

In his long and prolific climbing career, Welzenbach never took a fall or required a rescue. Yet he was still a believer in fate or luck. There are many analogies one can make between him and Reinhold Messner, but this is not one of them. Messner has stated unequivocally that he does not believe in luck. Despite Welzenbach's expertise and successes, he stated: "For success you need not only ability but luck as well, because the dangers threatening a climber are too diverse and too unpredictable to ever be counteracted by advance deliberation. The final destiny of an individual will always remain entrusted to the hands of fate." But, as his frequent partner, Erich Schulze remarked: "Welzenbach proved that the dangers inherent in his undertakings could to a large extent be counteracted by deliberation and prudent tactics."

In 1934, while attempting Nanga Parbat, Willo Welzenbach, age 33, met death. The cruel paradox here is that it was delivered neither by fate nor faulty decisions on Welzenbach's part. Rather, death was delivered by the subjugation of his own better judgment to that of the expedition leader, Willi Merkl. In his last letters home, Welzenbach saw the writing on the wall but, displaying true Germanic characteristics, he refused to mutiny and so robbed the world of the most profound alpinist of this century.

PETER METCALF

White Winds. Joe Wilcox. Hwong Publishing, Los Alamitos, California, 1981. 499 pages, black-and-white photographs, illustration, map, tables. \$14.95.

The 1974 *American Alpine Journal* has a review by Arlene Blum of Howard Snyder's book of the tragic 1967 Wilcox expedition on Mount McKinley. The story is of a climb up the Muldrow Glacier that combined two separate groups: a nine-man team led by Joe Wilcox and a three-man team of Colorado climbers led by Snyder. Blum's review of *The Hall of the Mountain King* observed the apparent one-sidedness of Snyder's account, which makes continual and quibbling criticism of Wilcox's leadership and comparisons between the experiences and strengths of the two groups—always to the benefit of Snyder. "Snyder is a bit overanxious to prove his blamelessness for the catastrophe," Blum wrote of this first account of a disaster that claimed the lives of 7 of the 12 climbers, due to a summit storm.

White Winds is Wilcox's side of the story. The first 200 pages of the book describes the planning and organization of the expedition and the climb's beginnings. Wilcox then documents the prelude to the tragedy—copies of pre-expedition correspondence, each man's climbing resumes, food and equipment lists show a keen anticipation of many problems on the mountain. The description of the summit storm is supported through

diaries, radio logs, and weather forecasts, and a scenerio is postulated on what probably happened to those who perished. (Only three bodies were ever found.) Wilcox includes a classification of windstorms, wind-chill chart, a list of McKinley fatalities (1932 through 1980), and a Mount McKinley "White Winds Index," designed to convert predicated winds to maximum possible gusts in the summit region.

A successful summit climb had been made in good weather on July 15, by Wilcox in company with the Colorado trio; four members of Wilcox's party had elected to remain at high camp to make the climb the next day with the remaining four coming up from below. Contrary to Snyder's account, however, and not in agreement with the analysis of the tragedy presented in the AAC's 1968 *Accidents in North American Mountaineering* (which apparently was based more on input from Snyder than from Wilcox), there was no advance warning of the devastating storm that killed those descending from the second successful summit assault. Wilcox's documentation of radio logs discloses that at no time was a storm alert given the party—yet this has been the chief criticism of the acts leading to the tragedy.

Through meticulous post-expedition research, Wilcox includes an impressive treatise on the storm that affected the McKinley region during that period of July 18 to 26, 1967. From weather records at various lowland stations around McKinley, he calculated that the storm may have been the worst ever encountered by mountaineers anywhere on earth. Wilcox's analysis of the weather and wind patterns in the McKinley area have received highly favorable response by professional meteorologists and his documentation has been archived in the library of the National Weather Service. The inclusion of this material alone makes the book a valuable reference to all who propose trips to the upper parts of the great peak.

The book is well-written and provides an unusually complete description of the ascent by the old Muldrow Glacier route. Even the occasional surfacing of personality conflicts between the two groups (or their leaders) didn't entirely spoil the experience and there were many good days and high thoughts. Wilcox's account reveals no unusually weak or ill climbers in his group (as stated by Snyder), and apparently they did most of the trailbreaking up the glacier and in the deep snows of Karstens Ridge. Only the upper Harper Glacier and in the successful summit climb did the Colorado group assert itself. Wilcox makes no direct or acrimonious references to contradictions with Snyder's book. However, for a detailed, point-by-point (sometimes nit-picking) discussion of the contradictions, he has published a limited-edition companion volume, *A Reader's Guide to The Hall of the Mountain King*; he provides these gratis to those with an interest in comparing the two accounts.

We might wonder at the long 15-year interval between the tragedy

and the appearance of *White Winds*. Why revive old wounds and painful memories for survivors and the relatives and friends of those who perished? The answer seems to be a deep need by Wilcox to expiate himself and shed a heavy moral and emotional load. "I have been a reluctant author," he writes. "For the disaster was deep and personal—the loss of friends as close as brothers . . . only a strong feeling of obligations to mountaineers, to the public and to history has prevailed, driving this work to completion and relieving me of an immense burden."

DEE MOLENAAR

Eiger: Wall of Death. Arthur Roth. W.W. Norton, New York, 1982. 350 pages, black-and-white photographs. \$15.95.

According to the jacket cover, this book of the complete story of the assaults on the Eiger will easily become the most popular climbing book of the year. At day's end, from Camp Four to Cathedral Ledge, 5.11 A3 hands will reach into tattered sacks and pull out this volume for an evening of pure entertainment. I have a different prophecy. *The Eiger: Wall of Death* will be a more popular game than Botticelli. In this game, points are given for finding errors within a specified time period. Here I predict the rules of play, with the most points going for obscure errors, and fewer points for the more obvious.

Here are examples worth 100 points:

- "The waterfall crack is over 100 feet long." At best it is 80 feet.
- "They (Waschak and Forstenlechner in 1950) were . . . the first to make the climb without a bivouac stop, taking 18 hours all told, a record . . . that was to hold for the next 15 years. . . ." Yet, later in the book we are told, "1965 and 1966 were distressingly similar . . . only one successful climb each year. . . ." The 1965 ascent was the first Japanese ascent of the 1938 route which took three days and the 1966 ascent was the John Harlin Direttissima. The second one-day ascent was not until Messner and Habeler's 10-hour climb in 1974, 24 years after Waschak and Forstenlechner.
- "Modern climbers can traverse the second icefield in a little over an hour." Three or four is more like it.
- On Lionel Terray doing the Waterfall Crack, Roth writes, "The vertical rock was bare of holds offering no cracks to take even an ace of spades piton. . . ." Never having heard of an ace of spades piton—thinking I may have been missing something—I checked Terray's *Conquistadors of the Useless* and found that he'd said he couldn't get in an "extra plat." Now "extra plat" means extra thin.
- "They (the Hinterstoisser Team) did a short traverse to . . . the start of the third ice field . . . here . . . they settled down only a