BOOKS

THE CONQUEST OF SPACE
Paintings by Chesley Bonesteel
Text by Willy Ley
Viking Press, N.Y., 160 pp. $3.95
Reviewed by Robert S. Richardson
Research Associate in Astronomy

The Conquest of Space takes you on a superbly illustrated tour of the solar system via space ship. Some of the paintings probably look better than if they were actual photographs of the real thing.

There have been other books on descriptive astronomy of this general type, but always before the rocket has been merely a convenient literary device for easing the reader from one chapter to the next. Here the approach is much more realistic. The book opens with a dramatic account of the launching of a V-2 from the White Sands Proving Grounds, followed by an elementary discussion of the principles of rocket flight and planetary motion in general. Although the authors feel confident that inter-planetary travel will be realized, they 'tell' the reader frankly that he will have to wait a while until the day arrives. But when and if it does come, here are some of the sights we will see.

There is so much general interest in rocket flight, and the habitability of the planets, that anyone rumored to have a special knowledge of these subjects often finds himself the target for some rather awkward questions. The trouble is that two fields formerly quite distinct have suddenly been merged. Few astronomers feel competent to answer queries on the intricacies of high-speed propulsion; and I presume that rocket experts feel the same way when it comes to discussing surface conditions on the planets. The easiest way out of such a situation is always to refer to some good book. In this event, you could not do better than to recommend The Conquest of Space.

The distinguishing feature of this book is Chesley Bonesteel's illustrations. In full color, they're real "stoppers," as the magazine editors would say. Mr. Bonesteel's training, first as an architect, and later in the special camera effects department of a motion picture studio, enables him to depict a lunar landscape or Saturn viewed from one of its satellites, with such startling realism that the effect is photographic. And there is imagination, too, in the peculiar dreamlike quality that he imparts to many of his scenes.

The informative passages are lightened by numerous amusing and interesting historical anecdotes, so that the exposition never becomes burdensome. Readers may differ with the text on certain points that are matters of opinion: thus they may object that the question of the origin of the lunar craters is not nearly so well settled as the remarks on pages 68 and 69 would imply, or that the fins on the rockets are too big, etc. Although these criticisms may be valid, they are trivial when compared with the fine quality of
The picture above doesn't begin to do justice to our fanciest piece of new equipment. It was taken aboard the Cascade Club, swank kitchen-dining car lounge, now in nightly service on the Cascade between Portland and San Francisco. But you really have to see it first hand to appreciate it.

In railroad parlance, it's a three-car articulated unit. All that means is that it is three cars long over all, and the dining and lounge sections provide an unbroken vista 135 feet long. The kitchen adjoins.

Cactus Fever?
Like the desert in the wintertime? If you do, chances are you'll like it even better in early season. It isn't too soon to be thinking of spots like Palm Springs, Phoenix, Tucson and the rest of the resort and guest ranch country.

For one thing, if you go soon, the resorts won't be crowded, and the weather will be at its best. Then, too, lots of places have special reduced rates for Indian Summer vacationers.

And remember, in making your plans, Southern Pacific has the only main line trains direct to Palm Springs, Phoenix and Tucson. We know our way around that country pretty well, and have a couple of generously illustrated folders to prove it. One of them is entitled simply "Palm Springs," and the other is "Your Vacation in Arizona and the Southwest."

If you'd like one or both to help plan your trip, just mail a card to Mr. Geo. B. Hanson, 610 South Main, Room 406, Los Angeles 14. He'll send them to you right away.

Ski Heil
The world's longest ski lift (8000 feet long, 2000-foot lift) is almost finished at Squaw Valley, not far from Truckee on our Overland Route. Opens next month.

Books
the book as a whole.
Perhaps the biggest question left unanswered is how the Viking Press managed to put a book on the market containing 16 illustrations in full color for only $3.95.

LIVE WITH LIGHTNING
by Mitchell Wilson
Little, Brown & Co., Boston
404 pp. $3.00

Live With Lightning is science fiction in the purest sense of that battered term. It doesn't involve any space ships or men from other worlds; it's a sober, earnest account of the making of a modern physicist.

Erik Gorin, at 21, gets an appointment as an assistant in the physics department at Columbia University. "What makes you want to be a physicist?" the head of the department asks him.

"It just never occurred to me to think of anything else," Erik answers. "After all, what else is there?"

In the course of the book, which covers the next 15 years of Erik Gorin's life, he finds out why he gave that answer, and why—for him—it was the right one.

After a couple of years of teaching at a midwestern university, Gorin gets a bellyfull of faculty politics and turns to industrial research. There isn't much satisfaction in it, but there's money, and Erik is a family man by now. When he tries to move in on the big money his work entitles him to, however, he is neatly outwitted by the business man who are old hands at this game.

After a wartime hitch at Los Alamos Erik is about to accept a top job in the atomic energy setup in Washington when he discovers what the politicians are doing to exploit atomic power. Finally he heads back to pure research at Columbia.

Surprisingly, Live With Lightning is a selection of the Literary Guild. It makes very few concessions to popular taste. The only flashy thing about it is its title. Above all, it is an honest book—with some of the dullness and doggedness that often accompany honesty. Erik Gorin doesn't win a Nobel prize or invent the atomic bomb. He's no hero. He's not even a colorful individual. He's the kind of man, and this is the kind of book, a physicist couldn't sneer at. In a sense, that's a high compliment.

—E.H.