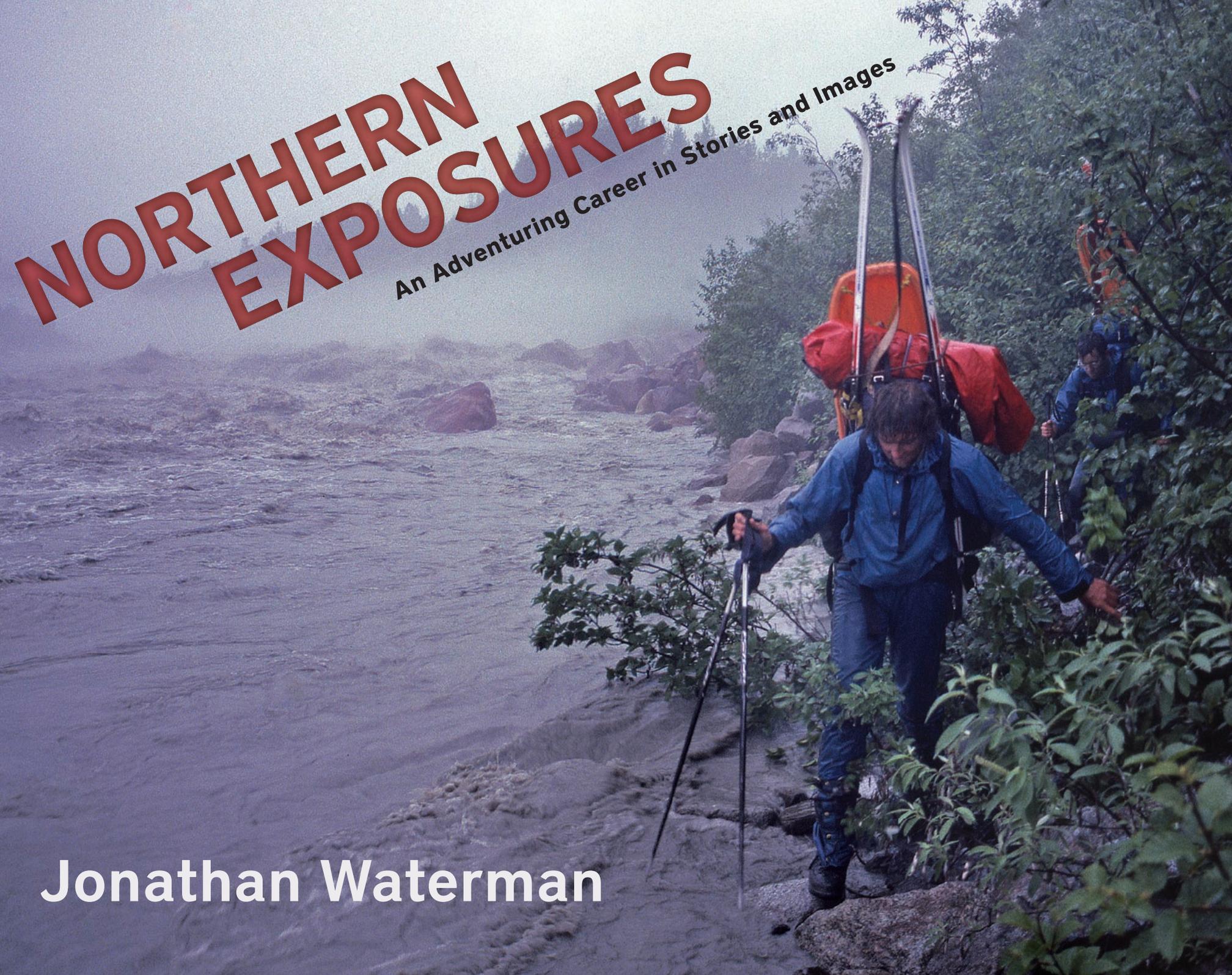


NORTHERN EXPOSURES

An Adventuring Career in Stories and Images

Jonathan Waterman

A photograph of a hiker in a blue jacket and dark pants, carrying a large red backpack and skis, ascending a rocky trail. The hiker is using a trekking pole and is surrounded by green foliage. In the background, another hiker is visible on the trail. To the left, a wide, shallow river flows through a rocky landscape under an overcast sky.







Storm clearing
above Mount
Foraker, from
15,500-foot camp
on Denali.

Sheep's Clothing

As a teenager growing up in a compromised suburban Boston ecosystem, I was inspired by both adventure books and conservation titles like Never Cry Wolf, Desert Solitaire, and Silent Spring. Consequently, as I got to know Alaska, I never took a trip without considering how each region and its wildlife were protected. So even while writing simple climbing or adventure stories, I tried to serve as a voice for the otherwise defenseless wild places of the North.

"Sheep's Clothing" was my first ecological, nonadventure story. I took on the daunting task of profiling a wolf hunter because I was outraged that Alaskans used (and continue to use) airplanes to hunt wolves. My first encounter with a family of wild wolves alongside an arctic river in 1983 had shown—as the mother swam its pups across the river and away from intruders at the den—the species' intelligence and family compassion. How could men chase them with airplanes and gun them down?

Even if editors shared my outrage, I couldn't find a magazine that would assign me the story. So I did it on speculation, knowing that the newsworthiness of the controversial aerial wolf-hunting practices in the early 1990s would eventually allow me to place the story. It wasn't hard to find a cooperative subject, because most frontier Alaskans believed that they had a right to their way of life, regardless of how hunters "Outside" treated animals.

There was no reason to be clandestine about my mission. I told my subject, Chuck McMahan, the truth: I wanted to understand his point of view, and if he showed me how he hunted wolves I would try and publish it in a magazine. I spent an equal amount of time in the city of Anchorage, attending wolf meetings and profiling the wildlife biologist Vic Van Vallenbergh. The editors cut most of his story from my final draft, but even if he is only mentioned briefly in this final version, I remain indebted to Vic for my



Vic Van Vallenberghe—one of many urban biologists who speak out against pioneer hunting gone amuck—leaving his downtown Anchorage office.

education in game management and Alaska politics. I also sent Chuck the final draft, and he replied with an angry letter suggesting that I misrepresented him, but he didn't suggest any corrections. I wrote the story while studying his portraits on my light table. Since larger circulation magazines rarely publish their writers' photographs, this story appeared with a gratuitous stock-agency photograph of a wolf in the May 1993 Outside magazine.

CHUCK MCMAHAN is ready to fly. He yanks on some Sorel boots, pulls the flaps of an otter-skin cap down over his ears, and steps outside. It's a calm, sunny, five-below day, perfect for hunting wolves.

He walks past his porch, where chestnut and gray wolf pelts dangle above. While McMahan is one of hundreds of citizen wolf hunters in Alaska, his pelts have been culled from some seven thousand wild wolves. Their noses are nailed to the top railing, and their bushy tails sweep the driveway. Both specimens of *Canis lupus* are several days dead and their dried



Rain of Avalanches: Finding Religion on Mount St. Elias

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Mount St. Elias was first climbed by the Italian Duke of Abruzzi in 1898, and this rich historical backstory made the expedition a perfect book project. In 1995, on the heels of a divorce that prompted a restorative expedition with plenty of time to rechart my future, I procured an advance royalty from the New York City publisher Henry Holt and, with my sailing partners, split the cost of a thirty-foot sailboat that carried us from Seattle twelve hundred miles north to Mount St. Elias. The first three weeks onboard in tight quarters—in hazardous tidal waters, then out in the open ocean—proved an expedition unto itself. But that was only the prelude to an uncharted and dangerous climb detailed in this story.

My blundering efforts at learning to sail or even pilot an awkward, large-keel-hulled boat

haunted me until I had the opportunity to sail alone from Prince Rupert to Seattle at the end of the expedition. Those times I put up the sail and found a sense of mastery under the power of the wind that set off a profound longing inside of me and in large part inspired me to rig a kayak to sail much of the Northwest Passage two years later (see Chapter One). The bug still hasn't left me: I often imagine sailing around the world, thanks to this 1995 climbing and sailing trip.

My climbing partner, Jeff Hollenbaugh, embodied the ideal expedition personality. Until the avalanches began, he was unflappable, enthusiastic, and the most easygoing soul you could wish for in the confines of a tiny bivouac tent. He chafed—as everyone does—while being repeatedly interviewed on my video camera, and by the end of the expedition, he wanted nothing to do with the long sail home, but who could blame him? The expedition was a glorious failure, almost doomed from the beginning

Sunset on the northern façade of Mount St. Elias, 18,008 feet, from the Quintino Sella Glacier.



Jeff Hollenbaugh
enjoying playful
Dall's porpoises,
showing us the route
twelve hundred miles
north from Seattle,
Washington, to Icy
Bay, Alaska.

for its audacity, and I never bothered making a film. The Most Hostile Mountain: Re-creating the Duke of Abruzzi's Expedition on Mount St. Elias was published in 1997—oddly, it is the only book of mine that went out of print, but it still earns the most word-of-mouth raves. Climbing magazine asked me to write the following story for their September 2000 "Epics" issue.

IN LATE APRIL 1995, Jeff Hollenbaugh and I began donkeying hundred-pound packs toward the tallest escarpment in North America. We first saw Mount St. Elias as the ultimate seismic tsunami: a product of battered continental plates, thrusting ancient earth and ice three and a half miles above the Gulf of Alaska. Just looking up at the cloud-hung mountain as we walked—knowing of the river crossings, mosquitoes, and blisters—hurt.

For training, we'd spent the last month sailing a small boat twelve hundred miles from Seattle, drinking beer, and fishing in the cold Pacific. Although neither of us were complete

strangers to the sort of labors that lay in front of us—18,008 feet of vertical gain through fifty miles of brown bear habitat and slushy glaciers—it did take several days of walking to get our land legs back.

Since Plan A—an unclimbed yet safe Southwest Spur—was blocked by impassible icefalls, we reluctantly switched to the South Face. This steep, two-and-a-half-mile-high, five-mile-wide concavity is overhung with hanging glaciers. Add to this the region's prodigious snowfalls (along with periodic earthquakes), which have a tendency to loosen these hanging edifices of ice and trigger cataclysmic avalanches. A place, in short, where atheists would be forced to review their convictions.

For several days now, as we plodded across the Malaspina Glacier and onto the Libbey Glacier, the roar of avalanches rose from the distant face like thunder. We reassured ourselves that our route was merely getting cleaned off. Therefore, we reasoned, by moving alpine-style quick, as the Nietzschean climbers of our fantasies, we could beat the next cycle of avalanches. Up there, we equivocated, we would also



Beneath the sea
of clouds, we were
surrounded by an
oceanic glacier
system: the Wrangell
St. Elias Range is the
largest nonpolar ice
field in the world.





An iceberg drifts west toward Alaska, a mile off the Canadian shore in the Arctic Ocean, as the midnight sun rambles along the northern horizon.



One of many hungry
"sea bears" waiting
for the ice to freeze to
facilitate seal hunting
on Hudson Bay.

Northern Exposures

An Adventuring Career in Stories and Images

By Jonathan Waterman

The perfect book for active, aspiring, or just armchair adventurers

North of the fifty-second parallel, the sun shines for less than eight hours in the winter, and towering mountains are the only skyscrapers. Pristine waters serve caribou, moose, and bears in an unbroken landscape. At any given moment in this spectacular scenery, there's a good chance that Jonathan Waterman is present, trekking across the land. A masterful adventurer, Waterman has spent decades exploring the greatest depths of our beautiful spaces. The essays and photographs collected in *Northern Exposures* are a product of this passion for exploration and offer an unparalleled view into adventuring in the north and beyond.

Northern Exposures collects twenty-three stories from Waterman's thirty-year career, from ducking avalanches near the Gulf of Alaska, to searching for the most pristine tundra on the continent, and from writing haiku on Denali in the depth of winter, to following a controversial wolf hunter. Ninety-six spectacular photographs taken by Waterman during his expeditions detailed in the essays lend a broader context and allow readers to fully understand his heartfelt argument for protecting these places.

Jonathan Waterman is an award-winning author, photographer, and filmmaker whose books include *The Colorado River: Flowing through Conflict* and *Running Dry: A Journey from Source to Sea Down the Colorado River* and whose films include *Surviving Denali* and *ANWR Trek*.

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