

Challenger

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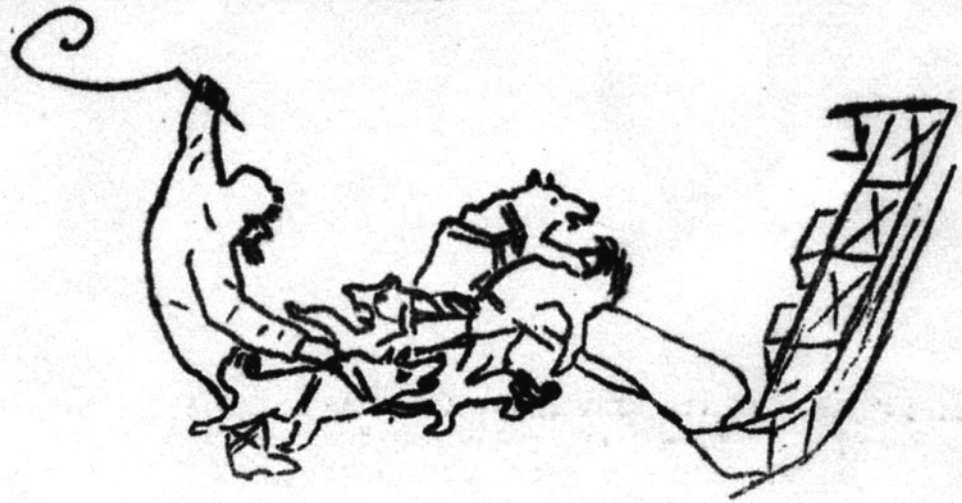
Leisure Activities.

EVEN THOUGH there is plenty of work on any Antarctic Station there is also ample spare time, partly due to the more simplified way of life we lead. Many of the men use this spare time to carry out all kinds of private projects and there are also many other forms of entertainment, some of which are described here.

MOVIES were one of the most regular forms of amusement and were screened three times a week. Bob Roff was Senior Projectionist and, early in the year, made it his project to make our humble rec. room look as much as possible like the Regent Theatre. He installed dimming coloured lights, background music, hot and cold running chocolate boys -- the works, and at Midwinter he was awarded an 'Oscar' carved by Tony Blundell. Assistant projectionists at various times of the year were Col. Huddy, John Elliott and Jock Taylor. Popularity of the pictures continued to the end of the year even though some of our 93 movies were screened 4 or 5 times. Movie nights were a chance for everyone to let off steam by hurling abuse at the projectionist, actors, producers and people who came in late and sat at the front, so movie nights were always pretty noisy. (One patron, tiring of the noise, erected a subtle, flashing illuminated sign saying "QUIET GENTLEMEN" or something like that.) One night was noisier than usual when Kev. White and his Cosray coterie concocted some invisible explosive powder which they sprinkled round the rec. room floor. Another night's programme was momentarily interrupted when a 90 knot wind gust sent the hwm radio aerial crashing through the roof just above Steve's head.

One particularly successful event was the DOG RACE organised by Tony Blundell in May. The starting line near the dog-lines was decorated with flags and coloured, gas-filled balloons, while the seven contestants were suitably dressed. One team had red spotted shorts over long white underpants, and another had long, red wind-proof pants and white football guernseys. Hans Brickies sheltered from

the fierce Midwinter sun under a large black umbrella. The teams lined up, with five dogs and two or three men on each sled, then they all raced off about a minute before the starter's gun went off. One team knocked over Tony Blundell, the official starter, Leigh's sled took off without him while he took photos, Steve fell off his chariot, and Roger Peterson and Dick Honks also got left behind, so two sleds went careering off in the wrong direction with no riders. Meanwhile John Beck, back at the starting line, was yelling his head off in his best racetrack announcer's voice with a tape recorded description of the race, most of which he made up because he couldn't see the teams -- they soon disappeared behind the hills. Roffy took up the commentary further on. Col and John Elliott's team was the only one to get away without incident, so they lead all the way round the mile circuit and returned easy winners. The other two teams breasted the rise almost together and raced for second place. One team had a short lead, but their two lead dogs went one each side of the winning post and in the resulting confusion, the other team passed them. Ted Elkington staggered in some time later, having walked the full course



Our comprehensive LIBRARY covering almost 200 square feet of the rec. room wall was under the care of librarian Andrew Sparks, and the huge range of subjects catered for the many voracious readers in the camp.

During the winter a course in GERMAN was conducted by Herr. Hans Brinkies, who knows a bit about the subject. Although his lessons were extremely well presented, nobody actually became fluent in the language, but the classes were always plenty of fun and the 7 or 8 students turned up regularly twice a week for about five months and learnt, amongst other things, several German drinking songs, and the right and wrong things to say to a pretty Fraulein on Platform 25.

With the decreasing daylight hours of winter, recreational activities moved indoors. Joe Bray and Dennis Willmetts demonstrated courses in weightlifting and exercises, which resulted in a few grunts and groans in the rec. room late at night. Jock Taylor, Kiwi, Roffy and Rodger Williams arranged tournaments for billiards, snooker, darts and table tennis, which created a lot of enthusiasm, resulting in a rush for the tables after dinner. Dennis won the darts and Jock was the billiards champion, but the other tournaments were not finalised before the Spring Field Trip left and the summer days turned our attention outdoors again.

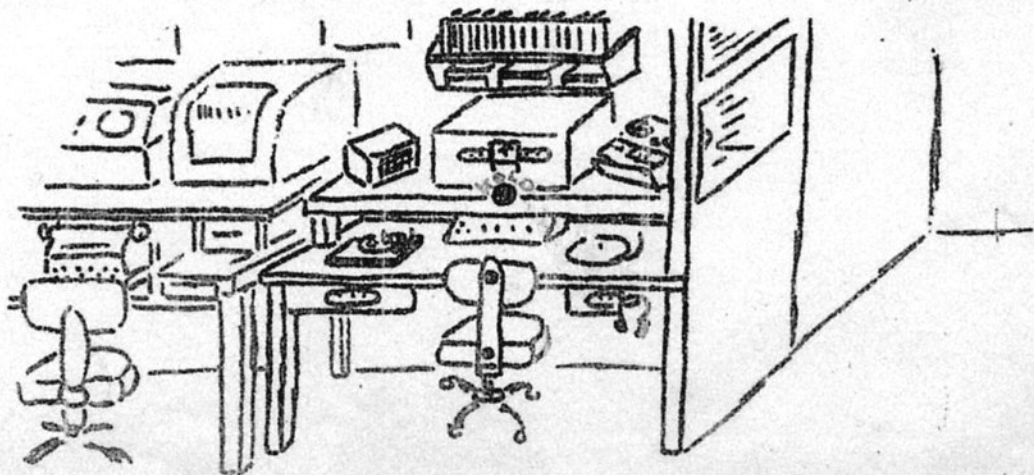
MIDWINTER DAY is the most important festive day in Antarctica and as such is unique to that continent and to those who have wintered there. This is usually the only holiday when the full camp is present and of course, from then on, the days start to get longer and it is usually regarded as roughly the halfway mark of the year. About 30 cables from all over the world were pinned on the notice-board. For the week before June 21st. there was a good deal of quiet, surreptitious activity going on round the camp with most blokes arranging different things for the day. The main dinner was at 2 pm. and Steve, helped by Ted Giddings and Becky, turned on a large meal of prawn cocktails, roast duck, bombe Alaska and Steve also made a huge cake showing all the buildings of the station, even including a tiny hydrogen filled balloon floating over the met. building. Rodger Williams and Jock Taylor, the official camp photographers, provided a beautifully done souvenir menu for each man. Drinks continued for most of the afternoon, then after a buffet dinner the 'ding' started in earnest and the remainder of the 24 dozen cans were consumed between acts arranged by Dick and compered by Tony Blundell. Noel, Roger Peterson and Hans did an adaptation of Romeo and "Yooliet," Ted Giddings and Joe sang some Cockney songs, then Joe joined Alan Blyth for some army ditties. There was a beauty contest between "the Heavies" -- John Beck, Steve, Bruce Neilson and Jack Sillick, all dressed in home-made fur bikinis and rope hair. "Gangles" Neilson who has always been known as Miss. Wilkes (because you couldn't imagine anything less like Miss. Wilkes) won the coveted sash for "Miss. Antarctica" and threatened to kiss the judges. Steve and Doc. had a crazy wrestling match, and Alan Humphreys, Tony Groom and Dick sang some folk songs accompanying themselves on guitars with Alan doing some fine virtuoso work on a tambourine. John Elliott did a short edifying mime and Col. gave us a rousing rendition of "Man From Ironbark." The last act had more people in it than watching -- the Wilkes Band which had practised only once, and included drums, guitars, piano, tea-chest base, comb and paper, bongoes and several unidentified instruments. Doc of course, featured on the piano accordion. He has a little trouble with timing -- stamps his foot out of time with everyone else, and plays out of time with his foot.

A 'ding' night was held for each man's birthday and Steve's

birthday spreads were always a popular feature. Some of the most remembered parties were the spontaneous ones and we were never short of excuses -- Mrs. Elkington had a son, Don Styles was awarded an "B.E.", July 4th., Independence Day in Lower Siberia, etc. One of the biggest nights was Rodger William's and John Beck's "Discotheque" in October. This came about mainly because Becky came across some extra supplies of malt. This was such an important occasion that it was thought a special brew be made and a special night arranged to drink it. John 'Disco' Beck arranged the newly painted rec. room with small tables, complete with candles, white table-cloths and menus and, being a 'pie and pasty man from way back' he turned on an excellent supper. Everyone was dressed in ties, ANKLE jackets etc. and Tony Blundell made a very professional waiter. (he even collected 6/11 in tips.) Rodger William's stereo outfit beefed out the loud music and it was a pleasant change to sit at tables and be waited upon like civilised people. Naturally these things always accentuate the absence of women, but after the grog has been flowing for a couple of hours, it's probably a good thing there are no women there. Anyhow, we had Jack Sillick who came prancing in dressed in sarong and a bra around his belly, with long blonde hair framing a life-like female mask. He made a very shapely cigarette girl -- shapely is the right word. Roffy felt moved to making a speech because this was also a kind of farewell to the Springfield Trippers.

The following day was to have been the Great Race to Repstat and back. We had Humph's motor bike, Jack Sillick on the BSA, Joe's 13 dog team, a weird looking contraption called a Pettibone forklift, with Andrew at the controls, Hans on a pair of langlauf skis, Roger Peterson on a two-dog powered toboggan, Leigh on skis pulled by dogs, Noel Barrett who threatened to float across the bay on hydrogen filled balloons and four bods who were going to run. But at the last minute it began to snow, then a blizzard set in so the race had to be abandoned.

RADIO KOLD played an important part in the year's entertainment. Early in the year Hans moved it from its somewhat sacrilegious position in the Chapel and set up a new 'studio' in the Met. Section where it was more accessible for Met. and Radio men to run it.



Hans and Tony Blundell then arranged a nightly NEWS service, mainly for the benefit of Repstat workers. Tony's witty comments on the day's doings and undoings were very entertaining. Noel Barrett spent many hours rebuilding the transmitter until KOLD could be heard by the field party at the furthest point of the Triangle. This resulted in a series of DJ programmes, with Becky, Kiwi, Noel and Tony Groom, the main announcers. Anything was likely to be broadcast, especially on Becky's programmes. Features for the Spring Field Party included news, local weather information, ship's positions, advertisements selling local products, and jazz and classical music programmes.

SKI-ING is a summer sport at Wilkes - in winter the days are too short, the weather is a bit cold and the snow surface is usually too rough. During the summer months, often after dinner at night, groups would ski on a short slope right beside the camp, or take a vehicle to the 'Tit' slope or other suitable ski-ing slopes in the area. Many tried ski-ing for the first time.

There were many other interests which helped to use the leisure hours. Football and volleyball had short seasons, igloo building was tried (successfully) and many of the party spent the time wandering around the bays and headlands near the camp, visiting the different rookeries from October on, and watching and photographing the other wild life. Dennis, Allen Sauer & Steve were amongst the keenest walkers and would often return with news of the latest activity in the penguin rookeries. Almost everyone had a camera of some sort and thousands of exposures must have been made during the year - colour, black and white and movie. The two photographic dark-rooms were always in use. Several men showed their collections of colour slides at night, and some took up wood-carving, painting, or taught themselves to play a musical instrument. Alan Humphrey's motor bike carried him to various places across the sea ice and over the snow, until it blew up on the Repstat road with Steve on the pillion. Our own programme of "Calling Antarctica" on Radio Australia always attracted a group of men to the radio room on Friday nights. The voice of Norma Ferris was one of the few female voices we heard all year.

The dying pastimes of discussion and conversation are revived on Antarctic Stations. It seems that almost every subject is covered at some time or another. Usually total agreement is not reached, but the different points of view give plenty of food for thought. Being cut off from our former way of life for a year is a unique experience and provides fresh angles on our original ideas, values and beliefs. For this reason few people could return from their year in Antarctica completely unchanged.

TONY GROOM.