



AAC Publications

The Climbers

By Jim Herrington

THE CLIMBERS. Jim Herrington. The Mountaineers, 2017. Slip-cased hardcover, 189 pages, \$59.95.

When you stand outside, looking to your climbing objective, you study the ridges, the lines defined by the terrain, and you analyze the peak you intend to climb with great patience and longing. I had a parallel experience when I first laid eyes on Jim Herrington's masterpiece of portrait photography, the grand prize and mountaineering history award winner at the 2017 Banff Mountain Book Awards.

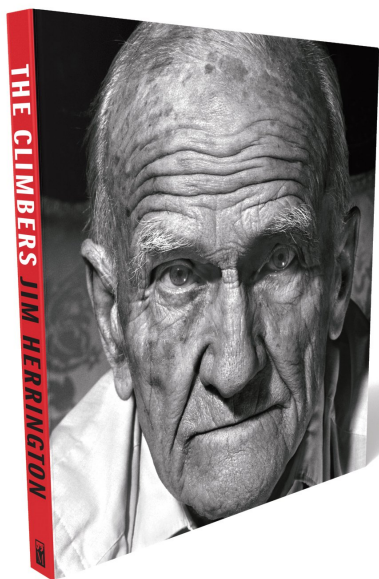
The book comes encased in a black canvas cover with the spine of the book revealing its name, *The Climbers*, in bold red font. I traced my fingers over the outward-facing print, like fingers over a topographic map. The coffee-table book is heavy, and my arms tired while holding it. This is not a book that I wanted to read at a quick pace, like a sport climber racing for the chains. This was a book I wanted to savor and enjoy—I took my time unveiling its rich content, just as an alpinist may do while hiking toward his objective in the mountains. With each page, just like each bend and incline of the trail, I found new rewards and mystery in the folds that lay ahead.

The book's print content is well placed, up front, and is not messy with distractions—simple, clean text, spaced in such a way that it allows the reader to breathe it all in for easy reading. The introductory pages serve as a guide to the importance of the portraits that await, beginning with a timely foreword from Alex Honnold, who is himself a climbing history buff. Herrington reveals the motivation behind his obsession with photographing his heroes, and then the meat of the text is a captivating and educational history penned by climbing luminary and entertaining writer Greg Child. His 42 succinct pages give a comprehensive overview of climbing in the 21st century, offering insight into the characters focused in front of Herrington's soul-revealing lens. The subjects range from the familiar, such as Ament, Beckey, and Robbins, to the lesser known (to North American audiences) such as Euro luminaries Sonia Livanos or Robert Paragot.

As a photographer, I have a lot of respect for Herrington's choice to use the timeless medium of black and white, even though digital photography took hold during his creative odyssey. Herrington's book is a testament to an artist's belief in the power of a photograph as a statement—a picture *is*, or *can be*, worth a thousand words. To understand that comment you must look to Herrington's day job as a celebrity photographer, shooting portraits of greats such as the Rolling Stones and Cormac McCarthy. Instead of resting on those laurels, enjoying weekends in the mountains from his Sierra Nevada home—he is a longtime climber—he shouldered the load and spent his own hard-earned money and free time to research, find, and ultimately travel the world for more than 20 years, capturing real—and at times not the most flattering—photographs of his heroes. The completion of this book illustrates the same grit and tenacity that its featured subjects have embodied in the mountains.

– James "Q" Martin

Images



Article Details

Author	James Martin
Publication	AAJ
Volume	60
Issue	92
Page	356
Copyright Date	2018
Article Type	Book reviews