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Peary: The Explorer and the Man

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the chapters are not strictly faithful to this. The general lack of convergence of the chapters gives the impression that they may have been produced as separate papers, which later were glued together to produce a book. While this can be a legitimate way to create a book, the chapters should form an integrated whole; else, the resulting product is a compendium, not a book.

There would appear to be enough raw information in *Armed Forces* to lead to several, very good books on Alaska. If this information had been sifted and interpreted, a valuable contribution might have been made to a better understanding of our 49th state. But I found *Armed Forces* to be much like a cluttered attic: likely to have valuable and interesting objects, but hard to decipher as a pattern. A reader with a general curiosity about this subject would be advised to consult other sources first.

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Weems, John Edward. *Peary: The Explorer and the Man*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988. 362pp. \$11.95

Originally published in 1967, Weems' biography of Robert E. Peary and his search for the North Pole has been reissued just in time for the latest round of the controversy over his polar exploration. While the Cook portion of the affair seems to have gone away, new calculations based on Peary's apparent sextant

observations indicate that he might have been as much as 110 miles away from the pole on April 6th of 1909.

Regardless of the merits of this newest turn of the controversy, Peary remains an important and impressive figure in naval and polar exploration. Shortly after his graduation from Bowdoin College in 1877, Peary was appointed as a civil engineer in the Navy and began a career of major exploration, that was broken only by the tedium of late 19th Century naval staff service. He seems to have been a good civil engineer, but his heart lay with polar exploration as it had from his undergraduate days. The Navy—whether from lack of interest or remarkable foresight—granted him an unusual number of leaves of absence and eventually the support to pursue his passion.

Peary appears to have been thinking about the Pole when he was surveying a Nicaraguan canal route in 1885. Taking leave from the Navy in 1886, he set out to explore the west coast of Greenland and to test his ideas for polar travel. With additional leaves from the Navy and support from the American Geographical Society, he returned to Greenland in the winters of 1891/92 and 1893/94 and again in the summers of 1896 and 1897.

In 1898, despite the general opposition of the Navy but with the intervention of President McKinley, Peary was directed to "continue his great work in the North." He was given a five year leave at half pay. When the Spanish-American War

broke out, Peary left for four years in Greenland. These were productive years, when Greenland was recognized to be an island, and much was learned about travel by dogsled across the ice. On his return to the Navy, he passed the promotion exams to commander, accepted the presidency of the American Geographical Society, and found a new friend in the White House—Theodore Roosevelt.

With the President behind him, the Navy quickly saw the possibilities in polar exploration.

In the 1905/06 season, the Secretary of the Navy sent Peary to seek the North Pole, saying "Our national pride is involved in the undertaking, and this department expects that you will accomplish your purpose and bring further distinction to a service of illustrious traditions." A sledging season with unusually wide leads in the ice pack prevented Peary from reaching the pole that season.

Again with the active support of President Roosevelt, he set out in 1908 for Greenland. After establishing base camps and wintering-over, he set out for the Pole with Matthew Henson and several Eskimos. By Peary's calculations, he reached the Pole on April 9, 1909 and returned to fame and controversy. Eventually, Congress appointed him rear admiral in the Civil Engineer Corps in recognition of his accomplishments.

What sort of a man was Peary? Peary's diaries and letters show him to be a tough, individualistic driver who was extraordinarily dedicated to a goal that dominated his life.

While he had doubts and concerns for the hardships that his life's work caused for his family, he never deviated. One reads of Peary for a study in grit: this was a man who lost all his toes to frostbite in 1894 and still walked to the North Pole, 15 years later when he was 54 years old.

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Donnelly, Christopher. *Red Banner: The Soviet Military System in Peace and War*. Janes Information Group, Ltd., 1988. 288pp. \$52.50

The primary strength of *Red Banner* lies in the insights it provides on the underlying forces, motivations, and dynamics which act to shape the Soviet military forces and their doctrines.

Christopher Donnelly is the Director of the Soviet Studies Center at Sandhurst. One of his key premises is that the Soviets view war differently than we in the West do. Hence, he opens his book with a section called "Molding the Soviet Military Mind." He writes that "we may all share the same human features, but we possess them in different measures, and we develop different values depending on our experience and our circumstances. If this can be said of individuals, then it can also be said of nations and equally, of armies." In this section he focuses on the environmental, historic, national, military, cultural, and political factors that create the "lenses" through which Soviet