

The book is a valuable addition to those written about this fascinating controversy.

A.C.

Mountains of North America. Fred Beckey. Sierra Club Books, San Francisco in association with The American Alpine Club, 1982. 256 pages, 140 color photographs, map. \$35.00.

Shore up your coffee tables: here comes another three-and-a-half pounds of lavish illustration in a large format. Somewhere between *The Mountains of America*, by Franklin Russell, and *Climbing in North America*, by Chris Jones, Fred Beckey has perceived a gap; this book is his attempt to fill it.

Mountains of North America is not a mountaineer's atlas, as its name implies; nor is it a climber's route book, for which we should be grateful. Neither is it a geology text, a history, a photo-essay, or a catalogue of the author's climbs, although it partakes of all these things. It is hard to say just what it is. Perhaps it most resembles the Combination Plate at a Mexican restaurant: you get a bit of each item, and after a while, with enough salsa, they all taste the same.

Each of the thirty-five chapters of the book concentrates on a single peak, chosen either for its unique qualities or as representative of an area. Though not necessarily the highest, the most difficult, or the most well-known mountains in North America, the features they do share are Fred Beckey's footprints and his love. Whether that is sufficient adhesive to hold a book together the reader will have to determine.

For each of the mountains selected, we are treated to a basic geology lesson, a bit of history, the story of the first ascent, a brief rundown on the local flora and fauna and, perhaps, a firsthand description of a climb on the peak. The book is evidently not meant to be read from cover to cover, as much of the information is repeated from chapter to chapter; taken one chapter at a time, it may prove less insulting to a reader's intelligence. I think that if I had had a copy as a teenager, I would have found it inspiring: there are a lot of little tidbits of information to pique one's interest and the scent of adventure is definitely in the air. Youth would have kept me from noticing all the clichés.

Be especially careful not to spill your coffee on any of the 140 color photographs, as they are the most painstaking reproductions ever to appear between hard covers. The color is brilliant, the detail perfect and the layout tasteful. At least two of the pictures have appeared before, in Russell's similarly named book, but this time around it is like remembering to put your glasses on: they might as well be new.

I am personally familiar with only about a third of the peaks selected for inclusion but found little to squabble with among the meticulously researched facts of their chapters. The real core of the book, though, is not the factual content but the attempt to evoke the feeling peculiar to each place. It is the

photographs, not the text, that do most of that work; they do it by small revelations, with details of plant life or lighting that say much more than the often ponderous narrative.

With such a vague program giving it form, it is not surprising that this book should be so difficult to describe. The gap it attempts to fill would not even be perceptible to many of us, yet Beckey pours a lot of his soul into it. The climber might disdain it for its insistence on the nobility of the walk-up peaks; the ecologist might skip over it for its superficiality; the historian might pick at its inaccuracies; but the simple lover of mountains will probably pick it out from under his accumulation of *Time* magazines and junk mail to read a chapter now and then and wish he were there. If he had been as peripatetic as Fred Beckey, he wouldn't need the book.

RON MATOUS

Yosemite Climbs. George Meyers. Chockstone Press, Denver, 1982. 260 pages, black and white photographs, route diagrams, maps. \$16.95.

Friends of Yosemite Valley relax! No longer do you have to guard your worn and torn topos against thieves or grudgingly lend your copy to a desperate soul who then pleads to use the Park Service's Xerox machine. George Meyers has published a concise, artistic and, indeed, beautiful update of *Yosemite Climbs*, which has been tragically out of print for yea these many years.

As with the previous version, it is sparse and lean—what little language there is comes in an introduction by the usually laconic Jim Bridwell. It does have a few things that the earlier volume lacked: like a bouldering guide, a list of recommended classics and better information on descent routes. Its dayglow yellow cover is a dubious improvement on the old green one but the material is more resistant to wear and tear.

What would a review of a guidebook be without a little cavil or two? So, for the sake of form, I offer that the Mountaineers route on the northwest face of Half Dome is mixed up with Arcturus in one picture caption and that Australia is misspelled once. But these are nothing compared with the book's comprehensiveness and thoroughness.

I expect it will sell fast and that all too soon it will go out of print. The climbing public will then be back to its old mooching and scrounging, wheedling and pilfering of these indispensable maps to Valley pleasure.

R.D. CAUGHRON

Rock Climbs in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. Ed Webster. Mountain Imagery, Conway, New Hampshire, 1982. 294 pages, black and white photographs, route diagrams, bibliography. \$14.95.

"Have you seen the new guide to the Valley, man? Like it's *really* awesome!"

"What? Did you say a *new* guide to the Valley?"