



In the Shadow of Denali: Life and Death on Alaska's Mt. McKinley

Jonathan Waterman , Greg Child (Foreword by)

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For fans of *Into Thin Air*, a gripping narrative.

In the Shadow of Denali: Life and Death on Alaska's Mt. McKinley Details

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Sandra says

A beautifully written book about the author's love affair with Alaska in general and Denali in particular. At times hilarious, harrowing, heartbreaking. A must read for any armchair adventurer. And truthfully, this book isn't simply about Alaska but really it's about how we choose to live, our capitulation to the demands of psyche and the world. I love this book.

Ned Hayes says

Interesting high mountain story.

Mars Girl says

This book was MORE than a book about the trials of mountaineering; it taught me how to live. I don't know. I guess you have to be someone who enjoys endurance sports. Like the author, I find that I learn more about myself and life by struggling through a particularly challenging feat. I don't do it to impress others, I do it to push myself to my limits and understand how much determination I have to complete a goal. And, like I said, you learn about life in the process. This book is utterly inspiring. I don't think you have to be a mountaineer to get it.

Evan Phillips says

An Alaskan mountaineering classic. But more than that. Amazing characters, descriptive writing. A great book.

Malia Silverman says

The author does a phenomenal job at capturing his and other climbers' experiences on a tireless mountain. He recognizes the trauma that it has left in the minds of those who have come face to face with death on the mountain. Waterman will pull you into the heart of Alaska with this recount of experiences.

I truly enjoyed reading and learning the different stories of these infamous climbers within the industry who climb for themselves rather than to be recognized. I especially loved reading the chapter about bears because of how many times he seems to tie back to what was previously written about.

This book will probably not make you want to go climb Denali yourself, but it will create a drive to go see the infamous mountain yourself, and maybe spend a little time exploring the base areas.

Overall, a great read!

Jack says

A must read for my fellow Alaska travelers, if only for the Bear Chapter. I am one who does not really get the mentality of these folks that scale mountains in constant danger... but this collection of true stories about Alaska's Denali was very interesting. I was almost through the book when the author shared that he was born in Rhode Island! A large number of the deaths on Denali have taken place in snow storms in JULY!!! And there is a lot of background information on Talkeetna as well! A definite must for the July Alaska Group!!

L.J. says

A very good mountaineering book by Waterman. He puts the reader on the mountain, describing the low points of climbing (where to go to the bathroom on top of freezing peak, way above treeline-think about that?) and the unbelievable sense of accomplishment and view upon reaching the summit. Not a glorified account of his experience but a well executed story.

Lisa says

I guess I read this but I don't remember the details. I need to be more careful to write the review as soon as I finish the book

Kerfe says

These people are crazy.

Addicted to pushing physical and emotional barriers, climbing becomes an obsession, leading to injury, death, or at the very least, burnout.

Waterman captures the intensity of the experience and the (mostly) men who make mountains, in this case Denali (Mt McKinley) in Alaska, the main focus of their lives. Some of them are anti-social to begin with; certainly their ability and wish to relate to others is severely tested by the self-imposed deprivations and limited circle they inhabit.

Some of the accounts of the climbs, journeys and rescues are very powerful; others lack the same life. Those who climb only to add another accomplishment to their resume, rude and often unprepared, do not come off well, particularly in their lack of appreciation for the environment they are defiling, and their expectation that others will make up for their deficiencies and mistakes and pick up after them or rescue or even die for them. Most cannot even manage a word of thanks.

Waterman is also distressed by the disappearance of the wilderness and habitat of native Alaskan species; he speaks often of the Native American views on honoring the spirit and of the land, of treading lightly and with humility, a way of living he agrees with. His descriptions of the environment surrounding Denali are often

eloquent and from the heart.

I think he idealizes the climbers' often short lives and deaths, and plays down the pain they may have brought to their families and friends. It's an insular world, that does not have much respect for those who make different choices, or allow that they can also live lives that possess integrity. When he speaks of "the banality of city life" and its "already dead" inhabitants, I know he is parroting a stereotype, not the experience of the city I know. Surely he does not need to denigrate others to honor his friends.

At the same time, you have to admire the respect the climbers show for the earth and its beauty and power, their willingness to challenge themselves, both physically and mentally, and the way they live sparsely, not accumulating more than they need or wasting what they have.

They would not consider a snowmobile championship, or hunting and fishing for sport, or drilling for oil, as accomplishments to list on their resume. In that, perhaps, they represent the true spirit of Alaska, rather than the "Alaska lite" of its current political leaders.

Kirsten says

Fun to read after my visit to Alaska.

Ben says

Pretty good writing, not just about mountaineering but about Alaska in general. Really shows what a beautiful, but harsh place it is.

Amerynth says

Jonathan Waterman's crisp writing style really carries his book "In the Shadow of Denali" above the level of the typical expedition book. It's clear he loves Denali, the tallest mountain in North America as well as many of the guides and personalities that have climbed up and down its snowy slopes. The book tells the tale of many of Denali's most famous adventurers and a few lesser known friends of Waterman who have been involved in tragic expeditions. Tales are told in a moving and beautiful way, making this book a real joy to read.
