

Peggy Shumaker

How To Be a Mountain Climber

Spread your gear in a hangar in Talkeetna. Weigh each crampon, piton, belay. Weigh each inch of rope. Weigh the necessity of Chapstick against the luxury of cocoa mix. Weigh capilene longjohns. Wake up wired. Weigh the experience of the climbers you'll be roped to. Pray. Even Muggs Stump slid down a crevasse so deep nobody ever heard from him again. What does it mean to descend instead of summit? Weigh that. But don't let it weigh you or you'll never fit in your pack freeze-dried stroganoff and ramen noodles sure to be crushed. Know you can always melt snow by packing it close to your heart.