Review of *Footsteps on the ice: the Antarctic diaries of Stuart D. Paine, Second Byrd Expedition*, edited and with an introduction by M. L. Paine (2007). Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press. 368 pp. ISBN 978-0-8262-1741-7.

If the reader is looking for another rehashing of one of the adventures of the "Heroic Era" of Antarctic exploration, or another reshaping of the same old material about the three or four explorers from that period who get all the attention, M.L. Paine's *Footsteps on the ice: the Antarctic diaries of Stuart D. Paine, Second Byrd Expedition* is not the book for you. But if you are a serious Antarctic buff who wants to learn something new, and really get inside one of the early expeditions of the 20th century, Paine's volume will be a compelling read.

Frankly, few Antarctic diaries should be published. While sifting through the archives looking at the musings of some of the fellows who went south before the International Geophysical Year in 1957–58, a researcher occasionally comes to the point of asking him- or herself, "These people were in the midst of a unique and exciting expedition. What didn't they tell us about it?" No such response will greet this narrative, because Paine demonstrates two things one wants in a diarist—a keen eye for detail and a willingness to offend someone else by writing frankly. Paine has no axe to grind, but he is honest enough to let you know that not everyone overwinters with the same social grace.

Paine offers readers insight into an expedition that took place in the 1930s, a period less studied than others, about which comparatively few versions have appeared besides the official one given by the original leader. In Paine's account, we see Byrd more accurately, without the filter of the well-oiled publicity machine. Paine tells us what Byrd's account omitted: ongoing problems with leadership, alcohol abuse, lazy and unmotivated people, and how—and this happens even in a good expedition—people had days when they wished they had not bothered to come. Alcoholism was a serious problem en route south (so Byrd could not have been unaware of it), and even more so when the expedition got to the ice. Various attempts to find and destroy all alcohol failed to eliminate the problem; indeed, at one point, men opened the compasses and drank the alcohol out of them.

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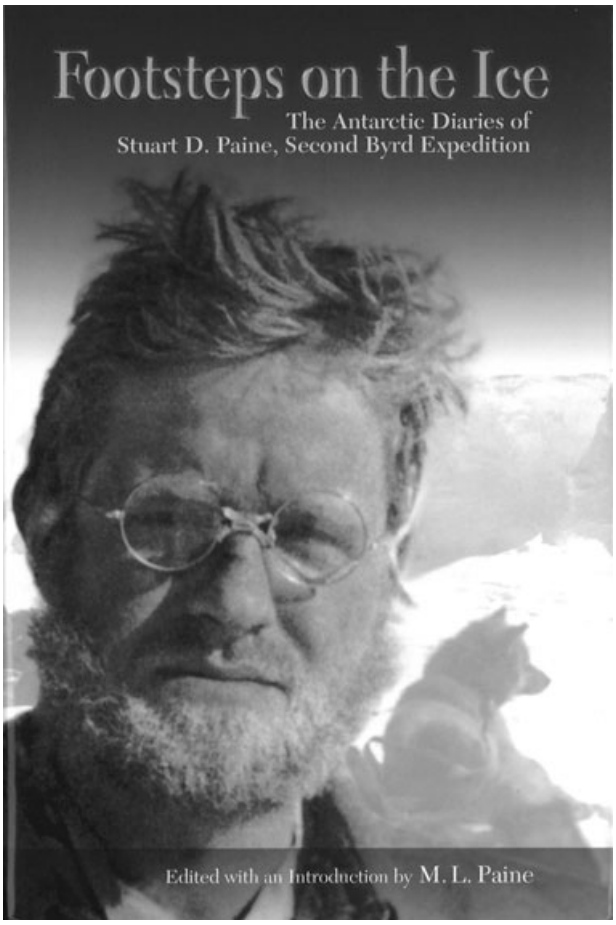

Leadership problems were made worse when Byrd left for his solo overwinter, but existed even when he was present. Paine—whose writing leaves the reader to deduce that he was no complainer—faulted the overall lack of organization and purpose of the scientific programme. That everything on the expedition was designed to make Byrd look good was not in doubt. Paine provides a wonderful insight into the issue of Byrd's decision to overwinter alone, indicating the difficulties it created, its lack of real scientific merit and at times an underlying tone that this effort was more stunt that science. Even before the accusation that Byrd had faked the North Pole flight was proven by Raimund E. Goerler's excellent book on the subject, sceptics made the pointed suggestion that, knowing he had faked the North Pole flight, Byrd had to prove he was brave, or daring, or that he could accomplish something on his own.

The brilliance of Paine's diary is that it is so *daily*: so full of the minutiae that really puts the reader in the hut with

Admiral Richard E. Byrd's men, as they muddle through a winter with the leader off at a forward base on his own. Narratives by expedition leaders tend to gloss over the petty problems of every day life—the way someone chews his food at dinner or leaves his mess all over the common table. By not doing so, Paine presents a more realistic idea of life on a 1930s expedition. Paine details the deep frustration, the annoyance with the foibles of others and the questioning of leadership that occur on most such endeavours.

Stuart Paine's diary peels away the decades and our current notion of today's Antarctica—replete with tourist ships and recreated expeditions, wherein the dogs can be airlifted out if necessary—to a time when leaving for Antarctica meant being away from one's family for the better part of two or three years, and sharing what can be a stress-ridden existence with 55 other men. The narrative conveys how a young and impressionable Paine was able to capture some of the magic of the Antarctic. One senses that, like so many others who went south in their early years, Paine never quite shook off the hold it had over him. He left Antarctica, but part of the southern polar region never left him. Moreover, Paine—without being vindictive—conveys the tensions inherent in close-quarter living. By openly discussing such problems, Paine gives the general reader an impression of what expedition life was like.

M.L. Paine has done an excellent job with her preparation of the annotations—they are sharp, concise and virtually always on the mark. Much difficult paring must have taken place to produce such a fine result. Creating a book as a work of love, out of devotion to a father, does not always lead to a fine, serious book, meriting the attention of others. Ms Paine has accomplished two goals: a worthy scholarly work contributing to the history of Antarctica and a fitting memorial for her father.

Paine's story is what it is—a daily account, occasionally, but not often, tedious—and ought to reach a wider audience beyond serious scholars or those who are themselves overwintering at an isolated base. Some of the 40 000 tourists who will transit the Convergence this Antarctic summer ought to buy this book and read it. Paine's story is the real Antarctic of scientific research in the old days, every bit as important to understand and appreciate as any of the "Heroic Era" tales. Paine takes you back to Antarctica, back to a magical place–one that many people in the past have found spiritually moving. Readers of this book will remember why many of us are still moved, still drawn to the ice, either literally each season or just in a chance moment here and there, in our minds.

Reference

Goerler R.E. 1998. *To the pole: the diary and notebook of Richard E. Byrd*. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press.