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Book reviews

Irving's magic flags

The Hotel New Hampshire
By John Irving
Pocket Books, 1982
450 Pages, \$3.95

No doubt, "The World According to Garp" is a tough act to follow. With it, John Irving sprung to fame and fortune almost as if by the same powerful magic that marks his prose. His previous three novels ("The 158-Pound Marriage," "Setting Free the Bears" and "The Water Method Man") were resurrected and repackaged as Irving fast became a dashing new darling of the literary (and best-sellers) world.

"The Hotel New Hampshire" hints of the unfortunate possibility that the ensuing celebrity and excitement over his writing may have clouded his fictional skills. Perhaps though, Irving fans expect unfairly that he continue to create breathless and unforgettable stories.

Readers tax good authors to improve; the most recent novel shoulders the burden of trying to be better than the last. In "Hotel's" case, the reader should be warned: there is life

after Garp. It just fails to touch the soul as much.

"Hotel" has the bones of a delightful story, and Irving's storytelling strategies rarely flag. He has the knack for keeping the reader poised for the New Experience, the next Crazy Event.



The story spins around the large, lovable, foul-mouthed Berry family. The family fluctuates in size and age as sorrow, doom and love enter and pass through it. The family motto is "Keep passing the open windows." Some of its members do so unscathed. Others pass by, accumulating scars and hoodwinking fate. Several fall

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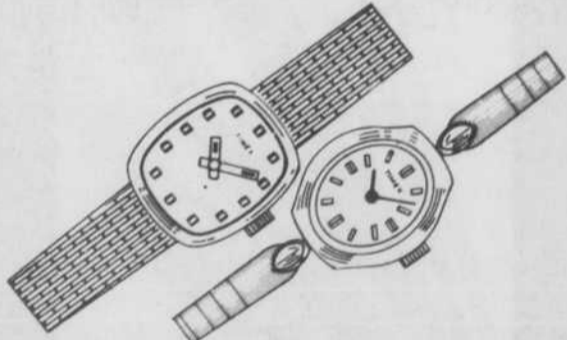
By Proctor-Silex. 29 steam vents; fabric control dial. Makes ironing easy. A great buy!

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