

Storm Over Denali. Thomas Pollard. Diocese of Springfield Massachusetts, 1995. Video. 50 minutes. \$30.00.

Mount McKinley: Climbing the West Buttress of Denali. Kevin Flynn. The Flynn Agency, Rochester, New York, 1995. Video. 50 minutes. \$29.95.

Two recent video releases present informative and entertaining accounts of climbing on Denali: *Storm Over Denali* and *Mount McKinley: Climbing the West Buttress of Denali*. *Storm Over Denali* documents an attempt of the West Rib route of North America's highest point, and *Mount McKinley: Climbing the West Buttress of Denali* presents an overview of Denali's most popular route and documents two attempts (1992 and 1993) by Kevin Flynn, the writer and producer, to climb the peak via this route.

In *Storm Over Denali*, Thomas Pollard, the main videographer, writer, and producer, has created a very relaxed, almost intimate presentation of his 1994 attempt of the peak. Pollard narrates, and is even a member of the band that plays the background music. There are good scenics, a number of interesting facts about the mountain and the route, and the style of shooting brings the viewer into the climb. This movie is much more for the person planning to go to this mountain than for someone just interested in mountain climbing or general Denali or Alaska information. You probably won't find it on the Discovery Channel.

Although Pollard's team did not summit, *Storm Over Denali* shows us that this fact in no way detracts from the overall "mountaineering experience," and in the process of failing the team shot some excellent coverage of the powerful storm that prevented their success. I commend Pollard not only for surviving a major storm that nearly wiped out another expedition on the West Rib, but for capturing the whole experience on film. This video made me wonder if I would rather summit a big peak in perfect conditions, or have the wisdom gained by trying my damndest and still getting my ass kicked on a major endeavor. (Side note: Pollard plans to return in 1997.)

While there are scenes in Flynn's *Mount McKinley* that can best be appreciated by past and prospective Denali travelers, this movie avails itself to an audience broader in scope than those just interested in climbing the West Buttress of this peak. Each of the climbers of the 1992 expedition are introduced and discuss why they are interested in climbing Denali, how they feel about it, how their family and friends feel, and what they do while not climbing. Since the first expedition by Flynn was as a member of a guided expedition, we see a very diverse group of people on the team, with the youngest member, an apprentice guide, 19, and the oldest, 59.

As part of the overview of climbing the West Buttress, Flynn includes an excellent interview with Bradford Washburn, pioneer of the route. Washburn relates his early explorations via aircraft and the first ascent, and tells of other interesting Denali facts. Washburn, now in his 80s, is lively and inspiring, and the interview alone makes the film well worth watching. Also, the excellent black-and-white aerial photographs taken by Washburn are referenced frequently to show the route.

Like *Storm Over Denali*, *Mount McKinley* shows the 1992 team pinned down in a storm at high altitude. Overdue and running out of food, the group descends. After a brief interview with Flynn telling how he felt about the expedition, the video continues with a return expedition in 1993, with Flynn as a member of a private (non-guided) four person team. The movie briefly traces the team's progress up to 17,200 feet, Flynn's high point the previous year. After one failed summit attempt by Flynn (he brought down a sick partner), we are treated to superb panoramas from the mountain's summit. Although not an overt theme of *Mount McKinley*, Flynn's perseverance and resourcefulness in his goal to reach the summit is obvious in this film, and I like that.

I enjoyed both videos. Day-to-day rigors and mundane chores were captured in good detail in each production. Also, there is sequence in each that will bring memories of this peak into the fore of any climber's mind who has ventured into this range. Both illustrate as well as possible to prospective climbers what this mountain can be like. Aside from training and careful planning and packing, I would recommend to any prospective Denali climber to read the informative books on this peak by Jonathan Waterman and Glenn Randall, and to watch *Storm Over Denali* and *Mount McKinley: Climbing the West Buttress of Denali*. After that, it can't get any more real except by actually going there.

ED DARACK

On Ice. Directed by Scott and Eden Ayer. Cliffhanger Productions, 1995. Video, 62 minutes. \$29.95.

With all the renewed interest in waterfall climbing and mixed rock and ice climbing, it only comes as a surprise that instructional and entertaining videos about each sport didn't come out sooner. Legions of ice climbers and aspiring alpinists can now front-point to the nearest climbing store and ask to purchase the most recent and absorbing video on the shelf, *On Ice*. This video, produced by Scott and Eden Ayers, is both entertaining and instructional as it introduces you to ice climbing and mixed climbing through the