

Review: Parsons, Mike & Rose, Mary (2006). *Mallory Myths and Mysteries: The Mallory Clothing Replica Project*. Pennrith: Mountain Heritage Trust. *Canadian Alpine Journal*, 2007, Volume 90, p. 164.

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This is a small (48 page) booklet which is a kind of appendix to the authors' excellent book, published in 2003, *Invisible on Everest: Innovation and the Gear Makers*.

In this booklet, Parsons and Rose document a project in which they made and tested a replica of the clothing worn by Mallory in 1924. The clothes retrieved from Mallory's body in 1999 provided the template for the modern replica – a replica that was as faithful to the original as possible in terms of both pattern and the fibres used. The resulting clothing was tested at both base camp on the north side of Everest (3658 metres) and on the Ronbuk Glacier (4877 metres). The conclusion that the study came to was that the popular impression about the inadequacies of the clothing from the 1920s is greatly exaggerated, and that the layered system that they had was sufficiently warm to summit, and compared favourably with modern clothing in many ways. In fact, the claim made is that in some areas (such as weight) it was superior.

The question that arises, however, is how compelling is a test made at the relatively low altitude of the Ronbuk Glacier? How valid is it in terms of coming to any conclusion about the adequacy of the clothing on the summit, almost 4,000 metres higher? As Pat Morrow said to me, "It feels a lot colder up there, deprived of oxygen, in the wind, and when you are tired and dehydrated." While the study is interesting, I don't anticipate a radical change back to old-school clothing based on the tests thus far. But that is not to suggest that the exercise was without merit or interest. The booklet keeps us vigilant against automatically assuming that newer and high-tech is always better. And, in terms of the details of the analysis and reproduction of the clothing, the booklet is extremely interesting and a very nice compliment to Parsons' and Rose's earlier book.