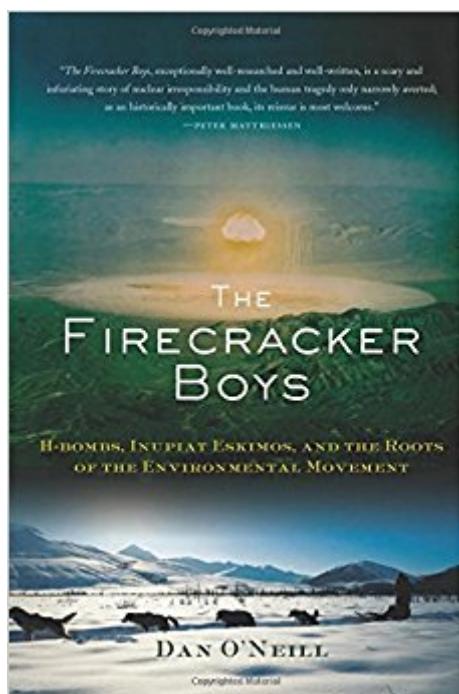


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# The Firecracker Boys: H-Bombs, Inupiat Eskimos, And The Roots Of The Environmental Movement



## Synopsis

In 1958, Edward Teller, father of the H-bomb, unveiled his plan to detonate six nuclear bombs off the Alaskan coast to create a new harbor. However, the plan was blocked by a handful of Eskimos and biologists who succeeded in preventing massive nuclear devastation potentially far greater than that of the Chernobyl blast. *The Firecracker Boys* is a story of the U.S. government's arrogance and deception, and the brave people who fought against it-launching America's environmental movement. As one of Alaska's most prominent authors, Dan O'Neill brings to these pages his love of Alaska's landscape, his skill as a nature and science writer, and his determination to expose one of the most shocking chapters of the Nuclear Age.

## Book Information

Paperback: 448 pages

Publisher: Basic Books (November 6, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0465003486

ISBN-13: 978-0465003488

Product Dimensions: 5.6 x 1.1 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 15.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 15 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #299,434 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #50 in Books > Engineering & Transportation > Engineering > Energy Production & Extraction > Nuclear #158 in Books > History > Military > Weapons & Warfare > Nuclear #633 in Books > Engineering & Transportation > Engineering > Civil & Environmental > Environmental

## Customer Reviews

Dan O'Neill is the author of *A Land Gone Lonesome* and *The Last Giant of Beringia*. He was named Alaska Historian of the Year by the Alaska Historical Society for *The Firecracker Boys*. He lives in Fairbanks, Alaska.

I have an Alaska background, am an environmental biologist, and was in the same university department with Bill Pruitt (one of the stars of this book) for several years - and yet I stumbled across this book by accident. Please don't just read it - also recommend it and loan it around to friends. Whether you care about Alaska, care about the environment, worry about things nuclear, worry about academic freedom's vulnerability to politics, or you like Dan O'Neill as an author (his "A

Land Gone Lonesome" for example), you have to read and spread the word about this book. It's one you will not just read, but will re-read.

Dan O'Neil's excellent book, *The Firecracker Boys: H-Bombs, Inupiat Eskimos, and the Roots of the Environmental Movement*, tells the story of Project Chariot. It's hard to comprehend the lunacy of it today, but Project Chariot was a serious proposal by the Atomic Energy Commission to geographically engineer a deep-water harbor on the northwest coast of Alaska by detonating a series of thermonuclear explosions. That's right: hydrogen bombs. Three major themes jumped out at me from the book. First: There is an inexorable structural bias that causes local interests to be seduced by the promise of short-term financial benefits such as employment or tax revenues. That is why many local politicians, businesses and communities initially embraced Project Chariot, just as they do more contemporary examples like the Keystone XL Pipeline or oil and gas exploration in Alaska's arctic. Second: Development interests, often in the form of government, almost always provide reassurance that there is little or nothing to fear, whether in the form of nuclear radiation from Project Chariot blasts, human impacts on climate change, oil exploration in the arctic ocean, or mining activities in the headwaters of salmon streams. Third: The most effective organizers operate at a grass-roots level. Project Chariot garnered the attention of local activists like Ginny Wood and Celia Hunter. Before long, they had helped organize the Alaska Conservation Society, which launched successful campaigns to establish what is now known as the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and to defeat Project Chariot from proceeding. These themes still resonate today across a broad spectrum of threats to the environment, ranging from climate change to fracking to offshore oil exploration.

Boy, is this a slow-moving sucker! I have a friend who was involved in the Firecracker Boys project. This is one of the most revealing books of the Cold War, but it is told so laboriously that you find yourself doing a lot of speed reading, turning pages every few seconds . . . and not because you can't wait to get to the next part. In truth, this book could have been told very well in half the pages. One of the most provocative concepts was the wrongheaded ideology of Edward Teller, and he was head of Livermore Laboratories at the time. I'm sure there were people behind the scenes in government, scratching their heads, trying to figure out what to do with this man with nuclear on the brain. Poor Eisenhower! He had no concept of the magnitude of all this, but he was worried about the military-industrial complex.

If you want to know the true nature of American government, this is a must read book! Project Chariot is when the US government wanted to explode a nuclear bomb in Alaska, and the fight it took to prevent it. Today is a good day to read this because history is repeating itself.....

Impressive incorporation of scientific research and cultural response! Written in a era when research ethics were optional, this documentary reinforces place-based accountability and respect for all stakeholders.

long overdue for reading this important book about Alaska and Atomic Commission. It was a great read and a lesson for all of us how a few did not want radiation but the majority did and it happened in remote Alaska. It was painful for a village of folks who knew it was wrong. Great writing and I should find his other books for great read.

Great story about real scientists doing the right thing for humanity. Should be a must read for science majors in college.

The book was very good. The author gave an in depth approach of what was happening to the Alaskan people and Project Chariot.

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