

“SOUTH POLE, CANADA & BEYOND”

Q&A with Maurice & Fran Cutler Sydney Probus 1st Feb 2022

Note : The following transcription includes more detail and some very interesting experiences that had to be omitted in their presentation in view of time constraints. Several remarkable photos have been omitted below and all have been reduced a lot in order to restrict the MBs for the archives.

If you wish to see the glorious photos as shown in the presentation, contact Peter James pjames@a1.com.au, who will be pleased to send you the powerpoint presentation (about 15 MB).

PJ

Sydney Probus is delighted to welcome Maurice & Fran Cutler to tell us some of the many highlights in their extraordinary careers.

Maurice became the first Australian to “reach” the South Pole at only 17 years old and to be one of first western journalists to visit China during the cultural revolution in 1970.

Meantime Fran has had a remarkable lifetime of achievements at the CBC, and as an advocate and mentor for the vision impaired and disabled in Canada and globally, especially notable as she has been legally blind since her 20s.

For the last 20 years, they have been spending half years in their homes in Ottawa and Sydney. Over those years, I have been playing regular golf with Maurice and enjoying opera and dinners with them both, every year except in summer 2021/22 when Covid bans meant they could not return to Australia.

Three years ago, Robin and I stayed with them at their delightful riverside retreat 30 mins north of Ottawa with a view that has not changed since they bought it 50 years ago



This will be done in Q&A format, with me asking questions to cover the broad points that each wish to make, leaving some time later for Q's from the floor.

MAURICE

Thank you Peter and good morning everyone.

I was very pleased Peter, when you asked me to participate, that you accepted my suggestion that your audience would possibly be **more inspired and more informed**, if the lovely lady to my right were involved.

Fran has been **inspiring me, informing me and instructing me** for more than 60 years. Over to you Peter and Fran.

PJ

*Fran, why have you been doing 6 monthly autumn shuttle between Ottawa and Sydney?
What is temperature in Ottawa now?*

Fran:

- Siri tells me the temp in Ottawa is minus 10 deg, much hotter than recent days when it got down to minus 32 overnight after a 50 centimetre snowfall. Reminds me of the winter of 71 at our home (photo).



Fran and baby Fred outside their Ottawa home in 1971

- We have two sons and families in Ottawa and Vancouver
- But also have Maurice's siblings' families in Australia, including a great niece who plays cricket for Brisbane Heat and Queensland Fire.
- In Ottawa, golf courses are closed in winter, and footpaths and bushwalks are dangerous with my eyesight

PJ:

I know you both love both countries, but also feel that sometimes connections are not as close as they could be. I was not aware until you told me recently about the reason there is Canada Bay in Sydney, and the transport of "convicts" from Canada to these shores. Can you tell us what happened?

Fran:

- "patriots", who protested for responsible government in Toronto and Montreal. They were transported to Hobart and Sydney circa 1840.
- In Sydney, they were sent to what has since been named Canada Bay. Confined in stockade on what is now Concord Oval.
- By coincidence, that is very close to where Maurice grew up in Concord

- Maurice accompanied Prime Minister Trudeau in 1970 to Cabarita to unveil monument to the Patriots

PJ:

Can you briefly tell us about your family, where you grew up, school, etc before you met Maurice at university in Ottawa?

Fran:

- Grew up in a lovely area of Ottawa, living close to Government House
- Family had keen political interest, including an uncle who was a Minister in the Trudeau government.
- I attended a top local state school, which was academically strong and drew on all levels of society
- I went to Carleton University in Ottawa including a political science class, where I met Maurice in 1962

PJ

Can you tell us about your 1st job after university, and your career, including how you managed that with 2 boys?

Fran

- Researcher for Royal Commission on Taxation
- Canadian Broadcasting Corporation CBC
- Roles at CBC, including production of current affairs programme, sourcing directly from correspondents around globe (a new concept in those days)
- Balancing that with raising family, and Maurice travelling.



Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, Fran and baby Fred, Ottawa airport, 1970

- Coordinated nipper ski league including my 2 boys and Justin Trudeau

PJ In the meantime in your 20s, you faced increasing challenges with your eye sight. Can you tell us about that, including CBC's response?

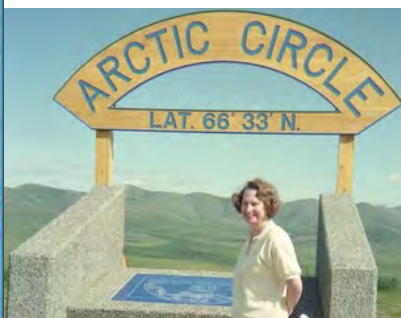
Fran

Rare retinal form of juvenile macular degeneration.

- Increasing challenges, Diagnosis, Adaptation
- CBC were helpful in providing innovative equipment and innovation (large print etc),



- Conrad Black requested a job, and I turned him down for lack of experience.
- Management roles including CBC Director of Canada's North & Arctic Regions radio services, where there are many challenges due to remoteness and numerous local indigenous languages.
- Close involvement with Inuit and associated issues
- New Governor General is Inuit, very impressive, multilingual
- Appointed CBC's Director of Employment Equity



PJ

Meantime I gather you had become an active mentor to people and organisations, prominent advocate for change, worked on numerous Govt advisory committees, especially involving disability issues. Can you tell us of some of your experiences, innovations made, legislation?

Fran

- Many changes were made, eg, bus outside destination speakers and onboard announcements.
- Improved Canadian banknotes for blind and visually impaired
- Chairman Canadian National Institute of the Blind for the Blind (CNIB).
- Deeply involved in many international meetings
- President of Voice Print, reading service for print-handicapped. Lobbied to have broadcasting regulator mandate that this service be carried on cable television channels.
- Worked with airlines to improve accessibility for vision challenged passengers
- Technology improvements have been amazing in recent years, especially in use of the mobile phone



CNIB (= Vision Australia)



Receiving \$1million cheque



At peak global conference in Morocco

- Willing to advise any of you facing eyesight issues

PJ

You have continued to be an active advocate and mentor in retirement, resulting in the one of the highest Canadian awards, an Officer of Order of Canada for your lifetime achievement and service. And here's a photo of you receiving that from Canada's Governor General David Johnson.



And now over to you Maurice.

MAURICE

Thank you Peter. What can I do for an encore? Fran deserves top billing in our family.

Before I start, just a little clarification. In your introduction you referred to me being the first Australian to reach the South Pole.

I certainly was the first Australian at the bottom of the world, and the first to **see** the Pole. It was from a United States Air Force plane, flying at six hundred feet, circling the Pole for a couple of hours. I'll get to that a little later.

The first Australian to **actually stand at the Pole** was a Queensland geologist, the late Jon Stephenson. Jon got there 15 months after me. He was a member of the British Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic expedition led by Britain's Dr. Vivian Fuchs and New Zealand's Sir Edmund Hillary. He did it the hard way and I wanted to pay tribute to him.

I was honoured and a bit surprised to receive the invitation to speak to your distinguished members. I am neither a business person nor a professional. But I **was** for many years a journalist **writing for a business audience**.

I later became a Canadian government official, dealing with the media. It was, as a fellow Australian journalist in Canada, Jack Cahill said, **the game poacher becoming the game-keeper**.

The jury is still out on whether journalism is a profession. I am sure that some of you who have dealt with journalists, may have questioned their level of professionalism.

But I did take umbrage at the person who described journalism as **the second oldest profession**.

When I was getting started **in the 1950s**, journalism had not yet been established as a **quote profession unquote**.

Back then, shortly after World War II, was what I call **the golden years of competitive journalism**. Beginning journalists weren't recent graduates of university or tertiary journalism schools, if there were such things. Universities were only just beginning to establish journalism faculties.

Many of the prominent journalists in that era, came to their trade or craft **like me**, right out of high school, and learned on the job.

PJ HOW DID YOU BECOME A JOURNALIST AND A 17 YEAR OLD FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT

I first became interested in journalism when I went to the pictures in the late 1940s. I saw a movie starring James Stewart as a dogged reporter. His investigative journalism proved the

innocence of two men wrongly convicted of murder and robbery.

A little later on, while at high school, I happened to read a centennial history of the New York Times, and its reporters and editors. I was enthralled by how they became witnesses to history, over that century.

I was extremely lucky to know a man whose partner worked for the American wire service, United Press. He asked me what I wanted to do when I finished my Leaving Certificate. I told him I wanted to be a journalist.

Uni, surprisingly, wasn't in my picture, despite the fact that, as a ward of Legacy, I would have had financial support. I also had a RAAF flying scholarship as a Cadet Pilot Officer in the Air Training Corps.

I didn't think any more of our conversation until a few weeks later, I received a letter from his partner, suggesting I come in for an interview, for a cadetship with United Press.

Then, like many of you that November, I scanned the Leaving results in the Herald.

I managed to get a satisfactory Leaving result. And a couple of weeks later, just before my 17th birthday, I started at the Sydney bureau of United Press on Castlereagh Street,

UP, later UPI was a competitor of the Associated Press and Reuters. We provided international news to the ABC, the Daily Telegraph and other Australian clients, including Australian Associated Press AAP.

Every day, I saw how major international news events were covered and written. I learned a lot as I relayed these reports to the Tele and the ABC, on the teletype machine.

The UP motto was "a deadline every minute." The international wire service reality was that newspaper or broadcasting clients were going to press, or to air, at any time, given different countries and time zones around the world.

Consequently the emphasis was on speed. We didn't have the luxury of a fixed deadline every day which journalists on individual newspapers enjoyed.

"Get it first, but get it right," was also drummed into me.

The Sydney bureau was also responsible for feeding Australasian and Southeast Asian news to UP headquarters in New York. So the only stories I covered were major ones of the kind that were written by senior journalists at the newspapers and the ABC. It made me an instant foreign correspondent.

If I had started with the Sydney Morning Herald, the Daily Telegraph or the afternoon tabloids Sun and Mirror, I would have been writing the shipping news, traffic accidents or local government politics, for a few years, before being given more significant assignments.

At UP, I was thrown in at the deep end. I did however have the benefit of tutelage by a couple of senior journalists in the bureau. I was learning on the job at a high level.

I was immediately sent to a business school to learn how to touch type. This was very important because the heart of a wire service operation is the teletype machine. The teletype received the UP world news reports and we then distributed them by punched tape to the Daily Telegraph and the ABC. You had to have nimble fingers punching the tape to prevent it stopping in mid-transmission.

I did have a shock when I started at the Remington business school on Liverpool Street as the only male among about 60 young women. But with that instruction, and the imperative of the teletype machine, I was soon typing at about 75 words a minute.

As the youngest person in the bureau, one of my daily jobs was to type a summary of the UP foreign newswire for the Daily Telegraph.

The circulation list at the top started out FP and DMcN, Frank Packer, not yet Sir Frank, and his editor David McNicol. I would then walk down to Castlereagh and Park and deliver it to their offices.

By now I was beginning to focus on a future as a foreign correspondent for United Press. I was handling incoming reports from UP correspondents in Malaya, Singapore and Djakarta. Their "copy" was sent by Morse code and translated from Morse in the Sydney bureau.

I would take their reports and re-transmit them to UP's New York world headquarters. The stories were then transmitted around the world to UP's newspaper and broadcasting clients.

One night I was shaken to read a story filed by the assistant bureau manager in Singapore which started out: "United Press correspondent Gene Symonds was killed today by a mob that dragged him out of his taxi during a riot."

PJ WHAT SORT OF ASSIGNMENTS DID YOU HAVE AS A YOUNG REPORTER

In that first year, my first outside assignment was to cover the sod turning for the Lucas Heights nuclear reactor. I also covered airport news conferences by Prime Minister Menzies and important foreign visitors, including Frank Sinatra when he arrived on his first Australian tour.

Because I worked for UP, I was able to wangle a rare, one-on-one interview with media-shy Sinatra. It was conducted in a dingy boxers' change room at the Sydney Stadium just before one of his concerts. In order to get the interview, I had to come up with a new angle. So I told his manager that I wanted to ask about Sinatra's love of sports. The stadium venue was appropriate because his father was a semi-pro boxer.

My articles were sent to New York and then distributed to newspapers and broadcasting outlets in the United States and around the world with my byline as a United Press Staff Correspondent.



MC at teletype



Menzies press conference



Sinatra

PJ HOW DID YOU GET TO GO TO THE SOUTH POLE

That first year we were writing about preparations for the Olympic Games in Melbourne. I was very excited at the prospect of covering the Games. One of my assignments was to interview miler John Landy when he returned from an American tour to prepare for Melbourne. I was also now a “United Press Sports Writer”.

But I never made it to the Olympic Games. Eighteen months after starting with United Press, and still only 18 years old, I was given an assignment which changed my life forever.

One of UP’s big newspaper clients in Japan was Mainichi Shimbun, a widely-read and influential daily. Mainichi asked UP for a series of articles on Australia’s activities in the Antarctic.

Japan was going to play a role in the International Geophysical Year (IGY) 1957-58. The IGY was a huge international scientific research effort to unlock the secrets of Antarctica. And of course were familiar with their interest in whales.

I was given the assignment and I contacted the Australian Antarctic Division and got enough information for the articles.

One of them reflected the Cold War atmosphere of the time by revealing breathlessly that “Russia is planning on building a base in the Antarctic”, one of 40 science bases to be built in Antarctica during the IGY.



Some of MC's US articles on IGY + Russia's plans in Antarctica

During my research I learned that the Kista Dan would be sailing to re-supply the new Australian base at Mawson later that year and that I would be able to go with it.

So over the next few weeks I began to think about the Olympic Games and afterwards my summer holidays on an Antarctic cruise.

But one day a few weeks later, my boss came into the newsroom and said: “Maurice, would you like to go to the Antarctic.” I reminded him that he had already agreed that I could go down to Mawson on my holidays.

“No, this is something different. UP New York has just learned that our competitor the Associated Press is sending someone to McMurdo Sound to cover Operation Deepfreeze, the American IGY expedition and we have to match them. You have a couple of weeks to get ready. You have to be in Christchurch by middle of next month to get the flight to McMurdo.”

Looking back on it now I have to wonder “what on earth was he thinking?” giving the assignment to a wet-behind-the-ears teenager.

The next couple of weeks were a blur. I got a passport, inoculations, winter clothing gear and training in the use of a Rolleiflex camera, the Rolls-Royce of still cameras. Like most correspondents who worked for the perennially cash-strapped UP, I was expected to perform as a photographer as well. I think I was paid \$5 for every photo published by UP.

America's famous Antarctic explorer Admiral Byrd who was in charge of the U.S. effort, sent me a letter welcoming me aboard the expedition. He also sent copies of his famous books “Alone” and “Little America.”

I received my orders from the Pentagon which accredited me to Operation Deepfreeze II, Task Force 43. I was given the “simulated” rank of a Lieutenant Commander in the U.S. Navy for accommodation and other purposes.

The night before I flew to New Zealand, where I would jump off for McMurdo Sound, was the first night of television in Australia. When I returned, I was a guest on one of Australia's first TV talk shows with compere Eric Baume.

My departure was well noted by the two Sydney afternoon papers.



Rolleiflex camera issued to MC for the trip



Sun & Mirror articles on departure

The Mirror's airport "beat" reporter had fun with the fact that I was leaving as my big sister, a Qantas flight attendant, was arriving from London. My mother "gained a daughter and lost a son." The Sun reporter played it straight: "He'll tread Scott's path."

Arriving in Christchurch, I went around to the Christchurch Press, the city's leading daily newspaper to meet Chief Reporter Jim Caffin. Caffin was also UP's "stringer" or local correspondent for the South Island.

He briefed me on plans for the British Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic expedition during the IGY. Britain's Dr. Vivian Fuchs, supported by a New Zealand team led by Sir Edmund Hillary, would attempt the complete crossing of the Antarctic continent. This was a venture that Sir Ernest Shackleton failed to accomplish during World War I.

The New Zealanders would anchor the Ross Sea half of the expedition from McMurdo Sound. Fuchs would travel from the Weddell Sea below South America to the Pole and then on to McMurdo.

Caffin and I then went to the United States Navy headquarters to meet Rear-Admiral George Dufek, the commander of Operation Deepfreeze, Task Force 43, the U.S. Navy's support to U.S. Scientists. They planned to establish several new bases in the Antarctic during the IGY, most ambitiously one at the geographic South Pole itself.

No one had been at the bottom of the world on foot since Scott left to begin his ill-fated return journey to McMurdo Sound in 1912. In succeeding years, there had been a few Pole overflights, most notably by U.S. Antarctic legend Rear-Admiral Richard Byrd, involving about a dozen American fliers.

Admiral Dufek briefed us on the dangerous flight schedule. He first had to get his propellor-driven aircraft 3,800 kilometers non-stop, from New Zealand to McMurdo. He also told us of his plans to land a plane at the Pole in advance of building a scientific base there.

In addition to the Navy squadron, an Air Force Wing of several huge Globemaster transports had assembled at Christchurch. They would carry heavy equipment and passengers in their barn-like, unpressurized cabins.

Over the next few days I met the growing media corps. My new colleagues represented the two major U.S. television networks CBS and NBC, the New York Times, Life Magazine, the National Geographic and my “opposition” the Associated Press AP.

Life Magazine accredited their famed photographer Albert Fenn and also Scottish author Robbie Robertson. Robertson had written the 1950's best sellers, *Of Sheep and Men*, and *Of Whales and Men*.

He managed to squeeze into his luggage two cases of Ballantines Scotch whiskey. This was quite a feat because McMurdo Sound and the American ships were all officially “dry.”

Robertson explained the therapeutic benefits of Scotch to this barely-legal drinker. Al Fenn introduced me to the art of making a martini.

Scientists who would live at the seven U.S. bases including McMurdo, Little America, Byrd and Cape Hallett, began to arrive in Christchurch. During the coming Austral summer, the population in Antarctica would rise from a handful of “winter-overs” at McMurdo to several hundred persons.

The previous year during Deepfreeze I, U.S. bases were established at McMurdo Sound and Little America to the east on the Ross Ice Shelf. No one had lived at McMurdo Sound since Shackleton’s Ross Sea party left in 1917. Little America had had no habitation since Byrd’s 1935 expedition.



McMurdo Base is on Ross Island



McMurdo Base and Mt Erebus

In the first wave of aircraft, taking off for McMurdo Sound, there was just one media slot on one of the R5D Skymaster planes. It was a 3,800-kilometer non-stop flight with only one landing strip, on the ice which covers the waters of the Sound.

Don Guy of the AP and I tossed a coin to see who would get it. Don won the toss. He climbed into the propeller-driven transport plane, **loaded to the gunwales** with aviation fuel for the 13 and a half hour flight.

Several hours south of Christchurch, and **beyond the point of no return**, things started to go wrong. One of the engines began to guzzle fuel at a rapid rate. The carburetor was malfunctioning. And, By the time they were well past the six hour point of no return, the weather at McMurdo closed in over the ice runway.

The pilot turned off the heating and moved passengers from the cabin into the cockpit area. The last half of the flight was spent tensely fighting icing and strong headwinds and dwindling fuel.

They approached the McMurdo airfield in a “white out,” visibility was almost zero. The aircraft only had a primitive GCA (Ground Control Approach) facility to guide them.

They then had to circle while a Marine Corps Neptune aircraft was about to land ahead of them. I photographed and interviewed the Neptune crew before they took off from Christchurch.

This forced them into an agonizing holding pattern with the fuel gauge dropping to empty. It looked as though they would be landing “on the fumes,” the pilot told me.

Tragically, the Neptune pilot ahead of them missed the end of the runway. As he attempted to “go around,” a wingtip struck the ice and the plane disintegrated. It cartwheeled across the sea ice, killing four of the crew.

A few minutes later Don Guy’s plane found an opening in the whiteout and landed with fuel gauges showing empty. Don Guy jumped from his plane, saw the wreckage at the end of the runway and rushed to the scene as the victims were being recovered.



Globemaster landing



Neptune crash



Globemaster crash

There was no drama, a couple of days later, on my 12-hour flight to McMurdo. It was no milk run, however as we huddled on canvas benches along the side of the fuselage of the unpressurized and noisy Globemaster. There were no oxygen bottles ready to drop down should we have to climb above 10,000 feet.

The possibility of crashes by planes and helicopters, and there were several, was a constant companion during my four months in Antarctica.

The discomfort of the flight was made up by the views of spectacular scenery as we made landfall at Cape Adare and saw Mount Sabine and Mount Herschel at the start of Victoria Land.

Emerging from the Globemaster, I was greeted by a blast of 20 degree below zero Fahrenheit air.

The first thing I saw was the shattered wreckage of the Neptune. A Globemaster that had crashed on landing was nearby.

But I was stunned by the beauty of the area. It was all bathed in bright sunshine that would not fully set in the next five months.

About 30 miles to the north was the massive steaming bulk of Mount Erebus, a 3,800 metre active volcano. It was completely covered in snow and ice. Half the height of Mount Everest, it was the site of that horrific Air New Zealand plane crash that killed 257 tourists and crew in 1979.

It dominates Ross Island where the U.S. airbase is located at the western end of the volcanic island, on the Hut Point peninsula.

On the other side of the Sound, about 40 kilometers away, on the mainland was the dormant volcano Mount Discovery. Stretching along the coastline into the distance north and south was the Royal Society mountain range, rising to more than 3,000 meters for hundreds of kilometers.



MC at base.



Scotts Hutt and Royal Society range



Royal Society Range

A few hundred meters to the north of the new base stood the hut built by Scott during his 1901 expedition. It was also used by subsequent expeditions including two of the Shackleton ventures in 1907 and 1915.

And to the south, looking out across the Ross Ice Shelf towards the Pole was Observation Hill, rising 1,500 meters to a plain wooden cross. Its tribute to Scott and his companions who died 150 kilometers away was carved on Australian jarrah: "To strive, to seek, to find and not to yield."

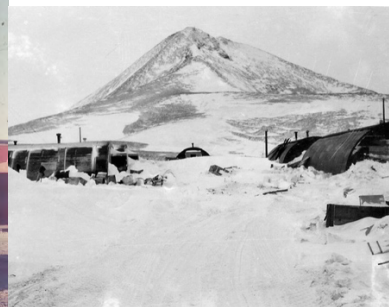
It was erected by the survivors of the ill-fated Scott dash to the South Pole in 1912.



Scott's Hut



Base in summer



Nimitz Blvd after storm

The box-like metal-lined buildings at McMurdo, were very comfortable and in typical American fashion well appointed. There were hot water showers once a week, somewhat primitive privies and well-heated barracks. The mess-hall provided lots of good food around the clock.

But once outside the buildings you were subject to the vagaries of the weather. When the frequent blizzards rolled in it was extremely dangerous even walking between the buildings at the base. There was the possibility of becoming disoriented in the "whiteout" conditions and getting lost.

There was sadness from the tragic loss of life in the plane crash. But there also was a buzz around McMurdo as preparations continued for the first aircraft landing at the South Pole. And plans were well advanced for the creation of other new bases by the U.S. Navy Seabees (Construction Battalion).

The job of ferrying people and supplies from New Zealand to McMurdo was done by the U.S. Air Force transport squadron of Globemasters. Flying around Antarctica was the job of U.S. Navy fliers of VX-6 squadron. My bunk in the barracks building was with VX-6 fliers who I got to know quite well.

I had my hair cut by one of the Navy pilots, Commander Gus Shinn who happened also to be an amateur barber. Shinn was the man chosen to be the pilot for the first landing at the Pole in his ski-equipped DC-3 Dakota named "Que Sera Sera" (What Will be Will be).

Although Admiral Byrd had flown over the Pole during two earlier expeditions, no one had landed there or at any similar location in the world.



Map of flight plan Ross Island to Sth Pole
Approx. following Scott route (green)



Admiral Dufek briefing (MC green shirt)

The flight involved flying 1,290 kilometers, across the Ice Shelf, then up the Beardmore Glacier to the 3,400 metre high plateau. The aircraft were unpressurized and had to touch down on skis. The snow had been blown into pressure ridges in places. And temperatures were colder than 50 degrees below zero Fahrenheit.

The engines could not be turned off. Small jet bottles would be attached under the wings to give greater thrust on take-off, especially if the skis became frozen to the surface while at the Pole.

Admiral Dufek held a news conference to outline his plans for the Pole landing and the construction of the Pole station that would follow. Attendees were Maurice Cutler UP, Walter Sullivan New York Times, Don Guy AP, Al Fenn LIFE

He announced that he would lead the seven-man crew aboard Que Sera Sera. This was appropriate since he had been on every U.S. Antarctic expedition since 1939 when he was the navigator on Admiral Byrd's flagship U.S.S. Bear.

We journalists would watch the landing from a hovering Globemaster. It would carry emergency supplies which we would drop to them should Que Sera Sera not be able to take off.

But even Globemaster overflights were no milk runs, as Ed Rees wrote for Time Magazine:

The week before the Pole landing, a Globemaster carrying a United States Air Force General had flown to the Pole but bad weather forced it up to 5,000 metres, disabling many of the passengers and preventing them from seeing the bottom of the earth.

"The newsmen were laid low with hypoxia," Ed Rees wrote. The plane, unpressurized, did not have enough walkaround oxygen bottles to "feed" them. Several sprawled on the floor in semi-comas, developing shattering headaches which lingered a full 24 hours. "

"A similar flight was the one covering the landing of the first advance construction party at the Pole. Here reporters and newsmen suffered a discomfort not forewarned in journalism school curricula: the hatches and bays were opened so crewmen could drop equipment to the Seebees and a minus 39 degrees cold flooded the cabin.

"Newsmen shivered their timbers with increasing amplitude. Windows frosted and photographers could not take their pictures. Cameras as well as some typewriters froze."

Now I'm a bit embarrassed to read the next bit of his article.

"The one reporter who seemed unaffected by all this was the UP's Maurice Cutler. He calmly completed his story before the plane returned 800 miles to McMurdo.

"Cutler, an Australian who is assigned to UP's Sydney bureau, had youth on his side: He will not be 19 (correct 19) until next month.

"(Last week, as snow fell at McMurdo and we were on the way to the mess-hall, Cutler remarked drily: "this is the first time in my life I have ever seen snow fall.")"

No one had set foot at the bottom of the earth since a weary Captain Scott and his four companions arrived in January 1912. They found they had been beaten to be the first there. Norwegian Roald Amundsen and his party achieved one of exploration's holy grails almost a month earlier.

You may remember the old passport which described you as an Australia citizen and a British subject.

I reckon I was the next British subject after Scott's group to see the Pole.

Scott's group perished on the return trek to McMurdo Sound. Three of them are still entombed in the Ross Ice Shelf where searchers buried them. The tent which contains the bodies of Scott, Edward Wilson and Birdie Bowers was made into a cairn. For more than a century now their final resting place has been covered by many feet of snow on the ice shelf. Eventually, the shelf will move towards the Ross Sea edge.

The part of the Shelf containing their bodies will break off as an iceberg and float into warmer waters north. Ultimately the berg will melt and consign their bodies to the deep. A burial at sea is appropriate for Captain Scott.

It didn't hit me that I was about to be among the first human beings ever to see the Pole.

Our attention was diverted somewhat by momentous international news. On shortwave radio we followed the Suez crisis and the Russian invasion of Hungary. Our only consolation was that if it led to a nuclear war the Antarctic was about as good a place to be as any.

Unfortunately, we journalists realized we would have to fight for space in newspapers against a potential World War III. From a journalistic standpoint we also had to compete with the U.S. Presidential elections. Dwight D. Eisenhower was about to be elected to a second term in the White House.

We also faced significant communications problems. Our news stories had to wait until the expedition's operational traffic was carried. The first eyewitness reports of the landing didn't get into the world media until a couple of days after the event and were pushed off the front pages by the world crisis.

Brilliant clear weather on Oct. 31 gave the green light to Admiral Dufek and he ordered the Pole landing to go ahead. The Admiral's "gooneybird" DC-3, Dakota or R4D as the Navy called it, was to take off from McMurdo and chug up to the Pole at around 110 knots.

A faster Air Force Globemaster and a Navy Skymaster which could do 185 knots, would take off an hour and a half later. Aboard would be emergency supplies and news correspondents and photographers. These two larger aircraft would circle the Pole while the DC-3 landed on the Polar plateau and be on standby in case the smaller plane could not take off.

The ski-equipped DC-3 Que Sera Sera, chockfull of aviation gas, with the "McMurdo Barber" Gus Shinn at the controls, trundled down McMurdo's ice runway and headed south. It was quickly over the Ross Ice Shelf.

The Shelf, the size of France, is a flat estuary of ice fed by glaciers tumbling down the adjacent mountain ranges from the Polar Plateau. A blend of white and blue ice, it stretches for hundreds of miles to the east.

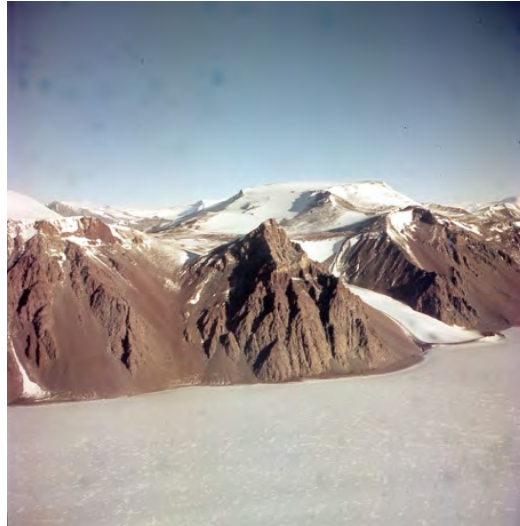
The route which we were to follow a couple of hours later was essentially that used by Scott and earlier by Sir Ernest Shackleton. Along the Royal Society range down the western side of the Shelf to the Beardmore Glacier.

When we reached the Beardmore we turned right, to climb from sea level up to the 3500-meter high Polar plateau.

Most of the scenery on that 200 km river of ice, looked like giant scoops of ice cream. But there are mountainsides with exposed brown and black rocks in alternate layers.



Globemaster takeoff



Over Beardmore Glacier



passing Que Sera Sera on polar plateau



Sastrugi on polar plateau, among which flat landing strip had to be found

By this time our faster Globemaster had passed over the DC-3. We swept ahead to be ready at the Pole for the arrival of the crew who would attempt the first aircraft landing at the bottom of the earth.

As Admiral Dufek wrote later: "Ahead to the horizon stretches the monotonous flat white of the Polar Plateau, elevation about 11,000 feet."

The ceiling and visibility were unlimited over what appeared to be a smooth carpet of snow. In reality there was no guarantee that it would provide a soft landing. The surface was subject to wind- carved "sastrugi" ridges which are difficult to see.

We were in a holding pattern at the Pole for half an hour until, looking out of the Globemaster's porthole windows, we caught sight of the DC3. Gus Shinn was looking for the smoothest spot to set his plane down.

Although flying conditions were perfect, the two planes were creating con-trails. These cloudy condensation tails soon covered the Pole and forced the pilots to rely on instruments.

Down in the belly of the Globemaster we fortunately couldn't hear our pilot Major Ellen talking to Shinn.

The Navy pilot in the smaller plane radioed: "My instrument panel is lighting up like a Christmas tree." Red warning lights were flashing on and off as pressure gauges dropped and oil streamed out over the cowlings of both engines.

Shinn was gratified to hear Ellen's response: "Don't worry Gus. If you can't get off, I'll belly-land this baby and give you a warm house to live in."

I'm glad I didn't hear our pilot making that offer. About an hour later it might have come into play.

"I'll make three passes," Shinn told the Admiral. "One at four hundred feet, one at two hundred, and then drag the surface at one hundred feet. If it looks all right, I'll come in for a landing."

After the last pass, the plane came in smoothly, touched the surface, bumped a little and slowed to a stop. It was 8:34 p.m. Oct. 31, New Zealand time, almost eight hours after takeoff from McMurdo.

The temperature was 58 degrees below zero Fahrenheit. With a 10 knot wind I wouldn't want to even think about the wind chill factor.

Above in the Globemaster at about five hundred feet, we were having trouble keeping warm in the cargo bay of the huge transport.

I was lucky enough to be able to see Gus Shinn's landing in the DC-3 in my camera's viewfinder. And even more fortunate, the windows were not frosted up to much extent, despite the freezing temperatures inside our plane and my camera had not frozen up.

By this time, we had been circling the Pole for more than two hours at around 200 meters above the surface.

The Pole's 3,050 m altitude meant we were at 4,000 m. The Globemaster was unpressurized. There were no "oxygen masks will drop down from the ceiling" messages from the crew. We took sucks from a shared oxygen bottle every while to combat apoxia.



Que Sera Sera landing at Sth Pole



Planting flag at Sth pole. Globemaster above

After 49 minutes on the ground, the U.S. flag was planted and navigational instruments left to aid future flights. Que Sera Sera then prepared for an uncertain take-off.

“Let’s get the hell out of here,” Dufek told pilot Shinn. He had noticed that several of the group had developed frostbite.

Shinn had kept the engines running but there was a strong possibility that the plane’s skis might have stuck to the ice surface. That in fact is what happened and the windshield was completely frosted over. Adding to their concern was an engine that was leaking oil onto the snow.

Shinn then went to plan B, a series of JATO jet propulsion bottles that were attached to the wings. He first fired four of the 15 bottles, equal to the thrust of one of the engines. The addition of a “third engine” had no effect, so Shinn fired four more which freed the skis. He had to use two more 30-second bursts of four and three bottles to get the plane rolling across the snowy plateau.

The firing of the last three JATO bottles helped Shinn get enough thrust to enable the DC-3 to stagger into the air at the dangerously slow speed of 60 knots. When the 1,200 kilos of empty JATO bottles were ditched, the aircraft flew at a more appropriate speed.

But one of the engines was leaking oil. It was decided that instead of cruising back to McMurdo, our plane would throttle back for three hours and escort the DC-3 down the Beardmore Glacier to a refueling base at the nearby Liv Glacier.

A refueling was crucial because the small plane had been in the frigid air for more than 12 hours. Commander Shinn found a “base” that consisted of a few oil and aviation gasoline drums and a tent for the two lonely men who had to service the aircraft. Que Sera Sera finally got back to McMurdo Sound more than 24 hours after leaving.

Because of the severe low temperatures, Admiral Dufek postponed a start on construction of the South Pole base for two weeks. By late November, however, a small team of Seebees were hard at work at the Pole. They built the base that would be home for 25 men during the following Antarctic winter night.

I returned to the Pole on two USAF airdrop missions that season. I watched as building materials and fuel oil were dropped out of the belly of our plane onto the Plateau where the Seebies recovered them. I spoke by radio with Paul Siple, the commander of the science team, a veteran of Byrd expeditions who would spend the year at the Pole.

Meanwhile, the U.S. military and scientists were busy at McMurdo and its eastern base Little America getting things ready for the IGY. Over the coming months they established additional science bases at Cape Hallet and in Marie Byrd Land. And I traveled around by plane and ship to write about them.

PJ AND SIR EDMUND HILLARY?

At the end of December of 1956, a tiny ship came into McMurdo. It was carrying Sir Edmund Hillary and his team of New Zealanders. They were to establish New Zealand's Scott Base, located a couple of kilometers south of the U.S. Base at Hut Point.

From there they would lay down a series of depots of fuel and food for use by Britain's Dr. Vivian Fuchs and his Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic team.

Fuchs was making the first land crossing of the continent from the South American side. It was the project that Ernest Shackleton failed to accomplish 40 years earlier.

I was at the edge of the sea ice when the *Endeavour* tied up and greeted Hillary and the Kiwis. Later I visited them one afternoon and helped in the early construction of the camp buildings by carrying timber and building materials. Hillary jokingly agreed to an interview but only if I did some heavy lifting.



Sir Edmund Hillary



Building NZ's Scott Base



Official Opening

One of the Kiwi expedition members I met was the radio officer, Chief Petty Officer Peter Mulgrew of the New Zealand Navy. Mulgrew became a close friend of Hillary over the years. He was among the 257 persons killed when the Air New Zealand DC-10 crashed into the side of Mount Erebus in November, 1979.

The pilot was attempting to show McMurdo to the tourists. Mulgrew was aboard as a commentator. Hillary, whose first wife died in a plane crash in Nepal, later married Mulgrew's widow.

Hillary told me of his plans to lay the depots of fuel and supplies along a land route to the South Pole. These would be used by the Fuchs group, enabling them to travel lighter as they crossed the continent.

He also expressed an interest in furthering his mountain-climbing career by scaling Mount Erebus, the beautiful sentinel of McMurdo Sound that was only half as high as Everest.

A couple of weeks later in early 1957, I was present when Scott Base was officially commissioned by Sir Edmund. New Zealand has maintained the base for nearly 65 years

PJ HOW DID YOU BECOME A PEN PAL WITH SIR DOUGLAS MAWSON?

Just before Christmas in 1956, I realized that I was probably the first Australian at McMurdo Sound since 1917 when Shackleton rescued his Ross Sea team of his Endurance expedition, which included several Australians.

I had just inspected the hut at Cape Royds where Douglas Mawson lived for two years in 1907-09 as a member of Shackleton's earlier Nimrod expedition. So I decided to send Mawson a Christmas card reporting on events in his old stamping ground.

That was the expedition where Mawson cut his teeth as an Antarctic explorer.

He and his mentor, Professor T. Edgeworth David of Sydney University were the first to climb the active volcano Mount Erebus which rises to 13,000 feet behind the hut.

While Shackleton was making the first of his unsuccessful quests for the geographic Pole, Mawson, David and an English doctor Alister Mackay made an extraordinary trek to the area of the South Magnetic Pole,

In 1909, after months of struggling through rugged terrain along the Victoria Land coast, they achieved an objective that had been sought for more than a century. Then they had a harrowing time walking back to McMurdo Sound when their ship was unable to pierce the cordon of pack ice and pick them up.

A few weeks after sending the Christmas card, I returned from a flight to the Pole and found a reply from Mawson waiting for me at McMurdo.

Even at 75, he still had a keen interest. Looking at the envelope and the letter, it seemed as though Mawson had typed it himself. The letter also reflected his feisty demeanor.



Shackleton/Mawson's Cape Royd Hut



Letter from Mawson



2 dogs left by Shackleton @ Cape Evans

Mawson was quite blunt in criticizing the initial plan by Hillary's New Zealanders, to put their base on the Antarctic mainland instead of Ross Island.

"We have just learned that Hillary's party have decided to base at Pram Point," Mawson told me.

"Had the New Zealanders asked me or Captain J.K. Davis, who knows the MacMurdo (sic) Sound locality so well," Mawson said "the merits of a shore base anywhere near the sea end of the valley of the Ferrar Glacier, we could have told them to cut it out."

"When the sea is free of ice elsewhere, the coast on the west side of the Sound is usually menaced with pack ice," he added."

"The U.S.A. party is, apparently, now well established," he noted.

He was right about the New Zealanders' decision to abandon the Ferrar Glacier site and move across the Sound to Pram Point, just two kilometers over the hills from the U.S. Base.

"I have always regarded South Victoria Land as one of the show areas of Antarctica," he told me. He was referring to the spectacular scenery of the mainland mountain ranges and the volcanoes on Ross Island where the Ross Ice Shelf meets the mainland.

Mawson also asked me to send a message to Paul Siple, scientific leader at the U.S. South Pole base.

Should you meet Dr. Siple, please pass on to him my good wishes," Mawson said.

Unfortunately, I had just returned from a flight to the Pole. I had interviewed Siple by radio from the cockpit of my aircraft. However, on a later Pole flight, I was able to relay Mawson's message to Siple personally.

A few weeks later, I gave Sir Douglas a further report. following another visit to Hillary at Scott Base. The New Zealanders had by then completed their 7 buildings connected by a corrugated iron tunnel.

“When I flew over the Ferrar Glacier and Dry Valley in a helicopter I gained your impressions of the area’s unsuitability,” I told Sir Douglas, “and wasn’t surprised when they came across to Ross Island to look for a site.”

“Although Hillary won’t openly admit it,” I told Sir Douglas after interviewing Hillary, “I think he’ll take his party all the way to the Pole to meet Fuchs next year.”

“They’ve already laid their first depot at the Skelton Inlet about 150 miles out and according to Hillary have found an eminently suitable route onto the Plateau.”

Hillary's group was supposed to stop well short of the Pole after laying down the depots of fuel and food that Fuchs would need from the Pole to McMurdo. When Hillary decided to push onto the Pole it created a controversy between him and expedition leader Fuchs.

Sir Douglas replied: “I write again to thank you for a very interesting letter. The wealth of information contained in your letter is of the greatest interest to me.” “

“Hillary’s party have done very well after their initial set-back. It would appear that they will now be certain to do a good job, and pioneer a new track from the ice shelf up through the mountains to the Plateau. “

And a year later, that’s exactly what they did.

McMurdo Sound is a remarkable historic region because it was the headquarters for four important expeditions: There was the Discovery hut near the American base, and the hut at Cape Royds where Mawson lived with Shackleton for two years.

I wrote to Sir Douglas Mawson to tell him about the condition of his old McMurdo home, at the foot of Mount Erebus:

“The supplies were still piled around outside and corn you left behind looked amazingly fresh after more than 50 years exposure,” I told him.

“Directly inside the door a huge pile of snow had collected. Inside was a scene of disarray with all sorts of equipment strewn around. But the building itself looked as though it would stand for another 100 years.”

Sir Douglas in another letter to me expressed concern with what was happening to the historic huts:

“In 1909 when we departed from Shackleton’s Cape Royds hut it was left in fairly good order, but since then a number of expeditions have visited it, hence the disorder”, he wrote.

Sadly, Sir Douglas Mawson died in Adelaide 18 months later.

Another more substantial hut at Cape Evans, about 20 kilometers to the north, was Scott's 1911 base. It was the goal that Scott and his four companions were seeking when they died on the Ross Ice Shelf.

It was also used by men from Shackleton's 1914-17 Endurance expedition. The hut was the base from which they laid depots across the Ross Ice Shelf for the benefit of the overland party from the Weddell Sea that never came. They were marooned there for nearly two years when their ship was ripped from its anchorage and floated north with the ice.

When we visited Cape Evans we were greeted by a chaotic sight. Supplies from those expeditions scattered around the hut. Two dogs apparently abandoned when Shackleton's marooned party hastily left during their rescue, were still tied up.

And the motorized sledge for which Scott had such high hopes, lay rusting, along with cans of gasoline which still smelled fresh after 44 years.

The hut was pretty much as Shackleton's party had left it in 1917, with clothing and supplies in a jumble. We could only imagine the relief and urgency to leave that Shackleton's men felt after being marooned for two years.

PJ: YOU HAD CONTACT WITH ANOTHER EXPLORER FROM THE HEROIC AGE

I returned to McMurdo in late 1958 for another four-month reporting assignment. At that time, I made another link with the heroic age of Antarctic exploration.

Sir Raymond Priestley, a veteran of two of the great expeditions, visited the base. Priestley was with Mawson on Shackleton's Nimrod venture in 1907-09 and Scott's last expedition four years later.

Priestley was a member of Scott's Northern Party. As my friend Les Quartermain wrote in his great book "South To The Pole," "these men endured great privation and danger. Stranded without shelter on the pitiless Victoria Land coast throughout a whole Antarctic winter."

That winter on "Inexpressible island" ranks alongside Shackleton's Endurance expedition and Mawson's tragic journey, in the annals of human survival. The group had already spent one winter in northern Victoria Land

After a further summer's sledging, the six men were expecting to be picked up by Scott's ship Terra Nova to be taken back to the Scott hut at Cape Evans. But the ship never came. They then had to spend another winter in a snow cave that they carved on the rocky shore, in tattered clothes, existing on seal and penguin meat.

When spring arrived, to get back to Cape Evans, they had to walk for hundreds of kilometres on dangerous sea-ice, along mountainous, crevasse-ridden shores.

When they did arrive, they were given the news that Scott and his party had perished earlier in the year.

Four years before that, Priestley had been a colleague of Mawson, when they were in Shackleton's shore party.

Mawson, his fellow Magnetic Pole trekkers Edgeworth David and Mackay almost had the same experience. They barely made the rendezvous with their relief ship on that same Victoria Land coast.

Sir Raymond looked extremely fit at 72. He told me that the savage nature of the Antarctic environment was just as hazardous in modern times as it had been for him and the other survivors of the snow cave.

In 1912, Sir Raymond climbed the 13,280-foot active volcano, Mount Erebus. (Mawson and Edgeworth David were the first in 1909).

Sir Raymond told of the time he and two companions were tenting on the ice covering McMurdo Sound in 1908.

"We went to bed in our tent, and when we woke up, the ice on which we were camped had broken away from the shore and was drifting out to sea. We could feel the thud as killer whales zoomed up and crashed under the ice, trying to knock us off the floe into the water."

The men were saved 24 hours later when the wind changed and blew the ice floe close to the shore again.

Priestley suggested to the captain of a U.S. Navy ship that "it's about time someone climbed Erebus again."

The captain called for volunteers and said one journalist could join the group. Luckily, I lost a coin toss with my Associated Press competitor Charles Maher.

Charlie had an uncomfortable two days in the high altitude air near the summit. When he returned, looking much the worse for wear, he presented me with a rock he picked up at the edge of the crater.

PJ YOU HELPED PORTLAND ZOO COLLECT PENGUINS?

Ross Island is the site of two major penguin rookeries or breeding grounds. One near Shackleton's 1907 hut at Cape Royds is for the smaller Adelies. Another, 40 kilometers away at Cape Bird in the shadow of Mount Erebus is where the larger Emperors congregate.

There are usually a good number of the flightless birds on the sea ice covering the waters of McMurdo Sound. Because they can't fly, it would seem to be an easy proposition to capture them.

But, as I discovered when I accompanied a curator from the Portland Zoo, on a penguin hunt, it's a formidable challenge. These birds can weigh up to 40 kilos and reach more than a meter in height.

As I wrote at the time: "catching penguins and bringing them back alive involves some of the elements of football, wrestling and ice hockey."

If we had done this today, I'm sure we would have justifiably aroused the ire of animal rights people and conservationists.

We flew out to the edge of the sea ice equipped with 20 canvas bags like strait jackets, two crates with air holes, and two long steel rods with steel bands on the end.

The Emperors, aptly named because of their regal bearing, were gathered in groups of four or five near the waters of the Ross Sea. They are deceptive. They look awkward waddling over the ice. But they surprise you with their speed. They can outdistance a man over the snow. And in the water they are among the fastest of all swimmers.

As we approached, the Emperors sensed something was wrong. They began to move a little faster from the encircling band of humans. Their waddling speed quickened. After attempting to escape on foot, they fell forward on their white chests and propelled themselves face down across the ice with their flippers.

I was supposed to "head them off at the pass." But I was so busy taking this picture that some of them propelled themselves past me and made it to the open waters of the Sound.

When our party surrounded a group the zoo curator, Jack Marks, put the bags on the two steel rings at the end of rods and tried to place them over the penguin's heads. The birds squirmed and shrieked and became very belligerent. But the strait jackets were applied and the emperors were turned over on their backs, none the worse for wear.

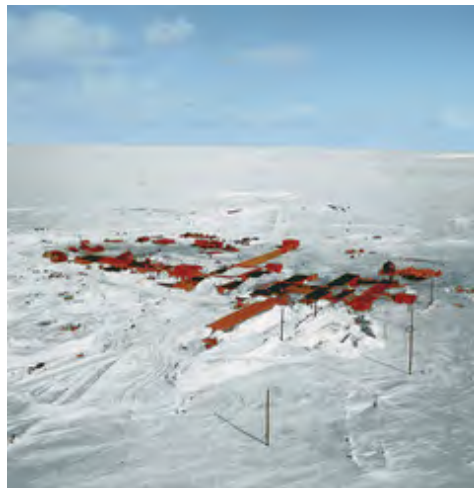
Marks, who was in his 50's, had to bring down several of the penguins with flying tackles. He ran the risk of injury from their long, narrow pointed beaks.



The flightless birds were loaded onto our plane, for their first flight. They almost crowded out the passengers. We had to suffer the fishy smell of the birds and their barks of protest all the way back to McMurdo. There they were placed on an Air Force Globemaster for the long flight across the Pacific.



MC golfing at McMurdo



McMurdo Base after a snow storm

I left McMurdo in late February 1957 after spending more than four months on the ice.

I sailed in a United States Navy ship to the Atlantic Fleet headquarters at Norfolk, Virginia. After getting a grounding in United Press headquarters in New York, I was assigned to the Montreal bureau of UP's Canadian affiliate British United Press.

In 1957, I was appointed BUP Bureau Manager at Halifax, Nova Scotia with responsibility for covering news from Canada's four Atlantic Provinces. This included a federal election campaign, a Royal visit and the 1958 mine disaster at Springhill, Nova Scotia.

In 1958, I was re-assigned to the Antarctic to cover the windup of the International Geophysical Year and spent another four months at McMurdo Sound and other U.S. Bases.

But by this time even flights to the Pole had become routine as the Americans settled in. They've been at McMurdo and the Pole ever since and are in their third South Pole base after wearing out the first two.

When I left McMurdo Sound in February of 1959, I travelled on one of the US Navy cargo ships, the *USS Wyandot*, back to New Zealand and Sydney. Coincidentally, the aerial conqueror of the South Pole, *Que Sera Sera*, was tied on to the deck. It was on its way to be displayed at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington. I witnessed its moment in history.

PJ YOU HELPED TO GUIDE THE WYANDOT INTO SYDNEY HARBOR?

On the morning we were to go through the Heads, I looked out the porthole. Through a thick fog I could only see that we were close to cliffs on the shore. The ship seemed to have stopped.

A few minutes later there was a knock on my ward room cabin door. It was a young sailor who said: "Mr. Cutler, the Captain would like to speak to you on the Bridge."

When I got up there I found the Captain, the first officer and the navigator. The Captain handed me a pair of binoculars and asked me to look through the fog and tell him where I thought we were.

I really didn't have a clue. But I was very lucky. As I looked through the fog, I could see an oil refinery flame-off. I surmised correctly that it was the refinery at Kurnell.

"Captain," I said. "I think that we are about to enter Botany Bay."

The Captain then ordered hard starboard and the ship turned right and sailed up to the Heads and entered the correct harbour.

For the purposes of accommodation and messing, the Pentagon had given correspondents the simulated rank of Lieutenant Commander. I think I earned my stripes that morning.

On my return to Canada in 1959, at 21, I was appointed to BUP's Parliamentary Press Gallery Bureau in Ottawa where I covered major national affairs. This involved travelling with the Prime Minister and other cabinet ministers around Canada and overseas. Apart from an 18-year-old in the 19th century, I was the youngest person to be a Gallery member.

This prompted me to enrol at Carleton University in Political Science and Economics courses while working full-time at the Press Gallery. That is where I met Fran.

In 1962, I left BUP and joined the Ottawa Citizen as a reporter and later a sub-editor. I also was a freelance contributor to Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) radio and television programs, the Ottawa correspondent for the South China Morning Post, Hong Kong and contributed to Time Magazine, the Times of London and the Financial Times.

In 1963, I returned to the Ottawa Press Gallery as Parliamentary Editor for some 50 Maclean-Hunter business publications.

**PJ HOW DID YOU GET TO HAVE A FEW WORDS WITH PRESIDENT KENNEDY AND VISIT
PRESIDENT NIXON IN THE OVAL OFFICE?**

A few words is right

In the 1963 Canadian federal election, Lester Pearson led his Liberal Party to defeat Conservative Prime Minister John Diefenbaker.

One of the first things a new Canadian Prime Minister does is meet as soon as possible with the United States President.

So in May 1963, six months before that fateful day in Dallas I was in the Press Gallery group travelling with the P.M. We flew to a U.S. airbase near the summer White House, at Hyannisport, Massachussets. These are a few of the pictures I took on that day.



PM Pearson meeting Pres Kennedy at Cape Cod



PM Trudeau meeting Pres Nixon

Kennedy and Pearson got along well because Canadian Liberals are more like Democrats.

It was a cold and blustery day at the Kennedy family compound on Cape Cod. We waited for the President and Prime Minister after their meeting.

Kennedy came out, without a coat and walked and talked with us and Invited us into brother Bobby Kennedy's house which was next door, to warm up.

Mr. Pearson took the President around the lounge room and introduced us to Kennedy. When it was my turn, all I could muster was something like: "Is this is what the weather on Cape Cod is really like Mr. President? "

Kennedy smiled and said: "Nah, you should be here when it really blows."

Yes, I was that close. You can see, as far as security goes, how times have changed.

Five years later, I travelled with Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau when he made his first official visit to Washington to meet President Nixon.

This time we were waiting in the West Wing media briefing room. When the Nixon-Trudeau talks were over we were ushered into the Oval Office where Nixon greeted us and presented us each with a ballpoint pen with the Presidential seal on it.

I'm not too sure today, whether I would regard the pen as one of my most treasured possessions.

In 1970, I accompanied Prime Minister Trudeau on a tour of the Pacific, including New Zealand, Australia, Malaysia, Hong Kong and the Osaka 70 World's Fair. In 1976, I accompanied the Foreign Minister on a tour of New Zealand, Australia, Indonesia.

PJ Now China. How did you become one of the first western journalists to go to China during the Cultural Revolution, and shortly after the ping pong tournament.

It was July 1971. Eight months before, Canada became one of the first of the major western governments to recognize the People's Republic of China.

And it was just a couple of months after China's dramatic invitation to the United States ping pong team to visit the PRC, after an international tournament in Japan.

One of the first Canadian delegations to China was a trade mission led by the Canadian Trade Minister Jean-Luc Pepin. He took along major figures in Canada's financial and business community.

I was one of a small number of Press Gallery journalists accredited to the mission.

For an amazing week we were royally received and entertained by the Chinese. The Great Wall, banquets, visits to factories, universities and schools, communes.

The highlight was a two and half hour audience with Premier Chou En Lai. We were taken to meet him in the Great Hall of the People on Tien a Men Square. Minister Pepin introduced us to the Premier. As you can see, Chou En Lai had charm and charisma to spare.

I had a small tape recorder and I put in on the coffee table in front of M. Pepin and Premier Chou. I captured the entire conversation.

When I returned to Canada I moderated a discussion on the tape with three major China experts. It was broadcast by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and the Public Broadcasting Service in the United States



MC met Chou En Lai 1970 in Peking with Trade Minister



and again in 1971 on visit with PM Trudeau

When the formal part of the visit was over, three of my colleagues and I asked the Chinese Foreign Ministry to let us stay for another couple of weeks. We were the first western journalists to get into China after the ping pong diplomacy. It was too great a journalistic opportunity to miss.

Our Chinese hosts had been the soul of hospitality during the visit. So we were very surprised when they were unwilling to let us stay on. We finally went to Minister Pepin and asked him to ask Chou En Lai to intercede for us.

He did so and our Chinese minders changed their minds. But there was a caveat. We had to leave Peking and northern China and do our further investigations in south China around Canton, Kwanghou.

We were puzzled, but gratified. We didn't think too much about it, even being seasoned journalists.

PJ I understand you gave Gough Whitlam a "heads up" as the Labor leader on his trip to China with his ALP delegation.

At the same time, Whitlam's ALP group was getting ready to follow us into Peking. There was a chance our paths would cross.

However there was a much more significant and historic visit at that time which coincided with the Canadian and Australian visitors, who were kept out of Peking just then. I'll get to that in a minute.

We flew down to Canton. We happened to be staying at the same hotel as the incoming Whitlam Labor group. They had just arrived on their way to Peking.

On the hotel steps I recognized Whitlam. A few years earlier, we had him to dinner, at our weekender north of Ottawa. At the time he was Deputy Opposition leader. He was being minded by an Australian diplomat who shared the cottage with us.

Remarkably, nearly 60 years later, I see that diplomat is here today. Hello Geoffrey White, a Probus member...

As I began my Whitlam interview I was armed with the communique from the Canada-China talks. It was just a few hours old.

From the Australian perspective, it contained an explosive paragraph: "when China had to import wheat," it said, China "would continue to look to Canada first."

Whitlam was a bit taken aback, when I read this to him. The potential for Australian wheat sales to China was an important element in the discussions he was to have when he reached Peking.

He was extremely guarded in his response: "I haven't seen the communique and I wouldn't want to comment on it if I haven't seen it. But I wouldn't want you to get the impression that the Australian Labor Party's interest in China flows solely or mainly from the wheat question."

Then he made it quite clear to me that an Australian Labor government would quickly follow Canada's lead and recognize the Peking regime.

"The Australian Labor Party believes very strongly that the Trudeau government was on the right track," he told me. "We want to follow it."

We concluded our Chinese visit and took the train from Canton to Hong Kong. When we arrived there, we turned on the television news. And the reason for the Chinese insisting that we leave Peking became clear.

Nixon was announcing that he would go to Peking to meet with Chairman Mao.

We were ushered out of Peking because Henry Kissinger was arriving from Pakistan. Kissinger was on his secret mission to set up the Nixon visit to China. The trip was so secret that even some members of Kissinger's staff were not told of the destination.

We left Peking a couple of days before he arrived. Whitlam's visit was delayed until after Kissinger had left the Chinese capital. But his lucky presence in China at that time gave him a boost in the next Australian election.

I returned to China the following year with the Canadian Foreign Minister. We were again entertained at the Great Hall by Chou En Lai.

When I shook hands with him again, he had been well-briefed. He referred to our meeting the year before. He noted that while I had a French name, I was actually an anglo.

Chou had studied in Paris in his younger days and was quite fluent in French.

When he asked me whether I spoke French I could only reply, with some embarrassment: “un peu.” My Sydney high school French couldn't cut it, despite 15 years in bilingual Canada.

The next year, I accompanied Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau on his official visit to China.

PJ As time is slipping by, can you briefly cover your switch to the Canadian Public Service?

In 1977, after 22 years as a journalist, I moved to “the other side” when Canada's Finance Minister (Treasurer) Donald Macdonald asked me to be his Press Secretary (when Pierre Trudeau was PM).

I accompanied the Minister to London for the 1977 Economic Summit and on an official visit to Yugoslavia.

When he retired, I joined the staff of the Foreign Minister and was appointed Director of the External Affairs Department Press Office and Official Spokesman for the foreign office. In that role, I was a member of Canadian delegations to the United Nations and NATO conferences.

In 1980, I joined the staff of the Auditor General of Canada who wanted me to establish a public affairs operation. I retired in 1993 after 13 years as Director Public Affairs and served three Auditors General in that time.