

words as carefully sculpted as trench battlements. Another breakthrough is that this biography allows Tilman's family and adventure companions to complete the portrait of "Uncle Bill," "Tilly," "the Ancient Mariner," or "the Old Man," as he was variously known through diaries, letters, and the illuminating epilogue by his niece. Madge unveils Tilman's respect and love of women (and children and dogs), his shy modesty, and his droll wit.

Madge's narrative is occasionally weakened by chronological flip-flops: describing Tilman's 1950 climbing before describing his behind-the-lines work with World War II partisans, or invoking his death before the many sailing voyages. Occasionally, Madge resorts to an academic voice, which is intrusive, but bearable insofar as it sheds more light on the elusive subject.

Madge does miss the proverbial boat by suggesting that Tilman did not do a service to young adventures by advocating that journeys be planned on the back of an envelope. This philosophy of simplicity — a disdainment of technology and hyperbolic sponsorship — is, in fact, Tilman's greatest legacy to all modern climbers and adventurers.

Those who haven't read Tilman will probably be inspired to do so after finishing *The Last Hero*. Madge's work is practically a lexicon, as necessary as *A Sea of Words* for the sailing novelist Patrick O'Brian's work, or *Cliff Notes* for Joyce's *Ulysses*, or *A Reader's Guide to the Hall of the Mountain King*.

In particular, Madge's last two chapters tie together the adventurer's life, and death, with aquamarine clarity. He tries to answer the inevitable question about what sex meant to the obviously celibate adventurer (Madge believes Tilman found a way to substitute mountains and nature for conventional love — somewhat Freudian, but probably true, and more revealing than anything Tilman would have conceded).

The biographer recalls a moment in 1965, when Tilman's boat appeared to be sinking, and one of the crew confided he could not swim. Madge writes about his subject's reply (who could swim), "'Then,' said Bill, 'you are lucky, your struggle will be the less.'"

How many of your heroes perished while vying to spend their 80th birthday in the extremity of their calling? Tilman stands alone, and Madge calls it squarely in *The Last Hero*.

JONATHAN WATERMAN

*Ice World: Techniques and Experiences of Modern Ice Climbing*. Jeff Lowe. The Mountaineers, Seattle, 1996. 256 pages, color photos. \$29.95.

*Waterfall Ice: Jeff Lowe's Climbing Techniques*. Arctic Wolf,

Nederland, Colorado, 1995. Video. 180 minutes. \$39.95.

These sibling productions from Jeff Lowe bring to bear the breadth and depth of his experience at the vanguard of modern ice climbing and alpinism. Not just a virtuoso technician, Lowe has been a great innovator in the sport, developing techniques and tools while expanding the notion of what is not impossible. Coupled with Lowe's deceptively easy eloquence as a writer and speaker, and high production values, these two efforts provide rock solid information and insights into the fragile and ephemeral world of ice climbing.

Though related and with some material in common, there is a big difference in the scope of the two. As the title of the video subtly implies, it is an instructional piece about waterfall climbing techniques. Expertly filmed and directed by brother Greg Lowe, an experienced and talented climbing film-maker (and climber), in locations that include Vail and Ouray, Colorado, the video uses Lowe's tutelage of American rock climber and ice climbing novice Bird Lew as an effective vehicle for presenting everything from 20° flat foot technique, to leading and placing protection, to the negotiation of extreme mixed terrain. Segments on equipment and clothing are also included. It is interesting and instructive to follow Bird Lew's progress from her initial awkwardness, where she's obviously just trying to hold on, to a later segment in Ouray in which the internalization of her lessons finally kicks in and her body language and swing of the tool relax. She really starts to *climb* the ice.

Jeff Lowe's style of climbing ice and his style of describing how to climb ice are remarkably similar: sort of an understated elegance; nothing really hits you over the head, but the next thing you know, he's conveyed some subtle point (or himself) up some complicated passage quite nicely, thank you. There is great footage (in real time, hence the three-hour length of this video) of Lowe in action on climbs of all grades of ice and mixed terrain. One climb in Ouray shot with a long lens through falling snow was aesthetically memorable for me and you can learn a lot through osmosis. Small wireless microphones, which both climbers wear, add to the real life feel of the scenes, and judging by his laconic comments in the middle of what I might consider to be fairly stressful situations, Lowe must be a pretty cool customer. It's not readily apparent by watching these scenes just how vast the gulf is between leading and following these pitches.

Lowe's book, *Ice World*, handsome and well-produced, has a much broader agenda, being not only instructional, but historical and autobiographical as well. In the historical section, Lowe traces the various threads that have led to the current state of the sport. His comprehensive view reflects his broad experience, having climbed around the world for the bet-

ter part of 30 years with top climbers of diverse backgrounds and nationalities. Eight pieces constitute the personal history section: tales of seminal experiences from early Teton adventures to recent hard routes. These accounts are frank and well-written, giving insights into Lowe and his partners . . . when he had one.

The book concludes with a general overview of ice climbs around the world, and 16 selected routes — “World Classics,” as Lowe calls them — in the Americas, Europe, and Asia, complete with topos. I wasn’t really sure about the utility of this section, as fewer than half of them are what I’d actually call destination climbs in their own right, but maybe including them in a list like this will turn them into such.

The instructional sections account for somewhat less than half of this 250-page book, thoroughly covering gear, clothing, and ratings; glacier travel and alpine ice climbing techniques; waterfall and mixed climbing techniques; and a glossary of mountain, snow, and ice terminology. The excellent technique photography, shot in the Canadian Rockies, Ouray, and Vail, is clear and understandable (no small feat), as are the accompanying explanations by Lowe.

I can’t imagine that there is anyone who couldn’t learn something from these two sources (I know I did, but I’m not saying what). If your specific interest is learning how to traverse the discreet realm of waterfall and technical mixed climbing, the video is great. Climbing *is* movement, after all. If you are casting your net not only onto waterfalls but over the big ranges of the world, and you also want to know how the sport has evolved so you can grasp a sense of where it’s evolving to, the book would be for you. About the only thing it lacks are recipes and tips for high altitude cooking.

Through the years I’ve added ice screws to my rack, at no cost, because I found them where someone else had left them after lowering off. It’s interesting to note that both the book and the video are each cheaper than a brand new shiny ice screw. I could make the case that if you invested in either the book or the video you’d probably someday save yourself an ice screw because you’d know a cheaper way to bail, or better yet, you’d have been more likely to have finished the route in the first place. But if I did make that case, I fear that the halcyon days of free gear and booty, alas, would come to a close.

MICHAEL BEARZI

*Climbing: The Complete Reference.* Compiled by Greg Child. Facts on File, New York, 1995. 264 pages, 60 photographs. \$39.95.