

(vi) Hannes is reeds in 1958 vereer deur die toekenning van 'n erepenning vir wetenskaplike werk in Antarktika deur die Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns. Vir sy deelname aan die Trans-Antarktiese Ekspedisie het hy ook 'n brons kopie van 'n goue medalje van die Royal Geographical

Society, die British Polar Medal en 'n medalje van die New York Explorers' Club ontvang. Die Suid-Afrikaanse Antarktiese Medalje word nou aan hom toegeken vir al sy bedrywighede in verband met Antarktika en die sub-Antarktiese eilande sedert 1950.

WITH THE R.S.A. TO THE ANTARCTIC

By W. A. NIEMAN

Table Mountain stood etched against a pale blue summer sky as the m.v./R.S.A.'s foghorn sonorously responded to the farewell hoots of tugs and other vessels in Table Bay on Friday, 27th December, 1963 at 3 p.m. On board were the team for SANAE V, the American seismograph team, the Public Works team, the neutron monitor team from Potchefstroom University (Kobus van der Walt and Cecil Smith), and the five 'observers'—Dave Perkins, representing the United States of America, Koos van Zyl and Johan Loock of the University College of Western Cape, Jan Nel and myself, representing the South African Antarctic Association.

The sky was cloudless, the sea calm and there was only a light breeze but an afternoon haze aided in obscuring a good final look at land as the air temperature remained a sultry 20°C. We were off to the Antarctic! "This is the life, boys!"

During the first night the air temperature never fell below 20°C while the sea temperature rose to 21°C. Next morning, it was still fine and clear, but not for long. A south-southwesterly wind, reaching 10 knots, heralded the approach of cirrus clouds in the southwest and by noon the sea had become so rough that I was no longer able to measure sea temperatures from the freight deck. The master of the RSA, Captain K. T. McNish, kindly permitted me to use the bridge deck for air and sea temperature observations. His officers also volunteered to help me maintain an hourly watch on these temperatures in order to get a complete record—one has to sleep sometimes!

Light rain occurred at 15,00 GMT (it was not overcast) but at 17,00 GMT the sky was clear above us. Five minutes later, however, low stratus clouds again covered the whole sky, a westerly wind (40 knots) traced white streaks across a heavy sea and the air temperature dropped from 19.1°C to 16.0°C. By midnight the westerly wind reached 50 knots as the ship reached a position of 38° 24' S, 15° 06' E. The storm lasted for more than six days until 4th January, 1964 when we passed that magnificent but grim, snow-capped volcanic island, Bouvet Oya (54° 26' S, 3° 24' E).

Westerly, south-westerly and, at times, north-westerly winds raged throughout the Roaring Forties, reaching average speeds of 35 knots. The barometer, at one stage (30th December), dropped 8.8 millibars in eight hours. Sea-sickness took its toll and Pieter de Waal (radio technician, SANAE V) and Johan Loock almost never left their bunks during these days. Least affected by the pitching and rolling of the ship were Tollie Traut and Zac Ezekowitz, doctor and geophysicist of SANAE V, respectively.

Actually they were the clowns-cum-practical-jokers and even the captain was not immune to their antics. It was the two of them who created "HERRIKIN" (from "hurricane"), "that man at the wheel" who was responsible not only for the figure eight movement of the ship but for everything extraordinary happening. I am sure SANAE V will never regret having Tollie and Zac with them.

Trevor Robertson (geomagneticist) and Koos Pretorius (senior diesel mechanic) competed for the title "Public Sleeper No. 1" while the storm lasted. I think Koos eventually won, for he stayed on in a horizontal position in the smoke room when Trevor made his singing rounds of the bathroom and decks. But, when we entered the ice, no one, not even Johan Loock or Jan "Voorrade" du Plooy (Department of Transport), could match Trevor's appetite for bread. His farewell gift from the ship's cook before we departed from Polarsirkelbukta, was . . . a loaf of bread!

New Year was celebrated four times: South African time, ship's time, Greenwich Mean Time and also U.S.A. time in honour of the three Americans on board. On New Year's Day we also started the ice watch and two of the passengers were on the bridge for a two hour watch constantly until we entered the ice. This duty helped us forget the monotony of the rolling ship and the chaps suffering sea-sickness were "cured" while on watch.

When we reached Bouvet, we were already in sub-Antarctic waters (sea temperature 0.3°C) and air temperatures began falling below freezing. On 5th January, the first small iceberg was sighted (56° 30' S) five hours before we crossed the Greenwich Meridian. Light flurries of snow became more frequent, as well as growlers

and bergy-bits and at 03.30 GMT on 6th January, we encountered the first very open rotten pack ice or field ice (57° 48' S, 0° 26' W). The sea temperature was -0.9°C at that stage. Gradually the pack ice became more dense and at 14.10 GMT just before we entered a very thick patch of hummocked pack ice, we sighted 11 killer whales near a lonely seal on an ice-floe—looking not unlike a sardine on toast! Soon afterwards we were in open water. It took us 11 hours to pass through the pack ice and everything was made ready for our arrival at the South African base, a mere 10° of latitude away!

Our high spirits were unfortunately soon damped because we again encountered pack ice on 7th January at 19.30 GMT (63° 31' S, 2° 53' W)—had we the previous day but looked at Figure 31 of the *Oceanographic Atlas of the Polar Seas* (Part 1, Antarctic, 1958; U.S. Navy Hydrographic Office, Washington)!

Bands of open pack ice gave way to open pack consisting of heavy floes on which seals were often to be seen and from then onwards, for the next 18 days, the stout RSA had a constant battle with the ice. Some days we simply drifted north-westwards with the pack, the engines stopped. At times the ship got nipped and we had to dig her out of the ice! A game of rugby on a large floe and an audience with Emperor Charlie van der Merwe provided some of the entertainment during those days. The emperor penguin answered "Ja-a-a!" when we asked him if he really was Charlie van der Merwe.

On 24th January, half-an-hour after midnight the midnight sun—we were more than 6° W—touched the horizon and at 04.30 GMT we finally broke through the pack ice to get our first glimpse of the ice shelf of the Great White Continent. It was just after noon, four weeks after we left Cape Town, that we sailed into Polarsirkelbukta, 70° 15' S, 2° 51' W—to the great relief of Andrew Venter's SANAE IV . . . and Skroef van Zyl's SANAE V?

I would like to add that the "observers" are very grateful for the privilege of having been able to sail with the RSA to Antarctica and we sincerely hope that the Department of Transport will continue the practice of allowing a few persons with special interest in Antarctica to join the ship. I have a few suggestions to make. Although space is very limited on the ship, more research can be done during the voyage. Not only will this keep the passengers occupied, but valuable scientific observations can be made. This voyage occurs but once a year through seas sparsely covered with meteorological, oceanographic and other observations. Research can be done as proved by the neutron monitor team from Potchefstroom. More meteorological instruments should be provided to the RSA, e.g. a bathythermograph, a sea temperature recorder, an anemometer, etc. Captain McNish shows keen interest in research and, amongst other things, he helpfully supplied whatever literature there was available on the subject of the Antarctic. Incidentally, the captain's uncle was carpenter on Shackleton's ship, the "Endurance". A library on board the RSA containing technical and non-technical material appertaining to the animal life, ice and other relevant subjects on Antarctica ought to be a great asset to both the observers and the expedition members.

EXPERIENCES AND WORK OF SANAE III, 1963

By A. M. VENTER

After over 13 months' stay on an ice shelf of Antarctica, it felt a luxury to relax in an easy chair in a modern cinema or to feast your eyes on the variegated colours of nature. These are a few of the conveniences and splendours of civilisation we had to do without; nevertheless there is nothing to compare with the calm grandeur and beauty of Antarctica.