

severity of the storm.

When he returned from the rescue, his daughters, six and eight, bombarded him with questions about it and its aftermath: three men dead, one of them, Kelly James, leaving four children behind. The author answered them simply and directly. “The mountains are not necessarily dangerous,” I say to them. “You just have to learn to be careful. You have to respect nature and the mountain.”

There is much distilled wisdom in that answer. Moments like this give the book its authenticity and poignancy. You come away impressed with Van Tilburg’s knowledge, practicality, sensitivity, and appreciation for the pleasures as well as the dangers of mountaineering, convinced that he’s the kind guy you’d want to call if you ran into trouble in the mountains.

NICHOLAS O’CONNELL

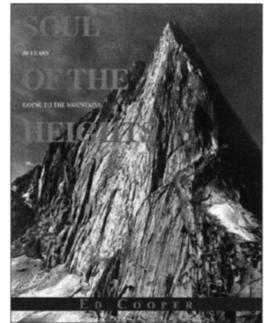
Soul of the Heights—50 Years Going to the Mountains. ED COOPER. GUILFORD, CT: FALCON PRESS, 2007. 224 PAGES. \$39.95.

Ed Cooper’s *Soul of the Heights* is a beautiful collection of photographs and stories spanning his 50-year “vision quest” in the mountains. Beside offering a portfolio of magnificent images, it is a work of historical merit, especially of the Pacific Northwest climbing scene that helped shape American mountaineering.

Although Cooper’s name is long-familiar to those who read photographic credits in calendars, postcards, and magazines, it is probably a measure of your longevity as a mountaineer if you remember him as a climber, much less as one of the most prolific alpinists of his generation. Herein, however, lies the book’s greatest surprise. From the moment he climbed Mt. Rainier at age 16, he recalls, “I realized that mountains would be my *raison d’être*.”

Cooper’s legacy as a climber, although it lasted scarcely a decade, is noteworthy. Between 1953 and 1963 he may have accomplished more first ascents than anyone but Fred Beckey, with whom he sometimes shared a rope. While still a teenager, he graduated from mass ascents of prominent Northwest volcanoes, led by the Mazamas or the Mountaineers, to climbs up ever-more-difficult routes with smaller groups of friends and new acquaintances—many of whom became pillars of the Cascades climbing community. In the summer of 1955, when he was just 18, he climbed most of the major volcanoes stretching between mounts Baker and Shasta, including a difficult route on Rainier and six ascents of Mt. Hood. Thereafter he kept upping his ante, sometimes solo. The list of his achievements is impressive, including the second ascent of the West Buttress of Denali; new routes in the Bugaboos; the Grand Wall of the Chief near Squamish, British Columbia; the horrifying then-forbidden Willis Wall on Rainier, and finally, his first ascent of the Dihedral Wall on El Capitan, which was only the fifth ascent of the Capitan, and the first by a “Valley Outsider.”

Cooper’s love of photography predated his passion for climbing, beginning in high school. Starting with his very first climb, he carried simple 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ by 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ format cameras, larger than those carried by most, and he returned with striking images of the mountain environments he loved. Although he was slow to publish, these were part of an evolving “master plan” that would shape the rest of his life and forever limit his ability to “get a real job.” Over time he augmented his 2 $\frac{1}{4}$



equipment with larger formats, inspired in part by Ansel Adams, a great influence on his work. In turn Cooper's own mastery of the medium inspired many other young mountain photographers beginning their careers in the late sixties and early seventies, including myself. Even 40 years after viewing some of his first photo essays in the Sierra Club's legendary *Ascent*, I still recall my own astonishment at his skill working with light, contrast, and detail.

Not surprisingly, Cooper's photography is the best part of *Soul of the Heights*, rich in magnificent shots, both in black and white and in color, which eventually became a more saleable medium for him. Many of these images correspond directly to adjacent text in the 22 chapters, and others are clustered into three portfolios in which he chose pictures primarily for their aesthetic majesty. My favorites are his black and whites, some of which rank right up there with a few captured by Adams. With notable exceptions, however, I don't think his color images fully measure up. Similarly, Cooper's landscapes are generally more powerful than his actual climbing pictures. While his landscapes transcended the standards of his time, his pictures of people in action were outpaced by others, including Galen Rowell. In that respect the action images in his book are more powerful for their historical significance than their aesthetic beauty. I suspect, however, that even Cooper would acknowledge this, and it does not reduce from the visual majesty of his work. Simply put, at a time when climbing photography began leaping to new levels, he turned his keen eyes to the landscapes that dominate *Soul of the Heights*. For those with an interest in technical details, Cooper provides an appendix outlining what camera, film, and lens he used to create each picture, including extensive input about his newfound love of the "digital darkroom" that has helped him either rescue or bring new life to images that had faded over time.

Cooper's extensive text is a readable and compelling autobiography of a young climber and his later struggles as a mountain photographer. He is at his best when he devotes all or most of a chapter to a single mission, such as the weeks he and Jim Baldwin spent puzzling their way up the Chief, a climb that created traffic jams similar to those of Warren Harding's first ascent of El Capitan. His storytelling is similarly good in describing rigors on the Willis Wall, where he and various companions and rivals encountered a gripping mix of intrigue, scarcely tenable danger, and National Park Service bureaucracy. For those interested in a photographic career, the later chapters paint a realistic picture of the rigors of survival in that difficult trade—a period during which Cooper graduated from mountaineering toward "topping" (and often bivouacking on) mountains as a means to create images composed of angles and lighting a non-mountaineer could never achieve.

My only complaint is that Cooper's writing is uneven, the words occasionally not measuring up to his imagery. This is an admittedly tall order, but periodically he falls into half-told, episodic recollections about expeditions, places, and other climbers that leave the reader hanging. This is especially evident in his development of certain characters (although he does a good job with Beckey) and sometimes with his own true motivations. Twice, for example, he fleetingly describes his estrangement from the Yosemite climbing community, summing it up in the following sentences:

"In Chris Jones's book, *Climbing in North America*, he writes that, disgusted with the treatment by local climbers, I retreated back East. This story seems to have been repeated in other publications. The fact is that economic necessity drove me to move. Less than three years later, I returned to the West Coast for good to pursue photography. Had I wished to continue technical climbing, nobody would have driven me away or stopped me." Obviously, there is a

story behind the scenes here, and Cooper should either have told us more, or simply not raised the subject. Similarly, he writes often about his undying love for the mountains—a truth that glows from nearly all his pictures—but in his prose a certain detachment borders on the clichéd.

Nitpicking aside, the photography alone will keep you turning pages and dreaming of new places to explore, photograph, or climb. *Soul of the Heights* tells an entertaining and informative story, especially for those interested in a key evolutionary period of North American mountaineering. It is a worthy addition to any mountain lover's library.

GORDON WILTSIE

Night Driving, Invention of the Wheel & Other Blues. DICK DORWORTH. FOREWORD BY JACK TURNER. LIVINGSTON, MT: FIRST ASCENT PRESS. 2007. 254 PGS. \$25.00.

Dorworth, 1975. As an impressionable twenty-one-year-old living in my native Midwest I was dreaming of making a life in the mountains. Then I read "Night Driving" in *Mountain Gazette*. Within two months my car was loaded, and I was driving into the sunset to make it happen. Okay, maybe I can't claim a one-to-one, cause-and-effect relationship, but Dorworth's influence is clear in hindsight. If "influence" is not quite the right word I'll just say that "Night Driving" made me aware of some of the possibilities.

Now, well over 30 years later, here it is collected in book form, the title essay along with a half dozen others. I was hesitant to revisit it, fearing embarrassment for my former self: the kid who thought this stuff was the real goods might be revealed for the unworldly unread naïve waif that I actually was. I fear returning to Castañeda and Hesse for the same reasons.

In Dorworth's case, I'm happy to say, my fears were unfounded.

Among Dorworth's non-literary mountain deeds: holding the world's record for speed on skis, first person over 105 m.p.h.; his six-month "Funhog" road trip with Chouinard, Jones, Tejada-Flores, and Tompkins, on which they put up the Californian Route on Fitz Roy; and two years later with Robbins, the first ascent of Arcturus on Half Dome. This book is officially categorized as "Memoir: Mountaineering," so we hear the stories of those events in these pages, right? Wrong. Although we do read about driving on the Funhog trip, during the almost 10 pages he devotes to it there's no mention of summiting Fitz Roy. So where's the mountaineering? Where's the skiing?

There are glimpses, of course, but Dorworth is writing about the life that he's made *around* those activities. In his foreword Jack Turner calls "Night Driving" "a memoir of a well-spent epic youth on the ski-racing circuit." Turner, as usual, gets it right, but it's a hard essay to summarize. It's an essay about energy and movement, about velocity, and it embodies those characteristics—thus hard to pin down. "Europe: Fourth Time Around," which, in nearly 70 pages, closes the book, is much the same. Both describe a life to which the mountains and skiing are central, both portray a large cast of characters, succinctly and lovingly. Many of the cast I'd never heard of before: skiers or friends of Dorworth. Others are more familiar, for example the crew of a Bev Clark film, *The Skiers*: Dougal Haston, Mick Burke, Rick Sylvester, Jim Bridwell, Wayne Poulsen, Jr., and Ginger. I've read hundreds of pages about Haston, but Dorworth's

