

ADVENTUROUS DREAMS, ADVENTUROUS LIVES

Collected and Edited by

JASON SCHOONOVER

Foreword by

MEAVE LEAKEY

I had no idea when I had my first youthful dream of flight that it would take me all the way to the moon—but

that's the power unleashed in following one's dreams. Jason Schoonover's book should be required reading in every school. —BUZZ ALDRIN



MIKAEL STRANDBERG



-50°F along Russia's Kolyma River and loving it. MIKAEL AND TITTI STRANDBERG

“The true explorer is unselfish, curious and ready to sacrifice his life in the quest of discovering unknown areas and human limits. An explorer’s life is a mission to make this earth of ours a better one to live in.”

Bone Marrow and Fried Reindeer Brain

The day in April 2005 I arrived at the small Siberian settlement of Kolymskaya was the happiest of my exploring life. It was the end of the most demanding part of my expedition along the Kolyma River, one of the coldest inhabited places on earth. I had, together with my assistant Johan Ivarsson, spent most of the past five months hauling 660 pounds of necessities, mainly in utter darkness, experiencing terrifying cold with average temperatures around -50°F day and night. The cold made sleep almost impossible, gave us frostbite and ruined most metal parts of our equipment, like our ski bindings, and we therefore arrived walking, not skiing.

It seemed like every inhabitant greeted us with customary warmth and joy, most dressed in colourful traditional dress. We saw Chukchis, Even, Yakuts, Yugahirs and Russians. After the traditional welcoming offerings to the spirits, we were led into the local museum, where more cheerful and hugging villagers awaited around a table topped with delicacies. After having survived mainly on moose and raw, frozen fish most of the winter, we nearly cried when we spotted big plates of fried reindeer brain and cooked bone marrow. I suddenly realized, after 20 years of exploring extreme parts of our world and trying to understand the meaning of life, that from now on I’ll stop thinking about the big worrisome issues and simply concentrate on the uncomplicated ones. Like the thought of more cooked bone marrow

I was brought up in a working-class environment in Dala-Järna, Sweden, 60 degrees latitude, population 1,000, where the basic values were hard physical work,

loyalty to your employer, never forget where you came from and stick to your own kind. For this reason, we only had two books at home—*The Sea Wolf* and *White Fang*, by Jack London. My bricklaying father had them on loan indefinitely from the local library, to show our neighbours that our family had ambitions beyond the village limit. I wouldn't have touched them if I hadn't caught the measles and, as a bored ten-year-old, started reading them. But once started, I couldn't stop! In them I discovered that an unknown, exciting and important world existed beyond the narrow-minded limits of my village and I yearned to understand other people and to build bridges between them. As well, I then and there determined to live in the wilds of Nature. Those discoveries, combined with a mother who loved me above all else, gave me self-confidence and a sense of uniqueness.

As quick as I turned 16 in 1978, after avoiding the utterly boring knowledge taught in school, I set off for India to spend a year studying Mahayana Buddhism. But those studies only gave me diarrhea and gut pains. Instead, I ended up hiking, reading and travelling. When my money ran out, I returned home with a wish to build bridges of understanding by writing, lecturing, filming and through photography. I met a total lack of interest.

At that moment I realized that I had to do something that nobody else had done before. So over the next 7.5 years I cycled from Chile to Alaska, Norway to South Africa, and from New Zealand to Cairo. I pedalled 90,000 kilometres, passing through terrain as difficult and diverse as the Sahara Desert and the Darien Gap. Since then, I've been privileged to live my dream.

MIKAEL STRANDBERG was born in 1962 in Sweden and is a lecturer, filmmaker and writer. He has written six books and numerous articles, filmed several documentaries and is frequently consulted by broadcasters doing travel and adventure programs. In Sweden, Mikael has become a household name, and *National Geographic* has made a documentary about his life. For his Siberian adventure, King Carl XVI Gustaf awarded him the prestigious Travellers Club Silver Medal.

Mikael has cycled through 95 countries. In 1997 he, together with then-wife Titti, explored 3,000 kilometres of Patagonia by horse. In 2000, they walked through East Africa, exploring all the clans of the Masai people. In 2005 he returned from 10 months exploring the full 3,500-kilometre length of the Kolyma River in northern Siberia by canoe and skis.

Mikael is a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, The Explorers Club, Travellers Club and the Long Riders Guild. He lives in one of the coldest spots in Scandinavia, Sörberget, Sweden. There Mikael spends most of his time hunting and fishing.