

*Around the Roof of the World.* Edited by Nicholas and Nina Shoumatoff. The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1996. 23 chapters, 23 drawings, and 16 colored plates. Notes, index, 227 pages. Hard cover. \$29.95.

This fine book by American Alpine Club members Nicholas and Nina Shoumatoff contains 23 chapters concerning mountains and mountain peoples within the vast regions of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, the Alai and Trans Alai Mountains, the Pamirs, Hindu Kush, Hunza (in Pakistan), Ladakh, and Everest. The authors, who know Russian, have climbed and traveled in the high Pamirs and in four of the new Russian republics. Four chapters were written in English, including one by Heinrich Harrer on Tibet, while 18 chapters have been translated into English by the authors, three from French and 13 from never-before-translated Russian originals.

Most Americans know little about Russian mountains or Russian climbers, and have much to learn. Russian climbers tell of first ascents of the great Korzhenevskaya, Pobeda Peak, and Victory Peak, while a well-known botanist records a difficult trek across 600 kilometers of mountainous Tadjikistan. Outchinnikov, a famous Russian climber, describes the Russian first ascent of Mt. Everest, which he led, and tells of witnessing the unfortunate deaths of the British climbers Noyce and Smith in the Pamirs in 1962.

American travelers, climbers, and general readers will find much of interest in this unusual and informative book.

ROBERT H. BATES

*Alaska Ascents.* Edited by Bill Sherwonit. Alaska Northwest Books, Seattle, 1996. 295 pages. \$16.95.

For those interested in Alaska in particular and mountaineering history in general, *Alaska Ascents*, a compilation of 17 stories written by climbers who could serve as a Who's Who of Alaska mountaineering (Washburn, Beckey, Cassin, Krakauer, Roberts, Kennedy, Waterman, and Robbins, to name a few) is a "must buy." All of Alaska's great mountain ranges are captured, and Sherwonit has done an excellent job in selecting accounts of some of the most significant climb. He has also culled excerpts from original publications. Some of the most noteworthy climbs done in the Wrangell-St. Elias Range, the Coast Range, the Chugach Range, the Alaska Range, and the Brooks Range are included. Reading it, one can't help but come away with a real appreciation of the kind of mountaineering adventure Alaska has to offer. No wonder the book won the Banff Mountain Book Festival 1996 Jury Award.

Having been a climber and a student of mountaineering literature for almost 30 years, I discovered that I had read many of these articles before (most a long time ago), but the quality in the writing and the spirit of adventure contained in each chapter made reading them again as much fun as the first time. For me, though, reading accounts of the less well-known climbs, and by authors not often encountered in the current stream of literature, gave the most pleasure.

The book begins with a masterpiece in mountaineering literature, Filippo de Filippi's colorful, spellbinding 1900 account of the Duke of the Abruzzi's first ascent of Mt. St. Elias. The selected chapters reveal the excitement of climbing what was then believed to be North America's highest peak. This account is followed by the story of Dora Keen's first ascent of 16,523-foot Blackburn, remarkable not only for Keen's vision and tenacity, but for the fact that she was a woman from Pennsylvania pursuing an interest dominated by men. She chose to attempt