

Obituaries

Norman Vaughan, died on 23 December 2005 at the age of 100. A distinguished Antarctic explorer and adventurer, Vaughan was also a superbly accomplished dog driver and competed in several of the major Alaskan runs.

Vaughan was born in Salem, Massachusetts, on 19 December 1905, the son of a wealthy leather merchant. Educated at Milton Academy and at Harvard University, Vaughan acquired, at a very early age, a taste for an outdoors and adventurous life. His first serious trip abroad was as a member of the Grenfell mission to Labrador where he almost inevitably acquired expertise in dog driving because land communications between the various villages on that coast were by sled.

This was fortunate experience for Vaughan in that it assisted him to secure a place on Richard Byrd's 1928–1930 Antarctic expedition. This arrived at the Bay of Whales in early 1929 with 97 dogs and a huge weight of stores. Vaughan's nominal position appears to have been that of dog trainer but his youthful exuberance seems to have alienated the expedition's chief dog driver, Arthur Walden, and in Vaughan's apparently somewhat fevered imagination, this manifested itself in an idea that Walden would kill him if he had the chance. During the 1500 mile, three month expedition to the Queen Maud Mountains undertaken by Vaughan, Walden and four others, Vaughan, determined not to be caught by surprise took to sleeping outside the tent, which on the face of it seems to be more than ordinarily foolish. The expedition was, however, a great success and important geological, botanical and cartographical discoveries were made.

But, of course, it took second place in the eyes of the public in comparison with Byrd's flight over the South Pole and this may have decided Vaughan to reject Byrd's offer, made in 1932, to be second in command of a further expedition, as he detected that Byrd was primarily interested in developing his own reputation and that there might be little recognition for others.

He devoted more and more time to dog sledding and he represented the United States in that sport at the 1932 Winter Olympics at Lake Placid, New York, the only time that that activity has appeared as a Games discipline. With the advent of World War II, Vaughan joined the United States Army Air Corps and was engaged in search and rescue work in the north Atlantic and in Greenland. Later in the war, he was involved in taking 209 dogs and 17 drivers to the Ardennes to assist in the Battle of the Bulge, but the thaw came too soon for them to be of significant use. After the war, he was employed by the UN and in, the Korean War, he undertook psychological warfare duties, which seem to have included a rather fanciful plan to

influence the enemy by sending balloons over their lines from which propaganda cartoons would be released. He retired from the service in 1955 in the rank of Colonel.

Vaughan then engaged in business but the failure of his company and of his third marriage, precipitated an 'escape' to Alaska. This enabled him to continue with dog driving at which he became one of the very finest practitioners. He participated in 13 Iditarod races, and his last finish was in 1990 at the age of 84. He also participated in the Serum Run, which commemorates the 1925 dash to Nome to take anti-toxin serum to people stricken with diphtheria.

His interest in and love for the south had continued since his return to the United States in the early 1930s and he had revisited the Antarctic for the 50th anniversary of Byrd's expedition. This was the precursor to a remarkable series of events. He planned a further visit to the continent in 1993 in order to drive dogs for the last time before they were to be removed for environmental reasons. Unfortunately this did not come to pass when the aircraft carrying the dogs crash-landed at Patriot Hills.

Nothing daunted, Vaughan returned the following year and achieved the astonishing feat, at the age of 88, and with an artificial knee, of climbing Mount Vaughan (3140m; 10302ft) that had been named after him by Byrd.

Vaughan was the last representative of what might be called the golden age of polar exploration. He died very shortly after his hundredth birthday. The polar community is the poorer for his passing.

Ian R. Stone

Tore Gjelsvik, one of the 'grand old men' of Norwegian polar research and politics, died on 23 January 2006 at the age of 89 (Fig. 1).

Gjelsvik was born in Bodø, northern Norway, on 7 September 1916, but his family soon moved to Ski in southern Norway, where he grew up. He was a student at the University of Oslo when the Germans occupied Norway, but he managed to graduate in geology at the same time as playing an increasingly important role in the Resistance movement. Towards the end of the war, he was a central figure in the movement and he later produced two books describing some of these wartime experiences. During Gjelsvik's studies in geology he was one of the small number of students who attended lectures by Adolf Hoel, Svalbard geologist and the first leader of what later became the Norsk Polarinstitutt.

Gjelsvik married after the war and had four children, a girl and three boys. The fact that one of his sons predeceased him by a few years was a huge blow.



Fig. 1. Tore Gjelsvik.

A research fellowship at Harvard University 1946/47 led to a dr.philos. degree in Norway in 1953, and then work with the Geological Survey of Norway and for the UN in Turkey and Burma. In 1960 he was appointed director of the Norsk Polarinstitutt, a position he held until retirement in 1983.

When Gjelsvik took over the Institute in 1960, it was in acute need of modernisation and sufficient resources to manage all the tasks imposed on it by the Government. These included most of the research, surveying and official practical operations in and around Svalbard, since the Institute was the only government institution in Norway at that time which had the logistical capacity and activities covering the archipelago. Gjelsvik was a fearless and strong fighter for both the Institute and for Norway's polar obligations and status. In a period when Norway had little activity in Antarctica and strong voices in the government were calling for a complete withdrawal from Antarctic work, he mustered both his own private channels and his influence in the relevant Ministries to ensure that the activity continued and finally increased to become a standard part of the Institute's regular field expeditions. It was due to his personality and professional abilities rather than to any impressive Norwegian field activities that Gjelsvik became president of SCAR 1974–78. There is no doubt that Norwegian polar activities today owe much to the foundation he helped to lay.

Gjelsvik's network was large, both at home and abroad. He was chairman or member of many national and international committees and societies. He was honoured with the Swedish Nordstjärna order and the Polish Copernicus Medal in 1982, the Norwegian Commander of St Olav Order in 1984, and the German Georg von Neumayer Service Medal in 1988 for his contribution to developing German polar research.

Those of us who worked at the Institute under Gjelsvik remember him as a firm leader on whom we could rely to stand up for us and for the Institute whenever necessary. At the same time, he was informal and approachable and willing to listen and help. He continued with polar activities after his retirement, including an important effort to upgrade the *Fram* Museum in Oslo, of which he was chairman 1985–96.

It was difficult for Gjelsvik to accept that his role had become somewhat reduced towards the end. Happily his impressive career is reasonably well documented, and it is certain that his wartime and polar efforts will not be forgotten.

Susan Barr

James Houston, who died in April 2005, was a writer, designer and filmmaker with long experience in the Canadian Arctic.

Born in Toronto in 1921, Houston studied art at the age of 11 under Arthur Lismer at what is now the Art Gallery of Ontario and at the Ontario College of Art. He later studied life drawing in Paris at the Academie de la Grande Chaumière, engraving at Atelier 17 under William Hayter, and print making in Tokyo under Unichi Hiratsuka.

After five years of wartime service in the Toronto Scottish Regiment, Houston went to the Canadian eastern Arctic in search of, to him, a new land and a new people – the Inuit. He lived there from 1948 to 1962, for the last nine years as Northern Service Officer and Civil Administrator of west Baffin Island in the Northwest Inuit co-operative. He worked hard with the Canadian Guild of Crafts and with the Hudson's Bay Company to bring Inuit sculpture in stone, bone and walrus ivory to the attention of the outside world and for marketing within it. It was he who introduced the Inuit to the technique of making prints from sealskin. In these ways he encouraged Inuit self-esteem and pride in their native skills.

Houston was a close friend of the late Charles Gimpel, art connoisseur, French resistance hero in the Second World War, and benefactor of the Scott Polar Research Institute. Gimpel was a frequent visitor at Houston's Arctic station.

Latterly in his career, Houston moved to New York to work for Corning Glass. He is survived by his wife, Alice, and by two sons.

Geoffrey Hattersley-Smith

John Powell, who died on 4 August 2005, aged 72, was one of four young graduate students from the Department of Geography, McGill University, Montreal, who manned the Canadian IGY station at Lake Hazen, northern Ellesmere island, during the 1957–58 winter (Fig. 2).

The other members of the party were: Dick Harrington (Leader), Ian Jackson and David Ingle Smith, whose task was to take regular meteorological observations. After the summer party left the camp in mid-August, the winter



Fig. 2. John Powell, on the right, with his friend the late Brian Sagar, at the foot of the terminal icecliff of the Gilman Glacier.

party soon had problems. Firstly the diesel generator broke down, leaving them with no electric light, only oil lamps and candles, and without radio communication. Later the oil stove and heater in the hut malfunctioned for a time. For four months the outside temperature ranged below -40°C (-40°F), with a minimum temperature of -57°C (-71°F). Unsurprisingly the authorities in Ottawa were very concerned about the party's welfare, and arranged for a USAF C-130 Hercules aircraft from Thule Air Base, Greenland to fly over the camp in the winter darkness. There was great relief when green flares were observed, indicating that all was well. The experiences of the winter party are well described in Jackson's book *Does anyone read Lake Hazen?* (Jackson 2002). In April 1958, the summer party found the four men in excellent health and spirits.

John Michael Powell was born in Hampton, Middlesex, on 17 February 1933 and his schooldays were spent there and in North Devon and Norfolk. His parents were keen gardeners, and implanted in him a lifelong interest in plant geography. After 18 months national service in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps, mainly in Egypt, he entered University College, London where he gained his BSc in 1956. He then emigrated to Canada and soon joined the McGill Department of Geography under Professor Kenneth Hare. Following his return from Lake Hazen in 1958, Powell returned to McGill to write up the botanical work he had undertaken during the summer. With his friend and colleague, the late Brian Sagar, he returned to the Lake Hazen area mainly for glaciological and meteorological research on the Gilman Glacier, but also engaging in further plant collecting. At the end of the summer, the two men were evacuated by an RCAF flying-boat from the surface of the lake.

Back at McGill, Powell completed his thesis on the vegetation of the Lake Hazen area for an MSc degree. He later collaborated with Dr J. H. Soper of the Canadian National Museum, and of the 1958 field party, in a seminal article on that subject for the *Canadian Field Naturalist*.

Late in 1959, Powell joined the Forest Biology Laboratory of the Department of Agriculture in Calgary as a biometeorologist, thus combining his interests in vegetation and climate. After educational leave, he completed a PhD degree at the University of British Columbia in 1969. In the following year, he moved to Edmonton to join the Northern Forestry Research Centre with concerns in hydro-meteorology, forest-fire management, and climate change. He remained there until he retired in 1991.

His outside interests included ornithology: he was President of the Calgary Bird Club and of the Federation of Canadian Naturalists. In 1981, he was received the prestigious Loran L. Goulden Award for his work as a naturalist, conservationist and scientist.

John Powell is remembered by his many friends as a modest unassuming man, with a ready smile, who always completed the job in hand. He is survived by his wife, Margaret, whom he married in 1962 and by three daughters.

Geoffrey Hattersley-Smith

Reference

- Jackson, C.I. 2002. *Does anyone read Lake Hazen?* Edmonton: University of Alberta: Canadian Circumpolar Institute.