

Alpha Ridge Test of Appurtenance (ARTA)

Newsletter #18

April 17 (Thursday)

The three main seismic runs (inner, outer and cross) have been completed very successfully. Isa Asudeh says that the data is great. Not just good – its great!

There is, however, a follow-on experiment that will attempt to get seismic measurements from even farther north into the Arctic Ocean. This work is made possible through the good offices of the Canadian Military and their Aurora aircraft. The aircraft will drop ice-picks, which are devices that stick in the ice and pick up vibrations. They contain geophones – just like the ones that we have been using with such success. Because of the Aurora's long-range capability, these geophones can be placed much farther out than our helicopters can reach. The plane will drop a dozen, or so, in a line covering maybe twenty kilometres, and each of the icepicks will radio its signal back to the Aurora. The aircraft will stay in the neighbourhood recording these signals until all shots have been fired. At least two such lines will be covered.

The shots will be loaded and fired in the same way as before. There will definitely be an underwater explosion at the North Camp, and, if the weather is good, other holes farther north than North Camp will also be loaded and fired. The Aurora, which will be working out of Thule, Greenland, can give us six days, 20 to 25 April. It seems quite probable that we can get in two or three good run during this time. If the worst happens, and the weather makes it impossible for the helicopters to load the northerly shot holes, well – that's too bad. We will have to live with the few shots from the North Camp.

Don Mosher has been doing some of the liaising between Ruth's people and the military. Don works at Defence Research and Development Canada (DRDC) in Halifax, where I worked at one time. After a couple of trips to the Arctic, he has come to like the northern work, and he has become good at it. I mention him particularly because Don will be on the aircraft that is doing the recording, and he'll make sure that Ruth's interests are well looked after.

For this final part of the experiment, Ruth won't need so many people. There won't be so many holes to drill, and there won't be the dozens of recording boxes to set out and pick up. Therefore, she has decided that a number of us can go home. This will ease the strain on both the Icecamp and

Eureka. So, today (Thursday) five of us flew south: Isa Asudeh, John Shimeld, Patrick Potter, Lloyd Litwin and I.

But, before we left camp, Tom Kiguktak gave us a demonstration on the construction of an igloo (Right). Nobody wanted to go home. Everyone wanted to build igloos.

When the Aurora work is finished, the rest of Ruth's people

can leave. Jon Biggar and his hydrography crew will remain until the end of the month making



depth and gravity measurements. Then there will be a hectic few days tearing the camp down and sending everything back to Eureka. Their plan is to use the Buffalo for this work.

Several people have asked about the Buffalo. They say that it seemed this aircraft was very important at the beginning of the field trip, but then it disappeared from the news. This is, indeed, true, and it is my fault. I had too many other things to talk about. Even though I haven't mentioned it, the Bobcat snowblower has worked steadily (between repairs) at lengthening and broadening the runway. They fully intend to use the Buffalo for the haul-back, and Jon says it shouldn't take more than four or five loads for the big plane. Unfortunately, I won't be there to see it.

The other news of the week is that the Minister of natural Resources, Gary Lunn, paid us a visit yesterday (the 16th). He and his aid were accompanied by Jacob Verhoef, Ruth's boss, and five or six members of the media. His itinerary, or at least one version of it, was to fly from Ottawa to Eureka in a Lear Jet on the morning of the 16th. They would pay a quick visit to the Eureka Weather Station and a slightly longer visit to the ice Camp. He would then return to Ottawa, arriving in the small hours of the 17th. (What a day!)

However, Arctic weather accords no respect to the rank of the visitor. The Minister's party was delayed for five hours in Hall Beach by the bad weather in Resolute (where else?). Then they couldn't get fuel in Hall beach because – they say – the pump froze up. Then the jet wouldn't start because its battery couldn't stand the cold. They had to get a jump start and then go to Nanisivik for fuel. We, in Eureka, figured that the Minister's party was getting the beginnings of an education in the problems of Arctic work even before they got to Eureka.

As far as I know, everything went smoothly after Nanisivik. They arrived in Eureka at about 20:00 local. Everyone piled out of the jet, shook hands, chatted a bit and then walked over to Dave Maloley's tiny office at the side of the runway. After greeting Dave, the whole crowd struggled into their heavy arctic clothes – parkas, mukluks, big mitts, etc., etc. Try to imagine changing your clothes in a telephone booth.

Eventually, of course, everyone was kitted out, and they made their way to a waiting Twin Otter, which Dave had laid-on to take them out to the Icecamp. Ruth went along to describe the project. I'm sure they entertained each other.

The Minister ("Call me Gary.") was keen to stay overnight at the Icecamp, but Dave told him that there was a weather system coming in, and if he stayed overnight he might not get back to Eureka for several days. Anyway, they all got a very pretty trip out to the camp, and then they were given a tour of the facilities. (I wonder if they inspected the 'washroom' tent.) The Minister got a helicopter ride to see some of the sites, and this included a big chunk of ice-shelf that had grounded itself (and broken up) a few miles east of the camp. These pieces of ice are very impressive.

The weather held for them, they left the Icecamp a little before midnight, and they arrived back in Eureka by 01:00 (in the morning). All this was in broad daylight, of course; the sun has stopped setting for the season.

The Minister was very keen on everything. Had it not been for his insistence, the party would probably have turned back at Hall Beach. (I think there is a story here, but I don't know any



Twin Otter with professional photographer at the ready.

details.) And, again, it was because of his insistence that they went out to the Icecamp. He met his match in Dave Maloley, however, and they didn't get to overnight on the ice.

His whole party was up again by about 07:30, ready for another busy day of visiting, learning and then returning home. This was the morning that the five of us were leaving, and breakfast time was quite hectic with people milling about, organizing itineraries, sorting out problems and, of course, having breakfast.

I don't suppose I need tell you that some pictures were taken. A lot of pictures were taken.

And, since I'm writing this I get to show the picture of Gary Lunn with me. (He's the one with the great head of hair.)

Shortly after the pictures were taken, the five of us who were leaving were taken up to the air strip.

We were loaded into an aircraft that I had never seen before: a Dornier 228, which had the memorable call sign C-FUCN. It had come to Eureka to deliver people and freight, and, because it was so convenient, Dave Maloley chartered it to take the five of us south. It's a small twin-engine prop plane that seems to have a cruising speed of about 175 knots. (I could see the speedometer.) It carried eight passengers and our luggage, and it had room for, perhaps, a couple more.

It was a two-hour flight to Resolute, where we refuelled, a two-hour flight to Cambridge Bay, where we refuelled again, and then a two and a half hour flight to Yellowknife. The seats were small and hard, and we were pretty tired and stiff by the time the flight was over. But we had finished the first leg to the south – the hardest leg. By the way, we saw the Lear Jet refuelling in Resolute. I assume it was on its way back north to pick up Gary Lunn and his party.



April 18 (Friday)

Today the five of us worked our way south to our various homes: Isa to Ottawa, Lloyd to Saskatoon, John and Patrick to Halifax, and me to Victoria. (Sounds delightfully Pan-Canadian.) The trip started out with a bit of a hitch. John Shimeld and I were both pulled over at the Yellowknife airport security, because our computers showed traces of explosive. Lloyd, who did much more of the blasting, but who didn't have a laptop, walked right through. Both John and I were let go after a few questions, an explanation and a pat-down search. They took a copy of Ruth's explanatory letter, which started 'To whom it may concern'. After Yellowknife, the flights were quite boring and uneventful.

Since I am home now, this will probably be my last Newsletter. We can only hope that things go well for the rest of the month. It has been a great year, and it is due, in large part, because the weather cooperated so well. We had no storms. We didn't even have strong winds. We had one night where the wind blew at about 15 mph, and that was it. And the visibility was excellent. A little morning fog was the worst we had to bear. Mind you, it was cold. The temperature at the beginning of the set-up was -52 C, and it is still hovering around the -30 mark, but cold weather goes hand-in-hand with clear skies, and we do need the good flying conditions.

The group was very professional. They knew what to do, and they did it. I'd like to give special credit to Dave Maloley, who controlled up to five helicopters, a Twin Otter (sometimes two) and a Skyvan. He made sure that all equipment was at the right place at the right time. This included fuel, camp gear, food, explosives, recording boxes and every other little thing that people at the camps wanted. It is a credit to him that everything worked so smoothly. He had two assistants, Doug Briscoe and Shawn Swire, who put in long days loading and unloading planes, finding equipment, organizing loads and driving people around. The three of them made a good team.

When I started these Newsletters back in 1998, they were meant for family, friends and co-workers. I am flattered and somewhat amazed that so many other people have asked to receive them. People seem to have a real interest in what goes on in the high Arctic, and I guess it's natural that they like to follow the work as it is happening. Thank you all for your interested and interesting comments.

I have no idea whether or not there will be a 'next time'. But, until then,

Best Wishes,
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