



# 81 Days Below Zero: The Incredible Survival Story of a World War II Pilot in Alaska's Frozen Wilderness

*Brian Murphy*

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Shortly before Christmas in 1943, five Army aviators left Alaska's Ladd Field on a routine flight to test their hastily retrofitted B-24 Liberator in harsh winter conditions. The mission ended in a crash that claimed all but one—Leon Crane, a city kid from Philadelphia with no wilderness experience. With little more than a parachute for cover and an old Boy Scout knife in his pocket, Crane now found himself alone in subzero temperatures. Crane knew, as did the Ladd Field crews who searched unsuccessfully for the crash site, that his chance of survival dropped swiftly with each passing day.

But Crane *did* find a way to stay alive in the grip of the Yukon winter for nearly twelve weeks and, amazingly, walked out of the ordeal intact.

*81 Days Below Zero* recounts, for the first time, the full story of Crane's remarkable saga. In a drama of staggering resolve and moments of phenomenal luck, Crane learned to survive in the Yukon's unforgiving wilds. His is a tale of the capacity to endure extreme conditions, intense loneliness, and flashes of raw terror—and emerge stronger than before.



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