

Dave Gregory gives us a real potpourri: personal narrative, fiction, a little poetry, even a comic, pseudo-scientific treatise on cooking porridge. I found the personal narrative best, full of convincing grit. Here is some nice description: "She reaches three left finger ends onto a small triangular hold above her head. I freeze as her right hand moves slowly up like a slow motion replay of a crawl stroke to grip the very bottom of a small ripple of a flake." Gregory has a true feel for rugosities.

The fiction is less successful, I think. The dialogue, some of it in dialect, often works well, but the characterization is decidedly thin. Several of the endings are unsatisfying and melodramatic ("The Black Hollow") or unconvincingly hopeful ("The Last Straw").

Many of these pieces have appeared in the journals of British climbing clubs, and the tone is often rather clubby. The identity of some of the climbers is footnoted for a wider readership, but be prepared for a lot of British vocabulary: peg ring, krab, boot (of a car). The volume is enhanced by excellent production and by many fine line drawings by Malc Baxter.

In a brief introduction, Jim Perrin, who has met Dave Gregory only once, says that he felt as though he had always known him. Many readers will have the same response. He emerges from this book as a climbing Everyman, without overweening ambition, but gifted with a love of the crags. You may find yourself somewhere in the pages of this book.

STEVEN JERVIS

Great American Rock Climbs. Richard DuMais. High Peak Books, Wilson, Wyoming, 1995. Black-and-white photos, topos. 115 pages. \$21.95.

Richard DuMais tackles a topic paradoxically simple and difficult in his *Great American Rock Climbs* by attempting to chronicle a sampling of the great climbing of all grades and types to be found throughout the United States. Any well-traveled and experienced rock climber, armchair or otherwise, can rattle off a dozen eminently classic routes scattered across the nation: the *Nose*, *Bastille Crack*, *Repentance*, *High Exposure*... the list would be as wide and deep as a climber's knowledge. This expanse presents the other half of the paradox: any truncation of a list that could account for thousands of climbs will arbitrarily eliminate comparably classic routes. Though I have climbed a third of those the author selected and have no real complaints, readers of *Great American Rock Climbs* will undoubtedly find some of their favorites overlooked by DuMais — and might grimace at the inclusion of what they consider less worthy routes. Therefore, rather than judge the book on the subjective nature implicit in which climbs it features,

I will focus more on how it presents the climbs DuMais has selected — which still leaves plenty of room for criticism.

Great American Rock Climbs' most significant shortcomings lie in its lack of a specific audience. I approached it as a to-do list for climbers and felt disappointed in the style in which DuMais presented the routes: a photograph of the formation, but no means to locate the route on the formation, and an adjoining topo only very rarely featuring distinguishing landmarks to link it with the photograph. This layout of illustrations, coupled with the fact that the reader needs to delve into the smallest of print to discover in which state the climb might be found, made it seem to me that DuMais had written the book to be appreciated by climbers who had already done the routes he had selected.

However, the format of the text describing each climb aims more at newcomers to the route, as the descriptions fall into regular accounts of a vague history of its ascent and draw upon a small bank of superlatives. DuMais describes five different routes as **THE** climb to do, placing **THE** in bold-face type annoyingly often in case we missed his point. While I am sure that DuMais climbed many if not all of the routes listed, his lackluster descriptions fail to convey the majesty of the routes he has chosen — perhaps because he has not included any personal anecdotes, as have Fred Beckey or Steve Roper and Allen Steck in their respective volumes that use the list format as an organizing principle. The broad focus of the text and the fact that more than half of the introduction summarizes the overall history of climbing made me suspect that Dumais may have intended *Great American Rock Climbs* for the fledgling or non-climber, but the presence of the topo and a side bar of route data complicated this possibility. Exactly for whom this book was written was for me a muddled issue.

Other problems with *Great American Rock Climbs* make it a less useful addition to a climber's library. The book's lack of a table of contents or integrated index inconvenience the reader attempting to look for a particular route. This lack of a contents page or index is obviously intentional, true to the writer's private conception of the enterprise. The bookseller Michael Chessler has included a separately-printed, one-page index as an addendum to the copies he sells, and most readers will be grateful.

Some photos are randomly dispersed throughout the book: Why, for example, does a photo of the *Bastille Crack* join photos of *the Nose* in the section featuring the *Salathé*, or the Teton's *Guide's Wall* appear beside the *Tour De Platte* in the pages detailing *the Nose*? And while the text does not purport to be a guidebook by any means, a small map in each section locating the climbing area within the state would be helpful to inspired climbers. Photos should feature the path of the climb.

Overall, I could appreciate *Great American Rock Climbs* for what it was: brief descriptions and accompanying topos and photos of over fifty excellent

climbs; but I felt disappointment over what the book could have been.

PETER CASTER

Vertical Pleasures: The Secret Life of a Tax Man. Mick Fowler. Cloudcap Press, Seattle, Washington, 1995. \$19.95.

I do not read many climbing books. In fact, I only read the classics. Therefore, when I was given *Vertical Pleasures* and told that it was a finalist for the Boardman-Tasker Award for Mountaineering Literature, I had high expectations. I was not disappointed.

Fowler writes of his most memorable climbing adventures, beginning with his first outings with his father to sandstone outcrops near his home and a trip to the Alps. These climbing excursions were the result of an effort by his father to keep Fowler out of such trouble as exploring the sewage system or biking at night without the use of headlights. Despite his father's efforts, Fowler vowed to ensure that a certain amount of irresponsibility and excitement was injected into his life. Inevitably, his father was left behind.

Fowler further developed his climbing skills on various types and quality of rock in the U.K. and ice in Scotland. He especially seemed to enjoy adventure, climbing chalk cliffs with ice axes, crampons and screws, or sea stacks in which the approach via a rubber dinghy was the crux. Eventually he began to save his Tax Office holidays for trips to foreign peaks, beginning with the first ascent of the South Pillar of Taulliraju.

Fowler writes in a modest, understated style. Little is made of the fact that his first ascents on Taulliraju, Spantik, and Kishtwar are major accomplishments. The book is filled with humor. In one instance, Fowler was being filmed doing a simulated crevasse rescue off a railway cut in hopes of promoting and raising money for Spantik. His partner Victor decked when simulating a fall into a crevasse, so another team member, John, used this opportunity to demonstrate how to jümar with an injured climber (still belayed by Fowler) on one's back. Unfortunately, the weight of Victor on John's back pulled the two over backward and the pain of Fowler's pulling on them caused John to release the jümars, causing John and Victor to collapse in the mud in front of all cameras.

My only criticism of *Vertical Pleasures* is that it might have been stronger if Fowler had described his emotions more often. Also, in a few instances, the stories were not brought to a climactic moment.

Overall, however, *Vertical Pleasures* is an enjoyable read and highly recommended.

KITTY CALHOUN