

Renshaw must leave the mountain to return to England. Meanwhile, Bonington's own reserves have been stretched to the point where Boardman and Tasker remain as the only strong climbers capable of a final try for, if not the summit, at least the top of the northeast shoulder, an 8000-meter subsidiary peak of Everest.

The book culminates in the events surrounding the disappearance of the two climbers at 27,000 feet. On May 17 Bonington and Gordon sight the pair in the gap between the first and second rock towers, but there is no response during subsequent attempts at radio contact. Finally, after several days of a roller coaster ride of optimism and fear, and absolutely no trace of the missing climbers, Bonington and the others are forced to conclude that Tasker and Boardman have fallen down the east face.

What is indelibly ironic about this book is that, if Tasker and Boardman had succeeded (or even returned from a magnificent effort), one or both of them most likely would have written this or a comparable book. Boardman and Tasker both were among the most accomplished mountain writers, the former with his *The Shining Mountain* and *Sacred Summits*, and the latter with *Everest: The Cruel Way* and *The Savage Arena*. One is reminded of the acute sense of loss when Wilfrid Noyce, perhaps the finest mountain writer of his day, was killed in the Pamirs with Robin Smith, also a gifted writer.

Although this is a slim volume, it is one of Bonington's best.

JAMES WICKWIRE

Everest: The Ultimate Challenge. Al Burgess and Jim Palmer. Beaufort Books, New York, 1983. 214 pages, color photographs, diagrams. \$27.95.

"I had chosen the Canadian expedition over the Lhotse climb because it was cheaper," candidly writes author Al Burgess, reknowned Himalayan mountaineer. True to current ethics, he espouses the lightweight style of trying to climb the world's highest mountains; lightweight the Canadian Everest Expedition definitely was not. Burgess had first been invited to join a concurrent lightweight New Zealand expedition to Lhotse but declined. At the last minute, when the Canadian expedition invited him, this most-experienced of high-altitude mountaineers, who has made his home in Canada, junked his principles. The Canadian expedition clearly needed someone with his knowledge, skill and experience. But it was a "grudging" acceptance. Although Burgess' heart was with the other expedition, he chose Everest with the Canadians because, he freely admits, of the cost benefit. Getting to the top couldn't hurt his career as a professional climber.

Tragedy struck the expedition: Three Sherpas and one climber were killed in two separate accidents in the Khumbu Icefall, three days apart. But, despite this and the defection of seven participants, the expedition succeeded in putting two Canadians on top. Burgess wasn't one of them—his oxygen delivery system failed near the summit. His international reputation tarnished, what should he

do? Collaborate with a commercial writer and produce a denigrating account of the expedition.

This book was rushed into production in time for the Christmas season. There was little input from others on the expedition and that mostly from a few climbers' diary entries. Burgess' feelings while on the mountain—almost a standard part of the scene—are not recorded as he apparently did not keep a journal.

Sadly, he repeatedly downgrades most of the other members of the team, characterizing them as basically inexperienced, sometimes incompetent and often unable to work hard—qualities that contrast dramatically with those he attributes to himself. He feels that the leadership of the expedition was irresponsible and lacking in judgment and attributes three of the deaths on the climb to these factors.

Sloppy layout, amateur design, copious errors and omissions abound. Only one photograph, the one on the jacket, is credited. The quality of the printing of the remainder of the images is so poor, it reminds one of climbing books in the 1950s. Errors abound in captions, translations and spelling as well as in verifiable factual material.

That any expedition members reached the summit was due in large part to the effort of the Sherpas; however, there is no listing of their names nor any photographs of them. Even Sungdare, who reached the summit for the third time with this expedition, doesn't rate a picture. One of many examples of sloppiness is Burgess' description of the cremation of Sherpa Pasang Sona. From hearsay, he writes of "the flames and smoke writhing around the corpse's limbs and face, the grisly ghostly effect of them on the mouth and eyes and hair." In fact, the body burned with dignity, hidden deep inside the pyre, as I witnessed.

In the end, most mountaineering expeditions compromise. The New Zealanders, given the opportunity, demanded use of the Canadians' food and equipment to spare journeys carrying their own through the icefall. The Canadians shunned responsibilities whenever possible; the climbers selfishly wanted to climb and not to organize. The Canadian media machine publicized the preparations, which was the cost of having a corporate sponsor. There was little opportunity for the close control that would bind the expedition into a tightly-knit unit. Then, the Khumbu Icefall split the group apart.

The Canadians tackled Everest with modest high-altitude experience, using the grand style of every nation's first successful expedition to Everest. They had hoped to do a new route but, with only half the team available after the accidents, accomplished yet another ascent of the "yak" route. That they succeeded in the face of such tragedy is an accomplishment.

Burgess made a mistake in deciding to join the expedition. His statement about the leader, Bill March, more accurately applies to himself: "Human dignity can be lost in the scramble to achieve success by sacrificing ideals."

STEPHEN BEZRUCHKA