

6th January 1960

Dear Hap:

The trip to Macquarie Island was quite short, five days down, six days there and five days back. They usually spend two weeks or more there, but this time the trip was made very short because of the much delayed start and the desire to reload the Thala Dan and set off again for Wilkes and Davis on the Antarctic continent. The Thala Dan is a good ship with plenty of fine Danish food and I enjoyed the trip.

Unfortunately the setup at Macquarie is a poor second rate affair. It is the first station established in 1947. Presently their main interests are on the continent at Wilkes, Davis and Mawson. Consequently, Macquarie gets small attention. It seems that the Russians paid a visit to Macquarie a year ago and then went over to New Zealand where they reported that "Macquarie was the worst antarctic sleep they had seen"! Either this appraisal has not gotten back to the management or else they don't care.

Actually Macquarie is not a cold place. The average daily minimum temperatures are 34° F in winter and 40° F in summer. The average daily maximums are respectively 40° F and 46° F. The extremes in a dozen years are 17° F and 56° F. It is because of this moderate climate that they can get away with the shacks they have. The worst feature is the very high relative humidity. Half the time it is about 90% and nine tenths of the time it is above 70% with an average of 88%. Little provision has been made to heat the sheds and no provision has been made to dry them out. Consequently the quarters are very uncomfortable and conducive to various debilitating aches and pains.

On the staff are some biologists and rather unbalanced nature lovers. Some of their pets are the seals which are a kind of sea going pig. On the land they are plain filthy. Instead of keeping these creatures at a decent distance, they seem to want them crawling all over the place. These and the rotting kelp on the shore make the camp have much the appearance and odor of a hog yard. It is little wonder they have difficulty getting able men and that the scientific output is low.

Of the six days there, I spent one day at the camp (plenty), one day on the ship and four days at Green Gorge, which is a dozen miles below the camp at north end of island. I had one capable scotsman as a helper. We lived in a nice little cabin at the edge of the beach. Unfortunately, it was dirty and run down like all the rest of the place. However, there were few seals present and very little kelp. There were four varieties of penguins and some other birds which were quite tame. Some could even be handled if one was careful.

We were fortunate in having fine weather and secured three good working days. Sawyer Valley was examined in some detail. Marking stakes were planted along the bottom and along the east ridge. Nothing was done on west ridge due to lack of time. All the stakes were surveyed and found to be only vaguely correct. Much more effort is necessary to determine the correct locations. Also considerable pick and shovel work is required at each anchor point to find the nature of the ground. Probably a month or six weeks would have been necessary to do the job completely and right. In my last letter I mentioned staying until the Magga ~~was~~ came up in March. However, after viewing the primitive circumstances, I decided to not stay since we were without so many things needed.

Actually, Sawyer Valley is quite a suitable and feasible place to hang up long antennas and conduct long wave cosmic

static experiments. Up in the valley it is green and beautiful and shielded from the wind. There is an excellent clear fresh water creek with a flow of over 1000 cubic feet a minute all year around. The only wild life seems to be rabbits, weka birds (like a chicken) and Skua birds (like a large hawk only web feet). The bottom of valley remains clear much of the time when clouds are blowing across the peaks.

Upon my return, I drew up a memorandum on the whole affair at Green Gorge and Sawyer Valley with requests for improvements of facilities. I more or less expected somebody to get upset. Peculiarly enough, everything I asked was agreed to and I was invited to come back next year for a three months stay. I didn't mention north camp as they can run that to suit themselves.

Phillip Saw who is director said that I should supply him with a request for work to be done during the next four years. He would put it in the budget next May and probably be able to get it thru. I will have to think this over in some detail.

Tomorrow I leave for Tasmania where I will be moving about somewhat. However my mail address will be as on the back of this letter. I intend to dig up my old cables in the bottom of Johnson Valley to salvage what can be had. Also I will try to figure out what needs to be done there as a more permanent setup. About three years from now I hope to have two installations in operating shape; one at Kampton and the other at Macquarie. The two sites are quite similar and good comparative data should be possible thru the next solar activity minimum. Incidentally, I have found people here who recognize that Yale tie!

Best regards,

Grote
Grote Reber

IPS
Box 801 H, GPO
Hobart, Tas.