

ing the book. Readers may also wonder why a mountain range as major as the Karakoram is brushed over in three sentences, while other much more minor yet centrally located ranges are given more focus and detail (this is probably a reflection of the same Sino-centric view that caused the Chinese to call their nation Zhong Guo, or Middle Kingdom, as in the center of the civilized world).

In general the writing is very party line, even to the point of reading like some of the nauseating tourist brochures widely dispersed by the state-run travel organizations. China's climbers are "heroes" who serve as "uplifting" forces for the Chinese people and their Motherland (in Chinese parlance, the Motherland includes Tibet, Taiwan and Hong Kong). But *Footprints* does include a couple of personal and revealing passages. In one, a woman named Tong Lu who climbed Xixabangma (Shisha Pangma) in 1990, writes in her diary of aborting a pregnancy to go on the expedition, and then dealing with her period during the expedition, with a frankness rarely seen in western mountaineering literature. All in all, the nationalistic overtones shouldn't deter anyone from reading the book and appreciating its more important qualities.

The Chinese place great importance on documenting their history and preserving those documents. More often than not, the historical records were written to justify the reigning emperor's claim to the Heavenly Throne. Written and translated by native Chinese, *Footprints on the Peaks* follows those lines, and readers should prepare themselves for something other than the highly personal and individualistic accounts by western mountaineers that we're used to reading. That aside, the book is a major first step in revealing the somewhat hidden and mysterious realm of Chinese mountaineering. Its value lies not in inspiration but in revelation. Anyone who has climbed, will climb, or has any interest in the Middle Kingdom and her mountains, should have and read a copy of this book.

MARK NEWCOMB

Gary Hemming: The Beatnik of the Alps. Mirella Tenderini (trans. Susan Hodgkiss). The Ernest Press, Glasgow, Scotland, 1995. 195 pages. £11.95.

As the sub-title suggests, Gary Hemming was a climber of the 1950s and '60s — my generation. He climbed in California, New York, Wyoming, and the Alps, performed a daring and famous rescue on a route of his on the West Face of the Petit Dru, and killed himself at Jenny Lake in the Tetons in the last year of that era, 1969. The subject of this biography, its author and

its English publishers are my friends. I'm the person least able to judge how interesting this book is to those who didn't know Gary. However, the role of storyteller is more interesting and noble than that of literary critic, and I have a story to tell of how this book came to be.

Written by the Italian writer and mountaineering scholar Mirella Tenderini, *Gary Hemming* was first published in French in France, next published in Italian, and then in Spanish. The first English language incarnation of Gary Hemming's story was a movie script for Robert Redford. The first public access to the story in English was *Solo Faces*, the novel James Salter made from his script.

Mirella is bilingual in French and Italian. Since most of the dramatic events of Hemming's life except the last occurred in France, where Hemming was something of a national hero, the book was first published for that ready audience. For reasons not completely clear to this provincial American, the recent fall of the remnants of the pre-WW II fascist regime in Spain unleashed the publication of a whole slew of mountaineering books. It sort of makes intuitive sense if you've read your Hemingway. Now it is in English, though it does not have an American distributor. Even this makes ultimate sense. One of the mysteries of the story of Hemming's life is whether his countrymen will find it interesting.

I first heard of this book 11 years ago when Mirella wrote to me: "I am compiling a biography of Gary Hemming and I'm looking for information all over the world," were her opening words. She explained further:

"The biography I plan is in book form, for the general public (although it will have a lot of climbing accounts in it). I never knew Hemming. I'm the wife of an Italian rock climber and a writer on mountaineering and my interest in Hemming arose from the lack of documentation on his outstanding activity in the Alpine range. During my search I became less interested in the climber and more in the man."

Could Mirella have but known how insidious was that shift in interest! Two years later she wrote:

"I am treasuring the manuscript you sent me a couple of years ago, waiting for my book on Gary Hemming to advance and ask you the permission to use the material you sent me. I have worked four years now interviewing people and gathering information, but cannot finish my work yet because there are too many gaps."

Mirella was a featured speaker at the Ninth International Festival of Mountaineering Literature at Bretton Hall in England this past November. In the morning she reviewed for us her work on the history of Italian mountaineering, a remarkable performance which moved Andy Popp to say:

"Mirella showed us how we might begin the writing of something which climbing has long been in need of, a real history of the activity . . .

I doubt that I will often hear a neater or more intelligent exploration of the evolution of mountaineering. Powerful and evocative character sketches of leading climbers and writers, often one and the same person, were combined with telling reference to other wider currents of history; political, social and cultural history were all included in a way that went far beyond paying lip service.”

Andy might have added that of the two tasks, a biography of Hemming and the history of mountaineering, the latter is the easier task.

At a later session Mirella and Alan Hankinson, winner in October of the Boardman-Tasker Literary Award for his biography of Geoffrey Winthrop Young [*also reviewed here-Ed.*], talked about the work of the biographer. From the audience came a request for the two to say how their attitude toward their subject changed in the course of their research, adding that it had happened with others that the feeling went from admiration to loathing. Neither had that experience, but Mirella came to feel protective of both her subject and those who loved him. For those who loved him, the major concern is the same as Mirella's: how to interpret the thoughts of a man who concealed much of his past and lied about the present to mock friends and strangers — equally, it often seemed. As her difficulties in finding out what actually happened intensify, Mirella makes these difficulties integral to the narrative, and meaning, of Gary's life.

Those who knew Gary will find much that they didn't know or had forgotten about him. I had no interest in understanding why he committed suicide. I learned to respect his privacy while he was alive and did not wish to change that. It isn't that simple. I did always wonder why Gary started fights and lost them. I also wondered why he was genuinely surprised to find that I didn't carry a pistol.

“You don't!” he said. “I always do. How can you stand to be that vulnerable?”

I wonder no longer. In the chapter, *Last Journey to Jackson*, there is an account of a conversation between Gary and Muffy Corbet.

“[Gary] even told her of events far back in his childhood and adolescence, events he had never recounted to anyone before and which were not even mentioned in his diaries. One of these occurred when he was eleven years old and staying in the countryside near La Mesa and three grown men had tried to rape him.”

If they tried, they did. Gary lost that fight. The sense of honor and integrity of an 11-year-old boy is not the less for his being young and small. How could he have lost that fight? Rather than have his honor violated it would be better to have died. If ever there were a fight to win it was that one. He lost all his fights.

The portrait of Gary in Mirella's account is of the Gary I remember, a

man who unflinchingly tried to be as good a man as any he knew, a man who desperately needed to conceal his private self but who sometimes thought he wanted to be famous. The preponderance of Mirella's evidence is overwhelmingly that Gary really wanted love more than fame or even privacy. He had that love. His tragedy was that he was damaged precisely in a way that prevented him from seeing that.

PETE SINCLAIR

Teton Tales and Other Petzoldt Anecdotes. Paul K. Petzoldt, with Kevin Cassidy. ICS Books, Merrillville, Indiana, 1995. 214 pages, black-and-white photos. \$14.95.

This is oral history, transcribed; and as the title implies it has a narrow focus that will delight some readers and deter others. Over the years, Petzoldt himself has had the same sort of ambivalent impact on the people he has met and worked with, delighting some and taking pride in his effect on the others; we must note that in these stories he does nothing to amend that. I am reminded of the first (and only) time I ever met him, on the trail in Garnet Canyon. As we were introduced, I told him that I was glad for the chance to meet him at last, having heard so much about him over the years. "Just remember the bad things," was his sardonic reply.

This reader was one of the delighted, while recognizing that the editing of this book did not include enough in the way of background for, or continuity between, the stories. Had I not been already familiar with many of the places, people, and events (apocryphal or not) described here, I might have missed many of the allusions. The chronology as well is a bit confusing, with some references made to things we will not read about for many chapters to come. But these are characteristic drawbacks of stories that, though told many times, have not yet been written down; and it is in that oral tradition that we should receive this book.

Petzoldt's chapters on his first climb of the Grand and his serendipitous embracing of a guiding career are particularly enjoyable, as are his insights into the ambience of the early Jackson's Hole; but some of his stories are less relevant to the theme of the book and seem to have been tacked on as afterthoughts or filler. His exact relationship with Glenn Exum and the ultimate disposition of the guide service which Petzoldt founded is never quite made clear; and there are a number of assumptions made about the reader's familiarity with this neck of the woods which, in the long run, will only serve to limit readership to those who can fill in the blanks. A bit of editorial intervention might have averted these problems, but from the conversational tone