

another: in the text he tells us the eye of the screw is turned uphill so that the downward force is exerted directly on the shaft of the screw; the illustration on page 110 shows the eye turned downhill.

One welcome addition to the tried-and-true format is the chapter on conservation in the mountains. Minimum impact wilderness use is an idea whose time has come. The use of stoves instead of campfires in alpine areas and *other heavily traveled mountain areas* has become even more critically important than clean climbing. People must be taught not to mass produce campfire pits and erect megalithic shelters. Many climbing instruction books have been written. Undoubtedly, more will follow. And while the ultimate degree of this proliferation is uncertain, it will probably continue until each publishing house has issued at least one book.

Final recommendation: If you want a general climber's instruction book, save your \$8.95 and stick with the "classics".

ROBERT SCHNEIDER

Downward Bound: A Mad Guide to Rock Climbing, by Warren "Batso" Harding, with illustrations by Beryl "Beasto" Knath. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1975. 204 pages, numerous photos and drawings. Price \$7.95.

Climbing autobiographies have never become popular in American climbing, probably due to the lack of audience. The scene has never had a public following as in such urban cultures, as France, which has produced many fine mountain memoirs, or Britain, which has also had a goodly number. One event in American climbing certainly did catch the public's fancy: Warren Harding's climb of the Wall of Early Morning Light. Whether this was attention long overdue, a fluke or as Warren says, "Merely the result of a slack period in the overall news scene," it generated a lot of public interest, gave Warren his long overdue fame—though not fortune—he mock-laments that his first ascent of the Nose twelve years before was eclipsed in the news by the death of the Pope), created widespread fear and loathing in the climbing community, and eventually resulted in this book.

Into this literary void steps the modest Batso, at times unsure for whom he is writing. The climbing community has read his trenchant pieces of satire—directed as much at himself as at others—and loved him for it. Some of this new wit is obviously for them, but the book is basically for wider audiences. It starts with a lengthy discourse on the conduct of climbing, with answers to the question of "How does the rope get up there?" works into climbing "Philo-pharcy" and Warren's life as a rock climber, and climaxes with "the big motha climb" itself. All this is set in play form with members of the audience, ranging from Dr. Sigmund

Fraud and Hairy-Giant Superclimber to Penthouse Pundit and Rather Well-Equipped Young Lady, rising from time to time to pose difficult questions. Warren is right in his element. But the action dragged for me; I've heard too many novice-oriented explanations of how climbing is done. So I watched the reactions of interested but less jaded friends. They seemed to be as enlightened as entertained. Those who have read Warren before will recognize the humor.

What delights me is Warren's sense of proportion, disarming by understatement the usual tendency toward self-important dramatics. He answers the question of "Why climb?" with "It's fun." Then he adds his twist on Mallory's famous enigma: "It's there and we're mad!" When he finally succeeds in getting up the south face of Half Dome after many tries and one close shave, it becomes "an uneventful but tedious six days." And his final judgment on the publicity surrounding the Wall of Early Light is turned not toward climbing, which he doesn't see suffering from its growing popularity, but toward the public, who got "something more positive to talk about than the routine crime, crises and catastrophies that normally dominate the news."

Physical testing is a theme that runs through Harding's climbing and, lightly of course, through this book. Not the gymnastic sort of move strength—he pokes fun at the Yosemite scene focused on free climbing—but endurance, staying power, slogging it through the long haul. Instead of working the high bar or walking the chains set up all over Camp 4, we find Warren up on the Yosemite Falls Trail trying to better his time to the rim and back. His bolting marathon on the last pitch of the Nose is well known, hammering away hour after hour at the overhanging darkness, drilling all night to arrive on the summit at dawn.

I think Warren is truly excited by steep, blank walls. While most of us like to see the features on the walls, preferably set off by surrounding blankness, he sees the blankness of the route, the holes rather than the net which defines them, the gaps. Some choose form as their task, others emptiness. Either way we haul our load of conceptualized style around with us, as surely as our water and salami. Warren sees the rock his own way and climbs accordingly: blankness begets bolts. Being inventive too, and bold, and tired of hammering, he came up with bat hooks, a device guaranteed to keep the interest up.

Climbing ethics is a favorite topic with Warren, a subject he loves to hate. But do not be deceived. He is by no means antiethical. He chastises the early attempts on the Wall of Early Morning Light for starting up the right side of El Cap Tower, which he sees as a route unto itself. His own line further to the right he considered more direct, more in keeping with the character of the route and needing fewer bolts. He turned out to be wrong about the bolts, but the character of the climbing so impressed even Royal Robbins that he decided to quit "erasing" the

route. Warren's point is not antiethical then. He is just against other people imposing their ethics on him. He is certainly his own man.

Whatever the future holds for Warren Harding, it is bound to be interesting as he continues to do "my own thing my own way."

DOUG ROBINSON

The Great Days, Walter Bonatti, Translated by Geoffrey Sutton, Victor Gollancz, Ltd., London, 1974, photos, clothbound, 184 pages.

Last spring, as several climbers and a slew of Balti porters trudged up the Baltoro Glacier high in the Karakoram, a porter who was surely old enough to remember pointed out a prominent boulder and declared, "Bonatti climb!" One climber picked up the challenge and comfortably scrambled up it. A short time later, another boulder, this time larger with fewer holds, was noted: "Bonatti climb!" This was also topped, but the moves were slower, tougher. The game grew, the angles went up, and the climbing became increasingly desperate. Finally, the Balti stood in front of a flawless wall, capped by a jutting ceiling. "Bonatti climb," he said in a similar tone. The Baltis, of course, had had their game, but the point is none-the-less well taken. Even in the high, remote Karakoram, Walter Bonatti has become an unquenchable legend.

The Pakistani porter could have recalled Bonatti from the 1954 Italian trip up the Baltoro to K2 (where Bonatti did not reach the summit but did spend a blistering cold night in the open at over 8,000 meters with the Hunza, Mahdi, who, a year before carried Hermann Buhl from the face of Nanga Parbat), or perhaps he remembered him from the 1958 climb on Gasherbrum IV (where he was successful). But the mass of the climbing world knows him for other climbs in other mountains, particularly those of the Mont Blanc range: Walker Spur in winter, the tragedy on the Central Pillar of Freney, his soul-searching solo of the Dru, and the direct route on the north face of the Matterhorn—alone and in winter.

The Great Days is the second collection of the debris of Bonatti's climbing memories, and its essence is much like that of the first, *On the Heights* (1961). Indeed not only does this installment take up where the former left off, but even the first chapter of *Days* is exactly the same as the final chapter of *Heights* (A portent for his third book?).

The Great Days was translated from the original Italian version. I do not read Italian and perhaps it's best that I don't. I'd prefer to believe that Bonatti's graceless, stylized, and often dull prose is the sole result of a disinterested translator. Bonatti's first book was also mighty slow going, but with a different translator. But no matter. One doesn't read this kind of stuff for literary style anyway.

Now in his early 40s and retired for the second time from moun-