



THE ANTARCTICAN SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

"BY AND FOR ALL ANTARCTICANS"

Vol.04-05

February

No. 4

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EREBUS VOICE

The Mountain

I am here beside my brother, Terror
I am the place of human error
I am beauty and cloud, and I am sorrow
I am tears, which you will weep tomorrow
I am the sky and the exhausting gale
I am the place of ice I am the debris trail
I am as far as you can see
I am the place of memory
And I am still a hand, a fingertip, a ring
I am what there is no forgetting
I am the one with truly broken heart
I watched them fall, and freeze, and break apart

The Dead

We fell,
Yet we were loved and we are lifted
We froze,
Yet we were loved and we are warm
We broke apart.
Yet we are here and we are whole

The above commissioned poem by Bill Manhire was read by Sir Edmund Hillary at the 25th anniversary commemoration of The Darkest Day in the history of the Antarctic, November 28, 1979, when 257 persons lost their lives when an Air New Zealand DC-10 crashed on the lower slopes of Mt. Erebus. Hillary was originally booked to be the Antarctic lecturer on this ill-fated flight, but was replaced by his very best friend, double-amputee Peter Mulgrew. Peter was known and loved by all the Americans at the Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station where he stayed for nearly a month in January 1958 while a support member of the New Zealand party of The Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition.. Sir Edmund, who lost his wife in a plane accident in Kathmandu, is now married to Peter's widow who opted not to attend the heart wrenching ceremonies.

BRASH ICE. When we start to think that it is about time to start another Newsletter, we often wonder where we will find the material. Such was the case this time, but slowly the pieces began to appear like pancake ice on the surface of the cooling Antarctic waters. It seems almost impossible to find something of interest for everyone because of our diverse membership formed over more than 45 years, but there are some ageless items that will appeal to all ages. Our cover page melodramatic poem about Antarctica's Blackest Day should move everyone. The story of the whereabouts of the B14 family of icebergs will hopefully tell you more than you have been able to read in your favorite home-town newspapers, and actually pinpoint where they were within the past month. The first hand account of life at Palmer Station by the erudite Dr. Will Silva will be a real revelation to old timers as well as current OAEs. He writes in a very appealing vein, off the cuff, letting the chips fall where they may. We love his honesty and his forthrightness. Following Will's story on Palmer Today, we have a flashback story dating back to Byrd Station in 1958, telling what has happened to an IGY scientist, John Annexstad in the intervening forty-seven years. We also have another interesting contribution from Katy Jensen, just back from the ice before her husband took off to winter-over at the South Pole for yet another year. It's a new ball game now with a large cadre of repeaters.

Jerry Marty informs us that the Domed South Pole Station is doomed to go to Port Hueneme, California, where it will become a part of the USN Seabee Museum. The NSF is proceeding with the cooperative planning with the US Navy for the disassembly and its reassembly, phasing out the old station in the austral summers of 2007 and 2008. How about mat!!!

REUNIONS.

Deep Freeze Spring Fling 2005. 22, 23, 24 April 2005, Dayton, OH. POC Edson B. Waite Jr (ebw@thewaitegroup.com)

Retired Seabee Association 11th annual reunion, 29 April thru 1 May 2005, CBC Gulfport, MS. POC Bill Stroup (stroup597@aol.com) (228), 864-3270

ADFA 2005 Reunion, May 3-5, 2005. Biloxi. MS. POC Dick Bowers (rbowersindy@comcast.net). Celebrating the Fiftieth Anniversary of Operation Deep Freeze.

MEMBERSHIP. Eighty-five percent of you folks have paid their dues, and those of you who haven't are getting another bill in this Newsletter. As this is a one-man operation, it would help the treasurer if you renewed for multiple years. And if

you want to go inactive, that is okay, too, but please return the form with the inactive line checked.

The earliest listing of members that we could find in the files is one of January 31, 1961. Ten of them are not only alive, but are still members. From the wintering over ice parties from the first year of the IGY, we have Gordon Cartwright of Mirny, George Toney of Byrd, and Herb Hansen of the South Pole. Of course the ancient and venerable Bill Sladen goes way back into the 1940's with the Brits, being our most senior member, Ken Moulton and Walt Seelig had long and distinguished careers with NSF; Phil Smith was with both NSF and the National Academies, and Bill Littlewood worked for the State Department. Two of our long-termed members, Len Dykes and Betty Didcoct Burrill, both worked for the government agency which we do not talk about. Of these old stalwarts, Betty was the prettiest, Ken the most handsome, Phil the youngest, Bill S. the most active, Walt the luckiest, George the most legal, Gordon the most international, Herb the most weatherwise, Bill L. the most philatelic, and Len the most underground.

RUTH J. SIPLE MEMORIAL FUND. Some big contributors surfaced since our last Newsletter in December, so the total has grown from slightly over \$2500 to over \$4000. People who contribute \$50 or more receive a waiver of a years' membership dues to the Society for each fifty dollars donation to the Fund. Many prominent, big-named Antarcticans came through during this last reporting period. You can find their names among Rob Flint, Phil Smith, John Middaugh, Lou Lanzerotti, Gisela Dreschhoff, Tom and Edith Taylor, Pete Barretta, Gracie Machemer, Ed Williams, Bob Dodson, Ron Thoreson, Mel Havener, Rosa Rubin, Steve Dibbern and Bill Spindler. On behalf of all the Siple daughters and the Fund, we thank you. We also hope to have some good news on the Fund by mid-summer, at the latest.

OUR PRESIDENT HAS JOINED THE MAJORITY (ROB FLINT). The majority of visitors to Antarctica nowadays are tourists - about 20,000 last year according to IAATO statistics. I remember seeing a promotional film in 1973 for Lindblad's Antarctic cruises - Lindblad was one of the first to offer a tourist trip. In the film, a waiter is serving at a beautifully appointed table while icebergs and mountains slide by outside of the window. It seemed a long way from the Antarctica that I knew. Now I have been to the tourists' Antarctica, too.

After nine expeditions spanning 37 years, working as an engineer in support of a variety of scientific programs, my 2005 trip to the continent was an opportunity to see the

continent from the tourist perspective, AND to take my family to a part of the planet which has had a profound influence on my life. I, my wife and grown children and their companions were passengers on the *Orion*, a comfortable, very modern (launched November 2003), small (106 pax), cruise ship for a 10 night round trip from Ushuaia to the Antarctic Peninsula. Much of the group were Yale and Harvard Alumni and spouses, though the passenger list was geographically diverse with fellow travelers from as far as Australia and Britain.

From the descriptions of other tourists and photos and brochures, I had a conception of how the trip might be run and what to expect, but I must say the actual trip exceeded all my expectations for spectacular scenery, profusion and approachability of wildlife, professionalism of staff and crew, and comfort of accommodations. We were very fortunate with weather - calm crossings of the Drake both ways, virtually no precipitation, and several days of bright sunshine. Elsewhere in this newsletter, Will Silva notes that Palmer Station has 90% cloud cover, but our morning there was cloudless and still. Lemaire Channel was, if anything, even more magical than its reputation.

Typically, we enjoyed a shore excursion morning and afternoon of each day on the peninsula - nine beach landings plus one Zodiac cruise among icebergs without landing. The shore excursions ranged from touring wonderful, crowded, noisy smelly penguin rookeries and seal wallows, to a some fairly strenuous hikes to overlooks, to science tours at Port Lockroy and Palmer Station, to historic sites at Deception Island and Paulet Island. And we had perfect weather for the S.T.T.T.D. - or Stupid Tourist Thing To DO - wallow in volcanically warmed water in Whalers' Bay at Deception Island (yes, it IS a kick!).

The lecturing and guiding staff were truly excellent. Each one was an expert in his or her field, and they were all personable and interested in giving the guests a quality experience. Of special note was John Annexstad of this Society whose Antarctic experience goes back to IGY. It was great to renew acquaintance with him. Warren Zapol, also of this Society was the lecturer for the Harvard Alumni group, and his lectures on his seal research were high points. (Another Antarctic veteran among the passengers was Dr. Bob Laird, who wintered at McMurdo for Dr. Wohlschlag in 1963.) Warren's wife, Nikki gave a good lecture on the legal status of Antarctica, and the Yale lecturer, Ron Smith, gave several talks on plate tectonics, global warming, and other subjects.

My impression was that the tourist operation was run very sensitively, both for safety and for minimizing tourist impact.

The staff took the IAATO rules very seriously and imparted that seriousness to the guests. I believe that tourism is a very good thing (with these controls) for increasing the constituency for the protection of the continent.

I asked my family for their impressions of the trip. My nephew Nicholas West writes, "I was impressed by the size of the mountains and the multitude of life in such an extreme place. The knowledge that this area is huge and practically untouched in this day and age is amazing. The sheer natural beauty was impressive - I think it can be hard to do it justice even with photos. (And I also learned how much those cute penguins can stink up the place!)"

My son Alexis writes, "I can't say my point-of-view would be that of a 'typical tourist' because the typical tourist hasn't grown up watching slides of his father's life on the ice down in Antarctica. This background did not however diminish my surprise in encountering the strange, alien nature of the Antarctic Peninsula. If anything it was heightened; here I was thinking I knew what 'Antarctica' meant, but actually what I knew was just the tip of the iceberg (sorry). The temperatures were higher, the wildlife was more numerous and varied, the forms and colors of the ice exceeded my imagination, and... grass? Never did I expect to see grassy slopes as far as 64 degrees south. Our voyage was one revelation after another, from the first iceberg to the last humpback whale."

My sentiments, too.

B-15A AND ITS NEXT OF KIN (AL SUTHERLAND)

"Only satellites and astronauts get views like this, an unprecedented look at the western Ross Sea, the Ross Ice Shelf, Ross Island, and the array of icebergs that originated from the Ross Ice Shelf, courtesy of Al Sutherland, NSF/OPP. The labels help with the locations of the major ones. For example, B15A, the large one near Drygalski Ice Tongue, has been moving a bit, but vacillating in movements. B-15K is a long, skinny one that is parallel to and south of B-15A (which has not moved since it came to its current position about a year ago). C-16 has its southern point in Lewis Bay on the north side of Ross Island and moved about 7 miles to the north in January 2005, but otherwise has stayed in the same area since Jan. 2001. B-15J is the one to the east of Cape Crozier (eastern Ross Island), and moves north, south, east, west and rotates, but doesn't leave the general area. Another figure is an enlargement of the first, taken on 2 Feb. 2005. Further breakout has occurred since then. The most recent image can be seen at <http://rapidfire.sci.gsfc.nasa.gov/subsets/7RossSea/>.

Breakout of sea ice to Cape Royds, showing the ship channel from Royds to Hut Point can be seen at <http://rapidfire.sci.gsfc.nasa.gov/subsets/7RossSea/2005045/RossSea.2005045.aqua.250m.jpg>. The freighter AMERICAN TERN completed its offload at Hut Point and departed McMurdo on 9 Feb. 2005 under the escort of the KRASIN and POLAR STAR. KRASIN, a Russian icebreaker out of Vladivostok, was chartered to provide additional horsepower to create the channel to Hut Point. Iceberg designations of 'B' and 'C' refer to the quadrant source for the iceberg; for example, 'B' icebergs originate from the 90° W to 180° quadrant, 'C' from 180° to 90°E."



1. B15-A
2. Drygalski Ice Tongue
3. C-16
4. B-15J
5. Ross Island
6. Cape Crozier

7. McMurdo Station
8. Ross Ice Shelf
9. White Island
10. Black Island
11. Ferrar Glacier

ASTRONOMY ON ICE: OBSERVING THE UNIVERSE FROM THE SOUTH POLE, by Martin A. Pomerantz. Xlibris Corp., 2004.

271 p. \$21.99 paperback; \$31.99 cloth hardback. Reviewed by John Spletstoeser. Anyone who spent enough time at McMurdo Station in the 1960's through the mid-1990's knows the name Martin A. Pomerantz, the quiet physicist who migrated from his home base in Pennsylvania to the U.S. station at the South Pole every austral summer for 26 years. Why would anyone do that, you might ask? Well, from an initial project to study cosmic rays resulting from an invitation to submit a proposal in 1960, Martin gradually developed a sophisticated observatory at the South Pole to include observations of the solar interior. He proposed that the high elevation of the Pole (9,300 feet/2,835 meters) and the uncontaminated air provides an ideal platform for an astronomical observatory, although at first he encountered considerable opposition from the scientific community. Ultimately, however, he has been proved right, as evidenced by numerous observations and experiments conducted at the world's southernmost observatory. Based at the Bartol Research Foundation of the Franklin Institute, located near Swarthmore College, Pennsylvania, Martin's research carried him to many parts of the world, much of it launching balloons to study the upper atmosphere. The South Pole, however, captured him early and, like the mysterious mistress that many Antarctic veterans experience, drew him back for the remainder of his career. His pioneering work has earned him the dedication of the Martin A. Pomerantz Observatory at 90°S. This book, in 19 chapters, covers his interesting professional career, and is published under the auspices of the American Polar Society. To order the book, contact the publisher at (888) 795-4274 x. 487 or x. 876. Buy the book - a bargain and very interesting reading.

INTERSTATE HIGHWAY 90°S ALMOST A REALITY.

(clipping from Margaret Lanyon). The overland (sic) route to the South Pole had a big breakthrough this past austral summer. The 12-strong team reached the Polar Plateau, 480 km from the Pole, in January, and could have continued all the way to the station, a year ahead of schedule. However, bad weather was putting pressure on South Pole flights so they called a halt. Overland supply convoys will begin to the South Pole as early as next summer. Ultimately, it is expected that the overland route will free up between 20 and 60 cargo flights, making them available for science.

The American team had struggled for the first two years of assessing the route's viability. In the first year a heavily crevassed zone took weeks to make safe as a bulldozer filled in the crevasses. The next year, the team wallowed in soft snow as it crossed the Ross Ice Shelf and, by the turnaround point, had completed only 680 km of the 1600 km route.

READY FOR WINTER (Katy Jensen) Ah, February. For many of us, this is the month when we abandon our New Year's resolutions, replenish the holiday chocolate jar, and curl up on the couch to watch winter sports on television. For our colleagues in Antarctica, however, February is one of the busiest months of the year. The summer field season is still bucketing along in high gear, but

thoughts turn increasingly toward station closing and its related stressors, including prioritization (and reprioritization) of incoming supplies.

You can learn a lot about a person by asking them for their cargo priorities. Intellectuals choose science equipment, gastronomes choose freshies, and bacchanals choose beer. But in Antarctica, there is one thing even more essential than the quest for knowledge, more basic to our needs than nourishment or liquid courage. The lifeblood of our program is a stinky, straw-colored mix of hydrocarbons called "fuel." Without it, science and food become mere luxuries.

The totals for ship usage are elusive, but last year the USAP used 5.8 million gallons of fuel to provide power, heat, and equipment operations for the stations, camps, and aircraft. At 6.8 pounds and up to \$2 per gallon, that's a significant chunk of the logistical and financial requirements for pursuing science on the Ice. Energy conservation is paramount at all sites, and alternative energy sources are used whenever possible, especially at the field camps. But for now, at least, the USAP's success is utterly dependent on the availability of fossil fuels.

Palmer Station receives enough fuel to cover its 133,000-gal/yr habit in twice-annual resupply trips from the ASRV *Laurence M. Gould*. McMurdo and its camps (2.5 million gal/yr), South Pole (481,000 gal/yr), and New Zealand's Scott Base (124,000 gal/yr) all rely on the ability of a fuel tanker to reach Hut Point each austral summer. Which means they all rely on the capability of one or more icebreakers to clear a channel and escort the larger ship into Antarctica's southernmost port.

Until recently, the annual sea ice that formed near McMurdo would disperse enough for one icebreaker (usually one of the USCG sister ships *Polar Sea* or *Polar Star*) to cut a channel and escort the fuel tanker and the cargo resupply ship through McMurdo Sound. But the presence of two massive icebergs in the Ross Sea seems to be preventing the sea ice from breaking up and drifting away, allowing it to re-freeze each season into thicker, "multi-year" ice. What was once a relatively thin, 15-mile strip for the icebreakers to clear has grown progressively in amount and thickness.

In 2002, the sea ice was extensive enough that both USCG icebreakers were sent south to clear the channel together, hi 2003, the distance from McMurdo to the ice edge expanded from 15 miles to 40 miles. Again, NSF had to recruit a second icebreaker, this time the USCGC *Healy*, to help the *Polar Sea* break through. But the ice proved too thick for even the Coast Guard, and the MV *Richard G. Matthiesen* couldn't quite reach the McMurdo pier. NSF extended McMurdo's field season by two weeks, and crews clamored to set up a safe, efficient hose line to offload 6.6 million gallons of fuel across 4.5 miles of sea ice.

This year, the sea ice stretched an unprecedented 90 miles from McMurdo station, and icebreaking operations were complicated by

a leaky propeller on the *Polar Star*. With the *Polar Sea* in dry dock, NSF turned to the Russians for help. According to an NSF press release, the [Russian icebreaker] *Krasin* was the "only qualified ship available on the world market to assist the *Polar Star*." Together, the icebreakers' efforts were a success, and at the end of January they escorted the USNS *Paul Buck* to the pier at Hut Point, where crews offloaded 6.1 million gallons of fuel without difficulty.

Oh, and the cargo resupply vessel *American Tern* arrived shortly thereafter, delivering about 5,000 tons of other important things like science equipment and food.

References:

2004 Annual Report for the USAP Master Permit
"Fuel Used at Scott Base " <http://www.antarcticanz.govt.nz/article/4028.html>
"Facing Extreme Ice Conditions, Coast Guard, NSF deploy second icebreaker to Antarctica" NSF Press Release 13 Jan 2003
"Icebreakers Clear Channel into McMurdo Station " NSF Press Release 03 Feb 2005
McMurdo Station Situation Report 09 Mar 2003
McMurdo Station Situation Report 03 Jan 2005

THERE'S LIFE AT PALMER, SHADES OF GRAY, BEAMS OF LIGHT (Dr. Will Silva) Palmer Station, Antarctica: 64.7°S, 65°W. 30 October, 2004. Riviera of the Ice. The US Antarctic Program's red-haired step-child. Gets hind-teat on the NSF sow.... Our little home on Gamage Point, on the southwest coast of 23 x 40 mile Anvers Island just off the Antarctic Peninsula is known in many ways. I suppose Outpost of Progress might be one. Transit across the Drake Passage from Punta Arenas, Chile aboard our supply vessel, the 1,600 ton R/*Laurence M. Gould* takes 4 days. We have no air strip. With only 45 beds on station, our project has a very different feel to it than Pole or McMurdo. In more ways than latitude, marine climate, and transit via Chile rather than New Zealand, it really does seem a world apart from the other stations. This is mainly a marine biology station, and many projects revolve around its being a Long Term Ecological Research Area. Researchers study the impact of regional warming and increased UV radiation on local flora and fauna. Some groups have come year after year to study terrestrial plants, plankton, krill, and population dynamics of the penguins, giant petrels, skuas, shags, and gulls. Others have come to investigate the few terrestrial insects here, and at times we have grantees looking at atmospheric and solar physics, glaciology, chemical defenses of marine invertebrates, and the substances that act as antifreeze in Antarctic fish.

Palmer's annual average cloud cover is 90%. There are quite a few partly sunny days most summers though, with a few clouds or high overcast in a pale sky casting hazy shadows. On those rare, really clear days the light is irresistible and I look for excuses to do something outside. Many evenings, a glorious sunset peeks out from under our typical 2000' stratus layer. We can see rain, snow, or something in between in any month of the year. Annual average rainfall is 30 inches and snowfall about 13 feet. Summer days average 35°F, winter days 23°F. Though annualized average wind speed is 11 knots, as an air sampler I can tell you that we go 10 days

at a time without seeing winds over 3. By the same token, we can have storms with winds sustained at 20 to 40 knots and gusting to 60 knots for a couple of days at a time. Peak recorded wind speed here was 93kts in June 1990. So while temperatures are very mild compared with those at Pole, the climate is often very, very harsh. I recall seeing the stars only twice during the winter of 2000.

It's so good to return here, after 4 years away that held a summer in McMurdo and year at Pole for me. I've been here for four weeks, with the first few seeing turnover activities between those finishing their winter and those of us arriving for the summer. Last weekend our supply vessel, R/V *L.M. Gould* arrived with the rest of our summer crew and the early contingent of researchers. We're up to 38 aboard now; we'll be at full capacity when the next vessel arrives in 2 weeks, and I'll have a roommate again after that. Most of us haven't slept in bunk beds much since childhood. Welcome to Palmer Station.

Things are so much better than last time I was here, and in so many ways that it nearly seems like a new place. For starters we've a lot of very decent folk here, and no knuckle-heads. It feels like a calmer, happier place than when I arrived 5 years ago. The place looks a whole lot better than it did then; and I think our Area Director Bob Farrell and station manager Joe Pettit deserve a lot of credit for that. We've enough sheets, forks and spoons, and cups. The changes are good for morale.

For me an even bigger change is that I've a much better medical shop to work in. It was just getting finished when I left in 2000. Add to that, enough new equipment that finding space to put it and organizing it for easy access has become a challenge. Some different than last time around! Instead of hand-dipping X-ray films in 5-gallon chemical tanks, we now have phosphor plates and a digital scanner like I was using at Pole last tour. We have good video-telecoms gear, slit-lamp, EKG, multi-function monitor/defibrillator, a modern IV infusion pump and a versatile ventilator, a well-functioning EktaChem bench-top chemistry analyzer that was down for most of my last tour, a new I-Stat bedside chem analyzer that runs blood gasses or basic chemistries in a couple of minutes, and I've recently taken delivery of an automated blood cell counter and an ultrasound machine that's the size of a 1995-vintage laptop computer. So many toys! But when evaluating a sailor with a dose of the clap (my most serious case to date), there's still no substitute for a microscope and a Gram's stained slide of the goo....

It's still a little wintry here. The bay remains choked with refrozen brash and fast ice, frustrating the scientists' ambitions. Our days are around freezing, nights a bit below. The skiing isn't great on the wind-blown glacier, but on the rare clear days the view's world class. Besides, I get more turns in one run here than I've ever had in a year at Pole. It's fun carving turns on an old pair of Hagens with Silvretta 404's, taking only a few minutes to travel over snowed up rocks and morainal mud that will bite the ankles in another month or two. Don't I wish I could go off ski-

mountaineering here! It's a pity we Yanks - and the NSF and Raytheon Polar - are so risk averse and given to CYA.

Summer is flying, and already the days are growing shorter. Today, the sun rose at 04:30 and will set around 22:15. Hard to tell where it is though through the gray sky and snowflakes. It rained hard a few days ago. We've had only a few days of brash ice since summer solstice, so parties of birders, buggers, and beakers have spent long days in the field making up for lost time. We had the same crew on station from mid-October until New Years, and we grew very comfortable with one another. It was a fun stretch. Medically things have been quiet, but owing to the ship schedule I had the fortune to be acting manager/ point man / fall guy for three weeks over the December holidays. This job presented different challenges than my usual work. We had two Zodiacs holed by brash during that time and put out a fire in a trash cargo container on New Year's eve, just a couple of days before Bob our Area Director and our new NSF Rep arrived. No worries, nobody got wet or hurt so all's well ends well.

Besides coordinating fire drills and teaching Heart Association BLS sessions, I've taught my MedSurg Assistants course and been involved with our SAR teams. I've managed the Glacier SAR team teaching roped glacier travel, crevasse rescue, and casualty packaging & transportation skills. I've helped with the Ocean SAR training and we've been out to the islands to swap out survival caches. We practice person-overboard recovery, rapidly getting into and out of boats in a big swell, finding other boats via radioed GPS coordinates, and towing. I've gotten out with birder friends a few times too, and for me that's the highlight to Palmer summer. It's been great to see the giant petrel chicks again! Wrangling and weighing these birds during the last 6 weeks before they fledged was the highpoint of my '99 - 2000 tour. The smell and cacophony of a penguin colony is something you must experience to believe. In January I got to visit Dream Island for the first time. It's 8 miles away though only a mile offshore, and has healthier penguin colonies on it than on the local islands though they're dwindling there as well. I helped Heidi, a friend from my last time here, and Dan with penguin chick counts and measurements. Holding one shit-covered 3kg black fuzzball of a chick as it squirted gooeey white stuff all over her, she said "these guys take 'dingleberry' to a whole new level". I'd have had beer coming out my nose if I'd been drinking one for some reason. We saw a humpback whale on the way home, too.

Marine mammals I've seen during this tour: Elephant, Weddell, Crabeater, Southern Fur, and Leopard seals; Orcas, Minkes, and Humpback whales; Commerson's dolphins (in the Straits of Magellan on our way here). Birds: Magellanic (also in the Straits), Gentoo, Chinstrap, and Adelie penguins; Sheathbills; Kelp gulls; Brown and South Polar skuas; Giant, Wilson's Storm, Snow, and Cape petrels; Antarctic terns; Blue Eyed shags; and Wandering albatrosses.

Seven of us made a point to sit together one night recently at dinner. We are all veterans of the winter of 2000 here, and laughed hard at stories of what went down during that tour. It's easy to laugh now, in the company of friends and a crew of fine folk. The grantees who

arrived after New Year's have been a great bunch who integrated well into our community. We've had no knuckle heads or maintenance queens. What a difference from that earlier winter! I: life at an Ice station a very funny utopia, or a penal colony on an ice planet? It can go either way, and hinges on your work, your boss, even more so on your community, and most of all on your attitude. At breakfast this morning one of our grantees, a slight and usually quiet young woman got on a humorous rant. "Antarctica is like dating a dumb man who's really good looking," she said. "Looks good, but all empty inside". The Palmer area is much more interesting visually than the flat, white Polar plateau so it's easy to create expectations about it. I've found it best not to expect too much. It'd be different if we could go ski touring and climbing in the spectacular mountain terrain here, but when "look but do not touch" is the law of the land, I do well not to look too hard.

As some prepare to leave, my own thoughts are beginning to turn towards home. Helping Vinny our boating coordinator put a Zodiac in the water one morning recently, I felt a strong flash of northern New England. It felt like a perfect late October day that looks warmer than it is with a fresh west wind and clouds and sun. End of summer, time to pull the boats and the dock float. Water so clear, its blue tint barely tells just how hard it will bite your hands. A slight smell of wood smoke drifted by as Dave our mechanic got the charcoal started for a Sunday afternoon barbecue. Another time in another land. I think of friends.

Go well, friends, and stay well and keep in touch. I'll be home in April.

STARLIFTER BIDS FAREWELL BEFORE BEING PUT OFF THE ICE. (clipping from Margaret Lanyon) The make of jet aircraft that for years linked Christchurch to Antarctica has just taken its last Ice flight. C-141s were the first jets to land in Antarctica and have transported people and supplies to the United States' McMurdo Station in Antarctica for the past 40 years. In its almost half a century of service to the antarctic mission, the C-141 put in more than 45,000 flight hours as part of Operation Deep Freeze, which kept McMurdo and Scott Base stocked with people and necessary supplies.

While the aircraft was a workhorse and an integral part of antarctic history, it was not the most comfortable of rides, Harrison said. Seating arrangements inside the C-141 is so tight passengers sit facing each other with little room between the knees. The C-141 s had been replaced by a newer, larger and more comfortable C-17 aircraft. Despite its well-worn exterior and squashed interior, the Starlifter would be missed, Antarctica New Zealand chief executive Lou Sanson said. "The C-141 s have been an integral part of the New Zealand Antarctic programme...their arrival changed both the speed and volume of people and cargo that could be moved between Christchurch and Antarctica." "If s the end of an era and the passing of a significant Antarctic milestone."



The above view of McMurdo Sound , Ross Island, and a few wayward icebergs is a MODIS Aqua Satellite image from 2 February 2005, courtesy of Al Sutherland. As this constitutes the Midway of the Antarctic, nearly all of you have first hand information as to its geographical features. For those who need help, see the smaller scale image on p. 4. Polly Penhale has pointed out to us the fallacy which was perpetuated by the media that B15-A was blocking penguins from access to fishing grounds, when the berg was over a hundred miles north of the Cape Royds colony. Looks navigable to me, what do you think?