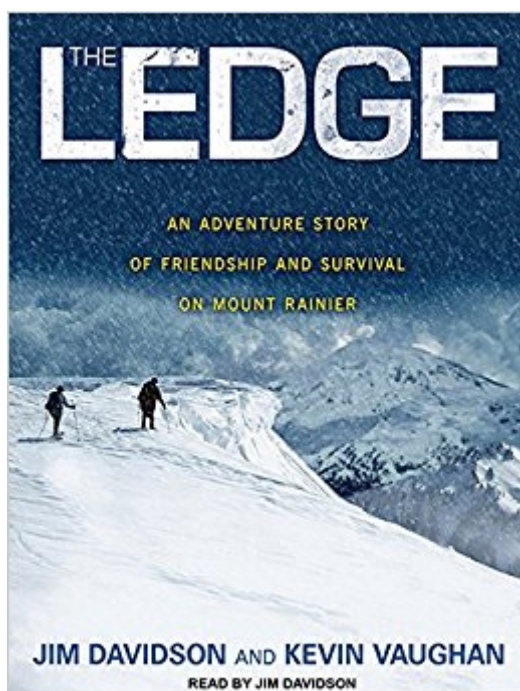


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# The Ledge: An Adventure Story Of Friendship And Survival On Mount Rainier



## Synopsis

On June 21, 1992, two best friends summited Mount Rainier. Within hours, their exquisite accomplishment would be overshadowed by tragedy. On their descent, Jim Davidson fell through an ice bridge on Rainier's northeast flank, plunging eighty feet into a narrow crevasse inside the Emmons Glacier and dragging Mike Price in after him. Mike fell to his death; Jim, badly injured and armed with minimal gear, faced an almost impossible climb back out of the crevasse, up a nearly vertical ice wall. Mourning his friend's death, he miraculously climbed out of the crevasse and lived to relate his experiences. Told in parallel narratives of the tragedy and the climbers' lives, *The Ledge* is both a riveting, wrenching story and an inspirational adventure tale.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Guest Reviewer: James M. Tabor James M. Tabor earned an MFA from Johns Hopkins University and is a former Contributing Editor to *Outside* and *SKI* Magazines. His writing has also appeared in *TIME*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, *Smithsonian*, *Barron's*, and many other national magazines. He was the writer and host of the national PBS series, *The Great Outdoors* and in 2007 was the co-creator and Executive Producer for the History Channel Special, *Journey to the Center of the World*. His first book was the international-award-winning *Forever on the Mountain* (2007) and his most recent was *Blind Descent*. A former Washington, DC police officer, Tabor now lives in Vermont where he is at work on his first novel, *The Deep Zone*. On June 21, 1992, Jim Davidson, 29, and his best friend and climbing partner, Mike Price, 34, summited 14,410-foot Mt. Rainier via the challenging Liberty Ridge route. While descending, Davidson

plunged into an 80-foot-deep crevasse and pulled his rope-partner Price in, too. Price died, Davidson survived, and *The Ledge* is Davidson's painstakingly detailed account of their accident, written 19 years post facto. Hundreds of books have described climbing tragedies in such detail. Two things set the best apart. One is the attempt to look beyond obvious vagaries of gear, weather, and happenstance to discover tragedy's true, dark roots. The other is an equally strong determination to bring something of value back from the brink. These are much harder quests and, to his credit, Davidson tackles both. That detail, first. Davidson recreates the fatal fall and aftermath as though they happened yesterday, thanks to hours of recollections tape-recorded shortly after the event. That's important, because on one level, such the success of such narratives depends on details as sharp as ice shards. An example will suffice. After he hit bottom, buried beneath and completely immobilized by cascading snow and ice, Davidson could not breathe. I suck in hard, trying to grab a breath, but my mouth is half-filled with crunchy snow, so I pull in only a small gulp of air. I try chewing the snow to clear it away, but it is too much, as if someone has stuffed a Popsicle into my mouth. I work my jaw and tongue, struggling to push out the rapidly hardening snow clump. But it turns into a dense lump the size of a plum. When I rest for a second, the snowball settles back in my throat and gags me. Having had no chance to save his friend, Davidson had to save himself by climbing out of the crevasse, and the odds against him were long. Davidson was injured, exhausted, and probably in shock. He lacked both the requisite technical aid-climbing experience and most of the proper gear. But he drew strength from recollections of Joe Simpson's against-all-odds self-rescue in *Touching the Void*. After many hours of struggle, Davidson finally climbed back to the surface. Even then, the ordeal was far from over. It was late and getting dark. He was hurt and had no gear and was alone on a glacier riddled with more crevasses. "I'm out, but I'm not safe," Davidson acknowledged. That turned out to be true in more ways than one. Though he survived and eventually recovered physically, Davidson continued to suffer from psychic injuries, survivor's guilt chief among them. In his journal, he wrote, "How am I to carry this load alone--the self-doubt, the endless questioning? How can I hope to carry it alone?" Mike Price haunted his thoughts and dreams and, laudably, Davidson eschewed the more common rites of exorcism: chemical, alcohol, and compensatory self-sacrifice. Instead, over the months, he went mano a mano with every painful "what if" and found his measure of solace: Each decision, action, and bit of luck is a fork leading to different outcomes, different branches. Some are sturdy and hold fast, some creak under your weight, some fracture and drop you into unexpected turmoil. Not perfect, perhaps, but certainly good enough to live with. Making personal peace with the

tragedy was good, but left missing one last arc in the circle of healing. Could something of value be distilled from all the loss and agony? As it turned out, yes. “While I was in the crevasse, Joe Simpson’s survival tale convinced me that there was a remote chance to escape, and that belief helped spur me to action. Perhaps I have an obligation to share my story.” After securing permission from Mike Price’s parents, Davidson spoke to his first live audience in September, 2003 at the annual Rainier Mountain Festival. Afterward, among the many grateful listeners was a middle-aged mother with two daughters. “I wanted them to hear it,” she told Davidson. “Now if they’re in an accident...they’ll know how much people can do, that we can do incredible things if we try our hardest.” And with that, the circle was complete. Since then, according to his publisher, Davidson has delivered his message to more than 30,000 people. The Ledge is part of his ongoing commitment to Mike Price--and to himself--to find meaning in the heart of tragedy. Someone once said that for true value, “a book must be about more than it is about.” Jim Davidson’s The Ledge is. You can read it as a thrilling, chilling tale of adventure and death in the mountains, but it is, ultimately, about more than that. As, come to think of it, are climbing and mountains themselves. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"Davidson and journalist Vaughn have crafted a modern Aristotelian tragedy." ---Publishers Weekly

The account of the make-do-with-what-you-have climb out of the crevasse is gripping and excellently written, and the author clearly made the right choice in taking action rather than waiting for help that would very likely arrive too late. But the author seems to gloss over all the other questionable decisions he and his partner made during the climb that directly contributed to the accident. Taking shortcuts on a heavily crevassed glacier is never a good idea and glissading through a crevasse field is a real head shaker. The author does not note the possibility that if his partner’s crampons were on his boots rather than in his pack, maybe a self arrest would have been successful and the fall might have been prevented. The author notes two other incidents during the climb that also indicate highly questionable judgement, a bivy in a dangerously exposed location and another risky shortcut near the summit. All the other climbers on the mountain that day descended safely, but they stayed on route and didn’t take shortcuts. Accidents do happen, but I think the author missed an opportunity to critically assess alternative actions he and his partner could have taken that would have been instructive to current and future mountaineers. For a totally different assessment of taking risks on a big mountain, read Ed Viesturs’ “No Shortcuts to the Top”.

This is a powerful story and it is true. Jim Davidson and his friend Mike Price are both experienced mountain climbers. The story gives some background on each one and tells about some of their climbs. The main focus however, is on one particular climb on Mt. Rainier in Washing state. They have a fall and it tells the story of how they get out. You will learn a lot about the technical aspects of mountain climbing but it is presented well and it not boring. You will also learn a lot about the human spirit in crisis and about friendship. The story ends with how one copes after such a life challenging experience.

Gripping tail of life, death and survivor guilt. Lingering question of why they were traveling on a glacier and not using crampons at the time of the accident?? All in all an amazing story of his self rescue.

Great book but the corners were bent upon arrival.

Purchased this book for my husband, he really enjoyed it.

I had met the Author while a friend and I were climbing Mt Cayambe in Ecuador. He was leading a climbing group from Colorado State University. I ran into Jim again in Quito and he briefly told me of the experience related later in "The Ledge". A must read for those interested in climbing , recovering from a traumatic event, or simply interested in adventure.

I just finished listening to the unabridged Audible audio version of "The Ledge". While not a climber myself, I have read quite a few exploration, adventure and survival books and this was a good one. For my own tastes, I could have done with a bit less of the inner mind of Davidson. Some of that semed to bog down the story just a bit at times. For example, after listening to what seemed like a very detailed and lengthy account of events subsequent to the fall the author points out that it had only been one hour since crashing through the ice bridge into the crevasse. It semed much longer to me. In fairness to the author, I think that to a large extent the inner struggle was what he set out to write about and I think he did well with that.

It was certainly inspiring and climatic, but I think Jim went on and on too long about his friend Mike's accident and death. He has a lovely family and needs to appreciate that he survived and not feel

guilt. Sometimes our time comes to die and it's meant to be. God knows when that time will be.

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