

within the larger arena of rock climbing. Instead of disrupting any sort of flow, this gives the reader a sense of when and where certain aspects of the greater discipline of rock climbing were happening. Interspersed throughout are accounts from the first ascensionists, which help to not only to vary the tone of the book's dialogue, but give a personal perspective to the history.

Achey does justice to the complex and interesting history of Colorado's rock climbing past. He covers every noteworthy area in the state, and all those who were instrumental in the development of routes and standards. Along with the presentation of information, it is also apparent that all this effort came from a climber, and one who is proud of the history of his home turf.

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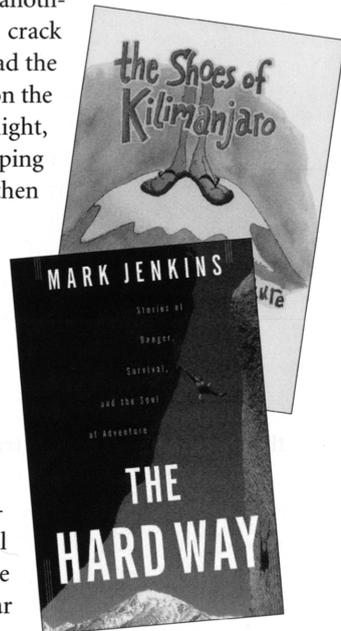
The Shoes of Kilimanjaro and Other Oddventure Travel Stories. CAMERON M. BURNS. BASALT, COLORADO: HARD PRESSED BOOKS, 2002. 184 PAGES. PAPERBACK. \$16.95.

The Hard Way: Stories of Danger, Survival and the Soul of Adventure. MARK JENKINS. NEW YORK: SIMON & SCHUSTER, 2002. 222 PAGES. HARDCOVER. \$22.00.

Neither of these titles is strictly a book about climbing per se, but while reading them it becomes obvious that there is a lot more climbing between the lines than shows up on the page. Both writers deliver on the promise of their subtitles: Burns comes through with the "oddventure" story, the unique spin he seems to naturally find in each new locale; and Jenkins manages to live up to what at first glance seems an overhyped description: getting darned near the soul of adventure.

The opening three tales in Burns' book speak directly to climbing: trips to Kilimanjaro, the Cordillera Blanca, and Fitzroy. Burns knows we don't need to hear another, as Jeff McCarthy describes it in an earlier review: "then the crack widened, but I struggled onto the ledge" version of a climb. Instead the title story, "The Shoes of Kilimanjaro," is a humorous meditation on the footwear of his Kenyan porters: "We sat around a small fire that night, the night before our final day of the climb, eating, laughing and sipping mugs of tea. Secretly, we were regarding each other's feet." Burns then launches into a short, and again humorous, digression on the the history of footwear. This sort of a digression is a staple of most of these essays and they range widely: in an essay about sailing in the Bahamas he takes this turn: "All this Atlantis stuff started over 2,000 years ago when Plato wrote two stories called 'Critias' and 'Timaeus,' way back in 360 B.C." Or, my personal favorite, in an essay about a trip on the Ewaso Ngiro river in Kenya: "Consider the bathtub." These aren't really digressions, of course, they're just Burns putting his quirky observations into a larger context.

In his essay on Alpamayo there is an actual paragraph devoted to the climb, but Burns' meditations are directed to the social scenes at basecamp and the crowded conditions he encounters. The Fitzroy piece offers dozens of dead-on observations of our peculiar



subculture: “With every patch of blue sky that floated overhead, dozens of wrists would be bared and excited consultations with barometer watches would ensue.”

His piece on his attempt to dribble a soccer ball across the Elk Mountains begins with a quote from Warren Harding: “What’s the sense in all this?” That line is well-chosen—there is indeed a sense that the world as seen through Burns’ eyes is a kind of glorious farce. Burns writes “[Climbing trips] made me realize that there’s a whole wide world out there of interesting people and cultures, mountains and geographic regions, fruits and vegetables, and international headgames involving salamis and potatoes.” That’s the world Burns is showing us here, but his real point is that we should see it for ourselves.

I first read most of the 23 essays collected in Mark Jenkins’ *The Hard Way* as they appeared in his regular column in *Outside*. I have marveled at them over the years, read singly, wedged as they were between car advertisements and gear reviews; collected here between the covers of a book the clarity and wisdom of his words accrue for a more powerful and memorable effect. As in Burns’ work, climbing appears in the background of some of the essays; In two of my favorites “What Goes Around” and “The Bike Messenger” Jenkins writes about traveling in Tibet. They contain the phrases “aborted expedition” and “failed expedition” respectively. Most writers would gladly trade a successful climb for the beauty Jenkins captures in the wake of those undescribed climbing fiascoes.

The climbing pieces as a set of about a half dozen are brilliant. They include descriptions of a first ascent on Mt. Waddington, a climb on the Matterhorn, soloing in Bolivia, ice climbing in Scotland, climbing with a stranger on Denali, and a piece on George Mallory; also, a terrific piece written as a diary composed after 17 days above 21,000 feet. In “Ego Trip” the story of his solo climb of Huayana Potosi, he writes:

“Just because I summited and managed to get down alive doesn’t mean I did the right thing.... Surviving after a series of stupid moves means nothing more than that the gods took pity on you. It’s nothing to brag about.”

He’s not bragging here, he is illuminating his (our) conflicting intellect and emotions. He knows that in considering the value of our achievements we best be honest about the line between what we’ve earned and the good dumb luck with which we are sometimes blessed.

Many excellent books about Mallory have been written in the last half dozen years, but in “In the Good Company of the Dead” Jenkins manages to give us a very satisfying, full portrait in a mere 10 pages.

“Wisdom” is a word I don’t use lightly. Most of the wisdom Jenkins manages to get on the page is self-knowledge, what every person must figure out for him or her self. But beyond that he makes a lot of observations that might be pretty useful for the rest of us, such as, “One of the many problems with the indoor life is you start to think that all that secondhand cyberinfo you’re gathering has some validity.” The best advice he has comes in the essay “From the Mouths of Babes,” and since it closes the book, I won’t give it away here—like a lot of words to live by these are both simple and true.

Jenkins travels on foot, by ski, bicycle, and kayak. He hitchhikes, does pull-ups, climbs, skydives, rappels in holes in the earth, and plays with his kids. In his descriptions of these activities he’s managed to somehow weight them equally, as if every moment is equally alive, equally capable of yielding the hard won lesson. And that’s what good writers do.