

~ LYNN M. STEGNER ~

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

April 4, 2014

Dear Colleague:

My acquaintance with John Yewell began fifteen years ago when he wrote a profile of me for a regional journal. Many years prior to that, John had been a student of my husband, the writer Page Stegner. In short order, we became good friends, and have remained so ever since.

What you will encounter first in John is the intensity of his commitment to literature with a capital L. Read any one of his hundreds of journalistic pieces and you sense instantly a quantum elevation in prose style, in the quality and grace of thought, and in thematic consequence. It often does not matter what he's writing about, but how deeply he reaches into his subjects, and that can carry a reader a long way down the road not only to genuine understanding, but perhaps more importantly, to lasting shifts in perspective. Booth called this "the rhetoric of fiction;" I would call it art.

His novel, *THE SPANISH BEAUTY*, invokes what might be termed the American style—classically clean, straightforward without being facile, and sensuous in its rendering—the impressionistic realism characteristic of the 20th century novel that recalls writers like Steinbeck, Cather, and Houston. He knows how to write scenes that are imaginatively alive on the page, and then to orchestrate them in dramatic waves that build and break naturally. His marvelous control of the language, his seamless manipulation of syntax, and his reliance on the concrete, on the details and small actions of human existence, to carry the burden of storytelling exhibit a certain unassailable intuition, to be sure, but they also embody years of experience working with the English language as an instrument itself. He simply knows how to arrange words on the page.

But anyone who writes fiction as calling or career realizes quickly that a talent for composition will not move hearts or expand minds. John Yewell's empathy for his characters, the ways in which he manages to breathe life into their fictional lives, is remarkable. Add in discipline, the kind of hungry discipline that drives a writer where his artistic vision leads him, and you have the laid out the DNA sequence of a real writer.

Lastly, because John is applying for a position in an academic program where the teaching format is often the workshop, and the work itself grist for the mill, it ought to be mentioned that John can intelligently and sensitively articulate narrative issues, and parse the sometimes mysterious dynamic between elements of fiction.

If you have applicants with stronger or longer literary credentials, you will be hard put to find one with more authentic, in-the-trenches experience, or finer aesthetic sensibilities than John Yewell. I recommend him with great confidence.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lynn Stegner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Lynn Stegner