THE ANTARCTICAN SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

HONORARY PRESIDENT - RUTH J. SIPLE

Vol. 02-03 January No. 3

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BRASH ICE. Well, another year, another format for the cover page. Been some house changes since the last newsletter, As you will see if you shift your eyes to the left, our president heeded his roots calling, and moved on back to Minnesota - within a half-mile of where he was born, some time back in the (early) last century. Some people ask who in the world are responsible for what they are reading here, as we never have shown any names for fear of repercussions. But now we are letting it all hang out, with e-mail addresses for those who want to complain, or even for those who may want to submit something for the newsletter. A well-known Antarctic Brit, a former editor of the POLAR RECORD, accused us of writing taradiddle. It fell on deaf ears, as we had no idea at all what he meant, but then we found a dictionary with the word, and lo and behold, the guy was right. In recent years we have been actually putting in some real news items, but we want to keep the overall tone free and easy. Plus personal. With so many societies, so many publications, we feel that what makes us a little bit different from the others is that PEOPLE are our stories, our heroes. And as we keep repeating, we try not to let the truth get in the way of a good story.

There are a couple of new books out on two famous Brits from the Heroic Age, Titus Gates and Tom Crean. Both were written by Michael Smith. TOM CREAN was published by The Mountaineers Books in Seattle, ISBN 0-89886-870-X (pbk). I AM JUST GOING OUTSIDE was published by Spellmount, and its ISBN is 1 -86227- 178-X. This book makes a great companion piece to Sara Wheeler's CHERRY. The last chapter in this book will knock your socks off, as it appears that Titus should have taken an earlier walk in life. Reviews to follow in a later issue of the Newsletter.

We are including in this newsletter the dullest article ever published in 40 years of this newsletter, the one on South Pole Communications. The only reason that we are putting it in is to show you that there has evidentlj been a quantum leap in communications at the South Pole. The article is over-saturated with land mines, but please read through the acronyms and they probably won't hurt any of us—at least not for long. We assure you it won't happen again!

MEMBERSHIP. If you owe dues for this year, you should have received your bill in the past few weeks. We did not raise them, even though we will no doubt be operating in the red this year. However, we will no doubt raise them a year hence. If any of you want to get under the wire, even though you are paid up, you can pay for additional years at oui current rate: $12 for singles, $15 for married couples, $20 for overseas. The treasurer's address is shown on the left.

MASSIVE ICEBERG CREATES PROBLEMS (John Henzell)

One of the world's biggest icebergs is continuing to create havoc in Antarctica, almost three years after it broke away from the Ross Ice Shelf. The 300km by 37km iceberg, dubbed B15 by researchers, has contributed to years of unusually thick sea ice around Ross Island, the location of Scott Base and McMurdo Station. The impact includes the United States having to use two icebreakers - at an extra cost of $3 million - instead of the usual one to keep the sea-lane to McMurdo Base open for the supply ships that transport most of McMurdo and Scott Base provisions. The seasonal sea ice around McMurdo is now about 65km, about three times the usual limit.

The ice has meant that some of the most famous penguin colonies in the world, around the Ross Island huts used by Scott and Shackleton during Antarctica's heroic age, have had their breeding seasons devastated. This is because the birds have to travel up to 30km to find open water to gather food for the chicks.

The influence of B15 and other more recent icebergs is also thought to have caused an explosion in the number of pteropods, microscopic sea creatures that clogged the high-tech desalination system that provides McMurdo Base's drinking water. Filters that used to last two months were clogged in a day, leaving the base with barely enough water in reserve to meet its minimum firefighting requirements.

HELICOPTER CRASHES AT McMURDO. A helicopter flying in support of the National Science Foundation's (NSF) Antarctic research program crashed near McMurdo Station, on January 16th. The helicopter's pilot and a passenger, the only people aboard the aircraft, were injured in the accident, and were evacuated to New Zealand aboard a New York Air National Guard LC-130 cargo aircraft for medical treatment in a hospital in Christchurch, NZ.

The helicopter was shuttling cargo to science stations in the Dry Valleys, roughly 96 kilometers (60miles) from the station across the ice-covered McMurdo Sound. Petroleum Helicopters Inc., of LaFayette, La., operates NSF's helicopter fleet in Antarctica. The incident involved a seven-passenger Bell 212 helicopter.

PHI flies approximately 1,400 flight hours each season in support of U.S. Antarctic research. This is the first aircraft accident with serious injury for the U.S. Antarctic Program since PHI assumed responsibility for helicopter flight operations from the U.S. Navy in 1996.

P.S. Our illustrious president crashed in another helo in the Polar Regions over two years ago. His sympathies go out to the injured.

GLACIOLOGISTS NEVER DIE, THEY JUST CORE AWAY. Antarctica is a safe haven for glaciologists-they will never be unemployed as long as there is ice moving in Antarctica. For some inordinate reasoning, Congressmen/women take great delight in funding programs that may or may not determine in the next century if 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. will be under water as a result of climate change. So people like Charlie Bentley and Paul Mayewski have guaranteed grant funding for the rest of their life times. In that vein, Paul recently put another piece into the jigsaw puzzle when he completed an 800-mile trek from Old Byrd to the South Pole, arriving there on January 2nd. It was the first U.S. over-snow expedition to the South Pole since Bert Crary and his motley crew made it from McMurdo to the station in 1960-61.

Paul's trip was much, much different from Bert's. Bert had three vehicles (Sno-Cats) and Paul had a modern version of a wagon train, one made up of big sleds loaded with drilling, radar and other research equipment. They were pulled by two 13-ton Caterpillar tractors; the two-part train included a science lab, a kitchen, a caboose and a "polar pooper." They dug a pit at each stop, and pulled the outhouse over it. What sheer luxury! Bert had a party of eight men; Paul had a party often men. Whoops that is really not correct, he had a party often men PLUS three women. Things have really changed, as Paul also had satellite phones and navigation equipment, Internet connections, and a crevasse detector. Paul was on the trail for thirty-one days; Bert was on the trail for sixty-five days. Bert could have been out there even longer, as when he lost his teeth, he disdained stopping to search for them saying, "Let's keep on going, when we get to the Pole we will clean out the bilge, and then we will find them".

Paul's team of researchers is working with others from eighteen other countries, under the guise of the International Trans-Antarctic Scientific Expedition. The scientists are investigating changes in Antarctic temperatures, sea levels, precipitation, atmospheric patterns and other features going back pre-Norman Vaughan, in fact, 200 years. They are providing ground truth data for comparison with satellite data. They are tracing the fallout from far-off volcanic eruptions and the wind-deposited residue of marine organisms. They are also studying Bentley-like things, such as ice sheet melting, rising sea levels. Within a few years, they hope to understand how much such changes are part of a long-term natural process and what role human activity plays. Believe that from the WASHPOST, and we have a bridge we would like to sell you!

Paul and his intrepid band of meteorologists, geophysicists, atmospheric chemists, remote sensing specialists and glaciologists have been in Antarctica for the past four austral

summers. They have covered more than 1500 square miles and carried out eleven lines of scientific inquiry. They have probed more than fourteen miles into the atmosphere with research balloons, and drilled nearly two miles to the continental bedrock.

The centerpiece of the effort is collecting ice cores. During each stop, the team drills cores as long as 400 feet out of the two-mile thick ice mantle. We wonder if they have to file an environmental impact statement before they start every drilling. It looks to us taxpayers that we are going to end up with a pretty Holy Antarctica. Hundreds of samples are being sent home. But there is a limitation, as they were restricted by weight to keep the cores to about 7,000 pounds. Given enough time, and drilling of ice cores, ITASE will reduce the mass of the Antarctic ice sheet, promoting its slipping into the sea! Think about it!

P.S. We hope you all saw Paul and his train and his crew on "Sunday Morning", CBS, Jan 19th. Paul Mayewski is from the Collegiate Hockey Capital of the United States, the Univ. of Maine! Go Black Bears. Keep Coring, Mayewski!!

SOUTH POLE REACHES A COMMUNICATIONS MILESTONE. Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station, one of Earth's most isolated places, made a giant technology leap forward recently. The South Pole MARISAT GOES Terminal (SPMGT) achieved its design objectives for improved off-continent communications. MARISAT F2, TDRSS Fl and GOES-3 combined now give South Pole 11.5 hours of high-speed satellite communications daily.

South Pole depended on high-frequency (HF) radio for voice and low-speed teletype communications to McMurdo for many years after station opening hi 1957. However, HF radio is slow, subject to interference, and can experience solar-flare-induced blackouts, sometimes lasting for days. ATS-3 and LES-9 initially demonstrated South Pole satellite communications potential. Increasing science and operational data transmission demands, the Internet, and e-mail showed the need for even faster service. TDRSS was the first high speed data communication satellite used by South Pole. MARISAT and GOES followed, adding capability that will support the station's intra- and intercontinental communications needs well into the next decade.

SPMGT upgraded the MARISAT and GOES data rates to T-1 (1.544 Mbps) slightly faster than the 1.024 Mbps available over TDRSS. The new MARISAT/GOES service lengthens the daily satellite window providing more telephone calls, e-mail, web browsing, and instant messenger opportunities, while higher data rates speed web access and file transfer, as well as improve telephone audio quality. Satellite ground stations in Clarksburg MD, Miami FL, and White Sands NM support links through MARISAT, GOES, and TDRSS respectively. Circuits through Raytheon Polar Service (RPSC) HQ in Denver provide telephone and Internet network connectivity.

Originally installed during the 2000-2001 austral summer, SPMGT required considerable attention the first year and data throughout did not meet expectations. The following summer brought greater understanding of operating a 30-foot diameter, full-motion satellite tracking antenna in the harsh South Pole environment. However, improvements only increased MARISAT performance. GOES integration was another season away. System performance showed the antenna feed that collects and transmits radio signals required replacement. Over the austral winter, RPSC, NSF, and subcontract engineering staff developed a repair and modification strategy so SPMGT would meet design goals.

Repair and modifications began in late November with feed replacement the central activity. The task required a crane because of feed size, weight, position in the antenna, and sensitive interior electronics. Delicate, precise crane work permitted task completion by FEMC and IT personnel within an hour. Integration and testing brought SPMGT up to its full potential within weeks. Now, complete automatic control of SPMGT allows unattended system operation to minimize 4000-foot walks from the main station for service calls, a welcome system feature!

SPMGT represents the first large, complex satellite communications ground station of its type installed in an Antarctic interior environment. Engineering, installation, operations, and support personnel drew from a limited body of knowledge when designing, installing, and operating SPMGT. Their efforts made SPMGT a reality and brought South Pole a new communication system designed for the 21st Century.

(Editor's note: Not responsible for a truly amazing series of acronyms, most of which are complete mysteries.)

LLANO GOES TO WASHINGTON - Continued.

Beginning an Antarctic program from scratch raised problems both scientific and logistic. Oceanographic studies were begun at McMurdo Station by utilizing sea ice as a platform in the absence of a ship. A variety of marine studies initiated by Stanford University graduate students (add Jack Littlepage to those listed earlier) under Dr. 'Curly' Wohlschlag's management of the Biological Laboratory were extended as individual grants toward doctoral studies. Since the 'BioLab' was furnished only with basic scientific items, additional special equipment was added to the inventory by retaining scientific apparatus provided grantees for field research. Over time this proved more practical in bringing the laboratory into a more functional role in support of experimental, physiological and medical studies.

In anticipation of oceanographic research on the *R/V Eltanin* a major activity was to arrange for a repository for receipt, storage, and recording of terrestrial and marine biological materials. Learning of the Smithsonian Institution's collaboration in the terminating Indian Ocean Oceanographic Survey, arrangements were concluded for a similar cooperative arrangement to curate Antarctic biological collections. Thus the Smithsonian Oceanographic Sorting Center (SOSC) was established to service the anticipated biological and other materials. A summary published in *Nature,* 1963, p. 1230 follows:

"A service organization for the benefit of scientists and scientific organizations both within and without the Federal Government. Collections submitted for processing will now automatically become the property of the U.S. National Museum. Indeed it is the desire and the intention of the Smithsonian Institution to aid the interested scientific community to make an equitable distribution of all such materials, placing them in institutions throughout the country where they will most effectively advance the biological and geological aspects of the national oceanographic effort. "

This arrangement resolved a number of problems. A critical one is to collaborate with a depository with some perpetuity, which has a function of a museum. In addition the Smithsonian had the necessary facilities and know-how in handling large marine collections and the means for the storage, safeguarding and systematic distribution of fauna and flora collections. The grant also included a subsidiary program for training technicians in primary sorting before specimens were forwarded to specialists for identification and the maintenance of a catalog of all pertinent data.

I was amazed to learn that Jim Zumberge, at the time President of the University of Southern California, who had since the IGY served as Member and Director of the U.S. Committee on Polar Research and later held distinguished international postings as President of SCAR and also represented the U.S. at Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings, had never been in the Antarctic Peninsula, probably the most contentious part of Antarctica. After my retirement, when with Society Expeditions, I invited Jim and his wife on a cruise through the Magellanic Channels of Chile and Argentina to the Antarctic Peninsula. One day on shipboard I spoke with Jim about letters from USC biologists who were concerned about a proposed action by his University to convert biological storage areas to other purposes. Jim remarked that the University was considering such a move. At that moment I was gratified by my cancellation of Dr. Mohr's 1960 proposal for a sorting center at USC, which would have required additional working space.

By the second year of the Biological & Medical program scientists, both biological and medical, from 15 universities and other institutions were participating in a variety of studies at three U.S. stations—McMurdo, Hallett, and South Pole—and as exchange scientists at Australian and Russian stations.

By the third year oceanographic and hydrographic work was carried out on the U.S. icebreaker *Glacier* in sub-Antarctic waters. In 1963 marine biological research hi the Southern Ocean began on the *R/V Eltanin.* Palmer Station was dedicated in 1965 to marine biological studies in the Antarctic Peninsula, thus providing U.S. workers access to the sub-Antarctic marine faunal zone and made possible *in situ* krill observations. The selections of the station leader for the first year proved more difficult. My first choice was a biologist who spent a year at McMurdo and later transferred to the Russian station Mirny. His final report was in Russian!! He agreed to serve at Palmer but only on condition that the Foundation hires a French chef!

Thus within the span of 5 years biological and medical programs vied with the physical sciences in investigating Antarctic phenomena. The flood of reports from Antarctic studies subsequently prompted the need for suitable publication. The Antarctic Research Series (ARS) was initiated in 1963 in collaboration with the American Geophysical Union. The Series currently lists more than 77 volumes providing an outlet for scientific treatises, serving both as a chart and compass of America's national Antarctic scientific and environmental endeavors. In my conceit, I like to think that the ARS continues the tradition of the Narrative of the U.S. Exploring Expedition of 1838-1842, our first national, expeditionary investigation of the south polar regions.

How I wound up in Antarctic research activities grew out of a series of unrelated events. During WWII I was associated with individuals who were influential in directing my attention to polar events and opportunities. These were, principally, Carl Eklund, Laurence Gould, Laurence Irving, Per Scholander, George M. Sutton, Carl Skottsberg, and Finn Ronne. A Fellowship to study lichenology at Uppsala, Sweden, brought me in contact with Europeans investigating lichens in the sub-Arctic. My doctoral studies at Washington University gave me access to Siple and Mawson's Antarctic collections. In the process I learned about polar history. My years at the Smithsonian brought me in contact with many specialists, notably Henry B. Collins, an outstanding Arctic ethnologist. An Arctic Institute of North America grant provided the means for extensive fieldwork from Barrow, on the North Slope of Alaska, to Attu on the Aleutian Chain.

My involvement with the IGY was recalled by Larry Gould in a 1977 letter to me: 'What a great debt we owe to that remarkable mutual friend, Carl Eklund - and what a fine record you made since that meeting.' Except for arranging

my itinerary in the Antarctic I had little in common with Bert Crary either at the Academy or in the Antarctic. I was flabbergasted when he named an Antarctic feature after me in 1958. Nor did I ever learn why he asked me to join him at the Foundation in 1960. In 1982 Bert wrote me "I don't deserve anywhere near as much credit for getting you into the Antarctic operations as you do for giving the whole program a bang-up job - often against odds—in your twenty years at NSF. In any event all's well that ends well."

A REAL EXPLORER ABOUT TO RETIRE. (John Splettstoesser) The famed *Explorer,* built in 1969 as the *Lindblad Explorer,* has reached the end of its tune in Antarctic tourism cruising, and will spend its last cruise in Antarctica in the 2002-03 season. As some (many) of us are aware, with age comes wisdom, and the ship somehow knew that its time had come to toss in the hawsers. This doesn't mean that its days at sea are over, as you will read below. Lars-Eric Lindblad was the first tour operator to commission his own cruise ship, with an ice-working capability and a size to reach remote areas, passenger capacity of 90-some to alleviate environmental stress, and a 'Code of Conduct' that evolved into more formal guides for protection of the environment and the fragile wildlife of Antarctica. Adventure cruising and passenger education were primary themes of Lindblad's tourism philosophy.

The ship was built in Finland in 1969, named the *Explorer* by Sonja, Lars-Eric's first wife, and after shakedown cruises hi the North, conducted three cruises in January-March 1970 in Antarctica. The ship was in service every season thereafter, although under different owners, was renamed the *Society Explorer* in 1984 (Society Expeditions) and *Explorer* (Abercrombie & Kent/Explorer Shipping Corp.) in 1992.

At various times in its history, crew came from the Tonga Islands, Philippines, Indonesia, and Sweden. When I was first on the ship, in Dec. 1983, the crew was Swedish. Books have been written about the 'Little Red Ship', by Lindblad and also Keith Shackleton, one of the premier lecturer/naturalists on her cruises. Highlights only can be included here, some of its setbacks, and also its 'firsts.' A grounding in Admiralty Bay, King George Island, hi Feb. 1972, required a tug to pull the ship free and tow it to Buenos Aires for repairs. On Christmas Eve, 1982, she left Paradise Bay and headed for Port Lockroy to celebrate Christmas. She hit a rock before the entrance to Neumayer Channel and was almost lost. All passengers had to abandon ship for rescue by the Chilean vessel *Piloto Pardo.*

Lindblad Explorer was the first passenger ship to travel to nearly 70 degrees latitude along the Antarctic Peninsula. In 1984 the ship became the first passenger vessel to travel the Northwest Passage. In Feb. 1997, *Explorer* circumnavigated James Ross Island on the northeastern side of the Antarctic Peninsula, the first to do so, the result of Prince Gustav Channel breaking up its ice cover. During her 15 years with Lindblad, the ship cruised more than 1,300,000 nautical miles in its worldwide travels. Lindblad died in Sweden on 8 July 1994, and has a geographic feature named for him, appropriately in the Antarctic Peninsula. His widow, Ruriko, traveled frequently on *Explorer,* as well as other tourist vessels, primarily as a tour leader and interpreter for Japanese passengers.

Abercrombie & Kent, the present owner *of Explorer,* plans to replace the ship in 2003 with a newer, larger ship, *Explorer II* (now the *Minerva,* construction completed in 1996 when she entered service). The present *Explorer* has been sold to Kyris Shipping Ltd. for possible operation in Norwegian coastal waters, or perhaps it will be converted into a 'private yacht.'

D-8 TRACTORS PART OF ANTARCTIC HISTORY. If you were part of the U.S. Antarctic Research Program in the 1950s and 1960s, you will know the name 'Phil Smith,' one of several individuals in the Office of Antarctic Programs (later Polar Programs) who made things work. The following is a slightly edited letter that Phil wrote from his home in Santa Fe, New Mexico, to Dave Bresnahan, also instrumental as a driving force in the U.S. program. Phil, sometimes known as 'Crevasse Smith' earned the name from experience, as you will see below. Phil writes, "I was delighted to learn of the austral summer's progress hi the U.S. Antarctic Research Program but even more pleased to learn that the venerable Caterpillar D-8 is being recognized for its contributions to the U.S. program. It came as something of a shock to me, however, that some of the D-8's now in service are the *original* D-8s that were involved in Deepfreeze I-IV when the IGY stations were built and in operation. Can this really be true? This makes the D-8s longer-term survivors than some of their drivers, I am sorry to say. ["Williams Field" airstrip at McMurdo and Williams Cliff at Mt. Erebus are named for Richard Williams, the Seabee who went through the ice on McMurdo Sound with a Caterpillar in January 1956.]

D-8s were important in the construction of several of the coastal stations built by the Navy for the IGY, but they played an especially critical role at McMurdo Station because of the ah- operations and at Little AmericaV from which a D-8 trail party and two large D-8 trains with building supplies departed during the 1956-57 austral summer for a 646-mile trip to 80°S 120°W, the site for Byrd Station. Admiral George Dufek, the Deepfreeze Task Force Commander committed to two different strategies for the IGY inland stations. Byrd was to be attempted via an overland supply route and the South Pole by airdrop. Both

campaigns succeeded out witn some mishaps along the way, including the tragic loss of Seabee Max Kiel and a D-8 in a crevasse on a first Byrd trail attempt in Deepfreeze I. The first tractor dropped out of a C-124 (Globemaster) was a stripped down D-2 weighing seven tons. It was the heaviest object ever dropped at the pole from a C-124, and it streamed in ingloriously, ending up in a crumpled mass of twisted steel, some thirty feet down, in a twenty-foot wide crater. It was from that same pit that the well-known geophysicist, Father Dan Linehan of Boston College, took the first -ever seismic shot at the South Pole on December 5, 1957. My own first involvement with Antarctica was as an Army officer assigned to Dufek to construct the trail to Byrd Station. After much aerial reconnaissance in R4Ds (DC-3s) we selected a crevasse-free route except for seven miles at the hinge between Marie Byrd Land and the Ross Ice Shelf. We were two, maybe three weeks at that spot blasting snow bridges and filling crevasses with snow to construct a route that was not much wider than a D-8 and a sled train. It was quite a scene involving our eleven-person trail party, a helicopter that was assigned to us for several daily recon flights, tons of explosives and an almost round the clock operation. As the Byrd Station site was being reached I flew back to the crevasse zone to meet the first, then returned to meet the second tractor train of construction materials to guide the Seabee drivers through the crevasse zone. We got Byrd Station built and installed the first IGY wintering team that included George Toney as science leader, Charlie Bentley and the late Ned Ostenso, among others.

The D-8 performed magnificently in those early years and has performed well ever since. Surely this is one of Caterpillar's most successful products ever! One of the early D-8s belongs in the Smithsonian!"

DON'T SELL YOUR OCEAN-VIEW PROPERTY JUST YET. An account by two of the world's professionals on the subject states that the West Antarctic Ice Sheet is not about to disappear into the ocean in the near future. Continuing research by Bob Bindschadler and Charlie Bentley and others is boiled down for the average reader in *Scientific American,* Dec. 2002. Their combined seasons in Antarctica, studying the Ross Ice Shelf, the ice streams feeding it, and the ice sheet in West Antarctica indicate that the latter will continue to shrink, but only over thousands of years. To residents of Florida and elsewhere, this means another meter of sea level rise every 500 years. In fact, southern Florida would disappear. Bob and Charlie know better than to state this as a fact, of course, and these 'conclusions' have the usual qualifying statements. Bob has 23 years at the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center, and has led 12 field expeditions to the 'Ice'. Charlie retired from the University of Wisconsin in 1998, but has lots of miles driving Sno-Cats and Ski-Doos, and frequent flyer miles in Twin-Otter aircraft to know what he' talking about. Some people think that Charlie has spent more time in Antarctica than in Madison. The final word on this 'global warming' subject isn't over yet, folks.

On an allied subject, the 19 Nov. 2002 issue of *Eos* (American Geophysical Union) includes a large ad announcing a job opening at the Universidad de Magallanes, Punta Arenas, Chile. A doctoral degree in Earth Sciences is essential, with experience in glaciology. Fieldwork in glaciers and ice caps of Patagonia and Antarctica is part of the job, 'under rough weather conditions.' The latter part gives you some idea of what to expect, although the ad did not include what Shackleton said when he was hiring for his Antarctic expedition—'Safe return doubtful!'

SOUTH POLE HAS MANY ADDRESSES, LOCATIONS. The South Pole postal cancellation has been a prized souvenir for many philatelists for years, but do they always know what they are getting? Did the envelope actually reach the South Pole? As a matter of fact, did it even reach Antarctica? It may have gotten as far as New Zealand, but also it may not have gotten beyond New York City! In an attempt to update you on the history of the South Pole postal history, the current postmaster, Scott Smith, has given us an excellent review of developments since the inception of postal service to the South Pole. And we will excerpt from his e-mail.

Since 1956 there have been over 21 different canceling devices, hand stamps, and machine cancels. There have been five different addresses or zip codes. The original one, Pole Station, followed by the zip codes So. Pole Barracks New York, NY 10090, FPO AP 96692, FPO AP 96691, FPO AP 96598, and then APO AP 96598. The US Navy operated the postal facilities at the South Pole from 1956 to 1974. Thereupon, there was a two-year transitional period when civilian-engineering groups ran the operations. All mail at this tune was forwarded to McMurdo for cancellation and dispatch. Then the Navy came back into operation at the Pole, and a postal clerk handled all the traffic from 1975 to 1998. This was followed by the Air Force taking over, and they have continued to watch over postal operations.

The South Pole Post office usually opens for business around the first of November and stays open until mid-February. There has been a marked decrease in philatelic mail since September 11th and the anthrax incidents. All the mail that used to come addressed to Chief Scientist, Station Manager, Medical Officer and their likes no longer make it to the South Pole. All the mail is stopped in Christchurch and prescreened there for suspect mail. Only mail directed to a real live person at the South Pole makes it to the South Pole. Scott Smith graciously said, "If anyone needs an

address of somebody here at the South Pole, please feel free to use mine. I would be happy to take care of those requests." Then his name and address: Scott F. Smith, South Pole Station, PSC 468, Box 400, APO AP 96598-5400, USA

CACHETS (SEE LAST PAGE). The envelope commemorating the First Trans-Antarctic Crossing, 1957-58, is signed by quite a group of distinguished visitors to the South Pole. In the upper left hand comer is the autograph of a well-known New Zealand apiarist, Ed Hillary of Everest fame. At the middle of the envelope is the signature of his mountaineering buddy, George Lowe, who got an Oscar for the best documentary film of the year for his epic film, THE CONQUEST OF EVEREST.

Also on the envelope is the signature of Peter Mulgrew (P. Mulgrew), who lost not only both legs in Nepal, but also his life on Mt. Erebus when he was a lecturer on the ill-fated worst tragedy in Antarctic history when the Air New Zealand DC-10 crashed onto the lower slopes of Mt. Erebus on 28 November 1979, the day before the 50th anniversary of the first flight over the South Pole. Peter's widow is now Lady Hillary (Ed's first wife died in an airplane crash in the Himalayas). For those of us at the Pole at the time, Peter became a great friend, staying with us, washing dishes, pots, and pans for several weeks, while awaiting the arrival of Fuchs's party. We loved the guy.

The leader of the whole Commonwealth Expedition was a very well known geologist, Vivian "Bunny" Fuchs, who was later knighted by the Queen for leading the successful crossing. His radio operator and general all-around handy man who could do everything was Ralph Lenton. His name should be forever entwined with the South Pole, as that is where his ashes rest. He had a long and distinguished polar career at many of the British stations in Antarctica, and it was most fitting that his son, Anthony, who worked in Antarctica for the US contractor, took his father's ashes to the South Pole. Ralph was a good man, and it was an honor for me to stand up for him when he got married.

M. R. Ellis's name also appears. His family was in the mattress business in Dunedin. but they also made polar clothing, and at the time of the IGY, they probably manufactured the best down sleeping bag in the whole world. Murray Ellis was and is a buddy of Ed Hillary, and is still active, working with Ed on the Himalayan Trust My most delightful New Year ever was hiking with Murray and his lovely bride into the valley below Mt. Aspiring, climbed by both Murray and his father.

Hal Lister's name is also there. Some of us in the States got to know him better later on when he spent tune in the Canadian Arctic, and came through our country. We believe he had a double connection with both Dartmouth College and the Cold Regions Research and Engineering Laboratory at Hanover, New Hampshire.

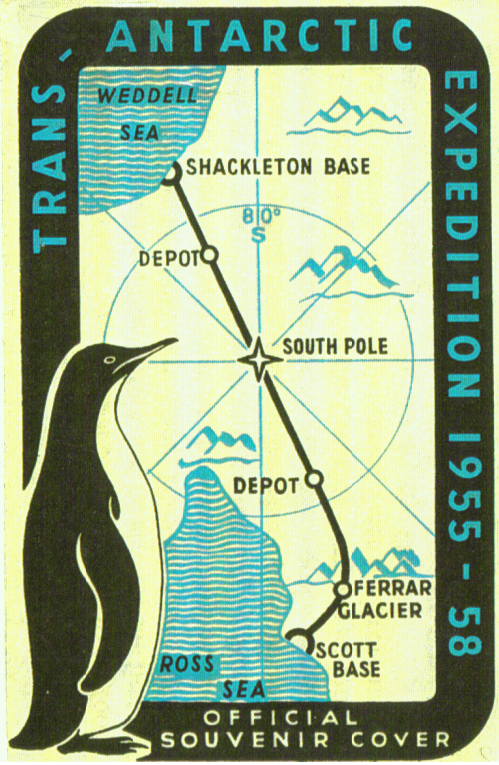
One name there brings back a smile to those of us who witnessed Allan Rogers on the evening of the Fuchs party arrival at the Pole, walking backwards around the ring of empty diesel drums, which supposedly encircled the Geographical Pole. We asked him what he was doing, as there appeared to be a purpose to his madness. He replied, *"I* had a birthday three days ago, and I am walking back three days so that I can say I spent my birthday at the Pole!"

Hannes la Grange was the first South African to set foot on the Geographical South Pole, and he also led the first South African National Expedition, 1959-61. One way to describe Hannes would be to say he was as eloquent and polite as he was nice. The Australian Jon Stephenson is another fine young man, and has been back to Antarctica in recent years as a lecturer for an Australian cruise company.

Unfortunately, many of the Crossing Party are no longer with us. Besides the aforementioned Peter Mulgrew and Ralph Lenton, Bunny Fuchs, his deputy, David Stratton, Hannes la Grange, Allan Rogers, and Jeff Pratt are gone. The one person from the expedition who has never hung up his crampons and parka is Ken Blaiklock, whose name keeps surfacing as an Antarctic surveyor for the British Antarctic Survey. In the early 1960s Ken held the Antarctic record for most miles sledged behind dogs, some 5000 miles.

The other envelope, signed by the expedition leader, Vivian Fuchs, was the official souvenir cover of the Trans-Antarctic Expedition, 1955-58. Its design tells it all.

NORMAN CLOSES THE LOOP, COMES FULL CIRCLE. The venerable, indefatigable Norman Vaughan, recently turned 97, still remains active in Alaska doing the commemorative serum run by dog teams. In late October 2002, this lone survivor of the 1928-30 Byrd Antarctic expedition was an eyewitness, along with his bride Carolyn, of the first flight of the only existing P-38F, "Glacier Girl", since its recovery from 270 feet down on the Greenland Ice Sheet. Norman and his dogs rescued the downed crew back in July 1942, and have been instrumental in the piece-by-piece recovery of the plane. Both Norman and the plane are relics, each one of its kind; both held together by technicians,



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