

ACTIVEfamily

MAGAZINE

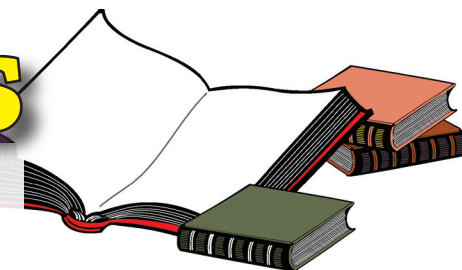
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Great Books

Great Heart, The History of a Labrador Adventure

1988, James West Davidson & John Rugge



Astounding, unbelievable, heart-wrenching and yet fascinating by every measure, this exploration will make you wince, shiver and squirm...and in the end, thrill at well-deserved triumph and human perseverance.

Hoping to illuminate one of the last uncharted territories in North America and perhaps elevate his career, young journalist Leonidas Hubbard, Jr. set out in 1903 to explore Labrador's interior. Dillon Wallace, a good friend and able hiker, and George Elson, a half-Scottish, half-Cree woodsman from Hudson Bay, accompanied Hubbard.

The planned 550 mile canoe trip, from Northwest River Post to Ungava Bay was thrown off-course almost from the beginning. With questionable maps and uncertain information, Hubbard chose the wrong river to fol-

low north. They planned on a fairly straightforward though arduous trip along the Naskapi River, which would bring them to Lake Michikamau and hence to their goal. Instead, they mistakenly chose Susan Brook which led to unfathomable misery: unceasing blankets of mosquitoes, giant "bulldog" flies, treacherous boulder-strewn waterways, and weeks of portaging. By the end of the summer unrelenting cold and wind pressed upon them, delaying them further. When they finally decided to retreat the three were starved ghosts and game was so scarce they couldn't remedy their plight.

Assembled from journals, correspondence and diaries, Great Heart does more than retell the facts of Hubbard's expedition. It reveals the stead-

fast and selfless devotion the men felt for one another, which grew as their situation became more desperate. Plus it recounts the heroic efforts of Elson to save both men, despite being near death himself.

But the story doesn't end here...there are two sequels to the Hubbard trip. After his death Leon's wife Mina and Wallace had a bitter falling out. Both were compelled to honor Leon's name by recreating the expedition and seeing it through to success. In 1905, the rival expeditions cast off from Northwest River Post, practically within hours of each other. What follows are two tales of amazing variation that will grip your heartstrings for years to come.

