

Overall, the book will be a significant help to those unfamiliar with climbing areas in the South, but it is not definitive or really comprehensive.

RICHARD W. TYRRELL

Columbia Icefield—A Solitude of Ice. Don Harmon (Photographer), Bart Robinson (Writer). The Mountaineers, Seattle, 1981. 103 pages, black and white and color photographs, maps, glossary, bibliography. \$29.95.

Even with the flood of heroic tales and spectacular photographs from the great mountain regions of Alaska/Yukon, South America, and Asia, the Canadian Rockies maintain in my mind a certain image of special beauty, boldness, and scale not to be matched. There is something about the broad sweep of the deep wooded valleys, the azure rivers and lakes, water tumbling over cliffs, and the majestically architected glaciers that leads one to forget that these mountains are not very high and are made mostly of atrociously rotten rock.

Columbia Icefield—A Solitude of Ice is a book that catches this image. It is not a book about mountaineering. It is about place. Principally, it is a book of fine pictures by Don Harmon, a well-known photographer of the Rockies. The pictures speak through a complimentary text by Burt Robinson. The text is organized in three sections: one describing the Icefield and its glaciers; one giving an overview of geography; and one telling the stories of discovery and exploration by Europeans.

As a scientist involved in the study of glaciers, I read the first section about understanding glaciers with an especially critical eye. Even though certain details and ideas don't level with current generally accepted understanding, a good picture of glacier behavior is conveyed. As a personal view, I would have preferred more understanding and fewer terms. But in the fine selection of photographs, there is a lot to try to understand and puzzle about.

A look at the geography is accomplished by means of a helicopter trip around the icefield region described in picture and text. One can follow the flight route on a map to get a good mental image of the geography of the ice, principal mountains, and rivers. The first photograph of the book was apparently taken on this flight. It shows a uniform area of snow broken only by a single gaping crevasse and a thin line of tracks behind two climbers headed up onto the icefield. It is an appropriate opening photograph. It gives the sense of an icefield and its solitude. Just above the climbers, clearly visible, is the shadow of the helicopter, which reminds us how hard it is to come by real solitude these days.

I found the third section lots of fun. It is not intended to be a detailed history, but rather is a recounting of the best yarns of discovery, exploration, and early ascents of the principal peaks. These early days are illustrated by a nice set of historical photographs dating back to the turn of the century.

I haven't been to the Rockies for several years. After picking up this book, I want to go back as soon as I can.

CHARLES RAYMOND

