

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.

John Hostinsky was another close associate. He showed so much more intelligence than his fellow boatswains mates. He had one terrible fault — a cruel, mean streak. That did not keep him from being a good sailor. It was common knowledge in the Navy he had been the Fleet Boxing Champ as well as their wrestling champ. He weighed in at 215 lbs. and was 5'10" in height. He was lean and looked like he weighed 150 lbs. He worked out religiously every day and was hard as an anvil. He was neat and clean in appearance. Prior to the end of the Antarctic expedition, he had passed to the rank of Warrant Boatswain. He took delight in harassing us by telling us the ship was breaking up due to bad weather and we were going to be lost at sea. He further announced that if there were any survivors to be sure to remember to spell his name correctly — H-O-S-T-I-N-S-K-Y!!!

One of the stories that came out of this expedition was the one involving "Red" Keck and John Hostinsky. One night, while we were at sea, Keck was making some cookies. Hostinsky, who happened to walk by the galley, decided to play a prank on his shipmates. He slipped a handful of dead cockroaches in the cookie batter. Needless to say, when the word got around of this incident, we had lost an appetite for Keck's cookies. No one knew that it was Hostinsky that played that prank — if they did know, they would not dare to tell on him for fear of reprisals. To ease your mind, no one ate the cookies as the contamination was discovered and new batter was made.

I have, yet, another story to tell about this man. I realize that I am spending more time with his description than anyone else's but he added to the color of this voyage and helped to break the monotony of continuous sea duty.

He pulled such stunts as passing out "chocolates" to the youngsters in New Zealand, but, actually it was pieces of Ex-Lax. Anyone with his sick sense of humor had to be as mean as a "junkyard dog". There are many tales to tell about him. He frequented local bars while we were in port. One night, while in port in Philadelphia, he became inebriated and subsequently became violent. He was involved in a brawl which ended with his arrest by the police. The story goes he sent seven out of fifteen policemen to the hospital who were trying to subdue him.

In spite of his mischievousness, I still respected him. I learned in later years that he had been promoted to Lieutenant Commander in charge of supplies in San Diego during World War II. Sometime after the expedition ended, I happened to be in the San Diego area. I called him on the phone and began to relate the incident about the cockroaches. There was a dead silence on the other end of the line. At length he asked who was speaking, in a rather gruff voice. I said, "This is Daigle!". We both had a good laugh and began to reminisce and bring each other up-to-date on our careers.

We had two cooks on board: Chief Commissary Stewart Nusbaum, who was a 20-year veteran in the Navy and the other one was 2/C Cook Swensen

and, of course, "Red" Keck who became Cook Striker. Swensen turned out to be the better of the two. One could walk through the mess hall at meal-time and without knowing who was on duty, the aroma emanating from the galley told us Swensen was the one. Credit must be given to both for doing the best they could with the supplies in the larder.

Bendik Johansen and Paul A. Siple were veterans of both the First and Second Byrd Antarctic Expeditions. Captain Johansen was hired as a Civilian Ice Pilot. He played a vital part as we were going into unknown waters laden with icebergs and ice floats. He was skilled and experienced with the capability to manuever the ship through treacherous waters. The Navy had made arrangements to employ him for that purpose. Between Captain Johansen, the boatswains mates and Captain Cruzen, they whipped a group of fairly green sailors into an excellent crew. As the deck hands had no knowledge of sailing ships, they soon became adept at moving up and down the crossarms like a bunch of monkeys. I had read many sea stories about sailing vessels when a young man and about the necessity to repair lines and sails in all kinds of weather, but I never thought I would be a witness to such procedures.

After 45 years, it is difficult to remember names of all the people and the crew members of the *USS Bear*, but some personalities make a lasting impression. One such person was Chief Radioman W. A. (Swede) Nylund. He was from Minnesota and was called "Swede" as it is common in the Navy to designate nicknames when appropriate. All personnel were called by their last names as there were too many "Bills, Johns, Jims, Jacks and Joes" (as I was known during my Navy career). Among the crew, I was just simply called "Daigle". Swede and I worked together for two years and he was a very good sailor — the type that makes the Navy what it is today; reliable, somber, dedicated, hardworking, and an accomplished radioman. He was my mentor during my early years as a sailor as he taught and guided me in the finer points of radio and discipline in its operations. I shall always be indebted for his confidence in me and for taking me under his wing. He had the patience to guide me through those learning years. We made a good team and got along very well. By the time I had learned all there was to know about certain phases of communications, he was instrumental in helping me secure the next rating.

When I boarded the *USS Bear* as a crew member, I had attained the rating of 3/C RM, which was unheard of in those days as I had been with the Navy for such a short time, but I attribute this rapid promotion to the guidance and training by Swede Nylund — and, of course, the education and training received at Chenier's Business College in basic radio and electricity.

Last, but surely not least, the Captain of the *USS Bear* was Lieutenant Commander Richard H. Cruzen. He was Commanding Officer of the Task Force 68, United States Navy. He was one of the finest naval officers any-

one could have had the opportunity to serve under his command. He was an even tempered man and had the capability to get the most and the best from his men without pressure. He had their respect and admiration as an officer. He had the good virtues of patience and understanding. (He was also a good acey-duecy player.)

Lieutenant Commander Peter J. Nemo was Executive Officer aboard ship; Lieutenant Crawford was Supply and Operations Officer; Chief Warrant Officer Dawley was Engineering Officer.

Joseph D. (Don) Healy, U.S. Department of Interior, was from New Hampshire. He had been on a previous expedition with Admiral Byrd in 1932. He knew dogs and was an expert in handling them in arctic situations and knew how to repair their gear. He was not a young man, as compared with the average age of the ship's personnel, but he was a very vital crew member on this expedition. His exploits in dog sledging and arctic weather had been written up in various books.* His role was that of lead dog driver. His duty was to lead and organize sledging parties from the East Base on biological and geological surveys.

* Joseph D. Healy was written up in *Americans in the Antarctic 1778-1948* by Kenneth J. Bertrand; pgs. 415, 445, 448, 450-51, 461-63, 466-68, XIII-A, XV-A.



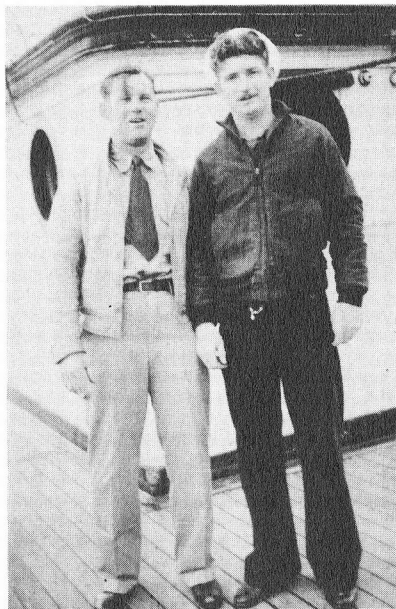
"Swede" Nylund at Little America



Captain Bendik Johansen, Sailing Master and Ice Pilot; Reese, CRM, U.S. Navy; Walter R. Giles, Marine Radioman/Pilot.



Mulhern and "Red" Keck peeling spuds.



Earl Baker Perce and "Red" Keck.

Supplies

One very important item for this expedition was food. Modern ships are provided with all kinds of refrigeration space; thus, the capability to carry and store food supplies for long periods of time without spoilage. In 1939-41, the *USS Bear* had very limited space aboard to carry fresh food. When it was gone, we relied on fish and canned goods. On the other hand, we never went hungry. There was always plenty to eat. The cooks aboard ship performed miracles.

While in Panama on our journey to the Antarctic, we stocked up on salami with rows and rows hung from the ceiling of the ship in the passageways. Within a period of time, it began to turn green. But after you have been at sea for a while, a salami sandwich tasted pretty good — green or not!

I have always been a milk drinker and wondered how I was going to get along without it. After we were into our trip a few weeks, I discovered canned evaporated milk aboard and it was obtainable from the commissary. It was a welcomed refreshment while on watch. Thank God! — we had a big supply of canned milk.

While the *Bear* was being readied in Boston, supplies — not only for the ship but also for the East and West Bases of the expedition — were being stored aboard. Not only food for personnel, but for the dog teams aboard as well. Also being loaded were equipment, repair kits for all equipment, dogs, dog sleds, harnesses, the personnel to handle and care for them, etc.

The other ship in the expedition, the *North Star* was also in Boston harbor. She was taking on supplies as was the *Bear*. The Coast Guard agreed to loan the *Star* to the expedition for this assignment to assist in transferring a great deal of heavy equipment and supplies. The vessel was large and normally operated in the Pacific Northwest. She also carried the Snow Cruiser and stored a Navy twin-motored Curtiss-Wright Condor plane aboard. Six hundred tons of supplies and equipment were embarked by the *North Star* including prefabricated buildings, in Valparaiso, Chile. The two ships met in Marguerite Bay on the fifth of March and began their search for suitable base sites.

Among the oddities the *North Star* transported were 100 feet spruce logs that were 2 feet on the butt end and 14 inches on the top. They were to be used as a ramp to offload the snow cruiser* from the ship. (Some years later, I talked with a man in Andover, Maine, who said he had cut some trees that he understood were being shipped to the Antarctic, but he was puzzled at the time as to their use. I was able to inform him as to their purpose and he was truly amazed — not only for their use, but at our chance meeting and that I would be the person to supply that information.)

* See chapter on *Infamous Snow Cruiser*.

On November 15, 1939, the *North Star* set sail from the Boston port bound for Philadelphia under the command of Captain Isak Lystad. There she loaded more supplies and a supply of meteorological instruments. On November 21, she sailed down Delaware Bay enroute to the Panama Canal.

Chapter Three Communications

During that period of history, it seemed that our method of receiving and sending messages was adequate with the equipment we had been using as we were able to do so with utmost efficiency. Compared with the modern technology of today, one wonders how we were able to operate so well.

Messages were sent to Station NAA in Washington, D.C. It was quite an art to be able to handle the traffic that particular station generated. They handled radio traffic for most Navy ships that were away from the East Coast and on special assignments, as in our case. There were major radio stations in San Francisco, Honolulu, Guam, the Philippines, as well as Balboa, Panama. It was all dots and dashes and most operators prided themselves in being able to handle traffic with one of those major stations.

The Navy had developed a set of "shorthand" messages called "Z" (ZEBRA) signals. By using the "Z" signals it was possible to transmit lots of information in a very short time. Example: ZSA4-ZAA5 told the receiving station — "I hear you strength 4, send at a fast clip and I have 5 messages for you." The receiver comes back with a ZSA4/5K — meaning, "I hear you very well, start sending your messages." The commercial radio operators had a similar set of "shorthand" messages called "Q" signals. Normally, we would tell the operator in Morse Code: "I have 5 messages — one priority — 2 routine — 3 deferred." When they acknowledged our code, we keyed them again with a "Z" signal to let them know how we were reading them, from strength 2 to 5. We were then told the kind of signal they were receiving. Radio operators sat at their stations in the shack for long periods of time performing their tasks. When we received the signal to transmit at the recommended strength 4 signals, we then knew to send at a pretty fast clip. When our transmission was complete, the operator would say in code "end of message." The receiving operator would tap his key and say "R-K" meaning "Keep sending, friend, I am with you." Then we would go into the next message.

Most of the time, we had a duplex operation; that is, if we were sending and the receiving operator missed a word, he would touch the key on his transmitter and when we heard his signal, we stopped sending. The moment we stopped sending, he would repeat the last words of our message that he had received which meant to us — "Go after the last word." When we were finished, he would say, "I have a few messages for you and we would key "K" — meaning "Give them to me." All of the operators were tremendous professionals.

If the weather was bad, we naturally had to send more slowly and we would find ourselves repeating more messages, but this was minimal. The signing-off key was "TKS" — meaning, "Thanks!" Each message was followed by the sign letters of each operator. Mine was "JD."

This type of communication developed into a camaraderie and closeness between operators which, I am sorry to say, does not exist today due