



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **Courageous story of escape and survival wins 2003 Banff Mountain Book Festival Grand Prize**

A riveting story about the 1937 first ascent of Alaska's Mount Lucania by two mountaineers – who found themselves stranded on the mountain with inadequate gear and provisions due to bad weather and logistics – is the Grand Prize winner of the 2003 Banff Mountain Book Festival.

*Escape from Lucania: An Epic Story of Survival* by David Roberts, Simon & Schuster (USA, 2002), Time Warner Books UK (UK, 2002) receives the Phyllis and Don Munday Award, sponsored by the Alberta Sections of The Alpine Club of Canada.

“The story leaps off the page,” says jury member George Lowe about Bradford Washburn and Bob Bates’ climb of Mount Lucania, which in 1937 was the highest unclimbed peak in North America. “It loses none of its impact in the retelling by two 90 year olds who had a miraculous escape by their own efforts.”

More than 150 books were entered into the 10<sup>th</sup> annual book competition, and a committee selected 30 finalists. The winning books were announced at a ceremony on Thursday, November 6. The 2003 festival jury included Australian climber and writer Greg Child, 1953 Everest expedition member George Lowe, and Calgary-based outdoor writer Bruce Ramsay.

The Jon Whyte Award for Mountain Literature, sponsored by The Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, goes to Maria Coffey for her book *Where the Mountain Casts Its Shadow: The Personal Cost of Climbing*, St. Martin's Press (USA, 2003), Random House Group Limited UK (UK, 2003). Coffey conducted many of her interviews for this book at past festivals, and wrote part of it at The Banff Centre during a creative writing residency.

“The subject of death and loss in the mountains, and the impact this has on those who are left behind, is a difficult subject that few writers, or mountaineers, have challenged,” says Child. “To dare this topic takes courage.”

*Tenzing: Hero of Everest* by Ed Douglas, National Geographic (USA, 2003), takes the prize for the Best Work of Mountaineering History, sponsored by the International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation (UIAA). Douglas tells the story of Tenzing Norgay, the Tibetan-born son of a yak herder who went on to become a legend after making the first ascent of Mount Everest with beekeeper Sir Edmund Hillary.

“This is a fully-textured portrait of the man that avoids legend building and myth making,” says Ramsay. “It becomes more magical simply because of Douglas’ confidence, patience, and incredible gift for timing which have always made him one of the best.”

The Best Book – Adventure Travel award recipient is artist-naturalist Ellen Meloy for *The Anthropology of Turquoise*, Pantheon Books (USA, 2002), that looks at the connections between human perception, geography, and the natural world through various landscapes, from the Sierra Nevada to the Yucatan Peninsula. This award is sponsored by Batstar Adventure Tours.

“This is a special little book that comes at a very interesting time in adventure,” Ramsay says. “With the world shrinking, Meloy discovers a myriad of journeys literally in her own backyard.”

The winner of Best Book – Mountain Images, sponsored by Spotted Dog Press, is *Arctic National Wildlife Refuge: Seasons of Life and Land*, The Mountaineers Books (USA, 2003) by Subhankar Banerjee. Banerjee, a photographer, in collaboration with six essayists, presents a portrayal of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, a unique landscape made up of equal parts of beauty and hazard. The U.S. is currently considering this area for oil drilling.

“This book does what it was meant to do: stimulate the senses and debate. It accomplishes both beautifully,” says Ramsay.

*The Bugaboos*, Elaho Publishing Corporation (Canada, 2003), takes the award for Best Book – Mountain Exposition, sponsored by Mountain Lights Bookstore. The book is written by Canadian mountain guides Chris Atkinson and Marc Piché and is a climbers’ guide to the Bugaboos and Vowells, one of the world’s great alpine rock climbing centres.

“The job of a climbing guidebook is to inform, invite, and inspire,” says jury member Greg Child. “This entry does all of that, in compact form and with clear presentation. Pure and simple, it just makes you want to get off the couch and stuff your fists in a granite crack.”

Special Jury Mentions go to: *Everest: 50 Years on Top of the World*, by George Band, HarperCollins Publishers Great Britain (UK, 2003); and to *Everest: Summit of Achievement* by Stephen Venables, Royal Geographic Society, Simon & Schuster, (USA, 2003).

“Each book is so good that I cannot separate them. Each contributes significantly to the story of climbing Everest with superb presentation in both verbal and visual aspects,” Lowe says.

The Banff Mountain Book Festival is the only festival of its kind in North America. The festival runs in conjunction with the Banff Mountain Film Festival and 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.

This year’s festival runs November 5 through November 7 at The Banff Centre. The entry deadline for the 2004 book competition is July 15.

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An electronic version of this media release and downloadable photos of festival speakers are available at [www.banffmountainfestivals.ca/media](http://www.banffmountainfestivals.ca/media)

***The 10th Annual Banff Mountain Book Festival***

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With assistance from: Alpine Club of Canada, The Banff Book & Art Den, The Mountaineers Books,  
The Government of Canada, and Cordillera Okanagan Wines

*Mountain Culture at The Banff Centre promotes understanding and appreciation of the world's mountain places  
by creating opportunities for people to share – and find inspiration in – mountain experiences, ideas, and visions.*