

THE ANTARCTIC VOYAGE OF THE HMAS WYATT EARP. Phillip Law. 1995. St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin. xii + 152 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 1-86373-803-7. \$Aus29.95.

This book fills a gap in Phillip Law's earlier writings on his time with the Australian National Antarctic Research Expeditions (ANARE) — the *Wyatt Earp* saga rates only a mention in his *Antarctic odyssey* (1983). Law was appointed senior scientific officer to the ANARE in 1947, and in this capacity he voyaged south on *Wyatt Earp* in the 1947/48 austral summer, under the then officer-in-charge, Group Captain Stuart Campbell. Soon after, Law became head of the Australian Antarctic Division, the key agency of ANARE, a position he held until 1966.

The author deals briefly with the background to the start-up of the ANARE program, and covers the preparation for his own scientific work in cosmic ray physics before starting on the expedition voyage itself. The book concludes with a personal account of the bureaucratic processes leading up to the filling of senior ANARE positions in 1948–1949.

The 41 m, timber-hulled *Wyatt Earp* started life in 1919 as the Norwegian herring vessel *Fanefford*, and was purchased by Lincoln Ellsworth for his series of expeditions to Antarctica in the 1930s. Refitted and ice-strengthened, it was renamed by Ellsworth for the famous marshal of the American west. The Australian connection in those days was Sir Hubert Wilkins, aviator and adventurer, who was a member of Ellsworth's expeditions. The vessel was purchased by Australia in 1939, and, after a period in general naval service as HMAS *Wongala*, the decision was taken to refit her for Antarctic expeditions, initially to explore the coast of the Australian Antarctic Territory. The Royal Australian Navy took responsibility for the project and for the continued operation of the vessel, the name of which reverted to *Wyatt Earp*.

The expedition voyage is a rather sorry tale. After a false start, which involved returning to Melbourne for repairs, the ship lurched about the Southern Ocean and then the edge of the pack ice. According to Law, 'rolling through angles of 50 degrees or more each side of the vertical is not uncommon.' She proved unequal to the task of ice-breaking, but was able to reach the Balleny Islands and Macquarie Island before returning to Melbourne. The shortcomings of *Wyatt Earp*, including persistent water leaks and the inconvenience and discomfort enjoyed by those on board, are described by Law in some detail, as are some of the idiosyncrasies and 'Boys Own' type pranks of members of the crew and the expedition party. Sensibly, *Wyatt Earp* was paid off after the voyage and sold to a private company for the coastal trade in mid-1948.

The principal objective of the 1947–1948 voyage — 'to attempt to reach the coast of George V Land...and to discover...a possible site for a future Australian Antarctic station' — was not fulfilled. It was not until *Kista Dan* was chartered from J. Lauritzen of Denmark in the 1953/54 season that a permanent Australian station on the Antarctic

continent was established.

The final chapter gives an insight, however one-sided, into the office politics of the time. Various correspondence is reproduced with commentary, but the sniping at Stuart Campbell finally wears a bit thin.

There are many black-and-white photographs interspersed through the text, the best by Laurie Le Guay, the official photographer. A number of the photographs feature the author. The choice for the front cover of a shot of the ship's eventual demise on the Queensland coast in 1959 is rather incongruous, given the many shots available with an Antarctic backdrop. A comprehensive index is included, and there are several appendices.

This volume of recollections reveals much about the author and puts a very personal perspective on events of the time. It should be popular with Antarctic enthusiasts. (David Lyons, Institute of Antarctic and Southern Ocean Studies/Antarctic Cooperative Research Centre, University of Tasmania, GPO Box 252C, Hobart, Tasmania 7001, Australia.)

MY LIFE OF ADVENTURE. Norman D. Vaughan with Cecil B. Murphey. 1995. Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books. viii + 246 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 0-8117-0892-6. \$US24.95.

If you were to scan the 'Earth Almanac' in the back pages of *National Geographic* (vol. 180, no. 5, November 1991), you would find an unusual, and very memorable, short article. It reveals the ambition of an 86-year-old man to cross the Antarctic, on a dog sled, one last time before an Antarctic agreement banned dogs forever from that continent on 1 April 1994.

Now picture a 10,302 ft mountain called Mount Vaughan and imagine the same man successfully climbing that mountain just three days short of his eighty-ninth birthday. If you can begin to conceive of the exploits of this uniquely remarkable octogenarian, then you can begin to imagine the kind of excitement that awaits you among the pages of Norman Vaughan's *My life of adventure*.

Do not be deceived though. Vaughan's reminiscences are not entirely those of a super being who never failed or put a foot wrong. With surprising honesty, Vaughan recounts not only his peaks (literally), but also his troughs. In one passage he sketches the image of a man of 68, newly arrived in Anchorage, down on his luck, estranged from his wife, and shovelling snow in exchange for breakfast. In another he reveals that the last Antarctic dog-sled trip failed, foiled by an air crash. Ironically, that journey retracing the route of the 1928–1930 Byrd expedition, of which he was a member, was to have delivered him in fitting style to the foot of Mount Vaughan for his ascent.

Such scenes would be depressing for a reader were it not for Vaughan's characteristic love of life, overriding optimism, and ability always to come out ahead. After all, this is a man who, among his many adventures, once taught Pope John Paul II how to 'mush' a dog sled and then rode on it, who gate-crashed President Carter's inaugural pa-

rade, and who ran the 1151-mile Iditarod dog-sled race 13 times. Clearly Vaughan is a determined man, with a penchant for unusual experiences, and unlikely to let a plane crash stand in the way of a mountain. He didn't, of course.

One would, perhaps, secretly hope that a man with a mountain named in his honour would be larger than life, and Vaughan certainly justifies such a hope. His successful ascent of his own personal mountain clearly endorses the adventurous spirit characteristic of his entire life. To the old he advises that they 'throw away their armchairs,' and this is doubtless also good advice to those much younger in years than he. So by all means feel free, and throw away your armchair, but not before you've had a chance to sit down one last time and read this remarkable book. (Ian Higginson, Centre for History & Cultural Studies of Science, Rutherford College, University of Kent at Canterbury, Canterbury, Kent CT2 7NX.)

THE ICE-AGE HISTORY OF ALASKAN NATIONAL PARKS. Scott A. Elias. 1995. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press. x + 150 p, illustrated, soft cover. ISBN 1-56098-424-4. \$US16.95.

The ice-age history of Alaskan national parks is the first in a series of books geared towards the 'general reader' concerning the glaciation of the Rocky Mountains and western national parks of the United States. Scott Elias has, in this short volume, developed an engaging writing style that guides the reader admirably well through a number of subjects ranging from the broad aspects of Quaternary science to the palaeogeography of the Alaskan national parks. Assuming that the reader is one with an enquiring mind, but without any prior knowledge of the last ice age or how Alaska was transformed during this period, then the book will achieve its goal and provide an interesting simple overview of the glacial history of three

regions within Alaska.

This is evidently not an academic textbook, and does not claim to be so. Neither is it a tourist guidebook; there are too few field examples and illustrations for it to be so. However, Elias should be commended on this attempt to educate the lay person in Earth processes, landforms, and palaeobiology that relate to Alaska during the last ice age. As a consequence, this book will probably only be of interest to those who have visited (or will visit) Alaska, and those who have an affinity with the region.

The volume is split into two sections. The first part introduces aspects of palaeoecology that are relevant to the discussion within the second section. The theories behind, for example, the causes of ice ages, dating methods, and palaeoarchaeology are explained well, using simple terminology and examples. When a scientific word is introduced, the reader is referred to a useful glossary at the end of the book. There are a number of cartoon-type illustrations that are light-hearted and yet instructive, and fit well within the text.

Section two deals with how the ice age affected the national parks. Because of the overview style of the book, field examples are kept to a minimum, and the discussion remains in a general context. However, as any Earth scientist can testify, field examples are necessary in order to teach and discuss geoscience effectively. Because of this, I believe the book to be too generalised to be of any use as a student text.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading this little book and would recommend it to tourists, in order for them to gain an understanding of the ancient Earth-system pertaining to the Alaskan region, before they visit the area. This book may well help such readers to appreciate the Alaskan national parks rather than merely wonder at them. (Martin J. Siegert, Centre for Glaciology, Institute of Earth Studies, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, Dyfed SY23 3DB.)