

**SNOWSHOES & STETHOSCOPES: TALES OF MEDICINE AND FLYING IN THE CANADIAN NORTH.** By JOHN DALE. Nelson, British Columbia: Daedalus Publishing, 1997. 158 p., maps, b&w illus. Softbound. Cdn\$16.95 + \$3.50 s&h.

Rarely does one have the opportunity to read the exploits of someone who is both doctor and flyer. As such, this book provides interesting glimpses into flying, the life of an isolated doctor in the Arctic, the Arctic itself, and of course the Inuit people. Being autobiographical, it touches on other aspects of the writer's life.

"Snowshoes" and "stethoscopes" sound nice together in the title, but snowshoes don't actually come into the picture. Further, is the book really a collection of "tales"? True, there are some good stories, many absorbing and illuminating. But I consider the book to be really the writer's memoirs.

I enjoyed the Acknowledgements, in which Dale finds similarities between flying and writing a book and gives thanks to all the "ground crew" who helped him with the manuscript.

In the Foreword, Dale states that his experiences in the Arctic form the focus for most of the book. I believe the book would have carried more impact had he eliminated or condensed matters—except perhaps for flying—that did not relate to the Arctic, for example, his disenchantment with pediatrics and his apparent passion for philosophy.

Dale got off to a good start with an interesting "Prologue," which could have served quite nicely as the first chapter. He began the Prologue with an italicized excerpt from his diary, a technique used in several chapters. I honestly cannot see any value in separating out these diary entries. Why not incorporate them in the body of the chapter? This part began with an emergency call that immediately captured my interest, but the outcome somehow got lost amidst historical references and comments on the Inuit.

The maps are of mediocre quality, and the absence of captions does not help. Most of the black-and-white pictures are sharp and clear. I wondered, however, about the order of these pictures. For some, the captions are excerpts from the text, which offer the reader little help in identifying the person or place (a reference to the page number would have helped.)

The dramatic Belfast episode in chapter 1 did hold my attention initially, but on reflection, I began to ask why it was included when a paragraph summarizing Dale's medical education would have sufficed.

One must respect the author for his honesty: "I am probably totally unqualified for this job" (p. 8); "Definitely a sense of failure" (p. 21, after quitting his training). But I wonder about his sincerity in writing "I felt I would happily switch places with her" (a little girl dying from cystic fibrosis, p. 18). Dale's passion for flying is unmistakable; I found myself pulling for him when reading how he started flying again at Smithers to get his license and ordered his Citabria plane. But he wanders off the subject with references to the history of northern British Columbia and Oblate missionaries, white

exploration of that area, and various patient stories. "Rosie's Story," though interesting and revealing, definitely interrupts the flow of that flying part of the book.

By the chapter entitled "The Arctic Beckons," the reader is finally into the core of the book. But it is disappointing to find most of this chapter devoted to historical references, valuable though they might be. (Historical material could have been nicely interwoven with places like Gjoa Haven, where he actually spent some time.) And apart from one or two instances, the author gives no indication of the source of this material. It's not clear what route Dale and his wife took on the way north to Cambridge Bay: on page 58 they're travelling up to Whitehorse in a VW station wagon; two pages later, they are flying by jet from Edmonton to Yellowknife.

Chapter 8 offers some insight into the Inuit people, but it could have been improved by a good character sketch of someone Dale knew well. His research is deficient in at least two areas: the "terrible tuberculosis epidemic" (p. 67) occurred during the 1940s, not the 1950s and 1960s; Dr. Otto Schaefer denies ever having claimed that the igloo offered any protection against the spread of the tuberculosis bacteria. Other statements on medical matters are also questionable. I doubt if many experienced surgeons would include "bowel fistula formation" (p. 98) as a significant complication of late surgery for appendicitis.

For non-flyers, terms like VOR, VHF Omni Range, and QBV convey very little.

Dale's statement (p. 105): "Later came all the others, worst of all perhaps the missionaries" does not square with the 32-year Arctic experience of Dr. Otto Schaefer. Dr. Schaefer shared with me his admiration and respect for the workers at Aklavik's Roman Catholic and Anglican Hospitals and the Anglican Hospital at Pangnirtung. Perhaps the key to the author's statement is to be found later, on page 131, where he describes himself as "a total unbeliever."

Chapters like "Medevacs and Arctic Flying" provide superb insight into the immense problems of providing health care to small settlements and isolated areas over phenomenal distances. The isolation described in the following chapter is probably the major burden carried by any doctor or nurse working in the North. With disarming honesty, Dale goes on in chapter 15 to describe his almost overwhelming feelings of depression, self-deprecation, and inertia. He was "bushed" up to the eyebrows. But the Arctic still captured his fancy, and when he headed for England, it was to study at Cambridge's Scott Polar Research Institute. After returning to Canada, he got a call to go to Baffin Island as the doctor for a large mining company, and went without hesitation.

It seems his most cherished dream was realized a few years later, when he flew his own plane back to the Arctic. One gets the impression that flying is really his first love, and there is really nothing to compare with cruising through the skies high above the sheer magnificence and grandeur of the Arctic terrain.

The book ends abruptly after the description of a ten-hour flight from Inuvik down to central British Columbia. The ten-line Epilogue fails to establish any meaningful "closure."

This is a book with great potential, but like most memoirs it would benefit greatly from some editing. If that were done, I see no reason for it not to appeal to a wide readership.

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**VOICES FROM THE BAY: TRADITIONAL ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE OF INUIT AND CREE IN THE HUDSON BAY BIOREGION.** Compiled by MIRIAM McDONALD, LUCASSIE ARRAGUTAINAQ, and ZACK NOVALINGA. Ottawa, Ontario: Canadian Arctic Resources Committee and Environmental Committee of the Municipality of Sanikiluaq, 1997. xiii + 98 p., maps, b&w illus. Softbound. Cdn\$41.14 (includes postage from the Canadian Arctic Resources Committee).

Placing traditional ecological knowledge on paper often seems an attempt to make a silhouette: the outlines can be traced, perhaps from several angles, but even the compilers acknowledge that the essence is missing. *Voices from the Bay* is an elegant proof that this need not always be so. Miriam McDonald, Lucassie Arragutainaq, and Zack Novalinga have produced a beautiful, eloquent, evocative summation of why Hudson Bay matters to those who live there, and why the rest of us should listen to them.

Despite the subtitle, this book is not about traditional ecological knowledge as it is often narrowly defined. It does indeed include a detailed description of the Bay and its environment, as well as appendices with information about certain animals. But it is far more than a compendium of observations and explanations. Copious quotations from Cree and Inuit residents of the villages around the Bay describe how they feel about the changes that are occurring and what they consider to be the most pressing needs in their struggle to pass on to their children the clean and productive environment in which they were raised. These “voices from the Bay” enlighten us not with information but with insight.

The book has four main sections, plus appendices on methods, environmental indicators, and other details from earlier Hudson Bay Programme reports, also available from the Canadian Arctic Resources Committee. The main sections of *Voices from the Bay* are Traditional Knowledge of Ecosystem Components, Environmental Change and its Significance to Inuit and Cree, Indigenous Perspectives on Development, and Future Needs. These are illustrated with maps, diagrams, and photographs. The diagrams, unfortunately, are often complex and confusing, failing to distinguish between causes and effects, as in Figure 4: Effects of Currents, Spring Tides, and Wind on Sea Ice. The maps, on the other hand, are well done, and the well-chosen combination of old and new photographs vividly shows the continuity and change that are characteristic of Arctic communities.

Two significant aspects of the research that led to *Voices from the Bay* are that it was carried out by Cree and Inuit, and that its funding came from a wide variety of sources, including government agencies, private foundations, utilities, and the Canadian Arctic Resources Committee and its members. Few community-based projects are able to garner such support, and the results should encourage those who wish to see a greater role for indigenous peoples in research about them and their knowledge.

The great strength of *Voices from the Bay* is that it conveys a tremendous volume of information without dense text and without losing the connection with the people of the region. Descriptions of traditional knowledge run several risks: abstracting data so that its context is lost, cramming in too many tangential threads so that narrative continuity is lost, or, conversely, reducing a rich and interrelated body of knowledge to a simple sketch. The compilers have applied a light hand to the text that explains and joins the quotations, and the result is a finely balanced presentation that places the “voices” in context without overshadowing their message.

But the book has interest far beyond the manner of its presentation. The Hudson Bay bioregion is not the pristine and untouched wilderness of southern imagination. Enormous development projects, such as hydroelectric development in Quebec, Ontario, and Manitoba, have altered patterns of wildlife and humans. Contamination from long-range transport of pollutants as well as from local military sites has entered the food chain. Social change, too, has altered patterns of land use and other cultural practices in Cree and Inuit communities of the area. The combination of such factors makes the challenges facing today’s youth vastly different from those that faced their parents and grandparents.

Despite these changes, *Voices from the Bay* gives a strong answer to the question, how can the knowledge accumulated through generations of living along Hudson Bay and depending on its resources help solve problems today? Traditional knowledge can be used with scientific knowledge to better understand the environment and potential impacts of development, both locally and globally, as indicated in Figure 12. Cultural patterns reinforce survival skills needed in the North. Respect for the environment supports sound management of resources. Above all, for the people of the region, their knowledge and their culture provide the basis for thriving communities. Without that knowledge and the culture built upon it, the communities of Hudson Bay are in peril.

This peril is perhaps one of the most troublesome issues raised. How can Cree and Inuit cultures be sustained in the face of exposure to southern influences ranging from TV to food to industry? Will the wisdom shown in the statements of the elders be lost when they are lost? Or can the younger generations maintain the connection with their ancestors and with their land and sea? This sense of loss permeates many of the quotations, and the “voices from the Bay” should be heard not just by outsiders, but by the people of the Bay.

*Voices from the Bay* conveys a sense of meaning, a sense of belonging, and a sense of sadness. We learn what matters and why, but we also learn to fear for the future. We are given