

## CHAPTER 6

### To THE South

I could not wait for Sunday, 11 December 1965. Not an avid sports fan, but nevertheless aware of important mileposts in sports, I held several tickets for the big showdown between quarterbacks Johnny Unitis of the Baltimore Colts and Bart Star of the Green Bay Packers at the Baltimore stadium. All East coast sports writers saw only Johnny's arm. Yet it was the powerhouse days of Vince Lombardi's Packers with Bart Star doing all the passing. Suddenly, delivered by hand were military travel orders. You shall board DC-7/SARD 2737 at Andrews Air Force Base at 1500 LST 10 December 1965. All passengers must report to the terminals two hours prior to flight departure. You must have in hand passport, travel orders and inoculation record. Warning, as a civilian you need to know the military travels on time!



Bill Weyant drove me to Andrews. Herb Viebrock and Ed Flowers came along. Besides the two personal suitcases I checked in, I was hand carrying two crates holding my last minute purchase of theodolites, several boxes of extra thermistors for monitoring the temperature of the snow at several depths beneath the surface, and one large box about a cubic metre in size painted in international fluorescent orange with red and white letters spelling out DO NOT FREEZE. Inside this box, buried in styrofoam about a foot thick, was a little black box that had two electrodes coming out of a leather pouch holding a sample of liquid water, ice crystals, and water (gaseous) vapor at a very low pressure sealed in heavy plastic. This was my standard triple point bottle, which would be used to calibrate all temperature devices at Plateau Station.

Leander Stroschein also came loaded down with more than a dozen boxes of instruments that were purchased or acquired too late for shipment by the Navy to the Ice. It was a little embarrassing shuffling in loading lines pushing all these boxes along. In time it became our standard way. We checked in, found our stanchions to park for the military world of hurry up and wait, bid farewell to our friends who came out to Andrews to say good-bye and settled in. I wished I could be leaving a day later for the sake of the football game.

We waited around more than four hours, now two hours late according to my travel orders and itinerary. Working the crowd of polar personnel was Helen Gerasimou, the secretary of the head of Polar Programs of NSF. She was our queen, our mother, our girl friend. She personally said good-bye to everyone leaving for the Ice. She never missed a person. She was whoever you needed her to be. She let the men who needed to be draped around their girl friend or wife find a quiet corner of the air terminal until the very last moment and then gently pried them apart, even caring for these women as the airplane took off. She talked sports to the sports men, about hunting bear, deep sea fishing, the past World Series, the football games of the last weekend, but had not heard of Bart Star. Helen automatically knew who to give a hug or kiss as a mother might say good-bye to her young polar hero or who to slip a Playboy magazine or a bottle of whiskey. I got a great big hug.

At 2000 LST, now five hours late, we at last boarded the airplane. But almost immediately after we fastened our seat belts we were asked to disembark. No reason was given. One ranking military person jokingly announced that for an airplane loading drill we did poorly and had to do it again. In

fact, at 2130 LST we loaded up again and were sent back to the terminal again. Someone thought President Johnson was departing with Air Force One from a hangar at Andrews and it was a rule that the air space all around Andrews had to be cleared while a fighter squadron patrolled the sky and escorted the President's plane. Activity on the ground seemed to support this idea.

At 2245 LST, now seven hours and forty-five minutes late, we started taxiing down the runway, blew a tire, and skidded to the very end of the runway before being towed back to the terminal. Once more we walked into the terminal. This time all personnel were beginning to get perturbed and some were scared and shaken. The military was not exactly leaving on time.

Nothing was said. No excuses were given. Just do as you're told. Wait!

We could not leave the military air terminal. Wanting to depart for some tavern or other more comfortable places, we were told that in essence we were checked out as though we had gone through customs and technically had left the country. I didn't believe this and knew the military in charge of the transport of all polar personnel were running out of reasons but also could not do much better. I just never have believed official statements. I know gossip can bring serious panics and undesirable consequences. In reality, with lying as the standard policy for all official statements issued by the administrative powers, or at best, shaded truth that releases no information and takes no responsibility, gossip is the closest answer to the truth. The bigger the organization, the greater is the need to rely on gossip for truth.

At 0000 LST, Sunday, 11 December 1965 we thought surely they would put us up in some hotel or at least a barracks since the rumor mill identified that there were no flight personnel around, no stewards, no mechanics, and no pilots. The official statement still claimed we needed to stay alert because takeoff was imminent. By 0300 LST the bottles Helen left were dry and even the card games came to a halt as each individual gave up on the hope of flying out that night and collapsed to sleep on the floor of the terminal.

1220 LST, Sunday, an hour before game time we were in the aircraft with new tires. As the pilots revved the engines for the final check, flames shot out of the engine on the left side closest to the passengers' cabin. Taxiing at high speed on a secondary runway put the fire out, but once again we off loaded, more than depressed.

Search for a TV to see the game ended in the realization that, as a home game for Baltimore, the game broadcast was blacked out. A radio gave us the kickoff but at 1435 LST in our trusty plane out of radio signal distance, we took off without further incident twenty-three hours and thirty-five minutes behind schedule. From the depths of the polar night more than six months later our radio operator, Ed Horton, asked for me who won that great game. The Navy messages only asked us to carry on and sent us their prayers of concern over morale. I never found out who won that game.

	Arrive	Flyg Time	Depart	Gnd Time
Andrews AFB Maryland	1500 10 DEC	--	1435 11 DEC	23.5 hrs
Travis AFB California	2100 11 DEC	11.5 hrs	0050 12 DEC	4 hrs
Honolulu INT Hawaii	0730 12 DEC	8.5 hrs	0015 13 DEC	17 hrs
International Date Line -----				
Nandi Fiji Islands	1000 14 DEC	12 hrs	1130 14 DEC	1.5 hrs
Christchurch New Zealand	1800 14 DEC	6.5 hrs		

Bound for Plateau and traveling to New Zealand together were Bob Geissel, Hugh Muir, Leander Stroschein, and me. Almost within the same time frame, on 13 December 1965, Captain V. Donald Bursik, Deputy Commander, U. S. Naval Support Force, Antarctica, planted the United States flag on the high polar plateau in the middle of the large unexplored region of Antarctica at 79° 15' South and 40° 30' East (LST at Plateau Station is nine hours earlier than at Christchurch). The advance party also included Lieutenant Jimmy L. Gowan, MC, USN, Officer-in-Charge; Robert Flint, Station Scientific Leader; Charles L. Roberts, of the U. S. Weather Bureau; Arthur Weber, architect from the Bureau of Yards and Docks; Ed C. Horton, Jr., a Navy electronics technician cross trained as a radio operator; and Robert Faul, ABC-TV. They quickly erected a tent camp and began the preliminary surveying for the eventual construction of Plateau Station.

Following my instructions and using his expertise and previous Antarctic experience, Charlie Roberts determined the prevailing wind direction from surface features on the surface of the snow. Particularly important was the undisturbed field of sastrugi, a harder small erosional feature that was dug out on the sides by wind and blowing snow erosion and grew as a pointer in the wind as sharp ice needles built up the pointer facing into the wind. Flint, Roberts, and Weber with Gowan consenting assured the placement of the camp and its orientation was satisfactory to all the scientific research projects planned at Plateau Station. Dr. Gowan bore the chief responsibility to the Navy and to all of us as our medical doctor that this station was also placed in a survivable position as well.

We were taken to the Zetland Hotel at 88 Cashel Street in downtown Christchurch for warmth, rest, beer, and comfort. At the hotel we were immediately introduced to the proprietor, Reg. McKenzie and his wife Jean. It was well known who Hugh Muir, Bob Geissel, and I were because of our connection to the establishing of a new station in an unexplored section of Antarctica. The Christchurch newspaper's headline read,

**“Eight Will Dice With Cold Death.”  
“THEY COULD ALL DIE.”**

“There are few great adventures left on the face of the globe. But while any shadow of the mysterious or the challenging exist there will be people who cannot rest until they have torn open the door or looked over the top, no matter what the potential cost.”

“Everest has been subdued, the jungles are full of well-beaten tracks, and the light has been let into much of the ocean bottom.”

“But this winter eight Americans are embarking on what might be the last adventure this side of space.”

“They will be locked in the dark winter night 600 miles beyond the South Pole in the worst place in the world. For eight months they will be as good as on the moon, living higher and colder than any man has ever attempted.”

“They could all die and not a single finger could be lifted to bring them help. When the Antarctic summer fades in February they will be heard but not seen till November. And throughout the black sunless months they will be fighting for survival in cold that is beyond a city dweller's comprehension.”

Reg. and Jean showed us our rooms and invited us to join them in the Hotel Lounge after we had time to freshen up and put on a tie. Things were quite formal in New Zealand, especially hotel lounges

after hours. All taverns, pubs and saloons were generally closed after 6:00 P. M., but lounges remained open as long as hotel guests were present. (In addition, in lounges, you generally needed an invitation so the attendees always were chosen.) The first night drinks were on the house. The group Reg. gathered for us were guests from quite a cross section of the world as well as some local dignitaries very interested in polar exploration. We spent most of the evening talking about each of our plans and hopes for Plateau Station and after Plateau Station.

However, once it became evident that none of us, not Hugh, not Bob, not Lea and certainly not me, had ever been to the Antarctic, Reg., an old hand giving service to all Americans of Operation Deep Freeze, had his fun with us. "Come look at these blokes who's going to find out if they have any male parts after winter." . . . "Let me tell you, you bloody yanks, your biggest problem is going to be how to get what's left of your two inches out of six inches of clothing. And if you think you have more than two inches, well, you ain't never been cold!" With laughter all around, and much free beer as well, I was afraid we'd become the "two inch crew".

First things first, we reported to Deep Freeze Headquarters the next day and met Eddie Goodale, the current USARP representative in Christchurch and the chief liaison between the civilian scientists and the Navy. Eddie held an office with Overseas Operations of the Weather Bureau but also was so well respected that NSF turned to him for this very high office with much responsibility that led to the success or failure of any and all scientific projects in the Antarctic.

Eddie was a dog trainer for Admiral Byrd in 1928 at Little America on the first modern American expedition that culminated with Byrd's flight over the South Pole. Eddie, a Harvard student, gave up his studies back in 1928 to take part in the adventure in the South and gave his entire life since to the research and exploration of Antarctica. I considered myself a theoretician and yet embarking on this adventure, I was fully aware that Lettau, Schwerdtfeger, and their stay-at-home students were racing ahead with theoretical math models while I was on this slow and deliberate adventure far removed from the theory. I was becoming very much aware that you could not do both.

I still had a shopping list of things needed for Plateau Station. Goodale pledged his assistance, sent me to Ralph Lenton, another USARP rep working with supplies and the deployment of all science personnel. One of my chief, still unpurchased needs, was a large quantity of bamboo poles for the establishment of a snow stake field and for Lettau's suggested mirage targets. Between Goodale and Lenton, I had no worry that all the last minute supplies would be delivered onto the high plateau.

Ralph Lenton, then with the Arctic Institute of North America (AINA), was an elderly carpenter, logistics man, and problem solver for nearly everything with respect to Antarctic expeditions. His greatest achievement perhaps was his crossing of the Antarctic continent as a member of the first team ever to do so. That expedition was led by Sir Vivian Fuchs from the British station, Shackleton Base on the Weddell Sea, over the South Pole, and on to the New Zealand station, Scott Base on the coast of the Ross Sea. All these men, brilliant in their own right, chose the active adventurous life and, as they themselves aged, took pleasure in assisting the younger scientists with less experience. Specifically Ralph's organization, AINA, was responsible for providing the clothing for the men of the expeditions in addition to other research projects such as the aurora that Hugh Muir was working on.

I was issued a locker and lock for all my civilian clothes and belongings I would not need at Plateau Station. Then I was issued the polar clothing that consisted of:

Helmet, balaclava	1
Cap, pile	1
Underdrawers, thermal	4

Undershirt, thermal	4
Shirt, wool, heavy (red checkered)	1
Trousers, field	2
Liner, field trousers	1
Anorak	1
Parka with liner	2
Boot, rubber, thermal, white (bunny boots)	1 pair
Boot, mukluk	4 pair
Shoe, work	1 pair
Sock, shearling, low	4 pair
Sock, shearling, high	2 pair
Sock, wool, ski	4 pair
Sock, cushion sole	8 pair
Insole, saran	2 pair
Insole, felt	3 pair
Slipper, shearling lined	1 pair
Mitten, gauntlet (bear claws)	1 pair
Mitten, buckskin	3 pair
Mitten, insert, wool	4 pair
Glove, shell, leather	2 pair
Glove, insert, wool	2 pair
Bag, guide	3
Goggles, sun	1 pair
Belt, web with buckle	1
Suspender, armhole	2
Repair kit, sewing	1
Stencil pencil	1.

Geissel, Muir, Stroschein and I were told to stay near by and not to travel much out of the city of Christchurch so that we could be contacted within a few hours for departure for McMurdo Station. We would be transported by C-121J Super Constellation, a four prop wheeled aircraft that readily could take off from Christchurch and in about eight hours land at William's Field, a runway scraped smooth on the near permanently frozen sea ice of the Ross Sea between Ross Island and the Ross Ice Shelf. This was a flight that took the plane, crew, personnel, and priority cargo past a point of no return and on to McMurdo. The point of no return for the Navy was a point along the flight path where a decision had to be made to return if the weather looked bad at the destination or to continue on to the destination with no possibility of turning back since the consumption of fuel would not permit it. For that reason Eddie Goodale told us to stick tight and warned us that there might be many frustrated calls to service followed by cancellations. Much more hurry up and wait.

It was funny and at the same time a little sad. We had a little free time as long as we stayed near Deep Freeze Headquarters but the four of us, all who had been chosen for our independence which was needed to get a job done in isolation a long distance away from our employer, suddenly faced failure in cooperating for some short time touring of this beautiful country. Hugh Muir, a Scotsman, had a very different agenda for seeing New Zealand and quickly disappeared. Bob Geissel, a former member of the Peace Corps, likewise was eager to do some skiing and mountain climbing and disappeared. That left Leander Stroschein and me to cast our lots together.

The first day, Lea and I rented a Morris-Minni-Minner (a car that had tires on it that were smaller than a kid's little toy wagon) and drove down to Christchurch's seaport of Lyttelton. We both desired to check how our main cargo shipments were progressing and enjoyed watching the ships coming in

and departing for the South. To our disappointment, we were unable to see any manifest and even much less able to board a ship. The Navy was the Navy and we were USARP, "Useless Scientists Assigned to Ridiculous Projects." What was promised at the political levels in comfortable board rooms or retreats became different commitments of labor on the ships and on the Ice.

Bored and waiting around, drinking without end, and waiting some more, became our way of life but fortunately only for a few days. While drinking in a sheep field overlooking the surf of the South Pacific Ocean near Christchurch, it suddenly dawned on Lea and me at the same time, we were the important cargo. It was our projects that were the justification for the U. S. presence in the Antarctic. Why were we waiting on the Navy? Our Morris-Minni-Minner burned up the wrong side of the road and we toured Dunedin, Queenstown, the Fiord lands at Milford Sound and met Bob Geissel at the Hermitage in the Southern Alps at the base of Mt. Cook. Bob had been skiing and camping.

We used the Hermitage Lodge as a base camp. Our conscience did bother us enough to check in with Ralph Lenton frequently. His British humor understood our restlessness and he also could judge the Navy's real intent on operation in the South well enough to give us fair warning when to high tail it back to Christchurch. Exhausting hikes and climbs took me to Franz Josef Glacier and about halfway up Mt. Cook. The conditioning was long overdue after being closeted on the flight over the Pacific. We all justified our AWOL activity for the sake of our research. We all drank an incredible amount of wine at the Hermitage.

After more than a week's time, we finally got the word. The Navy was really ready to take us, the Plateau scientists, South. 24 December 1965, when many newly introduced local friends were liberal with invitations to come to their homes for Christmas cheer, we gathered in our polar gear, boots and all, on a warm summer day and waited for our flight South. Again bored, many men, including myself along with the camp followers, sang 'God Save the Queen' at a movie house and were enjoying a movie when it suddenly was interrupted, the lights turned on, and the manager announced that our Deep Freeze Flight was leaving. With a standing ovation from the Kiwi's in the theater we were sent South Christmas Eve, landing at Williams Field in the midnight sun.

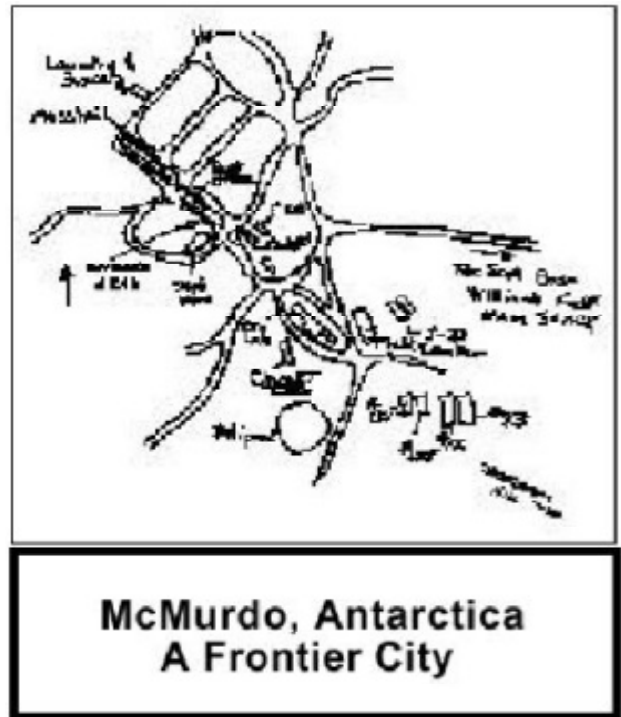
I did not try to sleep the first night. I walked around McMurdo Station, the largest station in Antarctica. The cargo ships escorted by ice breakers were not in port yet. The population was only about four hundred. That was nearly double the winter population, but when the ships came in, the population would swell to nearly four thousand men. No women at all.

Writing as President of the Antarctic Society in January 1980, Paul Dalrymple reflected on his views of the new inroads women were making, even in the Antarctic:

"A Christchurch newspaper had an article which said that there would be seventy, yes, 70, women from New Zealand and the United States at Scott and McMurdo stations this summer. I can't believe it. Whatever happened to the good old days? They quoted an Ensign in our navy, one Kris Chase, as saying, "Part of my work is to make the time fly this summer for people working at McMurdo. I'm involved in morale, welfare and recreation." On top of that, she has a staff of three full-time military personnel. I thought people were still willing to give an arm or a leg, and work 20 hours a day, just for the opportunity of going to the Ice. Now they have to be entertained, if not coddled. Ensign Chase has suggested that softball be played in the Antarctic. You mean that our government actually pays people to come up with such great ideas? I think I could come up with a better idea about how fewer women could make more men a whole lot happier, but I don't think I could get it by the Board of Chaplains."

“There is a new record for the South Pole. It isn’t exactly a station record, being more of a personal achievement. But as you know, there was a female doctor at the station during the past year. That alone was history-making, as she became the first female pole sitter to winterover at either Pole. But she also became the first bona fide female member of the 300 Club. As I understand it, one has to undergo in the altogether a temperature difference of 300 Fahrenheit degrees, with one of the temperatures being at least -100 ° F. To make it official one has to tiptoe through the sastrugi patch and remain outside in the buff for at least one full minute, and it has to be authenticated by a photograph. What Paul Siple used to do in the interest of science, determining when stout hearted men froze their extremities in the interest of refining the windchill monogram, is now not only done by men but also by a woman as a routine lark. And who says nothing ever changes.” (Paul Dalrymple, *Antarctic Society Newsletter*, January 1980, page 12)

I walked around examining a few of the tourist sights. Scott’s Hut, built in 1901, renovated by the Kiwi’s, was a fine reminder of the sacrifices made by the men who came here before we did. Overlooking this little house was a very large oil storage tank that provides comfortable heating or rapid air transport everywhere on the continent. Scott’s hut was built by men who walked everywhere pulling one ton sledges.



Three months earlier a memorial statue, a bronze bust of Rear Admiral Richard E. Byrd on a polished black Norwegian marble pedestal, was set up next to the Chapel of the Snows. In only three months’ time skua gulls had taken aim and found their mark just as every other statue in America was found by pigeons.

On Christmas morning I attended church in the Chapel of the Snows, the only church in Antarctica. It was built during IGY and maintained by the military with services conducted by the military chaplaincy program. We sang the familiar Christmas carols. During the first service a Navy Chaplain tried to assure us that the peace on earth was being maintained by the constant vigil of the atomic submarines. Not getting a very comfortable message from the secret subsurface force, I stayed for the second service.

The second Christmas service was conducted by an Air Force Chaplain and he saw the ever readiness of the Strategic Air Command every hour carrying their nuclear devices to our enemies’ borders before being called back as a certain method to maintain the peace on earth. Enough! I never understood my church body’s schism with its sister synod, in part over the chaplaincy program. Now I saw more clearly.

I climbed Observation Hill, the primary landmark in the immediate McMurdo area. It was a

volcanic black ash cone that rose from the sea about two thousand feet. Half way up was Nuki Poo, a nuclear reactor to generate electricity and heat for the station. It was established during IGY as a show off piece of American engineering and as a model of President Eisenhower's atoms for peace plan. It never worked well. Either it produced too much heat or not enough. The last four or five years the Navy was increasing their reliance on conventional oil for both electricity and heat.

From on top of Observation Hill I was overcome by the size, the stark weathering of, and the nearness of the great wooden cross erected as a memorial to Captain Robert Falcon Scott's polar party that perished during their march back to Ross Island from the South Pole. High on top of Observation Hill I looked down at McMurdo Station as it slowly came alive this Christmas morning. For the entire camp it meant a great feed at noon, a day off for most of the military personnel, and just a routine day for field work and observations for most biologists and geologists.



Looking over McMurdo toward the West I could clearly see glaciers descending to the sea between the Royal Society Mountain Range. They seemed to be just a few miles away, but when I returned to the science Chalet and consulted a map, it revealed that these mountains were beyond the coast more than fifty miles away. The names of the glaciers carried the names of the explorers from England who did the intensive studies in this region the first quarter of this century - Wilson Piedmont Glacier, Debenham Glacier, Wright Valley and Wright Lower Glacier (after the very Sir Charles Wright I spent an evening with at Skyland), Taylor Valley, and Ferrar Glacier. Maps and aerial photos made these geographical features look picturesque without revealing the frost-bite, abandonment, panic while lost, and even death that others paid to get the earliest sketches. Looking closer at a detailed map of the same region reveals names like Mount Weyant (Bill) and Cape Roberts (Charlie).

South to the Pole and the midnight sun was the featureless Ross Ice Shelf and north and east loomed the most dominant features: Mt. Erebus, an actively smoking volcano rising out of the sea 12,448 feet, and Mt. Terror. These two mountains were named by Captain James Clark Ross on a British expedition 1839-1843 after his two ships the *HMS Erebus* and *HMS Terror*.

The setting was a perfect church for this young explorer to confess my sins to my Lord and ask His blessings on the expedition I was about to embark on. Vividly imprinted during my personal church service was the reality of the loss of life both of humans struggling to understand the natural world and the wooden cross two thousand years ago erected by Roman Soldiers that displayed the sacrifice my Lord made for me. I thanked and praised Him, singing into the warm wind as loud as I could knowing with the roar of the sea ice breaking up, the thunder of gases erupting from Mt. Erebus, and the whistling of the wind only my Lord could hear me. It was a far more meaningful service than I experienced in the Chapel of the Snows and I took great comfort knowing my Lord and Savior Jesus occasionally went to a mountain or high place to pray as well.

While checking a map at the Chalet, Ken Moulton, the USARP Representative at McMurdo and chief civilian liaison between the military and the civilian scientists throughout most of Antarctica, sought me out and informed me to get my gear ready for departure for Amundsen-Scott Station as soon as the weather stays clear with some certainty, either later Christmas Day or the first thing the next day. I did not need to tell the other USARPs bound for Plateau. They would follow later. No reasons for the changes were given. Excitedly I complied.



The plan was for the four of us, Geissel, Muir, Stroschein, and me, to spend a week or more acclimatizing to the cold and twenty-four hour sun at McMurdo while assisting other scientists with field work. Then we were to be flown to South Pole at an altitude of 9,186 feet above sea level and spend an additional two weeks acclimatizing to the high altitude before flying to Plateau at still a very much higher altitude. Something was going on that I was not being told. I was to work with the U. S. Weather Bureau group with Ron Stevens as the Meteorologist in Charge until I would be ordered to Plateau.

The next day, 26 December 1965 on a ski equipped LC-130F, #321 (There were four such aircraft, #318, #319, #320, and #321, and in the high interior of Antarctica they were our life blood for all supplies and personnel transportation.) I landed at the South Pole, reported to Ron Stevens and became part of the routine observational shifts. The over ice Queen Maud Land Traverse II was well on its way toward Plateau Station and was currently at 82 ° 54' South and 28 ° 00' East. *USNS Towle* commenced the off-loading of cargo at Elliott Quay, McMurdo. This ship carried the four orange “vans” that would make up the main base for Plateau Station. Lieutenant James D. Ramsey, CEC, USNR and fourteen “sea bees” were already at the South Pole putting in their time of acclimatizing before building Plateau Station.

Ed Landry, a meteorologist finishing his year at Amundsen-Scott Station was rounding out Ron Stevens’ crew that was suddenly made small by the abandonment of the polar job by Charlie Mabe. Ed, too relaxed as an old timer and drinking too much before his task, walked into the weather balloon shelter with a lit cigar where pure hydrogen gas was used for the balloon inflation. An instantaneous explosion took off the roof and did other structural damage to the balloon shelter. “Mad Bomber” Landry was thrown down the tunnel between buildings and almost made it back to Club Ninety (the South Pole tavern) without touching the ice. Loose and limber, he was not hurt. The “sea bees” had some extra work with which to break them into high altitude breathing.

I met every plane that carried USARP cargo when I was not taking weather observations. Meteorologists had an “in” with the military. The military may never have understood the need to measure minute magnetic field changes or the colors of aurora but weather, on which all transportation depended, was a necessary job for a USARP. With both the display of a willingness to work and cooperate and the needed weather observations, all Weather Bureau people were readily accepted. As a result I got to know quite a few of the “sea bees” en route to Plateau and also some of the other Navy members. One Navy person that I became a good friend of during my short stay at the South Pole was Andrew Burl Moulder who did a lot of unloading as each plane landed. At South Pole or Plateau Station the conditions were always so cold that the airplane engines never were turned off. That caused a backwash of blowing snow and nearly zero visibility behind the aircraft. Two visible flags some distance behind the aircraft outlined the path heavy equipment would take in the man-made blizzards. A 10-ton Traxcavator would push a large freight sledge up to the aircraft to allow the cargo to be rolled on to the sledge and hauled to the appropriate place at the station.

In one of these man-made blizzards, Andrew Burl Moulder was crushed between the LC-130F and a cargo sledge before the resupply season finished. It was a very dangerous year. Also six other military flyers were killed in a crash on the Ross Ice Shelf. The entire crew of an Air Development Squadron Six plane died when their plane crashed while trying to move a scientific field party studying glacial movements on the Ross Ice Shelf. Witnesses observed poor visibility during a partial whiteout and some evidence of icing. “From a distance of about a mile . . . [scientists] . . . observed the LC-47 approaching at an altitude of about 200 feet. The aircraft appeared to stall right wing first, resume level flight for an instant, and then stall to the left. It plunged to the surface making violent impact with the snow. The front part of the aircraft was compressed by the force of the collision. The center section

and both wings tore loose, and the rear portion of the aircraft ripped free. Before rescue operations could be started, leaking aviation gasoline caught fire and subsequently ignited JATO bottles which the aircraft carried. Six hours after the accident, fire and exploding JATO continued to prevent any effort to remove the remains of those on board. The entire aircraft, except the extreme empennage and a portion of the outer starboard wing panel, was consumed by the flames. The twisted wreckage rested in a hole in the snow approximately 40 feet wide by 35 feet deep. No evidence exists that any crew member attempted to escape." (*Antarctic Journal of the United States*, March-April, 1966, p.39)

The words of Rear Admiral Richard E. Byrd to a family of another man who died in Antarctica: "He served and died for his country just as devotedly and with as high purpose as if he had died fighting to preserve freedom. The mission for which he had volunteered and on which he served is, and will continue to be, an effort to unlock further the secrets of nature in that vast area, Antarctica, and put them to the use of all mankind." (in *Antarctic Journal of the United States*, March-April, 1966, p.39)

When the South Pole camp sobered up after New Years 2 January the "sea bees" were taken up to the Plateau to build a small base camp, first for their own needs in the growing and crowded new Plateau Station. The Jamesway they constructed would become part of the emergency camp and the needed second observation point for the second theodolite of my inversion study. Two days later, with their construction work on that Jamesway complete and the tent city taken down for warmer comfort at Plateau Station, I was given the order to take the next plane to the high country. I still had not logged enough acclimatization time, but Ron Stevens passed on a little private information that a near or actual altercation may have occurred between Jimmy Gowan, the Navy's Officer in Charge at Plateau Station, and Charlie Roberts. Tensions surely must have been high in setting up final guidelines for the permanent camp quarters and last minute changes could drastically harm a science program or put the personnel at needless risk. These were the tensions seasoned polar people like Rob Flint and Charlie Roberts were expected to resolve. I never found out just what happened, but I was headed up to Plateau.





**Top: Heading for the ice, Pago Pago  
American Samoa; December 1965**

**Bottom: Avon River, Christchurch, New Zealand;  
December 1965**





**Top: McMurdo, Antarctica, looking toward Hut Point;  
December 1965**

**Bottom: Observation Hill, Ross Island, over looking McMurdo;  
December 1965**

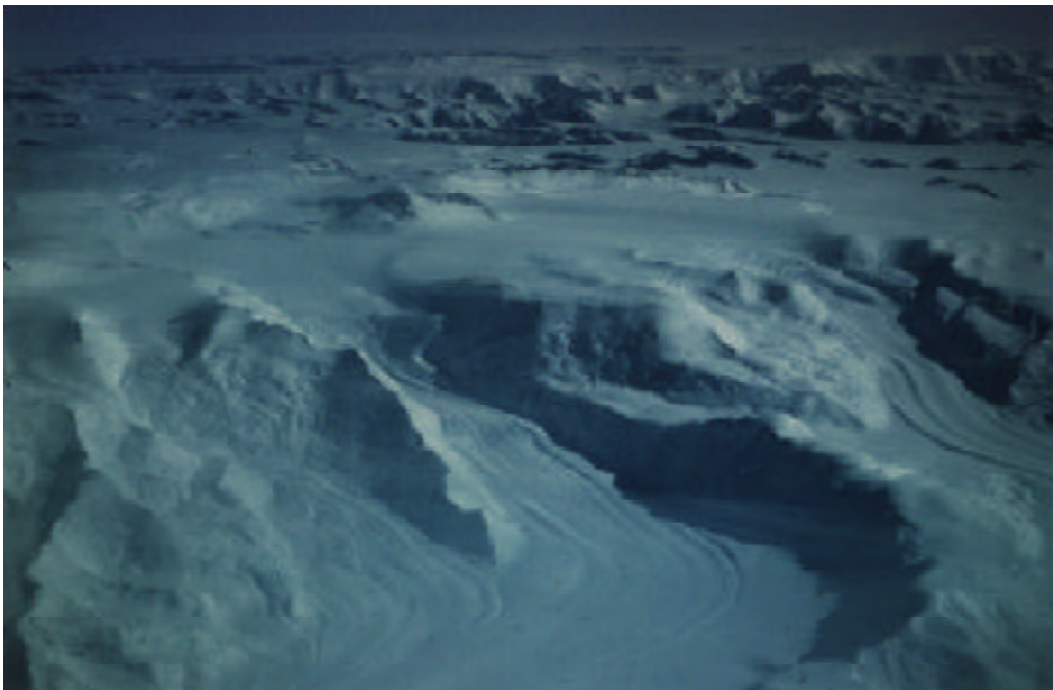






**Top: Chapel of the Snows at the foot of Observation Hill. “Nuki Poo,” a nuclear reactor and electric power plant can be seen halfway up Observation Hill; December 1965.**

**Bottom: Flying over the Beardmore Glacier with the Trans Antarctic Mountains in the distance enroute to the South Pole: December 1965.**





**A tunnel between buildings at Amundsen-Scott base, South Pole;  
December 1965 (Slide by Rob Flint)**