

Then on 12 May the climbing party set off from a place called McCarthy in Alaska and reached the summit on 22 June, returning on 15 July, after having surmounted great difficulties and hardships.

One of the chapters deals with the accidental discovery in 1957, while mountaineering on Mount Slesse, an 8,200-foot peak in the Chilliwack region of British Columbia, of the wreckage of a TCA North Star airliner which had crashed there. Sixty-two died. For five months it had been impossible to locate the place of the accident.

The book also contains good maps and photographs.

Notwithstanding the variety of the subjects undertaken and their apparent lack of coordination, the book is full of interesting observations on mountains and on human nature and makes very good reading. It is a remarkable and pleasant introduction to Canadian mountaineering and deserves special mention.

PAUL BLANC

FREDERICK ALBERT COOK: PIONEER AMERICAN POLAR EXPLORER. By RUSSELL W. GIBBONS. Hamburg, N.Y.: The Dr. Frederick A. Cook Society, 1965. (Distributed by Sullivan County Historical Society) Pamphlet, 23 pages, illustrated. 30 cents (Can.).

The 100th anniversary of Dr. Cook's birth has revived interest in one of the most baffling historical and geographical puzzles of the century.

This 24-pages pamphlet is published by the Dr. Frederick A. Cook Society, an organization founded in 1957 to "gain official recognition for the scientific and geographical accomplishments of the American physician and explorer . . ." The emphasis is on Cook's achievements rather than on the revival

of any unfortunate controversy. There is a brief description of the Centennial ceremonies held 13 June, 1965 at Callicoon, New York, near Cook's birthplace. The historical marker erected on the occasion cites Cook as a "Pioneer American Explorer, Arctic & Antarctic, 1891-1909," without specific reference to the north pole. The pamphlet seems to have a twofold purpose: to commemorate the anniversary and to set forth the essential facts of Cook's career as briefly as possible.

The biographical sketch by Russell Gibbons is straightforward and fair, although obviously much of the rich detail of Cook's turbulent and complex life had to be omitted. There is no bitterness and little reference to the controversy with Peary; Cook's priority at the pole is treated as an historical fact. One thing surely emerges from a study of any of the more responsible statements made over the years and now summarized in this pamphlet: Cook's own story of the polar journey is virtually unassailable. To this has now been added powerful *ex post facto* evidence concerning ocean currents and ice islands. He was far out on the ice and certainly could have reached the pole. Judged on its own merits, Cook had a very strong case, and while the absolute truth may never be known, it may now be possible for fair-minded men to render a just verdict.

It was of greatest interest to learn that the Cook Society plans to establish a Cook Memorial Library at an eastern university. This will contain the unique collection of Cook materials and memorabilia, now in the possession of his daughter Helene Cook Vetter, including all original records, charts, manuscripts, and the closely written, almost illegible diary that Cook kept on the north pole journey. This diary has never been fully transcribed; probably

little of the primary material in Mrs. Vetter's collection has ever been examined by a professional historian. If the Memorial Library materializes, the key to the puzzle may yet be found.

JOHN E. EULLER

Obituaries

Frank Debenham (1884-1965)

The Polar community has suffered a great loss in the death in November 1965 of Frank Debenham. Debenham was a powerful inspiration to many polar workers, being at the same time a disciplinarian professor of geography and a warm hearted individual who, around his hospitable fireside, could inspire young men to take up a career, or a voluntary immolation into polar exploration.

He was definitely the founder of what must be considered the senior Polar Research body of the world, the Scott Polar Research Institute at Cambridge. Many of us have thought out fanciful or practical schemes when confined to tent or igloo in a blizzard. But the idea of a repository of polar information and a centre from which future expeditions could draw their nourishment came to Frank Debenham on the slopes of Mt. Erebus in 1912.

At that time he was a member of Capt. Scott's last Antarctic expedition, which ended triumphantly but tragically for the leader and his four companions. Britain and the world were profoundly moved by the death of these brave men and the public subscription to take care of their widows and children exceeded the funds required by a wide margin. It was from this surplus that Debenham's scheme for a Polar Institute was achieved, supported as he was by (Sir) James Wordie and (Sir) Raymond Priestly, two other great Antarctic men.

From its inception in 1920-26 until 1946, Debenham was the Director of the Scott Polar Research Institute, and from 1930 Professor of Geography at Cambridge University. Debenham, Griffith Taylor, and Priestly were all three geologists on Scott's last expedition. The first two, Australians by birth, were distinguished founders or chairmen of University Geography Departments; the latter went on to be Vice-Chancellor of two universities and President of the Royal Geographical Society. Scott and Shackleton both knew how to pick men, and Debenham likewise attracted and then stimulated the very best. In these material modern days when a graduate student assistant expects a fat salary, it is of interest to record that until 1930 neither the Director nor his secretary nor any of the other workers at the Scott Polar Research Institute received a cent of pay, and thereafter only the secretary, who, at times, assisted Debenham in scrubbing the floor.

Ill health plagued Professor Debenham for a time, at and after his retirement. But somehow a new lease on life arrived with his postwar researches in Africa and his scholarly writings, if anything, increased now that he no longer had to devote his leisure to housecleaning in the Polar Institute. In skull cap and smoking jacket he became the friend and mentor of a new generation of British polar enthusiasts.