

## Bitterroot Valley explorer, partner circumnavigate Ellesmere Island

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### The walrus was a surprise.

Jon Turk saw it first - a flash of color silently streaking under his kayak.

The next second, the water boiled close to his partner's boat as the walrus breached the surface.

"I thought for sure that the walrus was going to kill Boomer," Turk said this week, while hunkered down in his delightfully-crowded office hidden in the woods in the West Fork of the Bitterroot Valley.

"I could see the tusks right over this head," Turk said, his eyes gleaming.

Turk and Erik Boomer were well into their epic adventure as the first to circumnavigate the treacherous coastline of Ellesmere Island off Greenland's west coast when they met the walrus.

Easing their kayaks through narrow ribbons of water, the men were focused on the dangers of the moving ice and the bone-chilling water below.

"We were making our way through tight ice," Turk said. "We were looking for a way through. At that moment, I didn't think we were in any real danger..."

On Aug. 19, they returned to the tiny town of Grise Fiord where they'd started.

Turk wrote in his journal: "Friday, Aug. 19 - Camped last night.



Jon Turk said he was blessed with a healthy body that didn't age fast and an ability to push himself to near death.

Grassy place. Warm today. Feet very swollen and sore. Very. Complete circumnavigation. Yahoo. Now to get home."

Thirty-nine hours later, Turk's kidneys shut down as a storm closed the community off from the outside world. A company called Global Rescue arranged the medical evacuation to Ottawa that saved his life.

"I had purchased a [membership] with Global Rescue, a company that promises that if you're in trouble, they will come and get you any place in the world," Turk said. "They found an incredible bush pilot that came in through the storm and without a doubt, saved my life."