Wallace Stegner

1909-



Wallace Stegner in Rome, about 1960

Novelists have few of the usual excuses for writing their autobiographies. They are not like politicians and generals. Though they may be just as intent upon leaving their mark on the world, they have no obligation to history and no lifetime of top-secret actions to reveal. At least in their productive years, writers can report only days spent tapping typewriter keys while staring at a blank wall. They live, it is said, in their imagination.

Moreover, uneventful as their lives usually are, they publish those lives, piecemeal and in disguised form, all the time. It is possible to get from their writings a good idea of what their experience has been and how they have responded to it. They use up their autobiographical capital in fictions.

For fiction is not made out of nothing, the imagination does not work in a vacuum, you can imagine the unknown only in terms of the known. Fictional people, places, situations, and actions derive mainly from people, places, situations, and actions that the writer has encountered in his life. Sometimes the raw materials are transferred to the page so unaltered that they amount to public confession or exhibitionism. More often they are added to, subtracted from, combined, turned upside down or inside out, to satisfy fictional imperatives. But even in

their tailored form, parts of them may be recognizable. Hence the common error of readers who read novels as if every one were a *roman à clef* or a veiled autobiography, and who hear the voice of any narrator or "I" in the story as if it were the voice of the author.

It infuriates novelists to be read that way, for they are not historians or biographers or autobiographers, recorders of the actual. They are renderers of the possible, generalizers from reality or commentators upon it, and their role is not that of spokesman or confessor but that of ventriloquist.

That is rudimentary, but it is not always understood. The fact is, the reality from which fiction is made is plastic, not rigid. The art of fiction, Henry James assured us, "helplessly depends" on the air of plausibility that the writer maintains; and the air of plausibility can be achieved only by the use of considerable brute detail, the sort of detail that the writer can know only through his own experience, though he may apply it anywhere he sees fit.

So any fiction, even the most fantastic, contains elements of the author's autobiography, and having been used in this way, that autobiographical material is, so to speak, used up. It requires an effort, and perhaps an unnecessary one, to use it again. Ultimately, if a novelist does write his autobiography, it will be useful mainly as a key to how one artist has tried to transmute life into art.

Intention has little to do with it. Commit experience so as to have something to write about? You might as well try to fall in love to order. Fiction is as mysterious and as serendipitous as life itself: we make what we can out of the accidents, shipwrecks, affections, triumphs, frustrations, and consolations that life leads us into. The indispensable quality that a novelist must have is some perspective on where he has been carried, and a feeling for the mystery and wonder of what happens in any human life. Few of us can be what James said we ought to be—people upon whom nothing is lost. But we had better be people upon whom *something* is *not* lost. Out of the different things that are not lost upon them, different writers make their different books.

I have been writing fiction, and hence fragments of autobiography, for a long time. My first short story was published in 1928, my first novel in 1937. Many of my books and stories, though not those first ones, utilize scenes, episodes, and characters encountered during my years in Saskatchewan, Montana, Utah, Nevada, Iowa, Wisconsin, Massachusetts, Vermont, and California, and during travels that by now have taken me to many parts of the world. My filter has caught lint from many places, and sometimes I have dyed or processed the lint, so that now I am almost as uncertain as any outsider would be about what in my stories is fictional and what historical.

At least, in undertaking this retrospective, I do not have to change the habits that writing has imposed on me for more than fifty years. I can sit with my fingers on the familiar keys of the same old manual Royal, and with my eyes on a blank wall remember, or perhaps invent, how I came here.

It was not a route that could have been predicted, except by the general rule, valid until recently, that most American children have more opportunities than their parents had. I was no Rockefeller or Adams or Kennedy, destined by wealth, family tradition, and cultural accrual to play any significant part in the world. My parents had nothing to give me but their genes.

On my father's side I never had a family—in fact, I was past thirty years old before I ever met anyone with my surname. My father came from the little farming town of Anawan, Illinois, near Rock Island. He had brothers and sisters, but I never knew how many they were, or what they did for a living, or even their names. I never knew the first name of my grandfather, or of my grandmother either, though she lived with us for a while in her senile old age and impressed upon us all the concept of family as burden. That was probably the way it had always seemed to my father, for he left home at fourteen or fifteen, and never returned, and never stopped moving. His schooling stopped with the eighth grade.

My mother's stopped even earlier, with the sixth. She was twelve years old when her tubercular mother died, leaving her to take care of her father's house and bring up her younger sister and two brothers. Born Hilda Emelia Paulson, she grew up on a farm near Lake Mills, Iowa, a Norwegian enclave where most children, including herself, didn't learn English until they started to school. I know more about her family than about my father's because I too was born on Chris Paulson's farm, on February 18, 1909, and because with my mother and brother I spent the winter of 1913–14 at the Paulson house in the town of Lake Mills, and because I visited there in the thirties when I was a graduate student at the University of Iowa, and because for many years I kept in touch with my aunt Mina and her children, the only relatives I ever really knew.

I owe Chris Paulson for several things, among them a long clock (he lived past ninety), a full head of hair that has lasted, and perhaps—this is guesswork—a literary gene. Two of his grandsons became writers: I for one, and for another my cousin Tom

Heggen, Mina's son, the author of *Mister Roberts,* whose career was cut calamitously short at twenty-nine. I owe him also for my mother, who was a saint.

Perhaps she learned her unselfishness and humility and concern for others by doing the work he loaded onto her, for in his Old Country way he worked her like a mule, indoors and out. She gave up her girlhood to the care of the family, sewing their clothes, doing the washing and cooking, working at harvesttime in the fields. She baked bread, and at Christmastime all the Norwegian delicacies, *fattigmand* and *lefse* and the rest. She prepared the *lutefisk* without which no Norwegian holiday is legitimate. She canned fruits and vegetables and put up jams and jellies. At hog-slaughtering time she spent hot days frying and putting down in crocks of their own lard the sausage patties that would last all winter. She made headcheese. She swallowed her gorge and caught the blood for the blood pudding her father relished.

He made her the maid of all work on a farm that still had much of the subsistence character of his family's farm in Ulvik, Norway. But one thing he did not succeed in making her: a good Lutheran of the inflexible immigrant kind. She had a mind of her own, and some unrealized dreams, and when he married a girl almost as young as herself—one of her friends, actually—she escaped to North Dakota to keep house for an uncle. There she met, and fell in love with, and married, with the disapproval of her family, George Henry Stegner, a man of a kind she had never before known—worldly, amusing, full of ballads and poetry and folklore and stories of adventure, a man who had lived dangerously in the woods and on the railroads, who had played baseball in the Three Eye League, and who when she married him was running a blind pig.

Here I must be careful. I *think* he was running a blind pig, but that may be a detail I invented when I wrote *The Big Rock Candy Mountain,* which is their life story, or a version of it. Their life before I was born I had to make up out of overheard scraps of talk remembered years later, after both were dead. I was dealing in plausibilities, not hard facts.

I don't really know about their years in North Dakota, where my brother, Cecil, was born in 1907. I don't know why my mother came back to her father's farm to have me, two years later, or why, after another year or two in Dakota and a couple in and around Seattle, my father disappeared from our lives. All I know is that Cece and I were put in a Seattle orphanage so that my mother could work, and that when she found out how miserable we were she took us out and retreated to the only safety she knew, Lake



Wallace with his brother, Cecil, Seattle, 1913: "I am the one too young to drive."

Mills. Home, Robert Frost has said, is where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in.

My memories of that time provide only random images. I remember too well that Seattle orphanage. I remember an autumn day in Lake Mills when I sat among colored oak leaves in the backyard and plastered the side of a shed with ground cherries, while I sang to myself a song my mother had taught me about Whistling Rufus, the One-Man Band. It was a song I sang for anyone who would listen, my first accomplishment. It brought exclamations of praise from my stepgrandmother and the neighbor women who drank coffee together in the kitchen. It made my mother proud. I was held to be a prodigy. And I could read a little, or thought I could. Jealous of Cece, who had started school, I badgered my mother to be allowed to go too.

Whistling Rufus is stuck in my mind yet, along with the smells of coffee and drying laundry and ironing, the feel of cool dusk under the clotheshorse where I crawled to listen to the women talk, the sound of their incomprehensible Norwegian, and the little sighs they made, the indrawn breath of pity and sorrow over the sadnesses of the world. But nothing my memory clings to tells me what was going on

between my mother and father. Whatever *The Big Rock Candy Mountain* says about that separation I invented.

The next thing my memory brings back is the waiting room in the railroad station at Weyburn, Saskatchewan, where I was impressed by the portraits of stern men in red coats who stared down from the walls. That, as nearly as I can tell, was June 1914, and we were on our way to rejoin the father I had not seen for a couple of years. Maybe the breach in their marriage was now healed; maybe he had only been out scouting around for the golden opportunity he was always looking for. Now it seemed he had found it, and perhaps used it as the basis for a reconciliation, as I guessed in the novel. He was in the valley of the Frenchman River in Saskatchewan, through which something called the CPR was running something called a branch line. It would open up a whole new tract of country. We would be in on the ground floor, and would make a pile.

Eastend, Saskatchewan, was not yet a town, but only a construction camp on the railroad grade, when my mother, brother, and I arrived by stage from Gull Lake. For a while we lived in a derailed dining car next to Mrs. Torkelson's boardinghouse for construction workers. Later we rented a shack on Main Street. Still later—1916 as I remember it, but 1917 according to the Eastend Arts Council, which recently bought it as a literary landmark—my father built a four-gabled, two-story house in the west end of town, on a bend in the river.

We lived in Eastend from 1914 to 1920. We did not make a pile, though my father tried everything from poker—and he was a good poker player—to potatoes and wheat. In 1915 he homesteaded a quarter section and preempted another on the Montana line, fifty miles from town, and set out to feed the warring armies of Europe. Two good crops and three burnouts later, he turned to rum-running, first from Montana into Saskatchewan when Saskatchewan was dry, and then from Canada into the United States when the laws reversed themselves.

Eastend was a failure place, ultimately. But it held our atomic family together for six years, it gave my mother the longest period of stability, with neighbors and friends and a house of her own, that she had known in her laborious and selfless life, and it imprinted me, indelibly, with the perceptions, images, memories, behavior codes, and attitudes that have controlled my mind and life and writing ever since.

Only thirty-five years from the wild frontier of buffalo, grizzlies, and the Indian wars, and only seven from the open-range cattle frontier that had been all but wiped out in the winter of 1906–7, it was a marvelous place to be a boy in, as I tried to indicate much later in the partly historical, partly fictional, partly reminiscent *Wolf Willow*.

The freedom we were allowed astonishes me in retrospect. In winter we trapped the river for muskrat, weasel, and mink. When the ice was good we could skate for a mile between rapids, coming back downwind, using our spread mackinaws for sails, to warm ourselves by great fires built on the ice. In spring and fall we spent all our odd hours in the river, or, armed to the teeth, prowled the river brush and the aspen coulees of the Cypress Hills looking for something to shoot. It was only by the grace of God that we didn't kill each other, for nobody supervised us, and none of the gang I ran with was more than twelve years old, and most of us only eight or nine. The only firearms accident that I recall happened to me. Learning to shoot on the river bank behind our house, I set the muzzle of my .22 down on my toe to let a dray pass, and shot myself through the big toe and blew the sole off my shoe. Proud wounds.

From 1915 on we spent the two months of summer out on the homestead, where my brother and I were charged with controlling the swarms of gophers—Richardson's ground squirrels—that found our wheat fields a land of milk and honey. While shooting, trapping, drowning out, snaring, and poisoning the gophers, we also did unforgivable damage to the prairie dogs, black-footed ferrets, badgers, and other members of the wild community on that prairie, and we helped prepare a future dust bowl by plowing up buffalo grass that should never have been plowed, and that had to be restored to grass, at great provincial expense, in the 1930s.

But while it lasted it was isolated, lonely, wild, and free as the life of hawks. My adult contrition for all the killing we did made an environmentalist of me later, but it has always been mixed with nostalgia for the interminable days of Canadian summer, for the incomparable intimacy with the earth, for the ferrets and burrowing owls and magpies and coyote pups that we captured and tamed, or rather kept prisoner, and for the sunstruck afternoons when we lay in the sleeping porch listening to the lonesome wind in the screens, and dreamed of buying all the marvels pictured in the Sears, Roebuck catalog. The section of *The Big Rock Candy Mountain* that deals with the homestead is as unadulterated autobiography as I have ever written, nearly total recall from a time of savage innocence.

Each September we made the long, racking trip back to town, fifty nearly roadless miles across burnouts and coulees under a sky like a bowl of brass.

If the homestead struck me as perfect freedom, the almost-equivalent freedom of town felt like sanctuary. The benches of the hills shut us in, winter forced us into a community, school and friends replaced isolation.

Though it trained us by rote and disciplined us like sled dogs, I have warm memories of that school. It ran from eight to four, six days a week, ten months of the year, a schedule that would feel like a life sentence to modern children. But I liked it. It let me shine. It was just what I had yearned for at the age of four when I learned Whistling Rufus to impress my mother and stepgrandmother and the women in the kitchen.

From my first day in the first classroom of the town—in the loft over Bill Anderson's pool hall—until I left Eastend at the age of eleven, bearing a letter from the principal to whom it might concern, saying that I was ready for the eighth grade, school opened up vistas that the purely sensuous life of the homestead would never have shown me. Geography told me about a far wider world, some of which I had seen but nearly forgotten. History told me stories that later, back in the United States, I would have trouble squaring with American versions of the same events. Stories and poems, of which my head was full, had the effect on me of the night winds on the homestead that periodically blew things around and tipped over the cages and let my imprisoned ferrets and owls and coyote pups loose.

We gave up on Saskatchewan in 1920—abandoned the homestead, sold the house in town, delivered our horses to a river-bottom rancher who would keep them for half the increase, and moved out, as many other families were doing. Our destination was Great Falls, Montana, an awesome step upward and outward. At eleven, I had no memory of ever having seen a paved street, a lawn, a flush toilet, a house with a street number. My father had once seen an airplane close up, and he swore it was as solid as a democrat wagon, though even I knew that couldn't be true, else how could it get up in the air?

That and many other things were before us to be learned about, but I was not full of anticipation as we pulled up the dugway to the South Bench. I was desolate at leaving my friends, my town, my life. In the back seat I pulled a blanket over my head so that the others would not see my tears.

Departure was like being born when you didn't want to be. The world was all before me, but I wanted the known safety of the womb. Great Falls, though it taught me things almost faster than I could take them in, was never a comfortable place. It was a place of humiliations, a city of strangers where I was a freak, a runt in funny Canadian clothes thrust into the eighth grade among pupils three years older. Great Falls was something I survived.

My brother, by contrast, made himself instantly at home, went out for football and got his nose broken the first afternoon. Proud wounds. He would acquire them until he died, a parable of our family's ill luck and fecklessness, at twenty-three. As for me, I dug in like a terrified gopher pup, suffered panicky personality changes, reverted to baby talk that infuriated my father and made even my mother impatient, and, in my desperation, not for the last time, focussed my whole life on the school that was both my torment and my only chance.

By the time we took off again the next summer, down through the Little Belt Mountains and the Smith River Valley and Yellowstone on our way to Salt Lake City, I was not desolated as I had been when we left Eastend. Already I had hardened myself for migratoriness. I was even eager for it. I felt safer in our Hudson Supersix, with only the family around and no other contact than the people who waved at us as we met on dusty roads, than I had in the difficult society of Great Falls. The road felt both free and friendly.

But I was prepared for more rootlessness than I encountered. As it turned out, we lived in Salt Lake, with brief temporary interruptions, for the next seventeen years; and though my parents, because of my father's erratic and sometimes furtive businesses, never became part of the city, but lived in it like mice in its walls, Cece and I found an unexpected home there.

In the history of any mind there are periods of extravagant growth, times of challenge and response such as Arnold Toynbee found in the history of civilizations. These are usually followed by periods of quiescence and consolidation. By flurries of activity we work ourselves into comfortable ruts out of which we are flushed by new challenges.

My times of growth were always associated with moves, either physical or psychological. I had one in Great Falls but never stayed long enough to get comfortable there. I had at least three in Salt Lake: one soon after we arrived, when I found the Carnegie Public Library and devoured it, a book a day; when I found that I knew enough ropes from Great Falls to let me establish myself quickly in South Junior High School; when I discovered the Mormon institution of Mutual (for Mutual Improvement Association, or MIA), which in every ward in Zion, on Tuesday nights, brought people together in Boy and Girl Scout meetings, basketball leagues, and dances, and

which welcomed even such gentile waifs as my brother and me.

Though my status was never more dignified than that of a sort of mascot, because I stayed a runt until my last year in high school, when I suddenly grew six inches, it was status of a sort. Cece played football and baseball, and his shine reflected on me. And some of my teachers made a pet of me, something I found it possible to bear. I was fully a part of East High School and the city, contented with myself and my place in my world, when I graduated in 1925. Then came college—the University of Utah—a streetcar college then of barely three thousand students, but awesome to me, since my parents, who had never even attended high school, had no advice to give me. I was already out beyond them in that respect, and on my own.

I started to college scared to death. The straight-A average that my terror drove me to deteriorated rapidly to straight B when as a sophomore I discovered girls, fraternities, beer, and sports, and the frantic pace of intellectual awakening subsided into a sort of slumber, the happiest slumber of my life, for the remaining undergraduate years. I could shine in some kinds of subjects without much effort. Moreover, besides taking courses, I was working a forty-hour week at a rug and linoleum store for the last three years, playing on the tennis team, editing the literary magazine, and in odd hours reading papers for a couple of my English professors. I told myself that the more I gave myself to do, the more I could do; and in choosing to do frivolous or irrelevant or unimportant things, I wasted the best opportunity of my life. I liked my rut, and rolled in it, when I should have been improving my mind.



"Sitting outside our cottage on the Fish Lake Plateau in Utah," about 1927

That growing-up time, many years later, I put into the novel *Recapitulation,* which started out as a novel about growing up in the twenties and turned into a novel about *myself* growing up in the twenties, a sort of trailer to *The Big Rock Candy Mountain.* When I began summoning up those memories, expecting them to be somber and unhappy because of my relations with my father and my resentment of the life into which he had led my mother, I found that instead they came up with a glow on them. Family trouble, girl trouble, my brother's early death—none of that could dampen the happiness of those years of my youth, when, wanting nothing so much as to be accepted and to belong, I finally did belong.

It came back over me in a flood—weekends and summer vacations in the high, keen air of our cabin down in the high plateaus, camping trips with friends into the Wasatch or the Uintas, expeditions to Grand Canyon and Zion and Bryce and the slickrock country, moons that swam up over the Wasatch like bubbles in honey, the ripe, exciting smell of the salt beaches at Saltair, on Great Salt Lake, the coolness of the canyon breeze on summer nights, the smell of damp lawns, the singing of mockingbirds down in the gully. Writing that novel, in my seventies, I discovered that my youth had not been the tense, unhappy time I had often thought it, but something rich and precious. I might have gone on in that rut for a long time, a lifetime.

Then, when I graduated from the university with no larger plans than to go on with my job and perhaps eventually work up to manager or part-owner, some of my professors put their paddles into me and stirred up my sediments. They said I had to go on to graduate school, at least for an M.A. I had won a little newspaper contest with a short story. I was literary. I should shoot higher than selling linoleum. It was not my own doing. Two roads diverged in a wood, and I, I took the one I was pushed into. I climbed on a bus in September 1930 and went off to Iowa City to take up the teaching

assistantship they had arranged for me. I was barely twenty-one, having taken five years to finish college because I kept dropping out to work. I had arrived at man's estate when the estate had all gone in the sheriff's sales of the Depression. I had no idea what I was getting into. I soon found out.

Routed out of my rut, I was surly about the Iowa climate and its dreary rains. I disliked the Iowa landscape, where rolling hills cut off the horizon too close. But I could make no such complaints about the intellectual landscape. That widened out by the day, exposing constantly new possibilities. Every class, even the freshman classes I taught, opened my eyes to things I should have known but didn't. It was like being on the homestead on a hot morning and watching the Bear Paw Mountains fifty miles to the south lift into view on the heat waves. Too stimulated to be lonesome except at mail time, I read, thought, and wrote sixteen hours a day. And while I was hopelessly chasing other students whom I saw as better prepared, better disciplined, and with sharper minds, the world fell in.

First, the Salt Lake bank in which I had my savings folded. Then I awoke one morning to find every bank in Johnson County, Iowa, closed. We lived by loans and barter. Then shortly after Christmas I was called back to Salt Lake for the funeral of my brother, who had contracted pneumonia pushing some motorist out of the snow at Ecker Hill. That first reduction of our family made me realize how tight a cluster we were, knotted against respectable society, our own sole resource, our own prison. My father must have felt it in some way, too, for he broke his pattern and changed his life. Within a few months he had dragged my mother off to Reno, where he acquired a half-interest in a gambling casino. That was a step up; at least it was legal.

Graduate school, while taking a can opener to my mind, had also given me encouragement to write. In Norman Foerster's new School of Letters it was possible to write stories for an M.A. thesis. I did so, one of the first in history, and published a couple of them in little magazines. But when I completed work for the M.A. in the middle of my second year, I looked outside and saw the Depression so deep and black that it was frivolous to think of going out into it and making a living. It was safer in school, where I could live on the seven hundred dollars I made as a graduate assistant; and besides, my old friend inertia now had me in a rut headed toward the teaching profession. Without a real vocation for scholarship and with imperfect training (my own fault), I decided to go on for the Ph.D.

During my first two years in Iowa City my roommate at the old Quadrangle dormitory was Wilbur Schramm, one of the best friends of my life and a major influence on my life. Unlike me, he knew where he was going and had been preparing for his future (though he ended up somewhere else, not a literary figure but the father of communications research). Unlike me, he had not goofed off during his undergraduate years at Marietta College and his one year of graduate study at Harvard. He would not have been in Iowa at all except for his stammer, and his hope that it could be cured in the clinic of Lee Travis of the psychology department. Most of his treatment (which never worked) consisted of changing his handedness. He wore a brace on his right hand and did everything with his left. In the end, he could beat me at Ping-Pong with either hand.

In holiday periods we hitchhiked around the Middle West together, visited my grandfather and my aunt Mina, paid a visit of homage to the Beowulf class of Franz Kleber at the University of Minnesota, went to a ball game or two at Wrigley Field in Chicago, the farthest east I had ever been.

Wilbur found me an interesting barbarian, and without prejudice, and with real liking, tried to open my upstairs windows. But our friendship was interrupted when I went home in June to find that (luckily, as it turned out) my two-year absence had cost me my girl, and that my mother's cancer, operated on four years before, had recurred. My parents were then living in Los Angeles. Rather than go back as far as Iowa, I transferred to Berkeley, where I roomed with an old friend from Salt Lake, Milton Cowan, an ex–Mormon missionary who was taking a Ph.D. in German and roared passages from the Niebelungenlied in his sleep.

That year in Berkeley at the very bottom of the Depression was a strange interlude, an underwater period. By the time it ended, my mother was clearly dying. The beginning of the summer we spent at our cabin on Fish Lake, which she loved; but when it became clear that she needed to be close to medical care, we moved to Salt Lake, still our little atomic particle of a family, now three. In November my mother died in a rented apartment, her husband gone off on one of his trips, nobody there but a nurse and me.

That was not surprising. The script demanded it. She had been alone, except for her children and the wilful husband to whom she was bound, ever since we left Eastend in the summer of 1920. For the last fourteen years she had lived behind walls, without friends, unable to make too many gestures even to neighbors, seeing no women except the women of the

subworlds where my father operated—picture-brides from Greece, the wives of bellhops and shoeshine-parlor operators, and the tarts and random women who accompanied his business associates. The next to last words she said were, "Which—way?" The last, at a time when I am sure she could no longer see me, were, "You're a good—boy—Wallace."

By God, I was not, and am not, but if anything could make me what she thought I was, it would be the memory of herself.

Through the bleak fall and winter, without a job, without money, rooming with the father with whom I had never got along and whom by now I hated, I hung around Salt Lake. That time, with some modification of details, I eventually wrote as a short story, "The Blue-Winged Teal," which I later incorporated into *Recapitulation*. I was never lower in my life. Finally, in February, Milton Cowan and I drove back to Iowa City for the beginning of the second term, and in Iowa City I was reunited with Wilbur Schramm, now teaching there. He was true to his character. Within a couple of weeks he had found me a fill-in job at Augustana College, a Lutheran school in Rock Island, Illinois, close to where my father was born. And he had introduced me to the girl that I would marry before the year was out. The job was artificial respiration; the introduction was a reentry into life.

At Augustana I lived in the theological seminary among people training to be Lutheran preachers, and on Thursday evenings, when my classes were over, I escaped to Iowa City for three-day weekends of reading for my Ph.D. exams and courting Mary Page. I intended to stay on another year at Augustana, but in May the Fundamentalists threw out the Evangelicals who had hired me, and demanded to know if I subscribed to the Apostles' Creed, the Augsburg Confession, and the principles of higher Christian education. Assuming that I did not, I managed to arrange an instructorship at Utah, among my friends. During the summer I took classes in Iowa City, and on September 1 I married Mary Page at her home in Dubuque and we drove west in my old Model A, known as Laura in honor of Petrarch.

My wife was the best thing that had happened to me since I first knew my mother. She was a musician, a reader, an eager and curious searcher of the world. She even gave me new eyes to see the West with, for she really saw what I took for granted. We drove west through the Badlands, the Black Hills, Yellowstone, and Jackson Hole, and arrived among my old companions in Salt Lake ready to make a life on seventeen hundred dollars a year.

Our years in Salt Lake began as one of those subsidence periods after turmoil. Ambition did not gnaw me. We had friends. We enjoyed our life. I did one job. Not until the spring of the second year did I have the slightest urge to write anything. Then I sat down one idle afternoon and wrote a story in three hours. About what? Saskatchewan, naturally—the homestead, the loneliness and savagery and poetry of the prairie. *Virginia Quarterly Review* bought it, and shortly *Story* bought another. Something in me began to wake up. Never having known any writers, I thought of them as distant in both time and space, perhaps as mythical as gryphons. Now my psyche began to hint to me that I could be one.

That fall, in the hours before my first class, I wrote a short novel called *Remembering Laughter*, elaborating on a story that Mary had told me about some of her remote Iowa relatives. In six weeks it was done, and I mailed it off to a novelette contest that Little, Brown and Company advertised. Then I all but forgot it, for Mary was pregnant, and we were preoccupied. A telegram awakened us at the end of January. We had won Little, Brown's twenty-five hundred dollar prize, more money then than it sounds like now. The novel would be published, and would also be a one-shot magazine serial.

We had a party, quite a party. At its end, Mary went into labor, and after a couple of hard days produced a son. My new family responsibilities and my new literary life began together. All of that, too, in my frugal way (I learned frugality by watching my mother make jelly out of the peelings of apples she had just made pies of) I eventually used. Fifty years later, with changes of personnel and location, I wrote that episode into *Crossing to Safety*.

Being now famous, I thought we should be promoted. The university, mired in the Depression, saw no way. In June 1937 we resigned from the University of Utah, intending to go to some exotic place and live by writing. But when we stopped in Dubuque Mary's mother cried, "Take that little injured *baby* to the Virgin Islands? Oh, you can't." She offered to look after him, lovingly, while we took a vacation somewhere and got the wanderlust out of our systems. So we went bicycling in France and England for three weeks and got cultured. Home again, nearly broke, we took a job at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. There I set out once again to prove that the more I tried to do, the more I could.

Many years later, writing of those Madison years in *Crossing to Safety*, I toned down the facts for fear readers would not believe them. In two years, besides collaborating on a textbook and writing a dozen essays and book reviews, I wrote four short stories, a

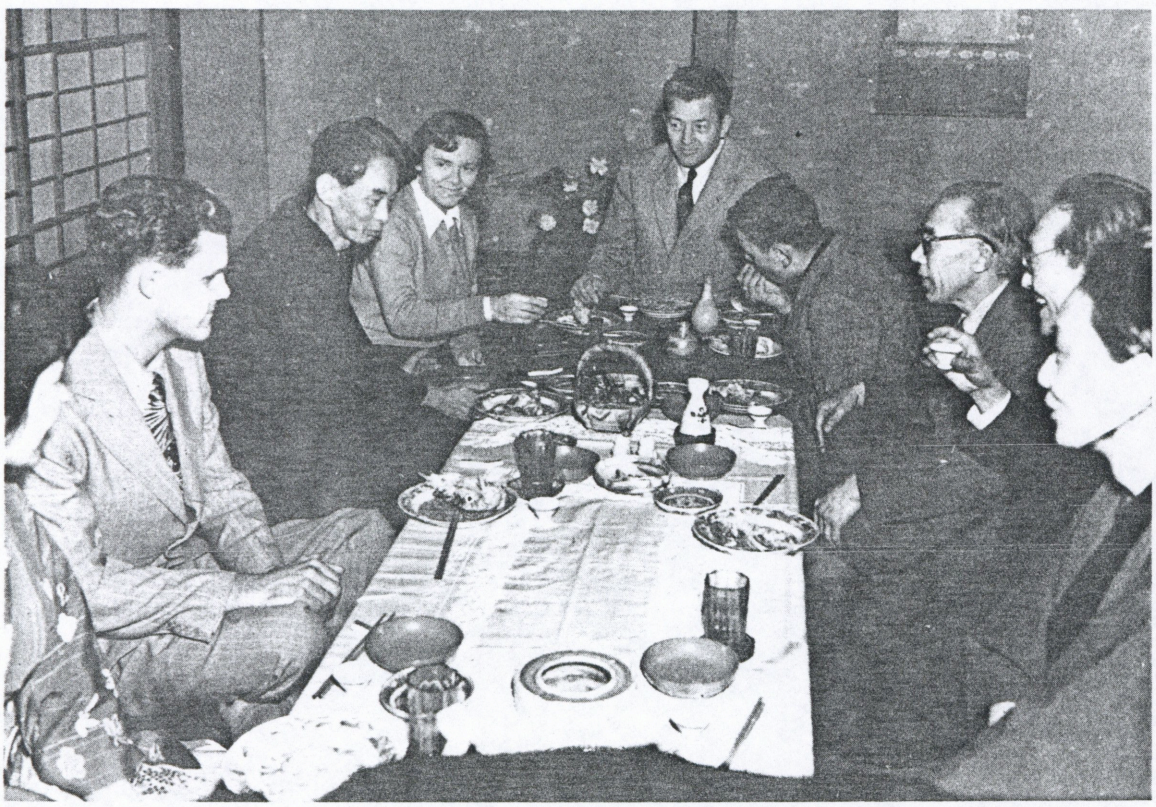
novelette called "One Last Wilderness" that killed *Scribner's Magazine*, a novel called *On a Darkling Plain*, another novel, called *Fire and Ice*, and the first few chapters of *The Big Rock Candy Mountain*. This while teaching four undergraduate classes.

I think I was simply blowing my pipes clear, getting ready for what I really wanted to write, which was the story of my orphaned and symbolic family. I worked on it at Yaddo in the summer of 1938, I worked at it off and on through 1939, and I had a good part of it done when my father made it imperative, and gave it its fated ending, by shooting himself to death in a fleabag Salt Lake hotel in the summer of 1940.

Wilbur Schramm brought me the word, interrupting a lecture I was giving for him in Iowa City. He had a gift for being there in my crises. And he had already pointed me the way to my future two years before, when he talked me onto the staff of the Bread Loaf Writers Conference.

As a graduate student I had met, at respectful distance, a few writers—Stephen Vincent Benét, Floyd Dell, the Irish poet A.E. At Yaddo, in the summer of 1938, I met some more, most of them as struggling as I was. But at Bread Loaf, after the Yaddo stint, I found myself pretending to be the colleague of people I had read and admired, even revered—*real* writers, echoing names. In its two furious weeks, Bread Loaf started me on another of my periods of accelerated growth. I could listen to, work with, walk with, talk with, drink with, play tennis with, sing bawdy songs with Robert Frost, Bernard DeVoto, Archibald MacLeish, Louis Untermeyer, Herbert Agar, Gorham Munson. I could share a class with Herschel Brickell, who edited the *O. Henry Memorial Award Prize Stories*, in which I hoped someday to fill a few pages. I could develop a warm friendship with Ted Morrison, who directed not only Bread Loaf but the composition section, English A, of the Harvard English department.

If I had gone to New York looking for an entry into the literary establishment I could not have done a quarter as well as I did in the intimate atmosphere of Bread Loaf. Publishers, editors, and agents came through the place in twos and tens, looking, it turned out, for just such "promising" young writers as I was,



"At a Japanese writer's party in Kamakura," 1951:
Stegner is seated at the far end of the table between his wife, Mary, and son, Page. Next to Mary is their host, Yasunari Kawabata, who later won the Nobel Prize.

and being on the staff, I met them on more equal terms. I was little but a pair of bulging eyes and a pair of pricked ears. I went back to Madison dazzled and inspired; and when Ted Morrison wrote asking me to come and teach at Harvard I could have ballooned there on my own expanded self-esteem.

What was better yet, we did not arrive at Harvard, and sneak into the Boston literary world, unknown and unfriended. The Morrisons, Frost, DeVoto, and several junior Bread Loaf regulars lived there and made us welcome. Challenged and galvanized, elevated beyond my confidence, I wrote hard on stories and on *The Big Rock Candy Mountain.* I met and learned from my betters, and we were well on the way to an altogether new sort of life when my father closed off the old unhappy one with his death.

But the past did not let me go. Even there at the hub of the universe, even in the summer atmosphere of Vermont, where we had bought an abandoned farm, I spent most of my time facing a blank wall, with my fingers on the keys of a typewriter. Finishing *The Big Rock Candy Mountain* was not easy, for I was writing close to the bone. For a year I was totally stuck, and got sidetracked onto a book, *Mormon Country,* celebrating the other place besides the Bread Loaf–Cambridge axis that had let me in. *Mormon Country* was published in 1942, just a little while before, holed up in Vermont and sawing wood to stay alive, I finally wrote the last pages of my family's history and closed the book. From first to last, through more than five years, it had been not a literary effort but an act of exorcism.

By the time *The Big Rock Candy Mountain* was published, in 1943, the war was sucking Harvard dry of students and of junior faculty. I myself, near the upper edge of draft age, with a high draft number and a birth-crippled child and an unwell wife, was in no hurry to enter the armed services, and not even Wilbur Schramm could talk me into joining the Office of War Information. I stayed on, teaching classes in the Army Special Training Program, until March 1944, when I accepted an offer from *Look* magazine to do a series of articles, leading to a book, on racial and religious minorities in the United States. It looked like a chance to say something important to an audience that needed it. The real problem was that I was not qualified for the job.

My youth had been pathologically apolitical. I had partly grown up in a foreign country, my parents had never voted in their lives, the Utah and Iowa campuses had been politically placid and removed. Only at Wisconsin, where we ran into the agitation over the Spanish Civil War and the debates on whether the United States would go fascist or communist, did I begin to get my eyes opened. I even attended a few Young Communist League meetings, and probably got my name on the attorney general's list, but I was not persuaded. The little novel *Fire and Ice* expressed my skepticism of the state of mind I found there.

Now I contracted to investigate and write up the festering sores of wartime democracy, the second-class citizenship of blacks, browns, and yellows, the vicious persecution of Jews, the prejudices against Catholics, who in turn had done and were doing some of that persecution. I was on the brink of another spasm of growth. My only qualification for the assignment was that I knew how it felt to be excluded.

The fifteen months I spent on *One Nation* were a complete break from my old academic routines. After I had established Mary and our son, Page, on Martha's Vineyard for the summer, I went with a *Look* photographer to record Jim Crow in North Carolina, where it was at its mildest. We documented the persecution of Jews by Father Coughlin's Christian Fronters in Mattapan and South Boston. We recorded the serene side of the Catholic establishment in Mary's hometown of Dubuque.

Then, with a special gas ration and no dependable tires, we drove west, with extended stops at Japanese internment camps and Indian reservations, and finally settled in Santa Barbara. From that base I covered Mexican and Filipino pickers' camps, San Francisco's Chinatown, and the Los Angeles *barrios* disputed among gangs of Mexican *pachucos.* I cannot say that those experiences made a man of me, but they cured me of seeing America from the monastic distance of the campus. Just incidentally, as if a bonus of green stamps, they gave me several short stories.

Field work ended early in 1945. For three months Mary and I lived in a single room in the Beekman Tower Hotel, the only hotel room we could find vacant in New York, while I finished writing the text and selecting the photographs. No sooner were we back in Santa Barbara than a call came from Stanford University, where our old Bread Loaf friend Edith Mirrielees had recently retired. They needed a successor. Good as Harvard had been to us, we hardly hesitated. I found that I wanted to be West. By mid-June, between V-E Day and the Bomb, we had arrived in Palo Alto, ready for the next stage of our lives.

Abruptly, the war ended. By September crowds of GI students were flooding back. Teaching had never been, and has not been since, the pure pleasure that it was in those years. Instead of green nineteen-

and twenty-year-olds, my classes were full of mature, experienced, highly motivated men and women with hard experiences, serious minds, and an urge to catch up lost time. There were many like my cousin Tom Heggen, who for several months had been sending me stories off his "bucket," the USS *Reluctant,* in the South Pacific. I had sold one of them to the *Atlantic* for him, and had got him a contract for a book from Houghton Mifflin, for which Mary and I were acting as West Coast editors. Now he came through town, we talked his book for a day, and he went home to Minneapolis and turned his random pieces into *Mister Roberts* in about three weeks. There was that kind of energy abroad.

In my first writing class another navy lieutenant, still in grays, handed in a story called "Rest Camp on Maui." We sold it to *Harper's,* and it won second prize in that year's O. Henry Memorial Awards and started Bud Burdick on the short, hot career that came to some kind of climax in *The Ugly American.*

Burdick was only the most energetic and noticeable of a dozen. It was impossible not to give encouragement and support to students of that caliber. The first year I managed only some small prizes, but in 1946 Richard Foster Jones, the chairman of the English department, introduced me to his brother E. H. Jones, a man with literary tastes and Texas oil wells. Ned Jones, with assistance from his loyal family, funded what became the Stanford Writing Program.

Setting it up, I put into it fellowships, prizes, publication in annual collections, an M.A. program for those who needed a teaching certificate, and a fund for literary visitors, all this based upon a ladder of courses taught by writers. There was some Iowa, some Bread Loaf, and some Harvard in the program, and, until we abolished them because they caused dissension and hard feelings, prizes based on the Hopwood Awards at Michigan. Three thousand miles from literary headquarters, we aimed to make a headquarters of our own.

In its forty-two years, the program has gone through many changes of direction and staff and curriculum, but it continues to attract and train young writers. The roll of ex-students is too long to call, but to run down even a selective list is to encounter distinguished names: Wendell Berry, Edward Abbey, Robert Stone, Larry McMurtry, Tillie Olson, Ernest Gaines, Max Apple, Philip Levine, Scott Momaday, Tom McGuane, James Houston, Raymond Carver, Ken Kesey, Harriet Doerr, Scott Turow, many more. Many, like Hughes Rudd, who became a television personality, and Don Moser, who edits *Smithsonian Magazine,* have been diverted from the literary line into related fields. Scores are teaching and writing, part of the broad base that always underlies the noticeable reputations.

We did make a literary center and create a literary tradition at Stanford, despite its distance from New York and its suburban remove from San Francisco. I benefited as much as any. When we moved back West, I knew that literary careers cut off from New York tended to wither. But we have never felt isolated, because we could bring people in, and did—Katherine Anne Porter, Walter Van Tilburg Clark, Hortense Calisher, May Sarton, Elizabeth Bowen, C. P. Snow, Frank O'Connor, Malcolm Cowley, William Styron, Saul Bellow, and from the old Bread Loaf clan Robert Frost, Bernard DeVoto, Ted Morrison, Catherine Drinker Bowen, John Ciardi. They enriched our personal lives while they were doing for the young and unaffiliated what Bread Loaf had done for me in the summer of 1938.

I went to Stanford, as I had gone to Harvard, on a part-time basis, hoping to save some time for writing. It was not easy, and I made it no easier by involving Mary and myself as West Coast editors for Houghton Mifflin. Eventually I learned to concentrate my teaching into two quarters and get out of town for the other two. Usually we spent the off time in Vermont, sometimes we went farther afield.

In 1950–51 we took a seven-month trip around the world for the Rockefeller Foundation. In 1954 we spent six months in Denmark. In 1955 I was a fellow at the Center for Advanced Studies in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford, but was gone for a month in Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and Syria working on the history of the Arabian-American Oil Company, ARAMCO. The years 1959–60 we spent on a sabbatical-Guggenheim, first in London, then in Florence, then for six months at the American Academy in Rome. In 1963 we spent four months as a Distinguished Visitor in the Fulbright program in Greece, and in 1967 we made a lecture tour for the State Department in England, West Germany, Lebanon, Cyprus, and Iran. We taught for three months each at Stanford's overseas campuses at Semmering, in Austria, and Cliveden House, in England.

The boundaries of the world that I was dragged out into from Eastend in 1920 had widened beyond belief, beginning with the 1950 trip. Six weeks in England, Germany, France, Italy, and Egypt gave us a look at the wreckage of the war. That was followed by five months, as strenuous as if I had been an American politician running hard for office, in India, Thailand, the Philippines, and Japan. Sometimes I lectured five or six times a day. We spent a week at



Piazza del Campo, Siena, 1979

Rabindranath Tagore's ashram at Santiniketan, in Bengal; we talked to writers in Bombay, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Mysore, Delhi, Calcutta, Bangkok, Manila, Tokyo. I wrote articles for the *Reporter* and other magazines, and I got (more green stamps) several short stories out of the trip. For two years after our return I was involved in a program to introduce Asian writers to American readers.

But no day on that and other journeys struck me so forcibly as the one in 1963 when I talked to a meeting of the Association of Greek Writers. I told them about growing up without an extended family or a definable culture in a place with no history, about a childhood in which everything was to be made anew. My intention was to express my embarrassment at being in a position where it seemed I thought I was bringing culture back to Athens. Instead, they envied me. That speech was printed in every paper in Athens as a revelation from the New World, where it seemed talents were not shriveled in the competitive glare of a great past.

I did not quite accept their view, but I had to realize how different my problems were from theirs. I did not have Homer and Anacreon and Plato looking over my shoulder. If I had no rich texture of custom and acceptance and memory to sustain me, neither did I have shackles and conventions. My conventions were such as appealed to me, not such as were forced on me by inheritance. At a coffee shop one afternoon a young Greek writer half persuaded me that it is easier for a cultural orphan to take his pick of the world's traditions than for someone born under the shadow of a great lost past to acquire the freedom of thought and action that had been mine since my parents and my unformed village let me and others go out, armed, at the age of eight or nine, to make our raids on the visible world.

Since the first hour when I sat down to the typewriter and the blank wall, I had been writing about the West because that was all I knew. By 1954, when I published *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian,* the biography of John Wesley Powell on which I had been working for more than ten years, I knew a great deal more about Western problems—water, resource raids, the condition of the public lands. Under the urging of Bernard DeVoto, who had been one of my gurus at Bread Loaf and Harvard, I began to write environmental articles for the magazines, and in 1955 David Brower, then executive director of the Sierra Club, got me to edit a book, *This Is Dinosaur,* opposing reclamation dams within Dinosaur National Monument on the Green River, part of my old Utah stamping ground. That little book, distributed to every member of Congress, had a part in stopping the Upper Colorado River Storage Project in its tracks, and in uniting the previously dispersed and weak environmental organizations into a political force that by the 1970s was formidable. It also confirmed me in an environmental activism that has taken precedence over every interest except writing since that time, and has sometimes taken over the writing too.

Like Aldo Leopold, I had grown up in wild places. Like Leopold, I could not bear to think what the world would be like without such places to grow up in. In 1961, when John F. Kennedy appointed Stewart Udall as secretary of the interior, I sent Udall a copy of *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian,* and later that year, while doing part of a Phi Beta Kappa lecture tour, I stopped off in Washington to meet him, for he seemed to me precisely the kind of secretary we needed—a Westerner with an intimate knowledge of the dry country but with a distaste for the economics of liquidation that was killing it. Later, I got several telephone calls from Udall asking me to

come to Washington, D.C., as a special assistant. Finally he cornered me in Pullman, Washington, and I agreed to come for the last few months of 1961.

Another move, another learning period. Though we were in Washington only three or four months, I got an inside look at parts of the Kennedy administration during its first energetic year. Washington seemed to have been staffed from Harvard, and some of our Harvard friends, including Arthur Schlesinger and Kenneth Galbraith, were in high places. Washington reunited us with Robert Frost, who had been much in evidence there since his term as poet in residence at the Library of Congress, and who was a pet of both Udall's and Kennedy's. And Washington gave me a quick, deep look into the politics of conservation as it might operate when friends of conservation were in power, as well as a good lesson in how long ideas that on their face seemed to me self-evident and self-justifying could take to be translated into law.

Our purpose in 1961 was to lay out a conservation program, especially a program of land acquisition for the national parks system, that would run through eight Kennedy years. Not more than a beginning had been made when I returned to Stanford at the end of 1961. Only a bare beginning had been made when President Kennedy was assassinated in November 1963. (I spent that evening roaming Syntagma Square in Athens, accosted every few yards by Greeks in tears.) But by the end of the Johnson administration a very large part of what we dreamed of doing in 1961 had been done, and Stewart Udall deserves the major credit for it. He lasted longer as secretary of the interior than anyone in history, and he had the vision and the persistence to push his program through.

After the publication of *The Preacher and the Slave* (later reissued as *Joe Hill*) in 1950, I wrote no novels and hardly any stories for ten years. The Rockefeller trip killed the best part of a year, the stay in Denmark another six months, the completion of *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian* most of 1952 and 1953, the environmental wars and teaching constantly prevented the kind of extended concentration that a novel demands. Not until the Italian year in 1959–60 was I able to finish a novel, *A Shooting Star,* which was published just as we arrived in Washington in 1961.

But the 1960s, with all their disruptions, were hardly kinder to the fictional impulse. I found the writing of nonfiction easier in that mangled decade, and in 1962 finally published *Wolf Willow,* a historical and reminiscent look at the bald Canadian frontier of my childhood. It was a book as personal to me as *The Big Rock Candy Mountain,* for though I was dealing with events that were largely historical, I permitted myself the luxury of a historian's omniscience and right to judge as well as a participant's right to remember.

In 1964, never straying from my own track, I returned to Utah and wrote *The Gathering of Zion,* a history of the Mormon Trail between 1846 and 1869, that saga of hardship and wrong and mule-headed tenacity, that pursuit through the wilderness of a pillar of fire and cloud, that story whose guiding faith I could never accept but whose heroism I could not deny.

My only novel of the 1960s was *All the Little Live Things* (1967), whose setting was what I could see out my study window, whose time was the time of growth and disruption during the years we had lived in the Peninsula hills, and whose theme was an adaptation of the biological immortality of Teilhard de Chardin. I have been accused of putting myself into it, disguised as my narrator, Joe Allston. I deny the accusation. I am not there. Only the place I live in is there.

In 1971, at the age of sixty-two, discouraged about teaching in disturbed times, and in fact feeling Time's winged chariot hurrying near, I resigned from Stanford, determined that whatever years I had left I would spend writing books. I had just finished *Angle of Repose,* and when it won the Pulitzer Prize the next year I was strengthened in my new limitation to a single track. *The Uneasy Chair,* a biography of Bernard DeVoto, just missed the Pulitzer Prize in history in 1974. *The Spectator Bird,* a novel that put Joe Allston through some of our 1954 experiences in Denmark, won the National Book Award in 1977, and finally cured me (I think) of the habit I had formed in college of doing seven things at once under the delusion that getting things done was more virtuous than doing fewer things right.

There have been no more moves, no more exhilarating bursts of learning and growth. We have lived in the same house on the same hill since 1948, and spent part of nearly every summer since 1938 on the same Vermont lake. Since *The Spectator Bird* in 1976 I have written two novels, *Recapitulation* (1979) and *Crossing to Safety* (1987), the first an effort, personal both in its feelings and in some of its events, to tie off for good the history of my family; the second a celebration of the kind of long and enduring friendships that have increasingly seemed to me what life should be about. Again I have used places familiar to me. Why not? They are places I love. Again I have used modified versions of people I have known. Why not? They are the people who have meant most to me and touched me closest to where I live.

In *Crossing to Safety* I borrowed a sentence from Henry Adams: "Chaos is the law of Nature, order is the dream of man." Having grown up in chaos, I perhaps appreciate order more than some others do. I never expect it to be perfect; in fact, what seems like relative order to me may look like confusion to others. But I do not quarrel with what life has brought me. I am married to the same Mary Page whom I married in Dubuque fifty-four years ago. We have a son who has made his own place in writing and teaching, and with whom I have happily collaborated a couple of times, most notably in the book *American Places,* with photographs by Eliot Porter. We have grandchildren whom we love. Our family is tight and strong.

I have been immoderately lucky. I never thought the world owed me a living, or happiness, or any of the other goodies advertised on TV. I always thought I was lucky to survive in it. To survive in it, to have a wife who has never been less than loving and loyal, to have an extended family and grandchildren who know my first name, as I did not know the first names of more than one out of four of my own grandparents, and to have a certain place in the literary record, to be one who has communicated and made contact and perhaps helped some readers in the examination of their own lives—that is more than I thought I had coming.

I accept it, humbly and with gratitude.



Wallace and Mary Stegner, Alaska, 1965

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San Francisco speech

(1)

If I could ever stand on a passing comet, and watch the clock of earth below, a moment I would choose is in the summer of 1921. A boxy, spoked-wheel vehicle called a Hudson Super Six is trying to make time on the indifferent dirt road down through the Smith River Valley of Montana. There in the middle of not much but sagebrush, that car passes a rickety small dairy farm called Moss Agate, and the twelve-year-old boy named Wallace there in the carload

of the Stegner family heading for Salt Lake City and yet another new try at life, crosses paths -for an instant- with the asthmatic eight-year-old girl there at Moss Agate who will live long enough to become my mother, and a stout, much-put-upon, durable ranch woman who became my grandmother and ultimately the woman who raised me.

// Destinies, outlined against the basic earth. That is the story we all write in the American West, whether in memory or on the white canyons of paper.

In time to come--indeed, in Times to come, for this occurred in the pages of the New York Times--I suppose I began my own Professional crossing of paths with Wallace Stegner when the Sunday magazine editors whomped together a bunch of us they chose to call "Writers of the Purple Sage." Most of us were 40-something then, and a few--no longer including me--even did lived somewhere around sagebrush, but the exception on both counts was pictured in distinguished gray-haired presiding manner beneath a California oak and presented to the New York Times readership in big hey-look-who-we've-discovered typeface as:

William Stegner.

West of the Hudson, of course, that first name has always been pronounced "Wallace." But at least they got it right, back there, that W. Stegner, Pulitzer Prize novelist, National Book Award novelist, and essayist and conservationist and historian and teacher and consummate citizen of the West, was the dean of our congregation.

Wolf Willow / The Sound of Mountain Water/ Angle of Repose // The Spectator Bird / Crossing to Safety/ Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs...

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

As did his letters:

"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, IVAN, I hope."

We did not see each other in December, nor nearly as many other times as I now wish. Yet I will always feel about Wallace Stegner that there was a general benefit to me just being in his region of the country and his line of work.

In person, Wally of course looked like a one-man Mount Rushmore. And His solidity, that Scandinavian-Iowan-Saskatchewan-Montana-Utah-etcetera mien of flat-footed common sense and endurance, went much more than skin-deep. Wallace Stegner 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."

He practiced what he preached, there, too, and off the Stegner shelf of about thirty books, let me pluck just one--I think, the smallest one--as a particular favorite. The American West as Living Space began as a trio of lectures he delivered at the University of Michigan in 1986, and to me it is a diamond-hard distillation of what Wallace Stegner spent a lifetime of words on. Here's his opening paragraph:

HERE'S

~~'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 fragil 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 from Wally, an impressive number of them about the art of writing. Parallel constructions, alliteration, deft change of sentence rhythm from that ~~no~~ 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.

In trying to review Wally's last book, "Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs," I swiped from the Greek poet Arki-loke-us and the philosopher ~~Isiah~~ I-zay-ah Berlin the notion that strong writers, the enduring hedgehog type, are said to know one big thing. Wallace 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 provoked the right enemies. Ronald Ray- 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 recognition, ever find its way to this most obvious candidate -nominated time and again from the West- during the NEH regimes of Lynn Cheney and William Bennett.

In such telling echoes, Wallace Stegner's was a voice that goes back far--certainly to the spirit of Theodore Roosevelt's words, "I hate a man who skins the land," although I doubt that Wally himself ever used the word "hate." Born as he was in 1909, he was thus a witness to every haywire development in the American West since then, and yet managed to maintain an almost preternatural patience with his fellow humanity: "the West...is the native home of hope," one of his most memorable sentences sang. So say we all, tonight, in his spirit.

None of us is going to replace him, and it's just about as doubtful whether any half-dozen writers and thinkers can produce a combined rainbow of work to equal his.

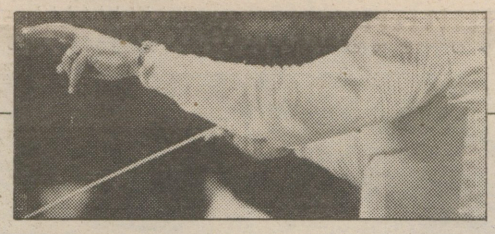
So, in the West, this ever-old, ever-new part of the American land, we resort to the lessons that shaped Wallace Stegner and that he wrote so long and eloquently about. Go on with what you got. Remember that humanity is a tough neighborhood, and love it nonetheless.

Our advantage is that we have his lifework to draw on, and my hope--here in this honored company of wordsmiths, representing as we do, tonight, many other writers at this end of the country--my hope is that we can find a paradoxical strength in this loss of him. That instead of Wallace Stegner's long-familiar and often lonely eloquence for the West and its earth, the rest of the country will now have to hear from us as a tribe of western writers, a swarm of us.

In his last years, when the national bestsellerdom 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.

Dictators on the Dais



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BOOK REVIEW

LOS ANGELES TIMES • SUNDAY, APRIL 12, 1992

UNDER THE Great Wide Sky

WHERE THE BLUEBIRD SINGS TO THE LEMONADE SPRINGS
Living and Writing in the West
By Wallace Stegner
(Random House: $21; 227 pp.)

Reviewed by Ivan Doig



Wallace Stegner

In another Times, in another place (considerably eastern), Sunday editors some years ago whomped together a bunch of us they chose to call "Writers of the Purple Sage." Most of us were 40something then, and a few even lived somewhere around sagebrush, but the exception on both counts was pictured in distinguished gray-haired presiding manner beneath a California oak and presented to the readership in big hey-look-who-we've-discovered typeface as:

William Stegner.

West of the Hudson, that first name has always been pronounced "Wallace." But at least they got it right, back there, that W. Stegner, Pulitzer Prize novelist, National Book Award novelist, and essayist and conservationist and historian and teacher and consummate citizen of the West, is our chairman of the board.

Early in his majestic sum of 29 books was "The Big Rock Candy Mountain," Stegner's breakthrough novel based on his own family and their version of the wanderings within that hobo anthem of Western hopefulness, and not quite half a century later here is another inspired stanza, "Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs," from that same restless lilt. In this collection of 16 essays, even the ones with the telltale sheen of deadline magazine work are pleasurable enough, all come right up to you with typical Stegnerian common sense, and three are the brilliant crystallization of his lifetime of thinking about the American West.

One kinship I have always felt with Wallace Stegner is the square-built Western kid sort, that although we both are descendants of a West of hell-raisers, we ruefully recognize ourselves as at most born to raise heck. Yet, chain us together to a keyboard and we'd fairly soon admit we have differences. Likely he thinks the plots of my novels are somewhat, shall we say, unbridled; possibly I think his main characters hew a bit too closely to his own persona. But maybe a little orneriness in our different directions—and those of Stegner's Stanford students as diverse as Larry McMurtry, Tillie Olsen and Ken Kesey—is to be expected, too. As usual, he has spoken for many Western writers, and Westerners, who have had to pull up our socks and try to make something of ourselves: "There is something about exposure to that big country that not only tells an individual how small he is, but steadily tells him *who* he is. I have never understood identity problems."

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Doig is the author of "This House of Sky," soon to be reissued in a 15th anniversary edition.

Guess/Jordache: The Bottom Line

SKIN TIGHT
The Bizarre Story of Guess v. Jordache
By Christopher Byron
(Simon & Schuster: $23; 352 pp.)

Reviewed by Frank Rose

Americans like to think there's a rational explanation for everything, from the twinkling of the stars to the vagaries of human behavior. Among other things, our faith in reason has given us the American legal system, which is based on the idea that there's an objective truth out there, a quantifiable reality that can be nailed down if enough people hammer at it for enough time. But every once in a while, something comes along to suggest that the powers of reason we put so much trust in are actually little more than the hallucinatory firings of a hyperactive cerebral cortex. Something like the jeans war.

Designer jeans appeal to a more primitive region of the brain, the part responsible for (among other things) lust and greed. And in the final analysis, this is what "Skin Tight," Christopher Byron's controversial account of the unimaginably convoluted vendetta between two wildly successful jeans makers, comes down to—the primacy of primitive emotions, their ability to short-circuit all the high-minded institutions of Western civilization and go straight for the id. Coarse cotton fabric becomes invested with sex and catches fire with consumers, and then—whoa, stand back.

The story begins in 1977, when the three Nakash brothers—Sephardic Jews from Tel Aviv who've settled in Brooklyn—lose one of their discount-jeans stores to vandals during a power failure in New York. With $120,000 in insurance money, they launch their own jeans line, giving it the vaguely European-sounding name of Jordache and shrewdly putting their cash into a TV spot that shows a blonde wearing skin-tight jeans as she gallops through the surf astride a pounding steed. Having thus tapped into the universal language of adolescent female sexuality, the Nakash brothers see their enterprise mushroom within a year into a $75-million business. But then comes the recession of 1982 and the need to hedge their bets amid a softening economy.

The investment they settle on is Guess? Inc., an upstart jeans company owned by the Marciano brothers of Beverly Hills—a Sephardic Jewish clan from Morocco by way of Marseilles. For $4.7 million, the four Marcianos part with half their company and give the Nakashes equal representation on their board.

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Rose is a contributing writer at Premiere and has written for several other magazines, including New York. He is currently working on a book on the William Morris Agency.



Conduct Unbecoming

THE MAESTRO MYTH
Great Conductors
in Pursuit of Power
By Norman Lebrecht
(Birch Lane Press/Carol
Publishing Group: $22.50; 384 pp.)

Reviewed by Martin Bernheimer

Heaven, so the story goes, was crowded. Would-be entrants clogged the Pearly Gates. A worried St. Peter canvassed the mob and, via megaphone, invited any erstwhile psychiatrist to step to the front of the line.

"What seems to be the problem?" asked the bespectacled gentleman who took his favored treatment in stride.

"It's God," replied the charismatic usher. "He thinks he's Karajan."

When I first heard the joke, in Tanglewood over 40 years ago, the protagonist of the punch line was Serge Koussevitzky, the temperamental but benevolent dictator who waved his stick at the Boston Symphony. In other re-tellings, the egomaniacal figurehead has been Arturo Toscanini, Leopold Stokowski, Leonard Bernstein, Georg Solti and even Zubin Mehta. Everything is geographically and temporally relative.

In his fascinatingly sleazy book on the ravages and abuse of podium power, Norman Lebrecht offers another variation on the megalomanic theme. His story places the ever-formidable Herbert von Karajan in a Viennese taxi.

"Where to?" asks the driver.

"It doesn't matter," replies the supermaestro. "I've got something going everywhere."

Lebrecht, a British iconoclast who specializes in musical muckraking, puts the apocryphal anecdote in context: "It is terrifying to contemplate how close [Karajan] came around 1960 to achieving a total hegemony of world music."

Contrary to the implications of the title, "The Maestro Myth" isn't a serious book about music. It is an extravagant exercise in pop sociology and armchair psychology. It also is a gushing essay in low-brow gossip on a high-brow subject.

Lebrecht's thesis is as simple as it is cynical: The world needs great conductors not because they may be able to

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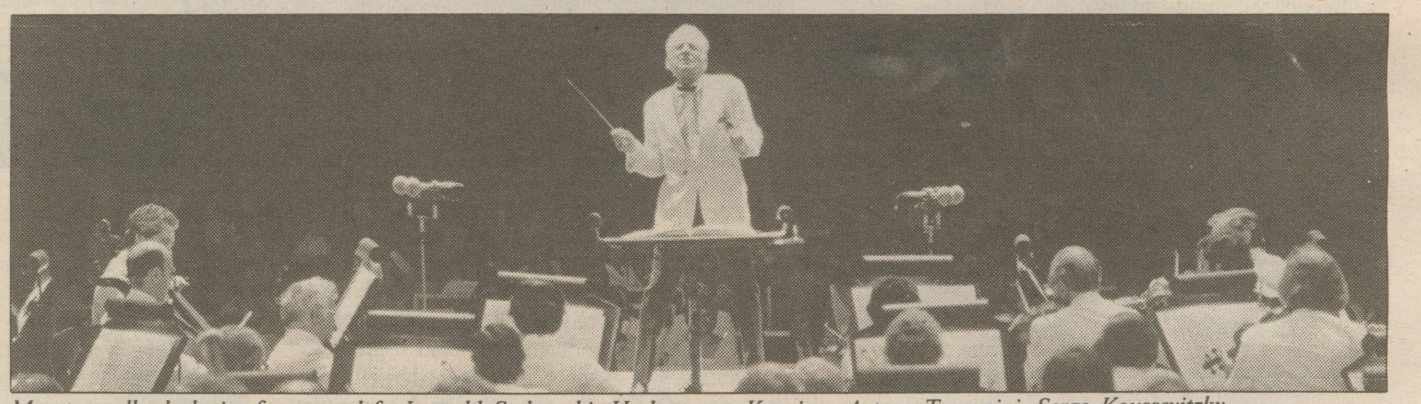
Bernheimer has been The Times' music critic since 1965. He won the Pulitzer Prize for criticism in 1982.





Maestros all, clockwise from top left: Leopold Stokowski, Herbert von Karajan, Arturo Toscanini, Serge Koussevitzky, Wilhelm Furtwängler, Leonard Bernstein, Georg Solti, Simon Rattle.

The Last Orange Grove

POMONA QUEEN
By Kem Nunn
(Pocket Books: $19; 211 pp.)

Reviewed by Cassandra Smith

Kem Nunn does for Pomona what Raymond Chandler, James M. Cain and Nathanael West did for Los Angeles. He depicts the squalid underbelly of a soiled landscape, a legacy of decay inhabited by foul-mouthed lowlifes and racist scumbags.

In his third novel, "Pomona Queen," all the action transpires in one very long night. It opens with Earl Dean, heir to the last acre of orange grove in Pomona, hawking Rainbow Air Purifiers—a fancy name for vacuum cleaners—door-to-door in a rundown tract of cheap look-alike houses with unkempt yards. Dean is lost in a part of town he doesn't like. It has no sidewalks or street lights, and the addresses are illegible. But he dutifully makes one more call.

This last stop turns out to be the residence of Dan Brown, a burly, beer-bellied biker he knew 20 years ago in high school when Dean played piano and sang with his own band, using the moniker Johnny Magic.

Brown, a violent boozer who once beat a cop to death and spent time in prison for stabbing a security guard in the throat with a screwdriver, remembers Johnny Magic's singing with a perverse fondness.

It just so happens that this unexpected reunion occurs on the night Brown's brother, Buddy, has been knifed to death. Buddy's naked body lays stretched out upon a bed of ice cubes in a large red Coca-Cola freezer with white script on the side that reads: "Things Go Better With Coke." This is the kind of depraved humor that punctuates Nunn's darkly poetic prose.

Brown plots revenge for his brother's murder and wants Johnny Magic to sing at the burial. Not keen on being a part of this scene, Dean attempts to escape. He fails. Trapped in a dirty house with Brown, his biker buddies and their old ladies who are ripped on speed, the long night turns into a journey that leads to the past.

Dean's great-grandfather was a pioneer fruit grower who was mysteriously shot to death in Chinatown. Gramps, the first president of the Pomona Fruit Exchange, had commissioned artwork from a lithographer to distinguish his produce from that of his neighbors; his packing-crate label bore the image of a sad, dark-eyed girl and a crimson sky. Above her head, in gold letters, were the words *Pomona Queen*.

Pomona Queen is coincidentally also the name of the gang to which Buddy's killer, a woman, belongs. In the course of the night, Dan Brown's crowd load Buddy, in

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Smith lives and writes in Venice, Calif. She has never been to Pomona.

RICHARD EDER

Letting a Little Air In

AT WEDDINGS AND WAKES
By Alice McDermott
(Farrar, Straus and Giroux: $20; 213 pp.)



J.J. SMITH-MOORE

Get the subatomics right and you get the universe right; get the quarks in line and the quintessentials fall into place. So modern physics tells us, pausing periodically to wonder if it is true.

There are a few American writers who use the homely details of people's lives and behaviors that way. They get these details absolutely right, not for the purpose of description, or classification, or—as with some of the minimalists—taxidermy, but to ignite the transformations inside them.

Ann Tyler does it frequently in her shabby-genteel Baltimore; Bobby Ann Mason did it at least once, in the small Kentucky town of "In Country"; Susan Minot did it, also once, with the troubled New England family of "Monkeys." Alice McDermott did it with "That Night." She got the movements and vacancies of an American suburb to work so exactly that, out of their clotted energy, she released a Tristan and an Iseult in the guise of two adolescent lovers.

McDermott does it once more in "At Weddings and Wakes." A more constricted book in some ways, it is set, in the 1950s, among the stifled grievances of an Irish-American matriarch and her three spinster stepdaughters. Cooped up in the middle-class solidity of a Brooklyn apartment—Brooklyn was solid back then—they alternately fatten on rancorous memories and struggle ineffectually to escape them.

Mary Towne came over from Ireland in the 1920s to help with her sister's fourth childbirth. When the baby was born, the sister died; Mary stayed on to help the widower, and eventually to marry him. Briefly, there was a blaze of something like passion; then the widower died, leaving Mary to rule with the heavy hand of disappointed memory.

John, their son and her pride, turned into a drunk, moved away and comes back annually for a brief, angry visit. As for the stepsisters, the loving and sweet-tempered May entered a convent, found she loved its peace and quiet so much as to distract her from religion—a wonderful McDermott touch—and came home to live. At the end, she marries Fred, a postman, but it is a sadly brief escape. Agnes, with a good job as an executive secretary in Manhattan, returns each night to exercise her critical spirit and sharp tongue. Veronica, pock-marked and alcoholic, drifts woozily out of her bedroom long enough to locate an affront and carry it back in with her.

The Towne apartment—heavy furniture and Waterford crystal and starched Irish linen for holidays—is asphyxiating, and McDermott occasionally comes close to asphyxiating us with it. (It is a risk you take if you write well; describe a Camembert, and the reader has to open a window.) But essentially, her book transforms the oppressiveness.

The somber realism of the Towne ménage is undermined by the little eyes that see it. They belong to the three children who visit dutifully twice a week during the summer from their home in the leafy green outskirts of Queens. Lucy, their mother, brings them; she is the fourth stepdaughter. Ostensibly, she has escaped; in fact, with her incessant visiting, her perpetual phone calls, her instant immersions into the latest round of Towne bickering, she is torn between two worlds.

The Brooklyn apartment is old-world memory troubled by the struggle of its prisoners. The new world and its possibilities are represented by Lucy's husband: kind, buoyant and with a talent for exploration and enjoyment. The children move forward with him, inevitably and fortunately, but at some sacrifice. McDermott makes us feel the health that lies in releasing memory's chains. She makes us feel the weight of the chains, but she makes us feel their piety as well, and the tug they exert even when cast off. Her book has a bewitching complexity.

The narration is part of the bewitchment. It belongs to the three children: kind Bobby, who at 12 or so still thinks he wants to be a priest; gawky and introspective Margaret, with a gloomy touch of her mother's "easy access to regret"; and Maryanne, the wide-eyed, melodramatic baby of the family. The narrative doesn't belong particularly to any one of them, though Margaret is the most likely, and it suggests both children seeing, and remembering as adults what they once saw.

This allows reflectiveness and immediacy; it allows a darting chronology, and a darting selection of events to be followed. It allows us, as children do, to change the subject. Its quickness and lightness do not lighten the heaviness of the Towne household, but they set it off like alternating tiles in a mosaic.

We read of the painful twice-weekly trip of Lucy and the children from Queens to Brooklyn: a 10-block walk in the July heat, a bus, then another bus, a subway and then another subway. Yet the painfulness—it lies not so much in the trip as in the quality of Lucy's dogged pilgrimage to her family's battles—is relieved by the freshness of the children's experiencing. They note Lucy's fuss with the front-door latch as they leave, her juggle with white gloves, handbag and the cigarette she lights up between buses and stamps out with the toe of her high heel pumps. In the crowded bus she stands, shielding them "in what might have been her shadow had the light been right, but was in reality merely the length that the warmth of her body and the odor of her talc extended."

After the long Brooklyn afternoon, their father arrives to take them home. They all perk up: the children, Lucy, her sisters, old Mrs. Towne. Gaiety has made an entrance, theatrical as the contrast between the masks of comedy and tragedy. The trip back in the family car is another contrast, a chariot ride after the morning's bus-and-subway ordeal.

Another chapter tells of the annual two-week beach holiday in a rented cabin

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Semiotics of the Semi-True

A GOOD MAN TO KNOW
A Semi-Documentary
Fictional Memoir
By Barry Gifford
(Clark City Press: $21.95; 184 pp.)

Reviewed by Fred Schruers

An author's note preceding this slim volume quotes the definition of the Japanese form *shosetsu*: "a piece of autobiography or a set of memoirs, somewhat embroidered and colored but essentially nonfiction." A glance at the list of 22 publications where parts of this book earlier appeared may make some readers suspect *shosetsu* is closely related to "garage sale," but in fact "A Good Man to Know" is a surprisingly graceful, quietly affecting account of a boy—and the man he became—coming to terms with a father he barely knew.

Schruers, a senior writer for Premiere magazine, is currently completing a true-crime book in New Orleans.

The pages before we're actually into Barry Gifford's story are overly busy—with the above definition, with the list of the dauntingly fecund author's 26 previous books, with epigraphs from Sidney Zion, Nelson Algren and Roland Barthes, and with the title page's redefinition of the playing field: "A Semi-Documentary Fictional Memoir." Semi-documentary? Have we finally reached the book-length equivalent of "You didn't get this from me, but . . ."?

The reader's suspicion is understandable. By habit we contentedly abandon ourselves to fiction, and for different and equally good reasons we like true stories. Even the *roman à clef*, almost always a pulp romance these days, has its place. But we mistrust the semi-true. It's a form that hides its boundaries or, worse, moves them for its own convenience. Either way, we don't know where we stand, and tend to suspect the author of protecting or ennobling himself, or at least casting a shallow light on others to fulfill some agenda beyond simple storytelling. That's why we discount most barroom tales of bravado or injustice until the speaker raises a finger and says, "True story."

That's most of the bad news. Gifford doesn't explain why he's gone semi-, who's being protected or what the literary benefits are. But in the first of many brief chapters, the one that lends the book its title, he settles right into the economical narrative style that animates much of his work, including the now famous "Wild At Heart": "I was seven years old in June of 1954 when my dad and I drove from Miami to New Orleans to visit his friend Albert Thibodeaux."

Suddenly, after all the formal set-up, we've been oxygenated. Gifford has a crafty touch with details—the

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BOOK REVIEW

SONJA BOLLE, *Book Editor*

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Living and Writing in the West
by Wallace Stegner
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SKIN TIGHT
The Bizarre Story of Guess v. Jordache
by Christopher Byron
Reviewed by Frank Rose

2 THE MAESTRO MYTH
Great Conductors in Pursuit of Power
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4 ONLY MAN IS VILE
The Tragedy of Sri Lanka
by William McGowan
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FICTION

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Slaughter in Sri Lanka

ONLY MAN IS VILE
The Tragedy of Sri Lanka
By William McGowan
(Farrar, Straus & Giroux: $25; 398 pp.)

Reviewed by Mark Fineman

The Kandyan jungle seemed so at peace just after dawn on that October morning in 1989. In the twisted thicket of palms, bamboo and bougainvillea that blanketed the hotel, a handful of iridescent parrots screeched cheery greetings to the first rays of sun as they splintered into a forest of prisms through the morning dew.

A narrow ribbon of road cut through this ancient heart of Buddhism, deep inside a paradisiacal island so spectacular in its beauty it was once nicknamed Serendip. To the right, just five miles away from the hotel entrance, lay one of Buddhism's holiest shrines of pilgrimage, the Temple of the Sacred Relic, with its gold cask containing the wisdom tooth of Lord Buddha.

But we turned left that morning, and we hadn't driven even a mile when we saw our first body—a headless corpse, hands bound behind its back, blocking the road like a fallen tree. A few hundred yards farther, there were three more, then two more, then four more, all with their heads neatly severed at the shoulders.

The jungle road turned up then, into a rich, verdant hillside, and as we approached a bridge over a cascading waterfall, we found the severed heads. There were a dozen or so in all, each carefully placed at 10-foot intervals on the bridge culvert, like horrible mileposts to the civil war that has become Sri Lanka's living nightmare.

That night, in his modest home near the Temple of the Sacred Relic in downtown Kandy, one of the island's parliamentarians spoke with quiet frustration of the trauma that this awful era has caused his island paradise and its 14 million people—"We wake up in the morning, and we know tomorrow will be worse than today"—and he tried to square the living death with the religion that had taught them from birth the sacredness of all life.

"We're not to kill even an animal or an ant," Shelton Ranaraja said that evening, his body shaken and broken from the horrors that abounded in the peaceful jungle around him. "I don't understand why this is happening. I cannot explain it."

It was into this kaleidoscopic hall of horrors that a young American academic-turned-free-lance-journalist brought his abiding curiosity, hope and desire to understand and explain one of the world's most confounding and remote civil wars. The enduring ethnic conflict grew from an era of Machievellian British rule in which the island's colonial masters vested the minority Tamils with jobs and power to avoid rebellion from the majority Sinhalese, only to hand that power to the virulently frustrated Sinhalese at independence in 1948.

Fineman is a Times foreign correspondent.

William McGowan had seen brief glimpses of the conflict in the fall of 1986, when he came to the remote Indian Ocean island formerly known as Ceylon to serve as an adjunct professor at the School of International Training. His self-appointed task when he returned a year later was far more daunting: to live for a year on an island that journalists visit only briefly, a land already five years and 8,000 dead into the brutal conflicts that have so defied comprehension. His goal was to understand the cultural, historic and religious roots of Sri Lanka's lethal labyrinth.

The result, "Only Man is Vile," is billed on the book jacket as an "explosive" and "gripping political travelogue" that not only explains this evil coexistence of corpses and lotus flowers to an uninitiated Western reader, but contributes to "the literature of cultural identity, East and West." It was an excursion into the realm of anthropological and cultural realism that clearly left McGowan as deeply disturbed and tormented as any who have ventured into this paradise lost. McGowan writes often of his fears, his nightmares and, ultimately, toward the end, the deepest dread that accompanied the end of his search:

'If they gave me an injection to die, I would take it,' a retired Tamil railroad clerk tells McGowan. 'It is no longer good to live here.'

"The fear I had repressed on earlier excursions into the war zones was now uncontainable," he explains in opening his final chapter with something of an apology for looking no further. "Memories of burned bodies, land-mine victims and morgue scenes sprang forth in me."

McGowan unfortunately confirms time and again the reader's own fear: that they will follow the author on his journey into horror, but he will abandon them there, unable to get to the roots of a war that is as complex as it is confounding. "Even though I had learned much over the two years I was there," McGowan explains in the preface, "I still had nagging doubts that I had missed something, some avenue of hope."

McGowan gets close enough to describe the concussion of incoming mortar fire from the Indian troops who met their own Vietnam trying to put down the Tamil insurrection that they had helped create, a guerrilla war that continues even today. But through frequent and admirable self-effacement, he continually confesses his failure to break ranks with the visiting journalists. The foreign correspondents appear to intrigue him almost as much as the island itself; although they remain his constant traveling companions on his search for truth, they seem to keep the author himself on the level of the superficial.

"When the ground started rumbling with the concussive force of approaching artillery and mortar fire, we turned back. We spent the rest of the day in a safe house," he explains during one visit to the embattled northern Jaffna region that is the heart of the Tamil rebellion.

The author stresses painfully often the island's "culture of avoidance" and "culture of denial," deep-seated shields that keep all probing eyes—including the author's—continually in the dark. In the capital, Colombo, where McGowan made his home, "the . . . elite as a whole was skilled at avoidance . . . as if the entire community was living the old Ceylonese adage that 'a well-told lie is worth a thousand facts.' "

As McGowan acknowledges time and again, he never seems to penetrate that shield, keeping the reader on the outside along with him. In his attempt to describe the island's famed and ancient annual Perahera festival, which begins in the chamber of the Sacred Relic Temple containing Buddha's tooth, he writes: "There was a lot of confusion in the chamber, no clear sense of what was going on or who was doing what."

In a lengthy chapter that searches for the roots of Sri Lanka's resistance to international economic development, McGowan focuses almost entirely on a frustrated American trying to build a prawn farm just north of Colombo. He quotes the American agriculturist to explain, "You learn pretty quick around here that nothing is as simple as it should be." McGowan then ventures into the nearby village to explore the deeper cultural and social-caste causes that appear to inhibit rural development, but observes, "Many of the villagers wouldn't talk to me, because, as one of them explained, 'I was not from there.' "

Nonetheless, McGowan asserts that his visit to the prawn farm had given "a pretty good sense of ground-level development problems," but then he observes, "I was eager to talk to international development officials in Colombo to get their idea of the role that social and cultural factors played in frustrating their expensive efforts. But the people I spoke to were either unable or unwilling to talk about such problems."

What emerges from McGowan's painstaking and bold effort to explore Sri Lanka's contradictions is merely a reaffirmation of the confusion. He uses the characters that abound as well as confound in this strange land merely as brief, stiff vignettes rather than human vehicles to penetrate that culture of denial. He presents the foreign correspondents who traipse through the jungle along with him as cynical "fire men" who specialize in the superficial "boom-boom" of war, and yet he makes clear his own personal fascination with those same journalists, who oddly emerge as the book's most intriguing and best-developed characters.

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'The Maestro Myth'

Continued from Page 2

make profound aesthetic statements but because they fill a contemporary void. Everyone, we are reminded, wants to follow a glamorous leader, to worship a mighty hero, to admire an economic icon.

Unfortunately, Lebrecht drops the thesis almost as quickly as he states it. He never really applies his theory to history. He certainly doesn't analyze the mystery of what conductors actually do, much less how they do it. The definition of talent doesn't elude him because it doesn't seem to concern him. He may know what makes a "great" conductor great, but he doesn't tell us. He may know what makes a Beethoven symphony under Simon Rattle different from one interpreted by, say, Daniel Barenboim, but he doesn't offer proof.

He is too busy creating a gallery of dirty portraits. It begins with the quaint antiquity of Hans von Bülow, a selfless conductor who served as faithful stand-in for the romantic composer. The gallery ends with the modernist urgency of Franz Welser-Möst, who is still in his early 30s. A lengthy addendum examines the role (apparently scuzzy) of Ronald Wilford, known to insiders as the most powerful agent of the most powerful conductors.

In the course of his collection of exaggerations, distortions, digressions and obfuscations, Lebrecht does a lot of name-calling. Wherever possible, he dwells on political and/or sexual peculiarities. When he can't—or won't—document his sources, he offers blithe innuendo.

One can almost hear the smacking of lips—his—as he chatters about Karajan's Nazism and erotic proclivities: "Collaborators claim that 'the homosexual part was very strong . . . and almost certainly active.' " The collaborators are, of course, unnamed. Lebrecht makes much of Karajan's opportunistic attitude toward the Third Reich, yet fails to explain why this tireless self-promoter married "a woman with a Jewish grandparent" in 1942.

The pictures at Lebrecht's exhibition are almost invariably smeary. In a flight of dubious debunking, Carlo Maria Giulini is described as a musician who "has failed to fulfill the high career expectations generated by his early recordings." Karl Böhm is accused of "catnapping while the orchestra played on regardless," an astonishing feat even for an old Viennese master. Bruno Walter, generally regarded as a man of saintly character, is ploddingly labeled "a hypocrite, the antithesis of Mahlerian morality masquerading as its mortal manifestation."

The noble Toscanini? "His antipathy to Fascism was neither ideological nor entirely humanitarian. . . . What aroused him was . . . the state challenge to his own authority." Koussevitzky and Szell were guilty of "bestial behaviour," which—get this—"critics tolerated, even adulated." Jeffrey Tate is cited, incidentally, as "a notable exception" among the "homosexual conductors who are forced by the music industry to dissimulate in public."

Much ink is spilled on Wilhelm Furtwängler. We discover that he "was said to take a different woman to his room before every concert." Said, one must wonder, by whom?



Leopold Stokowski

Further attention is devoted to the accusation that Furtwängler was an enthusiastic Nazi collaborator—an accusation passionately disputed by many authorities who document their research more carefully than Lebrecht deems appropriate. ("The Devil's Music Master" by Sam H. Shirakawa, to be published by Oxford University Press in June, will shed additional light on this shadowy subject.)

One may want to forgive Lebrecht's passing errors, along with his hyperbole. Still, the little slips make one all the more leery of big gaffes.

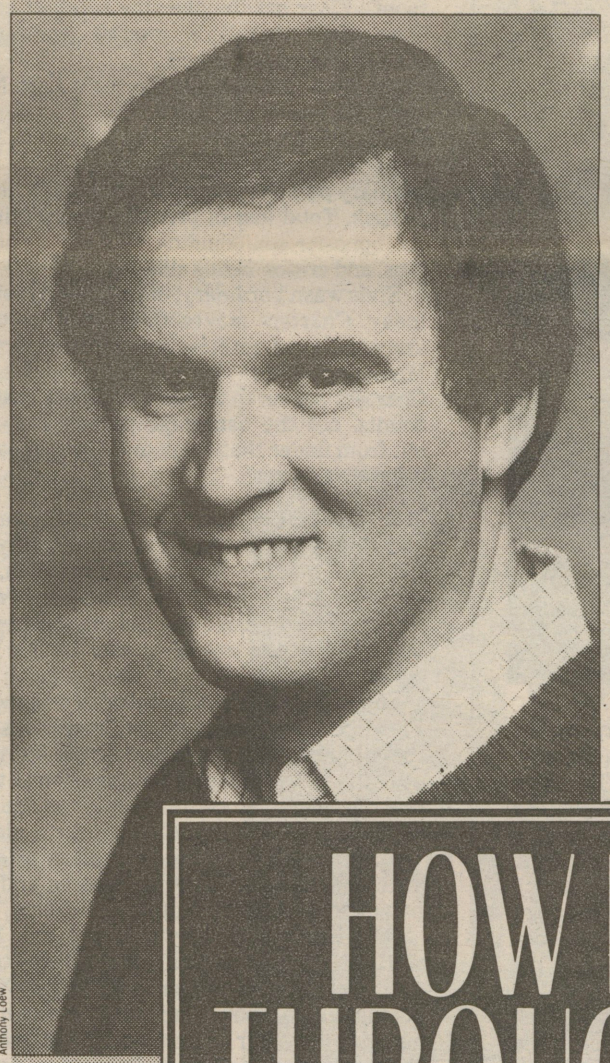
Contrary to what one reads, Kreisler and Joachim were *not* the only composers who wrote cadenzas for the Beethoven violin concerto. Otto Klemperer did *not* enjoy much of a U.S. career after World War II. Antonia Brico did *not* conduct at the Met. Rudolf Bing did *not* ban Elisabeth Schwarzkopf from that house. James Levine's favored artists at the Met are *not* "little-leaguers." Klaus Tennstedt *never* was "the most sought-after conductor on earth." When Zubin Mehta came to Los Angeles, he did *not* inherit a "world-class, well-run Philharmonic." Leonard Bernstein could *not* claim the longest tenure of any music director of the New York Philharmonic—that was Mehta. Irmgard Seefried, Sena Jurinac and Hilde Güden did *not* "*trill* secondary roles" in Vienna—they didn't really trill anything, but they did *sing* primary roles.

One may want to forgive Lebrecht's passing insults: He allows Georg Solti to be likened to a "screaming skull." He says Giuseppe Sinopoli "looked the part of the great conductor, and in Japan that seemed to suffice."

Finally, one may want to forgive Lebrecht's sloppy and incomplete—also devious and evasive—system of annotation. His study eschews footnotes in favor of often incomprehensible and sometimes irresponsible quasi-credits reproduced in some mysterious form of shorthand at the back of the book. Careful scholarship does not seem to be Lebrecht's forte. It does not even seem to be his pianissimo.

Still, a cautious, patient, skeptical reader can find useful particles of truth amid the sensational twaddle. And, if nothing else, "The Maestro Myth" capitalizes on the universal charm of *Schadenfreude*.■

"Hilarious... eloquent... calls forth echoes of James Thurber, Andy Rooney and even a Zen master or two."
—*Publishers Weekly*



Anthony Loew

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IN BRIEF

By MICHAEL HARRIS

FICTION

REGENERATION *by Pat Barker (Dutton: ($20; 256 pp.)*. We remember World War II for the horrors it inflicted on civilians: Auschwitz, Hiroshima. We remember the Great War that preceded it for the horrors endured by soldiers: those hopeless, suicidal offensives on the Western Front. We wonder at the bravery—or the social conditioning, which may be much the same thing—that led so many to die so uncomplainingly. As in most other wars, overt protest from the ranks was rare, if threatening to those in authority.

In 1917, when British casualties in Flanders were running as high as 100,000 a month, poet Siegfried Sassoon, a decorated infantry officer, issued one of those rare protests—a five-paragraph statement to Parliament entitled "Finished With the War." Friends in high places saved Sassoon from court-martial; instead he was sent to "recuperate" at a hospital for shell-shock victims in Craiglockhart, Scotland, where he was treated by Dr. William Rivers, an anthropologist, neurologist and pioneer Freudian therapist.

Pat Barker's moving novel about these two historical figures skillfully sutures together fact and fiction. Rivers believes that his job is to return his patients to duty, but his confrontation with Sassoon forces this humane and enlightened man to admit what he has begun to suspect—and what a visit to a colleague, who treats "war neurotics" with electric shock, confirms: These soldiers *are* protesting, in the only way their stoical upbringing allows.

"Just as [the other doctor] silenced the unconscious protest of *his* patients by removing the paralysis, the deafness, the blindness, the muteness that stood between them and the war," Rivers thinks, "so, in an infinitely more gentle way, *he* silenced *his* patients. . . . He knew the extent of his own influence" in muzzling Sassoon, who does return to the front.

Barker ("Union Street") makes both her fictional and her real characters (including poets Robert Graves and Wilfred Owen) complex and credible. She vividly evokes the period: pub and drawing room and battlefield, hospital wards full of amputees and munitions factories whose fumes stain the skins of women workers yellow. Best of all, she attends to the moral nuances of a time when it was hard to distinguish the lesser insanities from the greater one.

ELVIS PRESLEY CALLS HIS MOTHER AFTER THE ED SULLIVAN SHOW *by Samuel Charters (Coffee House Press: $11.95; 128 pp.)* Poet, novelist and musicologist Samuel Charters steps on nobody's blue suede shoes in this novella, which consists of a single, unbroken monologue that wails and jangles like an electric-guitar solo. The voice is 21-year-old Elvis Presley's; he's phoning home from a New York hotel room on the night after the breakthrough 1957 performance in which TV cameras showed the Pelvis only from the waist up.

It's a moment when youthful innocence and the corruptions of celebrity hang in uneasy balance. Elvis tells his mother, Gladys, that he wants her to act with him in a movie—a movie in which her singing of a gospel song will save him from a girl who is tempting him to "sin." But all the while, band members are holding an orgy in the next room—Elvis has to cover the receiver and tell them to pipe down—and there's a groupie waiting for him, eating cheeseburgers on his bed.

Charters ("Jelly Roll Morton's Last Night at the Jungle Inn") captures the voice, the inflections, the humor, and although the phone-call idea is hard to sustain for 100-plus pages, he writes with rare insight about what it's like for an ordinary person to become famous. It's like being run over by a truck. Total loss of privacy. Disorienting attractiveness to the opposite sex. Finding yourself turned into a symbol in fans' and critics' heads alike.

Elvis wasn't ordinary, of course, any more than Madonna is today. Charters makes this clear, too. Something shrewd, knowing, even ruthless lurked beneath that baby face, that Mississippi drawl. In this basically sympathetic portrait—Charters seems to agree with Elvis that the music is what counts, not the backstage peccadilloes—we see him crawl out from under that truck and climb aboard and begin to ride it for all it's worth.

THE MURDERER *by Roy Heath (Persea Books: $19.95; 190 pp.)*. Move "Crime and Punishment" from the slums of St. Petersburg to the slums of Georgetown, Guyana, and you'll have something like "The Murderer." With this difference: that the murder isn't an existential experiment, like Raskolnikov's, but the act of a man unable to escape his own childhood.

Long submission to his domineering mother has left Galton Flood permanently insecure, suspicious, touchy. He leaves the property he shares with his brother, flees from an attractive girl he meets in a provincial town, buries himself in the bush. When he finally marries the girl, he sets tragedy in motion. No wife could live up to the ideal of compliance his wounded pride demands—especially after he moves her into a neighborhood of thieves, whores and informers to avoid having to depend on relatives or friends.

Roy Heath ("Shadows Round the Moon") describes a world in which the battle of the sexes underlies everything else. Women have power in the home—"I had to lock up my personality in a box to survive," one man says—but no power outside it. After Flood kills his wife, he claims that she ran away, and the authorities don't even bother to look.

The nemesis that stalks him—Heath's equivalent of Dostoevski's police inspector—is mental illness. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, Flood's mind breaks down, along the paranoid lines suggested by his earlier behavior. Heath's rough-hewn style lends a primitive intensity to Flood's passions, though in the end it's not him we remember so much as the society as a whole, which shares the murderer's arrested development, if to a lesser degree.

CAPTAIN JACK ZODIAC *by Michael Kandel (Bantam: $4.50, paperback; 224 pp.)*. Do you ever think life is just a video game programmed by unfeeling aliens who *enjoy* watching human beings mess up? If so, then Michael Kandel has got a novel for you.

Hilarious and grim, "Captain Jack Zodiac" envisions a future in which today's toxic trends—inflation, AIDS, drugs, gridlock, gunplay, garbage strikes, global warming—have reached such extremes that the nuclear war that kicks off the action makes things only marginally worse.

In the midst of all this—including a neighbor who acquires super powers from an antiperspirant and a lawn that turns into a squirming green killer—songwriter Clifford Koussevitzsky yearns for normality, which recedes from him at warp speed. To remarry, he literally has to go to hell and back to placate the ghost of his mother-in-law. To reclaim his children (son Josh is a "space cadet" who buys pills from the neighborhood dealer, Captain Jack Zodiac, to hot-rod in far galaxies; daughter Trish is a "mall zombie," a transparent wisp haunting shopping centers from Kalamazoo to Katmandu) requires even stranger journeys.

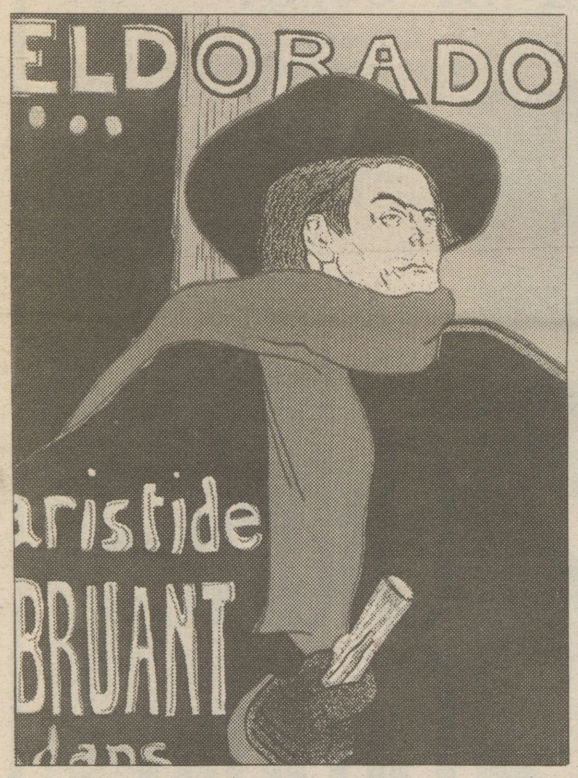
Kandel raises a number of metaphysical issues. Like Woody Allen, he wonders whether there's sex after death, and goes Allen one further: Are there Taco Bells? He explores the idea of serial afterlives: Can you keep on dying into deeper and darker versions of eternity? When the fun has evaporated, though, we're left with a chilling vision of where the real world is going, along with a testimonial to humans' thick-headed, admirable, creepy, touching ability to adapt to almost anything even as they furiously resist change.

THE BRIDGES OF MADISON COUNTY *by Robert James Waller (Warner: $14.95; 171 pp.)*. At 52, Robert Kincaid is a National Geographic photographer, a nomadic loner who calls himself "one of the last cowboys." At 45, Francesca Johnson is a former Italian war bride who lives all too rooted a life on an Iowa farm. They meet in the summer of 1965, when Robert is taking pictures of the covered bridges in the area and Francesca's husband and children are off at the state fair.

They fall in love. They enjoy four days of passion so incandescent that it seems to confirm a cosmic destiny and to short-circuit conventional logic. Then they part, but the glow never fades.

In a long foreword, author Robert James Waller asserts that these were real people—that this story is backed by documents that Francesca's children discovered after her death. In an afterword, he interviews a jazz musician in Washington State who knew Robert Kincaid in later years and attests to his emotional fidelity. A scaffolding of hard, journalistic detail surrounds the romantic scenes, in which Waller doesn't hesitate to use the novelist's privilege of entering his characters' minds—or to write, at times, like a Harlequineer.

Waller misjudges the problem here. Readers—romantic readers, at any rate—are willing to believe in the love story. The journalism isn't needed to prop it up. The problem is that the story lacks conflict, other than the guilt that keeps Francesca from leaving her family. Nothing ever threatens the couple's conviction that their affair is something mystical, beyond the common range of experience. And without such a threat, the story is like a Coke that's been opened a while ago: sweet but flat.



TOULOUSE-LAUTREC: The Complete Posters, *text by Russell Ash (Pavilion, distributed by Trafalgar Square: $34.95; unpaginated)*. Toulouse-Lautrec: The name evokes the Moulin Rouge, the *putains* of Paris, the cancan, the poseur Aristide Bruant (above), the ineffable Jane Avril . . . and *bicycle chains*? Indeed. Lautrec didn't need the money, but he loved pushing the art of lithography beyond the somewhat stodgy limits of the late 19th Century. He accepted commissions to illustrate whatever took his fancy, and while his broad range of interests centered around the demimonde, the mechanics of the bicycle fascinated him too, though his legs were too short to reach the pedals. Of his 31 posters, two advertised "Simpson's Lever Chain," one of them puckishly signed *L. B. Spoke*.

Lautrec's humor is caught in this stylish book that reproduces all of his posters in a 9x12-inch format begging to be cut out, mounted and framed. His boldness, too, bursts from the page: a few Picasso-esque lines capturing in near-caricature the spirit of his times, while Russell Ash's text underlines Lautrec's innovations and improvisations (his *crachis*—spit—technique involved flicking ink from the bristles of an old toothbrush!). Lautrec's physical stature—result of badly breaking both legs while in his teens—was dwarfed by his talent and his sheer exuberance. He "never lacked adoring female company," writes Ash—his gain and our loss: He died almost literally of wine, women and song at the age of 27. Vive Lautrec!

—Dick Roraback

The Physical Review

By PATRICIA BEHR WHITTON

There's a cold doctrine somewhere held
or just underneath the girls
who open up their legs
while travelling at night
pretty heavenly pretty tough
just visiting after dark this time they say
is this a place
like the bushes
to love in
until it's steaming up
like clover motors
those heart fingers
that fundamentally decide
where we are narrow
and we finally cry

From "The Physical Review" (Lynx House Press: $7.95; 36 pp.). Patricia Behr Whitton was born and raised on the coast of Maine, and has spent the last 25 years in Los Angeles. She teaches poetry and creative writing in the Los Angeles public schools. This is her first book of poetry. *© 1991 by Patricia Behr Whitton. Reprinted by permission of the author.*

Pomona Queen

Continued from Page 2

his makeshift coffin, into the back of Brown's panel truck, and the group goes out in search of the murderer.

Dean unwillingly accompanies Brown in a night of unexpected events. To ease the tension, Dean relates stories about his grandfather and the days when the Pomona Valley was the hub of a booming citrus industry. This allows Nunn to weave Pomona's history into his saga and comment on the changing area that now reeks of smog, trashy used-car lots, overdevelopment and lost promise.

Each chapter begins with an italicized paragraph from a Frank P. Brackett, who in 1920 wrote a "History of Pomona Valley." These snippets add very little to the novel's narrative and tend to slow it down, but Nunn's own description of Pomona's decline is compelling. In the downtown district, shoppers disappeared and were replaced by the winos who lined up to buy booze from Thrifty's drugstore. Graffiti began to appear on storefronts and businesses began to fold, Nunn writes, "and that had pretty much been it for the town. One more broken promise. One more plan gone sour. The land would only stand so many. One could look back on it now, all those folks with their big plans. . . . One could speculate, with the advantage of hindsight, upon the causes of it all. In fact, if one were so inclined, one could find evidence of the virus on every hand—the power virus as real-estate bug, the insatiable self as the death seed, the shadow at the base of the skull. . . . There was an equation somewhere."

What follows is a night of boozing with a bartender called the Stench, mayhem that includes car theft and losing Buddy's body, and an adventure filled with endless terror. Nunn displays an impressive knowledge of the ecological factors that have warped a once pristine prairie. His flair for language and explicit vision put him among the disaffected who warn of an environmental apocalypse. ■



ROBERT BURROUGHS

Alice McDermott

At Weddings and Wakes

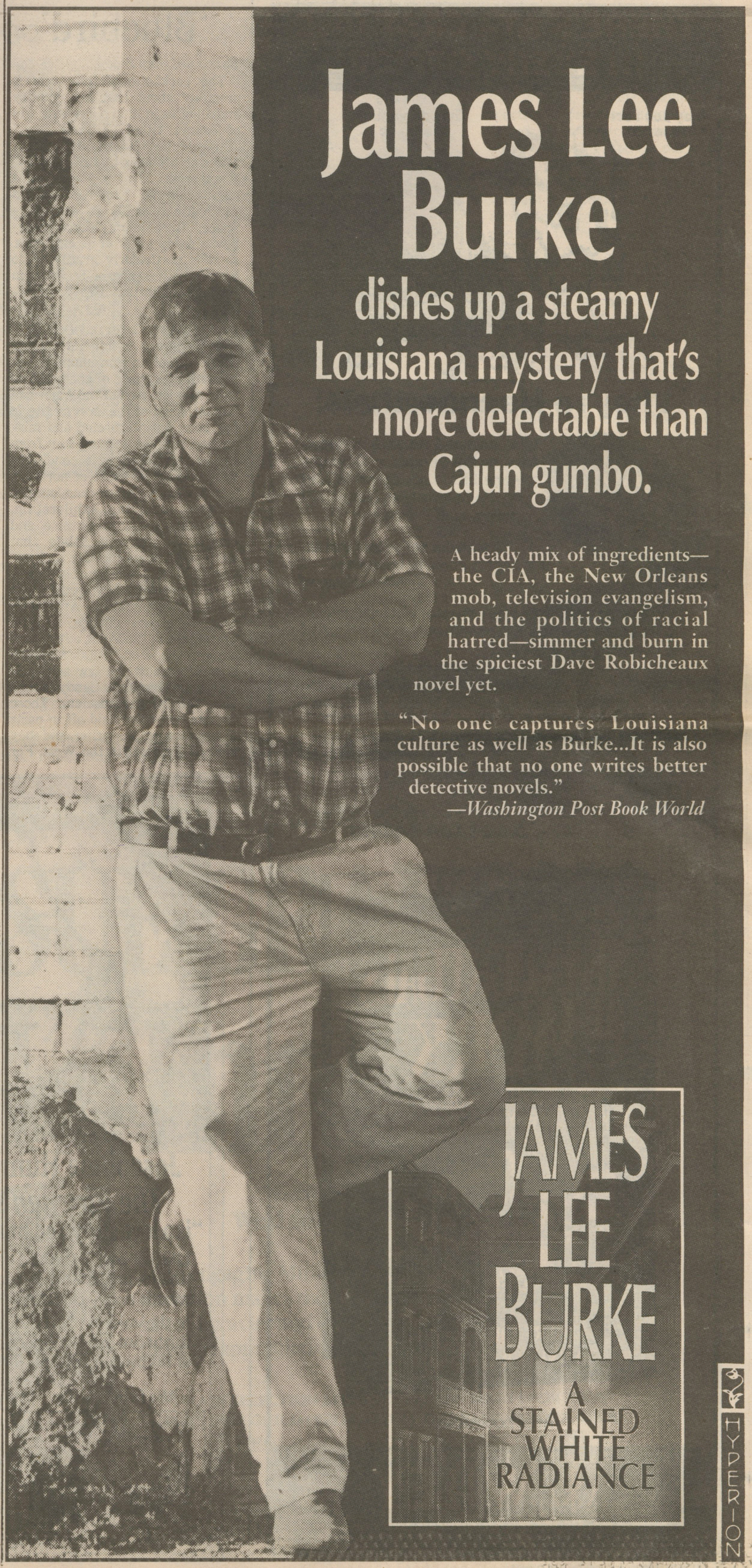
Continued from Page 3

on the eastern tip of Long Island. The Brooklyn visits are replaced by swimming, shell-collecting and fishing from a hired rowboat. It is the father's time. A slum child who remembers what a trip to the country meant to him, he insists on the two-week break to administer beauty as though it were a vitamin. Lucy enjoys it in a complaining sort of way; but each evening she treks to the public phone to plug back in to Brooklyn, and the quarrelsome remembrance that is her own vitamin.

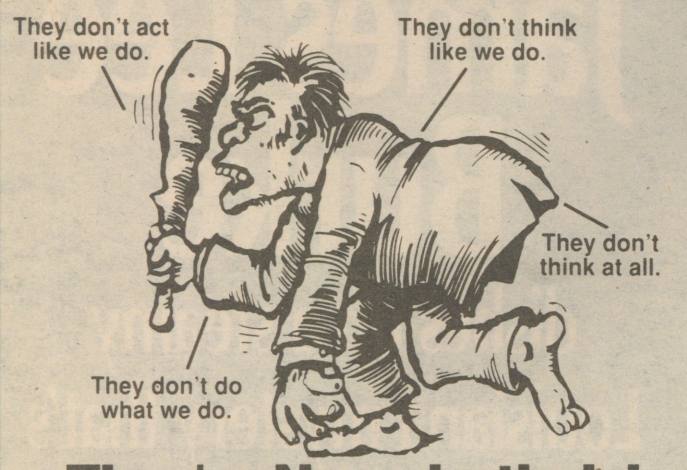
There are stories of each of the Townes, and beautifully, lightly contrasting accounts of the children's own encounters at school and elsewhere. The most vivid and winning of the Towne stories is that of May, the ex-nun who timidly falls in love with Fred, the postman, and marries him. It is a lovely courtship, though it comes tragically late. The wedding and reception are a long and skillful set piece, but their awkward celebration and embarrassing emotional misfires belong to an all too familiar genre, and don't advance it much.

On the other hand, the story of Fred is one of the most rousing and moving things in the book. It uses familiar materials—he is an Irish-American bachelor who cares for his mother until her death—but his portrait continually takes on new and unexpected shadings. McDermott can make sadness exhilarating; she can make goodness as irresistible as venial sin.

The detail in "At Weddings and Wakes" is not painstaking but hallowing; as if specific descriptions were the wards of a key and lock that, fitted exactly, open the door to the perilous magic of the past. ■



THERE'S AT LEAST ONE IN EVERY OFFICE



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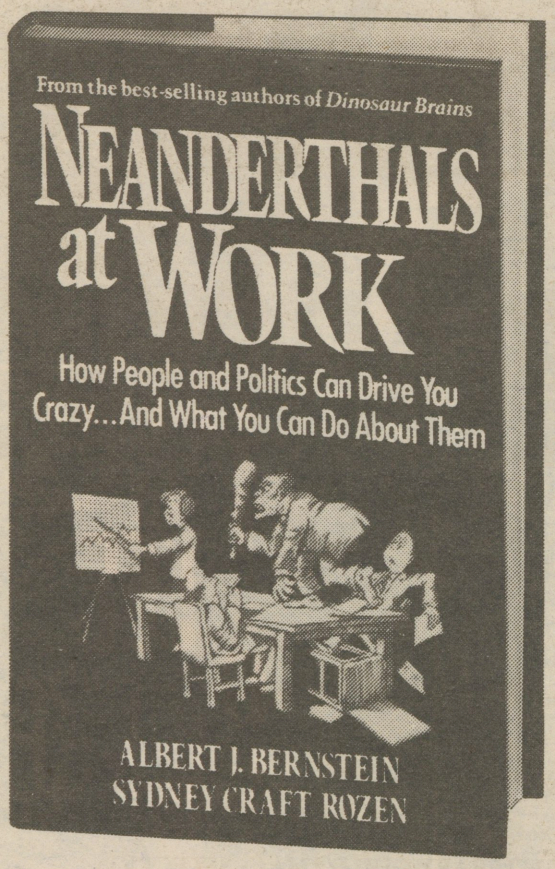

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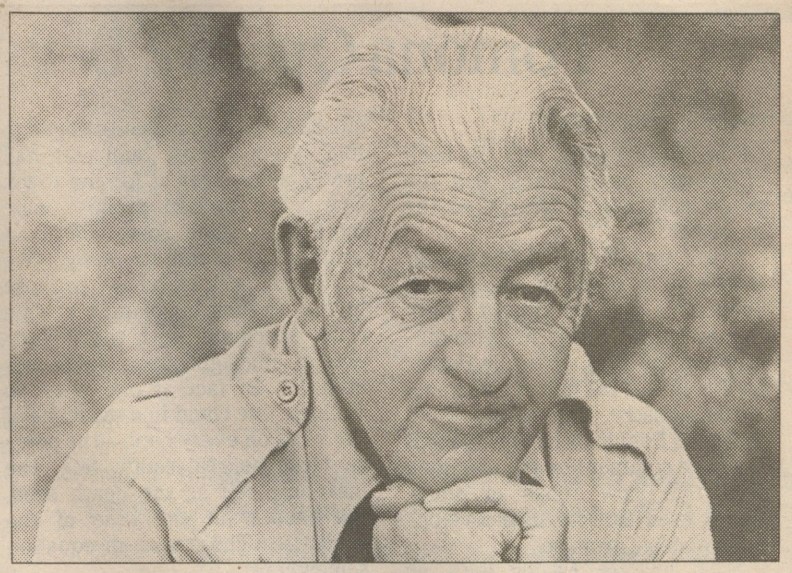
'Bluebird'

Continued from Page 1

The backbone of this book is precisely about that big country and all of us in it, in his central trio of essays titled "Living Dry," "Striking the Rock" and "Variations on a Theme by Crèvecoeur." They previously stood alone as a slim academic paperback called "The American West as Living Space," findable only if you somehow already knew of its existence, so it is particularly gratifying to have this essence-of-Stegner in broader publication. Here's the beginning:

"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."



Wallace Stegner in 1980, when he won the Times' Robert Kirsch Award (given for a body of work by a writer from the West or featuring the West).

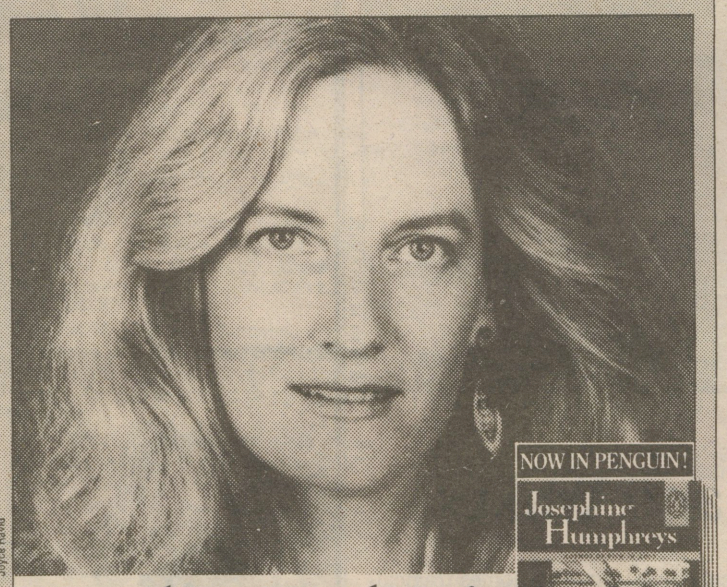
Lots of lessons in that one paragraph, an impressive number of them about the art of writing. Parallel constructions, alliteration, deft change of sentence rhythm from that 40-worder which crescendos in "the Big Rock Candy Mountain, the New Jerusalem" down to the honest power of that four-word dream-breaker: "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.

Elsewhere in the book, Stegner says 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." Here in the essay "Living Dry," he does a diamond-hard distillation of our settlement of this half-continent of mostly unreliable rain, to the conclusion: "And what do you do about aridity, if you are a nation accustomed 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 try to engineer it out of existence or adapt to it." The engineering of water where there mostly isn't any is just as trenchantly dealt with in the next essay, "Striking the Rock," as are the signs he sees of adapting ourselves to the land's circumstances—"the seedbeds for an emergent western culture"—in the finale of the three, "Variations on a Theme by Crèvecoeur."

It is a cause for wonder that Stegner, born in 1909 and thus a witness to every haywire development in the West since then, can remain full of hope. But then strong writers, the enduring hedgehog type, are said to know one big thing, and Stegner powerfully has always known his: "I really only want to say that we may love a place and still be dangerous to it."

In the quibble department, I wish this publisher had retained Stegner's useful bibliography that backed up his central trio of essays in their "Living Space" incarnation, or even better, had this splendidly cross-referential thinker furnish a suggested reading list covering this entire collection of topics. And to author and editor alike, I'll say that I don't see how it would hurt us Western boyos to lay off the use of "man" and "men" when we mean people in general, i.e. including women. (Especially since some of Stegner's most affecting passages in this book are in his "Letter, Much Too Late" to his mother.)

Like his region, which he has christened for us the native home of hope, Wallace Stegner has exemplified extraordinary variety. If, after the novels "Crossing to Safety" and "Angle of Repose" and the inspired history/biography "Beyond the Hundredth Meridian" and the marvelously unclassifiable "Wolf Willow," anybody still needs to be introduced to the work of this eloquent writer, this book of essays is a good place to start. The essential Stegner is in them, patient as a mountain range, hopeful as a bluebird. ■



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PENGUIN BOOKS

'A Good Man to Know'

Continued from Page 3

powder-blue Cadillac Dad is driving, the smell of his Lucky Strikes mixed in with river smell and malt from the Jax Brewery, and later, the drive across the Huey P. Long bridge, "where a freight train was running along the tracks over our heads." Whether or not that freight train was there at that moment in the summer of 1954, we've been immediately seduced into the pleasures of semi-documentary experience. Rudy Winston, the Dad in question and the book's title character, is not a talkative man. But we see in this chapter his knack for epigrammatic pitch when the son, our narrator, says it feels like it's going to rain: "It always feels like this in New Orleans,' " he said.

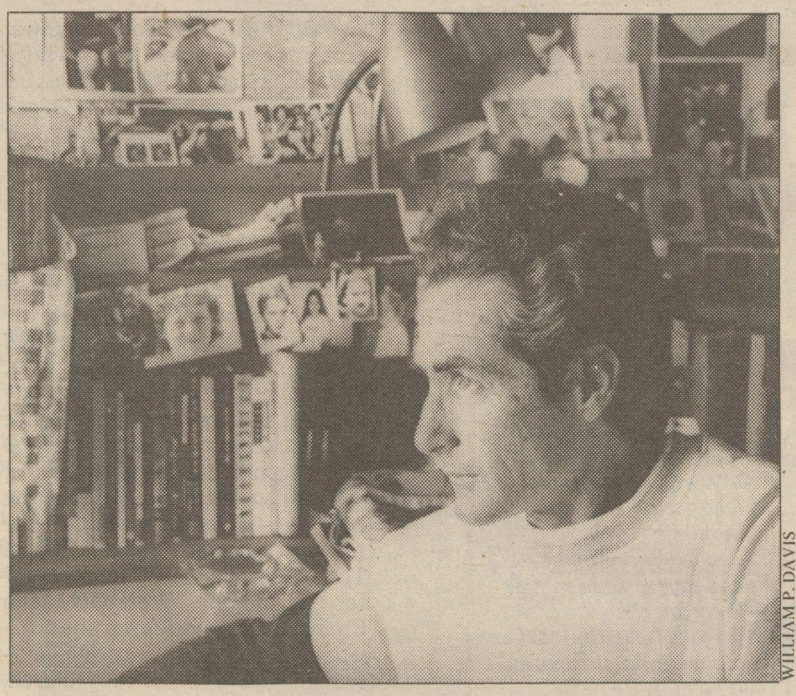
Rudy Winston is veiled, oracular, and semi- (there's that prefix again) legendary as a Jewish gangster. Thus the Roland Barthes epigram Gifford quotes: "The father, dead very early . . . merely touched the surface of childhood with an almost silent bounty."

The book is structured as a pilgrimage, and it's not only Rudy Winston but the taciturn, amiable crooks in his orbit who speak such homely and practical truths. Various relations are memorably heard from as well. A man called Uncle Buck (no relation to Hollywood's recent John Candy vehicle) has some claim as a surrogate Dad, and supplies his own kind of wisdom. Our narrator asks if he's worried about being caught with an illegal alligator hide he's just skinned: " 'People have to live,' he said, 'Not worry. A man can't do both and expect to get away with anything.' "

Gifford's journey partakes of nostalgia, but it's almost never cheaply sentimental in its particulars. Loneliness is its constant subtext, but not self-pity. We watch the kid become a man, learning to make his own fun, savoring the characters he meets, taking nobody's crap ("Memoir of a Failed Cadet" is a droll episode wherein he clashes with a "baby colonel" in ROTC).

Occasionally the seams show. "I've always thought of Moe as the kind of guy my dad would have liked . . ." goes part of the introduction to a pedestrian chapter about a mechanic buddy, soon giving way to a chapter that starts, "The only one of my friends who remembers my dad is Big Steve." Big Steve has already been profiled in Gifford's "The Neighborhood of Baseball," and this time we get scraps. We have more baseball diarists than we need, Gifford hardly being the best of them, and he luckily steers clear of that neighborhood except in spots. Some chapters feel like simple chattering, as when Gifford explains, "I was a fairly manic kid. . ."

Scattered through the text are photos of the author as a child, sometimes with either parent or with Willie, the son his dad has with second wife Eva. These semi-



WILLIAM P. DAVIS

Barry Gifford

otics of semi-autobiography lend a resonance to the prose alongside. What doesn't quite cohere is the last quarter of the book. Here we get three short obits of his dad and newspaper clips about gangsters of Winston's circle, like "Dago" Mangano, Willie (The Hero) Nero, and Samuel (Dummy) Fish (the latter a Dillinger pal; Winston was convicted of being his accessory in receiving stolen property).

Finally, there's a long FBI report entitled "The Gulf Coast Bank Sneak" implicating Winston in the theft of $20,000 in bonds from a bank in New Orleans. A key figure is Albert Thibodeaux, the man father and son went to meet in New Orleans at the book's start. This sheaf of documentation doesn't sing as it was meant to, and the pages feel like appendices, tacked on to supply the authenticity we already forgave the book for fudging.

No, the task of this book is the pilgrimage. Time and place are fractured with the illogic of life itself in the diverse string of episodes. Gifford has already memorialized his mother in "An Unfortunate Woman," and she is almost as spectral a presence here as his father. Their divorce occurs when he is quite young, and the narrator is only 12 when his father dies. Gifford's search moves inward, through a maze of concentric circles marked by gangsters' asides, and we follow it willingly. En route, we realize ever more forcefully that despite allusions to his writing success, a key mission of Gifford's life has been to seek out clues to his dad—partly to read what he can of his own destiny in them.

In life as in death, Rudy Winston was a cipher. The true center of the story occurs late, when the narrator comes home from school to be told by his mother that his dad died that morning. "You never called him last night like I told you to," said my mother. "Did you?" Staring out the front window, our young protagonist pictures his dad coming down the street, and then his mother starts talking. "At that precise moment time began to pass more quickly." Of course, the writer will discover, time at that moment also stood still. Memory and legwork will have to retrieve his father's image and substance, and the search will last a lifetime.

"A Good Man To Know" is a book about loss, yes, but more poignantly and unusually, it is about the loss of something that was never truly held. ■



A Dancer at the World's Rim

BLACK EAGLE CHILD
The Facepaint Narratives
By Ray A. Young Bear
(University of Iowa Press: $24.95; 304 pp.)

Reviewed By Douglas Glover

Albert E. Stone, in his foreword to "Black Eagle Child," calls this book an experimental autobiography. But the reader quickly discovers two things: This tale is not factual—it is full of composite characters and fictionalized events—and it is only tangentially about its author, the Mesquakie Indian poet Ray A. Young Bear, who eventually disappears behind a series of changed names, false leads, alter egos, digressions, epistories and myths.

Young Bear is a poet who makes his aesthetic home between two worlds, the native and the non-native. He is a dancer at the world's rim—a fan dancer, for he conceals as much as he reveals of himself and his people. Concealment is a key aesthetic principle, for as Young Bear constantly reiterates, there is a price to be paid for telling tribal secrets to outsiders. In his afterword to "Black Eagle Child," he recollects how his grandmother taught him that "there were things I could not write about."

As an Indian who sets himself up as an author in the white sense, Young Bear is freighted with a terrible dual responsibility: to satisfy his readers that he is being truthful and informative, and to satisfy his personal and tribal need for secrecy. He must invent a new form, the nature of which is duality, a form that is never straightforward, yet full of implication. It will be poetic, but it will not fulfill every demand of traditional poetic genre. It will always be surprising; it may not end. A code, in other words, that only the right people can break.

In his first book of poems, "Winter of the Salamander" (1980), a much younger Ray Young Bear gave a hint of forms to come:

What do you do when
there is a man
who represents your dreams
who goes talking and appraising
his deeds
and for no reason he stops
and says something new
there is a chance
for those who want to learn
but not for those who feel it
hard and difficult

For "those who want to learn," "Black Eagle Child" is a kind of non-autobiographical Zen treasure trove of non-information about Mesquakie Indians and Young Bear. It is ostensibly a poetic *Bildungsroman* centered around Edgar Bearchild, a Mesquakie boy from the Black Eagle Child Settlement in central Iowa (Young Bear is from the Mesquakie settlement near Tama, Iowa). It begins with Edgar in grade eight in 1965 and follows him through his career as the community's youngest treatable alcoholic. There's a brief stint at a prestigious liberal-arts college in California, then back to Iowa, where he becomes a successful poet haunted by UFOs. He lives off grants from the fictional Maecenas Foundation (Young Bear received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts in the 1970s).

This process of becoming a writer fascinates Edgar, who sees himself wrapped in a paper cocoon, changing, altering, saving himself from the usual fates of a reservation Indian. Learning to translate between worlds redeems him, though with redemption comes alienation and survivor's guilt, since he must separate himself from the normal communal life of his people.

Twinned with Edgar (like the twin boys of Indian legend) is the more adventurous and traditional Ted Facepaint, who follows the tenets of the Well-Off Man Church, a fictional Mesquakie affiliate of the mushroom-eating, pan-Indian Native American Church. (This, by the way, is Young Bear being highly elusive. Rather than reveal traditional Mesquakie rites and legends, he describes a modern cultural intrusion in which he has no stake. Here he seems to reveal without revealing anything.)

Like Edgar, Facepaint also heads west to college. He drops out and hitchhikes across America, trying to reach some romanticized accommodation with this alien white country, only to be beaten and robbed along the way. Back in Iowa, he continues his frenetic drinking and eventually dies—metaphorically, at least—stabbed repeatedly with a screwdriver by rogue Mesquakies nicknamed the Hyenas. He is then mystically transported to Orion, the sacred constellation of the Well-Off Man Church. "Black Eagle Child" closes, however, with Facepaint's resurrection at the hands of Rosie Grassleggings, an immensely obese native healer.

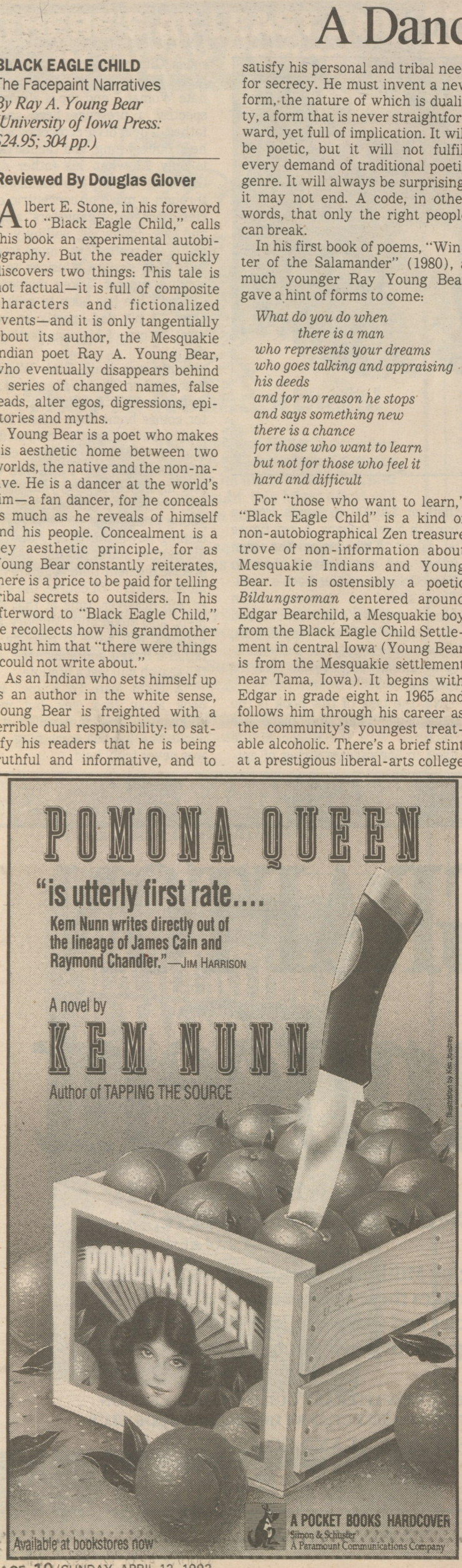
As an Indian who sets himself up as an author in the white sense, Young Bear is freighted with a terrible dual responsibility: to satisfy his readers that he is being truthful and informative, and to satisfy his personal and tribal need for secrecy.

Young Bear knits together these two narrative lines with a complex pattern of imagery. Red-haired and red-hatted people relate to the red-capped hallucinogenic mushrooms, and also to the red-haired man of some native legends. White rabbits recall the Great Hare, Nanebojo, an Algonquin culture hero, who is often paired with Jesus Christ in modern native myth.

This is the bare skeleton of Young Bear's code, the vastly complex and engaging system the reader has to learn to read. Only superficially chaotic, his narrative bears all the indications of a sophisticated and cunning literary intelligence. Young Bear has a novelist's eye for precise social and atmospheric detail.

In his afterword, the author himself calls his book a collage, but whatever you call it, "Black Eagle Child" is an example of the new blood flowing back into the hardened arteries of Anglo-American literature from the margins—from the formerly colonized, enslaved and defeated peoples who must, inevitably, change us as we have changed them. ■

Glover's most recent book, "A Guide to Animal Behavior," was nominated for the 1991 Governor-General's Award for Fiction, Canada's highest literary prize.



BOOK CALENDAR

TODAY

BALBOA ISLAND. **Allan D. Willey** signs "Rollover to Riches: Investing for Self Directed Pension Plans," Martha's Bookstore, 308½ Marin Ave., 2 p.m. (714) 673-7185.

HOLLYWOOD. **Short-story readings** of Milan Kundera's and Joyce Carol Oates' works, Lost Studio, 130 S. La Brea, $5, 2 p.m. (310) 392-0200.

LOS ANGELES. **Michelle T. Clinton, Dennis Cooper, Jim Kruso, Benjamin Weissman** read fiction and poetry, Museum of Contemporary Art, 250 S. Grand Ave., 1:30 p.m. (213) 621-1751.

NORTHRIDGE. Valley Contemporary Poets present poet **Tess Gallagher,** California State University Northridge, 18111 Nordohoff St., Campus Theatre, $10, 4 p.m. (818) 348-6722.

SAN DIEGO. **Gen Wentz, B. Abell Jurus** sign "Men in Green Faces," Brentano's, 377 Fashion Valley, 1 p.m. (619) 225-0465.

SANTA MONICA. Poet **Cynthia Waring,** followed by an open reading, The Revolution Bookstore, 2433 Main Street, $5, 6 p.m. (310) 396-4800.

SANTA MONICA. Author **Thomas Lane** reads "The Artists' Manifesto," The Revolution Bookstore, 2433 Main Street, 6 p.m. (310) 396-4800

WESTWOOD. **Eve La Salle Caram** reads "Dear Corpus Christi"; **Creative Options Journal Workshop** read "Finding Our Voices: Speaking Out Against the Violence," Sisterhood Bookstore, 1351 Westwood Blvd., 2 p.m; 3:30 p.m. respectively. (310) 477-7300.

MONDAY

LOS ANGELES. Ellen Malino James interviews Jack Brill, Alan Reder ("Investing From The Heart"), KPFK-FM (90.7), 9 a.m. (818) 985-2711.

WEST LOS ANGELES. **Patricia Cornwell** autographs "Body of Evidence," Waldenbooks, Westside Pavillion, 10800 W. Pico Blvd., 12:30 p.m. (213) 474-6550.

TUESDAY

CENTURY CITY. **Nancy Freedman** signs "The Seventh Stone," Brentano's Bookstore, 10250 Santa Monica Blvd., 7:30 p.m. (213) 785-0204.

LA JOLLA. **Sue Grafton** signs "I Is for Innocent," Warwick's, 7812 Girard Ave., 2 p.m. (619) 454-0347.

PASADENA. **Gloria Horstman** reviews a variety of books, Vroman's Bookstore, 695 E. Colorado Blvd., 7 p.m. (818) 449-5320.

SAN DIEGO. **Jayne Relaford Brown, Wendy Caster, Marian Thacher** read new works, Blue Door Bookstore, 3823 5th Ave., 7:30 p.m. (619) 298-8610.

SANTA MONICA. **Bob Lees** reviews "Thomas Jefferson: An Intimate History," Santa Monica Public Library, 1343 6th St., 1:30 p.m. (213) 458-8606.

SANTA MONICA. Author **Marvin Saltzman** signs and discusses "Eurail Guide," California Map Center, 3211 Pico Blvd., 7 p.m. (310) 829-6277.

WEDNESDAY

BRENTWOOD. **Marti Leimbach** reads and signs "Sun Dial Street," Dutton's Books, 11975 San Vicente Blvd., 7 p.m. (310) 476-6263.

CENTURY CITY. **Sue Grafton** autographs "I Is For Innocent," Brentano's, 10250 Santa Monica Blvd., 1 p.m. (213) 785-0204.

GLENDALE. The **Chapter 1 Club** (4th-8th grades), Glendale Public Library, 222 E. Harvard St., 1 p.m. (818) 547-2048.

IRVINE. **Michael Golding** reads fiction, **Christy Pobanz** reads poetry, University of California, Irvine, Humanities Office Building, 7:30 p.m. (714) 856-2204.

LOS ANGELES. **Storytime** with Melanie Contreras (1½+), Happily Ever After, 2640 Griffith Park Blvd., 10:30 a.m. (213) 668-1996.

LOS ANGELES. Poetry reading with **Tom Lux,** UCLA, Wright Art Gallery, 8 p.m. (310) 206-4897.

LOS ANGELES. **Sue Grafton** signs "I Is for Innocent," Mysterious Bookshop, 8763 Beverly Blvd., 6 p.m. (310) 659-2959.

MALIBU. William Menger leads discussion of **Mordecai Richler's** "Joshua Then And Now," Malibu Community Center, 1655 S. Fernhill Dr., 1 p.m. (310) 457-1558.

PASADENA. **Storytime,** Vroman's Bookstore, 695 E. Colorado Blvd., 10 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. (818) 449-5320.

THURSDAY

BEVERLY HILLS. **Tippi Hedren** ("The Cats of Shambala"), Dr. **Herbert L. Abrams** ("The President Has Been Shot"), **Barbara Wilkins** ("In Name Only"), **Sattareh Farman Farmaian** ("Daughter of Persia"), Round Table West Luncheon, Beverly Wilshire Hotel, Wilshire at Rodeo, $35, noon. (213) 256-7977.

BRENTWOOD. **Sue Grafton** signs and reads "I Is for Innocent," and other works, Dutton's Books, 11975 San Vicente Blvd., 7 p.m. (310) 476-6263.

LA JOLLA. **Sattareh Farman Farmaian** discusses her autobiography, "Daughter Of Persia," Warwick's, 7812 Girard Ave., 7:30 p.m. (619) 454-0347.

SANTA MONICA. **Lynne S. Olmos** signs and discusses "Talking With Your Child About a Troubled World," Revolution Bookstore, 2433 Main St., 7 p.m. (310) 396-4800.

FRIDAY

WEST HOLLYWOOD. **Dennis Cooper** reads and signs "Wrong," A Different Light Bookstore, 8853 Santa Monica Blvd., 8 p.m. (310) 854-6601.

SATURDAY

BURBANK. KPFK's **The Car Show** broadcast live, Greg Von Dare, David Fetherston, Michael Lamm, Ashleigh Brilliant, George Peters sign their automotive books, Autobooks, Etc., 3524 W. Magnolia, noon. (818) 845-0707.

NORTH HOLLYWOOD. **Marilyn Hochheiser, Mona Locke, Ron Reichick** celebrate VERVE, the Iguna Cafe, 10943 Camarillo St., 9 p.m. (818) 763-7735.

SOUTH PASADENA. **Robert Tanenbaum** signs "Reversible Error," Book'em Mysteries, 1118 Mission St., 2 p.m. (818) 799-9600.

SAN DIEGO. **Jill Smith** signs, discusses "Death and Taxes," Grounds for Murder Mystery Book Store, 3287 Adams Ave., 3 p.m., 6 p.m. (619) 284-4436.

SANTA BARBARA. **Gene Wentz, B. Abell Jurus** sign "Men in Green Faces," Brentano's, Paseo Nuevo, 1 p.m. (805) 564-2385.

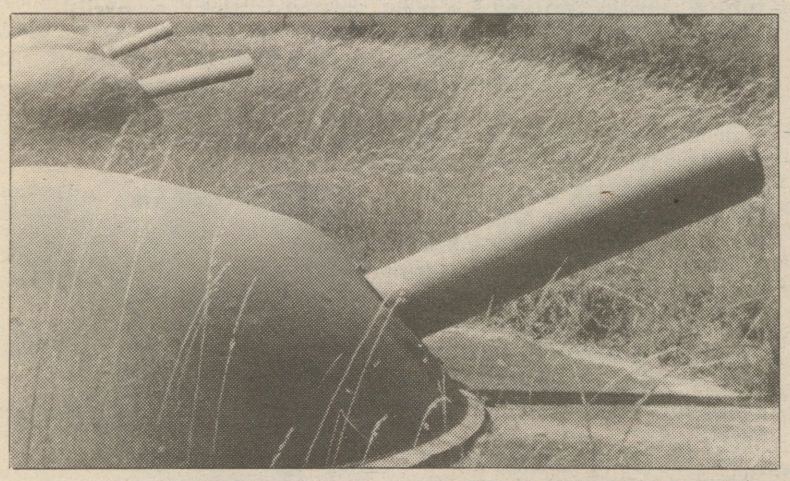
WEST LOS ANGELES. **Mary Hirschfeld** signs "Adult Children of Divorce Workbook," Waldenbooks & More Books, 11870 Santa Monica Blvd., 2 p.m. (310) 826-8536.

Send notices for Book Calendar to Ethel Alexander, Book Review, Los Angeles Times, Los Angeles, 90053 or FAX (213) 237-4712, in Book Calendar format; *11 days before issue date. Notices must be in writing; telephone notices not accepted. Book Calendar lists only free events or those $35 or less.*

DEPT. OF GRIEVIOUS ERRORS

In his review of Edward Berenson's "The Trial of Madame Caillaux" [March 8], Stefan Kanfer notes how France was "so intoxicated by this courtroom drama that it scarcely noticed the soldiers marching toward the Maginot Line."

Either the intoxication produced a terrible hangover, or else this was the longest murder trial in history. The trial began in 1914, but troops did not march toward the Maginot Line until 1939. In fact, the French government did not decide to build that fortification until 1930, 16 years after the Caillaux trial.



Guns defending the Maginot line

DAVID E. ROSS
AGOURA

□

It would help Mr. Kanfer to march toward a public library . . .

B. BRAUER
VAN NUYS

□

Most of those unfortunate soldiers were less than two feet tall in 1914 . . .

ED STOFFEL
LANCASTER

□

What's 20-odd years to an arts critic, eh?

J. NEIL GIELEGHEM
LOS ANGELES

□

Kanfer's review suggests that your editors need to find the time to utilize more scholarship in their work, if the pursuit of the trendy permits.

J. WILLIAM THOMPSON MD
LOS ANGELES

□

This casualness about the order of events is not entirely harmless. It permits nonsensical claims about causality.

A recent example is Quayle's assertion that Bush's 1990 breaking of his "no new taxes" promise was due to the Persian Gulf War. In fact, Bush's proposals were made *before* Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

JAMES B. ELLERN
EL SEGUNDO

□

I am generously prepared to exculpate your reviewer for this egregious error on the grounds of his putative youth. But where, oh where, was the [darn] copy editor?

JOAN M. GREENWAY
Prof. Emeritus, Social Sciences]Cal Poly Pomona
LA VERNE

Thanks to the above and to more than 20 other readers for turning their cannons in the right direction. (You know who you are!)—The [darn] copy editor.

LIFE IN LEAVENWORTH

Re Pete Earley's latest book, "The Hot House," [Feb. 16]:

The Bureau of Prisons believes that the public should be made aware of several facts. Specifically, the book gives the average citizen an interesting but narrow view of life and work in a high-security prison. It's a good book as far as it goes—catering to America's fascination with the criminal extreme. But it falls short in several areas, distorting a great deal of the picture it attempts to portray.

Mr. Earley focuses on a small group of particularly notorious inmates and an equally limited and unrepresentative group of correctional staff. While their experiences and comments are sometimes rather surprising and colorful, they should not be used as the basis for characterizing the entire inmate population and staff of the U.S. Penitentiary at Leavenworth, much less of the Bureau of Prisons as a whole.

Mr. Early clearly has missed seeing the critical balances between security and self-improvement programs, supervision and productive activity, control and humane treatment, which keep a major prison running every day. Indeed, Mr. Earley missed the essence of Leavenworth—bustling factories, active literacy programs, effective drug treatment, cultural diversity, dedicated community volunteers. He seems unable to grasp how 1,200 of the most sophisticated, dangerous individuals in this country can live together in close proximity yet maintain relative calm. If, as "The Hot House" would lead its readers to think, Leavenworth is such an erratic, anarchic place, under the supervision of venal, callous, vulgar staff, why did it run so well for Mr. Earley's two years there, and has done so both prior to and since these two years?

At this level, the book leaves many unanswered questions—questions for which the public deserves answers in a time when the U.S. is expanding significant amounts of tax dollars for prisons. Very little violence occurs over the two years—why? If the institution verges on anarchy, why isn't there a riot or murder every day? If working at Leavenworth (where no employee carries a weapon inside the facility) is so risky, why would anyone work there? Despite the extent and duration of Mr. Earley's experience there—and his ability to gain the confidence of (or be conned by) some of the most predatory and sophisticated inmates in custody—he seems to have seen only a thin veneer of prison life and failed to see its essence.

Mr. Earley makes it clear the Bureau initially didn't want him to profile Leavenworth: It's old; its facilities are far from ideal; and its high-security inmates are not typical of most offenders. In the face of those concerns, the Bureau's cooperation in this enterprise is ample testimony to the agency's confidence not only that it has nothing to hide, but also that Leavenworth is an excellent institution.

"The Hot House" portrays a Federal prison, its staff and inmates by focusing selectively on small subsets of inmates and staff. Even though the book contains a number of disappointing factual errors and fails to capture many important facets of life in Leavenworth—its well-honed policies and procedures and the staff competence and professionalism that keep it running year after year—Mr. Earley's perseverance and ability to synthesize a picture of some portions of prison life make this one of the more engaging books about maximum-security prisons written by an outsider.

The pity is that despite his unique access, Mr. Earley took the easy way out. As a product of journalistic expediency and the marketplace, "The Hot House" is exciting reading. But as a chronicle of day-to-day corrections that could have helped the public see the real world of prisons, it falls far short.

J. MICHAEL QUINLAN, Director
Federal Bureau of Prisons
WASHINGTON, D.C.

'UNRELIEVED GLOOM'

"The only thing he can think of to do with its hero is to have him commit suicide" [In Brief, March 8]. Substitute "In Brief" for "he." Substitute "reader" for "hero."

Suicide seems to be the least that can be expected by anyone who reads the six books reviewed.

Talk about unrelieved gloom and despair! How's Michael Harris holding up?

I'm going back to "Emma."

KAY WALKER
PASADENA

MAXIMA CULPA

It's humbling to have to admit what an editor's eye can pass over, unseeing. The author of "Memoirs of Hecate County" (in our March 22 review of "Girls Lean Back Everywhere") is Edmund Wilson.

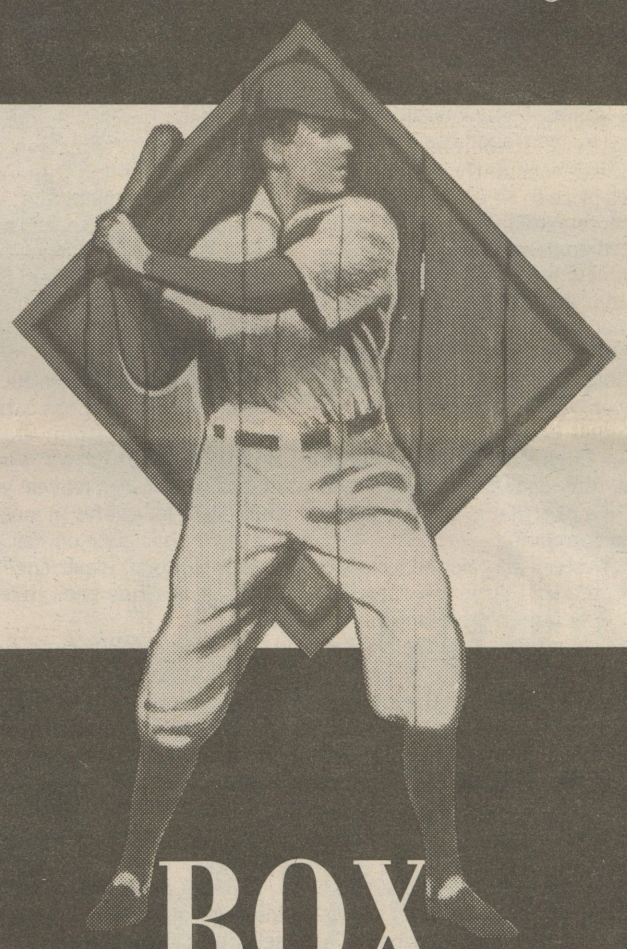
The Book Review welcomes expressions of all views from readers. Letters should be kept as brief as possible and are subject to condensation. They must include a signature, a valid mailing address and a phone number. Because of the volume of mail received, unpublished individual letters cannot be acknowledged. Send to:

The Book Review, Los Angeles Times, Times Mirror Square, Los Angeles 90053.

His spectacular new novel of life, love, and baseball.

W.P. KINSELLA

author of *Shoeless Joe*



BOX SOCIALS

Introducing some of the quirkiest, rowdiest, hottest-blooded folks in fiction, BOX SOCIALS begins with a legendary baseball showdown, but quickly takes a hilarious detour through the small towns, ball fields, barns and bedrooms of Alberta, Canada in the 1940's.

By turns randy, riveting and heart-breaking, this is easily the best yet by the acclaimed creator of *Field of Dreams.*

A Ballantine Hardcover

By CHARLES CHAMPLIN

Sharyn McCrumb, who won an Edgar in 1988 for "Bimbos of the Death Star," can be one of funniest of crime writers, a social satirist well displayed in 1990's "The Windsor Knot." But she can also be movingly serious, a side of her versatility wonderfully displayed in **The Hangman's Beautiful Daughter** (Scribner's: $19; 306 pp.).

The title, unfortunately, is as misleading as a movie trailer. The Hangman is a mountain-top formation; the identity of the beautiful daughter is a bafflement. McCrumb, who lives in Virginia, writes with special fondness and insight about Appalachia, and she returns to it in this many-stranded account of life deep in the hills and hollers of Tennessee.

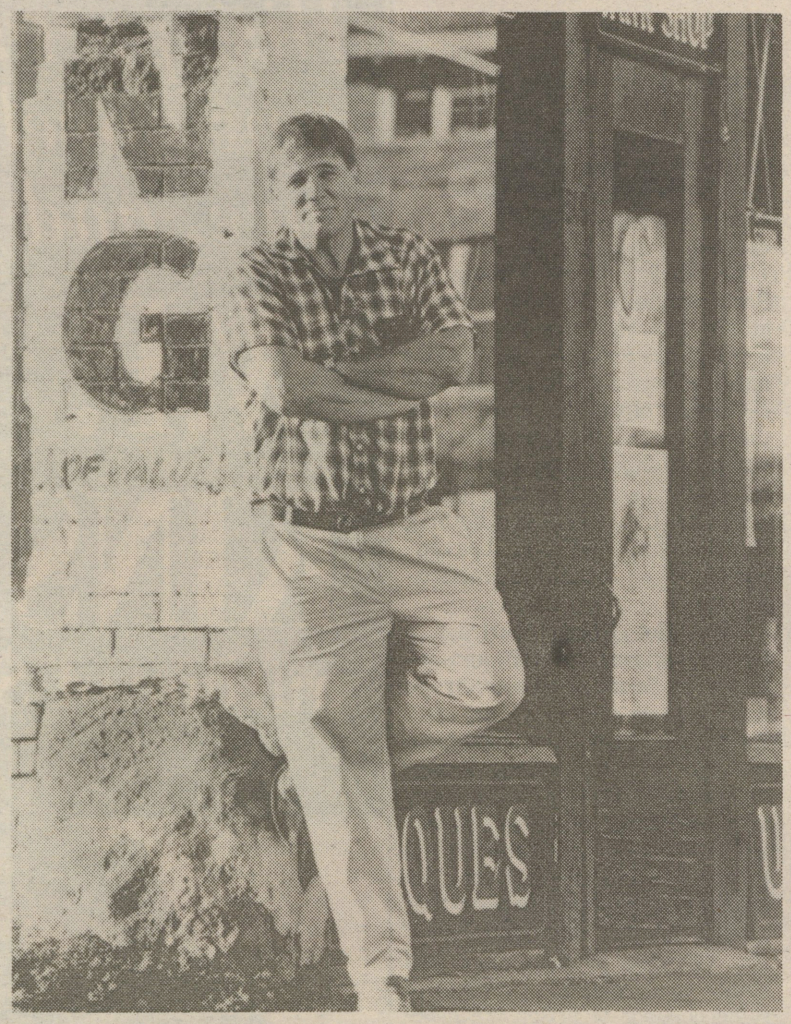
McCrumb's dominating figure, an elderly spinster who has what locals call The Sight (the unsought gift of foretelling tragedies she can't prevent), becomes a kind of Celtic chorus on the dramas and the players. The central event has been the slaughter of a new family in the vicinity. A teen-ager has killed his father (a retired Army officer) and mother, a kid brother and then himself, leaving two other teen-aged siblings to fend for themselves. The why of it is the novel's mystery, and its denouement is affectingly sad.

But there is more than a mystery this time. There is in fact very nearly an "Our Town" feeling to McCrumb's account of daily existence in Dark Hollow: the church socials, the endemic poverty, the sense of a past that is both nourishing and entrapping.

The mystery may not be a classic puzzle, but of suspense there is plenty. The fate of the dazed survivors is suspenseful. So is the fight of an old man (dying of cancer undoubtedly caused by the town's poisoned river) to bring to account the owner of the polluting paper mill upstream. (This becomes a hilariously satisfying confrontation amid the other, more somber goings-on.)

Suspenseful as well is the life and pregnancy of the wife of a young local preacher who is off being a chaplain in the Gulf war and who is confronting his growing uncertainty about his vocation. (Here as elsewhere, the reader is led to speculate about events that will extend beyond the novel's end.)

By its nature, crime fiction—intending to be a pleasing diversion—does not often provoke tears.



James Lee Burke

Even its bloodiest deaths are relievingly bloodless, its pains savingly distanced from the reader. But McCrumb draws you close, makes you care, leaves you with the sense, sought for in most fiction, that what has gone on has been not invention but experience recaptured. It is a fine book, mistitled or not.

The ever-prolific Ruth Rendell is back with her fifth novel written as Barbara Vine; as always, she seems by any name to delight in setting herself challenges—creating stories remarkable in their placings, their multiple and crosshatched relationships and their psychological complexity.

In **King Solomon's Carpet** (Harmony/Crown: $20; 352 pp.), Vine's setting is a moldering old London mansion, once a private school, situated near a tube station. The house has become a kind of commune, negligently presided over by a descendant of the schoolkeepers, a young man whose passion is for subway systems worldwide. He is writing a history of the London Underground, and the lore Vine has dug up, to coin a phrase, is fascinating.

The commune inhabitants include a terrorist, some buskers (musicians who work the tube stations) and assorted soiled kin of the landlord. As she did in "The House of Stairs," Vine creates a gallery of vivid eccentrics operating along a narrow border between despair and tragedy.

In mid-story Vine does a set-piece of sustained dramatic action (the planting of a bomb) that would not be out of place in Ambler, Fleming or Forsyth.

Vine does not put much stock in happy endings—this one is to a high degree explosive—and what she generates for her characters is closer to pity than sympathy, which is probably why some readers find her austere and off-putting. But no one gets inside aberrant psychological states like Rendell/Vine, and no one, in my view, does books that are more continually surprising and exciting.

American crime fiction has no finer prose stylist than James Lee Burke, and he has never been better than in **A Stained White Radiance** (Hyperion: $19.95; 305 pp.), the fifth of his stories about Dave Roubicheaux, a New Orleans detective who also runs a bait shop out in the bayous, with his wife and the adopted daughter he rescued after a plane crash in an earlier adventure. (The title is from Shelley.)

Burke, who grew up on the Gulf Coast but has had a peripatetic life, including a hitch as a social worker in Los Angeles, wrote several "straight" novels and a collection of fine short stories before turning to mysteries. He is an intricate plotter with all the narrative gifts of the born storyteller. Yet he is uncommonly concerned with and eloquent about the textures and the stresses of his times.

In the new book, set in the Louisiana turf that produced David Duke, he creates a racist right-winger named Bobby Earl Sonnier, one of a family Roubicheaux had grown up with, watching their graspings and their aspirations. Beyond the family's problems, Roubicheaux faces some particularly vicious New Orleans thugs, who very nearly put an end to the detective's career.

Yet the novel's interest lies not simply in the pulsing events, gripping as they are, but in Roubicheaux's (and Burke's) perceptions of what they mean.

"Bobby Earl's ilk," Roubicheaux thinks, "want power so badly that at some point in their lives they make a conscious choice to embrace evil. . . . They do it without reservation, and that's when they leave the rest of us."

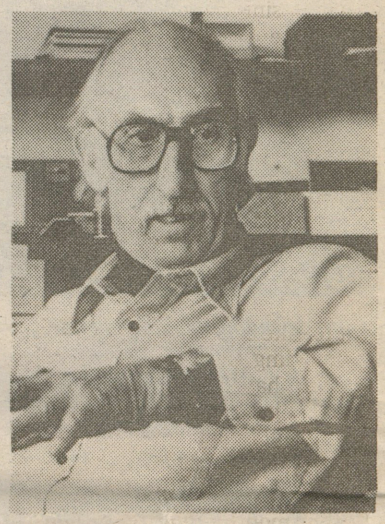
Burke is notable for his conveyance of the banality of evil, but he is notable not less for his compassion and for his ultimate faith in the power of decent human relationships to triumph, somehow.

Michael Collins of Santa Barbara has as his present series figure the one-armed private investigator Dan Fortune, whose last adventures were in Central American jungles. But, like Burke, Collins is perceptive about and sensitive to the world immediately around him, and he examines it with special care in **Cassandra in Red** (Donald I. Fine: $19.95; 248 pp.).

A homeless young woman, known as Cassandra to the other homeless in whose behalf she had been an activist, is found stabbed to death in a Santa Barbara playground storeroom where she was crashing. Had her activism gone too far for someone of power, or was it a random robbery/murder? Fortune's nosings-around lead to some of the city's street gangs (not as lethal as those in Los Angeles but still potentially violent). He is also led to a particularly nasty sect of rich Anglo teen-agers.

Collins knows the turf very well, and the racial tensions and emotions that crackle across it, and he tells a story that carries the sting of the very possible. It is a provocative entertainment.

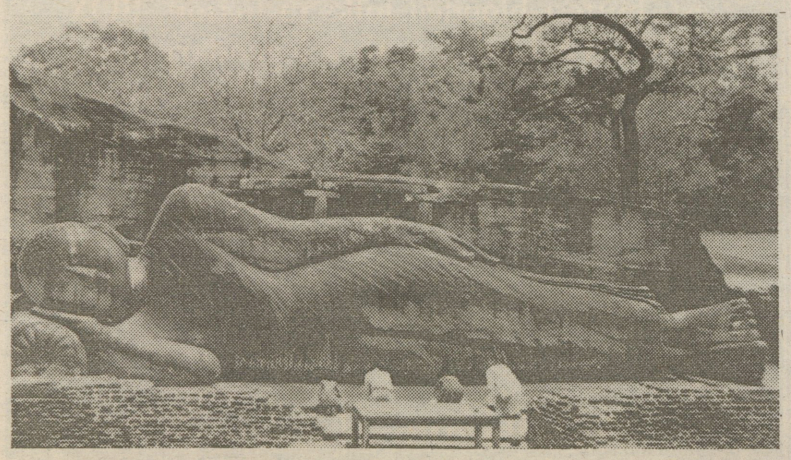
Robert K. Tanenbaum, former assistant D.A. in Manhattan, former mayor of Beverly Hills, presently a political candidate for higher office, has written previous thrillers about a New York assistant D.A. named Butch Karp. **Reversible Error** (Dutton: $20; 292 pp.), like the earlier works, bears an unmistakable stamp of authenticity. The overworked staffers, plea-bargaining simply to prevent an overburdened justice system from freezing-up totally; the conniving and corruption, the political pressures and the bitter humor—it says the reality can't be much different.



Michael Collins

This time some big drug dealers are being gunned down; no great loss, except that it's evidently being done by cops in the pay of some very highly placed figures. Karp steps neck-deep into a game of deceptions and counterdeceptions. In a parallel plot, Karp's colleague and love, Marlene, is trying to trap a serial rapist and nearly gets killed for her pains.

Reading Tanenbaum is a guided tour through a vivid if depressing milieu is which justice is not only blind but also enfeebled. ■



Giant Buddha in Sri Lanka.

'Only Man Is Vile'

Continued from Page 4

Almost lost in McGowan's pages of hand-wringing doubt and sometimes angry frustration are some nuggets of brilliance. A chapter entitled "Christmas in Batti" is a travelogue of McGowan's holiday visit to the Catholic bishop in the war-torn east-coast town of Batticaloa. The trip becomes a vivid, escalating cycle of violence, beginning with a terrifying bombardment of the rectory by India's "peacekeeping" force. Here the story takes us as close to the roots of the island's despair as any account ever written: "If they gave me an injection to die, I would take it," a retired Tamil railroad clerk tells McGowan. The author continues: "The train we were on finally lurched forward after soldiers discovered no bombs aboard." Then, returning to the railway clerk's voice: "It is no longer good to live here. Hitler was a good man. At least he killed the Jews all at once. Here, they are doing it slowly."

McGowan would have needed many more such characters to show him the inner workings of a national soul that could leave so much flesh so casually discarded in the verdant jungles of Serendip.

"I left Sri Lanka burned out, physically and emotionally," the author unabashedly explains. "During all the time I spent thinking about and writing this book, I resisted the full implications of what I had seen and come to feel."

"The full implications" are exactly what the reader misses, but what are in Sri Lanka's situation, perhaps, impossible to deliver. ■

'Skin Tight'

Continued from Page 1

Byron has prefaced his story with an account of the remote Moroccan village of Debdu, which for hundreds of years was riven by a blood feud between two families, each claiming a half-ownership of a synagogue—two families named Cohan and Morciano. Reading that the Nakash brothers have decided to hand over their money to descendants of these same Morcianos, one wants to scream out: Forget the $4.7 million! Go back to Brooklyn! Eat the loss and count yourselves rich! But no.

Guess? is an aptly named company, a place where nothing is quite what it seems. Just as Jordache captured the frolicsome sexuality of the '70s, Guess? cultivates an image that's mysterious and riveting, with a sinister edge—just right for a time when sex becomes freighted with death. And this seems to be one company whose image is an accurate projection of the people behind it. As Byron presents the story, for $4.7 million the Nakash brothers buy their way into a snake pit, an ever-widening sinkhole writhing with demons.

Because the Marcianos make their deal just as their company is about to take off, they soon succeed in persuading themselves that the Nakashes have fraudulently underpaid. What is to all appearances just a normal if ill-advised business deal becomes to them, as Byron puts it, "a fraud upon the Torah."

Within months they file a lawsuit charging the Nakashes with racketeering. To bolster their case they hire a snoop firm, then go to federal prosecutors with allegations that the Nakashes are engaged in tax fraud. Armed G-men show up at Jordache headquarters in New York and carry off every piece of paper they can find. The district attorney's office never follows through because it's swamped by more serious cases—Wed-tech, Iran-Contra, corruption in the Bronx, insider trading on Wall Street. Nonetheless, the Nakashes hire their own private eye and go to a different set of federal prosecutors with their own allegations. And so forth.

Litigation is as common in America as street crime, but the Marcianos and the Nakashes bring a new level of ferocity to the game. They treat business as a form of Middle Eastern politics, with shifting loyalties and plots within plots and depositions that go off like car bombs. The spectacular profits of the designer-jeans trade give them access to the highest-paid legal talent in the country, which they deploy with the eagerness of oil-rich potentates drunk on military hardware.

Meanwhile, the snake pit becomes a yawning chasm, engulfing not only the seven feuding brothers and their two companies but the Internal Revenue Service, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, U.S. attorneys' offices in New York and Los Angeles, grand juries on both coasts, a Congressional subcommittee, several top-flight Wall Street law firms, various private-investigation agencies, and much of the American media.



The Nakashes, from left, Joe, Ralph and Avi.



The Marcianos, from left, Armand, Georges, Maurice and Paul.

Investigations are launched, and then counterinvestigations, and then investigations to investigate the investigators. Now, with a former associate and a key source virulently attacking Byron's integrity as a journalist, the sinkhole is threatening to consume the book itself.

In an 11-page, single-spaced letter to Byron's publisher, Times reporter Richard Behar, a former associate of Byron's at Forbes magazine, charges him with a variety of deceitful acts, from conning a source to feeding the Marcianos confidential information. The source in question, onetime Jordache investigator Octavio Pena, has weighed in with several missives of his own, including a 17-page document in which he accuses Byron of distorting the facts in order to discredit him. A minor figure in the drama has accused Byron of racial slurs and compared him (somewhat hysterically, it would seem) to former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke. All three complaints have been widely circulated to book reviewers, creating a group rebuttal that follows the book around like so much unclaimed baggage.

The relationship between Byron and his accusers is as tangled as anything else in this tale. Behar was the Forbes reporter who broke the story of how the Marcianos inveigled the IRS into the case; Byron was his editor and his mentor. They got their story from Pena, a private eye with a specialty in clandestine tape recordings, who fed it to them on behalf of the Nakashes. Behar and Byron originally planned to write a book on the subject together, but they lost enthusiasm for the project and dropped it. Byron resurrected it when he left Forbes, at which point Behar turned over his notes and some 45 tapes that Pena had given the magazine to substantiate his charges against the Marcianos.

Much of what Behar and Pena now have to say against Byron seems overblown, even silly. When Behar complains that Byron "does not even disclose that he was the editor of my piece until a footnote" near the end of the book, you have to wonder: Where was he supposed to disclose it? In flashing lights on the title page? Similarly, Behar's charge that Byron downplays the significance of the Forbes story simply does not square with what Byron has written. But two charges cannot be dismissed so easily, and they are by far the most serious: that Byron seduced, betrayed and finally smeared Octavio Pena, and that he violated his word as a journalist, not only revealing Pena as the chief source of the Forbes story but sharing Pena's tapes with the Marcianos themselves.

As the fallout from the Clarence Thomas hearings has just reminded us, exposing a confidential source is something most journalists would go to jail to avoid doing. Confidentiality is the *sine qua non* of serious reporting, since few sources are going to say anything inimical to their own immediate self-interest without it. Obviously a source could be using the reporter, hiding behind a veil of anonymity while making reckless or unfounded charges. That's why good reporters check and cross-check and try to maintain a skeptical eye. But an honest reporter does not, for any reason, reveal a source whose identity he has promised to protect—not in print, not in court, and certainly not to the other side in an out-of-control legal dispute.

Did Byron do it? Shortly before the book's publication, the magazine Inside Media reported that he denied the allegations as "baseless" and refused further comment. In the same article, Byron's editor at Simon & Schuster said the publisher's attorneys were "completely satisfied that there is no confidentiality agreement that binds Chris." Does that mean there's an agreement that doesn't bind him? Pena told the magazine he was given a Forbes confidentiality agreement signed by Behar (but not Byron). Meanwhile, an attorney for Forbes has written S&S and Guess?, requesting the return of all confidential tapes and documents. The pit widens. The snakes hiss.

It's difficult to believe that a journalist as experienced as Byron—now the business columnist at New York magazine and the author previously of "The Fanciest Dive," a well-reviewed book on the disastrous launch of Time's TV-Cable Week magazine—would do something as stupid as exposing his chief source to his enemies. (Behar says Byron did it after the Marcianos convinced him that Pena had planted false information in an attempt to get one of them deported.) On the other hand, stranger things have happened, many of them in the pages of this very book. And whether Byron betrayed Pena to the Marcianos or not, his treatment of him in the book is unfortunate.

Byron maintains a breezy skepticism through most of the volume, but when Pena crops up, the tone tends to downshift into ridicule. Describing the investigator as a Mexican-American who "had worked hard to make himself seem bigger than he was," he then holds him up against a rogue's gallery of pop-culture caricatures, from the Frito Bandito to Señor Wences. Although Byron never quite articulates it, his book suggests that Pena's knuckleheaded schemes, which come off as bad imitations of the Marcianos' devious machinations, are what keep the Nakashes from being purely the victim in this case and make them villains as well. Are his verbal jabs the result of some misplaced anger over Pena's handling of the case? Or do they stem from more complicated feelings, arising perhaps out of resentment over Pena's manipulation of Forbes, or misgivings over his own treatment (whatever it may have been) of Pena?

These issues aside, there is much that is disappointing about the book. Its organization, particularly in the early chapters, is disturbingly haphazard. In a story as complicated as this one, it doesn't help to have the first meeting of the Nakashes and the Marcianos come 44 pages after they've consummated the deal. And in a weirdly clumsy reversal of new-journalism techniques, Byron repeatedly climbs inside his characters' heads only to tell us he doesn't know what's going on there. "What Paul [Marciano] may have thought during those silent, spying moments is a mystery," he writes at one point. "But it's a fair bet he wasn't thinking about . . ."

All the same, Byron succeeds in conveying the essential mindlessness of the dispute, so monumental in its inconsequentiality, yet so consuming of all who venture near it. His story comes to a fitting end when the Nakashes and the Marcianos, after seven years and an estimated $80 million in legal fees, settle with each other and turn against their lawyers. It seems similarly inevitable that the book itself would be caught up in the feud—that the story, having marred its protagonists, would turn against its chronicler as well. There are no heroes here, only victims. And if there is a moral, it is only this:

Stick with Levi's. ■

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PAPERBACKS

By CHARLES SOLOMON

CITY OF QUARTZ: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles *by Mike Davis, with photographs by Robert Morrow (Vintage: $14.)*. In this often devastating socio-economic history, Mike Davis argues that Los Angeles "has come to play the double role of utopia *and* dystopia for advanced capitalism." The same city has become the symbol of the future everyone desires and the future that doesn't work. Any number of books have recounted the fads and frauds of Southern California's colorful past, but Davis offers a ferociously left-wing interpretation of these developments, stressing the role of power, money and the conflict between various groups of haves and have-nots. In addition to the familiar stories of the development of the San Fernando Valley and the widening gap between the rich and poor, he comments on such diverse phenomena as the rise and fall of Kaiser Steel, Cardinal Mahoney's opposition to the attempts to unionize the gravediggers in Catholic cemeteries and the popularity of fortress-like architecture during the '80s. Davis has a weakness for the melodramatic turn of phrase, and some passages seem to have been written with a thesaurus at his side. But despite these flaws, "City of Quartz" stands as a fascinating and appalling account of the development of an increasingly bizarre city.

IN SEARCH OF BEAUTY AND LOVE *by Ruth Prawer Jhabvala (Touchstone: $10.)*. Reading this curious novel by the author of the Oscar-winning screenplay for "A Room With a View" is like sitting at the feet of a village storyteller who knows exactly when to pause and when to elaborate to hold the audience's attention. A sophisticated comedy of manners, "Search" involves three dissatisfied generations of a single, wealthy family: Louise, an émigrée married to a gently adoring husband seeks to reclaim the boldness of her youth; her brittle, socialite daughter Marietta divides her time between lofty concepts and exotic lovers; Marietta's son Mark is obsessed with money, real estate and vacuously beautiful young men. The nexus that binds these disparate lives is Leo, a guru/adventurer whose philosophy blends aesthetics and psychology with old-fashioned lust. No matter how absurd his statements and demands become, his curiously magnetic personality keeps his followers bound to him, like minor comets trapped by the gravity field of a gigantic star. Ultimately, Louise, Marietta and Mark seem to be searching for the same things in different guises, and Jhabvala's witty prose suggests the search can be more interesting than the goal.



THE MEDIEVAL HEALTH HANDBOOK: Tacuinum Sanitatis *by Luisa Cogliata Arano (George Brazilier: $20.)*. During the late 13th and early 14th Centuries, a number of health handbooks circulated in manuscript form throughout Europe. Based on Arabic herbal and medicinal treatises but illuminated in the late Gothic style of northern Italy, these texts offered advice on diet, clothing and weather predicated on the belief of that bodily functions were controlled by four cardinal fluids, or humors—blood, phlegm, choler (yellow bile) and melancholy (black bile). Roses, which are "cold in the second degree, dry in the third," were recommended for "inflamed brains"; acorns helped retention but might prevent menstruation, a danger that could be neutralized by "eating them roasted with sugar." These charming illustrations and silly nostrums make Arano's scholarly text seem very dry. —C.S.

JUVENAL: THE SATIRES *A New Translation by Niall Rudd (Oxford: $7.95)*. The last great classical Latin poet, Juvenal coined a number of familiar idioms, including *panem et circenses* ("bread and circuses"), *mens sana in corpore sano* ("a healthy mind in a healthy body") and *quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* ("who will guard the guardians?"). In the "Satires," he savagely lampooned what he perceived as the degraded condition of Rome during the early 2nd Century. In his condemnations of foreigners, nouveaux riches, women and the general corruption of the traditional social order, furious invective alternates with an almost Dickensian concern for the poor. Niall Rudd's very literal new translation preserves Juvenal's use of proper names for archetypes—the Roman equivalents of Uncle Tom, Mae West, Boss Tweed, etc.—forcing the reader to flip back and forth between the text and the explanatory notes. This rather bloodless version makes Juvenal sound like a small-town English teacher fussing over a dangling participle, rather than an outraged moralist. Peter Green's 1967 translation (published by Penguin) is closer to the spirit, if not always the letter, of the original hexameters.

A HOME AT THE END OF THE WORLD *by Michael Cunningham (Bantam: $6.99)*. Michael Cunningham attempts to redefine the concept of the family for the late 1980s in this rambling novel. Jonathan, an alienated, sensitive, gay Midwesterner, and Clare, a New York sophisticate hardened by years of pursuing the latest trend, have established a sexless but supportive partnership in Greenwich Village. The arrival of Bobby, Jonathan's aimless, undefined boyhood companion, complicates their comfortable idyll and leads to the establishment of an even more unconventional ménage. Cunningham strikes some resonant chords as his trio of aging baby-boomers struggle to establish their collective identity and find a more meaningful goal than being among the first to adopt the latest SoHo fad. However, the potentially interesting story is undermined by the nebulous characterizations. Although the narrative supposedly reflects a shifting point of view, Jonathan, Clare and Bobby all seem to say the same things about the same subjects, and unless the reader checks the heading of the chapter, he can't tell which of them is speaking.

TRAGIC MAGIC: The Life and Crimes of a Heroin Addict *by Stuart L. Hills & Ron Santiago (Nelson-Hall Publishers: $13.95)*. This straightforward memoir documents the struggle of a black Cuban-American with heroin and the vicious culture that surrounds it. A largely self-educated drug counselor, poet and self-avowed "dope fiend," Santiago emerges as an articulate, complex man who describes the insidious power of heroin, and how it came to dominate his existence. He calmly recounts the robberies and burglaries he committed to sustain his habit—and the loopholes in the American judicial system that allowed him to be arrested and released to commit additional crimes. Santiago's recollections of life in the urban underclass reveal the folly of imprisoning drug addicts without providing for their rehabilitation.

MY PERFECT LIFE *by Lynda Barry (HarperPerennial: $9.)*. Although the term *graphic novel* is usually reserved for flashy superhero comic books, it aptly describes Barry's recent work—a combination of words and pictures that relate a story more effectively than either medium could alone. A sequel to "Come Over, Come Over" (1990), "My Perfect Life" continues the story of Maybonne, a socially inept junior high student during the late '60s/early '70s. Too young to participate in the Woodstock counterculture, Maybonne flounders through unsuccessful attempts at romance, an ongoing family crisis and a succession of "cruddy teachers." Barry's carefully chosen words and scribbly drawings capture the melodramatic fantasies and insecurities of adolescence more accurately than most conventional novels do.

THE TOMCAT'S WIFE AND OTHER STORIES *by Carol Bly (HarperPerennial: $9.)* Bly's colorful short stories depict seemingly ordinary, everyday inhabitants of the upper Midwest who find themselves in unlikely situations. In the title story, a housewife suspects her husband of falling in love with another man, yet pursues an odd friendship with his alcoholic, emotionally abused wife. Her descriptions occasionally echo Garrison Keillor's stories about Minnesota: At his child's baptism, a father muses, "How could any realistic person ask those particular three godparents 'to renounce the vain pomp and glory of the world'? Where would that crew get any glory in the first place?" Bly offers an interesting but oddly skewed vision of the American heartland.

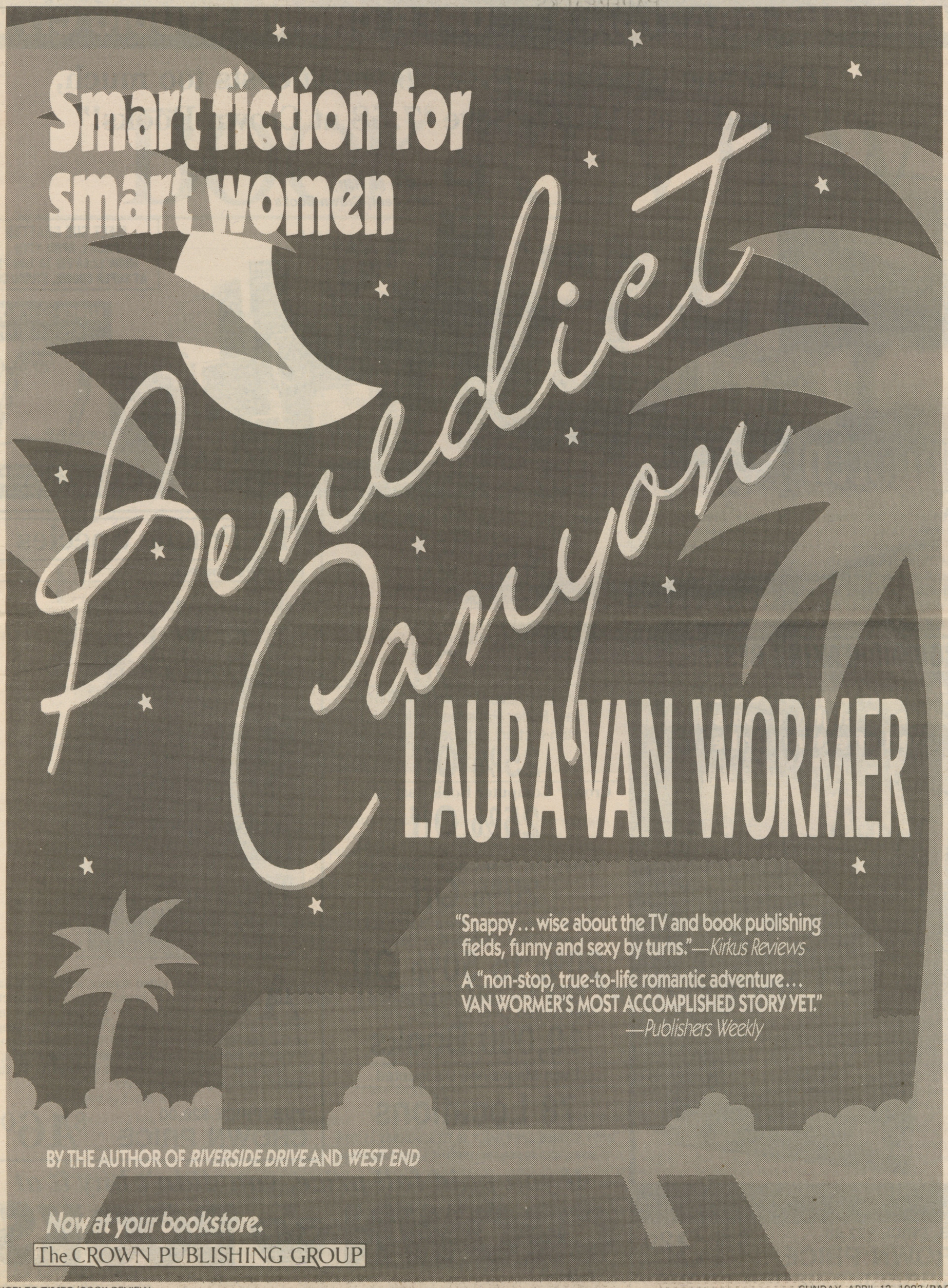
IT WAS A DARK AND STORMY NIGHT: THE FINAL CONFLICT: Yet More of the Best (?) from the Bulwar-Lytton Fiction Contest *compiled by Scott Rice (Penguin: $8., illustrated)*. The creator of turgid Victorian potboilers, Edward George Bulwar-Lytton began his "Paul Clifford" (1830) with the phrase so often spoofed by Snoopy and many others: "It was a dark and stormy night." Rice founded the annual Bulwar-Lytton contest that invites people to write the opening sentence of an imaginary awful novel, and this latest collection of entries proves the contestants rise—or sink—to the challenge: "Her mouth said, 'No! no! no!' but every other inch of her throbbing body said, 'Yes! yes! yes!' except for her pancreas, which didn't care much either way." "Being a near-sighted rapist was hard enough, even before the town was garrisoned by a Highland regiment." "She raised the barrel of her Browning 20-gauge and aimed for Daniel's lower chakras." Great fun to read aloud with group of friends.

BEST SELLERS

Southern California ranking	FICTION	Last Week	Weeks on List
1	**THE PELICAN BRIEF** by John Grisham. (Doubleday: $22.) Two Supreme Court justices are slain and a law student has a suspect.(1)	1	6
2	**RISING SUN** by Michael Crichton. (Random House: $23.) A murder mystery set in the arena of Japanese-American relations.(2)	2	10
3	**THE ELF QUEEN OF SHANNARA** by Terry Brooks. (Del Rey: $22) Book Three of the Heritage of Shannara.(4)	5	4
4	**THE ROAD TO OMAHA** by Robert Ludlum. (Random House: $23.95.) Two wild and wacky heroes try to take possession of the state of Nebraska.(3)	6	8
5	**STAR TREK: PROBE** by Margaret Wander Bonanno. (Pocket Books: $18.95.) A mysterious alien probe nearly destroys all life on Earth.(8)	7	4
6	**VOX** by Nicholson Baker. (Random House: $15.) Two people meet on a 900-number party line and reveal their most intimate sexual secrets to each other.(5)	3	12
7	**DISNEY'S BEAUTY AND THE BEAST.** (Gallery Books: $6.98.) A new edition of a favorite fairy tale.	4	10
8	**SILENT PREY** by John Sandford. (G.P. Putnam's Sons: $21.95.) A thriller, set in New York, with a pathologist protagonist.	—	1
9	**OUTERBRIDGE REACH** by Robert Stone. (Houghton Mifflin: $21.95.) A portrait of two men and the woman they both love.(6)	8	4
10	**SCARLETT: The Sequel to Margaret Mitchell's Gone With the Wind** by Alexandra Ripley. (Warner Books: $24.95.) This new novel begins just days after the original ends, and takes Scarlett from Atlanta to her father's birthplace in Ireland.(7)	9	27

	NONFICTION		
1	**REVOLUTION FROM WITHIN** by Gloria Steinem. (Little, Brown: $22.95.) A book about self-esteem that blends self-analysis, autobiography, philosophy and folk wisdom.(2)	1	13
2	**DOUBLE CROSS: The Explosive, Inside Story of the Mobster Who Controlled America** by Sam and Chuck Giancana. (Warner: $22.95.) His brother and godson link a mob boss to the U.S. government.(4)	4	6
3	**A RETURN TO LOVE** by Marianne Williamson. (Harper Collins: $20.) How to become a miracle worker by accepting the God within you and by the expression of love.(1)	2	8
4	**BACKLASH: The Undeclared War Against American Women** by Susan Faludi. (Crown: $24.) How to make sense of the current attack on women's rights.(3)	6	23
5	**AWAKEN THE GIANT** by Anthony Robbins. (Simon & Schuster: $20.) How to take responsibility for your mental, physical, emotional and financial destiny. Any questions?(6)	7	18
6	**MORE WEALTH WITHOUT RISK** by Charles Givens. (Simon & Schuster: $23.) More wealth, less risk.(6)	3	11
7	**DEN OF THIEVES** by James B. Stewart. (Simon & Schuster: $25.) The men who plundered Wall Street and the Feds who chased them down.(7)	9	24
8	**HOW TO SATISFY A WOMAN EVERY TIME AND HAVE HER BEG FOR MORE** by Naura Hayden. (Bibli-O'Phile: $14.95.) From the woman who brought you the Dynamite Energy Shake, a no-miss guide. "It really works!"(9)	5	8
9	**ROGUE WARRIOR** by Richard Marcinko with John Weisman. (Pocket Books: $22.) An autobiography of the founder of the Navy's top-secret counterterrorist unit, Seal Team Six.(5)	8	3
10	**FINANCIAL SELF-DEFENSE: How to Win the Fight for Financial Freedom** by Charles J. Givens. (Simon & Schuster: $22.95.) Givens shows how to avoid all those shysters promising to make you rich quick.	—	27

Southern California rankings (left) are based on The Times' poll of local bookstores. National rankings (parentheses) are those of Publishers Weekly. For early information on Times best sellers, call (213) 237-4336 after 11 a.m. on Wednesdays.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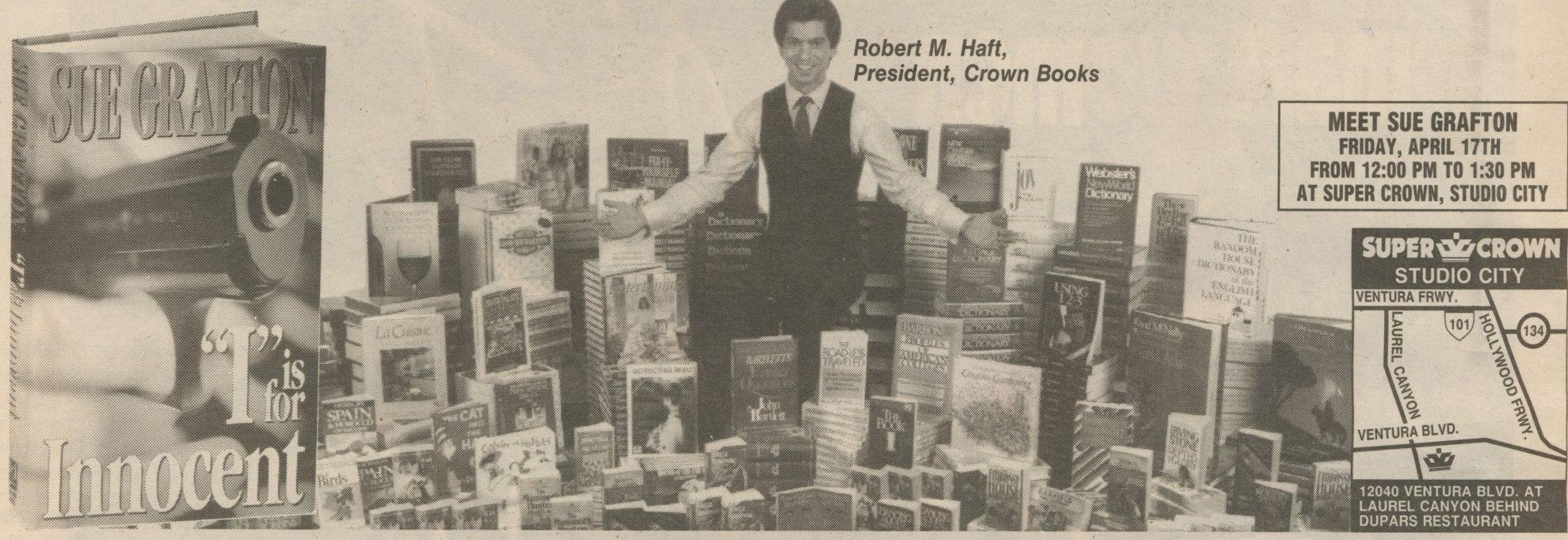

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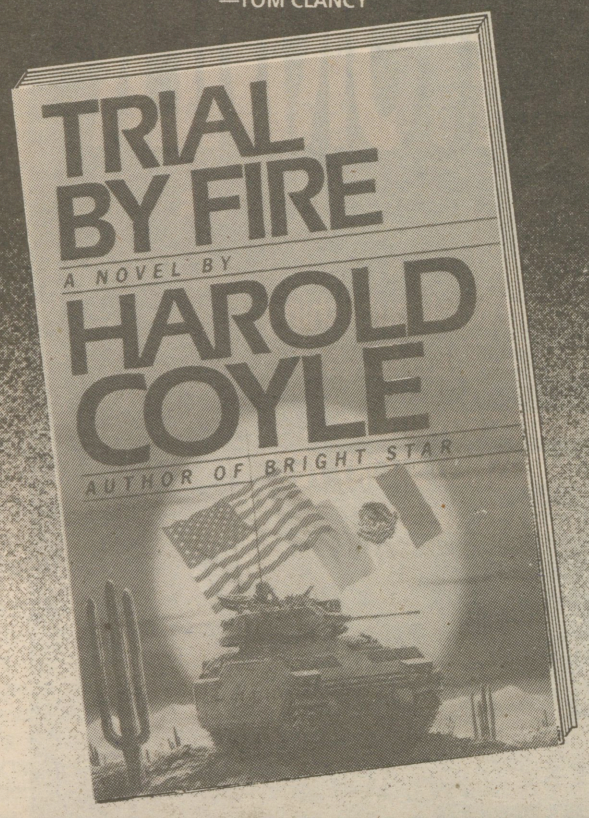

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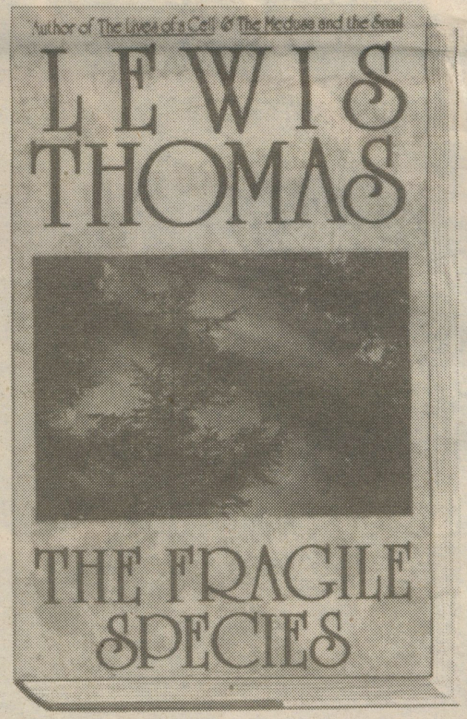

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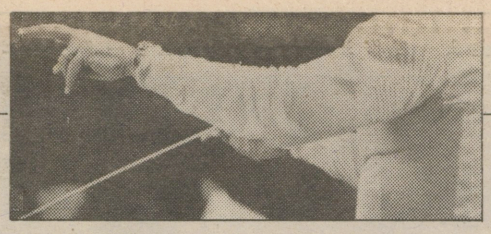

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BOOK REVIEW

LOS ANGELES TIMES • SUNDAY, APRIL 12, 1992

UNDER THE Great Wide Sky

WHERE THE BLUEBIRD SINGS TO THE LEMONADE SPRINGS
Living and Writing in the West
By Wallace Stegner
(Random House: $21; 227 pp.)

Reviewed by Ivan Doig



Wallace Stegner

In another Times, in another place (considerably eastern), Sunday editors some years ago whomped together a bunch of us they chose to call "Writers of the Purple Sage." Most of us were 40something then, and a few even lived somewhere around sagebrush, but the exception on both counts was pictured in distinguished gray-haired presiding manner beneath a California oak and presented to the readership in big hey-look-who-we've-discovered typeface as:

William Stegner.

West of the Hudson, that first name has always been pronounced "Wallace." But at least they got it right, back there, that W. Stegner, Pulitzer Prize novelist, National Book Award novelist, and essayist and conservationist and historian and teacher and consummate citizen of the West, is our chairman of the board.

Early in his majestic sum of 29 books was "The Big Rock Candy Mountain," Stegner's breakthrough novel based on his own family and their version of the wanderings within that hobo anthem of Western hopefulness, and not quite half a century later here is another inspired stanza, "Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs," from that same restless lilt. In this collection of 16 essays, even the ones with the telltale sheen of deadline magazine work are pleasurable enough, all come right up to you with typical Stegnerian common sense, and three are the brilliant crystallization of his lifetime of thinking about the American West.

One kinship I have always felt with Wallace Stegner is the square-built Western kid sort, that although we both are descendants of a West of hell-raisers, we ruefully recognize ourselves as at most born to raise heck. Yet, chain us together to a keyboard and we'd fairly soon admit we have differences. Likely he thinks the plots of my novels are somewhat, shall we say, unbridled; possibly I think his main characters hew a bit too closely to his own persona. But maybe a little orneriness in our different directions—and those of Stegner's Stanford students as diverse as Larry McMurtry, Tillie Olsen and Ken Kesey—is to be expected, too. As usual, he has spoken for many Western writers, and Westerners, who have had to pull up our socks and try to make something of ourselves: "There is something about exposure to that big country that not only tells an individual how small he is, but steadily tells him *who* he is. I have never understood identity problems."

Please turn to Page 8

Doig is the author of "This House of Sky," soon to be reissued in a 15th anniversary edition.

Guess/Jordache: The Bottom Line

SKIN TIGHT
The Bizarre Story of Guess v. Jordache
By Christopher Byron
(Simon & Schuster: $23; 352 pp.)

Reviewed by Frank Rose

Americans like to think there's a rational explanation for everything, from the twinkling of the stars to the vagaries of human behavior. Among other things, our faith in reason has given us the American legal system, which is based on the idea that there's an objective truth out there, a quantifiable reality that can be nailed down if enough people hammer at it for enough time. But every once in a while, something comes along to suggest that the powers of reason we put so much trust in are actually little more than the hallucinatory firings of a hyperactive cerebral cortex. Something like the jeans war.

Designer jeans appeal to a more primitive region of the brain, the part responsible for (among other things) lust and greed. And in the final analysis, this is what "Skin Tight," Christopher Byron's controversial account of the unimaginably convoluted vendetta between two wildly successful jeans makers, comes down to—the primacy of primitive emotions, their ability to short-circuit all the high-minded institutions of Western civilization and go straight for the id. Coarse cotton fabric becomes invested with sex and catches fire with consumers, and then—whoa, stand back.

The story begins in 1977, when the three Nakash brothers—Sephardic Jews from Tel Aviv who've settled in Brooklyn—lose one of their discount-jeans stores to vandals during a power failure in New York. With $120,000 in insurance money, they launch their own jeans line, giving it the vaguely European-sounding name of Jordache and shrewdly putting their cash into a TV spot that shows a blonde wearing skin-tight jeans as she gallops through the surf astride a pounding steed. Having thus tapped into the universal language of adolescent female sexuality, the Nakash brothers see their enterprise mushroom within a year into a $75-million business. But then comes the recession of 1982 and the need to hedge their bets amid a softening economy.

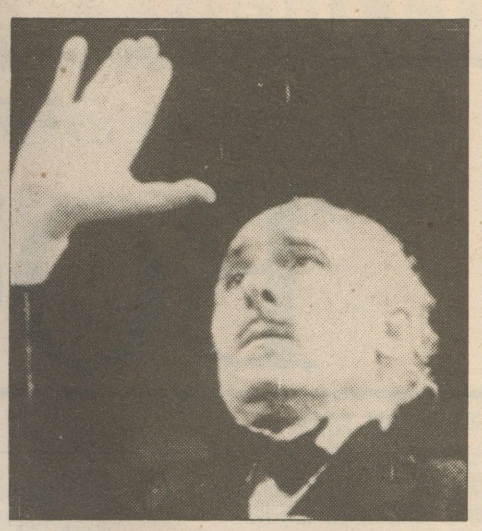
The investment they settle on is Guess? Inc., an upstart jeans company owned by the Marciano brothers of Beverly Hills—a Sephardic Jewish clan from Morocco by way of Marseilles. For $4.7 million, the four Marcianos part with half their company and give the Nakashes equal representation on their board.

Please turn to Page 13

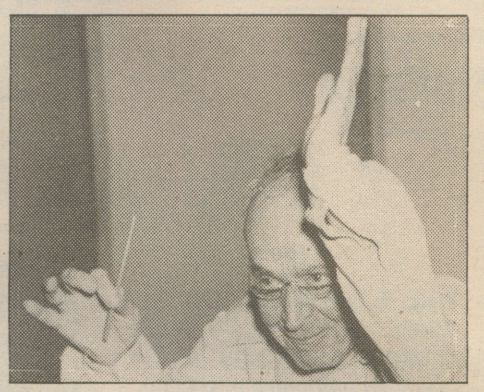
Rose is a contributing writer at Premiere and has written for several other magazines, including New York. He is currently working on a book on the William Morris Agency.

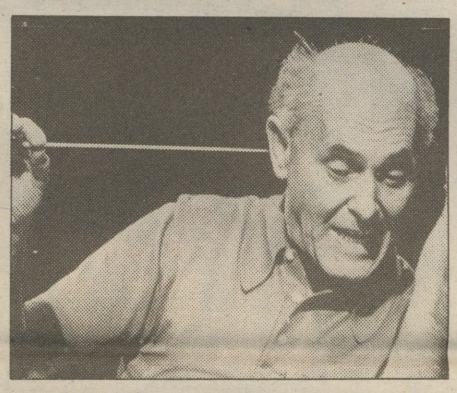














Conduct Unbecoming

THE MAESTRO MYTH
Great Conductors
in Pursuit of Power
By Norman Lebrecht
(Birch Lane Press/Carol
Publishing Group: $22.50; 384 pp.)

Reviewed by Martin Bernheimer

Heaven, so the story goes, was crowded. Would-be entrants clogged the Pearly Gates. A worried St. Peter canvassed the mob and, via megaphone, invited any erstwhile psychiatrist to step to the front of the line.

"What seems to be the problem?" asked the bespectacled gentleman who took his favored treatment in stride.

"It's God," replied the charismatic usher. "He thinks he's Karajan."

When I first heard the joke, in Tanglewood over 40 years ago, the protagonist of the punch line was Serge Koussevitzky, the temperamental but benevolent dictator who waved his stick at the Boston Symphony. In other re-tellings, the egomaniacal figurehead has been Arturo Toscanini, Leopold Stokowski, Leonard Bernstein, Georg Solti and even Zubin Mehta. Everything is geographically and temporally relative.

In his fascinatingly sleazy book on the ravages and abuse of podium power, Norman Lebrecht offers another variation on the megalomanic theme. His story places the ever-formidable Herbert von Karajan in a Viennese taxi.

"Where to?" asks the driver.

"It doesn't matter," replies the supermaestro. "I've got something going everywhere."

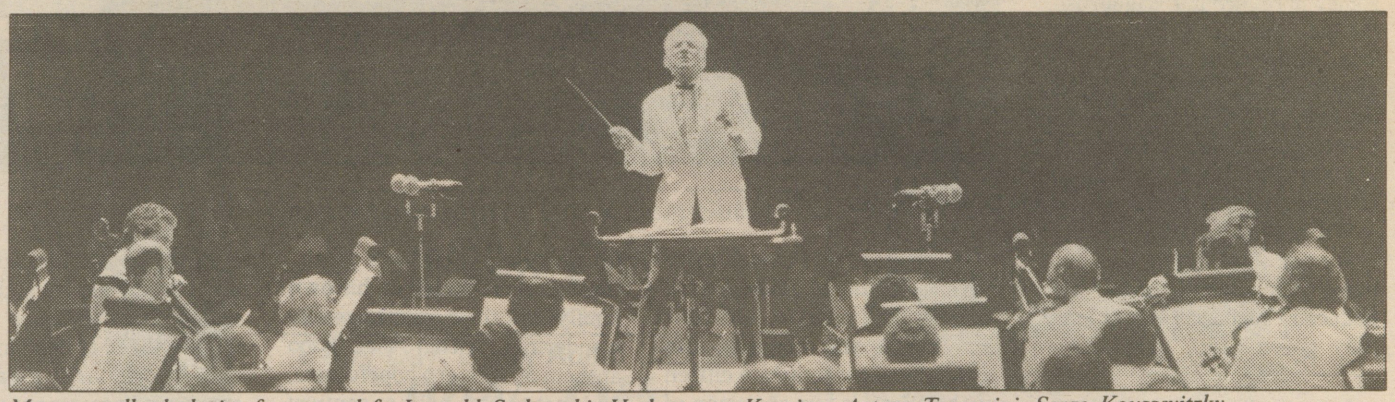
Lebrecht, a British iconoclast who specializes in musical muckraking, puts the apocryphal anecdote in context: "It is terrifying to contemplate how close [Karajan] came around 1960 to achieving a total hegemony of world music."

Contrary to the implications of the title, "The Maestro Myth" isn't a serious book about music. It is an extravagant exercise in pop sociology and armchair psychology. It also is a gushing essay in low-brow gossip on a high-brow subject.

Lebrecht's thesis is as simple as it is cynical: The world needs great conductors not because they may be able to

Please turn to Page 5

Bernheimer has been The Times' music critic since 1965. He won the Pulitzer Prize for criticism in 1982.



Maestros all, clockwise from top left: Leopold Stokowski, Herbert von Karajan, Arturo Toscanini, Serge Koussevitzky, Wilhelm Furtwängler, Leonard Bernstein, Georg Solti, Simon Rattle.

The Last Orange Grove

POMONA QUEEN
By Kem Nunn
(Pocket Books: $19; 211 pp.)

Reviewed by Cassandra Smith

Kem Nunn does for Pomona what Raymond Chandler, James M. Cain and Nathanael West did for Los Angeles. He depicts the squalid underbelly of a soiled landscape, a legacy of decay inhabited by foul-mouthed lowlifes and racist scumbags.

In his third novel, "Pomona Queen," all the action transpires in one very long night. It opens with Earl Dean, heir to the last acre of orange grove in Pomona, hawking Rainbow Air Purifiers—a fancy name for vacuum cleaners—door-to-door in a rundown tract of cheap look-alike houses with unkempt yards. Dean is lost in a part of town he doesn't like. It has no sidewalks or street lights, and the addresses are illegible. But he dutifully makes one more call.

This last stop turns out to be the residence of Dan Brown, a burly, beer-bellied biker he knew 20 years ago in high school when Dean played piano and sang with his own band, using the moniker Johnny Magic.

Brown, a violent boozer who once beat a cop to death and spent time in prison for stabbing a security guard in the throat with a screwdriver, remembers Johnny Magic's singing with a perverse fondness.

It just so happens that this unexpected reunion occurs on the night Brown's brother, Buddy, has been knifed to death. Buddy's naked body lays stretched out upon a bed of ice cubes in a large red Coca-Cola freezer with white script on the side that reads: "Things Go Better With Coke." This is the kind of depraved humor that punctuates Nunn's darkly poetic prose.

Brown plots revenge for his brother's murder and wants Johnny Magic to sing at the burial. Not keen on being a part of this scene, Dean attempts to escape. He fails. Trapped in a dirty house with Brown, his biker buddies and their old ladies who are ripped on speed, the long night turns into a journey that leads to the past.

Dean's great-grandfather was a pioneer fruit grower who was mysteriously shot to death in Chinatown. Gramps, the first president of the Pomona Fruit Exchange, had commissioned artwork from a lithographer to distinguish his produce from that of his neighbors; his packing-crate label bore the image of a sad, dark-eyed girl and a crimson sky. Above her head, in gold letters, were the words *Pomona Queen*.

Pomona Queen is coincidentally also the name of the gang to which Buddy's killer, a woman, belongs. In the course of the night, Dan Brown's crowd load Buddy, in

Please turn to Page 7

Smith lives and writes in Venice, Calif. She has never been to Pomona.

Pomona Queen

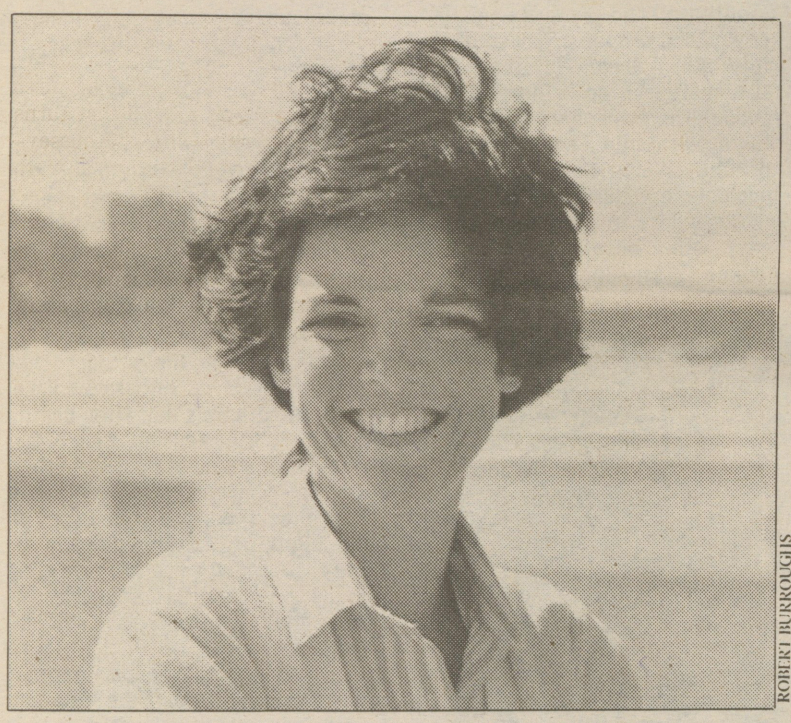
Continued from Page 2

his makeshift coffin, into the back of Brown's panel truck, and the group goes out in search of the murderer.

Dean unwillingly accompanies Brown in a night of unexpected events. To ease the tension, Dean relates stories about his grandfather and the days when the Pomona Valley was the hub of a booming citrus industry. This allows Nunn to weave Pomona's history into his saga and comment on the changing area that now reeks of smog, trashy used-car lots, overdevelopment and lost promise.

Each chapter begins with an italicized paragraph from a Frank P. Brackett, who in 1920 wrote a "History of Pomona Valley." These snippets add very little to the novel's narrative and tend to slow it down, but Nunn's own description of Pomona's decline is compelling. In the downtown district, shoppers disappeared and were replaced by the winos who lined up to buy booze from Thrifty's drugstore. Graffiti began to appear on storefronts and businesses began to fold, Nunn writes, "and that had pretty much been it for the town. One more broken promise. One more plan gone sour. The land would only stand so many. One could look back on it now, all those folks with their big plans. . . . One could speculate, with the advantage of hindsight, upon the causes of it all. In fact, if one were so inclined, one could find evidence of the virus on every hand—the power virus as real-estate bug, the insatiable self as the death seed, the shadow at the base of the skull. . . . There was an equation somewhere."

What follows is a night of boozing with a bartender called the Stench, mayhem that includes car theft and losing Buddy's body, and an adventure filled with endless terror. Nunn displays an impressive knowledge of the ecological factors that have warped a once pristine prairie. His flair for language and explicit vision put him among the disaffected who warn of an environmental apocalypse. ■



ROBERT BURROUGHS

Alice McDermott

At Weddings and Wakes

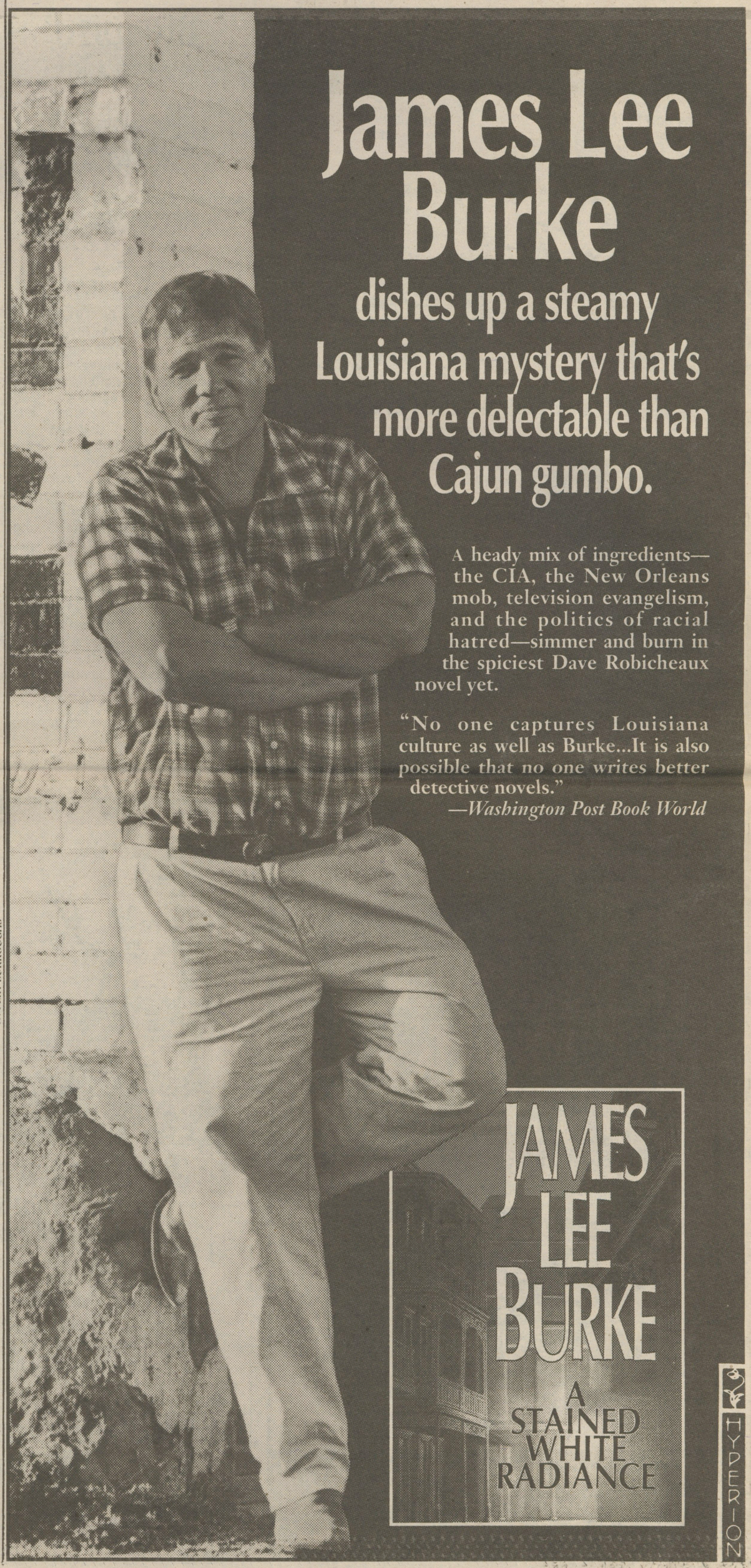
Continued from Page 3

on the eastern tip of Long Island. The Brooklyn visits are replaced by swimming, shell-collecting and fishing from a hired rowboat. It is the father's time. A slum child who remembers what a trip to the country meant to him, he insists on the two-week break to administer beauty as though it were a vitamin. Lucy enjoys it in a complaining sort of way; but each evening she treks to the public phone to plug back in to Brooklyn, and the quarrelsome remembrance that is her own vitamin.

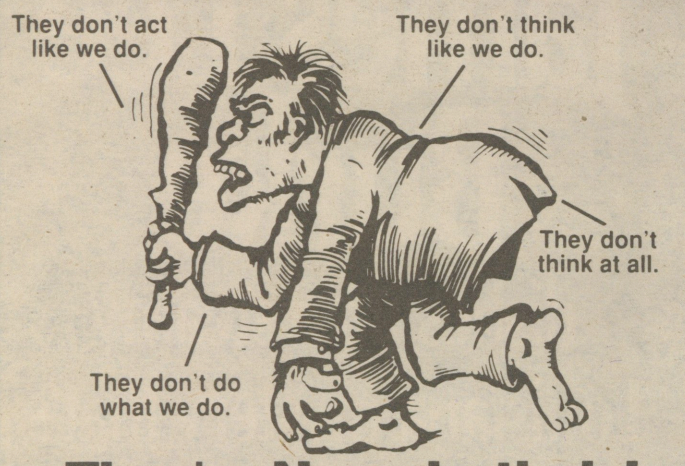
There are stories of each of the Townes, and beautifully, lightly contrasting accounts of the children's own encounters at school and elsewhere. The most vivid and winning of the Towne stories is that of May, the ex-nun who timidly falls in love with Fred, the postman, and marries him. It is a lovely courtship, though it comes tragically late. The wedding and reception are a long and skillful set piece, but their awkward celebration and embarrassing emotional misfires belong to an all too familiar genre, and don't advance it much.

On the other hand, the story of Fred is one of the most rousing and moving things in the book. It uses familiar materials—he is an Irish-American bachelor who cares for his mother until her death—but his portrait continually takes on new and unexpected shadings. McDermott can make sadness exhilarating; she can make goodness as irresistible as venial sin.

The detail in "At Weddings and Wakes" is not painstaking but hallowing; as if specific descriptions were the wards of a key and lock that, fitted exactly, open the door to the perilous magic of the past. ■



THERE'S AT LEAST ONE IN EVERY OFFICE



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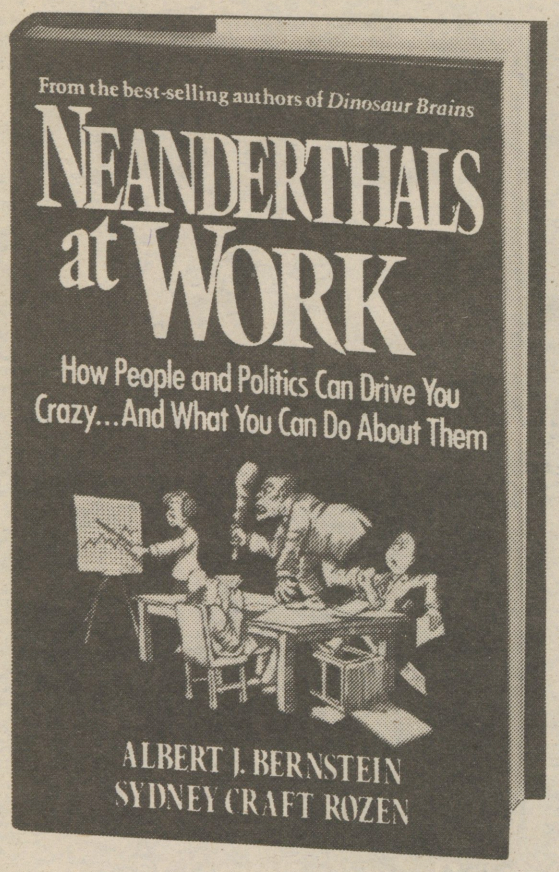

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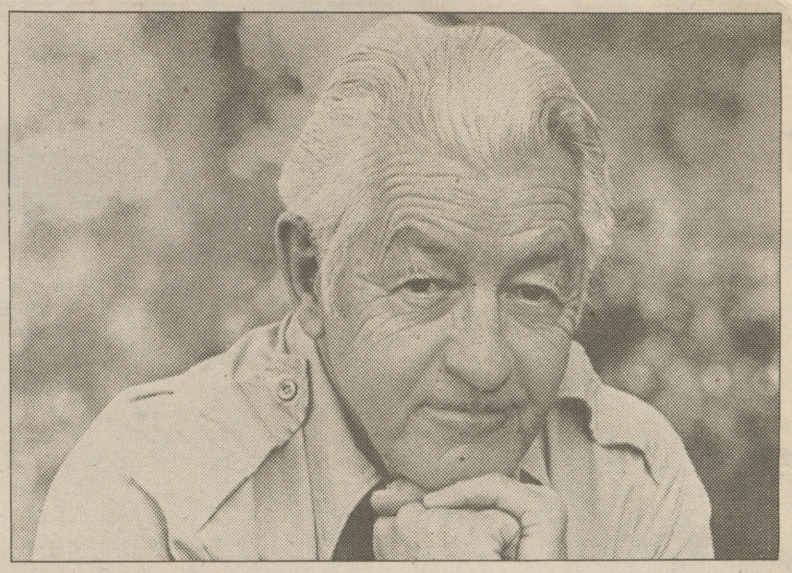
'Bluebird'

Continued from Page 1

The backbone of this book is precisely about that big country and all of us in it, in his central trio of essays titled "Living Dry," "Striking the Rock" and "Variations on a Theme by Crèvecoeur." They previously stood alone as a slim academic paperback called "The American West as Living Space," findable only if you somehow already knew of its existence, so it is particularly gratifying to have this essence-of-Stegner in broader publication. Here's the beginning:

"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."



Wallace Stegner in 1980, when he won the Times' Robert Kirsch Award (given for a body of work by a writer from the West or featuring the West).

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-worder which crescendos in "the Big Rock Candy Mountain, the New Jerusalem" down to the honest power of that four-word dream-breaker: "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.

Elsewhere in the book, Stegner says 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." Here in the essay "Living Dry," he does a diamond-hard distillation of our settlement of this half-continent of mostly unreliable rain, to the conclusion: "And what do you do about aridity, if you are a nation accustomed 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 try to engineer it out of existence or adapt to it." The engineering of water where there mostly isn't any is just as trenchantly dealt with in the next essay, "Striking the Rock," as are the signs he sees of adapting ourselves to the land's circumstances—"the seedbeds for an emergent western culture"—in the finale of the three, "Variations on a Theme by Crèvecoeur."

It is a cause for wonder that Stegner, born in 1909 and thus a witness to every haywire development in the West since then, can remain full of hope. But then strong writers, the enduring hedgehog type, are said to know one big thing, and Stegner powerfully has always known his: "I really only want to say that we may love a place and still be dangerous to it."

In the quibble department, I wish this publisher had retained Stegner's useful bibliography that backed up his central trio of essays in their "Living Space" incarnation, or even better, had this splendidly cross-referential thinker furnish a suggested reading list covering this entire collection of topics. And to author and editor alike, I'll say that I don't see how it would hurt us Western boyos to lay off the use of "man" and "men" when we mean people in general, i.e. including women. (Especially since some of Stegner's most affecting passages in this book are in his "Letter, Much Too Late" to his mother.)

Like his region, which he has christened for us the native home of hope, Wallace Stegner has exemplified extraordinary variety. If, after the novels "Crossing to Safety" and "Angle of Repose" and the inspired history/biography "Beyond the Hundredth Meridian" and the marvelously unclassifiable "Wolf Willow," anybody still needs to be introduced to the work of this eloquent writer, this book of essays is a good place to start. The essential Stegner is in them, patient as a mountain range, hopeful as a bluebird. ■


Joyce Ravid

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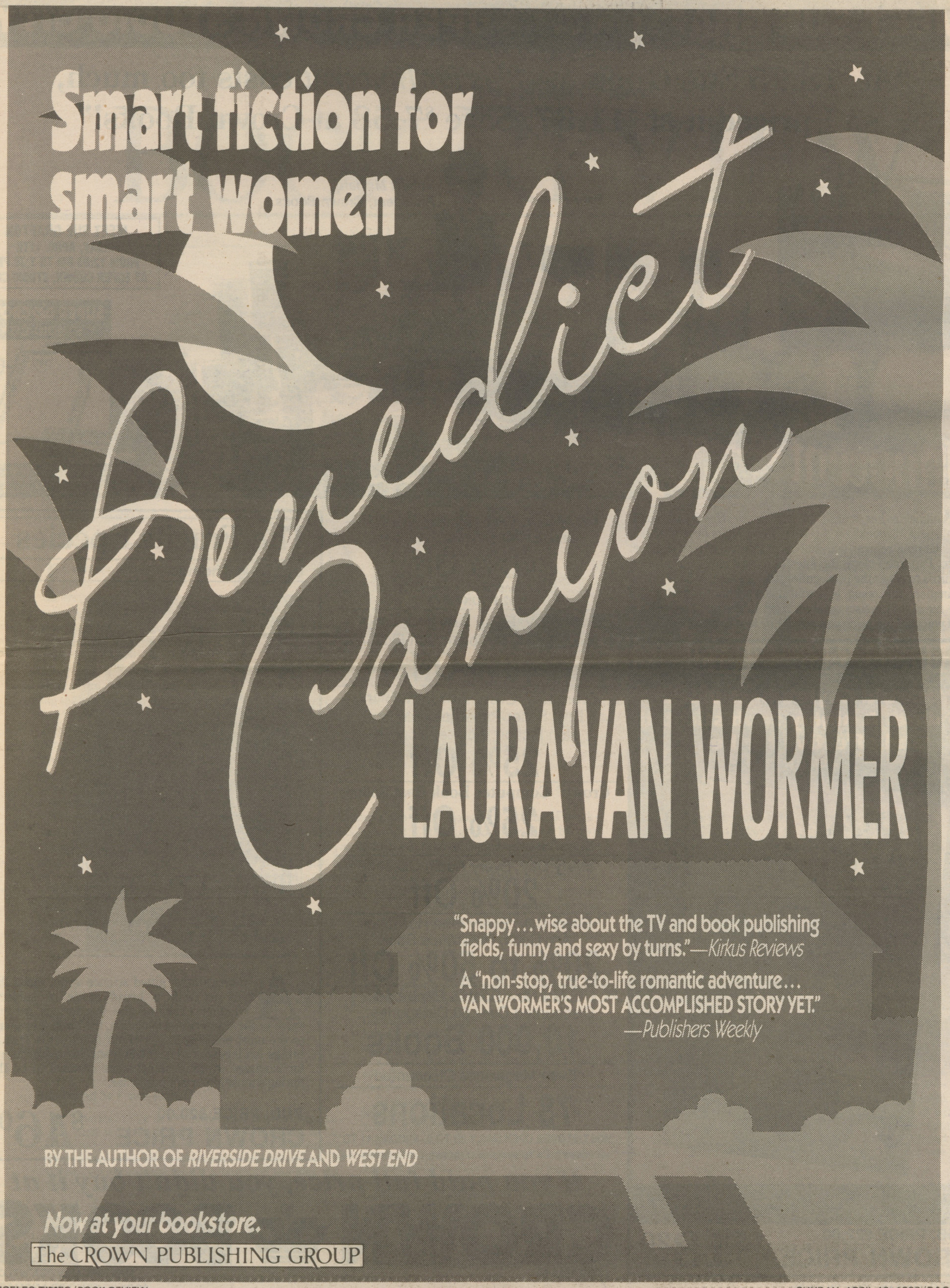
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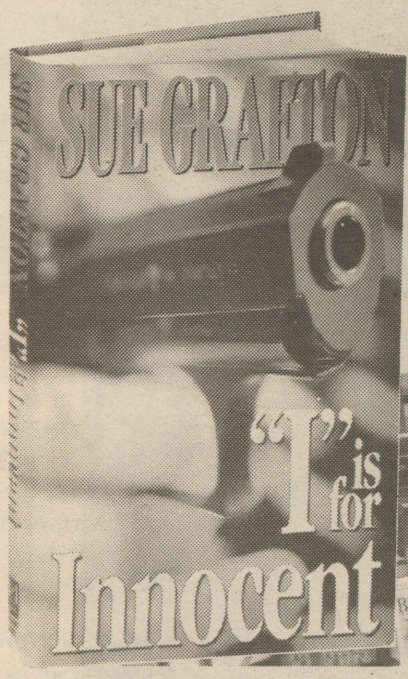

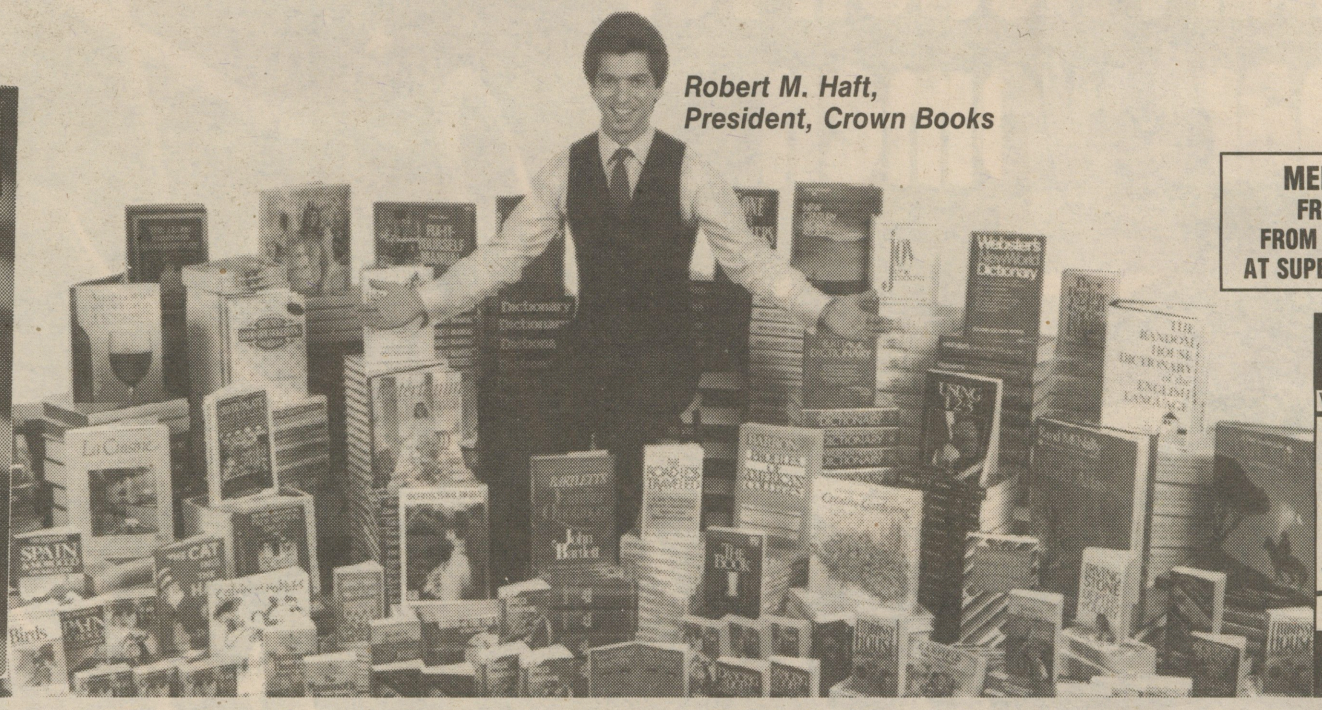

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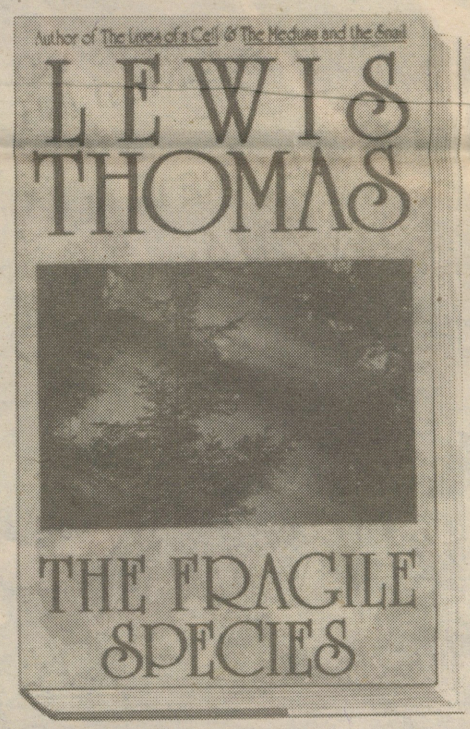

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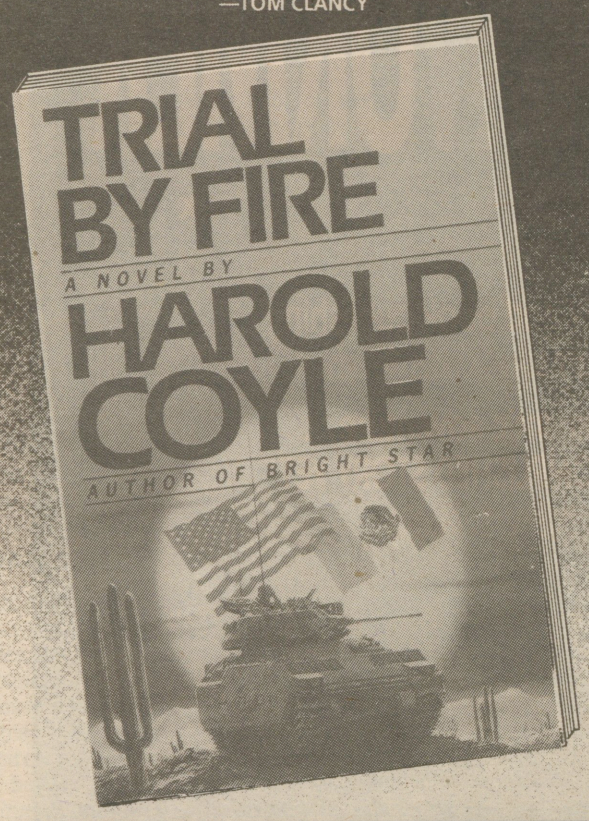

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Bed & Breakfast? No, Bed & Dinner

By PERRY GARFINKEL

SAN FRANCISCO

IN 1981, the trend in hotels was turning toward opulence — towering atriums, dizzying glassed-in elevators, dazzling marble and brass, amenities galore and sky-high room rates. But William Kimpton had another idea.

He started buying small, older buildings in downtown San Francisco at bargain prices, and developing intimate European-style hotels that are modest on amenities and glitz and moderate in price. He called his concept "affordable elegance."

Later, when many travelers were agreeing that eating establishments in hotels were a great place for breakfast but not much else, Mr. Kimpton began opening critically acclaimed restaurants, featuring celebrity chefs, in his hotels, as a way of drawing more overnight guests.

The formula has worked again and again. Today Mr. Kimpton's privately held Kimco Hotel & Restaurant Management Company operates 18 hotels and 21 restaurants in cities up and down the West Coast. In San Francisco alone, Kimco controls 2,149 hotel rooms, more than any company except Hyatt, which has four hotels here. Kimco estimates its pretax earnings before debt service for 1993 at $24.8 million, an increase of 17.5 percent from a year earlier, on sales of $125 million, up 14 percent.

People in the hotel industry say Mr. Kimpton has found a lucrative niche between the luxury hotel and the mid-rate hotel.

"He redefined the small-hotel concept and packaged it perfectly for the upscale American business and leisure market," said Stan Bromley, a regional vice president for The Four Seasons Hotels who was general manager of the Four Seasons Clift in San Francisco, which has competed against Mr. Kimpton's hotels.

With investors expecting to gain an estimated 20 to 25 percent annual return in Kimco deals, there seems to be no shortage of financial backing for Mr. Kimpton and the expansion of his hotel business. "He's a visionary and I'd follow him anywhere he wants to go," said Dr. Thomas Frist, chairman and chief executive of the Hospital Corporation of America, and a Kimco investor.

Now Kimco is taking on its biggest challenge. Mr. Kimpton's most recent acquisition here was the 420-room Sir Francis Drake, noted for its doorman in a Beefeater uniform, at the corner of Sutter and Powell Streets, a block north of Union Square. Closed for renovation in December, it will reopen in April. The question: Can Mr. Kimpton put his stamp of intimacy on such a large hotel?

Among Kimco's best-known restaurant-hotel combinations is Masa's, the highly acclaimed French restaurant in the same building as Mr. Kimpton's 106-room Vintage Court Hotel at 650 Bush St. The hotel in 1987 recorded the highest occupancy rate of any American city hotel, 90 percent, and last year was at 80 percent, still far above the average here. (The overall occupancy rate for Kimco's San Francisco hotels last year was 75 percent, slightly higher than the city average of 72.6 percent.)

Mr. Kimpton has also teamed up with the chef Wolfgang Puck (Postrio, at the Prescott Hotel, 545 Post St.); the restaurant designer Pat Kuleto (Kuleto's, at the Villa Florence, 225 Powell St.); the barkeep Harry Denton (Harry Denton's Bar & Grill, at the Harbor Court, 165 Steuart St.) and, last May in Beverly Hills, the chef Hans Röckenwagner (Röx, at the Beverly Prescott Hotel, 1224 South Beverwil Drive).

All told, Kimco now manages 13 hotels and 13 restaurants in San Francisco, a hotel and restaurant in Beverly Hills, a hotel and restaurant in Portland, Ore., 2 hotels and 4 restaurants in Seattle and a hotel and 2 restaurants in Tacoma, Wash. Of these, 11 hotels and 13 restaurants are owned by limited partnerships of which Mr. Kimpton is the controlling partner; the rest are owned by interests in which Mr. Kimpton is not involved.

Mr. Kimpton, a fit man of 58 who often dresses casually in sweater and khaki pants, said he came upon his approach to hotel development during a business trip to London. As an investment banker — he helped raise $23 million for Harry Helmsley's Palace Hotel in Manhattan, and he orchestrated Kentucky Fried Chicken's initial public offering — he was staying in a $350-a-night suite at the Hyde Park Hotel on an expense account. On his own budget, he moved across the street to a $35-a-night inn, where a friendly innkeeper and warm décor made him feel "much more at home at one tenth the price."

He recognized that hotel prices are raised, and profits cut, by such extras as big banquet facilities, expensive lobbies and other entertainment that most guests rarely use.

He set out to create a new kind of hotel class that some industry experts call the B+ category.

Compared with some larger hotels, Kimco hotels are short on meeting space but long on personal attention. Kimco hotels feature small lobbies with gas-driven fireplaces, and the furniture looks as if it belongs in most people's living rooms. Coffee and tea are always available, and the general manager serves wine in the lobby every evening at 5. Rooms are well appointed; amenities, from soaps to shoeshine services, are adequate but not elaborate.

It was an idea whose time was about to come back. Edward Meyer, chairman and chief executive of Gray Advertising, and an investor in each of Mr. Kimpton's hotel projects, said, "I knew there was an under-served market segment of people — professors, government people, middle managers, tourists — who wanted charming hotels that they could get their arms around and that were priced below the big hotels. That market will always be there."

But the key to Kimco's success lies in Mr. Kimpton's understanding of real estate. The first step is finding buildings at the right price. Mr. Kimpton calls his approach the mongoose theory. "We circle a building until the price is right," he said.

Julie Purnell, Kimco's director of development planning and financial analysis, added: "Lots of developers stumble due to impatience. But we wait. Then, when the timing is right, we swoop in."

That was the situation with the Drake deal. The hotel was first offered for $60 million eight years ago. Mr. Kimpton passed. His final purchase price, $19.75 million, was a steal, local real estate experts agree.

Mr. Kimpton's partnerships finance their projects with as much equity and as little debt as possible. In this case, Mr. Kimpton raised $20 million through limited-partnership contracts with 75 investors. He borrowed $8 million from the bank to complete renovation of rooms, and he plans to develop three restaurants, including an updated version of the once popular Starlite Roof atop the 21-story building.

Mr. Kimpton calculates that he will spend about $75,000 on each room and charge guests an average of $90 to $100. The average room rate for all Kimco hotels for 1993 was $99.

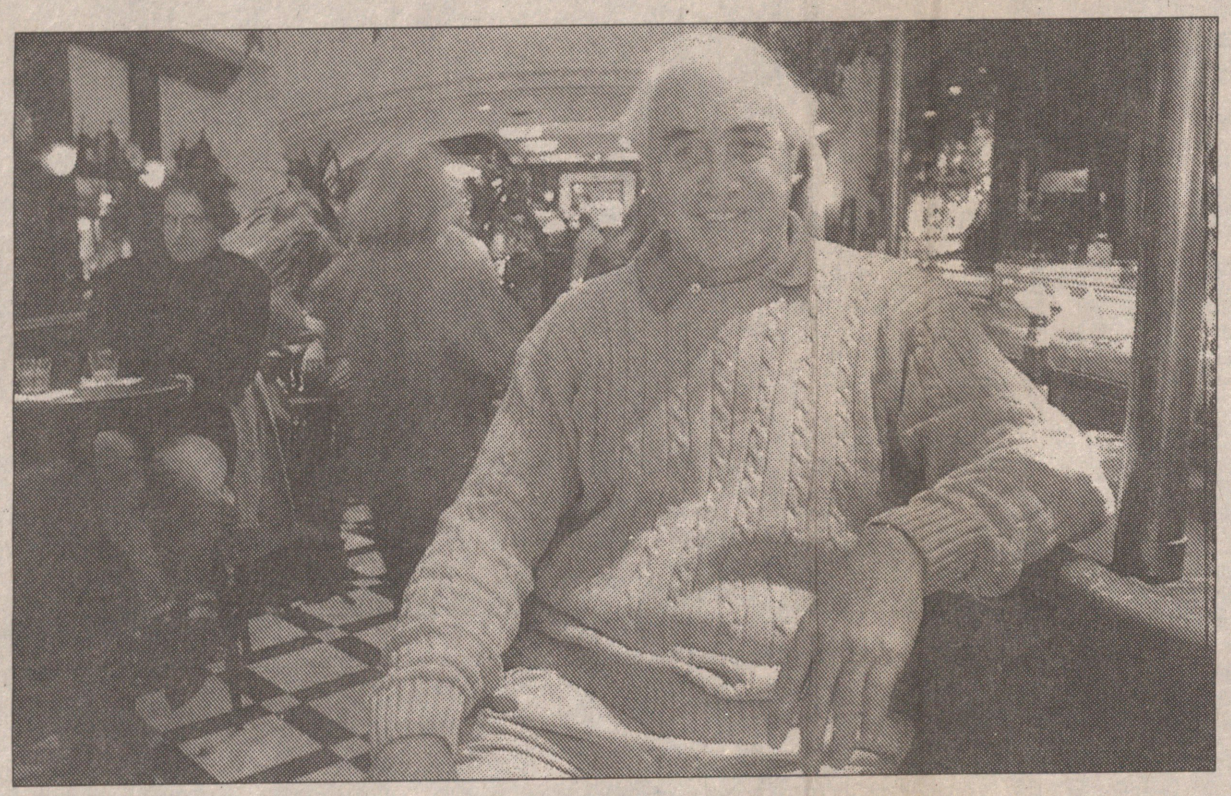
Almost twice the size of other Kimco hotels, and with grand ballrooms and ample banquet facilities, the Drake may test the Kimco concept. "He's stepping up to a category he hasn't played in," said Patrick Cowell, Western-region vice president of Hyatt hotels, which have competed with the Drake.

Some investors were skittish about getting involved in the Drake acquisition. "I think it's his biggest risk because he has not converted a grand old dame into an updated contemporary lodging," said Donald Cecil, retired founder of Cumberland Associates, a Wall Street money management firm and a longtime Kimco investor. "How do you make a 420-room hotel feel like home?"

But Susan Ernst, director of Horwath Hospitality Consulting, San Francisco, which publishes with Smith Travel Research the Lodging Market Trend Report for the San Francisco metropolitan area, suggested that, with significant growth anticipated this year in San Francisco's convention and group-meeting business, expanding into the next market may be a timely move.

"Venturing into a full-service, first-class upscale hotel is a good idea," she said. "Given the extensive background and expertise of Kimco's management team, I don't see it as a major leap of faith given the added market stemming from the group and convention segment." ■

A growing West Coast hotel chain finds a niche in the upscale market.



William Kimpton has thrived with hotels offering good restaurants and a sense of intimacy.



Photographs by George Olson for The New York Times

The lobby of the Villa Florence Hotel in San Francisco.

Kimco's Rules For Success In Hotels

WILLIAM KIMPTON lives by the following rules in his hotel-restaurant business:

¶**The Pizza Theorem:** If you pick up a pizza and take it home to eat 30 minutes later at a temperature of 85 degrees, you'll be quite satisfied. If you order it by phone and it arrives 30 minutes later at the same temperature, you'll think it is too cold. Thus, Kimco hotels do not provide 24-hour room service, because service would never meet expectations.

¶**The Mongoose Theorem:** Like the animal that circles poisonous snakes, finally attacking when it has worn down the predator, Mr. Kimpton circles a hotel building for sale or in bankruptcy until the price comes down to one that will allow him to charge moderate room rates.

¶**The Junk-To-Antiques Theorem:** Buying rundown historic buildings, Mr. Kimpton remodels and refurbishes the properties to look like they're old. "We buy junk, we sell antiques."

¶**The Perception-Is-Reality Theorem:** Give people their perception of reality, not reality itself. For example, design a restaurant to look like what people think a village in the Tuscany region of Italy looks like, not what it actually looks like. The same goes for the restaurant's food. People will probably not like the real food of Tuscany as much as they'll like an American interpretation that may be called authentic.

¶**The "We Sell Sleep" Theorem:** Mr. Kimpton tries to provide guests with a good night of sleep, rather than banquet facilities, elaborate lobbies, multiple restaurants and other entertainment that most people never use but pay for in their room rate. "We check you in, carry your bags to your room, shut your door and make sure it's quiet," he says. "We sell sleep."

Perry Garfinkel is a writer based in Oakland, Calif., who has written extensively about travel trends.



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Finding New Ways To Strengthen Athletes' Marketing Muscles

By RICHARD SANDOMIR

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J.

MENTION potato chips, and Frank Vuono thinks of quarterbacks.

Mention sneakers, and Frank Vuono thinks of three-point shooting guards.

Mention soft drinks, and Frank Vuono thinks of linebackers.

A Princeton graduate with an industrial-strength Rolodex amassed in seven years as vice president of National Football League Properties' retail licensing division, Mr. Vuono and his partners, Steve Rosner and Fred Fried, created a business eight months ago that is finding new ways to sell the star appeal of athletes, teams and other sports organizations to businesses looking for marketing prowess.

In the months since it began work, Mr. Vuono's firm, Integrated Sports International, has helped strike a number of deals that attest to the growing sophistication with which sports icons are being deployed to make money for themselves and others:

• It created an unusually wide-ranging marketing strategy for the San Francisco 49ers that the team lacked the resources to plan and implement. It includes an off-season fantasy camp (where die-hard fans can suit up and take the field with current and former players), a collectibles and memorabilia business, events to finance a team charitable foundation, producing and selling television and radio shows, and hawking scoreboard advertising at Candlestick Park. I.S.I. is helping to execute the plan.

"The impetus for this was when Steve Young's deal was being negotiated, the 49ers were faced with how they'll get enough money to pay their players," Mr. Vuono said, referring to the quarterback who signed a five-year contract for $26.75 million.

• I.S.I. helped create Coca-Cola's $14 million "Monsters of the Gridiron" television, print and radio campaign last fall, which starred 28 National Football League players as monstrous characters. Six of the players were secured by I.S.I. Assembling such a bevy of players is rare and illustrates the type of group deal I.S.I. lusts to broker.

• The company renegotiated a local television deal for Warren Moon, the Houston Oilers quarterback, that reaped Mr. Moon three times what he got when the station paid him a flat fee. I.S.I. eliminated the fee and instead reached an agreement under which Mr. Moon is paid out of advertising revenues from his show. Three of the companies for which Mr. Moon does endorsements are contractually required to buy spots on the show. Mr. Rosner said the deal will be a model for similar agreements for Mr. Young and the Dallas Cowboys quarterback Troy Aikman.

• I.S.I. crafted a relationship for Boomer Esiason, the New York Jets quarterback, with Frito-Lay Inc. that cast him as the star of a commercial with several other players last fall and made him the first player to have his face on a potato-chip bag. I.S.I. also persuaded Frito-Lay to contribute to the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation (Mr. Esiason's son, Gunnar, has the disease) and sponsor his 15-minute radio appearance each Friday of the season on WFAN-AM in New York City.

• I.S.I. has handled delicate negotiations among the National Association of Stock Car Auto Racing, star drivers, car owners and race-team sponsors to create a Nascar Drivers Club to sell merchandise pitched by some of the nation's top stock-car drivers. (The deal is nearly complete.)

THE idea of new uses for sports in marketing is by no means I.S.I.'s alone. The Walt Disney Company used its popular children's hockey film, "The Mighty Ducks," to spawn a professional hockey team, the Anaheim Mighty Ducks, whose retail merchandise is sold at Disney's theme parks and its chain of retail stores. H. Wayne Huizenga, chairman of Blockbuster Entertainment, acquired a chunk of a football team, the Miami Dolphins, and the stadium in which it plays, then bought a baseball team, the Florida Marlins, and a hockey team, the Florida Panthers. Each part of his sports empire promotes his chain of video stores.

And none of what I.S.I. does is unique. Sports management firms like the International Management Group and ProServ perform similar roles, but only on behalf of players they already represent for salary negotiations and financial planning.

I.S.I.'s singularity lies in its being free to represent any athlete whose agent is willing to hand over the marketing reins. I.S.I.'s sole desire is to market players, not to be an agent in salary talks. "We're open to anybody," Mr. Vuono said. "We're not exclusionary."

I.S.I. operates like a football free safety, roaming the field, seeking engagement. But it could have a problem if prospective clients are scared away by the potential for favoritism toward the interests of its investors. Besides the three principals, the key backers of I.S.I. are Leigh Steinberg, the Newport Beach, Calif., agent who represents 23 N.F.L. quarterbacks, including Mr. Aikman, Mr. Young and Mr. Moon; Logo 7, an Indianapolis-based apparel manufacturer and a leading sports licensee; and Apex One, a footwear and apparel manufacturer based in Piscataway, N.J.

Some agents worry that Mr. Steinberg's clients may be favored in deals I.S.I. concocts, beyond the usual pay differences between, say, quarterbacks and running backs.

Mr. Steinberg said that his ownership stake in I.S.I. should not scare off other agents and that he exerts no management role at the firm. "The point is not to narrow the scope of the athlete," he said, "but to expand it."

I.S.I. insists it has no biases. It cites deals made with several unaffiliated agents and an agreement with Adidas struck even though Apex, a footwear rival, is an I.S.I. investor.

Terry Bender, the agent for the Philadelphia Eagles quarterback Randall Cunningham, agreed. "Business is business," said Mr. Bender, who advised his client to join the "Monsters of the Gridiron" when Mr. Aikman was injured, Mr. Young declined because he eschews caffeine and a third quarterback, Dan Marino of the Miami Dolphins, was rejected because he had once done a commercial for Pepsi.

Another concern expressed by competing agents is that I.S.I. will promise athletes whom it can't deliver. "Sometimes you don't know how a deal came about or if they volunteered a player they don't have for a deal," said Ralph Stringer, Mr. Marino's agent.

One agent who probably won't be doing any business with Mr. Vuono is Leonard Armato, who represents Shaquille O'Neal, basketball's 7-foot-1, 304-pound backboard-shaking marketing phenomenon. Mr. Vuono worked on Mr. O'Neal's deals while he was employed at N.F.L. Properties.

Mr. Armato said I.S.I. exaggerated its connection to the marketing of Mr. O'Neal. "I read some blown-up things about what I.S.I. was doing with Shaq," Mr. Armato said. "But they did nothing for Shaquille."

Mr. Vuono said: "Leonard's done a great job with Shaq. I might have done some things differently."

Mr. Vuono and his partners have managed to blend three disparate talents into a fast-growing new business. Mr. Vuono was one of the sports-licensing industry's most powerful figures, running the highest-profile division of N.F.L. Properties. The retail licensing division produced sales of N.F.L. merchandise estimated at $2.5 billion last year. He masterminded successful product extensions like the Quarterbacks Club, an amalgamation of 19 signal callers that sells a line of merchandise.

"It was probably a shock to his boss, John Bello, that most people thought Vuono ran N.F.L. Properties," said Bob Carr, editor of Inside Sporting Goods, an industry newsletter. "With Frank there, no one knew Bello existed."

Mr. Fried, who specializes in marketing, helped devise the early marketing plans for Michael Jordan during his five years at ProServ, the sports management firm, and orchestrated the selling of Mr. Esiason when he quarterbacked the Cincinnati Bengals.

Mr. Rosner, as an agent, represented Lawrence Taylor, the New York Giants linebacker; Carl Banks, the Washington Redskins linebacker, and two dozen others.

The trio has connections. There is also some bravado. "With us, one plus one plus one plus equals ten," Mr. Fried said.

I.S.I. operates out of a 15th-floor suite in a building overlooking Giants Stadium here. On one recent day, Mr. Vuono gave Mr. Taylor advice on a new licensing deal and confirmed a Cadillac endorsement. Peter Moore, the president of Adidas America, discussed plans for a deal with John Starks, the New York Knicks guard, and apparel deals for groups signed by Rough House, a rap music label that retained I.S.I.

I.S.I.'s relationships traverse the sports world: players like Mr. Taylor and baseball's Will Clark, members of the United States World Cup soccer team (for whom I.S.I. got an Upper Deck sports card deal), leagues like the N.F.L. and the Association of Volleyball Professionals, and sporting-goods makers like Adidas and Gatorade. The firm claims 1993 revenues of a few million dollars.

HOWEVER, the bigger the picture gets, the greater the potential management risks for I.S.I. The firm will have to expand aggressively outside its acknowledged expertise in football to other sports, and find ways to promote and market players who aren't top-of-the-line stars.

After all, quarterbacks will always be easy to get commercial deals for, but what about, say, the grittier offensive or defensive players, most of whom lack the flash of Deion Sanders, the Atlanta Falcons cornerback?

A client like Cortez Kennedy, a 300-pound defensive tackle for the Seattle Seahawks, is a case in point: a great player on a small-market, mediocre team. "He's a tough sell, even if he was Defensive Player of the Year last year," Mr. Rosner said. "The market doesn't help. But we'll try to align him regionally, then include him with other players in some national deals. But to be honest, not everybody is marketable." ■



Fred R. Conrad/The New York Times

Steve Rosner (left), Frank Vuono and Fred Fried, who began Integrated Sports International eight months ago, in their office overlooking Giants Stadium in East Rutherford, N.J.

Coming Soon: The Coca-Cola Giants?

THE grand vision at Integrated Sports International is of sports blending seamlessly with the business, music and entertainment worlds, where each needs the others to sell more tickets, soda, compact disks or movies.

"That's the future, where sports will come together with the corporate world, and ultimately we'll have the Coca-Cola Giants," said Frank Vuono, president of I.S.I.

That's not so farfetched. Japanese baseball teams are named for the corporations that own them. And major league baseball, with its escalating player salaries and financial woes, is trying to forge closer ties with companies to buy advertising on television and radio and in ballparks.

"It's going to happen," Mr. Vuono said. "The economics of running a team will dictate it. Team owners will only be able to get their return on investment through that kind of integration."

I.S.I.'s dream deal is to expand its sports and corporate connections and begin a league "where we put together the players, the owners, the sponsors and the broadcasters and manage the league," Mr. Vuono said.

How likely is that? If I.S.I. develops enough contacts in a sport, through its connections with agents representing players and broadcasters, and through its work with corporations that would own or sponsor teams, it could act as the chief broker of talent and money for a new league. It is the quantity of I.S.I.'s affiliations that would make or break such a venture.

Speculation about new leagues has centered on football, but Mr. Vuono, who is cagey, declined to say he is involved with such a project. I.S.I.'s affiliations with soccer and volleyball may also portend leagues. "And lacrosse is a fast-paced, energetic sport."

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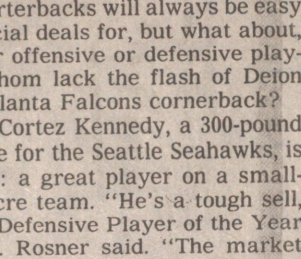

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Mr Doig-

Here, finally, are the prints that you asked for, and I hope that the delay didn't cause any inconvenience. The negatives for two of the shots were damaged back at the time of the book's publishing. Those prints aren't of the best quality, but they're as good as I could do in my little darkroom.

And on the subject of payment- I'm a cinematographer by trade and the still photography thing is strictly a therapeutic hobby at this point. I have no idea of the proper fee to charge. I think that an autographed copy of "Heart Earth" would be a more than fair compensation, and still allow me to keep my amateur status.

Best-

Joe Gantz

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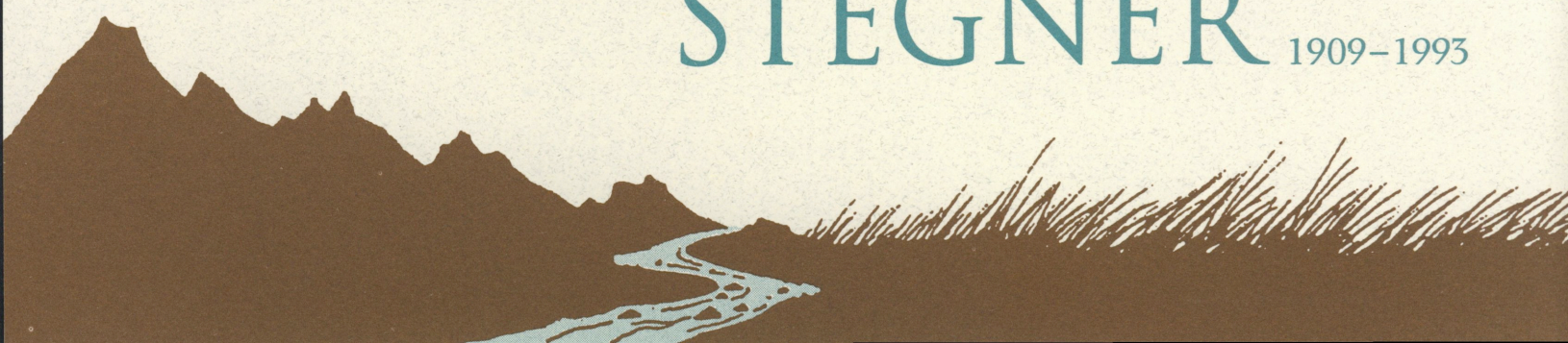

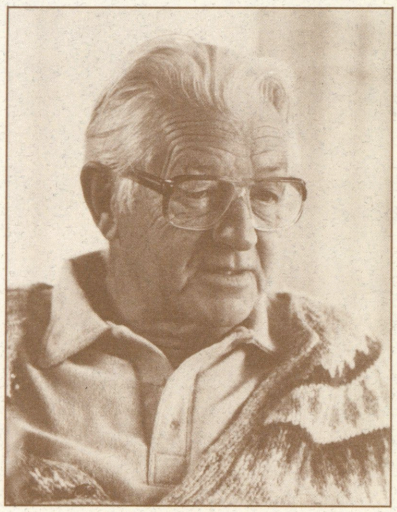

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FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 17

1:30–3:00 P.M.
- Welcome—George Dennison, President, University of Montana
- Panel presentations
  - Bill Bevis, University of Montana, moderator and opening comment
  - Page Stegner, University of California, Santa Cruz, panelist
    - *A Brief Reminiscence: Father, Teacher, Collaborator*

3:00–3:15 P.M.
- Brief intermission

3:15–4:30 P.M.
- Panel presentations (continued)
  - Ivan Doig, Seattle, Washington, panelist
    - *Stegner's American West as Living Space*
  - William Kittredge, University of Montana, panelist
    - *Stegner and the Western Landscape*

4:30–5:30 P.M.
- Reception in the Montana Theater, University of Montana campus

8:00 P.M.
- Lecture by Jackson Benson, San Diego State University
  - *Finding a Voice of His Own: The Story of Wallace Stegner's Fiction*

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 18

9:00–10:30 A.M.
- Welcome—Margaret Kingsland, Montana Committee for the Humanities
- Panel presentations (continued)
  - Gordon Brittan, Montana State University, moderator and opening comment
  - Elliott West, University of Arkansas, panelist
    - *Stegner, Story-Telling, and Western Identity*
  - Richard W. Etulain, University of New Mexico, panelist
    - *Wallace Stegner as Western Humanist*

10:30–10:45 A.M.
- Brief intermission

10:45–12:00 noon
- Panel presentations (continued)
  - Dan Flores, University of Montana
    - *Stegner, the West, and the Environment*
  - Patricia Nelson Limerick, University of Colorado, panelist
    - *Precedents to Wisdom*
- Adjourn

For more information, contact The Center for the Rocky Mountain West, Department of History, The University of Montana, Missoula, MT 59812; (406) 243-2231.

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The Center for The Rocky Mountain West
Department of History
The University of Montana
Missoula, MT 59812

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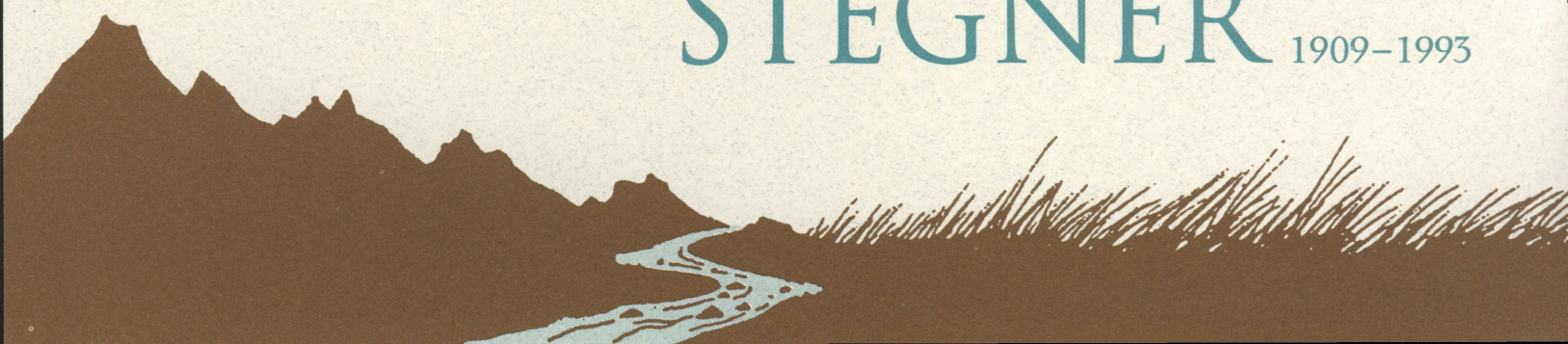
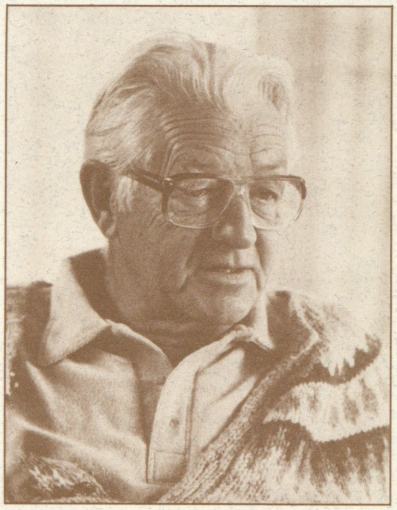
A Symposium in Tribute to

WALLACE STEGNER 1909–1993





A Symposium in Tribute to
WALLACE STEGNER

Sponsored by:
The Center for the Rocky Mountain West, The University of Montana and the Montana Historical Society

All presentations, free and open to the public, in the Montana Theater on the University of Montana campus

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 17

1:30–3:00 P.M.
- Welcome—George Dennison, President, University of Montana
- Panel presentations
  - Bill Bevis, University of Montana, moderator and opening comment
  - Page Stegner, University of California, Santa Cruz, panelist
    A Brief Reminiscence: Father, Teacher, Collaborator

3:00–3:15 P.M.
- Brief intermission

3:15–4:30 P.M.
- Panel presentations (continued)
  - Ivan Doig, Seattle, Washington, panelist
    Stegner's American West as Living Space
  - William Kittredge, University of Montana, panelist
    Stegner and the Western Landscape

4:30–5:30 P.M.
- Reception in the Montana Theater, University of Montana campus

8:00 P.M.
- Lecture by Jackson Benson, San Diego State University
  Finding a Voice of His Own: The Story of Wallace Stegner's Fiction

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 18

9:00–10:30 A.M.
- Welcome—Margaret Kingsland, Montana Committee for the Humanities
- Panel presentations (continued)
  - Gordon Brittan, Montana State University, moderator and opening comment
  - Elliott West, University of Arkansas, panelist
    Stegner, Story-Telling, and Western Identity
  - Richard W. Etulain, University of New Mexico, panelist
    Wallace Stegner as Western Humanist

10:30–10:45 A.M.
- Brief intermission

10:45–12:00 noon
- Panel presentations (continued)
  - Dan Flores, University of Montana
    Stegner, the West, and the Environment
  - Patricia Nelson Limerick, University of Colorado, panelist
    Precedents to Wisdom
- Adjourn

For more information, contact The Center for the Rocky Mountain West, Department of History, The University of Montana, Missoula, MT 59812; (406) 243-2231.

PLEASE POST

Mr Doz -

Here's the Stegner at ABA shots that we talked about - I hope you can find some that suit your needs. I included roll #4 on the chance that you might also need a straight head shot.

If you can, please try to let me know what you want as soon as posible in January, as I'm starting a movie on the 23rd that will keep me out of the darkroom for about a month.

Best Regards

Joe Back

1908 11th St #4
Santa Monica CA 90404
310-396-0249

26 Dec. '94

Dear Joe--

Thanks immensely for passing along the ABA proofs. I found a shot on sheet 6, and two on sheet 2, one of which I'd like both uncropped and cropped versions of, as indicated. So, that'll be a total of four shots, and I'd appreciate two prints of each, okay? And please do bill me at your regular rate; I've been a freelance in my time (maybe any writer or photographer always stays one) and believe the laborer is worthy of his hire.

Poignant to see your dad in these pics. He figures in one of my favorite Denver stories. For one of the Post's books-and-authors shindigs, John Edgar Wideman and I both checked into the Brown Palace at the same time and as your dad showed up right then to take us to lunch, off the three of us headed for the dining room. Only to be refused admittance! What the hell, I thought, is it John because he's black? Is it me because I'm bearded and dressed vaguely like a lumberjack? Of course it turned out to be because, magnificently dressed though we thought we were (John in those days wore a bomber-pilot leather jacket and a black Stetson), we didn't have ties. Meanwhile your dad, naturally, was in a double-breasted suit which made him look like the Italian ambassador. I've always believed the Brown Palace should have averaged the other two of us into Clarus Backes' nattiness, and let us eat.

Will look forward to the prints; best wishes for '95 and the movie job.

The University of
Montana

Department of History
The University of Montana
Missoula, Montana 59812-1022
(406) 243-2231 phone
(406) 243-4076 fax

August, 30 1993

Dear Ivan and Carol:

Enclosed are a couple of parking permits for the upcoming Stegner Tribute. I'm looking forward to seeing you both again.

Congratulations on the new book. Haven't read it, but I have bought it--the first step, a kind of promise to both myself and the author.

See you soon,

Bill

Bill Farr

An Equal Opportunity University

[★] Wednesday afternoon APRIL 14, 1993

San Francisco Examiner

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."

WESTERN AMERICAN LITERATURE
QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF THE WESTERN LITERATURE ASSOCIATION

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT • UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY • LOGAN, UTAH 84322-3200

18 August 1993

Ivan Doig
17021 - 10th NW
Seattle, WA 98177

Dear Mr. Doig:

I read in the flyer for the upcoming symposium in tribute to Wallace Stegner that you are delivering a paper entitled "Stegner's American West as Living Space." I am serving as Editor of Western American Literature while Tom Lyon is on sabbatical, and would very much like to put together a special issue on Wallace Stegner while I am here. If you have not already sent your essay elsewhere for consideration, and if the proceedings of the symposium are not to be published as a book, I would welcome your submission for possible publication in WAL.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Charlotte M. Wright
Editor

31 Aug. '93

Dear Charlotte--

I don't know yet whether the Missoula Stegner doings is meant to be a book, nor am I sure my presentation, which is a kind of recapitulation of Wally's "The American West as Living Space," really amounts to an article. But if you want to nudge me later this fall, maybe I can give you a yea or nay then.

Carol and I really enjoyed Logan during our Evans Award stay; nifty place.

best,

Everything Potent Is Dangerous

BY WALLACE STEGNER

IT IS TERRIBLY DIFFICULT to say honestly, without posing or faking, what one truly and fundamentally believes. Reticence or an itch to make public confession may distort or dramatize what is really there to be said, and public expressions of belief are so closely associated with inspirational activity, and in fact so often stem from someone's desire to buck up the downhearted and raise the general morale, that belief becomes an evangelical matter.

In all honesty, what I believe is neither inspirational nor evangelical. Passionate faith I am suspicious of because it hangs witches and burns heretics, and generally I am more in sympathy with the witches and heretics than with the sectarians who hang and burn them. I fear immoderate zeal, Christian, Moslem, Communist, or whatever, because it restricts the range of human understanding and the wise reconciliation of human differences, and creates an orthodoxy with a sword in its hand.

I cannot say that I am even a sound Christian, though the code of conduct to which I subscribe was preached more eloquently by Jesus Christ than by any other. About God I simply do not know; I don't think I can *know*.

However far I have missed achieving it, I know that moderation is one of the virtues I most believe in. But I believe as well in a whole catalogue of Christian and classical virtues: in kindness and generosity, in steadfastness and courage and much else. I believe further that good depends not on things but on the use we make of things. Everything potent, from human love to atomic energy, is dangerous; it produces ill about as readily as good; it becomes good only through the control, the discipline, the wisdom with which we use it. Much of this control is social, a thing which laws and institutions and uniforms enforce, but much of it must be personal, and I do not see how we can evade the obligation to take full responsibility

for what we individually do. Our reward for self-control and the acceptance of private responsibility is not necessarily money or power. Self-respect and the respect of others are quite enough.

All this is to say that I believe in conscience, not as something implanted by divine act, but as something learned from infancy from the tradition and society which has bred us. The outward forms of virtue will vary greatly from nation to nation; a Chinese scholar of the old school, or an Indian raised on the *Vedas* and the *Bhagavad Gita*, has a conscience that will differ from mine. But in the essential outlines of what constitutes human decency we vary amazingly little. The Chinese and the Indian know as well as I do what kindness is, what generosity is, what fortitude is. They can define justice quite as accurately. It is only when they and I are blinded by tribal and denominational narrowness that we insist upon our differences and can recognize goodness only in the robes of our own crowd.

Man is a great enough creature and a great enough enigma to deserve both our pride and our compassion, and engage our fullest sense of mystery. I shall certainly never do as much with my life as I want to, and I shall sometimes fail miserably to live up to my conscience, whose word I do not distrust even when I can't obey it. But I am terribly glad to be alive; and when I have wit enough to think about it, terribly proud to be a man and an American, with all the rights and privileges that those words connote; and most of all I am humble before the responsibilities that are also mine. For no right comes without a responsibility, and being born luckier than most of the world's millions, I am also born more obligated.

WALLACE STEGNER is a teacher with one hand and a writer with the other. Professor of English at Stanford University, he directs its writing program, and in his "think house" in the hills behind the University he continues to produce books, stories, and articles. His novels include *The Big Rock Candy Mountain*, *Second Growth*, and *The Preacher and the Slave*.

His stories have appeared in magazines both here and abroad, some of them having been collected in the volume *The Woman on the Wall*. His literary prizes include Houghton Mifflin's Life in America Award, the *Saturday Review*'s Anisfield Wolfe Award, and three O. Henry Prizes for short stories.

In 1950 Mr. Stegner and his wife spent seven months making a literary exploration of Asia. At present he is on a Guggenheim Fellowship, completing a biography of John Wesley Powell.

Nevertheless, the surprise and disbelief expressed by many people at what they have seen, plus the reluctance of several individuals to speak of their experience for fear of being ridiculed, suggest that they might be telling the truth. In some cases multiple witnesses have corroborated each other's descriptions.

Many skeptics acknowledge that the observers have encountered some strange animal. The interpretation of what witnesses saw is most often not accepted by scientists, who suspect some error of observation and are wary of jumping to conclusions on the basis of irreproducible evidence, and by laymen, who feel threatened by novelty. Thus, a plethora of alternate explanations has come forward: "What you must have seen is an oarfish," insists the dismissive critic. Others are equally sure that a pod of leaping dolphins or belugas were seen, or a leopard seal, a family of sea lions, a tangle of giant kelp, and so on.

Most cases of misinterpretation can be eliminated by admitting only the best evidence such as sightings at close range, under good conditions, by sober and (preferably) numerous witnesses who provide detailed and consistent information. The eyewitness accounts reported here are among the best. None of the "monsters" is reconcilable with any known living marine creature, which indicates that perhaps witnesses saw a creature thought to be extinct. This possibility has gained respect since 1938 when Marjorie Courtenay-Latimer identified a bluish, man-sized fish captured in the Indian Ocean off South Africa as a coelacanth, previously known only as a fossil fish with stubby, leglike fins, thought to be ancestral to land vertebrates.[17] The last known living coelacanth had lived eighty million years ago! The prospect of discovering more "living fossils" has fired both public and scientific imaginations.

Numerous marine cryptid sightings have been explained in terms of extinct animals such as Steller's sea cow, a sluggish sirenian hunted to extinction by starving Russian fur traders soon after its scientific discovery in the Bering Sea in the eighteenth century; the zeuglodon, a serpentine, primitive whale known from shallow seas of the Miocene Period (twenty-five-million years ago); and long-necked plesiosaurs, marine reptiles from the Jurassic Period (more than sixty-five-million years ago).[18] Each of these hypotheses has its proponents, but none draws universal approval.

The final possibility is, of course, that the animals observed are entirely new and unknown to science. Most oceanographers readily concede that the ocean may yet have secrets to reveal. New animals continue to be discovered, usually by accident. For example, the megamouth shark, a fifteen-foot-long filter feeder, was found tangled in the anchor chain of a United States Navy ship near Hawaii in 1976.[19] It had never been observed before, and only five other specimens have been seen since.

What unknown animal hides in the coastal waters of the Pacific Northwest? A creature with a long neck, whiskers, a mane, and a large body with lumps on its back. An animal that makes noises and hisses when it surfaces; by all appearances an air-breather and a mammal. But why would a large air-breather be seen so rarely at the surface? Where would this unknown, presumed mammal, perhaps even Heuvelmans's hypothetical "merhorse," breed? Heuvelmans has attempted to classify marine cryptids according to their characteristics and has hypothesized a variety of new animals to fit the observations. One of them is the "merhorse," a long-necked, horse-headed marine mammal with large eyes, whiskers, and a mane, similar to many of the observations of Caddy. Seals and other pinnipeds congregate in gregarious rookeries; whales engage in musical frolics. How could such a large, unknown marine mammal be so elusive?

The mystery is not likely to be solved in the near future. Sightings are rare and apparently random.[20] The development and funding of a research program that embraces review of evidence, formulation of hypotheses, search strategy, and instrument design in what is, after all, a legitimate scientific question tends to be thwarted by the stigma of "frivolity" that mars the subject, as well as by the absence of any obvious practical application. Cryptozoology, without a clear prospect for the betterment or enlightenment of humankind, remains a science that seems too "pure" for most oceanographers to pursue seriously.

19. The megamouth shark (*Megachasma pelagios*) was described by L. R. Taylor, L. J. V. Compagno, and P. J. Struhsaker in "Megamouth—A New Species, Genus, and Family of Lamnoid Shark (*Megachasma pelagios*, family Megachasmidae) from the Hawaiian Islands," *Proceedings of the California Academy of Sciences*, 43 (July 6, 1983), 87-110.

20. For a survey of observations of marine cryptids, see Heuvelmans, *In the Wake of the Sea-Serpents*, and Michael Bright, *There Are Giants in the Sea* (London: Robson Books, 1989).

PAUL H. LEBLOND is professor of oceanography and director of the Program of Earth and Ocean Sciences, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C., Canada. His scientific interests range across the field of physical oceanography, including waves, tides, coastal currents, and the influence of the ocean environment on fisheries. LeBlond has been collecting eye-witness reports on marine cryptids since 1967. This article is adapted from *Mysteries of the North American West* (Fulcrum Publishing, 1993).

Tribute to Wallace Stegner

The following essays are drawn from a special symposium held September 17–18 in Missoula, Montana, to honor the memory of Wallace Stegner. Few people can claim the title of renowned historian, Pulitzer Prize–winning author, or nationally and internationally acclaimed essayist. Wallace Stegner commands deserved credit for having been all three.

Born in 1909 in Iowa, Stegner died on April 13 this year in Santa Fe, New Mexico. In between, he had lived at one time or another during his youth in North Dakota, Washington, Montana, Saskatchewan, and Utah. He had taught at the university level at Wisconsin, Harvard, and Stanford, the latter for twenty years as head of Stanford's famed creative writing program.

A partial bibliography of Stegner's writing is included here, but some of his most famous works include *Angle of Repose*, a novel based on the life and letters of Mary Hallock Foote, that won the Pulitzer Prize in 1971; *The Uneasy Chair*, his biography of friend and mentor Bernard DeVoto; *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian*, a biography of western explorer and scientist John Wesley Powell; and *Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs*, a collection of essays published in 1992 in what would be his last book.

The Missoula symposium was sponsored jointly by the Montana Historical Society and by the Center for the Rocky Mountain West, University of Montana History Department. Symposium participants assessed varied aspects of Stegner's contributions to the literature, history, and public policy issues of the American West. As these essays show, Stegner was recognizably one of the foremost spokesmen for the West in much of the twentieth century.

The first essay appearing here is by Wallace Stegner's son, Page Stegner, a professor of creative writing, University of California, Santa Cruz. Among Page Stegner's own numerous publications are a book, co-authored with his father and titled *American Places* (1981), and a special issue of *Atlantic Monthly*, titled "Rocky Mountain Country," appearing in April 1977.

Other essays are by Jackson J. Benson, Elliott West, Patricia Nelson Limerick, Dan Flores, Ivan Doig, William Kittredge, and Richard W. Etulain.

Benson is professor of English at San Diego State University and author of numerous books and essays on various facets of American literature. Winner of the PEN-WEST award for his *True Adventures of John Steinbeck* in 1985, he is writing the authorized biography of Wallace Stegner.

Elliott West is professor of history, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, and author of numerous books and articles on the West, including *Growing Up with the Country: Childhood on the Far Western Frontier* (1989). Patricia Nelson Limerick is professor of history, University of Colorado, Boulder, and author of *The Legacy of Conquest* (1987), and co-editor of *Trails: Toward a New Western History* (1991). Dan Flores is A. B. Hammond Professor of History, University of Montana, and author of *Jefferson and Southwestern Exploration* (1984), and *Caprock Canyon Lands; Journeys into the Heart of the Southern Plains* (1990).

Ivan Doig is a writer living in Seattle. He is author of the Two Medicine novels and, in non-fiction, *This House of Sky* (1978) and *Heart Earth* (1993). William Kittredge is professor of creative writing and English, University of Montana, and author of *We Are Not in This Together* (1984), *Owning It All* (1987), and *Hole in the Sky* (1992).

Richard W. Etulain is professor of history and director of the Center for the American West, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, and author, editor, and co-author of numerous works on the American West, including *Conversations With Wallace Stegner* (1983, revised in 1991).

All photographs used in this essay are provided courtesy of Mary and Page Stegner unless noted otherwise.



Wallace and Mary Stegner, 1989 Leo Holub, photographer

A Brief Reminiscence
Father, Teacher, Collaborator

by Page Stegner

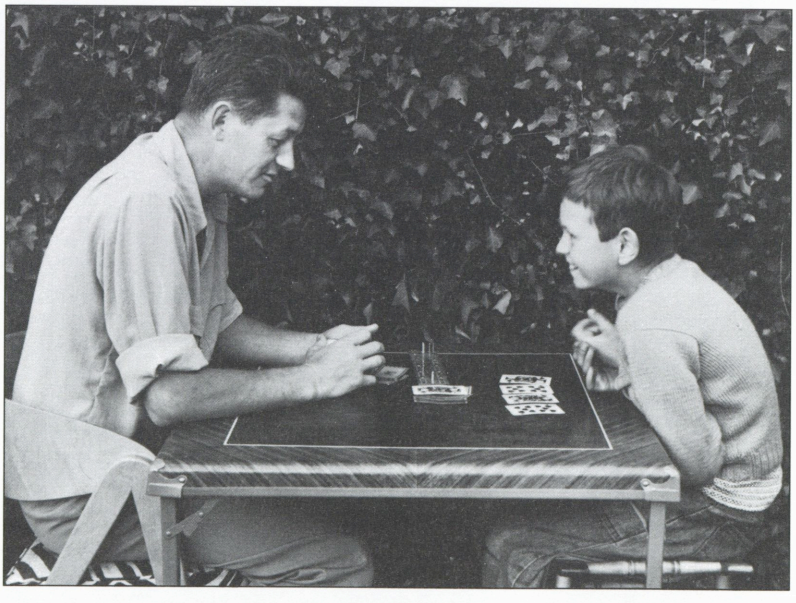
When Chuck Rankin wrote me last spring to invite me to this conference I said, without deliberating very seriously about whether I had anything to contribute, that I would be delighted to do so if I didn't have to pretend to be scholarly, and if I could just maunder on anecdotally for a few minutes and sit down. I think it was the opportunity to hear such distinguished speakers that compelled me, because both before my father's death and since, I have been asked if I would speak about, or write something about him, and heretofore I have always refused. It would have embarrassed us both when he was alive and that hasn't much changed since his death. And anyway, I don't have any "daddy dearest" tales to tell; if there are skeletons in the closet I am unaware of them; and I have never been all that interested in the subject that seems to pique the curiosity of most of the magazine editors who call—to wit: How tough was it growing up in the shadow of a mountain as big as Wallace Stegner.

Having nothing to compare it to, I don't know how tough it was. Also, it has occurred to me, when I was growing up, the mountain wasn't yet that big or the shadow that long. In fact, at Stanford in the early 1960s I can remember defending the *pater familias* at a rather drunken English department party by depositing one of my graduate student colleagues in the chairman's fish pond for proffering, through his faux British nose, the sonorous observation that Wallace Stegner was plainly a minor figure on the American literary scene.

That opinion was clearly in error, then as now, and I imagine a number of the speakers here this weekend will bear witness to the major importance of such books as *The Big Rock Candy Mountain, Beyond the Hundredth Meridian, Wolf Willow* (which contains the superb novella, *Genesis), The Gathering of Zion,* and the two collections of short stories, *Women on the Wall* and *The City of the Living*—all of which were written and published well before I deposited my colleague in the fish pond. If there was any question of literary standing in 1964, *All the Little Live Things, The Sound of Mountain Water, Angle of Repose, The Uneasy Chair, The Spectator Bird, One Way to Spell Man,* and *Crossing to Safety* dispelled them. Among other things.

When I think about lineage and kinship—my own, that is—I do not think of shadows, mountains, or difficulties associated with being the offspring of an increasingly famous father. I think, rather, of being the lucky son of a man who was as devoted to his responsibilities as husband and father as he was to his public reputation, and whose ambitions did not include the pursuit of any literary reputation beyond that generated by the works themselves. I think, too, of having been the lucky son of a consummate teacher, because it has shaped the direction of my own life profoundly, and when I think about him now (as I have been doing for these remarks today) it is in that capacity around which most of my recollections revolve. And by consummate teacher I mean one who was able to share and impart a wealth of knowledge and wisdom to a very recalcitrant student (me) who up until his late twenties didn't think he much needed to learn *anything.* (Of course, as a sub-adult I knew everything worth knowing.)

My father was a teacher in the most conventional sense: He gave me books to read, endlessly corrected my grammar, gave me *detailed* instructions on the difference between lie and lay, read my school themes and essays and went through them with me laboriously, suggesting changes to both content and structure that might improve their substance and distinctiveness. He was not, I might add, particularly liberal with praise. "Okay," he would say, when I came home from school with five As and a B+, "but still room for improvement." That was about as lavish as it got. Even when I was thirty-five years old with three novels and a critical study of Vladimir Nabokov under my belt he would still write "ok" in the margin of a new manuscript



Wallace and Page playing cribbage about 1947

I had given him if he particularly liked something, and type out two pages of thoughtful criticism when he thought something had gone astray. Perfection, or as close as one ever gets to it, comes in the fifteenth or twentieth draft, was always his message, and I'm glad I heard it early in my life. I'm sorry so few of the students I've encountered in my own twenty-five-year teaching career didn't have someone like my father come into their room, holding the latest book report between thumb and forefinger as if it were a slightly ripe codfish, and say "well, let's sit down and go over this one more time."

But more important, I think, than any formal instruction he offered was his habit of imbuing virtually everything he came across with substance. My father, for example, could never just *look* at scenery. If we happened to be driving across the Colorado Plateau through southern Utah, say from Cisco to Price along the Book Cliffs, he'd offer up an anecdote about Powell being rescued by Bradley in Desolation Canyon, and then explain to his slightly annoyed eight-year-old boy (me), who was trying to concentrate on his Batman comic, who Powell was and why he was important. Then he'd point out the La Sals and Abajos to the south and tell that boy something about laccolithic domes, betting him he couldn't spell laccolithic. He'd comment on the immensity of geological time and the number of Permian seas responsible for the deposition of the Moenkopi, Chinle, Wingate, and Kayenta formations (he could identify them all) on our left and the Dakota sandstone and Mancos shale on our right. He'd observe the Fish Lake Plateau far to the west and remember something of his boyhood summers at that lake, though he was never particularly loquacious about his own childhood except in his writing. Crossing over the Wasatch Plateau and heading south through the Spanish Fork canyon would remind him of the specific dates of the Escalante/Dominguez expedition through the region (September 23, 1776), and that it was exactly fifty years before Jedediah Smith came through following essentially the same route. He had a kind of holistic relationship with the land, and he couldn't look at it without remembering its geological history, its exploration, its social development, its contemporary problems, and its prognosis for the future.

As a boy I always thought I was hearing a lot more about all this than I wanted to know, but in retrospect, I concede I was wrong. In fact, I thought about how wrong I was just two weeks ago when my wife and I were returning from our summer home in Vermont. It was a morning flight, but that didn't keep US Air from showing a movie to its bored passengers, most of whom they seem to think are more interested in Richard Dreyfus's romp through the bedrooms of New York than in what's outside the window. I suppose they're right. Anyway there was an obvious cultural imperative to close the shade during the show.

The movie began somewhere over Illinois—I know because I looked down and recognized the Illinois River where it runs south from Chillicothe to Peoria on its way to the Mississippi above St. Louis. When the movie was over I opened the blinds and looked out, or down—35,000 feet down—and was a bit surprised to discover it took me about thirty seconds to identify exactly where we were. There was the Colorado where it hooks around Moab and creates the only major wetlands on the entire upper stretch of the river, there was Wilson Mesa, the Island in the Sky, the Green River through Labyrinth Canyon. To the south, off the left wing tip, I could see the confluence of the Green and Colorado at the mouth of Cataract Canyon and farther south still the Henry Mountains, the Circle Cliffs, the Kaparowitz Plateau. I could identify (and did for my long suffering wife) virtually everything I could see, and it suddenly struck me why this was so, and who had taught me to assimilate the western landscape so completely that I could tell where I was almost anywhere west of the Front Range, even from 35,000 feet in the air. I had a great instructor.

I might add, parenthetically, that I took only one formal class from my father—a large survey of the twentieth-century American novel with about 150 students in it and four teaching assistants. I remember I wrote a term paper on John Steinbeck and got a B+. No doubt there was room for improvement. Okay. I took the midterm and got an A; then took the final exam, for which somehow a numerical grade was assigned, and I scored the second highest mark in the course. My father, naturally, did not want to appear to be playing favorite and gave me a B+ for a final grade. I squawked loudly about this injustice, and he left adjudication of my appeal up to his TAs—who happily overruled him. It made him very uneasy my being in that class. I know because I came across some notes he was writing just before he died, notes, ironically, for an introduction to a collection of my essays, in which he recalled this incident himself.

"If I had known his intentions (to take the course) I might have steered him away," he said, "for how could I trust myself to judge him fairly? And I would have to judge him; grades are a vital necessity to a graduate student, as much of a necessity as judicial integrity is to a professor. What would I do if he did badly? Protect him? Flunk him?" And farther down the page he observed, "He was faithful in attendance, silent in discussions. His term paper came in on time and was very creditable. He wrote one of the best examinations in a big class. Relieved, I was ready to give him a respectable but not superlative B plus for the course. My reader protested loudly. 'Come on,' she said, 'he's an A student.' To which I replied, 'How would it look if his *father* gave him an A?' After all, I had spent more than twenty years trying to teach that boy that no

matter how well he did, there was always room for improvement. But she insisted so long and vigorously that I finally yielded and gave him an A. But I salved my conscience, and reinforced my lifelong lesson by sticking a minus after it."

My father always liked to point to the flaw that weavers deliberately weave into oriental rugs because they know that only Allah is perfect. It was a gesture that greatly amused him.

In 1977 the editor of the *Atlantic Monthly,* whose name escapes me at the moment, came up with the idea that it would be cute to have Stegner *père y fils* co-author a special issue of the magazine on the West (I mean the real West, not California or the Pacific Northwest). "Rocky Mountain Country" it was called, and we divided the territory up. My father took Montana, Idaho, and Utah. I took Colorado and Wyoming.

I had written two or three stories for the *Atlantic,* but I had never written a lick of non-fiction prose, other than literary criticism; I had no idea that one could employ many of the devices of the fiction writer in such a composition; I had no investigative skills, did not really even know where to go for information, had no accumulated knowledge, had no time to properly do my homework, was utterly unprepared for such an assignment. I cringe when I think about it. My God I was ignorant.

My father knew, I'm sure, just how ignorant I was, but I think he regarded this in some way as an opportunity, in the guise of a collaborator, to again teach me something. He patiently indicated the directions we might go, the subjects we might cover, people I might want to talk with, and suggested a few bits of background material I might want to thumb through—like Chittenden's *The American Fur Trade in the Far West,* DeVoto's *Across the Wide Missouri,* David Lavender's *The Rockies,* maybe a little Lewis and Clark, Francis Parkman, John Wesley Powell, maybe take a look at Atwood's *Physiographic Provinces of North America.* Just bedtime reading. Not to worry, he said. In three or four months when we had a draft put together he'd go through it and just sort of clean it up.

I don't know if he really had any idea of what he was in for—cleaning it up. I do know that when all was said and done I didn't recognize a whole lot of my own sorry prose and half-cocked social commentary in the final product, and although my nose was a bit out of joint at being so massively revised, I learned so much from the examination of his deconstruction (and reconstruction) of my work that I haven't written much of anything else *but* non-fiction essays on the American West ever since. I do remember one part of my narrative that managed to slip through intact in that piece had to do with the Colorado River Compact, with water allocations in the upper and lower basin states, and somehow I managed to re-route the Colorado to drain "into the Gulf of Mexico." There were more than a few astonished letters to the editor. How my father's proofreading eye missed that howler, I'll never know. Only Allah is perfect, I guess.

In 1980 we collaborated again (along with the photographer, Eliot Porter) on a book called *American Places,* and this time I must have gotten it right, or closer to right, because I remember few if any suggested changes to the chapters I wrote and no alterations in my parts of the beginning and concluding chapters that we wrote together.

I don't know what conclusions to draw from all this. As I said at the outset, I planned just to maunder on anecdotally until it was time to sit down, so maybe I don't need conclusions. But I guess I come back to those questions about the accidents of birth that I said didn't interest me much, those "how tough it was" queries, and to my sense, on the contrary, that I have been inordinately blessed and lucky. I don't mean to be a Pollyanna about it. There were times we didn't get along, and things we disagreed about, but it is symmetry not dissonance that strikes my reminiscent ear.

If I had to make metaphor out of collaboration I would make it out of something else my father and I happened to team up on, a different form of collaboration that has nothing to do with students, teachers, fathers, sons, learning, books, or any of the things I've been talking about, but that forms a similar, if more precise, kind of balance. Fifty years ago I helped my father plant eight thousand Norway pines on two hundred acres of land we owned in northern Vermont—land I still own—and about five years ago I cut down three hundred of those now grown trees, had them milled out flat on three sides, and built a log house out of them. When I stand outside it sometimes on a warm summer evening, and look at it weathering there against its dark background of cedar and spruce, I think, Jeez, this is quite totally amazing. My old man and I, we *grew* this house. I think it's about as good a legacy as a human being can ever receive.



The Stegner family and Smokey moved into their home in Los Altos Hills, California, in 1950.

Where the Old West Met the New

Wallace Stegner: 1909–1993

by Jackson J. Benson



Wallace Stegner stands between his father, George (left), and an unidentified friend.

Wallace Stegner died the evening of April 13, 1993, in Santa Fe, New Mexico, as a result of injuries suffered in an auto accident two weeks earlier. During a long and distinguished career he received just about every award an American writer might receive, including a Pulitzer Prize for the 1971 novel, *Angle of Repose*, and a National Book Award in 1977 for *The Spectator Bird*. Among the many other tributes to him was a PEN Centre-West Freedom to Write Award given to him last fall to mark his refusal of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) medal, to have been presented by President George Bush, in order to protest the politicization of the NEA. In accepting the award, Stegner wrote,

> I believe that government should support the arts. I also believe that its function stops with support—it has no business trying to direct or censor them. Art must be left to the artists. If they sometimes make mistakes, or press too hard, or test too strenuously the boundaries of the accepted, that is part of the commitment and the excitement: creation by definition deals with what has not yet been made. The creation of any art is three quarters error. As Lewis Thomas said, it was only by making mistakes that mankind blundered toward brains.

Born in Iowa, Wallace Stegner spent his childhood on the last homestead frontier in Saskatchewan and then the latter part of his life in the foothills of California—a remarkable span that ran from the horse-drawn plow to the information age. During his growing up, Stegner's father, a "boomer" looking to strike it rich, dragged the family from one place to another, finally—after an interim year in Great Falls, Montana—settling down for a few years as a bootlegger in Salt Lake City. A big, strong, violent man who tried to pursue frontier values in a post-pioneer society, George Stegner became the basis for Bo Mason in *The Big Rock Candy Mountain* (1943), a novel that embodies the rootlessness, mobility, and rugged individualism that typified so much of western experience.

Wallace, physically weak as a child and scorned by his father, found acceptance in school and ended up working his way through the University of Utah and graduate school at the University of Iowa. He earned a Ph.D. in American literature, by contrast to his parents who had not gone beyond the eighth grade, and went on to teach at Utah, Wisconsin, Harvard, and Stanford. He was a staff member for many years also at the granddaddy of all the summer writer workshops, the Bread Loaf Writer's Conference in Vermont. It was there he met Robert Frost and Bernard DeVoto, both of whom would strongly influence his thought and writing.

During the late 1930s, the 1940s, and early 1950s, he became known as an outstanding short-story writer. One of his stories appeared in each of the successive years, from 1941 to 1943, in the annual, *The Best American Short Stories*, and "Two Rivers" won second prize in the 1942 O. Henry Competition. Over the next three decades one of his stories was included in the *Best* series on six more occasions, and he made four more appearances in the *O. Henry Memorial Award Prize Stories*, including another second prize, for "Beyond the Glass Mountain" (1948) and a first prize for "The Blue-Winged Teal" (1954).

He was a man, to paraphrase what Robert Stone has said about one of his characters in a recent novel, who practiced the virtues that most of us used to believe in—kindness, courtesy, responsibility, and hard work. He had many roles—novelist, essayist, historian, lecturer, editor, and environmentalist—but perhaps all of them go back to one central role, that of being a teacher. As teacher in the formal sense, he is known for founding the creative writing program at Stanford University, which he directed for twenty-five years,



A well-armed Wallace Stegner, about twenty, scouts the woods.

producing several dozen of our most accomplished writers. As teacher in a less formal sense, he was all his life a truth-seeker who tried to see himself, his history, his land, and his people as clearly as possible and to pass on those discoveries to others.

As a westerner who frequently wrote about western subjects, he worked to increase our understanding of the West—its history, its geography, and its social dynamics—and to expose the myths that all too often had contributed to its exploitation. He was a writer shaped in large part by his sense of the importance of history. Most of what he wrote, beyond the histories themselves, whether fiction, biography, or essay, employed history as part of his perspective.

This attachment to history and his drive to learn about it in various contexts seems to have come out of his own experience. He felt in growing up that he had been cut away from his roots, that he had no history as a basis for understanding his own life. Like Bruce Mason, his semi-autobiographical persona in *The Big Rock Candy Mountain*, 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, except for a time during the winters in Saskatchewan. This gave Stegner a need to belong, to find a place that he could relate to and a tradition to be a part of. It also planted in him a life-long admiration for the community-building that he witnessed as a teenager among the Mormons in Salt Lake City.

In his Mormon histories, *Mormon Country* (1942) and *The Gathering of Zion* (1964), winner of the 1965 Award of Merit of the American Association for State Local History, he displayed the fallacy of a West created by the lone horseman and demonstrated how important cooperation was to its actual development. His biography of John Wesley Powell, *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian* (1924), performed the invaluable service of reminding us that the West was not a New Eden, a paradise, but for the most part an arid, near desert. His biography of Bernard DeVoto, *The Uneasy Chair* (1974), did much to spread the DeVoto gospel concerning the need to preserve public lands and the need for constant public vigilance in their protection. With these latter two works alone he made a substantial contribution to the emergence, development, and agenda of the environmental movement.

In *Wolf Willow*, he recreated the environment of his own roots in Saskatchewan on the last of the homestead frontiers through the combination of a history, a memoir, and a fictional account of the cattle ranching disaster of the winter of 1906–1907. These two stories, "Genesis" and "Carrion Spring," were the only "cowboy" stories he ever wrote. Growing up he frequently came into contact with the real thing, and in his introduction to the two stories he wrote about their influence, for better and worse, on him:

> Many things those cowboys represented I would have done well to get over quickly, or never catch: the prejudice, the callousness, the destructive practical joking, the tendency to judge everyone by the same raw standard. Nevertheless, what they themselves most respected, and what as a boy I most yearned to grow up to, was as noble as it was limited. They honored courage, competence, self-reliance, and they honored them tacitly. They took them for granted It was their absence, not their presence, that was cause for remark. Practicing comradeship in a rough and dangerous job, they lived a life calculated to make a man careless of everything except the few things he really valued.

As an environmentalist, Wallace Stegner was well-known for his activities on behalf of the Sierra Club and the Wilderness Society, as well as for his many publications on the subject. Among these was the "Wilderness Letter" (1961), which defined wilderness as "the geography of hope":

> Something will have gone out of us as a people if we ever let the remaining wilderness be destroyed; if we permit the last virgin forests to be turned into comic books and plastic cigarette cases; if we drive the few remaining members

By 1977 when this photograph was taken, Wallace Stegner had authored twenty-seven books.

> of the wild species into zoos or to extinction. . . . Never again will Americans be free in their own country from the noise, the exhausts, the stinks of human and automotive waste. . . . And . . . never again can we have the chance to see ourselves single, separate, vertical and individual in the world, part of the environment of trees and rocks and soil, brother to the other animals, part of the natural world and competent to belong in it.

In more recent years he joined with his son Page to write *American Places* (1981), using his extensive knowledge of the exploration, exploitation, and topography of our land to put forth one of the finest of our books on our complex and generally destructive relationship to our continent. In 1982 he published his second collection of essays, *One Way to Spell Man*, and in 1986, 1987, and 1988 he published three series of lectures, *The Sense of Place*, *The American West as Living Space*, and *On the Teaching of Creative Writing*. His last novel, *Crossing to Safety*, came out in 1987, and his most recent publication is a third collection of essays, *Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs: Living and Writing in the West* (1992).

For those who knew Wallace Stegner personally, his loss is particularly difficult to bear. Everyone I knew who knew him expected him to always be there, like a national monument, weathered, craggy, and inspirational. In a way, his finest work of art was himself—he often declared that his motive for writing was to examine himself, his roots, his motives and goals. Out of that self-examination, and a determination to grow, came one of the most remarkable persons of this or any other time. No man ever had more integrity. We in the West can take him, in death, to our hearts to cherish as one of ours, the best of what we can be. But we can also with some pride present him to the world, a great man and a great American writer.



Lee Foster, photographer



Courtesy G. T. Davidson

The Whitemud River swimming hole, mentioned by Stegner in *Wolf Willow*, looks as inviting today as when Stegner and his boyhood buddies swam in it.

Stegner, Story-Telling, and Western Identity

by Elliott West

Wallace Stegner is the only historian I can think of who titled one of his books after a smell. That alone qualifies him as one of the best and shrewdest members of our guild. The book is *Wolf Willow*, "a history, a story, and a memory" of the southern Saskatchewan of Stegner's childhood. Wolf willow is also a gray-leafed shrub. When Stegner, about fifty, revisited the town he had known as a boy and walked down to the muddy river where he had fished and dived and loafed, it was the scent of wolf willow that carried him instantly and completely back to his early years, that made "reality . . . exactly equivalent with memory," as he put it. Stegner used that moment of "ancient, unbearable recognition" as the starting point of one of his most interesting and provocative works. The choice of such a moment suggests, to me at least, one of the many important things that that remarkable man has to teach us.

The lesson has to do with the subject of an essay Stegner published in 1967, "History, Myth and the Western Writer." His main point was that western fiction was suffering a sort of paralysis because it was stuck in dichotomies, a series of either's and or's. There was the tension between the restless, freedom-loving types (invariably men), forever in search of the main chance, and the civilizers (women, of course) striving for domesticity and order. There was the clash between the law, as laid down in books and enforced by institutions, and true justice that good men knew in their upright souls. Above all, there was the distinction between a heroized past of natural beauty and "horseback virtues" and a contemporary West that blights the eye and stifles the spirit. As long as western writing was continually pulled between these opposites, Stegner argued, it would be like a car high-centered between ruts: it was going nowhere.

Stegner was making two interesting points here. First, the people of his region had been left marooned in the present. "Millions of westerners, old and new, have no sense of a personal and *possessed* past," he wrote. Most troublesome was the gap that yawned between the present and an earlier, increasingly mythicized

age. The disjunction of now and then—especially when "then" seemed so uplifted and "now" so botched—left people feeling isolated in time, collectively and individually. And second, Stegner was saying that this lamentable situation was, more than anything else, a failure of story-telling. Westerners had somehow gotten themselves into a terrible fix. They had come to think about a certain period in their history—the time of frontier settlement, especially its last stages—in such a way that they could not find in it the makings of a narrative that connected that time, only a few generations ago, with what they knew of themselves and where they lived. Westerners, in other words, were historically stuck. They had no means of understanding how things around them had come to be, no way to know who in the world they were.

Stegner was writing about a crisis of western identity, a shifty term that refers both to what the West is and to who westerners are. Its common meaning has something to do with how the place and its people have made one another. Its story must include that mutual shaping and how it has unfolded through time. And that, Stegner argued, was the story that was not being told.

In this essay, written more than twenty-five years ago, Stegner was considering what has become the central issue in western studies. We historians, tagalongs as usual, have lately been trying to bridge that gap, to find some threads of experience that tie together, for instance, the Montana of Plenty Coups and Granville Stuart with the Montana of Mike Mansfield and Henry Fonda's children. Our method has been to look mainly for grander themes of social and economic continuity, from the endless mixing of varied cultures to the long reach of the federal government and the influence of global technologies.

That is all to the good. Those broader developments have to be part of our new history. But when Stegner wrote of a breakdown of a western narrative, he meant a failure of other kinds of stories as well and the absence of other continuities. "Western identity," that slippery rascal, is not so easily grabbed and wrestled down. Historians have written often and well about the West as a physical environment and about the outward occurrences of people trying, with mixed results, to shape it. But the inward history of the West—western history as a perceptual and emotional encounter—that is an approach we have given much less attention than, say, the West as a hydraulic society or as a culture of urban oases.



Hilda Stegner (left) holds Wallace, and her sister, Mina, holds Wallace's brother, Cecil, and the family's dog about 1912 in Seattle.

Telling that inward history is no easy task, but Stegner gave us some examples of how to get on with it. First, his work reminds us of the importance of the family. In both western fiction and history, families have not exactly been an overriding concern. They are there, of course, but mainly to motivate, and sometimes to restrict, the hairy-chested heroics of a variety of stalwart males. Families hang there like a painted backdrop, while the man stands at center stage in solitary communion with nature, squinting toward the horizon for something to challenge him so he can prove his stuff.

Stegner made the family what it ought to be in our stories and what it always has been in western history—a central part of people's lives, a powerful shaping force on the land and institutions, and the main emotional area in which a western identity has developed. It is true, as Stegner himself pointed out, that Bo and Elsa in *The Big Rock Candy Mountain* fit the usual formula of restless man and civilizing woman, but the resemblance to the usual pattern stops there. Who, after all, is the story *about*? Bo? Elsa? Bruce? It's hard to say, and that's the point. Among many things, the book is about how we all turn out the way we do in part because of the wonderful and the perfectly god-awful things that happen to us in our families, and also about how

looking back into that intimate world, as Bruce begins to do in the book's final paragraphs, is a continuous act of revelation and reinvention. And so, if nothing else, Stegner teaches me that if we want to know what the West is and who westerners are, and also what we should and shouldn't do and be, we need to spend more time trying to reconstruct the western past through the thousands of stories like that of the Masons. We need to make our history, in the root meaning of the word, familiar.

Doing that, Stegner's second lesson quickly becomes obvious. The family as a focus of understanding has its own severe limits. Bruce Mason became who he was partly out of interactions with parents and brother but also because of what he took from the world beyond their reach, and for Bruce—as for Wallace Stegner—those other influences were largely of the physical environment. Stegner's writing is full of finely drawn descriptions of the western country—or, more exactly, perceptions of those places. I would guess that all fans have their favorite passages. Mine is the first ten paragraphs of chapter four of *Big Rock Candy Mountain*: Bruce's impressions of the Canadian homestead, a collage, the "mousy smell of the house, the musty smell of packed quilts," the Russian thistle hoed out of the garden, the "grass-grown wagon track," "the way the grass grew curling over the lip of a burnout, and how the prairie owls nested under those grassy lips." This, of course, is from Stegner's own childhood, when he was, in his own words, "a sensuous little savage," and these passages, like many others he gives us, are remarkable in their vivid particularity. Reading them, it occurs to us that these are as much descriptions of the characters as of their surroundings. Bruce says so: "The yard and chicken house and fireguard and coulee were as much a part of him as his own skin."

We have to tell better stories, Stegner said, if we are going to have "a personal and *possessed* past," and however our new history is written, it must include not only those outward, visible events and transformations but also that inward narrative, familial and sensual, that plays such a prominent part in Stegner's writing. By its nature, that story weaves together the generations and pulls us across those decades between the frontier and today. It makes possible a layered sense of place like that of Port William, Kentucky, the fictional creation of Stegner's student and friend, Wendell Berry. It tells us something about the lessons we are now feeding our own daughters and sons who later will know the West of Stegner's dying as the old West, their first West.

If all this sounds abstract and speculative, it is my failure, because in the recent flourish of western writing there are plenty of examples of what I am talking about—books by, among others, Ivan Doig, Bill Kittredge, Mary Clearman Blew, Terry Tempest Williams, and most recently Teresa Jordan, a small tribe of former "sensuous little savages" who have started to record what are essentially the gut memories of those connecting generations between the frontier and today. All these books are about families, about land and air seen and felt and smelled, about the inseparability of identities and particular places. They strike me as just the kind of story-telling that Stegner said we needed but were not getting.



Courtesy G. T. Davidson

The George Stegner family lived in this Eastend, Saskatchewan, home from 1914 to 1921.

A few years after the essay mentioned above, Stegner wrote in a different form of the westerner's peculiar historical isolation and the way to break it. This time he spoke through Lyman Ward, narrator of *Angle of Repose*. A western historian past the middle of a troubling life, chairbound with one withered leg, Ward has given up writing monographs to piece together the stories of his grandparents, how they faced the West and were changed by it and by each other, and doing that, he hopes to find for his own life a resonance and connection he has never known. "As I look down my nose to where my left leg bends and my right leg stops," Ward tells us at the outset, "I realize that it isn't backward that I want to go but downward. I want to touch once more the ground I have been maimed away from."

Ward speaks for a lot of us who are trying to connect now to then so that we might, literally, know where we stand. More than anyone, Wallace Stegner showed us how that work can be done, and as we get on with the job of telling better stories, he is the one who deserves our first and deepest thanks.

Precedents to Wisdom

by Patricia Nelson Limerick



Harvard faculty member Wallace Stegner, probably in 1943

Wallace Stegner faced facts, and found in those facts both poetry and history. In a wonderful chapter in *Wolf Willow*, Stegner wrote of the town dump in Whitemud in southern Saskatchewan, where he and the other boys took up a pioneering project in recycling. When they brought items they discovered at the dump back to the town, adult reaction was not overwhelmingly enthusiastic. "Occasionally," Stegner wrote,

> something we really valued with a passion was snatched from us in horror and returned at once. That happened to the mounted head of a white mountain goat, somebody's trophy from old times and the far Rocky Mountains, that I brought home one day. My mother took one look and discovered that his beard was full of moths.

"I remember that goat," Stegner ended this passage from *Wolf Willow;* "I regret him yet. Poetry is seldom useful but always memorable."

Stegner knew that the workings of human memory and loyalty are as funny as they are powerful. In Sacramento last February, responding to a panel presentation of writers discussing his work, Mr. Stegner said: "I want to protest first, to all of you. Not one of you, in all this laudatory talk, has mentioned my sense of humor."

Wallace Stegner was a man of humor, and of great foresight, and of wisdom. If you spend your days in a university, "wisdom" is not a word that you hear much. You hear a lot about research and scholarship, but the word wisdom never comes up when vice chancellors and deans gather to discuss the agenda of the university. This is one of the main reasons why the public does not feel much affection for universities, and why the public thinks that scholarly writing is a self-indulgent habit of professors, without much value to anyone outside the university. The troubled state of affairs in higher education adds up to one major reason why Wallace Stegner's example is so compelling and urgent today. He was not a man in flight from the word wisdom.

In 1945, Wallace Stegner, in collaboration with the editors of *Look Magazine,* published a book called *One Nation.* When you look at this book, one set way of thinking about Wallace Stegner's work collapses. "Stegner," this pattern of thought runs, "was great on environmentalism, and very much ahead of his time in paying attention to women as morally complex, significant characters in fiction, but ethnic issues were not really his concern." I was myself long under the impression that if you were in the market for precedents in wisdom in environmental affairs, you went to Stegner, and if you wanted precedents in wisdom in race relations, you went to Carey McWilliams.

Look at *One Nation*, and you learn that Stegner was just as dramatically ahead of his time in the matter of race relations as he was in environmental affairs. "There is a wall down the middle of America," Stegner said in the opening pages of *One Nation*, "a wall of suspicion, hatred, and guilt. On one side is the majority of our people—white, Protestant, gentile . . . . On the other side are people who because of color, religion, or cultural background are not allowed to be full citizens of the United States."

It would not take a particularly acute thinker to make this observation in 1993, or in 1963, for that matter. But a white writer *in 1945,* attacking the injustice of segregation and discrimination and launching that attack in a very public arena, adds up to a remarkable and inspirational sight to contemplate. Stegner himself referred to *One Nation* as a "wartime-patriotism" book. This reference might be puzzling, until

you realize that Stegner meant *true* patriotism—not an unthinking round of applause for a great country, but an appraisal of the nation's real situation, an appraisal with a critical and ethical edge. Patterns of racial injustice that "we have permitted," Stegner wrote, "have a clear relationship with Nazi practice; the difference is only a difference in degree. . . . The Nazi cult of 'race' purity . . . has its exponents in America, and always has had." He gave no white Americans a comfortable exemption: "None of us is so different from the classic Southerner, the unreconstructed Johnny Reb. The germs of prejudice are as common as those of tuberculosis: most of us under the x-ray would show the [signs] of old infections."

Stegner did not give an inch to any wartime impulse to offer an upbeat or sanitized version of American history. "Two of our minority groups," he said, "are conquered peoples, the Indians and the Spanish colonists of the Southwest," while blacks came in a "forced immigration," and even immigrants who came by choice entered a nation which "showed ugly signs of class and caste distinctions and an ugly will to resent or suspect the foreign and the strange." In the years since the conquest, Indians, Stegner said, had "suffered almost as much from our indifference and our charity as they did earlier from our Manifest Destiny." "Prejudice against the first Americans still persists," he wrote, "and there are plenty of people quite willing to go back to the exploitation and robbery that we practiced for two hundred and fifty years."

Stegner was just as clearsighted in his discussion of the history of Mexicans and Mexican Americans. For Mexican workers employed by "large-scale farm operators," he said, "working for such operators has been a kind of slavery." And, anticipating what is currently a huge issue in the West, Stegner captured the difficulties raised by shifting an economy toward tourism and offering a romanticized, colorful history for sale. Many Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants, he wrote, "neither can be nor want to be 'professional Mexicans' for the amusement of tourists in such 'quaint' sections of Los Angeles' Olvera Street. With some justice they commonly feel that everything Mexican in California is picturesque except the Mexican people."

When one reaches Stegner's discussion of police brutality toward minorities, the urge—to look back at the publication date and make sure that it *really* says 1945—becomes overpowering. Almost fifty years before the name "Rodney King" became famous, he wrote:

> police protection is too frequently something to make a Negro or Mexican shut his teeth together and bite off the things he wants to say.
>
> It is no secret that many police departments have their quota of sadists who operate by preference on the helpless—and no other grown man in America is likely to be quite so helpless as a member of a disliked and branded minority.

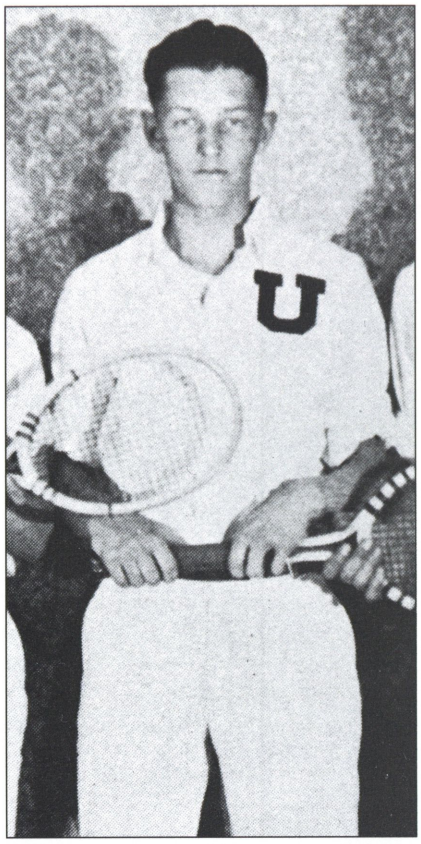
On the chance that some of his readers might take him to mean that a few bad policemen were corrupting a basically sound system, Stegner pulled out the stops:

> The law and order which the police are sworn to protect is the law and order of the ruling caste and class and color and faith, and so one is not surprised when Los Angeles police, faced with the problem of a dead Mexican in the street, put out a dragnet and sweep in three hundred Mexican youths on suspicion . . . . As long as we hire police we should expect them to do our collective will. The reason behind the frequent indifference of the police to the rights of minorities is the collective will of the society which hires them.

There is not an enormous amount of text in *One Nation*, because it is also full of pictures. But, short or not, it is a remarkable text for the tranquility, measured pace, and thoroughness of its coverage. Stegner does not, for instance, waste any time on lamentations over the



"Wally" Stegner, second from right in this 1923 photograph, had little contact with people other than whites during his growing-up years in the West.



Stegner while a University of Utah student in Salt Lake City

usual, East Coast–centered picture of American race relations. He does not bother to denounce the limits of that model; he simply puts forward a better and more accurate one. The book begins in the West, and, quietly reversing the usual, set, unthinking, east-to-west directionality of American history, begins with Filipinos, Japanese-Americans, Chinese-Americans, Mexicans, Hispanos, and Indians, and then turns to eastern locations for three groups, blacks, Catholics, and Jews. The text is centered in the West for seven of its group portraits, with only the last five portraits drawn from the eastern United States.

From the first page, Stegner made it clear that he was not going to fall back on the usual pattern of thought that comes as a direct result of failure to take the West seriously. He would not take the idea of "American race relations" to mean a bipolar relationship between blacks and whites. On this matter and many others, Stegner was far ahead of his time in 1945. He is, in fact, still ahead of *our* time, in 1993.

Stegner found space in his brief text for another important, and too often evaded issue. Prejudices and stereotypes, he said, "can even infect minority groups—set one group against another, breed a narrow group spirit that can be fatal to any hope of ultimate harmony." There are Jews who are anti-Semites, Stegner noted; while a "snobbish dislike for lower-class Negroes is by no means uncommon among Negroes who have climbed above the average level." The dangers of stereotyping appeared in every relationship. "It is as dangerous," Stegner said in a line well worth pondering, "for a Negro to think of the generalized 'white man' as it is for a white man to create and then abuse an abstract 'Negro'."

Stegner had clearly and accurately sized up the meaning of his historical moment: "Whether we like it or not, World War Two has been a war of liberation. It will not be possible in any foreseeable future to run a white man's world with yellow or black or brown colonies whose exploitation supports it." The United States was not quarantined from the broad patterns of change on the planet. "It becomes increasingly clear," Stegner concluded, "that racial and religious tensions are the gravest threat to the future that we face."

There are some clear "signs of the times" in *One Nation,* of course, references to "simple" and "primitive" cultures, for instance, references that do not sound anywhere nearly as hip as the passages I have quoted. But even with a few of the more dated elements included, what Stegner said in the 1940s is still what we need to hear, and to act on, in the 1990s. My point, moreover, is *not* that Stegner was "politically correct" long before the term was invented. My point is that Stegner was factually correct and ethically correct, and we are much in his debt because he said these things so clearly and so forcefully, before many others were saying them, or even thinking them. He warned Americans in 1945 that they ran the risk of "Balkanizing the nation, splitting it into mutually repellent fragments." The warning stands, having only gained in relevance.

One Nation, with its full ethnic inclusiveness and demand for justice, with its careful attention to the significance of the western half of the United States in the picture of national race relations, was evidence enough that Stegner had the jump on the New Western History. Both the method and the content of his story in *Wolf Willow* proved the case again. This was place-centered history, beginning with the physical environment, tracking the presence of Indians, telling the full story of the complicated events and maneuverings—of Indians, *métis,* Hudson's Bay Company traders, and Mounties—that had preceded the arrival of white American farmers. This was a history that faced up to tragedy and failure, and to brutality as well, and connected the whole package of the past up to the environmental and human issues of the present.

As a child in Whitemud, Stegner learned nothing about the history of the place where he lived. The chimneys of an abandoned *métis* village stood near his town, and no one knew what they were; "we never so much as heard the word *métis*," he wrote. Instructed in the history of the distant places, he lived in the Cypress Hills without "the faintest notion of who had lived there before me." The Cypress Hills and Whitemud offered all the elements of "a past to which I could be tribally and emotionally committed," he wrote; his home had all "the associations with which human tradition defines and enriches itself"—but no one knew, and no one told the children.

Repeatedly, Stegner declared in *Wolf Willow* that he wished he had been told this history as a child, given some moorings in his particular place, allowed to know that siginficant human events had happened in his home, and not just in places far to the east.



Stegner identified the staghound in this photograph as "Puma [the dog] I had in mind in 'Genesis'," one of two stories that he wrote about cowboys.

These declarations go right to the core of the new western history. His desire for "a past to which [he] could be tribally and emotionally committed" express exactly what I, and many others, wanted but could not get from the old western history.

In his writing of place-centered history, Stegner had again jumped ahead of his time. In fact, most western writers—historians as well as novelists—were at the very same time resolutely jumping *behind* their times, jumping backward into a remote and unconnected frontier past. In an essay published in 1967, "History, Myth, and the Western Writer," Stegner used the important and memorable phrase "the amputated Present," to describe this failure to connect. "Western writers," Stegner said, "have shown a disinclination, perhaps an emotional inability to write about the contemporary." Through all "the newly swarming regions of the West," he 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.

Twenty-six years ago, Wallace Stegner challenged western historians to stop amputating the present from the past. Fifty years ago, he wrote a text that put the great ethnic diversity of the West permanently on record. And yet professional western historians neither responded to his challenge nor imitated his example. Stegner had the strange and ironic experience of writing in several genres and crossing between the disciplines just at the historical moment when the boundaries between the disciplines were hardening and rigidifying. But things have changed. This is, in fact, one of the most interesting, distinctive, and exciting things happening now in western intellectual affairs: everybody is reading everybody else—academics reading non-academics, writers of fiction reading writers of nonfiction, and people with doctorates in history taking Wallace Stegner seriously as a thinker about the field.

Back in Whitemud, Saskatchewan, Stegner had only one place to go to learn about local history, and that place was the dump, the place "that contained relics of every individual who had ever lived" in town. In the artifacts of that dump, and in the unbridled enthusiasm that Stegner and his friends had for examining those artifacts, we get a very close analogy to the spirit of the new western history. As the boys of Whitemud knew, it does not make any sense to go to the dump in order to *edit* it, to look only for positive and inspirational relics. You examine everything, whether it is attractive or not, because you want to understand the *whole* past, not a selected and prettified version of it. Indeed, those who have complained of the harsh realism and "negativity" of the new western history might thank their lucky stars that they were spared participation in the exploration of the Whitemud Dump. In one memorable passage, Stegner described a

> welter of foul-smelling feathers and coyote-scattered carrion, that was all that remained of somebody's dream of a chicken ranch. The chickens had all got some mysterious pip at the same time, and died as one, and the dream lay out there with the rest of the town's history . . . .

To Stegner the town dump, in all its mixed contents, "was our poetry and our history." That statement goes a long way to explaining why western creative writers and western historians have found a shared cause in their exploration of the western past, with Wallace Stegner as the guide we have in common.

Stegner, the Environment, and the West

by Dan Flores

I never met Wallace Stegner, but after reading his biography of John Wesley Powell, *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian*, I followed him through many another of his books. Eventually my own career intersected modestly with his so that I got to review some of his last works, one of which was *The American West as Living Space*, a magisterial little essay collection published in 1987. No one has ever synthesized the environmentalist position with respect to western development, it seems to me, more thoughtfully, at a more informed level, or with more graceful language. In memorable Stegnerian cadences and rhythms—a language, incidentally, clearly meant to be spoken aloud as much as read—is a rather complete vision of the American West, its space, and its trajectory through time.

Despite its grace of presentation, however, Stegner's vision was tough-minded, steeped in a knowledge of the layer cake of choices that fold together to make up history, and in its sum, amounted to a pretty caustic social criticism. It was a vision, with perhaps only one or two exceptions, that most any modern western environmentalist would nonetheless be proud to endorse. Yet what gave Stegner's vision a power that many environmentalist manifestos lack is that it was a product not just of a far deeper knowledge of history but of harder, more penetrating thinking. History and intelligent thought were the main weapons in Stegner's arsenal, and they gave him at least three key insights into how human societies ought to adapt to living in the American West.

Among the most simple yet compelling ideas Stegner addressed was his conviction that the West is, environmentally, a very different place from the rest of the United States, and that aridity is the cause for that difference. It is aridity that accomplishes the seemingly magical transformation of the landscape beyond the hundredth meridian, aridity that has served as the principal challenge to living in the West, aridity (and, I might add, elevation) that has imparted to the modern West its defining identity as the domain of the public lands. This stamp of aridity not only made Stegner aware that the West was, in truth, far more a place than a pioneering process, Stegner's appreciation for aridity worked its way into his aesthetic. He loved what lack of moisture did to topography, air, light, life. The West has desert at its heart, and Stegner seemed so attuned to the principle that his books, at first opening, always seem to have just a hint of dry wind and sagebrush about them.

I know Stegner absorbed some of these ideas from Walter Prescott Webb and especially from Webb's 1931 classic, *The Great Plains: A Study of Institutions and Environment*. Yet unlike Webb and Kansas historian James Malin, who argued over whether aridity was a positive or a negative for the West, Stegner saw aridity simply as fact. But it is all-important fact. Not only has aridity altered history in fascinating ways, most crucially aridity's consequences have forced westerners to address



Stegner looks over the Black Rock Desert, probably during the early 1960s.

limits, to face the fact that the world *is* (so to speak) flat and has borders.

As with most of his key ideas, Stegner wrote not only well but often about aridity. In one particularly vivid passage, he wrote:

> Aridity, more than anything else, gives the western landscape its character. It is aridity that gives the air its special dry clarity; aridity that puts brilliance in the light and polishes and enlarges the stars; aridity that leads the grasses to evolve as bunches rather than as turf; aridity that exposes the pigmentation of the raw earth and limits, almost eliminates, the color of chlorophyll; aridity that erodes the earth in cliffs and badlands rather than in softened and vegetated slopes. . . . The West, Walter Webb said, is a 'semi-desert with a desert heart.' If I prefer to think of it as two long chains of mountain ranges with deserts or semi-deserts in their rain shadow, that is not to deny that the primary unity of the West is a shortage of water.

That elemental premise—that it was not any lack of land, the so-called "closed space" argument, but a scarcity of water that defined western history and possibilities—led Stegner to anticipate the kinds of ideas environmental historians have made their careers analyzing. Water, like air and sustenance, is one of the few things the human animal absolutely must have to survive in a place. A place without water and air—Mars, let us say—*can* be settled by humans, but the requisites for life must be supplied artificially. Most of the West is not quite so dry as Voyager II photographs show Mars to be, but in fact the mountain snowpacks, while they renew themselves every winter, store only so much water for the drylands that surround them. Western aquifers like the vast Ogallala Aquifer, which saturates the gravels beneath the sweep of the central and southern Great Plains, are essentially fossil lakes, many of them as depletable as mine ore. They will one day be done; the earth really is flat.

To his credit Stegner realized what all this meant in terms of the larger environmental picture for the West, for adaptation and carrying capacity in particular. He consistently ridiculed the big technological fixes for aridity—the dams that have engineered so many western rivers out of existence ("original sin," Stegner called the process)—and was especially critical of the grandiose plans for diversion projects that promised more water from the Southeast or the Pacific Northwest or even the Yukon to transform the West into something it was not.

In some of his last books, Stegner urged a kind of organicist adaptation for western societies. From the idea that because of aridity the West is substantially different from elsewhere follows the argument that the West is more fragile, that its resources must be managed more carefully, that it cannot absorb the levels of environmental modification or human population the rest of the country perhaps can.

Stegner, meanwhile, knew firsthand the dangers inherent in the transiency that is such a part of the American character, and this knowledge led him to a second important insight about human adaptation to the western environment. It led him to admire western societies that created unique responses to their local environments. It was Mormon Utah that first focused Stegner on the dialogue between place and culture. It was not until he left Utah that he realized what a unique lifeway had resulted from the interplay of Mormon culture and the ranges and canyons of the intermountain West. *Mormon Country* was his introductory exploration of that phenomenon, which deepened considerably in *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian* when he realized that John Wesley Powell's blueprint for a kind of planned, Darwinian adaptation to the West was based largely on Powell's admiration for the Mormon model.

In the communally based Mormon towns, Stegner found the growing seed of one distinctive sense of place in the West. That recognition made him look elsewhere for the phenomenon and find and ruminate about other cultures he believed were in the process of going native in the West—the New Mexicans of the mountain villages around Taos and Santa Fe, the ranchers of the Absaroka country in Montana, small cities with flavorful personalities like Missoula, Montana, with its literary and environmental colonies. He certainly did not always applaud the details of the process, as in frantically booming modern Utah, but it always interested him. And in his dissonance over whether he had ever managed to go native himself, he wrote a superb essay about creating a small ranch in the Los Altos Hills outside San Francisco that can serve as a guide to conscious place immersion—or what we would call western bioregionalism today.

Because he knew western history as well as he did, Stegner became famous as a literary champion of a third idea that continues to define the West. In the late 1950s, after three decades of agitation by now-famous conservation figures like Aldo Leopold, Bob Marshall, and Arthur Carhart, Congress began to hear testimony on bills to create a wilderness system in the United States. Stegner was by no means the only voice, or even the most important voice, to speak to the necessity of wilderness to American culture. But his 1960 "Wilderness Letter," now a worldwide classic of environmental history, was a galvanizing document. With good reason it has been quoted endlessly as perhaps the single best statement on behalf of wilderness preservation.

"I want to speak for the wilderness idea as something that

has helped form our character and that has certainly shaped our history as a people," Stegner wrote. In one sense Stegner's rationale was anthropomorphic: Preserving wilderness was crucial for Americans, he believed, not so much because it set aside habitat or preserved slices of the primeval earth, but because American history has tucked the *idea* of wilderness close in to the spiritual and mystical kernel of who Americans are. In the process of conquering the continent we in part surrendered our souls to the wild and the natural, and this has given Americans a sense of bigness, a primal sense of ourselves as "a wild species" that few modern peoples retain. Preserving wilderness amounted to a "geography of hope," as Stegner's memorable phrase put it, that humans could retain that sanity of knowing they are nature's children. Echoing Henry David Thoreau, Stegner believed that the wild held out to Americans our last, best hope of being "good animals."

More than his awareness of the limits imposed by arid-lands living, or his hope for a bioregional sense of place in the West, it was Stegner's appreciation of wild places and their effects on humans that made him a kind of model westerner. You have to suspect that what Stegner most wanted was to be left alone to read, experience, and write. But the circumstances of his time and his place made it impossible for him to hide in the scholar-writer's life. If he was, as the *Sierran* recently called him, a "reluctant activist," I think we ought to understand the adjective, yet note how often he set his reluctance aside, and recognize the inspiration his activism has had on many western thinkers and writers of our time. Encouraged by Bernard DeVoto, Stegner began writing environmental essays, usually about wilderness and public lands issues, in the early 1950s and continued to do so throughout his life. His edited volume, *This Is Dinosaur*, was the first cause-oriented coffee-table book published by the Sierra Club and was a critical factor in the great 1950s battle over western dams and rivers that converted environmentalism into the potent political movement it has been ever since.

It is a simple thing to say that Stegner's influence was large, but like the big, elemental ideas he had about the West, there is an irresistible force in simplicity. As has been said of Aldo Leopold, the man grew throughout his life, and what he came to know became our knowledge as well. But as Edward Abbey once observed, writing books and articles isn't enough. Knowledge isn't enough. Like Bernard DeVoto for an earlier generation, like Abbey for a somewhat different cultural subset, Stegner has served—and still serves—as an apotheosis of environmental activism for writers and even academics whose topic is the West. He married intellectual rigor and literary grace with passion and social commitment, and in his quiet way he promoted those who shared that commitment.

If the enemies of environmentalism have noticed this, and don't like it, blame Stegner. Good animal that he was, I somehow don't think he would mind.

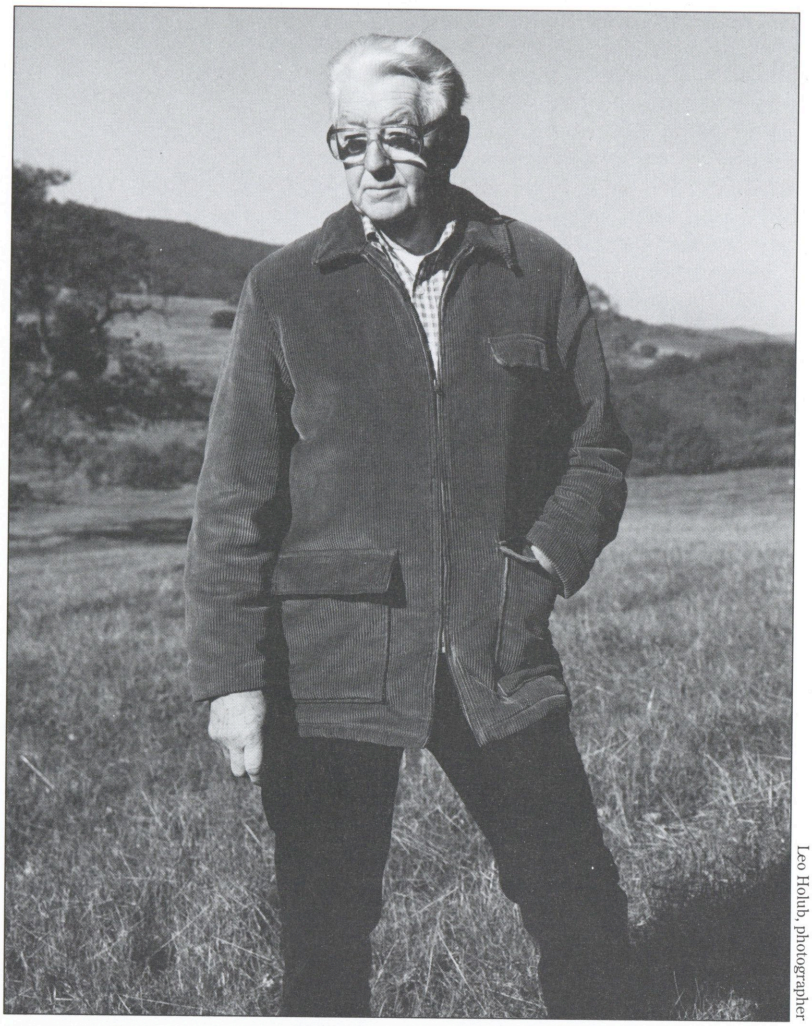


Courtesy G. T. Davidson

Stegner describes this stretch of road from the Canadian border to Chinook, Montana, with the Bears Paw Mountains on the horizon, in *The Big Rock Candy Mountain.*

Thoughts on Wallace Stegner

by Ivan Doig



Leo Holub, photographer

Wallace Stegner, 1989

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

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.

> 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

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.

> . . . 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

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 dryly: "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 moccasin-like 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.

> *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

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 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 bestsellerdom 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.



The Saskatchewan History and Folklore Society has preserved the Stegner home in Eastend and has mounted on the pump a plaque in tribute to Wallace Stegner.

Courtesy G. T. Davidson

The Good Rain
Stegner and the Wild

by William Kittredge

"You don't go there to find something, you go there to disappear."

—Wallace Stegner

There is no such thing as a landscape, there are only the processes of nature, and those of location, which in humans derive so largely from our incessant story-telling. More than a decade ago, in the introduction to an issue of *TriQuarterly* devoted to story-telling in the American West, Steve Krauzer and I quoted Wallace Stegner and made some generalizations from his work. I'd like to go back to those quotations.

This is from *The Big Rock Candy Mountain:*

> Things greened beautifully that June. Rains came up out of the southeast, piling up solidly, moving toward them as slowly and surely as the sun moved, and it was fun to watch them come, the three of them standing in the doorway. When they saw the land east of them darken under the rain Bo would say, "Well, doesn't look as if it's going to miss us," and they would jump to shut windows and bring things in from yard or clothesline. Then they could stand quietly in the door and watch the good rain come, the front of it like a wall and the wind ahead of it stirring up dust, until it reached them and drenched the bare packed earth of the yard, and the ground smoked under its feet, and darkened, and ran with little streams, and they heard the swish of the rain on roof and ground and in the air.

And there's this, from the story, "Carrion Spring," in *Wolf Willow*:

> Three days of chinook had uncovered everything that had been under snow since November. The yard lay discolored and ugly, gray ashpile, rusted cans, spilled lignite, bones. The clinkers that had given them winter footing to privy and stable lay in raised gray wavers across the mud; the strung lariats they had used for lifelines in blizzardy weather had dried out and sagged to the ground. Muck was knee deep in the corrals by the sod-roofed stable, the whitewashed logs were yellowed at the corners from dogs lifting their legs against them. Sunken drifts around the hay yard were a reminder of how many times the boys had had to shovel out there to keep the calves from walking into the stacks across the top of them. Across the wan and disheveled yard the willows were bare, and beyond them the floorplain hill was brown. The sky was roiled with gray cloud.

Two experiences, one running with water and hope, the other two-hearted, deceptive, and demonic, both from Stegner's childhood in the Cypress Hills of southern Saskatchewan—a past which was emotionally his, and because of his insistence, worth writing about, fathoming, making sense of.

Those paragraphs echo in me like episodes from my own life. "They could . . . watch the good rain come . . . the ground smoked under its feet . . . ." The language seems to call up images from a life which was mine once. I suspect this is true for many people who grew up amid distances in the American West. It's a notion which leads me to wonder how young I was when I first made an attempt at reading *The Big Rock Candy Mountain*. I like to imagine the child who was myself out on the screened-in veranda in front of our house in Warner Valley on a summertime evening with that big book propped up in his lap, listening to the voice and the talk and learning to think about the life I was in the midst of, beginning to imagine my way toward attempts at trying to articulate my own love of the great thunderstorms that came down across our valley.

One reason I like to wonder is because Stegner's paragraphs seem like ideal versions of the ones I wanted to write thirty years ago at Oregon State University when I first got the urge—notes which don't attempt much beyond emotional accuracy in rendering those still moments when the rain is coming which rest so quietly at the pure center of narrative.

As I understand it, the Greeks had a word for such moments, *exphrasis,* which means that moment which contains the past and implies the future. The impulse to understand them, I think is mostly religious and probably the work I have always wanted to get at. Which maybe accounts for my quite irrational affection for some patches of Stegner's writing.

But there at the beginning I let myself be talked out of my reason for writing—paragraphs like these of Stegner's—by writing teachers. It was a failure of nerve I excuse by saying, well, I was only a kid. But it cost me a lot of years. Now I'm a writing teacher. Beware of people like me.

Stegner is an artist who reminds other artists of fundamental responsibilities. The last week I've been reading a book about



Courtesy G. T. Davidson

Grain elevators and an imposing church are reminders of a more optimistic time for Hogeland, Montana, about twenty miles south of the Stegner homestead and fifty miles south of Eastend, Saskatchewan.

story-telling as it was used by the very early Greeks, people who were in the throes of learning, if you will, to think. The book, *The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony* by Robert Calasso, seems to me to be about the way the Greeks' early understanding of the fluid world was mirrored by the endlessly transformative cycles of the mythological stories they told in their attempts to make sense of the incessantly metamorphosing place where they lived.

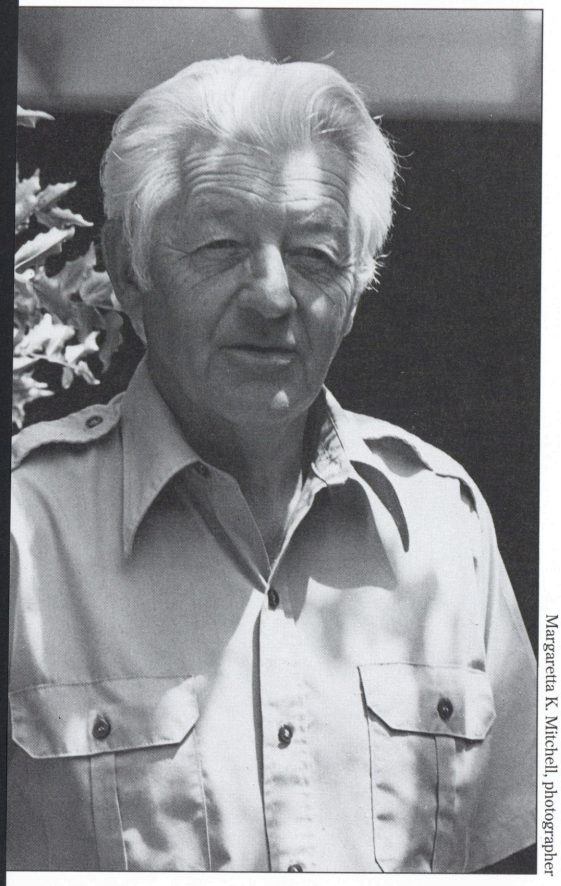
Of Phidias's great statue of Zeus in the temple to Kronos in Olympia, Calasso writes: "The gold and ivory seethed like an ants' nest. Zeus didn't exist except as a support for animals and lillies, arches and drapes, old scenes forever repeated. But Zeus was more than just the motionless guardian seated on his throne: Zeus was all those scenes, those deeds, muddled and shuffled about, rippling his body and throne in tiny shivers. Without meaning to, Phidias had illustrated that Zeus cannot live alone: without meaning to, he had represented the essence of polytheism."

But as we know, all that changed. The great project of European civilization, the quieting of nature, the conquest and possession, was already under way. Of later, classical Greek interest in attempts to still the writhing of the world, Calasso writes, "[They] were chiefly interested in shaping molds . . . . We live in a warehouse of casts that have lost their molds."

Calasso is, I think, talking about the domestication of plants and animals, the irrigation canals, the pinning things down and the weeding, the history of European conceptions of the wild, making things fit in the New World, genocide and agriculture as practiced in the American West. He is talking about our history of trying to put a stop to the incessant shape-changing, that flow and unceasing interpenetration of energies which we now, together with the early Greeks, understand as that which is actual.

No matter how arrogant we may become inside the convolutions of our technologies, Stegner reminds us, as he shows us those bones from under the snow and the high roiled sky on the horizon, as his great storm of rain sweeps toward us, we inhabit a universe our categorizing cannot remotely approach naming, one which doubtless in any foreseeable future will remain at least partways unfathomable. Stegner reminds us to stay humble and to stay compassionate because this animal life is all we have for sure. He reminds us to love it, make the best of it. He reminds us that such love is the source of our best politics. He reminds us to attempt staying true to what we actually have.

Wallace Stegner: Western Humanist



Margaretta K. Mitchell, photographer

Wallace Stegner, 1977

by Richard W. Etulain

Wallace Stegner advanced seven leagues beyond most westerners because he learned the rhythms of the West, experienced and drew on the bruising dilemmas of his life, and realized how premier regional writing must link the provincial and universal. As a result, in the last half century Stegner increasingly became our Wise Man of the West, his superbly written novels, histories, biographies, and inspired environmentalist works provocatively juxtaposing regional history and illuminating depictions of human actions. In the largest sense of the words, Wallace Stegner was a model western humanist.

Stegner's realistic and probing understanding of the West came neither quickly nor easily. Reared on the tail ends of Canadian and American frontiers, Stegner hopscotched around the two Wests with his migrating family; his father searching for riches at the end of a rainbow, and his mother patiently following. His boyhood in Canada and teen and college years in Salt Lake City also introduced him to western communities as varied as jerry-built East End, Saskatchewan, and as centripetal as the Mormon capital. These initiations into frontier and regional strivings toward identity, although at first personally traumatic, later became revealing themes in Stegner's mature fiction and histories.

Meanwhile, Stegner was learning other kinds of lessons. Bookish, perhaps a mama's boy, and pushed rapidly through the grades, he drifted through high school and college before deciding on graduate school in English at the University of Iowa. Early on a ravenous if undisciplined reader, Stegner now tried to educate himself in huge amounts of English and American literature that previously escaped him. Then marriage to fellow graduate student Mary Page and miserable instructor's salaries at Utah, Wisconsin, and Harvard brought on added financial worries and whetted his interest in free-lance work. Once available, these assignments forced Stegner to think and write about what he knew best—the West and his own life.

From the beginning Stegner consciously mined his life and the histories of his family and friends for his first fiction. After his prize-winning initial novel, *Remembering Laughter* (1937), based on his wife's family history, he turned out a series of apprentice works that culminated in his first blockbuster, *The Big Rock Candy Mountain* (1943). Hailed as a sprawling, picaresque story of the early twentieth-century West, the novel, Stegner admitted, was "family history reasonably straight."[1] The author's parents served as models for the stunning portraits of Bo Mason—booming, restless, wandering husband—and Elsa Mason—a nesting, reluctant, and peace-loving wife dragged throughout the Far West. Here was the first major installment of Stegner's extraordinary career as a western humanist, a superb novel bursting with the stark story of a questing family crisscrossing the two Wests searching for stasis and meaning.

This fertile marriage of region and the human condition spawned other notable offspring. Two collections of stories, *The Women on the Wall* (1950) and *City of Living* (1956), illustrated Stegner's first-rank abilities in dealing with characters in tension, especially in such memorable stories as "The View From the Balcony," "The Women on the Wall," "The Blue-Winged Teal," and "Field Guide to Western Birds." One of Stegner's favorite books, *Wolf Willow* (1962), which he termed a "librarian's nightmare" because it stitched together history, memoir, and fiction, also overflowed with lyrical and penetrating observations on the history and nascent society of the author's Canadian West.

Most of all, however, Stegner's *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian: John Wesley Powell and the Second Opening of the West* (1954), along with Henry Nash Smith's pathbreaking *Virgin Land* (1950) and Earl Pomeroy's pioneering essays of the 1950s, urged Americans to rethink their mistaken notions about the West. A generation before other westerners, Stegner asserted that if Americans had followed the scientific, rational arguments of John Wesley Powell rather than the romantic idealism of William Gilpin and other expansionistic tub-thumpers, the American West

would have been saved from many of its economic busts, environmental disasters, and even cultural tragedies. Like *The Big Rock Candy Mountain*, *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian* brimmed with Stegner's humanistic knowledge of the American West and its English-speaking peoples.

Even though Stegner's mid-career sparkled with satisfying achievements as a writer, teacher, and editor, he also continued to learn from buffeting personal and professional disappointments. By his mid-thirties, only he survived from his family, his mother succumbing to cancer, his brother to pneumonia, and his father to suicide. And there were dry spells as a writer. When reviewers did not react well to *Preacher and the Slave* (1950), later retitled *Joe Hill*, Stegner "quit writing fiction" for nearly a decade. Even when *Angle of Repose* (1971) won the Pulitzer Prize and *The Spectator Bird* (1976) the National Book Award, neither was reviewed in the New York *Times Book Review*. And later, when the lordly *Times Book Review* lionized Stegner as the "Dean of Western writers," the paper misnamed him William.

Still, Stegner won increasingly significant attention in the last two or three decades of his life. He gained thousands of new appreciative readers even though his fiction focused on families, friendship, and the humane qualities of his characters rather than on the despair, social criticism, and hyped ethnicity that marked much contemporary American fiction. Moreover, his three most recent books, *Crossing to Safety* (1987), *Collected Stories* (1990), and *Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs* (1992), all appeared on the New York *Times Book Review* bestseller lists, won major press attention, and were quickly reprinted in prestigious paperback series.

Stegner's outstanding novel of the West, *Angle of Repose*, tellingly illustrates his brilliant abilities in combining historical research, imaginative characterizations, and humanistic perspectives. Recognizing the cultural significance of Mary Hallock Foote as an eastern woman illustrator who comes west to discover a new local color region, Stegner used her life, not for the biography his graduate student began and abandoned, but as the central source for his premier historical novel. Her story as a snobbish immigrant alien to the frontier West—"I love my West when I am in the East"—became a perfect vehicle for comparing the two regions. Likewise her troubled marriage served as one sample of several imperfect unions that Stegner examined in the novel, all searching for their "angle of repose." Seeing firsthand in his own father and mother what dilemmas and frictions arose from mismatched personalities, Stegner returned to this theme repeatedly in his most noteworthy fiction.

In *Angle of Repose* and in the remainder of his writings, Stegner assiduously avoided a Wild West. Instead, in his fiction, histories, and essays he called for careful and judicious scrutiny of families, friendships, and cultural landscapes that avoided the frantic adventure, white- and black-hat stereotypes, and unbelievable fantasy of a six-gun West. He once remarked that too many third-rate scribblers were still panning the low grade gravel of the Lola Montezes, Calamity Janes, and Belle Starrs when they should be mining the rich ores of frontier and modern western institutions, social transformations, and cultural shifts.

In its most inclusive meaning, Wallace Stegner was a regionalist. Like southerner William Faulkner and New Englander Robert Frost, he used local and place-based materials to examine wider worlds. True, most of his best writing focuses on his native West, but his human and physical landscapes are as varied and complex as nature itself. The lives of John Wesley Powell, Mary Hallock Foote, Wallace Stegner, and the communities of pioneer Canada, Mormon Utah, and modern California serve as mediums for illuminating commentaries on a plethora of people and experiences. All his life Stegner tried to draw a line between his regional work and stereotyped popular Westerns. Once, when asked the difference between his and Louis L'Amour's Wests, he replied with a chuckle, "a few million dollars."

Westerners know Wallace Stegner as author of more than two dozen volumes of superb fiction, history, and biography about the region, but they and other Americans probably are even better acquainted with his writings about the environment. Well before others became born-again ecological evangelists, Stegner urged his countrymen to show much more care in their uses of land, water, and other natural resources. Urged by pundit Bernard DeVoto and others to employ his powerful pen for environmental causes, Stegner became a notable spokesman for conservation, taking on farmers and ranchers, government agencies, and planners who threatened to redo the vast spaces of the West. Above all he implored Americans to retain wilderness areas to encourage a much-needed "geography of hope" as a counterbalance against the expansionist motives that drove Americans to destroy even that which they loved.

In *The Sound of Mountain Water* (1969), *The American West as Living Space* (1987), and *Where the Bluebird Sings*, Stegner collected his luminous essays calling for more beneficial consideration of the West's landscapes and resources. Yet here, as in all parts of his life, Stegner was a model of humane balance, not a Don Quixote galloping after every doctrine of wilderness idealism. To the end of his fourscore and four years, Stegner was a thinker not a throbber on environmental issues. Obviously no mindless advocate of a Sagebrush Rebellion, neither was he a lockstep follower of pied pipers waiting to redeem all the West from beneficial uses of land and water.

Overall, Stegner learned what so few understand: our lives are

oxymoronic, most often compromised combinations of idealism and pragmatism. Preaching thoughtful sermons on the environment well before latter-day idealogues took to their pulpits, he never forgot that farmers and ranchers had to use resources to make their livings. His fiction and his histories, as well as his writings on the environment, were ever wise marriages of lofty ideals and necessary realities. Avoiding empty landscapes and superficial protagonists, he peopled his settings with full-bodied characters living in, conflicting with, and adjusting to their regional environments.

Stegner's wisdom and balance were particularly evident to those who knew him personally. First introduced to Stegner's work when a graduate student in history in the early 1960s, I met him a decade later at a western writers conference in Utah. *Angle of Repose* had just won the Pulitzer Prize, and he was being lauded as the West's leading man of letters.

He wore his laurels lightly, and I was especially impressed with his friendliness and energy. He calmly answered questions, his alert, blue eyes and white hair setting off a handsome, masculine face. He took time to chat with me, and we later began a sporadic correspondence. Later, I was elated when he asked me to provide information for the long essay he and his son Page published in the *Atlantic Monthly*.

I continued to read everything he wrote in the 1970s, and early in 1978 spoke to him about a book of conversations dealing with the West. He encouraged the project, so in the summer of 1980 and in early 1981 we met for two unforgettable weeks of chatting about the West. Nothing before or since matches the stimulation I received in talking with Stegner for three hours a day for two weeks. I experienced firsthand what so many observed in the last generation: no one spoke with more persuasion, with more humane insight about the West than Stegner.

I was even more taken with Stegner as a person. I thought he had experienced in earlier Canadian and American frontiers and Wests what I had known growing up the son of an immigrant Basque sheepman on an isolated ranch twenty miles from the nearest small town in eastern Washington. Stegner exuded the outdoor West, he acutely recalled his rural boyhood, and he dreamed of a wider world through books. These were shocks of recognition. They were my experiences too—just a generation or two later.

Those were the draws—first to his writing, then to him personally, and finally to his experiences in those northern Wests with which I identified. Stegner once wrote that he was not too certain of what he was, but he knew where he was from. He helped me to see that about myself.

What I learned in those memorable conversations in Stegner's home in the Los Altos Hills west of the Stanford campus parallels what others have recognized through their acquaintance with Stegner the man and writer. He was an enormously talented writer and a generous friend of understanding and foresight. Wallace Stegner stretched our minds while he delighted our souls.

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*)
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 (editor)
The City of the Living, and Other Stories, 1956
Great American Short Stories, 1957 (editor, with Mary 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 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

The New York Times
Book Review
229 WEST 43 STREET
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10036

October 20

Ivan Doig
17021 Tenth Ave., N.W.
Seattle, Washington

Dear Mr. Doig:

I've received your Stegner pieces, and have passed them on to our Editor and Deputy Editor for the Review. I must say that I found your piece on Mr. Stegner's perception of the West, and his influence on all those who have followed him in attempting to make sense of that terrain, to be both moving and convincing.

Thanks again for taking the time to send these two pieces on to me. I hope to be in touch shortly. And I hope that your tour continues to prove more pleasurable than not.

With best wishes,

Rich Nicholls

Rich Nicholls
(212) 556-7443

UMich Press (313) 764-4392 } Mary Irwin
circumstces of Cook lectures? asst Robin Moyer (313) 764-4387
- publish all? No
- some others? (send a list?)
- who arranged Stegner to come?
- use of "man" & "men"?
still in print? going out @ end of yr
- Blue bird
total sales — will call back Aug. 17 w/ total → 555 h'back 5500 p'back
~~how many sold~~?
- "felt some kind of loyalty" — "fairly easy" to acqre
-

Ross #

UMich Law School (313) 764-1358
Lilian Fritzler: dean's sec'y
- com'tee: law fac & Eng, hum'ties invited
- Jan '85 Terence Sandalow # Dean
- primly law students & fac
- others: Ap '93 - Am Art Museum, Stephen Weil of Hirshorn
eclectic '92 Arthur Danto - Ufizzi
- phil prof @ Colia -
'90 - Geoffrey Ruddyn Elton
'89 - Bartlett Giamatti (Amcns & the Games)
"splong interest in W"
"to reflect on"
~~Jeannette~~ "place of West in Amcn life"
- - not standard for UM Press to get lectures

13 Oct. '93

Dear Rich--

Here are the Stegner pieces you asked to see.

regards,

Rich Nichols
New York Times Book Review
The New York Times
229 W. 23rd
New York NY 10036

(212) 556-7443

Author copy

Wallace Stegner

by Ivan Doig

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

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.

> 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, Nov. 10, 1992

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.

> . . . 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

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 moccasin-like 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.

> *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

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 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 bestsellerdom 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.

Ivan Doig's books include *This House of Sky*, the *McCaskill Trilogy of Novels*, and forthcoming *Heart Earth*.

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 5, 1993

Dear Ivan,

Thanks for your letter of September 28, and for putting it all down on paper. Good to have it, and your recollection jibes with mine exactly.

In subsequent discussions with other symposium presenters, there is much enthusiasm for this project. From the perspective of early October and early conception of this thing, it would seem a go. I'll keep you posted (I hope to know one way or the other by sometime in November).

Thanks again for participating in what everyone seems to agree was a splendid symposium. Best of luck on the book signing tours, and on the next book. HEART EARTH is terrific.

All the best,

Chuck

neighborhood.

Vehicle Rollovers Kill 3 Men

Three men, including two from Albuquerque, were killed over the weekend in two separate rollover accidents in Sandoval County, State Police said.

Jimmy J. Gutierrez, 31, of 51st NW, and Brian J. Cordova, 30, of David Court SW, died after the truck in which they were riding rolled over on I-25 south of Bernalillo about 4:20 a.m. Sunday, according to State Police.

The 1988 Ford Ranger was being driven south by Gutierrez when for an unknown reason the truck went into the median and rolled three times, coming to rest in the median, State Police reported.

On Saturday, a Wisconsin man was killed in a one-car accident on NM 4 near Jemez Springs, according to the State Police.

Timothy W. Long, 27, of Platteville, Wis., was driving a Cadillac north about 1 p.m. when it went off a curve, became airborne, then rolled over three times, coming to rest about 150 feet from the road, State Police reported.

Long was not wearing a seatbelt.

IN BRIEF

Albuquerque Journal
Monday, April 5, 1993

Injured Prize-Winning Author 'Fair'

SANTA FE — Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist Wallace Stegner, who was injured last week in a traffic accident, is in intensive care in fair condition, a nursing supervisor said Sunday.



Stegner

Stegner, 84, was moved out of ICU earlier this week when his condition was listed as guarded and improving.

Then on Friday, he was sent back to intensive care and listed in serious condition, said Laura Folsum, marketing director at St. Vincent Hospital. Stegner's condition improved Sunday, a nursing supervisor said.

Stegner, of Los Altos Hills, Calif., was injured in a Santa Fe traffic accident last Sunday night. He was cited by police for failing to yield the right of way.

Stegner had been guest speaker at an awards banquet of the Mountains and Plains Booksellers Association. He was honored for his 1992 collection of essays entitled "Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs: Living and Writing in the West."

The novelist won the Pulitzer Prize in 1972 for "Angle of Repose" and the National Book Award in 1977 for "The Spectator Bird."

— The Associated Press

Gas-Tax Bill Goes to Council

ON THE CALENDAR

A bill goes before the Albuquerque City Council tonight that would put a 2-cent-a-gallon gasoline tax on the Oct. 5 ballot.

The tax is projected to raise about $4.3 million a year for hiking and biking trails, improved bus service and street repairs.

The council is also scheduled to hear a report by the Albuquerque Convention and Visitor's Bureau.

The council meeting will start at 5 p.m. in the council chambers at City Hall Downtown.

Rescue Mission Plans Easter Dinner

Albuquerque Rescue Mission, 509 Second NW, will serve a special Easter dinner April 11 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. for homeless people.

More than 20 volunteers as well as several community leaders and local celebrities will work with the mission.

Albuquerque Rescue Mission provides emergency food, shelter and clothing to people who are homeless. For information call 889-6359.

Catholics Pray

By Christopher Miller

JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Parishioners came together at rosary rallies throughout the Archdiocese of Santa Fe on Sunday, praying the church will soon heal from the archbishop's resignation and allegations that some priests have molested children.

About 200 Roman Catholics gathered Sunday afternoon to recite a rosary at the Immaculate Conception Church in Downtown Albuquerque. Catholics gathered to recite rosaries in other churches throughout the archdiocese Fe and Bele

"We are t wounded by said Adolph Alameda who by lay membe difficult tim overcome thi

Gallegos r Robert Sanch last month fol relations with past. Nor did

Students To Explain

By Nancy Tipton

JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Ken Distler is a disabled veteran. Leonard Castillo was laid off after 13 years with a computer company. Jacqueline McDowell quit school, married and became a mother at age 14.

What this diverse group of people has in common is the Albuquerque Technical-Vocational Institute.

Distler, Castillo and McDowell are among seven students who will tell their stories at the T-VI Foundation's first fund-drive appre dinner Wednesday at the R Classic Hotel.

The dinner will recognize who contributed during the s first fund drive, which target business community, said Downey, the school's direct development. The three-m drive raised about $450,000 in and pledges with 14 gifts of $1 or more.

The students, one from ea the seven instructional de

TRAFFIC WATCH

Here are the traffic trouble spots to watch out for in the city this week:

NORTHEAST

1)**San Mateo between Lomas and Constitution/ San Mateo between Menaul and Indian School:** Various north and southbound lane closures through November.

2)**Central between Juan Tabo and Western Skies:** Various east and westbound lane closures through April 12.

3)**Lomas at Broadway:** Various lane closures in all directions at the intersection, with no left turns allowed, through June.

4)**San Pedro between McKinney and Santa Monica:** North and southbound closed.

5)**San Pedro between Natalie and Kiowa:** Various north and southbound lane closures through Friday.

6)**Montgomery between Tara and Eubank Place:** East and westbound will be restricted to one lane each direction, with no left turn at Montgomery and Morris for east and westbound traffic.

7)**Wyoming between Comanche and Aztec:** Northbound will have double right lane closure through April 23.

8)**Louisiana between Domingo and Marquette:** North and southbound closed through April.

9)**San Pedro at Bellemah:** Various north and southbound lane closures through April 24.

10)**Office Boulevard between West Fron and G**

11)**Montgomery be ingside:** Various east Friday.

NORTHWEST

12)**Twelfth betwee** closure through April.

13)**Atrisco between** Closed through Friday.

14)**Alameda bridge o** being used until complet of the existing road.

SOUTHEAST

15)**Carlisle between** Various lane closures for through July.

16)**Central between J** bound restricted to one

SOUTHWEST

17)**Second at South** closed through July.

18)**Central at 46th:** Va for an indefinite time.

INTERSTATES

19)**I-40 and Coors:** Tra and westbound I-40 throug in spring 1995.

20)**I-40 at Rio Grande**

5118 N. Princeton St.
Portland, OR 97203
June 3, 1993

Dear Ivan Doig,

My wife and I have been thinking we might organize a Portland event celebrating Wallace Stegner--some combination of readings from and talking about his life and work. As you know, Wally had a big following in the Northwest, as elsewhere. I think a lot of people would appreciate a chance to honor and remember him.

We're thinking of sometime in the period September through November.

If you'd be interested in taking part in such an event, would you drop me a line?

Sincerely,

John Daniel

John Daniel

9 June '93

Dear John--

9 June '93

Dear John--

Given the traveling I'm going to have to do all fall for my nex book and the likelihood that the Montanans--maybe in both Missoula and Bozeman--are going to do some kind of memorial gathering(s), I'm not a good bet for your Portland remembrance of Wally, sorry to say. I don't know what it could contribute to the occasion, but I'm passing along the remembrance piece I did for the SeattleTimes, which will also run in Montana Magazine of Western History with Kittredge's, Etulain's, etc. in its next issue. Good luck with the event, and with your own wordworking.

best,

Ivan

ALENE H. MORIS
LifeWork Consultant to Individuals and Organizations

Dear Ms Doig:

Since you so obviously admire Wallace Stegner (Seattle Times, April 18), you might enjoy this story of his humanity.

My mother was his Sunday School teacher in Eastend, Saskatchewan — or Bell Lake nearby; she lived in both towns. I never did ask her which town he lived in.

In the late 1970's, my mother was visiting me in Seattle on her way to visit friends in California. She was in her mid-80's. One day, in my kitchen, she said "I think I'll call Wallace Stegner in Palo Alto. Maybe I could stop off & see him before going on to L.A." — I said, "Have you had any contact with him all these years?" — "No," she replied, "but I think he'll remember me."

She called Stanford — & they got in touch with him at home. The next day my mother got a phone call and

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he said she must stop off & visit him. He knew her immediately, he said, and they had a lively chat on the phone.

He met her at the S. F. airport, drove her around Palo Alto - took her to a 2½ hr lunch & put her back on a 5 p.m. flight going on to L.A. He gave her the day, essentially.

My mother had an incredible memory and so did he, of course. So they had a wonderful time remembering everything — but went on to discuss Canadian politics — and hockey — and, and —

My mother had only 4th grade formal education in Icelandic — but was very well educated, on her own. That he was gracious to his woman he remembered as being very kind to him in ~~his~~ hard homesteading days speaks very well of his spirit. It meant so much to her because she had enjoyed his mind so many years before. She died in 1980.

Just thought you might enjoy this glimpse into his humanity. Sincerely, Alice N. Morris

6/13/93

Dear Ivan,

Thanks very much for the copy of your remembrance. Here's what I said at the Stanford service, which may or may not appear in Bloomsbury Review.

All best to you —

John

WALLACE STEGNER

A Remembrance May 3, 1993

In 1982 I came to Stanford on a fellowship bearing Wallace Stegner's name, and a year later my wife and I rented a cottage from the Stegners on the hill where they had lived since the 1940s. We stayed five years, as tenants, as helpers around the place, and as friends. We count it a great privilege to have had those years.

The trail to our cottage passed along the hillside close below Wally's study. I became accustomed, as I walked out in the morning, to hearing the steady tapping of his big Olympia manual typewriter--that was his call, and it began as early in the day almost as the birds began theirs. I liked to think he had used the same machine to write his "Wilderness Letter," which had brought Wallace Stegner to my attention fifteen years before. I was new to the West then, and in love with it. His words gave clarity to my love; reading them, I understood what I believed and had been unable to say.

The tall, silver-haired man we began to know was self-possessed, decorous, considerate, and kind. He smiled easily and often, the lines of his face all participating, a lively and sometimes mischievous light in his eyes. Dignified as he was, you could always see in those eyes the "sensuous little savage," as he called the boy he had

been, who worked and played on the northern prairie a long time ago.

He never left that boy behind. I remember how he admired with pleasure my stepson's ability to soothe a lizard into riding his bare shoulder. And I remember a summer evening when four sensuous little savages, two of ours and two of their friends, had been tearing around the Stegners' house, against our instructions, playing Ninja warriors. Wally and Mary had every reason to be annoyed or worse, but Wally on the phone was more amused than put out. "I think," he said, "it's time to call in the troops."

He usually had his writing done by late morning. After lunch, an hour of reading, and sometimes a nap, he gave most of his afternoons to the place. In nearly fifty years of living there, he and Mary created a humanized landscape in which the wild is welcomed and loved. There's an easeful order to their beds and hedges and trees--nothing regimented, nothing cropped in hard lines. The place is cultivated and natural, like its stewards. The native oaks have grown up around the pale green house; Wally and Mary built their deck around one of them. Deer and coons and king snakes habit the place. A coyote occasionally stares from the field. Wally did make war against gophers, but only to control, not to exterminate. He claimed to have knocked off loudmouth jays with his pellet gun, but I didn't believe him.

He liked to complain about the dobe soil--there was only a week in the spring and a week in the fall you could work it, he grumped. The rest of the year it was sodden clay or baked brick. When he and Mary talked about where to plant a new orange tree or how to prune the pistachio, I pretended to have work to do nearby so I could listen. Sometimes they argued mildly about how old one of their trees was, about what had used to grow where, and when. The lore of their place lived in them and they lived in it, like the air they breathed.

Wally relished his work, within his study and without. He even liked the kind of job he called "idiot's delight"--clipping the twigs and leaves off small pruned branches, and cutting the branches into sticks that would dry through the months and warm his study on winter mornings. He'd have the Giants on the radio if they were playing, he'd stand shirtless in the sun and clip for as long as the job required. Sometimes, when I passed by doing other work, he'd have a few lines of poetry for me--Wordsworth and Frost most often, but others too. Once I found him gleefully declaiming a version of Milton about a gopher he'd trapped. "Which way he flies is hell," Wally chortled, tossing the rodent into the field. "<u>Himself</u> is hell...."

I hope I age with all of Wallace Stegner's good humor and a fraction of his wit. "I don't know," he once answered a friend who had asked how he was, "I'm too dull

in the senses to tell." In a letter three years ago, he wrote: "God damn the common cold virus, to which I have no resistance at all. I'm only a swamp where it loves to snuggle down and multiply." And last year he had this to say about his medicinal regimen: "I take 11 pills at breakfast and 8 more the rest of the day, but they haven't done me in yet. These modern pills haven't got any oomph."

I've learned much about writing, literature, and the American West from Wallace Stegner, but I've learned even more about the conduct of a human life. He was at work on the back terrace one afternoon, pulling up bricks and re-setting them in sand, when I came home from teaching and joined him. For several minutes I did more talking than work. I had two courses that quarter; I was feeling kind of frazzled. How could I write poems? I complained. I had no time, no energy left over.

Wallace Stegner answered my complaint the most generous way he could. Kneeling to his work, smoothing the sand and setting the bricks in true, he gave me the lasting benefit of his silence. He allowed me to realize, with no word from him, that no word was needed. His example was answer enough--he who had finished <u>The Big Rock Candy Mountain</u> snowbound in an underheated Vermont cabin, on unpaid leave from Harvard with a wife and small child, writing reviews and what he called potboilers for cash as he threw himself at the novel seven days a week. No one made time for his writing. He made it himself, and the time he enjoyed in

his later years was time hard-earned. Writing, teaching, conservation, family and home--there was work to be done, and as long as he lived he did it well.

Wally had a certain way of walking from job to job around the place. Hose or rake or flower pot in hand, he would shuffle along in a deliberate kind of hurry, his torso tilted slightly forward, his feet keeping close to the ground. It was eager and careful at the same time. Since he died, I've been seeing him walk that way. I've been thinking of all he got done in an afternoon as he shuffled between orchids and roses and pool and shed, maybe slipping into his study once or twice for a flurry on the big Olympia. And I've been thinking of all he got done in a lifetime, too--shuffling around the West as a boy, moving on through schools and jobs to the work of words, from Utah and Iowa to Wisconsin and Vermont, from Cambridge to California, Rockies and Great Basin to Los Altos Hills, from sentence to sentence, from page to page, from book to book. How much he made, in his slow hurry, by the time he was done.

"Anywhere on the spectrum from tame geranium to wild peaks and forests, nature contains me and I contain it. Going deeply into nature, I find myself." He wrote those words a decade ago, and more recently he said these, for a documentary on wilderness: "You don't go there to find something, you go there to disappear." Now Wallace Stegner has disappeared into the wildness of Earth, and we who

loved him will not see him again. But like his words, our love survives him, and much that he loved in this world will survive us all. And so I say to you, to myself, and to Wallace Stegner ~~these words of a poet:~~ these words of a poet if he can hear them:

What thou lovest well remains,
the rest is dross
What thou lov'st well shall not be reft from thee
What thou lov'st well is thy true heritage

#

JOHN DANIEL
5118 N. PRINCETON ST.
PORTLAND, OR 97203

MONTANA
The Magazine of Western History

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

May 10, 1993

Dear Ivan,

Your piece on Stegner came to hand last week and is in typeset this. It'll work just fine (he said with studied understatement). Please consider the enclosed as proof copy. We can still make changes if you like

We didn't talk money. What do we owe you? If you can attend the symposium, probably a go, probably in September, and probably in Missoula, there will be some reward-- honorarium plus expenses, most likely. If cannot attend, I can try for the honorarium. Let me know.

Once again, thanks. Have a safe trip. I'll probably try to reach you in June.

Meantime, all the best,

Chuck

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

27 May '93

Dear Chuck--

Am out of the car and into the mail, so, quickly:

--$125 okay for the Stegner piece?

--2 crx needed, is all. At bottom of middle column, p. 1, closed parentesis needed after "exception." At bottom of next column, part of the word "convention" got dropped.

--Will be putting together this Sept.'s Montana-Wyoming bookstore tour sometime in June, but can already tell you (a) I've decided against a reading in Helena and (b) it's going to be pretty dubious that I can participate in the Stegner symposium--there's just a helluva bunch of conflicts of obligations already, and I can't see a clear spot this summer to write any kind of decent presentation. Figured you'd better know, pronto, how things are shaping up: hyper-busy!

Looking forward to the issue with the Stegner tributes.

regards,

Ivan

Stegner left amid a growing appreciation

by Ivan Doig
Special to The Times

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.

– Wallace Stegner, in a letter to Ivan Doig, June 16, 1990

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 two weeks earlier finally claimed him last Tuesday, Stegner left amid a late, luminous blossoming of public and critical appreciation for his life's worth of books – 29 of them, across the spectrum of essay and history and fiction and biography. 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

Please see **STEGNER** on F 5

tween.)

The accuser (and narrator) is Harrison Burns, Constant's boarding school friend. In flashback, we learn of Harry's own days as a scholarship student, recently orphaned by burglars in his parents' home. When the Bradley clan takes him under its wing, he is properly dazzled – especially by the smart, handsome and charming Constant.

But when Harry becomes an unwilling accessory to the murder Constant commits in a drunken rage, his ties to the Bradley family become stranglеholds. Constant's father buys silence with the guarantee of a college education, and Harry gains an unbearable burden.

The Bradley family remains part of Harry's life into adulthood. While researching a story, he by chance turns up a mysterious mad relative. And as his own marriage dissolves, he starts a scandalous affair with Constant's sister. Meanwhile, the secret continues to gnaw.

When he can no longer abide it, Harry goes public, and we're snapped back to the present, as the Bradley family gathers to fend off the attack. We have no doubt about Constant's guilt; but will the jury believe that this shining beacon of privilege – good presidential timber, the newspapers are saying – once beat a girl with a baseball bat so hard that it broke in half?

As both a novelist and journalist, Dunne shows an abiding fascination with certain themes: guilt, family ties, the abuse of power, terrible heartbreak, the charisma and gleam of the rich-and-famous-with-a-kink. The same is true of his brother, the screenwriter and novelist John Gregory Dunne.

Dunne's prose is artless and unadorned – his brother is a more gifted stylist and yarn-spinner – but his themes are bittersweet and compelling. He explores them fearlessly, and so



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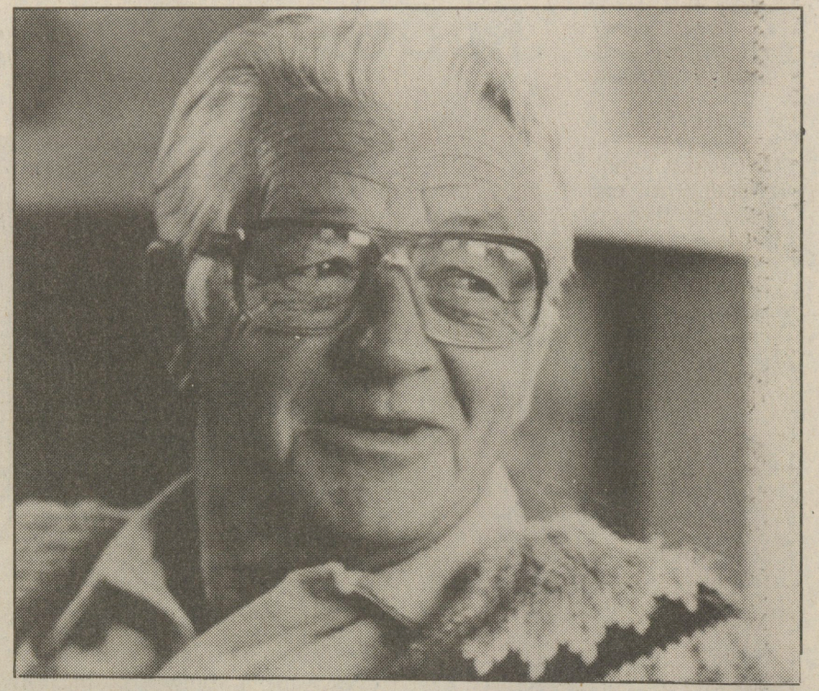
Wallace Stegner made the right enemies



Leo Holub

Wallace Stegner, 1909-1993

STEGNER

continued from F1

trio of feet.

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, Nov. 10, 1992

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." But another year or two of unreliable rain here, and we're going to be wondering how damply unique we really are.)

In trying to review that last book of Stegner's, "Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs," I swiped from the Greek poet Archilochus 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 recognition, ever find its way to this most obvious candidate during the NEH regimes of Lynn Cheney and William Bennett.

. . .Good stand of wavy gray hair, rugged square-cut face, bifocals in either horn rims like mine or what used to be called tortoiseshells; 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

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

That solidity, Stegner's Scandinavian-Saskatchewan-Montana-Utah-etc. mien of flat-footed 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, Mont. Trying to be helpful about breakfast-time logistics, Stegner said: "We get up around 7." 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 during his hyper-Western boyhood, he lived in "twenty places in eight states and Canada" (the state of Washington among them; part of his novel "The Big Rock Candy Mountain" is set in Puget Sound country), and one of my regrets is that my home state of Montana was among his unfondest 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 mocassin-like 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.

"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

None of us is going to replace him, and it's just about as doubtful whether any half-dozen 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 land, we resort to the lessons that shaped 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 bestsellerdom 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.

■■ Seattle writer Ivan Doig's books include "This House of Sky," "Winter Brothers" and the forthcoming "Heart Earth."

...er in the opera?

...n't "more ...sical

THE CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED HIT OF THE SUNDA...
"DON'T LET THI...

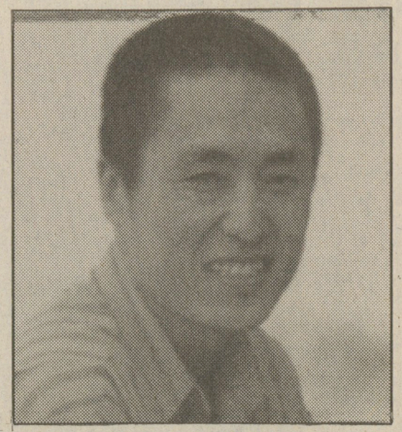
Zhang: 'Ju Dou' director takes repression in stride

by Stephen Schaefer
USA Today

Though he is China's most important filmmaker and twice nominated for the best foreign film Oscar, Zhang Yimou hardly basks in a Steven Spielberg lifestyle.

The rising director lives simply in the north of China between Xian and Beijing, in a residence that costs $5 of a $40 monthly salary, without perks like use of a free car.

If Zhang Yimou (his name is pronounced zhung ee-mow) ever wants to fly to Tokyo for a weekend to see movies, he has to apply for a travel visa months in advance.



Zhang Yimou
China's top filmmaker

"It's not like I don't want to be rich," says Zhang, 43, speaking in Mandarin through an interpreter. "It's just impossible. All profits (from my films) go to the state. I don't have a percentage, we just take our basic salary."

But Zhang wanted nothing except to make movies. During the infamous Cultural Revolution in the '60s and '70s, he was forced to work on farms and in a spinning mill. He sold his blood to buy his first camera.

After the Beijing Film Academy reopened in 1978, Zhang applied and was rejected because at 27 he was considered five years too old start studies. He persisted, ap- to the Minister of Culture, ed to the academy's tment.

and

pictures, 1990's "Ju Dou" and 1991's "Raise the Red Lantern," were initially banned at home for their political content, despite the fact that they were set in China's past. Each questioned the country's class system and treatment of women.

He is understandably wary when discussing politics.

"It's very difficult for me to comment on that. I can only say China is a very complicated place that has its own way of doing things."

Zhang's latest, "The Story of Qiu Ju" (opening in Seattle May 28), is also politically provocative, but different from the gorgeously filmed period pieces that have made his worldwide reputation. Adapted from a prize-winning Chinese short story, it is his first comedy and centers on a pregnant peasant named Qiu Ju (played by and her stubborn at- ology from

Zhang is now poised for international filmmaking fortune. But unlike Poland's Roman Polanski or Switzerland's Barbet Schroeder, Zhang has no plans to leave his homeland and make English-language films for the world market.

He is incredibly well-known at home: A recent Chinese popularity poll ranked him sixth and Gong Li seventh (Deng Xiaoping, the nation's leader, was first).

"I believe I will stay in China. There is a big difference between Eastern and Western films," he says, dressed in jeans and sports jacket, sitting in a tiny hotel room.

"To make good films, you have to be familiar with the subject and have an emotional connection with it. Although I foresee myself encountering many problems to come in China, many loopholes to jump over, I will stay."

> Zhang wanted nothing except to make movies. During the Cultural Revolution in the '60s and '70s, he was forced to work on farms and in a spinning mill. He sold his blood to buy his first camera.

To make any film in China is complicated. Zhang notes that "censorship has existed for over 40 years, so we're used to it. Films that cannot be made include those that are antigovernment, anticommunism or pornographic. Those are subjects you cannot touch.

"So when I look at a project I only for their ravishing cinematography, but also for the heavyweight roles he writes for Gong Li.

Although "Qiu Ju" mocks Chinese customs, he aimed for a film "completely different from 'Red Lantern.' With that I had reached the apex of a certain style and if I made that kind of film again, people will say I'm repeating myself. . . . why not try something new?"

On his visit to the States, Zhang saw only one American movie. "I was particularly struck by 'Unforgiven,'" he says of Clint Eastwood's multiple Oscar-winner, "because it uses a nontraditional approach which I found very interesting.

"I didn't really understand the dialogue, but they were attempting something very different. This is the dream of any filmmaker, not to repeat themselves."

His next picture, "To Live," follows a family that does shadow puppet theater through century and, like made with Ta

His in incl

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Wallace Stegner, 84, Is Dead; Author Celebrated the West

By WILLIAM H. HONAN

Wallace Stegner, the novelist and short-story writer whose work celebrated the American West and won him the country's highest literary awards, died on Tuesday night at St. Vincent Hospital in Santa Fe, N.M. He was 84 and lived in Los Altos Hills, Calif.

The cause of death was respiratory failure, said Lynn Stegner, his daughter-in-law. On March 28, Mr. Stegner was seriously injured in a traffic accident in Santa Fe, where he had gone to give a lecture.

The Potential for Dignity

In a literary career that covered more than 50 years and produced more than two dozen novels, historical works and collections of stories and essays, Mr. Stegner found the Western frontier spirit of boundless optimism receding. But he saw in its place, as he once expressed it, "a respect for the heroic virtues: fortitude, resolution, magnanimity."

His preoccupation with these upbeat qualities separated Mr. Stegner's writing from the despair and alienation in the work of many of his contemporaries. His characters seem propelled by the author's conviction "that man, even Modern Man, has some dignity if he will assume it, and that most lives are worth living even when they are lives of quiet desperation."

To appreciate the West, he once remarked, "You have to get over the color green; you have to quit associating beauty with gardens and lawns; you have to get used to an inhuman scale."

He also turned upside down the stereotypical characters of the West: the barroom beauties with hearts of gold and the lean, heroic cowboys in their chaps and Stetsons. In "Remembering Laughter," he portrayed two sisters who are a complex mixture of youthful exuberance, penance and hatred; in "All the Little Live Things" (1967) and later in "The Spectator Bird" (1976), the recurring character Joe Allston, a fearful retired literary agent, struggles to extricate himself from a tragic past.

'The New World's Last Chance'

"The West does not need to explore its myths much further; it has already relied on them too long," he told a reporter in 1981. "The West is politically reactionary and exploitative: admit it. The West as a whole is guilty of inexplicable crimes against the land: admit that, too. The West is rootless, culturally half-baked. So be it."

Despite all this, he continued, the West remains "the New World's last

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Corrections

An article in Business Day yesterday about The New York Times Company's first-quarter earnings misstated the latest reporting period for the Times's circulation. It was the six months ended March 31, 1993, not the quarter.

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An article yesterday about the Federal trial involving the Bank of Commerce and Credit International misidentified the law firm of a witness, Cantwell F. Muckenfuss 3d, former deputy Comptroller of the Currency. It is Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher.

•

A brief report in the Health Watch column on the Health page in some editions yesterday about overdiagnosis of Lyme disease omitted a credit line. It was by The Associated Press.

•

An article and a picture caption yesterday about the Pulitzer Prizes referred incorrectly in some editions to the category for which The Dallas Morning News won. It was spot news photography, not feature photography. Because of an editing error, the article also misstated the title of a series of reports in The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, honored for explanatory journalism. It was "When Bugs Fight Back."

Wallace Stegner, 84, Author And Pulitzer Winner, Dies

Continued From Page A1

chance to be something better, the only American society still malleable enough to be formed."

Accepting One's Anguish

He won the 1972 Pulitzer Prize in fiction for "Angle of Repose," a novel about an elderly, sickly man who learns to accept his anguish when he studies the lives of his grandparents and realizes that their lives, too, left much to be desired.

In 1977, he won a National Book Award for "The Spectator Bird." His work has been nominated several times for the National Book Critics Circle Awards, including this year for a 1992 collection of essays, "Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs: Living and Writing in the West."

Among his most popular novels was "The Big Rock Candy Mountain" (1943), a semiautobiographical work in which two sons learn to cope with life by coming to understand their father's failings. When Mr. Stegner was a child, his father had shuttled the family from North Dakota to the state of Washington, and from Saskatchewan to Montana and Utah, pursuing the dream of an easy life that was always just out of reach. The book's title is taken from the hobo song about an imaginary land where life is never less than ideal.

A Mule and the Environment

An important theme of that and other works was the fragility of the environment. In an essay for The Saturday Review in 1964, Mr. Stegner compared the way Americans were learning about the environment to the cracker-barrel joke about the boy who twisted the mule's tail and "isn't as pretty as he once was, but knows more."

"There is nothing in the history of the West that indicates any great concern for the environment or for the renewability and sustainability of the economy," he said in an interview last year. "Nor for the labor force used in that exploitation. Those are all serious mistakes."

His "Beyond the Hundredth Meridian" is a biography of John Wesley Powell, who explored the Colorado River. "Wolf Willow" is a history of Saskatchewan.

Another significant nonfiction work was "One Nation" (1945), a collection of photographs illustrating the corrosive effect of racial prejudice in the United States. The book was a co-winner of the Anisfield-Wolfe Award for the best book of the year on race relations.

A Teaching Career

Besides writing and editing, Mr. Stegner had a long career as a teacher of creative writing and literature at the University of Utah, the University of Wisconsin, Harvard University and Stanford University, where he was the director of the Creative Writing Center from 1945 until his retirement in 1971.

His students at Stanford included a number who went on to become notable writers, including Larry McMurtry.

Wallace Earle Stegner was born in Lake Mills, Iowa, the son of Scandinavian immigrants. He received a bachelor's degree from the University of Utah in 1930, a master's degree from the University of Iowa in 1932 and a doctorate from Iowa in 1935.

He then taught English at the University of Utah, and began his literary career in earnest after winning a $2,500 Little, Brown novelette contest in 1937 with "Remembering Laughter," a tale about an adulterous triangle in Iowa farm country.

In addition to his daughter-in-law, he is survived by his wife, Mary; a son, Page Stegner, who is a novelist and professor of American literature and creative writing at the University of California at Santa Cruz, and three grandchildren.



Leo Holub

Wallace Stegner

Pursuing the Truth Behind the Myths

Throughout his long career, Wallace Stegner pursued the truths that lay behind the mythology of the American West. These are some of his books.

- *Remembering Laughter* 1937
- *Mormon Country* 1942
- *The Big Rock Candy Mountain* 1943
- *One Nation* 1945
- *The Women on the Wall* 1950
- *The Preacher and the Slave* 1950. (reissued as *Joe Hill: A Biographical Novel*
- *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian* 1954
- *Wolf Willow* 1962
- *All the Little Live Things* 1967
- *Angle of Repose* 1971
- *The Uneasy Chair: A Biography of Bernard DeVoto* 1974
- *The Spectator Bird* 1976
- *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

Stephen P. Taylor, 69 And Federal Reserve

By BRUCE LAMBER

Stephen P. Taylor, an economist and a retired official of the Federal Reserve System, died last Friday at a hospital in Arlington, Va., his hometown. He was 69.

He died of injuries suffered in a fall from a bicycle, his family said.

Mr. Taylor worked for 32 years at the Federal Reserve's headquarters in Washington in the Flow of Funds and Saving Section, which he headed from 1961 until he retired in 1985.

The flow-of-funds system tries track all significant parts of the e omy, including borrowing, lending ing and investment. Other co have adopted the system.

Mr. Taylor integrated th into a single system and w ble for its early comput also helped to develop t tions' national capita counts, and devised a vate holdings of cr called the Kaufman

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Fort Collins, CO
29 April '93

Dear Chuck—

Here's the Stegner piece, with the Seattle specifics edited out, and I hope it'll serve. Doubtful that I can undertake any other piece than this, the way things are going. Will be home by end of May—best till then.

(amended nights on S. Times copy to "second nights")