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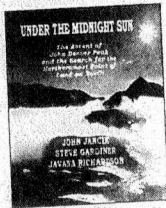
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top of the world Expedition journeyed  
above the Arctic Circle to Greenland to  
explore many of its unclimbed peaks.  
The team dedicated this expedition to the  
memory of legendary singer-songwriter  
John Denver, in honor of his commitment  
to the environment and protection of the  
wilderness. On July 18, 2001, the expedi-  
tion summited the highest unclimbed peak  
in Greenland's Roosevelt Range and, with  
support from John's family and the govern-  
or of Colorado, named this mountain John  
Denver Peak."



**Excerpt:** "Even though it was July, the  
temperature was 37 degrees and ice was  
everywhere. Our 10-person team, spread  
across the frozen Arctic Ocean, had been  
wading for hours through thigh-deep pools of  
meltwater, searching for any clue that would  
lead us to Oodaaq Island, the tiny speck of  
black rock, the northernmost land on Earth.

"Difficulties plagued us. Already, pho-  
tographer Galen Rowell had fallen through  
the ice, drenching his clothing and camera  
gear. Peter Skafte had also plunged into a  
waist-deep pool, and expedition co-leader  
John Jancik had given him dry clothing and  
helped change into them on the sea ice....  
With each step, icy water filled our boots  
and soaked our pants. How much more of  
the bitterly cold water could our feet en-  
dure?"

## Ch'askin: A Legend of the Thunderbird

By Donna Joe;  
illustrated by Jamie Jeffries  
(Nightwood Editions, \$7.95)

**The blurb:** "Ch'askin" is the fourth in-  
stallment in the "Legends of the Secheit Na-  
tion" series, whose best-selling titles "Salmon  
Boy," "How the Robin Got Its Red Breast"  
and "Mayuk the Grizzly Bear" are told in the  
style of oral tradition. Beautifully illustrated  
with black-and-white Native drawings, the  
tale is simple enough to be enjoyed by read-  
ers aged 4 to 7 and engaging enough to be  
enjoyed by readers of all ages."



**Excerpt:** "Spelmu'lh was the father of  
the Secheit people. When he first came to  
Jervis Inlet, he had no place to live, but the  
valley of the Tsunay River was forested in  
tall cedar trees, and Spelmu'lh chopped  
down the largest of these. He wanted to use  
them as roof beams for a great longhouse,  
but they were too heavy for him to raise up  
off the ground.

"How will I make a longhouse for my  
people if I cannot raise these beams?" he  
asked aloud.

"Just then, he heard a noise like thunder

## Interview by SHARON BUSHELL

I was born in a small town in Cali-  
fornia in 1917, the fourth of eight  
children, and grew up in Merced.  
In 1937, I joined the Army. Our basic  
training was at Angel Island. One  
day they told us, "Get packed up.  
You're going to Hawaii." Boy, that  
sounded good to me. On the fifth day,  
we got to Honolulu, and I joined my  
group, the 8th Field Artillery, Bat-  
tery B.

Within a few months, I decided I  
wanted out of the Army I could see  
right away there was no way I could  
fit in: I just wasn't cut out to be a sol-  
dier. One of my ongoing miseries was  
that I was 6 foot 4 and a pretty big  
guy, and the uniform we wore practi-  
cally choked me to death. Plus, in all  
honesty, I have to say, I'm just not a  
rules-and-regulations kind of guy. In  
those days you could buy your way  
out of the Army, but you had to have  
a year in before you were eligible,  
and it cost \$125.

The powers that be figured out  
they could get the most out of me by  
detailing me to play football and bas-  
ketball. That made things a whole lot  
better. I did some soldiering too; I  
was a gunner.

After three years, I left Hawaii,  
having just read a bulletin that said,  
"Opportunities Hot and Cold." The  
"cold" was Alaska. That interested  
me, so I tried to get more data and  
was thrilled to receive a handwrit-  
ten letter from the registrar at the  
college in Fairbanks. The stories she  
told me about Alaska had me totally  
dazzled.

Alaska sounded like a magical  
place to me. I talked two of my bud-  
dies into going with me, but at the  
last minute they both bailed out.

After two weeks in San Francis-  
co, what do you know? I was broke.  
I had to figure out some way to get  
to Alaska, so I told the sergeant, "I'll  
re-up providing you put me in the Air  
Corps and send me to Ladd Field in  
Fairbanks." He said, "Soldier, you  
got it."

Instead, they put me in the in-  
fantry and sent me to Chilkoot Barracks  
in Haines. And it was right at that  
point that they stopped allowing peo-  
ple to buy their way out of the Army.

A couple of guys I really admired,  
William "Sam" Bates and Don-  
ald O. Spaulding, were both in the  
Alaskan Scouts, the Alaskan com-  
bat intelligence platoon, which was  
formed in November of '41 by Colo-  
nel Lawrence Castner. His plan was  
to have a small group of men be the  
eyes and ears for the Army in Ala-  
ska. They had to be capable of living  
off the land: trappers, miners, fisher-  
men, people like that. They would be  
taught mapmaking and Morse code  
and a whole lot of other stuff. I went  
and was selected.

I immediately went to see Lieu-  
tenant Thompson, who was work-  
ing in a tent. I reported to him as  
was customary, with a salute, but he  
didn't salute me back. He just said,  
"Welcome. Have a seat at the type-  
writer. I've got some guys who want  
to go to town, and they need pass-  
es, so you'll be typing them." I had



Ed Walker, second from left, with the Army's "Castner's Cutthroats" combat intelligence unit on Amchitka Island during World War II after they had gone weeks without significant food.

'em, didn't you? So sign 'em."

I said to myself: Lordy, I love this  
outfit.

We could wear anything we want-  
ed. My uniform was a pair of wool  
GI pants, a civilian button-up sweat-  
shirt, a Fillson jacket and a wind par-  
ka 'cause we were going to be out  
in the boonies carrying a big, heavy  
pack and you didn't need a great big  
parka.

We had several Natives from var-  
ious places. They knew dogs, and  
they knew how to fish. We also had  
Big Jake, a Finlander, an excellent  
carpenter; he could build anything.

When the Japanese bombed  
Dutch Harbor in Unalaska, we went  
there right away. The Navy offered to  
take us into Adak by submarine. We  
didn't know what the situation was  
there, and 37 of us were going to find  
out. This was August of '42.

Wilbur Church and I were teamed  
off as number one boat, but about 300  
yards from the sub, bam! Our rubber  
boat blew up. We managed to stay in  
the center; the seat was still intact,  
so that gave us buoyancy. Still, it was  
a real iffy deal.

We were hypothermic when they  
got us back on the sub, but they took  
good care of us. The next day was my  
25th birthday, and I was very glad to  
be alive.

Some of the other Scouts did  
make it to Adak and found that the is-  
land was deserted, so they flashed a  
message to the invasion force to  
land. The main objective was build  
an airfield as soon as possible as a se-  
curity against enemy forces and to  
keep up the bombing missions over  
Kiska.

I was fortunate to avoid battle, ex-  
cept in a few cases. I was in and out  
of the Aleutians on seven different

the destroyer that brought us in, the  
USS Worden, hit a rock in the har-  
bor and split in two. I never imagined  
that a ship could go down so fast.  
Fortunately, I had all my gear and  
my packboard on, though that made it  
incredibly difficult to get to shore.  
I helped rescue one of our guys. Ar-  
nold "Shaky" Akers, and took him to  
a barabara to get warm. I went back  
to the beach to see what was going  
on, and all our guys had made it. Sad-  
ly, 14 sailors drowned.

Captain Thompson's plan was to  
plot where the Japanese were. We  
would sneak around with walkie talk-  
ies and relay what we learned. We  
accomplished that task in only three  
days. After that, General Landrum  
had a lot more communication.

The wind blows constantly in the  
Aleutians. Due to the horrible weath-  
er they couldn't supply us with food,  
so we went days and days with no  
food of any consequence.

I had eight guys in my troop.  
There was a cabin where we were on  
Amchitka — it had been a fox farm —  
and we moved into it. There was an  
other group of Scouts on the other  
end of the island.

We ate all the C rations we had,  
then we started scroumging around  
on the beach. One day I found an ap-  
ple, which we cut into eight pieces,  
and we really treasured that little bit  
of food. We tried to shoot ducks, and  
we did shoot them, but without ex-  
ception, they always fell into the wa-  
ter and floated away.

One day, I pulled up some beach  
grass, it was about 2 feet high. It  
came right up, and the roots looked  
like they were edible, so I got out my  
knife and cut off a few inches, wiped  
the dirt off and started chewing on it.  
And lordy, it tasted so good, it tast-

that whole knoll was bald, we pulled  
up all the grass and ate it. And that  
helped, darn right it did.

One day, Reinhart Berg found a  
box of oatmeal in a lean-to. It was so  
soaked with mold, it was a solid lump  
that stood freely without the box  
holding it. I told him he'd better put it  
in something to preserve it, because  
we might get even hungrier. At that  
time, we'd gone about 15 days with-  
out much of anything to eat.

Finally we tried the oatmeal,  
though Reinhart warned me it was  
no good. I put a few spoonfuls of it  
in my bowl and sat down, just as  
though I was belying up to a good  
meal. I swallowed a bite and, oh boy,  
it bounced right back up. Fortunate-  
ly, we had saved our coffee grounds.  
We boiled them so many times they  
eventually turned white.

So we kept eating roots, and they  
helped us tremendously; we ate a  
bundle of those. By then we had gone  
28 days without any real food. Final-  
ly Captain Thompson was able to get  
word to headquarters that we were  
desperate for supplies.

There were so many lakes around  
us, we figured that if they did come to  
resupply us in an airplane, the sacks  
would likely land in a lake. That's ex-  
actly what happened, too.

I retrieved the two sacks, and we  
all ran back to the cabin, thrilled at  
the thought of a feast. We dumped  
the sacks out, and to our disgust,  
they were both full of shoe packs. We  
couldn't believe it. We even thought  
about boiling the darn things to see  
if we could eat the leather, but we  
didn't. Our only option was to gather  
more roots.

Ed Walker's story continues next  
week.

H-97-48

# AMCHITKA

Anchorage Daily News 11/23/03 P. D-3 Part 1 of a 2-part profile.

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—Bureau of Land Management

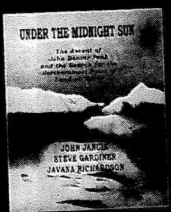
## READING THE NORTH

Recent books of interest to Alaskans

### Under the Midnight Sun

John Jancik, Steve Gardiner and Javana Richardson; Photos by Galen Rowell  
End Creations, \$29.95

The blurb: "In 2001, the Return to the World Expedition journeyed to the Arctic Circle to Greenland to climb many of its unclimbed peaks. A team dedicated to this expedition to the glory of legendary singer-songwriter Denver, in honor of his commitment to the environment and protection of the wilderness. On July 18, 2001, the expedition summited the highest unclimbed peak in Greenland's Roosevelt Range and, with support from John's family and the governor of Colorado, named this mountain John Jancik Peak."



cerpt: "Even though it was July, the temperature was 37 degrees and ice was everywhere. Our 10-person team, spread across the frozen Arctic Ocean, had been waiting for hours though thigh-deep pools of water, searching for any clue that would lead us to Oodaaq Island, the tiny speck of rock, the northernmost land on Earth. Difficulties plagued us. Already, photographer Galen Rowell had fallen through the ice, drenching his clothing and camera. Peter Skatte had also plunged into a deep pool, and expedition co-leader Jancik had green lam dry clothing and a change into them on the sea ice. Each step, icy water filled our boots, soaked our pants. How much more of this icy cold water could our feet en-

### Skin: A Legend of the Thunderbird

anna Joe  
Created by Jamie Jeffries  
Wood Editions, \$7.95

The blurb: "Chaska is the fourth in a series of legends of the Suvvutl Natives, whose best-selling titles 'Sam' and 'How the Robin Got Its Red Breast' layk the Grizzly Bear, are told in the oral tradition. Beautifully illustrated in black and white Native drawings, the simple enough to be enjoyed by readers 4 to 7 and engaging enough to be enjoyed by readers of all ages."



cerpt: "Spelmuh was the father of his people. When he first came to the inlet, he had no place to live, but the land of the Tsunay River was forested in cedar trees, and Spelmuh chopped the largest of these. He wanted to use the roof beams for a great longhouse, but they were too heavy for him to raise up on ground. So he will I make a longhouse for my people. If I cannot raise these beams," he thought. Then, he heard a noise like thunder coming from the highest of the nearby mountains, and the sky darkened overhead. He looked up and saw a bird like an eagle except much, much larger."

“One day, I pulled up some beach grass. ... The roots looked like they were edible. ... Lordy, it tasted so good.”

ED WALKER

# Starving on Amchitka

Interview by SHARON BUSHELL

I was born in a small town in California in 1917, the fourth of eight children, and grew up in Merced. In 1937, I joined the Army. Our basic training was at Angel Island. One day they told us, "Get packed up. You're going to Hawaii." Boy, that sounded good to me. On the fifth day, we got to Honolulu, and I joined my group, the 8th Field Artillery, Battery B.

Within a few months, I decided I wanted out of the Army. I could see right away there was no way I could fit in. I just wasn't cut out to be a soldier. One of my ongoing miseries was that I was 6 foot 4 and a pretty big guy, and the uniform we wore practically choked me to death. Plus, in all honesty, I have to say, I'm just not a rules-and-regulations kind of guy. In those days you could buy your way out of the Army, but you had to have a year in before you were eligible, and it cost \$125.

The powers that be figured out they could get the most out of me by detailing me to play football and basketball. That made things a whole lot better. I did some soldiering too, I was a gunner.

After three years, I left Hawaii, having just read a bulletin that said, "Opportunities Hot and Cold." The "cold" was Alaska. That interested me, so I tried to get more data and was thrilled to receive a handwritten letter from the registrar at the college in Fairbanks. The stories she told me about Alaska had me totally dazzled.

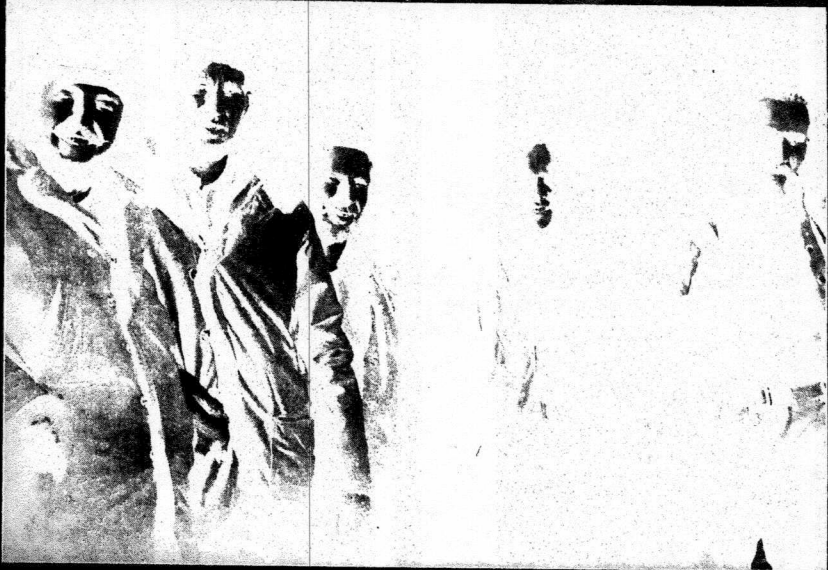
Alaska sounded like a magical place to me. I talked two of my buddies into going with me, but at the last minute they both bailed out.

After two weeks in San Francisco, what do you know? I was broke. I had to figure out some way to get to Alaska, so I told the sergeant, "I'll re up providing you put me in the Air Corps and send me to Ladd Field in Fairbanks." He said, "Soldier, you got it."

Instead, they put me in the infantry and sent me to Chikoot Barracks in Haines. And it was right at that point that they stopped allowing people to buy their way out of the Army.

A couple of guys I really admired, William "Sam" Bates and Donald O' Spaulding, were both in the Alaskan Scouts, the Alaskan combat intelligence platoon, which was formed in November of '41 by Colonel Lawrence Castner. His plan was to have a small group of men be the eyes and ears for the Army in Alaska. They had to be capable of living off the land, trappers, miners, fishermen, people like that. They would be taught mapmaking and Morse code and a whole lot of other stuff. I wanted that, so I made application for it and was selected.

I immediately went to see Lieutenant Thompson, who was working in a tent. I reported to him as was customary with a salute, but he didn't salute me back. He just said, "Welcome. Have a seat at the typewriter. I've got some guys who want to go to town, and they need passes, so you'll be typing them." I had never used a typewriter before, but with the one-finger method I managed it. When I had 'em all written and typed, I said, "Lieutenant, you signs these?" He said, "You wrote



Ed Walker, second from left, with the Army's "Castner's Cutthroats" combat intelligence unit on Amchitka Island during World War II after they had gone weeks without significant food.

em, didn't you?" So sign 'em." I said to myself, "Lordy, I love this outfit."

We could wear anything we wanted. My uniform was a pair of wool GI pants, a civilian button-up sweat shirt, a Fillson jacket and a wind parka, 'cause we were going to be out in the booms carrying a big, heavy pack and you didn't need a great big parka.

We had several natives from various places. They knew dogs, and they knew how to fish. We also had Big Jake, a Finlander, an excellent carpenter, he could build anything.

When the Japanese bombed Dutch Harbor in Unalaska, we went there right away. The Navy offered to take us into Adak by submarine. We didn't know what the situation was there, and 37 of us were going to find out. This was August of '42.

Wilbur Church and I were teamed off as number one boat, but about 300 yards from the sub, bam! Our rubber boat blew up. We managed to stay in the center, the seat was still intact, so that gave us buoyancy. Still, it was a real dry dead.

We were hypothermic when they got us back on the sub, but they took good care of us. The next day was my 25th birthday, and I was very glad to be alive.

Some of the other Scouts did make it to Adak and found that the island was deserted, so they flashed a message to the invasion force to land. The main objective was building an airfield as soon as possible as a security against enemy forces and to keep up the bombing missions over Fiska.

I was fortunate to avoid battle, except in a few cases. I was in and out of the Aleutians on seven different trips, always for months at a time. I did all kinds of work, securing the islands and scouting for Japanese.

I nearly died in the main landing on Amchitka in January of '43, when

the destroyer that brought us in, the USS Worden, hit a rock in the harbor and split in two. I never imagined that a ship could go down so fast. Fortunately, I had all my gear and my packboard on, though that made it incredibly difficult to get to shore. I helped rescue one of our guys, Arnold "Shaky" Akers, and took him to a barabara to get warm. I went back to the beach to see what was going on, and all our guys had made it. Sadly, 14 sailors drowned.

Captain Thompson's plan was to plot where the Japanese were. We would sneak around with walkie-talkies and relay what we learned. We accomplished that task in only three days. After that, General Landrum had a lot more communication.

The wind blows constantly in the Aleutians. Due to the horrible weather, they couldn't supply us with food, so we went days and days with no food of any consequence.

I had eight guys in my troop. There was a cabin where we were on Amchitka—it had been a fox farm—and we moved into it. There was another group of Scouts on the other end of the island.

We ate all the vegetables we had, then we started scavenging around on the beach. One day I found an apple, which we cut into eight pieces, and we really treasured that little bit of food. We tried to shoot ducks, and we did shoot them, but without exception, they always fell into the water and floated away.

One day, I pulled up some beach grass. It was about 2 feet high. It came right up, and the roots looked like they were edible, so I got out my knife and cut off a few inches, wiped the dirt off and started chewing on it. And lordy, it tasted so good, it tasted exactly like peas in a pod before they've matured.

So I pulled up a bunch more and took 'em down to where we lived and gave 'em to the guys. In nothing that

that whole knoll was bald, we pulled up all the grass and ate it. And that helped, darn right it did.

One day, Reinhart Berg found a box of oatmeal in a lean to. It was so soaked with mold, it was a solid lump that stood freely without the box holding it. I told him he'd better put it in something to preserve it, because we might get even hungrier. At that time, we'd gone about 15 days without much of anything to eat.

Finally, we tried the oatmeal, though Reinhart warned me it was no good. I put a few spoonfuls of it in my bowl and sat down, just as though I was bellying up to a good meal. I swallowed a bite and, oh boy, it bounced right back up. Fortunately, we had saved our coffee grounds. We boiled them so many times they eventually turned white.

So we kept eating roots, and they helped us tremendously. We ate a bundle of those. By then we had gone 25 days without any real food. Finally, Captain Thompson was able to get word to headquarters that we were desperate for supplies.

There were so many lakes around us, we figured that if they did come to resupply us in an airplane, the sacks would likely land in a lake. That's exactly what happened, too.

I retrieved the two sacks, and we all ran back to the cabin, thrilled at the thought of a feast. We dumped the sacks out, and to our disgust, they were both full of shoe packs. We couldn't believe it. We even thought about boiling the darn things to see if we could eat the leather, but we didn't. Our only option was to gather more roots.

Ed Walker's story continues next week.

Sharon Bushell lives and writes in Homer. Her books, "We Alaskans" and "We Alaskans II" feature her stories about Alaska pioneers that have appeared in the Daily News. For more information, visit her Web site at [www.wealaskans.com](http://www.wealaskans.com).

## ITCHIE: Proper perspective on worrying makes it easier to get to sleep

Continued from D-1

re's little evidence of people worrying, and of years ago.

When my worries become particularly troubling, I eat chocolate or cut my hair. All of the women I know do things like this when they are worried. That makes me feel better, and the best part

will have to borrow some from a friend, which will embarrass him.

My dog worries that the vacuum will suck up her tail, that the cats will eat her chew bone,

ly sedan alongside SUVs during rush hour. So perhaps my worries are age-old cues from inside a nervous system charged for more excitement and danger than my life presently affords. Per