BOOK REVIEWS

The book is divided into four basic sections—Goals: transforming dreams into realities through personal vision; Preparations: pushing the limits of equipment, film and technique; Journeys: merging visions with realities; and Realizations: communicating your world view through photography.

When not preoccupied with being judgmental about other photographers or too self-centered about his own talents, Rowell shares some astute observations as well as practical, easily understood technical advice on taking better photographs. He defines adventure photography not as being the action or adventure itself but as the adventure of active visual exploration, a process that is more mental than physical. He makes an astute comment on the oft heard lament: “If I were there, I could have taken that picture.” Rowell knows that this is simply wishful thinking as shown by his own observations of workshop participants working in the same area who always turn out markedly different images! Rowell makes considerable effort in communicating the need for “connecting internally.” To photograph otherwise is equivalent to looking without seeing, or conversely seeing without looking. He also makes a great deal of spiritual connections. Interestingly, I found that many of his images had a “staged” feel to them, a feeling that did not help me connect with his spiritualism, but one image in particular did stand out as inspirational: Kailas in western Tibet. This will stay with me—for me, a measure of whether the image succeeds or not.

Technical insights and advice are abundant and include such topics as the use of strobes, graduated neutral density filters, advantages of various focal-length lenses, hyperfocal depth of field and perspective control especially for climbing photography. Here again, his writing skills complement his knowledge nicely, communicating the subject matter that is easily readable as well as understandable.

Photography is, for me, a visual medium, and sometimes more photographs and fewer words work more effectively. Of course one of the functions of this book is “how to,” but I still can’t help but wish there were more images that stayed with me. The verbal articulation of his vision is well executed, but the visual proof of this vision is lacking in the book. His essays are those of a good storyteller, traveler and adventurer. When he stays within this role, his insights and recollections are at times brilliant, always delightful. When he reaches outside this domain into the role of photo critic taking on the likes of Frederick Evans in a condescending tone, he ventures out into water over his head.

TONY DECANEAS


The mail has just arrived. Harish Kapadia has graciously sent me a copy of his new book. I am swamped with work, trying to get this Journal to the printers. I haven’t a moment, but I must show respect for my fellow editor, the Editor
of the Himalayan Journal, by at least leafing through some pages. Now it is some hours later and I have been unable to put it down. Not only is Harish a most competent mountain chronicler, he is also a distinguished mountaineer and, what is rarer in this day and age, a noted explorer of the less known mountain ranges of the Himalaya, in particular in India. In the past 30 years, he has climbed and trekked in some of the most remote valleys of Sikkim, Kumaon, Garhwal, Kinnaur, Spiti, Lahul, Zanskar, Ladakh and the East Karakoram. He has arranged his experiences and adventures by region, rather than chronologically, which will make it easier for one not familiar with each region to follow the theme. It was a great pleasure to read his vivid descriptions of places which I had personally visited. The many maps are of the greatest value, not only to the casual reader, but also to the climber intent on following his footsteps into fascinating, remote regions.

Harish writes with such skill that he holds your attention throughout. Not only is valuable mountaineering history recorded here; he relates accidents, deaths, personal injury and agony, along with the joys and triumphs that his life dedicated to the mountains have brought to him. He recounts the history of remote valleys, their legends, culture. For me, I am particularly interested in his explanation of the names of many of the mountains, for mountain names always reveal so much about beliefs and culture of mountain people. For him, mountaineering is a way of life, always done in “good style.” Those who have climbed with him have included many of the best Indian mountaineers as well as renowned foreigners. They have found him a delight, whose sharp, yet gentle, sense of humor shines through in the pages of this book.

This a book for both the active climber and the armchair mountaineer.

H. Adams Carter


What has been prominently missing in the profuse literature of the history of attempts to climb Everest is a compendium of the essence of these climbs, many told in the words of those who made them. With the publication of Mount Everest—70 Years, Peter Gillman has remedied this omission in a manner grandly befitting the subject. In a coffee-table format book of breath-taking graphic beauty, he has excerpted the climbers’ own stories with an editorial focus on the human side of this epic history of three generations of climbers.

Most histories of Everest are third-person interpretations. What gives Gillman’s work its distinction is that it is comprised almost entirely of firsthand accounts. These include a startling kaleidoscope of raw sentiments—sentiments that are desperate, exultant, grief-stricken, eccentric, oft cantankerous or crude, and reflect the momentary moods and personalities of climbers under great stress.

Gillman places unobtrusive editorial observations in captions of photo-