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## News release

### **MEDIA ADVISORY**

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CONTACT: Barbara Brannon, Texas Tech University Press, 806.742.2982

### **Journalist explores truths and myths behind one of Native America's most disturbing deaths**

Two weeks after returning from a stint as news correspondent in Asia, Nebraska native Stew Magnuson picked up an Omaha newspaper and read about a race riot in the remote northwest corner of the state. Two Oglalas had been murdered and found in a ditch near the border town of Whiteclay. A subsequent protest demonstration turned ugly, and Magnuson was assigned to report on aftermath of the tragedy and the ongoing racial strife behind it.

That experience fueled his resolve to write the full story of this troubled region. In *The Death of Raymond Yellow Thunder and Other True Stories from the Nebraska-Pine Ridge Border Towns* (forthcoming from Texas Tech University Press, Sept. 2008; a 2008 Nebraska Book Festival selection) Magnuson tells the powerful history of two neighboring American peoples who struggle to coexist—at times friends, at times bitter enemies.

Examining Yellow Thunder's death at the hands of four white men in 1972, Magnuson looks deep into the past that gave rise to the tragedy, as well as the questions that persist for the future of these communities. He situates long-ranging repercussions within 130 years of epic context, covering the region's history from chiefs Red Cloud and Crazy Horse in the 1800s to American Indian Movement leaders Russell Means and Dennis Banks in the 1970s.

Other figures in the book are no less fascinating: small-town lawyer Mike Smith, who hated nothing more than to lose a case; Syrian trader Sam Hinn, who came to the stark land with nothing and made a small fortune selling alcohol to the reservation; Reva Evans, whose column ran in the *Gordon Journal* for more than 30 years; Bob Yellow Bird, the activist who fought law enforcement and his own demons for a decade. And the quiet ranch hand, Raymond Yellow Thunder, who found himself stripped half naked, tossed into a car trunk, and pushed into the middle of an American Legion Hall dance.

Magnuson's commitment to investigating the truth behind Yellow Thunder's mysterious death days later led him to expend extraordinary efforts in firsthand research. He conducted more than 70 interviews and was the first journalist to interview

with Les Hare, ringleader of the crime against Raymond Yellow Thunder 29 years earlier. To raise money for travel and research, Magnuson worked in an Alaska salmon-canning factory for seven consecutive weeks without a day off.

Encounters with ingrained misunderstanding, Magnuson writes, “gave me a renewed sense of purpose. . . . I just wanted to write something people north and south of the border would read.”

A native of Omaha and a graduate of the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, **Stew Magnuson** is a Washington, D.C.–based journalist and former foreign correspondent who has filed stories from Mali, Japan, Cambodia, Burma, Laos, Thailand and Indonesia. His 2005 novel *Song of Sarin* is based on his experiences as a resident of Tokyo on March 20, 1995, when the Aum Shinrikyo cult released nerve gas in the city's subway system. Magnuson lives in Arlington, Virginia.

The author is available for interviews and book signings; contact him at [stewmag@yahoo.com](mailto:stewmag@yahoo.com) or visit [www.stewmagnuson.com](http://www.stewmagnuson.com). Publicity materials, including hi-res cover image and author headshot, are available at [www.ttup.ttu.edu/BookPages/9780896726345.html](http://www.ttup.ttu.edu/BookPages/9780896726345.html)

For more information or a review copy of the book, contact Barbara Brannon, marketing manager, Texas Tech University Press, (806) 742-2982 or via e-mail at [barbara.brannon@ttu.edu](mailto:barbara.brannon@ttu.edu).