



# A splash OF HISTORY

## Doig novel explores life of rural bartender

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Rural Montana bars often serve as the area's social thermometer measured through the diverse characters who frequent it.

In his new book "The Bartender's Tale," famed Montana author Ivan Doig explores the life of a rural Montana bartender, his son and the struggles they endure together.

"The Bartender's Tale" follows Rusty, an 11-year-old boy, and his father, Tom Harry, proprietor of The Medicine Lodge in Gros Ventre, the small fictional Montana town that's been the setting in several of Doig's previous novels.

The story is set in 1960, and in the momentous summer that is the heart of the novel, Rusty shares a secret aperture into the often mystifying world of grown-ups with Zoe, the new girl down the street whose imagination outdoes even his own amid the wonders of the back of the saloon.

History arrives with gale force, first through the young oral historian Del Robertson and then in the shapely form of Proxy, a taxi dancer in Harry's earlier fabled saloon in a Fort Peck Dam boomtown. Proxy comes with news that leaves many to wonder whether she's the mother Rusty has never met or another woman from his father's mysterious side that sees him leaving Rusty for days at a time on a moment's notice.

The tale unfolds in Rusty's

Montana author Ivan Doig released his new novel, "The Bartender's Tale," on Tuesday. The book is Doig's 11th and his first since 2010's "Work Song." COURTESY PHOTO

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