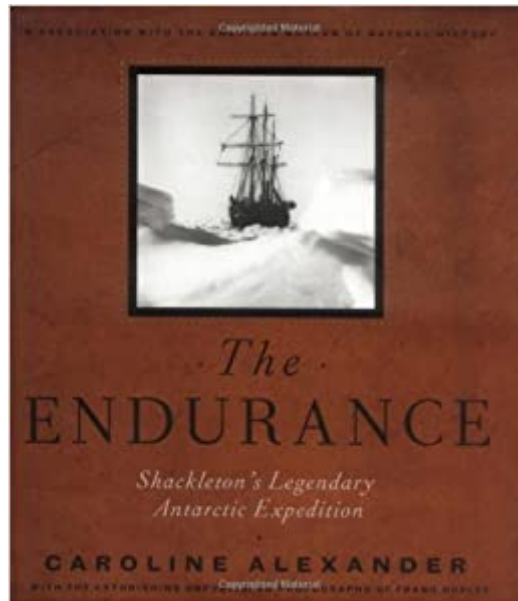




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# The Endurance: Shackleton's Legendary Antarctic Expedition



## Synopsis

In August 1914, days before the outbreak of the First World War, the renowned explorer Ernest Shackleton and a crew of twenty-seven set sail for the South Atlantic in pursuit of the last unclaimed prize in the history of exploration: the first crossing on foot of the Antarctic continent. Weaving a treacherous path through the freezing Weddell Sea, they had come within eighty-five miles of their destination when their ship, *Endurance*, was trapped fast in the ice pack. Soon the ship was crushed like matchwood, leaving the crew stranded on the floes. Their ordeal would last for twenty months, and they would make two near-fatal attempts to escape by open boat before their final rescue. Drawing upon previously unavailable sources, Caroline Alexander gives us a riveting account of Shackleton's expedition--one of history's greatest epics of survival. And she presents the astonishing work of Frank Hurley, the Australian photographer whose visual record of the adventure has never before been published comprehensively. Together, text and image re-create the terrible beauty of Antarctica, the awful destruction of the ship, and the crew's heroic daily struggle to stay alive, a miracle achieved largely through Shackleton's inspiring leadership. The survival of Hurley's remarkable images is scarcely less miraculous: The original glass plate negatives, from which most of the book's illustrations are superbly reproduced, were stored in hermetically sealed cannisters that survived months on the ice floes, a week in an open boat on the polar seas, and several more months buried in the snows of a rocky outcrop called Elephant Island. Finally Hurley was forced to abandon his professional equipment; he captured some of the most unforgettable images of the struggle with a pocket camera and three rolls of Kodak film. Published in conjunction with the American Museum of Natural History's landmark exhibition on Shackleton's journey, *The Endurance* thrillingly recounts one of the last great adventures in the Heroic Age of exploration--perhaps the greatest of them all.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Melding superb research and the extraordinary expedition photography of Frank Hurley, *The Endurance* by Caroline Alexander is a stunning work of history, adventure, and art which chronicles "one of the greatest epics of survival in the annals of exploration." Setting sail as World War I broke out in Europe, the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition, led by renowned polar explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton, hoped to become the first to cross the Antarctic continent. But their ship, *Endurance*, was trapped in the drifting pack ice, eventually to splinter, leaving the expedition stranded on floes--a situation that seemed "not merely desperate but impossible." Most skillfully Alexander constructs the expedition's character through its personalities--the cast of veteran explorers, scientists, and crew--with aid from many previously unavailable journals and documents. We learn, for instance, that carpenter and shipwright Henry McNish, or "Chippy," was "neither sweet-tempered nor tolerant," and that Mrs. Chippy, his cat, was "full of character." Such firsthand descriptions, paired with 170 of Frank Hurley's intimate photographs, which are comprehensively assembled here for the first time, penetrate the hulls of the *Endurance* and these tough men. The account successfully reveals the seldom-seen domestic world of expedition life--the singsongs, feasts, lectures, camaraderie--so that when the hardships set in, we know these people beyond the stereotypical guise of mere explorers and long for their safety. Alexander reveals Shackleton as an inspiring optimist, "a leader who put his men first." Throughout the grueling ordeal, Shackleton and his men show what endurance and greatness are all about. *The Endurance* is a most intimate portrait of an expedition and of survival. Readers will possess a newfound respect for these daring souls, know better their unthinkable toil and half-forgotten realm of glory. --Byron Ricks

The unparalleled adventure and ordeal of Sir Ernest Shackleton and his crew, stranded on the Antarctic ice for 20 months beginning January 20, 1915, then forced to row a 22-foot boat 850 miles across storm-ravaged seas, has inspired at least three marvelous books: Shackleton's own memoir, *South*; Alfred Lansing's bestselling *Endurance*; and this stirring account by Alexander (*The Way to Xanadu*). In 1914, Shackleton sailed to Antarctica with 27 men in hopes of being the first human to transverse the continent. But his ship, the *Endurance*, was trapped, then crushed, by ice in the Weddell Sea, propelling the party into a nightmare of cold and near starvation. Alexander, relying

extensively on journals by crew members, some never published, as well as on myriad other sources, delivers a spellbinding story of human courage (and occasional venality) in the face of daunting odds. She succinctly and boldly captures the character of the men and of the terrible land- and seascape they crossed toward salvation. What makes this book especially exciting, however, are the 170 previously unpublished photos by the expedition's photographer, Frank Hurley: stark, artfully composed tributes to the savage beauty of the ice and to the fortitude of the men and their dogs. Not one of the men died during their sojourn in a freezing hell; as Alexander makes clear in her gripping, emotionally resonant book, this incredible fact bears witness not only to Shackleton's leadership but to the strength of the human spirit. Agent, Anthony Sheil. Author tour. (Nov.) FYI: The *Endurance* is being published in association with the American Museum of Natural History, which in March 1999 will open an exhibit, curated by Alexander, chronicling Shackleton's voyage. A feature-length IMAX film on the subject will be released then, as well. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Before I read Caroline Alexander's gripping story of Ernest Shackleton's Antarctic expedition, I thought the greatest story about survival at sea was Nordhoff and Hall's *Men Against the Sea*, the story of Lieutenant William Bligh and the eighteen men set adrift in an open boat in 1789 by the HMS *Bounty* mutineers. But compared to the *Bounty* crew, the *Endurance*'s men had an incredibly more difficult and dangerous experience, as the author vividly describes. In addition to the text, crewman Frank Hurley's remarkable photography really brings the story to life. Note: I referred to the *Bounty* mutiny in my review. Caroline Alexander, the author of *The Endurance*, also wrote *The Bounty: The True Story of the Mutiny on the Bounty*, a book I've also read and can highly recommend.

This is an excellent photo and text over-view of the *Endurance* journey and the associated drama that followed its sinking. The photos are the key to this version of the story, giving something to the epic that words alone cannot give. I have long been fascinated by the *Endurance* expedition and this book is a "must have" to complete any collection of, or visit to, this story. The fusion of multiple versions of the story gathered from many different persons and the compilation of various types of data and historic sources also make this book a unique and special read. Though space and publishing would not allow inclusion of all available photos, one flaw might be that the author was not able to include more photos. I found this to be a great addition to a Shackleton/*Endurance* collection.

In the quest to cross the Antarctic Continent in 1914, brave-hearted soul Captain Ernest Shackleton and his twenty-seven man crew set sail on a perilous, nearly deadly journey. Less than 100 miles from their destination the "Endurance" became hopelessly trapped in an ice floe; slowly breaking apart. Their ordeal of living on this drifting berg for months, only to be stranded on a solid piece of land later for nearly two years is mind-boggling. The personal accounts of the crew members daily treacherous turmoils, coupled with an undefeatable and inspired leader (Shackleton) is devastating. Photographer Frank Hurley supplied some of the most breathtaking and dynamic pictures of the saga of the trip, one can only become overwhelmed with the enormity of the dilemma. It is simply too real and too heartbreaking. This beautifully crafted "coffee table" book is one of many released regarding the extraordinary plight of this team against nature. Although author Caroline Alexander borrows heavily from previous accounts and repeats some of the adventures from her earlier "Mrs. Chippy's Last Expedition", "Endurance" is the classic adventure tale of the last Century. A wonderful collaboration of writer/photographer, this makes a great gift. A 'beyond Hollywood' story that many have never heard, much less seen in this manner makes it extraordinary!

Shackleton and his men are one of my favorite TRUE stories of bravery and endurance. First, it was fortunate that the photographer was allowed to preserve some of his plates of the ship on the ice. Second, I read recently that within this last decade some people replicated the search party going to find the Russian fishing camp to get help for the rest of the men. These recent heroes were outfitted in the garb of skiers today with snowshoes and the best in warm clothing and, as I recall, Shackleton's men made it faster, because it was a matter of life or death. I many have heard it incorrectly, but I don't think so. It makes a good story.

The Endurance is simply excellently told, and with captivating photography. I was stunned the first time I read it ... and, it has been a re-read every year, twice a year (at least once per hot summer and every cold January) since that first page turner. What a company of men, led by a resolute and ultimately fair individual, can do is astonishing ... and inspires hope (and humility). You will wonder at the predicament and cringe at the odds ... and then marvel at what ... and how ... they overcome them. Then, suffer right along with those left on the island ... The book chronicles the 'refuse to quit on even one man' efforts of Shackleton, who struggled against unimaginable hardships in the most inhospitable place on earth, in an effort to deliver His men to safety ... from what must surely be an unavoidable fate. The journey will astound you ... enthrall you ... have you re-reading pages to try to

appreciate the magnitude of the circumstance ... and then have you shaking your head in awe. These men WERE made of sterner stuff. Shackleton was not a perfect man, but ... a perfect hero for that very reason. Our world could use more like him. I encourage you to try this book ... it will change your outlook ... on many things. Q.

Great book. Just as they described it. You get the real look at an extreme adventure that turned into a battle for survival.

This book will satisfy any desire to escape from the mundane existence we all endure. You get to journey with them, and the story will captivate you. I only wish there was an index, as all through the book I had to constantly thumb through previous pages to figure out who was who. There never is a list of who the crew is and who does what. This aspect has to be pieced together. The only shortcoming. Don't let that deter you. The photographs alone are worth the price, and the first and the final photograph (the same one) is quite remarkable for the insight the author provides. To get to know these men and their dogs is quite satisfying.

The most extraordinary adventure ever, brilliantly documented and described by the author. The large-format reveals the true beauty of the original photographs by Frank Hurley. And nobody died!

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