



Sixty-mile-per-hour winds forced us to stop and set up camp at three o'clock. As we tried to weight down the tents, the wind blew the snow from the shovels before it could be dumped. By eight o'clock gusts topped one hundred miles per hour and the tents were vibrating so violently we had to shout to communicate. Later the snow washed over the tent, covering us in a drift. Here, we are barely an eighth of the way home.

Will Steger from his Antarctic Journal, Day 56

In Ernest Shackleton's prospectus for the *Endurance* expedition he wrote, "There now remains the largest and most striking of all journeys—The Crossing of Antarctica." What started out to be the grandest of all Antarctic expeditions ended up to be the most dramatic polar rescue of all times. Seventy miles from the continent, on the coast of the Weddell Sea, the *Endurance* was trapped in the ice and eventually crushed. The following 24-month ordeal would draw on all of Shackleton's leadership powers to bring his men back alive.

The crossing of Antarctica by dog team was finally accomplished three-quarters of a century later by an international team of six people from six different countries led by American explorer, Will Steger. The International Trans-Antarctic Expedition took the longest possible route, traversing Antarctica's entire west-east axis from sea to sea, a distance of 3,741 miles. The team encountered unimaginable conditions along the way: wind-chills routinely below minus 100-degrees F, a 1,000-mile trek across the unexplored Area of Inaccessibility, and storms that lasted 68 days. Racing the oncoming winter, they finally reached their destination safely on March 3, 1990, 221 days after departure.

Known by many titles—educator, activist, photographer, and explorer—Steger is a pioneer in his field, with a series of firsts in polar exploration to his credit. In 1986 he made the first confirmed unsupported journey to the North Pole leading a team of eight people with 50 sled dogs. In 1988 he guided the longest unsupported dogsled expedition in history, a 1,600-mile south-north traverse of Greenland. Most recently, in 1995, he led the International Arctic Project—a 1,200-mile expedition between Russia and Ellesmere Island, Canada, via dogsleds and canoe sleds with a team of five educators and scientists. This sweeping project earned Steger the prestigious National Geographic John Oliver La Gorce Medal, awarded only 19 times since the founding of the Society in 1888. Steger joins Roald Amundson, Amelia Earhart, Adm. Robert Peary, and Jacques-Yves Cousteau in this honor. Said Gilbert Grosvenor, then President of the National Geographic Society, "In all my 41 years with the society, I cannot recall an expedition that has so broadly advanced all three of our own missions: research, exploration, and education."

Steger is the author of four books and numerous articles, and has testified before Congress on polar and environmental issues. He holds undergraduate and graduate degrees from the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota. Presently, he is organizing an expedition across the Arctic Ocean and Greenland Ice Cap by dog team, and is hard at work on a book about his prized sled dogs.

TOPICS:

Business Management and Leadership Skills

Steger draws on his own skills as an expedition leader and reflects upon the lessons learned during the Shackleton era, applying them to modern business.

The Crossing of Antarctica

Steger shares the story of Shackleton's *Endurance* expedition and his own 1990 International Trans-Antarctica Expedition.

Crossing the North and South Poles via Dog Sled

Steger takes audiences along on his epic adventure across the poles.

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