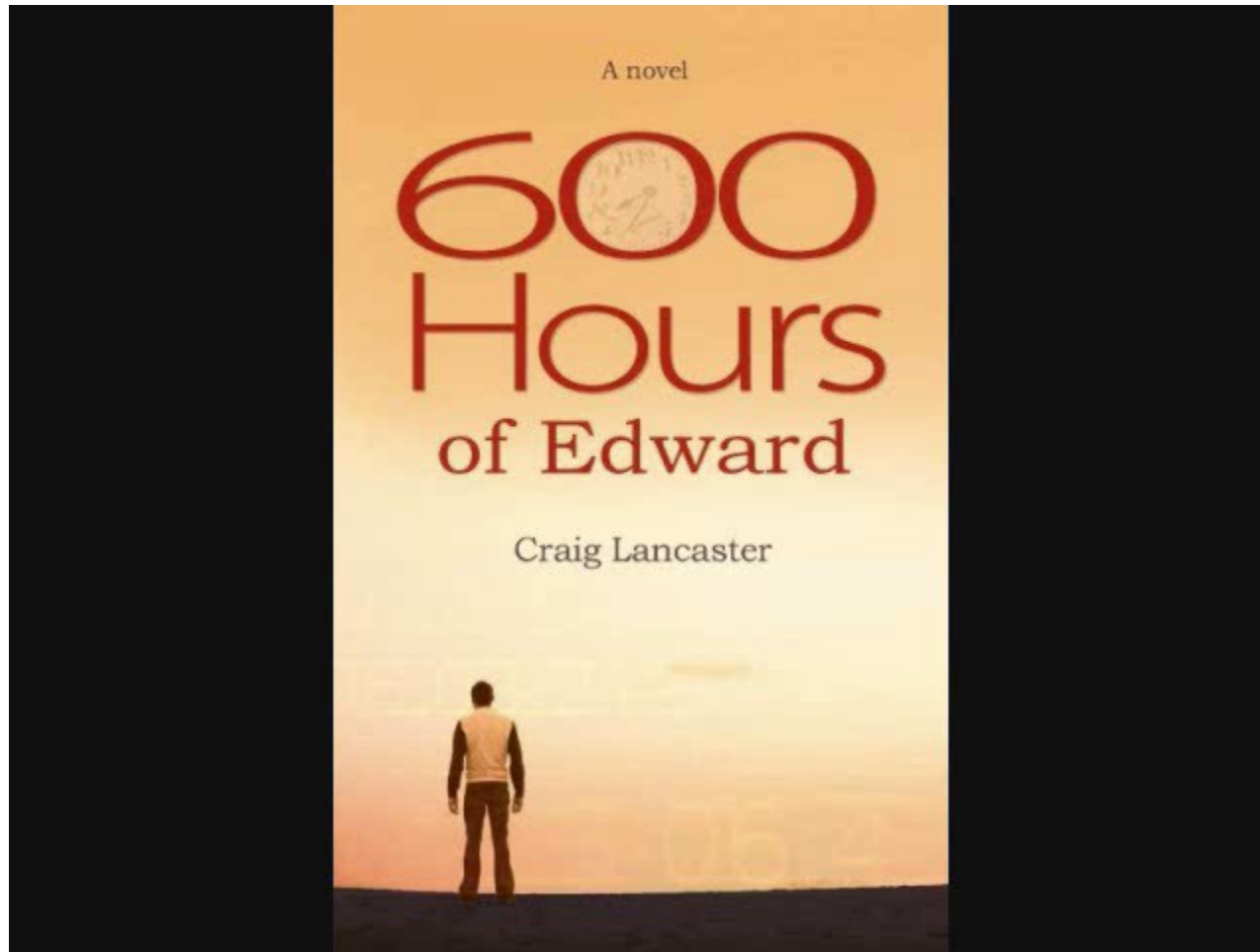


EDWARD AND ME

The building of *600 Hours of Edward*

FIRST, AN INTRODUCTION ...



IT STARTED WITH A CHALLENGE

- In October 2008, my good friend Jim Thomsen asked me if I would do National Novel Writing Month with him.
- For the uninitiated: NaNoWriMo (as it's called) happens every November. The challenge: write 50,000 words in 30 days. If you accomplish this, you “win.”
- At first, I declined. I'd tried it before, never gotten very far, and I didn't have an idea for a story. In truth, I'd given up any thought of ever writing a novel.
- Then I changed my mind.



WELL, I “WON”

- On Nov. 1, 2008, I had a concept of a man so beholden to patterns that he lives very rigidly. I’d done a small amount of research on Asperger syndrome. Other than that, I had my fingers, which, as it turned out, moved quite quickly.

25 days of writing madness

My day-by-day progress during NaNoWriMo 2008, with daily word totals in parentheses

Nov. 1: 5,763 (5,763)	Nov. 14: 39,886 (5,328)
Nov. 2: Off	Nov. 15: Off
Nov. 3: Off	Nov. 16: Off
Nov. 4: 11,183 (5,420)	Nov. 17: Off
Nov. 5: Off	Nov. 18: 43,846 (3,960)
Nov. 6: 13,721 (2,538)	Nov. 19: 51,811 (7,965)
Nov. 7: 16,963 (3,242)	Nov. 20: 54,816 (3,005)
Nov. 8: 20,439 (3,476)	Nov. 21: 60,837 (6,021)
Nov. 9: Off	Nov. 22: 63,957 (3,120)
Nov. 10: 23,085 (2,646)	Nov. 23: Off
Nov. 11: 27,293 (4,208)	Nov. 24: 73,208 (9,251)
Nov. 12: 30,744 (3,451)	Nov. 25: 79,175 (5,967)
Nov. 13: 34,558 (3,814)	



TO THE VICTOR, ETC., ETC.

- I got this sweet online badge for successfully completing NaNoWriMo.



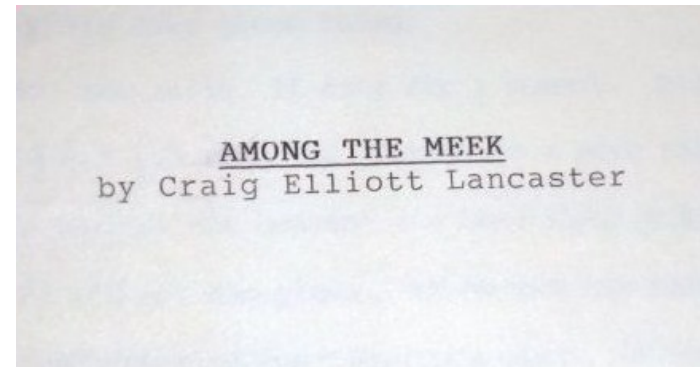
TO THE VICTOR, ETC., ETC.

- After 25 days of utter absorption with my novel, I was also made to shave by my wife, who apparently doesn't understand the concept of the playoff beard.



SO WHY DID IT WORK?

- Before November 2008, I'd tried many times to write a novel and had never succeeded.
- The biggest key: I had a good idea, one that I was excited to write. The story that became "Edward" had me by the heart, and that's where the best writing comes from.
- But my success was also rooted in something that happened several months earlier ...



The cover page of a novel I tried to write at age 20, back when I thought I needed three names to be a real writer and I was desperate to write Steinbeck-esque themes.



IN WHICH I DO SOMETHING STUPID

- In July 2008, at the annual town festival in Fairview, I told my wife I wanted a motorcycle. I hadn't ridden one since I was 14 years old. I was 38 at this point.
- She said no.
- I said yes.
- She said no.
- I said yes.
- She said no.
- I said yes.
- She said OK.



Isn't it beautiful?



SO I BUY A BIKE. IN SIDNEY.

- And I try to pilot it 260 or so miles home.
- 37 miles short of my goal, a buck dashes into my path, and down I go.
- Broken ribs. Lacerated spleen. Broken toe. Road rash. And one understandably shaken, angry wife.



My helmet, which saved my noggin (not to mention some of my blood).



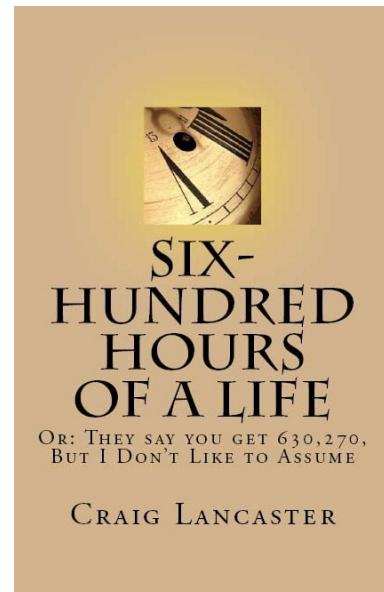
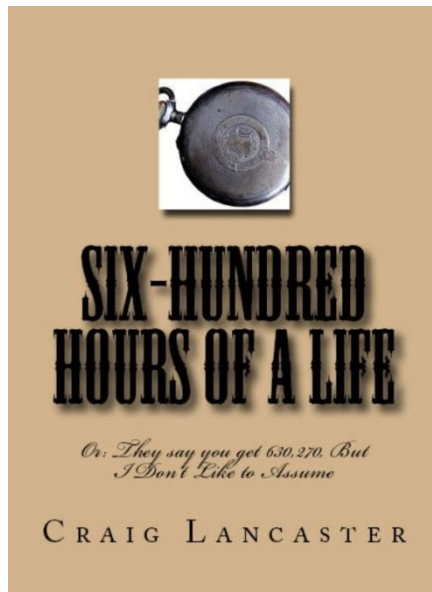
WHAT I GAINED: PERSPECTIVE

- Nearly buying the farm on the back of a motorcycle has a way of rearranging your body and your priorities.
- I don't want to paint this as some kind of epiphany, because it wasn't, but I naturally did some thinking about my life, what I'd done with it, and what I wanted to do with it.
- Writing novels was one of the things I'd badly wanted to do.
- So, in addition to a good idea, I also had the sense of urgency to get cracking on it. That's a good combination.



THE EARLY LIFE OF “EDWARD”

- Having no background as a fiction writer and not being entirely sure what I had on my hands, I started out by self-publishing the book in almost a workshop way (changing covers and interior layouts as I found flaws ... and there were many).



THE ORIGINAL SUBTITLE

- “Or: They Say You Get 630,270, But I Don’t Like To Assume.”
- That was actually a concession to the original, full title of the book, which was:

**Six-Hundred Hours in a Life That Will Have Only 630,270,
Assuming It’s a Life of Average Length, And I Don’t Like Assumptions**

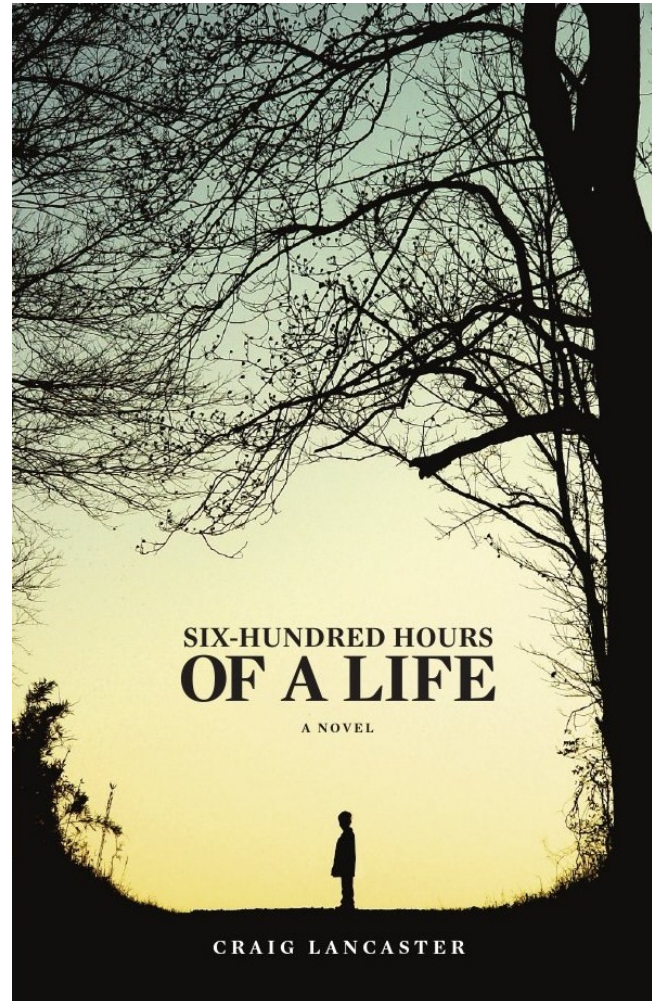
A novel
By Craig Lancaster

All things considered, it’s just as well that I abandoned this idea.



FINALLY, SOME SEMBLANCE OF DECENCY

- Rather late in the book's incarnation as a self-published title, I prevailed upon my friend Tim Ball, one of the best designers I know, to create something professional-looking. To this day, this remains the favorite cover of many people.



GETTING ATTENTION

- Any author will tell you that marketing a book isn't easy, whether you have a publisher's might behind you or not. And I didn't.
- Still, I was willing to dive in there.
- I did readings.
- I talked to civic groups.
- I went to arts festivals.
- And, amazingly, people started to notice.

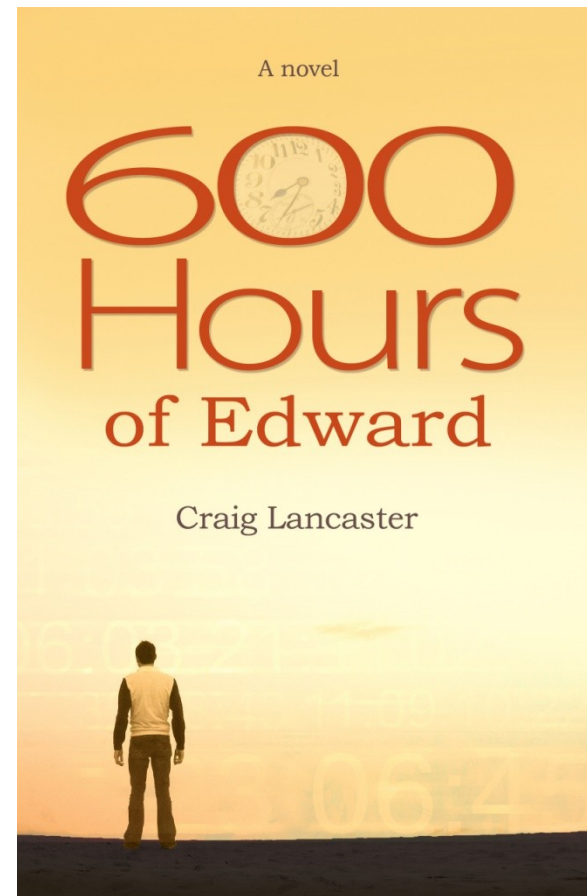


My first public reading, March 2009 at Off the Leaf. Note to self: People will like you more if you don't look like a serial killer.

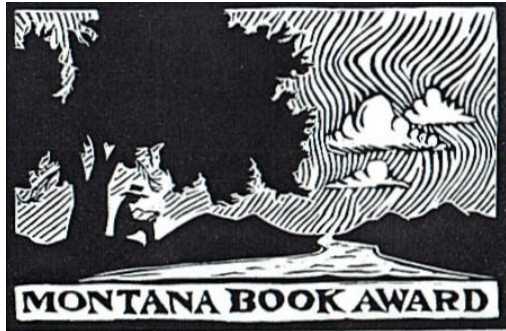


A NEW LIFE

- One day in August 2009, I came home from the golf course (don't ask my score) and found an e-mail waiting from me: It was Chris Cauble at Riverbend Publishing in Helena, and he wanted to acquire my book.
- In a stunningly quick turnaround, at least in publishing terms, Riverbend released it, with a new title, in late October 2009.
- Most of the good things that have happened to the book have occurred since Riverbend got involved.



THE GOOD THINGS



- 2009 Montana Book Award Honor Book (Jamie Ford's *Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet* was the big winner.)
- 2010 High Plains Book Award winner for best first book.
- And now, One Book Billings selection. A great honor in the place I call home.



A QUICK PLUG

- In January 2011, my second novel, *The Summer Son*, was released by AmazonEncore.
- It's a father-son story, spanning nearly 30 years as the two men try to reconcile an enormously difficult relationship.
- Jonathan Evison, award-winning author of *West of Here*: “*The Summer Son* will grip you with its pathos and insight, propel you mercilessly forward with its tension and suspense, and then wow you with an ending you won't see coming.”



THE SUMMER SON

"The Summer Son will grip you with its pathos and insight, propel you mercilessly forward with its tension and suspense, and then wow you with an ending you won't see coming."

— Jonathan Evison, author of *West of Here* and *All About Lula*



THANK YOU!

