

## OBITUARY

The **Hon ALEXANDER CAMPBELL GEDDES**, OBE, MC, died on 21 September 1972. He was born in Dublin on 24 September 1910 and educated at Stowe School and the Royal School of Mines. He became a mining engineer and, during World War II, was first in the Field Artillery, then Military Assistant to the Deputy Chief of the Imperial General Staff. After the war, he was director of a number of companies, many of them active in the export trade. In 1954, he started his own business as consultant, property developer, and entrepreneur. Apart from business, his chief interest was in problems of conservation. He was on the management committee of the British National Appeal of the World Wildlife Fund. He was twice married and had nine children.

He made only one Arctic expedition, in 1933, when he joined the Oxford University Expedition to Spitsbergen as a geologist. He was a good geologist, with the immense verve and the mental and physical energy that denote all the members of his very remarkable family. During the expedition, he was one of a four-man party that was landed in Sorgfjorden. They spent some two months travelling in an open boat down Wijdeforden to map its eastern side, and they did a first-class job despite the dangers and difficulties of travel.

The mix of this party did not correspond with the rather grey meteorological conditions they met. Their life was colourful and discord was not always absent — but almost all of it was constructive. Not one of them would have missed the experience, and I was sorry not to be able to persuade Geddes to join our 1935-36 expedition.

I have paid tribute to his quite unusual mental and physical resources. The range of his later activities show that his potential was very largely realized. He was a man whom I am very glad to have had as a friend, for there are few like him. At that time, with his gigantic frame, golden beard and hair, he looked the epitome of a young Viking. Provocative, dogmatic, eternally enquiring, generous, kind — he had many strong and contradictory qualities.

The world could do with a few more of his kind — not least in Britain.

Sandy Glen

With the death of **WALTER ERNEST HOW** on 5 August 1972, we have lost one of the few remaining sailors of the Heroic Age of Antarctic exploration. Born in Bermondsey on 25 December 1884, he joined Shackleton's *Endurance* expedition, 1914-16. He was a faithful and strong supporter of his leader, especially in the days when heated comparison between the merits of Scott and Shackleton were common. He served in the merchant navy during World War I and from time to time after that. During his later years, before retirement at 70, he was a house decorator. Although How went south only once, he maintained a keen interest in the

Antarctic, and nothing gave him greater pleasure than to get hold of photographs, especially of ships, taken on later expeditions, and to make oil paintings from them for the members of those expeditions. His memory for colour and atmosphere were phenomenal for a man of his age and, within the last ten years, in spite of failing sight, he was still painting pictures of subjects such as *Endurance* in the ice or of Winter Quarters on Elephant Island, in which the impression of the cold still air and faintly pink sky of an Antarctic spring morning was remarkably portrayed. How was a stalwart member of the Antarctic Club, and his familiar and regular attendance at the club's reunions will be sorely missed.

A. Stephenson

**Mrs EVA McGOWN**, a noted Alaskan personality, died in a fire that destroyed the Nordale Hotel in Fairbanks on 22 February 1972. She was born Eva Montgomery in Belfast, Northern Ireland, on 23 June 1883. She travelled to Fairbanks in 1914 to marry a fellow Irishman, Arthur Louis McGown, whom she had previously known only through correspondence. After his death in 1930, she continued to live there and to take a very active part in community activities. She became Fairbanks' "official hostess", an office created specially for her with duties that ranged from rather grand public appearances to gossip over cups of tea with anyone who thought he needed advice, assistance, or just conversation. Her sympathetic charm, evident good will, and wit endeared her not only to the vast number of persons she knew personally, but to the very many more who had heard her on radio, seen her on television, or had read about her in interviews, articles, and books. (One of the published tributes to her memory recalls the broadcast of a "hilarious 15 minutes wherein [Richard] Dimbleby tried to interview Eva and he could not stop her or get a word in edgewise. That was Eva.") She consciously, and with some justice, typified the Alaskan pioneering spirit, and fellow Alaskans were glad to see her as a living link with the early days of Fairbanks to which they nostalgically — and with a certain commercial interest — looked back. Her friends responded generously to a memorial appeal, and some \$12 000 was collected for donation to the Fairbanks hospital.

**RUDOLPH ARTURO REYNOLDS**, secretary of the Hudson's Bay Company, died suddenly on 22 July 1972. He was born on 4 February 1906 in Deptford, Kent, the son of Captain W. Reynolds, surgeon with the Royal Army Medical Corps. Reynolds was educated at Harrow and St John's College, Cambridge, and was called to the bar in 1931. During the 1930's, he was assistant secretary to the Milk Marketing Board and served in the Territorial Army. During active service in Sicily and Italy, 1943-45, he attained the rank of lieutenant-colonel, being twice mentioned in despatches. In March 1946, he joined the Hudson's Bay Company and became its secretary on 1 April 1948. In that capacity, he served three governors of the company and was deeply involved in the legal and

constitutional issues connected with the transfer of the company's headquarters to Winnipeg in 1970\*. He served also, from 1946 until his retirement from the company in February 1971, as honorary secretary of the Hudson's Bay Record Society, taking a keen personal interest in the society's series, a handsome set of splendidly edited selections from the company's extensive archives.

**DAVID GEORGE STRATTON**, second-in-command of the Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition, 1955-58, died on 22 May 1972, aged 45. He was educated at Harrow and, after serving in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, came up to Clare College, Cambridge, in 1948, where he took an honours degree in geography. In 1951, he spent a few months as assistant glaciologist at the Tarfala glaciology laboratory in Swedish Lapland. In the same year, he joined the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey and was a member of the party that reopened and rebuilt the Survey's base at Hope Bay. During the two years he spent there, he made a number of notable journeys by dog team and, as assistant surveyor, added considerable topographical detail to the map of the area between Joinville Island in the north and Jason Peninsula in the south. In 1954, on return to the United Kingdom, he was the first person Sir Vivian Fuchs selected for the Trans-Antarctic Expedition. As stores officer, he had the task of preparing the lists of food and equipment required, discussing the expedition's special needs with the manufacturers, and coordinating the whole complex of materials for packing and shipping. His efficiency in this work and his later appointment as second-in-command contributed in no small measure to the eventual success of the expedition.

He sailed in *Theron* in 1955 to help the advance party to set up their base, later known as Shackleton, at the head of the Weddell Sea. In 1956, he returned to Shackleton with the main party on *Magga Dan*. His place in the history of polar exploration was assured when, as a member of the party that left Shackleton on 24 November 1958 and, 98 days later, reached the Ross Sea, he became one of the first men to have crossed Antarctica by way of the South Pole. The expedition marked the culmination of his active life as an explorer. During it he had become an accomplished polar traveller, and all with whom he worked were impressed by his enthusiasm and good humour. It was, however, his decisiveness and sang-froid in difficult situations that made him an invaluable member of any expedition. In 1954, he received the Polar Medal for his work at Hope Bay and, after the Trans-Antarctic Expedition, he was awarded a clasp. In 1958, the Royal Geographical Society gave him the Back Grant for polar exploration. In the years that followed, although no longer actively engaged in polar work, he maintained a close interest in all matters relating to it. He served on the council of the Royal Geographical Society and on the committee of the Friends of the Polar Institute; in 1969-70, he was president of the Antarctic Club.

\* *Polar Record*, Vol 15, No 97, January 1971, p 544.

In 1959, he joined British Petroleum Ltd, and his appointments included those of regional marketing manager in Scandinavia, general manager in Belgium, and marketing manager in south Europe and North Africa. It was during this last appointment, in 1970, that his business career was cut short when he contracted poliomyelitis, which left him completely paralysed. He displayed in his fight against this terrible affliction the same qualities of courage, endurance, and fortitude that had characterized his life as an explorer. Those who met him during the last months of his life know well the cheerfulness and determination that made it possible for him to continue with many of his polar interests. He is survived by his widow and a young son and daughter.

G. W. Marsh

**WILFRED JOSEPH AMADEUS TAUBER** was killed in a climbing accident on the sea cliffs of Anglesey, Wales, in April 1972. He was born in London in 1948 and was of German descent. Wilf came to the University of St Andrews in 1966, earned a first-class degree in English, and grew to love the Scottish Highlands. He soon established a reputation for his apparently effortless ability to travel and climb in all conditions. He joined the St Andrews expedition to Upernavik Ö, Umanak, west Greenland, in 1967, and he was the chief instigator of a return to the island in 1969 with an expedition that climbed 42 mountains, including the west ridge of Qioqe, one of the longest and most continuously difficult rock routes attempted by any party in the polar regions. Much of that expedition's success was due to Wilf's unrelenting and tireless energy and to his wholehearted enjoyment of living and climbing in the Arctic. He had planned to return to Greenland in 1970, but decided to accept instead an invitation to join the Scottish Hindu Kush Expedition. In 1971, he postponed a planned expedition to the Blossville Kyst to climb Ejnar Mikkelsens Fjeld, the highest unclimbed mountain in Greenland, when he learned that the ascent had been partially made by another expedition.

Wilf was a man of great physical and spiritual stamina, well balanced, and considerate to others less well endowed than himself. His death has meant an irreplaceable loss to his friends.

P. W. F. Gribbon