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Joint Meeting with the Explorers Club – Washington Group
and The Society of Woman Geographers

JOURNALISM ON ICE: How Polar Research Plays in the Press

by
Curt Suplee

Science Reporter and Horizon Editor
Washington Post

Saturday evening, December 11, 1999

The Cosmos Club
2121 Massachusetts Avenue, NW

(Massachusetts and Florida Avenues)

Social Hour 6 PM - Dinner 7 PM - Lecture 8 PM

Black Tie or Dark Suit suggested

The cost of dinner, including tax and gratuity is \$50 a person.
Make check payable to ECWG, and send to:
Roger L. Payne, 47762 Hammerstone Way, Potomac Falls,
VA 20165-4769

No reservations or cancellations after December 8, 1999

Curt Suplee, The Washington Post science reporter and editor of the Post's acclaimed Horizon section, has worked in both polar regions and will tell us why some expeditions get great press, some lousy, and some not at all. Mr. Suplee is a winner of the AAAS science writing award and the author of two books, "Everyday Science Explained" and "Physics in the 20th Century." He is informed and highly articulate about science and the news business, and we can look forward to a stimulating talk and a liveh question-and-answer session. In addition to his 23-year career with the Post, Curt contributes to National Geographic and "lives in Silver Spring with his wife and two highly adventurous daughters."

We still have some Antarctic calendars - \$11 each. Send your check payable to Antarctic Society, to Ruth Siple at the address above.

BRASH ICE

We are going to initiate something new with This issue, presenting a listing of some of our members' favorite web sites. This may not be overly popular with those members who don't have computers, but it should play with those who do have computers. Besides, we aren't going to force-feed you a whole newsletter of web sites. Well start out with old Art Ford who has been an active Antarctic since time immemorial.

Have you noticed the proliferation of women Antarctic writers? Caroline Alexander has broken all records for Antarctic sales with *The Endurance*, Shackleton's Legendary Antarctic Expedition. And probably the number one runner-up, Sara Wheeler's *Terra Incognita*. Currently Sara is working on a biography of Apsley Cherry-Garrard, which will no doubt be another big seller.

Another Brit, Diana Preston, published *A First Rate Tragedy, Robert Falcon Scott and The Race to the South Pole*. L.C. Bernacchi's granddaughter, Janet Crawford, has written and edited a beautiful edition of *That First Antarctic Winter, the Story of the Southern Cross Expedition of 1898-1900*. In the wings, Susan Solomon of Antarctic ozone fame, is working furiously on Scott's last expedition, a book destined to come out "late next year or the following year." Diane Belanger, who is doing a study for NSF on oral history of Antarctica, will publish a book after the completion of her contract. And there are several other women authors and editors of Antarctic books worthy of note.

We are running newspaper accounts of two well-known Antarcticans. Margaret Lanyon outlasted Walt Seelig in Christchurch, and is legendary to thousands of Antarcticans who passed through Christchurch during her thirty-six year tenure. The other article is an interesting interview at the Pensacola National Museum of Naval Aviation with old Gus Shinn, who was the very first pilot to land at the South Pole. And, naturally, we all were saddened to read about the death of one of today's most legendary Antarcticans, Bunny

Fuchs. I was fortunate enough to be a wintering-over resident at the South Pole when he and his colleagues dropped in for a five-day change of underwear, hot meals, coffee, and non-moving beds back in January 1958.

Please note that our third wheel and Penguin Prattler, Kristin Larson, has not taken leave of this newsletter (nor her senses). She helped get this one out the door but will wait until our next issue to bring you up-to-date info on USAP research projects, Southern Ocean fish stories and the like.

Late holiday shoppers! We still have some excellent millennium calendars of the Antarctic. Send checks to Ruth, \$11 per calendar! Hurry!

RAYTHEON AWARDED \$1.12 BILLION USAP SUPPORT CONTRACT (adapted from Raytheon's web site). Raytheon, based in Lexington, Massachusetts, is a \$28 billion corporation that made its name in the defense industry. The contract, one of the largest awarded by the federal government, is to provide science, operations and maintenance support to the U.S. Antarctic Program, including the bases at McMurdo, Pole, and Palmer, two research vessels and numerous field camps.

According to Bob Valentine, a Raytheon spokesman, the new contractor will attempt to retain many of ASA's current employees. "We'll be meeting with the incumbent work force to talk to them with the objective of hiring as many of them as possible," Valentine said. He said company representatives will soon be visiting the Ice to begin preparations for next year's changeover. Valentine described Raytheon officials as "elated" by the news of the contract award.

In a statement to ASA employees, Karl Erb, the director of the Office of Polar Programs at the NSF said, "ASA has been critical to U.S. Antarctic Program success in many areas over the years, and I thank you all. There remains much to do in Antarctica. I hope many of you will stay with us as we move into the future with Raytheon."

POP ICE WOMAN FINISHES UP (Adapted from June '99 article contributed by Walt Seelig). Christchurch woman Margaret Lanyon's entree into the fledgling U.S. Antarctic Program began with a flat rejection from her prospective bosses. She flunked the US Navy Antarctic Support job interview because she was "too quiet." Instead she was referred to the U.S. National Science Foundation. There she became personal assistant to the foundation's bosses, including the popular Walter Seelig.

So began an enduring love affair with a cast of thousands. As fate would have it, the woman destined to manage NZ civilian contractors to American ice operations was later assigned to a six-month stint as administrative assistant to the US Navy Antarctic command. Her boss "gleefully" told her that the military were now "very sorry" about their initial rejection.

Morale and a multitude of research projects depend on the unhindered passage of staff and their vital lifelines. Over 36 years, until her retirement last month, Margaret Lanyon helped shift almost 20,000 scientists and support personnel to and from McMurdo Base, and back to the US. With each contractor change, Margaret, Lanyon acquired another portfolio and in 1974 was appointed the foundation's contractor manager for NZ operations. Moving men and women - about 2000 of them in the latest six-month summer drop - kitting them and transporting them was a mammoth and complex exercise fraught with its own perils.

Such was the TV coverage in the late 1970s of an airlift of live penguins from the ice to the San Diego Zoo. Refrigerated trucks, back-up power units and a special permit to "import" the birds into NZ were arranged in a meticulous planning exercise which required

hydrating the feathery cargo with specially made ice blocks. The permit stipulated the penguins be contained in a restricted area at all times. "The birds were closely attended at all times by the curator and other scientists," she recounts. "One felt confident nothing could wrong."

It was big news - television coverage featured a Hercules landing - and penguins which appeared to be standing on the tarmac, a piece of creative editing, which riveted the attention of the NZ permit and quarantine squad, not to mention the civilian contractor manager. Panic ensued. The permit team turned up early next day, but was swiftly reassured.

Margaret Lanyon was recently honored by colleagues, compatriots and associates at the USNSF Christchurch Airport base. Friends from the entire airport community from air traffic, Customs and freight to the Bank of New Zealand and the airport motor inn mustered at the all-male turnout. She is one of the few foreign nationals in American Antarctic annals to be given the honor of a mountain named after her - a rocky peak in St. Johns Range in the Victoria Upper Glacier Lanyon Peak is officially listed with the US Board on Geographic Names. In a northwest Christchurch home stands a black and white framed photograph of the stark sentinel surveying the captivating beauty of the silent waste.

GUS SHINN RECALLS FIRST SOUTH POLE LANDING (Adapted from article in the Ocala Star Banner, 10/31/99, contributed by Kirby Hanson, Meteorologist, SP '58)

They flew 800 miles from McMurdo Station or the Antarctic coast to the South Pole on Oct. 31, 1956 in an aging R4D, affectionately and sometimes derisively called a "Gooney Bird." It was the Navy version of the piston-powered twin engine DC-3 airliner that had gone into service 20 years earlier. The R4D had none of the sophisticated navigation gear nor the power of the turboprop LC-130 Hercules the New York Air National Guard used to pick-up Dr. Jerri Nielsen from a research station at the South Pole last month.

Shinn, originally from Eden, NC was one of seven Navy men aboard the R4D, including Rear Adm. George Dufek. The 77-year-old Shinn, now living in Pensacola, recalled his flight in an interview at the Museum of Naval Aviation where the plane is on display. It was named *Que Sera Sera* - French for whatever will be will be - the title of a then-popular song. The name turned out to be very appropriate, Shinn said. Just as the Air Guard did this year, the Navy waited for winter to wane before attempting a polar landing, although not long enough for Shinn. The Cold War had literal meaning in the Antarctic. Dufek was in a hurry, worried that the Russians might get there first.

An earlier flight in another R4D to seek a refueling site between McMurdo Station and the pole nearly ended in disaster. Flying into a valley, the plane got caught in a windshear and began falling. Fortunately it was equipped with small rockets called JATO for jet-assisted take-off. Shinn fired all 11 JATO bottles to stop the fall just as the wing tip hit the ice. There was "lots of noise, lots of fuss" but damage was minor and the plane flew fine. Dufek did not want to go to the pole with a bent wing so they borrowed *Que Sera Sera* from another crew.

The polar landing was a bit rough, but not unusual for the terrain, recalled Strider, 69, from his home in Newport News, Virginia. Strider is the only other surviving member of the landing party. Their JATO assisted takeoff appeared uneventful to those watching from an Air Force C-124 Globemaster that circled overhead. It was not.

The high altitude of the ice cap- about 10,000 feet at the pole- starved engines of oxygen and robbed wings of their lift. That, along with the plane's 28,000-pound weight, made JATO necessary to take off in the best situation, the JATO bottles usually were fired after the plane hit 30 knots, but "*Que Sera Sera*" remained stuck with the engines at full power. "We just sat on the ice like an old mud hen," Shinn said. To break loose, Shinn fired four JATO bottles. That did the trick, but he was worried about having enough JATO left to get

airborne. They barely made it only to be enveloped in ice and snow. We couldn't see anything, but that was no big deal," Shinn said. He relied on instruments to keep flying.

WEATHER NOT AN ALLY OF CAPTAIN

SCOTT Susan Solomon and Chuck Stearns have collaborated on an analysis of weather encountered by Scott's party, and averaged data measured by Chuck's automated stations on Scott's route to the South Pole. It seems that Scott picked a bad year to be late in departure and return, as meteorological data collected by his party showed abnormally colder than normal temperatures for the return trip. Amundsen evidently benefited by much better mid-summer conditions. Solomon and Stearns have published their analyses in a short report in the November 1999 issue of the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. Susan's forthcoming book on the expedition will go into it in much more detail.

Susan was quoted in an interview published by *USA TODAY* to the effect that even though Scott made many mistakes, "these alone would clearly not have been sufficient to cause all of them to die had the weather been normal." In a *London Times* Article by Science Editor Nigel Hawkes, quoted Susan and Chuck as writing that falling temperatures "likely contributed substantially in the exhaustion and frostbite Scott and his companions endured, and their deaths were therefore due, at least in part, to the unusual weather." But on the other side of the street, there are some of us Doubting Thomases who feel within their own hearts that both Birdie Bowers and Edward Wilson could have gone on if Capt. Scott had been physically able. However, as the very observing Charles Swithinbank wrote us, "it is nice for once to hear something supportive of Scott's view.

FOOTHOLD ON ANTARCTICA, THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL EXPEDITION (1949-1952)

by Charles Swithinbank. (Review by Paul Dalrymple). For real Antarcticans, those who want to tie the heroic era in with the scientific era, this, *Foothold on Antarctica*, is the book to read. Unlike many books on Antarctica today which are written by women who are much

more familiar with Trafalgar Square than the Great White Continent, this book is actually written by a member of the expedition, Charles Swithinbank, who was only 22 years old when he was selected to go on the Norwegian-British-Swedish Expedition.

Now, some fifty-one years later, mellowed by time, hardened by five continuous decades of Antarctic research, viewer of more of Antarctica than any man or woman in history, and probably the world's leading authority on Antarctica, Charles has blessed us with the first, first-hand account of the expedition. The expedition leader, John Giaever, wrote the official account of the expedition, *Maudheim*, but he wrote it from the bowels of the camp, never participating in any of the countless exploratory scientific sledge journeys away from the station. And this expedition was truly one of science in the field, and Charles brings it all alive to its readers.

The expedition was unique in so many different ways. It was the very first multi-national expedition to Antarctica, and was a prelude to the International Geophysical Year, a blueprint for how the Antarctic Treaty was supposed to work.... and did. It was really the last hurrah for working dogs in Antarctica, when dogs played a major role. Vehicles such as two lonely weasels were supporters, and aircraft were only summer adjuncts flying reconnaissance trips. This book is about men and dogs and science in its purest form, working in unknown territory, writing their own scripts, day to day. There was no master plan, per se, but young, ambitious, studious men who were willing to work until exhaustion.

The expedition was small, totaling only fifteen men. Three were married. One had his doctorate. Five more were to earn their doctorates from their scientific results. Several, including the author, were to become very well-known internationally, and their names will live forever in polar archives. Never before, or after, have so few achieved so much, and readers can experience their adventures and rewards by reading this very fine book. The book has tragedy, as three lives were lost when a weasel plunged off the

ice shelf into the bay. The book has drama of the very highest order, when the staff medical officer had to remove an eye, tooling his own instruments, training his colleagues to administer the anesthesia, monitor the patient's blood pressure, pulse, and heart rate, passing the right instruments on command. After two hours and forty minutes of high tension, the operation was successful, and the man's other eye was saved. It was an epic story, probably the greatest victory in the annals of Antarctic medical history.

This book has an excellent library of photographs taken on the expedition, which, fortunately, are placed in juxtaposition with the text, so you can read about the portrayals on the same page. Expedition members have an up-front and personal mug shot, so you know exactly what they looked like - fifty years ago. I don't know of any other Antarctic book where there is such a good marriage of people, events, and text.

It's fun to read something written by a true Antarctic, not something written by an outsider who has a way of putting words together which can boondoggle an innocent reader into buying their books. Charles spoke early on in his book about the quietness of Antarctica, and I couldn't help but remember the words of the American George Denton who appeared as the lead in an Antarctic science film, speaking about how Antarctica was such a silent continent. Yet the Antarctic IMAX film of perhaps a decade ago portrayed Antarctica with a continuous howling wind. Read this book, enthral in its excitement, live the traverses. It was one of the great expeditions of all time.

For those of you who may want to buy this, and others of Charles' fine Antarctic books, it is better and cheaper to buy direct from Charles, and he will sign your copy if you request it. He says "\$ and checks are welcome."

FOOTHOLD ON ANTARCTICA: The First International Expedition (1949-1952). Through the Eyes of its Youngest Member. UK, The Book Guild, 1999.
\$30 + \$5 = \$35 (surface) or \$30 + \$10 = \$40 (airmail)

FORTY YEARS ON ICE. UK, The Book Guild, 1988. \$40 + \$5 = \$45 (surface) or \$40 + \$10 = \$50 (airmail)

AN ALIEN IN ANTARCTICA. USA, McDonald & Woodward, 1997. \$50 + \$7 = \$57 (surface) or \$50 + \$16 = \$66 (airmail). This can also be obtained from the publisher (McDonald & Woodward, 325 Dorrence Road, Granville, OH 43023) at \$49.95 + \$3 for shipping.).

SIR VIVIAN DEAD AT AGE 91 (Charles Swithinbank). Sir Vivian Fuchs - Bunny to his Antarctic friends - died at his home in Cambridge on November 11th at the age of 91 years. His interest in polar exploration was aroused by his tutor in Cambridge, Sir James Wordie, who had been with Shackleton in the *Endurance*. Wordie led an expedition to East Greenland in 1929 with Fuchs as geologist. Although best known as Leader of the Commonwealth Transantarctic Expedition of 1956-58 and Director of the British Antarctic Survey from 1958 to 1973, Fuchs had earlier spent most of the 1930s working in the East African Rift Valley. After war service he joined the Falklands Islands Dependencies Survey (later renamed the British Antarctic Survey) as overall field leader, wintering over at Stonington Island in 1948 and 1949.

When the Ronne Antarctic Research Expedition arrived at Stonington, Ronne issued a decree that there would be no fraternisation between the British and the American bases situated 250 yards apart and speaking the same language. For the most part, both sides ignored this, though it meant that communications had to be furtive. A strained truce prevailed throughout the time that Ronne was on the island. Much pleasure can be had by comparing three published accounts of the same events: Finn Ronne's *Antarctic Conquest* (New York, Putnam & Sons, 1949); Jenny Darlington's *My Antarctic Honeymoon* (Frederick Muller, 1957); and Vivian Fuchs's *Of Ice and Men* (Anthony Nelson, 1982).

Fuchs had spent the winters at Stonington dreaming of reviving Shackleton's grand

design of 1914-16, the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition, which had been thwarted when *Endurance* was beset and later sunk. Within the UK he had an uphill struggle against opposition because resources were already stretched by the funding of FIDS and also by funding the proposed British IGY station at Halley Bay. Sir Winston Churchill, however, was impressed by Fuchs's persistence and arranged for a substantial government grant. This was soon followed by financial support from New Zealand, South Africa, and Australia.

Following Shackleton's plan, the expedition was divided into two parts, a Weddell Sea party led by Fuchs and a Ross Sea party led by Sir Edmund Hillary. Hillary's party, like Joyce's in 1915-16, was to lay caches on the Ross Sea side to provide for the Weddell Sea party after they passed the South Pole. Hillary set out the caches but then, against Fuchs's instructions, used some of the supplies to lead his own party onward to the South Pole. When the crossing party arrived at the pole later than expected, Hillary advised Fuchs to break his journey and accept an American offer to evacuate the party by air. Fuchs chose to continue as planned but Hillary had already gone public, with the result that their differences were inflated beyond recognition by the media.

Fuchs' and Hillary's account of the expedition was *The Crossing of Antarctica* (London, Cassell & Co, 1958). Later, a less restrained account was published by Hillary under the title *No Latitude for Error* (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1961).

Following the successful completion of the TAE and the publication of its scientific results, Fuchs became Director of the British Antarctic Survey until his retirement in 1973. He is remembered with affection by his TAE and BAS colleagues as an inspiring leader, a good friend, and the right person to be with in times of crisis. From the American point of view he is regarded -with some justification-as favoring spartan conditions for men in the field, while from his point of view he saw USAP-living standards as unnecessarily extravagant.

For many years he played a constructive part in Antarctic Treaty affairs, and in UK circles he served-among other things-as President of the Royal Geographical Society. Fuchs's autobiography was published as *A Time to Speak* (Anthony Nelson Ltd, 1990). He is survived by his second wife and by a son and a daughter from his first marriage.

SHACKELTON STILL BESET AT SEA. White Mountain Films has had two ships, the *Akademic Shuleykin* and the *Laurel* in Antarctic waters for the past two months shooting films for two productions about The Boss. One is going to be a two-hour documentary expected in 2001 via the U.S. Public Broadcasting System, the other for [MAX theaters around the world.

Both ships worked in and around South Georgia in early November and got what they wanted. However, the weather at Elephant Island was so bad, which is normal, that they had to temporarily abandon the area. Both ships then went into the Antarctic Sound area where "Iceberg Camp" was reconstructed on an ice floe and filming undertaken. The *Shuleykin* then traveled into the Weddell Sea and did some more filming on pack ice some 250 km southeast of the Antarctic Sound. The *Shuleykin* went back to Elephant Island where replicas of the *James Caird*, *Stancomb Wills*, and *Dudley Docker* were used for a series of reconstructions. The weather turned bad again, and the three replicas were lost while under tow from the ship! The next day, November 21st, they cancelled further filming, and the operation was terminated, to be continued in the arctic at a later date.

POLAR URLs - Art Ford's list The contributor's credentials include a 40-year Antarctic career and extensive research that has led far beyond the web: Ph.D., Geology, Univ. Washington (1959), for first geological investigation of the active volcano Glacier Peak in the high North Cascades, Washington. Then, first job, Asst. Prof. Geology, San Diego State Univ. (1958-60), escaped academia and in 1960-63 led expeditions first studying ranges nearest South Pole (Patuxent Range, Pecora Escarpment, parts of Thiel

Mts). And on and on....leading eventually to taking folks ashore on zodiacs to exotic Antarctic sites.

HISTORY OF DISCOVERY. All about discoverer; and a time line of history of discovery. (Very thorough.)
<http://www.win.tue.nl/cs/fm/engels/discovery>"

ROBERT HOLMES' WEBSITE about Antarctica. Lots of links to other Antarctica sites (e.g., BAS).
<http://www.theice.org/>

SOUTH POLE ADVENTURE Web Page. Antarctic science for students (has present weather at S. Pole)
<http://www.southpole.com/>

NATIONAL ICE CENTER. World data on icebergs, sea ice, etc., with many links
<http://www.natice.noaa.gov/>

CURRENT ANTARCTIC LITERATURE. (Cold Regions Research and Engineering Laboratory).
<http://www.crrel.usace.army.mil/library/aware/antlit.htm>

BRITISH ANTARCTIC SURVEY (BAS) home page. Many links, such as to Antarctic digital map database). <http://www.nerc-bas.ac.uk/>

SCAR COMPOSITE GAZETEER OF ANTARCTIC GEOGRAPHIC NAMES.
http://www.pnra.it/SCAR_GAZE

POLAR - Arctic & Antarctic information, with many links, e.g., resources & environment, recruiting, looking for a job?
<http://www.arcticsurvev.com/>

GLOBAL WAM (Wave-amplitude) forecasts. A. US Navy site. Gives 12-hourly forecasts for up to a week - this is a favorite for surfers! A good way to track sea conditions for any ocean, including seas around Antarctica. Also shows present sea ice boundary. <http://152.80.56.202/wam.html>

GATEWAY TO ANTARCTICA. - University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand site. Links, e.g., to ICAIR (International Centre for Antarctic Information and Research)
<http://www.icair.iac.org.nz/>

POLAR BIBLIOGRAPHY. The Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress and the U.S. Army Cold Regions Research and Engineering Laboratory (CRREL) disseminates information on cold region science and technology at this site.
<http://lcweb.loc.gov/n/scitech/coldregions/welcome.html>

USA ANTARCTIC TREATY INFORMATION EXCHANGE
<http://www.nsf.gov/od/opp/antarct/treaty/index.htm>

CURRENT ANTARCTIC SEA-ICE MAP.
http://metoc-ul.fnmoc.navy.mil/otis/otis_shen_ice.gif

SCAR HOME PAGE. Many links, e.g., working groups, history of SCAR <http://www.scar.org/>

ANTARCTIC PHILATELY. A great site for all about Antarctica's postal history and especially for an excellent summary of the history of exploration up to the International Geophysical Year.
<http://www.south-pole.com/>

ANTARCTIC SUPPORT ASSOCIATES.
Contractor to NSF to support US program in Antarctica.
<http://www.asa.org/>

BYRD POLAR RESEARCH CENTER, OHIO STATE UNIV.
<http://www-bprc.mps.ohio-state.edu/BPRC.html>

INTERNATIONAL ASSOC. ANTARCTIC TOUR OPERATORS. All about tourism in Antarctica
<http://www.iaato.org/index.html>

SCOTT POLAR RESEARCH INSTITUTE
<http://www.spri.cam.ac.uk/>

NSF: POLAR RESEARCH. All about how to get grant money to do polar research. <http://www.nsf.gov/home/polar/start.htm>

AUSTRALIAN ANTARCTIC DIVISION. All about Australia's program.
<http://www.antdiv.gov.au/>

CHEESEMAN'S WILDLIFE SAFARIS TO ANTARCTICA.
<http://www.cheesemans.com/Antarctica\\wildlife.html>

QUARK POLAR EXPEDITIONS. (Cruise trips to Arctic & Antarctic.)
<http://www.quark-expeditions.com/>

PUBLIC BROADCASTING ONLINE. Links to NOVA programs, incl. Shackleton's Antarctic Odyssey.
<http://www.pbs.org/>

PETE & BARB'S PENGUIN PAGE. All about the 17 species of penguins.
http://ourworld.CompuServe.com/homepages/Peter_and_Barbara_Barham/pengies.htm

ART FORD'S EXPLORERS CLUB TALK. Palo Alto, Calif., May 29, 1998. (Have patience, loading up all color photos takes time!)
<http://caldera.wr.usgs.gov/mdiggles/EC1998/EC98-05.htm>

ART FORD'S TALK ABOUT GEOLOGY OF DUFEK INTRUSION TO PENINSULA GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY. Stanford Univ., April 6 1999. (Have patience, loading up all color photos takes time!)
<http://caldera.wr.usgs.gov/mdiggles/PGS1999/PGS99-04.html>