

Unfortunately, Wickwire's association with death up close and personal does not end. One chapter tells of his futile attempt to find his missing friend, Japanese hero Naomi Uemura, on Mt. McKinley. Another relates the unbelievable circumstances of the senseless murders of his law partner, Chuck Golmark, his wife and two sons by a crazy man. Finally, climbing out of the "death zone," the reader relives happier times and expeditions as Wickwire tells of first ascents in South America and more attempts on Everest with his good friend John Roskelley.

Fate (fortunately!) also blessed Wickwire, giving him a wife as tough as himself. Mary Lou Wickwire, his wife of 37 years, is the heroine of the book, as he unabashedly admits.

I have not read a mountaineering book in a long time that held my attention so thoroughly as did this memoir. Its weakness is that if the reader is looking for a literary artwork, this book is not it. However, the truth of these tales and the candor of how they are told transcend the vertical world of white-knuckle adventure to a soul-bearing catharsis as a personal witness to tragedy. Jim Wickwire, on his long journey as a pioneering mountaineer, is a victim of circumstance. He chose to tread a razor's edge between the abyss of death and the ecstasy of life. Fate had him straddling that edge more often than he deserved.

CHRIS KOPCZYNSKI

On Belay! The Life of Legendary Mountaineer Paul Petzoldt. Raye C. Ringholz. Mountaineers Books: Seattle, 1998. 272 pages. \$24.95.

Paul Petzoldt is a mountaineering icon who, at 91 years of age, represents a lifetime of achievement in exploration, alpinism, mountain guiding, outdoor education, and environmental awareness. In *On Belay! The Life of Legendary Mountaineer Paul Petzoldt*, Raye Ringholz takes the reader on a tour from the farm country of southern Idaho to the upper reaches of K2 in 1938, discussing these and many other facets of Paul Petzoldt's life. The book provides answers to questions that I have always had about this legendary climber, such as: what was the 1938 K2 expedition like from Paul Petzoldt's perspective? What really happened during his falling out with NOLS? Was Petzoldt really put on trial for murder in India?

Petzoldt's Teton years, the part of his life with which I am most familiar, are, for the most part, accurately portrayed. His Teton career is fascinating not only because he was, beginning with the fifth ascent of the Grand, one of the great pioneers of the range, but also by the fact that he is still very much alive today. Petzoldt is a living bridge between modern American climbing and its early beginnings, which were really not very long ago. Ringholz chronicles some of the great Paul Petzoldt/Glen Exum stories, such as their chivalrous defense of Jackson local Dorothy Redman one Saturday night. This good-old western barroom brawl ends with local villain John Emory being thrown across the porch and down the front steps of the old Jenny Lake dance hall by a well-placed Petzoldt punch.

Ringholz also provides, for the most part, accurate, well-researched historical detail concerning early Teton climbing history. A few errors are noticeable, such as the dialogue with an inquisitive Billy Owen over Petzoldt's ascent in 1924 of the Grand Teton with friend Ralph Herron. When asked what the youths had found on the summit, the plaque commemorating Owen's ascent is given as "proof" that the boys had made it to the top. They had actually seen the metal "Rocky Mountain Club" pennant that the Owen party had left up there; the plaque did not arrive until the dedication ceremony of Grand Teton National Park some five years later. Generally, however, the key role that Petzoldt played in making so much of the early Teton climbing history is handled well.

Ringholz provides an in-depth description of the 1938 American K2 expedition, a pioneering trip to the Himalaya on which Petzoldt demonstrated considerable strength, experience, and courage. Much of the author's research was based upon the expedition account, *Five Miles High*, by Robert H. Bates and other members. For me, the narration of the high-camp cooking ordeal, with Petzoldt and Charles Houston each taking turns striking the last of their matches in order to melt water, was fascinating. This episode is missing in the expeditionary account and provides a gripping tale of survival in 1938, the Stone Age in Himalayan mountaineering. I also enjoyed hearing of Petzoldt's secret purchase of extra pins as the expedition traveled through Paris, since, to his more-experienced rock technician's eye, K2 seemed like a rocky peak. This was during the time period where the use of such implements for mountaineering was eschewed by most, including Houston, who referred to pitons as "iron ware."

The post-expedition time period that Petzoldt spent in India is one of the gaps in his life about which I had heard rumors. Ringholz explores this strange interlude in Petzoldt's life in which he becomes employed by a retired American surgeon from California who, with his wife, had become a follower of a small religious sect in northern India. Petzoldt's wife, Bernice, who traveled to India from the States by boat after the expedition, joins Petzoldt there. Things gradually become quite strange as the Petzoldts become convinced that the doctor's wife is slowly poisoning Bernice. This conviction leads to a wrestling match with a loaded shotgun and an accidental collision with the doctor, who hits his head and shortly thereafter dies. All of this adds up to one heck of a way to end your first climbing trip to the Himalaya.

Ringholtz concludes with two chapters that outline Petzoldt's commitment to environmental awareness and outdoor education. From the beginnings of NOLS to the establishment of the Wilderness Education Association, Petzoldt's lasting legacy will certainly be his commitment to wilderness and to teaching people how to leave no trace of their enjoyment of it. I enjoyed reading *On Belay! The Life of Legendary Mountaineer Paul Petzoldt*.

RENNY JACKSON

Facing the Extreme: One Woman's Story of True Courage, Death-Defying Survival and Her Quest for the Summit. Ruth Ann Kocour with Michael Hodgson. St. Martin's: New York, 1998. 256 pages. \$22.95.

F*acing the Extreme* does not merit inclusion in the *AAJ*, although the dust jacket and preface intentionally give the impression that the book is about a top woman mountaineer pushing the edge on Denali. The cover breathlessly promises "one woman's story of true courage, death-defying survival, and her quest for the summit" under a blurry photo of computer-generated hikers on an unidentifiable Alaskan ridge.

"I was pulled back to the lures of ascending in a vertical world by an invitation to climb Mount Kilimanjaro in 1986 with Peter Whitaker, a world-class alpinist from a legendary mountaineering family," Kocour (or rather, Michael Hodgson, who actually wrote the book) begins modestly. She goes on to talk of climbing Aconcagua, accompanied by Mark Tucker. Tucker happens to be a guide, but Kocour breezily mentions that he is there "training for an Everest attempt." On Denali, Kocour is "the most seasoned mountaineer [in the group] outside of Robert and Win [Whitaker]," who, by the way, are guides, too. Scattered, offhand details gradually clued me in to the fact that Kocour's self-described "shopping list of summits" consists of guided treks up the trade routes of moderate peaks, as opposed to self-directed ascents