

the real mystery is not who did the murder, but who did the book! There is a strong possibility that Trevanian is a pen name for a person who might even be a member of the AAC.

There is a mention of the IAA (International Alpine Assoc.), which sounds close to the UIAA. The American Alpine Association is obviously a fictionalization of the AAC. The use of a main character who is a writer tends to suggest that the hero may be based, at least in part, on the author himself. Every name in the book has a double meaning. A black girl named Jemima Brown is obvious. Yurasis Dragon is slightly more subtle. What about Jonathon Hemlock? I have already found a climber-writer whose name has the same rhythm and accent as Jonathon Hemlock. Other clues are found in the intricate descriptions of Kleine Scheidegg and guided climbing in the Alps. The writer is obviously not a modern ice climber of the French school: "Big Ben took over when they were on ice and snow where he would pant and bull through the drifts, breasting an upward path like an inevitable machine of fate." Why would Trevanian, whoever he is, not wish to place his real name on a potential best-seller? This is the genuine mystery.

GALEN ROWELL

*Angels Four*, by David Nott. Englewood Cliffs, N. J. : Prentice Hall. 176 pages, 8 color plates, 5 drawings, 2 maps, \$6.95

Gran Sabana! This wild, weirdly beautiful high jungle land of southeast Venezuela has long been the locale of adventure stories both fictional and factual. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle found a Lost World complete with real live dinosaurs. Jimmy Angel found gold and diamonds (at least his colleagues did!) and a rather poor place to land an airplane! John Timo and his companions found great physical discomfort in the form of soaking rains, mud, slime-coated rock, near starvation. They found great personal satisfaction in making the first ascent of the face of Angel Falls.

David Nott's exciting account of this venture is a fine mixture of humor and drama, suspense and relief. But always realistic. The action frequently becomes alarmingly similar to a Chinese Fire Drill. Slipping and sliding in the tropical slime, dropping packs, personnel breaking down, inter-personal flare ups, getting lost—all the fun things that seem to be an inherent part of climbing. Especially on an expedition of this nature which involved rather novel logistical and terrestrial problems. The matter of including a person with no previous climbing experience and an aging, decrepit journalist as members of a serious climbing team is, at best, questionable . . . but more about that later on.

I find *Angels Four* a most attractive book. Its rather tall physical proportions took a little getting used to, but it certainly is appropriate considering the strong vertical influence of the jacket photo.

It would be presumptuous of me to comment on Mr. Nott's writing style in any technical sense. Rather I'll just say that it "reads nicely—

moves right along." This fluidity is enhanced by the overall organization of the book—the "Part, Chapter, Chapter sections" format all help to keep it together. Also the two maps help the reader to sort out the rather confusing terrain where all this takes place. It must be kept in mind that *Angels Four* was not produced solely for the "dedicated climber" (who may find it deficient in certain areas). For example, there is no pitch-by-pitch grading of difficulty—for that matter, there is no really concise delineation of the *exact* route. This will, no doubt, disappoint—even annoy—some. For them, something like Pat Ament's *High Over Boulder* or any of a number of fine guide books would make better reading!

It could also be said that the color photos "are not the best." This certainly is true. They *are* the best available! Considering the conditions encountered on the expedition, it is remarkable that any film survived at all. For those who find this unacceptable, there are always the Sierra Club Exhibit Format books. The important thing is the story—the determination and quiet strength of John Timo (his third attempt on this wall), the power, spirit and climbing prowess of George Bogel, the remarkable "learning capabilities" of Paul Straub who enjoyed a most demanding course in rock climbing techniques, and David Nott himself. It's simply amazing that this fellow—"gamy" leg, palsy, generally dissipated (I'm personally quite familiar with this syndrome!)—could even consider such an undertaking!

But it soon becomes clear that sound judgment is not one of Mr. Nott's strong points. For example: on page 20, upon receiving a phoned invitation (from John Timo) to join the Angel Falls expedition, he became hysterical, jumped to his feet, ran to the kitchen and poured his glass of scotch down the sink. Next evidence of poor judgment was the incredible failure to include booze in the expedition provisions. (It was only by merest chance that they ran across some beer in a place they'd never even heard of—Callao.) The worst dereliction of all, however, is failure to report the sighting of even a single Pterodactyl. . . .

I certainly would have!!

WARREN J. HARDING

*The Mighty Sierra*, by Paul Webster. Palo Alto: American West Publishing Co. 1972. 287 pages, over 200 illustrations, 70 color plates. \$17.50

*Gentle Wilderness, The Sierra Nevada* was published almost a decade ago by the Sierra Club as part of their award-winning Exhibit Format Series. The color photographs were of simple scenes, the kind that the average tourist, whether armed with an Instamatic or a Nikon, would walk past without thinking about his camera. Through the eye of Richard Kauffman, the commonplace became unique. The effect of his superbly reproduced images matched with quotations from John Muir was a rare glimpse into the subjective beauty of the Sierra.

Beginning with the title, *The Mighty Sierra* is precisely the opposite. The dust jacket presents it as an all-inclusive book of facts: