temperatures drop to thirty below. Outmaneuvered by Finnish soldiers on skis, the Soviets fitted out some troops with skis and others with how-to-ski instructions. One Soviet unit was outfitted in tsarist-period uniforms swiped from a museum. For camouflage in the snow, the Finns sometimes covered themselves with sheets. Stalin expected it all to be over in two weeks. After more than four months and the loss of 250,000 men, the Soviets took the land they wanted. The Finns lost a tenth that number — proving, perhaps, that war itself is stupid. 

UNDER NEW ENGLAND: THE STORY OF NEW ENGLAND’S ROCKS AND FOSSILS
CHARLES FERGUSON BARKER (GRS’88)
UNIVERSITY PRESS OF NEW ENGLAND

“Heaven is under our feet, as well as over our heads,” naturalist Henry David Thoreau once wrote, and geologist Barker would certainly agree. Several such quotations from the region’s celebrated writers pop up throughout the book, as a testament to the unlikely inspiration found in studying New England’s rocky coastlines and wooded hills. The latest entry in Barker’s series of geology books, which he also illustrates, aims to evoke the same sense of wonder and curiosity for young readers. Imagine a fifth-grade science textbook, with bright, playful illustrations substituting for those boring step-by-step experiments.

REGGAE SCRAPBOOK
PETER SIMON (COM’70) AND ROGER STEFFENS
INTRODUCTION BY STEPHEN DAVIS (CAS’70)
INSIGHT EDITIONS

Chronicling the rise of reggae, the musical phenomenon that brought Jamaican culture and Rastafari spirituality into the mainstream, has never been an easy task for a journalist. There is the sheer exoticism of Jamaica — its expanding economy and friendly people juxtaposed with growing violence and political and social unrest in Kingston slums — not to mention the difficulties of conducting interviews with the musicians themselves, who are often ganja smokers, esoteric mystics, or both. Take Toots Hibbert, lead singer of the Maytals and the man who coined the term in 1968 with his hit song “Do the Reggay.” “If you ask me how I came to write it, the answer is that I didn’t ‘come to write’ that song ... it just came to me,” Hibbert says in the foreword to Reggae Scrapbook.

It is, indeed, a hard movement to crack; as the authors half-jokingly note, “there are no facts in Jamaica.” Thank Jah, then, for Steffens, Simon, and Davis, who have become the foremost authorities of the reggae scene. Simon and Davis, who met at BU in the turbulent late sixties and later worked together at Rolling Stone, first traveled to Jamaica in 1976 to cover the island for the New York Times. The experience produced their first book, Reggae Bloodlines (1977), which introduced reggae to America; it also helped introduce Simon to Steffens, a Los Angeles DJ who had recently founded The Beat, a magazine about world music.

Now, thirty-five years after their obsession took root, Simon and Steffens — in true Jamaican fashion — have produced a history of reggae as they lived it: a collection of documentary photos, pullout concert posters, meticulous timelines of the genre’s offshoots, and interviews with reggae’s heroes. Steffens scoured his Reggae Archives, while Simon returned to Jamaica with his son to photograph the contemporary music scene, giving the reader a sense of the island’s people and philosophy beyond the Marley-and-marijuana stereotypes. Reggae Scrapbook is just that: an exhaustive memory book by real reggae fans.