

achievement of putting twelve climbers on the summit last spring via a difficult, new route on the Southwest Face.

Dominating the post-1953 events are the American West Ridge climb and traverse in 1963 and the seven separate expeditions to the Southwest Face in the early 1970s that tackled the mountain "the hard way." Of all the Everest climbers mentioned, Unsworth appears to have the most admiration for Tom Hornbein, whose tenacity and single-minded drive were chiefly responsible for the remarkable West Ridge climb and traverse that stands as one of the major achievements of Himalayan mountaineering history. Chris Bonington, whose expedition to Annapurna's South Face in 1970 pioneered the breakthrough to the difficult face climbs, also comes in for high praise. Despite a hailstorm of criticism from some quarters about the tremendous cost and publicity that attended Bonington's Southwest Face endeavors, in 1975 his team brilliantly succeeded in climbing the face to the summit. Only Mick Burke's disappearance on a solo excursion to the summit marred the outcome of an expedition that Unsworth contrasts markedly with the ill-starred 1971 International Expedition, also ably chronicled.

Unsworth concludes his book with an account of what most thought impossible at the time: climbing the mountain without the benefit of supplementary oxygen. During the British prewar attempts, the issue of oxygen use was hotly debated. As with the heavy versus lightweight expedition issue, had Norton, Smythe or some of the others reached the summit without oxygen, the almost total reliance on oxygen for climbing the highest peaks in the so-called "golden age" of Himalayan mountaineering would have been avoided. It remained for Reinhold Messner and his Hidden Peak companion, Peter Habeler, to surmount this last great physiological challenge, to climb the mountain by "fair means."

The account of the historic Messner-Habeler climb in 1978 is greatly enhanced by the use of lengthy comments from Habeler obtained in an interview with the author. Unlike the sanitized version in Habeler's published account, Habeler here gives a graphic rendition of their summit climb, not altogether favorable to Messner, but one that has the ring of truth.

Unsworth's book also contains an extensive bibliography as well as a useful summary of all the expeditions. The color plates are one of the few shortcomings. For Everest buffs, or for that matter anyone interested in the climbing history of the world's highest peak, this book is a must.

JAMES WICKWIRE

Everest the Cruel Way. Joe Tasker. Eyre Methuen, London, 1981. 166 pages, black and white photographs. £6.95.

This book by Joe Tasker describes the British 1981-82 winter attempt on the west ridge of Mount Everest. It is a grim story of eight comrades, with slender resources—crack mountaineers all—undertaking a cruel task with high resolve, but who are worn down by the unremitting, bitter cold, by their decision

not to use oxygen equipment and, finally, by their formless organization which the group labels "democracy."

Reaching Everest Base Camp on the Khumbu Glacier on December 6, 1981, the British group contrasted their spartan digs with the lavish tent-city laid out by the Japanese who were also attempting a winter ascent of the mountain, via the South Col. They lacked for nothing material. "I have a contract to go to 200 metres from the summit," one member of the Japanese expedition confides to Tasker. "After that, only Mr. (Naomi) Uemura goes alone."

Tasker's group climbed up the 3000-foot steep, exposed rock face to the left of the Lho La that partially breaches the ridge connecting Mount Everest to Khumbutse. This pass is subject to constant avalanches, one of which wiped out six members of the Chamonix Guides' West Ridge Expedition of 1974.

The true west ridge of Mount Everest has been climbed only once, by the Yugoslavs in the spring of 1979. And the mountain has been climbed only once in winter, by the Poles along the South Col route. Both of these large expeditions used oxygen equipment which climbers, such as Haston and Messner, experienced in oxygenless ascents, believe the paralyzing cold of a winter ascent of Everest requires. So this attempt by Tasker's group was more than a little ambitious.

After shuttling equipment up to higher camps, they left the selection of what to shuttle up to democratic principles. The reader comes to realize that this form of democracy—the climbers' misnomer for a complete lack of formal leadership—while certainly the preferred way to run an alpine-sized assault, turns out to be woefully inadequate to accomplish a difficult climb with a larger group. Every five pages of *Everest the Cruel Way* contains a bitter reproach against the inefficiency of their anarchic organization, or recriminations against the selfishness of others who were perceived to be working less hard, or hogging the lead, etc. It all sounds like ten-year old kids playing unsupervised baseball: two minutes of play, ten minutes of argument.

The end of the game for this group came while Tasker and Ade Burgess lay holed up in a wretched snow cave at their highest camp—Camp III at 23,200 feet. Exhausted by their efforts to place a higher camp on the West Buttress, short on supplies, numb with cold, they were cut off from below by comrades who, also desperately weakened, would no longer come to their aid but, being democratic, would not say they would not come. A final, fruitless argument ensued on their walkie-talkies. Without hope of further reinforcements, the stranded climbers retreated.

There are no maps or route diagrams in the book, so following the climbers' progress becomes confusing. The twelve pages of photographs suffer in two respects: they are all murky, contrast-flat conversions of color slides—a cost reduction strategem that this publisher has not yet mastered. One picture required 15 minutes of intense scrutiny to discover the climber, so expertly does this conversion process camouflage his bright uniform against the gray rocks. And secondly, one has become so spoiled by the visual artistry of

Rowell, Messner, et al, that the lackluster point-and-shoot photographs of this book are disappointing.

Yet it would be a disservice to the reader to end this review on the same sour note as did the British expedition. Joe Tasker disappeared in 1982 with Peter Boardman while the two were boldly attempting another first route on Mount Everest without oxygen, in an even smaller—this time truly democratic—expedition. Joe Tasker deserves a better epitaph.

In his splendid book, *The Shining Mountain*, which describes a brilliant two-man ascent of Changabang with Tasker, Boardman paints a far more sympathetic picture of Tasker than comes through in the cool, distant writing of *The Cruel Way*. Tasker himself wrote a second book *Savage Arena*. Printed in an edition of only 5000 copies, it was impossible to obtain in time for this review. Scheduled for reissue, this book, I have heard, is probably one of the finer mountaineering works to have come out in a long time. It, not *Everest the Cruel Way*, is what we should remember Joe Tasker by.

TOM HOLZEL

A Walk in the Sky: Climbing Hidden Peak. Nicholas Clinch. The Mountaineers, Seattle and The American Alpine Club, New York, 1982. xii + 214 pages, black and white and color photographs, map. \$18.95.

Millions of years ago, a mighty and inexorable clash of drifting continental plates pushed against one another and created a group of huge peaks on what is now the eastern border of Pakistan. Five of these summits are higher than the magic number of 8,000 meters, which is 26,247 feet (not 26,268 feet, as stated on page xi or 26,240 feet, as stated on the book's dust jacket). One of them, Hidden Peak (26,470 feet) is the highest of the Gasherbrum group and was the only eight-thousander whose first ascent was made by Americans. Author Nick Clinch was the driving force behind the expedition and now his book, written in 1959, has finally been published.

Nick's friends, myself included, know him as an outstanding mountaineer-politician, who has been both the friend and the protégé of the elders of our tribe, the bridger of generation gaps. He is a cajoler of the recalcitrant and, of course, a fine mountain climber with strong powers of endurance. Combine these qualities and you have what it took to organize and mount a successful assault on Hidden Peak, on a marginal budget, by a small party of enthusiasts, who learned as they went along.

The expedition was first conceived in 1954, on a climbing trip in British Columbia. From then on, Nick pulled strings, wheedled, improvised and recruited, as described in Chapters One to Three. He says that without Laurence Coveney, the expedition "would never have been more than a pile of papers inside a manila folder." One of Nick's most important achievements was to persuade, by repeated pressure ("I bombarded him with special-delivery