

Die Trying- July 09

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Title: "Die Trying: One Man's Quest to Conquer the Seven Summits"

Author: Bo Parfet with Richard Buskin

By MICHAEL SHIREK
Bismarck Tribune

I'll admit that I expected to hate this book. I spent a week giving my girlfriend a sneak peek at all the clever critiques I was prepared to write about this adventure memoir based on the literature that accompanied it. I told her it might be



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exciting to get a chance to write a bad review. And then I read the book. I hate being wrong. And, boy, was I wrong. As someone who suffers from a major case of acrophobia I've only been able to suppress with any success about a dozen times in 30 years, I'm inclined to believe that mountaineers suffer from a special brand of insanity.

And it doesn't help that I once had a terrible experience on Mount Evans, one of Colorado's fourteeners, about the same time author Bo Parfet was completing his conquest of the highest peaks on all seven continents, the Seven Summits — which actually encompasses eight mountains. If you want the technical details, read the book or use the Google.

Parfet comes from a long line of successful entrepreneurs, and in his mid-20s, found himself working on Wall Street. While in college, he had climbed Longs Peak (another of Colorado's four-

teeners) with a group of ROTC students. That excursion lit his fire, and it wasn't long before he found himself climbing Africa's Mount Kilimanjaro — and being completely unprepared to do so.

Through the course of the book, Parfet encounters dozens of incredible circumstances, and overcomes himself, his guides and climbing partners, and Mother Nature in his quest for the Holy Grail of mountaineering. Along the way, he witnesses several deaths and has a few close calls himself. He conquers the highest peaks on all seven continents.

Parfet offers a perspective on mountaineering you won't find in the movies — whether it be a slick Hollywood action-adventure flick or a serious documentary on mountain climbing. Where else will you find a description of the toilet facilities on Russia's Mount Elbrus? Not in a travel guide, most likely.

But this book isn't about climbing mountains. While it's technical enough to give a novice an idea of what is happening on the way up and down (and the travel to and from), this is not a guide to climbing Mount Everest or Mount McKinley. This is a book about personal growth.

When I thought of a mountain climber writing a book about how he had climbed to the top of every continent, I expected a tome dedicated to his wow-I'm-great-look-at-what-I-did achievement. Instead, Parfet critiques his teamwork skills, his ego, his attitude and his growth as a human being. It really is a nice touch,

although it did take me a bit to get past the Doogie I fowser-like wrap-up at the end of each chapter.

The book is pretty straightforward. Parfet makes just one attempt at humor, in the appendix, and it hits the mark.

Richard Buskin most likely penned "Die Trying" after extensive interviews with Parfet. Ordinarily, I would prefer to read a book the author actually wrote. Having someone else at the keyboard has a way of coloring the narrative. In this case, it was probably a good choice. The book flows quite well and doesn't have a whiff of amateurism in it. Had aspiring business tycoon and peak bagger Parfet written it, it probably would have come out differently — and likely not for the better.

Will this book inspire you to climb every mountain? Doubtful.

Will this book inspire you to be a more effective communicator and team player? Possibly.

Will this book teach you a thing or two? Yes — especially if you're a certified flatlander, as most North Dakotans are.

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