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## Book Review: Island of The Lost: Shipwrecked at the Edge of the World by Joan Druett

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# Academic Leadership Journal

## Book Review

Island of The Lost: Shipwrecked at the Edge of the World by Joan Druett

Algonquin Books – May 17, 2007 – ISBN-10: 1565124081

284 pages,

Reviewed by: Peter A. Maresco, Ph.D.

There should be a genre of books devoted to survival leadership.

This is NOT just another book about survival and surviving. Well, it is a book about survival but from two very different leadership perspectives.

Books about surviving disaster at sea are nothing new. Books that capture the spirit of leadership while at sea are also nothing new. There was Captain Bligh from Mutiny on the Bounty who because of his lack of leadership was cast adrift with several of his men only to use his leadership skills to sail thousands of miles eventually reaching safety. There was Moby Dick and Captain Ahab who as a leader sealed the fate of his men, all except one, to certain death because of his resolve and compulsion to kill the great white whale.

In recent years several books have been published dealing with disasters at sea but not usually from a leadership perspective. They have dealt more with mutiny, disaster, survival and in some cases, rescue. The leadership piece was there but you usually had to dig for it. A sampling of these novels include Demon of the Waters: The True Story of the Mutiny on the Whaleship Globe by Gregory Gibson, Desperate Journeys,, Abandoned Souls: True Stories of Castaways and Other Survivors by Edward E. Leslie, The Wreck of the William Brown: A True Tale of Overcrowded Lifeboats and Murder at Sea by Tom Koch and In the Heart of the Sea; The Tragedy of the Whaleship Essex by Nathaniel Philbrick. Now comes Island of the Lost: Shipwrecked at the Edge of the Word by Joan Druett. Simply stated, what separates this book from the rest of the survival genre is that it deals with two shipwrecks occurring within six months of each other, both on the same uninhabited island with two distinctively different leaders attempting to survive along with their men in a daunting and very hostile environment.

Island of the Lost: Shipwrecked at the Edge of the World, is indeed about leadership. The basic story line is about two ships, their captains, and the role that leadership or lack of it, played in their survival. The first ship to wreck was the schooner Grafton, captained by Thomas Musgrave with a crew of four that had left Sydney, Australia intending to locate a major source of argentiferous tin rumored to be on Campbell Island located off the southern coast of New Zealand in the sub-Antarctic region. It was shipwrecked at Midnight, January 3, 1864. Five months later, on May 3, 1864 another ship, the 888-ton freighter Invercauld, captained by George Delgado with a crew of 15, was on its way to Peru to take on a cargo of fertilizer. The Invercauld shipwrecked on May 10, 1864. Within 6 months of each other both ships shipwrecked off the coast of Auckland Island, one of the most isolated and uninhabited island in

the sub-Antarctic located two hundred and eighty-five miles south of New Zealand. Over a two year period all four crew members and Captain Musgrave of the Grafton survived. It was a different story for Captain Delgado and the crew of the Invercauld. Of its nineteen member crew, including the captain, only Delgado and three crew members survived.

The leadership portion of the book is embedded in the storyline. Musgrave, unlike Delgado, exhibited leadership that included strong communication skills and an ability to listen to the suggestions of others. He was also able to put his ego aside and listen to and trust in others who had skill sets from his own. By working as a team the men of the Grafton built a sturdy shelter, hunted sea lions, and built a boat that resulted in them finally being rescued. On the other hand, and on the other side of the island, just twenty miles away, Delgado exhibited none of the leadership skills necessary to keep his men alive in a hostile environment that included freezing rain, driving snow and gale force winds. His men constantly argued, went off on their own for no apparent reason and had no plan for survival. There was constant in-fighting, selfishness and even cannibalism.

Eventually both parties were rescued. The crew of the Grafton through resourcefulness and the crew of the Invercauld through pure luck.

What separates this book from other survival novels is the direct comparison of the leadership styles used by two men who through an act of fate found themselves on the same island, at the same time, and survived; in the case of the Invercauld and its crew, just barely. Both of these men were captains but only one exhibited true leadership.

A perfect compliment for any leadership class.

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