



Just for the Love of It

Cathy O'Dowd

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This is an expanded edition, containing an extra chapter written exclusively for the softcover and ebook. editions The original book tells the story of Cathy O'Dowd's first three Everest expeditions: her successful ascent of the south col route in 1996 (becoming the 1st South African to climb Everest), her unsuccessful attempt on the north ridge route in 1998 and her successful return in 1999 (1st woman in the world to climb Everest from both sides). This edition contains one more chapter, which tells the story of her attempt to climb a new route on the east face of Everest in 2003.

Just for the Love of It Details

Date : Published November 7th 2014 by Crux Publishing Ltd (first published 1999)

ISBN : 9781909979154

Author : Cathy O'Dowd

Format : Paperback 272 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Autobiography, Memoir

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Mel says

This book painted a very descriptive picture of Cathy O'Dowd's experiences on Mount Everest -- so detailed that I found myself dreaming of climbing each night while I was reading this. I don't expect to *ever* find myself on Mount Everest but she writes with such a passion for the adventure sport that I half considered adding mountaineering back to my bucket list (maybe just for the goal of Mount Kilimanjaro). Exceptional, engaging and inspiring book!

Patricia says

Just reissued with an extra chapter regarding the Mazeno Ridge, I enjoyed it as much second time around. Women mountaineers face an extra challenge and have to prove themselves to be not only responsible, technical climbers but also equable in challenging personal situations. This O'Dowd displays in her down-to-earth, straightforward, but always well written prose. Hard to put down. Gripping until the end. A role model if there ever was one for adventurous women who choose to walk a path outside the norm.

Dolly Mastrangelo says

So inspiring!

Cathy O'Dowd takes us through her amazing challenges attempting to summit the three faces of Everest: north, south and east. Each had its joys and its horrors. She used her enormous skill and drive to overcome adversity. What is most remarkable are the pictures and her description of the most spectacular glaciers and peaks. The most surprising thing for me is the reality of mountaineers crossing over bodies of other mountaineers who didn't make it. And her discussion of how easy it is to happen to the best mountaineers, including one of her good friends.

Anna Marie says

I personally know very little about climbing Everest so found this first hand account interesting. A woman's more emotional perspective gave me some insight into the challenge of conquering an activity dominated by men. I didn't read the synopsis before starting, so was surprised to read about three expeditions to Everest and about Cathy's being the first woman to summit both sides of Everest.

chucklesthescot says

Cathy does not waste time talking endlessly about her childhood and youth, which I was pleased about. She

starts with brief mentions of a few early climbs that she did before reading about a South African contest to recruit women for an attempt on Everest. She is brutal about her opinion of the other women she was competing with and describes how those on the shortlist went on a final selection hike on Kilimanjaro, during which she and Deshun are chosen for Base Camp.

It is probably a good time to point out that the South African expedition to Everest in 1996 are blamed in other books for failing to assist in the disaster rescue and that leader Ian Woodall was not liked by any other expedition leader. I'm not going to go into any of that in this review. I am talking in this review about what is happening within this team at war, the quality of the writing and storytelling, not going moral or deciding if people are lying. I'm mentioning it in case others who have read Into Thin Air etc comment on me not talking about the allegations here.

The first obvious thing about the Everest team is that they were not a team from the start. The men, with the exception of Bruce, did not like the way that Ian was running the team and were in rebellion. This seems to be accepted by all sides though opinions differ as to who was right. Based on Cathy's opinion, the others were said to complain about sponsorship duties, the equipment, how Ian was handling things and about the expedition in general. The journalists who were with the team to send reports did not get on with Ian either. Cathy indicates that Ken was unfit, rude, racist, bigoted and complained about everything as he didn't want that assignment. I need to point out that the journalist in question wrote his own book with his side of the story which I haven't read so I can't comment on who is right. Either way, morale was low before they started.

One thing in the book which is verified by another book is the ongoing saga of the team doctor Charlotte. Cathy claims that she was always going off without telling people where she was going, so that when she was needed to treat someone, she could never be found. It is also claimed that she neglected her patients, was always late, upset the Sherpas by dressing in skimpy clothing and never did what she was told, leading to her being fired several times before reaching Base Camp. At Base Camp, Charlotte was looking to climb with a different team and asked Goran Kropp, a solo climber, to be put on his expedition which he agreed to on the condition that she had a permit before climbing. On finding out that she went into the Icefall with no permit, he kicked her out and a liaison officer ejected her from Base Camp. This was in his book and it backs up what the South African leadership said about Charlotte, so it looks clear that she was indeed a problem.

Charlotte's alleged affair with a married climber is said to have got the other climbers on her side, leading to the other men quitting the expedition. It did not provide a good start for the remaining team members. I will be talking about the Everest expedition itself in my review of 'Free to Decide' the book about the 1996 Everest trip written by Cathy and Ian.

After the 1996 expedition Ian and Cathy set up their own climbing company and decide to do another climbing competition to select new team members for an attempt on the north face of Everest. Selection takes place on Aconcagua but at Everest Base Camp, Cathy and Ian are not impressed that the chosen climbers and Base Camp manager quit because of the cold weather, altitude and conditions! It kind of makes you wonder what they thought they were signing up to...5 star hotels and a beach holiday? For Cathy, all of this pales in comparison to being confronted by a dying climber high on Everest.

I found this book to have lots of interesting detail and Cathy tells the story clearly in a way that non climbers like myself can understand . With her description of the landscape and conditions, it is easy to imagine yourself there and what it must really be like. I enjoyed the book and I liked getting some background to the fighting in the South African team.

Rasoul Emadi says

Just for the love

Sam Thompson says

A relatively interesting read. For those interested in alpine exploits, this is a good recommendation as it follows the author from a novice to an Everest veteran. Unfortunately, it does get relatively matter of fact at times, and you can see the author straining to add some amount of story or interest to large sections that mostly contain sitting around camp endlessly waiting for weather breaks. It's also unfortunate that the author seemed to design this book around her need to justify to her critics why she did what she did in moments of difficult decision making, only to then defensively declare that nobody can judge her anyways and if they did she wouldn't care. This happens several times during the read.

Adrienne says

It's often the things we don't do that we come to regret. O'Dowd, a South African, fortuitously read an advertisement looking for a woman to join an Everest team during 1996. Without any prior thought of Everest, or any similar mountain, she filled out the application, was chosen for the short list of six women, and joined the trial hike on Kilimanjaro. The criteria for the team was the ability to fit in rather than the ability to climb high mountains. O'Dowd met both challenges.

She makes the Everest climb come to life with her descriptions of the mountain and severe weather. The after-dark call to rescue another team trapped below the Hilary Step, 8 hours away, during a raging storm was riveting. O'Dowd reveals problems within the team; personality conflicts and dissention and a doctor who alternately over medicates and abandons her patients. These problems resulted in members either withdrawing or being removed from the climb.

Interestingly, O'Dowd climbed Everest at the same time as Jon Krakauer who wrote *Into Thin Air* about his Everest experience. You guessed it...my next book is *Into Thin Air*, already loaded on my Kindle!

Chris Steeden says

1996 and Cathy O'Dowd puts in a great effort to get selected to join a South African expedition team in its attempt to climb the classic south route up Everest. What an expedition group she was in and not in a good way. No-one got on and the men just moaned or were sexist and abhorrent. They really come over as pathetic. The woman doctor was dismissed for being irresponsible. It was a mess of a team that Ian Woodall was leading. President Nelson Mandela penned a message 'When I met the team I warned them it would not be easy and there would be set-backs. This has now happened. I call upon all members to try and settle the matter. This expedition is very important. It is important for South Africa. Our young sports people are reaching for the stars. I wish the team well.'

Well, what a start to this great and inspiring book. If it wasn't enough attempting to climb Everest, you have to contend with a completely dysfunctional expedition team that had no Everest experience. You know from the title of the book that Cathy triumphs and you do root for her in this really well written book. Guess what, this is the same time that Jon Krakauer went up and wrote 'Into Thin Air' about the 1996 disaster. That is a terrific book by the way but Cathy gives her views on the factual content. Half this book is spent on this expedition and it whizzes by. There is a lot more drama with the climb and the aftermath.

The second half of the book concentrates on the north side climb from Tibet which is harder than the south and a hell of a lot windier it seems. There is more than enough drama in this climb as well to compare with the first.

What this book did not have was the massive ego of a man coming through. These types of books written by men get cramped with 'inspirational quotes' and how tough and focused they are so what a nice change to just hear the facts presented in such a normal manner. No bravado. No, look at me, beat chest, blah blah blah. What Cathy achieved was remarkable and this book is a great accompaniment to her achievements.

Daryl says

Good book. I've read a lot of these sorts of books and it definitely made an interesting change to get a woman's perspective - much more insight into the emotional side of tackling these extreme endeavours than is usually the case. It was also interesting to hear about the 1996 disaster from one of the much criticised parties. It's difficult to know who is right or wrong in these situations if you weren't there and it's probably not very clear when you are there. Everyone makes decisions for different reasons and has to live with the consequences one way or the other. I don't envy them in this case.

Not a classic of mountain literature but a real page turner all the same.

Also the first time I've read a book by someone I knew once which was a bit weird (in a good way :)

Julian Walker says

An instantly engaging and highly readable story of self-discovery, physical adversity and self-belief.

A powerful story of extreme mountaineering, with joy and disaster, in equal measure as the author makes her way into the record books on the world's highest mountain.

Self-effacing and highly inspirational, this is a book to show you the power of what might be, and is a great read, regardless of whether you have any interest in climbing.

Prajot Joshi says

It's not just the inspiring journey that the author went through, but also the beautiful way in which she has narrated the events , that made me enjoy the book thoroughly. Liked the language used and the words chosen.

Sarah says

Loved it!

Brilliant, thought provoking, honest and in turns, brutal yet beautiful. The lessons Cathy learnt on the massive slopes of Everest are lessons that we should all aspire to remember and apply to our lives. Wonderfully written book that is well worth a visit x

Ann Beej says

This is well worth reading and far outpaces "Free To Decide". This book surprised me with the realisation that I actually like Cathy O'Dowd! Very happy she kicked Woodall to the curb. This book does not shy away from asking and answering difficult questions, which is appreciated. One of those questions (don't pretend you don't want to know), is "when exactly DID Cathy and Ian first hook up?" The answer is the worst possible answer. Despite that, if you are at all interested in Cathy's career, this book is a good read.

Carrie Stevens says

I admit it: I'm addicted to Everest memoirs. I don't know why, but ever since reading INTO THIN AIR they've fascinated me. Living vicariously? The macabre aspect of modern Everest expeditions? Sure.

I really wanted to like this book. She seems like a great person to have coffee with. I just don't feel it was as polished as it could be. She swings from great emotional narrative (in both high and low places) to chapters that seem almost clinical in their detachment. I get what she was trying to do, especially in describing her "last" climb, it just didn't work for me.

That said, it's an entertaining read. I'd recommend going into it with climbing vocabulary and basic knowledge of the Everest climb, because she doesn't pause for definitions or maps.
