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SHAKESPEARE IN MONTANA WINS THE 2020 MONTANA BOOK AWARD

The 2020 Montana Book Award winner is ***Shakespeare in Montana: Big Sky Country's Love Affair with the World's Most Famous Writer*** by Gretchen E. Minton, published by the University of New Mexico Press. 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. Due to Covid 19, presentations and a reception for the winning authors will be hosted online this year by the Montana Library Association. Dates and times will be forthcoming.

Shakespeare in Montana: Big Sky Country's Love Affair with the World's Most Famous Writer traces more than two centuries of history and uncovers a vast array of different voices that capture the state of Montana's love affair with the world's most famous writer. From mountain men, pioneers, and itinerant acting companies in mining camps to women's clubs at the turn of the twentieth century and the contemporary popularity of Shakespeare in the Parks throughout Montana, the book chronicles the stories of residents who have been attracted to the words and works of Shakespeare. Minton explores this unique relationship found in the Treasure State and provides considerable insight into the myriad places and times in which Shakespeare's words have been heard and discussed. By revealing what Shakespeare has meant to the people of Montana, Minton offers us a better understanding of the state's citizens and history while providing a key perspective on Shakespeare's enduring global influence.

Three honor books were also chosen by the 2020 Montana Book Award Committee:

The Blaze by Chad Dundas, published by G.P. Putnam's Sons. Having lost much of his memory from a traumatic brain injury sustained in Iraq, army veteran Matthew Rose is called back to Montana after his father's death to settle his affairs, and hopefully to settle the past as well. When an event sparks a memory of an unsolved crime from long ago, a part of Matthew's past might lead to answers that connect two acts of arson, a series of long-unsolved mysteries, and a ruthless act of murder.

Life List by Marc Beaudin, published by Riverfeet Press. A kind of field guide in poetry, this collection pays tribute to the birds that have flown through Beaudin's years of watching and listening, through his "vain attempts to render in language the precarious circumstances of being alive." With a sharp critique of environmental, social and political issues, along with haunting ruminations on loss, love and the passing of time, these poems fill the skies with a feathered grace.

Regarding Willingness by Tom Harpole, published by Riverfeet Press. Tom "Harp" Harpole was a horse logger working from remote mountain camps and living in wall tents until an accident suggested a change of lifestyle. He took to his other avocation – writing. His willingness and perspective on dalliances with danger range from an N.F.L. record, to horse logging, to skydiving with Russian cosmonauts, to getting a black bear stoned, to his compassion as a volunteer EMT in rural Montana, to protesting Gorbachev in 1990, to driving ice roads above the Arctic circle, and more. This book is a collection of sixteen of his most popular stories.

The Montana Book Award was founded by the Friends of the Missoula Public Library in 2001 and winners are selected by a committee of individuals representing areas throughout Montana. Members of the 2020 Montana Book Award committee include Gloria Behem, Chester; Marje Doyle, Missoula; Amanda Allpress, Missoula; Della Dubbe, Helena, Hannah Mundt, Bozeman, Kim Siemsen, Glendive; Debbie Stewart, Great Falls; Starla Rice, Hot Springs; and Gavin Woltjer, Billings.