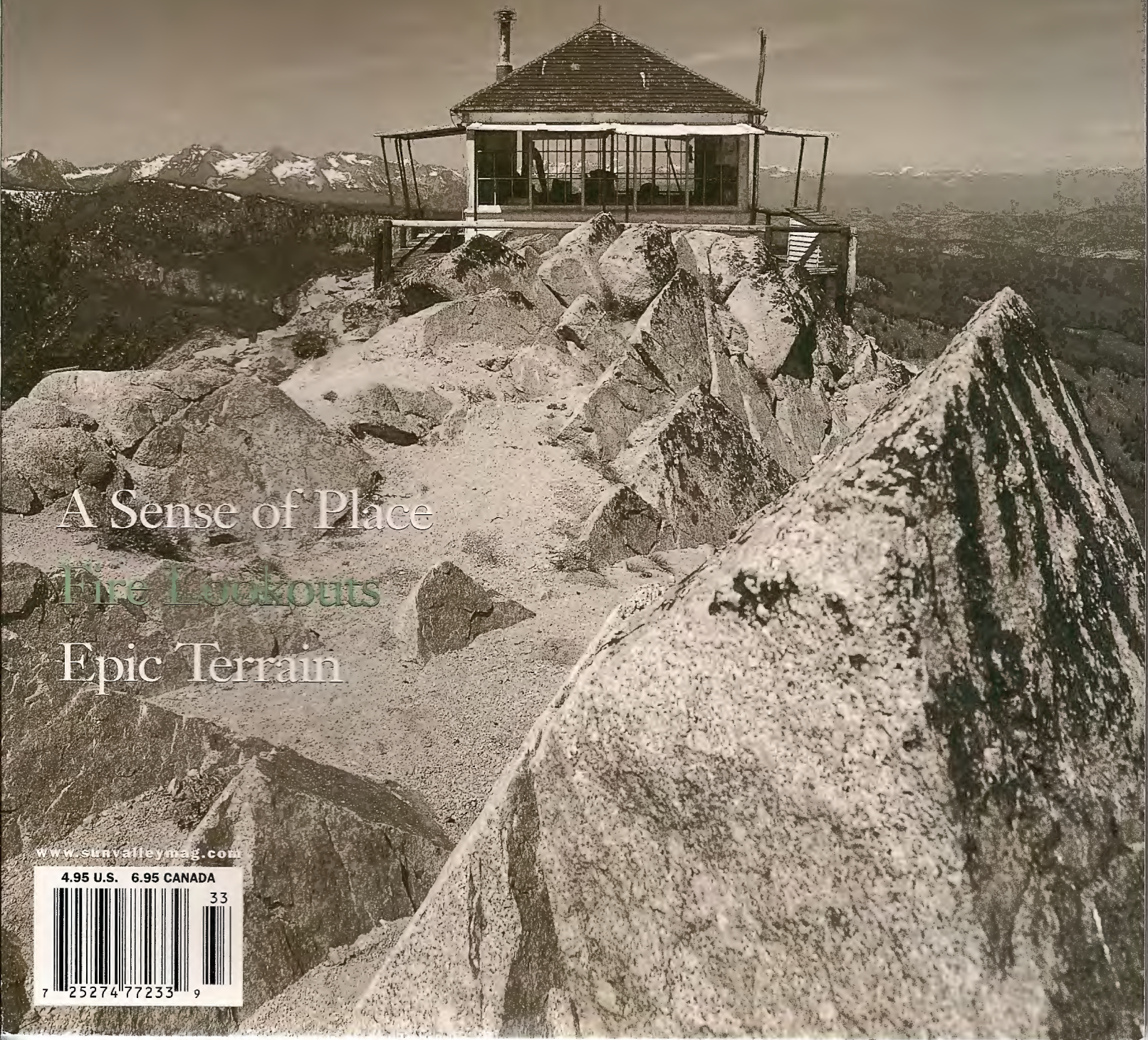


Sun Valley

magazine

Summer/Fall 2003



A Sense of Place

Fire Lookouts

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Richard Odom was delighted to talk about books, mainly because the subject was something other than yoga. Not that he doesn't love teaching yoga, but sometimes, he says, "people identify you so much with one thing, they don't realize you have other interests. For me, reading is definitely one of them."

The "yoga guy" was raised in Daytona Beach, Florida, by parents who were Theosophists (a belief akin to Buddhism and Brahmanism, religious systems that aim at establishing a direct link between the individual soul and the divine principle through contemplation and speculation). For Odom not to have been a reader under these circumstances would have been difficult. Then, as now, he was always surrounded by eclectic reading material; and it was at home, at about age 13, that he ran across the philosophy and practice of yoga and the beginning of a "journey without end." Some kick-around time after college and an interest in skiing led him to wash up on the shores of Ketchum during fall slack. Stepping off the bus in 1974 with a backpack and a Florida-thin sleeping bag, his thought (like many of ours) was to spend a winter and move on. But as it turned out—aside from a return home to help raise a family of five due to his mother's illness, and a short stint or two of teaching and learning elsewhere—that "one winter" has yet to end.

Reading The other side of the comparative-religions coin for Odom as a youth was an interest in all things military, including histories and biographies. He won an appointment to West Point, and then relinquished it after realizing he was more interested in the healing arts than the military arts. Back at Florida State U., he studied math, physics, engineering, and languages before earning a degree in history and philosophy—his main interests at age 13.

Favorite Book Herman Hesse's *Siddhartha*.

Largely self-taught in yoga, Odom attributes much of his unique teaching style to reading. He follows a simple format: read, do, teach, learn from those taught. "This book is important to me. It ties in with my practice and core beliefs, and has influenced my teaching greatly. One passage in particular I have found inspirational: 'I can wait. I can fast. I can listen.'"

"These three acts (or non-acts) allow me to disengage and not attempt to consume everything in front of me at once. Not just food or conversation, but all things offered in life."

By reading and keen observation, Clarence Stilwill indulges his curiosity about the fascinating details of people and life around him. He may be persuaded to share his discoveries at the Farmers' Market in Ketchum on summer Tuesdays.