

## Prydz Bay—Riviera of Antarctica

BY BRIAN B. TAYLOR

Less than a week after returning to my home in Halifax from Y2K celebrations in Banff, I boarded an airplane to join the *JOIDES Resolution* in Fremantle, Australia, with the ultimate destination of Prydz Bay. As I stepped on the aircraft, I began to have second thoughts about the wisdom of this particular venture. After all, two months at sea is an awfully long time for someone prone to seasickness. I wondered how an engineer with little scientific background would fit in with a shipload of research scientists. Also on my newly forming list of doubts was the fact that I was heading for Antarctica. Even if it were summer down there, it's cold, and I don't like cold.

The transit to Prydz Bay took an arduous twelve days, slowed by storms in the Roaring 40s and the Furious 50s. The seals of even the saltiest of seadogs were tested as we took green water over the bow and the weather reports cautioned us of approaching vicious lows. On one occasion the ship rolled a frightening 25 degrees, sending all manner of items crashing to the deck, including the dishwasher in the paleo lab. We were assured by our co-chiefs, however, that upon crossing the 60th parallel we would enjoy better weather. In fact (so the story went), Prydz Bay often enjoys bright Antarctic sunshine and flat calm days, and is known to some as the Riviera of the Antarctic.

Upon arrival in Prydz Bay, time passed quickly as the drill pipe was run in and cores started to arrive on deck at a furious pace. I was on board essentially without any scientific portfolio (officially listed as Observer and ODP Engineer), but the Staff Scientist (Carl Richter) and co-chiefs (Alan Cooper and Phil O'Brien) were kind enough to allow me to work with the Physical Properties specialists, Carl Forsberg and Jens Grutzner. They even gave me a shift that was the envy of all, from 0600 to 1800. I soon fell into the routine of making and compiling the Fizz Prop measurements, tasks that I was familiar with from my engineering background.

When we were drilling, humpback whales regularly visited the ship and sometimes gave a spectacular show by breaching nearby. The whales were clearly curious about us and our ship, because they frequently returned and were seen several times spy hopping, or raising their heads above the water surface to inspect us. We were also visited by *Australis Rex*, Ruler of the Southern Winds (see photo), to commemorate our crossing of the Antarctic Circle. Other, less welcome, visitors were large icebergs which forced the ship to abandon its scientific activities and move aside as they drifted by. We all experienced firsthand what an Antarctic summer is like—temperatures generally below freezing, and snow flurries on most days.



*Australis Rex*, Ruler of the Southern Winds (Patrick Quilty) prepares to anoint Captain Tom (Tom Ribbens) in commemoration of crossing the Antarctic Circle. YeoJo (Yeoperson Jo Ribbens) assists *Australis Rex* by reading the List of Charges against Captain Tom.

When time ran out in Prydz Bay and it was time to return to warmer climes, the ship headed for Hobart, Tasmania. Again, the ship encountered storms through the Furious 50s and the Roaring 40s, but thankfully they helped the ship along by blowing from behind. During the transit, the scientists occupied themselves by preparing the *Initial Reports*. The highlight of the transit back was the First International Antarctic Challenge Kite Flying Competition, held on the helideck. All kites had to be constructed of materials scavenged on the ship. Although I claimed none of the prizes that were put up for the event, at least my kite did not embarrass me by crashing into the ocean.

The ship's arrival in Hobart was met with television and newspaper coverage, but of most immediate concern to the crew after two long months on a dry ship was beer on the pier (in moderation, of course), and forays into town when Australian customs and immigration formalities were complete. Over the next two or three days before we all had to go our separate ways, we were shown Aussie hospitality that will stay with us for years to come.

BRIAN B. TAYLOR ([btaylor@jacqueswhitford.com](mailto:btaylor@jacqueswhitford.com)) is a consulting geotechnical engineer with Jacques Whitford Ltd.