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MWR/Ship's Store To Change Hands

by JOC(AW) Jacqueline Kiel

Rumors abound on the transition of Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) from Naval Support Force, Antarctica (NSFA) control to Antarctic Support Associates (ASA). Here are the facts.

While not all dates are firm, the final switch is scheduled to take place on Feb. 1, with some parts of the operation being switched earlier, according to MWR Director, Carl Plummer.

"We're going to incrementally turn over facilities on Jan. 12," Plummer said. "The first to go will be those facilities which require little or no manning and those which we feel are underutilized. Our goal is to keep the impact on the community to an absolute minimum."

The shutdown of facilities at this time of year is not unusual. "Historically, as the ship off-load period approaches, we begin to close the most underutilized facilities first, followed by those which will be closed for the winter," Plummer said. "During ship off-load, all resale facilities are closed. The only real difference this year will be when the ship departs, the facilities will re-open under ASA management.

The first facilities to be turned over will be the ceramic shop and Hut 10. The ceramic shop will remain closed until March 1, but Hut 10 will be available immediately.

Some services, such as the fitness room, gymnasium and the band room will remain unaffected. They will simply be inventoried.

Video check-out, gear issue and the library will operate until the Ship's Store closes, thus allowing continued access to those services.

The last facility to be turned over will be the Erebus. The club will remain open through Jan. 31. It will be turned over on Feb. 1 and will reopen after the ship's off-load is complete and the ship has departed.

Wednesday, Jan 29, is the last day for the Ship's Store operation. The store will be closed Jan. 30 - 31, according to Lt. Ken Wesolowski, NSFA Supply Officer.

"That's when we're going to do our turn-over inventory and close out all the records," Wesolowski said, "so that ASA can input all the records and get their system going. Then they can start business on Feb. 1."

The two days the store will be closed will be used to complete the transfer. "We have to do a full wall to wall inventory, turn it over, close out our records and then the profits we generated will be turned over to MWR," Wesolowski said. "And then we'll do an official disestablishment of the Navy Ship's Store."

With the transition comes consolidation. Up to this time, the store was run by NSFA, with profits being turned over to MWR. Additionally, MWR ran a section of the store, selling liquor, beer and soda. Once ASA takes over, the store will boast one-stop-shopping, according to Warren Hoy, manager of Station Services.

"You won't have to go to one register for alcohol and another for a tee-shirt," Hoy said.

Initially, the new store will be called the McMurdo Retail Store. This will change however, with a contest for renaming the store occurring sometime next season.

Hoy has several plans for MWR, once he takes it over. One of the first things that will happen is that the new staff will move into MWR spaces, and the old MWR staff will go back to the U.S.

"We are presently working on a winter-over recreation plan," Hoy said. "We hope to have that ready sometime in January. We will consolidate the different areas, the clubs, the recreation department, the crafts department, the bowling alley, everything that's associated with recreation."

Regular activities such as karaoke and bingo will continue for the time being. "That will remain until something comes along that's better," Hoy said.

"The thing we're trying to do is to come up with a recreation schedule that covers the season, so that we can try to spread out our activities," said Charles Gallagher, recreation supervisor.

Another part of Hoy's overall plan includes computer tracking. They have a complete hardware and software network that will cover the clubs and the ships store. The system will control everything from cash register reports to inventory, and it will be accessible from both the MWR office and Denver Headquarters.

The new system will include cash registers equipped with barcode reading wands. This new equipment will be installed as soon as it is feasible.

Ultimately, there will be a new entrance door facing the barber shop, the present doors will both be used for exits and there will be two cash registers. They are hoping to get the work done during the winter.

Some other changes include new shelving and a new design in the store.

The store will be playing a different role than in the past. Items such as phone cards and models will now be sold at the store. Eventually the craft shop will close down and everything will be sold at the store.

They intend to delete some items and add some, such as vitamins, cold remedies, teas and some different toiletries.

During the winter the Erebus is going to be the only club facility open, and the plan is to make it a combination club/coffee house/wine bar, according to Gallagher.

"We will arrange it out so that all functions still have an area. For example, we could bring in the large TV/VCR and people could come in, sit down and watch a movie," Gallagher said. "It would be more toward a multi-purpose activity, a little bit more than it is now."

The bowling alley and weight room will close for a time during which the bowling alley floor will be leveled. The weights may be moved to another location. The project is scheduled for January.

ASA will reopen video check-out on Feb. 1. Gear issue, library services and the ceramic shop will reopen March 1, according to Hoy. There will be a slight change for gear issue in that a deposit will now be charged, instead of a fee.

One of the changes the new management would like to make is to put emphasis on food. They would like to increase the size of the Erebus snack bar and install a pizza oven. They would like to have a pizza delivery service to the dorms. They also want to increase the number of vending machines and perhaps add snack machines.

While the McMurdo community can expect some changes due to the transfer, MWR and ASA asks for the community's patience. Most services will be back in operation as soon as possible.

Cruise Ships On The Way

by JOCS Brady Bautch

The weather is getting balmy, the ice is melting and that means one thing for McMurdo residents -- the tourists will soon be making their annual migration into town.

This year there are six cruise ship visits planned for McMurdo during January and February, according to Nadene Kennedy, visitor coordinator for the National Science Foundation's Office of Polar Programs.

The first ship scheduled to visit McMurdo is the Kapitan Khlebnikov which is a Russian icebreaker turned into cruise ship. The Khlebnikov is scheduled to visit McMurdo on Jan 9, according to Kennedy.

During their visit, the tourists are given a walking tour of McMurdo to include a tour of the Crary Lab and stops at the ship's store and coffee house.

According to Kennedy, both military and civilian volunteers are needed to act as tour guides. Military personnel should contact LT Jan Fietz preferably via email at: nsfa10 or call ext. 2453 to sign up and civilians should contact Todd Franson in the Heavy Shop at ext. 2500. Volunteers should expect to spend the entire day playing host to McMurdo's guests.

A meeting will be held early this week for all volunteers, according to Kennedy. Winter-over personnel are especially encouraged to act as tour guides as there will be two cruise ship visits in mid-February during redeployment and after station close-out.

The Khlebnikov is circumnavigating Antarctica, with the cruise beginning and ending in Port Stanley, Falkland Islands. The ship has visited all of the coastal stations except Mirny.

The ship is the only cruise ship visiting McMurdo which has helicopters capable of carrying passengers. The ship has approximately 90 passengers aboard. The cost of this cruise per person ranges from \$29,900 to \$55,000 depending upon accommodations.

The Khlebnikov is scheduled to visit McMurdo again on Feb. 13 with a new load of tourists.

Following the visit by the Khlebnikov Jan 9, the next scheduled visit is the Bremen on Jan. 20. Unlike Khlebnikov, Bremen's hull has only an ice-strengthened hull and she does not have helicopters capable of carrying passengers. So, if the ice doesn't clear out of McMurdo Sound permitting zodiac operations the ship's passengers will not be able to come ashore. The Bremen carries 140 passengers and the average cost for a cruise on this vessel is from \$8,890 to \$16,490.

Sometime between Feb 1 - 5 the cruise ship Shokalski is scheduled to visit. This is a smaller vessel capable of only carrying 38 passengers. Again, it only has an ice-strengthened hull and does not have helicopters.

The Khlebnikov is scheduled to return to McMurdo on Feb. 13 followed by the Shokalski on Feb. 24, two days

after station close-out.

AROUND USAP

by JOC(AW) Jacqueline Kiel

McMurdo Station - The external review panel arrived Sunday, Dec. 29 and departed Friday. During their stay, the 11 member panel broke down into three groups and toured various facilities, looking at all aspects of the U.S. Antarctic Program. They had tours of the Crary Lab, Terminal Operations, the Operations Department, the South Pole, science in the Dry Valleys and Siple Dome and operations at Marble Point and Black Island.

The Coast Guard icebreaker USCGC POLAR SEA (WAGB 11) arrived at the ice edge on Wednesday and arrived at McMurdo Station on Friday.

Antarctic Development Squadron-SIX dropped off a fuel cache at Shackleton Range on Wednesday. The cache will be used by Twin Otters flying from McMurdo Station to the Swedish Station Wasa.

McMurdo residents will begin seeing a change to one of the buildings on Observation Hill. Building 87 is being torn down, however, only its skin will be removed this season. The skeleton of the building will be removed during the winter.

South Pole - South Pole personnel celebrated the holidays with a traditional Christmas dinner, Yankee gift exchange and the annual Race Around the World.

The station hosted three skiers who arrived on an Adventure Network expedition. The skiers were given a tour and a meal. They camped near the station for two nights then departed on an Adventure Network Cessna.

R/V Nathaniel B. Palmer - Last Monday, the ship received consumables and sediment trap parts, via a helicopter resupply flight. The cargo was necessary for continued research.

The cruise has been extended for a couple of days and is now expected to arrive at McMurdo Station on Wednesday. During a three-day port call in McMurdo, researchers and Antarctic Support Associates personnel will transfer to the station, and a new group of researchers and support personnel will embark, in preparation for the next cruise.

R/V Polar Duke - The ship had a very busy week, arriving at the British base, Rothera, on Dec. 24 to off-load cargo and passengers involved in radar studies. While there, crew members enjoyed a tour of the facility.

The ship departed Rothera and headed back to Hugo Island on Christmas day to redeploy a mooring. They then proceeded to Palmer Station, arriving Dec. 26, to transfer more cargo and passengers before heading to Punta Arenas.

Palmer Station - The producer and a cameraman from "Live From Antarctica - 2" arrived at Palmer Station on Dec. 22. They travelled to the station on board the R/V Polar Duke, videotaping shipboard activities and research along the way. They intend to continue videotaping at Palmer, and then connect students interactively via television and the internet with researchers in the Antarctic Peninsula.

The station also hosted a reporter from Reuters Dec. 22-26.

Local Volcano Offers One-Of-A-Kind Study

by Samantha Tisdal

In Greek mythology, "Erebus" is a place of darkness in the underworld on the way to Hades. This seems a far cry

from the ice-clad volcano which dominates our landscape, rising above McMurdo like a gleaming white god.

And yet figuratively speaking, Mt. Erebus is aptly named. Captain Ross most likely did not realize, when he christened the volcano after his flag ship in 1842, that the bowels of Mt. Erebus are a passage-way to a "real" Hades deep inside the mantle of the earth.

"Erebus is essentially a long molten pipe, churning away, all the way from the surface of its lava lake, to maybe a hundred kilometers down inside the earth," said volcanic seismologist Rick Aster, who has been studying Erebus for several years. "It's really a remarkable volcano!"

Aster and fellow Erebus researchers (including Antarctic veterans Phil Kyle and Ray Dibble) find plenty of things to appreciate about Antarctica's most active and accessible volcano. For starters, Erebus is in a continuously eruptive state, sometimes experiencing hundreds of explosions in a single day. This makes it an ideal candidate for scientific pursuits such as volcanic seismology and gas emission surveillance.

"It's been sputtering away for at least the last 200,000 years or so," Aster said. "It's sort of a steady-state volcano, and yet it's not particularly dangerous."

Erebus's biggest eruption in recent history occurred in 1984, when car-sized bombs were tossed over a kilometer from the crater. But such events are rare, and the volcano is considered to be quite placid.

Scientists attribute this in part to the "dryness" of Erebus's lava. Water is known to make lava viscous and explosive, and Antarctica's desert climate deposits very little moisture in the volcano's lava lake.

And because the lava lake is always open to the surface, it can never build up enough stored energy to produce a truly cataclysmic eruption. "When a gas bubble gets too big, it just blows some of its stuff out of the crater, and goes 'bloop,'" Aster explained. "Presumably, every few-hundred years, the whole crater fills up with lava which spills over the top, and we get some lava flows, but that's about it."

This isn't likely to happen anytime too soon (in human terms), as the lava lake is currently estimated to be about 250 meters below the crater rim.

The volcano is unique in other ways as well. According to Aster, it contains a rare high-alkali, low-silica lava called phonolite, which is found only at Mt. Erebus and the East African rift-zone volcanos, Mt. Kenya and Mt. Kilimanjaro.

As the phonolite froths and churns away within its lava lake, feldspar crystals (otherwise known as "Erebus crystals") precipitate out of the mixture. When an explosion occurs, the crystals are caught in frothy phonolite bombs, which are tossed out along the crater rim. The bombs' glassy matrix quickly weathers away to leave deep piles of crystals -- the prize of any Erebus expedition.

For the rare and lucky human beings who get to stand on top of Mt. Erebus, there are many wonders to behold. "Often the summit plateau [12,400 feet] will be above the clouds," Aster said, "so you look down and all you see is a sea of clouds rolling to the horizon."

"The main crater is also really impressive," he continued. "It's over 200 meters deep, and it's got active fumaroles, and the lava lake. Then there's the side crater, and all sorts of little cones. On the summit plateau, there's a small lava flow. There are places where you can lie down on the ground and feel the heat coming through."

Aster also described "ice towers," which form when the relatively warm vapor of fumaroles comes out of the ground and freezes into structures up to 25 feet tall. Inside these towers can be found lovely caves of ice.

"The caves are warm, kind of like a sauna, and the top is covered with thin snow, through which shines a beautiful blue light" Aster said. "And the walls are covered with incredibly beautiful frosty fingers of ice crystals. There's nothing else like it!"

Even the smell of the plume adds to the experience. "It has a typically volcanic sulfurous smell, but it's not

unpleasant," Aster said. "I associate the smell of a volcano with all sorts of good experiences, so I don't mind it at all!"

All this is just the gravy that goes along with a most satisfying scientific pursuit. "Volcanos are just intrinsically interesting," Aster said, "like so much of what's here in Antarctica."

SCIENCE PROJECT UPDATE

by JOC(AW) Jacqueline Kiel

University NAVSTAR Consortium (UNAVCO) GPS Survey Support (S-295)

UNAVCO provides geographic positioning system (GPS) support for all United States Antarctic Program science events that use UNAVCO equipment. Mr. Bjorn Johns and his field team ensure all projects requiring GPS support are successfully executed.

The level of support provided to the various projects depends on the experience of field-team members. Field support includes training; field project planning; data management, processing, and interpretation; and equipment testing and maintenance.

Research on Ocean-Atmosphere Variability and Ecosystem Response in the Ross Sea (ROAVERRS) (S-216)

This is an interdisciplinary study that covers different components, including physical oceanography, the benthic (bottom-dwelling) component and the biological component. The study began in October 1996 and will continue through March 1997, then recommence between October 1997 and March 1998.

During the study, links between the atmospheric, oceanic and biological systems of the southwestern Ross Sea ecosystem will be investigated. Various measurements will be taken using automatic weather stations, satellite-based sensors, and research cruises.

Measurements include regional wind and air temperatures; ice cover and movement, and sea surface temperatures; the hydrographic characteristics of the upper ocean and primary productivity in the ice and water; the vertical flux of organic material and water movement; and the abundance, distribution and respiration rates of biological communities on the sea floor.

Results of this study will lead to a better understanding of marine ecosystem response to climatic variations.

USAP PERSON OF THE WEEK

by JO3 Roland Ortiz

There are many hurdles to overcome in keeping McMurdo's runways smooth. Fleet Operations personnel are assigned the task of keeping them ready for use.

Heavy Equipment Operator James McCabe, who is assigned to Fleet Ops, is one of many people who work on the runways.

McCabe's first priority is to keep William's Field operational, while Pegasus is attended to last.

"The main effort in the early part of the year is getting the snow cap over Willy's runway," McCabe said.

The runways are covered with snow to provide an insulating layer which prevents them from melting.

The Pegasus runway preparation proved to be quite a chore for the operators this season.

"Over the years, snow accumulated, creating a berm," McCabe said. "This year, a lot of time and effort was put into moving it. This will give us a big area to use this year for a runway."

This is McCabe's third season with Fleet Operations. But, this year is a little different than past years.

"My wife came down with me this season working for International American Products," he said. "I wouldn't want to come back here without her. It's a lot more fun with my wife down here," he added.

A resident of Fairfield, Texas, McCabe is retired from a mining company. He and his wife will return to Fairfield after visiting Australia and New Zealand.

Firehouse Dispatch

by Debbie Gee and Mark Lane

What is the area code for Denver?

What time is it in Hawaii?

What is the Capital of Iceland?

These are some of the more entertaining questions that have come across the phone lines at the Firehouse dispatch office this summer. The dispatch office, which also serves as the trouble desk, is singly manned 24 hours a day with four dispatchers working rotating shifts.

The dispatchers are required to monitor seven phone lines (including the 911 emergency line), three radio channels, the in-house intercom system, and "FRED" the fire alarm monitoring system for McMurdo. At the same time, the dispatchers are assisting the walk-in visitors seeking foot plans or the climbing wall key. As you probably already guessed, the dispatcher's job can be quite hectic; the phone calls alone average 1,500 a week.

The primary purpose of the dispatch office is to initiate response to emergencies such as fire alarms, medical calls, and hazardous material spills. Another important dispatcher duty is manning the trouble desk calls such as transferring calls, paging individuals, looking up phone numbers, room lock-outs, and other housing problems.

When the phone isn't ringing, the radio is quiet, and McMurdo is peaceful, the dispatchers are still busy, at the computer, processing the numerous work orders that came through the fire house that day. The job is never over till your relief comes on.

Oh...by the way, 303, 23 hours behind McMurdo time, and Reykjavik.

NAVY NEWS

VEAP Participants Can Enroll In GI Bill

compiled from NAVADMIN 298/96

Under the recently enacted Veteran's Benefits Improvement Act of 1996 Sailors on active duty who had money in their Veteran's Education Assistance Program (VEAP) can now enroll in the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) or remain in VEAP.

Presently, Montgomery GI Bill benefits total \$15,403.32 and are paid at a rate of \$427.87 per month for 36 months for full-time schooling. VEAP pays only \$8,100 at a rate of \$300 per month for 27 months.

Members who withdrew all of their money from VEAP are not eligible for this program and cannot reestablish eligibility. NAVADMIN 298/96 provides full eligibility criteria and procedures for this new program.

Eligible Sailors must decide by Oct. 8, 1997 and once made the decision cannot be changed. Sailors eligible for this special program will be sent letters via their commands. This letter will have with it DD Form 2366 and a VEAP refund form.
