Alaska Book Festival to celebrate Alaska history

For IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 29, 2009

History buffs and readers of all kinds will get a chance to hear and meet some of their favorite authors June 11-13 at the third-annual Alaska Book Festival in Fairbanks.

The theme is “Historically Alaska” and two dozen authors, including special guests Willie Hensley and Brian Garfield, will be featured at lectures, panels and readings. Most events this year will be at Pioneer Park Civic Center and all are free.

University of Alaska Fairbanks Summer Sessions Director Michelle Bartlett, who has organized the event the past three years with a committee of community and university representatives, describes it as “a celebration of the written word.” The celebration aims to engage readers, potential writers and the community in a variety of ways, including a boogie-woogie piano performance this year.

Sessions with authors will focus on Fairbanks history, Alaskan aviation, politics, statehood and children’s literature. Other events will include historical walking tours, outdoor bannock baking for children and parents and sessions on screenwriting, book making and self-publishing.

Most events are scheduled during the daytime June 12-13, but several evening lectures and events are also planned. A complete schedule is available at www.uaf.edu/bookfestival.

Hensley will talk about his new memoir at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, June 11, in the University of Alaska Fairbanks Davis Concert Hall. “Fifty Miles from Tomorrow: A Memoir of Alaska and The Real People” describes his family’s traditional Inupiaq life and his journey to activism. After attending school Outside, Hensley became active in the Native land claims movement and helped found the Alaska Federation of Natives. His numerous leadership roles have included 10 years in the Alaska Legislature, executive director of AFN and director and president of NANA Regional Corp.

Brian Garfield will talk about World War II in Alaska at 7 p.m. Saturday, June 13, in the Pioneer Park Civic Center Theatre. Garfield is well known in
Alaska for one of his earlier books, “The Thousand-Mile War: World War II in Alaska and the Aleutians,” a history of the only World War II campaign fought on North American soil. First published in 1969, the book was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in history.

Altogether, Garfield has written more than 70 books and is best known for his novels of suspense and the movies derived from them, including “Hopscotch,” “Relentless,” “Necessity,” and “Death Wish,” which became the basis for a series of Charles Bronson action movies. More than 20 million copies of his books have been published worldwide. Garfield also will talk about screenwriting from 10:30-11:30 a.m. Friday, June 12, in the Pioneer Park Theatre.

Boogie-woogie piano man “Johnny B.” Bushnell of Homer will perform at 8 p.m. Friday, June 12, in the Pioneer Park Theatre. Bushnell plays what he describes as a mix of blues, swing, Alaskan dreamscape and boogie-woogie.

Children’s events will include readings and presentations with children’s authors Tricia Brown, Deb Vanasse and Mary Shields and two sessions of bannock baking and outdoor safety for children ages 5 and older and their parents will begin at 10:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. June 13. Call 474-7021 to register for the cooking class as space is limited.


For more information, call Summer Sessions at 474-7021.

Contact: Michelle Bartlett, UAF Summer Sessions director, at 474-6624 until June 9 or Mary Calmes at 474-7021