

February 20, 1979

Mr. Don Lampman
1012 West 72nd Street
Kansas City, Mo. 64114

Dear Mr. Lampman:

Thank you so much for writing to us about Ivan Doig's
THIS HOUSE OF SKY. Though I know you will be writing
to Mr. Doig, I am sending him a copy of your letter
to us.

With best wishes,

Carol Hill

EDITORIAL OFFICES
HARCOURT, BRACE, JUVANOVICH

DON LAMPMAN
1012 W. 72ND STREET
KANSAS CITY, MO
64114

FEBRUARY 5, 1979

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN;

I REALIZE THIS LETTER MAY BE A LITTLE OUT OF THE ORDINARY, COMPARED TO THE USUAL SORT OF LETTERS YOU FOLKS RECIEVE; HOWEVER, I FEEL COMPELLED TO WRITE TO YOU FOR TWO REASONS, THE SECOND BEING A REQUEST.

I HAVE JUST FINISHED READING A BOOK PUBLISHED BY YOU FOLKS, A BOOK THAT HAS HAD VERY LITTLE PUBLICITY (AS FAR AS I HAVE SEEN), AND YET I THINK IT IS ONE OF THE FINEST AUTOBIOGRAPHIES I HAVE EVER READ AND I JUST WANTED TO TELL YOU THAT YOUR COMPANY DID AN EXCELLENT JOB ON IT.

THE BOOK IS ENTITLED "THIS HOUSE OF SKY" BY IVAN DOIG. I CAN THINK OF QUITE A FEW PUBLISHERS WHO WOULDN'T HAVE DONE HALF THE PRODUCTION WORK YOU FOLKS DID ON IT AND I'M GRATEFUL, IN A WAY, THAT YOU TREATED MR. DOIG'S BOOK WITH SUCH STYLE AND GRACE, NOT UNLIKE THE ~~ACTUAL~~ ACTUAL STORY MR. DOIG TELLS SO MOVINGLY.

I KNOW HIS BOOK WILL NEVER BE A BIG SELLER AND THAT IT WILL NOT BE PROMOTED AS SUCH, BUT I DO WISH I COULD HAVE SEEN MORE ADS ABOUT IT. IT IS A BOOK THAT I HOPE WILL BE A STEADY SELLER FOR YOU, AS IT DESERVES TO BE.

Answered 2/2/79
S.D.

AS FOR THE REQUEST PART OF MY LETTER, I WAS WONDERING IF YOU THINK IT WOULD BE PERMISSABLE ^{FOR ME} TO WRITE A SHORT NOTE OF APPRECIATION TO MR. DOIG, TO LET HIM KNOW HOW MUCH I ADMIRE HIS WRITING.

I REALIZE THAT YOU PROBABLY CANNOT REVEAL HIS ADDRESS TO EVERYONE, BUT IF I WROTE A NOTE TO HIM AND SENT IT TO YOUR OFFICES, WOULD YOU FORWARD IT ON TO HIM FOR ME?

I KNOW THAT WHAT I'M ASKING HERE IS ONE OF THOSE TIME-CONSUMING THINGS THAT CAN EASILY GET OUT OF HAND, SO IF YOU FEEL YOU CANNOT DO THIS, PLEASE BE HONEST WITH ME AND FEEL FREE TO TURN IT DOWN. I WILL UNDERSTAND COMPLETELY.

ANYWAY, THIS STARTED OUT TO BE A NOTE OF THANKS FOR PUBLISHING MR. DOIG'S BOOK, SO I GUESS I SHOULD END WITH IT. IF I WERE YOU, I WOULDN'T LET MR. DOIG GET AWAY FROM YOU.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TROUBLE.

Respectfully,

Don Johnson

Feb. 26, '79

Dear Don Lampman--

Quite a number of people have written me about House of Sky, but I think you're the first to do me the favor of writing to praise the publisher. Your letter hit exactly the right target there: Carol Hill, now editor-in-chief, is the editor who took on my manuscript when it was a rather shaky, 25,000 word sample of what the book eventually became.

So, thanks immensely for writing, and I'm gratified that you liked the book. So far, my next one seems to be going well, so I'm in a sanguine mood these days.

MARGUERITE NOBLE

P. O. BOX 1324

PAYSON, ARIZONA 85541

TEL. (602) 474-3831

Feb. 10, 1979

Dear Mr. Ivan Doig,

I have just finished reading the last word of THIS HOUSE OF SKY: Landscapes of a Western Mind. It is the most beautiful book I have ever read. It is a love story unsurpassed. How rich you are to have been the recipient of such caring, such love, such sacrifice.

My throat is still choked up after laying the book aside. Of course, I had not read two pages in the beginning until I kept the tears imprisoned within me. You wrote -- not emotionally but quite objectively, journalistically -- but the vividness and the truth overwhelmed me.

I can see, I can see Charlie and Lady and Skavinsky -- so three-dimensional, so living, creating-- and of course, loving .. you. I shall read this book again soon to enjoy its flavor anew. Your writing is so precise --the exact word to express that subtle meaning.

Your book was sent to me by a friend in Phoenix. He was so impressed by it that he mailed me a copy. A finer gift I never had.

Perhaps this letter seems a little "goopy" to you, but I am not embarrassed by expressing my deep feeling for your writing. I felt a compulsion to let you know the great effect your book and its characters had on me.

I was born on a cow ranch in Arizona in 1910--that was in the Territory of Arizona. My friend thought I could relate to your book. Our ranch life was the opposite of yours in family relationship.

Thank you for your beautiful book of love, Skavinsky.

Sincerely,

Marguerite Noble

Not knowing how to reach you, I have written to Harcourt Brace Jovanvich and asked that this letter to you be addressed and forwarded to you.

Feb. 26, 1879

Dear Margaretta Noble--

Thanks so much for troubling to write me about House of Sky. I count it as a bonus that the book rang true with someone out of the Territory of Arizona.

Also, it's encouraging to me to hear that the book is drawing some attention elsewhere besides my twin homes, Montana and Seattle. It has sold well in both, but all the rest of the country has been a more dubious proposition.

all best wishes

Rt. 5, Box 5199-20
Juneau, AK 99803
Feb. 12, 1979

Ivan Doig
c/o Pacific Search Press
715 Harrison St.
Seattle, WA 98109

Dear Mr. Doig:

For years my husband's father was the only Doig listed in the Seattle telephone directory. Once in Portland we met some Doigs.

Some years ago I started receiving the U. of W. Alumni Bulletin addressed to Ivan Doig at my address, perhaps it was in Sitka at the time. After I wrote several times it finally stopped coming and I no longer got the Alumni Bulletin from the U. W. Library School.

We have seen some of your articles in the Seattle papers, of particular interest was the one about Metlakatla. Recently one of our sons sent us a clipping an Arlington friend had

23 Feb. '79

Dear Laurence and Zelma--

Thanks so much for writing. Our schedule doesn't seem to coincide at all: now that you're back in town, I'm leaving, to places such as Pt. Townsend and Steilacoom for the sake of the current book I'm working on. Will be back tomorrow night for a speech, then gone again pretty promptly. Maybe I can catch up with you in Juneau sometime. As to family roots, my Doigs all came direct from near Dundee to ~~Spokane~~ Montana. I've been to Scotland once--hope to go again this spring--and found Doig a very common name. Anyway, I'm glad we share the name--I'm pleased to think of Doigs in Alaska; I have a younger cousin or two somewhere up there.

all best wishes

sent him asking if there were any family relationship. In a Christmas letter a friend asked if we were related to the Ivan Doig who wrote the book which she was reading.

We would be happy to compare notes on "roots."

Lawrence's father was Herbert (J. W. H.) Doig, born in Ontario, near Port Colborne. His grandfather was Alexander Smart Doig.

It would be interesting to at least meet you. Our present headquarters are with Mrs. Agnese Conn and Miss Mary Mount, 225 First, Kirkland, 98033, telephone 822-5273. We will be away until about the 22nd, then here off and on until March 1 when we return to Juneau.

We lived in Sitka, Alaska, for 30 years, while working at Sheldon Jackson College. Since 1972 we have been in Juneau, and Lawrence was skipper of the M/V Anna Jackman until March 1, 1978 when he retired. We look forward to meeting you.

Sincerely, Lawrence & Zelma Doig



Mrs J Hamill
112 Lanford Dr
Ogh Pa 15235

Feb 9. 1979

Dear Mr. Naig,

My husband and I have just read "This House of Sky" and enjoyed it very much. I'm only sorry my father, who died in 1978, is not alive to enjoy it. My mother in Billings, Montana, also read it with interest and pleasure.

Not only was the book written extremely well but it was a moving memorial to your father and grandmother. Good luck with your next book.

Sincerely,

Alice A. Hamill

Joseph JEAN GILLES (Haiti) b. 1943
Woodcutters, oil, 1972, 30" x 40"
Permanent Art Collection
Organization of American States
Washington, D.C.



Proceeds from the sales of these cards go to the Pan American Development Foundation's Operation Niños programs which provide assistance to children throughout the Americas.

Los beneficios que se obtengan de la venta de estas tarjetas serán destinados a implementar el programa "Operación Niños" de la Fundación Panamericana de Desarrollo, el cual provee asistencia a los niños de las Américas.

52 Columbia Street
Newark, OH 43055
18 Feb 1979

Ivan Doig, Esq. Montanologist:

Two more tales on the state committed. A guy named Moon wrote one of fiction named "John Medicinewolf." Sounds like a shaggy wolf story in spots and fairly good on the average, especially one where snowmobilers chased deer onto ice and the sawmill crew loses time trying to save them. Later one millhand shoots holes in the snowmobilies. "Who, Us?" And one good tale on Page 122 if you run across it.

I passed through SE Montana last summer to visit sister in Calif, and stopped off in Glendive to visit friend. Stopped next day at LBH to look at Custer's vanishing point, and mused among the old graves a while, such as a number of Indian stones, like some Scouts. Sgt Bad Man sounded like a recruit's nightmare, and 1st Sgt Cold Wind, 1st Cavalry had the perfect name for a top soak. One squaw had the intriguing name of Shield At The Door, which has to have some tribal meaning.

Wrote a letter to Army Magazine, sort of a mood piece, and they sent me \$25 for it....I enclose xerox. I haven't sold a damn thing since 1967 up till now, so it's a good thing I had two other sources of cash.

For more of the mighty Flynn, read David Niven's "The Moon's a Balloon". You might also read Ray Milland's tales of Olde Hollywoode, though I felt the best part was when he was Trooper Truscott-Jones of "His Majesty's" Orse Guards and took a couple beers before the parade started. Someone blew "To 'Orse" just as he realized he'd had too many and had to drain a few. Urination in an 18th Century cavalry suit is a major operation. He staggered out afterward, groaning that he was blind. "Simple barstard! Ye got yer 'elmet on backarsewards..." He had fun, I gather.....I do not know why, but English actors seem to have had the most interesting lives. Some time when you are laid up with the flu, get the above and read them, along with some sort of fluid to loosen things up.....

Commit another book some time. That one was nice.....

sincerely

John P Conlon

*retired & seldom
published*

PS- Raincheck on that xerox. This is one of the days when I can hardly find mein arsch from in front of it. You ain't missing much.

Pontiac, Illinois
January 30, 1979

Dear Mr. Doig,

It was with much interest and satisfaction that I read your book "This House of Sky" and other publications, for I feel that we have a kinship in our backgrounds.

Please read my enclosed copy of records from Arbroath, Scotland, where my people came from, and I believe you may be interested in the address given of the archivist there.

My father, Ralph Waldo Emerson (yes!) Phillips, was the son of Elizabeth Smart Munro, who was born in Arbroath Scotland in 1839, the daughter of Margaret Nicole and William Munro. Her grandmother was Ann Doig, married to George Nicol of the Forfarshire Militia.

Although I have German parentage also, I believe myself to be Scottish in nature and would like to visit this area sometime.

My oldest boy, who was at Northwestern University during the years you speak of in your book, also was at the University of Washington for eight years, and it seems that you had a parallel there. His friend, Dick Tilden, lived at Latham House during that time also.

So, congratulations on your prowess, and I will be looking forward to other publications from you and your wife.

Please answer this so that I will know you have received this. I did write to the Harcourt Brace Jovanovich company, requesting permission to review your book, but I have not received an answer.

Yours very truly,

Mrs. Dorothy Phillips Rittenhouse

Mrs. Floyd M. Rittenhouse,
Rural Route One,
Pontiac, Illinois 61764

Feb. 16, '79

Dear Dorothy Rittenhouse--

Thanks so much for troubling to write about House of Sky, and for sending the genealogical notes.

From what a cousin has told me, my branch of Doigs apparently originates near Dundee, at a village called ~~Kinnin~~ Monikie. There's a chance I may get to Scotland this spring, in which case I'll do some looking. I'll let you know of anything we seem to have in common.

Yes, Rick Tilden is a very familiar name from my time at Latham. We were not closest friends, but got along well. My freshman-year roommate, who works for the Boston Globe, is a very close friend of Rick's, and reported on him during a visit last spring.

I'm a bit puzzled about your reference to asking Harcourt Brace Jovanovich for permission to review my book. As the practice is, no permission is required--everybody just goes ahead and does it. Extensive quotation, of course, is another matter, but there's really no restraint on the customary sort of book review.

I'm glad you liked the book, and were kind enough to write.

best regards

Avan Doig

ANGUS DISTRICT LIBRARIES

William Coull Anderson Library of Genealogy

Telephone : 6221

Keeper : LAWRENCE R. BURNES,
F.R.G.S., F.S.A.Scot.

DEWAR HOUSE,
HILL TERRACE,
ARBROATH
ANGUS DD11 1AJ

.....16th. November.....19.76.

EXTRACT OF.....Births..... FROM THE PARISH RECORDS OF.....St. Vigean.

- 2 Aug. 1774. Robert Nicol & Marjory Anderson in E. Seatown had a child baptized named David.
- 25 Jul. 1775. David Doig & Isobel Kerr in Bog had a child baptized named James.
- 10 Oct. " John Nicol & Isobel Little John at Grange of Conan had a child baptized named John.
- 10 May, 1777. Robert Nicol & Marjory Anderson at E. Seatown had a child baptized named Robert.
- 5 Jul. " George Nicol & Elizabeth Black at Collistown Mill had a child baptized named William.
- 25 " " John Nicol & Isobel Littlejohn at Grange of Conan had a child baptized named James.
- 6 Sep. 1778. David Doeg & Isobel Kerr in Bog of Guthery Hill had a daughter baptized named Margaret.
- 6 Oct. " John Nicol & Margt. Chrystie in Ground of Letham had a son baptized named Alexander.
- 18 Apr. 1779. George Nicol & Elizabeth Black at Collistown Mill had a son baptized named George.
- 1 Jun. " John Nicol & Isobel Littlejohn at Grange of Conan had twins baptized named David & Isobel.
- 17 " " Robert Nicol & Marjory Anderson at Seatown had a daughter baptized named Elizabeth.
- 8 Jun. 1780. John Nicol & Margt. Christie at Letham had a son baptized named John.
- 1 Nov. " David Doig & Isobel Kerr in Smiddy Croft had a son baptized named David.

ARBROATH PUBLIC LIBRARY

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Keeper : LAWRENCE R. BURNES,
F.R.G.S., F.S.A. (Scot.)



TOWN HOUSE,
ARBROATH,
ANGUS, DD11 1HP

.....24th. August.....19..76.

EXTRACT OF.....Birth..... FROM THE PARISH RECORDS OF.....St. Vigean.....

25 Nov. 1812. George Nicol of the Forfarshire Militia and Ann
Doig had a daughter baptized named [blank].

Margaret

ANGUS DISTRICT LIBRARIES

William Coull Anderson Library of Genealogy

Telephone : 8221

Keeper : LAWRENCE R. BURNES,
F.R.G.S., F.S.A.(Scot.)

DEWAR HOUSE,
HILL TERRACE,
ARBROATH
ANGUS DD11 1AJ

.....1st. September... 19 76.....

Mrs. Floyd M. Rittenhouse,
Rural Route One,
Pontiac,
Illinois, 61764,
U.S.A.

Dear Mrs. Rittenhouse,

Thank you for your letter of 24th. June.

I was in Edinburgh but did not have a great deal of success with your family. I searched the Arbroath and St. Vigeans Registers but was only able to get the birth of your great-grandfather and the marriage of his parents. I also found a birth entry of a child of George Nicol and Ann Doig but the child's name was not filled in. It would appear that your great-great-grandmother's name was Susan Cant and not Sinclair as you have stated. In view of the detailed information which you gave me of the children of William Munro and Margaret Nicole it is strange that I could not find any of these entries and I am wondering if they were registered in one of the near-by Parishes. Of course, one must always bear in mind that in those days registration was not compulsory and they may not have bothered to register these births.

Extensive enquiries have been made about the foundry of William Munro but I cannot find out anything about it.

Please let me know if you wish any further searches to be made. In the meantime, I shall be grateful if you will send to me \$5.00 in respect of the information I am enclosing. It will be in order for you to send me your personal cheque.

Yours sincerely,

Lawrence R. Burnes

Feb. 9, 1979

Dear Ruth Knapik--

I had thought I was doing a nice job of keeping up with the flow of mail, until I moved something on the desk the other day and came across your letter from December. My apologies.

I'm intrigued to hear from someone with such a direct link to Ringling and the Basin. Last July, one of my distant cousins got us together for a Doig family reunion--the first ever--in Ringling and at the Dave Doig homestead. My uncle Edwin Doig, and Walter and Nellie Doig of Dave Doig's offspring, were the only family members left who had grown up there (although my aunt Anna lives in Nebraska, and an uncle named Claude is in Michigan). Some of the other Basin people were Johnny Gruar, who lived with the Jake Mitchells, and some of the Christisons. Also, there was the great-nephew of Tom and Mary Carr; and Bob Campbell, whose mother was a Doig.

Clifford is a prized person to me; I don't know anyone I value in quite the same way. He seems pleased that he's in my book as much as he is, which is a relief to me.

I've also heard from a number of Ringling people: Jake Mast, Edith Brekke, a man named Ford (his father was Arch Ford, I think), and I saw Isobel McCurry during a bookstore party in Gt. Falls last fall.

Anyway, I'm glad you liked the book, and if my wife and I get through Lewiston we'll look you up. I would be interested in seeing the pictures, and the frame, sometime. And my special regards to your mother; I wish she could have been at the gathering in the Basin last summer.

very best

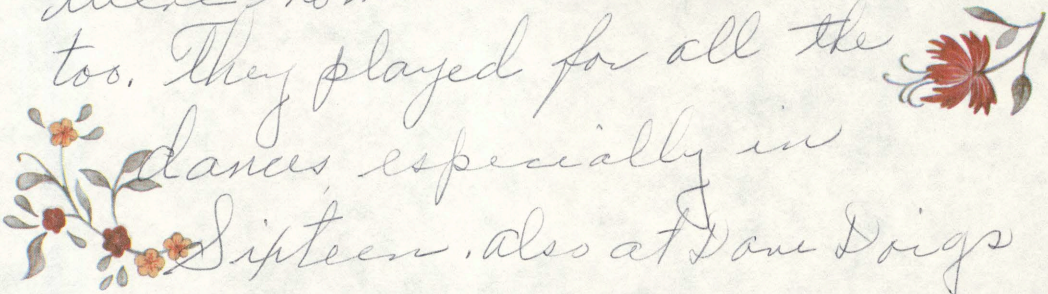
[Lewiston, ID]



Mr. and Mrs. Ivan Doig:

Hello:

I am sure you are wondering
who on earth I might be,
I am not from your past, but
surely of your mother & Dad's.
it is many years, I bought
your book and brought
back so many memories.
My parents, George Messer
were homesteaders in the basin
too. They played for all the
dances, especially in
Sipteen, also at Dan Doigs

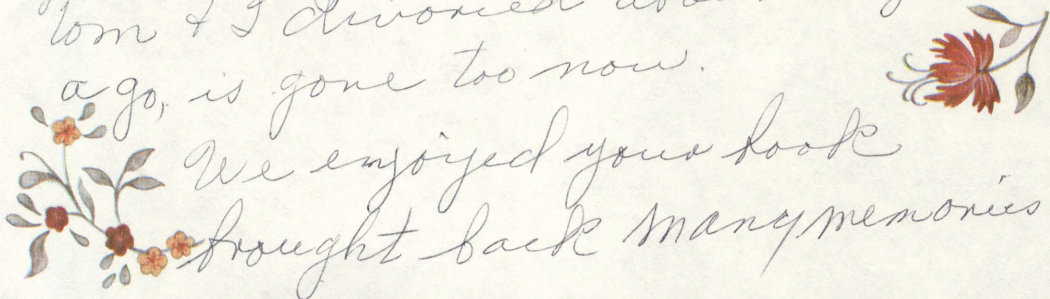




I married Tommy McCurry and
lived in the Ringer house in
Ringling, as near as I remember.
my little girl died, and we moved
to Ballantine Mont. Seemed to
lose contact. Valga was also
one of my girlfriends as was
your mother. + Charlie he was
my favorite Daig. So quiet and
nice to everyone.

My mother lives with me
since my husband's death.
Tom + I divorced about 20 years
ago, is gone too now.

We enjoyed your book
brought back many memories



3

to her. she is 91 and very
bright and alert. probably
one of the oldest yet living.
I don't know if you are into
keeping old family things.
or not, Mother had a large
picture frame. Dave Jr. made
it from cigar boxes for my Dad.
it is very clever and different.
If you ever come thru Lewiston
I am sure you would enjoy
visiting with her. and she
would be happy to give you
the frame and some pictures
too.

I have just been back to
visit in Ringling & U. S. S.
visited Clifford. He sent me
your address.
Merry Christmas. Ruth Knapik

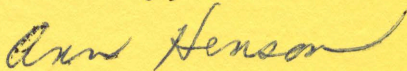
1-29-79

Dear Mr. Doig,

Thank you for the distinct pleasure of reading your book THIS HOUSE OF SKY. I grew up in Havre and Helena, though the last thirty years here have made me know I would live nowhere else now. Your evocative wordings took me on a lovely trip down memory lane with all my senses...and how aptly you portrayed the vastness of it all!! Most importantly, your message of continuity and caring would touch any reader from Hong Kong to Havre.

Thank you again... I look forward to your next book!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ann M. Henson". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Ann M. Henson
2644 W. Lynn
Seattle 98199

9 Feb. '79

Dear Ann Henson--

Thanks for taking the trouble to write me in praise of House of Sky. I've heard from many Montanans, past and present, and one of the best rewards of the book has been how well they've all liked it.

Now, the next task is to try do something similar in a book about this region, to express something of the feeling for the Northwest by those of us who have adopted the area. It'll take me the rest of this year in the writing, but so far it feels promising.

all best regards

GEORGE HAESSLER
4216 BISHOP RD.
DETROIT, MICH 48224
JAN 10, 1979

MY DEAR IVAN JOIG :

I WONDER IF YOU WOULD BE SO KIND
AS TO WRITE ME YOUR ANSWER TO THE
QUESTION: " WILL CIVILIZATION, AS WE
KNOW IT, SURVIVE THE CENTURY ? "

I HAVE READ YOUR SUPERB THIS
HOUSE OF SKY AND I FOUND GREAT
SUBSTANCE IN IT. THANKS FOR
ANSWERING MY QUESTION.

RESPECTFULLY,
George Haessler

52 Columbia Street
Newark, OH 43055
29 Jan 1979

Mr. Ivan Doig, c/o Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich:

I have seen damn little of Montana, such as the area along the railroad en route to Korea, and a larger view this summer, past the place where Custer bought the farm. The few books I recall reading about Montana have been good ones, like Eliot Paul's "Ghost Town on the Yellowstone" and Garcia's "Tough Trip Through Paradise." "This House of Sky" is equally good, and not like the others either.

You may not have had a large family, but they came through as a damn good one, troubles to the contrary. You may hear from their remaining friends and cousins. Your father sounds like one of those rare people who could lead and not have to drive very often. For everyone of that sort, there is some sad apple who has to threaten and blackmail and a couple hundred who couldn't lead thirsty cows to a waterhole upwinds, let alone get along with people. I recently had a boss of the former sort and seeing him retire was a pleasure shared by the rest of the guys I worked with.

At the time your story begins, I was far away in Europe assisting Ike to convert Germany back to a peaceful land. As could be plainly seen, life on the home front was no damn bed of roses at times either. Montana in the late 40s and 50s sounds like a fine place for someone who could stand bad waather and didn't mind working like hell.

One little thing reminded me of another book. McGrath biting the balls off the lambs echoes a part of Errol Flynn's life story, in which Flynn once worked on an Aussie sheep station and being low man on the totem pole, got to "dag the hoggetts" as the Aussies put it. Hard to imagine the debonair dame-chaser like that, but it seems to be a system used here too. The only member of the Clan McGrath I know is a former Army nurse and I'll have to mention that to her next time I write....Good for a laugh, maybe...

I was raised till I was 12 by my mother's paternal grandmother, a widow of a Civil War soldier, and a farmer's wife for many of her years, who had buried most of her kids. I learned a lot of things about the Civil War and wish to God I could remember all of them. I have a fragment or two of poetry she wrote. She and your Grandma Ringer were not too much schooled, but very well educated in their own way. Your account of life with your Grandmother sounds at times like things I remember, though not in detail. The old timers are gone, but it was good to know them.

While I doubt your book will sell a million, I extend my best wishes on that line. It will be appreciated by a lot of people who lived a life such as you did when you were young. It might even get some present sheep raisers to read more and spend less time on the range.....I've seen some sheepwagons in the last few years, such as you mentioned. They look a bit nicer than a pup tent.

Sincerely

John P. Carter

9 Feb. '79

Dear John Conlon--

Thank you much for taking the trouble to write in praise of

House of Sky. You might be interested to know that I teach

courses in Montana literature at the U. of Mont. and at least

one of the colleges there--beginning with Tough Trip. Have

you read A River Runs Through It, by Norman Maclean? It may

be the best of any of our efforts.

I've heard a bit of Mr. Maclean's background, but I

don't know the details. I've also heard the phrase "lingo"

used in your book. I'm doubly in your debt.

Very sincerely,
John Conlon

all the best

John Conlon has a large family, but they come through as a good

one, troubled by the ordinary. You may hear from their occasional friends and

consider. Your father sounds like one of those rare people who could have and

not have to drive very often. For everyone of that sort, there is some one

who has to be fascinated and interested and a couple hundred who couldn't

possibly have to be a whole town. The story and story with people.

Recently had a case of the former sort and seeing his writing was a pleasure

shared by the rest of the family. I worked with

at the time four story books. I was far away in Europe and

to convert them back to a normal world. It could be a really messy

of the time and was no doubt a case of those who could stand the

late 40s and 50s sounds like a fine place for someone who could stand the

weather and still mind working hard.

The last time I saw him was in another book. He was sitting in the

and the family sound a lot of like a family. I wish I knew more

worked on an estate there and after I saw him and his wife and

but the picture of the family was not. I had to imagine the family

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Feb. 2, '79

Dear Bill Stockton--

Well, thanks for your words about House of Sky; I don't think I've had any others which were done at the risk of a household civil war. No higher compliment possible, I guess.

Your original part of the country intrigues me. A grad school friend of mine teaches at Highlands in Las Vegas, and while I gather you're likely from farther north, that area was a revelation to me--the Great Plains beginning at the outskirts of town and going on off around the planet until they by god feel like stopping. I hope you are able to get to some writing about your past (my apologies to Ann; tell her I don't want you to embark on it if it's going to cost you the marriage); one of the best surprises about House of Sky is that it seems to have made the stories of people of our vintage and background a more respectable commodity. I've had praises on the book from reviewers I was certain~~xxx~~ would sneer at it from their big-city typewriters. Maybe this country isn't yet hopelessly megalopolitan.

I don't really know anybody in ASJA except Holly Redell, ~~Mac~~ McCleary in Chicago, and Merle Dowd out here. I intended to remedy that during a NY trip last November, but finished business a day early and came home, thereby missing the famous dinner that made a bunch of ~~people~~ ASJAers sick, I guess, as far as freelancing goes, I intend to try books; I'm about battered out of the magazine field after 10 years of starveling income. I don't think House of Sky will bring me the pile of money you wished, but it's at least buying me a year or two of respectability.

I hope we'll meet sometime. We'll drink a toast in damnation of sheep.

best

Ivan Doig:

I wrote the attached letter in a moment of emotional reaction to your book. I left it on the desk of my wife, who was out of town at the time. She read it and wrote the note you see in red ink. She thought I wanted her to edit the letter and that I would then retype it. I didn't want her to edit it and I didn't intend to retype it and was irritated that she had marked it up. Her note didn't refer to the letter so much as my remark about going back to my ancestral grounds. That's what she wanted to talk about. It's not something she's keen on.

Anyway, then I went away for Christmas. Then the letter got buried on my desk. Then I couldn't get around to investing in a long distance call to the ASJA office to get your address. So, finally, I've written this note and now I'm sending it all off to the ASJA and they can forward it.

I still think about your book. Excellent work. I hope you make a pile of money.

WS

January 19, 1979

Main Street
Copake, N.Y. 12516
December 5, 1978

Ivan Doig:

I have just finished your book and must write (most unusual behavior for me) to say how moving I find it. Several ~~times~~ times in the last chapter I had to ~~stop~~ stop and pace furiously through the dark and cooling house into my study and stare from the window into the blackness of the winter night.

Like you, I am a writer, toiling on that margin of writing reserved for the free lance. I come from a cattle ranch in the high mountains of northern New Mexico. I, too, can remember the day I turned away from the drudgery. I have sought and still seek ~~to find~~ the kernel of my heritage ~~that~~ that that arid land and those stubborn pioneer stock who are my family have ~~passed on~~ passed on. Often of late, Ann, my wife, also a writer, and I have ~~plotted~~ plotted a return to my ancestral grounds to compare then with now, to seek my past. The place that you had in your family's life and the place they had in yours seem ~~to be~~ so much like my own. Your work has evoked much thought from me. Now, more than ever, it seems I must return before it is too late.

The Stocktons were always cattlemen. As an FFA member, I introduced the first sheep, a small flock of suffolks. I found them as stupid as you did, more dim, in fact, than chickens. My father had the good sense to rid himself of them after I moved on to college, big cities and the mysterious east.

~~Good heavens!~~ Good heavens! I've never written a fan letter to an author before.

Regards,

Bill Stockton

William Stockton

*We
have to
talk about this*

N. 308 Sunderland Road
Spokane, WA 99206

December 23, 1979

Mr. Ivan Doig
c/o Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.
757 Third Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10017

Your book, THIS HOUSE OF SKY took me down memory lane fifty years back. I will reread it when my husband and I return from a three-week's trip to South America. We are leaving Friday, January 26.

After being graduated from college in 1927, at age 22, I went to Ringling to teach in its two-teacher high school. I knew your father slightly, having met and danced with him at the local dances. I taught your mother, Berneta Ringer, but I cannot remember meeting your grandmother, though likely I did. You meet everyone in a town of that size. Many a pleasant weekend was spent at the Higgins Ranch and also with Florence and Ross Higgins. Walter was unmarried at that time. I still send and receive Christmas notes from Florence. The young man I was going with worked at the Higgins Ranch and sometimes on weekends we would ride horseback to the tops of some of nearby hills and sometimes he would shoot a coyote. Your excellent descriptions of the area brought back a clear picture of those sagebrush hills. Also, we sometimes we took supplies to sheepherder's wagons by truck. White Sulphur Springs was a special treat for dinner or the other high school teacher and I would go up by train and stayed over night to enjoy a sulphur bath. On one such trip John Ringling held the train while someone rushed back to the house to get Mrs. Ringling's jewel case which the maid had failed to pick up.

In summer I spent the vacation time at my parent's farm at Valier, where I had gone to school from the sixth grade through high school. All that territory was also very familiar--Dupuyer, the Indian reservation, and all the creeks and rivers which were the locations of Sunday picnics. I taught in Shelby High School from 1932 - 1936 after which I came to Spokane. You did a beautiful job in depicting the hard life in Montana and your descriptions are outstanding. If possible, I would like to mail your book over for an autograph. I'd surely appreciate it.

Sincerely,

Mrs. O. N. Purcell

Mrs. O. N. Purcell

MILLERS FALLS
EZERASE
COTTON CONTENT

Feb. 2, '79

Dear Mrs. Purcell--

Whatever befell your letter at my publisher's, it reached me only yesterday. How remarkable that you have a background in both Ringling and Valier. I've heard from a number of former Ringling people--Edith Brekke, ~~Elizabeth~~ Jake Mast, Isobel McCurry. I'll be glad to sign your book. The simplest way is to get a book mailer--post offices sell them--and ship it to me Special 4th Class rate, which I think is 66¢. Put in the return postage and provide me whatever names you'd like in the inscription, I'll sign and send back to you in the same mailer. I'm much pleased that you liked the book, and took the trouble to write me.

best regards

Jan. 20, '79

Dear Mrs. Doig,

Thankyou for your card explaining the delay. It will just extend Christmas for them a little longer! Enclosed is my check for \$11.⁰⁰ to cover the cost of the book plus mailing expenses. The address again is:

Mr. & Mrs. Arnold H. Steinert
1018 Eastview Dr.
Riverton, WY 82501

I'm sure they will enjoy it!
Thankyou very much.

Sue Steinert
4400 4th Ave
Regina Sask.

547 018

Sent
21-79

29 Jan. '79

Dear Sue Steinert--

Your check~~ed~~ arrived, and as quickly as I can this week, I'll get a copy of House of Sky--I'm momentarily out of copies myself--and inscribe it and mail it to your parents. Thanks for your interest in the book, and good luck with your school career.

best regards

Mrs. John H. Haerry
231 Greenwood Ave.
Warwick, Rhode Island 02886 Box 57 02887

Jan. 22, 1979

Dear Mr. Deig,

This is to thank you for a very moving and satisfying experience in reading "This House of Sky." As a 62 year old librarian with threatened vision, I no longer read many books, but I do cover many reviews in my work. Its title and the New York Times review led me to yours.

Its focus and tone are absolutely unfaltering. ~~Some~~ Some writers would have made the events of your life into a grimly "realistic" work, seen through a glass darkly as so much realistic/naturalistic work has been. But you saw it, and reflected it, as through a prism -- bright and colorful and flashing, warmed by the characters of Dad and Grandma, and the clear vision of the young man you became.

Your title and subtitle took me back to 1944 when, as a city bred Easterner, I went to Farragut, Idaho to work for a year as a civilian librarian at the naval training. Two of my co-workers were girls from Montana. The parents of one owned a little restaurant in Cut Bank, and the parents of the other a vast acreage where the nearest neighbor was miles away. But both yearned to return to their horses and the wide sweep of Montana. Another, elder, woman was working at the station with her husband to get a stake to herd their own sheep. They had evidently spent most of their lives in other people's sheep camps. I hope they made it. He later went to work on the construction of the atomic energy plant at Hanford, which even then was spoken of in worried tones, its threats already vaguely felt. I enjoyed listening to these women talk of the lives they had loved, in spite of the varying degrees of hardship and isolation which all had experienced.

One more personal note - My father was of Scottish ancestry and he and I found deep peace in the country. My mother was city born and bred and we lived in a suburb of Buffalo in a small, comfortable house with neighbors a driveway's width away. She kept close track of us. But for his precious 2 week vacation, which we spent in the country in Canada, my father and I escaped into a world of our own choosing. It was not so spacious as Montana, but Lake Erie stretched out in front of our cottage, and behind were fields and woods where we stored up energy to face the coming winter siege.

So much for my reminiscences which your fine book triggered. One of the pleasures of advancing age is the framing of good memories. I look forward to your work on the Northwest and wish you well in all things.

Sincerely,

Jean F. Haerry

31 Jan. '79

Dear Mrs. Haerry--

Thanks so much for taking the trouble to write me about House of Sky. It always gives me most pleasure when the book strikes a personal chord with someone.

Since you are something of a one-time Westerner, you might like to read, if you haven't already, Norman Maclean's title story in A River Runs Through It. It's set in the Missoula-Hamilton country, and is a bit racier in spots than my book, but I think the writing is just splendid. I avoided reading it while working on House of Sky, and am glad I did--it might have been daunting.

The words seem to be flowing well on my Northwest book. With luck, it'll be in print by early fall of '80.

all best wishes

January 20, 1979

Dear Mr. Doig,

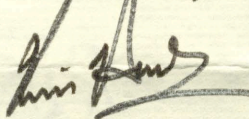
I have just finished This House of Sky and must say that I am very deeply moved. At times, I couldn't help crying--especially in the last two chapters. You have bravely laid yourself open in your work and I very much appreciate your reflections.

We have traveled a somewhat similar path. I was born and raised in Billings and took a degree in English from Yale. My first book was published last year--a simplification of the how and wherefore of energy conservation in the home--called How to Cut Your Energy Costs. I am afraid that I don't have your taste for freelance work, however, and for the moment have gone back to school to study the trade of business. I am now in the first year of a master's degree from the Yale school of Organization and Management.

As I think about my career change and my plans for the future, your reflections on Montana and your own career changes came close to my heart. This is clearly secondary, however, to your thoughts on loved ones and the landscape of Montana.

If and when I get to Seattle, I would appreciate a chance to meet and perhaps have lunch. Again, thank you for a very good book and a very deep personal experience.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Kim Hart', with a stylized, flowing script.

Kim Hart

178 Mill Rock Road
Hamden, Conn. 06511

31 Jan. '79

Dear Kim Hart--

Thanks so much for writing me about House of Sky. I'm particularly pleased it struck some chords in a fellow Montanan.

I never have encouraged other people to risk the freelance life, and I think now I positively speak against it, at least in the magazine field. It's probably my ten-year fatigue showing through, but I'm very disconsolate about the chances of staying financially alive as a magazine freelance. Inflation is roaring over the very low level fees which magazines seem determined to pay. It's been a hard admission for me, because I've done magazine work of one kind or another since I was a junior in college, but I think any magazine writing I do for the foreseeable future will be pretty incidental. I applaud your decision to study business, in other words.

The title of your book caught the eye of my wife, who has hopes we may somehow tighten up this typically loose suburban house we live in. Could you send a copy--we'd be pleased to have you sign it--and I'll send you a check for it?

And yes, if you ever get out here there's probably no reason we couldn't have lunch, unless I'm in a writing blitz.

best regards

p.s. Are you a Hart of the Hart-Albin store in Billings? I ask because, against all my expectations, House of Sky has done wonderfully well in Billings, mostly due to Dorothy Lough of the H-A bookstore, who probably is going to end up selling more copies of Sky than anyone else in the nation.

January 16, 1979

Dear Mr Roig,

I was so moved by "This House of Sky" that I feel compelled to write to you. It was a birthday present from a dear friend. Both of my daughters had read it earlier, considered giving it to me and decided not to; it being just too close to my experience. Another friend had searched for it for me as a suitable gift, couldn't find it and gave me a Charlie Russell calendar instead. I cried a lot as I read, not sadly but in the deepest recognition of what you were saying.

My maternal grandparents, Marvion and Minnie Stewes bought a ranch on the Shields River where it runs into the Yellowstone about seven miles from Livingston on the way to Clyde Park. They came there around the turn of the century. Their first house was one of the old Fort buildings. The Fort had been used only one year and then was turned into a ranch by the people my grandparents bought it from. They had seven children, Mork, Grace, Leah, Walter, Ruth, Jay & Don. Ruth was my mother. Aunt Joy Stewes Taylor and uncle Walter

and his wife Beatrice still live on the Stearns ranch. The home stood some where "up the river" in the early 40's. I think it quite likely that your family and mine knew each other. Grandpa Stearns used to let people ^{have} picnics in the grove by the river and we called this place "Stearns Bottom".

My paternal great grand parents, Josiah & Lucinda Elliott homesteaded in the Thompson River valley in the '80s and this ranch, between Knapjell and Libby, was my home. My grandparents William & Phoebe Long bought the ranch from her parents soon after their wedding in 1889. After my mother's death in 1938 I lived with my grandparents & my ^{great} aunt and uncle Eleanor & Edward Palm who had the ranch next to us. My father worked away from home for the Forest Service, road building and "timber cruising" for the Northern Pacific. He took over the ranch when my grandfather went blind in the early '40's. It was

finally sold in about 1962 to my uncle's nephew.

The landscape, people, weather and ranch life are such a part of me. After thirty years of raising my own family & working at my profession in Washington, I still identify myself as a Montanan. Your book has given this a validity. I am pleased, as you must be, that it is a national success. I hope this doesn't add another threat ~~to~~ ^{to} any of the special aspects of the state.

In the last three years I have traveled all over Washington on business and this has stimulated my interest in this state's history. Now that I know a little about its early days I'm beginning to feel some allegiance to this state. I started with the journals of the Whitman group and then read a book by Lucullus McWhorter and since then a lot of other things.

I don't know your Seattle address so am sending it to your publisher for

forwarding. I would like to have you autograph
my copy. If you would care to do so, please
let me hear from you.

Sincerely

Dorothy M. McDaniel

811 W. Fulton

Seattle WA 98119

(206) 285-2217

26 Jan. '79

Dear Dorothy McDaniel--

Your letter to me by way of my publisher has caught up with me, and thank you immensely for taking the trouble to write. I'm hearing from a number of people whose Montana backgrounds are similar to mine. Or more difficult, in many cases. I simply happened to write mine up.

I'm sure that, on one side of my family or the other, my people would have known your people. The Shields River country always has been interesting to me--I felt, when my father and I would come to visit my grandmother, as if we were coming to quite another country--and I wish I knew it better. One name in particular I recall is Fivland; Ole Fivland and his wife, whose name I can't bring to mind, had a small ranch up near the Crazies and were great friends of my grandmother. I think Ole was a Finnlander, although now that I say that the name doesn't fit, does it?--anyway, he was all arms and legs, a moody, bullheaded man, who is entirely singular in my memory.

I now feel considerably more allegiance to the Northwest than to Montana, and consider I'm probably here to stay. I'm at work now on a book set here in the Puget Sound country.

I'm happy to sign a book when it can conveniently be done. If your place of work is somewhere convenient, I could come by sometime when I'm out; or we could do it by mail--I think the book rate is 66¢; or it may be that I'll have one more bookstore autographing party, though that's not certain. If any of this is feasible, drop me a card and we'll try arrange it; sorry to deal by mail, but I pretty much have the phone shut down during work on this next book.

Again, thanks for writing. It's doubly pleasant to hear from another Montanan.

best wishes

Stan D.

January 13th, 1979
63 West Parish Road
Westport, Conn 06880

Dear Mr. Doig:

A brief fan letter, this, to say Halleluia, Bravo and hurrahs for writing such a book as "This House of Sky".

What a joy to have stumbled across it in the library and to have discovered in its reading that American literature is alive and breathing way out there in the far west.

Bravo for no rape scenes.. no two headed protagonists... no neurotically painted characters who, in their one sidedness bear little resemblance to the people we know.

What a thrill to read what you've done in this book to reestablish the English language in your own unique style.

You have added grandeur to both life and language to this avid searching reader and shown me that all is not dead in the American literary scene.

Allow me a question(not necessary to answer):

The library's lending data in the back of the book registers too few borrowings and this breaks my heart and can only indicate too little publicity. We hear in the moribund east NEED to read authors like you.

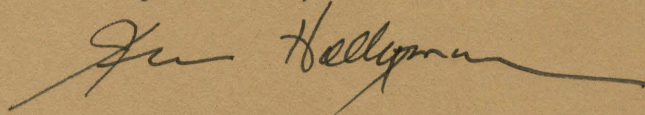
The question, then is does Harcourt Brace, thinking of you as a "regional writer", not publicize you and others outside your so called "region"?

If not, they should and I hope in your next work you will see to it that they do .. even if you yourself hate the publicity rigmarole.

As I say, we here in the east, surfeited by smoggy skies and minds really DO need to read authors like you.

You have enlarged my life by your writing and your themes so thankyou for sharing with me in such an outstandingly creative way. And what a grand wife came into your life.

Good luck to you both,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Jean Hollyman". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

(Jean Hollyman)

P.S. As you can see from my typing I'm an amateur at it but , were I to write by hand you'd never know what I had to say.. and were I to retype 'till perfect the same would hold true.my apologies.

26 Jan. '79

Dear Jean Hollyman--

Thanks for troubling to write in praise of House of Sky. And pardon the brevity, but I'm in the midst of work on the next book. I don't really think Harcourt Brace has written me off as a "regional" writer--Sky simply is a hard book to tout in the marketplace. You might, incidentally, be interested in another Montana book--A River Runs Through It, by Norman Maclean. Colleges in Montana now teach Montana lit courses, and Maclean's book, Richard Hugo's poetry, and James Welch's Winter in the Blood, are standard fare there.

all best wishes

25 Jan. '79

Dear Rod Belcher--

By now we've shared considerable newsprint in the Seattle Times Magazine, and I'm glad we've at last met, if only by mail. I'm doubly glad to have your words about the craftsmanship of my work; I think being a decent craftsman is one of the highest callings, and am pleased to be counted as one.

I was interested to hear about your years in Missoula. I don't know whether you would recognize the place now--shopping mall upon mall on the road toward Hamilton. Also, judging from my experience when I was plugging House of Sky there one weekend last fall, there's a novelist or poet--good ones--behind every jackpine now. Also, something you mentioned about having been mostly in "the western part of the state" caught me. During that Missoula weekend, a fellow came in the bookstore there and said that, although he normally collected only books of west slope (of the Rockies) writers, he was making an exception for mine. I was bowled over, because I grew up thinking I was in western Montana, what with those hundreds of miles of eastern Montana--the plains country--stretching off from us to the Dakotas. All a matter of perspective.

Anyway, thanks immensely for taking time to write about Sky; it means much to me when a fellow word-worker makes the minutes to do so. And I trust, as an old Bitterroot hand, you've read A River Runs Through It, by Norman Maclean. I deliberately never read it during the years of work on Sky, but caught up with it a few months ago, and thought it lovely.

best regards



Rod Belcher

Information Officer

Public Affairs, District No. 1

Washington State

Department of Transportation

6431 Corson Ave. S.

Seattle, WA 98108

Phone 206-764-4097



January 19, 1979

Dear Mr. Doig.....

Over the past several years, your name became familiar to me through the freelance pieces under your byline I've run across in various local publications. I learned early that if it was signed by you, the piece would be well crafted and highly readable. I even clipped out a thing you did on palindromes in the Times Magazine a few years back and sent Xeroxes of it to a few friends who are somewhat nuts (like myself) on word and language exercises.

Based strictly on the name familiarity, I suggested to my daughter that if she was hard pressed to think of a Christmas gift, "Ivan Doig's book, 'This House of Sky' might be a possibility." (I'd seen it advertised.)

Fortunately, she followed through. I finished reading it a few days ago and, based on the feeling that a sincere compliment is never out of place, I have to say the book was a beautiful reading experience. You had me getting out my Montana map and trying to follow along the place-and-time track of your narrative. It helped considerably because I have never been to the parts of Montana where you grew up. I now almost feel like I would recognize those places if I went there.

Back in 1942, when I was 21, two other college friends and I hitch-hiked to Missoula from California to enroll at summer school (we knew we'd all be in the service shortly and were looking for a fairly remote college adventure.) I wound up getting a job as news and sports director in a radio station there -- the start of almost 28 years in the broadcasting business. The three of us loved Montana, but traveled only in the western part of the state. After getting through with the war, I returned to Missoula to resume my job. But as you well know, you almost have to leave Montana unless you're an owner of land or a business. No more details, but I've lived in Seattle for almost 28 years now and am a confirmed believer in this area as a place to live.

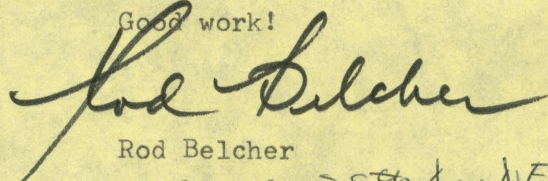
I guess what amazed me most about "Sky" was the fact that it all took place in the 1940s-50s. I kept thinking: God, this sounds like it all should have happened in the 1910 - 1930 time frame -- maybe in the days Hamlin Garland wrote about or some such.

Another thought. The name Doig is an unusual one. My maternal grandmother's maiden name was either Duhig or Duig, I am not sure which -- but she was from the New England area someplace. Scotch-Irish. (Who knows, there could even be a connection 'way back when, though I'm not a pursuer of roots.)

In closing (and I'm not really doing an adequate job of being complimentary) let me note that you succeeded in doing the near-impossible: Keeping a first-person narrative from the pitfalls of self-indulgence. No small accomplishment.

I'll surely look forward to your next book--the one plugged in the jacket notes.

Good work!



Rod Belcher

8010 28th Ave NE
Seattle 98115

619 West Walnut
Lompoc, Ca. 93436
January 9, 1979

Dear Mr. Doig:

Just finished your book, of which I got two copies for Christmas, one from each of two Montana-based daughters.

You stirred sleeping memories and vibrated dying nerve circuits. Although I'm a generation ahead of you and female, the parallels in our experience seem so interesting to me that I write you about them.

Last year, at the urging of our six children, who want them for their children, I had already begun my memoirs about growing up on a homestead in central Montana: about Dad who came into Montana in 1898 building railroad bridges for Nels Peterson, about Mother who never intended to leave Sweden and spent the rest of her life trying to get back there---you get the idea.

Like you, I began to gobble the printed word early on. When I started school, I had to learn English as well as the reading of it, but by the end of that first year I had grasped the fundamentals of both language and symbol.

From Highwood High School and a graduating class of four students (Know where Highwood is?) I went "east" to college and made magna cum Laude and Phi Beta Kappa. In J school at the time were Eric Severeid, Richard Scammon, and Hedley Donovan.

No scholarships in 1933 that I could locate, but tuition at the U of Minnesota was \$20. per quarter plus \$10. for out-of-state, altogether \$90. a year. Originally, I had dreamed of going to Northwestern but their tuition was \$450. Minnesota also offered the Coop cottages where we lived well for about \$25. a month, room and board. I washed dishes for spending money and made my entire wardrobe each summer. Came home only for summers; railroad fare was a large item in that 1933 budget.

When I tried to major in Journalism the assistant dean turned me back. "We seldom place our top-notch men graduates these days," he said. "A mediocre man often gets hired ahead of a top-notch woman. If you want a job, I suggest you major in English, minor in Journalism and be sure you get a teachers' certificate. They still hire teachers."

So I followed that advice and got a job in Ekalaka, Montana, to teach four classes of English, one of journalism, supervise the school paper and the annual, manage the library, coach the girls' basketball team, and teach them tennis.

Ekalaka, even more than White Sulphur, lived and lives on cattle and sheep. Half of my scholars were the children or grandchildren of cowboys who had come up the trail from Texas or Oklahoma. Many of these old-timers were still alive in 1936. The school spoke with a southwestern drawl.

Again, I could go on. But now you see why I did read every word of your book, which I seldom do in recent years. I even weighed carefully the numerous adjectives, adverbs and manufactured verbs. You styl~~e~~ is not my styl~~e~~; nevertheless, I did enjoy it. My own predilection is for skinny, straight-up-and-down prose.

If we drive to Montana in early April and come near your house, would you autograph my books for me? Are you anywhere near Interstate \$05? I could also mail the books to you with return postage.

Sincerely,

Marie Mac Donald

Prepared envelope enclosed for your reply.

19 January '79

Dear Marie MacDonald--

Thanks so much for troubling to write. I'm curious to know whether, when a person has two copies of House of Sky, it reads twice as well as it otherwise would, or only half.

I've heard from a number of Montanans, present and ex-, and quite a few of them have stories, lives, at least as interesting as mine. I'd say you're probably in that company. Also, you come from what I consider one of the real ends of the earth, Elkalaka.

You likely couldn't tell it from the prose in House of Sky, but I too like skinny, straight-up-and-down writing: Orwell, Sylvia Ashton-Warner. But I also like the adventure of language--St. Exupery, Loren Eiseley--and seem to be in a mood now to see what possibilities I can achieve with words. One thing hardly anyone seems to notice: that no matter what chances I take with verbs, etc., my words generally are the shortest, most Anglo-Saxon, fundamental ones I can find. Anyway, it may be that before too long, maybe the book after the one I'm on now, I may work back to some simpler language. But I dunno.

your

I'd be glad to sign ~~you~~ book(s), but I am going to be hard to catch this summer, because I'll be deep in archival research for this next book. Also, I turn off the phone when I'm home writing, so I'm exasperating to try get hold of, usually. If you'd prefer to send the books--I think the postage, special 4th class, is 66¢ each, or was the last time I looked--I'll happily inscribe for you.

Best regards. You are going on with your writing, I hope?

Juan Diego

Jan 5 - 79
Bx #13.
B.T. Int. 59011

Dear Ivan,

What a nice response - your right Jerry is my one & only. Add that he identified so quickly but maybe our values are more in tune than we realized.

I've always believed we're all here to fulfill a mission - if the good Lord puts us in these positions it's because we are to work our Karma's out to the best of our abilities - if we fail (tough) at least we tried, if we make it, watch out, we've got more to go through. As I said, while I was surviving the "battered woman syndrome", poor Jerry was going through his private hell. In my own stupid, stumbling way, I tried. As Jerry was kind enough to say 13-4 yrs. ago, if I had any other mother than you I wouldn't be where I'm at. This fall he was home for about 3 hrs - again he was generous - he said, you give a woman, mother, they are grumps for a starving woman and hopefully hit keep maturing and will be back to the good times, & they were there, but it's so easy to forget while you're feeling sorry for yourself. Jerry has a marvelous humor. We can tangle as if we were brother & sister rather than mother & son. She lived alone too much also - it does make a person different!

Calony boys usually are in groups - its protection - one Nuttite is often harassed but he's protected with the company of others. Its the same with the women or girls - frequently if I've got only one with me I find I'm finding for them. No matter how close a friend you were with a Nuttite, you would never know really what he knew or could tell you - they learn early - not to talk about Calony life or what

goes on within the commune. You never hear
of a runner writing about his life as a Hutterite.
Men go to town in groups - not often do they have
their wives or girlfriends - the family ties are
when they are home. I'll ask about this unusual
situation when I go north again this spring - if it
interesting I'll let you know. (It is wrong)

I've been staying at our trailer house in town
off & on these last two months - working on the
5th edition. Can't work at the ranch - too much to do.
I've revised, tore up - tore down, added to and
taken away in the revision. It will be twice as big
as last time - I've gotten more personal as to incidents
but no names, etc. Hope this finishes me on Hutterites.
I love the people that I do work for & with every
yr. Counseling on prevention medicine, etc. no teaching.
But there's a lot wrong with living like they do -
& this intermarrying is showing more & more.
There's a lot of money going into bars & preachers
hands and to me nothing concrete evidence of
good for the people as a whole. Mine got some very
wealthy colonies in Montana, but the people
really do without on extras.

Good grief, I'd better close, this is almost
a book. Thanks again, Ivan, I did choke up
that you read Jerry & me so clearly.

Thanks for the
news on Claude.

June Leiley.

Dec. 9, '78

Dear Mr. Daig,

I heard about your book entitled This House of Sky; Landscapes of a Western Mind, and thought it would be a perfect gift for my parents! I would like it to be a Christmas present if you could send it that soon. I'm sure they would know a lot of the people mentioned in the book.

Please send the book to:

Mr. & Mrs. Arnold Steinert

1018 Eastview Dr.

Riverton, Wyoming 82501

Send the bill to me at:

Sue Steinert

% Canadian Bible College

4400 4th Ave.

Regina, Sask.

S4T-0H8

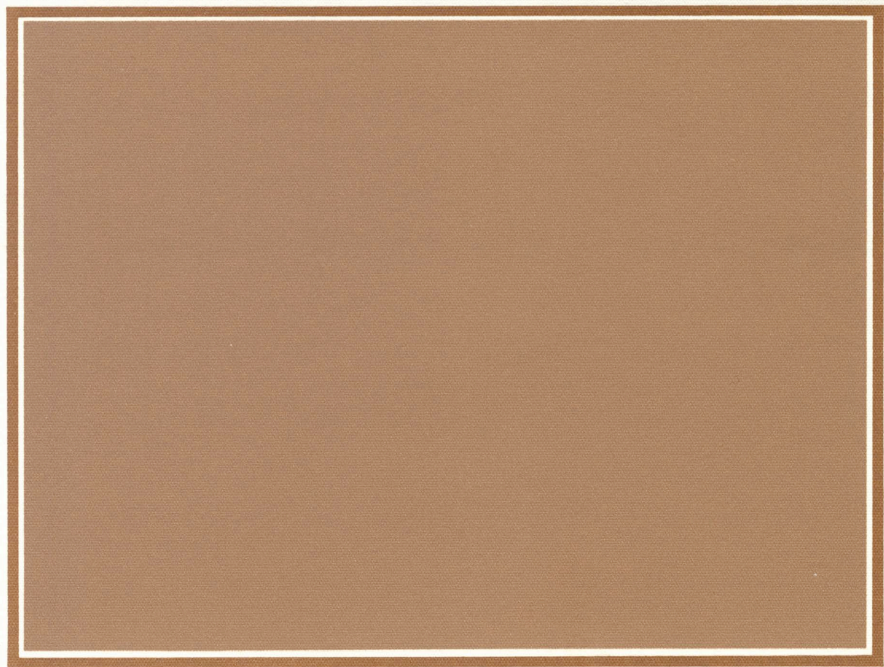
(over)



5 Jan. '79

Dear Sue Steinert--

*Thank you very much, and have a
Wonderful Christmas Season!*
I'm sorry to hear of the delay in your letter-
especially, to be so long past Christmas. I was
forwarded to me from my publisher just the other day and,
worse news, I'm momentarily out of my own copies of This
House of Sky. I should be receiving some any time; ~~if~~ *if* you'd
still like a copy sent to your parents, send me a check for
\$11--the book is \$9.95, book rate postage is 66¢, the mailer
is about 30¢-35¢--and I can inscribe a book and get ~~it~~ off to
them in the next few weeks. Best of luck with your studies.
regards



Dear Daigo,

The scotch is overwhelming,
(Maish sighed blissfully when
he opened it), the fairytale book
is terrific, and she read Sarah
the ferry book twice.

But what really prompts this
note is Laird's NUT TREE which is
driving the whole family crazy.
(Except for Sarah who sensibly
mounds the nuts on the base and
shouts "Did it!") Thank you...
I think.

Love,

Ann

EATON

© TEXTRON INC.



Dear Joan -
Just a brief note to tell you
the sad note that Everett died
on Nov. 30th - the morning I had
posted the note to you. (died in the afternoon
at 3:30 p.m.)

He suffered with a
multiple of things for 4 years and
it finally wore him down.

If you had met and known
him you would have liked him
as so many people did. He was
an inspiration to many through
his illness.

I am sending a copy of
your letter to Mick's sister Janette,
who lives in Mesa, Ariz. She and
Everett always had a great time
when they got together, talking
about all the family they knew,
and I'd say Everett knew a great
many. He also had a great memory.

LUKE 2:11 For unto you is born this day in
the city of David a Saviour, which is
Christ the Lord.

I'll try to get a copy of
How to Give Away later

I will stay at this house as
long as I can and am able. So
if you come this way I'd like
to meet you and your family.

You could also meet our
daughter who teaches in Redding,
and our son who lives in
Concord.

May peace

BE GOD'S GIFT

to you

at Christmas

Mary White

*Designed
by*
EMBASSY

1478 Cumberland Court
Fort Myers, Fl. 33907
December 17, 1978

Mr. Ivan Doig
c/o Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.
757 Third Avenue
New York, N. Y. 10017

Dear Mr. Doig,

Your name attracted my
immediate attention as I was
browsing through the bookstore

doing my pre-Christmas shopping. The enthusiastic response of the clerk to my questioning resulted in an immediate purchase of your book and I returned home to spend the night finishing your book before wrapping it as a Christmas gift for my brother.

Thank you for a most interesting night spent with your branch of the Doig family.

Sincerely.

Millicent Doig Crichton

Clearview City Kansas 66019

Dear Mr Ivan Drig

I have received your book. The House of Sky
I am sure you can imagine my surprise
not a surprise as to John Preslons value as
Jean I have and always did realize John's
character even when not more than 6 mo
old. I could write a whole book on this
and on Jean. When I went to Maryland
for his wedding I saw immediately the value
of Jean. and I said (Pepper Boy) my pet name
also The Twins name for John) if you had comb-
ed the world you would never have found a
finer girl. John said Mother I did comb the
world. So thank to you Ivan, John, Jean.

Dear Ivan I havent finished your books
but I see a quality to appreciate & love

I shall report when finished Two friend here
have ask permission to read This House of Sky
Thanks again

Lema Roden

Mr Doig

Dec. 18, 78
Box #13
Big Timber, Mt.
59011

Dear Mr. Deig;

My son sent me your book, now that I've read it I wonder if he too, felt kinship to you. I appreciated the locale you so vividly describe, having spent time in most of the places.

I couldn't get beyond the sadness, it was so much my son's life. Your dad did think more about your welfare than I'm afraid I did for Jerry's.

My son was shuttled from grandparents to step-daddies until he was 15. During those tragic, formative years he too learned to entertain himself as we lived on isolated ranches in Sweetgrass and Stillwater Counties. It must have been doubly hard on Jerry as I was the "battered wife syndrome" trying to survive. Jerry learned quickly to be his own man. He decided early that ranching was for the birds. He got stuck milking 15 cows by hand and slopping 50 head of hogs, time and time again, while his drunken step-father whooped it up in some saloon.

He turned out well, too, majoring in Political Science at U. of Idaho. Spent two years at Bremerton, Wn. after graduation then on to D.C. He did go off the deep end a couple times emotionally but not due to drinking or caureusing. He married a girl from Denmark and they have three children.

There was a Claude Deig who lived neighbor to us in Sweetgrass Co. He had three children a little older than Jerry. His wife was the former Dora Shellhammer from Ringling area. Their life together was a tragic life of personal mishaps. She died in Billings from an overdose of drugs, the kids are scattered and Claude died a few years later in Idaho.

I want to call attention to a mistake in your book I'm sure you got the info as "heresay." You said that the Hutterite young men live in barracks, noway. only if they are building a daughter colony and they are away from home. They as a people have the closest family ties I've ever been around. If the family home is crowded, the kids will sleep on the floor until more room is available. If a young man runs, his biggest problem is not being able to see his mother, that often brings the Hutterite back to the colony when all else fails.

My book on the Hutterites is at the King County Library and the Seattle Lib. The name is "Beneath the Mask, life with the Hutterites", I wrote the book as an authority of the subject having lived with the people in their own homes as one of them. I was not a guest, there is a big difference. This book was to test the water, the next one will be more concise and more in depth. I was threatened by some of the Hutterite bosses but as few had to admit I did tell the truth but they wished I hadn't.

Sincerely yours,

June Leiby

June Leiby

Dec. 30, '78

Dear June Leiby--

Thanks for troubling to write me about House of Sky. I take it your son is Jerry Walsh of Virginia, who wrote me an extraordinarily fine and generous letter. I am pleased that you both identified with the book, but I hope the personal chord struck in the pair of you hasn't been too painful.

I think I'm going to have to stick by my mention of the young Hutterites being "hived off by themselves, several to a room." I'm sure, from your time among them, that you're right about it perhaps not being a general practice. But in the case of the one colony I was writing about, on the old Sullivan ranch near Dupuyer, I have a fairly clear memory of being shown the separate rooms where the teenage boys/young men lived--I was briefly a chum of a couple of the colony's boys. Also, I know that my father recited the point whenever he talked about that colony; he was over there quite a lot, and hired a number of the young men for a few days' work at our place, a number of times. There also was the clannish behavior of the young males there; they would always be seen together, in town or wherever, in groups of three or four, not really with their families. As I say, this may have been some expedient of that particular colony, or I may have got some of the notion mis-remembered somehow, but I know that several of my friends in the Dupuyer area who've read the book, and know the Hutterite patterns there, have not commented to me.

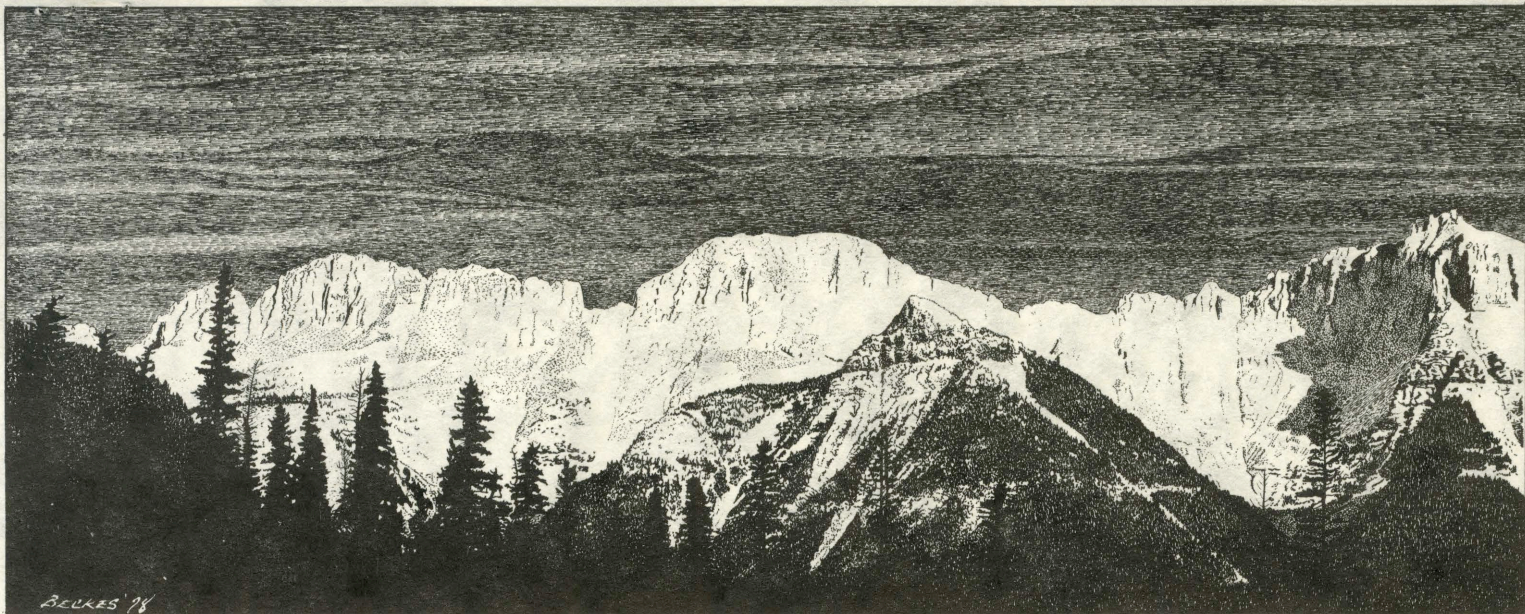
I'm quite sure I did come across your book, Beneath the Mask..., as I checked my research on Sky. Good luck on your next one; certainly they're a fascinating people, and not easily understood by those of us who don't get as close to them as you've managed.

Incidentally, the report of the death of Claude Doig (my uncle) is, like Mark Twain's, a bit exaggerated. Though he's pretty much dropped out of touch with the rest of the family, he's living in Michigan, I believe with one of his daughters.

Best regards. I don't know what you and Jerry make now of the life you shared together, but from his letter to me, he sounds like a hell of an interesting fellow.

Juan Doig

Cort (?) Conley, Cambridge, Idaho, called in admiration of Sky, Sept. '78;
had been given galleys by Jean Wilson of Boise.



The Garden Wall, Glacier Natl. Park, Montana.

Dec. 11

Dear Mr. Boig,

Your new book "This House of Sky" will be enjoyed by many. I have purchased two copies for Christmas presents, one for my husband and the other for my mother. I really wanted them personally autographed! The Fairhaven Bookstore in Bellingham, where my husband is a graduate student, was kind enough to call your agent in Seattle to get your address.

I'd appreciate it if you would autograph both copies. My mother is a native Montanan, like her father and still lives in the Flathead Valley. She loves Montana and the history behind it, so I know she'll enjoy your book. Her name is Helen.

My husband is a Montana transplant and has come to love it like those of us who were born and raised there. His name is Stan.

I have enclosed enough stamps to cover the cost of them being mailed back to me. I hope this isn't an inconvenience.

Thank you very much. Have a Happy Holiday.
Sincerely,
Gretchen Carlick

Carrick
1011 High St. #4
Bellingham, Wa.
98225



Andrea della Robbia: National Gallery
Christmas USA 15c

To: Ivan Doig
17021 10th Avenue N. W.
Seattle, Wa. 98117

BRUCE DAVID WEISS
1 98-19 64th AVE., 4B
REGO PARK, N.Y. 11374

Dear Mr. Dorg

We hope We are not Annoying
You in trying to get Your
Autograph for my son Bruce
who is "Brain Damaged"

Bruce is an avid Autograph
Collector.

With our best Wishes.

We remain

Sincerely Yours

Anne Weiss

Nov 17, 1978

Dear Mr Doig

I have just finished reading your book This House of Sky and it could serve as my biography. I was born in 1937 in Billings and after my mother divorced my father she married a man not unlike your Mr Mc Grath who came us from ranch to ranch, first near Fishtail, then Columbus, then Reed Point and finally Big Timber.

Montana's harsh climate and mean hospitality drove me out to seek any alternative the world could offer. Boarding out, blizzards, lambing, docking (I pulled out the nits with my teeth), chopping holes in ice for drinking water, suddenly changed to heat, mosquitoes, shearing, herding sheep to grazing land, derouling, migrating, picking rocks, haying, harvesting, and shoveling shit. Then it was winter again.

It is of course impossible to forget Montana's beauty and I am drawn back each year. Something happens to ranch children, perhaps it is the many cold nights in the peck-up cab, but we don't disappear in the crowds of the large cities. People I have met in Paris, Copenhagen, Washington and Seattle can't place my origins - some guess another planet - ~~but~~ they can tell that my personality, far better and usually worse, was forged somewhere they cannot imagine.

I saw Pengling once from the highway on my only trip from Livingston to Helena. The time was late afternoon and the sky was threatening black and purple. My only trip to White Sulphur was to beat the high school in basketball. I have driven through Dupuyer several times on the way to Glacier. While you drove conchies on your way off the range, I drove dump trucks on road construction projects in Glacier, near Babb, Harlowton, Livingston and Roundup.

Near our ranch on the Boulder south of Big Timber lived a family named Daig. Claude Sr., Claude Jr., Darlene and Kathleen plus a wife whose name I forget and her son from an earlier marriage. I would guess Claude Sr. was your father's brother. At least he and your photo on the jacket cover could be the same person.

Your book was the subject of an editorial in the Livingston Star, an unusual spot for a review. The review was complimentary. Finding your book was not easy. It may be on the lists but it isn't on the shelves or in the minds of sales people in Virginia or Tennessee. Nevertheless I wouldn't be surprised to hear my daughter ^{hear} ~~tell~~ of it in her college literature courses.

Respectfully,
Jerry Welsh

11 Dec. '78

Jerry Walsh
3465 Mildred Drive
Falls Church, VA 22042

Dear Jerry Walsh--

Thanks for your letter of compliment on House of Sky. I've heard from a lot of people, a number of them from our own background, but nobody has put quite as well as you the uniqueness--oddness?--we seem to carry around with us from Montana of thirty years ago.

I did see the Washington Star review, sent me by an impressed bureaucrat I happen to know, and in fact I had a letter from the Star staffer who I believe wrote the review. He's from Helena, and I asked him if he was ready for the news that Helena now has its own literary journal.

One of the marvels--a bit of an embarrassment, really--is to hear from people who have been moved by House of Sky, and to realize that they, or someone in their family, have stories at least as interesting, and generally a good deal tougher, than mine. I wish this could somehow be remedied, that the stories of "plain people" would get told more than they do. If there is any wish I have for House of Sky, it is that it may encourage that.

thanks again for your
very fine letter.

p.s. Almost forgot: sure, Claude Doig was my dad's kid brother. He is in fact still alive, living in Michigan, but for some reason mysterious to me has dropped entirely out of touch with the rest of the family. I tried to establish touch during my research on Sky, but could never get a response.

CLA-MAR Leasing and Financing

December 6, 1978

Dear Mr. Doig:

Thanks so much for replying to my letter. In fact, tracking you down became quite a game for me. I tried the Sherlock Holmes bit through Emmett Watson, who guided me to Pacific Search, who said they would relay any message, who never returned my call...but, now, all is well. Again, my thanks for the card.

I do correspond with several other published authors, including Kurt Vondra, Terry Harper, Ron Kurz and Agnes Newton Kieth (remember, "Three Came Home") from World War II days?

Anyway, I am looking forward with great anticipation to your newest book. Please keep me informed. I think your literary style is not only masterful, but great; and that I mean sincerely.

Frances Tidyman was not teaching during my school struggles at Valier, however my sister Frances slaved for her during her town days when staying at the Tidyman home helping raise the boys, and attending school. Paul and Olive Bruner I know.

You mentioned working for a farmer on irrigated land. Although I lived on the Francis Heights bench above Lake Francis, possibly he was a neighbor just over the hill. My cousins, still in the area, and who I visit every three or four years, are the Geigers, the VandenBos's and the Tronson's. My Valier years from 1932 through 1941 are my most memorable and haunting (depression, crop failures and HARD work). Luxury then was electric lights in 1938 and the school bus so we could attend high school in town in 1939. But I LOVE Valier and the surrounding countryside. Being an antiquer (not that Junker since I've been collecting for thirty years), I always look for Western farm items, maps, globes and books whenever I am in Montana. I have a good collection of Russell prints and several original oils by Fred Oldfield (now considered one of the better living Western artists).

I would like very much to have an hour of your time, and over a cup of coffee, compare some notes. Would you consider this? If so, please call me at either office number listed below, or in the evenings my ~~THE~~ Tacoma home number is 927-0896. My entire family is most anxious to read your book, and one brother, in particular, is most desirous to see you.

If you recall the newspaper, SPRAY, every so often a poem I compiled when in High School comes back to haunt me, about the town of Valier, and its most prominent citizens during the thirties. In fact, they repeated it in the Fifty-year anniversary book ~~pk~~ published just before they tore down the old high school and rebuilt. I attended that re-union, and fortunately we had someone attending from all fifty graduating classes.

Do you recall a teacher named Carrie Larson? She was my tutor and inspiration.

12-10: responded that if I make it to Tacoma, will try him for lunch.

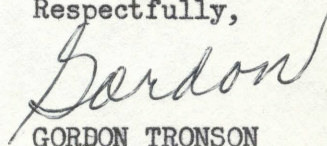
CLA-MAR *Leasing and Financing*

-2-

As you undoubtedly can tell my th is prose, I no longer write much. Out of practice completely. But I did spend several years in newspaper reporting and as a newscaster with the networks and minor stations, both radio and TV. Now I am only a "book-a-holic"; but have continously promised myself over the years that once I leave the world of finance and greed for money, I woould attempt, once again to write. No, I don't poassess the Great American Novel in my mind, but knowing many fascinating Extra-ordinary, ordinary people, I do have considerable stories that I would like to work on.

Enough is enough, Ivan. If y our schedule would permit it, please arrange to meet with me. I would like that very much.

Respectfully,


GORDON TRONSON

Please forgive any and all typing errors...this electric typewriter hates me....think I'll junk it and go back to the manual.

GORDON G. TRONSON

P. O. BOX 3023 - FEDERAL WAY, WASHINGTON 98003 - (206) 941-2800

March 20, 1981

Dear Ivan:

Remember me....fellow Montanian emigrant to Northwest,
but whose heart still lives in Valier.

My last correspondence from you was at the time you were
beginning "Winter Brother's"; which I received for
Christmas and enjoyed very much!

Now, unless you're deep into something else, perhaps
you'll have time for that long delayed lunch. Please
call me at the number listed above (days, as its my
office telephone), and we'll set a definite time.

I come to Seattle quite regularly and can meet you
at your convenience...many unusual restaurants in Univ.,
district, close to you, that I try to hit monthly.

Thanks.

Warm regards,

GORDON TRONSON

Dear Gordon Tronson--

I'm going to have to take a bye on that lunch. Am
at work now on a novel, which I have to hit the halfway
point of by early June, then am going to Montana for
some of the summer. Sorry I can't spring free, but time
could absolutely get away from me if I let it. Maybe we
can encounter when I get out in public again, reading and
signing books, after this novel is done. Glad you liked
Winter Brothers. I thought it was a risky book to do, but
it's worked out fine.

all the best

6133 Brooklyn Ave NE
Seattle, WA 98115
November 27, 1978

Ivan Doig
c/o Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich
New York, New York

Dear Ivan Doig:

I am writing to you because I have just finished reading your book, This House of Sky. Actually, my husband read it first, having read the review of it in the Weekly here in Seattle a couple of months ago. He enjoyed it so much that he encouraged me to read it, and I am writing to say that I think it is a wonderful book. I kept feeling that I was reading a unique language, one that you had invented, which bordered on poetry in the careful and precise choice of words. I had to slow down my customary break-neck reading speed in order to take it all in!

We have told many of our friends here about the book, and hope that they will read it, too.

I hope that you get this letter. I think that the publishers should print their full address in their books so that people like me can write to authors.

Thank you for writing, instead of taking that teaching job!

Sincerely,

Joan Dorman Davis

Joan Dorman Davis

5 Dec. '78

Dear Joan--

Many thanks for taking the trouble to write about House of Sky.

You're very much on target about what I tried to do in the book--
contrive language as close to poetry as possible, I suppose. And
I'm absolutely delighted whenever I hear someone say, "I had to slow
down my reading to enjoy your book."

I'm at work on the next one, which again will be first-person, but
set here in the Pacific Northwest. If all goes well, it'll be published
in autumn of '80. Meantime, I'll exist on the memory of those of you
who liked Sky.

best wishes

Sincerely,

14324 Magnolia Blvd.
Sherman Oaks, CA 91423

November 17, 1978

Dear Mr. Doig,

Thank you for writing This House of Sky.
It's wonderful - delicious prose.

I am a graduate student in English,
a voracious reader who can't read without
a pencil in hand for underlining favorite
passages and scribbling in the margins.
I've made a mess of your book, and I'm
looking forward to making a mess of
your next one.

Much, much success to you.

Sincerely,

Judith St. George

Dec. 2, '78

Dear Judith George--

How strange a process a book is, beginning as the mess I make of it--typing, retyping, cutting, pasting, penciling in--and ending as the mess you make of it by underlining. At least it has a few pristine bookstore moments in between.

I appreciate hearing from you; it's a bonus to a writer to hear that the book has given pleasure. I am at work on my next one, which if everything clicks on schedule should be published in late '80. A slow business this is.

many thanks for writing.

Yours
John G. George

Nov. 19, 1978
4747 Shippin Lane
Freeland, Wash. 98249

Dear Ivan Doig,

I thank you for your beautiful book This House of Sky: after reading the review in the Seattle Times, I knew I had to read it. Our book store, Book Bag, in Freeland ordered it for me. I couldn't put it down after starting it - and now that I've finished it I felt I had to write you & tell you how much your beautiful descriptions meant to me & of more importance, the beautiful soul & spirit of a boy grown into a talented writer.

I will be looking forward to your new books

Your writing reminds me of
Ernie Pyles - down to earth, sincere
and so much love for family -

P.S. Lots of beautifuls in
this - but I lack words to
express myself.

I thank you
Sincerely,

Kate Bennett

Dec. 2, '78

Dear Kate Bennett--

Thanks so much for your letter about my book. It's the first time anyone has compared my work to Ernie Pyle's, but in this household that is a tribute of real worth: it was the work of Ernie Pyle which inspired my wife, when she was a schoolgirl in New Jersey, to go into journalism.

I am at work on my next book, and I hope it is good news to fans of Sky in this region that it'll be set here in the Pacific Northwest. If all goes well, it should be published in the autumn of '80.

best regards

GEORGE HAESSLER
4216 BISHOP ROAD
DETROIT, MICH. 48224
NOV. 25, 1978

MY DEAR IVAN JOIG:

I WONDER IF YOU WOULD BE SO KIND AS
TO WRITE ME YOUR ANSWER TO THE
QUESTION: "WILL CIVILIZATION, AS WE
KNOW IT, SURVIVE THE CENTURY?"

I HAVE READ YOUR SUPERB BOOK
THIS HOUSE OF SKY AND I FOUND
GREAT SUBSTANCE IN IT.

THANKS FOR ANSWERING MY
QUESTION.

RESPECTFULLY,
George Haessler

WILLIAM REED COMPANY

300 NORTHCREEK, SUITE 190
3715 NORTHSIDE PARKWAY, N.W.
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30047
404-233-4608

November 4, 1983

Ivan Doig
c/o Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.
757 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10017

Dear Mr. Doig,

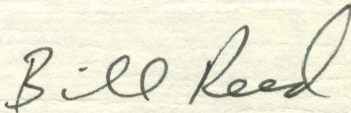
My family has just completed reading your wonderful book This House of Sky and I wanted to write to you to tell you how very much we enjoyed it. To me, it brought back such warm memories of the time my family spent in Great Falls when I was in the Air Force. It also recalled the gorgeous yet fierce weather that became a part of our lives for the two years, 1963-1965, we spent there.

But most of all I was impressed by your book because it was so well written. I am a voracious reader and it is always such a joy to find or rather stumble upon a gem of a book such as yours. My only hope is that you will give us more of your extraordinarily superb work.

My Mother, age 83, is visiting us and was a short story writer in her younger days. Self taught, a high school graduate, married at 18, she had 23 stories published in the Saturday Evening Post, Colliers, Scribners, etc. and she too loved your work. She feels that it is so "sweetly and gently done" - a real classic.

Congratulations on a great work. The quality is magnificent.

Sincerely yours,


William P. Reed

WPR/sb

25 Nov. '83

Dear Mr. Reed--

Appreciated your kind words about House of Sky. You're the only person I've heard of who has "warm" memories of Great Falls; usually they're wintery and windy.

I am at work on more Montana prose, a novel which will be published in fall '84. Please tell your mother for me that in it, my narrator--14 years old in 1939--will be papering his bedroom with illustrations out of the Sat. Eve. Post and Colliers.

best regards



December, 1983

Dear Ivan,

What can I say? your books are

WONDERFUL

moving, and powerful. My husband, Bill, and I have especially enjoyed "This House of Sky" which Ann McCartney brought back to us after her visit with you on the 4th of July.

Special blessings to you and Carol this Christmas.

Thank you for enriching our lives.

Wishing you every happiness
this holiday season and
throughout the coming year

Susan and Bill Lefebvre

"Next to life itself, God's most gracious gift is sight."



*the auxiliary to the
American Optometric Association*

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"Seeing Nature," by Peggy Ann Eskra,
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art program sponsored as a public
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Box 11384, Chicago, Illinois





Dear Ivan Doig,

You don't know me, but you have spoken with my friend & partner, Annick Smith, about locations for our film, Burntfork. I'm Beth Chadwick, and I wrote the script about a Wyoming homesteader which we hope to film in Montana. I wanted to thank you for leading us to Walter Doig, who, although he couldn't show us the old homestead, was full of wonderful words & stories. (Some of which I couldn't resist sticking in the script). I also wanted to tell you that your book meant a lot to me, and I am still reading it because now I've seen the place & the people. So Merry Christmas, and thanks for the help & ideas on homesteads.

Beth Chadwick

Rejoice!

Original Art by Monica Beisner



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Bloomington, Indiana
C-231-60

802 Power St.
Helena, Mt. 59601
11-12-78

Dear Mr. Doig:

I enjoyed "This House of Sky" immensely, as I was familiar with most of the places you wrote about. I was born and raised in White Sulphur Springs; my parents, Jim and Jean Duncan were pioneers, coming from Scotland in 1904.

I knew your Father, and met your frail Mother and also your Grandmother, Bessie Ringer. I remember the Doig brothers at dances in Ringling, having a ball...they were always so lively, which shows one never knows what lies behind the scenes. Your book had a sadness to it, laced thru with melancholia.

You mentioned the rubble that was once the grand old Auditorium. I danced there from the time I was 17 into my early 20's, prior to its demise. The roof evidently was leaking, as the Ringling Brothers donated a circus tent, under which we danced, and in the middle of the ceiling was a huge, suspended, revolving sphere, covered with mirrors which reflected the lights. They also held Chautauquas there and on one occasion, when I was quite young, the Gordons, (Rose, George and "Manny") were invited to join the singing group and I was so impressed knowing someone in show biz!

I have lent the book to Katherine Brewster McVeigh, who lived in Ringling and whose Aunts, Kathryn Donovan (~~Mike~~ ^{John} Donovan had a garage there) and Julia Sparks (Henry Sparks was a rancher in the vicinity) are now living together at Birdseye.

Good luck to you in your career.

With best wishes,
(Mrs) Isobel K. Choquette
Isobel K. Choquette

Nov. 28, '78

Dear Mrs. Choquette--

Thanks so much for taking the trouble to write about This House of Sky. I'm especially pleased when the book strikes a chord with people who genuinely know the Sixteen and Ringling and WSS way of life.

You're right, the book does have a melancholy streak, which I think was right enough for the story of struggle I was trying to tell, but I'm just as thankful to be out of it. The next book, which I'm just beginning on, will be much better-humored; on the other hand, it won't be about Montana.

One of the most remarkable letters, and tributes, I've had was from Clifford Shearer of WSS, my father's lifelong friend. Clifford was a marvelous source of help to me with the book, so I sent him a copy. He wrote back, surely one of the few letters in his life, to say he liked it, was proud to be in it, but it left him "kind of blue." The lament I feel for the passing of that generation of Clifford and my father and my grandmother is all in those words, I suppose.

You mentioned the old Auditorium. I didn't have a chance to use it in the book, but someone, perhaps Gladys Hessler in WSS, told me that at the New Year celebrations in the old days, there'd be a big dance in the Auditorium, and near midnight Tommy Meixsell would give a whoop for every year of the century, then fire off a six-shooter at midnight. As I remember the story, this was at the end of the 19th century, so that Tommy had a good deal of whooping to do.

Should you happen to see Kathryn Donovan and Julia Sparks, my very best to them; they are long-time friends of the family, and prized persons.

best regards

8/20/81

Marjorie Sanders
5395 N. MT #31
Helena, MT 59601

Dear Ivan:

I don't suppose you even remember me...I see no special reason why you should, but I remember you so very well; for some reason, when I think of you, I see you coming down the street at the side of Charlie, somewhere in the vicinity of Shorty Thunes barbershop, headed for the Rainbow no doubt, I especially remember the red hair, and myself and someone else, a friend no doubt, but it isn't clear to me who it was... (Verna Lee Loveland, I think) are passing you, headed in the opposite direction, I suppose this was the big "Saturday night in W.S.S." and there was a dance at the Rainbow. Anyway, this is always the picture that comes into my mind. You were a little tyke then, and I was probably 13 or 14. (I am 49 now).

All of this introduction into my letter is probably not necessary but it seems so to me. I want to strike up some kind of a "personal touch" for some reason, so that I can really tell you, how much I loved you book, "This House of Sky". Gloria Manger gave it to me for my birthday last year, I have read it twice, and am about to pick it up again. I have never read a book twice in my life, but then I have never read a book that hits home like this one, You could have been describing my own life, in so many ways. I was raised around sheep camps, shearing camps etc. My father was also one "Hellofa-Sheep-man" and I had always been told that "ol Frank Madison is one of the best damn sheep men to ever draw a breath" so of course, you know how a kid takes pride in something like that, for the rest of your life. Your story just took me back, like nothing I have ever come across before, knowing almost every name you mentioned, every sheep-herder, bar tender etc. I especially loved your bit about you and Fern standing at the window, watching Charlie disappear into the blizzard...I felt myself standing there at the window with you, I could almost hear the wind whistle, see the whirling snow, and the whole bit...it brought back scenes from my own life so vividly. I see that book as a western, "Gone With The Wind" and I would give anything to see it made into a movie, if we could get them to let you cast it, for no one else alive could pick someone to play Bessie, or Fern, or Clifford S. or your darling Dad..but you; (or maybe me) ha ha. I remember very well the day that I heard that your mother had died; It stayed with me for many years, the thought of 'loosing your mother' was more than I could conceive, and I cried as I said my Prayers at night, more than once, when I included you.

Seriously, have you ever thought of trying to sell the book to be made into a movie? I think someone like Michael Landon would snap it up, but never let them make a short out of it, if it would be made for t.v. it would have to be in sequels like "Roots". (no shortage of imagination where I'm concerned...I have it already in the makings...ha ha). If you do, let me take part in it.

God Bless,
Marjorie Madison Sanders

*graduated U.S.S.
1950 (over)*

Marjorie

27 Aug. '81

Dear Marjorie--

Thanks for taking the trouble to write. I do recall you, or more properly, both you and Verna Lee, although I don't know if you were as inseparable as you seem to be in my head. I made a quick look for an old WSS annual I have around here, to refresh the faces, but didn't come up with it; maybe our paths will cross in Helena sometime and I'll see the original version instead of the photographed one.

In fact, I may be in touch with you sometime as I get underway on a Montana novel, I hope next year. I intend to set it in the summer of 1939 and make it about ranching, so you may get included in the gather as I talk to people about lore of sheep and sheepmen.

I appreciate your enthusiasm for the film possibilities of House of Sky, but nobody from Hollywood with any dollars has shared it. (Strangely, my second book, Winter Brothers, is being made into a half-hour documentary for public tv out here, even though it seems to me not nearly as filmable as Sky.) I haven't minded much that there's been no interest so far; from all I hear, it's very hard for a writer to keep control of what the movie-makers do to his book. Like anyone else, though, I could use the money. Will just see what eventuates, I guess.

Was in WSS briefly in June, but really don't get there much any more. I find it hard to put in much of a stay, so many of the family and friends dead now, so many memories of them. Anyway, I'm glad House of Sky sounded right to you. I spent an ungodly amount of time on it, and it helps to know that someone who shared my background thinks the result was okay.

all the best

Something like this okay for your copy of the book?

*I would sure like a short note
from you to put in my book -
if you want to. I hope. Love
Janet - you might remember
me -*

Oct 6, 1998

Ivan Diog

Twenty years ago a friend gave me "This House of Sky". I am re-reading it with more appreciation than the first time.

I decided to say "Thank you" for writing this beautiful book; a tribute to the people who scratched a living in that area. I phoned the local library and got this address, altho the librarian was not certain it was current. She said there were other books there written by you.

In 1938 my husband was shearing sheep for Jap Stuart; I arrived on a greyhound bus from SF. He and I were married in White Sulphur Springs just before midnight on Jul 4, 1938 by a very

Sleepy Justice of Peace -

We have lived more or less the lifestyle you describe, only in N California. We're in our 80's and still ranching -

We plan to go to the library and try those other books you have written

Sincerely

Mary & Jim Jensen

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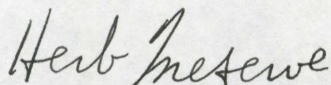
February 11, 1998

Mr. Ivan Doig
17201 10th Avenue N.W.
Seattle, Washington 98177

Dear Mr. Doig,

As part of my AP American History course the students study the Frontier as an idea and its impact on American thought. As part of this unit the students read This House of Sky and compare your experiences with the idea of Turner Webb and Pat Lemrick. I thought you might be interested in reading one, the enclosed paper is the best.

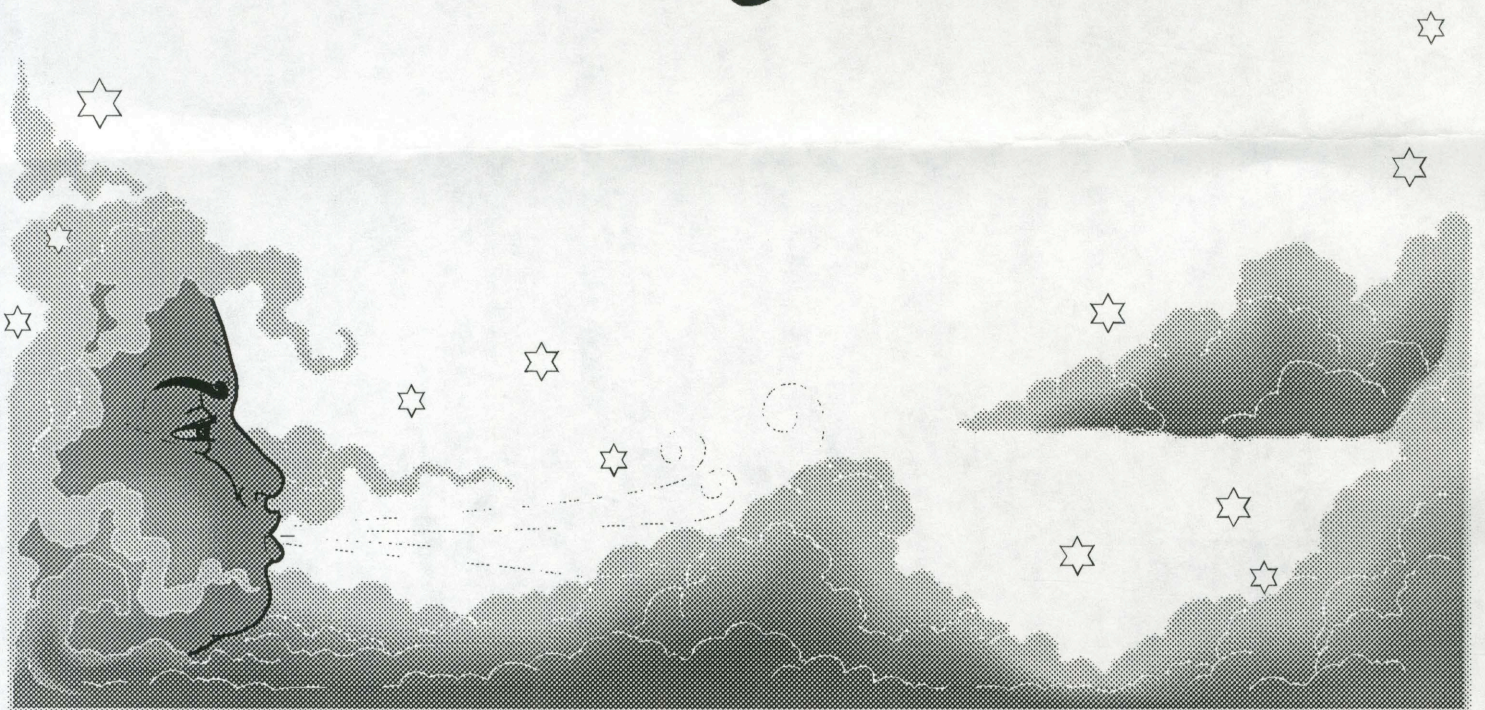
Sincerely yours,



Herb Meserve
enclosure

Norah Kaplan
AP American History

This House of Sky



The American frontier exists not only as a place, but as an idea, a philosophy that has influenced an entire nation's collective character. It was historian Frederick Jackson Turner who believed that American character was shaped, if not defined, by the frontier, "an area of free land, its continuous recession and the advance of American settlement westward."¹ According to the beliefs of Turner and fellow historian, Walter Prescott Webb, the physical conditions and environment presented by the frontier had a profound influence on its inhabitants, forcing them to adapt to their surroundings and change their attitudes in order to survive. As it is not only a place but a mental state as well, the frontier helped to promote the characteristics of individualism, self-reliance and democracy in Americans. Another school of thought, the New Western Historians, point out that Turner's thesis is monocausationist and leaves out key influences on settlers, such as natives, other ethnic groups, the East and the government. They believe that the settlement of the American frontier centered around "the discovery of new resources and the rush of population to exploit those resources."² Ivan Doig's autobiographical novel, This House of Sky, is the story of one family's settlement in the Montana wilderness. In this frontier setting, the three main characters illustrate Turner and Webb's thesis, as each show how their lives have ultimately been influenced by their environment, both physical and mental.

The harsh environment the Doig family lives in has a primary influence on their life. The weather, in particular, shapes their mentality, as well as their actions. The severe, snowy winters coupled with spectacular, grassy summers make life unpredictable for any given year might bring devastating storms that destroy livestock or the blessing of mild and temperate weather. The difficult winters breed a sort of endurance and grit into

¹ Frederick J. Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," The American West, 247.

²Patricia Nelson Limerick, "What On Earth Is the New Western History?", 83.

those who live in such rugged country which transcends physical strength. Even in their relationships exists the will to hold on and bear emotional conditions. Though Charlie Doig's marriage with his second wife, Ruth, had been over before it even began, they each felt the inexplicable need to see out one final winter together before she could leave. "Perhaps it was a final show of endurance against one another, some way to say *I can last at this as long as you can*."³ With this fierce sense of survival against the elements and each other, all are able to survive except for Ivan's mother, an asthmatic who was "so slim - too light a being to last there so near the challenge of timberline."⁴

The solitude of the frontier life also has an impact on the development of the characters. Ivan learns, when his maternal grandmother comes to live with him and his widowed father, that she had a particularly short temper which manifested itself in her stony silences. Later in life, Ivan realizes that "such silences came out of years of having no other defense: of being alone on a remote ranch, nowhere to go, no other person to unbend to, when a stormy husband went into his own black moods."⁵ Growing up alone also had an effect on Ivan and his friend Tom Chadwicks, whose family he boarded while going to school. Being "raised alone as best [their] families had been able to find time for [them], each had come out of it with a knack the others didn't."⁶ For Ivan, it is his love of books which stays with him throughout his life. The solitude also helps Ivan to grow up and leave his childhood behind at an early age. After his mother's death, Ivan and his father are left by themselves. In the tough months that to follow, it was his "father's wise instinct of treating [him] as though [he] was already grown and raised,"⁷ that helped force Ivan to mature, as the frontier is no place for a motherless child.

³ Ivan Doig, This House of Sky (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978) 103.

⁴*ibid*, 6.

⁵*ibid*, 129.

⁶*ibid*, 186.

⁷*ibid*, 67.

The frontier also creates an interesting relationship between the land and the people who choose to live on it. Life for those on the brink or surrounded by wilderness in the valley was a constant struggle with the land and the environment to scratch out a living. "Anyone of Dad's generation always talked of a piece of land where some worn-out family eventually had lost to weather or market prices not as a farm or a ranch or even a homestead, but as a *place*."⁸ First drawn to the rough Montana hills by the prospect of raising sheep and cheap land, the Doig family's story is one of a long battle against the elements, a constant struggle to come out on top over the conditions they lived in. Despite its quirks and weather, the Smith River Valley and "its walls of high country did fit that one firm notion that settlers held: empty country to fill up."⁹ The uniqueness of the American experience comes, in part, from the fact that, unlike European nations whose problems arise from lack of land for their inhabitants, America has sought to fill its land with people.

A certain adaptability and flexibility is also necessary to survive the unpredictability of the frontier environment. Ivan's father shows a great deal of these qualities in his willingness to work a variety of jobs throughout the novel. As a young man, Charlie Doig worked as a cowboy, an apple picker in Washington's Yakima Valley, a piler in a lumber yard before settling into sheep ranching. Though raising sheep becomes his primary occupation, he takes time out to run a cafe with his second wife, and do other odd jobs for quick cash when offered. Ivan, himself, must be flexible for he moves around a lot. "In the several years between [his] mother's death and Grandma's arrival, [he] had followed Dad through seven or eight places to live. In the year and a half after [he] and Grandma left Ringling, [he] ricocheted among half a dozen."¹⁰ The biggest adaptation Ivan has to make in the book is to his own mother's death. This

⁸*ibid*, 22.

⁹*ibid*, 21.

¹⁰*ibid*, 157-158.

includes being treated like an adult by his father and the introduction of new women, such as Ruth and Grandma, to his life. This ability to be flexible and adapt to adverse situations applies not only to the Doigs, but to other settlers of the frontier as well. As described in Webb's book, The Great Plains, settlers of the area west of the hundredth meridian to the base of the Rocky Mountains had to adapt to the unique conditions presented by their environment. A certain amount of flexibility was needed to adapt their housing, methods of farming and way of life to their new arid, flat and treeless surroundings.

The New Western Historians agreed for the most part with Turner's thesis on the settlement of the American frontier, but felt that he left out many other important influences. One such aspect absent from Turner's thesis is the impact of the community, as well as a mutual dependency on one another, for it seems to go against the image of the rugged frontier individual surviving on his own. The Doig's lived for some time in town, where Ivan went to school and came to depend on his life there for it would eventually shape his future. The system of sharecropping that Charlie Doig took part in also relied on a sort of reliance. He worked the land belonging to another, splitting whatever profits he made off of it with the landlord. In the face of a rough environment, the landless and landed depended on one another for an income. Also, when Charlie and Ruth owned a cafe together, they often gave meals "on account" when a customer was out of money for whatever reason. Even the Doig's as a family come to depend on one another. When Ivan's mother dies, his father is all he has to depend on until his grandmother joins the family and fills the role of mother to him. Ivan even admits that going off to college would be "a reverse trek"¹¹ away from his family and Montana. In such an environment as the one they lived in, it would be impossible to think that one

¹¹*ibid*, 236.

could survive without a certain amount of dependency on others, even if its one's own family.

New Western Historians would also point out that the Native Americans in Doig's book were being exploited, just as they were when the frontier was first settled. The reservation Indians in This House of Sky have been conquered, not by the six-shooter of Webb's thesis, but by alcohol. Driving into town to buy their beer, they get into so many accidents that the roadside begins to look like a graveyard with all the crosses put up for each death. New Western Historians would point to this as a classic example of victimization and exploitation. They would also say that the Native Americans were not the only thing being exploited; the land was as well. Just as Ivan came back to Montana to find "the sagebrush, the very coloration of that so-high prairie country, was beginning to be erased under potent new plows and tractors and farming theories, they see the negative environmental effects of frontier mining and other forms of exploitation had on the land. "The invaders reshaped the environment. Those changes in the land undercut older native economies and left no alternative to the new ways of living."¹²

Ivan Doig, his father and grandmother remain characters representative of the American frontier spirit, despite historical discrepancies about its actual settlement. They are embodiments of Turner and Webb's thesis and the American ideals of strength, independence, and adaptability. Through the portrait that Doig himself shows of his life in the Montana wilderness, This House of Sky shows the effects of the physical and emotional environment on the family, and in a larger sense, on American character.

¹²Elliott West, "A Longer, Grimmer, But More Interesting Story," 108.