

Buddy Levy –Storyteller, Creative, Collaborator



Buddy Levy is the author of eight books and his work has been featured or reviewed in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, NPR, TIME, USA Today, *The Washington Post*, *The Washington Times*, *Kirkus Book Reviews*, *Publisher's Weekly*, *Booklist*, *The Daily Beast*, *The A.V. Club* and *Library Journal*. He was the co-star, for 25 episodes, on HISTORY Channel's hit docuseries Brad Meltzer's DECODED, which aired to an average of 1.7 million weekly viewers and is still airing as reruns today. In 2018 he was an on-camera expert on the 4-part TV Series *THE FRONTIERSMEN: The Men Who Built America* (HISTORY, Executive Producer Leonardo Di Caprio).

Levy was a contributing writer on the 2018 documentary film *The Weight of Water*. The film was based in part on the book *No Barriers*, which Levy co-authored with blind adventurer Erik Weihenmayer. The film premiered at the 2018 Banff Mountain Book and Film Festival, where it won the Grand Prize and the Best Mountain Film Award. It has since won The People's Choice Award for Best Documentary at the 2018 Denver Film Festival; Best Sport and Adventure Film at the 2018 Mendi Bilbao Film Festival; and Audience Choice Award at the 2019 Waimea Ocean Film Festival.

Levy's most recent book is the forthcoming *Empire of Ice and Stone: The Disastrous and Heroic Voyage of the Karluk* (St. Martin's Press, December 6, 2022). His book *Labyrinth of Ice: The Triumphant and Tragic Greely Polar Expedition* (St. Martin's Press, 2019) won the Banff Mountain Book Festival Award for Adventure Travel and a National Outdoor Book Award for history. Levy is the author of the National Bestseller *No Barriers: A Blind Man's Journey to Kayak the Grand Canyon* (with Erik Weihenmayer; Thomas Dunne Books, 2017); *GERONIMO: The Life and Times of An American Warrior* (co-authored with Coach Mike Leach, Simon & Schuster, 2014) and *River of Darkness: Francisco Orellana's Legendary Voyage of Death and Discovery Down the Amazon* (Bantam Dell, 2011). His other books include the critically acclaimed and Amazon #1 Bestseller *Conquistador: Hernan Cortes, King Montezuma, and the Last Stand of the Aztecs* (Bantam Dell, 2008), which he is currently developing for a television series; *American Legend: The Real-Life Adventures of David Crockett* (Putnam, 2005, Berkley Books, 2006); and *Echoes On Rimrock: In Pursuit of the Chukar Partridge* (Pruett, 1998). His books have been published in eight languages.

As a freelance journalist Levy has covered adventure sports and lifestyle/travel subjects around the world, including working with TV impresario Mark Burnett on numerous Eco-Challenges, and other adventure expeditions in Argentina, Borneo, Europe, Greenland, Morocco, and the Philippines. His interests are wide-ranging: discovery and adventure, the mountain men, arctic exploration travail, clashes of empires and civilizations, conspiracy theories, and riveting human stories of survival.

Current Projects

***Empire of Ice and Stone: The Disastrous and Heroic Voyage of the Karluk* (Dec 6, 2022, St. Martin's Press—suited for feature film or limited series).**

***Labyrinth of Ice: The Triumphant and Tragic Greely Polar Expedition* (St. Martin's Press 2019; Major Award Winner—suited for feature film or limited series)**

CONQUISTADOR—Clash of Empires. 1 Hour TV Drama Series x 10 Episodes x 5 Seasons
Based on his book *Conquistador*.

CONQUEST—The Inca's Last Stand. 1 Hour TV Drama Series X 10 Episodes X Five Seasons
Based on his book *River of Darkness*.

THE LOST COLONY—Rise of the Revenants. Reimagined historical fiction. Book and TV Series Proposal. Based on his 100-page proposal and treatment.

WIND CHILL—A Novel Follows the daring and deadly sport of Adventure Racing, made famous by Mark Burnett's Eco-Challenge. Completed manuscript. Adaptable to feature film or series.

HEADNOISE—Completed feature film script. *A River Runs Through It* meets *Children of a Lesser God*.

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THE TRIUMPHANT AND
— TRAGIC —
GREELY POLAR EXPEDITION

LABYRINTH
of ICE

B U D D Y L E V Y

Buddy Levy—Other Books and Projects

Labyrinth of Ice: The Triumphant and Tragic Greely Polar Expedition

(St. Martin's Press, December 3, 2019). Narrative history. Swashbuckling adventure.

In July 1881, Lt. A.W. Greely and his crew of 24 scientists and explorers were bound for the last region unmarked on global maps. Their goal: Farthest North. What would follow was one of the most extraordinary and terrible voyages ever made.

Greely and his men confronted every possible challenge—vicious wolves, sub-zero temperatures, and months of total darkness—as they set about exploring one of the most remote, unrelenting environments on the planet. In May 1882, they broke the 300-year-old record, and returned to camp to eagerly await the resupply ship scheduled to return at the end of the year. Only nothing came.

250 miles south, a wall of ice prevented any rescue from reaching them. Provisions thinned and a second winter descended. Back home, Greely's wife worked tirelessly against government resistance to rally a rescue mission.

Months passed, and Greely made a drastic choice: he and his men loaded the remaining provisions and tools onto their five small boats and pushed off into the treacherous waters. After just two weeks, dangerous floes surrounded them. Now new dangers awaited: insanity, threats of mutiny, and cannibalism. As food dwindled and the men weakened, Greely's expedition clung desperately to life.

Labyrinth of Ice tells the incredible true story of one of the most harrowing adventures in the annals of polar exploration, and of the heroic lives and deaths of these voyagers hell-bent on fame and fortune—at any cost—and how their journey changed the world.

Praise for *Labyrinth of Ice*—

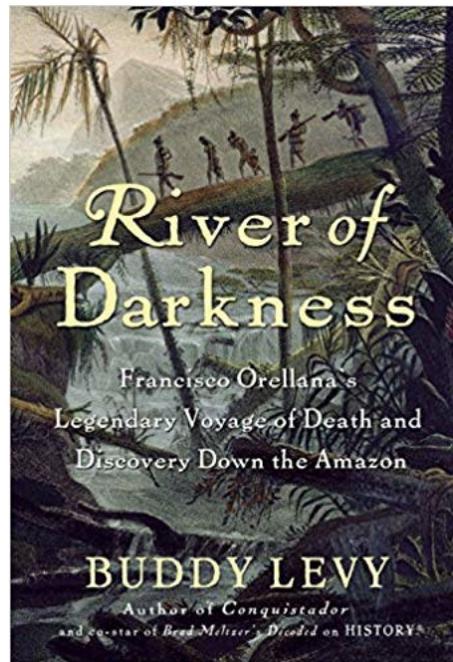
"Buddy Levy offers an engaging, superbly written, and meticulously researched chronicle of the Greely expedition that proves it is one of the most engaging adventure narratives ever. With cinematic prose, great economy of language, and vivid descriptions, Levy places readers in the middle of the action and makes them see the snow, feel the hunger and the tension, and hear the cracking of the ice, which the men called "the Devil's symphony." More than a nonfiction book about an expedition, *Labyrinth of Ice* reads like an outstanding script for an action movie. *Labyrinth of Ice* is a riveting, engaging read packed with superhuman feats, incredible journeys, amazing discoveries, tension, heartbreak, and constant danger. It is also a true tale — and that makes it a book that demands to be read." Gabino Iglesias, NPR

<https://www.npr.org/2019/12/04/784403792/greelys-polar-expedition-faces-heartbreak-amid-heroism-in-labyrinth-of-ice>

"A thrilling and harrowing story. If it's a cliché to say I couldn't put this book down, well, too bad: I couldn't put this book down." —Jess Walter, bestselling author of *Beautiful Ruins*

"Polar exploration is utter madness. It is the insistence of life where life shouldn't exist. And so, *Labyrinth of Ice* shows you exactly what happens when the unstoppable meets the unmovable. Buddy Levy outdoes himself here. Superb." —Brad Meltzer, #1 NY Times Bestselling Author.

River of Darkness: Francisco Orellana's Legendary Voyage of Death and Discover Down the Amazon (Bantam Books, 2009; Diversion Books March 2022). Narrative history. High adventure.



From the acclaimed author of *Conquistador* comes this thrilling account of one of history's greatest adventures of discovery. With cinematic immediacy and meticulous attention to historical detail, here is the true story of a legendary sixteenth-century explorer and his death-defying navigation of the Amazon—river of darkness, pathway to gold.

In 1541, the brutal conquistador Gonzalo Pizarro and his well-born lieutenant Francisco Orellana set off from Quito in search of La Canela, South America's rumored Land of Cinnamon, and the fabled El Dorado, "the golden man." Driving an enormous retinue of mercenaries, enslaved natives, horses, hunting dogs, and other animals across the Andes, they watched their proud expedition begin to disintegrate even before they descended into the nightmarish jungle, following the course of a powerful river. Soon hopelessly lost in the swampy labyrinth, their numbers diminishing daily through disease, starvation, and Indian attacks, Pizarro and Orellana made a fateful decision to separate. While Pizarro eventually returned home barefoot and in rags, Orellana and fifty-seven men, in a few fragile craft, continued downriver into the unknown reaches of the mighty Amazon, serenaded by native war drums and the eerie cries of exotic predators. Theirs would be the greater glory.

Interweaving eyewitness accounts of the quest with newly uncovered details, Buddy Levy reconstructs the seminal journey that has electrified adventurers ever since, as Orellana became the first European to navigate and explore the entire length of the world's largest river. Levy gives a long-overdue account of the native populations—some peaceful and welcoming, offering sustenance and life-saving guidance, others ferociously hostile, subjecting the invaders to gauntlets of unremitting attack and intimations of terrifying rituals. And here is the Amazon itself, a powerful

presence whose every twist and turn held the promise of new wonders both natural and man-made, as well as the ever-present risk of death—a river that would hold Orellana in its irresistible embrace to the end of his life.

Overflowing with violence and beauty, nobility and tragedy, *River of Darkness* is both riveting history and a breathtaking adventure that will sweep readers along on an epic voyage unlike any other.

Praise for River of Darkness—

"River of Darkness immediately takes its place as the definitive book on one of the great voyages into the unknown of all time, Orellana's accidental first descent of the Amazon. Not only is it a solid contribution to the scholarly literature on Amazonia, but it is a riveting and irresistible read, narrative history of a literary quality rarely encountered that compares with Alan Moorehead's great books on the Nile. Bravissimo !" -- Alex Shoumatoff, contributing editor, Vanity Fair; publisher DispatchesFromTheVanishingworld.com, and author of *In Southern Light*, *The Rivers Amazon*, and *The World is Burning*

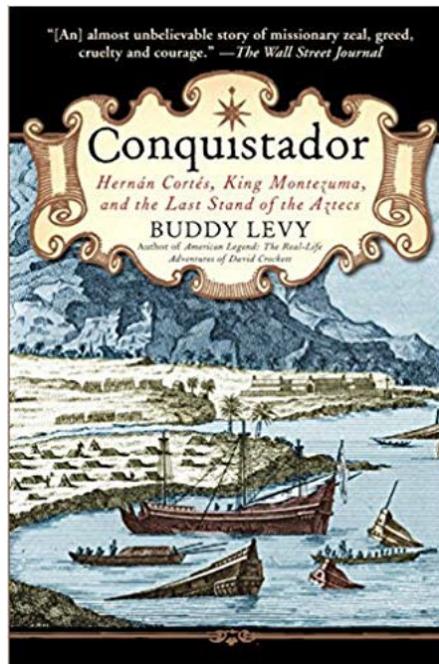
"In River of Darkness, Buddy Levy proves that the scariest stories are the true ones. Filled with fascinating details and the terror that comes with exploring something for the very first time, this is history coming back to life."

- Brad Meltzer, Bestselling author of *The Book of Fate* and *The Inner Circle*

"Buddy Levy is one of those rare and gifted authors whose books are virtual time machines that effortlessly transport us back through centuries. In *River of Darkness*, we participate in one of history's signal explorations, Francisco Orellana's descent of the Amazon River. We see blood, smell smoke, hear screams of joy and agony. Levy's impeccably researched book is at once harrowing adventure and revealing history. Better than any in recent memory, *River of Darkness* sheds new light—and reveals the darkest aspects—of the Conquistadors' brave and bloody New World forays."

-James M. Tabor, Author of *Blind Descent: The Quest to Discover the Deepest Place on Earth*.

Conquistador: Hernan Cortes, King Montezuma, and the Last Stand of the Aztecs (Bantam Books, 2009). Narrative history/military history. Action/Adventure



It was a moment unique in history—the face-to-face meeting between two men from civilizations a world apart. In 1519, Hernan Cortes arrived on the shores of Mexico, determined not only to expand the Spanish empire but to convert the natives to Catholicism and carry off a fortune in gold. That he saw nothing paradoxical in carrying out his intentions by annihilating a proud and accomplished native people is one of the most remarkable and tragic aspects of this unforgettable story.

In Tenochtitlan (modern day Mexico City) Cortes met his Aztec counterpart, Montezuma: king, divinity, commander of the most powerful military machine in the Americas, and ruler of a city whose splendor equaled anything in Europe. Yet in less than two years, Cortes—using guile and political savvy, ruthlessness, cunning, and his secret weapon—his interpreter/mistress slave girl Malinche—Cortes defeated the Aztec nation in one of the most astounding battles ever waged. It is a story for the ages, filled with religious zealotry, sexual intrigue, battles on sea and on land—*CONQUISTADOR* is epic in every sense of the word.

Praise for Conquistador—

“The Greatest Story Every Told”—Jeremy Schaap, ESPN

"For sheer drama, no age compares to the age of exploration, no explorers compare to the conquistadors and no conquistador compares to Hernan Cortes. In Buddy Levy's finely wrought and definitive *Conquistador*, the worlds of Cortes and Montezuma collide and come to life. Five hundred years after the conquest, the Cadillo and his prey have been made human. To read *Conquistador* is to see, hear and feel two cultures in a struggle to the death with nothing less than the fate of the western hemisphere at stake. Prodigiously researched and stirringly told, *Conquistador* is a rarity: an invaluable history lesson that also happens to be a page-turning read."—Jeremy Schaap, best-selling author of *Cinderella Man: James J. Braddock, Max Baer and the Greatest Upset in Boxing History*, and *Triumph: The Untold Story of Jesse Owens and Hitler's Olympics*

"Sweeping and majestic...A pulse-quickenning narrative."—Neal Bascomb, author of *Red Mutiny: Eleven Fateful Days on the Battleship Potemkin*

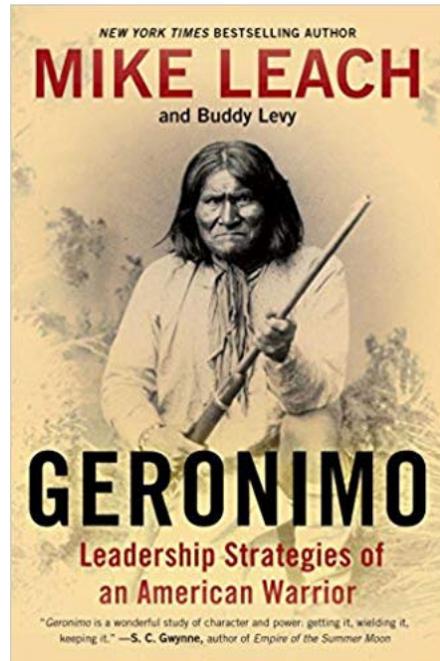
"A century before the *Mayflower*, a single man settled the destiny of the Americas far more momentously than the Puritans ever could....*Conquistador* offers a fascinating account of the first and most decisive of those encounters: the one between the impetuous Spanish adventurer Cortés and Montezuma, the ill-starred emperor of the Aztecs.... [An] almost unbelievable story of missionary zeal, greed, cruelty and courage."—*Wall Street Journal*

"Drawing heavily on both Spanish and Aztec sources.... [Levy stresses] the military strategy, diplomatic initiatives, and personal relationship between Cortés and Aztec emperor Montezuma.... Well-written.... Highly recommended."—*Library Journal*, starred review

"A fateful meeting of civilizations.... Cortes is front and center in this book.... [Levy's] description of the final siege on Tenochtitlan is especially dramatic."—Associated Press

"Explores just how far invaders will go to take what they want."—Cape Cod Times

Geronimo: Leadership Strategies of an American Warrior (Gallery Books, Simon & Schuster, 2015). Narrative history. Leadership. Adventure.



“In the hands of Mike Leach and Buddy Levy, the story of this brilliant Apache leader comes into sharp focus, both in their narrative of his life and in spirited commentaries on its meaning” (S.C. Gwynne, author of Pulitzer Prize finalist *Empire of the Summer Moon*).

Playing cowboys and Indians as a boy, legendary college football coach Mike Leach always chose to be the Indian—the underdog whose success turned on being a tough, resourceful, ingenious fighter. And the greatest Indian military leader of all was Geronimo, the Apache warrior whose name is so symbolic of courage that World War II paratroopers shouted it as they leaped from airplanes into battle.

Told in the style of Robert Greene’s *The 48 Laws of Power*, Leach’s compelling and inspiring book examines Geronimo’s leadership approach and the timeless strategies, decisions, and personal qualities that made him a success. Raised in an unforgiving landscape, Geronimo and his band faced enemies better armed, better equipped, and more numerous than they were. But somehow they won victories against all odds, beguiling the United States and Mexican governments and earning the respect and awe of those generals committed to hunting him down. While some believed that Geronimo had supernatural powers, much of his genius can be ascribed to old-fashioned values such as relentless training and preparation, leveraging resources, finding ways to turn defeats into victories, and being faster and nimbler than his enemy. The tactics of Geronimo would be studied and copied by the US military for generations.

Pain, pride, humility, family—many things shaped Geronimo’s life. In this “compelling book that humanizes a man many misunderstood” (New York Times bestselling author Brian Kilmeade), Mike Leach illustrates how we too can use the forces and circumstances of our own lives to build true leadership today.

Praise for Geronimo—

“Highly compelling.” *The Wall Street Journal*

“Mike shares the character of a true American badass ... and he shows how that character can be put to practice in the game we’re all in: the game of life.” –Matthew McConaughey

“Shows how traits like ambition, independence, discipline, and audacity can take a person from good to great—and even from great to legendary. The lessons here are fascinating and useful.”

--Donald Trump

“A compelling book that humanizes a man many misunderstood.” –Brain Kilmeade, *New York Times* bestselling author of *George Washington’s Secret Six*.

THE WEIGHT OF WATER



SERAC ADVENTURE FILMS PRESENTS
A LAVA FALLS FILM PRODUCTION OF THE WEIGHT OF WATER
FEATURING ERIK WEIHENMAYER LONNIE BEDWELL HARLAN TANEY ROB RAKER
WRITTEN AND EDITED BY AUBRY HOLLINGSHEAD ROXANNE HARBITTER
WRITTEN BY VICKIE CURTIS BUDDY LEVY DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY ANDY MASER
CINEMATOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL BROWN ANDY MASER HARLAN TANEY
ROBERT RAKER SETH DAHL DIGITAL COLOR CORRECTION DAVE KRAHLING
MUSIC BY CHRIS BACON GAD EMILE ZEITUNE FINE CUT EDITING BY CASEY NAY
MATT CORLISS RYAN FENSON-HOOD JASON REID
SOUND RERECORDING MIXER STEVE BOEDEKER SKYWALKER SOUND
POSTER AND WEB ART BY MY TRAN CO-PRODUCERS ED WEIHENMAYER ELLEN WEIHENMAYER
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER SKYLER WILLIAMS FIELD PRODUCER HARLAN TANEY
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER ERIK WEIHENMAYER LINDA BUONANNO JULIA BUONANNO

WRITTEN DIRECTED AND PRODUCED BY MICHAEL BROWN

WWW.WEIGHTOFWATERMOVIE.COM



The Weight of Water—(Documentary Film, 2018). Based in part on Buddy Levy and Erik Weihenmayer’s book *No Barriers: A Blind Man’s Journey to Kayak the Grand Canyon*. Grand Prize Winner of the 2018 Banff Film Festival. Adventure narrative.

<https://vimeo.com/276085173> Trailer here

In September, 2014 Erik Weihenmayer set out to do what many deemed impossible: to whitewater kayak the length of the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon—all 277-miles. He would paddle his own kayak, solo, using only the voice commands of his guide, his kayaking skills, and his courage to navigate the most famous rapids in the world. He would kayak them ... blind.

The Weight of Water is a thrilling adventure story and an exploration of the human spirit. It’s the story of a remarkable and transformative person who was born with a congenital eye disease and was completely blind by the age of 13. At around the same time his mother died tragically in a car accident. Erik was crushed, scared, vulnerable and lonely. His greatest fear was being swept to the sidelines and forgotten—just the blind kid in the corner, listening to life pass him by.

Eventually, with the support of his father and brothers, Erik climbed out of that dark place and he went on to summit Mount Everest—making history and the cover of Time Magazine. He shattered perceptions about what was possible for a blind person. On his descent from Everest, his climbing guide Pasquale said to Erik: “Don’t make Everest the greatest thing you ever do.” They were words Erik would never forget.

The Weight of Water explores how Pasquale’s words forced Erik to contemplate the meaning of his life. It’s about how he took what he learned on Everest and began to build a kind of map, a way of approaching life with an intense purpose. Erik’s story is about living a life that isn’t defined by barriers. It’s about what he calls “alchemy,” a process of taking the lead in your life and transforming it into gold. It’s not easy, and there is blood and carnage and fear and anguish along the way. Erik’s process becomes an emotional and cathartic journey into balancing grief with family and friendship and adventure.

Kayaking white water is the most difficult and most terrifying pursuit that Erik has ever attempted. It forces him to reckon with himself and his own limitations. The film is an intimate look at a heroic journey from a vulnerable insider’s perspective.

The Weight of Water is about searching for and finding real meaning in our lives. Erik has an intimate relationship with fear. He uses fear to fuel his drive. In a way, fear is the source of his strength. Are the risks Erik takes worth all that he has to lose? Erik has a beautiful family who support his lofty aspirations of climbing the world’s highest mountains and running the world’s biggest rapids. But every time Erik Weihenmayer leaves on an expedition, there is the very real possibility that he will not come home ...

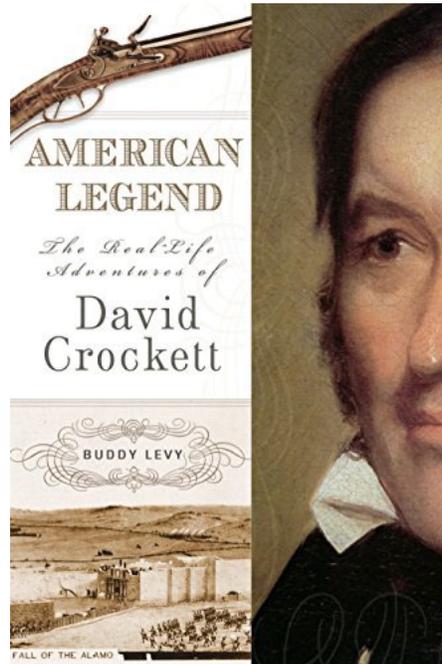
Praise for *The Weight of Water*—

“In the end, we selected the film that touched us most deeply – the one that caused us all to shed some tears. The human achievement that was the focal point of this work gripped us and the emotional journey of the main protagonist as the narrative unfolded was palpable, while also being exquisitely subtle. We were moved. We were immensely inspired. And we were drawn into the story

so intensely, we felt a part of the exhilaration of an unimaginably hard-won accomplishment.”—
Jury, Banff Film Festival.

***American Legend: The Real-Life Adventures of David Crockett* (Penguin/Putnam, 2005)**

The Popular biography of one of America’s most enduring symbols of the Old West.



David Crockett was an adventurer, a pioneer, and a media-savvy national celebrity. In his short but distinguished lifetime, this charismatic frontiersman won three terms as a U.S. congressman and a presidential nomination. His 1834 memoir enjoyed frenzied sales and prompted its enormously popular author to embark on the first-ever official “book tour.” Down to earth, heroic, and independent to a fault, the real Crockett became lost in his own hype—and he’s since been overshadowed by a larger-than-life, pop-culture character in a coonskin cap.

American Legend debunks the tall tales to reveal the fascinating truth of Crockett’s hardscrabble childhood, his many near-death experiences, his unlikely rise to Congress—and the controversial last stand at the Alamo that mythologized him beyond recognition. In this beautifully written narrative, Crockett emerges as never before—a rugged individual, a true American original, and an enduring symbol of the Western frontier.

Praise for *American Legend*—

“A great myth-busting story that presents Davy Crockett as a man of genius and folly, which has the unlikely effect of making him all the more heroic.”—Martin Dugard, Author of *Killing Lincoln*, *Killing Kennedy*, and *The Last Voyage of Columbus*.

“As spellbinding and dramatic as any novel and as compelling as any reportage.” –Peter Hoffer,
Distinguished Research Professor of History, The University of Georgia.

“Meticulously researched.” –Booklist