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One Day as a Tiger: Alex MacIntyre and the Birth of Light and Fast Alpinism

By John Porter



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A revelatory and poignant memoir showing mountaineering at its extraordinary best and tragic worst as it draws an unforgettable picture of a dazzling, argumentative and exuberant climbing legend.

In the autumn of 1982, a single stone fell from high on the south face of Annapurna and struck Alex MacIntyre on the head, killing him instantly and robbing the climbing world of one of its greatest talents.

Although only 28 years old, Alex was already one of the leading figures of British mountaineering's most successful era. His ascents included hard new routes on Himalayan giants like Dhaulagiri and Changabang and a glittering record of firsts in the Alps and Andes. Yet how Alex climbed was as important as what he climbed. He was a mountaineering prophet, sharing with a handful of contemporaries – including his climbing partner Voytek Kurtyka – the vision of a purer form of alpinism on the world's highest peaks.



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Editorial Review

Review

'One Day As A Tiger gets at truths that very few biographies of mountaineers have touched. That Porter waited three decades to tell the story of his lost comrade no doubt accounts for much of the wisdom and power of this remarkable book.' (David Roberts, Judge, Banff Mountain Book Festival). 'Porter's writing is uncluttered and effortless ... capturing an extraordinary time when alpinism was dangerous and rebellious. I wholeheartedly recommend this excellent book.' (Ian Parnell, Climb Magazine). 'This book, which is full of humour and anecdotes, is written with exceptional liveliness. It is among the great books of alpinism.' (Vertical Magazine). 'A fine and intelligent book.' (Daily Mail). 'A book on climbing both humorous and perceptive, as close to the essence of our life as you can get.' (Doug Scott). 'One of the most intelligent, closely observed and engaging books ever written about mountaineering.' (David Pickford, Climb Magazine). 'A meticulously-researched history of a generation of climbers so fuelled by ambition and adrenalin that they came close to climbing themselves into extinction.' (Bernadette McDonald, Author of Freedom Climbers). 'Sid Vicious sang "Regrets, I've had a few, but then again, too few to mention." One of my greatest regrets is never having the chance to meet Alex MacIntyre. He was a true inspiration. In One Day As A Tiger, John Porter skilfully and eloquently fills the gaps and answers the questions about a time and a style in British mountaineering that were as refreshing as punk rock was to music in the 1970s.' (Nick Bullock). 'One Day As A Tiger is a brilliant read on so many different levels; a vivid and perceptive biography of one of the most talented and innovative climbers of his generation, but going much further to unveil a forgotten story which encompasses the breathtaking confidence of the anarchic and dynamic climbing culture that grew up during the cold war on both sides of the Iron Curtain.' (Chris Bonington). 'I won't beat about the bush: if there's just one climbing biography you should read this year, this is it.' (Steve Long, The Professional Mountaineer magazine).

About the Author

John Porter was born in Massachusetts and started climbing at the age of 12, serving his apprenticeship in the White Mountains, Rockies, Cascades and Yosemite. He moved to the U.K. in the early 1970s to do postgraduate work at Leeds University, where he joined a team of climbers dedicated to clean ethics, alpine-style, and the fostering of international partnerships.

Ascents of the north face of Koh-i-Bandaka (1977) and the south face of Changabang (1978) with Alex MacIntyre and Polish friends were achieved in the middle of the Cold War. Other climbs include lightweight attempts of the west ridge of Everest in winter, the northwest ridge of K2, the east face of Sepu Kangri, first ascents of Chong Kundam I and V in the Eastern Karakoram, and many other notable climbs around the world over a period of 55 years. In 1980 he founded the Kendal Mountain Festival with Brian Hall and Jim Curran, and in 2011, he and Brian founded the adventure-film website SteepEdge.com.

John is a vice president of the Alpine Club and has previously been a vice-president of the British Mountaineering Council and secretary to the Mountain Heritage Trust. He lives in the Cumbrian Lake District, U.K.

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