presented; even the broken glass, used prophylactics, beer cans and butt ends
at the base of cliffs he treats with sympathetic understanding. The quality of
sketches by Nichols and Clint Cummins, who spent many hours tied into
tree-tops drawing, is first class. And there is even an occasional flash of wit
and humor—qualities that seem to be getting rarer these days, as guidebooks
too often read like computer print-outs.

One ancient game played by guidebook reviewers is to catch and parade a
handful of inaccuracies. There might be contentions about interpretation, but
on matters of fact I’m so confident of Nichols’ steel-trap mind that I promise
to donate $50.00 to the American Alpine Club Endowment for each one sent
in.

There is one small point of criticism that I’ll raise, though I don’t know that
there’s a better alternative. In Trapsrock, Nichols uses a three-, two- and
one-star quality rating system, much praised in Jim Erickson’s Rocky Heights
about the Boulder region. Ostensibly this is to help the visiting climber who
is scarce on time. The trouble is that one- and no-star climbs become pariahs,
and when these are no more than 50 or 60 feet long—extended boulder
problems almost—one wonders if they are worth the paper they’re printed on.

JOHN THACKRAY

and white photographs, map, charts, appendices. Estimated $10.00.

McKinley is a paradoxical mountain. Windswept and devoid of life for the
greater part of the year, the peak suffers an onslaught of brightly-clad bipeds
each spring and summer, a short-lived migration accompanied most often by
flocks of noisy metallic birds, glacial snow-sculpture reminiscent of Stone­
henge, and odd pagan rituals involving the carrying of huge weights to great
heights, with the subsequent sacrifice of various items of food and equipment
to the bowels of the mountain. On occasion, one or several of the pilgrims is
sacrificed as well. Mount McKinley is the highest point in North America, as
well as the most easily reached Himalayan-scale peak in the world, making it
a justifiably popular goal for mountaineers from many countries. It is also one
of the coldest, and precisely because of its accessibility, one of the most serious
peaks available to large numbers of climbers. On the standard West Buttress
route, it is entirely possible to fly into the Kahiltna Glacier at 7500 feet and
reach the 20,320-foot summit three or four days later. If one doesn’t succumb
to one of the more serious forms of altitude sickness, if one isn’t too befuddled
by the cold and the wind, if one doesn’t fall into a crevasse, if one doesn’t get
caught in an avalanche. . . . From the searing heat of its lower glaciers on a
sunny midday to its windswept, below-zero upper plateau, McKinley is always
fickle, contradictory, friendly at one turn and deadly at the other. A McKinley
climb can be a cruise or an epic, or anything in between.
Surviving Denali is also a paradoxical book. In an era when the West Buttress often seems as crowded as the regular route on Mont Blanc, many would argue that anything which makes the mountain more accessible to the masses is unnecessary and probably undesirable. At the same time, McKinley’s rising popularity over the past decade (slightly over 100 climbers in 1970 and nearly 700 in 1982) has created a demand for ever more information. Will the publication of this climbing guide *cum* accident report result in still more traffic on what some consider an already crowded peak? Or will the information thus disseminated lead to better prepared, more responsible climbing parties and a consequent reduction in the accident and fatality rate on McKinley?

It’s a real chicken-and-egg question. *Surviving Denali* certainly isn’t a Chamber-of-Commerce style guidebook; if anything, it would discourage most normal folk with its tales of avalanches, frostbite, crevasses and altitude sickness: a gruesome collection of the mountaineer’s worst nightmares. Most of the book is devoted to case histories and analyses of accidents on McKinley, with chapters on pulmonary and cerebral edema, crevasse and climbing falls, prior medical history and exhaustion, and avalanches. These span the years 1968–1982, while a separate chapter (“The Self-Sufficient Pioneers 1910–1967”) covers McKinley’s golden (and less populous) age.

Although Waterman presents the incidents in a refreshingly straightforward, largely nonjudgmental tone, all of this makes for grim and upsetting reading. He occasionally offers suggestions as to preventive measures that could have been taken but mainly lets the accidents speak for themselves. The lessons we learn are clear: go slowly and with a clear head, take care of yourself and the mountain and, if things get bad, turn back before it’s too late—the mountain will be there another year. These are all things that we’ve heard before, made more convincing by the framework within which they are stated.

By far the most immediately useful section of the book is an “appendix, How to Prepare For Denali.” Drawing liberally from Boyd Everett’s classic *Organization of an Alaskan Expedition*, Waterman offers a cohesive and informative primer on climbing in the Arctic environment. As most of his suggestions can be applied to other Alaskan peaks, to winter climbing in the Lower 48 and Canada and to climbing in the Himalaya, the value of this section is not limited just to McKinley. The comments on clean climbing are especially pertinent considering the increase in traffic on the peak in recent years, as well as the relative permanence of trash and excreta discarded high on the peak.

The author is well qualified for his task, having made ascents of McKinley by several routes both on his own and as a guide, as well as climbing other peaks in the Alaska Range and Mount Logan. More importantly, Waterman is no stranger to pulmonary edema or frostbite and readily admits the mistakes and miscalculations that very nearly led to his own demise on the Cassin Ridge in the winter of 1982. Bravo to an author (and a book) which is not holier-than-thou!

MICHAEL KENNEDY