

**THE ANTARCTIC VOYAGE OF THE HMAS WYATT EARP.** Phillip Law. 1995. St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin. xii + 152 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 1-86373-803-7. \$Aus29.95.

This book fills a gap in Phillip Law's earlier writings on his time with the Australian National Antarctic Research Expeditions (ANARE) — the *Wyatt Earp* saga rates only a mention in his *Antarctic odyssey* (1983). Law was appointed senior scientific officer to the ANARE in 1947, and in this capacity he voyaged south on *Wyatt Earp* in the 1947/48 austral summer, under the then officer-in-charge, Group Captain Stuart Campbell. Soon after, Law became head of the Australian Antarctic Division, the key agency of ANARE, a position he held until 1966.

The author deals briefly with the background to the start-up of the ANARE program, and covers the preparation for his own scientific work in cosmic ray physics before starting on the expedition voyage itself. The book concludes with a personal account of the bureaucratic processes leading up to the filling of senior ANARE positions in 1948–1949.

The 41 m, timber-hulled *Wyatt Earp* started life in 1919 as the Norwegian herring vessel *Fanefford*, and was purchased by Lincoln Ellsworth for his series of expeditions to Antarctica in the 1930s. Refitted and ice-strengthened, it was renamed by Ellsworth for the famous marshal of the American west. The Australian connection in those days was Sir Hubert Wilkins, aviator and adventurer, who was a member of Ellsworth's expeditions. The vessel was purchased by Australia in 1939, and, after a period in general naval service as HMAS *Wongala*, the decision was taken to refit her for Antarctic expeditions, initially to explore the coast of the Australian Antarctic Territory. The Royal Australian Navy took responsibility for the project and for the continued operation of the vessel, the name of which reverted to *Wyatt Earp*.

The expedition voyage is a rather sorry tale. After a false start, which involved returning to Melbourne for repairs, the ship lurched about the Southern Ocean and then the edge of the pack ice. According to Law, 'rolling through angles of 50 degrees or more each side of the vertical is not uncommon.' She proved unequal to the task of ice-breaking, but was able to reach the Balleny Islands and Macquarie Island before returning to Melbourne. The shortcomings of *Wyatt Earp*, including persistent water leaks and the inconvenience and discomfort enjoyed by those on board, are described by Law in some detail, as are some of the idiosyncrasies and 'Boys Own' type pranks of members of the crew and the expedition party. Sensibly, *Wyatt Earp* was paid off after the voyage and sold to a private company for the coastal trade in mid-1948.

The principal objective of the 1947–1948 voyage — 'to attempt to reach the coast of George V Land...and to discover...a possible site for a future Australian Antarctic station' — was not fulfilled. It was not until *Kista Dan* was chartered from J. Lauritzen of Denmark in the 1953/54 season that a permanent Australian station on the Antarctic

continent was established.

The final chapter gives an insight, however one-sided, into the office politics of the time. Various correspondence is reproduced with commentary, but the sniping at Stuart Campbell finally wears a bit thin.

There are many black-and-white photographs interspersed through the text, the best by Laurie Le Guay, the official photographer. A number of the photographs feature the author. The choice for the front cover of a shot of the ship's eventual demise on the Queensland coast in 1959 is rather incongruous, given the many shots available with an Antarctic backdrop. A comprehensive index is included, and there are several appendices.

This volume of recollections reveals much about the author and puts a very personal perspective on events of the time. It should be popular with Antarctic enthusiasts. (David Lyons, Institute of Antarctic and Southern Ocean Studies/Antarctic Cooperative Research Centre, University of Tasmania, GPO Box 252C, Hobart, Tasmania 7001, Australia.)

**MY LIFE OF ADVENTURE.** Norman D. Vaughan with Cecil B. Murphey. 1995. Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books. viii + 246 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 0-8117-0892-6. \$US24.95.

If you were to scan the 'Earth Almanac' in the back pages of *National Geographic* (vol. 180, no. 5, November 1991), you would find an unusual, and very memorable, short article. It reveals the ambition of an 86-year-old man to cross the Antarctic, on a dog sled, one last time before an Antarctic agreement banned dogs forever from that continent on 1 April 1994.

Now picture a 10,302 ft mountain called Mount Vaughan and imagine the same man successfully climbing that mountain just three days short of his eighty-ninth birthday. If you can begin to conceive of the exploits of this uniquely remarkable octogenarian, then you can begin to imagine the kind of excitement that awaits you among the pages of Norman Vaughan's *My life of adventure*.

Do not be deceived though. Vaughan's reminiscences are not entirely those of a super being who never failed or put a foot wrong. With surprising honesty, Vaughan recounts not only his peaks (literally), but also his troughs. In one passage he sketches the image of a man of 68, newly arrived in Anchorage, down on his luck, estranged from his wife, and shovelling snow in exchange for breakfast. In another he reveals that the last Antarctic dog-sled trip failed, foiled by an air crash. Ironically, that journey retracing the route of the 1928–1930 Byrd expedition, of which he was a member, was to have delivered him in fitting style to the foot of Mount Vaughan for his ascent.

Such scenes would be depressing for a reader were it not for Vaughan's characteristic love of life, overriding optimism, and ability always to come out ahead. After all, this is a man who, among his many adventures, once taught Pope John Paul II how to 'mush' a dog sled and then rode on it, who gate-crashed President Carter's inaugural pa-