

The narrative is a pleasure to read. I found it interesting and at times pleasingly humorous, however, rather than compelling. One reason is that so little went wrong: the most trying moment was the loss of the skidoo, their only means of motorized hauling, along with a crucial pair of skis. Another is that despite extensive use of dialogue, the author does not effectively differentiate among his six characters. Although their speech is convincing, they sound much alike.

In the inevitable comparisons with earlier explorers like Amundsen and Scott, one can't help thinking how significantly modern technology protects our contemporaries. Hall addresses this point in his introduction: "Our aim was to climb a mountain, but the size and style of the expedition was actually more important than the goal itself. . . . The challenge is to meet the world on its own ground, because then one has no choice but to understand it." The six made the climb in good style, but they were dependent on radio communication, and the genuine risk of having to winter over—because the ship would have left to escape being trapped in the ice—was finally eliminated by a helicopter evacuation to a large, friendly ship.

The greatest virtue of the book is its production. If \$35.00 sounds like a lot, then believe me, the value is excellent. The large glossy pages are studded with marvellous color photographs, thoughtfully laid out and worth the price of admission by themselves. There are also some clear, helpful maps. The Mountaineers and the printers in Hong Kong are to be applauded. Moreover, various members of the expedition contribute valuable appendices on food, photography, equipment and other matters essential for anyone contemplating a similar enterprise.

The book is animated by a strong environmental concern. A prologue describes a nighttime ascent of the Centrepoint Tower in Sydney, to display a banner protesting nuclear warships. The note left on the summit reads in part: "We intend the ascent be used to place Mount Minto as the cornerstone in an Antarctic World Park for the physical and spiritual benefit of all humankind." Amen to that.

STEVEN JERVIS

*Rocks around the World.* Stefan Glowacz and Uli Wiesmeier. Sierra Club Books, San Francisco, 1988. 144 pages. \$24.95.

There's a commercial recipe behind *Rocks Around the World*: find a reigning rock-climbing star, send him with a personal photographer on a world tour of the standard watering places (Smith Rocks, Needles, Red Rocks, Arapiles in Australia, Ogowayama in Japan, and well-known locations in France, Germany and the U.K.) crank out another coffee-table book and count the money rolling in. Since my personal coffee table's legs had buckled and collapsed long ago, I've been immune to this formula. Then I discovered, engaged in the mummified hand of this publishing convention, the photographs of Uli Wiesmeier, who accompanied the peripatetic West German ace Stephan Glowacz.

In a field where even gifted photographers can get sucked into cliché, Wiesmeier stands out as an original mind: bringing a personal vision to such standard shots as a chalked-up fist straining on a nubbin, a group of climbers at a bouldering wall. The true hero of this book is not the lantern-jawed Glowacz with his long locks and gymnast's physique in colorful tights, it is the rock — its sculpture, its fantastical textures, its place in the landscape — observed by a genius eye. At his best Wiesmeier communicates a richness of vision and fine detail akin to a canvas by a grand master. His double-page spreads on Jogasaki, Red Rocks, Mount Arapiles and Verdon are breathtaking.

In the more familiar rock-climbing sequences Wiesmeier deftly gives us shots with something urgent to say, each frame dense with information, lyrical in its evocation of scenery. With a fine sense of perspective, he balances the claims of rock climbing action and of the surroundings. The picture of the sport that emerges is full of reverence and wonderment at the properties of rock. The climber belongs here, he is integral and necessary to the properties of the land, not the gaudy alien we've seen so often. And the crags themselves are just magical.

Glowacz's short, four-part commentaries are uninformative and at times just silly. (If Rodin's Thinker could speak, would he be worth listening to? Was Nijinsky?) But the text's triviality hardly matters, such is the majesty of Wiesmeier's work.

JOHN THACKRAY

*Portrait of an Explorer. Hiram Bingham, Discoverer of Machu Picchu.* Alfred M. Bingham. Iowa State University Press, Ames, Iowa, 1989. 141 black and white photographs, 6 sketch maps, 382 pages. Hardbound. \$29.95.

Although Hiram Bingham was not the discoverer of Machu Picchu any more than Columbus was the discoverer of the New World, it was he who put the last Inca capital on the map and who gave it back to the world. The book, written by Bingham's third son, is an efficient biography that, without omitting the necessary detail about the personal life of the person portrayed, goes to great lengths to describe the job he did. The work is divided into four parts with 27 chapters. There are also an epilogue, appendixes, bibliographies and an index.

Born in 1875, Hiram Bingham earned a doctorate at Harvard and became a lecturer at Yale. In 1906-7 he made his first South American expedition, repeating across Venezuela and Colombia the route of Bolívar's liberating army (1821). In 1907 he carried out his second South American expedition, or rather, travels. It was then that he became convinced that "the last Inca capital" remained to be discovered. This led to his 1911 expedition to Peru, his most famous one. Archaeologist A. Bandelier had written that Nevado Coropuna could very well be "the culminating point in the continent," and placed it at over 23,000 feet. Bingham, even if he actually had not been a mountaineer, had