

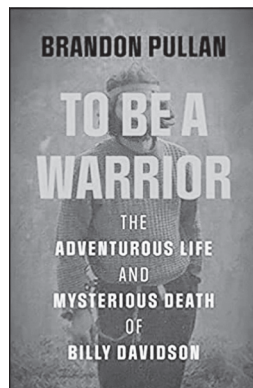
times your right leg hits the ground in 30 seconds, then multiply by four. If you want to experiment with different stride rates, use a metronome track,” they write. “Many elite runners come in at around 180 strides per minute, but keep in mind that your pace at any given time, along with the ever-changing terrain—uphills, downhills, rocks, roots, puddles, mud, stream crossings, and so form—will affect your cadence.”

For the most part, *Trail Running* offers common-sense advice: Don’t overdo training, set realistic race goals, take time off from running every so often, and stay in shape by hiking, swimming, biking, and other activities.

The authors write with well-deserved authority. Mayer, who has written more than a dozen other adventure-related books, has been climbing and trail running in mountain ranges around the world for three decades. He is founder of the tour company Run the Alps and contributing editor for *Trail Runner* magazine. When he’s not in the Alps, he lives within sight of Mounts Adams and Madison in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. He has written often for *Appalachia* and co-wrote the profile series for this journal that became a book: *Mountain Voices* (Appalachian Mountain Club Books, 2012). Metzler, author of several running books, is founder of *Trail Runner* and *Adventure Sports* magazines.

They adhere to the book’s prevailing theme: Keep it fun.

—Steve Fagin



To Be a Warrior

By Brandon Pullan

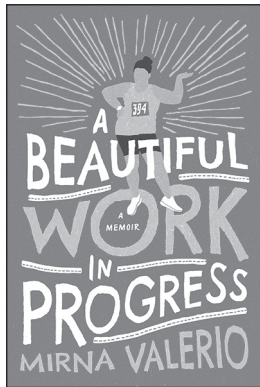
Rocky Mountain Books, 2021, 272 pages.

ISBN 978-1-77160-437-6. Price: \$28 (softcover).

JOURNALIST BRANDON PULLAN PIECES TOGETHER the nomadic life of Canadian adventurer Billy Davidson, who died in 2002. A somewhat mythic figure, “as ephemeral as the wake from his kayak,” according to a profile of him in *Sea Kayaker* magazine from 2005, Davidson grew up in a Calgary children’s shelter, made first ascents on Mount Yamnuska in the Canadian Rockies and on El Capitan in Yosemite National Park, and then trimmed all his belongings to what could fit on a 21-foot-long kayak that he paddled up and down the Salish Sea for several decades. The author relies

heavily on Davidson's diaries, which can be tedious to read, with chapters falling into a rut of "he did this, then this, then this." But given Davidson's place in climbing history and sea kayaking lore, this book seems a worthwhile documentation of the Thoreauvian life he chose to live.

—Stephen Kurczy
Assistant Book Review Editor



A Beautiful Work in Progress: A Memoir

By *Mirna Valerio*

*Grand Harbor Press, 2017, 317 pages including appendix.
ISBN 978-1-5039-4339-1. Price: \$14.95 (paperback).*

IF YOU EVER RUN INTO MIRNA VALERIO—AND if you're a runner, this is a literal possibility—you might recognize her from her social media presence, from REI's film *The Mirnavator*, from her having been chosen 2018 National Geographic Adventurer of the Year, from her feature in *Runner's World*, or from her blog, *Fat Girl Running*. In her mid-40s,

she has completed eleven marathons, fourteen ultramarathons, and at least one Tough Mudder obstacle race. And in this ebullient memoir, she lists some vital personal numbers—speed: 11–13 minute mile; shoe size: 11; height: 5 foot 7 inches; weight: 240 pounds. “I didn't want people to pity me because I was fat,” she writes. “There was no need.”

The first time Mirna ran a mile, it “felt like an asthma attack, a gunshot wound . . . topped with the whipping cream of death.” In other words (though hers are evocative enough), not so easy. She was an adolescent; gifted with a roaming intellect and an operatic soprano. But the mile seemed insurmountable.

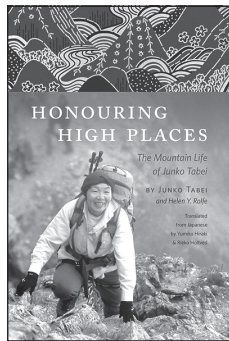
Harder times were to come. Mirna hadn't yet hit the 300 pounds she would reach after becoming a mother and hadn't yet had the episode of chest pain in her early 30s that would lead her to turn her health around. But better times were coming, too. She wasn't yet a music teacher, running coach, NBC celebrity, plus-size model, and cheerer-on of other large women looking to turn their health around. She hadn't started to sign up for the marathons where, to this day, she searches at the starting line for “any Clydesdale/Athena types who might be taking the plunge with me,” or the ultramarathons where

she hallucinates, limps, and meditates her way through 50, 60, 120 miles. Back then, she was an overweight Black girl, just trying to run a mile. Today she has crashed through stereotypes about weight, race, and age.

Reading *Mirna* is like having a 26.2-mile chat (at the back of the race) with someone exuberant, irreverent, occasionally rambling, and admittedly “all over the place, frenetic . . . dipped in different projects, disciplines, and just about anything.” Running brings her focus. “I become the trail and the trail becomes me,” she writes, recollecting each rock, cranny, and mile of just about every trail she has run. They trip her up, drive her crazy, keep her company, and catapult her into joy.

A 300-plus page book is a little like an ultramarathon: it could probably be shorter. But when everything in your 5-foot-7-inch, 240-pound life compels you to share your story—well, length, like weight, is no object.

—*Elissa Ely*



Honouring High Places

By Junko Tabei and Helen Y. Rolfe

Rocky Mountain Books, 2021, 400 pages.

ISBN 978-1-77160-527-4. Price: \$28 (softcover).

“AVALANCHE!” THAT YELL IS A RIVETING START TO *Honouring High Places*, a memoir by Japanese mountaineer Junko Tabei, who was buried alive in May of 1975 when several tons of snow and ice fell onto her Mount Everest campsite. Trapped under the snow for six minutes, she was miraculously pulled from the grave by a Sherpa, banged up but without serious injury. Twelve days later, the 4-foot-9 editor and piano teacher from a poor farming family became the first woman to summit Everest as part of Japan’s first all-women team in the Himalaya, at a time when some Nepalese opposed the idea of *any* woman entering their sacred mountains. In 1992, Tabei became the first female to climb the Seven Summits, the tallest peak on every continent. She died in 2016.

Her memoir seems long overdue. Despite its somewhat dry prose—perhaps because of the English translation from the original Japanese—my palms were sweaty when reading Tabei’s account of navigating through the Khumbu Icefall and up the steep Lhotse Face on Everest. To reduce weight and costs, her team climbed without jumars or other self-arrest devices, even

when crossing deep crevasses and going up icy walls. “Our calves burned and our hands gave way to the bitter cold and intense work of hanging on for dear life,” Tabei writes.

Throughout the book, I was also struck by the supportive role of Tabei’s husband, Masanobu, who had been a mountaineer. In 1968, a year after their marriage, Masanobu lost four toes to frostbite on the Matterhorn, an injury that would prevent him from further mountaineering. He remained fiercely supportive of his wife. Before Tabei departed for her half-year expedition to Everest in 1975, when her daughter was 3 years old, Masanobu exhorted her: “Don’t worry about us. Trust me to provide a good life here in Japan. Focus only on yourself and your team; complete your mission from your heart without regret.” When Tabei returned home, her daughter was wary of the weathered woman standing in the airport. “Noriko, it’s your mom,” Tabei had to tell her daughter, in a moment of understated heartbreak.

Honouring High Places is an honest, unvarnished accounting that adds an important woman’s voice to what, thanks partly to Tabei, is becoming a more gender-inclusive sport.

—Stephen Kurczy



Overexposure

By Chad Sayers

Rocky Mountain Books, 2021, 296 pages.

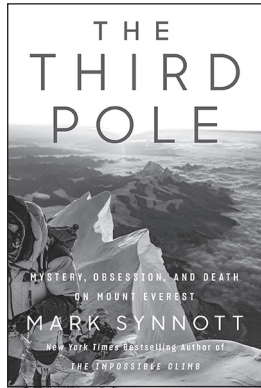
ISBN 978-1-77160-519-7.

Price: \$60 (hardcover).

THE PROFESSIONAL FREESTYLE SKIER
Chad Sayers is perhaps best known for

starring in the gluttonously snowy documentary series *A Skier’s Journey*, which has several hundred thousand views on YouTube. Sayers, who grew up in Vernon, British Columbia, was considered one of the world’s best off-piste skiers when, in 2008, he ditched competitions for the glory, nirvana, and agony of skiing beautiful, dangerous, virgin snow across the world’s biggest ranges. His book is essentially the still-image version of those documentaries, interspersed with short essays by Sayers, who at times comes across as a self-proclaimed ski-shaman tortuously searching for enlightenment as he jets and drives around the world in search of the most badass lines. That said, I couldn’t stop turning the pages.

—Stephen Kurczy



The Third Pole

By Mark Synnott

Dutton, 2021, 448 pages.

ISBN 978-1-5247-4557-8. Price: \$29 (hardcover).

HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I LOOKED UP AT ODELL'S Gully, a 600-foot-tall ice sheet in Huntington Ravine on Mount Washington, without realizing its namesake played a crucial role in fueling the mystery of who was first to climb a major peak on the other side of the world?

A member of the 1924 British Mount Everest expedition, Noel Odell was the last person to see George Mallory and Sandy Irvine alive on their summit push. In the words of Odell, who was observing from far below, the pair was “going strong” within 1,000 feet of the peak, having surmounted a difficult section known as the Second Step on the Northeast Ridge. From there, it would have been a hike to the top.

Odell's sighting has forever fueled speculation that the British summited Everest three decades before Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay made their historic ascent from the Nepalese side. If only there were photographic evidence.

Cue the New Hampshire mountaineer Mark Synnott, who travels around the world in search of that evidence in this new book—a fun, fast, colorful romp from his base in Mount Washington Valley to the Alpine Club archives in London to the bureaucratic slopes of Everest.

Synnott is aided in his quest by a few other eccentric New Englanders. One is historian Tom Holzel, whose Connecticut basement is a veritable Everest archive. On an eight-foot-long map of the mountain's north face, Holzel shows Synnott a tiny blotch where he believes Irvine's body may be preserved along with a century-old Kodak camera that could hold proof of who first stood atop the world's third pole.

Accompanying Synnott is Renan Ozturk, who grew up sailing in Narragansett Bay before finding his footing in the mountains. An accomplished videographer (he worked on and starred in the award-winning film *Meru*), Ozturk signs up to take aerial photographs in the hunt for Irvine.

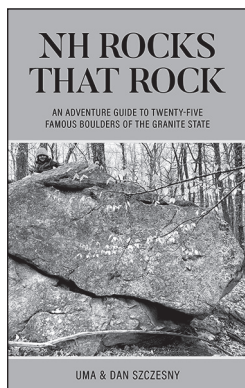
The Third Pole progresses in the vein of *The Lost Explorer* (Simon & Schuster, 1999), in which Conrad Anker told of finding Mallory's body in 1999, and *Into Thin Air* (Villard, 1997), Jon Krakauer's personal account of the 1996

Everest disaster when eight people died. But the stakes are lower in Synnott's book, set in 2019. Of eleven deaths on Everest that season, nine happened on the Nepalese side of the mountain, far from the Tibetan base camp where Synnott was sheltered. Moreover, Synnott's search for Irvine is essentially scuttled by bad weather, red tape, and, potentially, a government conspiracy.

Synnott provides testimonial evidence that Irvine's body may have been secretly whisked off Everest decades ago to safeguard the Chinese Communist Party's official line that the Northeast Ridge was first climbed in 1960 by three Chinese who placed a bust of Mao atop the summit. That point of pride would be undermined if two Brits had completed the route 36 years earlier.

We may never learn the contents of Irvine's camera, but I think there's already a piece of circumstantial evidence that he and Mallory reached the summit, and it's in New Hampshire. A couple years after the duo's disappearance, while Odell was a visiting lecturer in geology at Harvard University (during which time he mentored its newly formed mountaineering club), he made the first ascent of Odell's Gully, then considered the toughest ice climb in New England. One has to wonder: If Odell was able to tame Huntington Ravine, what was a superior climber like Mallory able to achieve on Everest?

—Stephen Kurczy



NH Rocks That Rock: An Adventure Guide to Twenty-Five Famous Boulders of the Granite State

By Uma and Dan Szczesny

Hobblebush Books, 2021, 84 pages.

ISBN 978-1-939449-16-0. Price: \$12 (paperback).

THERE WAS A BOULDER IN THE NATURE CENTER near where I grew up. It was towering and mesmerizing to a little me, and it demanded daring courage; an Everest that could not be scaled often enough or with greater triumph.

When I grew up, somehow the boulder shrank down. These things happen. But leafing through “NH Rocks That Rock” by Uma Szczesny (project progenitor) and her father Dan Szczesny (project scribe), the pleasure of ascent returned. This brief guide—prefaced with an essential question: “What

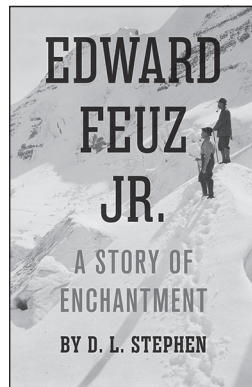
the heck is a rock anyway?”—contains a baker’s two-dozen scalable boulders in New Hampshire. Each has been visited and graded by a 6-year-old climber, surely a unique assessment.

For climbers around Uma’s age, a hiking patch and certificate can be claimed for scaling all 25 rocks. For readers closer to her father’s age, there is a brief geological discussion of the Udden-Wentworth scale, and some scholarly distinctions between conglomerates, glacial erratics, cobbles, and clastics. For any age, there is a list of places where, after a drive or gentle hike, one finds oneself facing boulders with such names as *Nessie’s Humps*, *Ordination Rock*, *Chicken Farmer Rock*, and *Quimby’s Pillow*. Each page comes with GPS coordinates, a description, and a little history or local legend (because in New Hampshire, there is always a story to be told). There are also a few suggestions of what to do around the area afterward because, when all is said and done, how long does it take to climb a rock?

The boulders themselves have lives and stories to tell, too. One weighs 5,000 tons, “the equivalent of 36 blue whales.” Another has its own stone staircase leading to a marble marker from 1862. A third is in the middle of a playground (rock is rock, and technically that counts), and yet another needs a ladder to reach the top.

Here is a topic that has been waiting to be written about for centuries—hidden, you might say, behind a rock. Pack up the children, start up the car. It’s a wonderful family project.

—Elissa Ely



Edward Feuz Jr.

By D. L. Stephen

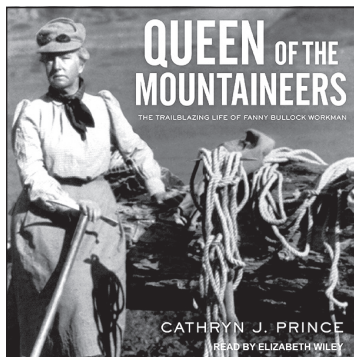
Rocky Mountain Books, 2021, 320 pages.

ISBN 978-1-77160-509-0. Price: \$28 (softcover).

IN 1903, THE TEENAGED MOUNTAIN GUIDE EDWARD Feuz Jr., of Interlaken, Switzerland, joined his father on a 5,000-mile journey over the Atlantic Ocean and across Canada to help establish a recreational alpine industry in Alberta. The federal government had recently completed its transcontinental railroad, and the Canadian Pacific Railway was attempting to entice train passengers to “the Switzerland of America,” replete with a Swiss-themed village called Edelweiss

and authentic Swiss mountain guides. The most prominent of those guides was Feuz, who worked in the Lake Louise area for six decades and made more than 100 first ascents in the Rockies, including of Mount Sir Sandford, the highest peak in the Selkirk Range. In profiling Feuz, author D. L. Stephen mixes history and memoir, drawing from her family's long friendship with Feuz. The best parts of the book are from those recollections, such as when, at the age of 84, Feuz guided the author's family up The Mitre (at the head of the Lefroy Glacier in Banff National Park) and found himself in the middle of a rockfall. Just as a croquet ball-sized rock was about to strike the author's mother on the head, Feuz leaned forward and lunged his ice axe's metal tip at the stone with a quick jab, deflecting the rock and likely saving the woman's life.

—Stephen Kurczy



Queen of the Mountaineers

By Cathryn J. Prince

Chicago Review Press, 2019, 320 pages.

ISBN 978-1-61373-955-6.

Price: \$28.99 (hardcover).

QUEEN OF THE MOUNTAINEERS DOCUMENTS the life of Fanny Bullock Workman in a readable and informative way. Cathryn J. Prince sets Workman's accomplishments in a historical context that gives fuller meaning to the groundbreaking and record setting that drove this great mountaineer. Along the way, we come to gain a picture of the kind of woman Fanny Bullock Workman was.

Prince begins with Fanny's birth in 1859 into a wealthy family. Her father was governor of Massachusetts. She married William Hunter Workman, a doctor, and the two began a life of adventure. Prince is clear that Fanny had no interest in acting the role society intended for her. She was drawn to wild places and succeeded in spending much of her life in them. The couple made their home in Dresden, Germany, avoiding the strictures of their upper-class background. Their son tragically died at 3 years, and their daughter Rachel was educated in English boarding schools.

From Dresden, in the 1890s, the Workmans began their exploring with long-distance bicycle trips: first Algeria; then Spain in a 2,800-mile trip; next a