



by Theresa Buckingham

A book from Mrs. Charles Cole of Seattle arrived at our house Saturday morning, "The House of Sky" by Ivan Doig of the local Doig clan. Just off the press with an excellent review from Time magazine, and furthermore about our own Meagher County cow country, it has been eagerly awaited.

We have all been to gatherings where the presence of out of town visitors or house guests prompted the telling of local tales and yarns. Everyone has a great time and someone always says at the end, "Y'know, someone ought to write a book." Well, he has—Ivan Doig. However, he does not intend his book to be the story of a town or a valley. It is the story of his father, and in clear decisive strokes on a back drop of beautiful imagery, he has drawn the people who were part of his father's life. In the honesty of his style and thinking he even gives their real names. It is a sincere book, a "tell it the way it is" book, yet so skillfully handled it brings out the beauty of our valley and the relationships of the people here. As the quote on the book jacket had it, "It is a landscape where there is still enough open spaces to preserve basic humanity."

It is the sort of book you can't hurry through. You will want to find someone in the house to whom you can read bits of paragraphs only to find more in the next paragraph you want to share. Sometimes you can't read it aloud because your throat is too tight and suddenly you need to find a kleenex. Be sure and take the book with you. If you put it down someone else will snatch it up. The story is saved from being sadly haunting by the direct quotes of the father and his friends which have such honest humor.

Briefly, it is the sage of Charlie Doig, the ranch hand, who always wanted a "little place" of his own, but he had to battle with the elements, disappointments, economic conditions, and most of all his personal grief, the loss of his young wife, a grief he carried with him and refused to relegate to a memory. With his little boy, Ivan, who had his mother's eyes, the pair criss-crossed the valley and the town dealing with their problems in their own stalwart independent

way. "Write 'er out, what ye think I have comin' to me. I'm headin' fer town." A supportive grandmother later joins them in their moving about, tucking her boxes under a daybed or couch where she slept in the thin little houses they called home.

This is a perfect gift for the "aficionados" of White Sulphur Springs, and there are many. They will love reading about Mulligan John, Jap Stewart, the nine bars and their comparable scale of social status, Pete McCabe and of course Charlie Doig.

As always time rubs dim our memory of friends of the past, but in this book I saw again Charlie Doig, the tilt of the brim of his hat, heard the easy laugh, the Scotch voice. What a wonderful thing for a son to do—bring his father back! "I'm right here ta tell ye."

Frank and Lucie-- Thought you might like to see one of the best reviews yet, in the tiniest newspaper--the little weekly in White Sulphur Springs. I had been apprehensive about how the folks there were going to react to having been written about, but it's apparently going to be okay. Theresa is quite upper-class--her family is one of the oldest and wealthiest ranching families in the valley--but she even liked my description of the 9 saloons!

Did Carol tell you I'm to be on TV in Spokane on Oct. 9? Ah, fame...

Ivan