of Nebraska, 1982) and *Wolf Willow* (1962, University of Nebraska, 1980). Both books are difficult to classify. But there is more than a smattering of history in his essay collections as well, *The Sound of Mountain Water* (1969, University of Nebraska, 1985) and *One Way to Spell Man* (OP). More recently, he published a slender but stunning book entitled *The American West as Living Space* (University of Michigan, 1987). As for the matter of telling lives, Stegner's biography of his friend, Bernard DeVoto, entitled *The Uneasy Chair: The Biography of Bernard DeVoto* (Peregrine Smith, 1988) narrowly missed both the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award when first published in 1975. For a lucid and stellar treatment of Stegner's conservation career, readers can turn to Tom Watkins' article "Typewritten on Both Sides" in *Audubon* (September, 1987). A forthcoming biography of Stegner by Jackson Benson may also be of special interest.

Regardless, Stegner's publicist at Random House has one thing right: "Stegner is perhaps the premier teacher of novelists in America." Between the time he came to Stanford in 1946 and the year he retired (1971), more than 100 writers passed through the program he directed, including Edward Abbey, Wendell Berry, Raymond Carver, Eugene Burdick, Max Apple, Max Crawford, Tillie Olsen, Charlotte Painter, Al Young, Nancy Packer, Tom McGuane, Judith Rascoe, Ed McClanahan, Ernest Gaines, Bill Kittredge, Larry McMurtry, N. Scott Momaday, Robert Stone . . . too many names to list here. While these writers all had what the Stanford anthology (1989) calls "The Uncommon Touch," other Stegner fellows have become foreign correspondents, teachers, and editors. In some ways that list may be more important than the much abbreviated one above. As for the writers, despite Stegner's refusal to take any credit for their success, we must assume that even a wild man like Ken Kesey learned something in Stegner's classroom. The teachers and editors, however, are out there doing what Stegner did, for Stegner did more than teach. He secured an endowment to finance the fellowships that still bear his name. He also developed a curriculum and ambiance that have been models for creative writing programs across the nation.

To face Stegner in a series of interviews across the course of ten years (1977-1987), however, requires patience and persistence. He bolts away quickly from talk about his own accomplishments. His academic vita takes up barely a page and lists none of his honorary degrees. Books fill the walls of his study from floor nearly to the ceiling. He refuses to drink, although he sneaks an occasional cigar that he lights from the woodburning stove. His tranquil voice records well and might remind a listener of actor Robert Young's. Stegner speaks in the same quiet, level tones. And his movements are deliberate. Seeing him shoveling horse manure onto his lemon trees, you might never guess that he can still outwalk the horse. And he could put a banshee at ease with his grandfatherly smile, but he also has a look that tells you he will take no fools for prisoners. He likes to rise before bird-light and write after breakfast. He keeps no copies of his letters and writes at a manual typewriter while his wife, Mary, screens calls and visitors. By 11:00 a.m., he has usually put in a full day. At lunch, he appears so tall and gracious that you wonder how anyone his age could possibly spend another six hours intensely engaged, and then beat you to the dinner table, ready to greet guests and entertain. Shouldn't he have taken a nap—or something? But at 5:30 a.m. the next day, there he is waiting for you to stumble to a table laid out with Texas pink grapefruit, skim milk, and Special K. "I hope you're hungry," he says. "You feeling all right? You look a little ill."

[Editor's Note: Portions of this interview are taken from a more in-depth interview to be published in a future issue of The Paris Review. *For subscription information, contact* The Paris Review, *541 E. 72nd St., New York, NY 10021.* TBR *thanks* The Paris Review *for their permission to reprint the following excerpts from Jim Hepworth's extensive interviews with Wallace Stegner.]*

in the reading rooms of public libraries and had big ideas, often kind of askew because a homemade education doesn't have many corrections in it. Tillie had only that kind of education, but she had a great gift. She is a very powerful writer in the few things she has managed to complete. You're luckier than she is if you're one of those—like Henry James' boy—upon whom nothing is lost. If you're that kind, anything will stick to you. That particular knack of being human flypaper is one of the things that I kept looking for when we were picking fellows at Stanford. Another thing I kept looking for was seriousness of intention, seriousness of purpose, and willingness to sit down and really work at it without being driven to work at it. Any writer had better be a self-starting worker. Another quality is the willingness to revise, to take criticism. And the fourth, which is often just whistling in the dark, is to know something. With those criteria, I think we managed to pick quite a few good writers at Stanford.

TBR: *Don't people who confuse author with narrator have a legitimate viewpoint? In his introduction to* Walden, *for example, Thoreau reminds us of something we commonly forget when we read: that it is* always *the first person who is speaking. Regardless, you would agree, wouldn't you, that readers want a sense of intimacy in a book?*

WS: I think there's a sense of intimate acquaintance that you look for in a book, yes. But I can get that out of a third person narration just as well as out of a first person narrator, I think.

TBR: *But do you get the* same *sense of intimacy from third-person narration as from first?*

WS: No, you don't. And one of the things that can happen when you're writing a first person narrative is that you can insert some element of unreliability into that character without depreciating him. There's *Huckleberry Finn*, for instance, which is a beautiful example of first person narrative. Huckleberry is not to be believed always. When he says, "All right, then, I'll go to hell," the reader understands exactly why he says that, but the reader is thinking the exact opposite. With a character like Lyman Ward in *Angle of Repose*, I have to have a reader believing in him pretty implicitly when he's talking about his grandmother. But when Lyman talks about himself, then the reader should be on his guard.

I don't know if you can do the same thing in the third person, at least not without some labels and captions, which would make the narrative technique heavy-handed and pretty obvious. So that's one of the reasons why first person, for certain kinds of storytelling, seems to be better than third. For other kinds, when you don't have the problem of the reliability of the narrator, then it doesn't matter.

TBR: *What is originality in fiction?*

WS: I haven't the slightest idea. It's often thought to be technical innovation, experimentation of one kind or another, which never intrigued me I would deny that technical innovation or experimentation amounts to originality of any important kind. But I don't know what originality is except, I suppose, that you can tell when it isn't there. If everything in your story can be anticipated from where you start, if you start with a situation, and the story develops in absolutely anticipated ways—to an anticipated conclusion—then I wouldn't say it's original. You're following a pattern, a formula. I suppose I associate originality with some element of the unexpected, or some element, at least, of the—what would you call it?—profound, I guess. To be original I would think you have to see so deeply into characters that you say something that makes a reader really pause, that isn't necessarily what he would have thought himself, but what he has to grant. And ultimately, you have to make him go your way, go deeper.

TBR: *Could we talk more about innovation and originality in fiction? I look at both* Angle of Repose

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and The French Lieutenant's Woman, *for example, and I see very traditional novels, extremely traditional novels.*

WS: I think they are traditional, which doesn't bother me one bit. I don't really aspire to write a novel which can be read backwards as well as forward, which turns chronology on its head and has no continuity and no narrative, which, in effect, tries to create a novel by throwing all the pieces in the bag and shaking the bag. It doesn't seem to me to be worth doing. If you have to do *that* to be original, then I don't care about being original. In fact, I don't think originality as it's usually used is a criterion that means much, because it usually seizes upon some innovation that often turns out to be frivolous or essentially unimportant, and which disappears. An awful lot of mutations, which is what these things are, turn out to be monsters that can't live. I'm content with the species, with turning out two-legged animals with one head.

TBR: *When did you decide that you had to be a writer?*

WS: I'm a writer by the sheerest accident. Nobody

(Continued on page 10)

INTERVIEWER: **James R. Hepworth**, an associate professor at Lewis-Clark State College, is currently at work on two nonfiction books: a critical study of Wallace Stegner and *Triplets: The Story of an American Family.*
PHOTOGRAPHER: **Leo Holub** ©1981, 1990.

Wallace Stegner

(Continued from page 9)

in my family had ever gone to college, and I was totally unprepared. At college they said, "You've got to major in something," and so I said, "Fine, economics." I took one course in economics and that cured that. Then, my freshman English teacher, who was Vardis Fisher, thought I had some kind of gift, so he let me out of two quarters of freshman English and put me in an advanced class, which gave me the notion that I could put words together . . . in some fashion. Then he went away and I got another teacher who taught short story. I wrote some undergraduate short stories, won a little prize at one of the local newspapers. But I was selling rugs and linoleum for a living, and, as far as I knew, I would go on selling rugs and linoleum for a living. I'm writing this piece of stupidity into the novel I'm writing now because it seems to me nobody above the stage of a cretin could have been so completely unaware, so totally naive, so unsophisticated, wide-eyed, going any way he was pushed. I was silly putty.

I think more circularly than linearly. I don't think there are beginnings and destinations so much as circlings which end by closing the circle and starting again.

When I graduated from college finally, the head of the psychology department said, "Do you want to go on to graduate school?" I said, "Sure, where? How? In what?" He said, "I'll give you a fellowship in psychology." So I said, "Fine," and took it. When I went over to the English department, the head of the English department said, "You're out of your mind. You're not a psychologist. You're an English major! If you go to graduate school, you ought to go in English." I said, "But the man offered me a fellowship." "All right," he said, "We'll see if we can get you something." He got me a fellowship at the University of Iowa, so I dutifully trotted off to the University of Iowa to get an M.A. in English, and when I got there I found Norman Foerster, who had just come from the University of North Carolina or somewhere and was just founding the School of Letters, which became the mother of the Iowa writing program. Paul Engle and I were the first two, I suppose, who went through that shop. I liked writing short stories better than studying *Beowulf*. I had to study *Beowulf*, too, unhappily. But I took an M.A. in creative writing and wrote some stories and published one or two of them in a couple of little places.

I had a choice at that point about what I was going to do. By then, the Depression was on. There wasn't anything *to* do. If you were in college during the Depression, you were lucky, because you didn't starve in college. There weren't many jobs outside, so instead of going back to Salt Lake and selling rugs and linoleum again—or whatever I was going to do—I just stayed in college. I decided I couldn't get a job with a degree in writing, which, at that point, at least, was looked down upon as a very low-life degree. So I took a Ph.D. in American Literature and went back to Salt Lake to teach, and after two years of recovering from the Ph.D., I sat down one afternoon and wrote a story just because I wanted to write a story. I wrote it in about two hours and sent it off to somebody—*Virginia Quarterly*, I think—and they published it. And, you know, then you're hooked. By that time I was twenty-six or twenty-seven, but I hadn't been grinding away at a literary apprenticeship except for the M.A., and I had never considered writing as a possible career. It never occurred to me that there was a possibility of making a living at it. So it was all pure, brute accident, with some people who encouraged me along the way. That's probably the way it is. You do get encouraged, when you're young and malleable, by people who think they know better than you do what you're good for. And they may be right. Certainly, I'd have made a terrible economist.

TBR: *You've written several kinds of books: straight fiction, fictional biography, and biography. Isn't a biography really fiction?*

WS: There's certainly a large component of invention that goes into any biography: if nothing else, selection, because simply by selection you begin to change the reality. When I published my biography of Bernard DeVoto, Malcom Cowley wrote me a note. He didn't like Bernard DeVoto very well, but he liked the biography. He said, "What you've written is a novel." I guess it probably is, although I was staying with the facts, so far as I could find them out. I didn't speculate very much about motivations and feelings unless I knew from letters or from talking to Benny—or having talked to him or his wife or some other source—about what he was feeling at a particular time. I wouldn't say there's any invention of fact in *The Uneasy Chair*, but there's certainly some invention in what you might call the storyline. It's all suggested in the life and it's all essentially there, but you can certainly firm that line up. I firmed up the line of DeVoto's rebellion against Ogden, Utah, and his going East to make his fortune in the land of brains and intelligence.

TBR: *Isn't the process of writing itself a theme in your fiction?*

WS: *Angle of Repose*, a good part of it, Lyman Ward's reconstruction of his grandmother's life is about process, the process that a Ph.D. candidate would go through digging out the stuff for his dissertation. It's essentially literary detective work, library research. That process is there, and I used it, quite frankly, as the framework for that whole element of the story. *The Uneasy Chair* was a pretty straightforward kind of biographical investigation, complicated by the fact that I had known Benny DeVoto very well. It's always more difficult to write about somebody you know well. For one thing, it presents you with the problems of how much to tell: things that are nobody's damn business, and you don't want to embarrass your friends or your friend's wife or your friend's family with something that has nothing to do with the main subject you're writing about. In my case, it was Benny's career, the way his head worked, and what he did with his head. He was a kind of neurotic, and he did some silly things in his life, but it didn't seem to me it was essential to dwell on the silly things. I wanted to write about the great things this flawed man produced out of his personal turmoil. So in a sense I suppose I can be called a whitewasher.

TBR: *You mean that what you've written of DeVoto is not the life of Bernard DeVoto but rather a life. I could come along and do some detective work and write another life, right?*

WS: Sure.

TBR: *Was there a problem in writing about DeVoto because you were so close?*

WS: I didn't want to leave out his warts, because he had plenty of them. And I wanted to be honest without being unkind, I think, honest without being a muckraker. There wasn't an awful lot of muck in his life to rake, but wherever there was, I didn't even want to know about it, especially.

TBR: *We have already talked briefly about the confusion that arises when your readers fail to distinguish between author and narrator. Maybe you could straighten those readers out once and for all.*

WS: What does Wallace Stegner have to do with it? The very fact that some of my experience goes into the book is all but inescapable, and true for almost any writer I can name. Which is real and which invented is (a) nobody's business, (b) a rather silly preoccupation, and (c) impossible to answer. By the time I'm through converting my life to fiction, it's half fiction at least and maybe more. People come to me yet and say, "Oh, it's too bad about your son who drowned in that surfing accident." Because some of *All the Little Live Things* reflects my immediate circumstances, they assume all of it does. People ought to learn to read better than that. The kind of *roman à clef* reading which determines the biographical fact extracted from fiction is not a good way to read. Read the fiction. The life, like all kinds of other things, is just raw material for the fiction. Insofar as the life is usable, it's used; insofar as it's unusable, something else is used. When I get through a book that involves some aspects of my own experience, as this new one does, I often don't know myself what I invented and what I didn't.

TBR: *Is that because you have made the experience real?*

WS: It's because I have thought my way into it in fictional terms. Yes. But I never want the end product to be taken as autobiography or biography. Because it isn't. No. The moment I would begin to say, "This fictional person is so-and-so," I would be lying in my teeth. My fictional people are no more real people than Larry Morgan is me. They are constructs with some relations and some roots in real life, but they are certainly not real people. If I said they *were* people, real people would begin to say, "Well, you did me wrong," and they would have every reason to say so. But as long as my characters are constructs and understood to be such, I have only borrowed, shall we say, some characteristics and experience for fictional purposes—and I hope transformed them.

TBR: *My own limited experience in creating fiction tells me I have no choice but to draw upon my own experience as well as that of my friends, parents, children, if I am going to shape character. Almost everything I write seems literally to be co-written. When it comes right down to it, I sometimes feel as if I am stealing.*

WS: Let me tell you something about stealing. You can't steal anything that isn't already yours—in a literary way. If you can surround it, understand it, comprehend it, it's yours, unless you steal word for word—which is another matter. If the material is yours and it fits your concepts and the growing pattern in a novel, then it's already yours.

TBR: *Is there a point where a writer's consciousness ought to take over his intuitive responses, when the character begins to cast a longer shadow on the page and assume symbolic values? I'm thinking of the evolutionary process: first by accident, then by design.*

WS: Oh, I suppose. Again, I would insist that those patterns are discovered and not imposed. When a writer finds them, he helps them along. You would be foolish not to play any scene that is given you to play. Benny DeVoto said, in effect, "You run out your hits as far as you can. You don't stop on second." But the author's consciousness—certainly it ought never to be obvious. It's imposed, of course it's imposed. But the author's view of his own characters may be arrived at through a long period of inductive thinking about them. You don't put placards up for the reader saying, "This is my meaning."

The whole business of writing is an attempt to arrive at truth insofar as you can see it, so far as your capacity to unearth it permits. Truth is to be handled gingerly. That's an egg with a very thin shell. I'm not writing fables—where the moral is literally part of the form—I'm writing something from which the reader is supposed to deduce or induce any moral that's there. The moral value ought to be hiding in the material. I think you have to be careful not to manipulate the material so obviously that the reader will go confidently to the piano and lift up the lid and find the moral you've hidden there for him to find. Any book that's worth anything ought to be read and thought over. And when you think it over there ought to be something in it by way of truth. I would hardly go any further than that.

TBR: *Is it possible for a writer to open up "new" territory for fiction?*

WS: Mmmmmmmmm. Insofar as fiction is the record of human action, human actions are not necessarily changed by technology. Star Wars and Star Trek don't change the human action. They only change the machinery. "There are no new ways to be new," as Frost said. I think that's a reasonably good statement. "There's nothing new under the sun," sayeth the Preacher. "All the rivers run into the seas, but the seas are not full." I think more circularly than linearly. I don't think there are beginnings and destinations so much as circlings which end by closing the circle and starting over again. I can't think of any fiction that introduces new elements of what used to be called "Human Nature," nothing that isn't present, say, in *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. The qualities of character, the machinery of suspense and climax, of mounting action and falling action: I don't think we've seen anything new in that way. There are new clothes, because civilization can change, and we get out of armor and into doublet and hose and then Brooks Brothers pants, but we're still the same people, and doing the same things essentially. I think it's a mistake to think originality amounts to much.

I know people, for instance, including former students of mine, who got into the sexual revolution and thought they had opened up really new material for fiction. They felt like Renaissance men and women discovering a New World with fifty-seven positions. But it's there in *The Arabian Nights*, it's there in the *Satyricon* of Petronius, it's there—though not so commonly or so publicly—in a whole library of books. There's nothing new about it. I doubt there's much of it that Cain didn't know as soon as he got acquainted East of Eden. I don't think that's a way of getting anywhere: to pretend that there's anything new to be said. What's important is a larger understanding of what has always been. I believe some things have been added in that respect.

PAPER BRIDGE

(for C.G.)

Sometimes it seems our lives are the childhoods
of stars:
the differences, the severances, the expanding *from*
building to a place in space.

I think of those who hoard their heart's coinage,
tolling the bridges of flesh arcing toward them
or burning them . . .

I think of a comet as part of a star's body
travelling the lonely years, arcing toward another,
a bridge of light like Christ nailing himself to both
shores.

I think of you tonight, wherever you are,
high in some glittering constellation. Come down
and stay for awhile, here, on the earth.

Fred Dings
SALT LAKE CITY, UT

A Hero to His Biographer

Jackson J. Benson argues vigorously that Wallace Stegner has been unjustly neglected.

WALLACE STEGNER
His Life and Work.
By Jackson J. Benson.
472 pp. New York:
Viking. $32.95.

By James R. Kincaid

CERTAIN lives of Jesus excepted, a less judicious biography has not appeared since Thomas Hardy ghostwrote his own. Jackson J. Benson, author of critical studies of Ernest Hemingway and John Steinbeck and a 1984 Steinbeck biography, was befriended by Wallace Stegner — "he insisted I call him Wally" — and found in him "simply, by far, the brightest man I've ever known," one who "never missed the point," who invariably "cut away the dross to get to the heart of the matter." Stegner had an "incredible memory" and "a vast storehouse of general knowledge." "In a world full of blowhards and show-offs," Mr. Benson says, here was "the real thing — someone a person could really look up to and admire."

These epic pronouncements, coming at us full blast in the preface to "Wallace Stegner: His Life and Work," might not constitute the best way to influence a reader not in on the worship. But Mr. Benson does not stop with the preface or with the inner man; he finds Stegner's exterior just as admirable: possessed of "a beautiful voice," Stegner was "a strikingly handsome man — one is tempted to add that he 'glittered when he walked.' " That's a temptation one should resist, as the allusion to "Richard Cory" suggests not only a suicidal darkness beneath the glitter but a superficiality in those who mistake the glitter for the man.

Not that there is not much to admire in Wallace Stegner. His fiction, honored by both the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award, can be witty and moving, poised and subtle. He was all his life a passionate enemy of land developers and an effective worker and writer for conservation and environmental causes; he founded a great writing program at Stanford and taught a host of excellent novelists how to do it; he could be an unshakably loyal friend. He was also pugnacious, hostile to writing different from his own, a staunch and not always interesting traditionalist, and so obsessively annoyed by youth, rebellion, hippies, drugs, post-structuralism, free love, divorce, loud music and scruffiness that he could ride his crankiness to the point of being blaringly obtuse about several recent decades he seems to have made no effort to understand.

Mr. Benson regards Stegner as "possibly the most accomplished man of American letters in our time," and possibly there is a case to be made there. I cannot tell, since Mr. Benson is so clearly not the person to make it. He says, "Stegner hoped for his Malcolm Cowley, who would take him out of the category of regional writer," but Mr. Benson seems to feel the charge too keenly.

Writing with a passionate commitment to his subject, Mr. Benson seems almost too aware that everyone may not share this commitment, that, as he says at the start, many "may never have heard of him" and some who have heard of him and read him do not think much of him. Mr. Benson keeps his mind so steadily on these dual outrages that he seems often operating with a game plan that is all defense. In this mode, he alternates between lame excuses and devil-may-care assaults: Stegner's reputation has been bottled up, he says, by our tendency to value only celebrity writers, talk-show and Time magazine cover flashes like Norman Mailer, John Updike and John Cheever — by that and by the dratted "Eastern literary establishment," which buried him as a regionalist. The loudmouthed organ of that establishment, The New York Times Book Review, we are told more than once, did not review Stegner's prize-winning novels at all, "shunted ... to the back pages" a brief notice of "Wolf Willow" and reviewed "Crossing to Safety" on page 14. "Can one," Mr. Benson snarls, "imagine Mailer, even with a bad novel, thrust into the back pages?" The problem with Mr. Benson's defensiveness is that it gets in the way of Stegner's wit and often reduces his wry irony to nasty platitudes. Mr. Benson says that Stegner "has more often spoken as a parent than as a child," which is a line that pays way too much for its sneer, as does the argument throughout that Stegner is tough the way grandpa is tough: refusing to flatter us, to honor our worship of thoughtless youth, our love of whiners and victims, our belief that "individuals do not need to strive to be better — all they need to do is sit down and recognize how wonderful they are," our tendency to "think there is something wrong with a man who has been married to the same woman for almost 60 years."

Wallace Stegner, about 1943.

We are told that, unlike Stegner, we value "experimentation for its own sake"; Stegner is boldly old-fashioned in having "something to say." When Mr. Benson tires of flogging the general reader he invents more specific enemies: feminists and "many teachers of creative writing today."

Though Stegner himself can be cruelly reactionary, railing, for instance, about "the number of functional illiterates that our free public education produces," he is more often possessed by a sharp double awareness of how ugly and illiberal such stuff is and how little it accords with other parts of his life and writing. But Mr. Benson, who seems to have glued himself to the worst part of his subject, is free of this irony: Stegner's "life might seem comparatively dull to some — particularly those conditioned by a National Enquirer public mentality." Mr. Benson cannot keep himself from insulting the person reading him, whom he often seems to construe as a Stegner-hating, hippie-admiring, experimental-fiction-writing, post-structurally-doting, victim-sympathizing, Eastern-establishment-joining feminist who is also a part-time condominium builder.

There is no need for such defensiveness, which obscures not only Wallace Stegner's virtues but Jackson Benson's as well. When he forgets, as he seldom does, that he is nursing grievances against the rest of the nation, he can produce a lucid narrative, a clear and well-researched chronicle of events, and quite sharp plot summaries. However, by defending to the death rather than analyzing Stegner's values and by focusing on Stegner's public life and so simplifying his ideas, Mr. Benson does sometimes create the impression that there is nothing much going on, that Stegner forged his pioneer values in small-town Saskatchewan and stuck to them, by gum, whatever feminists might say and hippies think.

THE result may not be "dull," as Mr. Benson seems to fear, though some of the more lively parts have to do with vicious department meetings and curriculum battles at Stanford, which is not a good sign. Mr. Benson does dwell on Stegner's writing, and seems to me quite effective in talking about the histories and about the public prose written in environmental battles. The literary criticism is not, however, distinguished. When it is positive, it either gurgles — "to read this description is itself an experience" — or soars — Stegner raised himself "above most other writers" by being "simply different — more genuine, closer to his work somehow, and broader in outlook." When it is discriminating, it collapses: the failed fictions are "told in a thin way that does not compel the reader's involvement," since Stegner "had to escape the peripheral in order to embrace the organic." There are many fascinating things about Wallace Stegner and his often brilliant writings: his relationship with his father and with his son, his marriage, his youthful sense of lacking "any capacity for culture," his ironic self-awareness, his politics, his idea of literary realism, his complex relation to the idea of "the West": did he demystify or simply sophisticate the Louis L'Amour vision? Mr. Benson opens up many of these issues but then is drawn off on what are, for me, hopeless quests to bully us into revering Mr. Stegner and adopting as our own his least compelling values. This is a biography that gives a more convincing view of Stegner's pettiness than of his loyalty and courage, of his crotchets than of his art. At the close, we may feel we have just been shown not Wallace Stegner but John Wayne with an itchy writing finger. □

James R. Kincaid teaches English at the University of Southern California and is the author of "Annoying the Victorians" and the forthcoming "Manufacturing Virtue: The Culture of Child Molesting."

Nov. 10, '96

Just Speculating

How much financial risk is reasonable and how much is foolish?

THE HIGH-RISK SOCIETY

Peril and Promise in the New Economy.
By Michael J. Mandel.
227 pp. New York:
Times Business/Random House. $25.

THE TROUBLE WITH PROSPERITY

The Loss of Fear, the Rise of Speculation, and the Risk to American Savings.
By James Grant.
348 pp. New York:
Times Books/Random House. $30.

By John Rothchild

THESE two books are so completely at odds, it's remarkable that they were published in the same month by the same house. "Americans are angry and worried" is the "Call me Ishmael" that leads off "The High-Risk Society." With pink slips flying and Social Security in doubt, says Michael J. Mandel, the economics editor of Business Week, the meek will not inherit the condo at Lake Tahoe. To get anywhere in this high-risk society, we all have to run risks: take the demanding job over the cushy one, put money in stocks instead of a bank.

The author of "The Trouble With Prosperity" couldn't agree less. As far as most stocks are concerned, James Grant, the author of "Money of the Mind," prefers money in the bank. His first line might as well be "Americans are giddy and deluded." In particular they are deluded about stocks, which these days are being snapped up at crazy prices. As Mr. Grant describes the rise of speculation in the 1990's, it sounds as though he's talking about Mr. Mandel: "America was becoming financially bolder. It was coming around to the philosophy that there was more to be feared in not making money than in risking its loss. Such, of course, is the psychological hallmark of every boom."

According to Mr. Mandel, before we became the high-risk society we lived in the Age of Security, where jobs were here today, here tomorrow, and where people could get ahead without taking chances. But in Mr. Grant's view, there never was an Age of Security, because in every economic cycle fortunes are made and lost, industries are started or shut down; what's good for the Farm Belt may be bad for the Rust Belt, and while they're popping corks in the Texas oil patch, they're circling the want ads in Silicon Valley. The risk in every era is the same. A euphoria develops around a certain kind of investment, and people end up overpaying for whatever it is: stocks and Manhattan real estate in the late 1920's, bonds in the 50's, gold in the early 80's, commercial real estate in the late 80's and so on. Large chunks of capital are foolishly deployed, resulting in large losses to the owners of the capital and a misallocation of resources.

Mr. Mandel's notion that inhabitants of the high-risk society should automatically invest in stocks is to Mr. Grant's way of thinking too popular not to be dangerous. He reminds us that in the 50's, during the Age of Security Mr. Mandel writes about, the average investor preferred bonds, which everyone knew was a risk worth taking, while stocks were disparaged as something to bet on when the horses weren't running. Because of their popularity, bonds were selling for crazy prices, so they yielded a pittance (3 percent) at a time when inflation was on the rise. Not surprisingly (at least not to Mr. Grant), stocks produced many happy returns in the 50's, while the bondholders got clobbered. Bonds lost roughly 80 percent of their value from 1946 to 1981.

Neither book is an investment guide per se, but this reviewer can't help noticing that whenever Mr. Grant finds people paying unreasonable prices for whatever's popular, the least popular alternative (stocks in the 50's, gold in the 70's, bonds in the 80's) becomes the source of great wealth for the oddballs who invest in it. Today, the oddball choice would be raw materials, because in the 14 years during which stocks have gone up, commodity prices have gone sideways or down, which to a Grant disciple means they'll make up lost ground in the next cycle. Naturally, Mr. Mandel predicts the opposite: because commodities have done nothing for 15 years, they will continue to do nothing.

In the high-risk society, Mr. Mandel sees government in retreat: less regulation, less consumer protection, big holes in the safety net. He is alternately thrilled and disturbed that people are being left to succeed or fail on their own. But what irks Mr. Grant about today's high finance is that the financiers aren't allowed to fail. By lowering interest rates in the early 90's and providing the easy credit that saved the likes of Citicorp and the Bank of America, the Federal Reserve created the flood of cash that has lifted stocks to a precarious height.

ON the readability scale, Mr. Mandel's book is low-risk and low-gain, short on anecdote and long on generality and annoying repetition. In one painful stretch of 30 lines, we find "uncertainty," "high levels of uncertainty," "far less certainty," a "rise in uncertainty," "the certain career paths," "increasingly uncertain alternatives," "such uncertainty," "economic uncertainty" and "the uncertainty," along with "the old rules for success do not work in an economy where the sources of growth are also the sources of uncertainty." Mr. Grant's book is demanding in spots, because it requires a working knowledge of Wall Street mechanics, but witty and informative throughout. Readers of his popular newsletter, Grant's Interest Rate Observer, will recognize the prose. In recent years, Mr. Grant's chronic bearishness on stocks hasn't helped his readers get any richer, but who else can make interest rates interesting, not to mention downtown real estate, the bond market, Federal Reserve policy and other subjects dear to Wall Street?

A recurring theme in his narrative is the skyscraper Mr. Grant can see from the window of his own office. Built in 1929 during the lower Manhattan boom, 40 Wall Street was expected to produce $3.9 million in revenues, a yield that didn't materialize until the mid-1950's. Mr. Grant's account of the owners, the tenants and the debts at 40 Wall is 67 years' worth of cyclical history crammed into one building. There was never an Age of Security at 40 Wall.

Mr. Grant notes the astounding popularity of mutual funds — 7,773 and counting — making the fund industry as overbuilt and overcrowded as lower Manhattan before the great crash of '29. "Like the Manhattan skyscrapers of the 1920's and the Texas oil rigs of the 1980's, the white elephants of the 1990's," he writes, "will bring grief to their sponsors and drama to the next recession." □

John Rothchild is a financial columnist for Fortune magazine.

Best Westerner

CHARLES PAINTER, COURTESY OF NEWS AND PUBLICATIONS SERVICE, STANFORD UNIVERSITY

BY TIMOTHY EGAN

A bloodhound ordered to find cliché and mythic pretension in the work of the late Wallace Stegner would soon return home, tail between its legs. As the patron saint of the New West, Stegner spent a lifetime debunking some of the most cherished fairy tales we Americans tell about ourselves in the land west of the 100th meridian. He applied a rock-salt layer of realism to the layer of fluff provided by such writers as Owen Wister and Louis L'Amour. But he didn't just scrape and deconstruct. In place of cowboy homilies, Stegner offered an aphorism that will likely outlive most of his fiction. The West, he said in his most famous phrase, offered "the geography of hope."

He arrived at that conclusion the hard way, for Stegner was a product of the boom-and-bust West. The towns that he called home during his childhood could form a road map of American social pathology. His father was invariably out of work, down on his luck, gambling away what money he did have and keeping a sharp eye out for creditors—all at the same time. Young Stegner spent time in places such as Redmond, when it was a dank stumptown full of three-fingered loggers, and the Montana front range, where the isolation was more painful than the unrelenting wind. It is a wonder that Stegner himself did not end up telling his tales over fortified wine, in one of those rooms where the smell of a larded hot plate is ever-present.

The story of how Stegner went from a product of a drifting, hardscrabble family to one of America's most respected writers, encamped in the reverence of perpetual acolytes at Stanford University, forms perhaps the best part of Jackson J. Benson's new biography, *Wallace Stegner: His Life and Work*. The author is less successful defending Stegner's work, which was prolific and uneven. He produced an astonishing volume—novels, short stories, biographies, histories, essays—and it is inevitable that some of it reads better than others.

Stegner, though he won the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award, could never quite escape the tag of a Western writer. Eastern critics, in general, snubbed him. There is no small irony in the fact that some of Stegner's masterworks, *Wolf Willow* and *Angle of Repose* among them, were relegated to back-of-the-book residency in *The New York Times Book Review*, while the great man himself merited a Page One obituary in the *Times* when he died in 1993.

Benson spends too much of this lengthy book acting insecure on behalf of his subject, whom he called "perhaps the greatest of our non-celebrity writers." The fact that some of Stegner's students at Stanford became more famous than he—Ken Kesey and Larry McMurtry heading the list—also seems to disturb the author.

But the notion that the Eastern media elite didn't get Stegner, or that the marital infidelities of Norman Mailer got more attention than some of Stegner's best novels, is nothing to lose hair over. So what? The West *was* Stegner's great passion, the main character of most of his work, and the place he most often called home. He did it well. Clint Eastwood, in his best Western, *The Unforgiven*, finally arrived at a place where Stegner had been all along—the de-

Wallace Stegner: His Life and Work
by Jackson J. Benson
Viking, $32.95

mythologized West, the pig farmer on the prairie. Tributes don't always have to come from book reviewers.

What's more, Stegner did much more than write about the West. Big parts of God's country, from Dinosaur National Monument to Arches National Park, are intact, preserved for the ages, in part because Stegner put his passion into action. Along with Teddy Roosevelt, he belongs on the Mount Rushmore of American conservation. Long before it was Gore-Tex-trendy or public television–safe to argue that the best place for America's natural wonders is out of the hands of people who pay for Slade Gorton's campaigns, Stegner was in there with his sleeves rolled up, a pamphleteer who wasn't afraid of drawing blood.

In his youth, Stegner saw the broken families, the poisoned rivers, the leveled forests, the foreclosed homes that were the by-products of booming Western economies. In novels such as *The Big Rock Candy Mountain*, he wrote about the footloose dream under open skies; it was a fraud, he told us, a ticket to despair. And then, in nonfiction books such as *Crossing the Hundredth Meridian: John Wesley Powell and the Second Opening of the American West*, Stegner drew on lesser-known shapers of Western historical narrative to offer a way to live more lightly on the land.

His fault, to a biographer, was that old Wally lived a pretty clean life, married to the same woman for 60 years, never drinking away an advance or missing a deadline. He built much of his own home in California, was a faithful letter-writer, and had friends on several continents. His adoring students practically fitted him for a statue mold. Even Ken Kesey, who had unresolvable disagreements with Stegner, later came to compare him to a great football coach. "It was like playing football under Vince Lombardi," he said of being part of Stegner's writing seminar.

There are neo-Stegnerians and neo-Powellians out there today, chipping away at what has already become New West orthodoxy. Maybe Butte wasn't so bad after all, they seem to be saying, even if 50 percent of the residents had black lung disease. Hey, it's better than a bunch of yuppie scum in Lycra and rollerblades.

This is a silly argument, with about as much staying power as a Mountain Dew commercial from the lip of the Grand Canyon. It can stay on the college campuses, where it belongs.

Most of the American West is public land, run in large part by the Interior Department. Three years ago, when Stegner died at the age of 84, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt had a day of mourning at the department; he called his top staff together to read from selected works. It didn't matter that some of them, Easterners from the best schools, were being exposed to Stegner for the first time. His work had already become institutionalized, in the way that Interior manages more than 500 million acres of the geography of hope. ■

Timothy Egan, author of 'The Good Rain' and 'Breaking Blue,' is Northwest correspondent for 'The New York Times.' He is currently at work on a book about the American West.

The Stanford University Libraries
announce the publication of

CATCHING THE LIGHT:
REMEMBERING WALLACE STEGNER

a limited edition, fine press book of tributes
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In honor of the fiftieth anniversary
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PERSONALS
Page **J-6, 7**

ATTITUDE
Page **J-8**

STEGNER'S LEGACY

The late Wallace Stegner left Utah in 1937, but the Western writer never forgot his "home."

Bequest to U. Documents Writer's Study of West

By James Thalman
SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

He came here as a 12-year-old boy caught in the whirlwind of his father's private gold rush. He left 15 years later as a hot new author swept eastward by literary acclaim. He returns today on the breath of those who in ceremonies this afternoon will thank the late Wallace Stegner for singlehandedly giving Westerners a literary tradition.

In his last gracious gesture to the only place he ever publicly called home, the Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist will by proxy today officially turn over most of his professional remnants to the University of Utah, the school where his 60-year embrace with writing began.

His widow, Mary Page Stegner, and son, Page, will present the Marriott Library a deed of gift to the personal papers that were the foundation of Stegner's career. Included are original typed and handwritten drafts, sheaves of correspondence, diaries, magazine articles and galley proofs from a self-described workaholic who produced 30 volumes of fiction, biography, history and essays and along the way earned literature's highest honors.

The heart of Stegner's literary bequest are the rough and final drafts of most of his work, including the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Angle of Repose*, the National Book Award-winning *The Spectator Bird* and his last published book, *Crossing to Safety*. Galleys of his breakthrough novel, *The Big Rock Candy Mountain*, the barely fictionalized account of his father's futile treasure hunt across the West, are also included.

"Salt Lake City doesn't know how lucky it is that Wally Stegner happened to spend his growing-up years here," said David Freed, a friend of Stegner's since they were teammates on the U.'s tennis team and "a huge fan" of Stegner's writing. "And I have a hunch that most people don't know how lucky they are that the papers of one of America's truly great writers have been passed along to us for safekeeping.

"If Utahns want to find out where they come from and who they are and see that revealed in unmatched detail, they should read *A Gathering of Zion* or *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian* or *Recapitulation* or his essays in *The Sound of Mountain Water*," Freed added. "This is a writer who can change your life. Really."

This is a writer who changed the lives of famous writers when they were his students during the 25 years he ran Stanford University's writing program, which Stegner founded in 1945. A few former Stegner Fellowship recipients and students: Raymond Carver, Wendell Berry, Ken Kesey, Larry McMurtry, Edward Abbey, Thomas McGuane, William Kittredge, Tillie Olson, Nancy Packer, Robin White and Judith Rascoe. Stegner, who always shunned bragging or being bragged on, said of his students in an interview in 1989: "They were all good before they got to me."

The Stegner collection, which he had been donating in parts since 1971, reveals what critics

■ See STEGNER, Page J-2

Lynn R. Johnson/The Salt Lake Tribune

Day Christensen examines finished page printed on ornate 1846 hand press at Red Butte.

'Wilderness Letter' Reprinted With Respect, Patience

By Lance S. Gudmundsen
THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

"This is my favorite part," says Day Christensen, as he pulls the worn, hardwood lever of a 150-year-old printing press, bringing a sheet of paper into contact with inked metal type.

"It's an almost intimate feeling," adds Christensen, 45, removing the sheet from the ornately decorated cast-iron machine and carefully placing it atop a stack of others.

The 1846 built-in-London press — topped by an imposing gold eagle as an ornamental counterweight — is centerpiece of Red Butte Press, ensconced on the top floor of the University of Utah's Marriott Library.

Christensen, the operation's book designer and printer-in-residence, along with Red Butte Press founder Everett L. Cooley, has been shepherding its sixth book — a limited edition of Wallace Stegner's "Wilderness Letter" from his 1969 volume, *The Sound of Mountain Water*.

The 1960 letter is prefaced with a forward by the Pulitzer Prize-winning author's son, Page.

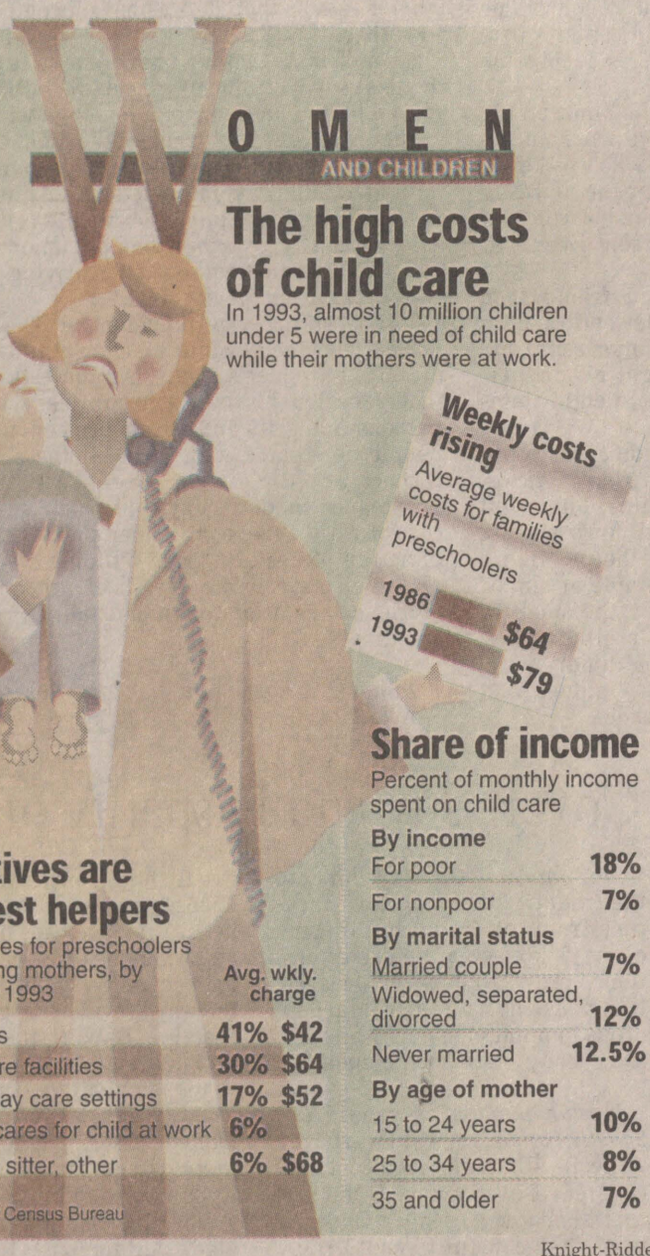
The 56-page volume will be unveiled this afternoon at ceremonies announcing establishment of the Wallace Stegner Center for Land, Resources and the Environment to be headquartered at the U. College of Law.

Only 100 copies of the book were printed. Of the 75 available for sale to the public, nearly 50 already have been presold, sight unseen, says Cooley, with a hint of understandable pride.

Cost per copy: $550.

In a decade where lasers, ink jets and desktop

■ See HAND PRESS, Page J-2



Knight-Ridder

IN ANOTHER TIME

A BLOODY DAY FOR S.L.'S FINEST

Cafe Robbery Ends With 2 Officers Dead, Thief Killing Himself

By Robert Kirby
SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

Every day hundreds of people in Salt Lake City pass the alcove at 307 S. Main St., unaware that it is where the bloodiest day in the history of the city's police department came to a grisly end.

On the night of Feb. 15, 1924, William Lee, a parole violator and forger from California, hid in the darkness of the alcove. Out on Main Street, one officer lay dead and another was mortally wounded. Both had been shot by Lee after he robbed a cafe.

Wounded and surrounded by a growing crowd, Lee, 24, was frightened and desperate. With him was 25-year-old Beatrice Hunter, a woman he had met three weeks earlier in California. Refusing to surrender, Lee pressed the muzzle of his .32-caliber automatic handgun against her cheek and fired. He then shot himself in the head.

Lee died hours later in a hospital. Miraculously, the bullet Hunter was shot with passed through both cheeks, only injuring the roof of her mouth. By the next day she was telling her story to police.

Veteran Brigham Honey died on duty.

Nolan Huntsman was 9-month rookie.

According to published accounts in several Utah newspapers, Hunter told investigators that she met Lee a month earlier, just days after his parole from San Quentin prison, where he was serving a sentence for forgery.

The pair took an eastbound train to Reno, where Hunter pawned two silver rings.

That gave them enough money to buy one ticket to Ogden that was used by Hunter while Lee hitchhiked to meet her.

■ See HISTORY, Page J-4

Here I Sit All Broken Hearted . . .

'Library' Floors Show Penchant for Reading

By Wayne Lockwood
KNIGHT-RIDDER NEWS SERVICE

It's time that bathroom reading came out of the closet. Water closet, that is.

One of the latest alarming facts in a long line of alarming facts to hit the media is that an alarming amount of adults have stopped reading. Or have cut back tremendously.

As someone whose livelihood depends on readers, that kind of scares me.

But the more I'm out at government buildings and restaurants and other such public and semi-public places, the better I feel. Better, because the floors of the bathrooms often are littered with newspapers.

Aha! So they really are reading, albeit in places where pollsters fear to tread.

I'm hip. I've been spending quality time with everything from Henry Miller to Shakespeare to *Rolling Stone* in my bathroom since I learned to read and, well, do those other things you do in the bathroom.

Only problem is, there's still kind of a stigma about reading in the bathroom, as if it constitutes just a little too much enjoyment in those confines.

For a long time at work, I found myself rolling up my issue of *Time* and holding it against the side of my leg so no one would notice during that long trip to the bathroom.

At least I now know I'm not alone. I don't feel so guilty anymore when I linger over the comics. The workplace restrooms are a telltale sign.

A tip for interested employers — strangely enough, you can gauge the morale of the workers by what they are reading in the "library." Good: *Time* or *People*. Bad: The want ads.

There's no shortage of stuff to ponder in the john. There even are books targeted specifically at the bathroom audience. Of course, they're usually collections of bad jokes or sports trivia. You can do better.

Here are some helpful dos and don'ts for bathroom libraries:

■ Do read pocket-sized books. The smaller, the better.

■ Don't put pocket-sized books into your shirt pocket, then lean over to flush. You could end up making one more deposit than you originally planned. Same goes for spectacles. Experience speaks: There's little worse than losing your glasses to the Ty-D-Bol man. Except for having to fish for them.

■ Do read newspapers. Don't use them for TP when you run out.

■ Do read magazines. Don't read *Rolling Stone,* if you can avoid it. The long-sized format of the magazine can put one in danger of some nasty paper cuts, if you catch my drift.

■ Don't leave your books strewn about the bathroom.

■ Do get a pair of bookends and create a miniature bookshelf. It looks nice, and it screams hospitality. Unless, of course, your guest is grossed out by most objects in bathrooms anyway.

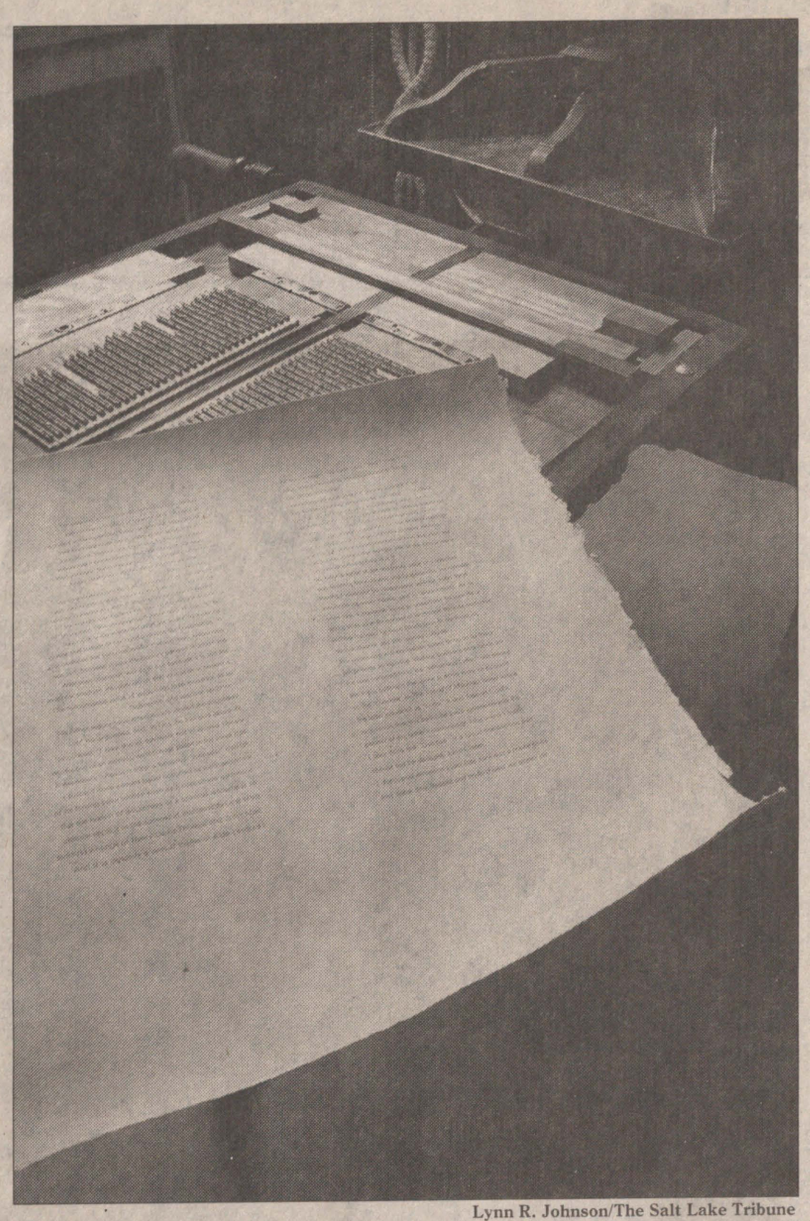
■ Don't read mail. It's just not fun. Anyway, escapism is a big element of reading, and a big element of restroom atmosphere. How often during your day do you get an escape from the grind for five or 10 minutes that doesn't involve coffee or errands? It's not a good idea to escape from reality into the stark reality of bills. Frying pan to fire, you know?

Really, though, just about anything goes. There's even toilet paper available with trivia, history and, of course, really bad jokes. It's the height of disposable reading material.

Some of the most successful underground and independently printed newspapers have a symbiotic relationship with the bathroom. They are printed as single broadsheets and are taped to the inside of stalls at universities and public places. Even not-so-underground places such as sports bars have entered the fray. Many of them have corkboards mounted above the urinals with the day's sports pages tacked up for easy access. Look, Ma, no hands!

If more people could get past the stigma, I bet the literacy level would climb, even without Classics Illustrated comic books. I know, you argue that, with today's lifestyles, who has time to read? You do. And you know where. Ten minutes a day to keep brain freeze away.

Look at this way — it's either read or count the ceiling tiles. And everybody knows English is more fun than math.



Lynn R. Johnson/The Salt Lake Tribune

An 1846 hand press is being used by Red Butte Press to print 100 copies of Wallace Stegner's "Wilderness Letter." Day Christensen uses a composing stick, below, to arrange type for the hand press at Red Butte.

Hand Press: 'Wilderness Letter' Reprint

■ Continued from J-1

publishing are buzzwords, the price elicits a certain sticker shock.

"Actually, we may just break even," explains scholarly but affable Cooley, who retired a dozen years ago as U. professor of history and director of the Marriott Library's Special Collections section. Formerly, he headed the Utah Historical Society.

Like hand-copied, illuminated medieval manuscripts or the magnificent Gutenberg Bible, the books produced by Red Butte Press are intended to be bona fide works of art. Most buyers are rare-book collectors and universities.

Christensen spends weeks designing a single book — variables such as the type styles, the hue and thickness of the paper, the ink colors, the artwork, the format and the binding.

After the raw materials are assembled, consider the effort:

■ Christensen sets each line of the book letter by letter, using lead type especially made by a San Francisco foundry. The type style, or font, for the "Wilderness Letter" is called Univers Light. Designed in the early '60s, it is straightforward and sparse, not unlike the letter itself.

Setting, spacing and assembling a 30-line page is painstaking — requiring between 2½ and three days. The result is a metal mirror-image of the page.

■ So imprint density will be uniform across the page, he uses tissue-thin material to raise areas of the press "tympan" — a flat plate that holds the blank sheet. Again, it is an exacting trial-and-error skill.

■ Each page is printed one at a time — and only on one side. Before every imprint, Christensen inks the type with a hand-held roller.

■ After he finishes printing four pages, Christensen distributes the type into shallow, partitioned drawers — or type cases — from which he creates the next four pages.

■ The all-cotton-fiber paper is handmade by an Indiana mill. For a sharper image, Christensen predampens the paper — an overnight process — before each "press run."

■ The book contains a section of five specially commissioned etchings by distinguished Utah artist V. Douglas Snow. They depict scenes from Capitol Reef National Monument country.

■ The book is bound between two quarter-inch boards milled from cottonwood trees, like those indigenous to Capitol Reef. The plain wood is protected by a thin coat of polyurethane, but "you can see the grain and any imperfections — making each cover unique," Christensen says.

Attention to detail is exquisite. The cover boards were used sequentially, so a knot hole on the front appears in exactly the same place on the back, Cooley says.

■ The pages are bound with linen thread by an Austin, Texas, bindery, which also has crafted a rust-colored cloth-covered case box. The book measures 7½ by 15 inches.

Each book will be numbered and signed by designer/printer Christensen and artist Snow.

Christensen, an articulate, bearded native of Washington state, holds a degree from Brigham Young University in art design and a master's degree in landscape architecture from Harvard University.

Now living in Pleasant Grove, the father of three designed the John W. Gallivan Utah Center Plaza's bronze "Story Wall" of American Indian legends, plus its bronze-cast murals depicting wildlife through the eyes of Utah first-graders. In collaboration with Bonnie Sucec, he has just finished an abstract sculpture now hanging in Salt Lake City International Airport's new international-arrival center.

Christensen is under contract with Red Butte Press and has overseen its four most recent books — including last year's *A Poet's Alphabet of Influences* by Mark Strand, illustrated with hand-painted, stylized capital letters by Sucec.

Before finding a home at the U., the cast-iron letterpress, patented in 1817, was a workhorse of a small but distinguished print shop operated from the Mill Valley, Calif., home of Lewis and Dorothy Allen. Despite the couple's fastidious standards, the Allen Press' output during a half-century was prodigious: more than 50 books.

Along with Catherine B. and Claudius Y. Gates, the Allens donated the $15,000 machine to the U., where Cooley founded Red Butte Press, serving for a decade as its unofficial "proprietor" and editor. The Gateses, likewise, have underwritten costs of all books bearing the Red Butte imprimatur.

At 78, Cooley says he will "finally retire" from his unsalaried stewardship when the Stegner book is published.

When he founded the U.-based minipublishing house, Cooley approached Stegner about "writing something" for its first book. The author, who was in the middle of a project, replied: "Ask me again."

While Cooley again broached the subject, nothing was decided before Stegner's 1993 death after an automobile accident.

Cooley recalls a conversation with former Interior Secretary Stewart L. Udall, who described the "Wilderness Letter" as "the genesis of Wallace Stegner's feelings about the wilderness."

Udall believed the document "deserved the kind of treatment we could give it" at Red Butte Press, the scholar explains.

Stegner Donates Papers To the U. of U.

■ Continued from J-1

have called his unrelenting and unerring obsession for detail. Stegner, who is called the dean of Western American letters by *The New York Times*, also leaves more than 40 years of correspondence with his book and magazine publishers, letters to and from former writing students, his teaching notes and reams of research. The collection, temporarily open only to researchers approved by the Stegner family, will eventually occupy more than 75 linear feet of shelf space and become what Marriott Special Collections director Gregory Thompson called "the cornerstone of our literary archive."

Until moving to Salt Lake City in 1921, Stegner had been a boy trapped by the constant motion of his wandering farmer, gambler, prospector, bootlegger father who came to town by way of Idaho by way of Montana by way of Saskatchewan by way of Iowa. He said he managed to transcend the brutality of his father with the help of folks in Salt Lake "who gave me that sense of belonging at the very moment I needed it."

Former Utah state historian and friend Everett Cooley said the collection is a truly remarkable legacy for someone who felt so much growing up that he had no roots and no history to help him understand his own life. "What he didn't have are the very things he leaves to us."

While Stegner's love of the West permeates the collection — he called the region "the New World's last chance to be something better" — he calls it "rootless, culturally half-baked." He accepts the necessary symbiosis between humans and nature, but never misses a chance to verbally kick the shins of his fellow Westerners for too easily giving into their impulse to raid the land and move on.

In written government testimony in 1960, he made one of the country's first calls for setting aside wild portions of the land as a way to preserve crowded society's eroding mental health. The document has since become known as *The Wilderness Letter*, and its clear and irrefutable voice is still heard echoing above the current Western land-use debates.

Stegner said in a biography to be published by The Viking Press next fall that part of the sense of belonging came in the stacks of the East High School library, where he said he read everything he could get his hands on. He later said his freshman English teacher at the U., author Vardis Fisher, was the first to see something special in his writing. He graduated in 1930 and left for his native Iowa, where he received a master's and a doctorate in English.

He returned to the U. as a professor but left Salt Lake City for good in 1937 at age 26 when no permanent faculty spot opened. He taught at universities including Wisconsin and Harvard. While he spent most of his academic career at Stanford, he remained emotionally connected to Salt Lake City, referring to it in one essay as the place "that embalms that youth of mine." He returned throughout his life for book signings and to visit old friends. He was awarded an honorary doctorate by the U. and dedicated the Marriott Library in the spring of 1968. His last speech here was the June 1991 dedication of the Matheson Wetlands Preserve near Moab.

Salt Lake City gave Stegner his first sense of being from somewhere, said Stegner's biographer Jackson Benson, a professor of Western American literature at San Diego State University who also wrote the authorized biography of John Steinbeck. Benson said that before moving to Salt Lake City, Stegner "came to think of his family as an outlaw family, always secretive, always on the run, and never in tune with neighbors or community." Stegner once wrote of that period: "We turned tail and disappeared, and I never got over the faint residual shame of quitting. I admired the stickers, and I still do."

As a teacher at the U. in the mid-1930s, Stegner wrote his first short story and first novel, *Remembering Laughter*, which won the Little, Brown Prize in 1937. Using the $2,500 cash award that accompanied his first major literary prize, Stegner and his wife, Mary, toured England and France on bicycles.

Salt Lake City is where he buried his mother, his only brother and father.

Along with the presentation of the collection, the U. is also unveiling today a handmade book of *The Wilderness Letter.* In addition, the U. will announce the formation of the Wallace Stegner Center for Land, Resources and the Environment, which will be housed in the U. College of Law. The center's first national symposium on land-use issues facing the West is scheduled for spring.

"It is only right that someone who so honored the West be so honored now," said Lowell Durham, director of the U.'s Humanities Center, who was key in securing the use of Stegner's name for the new center." He was a man of conscience and a voice of reason and maybe the sanest person I've ever known."

Despite what Montana author and friend Ivan Doig called Stegner's "iron-tumbleweed adolescence," Stegner had "a flatfooted common sense and endurance" most likely obtained from his "hyper-Western boyhood" spent in 20 towns in eight states and Canada.

In fictionalizing the perpetual motion of his youth in the 1967 book *All The Little Live Things*, Stegner's narrator lamented: "Sometimes I have felt that I could smell my way backward down my life from stranger's house to stranger's house, like a homing dog, by little tokens left on maple or elm or lightpole. I would know one place by the smell of crushed mulberries, another by the reek of trying lard, still another by the dampness of laundry hung on a clothes-horse under which I lay hidden and heard the surf of adult voices overhead."

Books by Wallace Stegner

■ *Remembering Laughter,* 1937
■ *The Potter's House,* 1938
■ *On a Darkling Plain,* 1940
■ *Fire and Ice,* 1941
■ *Mormon Country,* 1942
■ *The Big Rock Candy Mountain,* 1943
■ *One Nation,* 1945 (with the editors of Look magazine)
■ *Second Growth,* 1947
■ *The Women on the Wall,* 1950
■ *The Preacher and the Slave,* 1950 Reprinted as *Joe Hill: A Biographical Novel,* 1969
■ *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian: John Wesley Powell and the Second Opening of the West,* 1954
■ *This Is Dinosaur: Echo Park Country and Its Magic Rivers,* 1956
■ *Great American Short Stories,* 1957 (editor, with wife Mary Page Stegner)
■ *A Shooting Star,* 1961
■ *Wolf Willow: A History, A Story and a Memory of the Last Plains Frontier,* 1962
■ *The Gathering of Zion: The Story of the Mormon Trail,* 1964
■ *The American Novel: From James Fenimore Cooper to William Faulkner,* 1965 (editor)
■ *Twenty Years of Stanford Stories,* 1966 (editor, with others)
■ *All the Little Live Things,* 1967
■ *The Sound of Mountain Water,* 1969
■ *Angle of Repose,* 1971
■ *Discovery! The Search for Arabian Oil,* 1971
■ *The Uneasy Chair: A Biography of Bernard DeVoto,* 1974
■ *The Letters of Bernard DeVoto,* 1975 (editor)
■ *The Spectator Bird,* 1976
■ *Recapitulation,* 1979
■ *American Places,* 1981 (with son Page Stegner and Eliot Porter)
■ *One Way to Spell Man,* 1982
■ *Crossing to Safety,* 1987
■ *The American West as Living Space,* 1987
■ *Collected Stories,* 1990
■ *Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs: Living and Writing in the West,* 1992

— James Thalman

Stegner knew his stuff and he knew he knew it, Doig said. And the one big thing he knew was that you may love a place and still be dangerous to it. Stegner often invoked the 1,900-year-old advice offered by second-century Roman emperor and philosopher Marcus Aurelius: "What is bad for the beehive cannot be good for the bee."

Of the new and swarming West, Stegner wrote: "Millions of Westerners, old and new, have no sense of a personal and possessed past, no sense of any continuity between the real Western past which has been mythicized almost out of recognizability and a real Western present that seems as cut-off and pointless as a ride on a merry-go-round."

Doig, who first met Stegner at the American Booksellers convention in May 1988, described him this way in his diary: "Good stand of wavy gray hair, rugged square-cut face, bifocals in either horn rims like mine or what used to be called tortoise-shells; I don't know what Western genes account for the two of us standing there in don't-give-a-damn heavy-frame glasses."

"I know that none of us is going to replace him," Doig wrote shortly after Stegner's death in 1993. "And it's just about as doubtful whether any half-dozen current writers and thinkers at this end of the country can produce a combined rainbow of work to equal his."

Being reared on the tail end of the American frontier gave Stegner what he called his "overweening sense of place; almost a pathological sensitivity to the colors, smells, light and land and life forms of the segments of earth on which I've lived."

One of the life forms he met in Salt Lake City and carefully chronicled were the Mormons. He wrote that while he was never tempted to adopt their beliefs, so much good will had been offered him in his youth by members of the LDS Church that he could only write about it as a friend.

Book reviewer John Timpane said Stegner's sensitivity to his surroundings made him "perhaps our country's finest describer. No 'The hills were far and green and good' Hemingwayesque nonsense. He wrote things such as: 'the barren plains pimpled with gopher mounds and bitten with fire and haired with dusty woolly grass.' His work was carefully braced and cantilevered," Timpane said. "What is seen is what is felt, as though the one is incomplete without the other."

Stegner met what his friends say was an untimely death at age 84 in an auto accident chillingly like one feared by the narrator in a novel he wrote 25 years earlier. Police reports said on the night of March 28, 1993, Stegner failed to yield to an oncoming car at an unlighted highway intersection outside Santa Fe, N.M. Although the impact critically injured his left side, he was recovering when pneumonia halted his progress. He died without ever leaving the hospital two weeks after the accident.

T.H. Watkins, vice president of The Wilderness Society and the keynote speaker at today's ceremonies, said Stegner's legacy is a majesty of language that revealed his own extraordinary inner grace, personal integrity and a stubborn conviction that all people be treated with love, kindness, dignity and respect.

"Stegner spent his days building a great architecture of words, like a craftsman painstakingly assembling the pieces of a great building," Watkins said. "He then gave it the breath of art, and with that glorious exhalation, the immortality of pure understanding."

James Thalman is a free-lance writer living in Salt Lake City.

Stegner's Writing Covers Joy and Disparity of Life

Although Wallace Stegner's work is most often found in the regional sections of bookstores, much of his fiction is East Coast and urban at its core.

Spectator Bird, All The Little Live Things and *Crossing to Safety,* for example, present the cosmopolitan lives of people who confront the sublimely wonderful and the perfectly God-awful things that happen to human beings no matter where they live.

Stegner imparts joy, for example, when the main characters in *Crossing to Safety* share some good news: "The Langs join us in a war dance around the station wagon, and all the way out into the country their excited faces turn from the front seat to shine on us. They ask a hundred questions, they burst with pleasure, they warm us with their total generous happiness in our good luck. Everybody's tap is wide open."

He can be bleak as well. In *The Spectator Bird* the narrator writes: "What was it? Did I feel cheated? Did I look back and feel that I had given up my chance for what they call fulfillment? Did I count the mountain peaks of my life and find every one a knoll? Was I that fellow whose mother loved him, but she died. . . . Whose profession was something he did not choose, but fell into, and which he practiced with intelligence but without joy? This is the way the modern temper would read me. Babbitt, the man who in all his life never did one thing he really wanted to. One of those Blake was scornful of, who controlled their passions because their passions are feeble enough to be controlled. One who would grasp the handle but not the blade. Milquetoast. Homo castratus."

— James Thalman

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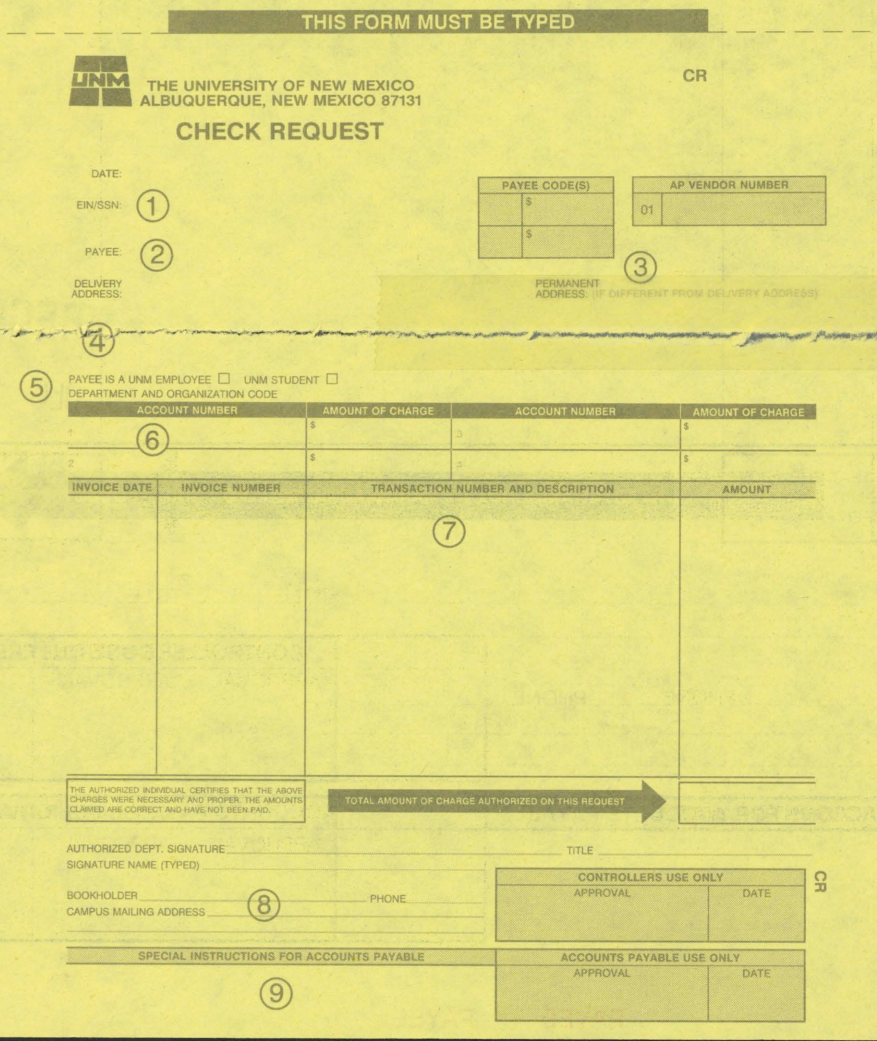

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Michael A. Keller
Ida M. Green University Librarian
and Director of Academic
Information Resources

Cecil H. Green Library
Stanford, California
94305-6004

makeller@sulmail.stanford.edu
telephone 415.723.5553
fax 415.725.4902

The Stanford University Libraries

January 25, 1996

Ivan Doig
17021 10th Avenue N.W.
Seattle, Washington
98177

Dear Mr. Doig,

I am writing on behalf of Stanford University to request permission to use your essay "West of the Hudson, Pronounced 'Wallace' " in a special forthcoming publication.

This year Stanford will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Creative Writing Program. As you know, the program was conceived by Wallace Stegner, who also directed it for 25 years. Stanford will mark the anniversary with several events – among them the publication by The Stanford University Libraries of a limited edition book of tributes to Stegner by alumni of the program and others who knew Wally. We hope you will allow us to use your essay in the book.

Both Page and Mary Stegner know about this project and have given us their enthusiastic support. We have discussed our intentions with staff at Sierra Club Books, who see no conflict with the forthcoming paperback, *The Geography of Hope*. Peter Beren, the publisher, has provided us with the list of contributors, contributor statements, and copies of the essays Sierra Club Books intends to include in its edition. We will use many of the same essays, as well as some additional material.

Our fine press edition, as yet untitled, will be limited to not more than 400 copies. It will be designed by James and Carolyn Robertson (who also are designing the Sierra Club book) and will be printed by letterpress at their Yolla Bolly Press. Copies will be sold by the Libraries at or near our cost.

In exchange for this one-time, nonexclusive use of your work, we will provide you with one copy of the letterpress edition. You will also have, of course, the sincere appreciation of the Stanford community for your generous participation in this anniversary.

If you have any questions, please contact Maggie Kimball, Head of Special Collections, at (415) 725-1161.*

Thank you for considering this request to include your essay in a book of tributes to a remarkable man. If you agree, please indicate your approval on the enclosed form and return one copy of it in the stamped addressed envelope provided – if possible by February 1, 1996.

Sincerely yours,

Michael A. Keller
University Librarian
and Director of Academic Information Resources

* or call Becky Fischbach, at 415 725-1020.
Welcome home.

Michael A. Keller
Ida M. Green University Librarian
and Director of Academic
Information Resources

Cecil H. Green Library
Stanford, California
94305-6004

makeller@sulmail.stanford.edu
telephone 415.723.5553
fax 415.725.4902

The Stanford University Libraries

I agree to have my essay,

'West of the Hudson, Pronounced 'Wallace' "

printed in the Stanford University Libraries'

limited edition book of tributes to Wallace Stegner,

to be published in 1996, one-time and non-exclusive use only, with the title copyrighted "Copyright ©1995 by Ivan Doig" at the front of the book, in consideration for one copy of the letterpress edition.

11

Ivan Doig Ivan Doig

28 Feb. '96

Date

Becky, I hope this faxed signature is sufficient for you. If not, have someone call me tomorrow for a mail version.

regards,

M.

25 Oct. '95

Dear Barbara--

My bio for the Stegner omnium gatherum:

> Ivan Doig's latest novel is Bucking the Sun. He is the author of four other works of fiction and three of non-fiction, including the National Book Award finalist This House of Sky. Born in Montana in 1939, he has worked as a ranch hand, newspaperman, magazine editor and writer, and holds a Ph.D. in American Western history. In 1989 the Western Literature Association honored him with its Distinguished Achievement Award for his body of work.

By the way, thanks for sending the copy of Listening to the Land, which my wife the Western Lit prof and defender of the environment has read and admired and which I'm looking forward to as a Christmastime treat, as I get this Bucking the Sun novel launched at Simon & Schuster. Looking forward to the memories of Wally book.

sincerely,

October 10, 1995

TO: Contributors to the Wallace Stegner Tribute Book

FROM: Sierra Club Books

RE: Contributors Notes

Dear Folks:

We would like to know how you want yourself identified in the contributor notes at the back of this collection. None of you *needs* identification, but it seems traditional and therefore appropriate. At the same time, we need to be somewhat concise, 8 or 10 lines, something roughly like the Stegner sample below.

> Page Stegner is Professor Emeritus at the University of California, Santa Cruz. He has been awarded fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Guggenheim Foundation. He is the author of two volumes of literary criticism, three novels, and four works of non-fiction. His most recent book, *Grand Canyon: The Great Abyss* was published by Harper Collins in spring of 1995. He lives with his wife and 7 year old daughter in Santa Cruz, California.

Use the back of this sheet, if you like, and return it to Barbara Ras in the envelope provided. Many many thanks for all your help.

MONTANA
The Magazine of Western History

Charles E. Rankin, Editor Marilyn Grant, Associate Edito[r] ... [Man]ager

Ivan – 10/4

I will be discussing an advance from UNM Press (already promised but not finalized) with Press representatives next week at the WHA Conf. in Denver. With that I'll get you ~~$~~ $250, yet in November I hope.

Best
Chuck

Ivan Doig
17021 Tenth Avenue N.W.
Seattle, WA 98177

October 4, 1995

Dear Ivan,

Enclosed please find manuscript proof for your article to be included in the volume of essays on Wallace Stegner and published by the University of New Mexico Press.

UNM Press has used an outside editor to produce this manuscript proof. Corrections of typos and minor punctuation have not been marked. Suggested editing changes are indicated thus: deletions with strike-outs, and insertions with a line of spaced dots under them.

Please read through the manuscript carefully for meaning and context. If you would, respond to all queries from the copy editor, check quoted material for accuracy, and doublecheck sequence of notes to make sure note numbers and notes correspond.

Time is of the essence. The book is on UNM Press's fall 1996 list, but the press still hopes to have it out in summer. If you could proof the enclosed as quickly as possible and return it to me no later than October 20, it would be a great help.

In addition, would you provide a paragraph about yourself that we can include in an "About the Contributors" section for the book (institutional affiliation, pertinent publications, etc.).

Many thanks for your help with the enclosed and for participating in a terrific project. I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

Chuck

Charles E. Rankin
Editor

Montana Historical Society • 225 North Roberts St. • P.O. Box 201201 • Helena, Montana 59620-1201 • (406) 444-4708 • FAX (406) 444-2696

MONTANA
The Magazine of Western History

Charles E. Rankin, Editor | Marilyn Grant, Associate Editor | Tammy Ryan, Business Manager

Ivan Doig
17021 Tenth Avenue N.W.
Seattle, WA 98177

October 4, 1995

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Charles E. Rankin
Editor

Montana Historical Society • 225 North Roberts St. • P.O. Box 201201 • Helena, Montana 59620-1201 • (406) 444-4708 • FAX (406) 444-2696

7 Oct. '95

Dear Chuck--

Here you go, the UNM Stegner piece with one clunky line deleted and one winsome one inserted.

As for a bio graf, I'm attaching a beefed-up version of the back flap copy of my last book, with mention of my Fort Peck novel coming (May '96 publication!). You can un-beef it to fit your "Contributors" format if necessary, okay?

Hope you're thriving, and I appreciate your perseverance with the Stegner stuff and UNM Press.

regards,

"About the Contributors"--Ivan Doig.

Acclaim for the work of Ivan Doig began with his 1978 book, This House of Sky, a finalist for the National Book Award in contemporary thought. "The language begins in western territory and experience but in the hands of an artist it touches all landscape and all life," wrote Robert Kirsch in the Los Angeles Times. "Doig is such an artist." His books since then have been the nonfiction Winter Brothers, the memoir Heart Earth, and the novels The Sea Runners, English Creek, Dancing at the Rascal Fair, Ride with Me, Mariah Montana and the just-published Bucking the Sun. Born in 1939 in the Montana mountain country he writes of, Doig has worked as a ranch hand, newspaperman, magazine editor and writer, and holds a Ph.D. in American Western history. In 1989 the Western Literature Association honored him with its Distinguished Achievement Award for his body of work.

"About the Contributors"--Ivan Doig

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<cn>3

<cn>Thoughts on Wallace Stegner

<ca>Ivan Doig

<ep> Salt Lake next Tuesday for a speech, and then we can escape to Vermont, which from here looks like a cool green sanctuary. Ah wilderness. There is too much frenzy and noise around here. Give me my scallop shell of quiet/My staff of faith to lean upon. And nine bean rows.

See you in December, I hope.

<eps>—Wallace Stegner in a letter to Ivan Doig, June 16, 1990.

<txt> Not the least of Wallace Stegner's miraculous qualities was that the December of his life ended in springtime.

Age and illness, he had wintered past like the sturdy square-cut Westerner he was; it took accident to do him in, and when the injuries from a Santa Fe car wreck claimed him, Stegner left amid a late, luminous blossoming of public and critical appreciation for his life's worth of books—twenty-nine of them across the spectrum of essay and history and fiction and biography, and at last people were seeing his work as the vast natural resource it is.

Better late than never, I suppose is the thing to say next. Wally Stegner himself, born in 1909 and thus a witness to every haywire development in the American West since then, maintained an almost preternatural patience with his fellow humanity—"the West . . . is the native home of hope," one of his most memorable sentences sang. But temper is a western commodity too, and right

now mine can't help saying that in undervaluing for so long such an important body of work as Stegner's, the American literary establishment and the American reading public and the western states of America collectively shot themselves in their tangled trio of feet.

<bq> Pray up a little rain for all of us, if you know the chants. We're starting our seventh dry year, and God knows what Egyptian plagues will come down on us if we don't get some rain this winter. God knows how many Californians will flee off to the better-watered Northwest, too. It's in your own best interest. Pray, man. (Stegner in a letter to Doig in Seattle, November 10, 1992)

txt> Over and over he said it, compellingly, passionately, honestly—"ad nauseam for fifty years," he chuckled in his final book and then said it one more time: "The whole west, including much of California, is arid country." ~~In an aside, he admitted that the Pacific Northwest is a narrow exception.~~ In trying to review that last book of Stegner's, *Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs*, I swiped from the Greek poet Archilocus and the philosopher Isaiah Berlin the notion that strong writers, the enduring hedgehog type, are said to know one big thing, and Stegner powerfully always knew his:

"I really only want to say that we may love a place and still be dangerous to it."

He and his irrefutable voice for the land made the right enemies. Ronald Reagan saw fit to bestow the Presidential Medal of

Freedom on Frank Sinatra and Whittaker Chambers, but not on the most distinguished voice for the natural glory of his own California. Nor did the Jefferson Award, the National Endowment for the Humanities' distinguished career award, ever find its way to this most obvious candidate during the regimes of Lynn Cheney and William Bennett.

<bq>Good stand of wavy gray hair, rugged square-cut face, bifocals in either horn rims like mine or what used to be called tortoise-shells; I don't know what western genes account for the two of us standing there in don't-give-a-damn heavyframe glasses. (Doig's diary entry on crossing paths with Stegner at the American Booksellers' convention, May 1988)

<txt> In person, he looked like a one-man Mount Rushmore.

That solidity, Stegner's Scandinavian-Saskatchewan-Montana-Utah-etcetera mien of flatfooted common sense and endurance, went much more than skin-deep. He knew his stuff, and he knew that he knew it. An academic interviewer once tried to get him to pontificate on "what it is that western writers will have to do to produce a crop of distinguished novels." Stegner looked at him and said drily:

"Write good books."

It took a little self-prodding, but Stegner could laugh at himself. I remember hearing from both him (ruefully) and A. B. Guthrie, Jr., (indignantly) the tale of the Stegners making an overnight stay at the Guthries' near Choteau. Trying to be helpful about breakfast-time logistics, Stegner said: "We get up around

seven." Guthrie, to whom morning existed only to ameliorate the night before, glowered at him and rasped: "Well, we don't."

Stegner once tallied up that in his hyper-western boyhood, he lived in "twenty places in eight states and Canada," and one of my regrets is that my home state of Montana was among his less fond memories. His main recollection of the Stegner family's short time in Great Falls was "humiliation," he told me with a wry face but obviously meaning it. Fresh from a Saskatchewan homestead, he'd started junior high school there wearing moccasinlike elkskin shoes and a sweater with a broad band around it which he suspected made him, a pudgy boy at the time, look like a striped pig. Oddly but honestly, Stegner always bore an unnecessary burden on himself from his family's peripatetic pattern: "We turned tail and disappeared, and I never got over the faint residual shame of quitting. I admired the stickers, and I still do." Maybe it was out of that iron tumbleweed past that he himself learned the stick-to-itiveness of his writing and thinking.

insert hyphen

<bq>*Wolf Willow, The Big Rock Candy Mountain, Beyond the Hundredth Meridian, Angle of Repose, The Sound of Mountain Water, The Spectator Bird, Crossing to Safety . . .* (a sampling of the book titles of Wallace Stegner)

<txt> None of us is going to replace him, and it's just about as doubtful whether any half-dozen current writers and thinkers at this end of the country can produce a combined rainbow of work to equal his.

So, in the West, this ever-old, ever-new part of the American

The man could not even write book titles without making his pages make music.

land, we resort to the lessons that shaped Wallace Stegner and that he wrote so long and eloquently about. Go on with what you got. Start over when you have to. Our advantage is that we have his lifework to draw on. In his last years, when the national best-sellerdom of *Crossing to Safety* and his *Collected Stories* inspired paperback publishers to pour his earlier books back onto the bookstore shelves, Wallace Stegner was a bit bemused at getting mined as a new literary resource. "I'm a land of opportunity," he laughed, "just like the West." Was he ever.

MONTANA
The Magazine of Western History

Chuck--You can tell the UNM Press people there's no other use of my Stegner piece imminent, but I won't be put in the position of having one anthology veto the use of a piece of my work in other anthologies. Huh uh.

regards,

Ivan

TO: Contributors to Wallace Stegner: M

FROM: University of New Mexico Press and Charles E. Rankin

DATE: April 24, 1995

RE: Permission to include your essay in the book Wallace Stegner: Man and Writer

The University of New Mexico Press seeks to secure your permission to include "Thoughts on Wallace Stegner" in a proposed volume titled Wallace Stegner: Man and Writer. According to the terms of the current copyright law, which became effective in January, 1978, you retain the copyright to the material requested although you grant us permission to use it for this book and publicity associated with its promotion, and the contract allows us to grant other publishers, institutions, and copy shops permission to reproduce it (except for inclusion in other anthologies). ~~As a courtesy to the Press and the other contributors, we ask that you also agree to not allow this requested material to be included in any other book on Wallace Stegner for three years after the publication of this volume.~~

for a fee of $250.00 and 12 copies of the volume, to be provided by either the Press or the anthology editor.

Please sign and return the form to Charles E. Rankin. We appreciate your cooperation in this matter.

Ivan Doig — 29 April 1995

Ivan Doig (date)

Please return to:

Charles E. Rankin
Montana Historical Society
225 N. Roberts Street
Box 201201
Helena, MT 59620-1201

MONTANA
The Magazine of Western History

April 24, 1995

Ivan Doig
17021 Tenth Avenue N.W.
Seattle, WA 98177

Dear Ivan:

Enclosed please find the standard permission form requested by the University of New Mexico Press regarding your essay contribution to the edited volume, Wallace Stegner: Man and Writer. If you could sign and return it to us at your earliest convenience, it would be a great help.

Thanks for your attention to the above and for a terrific contribution to the volume.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Rankin
Editor

Enc.

Montana Historical Society • 225 North Roberts St. • P.O. Box 201201 • Helena, Montana 59620-1201 • (406) 444-4708 • FAX (406) 444-2696

MONTANA
The Magazine of Western History

Ivan Doig
17021 Tenth Avenue N.W.
Seattle, WA 98177

January 20, 1995

Dear Ivan,

Thanks for your letter of reminder. Your stipulations as to price reflect what we discussed some time ago now, and I will ensure that they are honored.

I've discussed your specification for "one-time use" restriction on the material for the anthology with the people at the University of New Mexico Press, and they have no problem with that, nor with your specifications for noting copyright.

They did balk at the number of books you have requested, but I think I can handle that separately.

The introduction is not finished yet, so I don't know if we'll use the "good leave" wording. I'll let you know if we do.

So, all would seem set. I'll keep you posted on timetable and such. As of now, we're still shooting for a spring 1996 pub date. Meantime, all the best as always.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Rankin

Montana Historical Society • 225 North Roberts St. • P.O. Box 201201 • Helena, Montana 59620-1201 • (406) 444-4708 • FAX (406) 444-2696

MONTANA
The Magazine of Western History

Charles E. Rankin, Editor | Marilyn Grant, Associate Editor | Tammy Ryan, Business Manager

Ivan Doig
17021 Tenth Avenue N.W.
Seattle, WA 98177

December 28, 1994

Dear Ivan,

I had hoped to provide some definite word before now, but suffice it to say that the anthology of essays on Wallace Stegner that I have been attempting to pull together these past several months, and which includes your fine contribution, has received formal approval for publication by the University of New Mexico Press.

I was delighted with the book having found a home with UNM Press. I am familiar with the people there, and know they are eager to make this project a success.

We have set a target publication date of spring 1996, which means that a completed manuscript will need to be in to the press no later than early this coming spring.

The press has asked for revisions on a few essays, yours not among them. Whatever final changes there might be with your essay would be strictly stylistic, and I will try to be in touch with you on these (if there are any) sometime next month (January).

In the meantime, many thanks again for your fine contribution to what I can't help but feel is a most worthwhile project. All best wishes for the new year.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Rankin

2 Jan. '95

Dear Chuck--

Congrats on persevering the Stegner pieces toward publication.

As regards my own piece, I will need some paperwork from the UNM Press stipulating that my article (and the little "bad leaves" item if that's used) is being obtained for one-time use only, in the anthology, for a permission fee of $250, with the copyright on the piece(s) in my name, and that I'm to be provided a dozen copies of the book. I hope nobody finds this onerous; it's about the only way I can justify letting material of this sort be used--I think it'll be the only non-book material of mine that's ever been in an anthology.

Best wishes for '95.

28 Sept. '93

Dear Chuck--

Lest our phone conversation of a few days ago get away from me any more than it already has, here's the Stegner material you requested and my understanding of the "Stegner symposium book" situation:

--The Stegner appreciation piece that you already have in type can be used in the symposium book, for a permission fee of $250 and 12 copies of the book.

--The excerpt I'm enclosing with this, from my presentation at the symposium, you may use within the preface to the symposium book.

--Please copyright, separately, on the book's attributions/copyrights page, both the appreciation piece and the excerpt, thusly:

I hope this covers it okay, for both of us; good luck with the book and all.

regards,

"Bad Leaves" material from Stegner symposium, to be quoted in preface to sympobium book:

I once heard a stone mason use the term "a bad leave." A bad leave, he said, means that the previous stones had been forced to git together, kmk in such a way that they left trouble when the next stone had to be inserted. The West has had more than its share of "bad leaves"--the damage done and left behind by the fur and hide rushes, the mining rushes, the agricultural rushes, the energy rushes, all the booms and busts.

Typically, Wallace Stegner did things a little differently than the region wich which he had such a passionate lover's quarrel for 84 years. In his writings, his voice for the land, his battalion of students--honorary and otherwise--he gave us the best "leave" he could, to build on.

MONTANA
The Magazine of Western History

Charles E. Rankin, Editor | Marilyn Grant, Associate Editor | Tammy Ryan, Business Manager

Ivan Doig
17021 10th Avenue NW
Seattle, WA 98177

August 16, 1993

Dear Ivan,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the symposium in tribute to Wallace Stegner September 17-18. By now, you should have received a copy of the announcement-program we have distributed to several mailing lists, including the Western History Association and Western Literature Association. Just in case not, I enclose one here.

As you probably know, the major airlines are offering special discounted fares and are even offering refunds if you made your travel plans to Missoula earlier. If you have not made travel arrangements, we would ask that you might do so as soon as possible. (You will be reimbursed for these.)

When you have your itinerary, it would be helpful if you could either photocopy the flight numbers and times or jot them down on the return postcard provided and send them to us. We can then be sure to have transportation from the airport to the conference headquarters hotel arranged for you ahead of time.

In addition, it would be helpful if you could note whether you will require a single or double occupancy room while in Missoula, and for what nights you will need hotel accommodations. We are prepared to provide hotel accommodations at the Red Lion Inn, across the river from the University of Montana campus, for Thursday, Friday, and Saturday night, September 16-18. The Center for the Rocky Mountain West will also take care of all meals. On those meals not pre-arranged, it would help if you could keep receipts for reimbursement.

If you have any questions at all, please do not hesitate to contact me at (406) 444-4708 or Bill Farr, History Department, University of Montana (406) 243-2231.

17021 10th Avenue NW
Seattle, WA 98177
August 26, 1993

Dear Chuck

I'm being some combination of secretary and editorial assistant to Ivan today and am responding to your letter of August 16.

We will be driving up from Jackson and so have no need of airline transportation or airport pickup. Also, we have our reservations made at the Village Red Lion.

I believe Ivan already has mentioned his need for a parking permit close to the symposium site, so that he can dash off to other parts of the city for his book events when necessary.

Also, we'd be grateful for reserved seating for each of us. I intend to be there for the whole of the program; it's a great opportunity for someone who teaches Lit of the American West.

Thanks, Chuck, and we look forward to seeing you again.

Regards

Carol Doig

MONTANA
The Magazine of Western History

10(?) min.,
"S's am W as Living Space"
– as close to 2pm as possible

Ivan Doig
17021 Tenth Avenue N.W.
Seattle, WA 98177

June 17, 1993

Dear Ivan,

Sorry to not have gotten back to you sooner in response to your letter of May 27 (ouch!). Been out of town, swamped, and all that rot, but enclosed is the state form we need to have you sign and return to us to get you your money. Same thing as we did before, OK?

Meantime, we have scheduled the Stegner symposium in Missoula on the UM campus for Friday and Saturday, Sept. 17-18. The thing will kick off with a panel presentation on Friday afternoon, say 2 to 4:30, then adjourn to a reception. Conference participants and significant others then will be invited to dinner at the university president's house, then we'll all go back to campus for an hour or so of lecture/presentation by Jackson Benson, who is completing a biography of Stegner. Next morning we'll have another panel session from about 9:30 to 11:30 and that'll be it, save for invitations all the way around for a sophisticated tail-gate party at the president's in advance of the football game that afternoon.

If you can just be there, that would be delight enough, Ivan. If we could get you to say a few words, nothing onerous, that would be beyond delight, and if we had you to offer a few comments on Stegner from the perspective of a fellow man of western letters, that would be beyond ideal.

Hope there's a chance. Trust all goes well otherwise and that your tour was a good one. Wish you could do the reading here this fall--have you perfected a clone of yourself yet? If not, drat.

In any event, all the best. Essay should appear in the Autumn issue.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Rankin
Editor

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Ivan Doig grants permission to publish "West of the Hudson, Pronounced 'Wallace'" in the forthcoming book tentatively entitled A TRIBUTE TO WALLACE STEGNER, to be published by Sierra Club Books in the spring of 1996.

The author grants non-exclusive North American rights to the use of this material in all editions of the work, including rights for serialization, book clubs, and translations.

Upon publication, the author will receive five free copies of the book.

Author Ivan Doig

Address 17021 10th Ave. NW
Seattle WA 98177

Date July 17, 1995

Sierra Club Books

100 Bush Street, 13th Floor San Francisco, CA 94104
Telephone (415) 291-1600 *Fax* (415) 291-1602

June 28, 1995

Ivan Doig
17021 Tenth Ave. N.W.
Seattle, WA 98177

Dear Ivan Doig:

Thank you for sending the manuscript of your talk and for letting us include it in our proposed tribute to Wallace Stegner. I was at the event at Herbst Theater, and I was strongly moved by your remarks. Reading them in manuscript, I'm struck with the beauty and elegance of your writing and touched by the devotion they express. Thank you.

I'm enclosing a book from our spring list that I hope you'll find of interest. It's one that I feel particularly proud of.

Best regards,

Barbara Ras
Editor-in-Chief
(415) 291-1635

20 June '95

Dear Barbara Ras--

As per Page Stegner's request, here's a copy of my remarks at the "Geography of Hope" occasion at the Herbst Theater, for inclusion in the memorial volume dedicated to Wallace Stegner, pending the permission form which Page says is on the way to me. I put my copyright on the piece, but it can run in the front matter rather than with the article, if you prefer. I'm also enclosing a rather makeshift bio, if needed.

Good luck with the volume.

sincerely,

Kevin Starr

Barbara Ras, ed-in-chf
Sierra Club Bks
100 Bush St
SF 13th flr
94104

5 copies
↕

Alison — 2nd grade

the GEOGRAPHY *of* HOPE

Post-Lecture Dinner with the Writers

TICKET FOR

Ivan Doig

HOSTED BY AGNES BOURNE & JIM LUEBBERS
2622 JACKSON STREET, SAN FRANCISCO

Dinner begins at 8:30 p.m. Valet parking will be provided.

City Arts & Lectures
1415 Green Street
San Francisco, CA 94109

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An evening to benefit
The Wallace Stegner Environmental Center at the New Main Library
Produced in association with City Arts & Lectures, Inc.

The Geography of Hope

a tribute to Wallace Stegner

with

Ivan Doig Gretel Ehrlich
William Kittredge Barry Lopez
Terry Tempest Williams

7 PM
Thursday • April 27 • 1995
Herbst Theatre
Van Ness at McAllister, San Francisco

Reserved Seating $16 Perferred Seating $50
For Tickets & Information call 415/392-4400

Post-Lecture Benefit Dinner with the Authors
For Benefit Tickets call The Stegner Center at the Library Foundation
415/391-5582

WALLACE STEGNER ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER

at the

NEW MAIN LIBRARY

in association with

CITY ARTS & LECTURES, INC.

presents

the GEOGRAPHY *of* HOPE

A TRIBUTE TO

WALLACE STEGNER

"...THE REMAINING
WESTERN WILDERNESS
IS THE GEOGRAPHY OF HOPE."

WALLACE STEGNER

WALLACE STEGNER
ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER
AT THE NEW MAIN

The Wallace Stegner Environmental Center at the New Main Library will be a unique public resource for environmental awareness, scholarship, advocacy and activism. In addition to collections and electronic resources, the Center will work in partnership with local environmental groups to provide lectures, conferences and exhibits -- to educate, empower and enrich our community and environment. The Center is inspired by author and environmentalist Wallace Stegner, and his vision of nature and deep sense of responsibility for bringing human activities in harmony with the earth.

NEW MAIN LIBRARY

The New Main Library will be a dynamic cultural institution with innovative technology, vast collections and enriching programs to take San Francisco into the 21st century and the global information age. As a collaborative community center, the New Main will create vital connections in a culturally diverse city -- linking the people and communities of the Bay Area to each other, to knowledge and to the world.

For more information about the Stegner Environmental Center or the New Main Library, please call the Library Foundation at (415) 391-5582.

CITY ARTS & LECTURES

Since 1981 City Arts & Lectures has earned a national reputation for presenting lectures and on stage conversations with leading figures in literature, criticism and the performing arts. Lectures feature guests from around the world, and each season most events benefit other Bay Area non-profits. Many of the programs are broadcast to public radio stations across the nation and can be heard locally over KQED-FM (88.5) on Tuesdays at 8 PM.

For a complete list of upcoming events, please call City Arts & Lectures at (415) 563-2463.

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**Stegner Center Founding Committee*

lists as of 4/20/95

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IVAN DOIG
GRETEL EHRLICH
WILLIAM KITTREDGE
BARRY LOPEZ
PAGE STEGNER
TERRY TEMPEST WILLIAMS

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EVENT PRODUCTION - ECOEVENTS

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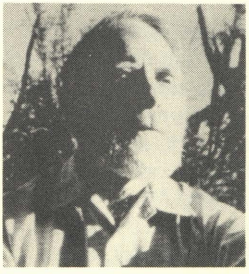
PROGRAM SCHEDULE

APRIL 27, 1995

Hosted by	CHRISTINA DESSER
Introduction	PAGE STEGNER
Presentations	WILLIAM KITTREDGE GRETEL EHRLICH IVAN DOIG TERRY TEMPEST WILLIAMS BARRY LOPEZ

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



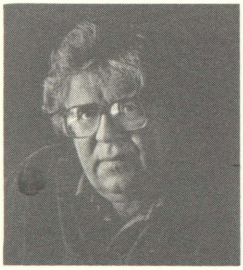
CAROL DOIG

IVAN DOIG Since the publication of his first book, *This House of Sky*, Ivan Doig has been praised and celebrated as an American original, bringing to vivid life the people and the lands of western America, in particular the Montana of his birth and childhood. Mr. Doig was born in White Sulphur Springs, Montana in 1939 and grew up along the Rocky Mountain Front where his trilogy of novels -- *Dancing at the Rascal Fair, English Creek* and *Ride With Me, Mariah Montana* -- takes place. His most recent book is *Heart Earth*, a sequel to his memoir, *This House of Sky*.

BLAINE BRANIFF

GRETEL EHRLICH Born and raised in California, Gretel Ehrlich started in the arts as a documentary filmmaker. At the age of 30, she moved to Wyoming and discovered her passion for literature, writing her first collection of essays, *The Solace of Open Spaces*. This first book was greeted with wide praise; critic Annie Dillard proclaimed, "Wyoming has found its Whitman." Ms. Ehrlich's other works include

Heart Mountain, *Drinking Dry Clouds*, *Islands, the Universe, Home* and *A Match to the Heart.* Her prose is lyrical, muscular and evocative; she writes of isolation and wonder, pain and grace, and in doing so illuminates the relationship between the human and the natural worlds.



WILLIAM KITTREDGE grew up on a dryland cattle farm outside Klamath Falls, Oregon. He published several short stories in his youth, but it wasn't until age 35 that he enrolled in the Writer's Workshop at the University of Iowa. He is now a full professor at the University of Montana. Mr. Kittredge was the recipient of two National Endowment for the Arts' grants, a Stegner Fellowship at Stanford, the Montana Governor's award for Literature and a PEN/West Award in non-fiction. Mr. Kittredge has published two collections of stories, *The Van Gogh Field* and *We Are Not in This Together*; a book of essays, *Owning It All*; and an award-winning memoir, *Hole In The Sky*. Additionally, he wrote the screenplay of Norman Maclean's *A River Runs Through It*.

MIKE MATHERS

BARRY LOPEZ Through his works, which are shaped by his unique and worldly perspective, Barry Lopez illuminates the mystery of the natural world with the imagination and emotion of the human observer. He has received several awards for his nonfiction work including *Arctic Dreams* and *Of Wolves and Men*. Other books include *Crossing Open Ground, Desert Notes* and *Winter Count*. His best-seller, *Crow and Weasel*, is an illustrated fable for all ages and uses the Native American culture to examine some of Lopez's concerns: our spiritual relationship to the landscape and our obligations to the inhabitants of the earth.

DENNIS M. GOLONKA

TERRY TEMPEST WILLIAMS The 1993 recipient of the Lannan Foundation Fellowship for non-fiction, Terry Tempest Williams has emerged as one of the most powerful and unique writers of the West. *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place*, an inspiring narrative about dying, accommodation, renewal and grace, was published in 1991 to impassioned critical praise. Wallace Stegner wrote of this book, "Terry Williams is too

full of life herself and too fascinated by all its manifestations to write a gloomy book. There isn't a page in *Refuge* that doesn't whistle the song of wings." Williams' other critically acclaimed works include, *Pieces of White Shell: A Journey to Navajoland, Coyote's Canyon* and *Unspoken Hunger.*

CHRISTINA DESSER is Project Director for the Migratory Species Project, an environmental education project aimed at demonstrating the interdependence and interconnectedness of life by linking communities based upon the migratory species that pass through them. She was the Executive Director of Earth Day 1990 and a co-founder of the Muir Investment Trust. Ms. Desser serves on several boards including Mother Jones Magazine and Rainforest Action Network.

PAGE STEGNER is the author of numerous volumes of literary criticism, fiction and non-fiction including *The Viking Portable Nabokov* and the award-winning *Outposts of Eden.* He has been the recipient of fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Guggenheim Foundation. Mr. Stegner is currently living in Santa Cruz where he is a professor of literature and the Director of Creative Writing at the University of California at Santa Cruz.

WALLACE STEGNER
ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER
AT THE NEW MAIN

c/o Library Foundation of San Francisco
220 Montgomery Street, Suite 406
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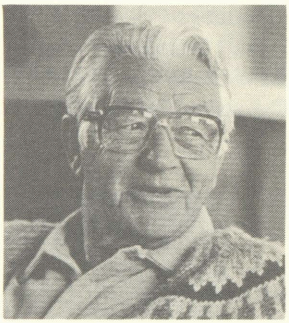

LEO HOLUB

WALLACE STEGNER In over fifty years of writing, Wallace Stegner accumulated many awards -- the Pulitzer Prize in 1972 for *Angle of Repose*, the National Book Award for the *Spectator Bird* -- and he received prestigious fellowships. Most importantly, he created a body of work which was highly esteemed by critics and the public alike. Mr. Stegner established a reputation for capturing the essential spirit where people and place meet. He was a prolific writer, but equally impressive was his work in guiding and inspiring the younger generations of writers. The Wallace Stegner Environmental Center honors his vision and hopes to continue his legacy.

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PATRONS, ATTENTION PLEASE! FIRE NOTICE: There are sufficient exits in this building to accommodate the entire audience. The exit indicated by the lighted "Exit" sign nearest your seat is the shortest route to the street. In case of fire, do not run, walk through the exit. Thank you.

PLEASE SEND ME INFORMATION ABOUT BECOMING A SUPPORTER OF THE WALLACE STEGNER ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER AT THE NEW MAIN LIBRARY:

Name_____

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Christina Desser

February 16, 1995

Dear Ivan,

On behalf of the Library Foundation and the Friends of Stegner, I would like to thank you for participating in the *Writers Tribute to Wallace Stegner* on Thursday, April 27th. All of us are extremely excited about the event and appreciate having you as part of our evening's program.

Joining you on the 27th will be writers Barry Lopez, Gretel Ehrlich, William Kittredge and Terry Tempest Williams. The program will begin at 7 p.m., and after a brief introduction, each of you will have fifteen minutes to speak or read. You can either read a short passage from one of your works or one from Wally's works. Another possibility would be to share your impressions and memories about him. Our hope is that the piece will in some way express your spiritual and intellectual kinship with Wally.

After the Tribute, we hope that you will join us at the home of Agnes Bourne for the *Post-Lecture Dinner*. We are asking each of the participating writers to try and be at the dinner so that the supporters of the Stegner Center will have an opportunity to meet you and thank you for your participation in the evening's program.

415 563-2463

Finally, I wanted to let you know that Sydney Goldstein and Steven Barclay of City Arts & Lectures have been engaged by us to produce the event. They will be handling the stage production of the lecture, in addition to your airline reservations, ground transportation and accommodations in San Francisco. They will be contacting you regarding these matters and will also be sending you a precise itinerary for the evening.

Please feel free to call me if you have any questions at 415-567-6328 (please leave a message if I'm not home) or call Gabrielle Anderman at the Library Foundation at 415-391-5582. Again, thank you for your participation. All of us are looking forward to great evening!

Best regards,

Chris

Christina Desser

Wallace Stegner Environmental Center, c/o Library Foundation of San Francisco
220 Montgomery Street, Suite 406 San Francisco, CA 94104
Tel: 415-391-5582 Fax: 415-677-0396

29 April '95

Dear Chris--

Home now, and about to go back to work. Thanks for inviting me to the Stegner shindig; I hope everyone else was as pleased as the writers were.

Two stray items: one is a packet, of printing-press work done by Peter Koch of Berkeley, which I left in the cloakroom at Agnes Bourne's party. It's a large envelope, probably something like 9" x 12", and plump, with no name or address on it but something in the upper left corner, possibly Peter's return address. It's not greatly valuable, but if anybody turned it in after the party, I would appreciate getting it back. The other detail is merely the $22 I spent on an airport shuttle and airport parking here in Seattle; I submitted those receipts to Steven Barclay at City Arts & Lectures, which is the way I understood the procedure in one of Steven's letters of instruction to me.

Lastly, I want to say how much I appreciated your impeccable work at M.C. in the Stegner event; good job.

best wishes,

Thomas Day

Mary Stegner & Christina Desser

December 12, 1994

Bonnie
Bill K.

Mr. Ivan Doig
17021 10th Avenue, N.W.
Seattle, Washington 98177

Dear Ivan,

We are writing to invite you to participate in a **"Writers' Tribute to Wallace Stegner"**, an evening to celebrate the legacy of Wallace Stegner. Proceeds from the evening will help to fund the Wallace Stegner Environmental Center at the magnificent new Main Library in downtown San Francisco.

The Tribute will begin with a series of readings by writers who admired or were influenced by Wally's writings and teaching. The readings will be held on **April 27, 1995** at the Herbst Theatre in San Francisco from 6 to 8 pm. The theatre seats approximately 900 guests and tickets will be priced at a rate that is affordable to the general public ($25-$35).

After the large public event, the Friends of the Wallace Stegner Environmental Center are hosting a small dinner at the home of Agnes Bourne for individuals contributing $500 or more to the Center. These funds will enable the Friends to expand the library's environmental collections, staffing and resources in preparation for the opening of the New Main in the Spring of 1996. The Friends have raised over $600,000 and have approximately $200,000 more to raise to meet their budget of $800,000.

The idea of building an environmental center at the New Main grew out of a gathering of environmental activists on Earth Day, 1993, less than two weeks after Wally's death. Although Wally was involved in the campaign for the New Main (see attached article), he died before he had the opportunity to learn about this exciting new center. We believe he would have been proud to have his name associated with this center which has adopted as its mission statement "*not only to provide a focal point for environmental information but to inspire understanding and appreciation of the human dependence on natural systems and to encourage individual and group responsibility toward the community of life on Earth.*"

Wallace Stegner Environmental Center, c/o Library Foundation of San Francisco
220 Montgomery Street, Suite 406 San Francisco, CA 94104
Tel: 415-391-5582 Fax: 415-677-0396

As one of the 6 to 8 writers participating in the Tribute, you would be expected to read a short passage from one of your works (it could also be a piece prepared especially for the Tribute) which in some way expresses your spiritual and intellectual kinship with Wally. Each writer will have 8 to 12 minutes to speak. Following the Tribute, we are asking each of the participating writers to join the Friends for dinner so that the supporters of the Stegner Center will have an opportunity to meet you and thank you for your participation in the evening's program. Although our funds are limited, Friends of the Stegner Center would be happy to underwrite your travel expenses to/from San Francisco (up to $300) and your lodging on the evening of the Tribute.

We would like to confirm your interest and availability to participate in the Tribute by **Wednesday, January 4th**. Please respond as soon as you can to Mary at 415-948-5348 (please leave a message if I'm not home) or Tricia Foster at the Library Foundation at 415-391-5582.

Thank you for considering this invitation. We hope you will be able to be with us on the 27th for what promises to be a very special evening.

Best wishes,

Mary Stegner

Mary Stegner

Christina Desser

Christina Desser
Friends of the Stegner Environmental Center

Dear Ivan,

These Friends are an inspiring San Francisco group of young men and women who are wholly dedicated to the Environment and to the Library. They call themselves the "Fabulous 15" and have already raised $610,000 and need $30,000. In addition they are working with the librarians to make the Stegner Environmental Center a fine addition to the New Main Library.

Fondly,
Mary

Thank you for your Xmas greetings

BIBLIOMUSINGS

Wallace Stegner

Photo by Anne Dowie

Wallace Stegner

They say that in Africa, when an old man dies, it is as if a great library has burned. That is because in non-literate societies the whole cultural tradition must be carried in human memories. Literate cultures are luckier. From the clay tablets of Ur and the great doomed library of Alexandria to the rich collections of the present – the Morgan, the Bodleian, the Huntington, the Widener, the Beinecke, the New York Public, the great books of Berkeley, Stanford, UCLA, even Texas, where oil money has accumulated priceless treasures – libraries have been the principal organs of cultural memory, repositories and renewers of traditions, aspirations, and inventions that might otherwise have perished in the first great human disaster.

One of the best ideas in American history was the one that Andrew Carnegie had, whether out of gratitude, pride, or penance doesn't matter, that put free public libraries in scores of American cities and towns, and opened up intellectual opportunities for tens of thousands of young and not-so-young Americans, anyone with a hungry mind.

I can remember when I was hungry. I was a child in a little raw prairie town in Canada, a town not only without a library but virtually without books - a place where there was no drama except grade-school cantatas at Christmas, no music except folk-songs, most of them held to be too dirty for childish mouths and ears, no architecture except grain elevators, no painting or sculpture, no arts, no crafts. A few of us kids traded books as modern kids trade baseball cards, and were always wanting more. I remember what a revelation it was for me to move to Salt Lake City at the age of eleven and find an imposing stone Carnegie library packed with books. I forgot that I was in a strange town where I knew no one. I forgot everything but the riches on those shelves. I took home six books at a time, and I re-loaded twice a week. That library was my haunt, my playground, my second home, the beginning of a lifelong addiction.

My experience was surely like that of millions of youngsters brought up on civilization's fringes and eager to become part of what they had only heard about, and also millions of the under-privileged and under-advantaged who aspired to strengthen what they lacked. I think of Eric Hoffer, an authentic

continued on page 16

Bibliomusings continued from page 15

San Franciscan, longshoreman and philosopher. Born in a German village, brought to America as a child, blind for many years of his youth, and with a first-class mind, he was so starved for learning that when he recovered his sight he read everything he could lay hands on. He picked fruits in the orchards of California with a copy of Pascal's *Pensées* in his overalls pocket — a book probably overdue at the San Francisco Public Library. Winter days he spent in that same library where it was warm and dry and where everything that fascinated him was available. The IWW, who enlisted a good many people like Eric Hoffer, called those library winterers "bughouse philosophers."

Not so bughouse. Eager, culturally and intellectually hungry. And blessed with access to an institution created to open up opportunity even for the dispossessed and disgruntled.

The future of the San Francisco Public Library will surely be even more distinguished than its past. I hope that all sorts of people — neighborhood book clubs, students writing term papers, bughouse philosophers, children, immigrants trying to find their way way in a new country, the whole mix that shares this bewildering culture — will find a home there, and be inspired not only by the books in it and the grand idea that begot it, but by the splendid architectural space that will house this cultural treasure house.

There is nothing in San Francisco's past or present that becomes it more than this great building, this idea, and these books.

"There is nothing in San Francisco's past or present that becomes it more than this great building, this idea, and these books."
Wallace Stegner

CITY ARTS & LECTURES, INC.

1415 GREEN STREET SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94109 415/563-2463 FAX 415/929-0119

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
SYDNEY GOLDSTEIN

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR
STEVEN BARCLAY

February 15, 1995

Ivan Doig
17021 Tenth Avenue N.W.
Seattle, Washington 98177

Dear Ivan,

City Arts & Lectures has been engaged by the San Francisco Library Foundation to handle the production of the Thursday, April 27, 1995 program which will inaugurate the Wallace Stegner Environmental Center. We are all grateful that you have accepted to participate, and Sydney and I look forward to working with you once again.

This event, which will begin at 7PM, will also include Gretel Ehrlich, William Kittridge, Barry Lopez, and Terry Tempest Williams--you'll be in good company. Our proposed format for the evening is to give each of you fifteen minutes during which to talk or read on Wallace Stegner. This could include a short reading of his work (your choice), or an informal talk on your impressions of his work, or both. We're flexible as to the exact format, but are restricted on the fifteen minutes, since there are five of you and we need to end no later than 8:30.

We would like to send you your airline tickets and need only your preferred departure and return dates. Naturally, we will cover your ground transportation, and accommodations in San Francisco will be provided.

Please write or call with any questions; we certainly look forward to the April 27th program and seeing you again.

Sincerely,

Steven Barclay

Dear Steve-- 29 April '95

As far as I know, everything went fine at the Stegner shindig. Thanks for handling the plane tix, and gratitude to Sydney and Jenny and Elissa for their part in it all. I'm attaching the receipts for my ground transportation costs--$11 apiece for the aisport shuttle on Friday morning and my overnight parking at the Seattle airport, total $22.

Best wishes all around.

18 Feb. '95

Dear Steve--

Well, good; glad your fine hand--and no doubt Sydney's--will be guiding us through the Stegner shindig.

I'll need to fly down from Seattle on the day of the event, Steve, and back the next morning. So, would you please book me these Alaska Airline flights (my frequent flyer number is 34773852, if that applies), an aisle seat, as far forward as possible:

Th, Ap 27--Alaska #84, dep Seattle 12:05, arr SF 2:06 pm

Fri, Ap 28--Alaska #85, dep SF 8:55 am, arr Seattle 11.

What's your preference on transportation from the airport--have me take a cab and submit the receipt? I don't mind doing that, or I don't mind being fetched by you or Sydney or somebody who works with you; I do mind shuttle buses and volunteers who aren't used to airports and the traffic patterns. Cabbies are fine with me, honest. In any case, I want to get to the hotel by about 3, hole up and rest for a while, and be ready for the 5 o'clock start. And I am mindful of the 15-min. time allotment, not to mention the audience's patience, and will tailor my talk to that and a little less if I can.

Looking forward to it; hi to Sydney.

best,

Wallace

p.s. Am I right that there's to be a 5 o'clock sound check, some food, etc.?

CITY ARTS & LECTURES, INC.

1415 GREEN STREET SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94109 415/563-2463 FAX 415/929-0119

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
SYDNEY GOLDSTEIN

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR
STEVEN BARCLAY

April 11, 1995

Ivan Doig
17021 Tenth Avenue N.W.
Seattle, Washington 98177

Dear Ivan:

By now you should have received your airline ticket. We will be at the airport to pick you up and take you to the hotel. You will be staying at the Abigail Hotel, 246 McAllister Street, San Francisco. Their telephone number is ~~415-9728.~~ oops 415-861-9728.

We're looking forward to seeing you.

All best,

Steven Barclay

CITY ARTS & LECTURES, INC.

1415 GREEN STREET SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94109 415/563-2463 FAX 415/929-0119

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
SYDNEY GOLDSTEIN

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR
STEVEN BARCLAY

February 22, 1995

Ivan Doig
17021 Tenth Avenue N.W.
Seattle, Washington 98177

Dear Ivan,

Those Alaska Airline flights are just fine. I have purchased the tickets and will forward them to you in the next ten days. A real person--most likely Sydney--will pick you up at the airport, not to worry.

You are right about the 5PM sound check followed by a little food break with the other four participants.

Looking forward. . .

Best,

Steven

Impermeably embedded in a microchip in the computer of a major West Coast newspaper is the news that, along with Edward Abbey and N. Scott Momaday and Larry McMurtry and Robert Stone and Ernest Gaines and Max Apple and Tom McGuane and Ken Kesey and Wendell Berry and Tillie Olsen and plenty of other writers who could be named, I was a student of Wallace Stegner's in the writing program at Stanford. This was particularly news to Stegner and me. Wouldn't you think one or the other of us would have remembered that?

This went on, enough, that after a lecture-tour talk by Wally which had been prefaced by my being singled out in the front row as a former you-know-what of you-know-who, Wally afterward gave me a Stegnerian look--furrows across that Mount Rushmore forehead--and said he was sorry about my being mis-introduced in his introduction, he didn't know how that story had got started. Hey, don't worry, I told him, we're probably both better off with this erroneous version--this way, he didn't have to put up with me as a student, and it saved me all that Stanford tuition.

That kind of inexplicable bonus to me, that because I am a writer of and about the West, I must have spent time at the Stegnerian elbow--that's pretty much the way I do feel about Wallace Stegner, that there was a general benefit to me just being in his region of the country and line of work. And, along that line, of merging the white space of writing with the landscape expanses of the West, I want to take you traveling into a particular piece of Stegner work now.

In 1987, two books of his were published. One was his last novel, Crossing to Safety--as he described it, "Of all the books I ever wrote... the most personal... Deliberately close to my own experience, opinions, and feelings...refracted through a narrator not too different from myself." The front-flap copy of Crossing to Safety describes it this way: "In the mid-thirties, in mid-Depression, a bright, nice, open couple from the West with gifts and dreams but no prospects or connections meets a bright, nice, open couple from the East with wealth, lakeside cottages, long lines of family certainties in manners, tastes, and opinions, and the generosity

to share all they have of good fortune. The friendship that forms and flowers in a single evening binds them together all their days."

Back to Stegner's own description of the book: "The themes of the novel are love, friendship, and survival. The villains are willfulness, polio, cancer, and blind chance. The tensions are the tensions between and among people who love each other at least as much as they resist each other. It is all very quiet. I intended it to be true. I wrote my guts out trying to make it as moving on the page as it was to me while I was living and reliving it."

Quiet though it was, Crossing to Safety caught on. People in publishing are skittish about firm numbers even when they have good news to report, but my phone calls to Crossing to Safety's hardback and paperback publishers add up to the evident fact that it has sold somewhere over 150,000 copies. Friends in the bookstore business frankly tell me it's been a favorite of theirs to sell--as one of them put it, "You don't get very many novels you can tell your customers are about friendship."

The other Stegner book of 1987 was a mere 86 pages of text, and five or six of those were given over to photos. The book's set of three essays had been delivered as the William W. Cook Lectures at the Law School of the University of Michigan in the fall of 1986--
one of those endowed lecture series with what sounds like
the up-and-down results you get out of an academic selection committee--
Arthur Danto of Columbia talking about philosophy one year, and A. Bartlett Giamatti of Yale and major league baseball talking about "Americans and

their Games" another year. The acquiring editor for the University of Michigan Press, Mary Irwin, tells me the publication rights to Stegner's set of talks was "fairly easy" to lay hold of--she believes he "felt some kind of loyalty" to the U. of Michigan because it provided the occasion for the lectures. The U. of Michigan Press went ahead and published the essay trio, to little fanfare and almost no reviews.-- I have the appalled memory of being at the American Booksellers convention three years later, at a lunch with the book review editors of most of the major U.S. newspapers, when

Stegner's name came up, I chipped in something about the University of Michigan Press book--and there was a puzzled general silence as it became clear that none of the book review editors were familiar with it. I will always credit Jack Miles, of the Los Angeles Times, for pulling out a notebook and in honest amends, jotting down the title. As to sales of that book, if Wally thought Crossing to Safety was a quiet piece of work, he must have thought this one was mighty near mute--555 sold in hardback, five-thousand five-hundred in the University of Michigan paperback.

The three essays that formed the book now have been subsumed into the larger and more general collection of Stegner essays, Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs. And though it's true that Where the Bluebird Sings... is attracting a much greater readership, the "Michigan trio" of essays are now sandwiched in a "Habitat" section of the book, between a couple of magazine pieces--so that it's not apparent, any more, that the "Ann Arbor three" represent a unified summary of Stegner and his West, by Stegner: what he wanted to say, when offered the chance to say whatever he wanted, three nights in a row.

The title, of that little book, that went down in Jack Miles' notebook and in thin ranks on bookstore shelves was The American West as Living Space--to give it the emphasis Stegner himself stressed in its preface: "the living region, with its country and its people, its splendors and its limitations, its facts and its fantasies, its opportunities and its problems, its romantic past and booming present and dubious future, all suggested"--and I may be in as sharp a minority as the disparity of those sales figures--this small set of essays selling less than one/twenty-fifth as many copies as Crossing to Safety--when I say that, for my money, The American West as Living Space is the grander finale of Stegner work.

Here's his opening paragraph:

"The West is a region of extraordinary variety within its abiding unity, and of an iron immutability beneath its surface of change. The most splendid part of the American habitat, it is also the most fragile. It has been misinterpreted and mistreated because, coming to it from earlier frontiers where conditions were not unlike those of northern Europe, Anglo-Americans found it different, daunting, exhilarating, dangerous, and unpredictable, and entered it carrying habits that were often inappropriate and expectations that were surely excessive. The

dreams they brought to it were recognizable American dreams--a new chance, a little gray house in the West, adventure, danger, bonanza, total freedom from constraint and law and obligation, the Big Rock Candy Mountain, the New Jerusalem. Those dreams had often paid off in parts of America settled earlier, and they paid off for some in the West. For the majority, no. The West has had a way of warping well-carpentered habits, and raising the grain on exposed dreams."

Lots of lessons in that one paragraph, an impressive number of them about the art of writing. Parallel constructions, alliteration, deft change of sentence rhythm from that ~~40~~ forty-worder which crescendoes in "the Big Rock Candy Mountain, the New Jerusalem" down to the honest power of that four-word dreambreaker: "For the majority, no." More vitally, though, he sweeps us at once into his exploration of the great theme of the West, the clash of its ecologies and its cultures.

pp. 12-14
Stegner
57 talk

This first essay carries the title [illegible] the second is called "Striking the Rock." Elsewhere, Stegn[illegible] a bit of a sigh that "the whole West, including much of California, is arid country, as I've been reiterating ad nauseam for fifty years." In this pair of essays he is, unabashedly, on what he believes is the main set of tracks in the West. Investigative reporters, certainly since Watergate, and Woodward and Bernstein, have spoken openly of the principle: "follow the money." Stegner is telling us here that if we want to savvy the West, follow the water. To me, this has the ringing sound of Stegner hitting the nail on the head, as usual--the truest (that I know of) cliche about the West is that, out here, water flows uphill toward money.

This first essay carries the title "Living Dry," and the second is called "Striking the Rock." Elsewhere, Stegner once said with a bit of a sigh that "the whole West, including much of California, is arid country, as I've been reiterating ad nauseam for fifty years." In this pair of essays he is, unabashedly, on what he believes is the main set of tracks in the West. Investigative reporters, certainly since Watergate, and Woodward and Bernstein, have spoken openly of the principle: "follow the money." Stegner is telling us here that if we want to savvy the West, follow the water. To me, this has the ringing sound of Stegner hitting the nail on the head, as usual--the truest (that I know of) cliche about the West is that, out here, water flows uphill toward money.

The "Living Dry" essay is an overview of western climate and geography, and the explorations and settlement patterns and water laws that the Anglo-American immigrants brought in. He covers a lot of territory, fast, and even an academic on an off-day could encyclopedify him into a corner on some of his assertions. Even I, as a sometime magazine writer, can catch him at giving an inconvenient fact a ~~quick~~ freelance virtuoso elbow in the ribs and waltzing away while it's still catching its breath--he calls "the northwest corner of the West, on the Pacific side of the Cascades...a narrow exception" to western aridity; as a current resident of that area, I would point out to Wally

that the arc of the raincoast from Oregon up through Washington and British Columbia and Alaska is at least as long and strong as the usual "West-defining" "dry line" of the 98th meridian from North Dakota to Texas.

But Stegner had said frankly near the start of this "Living Dry" essay that "I can't come to even tentative conclusions about the West without coming to some conclusions about myself," and so if he scampers a bit in his historical overview, he has a place he is hungry to get to. Here, I think, is how he begins to merge his conclusions about the West and himself as a Westerner:

"Our migratoriness has hindered us from becoming a people of communities and traditions, especially in the West. It has robbed us of the gods who make places holy. It has cut off individuals and families from memory and the continuum of time. It has left as least some of us with a kind of spiritual pellagra, a deficiency disease--a hungering for the ties of a rich and stable social order."

There are a couple more pages of assertions and examples, scholarly and reflective, then all of a sudden Wallace Stegner, son of the West, just lets rip:

For the moment, forget the Pacific Coast, furiously bent on becoming Conurbia from Portland to San Diego. Forget the metropolitan sprawl of Denver, Phoenix, Tucson, Albuquerque, Dallas–Fort Worth, and Salt Lake City, growing to the limits of their water and beyond, like bacterial cultures overflowing the edges of their agar dishes and beginning to sicken on their own wastes. If we want characteristic western towns we must look for them, paradoxically, beyond the West's prevailing urbanism, out in

the boondocks where the interstates do not reach, main-line planes do not fly, and branch plants do not locate. The towns that are most western have had to strike a balance between mobility and stability, and the law of sparseness has kept them from growing too big. They are the places where the stickers stuck, and perhaps were stuck; the places where adaptation has gone furthest.

Whether they are winter wheat towns on the subhumid edge, whose elevators and bulbous silver water towers announce them miles away, or county towns in ranch country, or intensely green towns in irrigated desert valleys, they have a sort of forlorn, proud rightness. They look at once lost and self-sufficient, scruffy and indispensable. A road leads in out of wide emptiness, threads a fringe of service stations, taverns, and a motel or two, widens to a couple of blocks of commercial buildings, some still false-fronted, with glimpses of side streets and green lawns, narrows to another strip of automotive roadside, and disappears into more wide emptiness.

The loneliness and vulnerability of those towns always moves me, for I have lived in them. I know how the world of a child in one of them is bounded by weedy prairie, or the spine of the nearest dry range, or by flats where plugged tin cans lie rusting and the wind has pasted paper and plastic against the sagebrush. I know how precious is the safety of a few known streets and vacant lots and familiar houses. I know how the road in both directions both threatens and beckons. I know that most of the children in such a town will sooner or later take that road, and that only a few will take it back.

That outburst of...longing, I think it has to be called, Stegner and we will come back to, in his final part of The American West as Living Space. But first he closes off this "Living Dry" essay with a potent final paragraph:

And what do you do about aridity, if you are a nation inured to plenty and impatient of restrictions and led westward by pillars of fire and cloud? You may deny it for a while. Then you must either adapt to it or try to engineer it out of existence.

"Striking the Rock" is his essay about our attempts to "engineer away" the fact of Western dryness, and it's a wicked-sharp recounting of environmental battles, and of the historically checkered personalities of both westerners and government agencies. The dam-building Bureau of Reclamation of the 1930s, 40s and 50s, he turns every way but loose. He cites to us other writers, such as Donald Worster, Marc Reisner and Philip Fradkin, who've taken scathing looks at "the hydraulic society" of dam-building and irrigation, and then, once again, he personally cuts loose.

Stegner has written elsewhere of his fondness for the Salt Lake City where he spent his adolescence and young manhood, and of the Mormon society there which he said generously "welcomed even such gentile waifs as my brother and me." But making the desert "blossom as the rose" is at the heart of his skepticism about engineering away aridity, and he quotes a Mormon hierarch, John Widtsoe, who advocated irrigation projects thusly:

"The destiny of man is to possess the whole earth; the destiny of the earth is to be subject to man. There can be no full conquest of the earth, and no real satisfaction to humanity, if large portions of the earth remain beyond his highest control."

Stegner takes that head-on:

"That doctrine offends me to the bottom of my not-very-Christian soul. It is related to the spirit that builds castles of incongruous luxury in the desert. It is the same spirit that between 1930 and the present has so dammed, diverted, used, and re-used the Colorado River that its saline waters now never reach the Gulf of California, but die in the sand miles from the sea; that has set the Columbia, a far mightier river, to tamely turning turbines; that has reduced the Missouri, the greatest river on the continent, to a string of ponds; that has recklessly pumped down the water table of every western valley and threatens to dry up even so prolific a source as the Ogalalla Aquifer; that has made the Salt River Valley of

Arizona, and the Imperial, Coachella, and great Central valleys of California into gardens of fabulous but deceptive richness; that has promoted a new rush to the West fated, like the beaver and grass and gold rushes, to recede after doing great environmental damage."

That splendid shout of Stegner's, echoes and echoes away in the face of the fact--as he too well knew--that the dams exist, the rivers pool behind them, the cities and suburbs grow and grow by suckling on their tapwater and electricity. He ends this chapter, this essay, this way:

"Sad to say...the West is no more the Eden that I once thought it than the Garden of the World that the boosters and engineers tried to make it; and that neither nostalgia nor boosterism can any longer make a case for it as the geography of hope."

Then, the finale chapter of a finale book: "Variations on a Theme by Crevecoeur"--by which Stegner of course is westernifying the famous rhetorical question Crevecoeur asked in his Letters from an American Farmer more than two hundred years ago--"Who is the American, this new man?"

Stegner knew better than to give a hard and fast answer to his version, our version, of that thumping question, "Who is the Westerner?" Those two biting essays on aridity and the denial-by-engineering of course add up, to something like this Stegnerian summary:

"We are not so far from our models, real and fictional, as we think. As on a wild river, the water passes, the waves remain. A high degree of mobility, a degree of ruthlessness, a large component of both self-sufficiency and self-righteousness mark the historical pioneer, the lone-riding folk hero, and the modern businessman intent on opening new industrial frontiers and getting his own in the process. The same qualities inform the extreme individualists who believe that they belong to nothing except what they choose to belong to, those who try on life-styles as some try on clothes...

One reason why it is so difficult to isolate any definitely western culture is that so many Westerners, like other Americans only more so, shy away from commitment."

To radically summarize a chapter which deserves careful reading, I'll tell you that Stegner found a resurgence of hope, for his native geography, in certain western "tastes, attitudes and skills," as he put it. In interests of full disclosure, I have to tell you, too, he mentions--in this connection--certain writers, with names like Kittredge and Welch and Erdrich and Doig.

Add on all the writers in and about the West who were his actual students, and my hope is that we can find a strength, in this loss of him. That instead of Wallace Stegner's long-familiar and often lonely eloquence for the West, the rest of the country may now have to hear from us as a tribe of western writers, a swarm of us.

Back to what Stegner saw, in the conclusion of The American West as Living Space, as hopeful western attributes. In person-by-person terms, he phrased this as--"the individual who transcends his culture without abandoning it, who leaves for a while in search of opportunity and enlargement but never forgets where he left his heart."

In societal terms, he put his hope this way--"towns and cities still close to the earth, intimate and interdependent in their shared community, shared optimisim, and shared memory." Missoula, need I point out, he figured was one such a place. Elsewhere in this final chapter of his, Stegner makes a backtrack that I'm very glad to see him make--away from that wonderful peroration about "characteristic western towns," to mention that Los Angeles is the West, too. This is Doig now, rather than Stegner, "striking a rock" to see what will flow, but I think the Wallace Stegner who came around from his 1979 self-description as "a pretty straightforward, realistic story teller from

the West," to his 1990 praise for Maxine Hong Kingston's wonderfully wild stylised novel "Tripmaster Monkey"--I think that adaptable Stegner would agree with me that as we keep trying to figure out the West, we have to include not only the farms and ranches and towns where we grew up, but the cities and suburbs that drew us away.

I once heard a stone mason use the term "a bad leave" (l-e-a-v-e). A bad leave, he said, means that the previous stones had been forced to fit together, but in such a way that they left trouble when the next stone had to be inserted. The West has had more than its share of "bad leaves"--the damage done, and left behind, by the fur and hide rushes, the mining rushes, the agricultural rushes, the energy rushes, all the booms and busts.

Typically, though, Wallace Stegner did things a little differently than the region with which he had such a passionate lover's quarrel for 84 years. In his writings, his voice for the land, his battalion of students--honorary and otherwise--he gave us the best "leave" he could, to build on.

(25 min.)

San Francisco Examiner
Wednesday afternoon
APRIL 14, 1993

Wallace Stegner chronicled the West

Injuries from car crash prove fatal

By Nancy Scott
OF THE EXAMINER STAFF

Wallace Stegner, novelist, historian, essayist, teacher and inspiration to generations of American writers, has died in Santa Fe, N.M., from injuries suffered in an automobile accident last month. He was 84.

A hospital spokeswoman at St. Vincent's Hospital in Santa Fe said Wednesday that Mr. Stegner died at about 10 p.m. MDT Tuesday. He was hurt March 28.

The appeal, "Bring me men to match my mountains" could have been invented for Mr. Stegner, though he was the antithesis of an empire builder.

His strength was in the word, rather than the ax, the plow, the gun or the building of railroads; his belief was in the preservation and salvation of the land; he was one of

[*See STEGNER, back page*]

◆ *STEGNER from A-1*

Writer dies from crash injuries

America's most distinguished writers.

In a career that spanned 60 years, he wrote with magisterial clarity of the Western landscape and its relation to the people who live in it — and despoil it.

His characters, fictional or historical, live in deserts, plains, prairies and mountains. Especially mountains: The Front Range of the Rockies. The Sierra. The golden slopes of the Coast Range where he and his wife, Mary Page Stegner, made their home in the hills above Los Altos.

Writer Ivan Doig, author of the Western memoir "This House of Sky" and several novels, said "Stegner knew one big thing — he knew the climate of the West, the dryness of the West. It remains the great massive fact of the West, and Stegner's professional life was a kind of long wrestling with the dark angel of that — that we have put so much on such fragile land here in the West."

Mr. Stegner was not, in fact, born in the West, but in Lake Mills, Iowa (where his mother was visiting her parents).

From earliest memory, however, he grew up in the West — in Washington, Saskatchewan, North Dakota, Wyoming and Montana, settling finally with his family in Salt Lake City, where he graduated from the University of Utah in 1930.

He received a doctorate from the University of Iowa in 1935, and there he discovered who he was: a Westerner.

In his most recently published work, "Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs," Mr. Stegner wrote that Iowa "taught me, during an endless rainy fall, that I came from the arid lands, and liked where I came from. I was used to a dry clarity and sharpness in the air. ... I was used to earth colors — tan, rusty red, toned white — and the endless green of Iowa offended me."

Mr. Stegner taught at the universities of Utah and Wisconsin and at Harvard. He came to Stanford University in 1945 and in 1946 he became director of Stanford's creative writing program, a post he held until his retirement in 1971.

While many novelists teach, perforce, few have achieved Mr. Stegner's influence, and perhaps no one else can boast such an illustrious list of graduates.

Among them: Larry McMurtry, Ernest Gaines, Edward Abbey, Ken Kesey, Judith Rascoe, Raymond Carver, Tillie Olson, Scott Momaday, Wendell Berry, Thomas McGuane and Scott Turow.

Mr. Stegner claimed to have learned from his students, including some writers who are all but forgotten.

In a recent interview with the the Boston Globe, Mr. Stegner said: "I learned all kinds of things about how to handle time and how to handle point of view, just by watching other good people do it. ... Did you ever hear of Bud Burdick? 'The Ugly American?' He was a rough diamond. But he had an awful lot of power; he was like a tank in low gear. I sure learned something from him."

Of Mr. Stegner's 28 books, 13 are novels and three are collections of short stories. The first, "Remembering Laughter," was published in 1937; "Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs," a collection of essays, was published last year.

He wrote two histories of the Mormons (as an observer, not a member); he wrote about labor martyr Joe Hill and about John Wesley Powell, explorer of the Colorado River.

Mr. Stegner's best known work of fiction, "Angle of Repose" won the Pulitzer Prize in 1971; an earlier novel, "All the Little Live Things," won a Commonwealth Gold Medal in 1968. In 1977, his novel "The Spectator Bird" won a National Book Award.

In 1991, he received a California Governor's Award for the Arts. In 1992, he turned down a National Medal for the Arts as a protest against political controls placed on the National Endowment for the Arts.

Later this month, he was to have received further recognition locally: the Cyril Magnin Award for outstanding achievement in the arts and the Bay Area Book Reviewers' Fred Cody Award.

Underappreciated

For writer Doig, ever since he read Mr. Stegner's "Wolf Willow" (1962), a history and memoir of the Saskatchewan prairies, "Stegner has been the chairman of the board for Western writers and thinkers."

He noted with sadness that Mr. Stegner "never got any consideration for the Nobel Prize."

For all Mr. Stegner's distinction, the East Coast critics and academics did not accept him into their literary establishment.

The Boston Globe reported that "a computer database of dissertations written at 550 U.S. colleges yielded this stark contrast: As of last year, Norman Mailer had been the focus of 57 theses; John Updike, 43; Stegner, 5."

Doig noted that Mr. Stegner "had famous trouble getting reviewed in the New York Times."

He added, with a snort of derision, that recently the Times referred to him as "*William* Stegner — dean of Western writers," a solecism tantamount to calling Norman Mailer Herman.

Perhaps, suggested Doig, "Stegner has lived, by literary standards, too orderly and citizenly a life. The literary lightning rods catch our attention while Stegner has been in the kitchen writing books."

In proof of Doig's contention: Mr. Stegner lived in the same house for 44 years and, as of this month, was married to Mary Page Stegner for 59 years.

Homage to Mr. Stegner would be incomplete without acknowledging two essentials of his work: a dry, bracing humor and a gift for writing from the heart with no trace of sentimentality.

An example of the latter speaks for itself. In the essay "Letter, Much Too Late," addressed to the author's mother, who died when he was 24, Mr. Stegner wrote:

"You believed in all the beauties and strengths and human associations of a place; my father believed only in movement. You believed in a life of giving, he of getting. When Cecil (Mr. Stegner's brother) died at the age of twenty-three, you did not have a single woman friend to whom you could talk, not a single family of neighbors or friends to help you bear the loss of half your loving life....

"'All you can do is try,' you used to tell me ... You taught me to undertake many things I would not have dared undertake without your encouragement.... You taught me that if it hadn't killed me it was probably good for me.

"I can hear you laugh while you say it. Any minute now I will hear you singing."

Out Where the Sense of Place Is a Sense of Motion

by WALLACE STEGNER

It is exhilarating to me, 60 years after I graduated from a Western university and 45 years after I made the decision to come back West to live and work, to see the country beyond the 100th meridian finally taking its place as a respected and self-respecting part of the literary world.

I used to yearn for the day when the West would have not only writers but all the infrastructure of the literary life—a book-publishing industry, a range of literary and critical magazines, good bookstores, a reviewing corps not enslaved by foreign and eastern opinion, support organizations such as PEN, an alert reading public, and all the rest.

As a writer from the West, I had already discovered how it felt to be misinterpreted. Even well-intentioned people who wanted to praise me often saw in me, or expected from me, things that I was not prepared to deliver, and misread things that I *was* prepared to deliver. Now and then I used to put on my armor and break a lance against the windmill of the cowboy myth that dominated not only much Western writing but almost all outside judgment of Western writing. We rode under the shadow of the big hat. As they used to say of Reagan, we were big hat, no cows. Nothing could convince them in New York or Massachusetts that there was anything of literary interest in the West except cowboys.

If we took a count now, we would probably find that there are actually more writers in the West than cowboys; and even the cowboys annually gather in Elko to read their poems to one another. Some of those, at least, are real cowboys such as I knew when I was young—hired men on horseback with hands so callused that they would hardly close, whose celebrated independence amounted to little more than the right to quit one bone-breaking, underpaid job for another just as bad. Real cowboys have more brutality and less chivalry in them than the literary kind. Some of them have been subverted by their own propaganda and believe their own myth. Others, I am sure, are trying to do what any real writer is trying to do: render the texture and tensions of their own life, their own occupation, their own place. Their trouble is that if they write with honesty about exploitation, insecurity, hard work, injuries and cows, none of which make even a walk-on appearance in "The Virginian" and most of the horse operas it has spawned, they will find a smaller and less-enthusiastic audience than if they had written about crooked sheriffs and six-guns. I have myself written only two cowboy stories in a long life. Both of them are grim little epics of work, weather and cows, with no six-guns, no sheriffs, no dance-hall girls, no walkdowns, not even a saloon.

I felt from the beginning that there was a great deal about the West in which I had grown up that

Wallace Stegner

was not getting into literature, or not finding responsive readers if it did. Like most of my fellows in the 1930s and 1940s, I was a sort of regionalist. People in provincial or unfashionable places are made to feel a sort of colonial complex, and one response to that feeling of inferiority is an indignant assertion of superiority.

But local puffery is not the way to achieve stature. You achieve stature only by being good enough to deserve it, by forcing even the indifferent or contemptuous to pay attention and to acknowledge that human relations and human emotions are of inexhaustible interest wherever they occur. My anguish is potentially as valid as that of Oedipus; my love may be as tragically romantic as Tristan's; my bond with the Earth may have as lasting a significance as Wordsworth's; my work, even if it is with cows, may have as much dignity as honest work anywhere. If a writer is good enough and takes his gift seriously enough, he ought to be able to see as far into the universe or into the human mind from a California promontory or a Montana mountain as Faulkner could from a hunting camp in Mississippi, or Mark Twain from a Mississippi River raft, or Melville from the deck of the Pequod.

Though it has had notable writers since Gold Rush days, the West has never until very recently developed the support structures of a literary life. Neither has it ever produced a group of writers homogeneous enough to be called a school. Why should it have been asked to? It is too various for that. How do you find a unity among the Pacific Northwest woods, the Great Basin deserts, the Rocky Mountains, the high plains, the Mormon plateau country, the Hispanic-and-Indian Southwest, and the conurbation of the California littoral? What kind of school can you discern in writers as various as Ivan Doig, Frank Waters, Scott Momaday, Ed Abbey, Tom McGuane, Larry McMurtry, Joan Didion and Maxine Hong Kingston?

California is a separate problem, hardly a part of the West at all. As one anthology recently put it, it is west of the West. But there are a few common characteristics in Western writing and Western life. For one thing, the whole West, including California, is arid country, and aridity enforces space, which in turn enforces mobility. In an oasis civilization, especially one that has been periodically raided for its extractive resources, you don't find the degree of settled community life that you would find in New England, the South, or the Middle West. Space does something to the vision: It makes the country itself, for lack of human coagulations and illusions of human importance, into something formidable and ever-present, and it tends to make humans as migratory as antelope. Their—our—literature reflects that necessity. Look at any novel or book that strikes you as somehow Western in its feel—"Roughing It," "The Grapes of Wrath," "The Big Sky," "The Big Rock Candy Mountain," "On the Road," "The Way to Rainy Mountain"—and you will likely find that it is a book not about place but about motion, not about fulfillment but about desire. Whether the formula is the upper-crust one—get in, get rich, get out—or the lower-crust one—rush in, go bust, move on—there is a common thread of seeking, generally unsatisfied.

The West doesn't need good writers. It has them. It could use some critics capable, by experience or intuition, of evaluating Western literature in the terms of Western life. So far, I can't think of a critic who has read Western books 'in the same spirit as its author writ.'

The country is a very prominent actor in much Western writing. It is big and impressive; it is often empty; it is unforgiving; it is fragile. Mobility puts us in touch with it directly, without too much human interference. That characteristic is as apparent in California writing as in the writing of any part of the West. A few years ago, David Rains Wallace, a gifted nature writer, wrote the text for a book called "The Wilder Shore," with photographs by Morley Baer. The whole burden of that text is how important the physical landscape is in the work of almost all California writers: Jack London, Frank Norris, Steinbeck, Jeffers, Mary Austin, Joan Didion. That single fact of our preoccupation with landscape is enough to make us unintelligible or beneath notice to critical opinion schooled in one or anther variety of abstract expressionism. Try to write "The Big Sky" about New Jersey.

So Western literature differs from much other American literature in the fact that so much of it happens outdoors. It also differs in that the influence of Europe's ideas, Europe's fashions, Europe's history is much fainter. Whether the writer of a Western book comes from Denver or Palm Springs, Missoula or Santa Fe, San Francisco or Los Angeles or Salt Lake City, his book will probably be remote, in spirit as well as in miles, from Europe. Long ago, Emerson declared that we have listened too long to the courtly voice of Europe. Out West, his warning has finally been taken. That too makes most books true to Western experience and the Western mind-set more or less opaque to critics whose training has come undiluted from across the Atlantic.

Western literature, especially that written in the inland West, is closer to the outdoors and big space, closer to the aggressive American Dream, closer too to the native inhabitants of the continent, who survive in greater numbers, and with more societal and cultural integrity, west of the hundredth meridian. Descendants of Pocahontas, or King Philip, or Billy Bowlegs, or Tecumseh, would speak to us now from a long, muted, defeated distance; but Scott Momaday, James Welch, Leslie Marmon Silko, Louise Erdrich, and other Western Indians speak from the present, from the very battlefields of cultures.

And there are other voices in Western literature that do not speak with authority to the East because they stir no recent memories and open no recent wounds.

Nearly 130 years ago, William Gilpin, the first territorial governor of Colorado, made a Fourth of July speech to the Fenian Society on the bank of Cherry Creek, where Denver now stands. Most of his speech was an egregious and misleading boosting of Western opportunities, but one thing he said was prophetic. "Asia," he said, "is found, and has become our neighbor." Fifty years or so ago, the historian Garrett Mattingly remarked to Bernard DeVoto that all American history is history in transition from an Atlantic to a Pacific phase. If they were alive today, both Gilpin and Mattingly could congratulate themselves as prophets. In the last generation or two, even our wars have gone Asian, along with much of our trade, some of our religious searchings and a lot of our apprehension.

Since the West leans toward the Pacific Basin, writers west of the Continental Divide, when they are engaging the universe instead of the local scene, inevitably reflect a different—I was about to say, orientation: a different history, a different emphasis and expectation, a different ethnic mix, a different culture.

It has been hard for the rest of the country to realize that the West incorporates not only cowboy and Indian fantasies but also the Hispanic Southwest, whose beginnings antedate Plymouth Rock by 80 years. The Grand Canyon was discovered by whites before the Mississippi was. And the Far East has been coming east to meet us and fuse with us for a long time now. Maxine Hong Kingston's "TripMaster Monkey" is not conceivable as a book written in any place but San Francisco. In his cockeyed 1960s way, Wittman Ah Sing, a fifth-generation Chinese American, is as American a character as Huckleberry Finn, and he could have happened only where he happened.

New regions do grow up and acquire their mature voices, and we should never be shamefaced about writing from our own base. I am not talking about method. A lot of experimentation goes on in the matter of method, and in the end we find and use what we like and what we can handle and what fits our material. It is that material, the depth and breadth of our understanding of whatever piece of human trouble is under our microscope, that really matters, and it may take a generation or two to train readers for that.

The only life we know well, the one on which we are the ultimate authority, is our own. The only experience to which we can bear witness is that which we have personally endured or observed at close range. That is why Ken Kesey's advice in a recent New York Times Magazine article, "Write what you don't know," strikes me as balderdash. That is the way to produce unknowing and unfeeling books, the way to send with a dead key, the way to convince ourselves and perhaps others that antic motions in a void, a meaningless mugging and hoofing, are what literature is supposed to be. I think, on the contrary, that at its best, it is a bolt of lightning from me to you, a flash of recognition and feeling within the context of a shared culture.

The West doesn't need good writers. It has them. It could use a little more confidence in itself, and one way for that to come about is for it to breed up some critics capable, by experience or intuition, of evaluating Western literature in the terms of Western life. So far, I can't think of a critic who has read Western books "in the same spirit as its author writ," and judged them according to their intentions.

Such critics will come. I can remember when every book by William Faulkner, including all five of his greatest, was greeted with incredulous laughter and ribald contempt by the smart reviewers of the New Yorker. As Faulkner himself might have said, they mought of kilt him but they didn't whup him. All it took to establish Faulkner's eminence was the books themselves, some applause from abroad, a little time for his peculiar variety of genius to sink in, and one perceptive and authoritative critic, Malcolm Cowley.

While we await the day, we can settle back and enjoy the books that Western writers are bringing us.

On April 27, novelist Wallace Stegner received the lifetime achievement award of PEN USA Center West. The remarks above were his acceptance speech.

Stegner: Am West

p.5 "indulgce q'te - personal Testamt
5 - defin'g . West (Wh: Am W @ Missouri R., p. 4)
6 - missed becom'g a Canadian y " a s of rain
26 - y inadq'te rainfall
8 - dry core of states
- aridity alone
10 - water rts: prior appropriation
12 - only drainage divide (political)?
17 - aridity & W'n character
18 - Oregon Trl emigrants
19 - . border of strangeness
22 - hungering for . . rich & stable social order?
24 - W'n towns!
- q'te, 24-5 on towns?
27 - engineer'g aridity out of existence: ch. closing quote
Striking . Rock, 31 -
32 - limits of . desirable
33 - instead of adapting . . .
36 - water engineer'g "original sin"
38 . fed'l presence
43 - reckless moment: pub lands part of geog'y of hope
44 - fed bureaus nec'y: Bur Rec s'thing else
~~45~~ - q'tes?
48 - use w/o impairmt: next, on Virgin R.?
49 - 4 "river" bks
50 - Glen Canyon: quote
55 - hydlc soc & deserts
60 - no longer . . . geog of hope
- quote "yearn"?

encyclopedi/y us
So What? So, I Hill . . .
S. hungry for culture;
I us " " learning

Bu Rec: turn it ev'y way but loose

A too late . cowboy myth, &

Stegner, Am West - Variations

65 - Wn culture & character exist to make-believe

68 - N Mexico adap'n

69 - W as melt'g pot — delicious pot: L'An laurent

70 - Wn cities distcve in settings — H James: chewed t...

71 - Crevecoeur

75 - "Wn" aggressive energy

77 - · Vn

78 - + writers than cowboys: quote

80 - cowboy stereotype: space as presv'n

81 - Spy ch'hood

- tastes, attitudes & skills tie W ners to: myth

85-6 · Missoulas & Corvallises

Lkg West, LAT

- plots bog dn, but you kno wha charcr is, physcly
- "intelcly snowed-in" quality

Sense of Motion -

- it gd enough: quote
- appen for Tripmaster Monkey