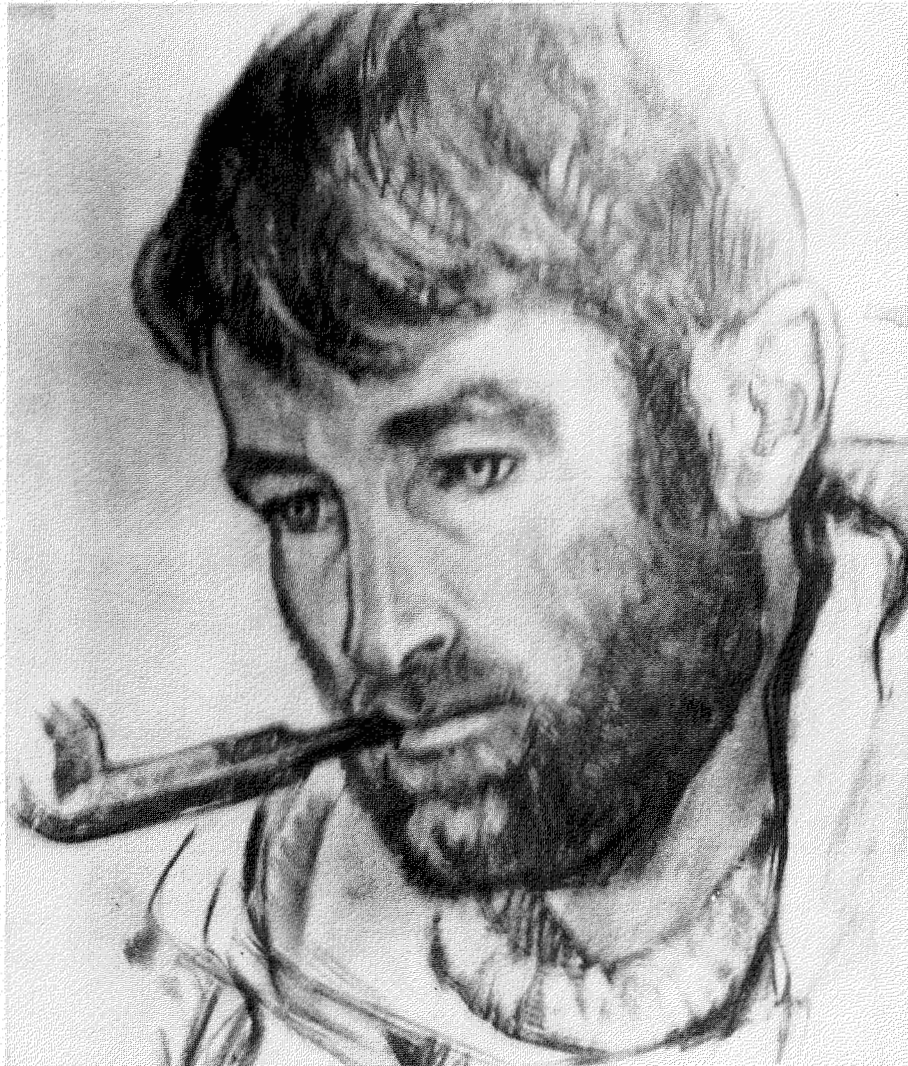


PATRICK DOUGLAS BAIRD
1912-1984



P.D. Baird, ca. 1953. Artist unknown. Photo of original charcoal drawing with Dr. S. Orvig, McGill University.

Pat Baird died in Ottawa on New Year's Day and was buried there on the 5th of January. He was twice married, with a son and three daughters by his first marriage, and was also survived by twelve grandchildren, as well as two brothers.

Pat Baird was a Highlander and proud of it. He came from a Caithness family, being the fourth son of Brigadier-General E.W.D. Baird, and was educated at Edinburgh Academy and Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, where he graduated in Geology. After Cambridge he spent a year or so in Africa as a geologist, but that was not to be his life for long. The Arctic took over. As an undergraduate he had been a member of Professor (later Sir James) Wordie's 1934 expedition to West Greenland and arctic Canada. It was in Baffin Island that Pat Baird first set foot in Canada. He was to return there many times, for he came to love the Arctic, its mountains, snow and

ice. After Africa he joined the British-Canadian Arctic Expedition, 1936-39, which worked in Southampton Island, Melville Peninsula, and Baffin Island, and he crossed Bylot Island in the summer of 1939 before catching the Hudson's Bay Co. ship *Nascopie* to go out and join the Royal Canadian Artillery as a gunner. He rose to the rank of lieutenant-colonel during the war, when he was at one time involved with training paratroopers in Scotland and later transferred back to Canada, concerned with arctic and mountain warfare training. Pat Baird became a well-known public figure in 1945-46, when he participated in the celebrated "Lemming" and "Muskox" military exercises in the Canadian northwest. Because of his experience, he led the main party in Exercise Muskox, an unprecedented automotive journey of 3400 miles around the Canadian Arctic, starting in Churchill and going to Victoria

Island, then as far as Coppermine and back to the Peace River country. He did this successfully and well, and did not suffer any accidents or lose any men on his party.

Col. Baird's decade of arctic and military experience led to his appointment as chief of the Arctic Section of the Canadian Defence Research Board. A year later, in 1947, he was made Director of the Montreal (head) Office of The Arctic Institute of North America, a post he held until his return to Scotland in 1954. During that time he planned and led two major expeditions to Baffin Island — to the Barnes Icecap region in 1950 and to the Pangnirtung Pass area and the Penny Highland in 1953. On these expeditions, glaciological investigations were undertaken for the first time in Canada's Arctic, and Pat became an authority on mountain glacier research and arctic mountaineering. The latter of these activities he pursued for many years later in his life, leading climbing parties to the magnificent Cumberland Peninsula in the summer.

Pat Baird was not an easy man to know. He was a charming and kindly person to encounter, but a private one, with what the Scots refer to as a "pawky" sense of humour. He rarely showed emotion other than detached amusement, except on occasion when he could get frustrated with a dog team that had different ideas from his own about where to go, or with a primus stove or snow vehicle that refused to work. He was somewhat like a coiled spring and was capable of sudden, exuberant fun. For instance, he was a great mountaineer, not only a pioneer in climbing the little-known peaks on Baffin Island; he could practice in houses by going around the room without touching the floor, hanging onto furniture and picture rails and skirtings. He also had an amusing trick of diving down stairs like a seal diving under water. He managed to slide down stairs head-first on his stomach without bumping his head at the bottom. This was an act that was guaranteed to enliven parties. He is said to have slid down the main staircase of Earncliffe, the U.K. High Commissioner's home in Ottawa, on his stomach, in full dress (kilt), to demonstrate the way seals slide off the ice floes.

His field exploits were legendary — 50-mile hikes on a chocolate bar and so on. I saw him in action on the two icecaps in Baffin Island and remember well the occasion when he was to come to the top of the Penny Icecap to spend some time with me who had been alone for awhile. I knew approximately when to expect him, and looked forward to it, only to be disappointed at a howling blizzard on the day. It was impossible to see anything and practically impossible even to stand up. No one could travel or navigate in such conditions. I spent an uncomfortable 36 hours in the tent, but not as uncomfortable as Pat who actually had arrived to within 200 yards of the camp and spent the day-and-a-half in a trench 6½ feet long and 3 feet deep. His skis formed some sort of roof over which the snow accumulated while he spent the time melting snow in a tin cup over a stub of a candle. The only other equipment he had was a knife and, of course, his pipe, and two chocolate bars. Somehow he did not seem to be anything but his normal self. He was always an excellent field companion. And yet, he did feel the cold more than most — probably because he was tall and thin (the Inuit on Southampton Island long after the war re-

membered him from 1936 when he walked across the island — they called him The Crane).

In 1954 Pat Baird returned to Scotland, to the University of Aberdeen, where he was Senior Research Fellow in Geography. While there he started his book *The Polar World* but it was not finished until 1963, four years after he had once again returned to Canada. He probably did not find the writing easy, and by the time it came out in 1964 it was already somewhat out-of-date. The exploration sections were by far the best: a field that clearly interested him and of which he had a vast store of knowledge. That interest showed also in some of the earlier things he wrote: "Expeditions to the Canadian Arctic" in *The Beaver*, 1949, and a review of the history of glaciology in the special issue "Arctic Research" (*Arctic*, 1954).

On his return to Canada in 1959 Pat Baird was appointed Director of the Gault Estate of McGill University (a 2600-acre property at Mont St. Hilaire, about 20 miles east of Montreal), and Supervisor of Northern Field Studies in the Department of Geography. He lived with his family on the estate like a Scottish laird (which he was, by birth) — he once commented that this was really the only kind of living he knew much about, dwelling in a large house at the edge of beyond. His background helped to make him the person he was.

During the years up to 1969, when he retired from McGill, he shared his time between the "base" job in the Geography Department with occasional visits to his main concern, the Schefferville Subarctic Research Station, and the development of the Gault Estate as a major centre of field training and research in the biological and physical sciences. As always, he was at his best and happiest in the field as a field leader. He was by training a geologist, but the subject did not seem to interest him very much. He was not really a scientist in the usual sense — he was, rather, a superb field man with a latent urge to wander. The Arctic, glaciology, and mountaineering were his love and interest. He was also an amateur Thespian, although his friends used to say that his talents in that field were somewhat inferior to those of his other favourite activities.

Pat Baird's achievements were recognized by the award of the Founder's Medal of the Royal Geographical Society for 1952, the Bruce Memorial Medal of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, and the Coronation Medal.

After his retirement he went to live near Ottawa, but he travelled on several subsequent climbing trips to his beloved Baffin Island, where Baird Peninsula is named after him. He was an admirable man who will be remembered and missed by many.

Svenn Orvig