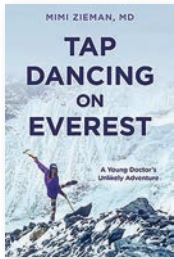


ESCAPE ROUTE

Off the Shelf



Tap Dancing on Everest: A Young Doctor's Unlikely Adventure

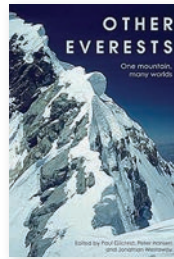
Mimi Zieman

MAY 1988: FOR DAYS, Mimi Zieman stared into a void of whirling snow. Somewhere behind the mists, her teammates Robert Anderson, Stephen Venables and Ed Webster were staggering down Chomolungma (Everest) after the first ascent of the remote Neverest Buttress. The whiteout concealed any signal lights, and they'd brought no radios. Waiting in Advance Base Camp, she'd prepared herself to treat any illnesses or injuries. But she had no way of knowing if they were still alive—she had only the sense of the bond that tied her to them like an invisible rope.

Here and elsewhere, Zieman's memoir, *Tap Dancing on Everest*, highlights intense moments that take place offstage in many earlier climbing books—exploring the edges of a genre, a mountain, a mind. As a Holocaust survivor's daughter, Zieman maps out the geographies of loss she traveled to reach this high, stormy place, where she is reminded, ceaselessly, of the fragility of human life. As a woman, she traces her own paths to acceptance and solidarity in a largely male mountaineering world. And as a medical officer, when the climbers finally stagger out of the clouds, she demonstrates her own heroism, tending to their severe frostbite far from any hospital.

In *Alpinist 27*, Ed Webster wrote that the "ethos" of how you approach Chomolungma "will determine, in large part, the mountain you find." Appearing less than two years after his death, *Tap Dancing on Everest* is also a poignant remembrance of shared ideals. Lyrical and compassionate, vulnerable and gritty, Zieman brings us to a realm where alpine light still illuminates hidden chasms of the spirit—and where what matters most is "the intimacy of physically caring for one another."

—Katie Ives



Other Everests: One Mountain, Many Worlds

Edited by Paul Gilchrist,
Peter H. Hansen and
Jonathan Westaway

IF YOU HAVE COMPLAINED that books about mountaineering on Chomolungma, or Mt. Everest, have grown somewhat repetitive, well, you're not alone. Man-against-mountain narratives and historical retrospectives fill the shelves but have grown stale. *Other Everests* takes a different approach.

While it's become more common for Everest stories to discuss topics like ethnicity and gender, *Other Everests* goes further. It covers many issues, including climate change, industrialization, visitors to the region and nationalism.

I was particularly intrigued by how the collection covers the topic of gender, notably in Agnieszka Irena Kaczmarek's piece about how Polish climber Wanda Rutkiewicz stood out among other female climbers of the 1970s and 1980s. Kaczmarek writes that it went beyond her drive to climb; Rutkiewicz adopted a more masculine identity when she climbed in the Himalaya to match the climbing culture there.

In another chapter, Anna Saroldi reevaluates the identity and role of Sandy Irvine in the 1924 British Mt. Everest expedition. I now have a whole new perspective on Irvine: he was not passive to other characters, like George Mallory, but was an active participant in the story, equally as driven to reach the summit. Irvine's story is another that "fell through the cracks," as Saroldi notes, in the writing of Everest history, which mostly focused on individual heroes.

Overall, the editors could have moderated the academic language to meet the general mountaineering-genre audience. We are readers and embrace a wide vocabulary, but some introductions and conclusions in *Other Everests* needed to be read and reread to clearly understand the authors' fine and nuanced points.

—Andrew Szalay



A Place Among Giants: 22 Seasons at Denali Basecamp

Lisa Roderick

LISA RODERICK'S EARLY LIFE growing up in Connecticut was marked by strict household rules, unthinkable tragedy and a strong desire to protect her loved ones. As she grew older, and with encouragement from her older brother, Paul, Roderick left the East Coast and moved to Colorado, where she discovered a love of mountains. Then she found the magic of Alaska.

Paul had moved to Alaska in the early 1990s. He landed a job at Talkeetna Air Taxi (TAT), flying climbers and tourists into the Alaska Range. A visit to Talkeetna in 1992 prompted Roderick to move her own life to the far north, where she eventually worked with Paul after he purchased TAT. One thing led to another, as opportunities often do in Alaska, and Roderick became the manager of Denali base camp in her early thirties.

At her post on the Kahiltna Glacier, Roderick helped pilots navigate hard-to-predict weather, assisted in rescues and interacted with some of the world's top climbers as they set off for historic ascents. She watched the glacier change with the warming climate and navigated new and less predictable crevasse danger. Through all of it, Roderick found community in the many people working together on Denali—including her own husband, climber and Denali ranger Mark Westman.

Roderick's story provides gripping insight into the operations on Denali, a new point of view on famous mountaineering feats and tragedies, and a colorful telling of a life lived outside the norm. She also offers thoughtful meditations on what it means to step away from the thing that has long defined you.

—Abbey Collins