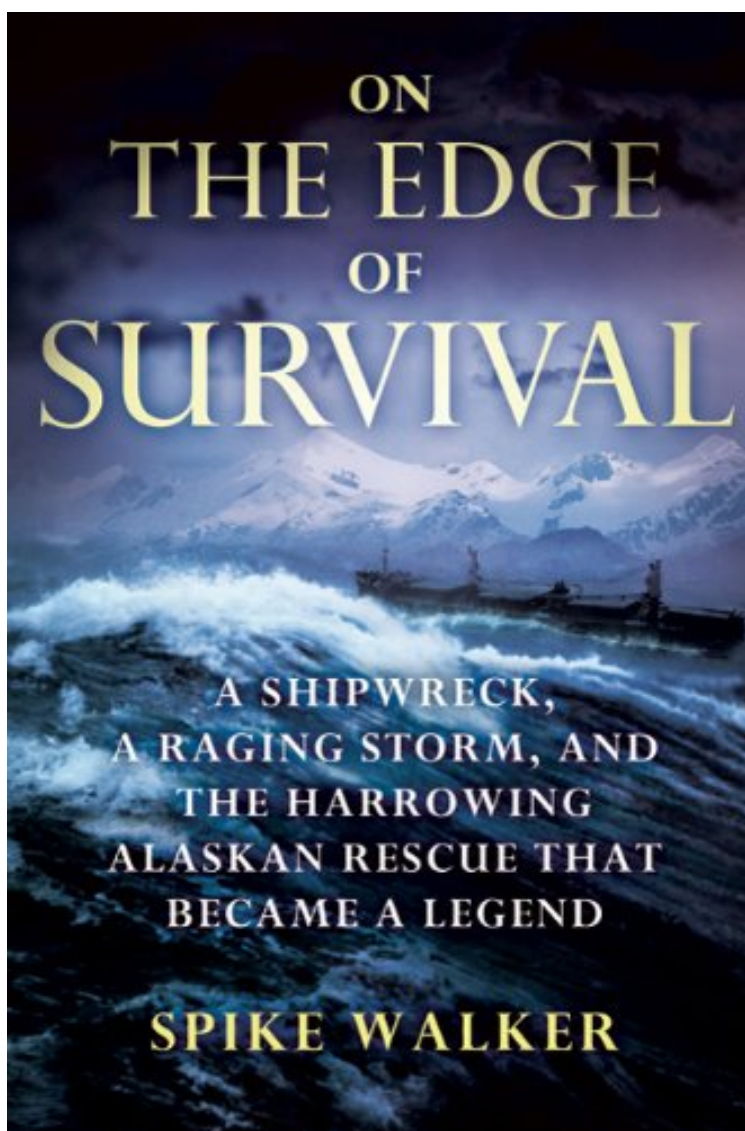


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On the Edge of Survival: A Shipwreck, a Raging Storm, and the Harrowing Alaskan Rescue That Became a Legend

Spike Walker

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#814667 in Books 2010-09-28 2010-09-28Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.24 x 1.07 x 5.76l, .79 #File Name: 0312286341288 pages | File size: 33.Mb

Spike Walker : On the Edge of Survival: A Shipwreck, a Raging Storm, and the Harrowing Alaskan Rescue That Became a Legend before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised On the Edge of Survival: A Shipwreck, a Raging Storm, and the Harrowing Alaskan Rescue That Became a Legend:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. The Bering Sea, A Terrible Storm, And A Freighter On The Rocks Adds Up To Spellbinding HeroismBy Robert I. Hedges"On The Edge of Survival" is a stunning nonfiction tale of survival and chronicles the US Coast Guard's devotion to preservation of life at sea. During a tremendous storm in the treacherous Bering Sea, the freighter "Selendang Ayu" experienced engine trouble and eventually ran aground. The Coast Guard responded in one of the most amazing rescue missions ever undertaken by the legendary service. Before it was over, three helicopters got involved, and one was lost due to an enormous wave reaching skyward and literally enveloping it. The book is extremely fast paced, and despite a couple of trivial terminology gaffes and some minor repetition, it is a praiseworthy read: my hat's off to the men who were involved in the rescue and I am genuinely grateful to Spike Walker for telling the story so compellingly. Walker was especially excellent when he described the frustration the rescuers had with the indecision and lack of leadership from the freighter's crew, and in particular the "Selendang Ayu's" master, Captain Singh. In particular the exploits of Aaron Bean, who was lowered to the wreck to assume control of the situation from the ineffectual crew and who ended up spending almost four hours being assaulted by frozen monster waves on the deck of the "Selendang Ayu" as the ship broke in two under him and started to sink are truly amazing. Likewise the helicopter crews did an absolutely stunning job, and Walker makes their harrowing mission come to life as few writers could do. I also appreciated the postscript catching readers up with the central characters after the rescue. This is a great and exciting book and anyone interested in maritime rescue or quality adventure writing will no doubt love it. If you were enthralled by "The Perfect Storm" this is a great pick. 12 of 13 people found the following review helpful. Interested readers need to separate the story from the writing styleBy Captain SilverI bought this based on the almost uniformly positive reviews, and realize I am in a distinct minority in giving it less than stellar reviews - I actually almost considered giving it two stars, but I did read it cover to cover, so that's worth something. First, the story: extremely compelling - one almost can't believe the sheer courage and skills of the Coast Guard personnel depicted in the story. Their sense of duty and mission, and their ability to carry it out, is truly incredible (this is no faint praise from someone from a Navy family going back to the Civil War). The personnel depicted in this book are far better people than me - I would have left the captain of the freighter and his idiotic crew to founder on the rocks and die in the storm without a second thought. Those on the political extreme who think the U.S. government can't do anything right can only pray to whatever god they believe in that these Coasties will one day be there for them if they ever need rescuing. The writing style is something else altogether. Spike Walker's prose is definitely readable, in much the same way that a story from Reader's Digest is readable. Written at what appears to be a sixth-grade level, with little depth to the story at all. The author's style relies heavily on superlatives - I think the word "gutsy" appears more times in this book than the last 100 books that I've read. There is little sense that the author has done any background research at all, beyond interviewing the participants in the events recounted in the book - the biographical information presented on the Coast Guardsman is about a (very superficial) paragraph each; there is nothing at all by way of exploration of the depth of training the Coast Guard personnel (especially the rescue swimmers) go through, nothing about what it is like to be stationed in Alaska for long periods of time, etc. No offense, but those reviewers who compare Mr. Walker to Jonathan Krakauer or Sebastian Junger are extremely misguided - I guarantee you neither of them would ever have used the phrase "bless their hearts" in whatever they were writing about. And as to the comparison with Ernest Hemingway - I don't even know how to respond. So this is a mixed review - it is a great story, and if you're just looking for a quick read to get through over a long weekend on vacation, this passes the time better than many alternatives. But if you're looking for something to hook your mind into in a little (a lot) more depth, pull that copy of "Into Thin Air" off the shelf, or subscribe to Outside magazine for a year. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Couldn't Put This Book DownBy KMBExcellent story, couldn't put it down. The bravery of the Coast Guard is exemplified throughout this book. So many lives were saved by those that went above and beyond the call of duty throughout this horrible ordeal. I never wanted the story to end, but happy it did end well for so many.

From the acclaimed author whose beloved books inspired the hit television show, *The Deadliest Catch*, comes a thrilling true adventure tale in the Alaskan seas. A Malaysian cargo ship on its way from Seattle, Washington to China ran aground off the coast of western Alaska's Aleutian Islands on December 8, 2004 during a brutal storm, leading to one of the most incredible Coast Guard rescue missions of all time. Two Coast Guard Jayhawk helicopters lifted off immediately from Air Station Kodiak during the driving storm in an effort to rescue the ship's eighteen crew members before it broke apart and sank in the freezing waters. Nine of the crew were lifted from the ship and dropped aboard a nearby Coast Guard cutter. But during attempts to save the last eight crew members, one of the Jayhawks was engulfed by a rogue wave that broke over the bow of the ship. When its engines flamed out from ingesting water, the Jayhawk crashed into the sea. The seven crew members from the ship who had been hoisted into the aircraft, along with the choppers three-man crew, plunged into the bitterly cold ocean where hypothermia began to set in immediately. Interviewing all the surviving participants of the disaster and given access to documents and photos, acclaimed author Spike Walker has once again crafted a white-knuckle read of survival and death in the unforgiving Alaskan waters.

From Booklist Walker mines familiar territory here with this detailed look into the grounding of a freighter on the Aleutian Islands in 2004. Through multiple interviews with the Coast Guard personnel involved, he provides a minute-by-minute account of the rescue mission that was compounded when a USCG helicopter was hit by a rogue wave, sending it into frigid waters. While readers will not find much nuance here and the dialogue sometimes falls into hyperbole, Deadliest Catch fans will appreciate hearing more about Alaska's dangerous environment, and there is plenty of tense human drama for even the most hardened disaster epic fan. An epilogue provides a welcome and emotional follow-up to what happened to the major players involved and how the tragedy has affected their lives (which may surprise some). Walker is very good at giving his readers exactly what they want, while making it look effortless in the process. His previous success at uncovering new tales of man against the elements will only be reinforced with the release of this title. --Colleen Mondor

Spike Walker, one of America's greatest storytellers, has created a vivid landscape of survival against nature's toughest forces! His no-frills gritty style of authentic true-life tales hits the bull's-eye once again! Thom Beers, creator/executive producer of Deadliest Catch, Ice Road Truckers, and 1000 Ways to Die Deadliest Catch fans will appreciate hearing more about Alaska's dangerous environment, and there is plenty of tense human drama for even the most hardened disaster epic fan. Booklist

About the Author SPIKE WALKER spent more than ten seasons aboard some of the most successful crab boats in the Alaskan fleet, and rode out one of the worst storms in Alaska's history. He is the author of Working on the Edge, Nights of Ice and Coming Back Alive. Spike lives in Alaska and the Pacific Northwest.