

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-

taineering, Bonatti is an Italian cultural monument of the stature of some of his mountaineering feats. As a personal memoir *Great Days* fails. Bonatti prefers to stay in the shadows and rarely comes stage front. Other than a passing word, we are left only to speculate about his personal relationship with other climbers, just as we're left guessing about his private life. There are only rare glimpses, such as a teenage climb of Walker Spur using a cotton shopping bag for a balaclava and supplied with a dozen apples bought on credit, or his brusque introduction to adolescence when he saw his schoolboy immortal, Mussolini, as a disfigured corpse dangling from a gasoline pump, or his very quiet and only companion on the Matterhorn, a small, stuffed teddy bear.

As in his first book, we see Bonatti in *Great Days* as the quintessential man of mountaineering, hurling himself into action and controversy as the only antidote to an overwhelming hypocrisy in the mountains. He polishes his purist image seeking purification through pain and chips away at the controversies which have dogged his enigmatic climbing life.

Though a full quarter of the chapters are throwaways, most of *Great Days* is like Diogenes' search; here's Bonatti cramponing about with headlamp aglow, searching for an honest life. And while he justifiably rails against the "morals of the rat race" in contemporary climbing, we muddle through the usual mountaineering litany of horrible bivouacs and impassable overhangs, terrifying winds, bleeding fingers, and unbearably icy nights which are somehow always borne.

But in the end he gets his man. If only Pogo had read *Great Days*, surely he'd be strained to say, "He met his maker, and he was it!" On retirement, Bonatti sums it up: "I imagine them all, the supporters and the detractors, debating the man, the scene, the challenge, the courage, the significance, the pride, the comparable, the soul, infinity, conquest, in short the whole range of subjects which all too often give rise to the empty question, 'Was it worth it?'"

Bonatti inescapably left his profound imprint on mountaineering and his feats are altogether genuine. But in this melancholy judgment of their meaning and in the almost mock-heroic gesture of his retirement, he is clumsily groping for a self he has already sold into servitude, not merely as a superb climber, but rather as a deity.

DENNIS G. HANSON

The Mountains of America: From Alaska to the Great Smokies, by Franklin Russell. Introduction by Edward Abbey. New York: Harry Abrams, 1975 224 pages, 133 photos, 124 in color. Price: \$40.00

Not many years ago it was fashionable to talk about cheap Japanese imitations of American goods. I kept quiet after I began using high quality Japanese camera equipment. Now, however, the pendulum is