



Anything Worth Doing: A true story of adventure, friendship and tragedy on the last of the West's great rivers

Jo Deurbrouck

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National Outdoor Book Award winning 'Anything Worth Doing' tells the unforgettable true story of larger-than-life whitewater raft guides Clancy Reece and Jon Barker, two men who share a love of wild rivers and an unbending will to live life on their terms, no matter the cost.

Clancy's motto, 'Anything worth doing is worth overdoing,' leads them into a decade of beautiful—and beautifully strange—river adventures. Then, on June 8, 1996, in pursuit of a 24-hour speed record they intend to share only with a handful of friends, the men launch Clancy's handmade dory, his proudest possession, onto Idaho's renowned Salmon River at peak flood of an extreme high water year. This time the odds catch up with them.

With clarity reminiscent of Krakauer's 'Into the Wild,' whitewater veteran Jo Deurbrouck carries us down the West's great rivers and into the hearts, minds and homes of that rare breed for whom security is optional but freedom and passion are not. 'Anything Worth Doing'—taut and efficient, yet rich with insight—is well on its way to becoming an adventure classic.

Anything Worth Doing: A true story of adventure, friendship and tragedy on the last of the West's great rivers Details

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Camilla Severns says

This is an incredible tale. I wish I could give a more in-depth review, but my mind has been rocked to the core by this story and its vivid retelling. Wow.

Karen says

This is an excellent book that I greatly enjoyed! Idaho and Pacific northwest friends, especially, take a look!! You will find references to Deer Gulch; Salmon, ID; North Fork, ID; Middle Fork Salmon river confluence; various named rapids; Vinegar Creek boat ramp (end of the road from Riggins, ID); Spring Bar; and Riggins, ID. There is also a trip chronicled that goes through Stanley, ID and on to Riggins, ID; then Asotin, WA; Lewiston, ID; then through the dams (Lower Granite, Little Goose, Lower Monumental, Ice Harbor, McNary, John Day, the Dalles, Bonneville); then on to Portland and the Columbia River bar. This is home territory for Idahoans, and here it is powerfully described in an absorbing narrative. I was struck by how seamlessly Deurbrouck works in facts with story and how quickly the tale moves forward. The writing is exquisite. Thanks, Jo, for putting Idaho and the Pacific northwest on paper!!! A wonderful example of the nonfiction of place...

Steve Troutman says

In most corners of this land, long gone are the open expanses of water and forests. But where they still remain, adventure lurks around every corner. That adventure calls on a few... some experienced and some not. The former are simply living while the latter are trying to escape. Regardless of who though, danger almost always accompanies adventure.

This book is a testament to simple living and respecting the land. It also provides a glimpse into the life of river guides. It's beautifully written and will connect to any outdoor enthusiast who enjoys his or her fair share of adventure.

It also stands as a firm reminder, at least for me, that when adventuring, minimize your risks by ensuring the obvious I's are dotted and T's are crossed. With a little luck and experience, you'll live to tell your stories to your grandchildren.

caroline says

I started this book on the second day of my Main Salmon trip and didn't know it was about the river. While the river was only running at 5k, reading this book in my tent at night had me excite for a day of raging

water! Good read and great story of friendship and how rivers bring people together

Bob says

This is an amazing read. The story is poignant and inspiring at once - all the more for being true. Jo Deurbrouck's writing fits the story perfectly: crisp, clear and vibrant, like whitewater. The tension of the story is amazingly held despite the lack of mystery about the ending. I am giving this book especially to my paddling friends.

Stacie says

Jo is a good story teller. I particularly loved the way she moved back and forth in time while relating this true story, managing to keep me in the present while taking me back to the beginning. I was afraid, when I first realized this was how it would be, that I wouldn't be riveted by Clancy's final run, but no fear. Even knowing the outcome, I couldn't put the book down once I'd reached the "point of no return." I finished it breathless as if I'd been alongside the river watching it unfold. Good read.

Linda says

Writing a book with a cast of living characters can be as confounding as navigating the whirling waters of a wild river. At every turn, the author feels the weight of her characters' reactions to how they have been portrayed. Creatively writing about real events is just as confounding as writing about living characters. Just how does one breathe life into the narrative while staying faithful to the facts? The facts themselves drive questions about what is real and what is imagined. Somehow Jo Deurbrouck has successfully mined these treacherous waters with skill and grace in her book *Anything Worth Doing*.

The book tells a harrowing tale of two men whose friendship is built upon mutual respect, shared values for adventure, and shared love of interacting with moving water. The book is as much about loyalty and kinship as it is about adventure. Both men are driven to reach for stars that seem unreachable. Formerly a professional guide on the Lochsa River in Idaho, Deurbrouck employs her own knowledge about rivers, water, and the people who love rivers to develop her characters and offer insight into why two men would feel compelled to ride the untamed Salmon River at its precise peak, challenging themselves to log as many miles as possible in one uninterrupted 24-hour period.

By steering clear of too much jargon, Deurbrouck's book is accessible to any reader, river rat or lay person. It's a page turner to the very end. Thankfully, *Anything Worth Doing* is not overdone. It's done just right.

Rob Baker says

I randomly bought this book at the North Fork, ID, cafe/mini-mart (because I had just finished "Tarzan of the Apes", which I had picked up at a used bookstore in Laramie, WY) unaware that that very business appears

in the book several times, or that, as we traveled on to Salmon and Stanley, both of those places would also show up in the book as would the Sawtooth Range and, most prominently, the Salmon River. I'm not sure I would have enjoyed the book quite as much as I did if I hadn't been experiencing its settings first hand as I read, and if I hadn't gone river rafting for the first and second time in my life (on the Salmon River!) during that time as well.

That being said, this is a remarkable story and a beautiful book. Author Jo Deurbrouck's moving and engaging, often poetic, prose brings to life the two unique protagonists and the river/lifestyle they love and fight to maintain as the wilderness around them is tamed, the rivers dammed into submission.

Two of my favorite quotes:

"On a shrunken planet where nearly every mountain bears bootprints and every mile of river has been run, being 'first' tends to require creative task definition" (111).

"...one of those moments had just passed, a moment in which normalcy becomes crisis and then flips back so fast it's hard to hang onto the significance of what has just happened" (143).

Jo Deurbrouck says

Ok so you can't review your own book. And I won't BUT I do get to click the five star rating to show how great it feels, after 17 years of hired-pen work and two books I couldn't get comfortable with, to have a title that I really, really like

Kurt says

Some of my favorite books are non-fiction adventure stories -- books like *Into Thin Air: A Personal Account of the Mt. Everest Disaster*, *Kon-Tiki*, and *Touching the Void: The True Story of One Man's Miraculous Survival*. I suppose a lot of this has to do with the fact that I fancy myself a light-weight version of an adventurer; so reading great stories like these can mentally, if not physically, transport me to the time and the place in which the adventure is actually happening, all from the safety and comfort of my living room.

Anything Worth Doing deserves a place among the very best of true adventure books. This story of three men's disastrous attempt at floating more than 200 miles in a single day on the flood-swollen Salmon River is as compelling as anything I have ever read. The author is a former river guide herself and is well-acquainted with the Salmon river. Her descriptions of river conditions, the environment, the experiences, and the personalities are wonderful.

Cathy says

It was interesting to read this right after I re-read *The Emerald Mile* by Kevin Fedarko. Different rivers and different terrain ; same whitewater/river/terrain/lifestyle addiction ; sadly, different ending. These people fascinate me.

Karin says

Wow! This book had my adrenaline surging like the Salmon River during floodwater stage. If you've ever had the privilege of rafting, kayaking or boating down a great river (or just dream of it), you'll want to read this. Plus, Ms. Duerbrouck's descriptions ring so true. "What the young man had not found was the thing he most wanted, a place so right for him that he'd stick like a well-thrown dart into cork, a place that would complete him like the woods had his silent father." Her prose is like a Mary Oliver poem that lodges in your memory of a well-loved place.

Naseem says

Excellent book, and a great example of how the mainstream publishing world just does not get it. The author, in her acknowledgements says the work was rejected "by nearly every other publisher in the world." That's a shame, as Jo Duerbrouck's book is a very well written, exceptionally informative, and totally engaging look at not just a couple of notable characters who took river running to an extreme, but also of the land and waters that make up the Pacific Northwest. I highly recommend this book and plan to give it to friends. This is a book to be enjoyed by adventurers, and stay at home dreamers.

Meera says

Disclaimer: Jo and I know each other on Twitter, although not terribly well and certainly not well enough to make me inflate my praise for her book, which is lithe and fast-moving and marvelous. It is also (almost) wholly unsentimental, which is a difficult feat considering the story it tells. If there is one thing Jo fails to do, it is surpass the clear, calm, heart-catching writing of her own subject--from whose "doodles" she is wise to include generous excerpts--but no one could have been expected to do that. This is a book for river-lovers, sailors, adventure-seekers and admirers of adventure-seekers. It can (and probably will) be read in less than a day. But as with the most momentous of the trips it chronicles, that day will compress time and space.

Kara says

I bought this for my husband, then read it myself -- an adventure story of / tribute to Clancy Reece, a professional raft guide who died on the river. Having rafted the Grand Canyon and kayaked numerous California rivers, I enjoyed the adventure story aspect of this book -- I always do! But the writing was weak and didn't feel polished. At times, the narration was too self-conscious, and the story too heavily written as a personal tribute to a person I didn't really feel like I knew. I remain quite curious about the lack of safety precautions on the fatal trip. What about Clancy's nature made him feel like he didn't need a dry suit? Understanding this aspect of his personality would have made for a better story.
