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Footsteps On The Ice: The Antarctic Diaries Of Stuart D. Paine, Second Byrd Expedition



Synopsis

In 1933 Antarctica was essentially unexplored. Admiral Richard Byrd launched his Second Expedition to chart the southernmost continent, primarily relying on the muscle power of dog teams and their drivers who skied or ran beside the loaded sledges as they traveled. The life-threatening challenges of moving glaciers, invisible crevasses, and horrific storms compounded the difficulties of isolation, darkness, and the unimaginable cold that defined the men's lives. Stuart Paine was a dog driver, radio operator, and navigator on the fifty-six-man expedition, the bold and complex venture that is now famous for Byrd's dramatic rescue from Bolling Advance Weather Base located 115 miles inland. Paine's diaries represent the only published contemporary account written by a member of the Second Expedition. They reveal a behind-the-scenes look at the contentiousness surrounding the planned winter rescue of Byrd and offer unprecedented insights into the expedition's internal dynamics. Equally riveting is Paine's breathtaking narrative of the fall and summer field operations as the field parties depended on their own resources in the face of interminable uncertainty and peril. Undertaking the longest and most hazardous sledging journey of the expedition, Paine guided the first American party from the edge of the Ross Sea more than seven hundred miles up the Ross Ice Shelf and the massive Thorne (Scott) Glacier to approach the South Pole. He and two other men skied more than fourteen hundred miles in eighty-eight days to explore and map part of Antarctica for the first time. *Footsteps on the Ice* reveals the daily struggles, extreme personalities, and the matter-of-fact bravery of early explorers who are now fading into history. Detailing the men's frustrations, annoyances, and questioning of their leader, Paine's entries provide rare insight into how Byrd conducted his expeditions. Paine exposes the stresses of living under the snow in Little America during the four-month-long winter night, trapped in dim, crowded huts and black tunnels, while the men uneasily mulled over their leader's isolation at Advance Base. The fates of Paine's dogs, which provided some of his most difficult and rewarding experiences, are also described—his relationship with Jack, his lead dog, is an entrancing story in itself. Featuring previously unpublished photographs and illustrations, *Footsteps on the Ice* documents the period in Antarctic exploration that bridged the "heroic era" and the modern age of mechanized travel. Depicting almost incomprehensible mental and physical duress and unhesitating courage, Paine's tale is one of the most compelling stories in polar history, surpassing other accounts with its immediacy and adventure as it captures the majesty and mystery of the untouched Antarctic.

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Customer Reviews

"One must greatly admire Stuart Paine, who on my Grandfather Byrd's '33-'34 expedition to the South Pole, navigated his dog team as far south as any man, except Amundsen and Scott. He writes of braving incredible hardships with the confidence, and even nonchalance, of a resourceful, extremely capable, and hardworking New Hampshire yankee. I thoroughly enjoyed reading this diary." — Richard E. Byrd, III
"In Footsteps on the Ice we find a man with boundless energy and enthusiasm who felt responsible for the expedition and took it upon himself to tackle any task, no matter how messy and dirty. We feel his different moods during the long, dark winter night where the men were in close contact with each other. Stuart Paine's courage and determination shine for all to see." — Leverett Byrd
"Footsteps on the Ice is a very special diary! It was written on a day-to-day basis by a dog sled driver during Admiral Byrd's second Antarctic expedition. Unlike most diaries that dryly record the events of the day, this one transports the reader to Antarctica to experience what the writer was experiencing as he explored a section of the earth never before seen. Read it and enjoy!" — Captain Brian Shoemaker, USN (ret.), Former Commander of Operation Deep Freeze
"Here at last is an exciting insider's look at what really went on during an Antarctic expedition. Paine takes readers back to an earlier era and puts them into the hut with the explorers." — T. H. Baughman, author of *Pilgrims on the Ice: Robert Falcon Scott's First Antarctic Expedition*
"Footsteps on the Ice captures the thrill and pain of dogsledding across unexplored Antarctica seven decades ago, at the transition to mechanized surface and air transportation. Paine's unedited and very candid comments on his fellows "on the ice" during the

winter beneath the snow, and over the ice sheet the following summer, charmingly capture the naïve grumbling of a 23-year old, and his inspired awe at the beauty of Antarctica. — John C. Behrendt, author of *The Ninth Circle: A Memoir of Life and Death in Antarctica, 1960–1962*

M. L. Paine, the daughter of Stuart Paine, is an independent researcher who resides in Nevada and Alaska.

During the Great Depression, Stu Paine signed on as a dogsled driver for Admiral Byrd in his attempt to reach the South Pole. It was Paine and his companions who set the record for the "farthest South" any American had yet gone. Now his daughter has edited his diaries for publication, with lots of contemporary photos. The result is a book that is raw and real. Paine's diaries have given me more of a picture of Antarctica than a dozen books I've read about that vast, cold land. For example, he wrote on August 14, 1934: "Nature, strong + big, has let human ambitions contaminate her realm only at great cost. But it is only for a while -- We will return. Other expeditions will come + go, hanging like flies on an edge of a dish, to the edge of Antarctica, here to-day, gone tomorrow. And all the while the blizzards come, the temperature sinks to the seventies + eighties [below zero F], the seals + penguins + gulls come + go, the overwhelming forces of the ice pressing down from the plateau will go on, tremendous, grand + awful. How few see it -- what a pity, a land of inspiration and to most people a land of monotony + terror. As in no other place, peace holds sway, the peace of God perhaps --" A great book for Arctic and Antarctic fans and also for those who love reading diaries to get a glimpse of the person who wrote them.

Wonderful book. I was with the 1962-63 geological party that found the cairn with the can containing the note that Paine and party left on Mt. Weaver in 1934. Reading that part of their journey made my day! Larry

This diary exemplifies exploration of a type that will not occur again on this planet - long, grinding, dangerous, isolated endurance exploration

The real thing. I prefer diaries to memoir books

The Second Byrd Antarctic Expedition (1933-1935) was a spectacular outing principally

remembered for the self-isolation of its leader at Bolling Advance Base. In addition to nearly expiring of carbon monoxide saturation, Byrd also created the model for future Antarctic exploration, coordinating dogs, tractors and planes for the first time. The expedition (BAE II, for short) accomplished a splendid agenda of geographical and geological field projects, and Stuart Paine participated in two of them. He mushed 150 miles into the frigid interior, breaking trail and caching supplies in the Antarctic "fall" of 1934 and was one of three men who completed a grand 1,410-mile sledge trek into the Queen Maud Mountains in the "summer" of that year, picking up the geological reconnaissance where Larry Gould, Norman Vaughan and their BAE I cohorts left off in 1929. Paine (1910-1960), a tall, bespectacled New Englander and a Naval reservist, had graduated from Yale and landed a job as an ad man in New York when at 22 he joined the expedition as a dog driver and navigator. His 3 leather-bound expedition diaries--detailed and reflective--bounced between closets and garages until his daughter, Merlyn, decided to transcribe them. The intended audience was initially her children and family, but the project fortunately gained momentum. Profusely illustrated with never-before-published photographs, the Paine diaries provide a gritty and intimate glimpse of classic Antarctic operations prior to the advent of the LC-47, Sno-Cat and GPS. Memorable vignettes include: Ex-Mountie Alan Innes-Taylor reading Khalil Gibran in a trail tent, curled in a sleeping bag with a faulty zipper ("Al nearly froze last night + his bag is sheathed in ice"). The backstage politics at Little America as the crew debated a dead-of-winter tractor trip to Advance Base to rescue Admiral Byrd. The joys of pathfinding in the frosted Queen Mauds, and the utter elation of discovering a natural amphitheatre there and the most southerly life forms (lichens) then detected. The principal supporting character is Paine's savvy lead sled dog, Jack. Nursed by his master through mid-winter surgery--Jack froze his tail, and the appendage had to be amputated with an ax--the black and white Labrador husky could be trusted to detect and safely negotiate crevasses without human guidance.

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