about House's journey between those disparate states of mind: from blaming to honoring the man who most contributed to success on Nanga Parbat.

House has executed what others envisioned. For example, whose idea was the single-push ascent of the Czech Direct on Denali? While the book does not provide explicit insight, I believe the answer reveals a great deal about the Mark Twight–Scott Backes–House relationship. (Note: on their non-stop 60-hour third ascent of the 9,000-foot Czech Direct, this team cut about nine days off the first ascentionists' time and four off the second ascentionists' time.) Whoever of the three first believed it possible brilliantly envisioned success without the benefit of bivy ledges, or indeed, bivying at all.

One difference between Twight's writing and House's (in this book) is that while Twight challenged his own ideas, House expresses disappointment but little self-doubt. At times it seems that we are reading a re-telling of House's journal, which makes me wonder how the story would have unfolded if he had honored the journal by using its original voice.

Is House simply hooked on the dopamine rush these intense climbs afford? The high that a climber achieves by living through such high-stakes experiences has an addictive quality that makes them incredibly desirable yet ever more difficult to re-create. This possibility becomes evident in House's retelling of his and Rolo Garibotti's one-day accent of Mt. Foraker's Infinite Spur. When that beautiful route went so easily, and they failed to be pushed, House and Garibotti left with both the experience and their relationship somehow diminished.

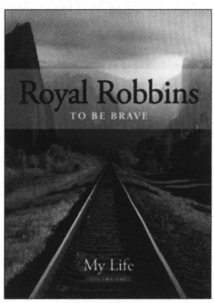
Is the book any good? I think so. Mostly because it is witness to the intense effort and commitment Steve House has brought to the project of building himself into a climber capable of succeeding on the toughest routes in the world. The Acknowledgments section alone makes the book worth purchasing. There we see the man, the authentic emotion, House's character, and the value he places on those most influential to his development as a world-class athlete, alpinist, and man searching for acceptance and meaning.

Whether *Beyond the Mountain* will change others' view of alpinism depends on the era in which one enters the sport. As a teenager I found Messner's *The Seventh Grade* among a pile of library books and was immediately transformed. Desmaison's *Total Alpinism* still makes my palms sweat. Will *Beyond the Mountain* have a similar effect on another young aspirant? Given my late middle-age stage in life, I don't think I can know the answer, but I hope it does.

While he may have failed to answer "why," *Beyond the Mountain* offers a glimpse of an answer through *knowing by doing*. That precept, *knowing by doing,* is rare enough, and we can only hope House will share more in his future work.

Charlie Sassara

***To Be Brave, My Life, Volume 1.* Royal Robbins. Pink Moment Press, 2009. 221 pages. Paperback. $19.95.**



Royal Robbins was the outstanding climber of the Golden Age of Yosemite climbing. More important, he was the most influential. He was probably the first American-born climber to climb 5.9 on this continent. His uncompromising vision of how to approach the great walls, from Half Dome to El Capitan's Nose and later the North American Wall, echo through the decades and speak to climbers to this day.

Less well known is that it was Robbins who triggered the clean-climbing revolution in this country. After a trip to the U.K., Robbins returned home imbued with the ethos of using natural features and chocks to protect rock climbs. Chouinard and Frost immediately understood the implications, applied their design and production genius to improving the chocks available from the U.K., and commissioned Doug Robinson's seminal essay, "The Whole Art of Natural Protection," in the Chouinard Equipment catalog. This was followed by John Stannard, on the East Coast, publishing his brilliant newsletter, "The Eastern Trade." The revolution swept on, but it was Robbins who triggered it.

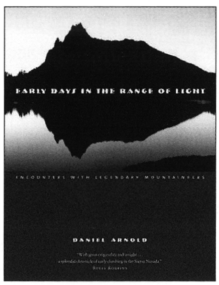
Thus an autobiography by Robbins is a must read for anyone interested in the modern history of American climbing. It helps that it is so well done and consistently engaging.

As a device, Robbins recounts his 1963 solo of Warren Harding's amazing route on the Leaning Tower in Yosemite. His clear descriptions of the technical aspects of the climb are accessible to the non-climber, but are gripping enough to satisfy the most experienced among us. Alone on the wall for days, Robbins looks back on his hardscrabble youth, growing up in post-WWII Los Angeles. Always supported by his long-suffering mother but without a steady father figure, he recounts his youthful adventures, and misadventures, with an uncompromising eye and an amazing memory for detail. His discovery of climbing and his calling gives us a window for understanding his resolute character.

This is the first of a seven-volume undertaking. I look forward to the rest with great anticipation.

JIM MCCARTHY

Early Days In the Range of Light: Encounters With Legendary Mountaineers. **DANIEL ARNOLD. COUNTERPOINT, 2009. 432 PAGES. HARDCOVER. $29.95.**



When it comes to mountaineering literature, California's Sierra Nevada is perhaps the most storied of North American ranges. Not that other mountains lack narratives, but the Sierra seems to have attracted more than its share of gifted chroniclers, among them Clarence King, John Muir, and Francis Farquhar. Now add to this illustrious company the name of Daniel Arnold.

An accomplished climber as well as scholar, Arnold immersed himself for ten years in the history of Sierra mountaineering, reading all the classic texts, from William Brewer's *Up and Down California in 1860-64* to Norman Clyde's essays, as well as the old climbing accounts published in the *Sierra Club Bulletin*. From this veritable massif of alpine material, Arnold identified "the most adventurous climbs made by the most headstrong climbers," then spent four summers re-doing the routes himself, following in the paths of "the climbing ancestors."

Not only did he follow the exact routes of these predecessors, he did it on their terms, leaving at home modern climbing gear and opting instead for vintage equipment. Or no equipment at all. When John Muir made the first ascent of Mt. Ritter in October 1872, he walked 25 miles across rugged high country to reach the peak. Afterward, he walked back the way he came. He wore light clothes and carried only a tin cup, a notebook, and a bundle of bread. Arnold, in retracing Muir's route, did the same, right down to the bundle of bread. At one