

No Mountain Too High: A Triumph Over Breast Cancer

Andrea Gabbard

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No Mountain Too High chronicles the story of Expedition Inspiration, a team of 17 breast cancer survivors who climb Argentina's Mount Aconcagua, the highest peak in the Western Hemisphere. Their goal: to raise public awareness about this devastating disease. The book divides its energies into three parts. "First Steps" introduces the expedition's founders, breast cancer survivors Laura Evans and Andrea Martin, and documents the development of their initial concept into the formation of the team. "The Inward Journey" briefly accounts each woman's experience with breast cancer, while "The Outward Journey" focuses on the team's ascent up Mount Aconcagua.

In addition to these 17 women, Expedition Inspiration included nearly two dozen members who traveled as guides and support. Among them was author Andrea Gabbard, a journalist who specializes in outdoor activities. She records not only the physical journey up the mountain, but also combines interviews, journal entries and team anecdotes in order to create a livelier narrative of the expedition's story. At times Gabbard's style seems journalistically heavy, as she tends to include superfluous factual material and lacks a sense of timing in reference to the chapter's lengths.

Gabbard, however, deftly captures the overall sense of determination, spirit and triumph embodied by these women. As founder Laura Evans observes, "In climbing a mountain and dealing with breast cancer, you face your deepest fear, the reality of death." The transformation of these women who undergo both cancer and climbing is evident and enlightening. No Mountain Too High is an incredibly moving book with a wide appeal. You may find yourself choking up a bit when imagining these breast cancer survivors standing on a snow-capped mountain appreciating just how good it feels to be alive.

KYLE NORRIS (September / October 1998)

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