

**DANGEROUS CROSSINGS: THE FIRST MODERN POLAR EXPEDITION 1925.** By JOHN H. BRYANT and HAROLD N. CONES. Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2000. ISBN 1-55750-187-4. 209 p., maps, b&w illus., afterword, appendices, notes, bib., index. Hardbound. US\$27.95.

Information about the authors on the inside cover makes it clear that they have an abiding and long-standing interest in radio communication in addition to a fascination with the history of aviation and polar exploration. It is little wonder that Donald B. MacMillan's 1925 expedition to the High Arctic attracted their attention: it was not only one of the first aviation-based Arctic explorations, but also the first to involve successful application of shortwave radio communication. The impetus for the book was the authors' chance discovery of sealed files belonging to the founding president of the Zenith Radio Corporation, Eugene F. McDonald, Jr. Not surprisingly, McDonald's involvement with the 1925 expedition is as central to the story as that of MacMillan and aviator Richard Byrd.

Chapter One is an exceedingly brief account of early Arctic exploration, centring primarily on the North Pole exploits of Robert E. Peary and Mathew Henson. One of the men Peary sought to hire for his 1905 expedition was his son's "outdoors skills teacher," Donald B. MacMillan (p. 8). MacMillan was unable to accept Peary's offer because of prior engagements, and was therefore not part of the "discovery" of Crocker Land, a distant landmass Peary reported to have seen far to the west of Ellesmere Island and Axel Heiberg Island. MacMillan did accompany Peary on his last Arctic expedition in 1908. The Far North proved an irresistible attraction for MacMillan, who probably began planning his own expedition even before returning south in 1909. A search for Peary's Crocker Land was the objective of MacMillan's 1913–1917 expedition. Not mentioned by the authors is the contemporary Vilhjalmur Stefansson expedition (1913–18), whose members explored some of the same High Arctic territory as MacMillan.

The Crocker Land expedition was successful, inasmuch as the phantom Crocker Land was proven not to exist. No mention is made of the fact that one of MacMillan's expedition members, Ensign Fitzhugh Green, killed one of the Inughuit assistants, Piuvaitsoq, during the return journey to Etah, Greenland. In 1921, MacMillan wintered his newly built ship, the *Bowdoin*, on the south coast of Baffin Island, a prelude to another High Arctic voyage in 1923. While planning and raising funds for the expedition, MacMillan met Eugene F. McDonald, founding president of the Zenith Radio Corporation. The meeting, a pivotal event for both men, resulted in the successful use of high-frequency shortwave radio communication in the Far North. The *Bowdoin* headed north in June 1923 and arrived at Etah on August 7. One objective of the expedition was to place a large National Geographic Society memorial plaque at Greely's Camp Starvation (Clay) on Pim Island.

While the *Bowdoin* struggled through heavy pack ice in Smith Sound, attempting to reach Pim Island, the Canadian "Coast Guard" [Eastern Arctic Patrol] ship *Arctic* arrived at Etah. The authors pay scant attention to this event, except to mention that the *Arctic* was trying to reach Cape Sabine on Pim Island and experiencing considerable difficulties with the ice. This brief note about the *Arctic* is particularly interesting to anyone aware of the history of Canada's sporadic struggles to secure sovereignty over the High Arctic islands. During those August days of 1923, Captain Bernier on the *Arctic* was in effect attempting to transfer Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officers from the Craig Harbour RCMP post on southern Ellesmere Island to the Bache Peninsula farther north. The RCMP posts and the Eastern Arctic Patrols were established specifically to "enforce" sovereignty laws on foreigners attempting to carry out exploration in the High Arctic.

The *Bowdoin*, frozen in for the winter in Kane's old Refuge Harbour just north of Etah, received weekly broadcasts from McDonald, transmitted from Chicago. Not until August 1924 was it possible to break the *Bowdoin* out of the ice and head for home.

Chapter Two presents the planning of the 1925 MacMillan Arctic Expedition, notable for its proposal to explore systematically, using aircraft, large areas of previously "unknown lands and seas." I have placed those words in quotation marks because the authors did not. It was precisely these proposed activities (and those of the Norwegian explorer Amundsen) that forced the Canadian Government to promote its claim of sovereignty actively, by sending RCMP personnel, significantly aided by (Greenlandic) Native assistants, on extensive sled patrols throughout the High Arctic islands. This chapter introduces readers to Cdr. Richard Evelyn Byrd, the colourful character who, according to the authors, so manipulated the truth about the expedition planning that MacMillan's role became completely overshadowed. The chapter impresses upon readers the considerable animosity that quickly developed among the three expedition leaders, with MacMillan and McDonald on one side and Byrd on the other. Byrd's planned overflight of the North Pole using the *Shenandoah*, a dirigible airship, had been cancelled. The use of fixed-wing aircraft for Arctic flights was gaining favour not only in the United States, but also in Norway, where Amundsen's plans had been underway for some time. Godfred Hansen, who had accompanied Amundsen on his triumphant Northwest Passage voyage, had already left emergency supplies for Amundsen at Cape Columbia, on the northern tip of Ellesmere Island, in the spring of 1920. Clearly the race to be the first to fly over the North Pole was a strong drive for Byrd. To seek and claim any and all lands yet to be discovered in the Polar Ocean was certainly an added motivation, and one that gave the Canadian government considerable anxiety. No one seemed very impressed with Canada's self-made "sector principle," which claimed sovereignty along meridian lines all the way to the North Pole. Certainly none of the

governments of the three countries in the air race for the Pole (Britain, Norway, and the United States) accepted the Canadian sector principle.

After months of bickering, claims, and counterclaims among Byrd, McDonald, and MacMillan, the United States Navy Department announced the expedition in a press release. The MacMillan Arctic Expedition, under the auspices of the National Geographic Society, would include Lt. Cdr. Byrd, in charge of flight operations. McDonald would pay particular attention to the radio equipment. A Zenith shortwave transmitter was installed on the *Bowdoin*, and three Loening Amphibian (model OL-2) aircraft would be crated and transported north on the *Peary*. The sniping among the three major figures increased throughout the frantic days of getting everything ready for departure. It says a lot about MacMillan's excellent qualities as an expedition leader that he managed at least to control the bickering.

Chapter Three describes the ordeal of getting the overladen ships to their destination. After the *Peary* took on 60 tons of coal in Cape Breton, its forecastle portholes were constantly under water while the ship was underway. On July 7, the vessel struck a reef and was re-floated only with great skill and luck. Delays in Labrador frustrated Byrd and led to an agreement between him, MacMillan, and McDonald to "reduce to writing all material communication" (p. 81), an extraordinary measure, but one that seems to have reduced tension during the rest of the expedition. The *Peary* arrived in Godhavn [Qeqertarsuaq], Greenland, ahead of the *Bowdoin*, to face new obstacles. Local government officials insisted that there were insufficient coal supplies available for the ship and initially even refused shore liberty for the crew. A flurry of radio messages between the *Peary* in Qeqertarsuaq and Washington eventually resulted in permission from the Danish government for the *Peary* to proceed to the coal mine at Umanak, where a sufficient quantity of coal was loaded onboard to ensure the continuation of the voyage to Etah. The two ships joined up at North Upernavik and successfully negotiated the treacherous Melville Bay without too many difficulties. Both arrived at Etah on August 1. It was MacMillan's plan to use Etah as a primary base and depart for the south three weeks later. By any estimate, this would be one of the shortest Arctic expeditions on record.

Chapter Four is the essence of the expedition story. Although the Inughuit were camped away from Etah, they appeared shortly after the arrival of the two ships. Among them were MacMillan's old friends, Nookapingwa and Inyougeeto [?]. Amazing difficulties had to be overcome to assemble the three planes. The lack of a large beach area for that job should have been expected, considering MacMillan's previous experience at Etah. Wings had to be uncrated and fuselages strapped between outriggers made from dories to be floated ashore. Once assembled, the planes were floated out into the Etah "harbour" and moored. With the determination and hard work of everyone, including the Inughuit, the first test flight took place on August 3.

The hazards associated with these first flights in the High Arctic were incredible, and it is amazing that no one was killed. For days on end, gales prevented flights and often threatened to smash the moored planes to pieces. Engine failures nearly caused fatal crashes. Thick fog banks developed suddenly during flight, rough weather made landings back at Etah dangerous, cold weather froze the flight crews, and a gasoline fire in the waters surrounding the *Peary* nearly spread to one of the nearby planes.

One hazard that should not have come as a great surprise, at least to MacMillan, was the whole business of having to find open water to land amphibious planes at various destinations. Drift ice moves very quickly with tide and winds: a fjord may be open one day and jammed full of ice the next. Ice conditions during the fall of 1925 were bad, and establishing essential forward supply bases for longer flights proved to be most difficult. Finally, on August 14, two planes landed a large cache of food, fuel, and other supplies at the head of Flagler Fjord [Bay] on the east coast of Ellesmere Island. But when the two planes returned to Flagler Bay the following day to leave additional supplies, the inner part of the bay was filled with ice and landing was impossible. A gale prevented further flights until August 20. Now followed a series of written messages between MacMillan and Byrd. Initially, MacMillan gave the aviators one more week to get ready for a final attempt to "reach a point on the Polar Sea at least two hundred miles west from any part of Axel Heiberg Land" (p. 117). The following day, however, MacMillan changed his mind and ordered the return journey to proceed as originally scheduled, on or before August 21. As one would expect, Byrd protested vigorously, but to no avail. The expedition headed south on August 22.

In Chapter Five, the authors describe the return journey, which included photographic flights in the Etah area followed by a flight south to Igloodahouny [Siorapaluk], where the planes would meet up with the ships. Shortly after the *Bowdoin* arrived at the settlement, MacMillan and crew set off on the last flight of the expedition. They flew to Karna [Qaanaaq], where MacMillan's old companion, Eetookashoo, accepted without hesitation an invitation to fly back to Igloodahouny. The continuing southbound voyage did not proceed without incident. While heading for Qaanaaq to return Eetookashoo to his family, the *Bowdoin* ran hard aground on a rocky reef. At high tide, she floated off the reef with only minimal damage. The problem onboard the *Peary* was a short supply of coal, a situation not alleviated until she reached Godthaab [Nuuk]. Leaving the shores of Greenland, the two vessels encountered severe storms while crossing Davis Strait, and for a while, the *Bowdoin* was believed to have gone down.

The authors spend only five pages on the importance of the MacMillan expedition, primarily its significance in the history of radio communication. They describe the flight operations as partially successful, with weather and ice conditions being the principal barriers to success. The bravery of the aviators is certainly acknowledged, as it

should be, considering the conditions under which they had to operate. The author's insights into the post-expedition lives of the principal expedition members, as presented in the Afterword and Appendix A, are informative and interesting. The total lack of references to Canadian government concerns about the 1925 expedition and its planned overflights of the Arctic islands is perhaps understandable, if somewhat disappointing. The appearance of Captain Bernier on board the *Arctic* at Etah on August 19 may have influenced MacMillan's decision to end the expedition. Undoubtedly, Bernier would have impressed upon Byrd and MacMillan the Canadian government's concern about the overflights. MacMillan's 1925 expedition certainly strengthened the Canadian government's desire to enforce its claim of sovereignty over the Queen Elisabeth Islands. In August 1926, the *Beothic*, under Captain E. Falk, picked up supplies left at Fram Harbour and transferred them to the new RCMP post being built on the Bache Peninsula at the entrance to Flagler Bay, where Byrd's aviation supplies had been cached the year before. No further foreign expeditions would enter the High Arctic islands without the consent of the Canadian government.

The book is well written and provides a new perspective on the 1925 MacMillan expedition. Surprisingly, the map on page 28, listing various important polar explorers, omits any mention of Otto Sverdrup and his Second Norwegian Fram Expedition (1898–1902). The older Danish place names, such as Godthaab [Nuuk], could have been replaced with current Greenlandic names. The same is true for settlement names like Karna [Qaanaaq] and Igloodahouny, which I assume is present-day Siorapaluk. Notwithstanding these comments, the book is an important contribution to Arctic exploration literature.

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THE OTHER SIDE OF EDEN: HUNTERS, FARMERS AND THE SHAPING OF THE WORLD. By HUGH BRODY. Vancouver and Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre Ltd. 374 p., maps, bib., index. Hardbound. Cdn\$35.00.

Hugh Brody has become famous among those who write about aboriginal worldviews and aboriginal rights. His clear prose and his engagement with the lives of Inuit and Dene have enchanted undergraduate students and teachers alike in his classic works, *The People's Land* and *Maps and Dreams*. For his fans, this new work offers a return to all the places where Hugh Brody has been, from 'skid row' in Edmonton to the tundra surrounding Pond Inlet. Here we can read new stories of his exploration of these unfamiliar places, as well as learn the often tragic fates of the

central characters in his books. However, this book differs from his earlier work for its philosophy of history. Thinking back over a lifetime of learning in different cultures around the world, from government offices to hunting camps, Hugh Brody makes an impassioned and often angry argument for the fundamental incompatibility of two human worlds: the world of hunters and the world of farmers. Marshalling data from archaeology, primatology, linguistics, ethnography, and post-colonial theory, he continues to enchant us with the dignity of the hunting lifestyle while documenting the ironclad processes that condemn it. Although elements of this interpretation are in all his books, this book is more an evaluation of urban industrial society (of 'farmers' in Hugh Brody's terms) through the stories and experiences of hunters he has known than it is a representation of hunters and gatherers in India, Africa, and the Arctic.

The book is structured around six thematic parts (Inuktitut, creation, time, words, gods, and mind), each of which has several dozen numbered sections. Each section is usually a vignette taken from one part of the complex landscape that Brody has experienced. The arguments are supported by a good set of discursive endnotes and a bibliography, which unobtrusively parallel the text as an ironically titled "shadow-text" (p. 6). Through these six themes, Brody builds a positive model of what makes hunting and gathering societies unique. He refers to their unique experience of time, their way of thinking, and their use of language, and tells the stories that capture their sense of being and becoming. Unlike his previous works, this book uses language and linguistic theory as the key dimension in which to measure difference. In each section, Brody compares the creation myths and linguistic categories of the hunters to similar myths from Judeo-Christian society. Readers are encouraged to follow Brody from his own Slavic-Jewish upbringing amongst the farmers in Sheffield through his exploration of hunting societies around the world.

The key dichotomy of the book is an ambitiously conceived conflict between hunters and farmers. In the section on Creation, through a very engaging exegesis of the Book of Genesis, Brody cleverly portrays farmers as rootless nomads who, condemned by God to work the soil, spread out across the world in a ceaseless search for new fields to colonize. Effectively inverting very old stereotypes of hunters, Brody portrays Dene and Inuit people instead as settled in their own lands over millennia, resisting the incursions of the farmers. Indeed, Brody insists that the Book of Genesis itself "is the poem of the colonisers and the farmers...and not the story of Anaviapik" (p. 101). Although this device gives Brody's story a strong sense of purpose, it is a very controversial stance to take. On the one hand, it negates the syncretic messages that many First Nations around the world take from the Bible (in particular, the Book of Genesis) to build conciliatory stories of how hunters and farmers can live together. On the other hand, many ethnographers of northern peoples today try to draw finer lines by distinguishing industrial or bureaucratic