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Contact: Barbara Theroux 406-721-2881

HOTEL ON THE CORNER OF BITTER AND SWEET WINS 2009 MONTANA BOOK AWARD

The 2009 Montana Book Award winner is *Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet* by Jamie Ford, published by Ballantine Books. This annual award recognizes literary and/or artistic excellence in a book written or illustrated by someone who lives in Montana, is set in Montana, or deals with Montana themes or issues. Presentations and a reception with the winning authors will take place Thursday, April 8, during the Montana Library Association Conference in Bozeman.

Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet is an extraordinary story of commitment and enduring hope. In 1986, Henry Lee joins a crowd outside the Panama Hotel, once the gateway to Seattle's Japantown. It has been boarded up for decades, but now the new owner has discovered the belongings of Japanese families who were sent to internment camps during World War II. Henry, a Chinese American, remembers a young Japanese American girl from his childhood in the 1940s--Keiko Okabe, with whom he forged a bond of friendship and innocent love. In *Henry and Keiko*, Jamie Ford has created an unforgettable duo whose story teaches us of the power of forgiveness and the human heart.

Four honor books were also chosen by the 2009 Montana Book Award Committee:

The 600 Hours of Edward by Craig Lancaster, published by Riverbend Publishing. Edward Stanton is a man hurtling headlong toward middle age. His mental illness has led him to be sequestered in his small house in a small city, where he keeps his distance from the outside world and the parents. For the most part, Edward sticks to things he can count on...and things he can count. But over the course of 25 days (or 600 hours, as Edward prefers to look at it) several events puncture the walls Edward has built around himself.

The Big Burn by Timothy Egan, published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. On the afternoon of August 20, 1910, a battering ram of wind moved through the drought-stricken national forests of Washington, Idaho, Montana. Egan narrates the struggles of the overmatched rangers against the implacable fire with unstoppable dramatic force, through the eyes of the people who lived it.

The Selected Works of T. S. Spivet by Reif Larsen, published by Penguin. When twelve-year-old genius cartographer T.S. Spivet receives an unexpected phone call from the Smithsonian announcing he has won the prestigious Baird Award, life as normal--if you consider mapping family dinner table conversation normal--is interrupted and a wild cross-country adventure begins, taking T.S. from his family ranch just north of Divide, Montana, to the museum's hallowed halls.

Stick Horses and Other Stories of Ranch Life by Wallace MacRae, published by Gibbs Smith. MacRae tells about his heroes and also the town vagabonds who came and went through the landscape of his growing up as a ranch kid and his adult life as a third-generation Montana rancher. Both humorous and poignant, the people and events in MacRae's stories portray the living Cowboy Code.

The Montana Book Award was founded by the Friends of the Missoula Public Library in 2002 and winners are selected by a committee of individuals representing areas throughout Montana. Members of the 2009 Montana Book Award committee included Honore Bray, Missoula; Anne Kish, Twin Bridges; Mark Miller, Bozeman; Carole Ann Clark, Great Falls; Jill Munson, Fort Benton; Gordon Dean, Forsyth; and Samantha Pierson, Libby.