

Northwest Books

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Lesley tells true story behind novel

He recounts the fathers in his life, fictionalized in his tale "Storm Riders"

Craig Lesley is a bold writer. His new book, "Burning Fence: A Western Memoir of Fatherhood," is his first book in four years.

It also is a rewrite or tribute to his previous novel, "Storm Riders."



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That book told, in fictional form, the story of Lesley's foster son. "Burning Fences" tells that same story in a strictly truthful mode, without the comforting guises of the instruments of fiction.

It is the story of four fathers: Lesley, his biological father, his stepfather and the biological father of the boy Lesley took in and tried to help.

Lesley is a superb storyteller.

He lives in Portland, and his writing is redolent with the sights, sounds and soul of the Northwest.

He moves as easily in the world of the Northwest Native Americans as he does in the "settled" Northwest. He is a writer whose emotions are alive on the page.

Here is the opening of "Burning Fences":

"When we held my father Rudell's funeral service in the Monument cemetery, raging forest fires surrounded the town, and we could hear the burning wood crackle. Smoke filled the air, and through stinging eyes, I could see only about a hundred feet. Ormand, my half brother, set the box containing my father's ashes next to the headstone. He kept looking around, but neither of Rudell's former wives had made the effort to attend. My half sisters didn't show, either. Just us boys."

Deserted by his father, mistreated by his stepfather and raised on a Native American reservation for years, Lesley knows pain, sorrow, poverty, triumph and joy, and he knows how to convey them all.

'Burning Fence: A Western Memoir of Fatherhood'

AUTHOR: Craig Lesley

PUBLISHER: St. Martin's, New York; ISBN 0-312-31846-4

FORMAT: Hardbound

COST: \$24.95

AVAILABLE AT: B. Dalton, Borders, Borders Express, Escape Fiction, Jackson's Books, Readers Guide, The Willamette Store, The WOU Bookstore

AUTHOR APPEARANCE: Lesley will appear at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday at Jackson's Books, 320 Liberty St. SE in Salem. He will speak with patrons and sign copies of his books. Call: (503) 399-8694.

"Burning Fence" is Lesley's story, but it also is the story of Wade, the child he took in and tried to raise.

Wade had fetal alcohol syndrome. In his quest to give the boy a good life, Lesley got involved in the life of the boy's blood family.

"Burning Fence" is the stuff of nightmares and the foundation of human connection.

It is the story of fractured families and damaged people, a story in which a minor incident provoke a personal consequences. It all is true.

It also is beautiful and often comic.

Lesley leads us through the core drama of his life. He tells us how his path was set, what decisions he made and why and how he faced, and grew from, the consequences of his choices.

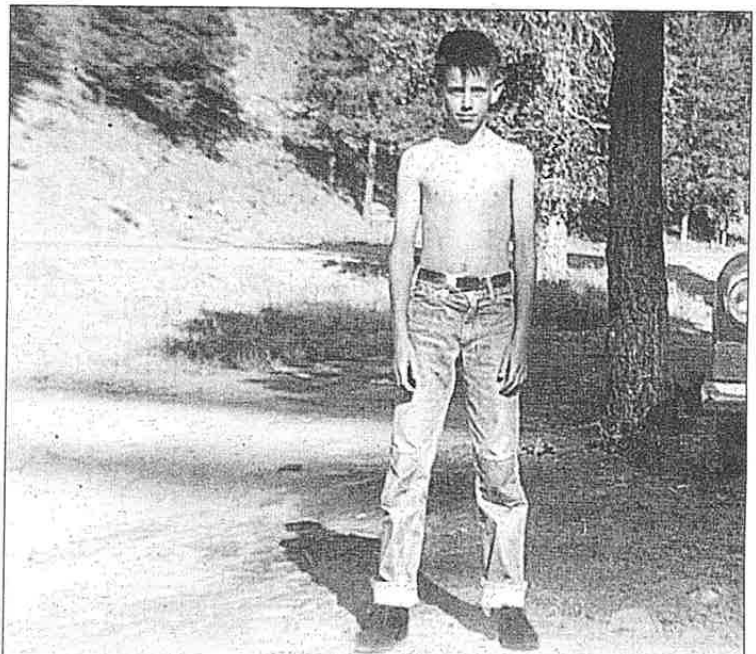
The book is set in Eastern Oregon, but ultimately its setting is the interior life each of us holds. It is the story of sons and fathers and a man who wanted to understand, who wanted to help.

"Burning Fence" should not be approached lightly. It welds itself to part of your very being.

The book is innovative in its ability to make the everyday interesting and the appalling believable.

There have been many memoirs published over the years, but few of them are as striking as "Burning Fence" or as fresh in tone and language.

The landscapes that contain the



BURNING FENCE

A WESTERN MEMOIR OF FATHERHOOD

CRAIG LESLEY
AUTHOR OF STORM RIDERS

"Craig Lesley has been justly celebrated for his novels. Now this vivid, unflinching story of his own life, as a son and as a father, can only serve to increase his already considerable stature as a writer—and, not incidentally, as a human being." —KENT HARUF, author of *Plainsong*

action of this book are raw and untamed. In a way, that is a metaphor for the lives of the people it reveals.

Lesley guides us through all of that in ways that make us feel we are walk-

ing by his side.

Dan Hays' Northwest Best recommends a book written by a Northwest author or about a Northwest subject. Write Hays in care of the Statesman Journal, P.O. Box 13009, Salem, OR 97309-3009.