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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Bellingham/Whatcom County, WA, Dec. 4, 2018** – Whatcom READS – Whatcom County’s premier annual literary series – presents its 11th title, *The Big Burn: Teddy Roosevelt & the Fire that Saved America* by Timothy Egan. Though set in 1910, the story of the nation’s largest wildfire and the birth of the national conservation movement is a timely, provocative story sure to spur interesting county-wide “book club” discussions. Readers will also engage with free community events, including March 7 and 8, 2019, appearances by the author.

An award-winning author and journalist, Egan wrote the heart-racing story of the apocalyptic blaze that burned an area the size of Connecticut in a weekend. No living person had ever seen a fire with the ferocity, speed, and destructive power of the Big Burn of 1910 that blazed through Washington, Idaho and Montana. Equally dramatic is the larger story of President Teddy Roosevelt and his chief forester, Gifford Pinchot, and the creation myth of the U.S. Forest Service. Pioneering the notion of conservation, Roosevelt and Pinchot did nothing less than create the idea of public land as our national treasure, owned by and preserved for every citizen.

*The Big Burn* is a New York Times bestseller and winner of the Pacific Northwest Booksellers Association Award and the Washington State Book Award. It is available in book, eBook and audiobook formats at all Bellingham and Whatcom County public libraries and from Village Books; the independent bookstore donates 10 percent of *The Big Burn* sales to Whatcom READS.

**EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES**

Reading the book is just the beginning. Whatcom READS partners are hosting events and activities now through March 2019 to inspire community-wide conversations. Following the powerful themes of the 2019 book selection, upcoming events include book discussions, readings, art exhibits and presentations, culminating in a March 7-8 visit by the author. All Whatcom READS events and activities are free. No tickets are required, and seating is first-come, first-served. Details can be found at [whatcomreads.org](http://whatcomreads.org) as well as Whatcom READS' [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) pages.

**Currently scheduled events are:**

**The Era of Megafires:** This 60-minute multi-media presentation combines the research of Dr. Paul Hessburg (Pacific Northwest Research Station, U.S. Forest Service) with the visual storytelling of award-winning film company, North 40 Productions. Designed to engage a wide audience, the presented material comes in the form of fast-moving, short, topic-based talks interspersed with compelling video vignettes and animation, and features the work of wildfire photographer, John Marshall. The Era of Megafires will inform, engage and inspire audiences, as well as provide an effective educational tool for organizations who are working tirelessly to improve the wildfire situation.

Blaine Library, 610 3<sup>rd</sup> St., Blaine  
Saturday, Jan. 26, 1 p.m.–2:30 p.m.

Ferndale Library, 2125 Main St., Ferndale  
Saturday, Feb. 16, 2 p.m.–4 p.m.

**Wildfire and Resilience:** Local Bellingham author and poet, Leslie Wharton, shares her experience of wildfire and recovery. What happens after the TV reporters interview fire survivors in the few days after a fire? What does it take to rebuild a life, feel safe and find home again? Join Leslie, co-author of *Phoenix Rising: Stories of Remarkable Women Walking Through Fire*, as she celebrates her journey from fire to the calming waters of the Salish Sea.

Bellingham Central Library, 210 Central Ave., Bellingham  
Tuesday, Jan. 29, 6:30 p.m.–8:30 p.m.

Deming Library, 5044 Mount Baker Hwy., Deming  
Saturday, Feb. 23, 3 p.m.–4:30 p.m.

**From Hiking Club to the CCC:** Local author and historian, Janet Oakley, will talk about how the first hiking groups in the area and the Civilian Conservation Corps shaped the future of the Mount Baker Forest Lands.

Lynden Library, 216 4<sup>th</sup> St., Lynden  
Saturday, Jan. 26, 2 p.m.–3 p.m.

South Whatcom Library, 10 Barn View Court, Sudden Valley, Gate 2  
Saturday, Feb. 9, 1 p.m.–2 p.m.

**Whatcom Writes:** Local authors submitted their writing on the topic of “hindsight” for publication in the Whatcom Writes anthology. Writers will read from their winning selections.

Village Books in Fairhaven, 1200 11<sup>th</sup> St., Bellingham  
Sunday, Feb. 3, 2 p.m.-3:30 p.m.

Village Books in Lynden, 430 Front St., Lynden  
Sunday, Feb. 10, 2 p.m.-3:30 p.m.

**Escape the Flames--The Big Burn Escape Room:** Like the residents of Wallace, Idaho, during the 1910 fires, your aim is to get a ticket to ride on the last train out of town. This escape room will provide participants with the chance to solve multiple *Big Burn*-themed puzzles in order to locate a train ticket to “escape” the room. People will be allotted up to 30 minutes to find the ticket. Start times are 5 p.m., 6 p.m., and 7 p.m. on either Monday, Feb. 4 or Monday, Feb. 11. **Registration is required.** Contact the Help Desk at the Bellingham Public Library, 360.778.7323 to reserve a space.

Bellingham Central Library, 210 Central Ave., Bellingham  
Monday, Feb. 4 or Monday, Feb. 11, 5 p.m., 6 p.m. and 7 p.m.

**NookChat: Community Storytelling with Phil and Joanne Cloward:** Master Forester Phil Cloward will describe his long career as a smokejumper, logging engineer, and logging company owner. He and his wife Joanne now host tours at the Black Mountain Forestry Center’s historic Gerdrum House Museum. Join Phil and Joanne as we “Explore the Past; Enrich the Present” at this informal, interactive gathering sponsored by the Nooksack Valley Heritage Center committee.

Everson Library, 104 Kirsch Drive, Everson  
Sunday, Feb. 10, 3 p.m.-4:30 p.m.

**Forestry and Wildfire Panel:** Listen as Department of Natural Resources’ local foresters explain what they do in Whatcom County and how their work fits into the bigger picture of forest management throughout the state of Washington. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) protects our state’s heritage of natural resources by sustainably managing millions of acres of state lands in forests, under the sea and across agricultural plains. DNR also protects forestlands and communities against wildfire using wildland firefighting crews and aviation resources, collaborative forest health efforts and community preparedness assistance, manages the state’s most precious natural areas, administers state forest practices rules, monitors geologic hazards, and regulates the reclamation of surface mines.

Ferndale Library, 2125 Main St., Ferndale  
Saturday, Feb. 23, 2 p.m.-4 p.m.

**Local Author Lit Live! Reading:** Joseph King, *The Fellowship of Fire*. He wasn’t exactly playing with fire; he was conducting an experiment. With heart racing and nerves tingling, 6-year old Joe King stomped out his first “wildfire” in the spring of 1954. Hooked, Joe never looked back; he’s been fighting fires and teaching others how to manage fires ever since. *The Fellowship of Fire* is Joe’s account of his 45-year career chasing wildfires across America. Told from his experiences and perspective, it shares the stories of the brave men and women

in the wildfire community who have devoted careers and lives to this dangerous and critical work. Regional firefighters will attend as special guests for this engaging event.

Village Books in Fairhaven, 1200 11<sup>th</sup> St., Bellingham  
Saturday, Feb. 23, 4-5 p.m.

**Fighting a Wildfire: A Personal Experience:** Will Morgan shares riveting pictures and stories of his time fighting wildfires in Washington and California. Sleepless nights, searing heat, and billowing smoke made attempts to control these blazes a dangerous challenge. This program is presented in partnership with the Sumas Library Community Center.

Sumas Library, 461 2<sup>nd</sup> St., Sumas  
Wednesday, Feb. 27, 6:45 p.m.–7:45 p.m.

**Whatcom READS Art Challenge and Exhibit:** Allied Arts of Whatcom County hosts a community art exhibit inspired by the novel. Artists of all ages, mediums, and experience levels may participate. The opening reception is 6-9 p.m. Friday, March 1. The exhibit is on display at Allied Arts Gallery, 1418 Cornwall Ave., Bellingham, through March 30. Visit [alliedarts.org](http://alliedarts.org) for an application and more information.

**Triple Nickel:** This first all-black paratrooper unit's mission and service made quiet history and is all but forgotten. In a surprising and insightful presentation, Robert L. "Bob" Bartlett tells the tale of the "555," paratroopers who, despite being prevented from serving in Europe or realizing some of the same privileges and rights granted white soldiers at home, served with distinction when cross-trained to become "Smokejumpers." Trained by U.S. Forest Service Rangers, members of the 555 jumped on some 36 forest fires as first responders, including the 1945 Mt. Baker fire. In the process of helping to save our forest, they gained military fame as the first all-black "Airborne Infantry Firefighters."

Bellingham Central Library, 210 Central Ave., Bellingham  
Saturday, March 2, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Ferndale Library, 2125 Main St., Ferndale  
Saturday, March 2, 2 p.m.–3:30 p.m.

**Book Clubs:** Unless otherwise noted, these local book groups will discuss the Whatcom READS 2019 title, *The Big Burn: Teddy Roosevelt & the Fire that Saved America* by Timothy Egan. Everyone is welcome!

#### **Books and Bites**

Blaine Library, 610 3<sup>rd</sup> St., Blaine  
Friday, Dec. 21, 2018, 1 p.m.-2:30 p.m. Bring your lunch if you'd like.

#### **Books on Tap**

Led by Deming Library staff Erin Suda and Katrina Carabba. Read a title of your choice by Whatcom Reads author Timothy Egan.

North Fork Brewery, 6186 Mt. Baker Highway  
Tuesday, February 19, 7 p.m.-8:30 p.m.

#### **Ferndale Book Group**

Ferndale Library, 2125 Main St., Ferndale

Wednesday, February 20, 2:30 p.m.-4 p.m.

**Ferndale Books on Tap**

Downtime Taps, 1740 LaBounty Drive, Ferndale

Wednesday, February 20, 6:30 p.m.-8 p.m.

**Author Timothy Egan Visits:** The Whatcom READS 2019 series culminates with two presentations by author Timothy Egan. He will speak at 7 p.m. Thursday, March 7 at the Mount Baker Theatre, 104 N. Commercial St., Bellingham, and 8:30 a.m. Friday, March 8 at Mount Baker High School, 4936 Deming Road, Deming.

**About Whatcom READS:** Whatcom READS began in 2009 as an annual literary happening that encourages community conversations about literature and the joy of reading. It is organized by all public and academic libraries in Bellingham and Whatcom County and community partner, Village Books and Paper Dreams. Significant funding comes from Friends of the Bellingham Public Library and Whatcom County Library Foundation as well as support from other local businesses and organizations. For more information, including how Whatcom READS books are selected, visit [whatcomreads.org](http://whatcomreads.org).

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**Attachment:**



Author Timothy Egan. Photo by Lisa Howe Verhovek