however, was barely hurt; Joe resumed his role of smashed-up survivor. Once more, in an eerie repeat of Siulá Grande, he was lowered down a snow slope with a serious injury.

Simpson is less reticent than most climbers about his life outside the mountains. There is a welcome chapter on his Greenpeace activities, and half a dozen mentions of his girlfriend. She even shows up in a photograph, poking her tongue in Simpson's ear at a post-Pachermo celebration. Joe is grinning, beer glass and lighted cigarette in hand. The book has the nervy humor of the survivor. I recommend particularly the vivid account of a ghastly van ride up the Karakoram Highway with a strung-out Pakistani driver. Throughout the book Simpson reproduces human speech with the authority of a good dramatist.

Like *Touching the Void*, this book is written with introspective conviction. Be prepared for the occasional outburst of doom-hung philosophy, with allusions to Sartre, and poetry of Siegfried Sassoon and Christina Rossetti. And be ready to laugh, for Simpson has a saving sense of humor. The dominant mood, however is in the title of the first chapter, "Fear is the Key." I know of no mountaineering writer better than Simpson at conveying this emotion. Look at the photographs of him and his partner after a night hanging from the precarious rope handrail on the Bonatti Pillar, after their bivouac ledge had broken loose, shredding their climbing ropes as it went. "Fear shows in their eyes," the photo caption needlessly reads. *This Game of Ghosts* is testimony to what those eyes have seen.

STEVEN JERVIS

Camp 4: Recollections of a Yosemite Rock Climber. Steve Roper. The Mountaineers, Seattle, Washington, 1994. 255 pages, black-and-white photos. $24.95.

Read this book. It's funny. Touching. Revealing. Named after the famous Yosemite Valley campground, *Camp 4* is a chronicle of rock climbing in Yosemite Valley during the "Golden Era," from 1933 to 1971. The author, Steve Roper, transports us to the era with detailed renderings of climbs, characters and conversations, as well as with perceptive and understated black-and-white photographs. He pulls out the best and worst of the time and place, the noble and farcical, the juvenile and tragic. Then he surprises us by going beyond the chronicle. Roper shakes out essence and grit for any climber with half a heart who was or is young, crazy, limber and passionate, and for whom walls devoid of routes beckon like a goddess.

Using personal recollection, letters, articles and interviews, Roper portrays climbers as a vivid blend of foibles, talent and drive:

- Royal Robbins was aloof with a "measured speech pattern" and "perfect bearing." He surrounded himself with "yes men." And he appeared all the more removed next to the Camp 4 crowd given to "laughing outlandishly,

gesturing, shouting, drinking, farting." He climbed not so much for love but in response to an "unrelenting demon inside" and soloed because of "the ego" and "to prove something." But the same self-centered man rappelled 700 feet down the snow-plastered south face of Half Dome to rescue Harding and Rowell. At night.

- Mark Powell once was overweight and "furiously" smoked cigarettes, then reversed course, got fit and passionate and became a Valley star with "angular face and sparkling, ultra-blue eyes" radiating charisma few could resist.
- Layton Kor paced like a lunatic, "chased women," told filthy jokes with "childlike glee." At the same time he climbed like an unstoppable machine.
- Warren Harding drove flashy cars, and drank jug wine. He carried out publicity stunts, seiged and over-bolted. But by sharp eye, sheer force of will and abandon he created stunning lines such as Washington Column's East Face and Dawn Wall, the latter involving "some of the hardest nailing" ever done, according to the nailing expert, Robbins. And in an act of heroism, Harding gave up all his precious water supply to Chuck Pratt and Yvon Chouinard on the fifth dehydrating day on Mount Watkins.
- Roper himself climbed the Lost Arrow spire solo in spite of his paralyzing fear because his girl friend "might refuse to mate that night with a known coward." And in the same high flying mood he "ran up Royal Arches alone in less than an hour, mostly unroped." For all his skill and speed, he lost sleep before every hard climb, and later found many hard men suffered the same plight.
- One of the best free climbers of the era, Frank Sacherer, tended toward "arrogance and recklessness." His temper was so fierce and "legendary," Roper envisions him shaking his fist at his partner or God amidst his death throes on the Grandes Jorasses.
- Among the few saints or near saints, Tom Frost, Mike Sherrick and Chuck Pratt, the best of them, Pratt, appears to have been beset by deep quandaries about reasons for it all. On Ribbon Fall, he said, "I could climb for a million years and still not know why I do it . . . why am I here?" But such quandary never kept him from creating some of the most fearful first ascents done in the period.

Roper's account and characterizations make the era come alive. In fresh, frank prose, Roper reveals the factions and cliques and abundant stupid behavior. Northern and southern California climbers stayed in separate parts of the campground. Northerners regarded southerners as too clean, polite and square. Climbers shoplifted at the local grocery store, stole into church to sleep, overstayed camping limits. Roper himself once brought part of the skull of a dead climber into the coffee shop to shock companions.

And for every juvenile or petty tale, Roper gives us one incredible, pathetic or tragic. Roper tells us, for instance, that all the climbing deaths in the sixties

came not during the bang of climbing but the whimper of rappelling. Yet at the same time, he shows us how moving and maddening were some of the whimpers. Jim Madsen rappelled from the top of El Capitan to rescue Pratt and Chris Fredericks, only to pop off the end knot and crash 2000 feet to his death. Jim Baldwin was so defeated in love he apparently lost concentration and rappelled off the end of his rope. Penny Carr asked Roper to take her up to Sickle Ledge so she could "untie and jump off." Steve refused but Penny took her life another way sometime later: sucking a hose from the tailpipe of her Plymouth. Along the way, Robbins climbed the Leaning Tower in a storm, alone with retreat impossible. By such an array and juxtaposition of feats and follies, deaths and disjoints, Roper constructs a realistic collage of the good, terrible, worthy and absurd, all of what was, and probably still is, Valley climbing.

Camp 4 reminds us nothing about climbing is new under the sun, and much in the sun's glow is not very golden. For instance, "tricksters" are not modern phenomena; nor is blatant if not ugly competition. Both were in evidence as early as 1946. In that year, Salathé, by tedious and admirable aid climbing, had worked his way to within 30 feet of the top of the Lost Arrow, and undoubtedly would have finished the climb first had not the tricksters acted. On Labor Day, Anton Nelson, Fritz Lippman, Jack Arnold and Robin Hansen tossed a weighted line over the summit of the Lost Arrow to set up the finish on the blank top. In so doing, they proudly and purposefully beat John Salathé to the finish. Salathé contemptuously dismissed the climb as a "rope trick" and said the original ascent employed the "help of the devil." Hmm, maybe not such golden days after all.

There is a sneak punch at the end of *Camp 4*, a haunting message not obvious until the read is done. It hovers in some of the reflections at the end of the book about the closing of the period, and especially in the captivating Glen Denny photos of Jim Bridwell, Frank Sacherer, Layton Kor, and the author with Eric Beck. It is not simply a sense of days gone by in the simple and telling black and whites. Nor is it the passion or innocence or wonder or certainty or carefree ways in those faces going to dust or gone already.

Rather, the haunt is in the passing of an age. An entire way of being, seeing, thinking forever gone. To view Yosemite walls with the trepidation of not knowing if they could be climbed by any means, because the means were paltry and evolving. To be wholly surprised or appalled by the newest technology twist instead of expecting it or something like it or something better. To look across a flock of half empty tables in Camp 4 and know the face of every climber and every climb they have done. To share within that narrow and oddball community your deepest beliefs, desires, hopes and hates, and feel the intimate, hot ricochet of looks, lies, boasts, jokes, plans and defeats. To have no idea what your future and the future of climbing will bring—and not to care. To sit in bivouac maybe the only one that night in the entire Valley. Swept in the wonder of the separate way it was. Utterly outside the understanding and sympathy of about every other man and woman in the country save the ragged ring of climbers. Utterly free. Utterly spent.

And so, thanks to Roper, we are left to feel the immerse joy and profound sadness of our fleeting dumb luck. The luck to lust for good walls and move over them, toned, tan, holding tightly to a vague, yet so bright, glimmer of meaning. Does anything in life compare to it?

Get the book. Savor the wacky, tall and weird feats, the moving feast of characters, the delicious detail of so many routes and motives revealed, the onslaught of images, the bundle of revelations, joys and disasters. Then reflect on it all and rediscover why you climbed or still climb or will climb again.

TOM HIGGINS

We Aspired: The Last Innocent Americans, Pete Sinclair. Utah State University Press, Logan, Utah. 1993. 239 pages.

As a twenty-three-year-old climber in 1959, Pete Sinclair was quoted in *Time* magazine: "You can't describe climbing to people. They don't have anything to compare it with." Nonetheless, his *We Aspired; the Last Innocent Americans* describes climbing about as well as can be done.

Sinclair's memoir begins with his ascent of the south face of Denali in 1959, then recounts summers of rescue work in the Tetons during the sixties. But it would be an oversimplification to say that this is what the book is *about*. Sinclair is writing about his life during this time. As such, the book probably has more in common with a coming-of-age story like *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* than with *Annapurna* (which incidentally Sinclair cites as a "text of moral instruction"). Although every autobiographical narrative about climbing can be said to be about the writer during a period of time, Sinclair's version is distinguished by the honesty and humility evident in his introspection, the generosity of his portraits and the discipline of his prose.

In most climbing books, the climbing is central; what it might mean, if anything, is often tacked on, hastily, it would seem. In other words, larger meanings seem to come as after-the-fact rationalizations. Sinclair doesn't *tell* us what events mean, as in the formulaic "climbing leads to personal growth." Instead, he *shows* us how for him this leap has been accomplished. One chapter opens: "We have precious times when we glimpse the trajectory of our lives, when we are free enough from the nudge of things done and the tug of things to do to have a gravity-free moment of lucidity about what we are up to." This must describe the space from which Sinclair's whole book arises, and also suggests the shortcomings of other works about climbing, which often feel as if their *raison d'être* is to "professionalize" climbing for the writer.

Sinclair recalls his and Gary Hemming's long talks about what "I wanted and Hemming was going to demand" from life:

> We weren't going to go through life looking respectable and feeling lousy. We weren't going to work hard and obey orders with no purpose other than becoming an American consumer. We weren't going to be managed or managers.