



▲ Ousland and Horn at North Pole

In the darkness of the Arctic night, a helicopter landed on the north coast of Russia. Boerge Ousland and Mike Horn were beginning one of the most amazing expeditions in history. It was January 22, and they planned to walk 600 miles (965 kilometers) to the North Pole—in winter.

There is no land at the North Pole, only ice that floats and moves. It's always a dangerous place, but winter is the worst. The sun doesn't come up for three months, and the temperature can be -40°F . But Boerge grew up in Norway, and he started skiing and climbing mountains as a boy. Mike Horn was a champion athlete from South Africa. They were ready for the challenge.

The two explorers wanted to set out right away, but the ice was moving too fast. They were waiting in their **tent** when Boerge heard a strange noise. "Mike, is that you?" Boerge asked. Suddenly, the tent ripped open. It was a polar bear! While they were looking for their gun, the bear grabbed some of their food. They didn't sleep very well that night.

The next day, they packed up their equipment and started their journey. They walked on skis, and pulled **sledges** behind them. The sledges could float on water and slide on snow. When the explorers came to open water, they had to swim. They put on waterproof suits over their clothes and got into the icy water, five or six times a day. When they weren't in the water, they were ski-walking. It wasn't light enough to see, so they used **headlamps**.

Every day, they skied and swam north. And while they were sleeping, the ice carried them south. But they kept on for 10 hours every day, covering 15 miles (24 kilometers) each day. They were getting close to the Pole when Mike became very ill. Blood was coming from his nose and ears. They had a cell phone, but Mike didn't want to give up and call for help. He took medicine from their **emergency kit**, and he slowly got stronger. And every day, the sky got a little bit lighter.

On March 23, Boerge checked his **GPS**. The North Pole was 1000 yards (914 meters) away. "I've been there before," Boerge told Mike. "You've never been. You go first."

"No," Mike said. "We'll do it together." And together, the two explorers walked to the Pole, and took this amazing photo.

