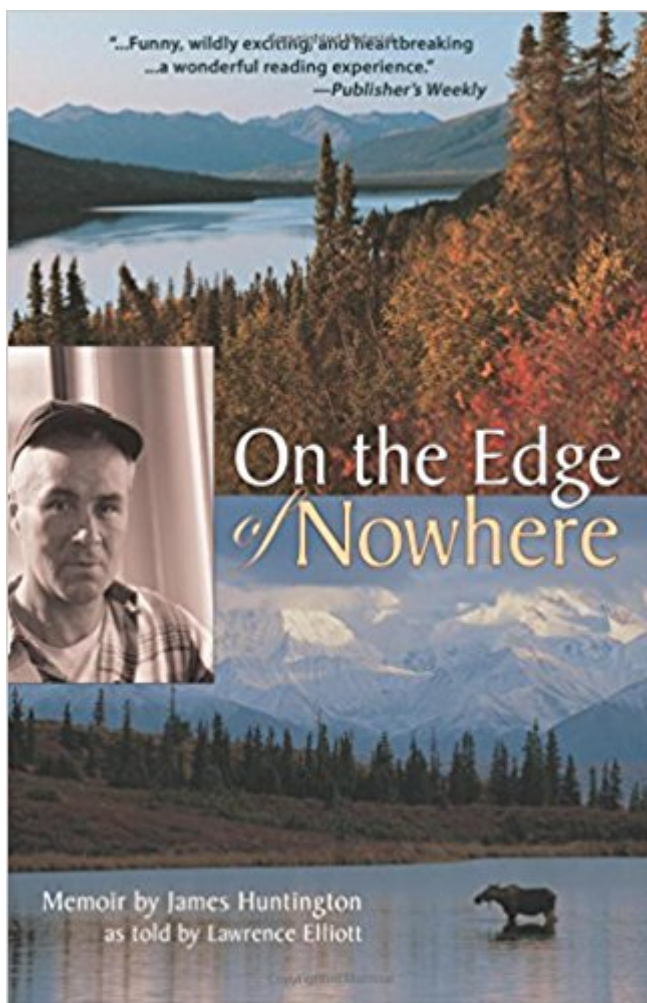


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# On The Edge Of Nowhere



## Synopsis

His father is a white trapper, his mother an Athabascan Indian who walks a thousand miles in winter to reunite with her family. Thus, Jimmy Huntington learns early how to survive on the land. Huntington is only seven when his mother dies, and he must care for his younger siblings. A courageous and inspiring man, Huntington hunts wolves, fights bears, survives close calls too numerous to mention, and becomes a championship sled-dog racer.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

...Funny, wildly exciting, and heartbreaking...a wonderful reading experience. --Publisher's Weekly

For sheer excitement and adventure, few novels match the true-life story of James Huntington. The son of a white trapper and Indian mother, Huntington learned early to fight for survival in the remote Kuskokwim region where life was hard. Huntington's mother walked 1,000 miles in the dead of winter to return to her family. Later, when she died, it fell to her son-then just seven-to care for his brother and sister. A courageous yet modest man, Huntington hunts wolves, fights bears, survives close calls too numerous to mention, and becomes the first musher to win the Anchorage and Fairbanks sled dog race championships in the same year. On the Edge of Nowhere is an enduring Alaska classic, an astonishing story filled with surprising twists and turns and still "tingling with excitement" in a new third edition.

A great, short read. Lots of funny tales and heartbreaks. Some of the stories seem a bit outlandish

but could be completely true, who is to say? I imagine my son might enjoy this book as well one day.

A fascinating, gripping tale of adventure in the Alaskan wilderness. The stories are told with spellbinding force, yet are simple, robust accounts of life as it really was, no sugar coating it. Jimmy had a way of speaking profound truth in the simplest of terms, as well as captivating the reader. This ranks up there for me with, if not above, books like "Into Thin Air." Unlike Krakauer, Jimmy is the real deal: a hardworking Alaskan and good man, as authentic as can be.

What a page turner! I felt as if I was sitting by a campfire with Jimmy Huntington as he told the amazing, heartbreaking and triumphant story of his life.

I think James' brother Sidney probably has better memories of their early days. Probably because He was a couple years older. I think it is a little disappointing that their ages were changed in this book (as Sidney shows in his book, *Shadows On The Koyukuk*) just to make their story more believable. You really have to read both books. Sydney does a better job of relating their boyhood days, But I think James had more adventures in his grown up life. His very first time going to Fairbanks is absolutely hilarious! These are both great stories. Young people today need more practical education like these guys had. Kids today don't know how to do practical things to solve problems today. They're just taught to go to school make lots of money and pay for everything to be done for you! They can't build their own boat or fix their own engines, build their own house, and they certainly wouldn't survive on their own *On The Edge Of Nowhere!*

I'm walking with my 23-year-old son to the movie theater. It's winter but still pretty warm. We're headed to "The Revenant" at Edwards Theater complex in Fresno's River Park shopping center. Thinking about the film made me remember "Man in the Wilderness," which I saw at Schiabe Hall at the University of Alaska Fairbanks campus. In winter. Me and Torg thought it was awesome. I believe we saw it again. But I'd already been thinking of the original film. It had been mentioned in reviews. But I'd heard a lot of bear stories, having grown up in Alaska. A bear surprised my grandfather one day on Kodiak. He shot it. Had to, I was told as I slid down its big head. The bear was made into a rug. I played on it constantly at my grandparents house on Raspberry Island. Really in the sticks back then. The greatest bear story, however, was told by Jimmy Huntington in "On the Edge of Nowhere." A teacher had read us the book. The original was published in 1966

about a guy who grew up in the Alaska Bush. Our teacher, and I suspect it was Miss Fenton (she became a principal in Arizona and married some guy named Bufmire) who taught at University Park Elementary in Fairbanks. It was 1970 or thereabouts. It was winter and cold. We all watched the frostbite videos. One in particular shows a guy's blackened dead toes being cut off with a high-speed cutting wheel. So gross, we all would say. Then we'd stare at it. Every time. This was the era of film reels. Black and white. So Miss Fenton reads. We listen. We live Jimmy Huntington's life with him. His mom had been married before. Her first husband was shot and killed. She had to testify against him in Nome. Travel then was either by boat or dog sled. And his mother had to spend the winter in Nome, leaving her children with family. The killer was guilty. But he was a white man, while she was Athabascan Indian. He was freed after the trial. She had to wait another spring to travel. Instead she walked all the way home. A thousand miles in deep winter. No map. Just general directions. She nearly died multiple times. And eskimo and indian didn't much care for each other back near 1875. Huntington was born later. His dad was a white trapper, who married his mom. But when he was still just a kid, maybe 10, mom dies. They live in a remote spot on the Hogatza River way up near the Arctic Circle. Dad's gone a couple weeks. Bears come. Jimmy and his older brother Sidney have a little sister to take care of. Jimmy survives this and multiple other scrapes with living by his wits in a harsh land. One of the stories involves hunting bears. Jimmy tangles with and kills three. He should have been killed. He's laid open. One of his sled dogs is killed. Again he helps a hunter recover from a serious mauling. He sews the man up with his own hair. His face is peeled away. He packs the wounds with salt. The man recovers. Jimmy's fame grows. Jimmy also becomes the first Huslia Hustler, a line of famous dog mushers who are amazingly fast. As kids we knew of him and we all followed a later famous musher, George Atla, from the same little community of Huslia, which Jimmy actually started. This is the kind of book people should read before visiting Alaska. This is the Alaska I knew. The remote, the harsh and the beautiful state that has sights that must be seen in person. When I first went to Nantucket to meet my sister-in-law's in-laws, they asked that we all read Nathaniel Philbrick's "In the Heart of the Sea: The Tragedy of the Whaleship Essex." It's about the real story behind a ship and captain from Nantucket who tangled with a great sperm whale and the few of them who lived to tell the harrowing tale of survival. The story provided great context for my family's visit and really got us interested in the history of the island. "On the Edge" provides that sort of insight. In straightforward storytelling, Jimmy Huntington comes alive. His decisions, the time he was a moonshiner, a hunter shooting wolves for a \$50 bounty, a fisherman, a trader, a husband, a visiting villager and his mushing exploits. I loved the book. I had remembered it wrong so I totally enjoyed traveling back to those

memories. They once made 50 below not so cold. Now they warmed my heart and made me realize that there is life after bear fights. And a shout out to Freya Anderson and Jane Fuerstenau, Alaska librarians who answered my inquiry to figure out the title of this book. I had the most obscure memories and I was confusing one Huslia Hustler with another, not remembering Jimmy Huntington's name. They figured it out. They rock.

It was a gift and I think the recipient enjoyed it. I hope it comes out on audio as I would like very to listen to it.

This is a great read. I read it in two sittings because I couldn't stop. Jim Huntington's brother Sidney also wrote a book many years after this one called "Shadows on the Koyokuk" which was as good as this and in fact has a bit more details of their shared youth. Jim Huntington's story was terrific. Lot's of bush adventures with attacking Bears, Wolves, Injuries, etc. Did you know that the Eskimos and Indians of Alaska hated each other so much prior to American Law and Order that they killed each other on site? I didn't. I really liked the admission that sometimes he succumbed to his human desires. In his circumstance I might well have done the same. If this was written now, this sexy morsal would surely have been omitted for the sake of political correctness. If you are a stickler for chronological stories, this may try nyour patience. It's more like your Grand Dad sitting by the fire recounting the days of yore. The Dog Sledding adventures were very good too and kept me on the edge of my seat. His contributions to his village and eventually the state of Alaska are well worth knowing about (especially if you are an Alaskan). If I was going to read this and his brothers book, I would read this first. However, if I were going to read one or the other, I would favor Sidney's book. Though they aren't the same story, many parts are. I highly recommend this.

This is a great book. But, I did enjoy his brother's book more.

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