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The Sky Below: A True Story Of Summits, Space, And Speed



Synopsis

An epic memoir from a man whose life is defined by exploration and innovation, *The Sky Below* re-creates some of the most unforgettable adventures of our time. From dramatic, high-risk spacewalks to author Scott Parazynski's death-defying quest to summit Mount Everest - his body ravaged by a career in space - listeners will experience the life of an elite athlete, physician, and explorer. This intimate, compelling account offers a rare portrait of space exploration from the inside. A global nomad raised in the shadow of NASA's Apollo missions, Parazynski never lost sight of his childhood dream to one day don a spacesuit and float outside the airlock. With deep passion, unbridled creativity, resilience, humility, and self-deprecation, Parazynski chases his dream of the ultimate adventure experience, again and again and again. In an era that transitioned from moon shots to the Space Shuttle, space station, and Mars research, Parazynski flies with John Glenn, tests jet packs, trains in Russia to become a cosmonaut, and flies five missions to outer space (including seven spacewalks) in his seventeen-year NASA career. An unparalleled, visceral opportunity to understand what it's like to train for - and deploy to - a home in zero gravity, *The Sky Below* also portrays an astronaut's engagement with the challenges of his life on Earth, including raising a beautiful autistic daughter and finding true love.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

MUCH ON THE PLUS SIDE. This book more than lives up to its title. It's a true story of summits, space, and speed.

The personal and team

adventures, inner and outer, of astronaut Scott Parazynski go beyond just space travel. We go to the top of the world twice, for Scott also takes us along on his two Mt. Everest climbs, harrowing and wondrous. He did his successful climb in his older years. How he relates the challenges with his earlier space travel brings out many insights into human endurance and "true grit." Adventures like this told in first person make me feel I WAS THERE! To add to the strong, straightforward story telling is co-writer Susy Flory, a New York Times #1 bestseller of 11 books. You get descriptions that appeal to our senses. Example: "I breathe in the scent of sunbaked rock and pines trees while my hands sweat through the chalk." No bragging, just telling in a humble and personal style, Scott relates his five Shuttle flights, first in 1994, last in 2007. Before that, he tells of his education in biology, medicine and Olympic try-outs. Much humor, too, in such stories as his experience with John Glenn on a flight, carrying toadfish for experiments. He also shares his wonder on big things such as seeing an orbital sunrise from space and one from the top of Mt. Everest. His greatest wonders, he admits, are first the love of his parents toward him and how they encouraged him to aim high. Then there's the love of his wife and his two children. Next all the adventures and explorations that still await him and other people. There are so many insights through Parazynski's life which I'm sure will help me explore my life anew. This book is definitely worth a second read and much thought. Sure, between all the high adventures there are rather mundane events just like regular life. Sometimes the authors, I feel, make too much of those regular events. But overall this book is a welcome read among all the fiction books, and so much more than most books of any kind. The "Show Media" episodes and photos are a good beginning but not enough of them. I'm sure more of this technique will be used in future Kindle books. But it's worth a look at in this book.

Scott Parazynski has some very interesting stories to tell. Like many astronauts, he tells them in a way that skips the flowery language and poetic metaphors. That's not a bad thing. Something about people who could brag choosing not to makes for more powerful reading. At times the technical details left me a little unable to picture what was happening, or understand the dangers in, for example, a perilous rock climbing expedition. I honestly prefer being briefly lost to other authors who will devote whole chapters to teaching you intricate details about something just for a single anecdote. You can catch enough to take Parazynski's word for it, which is good enough for me. I've just finished reading two other memoirs from people who, in reality, had led pretty uneventful lives.

This book is the exact opposite. While the two smooth-sailors did all they could to inject drama into the most everyday of occurrences, Parazynski tends to fly right over little, insignificant things like finding himself caught in the middle of a country exploding into civil war. Again, it's that cool-as-a-comet astronaut thing, and it makes for a refreshing read. The wooty-doo "Kindle In Motion" feature sadly reaches its peak on the title page, when the author's autograph appears in front of you, letter by letter, ghost-like. It's very cool, although I can't get it to repeat. Mostly it's a gimmick, that can feel a little after-the-fact, as if some programmer ran through the book later and said, "Hey! Look! We could make the line on the mountain appear in segments! SEGMENTS! AWESOME!" Yeah...not so much. It's an interesting technology and I see how it could be wonderful, but I think it would have to be something that's planned for and thought about right from the beginning of a project, which makes it something of a miss in the memoir world. The reason I gave this four stars instead of five is a design issue. I don't know what it looks like with the KIM features turned off, but with them on each page had topographical map-style lines behind all of the text. At first I didn't think it was a big deal, but after a while I started feeling a headache coming on and realized that I had been straining to read the text. The first page of each chapter is on a similar background, but with the colors switched, so you're looking at white text on a black background with much more visible lines. While many readers may not even notice, this could be an issue for readers with vision problems. I can understand wanting to make the chapter intro pages fancy, but I don't get the idea behind putting a background on each and every page of text. It would be nice if you could somehow turn the background off but leave the KIM features on. (It might be possible and I just haven't found the settings. My Kindle Fire isn't my main ereader so I'm not as familiar with the settings.)

Amazing story of an exceptional individual. The adventures Scott has experienced are phenomenal, and I was very envious until he finally had some negative events (failed marriage, autistic child) which made me realize that while I may not have had the tremendously unique and exciting experiences he has, I have a healthy marriage (41 years) and healthy children and grand-children and I wouldn't exchange that for anything. His story reflects what can be done when one is as driven as he is, and also the fact that single-minded dedication and focus leaves other areas to suffer. Scott acknowledges this himself in the book with regard to his first marriage. And lest anyone think I blame him for an autistic child, I do not. I'm simply saying that I am blessed to have healthy children and, were I given an autistic child, that would be a different kind of blessing but more of a struggle to manage in this life.

This book is so satisfying to the science nerd in me. I am grateful to NASA and its programs for so many innovations and this memoir is from a NASA insider who gives us a peek of his own historical experiences, from his childhood as he dreamt of becoming an astronaut to medical school to becoming a father to flying in the space shuttle. I'm not an adrenaline junkie but I sure like reading about them, and this memoir does not disappoint. Written clearly and with a sense of humor and humility, Scott Parazynski has become one of those people I'd love to have at my dinner party - you know, the party you'd have if you could invite anyone in the world to come have a meal and talk about their lives. The enhancements in the kindle edition are very cool - small bits of video embedded in the chapters so you get to see rockets take off and astronauts enter the Mir Space Station. Thank you NASA, thank you Scott.

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