

The Antarctic Sun



Published during the austral summer at McMurdo Station, Antarctica, for the United States Antarctic Program

The pull of the Pole

By Jeff Inglis
The Antarctic Sun

At South Pole Station, in the middle of the polar plateau, people keep showing up. While most fly here on LC-130s, there are a growing number who can say they got here by land.

Just the other day, seven men in bright orange jackets appeared outside the station. They were Argentinians who had driven snowmobiles from Belgrano Station near the Weddell Sea, at the same latitude as McMurdo. It had taken them 38 days.

The previous day, nine skiers had arrived from the Weddell Sea coast. Among that group were the first British women to travel overland to the pole, the first married couple to do so and the first Australian to visit both poles.

A significant spot in an otherwise featureless landscape, the South Pole is an appealing goal for Antarctic adventurers traveling on the frozen plateau.

Mike Thornewill, of the multinational

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Fiona Thornewill and Catharine Hartley toast their arrival at the South Pole. Photo by Jeff Inglis.



Please release me

U.S. Naval Academy seniors Jennifer Williams, Ana Wilson and Ann Donovan release a weather-monitoring balloon. The device in Williams' hand records wind, temperature, humidity and pressure as the balloon ascends up to 80,000 feet. Photo by Josh Landis.

DASI picks secrets of universe

By Josh Landis
The Antarctic Sun

From the top of a blue, two-story building at the South Pole, Nils Halverson is listening for whispers from the past. He and a team of researchers are training a multimillion-dollar telescope on a sliver of the sky to pick up energy waves from far, far away. They hope the signals they receive will reveal the shape of the universe more accurately than ever before. If the project is successful, the findings could change the way we think about the universe, in ways we can barely imagine.

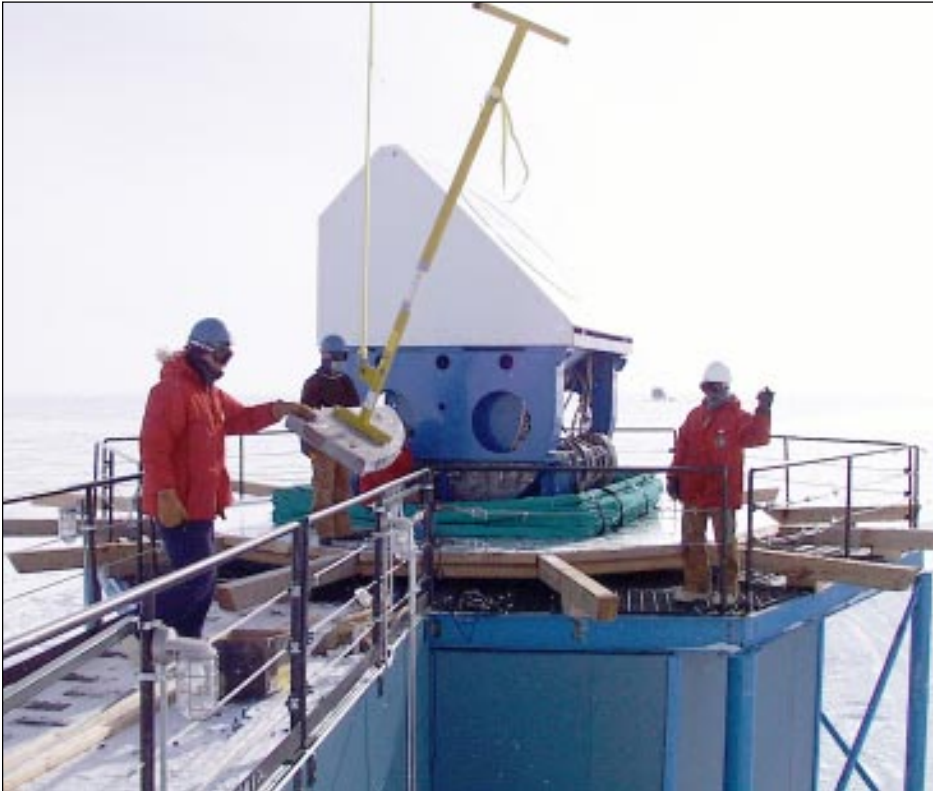
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/ Page 6**

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Sun / Page 9**

**From the equator to
the pole / Page 9**



DASI team members and construction workers at the South Pole install a counterbalance on the telescope. When operational, scientists will be able to look 15 billion years back in time. Photo by Josh Landis.

“DASI”—from Page 1

DASI—Degree Angular Scale Interferometer—is the newest telescopic array at 90 degrees south. It arrived this season after a long and carefully guarded trip from the University of Chicago, and now sits on top of the space observatory at Pole.

“We currently have seven working receivers installed,” said Halverson, field manager of the project and a graduate student at the University of Chicago. “We plan on getting the first test data with DASI within the next couple of days.”

As with most theories and projects involving the universe, the details of the science are mind-boggling. But the concept is not too difficult to grasp.

Ancient microwaves and infant clumps

DASI is actually a collection of 13 super-sensitive antennae set to receive cosmic microwave background radiation. CMB is a constant stream of energy that originated when the universe was born, and continues to flow past the Earth.

Because the distances involved are so large, the microwaves take billions of years to get here. By looking at the CMB, therefore, scientists can look back in time and see the universe when it was younger. The portion of CMB that DASI is focused

on dates back about 15 billion years.

According to John Carlstrom, the director of the Center for Astrophysical Research in Antarctica, “We’re basically looking at the fossil remnants of light from the universe when it was 300,000 years old.”

Or, as Halverson put it, “When it was just a baby.”

Astrophysicists have calculated that at that time the matter in the universe formed uniform clumps of a certain size. The CMB that DASI receives from 15 billion years ago, therefore, should reveal those clumps with their exact position and size.

This is where DASI’s precision comes in. If the objects appear larger or smaller than they’re known to be, the researchers will know that the CMB has taken a curved path.

Infinite universes?

What would be the significance of a curved path? It

would support current thinking about the shape and behavior of the universe: that it either curves in on itself like a sphere, or expands outward, like a saddle.

If, however, DASI finds that CMB waves have traveled in a straight line, it would mean the universe is flat. Such a discovery would herald a shift in astrophysical thinking as radical as the confirmation of subatomic particles was to physics.


Briefly put, it would lend tremendous support to an idea called inflation theory.

“If inflation theory is right, we are one of an infinite number of universes,” said Carlstrom, noting one of the idea’s many components. Proving the theory is an achievement some say could be worthy of the Nobel Prize.

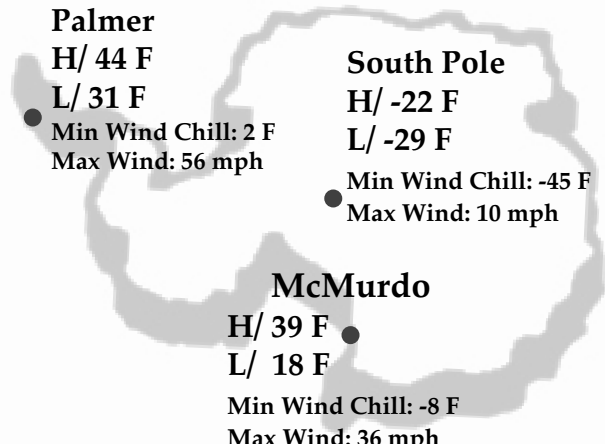
DASI is at the South Pole because the clear, dry air allows more of the CMB to penetrate the atmosphere. The antennae have to be cooled to 10 degrees Kelvin (minus 442 degrees F) to freeze out the noise of nearby instruments.

Peering from the bottom of the Earth, these astrophysicists are like an inverted, modern-day Pythagoras. The mathematician, astronomer and philosopher who lived 2,500 years ago is credited with being the first to prove the Earth is round.

These theorists, working with DASI, may end up proving the opposite about the universe. In doing so, they could earn their own place in history.

But ultimately Carlstrom isn’t worried about the outcome. Even if DASI doesn’t make a big bang in the astrophysical world, “no matter what, it’s going to be surprising.” 

The week in weather



<p>Palmer H/ 44 F L/ 31 F Min Wind Chill: 2 F Max Wind: 56 mph</p>	<p>South Pole H/ -22 F L/ -29 F Min Wind Chill: -45 F Max Wind: 10 mph</p>
<p>McMurdo H/ 39 F L/ 18 F Min Wind Chill: -8 F Max Wind: 36 mph</p>	

Letters to the editors

Why no southern hospitality?

With the turn of the millennium, there was a lot of activity here at Pole. There were station parties and events planned, TV crews, tourists and even some folks skiing in to make the New Year. Obviously, with all this going on there was a lot of strain on the station both in carrying capacity and in handling all the different events and interests. But above and beyond this was the excitement of having people of different nationalities here to celebrate an unusual occurrence in an unusual place—90 degrees south!

So why would we want to deny this occasion to anyone here to experience it? Especially people like the four Singaporean skiers who skied 57 days and nearly 700 miles from Hercules Inlet near Patriot Hills to get here in time for the New Year!

At a time when we are heralding in a new millennium of more advanced science, international cooperation, and a bigger and better South Pole Station, why are our doors and hearts closed to some?

I was mystified and dismayed by the decision to deny access to the Singaporeans after their initial greeting in the galley. The NSF in its wisdom decided to keep them across the skiway and away from the base on this special occasion.

When I asked why, the response was, "If I let them in, I'd have to let them all in." There were also eight tourists with Adventure Network International here.

This is not a query as to why we didn't provide them food and shelter, it's simply a question of why they couldn't join us in our celebration. Is such a large and wealthy country that small-minded and miserly? And if so, why?

But in the end it all turned out OK. By some miraculous coincidence, the Singaporeans showed up at the party one minute before midnight and were able to celebrate with us. And you've never seen four people happier to be welcomed as friends and adventurers in the new millennium!

—Tim Thomas

Thanks from Scott Base

The Kiwis at Scott Base would like to say a big "thank you" to all the McMurdo party animals who helped rock Scott Base into the new millennium at our New Year's Eve Party.

Hope you all have an awesome 2000!

—Scott Base



Antarctic worker dies

An employee of a technical support contractor for the U.S. Antarctic Program has died in Antarctica.

John G. Biesiada, 43, a Canadian citizen and a resident of St. Catharines, Ontario, was pronounced dead by medical personnel at McMurdo Station at approximately 1 a.m. January 8, 2000.

The cause of death is unknown, pending an autopsy. Biesiada's next of kin have been notified.

Biesiada, a radar technician, was a civilian employee of Aviation Technical Services, a contractor of Space and Naval Warfare Center, based in Charleston, S.C.

He had passed the physical examination that is required of all personnel who deploy to Antarctica under the auspices of the U.S. Antarctic Program.

NSF coordinates U.S. scientific research on the Antarctic continent through the U.S. Antarctic Program and operates three scientific stations year-round: McMurdo Station, Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station, and Palmer Station.

A memorial service is planned for 5 p.m. today in the Chapel of the Snows.

Correction

The last VXE-6 flight was in 1999, not 1998 as reported in last week's issue. The Sun regrets the error.



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Contributions are welcome. Contact the Sun at sun_news@mcmurdo.gov. In McMurdo, visit our office in Building 155 or dial 2407.

Web address: <http://www.asa.org>



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*See the Store folks for more details!
Two new shirts are on the shelves.*

"Pole"—from Page 1

expedition, said he has been trying to get here for 30 years.

"I couldn't get a plane so I had to walk," he said. His wife Fiona, one of the first British women to get to the pole on skis, was equally pleased.

"It's such a privilege to be here," she said.

The expedition was a fundraiser for the Marie Curie Cancer Care charity. They have already raised \$150,000. It's part of their effort to involve large numbers of people in the endeavor, which saw them travel 730 miles in 61 days, each pulling a 200-pound sledge.

"If you're going to take money from the community to do something, you should give something back," Mike Thornewill said.

But the effort is also for the individuals on the team.

"We have a dream and an earnest desire to make our dream come true," Thornewill said.

For the Argentinians it was different. They were on a scientific traverse and intended to camp near the pole for a couple of days before returning to their station, said expedition doctor Nicolas Bernardi.

Other expeditions to arrive at the pole, or to declare it as a destination, included several groups hoping to celebrate New Year's at the end of the Earth. Four Singaporeans and four British arrived on skis in time, while nine others flew in from Patriot Hills just to spend midnight at the pole.

The conditions continental traverses face today are very similar to those the early explorers endured. Clothing and shelter are of better materials, but hauling sledges across sastrugi isn't much easier. Food requirements are the same, if not higher, now. Safety margins are larger, requiring more supplies "just in case."

Living conditions are still quite spare, the Thornewills agreed.

"I'd forgotten what a clean cup looked like," Mike said.

Even in these tough conditions, though, it could be worse.



Members of the Argentinian snowmobile expedition to the South Pole arrive at the dome for a tour of the South Pole Station. The team's vehicles used "drums and drums and drums and drums" of fuel, according to expedition doctor Nicolas Bernardi. Photo by Jeff Inglis.

"It's kinder here than in the Arctic," said Grahame Murphy, the first Australian to visit both poles. He went to the North Pole in 1994, and would gladly trade the Arctic sea ice for sastrugi on the southern polar plateau.

The desire for primacy in arriving at the pole results in detailed descriptions involving nationality, gender, level of support, method of transportation and the route traveled. For example, Catharine Hartley and Fiona Thornewill were the

first British women to arrive at the pole on skis from the coast.

When expeditions arrive at the pole, they are welcomed by station staff, who usually have had some warning of the arrival. They're treated to hot drinks in the galley, and are often shown around the station's science and support facilities.

It's a welcome quite different from the one Scott saw, with a Norwegian flag flying atop an empty tent in the middle of the white desert.



Check out the Sun websites of the week:

www.heritage-antarctica.org

The Antarctic Heritage Trust website, describing the group's activities preserving Antarctic history.

www.antarctic-circle.org

The Antarctic Circle, including a timeline, and a list of places of Antarctic interest located outside the continent.

www.mcmurdohistory.org

The McMurdo Historical Society site, accepting submissions relating to Antarctic history from the early days through the present.

McMurdo, how does your garden grow?

By Aaron Spitzer
The Antarctic Sun

On an icy and nearly lifeless continent, there's one commodity hotter than package mail or boondoggles. It's fresh vegetables, and Bob Hanes, horticulturalist for McMurdo Station's greenhouse, grows them in abundance.

As MacTown's green thumb, Hanes tends the largest garden on the continent.

"I'm sticking pretty much to the basics," he said of the "freshies" he cultivates. But after months of Ross Island's moonscape, there seems nothing basic about the luxuriant



Green thumb Bob Hanes harvests fragrant basil from the McMurdo greenhouse. The basil will go to the galley, to appear in pesto sauce. Photo by Aaron Spitzer.

jungle in the greenhouse.

Contained in a cramped, windowless hut in the corner of a cargo yard, the greenhouse is an oasis. The rich odor of life pervades the building; tropical heat and humidity press in densely. And everywhere, everything is green.

In one room, pepper-plant tendrils clamber up a lattice to the ceiling. In another, tomato vines weave in a kind of hanging garden. In a third, scores of tiny, translucent lettuce-sprouts poke their way into the world.

Fans whir, water gurgles, and more than three-dozen 400-watt lamps bounce their warmth and brilliance off the silvery Mylar walls.

According to Hanes, the main purpose of the greenhouse is to provide fresh vegetables to McMurdo's winter-over population, which receives no outside resupply for six lean months. At peak productivity last winter, he said, the greenhouse was able to provide winterers with fresh salads twice per week.

During the summer, the facility merely serves to supplement the greens that get flown in from Christchurch. Basil, cilantro, arugula, chard, parsley, mustard, cucumbers, peppers, tomatoes, lettuce—they all find their way on to the

tables of hungry McMurdo workers.

But the greenhouse also serves another function, as a kind of refuge from McMurdo's daily worries. Hanes said he regularly comes to work to find people asleep in the hammocks that hang between the lettuce rows. Cassettes and CDs offer soothing sounds—everything from tropical bird calls to the jazz of John Coltrane.

And the greenhouse has a pick-your-own-vegetable policy: Just be sure to log the weight of what you take, and reap in moderation.

Unlike greenhouses common in the northern world, this one runs without sun or soil. The vegetables are grown hydroponically, each planted in a pot of perlite and vermiculite minerals, and then set in a trough where their roots are bathed in a solution of nutrients and water.


Though powerful sodium lights now take the place of the sun, the building's northern nook used to be a solarium. According to Hanes, the oblique rays of the 24-hour southern sun actually overheated the room, so the windows were replaced with grow-lights.

A farmer's work is never done, and the greenhouse keeps Hanes busy with a range of chores.

Temperature and pH levels must be regularly checked for each vegetable variety. The proper balance of phosphorous, potassium and nitrogen in the fertilizer has to be maintained.

The plants can't get too much or too little water, pumps must keep the water circulating, humidifiers must maintain the moisture level in the air, and fans must keep the warmth evenly distributed. Seeds must be sown and ripe vegetables harvested.

Though a graduate of Ohio State University's horticulture program, it's Hanes' first greenhouse work in more than four decades. A resident of Indianapolis, Indiana, the 72-year-old came south as a galley worker, but became a part-time gardener when the original horticulturalist resigned.

Hanes won't be staying for winter but the greenhouse will be here, providing freshies for the brave, hearty souls seeing McMurdo through the long, dark months. 

90 degrees and growing By Jeff Inglis The Antarctic Sun

McMurdo's greenhouse may be the largest on the continent, but the small one at South Pole Station is tended with care by Dave Zybowski, a carpenter and volunteer greenhouse worker.

Here, in a place where no plants grow unaided, herbs, vegetables and even a papaya tree soak in rays from growing lamps in a small room atop the science building.

Zybowski said he spends 12 to 15 hours per week in the greenhouse, maintaining the equipment and tending the plants, which supplied fresh salad to the station population at Christmas and during the winter.

"It's the nicest place on station to just veg," he said.

DISCOVERING THE HUT

By Ted Dettmar
Special to the Sun

On January 17, 1912, Robert Falcon Scott and four companions reached the South Pole, starving, frostbitten and beaten there by Roald Amundsen a month before. Scott remained at the Pole only long enough to pen his immortal words, "Great God, this is an awful place." He then began the ultimately vain struggle to return to his jumping-off point, a small building at the tip of Hut Point, the Discovery Hut.

Small and unobtrusive by McMurdo standards, the Discovery Hut is, in fact, the most historically significant building on the continent. Four separate British Antarctic expeditions used it, and each endured a crisis where reaching it became a matter of life and death.

Scott began the British quest for the Pole in 1902, when he arrived at Hut Point aboard the *Discovery*. Originally designed to withstand the heat of the Australian outback, the well-ventilated jarrah wood hut was assembled during the second week of February. It was quickly discovered that the small coal stove was inadequate to heat the dank, drafty building.

Scott headed toward the Pole in the spring of 1902, taking with him Edward Wilson and Ernest Shackleton. They reached 82 degrees South when scurvy overtook the party. It was a ragged trio that struggled back to Hut Point. Despite Shackleton's quick recovery, Scott sent him home, beginning a fierce rivalry.

Shackleton returned to the area in February 1908, determined to reach the Pole and show up his former leader. He made his base at Cape Royds but used the *Discovery* Hut as a supply depot. Having lost their last pony in a crevasse, Shackleton and three men got to within 97 miles of the Pole. The return journey was an epic fight against starvation. While still 33 miles from Hut Point and with their ship ordered to sail north within a day, Shackleton took Frank Wild on a forced march to catch the *Nimrod*. With almost no food and no sleep, they arrived at Hut Point just in time to signal the departing

ship. Shackleton returned to England a hero, having lost not a single man.

Scott returned to the fray in 1910. Though his main base was Cape Evans, at one point up to 16 men shared the cramped quarters of the *Discovery* Hut. Despite the less-than-ideal conditions, one man wrote, "those Hut Point days would prove some of the happiest in my life."



Scott did not make it back from the Pole, perishing 140 miles south of Hut Point. But another party of three men, the last to see him alive, almost didn't make it back either. Coming down with scurvy on the return journey, Lt. Teddy Evans had to be dragged on a sled by his companions William Lashley and Thomas Crean. Thirty-six miles from Hut Point, with Evans near death, Crean took off on a solo journey to get help at the *Discovery* Hut. Walking across crevassed terrain for 18 hours, Crean reached Hut Point on February 19. Dog teams retrieved Evans and Lashley, and Crean and Lashley received the Albert Medal for heroism.

The last men to occupy the hut had the most difficult and tragic tale of all. Tasked with laying depots across the ice shelf for Shackleton's Trans-Antarctic Expedition, almost nothing went right for them.

While unloading stores at Cape Evans, their ship broke its anchor lines and drifted out to sea. With little food or clothing and no sledding equipment, the 10 men scrounged around the three existing huts to cobble together enough material to lay the depots.

Six men began the depot journey

from Hut Point. Once again, scurvy set in, killing the Rev. Arnold Spencer-Smith and nearly killing two others, Macintosh and Hayward. The five survivors returned to the *Discovery* Hut, which was filled with snow and largely uninhabitable. The remaining men survived solely on seal meat for four months.


Hayward and Macintosh wrote the final chapter to the tragic tale, setting out for Cape Evans on very thin sea ice.

Shortly after their departure, a storm blew in and carried away the ice. They were never seen again. Shackleton rescued his Ross Sea party in 1917. Forty years passed before another human set foot on Ross Island.

Eighty-six years to the day after Scott reached the Pole, four members of the Antarctic Heritage Trust completed a renovation of the Hut that returned it to a state resembling the time of Scott's last occupation. The Trust was formed in April

1987 by individuals concerned with the effects of time and weather on the continent's historic artifacts. Based in New Zealand, it sends work parties down every year to repair damage to the huts and employ new preservation methods to the artifacts within and around them.

From the outside, the *Discovery* Hut doesn't look like much. But stepping inside takes the visitor back in time to a different era of Antarctic living. There is a pungent smell of old hay and seal meat. Crates and boxes of biscuits, canned meat, flour, sugar and cocoa are piled haphazardly. Deep cuts on the floor came from chopping up seal meat. Penguin skeletons and mutton carcasses adorn the meat-storage room, which some expeditions used as a privy. A tarp, originally off the *Discovery*, divides the hut. Around the stove, the soot blackens the wall and ceiling. The walls themselves, under good light, reveal graffiti—the signatures of the men who lived here.

Modern technology means there will never be another Heroic Age. But preserving the relics of that age will give the rest of us an idea of the human capacity for adaptability and survival. 

In Brief

Pole spared millennium madness

South Pole Station was expecting the New Year to bring an onslaught of visitors, arriving by parachute, snow buggy, airplane and skis. But not many of them made it.

By New Year's Eve, only eight skiers had arrived. Four were Singaporeans, the first from their country to ski to the South Pole. Another four were skiers from the British-sponsored "Last Degree" expedition. Both groups set up camp near Pole station, at the site of Adventure Network International's supply cache.

Nine tourists flew in on a Twin Otter that same afternoon, and stayed until about 1:30 a.m. January 1 before departing.

For New Year's Eve, the electricians at Pole hosted a party in the new garage arch, complete with a live band and midnight balloon-drop.

At 4:30 a.m. January 1, the U.S. Geological Survey moved the geographic South Pole marker, as they do each New Year's Day. The move was broadcast live this year, and viewed by a global audience.

After two or three phone interviews with various people on station, the party slowed. "Everybody was asleep by 7 or 8," said station manager Ed Blain.

The remainder of the "Last Degree" group, which skied from near 89 degrees south to the Pole, arrived January 1.

The station crew had a pool tournament that day, won by Dave Smith, and a banquet in the evening, including steak and crab legs. But the rest of the evening was quiet.

The massive skydive planned for Pole by the Russian-sponsored "Millennium Expedition" instead took place at Patriot Hills, where 40 to 50 people dove on New Year's Day. They still plan to travel to the Pole in "snow bug" vehicles.

Our Antarctic Week

Today

Self-defense class, 6:15-7:30 p.m., Gym

Monday

Burger Bar delivery, 6-8 p.m., Gallagher's, call 2413
Ed Anderson slide show: Colorado, 8:30 p.m., Galley

Tuesday

Swing lessons, 6:30-8 p.m., Gym, all are welcome

Wednesday

Hot tips for using your video camera, 7 p.m., Coffee House

Thursday

Pat Hicks acoustic music, 8-10 p.m., Coffee House

Friday

Gong Show, 8:30 p.m., Gallagher's. Get your "act" together and sign up with Rec!

Saturday

Contra dance, 8 p.m., Gym

If you have an item for the weekly calendar, e-mail us at sun_news@mcmurdo.gov, call 2407, or drop by our office in Building 155.



Pick of the litter

Coast Guard pilot Tom McDevitt and recreation coordinator Francine Oliver lend a hand to beautify McMurdo during a recent "daisy picking" day. Photo by Josh Landis.

Navy's new arrivals

The Navy returned to Antarctica this season with five midshipmen from the U.S. Naval Academy. They caught a ride from Tasmania aboard the Coast Guard icebreaker Polar Star. It's an experience they said changed their lives.

Their path to Antarctica began more than a year ago, when they selected oceanography as their major course of study. Their instructor and advisor, Cmdr. Donna Sengelaub, had been a meteorologist during Operation Deep Freeze from 1987-89. It was her experience on the Ice and passion for this land that ignited the same enthusiasm in her students.

When their senior year came around they managed to incorporate a journey to Antarctica into their final research projects.

But it took a lot of coordination and cooperation to pull off the extraordinary trip. The National Science Foundation, Coast Guard, Air Force, Air National Guard and even academy alumni worked together to make the trip possible.

"If anyone had said no, none of this would have happened," said senior Jennifer Wilson.

In the time they spent on the ship and in McMurdo, the students saw and did things they probably never imagined, from standing around-the-clock watch on the ship where they made sea ice observations to attending Happy Camper school.

"Not many people can say they've slept in a snow cave in Antarctica," senior Eric Olson said.

Nor can many say they've collected algae samples from Antarctic seas. Or been initiated with a blast of freezing sea water upon crossing the Antarctic Circle. Or had a snowball fight on Christmas Day while standing on fast ice in McMurdo Sound.

Naval cadets are taught to be hard-working and professional at all times, but there were some aspects of life on the Ice that challenged them.

"Twenty-four hours of sunlight is tough," Olson said. "It's the only thing that's been rough."

It's a small price to pay for the chance to live in Antarctica, and they all agreed that their time on the ship and on the Ice was something they wouldn't soon forget.

"It's been unbelievable," said Olson. "I hope to get down here again, any way I can." ❄️

Faces on



What's your favorite thing about living at the South Pole?



"Turning in my sheets on the last day here."
Bob Dunn
Electrical shop



"I can impose my Juan Valdez story on all those who fear me."
Jeff Ryan
Waste management



"The tremendous amount of laughter, and the sundogs."
Louise Mercier
Administration office



"Being in the middle of the vastest and most hostile wilderness on Earth."
Stephanie Rowatt
Galley worker and backward introvert

Ross Island Chronicles by Richard Perales

Have you heard? The scientists are here again looking for rocks from Mars.



WHAT?! First our chicks and now our beloved rocks!! We have not yet begun to fight!!!



It's high time we retaliated!



They want Mars... We'll give them Mars.



Contribute to McMurdo's Millennium Time Capsule!

Seeking small mementos, images, journal entries, etc., to commemorate the millennium and to be opened in 25 years. Bring to the McMurdo Historical Society meetings, Sundays at 6:30 p.m. in the Library, or contact Ed Anderson at andersed@mcmurdo.gov. Deadline is January 20.

Perspectives

The Sometimez, Sometimes, Sun Times, Sun

Antarctica's rich history of reporting

By Billy-Ace Penguin Baker
Special to the Sun

The distinction of "the world's southernmost newspaper" goes to the Antarctic Sun. However, it wasn't always so; this is the story of how the McMurdo Sometimez evolved through the many years of its publication.

The McMurdo Sometimez was the first Navy newspaper at McMurdo. It succeeded the McMurdo News, published during the International Geophysical Year.

Originally the Sometimez was a product of the Navy radiomen working in McMurdo, who produced the paper on a volunteer basis as time permitted. "Sometimez" the night watch could make a paper and "sometimez" they couldn't. The name was in use from at least 1960.

When I arrived at McMurdo in 1962, the radiomen were producing a daily morning newspaper consisting of a few sheets of text composed on a teletype and printed on a ditto machine.

Because of its relatively small size, hundreds of copies were printed. Most were dropped off at the galley in the early hours just before the morning meal. Copies were also distributed to Williams Field, Scott Base, outlying stations and ships operating nearby.

During the winters of 1967 and 1971, management exercised its authority, and bureaucracy reared its ugly head.

Censorship was a real nightmare to all of us who worked on the paper. Even though we produced it on a volunteer basis, usually in our free time, we still had to bow to the might of authority.

Because of the inclusion of the official weekly calendar, the paper was considered a house organ with official status.

Additionally, the paper was produced using government equipment and supplies, and, after all, most of us were members of the U.S. Navy.

Looking back, I wonder what all the fuss was about. Most of the objectionable material related to U.S. involvement in Vietnam and to a hippie-like guru named Mehar Baba.

In 1971, in addition to the censorship board, a military advisor was assigned to prevent controversial editorial material.

I was appointed military advisor, but in each edition of the paper some of the offensive and anti-military material still managed to get past my critical eye, and I was frequently called on the carpet about it.

There were no women in the winter-over parties during any of the four winters I spent there. But the censorship board deemed that the more risqué material was sexist, demeaning, in poor taste and bad for the men's morale and character.

In the early 1970s, the Navy began sending journalists to the Ice. They were a summer-only contingent, meaning that the regular summer paper was often published during the winter with volunteers.

In October 1972, a salvaged platemaking machine was recovered from the Washington Navy Yard and taken to Antarctica, along with cases of metal plate and liquid chemicals to put the newly renamed McMurdo Sometimes into operation.

A Jamesway hut, known as Pressheim, which had been used as a berthing and working space for visiting media representatives, was converted into a production room for the daily newspaper.

After long hours of frustration and, at times, what seemed like an almost impossible situation—frozen chemicals, dry and brittle plates and negatives and thick ice—the first issue of the new paper came off the press November 5, 1972.

The journalists took news copy from the military broadcast feed, and managed to salvage a photocopier. With this equipment and personnel dedicated to the task of publishing a daily newspaper the journalists assumed the entire production, publication and distribution of the Sometimes.

Almost 400 six-page copies were produced each day. The paper included three pages of world and national news and one page of sports. There was also a feature page and comic section.

In addition to the circulation at McMurdo, Williams Field and Scott Base, the new Sometimes was delivered to South Pole Station, Byrd Surface Camp, Siple Station and remote field parties.

The journalists recruited the help of the pilots to deliver the paper to outlying stations, field parties and ships. Each day, as the VXE-6 pilots filed their flight plans, they would stop by to pick up an envelope of papers.

By October 1974, the newsroom and production office had been moved from Pressheim to Building 155. It was located in a room adjacent to the radio and television studios and it remained there until I left, following the austral summer of 1980.

In 1976 we stopped using the platemaking machine. In spite of the almost unending problems with the replacement equipment, the paper continued to make its daily schedule during the summer months. The content and format of the paper changed very little between 1974 and 1980, with the exception that in 1980 a new masthead was introduced.

The Navy journalists continued to publish the paper from 1980 through February 9, 1997, changing the name to the Antarctica Sun Times and using the old cut-and-paste method for composition and layout.

By 1995, computers and digital cameras were used for production. Although local distribution at McMurdo was still done on paper, worldwide distribution was via e-mail and the Web.

With the decommissioning of the naval detachment in Antarctica on March 13, 1998, Antarctic Support Associates assumed full responsibility for the newspaper. Antarctic Support Associates later shortened the name to the Antarctic Sun. ❁

RMC Billy-Ace Penguin Baker, USN (Ret) has been involved with the McMurdo Sometimez and its successors since 1962.



PROFILE

Tropical trekkers reach South Pole

By Jeff Inglis
The Antarctic Sun

The first Singaporean expedition to Antarctica reached the Pole New Year's Eve, after 57 days of sledging. The team, none of whom had ever skied before, traveled nearly 700 miles from Horseshoe Valley just north of Patriot Hills.



The expeditioners relax at the South Pole galley after their 57-day journey. Photo by Eric Sturm.

"It's an extra challenge for Singapore," said team member David Lim. The small southeast Asian country is in the tropics. Its highest natural point is only 500 feet above sea level.

"We have a little extra gap to bridge," Lim said.

Last year several members of the group climbed Mount Everest, which caused a national sensation in the tiny city-state. The public interest and available sponsorship dollars convinced the team to attempt a ski and sledge journey from 80 degrees south to the South Pole.

The planning began shortly after they returned from Everest, in May 1998. "We rested for one or two months, and got restless again," said team member Khoo Swee Chiow.

In July 1998, they began preparation. In May 1999, they trained with British polar adventurer Roger Mear in Greenland.

"We didn't know how to sledge," Lim said. "And we had zero skiing ability."

From that dubious beginning in Greenland to a second training trip in New Zealand in July, they felt prepared, but Antarctica still offered a challenge.

The first trial was arriving on the continent. Weather kept them in Punta Arenas, Chile, for nine days beyond their intended departure date. During that time, they met some others involved in Antarctic expeditions this year: the British and Australian team whose leaky fuel ruined their chances

of a continental traverse.

They finally began their journey from 80 degrees south on November 4. Antarctica was just introducing itself.

"Most of us here have not been to this kind of cold," said Khoo, a software engineer with Singapore Airlines. The team endured cold reaching minus 67 F, and a 46 mph headwind.

At 87 degrees south, they hit bad weather that forced them to hunker down for two days, the longest delay of the trip.

"Eighty-seven to 88, that was like the South Pole putting up her last defense," Khoo said.

On the plateau before reaching the Pole, they met the British-sponsored "Last Degree" team who were skiing from 89 degrees south to the Pole.

The Singaporean prime minister is their primary patron, encouraging their mission "to promote the spirit of adventure in Singaporean youth," said expeditioner Ang Yan Choon.

They left the Pole in a private Twin Otter operated by Adventure Network International on January 3. But a number of items would remain in the ANI cache at the Pole.

"Anything that's edible or usable we'll leave here for others," Choon said.

The team will travel back to Singapore via Chile and New York. Their next adventure destination is uncertain at the moment, though the team all smiled when they thought of a "next time."

"The world is pretty big," Lim said. ●



Hours before their departure from Pole, Khoo Swee Chiow and David Lim relax in the tent they called home for two months. Photo by Jeff Inglis.