

# Craig Lesley's 'Winterkill' to be published

By Charlene Jensen  
Of The Print

Years of hard work have paid off and a writer's dream is coming true for Clackamas Community College Instructor Craig Lesley who will wear the official title of 'author' when his first novel, "Winterkill" is published in early May of 1984.

When Lesley was attending the University of Massachusetts, the Houghton Mifflin publishing company was looking for new writers. Houghton Mifflin invited Masters of Fine Arts programs throughout the country to submit outstanding student theses. A College director sent in Lesley's manuscript and the senior editor of Houghton Mifflin was very impressed and interested in the work from the beginning.

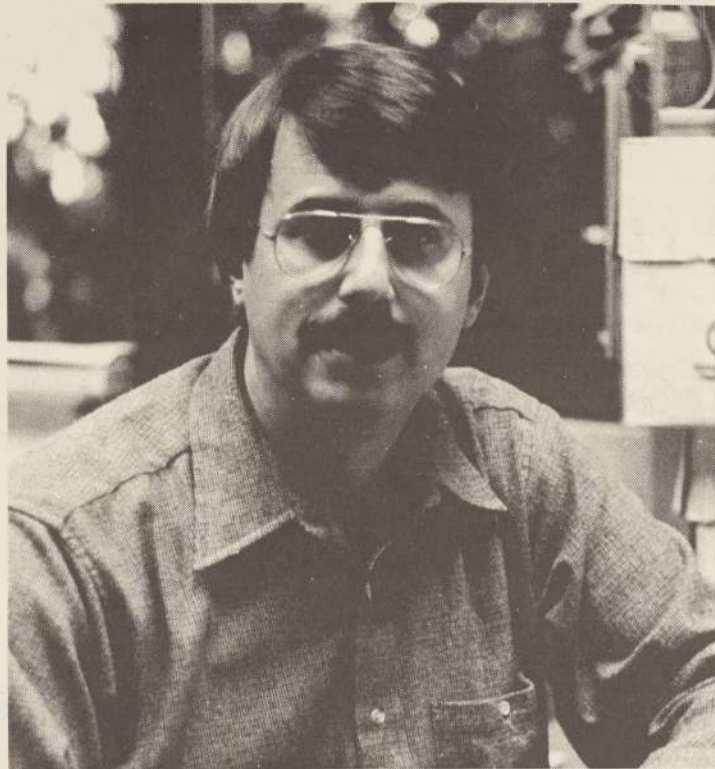
Lesley's manuscript contained many short stories which would be difficult to publish because people rarely buy short stories. The company was interested in Lesley turning the short stories into a novel. "As it turned out, the stories were episodes with the same main characters," Lesley said.

Lesley, who teaches English at Clackamas Community College, received a monetary advance from Houghton Mifflin so he could take a reduced teaching load while working on his book. Everything from then on has been hard work for Lesley.

The basic plot of "Winterkill" has to do with an Indian rodeo rider, Danny, who picks up his teen-age boy from a previous marriage. The story is about his awkward way of getting to know his son. "As Danny gets to know his son better he rediscovers the relationship he had with his father," Lesley said.

The novel contains a lot of Oregon: The Dalles, Pendleton and the Willowa mountains. "The primary movement of the story is up into the mountains which are more mystical. The novel takes place in 1980 and one important feature is Danny discovering what it means to be an Indian in a contemporary society. The important reason he goes up into the mountains is, that was the traditional home of the Nez Perce' Indians. Danny is Nez Perce' even though he lives on the Umatilla Indian Reservation," Lesley said.

The book tells how Danny makes his life at the rodeo. As he gets to know



Author/Instructor Craig Lesley

Photo by Russ McMillen

his son he tries to teach him how to make a trap. The father and son drive cattle, land and hunt. Each time they do this, Danny remembers how it was with his own father. If anything, Danny's father was a tough, hard-edged man and Danny is also tough. He lives according to a very practical code but regarding his son he is much more compassionate than his father was with him.

Danny's son, Jack, is a cynic who doesn't believe any of the old ways or beliefs and scoffs at everything. "So part of the novel is for Danny to rediscover his heritage but also to get his son, Jack, convinced," Lesley said.

The book is in no way about Lesley but it does hold some of his life experiences. Lesley, a native Oregonian, was born in The Dalles. Lesley attended salmon festivals with his Grandfather at Celilo Falls when the Indians would fish. His uncle is a hunting and fishing guide and "a great story-teller," Lesley said. Lesley's father is a trapper. "Some of my experiences helped and came out in the book," he said.

Writing is really just developing here in Oregon," Lesley said.

A section from "Winterkill" has been published in the Northwest Review. The Massachusetts Review will publish an excerpt from the book at the beginning of the year.

Lesley has no drastic plans in store for his life now that he is a published novelist but he does admit that the book has changed his life to some extent. "When you put five years into something, you're a different person for having done that. It's like going to college, or getting an advanced degree, or being in a war. It does change your life," he said.

Lesley has decided he would not like to make his career by only writing. "I really enjoy teaching. Ideally, I'd like to be able to both teach and write. Writing is very difficult and lonely. I enjoy the students and feedback, and working with people. I'd never want to write full-time for more than maybe a year at a time," Lesley said.

"I might write some more about Oregon. I like Oregon and I like teaching at the College. There's an interesting mix of students and I just really like it here," he said. "I enjoy this college so much. We have a great staff and everyone has been so supportive of me."

Lesley credits some of his success in finishing his book to his wife, Kathy. "My wife is also a writer and I couldn't have done this project without her. She was really helpful with revising and editing. She was very supportive," he said.

The Clackamas Community College staff was also helpful to Lesley. "The people here, the department division chairpersons were really supportive in trying to arrange a schedule where I could have certain days of the week off to write."

With the novel at the very last stages of completion Lesley said he will not begin on any other project right away. "I'm just going to fish, teach and enjoy the baby," he said. Lesley has two children, John, 14, and his baby Elena, 20 months.

## December to be musical for College

Clackamas Community College's music department will close the end of the 1983 school year with four December Concerts.

Dec. 9 from 6-8 p.m., the Cabin Fever Moonshine Band will perform country music.

Also free will be the concert performed Dec. 10 by the Beaver Creek Fiddlers. The concert will be held in the Community Center and will present fiddle music and Christmas sing-a-longs.

The annual end of the term concert for the Wind Ensemble and Chamber Choir will be held in the mall on Sunday, Dec. 11, at 3 p.m.

Wednesday, December 7, 1983



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