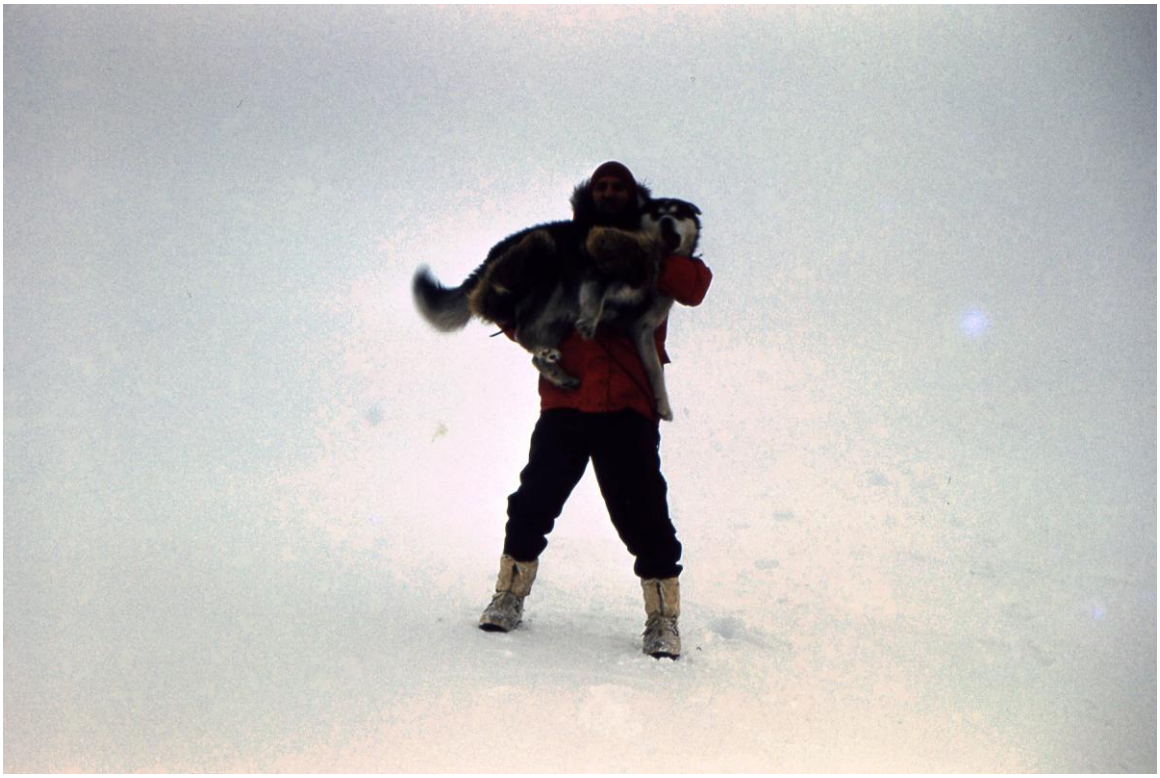
Antarctic Recollection



Arthur E. Jorgensen

AKA "*Red Jacket*"

This is not a scientific paper. It is a personal account of my year at the Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station during the International Geophysical Year 1957-1958.

I write this for my children and grandchildren.

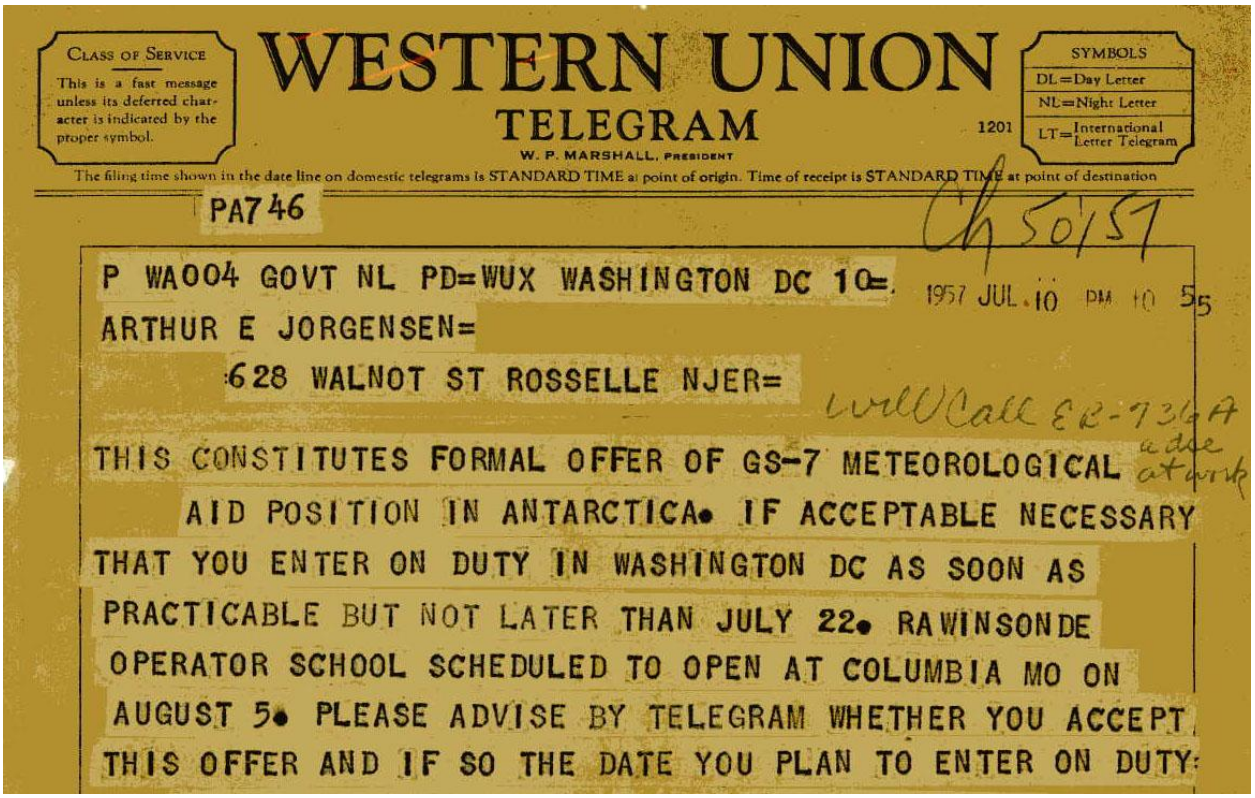
INTERNATIONAL GEOPHYSICAL YEAR

Twelve countries mounted extensive expeditions to the Antarctic region, establishing more then 50 stations as part of the International Geophysical Year (IGY) during 1957-58. The continent, half of which had never been seen, became a focus of studies in meteorology, oceanography, upper-atmosphere phenomena, seismology, glaciology, and surveying. The spirit of cooperation and free interchange of scientific data among participating nations during the IGY gave impetus to the Antarctic Treaty of 1959.


I.G.Y. STATIONS
United States
Great Britain
New Zealand
Australia
Existing
Planned
Soviet Union
France
Chile
Argentina
Glacier
Ice Shelf
Planned Traverses 1957-58
POLITICAL CLAIMS
South America
ARGENTINA
CHILE
GREAT BRITAIN
NORWAY
U.S. not officially claimed
NEW ZEALAND
FRANCE
AUSTRALIA
ANTARCTICA 1957
South Shetland Is.
South Orkney Is.
Antarctic Circle
Charcot I.
Alexander I I.
Bellingshausen Sea
PALMER PENINSULA
Weddell Sea
Weddell
Filchner Ice Shelf
Shackleton (HQ for Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Exp.)
Lowell Thomas Mts.
Gen. Belgrano
Halley Bay
Amundsen Sea
Walgreen Coast
MARIE BYRD LAND
Ellsworth Highland
COATS LAND
Princess Martha Coast
Norways Station
Mt. Siple
Getz Ice Shelf
Byrd
Trans-Antarctic route
Supply depot
Mudlig-Hofmann Mts.
QUEEN MAUD LAND
Cordell Hull Gl.
Hobbs Coast
Ethel Ford Range
Rockefeller Plateau
Supply line
Sulzberger Bay
South Pole
Queen Maud Range
Duncan Mt.
Roosevelt I.
Little America V
(U.S. HQ; exploration of Ross Ice Shelf)
Sovietskaya
Japan's Station
Ross Ice Shelf
U.S.S. Glacier
Mt. Erebus
Williams (Airlift for Pole Station)
Mt. Albert Markham (Supply depot)
Scott
Supply line from New Zealand
McMurdo Sd.
Adare
Admiralty Range
Prince Albert Mts.
VICTORIA LAND
Vostok
ENDERBY LAND
Baker Three Gl.
American Highland
Mac. Robertson Coast
Mawson
Polar Record Gl.
Amery Ice Shelf
Vestfold Hills
Oates Coast
WILKES LAND
Charcot
George V Coast
Pionerskaya
Mary Queen Coast
West Ice Shelf
Nimrod Gl.
Mertz Gl.
Adélie Coast
Dumont D'Urville
Banzare Coast
John Quincy Adams Gl.
Denman Gl.
Knox Coast
Mirny
Shackleton Ice Shelf
Totten Gl.
Budd Coast
Knox
Bunger Oasis
0 100 200 300 400 mi.
TIME Map by R.M. Chapin, Jr.

I enrolled in the fall semester at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ in September 1954 after a hitch in the U.S. Navy during the Korean War. I had no idea what major course of study I would pursue. I chose geography being influenced by my meteorological training in the Navy and my Norwegian sea-faring heritage passed down from my grand parents out of Grimstad and Kristiansand, Norway. I caught a glimpse of some of the world through naval sea duty and decided to learn more. I took as many earth science courses I could: geology, climatology, meteorology, geomorphology, cartography, etc. During my junior year our professor posted a memo distributed to universities throughout the country asking for volunteers to apply for the Antarctic phase of the International Geophysical Year (IGY) program 1957-58. Why not? My interest was piqued so I went for it. A few months later I received a telegram to report to the National Weather Bureau (part of NOAA today). I was accepted as a meteorological aide specializing in RAWINSONDE operations. After my arrival in Washington, DC I was informed that I was selected with 17 other souls to spend a year at the Amundsen- Scott IGY South Pole Station, 180^{o} S. Latitude.

I WAS OVERWHELMED!



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WESTERN UNION
TELEGRAM
W. P. MARSHALL, PRESIDENT

1201

SYMBOLS
DL=Day Letter
NL=Night Letter
LT=International Letter Telegram

The filing time shown in the date line on domestic telegrams is STANDARD TIME at point of origin. Time of receipt is STANDARD TIME at point of destination

PA746

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P WA004 GOVT NL PD=WUX WASHINGTON DC 10= 1957 JUL 10 PM 10 55

ARTHUR E JORGENSEN=

628 WALNOT ST ROSSELLE NJER=

WillCall ER-736A

THIS CONSTITUTES FORMAL OFFER OF GS-7 METEOROLOGICAL AID POSITION IN ANTARCTICA. IF ACCEPTABLE NECESSARY THAT YOU ENTER ON DUTY IN WASHINGTON DC AS SOON AS PRACTICABLE BUT NOT LATER THAN JULY 22. RAWINSONDE OPERATOR SCHOOL SCHEDULED TO OPEN AT COLUMBIA MO ON AUGUST 5. PLEASE ADVISE BY TELEGRAM WHETHER YOU ACCEPT THIS OFFER AND IF SO THE DATE YOU PLAN TO ENTER ON DUTY:

Many past explorers had attempted to reach the South Pole. On December 14,1911 a Norwegian party, led by Roald Amundsen were the only ones to do so overland and live and return to tell about it. The British, Scott party arrived at the pole on January 17, 1912 but failed to return alive. Since then it has been a quest for mankind. Rear Admiral Richard E. Byrd flew over the pole on November 29, 1929 but the next to set foot on the pole was Rear Admiral George Dufek who landed at the pole in 1956.

The mission of Admiral Dufek was gargantuan. He was to head up the Navy's Operation Deep Freeze with Navy's Task Force 43 to perform the task of building and maintaining the scientific stations on the Antarctic continent and providing a means to supply and support the scientific personnel assigned to each station. The logistic hub was McMurdo Station on the Ross Ice Shelf. This all had to be done under the severest conditions by the beginning of the IGY-1957. He and his Seabees did a magnificent job.

Admiral Richard Byrd, then 68 years old was given the honorary title of Officer in Charge, US Antarctic Programs. He saw to it that Paul Siple would be the Civilian Scientific Leader of the South Pole Station. This assignment for Siple would be his 5th extended trip to the Antarctic, the first with Byrd in 1929 at Little America. He was an 18 year old Eagle Scout at the time. He performed so admirably that Byrd chose him twice more for his expeditions to the ice: 1933-35 and 1939-41. He went off again in 1946-47 as an Army observer to the Navy's training exercise, Operation High Jump. In between his jaunts to the Antarctic he acquired his degrees in geography and married his wonderful wife, Ruth. Ruth Siple became a stalwart and driving force in the creation and continuation of the Antarctic Society of which I am a proud member.

Paul Siple and his team of 17 men had the mission at the South Pole in 1957 to maintain the integrity of the installation of the scientific instrumentation and equipment, get it all running smoothly for the first winter, and ensure it would be ready for us to operate nine months later.

To paraphrase Paul Siple:
All Antarctic heroes came before us; we were here to perform research tasks under severe conditions. What was I getting myself into? Antarctica!

Antarctica is a continent of approximately 5,000,000 square miles, roughly the size of Mexico and the U.S. combined. The central area, 750 miles wide, is the South Polar Plateau rising to as high as 2 miles. This is where the meridians converge at the South Pole. Unlike the North Pole that is on the frozen surface of the Arctic Ocean, the South Pole is 9,300 feet above sea level. About 8300 feet of this is an ice sheet created by ice crystals that fell through millennia at the rate of only about an inch a year. The texture of the surface is sand-like and dry. Although the ice in Antarctica is estimated to hold 75% to 95% of the world's fresh water in solid state, it is the driest continent in the world. The great weight of all this ice creates glaciers spilling down towards the ocean and winding up as huge icebergs. Frigid air also spills off the plateau toward the warmer ocean resulting in the fiercest blizzardly weather on earth. Wind gusts have been recorded as high as 200 mph. Except for coastal areas, the continent is lifeless.

During our first week in Washington, DC we were sent to Bethesda Naval Hospital for physical and psychological exams. One half day consisted of a physical another two days spent on psychological evaluation: endless true false, multiple choice, and Rohrshack tests. This all culminated in a sit-down interview with a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst designed, it seemed, to provoke and anger in order to evaluate your responses------- I was sure I had failed. Obviously I did not, along with the rest our small group we apparently passed, except for one. I felt very sad for him being a career man for the Weather Bureau and whose friends and relatives had already thrown him a going away party.

Our next stop was Davisville, RI. Along with a larger group of scientists and observers being sent to other polar stations in the Antarctic we convened at a U.S. Naval station for indoctrination in survival in the frigid polar environment we would be facing. This consisted of the daily living habits we would form along with the proper use of the clothing issued to us. The clothing was developed at the U.S. Army's Cold Region Laboratories in Natick, MA, along with clothing developed by private companies. The issue consisted of long waffle cotton underwear, wool shirts and trousers, socks and boot liners, vests, outer parkas, leggings, gloves, and footwear. All of us at the meeting were given a choice of attire to wear (I don't think the support team had a choice). We were guinea pigs in a real life experiment since not too many people had endured a year long period in the lowest temperatures recorded world wide to date. Besides the upper body gear issued, the footwear and gloves were the most important.

I selected the private labeled outer parka and vest. (*I wore my red vest every day and was tagged with the nickname* ***Red Jacket***). These were bright red in color made by Eddie Bauer, a much smaller company then than what they have become today.

The footwear options consisted of army "bunny boots" which were over sized white combat boots, rubber inflatable thermal boots, and Eskimo-style mukluks with felt liners. After arrival at the South Pole Station I opted for the Eskimo mukluks through trial and error, the "bunny boots" were not warm enough, the thermal boots became like cement blocks at extreme low temperatures, the mukluks were the most flexible and warmest for me. Everyone had his own preferences.

In addition to the practical part of these sessions we were treated with talks from past polar explorers along with present leaders of the U.S. Antarctic Program of the IGY and the National Academy of Science. They presented inspiring talks of present and future plans for Antarctic research. Sir Hubert Wilkens, a distinguished aviator and historical figure by being the first to fly over Antarctica in 1928, gave a

most interesting and impressive account of his experiences in a very down to earth manner. Our time spent in Davisville was very well worth it by inciting inspiration as well as equipping us both physically and mentally for our upcoming challenge.

Our next and last stop after Davisville, prior to departure, was to a weather station in Colombia, MO. This group was all assigned to the meteorological phase of the IGY program for study in both the Arctic and Antarctic polar region stations. We were there to hone our skills at Rawinsonde data gathering. This method of recording consisted of sending an electronic device aloft with large, helium filled, balloons (more on this later) that transmitted temperature, pressure, altitude, wind speed, and direction to on ground receivers at our stations for the duration of the flight. This would take hours before the balloons would expand and explode sending the sondes who knows where on earth. I was at an advantage since I had already been trained in this procedure while in the U.S. Navy. Most men present had no experience or training in this technique so for me it was a refresher course that soon became very boring. I thought that this six-week course would never end. Most men caught on quickly and they too became bored. We left Columbia a week earlier than scheduled after learning we were to be dispatched to our stations in two weeks. We all wanted to go to our homes to arrange our affairs and say our good-byes.

A party was arranged during my home leave to celebrate the engagement of Joan Cerreta, my wife to be, and me. We planned to marry after my return. Joan's family and friends did a wonderful job arranging this and it was a blast. Our families and friends were all there so it gave me the opportunity to say my good-byes. My closest buddies presented me with a 35mm camera, instructing me to take lots of pictures. I was grateful since I hadn't thought to include this in my duffel bags. I took hundreds of exposures while there, a few of which are sprinkled through out this writing. In my reviews of these slides to reflect my South Pole experience, many memories came to mind that, otherwise, would have been lost. Shortly thereafter, Joan drove me to Washington, DC for my departure. I said my farewell with a heavy heart but euphoric anticipation of what was lying ahead.

We took off from Anacostia Naval Air Station in a prop-driven military aircraft fitted out for personnel transportation. Destination-Christchurch, New Zealand.
The flight was uneventful except for layover and refueling stops. The first was a military base outside San Francisco. We were put up for the night in B.O.Q. and departed early the next morning. Next was another overnight in Honolulu, but this time we were able to go into the city and enjoy a fine dinner. A veteran Antarctic traveler told us that this would be the last fine meal we would enjoy for a year. We took off early the next morning then made a very brief refueling stop at Kanton Island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. A few hours later we continued on to the next refueling stop at Fiji Island. Our stay was longer this time and we were able to go by bus through Suva, it's Capital City, to a hotel and restaurant for a wonderful lunch. I made a mental note to add Fiji to my places that I some day wanted to

return to after driving through this lush and vibrantly colorful place. OH WELL. Next and last stop before landing on the ice was Christchurch, New Zealand. The city and its environs looked so green from the air and it turned out to be the case on the ground. Several of us were put up in a small hotel a few blocks from city center. Many others who arrived earlier were in quarters throughout the town.

It had been a whirlwind of activity since I was admitted to the program without much time between events and I thought this would be the same and we would be on our way to Antarctica in just a few days. Five or six weeks later, however, our small group assigned to the pole station was still here. As it turned out there were scores of people waiting for departure, not to mention weather conditions around and on the continent. The others were scientific personnel assigned to other stations for wintering over and many scientists here only for the summer months to perform their research and experiments while the sun was still up. They were from a wide variety of fields: glaciology, biology, seismology, climatology, etc. all heading to McMurdo Station the hub of most Antarctic transportation. Then they were shuttled to where ever they were conducting their studies. They had to go first since their time was limited.

We soon settled in to our routine of waiting. We had no “official” duties except checking in at the IGY office in the city every day to learn what our status on the list for departure was and to pick up mail. We enjoyed the great hospitality of the New Zealenders while “enduring” this delay. They were fantastic hosts who loved the “Yanks”. Many U.S. military had passed through their country during W.W.II to thwart the Japanese from over running their part of the world. They also whole-heartedly supported the IGY expedition since they have a heritage of being the springboard for many historic Antarctic expeditions, most notably that of Sir Robert Falcon Scott in the early 1900’s. Monuments to his and other expeditions are erected in Christchurch and it’s nearby seaport, Port Lytleton.

We didn’t want to miss our take-off slot so we couldn’t stray far from Christchurch. I would have loved to have traveled to the North Island and visit Auckland but didn’t want to risk any overnights just to indulge my curiosity. There was plenty to take in around the area of Christchurch and the rest of the South Island. It was their spring and everything was in bloom, especially the botanical gardens on the city’s outskirts. I found the city very lovely and very British. The Kiwis boasted the city to be the most like England outside Great Britain.

The people were very hospitable. We were invited to their homes for dinners and taken on motor day trips to the countryside and farmlands. I have never seen so many sheep in one place in my life. Sheep are a major part of their export economy and domestic diets. I actually got to like mutton. I was told that sheep outnumbered New Zealand’s human population and I believe it.

I cannot leave this part of my rambling without mentioning the pubs. The law required most businesses to be closed by 5:00 PM and all public pubs closed at 6:00 PM. The flurry of activity in these establishments during this one-hour would put any college fraternity binge-drinking party to shame. It was, however, very merry and congenial. I did however witness a serious and heated argument between two sheep shearers contesting the outcome of a previous sheep-shearing contest over which one of them had won. These events are apparently common in their circles. I guess like our rodeos. I found this dedication to their profession to be delightfully inspiring. The serving of the beer was unique in that it was delivered to your glass via a garden hose attached to their reservoir of vats a floor below. This supply was replenished by what reminded me of a gas truck delivering to stations throughout the U.S. A cap in the sidewalk outside was removed and a nozzle from the truck was stuck in to deliver the beer to the reservoir vats below. Needless to say the end product directly from the vats below was warm beer (I actually got to like warm beer). The hotels and private clubs got around this curfew through guest registration and private memberships.

We were finally informed of immediate departure after five or six weeks and were more than ready to hit the ICE. Approaching McMurdo from the air was a sight I had never seen before. So much white. So much ice. So much activity. I could easily see the reason for the long delay in New Zealand. The landing site was a single strip smoothed out over the Ross Ice Shelf able to handle a limited number of aircraft that deliver only small amounts of supplies and personnel at a time. Priority-the essence of our delay was obvious.
On the ground was a beehive of activity. Tracked vehicles scurrying about moving ice and snow, loading supplies of fuel barrels, containers of food, building materials, etc. for future air-drop deliveries to interior stations far inland from the coast.

There were also smaller ski-equipped planes (DC-3s, P2-Vs.) to handle delivery of personnel and sensitive equipment for more “gentle” transport to their destinations.

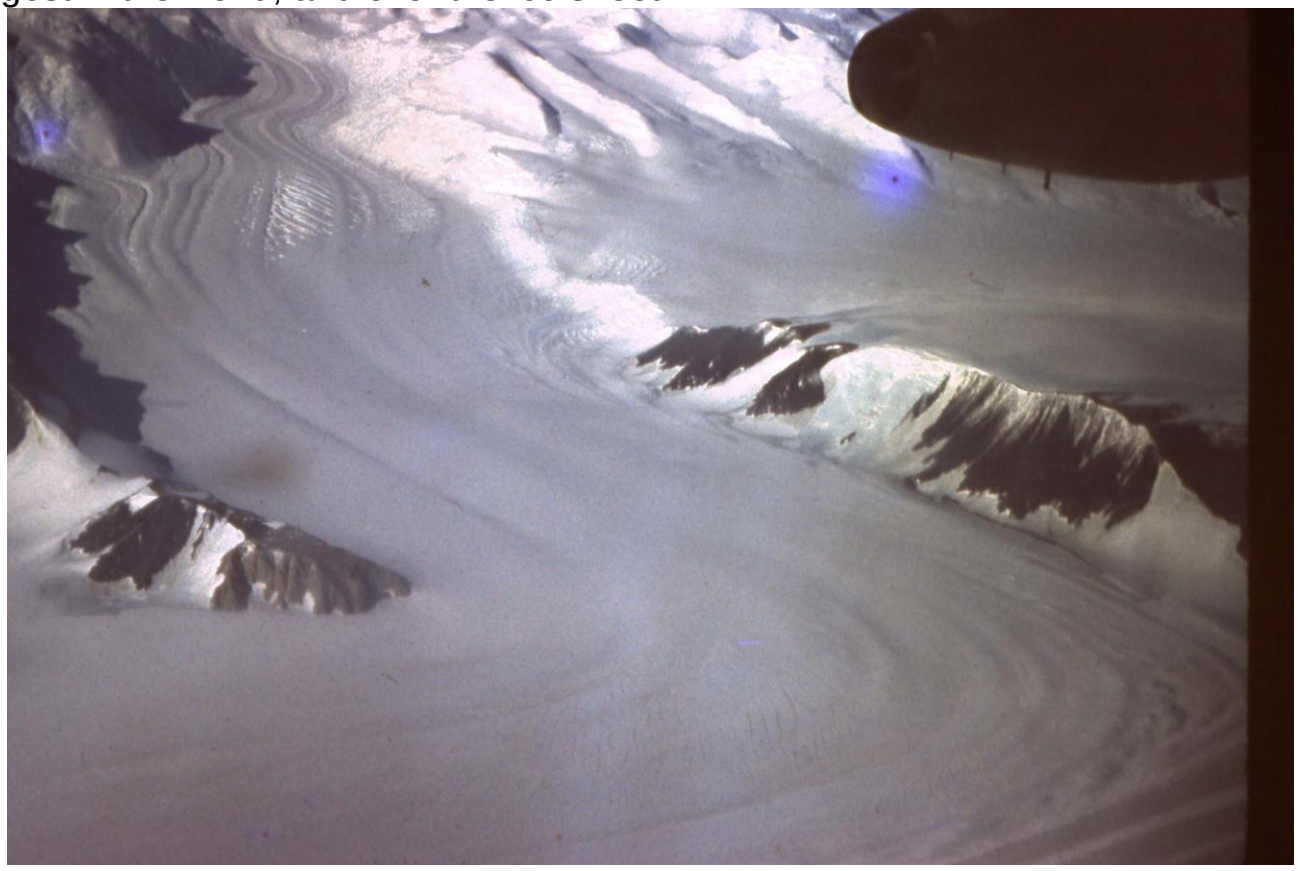
Once on the ice, after our assignment to temporary quarters, I walked around to get my bearings and check out the neighborhood. I spotted a small tanker frozen in place named USS Nespelen. It was being used to store aviation gasoline. I realized quickly that I had been aboard this vessel four years earlier. While in the navy I was briefly assigned to the fleet weather center in Norfolk, VA and my childhood buddy, Bill Kane was assigned to this ship. It had just returned to Norfolk from the Mediterranean and I had visited him aboard. We get together whenever we can and still reminisce about it to this day.

Jim Burnham also assigned to the pole station, and I hiked a short distance to New Zealand's Scott Station. The men were, as expected, very hospitable especially after hearing we were headed to the South Pole and invited us to lunch. This was to be the jumping off spot for Sir Edmund Hillary and a small party of four to mark a trail and lay supplies for the British Trans Antarctic Expedition (TAE) led by Sir Vivian Fuchs from the Shackelton Base on the opposite side of Antarctica. The TAE would end up here after passing through the South Pole Station.

On our way back to McMurdo from Scott Base we noticed several large seals asleep on the ice shelf. We warily approached and they never flinched. I mistakenly forgot my camera for there was a moment that I would love to have captured. Jim Burnham straddled one of these seals as if it was a rodeo horse. The animal must have been in such a deep sleep for it didn't budge. We also took short hikes onto the continent. We came upon rocks with lichens and moss on their surface---the only growth in Antarctica. Additionally, we saw many miles away through crystal clear atmosphere to the active volcano Mt. Erebus.

We departed for the pole after a short but eventful stay at McMurdo. This truly was a unique and exciting introduction to Antarctica.

We took off in a ski-equipped navy P2-V and flew up the Beardmore Glacier, the largest in the world, and over the ice sheet.



The Beardmore is the world's largest glacier dumping ice to the sea from the South Polar Plateau at a rate of just a few feet a day. This river of ice is an awesome sight from the air.

We arrived over the South Pole Station but before landing, the plane circled the base and we could see supplies and equipment scattered around the shelters in unceremonious fashion with men and machines moving these items from here to there sorting out their latest air-drop.

Apart from this scene of activity was a ring of empty barrels surrounding flagpoles flying the flag of the United States of America. My heart pounded and my mind thought I was viewing the Holy Grail of Antarctic exploration, a shrine of past explorer's heroism and of later men's perseverance and modern technology.

It was November 20, 1957 when I stepped off the plane with Palle Mogensen, DeeWitt Baulch, and Jim Burnham. Kirby Hansen, leader of the meteorological team and Paul Siple the station leader of renown (mentioned earlier) greeted us whom was to be replaced by Palle Mogensen. As soon as I stepped onto the ice my legs wobbled and I felt very light-headed. I thought, at first, this was emotion but soon realized it was due to the fact that I was standing 9,300 feet above sea level. It took me about a day to acclimatize to the altitude and was told this was a common reaction.

Kirby Hansen took me on a tour of the station, my home away from home for the next year. It consisted of six rectangular prefabricated buildings placed in a row with the hydrogen making balloon shack at the farthest end.
A chicken wired tunnel supporting discarded parachutes from previous supply airdrops connected them. The other end of the building housed the mess hall, radio shack, and meteorology station. The mess hall portion was the common social and recreation area. The buildings in between housed sleeping quarters, toilet facilities, garage, generator and ice melter for our water supply, and a science building where climatology, astronomy, glaciology, and astrophysics research took place. Lt. Vernon Houk, MD and a medical facility were also housed in the science area. The connecting unheated tunnel was also used as a storage area for food supplies and barrels containing fuel oil and diesel fuel. The tunnel was the only interior access from building to building since the ice crystals and blowing snow accumulation was up to the roof.
The snow mine entrance was off the tunnel and our source for the ice melter but the primary reason for the shaft was data gathering for the glaciologist Mario Giovinetto.

Snow Mine Work Detail

Snow Collection Detail

The snow mine was soon closed as a source for ice melting for safety reasons. We retrieved our ice and snow from the outside surface from then on. The mine was still operational for Mario's glaciology research.

I was introduced to the regimen and routine of the meteorology duties after my orientation of the base. There were four of us who comprised the largest contingent at the station because our duties required around the clock, 24 hour, 7 days a week data collection. Our group included Kirby Hansen, Steve "Zeke" Fazekas, DeeWitt Baulch and me. We were divided into pairs; each pair worked 12-hour shifts, 7days a week making hydrogen and sent a balloon aloft with its rawinsonde instrument. We also took hourly outside weather observations. This data was all recorded and universally encoded then transmitted from the Navy radio shack across the hall. I was glad that we were in the same building as the mess hall and the coffee urn which I partook of often.

More and more summer visitors arrived and by Thanksgiving, November 28th there were 32 people sitting down for dinner.

In the month of November a weasel (tracked motor vehicle) and a D-2 Caterpillar tractor were airdropped from globemasters. Earlier in the month the first D-2 was airdropped but it streamed in parachutes not opening. It free fell to the surface leaving a 45 foot deep crater, its still there. Twenty days later a replacement arrived and landed successfully intact. These vehicles are essential in clearing snow and maintaining the landing area for planes during the summer months.

An air of excitement prevailed at the station for the next two months. Summer scientists came and left after completing their research. Some congressmen and dignitaries arrive and stayed just long enough to have their pictures taken at the South Pole. Several news correspondents from the U.S. and Europe descended upon us because of the scheduled stop here in January by the British Trans-Antarctic Expedition led by Sir Vivian Fuchs and the news that Sir Edmund Hillary was going to attempt an unscheduled run to the pole after placing his last cache of supplies for Fuchs. Some of them dubbed this “a second race to the pole” referring to the Ammundson-Scott expeditions as the first. This was hogwash. Anything for a story even if it isn’t the case.

I got to meet, share a meal, have coffee and an occasional beer with our visitors during what was left of our summer. I thought nothing of it at the time. However, in retrospect, I realized how fortunate I was to have the opportunity to meet, talk with and listen to these outstanding men. Some of whom to the world are giants in their respective fields: Dr. Paul Siple, Sir Edmund Hillary, Admiral George Dufek, Sir Vivian Fuchs and their crews of men on their teams. Wow!

On December 5, 1957 Admiral Dufek arrived with 12 other people including Father Linehan, a Jesuit priest who was a professor of geology at Boston College. He took seismic soundings from the crater left by the D-2 Caterpillar stream-in. His soundings showed that we were sitting 9300 feet above sea level and 8297 feet of that was ice. He also said mass and became the first Roman Catholic priest to do so at both the North Pole and the South Pole.

Paul Dalrymple also arrived with this group on December 5th from Little America Station on the coast. He had just wintered over there and had volunteered to come directly here to start up a microclimatology program and remain for another winter. Everyone thought he was nuts to volunteer for a second year in a row wintering over. I was happy he did because he became my best friend at the pole and remains a good friend today.

Also arriving was Blizzard, a Siberian husky born at McMurdo station the past year. He became our beloved mascot.

On December 15th the United Nations flag was raised at the South Pole along side the U.S. flag. This required a ceremony with more visitors and newsmen attending.

Emergency Hut

Before the last winter had set in the Navy Seabees erected a Jamesway Quonset hut as an emergency shelter. This was necessary should our "permanent" station be destroyed by fire, which would be impossible to extinguish for lack of melted ice to subdue such a tragedy. The shelter was placed at a distance from the main base and was provided with enough cots and sleeping bags for the wintering over party. It was equipped with medical supplies, a heater, stove, radio, and enough food and fuel stored outside to sustain us for a year since in 1957-58 it was impossible for any air rescue here during the winter months.

Making Hydrogen

The largest danger was an explosion at the balloon shack. This early in the South Pole Station establishment it was not logistically feasible to air drop enough helium bottles to inflate our balloons for the duration.

We, therefore, had to make hydrogen. Combining caustic soda (lye), aluminum chips, and water through a port on the side of a thick vat did this. When a gauge indicated the right pressure, we opened it up through a nozzle into a balloon, which would be sent aloft carrying the rawinsonde instrument through a trap door in the roof. Present day OSHA would have a field day with this operation. Needless to remind how ignitable hydrogen is and therefore the requirement of an emergency shelter to see us through the winter. During the summer months the shelter was used to house our visitors since ski equipped aircraft could evacuate us should a catastrophe occur.

On December 21st the summer solstice marked the halfway point of daylight. The sun was at the highest elevation rolling around at 23^{o} and 26' above the horizon. Four days later we celebrated Christmas with a wonderful meal topped off with whiskey and champagne.

During December mail was arriving and my Mom sent me a Norwegian flag she got from the United Nations building in New York City.

I raised it at the South Pole. It was the second Norwegian flag to fly there since Roald Amundsen, the first man to step there, raised his on December 14, 1911. I felt honored and excited to do this. Mine was not an historic moment of significance but because of my Norwegian heritage it meant much to me and hopefully the rest of my present and future family. The flag presently rests on my son Eric's den wall in Hollywood, Florida.

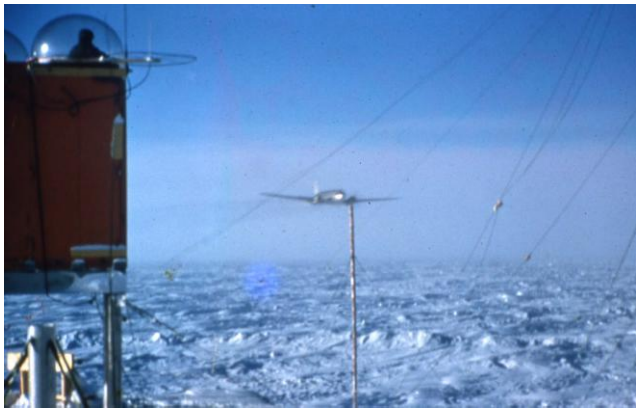
Hillary Arriving

On January 4, 1958 Sir Edmund Hillary and his crew of four arrived at the South Pole by jury-rigged Ferguson tractor. Between them they had a total of only 26 gallons of fuel left in their tanks. There were, of course, newsmen present snapping pictures frantically. He stopped at the outer perimeter of barrels encircling the pole and was asked to walk over to the flags at the pole for more pictures. His response was "come off it yank, I want a cup of coffee" and hastily made his way to our mess hall.

This was so typical of Hillary when remembering how low-keyed he was after being the first man to ever reach the summit of Mount Everest four years earlier.

Sir Edmund Hillary and Crew at the South Pole

A Baseball game was staged during January. It was the southern most baseball game, if you want to call it that, ever played. Sastrugi, wind formed sculptures in the ice, marked the bases and the rules were kind of made up along the way. Ed Hillary was with us and even participated with one pitch-----cricket style. I don't think it lasted more than one inning. Try running bases wearing mukluks in temperatures well below zero. So I guess Antarctica won.



A Russian plane flew very low over our base sometime in January. It was from their IGY base at Vostok in the middle of the continent. I was on duty at the time and provided weather data to the pilot by radio. A week or two later, Russian scientists and the plane's pilot arrived on one of our Navy ski planes just for a visit. The pilot thanked me for the weather info and they stayed long enough to join us for a meal. We had a very congenial time. Since junior high school in the late 1940's I was aware of the cold war between the U.S.A. and the USSR. This brief get together between us at the pole and the Russian scientists pointed up the cooperation of all participating nations

active during the IGY program regardless of politics. The International Geophysical Year was a precursor of what was to be decided at a later date.

The last and most exciting event before the lights went out for the summer was the arrival of the British Trans Antarctic Expedition led by Sir Vivian “Bunny” Fuchs. Their modes of transportation were sno-cats and two dog sled teams. The latter used for scouting and blazing a trail around many crevasses leading up to the polar plateau from Shackelton Station on the Weddel Sea, 800 miles away.

On January 20, 1958 Fuchs and expedition arrived. He was met by Sir Edmund Hillary, Admiral Dufek, Palle Mogensen, and of course, the press.

Admiral Dufek, Sir Edmund Hillary, Sir Vivian Fuchs

They were a tired, cold, and hungry group including their dogs.

All stops were pulled out in offering them traditional polar hospitality. This was especially true with our incredible miracle chef Louis DeWit. They stayed with us four days for recuperation and equipment repair. It was an exciting four days, almost like a party, getting to know and socialize with this intrepid group of men. Some who were with Hillary on the Mt. Everest assault. Ken Blaiklock was one of the dog sled leaders I got to chat with a lot and watch him feed his dogs. They were not looking like the friendly well tended pets that we are used to seeing, but instead they looked bedraggled, miserable, and hungry. After all, they had just worked extremely hard pulling a well-loaded sled for 800 miles in extreme conditions. The dogs were in staked out positions while Ken Blaiklock fed them some kind of

blubber. They were staked out to prevent fights over the food. I watched Ken break up one fight with a bop on the nose of one dog with his heavy mitten. They ceased immediately, knowing their master and feeder.

The Dogs

Our mascot, Blizzard, tried to playfully make friends with these working dogs but was fiercely rejected. He learned his lesson and stayed clear from then on. Unbeknownst to the dog teams, their work was over and they would be flown out. The last 800 miles of the expedition was already scouted and staked out by Hillary showing the way to their destination---New Zealand's Scott Base.

During one of my conversations with Ken Blaiklock, I offered him a cigarette that he readily accepted. After a while I realized he had none and he enjoyed a smoke, so I fetched a carton of Lucky Strikes from my stash and gave it to him. He wanted to repay me but I said it wasn't necessary.

He got up, went outside, and returned with his homemade pennant from the British County he was from and gave it to me. It had flown on his sled all the way to the South Pole. It was very faded, and weather worn, but I still have and cherish it as a momento from that moment.

The highlight of the TAE visit was a feast prepared by wizard chef DeWit complete with a cake he baked and decorated with a map of Antarctica honoring Fuchs and the rest of the TAE. We partied after some speeches. But on January 24th the party was over and they went on their way, not to arrive at Scott Base until March 5, 1958.

Two days later, January 26th, the last ski plane took off not to return until October. Along with the last of our summer visitors the TAE sled dogs were loaded aboard with the exception of one that avoided capture and for days he roamed around outside living off our garbage dumpsite. He was finally coerced to come inside by Paul Dalrymple who adopted and named him Beauty (which he wasn't). Beauty spent most of his time under Paul's desk and always in his company not trusting anyone else.

A final airdrop was scheduled the next week to deliver some essential parts and more supplies. But, after take off from McMurdo, the flight was diverted to New Zealand because the ice runway at McMurdo broke off and floated out to sea. A phenomenon occurring at the end of every Antarctic summer. The days of hosting the summer visitors who were engaged in the most interesting endeavors and research were over and we were finally left by ourselves. For the next eight months we would be about as alone as you can get on earth. The ten civilians among us settled into our routines of scientific data collection. The eight naval support personnel had the task of maintaining and keeping the base up and running. Survival chores had to be performed on a daily basis besides our individual missions. These ranged from snow collection for water consumption to mess cook duty in the galley. For this we were divided into 3 teams of 6 men each working on these chores every third day. The reality of our situation set in but we were too busy to lament any possibilities of disaster occurring. The U.S. Navy had provided us with much material for recreation during the long winter ahead of us: movies, books, music records, playing cards, etc. Besides a plentiful supply of beer, liquor was also provided but kept from us by the navy Dr. Houk to be broken out only on "special" occasions---Saturday Nights, Birthdays, and Holidays!

The Naval radio operators communicated daily with McMurdo Station relaying our scientific data mostly by Morse code and also audibly for official business only. Since there was no earth orbiting communication satellites in 1957-58 personal communication was limited to Ham Radio. Mail service had ceased for the next 8 months. Ham radio was sketchy at best relying on who was on the air at the other end and atmospheric blackout conditions. There was however a very dedicated station, K2KGJ located in Clark, NJ and manned by Jules Madey and his brother John. These men were GODSENDS.

This type of communication existed by raising a station's call letters and in turn being connected via a phone patch device and sent collect through telephone land lines to whomever. As easy as this sounds, it was just not available at our beckoned call for previously stated reasons.

Our summer was ending. Since dawn on September 21st the sun was orbiting 360° around us every 24 hours, never setting, until it reached it's highest point above the horizon (23° 26') on the solstice (December 21st). It was sinking ever so slightly each day since then until finally touching down upon the flat plateau. At this point, it rolled around the horizon like a bowling ball on fire until finally sinking on the autumnal equinox (March 21st).

During the summer we experienced the unique phenomenon of ice crystals, “diamond dust” formed in the crystal clear atmosphere. Almost invisible consisting of many tubular and geometric designs when observed under a microscope. These particles would refract the sunlight to create many rainbow visuals known as parhelion.

Another summer phenomenon was the white out. This occurred when light is trapped between an over cast sky and the white surface then bouncing back and forth in every direction leaving no shadows for reference. A man standing at a distance appears to be afloat in a bottle of milk.

The dark winter months also had treasures of visual phenomena. The aurora australis (southern lights) frequently occurred, flashing mostly green light shrouding the night sky in awesome fashion. There were also billions of bright stars shining through the crystal clear atmosphere. I had never seen so many stars in my life, even at sea in the middle of the Atlantic. Johnny Dawson, the aurora and air glow researcher had his work cut out for him.

I received very sad news concerning a personal tragedy in my family at the end of April. My sister Jean contacted me via ham radio to tell me her husband, Nick Conte, had died from a brain tumor. He was only 29 years old leaving behind his wife, and 4 children. It was difficult to fathom since he seemed perfectly healthy before my departure.

We had all settled in to our routines by now including our preferred methods of entertainment. We watched movies frequently, listened to music, read, played cards, etc. I started playing bridge with Dr. Houk, Palle Mogensen, and Paul Dalrymple (I wasn't very good at it). My favorite pastime was the many bull sessions with Paul Dalrymple. His experiences ranged from being a POW in a Nazi prison camp, observing weather from Mt. Washington and at sea in the Atlantic, to being here in the Antarctic for two consecutive years. He is a great friend and we've stayed in touch and met up several times over the years to hoist a few and reminisce. Kirby Hansen "qualified" as our Barber since he had practice on his children. Charlie Green played a keyboard for those who wanted to participate in Sunday services and just for some old-fashioned sing alongs. Stan Greenwood and crew operated the movie projector in the evenings while the rest of us kibitzed. Chef Lou Dewitt kept feeding us. All was well.

On June 19th the temperature broke the -100°F mark to -101.7°F. The coldest day of the year so far and I believe the coldest ever recorded on earth up to that time. Colder temperatures were reached later on at the Russian Station. The warmest day of the winter was –30.9°F on July 29th. The average temperature for the entire year was –55°F. In Polar Regions, it is traditional to celebrate the winter solstice (June21st in Antarctica) since that is when the sun reaches it's lowest point below the horizon and will start to slowly come up. We therefore had a good reason to celebrate with gusto. We donned the best apparel we brought with us. The Navy guys put on their dress blues and we civilians did the best we could. When I left Washington, DC it was hot and I was wearing a summer seersucker suit so that's what I wore. Of course we all had to still wear our cold weather footwear because the floors inside the buildings were below freezing. I guess I looked ridiculous wearing a summer suit and a pair of mukluks. You be the judge. The food was extra special, the liquor flowed, and the music was loud. A good time was had by all.

Thanks to the incessant daily routines, the remainder of the winter sped by and before we knew it the time had arrived when we were all watching the horizon for the first glimpse of light. This came in late August and the first edge of the sun was sighted by Johnny Dawson from his astronomical dome perch atop the science building on September 16th. The sun finally rose on schedule on September 21st (the equinox).

Blizzard sees his first sunrise.

Sunrise September 21st

It was time to shovel out and widen the accesses to the station so the dozer could do its job. The first air drop was on October 8th, but no mail. Mail came a day later, tons of it, mostly philatelic.

October 12th was one of our "special" holidays-Columbus Day. I'll never forget it. I drank scotch whiskey over very special ice that Mario Giovinetto retrieved out of the depths of the snow mine from the year **1492**. It was also the last celebration we would have before the summer visitors and our replacements arrived.

Sastrugi, which are anvil shaped, wind created ice features, needed to be dozed down to make our runway ski plane friendly. Although we received many airdrops, the first plane didn't land until mid-November. Our relief personnel trickled in but not all at once. The new men were quickly indoctrinated as they arrived so no beat would be missed in data collection.

A few days after sitting down for my second Thanksgiving feast at the South Pole I boarded a plane for McMurdo Station and we blasted off with help of JATO (jet assisted take off) bottles strapped to the fuselage of a P2-V.

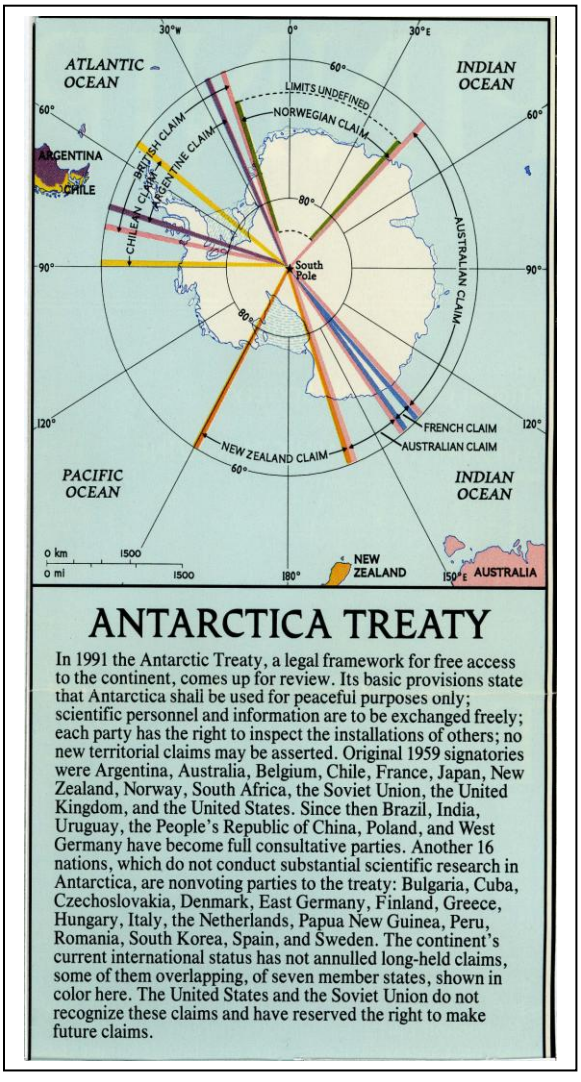
I WAS ON MY WAY HOME!

At McMurdo Sound we boarded a military aircraft heading for Christchurch, New Zealand carrying many men. Included, was Admiral Dufek. When we landed in Christchurch there was a throng of New Zealanders on the tarmac to greet us. The Admiral summoned DeeWitt Baulch and me (I guess because we were the only ones on board from the South Pole Station) to join him on departing the plane. We were the subjects of a photo-op moment with the Admiral at the top of the plane's stairway. I was shocked by the New Zealander's reception. We were treated like returning heroes. It would be a different story in the U.S. Not too many people, except for the scientific community, were aware of the Antarctic Program of the IGY. No 24/7 news networks existed in 1957-58 and the media had other items of importance to report to the general public, e.g. the economy, the cold war, presidential campaign, Cuba, and our response to Sputnik to name a few.

My visit to New Zealand this time was in whirlwind mode unlike my last stay. The next day we boarded a plane and retraced our route back to the U.S. I was not ready to go home as much as I wanted to see my loved ones; I had to catch my breath. DeeWitt Baulch and I did this by disembarking from the military aircraft in San Francisco before it took off for the final leg to Washington, DC. We taxied to the St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco after phoning in for reservations.

Lacking a professional haircut in a year and wearing wrinkled clothes, with our duffel bags we waltzed through the lobby to the reservation desk looking like a couple of homeless people straight through a crowd of gowned debutantes and tuxedoed escorts in attendance for the local debutante coming out ball. We received many stares and the management ran over, I was sure to throw us out, but after explaining our case he hurriedly checked us in and told us to get up to our rooms ASAP.

The next morning I arose early, showered, and went to find a barbershop. I then went to Brooks Brothers and ordered a suit to be altered by early afternoon along with everything that goes with an Ivy League looking suit. I was able to do all this since my Mother, who was my power of attorney, wired me money that had been deposited in my account as my salary since leaving the States. I felt great after getting dressed up and didn't look too bad either. DeeWitt Baulch had already caught a flight back to his home in Kentucky so I went alone for cocktails and dinner followed by a visit to the Top of The Mark Lounge in the Mark Hopkins Hotel. I did this because I thought it was pretty cool having seen it in a Hollywood war movie about Navy aviators heading to the Pacific. I had caught my breath and was ready to return home which I did the following day.



What did all this mean? To the U.S.A. and the world the International Geophysical Year and its Antarctic Program was a huge success. The groundwork was laid for all future scientific endeavors. The data collected at the South Pole Station and others was just a scratch on the surface of what would be learned. Our station and many others are still operating year-round with many more disciplines of science there, using cutting edge, state of the art equipment and methods that weren't even dreamt about back in 1957-58. Some people say the greatest accomplishment of the IGY was geo-political in that it succeeded in creating a level of cooperation between all participating nations and this paved the way for the signing of the Antarctica Treaty. What did all this mean to me? A day hasn't gone by since then when I haven't thought of that experience. It has had a profound influence on my outlook on life. I won't get into that now.

SKOL!

The Jorgensen Nunataks

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20550

March 12, 1968

Mr. Arthur E. Jorgensen
119 Orange Avenue
Cranford, New Jersey 07016

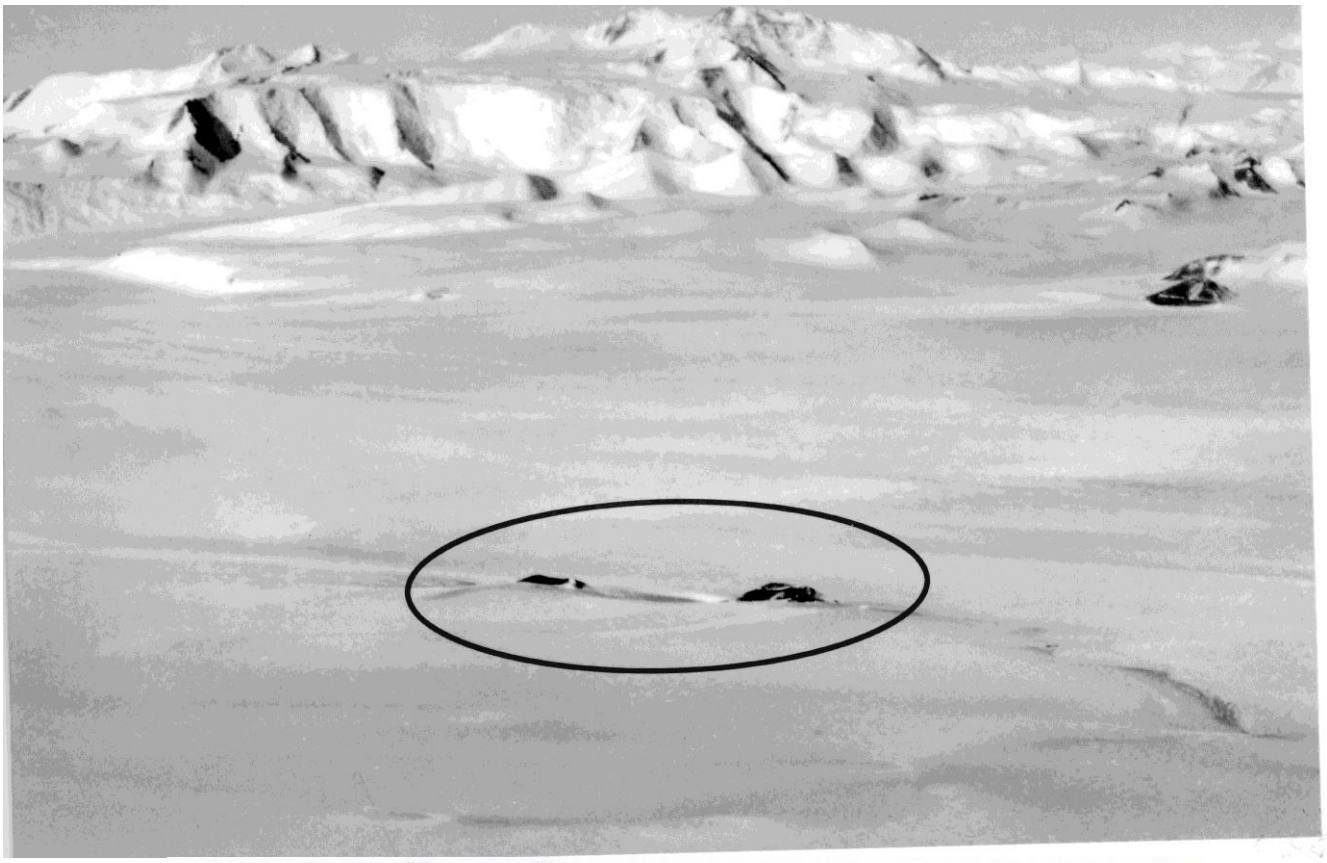
Dear Mr. Jorgensen:

It gives me a great deal of pleasure to inform you that the U.S. Board on Geographic Names has named in your honor the geographical feature Jorgensen Nunataks located at 83°43' S. latitude, 164°12' E. longitude, west of the Lennox-King Glacier in the Transantarctic Mountains, Antarctica.

Sincerely yours,

T. O. Jones

T. O. Jones
Division Director
Environmental Sciences

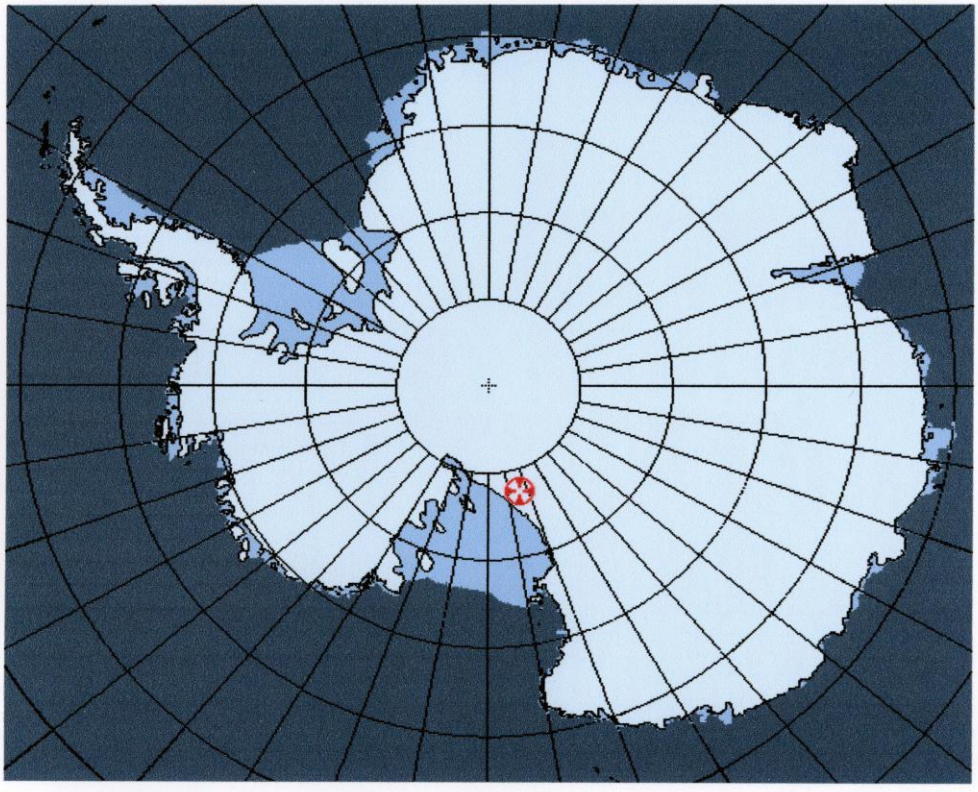


Jorgensen Nunataks

Location Type: nunataks

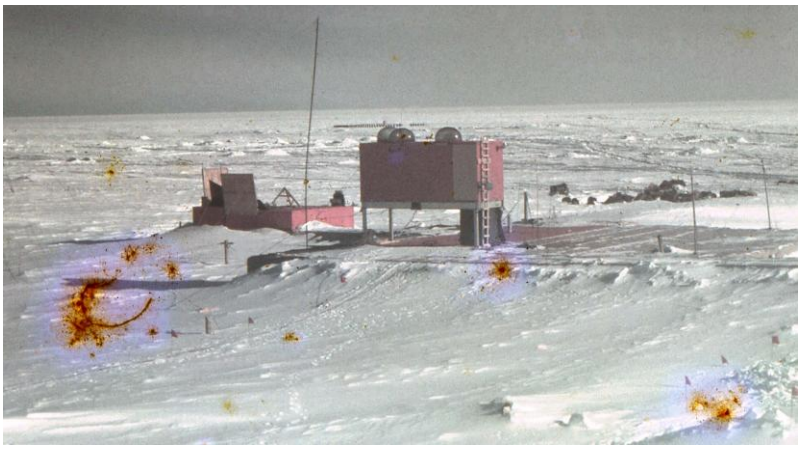
Position: 83°43′00″S, 164°12′00″E

Two rock nunataks, rising above the ice-covered ridge which descends eastward from Mount Picciotto, Queen Elizabeth Range. Named by US-ACAN for Arthur E. Jorgensen, USARP meteorologist at South Pole Station, winter 1958.

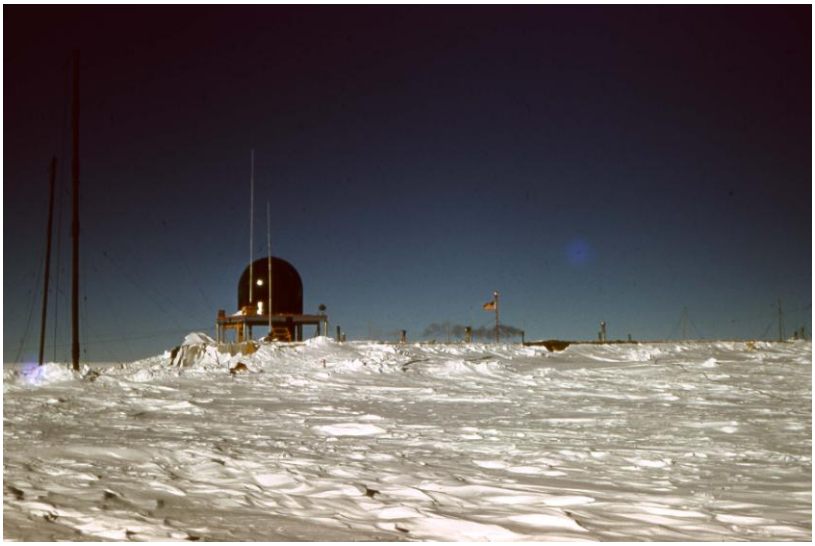


The Winter Over Crew:

Lt. Vernon N. Houk (Station Military commander)
RM1 Stanley C. Greenwood
RM1 John Hasty
ET1 Ron Mozetic
CE1 Donald E. Norman
CS1 Lewis B. Dewit
CM1 Gerald R. Dubois
UT1 Edward L. White
Palle Mogenson (Station Scientific Leader)
Paul Dalrymple
Kirby J. Hansen
James B. Burnham
Arthur E. Jorgensen
DeeWitt M. Baulch
John A. Dawson
Stephen P. Fazekas
Mario Giovinetto
Charles R. Greene
Blizzard (Station Mascot)



Base Camp



Weather Dome

Garage

CS1 Lewis B. Dewit

The Galley

Chef Dewit at work again

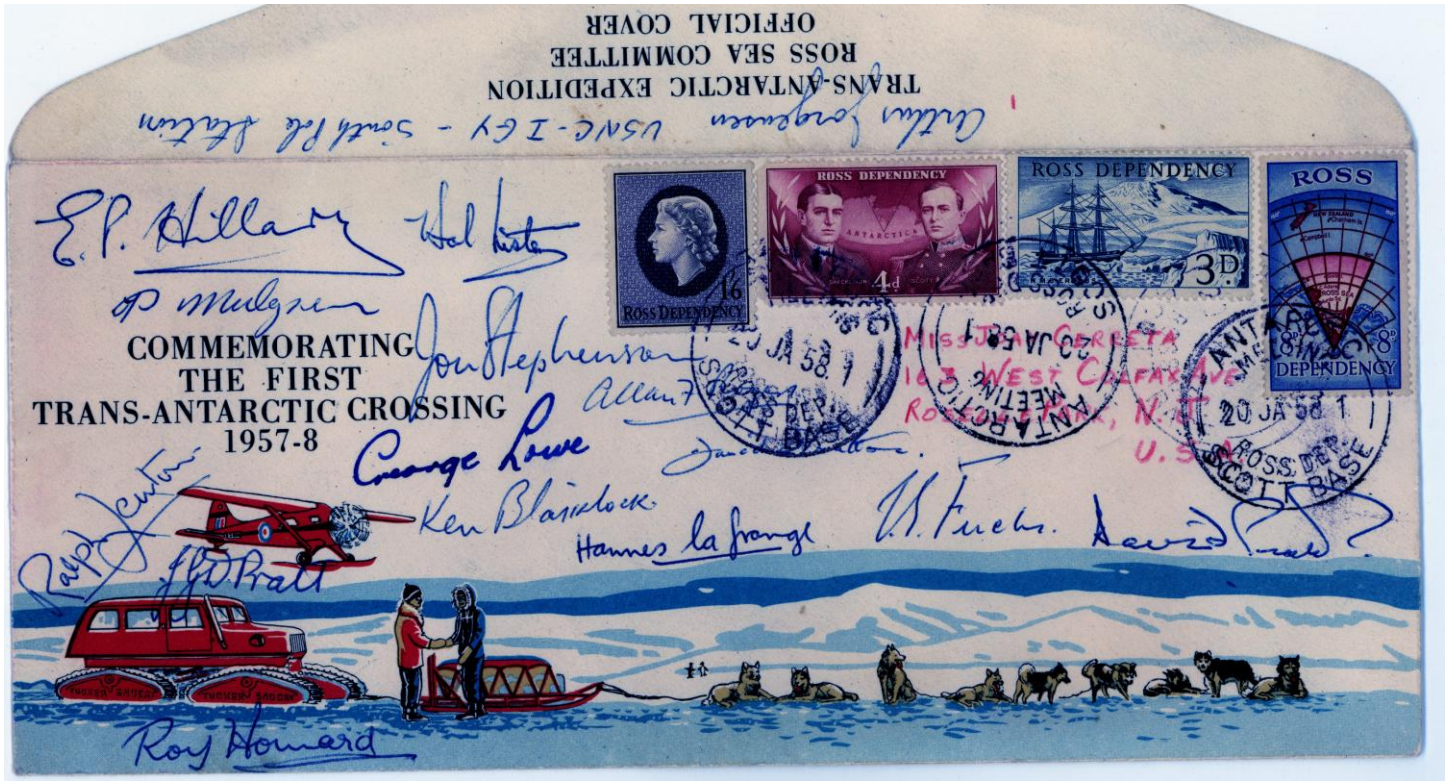
Mid-Winter Party

Decked Out for the Mid-Winter Party

Rawinsonde Weather Station (a sonde in hand)

South Pole Post Office

Our Diesel Generator



British Trans Antarctic Expedition Participants

Sir Vivian Fuchs, Geologist **(***First in Command***)**
David Stratton, Surveyor **(***Second in Command***)**
DR. L.G.C. Pugh, Human Physiology
Dr. Jon Stephenson, Geologist
Dr. AF Rogers, Physiologist
Dr. Hal Lister,
J.G.D. (Jeff) Pratt, Seismologist
Hannes La Grange, Meteorologist
David Pratt, Mechanic
Desmond (Roy) Homard, Army Mechanic
Ken Blaiklock, Surveyor **(*Veteran dog team driver, 1K miles, 6 winters in Antarctic*)**
George Lowe, Photographer
Ralph Lenton, Radio Operator **(*World record 8 years in the Antarctic*)**
Sir Edmund Hillary, Explorer **(*First man to conquer Mt. Everest, 1953*)**
Peter Mulgrew, CPO
Derek Wright, Photographer
Murray Ellis, Mechanic
Jim Bates, Mechanic

Admiral Dufek, Sir Edmund Hillary, Sir Vivian Fuchs

Sir Edmund Hillary and Crew at the South Pole

Sir Edmund Hillary, Sir Vivian Fuchs, Admiral Dufek

Bull Session with the TAE Crew

Hillary Arriving

Dog Sled Arrives, Ken Blaiklock mushing

The Dogs

British Trans Antarctic Expedition at the South Pole

TAE Snow-Cat

Sir Edmund Hillary and Sir Vivian Fuchs