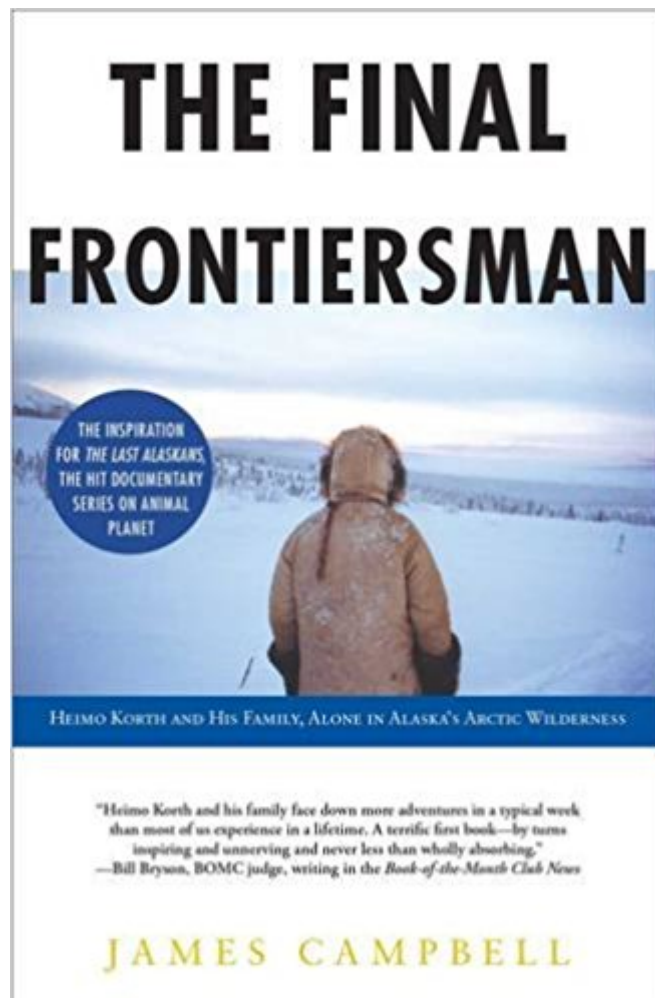




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# The Final Frontiersman: Heimo Korth And His Family, Alone In Alaska's Arctic Wilderness



## Synopsis

The inspiration for *The Last Alaskans*—the eight-part documentary series on the Discovery Channel! Called “[one of] the greatest life-or-death-tales ever told” (Esquire), James Campbell’s inimitable insider account of a family’s nomadic life in the unshaped Arctic wilderness “is an icily gripping, intimate profile that stands up well beside Krakauer’s classic [Into the Wild], and it stands too, as a kind of testament to the rough beauty of improbably wild dreams” (Men’s Journal). Hundreds of hardy people have tried to carve a living in the Alaskan bush, but few have succeeded as consistently as Heimo Korth. Originally from Wisconsin, Heimo traveled to the Arctic wilderness in his feverous twenties. Now, more than three decades later, Heimo lives with his wife and two daughters approximately 200 miles from civilization—a sustainable, nomadic life bounded by the migrating caribou, the dangers of swollen rivers, and by the very exigencies of daily existence. In *The Final Frontiersman*, Heimo’s cousin James Campbell chronicles the Korth family’s amazing experience, their adventures, and the tragedy that continues to shape their lives. With a deft voice and in spectacular, at times unimaginable detail, Campbell invites us into Heimo’s heartland and home. The Korths wait patiently for a small plane to deliver their provisions, listen to distant chatter on the radio, and go sledding at 44° below zero—all the while cultivating the hard-learned survival skills that stand between them and a terrible fate. Awe-inspiring and memorable, *The Final Frontiersman* reads like a rustic version of the American Dream and reveals for the first time a life undreamed by most of us: amid encroaching environmental pressures, apart from the herd, and alone in a stunning wilderness that for now, at least, remains the final frontier.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Heimo Korth was one of the many young men who set out for Alaska in the 1960s and '70s to recreate the life of early fur traders in the American West, a movement first observed in John McPhee's classic *Coming into the Country*. Journalist Campbell has written a worthy sequel to McPhee's book that is a powerful tale in its own right, focusing solely on Korth, who now "lives more remotely than any other person in Alaska" as one of only seven hunter-trappers with a permit to live in the 19.5-million-acre Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). Korth lives with his wife and two daughters 130 miles above the Arctic Circle, the only settlers for more than 500 miles (250 miles from the nearest road and another 300 miles to the nearest hospital in Fairbanks). Campbell artfully details a number of visits he makes to the Korth family in 2002, as he accompanies Korth on hunting and trapping expeditions that make him "and the reader" feel "transported straight back into the 19th century." He also sympathetically recounts Korth's flight from his abusive Wisconsin father and his reinvention of himself as an Alaskan "legend," a "gun-toting, park-hating anti-animal rights trapper with a soft side" but one who is well respected by managers of the ANWR. What makes this more than just a profile of a fascinating personality is Campbell's deft weaving of Alaskan history into Korth's tale, showing how the recent influx of developers and ecotourists is making the trapping life "more of an anachronism with each passing year." Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

By the mid-1970s, countercultural attitudes had propelled so many wilderness seekers to Alaska that writer John McPhee gave an account of them in *Coming into the Country* (1976). Over several visits in 2002, Campbell absorbed the life story of one such emigrant from the lower 48, Heimo Korth, who happens to be his cousin. Korth traps fur-bearing animals to generate what little cash he makes, and hunts caribou, moose, and fowl for his food. Campbell's observation of the shooting and skinning this necessitates is objective, leaving nothing to imagination. Retrospectively, Campbell relates why Korth moved to Alaska (partly due to antagonism with his father), followed by incidents in his marriage to a native woman and their raising of three daughters (one of whom died in an awful canoeing accident) along a remote tributary of the Yukon River. Because the author perceptively describes how teenagers Rhonda and Krin feel about growing up in such isolation, the circle of interest for Campbell's well-organized work will encompass fans of coming-of-age stories in addition

to those intrigued by unconventional lifestyles. Gilbert TaylorCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

After watching "The Last Alaskans" and enjoying the show it is a pleasure to read this story to fully understand the real story behind Heimo and Edna North. Just a small glimpse into what makes them the way they are and their experiences was very interesting. This book combined with the tv show makes me feel as though I've known them for a lifetime. Wonderful story !

Great book about a one of a kind man. Very insightful into what life in the wild is really like. I wasn't as interested in the politics behind all the legislation, but it gave me a sense that people in Alaska are a special breed. I learned that folks in the lower 48 have their ideas about how Alaska should be managed and have never been there. Democrats want to preserve everything to the point that people can't make a living and Republicans want the oil. Looks like a no win situation. I would like to have heard more about Heimo and his life on the trap line and more about his family. Overall, a great read and complement to the docuseries, "The Last Alaskans".

If you like watching the show "The Last Alaskans" you will love this book. It gives you an insight into the personality and background of Heimo Korth and his family. Heimo is truly a frontiersman who knows how to survive under the most adverse conditions. Whether you want to live off the land or not this book gives you a great insight into living in the wild and is also very entertaining. I highly recommend it.

Anyone who is interested in Alaska should read this book. Very well written account of Heimo's life in the most remote part of Alaska. I am a fan of the series Last Alaskan's and have a much better idea of how and why Heimo went there to live in the wilderness alone and why he stays. The book explains very well about the dangers of rivers, hunting, the remoteness, miles of traveling on foot for food and surviving the severe cold that can get down to 50 below zero that most of us who had never experienced it don't have a good understanding of what it actually takes to live there. I've read several books about Alaska and this one goes right to the top of my list.

Awesome book! If you enjoy watching The Last Alaskans, you will LOVE this book.

I watch the TV program but learned so much more from the book. The background on laws

regulating their lives was revealing and sad. They are brave and courageous people.

I rated this a 5 star book based on how well it kept my interest. A good read will do that. I felt as though I was right there, running the trap line, watching the girls play, listening to the easy conversation between family members. I worried when someone wasn't feeling well, hoped for successful hunts and felt somewhat sad when I finished the book. I could have done with a little less history of the things that went on between different frontiersmen and the government but that information would probably be welcomed by some readers. I had seen the documentary first and because of it especially enjoyed the book, being able to picture both Edna and Heimo, the sound of their voices and patterns of speech. The book was well written, James Campbell did an excellent job of telling the story. My only regret is there is not a sequel. (Mr. Campbell that WAS a hint. For anyone who has ever dreamed about living such an isolated life I think you would enjoy this. I also learned quite a bit about Alaska and the Arctic Circle. The book piqued my interest to read more about both, independent of the book. A door opener to increasing my own knowledge base.

Engrossing read, especially for lovers of nature and hard-core adventure. Just enough "grit" for those who need that. I'm a huge fan of the genre' so I may be biased. Sometimes the read was "choppy" - going back-and-forth in sequence but overall a fantastic read. Couldn't put it down. Highly recommended.

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