

has been diligently researched and will be a valuable help to all visitors to that part of the world.

Kurt Diemberger's and Julie Tullis' film, *K2—Traum und Schicksal*, was finished by Kurt alone and received the Città di Trento Prize at the 37th International Mountain Film Festival at Trento in 1989. The Italian version of Kurt's book on K2 was picked by the jury from 60 volumes of 37 different publishers as *The Mountain Book of the Year*. The English version of the book has been translated by Audrey Salkeld and will appear in the autumn. *K2—Traum und Schicksal* is a fine book that keeps one spellbound to the very last page.

HORST VON HENNIG

*Mountaineer: Thirty Years of Climbing on the World's Great Peaks*. Chris Bonington. Diadem Books, London, and Sierra Club Books, San Francisco, 1989. 192 pages, numerous color illustrations. £17.95 or \$29.95.

Chris Bonington's latest book, his tenth overall and his third autobiography, is certainly a pleasure to look at. With large images of ravishing mountain scenery, *Mountaineer* is a coffee-table book par excellence. The photos, well chosen and admirably reproduced, constantly remind us of the reasons we go to the mountains.

I can think of no other mountaineer except Kurt Diemberger who has climbed big Himalayan peaks over such a long time span. Since 1960, when he reached the top of Annapurna II, Bonington has made seventeen trips to Asia. And though he has climbed only one 8000-meter peak, Everest, this was in 1985, when he was 51!

Much of Bonington's early climbing life will be familiar to his followers. After surviving youthful forays to the crags of Great Britain, the author ventured to the Alps in his twenties, accomplishing some significant first ascents. In this abbreviated autobiography, these years pass quickly. Later he began his trips to the Himalaya, the subject of most of the remainder of the book.

Over the years the author climbed with dozens of legendary figures, among them John Harlin, Tom Patey, Dougal Haston, Ian Clough, Mick Burke, Nick Estcourt, Joe Tasker, and Peter Boardman. All these men are now dead, killed in action. And the last five died on Bonington's expeditions, a sobering statistic.

Those who have survived numerous Himalayan expeditions—men like Bonington, Diemberger, Scott, Messner—are the *living* legends, and an aura of respect and mystery surrounds them. Are these four survivors extra cautious? Is their karma so developed that they have become invincible? Or are they just plain lucky? Bonington, alone of the above quartet, is not known for his daring exploits. Does this make him the shrewdest—or the most timid—of the group?

There's hardly a trace of such philosophical introspection in *Mountaineer*. Bonington rarely displays emotion, though he once mentions "agonizing" about all the deaths on his trips. When Burke disappears on top of Everest and when

John Harlin dies on the Eiger Direct, the author is so casual he could be talking about total strangers.

The book is organized into ten chapters, each opening with an overview of its subject. The balance of the chapter reexamines the identical information by means of extended captions and detailed accounts of particular climbs. This format results in redundant material and confusing transitions. For instance, after a climb of Mont Blanc, with the weather still perfect, "there was only one climb to go for—the Eiger North Wall!" We turn the page, eager to hear about the dreaded Ogre . . . and instead wade through pages about the Chamonix aiguilles. Seventeen pages later we arrive at the Eigerwand.

Bonington's prose is adequate, though it is often bland and cumbersome. His thoughts can wander like a route through an icefall, causing readers to lose their way. An example: "The Mount Everest Foundation underwrote the cost of it, we were to be accompanied by a film crew, Don Whillans designed the box tents, successors to the Patagonian prefabricated hut, and also a waist harness, from which all subsequent harnesses have been developed." A sentence like this could go on forever, obviating the need for periods.

Bonington's life story is by definition exciting, unique. Yet he has trouble luring the reader into his special world. Hesitant to delve into the nuances and complexities of climbing, he instead tells us the "standard" thoughts. It's rough above 7000 meters. The mountains are soulful and yet unforgiving. Death is part of the game. Does the author spout these cliché from conviction, or because he's been advised that's the way to write about mountaineering?

I dream of perfection, I suppose. Few mountaineers write well, and we have come to accept lackluster prose as a trade-off for a well-illustrated adventure yarn. Not everyone can write like David Roberts, but why can't he at least have a few writers hot on his tail? Bonington, I regret to say, is not even in the race. But he surely takes pretty pictures!

STEVE ROPER

*Ascent: The Mountaineering Experience in Word and Image.* Edited by Allen Steck and Steve Roper. Sierra Club Books, San Francisco, 1989. 205 pages, illustrations. \$19.95.

In the inaugural issue of *Ascent*, Royal Robbins characterized the periodical as "a delightful and tasteful mélange of mountaineering; an eclectic potpourri of adventure, polemics, cartoons, photographs, poetry, humor and information, all strung together with a few central threads: California mountaineering, significant mountaineering successes and belles-lettres of alpinism." From its inception in 1967 through 1976, *Ascent* was, in effect, an annual mountaineering magazine. A shifting band of editors, which included Dave Dornan, Chuck Pratt, David Roberts, Lito Tejada-Flores, Jim Stuart, Joe Fitschen, Edgar Boyles and Glen Denny, worked with *Ascent's* mainstays Allen Steck and Steve Roper to produce a product that focused on first hand accounts of significant moun-