



# **American Daredevil: The Extraordinary Life of Richard Halliburton, the World's First Celebrity Travel Writer**

*Cathryn Prince*

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With a polished walking stick and neatly pressed trousers, Richard Halliburton served as an intrepid globetrotting guide for millions of Americans in the 1920s and '30s. Readers waited with bated breath for each new article and book he wrote. During his career, Halliburton climbed the Matterhorn, nearly fell out of his plane while shooting the first aerial photographs of Mt. Everest, and became the first person to swim the Panama Canal. With his matinee idol looks, the Tennessee native was a media darling in an era of optimism and increased social openness. But as the Great Depression and looming war pushed America toward social conservatism, Halliburton more actively worked to hide his homosexuality, burnishing his image as a masculine trailblazer. As chronicled in American Daredevil, Halliburton harnessed the media of his day to gain and maintain a widespread following long before our age of the 24-hour news cycle, and thus became the first celebrity adventure journalist. And during the darkest hours of the Great Depression, Halliburton did something remarkable: he inspired generations of authors, journalists, and everyday people who dreamt of fame and glory to explore the world.



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