

CELEBRATE WITH US!

Let us make your next event special in our private banquet room.

- Beautiful intimate atmosphere
- Award-winning wine list, full bar
- Custom menus from any cuisine
- Perfect for any event
- Accommodates up to 50 guests



Call Jennifer - 541.342.4141 • 174 E Broadway • www.ambrosiarestaurant.com

Jade Screen Clinic

introduces:

Russ Goodwin, Herbalist

Diplomate of Oriental Medicine, L.Ac, M.S.

featuring, **Individually Crafted Herbal Formulas** specific to your needs

- all natural Chinese herb pharmacy
- strong, effective internal medicine

For appointment call

344-8088

JADE SCREEN CLINIC

1210 Pearl, Eugene



Spa Gift Certificates

gervais
SALON • DAY SPA
301 West 5th Avenue • 541.334.6533

The Best Gift is Loving Care!



spa packages
spa pedicures
massage
facials
gift boxes

AVEDA

winter reading 2005-6

fiction

AS REAL AS IT GETS

Ordinary Wolves by Seth Kantner. Milkweed Editions, 2004. Paperback, \$14.95. **2004 Pacific Northwest Booksellers Association Award. Milkweed National Fiction Prize. Kantner: One of 10 awarded 2005 Whiting Prize.**

It's January 1976, and national attention is fixed on the end of the Vietnam War and the last act of the drama surrounding the Watergate cover-up. But this winter day, 10-year-old Cutuk Hawcly has more immediate concerns. His dad, Abe, has taken the sled team back to their sod house to pick up a geepole so they can haul back the moose he shot during the day's hunt. Cutuk's been left to watch over the still-warm carcass. Night is falling, and beneath a sky laced with pink and green aurora, the Arctic cold is merciless. Outside Cutuk's lonely circle of firelight, the night is inky black. He hears a shriek, then a burst of soft thumps. The deep black morphs into shapes with glistening eyes. Wolves. He reaches for the rifle his father has left him.

Down-state boys his own age would likely be rigid with fear. Cutuk has one thought: Would this be the time he shoots his first wolf?

Ordinary Wolves, Kantner's debut novel, is an engrossing tale of a young boy growing up on the Arctic tundra in a family that not only lives off the land but also lives in it, in a sod hut many miles from the closest Eskimo village. Narrated from Cutuk's point of view, the book follows him on his forays with his dog team out into the tundra, then on his painful trips into town, where his fumbling tongue and white skin shame him into silence.

The people, places and incidents in the book are fictitious, but the descriptions of the land, the family's way of life and the crisscross of generosity, racism and harshness in the Eskimo culture are too finely drawn to be imagined. Every page glistens with descriptions so real you can almost hear the crunch of mukluks on packed snow or smell the steaming gut pile from a recent kill.

On a recent book tour stop in Eugene, Kantner, who lives in a small town in north-west Alaska with his wife and daughter, said the book "follows the arc" of his own life, from growing up on the tundra to his mind-bending journey into city life as a young man. Kantner's father, originally from Ohio, moved to Alaska and befriended an elder Eskimo couple who taught him many of the old ways of living on the land. Kantner's parents eschewed the popular notion of career success as well as such amenities as electricity, plumbing and social intercourse.

Like Cutuk, Kantner grew up eating caribou and pemmican made with currants, dried cranberries and caribou fat. He spent hours catching and preparing fish to be made into dog food for the family's sled team. His first friends were dogs.

Also like Cutuk, Kantner spent years feeling deep shame for being white. "I'm 40, and I'm just getting over a lifetime of wanting to be Eskimo," he said. But his yearning did not keep him from writing about the racism he experienced or the destabilizing effects of modern technology such as snow-mobiles and television on the centuries-old Eskimo culture.

Sprinkled with words from the Iñupiat language, *Ordinary Wolves* includes a glossary. When Kantner reads words spoken by his Eskimo characters, the cadence says it all. He's been there, and he's listened closely.

One of the "old ways" Cutuk picks up early on is that true hunters don't boast about their skills or kills. Kantner follows suit. He describes himself as "jumble-brained and dyslexic" and perennially restless. He doesn't like to sit still or write. He doesn't

even like to be indoors. He has a degree in journalism but says he fell into fiction writing almost by accident when a teacher gave him the right encouragement at the right time.

When an audience member at his reading commented on his poetic descriptions, Kantner responded that his craft seems polished only because publishers kept turning down his book, so

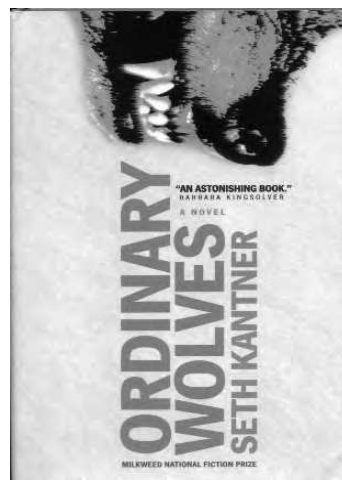
he had several years to re-write and hone each sentence. Maybe. But Kantner not only writes great description and supremely believable inner reflection, but he also has a way with metaphors.

"A discussion with [Abe] was like rolling a log uphill in sticky snow. Ideas glommed on." Or "his brown eyes looked rolled back like a village dog held down by its last six inches of iced-in chain." Some folks could do re-writes for a lifetime and never hit those perfect chords.

Kantner said he's not sure he's ready to sit down to another novel. Like his parents, he's suspect of the standard definition of success and doesn't feel the need to make a lot of money. He'd like more time for sled-making and photography. Carpal tunnel syndrome gives him an out for spending a lot of time at a keyboard right now. "I was actually thinking about making knives," he said.

It is a sweet relief to know the author is as real as this marvelous book.

— Alice Tallmadge



THE RELIABLE NARRATOR

War Trash by Ha Jin. Pantheon Books, 2004; hardcover, \$25. Vintage International, 2005; paperback, \$14.95. **Pulitzer Prize finalist. Winner Pen/Faulkner Award, 2005.**

You Yuan, the observant narrator of Ha Jin's incisive novel, is a Chinese clerical officer in Mao's so-called volunteer army selected to fight alongside North Korean troops against the Americans in the Korean