

# Eerste Toekenning van die Suid-Afrikaanse Antarktiese Medalje aan J. J. (Hannes) La Grange



Medalje

Suid-Afrikaanse Antarktiese Medalje (9 karaatgoud) geskenk deur BP Suidelike Afrika (Edms.) Beperk.



Hannes la Grange

Die name van ses kandidate is aan die Toekenningskomitee voorgeleë. In sommige gevalle het die motivering ontbreek en die Komitee het dus reeds aan die begin enkele van die kandidate uitgeskakel uit die gedeetailleerde oorweging. Na oorlegpleging met persone wat kennis gedra het van die oorblywende kandidate het die Komitee besluit om die eerste Suid-Afrikaanse Antarktiese Medalje toe te ken aan JOHANNES JACOBUS LA GRANGE en wel vanweë volgende oorwegings:

- (i) *Tydperke van Verblyf op Marioneiland en Antarktika.* Van alle Suid-Afrikaners het Hannes by verreweg die langste gesamentlike tyd op Marioneiland en Antarktika deurgebring. Op Marioneiland was hy altesaam twee jaar weerkundige waarnemer, eers vanaf Oktober 1950 tot April 1952 en toe weer vanaf Maart tot November 1954. In Antarktika het hy altesaam drie jaar en enkele maande vertoef, naamlik vanaf Desember 1955 tot Maart 1958 as lid van die Trans-Antarktiese Ekspedisie en vanaf Desember 1959 tot Januarie 1961 as leier van die eerste Suid-Afrikaanse Antarktiese Ekspedisie. Daarby kan nog ongeveer twee jaar gevoeg word wat hy voltyds bestee het aan voorbereiding vir ekspedisies of verwerking van die ingesamelde gegewens.
- (ii) *Publikasies.* Hannes het sowat 25 artikels, verhandelings en verslae geskryf oor verskillende aspekte van Marioneiland, Antarktika en die suidelike oseaniese. Die werke is van beide populêr en wetenskaplike aard. Publikasies wat egter aansienlike wetenskaplike waarde besit is ondermeer:
  1. "Meteorology. Shackleton South Ice and the journey across Antarctica". (Scientific Reports No. 13—Trans-Antarctic Expedition 1955/58).
  2. "Notes on the Birds and Mammals of Marion Island and Antarctica (SANAE)." (To be published in the *Journal of the South African Biological Society*).

Eersgenoemde publikasie kan as Hannes se *magnum opus* beskryf word. Die verwerking van die weerkundige gegewens, die kommentaar en veelvuldige opmerkings en wenke vir waarnemings in uiterste getuig van praktiese insig en vaardigheid.

Die artikels wat hy geskryf het getuig van veelsydige belangstelling. Behalwe oor weerkunde het hy ook geskryf oor gletserkundige waarnemings, see-temperatuur en pakys van die Antarktiese see, huskies, administrasie, samestelling en wetenskaplike programme van ekspedisies ens. In hierdie verband verdien ook om spesiaal genoem te word:

"The requirements and nature of the logistic support for a small national Antarctic expedition" (Antarctic Logistics Symposium, Boulder, Colorado, 1962. Symposium Papers, p. 43).

Alhoewel meeste van Hannes se geskrifte in die Weerburo se Nuusbrief verskyn het, getuig die volgende name van tydskrifte of boeke waarin artikels met Antarktiese strekking van hom verskyn het, van die wye veld wat hy gedek het: *Polar Record* (Cambridge), *Outlook* (Johannesburg), *Journal of the Mountain Club of South Africa* (Kaapstad), *Antarctic* (Wellington, N.Z.), *Notos* (Pretoria), *Afrikaanse Kinder-ensiklopedie* (Kaapstad) en

*Staatsamptenaar* (Pretoria).

- (iii) *Publisiteit.* Geen ander persoon het naastenby soveel bygedra tot publisiteit in Suid-Afrika vir Antarktika as Hannes nie. Nie alleen het hy sowat een honderd voordragte, meesal met skyfies geïllustreer, vir skole wetenskaplike verenigings en by openbare geleenthede gelewer nie, maar hy het ook oor die radio opgetree en in 1961, ses programme oor Antarktika in drama-vorm vir die Skoolradioprogram van die S.A.U.K. opgestel, terwyl 'n sewende program, met kleurskyfies geïllustreer, die eerste oudio-visuele uitsending vir skole gevorm het. Sy aandeel in die fotografie, kommentaar en regie van die klankfilm "Die Koue-Suide—The Cold South", was aansienlik. Daarbenewens het sy groot aantal populêre en ligter wetenskaplike artikels, soos hierby genoem, 'n wye leserskring bereik. Dit moet ook genoem word dat die kledingstukke en uitrusting wat in Antarktika gebruik word en wat vir die afgelope paar jaar by die Permanente Wetenskaplike Uitstalling by die skouterrein, Pretoria, tentoongestel is, byna uitsluitlik deur Hannes verskaf is. Verder het by 'n leidende aandeel geneem in die stigting en voortsetting van die Suid-Afrikaanse Antarktiese Klub en die Suid-Afrikaanse Antarktiese Vereniging. Op laasgenoemde se Bestuur het hy vanaf die stigting daarvan gedien en is reeds Voorsitter van die Vereniging vir die afgelope 15 maande.
- (iv) Hannes het die eerste huskies in Suid-Afrika beskikbaar gestel vir teelddoeleindes vir aanvulling van die honde by SANAE. In Januarie 1961 het hy Fatima en Bidule, wat deur die terugkerende Belgiese Ekspedisie aan hom en Mev. la Grange geskenk is, aan die Departement Vervoer gegee en sedertdien is verskeie werpsels by Onderstepoort in die lewe gebring wat daarna beskikbaar geword het vir SANAE.
- (v) Enkele ander punte word net kortliks aangestip. Eerstens is is daar die energieke wyse waarop hy die eerste ekspedisie na Antarktika in die kort tydperk van minder as drie maande tussen 9 September en 3 Desember 1959 help organiseer het. Saam met Mnre. H. P. Smit en S. A. Engelbrecht het hy na Brittanje, Noorweë en Duitsland gegaan vir die aansaak van voorrade en apparaat en om onderhandelings vir die oorname van "Norway Station" te voer. Programme moes georganiseer word, spanlede moes aangestel en voorberei word, voorrade moes gelys en verpak word. In alles het Hannes se ondervinding deur sy deelname aan die Fuchs-ekspedisie baie getel.

Twedens getuig die hoeveelheid werk wat die eerste ekspedisie onder moeilike omstandighede in Antarktika gedoen het van suksesvolle leierskap. Die Noorweegse basis was in 'n swak toestand en moes opgeknop word, nuwe apparaat en lugdrade moes geïnstalleer word, die voorrade moes 25 myl ver aangery word, en dit het 'n lang tyd in beslag geneem.

Nogtans is suksesvolle programme in weerkunde, geomagnetisme, gletserkunde, fisiologie, asook geologiese veldwerk en kaartering deurgevoer. Die gletskundige veldwerk was grootliks gebaseer op ondervinding wat Hannes gedurende die Fuchs-ekspedisie opgedoen het.

(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.