

What the World Knows about the M. U. Expedition to Antarctica, 1930-31

Most of the following came to the world via the Arkham Advertiser's powerful radio installation at Kingsport Head, Massachusetts.

The expedition landed at Ross Island in the Ross Sea. After several tests of the drilling gear and trips to Mt. Erebus and other local sights, the land party, consisting of 20 men and 55 dogs plus gear, assembled a semi-permanent camp on the barrier not far away and readied their five big Dornier aircraft for flight.

Using four of the aircraft, the fifth being held in reserve at the barrier camp, the party established a second base camp on the Polar Plateau beyond the top of the Beardmore Glacier (Lat 86d7m Long E174d23m) and did a lot more drilling and blasting in that vicinity. During December 13-15, 1930, Pabodie, Gedney, and Carroll climbed Mt. Nansen. Many fascinating fossil finds were made using the drill rig.

On January 6, 1931, Lake, Dyer, Pabodie, Daniels, and ten others flew directly over the South Pole in two aircraft, being forced down once for several hours by high winds. Several other observation flights were made to points of less noteworthiness during the week before and after.

The published plan for the expedition at this point was to move the entire operation eastward another 500 miles in mid-January, for the purpose of establishing once and for all whether Antarctica was one continent or two. The public also received word during this period that Lake, the biologist, campaigned strongly for an expedition to the northwest before moving the base camp. Therefore, instead of flying west on the 10th of January as planned, the party remained where it was while Lake, Pabodie, and five others set out via sled to probe overland into unknown lands. This expedition lasted from January 11th

through the 18th, and was scientifically successful and marred only by the loss of two dogs in an accident while crossing a pressure ridge. During this same period, many supplies and barrels of fuel were airlifted by the others up to the Beardmore camp.

The expedition's published agenda was changed once again when it was decided to send a very large party northeastward under Lake's command. The party left Beardmore by aircraft on January 22nd, and radioed frequent reports directly to the Arkham for rebroadcast to the world. The party consisted of 4 planes, 12 men, 36 dogs, and all of the drilling and blasting equipment. Later that same day the expedition landed about 300 miles east and drilled and blasted up a new set of samples, containing some very exciting Cambrian fossils.

Late on the same day, about 10 p.m., Lake's party announced the sighting of a new mountain range far higher than any heretofore seen in the Antarctic. Its estimated position was at Lat 76d15m, Long E113d10m. It was described as a very broad range with suspicions of volcanism present. One of the planes was forced down in the foothills and was damaged in the landing. Two other craft landed there as well and set up camp, while Lake and Carroll, in the fourth plane, flew along the new range for a short while up close. Very strange angular formations, columns, and spiracles were reported in the highest peaks. Lake estimated the range peaks may top 35,000 feet. Dyer called back to the ships and ordered the crew there to ready large amounts of supplies for shipment to a new base which would have to be set up in the foothills of the new range. January 23rd-Lake commented on the likelihood of vicious gales in the region, and announced that they were beginning a drilling probe near the new camp. It was agreed that

one plane would fly back to the Beardmore camp to pick up the remaining men and all the fuel it could carry. Dyer told Lake that he and his men would be ready in another 24 hours.

The rest of that same day was filled with fantastic, exciting news that rocked the scientific world. A borehole had drilled through into a cave, and blasting had opened up the hole wide enough to enter. The interior of the limestone cave was a treasure trove of wonderful fossil finds in unprecedented quantity. After this discovery, the messages no longer came directly from Lake but were dictated from notes that Lake wrote while at the dig site and sent to the transmitter by runner.

Into the afternoon the reports poured in. Amazing amounts of material were found in the hole, some as old as the Silurian and Ordovician ages, some as recent as the Oligocene period. Nothing found was more recent than 30 million years ago. Fowler discovered triangular stipple-prints in a Comanchian fossil stratum that were close cousins to ones discovered by Lake himself in Archaean slate elsewhere on the continent. They concluded that the makers of those tracks were members of a species of radiant that continued significantly unchanged for over six hundred million years-and was in fact evolved and specialized at a time "not less than a thousand million years ago when the planet was young and recently uninhabitable for any life forms of normal protoplasmic structure. The question arises when, where, and how that development took place."

Later that evening- Orrendorf and Watkins discovered a huge barrel shaped fossil of wholly unknown nature. Mineral salts apparently preserved the specimen with minimal calcification for an unknown period of time. Unusual flexibility remained in the tissues, though they were extremely tough. The creature was over six feet in length and seems to have possessed membranous fins or wings. (More detail given, too much for this synopsis.) Given the unique nature of the find, all hands

were searching the caves looking for more signs of this new organism type.

Close to midnight-Lake broadcast to the world that the new barrel bodied animals were the same creatures that left the weird triangular prints in fossil strata from the Archaean to the Comanchian eras. Mills, Boudreau, and Fowler found a cluster of thirteen more of the specimens about forty feet from the entrance, in association with a number of small oddly shaped soapstone carvings. Several of the new specimens were more intact than the first, including intact head and feet samples that convinced Lake that the creatures were his track-makers (an extremely detailed anatomical description followed at this point). Lake intended to dissect one, then get some rest and see Dyer and the others in a day or two.

January 24th, 3 a.m.-Lake reported that the fourteen specimens had been brought by sled from the dig site to the main camp and laid out in the snow. The creatures were extremely heavy and also very tough. Lake began his attempt at dissection on one of the more perfect specimens, but found that he could not cut it open without risking great damage to delicate structures, so he exchanged it for one of the more damaged samples. This also gave him easier access to the creature's interior. (More details vocal systems-very advanced nervous system--exceedingly foul smell -weird and complex sensory organs.) He jokingly named the creatures the "elder ones."

Last report, about 4 a.m.-Strong winds rising, all hands at Lake's Camp were set to building hurried snow barricades for the dogs and the vehicles. As a probable storm was on the way, air flight was out of the question for the moment. Lake went to bed exhausted.

No further word was received from Lake's camp. Huge storms that morning threatened to bury even Dyer's camp. At first it was assumed that Lake's radios were out, but continued silence from all four transmitter sets was worrisome. Dyer called up the spare plane from

McMurdo to join him at Beardmore once the storm had subsided.

January 25th-Oyer's rescue expedition left Beardmore with 10 men, 7 dogs, a sled, and a lot of hope, piloted by McTighe. They took off at 7: 15 a.m. and were at Lake's Camp by noon. Several upper-air gales made the journey difficult. Landing was reported by McTighe at Lake's camp at noon; the rescue party was on the ground safely.

4 p.m., same day-A radio announcement was sent to the world that Lake's entire party had been killed, and the camp all but obliterated by incredibly fierce winds the night before. Gedney's body was missing, presumed carried off by wind; the remainder of the team was dead and so grievously torn and mangled that transporting the remains was out of the question. Lake's dogs were also dead; Dyer's own dogs were extremely uneasy around the camp and the few remains of Lake's specimens. As for the new animals-the elder ones-described by Lake, the only specimens found by Dyer were damaged, but were still whole enough to ascertain that Lake's descriptions were probably wholly and impressively accurate. It was decided that an expedition in a lightened plane would fly into higher peaks of the range before everyone returned home.

January 26th-Early morning report by Dyer talked about his trip with Danforth into the mountains. He described the incredible difficulty in gaining the altitude necessary to reach even the lowest of the passes at 24,000 feet; he confirmed Lake's opinion that the higher peaks were of very primal strata unchanged since at least Comanchian times. He discussed the large cuboid formations on the mountainsides, and mentioned that approaches to these passes seemed quite navigable by ground parties but that the rarefied air makes breathing at those heights a very real problem. Dyer described the land beyond the mountain pass as a "lofty and immense super-plateau as ancient and unchanging as the mountains themselves-twenty thousand feet in elevation,

with grotesque rock formations protruding through a thin glacial layer and with low gradual foothills between the general plateau surface and the sheer precipices of the highest peaks." The Dyer group spent the day burying the bodies and collecting books, notes, etc., for the trip home.

January 27th-Dyer's party returned to Beardmore in a single air hop using three planes, the one they came in and the two least damaged of Lake's four craft.

January 28th-The planes were back at McMurdo Sound. The expedition packed and left soon after that.