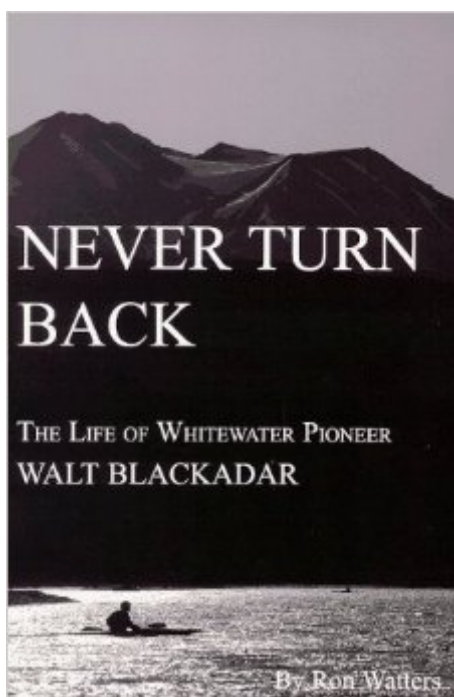


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Never Turn Back: The Life Of Whitewater Pioneer Walt Blackadar



Synopsis

Never Turn Back is the gripping and compelling life story of Dr. Walt Blackadar, a physician from a small town in Idaho. At the age of 49, he shocked the outdoor world when he made a solo kayak journey down the treacherous rapids of Turnback Canyon on the remote and wild Alsek River in Canada and Alaska. Blackadar's accomplishment on Turnback Canyon was the river equivalent of the first ascent of Everest, and when excerpts from his Alsek journal were published in Sports Illustrated, he became an instant sensation. He was at the top of his sport at an age when most athletes are long retired. Then suddenly, his spectacular rise veered wildly off course when a young woman tragically died on one of his kayaking expeditions. Heartbroken over her death and plagued with mounting physical problems, his kayaking technique began to deteriorate. Yet he had a spirit that was irrepressible, and pitting himself in a race against his body's clock, he sought out and faced off against the world's most formidable whitewater.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In August 1971, after three days of paddling his fragile kayak through a wilderness of bears and glaciers, Walt Blackadar, a doctor from Salmon, Idaho, tackled what is arguably one of the worst stretches of white water in the world- Turnback canyon on the Alsek river. He was forty nine years old and he was alone. His solo run of Turnback canyon was one of the major breakthroughs in the history of white water kayaking and has been compared to the first ascent of Everest without oxygen. Although techniques and technologies improve, psychological barriers define what is possible. Walt's run of Turnback, no matter how exaggerated it may have been in hindsight, blew

those definitions wide open. In *Never Turn Back*, Ron Watters, himself no slouch when it comes to river running, tells the story of this impressive man. Although born in the eastern United States, Blackadar went west looking for adventure. He didn't take up white water kayaking until he was in his forties. He quickly established a reputation through his pioneering runs on the biggest white water in the states. The chapters dealing with Blackadar's solo run are the core of this book, an inspiring description of one man pitting himself willfully against the possibility of his own annihilation. *Turnback* made Walt a celebrity. Seven years later he was dead. Watters deals honestly with Blackadar; he comes across as a loud, brash, boozy man. He also describes Walt's failures and there are some great stories along the way. Blackadar, like Mike Jones, died in 1978. Unlike Jones, Walt died in what seems a stupid accident on a Saturday morning paddle on a local river. The image of him causally trying to drawstroke his boat from under the log he was pinned against is one of the book's most haunting images.

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