

celestial observations. All evidence indicates that Henson was barely literate. And in a 1909 letter to his patron, Thomas H. Hubbard, Peary stated categorically that Henson could not take astronomical observations.) Moreover, one cannot be impressed with the authority of Avery's demonstration of how easy it would be for Peary to navigate a true course north when he states as a fact that, 'because the sun completes a full 360-degree circle of the earth in one twenty-four-hour day, one degree of longitude equates to four minutes' time' (page 289).

So Avery is right and wrong: his trip does not prove Peary reached the pole nor even that Peary could have reached the pole in 37 days in 1909. It does prove that Tom Avery's party, as equipped and resupplied, reached the North Pole in 37 days in 2005, however. And it shows that just as in Peary's time, big money can be coaxed from rich sponsors if they see some advantage in providing it. Avery did not attach Barclays

Capital and all his numerous other corporate sponsors' names to newly discovered or invented headlands on the Arctic Ocean as Peary did to guarantee their immortality, but he does splash them liberally across his pages, like the branding done in contemporary movies, to increase their exposure.

Peary once said that discovering the North Pole would make him the equal of Columbus and Napoleon. And the reactions of Avery's explorer-critics to his success in reaching the North Pole in 37 days, something Wally Herbert said beforehand was 'impossible,' and Avery's retorts suggest that one thing, at least, hasn't changed in a hundred years: the egos of explorers and adventurers and their overestimation of the importance of what they have actually done or claimed to have done are still as big as they were a century ago. (Robert M. Bryce, Montgomery College, 20200 Observation Drive, Germantown, Maryland 20876, USA.)

SMITHSONIAN AT THE POLES: CONTRIBUTIONS TO INTERNATIONAL POLAR YEAR SCIENCE. Igor Krupnik, Michael A. Lang, and Scott E. Miller (Editors). 2009. Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press. xv + 405 p. illustrated, paper cover. ISBN 978-0-9788460-1-5. Free on request to Ms. Ginger Strader, Manager (straderg@si.edu). doi:10.1017/S0032247409990349

This volume represents the Proceedings of the 'Smithsonian at the Poles Symposium,' held at the Smithsonian Institution on 3–4 May 2007, and is published as a contribution to the International Polar Year (IPY) 2007–2008. The symposium was a joint initiative of the International Council for Science (ICSU) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). An objective of the symposium was to increase understanding of how polar regions affect the habitability of our planet.

Multidisciplinary research from the IPY already provides new evidence of the widespread effects of global warming in the polar regions. Snow and ice are declining in both, affecting human livelihoods as well as local plant and animal life in the Arctic, as well as global ocean and atmospheric circulation and sea level. The chapters in this volume address many of those concerns and more, as our planet experiences changes that will eventually affect humans as well as its fauna and flora.

The 31 chapters by 79 authors represent research associated with Smithsonian initiatives, although the numerous co-authors

from other affiliations show wide involvement on a variety of subjects. The chapters are grouped into six themes – IPY histories and legacies; cultural studies; systematics and biology of polar organisms; methods and techniques of under-ice research; environmental change and polar marine ecosystems; and polar astronomy: observational cosmology. Multi-authored chapters are particularly prominent in the latter 4 groups, where affiliations range from a variety of U.S. and non-U.S. academic institutions and research centres, the Smithsonian Institution, and native populations in Greenland and Nunavut. Along with authors' names commonly seen in the literature associated with products of their research (Gerald Kooyman, Scripps, diving physiology of emperor penguins and Weddell seals, as only one example), it is gratifying to see native names as co-authors as well, indicating their involvement in the research. Examples are seen in a chapter on narwhal dentition, the 15 authors have affiliations from the Smithsonian as well as names of elders and hunters from Nunavut and Greenland.

Most of the illustrations and maps are in black and white, with some on glossy paper in colour to enhance the resolution and readability of the data. An 11 page index helps the reader locate significant topics in the various chapters. Smithsonian should be commended for making the book available at no cost, thus widening the audience for a significant series of subjects related to the IPY. (John Spletstoeser, P.O Box 515, Waconia, Minnesota U.S.A. 55387.)

ANTARCTIC PILOT: COMPRISING THE COASTS OF ANTARCTICA AND ALL ISLANDS SOUTH OF THE USUAL ROUTE OF VESSELS. S.J. Lawrence (compiler). 2009. Taunton: United Kingdom Hydrographic Office. 7th edition. xviii + 489p., illustrated, hard cover. ISBN: 978-0-70-774-2014. £50.10. doi:10.1017/S0032247409990465

The very subtitle of this latest edition of the Antarctic Pilot referring to 'all islands south of the usual route of vessels' is likely to engender a quickening of the pulse in the reader even before perusal of the volume starts. One has long suspected that

deep in the bowels of the Hydrographic Office in Taunton there exists some person, who perhaps rarely sees the light of day, whose task it is to insert in these ostensibly most functional and prosaic of books an element of poetry, a desire to bid farewell to normal cares and to embark on a voyage ... it matters little where. A much more distinguished writer than the present reviewer made a similar point. Somerset Maugham at the start of his famous story *The vessel of wrath*, written in 1931, enlarges on the merits of the series of works of which the Antarctic Pilot is representative. 'There are few books in the world that contain more meat than the Sailing Directions published by the Hydrographic Department. ...'. He devotes more than a page of the story to a description