April 1, 1965

THE ANTARCTICAN SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER NO. 2

In the "Notice to Members" announcing the meeting of March 10, 1965, it was indicated that the Officers and Board of Directors hoped from time to time to inform the membership of matters of interest. For the sake of recordkeeping, the opinion has been expressed that these occasional publications should be numbered. The abstract of Dr. Bertrand's talk is therefore designated as Newsletter No. 1, and this issue as Newsletter No. 2. The principal feature of the Newsletter will be texts or abstracts of talks given at the meetings of the Society, when they are susceptible to this type of treatment.

The second meeting of the season was held on November 12, 1964. At that time Dr. Meredith F. Burrill, Executive Secretary of the Board on Geographic Names, spoke on "Antarctic Geographic Names." A copy of Dr. Burrill's talk is attached as part of this Newsletter. The Society's second International Night took place on January 14, 1965. Captain Robert Graham, RN, gave an informal talk on his two years as commanding officer of HMS PROTECTOR. Unfortunately, Captain Graham's informative and witty remarks are not reproducible without the slides that accompanied them.

The Secretary also receives correspondence of interest to the members. Miss Joan Beckman, formerly of Washington, D. C., and now Science Editor of the University of Washington Press, writes that the Press is interested in manuscripts "on any scientific subject," providing that the manuscript presents a scholarly contribution to the subject concerned.

Mr. Tracey E. Simpson, Chairman of the Byrd Fellowship in New Zealand, forwarded to the Secretary an invitation to an anniversary service to be held at the Richard E. Byrd Memorial in Wellington on March 14, 1965. In an accompanying letter, Mr. Simpson requested the Secretary to inform members of the Antarctican Society that he and Mrs. Simpson will be delighted to entertain any of them who may visit Wellington.

STANDARDIZING ANTARCTIC GEOGRAPHIC NAMES*

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There seems to be something about Antarctica that brings out the man in men. Granted that sissies don't go there in the first place, and that in many who have gone there has been a lot of man to be brought out, the place does something to one.

Perhaps the continuous intimate contact over long periods, shared hardships and dangers, the mutual dependence for survival may lay bare a man's soul not only to his companions but also to himself. Perhaps in a situation reduced to elemental simplicity the choices that lead to maturity and greatness are part of daily living, or maybe Mother Nature's naked beauty, fearful power and seeming perversity do things to a man's spirit.

At the Geographic Congress in London last summer, Fuchs gave an evening lecture on man and machines in antarctic exploration, in which he said that the most indispensable ingredient of the total equipment still is absolute and transparent integrity.

This needed saying not only because sophisticated equipment and relative comfort invite us to discount mechanical failure and its results, but also because integrity is so significant in the making and working up of observations for new additions to our collective knowledge.

Speaking before the Special Libraries Association Geography and Map Division a few years ago I said that "The story of the geographic names of Antarctica is a story of people, men of imagination and courage. It is a story of faith that a task conceived in a knowledge of its elements and carefully planned could be carried through to a successful conclusion, a story of hard work over long periods." This applies not only to the intrepid explorers with whose heroics the public is familiar but also to the members of the committees and staffs who have done a monumental job on the names of Antarctica.

*Paper read at a meeting of the Antarctican Society, November 12, 1964

The naming of antarctic features has been done by many people. The resolution of names and naming into some kind of order was for years the work of relatively few. In the more than two decades that BGN has had advisory committees on antarctic names only 8 men have served on them - Joerg, Saunders, Martin, Bertrand, Friis, Siple, Crary, and Dater, and only 9 professional staff people - Fielden, Lyle, Bertrand, Alberts, Blodgett, Lindegren, Taylor, Wilson, and Ashley. Further, of these two groups, Joerg, Saunders, Bertrand, and Alberts carried the brunt of the load in the first 13 years, with help from Martin at the beginning of that period and from Blodgett at the end.

It was principally through their efforts and their integrity that by the start of the IGY there was a reasonably orderly and unambiguous body of geographic names in Antarctica.

Out of the many interesting stories from that period I've picked a few that I think you'll find interesting and in point.

For the setting in which they occurred we need to review a little history.

In 1912 the then U.S. Geographic Board made decisions on eight antarctic names: Palmer Land, Palmer Archipelago, Wilkes Land, Termination Land, Knox Land, Cape Carr, Cape Hudson, Antarctic Continent. Subsequently it reaffirmed some of these, defended some, modified some, but for a generation paid little attention to the new names being given there. No other body was paying much attention either and by the late 1930's the names were in a fine mess. The chaotic state of the nomenclature came to light when the Hydrographic Office undertook to do a nautical chart and sailing directions for the Antarctic in connection with the U.S. Antarctic Service Expedition of 1939-41.

Bob English had charge of the chart and sailing directions, which are monuments to his ability and energy. On many of the name problems he consulted Col. Lawrence Martin at the Library of Congress and W.L.G. Joerg of the National Archives, and referred a draft of the chart to Joerg who was then also Chairman of the U.S. BGN which at that time was advisory to the Secretary of the Interior Ickes who had full and sole authority. Joerg had a bear by the tail. Many names on the chart were those of living persons who had put up the money or donated supplies for expeditions in the period when that was the way antarctic exploration was financed.

The BGN had, and still has, a long standing policy that natural features are not named for living persons. Ickes had had occasion to invoke the policy and was always one to apply policy without exception.

Joerg saw that many of the living persons' names in Antarctica were either bestowed by foreigners or were too much entrenched in usage to

change, but saw little likelihood of getting Ickes to except Antarctica from the policy.

Then came World War II and in 1943 "the reorganization and staffing of the BGN. After the most immediate projects were under way, attention was turned to the antarctic chart which was about to be released.

Joerg agreed that Ickes would have to be advised to make the needed exception, however repugnant this might be to him, and that antarctic name decisions would have to be based on systematically applied principles and on the fullest possible knowledge of the facts about the naming, however formidable a research task that might be. The Hydrographic Office didn't agree and in a few days brought out the chart with Ickes' name on some mountains and the President's on a sea. Ickes hit the ceiling and required that his name be deleted before the chart was released. The Hydrographic Office protested that the BGN had had a year to act on the proof, but did delete his name. BGN on its part undertook to process names as needed.

While this served to make Ickes aware of the broad problem, the policy exception was now judged to require really compelling arguments and a positive concrete policy that Ickes could see in toto.

A Special Committee on Antarctic Names was therefore named to work up a policy and test it against actual names. The members were Joerg, Martin and Capt. H, E. Saunders, a distinguished naval architect and classmate of Admiral Byrd's who had helped to work out positions and plane tracks from uncontrolled photos of the Byrd expeditions.

Almost immediately it developed that the President's name on the sea posed a problem - the Norwegians had earlier named the sea for Amundsen, and had published it on a map in a Norwegian language journal. Discussions with the Navy didn't bring agreement and the Navy took the matter to the President, who replied that Amundsen's name had priority and should be used, adding that for himself a smoking volcano would be more appropriate anyway.

While all this was in process, and before the President's reply was received, the Special Committee held its first meeting and took its first actions. Five names were recommended; Amundsen Sea headed the list, followed by four associated names including Mt, Walker, for the mountain Siple had named for his wife (Walker commanded the Flying Fish on the Wilkes Expedition) and Eights Peninsula for the feature Byrd had named Thurston Peninsula after a patron (Eights was the first American scientist in the Antarctic).

These names served to illustrate some general principles that the Committee considered important, and since some people would surely be unhappy the list would serve to show the Committee where it stood. The

names were promptly approved "by the Secretary and promulgated, and stuck until the Committee itself much later revised three of them. The Committee was in business. In due course a comprehensive policy was laid out matching categories of people with kinds of features, stating criteria of appropriateness, and indicating what would be done about language and form. This was discussed with several antarctic explorers and finally approved by Secretary Krug.

A letter from Saunders to me in January 1944 while we were investigating the Amundsen Sea matter contains this passage, "As I take it, our role in this matter is to clear away the cobwebs, get down to facts and fundamentals, and make a decision that is sound and can be respected as long as maps are made. I take it further that we are not necessarily bound by previous interpretation of whatever facts we may bring to light, but we are bound to be fair, just and considerate, as in all human dealings."

This was the Committee's approach as, over the next eight years, it went over in detail the records of antarctic exploration in various forms and languages, seeking the answers to "who named what, when, for whom, why, what was named and where is it?" The Committee needed that information itself to make decisions in accordance with policy and had faith that if the information were made available to all, the names would be accepted.

Assembling a working collection of literature and maps was one of the first staff jobs, worked on by Betty Fielden Rothrock in 1944, then Florence Lyle, then Ken Bertrand after he took over the staff work prior to going to Catholic University in September 1946. It is not easy now to picture how scanty, how fragmentary, the information was. The continent still had great blank parts and great stretches of pecked coastline, and the reliability of map positions was not always high. The Committee wanted to do something about American names in areas of their activity, and did, but repeatedly had difficulty because American expeditions had generally not made maps on their return.

An extraordinary amount of work had to go into the identification and approximate positioning of features named. In the case of the Wilkes Land coast and the Pensacola Mountains the Committee and staff actually did the first delineation of features and relative positions.

The Wilkes job was done with ONR support, by Gardner Blodgett under Captain Saunders' tutelage and eye. Some 800 miles of coastline and coastal features were drawn in from aerial photos by simple methods developed by Captain Saunders in treating the Byrd pictures some years before. Since control points had been established only at the ends and in the middle the pictures were not suited to precise trimetrogon treatment, but the nature, relationship and location of features could be established well enough to put on them names that had been given originally by Wilkes, or names derived from his expedition and operations Windmill and Highjump. The delineation also proved to be of great

value in IGY planning, for it showed up the few places where access to the land was possible. The ONE used this in later appropriations hearings as a shining example of payoff from basic research. Foreign countries asked for and got it. The map makers used it until later work superseded it.

The Pensacola job was done from the photos made on the Hawkes flight from McMurdo to the Weddell Sea and back. It was pushed to completion to give to Fuchs before his walkover that we thought would cross them. The features were shown in essentially correct relation to one another, but the whole assemblage had to be moved westward about 40 miles when ground fixes later showed the dead reckoning calculations to be off by that much.

Over the years some real puzzles have come up. Some may never be solved. Among those that we did work out was Stefansson Strait, a name given by Wilkins in 1928. On his December 20 flight along the east side of the Antarctic Peninsula he saw some straits that cut through the peninsula. The most southerly one he named Stefansson Strait and the land to the south of it Hearst Land. The news of his discovery created quite a stir, for it bore on whether early sightings of the peninsula were sightings of the continent. The Geographical Review published the story, with some of his photographs and a map made from the photographs and his notes. The concept of transverse straits was generally held for a decade thereafter. However, Ellsworth failed to find it from the air in November 1935 and the British Graham Land Expedition of 1934-37 confirmed by mid 1935 that there was not even one transverse strait! Several had tried to unravel this one. Joerg, while at the American Geographical Society, had identified some features on both the Wilkins and Ellsworth photographs but was still baffled. The British Graham Land Expedition surveyor Alfred Stephenson had a go at the puzzle in 1939; with assistance from A. R. Hinks, Secretary of the Royal Geographical Society, managing to match some features in the most northerly of that expedition's photographs with some in Wilkins' most southerly. Still no strait.

Among the large number of aerial photographs brought back by the U.S. Antarctic Service Expedition of 1939-41 was one that showed a low dome-shaped island to which no particular importance was attached then but which later proved to be the key to the mystery. Not immediately, however, because the war intervened and those pictures went into the files.

The Special Committee had been at its task for about two years when it went systematically at the names on the east side of the Antarctic Peninsula, which we then called Palmer Peninsula, reviewing all the previous investigations in this area with the Antarctic Service pictures in hand. Things didn't match up properly.

In one of several conferences with Wilkins he mentioned that in the Geo-

graphical Review article about his trip the pictures had been cropped, and that the negatives of some showed the airplane wing. These could be identified as taken on the outgoing or return leg of the flight, but the negatives had been cut apart, and so neatly that the order in which they were taken could not be established.

However, Wilkins cleared up several points with the Committee and the overlapping 1939-41 photographs made it possible to proceed slowly from one known point to another. Finally, a low ice-covered point in a panorama in the Sailing Directions was correlated with a sketch made from Wilkins' pictures by Briesemeister to accompany Joerg's 1937 Geographical Review article on Ellsworth's flight. The panorama showed a long strait to the left (east) of this point, between it and the low-domed island. Wilkins' description tallied item by item. Stefansson Strait is practically where Wilkins said it was, but it runs north-south instead of east-west and what appeared from Wilkins' low altitude to be a large piece of land loses apparent height and size in subsequent pictures from higher altitudes.

The activity of the Special Committee, and the Advisory Committee on Antarctic Names (ACAN) that succeeded it after the Board was given statutory authority in 1947, helped stir up things in other countries. If we couldn't find satisfactory answers in the records, we commonly wrote to people abroad who were involved in the naming in question or might know of information we had missed, so many were aware of the activity even before the appearance of BGN Special Publication 86, The Geographical Names of Antarctica, in 1947.

The Antarctic Place-names Committee had been organized in Britain in 1939 and reactivated in 1943 but had not attempted systematic coverage of its area of concern--the sector they called the Falkland Islands Dependencies. That Committee began in 1948 to produce mimeographed "APC Papers" setting forth for names that were to be proposed the same sort of information that ACAN assembled. It was agreed between the two bodies that informal exchange of such information prior to formal action in either country would usually lead both groups to the same conclusion, and would reduce changes in decisions once made. It worked out that way. Over the years agreement has been reached on literally thousands of names.

In a few cases the process took some years. Emotional involvement delayed for several years agreement on Ross Ice Shelf in place of Ross Barrier or Ross Shelf Ice, but it finally came quietly. The Palmer Peninsula/Graham Land difference was considered for nearly a decade to be beyond settling. Then a proposal was put forward based on the fact that the northern and southern halves of the peninsula are quite different. Neither the original proposal nor various counterproposals were accepted but the question was kept open and talked about from time to time. Just lately it was settled on the basis of Antarctic Peninsula, the northern half of which is Graham Land, the southern Palmer Land.

There have been numerous contacts with explorers and official bodies in other countries too, rather more with New Zealand, Australia and France than some others, but some at least with almost every country involved. We like to think that agreement on the Antarctic Treaty was the easier because of the high degree of agreement and cooperation that had already been worked out in antarctic geographic names.

The IGY marked a change in many things - kinds of exploration, kinds of name problems, the function of ACAN and its composition. The literature on antarctic exploration in the heroic period was mostly about getting down there, discovering gross features of the landscape, battling nature and getting back. Scientific observation played an increasing part over the years, but the subordination of survival to systematic detailed scientific investigation really came with the IGY. Massive, efficient logistic support by the Navy and technically advanced equipment have increasingly freed the scientist for his mission. The literature now deals primarily with these matters. A large number of scientific and technical men have now been to Antarctica and have conducted investigations there. Many of them after their return, and others who never went there, have worked up observations and prepared reports. Exploration has taken on new dimensions.

So have naming and name standardizing. The accumulated confusion of two centuries has been essentially set straight. The problem now is more one of assimilating new names and applying new tests of appropriateness. More naming is being done, as detailed investigations require names for more features, and as greater mobility and better logistic support permit examination of larger or more areas in a given time. At the same time, ever since Operation Highjump, those who have visited Antarctica are so numerous that just having been there is not enough to get one's name on something. Selections must be made. New problems of categorizing people arise not only from differences in activities, but also from continuing or repeated participation in successive years with changing roles. Authors of reports are commonly content to leave the choice of names to ACAN, being concerned only with having handles for the features that they discuss, and having the handles in good time.

At this stage ACAN does more assigning of names to features and more evaluation of personal performance in varied lines.

The present members of ACAN, Bertrand, Friis, Crary and Dater, are eminently equipped to deal with problems of these kinds. They and the staff also supply in generous measure that essential ingredient referred to by Fuchs - absolute and transparent integrity. It is no less essential now than in what we might think of as the heroic period of name standardizing from which I drew my stories, for the trust that can be reposed in the product is still directly related to the integrity of the standardizers.

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