

Recollection of Former U.S. Navy Electronics Technician John Wright

I was the Navy person in charge when they de-activated Plateau Station, then a E5 Electronics Technician. This was after the disastrous austral winter of 1968 which included a fire, multiple failures of the Caterpillar generators, and a field extraction of a tooth. By the time I arrived, things had operationally settled down, but there was still a lot of bitterness between the USARP and NAVY communities. I managed to stay out of the fray, and I feel that I won the favor of the USARPS there.

We did have a data acquisition analyzer system (DAA) which was used in conjunction with what we called the "Micro Meteorology study". It was run by George Rubin de la Borbollia from Michigan Tech and by Tom Frostman who worked for the U.S. Army Natick Labs. That system consisted of a tower that measured wind speed, wind direction, and temperature at various points going up the tower. The data was routed to the data acquisition analyzer.

I recall the DAA system gave us headaches, particularly with the paper tape punch which I suspect was wearing out due to years of use. I do recall we had some spare parts for it. George spent a good bit of time fixing it, there were times I would help him. Last, I recall, George and Frosty and myself packed up the system, sensors, and reams of paper tape that were sent to Natick MA. Despite looking through the years, I never heard of any follow-up or conclusions from that study. I would love to know what was learned from it.

When I was there, I generally got along better with most of the USARPs than the Navy people. George, Frosty and Mike Kuhn got me pointed toward getting out and getting degrees in engineering and computer science. I ended up working for IBM for forty years in both the US and Germany.

Some of the people I knew and befriended there:

Bob Soond ran the geomagnetic study working with Claude Beers at the USCGS Facility in Corbin, VA. Bob visited us when I was going to college. I believe he died of stomach cancer not too long after that. Bob was probably my best friend when I was there.

I have, off and on, kept in touch with Mike Kuhn who ran the polar absorption study. He was the head of the Geophysics Department at the University of Innsbruck Austria at the time, now a Professor Emeritus there. We just missed each other when I visited Innsbruck when I was working in Europe back in 2005.

I lost contact with Atok Karaali who has passed as well. But later on, did get in touch with his daughter Gizem Karaali who is a mathematics professor at Pomona College. Atok was a great friend as well. I stay in touch with Gizem every now and then.

A couple of years back, I ran into Glenn Liston, a professor at Colorado State University, right down the road. He was with the Norwegian Antarctic Research Expedition I think back in the 1990s. They visited Plateau Station and Glen actually repelled down one of the skylight domes and took pictures; and guess what? Everything was just the way we left it back in 1969 (surprise,

surprise !) right down to the food and fuel we left for some unlucky person who needed it, to the naughty pictures we left on the wall.

John Wright