

.....

WITH ONLY ANOTHER 3 WEEKS UNTIL OUR RELIEF ARRIVES, THE BASE IS A HIVE OF ACTIVITY WITH THE TRADITIONAL BIG CLEAN-UP OF THE BASE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS. SO WITH THE INCREASE IN HUMAN ACTIVITY THESE NEXT FEW WEEKS WE SEE A DECLINE IN THE ACTIVITIES OF OUR ANIMAL FRIENDS ON THE ISLAND WHO HAVE MOSTLY SAID THEIR FAREWELLS TO THE MARION 42 TEAM, AND MOVED OFF TO WARMER CLIMATES AND AREAS WHERE FOOD IS MORE ABUNDANT. ONLY THE WANDERING ALBATROSS AND ITS CHICK, THE MOULTING ELEPHANT SEALS, KING PENGUINS, THE STRAGGLERS AMONGST THE MACARONI AND ROCK HOPPER PENGUINS, GULLS AND YOUNG FUR SEALS WILL STILL BE WITH US FOR OUR LAST TWO MONTHS ON MARION.

THIS MONTH HAS SEEN MUCH MOVEMENT OF PERSONNEL ON LAST TRIPS ROUND THE ISLAND AND NUMEROUS DAYTRIPS. THE BEGINING OF THE MONTH SAW FIRSTLY ANTON AND MARIUS MARAIS MAKE A QUICK 7 DAY ROUND TRIP, THEN WITH PETE ACTING AS GUIDE TO OUR TWO NEWCOMERS, THE THREE SET OFF ON WHAT PROVED TO BE A FANTASTIC 3 WEEK ROUND TRIP WHICH CHRISTINE AND PAUL SAID WAS AMAZING. SOON AFTER THEIR RETURN MIKE AND MUNNIK SET OFF FOR LONG RIDGE AND REPETTOS THOUGH NOT ON A PLEASURE TRIP BUT ON AN 'URGENT' MERCY MISSION TO COLLECT ALL THE TEA FROM THESE HUTS. WE HAD RUN OUT A FEW WEEKS BACK AND THE HEAVY TEA DRINKERS AMONGST US WERE BEGINING TO SHOW SIGNS OF WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS. THEY RETURNED VERY EARLY ON THE MORNING OF THE THIRD DAY WITH 500 TEA BAGS AND JUST IN TIME FOR THE OTHERS TO HAVE THEIR MORNING TEA. THEN WE HAD THE MASS EXODUS OF PETE, HUGH, ANTON, PAUL AND CHRISTINE OFF ON A LAST ROUND ISLAND TRIP. HUGH AND PAUL RETURNED AFTER 7 DAYS AND MADE THE 'OVERBERG' HOMEWARD JOURNEY FROM SWARTKOPS TO BASE. A JOURNEY WHICH TOOK THEM ON A RATHER ZIG-ZAG ROUTE DUE TO LOW CLOUD AND LASTING 9 HOURS.

MORE ON THE HOME BASE, MOST OF US HAVE BEGUN PACKING OUR PERSONAL BELONGINGS AND GETTING OUR RESPECTIVE OFFICES, STORES, WORKSHOPS AN ADMIN READY FOR THE ARRIVAL OF OUR REPLACEMENTS ON THE 21ST APRIL. INDIVIDUALLY MARIUS BEZ, WHO IS ALREADY ALL PACKED AND READY TO GO IS KEPT BUSY WITH THE ADMIN WHICH INVOLVES A MAJOR TAKEOVER. STEVE AND HIS MET BOYS ARE FOUND IN THE MET OFFICE AT ALL TIMES OF DAY AND NIGHT HUNCHED OVER ENDLESS PILES OF CHARTS AND PRINTOUTS WITH HEAVY METAL BLARING AND COFFEE MUGS STREWN OVER THE DESK TOP. BRIAN AND MUNNIK TEND THEIR MACHINES, MOTORS, AND RADIOS OR WHATEVER ELSE NEEDS THEIR TLC. LATELY THEY HAVE BEEN KEPT BUSY WITH OUR RATHER TEMPERAMENTAL DIESEL BURNER WHICH PROVIDES OUR HOT WATER. THEY SPENT A MARATHON 8 HOURS WORKING ON IT WELL INTO THE NIGHT BUT NOT TO BE DONE BY HUMANS IT PROMPTLY WENT ON STRIKE TWO DAYS LATER. AT THE EXPERT HANDS OF BRIAN AND MUNNIK IT WAS SOON ON THE GO AGAIN BUT NOT BEFORE

IT SHOWED ITS DISSAPPROVAL BY BACKFIRING AND COVERING MUNNI END ALL AROUND IT WITH SOOT. FOR ANTON AND PETE ITS 'BUSSINESS AS USUAL' WITH THEIR SEAL RESIGHTS AROUND THE ISLAND.

WITH NO BIRTHDAYS TO CELEBRATE THIS MONTH THE EVENINGS ARE MOSTLY SPENT VIEWING OUR 16MM 'OLDIES' AND VIDEOS FOR AT LEAST THE 4TH TIME OVER, OR PLAYING CARDS WHICH HAS STRANGELY ONLY RECENTLY BECOME A VERY POPULAR PASTIME. GAMES SUCH AS POKER, HEARTS, KLARBERJASS, BRIDGE GO ON UNTIL 3-4AM. ON THE CULLINARY SIDE, NOTHING SPECIAL PRODUCED IN THE KITCHEN, BUT TALKING OF FOOD WE ALL LOOK FORWARD TO HAVING SOME FRESH FRUIT, VEGES, MILK AND CHEESE AGAIN.

FOR MOST THE ARRIVAL OF THE SUPPLY SHIP SA AGULHAS WILL BE A HAPPY OCCASSION WHILE FOR OTHERS A DEGREE OF SADNESS WILL PREVAIL AT THE PROSPECT OF LEAVING THIS ISLAND WHICH HAS BEEN OUR 'HOME' FOR THE PAST 12 MONTHS. ENDING WITH THE CLICHE, 'ALL GOOD THINGS MUST COME TO AN END', WE WISH YOU ALL A HAPPY EASTER. AU REVOIR.

(M.G.)