El Capitan: Historic Feats and Radical Routes

Daniel Duane

San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 2000

US \$24.95, 143 pages, hardcover

I was nonplussed by Daniel Duane's latest work, *El Capitan: Historic Feats and Radical Routes*. What I thought would be another strong nonfiction book from one of the foremost new writers in the adventure sports genre was a short profile of a handful of climbers in Yosemite's climbing junto.

The 4 chapters span 4 decades and detail a handful of amazing legends: Warren Harding and Royal Robbins defined the 1960s; Jim Bridwell had the 1970s; John Middendorf and Mike Corbett dominated the 1980s; and Scott Burk typified the 1990s. The book highlights Yosemite climbing through these idols but brings neither the personal experience of Duane's climbing (he's ascended El Cap twice) nor the description of the natural world for which his other nonfiction books are noted.

And it left out a lot. Yvon Chouinard was mentioned in passing. Duane doesn't bring to light how El Cap changed Jim Bridwell's life or anything about his life today. Lynn Hill's ascent of The Nose, a magnificent feat for climbing and for women athletes, was only briefly mentioned. And as an aside, nonclimbers may have some difficulty with climbing terms that are not fully defined.

What had potential as a definitive history treatise on Yosemite climbing is a short read on a handful of influential climbing personalities. The beautiful black and white photos add some heft to the book, but it is otherwise not worth the price.

Christopher Van Tilburg
White Salmon, WA, USA