



High Exposure: An Enduring Passion for Everest and Unforgiving Places

David Breashears , Jon Krakauer (Foreword)

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For generations of resolute adventurers, from George Mallory to Sir Edmund Hillary to Jon Krakauer, Mount Everest and the world's other greatest peaks have provided the ultimate testing ground. But the question remains: Why climb? In *High Exposure*, elite mountaineer and acclaimed *Everest* filmmaker David Breashears answers with an intimate and captivating look at his life.

For Breashears, climbing has never been a question of risk taking: Rather, it is the pursuit of excellence and a quest for self-knowledge. Danger comes, he argues, when ambition blinds reason. The stories this world-class climber and great adventurer tells will surprise you -- from discussions of competitiveness on the heights to a frank description of the 1996 Everest tragedy.

High Exposure: An Enduring Passion for Everest and Unforgiving Places Details

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Sherry says

I liked this book. Being a mini mountaineer, I was familiar with Breashears' climbing and photographic prowess. It was fun to learn about the man as he sees himself. I have heard of or know several of the people he climbed with, so I felt a connection to him and his story. I am from Denver so could relate to his climbs in Boulder. Occasionally I felt bogged down in all his camera and filming details but not enough to stop reading. David Breashears is in my opinion one of the finest mountaineers of today. His filming skills are exceptional. His support and assistance during the 1996 Everest disaster is laudable, to say the least. His passion for the mountains, for Everest particularly, raises him to the pinnacle of mountaineering excellence.

Monical says

Interesting book from David Breashears, best known (at least to me) as the IMAX Everest cinematographer. The book chronicles his life, especially focused on his development first as a climber and then as a cinematographer. The climax of the book is events on the disastrous 1996 Everest season, when the author was filming at Everest as the disaster unfolded. The book ends rather abruptly at that point, which I found disturbing and unfulfilling. The book has very little personal reflection (the author discusses the failure of his marriage in such dry clinical terms that it was hard to empathize when it finally ends).

Evan says

OK, this book is not as rip-roaring as Krakauer's *Into Thin Air*, and yet it's an excellent insight into what makes a mountaineer tick. I was moved by Breashear's account of the Everest '96 disaster, and found his rendering of the survival of Beck Weathers perhaps even more moving than the account in Krakauer's masterful tome. Similarly moving was his account of the recovery of the camera containing the last picture of mountaineer Bruce Herrod, staring into the lens in triumph on the summit of Everest, soon to collapse and die with the very camera in his pocket. The image strikes me as similar in spirit to that of Chris McCandless in front of the bus in Krakauer's *Into the Wild*.

Breashears' life story is fascinating; and one sometimes wishes that, despite the inherent hardships, that one was raised as an army brat, because they seem to grow up with a special kind of resolve.

There are fascinating accounts of Breashears' early climbs in Colorado and as a crew member on the set in the Italian Dolomites of the 1980's Stallone thriller, "Cliffhanger." And, of course, there's Everest '96, one of the great adventure stories of all time, about which several books have been written.

I don't know what it is about the books I've been choosing lately, or if it's just an indicator of my tenuous emotional state of late [note: in 2009], but this book ultimately moved me to tears, and even if it's not quite the achievement that Krakauer's book is, it is nonetheless a first-rate adventure book as well as a worthy biography. As a sidenote, it baffles me how he could have let such an alluring woman as Veronique Choa slip out of his life. Oh well, I know from experience, it happens.

This is probably a four-star book, at best, but the enjoyment factor was high for me, and mountaineering buffs won't be disappointed.

(KevinR@Ky; edited and amended in 2016)

David Ward says

High Exposure: An Enduring Passion for Everest and Unforgiving Places by David Breashears (Simon & Shuster 2000)(Biography). This is the long-awaited biography of legendary mountaineer David Breashears. He is arguably the best high-altitude climber in the world today. This is the story of what drives his success; it includes a frank dissection of the 1996 tragedy on Everest and the subsequent rescue in which he was fully engaged. My rating: 7.5/10, finished 2010.

Greynomad says

His passion destroyed a remarkable marriage.....other than that he has lived his dream

Charlotte Elson says

Interesting if you're interested in climbing, but there are other far more well-written accounts of mountain life than this. Breashears comes off as arrogant and occasionally sexist.

What is the human cost of mountaineering? And I don't mean a death toll. What happens when one's passion takes them to the heights of the world, risking injury and death, gone for months at a time? What effect does that have on relationships? There's a line from the chapter on the 1996 tragedy where Breashears writes that he would have called his wife, but Veronique wasn't his wife anymore. He would've called his mother, but he didn't want her to worry. So he didn't call anyone. No one to tell, no one to share this devastating tragedy with on a personal and not professional level. That strikes me as tragic in itself.

Christine Yorty says

Enjoyed the book as another account of the climbing season

Susan Liston says

Pretty darn good. I have a sneaky feeling that David Breashears might be more than a little arrogant, but these extreme mountain climber folk are definitely nuts, so it isn't too surprising if they are also a bit prickly or difficult. Or hard to be married to...."Oh by the way honey, did I mention I'm off to Pakistan to take pictures while hanging from a little rope 20,000 feet in the air? See you in four months if I don't fall." It's not just climbing that is so unfathomable to me, the traveling you do to get to where you want to go is scary enough...

read his tale of taking a taxi in India in the middle of the night (and going for hours in the wrong direction) I am no adventurer myself, but it is certainly entertaining to read about someone who is. It was also interesting to hear his account of the 1996 Everest disaster, as he figured prominently in the rescue efforts.

Hannah McEntire says

His experience as a photographer...interesting perspective.

Chris Zeh says

Another excellent Everest book! I own a paperback copy, but I just finished the Audiobook version. The book focuses on Breashears' career in climbing and film making and culminates in a behind the scenes look at the making of the 1998 IMAX Film about Everest (which was filmed during the disastrous 1996 season). A must read alongside Anatoli Boukreev's "The Climb", Ed Viesturs' "No Shortcut's to the Top" and Jon Krakauer's "Into Thin Air".

Brad says

Having read Krakauer's "Into Thin Air" several years back, I was probably overdue on this one. It's an amazing account of mountain climbing in general, Himalayan expeditions in particular, and Mount Everest intimately, especially the '96 tragedy. One can only hope to catch a furtive glimpse of the raw exposure such nearly insane adventurers endure. Not my cup of tea, but fascinating all the same. I think I need to re-read the Krakauer account again.

Camee says

Very exciting stories in here! Just confirmed my idea that I NEVER want to climb Everest, but am incredibly thankful for those brave people who have and have shared their incredible stories. Breashears is an excellent writer and I loved reading about his adventures.

Sunny says

This book is slightly different from the other mountaineering books I've read lately. It's more of a biography than a straight climbing/adventure book. I enjoyed reading about Breashears' childhood years, the start of his passion for climbing and his time spent in the oil rigs. From the book, it seems that Breashears is obsessed with Everest in particular. He returns to this mountain over and over again; yet he doesn't seem to feel the desire to climb any of the other 8000ers. I specially enjoyed reading Jon Krakauer's foreword. I read it after finishing the book and it was interesting to hear from Krakauer's perspective what kind of person Breashears is.

Melissa says

Goodness, this guy is an jerk! The book opens in 1996 as the tragedy of that year is beginning to unfold. As I read, I found myself thinking, "Wow, this dude is awfully smug." I've read a lot of books about the 1996 disaster and of course some of them are very uncomplimentary towards Rob Hall & his actions. I'm not trying to be a Rob Hall apologist, the tone that David Breashears takes just makes him seem like a big-know-it-all. I found myself wondering if he really knew these people or if he was just pretending. But I kept at it, and the middle section is pretty good. He is a freaky good mountain climber, I'll give him that. Once we get back to 1996 at the end of the book, though, I was ready to strangle him again. So sanctimonious! So, "Oh, I would never, ever make mistakes." His team decides to go back up on the mountain, of course, after all the tragedy, and as he's filming two team members on the summit slope, he decides the framing is all off & *makes them come back down & do it again!!* Are you kidding me? His many accomplishments notwithstanding, his attitude makes this very unpalatable. I'd like to reread my mountain-woe books to see when he crops up and how others relate to him.

Antje says

Sicher muss man sich generell für Bergsteigen, Höhenklettere und das Drehen von Filmen dort interessieren, um von der Autobiographie David Breashears gefesselt zu werden. Natürlich ließ er sich wie andere seiner Kollegen beim Schreiben unter die Arme greifen, aber das Überprüfen nach Richtigkeit betrieb er sicherlich mit der gleichen Sorgfalt wie die Leitung seiner Expeditionen. Was mir besonders an seinem Buch gefällt, ist die Art und Weise, wie dem Laien Fachbegriffe und anderes Bergsteiger-Latein erklärt werden, ohne jemals überheblich oder langweilig zu wirken. Zudem scheint Breashears ein sehr diskreter Mensch zu sein, der ungern seine Schmutzwäsche in der Öffentlichkeit wäscht. So sind geäußerte Kritiken gegenüber gewisse Personen, gerade im Bezug der 1996er Mount-Everest-Besteigung, zurückhaltend und respektvoll. Stattdessen scheut er sich nicht, eigene Handlungsweisen selbstreflektiert zu betrachten. Einziger Beschwerdepunkt meinerseits betrifft die sehr detaillierte Funktionsweise diverser Kameras, was nicht unbedingt mein Interessengebiet streift, aber durch seinen Beruf logisch ist. Ich hätte mir außerdem noch viel mehr Fotos zu sehen gewünscht.
