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## **A PLACE AMONG GIANTS: 22 SEASONS AT DENALI BASECAMP**

By Lisa Roderick

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**By Lisa Roderick (Di Angelo Publications)**

*A Place Among Giants* is not only a fresh perspective and certain-to-be classic of mountaineering literature, but also a love story involving the author, Lisa Roderick, and the Alaska Range, her husband, climber Mark Westman, and the thousands of unique personalities she interacted with during her 22 seasons as Denali's base camp manager.

*A Place Among Giants* is a memoir of a unique life—the kind that only a few strong women have experienced. As the manager of Kahiltna base camp, Roderick spent more than two decades safely coordinating thousands of planes full of climbers and tourists in and out of the Alaska Range. (Many were flown by her brother, Paul Roderick, who runs Talkeetna Air Taxi.) Each page in this book exudes the reverence she has for this vast and wild place of sprawling ice and towering mountains. It would seem impossible to portray the enormity of North America's grandest peaks within the confines of a book, but as I flipped through these pages, I could feel the wind on my cheeks and the pre-climb nerves twitching, just as if I were stepping out of my tent in the predawn twilight on the Kahiltna.

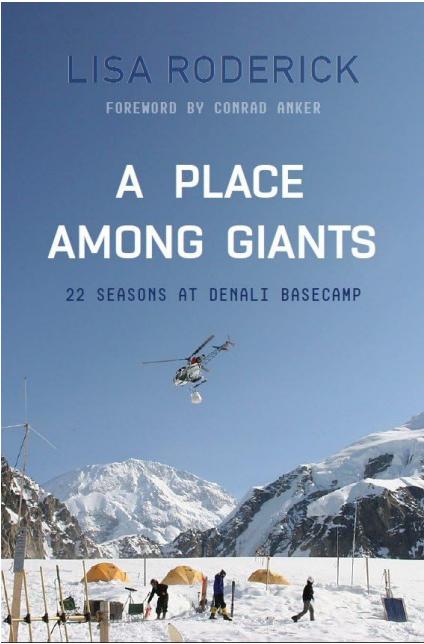
Roderick's book delves into the relationships she formed with close friends, some of whom died while reaching for lofty dreams. She also details funny anecdotes that have become legendary around base camp, such as the time she humbled an angry Russian climber into compliance with a few choice words when he tried to intimidate her. Then there's the time a non-climber snuck onto the glacier and stalked a guide up the West Buttress, dragging only a pink wheeled suitcase and baffling the many climbers who passed her. "It's the big one," she said when a group of tourists asked which mountain was Denali.

Sprinkled throughout are tales of legendary rescues and bar-setting feats of alpinism. Roderick addresses her worry as her alpinist husband progresses to bigger and more dangerous Alaskan routes, and she opens up about her own feelings of vulnerability and self-doubt, adapting to a midlife diagnosis of hypothyroidism, and the loss of far too many friends in the climbing community.

*A Place Among Giants* is a fantastic read from someone who has arguably spent more time in the Alaska Range and knows it in a different way than anyone else probably ever will. While Roderick frequently notes that she felt small among the surrounding mountains, she undoubtedly has left a lasting impact on the Alaska Range and on many of those who encountered her there.

**—Clint Helander**

Images



Article Details

Author	Clint Helander
Publication	AAJ
Volume	66
Issue	99
Page	
Copyright Date	2025
Article Type	Book reviews