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K2: Triumph And Tragedy



Synopsis

K2, "the savage mountain", is the second-highest peak in the world - and the most difficult to climb. In 1986, it was the site of both dazzling triumph and great loss as twenty-seven men and women reached the top but thirteen died trying. To this day it remains the single greatest tragedy in the history of mountaineering. Curran was there to record it all in words and photographs: courage and obsession, luminous success and thwarted ambition.

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Customer Reviews

Before the 1996 Everest disaster made that mountain synonymous with tragedy at 8,000 meters, there was K2. More technical in most routes than Everest, the world's second-highest peak is considered the ultimate achievement by many mountaineers. In 1986 K2 claimed the lives of 13 climbers in nine different parties attempting its summit. Author Jim Curran was on the mountain during the ordeal, and through narrative and photographs, Curran documents the sagas of success, failure, and tragedy in a fateful year that captured the world's attention. Alongside the terror of avalanches, crevasses, and horrific storms are stories of bravery and the indomitable human spirit.

In the summer of 1986, nine expeditions, representing 10 nationalities, attempted to conquer K-2, the world's second-highest mountain, located in Pakistan. Twenty-seven people reached the summit; 13 perished. Climber-photographer Curran has "told a gripping story that belongs with the classics of mountaineering," praised PW. Photos. Copyright 1988 Reed Business Information, Inc.

The World's Second-Highest Mountain | All 14 of the world's 8,000-meter peaks are located in the Himalaya or the Karakoram ranges in Asia. Of the group, Everest reigns as the supreme highest mountain in the world. And yet it is a neighbor with the strange name of K2 that many consider the harder to climb. Everest is deadly, but the ridges running up to the summit are said to be less challenging than K2. K2 is the true monster among mountains. During 1986, twenty-seven persons made the summit of K2, a triumph for the climbers. But thirteen persons lost their lives that year in the attempt to master what many have named The Savage Mountain. Author Jim Curran was on the mountain during the summer of 1986. His work as a climbing cameraman for the British Fullers Expedition gave him plenty of insight into the climbers and the mountain. Some of those who reached the summit of K2 that summer died on their way down. In fact, seven of the thirteen had reached the summit before disaster overtook them. Two Americans were killed in an avalanche, one man fell to his death in a crevasse just out of base camp, and seven were trapped at 26,000 feet for days. Only two would survive and they were almost dead when they finally were helped into base camp. But all was not tragedy. A young man named Benoit Chamoux made an historic 23 hour climb. Wanda Rutkiewicz became the first woman to summit K2. There were moments of heroism, including the author's rescue of one of the two survivors of the summit disaster. Curran tells his story much like he lived it, one day at a time. We witness his rejoicing at the accomplishments of the climbers. We feel his anxiety when his friends are trapped for days. He shares his sorrow for the ones who were left behind, dead on the savage mountain that claimed their lives. This is a fascinating account of triumph and tragedy. I give the book four stars.

Well written account of the 1986 achievements and deaths on K2. Twenty-seven climbed the mountain that year. Thirteen died. Eight died above 8,000m. The other five died from a falling rock, avalanches, and falls. I found a very crucial piece of information that apparently had not been read or heeded by most climbers on K2 in 2008 when eleven climbers died in similar circumstances. That is that a Korean summiteer in 1986, tried to fix the cut line across the traverse under the serac and put up a new line for others to traverse. Unfortunately, he left about a three foot hank of rope hanging down between the old and new rope line that others in the dark, and in fatigued conditions clipped onto and fell from in the dark. In 2008, many people who did summit couldn't find their way back to the fixed rope. Those with skills, used their crampons and ice axes to go down a near vertical wall of ice. Others, sat down to wait for morning. I think the lesson is, you have to plan to save yourself if possible. Cecilie went on later to be the first woman to win the Explorers Grand Slam, climbing the

highest mountain on each of the seven continents and going to both the north and south poles. In 2008, only Cecile Skog's team knowingly carried a 300' length of climbing rope for emergencies such as this, and fixed a crucial line just cut from an avalanche under this terrible serac, which also took her new husband down to his death. Jim was a minimal climber. He was along for videography, photos, and ultimately a documentary. He was the last member of his team left there by the time he trekked out to go home. I highly recommend this book to people like me who are interested in climbing, and especially for climbers.

In my opinion there was far more tragedy than triumphant. So much death.

Have read much more intriguing books about climbing tragedies. This conveyed the author's anguish, but seems like most could have been condensed into a 100 pages

I love reading about people who take risks by doing things I would never do. I get the excitement without having to try it and have a heart attack! This book is sad because so many people died. However, it is a good book because it gives you a chance to understand what happens on this kind of climb. Also, if you're not a risk-taker like me, you will still be asking, "why would anyone want to do something like this. Great book.

The black Summer of '86 is told in great detail by a man who was actually there. The 13 deaths are a sobering reminder of how the savage mountain can both take and give. While it took many lives that season, there were also a phenomenal number of firsts that year. This is the book to have, with so many legendary moments, so many harrowing moments...it's the true story of K2 and it's many highs & lows.

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