

## COLLECTING MY THOUGHTS

Alas we are coming to the end of our first adventure “The Antarctic Peninsula”, and I am wondering where to begin to summarise all the wonderful sights and experiences I have seen and had since arriving down here in early January.

The rugged mountainous regions, the ice, the snow, icebergs, glaciers, bergy bits, brash ice, clear water, murky water, seals, whales, penguins, birds, the good weather, the bad weather, sunsets, sunrises and so it goes on.

What a magnificent time it has been and how far we have come since our departure from South America, Ushuaia on January the 9<sup>th</sup>. Not to mention from New Zealand on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November 2000, several months ago.

Always plain sailing, no, but the great times have far outweighed the hardships and we have gained valuable experience in these conditions.

I believe all the crew would agree that the unsettling moments that were set before us to test our will and inner stamina have only reinforced our team and strengthened our resolve for the quest ahead. Antarctic is a harsh environment but it brings out the best in all and we have come through unscathed with lasting memories.

My mind is so full of wondrous tales that the saying I have used before, “Sensory Overdrive” comes to the fore and I am searching now for a brief way to share these times. It is not an easy task but we have been lucky enough to capture most on film so all can enjoy in the not to distant future.

Initially after reading and hearing old explorers and seafarer’s tales about the region, I must say I was a little apprehensive about coming down here. Don’t get me wrong, I always wanted to visit, but those slight doubts about the journey ahead always lingered close as we set forth from Ushuaia. These doubts however were soon allayed and I found comfort in the surroundings, as Antarctica became our home.

Naturally our fantastic lady “Seamaster” alleviated a lot of these doubts and as with crossing the southern ocean, she once again proved herself time and time again in quite difficult circumstances. Her strong purpose built exterior and comfortable interior put mind at ease and was a welcome base after hard days and nights on deck plus times away both onshore and below the surface.

I would be amiss not to mention our Captain and crew who have grown together and strengthened as a team over the last few months. I send a special thanks to their wives, girlfriends and loved ones for allowing me the privilege of having them as shipmates.

I should also speak about the amazing wildlife I have encountered on land and in the water as they have received me into their territory, as one would welcome a guest into your home. I say you get back what you give and I think most of the wonderful creatures I have met here have recognised that I mean them no harm.

Most people would think i'm crazy the way I have been talking to these creatures however to sit, lie or dive up close to wildlife in these remote places is a truly amazing experience that excites, exhilarates and emotionally drains.

After such embracing times it reinforces my feelings towards all life and our planet and I say to anyone, person, corporation or government who slaughters, mistreats and abuses either fellow man, animals or damages the environment, take a good look at yourself, how dare you and what gives you the right.

Maybe you should spend some time down here.

Peter and Don still work tirelessly in the log production office (Don.com) and even during the days when they wonder what to produce and are working into the late hours, they have never faltered to transmit by days end, what I think is a superb publication. It is a wonderful accomplishment and I wonder whether all out there realise the effort involved.

During the trip we have also met a wonderful collection of interesting people from around the world, on bases, cruise and expedition ships plus charter yachts. I am sure all transients and travellers have enjoyed it as much as we have and to those that assisted us from time to time, and made us welcome ashore and onboard their vessels, I thank you.

I could ramble on for some time re my thoughts about our journey however the above and the few articles I have produced for earlier logs portray my feelings.

As I write late in the evening, Seamaster is covered in ice and snow, all expedition and cruise ships have departed these waters, bases are closed or are closing and down grading for the winter. The weather is worsening daily. It is time to leave.

In the early morning we will be departing for Ushuaia and it is with some sadness that I leave these waters. I will miss this wonderful oasis of the south but know I will return.

I hope when I do that it will still be the paradise I am leaving.

It's a beautiful thing to live one's dreams.