

Reinhold Messner Free Spirit: A Climber's Life. Reinhold Messner. Translated by Jill Neate. The Mountaineers, Seattle, 1991. 250 pages, illustrated. \$32.00.

Although he is still well under 50, perhaps Messner has already accomplished too much for an autobiography. Too much, certainly, for *this* autobiography: not just the fourteen 8000-meter peaks (some of them more than once), but the highest points on all the continents, a sledge crossing of Antarctica, the Kilimanjaro icicle, numberless new routes in Europe, some solo or in foul conditions. Not to mention a medieval castle converted into a private residence, a divorce, a baby, and two brothers killed in the mountains. He has only two pages, for instance, for an ascent of K2; only two paragraphs for the traverse of Gasherbrum I and II. Much of the material may be found in greater detail in his many other books.

As so often when climbers tell their stories, the personal life barely exists. Some passages are introspective, but we learn little of Messner's wife, who meets him at the Munich airport on his return from Dhaulagiri "to say adieu to me;" Messner merely observes that "marriage was perhaps not the best way of living together; at least, not when more time was spent in the Himalayas than at home." Later we read of the birth of his daughter by another woman, whereupon mother and child virtually vanish from the book. The omissions extend to climbing relationships: only a photo caption alludes to the end of Messner's famous partnership with Peter Habeler.

But if a lot is slighted or left out, plenty remains. Many of the accounts, especially the early ones of the Alps and Dolomites, remain exciting despite their brevity. And Messner does leave more room (though still less than the reader wishes) for some crucial climbs, particularly on Nanga Parbat. His first ascent, with the loss of his brother Günther, was a major episode in his life, as was his remarkable solo climb eight years later. The sheer profusion of achievements is astonishing. Far from content with seizing the likeliest summits and routes, Messner has sought out truly remote places: the Tibetan plateau, the New Guinea highlands, Antarctica. And he has never settled for the obvious or become complacent about his accomplishments. One famous instance: having reached the top of Everest without oxygen, he repeats the achievement by a different route—this time, solo.

Messner has firm and, to my mind, admirable views on the mountain environment. He rejects the drilling of bolts and is particularly harsh about their use on climbs that had been established without them. "For a pure climb on extreme rock a sporting spirit is a prerequisite . . . it is not climbing 'by fair means' to carry on using all available aids." He has initiated "a small agricultural project in South Tyrol" that is run on ecological principles. "It is important that we leave all areas which we visit as we find them," he writes near the end. "Deserts and mountains are a catalyst for our humanity." He concludes with a strongly-urged tribute to Tomo Česan, whose solo first ascent of Lhotse's South Face embodies what Messner most admires: a solitary achievement, accomplished with great risk and in fine style.

Adding to the book's attraction is its excellent production by The Mountaineers. The text, like the many photographs, both black-and-white and color, is on glossy paper, and the signatures are sewn. This volume is meant to last on your shelves.

STEVEN JERVIS

Un Pionero de Bariloche: Otto Meiling. Vojslav Arko. Bavaria y Cía., Bariloche, Argentina, 1991. 125 pages, 58 black-and-white illustrations, 6 sketch-maps. Paperback.

Sitting at the gates of Argentinian Patagonia, Bariloche (population: 100,000) is the only important town in the entire Andes that lives for winter and mountain sports. Its Club Andino Bariloche (4000 members) is by far the largest in Latin America. It was founded in August 1931 by four residents of the town, of which the German Otto Meiling (1902-1989) was one. This book is his biography. While containing at the same time a parallel story of the Club Andino Bariloche itself, the work also covers a good part of Patagonian mountaineering history. Meiling and club members took part in the first ascents of San Valentín (3876 meters), highest in the southern Andes, of Balmaceda (2035 meters), attempted Paine in 1957, explored the valleys of northeastern Patagonia and pioneered rock routes around Bariloche itself. Author Arko portrays him as a rather eccentric person, a hermit and a thinker, who in the last years of his life chose to live in isolation in a hut perched on a high place. Having been besides a youth leader and one of the founders of Argentinian skiing, he left an imprint on the succeeding generations. The biography, well illustrated and straightforwardly narrated, represents a unique book in South American mountaineering: it is the very first biography of an *andinista*, and a good one at that.

EVELIO ECHEVARRÍA

Shawangunk Rock Climbs. Dick Williams. The American Alpine Club Press. New York, 1991. Volume One: *The Trapps*. 346 pages. 55 black-and-white photos. \$25.00. Volume Two: *The Near Trapps*. 218 pages. 28 black-and-white photos. \$20.00. Volume Three: *Sky Top*. 196 pages. 38 black-and-white photos. \$20.00.

Much has changed in the Gunks since Williams' last guide appeared in 1980. For one thing, there have been two editions of another guide to the area. For another, the crowds that throng the Trapps on any given weekend dwarf the relatively small population of climbers who used the region twelve years ago. And of course, there are a few more routes; well over a thousand now.

The Gunks lend themselves to verbal description rather than topo format, and because of their detail and explicitness, the guide comes in three volumes: