



Courtesy photo

Author Linda Fifer holds her novel "The Road Between Two Skies"

## Author credits SHS teachers writing achievements

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HAMILTON, Mont. — The inspiration to write a book can be credited to two Sidney High School teachers.

Sidney High School alumna Linda Fifer recently published her first novel, "The Road Between Two Skies." She said two of her teachers helped her appreciate language and writing.

Fifer was 10 years old when her dad moved his family to Sidney in order to begin a new job as a writer for Coin World magazine by Amos Press. After graduating from Sidney High School in 1970, she went to Kent State University where she graduated with a BS in speech and hearing therapy, immediately following that with a MA in speech pathology. Craving adventure, she moved to Montana after college.

"The Road Between Two Skies" is part suspense, part mystery, part romance. It follows the story of Brenness

Tripham in her recovery from memory loss after being kidnapped. The novel's realistic details are based on Fifer's 45 years of experience working with adults recovering from stroke and head injuries. She also relied on her husband, a former law enforcement officer, to help keep the crime scene and court case aspects to her story accurate.

As a young girl, Fifer didn't aspire to become a writer, even though she grew up in a creative family. She credits two of her Sidney High School English teachers for helping her to have a greater appreciation for language as well as her ability to craft better sentences. Don Stephan and the late Shearl Edler were her junior and senior English teachers. They taught her to analyze and problem solve while writing, thus preparing her for college and beyond.

Fifer has fond memories of Sidney. She recalls a vibrant downtown where

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people knew each other, supporting and caring for one another. That feel of community, sense of friendship and the impact of friendship on people's lives is the ambiance she was aiming for in her story.

In 2009 Fifer wrote the sentence "I have two names: Brenness and Maggie." This began a story she couldn't stop writing. About two-thirds of the way through her first draft, Fifer's manuscript was misplaced, forcing her to start over. Since Fifer had originally written it by hand, she used this rewriting opportunity to reorganize the story and improve the character development. When she later found the missing first draft she was able to consolidate both drafts into a better and more cohesive story.

Between writing and editing, Fifer prefers the editing portion of crafting a book. "The first time I write, I really don't like the book. But then I start self-editing and that problem solving is what I really enjoy. I am fascinated by the crafting of a story," she said. "Some people write a story and what

is important is the story itself. I write about the characters and how they work through the story and the situations they are in. I like a lot of depth in a story. I have to rewrite and rewrite to be sure that the reader can feel that depth."

Currently Fifer is working on the edits of her second book: "Discovering the Grain," about a woman recovering from loss while learning that independence doesn't mean not accepting help. Fifer hopes to have it published within a year, but is concerned that the expense and difficulty of self-publication may affect her timeline. She likes working with her publisher, Atmosphere Press, because they have staff to help with editing and promotion, as well as cover art.

The first time Fifer held her book she thought, "Is this really the same thing I hand wrote for 15 years? I'm still kind of pinching myself and wondering 'is this really happening?'" She recalls looking at the reviews on goodreads.com and seeing that her novel was in the top 1.2 million and thought, "I am on the best seller list!"

Fifer shares her wisdom for students living in Sidney: "It is so hard

when one lives in a small town to feel connected with a literary world. If you want to connect, read books as much as you can, trying different authors and genres, learn style and character development. Don't limit yourself in what you read. Read the paper, magazines, books, online. Then take some time to write bad poetry and bad songs. Take time to look and find what you like. Take time to soak up your environment and put it on paper. Don't be afraid to revise. Revision is one of the best gifts you can give your writing. Above all, the hardest thing to do is to believe in yourself. One reason it took so long for me to publish is that I didn't believe in myself. Don't rely on others, believe you are capable. Sometimes that means taking a risk you don't feel comfortable with."

"The Road Between Two Skies" can be purchased on Amazon, Atmosphere Press, Barnes and Noble, or an autographed copy can be purchased on Fifer's website. The Amos Memorial Public Library also has a lending copy. Readers are encouraged to leave a review on goodreads.com or the author's website [lsfifer-author.com](http://lsfifer-author.com).