



# Coming Out of the Ice: An Unexpected Life

*Victor Herman*

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## **Coming Out of the Ice: An Unexpected Life** Victor Herman

This astonishing true story is the tale of a young American man who was sent to the Soviet Union with his parents by the Ford Motor Company to set up an auto plant. He was eventually thrown into Soviet prisons and could not return to America until forty-five years later. During his life in and out of Russian prisons, he met and fell in love with a beautiful Russian gymnast who followed him into exile and lived with him and their child for a year in Siberia, in a caved chopped out under the ice. Theirs is the compelling story of a romance destined to thrive under even the most desperate conditions. It was 1938 when Victor Herman was inexplicably thrown into prison, after he had become a celebrity in the Soviet Union, having won acclaim as "the Lindbergh of Russia" for his flying and world-record-breaking parachute jumps. But what happened to him was a common nightmare during the Stalin years: those who survived imprisonment and torture were sent north to hard labor in the icy forests and mines, or into exile. Victor was one of the few who survived ~  
From Back Cover

## **Coming Out of the Ice: An Unexpected Life Details**

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Author : Victor Herman

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# From Reader Review Coming Out of the Ice: An Unexpected Life for online ebook

## Kris Aaron says

I give this book five stars, and would recommend that you read it. However, I also recommend that you chose perhaps a weekend or a holiday, for two reasons. One, you will need to put it down from time to time. When I reached the chapter describing CELL 39. I made it half way through the chapter then put the book down, and walked around the block many times, I think five, and breathed in the unsullied air, and heard birdsong, and children, and saw trees, grass, people who seemed happy as far as looking at them can determine such a thing, and thought, I am here, not THERE. Thanked God, if there is one, for letting me be here and not there. I walked slowly home, and told myself, when this is done I will do all I can for Amnesty International, oh yes. Then, I went back inside and finished the chapter. I did the same thing again, many times. I know for sure when the ISOLATOR was described, when men with a bit of food on their mouth and what happens next was described, and also when Victor Herman reminded me, again, how much he loved his father: "a laborer, a Socialist, a unionist" who uprooted the family from 1931 Detroit in the depths of the Depression to create a worker's paradise in the Soviet Union. He reminds me, again and again, that he loved the man who essentially delivered him into hell, and not only that, but would follow him into hell again. Then he thanks his father. I had to put the book down and digest that, because we have issues, my father and I, and I had to think things over. So, I am saying, give yourself time to read this book, it's not something you can do in a hurry. Also, ignore the people who say this is about Communism/Socialism; it is not. It is about what happens when one man has great power, and is not accountable for what he does with it. In this case it was a man who called himself Stalin (Man of Steel) but it could happen in any setting, and has. Evil has been done in the name of religions, all of them, for love of money, for National Socialism, for white supremacy, male supremacy, human supremacy (visit a PETA or Farm Sanctuary website if that confuses you), and well, just for the hell of it sometimes, for no reason at all except it made someone feel great to do it. The thing to think about is, who has power and is not held accountable and what do we do about that. What do you do the next time you see someone hurt someone (or something) else because they can. What will I do. My neighbors howl at their kids that they are useless and the kids take it out on each other. We hear them. Through the windows left open now that the weather is warm. I will think hard about what I can do about that. Maybe nothing, but I'm thinking about it now. Thank you, Victor Herman, for this book, because I'm thinking about it now and won't let it go this time.

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## Rachel says

After reading this book, I find it hard to understand why it is not in greater circulation or why it isn't more well-known. Elie Wiesel, Corrie ten Boom, and Victor Frankl are more or less household names (and rightly so), but I am baffled why more people have not read Victor Herman.

Herman's account of his life spent working in Siberian prison camps is intense. As an American unfairly charged with treason, Herman ends up spending thirty-eight years alternating between hard labor, exile, and senseless interrogation and torture. The amazing thing, however, is that he still manages to not only survive all that, but in the midst of it, fall in love, have a family, and maintain a normal outlook on life. I do have some doubts as to the complete accuracy of his account, (he wasn't able to return to the United States until 1976, and didn't write his book until some years after that), but it's unmistakable that he truly did lead an "unexpected life" (to say the least) and the fact that he was able to survive it is unbelievable. Rather than

being depressing, it is inspiring and makes me believe that I am capable of anything, absolutely anything, that life throws at me.

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### **Chris says**

Herman's suffering defies description. I read this book shortly after finishing *The Gulag Archipelago*, they work as wonderful companion pieces as each helped me better understand the other. I would recommend it to anyone interested in a fascinating biography, or a book to give greater insight into their study of Soviet history.

Stranger than fiction, more horrifying than anything dreamt by Lovecraft or Poe, Victor Herman's life was truly incredible. This book succeeds wonderfully as both a personal biography, a testament to the human spirit, a condemnation of the Soviet system and ideology, an ode to America, and as a son's personal letter of unconditional love to a father who failed him.

Herman concentrates on the early years of his imprisonment in the Soviet gulag. It is a horrific story, they didn't just work him and not care if he died, they singled him out because of his celebrity status (at the time) with the intention of working him to death, but inexplicably he kept coming out of every trial intact. He remained in tact not just physically, and that's the crux of the book, he never lost what made him who he was. It's fascinating how his experiences gave him a great deal of self awareness; attributing his rugged, somewhat cocky nature for his fame and success upon reaching Russia, his imprisonment, and for being what allowed him to survive where so many did not.

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### **Melody says**

Words can't do this book justice. If you are ever feeling sorry for yourself or feel like you've just been dealt a raw deal, read this book. I have a newfound gratitude for the life that I have been given and for the country that I live in. The author was held prisoner, starved, tortured, and was able to come out of the situation with remarkable aplomb. This book makes me so grateful for everything in my life.

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### **Michelle says**

I read this book the first time as a senior in high school in 1990/1991. After graduation, I searched everywhere for a copy and finally found a signed hardcover. It is my most cherished book and I can't recommend it enough. Victor Herman's story is heart-wrenching yet inspiring and it's written in such a way that you really feel as if the author is sitting across from while telling his story.

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### **Slaim96 says**

Oh man, what a lift this guy has gone through!

for any body complaining about life  
being difficult, I would recommend to  
read this book.

I heard about this book from Jim Rohn,  
and was encouraged to read it,  
It took me 3 days to finish it, once I picked  
it, I did not put it down until finished.

This guy was destined to live, his life spared  
many many times, I think God wanted him  
to live to tell his story and inspire all of humanity.  
He died at 70, but the thing he did in his life will take  
2 lifetimes for ordinary people to accomplish

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### **Tina says**

Probably my favorite book of all time! So touching, so inspiring, also informative, and engaging.

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### **M. Sarki says**

I read this book several years ago on the recommendation of Gordon Lish. The acknowledgment page credits the person responsible for this book as one who wishes not to be cited, but Herman does provide the initials of his son A.A.L who is none other than Atticus Lish. Anyone who reads this book can plainly see that Gordon Lish wrote it. His voice is all over it. I find it ironic how many readers love this book and so many claim not to like the writing of Gordon Lish. Hilarious.

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### **Candy says**

One of the most riveting books I have ever read. The true story of American Victor Herman who survived 18 years in Soviet prisons and another 20 in exile in the USSR before being able to return to America. (from 1931-1976) His endurance through the years of unimaginable hardships was beyond belief and was only softened by the love he found in wife Galina and two daughters halfway through his experience. We have so much to be grateful for in our country....

It is hard to understand why this book ever went out of print. It is a masterpiece and very well written. Used copies are expensive, but after borrowing one, I decided it was well worth owning my own copy.

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### **Megan says**

My dad suggested this book. Here is his review (he says it more eloquently than I would)

"I have given very few books 5 stars. With this book there was no question! This autobiography of a teenager

who goes with his family from Detroit to Russia in the 1930's "for three years" to establish an automobile plant is one of the most amazing and poignant stories I have ever read (or heard). The three years becomes 46, including 10 as a hard labor prisoner in a Siberian gulag. The book is a living witness to the failures and depredations of the Soviet communist experiment. It is a must read. I finished listening to it (it is out of print but available in audio—used print copies are expensive) this morning while up on a ladder scraping paint on my house, the tears streaming down my cheeks. [Spoiler alert: Happy Ending] WOW, what a book!"

I agree on every aspect on the above comments...except I wasn't scraping paint off the house. Alan and I listened on a couple of car trips. There is a lot of language in this book and it gets stronger as he travels further north into Siberia. But, I loved this book! The way he told his story was just amazing. I can't fathom the things he had to endure, but endure he did.

I was really disappointed in the way the Hunger Games trilogy ended because Katniss was seemed so broken at the end. Everyone said, look at what she's been through, of course she's broken. This is a TRUE story about a boy/man who had been to hell and back and in the end wasn't broken. LOVED it!

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### **Anneteb says**

This is an amazing story, in itself worthy of 5 stars. Victor Herman wrote the book soon after he was finally able to return to the US after being imprisoned and when released, forced to live in exile in Russia.

In my assessment, the writing style is worthy of fewer stars. Aside from the horrible events, it was sometimes frustrating to read the book as content repeated itself in the same paragraph. At first I felt that the editors should have cleaned some of this up but as I got further into the book I felt empathy for Victor Herman as he had the courage to write this book without a formal education after age 14.

For all of this, I'll give it 4 stars

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### **Paul says**

This is a powerful book. The narrative of the author's early years in Detroit followed by late adolescence and early adulthood adapting to life in the Soviet Union prior to the rise of Stalin is quite interesting. He is imprisoned in a soviet gulag for ten years and then exiled to Siberia. During this period, you see the very finest and the very worst humanity has to offer. Victor Herman finds the way to survive and adapt and even to strive in conditions that would normally drive a man mad or to an early grave. It's a book that makes you reflect on how fortunate one is to have a roof over your head and food on the table. Highly recommended.

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### **Mark says**

I have given very few books 5 stars. With this book there was no question! This autobiography of a teenager who goes with his family from Detroit to Russia in the 1930's "for three years" to establish an automobile plant is one of the most amazing and poignant stories I have ever read (or heard). The three years becomes 46, including 10 as a hard labor prisoner in a Siberian gulag. The book is a living witness to the failures and depredations of the Soviet communist experiment. It is a must read. I finished listening to it (it is out of print

but available in audio—used print copies are expensive) this morning while up on a ladder scraping paint on my house, the tears streaming down my cheeks. [Spoiler alert: Happy Ending] WOW, what a book!

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### **Mr.B says**

An amazing autobiography! An American teenager, who accompanied his parents to live and work in the Soviet Union on a three-year contract in the 1930s, spends more than 45 years there--most of it in the Soviet Gulag. Denied his American citizenship rights, young Victor Herman experiences an existence that shocks the imagination. (In painstaking detail he takes us through 55 days of physical and psychological torture during his "interrogation.") Minnesota and other American northland readers will empathize more with Herman's Siberian experiences. The writing is quite good--more like a prose poem than straight prose.

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### **Johanna says**

Somehow I forgot to put this book on my read list. Maybe because it has been many years since I read it. I was reminded of it because it is no longer at the library, is out of print, and I was trying to find a used copy at a reasonable price. This book made an indelible impression on me. Innocent, young and cocky American caught in the machinations of Communist Russia. This is a story of survival and healing against impossible odds. A morality tale for all us Westerners who presume we are safe and untouchable, that our democracy and sense of justice will prevail anywhere, and if not, we will be rescued by the powers that be. Victor Herman is just one of countless Westerners who have proven this presumption as just that, a cocky Western presumption.

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