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A Walk In The Sky: Climbing Hidden Peak



Synopsis

This book is a first-person account of the first group of American climbers to reach an 8000-meter summit in the Himalayas. The photographs, some in full color, really bring the experience to life. Excerpt: "We continued to buck forward. We could look directly up at the summit through the high col between the ridge of Hidden South and the Urdok Comb. Ahead were a few undulating areas with large crevasses, but it would be only a matter of putting one foot in front of the other, at least as far as the final pyramid. We had found our way past the cliff bands and had turned the defenses of a great mountain. Through the years as we had clung to ice and rock, chopped steps, and dangled from pitons, we had dreamed of climbing an Eight Thousander. Now the culmination of our mountaineering careers was going to be a trudge through soft snow with heavy packs. Just a walk - a walk in the sky. It seemed ridiculously simple. Yet we could barely move . . . Soon it was my turn again. One step, again up to the knees, and I bent double over the axe, gasping. One does not sweat at high altitude, but I could almost feel the water in my body departing through my lungs every time I exhaled into the dry air. Part of me seemed to stand aside and revile the inert figure hunched over the axe. 'Don't stand there, take another step, take another step, NOW.' But it was impossible to move until I caught my breath. Another step, more gasping, and a wave of remorse swept over me as I knew I was letting everyone down. 'Time,' yelled Nevison, and as I sank into the slope the agony of failure was blunted by fatigue. Another hundred feet."

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Customer Reviews

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summit in the Himalayas. The photographs, some in full color, really bring the experience to life. Excerpt: "We continued to buck forward. We could look directly up at the summit through the high col between the ridge of Hidden South and the Urdok Comb. Ahead were a few undulating areas with large crevasses, but it would be only a matter of putting one foot in front of the other, at least as far as the final pyramid. We had found our way past the cliff bands and had turned the defenses of a great mountain. Through the years as we had clung to ice and rock, chopped steps, and dangled from pitons, we had dreamed of climbing an Eight Thousander. Now the culmination of our mountaineering careers was going to be a trudge through soft snow with heavy packs. Just a walk - a walk in the sky. It seemed ridiculously simple. Yet we could barely move . . . Soon it was my turn again. One step, again up to the knees, and I bent double over the axe, gasping. One does not sweat at high altitude, but I could almost feel the water in my body departing through my lungs every time I exhaled into the dry air. Part of me seemed to stand aside and revile the inert figure hunched over the axe. 'Don't stand there, take another step, take another step, NOW.' But it was impossible to move until I caught my breath. Another step, more gasping, and a wave of remorse swept over me as I knew I was letting everyone down. 'Time,' yelled Nevison, and as I sank into the slope the agony of failure was blunted by fatigue. Another hundred feet."

Since I know the author I am of course biased in his favor. But as he makes (favorable) mention of me in the book that gives him top rating of 5 stars. Actually, it's a darn fine book. I've been reading mountaineering literature for quite some time now and am struck by evolution of style over the years. Books of the 1920s and 30s now seem "detached." We learn from them what people DID, but not a lot about who the people WERE. (Tilman is a great and welcome exception.) Through his humor--often self-deprecating--Clinch's story makes it plain that mountaineers can accomplish great things while still enjoying themselves. Probably as a reflection of what the publishers know will sell, more recent books (and especially TV movies and the like) place so much emphasis on danger, harum-scarum and disaster that a general reader (who can't see between the lines) must get a very peculiar slant on climbing. Read it!

This exciting book tells about the difficulties of organizing an expedition, and the expedition itself. It is a well written page turner for everyone, but especially for those with an interest in adventure, and the amazing fortitude of those attempting unclimbed, sky high peaks. PH

It was refreshing to read a good story of the first ascent of Hidden Peak in 1958. This was before

the Himalayas were deluged by eco-tourists and before numerous sensationalist accounts of conquest written or filmed. Here is a story of some American mountaineers scraping together an expedition to enjoy a climb of an 8,000 meter peak. How much better can it get? Perhaps the author "sanitized" the account since it is devoid of personality and ego conflicts. Everyone in the book is a happy camper: sahibs, HAPs and porters.

This book surprised me. It's a pearl. I judge mountaineering books by how many thoughtful quotations I can glean from the pages on a variety of topics and insights. It's a nice title, the walking, but I liked the talking. Here is an example: "Expeditions are born in the minds of men and more of them die there than are defeated by avalanches, bad weather, and misfortune combined." Nicholas Clinch.

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