

In Memoriam

HAROLD WILLIAM TILMAN
1898-1978

More than most men, Bill Tilman led several carefully compartmented lives and few were fortunate enough to know even one of them well. Tilman the soldier was commissioned early in World War I at the age of seventeen and fought for three years on the western front, receiving the Military Cross and later a bar for bravery. Volunteering again in World War II he was given the Distinguished Service Order after action in three theatres. Tilman the author wrote fourteen books and is widely read for wit and wisdom as well as adventure. The mountaineer explored countless hectares of wild, usually mountainous country and climbed scores of peaks in many distant places. The sailor took small ungainly ships to difficult waters and was lost at sea in his eightieth year. Who was he?

Harold William Tilman was born in Wales in 1898 and always called "home" his sister's house some seventy miles from his birthplace. Seemingly wedded to wandering, he never married and was so strong a misogynist as to resign when the Alpine Club proposed admitting women (he was made an Honorary Member). There were rumors of an unhappy love affair, and late in life he came close to a lovely American lady mountaineer, but he was a classically reticent bachelor of British mold. After World War I in a lottery of ex-service men, he won a farm in Kenya where he grew coffee for the next fourteen years, meeting a neighbor Eric Shipton with whom he climbed Kenya, Kilimanjaro and Ruwenzori, pioneering routes on all. Tiring of Kenya he bicycled alone across Africa, more or less along the Equator, covering 3000 miles in fifty-six days and reaching England late in 1933. The next year he was off to India with Shipton to solve the problem of the Rishi Gorge and penetrate to the Sanctuary of Nanda Devi for the first time. This was strong stuff: when invited to join an Anglo-American attempt to climb that mountain in 1936 he accepted, was voted leader at the highest camp and, with Noel Odell reached the summit. Of this he wrote "I believe we so far forgot ourselves as to shake hands on it." (Nanda Devi remained the highest mountain to have been climbed for the next fourteen years.) *The Ascent of Nanda Devi* (1937) was followed immediately by *Snow on the Equator*, the record of his years in Africa, and his dry wit, colossal understatement, and facility with appropriate quotes established him as a talented author. (He is alleged to have read all of the *Encyclopedia*

Britannica and all the *Everyman's Classics* while in Kenya.) He went on to twelve more books: five about his travels and climbs in Sikkim, Nepal, India, Kashmir and Kashgar (where he twice visited Shipton stationed there) including a long journey from Shanghai across China to northern India. Each book seemed better than the last and they are recognized as mountaineering classics. In 1950, believing that he was no longer able to climb very high, and because many of the less known lower mountains were best reached from the sea, he took up sailing and in the next quarter-century made ten voyages: to Greenland, to Patagonia, the South Shetland Islands, or Scandinavian fjords—wild places all with peaks to climb and hard land to cross. His succession of three ships were awkwardly refitted for such stern work and his scratch crews often unable to handle his austerity and the self-imposed hardships; some left for home, while a few hardy souls signed on again. On his last voyage he was headed for the second time to the stormy South Shetland Islands in the south Atlantic.

Bill was my friend for forty years—from our first meeting on Nanda Devi in 1936 to a reunion in Wales in 1975. On the return from Nanda Devi he and I with a great Sherpa, Pasang Kikuli, crossed a new and difficult pass and walked a hundred punishing miles back to Ranikhet through a number of misadventures which are more humorous in his telling than in the fact. I was too much in awe of this tough quiet man (and too tired) to talk much, but he did, occasionally. Then in 1950 he joined a small party my father organized to cross Nepal and visit Everest, the first such permission ever given, well before the flood of trekking began. For ten days we ambled through incredibly beautiful country meeting curious friendly people and seeing places no westerners ever had before, finally reaching the lamasery of Thyangboche with its awesome view of the Lhotse-Nuptse wall shielding Everest. Leaving our companions there, Tilman and I and two Sherpas hurried up the valley, undecided whether to turn left or right at the end, so vague were our maps, and finally, crossing the Khumbu Glacier and climbing to about 19,000 feet on Pumo-ri, we looked into the Western Cwm at the south face of Everest. Perhaps Bill already felt this would be his last Himalayan climb (he had twice before been to Everest) because he talked—and talked—around the fire each night about many unpublished adventures in Sikkim, China and Nepal, adventures to hear but frightening to repeat. I became aware of the deep feelings of this sometimes caustic, always reticent man then—and once again when he sent me a little pamphlet describing in quite un-Tilman-like emotions, the last days of his beloved cutter *Mischief*, crushed in the ice.

As he wrote of himself "Rest is stagnation and activity madness," and it is right and fitting that his death should have been shrouded in mystery on a difficult, dangerous journey. With five young men he was

due to make a landfall in the Falkland Islands but after many months of silence and extensive search no trace of them was found and hope was given up in the summer of 1978. For Tilman it was a Wagnerian end, but he would not have wanted his five friends to accompany him on that last journey. For Bill Tilman "The game is more than the players of the game, and the ship is more than the crew."

CHARLES S. HOUSTON

PHILIP DODD SMITH
1905-1979

On November 7, 1979, one of the great pioneers of Teton climbing, Philip Dodd Smith of Twentynine Palms, California, died of a heart attack. Born on March 11, 1905, at Montour, Iowa, Phil Smith, as he was always informally known, spent his early years at Flagler, Colorado, followed by attendance at Cornell College (Iowa) and Colorado School of Mines. In 1925 he found his way to Jackson Hole, Wyoming, where he spent the next four years working in a variety of positions, keeping his eye on the nearby Tetons. In 1927 he took out a homestead on the side of Blacktail Peak. Starting in 1929 as one of the first seasonal rangers in the new Grand Teton National Park, Phil served with the National Park Service every summer (except 1934) for the next eleven years as a Teton ranger. For several winters he held similar positions with the NPS at Carlsbad Caverns and Muir Woods. In 1930 Phil and Dorothy Gibbs LePage were married; his family included Phil Jr., Rodney, and a step-son Don LePage. In the last years before the war Phil held positions with the CCC camps in Yellowstone National Park, serving as camp superintendent. Beginning in 1940 Phil was also employed by the NPS at Joshua Tree National Monument, and more recently with the recreation department at nearby Twentynine Palms where he made his home for the past 41 years.

Any description of the climbs of Phil Smith over his 37-year climbing career requires much condensation. As a boy of 15 with companions from Flagler, Phil initiated the interest in exploring and climbing which he held throughout his life. From 1920 to 1925 they searched out ridges and faces in the Front Range in Colorado, making a dozen ascents. But the turning point came in 1925 when with his friend, Walter Harvey, Phil was drawn to the almost unknown Tetons where he began the consistently competent pioneering which characterized his mountaineering. Their first climb was the now famous attempt on the Grand Teton from Amphitheater Lake, which resulted in the first ascent and the naming of Disappointment Peak. With a better route five days later the pair made the 14th ascent of the Grand Teton via the Owen-