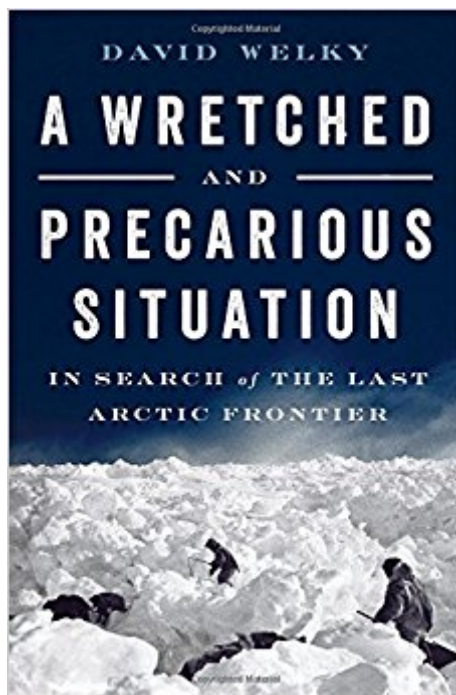




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A Wretched And Precarious Situation: In Search Of The Last Arctic Frontier



Synopsis

A Kirkus Reviews Best Nonfiction Book of 2016 A remarkable true story of adventure, betrayal, and survival set in one of the world's most inhospitable places. In 1906, from atop a snow-swept hill in the ice fields northwest of Greenland, hundreds of miles from another human being, Commander Robert E. Peary spotted a line of mysterious peaks looming in the distance. He called this unexplored realm "Crocker Land." Scientists and explorers agreed that the world-famous explorer had discovered a new continent rising from the frozen Arctic Ocean. Several years later, two of Peary's disciples, George Borup and Donald MacMillan, assembled a team of amateur adventurers to investigate Crocker Land. Before them lay a chance at the kind of lasting fame enjoyed by Magellan, Columbus, and Captain Cook. While filling in the last blank space on the globe, they might find new species of plants or animals, or even men; in the era of Jules Verne and H. G. Wells, anything seemed possible. Renowned scientific institutions, and even former president Theodore Roosevelt, rushed to endorse the expedition. What followed was a sequence of events that none of the explorers could have imagined. Trapped in a true-life adventure story, the men endured howling blizzards, unearthly cold, food shortages, isolation, a fatal boating accident, a drunken sea captain, disease, dissension, and a horrific crime. But the team pushed on through every obstacle, driven forward by the mystery of Crocker Land and faint hopes that they someday would make it home. Populated with a cast of memorable characters, and based on years of research in previously untapped sources, *A Wretched and Precarious Situation* is a harrowing Arctic narrative unlike any other. 16 pages of illustrations

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“What a book!....Excellent writing that combines some of the serious novelist’s techniques with information that can only come from hundreds of hours with long-forgotten diaries, letters and newspaper accounts....Comparable but better-known authors in the genre include David McCullough, John Barry and Timothy Egan.” - Bill Streever, Dallas Morning News
Polar historians will be grateful to have the Crocker Land expedition properly documented.” - New York Times Book Review
“David Welky reveals in this engrossing account....the classic litany of illness, privation and howling blizzards, [and] a singularly bizarre finding about [polar explorer Robert] Peary’s original sighting.” - Nature
Welky’s fast-moving, evocative narrative paints a vivid portrait of the men who, along with their Inuit companions, risked their lives for “dreams of lost continents awaiting discovery.” - The Explorers Journal
“A penetrating study of human character in a challenging environment....His seamless narrative, chilling at times and always thought-provoking, transports the reader to a time when the Arctic was virtually as harsh and inaccessible a place as the Moon or Mars.” - Natural History
“Drawing on extensive expedition diaries....This is a classic explorer’s narrative, pitting ambition against the limits of endurance.” - Publishers Weekly (starred review)
“Making magnificent use of documents and recreating the years-long Arctic sojourn with the drama and immediacy of a tension-filled adventure novel, [Welky] conjures a romantic quest emblematic of the rugged manliness of the time.” - Kirkus Reviews (starred review)
“Welky is a superb writer, and he mines the interpersonal relationships of the expedition’s participants – the loyalties, the friendships grown or torn asunder, the cultural insensitivities – as effectively as he describes the travel, the exploration into unknown territory, and the constant flirtation with death at the hands of the elements.” - The Arctic Book Review
“Unravels the strange story of one of the world’s greatest discoveries that never was.” - Simon Worrall, National Geographic

David Welky is the author of *The Thousand-Year Flood: The Ohio-Mississippi Disaster of 1937*, *The Moguls and the Dictators: Hollywood and the Coming of World War II*, and other books. He is a professor of history at the University of Central Arkansas.

This book has the two things a great non-fic has to have--a good story I want to hear, and one that’s well-written. I so appreciate the writing ability of this author. To handle so deftly the volume of detail in this book was no easy task. In lesser hands it would have bogged down. Not only did I learn a great deal about Arctic explorations and explorers (with lots of great info on those who came

before), but also about the social setting of these amazing men (and women too once you get into the cold--much appreciated). And thank you to the publisher for including so many great photos. When one gets to know Borup and Mac and the others so intimately, it's nice to see them in clear photos too. I loved it!

Completely absorbing and compelling. The writing brings the details to life and holds you on the edge of your seat with suspense even when you know (or could easily find out from a map or an internet search) how it turns out. The narrative takes you along on their journey and won't let you go--this book offers a great escape from the daily grind of postmodern life with digital distraction-- a thrilling read.

This book is an incredibly well researched page turner. It is a great example of epic historical literature in the vein of *The Perfect Storm* or *Endurance*. Welky's style is engaging and authoritative at the same time. A first-rate read.

I enjoyed this book more than I expected. As I'd hoped, it reads like a good historical novel and exposed me to a new world. I wasn't familiar with the history of polar exploration so I was moved right along with the adventure. Highly recommended.

A well written and thoroughly researched book reveals much about life in America a century ago. No pure heroes here just real people brought to life by an excellent writer.

This is an excellent read. The text is well written with a riveting story line that is exciting, factual and historical. I was raised in cold weather and I totally understand the challenges encountered on their adventure. This is a book that I will remember for the remainder of my life and I would have missed out had I not read it. If you are looking for a book to touch your human adventure senses this is it. Hardship normally brings out the best in humans and in many instances that was the case in this book. Also, there can be a dark side to these kinds of challenges and those were very much evident in this book also. An all around well written book that proves again that reading is very rewarding.

Stirring well written & incredibly well researched. Great story that may have otherwise been forgotten to time.

A vivid window into the early 20th Century. Good photographs, adequate maps, and all the details.

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