

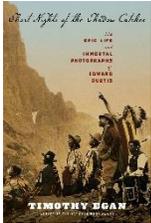
Opening Plenary

Timothy Egan

National Book Award Winner and *New York Times* Op-Ed Writer

Sunday, 5:45 p.m. – 6:45 p.m.

“Indiana Jones with a Camera: How Edward Curtis Tried to Make Native Americans Live Forever”



Edward Curtis was charismatic, handsome, a passionate mountaineer, and a famous portrait photographer, the Annie Leibovitz of his time. He moved in rarefied circles, a friend to presidents, vaudeville stars, leading thinkers. But when he was thirty-two years old, in 1900, he gave it all up to pursue his Great Idea: to capture on film the continent’s original inhabitants before the old ways disappeared.

Curtis spent the next three decades documenting the stories and rituals of more than eighty North American tribes. It took tremendous perseverance — ten years alone to persuade the Hopi to allow him to observe their Snake Dance ceremony. And the undertaking changed him profoundly, from detached observer to outraged advocate. Curtis would amass more than 40,000 photographs and 10,000 audio recordings, and he is credited with making the first narrative documentary film. In the process, the charming rogue with the grade school education created the most definitive archive of the American Indian.

Timothy Egan is an acclaimed writer and veteran chronicler of the West whose interests range wide across the American landscape and American history. He is a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter, a popular columnist, and a National Book Award-winning author.

His weekly online column for *The New York Times*, the popular "Opinionator," is consistently among the most read pieces on the NYT site. Before that, he worked as one of the newspaper's national correspondents, roaming the West and serving as its Pacific Northwest correspondent. In 2001, Egan was part of the Pulitzer Prize-winning team that wrote the series “How Race Is Lived in America.”

Egan is the author of several books, including *The Big Burn: Teddy Roosevelt and the Fire That Saved America*, a *New York Times* bestseller and winner of the 2009 Pacific Northwest Booksellers Award. *The Big Burn* was also the inspiration for a recent documentary also titled *The Big Burn* which aired on *The American Experience* (PBS) in 2014. Egan’s book *The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl*, a work Walter Cronkite called "can’t-put-it-down history," won the 2006 National Book Award for nonfiction. Egan is featured prominently in Ken Burns' acclaimed 2012 film, *The Dust Bowl*.

His most recent book, a "riveting biography" (*Boston Globe*) of the famous photographer of American Indians, *Short Nights of the Shadow Catcher: The Epic Life and Immortal Photographs*

of *Edward S. Curtis*, was named one of the best books of the year by *Publishers Weekly* and was awarded the 2013 Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Nonfiction. *The Wall Street Journal* said, "Egan fills his chronicle with bright turns of phrase and radiant descriptions, making both places and people come alive . . . A sweeping tale about two vanishing ways of life."

This third-generation Westerner is also the author of *The Good Rain: Across Time and Terrain in the Pacific Northwest*, a text consistently voted one of the essential books about the region. It won the Pacific Northwest Booksellers Association Award. "When it comes to this spectacularly mildewed corner of the American linoleum, Timothy Egan gets it right," commented Tom Robbins.

Egan also wrote *Lasso the Wind: Away to the New West*, a *New York Times* Notable Book of the Year which won the Mountains and Plains Book Seller's Association Award, and *Breaking Blue*, a true crime account of the nation's longest running murder investigation. On this latter book, Tony Hillerman said, "I wish I had written it. No one who enjoys mystery can fail to savor this study of a classic case of detection." Egan has also penned a novel, *The Winemaker's Daughter*, a story of wine, love, fire and betrayal, and has been a regular contributor to BBC Radio with his series of vignettes on American life.

Tim Egan is working on a new book titled *The Immortal Irishman: Thomas Francis Meagher and the Invention of Irish America* (Houghton Mifflin, March 2016). It will be about Thomas Francis Meagher, a 19th-century Irish rebel who was banished to Tasmania by the English, escaped to America, and fought for the Union in the American Civil War as general of the Irish Brigade.