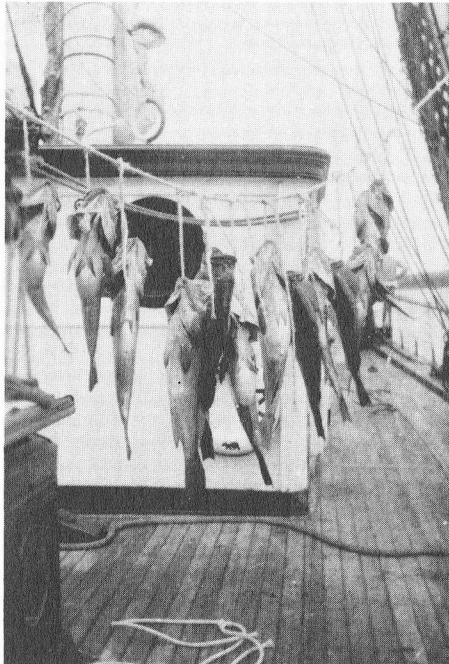


Our catch of fish off the Galapagos Islands.



The catch was strung along the deck until such time for cleaning and cooking.

Chapter Eight

Second Trip to Little America III

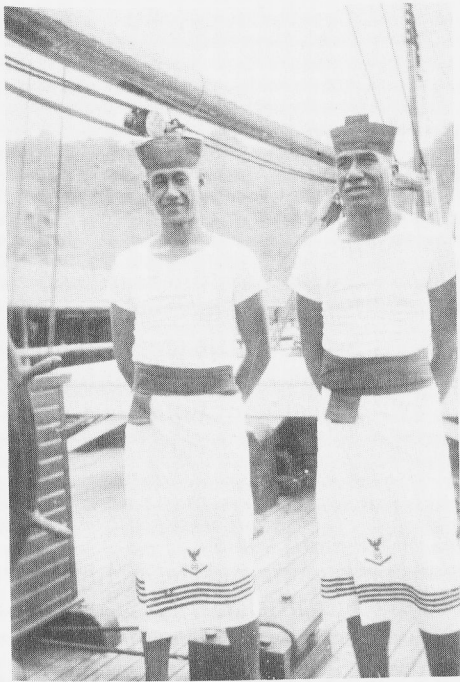
Evacuate Base Personnel

We sailed out of Philadelphia the 13th of October, 1940, to return to Little America. The *North Star* departed from Seattle on December 11. As the ships were readied for sailing, Captain Cruzen decided we would leave early. This would allow us to see a little of the South Pacific Islands. (The islands I did not see on this trip, I saw later during WWII. At that time, I was "island hopping" with an aircraft unit.) The new routing took some planning, as a new course had to be plotted for different weather conditions. It was decided to go to the Galapagos Islands, and it took some coordination, as the islands were controlled by Peru and permission had to be granted to land at any port of entry.

This group of islands is volcanic and the archipelago consists of fifteen large and several hundred small islands lying on the equator about 650 miles west of Ecuador. We encountered Peruvian soldiers posting a guard with little or no equipment, and they were poorly uniformed. The island is a bird and reptile sanctuary consisting of as many as eighty-five different birds (flamingos, cormorants, finches, penguins and many others), reptiles (Isabella tortoises, two species of large lizards in the iguana family, land lizards, marine lizards) as well as wild dogs and pigs. The fish were very bountiful. Sailors are known to be notorious fishermen, therefore we no sooner had dropped anchor than most of the crew were casting lines over the side to catch fish. This paradise provided the personnel with lots of fresh fish at mealtime.

After the Galapagos Islands, we set sail west to the American Samoa, which is divided into two sections — American and Western. The U.S. Navy had a radio communication station on the American Samoa. As we communicated with the island radio personnel while still at sea, they knew we were coming in. Some of us visited their radio station and examined the facilities, as it was of great interest to those of us who were radiomen. The harbor is a beautiful one, and we found the Samoan people to be very friendly. The climate is tropical, moist and pleasant. The products grown on the islands are citrus fruits, breadfruit, copra, bananas, and coconut. Hogs and cattle thrived abundantly on the rich pasturage, so they were raised for import.

The American Samoa lies in a group of 14 islands about 2500 miles off the northeast coast of Australia. The Samoans dress very casually and wear no shoes, unless it is necessary. We toured the island by taxi, and as the island is not very large, we were able to do so in a short time. There was so much rainfall; everything was lush with green foliage and flowers. It was a welcomed relaxation period for the crew. Several U.S. Navy families



Samoan Navy Guards.

were living there. The island was governed by a civilian. The islanders very graciously held a dance in our honor. The island women came dressed beautifully in multicolored fabric and wearing shoes, but as soon as the dance began, they removed the shoes and piled them in a heap.

The only beneficial experience gained by this visit (other than relaxation for the crew) was the ability to check out the radio station. Radiomen were a close knit group and almost all knew one another — no matter where they happened to be stationed in the world — land or sea.

After our farewells to Samoa, we sailed to the Fiji Islands, which is located a great distance from the Galapagos Islands. This group has about 350 islands located in the South Pacific, and situated between 15° and 20°S latitude in the vicinity of the 180° (the International Dateline). It is a British Crown colony. We sailed into Port Sovua. Our stay there was also a pleasant one; however, the British influence provided a reserved atmosphere. We toured the island while sampling the food, and could not help but compare the canned food diet we had been eating aboard ship to this cuisine. Again, we found the township cordial in their welcome and paid homage to the *Bear* crew, as another celebration was held in our honor.

I had occasion to return to this island and the town of Nandi, on a rest and recuperating period during WWII. Since Sovua was a short distance from Nandi, I took a bus trip there for old times sake. It had changed since my last visit. The war had hit these islands hard, and damage and hardship had taken its toll.

From Fiji, we set sail for Dunedin, New Zealand. We spent Christmas of 1940 there. Two things I remember about Dunedin; (1) It was impossible to understand their speech. The dialect was so confusing it left one wondering just what in the world they were saying; however, they were nice and friendly. We were in port for ten days, and toward the end of our stay we began to decipher their dialect. (2) They drive on the “wrong” side of the road. One not aware of this fact could get run down in the streets by an approaching automobile. We acquired an automobile and soon went careening through the streets like the natives. Eventually, we became rather proficient at handling the vehicle. The New Zealanders greeted us with friendly and courteous accord. Dunedin was a nice, quaint little town. It did not take long for the word to get around that the American sailors were in port.

This was 1940 when it was a novelty to see an American sailor on New Zealand soil, for that country is quite a distance from the United States and our country had no purpose to be present in that land before this time in history. No matter where we went, the world knew we were on an expedition to Little America; therefore, we were a novelty. We were always welcomed. After the *Bear* completed taking on necessary supplies, and repairs were made, we sailed from New Zealand.

The *Bear* sailed out of port the day after Christmas and we headed for Little America again. The trip was uneventful — same scenery — icebergs, icepacks, seals on icepacks, penguins. As before, we hugged the coastline to stay out of the way of menacing icebergs. We were more experienced in maneuvering the ship through these menacing waters this time. We sailed into the West Base on January 11, 1941, without incident, put out our lines and stepped ashore to visit the personnel at the headquarters building to see how they were progressing with plans to evacuate. Also, we had not seen the housing after the bases were set up when we originally off-loaded materials. We examined the facilities where the dog teams were housed.

Igloos had been built out of blocks of ice to be used for covered walkways into the entrance of the main buildings. The buildings were well heated with huge generators with fans that blew warm air between two sets of flooring; therefore, the buildings inside were warm as toast. Heating was not one of their problems. We visited the radio station and I helped Clay Bailey handle a couple of messages. Communications were well set up. Clay had done an excellent job of selecting the kind of long and short range equipment which allowed operators to communicate efficiently and clearly by wireless from points down “under” to various stations within our realm.

A man by the name of Boyd, who worked for the Federal Government, had a pretty good machine shop set up. This was his second trip to Little America. Also there was a photo lab that was well stocked and was operated by a Navy man named Charles Shirley. He was the base photographer. He flew in the planes and photographed territories, mountains, ranges, peaks and bodies of water for charting. He also photographed bird life and

their habits; animal life on the land and sea. Another of his duties was to record activities at the base for future reference and posterity.

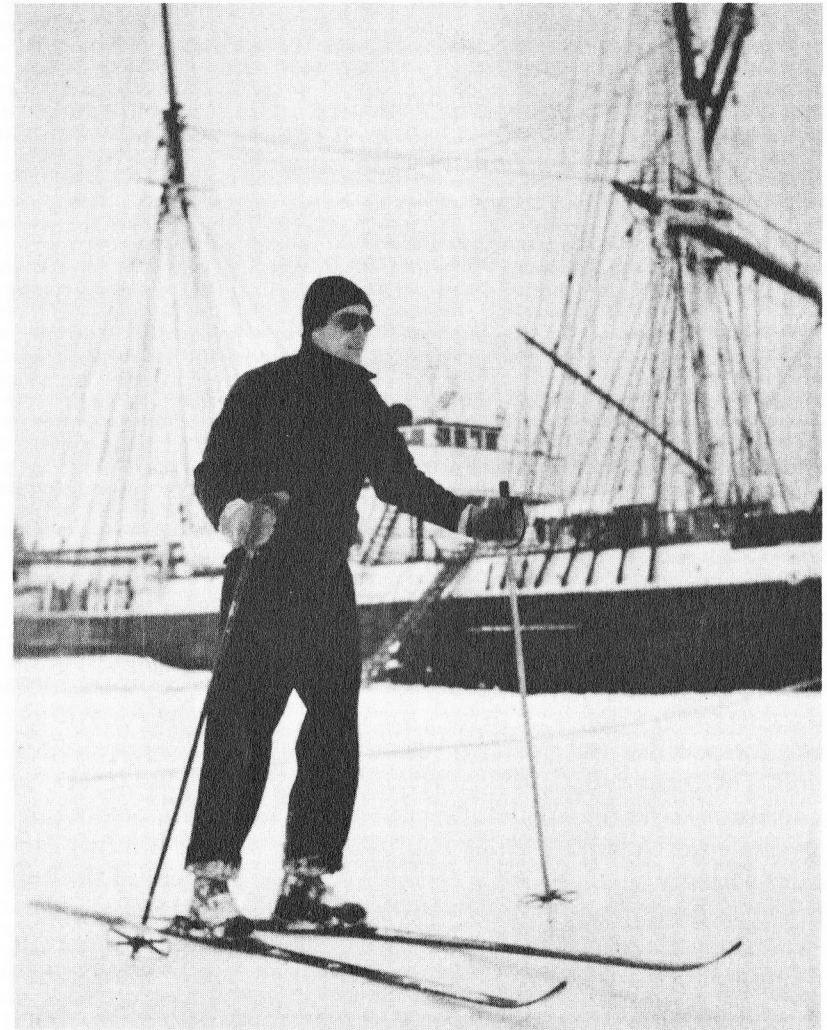
My curiosity about the ill-fated snow cruiser prompted me to ask to examine it closely. A Marine Corp sergeant by the name of Felix L. Ferranto, who was a radioman, escorted us through the huge vehicle. Swede and I were especially interested in the radio room, and it was certainly large enough to accommodate one. This vehicle is listed in history as a design failure. Besides the snow cruiser, other heavy equipment needed for transportation was a T-20 International Tractor and an Army tank.

The three main buildings were prefabricated structures filled with thick insulating material. Supplies were stacked systematically in parallel rows which were roofed over to form a network of tunnels between the buildings. When the whole assemblage was covered with drift snow, it was possible to go from one building to another without going out-of-doors. Side tunnels at right angles to the main tunnel were used to house the dog teams during the winter, each team having its own tunnel. The main tunnel ran from the main building, containing the living quarters and the galley, past the blubber house and chopping room to the magnetic hut. Airplane hangars were constructed of snow blocks — roofed over with lumber and heavy canvas. By March of 1940, everything at the West Base had been under roof.

We moved back and forth between the *Bear* and the West Base headquarters on skis. (See photo on next page.) None of us were very good on them, but we managed. One day, as two of the ship's personnel were walking back from the base to the ship, one of the companions realized he was walking alone. He looked back and could not see his partner, so he turned around to retrace his tracks. He soon came upon a large crevasse in the ice. The ice had split and the snow had covered over the crevasse from view. Ice had formed a thin film over the whole area and the one companion had easily stepped onto the thin film to fall into the crevasse. The one partner lay on his stomach, looked down into the crack — and there, about 14 feet below, was Shmoe. Luckily, he was not hurt, so the man on the surface left his jacket there to mark the spot, then ran back to the ship for help. Several of the ship's personnel brought back equipment to rescue Shmoe. The victim had suffered a few bruises but he considered himself fortunate, as it has been known for the ice to shift with these crevasses and Shmoe could have been crushed — or the hole could have opened larger and he would have slipped beyond rescue.

After this incident, we were instructed to move about in pairs and carry lines and poles. In the event the incident was repeated, we would have been prepared. When one stops to consider all of the explorations, reconnaissance flights and overland reconnaissance, plus snow dog sledging, this expedition was very fortunate to have brought all of its members back home unscathed — that was a real accomplishment.

As the prime purpose of the expedition was to gather information of all kinds, it was necessary to do some clear planning. Teams were set up by



I was learning to walk on skis, as we were compelled to walk from the *Bear* to the West Base headquarters on them. (USS *Bear* in the background.)

the base commander, usually two men with an assignment of dogs, sleds, etc. During the winter months without sun, the men were trained to operate the portable radio equipment. They used a transceiver, a small unit that housed a transmitter-receiver in one assemblage. The power supply was a small hand-operated generator. One man turned the generator crank and the other transmitted the messages. Prearranged times were scheduled to meet and code messages to those with need-to-know that "all is well," thus, avoiding long transmissions. Of course, if there was something to report — it was possible to do so. (Today, in Antarctica, the handheld battery-operated transmitter with antennas is used for the same purpose.)

In order to cover the largest area with the number of trail teams, a system was set up with the base as a starting point. One team would start out on a course of due east 90° — with an estimated distance to be covered. At the end of the route, they would turn south for a designated distance then return to the base on a westerly course. The second team would leave on the reverse course from the one used by the team returning, and reverse the operation. Actually, they each covered a pie-shaped wedge of territory. Prior to the teams departure, there had been caches of food set up along the routes. This was accomplished by the airplane crews. By requiring an outgoing and returning team to use opposite legs of the wedge, it required less drops of food and other supplies as well as gasoline for the team that was driving a small crawler tractor. Since the snow cruiser had been a failure, its radio operator, Ferranto*, was assigned as a part of a two-member crew of the crawler tractor which "crawled" its way over a very large section of the eastern Antarctic. Each team had weather observations to make several times daily. They were to look for animals, birds, and anything of scientific interest that would contribute more knowledge about the Antarctic region. The team members were experts in their field and it was their job to confirm or alter the known information. For instance, one of the things the members of the East Base was able to determine is the fact that Alexander Land is actually an island. It had been thought to be a part of the mainland and had so been recorded since the earlier Antarctic expeditions.

When one realizes the elementary crudeness of these procedures for gathering information, it is amazing that so much of it was obtained over half a century by many different groups of explorers. During "Operation High Jump" made in 1946-47, the Antarctic continent was photographed and re-photographed so that there remains few unknowns about the surface. Still, there are many questions regarding below the ice surface. In recent studies, scientists have found evidence that South America and Antarctica had been connected by land at one time, but due to volcanic action, the land separated — forming the archipelago of islands and volcanic lakes. To reach Lt. Marsh Base (Chilean Research Center) located in the archipelago on King George Island, it takes three hours by a C-130

* (Recently, July 1986, I received a letter from Lt. Col. Ferranto, U.S.M.C. [retired] who now lives in San Diego, California.)

cargo plane from Punta Arenas, Chile. These Shetland Islands chain are located on the northern tip of the Antarctic Circle.

As my duties were different in nature, I was assigned aboard the *USS Bear* performing communications. I had no part in the scientific explorations or procedures described in this writing. Onboard ship, we had our own duties to perform as a team, if we were to function as one — and the main purpose was to do so in order to bring about the success of the research and exploration procedures set down for us by "Uncle Sam."

As the days wore on, the ship was loaded with instruments, data from experiments, logs and personnel. (Equipment and supplies were left, as it was hoped the U.S. Government would continue their explorations in the future and the West Base could be re-occupied.) Before we left, Captain Cruzen told us we could bring back specimens of penguins to stuff. Several people elected to do just that for various reasons — mostly scientific and educational purposes. I brought back two: one for a friend, Bill Hatten of Orangefield, Texas, and I kept the other one. Local elementary and high schools approached me to give lectures. Later, my penguin was loaned to a teacher in Maine; however, while in his possession, his home burned and so did my penguin. These little animals were a constructive tool in lecturing, as it brought a visual image of that continent that students had studied about in classes. It gave them a different perspective of the Antarctic region to have a first-hand account.

Both the *USS Bear* and the *North Star* sailed out together on February 1, 1941, with the intention of sailing around the ice continent to the East Base to complete the evacuation procedure. On the way out, we spotted



The author brought back two penguins to be used in giving lectures at schools and organizations.

two Japanese "fishing boats" pulling into the base area. If I am allowed a guess, I would say some of the metal from the snow cruiser we abandoned was made into ammunition to be used against the United States during WWII.

We were not in too big a hurry, as we realized the ice breakup had not begun. In spite of this present condition we steamed on ahead with some anxiety, for we knew the fickleness of the Antarctic weather. To save fuel, the ships returned north, whereby they anchored in Andersen Harbor on the Melchior Islands; islands located in the center of Dallmann Bay. After sailing some distance from the West Base, the East Base radio operators relayed their concern about the ice, and said it appeared different from what is usual for that time of the year. The communication lines were buzzing with a number of dispatches relating the ice problem. While the ships remained here for a spell, the scientists from the West Base occupied themselves with a variety of scientific investigations. From Andersen Harbor, the *Bear* made a cruise on February 24, 1941, and again in mid-March, to observe conditions at the northern edge of the ice pack, but each time she was unable to enter Marguerite Bay where the East Base had been established. The ice condition was rotten. There were no easterly winds to blow it out; rather, north winds kept the ice in the bay. New falls of snow were occurring and new ice was forming over pools in the bay — winter was fast setting in. The prime priority of our commander and the senior officers was to address the problem; to try to come up with the solution to evacuate the East Base personnel. Time was crucial with the winter setting in. Also, if we did not complete our mission on target, as planned, it could have been disastrous for the expedition's personnel on the base. Lives were in jeopardy! We proceeded to steam on ahead, hoping the situation would correct itself as we neared our destination.

Admiral Byrd did not return with us on the second trip, as he was conducting business back in Washington, D.C. There were several dispatches between he and the ships. We related our problems and explained that the ice was not breaking up to allow our safe passage, for the *Bear* was not an ice breaker*.

The closer we steamed in, the more evident it became that the problem had not lessened. During all of this communicating back and forth from ship-to-base, we learned there were other problems brewing other than weather; personnel problems. Food was becoming scarce, as some of the caches had been buried by a snow avalanche. Dissention among the 22 people was occurring. Morale was at its lowest; therefore, they needed to be relieved from the extreme climatic conditions. It was becoming a desperate situation. It became very apparent that the ice was not going to flow out as it had on our previous trip. One might think that since we had dogs and sleds we should use them, but the ice was very thin toward the edges

* A ship designed to function in the arctic and antarctic sea conditions to break up ice packs and cut paths for ships to follow.

of the ice shelf and we could have lost a whole team — plus the rescuing personnel.

On March 15, the *North Star* was ordered to Punta Arenas, Chile, where most of the West Base men would disembark. Food and fuel for a second year would be put aboard for the East Base; just in case evacuation by air was not successful. It had been decided the Condor would be used to fly the people out to an airstrip on shore just beyond where the ship was anchored. The lives at the base depended on the success of this operation. The plane was not in good shape, as it had been utilized to the limit of its capabilities on this expedition. It had experienced several mishaps as well as crashes so it appeared to be held together with "spit and bailing wire." Fortunately, the Condor had been made air-ready and test flown after a January accident. We had to work fast as the antarctic weather is very fickle and moody. One minute it is sunny, then within seconds turns cloudy, rains, sleet, snows with icy winds blowing to create a sub-zero weather condition. Now was the time to launch as we had no choice.

Meanwhile, the *Bear* had been reconnoitering, and on March the 16th, a party was put ashore on Mikkelsen Island, just north of the Antarctic Circle. The ship could not dock due to coastal conditions; therefore, we anchored offshore. The shore party laid out and marked a suitable landing strip, and arrangements were made by the communication team to evacuate by air as soon as the weather was suitable. We were 100 to 150 miles from the main base. It was a desperate situation; yet, caution was of the utmost importance!

During this period, communications kept Admiral Byrd in Washington updated on our progress. The East Base Commander, Richard B. Black, determined that the first ten men would be evacuated. (I often wondered how they determined which ten should go first.)

At 7:15 a.m., the plane was loaded with men and records, specimen of animals, rocks, soil, plants and emergency gear, with Snow the pilot and Perce the co-pilot/radioman; the evacuation began. The plane covered 120 miles safely to the landing strip where the *Bear* was anchored. A lot was riding on the competence and capability of the pilots and aircraft. Eighteen good flying hours, with weather permitting, was needed to complete the evacuation successfully and completely. The maximum good weather was needed. Dorsey, the meteorologist, radioed back to us that the weather conditions were lightening up and a continued rescue effort should be successful. Snow and Perce were having a cup of coffee with a sandwich when the news came over the wireless. They immediately began to prepare to fly back to the East Base to pick up the remainder of the personnel.

As the plane took off a second time, it climbed and gained considerable altitude in order to fly over the mountains. We could not see the plane as it was out of sight, but we were apprehensive as to whether or not the visibility was clear enough for them to fly over the mountains. We were in communication by radio, and did not breathe a sigh of relief until they radioed to the ship that the plane had cleared and flown over the mountains. Later,

we heard from the East Base radio operator that the plane was finally circling to land. Soon after landing, they would begin the loading procedures of men and paraphernalia for take-off for the return trip to the landing strip and the *Bear*.

Back at the *Bear*, the ship's personnel were assisting those who had already landed in the first evacuation to remove their gear from the runway and proceed to load everything on board the *Bear*. The ship was anchored as close to the solid ice shelf as was possible — which happened to be at the bottom of a 400 foot cliff of rock and solid ice. The runway for the plane was up on top of this cliff. Subsequently, lines had to be dropped from the top of the cliff onto the ice shelf below. Then both men and their gear were very slowly handed down to the bottom of the cliff.

While we were loading the first load of men from the East Base with their material onboard the *Bear*, Elmer Lamplugh, base radioman, kept the *Bear* informed as to the progress of the loading at the East Base for the final flight from that facility. When the plane was finally loaded, Elmer called to report that he was closing down the base radio system and that we should hear from the plane in about an hour. When the hour went by and we had not heard any signals, we began to worry. In the meantime, the ice was moving in slowly, and we knew we needed three more hours to load the remaining men plus whatever gear they were able to fly out with, from the ice shelf into boats, then transport them to the anchored *Bear*.

Two hours went by and still no word from the plane. Three hours — still no word!!! Then, — suddenly, a sound on the wireless! — or was it?? All of the *Bear* crew were anxiously crowded around the radio room. They were concerned not only about the men being evacuated, but also worried over the ice factor and the element of time to get out of this area and escape the ice packs. Captain Cruzen was very concerned and was sitting — listening!! — for something! — some kind of signal! Finally, a semblance of sound came over the wireless, again! Swede and I were not too sure, as it could have been our imagination; but it soon came in again, — this time more strongly. IT WAS A SIGNAL FROM THE PLANE!! All of the men raised their voices in a cheer and were jubilant and relieved to hear that the plane was safe and approaching. The joyful tooting of the siren of the *Bear* could be heard over the cheers of the personnel as the plane came into view and into a safe landing!!!

We found out sometime later the reason for no communication from the plane for those three worrisome hours; the weather conditions were breaking up the communication signals. What the Condor and the East Base crew could not relay to us was the change in weather that suddenly arose, creating a warming trend that began to soften the snow. Since the plane was overloaded, it did not have the traction it needed to take off. The weight defeated its rising into the air and the softening snow made it worse. Two attempts to take off were unsuccessful and it was decided that almost everything aboard except records, emergency equipment and the clothes on their backs should be off-loaded to lighten the weight of the

plane. Three hours later, on the third and last attempt, the plane lifted off the runway. The base radio station had been shut down before the attempts to take off; therefore, they were not able to communicate with us. While these events were taking place, as well as the evacuation procedures developed, Admiral Byrd was kept informed of the whole situation — blow-by-blow from the *Bear*. You can imagine his concern and the tense situation this distressing news created in Washington. Through the media, the world was being apprised of the trouble the expedition was in. (Some twenty years later, after this incident, I wrote a paper relating the problems involving this evacuation, entitled, *Miracle or Just a Coincidence*.)

When the second evacuated party landed at the airstrip, the ship's personnel again assisted in getting men and gear down the 400 foot cliff and into the boats that were waiting to take them out to the anchored *Bear*. It was a monumental effort, working against time, and it took the cooperation of everyone — officers and enlisted personnel alike — to bring about the speedy and successful completion of this evacuation.

As the last of the evacuated members of the East Base clattered clumsily up the Jacob's ladder onto the deck of the ship, I could not help but notice how happy and jubilant they were to feel the deck of the *Bear* under their feet, and to be back onboard. The first thing they wanted was a hot shower, so they were accommodated. Even though it was with saltwater, they did not mind — it was hot water and very welcomed. The facilities for bathing on the bases were limited as water had to be conserved; therefore, the personnel had to be restricted from that luxury on a limited basis. It was also a precautionary measure, as bathing could have been a disaster in the Antarctic freezing weather. If a disaster such as a fire had existed in one of the housing units, one had to run — wet — into the freezing weather, it would have been instant death due to the instant drop of body temperature to freezing.

Pookie Odom, radio operator at the East Base, related to us later how the fear of the impossibility of evacuation affected the base personnel. There was much concern and tension throughout that whole situation.

While all of the jubilation and "patting on the back" for a successful operation was going on aboard the ship, we have not mentioned the other menacing factor — ice! We were wondering if it would blow out of our path when we were ready to depart Mikkelsen Island. As the weather had changed toward a warming trend, the ice was continually breaking off and forming hazardous conditions in the sea. Earlier, when we sailed into the East Base for the evacuation procedures, we had sailed through four-to-five miles of floating ice. Now, we began to observe that the winds had come up and the floating ice was slowly moving in toward the ship. Preparations were underway for immediate departure. Another factor had become apparent; time had flown by during all of the activity and nightfall was rapidly approaching. At long last we set slow sail and began to move out. Night had finally fallen! Slowly, the moon rose over the horizon and shone

wanly, at first; then burst into full brightness. It was so bright it outlined every part of the ship and its crew in washed light. What a sight!!! What a beautiful sight!!! Like a scene from fairyland. The ice packs were brightly lit by the moon and the water shimmered like a pool of sequins; making a silvery path for the ship to follow out from its berth into the open water. This memorable moment washed away all of the fear of menacing ice! — just beauty. The Condor airplane was visibly distinguishable atop the cliff, bidding us a lonesome farewell as she had to be abandoned. Those men lined on deck, taking in this quiet moment, were reminiscing over the events of the year and talking quietly about past events as if they were in a reverend moment. A quiet nostalgia and emotion ran through all of the crew and base personnel on deck. Each of us felt as if we were leaving a bit of us on that island, and we felt we were abandoning an "old friend;" one that contributed so much to the history and the explorations of this Antarctic Expedition of 1939-1941. As I stood on the deck and observed this whole scene unfolding before me, I thought I detected the "man in the moon" smiling down on us for all seemed to be going well for the *Bear* and its crew and passengers.

We passed through thirty-five miles of broken ice uneventfully. It took us most of the night to maneuver our way along, under slow steam. I felt it was truly a miracle for the moon to shine brightly to light our path through the water to safety and offered a silent prayer of thanks to the Supreme Being who brought us through a successful expedition and evacuation. The ship glided without damage through these "mine fields of ice." You can rest assured we were one happy crew when the ship finally sliced through the broken ice and sailed into clear waters. Once again, we were headed for Cape Horn and Punta Arenas, Chile.

Even though we had emerged unscathed throughout these past events, our trials and tribulations were not to be over for this trip. I am sure you have read accounts of sailing ships of yore going around the Horn. It is told that it took months to traverse, as atmospheric conditions approaching from three different directions created turmoil, high sea conditions and storms. History tells us that King George's Navy ship, the *Bounty* — commanded by Captain William Bligh — rounded the Horn in 1788 and sailed 35 miles in 81 days while attempting to circumnavigate around the Horn unscathed. Well, this March, our trip was no different. We hit bad weather, with all its fury, and the engine developed a "hot" bearing. I might add, this is an engineer's nightmare. It was a tense situation, as we were being lashed so severely. The *North Star* (steaming toward the coast to Seattle, Washington) had to be alerted that they may have to turn back and give us some assistance. The *North Star* slowed her speed, but had not reversed her direction, as yet. They waited!! Slowly, the storm abated. The engineers were able to cool the bearings that had taken a great amount of strain fighting the elements. Another catastrophe had been dealt with. The *North Star* was told that all was well and to proceed full steam ahead on

their journey. Their sailing instructions were to sail by way of Valparaiso, Chile, on into Seattle, eventually docking at San Francisco.

On March 29, the *Bear* arrived at Punta Arenas. Those who had lived on the ice continent for a year were anxious to walk on "dry land," to see people and civilization once again. They were starved for good food and companionship. The Antarctic expedition team members were more appreciative of this opportunity than those of us on the *Bear*, since we had enjoyed these privileges within the year. After we arrived, the usual port duties were taken care of: i.e., supplies to be taken aboard, repairs to the ship, etc. The ship was not in port too long before we set sail for Valparaiso. This city is the capital of the province of Aconcagua, Chile, chief seaport, and is situated 68 miles W.N.W. of Santiago. It is the most important commercial city of Chile. Again, we were granted liberty and went ashore, including the radio operators, Perce, Odom, Daigle and Swede. No messages were anticipated during our shore leave.

There were a few small incidences while on shore, such as the expected excessive intoxications among the crew. Let's use Yeoman Joe Wallace, for instance. We were in port a week and no one knew where he was, but on the last day in port, and just prior to sailing, he came dragging aboard. I must confess that he was not the only one that looked so terrible when the ship's personnel began to return on board the ship. One can understand why they were not reproached for their behavior, as it was one way to "let off steam," and the tensions that had built up had to have an outlet. Thank God! None were involved in any serious trouble. The local people had seen the sailors in port on previous occasions and, I must admit, knew what to expect. After everyone was aboard, we prepared to get the ship underway.

Our course was set for Panama, and there was no dillydallying on this trip. War in Europe was becoming more menacing to America; and because of this fact, we were in Panama just a week.

While in Panama, Captain Cruzen had his usual problems with personnel when they went ashore. For instance, there was one young sailor that became involved with one of the "hostesses" at a night club. In those days, in order to get club entertainers, owners had to import them from the United States and they were under contract to management, with certain restrictions. One "fair maid" in particular was a young woman of questionable character. Young Sweeney from the *Bear* crew was enamored with her and was all set to marry. Word got back to Captain Cruzen of this entanglement so he had a talk with him. The man had his mind set and fully intended to marry. When Captain Cruzen found out she was 20 years older than Sweeney, he knew he had to do something to keep him from making the mistake of his young life. Cruzen told Sweeney he would do all he could to help him in this matter; but, Sweeney mistook the captain's implications. Much to his surprise, he was restricted to the ship for the duration of leave. There were many incidences when women married servicemen to get their military insurances, especially if they were assigned to combat duty.

We set sail from Panama and headed for Boston. We arrived in port on May 18, 1941. Up to this time, we had not become involved in the war with military personnel, but some of our ship convoys were on the high seas transporting supplies to our allies. Other convoy duties were to escort tankers and other merchant ships carrying military equipment and materials in safety. News came out of Newfoundland that German submarines were spotted in their waters and the subs were effective in torpedoing some of our freighters. The shipyards were busy refurbishing ships that were eventually used to transport a number of military men, as it was soon apparent that we would be involved in this campaign before too many more months. Many of the vessels that had no guns in place were being rigged with gun emplacements and were being extensively modified for warfare.

It became a necessity to curtail further Antarctic Expeditions for the duration of the war. All personnel were immediately assigned to work on other active Navy tasks. Mine was an assignment with the U.S. Coast Guard to carry out investigations in Greenland.



Some of the men evacuated from the East Base. Joe Healy (with the whiskers) Cmdr. Nemo (far right with glasses).

Chapter Nine Greenland Assignment Investigate German Infiltration

In 1941, after Denmark had been occupied by Germany, the Danish minister to Washington, D.C. signed an agreement that put Greenland under the temporary protection of the United States. Although it still belonged to Denmark, the U.S. was given the right to build bases for airplanes, radio and weather stations and "to do any and all things necessary" to hold them. This prevented Greenland from falling into German hands and protected the North American continent from close observation by the "enemy".

One might say, "Surely, such a desolate land could be of no use to anyone in the eyes of the average American;" but it is this icecap and the location of Greenland between northern Europe and North America which made it valuable both as an air base for flights across the Atlantic and as a weather observation post.

The U.S. Government had good reason to believe that some of the trappers and countrymen on the mainland of Greenland were in communication with the German submarines. The trappers were Danish citizens and most were ham radio operators. It was believed that they were informing Germans of U.S. ship convoy movements and also intercepting our coded messages. We communicated with the Coast Guard in Greenland to let them know we were coming in.

On July 4th, 1941, we left Boston. We set sail with Captain Nemo as our new commanding officer of the *Bear*, as Captain Cruzen was given another assignment. Some of the *Bear's* original crew were assigned to other duty, while a few of us remained and other personnel were picked to replace those who left for new assignments. Since the *Bear* was now designated a "ship of the fleet," our complement of men was greatly increased.

I must mention this one fact about the *Bear*. While sailing to this new assignment, we ran into some heavy weather and the *Bear* began to roll to a much higher degree than ever experienced before. Rough seas played havoc with her timbers and we were within inches of capsizing. There were more experienced seamen than I aboard that ship, and they were just as frightened.

We finally reached Greenland, and I can truthfully say that I have never been as cold as I was in that land. By comparison, the snow on Antarctica was dry as powder; this snow was moist and packed. It was wet and cold to work in. We had sailed up and down the fiords and the winds that blew were almost unbearable. There were a number of small mining towns that mined a product called cryolite, which is used in manufacturing aluminum. We were privileged to visit some of the mines.

The Greenlanders are a friendly people. They are of both Danish and Eskimo descent. This was a new experience for me in this new Naval career of mine, and I had not counted on sailing to the land of Eskimos.