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BC '96 Means More Television and Radio

by JOC(AW) Jacqueline Kiel

Turning on the television next season will be a different experience for those used to McMurdo's programming for the last few years. Viewers will have three satellite channels to choose from because of a new project called "BC-96"

"BC-96" is a world-wide Armed Forces Radio and Television Service (AFRTS) project designed to provide not only additional television channels, but a greater selection of radio signals as well.

The program involves switching the current AFRTS Satellite Network (SATNET) signal from an analog signal to a digital signal which can carry more data.

The AFRTS Pacific Satellite, which services McMurdo, is tentatively scheduled to switch over to the new signal on Dec 16, according to JOCS Brady Bautch, Officer In Charge, Navy Broadcasting Detachment McMurdo.

However, even though the signal will switch to a digital one in December, the new programming will not be immediately available, Bautch added.

"The transition to this new service will take several months and there are bound to be delays and changes in the schedule. So, McMurdo viewers must be patient. BC-96 is going to happen, it will just take some time," said Bautch.

Bautch does expect that the system will be fully in place and fully operational by next September.

The new services will include a channel called "Newsports," which will be similar to the current SATNET channel. The channel will carry news, sports, and time sensitive information programs.

Another channel is called "Spectrum" and will offer programs from the "Discovery Channel," the "Arts & Entertainment" channel, a and "Public Broadcasting Service." The channel will also show classic movies.

Spectrum will be programmed in eight-hour segments which will be repeated three times in a 24-hour period.

The final channel will carry entertainment programs such as situation comedies, dramas and soap operas. This channel will also include news, sports and other time-sensitive programming.

The entertainment channel will be based on Tokyo time vice the current Los Angeles, Calif. time zone. This means McMurdo will be four hours ahead instead of three hours behind, so a program starting at 7 a.m. will be seen here at 11 a.m.

These additional satellite channels will eventually replace the programming on CH-8, CH-13, and CH-2. However, exactly where each new satellite service will be placed and how much local programming will be reduced has not yet been decided, according to Bautch.

"For the near term, we will maintain our movies, but as the new channels come on line, most local programming will be terminated," Bautch said. "However, we are looking at possibly adding another channel to our line-up to maintain a locally programmed movie channel."

Once the new service is completely on line, six radio signals will be available, but only two will be able to go over the air at one time. Those will be on McMurdo's two existing radio stations, 104.5 and 93.9. The others will be distributed on various community information channels.

"We are going to place one of the signals on the scroll channel, one on the passenger channel and we will modify the weather channel so we can put audio on that," Bautch said. "We will have to develop a programming solution to be able to broadcast the other signals," he added.

Radio formats will include adult contemporary, oldies, country/western, news, sports, and possibly some "National Public Radio" programming.

The upgrade will not be without growing pains, according to Bautch.

"The biggest hurdle we have right now is getting the signal from Black Island over to here," he said.

However, Antarctic Support Associates Information Systems personnel have developed a solution to that problem, and the necessary equipment should be in place by season's end.

Greenhouse Grows Feshies for McMurdo

by JO2 Trevor Poulsen

One of the most interesting sites in McMurdo is a little building set along the road to Scott Base. Few people realize that just inside an oasis awaits curious visitors.

McMurdo's greenhouse doesn't rank among the largest buildings in town. But what it lacks in space it certainly makes up for in what it produces.

In fact, the greenhouse is productive enough to keep McMurdo's winter-over population well-supplied with a variety of vegetables.

"In the wintertime we really make a difference because the greenhouse is able to provide two to three salads per week, which is a significant amount," said Lenore Hinson, Hydroponics Attendant. The greenhouse continues production throughout the year, even when fresh vegetables can be flown from New Zealand.

Production figures for the month of October show just how successful this growing operation is: 109 pounds of lettuce, 15 pounds of herbs and 26 pounds of onions, peppers, tomatoes and cucumbers.

McMurdo's greenhouse wouldn't be as productive without hydroponics technology. Hydroponics is the art of growing plants without soil. Instead, seeds are planted in a special growing medium, called vermiculite, which is

placed inside plastic tubes.

The vermiculite receives a continuous supply of nutrient solution at just the right temperature. The result is a much more efficient and predictable supply of produce.

Seven volunteers from the community keep a daily watch over this high tech garden.

"The volunteers have many responsibilities up here," said Hinson. "They help me with the planting of the seeds, and the harvesting of the plants. We also have readings that have to be taken every day in which we measure the pH, the nutrient level and the temperature."

Just six weeks after the seeds are planted, the first harvest can begin. Lettuce can be harvested up to three times before a new seed must be planted. Fruiting plants like tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers last even longer.

Visitors can enter the greenhouse anytime. Taste testing is also welcome, provided all picked vegetables are weighed and recorded.

SCIENCE PROJECT UPDATE

- by JOC(AW) Jacqueline Kiel

Chronology of Antarctic Glaciations(S-181)

Dr. Mark Kurz and his field team will collect samples of glacial moraines which are rock, sand and clay deposits, and associated bedrock from a variety of locations in the Dry Valleys. Their objective is to determine surface exposure ages of the moraines, bedrock and other glacial deposits.

The team will use drills to get continuous rock cores in several locations. These cores will be up to several meters deep.

Ice Sheet Mass Balance Using GPS Measurements (S-178)

The rate of thickening/thinning of the Antarctic ice sheets will be measured over three years. Dr. Gordon Hamilton and field team member Steven Price will use markers and global position system surveys to obtain precise measurements.

Three existing sites will be revisited and the team will establish as many as 13 new sites in nine locations on the east and west Antarctic ice sheets.

Additionally, the team will collect samples of the uncompacted snow which accumulated on top of glaciers to determine density and long-term accumulation.

AROUND USAP

by JOC(AW) Jacqueline Kiel

McMurdo Station - Construction at Siple Dome and Upstream Charlie field camps continued last week. Additionally, personnel, cargo and fuel was delivered to the two field camps and the South Pole.

Fleet Operations personnel are working on a water drainage project which will keep dirty melt water from running down the hill and onto the VXE-6 sea ice transition. The water tends to cause faster deterioration of the transition. The project will create a diversion channel.

Fleet Operations completed a traverse to Marble Point Wednesday carrying research supplies. The traverse team

brought retrograde cargo back to McMurdo Station.

The ice pier, which will be used in January, is going through its initial preparation. Snow is being removed and plans are being set to place a bridge from the road to the pier.

Electronic Technicians from Naval Support Force, Antarctica and equipment operators from Antarctic Support Associates installed a new precision approach radar into the ice runway radome. The old radar will be returned to Canada where it will be refurbished.

South Pole - Even with bad weather delaying the South Pole opening, the station experienced only minor impact in terms of the arrival of science personnel and receipt of cargo for science and major construction projects.

Newly arrived South Pole personnel completed necessary turnovers with outgoing winter-overs.

R/V Nathaniel B. Palmer - The ship arrived at the ice edge on schedule Friday, Nov. 8, to complete an exchange of research personnel and onload supplies. The transfer operation ran smoothly with 39 people arriving at the ship and 31 people departing. The ship departed the ice edge late Monday evening, ahead of schedule, and is heading toward New Zealand. Researchers on board will conduct research in support of the U.S. Joint Global Ocean Flux Study. The ongoing research has various objectives, including predicting the response of the southern oceans to climate change.

R/V Polar Duke - The ship completed its cargo offload and technical support at the Copacabana field camp and departed for Palmer Station. She arrived at Palmer Monday, Nov. 11, to offload cargo and onload needed supplies for the next research cruise.

Christchurch - The International Antarctic Centre Visitors' Centre has opened a new exhibit called "Snow and Ice." The exhibit is actually a controlled environment which simulates the icy conditions and temperatures of Antarctica. It will give tourists a taste of the environment.

Protect Your Valuables

by JOC(AW) Jacqueline Kiel

It only takes five seconds for a thief to walk into an open, unoccupied room and steal one of your belongings, according to Chief Master-At-Arms Ronnie "Pat" Woodard, McMurdo Station Security.

The problem occurs when people leave the room open just to run a quick errand. "People figure all they have to do is walk right in and walk right out, so they leave their doors wide open," said Woodard. "The fact is no one can use the bathroom fast enough to catch a thief."

Woodard advises people to lock up lockers and lock up unoccupied rooms just to be on the safe side. There is virtually nothing the police can do in the event of an unsecured larceny, he said.

A service provided by the Ice Police is "Lost and Found." If you find something, just take it to the office. If you lose an item, stop by the office and describe what you lost. High-value items must be described to be sure the item goes to its rightful owner. High-value items will be held throughout the season. Low-cost items will be held for 30 days, then sent to the skua pile.

An additional service provided by the Ice Police is a registration service for high-value items such as cameras video cassette recorders and stereos. Pick up a registration form from the office, fill it out, including serial numbers and turn it in. All cards are held until the end of the season. Winter-overs' cards will be turned over to the winter-over MAA.

Divers Study Human Impact On Antarctica

by Samantha Tisdel

If not for the fact that he's wearing fins, Stewart Lamerdin could be mistaken for an astronaut. His baggy, fully self-contained diving suit is topped off by a bubble-shaped helmet that fits snuggly into the rubberized cowl around his neck. Fresh air is pumped to his mask via an "umbilical cord" which will trail behind him throughout his dive.

All this to ensure that no part of his body is exposed to the environment he is about to enter.

Lamerdin is a member of S-320-A. This research group is studying how widely McMurdo's sewage impacts the surrounding sea bed environment, and how this sewage is distributed in the food web. Other members of the group include Jonna Engel, Gordon McFeters, Diane Edwards, and Principal Investigators Kathy Conlan and Rikk Kvitek.

After a quick thumbs up, Lamerdin plunges through the dive hole into the frigid water. His destination is the six-foot high, pyramid-shaped mound of organic matter at McMurdo's sewage outfall -- alternately dubbed "The Cornpile" and "Charmin Glacier."

The researchers have discovered that this sewage is not necessarily harmful to the environment. In fact, certain organisms have been found to thrive on the outfall's nutrient-rich conditions, creating their own mini-ecosystem.

The Cornpile is almost entirely coated with a mat of stark-white bacteria. The surrounding area also supports a busy community of nemerteans (ribbon worms), sea urchins, starfish, sponges, clams, tunicates, and anemones.

"And the sediment is chock-a-block full of worms -- the same sort seen anywhere in the world where there has been a natural or unnatural seabed disturbance," Conlan added. "They are sort of the dandelions of the underwater world."

A month of research at the sewage outfall has led to some interesting -- and disturbing -- discoveries about the waste in McMurdo Sound.

McMurdo's sewage is not chemically treated. Raw waste simply passes through a masticator before being pumped into the Sound. The masticator breaks most of the sewage down into small particles, which are readily absorbed into the ecosystem.

However, McMurdo residents are also flushing non-organic items which cannot be broken down.

Commonly flushed "no-no's" include cigarette butts and dental floss. The researchers of S-320-A are especially concerned about bio-waste materials, such as feminine hygiene products and prophylactics, which have also been found in the outfall area.

"We want to let people know that a toilet is not a black box," Conlan stated. "Whatever you flush, ends up in the Sound. There's no rug to sweep it under. People should dispose of their bio-waste in the properly marked containers, rather than simply flushing it."

As the United States Antarctic Program strives to reduce it's "footprint" in Antarctica, the findings of S-320-A will surely play an essential role in future policy decisions about the management of the station's sewage.

But for now, every McMurdo resident should do their part to resolve the problem.

USAP PERSON OF THE WEEK

- by JO2 Trevor Poulsen

Antarctic Development Squadron SIX (VXE-6) conducted this month's Winfly operations to South Pole Station. As a member of the ground support team, AS2 Phillip Hernandez played a crucial role in this annual event.

"VXE-6 flies to the pole on a regular schedule and when we don't fly we hear about it," he said. "The guys that winter-over down there are anxious to get back and without us they wouldn't be very happy."

Hernandez maintains a rigorous schedule on the ice runway. His primary duty is to supply hydraulic and electric power to the squadron's grounded C-130's.

"There's stress as far as getting the gear ready for use," he said. "They want it now and quick. There's really not a point in the day where you can count on things to flow easily."

Despite the stress, Hernandez enjoys his job and plans to retire from the Navy. "I'm learning more about electricity and that's what I came into the Navy for."

Hernandez has been with VXE-6 since July and will stay with the squadron through the '98-'99 season. A native of Topeka, Kans., he is married and has one child.

Don't Miss Today's Firehouse Expo

by T.J. Gagnon and Mark Lane

As you all have heard by now, the Firehouse Expo '96 is today from 12 o'clock noon until 5 o'clock this evening. We have prepared a fun filled and educational afternoon for you, and we hope you all come by for a visit. As firefighters, the most common question we are asked is "What do you do all day?" Well, we plan to answer that question and many more. The following are some other questions we are frequently asked. Instead of answering these questions here, we will just tease you enough to come to the Expo and find out for yourself! - Where does the water come from to fight the fires? - How does a fire truck pump water? - How many Firefighters does it take to run an engine? (This isn't the opening line to a joke!) - Do the clothes you wear keep you from burning up? - What is in the bottles that you wear into a fire? - How do those backpacks work? - How long can you stay in a burning building? - What's with the "Jaws of Life" I keep hearing about? - How do you get people out of a burning building? - How does a fire extinguisher work? - How effective is a fire extinguisher? - How good is the chief's chili (really)? We look forward to seeing you all this afternoon!

NAVY NEWS

Need Glasses? Take Your Pick!

by Jan Davis, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery

BETHESDA, Md. (NWSA) -- It used to be, if you were a Sailor or Marine who needed glasses, you had little choice in the frame you would wear.

Thick black or brown plastic frames surrounded the lens. They were durable. They were practical. They were low cost to the Navy.

They were ugly.

If you're one of the 245,000 Sailors or Marines who must wear glasses, take heart. Help is on the way. Beginning this month, Navy opticians are gearing up to give Sailors and Marines a choice when it comes to eye glass frames. They'll be several frames available, including stylish wire rims and plastic tortoise shell.

The frames of choice program is being phased in according to Chief Hospital Corpsman Kenneth Smith of the Naval Ophthalmic Support and Training Activity, Norfolk, the command responsible for coordinating the program.

"We can't possibly do everybody who wants new glasses all at once. We'll do a few commands at a time."

While Sailors and Marines aboard USS Roosevelt (CV 71) and USS Mount Whitney (LCC 20) participated in the testing of the program, USS Carr (FFG 52) Sailors will be the first to get new glasses under the Navywide implementation. Other commands will follow, until everyone who wants new glasses has a pair made for them. That's expected to take about two years.

Commanders, commanding officers and officers in charge of hospitals and clinics that have eye glass-making capability are working with the line community to determine which activities get to participate first.

Glasses with the new frames can be made from any prescription, civilian or military, that is not more than two years old, providing the patient has 20/20 or better corrected vision and no visual complaints.

Sailors or Marines must be on active duty for at least 30 days before they can have the new glasses made.

TRICARE Standard/CHAMPUS Info Now On The World Wide Web

AURORA, Colo. (NWSA) -- TRICARE Standard/CHAMPUS information is now available on the home page of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs: .

Users can find information easily by looking under the heading called TRICARE, and then finding the TRICARE Support Office. By clicking on this item, users will have access to a variety of TRICARE Standard/CHAMPUS information including manuals, news releases, beneficiary and provider handbooks, program statistics, Health Benefit Management Course schedules, contracting schedules, CHAMPUS Maximum Allowable Charge (CMAC) rates and more.

Additional links to TRICARE Lead Agents, uniformed services=C9 home page, Health Care Financing Administration (Medicare), Commerce Business Daily and other DOD addresses are available through the home page.

Back to the Antarctic Sun Main Page

Home