



The Antarctic Society

"By and For All Antarcticans"

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CONTENTS

LIFT OFF!!!	cover	TRIBUTE TO A HERO.....	6
BRASH ICE	2	MEMORIAL SERVICE	7
MEMBERSHIP	2	ANTARCTIC HERITAGE TRUST.....	7
BOLLING BYRD CLARKE	3	M.S. EXPLORER	7
BOB THOMSON.....	3	SOUTH POLE DEDICATION	9
HILLARY ASSOCIATES.....	4		

www.antarctican.org

WE HAVE LIFTOFF !!! In one sense, February 1, 2008 marks a major milestone in the history of the Antarctic Society. In another sense, it marks the point at which the Society simply caught up with the rest of the world. That was the day that our new website, "http://www.antarctican.org" went live. The web is a marvelous vehicle for communication and democratizing information and now we – the entire Society – can take full advantage of it. This is your website, your resource, your way to reach other Society members and Antarcticans young and old, in spirit or in fact. It is a work in progress that, with your help, will improve over time. The best way to learn about the site is simply to go there. Those of you comfortable with navigating the web will hopefully find it easy to explore. For those of you still intimidated by the web or without a computer entirely, what is described here will perhaps inspire you to become a “web surfer” at your local library. The site design is based on input from the membership collected last summer through a survey. A lot of suggestions, preferences and “must have’s” were recorded. The results were synthesized into a set of requirements and a “wish list” of future enhancements. Here is how the site design has addressed the central requirements:

Maintain the people-centered focus. The website continues the Paul Dalrymple tradition of focusing on people that has been the hallmark of his newsletters for over 30 years. To that end, all of the newsletters are archived on the site. There is also a Mail Bag section which will contain interesting past and current letters received, as well as selected emails from members, all published with the consent of the authors. Finally, articles about Antarcticans that are too long for the newsletter will appear on the website.

Serve existing members. While a great deal of the site is open to the public, there are members-only pages that are password protected. Included in this category are the newsletter archive, the members list, and newsletter indices to book/film/theater/music reviews, biographical sketches and obituaries.

A common thread throughout the survey responses was the desire to have a website that will facilitate communication and networking among members. In response, the Antarctic Society Forums area allows members to post and read messages, solicitations and opinions on any subject they desire. The posts will be archived on line so that threads of discussion over weeks, months and years will be preserved.

Attract new members. Voluntary societies such as ours either add new members or eventually die. Younger Antarcticans are sometimes not aware of the rich history of exploration and science in Antarctica. Our membership includes numerous prominent and lesser-known Antarcticans that actually carried out that exploration and science. Conversely, our members are keenly interested in what is going on in Antarctica now. The website is one way to connect the two. A freely accessible website literally allows the world to see who we are and what we do. The Time Trek feature (discussed below) is going to be a cutting-edge web tool to allow the younger web-savvy Antarcticans to explore the continent's history (and our members' contributions) in a new way.

In addition, the Society is taking another step to encourage current Antarcticans to take a look at us. We are offering free membership to winterovers at Pole and Palmer Stations for the duration of the winter. Common usernames and passwords will be provided through the station managers to all station personnel, allowing them full access to all parts of our website. At the end of the winter, the usernames will be retired and then the winterovers can decide whether or not to join as paid members. What better way to let current Antarcticans know who we are than through a captive audience with time on their hands!

Preserve and document history. The history of our Society is inextricably linked to the history of Antarctica. Our membership is extremely interested in researching and preserving that history, as reflected in the survey responses.

Time Trek is a feature of our website that will hopefully go a long way toward meeting this desire in an exciting new way. As the name implies, it is meant to be a vehicle to travel back through Antarctic time, but in a visual as well as a documentary way.

Many of you are aware of or have used an incredible geographic web application called Google Earth. Google now has more money than many developing countries and has been pouring a portion of it into buying and otherwise collecting detailed aerial imagery over the entire globe and making that data available through a powerful interactive web tool. If you haven't seen it, have a fairly new computer and are not on a dial-up internet connection, go to earth.google.com and download the plugin. You will be amazed! You can zoom from a view of the entire earth down to details of individual houses quickly and easily, for most of the world! In December, Google Earth published the Landsat Image Mosaic of Antarctica (LIMA) for almost the entire continent. This is 15-meter resolution data for an area the size of the continental U.S. and Mexico combined. They will keep adding to and improving the data in the future.

Time Trek takes full advantage of Google Earth. The really good news is that Google Earth is free and Google has opened it up for integrating other applications through an application programming interface. What we have done is develop a unique application that combines a slider bar-controlled time line with documentary information about events, geographic features, stations and images and links it all to Google Earth to display where those things are on the Google Earth imagery. All of the Google Earth tools for navigating the imagery are available to users.

The easy part (relatively speaking) is the development of the application; the harder part will be getting all of the historical information into it. But that is also the fun part and the part that could help rejuvenate the Society. Collectively, we have an enormous reservoir of resources that can be tapped into. We could, in a sense, use the wikipedia model where members contribute their pieces of knowledge, photos, letters and other recorded artifacts for inclusion into the timeline. The idea is to not only capture major events – as might be seen in textbooks – but also events and knowledge that might go undocumented otherwise. How many of

you kept lists of people that participated in particular field camp, or have a story about a discovery that may not have made it into a scientific journal? These are only two examples.

Time Trek is not only a multi-media historical tool; it also could be an attraction for younger Antarcticans and a feature that makes our website stand apart from others. That is the goal. So how do you get full access to the site? If you are a member and you wish to use the members-only areas of the site, simply contact Tom Henderson at webmaster@antarctican.org and provide what you want for a username and password. You will then be set up in our user database and notified by return email that you are registered. At that point, you simply login. Note that there is a separate login for the Forums area. However, that area allows you to register yourself. There is a user's manual available on the Members page that explains how to do this. There is no requirement that the website login and password be different from the Forums login and password.

Happy exploring, and use the Forums to let us know what you think!

BRASH ICE. When our November Newsletter went to print, we were all excited about drafting the next issue as we knew the Society's website existence would be ready to be announced, we knew the South Pole Station was going to be dedicated, and that there was an outside chance that its library might be named after our last Honorary President, Ruth J. Siple. But then things started to hit the fan tail, and it seems that some very important Antarcticans started to bite the dust, including a most popular cruise ship. And some strange things happened to human beings on the ice, who lost control of themselves over the holiday season. Some of these happenings we hope to cover within this Newsletter, but in some cases there will be supporting articles on our website.

We started this Newsletter with Tom Henderson walking us through the website which he has diligently prepared for our Society. Tom's address and contact numbers are on the breadboard on the cover page. And please check out the addresses of our officers, as many have new e-mail addresses.

As we were writing the last paragraph, we had an incoming call from Jerry Marty at the South Pole.

He reported that a plaque is going up on the library walls designating it as the Ruth J. Siple Library! (see cover) This has been a long, hard call, and as you faithful readers have noticed, we have cooled all comments on this possibility ever happening. Jerry has been an avid supporter all along of our proposal, and Polly Penhale has backed him up. Past Station Scientific Leaders have also supported our proposal. I can still hear Jerry's immortal words at the time we proposed this to him, "This will be a slam dunk" Well, it wasn't, but thanks to Jerry's perseverance, it all has come to fruition. I am so happy, so very happy, as Ruth was such a special person to all Antarcticans. Pictures of both Ruth and Paul Siple will be hung in the library. Jerry, could I buy you a drink tonight?

As you may have noticed in our last Newsletter, The Fund made its first contribution to the library at the South Pole, as musician Valmar Kurol of Montreal selected and collected twenty-seven CDs of Antarctic music. Bob Small, son-in-law of Gracie Machemer, known to many of you, is an expert woodsman, and he tooled a beautiful cherry box in which they are housed at the South Pole. We have spread our wings into the Antarctic Peninsula, and with the help of Valmar and Bob, a complimentary set is being sent to Palmer Station.

MEMBERSHIP DUES CHANGED. Our bills for the calendar year 2008 will soon be in the mail. Over half of our membership have already paid ahead, so naturally those folks will not be getting dues notices. We are dropping the family membership, as basically this was a gimmick to pick up extra dollars when we were in Washington, had local meetings where both husbands and wives attended. So all members are now individual memberships..

Dues are going up three dollars, so from now on our individual dues are \$15.00 per year. Foreign memberships will remain \$20.00 per year. If you are one of our members opting to receive your Newsletters electronically, your fee will be \$12.00 per year, whether national or international. If you should live in Canada, we recognize you folks as our American cousins, and you will be considered as such when it comes to billing. Thus you will be billed \$15.00 per year.

Bills going out will have an extra line for a write-in for the Ruth J. Siple Fund. We are recognizing the Ruth J. Siple Fund as our official charity, one

whereby we will buy books or CDs for the Ruth J. Siple Library at the South Pole . In addition to your individual donations, the Society each year will make a donation of a dollar for each member to the Fund.

BOLLING BYRD CLARKE, ICON OF THE BYRD FAMILY, SUCCUMBS AT AGE 85.

Nearly twenty years ago I got a telephone call from Society Expeditions saying that they would like to have a nostalgic cruise to Antarctica, and wondered if I could get Bolling Clarke, Ruth Siple, and myself as speakers. I knew that Bolling and her male companion were camping out in Maine, and would be at my house later that week, and I talked daily to Ruth, so in a few days we were all committed for a fantastic 24 day cruise which took us to the Falklands, to South Georgia, to the Peninsula and the Chilean coast. Two days before leaving, Ruth called up and said she was canceling out, that she could never stand up and talk to a shipload of eager tourists. I was furious, and said “Ruth, you just keep quiet and show up, and I will give all your lectures for you.” And so it was to be! Bolling was in Seventh Heaven on the WORLD DISCOVER, loved every minute of her first and last cruise to Antarctica. She loved talking about her famous father, and was a delightful advocator of his many accomplishments.

Now let’s fast forward to last spring, and put ourselves in San Diego, where the U.S. Navy was going to launch still another ship named after Admiral Richard E. Byrd. And who was the Guest of Honor who was going to make sure that the ceremonies were done properly, yes, Bolling Byrd Clarke. There was a flock of Byrds there, but Bolling was the one chosen to smash the bottle of bubbling stuff as the ship slipped silently into the harbor as dusk settled over the city. When Bolling ascended the steps to the launching platform, I wondered to myself if she was going to make it, but a convoy of junior Navy officers in their dress whites saw to it that she got to the designated spot. Afterwards she hosted a large gathering of friends and family in the ballroom of an elegant seaside hotel where she seated herself at a large round table greeting everyone. It was the last time that I ever saw Bolling. She was still a very striking female, her most gracious and personable self, but I walked away from her with this inner feeling that perhaps I would never again see her. If this was to be her last formal fare-thee-well, what a way to go with Navy bands blaring, high ranking Navy officers

talking from prepared speeches, and your whole clan there listening to accolades about their forefathers. Scripted by Hollywood, played out in San Diego!

Bolling had a most distinguished career in her own rights, but during World War II it wasn’t all that great, as she tended livestock and milked cows in Maine. She attended Swathmore where she met her husband-to-be. She and he got together and produced four children, three being daughters, one a son.. She was an active Girl Scout leader for many years, but she will be remembered mostly as a medical counselor. For twenty years she worked as a family planning special-projects coordinator and medical counselor in obstetrics and gynecology at the University of Pennsylvania. During her late years, she made many appearances at polar meetings, so became well known to many of our membership. We will miss you, Bolling.

Pick up the torch, Robert Byrd Breyer,

BOB THOMSON (Al Fowler) In January two famous New Zealand explorers and expeditioners have passed on. One of them was Robert B. Thomson, known to all Kiwis as Mr. Antarctica. When I entered his name and hit search on our new Antartican Society CD there appeared a list of 16 entries. Then I found another entry about Bob’s performance as speaker at a meeting of the Society in 1969. He was the speaker again on November 7, 1995.

From 1965 to 1988 Bob Thomson served as Superintendent of the Antarctic Division of New Zealand’s Department of Scientific and Industrial Research. Most everyone in the U.S. Antarctic Program during those years was acquainted with Bob while passing through Christchurch or down on the ice. Bob has been my good friend since 1972 when I started as the Deep Freeze commander, and then was the Deputy at Polar Programs, NSF until 1988. Bob and I sat on the SCAR Working Group on Logistics, where he was the Chairman, and we both attended all the SCAR meetings from 1974 through 1988. Bob’s earlier career on the ice started in the IGY when he was the radio operator and electronics technician on Campbell Island. Then he was the scientific leader at the jointly run US/NZ Hallett Station in 1960. After that he went with the Australian program and wintered as scientific leader at Wilkes Station 1n 1962.

I remember many pleasant hours spent with Bob; none of them at total leisure, certainly not recreation -- he didn't do that; worked all the time. During our times together the closest Bob ever got to recreation was when he told me about his dream to trek the full length of the Wright Valley. He had it all planned and insisted that I participate. He was a good story-teller, and the stories I most enjoyed involved his memories as leader of the tractor traverse round trip between Wilkes and Vostok stations in 1962. That was 900 unknown miles getting up and on the high plateau. He told of navigating with sunshots and the rear view mirror, and of making repairs on the machines in the most awful conditions of thin air, relentless winds and very, very low temperatures. His performance as leader of that successful traverse was later recognized when the Queen awarded him the Order of the British Empire. Bob Thomson has also received foreign honors from the governments of USA, Japan and Australia. It seems especially appropriate that the main building of the new Scott Base is the Thomson Building. Bob was the responsible guy who dealt with shrinking budgets and conflicting visions to prevent the NZARP from becoming summer-only, and to make the redesign and new construction at Scott Base a reality. With his 78 trips to the ice Bob holds the all time world record. At least two geographic features in East Antarctica are named for Bob Thomson

I suspect that Bob Thomson's most challenging and difficult time as head of the New Zealand program started with the 1979 crash of the Air New Zealand sight-seeing DC-10 on the slope of Erebus. The aftermath included the recovery and identification of 218 of the 257 who died instantly. There followed a whirlwind of inquiry, investigation, sanctification of the site as a tomb, and various legalities; and Bob was at or near the center of it. In due course, Bob wrote his own personal comprehensive book-length account of the tragedy, but it apparently was never given government approval to be published.

Over the years there have been a number of instances where American Antarctic men going to and from the ice managed to capture New Zealand women to be their wives. Bob Thomson did it the other way. As the story goes, Bob first met, and apparently proposed, to his wonderful American wife, Betty, in a hotel elevator where their paths crossed in Hawaii. He even managed to

convince her to pull up stakes and move to New Zealand.

Bob and Betty designed and Bob built a beautiful house high on a steep hillside overlooking the ocean at Sumner, near Christchurch. They once told me about spotting the vacant lot on a picture post card, then finding and convincing the owner to let them buy it. After he retired, Bob and Betty moved to a place called Moneta in Bedford County, southern Virginia, where Bob's propensity for work and leadership was again apparent in his service as President of the Beechwood Shores Association.

My wife and I teamed up with Bob and Betty at SCAR meetings, including Chamonix in 1978, Queenstown in 1980, and San Diego in 1986. For Bob, however, those SCAR meetings were pretty much all hard work as leader of the Working Group on Logistics. Part of the pay-off for his efforts resulted in a well-planned Third SCAR Symposium on Antarctic Logistics that took place in Leningrad in 1982. It was there that his planning resulted in an outbreak of bonding and information-sharing among the assembled brethren of national operators and managers. While Bob was an accomplished logistician he had also established himself among the Antarctic scientists as one who walked the walk and talked the talk. I think of Bob Thomson as one of the very important people who contributed to the success of the Antarctic Treaty System as it flourished during the time of the Cold War.

ED HILLARY ANTARCTIC ASSOCIATES.

Your attention is directed to our website where there are three personal letters to me from two of Ed's Associates which you should find of great interest.

We aren't going to write an obit on Ed Hillary, as all of you have probably already read extensive obituaries on him in your favorite publications. The NEW YORK TIMES, as an example, devoted three-quarters of a page to Ed's passing. The CHRISTCHURCH PRESS published a 12-page supplement on Ed, "Tribute To A Hero", which we contemplated buying copies for our members. Our Faithful Kiwi POC, Margaret Lanyon, sent us two copies of it, but after reviewing it, we felt that it was not worth their asking price.

What qualifies me to write anything about Ed Hillary and his Antarctic comrades? I first met Ed at Scott Base in January 1957 when he was hammering nails, carried in his mouth, constructing their camp. Then I was at the South Pole when Ed and his party of Kiwis (Peter Mulgrew, Murray Ellis, Derek Wright, and Jim Bates) arrived at the South Pole Station on January 3rd, 1958. Peter stayed on with us, but the rest caught a flight back to McMurdo two days later. Ed returned on January 18th to await the arrival of Bunny Fuchs and his Weddell Sea contingent of the British Commonwealth Transantarctic Expedition (TAE), which arrived two days later. All of the TAE members took off on the 24th, ending a very exciting time. I tape-recorded nearly all members of the TAE, and they remain a treasure in my home.

But who were the associates of Ed? One was his childhood mountaineering buddy from New Zealand, George Lowe, who was traveling with Fuchs as his photographer. George was also with Ed on Mt. Everest, and his film, THE CONQUEST OF EVEREST, won the best documentary film of the year, 1953. George's film on the TAE never received any notoriety, but he was/is a real nice guy. He arrived at the South Pole wearing a broad-brimmed sombrero, driving a weasel with his code name, Wrack and Ruin, painted on its hood. Some forty years later when he and his second wife visited me at my redoubt on coastal Maine, I shocked him by playing back my interview with him from the South Pole.

Another man who was very close to Ed was Peter Mulgrew, another mountaineer, who served as Ed's radio man. Where he stayed with us at the South Pole for several weeks, we all got to know him very well, a most lovable chap. As many of you may remember, Ed was not supposed to go all the way to the Pole, as their mission was to set up depots of support for Fuchs on his way down from the Pole. But where Fuchs was late, where Ed was ahead of time, there was no stopping of Hillary and he sent a message to Fuchs saying something like Hell bent for the Pole. This was greatly overplayed by the press, and I think I know of what I speaketh, as I also became a very close friend of Fuchs's radio operator, Ralph Lenton. So close, I was his best man when he got married several years later!!

I think you know the rest of the Mulgrew story. Ed had a son who he named after Peter, and this son,

along with a couple of Australians, later had their own expedition to the South Pole. Peter was a double amputee, losing both of his legs on a mountain climbing expedition to Makalu. Then, as a last minute substitution as a lecturer for Ed on an Air New Zealand DC-10 tourist flight to Antarctica, Peter lost his life when the plane crashed onto Mt. Erebus on Ross Island. Ed had lost his wife and a daughter in another plane crash, this one off the airstrip at Katmandu. Quite a few years later Ed married Peter's widow, who became Lady June.

Ed and Bunny Fuchs teamed up as Antarctic lecturers on the Orient Line's MARCO POLO. They lectured on the ship for several years, along with another member of our Society, Jackie Ronne. But Ed and Bunny sorted of drifted apart, and most unfortunately Ed's last book, VISION FROM THE SUMMIT, came out when Bunny's health was deteriorating. The bad part was that Ed presented in the book his differences with Fuchs. This did not play very well in the UK, Bunny's second wife was quite furious, and shortly thereafter Fuchs died.

Another member of the Hillary's successful expedition to Everest was Griff Pugh, a high altitude physiologist, who somehow got a ticket to the South Pole to greet Fuchs's party. Most of us thought he was sort of a queer duck, but he blended in well with press from around the world so wasn't too conspicuous.

One of Ed's best friends was the engineer on his oversnow traverse to the South Pole, Murray Ellis. His parents owned and operated the Arthur Ellis Company in Dunedin, which at the time made the world's finest down sleeping bags. Murray built a lot of school houses with Ed in the Himalayas. When I came off the ice in early December 1958, after two consecutive years in Antarctica, after a one-night sleep in Christchurch, I caught a plane the next morning to Dunedin to visit the Ellises. Then thirty years later, I happened to spend the best New Year Day of my whole life with Murray and Shirley Ellis. They had a summer home in Arrowtown, and we all went on a hike towards majestic Mt. Aspiring, a favorite climb of several generations of Ellises. Shirley packed a great picnic lunch and Murray and I filled an ice cooler with cold beer. It does not seem possible that Ed has now gone to join Peter Mulgrew, Bunny Fuchs,

Ralph Lenton, Murray Ellis, and some others from the TAE.

Another one of Ed's Kiwi mountaineering buddies was Harry Ayres, who is often associated with being the guide who really taught Ed the mysteries of successful mountaineering. Ed wanted him as part of his crew at Scott Base in 1957, but he failed to pass his requirements for qualification. But Ed insisted that Harry should go, and he was finally accepted. Many years later, his son also went to the ice to participate on some oversnow traverse. I had the opportunity to meet Harry at Mt. Cook, when he was the ranger at that fantastic house looking straight up the valley.

Ed and Murray went back to the ice for five weeks in 1967 and climbed Mt. Herschell while trekking the Cape Adare area. Ed also went back to McMurdo and Scott base several years later with George Lowe. And he has been a frequent visitor to Scott Base in recent years. While there celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the construction of the station, after the official delegation had departed, he asked permission to stay an extra night so that he could sleep in New Zealand's "bach", an A-frame abandoned by the Americans more than 20 years ago which subsequently was towed by the Kiwis to Scott to create a holiday home. Ever the dreamer, he longed to relive old times, spend another night with a few mountain men in a small hut, cook over an old-fashioned Primus stove – just how he had spent his first night in the Antarctic some fifty years before.

During the past summer, one of the doctors on the TAE, Rainer Goldsmith, hosted a 50th Anniversary Celebration for the TAE in his home in England. Probably the most able bodied soul to show up was Ken Blaiklock, one of Fuchs' dog team drivers who has continued to go to the ice as a surveyor until recent years. Once he supposedly held the record for most miles dog sledged in Antarctica: 5000. One of Rainer's granddaughters, Anthea Arnold, has written a book, based on his diary, EIGHT MEN IN A CRATE. Charles Swithinbank says "It is a good read." It is reviewed in our website by Charles Lagerbom. Another book on the TAE which is coming out this year is one by the Australian geologist from Brisbane, Dr. Jon Stephenson.

In closing this story about Ed and his Associates, I would like to include one about the two of us. My

diary shows that on the morning on January 20th, 1958, Ed and I went up into the aurora tower at the South Pole at 8 AM to gaze out over the snowscape to see if we could see Fuchs's party on the horizon. A half hour later we spotted them, then we lost them as they went into a depression, only to reappear a few minutes later. It was the biggest moment of my life, to be alone at the bottom of the world with the world's humblest hero who had conquered the world's highest mountain, when who should appear on the horizon but a Bunny, later to be knighted, who was in the process of completing some unfinished business planned and not executed by another knight, Sir Ernest, the very first Crossing of Antarctica. What a Moment!!! And I took a bit of solace out of the day that even I could grow a better beard than Ed's.

One of our members who knew Ed, called him and told him that Ruth Siple was seriously ill, probably would not survive much longer. He asked Ed to call her, and lo and behold if she did not die a week later. Ed wrote me on August 8, 1979. "Like everyone I've had my good moments and my bad, but on the whole I have been very fortunate." I think the fortunate ones are those of us who had the opportunity to get to know him.

TRIBUTE TO A HERO. (Christchurch Press,) We have pulled several segments about Ed from this supplement which accompanied their issue of January 14, 2008. Mike Crean, Philip Temple, and John Henzell were three of the main contributors. It was said that Ed was "neither religious or political, that he believed in universal brotherhood and equality. Inclined to be blunt, he spoke out against corruption and greed, sometimes incurring the wrath of others. An outspoken call for honesty in government brought an angry response from then National Prime Minister Keith Holyoake. In 1975, he joined Citizen for Rowling, a group of notable New Zealanders opposed to the political style of National's Robert Muldoon. So it was a clever stroke when a Labour Government appointed Hillary New Zealand High Commissioner to India (with responsibility to Nepal) in the 1980s. He had no diplomatic training or experience but was a hugely popular figure there. He was proud to be a New Zealander, understood being a New Zealander meant being humble, willing and able to mix with people at all levels.

"He was president of the New Zealand Volunteer Service Abroad and interested himself in such

diverse causes as family planning and race relations. Hillary had little grace of manners, being gruff and casual with strangers, but he came into his own in the field. Here the ebullient, restless Hillary, as George Lowe described him, retained basically the same spirit of adventure and (and there is no other word for it) fun, long after he became famous,

He was appointed to the Order of New Zealand (ONZ), in 1987, the year in which the order was initiated by the Queen. He was appointed a Knight of the Garter (KG) in 1995. Hillary received the Royal Geographical Society's Founders Gold Medal in 1958 and in 1960 was back in the Everest region with an ambitious program largely financed by the American publishers of encyclopedias, Field Enterprises Foundation, of which he was to become a director. He also served as a consultant of sports equipment to Sears Roebuck.

It was said that Hillary's most famous words were probably "We knocked the bastard off" in reference to climbing Everest. Well, they are probably right, but I would like to have a lip reading expert look at the film *Conquest of Everest*, of which I have a copy. It appears to me that as Hillary and Tensing approached the camp where George Lowe was photographing, George zoomed in real close to their faces, and that Ed actually said "We made the son-of-a-bitch" To me it would seem more logical!

MEMORIAL SERVICE HELD ON ICE

(Anna Chalmers, Christchurch Press, 14 January 2008) In a small, wooden chapel overlooking the Antarctic sea ice, about 100 mourners shared a special memorial service for Sir Edmund Hillary. The stained glass windows of the Chapel of the Snows provided the perfect backdrop for yesterday's celebration to honour Hillary's 50 years of involvement in Antarctica.

Hillary's determination, humility and generosity were recurring themes. "It's the most common denominator to this man - and I think everybody knows it," Scott Base coordinator Yvonne Boesterling said after the service. Hillary set up Scott Base in Antarctica in 1957 and in January 1958 led the first party to reach the South Pole by land since 1912, driving a modified Ferguson tractor. He made repeated visits to the ice, the latest in January last year, when he stayed in a small A-frame hut to celebrate the base's 50th anniversary.

Every New Zealander at Scott Base who could be present attended the service, along with United States personnel, Boesterling said. Photographs of the great adventurer, including during his 1958 expedition, were included in the memorial service, led by Father Tom O'Connor, who heads the interdenominational chapel at McMurdo Station. It also included Pastor Todd Luce with eulogies from Antarctica New Zealand spokesman Dean Peterson and Scott Base science technician Peter de Joux. They prayed for Sir Edmund's family: that they might be comforted, while at the same time remembering with joy the great man that they have known and loved. Mourners sang *Amazing Grace* and gave thanks for Hillary's life. After the service, mourners headed to the rugby field for a New Zealand versus the United States rugby game.

ANTARCTIC HERITAGE TRUST (John Henzell) A heart-shaped aurora that formed in the midwinter night sky over the Hillary Field Center at Scott Base will help fulfil Sir Edmund Hillary's wish of saving the huts of the heroic age of Antarctic exploration.

Anthony Powell, a Kiwi who has spent seven winters on the ice, took a photograph of the aurora over Scott Base's newest building last winter. "I like to think of the heart shape in the photo being a symbol of love that Kiwis and the Antarctic community have for Sir Ed," he said. "One of the things I was considering even before I had heard he had passed was to make prints of the aurora available to the public to purchase, with all the profits going to the Antarctic Heritage Trust."

Powell, originally from Taranaki, went to Antarctica as a satellite communications technician at Scott Base but has since been working at the neighbouring McMurdo Station where his amateur photography earned him an artist's fellowship from the United States Antarctic Program.

Hillary was a passionate advocate of saving the huts used by Robert Scott and Ernest Shackleton in Antarctica and used his last visit to Scott Base a year ago to rail against the failure by the British Government to put money towards their preservation. The preservation plan is being run by the Christchurch-based Antarctic Heritage Trust. Soon after Hillary's comments, the British allocated money to the fund but still well short of the estimated \$9 million cost of saving the huts.

Loss of the ship, “M.S. EXPLORER” By Keith Shackleton: The graphic pictures of the M.S. ‘Explorer’ sinking through the ice of Antarctica provoked some varied thoughts – as indeed did the press accounts of the event. One was the display of consummate skill and professionalism by Explorer’s crew as well as that of ‘Nordnorge’ who came to her aid. If a definition of a ‘successful’ shipwreck is one with no loss of life, this was surely as successful as any shipwreck can be! But the thought uppermost for me was that this little ship deserved a short obituary. As she was undoubtedly, and from first hand experience, no ordinary ship. The description ‘cruise ship’, so often used in the press accounts, conjures up something she emphatically was not. She carried passengers it is true but it was her services in other fields, science, conservation, survey work and discovery that made her name – and at a time when there were no other ‘cruise ships’ venturing south to the Southern Ocean and Antarctica.

‘The little red ship’ as she became universally known, was launched in Finland in 1969 and embarked on her maiden voyage – to the Antarctic naturally – at the end of that year. She was the world’s first specialised, custom-built vessel to be commissioned by a travel company, for the purpose of carrying a small number of passengers into the furthest flung corners of the world. By the very nature of her purpose she undertook field work for every kind of international scientific organisation involving the oceans. She was equipped with winches for plankton dredging and research. She had a marine biology laboratory that doubled as a lecture room. Her staff were scientists as well as boatmen to share their enthusiasm and expertise with passengers, many of whom were their equal or more so in scientific terms. The company that commissioned her was Lindblad Travel of New York, headed by the legendary Lars-Eric Lindblad and for her first 15 years she sailed under the name ‘Lindblad Explorer’.

Because the Antarctic was Lars-Eric’s passion, he had chartered several previous ships and drew advantages from each. She was first and foremost an ice-working ship – Antarctica for the southern summers – then north to the Arctic – while exciting experiences lay between. In her first 15 years she became the furthest travelled ship on the high seas. She reached the furthest north for a passenger vessel and the furthest south and cruised over 1,300,000 nautical miles. By now, under her name

‘Explorer’ she must have more than doubled this figure. Some of her voyages involved spectacular rescues, logistical back-up to polar expeditions, delivery and collection of mail and equipment to polar stations, she attended medical emergencies and saved lives and in the process made a host of friends.

‘Lindblad Explorer’s’ final achievement was to be the first passenger ship to make it through the Northwest Passage in 1984 (Captain Hasse Nilsson, Master) – completing a valuable hydrographic survey on the way. As Dr. Layall Watson put it – “For fifteen years we lead charmed lives...” He was talking of crew and staff but I feel he was including everyone on board....

And now she lies at the bottom of the Bransfield Strait. Anyone for whom this little ship has been a second home for so many years will feel the poignancy of those final images. The one of her settling into the pack ice called up a somewhat prophetic quote from the book ‘Ship in the Wilderness’. ‘Lindblad Explorer’ was a true ‘ice ship’. Ice was her natural element and each year she seemed to be coming home to Antarctica for Christmas... One can not help thinking that the seas off the South Shetland Islands make a far more appropriate resting place for such a vessel, than any ship-breaker’s yard – anywhere.

General Note. ‘Keith Shackleton was taken on as naturalist and Zodiac driver for the maiden voyage and worked in her constantly for many years to follow – including the North West Passage voyage 15 years on.

ADDENDUM. The EXPLORER was a ship dear to many of our members, but probably to no one more so than John Spletstoesser, who sailed on her for many years. Dotte Larsen, our Society’s Official Whale Spotteress, made four cruises to the Antarctic with Keith Shackleton. She also went on the Northwest Passage cruise. Several members of our Society, including Jackie Ronne and Anne Parks Hawthorne, were on the EXPLORER when she was on the Weddell Sea side of Antarctica and caught a rogue wave which smashed port holes and hurled passenger around like ping pong balls. But, nevertheless, everyone seemed to love the Little Red Ship. John is even contemplating organizing a small deep-sea diving expedition to go on down and bring back his mattress. He is sure he can find it, as it was the only double bed on the whole ship.

There was something really ironic about the ship going down where she did, as it appears she picked her own final resting place, very close to Lindblad Cove which was officially named by the Board of Geographic Names after Lars-Eric Lindblad himself, Within a hundred miles!! She went down at 62 24'S 57 15'W. Lindblad Cove is located at 63 57'S, 59 27'W. She is between 1100 and 1500 meters deep.

I had heard that the Expedition Leader was Brad Rhees, a man who I had worked under on many, many cruises for Marine Expeditions. He was an ex-Marine, a perfect man to be on board a sinking ship. I once saw him pull a zodiac driver out of the water at Peterman Island by just grabbing his collar with one hand and lifting him back on board. No one seemed to know where Brad lived, but I felt lucky one night so tried Google. It seemed that there was only one Brad Rhees in the whole country, and he was out in Southwestern Colorado. I called him, and we had a good talk. He had been on the bridge all that evening. Sure enough he and the captain of the EXPLORER were the last to leave the ship. The ship was so far over on its side that they just stepped over the rail on the bridge into a zodiac and took off.

The amazing thing to me is that the berg that got the EXPLORER was evidently a real small one, much smaller, in fact, than the EXPLORER itself, maybe half its size. Apparently the bridge was aware of its existence, as the captain had made an announcement that there was a berg in sight, which they were going allow to drift out of their path before proceeding. There is a complete eye-witness account by one of the passengers, Pete D'Angelo, of what went on in our new website. You should read it, interesting, to say the least.

Another amazing thing about all this was the weather. First of all, they were darn lucky that the generators were still functioning when the passengers were being lifted in their life boats into the water, Then the seas were quiet, no brash ice or bergy bits around. And other ships were relatively nearby, so were able to pick them up under ideal conditions. Then, and only after everyone had been picked up, the winds came up and it got rough. If you saw the pictures taken by the Chilean Naval Air, you saw the EXPLORER within a solid ice-pack. This was a real Hollywood production, from beginning to end, with no lives lost, and the ship seeking its own cove as its final

resting place.

SOUTH POLE DEDICATION (FROM THE EYES OF AN ANONYMOUS POLIE)

On Saturday, January 12th, a pretty historic event happened here at the South Pole. We all participated in dedicating the brand new elevated station. For us residents, this meant our workday was a little different than normal and it thankfully ended up being cut a little short.

The day started with the whole station going out in front of the old dome for a final group shot with the dome. After the picture taking, the flag was lowered on the dome and we all formed a chain to pass the flag up to the geographic south pole marker where it was folded properly. Then, the flags of the original 12 nations of the Antarctic treaty and the ceremonial pole were moved to their new resting place directly in front of the middle of the elevated station and we took another group photo. At this point, I was getting pretty cold from being outside for a long period of time and couldn't wait to join everyone else in the galley for coffee.

Later that day, the distinguished visitors flew in for a few hours and gave some speeches. We then raised the flag from the dome over the new station for the first time and cut a ribbon. There was some concern that the dv's weren't going to be able to make it in since there had been bad weather in McMurdo and no flights for a few days. However, everything worked out and the dedication happened as planned.

As far as dv's go, I didn't recognize anyone and actually felt kind of sorry for New Jersey residents as their congressman gave a speech in which he referenced polar bears in Antarctica and called McMurdo, McCurdo, even though he had just spent some time there.

After all the ceremony, we had an awesome dinner of filet mignon and lobster, and then, once the dv's left, we had our own party with some South Pole bands and some good dj'ing.

I would have to say overall it was a great day, and I'm happy that I got a chance to be part of Antarctic history.

**AMUNDSEN CONVERSATION WITH PCD
PUT ON HOLD.**