

# ANTARCTICA WINTER-OVER JOURNAL, 1996

by

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McMurdo, Ross Island, Antarctica



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**Sunday, January 14th**

Almost midnight. This time last night I walked around the Plaza Motel near the Christchurch, New Zealand airport, photographing flowers, savoring their fragrance, and the touch of green grass and summer trees. I knew that it would be many months before I would be seeing them again. Yesterday morning I rented a car and drove to Picton, stopping in Blenheim, to see friends Murray and Barbara Wilson. Murray is in the New Zealand Air Force. We first met in 1988 at the South Pole. We could have visited longer, but the train from Picton to Christchurch would not wait. Remember the lush green countryside, each clickity-clack, the sheep scattering away from the tracks, the beaches near Kaikoura, the men drinking their beer and ignoring the trains from the pubs, women wearing shorts working in their gardens, manicuring their lawns. Remember Lyttleton, the port from which many of the early Antarctic explorers sailed on wooden ships.



**Matt Nelson on board the LC-130 enroute to  
McMurdo**

That was last night. Tonight I am in my new dorm room, my roommate Sparkles (has a diamond in one of his teeth) is working the night shift, my gear in the orange bags still has to be unpacked, I have one last carton of fresh milk still cold from today's eight-hour LC-130 flight, and the brightness of the sun reflecting over McMurdo Sound is telling me to enjoy it while I can, because there are four months ahead of me that I won't see it. My airline tickets have a return date of October 31st. How close will I be to that date when I once again enjoy the New Zealand countryside and more fresh milk?

In Christchurch, the National Science Foundation contracts to the Kiwis to operate the Clothing Distribution Center (CDC) to provide cold weather clothing and logistics for Operation Deep Freeze, the term given to the Antarctic program. New Zealand Customs people in Auckland are used to Americans coming down for the program. Due to bad weather on the East Coast of the United States, I came down here without going there first as originally planned. I didn't have the proper travel documents. When I arrived on January 10th, the Customs man asked me if I had any identification to show that I was part of Operation Deep Freeze. The only thing I had with me was a McMurdo Coke and beer ration card with my photograph on it. That was good enough - he waved me on through!

As I mentioned, flying to McMurdo takes approximately eight hours on an LC-130 aircraft. These are actually C-130 cargo planes, but the "L" means they are configured with skis. The planes are noisy, but somewhat more comfortable than commercial airlines, because one can walk around, stretch out on the cargo, and go up into the flight deck. Navy Squadron VXE-6, and the New York Air National Guard fly the planes. In the early part of the season, the New Zealand Air Force flies down here, but they have to land on the sea ice, since they aren't equipped with skis. All of these aircrew and maintenance personnel have my utmost respect. They will fly in almost whiteout conditions to perform search and rescue. The mechanics change out engines in -30 F. weather without the benefit of a hangar. I think I would much rather track satellites.



**Ski-equipped LC-130 at the South Pole**



**McMurdo Ground Station Radome**

On Arrival Heights in McMurdo there is a new 56-foot radome, and inside that radome is a 33-foot (10-meter) satellite tracking antenna. The dome looks like a large golf ball, and is one of the most prominent man-made objects around here. Dave Hess and I will be operating and maintaining the McMurdo Tracking Station, a joint NSF and NASA venture to track the

Canadian-built RADARSAT. We came here in December for three weeks, went home for Christmas, and now are down here for the long haul. Thus, begins my Winter-Over adventure in Antarctica.

### Wednesday, January 17th

The day after we arrived, an intense satellite tracking campaign began. We are tracking the European remote sensing satellite, ERS-1, and ERS-2. ERS-2 was launched a few years after ERS-1, but their orbits are such that ERS-2 follows the same orbit as ERS-1, only 24 hours later. This is called the ERS Tandem Mission. Both of these satellites perform radar imaging. I guess we will be tracking these for several weeks or months. We have to record the data on high speed AMPEX tape recorders, since the data is transmitted at 105 MBPS. So far, we haven't started tracking RADARSAT, which was launched on November 4, 1995. Looks like we will have an interesting year.

Even though we have twenty-four hours of sunlight, the sun is now going lower on the horizon each night. The first sunset will be on February 21st. McMurdo is a busy place. All the scientists are trying to finish their projects before station closing next month. Not too many are eager to Winter-over.

S a t u r d a y ,

J a n u a r y

20th



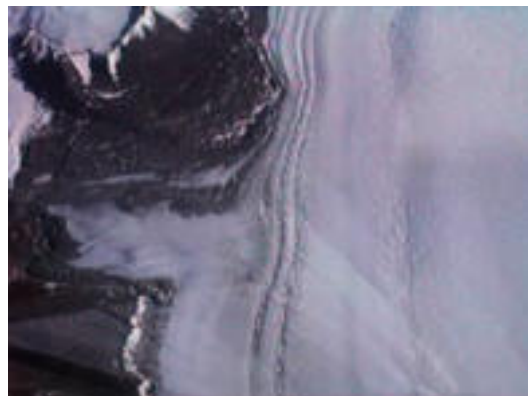
South Pole Satellite Data Link  
(SPSDL) radome

In December, 1984, two satellite tracking stations for the South Pole Satellite Data Link (SPSDL) were installed in Antarctica. One is at the South Pole, and the other is here in McMurdo. It is a completely different system from the satellite tracking station that Dave and I are working on. Once the SPSDL was installed, the same amount of data could be transferred to McMurdo in a five minute satellite pass that used to take five hours by High Frequency (HF) radio. From McMurdo, data was transferred back to the United States over another satellite link. The satellites utilized were existing satellites that were already in a Polar orbit, such as Landsats 4 and 5, and Nimbus-7.

Until I took this job with AlliedSignal Technical Services Corp. to work here in McMurdo, I worked for Lockheed at the Johnson Space Center in Houston for seventeen years. I worked as a communications engineer testing a Space Shuttle Ku-Band Radar and Communications system. Through NASA and Bendix Field Engineering (now AlliedSignal) contacts, I first came to the Ice in 1986 to repair the SPSDL. This same equipment may be used to track a Delta launch out of Vandenberg AFB next month, and the Total Ozone Mapping Spectrometer (TOMS) satellite in a few months. As the name implies, the TOMS spacecraft will be used to investigate the Ozone depletion area over the South Pole. Because my new job is actually in McMurdo, I didn't think I would go back to the Pole this year. Since I have had SPSDL experience, I was asked to checkout the gear. Oh no! Not another trip to the South Pole!

Today, I flew to the South Pole from McMurdo, worked for about five hours to check out the old SPSDL equipment with Andre Fortrin, and flew back to McMurdo. The VXE-6 pilot allowed me to be in the jump seat for the landing at the Pole. It is amazing how large, flat,

and white the Polar Plateau is. Flying time between the Pole and McMurdo is approximately three hours.



**Beardmore Glacier, as seen from the C-130 enroute to the South Pole**

The route between McMurdo and the South Pole is over the Trans-Antarctic Mountains. Usually, the flight crews allow passengers to come up into the cockpit to take photographs of these mountains. They are spectacular! Miles and miles of crevasse-filled glaciers flow between the mountain peaks. The peaks are snow-covered, while many of the sides of the mountains are just bare rocks. Various colors of blue, gray, and green can be seen in the ice. From what I understand, the Beardmore Glacier is the largest one in this group of mountains, and is part of the route that Robert Scott took when he went to the South Pole.



**Photos of Amundsen's team (Left) and Scott's team (Right) upon their arrival at the South Pole. Both photos are mounted on a wall at the Amundsen – Scott South Pole Station**

Scott reached the South Pole on either January 17th or 18th, 1912 (I've seen both dates published), only to see the Norwegian flag flying, planted by Roald Amundsen, who arrived there on December 14th, 1911. On December 14, 1996, while I was here, a Norwegian scientist led a ceremony of flying the Norwegian flag and reading Amundsen's account of reaching the South Pole. The Norwegians are still actively involved with conquering this harsh continent. One year, I was at Scott Base when three of them gave a presentation on their ski trip across Antarctica. That was the same night I joined the Scott Base Polar Plungers Swim Club. Somehow, my 10 seconds swimming naked didn't quite compare with their journey.

**Tuesday, January 23rd**

Today I completed my ninth trip to the South Pole. My boss, Ken Griffin, and Steve Currier from NASA are down on the ice, and I was asked to show them around at the Pole by Pat Smith, the NSF director of Polar Communications. We flew down yesterday on a New York Air National Guard plane, but had to stay overnight because the plane we were scheduled to fly back to McMurdo was canceled due to poor visibility.

I will probably be back at the Pole next week to track the Vandenberg launch of the Delta rocket carrying ISTP satellite. We will be trying to collect the telemetry data from the second and third stage of the Delta rocket. Telemetry is the data that is transmitted to the ground from the rocket (or satellites) that tell about the engine temperatures, amount of fuel, various pressures, etc. Usually, airplanes called Advanced Range Instrumentation Aircraft (ARIA) are used to collect this telemetry, but it is expensive to operate these planes, so NASA is looking for a cheaper way to do it. Since the equipment is at the South Pole already, it was suggested that we try and use it.



Upper Left: South Pole Dome  
 Bottom Left: Ceremonial Pole with flags

Upper Right: Dome Entrance  
 Bottom Right: Geographic South Pole Sign

**Saturday, January 27th, My 10th trip to the South Pole**

The launch of the ISTP was canceled, so my purpose of going to the Pole this time was to pack up some equipment. It didn't make any difference to me. Three trips to the Pole

in one week! This place has a magic of its own. When one is standing right at the South Pole marker, everyone else in the world is North of you.

Besides the many different science activities (which I previously have written about in my Antarctic Reflections I and II), the people are what make it interesting. For example, three of the four radio operators are women. Catherine Caesar has a Master's degree in zoology, Liza Lobe is an Alaskan bush pilot, and B. K. Grant has a ranch in Colorado. She also has been to the North Pole.



Bishopdale Bear at the Pole

Bishopdale (Teddy) Bear traveled with me on his first trip to the Pole. This bear has more frequent flier miles than I do. His home is at the Bishopdale School in Christchurch, but usually he is jet setting around the world. He just arrived back in New Zealand, after bungi-jumping over Victoria Falls in Africa. He managed to receive hugs from some of the pretty girls at the South Pole, and then smugly laughed at me because he was the center of attention. When I sat him on the brass South Pole marker with the wind chill at -75 F., he just glared at me. It wasn't my fault he only had summer shorts on. After the mandatory photographs he forgave me when I gave him a cup of hot chocolate.

#### Thursday, February 1st

Last night we finally tracked RADARSAT for the first time. It was not the best satellite pass in terms of collecting data, but we saw it. Each time I track a satellite it thrills me almost as much as the first time I ever did it, many years ago.

T h u r s d a y ,

In December, Dave Hess and I went to a two-hour snow survival class in preparation to go to Black Island, where there is some more satellite tracking equipment we are to maintain. A few days later we flew to Black Island on board a helicopter from the Coast Guard cutter, the Polar Star. We were only there for a few hours, but eating Jill's homemade blueberry cheesecake convinced us that we would have to have at least another trip there. This month, I had two helo flights to Black Island. I came back on my second trip on the next-to-the-last day that VXE-6 is flying helos here. Kinda sad. You know the respect I have for VXE-6.

F e b r u a r y

8th



Coast Guard Helo at Black Island

Then, I had a day of snowmobiling to the "Room-with-a-view" for snow/winter survival training, and now they want to make me work for a living!

Right: Scott Tent at survival training



Several ships in addition to the Polar Sea (or her sister ship the Polar Star) come to McMurdo during the Austral summer (October - February). My favorite is the Nathaniel B. Palmer, a research vessel just a few years old. Dave and I saw it the night it arrived. Now, even tourist boats are coming here, at a cost of about \$7000 per person. Two of the ships that have come here this season are owned and operated by the Russians.



Upper Left: Polar research vessel, the Nathaniel B. Palmer (called the "Nattie B".)  
 Lower Left: Russian Tourist Ship  
 Upper Right: US Coast Guard Cutter "Polar Sea"  
 Lower Right: USS Greenwave, the cargo ship

Patti Weeg, a teacher in Maryland, is teaching elementary students about the Internet. Dave has been e-mailing these students letters, and has asked me to join him, to tell about life in Antarctica. I wrote a letter/story to the kids about the South Pole. Some of it I copied from some of my earlier works. One of the things I did while back in the States was to buy a digital camera. It doesn't have the best resolution, but it is fun to play with. Learning to use it and send images back to the States has already occupied some of my time. Already, Patti has placed some of our photos on the web.



Dave Hess at Black Island (Self-Portrait)

### **Tuesday, February 20th**

What drives a man to leave his wonderful family, give up his reasonably safe and interesting job of seventeen years, limit his travel opportunities, etc., to Winter-over in Antarctica? Tracking satellites at the new NASA McMurdo Ground Station is one of the reasons. What are the others? I am not sure that I know the answers.

Wintering-over in Antarctica! Why? I have to keep asking the question, "Please, Mr. Custer, what am I doing here?" I was offered this job over a year ago, but I didn't really want to leave home with my daughter Cheri still in high school. She graduated in May, 1995, and this opportunity came again. Things were sort of shaky with Lockheed at NASA with all the layoffs. When I told my wife Karoline about this job opportunity, her response was that I probably ought to take it, even though she would miss me. My older daughter Michelle graduated from college in December, so the kids are more independent. Giving up seventeen years with Lockheed and leaving the Space Shuttle program wasn't an easy decision, but I quit in August, 1995, and hired on with AlliedSignal as a field engineer. Now I am based out of Wallops Island, Va. Karoline and the girls are still in Texas.

### **Thursday, February 22nd**

As I type these words, I am listening to the William Tell Overture on my portable CD player. I have heard it said that sophistication is being able to hear the William Tell Overture without thinking of the Lone Ranger. I am not sophisticated. The only reason I bought this CD was to be able to listen to the music of the Lone Ranger while living in McMurdo, Ross Island, Antarctica.

Every place has vocabulary words unique to its environment. For instance, here in Antarctica we all live on "the Ice". Prior to leaving New Zealand for the Ice, every one receives two or three orange bags containing cold weather gear such as the red parkas and white bunny boots. When one is flying to, in, or out of Antarctica, extreme cold weather (ECW) gear is worn and carried in a hand carry bag. Hold baggage contains the rest of the gear. Thus, when one is going anywhere on a flight, whether to the South Pole, Christchurch, or a helo ride to Black Island or the Dry Valley's, one must "bag drag" both the ECW gear and the

hold baggage, so the aircraft load masters will have an accurate weight of passengers and cargo.

A skua is a local scavenger bird that is like a gray seagull. Instead of throwing out items that someone else can utilize, “skuable” stuff and junk are placed in lounges and at the end of hallways. There is even an entire building that one can hunt for “skuables”. Watch out Bag Ladies, when people leave the Ice, you will have strong competition. My most treasured skuable is a Wyoming Centennial license plate (1890 - 1990), from Natrona County, which is where I was raised. Even more meaningful, in January, 1991, four people flew the Wyoming Centennial flag, along with the Wyoming state flag at the South Pole. My friends, Nora and Dana Van Burgh gave me the Wyoming flag years ago.

Last week, Sparkles, my roommate finally left. Now I have the room to myself, and in order to make it more livable, I tacked many of my photographs on the walls, next to my Wyoming license plate. Most of them are from the mountains of Wyoming. Besides the deer and mountains, there are also photographs of the Space Shuttle, sailboats, and a couple of South Pole shots.



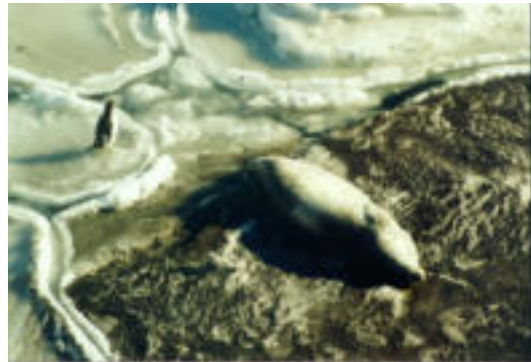
Hanging on the spare mattress leaning against the wall is a brochure of Ford trucks. With the money I save, and the tax money that, hopefully, will be refunded, I plan on buying a new 4X4 next year. If I can remain focused on staying here until Thanksgiving, instead of going home in October, I could pay cash for a new vehicle for the first time in my life. I have heard from many sources that if one is working out of the country for 330 days, the income taxes pertaining to that job will be returned. It didn't used to be that way in Antarctica, but after two guys died here in 1986, their families sued the government, and the government said this was foreign territory, so they weren't responsible. Thus, the tax laws changed in favor of the people working here. Now, President Clinton is trying to have the laws repealed that give people working overseas a tax break. Just my luck!

Yesterday, the last LC-130 plane flew away to Christchurch, New Zealand. The night before last, the Coast Guard Cutter, the Polar Sea, sailed away. Today, the Nathaniel B. Palmer research vessel is leaving. There won't be another plane here until August, when the next summer's season main body of people return. We don't even know if the traditional Mid-Winter's air drop will occur in June. The government is trying to save money. It is OK for a general to fly around the world in an empty aircraft, but why send mail to the people who Winter-over in Antarctica? After all, they volunteered, and they have e-mail now. People in jail don't want to be there, so they have the right to receive mail. From our standpoint, it is difficult to receive chocolate chip cookies by e-mail.

Anyone who knows me probably wonders how will I be able to stand at least six months not being able to hop a plane on the spur of the moment. I have asked myself the same question, and I don't know. I guess I will have to keep busy working, reading, writing, studying, working as a lay reader at the Chapel of the Snows, try my hand at building a few model airplanes, ships, and a GMC truck that really wants to be a Ford when it grows up.

Seeing that last plane leave tugged on the old wanderlust strings. Fortunately, my dorm window looks out over McMurdo Sound. Last night was the first sunset. Daily, I look at the changes in the colors from the sun reflecting over Mt. Discovery, the glaciers of the Royal Society Mountains, White and Black Islands, the Chapel of the Snows, and the ice around Hut Point. From what I have been told, the Winter brings continuous and fantastic color displays, so I have these simple pleasures of anticipating. Mt. Erebus, which is not directly visible from McMurdo, can be seen in clear weather from Arrival Heights. As the sun has lowered, the colors reflecting off of this mountain are incredible. We have to drive to the antenna every day to change tapes, which offers us the opportunity to see Mt. Erebus in its splendor!

Last week, there was a single Adelie penguin near Hut Point that was taunting a seal. Both were on small ice floes. Initially, the two were separated by a small floe, which was almost a perfect hexagon, perhaps ten feet across. The penguin waddled to the edge of his floe, hopped onto the one in the middle, as if to say, "Catch me if you can". The seal was stretched out on the ice, with his tail towards the penguin. Had he been more hungry than interested in a suntan, the penguin might have become lunch. Chomp!



Left: The William Memorial Madonna  
Right: "Catch-me-if-you-can" penguin  
Bottom: Sunbathing seal





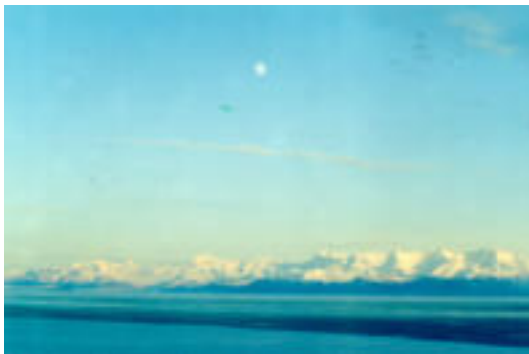
**Scott's Discovery Hut**

One of the three pre-fabricated huts that Robert Scott and others used in the early Antarctic exploration years is located on Hut Point. The hut was placed there in 1902. This hut is described in more detail in my earlier story, "Antarctica Reflections I". Walking down to Hut Point is one of my regular activities while in McMurdo. Three weeks ago, when the ship, "Greenwave" was in port unloading cargo, I took a detour while walking to the Point. After eight trips to the Ice, I finally visited the statue of the Holy Madonna, which is a memorial to a Navy enlisted man who died in the early days of Operation Deep Freeze. William's (Willie) airfield, the permanent ice runway, is named for this man.

### **Sunday, February 25th**

I have Sundays off now. There have been times when I worked two or three weeks without a break. It sure is relaxing to have the time off. I started my day off by making a cup of coffee in my room, then going to the Chapel of the Snows, and having Sunday Brunch. During the summer months, I could read the Sunday paper, the Antarctic Sun Times. That is one thing I miss now that the Times is not published in the Winter. This afternoon, I called home. It beats the old days of using Ham radio links, "Can you hear me? over..." "What did you say? Over".

I have usually felt guilty about coming down to Antarctica and having modern conveniences, such as the phone, e-mail, heated dorms, etc. I knew that I was not as tough as the early explorers, or even the people searching for meteorites out in the field camps. Then one day I realized that the early explorers used the best technology that they had available, and it is almost the 21st century, even here. So why not enjoy telephone calls home, and e-mail?



### Royal Society Mountains

As I write this, the sunset is enticing me away from this electronic box. Across McMurdo Sound, from left to right, are White Island, Black Island, Mt. Discovery, and then a long range of mountains and glaciers that compose the Royal Society Mountains. White Island is about the 10 O'clock position, Black Island is at 11, Mt. Discovery is at 12, and the mountains stretch from 1 to 2. The sky between Black Island and Mt. Discovery is glowing pink right on the horizon. The sun moves in counter-clockwise direction; the sky is a kaleidoscope of colors. About three hours ago, one of the many glaciers in the Royal Society Mountains was illuminated as a single strip of silver ribbon. All the other glaciers faded into a pale gray. The sun was hidden in an upper layer of clouds. The evening continued, and the next lower layer of clouds glistened in the reflecting light. As the sun moved lower out of the upper layer of clouds, the reflected light across the ice was that of a single beam.

With an radiance that only Mother Nature can give, the top clouds near the volcano Mt. Discovery danced as if distant forest fires were leaping from cloud to cloud. Tonight, the peak of Mt. Discovery is above the horizontal layer of clouds. At one time, a sheath of gold shrouded the peak. Dave Rosenthal, an artist who is down here solely to paint, that the split-second greenish flash of sunset known to sailors for centuries may last several minutes, tells me. He saw it the other night, and said it was the most brilliantly bluish-green color he had ever seen.



Mt. Discovery

### Monday, February 26th

It's 2 AM - really the morning of the 27th. Each evening, after the sun sets, it becomes darker outside. The sky over Black Island and Mt. Discovery has a faint reddish glow. So far, it has only been twilight. Today was one of those days that makes the Antarctic experience worthwhile. Most of the day was cloud free; when I woke this morning, the Royal Society Mountains lived up to their majestic name. Some of the glaciers flow down to the sea. It doesn't seem possible that this mountain range is fifty miles away. The ruggedness of the peaks remind me of the Wyoming Tetons.

In years past, the annual ice of McMurdo Sound dissipated in January and early February. Except for the channels opened by the ships, especially the Coast Guard icebreaker, this year most of the ice has remained intact. Within the past twenty-four hours, much of the ice had blown away. Hut Point had open water around it, so Dave and I decided we would go there on the chance we might see a penguin or two. We were pleasantly surprised to see eighteen Adelie penguins. What a treat! The most I have ever seen close up was three. A couple of times I have seen twenty or more, but they were always at a distance. I had left the digital camera back in my room, so we came back for it and batteries for the one that belongs to NASA. Within an hour or so, Dave had sent these to Mrs. Weeg, the teacher in Maryland. A half an hour later, photos of these penguins were on the Internet.



**Penguins at Hut Point**

### **Tuesday, February 27th**

A fresh snow covered the dirt of McMurdo when I woke up this morning. One of my e-mail messages said Casper, Wyoming had eight inches. We only had about one half inch. Somehow, I think the people in the States will be the ones feeling sorry for me in July, but I am the lucky one. No heat, humidity, nor mosquitoes!

People reported that whales were having penguin omelets for breakfast, so Dave and I had to retrace our steps to Hut Point. No whales were spotted, but the same group of penguins that we saw yesterday were huddled in the same spot, undisturbed by the snow on their backs. While walking up the hill at Hut Point, four other penguins dived into the water from ice about one hundred yards off shore.

This past Saturday left me feeling like the kid who doesn't receive any Valentine cards when every one in the class are smiling about theirs. The last mail until next August was distributed, and I walked away empty-handed. Yesterday, Sally, the mail clerk, called me and said that she had missed my name when she typed the list of people who had packages. Today, at lunch, I stopped by her office. The stereo that Karoline had mailed three weeks ago is now playing Johnny Cash as I type this. Karen, my OLDER sister, sent me a birthday present, but I can't open it for a few more weeks. She said the only reason I hid away in Antarctica for my up-coming 50th birthday is to avoid the retribution plans she has been talking about for a year. She turned 50 before me, and will be 60 when I will be 58!

### **Wednesday, February 28th**

This morning, Dave called me at my room (we work different shifts), and told me that there were whales at Hut Point. I looked out and saw an Orca. So another trip to the Point. By the time I arrived, the whales were gone. But the same group of penguins was still there, plus three seals. I thought the penguins might have been nesting, but they just seemed to be going through a feather changing stage (called molting). More photographs!

Tonight, Dave Rosenthal told me to check out the sun dogs. These are rainbow-colored spots, sometimes seen in the sky near the sun. However, tonight, the sun was near the horizon, facing McMurdo, between two sun dogs reflecting on the mist above the ice. It was as if seeing the very bottom legs of a rainbow.

### Sunday, March 3rd

Why do I spend time at a keyboard when I have a day off? I have enough of computers on a daily basis at work. The old days of tracking satellites by turning knobs, and to some extent, the thrill of locking onto a satellite, have been replaced by those marvelous machines, which make an oxy-moron out of the term, "user-friendly". To answer the question, "Why?", its because I am incapable of letting today go by without writing something of the beauty over the last twenty-four hours.

Yesterday started off rather badly. We were supposed to lock onto and pass data through the Tracking and Data Relay Satellite (TDRS). Equipment problems prevented us from successfully completing this test. It was a frustrating day, and to make matters worse, I was stuck inside on a day when the weather was warm and beautiful, with a clear sky and light wind. Finally, after fourteen-and-a-half hours, I had the chance to leave the computers behind. I was tired, but seeing several people at Hut Point compelled me to walk there. At 10:30 PM, the sun had already set, but twilight colors continued to dazzle me.

All the troubles of yesterday vanished as I walked to Hut Point last night. My thoughts weren't of retiring to Wyoming, but wishing Karoline was with me to share this beauty. The temperature was in the twenties; having no wind for the first time in several days gave the illusion of a heat wave. McMurdo Mall used to sell bumper stickers, which said, "I brake for penguins". As I walked to the Point, the pick-up truck that passed me did exactly that. Near where the ice pier is located, two penguins on the access road were going for their midnight stroll. The women in the truck stepped out, and we followed the penguins very carefully and at a safe distance from them. Laws protecting penguins from being harassed by people are strict and the fines are stiff.



"I brake for penguins"



Hut Point

The group of eighteen penguins, which have been at Hut Point, were still there, staying in the same spot. According to other people, they are molting their Summer feathers for Winter ones. Last week when I was there, one single penguin went to a small patch of ice near the water's edge. He was funny, because he kept loosing his balance on the ice, and came close to falling a couple of times.

As the sun moved behind Mt. Discovery, the reflections in the water showed all the colors of the rainbow. There was one spot that looked like clusters of grapes; another flat area mirrored pink and silver images of the few clouds. Standing on top of Hut Point Hill, one could see open water clear to the Northern horizon. A solitary seal swam by, and off in the

distance I saw a whale breach. The sounds of waves crashing on the rocks broke the silence at Hut Point. As the surf subsided back into the sea, the roar of a waterfall over an area about three feet deep and thirty feet long brought back memories of other beaches and waterfalls. One of the men I talked to while at the Point said, "What a wonderful gift." Thank you God, for this gift.

Back in my room, I just watched the sunset continue over the mountains. I moved my pillow to the other end of the bed so I could better look out the window. When I woke at 5 AM, still in my clothes, dawn bathed the mountains in pink.

Earlier, last evening, the sea ice began to break open. In front of the Crary Lab, where I work, there was only about one hundred feet of open water near the shore at 7 PM. By the time I finished work, the ice had moved approximately one-fourth mile off shore. Small ice bergs, with a surface area about the size of a house, drifted by. It was amazing how much the ice had moved in such a few hours. By 10 AM this morning, McMurdo Sound, which is at least twenty miles across, had open water half that distance. Today the sky was clear, and the sun clearly illuminated the water and the Royal Society mountains. Often times, I have looked at the water in it various hues, and thought, "That's the color I want my next truck to be".

Today, I enjoyed many hours watching out the window. At sunset, another rainbow-like sundog was near the surface of the water. The wind has been blowing all day; now at 1 AM there is a drifting mist across the sea. Much of this journal will probably be about the sunsets, sunrises, mountains, sea, whales, and penguins. They are part of my Antarctic experience. It is difficult to paint images with words on a computer screen. The beauty of this place is what causes me to try, and places me in front of a computer screen on my off-duty time away from the work computers.

### **Tuesday, March 5th**

Yesterday the wind was very cold. Actual temperatures were near 0 degrees F., but the wind chill brought them to an effective -40 degrees. The scrolling weather channel on the local TV channel said the wind was 12 knots, but I doubt that, since one could almost fly. McMurdo Sound now is clear of ice all the way across.

Early this morning when walking back to the dorm after work, the sky was the darkest I had ever seen here. There was a heavy blanket of clouds that just hung near the top of the Royal Society Mountains and Mt. Discovery. The sun had set, but its orange glow filled the gap between the sea and the bottom of the clouds. I have heard astronauts describe their reentry as traveling on the inside of a neon tube. I felt like I was seeing this same neon tube around McMurdo Sound. (Surround Sound!) Time for lunch, and then back to work again.

### **Thursday, March 7<sup>th</sup>**

(Morning)

While walking back to the dorm at 1 AM, nature gave me another surprise - a full moon peaking through the heavy clouds! While I knew the moon was visible here, I hadn't seen it since I left the States in January. About an hour earlier, I had driven up to the hill to change a tape. Snow blew across the road, limiting visibility. Temperatures had dropped. Sitting in front of a wood burning fireplace, like the one I have at home, certainly would have been more comfortable. Although this was not the night to see moon light reflecting off of Mt. Erebus, just seeing the moon uplifted my spirits.

(Afternoon)

Gray sky, gray choppy sea. Windy. Cold. Stay inside until time to go to work. Read. Read what - have tons of books? Joseph Conrad's "The Mirror of the Sea" sounds good.

Here am I, reading a book about sailing, looking out my windows at the hostile waters of McMurdo Sound, listening to the words of John Denver's Calypso.

Conrad, in his writing about sailors, echoes my sentiments about the earlier Antarctic explorers who would have used a GPS receiver, had they owned one, when searching for the South Pole, and who endured circumstances I only want to see in movies. "In his own time a man is always very modern. Whether the seamen of three hundred years hence will have the faculty of sympathy is impossible to say. An incorrigible mankind hardens its heart in the progress of its own perfectibility. How will they feel on seeing the illustrations to the sea novels of our day, or of our yesterday? It is impossible to guess. But the seaman of the last generation, brought into sympathy with the caravels of ancient time by his sailing-ship, their lineal descendant, can not look upon those lumbering forms navigating the naive seas of ancient woodcuts without a feeling of surprise, of affectionate derision, envy and admiration." One hundred years from now, when transportation to Antarctica is daily, or even hourly, I am sure the idea of having no planes for six months will make those people think we lived in primitive conditions.

Conrad describes the seas in its many colors and moods. Just watching the Ross Sea out of my window daily has given me a new prospective of how quickly and dynamic the sea can change. I have no idea the number of different shades of blue I have observed. The sea reflects all colors of the rainbow, and the waves are but a window into the dynamics of Mother Nature. Conrad refers to the sea as living being. Perhaps it is. Once, a friend of mine told me that the Earth feels man's presence, and sometimes responds with peace and beauty, but sometimes retaliates with hurricanes, floods, volcano eruptions, earthquakes, etc. Who am I to argue that concept. The Almighty Creator, if He can give me life, could He not give a spirit and/or life to a rock, or a mountain, a galaxy, or the sea?

A few more pages of Conrad triggers other thoughts: "It was somewhere near the Cape - The Cape being, of course, the Cape of Good Hope, the Cape of Storms of its Portuguese discover". Having worked nearly eighteen years working on NASA contracts, my image of The Cape is where the Apollo moon rockets were launched, and today's space shuttles are launched.

### **Friday, March 8th**

As with any job, there are days of job satisfaction, and there are others that are very frustrating. Today started off as frustrating. We are working long hours, and it seems that the people at Wallops are placing an extra burden of demands on us. Tomorrow, we have to repeat last Saturday's TDRS test. That in itself isn't so bad, because we now understand the cause of the problems we encountered, and have more confidence that our test will be successful. But this test conflicts with our normal satellite tracking operations. Somehow, we will juggle everything and make it happen.

Next week, a medical evacuation (med-evac) flight is coming to McMurdo to take a sick man out. There are rumors of incoming mail. The thought of hopping that plane out of here has probably occurred to most of us.

This afternoon, I had about a two hour break. The weather is warm, the Royal Society Mountains are clear, and the sea is an aqua blue. (Isn't it ironic, to describe the sea by a using a Latin-based word that means water? - The sea is the color of water!) To sulk in my room would have only wasted two hours.

"I wonder if the penguins are still at Hut Point", I thought. Walking fast and furiously, I kept thinking that I didn't need this frustration, and it wouldn't bother me very much to catch the med-evac flight.

How can words paint the water and ice? Cameras and artists can't capture the view as well as the human eye. Translucent, all shades of blues, grays, sometimes still - mirror like; a minute later, ripples from the wind. There were paddies of ice, sheets, and clumps, with

larger frozen waves bordering honey-combed natural stained glass patterns. Depending upon the direction of view, the water was dark gray, stormy, or calm and teal green, or gold and silver from sun reflections.

Eleven penguins remained in the small colony, laying down or standing on the same rocky hillside. It looks like they are nearly finished molting. Two others frolicked on the ice shaped like cumulus clouds. Being careful not to disturb them, I photographed them until I ran out of film. Of all the penguins I have photographed, these two may be in my best shots. One was having a bad hair day!



**Bad hair day for the penguin on the left**



**Vince's Memorial Cross at Hut Point**

Higher up on the hill, one lone penguin facing the water acted as a sentinal. He warned the others of my presence by a cawing sound. Concealed in the rocks, he was probably watching for seals. A few minutes later, when I was standing on Hut Point Hill, he cawed again, as an emperor penguin broke the surface.

Once, I had seen an emperor penguin through a telescope, perhaps a mile out on the ice. I had never seen one up close in Antarctica. At first, I just saw a small gray movement on top of the water. I thought it was a seal. Grabbing the binoculars, I saw his distinctive yellow markings as he surfaced. What a thrill!

Within a few seconds of the emperor diving, I saw a seal that came up for air, took a couple of deep breaths, and submerged. He was facing the emperor. After that, I didn't see any more action, but I wonder what happened, as I wonder what has happened to some of the Adelie penguins. Today I saw fourteen; last week I saw as many as twenty.

The George Vince memorial cross on top of Hut Point Hill has a sign that he fell into the water, and died, on March 11, 1902. He was a member of the Discovery Expedition. Three days away from 94 years ago I visited this site. There are greater concerns in life than tight schedules. How little does it matter in the Overall scheme that I had job frustration? We all do, one time or another. The penguins aren't worried about tracking satellites. But they are concerned about seals and survival.

Walking back from Hut Point, my thoughts were not on flying out on the med-evac, but that if I left early, I would have greater regrets of cheating myself out of the Antarctic experience. I would have felt that I had given up. That would be an even greater regret.

### **Saturday, March 9th**

Dave and I were successful in flowing data through the TDRS!

### **Tuesday, April 9th**

Hi there, good people! This is the Ice Man, back at the keyboard. Just thought I would tell you that, in case any of you are wondering what I am doing on this fine day. My attempts at journal writing are kind of like I do everything else - sporadic and unconventional. My last official journal writings occurred on March 9th. After that, I wrote the story on Norman Vaughan, and then I ended up writing on my teachers, sidetracked from what started out as journal entries on March 28th. One more time, I shall try and recapture some of the events of the past month, giving dates as I remember them, rambling on when I don't.

E-mail from all of you and the telephone calls I make help keep my spirits upbeat. I have heard from teachers, students, friends, former bosses, a couple of astronauts, and Hubbell family members. One special surprise was hearing from Chick Hubbell. He and I share both had Charles Brewster Hubbell as our third-great grandfather. Charles Hubbell is the man who wrote the Civil War letter, which started me on my genealogy search.

It is always great to hear about Spring back in the States. Some people have seemed apologetic when they tell me about nice days and their fun activities. Please don't - I am the one who made the choice to come here. Tell me about flowers, oceans, mountains, day-to-day things, anything.

One thing that does bother me about the choice I made is missing out on the birthdays of my daughters and other things, such as Cheri buying a new car a week after her nineteenth birthday. She has been working at the same job for three years. At Thanksgiving time she announced she want to buy a new car. Within the last four months she saved enough for a down-payment, and now has a bank note that is her responsibility, but one I know she will meet. I don't want to go into the details, but Michelle had a traumatic time at work, and I wasn't there to comfort her. Karoline reminds me that gradually the time left here is diminishing. "Wintering-over in Antarctica" will eventually become just a one line sentence, but right now eight months seems like a long time to serve a self-imposed sentence of another kind.

While I miss my family very much, and some of the typical things I do, such as hopping planes on the spur of the moment, and eating steaks from T-bone Toms, living in Antarctica is still a very rewarding experience. The people here all have an adventurous streak in common, and love to travel, but after that, the similarities disappear. Most of the people are very skilled in their jobs, but each person has his or her own story to tell. (Of course, that is true everywhere, but generally, one doesn't have daily contact with people with such diverse backgrounds.)

Travel is what I do best. But while the airlines have lost their Matt Nelson profit margin for the year, there are others who make me seem like all I do is sit home in a rocking chair. It all balances out. I have done a few things and have seen places that these people haven't. We all have our own experiences.

One of the subjects that has been surfaced here is what would we do if the National Science Foundation decided not to fly planes in for another year, due to budget cuts. No problem! McMurdo has such a pool of talented, skilled, and knowledgeable people, an abundance of raw materials, and a good cache of food and fuel, that we wouldn't be stranded here like the clowns on Gilligan's Island. There might not be much left standing in McMurdo, but the 233 souls here would arrive in New Zealand in hand-built boats or planes, complete with GPS receivers.

On some days, when the wind chill is -80 F, the blowing snow is almost blinding, and the sky is dingy gray, one walks between buildings with head low and face hidden in the parka. The next day may be clear, the ice on McMurdo Sound gone - blown out to sea, and we experience a heat wave of 0 degrees F. Once the wind stops, new patterns emerge as McMurdo Sound freezes again. An iceberg that blew in near Scott Base two years ago rises abruptly from the flat ice around it.

Our days of sunlight are now about nine hours in length. Each day, we lose about 22 minutes of sunlight. Our last sunset will be about April 26th, but I may be off on the exact date. I guess it doesn't matter much. Tonight, I work the evening shift. I didn't go to bed until 1:30 AM this morning, so didn't feel guilty about sleeping until 9:30 AM. When I woke, Mt. Discovery and the entire range of the Royal Society Mountains had the most beautiful pink glow. The glaciers that flow to the sea gradually faded into the natural choreography of ice. As the sun rose higher, the pink colors on the mountains began to diminish, and the ice refracted the sun's light through a prism belonging only to the angels. As I write these words, it is 3:45 PM. Sunset is about an hour away. The mountains, glaciers, and ice all have a purplish-pink tint. The snow is blowing, and steam is rising from stretches of open water. Time to go to work.



**Iceberg near Scott Base**



**Steaming water in McMurdo Sound**

### **Friday, April 12<sup>th</sup>**

I can't look out the window and see glowing sunrises or sunsets today. In fact I can't see much at all. Blowing snow and almost whiteout conditions really does give one the impression that Antarctica can resemble the movies.

Quick - look at the today's date and tell me what is so special about it. My wife told me she would not have guessed the answer had it been worth a million dollars. Well, for those of you who don't share my space enthusiasm I guess I will have to let you know that it is the thirty-fifth anniversary of Yuri Gagarin's space flight, and the fifteenth anniversary of STS-1, the first space shuttle mission with John Young and Robert Crippen on board. I saw that launch, and the landing of the same mission in California 54 hours later. Another story sometime. There will come a day when some people will remember the day of Matt Nelson's first space shuttle flight, perhaps on STS-144. But even if nobody else remembers, you can bet that I will. It's only a matter of time.

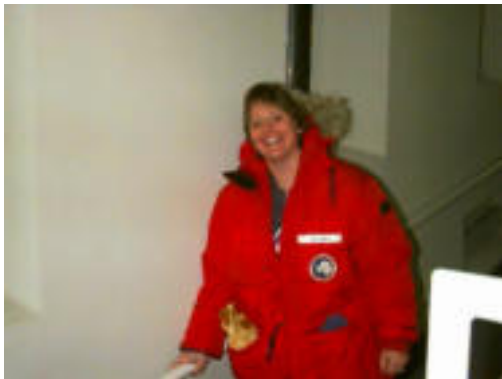


**STS-1, from software included in the digital camera.  
Wish I had taken this shot, but I didn't.**

Today, when I talked to my wife she told me that NASA had sent me a letter telling me to keep my astronaut application current, I would have to furnish more information. Hope I can fax it to them, or send it by e-mail. Most of the application is a standard government employment form. Last year, when I filled out the part asking geographical preference, I

answered, "One hundred miles plus about the surface of the earth". It may not be the proper answer, but it's a truthful one.

Last week, on April 4th, was my 50th birthday. I made it through that day without too much traumatic stress. My sister sent me a nice shirt. Beth Sheid, one of the people who works in the same building that I do, told me to open the package in front of her, just in case my sister sent something to embarrass me. Beth took the shirt, and embroidered a penguin and a space shuttle on it. Above the penguin, she wrote, "Ancient Antarctic Explorer", and beneath the shuttle, "Future Astronaut". That really made me happy! The "Ancient" part is funny - I love it, but the "Future Astronaut" lets me know that there are people who believe me when I say that I have 100 percent faith in God that I will go to space before I die. Jesus said, "If you have faith the size of a grain of mustard seed, you can move a mountain". My mountain is 265 miles tall - I am just trying to reach the base of it. Wintering-over in Antarctica will be part of the equation when I am selected.



**Beth Sheid**



**Bob Sheid**



**John the Electrician (Papa Smurf!)**

Beth, Bob, Dave and I often share our meals in the McMurdo Cafe. It is always enjoyable. Even when discussions are serious, we always laugh about something. Another friend is John the Electrician, commonly called Papa Smurf. The people I meet are really part of the Antarctic Experience; I feel that I will have these people for friends long after I leave the Ice.

Beth, and her husband Bob, are good people. This is their third time to Winter-over here. Beth works as an electronics technician, and Bob is a machinist. We share similar desires to work on the same research ship, the Nathaniel B. Palmer. I expect they will have jobs on it next year, but it is going to be a while longer before I do, if ever. One day last month, I had a couple of hours to kill before going to work, so decided to visit Bob in the machine shop. No computers. Just the smell of machine oil and a few metal shavings on the floor. Fantastic! I kid Bob that he doesn't ever work, just dumps bags of metal shavings on the floor for show and tell.

For my birthday, Beth and Bob gave me a case of Coca-Cola, and left it in the satellite operations room. Dave often buys Cokes, and I thought these were his. I didn't see "Happy Birthday, Matt, B & B" written on top of the cans. Dave asked me, "Can I move your

Cokes?" I had to give him a sarcastic answer. "I am the old guy here, and I know I can move the Cokes, so if you are so weak, I will do it for you." Then he asked me if it was OK to put them in my storage drawer. Still, I hadn't caught on. A few minutes later we went to Beth's office, where I opened the shirt. Beth asked me if I received the case of Cokes. Until that time it never dawned on me that the Cokes were mine. Poor Dave has to work with this old guy. It is a wonder that he hasn't use me for a depth finder at the bottom of McMurdo Sound.

On March 23rd, the "Heavy" shop, where vehicle maintenance is done on forklifts, cats, and other heavy equipment, had a party. Bob's machine shop is at one end of the Heavy shop. At 5 PM, I was down to the last satellite pass I had to track for the day, ready to leave and head for the party. The computer decided that this was a good time to crash. I was really frustrated, because the Heavy shop was serving steaks. Beth and I were going to share a ride, so she stopped by to tell me it was time to go. Only it wasn't. Beth knew I had been waiting for that steak. She convinced me I had to eat supper, anyway, and that I should not let the computer spoil my steak dinner. That was the best steak dinner I had since I left home. I was only there an hour, but it was long enough to change my mood. Dave and I tackled the problem soon afterwards, successfully.

That was about the third time that I had to call Dave in on his day off. Two days later, Dave extracted his revenge. He called me in to repair an antenna problem. We finally fixed it the next day, but only after several hours in -10 degree F. weather. The best part of the day was finding two dead lady-bugs inside the antenna. I would not have been as excited seeing these bugs if they were other types of insects.

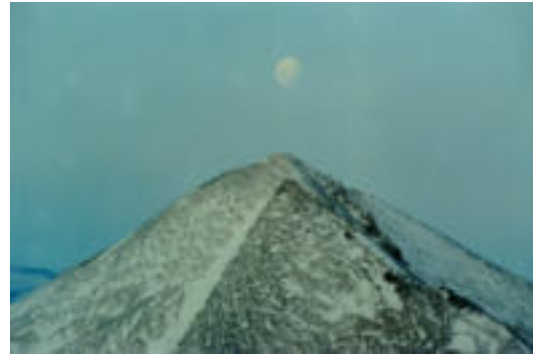
Dave showed me the McMurdo Greenhouse. How wonderful it was to see green plants growing, even vegetables I don't like. Already, the galley is beginning to serve some vegetables grown there. Dave and I have a good working relationship. He is almost a genius when it comes to computers, but is also good mechanically. I probably frustrate him quite a bit with my lack of computer skills. I may not like computers much more when I leave here, but I certainly will be more knowledgeable about them, thanks to Dave.

The most unusual meal that I have ever eaten wasn't with these guys - it was the Passover Service at Scott Base on April 3rd. Eric Trip, one of the New Zealand guys active in the Chapel of the Snows here in McMurdo, invited people to participate in the service led by Dave Hornstein, from Australia. Dave conducted the Service in Hebrew and in English. He explained very well the symbolic meaning each step of the way. After eating the bitter herbs and matzah (unleavened bread), we were able to eat a more traditional meal cooked by the Kiwi's of lamb and chicken and a delicious apple cobbler. But it was quite an experience, none-the-less. After it was over some of the people stayed to watch "The Ten Commandments", but I had to be at work at 5:30 AM, so chose to go back to McMurdo. A full moon was out, shining over the ice near Scott Base. Absolutely stunning!

By the time I walked to work the next morning, the moon was shining over the ice in front of the Royal Society Mountains. Moonset occurred a couple of hours later, over pink mountains, just as the sun was rising. I didn't have a chance to see it, but those who did said it was wonderful. On Easter Sunday, I was able to photograph the moon over Mt. Discovery. Later, that evening, when Beth and Bob brought my shirt to me, the moon was bright yellow but ready to disappear behind Observation Hill. I grabbed my camera but was in such a hurry to photograph the moon before it was out of view that I forgot to grab my coat. Bob yelled out of his window something about an idiot running around the Chapel of the Snows without a coat. Too many power lines were blocking the view, so I had to find a clear shot. Let me attest to the fact that it didn't take too long for me to decide whatever photographs I had were good enough.



**Observation Hill (Ob Hill)**



**Moon over Ob Hill**



**Sunset on Ob Hill**

Easter Sunrise here was at a more reasonable hour - 8:50 AM, so for the first time in my life I attended Sunrise Services. Eric had arranged to drive some of us to the Service in a Hagglund, a Swedish-built vehicle designed for driving in the snow. He drove us to an area that Mt. Erebus, Mt. Discovery, and the Royal Society Mountains were all visible. Calm wind, clear sky, a few glowing clouds, cold air on our faces, we read Words from the Bible, sang a couple of songs, meditated. "Christ the Lord has risen today, come Worship Me, this Sunrise is My gift to you, people of Antarctica." Once the brief Service was over, Eric led others in making snow angels.

Because of my profound experience carrying the Cross up Observation Hill (Ob Hill) two years ago, I wanted to share it with the people of McMurdo at the Chapel of the Snows Easter Service. Our music leaders, Cass and John, agreed that we could sing the Hymn, "The Old Rugged Cross" prior to my speaking. Essentially, the words I spoke were taken from my "Antarctica Reflections II" story, some of which will also be copied in the next few paragraphs. Combining my previously written words, and those that I spoke at the Service, this was my message:

"I first came to the Ice in 1986 with four other people. One day we climbed Ob Hill. Just about everyone in this group was younger and in better shape than I was. Everyone took off

ahead of me, and I was slowing trying to make it to the top. As I struggled, the words of 'The Old Rugged Cross' kept running through my head: 'On a Hill far away, stood an old rugged Cross, the emblem of suffering and shame...' I was wondering how I was going to reach the summit, when my friend Steve Hanson stopped and waited for me. He told me to take it one step at a time, and hiked along with me to the peak.

The Cross on the top of Ob Hill was placed there in 1913 as a memorial to Robert Scott. Some of you were here in 1993 when a storm blew the Cross down. In January, 1994, some of you may have been here to help carry the Cross back up Ob Hill. It wasn't the Cross to Crucify Jesus, but to remind people of the love that God has for us by giving His Son to us. It is the Cross of the risen Lord. That day in 1994, the people carrying the Cross started at 2 PM. I was late, and had to run to catch it. I couldn't help thinking that the message of the Cross goes on, with or without me. Finally, I caught up with the Cross, and managed to touch and help carry it. But I was out of breath, and the surge of energy of the people carrying it seemed like the Cross was carrying me. As I let go, and watched the team carrying it move ahead, I thought, 'How typical of my life, that I let go of the Cross.'

I climbed to the top of Ob Hill just before the Cross was permanently mounted. A Roman Catholic Priest from Ireland read the Easter Story from the book of John, and the head of Scott Base read the same words said at the time the Cross was taken up for Robert Scott.

Two years ago on Easter Sunday, I looked at the Cross in the church I normally go to back home. I was thinking about the Cross on Ob Hill, and wondering just what is the message of the Cross. As if the man behind me read my thoughts, I heard him say, 'Celebration of Life'. I added another word to that statement, 'Celebration of Life, Everlasting'. I thought how painful it must have been for Jesus to carry His Cross, alone. But he had an even heavier load. He was carrying the weight of all of our sins. The Cross is a symbol that if we ask forgiveness of our sins, and accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, that we too can celebrate everlasting life.



**Vince Memorial Cross at Hut Point**



**Scott Memorial Cross on Ob Hill**

Just as there were three crosses that day Jesus was crucified, there are three crosses visible here at McMurdo. We have the one at Hut Point, the one on Ob Hill, and above us, the Southern Cross. Jesus was hung on the center Cross; the center Cross here at McMurdo is the Southern Cross, directly overhead. There are two pointer stars that one can pick out the Southern Cross easily on clear nights. To me, seeing the Southern Cross in the Heavens is a sign that says, 'By following the message of the Cross, we can celebrate everlasting life in Heaven.'

On a hill not too far away, stands an Old Rugged Cross."

The Easter Service at McMurdo, Antarctica in 1996 is one I will always remember, but I was just one of the players. Several people gave of their time and talents to make this an e n r i c h i n g e x p e r i e n c e .

Sunday Brunch is always a special occasion. On Easter Sunday, several people who had been at the Worship Service dined together. Rebecca had an omelet that the cooks

decorated like an Easter egg. Mary Elizabeth was having ham, and asked others at the table what did they traditionally eat on Easter Sunday. She went on to describe Virginia hams, and mentioned "Hickory smoked hams", as in "Hickory, Dickory, Dock". From there we went to "Three Blind Mice," "Mary had a Little Lamb", and what are the names of the Seven Dwarfs? The conversation changed to the movie, "The Ten Commandments". Beth had told Rebecca at the Passover Service that she thought John Wayne played a bit part in this movie. Rebecca said she looked, but didn't see him. From there, we started discussing what John Wayne would have said had he played Moses: "Let those Pilgrims go". Or Clint Eastwood: "I don't remember if I laid this staff down five or six times. Do you feel lucky, Pharaoh?". Dustin Hoffman as a Rainman-Moses: "Definitely, let my people go on Tuesday. Definitely, let my people go on Tuesday." Writing this paragraph doesn't seem quite as funny as the actual meal, but it gives an insight to meal time conversations. It helps to have a sense of humor here.

The weather was clear and calm all day on Easter Sunday. During the afternoon, I just sat and watched the moon move counter-clockwise over the mountains. About 5 PM, I watched the sunset from the cross mounted on Hut Point Hill. The beauty of the entire day made this an Easter Sunday I will not forget.

On April 10, Dave and I had to extract data out of a device called an Active RADARSAT Calibrator (ARC). This was the first time we had actually driven to the ARC site. Supposedly, it has been working since January. The first thing we saw when we arrived was that the AC cord was just hanging straight down. We just looked at each other and laughed. I thought I cleverly worded the message I sent back to the States, saying how I doubted that the inductance from the South Magnetic Pole was strong enough to overcome the two-foot air gap between the plug and the receptacle. Not thinking how others might react, I not only sent the message to the bosses, but to the customers. Wrong! I received an e-mail from my boss with a thinly disguised threat to fire me. Just no sense of humor!

One thing that wasn't funny occurred last night. The same Hagglund we rode in to the Easter Sunrise Service caught fire. Eric Trip and three others were coming back from a twenty-mile Black Island traverse, when smoke started coming out of the engine compartment. They were less than one half mile away from Scott Base. Fortunately, no one was injured, although some people did lose their cameras, and the Hagglund was a total loss. Antarctica is a beautiful place, but one, which people must always exercise caution. This is a good stopping point. Adios until the next edition of my Antarctica journal.

### **Sunday, April 14th**

Another lazy Sunday. Church, brunch, and then back to the room to hibernate. This was a planned hibernation. Blowing snow makes me appreciate the beauty of last Sunday, which was Easter. Bob McCullough, one of the guys I traveled to Russia with in 1992, and I watched the movie "Apollo 13" roughly at the same time. I thought the launch of Apollo 13 had occurred on April 13th, but according to the movie, they launched on April 11, 1970. Since it was the 13th back in the States, and I had to work on Saturday, Bob and I communicated over e-mail that we would watch it together. Bob and I share the space disease. We saw the launch of Soyuz TM-15 at the Russian launch facility in Baikonur, and the STS-66 launch of the Space Shuttle Atlantis with astronaut Joe Tanner on board. In 1993, we were supposed to watch an Ariane 4 launch from French Guiana, but the day Bob and others from the Russian tour were watching the launch I was having my gall bladder removed. One of my plans while here in Antarctica is to finish the story of the Russian launch trip, where I met the STS-144 support crew consisting of Bob, Butch Head, Bob Gaylord (who was also at the STS-66 launch), Ron Caswell (who shared watching the launch of STS-51 with Capt. Bill Readdy flying as the Pilot), Ken Harman, Chris Gainor, Richard Tonkin, and Ed (N1) Cameron.

I am cognizant of the fact that I write about many people in my stories, and often the names are not known to the majority of the readers. That's OK! When I am much older than I am now, and re-read these stories, seeing their names will refresh my memory of them, and the events that were common in our lives. Friendship is more valuable to me than gold. And I certainly have been blessed to have met many fine people whom I consider friends. There

are certain things that money can't buy. Many years ago, my Dad said, "I am a very wealthy man. I have a good family, I have my health, I have friends, and the Lord has blessed me. What more can one man need?" He may not remember saying this, but I have not forgotten.

### **Sunday, April 21st**

Today is Dad's 76th birthday. Actually, it is yesterday, but that is back in the States, and it is tomorrow here for the people who are living in the States today. In reality, his birthday is April 20th, but I just wrote the above line to see if I could confuse anybody. Did I? I called him after Church today, talking to him Saturday his time. So I really did call him on his birthday. All this stuff about crossing the International dateline. On one of my previous South Pole trips, I left McMurdo at 11:30 PM on December 21st, and spent the next 38 hours flying home to Texas, all on December 22nd (except for the first half hour).

About 4 PM Beth Sheid called and excitedly told me to look out the window. She and her husband, Bob, spotted 17 or 18 emperor penguins on the ice, about 1000 feet away, heading towards Hut Point, single file. Two stayed behind, close to the ice edge (No, you go on ahead, or I'm tired, or they were designated to stay as rear guard.). The group would bunch up and rest, the leader would then slide and glide, and one by one the others followed. At one time most of the group were just standing around, while two others conferred off to one side, as if discussing options (one may have been asking the other for a date). They were the leaders. When they left, the others lay down and slid on the ice. It was amazing how fast they could move over the ice by sliding. I couldn't make up my mind to go out in the cold, grab a truck, and go to Hut Point. Five other people who were there had a closer view, endured a little more hardship to share in a greater reward of having the penguins waddle within one hundred feet. On que, the penguins turned back towards the two who stayed behind. I watched for over an hour. Finally darkness took over, I couldn't see them very well, but they looked as they were sneaking back towards Hut Point.

### **Monday, April 22nd**

About 10 AM, the group of penguins were about 1000 feet from Hut Point on the edge of the ice by the open water. Near Hut Point a seal did his best imitation of a log, facing the point, oblivious to the penguins. Time for a morning swim, after warm-up aerobics. "Now every one - move your left flipper in, move your right flipper out. Move your right flipper in, move your left flipper out. Stretch your neck and shake it all about!" I looked away for a few seconds back at Hut Point, missing the penguins diving into the water. Immediately, the seal dove into the water. Guess a seal doesn't grow wide as a barrel by being too oblivious to the penguins.



**Mt. Erebus in February**

2 PM sunset. Shadows on Mt. Erebus enhanced the orange plume, the largest I had ever seen. Spectacular. Glad it is only steam. Some of us have discussed what would we do if it erupted. Everyone agreed - grab the cameras. Future archeologists might be able to figure out how to process the film still in the cameras extracted from the ashes of Mt. Erebus, and see how people living near the beginning of the 21st century recorded such events. Have to admit that while I don't want to have that happen, to safely see Mt. Erebus erupting would be a wonderful sight - I would be snapping photographs until out of film.

Later tonight, I journeyed up the hill to change tapes, away from the lights of McMurdo. Two man-made satellites passed overhead, trapped in their orbits, prisoners of the

laws of Physics, never completely free of gravity's chain. On this clear, dark night, I felt the presence of the Holy Spirit while looking up at the bright stars shining in the constellation Crux - The Southern Cross. Shining as a diamond on a silver ring, the Southern Cross illuminated a dimly lit band of wispy clouds, which I hoped might be waiting to explode into the dancing greenish-blue Southern Lights, the Aurora Australis. Instead, I have to wait for another night to enjoy the beauty of my first aurora, for clouds surrounded not the Crux, only millions of stars light years away in the Milky Way Galaxy.

### Wednesday, April 24th

Last sunset faded away today. Our daytime hours lasted from sunrise at 12:23 PM, until sunset at 1:18 PM. In front of the Navy building there was a flag lowering ceremony, where some navy chief said a bunch of words that nobody could hear. I went out to late - should have gone to hut point to see the sunset there, but I didn't have time. I did shoot a nice photograph of the lowering of the flag with Mt. Discovery in the background.

The top of Mt. Discovery is pink, as are the individual peaks of Royal Society Mountains. Snow swirls around Mt. Discovery, like a marble carving, similar to the melting colors of Neapolitan ice cream. Pink and blue stripes of clouds cover about one fourth of the visible sky. The ice that had cleared a couple of days ago is reforming. Yesterday the open water had steam rising from it. A purplish-pink glow on the upper layers of the horizon softly changes into a royal blue as it descends towards the surface of the ice.



Sunset on the Royal Society Mountains

Sort of in a melancholy mood - know the time will pass, glad when it does and for the next sunrise on August 19th. It has been two months since the last plane left, which is one third of the time we will be without planes. Looking back, that time has gone by fairly fast. Many people I know have come here for several Winter seasons, but this will probably be the only one for me. It is beautiful here, but there are other places in the world I want to see.

It is now exactly one hour later past official sunset. Three of the peaks of the Royal Society Mountains are doing their best to capture the diminishing sunlight. Twilight will occur daily for a while, but the sun just won't break over the horizon.

Beneath the highest peak on the Royal Society Mountains is an area that looks like a giant ice cream scoop removed the face of it. Only a little pink remains on the face of the mountain at that point. Even the few clouds are losing in their battle of holding the sun's light captive. Some of the clouds had a fiery edge, but that is now giving way to a soft glow. The sea ice is gradually turning one shade of gray. The mountains and the sea are saying the same thing to the sun as my family said to me: "I know you have to go, it's something you just have to do, but I don't really want you to go away, and I will sure be glad when you return."

In the last package I received from Karoline, there was a box of Famous Amos Chocolate Chip cookies. Thirty-six packages, enough for one per week. Sometimes I cheat and have more. Today, I am going to have an extra package. Same thing with the thirty-six Cherry Bing candy bars that my friends John and Linda Zullig sent me. All may be gone by sunrise, but then, the planes should start flying, and more can be mailed to me. It helps to

cheer me up by having an extra package of cookies and candy bar on the day of the last sunrise and sunset.

One-and-a-half hours after sunset. Mountains have all lost their pinkishness, now are just shades of grayish-blue. Still can see the glaciers on the Royal Society mountains sweep to the sea. The few remaining clouds are lavender, and there is a slight orange glow above the horizon where the sun set. Even the ice, now reflects some of this glow. Older sea ice that formed perhaps a month ago is snow covered. New ice that is forming has several small pools of clear thin ice. There is one section that looks like a huge wave froze just at the peak of the rolling incoming surf. I look at it, expecting the wave to crest and break at any second.

Now it is two hours since sunset. The clouds are now gray, and only the light glow of the horizon reflects off the ice. I am in my room alone, typing as thoughts come to me. But I am not alone. The mountains, glaciers, clouds, ice, and I treasured the sunset together. Each of us sought to retain its warmth, its colors, its beauty. Each of us awaits sunrise.

### **Friday, April 26th**

Tonight the galley served a Birthday Dinner for those people who have a birthday in April. In March, they served people having February and March birthdays. I missed seeing the sign-up sheet in the galley, and didn't know it was even occurring tonight. At 5:30 PM, Beth and Leslie Learned asked me if I was going. Upon hearing my answer, Beth called a lady she knew at the galley, two people had canceled, and the dinner started at 5:30. Leslie's husband Tom and I have known each other for years, he was teaching welding, and before I knew it, I had a dinner "date" with her. (I called my wife soon afterwards and told her all about it.) Linen white table cloths adorned the dining tables, volunteers acting as waitresses and waiters, served coffee and baskets with hot rolls and poured glasses of water, and removed the round plates after the dinner. Mark, the "Chef", cooked the best tenderloin I have ever eaten, and lobster. David "Woody" Porter served wine to those who wanted it, surprising most people who know him, sharp looking in a white wine steward's jacket that he found in the skua pile, his hair color closer to blonde than the red, purple, pink, orange, or green that he has been known to wear, often two clashing colors at a time. As mentioned the plates were round, they didn't have partitions like the trays we normally have, so we did have to worry about the twice-baked potatoes mixing with the delicious meat. Best restaurant in town!

I don't know Peggy's last name, but she and Leslie work together as janitors. I first met both of these ladies at the close of the summer season, as they were bagging up the items people had placed in the skua pile. I helped them carry some of the bags to the large bins outside the dorm, destination Skua Central, where thrown away but usable items can be given a new life by someone else. At the Birthday Dinner, Peggy and her "date" sat on my left, Leslie on my right. Once, I overheard Peggy saying something about when she was in grad school, so I asked her about it tonight. In Colorado, her job is that of a professional counselor. Her son and daughter were grown, she needed a break from other people's problems, Antarctica beckoned. One of the galley ladies that served dinner drives a race car, another cooks for the National Outdoor Leadership School. She has a degree in Psychology and Art. Lance, another one of the janitors, works with children with learning disabilities. Katie teaches taekwondo. Stacie Tanner has a degree in communications. People who work in the galley and on the cleaning staff in McMurdo have some the dirtiest, hardest, and low-paying jobs, and are some of the most educated and talented people I know. They all have my respect.

### **Saturday, April 27th**

Disappointed myself tonight! Others participated, but I decided at the last moment that since I had already earned my Scott Base Polar Plungers Swim Club patch in 1991, I really didn't want to swim naked through the hole in the ice of McMurdo Sound, with the outside temperature a balmy -8 degrees F. The Kiwi's had a dinner afterwards, which was a good break from normal McMurdo food (although not near as good as last night's meal).

### **Sunday, May 5th**

Where did the week go? Today at the Chapel of the Snows church service, the non-Catholic participants received a “Remembrance” of Jesus consisting of Holy Bread and Wine. “Take, eat, this is My body. Take, drink, this is My blood. Do this in Remembrance of Me.” Sounds like Communion, doesn’t it? Since there isn’t an ordained minister here, officially under the guidelines of the Navy Chaplain who isn’t here, either, we could have a Remembrance Service, but not a Communion Service. The words were read directly out of the Bible, I spoke about the Communion Service that I had at the South Pole a few years ago, a few of us stood at the altar during the Remembrance Service, joined in Prayer, and felt that where “Two or three are gathered in My name, there is the Church”. Each Sunday during the Winter season, the Catholics have had Communion, while the non-Catholics meditated or listened to music, chagrined. It took a group effort, the Navy Chaplain was contacted, and now we will have a “Remembrance Service” each month. We don’t think Jesus cares about the semantics. We don’t.

After I spoke about the service at the South Pole, Leslie spoke of her and Tom going to Historical Scott’s Hut the previous evening to take photographs of the artifacts inside. She wondered how the early explorers celebrated Communion. Bursting with excitement, she told of finding three names written on the wall in pencil, dated January 21, 1915. One was Hayward, one was Wild, but couldn’t make out the third. Leslie has cleaned graffiti off walls for a long time, and is an expert at finding it. She then told of being at the hut at Cape Evans last year. I am not sure if she crawled under a bunk, or just laid down on the bottom bunk of bunk-beds. Looking up, on the bottom of the bunk above her, she found a list of three names who were missing. Hayward’s name was on this list. These men were part of the Ross Sea Party, to sledge food to the Beardmore Glacier for Ernest Shackleton’s Trans-Antarctic Expedition.

At Brunch, Tom, Leslie, Beth, Bob, and I ate together, while Leslie went over the details again. Later this afternoon, Tom knocked on my door and asked if I wanted to go back to Scott’s Hut with him that night to take more photographs. Tonight is my favorite night in Antarctica, since I started coming here in 1986. Only an Aurora would have added to it, but the full moon over Scott’s Hut certainly didn’t detract from the beauty. I saw Hayward’s and Wild’s name, the date, and I couldn’t make the third one out, either. Harold Gober, Tom, and I endured the -10 degree F. temperature for an hour-and-a-half, and it was worth every minute. We dressed for the cold, and only my fingers required warming. My heart didn’t! Two of us shined flashlights on the objects inside the hut, while the third person focused his camera(s). We then turned off the lights, and the photographer shot, using only the camera’s flash for illumination.

I used both film and digital cameras. With the digital camera, you can look right at the images away, sort of like using an electronic Polaroid camera. My favorite is the one of the box saying, “Used on the Scott expedition, 1910.” I have film shots of myself standing by this box in a previous trip. Boxes of Huntley-Palmer biscuits, tins of canned mutton, cocoa, sardines, and one that said Edinburgh (forgot what was in it) were among the shots taken. On one of my film shots, I captured a small can that had a man standing in front of a sailing ship, and one of an old magazine made out of newsprint on one of the shelves.

Things like going into Scott’s cold and dark Hut in the Winter are part of my Antarctic Experience. I thought of the early explorers, including Norman Vaughan, and marveled at their endurance, living at much colder temperatures than the -10 degrees F. inside Scott’s Hut. Some early films of the explorers showed them crawling into frozen sleeping bags at night. I don’t have to sleep in a frozen sleeping bag. My room is in a dormitory, and I am fortunate to have a window that overlooks McMurdo Sound. Matthew A. Nelson, the great Antarctic Explorer, uses an electric blanket at night. Heat magically appears in my room through forced air ducts. Tough, this Nelson explorer!



Upper Left: Scott's Discovery Hut with Mt. Discovery in the background

Upper Right: Scott's Discovery Hut under a full moon

Lower Left: Fry's Cocoa and Huntley & Palmer Biscuits

Lower Right: Homelight Lamp Oil shipping crate

### Mother's Day, May 12th

It seems as though weekends are the best time to write, but then I forget some of the everyday things that happen. I guess they are not important enough to write about if I can't remember them. Or perhaps my advancing age is catching up with me! It doesn't matter. Today is Mommy's Day. At church, Mary Elizabeth spoke of the Christmas when she was nine years old. Her mother worked as a home health nurse. Before Mary Elizabeth and her two sisters were not allowed to open their Christmas gifts, they all had to go with their mother on her patient rounds. Eighteen shut-ins, eighteen visits, eighteen times to sing Christmas Carols. Mary Elizabeth said that she was angry - she wanted to open her gifts, and it wasn't until the last old lady visited started crying that she realized the value of gifts from the heart.

There were about a dozen of us at the Chapel of the Snows this morning. Mary Elizabeth asked all of us to share something about their mothers. All of us talked about the loving kindness each of our mothers have (or had). I could have talked more about my mother if time allowed. I would have told about how she always remembers people's birthdays, her strong Faith in God, the giving of herself, how she could turn disasters of fallen cakes into lakes or roller coasters, or a bunch of other things. Instead, I chose to mention her sense of humor and her love of life. I didn't think church was the best place to mention her putting Jell-O into toilets of friends off on their honeymoon. Can you imagine your reaction seeing red Jell-O that had set up in your toilet? But I did tell her story of placing a dill pickle into her father's pants pockets, then asking for a nickel. She still giggles about that pickle hitting the wall. Splat!

After Church, time to head for the world famous, or at least Antarctica famous, Sunday Brunch. I gave some of my writings to Caryl Shea. Usually, we eat brunch together. She always asks about my wife and daughters, and she tells me about her grandson. When her son turned eighteen, it was time for Caryl to do some of the world travel she wanted to do. This is her third winter here in Antarctica - last year she was in Palmer Station. Traveling to Palmer, one must go to South America, and then ride the ship the Polar Duke through the

Strait's of Magellan, the roughest seas in the world. After brunch, back to my room to veg out, to do what is my favorite thing of the week - call home.

### **Sunday, May 19th**

Friday was absolutely the roughest day I have encountered here. Linda Zullig, a friend and an adopted sister, passed away. We have known each other for thirty-five years, and have been close friends since 1969. I mentioned her and her husband, John on April 24th, the day of our final sunset. Last night I typed a two-page story about our friendship, to be read at her Memorial Service. At a time like this, the fact of no planes for another three months reminds me how isolated Antarctica really is. Even as I write this, tears blind my eyes so much it is difficult to see the computer screen. As a tribute to Linda, I ate one of the Bing candy bars she sent, and kept the wrapper. This may seem strange to some people, but I don't care. She understands.

### **Friday, May 24th**

Almost another week has past. The sky is a sapphire blue at local noon time. Stars are visible. On Wednesday the wind chill was down to -95 F. However, that is not a true indicator of all of our weather, because, on some days, it has been calm, and only about -20 F. If I stay out of the States long enough for my tax break, last Sunday was the forty per cent mark, and next sunrise is eighty-eight days away, but who's counting? The satellites keep going round-and-round, and Dave and I keep tracking them.

Tonight, the NSF sponsored artist, David Rosenthal, displayed many of his paintings. I helped cut cheese for the wine and cheese party, and fully intended to be there while the show was going on, but my half-hour nap lasted until after the show. Maybe that is just as well. Not many people were around while I cut the cheese, so I enjoyed his paintings without other people's heads blocking my view. At one time, I had hoped to buy one of his paintings before I left the Ice, but the IRS changed my plans. Dave captured steam rising off the ice, a full moon, the mountains and glaciers at midnight before the final sunset, the natural sculptures of White Island, the sun gleaming off a sliver of ice surrounded by ancient rocks in the Dry Valley's, different views of Mt. Erebus, Mt. Terra Nova, Mt. Discovery, and the Royal Society Mountains. Dave added the final touches to two large paintings completed by Joe Pettit, Beth and Leslie. These last two are going to be mounted on the galley walls. Beth and Leslie's painting is of Mt. Erebus, glowing pink at sunset. There is so much beauty to this place, and so much artistic talent. Time to close this segment of my journal.



**Dave Rosenthal's painting of the Royal Society Mountains**

## **Mid-Winter in Antarctica, 1996**

## Sunday, June 30th

By writing today, I can officially say that I wrote entries in my Antarctic Journal during the month of June. I have to admit, though, sometimes it is an effort to write. It is not like I have to many activities to occupy my social calendar - I just have a tendency to be lazy. I could attribute the lack of journal writing over the last month to the time it took me to update my astronaut application, but that only took three days last week. All the people who have GPA's of 4.0, graduated with top honors from MIT or the military test pilot schools, and are recognized experts in their fields, submitted their updates within two days of receiving them. By waiting until the last minute, my update is now at the top of the stack. There is a madness to my method.

For over a year, thoughts of writing a story based upon my Wyoming and family heritage have ricocheted off the thick walls of my skull. On three separate evenings, out of sheer boredom, I hammered and banged on my computer machine the beginnings of the great American novel. Now, I may not ever finish nor publish it, but the first three pages of this story are now hiding somewhere on the computer's hard drive, and surprise of all surprises, I backed them up on a floppy disk.

Sinop, Turkey, 1966. Some of you will recognize that name. A few of you have even been there. Matt Nelson celebrated his 20th birthday at this isolated duty station, on the Black Sea Coast. Southern Black Sea Coast. Nancy Sinatra sang, "These Boots Are Made For Walking". Even made tapes of her singing on a Sony tape recorder. McMurdo, Antarctica, 1996. Some of you will recognize that name. A few of you have even been there. Matt Nelson celebrated his 50th birthday at this isolated duty station, on the Ross Sea Coast. Southern Ross Sea Coast. Nancy Sinatra sings, "These Boots Are Made For Walking." Even made tapes of her singing on a Sony tape recorder. There is something wrong with this picture. Matt Nelson does not plan on celebrating his 80th birthday at an isolated duty station, listening to an 85 year old woman sing, "These Boots Are Made For Walking" on a Sony tape recorder, unless it is perhaps at a colony on the moon, on some Southern Mare Sea Coast.

If that Southern Mare Sea Coast is in the moon's southern hemisphere, the United States will appear as if it is in the Earth's southern hemisphere, with Florida, Texas, and California all pointing up. Up here near the top of the world, this morning I viewed the full moon, with its South Pole at the top, shining over Mt. Discovery. After several weeks of darkness, it is good to know that our volcano didn't disappear into nether nether land. One star I have seen down here twinkles as if it is a diamond refracting the sun's light. The brilliant blues and fiery reds are breathtaking. Pollution from millions of cars does not obscure the atmosphere. Orion is the only constellation seen from the Northern Hemisphere that I recognize, but he is headless, and his sword points up. I finally saw my first aurora, but was disappointed. It's shape danced across the sky, but there was no color to it. It was sort of like looking at clouds at night. People tell me I have to be patient, but if I haven't seen colorful auroras by the time I leave, that part of my Antarctic experience will remain incomplete, for I will not come back for another Winter.

In my last segment of my Antarctic journal, I mentioned Beth Sheid and Leslie Learned painting Mt. Erebus. In the past few weeks, they have been painting their own pictures. Beth has been painting from a slide that John Bancozi took of the full moon setting over the Royal Society Mountains last April. Leslie is painting a snow and ice scene. Other people in McMurdo have started painting large canvasses of Antarctic scenes, which are to be mounted in the galley for the entire community to enjoy. About once a week or so, I visit the painters in Dave Rosenthal's studio. Each time, it is like going into an art gallery for the first time. Dave brought down 48 canvasses that he continuously paints, and he has about a dozen students who paint on their individual paintings. In August, there will be a McMurdo Winter-over art show, which should be a real pleasure to attend.



Beth's painting of John Banoczi's slide of the moon over the Royal Society Mountains

### Monday, July 15th

Anybody who reads this journal and looks at the dates knows that I have been procrastinating. Anybody who knows me also knows that I am a Great Procrastinator. There are few things I do as well as procrastinate. When I was born I procrastinated three days by being born on April 4th, instead of April Fool's Day. I have been a procrastinating fool ever since. So now, I sit here at my computer machine, trying to recreate the exciting events of Antarctica over the last month or so. Other people write in their journals often - that just ain't my style. Once in a while, I write about things as they happen, such as the last sunset here. With this preamble, I shall now attempt to record for future generations some of the things that have happened lately to the Ancient Antarctic Explorer during the Winter of 1996.

In the past, I have made references to some of the early Antarctic Explorers. Those guys were tough. I have been reading some of the books about Shackleton and Scott. It makes me feel guilty when I complain about the food, or the fact that I have to walk one hundred steps between the dorm and the galley. Even when the food isn't the greatest, it beats eating penguin blubber and seal steak everyday for several months. I don't have to rely upon burning seal blubber for heat or to melt the snow for drinking water. I don't have to use icicles for toilet paper. Bet that was fun!

Those early explorers would have enjoyed the beef steaks at Scott Base, or eating Marcie's hot chocolate chip cookies, or having Bar-B-Que at the firehouse and roast pig at Heavy Equipment Shop during town parties for the Memorial Day weekend and Fifth of July. The town parties are always fun. Some people had their faces smeared with whipping cream during the pie throwing contest at the firehouse. The guys at the Heavy shop made dunk tanks and Flintstone bowling at the Fifth of July (Friday night) party. Wednesday nights are good for double-cheese burgers at the snack bar in the Erebus club. This past week, vanilla and chocolate ice cream replaced the yogurt that had been served for about a month in the galley. Sunday brunch for me usually consists of a hunk of prime rib, a ham and cheese omelet, a pancake or two, and orange juice. The steak isn't T-Bone Tom's quality, but will have to do until I make it home.

In "Lord Jim", Joseph Conrad wrote: "I was going home - to that home distant enough for all its hearthstones to be like one hearthstone, by which the humblest of us has the right to sit. We wander in our thousands over the face of the earth, the illustrious and the obscure, earning beyond the seas our fame, our money, or only a crust of bread...We return to face our superiors, our kindred, our friends - those who we obey, and those for whom we love...Each blade of grass has its spot on earth whence it draws its life, its strength, and so is man rooted to the land from which he draws his faith together with his life."

Home - sure does seem a long time away, but the days are counting down. For a while, I debated with the real Matt Nelson, the one who drives a garbage truck that has pink pokka dots and purpol stripes (special for you, Mrs. Wig!), about whether to leave in August during WinFly, when three planes will be here with mail and the advance party, or wait until November, and receive my tax break. Last February, it was easy to write about the tax break, but by June, I was ready to be on the next plane out. There were other reasons as well, but staying until November finally won Londomat over. (Londomat is what the real Matt Nelson calls me, because I make him clean up his act!)

May and June were the hardest months here. I am not used to total darkness, and I think my moods were much more depressed. After the Winter Solstice on June 21st, pink clouds started becoming visible on the horizon. The week of the Solstice was the halfway point for me, both in terms of time left on the ice, and between the April 24th sunset and sunrise on August 19th. I could still easily step on the first plane in August, but once the planes start flying, I will only have ten or eleven weeks left on the ice, and if I break that into smaller segments, I feel that I can endure. That Ford 4 X 4 truck brochure is one of the candles that keeps burning into my consciousness.

I don't know if it was the 4 X 4 brochure, or the sun showing possibilities that there is life on the other side of the Universe, but one of my frozen ozone-depleted brain cells that has been on ice lately thawed. The neurons that are embedded into brain cells of the Random Access Variable (one whom may be found anywhere in the world) said, "TRAVEL, TRAVEL, TRAVEL!!" Once I leave the Ice, I have a combination of four weeks of comp time and vacation time to use, and I have to stay out of the country until at least Thanksgiving Day to retain my tax advantage. But I don't have to stay on the Ice that long. The globe in the library has been spinning for possible destinations. Watch out world, the other Matt Nelson (Londomat) will be off the Ice and ready to make up for lost time!

Once in a while, unexpected delights brighten spirits. Patti Weeg, the teacher whom Dave Hess and I have had correspondence, sent us three poems that her students wrote for us. These girls are about twelve years old, and can certainly write better poetry than I could at their ages. I would be remiss in my journal if I did not include them, because these beautiful poems are gifts from their hearts:

#### A DAY AND A NIGHT

-Tessa Newhouse

Look upon the midnight sun,  
By yourself, without someone.  
With the moonlight by your side,  
From the darkness, you can't hide.  
It will be daytime quite to soon,  
For the midnight sun is called the moon.

When the sun comes out with its light,  
look upon it, shining bright.  
You get up, yawn and stretch.  
Then play with Rosie,  
a game of fetch.  
Rosie's a dog, small, yet sweet,  
and always looking for something to eat.  
A cat named Bob curls up on the floor.  
By the fire, and near the door.

But then night falls again too soon.  
Out comes the midnight sun, the moon.  
Night has come too soon again.  
You fall asleep on a chair in the den.

Then wake up slowly, it's  
morning  
once  
more.

### BED TIME POEMS

By: Dawn Lyn Toomey

#### Darkness

The darkness comes within the night.  
The sun will never show its light.  
Until the misty days of summer appear,  
the sky will never be so clear.

#### Coldness

When the wind blows so high above,  
you know the sky is filled with love.  
The wind blows through my long, long hair.  
It's so brown it looks like a teddy bear.

#### Snow

The sky is black,  
the ground is white.  
In this place there is no light.  
At a time the sun goes down on  
this small snowy town.

#### World

Light is the wonder of the day.  
Where people like to sit and watch  
their children play.  
We take up space in this world of ours  
when we drive our gassy cars.  
Our world will end sooner than we think.  
Cause I read about this in Kidlink.

### SLEEP OVER

a poem by Nicole Layton

One night I stayed over, in a cold frozen place.  
When I woke up, with much disgrace, there wasn't  
a sound anywhere around... As hours drilled on  
it wasn't bright and I tried to remember the colors  
of light...

Finally after months of searching  
the sun would come up from where it was lurking.  
Bringing the summer season too soon.  
I almost wished it was the moon.  
But, the sun gave me warmth and it gave me fun.  
When darkness comes I always will know,  
it's just a sign of the soon coming snow...

So if you wake up in a cold frozen place ...

please don't be in much disgrace... cause the sun  
is mysterious and it will be back ....and you will  
see what it can't lack !!

Patti is also teaching summer school to kids that have more difficulty with school than some of their classmates. Several of these kids wrote to Dave and to myself. I didn't respond as quick as I should have, and these kids were disappointed that I didn't write back. I finally took the time to answer their letters. Their letters are also written from the heart. Thanks so much, Kevin, Keith, Jarrell, Paul, Mike, Tinelle, Darryl, Andrea, Brandon, Vaughn, and Marquis, for sharing your lives with me. I hope you see this journal, to let you know that your letters really cheered me up.

### **Friday, July 19th**

One month from today is Sunrise. Sunset on April 24th was described in my last journal. I guess my time left on the Ice is gradually diminishing. I wonder where time goes to live once it makes the transition from the Present to the Past. Why does the Future seem so far away? There will be a point in my life that I will talk about Wintering-over in Antarctica back in 1996 as a one line sentence. Looking towards November, by comparison, is like walking into a library and be given the task of reading all the books.

If the library chosen for this task is the one at Scott Base, one could be rewarded with reading First Edition books about the Heroic Age of exploration in Antarctica. Robyn, the lady in charge of the Scott Base library, gave me a gift I will cherish. She told me that I will be allowed to read some of these First Edition books. Until now, the books I have read are reprints. Robert Scott's "The Voyage of the Discovery" (about his 1902 - 1904 expedition), Admiral Byrd's "Alone", and Dr. Gould's "Cold" are among the books in the locked bookcase. Dr. Gould was with Norman Vaughan on Admiral Byrd's 1929 expedition. Scott's and Shackleton's journals will entice me to this library quite often.

From my window (when the sun is out) I can see Scott's Hut, also known as Discovery Hut. In Antarctica, time lives in these books as a bridge between me and these early explorers. Scott and Shackleton were the leaders, but through these time capsules called books, I know the expedition members. They are my friends. We live through the same winters of darkness. My living conditions are better, but they understand nearly a century has passed between their view of Mt. Erebus and my view. We share the bonds of adventure and seeking new places, especially those not visited by many other people. If they had been born a century later, Mars would be their goal.

### **Sunday, July 21st**

Tonight I finished reading "Shackleton's Forgotten Argonauts" by Lennard Bickel. It is the story of the Ross Sea Party, the team that dog-sledded food caches to the Beardmore Glacier in 1915 and 1916. The men from the Ross Sea Party are not as well known as the men of Shackleton's voyage on the ship the "Endurance". When the Endurance was ice bound, Shackleton led all twenty-eight men aboard to safety, going down in the history books as a great saga in exploration. After several months of being stranded on ice floes after the ice destroyed the Endurance, the men made their way to Elephant Island. Twenty-two men, under the command of Frank Wild, lived under two lifeboats, while Shackleton and five others crossed the Drake Passage and sailed 800 miles to South Georgia Island for help at a whaling station. Shackleton's group had to climb 10,000 foot high mountains and cross dangerous glaciers before arriving at the whaling station.

Sir Ernest Shackleton traveled with Robert Scott in 1902 (at which time the Discovery Hut was built at Hut Point). In 1908, Shackleton led another expedition on the "Nimrod" to Ross Island, and took his men and ponies to within 97 miles of the South Pole, before being forced back by dwindling food supplies, bad weather, and bad luck. After Roald Amundsen and Scott reached the Pole in 1911 and 1912, respectively, Shackleton devised a plan to lead the first Trans-Antarctic Expedition. The Endurance would take his men across the Waddell Sea, and then roughly following Amundsen's path, would travel to the Pole, and

then travel to Ross Island through the Beardmore Glacier. The Ross Sea Party had the task of sailing to McMurdo Sound on the other side of the Continent, then of sledding and staging food caches up to the Beardmore, so that Shackleton's Trans-Antarctic Expedition would have food for the remaining half of their journey.

The Ross Sea Party sailed from Australia on the "Aurora" to McMurdo Sound, arriving in January, 1915. On January 18th, Ernest Joyce, John Stenhouse, Irvine Gaze, Fred Stevens, Victor Hayward, and Ernie Wild (Frank Wild's brother) made their way from the Aurora to Hut Point, nine miles away. For three days, until January 21st, they stayed in Discovery Hut. This is especially significant for me, because when I visited the hut in May, Hayward and Wild's names were two of the three that I saw written on the wall, dated Jan. 21, 1915.

In May, 1915, the Aurora was blown out to sea with most of the food and supplies still aboard. The ship had been moored at Scott's other hut on Cape Evans, which is 13 miles North of Hut Point. John Stenhouse thought he had the ship secured well enough to endure Antarctic storms, and that there was no need to fully unload the ship. He was wrong on both accounts. The anchor cable snapped. The Aurora was jammed in the floating ice pack with crew members still aboard, but unable to start the engine. They floated North for several months with the ice, until they finally were able to reach open water and sail to New Zealand. In the meantime, ten people were stranded for two winters, with only the clothes they wore, the food they had unloaded, things they could scrounge, broken down sleds, and the penguins and seals that they could kill. Despite overwhelming odds, they still managed to deliver the food to the Beardmore Glacier. Bickel's book is the amazing story of survival by the Ross Sea Party.

I wrote a couple days ago that these guys are my friends. I know them. I respect them, and I have been in their house. I feel guilty that my stay in McMurdo isn't of the same magnitude as their stay, but I certainly have no desire to match my survival skills against theirs.

### **Friday, July 26th**

Today Dave Hess and I had to go to work at 4 AM to support a test involving transmitting data from McMurdo through the TDRS to White Sands, New Mexico, and then White Sands retransmitting our data through another TDRS to the Goddard Space Flight Center. This was a proof-of-concept test, which we have to repeat tomorrow morning at the same time to demonstrate the capability to some NASA big shots. We could have gone to work three hours later and performed the same test, which would have been 3 PM for the guys at Goddard. Everyone is always worried about the comfort of big wigs. As far as I am concerned, we could have performed the test at 8 PM our time, and let the hot shots go to work at 4 AM.

Our prime mission is to track the Canadian built satellite called RADARSAT. This satellite was launched on November 4, 1995, and we have only tracked it a few times. In August, we are scheduled to track it several times. Two European Remote Sensing satellites (designated ERS-1 and ERS-2) are what we have tracked the most. Each of three satellites has Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) on board, and their function is to map the world with radar images. Glacier and sea ice movements and thickness are some of the things that these satellites image while over Antarctica. Our job is to receive the data from the satellites, tape it, and then send the tapes to the Alaska SAR Facility in Fairbanks for image processing. In the five months since the last plane, we have recorded over four hundred tapes. When the planes arrive at WinFly, these tapes will be shipped to Alaska to be processed. Ultimately, the plan is to have the McMurdo Ground Station playback the tapes and transmit the data through the TDRS on a routine basis.

Another task that we have is to retrieve data from temperature loggers in a device called the Active Radar Calibrator (ARC). The purpose of the ARC is to receive a radar signal from one of the satellites of interest, amplify it, and retransmit the same signal back to the satellite as it is going overhead. A bright image of known intensity will then appear on the

processed radar images of McMurdo, and serve as a calibration benchmark. The ARC is located about halfway between McMurdo and New Zealand's Scott Base near a building called COSRAY. Initially, Dave and I were only to retrieve the temperature data from the loggers about once every two months, but there have been problems with the units, so we have had to make several trips.

Our visits to the ARC have been a cause of tension between the Principal Investigators and us. On May 15th, we were scheduled to go, but we requested and were granted permission to wait until the next full moon, which occurred on June 1st. Unfortunately, that day the wind chill dropped to about -100 F., and stayed near that mark for the next week. Instead of asking us directly why we delayed going to the ARC site, the investigators started sending sarcastic messages to NASA and the National Science Foundation Headquarters, questioning our wimpishness. Then the procedure we were given to download the data to a computer was wrong. When Dave discovered their error, they sort of backed off, but prior to that, they were quick to point fingers at us, from their offices in the United States with typical June summer temperatures.

The ambient temperatures here are lower than what an LCD display on a portable computer likes. We can easily walk the hundred yards from the COSRAY building to the ARC, but we didn't feel that we could protect the computer. Therefore, we drive directly to the ARC site. The first time we tried it, our pickup quickly decided that the snow level was higher than the axles, and proved once more one of Paul Harvey's Bumper Snickers that I heard several years ago: "Four wheel drive allows you to become stuck in more inaccessible places." Time to regroup. After that, we started driving the Sprite, which is a tracked vehicle. That has been kind of fun, but the same day we had our Sprite driving lesson, another Sprite caught fire with four people aboard. The Sprite was lost, but none of the people were hurt, due to the quick response of Amy, the driver, who made sure everyone vacated safely.



Beth Sheid, Dave Hess, and John Banoczi in a Sprite, photo taken at noon

### Saturday, July 27th

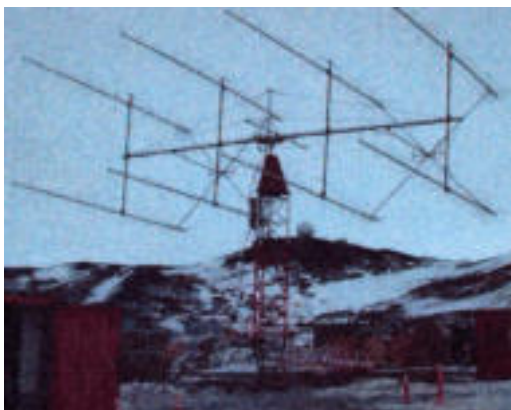
One more time, Dave and I went to work early to support the TDRS test I wrote about yesterday. There were a couple of minor technical problems, but overall, the test was a success. Some guy from the Goddard Space Flight Center spoke to me and said we did a good job. He asked about the weather here, and said it was a nice day in Maryland to go sailing. I told him that I felt sorry for him, having to swelter in the heat and humidity. He laughed. I found out later that he is Joe Rothenberg, the Goddard Center Director. After the test was over, my old friend, NASA Mike, told us congratulations for a job well done.

In the journals about my previous trips to Antarctica, I wrote about NASA Mike. He is the person responsible for me coming to the Ice back in 1986. He is a dynamic individual that steps on people's toes, but always manages to pull a team together to perform impossible tasks with no budget. We have had clashes in the past, probably will again in the future, but that doesn't diminish our friendship. He is one of the visionaries of satellite communications in Antarctica. When I first met him ten years ago, he talked of establishing a TDRS link from

Black Island back to the States. Today, we sent our data to Black Island via microwave, for transmission through the TDRS to the States.

The SPSDL that I first worked on here in McMurdo and the South Pole was one of Mike's projects. In January, 1994, Mike and I worked to check out the SPSDL equipment to support a launch of a satellite called TOMS-EP, which stands for Total Ozone Mapping Spectrometer - Earth Probe. After a couple years of delay, this satellite was launched from a Pegasus rocket, which was dropped from a Lockheed L-1011 aircraft on July 2nd. The McMurdo Ground Station locked onto the telemetry signal from the satellite shortly after it was inserted into orbit, but the old SPSDL equipment was utilized as the prime McMurdo tracking station, passing data real-time back to Goddard. It gives me a sense of pride that I was called here by NASA Mike to work on that equipment in 1994. That old junk SPSDL equipment is the foundation of my Antarctic experience that led to my current job.

Another NASA Mike project that keeps Dave and me busy is the IMP-8 satellite tracking system. IMP-8 is some planetary probe that was launched about twenty years ago. From what I understand, it goes around the sun. Instead of a standard ninety to one hundred minute orbit, this satellite is visible on the Earth for five days, and then it is out of range for seven days. Antarctica offers a better viewing location than other sites on Earth. The tracking system looks and often acts like a kludge, but the scientists who look at the data are happy with the results from here. Most of the system is automatic, but we have to monitor the data collection each five day period that IMP-8 is in view, and we have had to contend with several mechanical failures.



**IMP-8 VHF tracking antenna at McMurdo, with the RADARSAT radome in the background (photo credit: NASA Mike's Web page)**



**Greenhouse – Notice the GREEN!**

Working with the IMP-8 tracking system is a good excuse for us to visit the McMurdo greenhouse, which is next door. Walking in the greenhouse is like going back to Planet Earth. It is so wonderful and refreshing. Just inside the door, a huge sunflower greets the visitor. Red tomatoes and peppers add color to the place. For you Earthlings living with green plants all around, you may not be in as much awe as we Antarcticans who live in a world of ice and snow.

Around McMurdo there are several snow drifts that I really enjoy walking on, listening to the hollow crunch of my boots treading upon the compacted snow crust. The sculpture of the snow drifts fascinates me, as well as day old foot prints. Often, the footprints have a slight mound to them, which is slightly above the surface of the surrounding snow. Just as footprints disappear on the sands of the beaches, fresh blown snow constantly erases traces of men and women.

Perhaps we do not leave traces in the snow for long, but some of us left scuff marks on the ramp in the Crary lab, which prompted Leslie to complain that we were acting like naughty children. The lab has three parallel buildings, each at a different level, and interconnected with a ramp with about a thirty degree slope. My time rolling down the ramp in

office swivel chairs didn't compare with the ten seconds that both Melissa and Joe obtained. After Leslie's comment, the races stopped. She had a valid point, since she had just waxed the ramp (which I think helped increase people's speed). It was fun while it lasted, but in all honesty, somebody could have bounced off a railing or a wall and broken a leg, which would have caused all kinds of grief from the bosses. Once, while I hurled down the ramp, I spun completely around, having lost control of my vehicle. That same day, all of our chair driving licenses were suspended. A few days later, on a Saturday morning, I was talking to Beth in her office, and we heard the rumbling of a freight train. Melissa, the lab supervisor, sheepishly explained she had a fax for me, and the chair just happened to be at the top of the ramp



**Joe Pettit and Melissa Iszard-Crowley racing chairs down the ramp!**

Dave Hess's birthday gave us another chance to have fun. Beth baked some bread that several of us shared. Somebody from the lab gave him a jar of bubbles. He is waiting until the temperatures are really cold before blowing bubbles, to watch them freeze. My gift to him was a fishing rod that looked like a toy, but actually has a real hook on it. I found it in the skua pile last January, and just waited until June 13th to give it to him.

Two weeks ago tonight, I left down to stay in the COSRAY building. I discovered that it has a bed, so I finally left Dodge for a night. It was enjoyable, as there were no drunks slamming the doors in the dorm. To my immense pleasure, I found on the bookshelf a collection of poetry written in 1927 that contained verses of some of the early Twentieth Century poets.

A few days later, in the Scott Base library, I stumbled across a quote from the poet, Matthew Arnold, which I thought sort of fit me:

"A wanderer is man from his birth  
 He was born in a ship  
 On the breast of the river of time  
 Brimming with wonder and joy"

On July 4th, I talked to my friend Hawks Abbott. He told me that he and his wife Judi had eaten dinner with our mutual friend, Astronaut Joe Tanner. Joe told Hawks about the power of Christ in his life. So I sent Joe an e-mail message, saying that it would be difficult for me to make it through this place without God's help, and that I felt that God has some purpose for bringing me to Antarctica. Joe sent me an e-mail message back, with a reference to Romans 8:28. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."

### Sunday, July 28th

After this morning's Worship Service at the Chapel of the Snows, we all had our photographs taken. About a dozen of us stood at the alter, while Tom Learned photographed us with our own cameras. This small gathering of Christians has shared faith, prayers, and the Worship of God during this Antarctic Winter-over. While photographs will be good reminders of these people in future years, the blessings I have received by this association will be with me long after the photographs have faded. Sunday morning Worship Services and brunches have many times been the highlight of the week. After church, we would convene in the galley for Sunday brunch. Joy and laughter abounded at those brunches.



**Left to right: Flo Murray, Eric Trip, Matt Nelson, Mike "Mick" Blachat, Leslie Learned, Jeff Pickering, Rebecca Simonson, John Banoczi, Cass Banoczi, Chris, and Mary Elizabeth Andrews**

The Chapel of the Snows was constructed by the 1988-1989 Winter-overs, with volunteer labor and scrap material. Varnished wood adorns the ceiling. A stained-glass image of Antarctica, with a penguin, a Bible, a chalice, and a cluster of grapes overlooks McMurdo Sound. A cross with a circle around it (shaped like Antarctica) is beneath the one mentioned above and there is a second stained-glass cross above the entrance of the front door. During the summer time, a silver chalice is brought down from New Zealand, which was used on Robert Scott's expedition to Antarctica. I think the Chapel of the Snows is the most beautiful man-made structure here in McMurdo.



**Chapel of the Snows in the Summer**



**Stained glass window inside the Chapel**

The “How-to-survive-in-Antarctica Guide” has a much shorter title: The Holy Bible. During the darkest months of Winter, Words from the Bible, or those in Prayers, or spoken in the Reflections, or in the sharing of Praises and Concerns, or sung, focused on Light. John 8:12 “Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, ‘I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.’” Light of life. Eternal life. Sunday Worship Services at the Chapel of the Snows offered the Candle of Hope, the warmth of fellowship, a promise of the returning sun, a promise of light; a Promise of the Returning Son, a Promise of Light.

Our Worship Services were structured enough to follow the Liturgy, using the same Bible readings that churches across the world follow during the calendar year. We are all Lay persons, from various backgrounds. Sometimes I read from the Bible, sometimes I led the sharing of Praises and Concerns, followed by the Lord’s Prayer. Usually, when I did, I spoke a few minutes about some of my own religious experiences in Antarctica over the years. But I wasn’t the only one who spoke, or made things happen. We all benefited from each other’s contributions. Today, I want to write about the Chapel group. Every person in McMurdo and Scott Base were welcome, but the people I write about are the ones who regularly participated. As I have said in other journals, the people I write about may be just a long list of name to you, but they are my friends. When I read my journals many years from now, the few words I write now will keep their memories alive for me.

Monday nights were set aside by some to plan the next week services. Initially, I went to these for the first couple of months, then gradually slacked off. During the Monday night planning meetings, the hymns were selected, as well as who would read the four passages of Scripture each week. Flo Murray, one of the Navy personnel, is a very quiet and hard working lady from South Carolina. Between each Monday night and the next Sunday Morning, Flo somehow managed magically to salvage the discussions of who-does-what into the Sunday Worship Service programs. Each week the bulletins she printed had new drawings of the Chapel of the Snows, or Praying Hands, or other religious scenes. She serves the Lord without any fanfare; I can’t speak highly enough of her.

Eric Trip, the telecommunications technician at New Zealand’s Scott Base, is the most dynamic of the bunch. He has good leadership skills and is fun to be around. During the Winter, the services are Ecumenical. Eric is a very devout Roman Catholic, and therefore, has often given us Protestants a Catholic viewpoint to the Bible readings during the Reflections segment of Worship. He is one of the two strong Religious leaders we have. Every Sunday, the Catholics take a few minutes to have their Communion, while the rest of us will have moments of quiet. A “Remembrance Service”, which I have written about before, is held on the first Sunday of each month. Then, Catholics and Protestants share the altar together but participate separately in their respective Communion and Remembrance Service. We all respect each other’s beliefs.

Since my work is in satellite communications, Eric and I have something in common besides church. I inwardly complain about the cold when I walk to the Chapel from my dorm,

about three hundred feet away. Then, when I go to the Chapel, Eric will already be there, having gone for “a wee walk” from Scott Base, two miles away.

The other Catholic, Mike “Mick” Blachat, is the one whom I mentioned in a previous writing that wants to write a book about being a refrigerator repair man in Antarctica. He worked on fishing boats in Alaska and on the Great Lakes, and spent years as a pipefitter in Detroit. I call him “Bouncing Mike”. He wants to learn about everything. He should be a cartographer. During the Sunday services, he brings out a Biblical Atlas to show us where things happened. Mick keeps everybody in stitches as he uses his hands to make maps of different states. Early in the season, he initiated a “Circle of Prayer”, where we all join hands as we Pray the Lord’s Prayer. For the past few weeks, he has given an interpretation to the Lord’s Prayer by Emmet Fox. Quite a guy! Mick and I are the older guys of the group - the others are about fifteen to twenty years younger than the two of us.

Following her son’s footsteps to Antarctica, Claudette Fournier worshipped with us for the first few months. Another devout Catholic, Claudette works during the day at the Heavy Equipment shop as a dispatcher/secretary. Once or twice a week in the evening she serves wine and coffee in the wine bar, which is generally a quiet place for me to go for coffee and relax.

Cass Banoczi, our music director, leads us in singing as she plays a guitar and her husband John plays a harmonica. She is naturally talented in music, and can sing a wide variety of songs. One Sunday, she sang a song she wrote. Several months ago, she asked each one of us what our favorite Hymns are, and then incorporated them into the services. Mine is “The Old Rugged Cross”. Cass works in Materials. She and John are from the deep South - Southern California, and both worked at Disney Land while in their teens. They make a fun couple, and bring vitality to the group. Their faith is a strong part of their marriage.

John once worked as a Biologist on Alaskan fishing boats. We both work in the Crary Lab. He is involved with the lab equipment that the scientists use when they come here for the Summer. Besides his musical ability, John is the other strong Religious leader. Quite often, both He and Eric have given insights into the Bible readings that I had never thought about in the past.

Always a lighthouse, always an inner glow. Rebecca Simonson just shines. This lady from Minnesota is quick to show us the beauty of Antarctica, or what is good about Condition 1 storms. She is content with herself, with life itself, and where she is. She just radiates sincere happiness. Often, she has led us in the Praises and Concerns and the Lord’s Prayer. Once, a few weeks ago, when I was having a rough go of it, she said a special prayer for me (as did Cass). The Power of Prayer! She and Eric are fond of each other, and make a good couple.

On Mother’s Day and on Father’s Day, Mary Elizabeth Andrews started off the Praises and Concerns with favorite stories of her mother and father. Then she had each of us talk about our parents. Originally, she is from Virginia, but has lived in Colorado for the past several years. She is another delightful person to be around. One of the firemen, Chris Hinkle, from Colorado Springs, has come to church with her sometimes.

Jeff Pickering, another fireman, read the Bible readings from the Old Testament. It seemed that if a passage had many long, unpronounceable names, Jeff had the task of reading them. He left at WinFly, along with Mike Anderson. Mike was the safety officer. He is very quiet, and had the goal of working on his Master’s degree while here in Antarctica. Both gave the impression of having deep faith.

Sometimes Tom Learned came to Worship Services with his wife Leslie. I have written about Tom and Leslie in some of my other journals. I have known Tom for about ten years. This year, I met Leslie. She made her own contributions to the services, the best one for me being her involvement for the Protestants to have our “Remembrance Service” of taking the Bread, and the Cup, in “Remembrance of Me”.

**Wednesday, July 31st**

Today is my wedding anniversary. Karoline and I have been married twenty-four years. Wish I were home to share it with her. This isn't the first time we haven't been together on our anniversary. Hope it is the last. Next year, on our Silver Anniversary, I don't know where we will be, but I know one place where I am not going to be. Before I married, I asked God to select my mate for life. He gave me somebody who puts up with my travels to such places as Antarctica for a Winter. He gave me somebody who loves me, and a person that I love very much. I have been fortunate to have Karoline for my wife, and our two daughters, Michelle and Cheri.

**Sunday, August 4th**

Today, the citizens of McMurdo displayed their art and handicrafts at the Winter-Over Art Show. Professional quality photographs, paintings, ceramics, woodwork, weavings, quilts, and welded crosses adorned the galley. The talents that people have here never cease to amaze me. One of the guys made a clock and table out of old Caterpillar parts. Beth Sheid and Leslie Learned displayed their own paintings. A few days ago seven large paintings of Antarctic scenes painted by students of Dave Rosenthal were hung in the galley. Most of these paintings were of scenes Dave had painted earlier, but he taught these artists well. Stunning!



Beth Sheid's and Leslie Learned's painting of Mt. Erebus, copied from Dave Rosenthal's work

**Sunday, August 11th**

In February, 1969, I took my honorable discharge from the US Army in Japan, with the hope of going to Australia. With diminished funds, and my visa near expiration, plans changed. I left Japan working my passage back to San Francisco on a cargo ship, the USS

Fred Morris. Prior to going to college in the Fall, I worked on oil drilling rigs. Later, I worked as a TV cameraman, did some minor construction work, some other oil patch work, and a variety of other jobs before working in the space business. Except for a few times on a passenger ship, and some Friday evening sail boat rides, I haven't spent much time on the ocean, although one might think otherwise, since I am in the Naval Reserves. Mountains will always be my first love, but eighteen days sailing on the Fred Morris infected me with a fondness of the sea. In New Zealand last January, I found a one hundred year old copy of "The Seven Seas" by Rudyard Kipling. Oh, to be able to write like Joseph Conrad or Rudyard Kipling! Since I could relate to this poem so much, I decided to quote it all:

#### SESTINA OF THE TRAMP-ROYAL

Speakin' in general, I 'ave tried 'em all,  
 The 'appy roads that take you o'er the world.  
 Speakin' in general, I 'ave found them good  
 For such as cannot use one bed too long,  
 But must get 'ence, the same as I 'ave done,  
 An' go observin' matters till they die.

What do it matter where or 'ow we die,  
 So long as we've our 'ealth to watch it all -  
 The different ways that different things are done,  
 An' men an' women lovin' in this world -  
 Takin' our chances as they come along,  
 An' when they ain't, pretendin' they are good?

In cash or credit - no, it aren't no good;  
 You 'ave to 'ave the 'abit or you'd die,  
 Unless you lived your life but one day long,  
 Nor didn't prophesy nor fret at all,  
 But drew your tucker some'ow from the world,  
 An' never bothered what you might ha' done.

But, what things are they I 'aven't done?  
 I've turned my 'and to most, an' turned it good,  
 In various situations round the world -  
 For 'im that doth not work must surely die;  
 But that's no reason man should labour all  
 'Is life on one same shift; life's none so long.

Therefore, from job to job I've moved along.  
 Pay couldn't 'old me when my time was done,  
 For something in my 'ead upset me all,  
 Till I 'ad dropped whatever 'twas for good,  
 An', out at sea, be'eld the dock-lights die,  
 An' met my mate - the wind that tramps the world!

It's like a book, I think, this bloomin' world,  
 Which you can read and care for just so long,  
 But presently you feel that you will die  
 Unless you get the page you're readin' done,  
 An' turn another - likely not so good;  
 But what you're after is to turn 'em all.

God bless this world! Whatever she 'ath done-  
 Excep' when awful long - I've found it good.  
 So write, before I die, 'E liked it all!

**Wednesday, August 14th**

One never knows what gems books give, or how lives of people are intertwined. Between books on Antarctica, I have also been reading Mari Sandoz's 50th anniversary edition of "Crazy Horse". About 1863, Crazy Horse, Red Cloud, and Caspar Collins shared a friendship. On July 25-26th, 1865, Crazy Horse led a party of decoy Oglala Sioux warriors against the soldiers at Platte Bridge Station. Collins came out riding a spirited gray horse that neither Red Cloud nor Crazy Horse recognized until it was too late. Red Cloud tried to warn Collins away from Cheyenne warriors, but was unable to stop Collins from trying to save a wounded soldier. Lt. Caspar Collins ended up with a non-military haircut that day. As a result of his action, Platte Bridge Station was renamed Ft. Caspar, from which my home town of Casper, Wyoming grew.

June 25, 1876. Little Big Horn. Crazy Horse and his second cousin, Black Elk, a Sioux spiritual leader, just happened to be in the neighborhood. Thus, originated the song which I have quoted earlier when writing about Wintering in Antarctica: "Please, Mr. Custer, what am I doing here?". Benjamin Black Elk, the son of Black Elk, dignified Indian culture in Custer, South Dakota, near Mt. Rushmore, for the tourists. The father of Beth Sheid, who works here in Antarctica, was a good friend of Benjamin Black Elk. Life's little circles.

**Thursday, August 15th**

Eric Trip invited me to Scott Base for dinner. Good food, good company, and a good library. Dave Hornstein, the man who gave the Passover dinner in April, showed some of the e-mail letters from various Jewish people around the world who heard about the Passover dinner offered for the first time in Antarctica. I feel privileged to be invited to Scott Base, and to have an open invitation to visit. They have ten people Wintering, as opposed to the 233 people in McMurdo. Sir Edmund Hillary was one of the earlier founders of the base in 1957.



Scott Base Winter-over Crew

**Friday, August 16th**

Dave Hess traversed to Black Island today to repair some of our equipment that we use to transmit to the Tracking and Data Relay Satellite. Line-of-sight to Black Island is 22 miles, but the ground path is 62 miles one way. Four hours each direction is a long time to bounce in a Sprite that doesn't have much in the way of seat cushions. Dave said that about four feet of snow had drifted inside the radome covering the satellite antenna. As usual, he did a good job making the necessary repairs.

**Monday, August 19th**

Cloudy. Twelve minutes after noon, and no sun. You don't think that the weather forecasters would lie, do you? For months the weather channel scroll on TV has been saying sunrise on August 19th. Maybe the sun disappeared into some Black Hole, and it is a myth that we will see it again. Maybe the old sun didn't have enough energy to burn away or through the clouds. After all, as far as I am concerned, he has been in hibernation for the last four months, and maybe he needs to have a cosmic cup of coffee. For the past several days, the sky has brightened for a few hours a day, so I don't think he was swallowed by a Black Hole. You never know. I will give him another chance tomorrow to do his stuff.

**Tuesday, August 20th**

Blowing, gusting snow. How can a plane land. There it is! Several of us watch for it in the library of the Crary Lab, overlooking McMurdo Sound. Big! Smooth. An Air Force C-141 is the first plane I have seen since February 21st. WinFly season is open. Three flights will come in this week, and then the Main Body flights will start in October. Couldn't see it for long, because it disappeared into the fog over the Pegasus runway. Still no golden sun, but saw this silver bird flying South. New faces, tanned and eager, their projects the most important thing on the ice. Not to us Winter-overs. Relax. Letter mail came in. A couple of belated birthday cards. Travel packet on Bhutan. Notes from friends met in Antarctica in previous years. Thursday's flight is supposed to have freshies and packages.

**Wednesday, August 21st**

Beth Sheid gave me an fresh orange that came in on yesterday's flight. For ten minutes, I must have looked like Bozo the Clown. I just sniffed it, savored the smell. Dave Bresnahan, one of the heavies from the National Science Foundation, walked by to say hello. He came in on the flight, Wintered once in 1967, and now he was shaking my right hand, as my left hand held the orange glued to my nose. When he left, that orange was history.

In February, I had grabbed an orange from the galley, and taken it to the lab, to eat it later. That orange is still in the lab, hard and dry as a rusty tennis ball. With the digital camera, I took a photograph of these two oranges side-by-side. A withered cube of an apple finally was thrown away a couple of weeks ago. The green apple had been left sitting for a few weeks, flattening out on the bottom, with perfect concentric circles of brown gradually replacing the natural green. It looked like a baked apple. The cooks make apple pies in square pans. We were just making square apples to fit into the pan. Every now and then it was rotated, so by the time it was thrown away, we had formed it into a cube. The only reason we tossed it is because the bottom started growing mold after four or five months.

People always want to know what we do to amuse ourselves here. Now you know. This year has been the Year of the Dave's. Dave Bresnahan walked through the Crary Lab shaking hands with at least three other Dave people. For months, the galley posted a name tree with everyone's name listed in his or her work area. Bresnahan stayed only a few days, but by the time he left, a new chart magically appeared on the galley wall, with everyone called either Dave or David. The Davids are the ones really named Dave, the rest of us are just Dave. Thus, you are reading this journal courtesy of Dave Nelson (not Ricky's brother), but the brother of the real Matt, the one who is going to give Mrs. Wig a ride in the front seat of his garbage truck with the pink pokka dots and the purpol stripes instead of on the fireman's bumper.

**Thursday, August 22nd**

Saw the SUN today! I saw the SUN today! The SUN. I drove to Hut Point, walked to where the penguins were a few months ago, and there it sat, off towards the northern

horizon, kissing the ice. Beautiful, brilliant, burning, magnificent, wonderful, orange. Two oranges of different magnitudes in two days! Not completely round. Didn't care. Thin cloud layer across it. Didn't care. Not supposed to look directly into it. Didn't care. Other colors refracted off the ice in McMurdo Sound. Clear blue sky. It didn't matter that the cold air may have been thinking of giving me frostbite. What a surge of elation! Ecstatic! Liberated spirits hidden in the shadows of my soul soared. Mt. Discovery and Royal Society Mountains - prisms of pink, white, blue, orange. The sun said, "Hi Matt!" I said, "Hello, Sun! It is so great to see you again." While driving up to the NASA satellite tracking antenna a few minutes later, the pink plume of Mt. Erebus waved at me. By this time, the sun had set. I didn't care. I had seen it for the first time in four months. I gave God thanks for this sun and His Son. They both rose from the darkness. They both are sources of light. One is physical, the other Spiritual. The physical sun disappeared for a few months. The Spiritual Son never did. The presence, care, love, and Light of the Spiritual Son sustained me through this long Antarctic Winter, while the physical sun took four months to escape from some Black Hole. It didn't matter that the flight scheduled for today didn't fly, due to mechanical problems. I saw the sun.

In the galley tonight, we had a Winter-Over Award Ceremony. Antarctic Service Medals were given out, along with a pin that says "WINTERED OVER" Those of us who already had the medal were given the pin. One man has Wintered nine times. Good for him. Maybe someday he will have a life. Antarctic Support Associates gave everyone a blue baseball hat, with "ANTARCTICA 1996 ASA Winterover" embroidered in white letters. I think I will have my hat changed to read NASA, since I was down here on a NASA contract.

Today is my parents fifty-fourth wedding anniversary. God also blessed me with my parents, John and Marjorie, and my sisters, Karen and Cathy. Couldn't have had any better as I became as tall as I am now. Notice that I did not say anything about growing up. There are many other relatives and friends who have been special in my life, but I won't list them now. It's a good size list. As I continue to write, though, most of their names are bound to appear at one time or another.

### **Sunday, August 25th**

One Sunday two or three months ago I didn't go to the Chapel of the Snows for Worship Services because I wanted to sleep in. Until today, that was the only Sunday I missed. I would have gone today, but the Condition 1 weather forced cancellation of the service. Sustained winds at 82 knots, and the gusts up to 98 knots, influenced those who make the decisions to change the posted weather conditions. At 7:30 I woke, colder than I had been this Winter in my room. A sheet of ice and snow covered my window. In the upper right corner of the inside window sill hung a clump of ice the size of a wasp nest. I added a blanket, and slept for a couple more hours. I took a couple of photographs of the ice, and within two minutes, it fell. The heavy water content surprised me. Instead of solid ice, this clump had the consistency of a wet snowball. Although I felt the cold in my room, the outside temperatures had warmed enough to fill the snow with moisture.

### **Monday, August 26th**

About thirty minutes prior to the scheduled landing of the second WinFly flight, the plane returned to New Zealand. Winds were just too strong. I drove to the satellite tracking antenna site earlier on a snow-free road. Multi-tiered clouds looking like an upside-down wedding cake hovered over Mt. Discovery. With the winds not allowing me to walk upright, I decided that perhaps I ought naught to take photographs from the hill upon which the

antenna is mounted. It took every ounce of strength I could muster to open the pick-up door. Today's high temperature of + 25 F. broke the record for the month of August.

Several months ago I checked the oil of the truck during high winds. Ford may build their trucks tough, but they save money on hood hinges. A mechanic straightened the bends on the hood by jumping on it.

### **Tuesday, August 27th**

Ninety-four new people crowded the galley. All have tanned faces, and as the first group, all are ready to participate in historic Antarctic science. None will probably be as famous as Robbie Score, whom I met here in 1988. Robbie is the lady who discovered the "Life-on-Mars" meteorite. We both worked for Lockheed in Houston for several years. She is due to return here in October. Rick Pierce, one of my friends here, said that the people in the States have examined the Mars rock, and have determined that there used to be life in Antarctica. Amazing, those scientists!

### **Wednesday, August 28th**

A letter from my mother came in yesterday, and I was notified today. Even though I talk to her and Dad often on the phone, there is something about having a hand-written letter from Mom that is always special, especially after six months. When my mother was a teenager, she met Mrs. Audrey Stubbart at Devil's Tower in Wyoming. They have been good friends ever since. Mrs. Stubbart works as a proofreader, and writes her own column for the Independence (Missouri) Examiner newspaper. She is 101 years old. While I have never met the lady, I felt honored, for in the August 3-4, 1996 edition of the paper, she published most of the first segment of my Antarctic Winter-Over Journal, which I wrote in February. You never know what gifts may come from people you never even met.

### **Thursday, August 29th**

Clear day, blue sky, very few clouds. Once more, the tops of mountains and the glaciers bathed in pink. Wonderful outdoors! Wonderful indoors! FRESHIES and PACKAGES arrived on the third plane. Probably one of the most wonderful days in McMurdo for all of us.

All Winter-over people were invited to go to the galley early for dinner. As we stood in line, the hard working galley staff handed out oranges, bananas, apples, kiwi fruit. Left over pork curry only appealed to the new people. A fresh salad bar! Even for a meat-and-potatoes guy like myself, I enjoyed the salad bar. Every one had their trays stacked with colorful, crisp Fresh Green lettuce, Green celery that crunched, carrots that crunched, and not swished, forest Green broccoli, Red juicy tomatoes, firm Yellow bananas didn't have that too much banana smell of bananas past their prime, Orange oranges, new potatoes that had been grown this year, Red and Green apples, Green and Violet grapes that hadn't withered. Smiles of contentment at every table. Sort of a quiet dinner, as all just sort of savored the colors, tastes, and smells of all this fresh food. Heard many people happily sigh.

Next, came the two packages Karoline had mailed me, including the one from last March when we thought a med-evac flight was coming in. Boxes of candy, Girl Scout Thin Mint and Famous Amos chocolate chip cookies, beef jerky, macadamia nuts, new tapes and compact disks, magazines, photographs, and even junk mail that was fun to go through kept me occupied for a couple of hours. Then, I went to Scott Base to return a book, and borrowed "The South Polar Trail" by Ernest Joyce to read. This is a parallel book about the Ross Sea Party that I described last month, written by one of the actual participants. Robyn also gave me information on joining the Antarctic Heritage Trust, to protect the historical buildings here on Ross Island. This just topped off one enjoyable day.

### **Friday, August 30th**

The entire community appeared to be in good spirits. It's amazing how sunshine, fresh fruits and vegetables, and packages from home affects the morale. Karen, my sister, sent a letter, which I picked up today. Above the post office is a office and materials warehouse where coffee is always offered by the several ladies who work there. I have dropped in a few times, since I gave them a tour of the satellite tracking station a few months ago. They tell me about their husbands or boyfriends, or their nieces, and their post-ice plans, as they make me feel like an honored guest.

McMurdo now has several hours of daylight. Once again, the pink snows covering the Royal Society Mountains and Mt. Discovery overwhelm. Basking in the sun's warmth, solitary seals are laying on the ice of McMurdo Sound, waiting for unseen penguins. Pressure ridges distort the ice near the New Zealand Scott Base. Castle Rock and Mt. Erebus, Sentinels of Ross Island, often have the wispy, rainbow-colored necarious clouds floating above. Scott's Discovery Hut, about one thousand feet from my window, endured another Winter. His Memorial Cross on Observation Hill still stands. Life in Antarctic improves each Spring day.



**Mt. Discovery, under a half moon**

Smiling people walk outside with their red parkas open, unhooded. Conversations are lively. Other people are making their own travel plans, spinning and spanning the globe as I do. Their eyes are bright, not dark-weary any more. We made it through the Winter. Most of us only have a few more weeks left on the ice.

### **Sunday, September 1st**

Extracted lines of verse from Alexander Pope's translation of "The Odyssey", from a book I found at a used book store in New Zealand:

The Odyssey (into an Antarctic Winter)

Now reddening from the dawn, the morning gray  
Glow'd in the front of heaven, and gave the day,  
The northern winds shall wing thee on thy way.

Soon shalt thou reach old Ocean's utmost ends,  
 There fix thy vessel in the lonely bay,  
 And enter there the kingdoms void of day.  
 Now sunk the sun from his aerial height,  
 And o'er the shaded billows rush'd the night:  
 But here this night the royal guest detain,  
 Till the sun flames along the ethereal plain.

The hand of time had silvered o'er with snow  
 Now did the rosy-finger'd morn arise,  
 And shed her sacred light along the skies.  
 May every joy be yours! nor this the least,  
 When due libation shall have crown'd the feast,  
 Safe to my home to send your happy guest.  
 Complete are now the bounties you have given,  
 Be all those bounties but confirm'd by Heaven!  
 So may I find, when all my wanderings cease,  
 My consort blameless, and my friends in peace.

### Saturday, September 7th,

"Just happened to be in the neighborhood, Matt. Thought I would drop by and say hi" Old King Sol greeted me on my walk to Hut Point, where Scott's Discovery Hut welcomed me one more time. "Hi Sun, how are you doing? Glad to have you around."

"Matt, it is so refreshing to pop in on Antarctica. Everyone here treats me so well, and seems to appreciate my visits. They marvel at the light I give the sky, and the colors of the clouds and the ice. People here all make me feel that they are really happy to see me. Besides, it is relaxing for me. It takes much of my energy to heat the Sahara Desert, and there sometimes people curse me. All I have to do is show up in Antarctica, and people smile. Soon, I will melt the ice and the penguins will reappear."

Psalms 19: 1 - 6

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork.  
 Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.  
 There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.  
 Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.  
 In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, Which is as a bridegroom coming out of  
 his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.  
 His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it:  
 and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof."

Looking the sun in the eye, I said, "Sun, I thank God for your light. It is symbolic of the Eternal Light of the Risen Lord. From your light comes life for all creatures on Earth." The sun just beamed and the sea ice glistened, as fiery opalescent colors bathed the mountains in a spectacular sunset.

Psalm 8: 1, 3 - 5, 9

"Oh Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name  
 in all the earth! who has set thy glory above  
 the heavens.  
 When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy  
 fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou  
 hast ordained;  
 What is man, that thou art mindful of him?  
 and the son of man, that thou visitest him?  
 For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels,

and hast crowned him with glory and honour.  
O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name  
in all the earth!"

Matthew 6: 28 29

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow;  
they toil not, neither do they spin:  
And yet I say unto you,  
That even Solomon in all his glory was not  
arrayed like one of these.

A solitary Weddell seal basking in the sun's warmth about one hundred feet away quietly listened to the sun and me chatting. There was evidence he had staked his claim to the ice in several places. Frozen seal silhouettes adorned the ice where he had previously lain. His body heat melted the ice, which froze in his image as he moved on. Well, if I can talk to the sun, why can't I talk to a seal?

"Hi there seal! I'm Matt." He didn't tell me his name. But he casually waved his right flipper, and then stretched his dual tail fins. Laying on his back, he looked as though he wanted to roll over onto his stomach, but just couldn't make it. I chided him for being lazy. "Come on seal, you can do it. Just give a little more effort." He gave me a dirty look, like, "Come on down and lay on the ice for several hours and then see how well you would roll over." So I realized that I had over stepped my bounds, and apologized. He waved his flipper and exercised his tail fins again, and then grinned. Even at that distance, it looked like a grin on his face. Content, sunbathing on the ice, he tolerated me, somehow knowing that I meant him no harm. I like to think that he even accepted me as I am. A few days later I wandered to Hut Point to see him and the sun. Five seals lay on the ice, one whose fur was almost snow white. I think he may have been among them. It is difficult to distinguish seals from each other, but they also have trouble recognizing those of us wearing red coats. One said, "Hi Joe!" (in seal sign language), and I said, "Hi seal. I'm Matt, not Joe." He just grinned at me. I think of him now as my friend, one of God's creatures with whom I have been privileged to share Antarctica.



Weddell Seal waving his flippers at me

### Sunday, September 8th

Spring time in McMurdo - Hagglands, snow-mobiles, sprites on the ice, snowblowers creating rooster plumes flamingo pink in the setting sun, Chapel of the Snows more golden than white, brilliant colors on the Royal Society Mountains, mellow Mt. Discovery, White Island and Black Island misnamed (why not lavender islands?), red-coated visitors to Vince's Cross at Hut Point, skiers walking into the galley with rosy faces, sparkling eyes, and big grins. "When are you outta here?" everybody asks everyone else. Sunday Church service, Sunday Brunch. Things that I will miss. Gonna travel in New Zealand, to Australia, Japan, Fiji, Cook Islands, Indonesia, Africa, Europe, India, China's Old Silk route, Russia, Bali, Nepal, Bhutan, South America, gonna go diving, go back home and hang out, ride my motorcycle across country, gonna eat pizza, steak, have a fresh salad, drink fresh milk, eat at a restaurant that people wait on you and meals are on plates, gonna spend all day in Christchurch's botanical gardens; we're all gonna do something once we are off the ice.

**Saturday, September 14th**

Dave Hornstein took me for a visit to the New Zealand scientific facility at Arrival Heights after I showed him the NASA tracking station. He once told me that we have more computer power than the entire New Zealand Scott Base. One of these days I want to write about the science activities and experiments performed here in Antarctica, but I don't know if this month's segment will be the time.

Different topic:

"Good Morning Everyone,  
Another beautiful day for this chunk of ice.  
Have you ever been asked by folks in the states "Where do you work?" and do you reply "Oh on a south sea island with a active volcano, uncrowded beaches, miles of unrestricted views with beautiful mountains as a backdrop and the area is covered with acres and acres of bamboo."  
Hmmmmm, sounds pretty good eh ? Leave em wondering do you ?  
Well it is that time of the year once again to make ready for McMurdo's Arbor Day or at least make the outside world think we have a Panda Habitat down here with all the bamboo on hand."

Thus read the morning e-mail. The routes on the ice are flagged. Most of the town turned out to tie about 7500 flags onto bamboo poles to mark safe or unsafe routes on the ice. Orange and green are safe, black means unsafe, I forget what blue means, and once in a while there is a yellow flag, to mark the 'Don't eat yellow snow' locations.

Once I tired of tying the flags, and ate dinner, I drove to COSRAY and spent another enjoyable evening away from the hustle and bustle of McMurdo.

**Tuesday, September 17th**

Flagged part of route to Cape Evans, 13 miles away  
in a bouncing sprite with people from  
Crary Lab who Wintered-over:  
Joe Pettit, Melissa Iszard-Crowley, Jon Banoczi, Bill Bennett,  
David Porter, and Patricia McCairen, whom I must quote:  
"The people who come here strictly for the money don't  
enjoy Antarctica nearly as much as those  
w h o            c o m e            h e r e            f o r            t h e            a d v e n t u r e ."

Scott's hut at Cape Evans

Absolutely Thrilled. Rugged, Functional, a Palace.

Scott and his men lived here 1910 - 1912, and this is where he left for his quest of the South Pole.

"What an awful place", quoted Scott at the Pole.

Ponting's darkroom, located next door to tables of glass tubes and century old scientific instruments.

The Illustrated London News February, 1908 and dead penguin across from Scott's Bunk (where a photo of his wife, Catherine, hung) - might eat it if hungry enough today, or some of the biscuits in the galley and make some Fry's hot cocoa to drink at the long wooden wardroom table next to Oates's bunk, identified by round snowshoes for horses hanging at the end. Outside in horse shed penguin eggs for shipping back to England.

Ross Sea Party stayed there 1914 -1917. Cross on Wind Vane hill had names of Mackintosh, Hayward, and Spencer-Smyth who died in 1916, reported in my earlier journals.

Located Richardson's bunk which Leslie Learned saw the same names listed as missing above his bunk but I didn't have flashlight with me, too dark to tell, but tried some flash photos.

Outside, near mummified seal, is one of the anchors which ship Aurora tied to, but ice broke one inch cables, and ship drifted in pack ice for almost a year, taking with it most of food that Ross Sea Party planned to cache for Shackleton's Trans-Antarctic Expedition.



Photo of Mrs. Scott



Feb. 29, 1908 London News and dead penguin



Memorial to Mackintosh, Hayward, and Spencer-Smyth at Cross on Wind Vane Hill



Fry's Cocoa Mix



Aurora Ship's anchor



**Scott's hut at Cape Evans**

Today foggy, couldn't see Mt. Erebus, but in 1988, it was breathtaking. Saw my first penguins that day, two of the five were at Cape Evans. Greenpeace there then, with building that begged to destroy serenity of Hut and Mt. Erebus.

sunset on way back:  
 tiger eye formation top clouds,  
 rose colored bottom cloud layer  
 bands of clouds orchestrated slowly pulsating colors  
 glowing ember of sun fanned  
 sunbeams forming a cross  
 which softly faded away into fog or haze.  
 solitary seal snoozing  
 not a brilliant, sharp sunset, but  
 tops of clouds not seen before turned pink.  
 sastrugi ice flat with frozen waves of pressure ridges,  
 later, horizon and sky blended into the same dull gray.

I thought it appropriate to keep my notes intact, rugged, but functional, much like Scott's Hut at Cape Evans.

### **Sunday, September 22nd**

"Ice Crevasse Tour led by the SAR (search and rescue) Dudes" read the sign-up sheet on the galley bulletin board. It wasn't my first choice - I wanted to see the Ice Caves. Maybe next week. But it will take some doing to surpass today's treat. The only disappointment is that we didn't dangle in the abyss of the crevasse by the ropes we attached to waist harnesses. Each of those who wanted another look at Antarctica from a different viewpoint hiked about 500 yards to the top of a snow-covered glacier. We crawled through a small opening, slid around on the blue ice, and gasped in wonder at the incredible

beauty of this frozen cathedral. Since this is the first one I have ever seen, I have nothing to compare it against, but I left happy and impressed, glad that I hadn't left at WinFly.

### Monday, September 23<sup>rd</sup>

I have taken the liberty to quote several passages from "COLD - The Record of An Antarctic Sledge Journey" by Dr. Laurence McKinley Gould, Second in Command, Byrd Antarctic Expedition. If I ever publish my journal, I will obtain the written permission from the publisher. Hopefully, since this not now being written for profit nor publication, I am not violating copyright laws. Part of my Antarctic experience has been reading and writing about the experiences of the real explorers, especially those whom I can directly relate.

As members of Admiral Richard Byrd's First Antarctic Expedition of 1928 - 1930, Dr. Gould led a geological party from Little America into the Queen Maud Mountains on dog sleds. Dr. Gould, Mike Thorne, Jack O'Brien, Norman Vaughan, Freddy Crockett, and Eddie Goodale, departed Little America on November 4, 1929, laying food caches along the route Admiral Byrd flew over on November 29th on his historic flight to the South Pole. The team sledged into the Queen Maud Mountains, laying the caches near the Liv, Axel Heiberg, Amundsen, and Leverett Glaciers. During the next three months the team explored Antarctica from the Bay of Whales to the Queen Maud Mountains, they stood in places in Antarctica that no person had ever viewed before, Dr. Gould discovered a yellow sandstone (a major geological discovery of Antarctica), and on Christmas Day they found a cairn built by Roald Amundsen's men, on his return journey from the South Pole eighteen years earlier.

Dr. Gould wrote:

*"Why were they here? Why did they all want to come? What interest could a forester, for instance, have in the Antarctic? Some came for sheer love of adventure and wanted no reward beyond that; some wanted fame or its counterfeit, publicity; some were mercenary and thought primarily in terms of what they were going to get out of it; and lastly there was that small group, the like of which gives character to any expedition of merit - not necessarily scientists at all, but men who could understand the lure, if not the love, of knowledge for its own sake; men who came not for position or money but who found full reward for their effort, in the pursuit of an ideal."*

*Upon finding the yellow sandstone:*

*"And even now, as I review the event of that day I realize that I did not overstate my enthusiasm of the moment when I send Commander Byrd the following radiogram telling him about the day's work:*

*No symphony I have ever heard, no work of art before which I have stood in awe ever gave me the thrill that I had when I reached out after that strenuous climb and picked up a piece of rock to find it sandstone. It was just the rock I had come all the way to the Antarctic to find."*

*On finding the Amundsen Cairn:*

*"It was almost with reverent hands that we took a few rock from the side of the cairn so that we could see what was in it without in any way disturbing the shape of structure. We pulled out a five gallon tin can of kerosene or "paraffin" which, though it had been there for 18 years, was still quite intact and but little rusted, a waterproof package containing twenty small boxes of safety matches and a tin can with a tight lid on its top.*

*It was the climax, the high spot of the summer for all of us, when I pried off the lid of this tiny can and took out of it two little pieces of paper. One was just a piece rudely torn from a book and contained the names and addresses of Wisting and Johanssen who had helped*

*Amundsen build the cairn, and the other was a page carefully torn from the notebook of Amundsen himself:*

*6th - 7th of January, 1912*

*Reached and determined the Pole on the 14th to the 16th of December, 1911. Discovered the connection of Victoria Land and King Edward VII Land at 86 degrees south latitude and their continuation as a great mountain range towards the southeast. Have observed this range extending as far as 88 degrees south. Under the conditions of visibility that we had, I appeared to continue on farther in the same direction across the Antarctic Continent. Passed this place on the return with provisions for 60 days, 2 sledges, 11 dogs. Everybody well.*

*Roald Amundsen”*

*Why go to Antarctica?*

*“WHY? What for? What is the practical use of it all? These are the commonest questions that have been asked me about polar exploration and about the Byrd Antarctica Expedition in particular. It has been an interesting, if somewhat dismal, realization to find that people in general are more concerned with why we went to the Antarctic than they are with what we brought back!*

*It does not matter from what angle or relationship to existing knowledge in other parts of the world we may approach the Antarctic, whether it be the role it played in the evolution of the earth in past geological times, or whether it be its present important role in the meteorological set up of the world - we always come up against the same question - we don't know - we don't know. And is not this after all the most vital reason why Antarctic exploration must go on? Is not the very primal and fundamental urge that makes man want to know just for the sake of knowing a more real reason for it all than any thought of practical benefit? It is, after all, the lure of the unknown and the restless spirit of mankind will never stop until every bit of it has been explored. It is man's never-to-be-satisfied thirst for knowledge. It is bigger than peoples or congresses or parliaments and though a lethargy of public and private interest may from time to time slow it up, nothing can stop it, so long as man is man.*

*And because the Antarctic is there, I want to go back. I want to find out where the Queen Maud Mountains end; I want to know about the recorded writing on the rock pages of Antarctic geological history - more about its past climates and the life that has thrived in this now “lifeless continent” - more about the ancestors of that fascinating and restless little bundle of curiosity, the Adelie penguin and his great cousin the Emperor. And I had rather go back to the Antarctic and find a fossil marsupial than three gold mines.”*

Each of us live our own experiences. I don't have a burning (freezing?) desire to be cold for three months, and I seriously doubt that I will ever know the exhilarating thrill of dog sledding across Antarctica, but I can share the sentiments written by Dr. Gould, and other Antarctic Explorers.

Today, as we approach the 21st Century, gives me a cause for reflection. Here I am in Antarctica, writing about the Antarctic Explorers, while the Space Shuttle Atlantis, on mission STS-79, is docked with the Russian MIR. Captain Bill Readdy, the Commander of Atlantis, was my former Commanding Officer in the Naval Reserves, when I was attached to Naval Space Command 0166, Houston Detachment. The questions that Dr. Gould wrote about Why go to Antarctica also apply to space exploration. It astounds me that in my life I have been connected with the historical Antarctic explorers of the early 20th century, and those who will carry space exploration into the 21st Century. I have accepted as faith in God my dream that I will be going into space, probably early next century. As I have said before, my Antarctica Winter-over somehow will be part of the equation for my astronaut selection.

**Tuesday, September 24th**

One year ago today I met Norman Vaughan at his cabin in Alaska, where he continues to train dogs. He drove one of the dog sled teams with Dr. Gould in 1929, and shared the exploration of Roald Amundsen's cairn. Sadly, he told me that Dr. Gould had died just four months earlier. Norman Vaughan gave me a couple of "Musher Cards", which are like baseball cards for those people who run the Iditarod. I told him that when I fly into space, I will carry his card with me, "Norman D. Vaughan - The Oldest & Slowest 1995". Last March, I wrote more about meeting him.

### Wednesday, September 25th

Dave Hornstein invited me to participate in the Scott Base End of Season Dinner. Each of the people at Scott Base were allowed to invite three guests, so I felt honored. Ron Rogers, the Station Manager, gave me a 1996 Scott Base Winter-over patch, which will soon be on my vest with my other Antarctic patches. As usual, the food there surpassed that of McMurdo Station. (In all fairness, though, the cooks at McMurdo have to cook for ten times as many people, and I have eaten many good meals in the McMurdo Restaurant.) As I have mentioned in other journals, the people with whom I have shared Antarctica are treasured friends. Eating good food with good friends on an enjoyable evening definitely is a worthy journal entry.

### Sunday, September 29th

For years I have heard about the ice caves. Today I received the reward of visiting them. The Mt. Erebus glacier ice tongue extends into McMurdo Sound, approximately halfway between Hut Point and Cape Evans. It took about an hour to ride there in a Delta, the large-tire vehicle with the "Prison Wagon" box. The only thing missing is the rail to shackle one's ankles beneath the bench seats that are along the sidewalls. But it was worth the ride.



Icicles in the ice caves

Pale blue ice crystals and icicles line the walls and ceiling of the caves. One enters by crawling through a small entrance, and then tries to maintain balance along the slippery floor of this ancient glacier upon sliding into a cavern the size of a living room. Soft light from the outside filtered through. Once again, my eyes allowed me to see more hues of blue than I can describe with any kind of justice. The walls of the glacier had split a distance of about eighteen inches, giving a passage out. Hopefully, my film will turn out. Images from the digital camera are impressive. Savoring the beauty of these caves is one of the Antarctic experiences I would have missed had I left at WinFly. Just another one of God's magnificent works!



Left: Me having fun inside the ice caves  
Upper: Delta as seen from the ice cave opening

Tonight's Worship Service at the Chapel of the Snows tinged with sadness. This will probably be our last week of the Winter-over Service, since the Main Body of Summer people will start arriving next week. Our close knit group will go their separate ways, and next week the Navy Chaplain will lead a more traditionally structured Service. The Protestants and Catholics will start Worshipping at different times. The privilege I have had of Worshipping with this group of people has been another one of God's gifts in my Antarctic Winter-over. As I have mentioned in other journals, the Catholics and Protestants ate the Passover Dinner last April with David Hornstein.

Dr. Gould's quote from "Cold" almost directly applied to us:

"We represented a veritable museum of religious faiths. There were Greek and Roman Catholics and almost as many Protestant faiths as there were persons...I have never been among a group of men, anywhere under any circumstances, where there was more complete religious tolerance than there was among us."

### Monday, September 30th

An absolutely beautiful clear day. Now it is Twilight! Clear sky, dark orange glow between Black Island and Mt. Discovery. Wagon wheel spokes of pale bluish light. Calm, no wind. At dawn this morning the purple shadow of pyramid-shaped Observation Hill, sharp as an icicle, sliced across the ice of McMurdo Sound, pointed towards the blushing face of the Royal Society Mountains, kissed by the rising sun.

Today may have been the day Mt. Discovery married into the family of the Royal Society Mountains. Bridegroom Mt. Discovery, regal in his bluish-white crown, proudly stood stately against the azure sky, solitary awaiting the Bride, Princess of the Royal Society. Beautiful is the best mortals can call her wedding dress. Designed by her Mother Nature, the dress sparkled like diamonds as the sun illuminated fresh snow covering the train pleated with ancient mountain peaks, hemmed by threads of silver glaciers flowing into the frozen sea.

September has been a great month! I want to close this journal with one more poem, written last May by a girl about 12 years old. Beth and Bob Sheid received this at WinFly, among some very good maps and drawings of penguins and seals from students who go to school in Kennebec, South Dakota.

## ANTARCTICA

by

Amanda Anderson

Antarctica is a frozen lab,  
 Antarctica really seems bright,  
 Antarctica makes people blab,  
 because it's such a beautiful sight.

The ice down there,  
 is way up in the air.  
 The snowbanks really seem high,  
 because they're way up in the sky.

The sunset is so pretty,  
 because there's not one spot dirty.  
 Snow and ice are so much,  
 because they give Antarctica its special touch.

**Antarctic Winter-over Journal - October, 1996 (finally addition)**

by

**Matthew A. Nelson, Esquire, known as STS-144 and Londomat, and also, the real Matt who drives a garbage truck the one that has pink pokka dots and purpol stripes on it.**

**Tuesday, October 1st**

Today marks the end of the Winter season, and the start of the Summer Season. We can expect many more faces as Main Body opens. While I am ready for the season to end, I am not sure that I am ready for the influx of people. More lines at the galley. Won't be able to sit at my favorite table and chair. Won't be able to hang my coat on the same hook. Hopefully, a month from today I will leave for New Zealand.

**Friday, October 4th**

Today is a good day for space happenings. On this 39th anniversary of the launch of Sputnik 1, I ate lunch with Robbie Score, the lady who found the meteorite from Mars with indications of microscopic life, and I received the following e-mail from astronaut Bill Readdy after I sent him a note congratulating him on his successful STS-79 shuttle mission that docked with the MIR and brought Shannon Lucid home.

Matt,

Nice to hear from you! Thanks for the nice words. The mission went very well. We could even catch occasional glimpses of the 'ice' periodically during our mission.

You're one great American to volunteer for those extended stays like you do. My hat's off to you.

Take care,  
 Reads

**Captain Bill Readdy, commander of STS-79 (left) –  
 NASA photograph**



Wow! That certainly lifted my spirits. I could handle flying with him when I go up in the shuttle. Because the number 44 has often figured into my life, starting out being born on April 4th, somehow, as I have said before, I figure my mission will have something go do with this number. The 44th anniversary of the launch of Sputnik 1 is Oct. 4, 2001. That is the opening

of my expected launch window, which extends until my 60th birthday, in the year 2006. Of course, the dates may slide, but my faith that I will be going to space has not slid at all.

### **Saturday, October 5th**

Gorgeous sunset! Between Black Island and Mt. Discovery is a low layer of clouds which are peach colored. An arrow of red laser light pierces these clouds. A blowing snow plume on Mt. Discovery gives the impression that the ancient volcano is erupting, as small puffs of glowing like the embers of campfire in the mountains on a starless night, as small puffs of cotton candy dance across the sky, smoke signals from the indigenous Phoenix Indians in their Happy Hunting Grounds. A dark gray tidal wave of snow lies between Mt. Discovery and the Royal Society Mountains, obscuring distant glaciers. Above the peaks of the Royal Society Mountains beams of the setting sun make a huge blue layered "V". The inside area is pink, and the bottom of the "V" is orange. As the sun moves counter-clockwise on its horizontal odyssey to sleep behind the mountains, individual clouds not seen today burst into flame for a few moments, then disappear into gray nothingness. To the right of the Royal Society Mountains is a sandstone layer of clouds painted pink, blue, pale green, yellow, and orange.

### **Monday, October 7th**

The second Air Force C-5 plane landed at the ice runway today, just prior to the take off of the C-141. In its own right, the C-141 is a good size airplane, but the C-5 made it look like a Piper Cub. Just goes to show how rumor control can be off - people were saying that the Air Force wouldn't land the C-5 before the C-141 took off. Four helicopters from a private firm were the cargo of the C-5. No longer will the Navy VXE-6 helos buzz over McMurdo, transporting the scientists to-and-from the Dry Valleys, or to the penguin rookeries. An end of an era.

I guess I knew having a roommate was inevitable, but usually Housing notifies people when to expect a roommate. After several months of having my own space, I was caught off guard when I walked into my room today to see Bill Nesbit. All things considered, if I have to have a roommate, Bill is a good choice. I have known him for several years. He is an honest and a quiet person, and very considerate. He just wanted a place to hang his hat, and the Housing office gave him a key to my room. There are people much worse than Bill that I could have been stuck with. But seeing somebody in my space still came as a shock, nonetheless. If the situation was reversed, I would be wanting a place to stay if I came into McMurdo, as opposed to having to sleep in Scott's Discovery Hut, I must admit. (Although that could be very interesting, especially since there are stories of the place being haunted by the ghosts of the earlier explorers!) Instead of having a nice relaxing evening, I spent a few hours rearranging my junk. The wooden closets were moved to divide the room in half, giving each person his own space, and I still have the window. Losing that would have been a greater tragedy for me than gaining a roommate, especially if I had missed the sunset tonight.

Matt Nelson has three theories, which are doubtful that the National Science Foundation will fund for further research. The third theory will be discussed first, since tonight is its birth. This is the theory that Volcanic Lava Originates From Sunsets. Black Island is about 15 miles from Mt. Discovery. Tonight, the basin between these two land formations absolutely glowed the same color as flowing lava. The Westward direction of this lava basin extended all the way to the sun. I know, because I saw it. The sun's rays filled the basin, which caused the ice to melt and flow just under the earth's crust. Thus, the fresh water from Antarctica melting will be spring water in the Rockies soon. Once the ice melted, the sun's lava beams drained slowly into the hole made by the melting ice. Lava is heavier than water, so it flowed lower than the water. Through the massive conduits inside the earth's mantle, the lava will flow, until it finds some volcano on the other side of the earth to erupt. If a Black Hole's intense gravity can swallow light, why can't the sun's lava colored rays drain into the hole made by the melting of Antarctica? Makes sense to me. (I know - those of you who read

my theories will say I have been on the ice too long. But I agree with you, so that gives my theories even more validity!)

So what are the other two theories? One has been formulated by my years as an enlisted man in the Army and in the Naval Reserves. An Enlisted Man Found the South Pole on the British Expedition. I don't know much about Roald Amundsen's Norwegian team when he found the South Pole in 1911, but Robert Scott's British team had one enlisted guy, Petty Officer Evans, with them. Generally, it is the enlisted guy who is given the worse tasks, while the officers take all the credit. The man in the crow's nest who yelled "Land Ho!" is the discoverer of America, and not Columbus. Similarly, Evans is the one who found the South Pole, but Scott received the credit because he was the money man. Since the annual snow fall in Antarctica is only a few inches a year, Evans had the task of sweeping the snow away with a push broom to look for the black lines of Longitude. When he found 36 black lines of Longitude converging, he knew they had arrived at the South Pole. Look on any globe, and you will see 36 black lines of Longitude, spaced 10 degrees apart, converging at the North and South Poles. I rest my case.

The last Matt Nelson theory: A Brilliant Blue Band of Water Marks the Equator on the Oceans. Again, look how the Equator is marked on any globe. The ancient cartographers relied upon the knowledge passed onto them by sailors. Many cartographers were sailors themselves. I think is time for me to go to sleep, and to leave the ice!

### **Wednesday, October 9th**

Unfortunately, not every day is humorous. To my knowledge, there have been no fights all winter here in McMurdo. It has been a mellow winter. Until today. One of the cooks calmly walked into the housing office and asked for a hammer. He then walked into the dining room and attacked another cook, hitting the second guy in the head. Both of these guys wintered-over. A third cook, who came in at WinFly, tried to stop the attack, and was hit in the neck with the claw end of the hammer. The first cook then returned the hammer to the housing office, while the medical people were called. He had quit the day before, throwing away his bonus. He only had to wait another few hours, and he would have been off the ice. What a tragedy. The details are not clear, but apparently Glen has a severe drinking problem and a homosexual lifestyle, both of which were contributing factors. Three people are directly affected - two injured, and one whose career is now ruined. The entire community is stunned. A Federal Marshall from Hawaii will be coming in to take him away, which in itself is unprecedented. I guess one never knows how the dark and isolation of Antarctica can affect people, or what makes them snap.

### **Friday, October 11th**

Hammer jokes in bad taste abound. We all have been guilty of saying them. Now the word is that the FBI is sending agents in. While I didn't know any of the three cooks very well, you don't spend a winter with 233 people and not talk to most of them. Last Sunday, Glen, the cook who used the hammer, joked as he cut a slice of prime rib for me. The cook who tried to stop the fight sat next to me on the way to the ice caves a few weeks ago.

Overlooking McMurdo Sound is the Captain's hut, which has been a popular place for weekend parties. I had never been there before. The Navy Captain in charge of all the Navy personnel in McMurdo lived there in past summer seasons. Had I seen the place before tonight, I would have tried to stay there over the winter. It's quite nice inside, like a regular house, and has a beautiful view of McMurdo Sound. Tonight I visited Glen at the Captain's hut, where he is being held until the FBI arrives. The carpenters boarded up a window of one of the bedrooms, and installed a Plexiglas window and a lock hasp on the door. Glen has free reign of the house, but called the room his cell. Somebody is in the hut all the time with him.

Why did I go there? This guy just tried to kill somebody two days ago, and would have had the other cook not intervened. I remember Jesus saying something about visiting people in jail. He came into the world to save those who needed Him. As I left work, I felt that I my path back to the dorms should be by the Captain's hut. What would I say to him? On the way over I asked God to give me the right words.

Glen seemed happy to have a visitor. I certainly was not the only one, but somehow, I don't think the town swarmed there to wish him good luck. We talked about an hour. He says that he doesn't remember anything about the incident. Perhaps I am gullible, but somehow, I believe him. Whatever happens, he will be off the booze for awhile. Hopefully for good. I told him that he has the greatest communication link available to him, that prayer really works. It is easier to pray in church with other people who share similar beliefs. It is not easy to pray with-or-for someone on a one-to-one basis. I managed. Maybe some good will come out of this sordid incident. Glen may stop drinking, and he may come closer to the Lord. All of this is not about Glen. Perhaps this winter-over experience in Antarctica has given me more tolerance of people who have a lifestyle that I find abhorrent. Maybe the time has come for me to practice Christianity at some place other than the Chapel of the Snows, or to do something besides only write about it.

### **Sunday, October 13th**

Navy Chaplain Mark Smith preached this morning at the Chapel of the Snows. Thirty-six people crowded into the Chapel. Some of them had been here last summer, but my comfort zone collapsed. Who are all these people? Good - there is Rebecca and Eric, Mary Elizabeth, and Justin, who came in at WinFly. The four of them were sitting in chairs in the row behind me, so I moved back. Since last March, during the Lord's Prayer, we had joined hands in a Circle of Prayer. Tears of emotion welled up in my eyes when Rebecca grabbed my hand while the Chaplain led us all in the Lord's Prayer. I think all five of us were affected as we silently continued our tradition. About 9:30 PM, I walked out of the dorm and ran into Cass and Jon Banoczi, and Eric and Rebecca, and Rebecca's brother John. They invited me to see the stained glass window in the chapel at sunset. After taking some photographs John left. He came in on the first flight a couple of weeks ago. All of a sudden, five of us who had shared the winter together once more stood in a Circle of Prayer. Powerful. What a fantastic group of friends.

On Easter Sunday, I ran into Rebecca at Vince's Cross at Hut Point where we watched the sunset. Today, Mary Elizabeth and I walked to Scott Base together, sharing our faith in God the entire two miles. Both Rebecca and Mary Elizabeth are young enough to be my daughters. Lisa Trembly, a former navigator for VXE-6, and I have known each other for seven years. We have sent each other Christmas cards and e-mail. Each of these ladies know that I have a wife whom I love very much. They have talked to me about their boyfriends, and also, their faith in God.

I will always love and be married to Karoline. She is understanding enough that I can be good friends with women whom I have shared the Antarctic experience, but by the same token, she has bonds with some of the doctors that I accept. She has over twenty years working in Intensive Care. People can't go through years of saving lives together in critical situations without having some kind of mutual respect and trust. God really gave me a gift when He selected Karoline for my wife, and topped it off with Michelle and Cheri. I am proud of the fact that I have always been faithful to Karoline. I guess that is why we have a strong marriage. Sure will be glad to see her and the girls again.

### **Wednesday, October 16th**

Help! Have been invaded by 18th Century British Army. I am being held prisoner with people who have beakeritis disease. All the beakers wearing red coats are running all over the place. It is like somebody kicked over a red ant hill. Red coated (Ant)arctica. I wanna go home! Please Send Plane!

Too much noise. Too many people, all enthused about their wonderful projects and naturally, the NSF only funded them, so they all think their pet study-the-antifreeze-in-fish-properties or study-the-ozone or study-like-Matt-Nelson-and-flunk-out projects demand number one priority.

What does "TOAST" mean? One of these new people called me that.

### **Friday, October 18th**

Beth Sheid, Leah Thompson, Rebecca Simonson, and my good friend Harold Gober "Gube" all left tonight, along with 14 other people. I went to see them off at the place where they "bag drag" - I couldn't stand to go to the airfield and smell that airplane fuel. I would have been a stowaway for sure. Leah is the age of my daughter, Michelle. She is going to travel on the Old China Silk Route. That is one journey I wouldn't mind taking myself someday. While I was there, they called out the name of "Matt" so I answered, but they wouldn't let me board the bus because I didn't have my bunny boots on. Everybody laughed but the Matt guy scheduled to fly.

New subject:

Nearly Extinct Bird Spotted in Antarctica by Frozen Ornithologist.

Tonight, two red-tailed silver-winged Herky birds were observed to land at McMurdo, Antarctica for perhaps their last season. Flying to Antarctica in October, almost as predictable as the Swallows of San Jaun Capistrano, these two are among the six or seven surviving "Herks" of the species *Navius Antarcticus* which are now being encroached upon by their cousins, the *Airforceus Arcticus*. Designated LC-130 (for Lost Continent), their extinction is a cause of great sadness to this Ancient Antarctic Explorer.

For 10 years, I have been flying to the ice with the Navy Squadron VXE-6. Fantastic job, fantastic people. Flying with you guys is why I joined the Navy Reserves. Gonna miss flying with you the next time I come here.

### **Sunday, October 20th**

The crowds of the summer season intimidate me. But the Sunday Science Lectures are traditions of the summer, and certainly are something to attend. Never has there been a bad one.

Tonight, Kathy Conlan gave a spectacular slide and video presentation of her work as a diver in both the Arctic and Antarctic waters. She works as a Research Scientist in the Canadian Museum of Nature in Ottawa. She sat next to me on the flight here several months ago. While I wrote about life on the ice, she and others were diving in the Arctic Ocean. We sent e-mail back and forth over the year, and before the lecture, she gave me a bottle of wine from New Zealand, which I will take home and share with Karoline. How thoughtful of Kathy.

Other enjoyable science lectures have been given by Ann Hawthorne, a free-lance photographer; Bruno Nardi from the University of Wyoming and Darin Toohey from the University of California at Irvine on balloon launches to detect Chlorine molecules which cause ozone depletion; and Jim Barker on his life with the Yup'ik Eskimos.

Time for bed, but can't let this sunset pass:

Midnight. One more sunset.  
Misty Black Island  
Mt. Discovery obscured - gray clouds  
Left of Mt. Discovery, top of sun glows  
ember orange, fiery red, silently, suddenly  
blares opening notes of Beethoven's Fifth:  
"This one's for you, Matt!" and I am  
Captured once more, a slave to its beauty.

Photons bursting from the sun  
on Antarctic Beams  
eight minutes ago  
blaze jagged ridges on Mt. Discovery  
illuminate Herculean chariots  
taxiing on ice runway.



### Wednesday, October 23rd

I feel like a stranger in a stranger land. I hardly know anyone. Today, a plane came in with 60 people who are going to open the South Pole. I know more of them than the 900 people who are here in McMurdo. Most of the people who Wintered-over have already left for the greener pastures of New Zealand.

### Thursday, October 24th

Working the midnight shift tracking RADARSAT and being tired at 8:30 AM are certainly not worthwhile excuses to turn down a ride in a delta to go visit Cape Evans again. Mt. Erebus majestically reigns over Scott's Hut at Cape Evans. This time I went prepared with a flashlight to search for the names of members of the Ross Sea Party.

They weren't where I thought, but that doesn't matter - I found them anyway. Spotting the little penciled inscription on Richard's bunk is one of my highlights of this past year. Ecstatic! The same names are listed on a plaque at the base of the memorial Cross on top of Wind-Vane Hill, about 200 feet from the hut. In my previous journals I have written about the thrill of seeing some names on the wall at Scott's Discovery Hut here at Hut Point on Jan. 21, 1915. Victor Hayward's name was among those listed. Today I found what I wanted to see ever since Leslie Learned told me about them last May:

R. Richards

Missing  
August 14, 1916  
Losses to date

Mack  
Hayward  
Smyth

Written on R. Richard's bunk:



Smyth (the Padre) died from scurvy just a few days from Hut Point when the Ross Sea Party was returning from the Beardmore Glacier after laying food for Shackleton's Trans-Antarctic Expedition. Captain Mackintosh and Victor Hayward both had scurvy, but made it to

Hut Point, where they regained their strength after eating seal meat. Then in May, 1916, the two of them decided to walk to Cape Evans, and were never heard from again. Seeing these names on the bunk at Cape Evans meant more to me than the boxes of sugar and cocoa and Scott's wardroom table and the well preserved emperor penguin still waiting to be dissected after eighty years. Next to the penguin is The Illustrated London News dated February 29, 1908 that must have been taken on Shackleton's Nimrod expedition. All kinds of scientific instruments of the era take up any available space. The glass tubes and beakers are similar to those seen in the Crary Lab. One of the things I found interesting was a Chinese vase sitting on the wardroom dining table, as well as the fully stocked kitchen.



Chinese vase on wardroom table



Kitchen in Scott's Hut at Cape Evans

### Saturday, October 26th

One of the things I have wanted to write about all season is the Crary Lab, and some of the science activities in McMurdo. My writing time is limited, so I will give a notebook tour of the lab, and leave out the narrative:

Lab named for Albert P. Crary, 1911 - 1987  
pioneer in polar geophysics and glaciology,  
first person to set foot on both poles

Glass Showcase:

old ship's lantern found off Hut Point at depth of  
15 meters

old bottles

Weddell, crabeater, and leopard seal skulls

Adelie penguin flippers

bottles of Antarctic fish, octopus, coral, sea urchins,

sponges, krill, amphipods, giant isopods, sea spiders,

bottle of North Pole Sea Water, a plastic sea monster,  
and a battery operated blue swimming fish

fossilized wood and ferns

drawings of saurischian dinosaur found on ice

Geology - calcites, gneiss rocks, and a

Phonolite Bomb found one half kilometer from  
Mt. Erebus crater

Mt. Erebus crystals only found in two lava flows,

Mt. Erebus and in Kenya

Kenyte, Anorthoclase Fledspar crystals

fine grain igneous rock, an olivine bearing

phonolite with phenocrysts of anorthoclase

and sometimes acmite-augite and olivine

Hallway photographs, offices, labs, charts, and  
descriptions of science activities:

Pollutants in Winter Quarters Bay  
 LTER - Long Term Ecological Research  
     McMurdo Dry Valleys  
 Automatic Weather Stations for field parties  
 Gondwanaland Precambrian Super Continent  
 South Pole Inland Traverse  
 Oceanography from Space  
 Maps of satellite images and USGS maps  
 Global Positioning Satellites  
 Antarctic Meteorological Research Center  
 Life From Antarctica Office  
 Radioisotope Lab  
 Environmental rooms  
 Microscopy rooms  
 Freezer Room  
 Microbiology Lab  
 Photo Lab  
 Electronics Shop  
 Instrumentation Lab, complete with new X-Ray  
     machine for core samples of Cape Robert's  
     drilling project  
 Rock Ship thin section and rough cut rooms  
 University of Wyoming balloon room  
 Diver's equipment, complete with ROV  
 Aquarium - holding tanks for live  
     sponges, starfish, sea urchins, and one  
     Antarctic Cod, about 3 feet long  
 Mt. Erebus Volcano Observatory  
 Ann Hawthorne's (the photographer) office  
 RADARSAT tracking antenna control room  
 LIDAR  
 Ken Griffith's office, flies on Twin Otters  
     studying glaciers  
 Office for meteorite searchers  
 AGO - Automatic Geographical Observatories

This is a partial list of the science in Antarctica.  
 There is another list of the astronomy activities  
 at the South Pole that may be just as long.

Science is important, but just as important are  
 the people who support it - such as the carpenters,  
 plumbers, cooks, firefighters, medics, air crew  
 and ground support, materials, mechanics, admin.

Another change of subject:

Halloween party tonight.  
 Weird costumes, Weird People.  
 I wonder how they will feel in the morning!  
 Glad I won't be sharing their headaches.

**Sunday, October 27th**

Once more, I have had the privilege of reading another fine book on Antarctica. "Strong Men South" by William J. Menster is about his experiences as a Chaplain at Little America with Admiral Byrd's fourth Antarctic Expedition in 1946 - 1947.

Father Menster is a Roman Catholic Priest. He wrote that he had the honor to be the pray for the Blessing of Antarctica. Here is his prayer for the Blessing of the Continent:

*"O Almighty and Eternal God, Maker of heaven and earth and all things, from Thy heavenly throne behold us, Thy humble servants here assembled to offer Thee for the first time from this great continent, public adoration, praise, and thanks. We are inspired by its vastness and whiteness to thoughts of our insignificance and unworthiness and of Thy Greatness. Whilst scientists estimate how many thousands or millions of years ago Thou didst create this land, and whilst historians compute how few of Thy creatures have set foot hereon, we humbly thank Thee for the privilege that is ours today, of blessing and consecrating it to Thy service.*

*O Merciful God, by Whose word all things are sanctified, pour forth Thy blessing upon this continent; and grant that whatsoever peoples and nations of the world shall use it according to Thy will and law, may receive from Thee health of body and peace of soul. Endow with the spirit of wisdom those to whom, in Thy Name, is entrusted this land and whatsoever, through Thy Goodness, it may produce; that there may be justice and peace among the nations and continents of earth. Through Christ our Lord. Amen."*

*In the Foreword of this book, Admiral Byrd wrote:*

*"The whole Antarctic might be referred to as a mighty cathedral of glittering ice and painted sky erected by the Lord's own hand. Far from the turmoil and temptations of the world, it is the ideal retreat for those would find a more intimate touch with the infinite Greatness and Goodness."*

### **Monday, October 28th**

After dealing with the frustrations in the galley since the beginning of the month, such as bananas cut in half that turned squishy, dried up sliced orange slices, apples sliced in half and turning brown, spaghetti with no meat sauce and meat sauce with no spaghetti, unusually long lines, and rude galley staff, I sort of lost my cool when I went to eat food at midnight and found that steaks had been placed out for people who worked shift work and had a meal card. I was on the midnight shift, but waited until after the galley served the meal card holders, only to find the steak pan empty. I asked the woman serving why they didn't cook more steak, and she told me that she had cooked for the people who were important. At that point, I placed my tray down and walked out. I am not any more important than anyone else, but I feel each of us on station are entitled to eat the same kind of food. After feeling angry all night, I decided my time had arrived to depart this magic wonderland. Too many little things were starting to bother me. I requested to be manifested for Wednesday's flight, instead of waiting until Friday. I realize that many people in the world are going hungry, but it is still time to leave.

### **Tuesday, October 29th**

One plane left today with one passenger. Tomorrow's flight has been canceled, and now I am on the manifest to leave on Friday. Hope bad weather or mechanical difficulties don't prevent me from leaving. I will be so glad to see New Zealand, drink a fresh glass of milk, eat a good steak, and walk in the botanical gardens. I won't be home until December 6th, but at least I will be off the ice.

### **Wednesday, October 30th**

Today is beautiful. Good flying weather. I have calmed down. Although I would have been on today's flight had it not been canceled, I don't feel quite as rushed by waiting two more days. Hopefully, there won't be any delays, but if there are, that's life in Antarctica. Whenever that plane does depart, Matt's First Rule for Antarctica will not be broken: "Never turn down a plane ride when your name is on the manifest." I don't know what the Second Rule is - I haven't made it yet.

### Thursday, October 31st

#### Reflections on Wintering-over in McMurdo, Antarctica

Tonight is the last night here, I am still scheduled to fly to New Zealand tomorrow. Took a long time for this day to arrive. What a year! David Hess and I stepped off the plane at Willie Field just after 1996 was invented. We are still friends. I missed Karoline, Cheri, Michelle, Karen, and my parents very much. David Rosenthal painted the Antarctic scenes, but I don't have his talent to paint, so I have tried to capture the essence of Antarctica's beauty in words. Penguins, seals, whales, sunrises, sunsets, darkness, full moons, cold, ice, colors of ice, Mt. Erebus, Mt. Discovery, Royal Society Mountains, Scott's Discovery Hut and his hut at Cape Evans, little known historical names like Richards, Smith, Hayward, Wild, Mack, and Joyce. South Pole. Winter-over people, friends, letters to Patti's and Jan's students. STS-144 fan club. Soyuz TM-15 watch-it gang. Scott Base dinners and books. RADARSAT. Chapel of the Snows, Sunday Brunches, Faith, Forgiveness, and that greatest communication channel and gift - Prayer.

Will I Winter-over again? No, I don't think so, at least not in McMurdo, nor any time soon. But I am glad I did it. I probably have not made my last trip to the ice. It's in my blood. Some things are still left undone, such as my goal to read the Bible through. My attitudes have changed. No longer do I feel the intense pressure to complete my Master's degree at Clear Lake University, although I still plan on finishing a degree somewhere, sometime. I doubt if I will continue actively in the Naval Reserves, because it has lost its appeal and fun. My faith that I will fly in space has remained unchanged, and in fact, I am even more sure that it will happen. At this stage, I don't even know for whom I will work after I arrive home. Whatever turns up will still have some positive influence on my way to space.

Overall, I treasure the time I lived here. I will never be able to forget the beauty. There were rough moments, but I made it through them, through the help of prayers from many people. I thank each and every person who sent me e-mail and special thanks go to those of you who prayed for me. I have learned not to take so many things for granted. I leave the ice with many more friends. I grew professionally in my career, and spiritually, in this Land of Ice and Snow.

"Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow?  
Out of whose womb came the ice;  
And the frost from heaven, who hath gendered it?  
The waters are hardened like a stone,  
And the surface of the deep is congealed."  
(Job 38: 22, 29-30)

"And Jesus saith unto them,  
'Have faith in God.  
For verily I say unto you, That  
whosoever shall say unto this mountain,  
Be thou removed,  
and be thou cast into the sea,  
and shall not doubt in his heart,  
but shall believe  
that those things which he saith  
shall come to pass;

he shall have whatsoever he saith.

Therefore I say unto you,  
What things so ever ye desire,  
when ye pray,  
believe that ye receive them,  
and ye shall have them.

And when ye stand praying,  
forgive,  
if ye have ought against any:  
that your Father also which is in heaven  
may forgive you your trespasses.  
But if ye do not forgive,  
neither will your  
Father which is in heaven  
forgive your trespasses.”  
(Mark 11: 22-26)

“Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say,  
Rejoice. Let your moderation be known  
unto all men. The Lord is at hand.

Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by  
prayer and supplication with thanksgiving  
let your requests be made known to God.

And the peace of God, which passeth  
all understanding, shall keep your hearts  
and minds through Christ Jesus.

Finally, brethren,  
whatsoever things are true,  
whatsoever things are honest,  
whatsoever things are just,  
whatsoever things are pure,  
whatsoever things are lovely,  
whatsoever things are of good report,  
if there be any virtue, and  
if there be any praise,  
think on these things.

Those things, which ye hath both  
learned, and received, and heard,  
and seen in me, do:  
and the God of peace shall be with you.

But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly,  
and now at the last your care of me  
hath flourished again.

Not that I speak in respect of want:  
for I have learned,  
in whatsoever state I am,  
therewith to be content.

I know both how to be abased,  
and I know how to abound:

every where and in all things  
I am instructed both to be full  
and to be hungry, both to abound  
and suffer need.

I can do all things through Christ  
which strengthened me.  
Notwithstanding, ye have done well,  
that ye did communicate with my affliction.”  
(Philippians 4: 4-14)



**Crary Lab Winter-Over Crew**

**Front (L-R):**  
Dave Hess  
Melissa Iszard-Crowley  
David Porter  
John Banoczi

**Standing (L-R):**  
Russ Bixby, Matt Nelson, Gary Teetsell, Bill Bennett,  
Joe Pettit, Beth Sheid

### **Friday, November 1st**

McMurdo

Today is the day. Finished packing. Said goodbye to Dave, since he is staying another ten days. The next computer entry should be in New Zealand.

New Zealand

GREEN, Misty, WARM! Smell the flowers, grab a handful of grass, listen to the fountain outside of the Plaza Motel that sounds like rain. Five hour flight on a C-141. Not eight on an LC-130. OFF THE ICE!!! Fresh milk and fresh fruit. Tomorrow I am going to have a big juicy steak. Did you hear what I said? OFF THE ICE!!! Wow. What an adventure this past year has been. I am OFF THE ICE!!!

### **Monday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>.**

Look at my new Ford F250 4 X 4!

