

Professor reels in national award for book on race

by **David Williams - Monday, March 17, 2008**

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Fishing trips offer an angler the chance to bask in nature's beauty, lower one's stress level — and write an award-winning book.

Such was the case with assistant professor of English Robert Hayashi, whose travels and fly fishing expeditions throughout Idaho frame the contents of "Haunted by Waters: A Journey through Race and Place in the American West."

"It's a combination of creative nonfiction and academic writing in which I discuss the connection of ideas that were influential in shaping the Western environment and ideas about racial identity," Hayashi said.

"Haunted Waters," published by the University of Iowa Press, won the 2008 National Council on Public History Book Award. The honor is awarded annually to one book that uses research, analysis and presentation to address public history as it relates to contemporary life.

Hayashi has taught Asian American literature, creative writing, cultural studies and multiethnic literature at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh since 2002. It took him about eight years to write the book.

"The primary motivation was that my degree is in American studies, and I really had a desire to have this story of Asian Americans included in the history of the West," said Hayashi, who is Japanese American. "The book's primary focus is on Japanese Americans, but it also contains Mormons, Native Americans, Chinese and Japanese."

"Haunted Waters" is available at University Books & More in Reeve Memorial Union, 748 Algoma Blvd., as well as at most major online book vendors.

While "Haunted Waters" is Hayashi's first book, an article he wrote about Japanese Americans' internment during World War II was published in the fall 2003 issue of *The Public Historian*, a University of California publication. The article, "Transfigured Patterns: Contesting Memories at the Manzanar National Historic Site," won the first William C. Everhart Award.

Hayashi will be honored at the National Council on Public History awards luncheon April 11 in Louisville, Ky. The book award consists of a \$1,000 cash prize and a framed certificate.

"To have recognition from an organization like the National Council on Public History is validating and incredibly satisfying," Hayashi said.

Those at the National Council on Public History aren't the only ones who found "Haunted Waters" to be a good catch: The book also has been nominated for the Orion Book Award.

Hayashi already has plans to cast his line back into literary waters, though the topic of his next project won't focus on fishing.

"I am working on a book right now about Pittsburg, Pa., my hometown. It will be a discussion of the connection between ethnicity and sports in the history of that region," Hayashi said.