

Figure 1. Map of Antarctica at the South Pole. Little America III can be seen 150° - 180° longitude and 75° latitude.

Chapter One Objectives of Expedition

The objectives of the United States Antarctic Service Expedition were received by Admiral Byrd at Balboa, Canal Zone as he boarded the *North Star* on November 30, 1939. The President, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, directed that two bases be established. One to be designated East Base, to be located in the vicinity of Charcot Island or Alexander I Land, or on Marguerite Bay if no accessible site could be found on either of the specified islands. The second base, designated West Base was to be located in the vicinity of King Edward VII Land, but if this proved impossible, a site on the Bay of Whales at or near Little America was to be investigated.

The scientific program to be carried out at the two bases included observation of the aurora australis, cosmic rays and meteors. It also included investigations in geology, glaciology, geophysics, terrestrial magnetism, botany, zoology, oceanography, and meteorology. The medical officers were to carry out physiological observations on the base personnel.

The President requested that the United States Antarctic Service cooperate with the Argentine meteorological station on Laurie Island in the South Orkneys and with the Chilean Meteorological Service in the exchange of data.

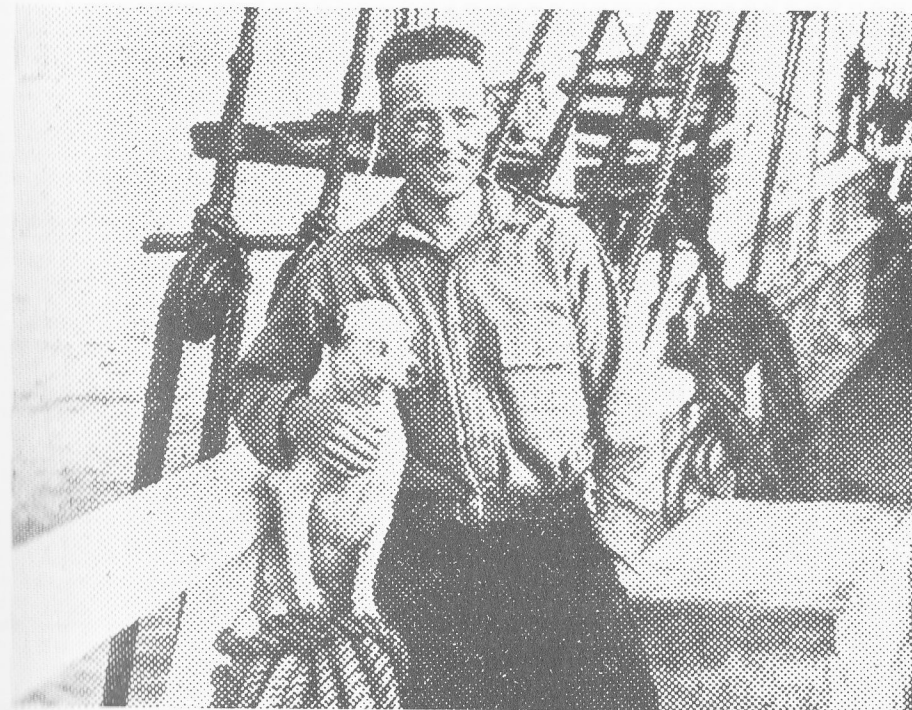
Cameo On Admiral Byrd's Career

When we hear the name "Admiral Richard E. Byrd," we immediately think of the South Pole, but before the Antarctic expeditions, he was in aviation. He was known for his pioneering of aviation. He was designated a naval aviator in 1918. In 1925, he took command of the naval air unit of the Navy-MacMillan expedition to Greenland which explored 30,000 square miles of territory. With the famed Floyd Bennett as co-pilot, he made the first flight over the North Pole in 1926. President Coolidge presented him with the Hubbard gold medal for valor in exploration. His first expedition of the southern polar region arrived at Antarctica in 1928 where he established a base and named it Little America I. Byrd's flight over the South Pole in January 15, 1929 was preceded by Sir Hubert Wilkins on November 6, 1928 — who succeeded in making the first airplane flight just ten weeks before Byrd. Byrd was promoted to the rank of Rear-Admiral for his accomplishments during this expedition. In 1933, he organized another trip to Antarctica and named it Little America II.

During his aviation career, Admiral Byrd was involved in an airplane crash which left him physically handicapped and unable to perform his duties as a Naval Air Officer — and, eventually led to his retirement from "active duty." His retirement did not deter his ambitions in the field of explorations as he was constantly looking to new horizons.

As a result of the 1939-1941 expedition, several noteworthy discoveries were made. New mountain ranges, five islands, 150,000 square miles of area and more than 900 miles of Antarctic coast unknown until this time, were discovered.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt presented him with a gold star in recognition of these services. He was overseas four different times during the course of World War II on aviation duty. He was decorated for outstanding service in connection with aviation and received two commendations for efficiency.



Admiral Richard E. Byrd and his dog aboard the *USS Bear* (1939-1941)

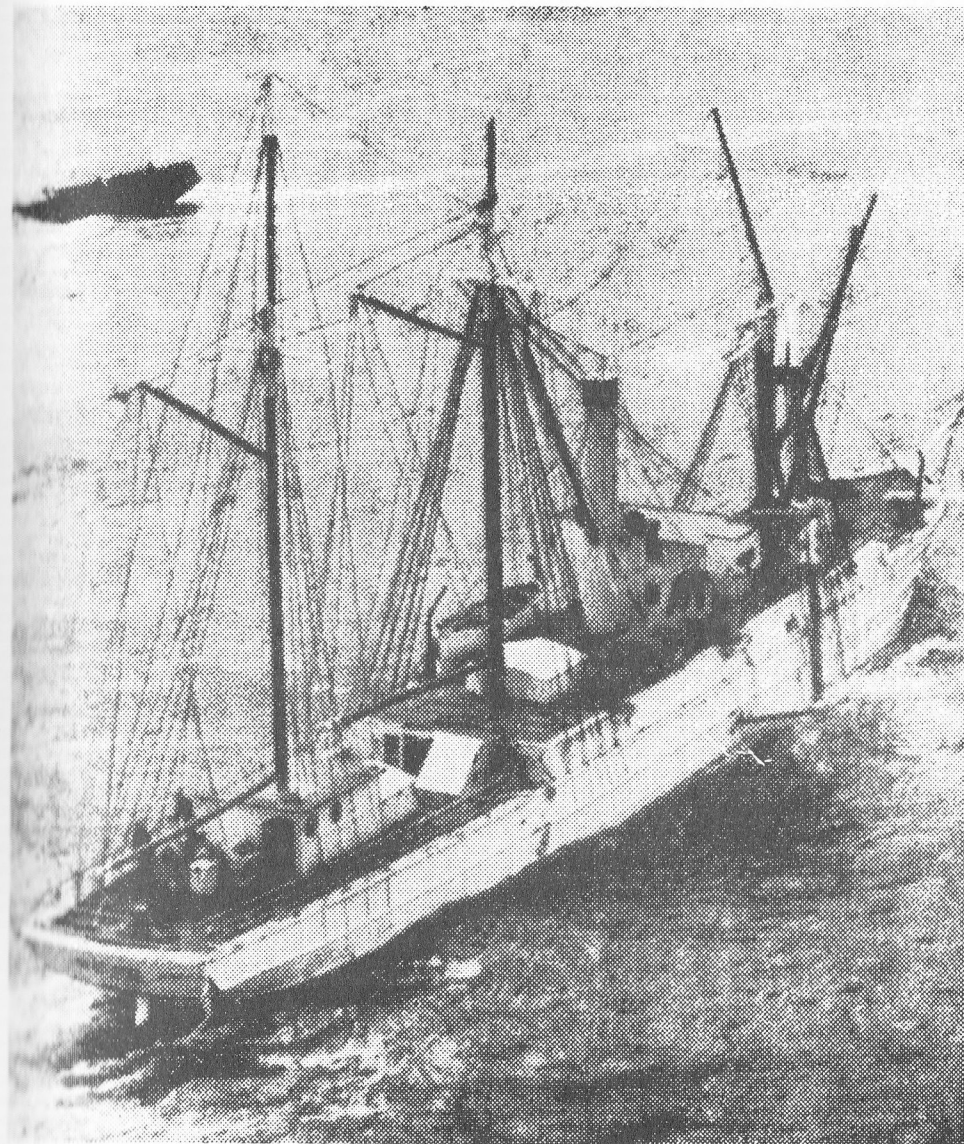
History of the Barkentine Bear

The barkentine *Bear* was an old arctic sailing whaler and was built in Greenock, Scotland in 1874 of Scottish oak, Norwegian pine and other materials from Europe and America.

After ten years of service as a whaler, the *Bear* was purchased by the U.S. Coast Guard for use in the rescue of the United States Arctic Expedition led by Lieutenant A. W. Greely. In 1928, the vessel had become the property of the city of Oakland and Admiral Byrd had it rechristened the *Bear* of Oakland after it had been reconditioned at Boston Shipyards. It had been converted from coal burning to diesel engines. She was a 703-ton vessel, 200 feet long, a beam of 32 feet and a draft of 17 feet, 2 inches, and equipped with sails. Under steam power she once was capable of nine knots. The ship's first voyage after reconditioning was on the Second Byrd Expedition in 1933-1935 and was used for ramming through ice packs (not to be confused with an ice breaker ship). It was common knowledge she was 65 years old at that time and could roll in dry dock. The fact-of-the-matter is, she almost did.

The *Bear* had several experiences of her rolling on the high seas during rough weather as you will find out in this narration.

On this trip, the commander was Lieutenant Commander Richard H. Cruzen, USN and Captain Bendik Johansen was the sailing master and ice pilot.



The Barkentine Bear

Funding

Up to this point-in-time, Byrd had received private funding for his expeditions. Principal backers were such tycoons as Edsel Ford and John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Additional support in the form of monetary contributions, both large and small, donations of supplies and equipment came from many sources; including the National Geographic Society, the New York Times, Fisher Brothers, Todd Shipbuilding Company, the Tidewater Oil Company and a host of private individuals. In exchange, many of these contributors received the favors of having newly discovered mountain peaks, mountain ranges, bodies of water and various lands named after them or members of their families. (See Map of Antarctica page x.)

When Admiral Byrd began thinking of the 1939-1941 expedition, he envisioned it to be privately funded, but in the 1930's the government officials in Washington were becoming cognizant of the popular concern for the Antarctic and the importance of American interests and presence in that region. Except for the cooperation of the learned societies in the formulation of a scientific program, and the participation of civilian scientists, the United States Exploring Expedition was carried out by the Navy. The United States Antarctic Services was organized as a civilian service. Although the U. S. Antarctic Service supported one expedition, the then President of the United States, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, had the idea of making an on-going project with bases continually rotating base personnel. The government agencies provided funding for such an expedition and President Roosevelt set-to-hand a number of provisions* in a letter on November 25, 1939 laying down a course of action to be followed and the time spans in which each assignment was to be accomplished.

*Letter with twenty-one provisions can be found in the book *Americans in Antarctica from 1778-1941*, pages 410-412, chapter on *The U.S. Antarctic Service Expedition*.



Chapter Two Recruitment and Crew Members

Our recruitment applications were carefully scrutinized and the best crew was handpicked based on experience, capability and age. The average group of young men ranged from 20-30 years; the bulk of which had only seaman rating. Lieutenant Commander Richard H. Cruzen, Captain of the *USS Bear*, selected the crew of the *Bear* after weeding out many volunteers.

Due to the fact that I had a commercial radio license, second class*, I was recruited as radio operator on the *USS Bear* by Clay Bailey. Prior to Clay's leaving San Diego to go to Washington, D.C. to recruit more personnel, he began his recruiting personnel at hand. Others were Earl Baker Perce, radio operator and pilot, referred to by the Navy as AP (Aviation Pilot). Ashley C. Snow was chief aviation machinist as well as a pilot; Howard Odom, known by fellow sailors as "Pookey", was also a radioman. There were two machinists; one was Orville "Pappy" Gray and others slip my memory. It finally ended with about half dozen of us volunteering for the recruitment.

Clay Bailey, ARM 1/C (Aviation Radioman First Class) was a radio operator in one of the Navy's UJ-1 utility squadron planes at the time I was a base operator at Coronado. He had been with Admiral Byrd on the Second Antarctica Expedition, 1933-1935 as communications officer. He had already been in the Navy for some 14 years, and I might add, his career was a very colorful one as he encountered many harrowing experiences. He later was attached to staff aboard ship with the 3rd U.S. Fleet, commanded by Admiral Halsey throughout the South Pacific Campaign.

Some of the men with whom I worked closely were: Boatswains Mate Flaherty. He and 1/C Boatswains Mate John Hostinsky and 2/C Boatswains Mate Jenkins were personnel concerned with the operations of the ship, small boats, rigging, the sails and ladders.

Flaherty was an excellent seaman. He thought we radiomen should be made to swab down and paint the decks or paint the funnel along with the rest of the crew. Swede Nylund and I were exempt as we were actually assigned to the engineering department. As I was 2/C and Swede made Chief soon after the expedition was well under way, neither of us were required to do deck duty. This galled Flaherty. One quality that I admired was his beautiful handwriting. It is not usual for a man to have such penmanship and it puzzled me. I was curious as to his educational and skills background. No one knew anything about him except that he had been in the Navy for nineteen years.

* Commercial radio ratings are not classified the same as the U.S. Navy classifications.