



## AAC Publications

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### **Some Stories: Lessons from the Edge of Business and Sport**

By Yvon Chouinard

**SOME STORIES: LESSONS FROM THE EDGE OF BUSINESS AND SPORT. Yvon Chouinard. Patagonia Books, 2019. Hardcover, 464 pages, \$45.**

Sometimes a former ropemate makes good so spectacularly that all you can do is rock back on your heels and say, Thanks! Of course we all recognize Yvon Chouinard for his breakthrough climbing. And we might tease his business as Patagucci. No matter. Building great outdoor gear has given my old friend huge leverage to fight the good fight for our suffering environment. Patagonia's latest catalog has hardly any gear for sale. Instead there is page after page of effective activism, starting with an inspired teenager on the cover. Flip it over and the walk-off line is "See You at the Strikes!"

How did that come about? The answer—and a lot of great reading—is found in Chouinard's new book, *Some Stories: Lessons From The Edge Of Business And Sport*. He had already changed the world before we met, by joining Royal Robbins, Chuck Pratt, and Tom Frost as one of Yosemite's "Fab Four," the quartet of visionaries that forged ever more committed lines during the Golden Age of big-wall climbing. Fewer will remember that in 1963 Chouinard spearheaded turning this journal, and the American Alpine Club behind it, toward the future with his seminal article "Modern Yosemite Climbing." It's in here, and it's still an inspiring read.

By his own count, Chouinard has taken part in seven golden ages, so there's a lot of surfing and fly-fishing in here, as well as the ice climbing revolution. The guy's life has had an amazingly broad reach, and he has written grippingly about each of its facets. Extremely poignant is his farewell to Doug Tompkins, "We Lost a Chief." Under the banner "Viva los Fun Hogs," they had rocked Patagonia (the place) by pioneering, with Dick Dorworth, Chris Jones, and Lito Teja-Flores, the California Route on Fitz Roy in 1968. Later, Tompkins spearheaded the hustling of over two million acres of greater Patagonia into new parks, only to die in a kayaking accident that Chouinard survived.

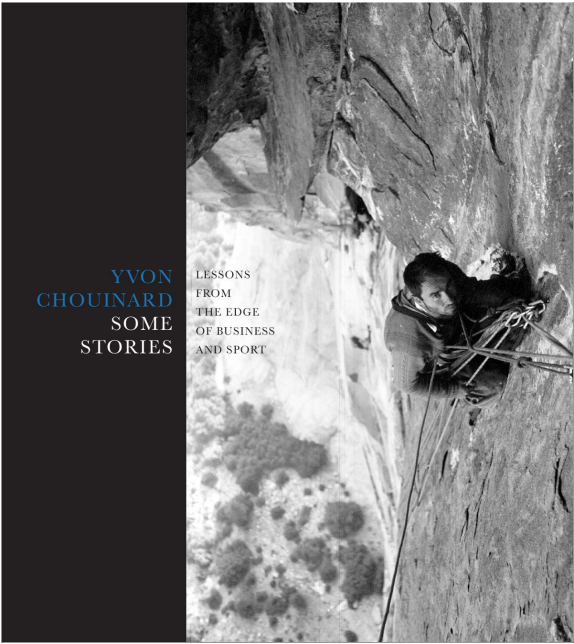
Many of my favorite stories here are previously unpublished tales of growing up in SoCal in the 1950s and starting Chouinard Equipment by forging pitons in "a chicken coop in my parent's backyard in Burbank"—before moving to the iconic Tin Shed, blocks from the Ventura surf. In those years, he writes, "I'd often climb for half a day at Stoney Point in Chatsworth, then go up to Rincon [to surf] the evening glass, and after I'd free dive for lobsters and abalone on the coast between Zuma and the county line. I almost always got my limit of ten lobsters and five abalone."

Reflecting back, Chouinard shows a powerful ability to see, and personalize, the grand sweep of cultural history. "The '50s were the easy years in California. With full employment from the Korean War, we were enjoying all the fruits of the fossil fuel culture. Gas was a quarter a gallon, used cars could be bought for twenty-five dollars, campgrounds were free, and you could easily live off the excess fat of society. Those of us in the counter-cultures of climbing and surfing were, as climber Pete Sinclair said, 'the last free Americans.'"

I don't know whether to thank Chouinard more for the great stories, the advances in so many sports, or for crucial work to help save the planet. And he's not done yet.

– DOUG ROBINSON

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