

MEDIA RELEASE

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Climbing Autobiography Takes Top Honours at Banff Mountain Book Festival

The autobiography of one of Scotland's best-loved mountain writers has taken the Grand Prize at this year's Banff Mountain Book Festival. *The Evidence of Things Not Seen*, by the late W.H. Murray, is the winner of the festival Grand Prize, the \$2000 Phyllis and Don Munday Award, sponsored by the Alberta Sections of The Alpine Club of Canada. The festival awards were presented on Thursday, October 31.

Murray's memoirs focus on his life as a climber and mountaineer and his many travels throughout Europe and the Himalayas. The book also movingly describes Murray's war experiences in the Middle East and his internment in prisoner-of-war camps — a period he used for writing and for intense philosophical study. *The Evidence of Things Not Seen* is published by Baton Wicks Publications (U.K. 2002).

"This is a big, quiet book that resonates far beyond the clamour of ego and conquest," says Irish mountaineer and writer Dermot Somers, a member of the 2002 book festival jury. "Murray is a great writer, sadly unheralded outside Britain," adds Geoff Powter, editor of the *Canadian Alpine Journal* and a fellow jury member. "To have this book come our way is a great gift. *The Evidence of Things Not Seen* is a very engaging portrait of a time and a man."

Joining Somers and Powter on the 2002 Banff Mountain Book Festival jury was New Zealand mountaineer Julie-Ann Clyma. One hundred and twenty-eight books were entered in the ninth annual competition.

Above the Clouds, by Anatoli Boukreev and Linda Wylie (editor), wins the Jon Whyte Award for Mountain Literature, sponsored by The Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies. The book is a compilation of Boukreev's mountaineering diaries from 1989 to his death on Annapurna in 1997. A Russian mountaineer, Boukreev is best known for his role in the 1996 Everest tragedy. "*Above the Clouds* is an interesting addition to the on-going *Into Thin Air* debate," says Powter. "It presents a much more rounded and sympathetic view of this important — and to some extent sidelined — player in the history of the Himalaya." *Above the Clouds* is published by Saint Martin's Press (USA, 2001).

The award for Best Book — Adventure Travel goes to Jerry Kobalenko for *The Horizontal Everest: Extreme Journeys on Ellesmere Island*, published by Penguin Books / Soho Press Inc. (USA, 2002). In the book, Kobalenko explores the past and present of this forbidding but beautiful landscape. Clyma comments: "Kobalenko's *The Horizontal Everest* stood out. He writes with passion, clarity and — praise be — some humour. I found myself smiling a lot at his observations." The Adventure Travel Award is sponsored by Batstar Adventure Tours.

Selkirks South, by David P. Jones, published by Elaho Press (Canada, 2001), wins the Best Book — Mountain Exposition Award, sponsored by Mountain Lights Bookstore, Lake Louise. "This is a book that will change how we measure our mountains in Canada, and that's a remarkable achievement," says Powter.

Bruno Engler Photography — a compilation of mountain images by Canadian Rockies mountaineer, filmmaker and photographer Bruno Engler (1915-2001) — wins the award for Best Book — Mountain Image, sponsored

by Spotted Dog Press. The book was edited by Vera Matrasova-Engler and Susan Engler Potts and published by Rocky Mountain Books (Canada, 2001). *Bruno Engler Photography* also wins the Canadian Rockies Award for the best book on the local area, sponsored by Eagle Creek Travel Gear. The Canadian Rockies Award is chosen by a local committee.

The jury also selected the following books for Special Jury Mentions:

- *Climbing Free: My Life in the Vertical World* by Lynn Hill with Greg Child, W.W. Norton & Company (USA, 2002). “This book makes an important contribution in documenting a period of phenomenal development in rock climbing, epitomized by Lynn Hill,” says Clyma.
- *Light at the Edge of the World* by Wade Davis, Douglas & McIntyre (Canada, 2001). “A remarkable book — especially given that it reveals that Davis’ ability with the lens is just as sharp as his fluency with prose,” says Powter.
- *North*, by Roger Hubank, The Ernest Press (Scotland, 2002). “A powerfully creative work,” says Somers.

The Evidence of Things Not Seen was also awarded the James Monroe Thorington Award for best recent work on mountaineering history, sponsored by the UIAA — The International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation. The UIAA represents mountaineers and climbers worldwide on all matters of common international concern.

The Banff Mountain Book Festival is the only festival of its kind in North America. The festival, which runs in conjunction with the Banff Mountain Film Festival, is a celebration of mountain literature which brings together writers, publishers, editors, photographers and — of course — readers. Featuring guest speakers, readings, seminars, a book fair, book signings and launches, the festival offers a wide spectrum of experiences for the participants and the audience. The 2002 festival runs from October 30 to November 1.

The entry deadline for the 2003 competition is August.

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An electronic version of this release is available at www.banffmountainfestivals.ca

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and The Mountaineers Books.***