

equaled her own; many of those partners were indeed male. But Bev's words on the issue to the *Times* reporter indicate that her own perspectives on gender were far more complex and less polarizing than Zim's are.

Zim seems angered, and yet at the same time a little too pleased, that Bev "earned the right to stay and climb" in the "Boys' Club," a contradiction that privileges the very male domain that angers Zim, as well as undervaluing the women who chose to participate in it. These sentiments may be acceptable on their own—given that the world of climbing has historically been a masculinized environment, and given that Bev Johnson's accomplishments were indeed extraordinary for an American woman at that point in U.S. climbing history. What is inexcusable is Zim's apparent need to objectify and trivialize the women who ventured into that domain: she describes one great woman athlete merely as an "athletic blonde," and employs diminutive phrases like "the little engine that could," and "rock nymph" to characterize Bev Johnson herself.

Nevertheless, Zim deserves credit for her fine documentation of Bev Johnson's remarkable and historically noteworthy life, particularly her well-chosen selection of Bev's letters, which were written to her family during her travels around the globe. These writings describe Johnson's encounters with the rain forests of the Amazon, the Antarctic ice cap, and even the Afghanistan-Russian war as filmed by Bev and her husband Mike Hoover. The letters demonstrate the wit and verve of a Bev Johnson that no biographer could ever duplicate, and convey the conflicts and confusions she experienced about continuing to live the nomadic life of a climber versus settling down into something more conventional.

Ultimately, Zim warrants applause for harnessing the subject's compelling and complex emotional life in a book that, like all climbing books, runs the risk of presenting a very one-dimensional look at its subject as climber. *View from the Edge* is brave in this sense, even tackling prickly and private issues like infertility and abortion. Because the reader is provided with such intimate glimpses of Bev Johnson's life, the final chapter describing her death in the infamous Ruby Mountains helicopter crash becomes all the more jarring. If one can get past the gender bulldozing as well as the atrocious typographical errors left behind by a neglectful editor, there is a genuine and well-rounded story of a spirited adventurer worth telling our daughters and sons about.

AMY IRVINE

*Carnets du Vertige*. Louis Lachenal. Editions Guérin: Chamonix, 1996. Profusely illustrated with black-and-white photographs, maps, sketches. 378 pages. 324 French francs.

Michel Guérin, a new Chamonix-based editor specializing in mountain books, has printed an edition of Lachenal's original *Carnets du Vertige*. This edition tells a greater, more intimate, more detailed story than the earlier published version, which was much-condensed for reasons the following review will illuminate.

In this edition the accounts of Lachenal's early years remain unchanged, but we discover many new words and feelings regarding his Annapurna ascent. We learn that all team members had to sign a contract before leaving for Nepal; in fact, the *Fédération Française de la Montagne* (FFM) owned all the rights to photographs and writing—and nobody was allowed to speak publicly about the expedition except the team leader, Maurice Herzog, under the supervision of Lucien Devies (then president of FFM). Rebuffat was even searched for rolls of film on the way back home by Marcel Ichac.

Other previously unknown stories also emerge here. On the final push, Herzog and Lachenal rope together (why? Lachenal was Terray's regular team-mate). When they encountered really bad conditions the controversy occurred: should they go up or down? Herzog wanted to go up (it was his day); Lachenal wanted to go down (his feet were freezing). But there was no way Lachenal would let Herzog continue upward, alone, in such terrible conditions. Were Herzog to continue alone and never return (as was probable), nobody would forgive Lachenal. Therefore, his choices were these: continue up with Herzog and lose his feet, or go down alone and in defiance of the rule of the mountain guide—that one does not abandon the client. Lachenal's choice was frightening and his words, "The French youngsters do not own my feet," proved wrong and bespoke the tragedy that followed. In fact, Herzog's decision was made in error, and Lachenal paid the price. Lachenal realized at that moment that his career as a climber was taking a sharp turn to nowhere—that he would never be the same.

A few years ago, upon meeting Marcel Schatz, he let me know how disappointing the Annapurna experience, with the tremendous stress the team members were under and the negligible return for his efforts toward the expedition, had been for him. The same feelings were expressed in Lionel Terray's *Conquistadors of the Useless* and in the recent Rebuffat biography, *Une Vie pour la Montagne*, by Yves Ballu. Having experienced many years of frustration during World War II, these climbers had every expectation of enjoying the accomplishments of the expedition, but that was not to be the case. Almost all of the team members wrote their stories on small carnets, but, tied up by the FFM, these were preciously stored at home.

This book is marvelous and beautifully made, with many photographs enlightening the writing (always the case in a Michel Guérin edition\*). Lachenal's words here are sure; there's no cheating, and no blah-blah. Even if the royalties had been paid to Lachenal's widow, the previous editions of Lachenal's carnets had actually been rewritten by Gerard Herzog (Maurice's brother) under the supreme guidance of Lucien Devies. Lachenal's original notes would have been much too rough and considered a poor influence upon the emerging generation of young French climbers whom it undoubtedly would have influenced.

At the time of the Annapurna expedition, the French had never been to Everest, and the success of the expedition was considered essential to the reputation of French climbers in the international climbing community. As the first 8000-meter peak to be climbed, this expedition opened the door to the future. Despite poor equipment and lack of medical knowledge of high-altitude and physiological problems, Lucien Devies wanted a perfect expedition with a perfect conclusion. These goals were almost achieved—but the individual amputations were an awfully high price to pay for the success of the team.

What is marvelous about this Lachenal book, and what was totally unknown but to a few relatives of the climbers, is the untold story behind a great adventure. I am sorry we had to wait so long for the true story. All around us we can see the damage done by false information. We have an obligation to tell our children the truth of our days. We don't have to be afraid of it.

PATRICK BARTHE

\*Guérin has also published a very elegant, lavishly illustrated, French language edition of Steve Roper's *Camp 4: Recollections of Yosemite Rockclimber*.—D.S.