



Nov. 12, 2003

Pulitzer winner reveals the effect Haitian healthcare had on in his life at Crain lecture

by Abbie VanSickle, BSJ04

Tracy Kidder has won numerous accolades and awards for the books he's written about small Massachusetts towns. But he takes on a new setting in his latest book, "Mountains Beyond Mountains: The Quest of Dr. Paul Farmer, A Man Who Would Cure the World" — the impoverished country of Haiti.

Kidder, who won both a Pulitzer Prize and a National Book Award for "The Soul of the New Machine," spoke to a capacity McCormick Tribune Center Forum crowd on Nov. 10, in the latest Crain lecture: "Journalism that Matters." The lecture was co-sponsored by the NU Center for the Writing Arts



Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award-winning writer Tracy Kidder said after spending time in Haiti, he now wants to help improve the country's quality of life.

Kidder read from his latest book and fielded questions about his writing techniques and the way his experiences in Haiti changed his outlook.

"I thought I'd seen a lot of the world," he said. "After I left the place, I tried to reconcile Haiti with my own privileged life."

First, in a profile for The New Yorker, and now in his new book, Kidder tells the true story of Dr. Paul Farmer, who is working to improve health care in Haiti through his medical relief organization, Partners in Health.

Kidder read several passages from the book before discussing how his experiences with Farmer have had a lasting impact on his views of healthcare and American foreign policy toward Haiti. Kidder said spending time with the doctor showed him the inequities in medical care between rich and poor countries.

"Did he transform you?" Dean Loren

Search

Go

[Site Map](#) | [Contact Us](#)



Dean Loren Ghiglione moderated the discussion, saying he was once president of the Tracy Kidder fan club.

Ghiglione, who moderated the discussion, asked of Kidder's time with Farmer.

"It's hard to know," Kidder replied. "Haiti burns itself into your brain."

He said he wants to do what he can to improve the quality of life in Haiti. "I have to admit I feel strongly about this cause," he said.

Kidder talked about the problems of tuberculosis and AIDS in many poor countries, telling the audience he thinks it is imperative to take action against the diseases.

"The way we combat them will determine our legacy," he said.

Kidder also explained his writing decisions in "Mountains Beyond Mountains." He said he included himself in the book using first-person narrative voice in order to show the remarkable nature of Farmer's life and work in Haiti.

Kidder also talked about his current work in progress, a memoir about his year as a soldier in Vietnam.

Roberto Garcia (WCAS06) said he has been inspired by Kidder's books. Garcia read Kidder's "Old Friends" as a high school student and came to the Crain lecture to hear the author discuss his writing style.

"His books are just very easy to read and make you feel you were there,"

Garcia said. "Even though he has one style of writing, he can write about such a wide variety of topics."



Kidder addressed a capacity MTC crowd.

Kidder told the audience that writing has always been a large part of his life. "It's all I know how to do," he said. "It's something that I can't imagine not doing."

Prospective students: E-mail inquiries to the [graduate](#) or [undergraduate](#) admissions offices.
[Journalism](#) | [IMC](#) | [Admissions](#) | [Student Work](#) | [Faculty](#) | [Placement](#) | [Alumni](#) | [Student Services](#)
[Special Programs](#) | [Search](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Site Map](#) Revised. ©1994-2003 Northwestern University.