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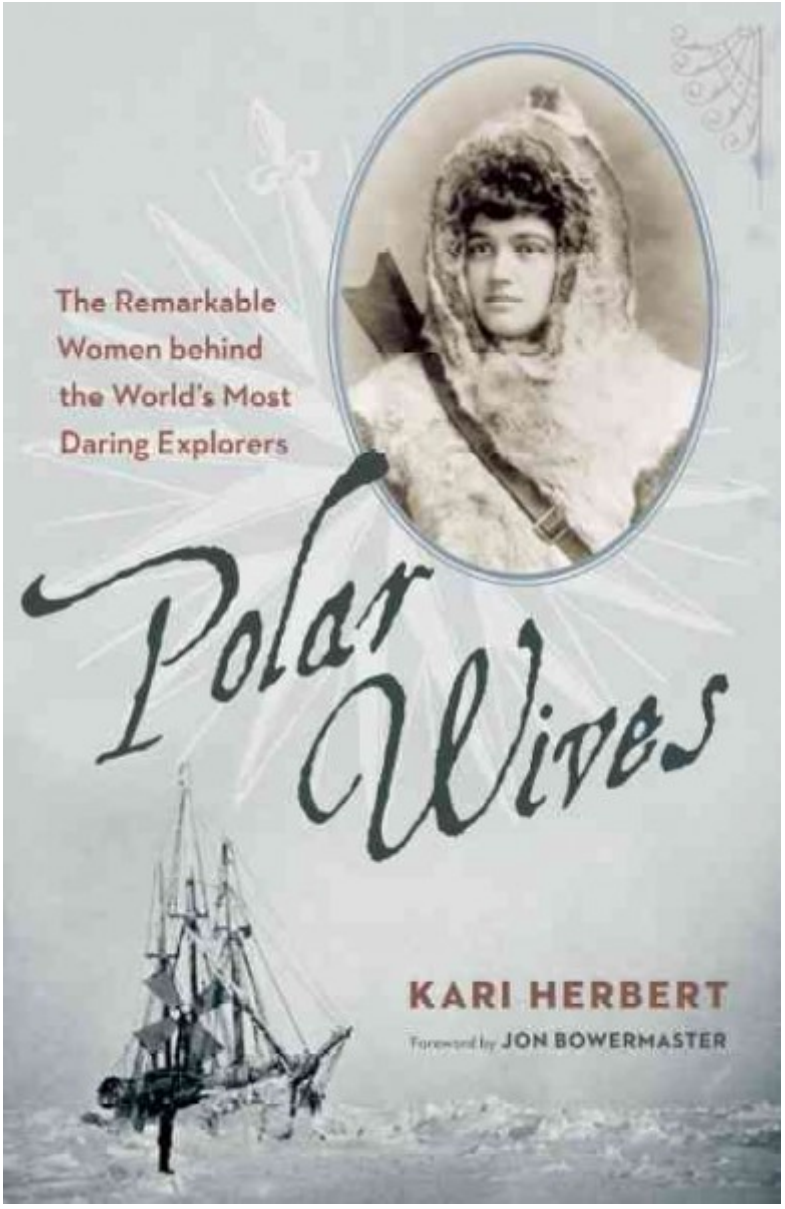
Polar Wives: the Remarkable Women behind the World 's Most Daring Explorers



view in catalog [1]

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What a cool (pardon the pun) idea for a book. We read so much about men who have conquered the poles or Everest but hardly anything about the women who have explored alongside them or have waited patiently at home. The author knows both how it feels to travel to remote places on dangerous missions and also the anxiety and deep worry that comes with being left at home?she?s the daughter of two explorers, Wally and Marie Herbert. She conceived the idea for this book while camping with her father in a tent on a Greenlandic glacier thirty years ago.

Many of the famous arctic and Antarctic explorers? wives are featured here beginning with Lady Jane Franklin, the powerful and persistent lady that pushed for rescue expeditions to find her husband?s ship. Also included are portraits of Jo Peary, Eleanor Anne Franklin, Eva Nansen, Marie Herbert (the author?s mother), Emily Shackleton,

and Kathleen Scott.
What struck me most reading*Polar Wives* [2]was how talented the woman were in their own right, for instance, Eva Nansen was a leading singer in Norway while Kathleen Scott was a very talented British actress. In addition, Eleanor Anne Franklin, first wife of Sir John, was a Romantic poet who died young at age twenty-nine. Sir John then married her dear friend, Jane.

Imagine how it felt to watch your spouse ship away for a three, four, or five year journey to the coldest and most inaccessible parts of our planet. In the chapter ?An Eagle in the Backyard? the author describes the feelings of both Emily Shackleton and her husband Ernest on the British docks. To make matters even worse, many explorers died on these journeys as Sir John Franklin and Robert Falcon Scott did.

Not only do you get a feel for the climate, the incredible challenges of exploration, trekking over ice fields, spending months on an ice-bound ship, but you also see a more personal side of these explorers, how much they relied on letters and contact with their spouses while they pursued their dreams. The author used a lot of first hand resources: letters and diaries along with many conversations with descendents of these explorers. When you're feeling homebound, perhaps snowbound this winter, try this interesting book.

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Posted by Dory L. on Nov 21, 2012

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