



# THE ANTARCTIC SOCIETY

## NEWSLETTER

HONORARY PRESIDENT - RUTH J. SIPLE

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### PRESIDENT

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### Paul C. Daniels

#### Memorial Lecturers:

Dr. William J. L. Sladen, 1964  
RADM David M. Tyree (Ret.), 1965  
Dr. Roger Tory Peterson, 1966  
Dr. J. Campbell Craddock, 1967  
Mr. James Pranke, 1968  
Dr. Henry M. Dater, 1970  
Sir Peter M. Scott, 1971  
Dr. Frank Davies, 1972  
Mr. Scott McVay, 1973  
Mr. Joseph O. Fletcher, 1974  
Mr. Herman R. Friis, 1975  
Dr. Kenneth J. Bertrand, 1976  
Dr. William J. L. Sladen, 1977  
Dr. J. Murray Mitchell, Jr., 1978  
Dr. Laurence McKinley Gould, 1979  
Dr. Charles R. Bentley, 1980  
Dr. Robert L. Nichols, 1981  
Dr. Robert H. Rutherford, 1982  
Mr. R. Tucker Scully, 1983  
Dr. Richard P. Goldthwait, 1984  
Dr. Mark F. Meier, 1985  
Dr. Claude Lorus, 1986  
Dr. Louis J. Lanzerotti, 1987  
Mr. Peter J. Anderson, 1988  
Dr. Ted E. Delaca, 1989  
Dr. Sayed Z. El-Sayed, 1990  
Dr. Charles W. Swithinbank, 1991  
Dr. Susan Solomon, 1992  
Dr. Michele E. Raney, 1993  
Dr. Doyle A. Harper, 1994  
Dr. Edith L. Taylor, 1995  
Dr. William J. L. Sladen, 1996  
Dr. Robert Bindschadler, 1997  
Dr. Charles R. Bentley, 1998  
Dr. Donal Manahan, 1999  
Dr. Philip Law, 2000  
Dr. Richard Alley, 2001  
Dr. Carl Safina, 2002  
Dr. Marv K. Miller, 2003

## RUTH J. SIPLE

January 16, 1912 - JANUARY 23, 2004

*"Death is the last chapter of life in time, but the first chapter in eternity."*

- Ruth Siple in a conversation with Anne S. Benninghoff on August 2, 2001

SPRING GATHERING OF THE ANTARCTIC SOCIETY  
WITH THE POLAR RESEARCH  
BOARD

### SOME MEMORIES OF THE FIRST LADY OF THE ANTARCTIC

Presented by  
**Dr. Paul C. Dalrymple**  
Antarctic Society  
Port Clyde, Maine

Wednesday, May 12, 2004  
6:30PM

Keck Center of National Academies  
500 Fifth Ave. NW, Room 100  
(kitty-corner from the old Pension Building)

This talk will be preceded by a full hour reception starting at 5:30 pm in the hall outside of the auditorium. It is hoped that all the Siple daughters will be in attendance. The short presentation on Ruth will be followed by a full lecture on the IGY and the forthcoming International Polar Year, speakers TEA. Limited parking under the building, enter on 6th St. between E and F. Submit your name 24 hours in advance to the PRB, (202)334-3479 and leave a message with your name. Be prepared to show a picture ID and BEWARE of traffic exiting the building. Please do NOT run over bureaucrats during an election year, as that will only result in a 2 for 1 replacement, bad for taxpayers.

## "I LOVE YOU, TOO!"

**[Editor's Note by John Splettstoesser: Because of the special relationship between Paul Dalrymple and Ruth Siple over many years, Paul has composed an entire newsletter devoted to Ruth.]**

The First Lady of the Antarctic departed us at breakfast time on January 23, 2004, at the Magnolia Care and Rehabilitation Center in Wadsworth, Ohio, one week beyond her 92<sup>nd</sup> birthday. Born in Ohio, died in Ohio, educated in Pennsylvania, raised her family in Virginia, and socialized with Antarctica. She was quiet and unassuming, but no matter what she did or who she met, she left a loving imprint of one who cared for people. She died with a clean slate, and was a rare individual who never had an enemy.

Before I go on, allow me to explain this newsletter, which will be entirely devoted to Ruth Siple, whose heart and soul rested with the Antarctic Society from the mid-seventies until the millennium. Some of you know her only as the widow of "Mr. Wind Chill", Paul A. Siple, but she went on after his death to carve out her own Antarctic career, which I want to honor with this newsletter. It is not altogether foreign to devote a whole newsletter to a single subject, as was done with the DC-10 crash on Mt. Erebus, Al Lindsey on BAE II, Charlie Murphy on BAE II, the miraculous life-saving effort by a doctor who saved Jerry Huffman's life, and a few others. But this is the first time a single issue has been done about a woman.

Ruth was loved by everyone she touched, and I think it is appropriate that some of our Society members be thanked herein for their contributions to her life. There were three wives of Paul's colleagues on the ice — Ruth Weiner, Elizabeth Lindsey, and Jane Wade — all of whom had well known Antarcticans as husbands. Mildred Crary always had Ruth in mind when she hosted a party. Anne S. Benninghoff called her often, and they had a special relationship. At NSF, Polly Penhale saw her as often as possible, and kept in close contact with her. After Ruth was moved into a Granny's Apartment in Fairfax Station, Karen Anderson Phaup became a very close companion, and did a lot to make Ruth's life more pleasant. Other names that come to mind are Betty Burrill, Jackie Ronne, Pat Wilson, and Kristin Larsen. As for men, there is one special friend, Pete Barretta, who came from Meadville and who attended Allegheny College. For someone who rode shotgun on the back of wagons during prohibition days, he seems like an

unlikely friend for Ruth. But for anyone who knows Pete he is as nice as Ruth, and has probably been our Society's biggest asset outside of the Nerve Center.

Ruth was a strong family person, and she was the cornerstone of seven siblings in the Johannesmeyer family. Although the oldest, five preceded her into death. The only surviving brother is Chuck in Hilton Head Island, who is a remarkable individual in his own rights. On May 7, 1982, he set a new world's record in the pentathlon for 64-year-old men when he amassed 1,654 points. In his eighties he is still a substitute school teacher. One of his sons was involved with the nuclear reactor at McMurdo. The Johannesmeyers had a family reunion in Upstate New York in the summer of 2001 and it was a wonderful time for Ruth. But tragedy struck almost immediately, as brother Gene, flying his own plane\* back home to Florida, was forced out over the sea by a storm, crashed and died. The quotation about life and death on the cover page came from a letter from Ruth, shortly after Gene's death, which she wrote to her dear friend Anne S. Benninghoff, widow of the very well known botanist, Bill Benninghoff.

Let me retell the wonderful story of Ruth's Valentine's Day in 2002. Many of you self-claimed so-called OAEs know Pete Beimele quite well from being associated with him on the ice. Pete leads at least a double life, as beyond being a scientist, he is a very accomplished barbershop singer, a member of the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America. The standard uniform for Pete's quartet is tails, so when they get dressed up, they look like aging penguins. So into Ruth's retirement apartment walks Pete and his fellow penguinites, carrying roses, a box of chocolates, and a stuffed penguin for Ruth, who fortunately was able to recognize Penguin Pete. They serenaded Ruth with the usual repertoire of Valentine's Day songs, and in I LOVE YOU TRULY, every time that the penguins sang "I love you", Ruth would immediately respond with "I love you, too."

Ruth was a very inward person, and even those of us who were privileged to know her, perhaps we really did not know the true Ruth Siple, as she wasn't one to expose herself to friends, or, for that matter, to family either. Those of you who saw her at Society functions saw a congenial, happy person, but in the outside world she led a somewhat secular existence. She wasn't one to initiate,

but she was one to respond. She prided herself on not being a doting grandmother, but on the other hand she never forgot the birthdays of her friend's children. Nor did she ever forget an anniversary. She was the oldest of seven siblings, and it was she who maintained contacts with all, who disseminated family news. In a way, the telephone was her best friend, and for those of you who heeded our pleading to call Ruth in her hours of need, I can assure you that she deeply appreciated those calls. It matters not that ten minutes later her failing memory wiped out your call, but for awhile your calls made her day.

Ruth was a loner, and she played that role to near perfection. As a senior citizen, she never hosted large dinner parties, had very few guests for dinner. But when she was younger, when Paul was alive, their guest book showed frequent visits by distinguished polar scientists from not only the USA, but from abroad, too. She measured everything in life, and never in the long-range. Every morning she would drive to the nearby Safeway and buy just what she planned to serve that day. Never fresh vegetables when she could buy already prepared frozen ones! Dinners were always parceled out in the kitchen, with each plate getting a woman-sized serving. There was no such thing in Ruth's home as seconds! It is no wonder that Ruth never put on any weight.

I have just finished writing about Ruth being a very quiet and reserved, inward person, but she also had the ability without knowing what she was doing to captivate groups of people. Al Fowler has had more careers than cats have lives, and one of his last retirements was from the American Geophysical Union. He was informed that he could bring one outsider to his retirement party, and he selected Ruth. He said that even though it was his day, and they were honoring him, that it was Ruth who stole the show from him. She captivated the gathering, and Al more or less faded into the background getting a big charge out of watching her sudden popularity!

Ruth never went to a mall, for those places were strictly alien to her. But she got tons of catalogues in the mail, and this was her way of shopping. UPS was an almost daily visitor. Although she lived most of her life in the Washington area, she had no concept whatsoever of the Beltway around the city. She treated it like a mine field. But she knew where Paul worked, as she drove him to work daily, and picked him up daily. The reason ~ Paul did not want to stay at work after hours, and he wanted that excuse,

"My wife is picking me up in five minutes." If you rode very often with Ruth, you knew that she avoided the big highways, and scooted around town, stop-and-go driving! Sometimes I got the feeling that God was her co-pilot as she seemed somehow to always avoid accidents.

Close friends, few and far between. Renee Cheney playing classical music on a local PBS station helped her through the day. She enjoyed her collection of classical CDs, but as she got older, this interest faded. There was a time when she was into yoga, and there was a time when she took physical therapy from a professional trainer. But for calling up a friend to go to Georgetown for lunch or shopping, NEVER. Her hobby was collecting beautiful bells. Many of the finest crystals. She was proud to be a member of the Theta sorority, as she felt they were the most beautiful women in the world. And I am sure Gentleman Jim Zumberge agreed with Ruth, as his wife was also a Theta. She sang in the chorus at Allegheny College, but something must have happened to her voice by the time we went together to church, some fifty years later! We always had light refreshments and coffee at our meetings on 18<sup>th</sup> Street, and Ruth always made the coffee. And what coffee, only fit for truck drivers on trans-continental drives.

One of the amazing things about Ruth was that she knew very little about her husband's professional career. Because of Paul's celebrity status, there was usually a call a week about this or that related to Paul. Invariably she would direct the caller to Jerry Pagano, who worked with Paul in the military and later was in the polar office at the National Archives. Jerry was a particularly good friend of the Siples, and was primarily responsible for the cataloguing and assemblage of 133 cubic feet of their archival material. Once upon a time when access to the archives was actually possible, it was great fun to go there and read things from the Siple files. But insofar as I know, Ruth never visited the stacks.

Ruth carried on Paul's torch for scouting, and became the best friend of the various scouts. Dick Chappell was our first choice to give the memorial talk on Ruth at the PRB evening session on May 12 of this year, but he reluctantly declined because he felt this soul should do it. Dick was very close to the Siples, and he had Ruth on his committees for selecting Antarctic scouts. Ruth became close to several of the Antarctic Eagles, especially Mark Leinmiller and Lou Sugarman. When Tony Meunier's son

Jeffrey became an Eagle, Ruth was a special guest of honor at the Eagle Court of Honor ceremonies of Troop 673 at the Great Falls Methodist Church. She presented Jeffrey with a copy of Paul's BOY SCOUT WITH BYRD, but Tony said that her influence went far beyond this, as the filled-to-capacity church had a lot of young impressionable 11-year-old scouts on their way up, and nine of the twenty went on to become Eagle! A phenomenal high percentage, and Tony thinks Ruth's presence and words encouraged them forward.

Ruth was religious, but only on her own terms. While Paul was at the South Pole, she thought that she had found her church when she visited the Episcopal Church in Williamstown. Mark Anschutz of Christ Church in Alexandria ministered to her every religious need in the seventies and eighties, but then her temples started to crumble. When they did away with the 1928 prayer book, she was heart broken; then women priests came into the pulpit and she was devastated, and the final straw was when women priests started serving communion. It was a catastrophe for Ruth, and thereby she lost her single largest support. She did find temporary relief in a Scottish minister who was conducting the old-fashioned service from the 1928 prayer book, but this was short-lived. She withdrew her membership from the National Cathedral when they allowed lesbians to hold meetings within, but would not allow advocates of the 1928 prayer book to convene there. Those were rough days for Ruth. She sought refuge in her own religious material, and would spend several hours each morning in deep meditation. Mark was no longer available to console her, as he had answered a call to a parish in New York City. It was a big fall for her when she could not accept the changes in the Episcopal Church. P.S. It was sure lucky she never was able to read about their new bishop in New Hampshire!!

Antarctic widows from the Byrd era have not always taken very kindly to their husbands passing along and leaving them behind. Jane Wade and Harriet Eklund almost took it personally. But Ruth had a deep spiritual feeling about Paul's death. She even wore white at his funeral, and she once told me that when he died, she felt that someone would come along in six months who would want to marry her. Well, it turned out that the 'someone' was actually the Antarctic Society.

Although Ruth was almost a plank member of the Antarctic Society, it wasn't until 1977 that she became our president, and then things started to happen. It was not

that she was aggressive, but I had become her friend after my employment had been moved to the Washington area, and I prodded her to make some overdue changes. Prior to Ruth's presidency, we had no real idea who the paid-up members were, so Ruth inherited the treasury by self-proclamation from Sophie Dales. Unless members could prove they were in good standing, they were shown the door. From a total of 400 on the books, it was found only 150 were legitimate. Goodbye, Roger Tory Peterson. From once-a-year newsletters, the Society started having one with each lecture. During Ruth's presidency, the first year we had Mary Alice McWhinnie, Dick Black, Jay Zwally, Chester Pierce, and Larry Gould as speakers. And when Larry spoke, we had the grand auditorium at the National Academy of Sciences. How big an evening it was is testified by the presence of Phil "Crevasse" Smith. It doesn't get much bigger than that!

The Society was changing fast, its membership was growing by leaps and bounds. Louie DeGoes was the local head of the National Academy of Sciences Polar Research Board, and he brow beat all *their* members to become *our* members. It gave us some legitimacy beyond being a good old boys social club in Washington, DC, with an annual summer picnic. Larry Gould was head honcho on the PRB, followed by Link Washburn, in turn by Gentleman Jim Zumberge, all good friends of our Society. NSF back in the seventies and eighties was located one block from the Old Executive Office Building in downtown Washington, and we had our meetings at NSF. Wonderful spot, even if you had to hunt for a parking spot in Foggy Bottom. The Society was prospering, and meanwhile Ruth had invited us into her home at 905 Jacksonville Street in Arlington, Virginia, which became known as our Nerve Center. It was a fun time to be associated with the Society as all things were coming up roses, and Ruth was doing all the leg work. Ruth was duly recognized one evening at the dinner party preceding our Memorial Lecture when Gentleman Jim Zumberge grabbed the microphone and thanked Ruth on behalf of all Society members for what she had done for the Society in recent years. Our membership had surpassed the old mark, and when Tahoe Washburn joined, we had 500!

The Society had all the trappings of a legitimate Society, with an honest-to-God set of by-laws, and an approved-by-someone tax exemption. Somehow we survived in spite of ourselves, as the quickest way to utter disaster is

to run something by committees. I think the only reason we survived is because of Ruth, as no one wanted to go against her wishes. For a quiet unassuming person, she had a ton of clout, although she never realized it, even though she had become our Honorary President. Without Ruth, our future IS in jeopardy!

Some of you people probably do not know that Ruth once was a librarian for the National Geographic Society, a job she loved deeply until shown the door when they enforced their mandatory retirement age. Then Ruth worked for a short time for the Arctic Institute of North America in their Arlington, Virginia, office, but she was too nice for the job. The head man there had a drinking problem, and you never knew when or if he would show up in the morning. So working at no salary at home for the Antarctic Society was a relief, although strictly a labor of love. She was a marvel at turning out our newsletters. She was a very good editor, and a whiz at typing, even though she never was a secretary. She could type ten pages, single-spaced, in one day without a single error. Boy, have we missed her after she lost her eyesight. Altogether Ruth put together over 130 newsletters, over twenty-one years of sheer dedication and perfection. If there is a Heaven, and both she and August Howard are there, these two friends must be having one great time talking about leaving us mere polar mortals here on earth.

An association with Ruth was like having a life-time pass to Cooperstown's Hall of Fame, as through her portals walked the greats and the near greats of the Byrd Antarctic expeditions. God, it was great to be privy to so many visits by so many of the legends, and to accompany Ruth to the homes of others, such as Henry Harrison and Howard Mason. But without a doubt the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Byrd Antarctic Expedition, 1933-35, in Washington, D.C. had to be the most exciting, and it seems during the festivities that all came to Ruth's home as if they were visiting some shrine, paying respect to some Greek goddess, except in this case a Johannismeyer whose ancestry came from a mountain village in Switzerland. As many of you know, Dick Black, who retired as an admiral, a Shakespearian devotee and the Antarctic Poet Laureate, came from the landed gentry in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and he had clout. As a member of the historic Cincinnati Club, he had access to the plush mansion on Massachusetts Avenue in the District, and here was where the OAEs convened to eat and drink and talk and reminisce, probably with many stretched truths. It was truly a gala

affair, the very last gathering of Byrd people. The next morning they all were able to get out of bed, exhibiting great intestinal fortitude, and in the cool fall breezes, gathered at the base of Admiral Richard E. Byrd's statue on the Avenue of the Heroes at the entrance to Arlington Cemetery, where they placed a wreath at his feet. Although the Admiral is buried within, high up on a slope identified by one of the small, white crosses of commoners, there was a feeling among the old boys that he had come down the hill that morning to say his real final goodbyes and thank yous to the survivors who paced around his statue that morning. It was a very, very touching morning, and as they dispersed to go home, they had to know that this was their last gathering.

One thing happened that brought one of their least humble members down on his knees in tears. I am speaking of Amory "Bud" Waite, whom I had known personally since 1936. How it happened does not matter, but Senator Byrd heard about the reunion, was asked to do something special for Bud as the sole surviving member of the party who went out to Advanced Base and brought back the Senator's uncle. The good Senator obliged, had the favorite picture of Admiral Byrd's mother enlarged, and then got members of the Byrd family to inscribe their thanks and appreciation around the border. Old boys shouldn't cry, but in this case it was excusable. That whole 50<sup>th</sup> celebration meant much to Ruth, although it had to pull on her heartstrings where one special member of the expedition was not there.

At the 50<sup>th</sup> reunion, most of the wives and a lot of the widows showed up. Some of the wives were put on the maps by having features named after them, but their names got purged when someone with authority lined them out. I have always felt that this was a grave injustice to these women, and that their first names should be restored, so Mt. Siple could once again be Mt. Ruth Siple. And if you ever met Jane Wade, you would immediately know that the twin-peaked Mt. Wade should have been left as Mt. Jane Wade. It was well named originally. Shouldn't fool around with perfection.

The most exciting day in Ruth's life had to be January 9, 1975, when she, too, stood on the South Pole. Imagine the thrill of being at the Bottom of the World, where her late husband had headed up the first hardy group to ever winter-over in what one explorer incorrectly assessed as, "Great God, this is an awful place." To Ruth it was

golden, fulfilling all the first-hand stories that she had heard from Paul. It was a typical beautiful summer day with clear skies and the thermometer reading a balmy -8° F. Doesn't get any better than that, but it did. They took Ruth over to the old station that Paul had occupied as Station Scientific leader in 1956-57. Walt Seelig and Al Fowler were with her, and Walt remembers Ruth saying, "This is just the way that Paul described it to me." She asked if anyone knew which cubicle had been Paul's, and Walt said some young lieutenant still wet behind his ears seized upon the opportunity to say, "This one right here." Of course the kid did not know, but it was the perfect answer at the right time, and Ruth sat down supposedly on Paul's old chair at his old desk, and she had to think smilingly to herself that she had actually gone to Heaven.

I tried to find out who was responsible for Ruth being included in the VIP group invited to the South Pole to dedicate the Domed Station. I kind of thought that Jerry Pagano had perhaps instigated it, but wiser heads than mine pinned it down to the triumvirate of Larry Gould-Grover Murray-Vernice Anderson. Larry Gould has been off frequency for several years, and Grover joined him about six months ago. That left Vernice, and she never returned our call. But whoever, it was a sweet thing to do, and Ruth spent the rest of her life reliving that day.

On the way to the South Pole she carried an important package. It contained the original silver sphere that Paul had put on the barber pole above the South Pole Station. She gave it to the Antarctic Wing at the Canterbury Museum in Christchurch, and it was accepted by Mr. Baden-Norris, Honorary Director of the Museum. He is the gentleman with that awful scowl on his face sitting directly behind the radiant Ruth in the photo on p. 9. Instead of rejoicing over accepting a treasure, he looked like a man who could not wait for his afternoon double martini.

A kind gentlemen from Midlothian, Virginia, by the name of John Lenkey HI was responsible for Ruth being invited to Wellington, New Zealand, in 1993 for the rededication ceremonies in conjunction with the refurbishing of the defaced Byrd Memorial atop Mt. Victoria. There were two other invited guests: Boiling Byrd Clarke, one of the Admiral's daughters, and an Eagle Scout from Paul's former group, the French Creek Council of Erie, Pennsylvania. The day atop Mt. Victoria was cold, as it was the first day of winter, and the wind-chill made it seem like the Antarctic. John turned to Ruth and said "I wish they'd hurry before

Paul's wind-chill factor does us all in." The Lord Mayor overheard the remark, promptly wound up the perorations, and they rushed off to the City Hall where he properly hosted embassy and government officials. John could not accompany Ruth back to the States, but he made sure that United Airlines realized that they had a very important person aboard in Ruth, and lo and behold, they upgraded her to first class for her long flight home. John wrote that Ruth was as thrilled as a child with a new toy!

Another bit of excitement for Ruth was the two-day celebration of Admiral Byrd's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday at The Ohio State University on 24-25 October 1988. It was within the framework of two very interesting presentations that our president, Bob Rutford as officiator, inducted Ruth as our Second Honorary President. There were a lot of Byrd people there, including daughter Boiling and three grandsons, Robert, Leverett, and Harry, as well as several OAEs. The indestructible Norman Vaughan with his dog-sledging wife Carolyn, represented BAE I. Al Lindsey, Joe Hill, Whirleybird McCormick, and Erwin Bramhall all were there from BAE II. Al presented a lecture, "With Byrd and Siple, BAE II, 1933-35." As most of you know, the Siples and the Lindseys were close friends throughout their lives, and now only Elizabeth survives. But it was an interesting gathering of Byrd people, and from out of the blue someone walked in and presented Whirleybird with the wing of the chopper that he crashed on the ice! It brought down the house almost as fast as Whirleybird crashed the chopper.

As I recall, Rutford inducted Ruth prior to Pete Anderson's talk on Admiral Byrd. Ruth was resplendent in a beautiful dark blue dress and Bob had a special plaque made up commemorating the occasion, which he then presented to The First Lady. Pete Anderson was in the process of writing a biography on Byrd, and he was determined to present the whole book, page by page, paragraph by paragraph, that evening. I thought it was fantastic and was hanging on his every word. Rutford was going crazy, wondering if Pete would ever stop, as I think he was afraid that he might lose out entirely on his appointed round at a nearby watering hole. However, it was a great evening for Ruth, and she kept that picture of the plaque on a stand right outside of her bedroom.

Ruth's life started to crumble when she was beset with macular degeneration. She really did not have the intestinal fortitude to cope with it, and it really put her into

the dumps. It wasn't easy for her, a person who loved beauty and enjoyed nature, to see this veil being swept over her eyes, taking the things she loved and appreciated out of her vision. And how she hated to give up driving, being the very last person to realize that she was a detriment behind the wheel. God must have been sitting in her co-pilot seat at the end.

Finally, during the past fall, the youngest Siple daughter, Mary Cathrin, found a nice care and rehabilitation center near her home in Wadsworth, Ohio, and Ruth was happily moved there. If there is a blessing in Ruth's death, it is that she spent her last two months near a loving daughter who came to see her and sit with her on a daily basis. A lot of you people answered our plea for you to call her on her birthday, January 16<sup>th</sup>, and you did. And you have told us what satisfying conversations you had with Ruth at that time. She lasted one more week, dying at breakfast time on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. I talked to her the evening before. She knew who I was, but she was confused as to where she was and what she was doing there. I think I can accurately say that she did not die in pain, as they had her pretty well doped up with morphine at the end. And I know she died with a loving daughter almost constantly at her side. The exact cause of her death was probably congestive heart failure, which was first ascertained when Ruth was hospitalized in December.

We asked Polly Penhale and Jerry Marty if the flag at the South Pole could be lowered to half-mast for a short time on the 23<sup>rd</sup> in tribute to a very loving and caring Ruth Siple. Jerry complied immediately, and sent us several pictures via e-mail. We forwarded them to my good friend Ed Williams in Roanoke, and he produced a beautiful enlargement for the casket, plus others for her family. Quite a few Antarcticans made visiting hours at the funeral home, including two who were with her at the South Pole, Al Fowler and Walt Seelig, almost as if they were there to see to it that she completed that journey. And in that room at the funeral home with Ruth was something very special and dear to her from one of you. It was a piece of Mt. Siple, which Paul had originally named Mt. Ruth Siple. Wesley LeMasurier was working in the field there about ten years ago, and knocked off a piece of the rock, and sent it to Ruth. Ruth was eternally indebted to Wes for doing it, and she had it mounted in her living room on a lighted stand given her by Eagle Scout Dick Chappell, who also graced the visiting hours with his gentleman's presence.

Her service at the cemetery was befitting the wife of the Father of Wind-Chill. The temperature was around 15 above, but a howling wind brought the wind-chill reading to below zero. Befittingly, the ground was snow-covered. I had a South Pole baseball cap on my balding head, and as I stood there in the biting cold, a fleeting thought rushed through my mind. Open the casket, and put the cap on Ruth, as it must have been damn cold in there, too! And she did deserve my South Pole cap. Reluctantly I selfishly kept it on my own head, but oh, how I wanted to do it!

One last comment about that day, as the procession weaved its way from the funeral home in Fairfax to the cemetery in Falls Church, we went past the large Washington postal distribution center in Merrifield. How appropriate that her last vehicular ride on earth should go by that center, as this is where Ruth made many a run with newsletters to mail to you all. And it was always so much fun to go out there with her, as all the mail handlers got to know her and to love her, and there was always friendly banter and smiles back and forth. She was a lovely lady, and we all are going to miss her, something terribly. Over a month later, my heart won't let me commit her.

#### **A TRIBUTE TO RUTH (From a Society Member, no doubt typical of the lives she touched)**

To a lot of people Ruth Siple was Paul Siple's widow, the wife of the "Boy Scout With Byrd", "90 Degree South", etc., etc. Well I never knew Paul Siple, but I knew Ruth. She was my friend and one of the few people I knew who fully understood my passion for Antarctica and all things Antarctic (she once told me that she could remember every minute of the day she spent at the South Pole!).

Nothing was too obscure or arcane to talk to Ruth about if it had to do with Antarctica in some way. We shared frequent phone calls and the occasional visit and for me she was like an antarctic oasis in my life, which was primarily inhabited with folks who just didn't get it. Ruth did. Ruth also flattered me that I was somehow important to her and to the antarctic "scene". I was at best an obscure player there but she treated me as though what I thought mattered. I think that she made everyone feel that way but it meant a lot to me.

When a newsletter arrived in the mail I was usually more interested in what Ruth had written on the always present yellow post-it than the newsletter itself. God knows how

many of those things she wrote but she made a lot of people feel special with them. Another Ruth trademark was the birthday cards. I don't think that she met my children more than a few times, but we all got birthday cards and valentines, and although my kids didn't know her well they always knew she cared about them.

She and Paul Dalrymple became regular visitors on their way to Wintergreen. Their visits were special evenings for me as I truly learned more about antarctic history and about the personalities at those meals than in all of my reading and visits. I believe that the "antarctic experience" today is sterile of the history and background of how it came to be. Ruth provided the bridge between the "thens" and the now.

It was an honor to visit her in the "Nerve Center" on Jacksonville Street on occasion. It is hard to imagine the treasure trove of memorabilia — books, rocks, maps, photos, art, and on and on. I hope that someone in her family thinks enough of it to preserve it!

I will miss Ruth, she was my antarctic connection and a good true friend. I feel that I was special to her, but then maybe that was Ruth's magic, I think she made a lot of us feel that way no matter how important or maybe not important we were."

### **HONORING RUTH SIPLE**

The Siple Family talked to us at the time of Ruth's death about some means of honoring Ruth with contributions. We thought we had the perfect outlet where Ruth had once been a happy librarian and an exuberant visitor to the South Pole with a name familiar to all South Polies. We suggested to Jerry Marty that NSF consider naming the library in the now-being-constructed South Pole station after Ruth, and Jerry thought it was a wonderful idea. It never flew. It is too bad, as it would have been a good deal for us, it would have been a good deal for NSF, and it would have been a good deal for Ruth. NSF is looking at the International Polar Year in 2007 and the coinciding completion of the new South Pole station (also 2007) to incorporate naming of rooms and station wings" One important person, above Jerry Marty, indicated that "the Ruth J. Siple library was a good suggestion and would be considered as part of the effort" So I guess you could say that there is some good news as evidently our proposal will eventually be considered.

But should we hold our breath for three more years in hope that it might possibly be executed at that time, or should we look now for an alternative avenue while the memory of Ruth is so strong? We felt the library idea was a natural, and I think Jerry Marty felt the same way, too. It is a tough call now as to what we should do to honor Ruth. If you folks have any thoughts or ideas, one way or the other, please let us know, as you are part of the overall plan(s). In the meantime we hope you have enjoyed the newsletter, have perhaps learned a little bit more about a faithful and abiding housewife and mother who turned out to lead an All-Antarctican life of her own.

### **Ruth and Paul Siple's daughters:**

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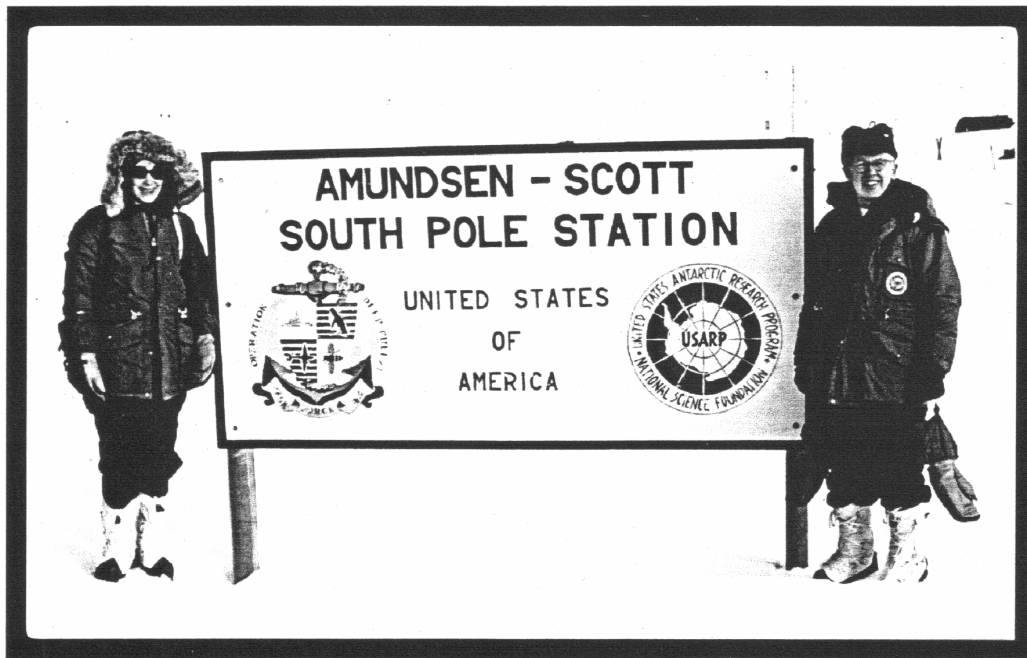
The montage of pictures was put together by a popular Antarctic videographer, Dr. Edwin Williams of Roanoke, Virginia. Thank you Ed.

**Upper left** - Boiling Byrd Clarke and Ruth Siple, age 80, aside the Byrd Memorial atop Mt. Victoria, Wellington, New Zealand, June 23, 1993; **Upper middle**- Ruth Siple, age 85, after the christening of the LAURENCE M GOULD, October 9, 1997; **Upper right** - Ruth Siple, age 80, and Boiling Byrd Clarke, again at Byrd Memorial Rededication Ceremonies, June 21, 1993. **Middle left** -- Ruth Siple, age 62, at the South Pole, January 9, 1975; **Center** - Antarctic Society "Team" of Paul Dalrymple and Ruth, age 73, April 1985; **Middle right** ~ Ruth, age 62, arriving at Antarctica on January 8, 1975. **Lower left** ~ Norman Vaughan, age 82, and Ruth, age 76, enjoying lunch at The Ohio State University's Faculty Club, October 25, 1988; **Lower right** ~ Ruth, age 85, applauding the audience after breaking the bubbly stuff on the bow of the LAURENCE M. GOULD.





Ruth Siple presenting the silvered sphere that formerly rested atop the first South Pole Station, 1956-7, to the Canterbury Museum, Christchurch, New Zealand. Accepting in behalf of the museum is Mr. Baden-Norris, seated directly behind Ruth. At the far right, smiling in approval, is Dr. H. Guyford Stever, director of the National Service Foundation. January 7, 1975.



Ruth Siple and Dr. Thomas Jones, Deputy Assistant Director, National Science Foundation, stand at the bottom of the world on January 9, 1975.



