

A CENTURY OF ADVENTURE IN NORTHERN HEALTH

Author: Robert Fortune

Dr Robert Fortune, a well known and esteemed Alaska physician, is also recognized as the health historian of Alaska Natives. He has authored the two major and most definitive historical studies of native health:

Chills and Fevers that documents the health history of Alaska natives before western contact and *Thou Shall Not Die*, describing the devastating impact of TB on the native population of Alaska.

A Century of Adventure in the Northern Health continues this tradition, and documents the contributions of the US Public Health Service Commissioned Corps from its earliest beginnings in 1898 through its first 100 years.

Dr Fortune's meticulous attention to details and well documented writing is again demonstrated in this monograph.

The hardships, adventure and observations of death and illness of these earliest clinicians tax your imagination. Consider Dr Samuel Call in December 1897 from the Revenue Cutter *Bear*. He was put ashore with a Lieutenant, seven dogs, two sleds and essential supplies with the charge to provide food and winter clothing for 265 whalers stranded in Barrow. The trip

required crossing the Yukon River, reaching the Bearing Sea Coast, obtaining several hundred reindeer and driving them- in the middle of an Alaska Winter mostly above the Arctic Circle- to Point Barrow. They arrived the following March.

Dr Fortune has Commissioned Corp Officer's descriptions and data from the devastating Spanish Flu epidemic, smallpox, measles, famine and the ever present TB (Kotzebue in 1947 was estimated to have had one fourth of the population with active TB).

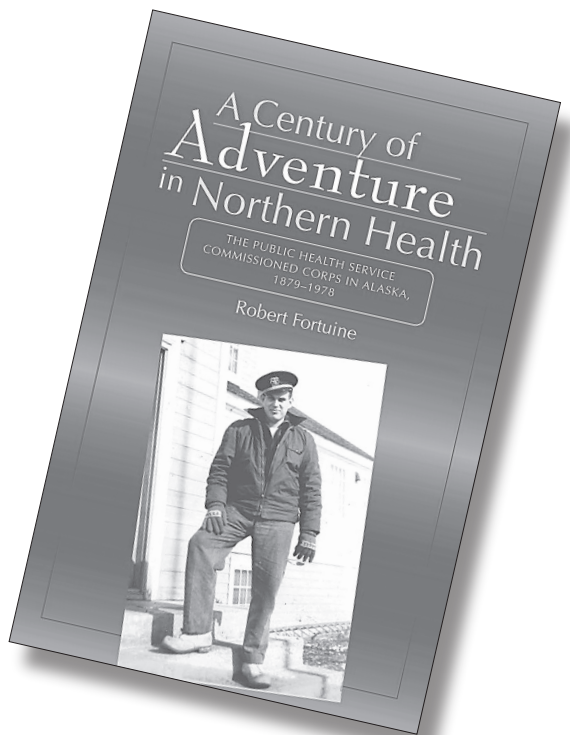
Using an Officer's diary, personal correspondence, and published data, he describes the often individual heroic effort undertaken to make a difference.

In the later chapters of the book, Dr Fortune recounts from the late 40's the beginning of organized health services including public health and clinical research for Alaska Natives. Commissioned Corps Officers with special training and/or experience, coupled with increased numbers and resources began to make profound and lasting changes. Snippets of the stories and careers of many are documented. More than a few have gone on to national and international leadership positions and have

had a significant impact on the health of many beyond the State of Alaska.

For those readers who have worked in Circumpolar Health and/or the Commissioned Corps of the US Public Health services, many of the stories and names will be familiar. Indeed many will have been friends and colleagues.

This book recounts a proud and significant chapter in the annuals of the Commissioned Corps and is a lasting tribute to all of those named and unnamed who have participated in this adventure in Northern health.



Reviewed by

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DETAILS OF THE BOOK:

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The Public Health Service Commissioned Corps in Alaska, 1879-1978

Fortuine, R

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