

## CHAPTER 2

### Application Forms

As a child I was infatuated with Antarctica but at the same time ridiculed when I suggested that, in fact, I desired to go there as an explorer. The children's newspaper, the *Weekly Reader*, followed the adventures of Admiral Richard E. Byrd as leader of the United States exploration of Antarctica in 1946 and 1947. I certainly did not recognize the scope of the exploration work when I was a child. Operation High Jump was sponsored by the United States Navy, involved 4000 men, and used thirteen ships in addition to two icebreakers, an aircraft carrier, two seaplane tenders, and a submarine. Six Navy R4D planes, four helicopters, and three light aircraft performed nearly continuously during the twenty-four hour sunlit summer days with exhaustive precision permitting the entire coast of the Antarctic to be mapped in a two year span of time. Much of the coast at that time had never been seen. Scientific objectives included many meteorological studies and gave for the first time weather maps of the entire south polar region.



The black and white pictures in the *Weekly Reader* nonetheless captured my interest in adventure and exploration as it would for any child. Ice breakers smashed up against large amounts of snow. A huge wolf fur ruff of a parka surrounded Admiral Byrd's head, and although most children tried to avoid wearing mittens, the huge "bear claw" mittens connected to straps around Admiral Byrd's head were somehow different.

**27 February 1946. "Ho Chi Minh handed me 2 letters addressed to President of USA, China, Russia, and Britain identical copies of which were stated to have been forwarded to other governments named. In 2 letters to Ho Chi Minh request USA as one of United Nations to support idea of Annamese independence according to Philippines example, to examine the case of the Annamese, and to take steps necessary to maintenance of world peace which is being endangered by French efforts to reconquer Indochina." (Cablegram from Landon, American diplomat in Hanoi, to U. S. State Department, Washington D.C.)**

While most children left ideas of adventure and exploration behind along with other childhood tales, I never let go of my imaginative views of the Antarctic. In my third and fourth grade, Operation Windmill by the United States Navy continued aerial photography concentrating on newly discovered mountain ranges and coastlines. Adding to the grade school publications and science books, the "Green Sheet" of the *Milwaukee Journal* carried frequent articles on the Antarctic exploration. I discovered the travel section of the Sunday paper. And when Miss Dorothy Wolf suggested to my guardian, Tanna, that I might not be promoted to the fourth

grade because of reading and missing too much school because of colds and fevers, my grandfather presented me with a library card that led me to many books about the Antarctic. Ernst Shackleton, James Ross, Robert Falcon Scott, Fridtjof Nansen (an Arctic diversion), Roald Amundsen, Hubert Wilkins, Douglas Mawson, Lincoln Ellsworth, and Finn Ronne wrote to me directly in library books whetting my appetite for adventure, showing me the value of reading, and helping me pass fourth grade.

I turned every hill that I climbed into a major glacier traverse. Visits to my Uncle Edgar's farm near Ixonia, Wisconsin, were great in winter. The chance of being snowbound was real, just as if I was

on Shackleton's ship and was locked in the ice. My cousin Dan Hahm and I every spring would try to march out to the Rock River, failing most times because of the flooded marsh and thin ice that interrupted our path. These walks always were imagined as man-hauling treks to the unobtainable pole. The pain of cold and wet became marks of endurance and survival. I loved it.

In the interim between Operation Windmill and IGY, American interests in Antarctica seemed nil. Antarctic news faded to only an occasional article on the pie shaped claims other nations had in Antarctica. My imagination ran wild inventing wars in the polar south. Two close friends and I divided the world and went to war for our respective countries. Paul Zedler, now a professor of botany at the University of Missouri, was the despot ruling the entire earth from an artificial island called Voltz. Leon Todd, now in the computer business in Milwaukee, held out in a nation called Boards that was mostly Borneo with all the waterways in Indonesia built over with wooden floors. I, of course, controlled Antarctica. The amount of time we spent drawing maps of cities in Antarctica, Boards, and Voltz connecting all land masses with international floating highways, moving large populations to resettle in cube cities in both polar regions, and conducting wars by mirror satellites, cannot be measured. Today I do not believe it was a waste. Paul and Leon and I demanded of each other correct maps, realistic data, and reasonable explanations to our imaginative inventions. I apologize to Mr. Vater, our seventh and eighth grade teacher, who had to endure our imaginative enthusiasm which spilled over into geography, history, and science classes. For one particular assignment, to draw a spring bird, Leon was drawing a dodo bird (but handed in a robin), Paul drew a vulture picking on a skeleton, and I handed in a penguin. I remember arguing at length with Mr. Vater, who knew we were smarting off, that Adelie penguins, as robins, laid their eggs in spring, albeit an austral spring. Always Antarctica was a real place for me to go someday.

~~I graduated to~~ *Current Events*, the newspaper for the upper grades, and by my eighth grade, preparations for the International Geophysical Year erupted in the news. Before this became news worthy, James A. Van Allen, a scientist for the federal government in Washington D. C., invited several of his scientific friends and colleagues to his suburban home in Silver Spring, Maryland, in 1950. Dr. Lloyd Berkner of the U. S. National Academy of Science proposed to Van Allen's friends that a third international polar year should be launched that involved sharing all new polar discoveries with all participating nations. The idea of sharing polar knowledge at a time when the cold war between the U. S. A. and the U. S. S. R. was preparing for possible nuclear exchanges over the North Pole was more than bold. Little interest existed for such exchanges, but the idea of simultaneously studying rapid changes on the sun and the earth with emphasis on the unexplored south polar region aroused the interest of all men present.

In quiet conference rooms all over the world this idea expanded into the full working IGY for 1 July 1957 to 31 December 1958. In 1955 Laurence M. Gould, chief scientist on several Byrd expeditions and then President of Carthage College in Minnesota, was appointed by President Eisenhower as Head of the U. S. Antarctic IGY Committee. Weather observations were a major item for scientific research exchange and provided immediate data for all logistics operations of all nations involved in the Antarctic for IGY. Harry Wexler, an enthusiastic idea man who always was assigned to special research projects of the U. S. Weather Bureau, became the Chief Scientist for U. S. Antarctic Programs. He in turn chose Albert Crary, from the Air Force Cambridge Research Center, as his Deputy Chief Scientist for Antarctic Programs. Crary represented geophysical and geological interests which also could readily be exchanged. All operations were handled by the United States Navy with Admiral Dufek commanding Deep Freeze I Expedition for Task Force 43 during the austral summer of 1955-56.

Exploits of Deep Freeze I filled the science sections of the *Milwaukee Journal* and the *National Geographic Magazine*, which I read without skipping a word. All this activity in a previously quiet region of the globe raised all kinds of political questions for nations that held overlapping claims to

territory of Antarctica. A few years earlier, in 1952, at Hope Bay, at the northernmost tip of the Palmer peninsula, Argentina attempted to prevent the reconstruction of a British base by not permitting the supplies to be taken off the British ship, *John Biscoe*, and repulsed the landing party with machine gun fire. Under the direction of the Governor of the British Falkland Island Dependency, the British returned with the *HMS Burghead Bay* and landed battle-dressed marines, drove the Argentines out, and provided naval protection for the reconstruction of the British base. The threat of spilling blood on the white snows of Antarctica over territorial claims during new explorations was a real fear.

Any hope for international scientific studies depended on the success of the Antarctic Treaty called for by President Eisenhower that asked for a suspension of all national claims to Antarctic territories for thirty years, arranged for the exchange of all scientific findings in the Antarctic, and permitted free inspections of all stations established in the Antarctic. Eisenhower proposed such free inspections in disarmament attempts between the NATO alliance and communist countries during his presidency but always without acceptance. The signing of the Antarctic Treaty was an unprecedented success in international relations during the Cold War.

**7 July 1954. "Thus since undoubtedly true that elections might eventually mean unification Vietnam under Ho Chi Minh this makes it all more important they should be only held as long after cease-fire agreement as possible and in conditions free from intimidation to give democratic elements best chance." (Cable-gram by Secretary Dulles to United States Embassy in Paris.)**

Deep Freeze I surveyed the Antarctic for potential placements of American stations for IGY. Deep Freeze II supported the first year of IGY and established those stations. Albert Crary established Byrd Station by overland (really over snow) tractor trains from Little America V. Morton Rubin was the head meteorologist for the Weather Center of Antarctica. Paul Dalrymple established a research project at Little America. Paul Siple was the Scientific Leader at the building of Amundsen-Scott Station exactly at the South Pole and stayed the full year over the cold dark six month winter. A meteorologist at Amundsen-Scott Station was Ed Flowers that first winterover year. The next year, Deep Freeze III, the second year of operations at Amundsen-Scott Station, Paul Dalrymple moved in and joined Kirby Hanson. These names were all part of the story I read, digested, and nearly memorized instead of doing homework when I was in high school and read *90 ° South* by Paul Siple and *Operation Deep Freeze* by George Dufek. For me in college, in the Rathskeller that day that I was being interviewed for Antarctic service, these names, idols in my mind, became personified behind pitchers of beer.

Kirby Hanson had encouraged me to apply for a position in the Antarctic. My master's thesis was nearly complete. It was time to pursue a career. At Kirby's suggestion I wrote the personnel office of the Weather Bureau. I was still on their roster since I was on a leave of absence to pursue graduate work. I wrote to ask for an assignment in the Weather Bureau after graduation in June and then also indicated my interest in Antarctica. In the mail shortly before Christmas of 1964, I received a booklet titled "ASSIGNMENT: ANTARCTICA." My excitement could not be described. However, reading it scared me as well as gave me all sorts of reasons why most of my hecklers were probably right. I was not cut out for exploration.

"Any male citizen of the United States, who is 20 to 45 years old and in perfect physical health, may apply for a position in the Weather Bureau's Antarctic research program by writing to Chief, Personnel Management Division, U. S. Weather Bureau, Washington 25, D. C."

"It should be appreciated that applicants must be carefully selected on the basis of high technical skill. The program is conducted on a highly efficient level which can only be maintained by personnel whose professional ability is proven by experience."

“Polar assignments can justly be rated among the toughest government positions anywhere in the world today. Hardships are inevitable. According to a report made by a U. S. Navy doctor, the main difficulties stem from the monotony of life in Antarctica and continuous association with the same small group of men. Tolerance, cooperation and good sportsmanship become of extraordinary significance when the winter darkness sets in. Most of the dangerous pioneering of years gone by has been done away with through the use of radio, aircraft and other mechanical devices, but isolation, darkness, low temperatures bring out the best or the worst in a man’s character. Once having embarked on this project no one should expect to change his mind and go home. A tremendous amount of money is spent on each individual for medical examinations, transportation and training and orientation. A cost of over \$100,000.00 per person per year has been estimated.” [The cost per man for Plateau Station, my eventual assignment, was more than double this amount.]

“An applicant should have an adventurous spirit which makes this undertaking of first importance to him personally and have a real desire to accomplish his duties and accept hardships and inconveniences with equanimity and in good spirits. He should be willing to work hard over long hours and be ready to give a hand in any work other than that which may be specifically assigned to him as his day-to-day job, including hard physical labor and K. P. The ability to work hard, to cooperate enthusiastically in the work of the station, and to keep on for a long period of time without relief, is essential to success of the program. Observations are made on an around-the-clock basis, therefore, hours of duty will vary in order to cover 24 hours.”

“It is recognized that in many instances applicants may not have experience in a particular program planned for these Antarctic stations. For this reason an intensive training program designed to satisfy the needs of each individual is made available prior to departure for the Antarctic. Each individual will have the opportunity of discussing with specialists and previous participants in Antarctic programs the problems, procedures, techniques and theories applicable to each phase of the program to which he may be assigned. They will also have the opportunity of discussing related, but not planned, research aspects of the programs. Meteorologists will be encouraged to initiate projects in varied program areas.”

“In addition to the regular per annum salaries, an allowance approximating \$2800 will be paid for Antarctic assignment. Quarters, travel, subsistence and polar clothing are furnished free of charge.”

The demand for experience and high professional ability sent shivers up and down my spine. Could I fit that requirement at all? My grade point averages in meteorology, physics, and mathematics were very high. I had finished a traineeship with the U. S. Weather Bureau in Milwaukee. I had an appointment as Meteorologist, GS-7, at the District Forecast Center in Chicago. I was in the process of finishing a two year analysis of the air flow over the Twin Cities in Minnesota where I was responsible for maintaining the data gathering system Dr. Deland and I mounted on KSTP-TV tower. Yet I never could get over the feelings of inadequacy, failure, and timidity. Someone else was stronger, wiser, and had more experience. Never me.

Advice from Bill Harms, Meteorologist in Charge at the Milwaukee Airport Station, comes to mind. Several years before my application for the Antarctic Bill Harms recommended me for my first professional position as a meteorologist in Chicago. I had just completed a Traineeship under him. In his den at his home, at a farewell so to speak, Bill, out of the blue with his back toward me said, “You think you’re a damned Christian don’t you.”

As he whirled around to see my reaction he further explained that I had performed as an observer, as a pilot briefer, and as a forecaster at an outstanding level. He further told me that if I would

accept the position he was recommending me for, at Chicago, I would be leaping fifteen years ahead in my professional career. I had one problem as he saw it. My gifts were so plenteous and I was ignoring them. He blamed it on my religious training, which he had also. Bill Harms was a member of the Missouri Lutheran Synod and I was a member of the Wisconsin Lutheran Synod. He knew the doctrines well. So much of Lutheran education stresses that we are all sinners worthy of eternal damnation and even though our Lord Jesus Christ has freed us and given us eternal life in Heaven, all the rules and all the training in school aimed at obedience and our own inadequacy.

Bill said I needed to recognize when my Lord had given me so much talent and I had refused to recognize it, or some teachers had not shown me the wondrous talents that I did have, how could I expect others to believe in my abilities, especially when they will really needed to, if I didn't. Unless I started acting as the redeemed child with many gifts that I really had, I would have failed His Church both inside and outside. Wow!

Bill was right. No teacher had ever told me I had gifts. I needed to know that I had an outstanding comprehension of the weather systems and was a very effective observer and forecaster. I had to believe that my Lord had given that talent to me through more than six years of university training. I had to convey to pilots my own confidence or else their need of my skills during times of emergency would be of no value.

I had studied hard. I knew my subject. I digested nearly everything possible about the Antarctic. Though never an athlete, I enjoyed things of endurance requirements such as canoeing, hiking, biking, and climbing. Were these not the stuff of Mawson, Byrd, and Amundsen? I wanted to go. I had the skills my government asked for. I would be accepted. I mailed in my application, still listening to my Christian teachers who said "unworthy" so often and remained unsure of my abilities. Harms understood.

Unknown known to me, that application went to the office of Overseas Operations Division of the U. S. Weather Bureau. The Polar Specialist was Charlie Roberts, a veteran of many expeditions to the Antarctic. Under the direction of Vaughn Rockney and Glenn Dyer, Overseas Operations (OOps) trained and sent to the Antarctic between eighteen and twenty-five meteorologists to four stations, Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station, Byrd Station, Eights Station, and Hallet Station. They also sent a similar staff to the Arctic. Many men working for OOps chose to be "polar rats" serving in the Arctic, returning to civilization at the end of the Arctic summer, wildly spending their high wages, and signing up for Antarctica at the start of the austral summer. Most of their work served the World Weather Watch that provided all nations with a global view requiring twenty-four hour data in the very remote polar regions. Acquiring precise quality standard data took dedication and sacrifice on the part of the men serving. I was most willing to be part of that routine.

Also unknown to me, Kirby Hanson had sent word of my interest to Paul Dalrymple of the Polar and Mountain Research Labs in Natick, Massachusetts, and to Bill Weyant, Head of the Polar Meteorology Branch of the Atmospheric Analysis Lab of the Office of Meteorological Research (OMR). As mentioned in chapter one, an opportunity for pure research was opening up at the planned terminus point of the overland traverse operation in East Antarctica on the High Plateau. Plans for the new station, Plateau Station, were already being drawn out in detail in the offices of the National Science Foundation. A man with my qualifications and experience was needed to serve in the Antarctic at this new station and return for a permanent assignment with OMR to serve both Bill Weyant's and Paul Dalrymple's research group. The job included publication opportunities and future grant supported work. OMR! This was the most prestigious research office in the minds of all my classmates. OMR! Wow! I would be lucky just to listen to one of these scientist's lectures.

The gigantic administrative services of the Federal Government, powerful as they are, move slowly. From the time I sent in my application until the luncheon in the Student Union on the University of Wisconsin campus in Madison I received nothing in the mail. That is one reason why the luncheon meeting with Lettau and company was so unexpected. Then a job offer came in the mail the end of March from OOps. I was ecstatic. Immediately I showed Kirby. I was stunned to hear him say that I should sit on it and wait. Why? All my life had dreamed of going to the Antarctic and now I should do nothing?

The next week I received a letter dated 1 April 1965 and a ton of federal forms from Bill Weyant. "Enclosed are numerous forms which have to be completed by anyone being considered for an Antarctic position. As Kirby Hanson has told you, your physical and psychiatric examination is scheduled for 8 a.m. on Wednesday, April 7, 1965. The 'Medical History' forms should be filled out by you before the examination. The form entitled 'Personal Information for Antarctic Service' is to be filled out and returned in the enclosed addressed envelope to NSF Office of Antarctic Programs. . . . After we have the results of the Navy physical, we can discuss the work we would like you to do for us, and send you a formal job offer. Best of luck with your examination next Wednesday, and please telephone me if there are any questions you have about the enclosed forms that Kirby can't answer."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
FORM CD-79a  
Exception to SF-86  
Approved by Bureau of the Budget  
Personnel Security  
Pres. by A.O. 207-4

"15a. Are you now or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party U.S.A., or any Communist organization?"

"15b. Are you now or have you ever been a member of a fascist organization?"

"15c. Are you now or have you ever been a member of any organization, association, movement, group or combination of persons which advocates the overthrow of our constitutional form of government, or of an organization, association, movement, group or combination of persons which has adopted the policy of advocating or approving the commission of acts of force or violence to deny other persons their rights under the Constitution of the United States or of seeking to alter the form of government of the United States by unconstitutional means? A list of organizations designated by the Attorney General pursuant to Executive Order 10450, is available through the Personnel Office or other office to which this form is to be submitted when completed."

No job offer yet. Why didn't I just go with OOps? Kirby advised that I could accept their offer if OMR fell through. My heart preferred research over routine so I accepted Kirby's advice and traveled to Great Lakes Naval Base north of Chicago for several days of examinations.

Physical examinations are physical examinations. Other than spending many hours naked in a paper sheet, they are endurable. What I did not know and wish I had been told was that at some point the long line up of exams changed from required to background research. I learned many years later from Dr. Karl Johannessen, Associate Director, Meteorological Operations of the entire U. S. Weather Bureau that our eight man team of Plateau Station and the successive teams were forerunning models for similar eight man teams to occupy eventual space stations.

Memory is fuzzy but I remember at least two medical doctors each giving me complete physical exams. Eye exams and my personal sensitivity to ultraviolet radiation were monitored. Special eye glasses with strong filters for ultraviolet rays were ordered. I also had a complete dental exam and was given orders to have even the smallest cavity filled. There were no dentists in Antarctica and the risk of even a small cavity suddenly getting worse and becoming an abscessed tooth could not be taken. Small problems in civilization could become major problems in isolation. A good plus for my acceptance into the program was that I already had my appendix taken out when I was a freshman in college. An appendicitis attack in the Antarctic might mean death or worse, death to an aircraft crew trying to perform a rescue mission.

All the medical doctors paid a lot of attention to my lungs. I was afraid of being disqualified because of childhood pneumonia which I had twice before the age of six. The exact location of Plateau Station had not been determined but it was known that a similar Russian high plateau station, Vostok, was at an altitude more than 11,000 feet above sea level. In the polar regions, because of the earth's spin, the atmosphere was thinner than normal. Where a normal atmospheric pressure of 30.00 inches of mercury existed in my home town in Milwaukee, an atmospheric pressure of 18.00 inches of mercury was expected at the station in Antarctica. That meant there existed only 60% of the normal oxygen content to breathe and occupants of Plateau Station were expected to acclimatize to that thin air. Again the overwhelming consideration for selection to this polar team was the candidate's ability to survive in isolation. Once you were taken there and winter set in, no one would be able to come back. All through my training from this visit in April to Great Lakes Naval Base until I was entering the DC-6 at Andrews Air Force Base for final take off for Antarctica in November, more and more tests of my lungs were performed. At each one I always suspected that this test would cancel my appointment to the Polar Meteorology Group.

In one test my nose was clamped shut and I was required to breathe through a hose that completely filled my mouth. Gradually the medical team monitoring me replaced the oxygen content with helium forcing me to breathe deeper and deeper until I nearly passed out for lack of oxygen. At another time and place I was put into a small room and strapped into a chair, somewhat like in a gas chamber used for execution. Suddenly all air in the room was allowed to expand into a large adjacent room that had been made into a near vacuum, a sudden decompression test. I was told not to eat beans the day before and I quickly learned why. The air within me suddenly evacuated from every body opening possible and I momentarily blacked out. Great Lakes Naval Hospital, Bunker Hill Air Force Base, The Naval Hospital in Bethesda, Maryland, and others were all part of the elaborate testing system concerned with each of the scientists and military personnel selected for such a rigorous polar assignment.

The psychiatric exams likewise seemed to go on without end. Why do you want to go to the Antarctic? Do you love your mother? When you dislike someone what factors lead to such a dislike? Do you love your father? Do you have black marbled bowel movements? Do you love your mother? Why are you going to Antarctica? Could you get along with an alcoholic? Have you ever been in a fight? Do you love your mother? Have you ever quit a job or project? Why must you go to Antarctica? If you discovered one of your polar party was a homosexual what would you do?

On and on went the questions. I was concerned with all the questions on family. I was virtually an orphan. My father died when I was one year old. My mother died before I attended kindergarten. My two brothers, both adopted, sailed off to war before I was four and were married shortly after their return from the Second World War. I was raised by a grandfather, now also dead, and by a maiden aunt, Tanna, whose home I still listed as my permanent address. This probably was not good for the psychiatric report. Several of these shrinks wanted to go to the Antarctic but they themselves could

never pass their own tests for isolation. What would I do if I found one of our polar party was a homosexual? After the sixth psychiatric exam I simply blurted out, "Shit, I'd lock him up and keep him for myself." I never had another exam after that remark.

Standing at the railroad platform next to Great Lakes Naval Base waiting for the train to return to my home to tell unbelieving Tanna how the exams went, I talked to a sailor who expressed some disparaging remarks about not being able to learn anything useful for civilian life. He claimed he was excellent at putting a shell precisely down a smoke stack twelve miles away. He was going to reenlist.

18 June 1965 a telephone call from Clyde L. Hughes, Head, Employment Branch, Personnel Division, confirmed my appointment as Meteorologist, GS-9, \$7,710 [\$27,789, 1993 equivalent civil service pay scale] per annum plus Antarctic bonus for a total of \$10,510 [\$37,881, 1993] with OMR. Unbelievable! Hallelujah! There was one glitch. "We have had no reply from Local Draft Board #44, Milwaukee County to our letter of June 8 in which we requested permission for you to leave the country. You should not begin travel until you have their clearance and approval of your Travel Request is received." I never knew we were prisoners in our own country. This should not have been a problem since we were at peace with no major military action occurring with American troops anywhere in the world, just military occupation forces in Korea and Germany.

**17 April 1965. "The JCS have reviewed the military resources which will be available in SVN by the end of 1965 and have concluded that even with an attainment of the highest feasible mobilization goals, ARVN will have insufficient forces to carry out the kind of successful campaign against the VC which is considered essential for the purposes discussed above. If the ground war is not to drag into 1966 and even beyond, they consider it necessary to reinforce GNV ground forces with about 23 battalion equivalents in addition to the forces now being recruited in SVN." (Cablegram from Ambassador Maxwell D. Taylor in Saigon to Secretary of State Dean Rusk.)**

"June 8, 1965"

"Milwaukee County Draft Board"

"Local Board #44"

"Selective Service System"

"135 West Wells Street"

"Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53203"

"Subject: Selective Service # 47-44-41-192"

"Dear Sir:"

"Mr. Martin P. Sponholz, 2535 N. 2nd Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin has been selected for assignment as a Meteorologist to participate in the U. S. Weather Antarctic Expedition 1965-66. Mr. Sponholz will be assigned to Plateau Station, Antarctica."

"The U. S. Government through the National Science Foundation and cooperating agencies such as the Weather Bureau is supporting an active national research program in Antarctica. This is an important part of the coordinated international scientific investigations of Antarctica, mainly in the geophysical sciences. The Weather Bureau conducts a meteorological measurement program and a program of Antarctic research using data from the measurement program."



“Since we have experienced a great deal of difficulty finding qualified persons willing to accept this isolated assignment, we are most anxious for Mr. Sponholz to be able to participate in this program.”

“The duration of the tour in the Antarctic is approximately 18 months beginning July 1965, and terminating December 1966 or January 1967. We shall appreciate it very much if you will grant Mr. Sponholz permission to be absent from the United States for the period indicated above in order that he may accept this assignment.”

“Sincerely, Guy H. Dorsey,  
Manager, Personnel,  
U. S. Department of Commerce.”

I, as well as most American citizens, was unaware of the involvement of the United States and its armed forces in Vietnam. Required to get my draft board’s permission for accepting a job and travel was a sudden way to become aware of our international relations in the Far East.

“11 June 1965”

“PERMIT FOR REGISTRANT TO DEPART FROM THE UNITED STATES”

“IN HIS APPLICATION THE REGISTRANT GAVE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:”

“A. COUNTRIES TO BE VISITED, Antarctica.”

“B. ORGANIZATIONS OR INDIVIDUALS REPRESENTED, United States Department of Commerce (Weather Bureau).”

“C. NATURE OF BUSINESS, U. S. Weather Antarctic Expedition 1965-66.”

“The above-named registrant is hereby authorized to depart from the United States and to remain absent therefrom until 11 June 1966.”

None of us took note that in spite of the U. S. Department of Commerce request that I be granted an eighteen month deferment, each government agency has its own policy and the Milwaukee Draft Board did nothing beyond twelve months. Never mind that June 1966 would be the austral winter on the isolated high plateau of the south polar region inaccessible from the outside world. The all wise administrator of the great bureaucracy would figure it out. I was on my way SOUTH!

