

**ANTARCTIC COMRADES — AN AMERICAN WITH THE RUSSIANS IN ANTARCTICA.** By GILBERT DEWART. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1989. 194 p. plus 10 p. glossary of scientific terms and Russian words. Hardbound. US\$25.00.

Gilbert Dewart is a geophysicist who first worked in the Antarctic in 1957 during preparations for the International Geophysical Year (IGY-1958). There he participated in establishing the American Wilkes scientific station, at which he mainly operated long-period seismographs.

Shortly after returning from his year on Antarctica he was invited to participate in a U.S.A./U.S.S.R. Antarctic scientific exchange program, which had been initiated during the IGY but not renewed in 1959. In December 1959 Dewart, carrying a large collection of American books, records and other cultural items, geophysical equipment, including his prized Worden gravimeter, and with just a few months of Russian language training, joined a Soviet ship, the *Kooperatsiya*, in Cape Town, South Africa, for a two-week sail to the Soviet Mirnyy base on Antarctica.

Dewart's book is a well-written, interesting chronicle of his preparations for, voyage to and activities on Antarctica. It features cultural, political and scientific activities over the year. The book is written so that it can be understood and enjoyed both by laymen and scientists of various disciplines.

Included in this chronicle are his induction into the exchange, preparations, sea voyage from Cape Town to Mirnyy, life at the settlement, trips out to survey large ice shelves, a tragic fire at the base, and finally his four-month-long trip with a tractor train from Mirnyy to the Soviet Vostok station, located at the south magnetic pole, and which then had the coldest recorded temperatures on earth (-88.3°C). He includes a plethora of stories concerning daily activities, discussions on culture and politics, accounts of parties, and his progressive acceptance by the group and his evolution into speaking and even thinking in Russian.

The book contains numerous essential scientific terms and a smattering of transliterated Russian. Most of the terms are familiar to general science practitioners, and much of the Russian is obvious. However, Dewart includes a ten-page glossary of both types of terms, which I used frequently. This style tends to add real character to the book and to provide interesting material for the more scientifically oriented readers.

A favourite theme of Dewart's is his relationship and interaction with his Soviet colleagues. Like any group of people of any nationality, they had their oddballs, ideologues and the rare unfriendly type. His main conclusion, however, is that despite large differences between Western and Soviet systems, people are people and they are all basically warm, friendly and professional and are all striving to do their best.

Two of Dewart's chapters depart from the chronicle-style account and enter into the area of speculation. These are "Conversations with the Comrades" and "Explorations of the Mind." In these chapters he launches into a speculative assessment of the nature and problems with the Soviet system, and to some degree with the mind-set of the people under such a regime, taking into consideration their history of wars and tyranny. Having worked with Soviets on a scientific exchange since 1986 and having in the process been saturated with comments on Soviets and their system, I found a lot of this repetitive and some conclusions debatable. If you are like me, then skip these chapters; if not, read them. You may enjoy them, since they are, after all, based on an intense year of direct one-on-one experience.

The parts of Dewart's account that I particularly like are his descriptions of the sailing trip to Mirnyy, winter life at Mirnyy and his trip to Vostok, "the Pole of Cold."

On the ship voyage to Mirnyy, Dewart's account certainly opened my mind to the peculiarities and distinct character of this part of the world and wetted my appetite for Antarctica. During this voyage they crossed the Antarctic Convergence zone of the Southern Ocean.

Here warm ocean water meets cold polar water, producing an upwelling that brings an abundance of nutrients to the surface. When the *Kooperatsiya* crossed this zone there was a sudden increase in wildlife — pigeons, whales, petrels — and soon after this they began to encounter Antarctic icebergs, on which they saw Weddell seals and Adelie penguins. Dewart also introduces a science flavour to the trip: as they passed over the Atlantic-Indian Ridge, he comments on their collective awe at this phenomenon, given the rapidly evolving concepts in science on the significance of such features at that time.

The chapter on life at the base, mostly during the long winter, was quite enjoyable. Dewart was a compulsory guest at all parties, at which human nature is often at its best. He relates a few instances where the collected assembly quickly and effectively "disposed" of the ideologues bent on arguing with Dewart. The comradery, the food and the whole adventure of it all made me envious of Dewart's experience. Dewart was also a willing participant in the ritual of the Soviet *banya* — a weekly cultural event that combines sanitation with recreation. *Banyas* are a real focus of socializing and relaxation in Soviet society that should be adopted by all cultures. I also enjoyed Dewart's description of the environment around the camp — storms, icebergs, the sea ice and its polar fog, the disappearance of the sun, the "blue-out" of sea and sky, atmospheric optical peculiarities of the arctic regions, and so on.

The final part of Dewart's stay on Antarctica involved a four-month trip with a tractor train to the south magnetic pole, where the Soviet Vostok station is located. They made the trip with three huge, 27-ton, over-snow tractor vehicles, *Kharkovchnaka*. They lived and worked on these monsters in mobile huts mounted on the tractors or on sleds, a *balok* in Russian (the American equivalent is a wanigan). Dewart makes you feel like a participant on the trip as you crawl at 5 km an hour across this immense hostile desert of ice and cold. The thickness of the polar ice cap was measured seismically whenever possible, and I was always amazed to read that once again they were at elevations of around 2-3 km, at which less than one-third of the material above the ocean was land mass and the rest was ice, all of which had accumulated in a real polar desert! During the trip the extreme cold made life difficult and they experienced numerous equipment failures (engines, wheel bearings, etc.). Eventually they attained their goal and were returned by air to prepare for their departure from Antarctica.

I enjoyed reading this book — I read it in record time, which is a reflection on how it captivated my interest. This book will be enjoyed by a broad cross-section of adventurous people, but particularly those who work in the polar regions and have been infected by its amazing climate and by the comradery of people who share this experience.

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**SADIE BROWER NEAKOK, AN IÑUPIAQ WOMAN.** By MARGARET B. BLACKMAN. Seattle: University of Washington Press; Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1990. 294 p., 32 black and white photos, appendix, end notes, bib., index. Hardbound. US\$19.95.

In recent years, Westerners have become increasingly conscious of Euro-centric views that have dominated our understanding of arctic Alaska. Indeed, even now much of our knowledge of Native life is filtered through the perspectives of non-Native North Americans. By contrast, the oral history *Sadie Brower Neakok, an Iñupiaq Woman* engages the reader in a compelling account of life on Alaska's North Slope as viewed by a well-known Native woman. Spanning the change-filled decades of the nineteen-teens to the mid-1980s, it provides a valuable counterbalance to the wealth of material that has been written by Westerners.

One manifestation of this Euro-centrism regarding the Arctic has been to identify the North with man's heroic battle with nature. This is portrayed in our fascination with the lives of individual explorers and a focus on man-the-hunter surviving through skill and ingenuity in a harsh environment. Unfortunately, this orientation all too often has polarized men's and women's roles, obscuring in the process the crucial and multifaceted contribution of indigenous women to their culture. Through Sadie Brower Neakok's narrative we gain important insights into the flexibility of the gender division of labor as she meets her multiple commitments to family, career and Iñupiaq culture. As an important leader, wife of an *umealik* (whaling captain) and mother, her oral history is instructive about other dimensions of struggle and heroism — dimensions that locate human frontiers not only in a confrontation with the physical environment in the North, but in the many social, economic and political issues that are interlinked with the survival of Iñupiaq culture.

From the beginning Sadie Brower Neakok has lived in two worlds. Growing up in Barrow, Alaska, as the sixth child of her renowned father, whaler and trader Charles Brower, she was expected to eat "white man's food" at his table and observe his evening curfew — in sharp contrast to the freer life of her Iñupiat friends. From Asiagataq, her capable, compassionate mother, she learned Iñupiat ways, including how to hunt and sew skins. This occurred most intensively during the occasional year-long absences of her father and at hunting camp during the summers. From her mother she also acquired an enduring concern for the welfare of her people.

Sent to high school in San Francisco, she found history and government difficult, seeing them as abstract and unrelated to her experiences back home. Also, she relates, "my language bothered me . . . I was always afraid to talk in class . . . And I got tongue tied . . ." The solution to her dilemma was to actively affirm her own culture. When required to give speeches in the classroom, she told stories about life in the North, "until I felt by my fourth year I was just as good as they ['the white kids'] were" (p. 88-89). Later, when she became a teacher in Barrow, these experiences enabled her to understand the problems of Iñupiat children who were faced with the requirement of speaking English at school.

Upon her return to Barrow, she saw life there through different eyes. "Oh, the different feelings I had . . . I was so happy to be back . . . but seeing my friends . . . how they were dressed, and their home conditions . . . People were so poor — but high in spirit . . ." (p. 98). This moved her to put her education to work. By the time she married her lifelong companion, Nate Neakok (whose entire schooling was in Iñupiat culture), she was committed both to the substantial work entailed in remaining close to a subsistence way of life, especially as the wife of an *umealik*, and to public service in the community of Barrow.

Best known for her 20 years as magistrate in Barrow, she also served as a volunteer health aide and welfare worker as well as teacher. All of these occupations made her part of the governmental structures she had found so confusing as a high school student. In addition to her employment, she and her husband raised their 12 children as well as occasionally providing foster care for others. As a person of unusual energy who never seems to have found a problem that couldn't be solved, she relates her remarkable story with insight and wit, filling the reader with the sense of vitality that sustained her in even the most difficult circumstances.

At times she was able to utilize her dual role as magistrate and welfare worker to advantage, as when in a court case she seized a moose from a man who had taken it out of season. Then, as welfare worker, she awarded the meat to his needy family. Larger issues also concerned her. For example, it was she who demonstrated the importance of allowing the Iñupiaq language to be used in the courtroom, thus achieving that significant change for members of all Native groups.

Her concern over the threat to Iñupiaq subsistence brought about by the enforcement of the Migratory Bird Act in 1961 led to her active support of the famous Barrow "duck-in." Hunting of this

significant food source was being banned during the only season when they were to be found on the North Slope. This brought about an organized protest where 150 Iñupiat hunters — men, women and children, each holding a duck — presented themselves before the game warden to be arrested. The outcome was that the hunting of waterfowl was allowed on the North Slope from May to September.

This book is about two worlds in another sense as well, in that it represents the combined efforts of an Iñupiaq and a Euro-American. Anthropologist Margaret Blackman avoids merging the two voices in the book by using italics where she interjects her own well-drawn commentary to clarify or elaborate Sadie Neakok's words. The original tapes were edited by Neakok and then published with minor changes by Blackman. A number of members (primarily white) of the state judicial system speak with great admiration about Sadie Neakok's tenure as a magistrate. Yet the voices of the community she served are missing. Although she used her knowledge of the community and Iñupiaq values in her position as magistrate, she also had to operate within institutional requirements that she enforce standards that came from Euro-American culture. Perceived as both a public official and an Iñupiaq, she must have generated some ambivalent feelings among community members resistant to outside controls — a topic that is not addressed.

Several other features strengthen this book. First, Blackman adroitly sets the narrative within the larger framework of North Slope history in an introductory chapter. Second, she provides a lucid, valuable analysis of the oral history approach, describing the complex process and choices involved in publishing this book, beginning with its origins in the North Slope Borough Field School at Barrow. Finally, there are two sections of photographs that enhance the text.

Even though an oral history necessarily focuses on a given individual, Neakok's account does not subordinate North Slope life to her own. Her narrative is situated in the broad sweep of events affecting life in Barrow for over half a century rather than on more personal dimensions of living. During that time she has played a significant leadership role. The recognition she has achieved both within the state and nationally attest to the contributions of this unique woman.

This fine book will appeal to a wide spectrum of readers interested in anthropology, oral history, the Arctic and women's studies.

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TO SIBERIA AND RUSSIAN AMERICA. THREE CENTURIES OF RUSSIAN EASTWARD EXPANSION. 3 vols. Edited and translated by BASIL DMYTRYSHYN, E.A.P. CROWNHART-VAUGHAN and THOMAS VAUGHAN. Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1985, 1988, 1989. 540, 590, 557 p., illus., maps, index, bib. Hardbound. US\$30.00 each vol.

This is a magnificent collection of 330 documents that, in three long volumes, provide us with a researcher's delight on the Russian penetration of Siberia, the North Pacific Ocean, and North America. In the first volume, *Russia's Conquest of Siberia, 1558-1700*, the story begins in 1558 with Tsar Ivan Vasilevich's letter patent granting a financial, judicial, and trade monopoly on the "uninhabited lands" along the Kama River to Grigori Stroganov. The first stage ends with the Treaty of Nerchinsk, agreed to by co-Tsars Ivan V and Peter I and the Khan of China in 1689. Volume 2, *Russian Penetration of the North Pacific Ocean, 1700-1797*, opens with an account of an expedition to Kamchatka in 1697 by Vladimir Atlasov (written in 1701) and concludes with a report to Emperor Paul I in 1799 on the formation of a United Fur Trading Company in Siberia.