

This is a recording by G. D. Cartwright for Mr. Beverly Smith, Jr., of the Saturday Evening Post

CASUAL INCIDENTS IN THE LIFE OF THE EXPEDITION

Even during the long winter things seemed always to be happening to relieve the daily routine of the expedition. Of course there were always birthdays. With 150 men during the course of the year you have 150 birthdays. I seemed to get invited to most of these celebrations--I didn't attend all of them, of course. But I suppose the one I remember most is my own birthday party. They found out rather early when my birthday was to occur and oftentimes at other parties they would say, "Just wait until your's comes off." My birthday was August 14. As I recall, August was one of the stormiest months we had which is not typical, I don't believe, although it's hard to say what is typical in the Antarctic. At any rate it became clear to me fairly early in the day that they were really going to make a big thing of it. They began to clear out one of the big bedrooms, or living rooms, the larger rooms in the quarters could sleep four men. Sometimes we had these parties right in the weather office itself. The desks ~~xxxx~~ could be taken apart and carried out into a kind of corridor to give more room. They'd set up card tables very ~~xxxx~~ much like the card tables we have and they had lots of little collapsible chairs, so in an office that ~~xxxx~~ normally accommodated four or five people they could squeeze maybe 30 ~~xxxx~~ into it. It wasn't very easy to get in and out but that didn't seem to matter.

Anyway, ~~xxxx~~ ~~xxxx~~ party they decided to hold it in one of the ^{living} quarters rooms in the main station. Everyone seemed to know that it was my birthday and I was being congratulated everywhere I went. They have an expression: [forst spoken in Russian] "Congratulations on your birthday," literally the day of your birth. The weather was rather bad all day. As I recall there had been several storms lasting more than a day but during

most of the day the wind was running around 30 or 40 miles per hour with some snow.

The system on these birthday parties was to go get an arrangement with the chief cook to make up special foods and these would be carried on plates--of course, you had to get all the crockery and things--these would be carried, sometimes right in their regular dishes with a cover over them, wrapped in white paper, to the house where the party was being held. The net house was about 200 yards from the mess hall so early in the afternoon the boys started gathering the materials for the party, glasses and knives and forks and plates and, of course, the actual dishes themselves. This really meant a lot of work but they didn't seem to mind all the fuss. x There were lots of smiles and ~~ja~~ joking about the party that would be coming off.

But as the afternoon wore on the winds became higher and higher and I saw the boys who were carrying the stuff from the mess hall and they shook their heads and laughed and said, "Pretty tough going." I suppose the winds were getting up around 60 miles an hour by this time and carrying a big platter full of salad or cold meats or something like that or a huge bag of goblets was a pretty tricky job in these high winds. And, of course, the snow drives absolutely like oil through anything, the slightest crack and it finds its ~~xxx~~ way in so the problem was to keep the food from being snowed in as you brought it back to the house.

Late in the afternoon I was quite surprised and, of course, very pleased by a visit from Alexei Troshnikov, the leader of the expedition and the base commander Matvechuk. They came with some gifts and congratulated me, we had a pleasant chat in the room. They brought ~~xxx~~ several long playing records including some of the better arias from the TschaiKowsky opera "Eugen Onegin," they also brought a box of select liquors, a bottle of vodka, a very

good wine and, I believe, a bottle of cognac, all done up in a very attractive box. This was certainly unexpected from them but I suppose I shouldn't have doubted it because everybody was coming along to give me little things: a photograph, a little memento of Moscow, the big gift, however, was about 15 long playing records which the net chief, Oscar Krichek gave to me. So, the room was getting an accumulation of gifts by the late afternoon.

It had been our custom to have weekly radio telephone conversations with Little America. We had missed the previous week, I believe, so it happened that about 6 o'clock, between 6 and 6:30, we had a call from the radio station saying that they had established contact with Little America, would we come over. Well, surprisingly enough, just about that time the wind had dropped to about 30 to 40 miles an hour and even though it was snowing quite hard it was almost pleasant outdoors as Oscar and I slogged through the snow over to the radio station which was about a quarter of a mile. We had no ~~fx~~ real difficulty except occasionally losing our way because of the thick snow. We got there without any delay and had fairly good contact with Little America. Most of these contacts never lasted very long; they would start out good on one side, we could hear Little America well, they were having a little difficulty with ~~z~~ us and then maybe it would turn about, so we often spent most of the time calling and giving a long count so they could tune to our ~~frequency~~ frequency.

Anyway, while we were sitting in the room in the little studio where we did out radio telephone contacts, the wind began to rise again. The Russians had a television set at the base, probably the only television set ever carried to the Antarctic. They never got anything on it but somebody always had an idea they might. I was sitting by a bench, or rather high table, against the wall where the support for the antenna~~x~~ came ~~in~~ through the roof and was anchored inside. It was a 2-inch galvanized pipe locked in a support. I could feel this thing beginning to ~~vibrate~~ vibrate and suddenly it began to jump up and down as though the

antenna were starting to fly. The building started to vibrate pretty badly so we knew then that the wind was really rising. About that time the Base Commander called and said that the winds were now up around 100 miles an hour and no one would be permitted out. So Oscar looked at me and I looked at him. What the devil was going to happen to our party. This pleased the boys in the radio station. They just gathered ~~ix~~ what reserves of hospitality they had and the party started right there.

As time passed, an hour went by and then ~~it~~ it was two hours and all the time the boys ~~ix~~ over in the net station were getting more and more impatient. After all, I was their guest and they had everything ready for a real show. Finally they couldn't stand the strain any longer so three of the younger fellows started out together to collect us. They made it all right but they looked pretty worn when they got there. I didn't fancy this idea of getting out in the blizzard but there wasn't anything else ~~to~~ to do, so we fastened our parkas on as well as we could and ~~starg~~ started out.

The radio station was on a kind of a knoll, ~~and it~~ it wasn't drifted ~~like~~ in like most of the rest of the houses because it was on this rock, a rather high rock, but the wind I think probably was at a maximum there because it took three of us to force the door open against the ~~wind~~ wind and, of course, as soon as you let go of it it banged shut with a tremendous clang and you had to hold onto anything you could lay your ~~x~~ hands on, ~~with~~ crouched down as low as you could. As we turned into the wind it whipped my parka off my head and I thought I was going to lose the whole thing for a minute. It was difficult to grab anything because you had to hold on to the other fellows or anything that was nearby.

It took us, I suppose, nearly a half hour to work our way back to the net station and I never have had such a struggle in my life. We were crawling a fair part of the time, never knowing just where you were and hoping you weren't being carried with the wind toward the sea.

There were a lot of big sort of general lights that had been set out just for this sort of situation. You couldn't see them at any distance but if you were on your course you would eventually ~~see~~ pass them and if you didn't pass them in a reasonable time then you knew you were off course. When we got to the net house you had to enter from the tower and down a ladder, I don't think I have ever been so exhausted. I just hadn't a bit of breath left. I couldn't say a word except shake my head and look pained. The last thing I wanted was a party at that stage but they were all keyed up about it and hardly gave us time to get our clothes off before we were rushed into the room.

The place looked quite attractive. They had set these card tables up rather like a little night club. Oscar had his tape recorder which also could be used as a record player, a ~~rather~~ rather tricky combination. It ~~wasn't~~ wasn't a good tape recorder because of the speed problem. Anyway, everything was ready so the party got off to a fast start finally. It must have been after 9 o'clock by that time. It was a gay affair. Of course, many ~~men~~ of the people who normally would have come weren't allowed out of their houses so we had really ~~only~~ only the boys at the station, but that was about 20. The toasting went on with great enthusiasm and, of course, everybody gets livelier and livelier, then the singing starts and about that time somebody says, "Let's play your boogie-woogie record." I did have one such record with my little 45 rpm player. I always hated to get the thing going because it seemed to have the same kind of exhilarating affect on the Russians that it does on many of the young Americans who like boogie-woogie. But they wouldn't listen to "no" so we brought the thing out and by that time the dancing was really something which should have been recorded on film. Unfortunately I couldn't use my movie camera because there just wasn't enough light for color film. I did get a couple of still pictures which look very,

very amusing now.

The party went on 'til 2, 3, I don't know, maybe 4 o'clock in the morning. I finally felt I had all I could stand and went off to bed which, fortunately, was just across the hall.

The next day the storm was still on ~~lx~~ but by the second day the winds had subsided some and Oscar said to me, "Well now we'll really have your birthday party." I looked at him in kind of a shock and asked him, "Why? Didn't we have a good enough ~~xxx~~ ^{party} the other night?" "Oh, no," he said, "we were responsible for that bad weather so the people couldn't come so we've got to have another party." Well, I said I felt it really wasn't necessary. "Oh, no," he said, "it wouldn't be right not to have a party." So the ~~xxx~~ preparations were made all over again. This time they decided to hold it in the weather office itself. The funny thing was that it didn't seem to get started very promptly. The party was supposed to be at 8 o'clock, I believe, and at 6 o'clock they hadn't even started to fix up the room. Oscar was very unconcerned about it so by the time the guests started to arrive we were still working on the arrangements for the party. But nobody seemed to mind, they stood around or went into one of the other rooms and carried on their conversations. Everybody had a little special dress on, some of them wore suit coats and ties, or their black blouses with ~~x~~ some special wearing apparel. ~~xxxx~~

This time all the outside guests were able to come and the chief correspondent of Pravda and the chief of the (Russian word) as they call it, the professional unions; the personnel officer. The ~~xxxxxxx~~ Chief of the expedition didn't come. I called him and invited him and he ~~xxxxxxx~~ he said he was a pretty shy man and maybe ~~x~~ the party would be better if he didn't come. I was a little bit surprised at that and I told Oscar about it and he said, "I think he's being honest, he feels the boys would have a better time." We had the doctor

and the chief cook—he was always invited to these parties because that was one way to get the special food.

~~Wsk~~ When everything seemed about ready Oscar said to me, "Look, let's go over to the room, I've got a problem here I want you to help me with. One of the fellows has asked us a couple of questions." At the time it didn't seem very reasonable but I went over with him to his room where we sort of fiddled around; it looked a bit silly but it didn't occur why we had gone off. When we came back there was a very attractive birthday cake, a big round cake surrounded by 48 candles, the cake had a very well done map of Antarctica in brown and white icing and engraved across the top of the cake in English was "Happy Birthday Gordon." This really staggered me and I think if you look at the pictures they took at ~~the~~ ~~the~~ ~~time~~ the time you'll see what a surprise it was.

This got the party off to a terrific start. It went very much the same as the other one only it was gayer. Here again we got started on my jazz records and by about two in the morning the dickheads—most of the people had gone or were leaving by that time but there are always a few who hang on until the end and these fellows were still going strong. One of them was an ~~old~~ old football player—soccer player—and he got to kicking up his heels and the first thing I knew the party was getting so rough I thought it was about time to leave. So I left about 2 o'clock and the thing went on until about 4 or 5 in the morning apparently.

That was rather typical of the birthday parties. They had a terrific time. There was always a lot of their own music, some of the fellows had accordions, there were several guitars and the little special instrument called the "domerie", which is something like a mandolin. Oscar was very good on this instrument and they usually wound up by a trio or so

accompanying singers. I think the Russians know many more songs than, say, a similar American group would do; they know the words, for example. Some of the boys thought they were fairly good singers and always took the lead in these songs.

One of the other amusing incidents had to do with the cleaning out of the latrines. This was naturally an unpleasant job. ~~But~~ Some of the latrines, ours anyway, had a half of an oil drum in them which was carried out and taken down toward the edge of the camp where it simply spent the winter. This job was passed around. Each house had what they called the commandant, they always joked about this position and kidded each other as to the merits of the commandant and how well he was doing. Then every day there was a kind of clean up man who had to do the sweeping of the general corridors. They didn't take these jobs very seriously, some of them did, and the ones that did always had a lot more work to do because the others didn't keep the place very clean sometimes.

~~Excuse~~ Carrying out this latrine can could be pretty exciting when you had to take it up a steel ladder and out a door into a howling gale. But they liked to have a joke so they always had ~~in~~ the boy who played the horn and somebody with an old tin can to ~~make~~ pound on to provide the proper music for this ceremony and everybody got a big bang out of this and would all line up while the boys went by to the accompaniment of this band.

One day, just to give you a little insight into their character, the horn player played a funeral march, I believe, a very solemn piece of music and one of the men took offense at this and said that it just wasn't good taste to do anything like that.

Also, when anyone went away on a trip of more than a day or two they always had a welcoming committee to the accompaniment of this same kind of music. Even in the bitter cold we'd all line up outside the entrance to the door, somebody would keep a sharp lookout so we would be all set when the person arrived, then one of the chief men would be the

official greeter. He would stand rather formally and walk up to the new arrival who would stop several paces away, make a quick speech usually in a humorous vein, everybody would howl, then they would throw their arms around the new arrival and give him a hearty smack on the mouth. I have one picture which is very amusing because it just caught these fellows--the greeters--lined up in a very straight line waiting to kiss the new arrival. When the man had a full beard it was quite an experience, something I didn't particularly like and usually I was busy taking pictures of the others doing the ~~xxx~~ kissing.

One of our men ~~xxxxx~~ went to Oasis which is another of the Russian stations on the coast at a rather special place along the coast, some 350 kilometers east of Mirny. In that area the ice sheet apparently has retreated and ~~thx~~ a large area of rock is exposed. Some snow drifts into the low places but it is ~~xx~~ virtually snow-free even during the winter. It is a very windy place oftentimes and had a lot of bad weather so it was risky to fly over there unless you were prepared to stay any ~~x~~ length of time necessary. The political officer, or personnel officer, and one of our men went over to do some work--I think they were ~~xxxxxx~~ having a little personnel trouble with one of the meteorologists--so they flew over there and I believe the aircraft came back leaving them for a day or so, then the weather turned bad and they were there about two weeks. This overcrowded the station, the station only had about six men, very little space, but when our meteorologist came back he regaled everybody with ~~xxx~~ stories of things that had happened ~~ix~~ at Oasis.

One of the amusing ones apparently was that they had no regular cook so every member of the group took turns cooking. Some of them were good, some of them were pretty bad. When he had the job he was making compote, which is dried fruit cooked in a sugar solution--sugared water. This was standard at all the bases, we had it every day at Mirny, but apparently in making this stuff he got mixed up, either deliberately or unintentionally, and put some laxative in the water, I guess it was epsom salts. This really created a

terrible problem because it happened at the time when there was a real blizzard on, the wind was running over 100 miles an hour and the men were absolutely frantic getting in and out of the house after this heavy dose of salts which they had taken. I guess they were about ready to kill him before the blizzard was over.

Their latrine was the most primitive thing I have ever seen. It was so small that you ~~was~~ couldn't close the door when you got inside. It was ~~x~~ just a tiny little box that you practically only stand up in. Fortunately the door faced away from the prevailing winds but it was pretty tough going to have the diarrhea in that situation.

Another amusing incident was ~~it~~ told to me by some of the boys who worked up in the interior. These interior stations were really rugged. They towed their houses--they built their houses on the sleds and simply towed them into the spot where the station was to operate and they were in business. Away up in the interior there isn't enough snow to cover the houses over so they are quite exposed; also there isn't as much wind there as you get on the coastal areas either. Most of the fellows were keen readers of Jack London, in fact apparently Jack London is one of the standard American authors in the Soviet Union; everybody had read his books and many of them had whole collections of them. One of the things which Jack London had apparently written was that when the temperature dropped around -60 if you spit the spit would freeze before it struck the snow. So apparently this one chap spent a lot of time testing this theory at various temperatures. He never found this to be true. He was quite disappointed that Jack London had apparently made a mistake.

in the outdoors, which they did,

On ~~the~~ ~~the~~ other hand, apparently if you urinated/at a temperature of lower than ~~was~~ -58 centigrade, you got a very special whooshing sound; if the temperature was warmer than -58 it didn't occur; anything lower than that--this was very characteristic of them, they apparently stood around testing this thing in temperatures of that severity. I think it is further insight on the Russian character.

Also, they used to joke about how they would relieve themselves--have a bowel movement-- outdoors in these temperatures. You had to get everything all set then rush outdoors, do your business and rush back in again before things froze up. In fact they used to kid each other about having to have somebody stand by with a stick.

I mention these things not because they are particularly pleasant but because they give you an insight into the character of the people.

They used to tell about the fellow up in the interior who oftentimes wouldn't bother to put on his shoes when he wanted to go over to one of the other buildings. With a temperature of 80 degrees below zero you don't run out in a pair of bedroom slippers. They prided themselves in their ruggedness. One day during a blizzard two of the fellows from Mirny from were going ~~in~~ the main headquarters to the radio station in a weasel. During these blizzards the visibility dropped absolutely to zero--~~you couldn't see~~ in a bad blizzard you couldn't even see your feet so you felt ~~as~~ though you were walking in a screaming void, and when you could see your feet the ~~the~~ whole snow surface was moving at terrific speeds so that it actually made you quite dizzy to look down, you felt as though you were walking on a high speed cloud or something.

Anyway, these two fellow set off this morning and visibility was variable, as the wind would rise the visibility would drop down. They were getting along fairly well but not quite sure where they were when the driver looked up and saw this brown rock surface. He thought this was the place they were headed for, the radio station, so he turned toward it. It happened that just at that moment they had a break in the visibility and he actually was looking at a rock island off in the sea ice. As a result, the next thing ~~that~~ they

knew they had gone over the Barrier. The Barrier was about 60 feet high at this point but fortunately at the very spot they went over there was a tremendous drift which was building up during the course of the winter so they fell down about 30 feet into this snow drift, head down, absolutely vertical. They seemed to have the most amazing luck, neither of them was hurt in the slightest, they managed to crawl out of the tractor and dig their way up to the top of this drift. But of course they didn't really know where they were except that they had gone off the Barrier. How they ever found their way back to camp I don't know but they got back somehow and there was great howling and laughter about their experience. They were kind of heroes.

The problem then was to get the weasel out. Of course you couldn't do anything during one of these blizzards, you couldn't work, so it was I guess about three days later before the weather cleared and the word went round that they were going to dig the weasel out so everybody in the camp practically put on his skis or alpine boots or something and naturally gathered his camera and down we all went. It took a whole day really, the way the thing turned out, so everybody had a holiday that day.

During the big windstorm that took place around my birthday the winds were very difficult to measure accurately, yet the best estimate we had was that it was well over 100 miles an hour during that period. One of the things it did was to carry away two of the aircraft—I guess three of them actually broke loose—but one was a DC-3. It carried this plane between the radio station and the ionosphere station, a whole batch of antennas, but miraculously it seemed missed these antennas, carried across a big sled and for some strange reason dropped it just about 30 feet from the edge of the Barrier. If it had gone over the Barrier it would have been a total loss. As it was the wing tips were damaged, one of the landing gears was broken, tail surfaces were damaged, but it could be salvaged

and they did eventually replace these parts to use it again. But here was another amazing incident of the freaks that sometimes happen.

There were two other incidents when aircraft were blown away ~~by~~ and damaged by the winds.

One other loss they suffered which they seemed to take very philosophically, was this: When the ships came back in the spring, that is, November of 1957, ~~that~~ the sea ice was very heavy, maybe two meters thick in places anyway, so that the Ob, which had all the heavy cargo, had great difficulty in penetrating this sea ice, a solid sheet of ice 6 or 7 feet thick. Of course the top surface was largely snow but through the action of moisture coming up from the snow this was quite hard. So they began unloading the vessel while they still 20 or so kilometers ~~is~~ off from the base, then they'd drive the things in on sleds. ~~and~~ They had three or four new aircraft. One of these aircraft, ^{of the big} several/new sleds and, I believe, one tractor had been unloaded from the ship and were sitting on the sea ice waiting to be transported to the base. The wind began to rise that day and it didn't get terribly strong, maybe 50 to 60 miles an hour but apparently it was sufficient to break up the edges of the ice; the waves started to rise, you see, and they work on the edge of the ice, get under the ice, so a very large piece of the sea ice broke away and it happened to be a piece on which this cargo was sitting.

Once it had become detached from the main ice it was ~~a~~ very unstable and the wind very shortly turned the whole thing over and dumped the cargo into the sea. I ~~wasn't~~ expressed my regrets that this had happened and they just shrugged their shoulders and said "Niche vo, niche vo."

Another accident that occurred could have been very serious but fortunately wasn't. The big glaciological party had been up in the interior~~s~~ all summer long working on studies

of the ice sheet. They had gotten a late start on that journey so they ~~was~~ were hanging on to the bitter end ~~in~~ so as to get as much done as they could before the worst of the winter started. But also May Day was coming up and they had been told they should be back to the base before then. I guess there were four tractors--three tractors and big heavy sleds, the tractors weighed around 30 tons and the sleds maybe 20. They had been in continuous blizzard ~~it~~ for days, the weather was ~~a~~ really miserable up in the interior, cold and strong winds, snow, and no visibility at all. During this kind of a situation it is impossible to navigate except by some radio means. They had radio compasses on the tractors so they were using this as a means of getting back to the base before the first of May. Whenever they got a chance they would take a sun sight to try to fix their position more accurately but the last several days of their journey they had been in cloud all the time. They were travelling at night because apparently they could see the surface a little better with their lights on than they could in the daytime when they had nothing but normal daylight. I mentioned earlier this problem of the white-out. When you get an ~~unusually~~ overcast sky over the ice sheet it diffuses the light so that you get absolutely no shadows; you can't see where the horizon is and you see no features on the surface. You make walk over zastrugi that is two or three feet high and never see it, just stumble over it.

So, here they were, this big party and these heavy tractors and sleds coming down the long slope of the ice sheet during the night at about 30 kilometers an hour. They were coming down a slight grade so they could make their maximum speeds, when suddenly they ran out into a terrifically ~~k~~ crevassed area. First thing they knew the tractors began falling through these big crevasses. ~~Because~~ I say "falling through"; they'd break through the snow bridge and hang up on the side of the crevasse in a very dangerous position.

Apparently the only thing that kept them from falling down into the crevasse was the sleds

themselves which would still be on the solid surface. You can imagine the jolt--the fright--that you'd get riding along ~~in~~ in one of these big tractors and suddenly dropping into a pit. The miraculous thing was that none of them broke entirely through, that is, they were hanging on the sides and no one was hurt, but they got a terrific banging around. ~~So~~ There they were in the middle of the night, a terrific blizzard on and the tractors all falling through these big holes. It must have been a very frightening situation. The only thing ~~they~~ they could do was to hope the snow ridges would continue to hold and the tractor wouldn't fall on down into the crevasse. Some of these crevasses could be well over 100 feet deep and gradually tapering to a point so that if the tractor ever fell it was just hopeless, or if a man fell he would be wedged in somewhere ~~at~~ at an unknown depth.

So, they waited until daylight, the blizzard was still on and they still couldn't see anything so they just had to sit it out hanging on the edge of this damned bottomless pit. Finally the weather cleared enough so the chief of the base flew in--they were only about 50 kilometers from their destination--and by much painstaking surveying they decided on the way that they would try to get out of this area. So they ~~took~~ took all the men out of these sleds and with only the tractor driver they--apparently the theory was that you should go over these crevasses at maximum speed, if you went slowly the vibration would weaken the crevasse and you were likely to fall through right in the middle of it which would be absolutely fatal, but with maximum speed even though the bridge broke you would usually be far enough over so that the momentum would carry you the rest of ~~the~~ the way. This was the theory anyway. It didn't work too well because they kept breaking through, but not fatally. I have pictures of that scene, it is quite dramatic. This is not exceptional, it is just one of the hazards that faces any people travelling in the interior.

They had lots of parties in addition to the birthday parties. Apparently they have holidays for everything, lots of holidays. Of course the two big ones were May Day and the celebration of the October Revolution. I'd like to give a fuller description of those later on.

I remember one holiday celebration. It was Aviation Day. I was very friendly with all the pilots so was invited to this celebration, in fact, I think I went to every celebration for one reason or another. I have fortunately some movies of this party which I think you ought to see to get a feel for the good times that the people had. This party wasn't really very much different from any of the others, all the members of the ~~the~~ base weren't there, this was a special party in celebration of the Soviet ~~the~~ aviation. They had very brief speeches and toasting but I believe it was this part when the chief said there would be only the main general toasts and the rest of the toasting would be left to each table. This annoyed some of the men. They felt they had been ~~the~~ cheated out of the honor of making a general toast. The idea was that it would cut down the amount of drinking a little bit because everybody wouldn't drink to every toast, you'd ~~the~~ just drink to the toasts at your own table.

During the course of this party--~~the~~ they had a little band there, a little orchestra called the "sosulka" which means icicle. One of the funniest men at the base was Semyon Gaigerov, he was an aerologist, a very experienced one who had held a number of free balloon records, that is he had flown as a passenger in free balloons studying air currents and changes in the weather over the Soviet Union. I think one flight lasted 84 hours and took him from Moscow away down into the borders of Afghanistan, a tremendous flight, wonderful to hear him tell about it. Semyon was an extremely complex character and he often seemed very shy, he wasn't a very attractive man; I think he was a little bit shy about his appearance but

whenever he got a chance he often could be a big showoff. This night he got ahold of the microphone and for ten minutes he kept the whole of that group absolutely roaring with laughter. I still had difficulty in following all that he said and I am sure much of the subtleties of his humor escaped me but even without understanding all he said it was one of the funniest performances I have ever seen. It just emphasized to me the richness of their sense of ~~his~~ humor and their honest good fun that they had. This idea that they are a stolid, absolutely dead serious people, repressed and depressed, is simply not so. They had a terrific time this evening. This same ~~man~~ gave a lecture ~~on~~ on his balloon flights.

These lectures were rather a popular kind, given by the leading scientists in each of the fields of activity to keep the interest up and to help pass the time constructively. They usually lasted an hour or so and were pitched to ~~him~~ a level which anyone could understand, you didn't have to be ~~a~~ an expert in the field to follow it. I think this was an excellent idea.

They also had what they called "Uchomie Soviets" which were learned councils. These were a very different sort of thing designed to review in detail the various scientific programs and to make changes which seemed to be justified.

Anyway, this lecture by Semyon Gaigerov was the outstanding one of the whole series. It was a serious lecture but he simply couldn't ~~refrain~~ refrain from wisecracking ~~about~~ about some of his experiences and I am only sorry I don't remember the whole thing or have it written down because it, too, was uproariously funny.

Oftentimes during the movies, either before the movie started or if the movie happened to be a pretty poor one, which wasn't uncommon, Semyon would wisecrack about it and oftentimes he was much, much funnier than the movie ever could be. Incidentally, he was my principal movie critic. He was a tremendous movie fan and rarely failed to go to the movies if it was

good at all. I found his judgement very accurate. If he said, "Well, you could see it," I usually didn't go and if he said "No, don't go to that one," I never went because the few times I had gone earlier they invariably were very ~~xxx~~ poor.

When we got to Australia he was intensely interested in seeing American movies. The last American one he had seen was with Deanna Durbin. So, when we got to ~~xx~~ Australia the first thing he did was get the newspaper, come to me with it, show me the movie section and ask my advice. And every day ~~xxxxxx~~ the first order of the day was to go over the movie section and advise him on which films he could see. He had ~~xx~~ two main criteria, one, it had to be in color; two, if possible it should be in cinemascope and, three, if it was a cowboy picture there was no doubt that he would go. He went with ~~xx~~ some of the others at my suggestion to see "War and Peace", that is our version of "War and Peace" and I was quite pleased to have a favorable comment from them. They were entirely frank and said there ~~xxxxxx~~ were many differences from Tolstoi but it still was a damned good movie.

Also he went to see James Dean in "Rebel without Cause" which was showing in Adelaide, Australia, at the time. He was ~~xx~~ tremendously ~~xxxxxxx~~ impressed by this movie even though he couldn't follow the subtleties of the conversations.

Part of this is due to the fact that they seem ~~xx~~ to have a kind of morbid interest in trouble and difficulties. I think this grows out of the heavy ~~xxxxxx~~ propaganda line which emphasizes the social problems in the capitalistic countries but there is no doubt that he was impressed, like many people have been, with the intensity of this young actor.

I think that will be the conclusion of this tape, which is recorded only on one side.

(End of reel)