

1996 JOURNEY TO THE END OF THE EARTH ANTARCTICA

MEG: Monday, February 19, 1996. Martha and I meet at the Atlanta airport for our flight to Miami. LAN Chile is very kind and gives us both passes to the business class "Club", while only I am traveling

Business class, Martha is back in steerage. LAN Chile even suggests I might like to upgrade to first class, but fearing it would mean more money, I decline. They apologize that they cannot upgrade Martha to Business class since it is full. Later we find out what the problem is. Business Class is overbooked and I get upgraded to first class anyway to make room for other people. Perhaps I should have "upgraded" earlier for Martha so we could both be there. The real difference between business and first is that in first the seats recline almost like beds and the service is more elegant, individually served plates off of a serving tray. We started with beluga caviar and smoked salmon, progressed to Chateaubriand, lobster and chicken, but I quit about two bites into the chicken for I wanted to get as much sleep as possible. It is an 8-hour flight with a two-hour time change, so while we left at nine and arrived at 7, it is only 5 AM Atlanta time. My seatmate also was upgraded. He is an Italian, married to a Chilean and has lived in Chile for 6 years in the fishing business. His whole family, in-laws, brother in law etc have just been vacationing in St Martin. His father and mother in law are among the other people in first class (there are 7 of us). There are other Abercrombie and Kent people on the plane but I have yet to make contact with any but our courier Juan Carlos. Martha meets a few back in tourist.

MARTHA It's my turn. There wasn't much to report before now. It was a long flight to Santiago, but I didn't wake up as sore as usual, I think because I was taking Advil the whole time. Santiago was hot, about 80, and in late summer weather. We checked into the Hyatt Regency, a very nice 3-year-old hotel. Mom immediately plugged in her computer, without removing the 110-volt surge suppressor. Zapp and stink, and of course the circuit blew as well. So we reported the circuit not working, and an hour and a half later they got our lights back on. That left us no time any more for naps before the city tour. We decided to take the tour, thinking it would keep us from sleeping all afternoon. That was a mistake in hindsight, but seemed to be a good idea at the time. For lunch there was a tempting salad bar, but remembering where we were, we refrained. I had wonderful seafood, calamari and shrimp and scallops, cooked Thai style, and wonderful fresh bread. For dinner we ate on the terrace near the garden and pool, with the sound of running water. I had a wonderful pheasant breast in a red wine sauce. Tumbled into bed to finish the 20th of February.

MEG: Tuesday, February 20, 1996. It was a short night but I slept pretty well and soon we were gathering bags and being herded onto our bus for the 45-minute ride into Santiago. The Hyatt Regency is lovely and our room a sort of mini suite with bedroom and living areas on two levels. I am anxious about my computer for clearing security in Miami I have found the battery is dead. So I plug it in and there is a sort of pop and burning sound as the surge suppresser cannot cope with the 220 power. And then there is darkness in the bathroom and around the desk area. So we call maintenance and with our non-existent Spanish manage to explain our problem. It takes them about an hour but finally the electricity comes on and I am back in business. I am not sure about the surge suppressor.

We check in at Sterns to receive our free charm (a moai from Easter Island) and I succumb to a lapis lazuli ring. We have lunch in one of the hotel restaurants, with a magnificent salad bar that we fear is loaded with E coli (so we avoid it), and an assortment of meat and fish dishes. Martha has a three fish Thai spiced stir-fry. I have more prosaic grilled chicken, all delicious.

Then it is time for our city tour. We aren't all that enthusiastic but the alternative is to fall into bed and sleep and that will just make it harder to get on Chilean time so off we go on the bus. It turns out to be a four-hour tour mostly of various residential sections of the city, but highlighting the racetrack, cathedral and San Cristobel Hill with the virgin overlooking the city. We are happy when it is over.

Back at the hotel, we pick up my ring that was being sized and try the Italian restaurant for dinner. I have venison and Martha pheasant. Then it is off to bed and a quick sleep before the 4:30AM wake-up call!

Wednesday, February 21. After a buffet breakfast we are loaded into buses for the 45-minute ride to the airport and our charter flight to Ushuaia (pronounced U-Shy-uh). It is a 3 1/2 hour flight

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to the southernmost city in the world. Ushuaia is an Indian word meaning bay that opens to the west.

Our guide is a very knowledgeable girl named Iris and as we drive down the 14 block of Old Town main street called San Martin, we learn a little of the history of this place on Tierra del Fuego. At first settled by the Yamina Indians, an Anglican Mission was established here in 1869. On October 12, 1884 the Argentine Government set up a sub-prefecture (or naval station), and encouraged the British to settle elsewhere. Each year on October 12 the city celebrates its birthday with a large paella party. The sub-prefecture attracted other Argentineans and by 1892 one hundred people called Ushuaia home. Some of the original corrugated iron buildings still remain; one has become the town library. In 1896 the Argentine government established a prison in town and more people came to provide the support system for it. The prison held 800 prisoners at one time.

The prisoners helped build the roads and many of them remained after they had served their sentences. The prison continues until

1947. By the 1960s there were 5000 inhabitants. The Argentine government passed some economic advantage laws to encourage more settlement and by the 1980s there were electronic factories.

Soon good jobs attracted more people, and the population has now grown to 41000. It gives the impression of a boomtown with much of its frontier legacy remaining. Some of the settlers were squatters and built their homes on a sort of sledge on government land so they could easily move them if asked to move.

We headed out of town into the Andes Mountains, which are not as tall here as further north. If it had not been rainy and cold we would have enjoyed seeing the peat bogs, lakes and waterfalls along the way to a ski resort called Las Cotarras where we have a lamb barbecue with lots of wine to wash it down and where the proprietor makes a special coffee with burnt sugar and orange peel, laced heavily with much liquor of all sorts. It was an international coffee, the liquor coming from all over the world. Fortunately we were only required to drink a thimbleful. The guides were all drinking cokes.

We slept our way back to Ushuaia.

We shopped for souvenirs and postcards along the main street and finally were allowed to board the Explorer at 5:30. Our cozy cabin is very conveniently located in the center of the ship just below the reception area. There are 84 passengers (capacity is 100) and they come from all over the world. There is a French speaking group with their own interpreter, about 15 are German speaking, about 20 are from the British world, everything from Australia to Antigua, and the rest are Americans; four mother-daughter combinations and a father with his 14 year old son. We are introduced to the staff and then have lifeboat drill as we go down the Beagle Channel. We have dinner with some of the other "singles" on board. Five of the six have left spouses behind; the sixth was an Australian girl who was not married. Not everyone wants to go to Antarctica! After dinner we are off to bed. It has been a long day!

About 11:00 we leave the Beagle Channel and head south across the Drake Passage and into the "roaring forties". Here the wind blows around the globe with nothing to break its fetch. The water becomes very bumpy and the ship really starts to rock and roll. Just getting from bed to bathroom is quite a trick! We will have two days of this to reach Antarctica. We have been warned that a lot will be seasick.

MARTHA: Up bright and early at 4:50 AM to breakfast and catch the plane to Ushuaia. We had a four-hour flight to get there. It was brisk and windy. We took a bus tour down the main street of Ushuaia and then up into the mountains to a ski lodge for lunch. Not much to see as there was mist and rain. There are three kinds of trees on Tierra del Fuego, all small leaved. Our tour guide told us of the beaver debacle, where 25 pairs were released earlier this century. Now there are 50000, and no predators. The irony is that their fur is terrible, as it doesn't get cold enough for the fur to develop. The temperature ranges from -10C to +10, and lots of rainy days. They gave us an hour to shop, and to our surprise there was enough to do.

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Mom found some masks for a friend, and I got a tee shirt of Cape Horn, and we also sent off some post cards in haste. And at last to board the ship!

The Explorer is much smaller than the Royal Viking ships, and was dwarfed by a cruise ship also in harbor. She is red and white striped.

Our cabin is cozy, just room for two single beds and a tiny night table between. There is a round porthole, which we can dog closed, plus two closets, a tiny desk, and attached bath. There is a European style shower, which is over the toilet. Actually, it's not a bad idea to sit on the toilet while showering, as the ship had a lot of pitch and roll on the way south. The shower comes in pulses of about 45 seconds, and then stops. That's so you can soap up, as it's a good idea to hold on, at least so far.

The cruise down the Beagle channel was lovely, soft light lasting long into the evening, with jagged mountains on both sides, trees on the lower slopes, and bald above, some snow capped. In the night we started to cross the Drake Passage, and I took some anti-sea sick medicine.

I ate breakfast in the morning, and attended a lecture. It was not good to sit in the lecture hall, with the curtains closed, lights low, looking at slides. I spent the rest of the day in bed, very drowsy, with rubbery muscles, no interest in eating.

MEG Thursday, February 22, 1991 Lecture on Darwin and the Beagle, by Jack Child. His lecture was very good with slides but the motion of the ship in the lecture room, which is on an upper deck, was bad. Martha decided she needed some Mal de Mer medicine and I was suffering from slight diarrhea, so we retreated to our stateroom and rested in bed. We heard the mineralogy lecture over the bedroom radio, but it suffered from not being able to see the slides. Part of the problem is that we are both just plain tired. I made it up for the buffet lunch but soon returned to the comfort of our cabin. Neither of us was actually vomiting but we sure didn't feel so great. We missed the Captain's welcome cocktail party and dinner (to which we had been asked to join Kim Crosbie's table (Expedition leader). Had bouillon, sorbet and rolls in our room and went early to bed. Had to advance the clocks one hour. During the night we pitched enough to send our water pitcher careening onto Martha's bed.

Friday February 23, 1992. We awake to find ourselves 61 degrees south and into the Antarctic convergence. It is noticeably calmer and we feel much better. There are penguins swimming near the ship.

The lecture by Jack Childs this morning was about the history of Antarctica. After bouillon, this was followed by our briefing on how to behave in Antarctica so as not to disturb the birds or ecology.

Also they showed us how to board the zodiacs and so forth.

During lunch we start to see dramatic icebergs and soon we enter the South Shetland Islands. Tony Chater gives a lecture on Penguinology, all 17 species, although some of them, like the Galapagos Penguin live elsewhere. We are going to make our first landing this afternoon. It's very cold on deck and we break out the arctic gear we have brought along.

Going through the MacFarland Straits we have dramatic views of icebergs and cliffs of basalt. We round Greenwich Island and enter Yankee Harbor where we go ashore to see a large Gentoo Penguin rookery. Yankee Harbor is called this because people from

Connecticut and New York hung out here during the war of 1812, when there was a lot of fighting with the British over the seal hunting rights. Skuas fly overhead and some fur seals snooze on the beach. We are supposed to keep a 15-foot distance but some of the penguins are curious and come much closer. Fortunately the fur seals showed no interest, as they can be vicious. The penguins are at the end of their mating season and many are molting. While they molt they also must fast, as they do not have the protective oil covered feathers to keep them warm while diving. This breed is one of the deepest divers among the various species. It is great fun to watch the penguins waddle to and fro, some chase each other, and many are preening and cleaning themselves. They look spotless, but the rookery is far from spotless and you must watch your step to stay out of the guano.

I am dressed in thermal underwear, corduroy pants, turtle neck shirt and sweat shirt, covered with Gor-Tex pants, wool hat, knee high rubber boots, over a double layer of stockings, and my big red parka.

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My glasses are under large orange goggles to cut the glare and I must look like some one on the moon. Over the whole outfit I wear a light emergency life vest designed to self-inflate if the zodiac capsizes.

Some people wear a back pack over this as it is important to keep your hands free going down the steep gangway to the small boats, or jumping off into the surf on shore. Actually I am almost too warm (it must be in the thirties) but I was so cold on board the Explorer I thought it necessary to try all my warm clothes. My brand new right knee-high boot has a small pinhole leak, that I didn't discover until I was scrubbing it to get back on board the Zodiac. The whole outfit is just a plot to make us all waddle like the penguins we are seeing!

After dinner there is a movie but we head for bed instead.

MARTHA: Actually I tried to watch, but fell asleep promptly. It was David Attenborough's "Life in the Freezer" and what I saw was wonderful.

MEG: Saturday, February 25. Martha sets her alarm for 6:00 so that we will be up for the Gerlache Strait, between Brabant and Anvers Islands and the Antarctic Peninsula. This is the western side of the peninsula. We have fresh snow and the view is a frozen wonderland of tall basaltic mountains dusted with snow. Surprisingly it is not really very cold. Probably about freezing but no wind. Antarctica is actually a desert and there is practically no humidity. It is clear and in the distance we can even see another ship. We have breakfast and push on to Cuverville Island where we anchor in an iceberg-strewn bay. Kim Crosbie, our expedition leader, spent 3 years here studying the interaction of animals and people. Adrian Gerlache was a Belgian explorer who explored these parts in 1897-1899 on his vessel Belgica. He discovered Cuverville and named it after a French Admiral who had helped support his expedition. We zodiac ashore to a mile long beach with nesting gentoo penguins at each end. There are hundreds of chicks, as this rookery is not as far along as the one yesterday. There are even some very tiny ones (who unfortunately will not survive the winter), and a few unhatched eggs. On the cliff we spied a Skua and her baby bird with its head stuck out of its nest.

It is fun to watch the penguin chicks chase their mothers to beg for their breakfast. As winter comes, these birds will move north to the edge of the ice flow to stay near open water where they can feed.

After about an hour we board the zodiacs for a short cruise through the icebergs back to the ship. Wonderful shapes and blue striations.

Then we move across the strait to Ronge (Ron-jay) island 20 minutes away. Again a beach with gentoo penguins but there are also chinstrap penguins nesting there. We have seen the chinstraps swimming in the water but this is our first good look. They have a small black feathery "chin strap" appearing to hold their black caps in place. Gentoo penguins are recognized by their orange beaks. Fur seals are also here and we must keep our distance. On our way back to the Explorer our zodiac detours to a small iceberg where a colony of crab eating seals is resting. They more properly should be called krill eating seals since they feed on the plentiful krill, a small shrimp like animal which the penguins also live on. The early explorers named them crab eaters because of the red food they were ingesting that they thought was crab. Krill are also red! The crab eaters are the most plentiful seal on earth, outnumbering all the others put together. The big bull seal of the group had lots of scars to show how he has fought other seals or been attacked by the leopard seal. The crab eating seal spends his whole life on the ice, even being born there. The mother seal deserts her pup when he is weaned at one month, and he is left to fend for himself against the other predator seals. Thus they all carry scars.

It is quite a struggle just to get my boots off, and I am pleased to find the plastic bag I wrapped my right foot in has kept me dry. The hardest part of this journey is getting dressed and undressed! It is lunchtime. This afternoon we will cruise further south to see how far we can go. It sounds like a more restful time. We are on our way to Paradise Bay.

Paradise Bay is spectacular. The sun is shining and the air is still, the water is like glass so the high mountains and glaciers along with the clouds are reflected. It reminds me of Glacier Bay in Alaska, except we don't see any calving by the glaciers. From the amount of ice in the bay, however, this must go on. Tall ragged mountains in the distance are lovely with snow spindrifts blowing from their tops. Paradise Bay is the scene most often pictured when you see scenes of

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the Antarctic, and it lives up to its reputation. However, from crew comments, the last three cruises have not had our wonderful weather. We pass two army bases, one Chilean and one Argentinean.

Paradise Bay has an entrance at each end and we soon are out into the Ferguson Channel. One of the nicer features of the Explorer is the "open bridge" policy so you can go inspect the charts or just stand and listen to the quiet commands from the Officer in command to the helmsman. He steers carefully between the icebergs, often scaring a group of seals into the water. We continue on until we are back in the Gerlache Strait. We pass the World Discoverer and a small private sloop. With intermittent watches down below to thaw out, we proceed to the Lemaire Channel, a wonderful narrow channel filled with icebergs and high mountains on both sides. Many pieces of ice have seals on them and our wake causes the berg to rock and the seals to slide off. By 5:30 we reach more open water and Meg gives up followed shortly by Martha. We have our recap in the lounge followed by an Italian dinner.

By nine, of course, we are back in our polar gear and on deck. As the sun gets lower, the snow on the mountains starts to glisten like a meringue. From the bridge I watch our Swedish captain thread his way through an ice pack. Our ship knives through 4 inch ice pieces like butter, scattering Adelie Penguins and a Weddell seal who crawls out on the pack to see what is coming. The ice gets thicker and thicker and finally our skipper is having to port rudder, starboard rudder quite a bit to ram our way through the ice. It is beautiful as the sun goes down and Kim says we should look for the "green flash", but we do not see it. I always thought you had to be able to see the horizon to see the green flash, and here we have icebergs and perhaps an island in the way. Finally it is announced that we are 65 degrees, 55 minutes south and this will be our furthest south. The Antarctic circle is still about 40 nautical miles south and it is a bit disappointing that we wont see it, but on the other hand, we understand it is a seasick 40 miles and there are other more interesting sights in store. We turn north back through the ice flow and Martha and I turn in. We hear an awful racket every time our hull cuts through the ice. I am glad we are not in the bow!

MARTHA: Today has been more wonderful than I could have imagined. Starting with an early morning jarring alarm, I crawled out and peeped out the porthole. Well, it was a bit grey, pre-dawn light, and ice covered mountains not too far out the porthole. It was hard to get excited, but I went to brush my teeth and get dressed. About the time I got dressed Mom surfaced and said what is there. I said, "Well there's a nice iceberg drifting by. Mom got up, came to the window and said "Wow". At which point I headed up on deck, joined shortly afterwards by Mom. It was beautiful, very wintry, grey, and not enough light to take pictures, but pink skies over the peaks were beautiful. We were going through a strait, with mountains rising directly from the ocean on both sides. An early breakfast, followed by zodiac rides ashore to a rookery on Cuverville Island, full of gentoo penguins. There were mostly grown, currently molting young birds, going from fat, fluffy downy penguins to sleekly plumaged adults. The parents were mostly not around, and the chicks were slowly getting hungrier and hungrier, prompting them eventually to enter the water and seek food. There were also a few skuas around, brown, gull type birds, which prey on the young and weak birds. It was simply marvelous. We wandered around there for an hour or so, and there were these clusters of gentoo penguins everywhere. They are so downy and fluffy; they look just like Megan's stuffed toy penguin, except usually not quite so clean. At one point I found a pair of parents with two tiny chicks, just delightful. They probably would not survive, but perhaps the parents would have better luck next year. There were some whalebones, vertebra and ribs, covered with a dusting of snow. Our fearless leader Kim had spent 3 summers here, doing census studies, stress studies and other research, living in tents and playing endless rounds of cards in the evenings. Gentoo penguins are the original penguins. They are what everyone envisions when you say penguin.

The bay had floating ice floes; including one convenient large boulder sized one with a few ridges aground where we landed. They tied the zodiacs there while we were ashore. It was beautiful there, watching the sun shining around a mountain on the mountains across the bay.

Back aboard, and we zipped across the bay and went ashore half an hour later, really not time enough to get out of our heavy clothing. This was on Ronge Island, and there were fur seals, gentoo and chinstrap penguins. The first beach had been mostly level, with some gentle rises each end. The fur seals were young males, feeling their oats, so they were doing some sparring

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with each other. We had been graphically warned about their grumpiness, speed and predilection for biting, so gave them lots of room. At one point I saw a lovely huge boulder that I thought would give me a good viewpoint, but as I approached I realized that there was a tail of something sticking out around the side that was bigger than a penguin, so I hastily retreated. And it was a fur seal, of course.

I climbed up the steepish ice slope there, and enjoyed the spectacular view from on high, looking down on the beach with penguins (small dots), fur seals (curves) and the red suited tourists ambling around. Actually, we look quite jaunty, and it makes it easy for them to keep track of us. The view was of bay, blue water dotted with ice floes, surrounded by grey jagged mountains covered with ice, all awash in sunshine, a soft light from an angle, the sky blue with some fluffy clouds echoing the ice floes. Words can't really describe it; I can only hope my pictures do.

I learned there to be punctual for the zodiacs, as I had to wait for three to go back. The early birds got a zodiac tour of the bay with commentary on the seals, etc. I also learned the trick to really getting the guano out on my boot soles. I waded in the water for about thirty feet before I get to the boot scraper, and then it is softened up and will come off easily. No one wants to bring penguin guano back to the cabin with them.

Lunch was good, lots of salads with pasta, olives and vegetables, two kinds of cold poached fish, lamb curry, fruit, and a healthy appetite as well. I spent the day out of doors, first on the shore excursions, and then on the fore-castle and top deck. We went through various straits during the day, with full sunshine making everything simply glorious. I keep thinking this must be like what the highest mountain peaks look like, except they don't have the ocean reflecting them.

There are glaciers everywhere, and jagged peaks poking out. The water was calm, almost oily at first, so everything reflected in it.

Later on a breeze came up, putting ripples in for texture. We saw lots of crabeater seals basking on the ice floes. Sometimes they would scramble to dive into the water as the ship went by, sending waves crashing over them. In general the ship left little wake. We went to

Paradise Bay, and continued through the most spectacular scenery imaginable all afternoon. We passed the World Discoverer, and two sailboats, several research stations.

Icebergs come in multitudes of forms. Some are rounded, like turtles. Others resemble cruisers and battleships, with prows and high sterns. Some look for all the world like skyscrapers, and when clustered, give the effect of a modern city from the distance. I saw one that looked like a moai head, some swirled and spiraling, many look like birds, or clusters of birds. The colors reflect the sky, and range from grey, to brown, pink, lavender, green, and frequently blue. Sometimes they are almost an inky blue.

This evening they announced that the captain was going to go south, to our furthest south. And of course, more spectacular scenery, so we bundled up and went on deck. Earlier it was above freezing, but not anymore. The sun setting on the mountains was beautiful, and we picked our way through the pack ice. I stood on the bridge awhile, watching and listening to the captain give minor course adjustments to the helmsman. Eventually we reached a point where we had to do some actual ice breaking. He brought the ship into the ice at a fair speed, and a crack opened and slowly widened in front of us. There was a jagged line in front, and straight lines went to the side. At one point the ice stopped us, and he had to use side thrusters to break through. Exhilarating! Finally we rounded an appropriate iceberg, and headed north. From our cabin you can see pack ice all around, and hear frequent scraping on the sides. Too wonderful.

MEG: We wake at 6:30 to a cold gray overcast world of floating icebergs and hills with their heads in the clouds. Charcot Bay on Booth Island. Here the French explorer Jean-Baptiste Charcot wintered over, but we are told the area is unexplored as no ships come here since there are many ice bergs and the waters are largely uncharted. Our captain does a great job threading through the enormous icebergs, but when we reach the beach area it proves inappropriate for a landing, so we leave the island still unexplored and go to nearby Pleneau Island, which has the usual assortment of gentoo penguins. We spend some time watching and being attacked by two angry skuas because we are too close to their nest, but we never see the chick they are defending. Skuas are a sort of brown seagull. This island is interesting because it is granite, large smooth granite outcroppings that make it easy to climb to the crest to see the icebergs in the

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ocean beyond. They promise us tours through the icebergs but in actuality, only the first few zodiacs get much of a tour. We had a shortened tour to observe some seals on an iceberg, with photo ops for the camera buffs. It is colder than yesterday and we are happy to get back on board our warm ship.

We are urged to come on deck and see us go through the Lemaire channel again, but this time we pass. Getting up at 6 and going to bed at 11 makes for a long day.

MARTHA: Another early morning, but we woke up by our alarm before they woke us up. Ample time for showers and breakfast today. We threaded our way through some huge ice floes, many very blue. The blue ice is denser than the rest, and refracts the blue spectrum better. There was a pair of huge floes connected by a submerged ice shelf, all gorgeously turquoise. The sun took awhile to get up to our side of the mountains, and there is a great deal of cloudiness today. We weren't able to land where Charcot overwintered, so no exploring for ruins. We did go ashore on a granite island. Except for no seaweed, it could have been Maine.

There was a tide pool where we came ashore, with green algae, and filmy pink kelp, dead limpet shells. The water was very icy (I reached into it). We clambered over large boulders, giving other people a lovely photo op, as a pair of skuas bombed us to protect their chick. Fortunately we ducked enough and they weren't throwing projectiles. I found green slime growing in some melt water areas, two different colors, and not far away some fluffy green moss.

There were also lichen in yellow, black, grey and some orange on the rocks. We climbed up the hill and had a view of an ice-strewn seascape, early morning sun turning the sky pink and turquoise, with fluffy clouds. Lovely tour by zodiac, getting right up next to some seals. They come in a wide range of colors; white to brown, one was mottled with yellow. Lots of scars. It was marvelous to see them up close. Back on board, we were delighted to have some bouillon and tea to warm up.

MEG: During lunch we passed through the Neumayer Channel between Anvers and Wienke Islands. We stop at Port Lockroy. In 1944 the British established a research station here during "Operation Tabarin" which lasted until 1962. The station was a key monitoring site during the Geophysical Year of 1957/8. After the station was abandoned it fell into great disrepair until this January when a team of four was sent here to restore it as a Historic Site.

They had to clear out much rubbish and re-roof a large part, but you can now see it mostly restored and see how life was at an Antarctic research station. The island was also decorated with the usual display of Gentoo penguins and some snowy sheathbills, small chicken-like birds, the only birds in the Antarctic that don't have webbed feet. They are prettier on the wing than in person. Nearby on another small island we saw blue-eyed shags, the handsome black and white cormorants of the Antarctic with a couple of their chicks, but I could not get close enough to see the distinctive blue eyes. This island also had two whale skeletons, which were interesting to see.

Along the windward shore a mini-pack ice was developing and you could see how it will be when it freezes in another month. The bad part of these two islands was that they were the dirtiest ones we have seen. Between the guano and the mud, I couldn't wait to get out of my gear and wash it when I got back to the ship!

MARTHA: Port Lockroy looked like what I thought an Antarctic research station would look like. Very basic, some shelving and other built in stuff. A grander stove than I had in West Virginia, but they couldn't get it to work properly, so were using a coal-burning box stove instead. I noticed that each bunk had a sheepskin mattress, and they all slept in down or thick hollow fill sleeping bags. They had a stove in each room and it was shirtsleeve temperatures inside, so I think the current people there must be hot at night. The floor of course was bare wood, and heavily tracked with guano. We all dutifully wiped our feet at the door, but it was a lost cause. The building was very colorful, turquoise blue and bright greens and yellow. And red and black trimmed on the outside. People in the Antarctic go in for bright primary colors, since the color scheme nature has in the far south is grey, black and white, with hints of other colors. Port Lockroy was very mucky, with quantities of gentoo penguin chicks, all very dirty, as there was lots of guano. One stood sentinel

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duty by the flagpole. Others were standing around by old rusty barrels, or underneath one of the buildings. I was glad to move on to the adjacent island.

There was just as much guano there, as well as mucky swamp slime that I waded through ankle deep. It is pleasant to not worry about gunk when you walk. They have a very efficient boot scraper that we all use. First you slosh around in water, and then use the industrial size bristles of their boot scrapers, intermixed with more water. No one enters the zodiac with dirty boots. Despite it all, the housekeepers have lots of mopping to do when we come back. It was interesting watching the shags. They are graceful birds, in flight and when they stand and preen. There were mostly adult looking birds, but also some full size juveniles. I had to stand my ground at one point, as a parent landed and was instantly attacked by two hungry young birds. There was a great deal of wing flapping, most of which took place almost at my feet, then one chick stuffed it's beak inside the parent's, probably for a minute, and was fed. The parent bird flew off immediately to get more food. There were also two sets of whalebones.

Afterwards we sailed down the Neumayer Channel, which is narrow, twists in an S curve in the vicinity of Port Lockroy, then widens somewhat. There are mountains on both sides, up to 1200 meters, all covered with the white meringue. It was as dramatic as the Lemaire Channel yesterday, but lacked the quantities of icebergs. And equally glorious to photograph, as the sun came out for the whole afternoon.

It got quite warm on the forecastle, probably close to 40, with light wind. I was on deck all afternoon, with brief spells to warm up. Late in the afternoon we entered Dallman Bay and were on the lookout for whales. I did spy a pod of Orcas in the distance, well behind the ship.

Right before dinner Tripp, our bird expert, came and joined me. He said the bridge had spotted whales two or three miles ahead, and they were going to keep an eye on them but not approach until afterwards. During dinner we were steaming slowly in a circle, and then I could finally not take it anymore, I abandoned the rest of my dinner and dressed to go on deck. There was a mother and calf swimming nearby. As Kim had said, we have a big invisible bumper sticker that says, "This ship brakes for whales." They quickly lowered the zodiacs and half of the passengers went out whale watching.

It was wonderful. There were little ice floes, and many with seals on them. There were seals swimming, and we went close by one with a leopard seal on it, and another seal played briefly near us in the water. And the whales..... They were leisurely swimming, you could hear them blow. It took awhile until they let us approach. Usually they would blow about three times, and then dive, showing fluke. People would chant "Fluke" whenever they would arch their backs more than usual. Frequently after diving they would surface 90 degrees to one side, once in back of the whole fleet. The ship leisurely followed, making lots of zigs and zags, trying to be close to the whales as well.

Eventually they let us approach quite close, maybe 50 feet, and after a few moments dove, showing their flukes beautifully. So marvelous to see, so quiet, you could hear them blow. The mother had yellow under her flukes, from diatoms in the waters here, actually living on her skin. The calf was creamy white on the underside of the fluke. I was surprised how ridged the back is from the dorsal fin back, and there were lots of notches on the fluke of the mother. We followed them for a long time, probably an hour, and in the end the light had faded, so most people put away their cameras and just enjoyed it.

What a marvelous couple of days.

Back in the cabin I earned my keep, wringing out Mom's socks so they will be dry, hanging things around the cabin to dry better, and using a hairdryer on her gloves.

MEG: Actually things weren't as bad as they could have been, it's just that the bathroom is very tiny and the line hangs over the toilet, so you don't want things dripping too much. I viewed the whales from the bridge of the Explorer and had a fine view. Could not go out in the zodiacs because all my polar gear was wet.

Monday, February 26, 1996. We actually were allowed to sleep until 7 this am and while having breakfast approached Deception Island.

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This is a volcano (active as recently as 1970), and you can go inside the caldera by ship where one side has fallen in. We are promised a swim in a thermal pool so dress starting with bathing suit under all the polar gear, which somehow seems a mistake in the zero degree weather.

Our first stop, however, is at Bailey Head where we hope to make a landing among a chinstrap penguin colony. But it is snowing and the surf is too high, so we go out on zodiac tours instead. On the beach are hundreds of birds, and a large colony of fur seals. Some of the seals are sparring with each other and we occasionally get whiffs of their smell, making us not really wish to go ashore anyway.

Following along the "head" we see icicles hanging in the crevices.

Three laccoliths stand sentinel a hundred or so feet off shore, called the sewing machine needles. On the back of Bailey Head is a steep cliff called the amphitheater. The penguins dramatically stand out against the fresh snow, and are perched all the way to the top. How they waddle up there is anyone's guess! Each variety of penguin likes a different terrain for nesting. The chinstraps like the highest points. These peaks are the first to clear in the Antarctic spring so they can start their breeding period. You also see chinstraps on the castellated icebergs. The clowns on our zodiac get into a spirited discussion of how many birds are on the cliff and it seems the best guess is between 1697 and 1698. Watching the birds climb these almost perpendicular cliffs was entertaining. Surf comes rolling in upsetting a large group on the beach who look like they are cued up waiting for a bus. All in all it is much fun and we are lucky that the snow stops while we are in close viewing range.

Back on the ship we pass through Neptune's Bellows and enter the caldera of the island, which is a mile or more across. We stop for a swim on the lava beach at Pendulum Cove where steam has been reported coming out of the earth since the 1880s, in the thermal pool there but the "pool" is deemed too hot, and we try the shore of the bay itself. It is quite an experience to strip down to bathing suit in the brisk air and run into the hot water. Once in, it is not bad but waves come in and wash very cold water on you. A short while later

I am back out and scrambling back into clothes. The hardest part of this trip is the dressing and undressing!

After lunch we cross to Whaler's Bay where there is an old whaling station ruin, abandoned in 1961. Remains of old whaling dories, an old dry dock, the vats to hold the oil, and various buildings remain, all in a state of disrepair. We hike about a mile down a lava beach and scale a small hill to Neptune's window to see the pintado petrels nesting there. Some (like Martha) climb even higher to get a closer look at the nests but I opt to head back to the zodiacs and The Explorer. Arctic terns fly overhead (are they the one's we saw in Iceland, I wonder), black lumps to be avoided are fur seals cleverly disguised as black rocks, a skua eviscerates a dead chinstrap penguin (surprisingly the only penguin I saw on this beach), and then the snow really starts to come down, so I am happy to go back on board the ship in time for tea.

MARTHA: What a day! We rose early (as usual) and prepared to go ashore to swim in thermally heated waters at Deception Island. That meant swimsuits under heavy clothing. Well, the weather was mild, so they decided to change the itinerary and attempt a landing at Bailey Head, where there is a chinstrap penguin colony of over 100,000 pairs. It is a volcanic headland, of petrified ash, and one can see the layers that fell. The beach is volcanic sand, of small black pebbles, with what looks to be snow-covered mountains rising very steeply behind it. It is actually a very dirty glacier, due to the volcanic activity in the area. There was a swell, and after several surveys of the swell, the waves breaking on the steep beach, and the prominent positioning of fur seals about every ten feet they decided to call off the landing and do zodiac tours instead. Chinstrap penguins were parading up and down the beach, in groups, occasionally being chased by seals. They weren't going in the water, so I guess it wasn't feeding time or they were newly fledged chicks. Everywhere you looked were birds standing, each with their own space. They covered the hills, and I was reminded of the illustration from "Millions of Cats" with dots on receding hills going on and on. The zodiac went around the headland, sheer cliffs with surf, and past a few pillar formations in the water. On the other side was the continuation of the colony, with some rocky areas where penguins were crowded just above the surf. The prime nesting places are the highest and most exposed, as they are the first to become accessible in the spring. So they all seek the place with the view, and away from the busy highways.

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We had a short cruise into the caldera of Deception Island, and on to the swimming area at Pendulum Cove. Mom was dressed in terry bathrobe over her parka, and we all had towels around our necks. And of course, knee boots, gore-tex pants, parkas, hats and gloves.

The steam rises right on the edge of the beach, so in the shallow water you can submerge yourself in warm seawater. I was reminded of pigs wallowing. Mom and I both went in, becoming official members of the sub polar Penguin society, or whatever they call the swimmers here. I went out for two quick swims in the cooler water, which was colder than Maine, and quickly returned to the warm area. Fortunately you got warm enough in the water that you had time to dress quickly. Showers were great when we returned to ship.

A quick lunch, and a stop at Whaler's Bay, also in the caldera of Deception. This is the ruin of a major whaling station, fuel depot, and I guess ships also pulled in here to reprovision with fresh water.

Volcanic activity in 1967 to 1970 destroyed a great deal, and it is long since abandoned. We hiked along the beach, carefully keeping distance from the fur seals disguised as boulders, and up a rise. We could see a large flock of storm petrels, and look into the remains of the main lava tube for the volcano. I hiked along further and got eye to eye with a pintado petrel chick, almost fully fledged. There were large areas of thick lichens on all the boulders there just above us. I came almost straight down the talus slope, and the snow was falling heavily. This was the weather I had been expecting, and it was beautiful. There was a shed, partially obscured by the falling snow, nestled at the base of a craggy mountain. Also, I later came upon three gentoo penguins, all clean from swimming, standing on clean snow. While I was standing there, the sun came out and they had sharp shadows, and all the time the snow was falling very hard right where we were. Very beautiful.

MEG: After tea, at 5 PM, our geologist, John Spletstoesser (who calls Rockland, Maine, home), gave a talk on ice and how it is formed and so on .. and on. The trouble with the lecture hall is that it is at the top of the ship and when they draw the curtains to darken the room for the slides the rocking motion of the ship tends to put you to sleep.

MARTHA: But he did have some magnificent slides. Just too many of them.

MEG: So after dinner it was early to bed hoping to get enough rest for tomorrow's plans. At four in the morning we hit a berg and it so loudly clangs along our metal hull that I was sure we have been holed, but soon we are steaming forward again.

Tuesday, February 27, 1996. Our plan is to try to be the first to circumnavigate James Ross Island. The ice reports from the satellite looked promising and the ice pack on the south side of the island is reported breaking up for the first time in recorded history. Our leader, Kim, wakes us gleefully at 6 AM and urges us to come enjoy the sunrise. Martha bounds out of bed to see it. I roll over in bed for another hour. We have entered the Erebus and Terror Gulf on the east side of the Antarctic Peninsula and are headed for the Prince Gustav Channel between James Ross Island and the Peninsula.

However, the ice pack is much worse than we thought (and far worse than it was just 10 days ago) and, while possibly passable, the

Captain feels the constraints of time should cause a change of plans.

We don't want to miss South Georgia Island. We head north again and finally reach open water where we can again head south on the east side of James Ross Island. As the brochure says, our plans are subject to plan without notice. Again the ice pack bars our way and we finally give up the days planned itinerary altogether and head back north toward the tip of the peninsula where we hope to make a landing in early afternoon! It is so interesting to see the pack ice and think of how Shackleton got stuck in it and had to spend the winter on it after Endurance sunk! Because of the prevailing wind and current, the pack ice is much thicker on the east side of the peninsula than the west and the Weddell Sea is frozen much of the time.

MARTHA: Sunrise was lovely, lots of turquoise blue in the sky reflected in the water. Glassy, oily calm water dotted with bergs. The captain made several attempts to enter the channel but it was

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very difficult. At one time I was on the bridge and they were unable to turn hard starboard rudder. Right after that the captain decided enough was enough, and circled to turn north. It was pretty cold this morning; you could see the ice forming on the water. At first it was mottled in places, and reminded me of damask.

MEG: After lunch we stop at Hope Bay where a tidy Argentinean army base looks like a toy red painted village along the shore. We don't have permission to visit it but climb a hill to view two British graves of men who died when a building burned at a British outpost here in the forties. We then climbed the hill of lava stone gravel to see a remaining building from this era and then hike out past a small lake of ice melt that supplies the Argentinean's with drinking water. Beyond is an area where fossils have been seen but our path is blocked by a watery area speckled with ice and uncertain rock stepping-stones. I watch the group struggle through it and come to the conclusion that if I fell, it would be a long wet walk back to the zodiacs so I turned back. I find my rubber boots are not the best hiking shoes. My zodiac back to the ship took us near a small penguin rookery where two or three adelies and some chinstraps are perched, but it is very late in the breeding season here and most of the birds have gone. A big Weddell seal wakes up from the noise of our zodiac and after a baleful look at us waddles away from the beach area scattering penguins in his path. One gentoo sits on a nearby rock observing, so this was a really mixed neighborhood! It was colder today with a brisk wind so it was good to be back on the ship, but I am so glad to finally set foot on the continent instead of just looking at it.

After tea, I stood on the bridge for almost an hour watching the captain steer us through a sea of icebergs. Mostly of the tabular type (flat on top like a sugar cube), some were as big as city blocks and as tall as the ship. It was blowing, hard enough to keep the ship on her starboard ear, with waves that sometimes washed over the bridge itself, and amidst all that white water it was sometimes difficult to make out the smaller ice bergs that only rose above the sea a foot or two and seemed to be a bigger hazard than the large conspicuous ones.

It got much rougher after dinner and we went to bed. Martha made her bed up the other way so her head would be higher than her feet, but I just fell in and fell asleep, so tired I hardly woke at all before Kim's 7AM wakeup call that we were at Elephant Island!

MARTHA: This afternoon as we came through Antarctic Sound (named for the ship Antarctic, not the land mass) there were large numbers of giant tabular icebergs. These are enormous, but it is very difficult to gauge their size. Much larger than an aircraft carrier, many were much higher than the ship, but as the captain very ably steered well clear of them we didn't look up at many close up. Some were easily larger than Curtis Island. As far as shapes went, they were generally flat topped, with straight sides, fairly new, so they hadn't been sculpted by the waves and wind much. Some were intensely blue, and others downright dirty, with brown and yellow striping. I watched on the bridge a long time, and there were several waves that broke and sent spray over the bridge. When I came inside for dinner I started to feel very sleepy. I took a Bonine tablet, but it only made me sleepier. I ate a light dinner, and fell into bed at 8, slept like a rock 11 hours and woke feeling great.

MEG: Wednesday, February 28, 1996. Elephant Island - truly one of the high spots of our tour. This is where Shackleton's men spent their second winter, having spent their first on the ice pack after their ship sank. After a journey by small boat from the ice flow they reached this forbidding island of high cliffs and glaciers, (named for the elephant seals the early sealers found here) just as the second winter was coming. Their first landing was at a tiny exposed beach, but searching along the shore they found another slightly larger and less exposed one at Point Wild, named for the leader of the men who spent the winter here. The spit was largely covered by a chinstrap penguin rookery and they spent their first days killing penguins to provide them with meat for the winter as the penguins leave and go to sea when winter comes. They also built a small shelter using two of their boats. Shackleton and five men left them here and sailed, 800 miles to South Georgia to get help in the third small open boat, and returned 137 days later with a rescue ship. He'd have come sooner but it was winter and he couldn't get there. Every morning of the encampment, someone would climb to the top of the hill and look for a rescue ship. How wonderful it was when one finally appeared.

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Every man on the expedition survived.

We board our zodiacs for a closer look. Due to the swell it was somewhat difficult just to get in them and less than half tried it. But the closer look was wonderful. We went near the spectacular glacier nearby and watched it calve and then got in close enough to the rookery to really savor the aroma! The surf was running and we periodically were sprayed and got more and more empathy for the hardships that Shackleton's men endured. A statue, not of Shackleton or Wild, stands anachronistically on the spot commemorating the Chilean captain of the rescue ship! It was erected in 1988 and symbolically stands to remind us that Chile and Argentina claim parts of Antarctica, despite the Antarctic treaty. Many countries, including the United States have made no claim on the territory, although we reserve the right to do so. Once a claim is established you must maintain it. The whole problem is one of politics and money. There may be minerals and coal; oil is off the

Falklands, for instance, and now tourism is bringing another source of wealth to the area. The whole area should be maintained as a world park, but various countries are staking out their claims for

When the Antarctic treaty expires in less than 50 years.

MARTHA: We have seen Elephant Island and Point Wild, where Shackleton's men spent several dreary months waiting for rescue. It is a very forbidding place, sheer cliffs, a large glacier coming down to the water, lots of swell and waves, and a small promontory where there is not much land at low tide, and less at high tide. It is a spit, with sheer cliffs coming down, then a low boulder strewn area, partially awash at high tide, with a higher rock at the end. It is also a chinstrap penguin colony. Not the sort of place anyone would want to spend much time, but better than the ice floes where they had been. I am so pleased to have seen it. I also was watching the glacier when it calved a large chunk, which was neat. There is a roar with it, and then a large wave after it falls in the water. The Explorer went along the shore, all very sheer and wild, and we passed by Point Valentine, where they had first landed. It has even less land, and is awash in any swell, so the second spot is clearly an improvement, but just barely. Shortly we will see some film footage from Shackleton's voyage, which we are all looking forward to.

I plucked a chunk of glacier ice out of the water, and it is amazingly clear, like crystal, with bubbles in it. The first lick was salty, and then the rest was fresh, with no flavor at all really. I brought it back on board after some joking about putting this piece of Antarctic crystal in my suitcase to bring home. You have to have both hands free while getting on and off the zodiacs, so I put it in my parka pocket to come aboard. I am drinking glacier melt water with the ice now.

MEG: They showed us a wonderful film, first presented on the BBC that used actual footage from Frank Hurley's films of the Shackleton journey. He was the official photographer of the expedition. How he ever got some of the shots, dangling from the bowsprit or climbing into the rigging, like as much preserved it, through all their days on the ice pack and at Elephant Island is a miracle. It was wonderful.

It was followed by a wonderful Philippine buffet. Since the crew is almost 100% from the Philippines you can imagine how good the food was! In the afternoon heard a lecture on seals by Charlie Wheatley, and slept. We are so tired. After dinner we get invited into a game of fourhanded cribbage with the doctor, Hal Engelke and John Spletstoesser. I warned them I was pretty good at the game but hadn't played in years and never 4 handed. They now call us hustlers for Martha and I took them 2 games out of 3!

Thursday, February 29, 1996. South Orkney Islands. We land on Laurie Island at the Argentinean Ocasas Naval Base. The base was originally established by the Scotch in 1903, the first scientific station in the Antarctic. The stone foundations still remain from their hut. The following year, William Bruce, the leader tried to turn the base over to the British but when they refused it, he handed it over to the Argentineans where it has remained ever since. It is the longest continually occupied station in the Antarctic. The base sits on a low shingle bar between two higher peaks and the beach is littered with hundreds of fur seals. Chinstrap penguins roost on the hillsides.

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We walked across the spit to Uruguay Bay (named for a supply ship) on the other side, which was clogged with icebergs and pack ice. This was where they originally unloaded supplies and brought them up to the base on a small railway, but the rails are long gone. Now the goods are moved by helicopter. We view a small cemetery near the beach and then we are taken to one of the older buildings on the base where a small museum has been set up. It is rather pathetic with some poorly stuffed birds and a few artifacts from older times.

Martha has become the German translator for the German-speaking passengers on board. Since there is a small group of French, with their own translator-guide, we are now a tri-lingual cruise! Back to the beach to board the zodiacs and a beguiling group of five pinstriped penguins poses on the water's edge creating great photo ops. Some of the 14 Argentineans are invited back to the ship for a sightseeing tour.

MARTHA: I spent yesterday afternoon snoozing, but did go to one lecture on seals. With a great deal of effort I managed to stay awake for most of it, then continued napping until dinner. In the evening, both Mom and I were wide-awake, and in search of nightlife we wandered into the lounge and started kibitzing a cribbage game between John Spletsstosser (geologist) and Hal Engelke (ship's doctor). Eventually they invited us to join them and we played a friendly game of four-hand cribbage and won. They think mom is a shark, but I have to confess she warned them that she has played the game a lot, even if not recently. It was a lot of fun, lots of good humor.

Today, Thursday, February 29 we visited the Argentine base Orcadas on Laurie Island, South Orkney Islands. It was a British base for two years, and then in 1904 it was transferred to the Argentineans, and is the longest continually occupied station in the Antarctic. There are a number of buildings, all either orange or black. It seems that severe storms must wash across it, as the main habitations are on stilts.

Everything is guy-wired in Antarctic style. They have been doing geomagnetic research here since 1905, studying the movement of the magnetic pole. They do this somehow with light and photographic paper in a special hut with no metal in it. They have a separate building apart from the others for emergency in case the main one is destroyed, and separate food storage as well. 14 men over winter, and in the summer there are up to 45. On the shore are a number of fur seals. As we approached them en masse, most of them decided we were frightening to them and backed off a little. One, a small male, decided to approach, and the Argentinean picked up a small stone and chucked it in his direction, with the comment that the youngest are the most aggressive. They had a hut set up as a museum, which was the original 1905 overwintering hut, built out of wood. They use part of it as a radio room, but are preparing to move that into a new building shortly. On the shore were a few chinstrap penguins, and we managed to get quite close to them for photos of us with these jaunty creatures. I have started to act as interpreter for the German speakers on board who are having difficulty with the varied accents and the speed of the Americans and English on board.

There is a French group who have their own interpreter on board, who is apparently fluent in English and Spanish as well.

MEG: After lunch I decide to give myself a long overdue shampoo, and, after setting it in pin curls, to dry it with the cabin hair dryer. But as I was drying it, the ship came out of the shelter of the islands and began to pitch and yaw and wallow in the waves, and for my own safety, I crawled into bed and let my hair air-dry while I slept away the afternoon. Had dinner propped in a corner of the dining room between the outside bulkhead and the adjoining chair, which likes mine, is anchored to the floor. We were early to bed after advancing our clocks another hour.

Friday, March 1. Scotia Sea. We have breakfast and then venture to the lecture hall for a talk on whales, but the rocking of the ship and the darkness of the room soon made me so drowsy, I could not concentrate on it and I retreated to the cabin for a morning of snoozing. All this sleep should be resting us, but instead we are tired, for even at night, our bodies are fighting the rolling of the ship.

Lunch was a real adventure with plates flying out of cupboards and passengers reeling around the dining room. After lunch we are ordered to our cabins for the duration. I was ordered to my

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bed once before on this ship, 17 years ago in a typhoon in the East China Sea. It is nice to know our sturdy ship can take almost anything!

Martha and I grab the cribbage board and have 3 games of cribbage in our cabin before the sleeping sickness overwhelms us once more and we went off to bed. Then the sea calms somewhat and we have dinner and went to the lecture hall for a charming video about the wandering albatross

MARTHA: A day and a half at sea, and I do get seasick. It was a rollercoaster all the way, but Bonine definitely helps a great deal, although it makes me unbelievably drowsy. We saw a wonderful film about Albatross last night, and had several good lectures.

Sunday, March 2. We sailed into Grytviken, South Georgia. There is an abandoned whaling station here, with lots of derelict buildings, rusting metals, chunks of rope and all sorts of artistic ruins. They have restored the lovely Norwegian church, and have converted the manager's house into a whaling museum, with lots of artifacts and pictures. It is appalling to think of how many whales were processed here. There are huge tanks, lots of them, which were all full of whale oil. They have been surveying the station for hazards and for what is here; some of the tanks have writing indicating they still held whale oil as recently as 1992. It was nice to see green again, as there are grasses and other plants here. I saw my first king penguin, a solitary one, molting near some rusting boilers.

The highlight of the visit was the toast to Ernest Shackleton held at his gravesite. It is a lovely graveyard, partway up a green hill, surrounded by a white wooden fence, with a view towards the sea.

And the view is spectacular, sheer mountains rising straight from the sea, jagged peaks, and glaciers. At this time there isn't much snow on the sides of the mountains, so they are very craggy and rocky. We have had sunshine again; we have had tremendous luck with the weather this whole cruise. The crossing, although it did my inner ear in, actually wasn't bad, as far as this region is concerned.

As we sailed out of Grytviken the clouds descended and the coastline vanished in the fog. We came to St. Andrew's Bay, where there is a huge colony of King Penguins, and on arrival the sun came out in full glory. There were the mountains and glaciers, and we landed on a cobble beach. And there were thousands of these regal birds, thigh high, in glorious black and white and yellow. They parade up and down the beach in groups, occasionally throwing their beaks to the sky and trilling. They are incredibly regal, moving at a measured pace, all impeccably clean and dignified. It was a magical afternoon.

You could watch and listen to them for hours without any effort at all. On the beach were fur seal pups, and a few elephant seals. There were also reindeer not far off. But all attention went to these wonderful birds, truly magical.

The sun stayed out and we sailed along a spectacular coastline, with lots of penguins and seals swimming near the ship. It was warm, and sunny, and gentle, until we passed Weddel Glacier, and then a katabolic wind swept down from the glacier, and very suddenly there were whitecaps and spindrift, all on a teal green sea. The seals and penguins were in their element, porpoising everywhere. The winds were 50 miles per hour, with some sustained gusts of 75.

Pretty amazing. I was on the bridge wing all afternoon, enjoying the spectacular scenery. It was getting pretty late when we arrived at Gold Harbor, where there was a magnificent glacier, with a very sheer face. On the beach were lots of fur seal pups, feeling their oats. They kept feinting at us, and made us all nervous, since they can bite pretty severely. There was a large clump of elephant seals, lying around and occasionally making their rumbling noises. There were king and gentoo penguins, and it was exciting to us to see a number of king penguins brooding their eggs. They have a 13-month adolescence, so they can hatch chicks almost any time. The downy chicks spend the winter on South Georgia, receiving irregular meals from their parents. It's a wonder to me that any survive, but lots do as there are huge numbers of king penguins in these colonies.

They had some trouble launching the zodiacs, as the tide was going out and the beach is steep. On the way back to the ship, the moon, almost full, was rising over the rocky spit. Just a beautiful ending to a magical day.

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MEG: Saturday, March 2. South Georgia. This is where God goes when she goes on vacation. A spectacular island with mountains rising right out of the sea and we are blessed with wonderful weather so we can see the tops of the peaks. Glaciers everywhere. We stop at Grytviken to clear immigration. The British maintain a small garrison here. For the first time in weeks we see green grass, although there are no trees. This is a ghost town, an old whaling station, established in 1904, by Captain Carl Anson Larson. He brought Norwegian whalers down here and they had a thriving industry until 1965, when the whales had been so depleted it was no longer profitable. The buildings are in a bad state of decay, but there is a good museum devoted to the whaling industry and a restored Lutheran church brought over by the Norwegians. The museum is so depressing when you realize how many thousand whales were butchered here, but at the time, whaling was an acceptable industry, providing oil, bone meal and other ingredients for animal food. At the church a pet skua belonging to the postmistress greets us. The object of our walk is the cemetery where Ernest

Shackleton lies entombed. It was at South Georgia that he ended his sail from Elephant Island and was able to get help to rescue his men. We drank a toast at the grave to this giant of men.

On the beach we watched some fur seals frolic and a couple of elephant seals snorted and belched in the background. All in all, a most picturesque spot, which reminded us of my sister's island, Criehaven, on a grander scale.

I have a heavy cold and rest in bed for the two-hour cruise down to St Andrews Bay. Here there is a huge rookery of king penguins, hundreds of thousands of them. These are wonderful birds, as regal as their name implies. The stand two or three feet high and have dramatic yellow markings on their head. They strut in pairs of threes (with their chicks) and walk right up to us, curious what we were all about. They lay their eggs as winter approaches and spend a whole year raising it, so we are looking at year-old chicks. The beach is covered with fur seals that sometimes chase us and we have to run or throw sand at them to keep from being bitten. A few elephant seals also wallow on the sand. It is a wonderful spot and we could have spent even longer watching these wonderful birds.

Another hour or so southward along the coast and we pull into Gold Bay, where there is another king penguin rookery. And at this one we see the birds starting their new families as winter is approaching.

The mother bird lays the egg and the father then sits on it while the mother goes out to sea and feeds for 3 weeks or so returning when the eggs have hatched. She then takes over, sitting on the young through the winter. There are no "nests", the birds covering their young with a flap of skin as they sit on the beach. It seems a miracle that they survive. Dodging the aggressive fur seals, and a few gentoo penguins, I climb back in the zodiac and retreat to dinner in bed as I really battle this cold.

Sunday, March 3. This cruise has been called the good weather cruise, but today our luck changes. It is cold and blustery as we pull into Hercules Bay where we have been promised Macaroni Penguins, but there is a strong sea running and they decide there is no way we can make a landing, so we continue down the coast to Stromness, where a ruin of a whaling village stands. This is the town to which Shackleton came after he crossed South Georgia on foot. They decide we can try a landing and we bundle up. One Zodiac is loaded and takes off and we are to be in the next one. As I start down the gangway a catabolic wind appears, gusts of up to 70 miles per hour coming down off the glacier. I clung to the gangway for dear life and finally make my way to the bottom where I am grateful to finally get into the boat. We headed for shore but the williwaws on the water and the catabolic winds keep the waves humping and we can barely make any headway at all. Finally it is decided to abort the adventure and we returned to the Explorer. Further down the coast we pass Leith, another deserted whaling village, this one where the first shots of the Falklands war were fired. Continuing on we came to the Bay of Islands and Prion Island. Here we anchored and a sturdy group went ashore to climb a cliff dotted with fur seals and mud holes to see nesting albatross. I waited on board but was glad Martha made the trip. Finally we reached Elsehul, on the north end of the island, and here we had zodiac cruises of this sheltered bay. Thousands of baby seals played in the water, waiting for their mother's who had gone out to sea for three or four days to feed. It looked as if you could walk to shore on their backs, they were so closely packed.

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Some elephant seals wallowed on the beach near their molting and unattractive beach master. Giant petrels flew and swam around our zodiac. Two or three of the seals were blond and since only one in

10000 is born blond, we estimated we must have been looking at 20000 to 30000 seals. We had hoped to find the macaroni penguin here and a spot was pointed out on the hillside as being their rookery but we were too far off to distinguish them. There were a few gentoos and kings but no real rookery on the beach with the seals. One of the guides commented on how different this beach was last December when they were last here. Then the seals were mating and there were fighting male seals on the beach and, of course, no babies. It is hard to believe that the fur seals were considered almost extinct a few years ago. As we left Elsehul we have ahead of us two full days of Drake Passage and we secure our stateroom by putting everything on the floor or under the bed. That night, Max

Scmidt showed his slides of the albatros nesting in the Kergulen Islands. He is a passenger, Swiss, but a professional photographer as well and his slides were wonderful.

MARTHA: We made an early morning stop in Hercules Bay. It is a spectacular small bay, with a waterfall, snow, sheer cliffs, macaroni penguins, mist and clouds, and today, katabolic winds and swell.

Mom and I were on the gangway when a katabolic wind sprang up, and all we could do was hold on until it eased. We boarded the zodiac, but there was so much wind that the driver couldn't make any headway, so we returned to the ship. They cancelled the excursion and headed along the island. There was a stop in another bay, with views of an abandoned whaling station (there are several on South Georgia). And glimpses of macaroni penguins, glimpse being the key word here. They continued along the east coast of South Georgia, and eventually were able to anchor near Prion Island. There was considerable swell and wind, but the zodiacs were able to slowly enter a narrow channel, with fur seals on the seaweed-covered rocks all around, and make a landing on a sheltered beach. There were cobbles, and tussock grass, king and gentoo penguins, fur seals, some elephant seals. With the hope of seeing albatross nesting, we waded up a flowing streambed, with slippery rocks and lots of mud to catch your boots in. There were fur seals nursing their pups in the tussocks all around, and there were trilling cries from them, like music. I saw the burrows of a ground nesting bird, but did not see the bird itself.

There was a steep, single file climb up the mountainside, and at the top, in tremendous wind, were albatross nesting. They use the nests from year to year, so they build up quite a mound over time. The nests were about 20 feet apart, and on some were wandering albatross. The birds are huge, much bigger than a goose, and they sat there and watched us without particular concern. It was very elemental there, wind, and the cries of the fur seals, the tussock grass waving, light shifting in and out of the clouds and on the far off mountains, and these calm, enormous birds calmly lying on their nests, beaks to the wind.

In the late afternoon we stopped at Elsehul, at the western end of the Island. There were tens of thousands of fur seals, and the water was alive with them swimming, especially near the rocks. There was constant movement on the land. The majority were pups, which are left for three days at a time by their mothers once they stop nursing, so she can go to sea and fatten up. There were some elephant seals on the beach. I never did get close enough to them to smell them, which is supposed to be incredibly bad. We cruised the bay by zodiacs for a good hour in the early evening light, and the fur seals were like porpoises all around us constantly. It seemed there were enough of them in the water you could have walked on their backs to the shore.

There was a lot of kelp on the shore, washed up by a recent storm. On a cliff at the entrance was a macaroni penguin rookery. You could tell they were penguins, but that was about all. That was the closest we came to them, a disappointment, but the weather hadn't let us land. We also saw some albatross nesting on the cliffs, not as high up as at Prion Island, but still all facing into the strong wind. Giant petrels were on the water, and it was fun watching them get airborne, as they sort of lift up and walk on the water quite a ways before they get airborne. We saw two blond baby fur seals, which Charlie Wheatley said occur naturally once per ten thousand births, so there may have been twenty thousand fur seal pups on that beach. It was overcast the whole time, yet the weather is very changeable in South Georgia. We have experienced sleet, snow and

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rain all simultaneously, and just as quickly, it will stop and the sun will shine. As the ship left the harbor, the skies cleared and there was wonderful light shining on the rocks at the mouth of the bay.

We prepared for the two-day Drake Passage crossing, by stowing everything in the cabin that shouldn't fall. Shortly out of the Elsehul Bay the rocking and rolling began and has continued. If we hadn't stowed stuff, it ended on the floor in no time. Today, March 3, there were lectures and films scheduled. Those all take place in the lecture hall, high up in the ship, so we carefully reel our way up there, or listen to them by radio in the cabin. Jack Child (professor of Latin American studies) gave a talk on the history and politics of the Falklands, which will be balanced by Tony Chater's tomorrow (viewpoint of a resident). Tony gave a delightful talk this afternoon on the life and wildlife there. I find that the Bonine pills keep me from feeling nauseous, but I don't feel wonderful either. They really make me drowsy, so I alternate between naps, lectures and meals.

This afternoon Viktor Engelmann from Vienna invited the German speakers to a poetry reading. He had composed a pleasant poem about the trip, and then afterwards I translated it for Brenda, an American passenger. Viktor is a lovely gentleman with a quiet but alert outlook on things and the poem had humor to it. To my relief my German was up to translation, because often to make a poem words are chosen which are not in the normal vocabulary.

MEG: Tuesday, March 4, 1996. Drake Passage. The ship is pitching and yawing so much it is very difficult to move around on her.

Although I am not sea sick, I am still nursing my cold so most of the day is spent in bed reading, sleeping or listening to a lecture or two on the radio in the cabin. I listened to Charley's lecture on the exploitation of the animals in the Antarctic on the radio and was glad

I did not have to look at his pictures of rendering the whales and so forth. However, I did make it up to the rock and rolling lecture hall to hear Jack Child talk about the history and politics of the Falklands.

He is the historian on board and the best lecturer of them all. He incorporates the stamps of South Georgia and the Falklands into his slides, which gives them a different slant. In the afternoon we hear

Tony Chater give his lecture on life and wildlife in the Falklands.

Tony is an artist (who designed some of the stamps that Jack uses), who owns part of New Island in the Falklands and is now encouraging tourism to the islands. His talk was not as well organized as Jack's but did make us all wish we were there, instead of on our rocking ship. Went to dinner alone, as Martha was under the weather and early to bed.

Tuesday March 5, 1996. Drake Channel. It is foggy and seems somewhat calmer. We are beyond the convergence now. John Spletts gives a rambling lecture on geology in the Falklands. He feels the scratches and lines on the hard rocks are made by penguins climbing the rocks to their rookeries. Some marks lead to remains of rookeries higher up than where the birds now live, also showing the different heights of the ocean. Then Tony Chater talks of his experiences of being in Port Stanley during the Falkland War. After lunch we are given our disembarkation lecture and then they have a reading from the diaries of Scott and the men who were with him on his last and fatal expedition. Tonight was the Captain Leif Skog's farewell cocktail party and dinner and for a change everyone gets dressed up, all the men had coats and ties and it was as if we were practicing for reentry into the real world. I found the captain had been the second officer on my last trip on the Explorer in 1978. We sat at the Hotel Manager's table, John Hammond, and had a fun evening playing cribbage, except Martha beat me 2/1!

MARTHA: Wednesday, March 6. The last full day. We arrived at Sealion Island, the Falkland Islands, after breakfast, cleared customs, and collected picnic lunches for a four-hour hike. It was billed as 7 miles of level ground, with lots of time to stop and see the various birds, including Rockhopper penguins. It was calm, with fog offshore, but clearing skies above. Landing was trickier than they expected, as the beach was steep enough to generate a high swell, and several zodiacs were swept from astern while landing. I had also not realized how much people hated their boots, as quite a few went ashore in their hiking boots, and had to be very nimble to get ashore with dry feet. Mom and I wore our usual gore-tex pants, the boots, and since it was 50

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degrees, left the parka on board and wore our gore-tex jackets. On shore we changed to sneakers and left the boots and lifejackets until we came back.

The hike was level, but it turned into a forced march, and there was a long line stretching from here to tomorrow. Mom managed to stay up near the front and got some explanations, but once I'd stopped for a few pictures I was among the stragglers, which included the serious birders.

There were two naturalists in the rear, Tripp and

Benoit, so I actually got a lot of explanations. There were flightless steamer ducks, steamer ducks, upland geese, ruddy headed geese, turkey vultures, rooks, and lots more. I don't think I'll ever be a serious birder, as I had trouble remembering the names just for a few minutes!

We went up some dunes, climbed some stiles to get over some sheep fences, passed by a farmhouse, their hedged vegetable area, some ponds (with the geese) and arrived at a cliff where we could look down on sea lions. It was a rocky shore, with kelp beds moving in the swell, and the sea lions were lolling around as they do. We started crossing fences without stiles, and since some were electrified you had to be careful not to get shocked (I was once). Where the sheep had been was very short greenery, tiny ferns or heather or grass. It was all a peat bed, so soft and firm underfoot. We saw where Magellanic penguins had made burrows in the peat, and sometimes you got a peak of the shy birds in their burrows. Then we entered the fields of tussock grass. There were lots of animal trails, but all down low, so we had to work to find our footing. The tussocks also grew tall enough that you couldn't see very far ahead and it was tricky to keep track of where everyone had gone. The original plan had been to send people back at the halfway mark, but it didn't work out, so lots of people went the whole way who shouldn't have. I passed another beach with sea lions, including two bulls who were going at each other in the kelp near shore. Eventually we got out to the far point, and it was lovely. There was a sheer, high cliff, and we were at the top of it. There were all kinds of Rockhopper penguins, mostly chicks, standing around, as well as a rookery of blue-eyed shags nearby. There was a natural stone amphitheatre and the penguins were standing around for all the world as if they were the audience expecting a play. Mom and I ate lunch maybe five feet from the rookery, and it was just glorious to be sitting there so close, up on that high cliff in the sunshine.

After a short lunch break we headed back to the ship, and lots of the passengers were bushed. It was more than 7 miles, I'm sure. We were very happy to get back to the beach and the zodiacs. By then it was very warm, up in the 60's, and as the ship sailed I sat in my shirtsleeves on the afterdeck.

A two-hour's sail, and we stopped at Bleaker Island. The weather had turned much cooler and there was a lot of fog. We went ashore for what was to be a one-mile walk to a rockhopper penguin rookery.

Well, our leader headed across the featureless island in the wrong direction, so we ended up walking further. Mom stopped at a shag rookery and then headed back. By then the fog was thicker, and I guess she thinks she went in circles a bit. I went all along to the end, and there was a shag rookery, quite large. The chicks were quite curious and crowded right up to us. One tried to untie my shoelace.

They were so close it was hard to take picture, but such fun. They have large paddle feet. 100 feet further and there was the rockhopper rookery. They are quite jaunty with their colored feathers where eyebrows would be. They also intermix with the shags. It apparently gives them more protection from the skuas, as the shags can defend themselves better than the penguins. A hike across the moor in thick fog, the last zodiac ride and back to the ship.

John Spletts did the "final exam" very humorously before dinner.

It has been such fun, this whole trip. So many incredible things, the stupendous scenery, the beguiling penguins and the quantities of wildlife, humpback whales, the swim at Deception, seeing the land where so many heroic expeditions took place, especially Shackleton's.

It is just truly amazing. We have gone over 3000 miles by ship; it is vast down here, and simply glorious. Even the rough crossing of the Drake Passage was appropriate and was fitting. I wouldn't have missed it for the world, and I am so glad I got to come.

MEG: Wednesday, March 6, 1996. Falkland Islands. We land at Sealion Island in the morning. Truly a magical isle as Kim has billed it. A beautiful sand beach, complete with shells, and once up on the bluff we find it covered with all manner of ground plants. So nice to see green again.

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We came to a small hotel (20 guests) and a farm like exterior, and then set out down a two-track behind John Splets who walked at a steady and fast pace. No trees, and much evidence of past sheep grazing, with periodic fences that must be traversed. The government now owns the island and has removed the sheep within the past two months so hopefully the vegetation will recover.

The island is basically peat in nature, which makes it soft walking, and the island is mostly level so it should not have been difficult.

They have told us there will be three walks, one short, with a zodiac ride to see the rookery, one medium length which will turn back at the half way point with the longest one to be a total of 7 miles to see the rock hopper penguin rookery. Unfortunately the planning was not exact, and by the time we detoured to see an enchanting pond of ducks and a beach of sea lions, we had added some distance to the walk. It also was not made clear that at the sea lions, the medium walk was to turn back, so many of the group made the walk to the end who should not have attempted it. I may have been one of these! So far I was holding up fairly well near the front of the pack (some 60 people strung out along the trail). But after the sea lions the trail became much more difficult as we entered an area of tussock grass. This can grow taller than my head, and among the grass, the Magellanic penguins had built their burrows so there were lots of places where you could step into a hole. (It is interesting that the Magellanic Penguins which I saw at Punto Tombo in Patagonia in 1990 were nesting on rock rather than in burrows.) The column of tourists became more and more spread out and some times you could not easily see the person in front of you. We followed along the cliff and in the distance could see a natural arch in the cliff over the water. On and on, and finally we got to a more open area, and perhaps a mile after this, we came to the rookery of rockhoppers, and it was glorious. High above the sea, the slate formation had formed an amphitheater-like setting, and there were rockhoppers everywhere with their colorful plumed heads. Nearby were cormorants/shags, also nesting and it was great to watch them dive off the cliff and gradually gain their wings. We had our picnic lunch with adorable penguin chicks sitting about 5 feet away (and a minimum of guano). But then it was time to start back. Fortunately there was a more level route, not through the tussock grass. By this time my right foot had gone to sleep and my left thigh was aching like crazy. I lagged further and further behind and finally Martha came alongside and volunteered to carry my pack and I gratefully consented. I was never so glad in my life to attain the beach again.

We must have walked closer to 10 miles rather than 7. I felt like I would be lame for life!

But back on board, I stretched out on my bunk for two hours, and when we reached Bleaker Island I felt ready to go again. This was billed as a two-mile walk. We came off the beach on a truly bleak Island with no trees or anything to distinguish it. We walked to the far side of the island and then along a cliff until we could see a big rookery of shags. However, at this point I felt I had already walked the mile and the rookery of penguins was obviously still far ahead.

Why can't they move the rookeries closer to the beach! It was getting foggy and I decided to start back to the ship. Soon a number of others were joining us and Tripp jumped into the lead to direct us back. I really thought we were walking in circles, but at last we found the beach and I was so happy to get back on the ship.

This was the night of the "final exam", which was an amusing multiple-choice test put on by John Splets. They threaten those who fail with another four days of the Drake Passage. After dinner Martha and I packed and I went to bed but did not sleep too well because of the bumps and bruises.

Thursday, March 7. Port Stanley, Falkland Islands. They took us off the ship about 6:30 and we all followed Tony Chater up to his "Pink Shop", The Harrods of Stanley. I bought one of his prints and then

Martha and I meandered our way back to the Upland Goose Hotel investigating shops and cathedral. We then took a bus to the museum, which is interesting. At 10:30 we were loaded back on the buses for the trip to the airport over an hour away. The countryside was rolling and barren and the road rather basic so you couldn't make very good time, and at last we arrived at the military airport which serves the island. Our charter took 4 hours to get to Santiago.

In transit at the airport, we went to the VIP lounge and they allowed me to bring Martha in. We killed five hours, reading a day old paper, eating our hamburgers provided by A & K and visiting

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with the other passengers whom we knew in the lounge. At last it was 10:00 PM and we boarded. Then I discovered that my business class ticket had been issued a tourist class seat. Why they didn't pick this up when we went to the VIP lounge is a mystery. I was most annoyed but nothing could be done since the plane was full. The eight hours to Miami was very long!. We arrived at 5:00 AM and found we could catch the 7:10 flight to Atlanta and get home two hours earlier than our program had been.

In Atlanta, it was a blustery 27 degrees, so I got my parka out of the bag and wore it home!

It has been a wonderful trip and Martha has been a great travel companion.