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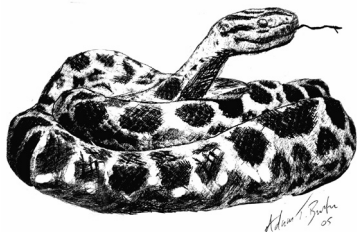
Written by Mike Conefrey

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THE ADVENTURER'S HANDBOOK



MICK CONEFREY

*FROM SURVIVING
AN ANACONDA ATTACK TO
FINDING YOUR WAY OUT OF A DESERT*



ONE WORLD

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To Phyllis Charlotte and Frank Angelo

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Mick Conefrey
May 2010

INTRODUCTION

Every expedition is unique, but many follow an archetypal pattern. Someone sets a goal, recruits a team, and then prepares to leave. They set off and then spend time in the field, overcoming obstacles and crises. Finally they stop, having succeeded or failed in reaching their goal. Then they turn back; some return to fame, some to indifference, and some never return at all.

In this book, *The Adventurer's Handbook*, I've tried to find a different way to look at the history of exploration, to present it through a kind of how-to manual in order to examine its paradigms and principles. I've included plenty of advice, based usually on historical incidents, but this book is not intended as a survival manual or a practical guide to the ins and outs of modern-day exploration. What interests me is not so much the detail of individual journeys but rather the general patterns.

Chapter 1, 'Getting Started', looks at the first stage on any expedition: organizing a team, choosing equipment, and, most importantly, raising funds. Exploration is an expensive business, and there have been few explorers who haven't had to put a lot of time and effort into finding sponsorship. Chapter 2, 'Getting Going', looks at the so-called objective hazards of expedition life: climate, weather, terrain, wildlife, and all those constraints that the physical environment throws up. Chapter 3, 'Getting Along', focuses on the human side of expedition life. Facing down a charging lion requires obvious courage and self-belief, but putting down a mutiny or assuaging hostile natives is just as demanding. In chapter 4, 'Getting There', the book changes gear, focusing in depth on six expeditions and trying to discover why some failed and others succeeded. The final chapter, 'Getting Back', looks

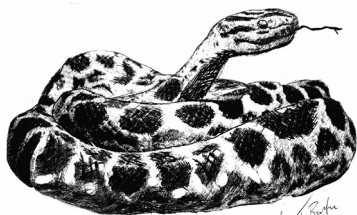
at that double-edged sword, fame, and the vital issue of keeping control of your own story.

In choosing examples, I've concentrated on the 'heroic age' of exploration: the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In this period, exploration increasingly came to be seen as a 'pure' activity, justified by abstract notions of science, discovery, and the needs of the human spirit rather than by claiming some commercial purpose. This was also a period when explorers and mountaineers invariably felt it necessary to record their adventures and misadventures in print, so it is easy to find firsthand accounts of the great expeditions.

There is a bias in the book towards colder regions; this is partly to do with personal experience and inclination, but it is also the case that, in general, mountaineers and polar explorers tended to operate in larger groups, so it is much easier to discuss issues such as leadership and teamwork by looking at expeditions to the Arctic and the Himalayas than by looking at the exploration of Africa, for example. Wilfred Thesiger, Heinrich Barth, Freya Stark, Richard Burton: they were all fascinating characters, but most of their travel was done in the company of native guides rather than other Western explorers.

Exploration is a very specialized activity, but it is also one that frequently resonates with everyday life. Few of us will ever have to deal with that charging lion or elephant – or, for that matter, tuck in to penguin stew – but when it comes to planning, crisis management, dealing with strangers, and many other human issues, obvious lessons from the history of exploration apply both to the slopes of Everest and to the wider world.

THE ADVENTURER'S HANDBOOK





Chapter One

GETTING STARTED

Men wanted for hazardous journey. Small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant journey, safe return doubtful. Honour and recognition in case of success.

ADVERTISEMENT PLACED BY ERNEST SHACKLETON

IN A LONDON NEWSPAPER, AUGUST 1914.

IT IS SAID THAT 5,000 PEOPLE RESPONDED

Small minds have only room for bread and butter.

ROALD AMUNDSEN, ON BEING ASKED

WHY HE WENT TO THE SOUTH POLE

WHAT MAKES AN EXPLORER?

Explorers come in all shapes and sizes, literally and metaphorically. Henry Morton Stanley was small and stocky, Fridtjof Nansen was tall and thin, Fanny Bullock Workman was round and tubby. The American explorer Robert Peary advised in his book *The Secrets of Polar Travel* that the ideal Arctic explorer should weigh 1 kg for every 2.5 cm of height and warned that tall men were a liability – they ate too much, needed too much clothing, and took up too much space in a tent. He also added that, whenever possible, he had selected blonds for his expeditions, ignoring the fact that on all of his Arctic trips he had been accompanied by an African American manservant, Matthew Henson. Obviously Henson wasn't in on the secret.

It is equally hard to pin down the archetypal explorer. Some have been tyrants, others team players; some were solitary, others gregarious. Reading through the biographies of nineteenth- and twentieth-century explorers, it is hard to find many common threads. On the contrary, it is striking just how diverse their backgrounds were. They began their careers as engineers, missionaries, sailors, soldiers, journalists, and beekeepers . . . the list goes on. Quite a lot came from the military, for the obvious reason that the armed forces were keen on exploration. More intriguingly, a number of explorers came from troubled family backgrounds, and several of them lost their fathers at an early age. Almost all of the polar explorers were men; female explorers seemed to be more interested in Africa and the Middle East.

Many were motivated by the desire for fame. At the age of 17, Edward Whymper, the Victorian mountaineer, confided to his diary that he was hoping to become 'the great person of my day'; on the other side of the Atlantic, at the age of 29, a desperate Robert Peary admitted in a letter to his mother that he simply '*must* have fame'. A lot of explorers professed in later life to have felt a sense of destiny, a sense that they were cut out to do important things. Others admitted that they 'liked the life'; when the Scottish explorer John McDouall Stuart returned from his attempt to cross Australia, he had become so used to sleeping outdoors that he scorned his bed and took to sleeping in the garden.

Some explorers never hung up their knapsacks; others found that they could use their skills to carve out successful careers in completely different fields. Quite a few former explorers finished life as politicians. Their fame got them a foot in the door, but their skills as communicators and organizers turned them into a success. Many of today's mountaineers and explorers have made lucrative careers as motivational speakers, spending more time speaking to businessmen than lecturing at the Royal Geographical Society. It is easy to be cynical about this, but to do so is to miss the point that, essentially, all expeditions are projects that have to be managed. Teams have to be selected, equipped, and motivated. Goals have to be set, and crises have to be overcome. In exploration, the physical risks may be greater and the rewards may be less tangible than in business, but it all comes down to knowing what you want and giving yourself the best chance of getting it.

So, what makes a good explorer? Adaptability, ambition, stamina, self-belief, doggedness, curiosity, optimism, authority, hardiness . . . but before all these come into play, you have to be good at raising money.

The moon landing	NASA	1969	\$25.4 billion
The first ascent of Everest	British Expedition	1953	£20,000
The first crossing of Greenland	Fridtjof Nansen	1888	£275
The first ascent of McKinley	Hudson Stuck	1913	\$1,000
The first crossing of Australia	Burke and Wills	1860	£57,840

RAISING FUNDS

I shall tell you what you will do. Draw a thousand pounds now; and then when you have gone through that, draw another thousand; and when that is spent, draw another thousand; and when you have finished that, draw another thousand, and so on; but FIND LIVINGSTONE.

J. GORDON BENNETT'S INSTRUCTIONS TO H. M. STANLEY

When in 1869 J. Gordon Bennett, the famous proprietor of the *New York Herald*, sent Henry Morton Stanley off in search of Dr Livingstone, money was no object. Few explorers have had it so easy. Funding is, and always was, a perpetual problem. Getting over this first hurdle requires ingenuity, perseverance, and luck. It is one of those times where your people skills come to the fore: how do you persuade benefactors to part with large sums of cash to enable you to realize your dream?

Paying your own way

The nineteenth-century explorer the Duke of Abruzzi paid his own way, and that of a large retinue of supporters, to the Arctic, the Mountains of the Moon (Renzori in modern-day Uganda), and the slopes of K2. He was the grandson of the king of Italy, and money was rarely an issue. The British explorer Samuel Baker had a large private fortune, which he used to fund his expeditions to Africa. He even bought his second wife, Florence, after bidding for her at a Turkish slave auction. Their personal wealth gave Abruzzi and Baker a lot of freedom, but few twentieth-century explorers were so lucky; at one point or another, most of them had to tap an external source for money.

What your country can do for you

The Royal Navy funded many of the most glorious episodes in the history of British exploration: Captain James Cook, George Vancouver, and Matthew Flinders are just three of the naval officers whose voyages of discovery helped to redraw the map of the world. But the navy also funded some of the most inglorious episodes, the polar expeditions of Sir John Franklin and George Nares being well-known examples.

The problem was that naval patronage invariably came with strings attached. Patrons had to be indulged, officers had to be taken on who weren't suitable for the job, equipment had to be used because 'that's how they did it' in the navy. On a smaller scale, though, the military is often worth approaching by independent explorers for equipment and sundry favours. Thor Heyerdahl was able to persuade the British and US military to donate equipment and rations to the *Kon-Tiki* expedition by offering to road-test them in the mid-Pacific.

Rich benefactors

The best type of benefactor offers you a large sum of money and then retires into the shadows surrounded by a warm but discreet glow. When in 1883 Fridtjof Nansen conceived of an expedition to cross Greenland, initially he was confident of a grant from the Norwegian government. However, there were so many letters to the press proclaiming that he would certainly die on this foolhardy mission that the government said no. Out of the shadows came Augustin Gamél, a Danish philanthropist who had funded previous Arctic expeditions. He covered the whole cost of the expedition and didn't ask for anything in return.

The reward for many benefactors was to see their names on a map. The Boothia Peninsula in northern Canada was named after Felix Booth, a London gin magnate, who underwrote Sir John Ross's second Arctic expedition in 1829. Booth also donated several bottles of gin to the expedition, one of which was used to christen its ship, the *Victory*.

The business of exploration

There has always been a commercial side to exploration. The kings of Spain and Portugal funded the voyages of Christopher Columbus and Vasco da Gama because they hoped to reap their rewards in gold. Exploration and empire went hand in hand. When the Victorian mountaineer Edward Whymper made his epic trip through Ecuador, none of the locals could believe that he had come for climbing and scientific research. They were convinced that he was really on a treasure hunt. On his return to Britain, Whymper was pestered by another species of get-rich-quick entrepreneur, the British businessman. He received

numerous letters from hopeful tycoons who wanted to hear about all the mineral deposits that, they assumed, he must have found 'in them hills'. Years later Whymper was employed by the Canadian-Pacific Railway to walk the length of the track in order to publicize the Rockies as a tourist destination. By then he was more interested in alcohol than exploration, but the railway men still saw his presence as an asset. On a more sinister note, in the 1880s Henry Morton Stanley was employed by the king of Belgium to explore the Congo basin in order give an air of geographical legitimacy to his covert empire building.

The advantages of a committee

When in 1965 the British explorer Wally Herbert began raising funds for a trans-Arctic expedition, initially he didn't do too well. He pored over *Who's Who* and sent out hundreds of letters but received very little in return. Then he got a committee behind him. Made up of some of the most venerable figures in British exploration, it quickly set to work. Within three days of its first meeting, Herbert had an office, a secretary, and a car. The committee was also happy to share its wisdom and offer its advice. Most of this was gladly taken, but a few months into the expedition, Herbert locked horns with his 'elders and betters' over what to do with a sick member of his team. The committee wanted the man evacuated; Herbert wanted to keep him on the ice. Their contretemps was leaked, prompting a spate of articles in the British press. Herbert accused the committee of not knowing 'what the bloody hell they were on about'; they replied that he was clearly suffering from 'winteritis'. It all blew over quickly, but the brief spat showed that working with committees does have its downsides.

Talk to your friendly bank manager

Modern-day adventurer Catherine Hartley, the first British woman to walk to both North and South Poles, spent months trying to raise sponsorship for her Antarctic trip from every business source she could think of, to no avail. At the point when she was about to pull out, her bank manager called and offered an interest-free loan of £10,000. He had heard about her plight after coming back from a Himalayan walking holiday and was feeling generous. It was a stroke of luck, but it

wouldn't have happened if Hartley had not spent so many months giving interviews and publicizing her plans.

Tap your friends

When Hiram Bingham decided to put together his 1911 expedition to Peru that ultimately resulted in the discovery of Machu Picchu, he simply talked his friends and colleagues at Harvard into coming along and paying for themselves. He was a famously charismatic and charming man, and ended his days as a politician. The discovery of this sacred city of the Incas set him up for life and ensured him easy sponsorship for subsequent expeditions.



ROBERT E. PEARY THE GREATEST FUNDRAISER IN THE HISTORY OF EXPLORATION?

There are many people who do not believe that Robert E. Peary got all the way to the North Pole in 1909. He may or may not have reached the Pole, but there is no doubt that he was the greatest fundraiser in the history of twentieth-century exploration and that his approach is well worth studying. He deserves this award not because of the amount of money that he raised but because of the many and varied ways he found to do it. Peary was a serving officer in the US Navy for 28 years, but for 16 of those years he was on leave, either in the Arctic or preparing for an Arctic expedition. During all this time, except for six months, he was on full military pay. When he came back from the Pole in 1909, he was promoted to rear admiral, much to the annoyance of many of his colleagues. Peary's naval salary covered his domestic expenses, but he still had to raise thousands of dollars to fund his expeditions. Early on in his career he spent a lot of time on the lecture circuit; in one year he made 165 appearances in 103 days, earning \$20,000 in the process. In order to fuel interest in his expeditions, he was always bringing things back from the Arctic and putting them on show. At various times he returned with huskies, Eskimo artifacts, and the huge Cape York meteorite, then by far the largest ever found. He took consignments of Eskimo bones to the American Museum of Natural History in New York and even brought back seven live Eskimos, who were also briefly 'displayed' at the museum.

As his fame grew, he amassed around him a group of rich patrons, the self-styled Peary Arctic Club. They asked favours of President McKinley and, through their contacts, helped Peary to become a friend of President Theodore Roosevelt. In return, Peary literally put his supporters on the map: The millionaire philanthropist Morris Jessup and the newspaperman Herbert Bridgman both had capes named after them, and George Crocker, another member of the Peary Arctic Club, gave his name to an island and a range of mountains (which subsequently turned out not to exist). In 1904, the Peary Arctic Club raised \$130,000, then a massive sum, to commission a purpose-built ship for Peary's final two attempts to reach the North Pole. In 1909, as he headed north across the ice, Peary filled his diary with endless speculation on all the commercial endorsements he might attract if he reached his goal. Indeed, when he returned, there were many:

GETTING STARTED

Winchester rifles
Shredded Wheat breakfast cereal
Koh-i-nor pencils
Rubber set shaving brushes
Brunswick thermal underwear
Thermos flasks
Phillips watches



EQUIPMENT



H. M. STANLEY'S ARMOURY FOR HIS EXPEDITION TO FIND LIVINGSTONE IN 1871

1 Henry rifle, 1 Winchester, 1 double-barrelled shotgun, 1 elephant rifle,
1 Starr's breach loader, 1 Jockelyn rifle, 24 muskets, 6 pistols, 1 battleaxe,
2 swords, 2 daggers, 1 boar spear, 2 American axes, 24 hatchets, 24
butchers' knives

ALBERT SMITH'S DRINKS LIST FOR HIS ASCENT OF MONT BLANC IN 1851

60 bottles of vin ordinaire, 10 bottles of St George, 15 bottles of St Jean,
3 bottles of brandy, 1 bottle of cassis, 6 bottles of lemonade, 2 bottles of
champagne

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS TAKEN ON BRITISH EXPEDITION TO KANCHENJUNGA IN 1955

25,000 cigarettes, 284 boxes of matches, 120 batteries, 100 candles, 100
bulbs, 100 toolkits, 30 torches, 16 pounds of tobacco, 6 hurricane lamps,
3 spring balances, 2 altimeters, 2 pair of binoculars, 1 hairdressing set

