



John in his hometown 4th of July parade.

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Location: United States of America

Here's John's interview with the main site for expedition news, thepoles.com

[Reprinted from thepoles.com](http://thepoles.com)

During the 2009 Arctic ski season John Huston and Tyler Fish became the first Americans to ski unsupported, unassisted to the North Pole.

This was John's second Pole after the South Pole. In an interview he compared the two Poles, the different clothes he was wearing and the strategies he applied to beat the cut off times at the end of the expeditions. He talked about these and more to ExWeb's Correne Coetzer.

ExplorersWeb: You bagged both South Pole and North Pole. How did they compare?

I thought the North Pole was a lot more fun, for the most part I really enjoyed route finding through the rubble and hopping over ridges. Days and marches pass much more quickly on the Arctic Ocean.

The South Pole is so much simpler and safer but windier, much more monotonous and with worse whiteouts. I definitely felt colder on the Arctic Ocean but did not miss the wind of Antarctica. The warm tent-life in Antarctica was luxurious compared to the humidity and deep cold of the Arctic Ocean.

ExplorersWeb: Both times you had to race against time at the end. What strategies did you use on the two expeditions to be at the specific Pole before the season's end?

Antarctica 07/08: We rolled the clock and operated on a 30-hour day for the last 20 calendar days of the expedition. We took a mid-day 2-3 hour break in the tent, which allowed us to nurse a few injuries and rest.

Arctic Ocean 09: We rolled the clock to a 27-hour day, but quickly fell behind schedule due to a southerly drift of up to 6-8 nm per 24 hours. We realized that the southern drift incurred while sleeping was costing a chance at the pole.

For the last 66 hours we skied 12 hours, set up the tent for a meal and a 1-hour nap and then started another 12 hours on the march. During that last push we were a bit slower than we wanted to be in the tent, but we wanted to be patient and cautious because our minds were starting to lose focus a bit.

ExplorersWeb: In the interview before you left you said your biggest fear is, besides Tyler's snoring, the first few days. Did Tyler snore? The first days were tough. How do you remember them?

Yes, Tyler did snore, but it did not cost me too much sleep. I think he felt worse about it than I did. The first days were tough, but I look back on them as relatively easy compared to the final push.

During the final few days we actually wore more layers even though it was 50°F warmer, our bodies had lost the ability to stay warm in the end. The first days were cold, but manageable. We slept a lot, took extra care to have safe comfortable routines and burned extra fuel.

ExplorersWeb: What kept you going?

Strong, patient, healthy routines were our engine. In the end we were fully committed to do whatever it took to reach the pole unsupported and unassisted. In the short term, the chance to eat another fudge bar at the next break was a big incentive.

Rune Gjeldnes has said, "The body can do a lot if the mind will let it." I totally believe in that statement.

ExplorersWeb: Did your clothes differ from what you were wearing on the South Pole expedition?

Yes, a little bit. On both expeditions I wore Bergans of Norway outerwear very similar to what Rune Gjeldnes and Torry Larsen designed when they crossed the Arctic Ocean in 2000. It breathed well, had excellent fit and function and was very versatile.

In Antarctica I wore my goggles every day, on the Arctic Ocean I only wore sunglasses. On the Arctic Ocean we brought more layers of fleece because we did not wear our down layers inside

the tent. On both expeditions I wore Bryjne long underwear, warm, versatile, durable and expedition worthy.

ExplorersWeb: You and Tyler worked well as a team. What was your secret?

Our secret is: no secrets, no complaining! We've worked together for years, respect each other's motivations, have similar values and are honest with each other. We've had our disagreements, but we were always moving forward interpersonally.

We ended the trip closer than we began. Skiing-wise our pace and flow matched perfectly. We really focused on self-care the whole way, we never hesitated to change a layer or adjust a boot if needed.

ExplorersWeb: You had a great reception in Norway when you got off the ice. How was your reception in the USA where skiing to the North Pole is not so well known as in Norway?

Our reception in Norway was a product of our friends and family coming together. We named our expedition company Forward Expeditions after the Fram, so it was the perfect place to celebrate. We've had quite a bit of media attention in the states. In the States we get a lot more of the 'why' and the 'huh?' questions. We'll have celebrations in the U.S. in the coming months.

ExplorersWeb: What advice would you give to future polar skiers?

Plan and prepare like Amundsen did...with humility, attention to detail, learning from those who went before and with a self-critical mind.

ExplorersWeb: Did this change/enrich your life? How?

From the expedition I feel I have a new identification with patience and perseverance. I found the unrelenting power of the Arctic Ocean to be very humbling. Even though there is very little life on the ice, the Arctic Ocean is the most 'alive' force of nature I have ever encountered.

ExplorersWeb: Any future plans?

Write our book this summer. Public speaking. I'm thinking about trying the Norseman Ironman triathlon. I'll likely do fun trips for a while. Who knows after that...?

ExplorersWeb: Anything you want to add?

Thanks to all who followed along and sent us supportive messages!

(Ed note: Check in tomorrow for an interview with Tyler Fish looking back at the experience and talking about the food, his scariest moment, team work, not having a rest day, what kept him going and advice to adventurers who wants to ski to the North pole.)

John Huston and Tyler Fish became the first Americans to ski unsupported, unassisted to the

North Pole. They arrived at the Pole on 25 April 2009 after sledge-hauling 54 days from Ward Hunt Island, Canada.

In 2007-08 John guided an expedition from Hercules Inlet to the South Pole and is also an experienced sled-dog handler. He was born on August 14, 1976 and lives in Chicago, IL. John is running our expedition company, Forward Expeditions, and does public speaking. He said he comes from a very close family of 5 and "have a lovely girl friend at home in Chicago".

His favorite book is "War and Peace", by Leo Tolstoy. When he was skiing to the South Pole he read "Anna Karinina" again (which he cut in half for resupplies). This time, with no resupplies he took a lightweight book of Tolstoy short stories. John's favorite movie is "Godfather I and II" and he said his favorite food is "Mexican, Indian, Italian, Steaks, just about anything ethnic, I really miss guacamole." As for music, "I'm an old time Blues fan, also some jazz, rock, anything with a groove."