



THE ANTARCTICAN SOCIETY

7338 Wayfarer Drive
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We Have Moved!!!

You will note by the letterhead that the Society has a new address. That is also the new address of our Honorary President, Ruth J. Siple. Her telephone at this new address is 703-250-7338. The Society means much to Ruth, it is one of her lifelong interests and she loves to hear from you people. Please keep writing and calling her. After all, she just can't be put out to pasture now... she is only 39!

Antarctic Poet to Speak at NSF

When: 12:00 noon, Tuesday, 18 May 1999

Where: Room 375, NSF, 4201 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington

Who: Bill Manhire, New Zealand's inaugural poet laureate

What: Public lecture and reading, "Poet on Ice"

Action: Mark your calendar!

Bill Manhire, in Antarctica in 1998 with New Zealand's Artists to Antarctica program, is "one of the freshest and most exhilarating poets now working in English," states the British journal PN Review. Like NSF with its Antarctic Artists and Writers Program, Antarctica New Zealand give humanities scholars the chance to work with scientists in a part of the world that otherwise would be inaccessible to them. The program "aims to encourage understanding among New Zealanders of the values of Antarctica and its importance to us as a nation." Like the NSF program, it helps to record our cultural history there and enables people who do not travel to Antarctica to conceptualize experiences they cannot have.

Bill Manhire is editing an anthology of imaginative writing (particularly fiction and poetry) about Antarctica. Its working title is 'The Wide White Page.' The poems he wrote in Antarctica will be in a book titled What to Call Your Child, which Random House will issue this year. This semester Mr. Manhire is Fulbright Visiting Professor of New Zealand Studies at the Center for Australian and New Zealand Studies, Georgetown University.

Brash Ice

By Paul Dalrymple

Treading on Sara Wheeler, the Newsletter has been "incognita" of late. But we promise to get better rather than worsen. We have a litany of excuses, whether you will buy them or not, such as Ruth Siple moving her residence (and the Antarctic Society's "nerve center"), and such as my cavorting around the Antarctic Peninsula for four months.

First the bad news. Ruth has been diagnosed as having that aging eye disease, macular degeneration. The good news is that there is only one wet eye, and she is under the care and treatment of a local ophthalmologist. At this point in time no one really knows what the consequences will be, how active Ruth can remain in the Society. But we aren't about to take Ruth out behind the barn and shoot her, and she will continue to do some of the things she has done so expertly for the Society for the past twenty-five years.

Along with macular degeneration, Ruth has developed an arthritic condition in her hands, which will not only prevent her from typing the newsletters, but also cost some of you the personal notes she used to affix to your newsletters. Kristin Larson, our co-editor, has volunteered to step forward to type the newsletters, and it may be that we will have to find a new method of dispersing them. One possibility proposed last year would be for those with computers getting your newsletters right off your screen. At this point in time, it is too early to do any forecasting of the future; however, we have included a brief questionnaire with this letter so you can voice your opinions on the matter.

The Shackleton Exhibit

The only thing wrong with the *Endurance* Shackleton exhibit, now at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, is the lack of space. An excellent exhibit of Frank Hurley's photography and *Endurance* memorabilia is encumbered by its confinement to a narrow corridor in the majestic museum. Dennis Peacock of the Office of Polar Programs admitted defeat while attending its opening on 10 April, seeking refuge outside the jammed corridor.

Both Caroline Alexander (curator of the show and author of the book reviewed below) and Shackleton are having an excellent year. She is serving as his mouth and secretary; appearing weekly on national television and in printed media across the country. Sir Ernest, aka The Boss, is truly Mr. Renaissance Man of the Antarctic, and bids well to become the most legendary Antarctic explorer of all time, especially if the long-promised full-length movie production of the *Endurance* expedition comes to fruition. The piece-de-resistance of the whole exhibit may have been something never associated with Shackleton or Hurley, but rather created by modern technology. There, surrounding the tiny whaling boat, the famed *James Caird*, are three screens upon which is projected oceanic waves of sizable proportions and generated by computer wizardry. But impressive as the projected waves are, they probably pale in comparison to what was actually experienced during the boat journey from Elephant Island to South Georgia. Perhaps it was a desire on the part of the curators not to have the spectators becoming seasick that they have reduced what were probably forty-foot waves. Too bad, as wouldn't it have been more befitting to see green-colored spectators fleeing the hall in a mad dash for fresh air covering their mouths with "barf bags"? Shackleton would no doubt have enjoyed such a spectacle!

The Shackleton Show Schedule:

The curators of the New York *Endurance* show can not yet confirm plans for where the show will next be traveling when it closes in early October. However, it seems fairly certain that the photographs and "some of the memorabilia" will come to the National Geographic's Explorer Hall in Washington DC and stay through the holidays. The next stop is rumored to be the Maritime Museum in Salem, Massachusetts and thence on to Seattle, Washington. One thing seems fairly certain: the tiny cork of a boat, *James Caird*, which brings awe and chills to any follower of the *Endurance* story, most likely will be returned to its home at Dulwich College in Engknd, and not part of any traveling retinue. If you want to see *that* boat on this side of the drink, we suggest you get on up to NYC before October 11th!

The Antarctic Society is looking into the possibility of holding special regional meetings in conjunction with the opening of shows in Boston

and Seattle that would include special guest lecturers. Watch for postings!

Other Tall-Masted Tales

In early February I was on the pier at Ushuaia, Argentina (jump-off point for cruises to Antarctica) hoping to meet an old friend who was serving as the expedition leader on the *Vavilov*. A young man walked down the gangway and soon we were deep in discussion. It seems he was the grandson of the famed shipper/explorer of the *Belgica*, and he and sixty-five other Belgian nationals were about to sail on the centennial anniversary celebration of that famous expedition. I asked him (Francois Ole Gerlache) if it were true that his grandfather had sold the *Endurance* to Shackleton. His reply was "No, but Adrien did have the plans drawn up for the *Endurance*, and he was along for its maiden, shakedown cruise." Incidentally, Francois has wintered-over with the British expedition on Brabant Island, and his father had been a winter-over member of another expedition. Do any of you know of any other family where three generations have all wintered-over? Francois is the father of twins, one of whom has been handicapped since birth. It was tear-wrenching to hear this dedicated father tell of his resolve to bring his handicapped son to Antarctica despite his disability.

Book Reviews

Innocents on Ice: A Memoir of Antarctic Exploration, 1957
by John C. Behrendt, 1998, University Press of Colorado

Editorial Comments by Paul Dalrymple

This long-awaited book, over forty years in the making, tells the story of what happened at Ellsworth Station in 1957. It is not only an account of what happened that year, it is also the strongest indictment ever written about an Antarctic camp leader. Because that camp leader's immediate family members are treasured Society members, it has created a real dilemma in finding a knowledgeable Antarctic who could give a non-partisan review.

Steve Dibbern, a long-time close friend of both Ruth and myself, was given the unenviable task of reviewing the book. Steve, a polar transportation expert who championed the use of hovercraft in Antarctica, is probably the best-read Antarctic I personally know in the United States. He is a very decent chap, one without built-in prejudices like someone I see every morning when I shave. Steve

was not shown flashcards as he wrote this review nor asked to soften or harden his comments. What you read is his unbiased opinion.

I know you will find this book extremely interesting. The tide alone tells so much about those of us who went to the Antarctic at the beginning of the International Geophysical Year (IGY). Of all the U.S. stations, Ellsworth may have had more interesting, budding scientists of note than any other station. Certainly the author, John Behrendt, has had a most distinguished career, remaining in the forefront of U.S. scientists in the international Antarctic arena. Considering John's credentials and those of his fellow "innocents," there is a high degree of credibility to be found in the pages of this book.

Review by Steve Dibbern

Until this year many of the books written about US Antarctic operations during the IGY were by expedition commanders or station leaders and were written in the somewhat "sanitized" fashion of die day that either ignored problems or deliberately adjusted facts and sequences of events for political or more usually self-serving purposes. Readers today who are familiar with the current structure of the US Antarctic program will strain to comprehend the structure during the IGY. The prevailing cold war situation had naval expeditionary forces building and operating bases and a relatively small number of civilian scientists, or "sandcrabs" as they were referred to, "doing the science."

life at Ellsworth Station near the base of the Weddell Sea is the setting of this eminently readable book, which is based on the diary of John Behrendt. He was one of the seismic party during die construction of the station, die first winter of the IGY, and die summer traverse to the interior. The raw diary, while interesting, is made much more coherent to the reader today by the author's extended comments, which are printed in a different type face so that the reader will never be left to wonder what was the thinking in 1957 and what is die contemporary interpretation.

I must confess that this is one of die most fascinating books that I have had die pleasure to read in years. As an Antarctic history fan I had long been aware of the kind of pressures and conflicts that plagued many or most isolated Antarctic stations. Each group dealt with these conflicts with greater or lesser degrees of success. The winter of 1957 at Ellsworth was

rumored for years to have been a particularly stressful one and now, at last, we have a "sandcrab" version of what happened there. The base leader, Finn Ronne published his version soon after the actual events and even the casual reader got the impression that his account was a bit self-serving; indeed all three of his books were a little of that. Most non-IGY people were unaware of the severity of the personnel conflict at Ellsworth. However, hints of problems can be discerned by a careful reading of books by Ronne, Kevin Walton and Jennie Darlington about the earlier private Ronne expedition to Stonington Island.

Ronne appears to have had serious problems with the exercise of authority. It is difficult for the casual reader to conceive of the depths of mistrust and paranoia that were exhibited by Ronne's actions. In particular, the modern reader will have difficulty understanding the level of control of communication that he exercised over his men to prevent word of the conditions at the station from leaking out. The parallels between Ellsworth and the fictional destroyer in the "Caine Mutiny" literally leap off the pages. Some of the reactions of the sailors and scientists were less than admirable, and, in fact Behrendt admits that after a period, no matter what Ronne did, it was interpreted as evil.

This book might be subtitled the "Triumph of the Sandcrabs" since, in spite of the petty, mean behavior of their commander, the scientists still strived to do their scientific work. Behrendt makes it clear that the bulk of the Navy personnel were most supportive and helpful. The traverse inland was the main focus of their summer science, and both the tedium and the excitement are vividly described. It is here that some of Behrendt's current commentary is most helpful because, although he never had another commander like Ronne, he did return to do other traverses and a lot more scientific work in Antarctica.

One area that is completely new to me is that both Ronne and Behrendt assert that the Air Force expedition lead by James Lassiter was a CIA mapping operation. There are a number of times when the cold war surfaces in both the diary entries and his contemporary comments. This spooky sideshow to Antarctic research is a ripe area for research.

Behrendt, a still active veteran of the IGY, has done a great service in writing about his experiences during a very trying and under-reported era. Not much has been written about one of the most significant periods

of Antarctic history. There are other books of this era that should be written, and now! You writers know who you are...get to work, you're not getting any younger and the story is worth telling. You'll have a really good example against which to measure yours in John Behrendt's excellent book.

The Endurance: Shackleton's legendary Antarctic Expedition by Caroline Alexander, Alfred A. Knopf/American Museum of Natural History, New York 1998

Review by Steve Dibbern

The first impression of this book is to be in awe of Frank Hurley's photography of the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition. The photography alone is enough to put this on any Antarctic history buffs "must have" list. Hurley too often takes an historical backseat to his counterpart on Scott's second expedition, Herbert Ponting. This, sadly, is at least in part because no one died, heroically or otherwise, on the *Endurance* expedition. Hurley's visual record contains a drama and power that I personally find lacking in Ponting's. Hurley's portraiture in particular gives us a window into the men who were the heart of the expedition.

Often the accompanying text in an album such as this is just a set of captions, but here is the best surprise, the text is a fresh new telling of the very well-known Shackleton story which throws new light on how the expedition survived and on Shackleton's character and leadership. It was a bit like watching the movie, *Titanic*; you knew how it ended, but were fascinated with the telling. Ms. Alexander's writing is full, clear and dramatic. The writing gives the reader a slightly antiquated feeling that contributes to an understanding of the time in which the action took place. Beyond all this is the skilful use of a great deal of diary entries never before available to the earlier chroniclers of the Shackleton *Endurance* story; Shackleton himself, the Fishers, Lansing, or even Huntford.

I have only two criticisms. Ms. Alexander's text mentions Hurley's use of color photography several times. A spin-off article in the *National Geographic Society Magazine* reproduced a few. Even at the risk of increasing the cost of printing I think that several should have been included, they were crisp and fresh-looking in the NGS publication and would have made the photographic record complete. My second criticism is aimed not so much at Ms. Alexander's

book as maybe at Shackleton and Hurley (though I don't have access to the film record). I wish there had been a portrait of Chips McNish, he wasn't easy to deal with but he deserved better.

Also on the racks but not yet reviewed by us is former Antarctic Society President, Ron Naveen's, latest book, *Waiting to Fly: My Escapades with the Penguins of Antarctica*. This book is published by William Morrow & Company, NY.

The Long Farewell

VXE-6 Navy Squadron (aka Ice Pirates)

1955-1999: Disestablished 31 March 1999

Closing Ceremony Prayer

Almighty God, Navy Victor Xraj Echo Six is prepared to land. Grant us clear deck in the known world, for the Pirates have conducted their final raid on the Icy Continent, and are bringing their treasures home. Treasures gained from the 44 years of soaring skies above terrain few others have seen. Treasure born of devoted and courageous aviators sharing a mission unlike any other, and the memories of what we did together for the benefit of humankind. Though we as a squadron will not fly Antarctica again in planes, we will continue the flight in the stories we have to tell.

For like any aviators before us, we have loosed the surly bonds of earth and been blessed to reach out and touch your face. But we have also held your hidden handiwork in trust, and seen crystalline sparkles of what could almost be your frozen tears of joy from the day of creation. Some of our own tears remain there also, for so do the spirits of our comrades who did not return with us. May their memories be ever sacred in our hearts as we remember their sacrifice, and as we pass this trust of your treasures on to those who will continue the adventures we must leave. Bless all who discover the wonders of your creation, and keep them safe wherever they now go in your name and mercy, Amen.

Chaplain Mark W. Smith



Penguin Prattle

By Kristin Larson

Lots of newness all 'round. A new home for us, a new era of Antarctic flight, Sir Ernest gets a new lease on life, IAATO is under new leadership, new fish species coming up in Antarctic nets, a new set of support options for the U.S. Antarctic Program, a new Antarctic climate record to scrutinize, and new buildings at South Pole; that's a lot of gloss to ponder.

But, don't you think it's kind of nice the way we Antarcticans hang together like a worn but elegant tuxedo topcoat? We tend to regard incremental change as were it an ephemeral caking of hoare frost on a grizzled beard. Perhaps it's the immutable character of Antarctica that forms the weft of our collective affection. Or perhaps it's the thrill of being part of a population that still numbers less than the crowd at Camden Yards on a good day. We, of the polar mentality, (as the New Yorker recently put it) whose "very sufferings apparently, are joys in memory," give our own meaning to the mercurially changeless landscape.

In any case, we strive to pay at least passable lip service to democracy. And for that reason we have provided you, our valued members, with a chance to help us shape our near future. Enclosed with this newsletter is a questionnaire. Take a minute to reveal your thoughts. If we like what you say, we may just use it!

A New Breed of Pirates in our Midst?

Would it be a toothsome fish that tickles yer fancy? Apparently many gourmands think so and are willing to pay handsomely to get it. A recent scan of the international newswires produced a daunting number of filings on an Antarctic species not usually among those classified as "photogenic mega-fauna" (you know, like penguins and orcas). No, these reports concern the Patagonian Toothfish. Unlike the new fish species described below, the Toothfish is so well-known (usually by some other name like Chilean Bass) that one dire prediction places this species in the commercially extinct category within three years. That is, unless strong protection measures aren't soon adopted. In point of fact there is a very strong and innovative regulator framework in place to protect all seagoing Antarctic

species. That framework is part of the Antarctic Treaty System, and is known fittingly as the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources, or CCAMLR.

It would appear, however, that a number of non-signatory nations, and maybe even some who are signatories (but are re-flagging their ships to avoid detection), have been raking in this tasty treat in a ruthless manner and running the sleek bounty to waiting processors. Given the apparently high level of illegal, unreported and unregulated fish pirating in the vast and trackless Southern Ocean, it would seem that the CCAMLR signatories have their enforcement work cut out for them; a job made all the more urgent by the astronomical number of petrels and albatross that are killed each year as by-catch in the illegal Toothfish long-lining operations.

Many solutions have already been floated by CCAMLR nations such as vessel tracking, port inspections, and ocean surveillance activities. The U.S. will also be introducing a new certification program during a special CCAMLR meeting next month. In short, the U.S. seeks a solution that will deny market access for Toothfish unless it can be demonstrated that the fish were caught legally. It may be a bit premature to check your grocery store shelves for Albatross-safe labels, but the Prattler will keep you apprised.



The new Antarctic gravelbeard plunderfish *Arteididraco glareobarbatus* is about 6 inches long. Image by Danette Pratt, Onto Univ. College of Osteopathic Medicine.

Nouveau Fishe

This past season netted a rich reward for OPP researcher Dr. Joseph Eastman. In a series of twenty trawls made from the *Nathaniel B. Palmer* over the past two seasons in the Ross Sea, a remarkable four new fish species were brought up. Polly Penhale of NSF/OPP said these fish help buoy the idea that Antarctic waters form an evolutionary island within the rest of the world's oceans. Because of the strong geothermal and chemical differences encountered below the Southern Ocean's convergence line (roughly parallel to 60 degrees south latitude), it is thought that this particular group of notothenoid fish

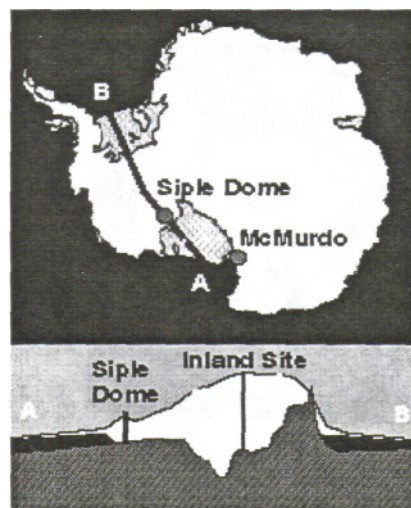
have not ventured beyond Antarctic waters nor have other groups of fish entered the competitive arena. In a manner that Penhale likened to the adaptive radiation of the Galapagos Island Darwin finches, this group of notothenoid fish have evolved to fill ecological niches that would normally be occupied by unrelated species in less isolated ecosystems.

With Barely a Spate...

On January 25* out on a big ice hummock in West Antarctica the two-year-plus drilling program known as Siple Dome was locked in a race with logistics.. a drawn and bitter battle that ended happily. With just six hours to spare, the Siple drilling team hit bedrock after producing a core of over 1000 meters in length. Since early November 1998, drilling teams have been working 12-hour shifts, seven days a week during each austral season. What's down there anyway? It is thought that the ice formed at the 1000-meter depth could be composed of snow layers as old as 80,000 years. By analyzing the gases, dusts and other materials trapped in these tree-ring-like ice records, much can be learned about the past climates. The core extracted this past season will "relax" on-site for a year in special trenches because it is too brittle when it first comes up from such pressure to safely transport. From Antarctica, the core will then go to several researchers and also be archived in the National Ice Core Laboratory in Denver.

The Siple Dome core is one of two full cores that members of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet (WAIS) group hope to extract. The second, as yet unfunded project, is planned for a site further inland where it is hoped that a record extending as far back as 100,000 years will be produced. For a great deal more information check out:

<http://www.rnaxey.dri.edu/WRC/waiscores>.





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Member Survey

Since we have decided to change things around a little we thought it would be nice to give our loyal following a chance to voice an opinion, an idea, an innovation. When done, simply fold in three, lick a stamp and zing it back at us. We will listen, although we promise nothing!

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- Dr. Paul C. Dalrymple

Name (optional) _____

_____ I like the newsletter just the way it is

I think the newsletter should consist of:

(or just leave it to their imagination)

----- I like to get my letter by the old-fashioned US mail

----- I would like to get my newsletter via e-mail

----- I would be willing to go to a password protected web-site

----- I would like to get my letter in any/all ways

I would attend lectures in the Washington DC area most often during: noon / evenings / both

Preferred or alternate lecture location = _____

My e-mail address is: _____

Other thoughts:

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