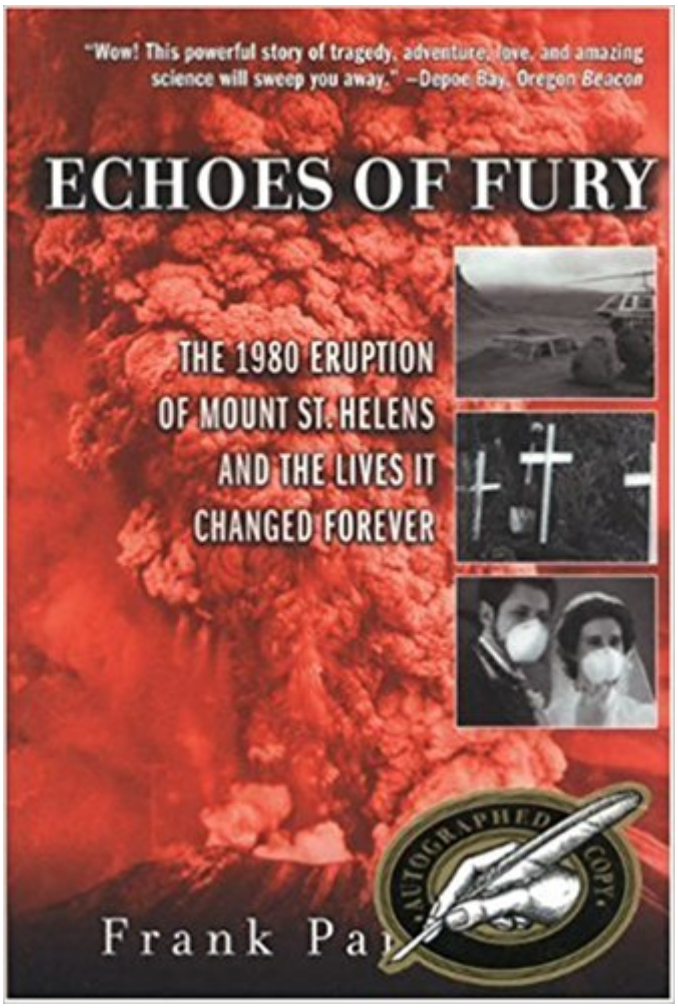
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Echoes Of Fury: The 1980 Eruption Of Mount St. Helens And The Lives It Changed Forever



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Synopsis

Former investigative journalist Frank Parchman becomes embedded in the lives of eight people whose fates are profoundly altered and ultimately become intertwined in the aftermath of the volcanic fury in southwest Washington state. The story begins on March 20, 1980. After 123 years of geologic tranquility, a swarm of earthquakes signals that America’s youngest and most dangerous volcano is coming back to life. At first, no one notices. Then, two months later, after much ""what now?"" speculation by scientists and bureaucrats, the once-beautiful mountain explodes with a force 1000 times greater than Hiroshima. All hell has broken loose. This is an epic account of the volcano’s awesome display of raw-throated power; the heartbreak and anger of survivors whose lost loved ones were largely unaware that they were in danger, even 30 miles away; the thrill of scientific discovery; and, ultimately, the recovery of nature and healing of the human body and spirit.

Book Information

Hardcover: 432 pages

Publisher: Epicenter Press; First Edition edition (March 1, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0974501433

ISBN-13: 978-0974501437

Product Dimensions: 6.2 x 1.3 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.7 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars 8 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,241,950 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #9 inÃ Â Books > Travel > United States > Washington > Mount St. Helens #275 inÃ Â Books > Science & Math > Earth Sciences > Earthquakes & Volcanoes #25278 inÃ Â Books > History > Americas > United States > State & Local

Customer Reviews

Frank Parchman’s story is a gripping thriller filled with enthralling science and a moving study of people. --Walla Walla (WA) Union-BulletinThis is the real inside story about what happened at Mount St. Helens--the most accurate book I’ve read on the subject. --Don Swanson, USGS volcanologistCompelling...dramatic...chilling.... --Seattle Post-Intelligencer

After 123 years of inactivity, a swarm of earthquakes signals that America’s youngest and most

dangerous volcano is coming back to life. At first, no one notices. Then, two months later, all hell breaks loose. Frank Parchman tells the riveting story of terror, survival, and recovery through the prespective of eight people whose lives are overwhelmed by cataclysmic events, among them: A geologist who asks a friend to take his place at a forward observatory the day of the eruption;A badly burned logger who becomes an icon for the survivors, many of whom thought they were far from danger;Young lovers who are swept away in a massive flash flood of water, hot mud, and debris on the Toutle River;A rookie newspaper reproter who covers the story of a lifetime and shares the Pulitzer Prize;An angry woman who challenges a misconception - encouraged by politicians - that her brother and others killed around the mountain deserved blame for their own deaths.

I found this book fascinating. I had a predisposition to like it in that I recently traveled to the St. Helens area for a wedding and went to the Johnston Ridge Observatory and hiked the nearby trail, returning after the wedding to come in from the opposite direction and hike the Harmony Trail to Spirit Lake and climb the Windy Ridge Observation Point. So I was already into it. At the Johnston Ridge Visitor Center I had seen this book, but thought I would buy it later on to save some bucks, which I did.The story weaves together 7 different threads involving 8 people: 1) Don Swanson, the USGS employee who asked David Johnston to take his place at the ill-fated monitoring station on May 18, 1980, 2) Jim Scymanky, one of four loggers working for a Weyerhaeuser subcontractor 13 miles northwest of the mountain on Sunday morning, the 18th, 3) Robert Rogers, a rebel and a risk-taker who violated the red zone prohibition to climb and camp near St. Helens, about 7 miles away on the southern side on May 18, 4) Andre Stepankowsky, a reporter for the Longview, Washington Daily News who flew over the erupting volcano on May 18 and reported on it for the next 20 years, 5) Roald Reitan and Venus Dergan, kids who were barely out of their teens camping and fishing on the Toutle River 30 miles away from the mountain on May18, 6) Peter Frenzen, who was a forestry student at the University of Washington at the time of the eruption, chose Oregon State rather than Yale for grad school to have a chance to study the effects of the eruption, and became the primary scientist for the Mt. St. Helens Monument, and 7) Donna Parker, whose brother Billy was camping with his wife outside the red zone on the morning of May 18. The story covers the events at the time of the eruption, the immediate aftermath, and the effect on the lives of these people for the next 20 years. With the pen of a poor writer, these threads would become jumbled and make for a very bad book. But Mr. Parchman weaves a tapestry with the threads all coming together. He jumps from vignette to vignette, keeping the reader’s interest as the story races along.

He covers the continuing threat of catastrophic floods to the Longview area, the lawsuit by the relatives of the victims against the state and Weyerhaeuser for their tailoring of the red zone boundaries based on Weyerhaeser's desire to continue logging despite the eruption threat, and the later false claims that the victims were all recklessly within the red zone. In the end, Mr. Parchman succeeds in painting the portrait of not just a stupendous geological event, but of an enormous human tragedy--something that was largely missed in the initial reporting of the event.

To say this first, I am a volcanologist, and I was 18 when Mount St. Helens erupted and I learned of it in the German news. That was not the first time I heard about the volcano - five years earlier, my father had given me a newspaper clipping that said "American volcano threatening to erupt", referring to the first scientific paper (published in the 7 February 1975 issue of the journal Science: [...]) warning of renewed eruptions from this volcano, "perhaps before the end of this [the 20th] century". So, when the volcano exploded on 18 May 1980, I was not exactly surprised. From what I had gathered in nearly a decade of being fascinated by volcanoes, nearly anything could happen at an active volcano.But through the years, and especially during my college studies, which brought me into the discipline of volcanology, I understood that though warnings had been given, the 18 May 1980 collapse-blast-eruption of Mount St. Helens was an outstanding event in volcanology, one that left a significant mark - in science, but also in the lives of numerous people, and I might dare say even in the lives of people who did not live through it first hand, but were distant observers like myself. I eventually came across publications describing the fate of the victims of Mount St. Helens, those who died, those who survived, and those who lost loved ones in the event. The death toll - officially 57 - was low compared to other volcanic disasters like El ChichÃƒÂ n (Mexico, 1982: 2000 killed), Nevado del Ruiz (Colombia, 1985: 23,000 killed) or Pinatubo (Philippines, 1991: about 800 killed).Certainly, the names of the most famous victims - Harry Truman, David Johnston - were to be found throughout the wealth of publications about the catastrophic 18 May 1980 eruption. A few other names appeared in selected books and reports, but those persons would not grown on you, they remained someone far away and detached from your own life.Frank Parchman's "Echoes of Fury: The 1980 Eruption of Mount St. Helens and the Lives It Changed Forever", published in 2005, changed all this. Besides re-telling, with remarkable detail and in a nearly flawless manner (from a volcanological standpoint), the full story of the 18 May 1980 catastrophe and all significant eruptive events at the volcano through 2005, it finally brings us in close contact with the victims. Persons who narrowly survived, and the relatives of those who died, arise next to the reader and become amazingly real. My experience is that many pieces somehow floating around in the picture of the

Mount St. Helens events for nearly 30 years come together, and the picture becomes not only complete but nearly three-dimensional. With exceptional sensitivity, Parchman guides us through the story of the volcano and the lives it left its stamp on - making us realize that in a very remote and reduced way, it left its signs on many of us.I have read countless books on volcanoes but also on entirely other subjects, including novels and crime stories. None has so profoundly touched my emotions. I have cried in some movies, and listening to some particular bits of music, but this is the first book ever that made me shed some tears, more than once. And it has done so in particular because it tells a true story that often is more phantastic and incredible than most novels and movies. It does contain a bittersweet love story, but that's not the only touching bit in it. If someone needs to understand what happened at Mount St. Helens in 1980 and during the following nearly 3 decades, this is the best thing to start with.

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