

IGY ANTARCTIC SIGNATORIES CACHETS

By

Dr. Paul C. Dalrymple

Background

Prior to going to the Antarctic at the end of 1956, I met with a family friend, one Mrs. Maxwell Hall Elliott of New York City, a philatelist, and we worked out a plan whereby, hopefully, we could collect cachets from all of the stations in Antarctica during the IGY, requesting their leaders at the stations to sign the envelopes. Mrs. Elliott was to send two envelopes to each station, and have them returned by the various postal services to her. With the exception of one envelope, both collections were the same. The sole exception was that President Eisenhower would only sign one envelope, which remained in Mrs. Hall's personal collection. After the IGY, her Collection received second prize in a national philatelic show held in New York City. Shortly thereafter Mrs. Elliott passed away, and where she had no children, I assume the estate sold her Collection at auction, although I have no proof of same. I might add that Mrs. Elliott was one of the very first females to join the Antarctic Society.

The Van Allen Dinner Party

Back in the early 1950s, when the famed space scientist, James Van Allen, was living in Washington, DC (actually Silver Springs, MD), he hosted a dinner party where several prominent scientists were hosted. One was Lloyd Berkner, who was one of Admiral Byrd's radio operators on board a ship participating in the Second Byrd Antarctic Expedition. Berkner had been active in the Second Polar Year when he was Head of the Section on Exploratory Geophysics of the Atmosphere in the Department of Terrestrial Magnetism of the Carnegie Institute of Washington. During the course of the evening, Berkner suggested that the time might be right for holding another International Polar Year. Also in attendance that evening was Sydney Chapman, who was the Sullivan Professor of Natural Philosophy of Queens College, Oxford and was soon to be elected president of the supreme nongovernmental academic body, the International Council of Scientific Union. Also in the Van Allen's living room that evening were three other geophysicists, S. Fred Singer, J. Wallace Joyce, and Ernest Vestine. It was decided that evening that Berkner and Chapman would present Berkner's proposal for another polar year to the Mixed Commission on the Ionosphere to be held three months later in Brussels. So the seed for what later turned out to be the International Geophysical Year had been planted by Berkner in Van Allen's home.

Signatories Cachets/ Covers

It is my feeling that this exhibit of IGY Antarctic Cachets/Covers should lead off with the envelope signed by James Van Allen, followed by the one signed by the flowing signature of Lloyd Berkner, and then the one signed by Sydney Chapman. The USA soon formed a National Committee for the IGY, and there is an envelope signed by Joseph Kaplan, chairman of the US IGY Committee. Larry Gould signed one as Director of the US Antarctic Programs, Harry Wexler as Chief Scientist for the Antarctic IGY, Bert Crary

as the Deputy Chief Scientist for the Antarctic IGY, and Hugh Odishaw as head of the IGY offices in Washington, D.C. A Who's Who of Antarctic big wigs during the IGY.

Then there are many cachets signed by personnel at all of the American scientific stations (Little America V, Amundsen-Scott South Pole, Byrd, Ellsworth, Wilkes, and Hallett). McMurdo was strictly a logistical support base during the IGY. Some of the cachets have multiple signatures, such as participants on the first Ross Ice Shelf Traverse, such as the first Weather Central, such as all the foreign scientists at Little America V, such as the first Congressional Delegation to visit Antarctica. The last group featured Congressman Torby McDonald, former All American at Harvard, who was JFK's best man when he married Jackie, and who initiated legislation for local viewing of all NFL games sold out by the preceding Thursday. Then there were special individual signatory envelopes, showing the autographs of explorer Sir Hubert Wilkins, Father Dan Linehan, seismologist, Jesuit priest, who took the first seismic shot at the South Pole, Gentleman Jim Zumberge, budding glaciologist-college president, and many, many others.

BRITISH COMMONWEALTH ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION

Having a connection in Wellington, New Zealand, I purchased perhaps forty TAE cachets, and I got both Crossing Parties (Hillary from New Zealand and Fuchs from the UK) to sign the cachets. I gave them to relatives and close friends, although I dare say now that there are probably only a couple of dozen in existence. I also was a close friend of Ralph Lenton of Fuchs' party – even stood up for him when he got married. So I ended up with some very special signed cachets that were carried from Shackleton to the South Pole to Scott Base.