

stranger led to his personal bankruptcy.

Somehow, Whittaker's confidence and idealism survived the trauma. While rebuilding his financial security, he assembled a joint Soviet-Chinese-American expedition with the simple goal of putting representatives of each nation on the summit of Mt. Everest together. Whittaker clearly felt that success could inspire world leaders to eliminate the scourge of war. The text provides a fascinating description of the difficulties he encountered both before and during the expedition in making the dream a reality, relying upon climbers who came from very different cultures. In the end, leadership experience on K2 served Whittaker well and he achieved an amazing goal.

Whittaker is now in the midst of a voyage around the world with Diane and his second family, a voyage that seems likely to be equally rich in adventure.

Whittaker emerges from the pages of this book as a heroic, but also very human figure. The peaks and valleys in his life are much larger than those most of us will experience. His heroism lies not in his successes on Everest and K2, but in his perseverance, optimism and enduring love of nature despite betrayal, tragedy and other severe personal challenges.

Whittaker clearly wrote this book with the objective of educating as well as entertaining us. As usual, he has succeeded admirably.

LOU REICHARDT

*Ghosts of Everest: The Search for Mallory & Irvine.* Jochen Hemmleb, Larry A. Johnson, Eric R. Simonson, as told to William E. Nothdurft. Seattle: Mountaineers Books, 1999. 80 color photos. 208 pages. \$29.95.

It was on George Leigh-Mallory's third expedition to Mt. Everest in 1924 that he and Andrew Irvine disappeared several hundred vertical feet from the summit. Over the years, this vaulted the two to legendary status, with speculation that they, and not Hillary and Tenzing nearly 30 years later, were the first to climb to the top of the world. One of the great unsolved mysteries of 20th century exploration, it would take until nearly the end of it before the most chillingly compelling evidence in this intriguing enigma would be discovered by the 1999 Mallory and Irvine Research Expedition.

*Ghosts of Everest: The Search for Mallory & Irvine* impressively tells the tale of this ambitious team effort led by veteran mountaineer Eric Simonson, and it is a must-read for aficionados of the subject and anyone else who would be riveted by a recounting of the courage of the 1924 expedition and the high drama of the 1999 team in searching for its two most famous members.

Seattle writer Bill Nothdurft, through expedition members Jochen Hemmleb, Larry Johnson and Eric Simonson, has crafted a powerful story, neatly combining the adventure of both expeditions until their two destinies converged with the discovery of Mallory's remains. The result provides a sharp contrast of the two eras and an invaluable appreciation of how success in the costliest human endeavors stands nobly on the shoulders of those who tried first.

Although Nothdurft's text effortlessly reads like good fiction, it is artfully woven with sepia-toned images from the pioneer Everesters and the more brightly spun Fuji and Kodachrome photography of the 1999 team. And utterly compelling are the images of the artifacts recovered from George Mallory's body. While not the Shroud of Turin, their collective impact comes close, and one has the sense in viewing them of the mythical Mallory made tangibly, warmly mortal. We see a broken, Everyman's wristwatch, the embroidered initials

“GLM” on a still-fresh linen handkerchief, battered Crooks goggles, the frayed frail rope once connecting him to Irvine, handwriting neatly chronicling the needs of the moment so many years ago.

Although the reverence for Mallory-in-death held by Simonson’s team is always clear, there seemed something still naggingly vexing in *Ghosts*’ portrayal of his remains. There is no question of the coldly historical relevance of these images, and the depiction of his final resting position is almost as effective as the magic of an oracle in helping to reconstruct the circumstances of his fatal fall. It is clear, too, that remnants of his body’s graceful majesty still survive the ravages of the mountain. And yet, I wondered at the cumulative impact these images may have had on Mallory’s surviving family members.

*Ghosts*’ chapter eight is perhaps the most compelling with a wonderfully written account of the expedition’s newly-discovered evidence, in an effort to circumstantially reconstruct the events of Mallory and Irvine’s last hours. Both fact and intricate inference lead to plausible scenarios suggested by this combined authorship, though the end result of most of them seem to argue against summit success. But not completely, either, given the “tantalizing, if indirect clue” of team members failing to find a photograph of Mallory’s wife Ruth on his body, suggesting that he may have delivered it to the summit as he was believed to have intended.

I was especially fascinated with *Ghosts*’ conjecture that put Mallory and Irvine above the crux Second Step, and perhaps the Third, when they were last sighted by teammate Noel Odell “going strong for the top.” This is crucial to an assessment of the likelihood of their summit success because of its bearing on their distance from the top and the time it would take to reach it and return. And it is a point of continuing controversy as well, given Odell’s revision of his initial sighting that placed his two friends above the Second Step and not the First, as he later believed. Despite this, *Ghosts* proposes that, given their potential oxygen supply and climbing speed, even a charitable analysis of Mallory and Irvine’s progress under favorable conditions presented such significant difficulties that it is improbable they reached their great goal.

There is the subtle sense in *Ghosts* of a whole stream of synchronistic occurrences leading to the solution of the mystery, as though the universe was gently orchestrating the actions of each team member. From Conrad Anker’s “intuition of looking low” in his discover of Mallory’s body to the fortuitous recovery of a key 1924 oxygen bottle as an emerging piece of the greater puzzle, this is a delicately interesting dimension to what is already a richly deserving read, refreshingly adding thoughtful perspective sometimes missing from the usual mountain fare. A symmetry emerges in *Ghosts* with the expedition’s discovery, delivering yet another element of closure to the Mallory family circle.

In the end, the magnitude of the tragedy of George Mallory and Andrew Irvine still teaches, with *Ghosts* offering not only insight into the circumstances of their youthful passing, but of the players themselves in this Golden Age of high-altitude mountaineering and exploration. *Ghosts* paints a wonderfully compelling tribute to the determination of two expeditions separated in time, with Everest’s First Knight, George Mallory, never far from Earth’s highest center stage. The gift of this book reminds that any great endeavor begins first in the imagination, where the seed that may one day bring it fully to life is enriched and then empowered by a brightly spun dream. This most certainly was the force with Mallory and his wool-clad, hobnailed teammates, and Simonson’s team, too, as they both struggled against great odds in reaching for the summit of their highest expectations.

PAUL PFAU