

make it a book for the library rather than for the individual. (Julian A. Dowdeswell, Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, Lensfield Road, Cambridge CB2 1ER.)

THE COLLEGE HILL CHRONICLES: HOW THE UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA CAME OF AGE. Neil Davis. 1993. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Foundation. x + 627 pp, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 1-883309-01-8. US\$30.00.

The College Hill chronicles is a partial history of the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, from its conception and founding in 1915 to the installation of Ernest Patty as president of the University in 1953.

The author, Neil Davis, is a geophysicist who took his undergraduate degree at the University, enrolling as a freshman in 1950. He tells of arriving from his parents' Alaska homestead and sensing an 'undercurrent of discord' on the campus. After his retirement from a long career as a geophysicist, he returned to pursue the history of the institution and its people, and to examine the conflict he sensed in his department as a young student in the early 1950s.

Davis opens his book with a brief discussion of the prehistory of the land where the Fairbanks campus was built. The book suffers from an apparent impulse to include every fact or opinion that is available from any source. The author had access to private papers of several of the principal players in the story and his own personal accumulation from the lifetime habits of a packrat. Davis does not claim to be a historian, and the book suffers from a lack of focus and meandering writing.

The conflict that Davis sensed on arrival at the University was the fight after Terris Moore succeeded Charles Bunnell as president. It was also the power struggle between those two men when Bunnell was named president emeritus and allowed to stay on into Moore's tenure. Moore initially suggested that Davis write the book, and gave him full access to his personal papers. The conflict these men and their supporters experienced is presented in minute detail. This book is a case study that supports the observation of Henry Kissinger to the effect that, 'Academic politics are so vicious because the stakes are so small.' There are certainly other stories to be told about the University of Alaska system, but this book stops at the end of Moore's term.

Davis employs an overwrought writing style that cries out for an editor. For example, he describes *fata morgana* thus: 'Adjacent mountaintops reach out to kiss, then coyly jump back and make strange faces at each other or disappear altogether' (page 4).

He dismisses complex matters out of hand, such as, 'Over the coming years the missionaries would receive much blame for helping to destroy Alaska's Native cultures, but the missionaries did work that bettered the lives of the Natives, particularly by providing education and health care. In addition to their aid to the welfare of the Natives, the missionaries realized that effective medical

care was a means of breaking the shamans' spiritual hold over the people. The missionaries did what they could, yet they were few in number, so the Native population continued to decline, racked by severe epidemics of infectious disease that neither the shamans nor the missionaries could combat' (page 11). Davis ignores the effects on Native children of forcing them to stop speaking their own languages and to feel shame for their traditional beliefs. He implies that missionaries were a seamless whole, and that they could have stopped the decline in Native population, if only there were more of them.

Unfortunate references to native Alaskans appear in the text, such that in his discussion of the Klondike gold rush, in which he opines that, 'the Natives perhaps were restless, but certainly suitably subdued' (page 14), and states that Chief Charley of Charley River thought that Judge Wickersham, the University's first president, was 'truly...a big chief' (page 24). He states that the 'non-Native population in Wickersham's district was 1500' (page 23). The reader is not told how many Alaska Natives lived in the district. If that statistic is not available from any source, then that fact is noteworthy in and of itself. However, the reader does not learn whether Davis did not find out or if the numbers were not kept for Alaska Natives.

Davis does not single out Alaska Natives. Many people are categorized without supporting evidence. For example, 'critical for a research organization is the ability to make its own financial decisions. The director and his or her staff should make those decisions — not a comptroller across campus who is hired for his accountancy rather than decision-making skills' (page 466). There is certainly a story here of an old grievance, but it is not necessarily a universal truth that comptrollers can't have skills in decision-making.

Although Davis tells us early on that he is no historian, he has taken on the historian's task in this lengthy book about a brief period in the University's history. His prejudices are obvious. This book is really a memoir as told by Davis. It may be the last word on this old conflict, because most of the players are gone, and few people would care to re-engage the fight. (Barbara Hodgin, 100 East Cook Avenue, Anchorage, Alaska 99501, USA.)

MOMENTS OF TERROR: THE STORY OF ANT-ARCTIC AVIATION. David Burke. 1994. London: Robert Hale. 320 pp, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 0-7090-5309-6.

David Burke is an Australian journalist with three Antarctic assignments to his credit. In 1964, at the invitation of US 'Operation Deep Freeze,' he accompanied the first direct flight from Melbourne to McMurdo. Following a successful air drop over Amundsen-Scott Station at the South Pole, the ski-equipped Hercules transport plane experienced problems while attempting an unscheduled landing at Byrd Station with falling cabin pressure and a critical shortage of fuel. To cap it all, the plane's forward landing gear iced up. A crash landing seemed inevitable,