



The Noose of Laurels: Robert E. Peary and the Race to the North Pole

By Wally Herbert

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Who was first to reach the North Pole: Frederick Cook or Robert Peary? Or did neither? After 80 years of controversy, here is a plausible answer. A 1984 TV program, *The Race to the Pole*, which credited the discovery to Cook, so incensed Peary supporters that the National Geographic Society persuaded his family to release Peary's diary, astronomical observations and private notes for publication. Herbert, author of *Across the Top of the World* and a veteran polar explorer, was invited to assess these documents that had been closeted for 76 years. The material, dating back to Peary's youth, sheds new light on his character and on his obsession with fame. Herbert, who re-traced both the Cook and the Peary routes, here provides an intensive examination of each man's claim to the Pole. He demolishes Cook's claim, then questions Peary's navigation and log-keeping: there were no observations of longitude, and Peary may have been in error on both drift and magnetic variation. Herbert's verdict is that Peary did not reach the North Pole. This is a valuable addition to Arctic history, and a gripping adventure story. Illustrations.

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From Library Journal

While not quite the "definitive answer" to the Peary-Cook polar controversy claimed by the publisher, this book is the most thorough and balanced examination of Peary's "discovery" of the North Pole yet. Cook, probably deservedly, gets somewhat short shrift. English explorer and author (*Across the Top of the World*) Herbert has logged 20,000 miles in the Arctic himself and was the first outsider to have access to some crucial documentation of Peary's final trek. Like many previous investigators, Herbert finds Peary's claims to be insufficiently documented and flawed, but he has a new theory as to how Peary went wrong. Essential for polar buffs, superseding such works as John E. Weems's *Peary* (*LJ* 2/15/67; o.p.), but somewhat heavy going and detailed for tyros.

- *Jonathan F. Husband, Framingham State Coll. Lib., Mass.*

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