

February 14, 2023: “Hey Andes, Know What That Empanada’s Got In It?”

We left Dallas on an atypical Winter day – overcast, yes, but warm, like Spring, which it will be when we return. It was hard to say goodbye to our little friend, Skipper. He's still a baby - like Baby Huey. He plays too rough, and our other cats (Jimmypage, Robertplant and Gadget) don't have the time of day for him, so we're his only friends. I hope he doesn't destroy the house while we're gone.



In true Bate/Pigg fashion, we arrived at the airport about 7 hours before we needed to. Good thing, as I discovered I left my glasses at home and had to find some in the DFW International terminal, which is no mean feat. You can find any kind of artery clogging food you want at DFW and get drunk off your butt but try finding a pair of readers. Upon solving the problem, albeit looking like Edith Prickley, we boarded on time and settled in for our 10 hour flight to..... Buenos Aires. That's right, Johnny Gilbert! You and a guest will fly to the Paris of South America on a luxurious Boeing 787 whereupon you will be greeted by Stop the tape.

I have been to Paris a few times and I don't remember it looking like the Bronx in the mid 1980s. Getting off the plane, I couldn't help but wonder what exactly is the "Second World." If the U.S., Canada, Western Europe, etc. are First World, and Haiti, some of sub-Saharan Africa, and bits of India are Third World, then I suspect Buenos Aires would be considered Second World. I suppose that's one of the differences between the colonizers and the colonized.

Everything here looks like it's about 40 years out of date – the cars (all of which are Euro size), the infrastructure, etc. It appears to me to be a place that peaked before WWII and is now mired in grandiose colonial decay.

And speaking of the 80s, the first song I heard was a Spanish language cover of Karma Chameleon, followed by covers of Girls Just Want to Have Fun and Kokomo. And since we're in a place that is supposed to be famous for beef, it only seems fitting that the fast food stop I see is an Outback Steak House. What a world.

Everyone seems to smoke here, which is odd to see. Tattoos are prevalent, extensive, and impressive. Lots of homeless, and we were treated to the police covering a corpse in a park as we drove in from the airport. There are armed police about every 50 feet, so I feel really safe (Hey Google, activate sarcasm mode). Mustn't let the tourists get killed. I get it, though. The Argentine dollar is worthless, inflation is staggering, and all the vendors here want either U.S. Dollars or Euros. Like everywhere else, I suspect the bad guys want whatever they can get.

It's summer here and therefore it is as humid as butt (for you Holly Rudin Ingram). Think New York City on a bad August day, or Dallas pretty much anytime between mid-May and mid-October. The weird thing is that everything here is really green, unlike Dallas and its healthy summer brown. It must rain a lot here. The other weird thing is that I haven't noticed central air conditioning, except in our hotel. Buenos Aires is really populous (18 million in the metro area) and all I see, at best, are room air conditioners in the windows of the never-ending high-rise blocks of apartment buildings. Or, even more prevalent, are the millions of swamp coolers which constantly drip on one's head as one walks down the street.

Our hotel, of course, is very nice. Nothing Second World about it and a good place to pampa oneself. See what I did there? And speaking of pampa, did you hear about the Communist Argentinian Cowboy Comedian - Gaucho Marx? Hello? Is thing on? Come to the 11 o'clock show. I work blue.

There was nothing to watch on the plane except a lot of 40 year old movies (I'm starting to notice a trend here), so I was awake all night listening to my audio book and contemplating how

Bernouli's Principle is nothing more than a collective act of faith. Our flight path took us on a diagonal line from Dallas across the Gulf of Mexico, across Central America, then a bit of the Pacific, then paralleling the Andes for hundreds of miles before hanging a Lou and heading into Buenos Aires. Only 20 percent of the world's population lives south of the Equator. We are not only south of the Equator, but south of the Tropic of Capricorn. I still haven't gotten tired of seeing water drain in a clockwise direction. It takes so little.

After a lunch of empanadas (baked, not deep fried as at Empa Mundo in Irving, Texas), we took a siesta. And now, cocktails. Followed by dinner. Perhaps we shall locate an Outback and get some steak.



February 15, 2023: What's New, Buenos Aires?

Well, we didn't go to Outback; and we also didn't have steak. After getting to know our bartender Tobias, we headed out into the wilds of Buenos Aires in search of a steak dinner. On Valentine's Day. Without a reservation. Doh!

But first, a bit about Tobias.

Like many people I've seen since my arrival, Tobias is tall and Aryan looking. And he's quick with a joke or to light up your smoke, but, in fact, he'd look right at home in Vienna or Berlin. Now I am starting to understand why I haven't seen one person of color since my arrival. In fact, I've seen only a couple of jibaros; the closest I've seen to black skin since I got here. On the plane, I joked to Adriana that I hoped I'd get to see an authentic Nazi, but I think the reality is that I'm seeing their grandchildren.

So, dinner. We went to a place called Natascha's. A locals place for sure. We had to be the only Americans in the joint. Like most of my Buenos Aires experience thus far, it's run down and dingy. (I've noticed no one smiles here. The women look older than their years and the men have a vague air of defeat about them – except for Lionel Messi). That said, the food was absolutely terrific and reasonably priced. I had a spinach stuffed canelone (that's how it's spelled on the menu). I would definitely eat there again.



After dinner, we took a stroll in the coolness of the night. After the heat of the day, it was really pleasant to feel the cool air as we wandered in the neighborhood of our hotel. We saw lots of young people (all white) milling about the clubs and met a couple of really nice dogs, which helped our missing Sophie for a few moments.

After sleeping the sleep of the dead, we breakfasted at the hotel where I saw a doppelganger of my friend Martha Esquivel Goldblatt. Martha, your twin lives in Buenos Aires.

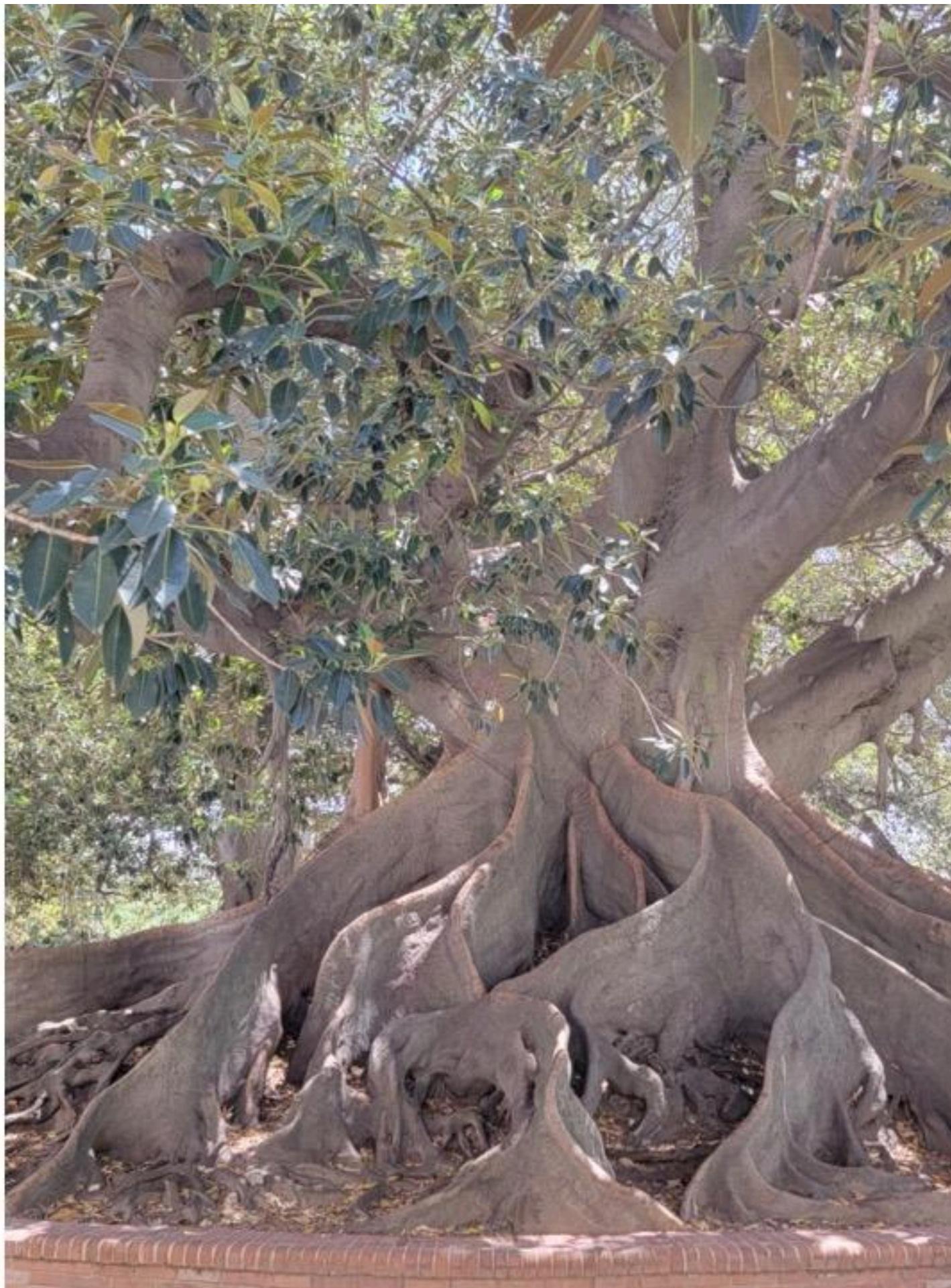
Continuing the '80s theme, our breakfast Muzak play list featured easy listening Spanish language covers of Don't You Want Me, Don't Stop Believing, and Rocket Man (ok, ok, Rocket Man is '70s, but close enough). And speaking of the Spanish language, the dialect here is really hard for me to understand. The pronunciations are not at all like what I learned in Sra. Morales' 8th grade Spanish class, so I'm finding it challenging to adapt my ear to the differences.

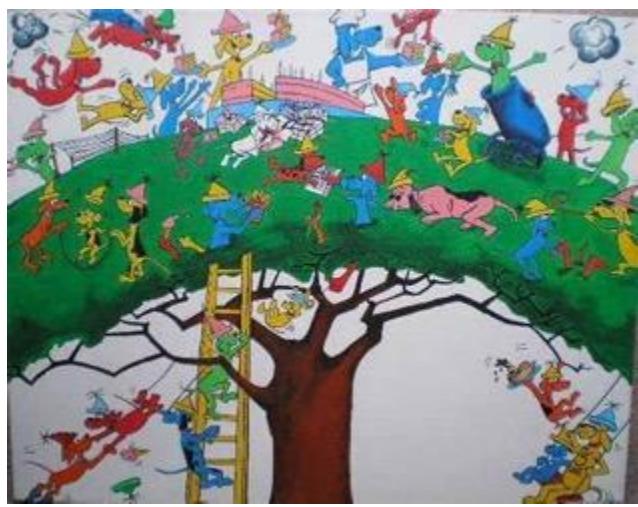
After breakfast, we decided to walk to the Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires; and a pleasant though humid walk it was. We walked through many parks (there's a bunch of 'em in Buenos Aires) and the jacarandas were still in bloom. The park highlight occurred when we saw a couple playing with their Border Collie who can do headers back to his owner after being tossed a miniature futbol. Clearly, we still miss our Sophie.

Quite by happenstance, we stumbled upon the granddaddy of Gomeros during our ramble. No, not that Gomero. The Gomero that is the Ur rubber tree progenitor of all the rubber trees in Buenos Aires - 20 meters high by 50 meters wide – big enough to host all of the Go Dog Go dogs.









After a long walk and before entering the museum, we stopped for a refresco at the Polo Lounge. We didn't see Warren Beatty, but we did see a nifty mural of the Argentinian flag.



The Museum exhibits were ok, if a little derivative. Lots of intertextuality with Bunuel, Rothko, and Dali, so I didn't really see anything I hadn't seen before and thought was better.

Of course, one cannot go to Buenos Aires without thinking about Eva Peron. I have mixed opinions about the Perons, but I'm glad I went to the museum dedicated to her. Funny, she does kind of look like Patti Lupone, back when Patti Lupone was still Patti Lupone and not a caricature of Tallulah Bankhead.





1919 | 26 DE JULIO | ∞

INMORTAL

El museo
Evita
20 AÑOS

Evita's museum is housed in an orphanage she had built when she was married to Juan and is pretty nice, in a Spanish Gothic kind of way. If you have to be an orphan, I'd say it's better than being stuck at Boy's Town with Mickey Rooney.

Now: Some say Evita was nothing more than an opportunist putana from the barrio who had a native intelligence and ruthlessly screwed her way to the top only to become power drunk before succumbing to cancer at age 33. Others venerate her with Selena-like ardor. Being a theatre guy who belongs to a couple of unions, I admire what she did for labor in general and the performing arts especially. She and Juan brought dignity to labor in Argentina and she almost single-handedly created a living wage for Argentinian performers. Her love of and compassion for children seems genuine to me. What she did for orphaned and unwanted kids are worthy testaments to her humanity. So who cares how she got to power? What she did with that power for the few years she was able to wield it are what counts to me.

AYER



HOY



DE LA FUNDACIÓN
DE LA REPÚBLICA
PERON

Juan, on the other hand, is a lot more complicated; possibly because he lived much longer than Evita. But probably because he was an asshole. He did a lot of good things for Argentina while he rose through the various governmental ranks to become President. He was also a Fascist in all but name and ruled with an iron fist. Let's check out a couple of his quotes, as set forth in Wikipedia – the most trusted name in information delivery:

“Italian Fascism made people's organizations participate more on the country's political stage. Before Mussolini's rise to power, the state was separated from the workers, and the former had no involvement in the latter. [...] Exactly the same process happened in Germany, that is the state was organized [to serve] for a perfectly structured community, for a perfectly structured population: a community where the state was the tool of the people, whose representation was, in my opinion, effective.”

Okie dokie.

We all know how about Peron's relationship with the Nazis, so 'nuff said about that, other than:

“In Nuremberg at that time something was taking place that I personally considered a disgrace and an unfortunate lesson for the future of humanity. I became certain that the Argentine people also considered the Nuremberg process a disgrace, unworthy of the victors, who behaved as if they hadn't been victorious. Now we realize that they [the Allies] deserved to lose the war.”

That's just super.

At least when he returned to the Presidency for a brief spell after his exile, he refrained from engaging in the wacky hijinks his buds Allende and Pinochet were up to in neighboring Chile. The desparecidos didn't happen in Argentina until after Peron's death and the military overthrew the government of his widow; third wife Isabel. “One hundred thousand disparos lost in the jails of South America.” Curl it up, Mick.



After walking a total of 7 miles in 90 degree heat, we returned to our room with a big bottle of water and had a little snooze before . . .

February 16, 2023: No! Steak! 'Til Brooklyn!

Maybe not Brooklyn, but certainly not last night. I feel like Peter in the opening credits of the Monkees. Two nights of trying for steak = bupkus. Then the panic set in.

What do you do after 8 pm in a foreign country when you think you've lost your passport? Adriana held it together very well. We retraced our steps, checked with the police, checked at the front desk of our hotel; nada. So, we canceled our driving tour of Buenos Aires for today and made an appointment with the American Embassy. Lo and behold, after sleeping on it, we decided to check the room one more time. In a hidden compartment in a bag we had both checked several times last night slept the miscreant passport. Whew! is an understatement. Damn you, Baggolino!

Having blown our driving tour, we set out to find El Ateneo Grand Splendid – reputedly the most lavish book store in the world. Except we didn't find it. Damn you, Waze! We did see some cool stuff though. The Argentina National Film School, The National Theatre Institute and Library – which even rivals that of Dallas! (Hey, Google....), the Opera House, the Ballet, and a strip of pawnshops and Orfevres that rival 47th Street. I expected to see Adam Sandler pop out of one and try to sell me Knicks tickets.

INET

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By the time we got back to the hotel, it was time to check in with our group. After a nap, we had orientation for our upcoming adventure (Have you guessed our destination yet?)



After meeting a few of our fellow travelers, we finally found that steak dinner.



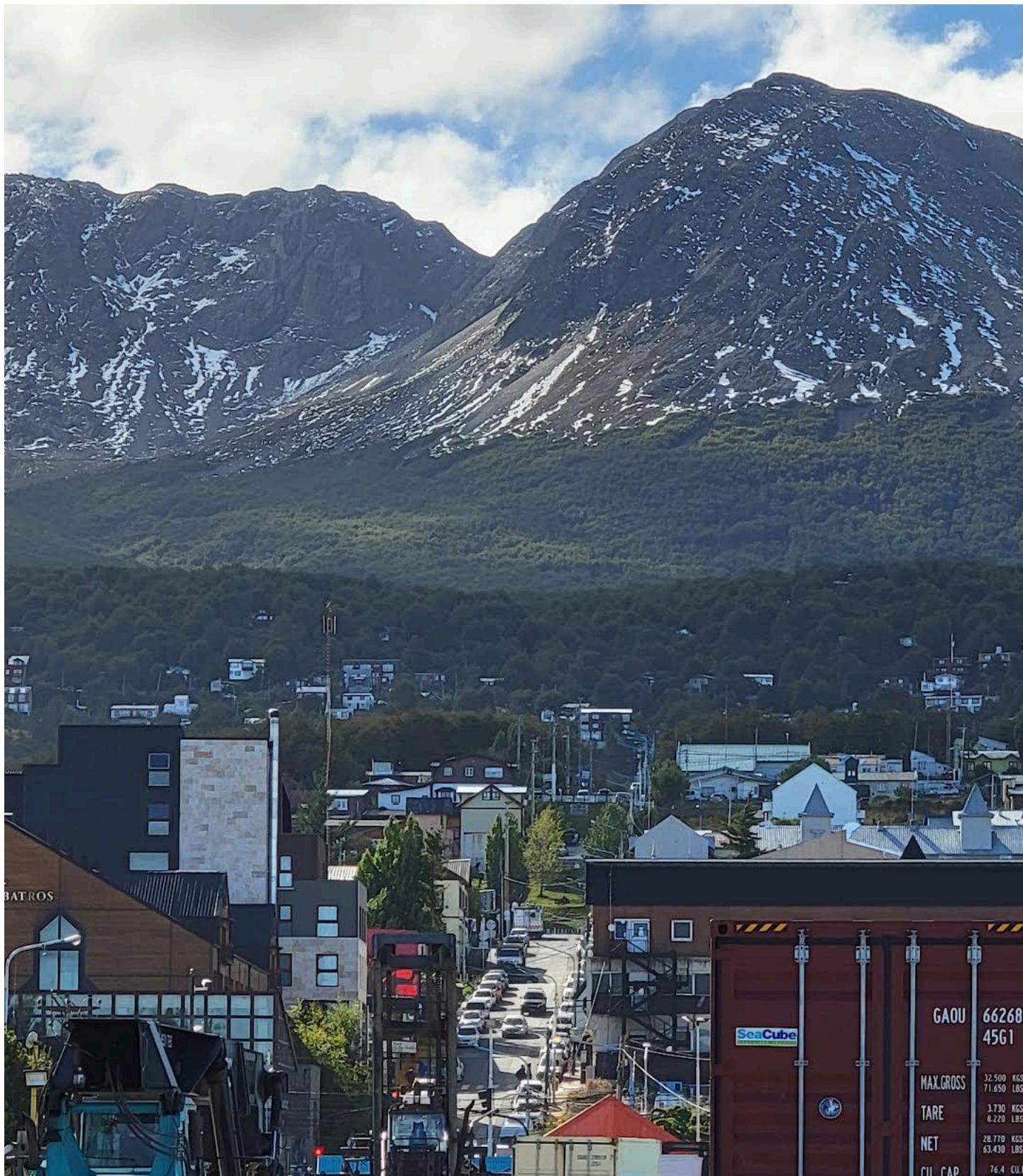
And all is currently well in the world. Just in time for the Pampero to blow in, which lowered the temperature by about 40 degrees in the space of 3 hours; in time for tomorrow's sojourn – at an insanely early hour – even for me, an inveterate early riser. Thus, in the words of Sammy P. "and so to bed."

February 17, 2023: "Scott. Beg leave to inform you [am] proceeding Antarctic. Amundsen."

And with those fateful words, the race to the South Pole began. Now you know where we're off to. Not quite the Pole but, comparatively speaking, not too far from it. In a future post, I'll regale you with tales of Scott, Amundsen and Shackleton. But first, a recap of a very long day:

It began at 3 a.m. in Buenos Aires. The Pampero was howling as 142 sleepy people, all tricked out in their layered explorer togs, slept walked through coffee and yogurt before boarding the bus for the airport. I have to say I'm awfully impressed with how well-traveled our group is. Many have been on safaris in Africa, seen Easter Island, snorkeled with the turtles in the Galapagos, and floated on the Nile. I used to think I was pretty well-traveled, but now I feel totally inadequate. But what the heck. I've been to Waxahachie. Suck on that, college boy.

The flight to Ushuaia was uneventful. It was like landing on another planet.



SeaCube

GAOU 66268
45G1

MAX.GROSS 32,500 KGS
71,650 LBS
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NET 28,770 KGS
63,430 LBS
CUB.CAP 76.4 CUL

Hyup Kim, did you ever make it to Ushuaia? Let's do that movie you wanted to do as I now have a handle on the place.

Ushuaia is the southernmost inhabited town on the planet. 95,000 souls live their lives in the middle of the Land of Fire, which is actually an island. One can drive from Ushuaia to Point Barrow, Alaska on a single road, but one has to go through a bit of Chile if one is to stay on that road. Otherwise, one can stay in Argentina by taking a ferry after driving through Patagonia, which ends in Ushuaia.

Parque Nacion

Tierra del Fue

BAHIA LA PA

República Arge

Aquí finaliza la Ruta Nac

Buenos Aires 3.079
Alaska 17.848 K

I'll leave it to Patagonia expert Greg Gross to expound on its wonders. I will only say that Argentina is a very long country. Buenos Aires is a little over half way down Argentina and it's 1500 miles from Buenos Aires to Ushuaia – the same distance as from Minneapolis to Brownsville, Texas. The only difference is that as it gets hotter as one drives south in the Northern Hemisphere, it's the opposite here in the Southern Hemisphere. It gets colder.

And why Tierra del Fuego you ask? Ask Magellan. For my money, Magellan was the coolest explorer. If you want to read a really good book about his voyage, check out "Over the Edge of the World: Magellan's Terrifying Circumnavigation of the Globe" by Laurence Bergreen, available at Amazon, a Bezos company - purveyors of quality goods and merchandise wherever deliveries are made. (In Argentina, it's not called "Amazon." It's called "Smile.")

The Strait of Magellan borders Tierra del Fuego, linking the Atlantic Ocean with the Pacific. When ole Ferd was doing his thing, he had to winter in Patagonia. The indigenous people at the time were taller and larger bodied than the Europeans. They constructed their footwear out of llama skins, which left a distinctive footprint. "Pata" is another word in Spanish for "foot." So Ferd and his guys thought they had found Big Foot and he named the region Patagonia. That's a true story.

When Spring came and Ferd and his crew were able to continue their journey down the Atlantic coast of Argentina, they got to the strait that now bears his name and saw lots of smoke from the fires marking the settlements of the indigenous peoples who inhabited the area around Ushuaia. Hence, Tierra del Fuego – Land of Fire.

By the way, the Andes run east and west in Tierra del Fuego. That's the only part of the Andes chain that does that.

We lucked out today as it was somewhat sunny and relatively mild. After a scenic bus ride through the National Park in which reshoots on The Revenant took place (remember the seasons are reversed down here. They couldn't do reshoots in Canada as it was summer and all the trees were green, so Leo got to sleep in a bear's stomach in Ushuaia).

We had lunch on a catamaran while cruising through the Beagle Channel (not Snoopy. Darwin. As in that Disney feline classic about the evolution of Dean Jones' career - "That Darwin Cat").



It was pretty cool and a nice foretaste of what is to come. We saw 1 albatross, a bunch of sea lions, 2 different kinds of cormorants, and a partridge in a pear tree.







Did you know Tierra del Fuego has only 5 kinds of mammals; the largest of which is a fox. It also has no reptiles and no amphibians. Must suck being a third grader here. Also of note is the fact that futbol is not the sport in Ushuaia. It's rugby. I currently don't know why that is, but I'll find out when I again get access to the world wide interwebs. If any of you know why that is, feel free to weigh in. Deborah Steed, I count on you to know this kind of information. Similarly, Tierra del Fuego only has a few species of trees; most of which are varietals of the beech tree. Makes sense as Ushuaia is near 2 oceans and, as we all know, life is a beech.

At 5 pm, we boarded the National Geographic Explorer.



After checking into our cabin, we shoved off at 6. First order of business was lifeboat drill. We all passed with flying colors. Not.



All I can say is if the ship goes down, I'm glad I brought women's clothing, cuz that'll be my only chance of survival.

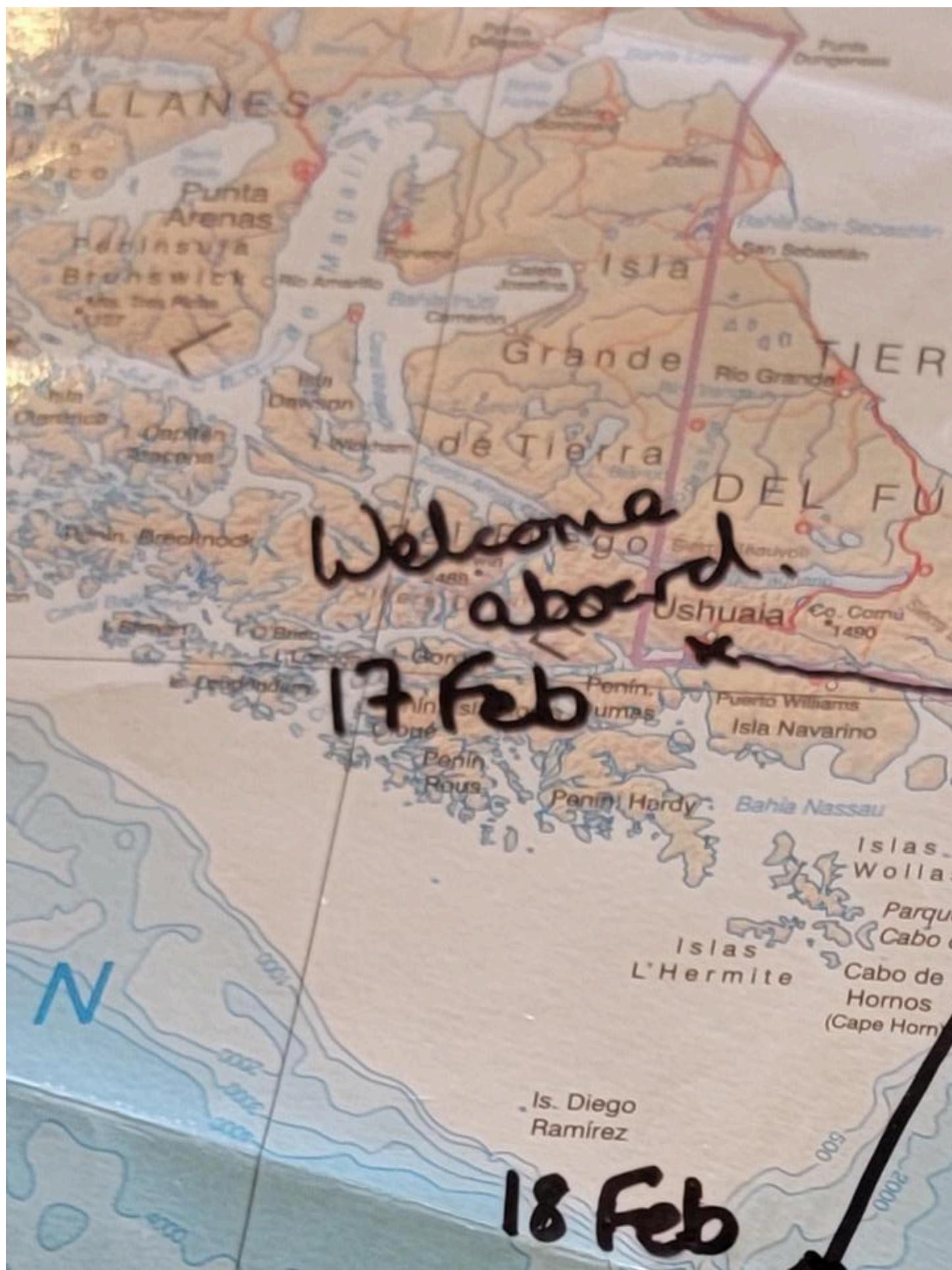
As I write this, it's pushing 11 pm and we've recently entered the Drake Passage; which I'll talk to you about tomorrow as we're going to be in it for the next 600 miles. After a smooth passage out of the Beagle Channel, we have started to roll a bit. Not to worry, though. I've applied my Scopolamine patch; which means I won't get seasick. The downside is I'll start revealing all of the nuclear launch codes.

I am now going to be rocked to sleep with the gentle sounds of the foamy swell lashing against my porthole.



Anybody seen Lord Jim?

February 18, 2023: Hey Drake, Give Me a Break



Welcome aboard
17 Feb

18 Feb

We were ship bound all day as we pitched and rolled through the Drake Passage; named after that famed Pirate... er, um, uh "Privateer," Sir Francis Drake. In 1577, Frankie was appointed by Queen Elizabeth to become the first Englishman to circumnavigate the globe. While he was at it, Liz thought it might be a good idea if Frank could manage to relieve some Spanish ships of their precious cargos of gold and silver. Frank didn't know about the Strait of Magellan, so he got from the Atlantic to the Pacific via a 600 mile wide body of water which is the passage that bears his name. He also made it around the world, laden with riches that he gave to Liz. He kept at the old exploring game until dying of dysentery in Panama when he was in his mid '50s. What a shi*ty way to go.

Sometimes, when the sea is calm, the mariners refer to the Drake Passage as the "Drake Lake." More often, it's like a Surfin' Safari. Waves can sometimes reach a height of more than 30 feet. For us, it has been an endless stream of 10-12 foot waves since I signed off last night.



The Scopolamine has performed as advertised though, and I have not become seasick although walking around a 300 foot long icebreaker is a little challenging. I've heard that a potential side effect of Scopolamine is hallucinations. I'm sure that won't happen to me.

The saying on board is "one hand for the ship, one hand for you." There are grab bars all over the place to assist us landlubbers in looking as little like drunken sailors as possible while we make our way around. We had some presentations today on birds of the Antarctic region, whales, and digital photography. And speaking of whales, do you know what you call a whale who flies airplanes? A pilot whale. I got a million of 'em.

The sky was overcast all day until about the time we finished dinner when the sun peeked out. It's still bouncy, but the seas have begun to calm down a little and the weather forecast is good for tomorrow as we proceed below the Antarctic Circle.

In an idle moment today, I began to think of all the songs that feature ships. The Sloop John B, The Night that Great Ship Went Down, The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald, Red Sails on the Sunset, Row, Row, Row Your Boat, Popeye the Sailor Man., Theme to the Love Boat, Red Sails, Anchors Aweigh, Ship of Fools, Michael Rowed the Boat Ashore, The Good Ship Lollipop, Shovin' Right Off For Home, and Rock the Boat. Feel free to add to the list.

We've made friends with a few couples. When I look around, I see that everyone is old. Good thing we still look young. Uh.... Dang. We probably look old too.

No worries, though. I've found my sea legs, I've had my daily rum ration, and there's no sign of a mutiny.



Things are looking down! Now if I could just manage to shake that large, purple sea serpent that keeps following me around quoting Proust. I am the Lizard King!



February 19, 2023: To Everything, Tern, Tern, Tern

An uneventful day on the ship. The weather has been mostly sunny with clouds at the horizon. The sea has calmed down enough that the waves are only about 4 feet high, but the ship continues to pitch and roll so it is still difficult to walk anywhere without having to hold the railing. I have no idea how sailors were able to stay upright and attend to their duties in the tall ships' era. I suspect the term "sea legs" speaks to that but I don't think climbing the rigging to de-ice the ropes or pulling a shift in the crow's nest sounds very appealing. Good thing there's now electric power and GPS positioning.

Although we spent a great deal of time looking out the windows in the Lounge – our central gathering place – we didn't see many birds. Only terns who skim the white caps looking for krill. It was quite relaxing just watching the sea and the terns. Since there is no access to email, phones, or the world wide interwebs, it's nice to truly get away from it all. It felt just like the 1990s.

Today, we were instructed as to how to avoid tracking bio contaminants on the continent once we hit the beach around noon tomorrow. It involves a certain amount of spraying and spritzing. We also had an interesting class about the history of the discovery of Antarctica. Spoiler: it wasn't Cook. He only got as far south as the South Shetland Islands, which he claimed for England, but they are not part of Antarctica. The agreed upon discoverer was Fabien Bellingshausen in 1820. Although, I think the Spanish will try to convince you otherwise as a Spanish ship also spotted Antarctica in 1820.



We'll get to the age of exploration in a couple of days where we shall learn more about foolhardy feats of daring do.

We are now within the Antarctic Circle. At lunch, we had a spirited discussion about the merits of various rock concerts we've seen. I think I won since I was the only one at our table who saw Bowie.

We took tea on the stern deck this afternoon and while it was cold, it wasn't insanely cold.

We have the captain's cocktail party in a few minutes. I bet he'll look just like Gavin McLeod.



After the meet and greet with the captain, we'll have dinner; merely one of the 17 meals they feed us every day. Holy moly, no one will go hungry on this trip. The food is of high quality but

is never seasoned, so it winds up tasting bland. I'm not much of a foodie, so I don't really care but I have heard rumblings.

Tomorrow, we shall make landfall around mid-morning. There are 142 passengers on our ship. The Antarctic Treaty only allows 100 tourists on the continent at any one time. To manage that, we've all been assigned to 1 of 6 Zodiac groups (That's Zodiac, a subsidiary of Nostradamus, Inc. Ask for it by name). We'll have to rotate the groups that get to be on shore vs. cruising around in a Zodiac waiting to land. I'm sure it will all work out as we always seem to have a raft of options..... Get it? Zodiac? Raft? Hello? I'm here all week, folks.

February 20, 2023: Made it Ma! Bottom of the World!

We're here.

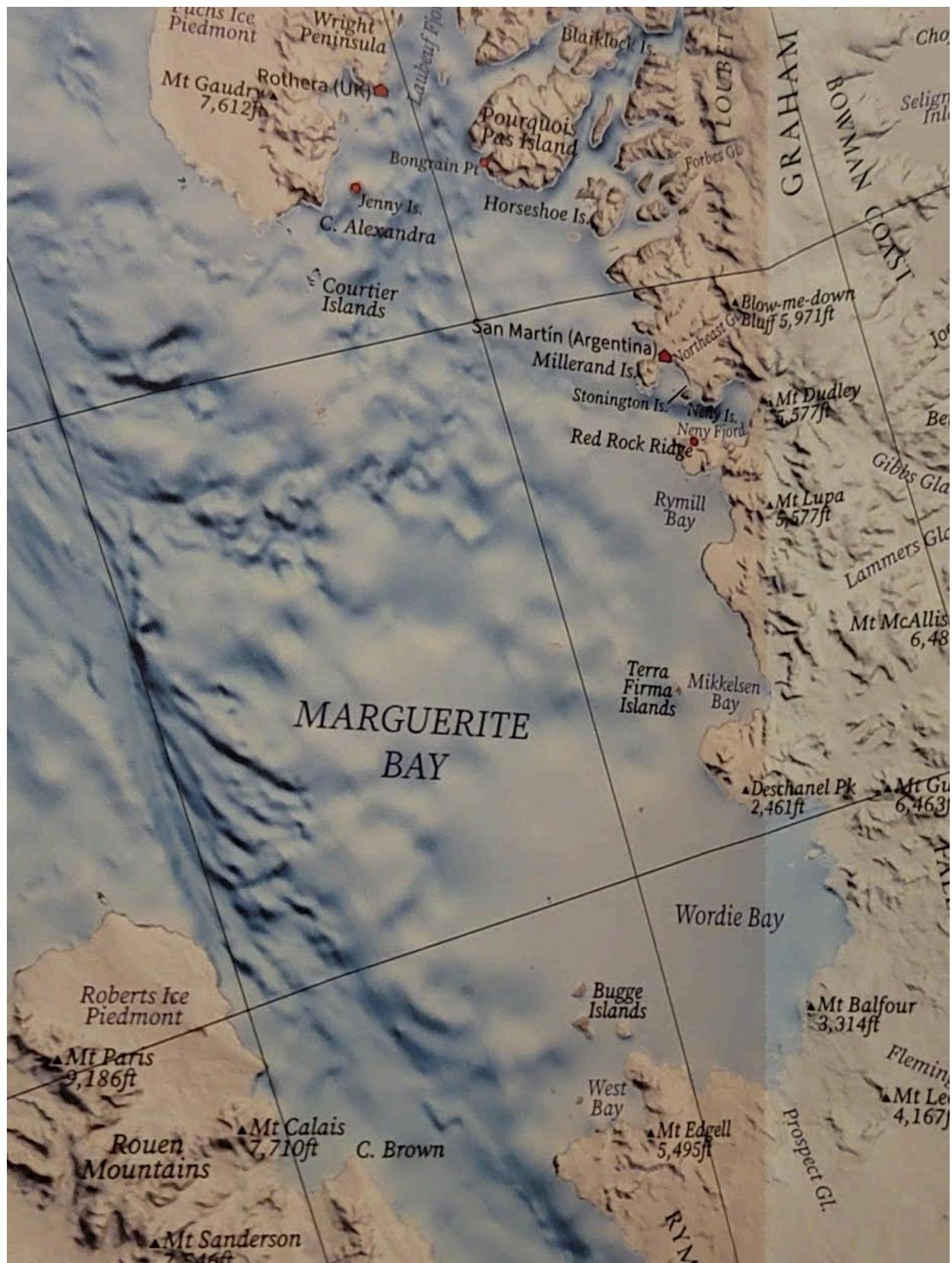


This is my first glimpse of the Antarctic continent:



We couldn't have asked for a better day. 32 degrees Fahrenheit, mostly sunny, no wind to speak of and very little chop here in Margeurite Bay – which is named for Jean-Baptiste Charcot's wife. More on him, later.

We are anchored at approximately 67 degrees, 40 minutes South Latitude and 67 degrees West Longitude – about 100 miles below the Antarctic Circle.



What's that? You don't know your Lat from your Long? Never fear. Captain Peachfuzz will explain.



In basic terms, each degree of either Latitude or Longitude equals 60 nautical miles. Nautical miles are a little bit longer than statute miles which is the measure we all use when we drive somewhere. For example, Dallas to Houston is about 250 statute miles.

But why use nautical miles as a measure? Because mariners were sailing all over the world before the Flintstones invented the automobile and commerce depended on an accurate measure of distance so that ship owners and, later, insurance companies (Damn you, Lloyds of London!) could figure out how long it would take for goods to travel from Point A to Point B and determine rates and pricing accordingly. No one cared too much about statute miles until the advent of the railroads during the Industrial Revolution of the early 1800s. Before the railroads became an efficient means for transporting goods, most goods were made at home and sold locally, so people didn't wander very far from their villages. If they needed to go someplace far away, they sailed. Hence, the nautical mile was the dominant measure of distance for most of recorded history. But I digress.

Latitude is measured from the Equator, which is given the value of 0 degrees Latitude. Each degree of latitude constitutes 60 nautical miles. Within each 60 mile increment there are 60 minutes. So, $1/60^{\text{th}}$ of a degree is 1 nautical mile, denoted as a minute. 60 minutes equals one degree. We are about 40 miles south of 67 degrees; making us about 4060 nautical miles south of the Equator ($67 \times 60 = 4020 + 40 \text{ minutes} = 4060$ nautical miles). The same principle applies when you calculate Longitude.

Longitude is measured from Greenwich, England, which is given the value of 0 degrees Longitude. Since we are west of Greenwich, our Longitude is denoted as W whereas if you start in Greenwich and go to Russia to blow up Vladimir Putin, you would be proceeding across Eastern Longitudinal lines denoted as E since Russia is East of Greenwich. Therefore, we are about 4200 nautical miles west of Greenwich ($67 \times 60 = 4200$). If you look at a nautical chart, you can pinpoint our exact location if you know the Longitude and the Latitude. Or you could say "to hell with it" and use GPS.

So how far are we from the South Pole? A long way. If you were fortunate enough to attend Edward H. Cary Jr. High School in the early 1970s, you probably took geometry from Mr. Otis Boyd Floyd. Mr. Floyd was Euclid's uncle. Mr. Floyd would tell you that since the earth is more or less round (unless you happen to agree with newest Dallas Maverick Kyrie Irving and believe the earth is flat) it has a circumference of 360 degrees. That means the distance from pole to pole is 180 degrees (half of the earth's circumference), or 90 degrees from either pole to the Equator. That makes the South Pole at 90 degrees S Latitude. Since we are at a Latitude of

67/40, we still have 22 degrees, 20 minutes to go before we can plant the Norwegian flag at the South Pole. $22 \times 60 = 1320 + 20 = 1340$ miles to the South Pole. We aren't going that far. Most likely because we'd die as the winds are around 100 miles an hour and the temperature is in the neighborhood of 40 degrees below zero. I have no desire to pull a Scott.



The land mass you see in the picture is named Pourquois Pas Island – which was the name of Jean-Baptiste Charcot's boat. Charcot was trained as a doctor. When his parents died, he quit med school to follow his dream of being an explorer. In the late 1890s, he volunteered to go to the Antarctic to look for the missing Belgica expedition. He didn't find them. But he was gone for 2 years. After being gone for 2 years, his wife Margeurite figured he was dead and took up with another guy. Imagine her surprise when Charcot re-appeared. I wonder what the allegations in the Divorce Petition said and if Margeurite got to keep the name of the bay as part of the settlement.



Charcot's boat, the Pourquoi Pas, saw action in WWI as a submarine hunter, with Charcot in command. It got blown up real good in the run up to WWII. Charcot was quite a guy.



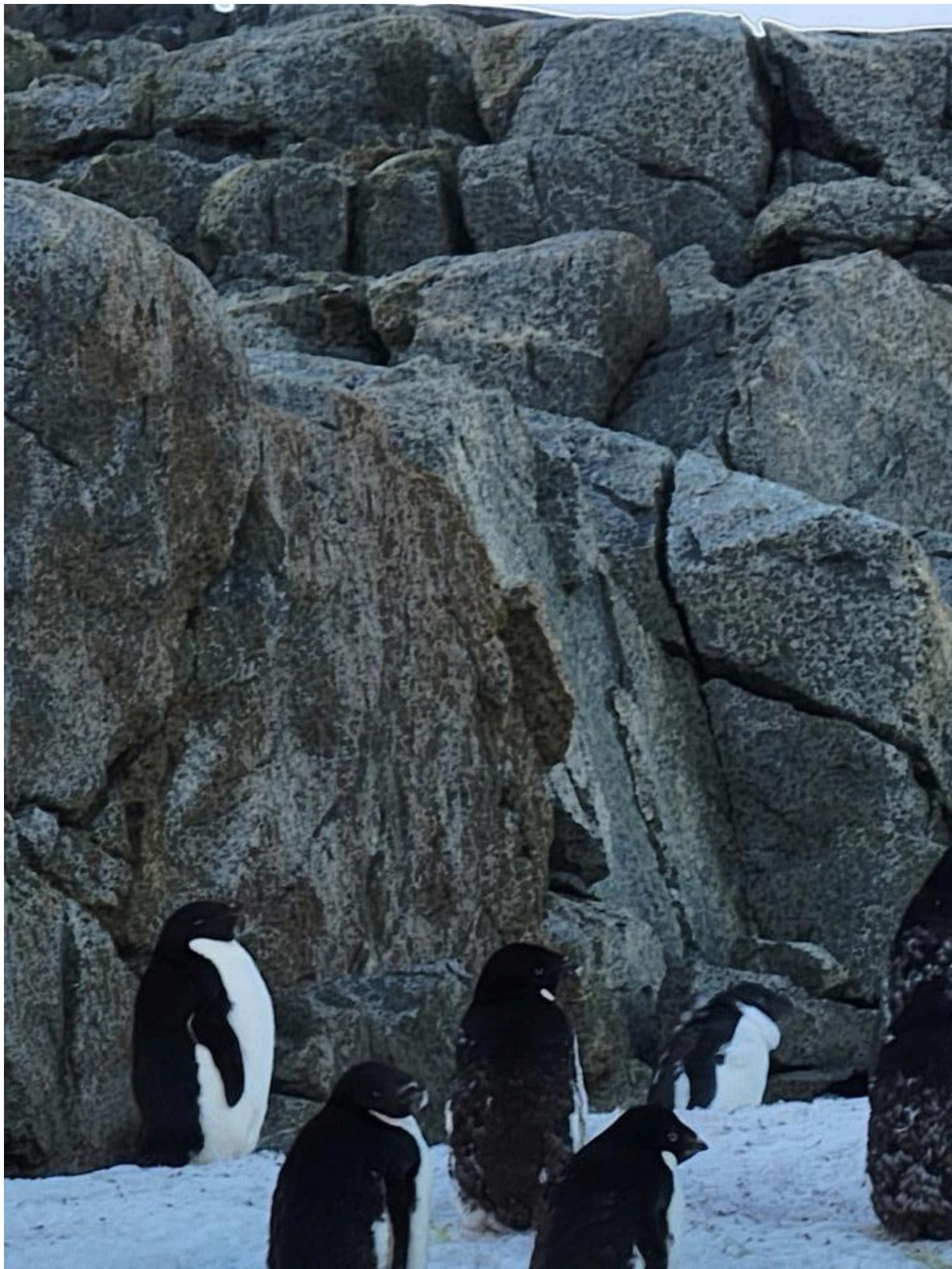
After a morning course in photography with National Geographic staff photographer Jasper Doest, we were given a challenge. During our time here we are invited to construct a story using only photographs. I think I know what my story will be, which I'll share with you at some point during our trip.

We couldn't make landfall this morning due to ice. Instead, we had a 2 hour Zodiac cruise around Margeurite Bay. We saw many humpback whales, leopard seals, fur seals, and a small colony of penguins. It's difficult to get good pictures in a Zodiac with a cell phone when one is all bundled up.









During our cocktails and 3 course gourmet lunch, our ship moved south about 10 miles to Horseshoe Island. Horseshoe Island was the home of the British Antarctic station in the late 1950s and early '60s. 13 men over wintered there for 5 years. Their hut is still there, with a fully stocked larder. Mmmm, mmmm. Nothing like canned mashed potatoes and 2 pound cans of lard to make a fella feel right at home. Man, that's good eating! Oh yeah, and no toilet facilities. There's a hole in the bucket dear Liza, dear Liza . . .



There's a lovely little bay on the west side of Horseshoe Island. I scattered some of me mum's ashes there. There's a nice view while she sleeps.



Once we got back to the ship, we had a nightcap with some of the folks from our group. As I write this, it's 11:30 pm and the sun has only just dipped below the horizon.

All in all, a really good day. Now that we've shown our mettle as rough, tough, rugged, badass explorers, it's time to nod off to sleep in the queensize bed in our cozy, climate controlled cabin. BTW, I need to ask housekeeping for a hot water bottle so dat my widdle toesies don't get code. As you can tell, we're really roughing it.



Sleep well, my friends. I'm sure I will have more news for you tomorrow.

February 21, 2023: Kayaketty Yak, Kayaketty Yak

The day started out as close to perfect as one can get down here at this time of year. 32 degrees Fahrenheit, sunny, no wind, the sea like glass. We are in an area called "The Gullet" which reminds me of me mum as she quite often told me to stop complaining about her cooking and just stick it down my gullet. She also told me to stick it other places, but this is a family blog.

Buchanan

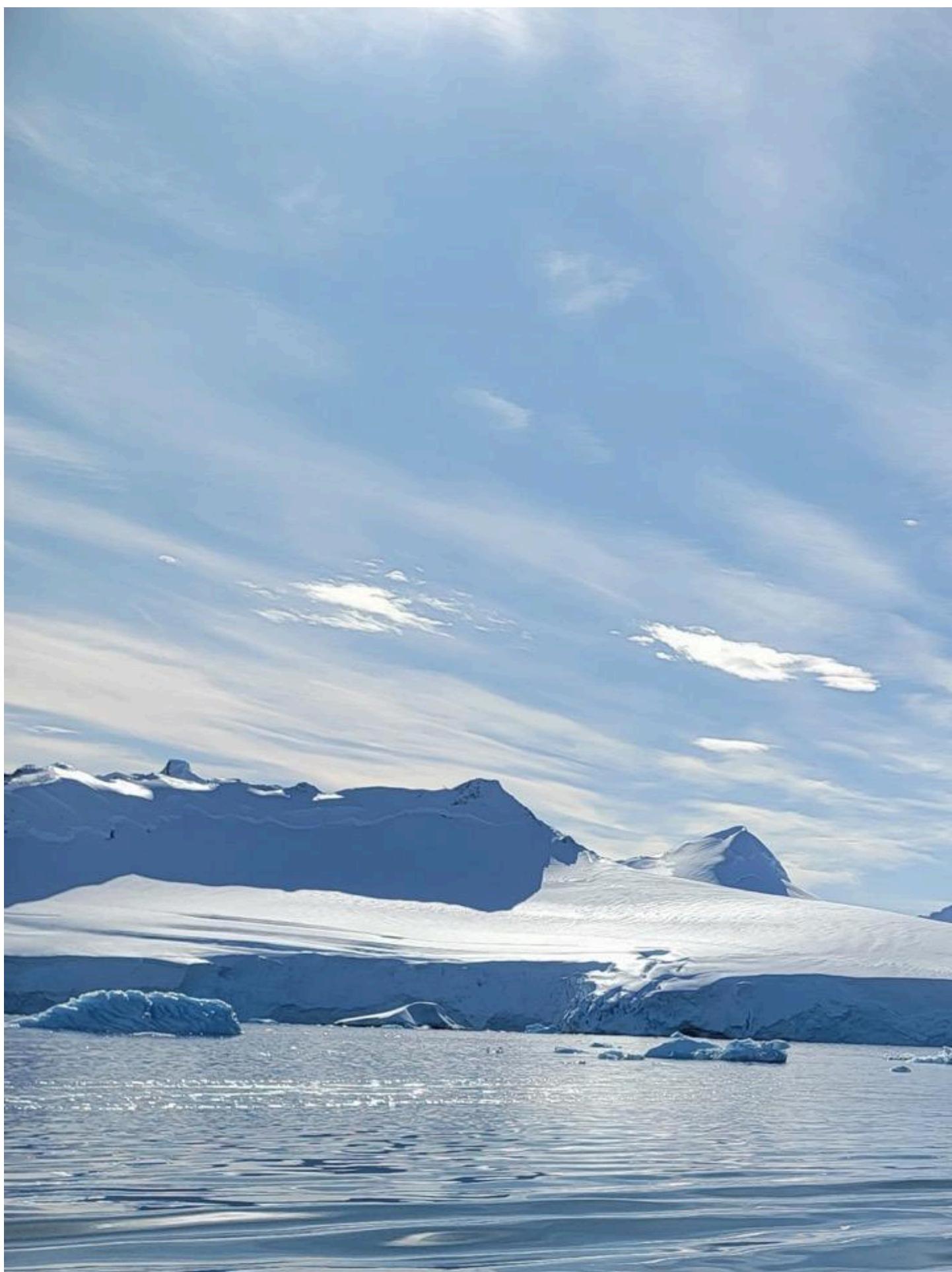
Isle

S

G

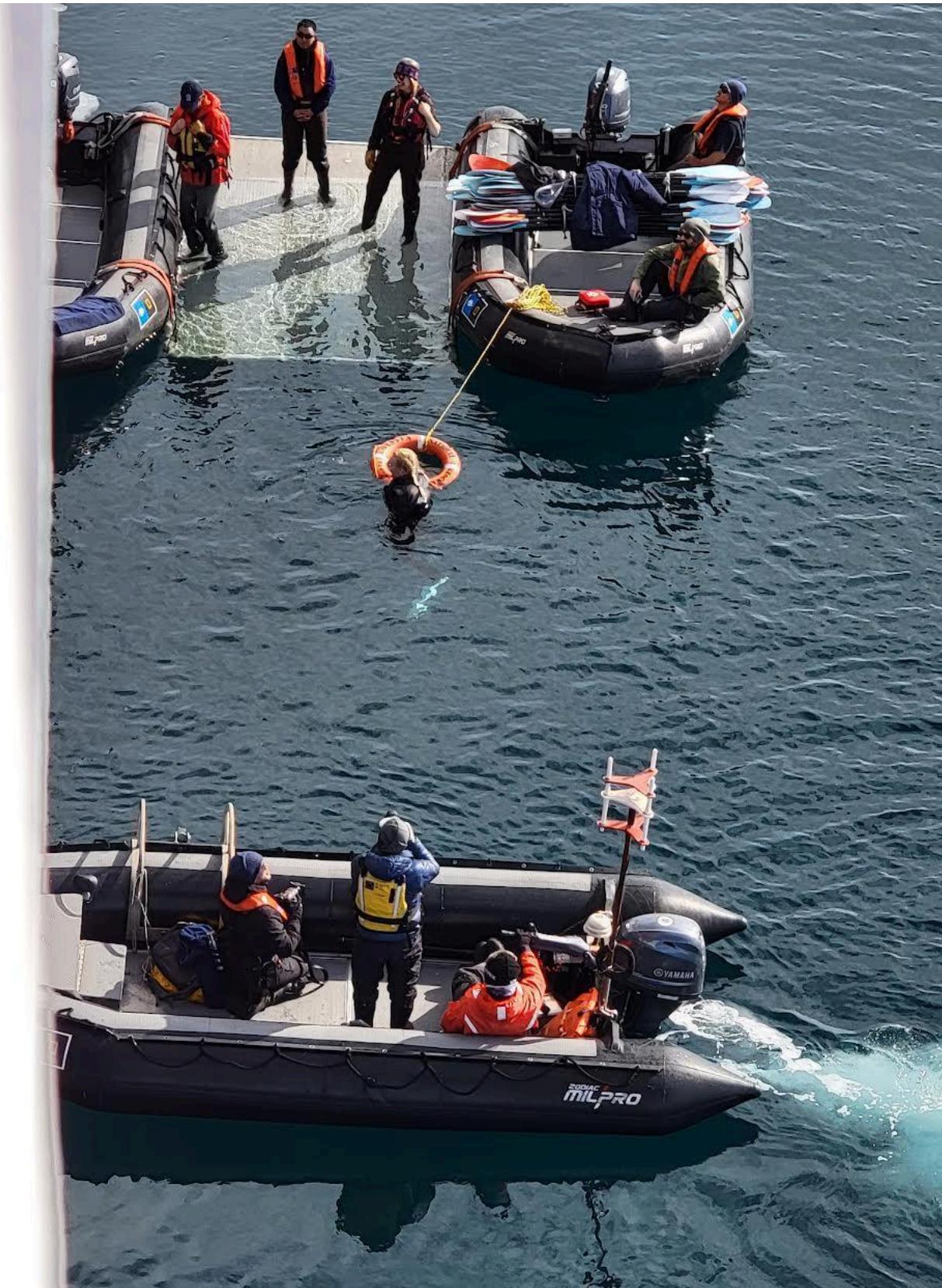
The morning activity was kayaking. We fought a fairly brisk current for an hour or so and, despite often paddling in a circle, we got up close and personal with several mini-icebergs. We were supposed to stay out of the way of the big ones as it is possible that chunks could break off and conk us on the head, but we found it difficult to stay out of harm's way due to the current and, consequently, scraped the sides of a couple of bigguns. No worries though. We didn't have to sing Nearer my God to Thee and made it back to our ship just fine.

We kayaked in Molle Sound. Molle Sound is usually ice bound year-round. Apparently, not so anymore. Reportedly, the 50 kayakers from our ship who were out and about today are the first kayakers ever in Molle Sound. So, I suppose I am now part of Antarctic history. That's one small step for man...



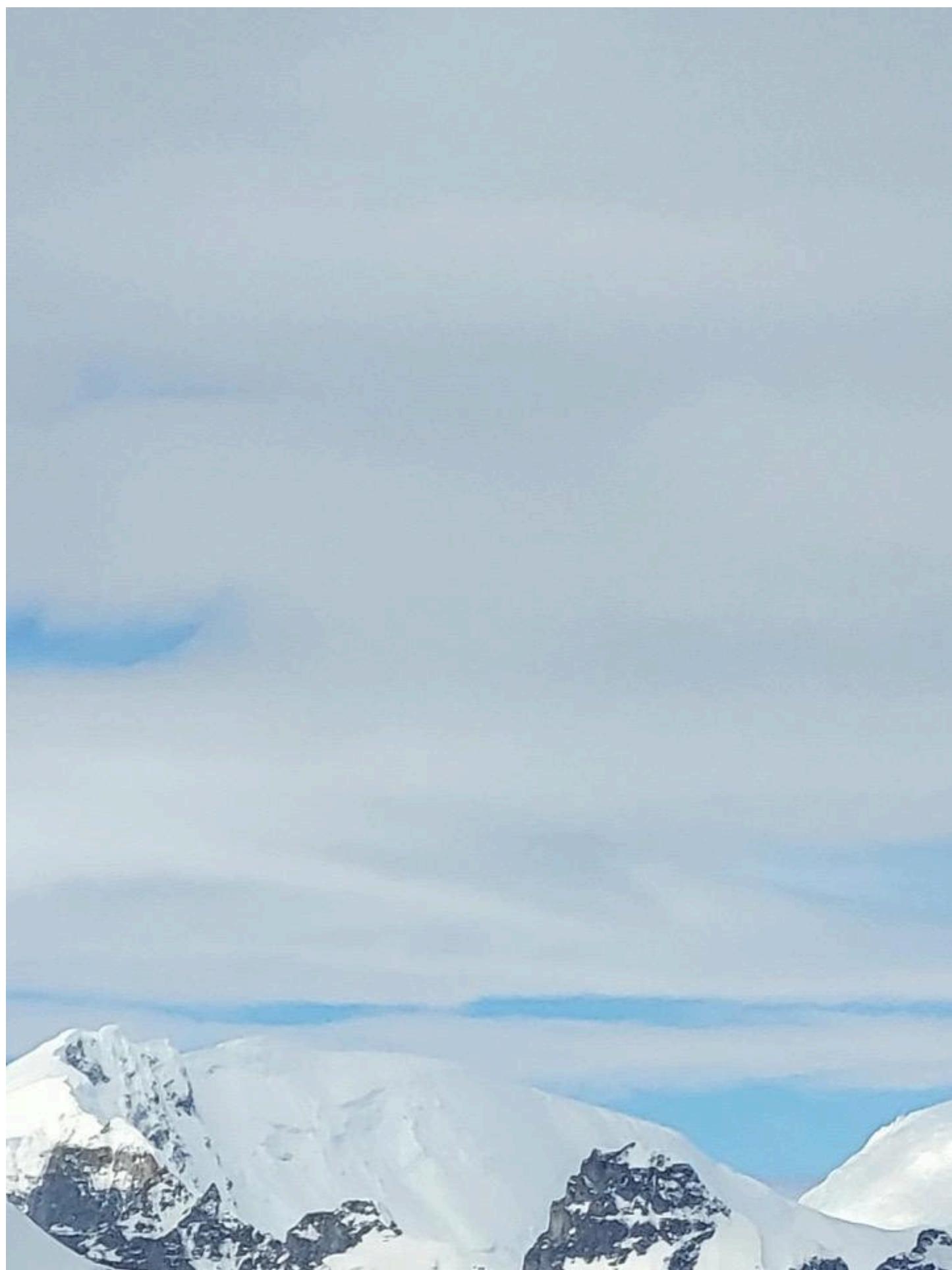


Next up was the Polar Plunge. The Polar Plunge is an activity where otherwise intelligent people voluntarily jump into freezing water. Adriana did it as did dozens of the other passengers. It was like a scene out of Black Panther: Wakanda Forever. I did not take the Polar Plunge as I'm not yet ready to die of a heart attack.



After lunch, the weather started to turn. There was a fairly stiff breeze as we entered The Gullet. Adriana and I stood at the bow as the ship navigated through a narrow channel which is usually ice bound. The scenery was terrific, and we got to see a chunk of glacier break apart and tumble into the water; a process that is called “calving.”





Less than 2 million people have set foot on the Antarctic continent since the beginning of recorded history. While the scenery justifies the usual adjectives like “awesome” and “surreal” and “magnificent,” what strikes me about the Antarctic so far is not the scenery. It’s beautiful, to be sure, but there are beautiful mountains in Colorado. For me, the paradox of the Antarctic is that by the very absence of human connection outside of our little floating village, it reminds me of how connected we all truly are. I keep expecting to see people or other boats and my eyes play tricks on my brain when I look into the distance, see something that I think is a boat or a person standing on the shore, and it is nothing more than a trick of the light playing on a rock, or a penguin watching us float by. It is at those moments that I realize my “self” is inextricably entwined with the others of my species. I wonder if the Apollo astronauts on the moon felt like that – that by the very nature of the lonely solitude of the environment, it forces us to examine ourselves and realize we really are one planet and one people.

By late afternoon, the weather had definitely turned. We are back to pitching and rolling with 6 foot waves, and a fog has enveloped the ship now that we’ve entered Crystal Sound on the way to Lemaire Channel, which we’ll reach around lunchtime tomorrow. I halfway expect to encounter the Flying Dutchman.

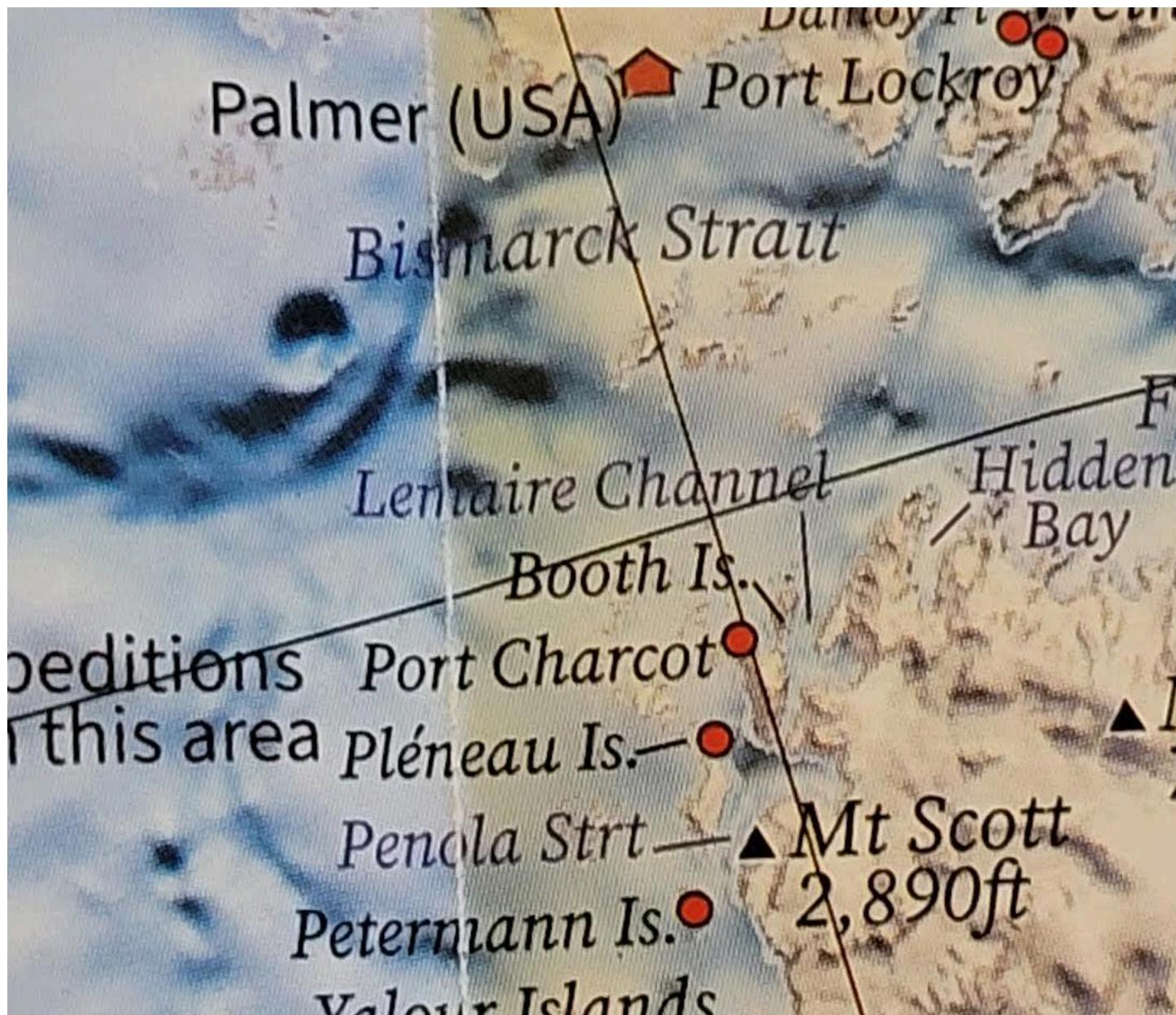




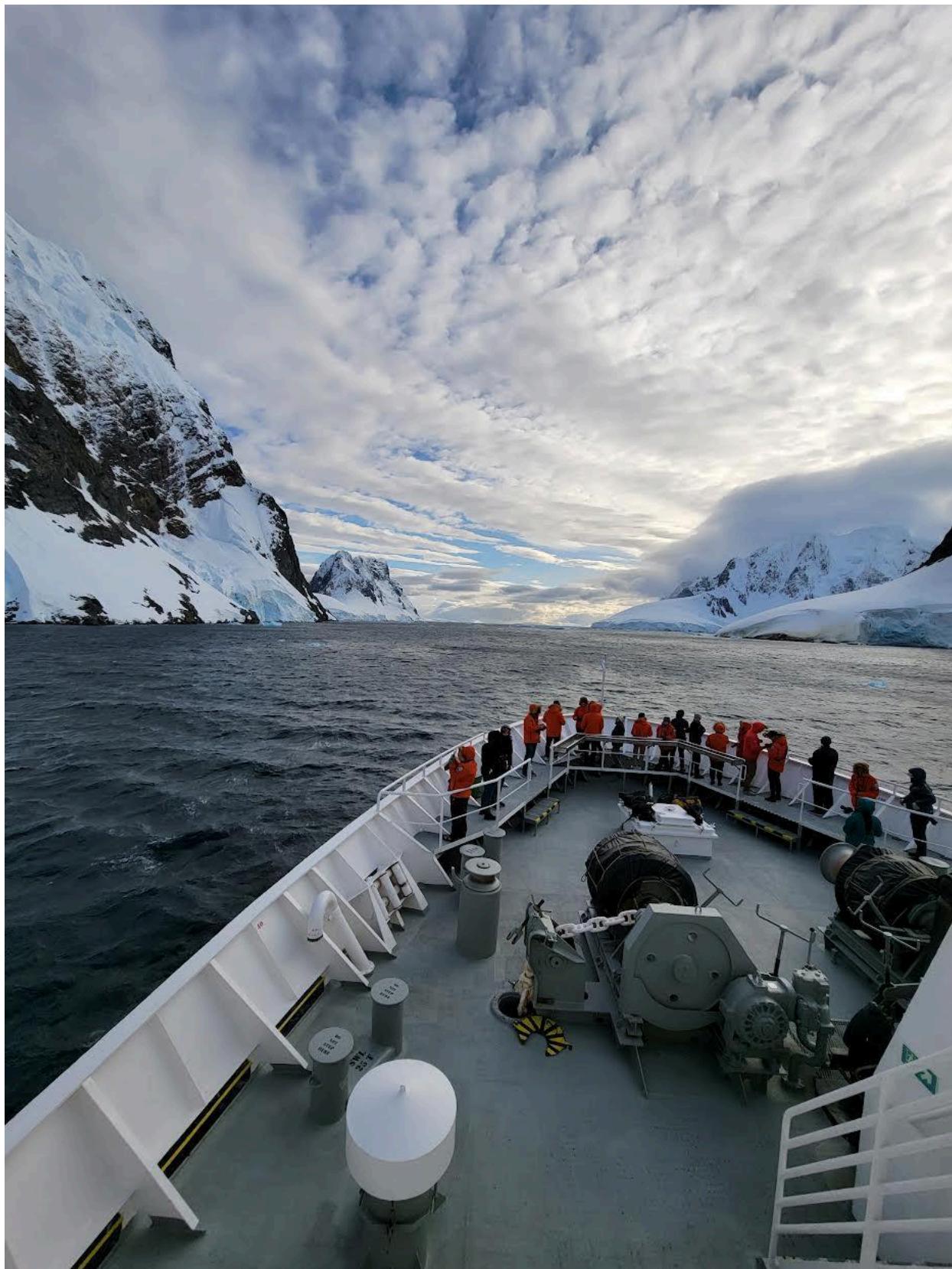
We had some interesting presentations before dinner. The presentation about icebergs was especially informative and will no doubt contribute to an understanding of what we'll experience tomorrow. Assuming we don't meet the Dutchman. But that's tomorrow. We're Gouda nough for now. I love cheese puns. I really Edam upI tell ya, I still got it. Good night, and thanks to our sponsor, Havarti will Traveli. Oh, behave.

February 22, 2023: Ice, Ice, Baby.

A blustery day. 39 degrees Farenheit, but a headwind of 40 mph, making the wind chill really cold. As we navigated the Lemaire Channel, we tried to stay outside but it was too cold after about 5 minutes.



Here's a couple of pics of the Lemaire Channel.



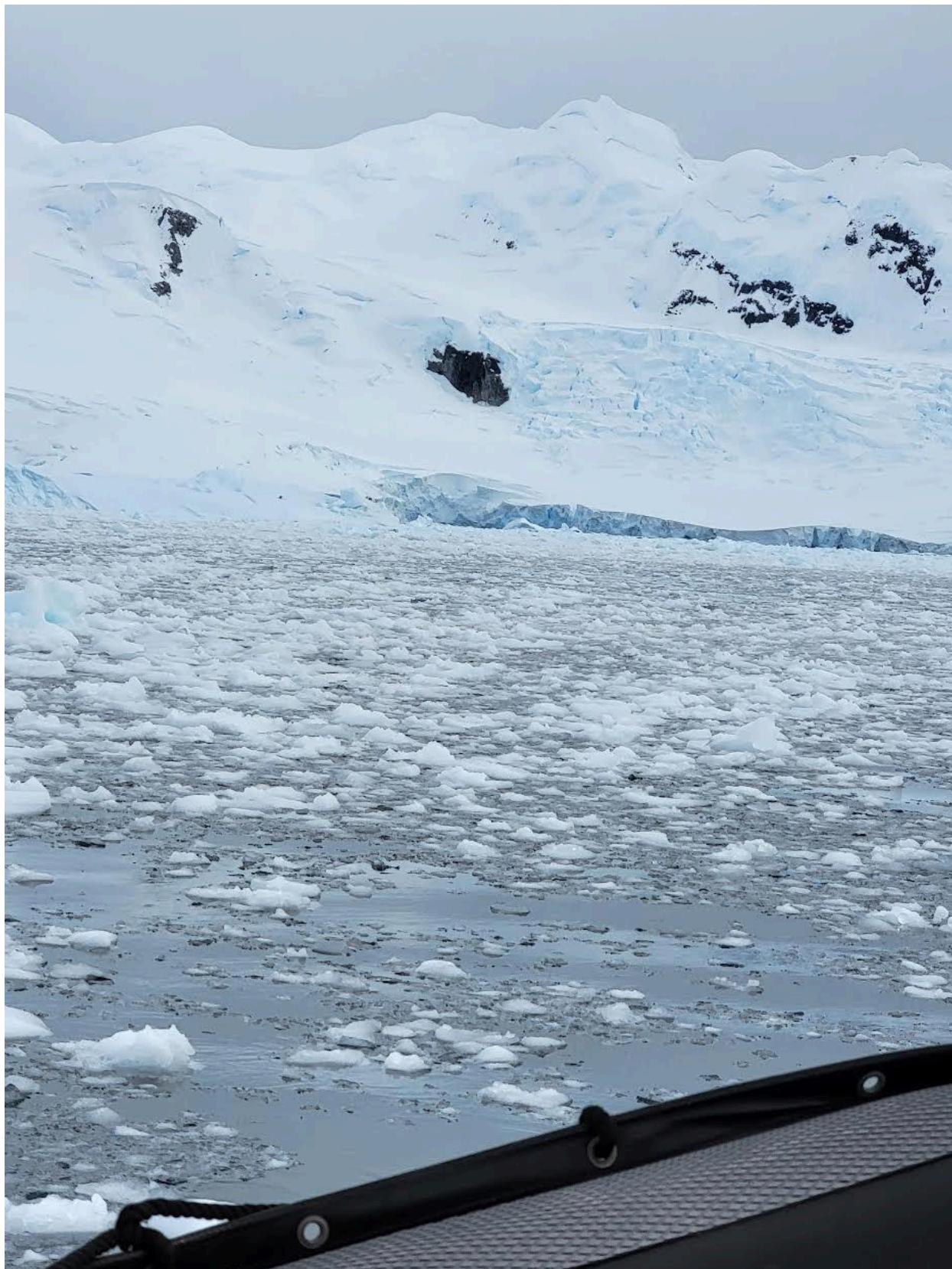


A lot of today was about ice. No, not Vanilla Ice. Real ice. Like icebergs. What sunk the Ti-ta-nic.



Here's what you need to know about icebergs: Icebergs are not formed in the water. They are formed on land. Before they were icebergs, they were part of a glacier until they broke off and fell into the sea (a process called "calving"). Sea ice, or "pack ice", on the other hand, is formed when seawater freezes. If a boat gets caught in pack ice, the pressure of the ice will eventually crush the boat. Just ask Shackleton.

Here is an example of pack ice:



In 6 weeks, this pack will be 6 feet thick and the entire bay in which are tootling about (Neko Harbor) will be frozen solid. You'll need to remember this for when we talk about Shackleton.

To qualify as an iceberg, it must be taller than 5 meters and have an above water surface area of at least 500 meters. If it doesn't meet those criteria and are smaller, they are referred to as "berg bits" or "growlers." In his book, Shackleton refers many times to seeing growlers. If you don't know who Shackleton was, don't worry. You will before I'm done with you.

Here is an example of an iceberg:



Scientists track the movement of some of the largest icebergs floating around in the Circumpolar Currents. The largest one has an above water surface area the size of Delaware and Rhode Island combined.

Here is an example of berg bits:



We didn't see any growlers – which have rigid grooves on their flat tops which come groovin' up slowly.

We are heading north again, having recrossed the Antarctic Circle yesterday. If you're keeping score at home, we have spent all our time on the Antarctic Peninsula. The continent of Antarctica is very large, and the conditions get significantly worse the farther south one goes, so in order not to be among a boatload of dead old people, we've stuck to the Peninsula.

The Antarctic is surrounded by two currents that circle the entire continent. They are called the Circumpolar Currents. The larger current circles the continent in a clockwise direction and is some distance away from the mainland. If you get iced in, you will drift with the current. If you get stuck in the outer current, you may get out of it eventually as the current will carry you farther north to where the water is warmer. That is, assuming the ice doesn't crush your ship and you have enough food and sanity to ride it out, as it will take more than a year. The other current goes in a counterclockwise direction and hugs the continent. If you get stuck in that one, you better have a lot of food and be prepared to abandon ship.

This afternoon, we went to Neko Harbor. I really liked the harbor tour as we bopped around in a Zodiac (That's Zodiac, a subsidiary of Nostradamus, Inc. Ask for it by name). At the edge of the harbor, it looks like some weather is moving in. This was borne out as we headed back to the ship as the swells were about 3 feet; enough to make the Zodiac bump about. I don't like it when Zodiacs bump about.

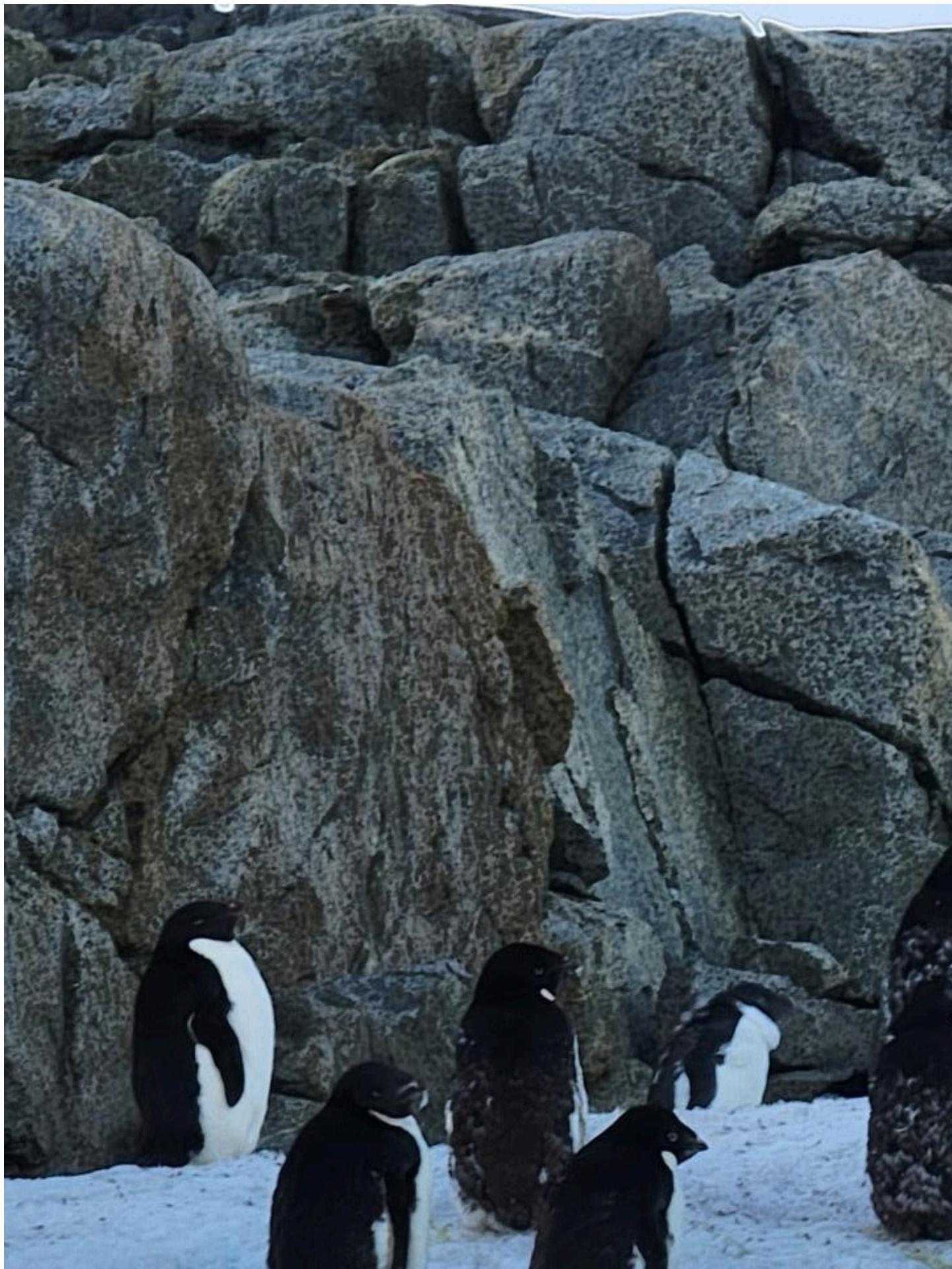
After our harbor excursion, we made landfall at a little beach on which there were several molting penguins.



A few facts about penguins: Penguins are not native to Antarctica. They evolved in New Zealand and in prehistoric times stood close to 6 feet tall.

There are 27 species of penguins. Only 4 of the 27 live in the Antarctic – Emperors, Adeles, Gentoos, and Chinstraps. We won't see any Emperors as they've already headed south because it's too late in the season for them where we are. Tennessee Tuxedo is an Adele. Chilly Willy is a Gentoo. Kenneth Mars is a Chinstrap.







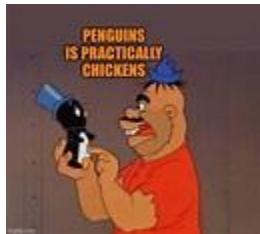






Penguins do not have reproductive organs. They only have one chute to handle both coming and going. (I'm trying very hard not to make a pun here). They kiss when they mate by touching beaks. Before mating, they generally have a nice candlelight dinner, a couple of glasses of champagne, and a Barry White medley on the stereo. DM me if you want to know more.

There are only 3 species of mammals that do not produce vitamin C internally – bats, guinea pigs, and primates. I am a primate. You probably are too. A lack of vitamin C causes scurvy – a very nasty disease that will kill you in a slow and most excruciating manner. Penguins and seals have huge quantities of vitamin C in their livers. That's how the heroic age of Antarctic exploration was able to function. The explorers ate seals and penguins. Just ask Shackleton (I bet you're really curious about him by this point, aren't you? Good things come to those who wait). And besides, "Pen-goo-ins is perac-tically chickens!"



And now, it is 5:30 and time for my daily dose of vitamin C in the form of a vodka and lime in this hazy shade of summer. See you tomorrow.

February 23, 2023: With Blood Spurting. In Slow Motion.

Partly sunny and fair. Temperature 35 degrees Fahrenheit. Slight chop in the sea which will prevent us from landing at Spert Island. However, it looks like we'll be landing on Trinity Island in Mikkelsen Harbor instead; just across the strait so to speak. The Gerlache Strait, that is; named after an early explorer. His expedition didn't turn out so well.



Speaking of explorers, it might be a good day to talk about Scott and Amundsen. You're probably familiar with the Monty Python troupe's retelling of the story of Scott in "Scott of the Antarctic" - "With blood spurting. In slow motion." As you can tell from the below, Python got it pretty much right.





But I'll give you a little back story:

Robert Falcon Scott was a British Naval Officer who dreamed of being the first to reach the South Pole.



He got close in 1907 – only 95 miles from the Pole before the weather forced him to turn back. Shackleton was on that trip (he does keep popping up, doesn't he?). After Scott's return to England, he was placed in command of a British Naval vessel. Unfortunately, Scott's ship rammed another Royal Navy ship. Not good for Scott's naval career as the Royal Navy frowns upon their Captains having fender benders with other ships. So, Scott's naval career was pretty much over. What did he do? Convinced the Admiralty to allow him to put together a scientific expedition to Antarctica. The stated goal was to gather scientific specimens for the benefit of the Royal Geographic Society. His secret goal was to get to the South Pole. Never underestimate the power of a quest for redemption. The Royal Navy was all too happy to oblige. They got rid of Captain Peachfuzz and no matter how Scott's expedition turned out, it would look good for the Royal Navy. If Scott died, he'd become a heroic martyr. If he lived and reached the Pole, more glory for England.

Meanwhile, back in Norway, there was a guy named Roald Amundsen. No slouch himself in the polar exploration game. He wanted to be the first to the North Pole. But Frederick Cook beat him to it. Maybe. That's a whole other story which I won't go into here. So, with no other place to go, Amundsen decided he wanted to be the first to reach the South Pole. His problem was he didn't have a ship. There was a ship he wanted – The Fram – which belonged to Friedrich Nansen – the most renowned polar explorer of the day. By now, Nansen was too old to make it to the South Pole, and he knew it. But never underestimate the venality of an old man whose dream is beyond his reach. Nansen played coy with The Fram until finally relenting. At an extortionate price. Nonetheless, Amundsen's brother, who was also his business manager, paid the vig. Amundsen put it out there that he was going North again; at which point, Scott thought he had a clear shot at the South Pole. However, when Scott and Amundsen were both at sea, Amundsen sent Scott a telegram that said he, too, was going South. The race was on. At least, that's how the popular press of the day framed it. Scott kept a diary, and, in it, he insists it wasn't a race. But Scott's wife, who was a nut in the mold of Libby Custer (a character you will hear more about from me later this summer), heavily edited the diary after Scott's death to make him look like a tragic hero, instead of a boob who was both a symbol and a victim of his era, which may be closer to the truth. Not to mention the fact that Mrs. Scott had an affair with Nansen while her husband was freezing his tuchus off in Antarctica. Talk about a starfuc*er.

You probably know how the story turned out. Amundsen was the first to reach the Pole. Scott got there a month later but died on the way back; 11 miles from a food and supply depot that would have saved him. The Royal Navy got its martyr. Kathleen Scott got her hero. And, today, no one knows who Roald Amundsen is.

Here's a picture of Roald Amundsen:



A chipper fella, if ever there was one.

There are a number of reasons for the failure of the Scott expedition. I have my own opinion, which is irrelevant, except I will say that it must have seemed a soul-destroying defeat to see a Norwegian flag fluttering in 100 mph wind at 40 below, knowing that you have to march back 800 miles to ignominy, defeat, and ridicule. If you want one author's take on it, you can read "The Last Place on Earth" by Roland Huntford. It's available at Amazon (a Bezos company - purveyors of quality goods and merchandise wherever deliveries are made). It was also made into a miniseries in the mid 1980s where you can catch a young Hugh Grant (in one of his first roles), Bill Nighy, and the always dependable Michael Maloney as Teddy Evans (No. The other one). It's a thorough dissection of the subject and a marvelous read; albeit it doesn't treat Scott very well. Perhaps deservedly, although he has enjoyed a bit of redemption of late. One interesting recent note is the release of a weather analysis of the relevant time period (1911-1912) which shows that the weather conditions were abnormally harsh as Scott marched toward his doom.

Which leads me to the reason I wanted to come to the Antarctic.

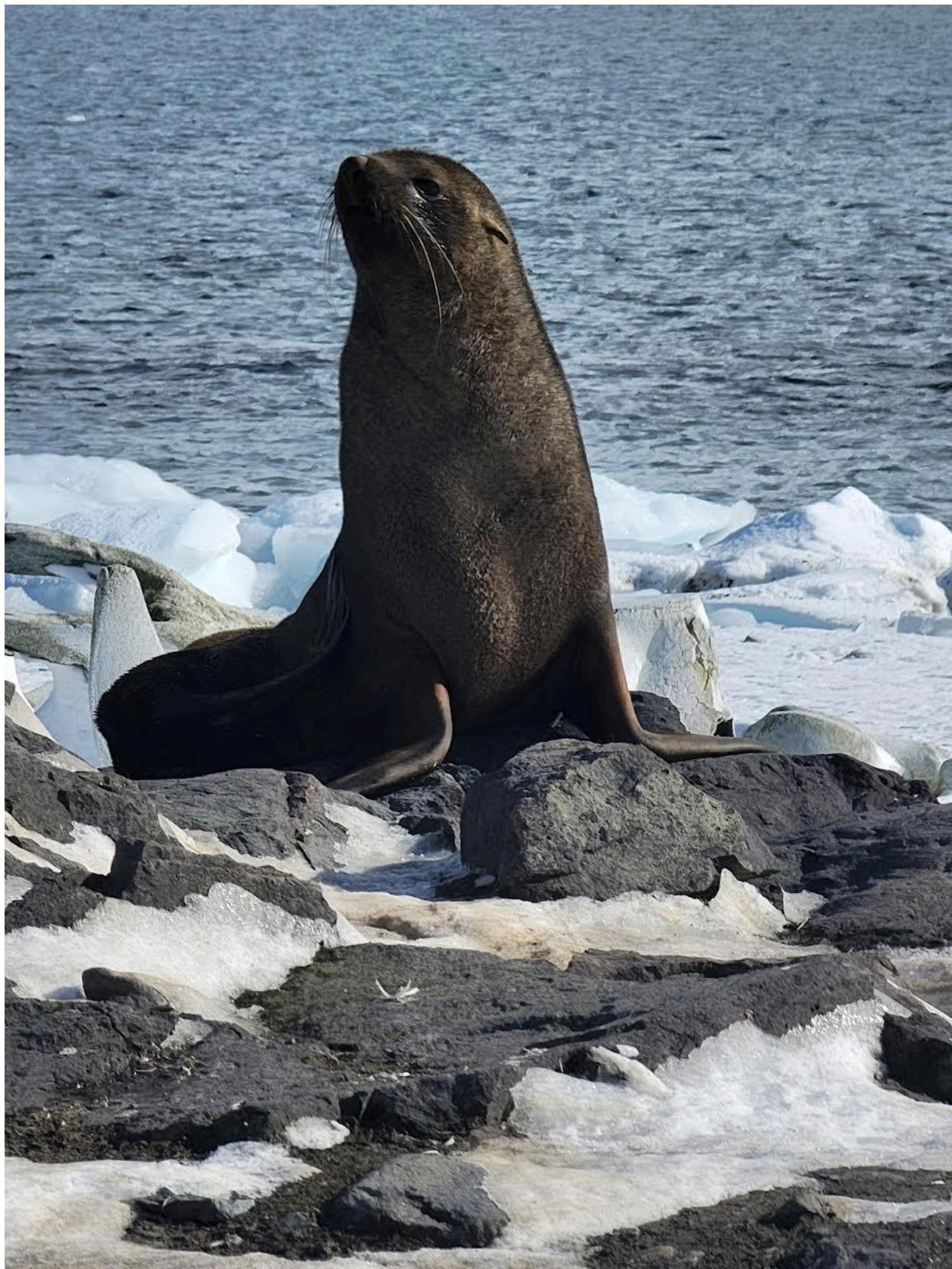
Most of you know I work in the theatre. In 1981, I read a play entitled "Terra Nova," which, incidentally, was the name of Scott's ship. Terra Nova was written by Ted Tally, who won the Oscar for writing Silence of the Lambs. It is my favorite play. I knew that I would someday direct it and I finally got the chance in 2019. I deliberately held onto it for 38 years until I had the right situation – the right theatre, the right actors, the right production team. It was worth the wait. If you'd like to see it, DM me and I'll send you the video we took of one of the performances.

Reading Terra Nova captured my imagination as I'm attracted to the psychology of what drives people to do what they do. As a result, I've done a fair amount of research of Antarctic exploration over the years. So, 42 years after reading Terra Nova, here I am. But that's enough of my yakkin'.

This morning we landed on Trinity Island. The weather was magnificent. We're trying to outrun a storm and the captain of the ship and the tour operator are doing a great job of maneuvering us around dicey situations and landing us at spots that not only meet, but exceed, our expectations. Here are a few snaps:















I wonder who the guy in the orange is.

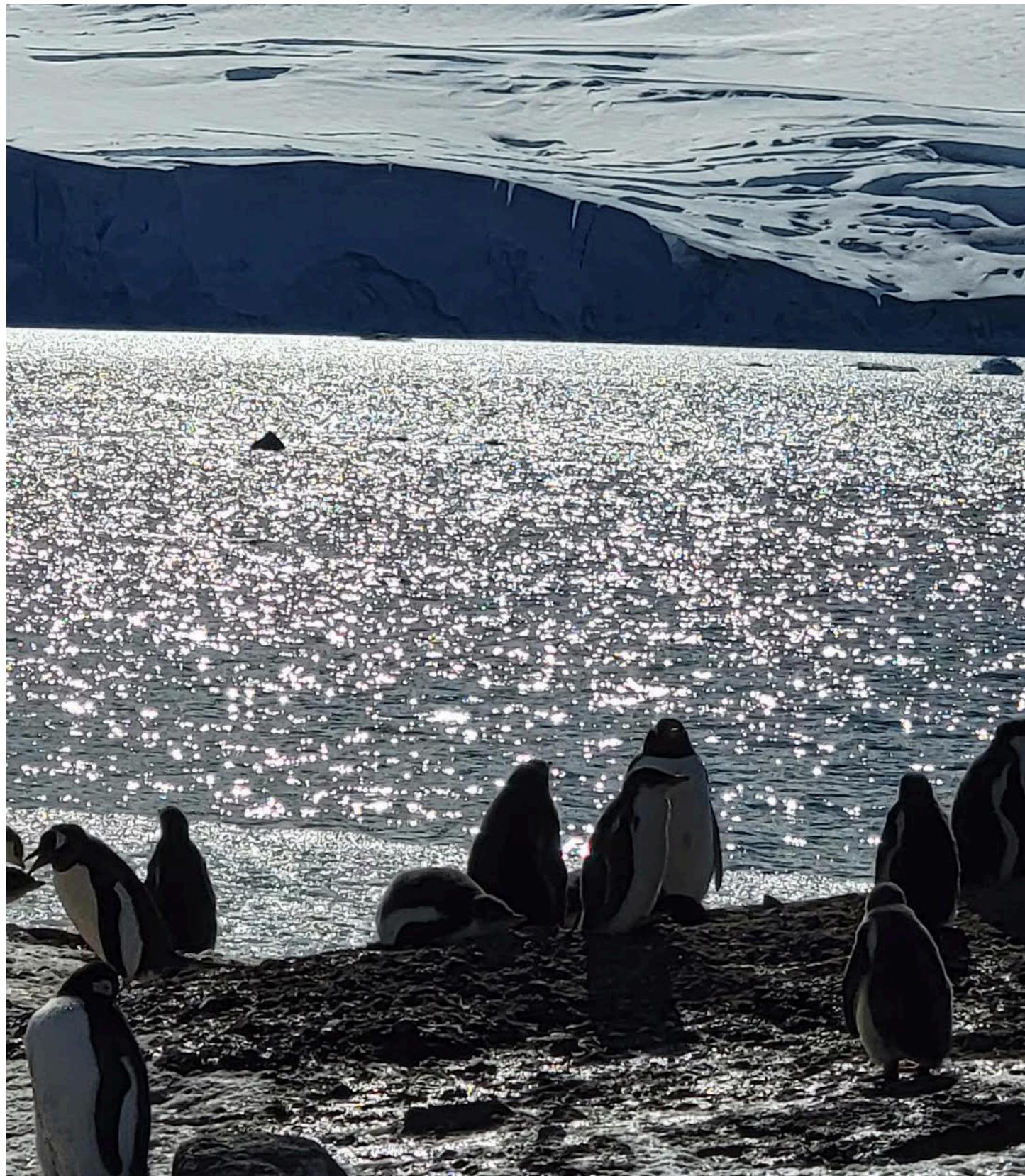
Trinity Island was a whale rendering station in the 1930s. Once WWII broke out, it was abandoned as everyone went back to their home countries to fight on one side or the other. That said, Argentina built a rescue hut in anticipation of the day when Antarctica is carved up among various countries of the world and it can claim priority of place on Trinity Island.

Of course, Alabama may also have a claim as evidenced by the below, which looks like a tusk.



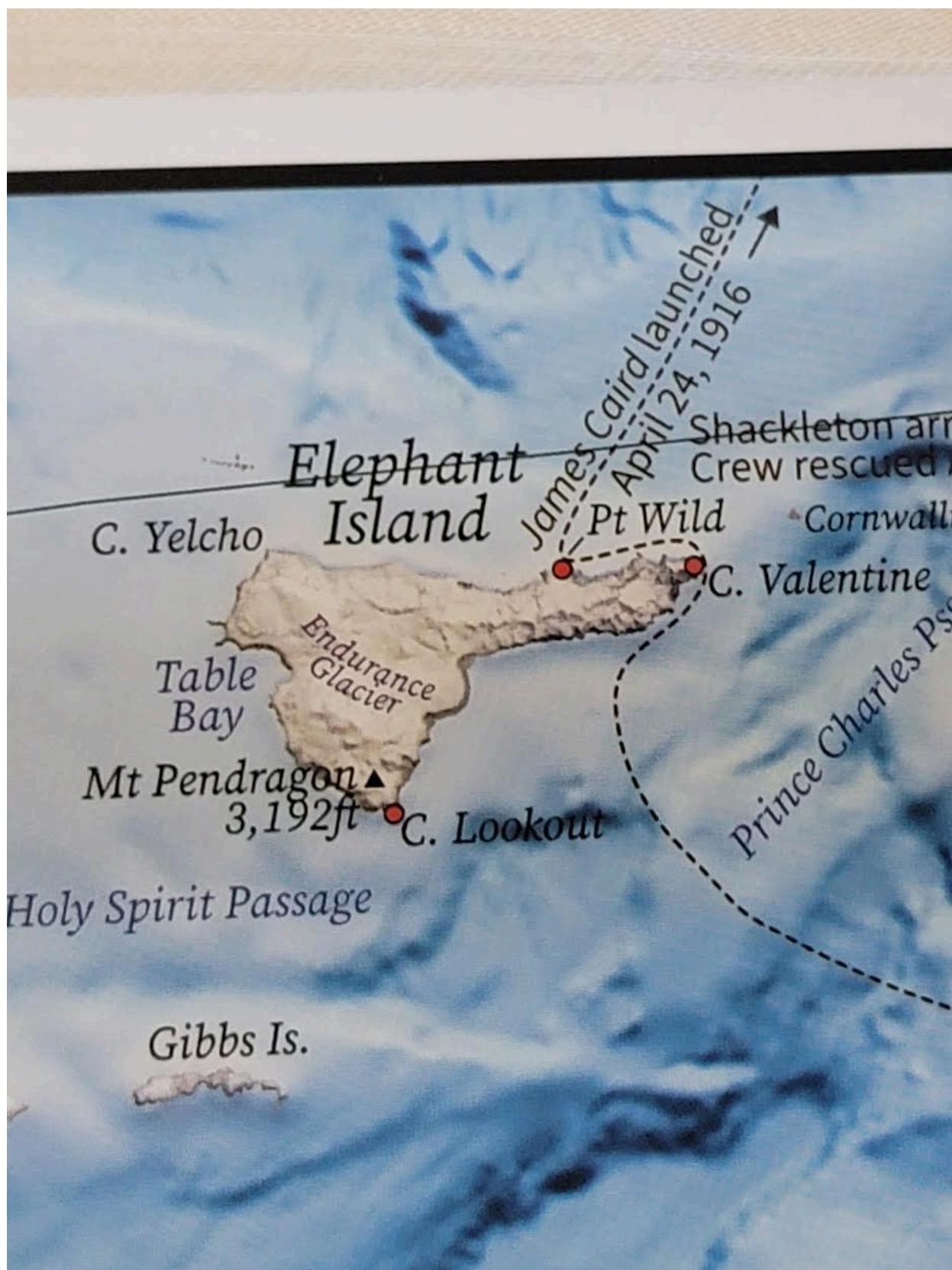
Since it came loose from a whale, Alabama would naturally have a claim because in Alabama, the Tuscaloosa. And you thought I was through, didn't you?

Well, off to a couple of lectures. Tomorrow, being the 24th and the day we hit Elephant Island, seems a good day to talk to you about Shackleton. So, until then, I bid you pleasant dreams.



February 24, 2023: By Endurance, We Conquer

We are at Point Wild - Elephant Island. 28 degrees Fahrenheit, 3 feet swells, snowing.



I now know where the most rugged place is that I've been to thus far in my life. Here's what it looks like on a late summer day:



It's called Elephant Island because Elephant Seals were prevalent at one time. I'll tell you later why it's called Point Wild.

Our Zodiac cruise was 1.5 hours. We couldn't land because there's no real beach and the waves crashing on the rocks prohibited us from getting very close.



Despite 4 thermal layers, I was cold. Good thing the Viking booze fairies were there to help warm us up.



Sir Ernest Shackleton:



I warn you in advance that I'm biased. I'm a fan without, I hope, being blind to his shortcomings. He is probably the closest thing to a hero that I have, and his is a ripping yarn to be sure. His is the most amazing feat of leadership that I have ever read about, and I think about what he would do when I find myself in a tough situation. You know, like trying to decide between red or white.

The heroic age of Antarctic exploration kicked off in 1895 when Sir Clements Markham, the Chairman of the Royal Geographic Society, issued a challenge to the world's explorers to be the first to the South Pole – the last place on earth that hadn't been "discovered." Much like Horace Greeley, who stayed east and got rich while young men went west and died, Sir Clements was a putz, and he tried to weight the game in favor of the British. In the British Antarctic game, that meant Scott and Shackleton.

Sir Clements liked Scott because Scott knew how to play the gentlemen's game. He didn't like Shackleton because Shackleton was NOKD (there were even whispers that Shackleton came from Irish yeoman stock. Gasp!). So, who got the pounds? Scott. That meant he got the Terra Nova at government expense. The Terra Nova had a rounded hull. This becomes important to the Shackleton story later.

Both Scott and Shackleton were on the Nimrod expedition to the South Pole in 1907. Shackleton was in charge. They were less than 100 miles from the Pole when Shackleton made the command decision to turn back because of the weather. Scott challenged the decision. More importantly, Sir Clements thought Shackleton wussed out. Shackleton's only comment was "better a live donkey than a dead lion." Oh, the irony.

I told you yesterday about Scott's next expedition to the Antarctic and how that ended up. Shackleton desperately wanted to be on Scott's expedition, but Scott blew him off most unceremoniously – reportedly at Sir Clements' instigation. But whaddya gonna do if you're Shackleton? Sir Clements controlled the purse.

While not being the first to the Pole, Scott was the first ENGLISHMAN to the Pole, which, in world opinion (at least in the opinions of the world press as controlled by Sir Clements) was far more important. But the opportunity for priority was gone. Not to be deterred, Shackleton cooked up a scheme to be the first to traverse the Antarctic continent, and he went to Sir Clements to kiss his.... ring and ask for some money. Grudgingly, Sir Clements allocated 10,000 pounds. Not much for such an undertaking, but it was enough to buy an old whaling boat – the Polaris – which Shackleton re-christened “Endurance” in honor of his family’s motto. Unfortunately, Endurance was a tub and the guy Shackleton bought it from was the Norwegian version of P.T. Barnum. Significantly, Endurance had a V-shaped hull. That was unfortunate, as you shall soon see.



Shackleton raised the rest of the expedition funds privately; mostly from 3 benefactors – all Scots - James Caird, Dudley Docker, and Lady Stancombe Wills. We know how much Caird and Docker gave (about 40,000 pounds; combined). How much Lady Stancombe Wills gave is unknown, but it was apparently enough.

The Endurance expedition (officially, the “British Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition”) was to set sail on August 1, 1914. You probably know what happened on June 28, 1914, and, as it turned out, the Endurance’s sailing date was the date England entered WWI. Shackleton went to Winston Churchill, who was then First Lord of the Admiralty, and offered his crew of 58 men and the Endurance itself to the British war effort (without first checking with his benefactors). Churchill gave his blessing to the expedition, saying 58 men and one ship wouldn’t make any difference and, besides, the war would not last long. Not a trenchant comment. Ouch. So, off Shackleton went.

The official version of the Endurance expedition was chronicled by Shackleton in his book entitled “South.” You can get it at Amazon (a division of Bezos.... never mind). But you should

bear in mind Shackleton was writing for history and to justify his decisions. The skinny is that the Endurance expedition never really got off the ground. A freak late summer storm kicked up in early 1915, and on February 24th, the Endurance got stuck in the pack ice. There it remained for the next 8.5 months, drifting with the Circumpolar Current (remember?) in an ever-spiraling clockwise direction. Finally, in November 1915, the ice crushed the Endurance's hull, and it sank. Damn you, V-shaped hull (the Terra Nova would not have sunk because it had a rounded hull. The ice would have just popped it up on the pack).



Mind you, Shackleton et al had a lot of time to get stuff off the Endurance. That wasn't the problem. The problem was what to do next. They were stuck on an ice pack like Rudolph, Hermey and Yukon Cornelius. An ice pace that would eventually melt and break up.



They were a long way from anything. They had a finite amount of food and supplies. They had no idea how long they'd be stuck but figured it would be months at least. So, what did they do? Shackleton ordered a march off the ice and onto terra firma. The men were allowed 2 lbs. of personal gear. They man-hauled food, supplies, and the lifeboats – the James Caird, the Dudley Docker, and the Lady Stancombe Wills. They made it to Elephant Island. Not the most hospitable location, but at least they wouldn't fall into the sea when their ice cap melted.

They camped out on Elephant Island for about 5 months, living on a starvation diet of penguin and seal (vitamin C, you know), while Shackleton figured out the next move. After weighing all

his options, Shackleton decided he had no choice but to set off for South Georgia Island where he knew there was a whaling station with sufficient support to mount a rescue operation.

If you know anything about the geography of this area, you're going to ask why didn't he aim for the Falklands, which was 200 miles closer? The answer is the prevailing winds and the current would have made it virtually impossible to get there in an open boat and if they got sucked into the current...well, there would have been a Disney ride floating into some lagoon in Western Africa.

Shackleton took 5 men with him – three of the malcontents (Vincent, McNish, and McCarthy), plus Frank Worsley - the best navigator on the Endurance - and Tom Crean – the captain and one hell of a mariner. He left his second in command, Frank Wild, on Elephant Island with 21 men, one pistol and instructions to march over the pack ice to the Antarctic Peninsula and try to find a whaling outpost in the event Shackleton didn't return by the end of the year.

Thus, on April 24 1916, Shackleton and the others set off in the James Caird (all 23 feet of her) on which the ship's carpenter (McNish, a crusty and ill-tempered old salt) had raised the gunwales, covered half of the hold with seal skin, rigged a rudimentary mast and sail, and set off for South Georgia – 800 miles of open sea away.

Here is a replica of the James Caird:



Imagine 6 guys crammed into that for 800 miles.

Here's what they saw when they shoved off from Elephant Island:



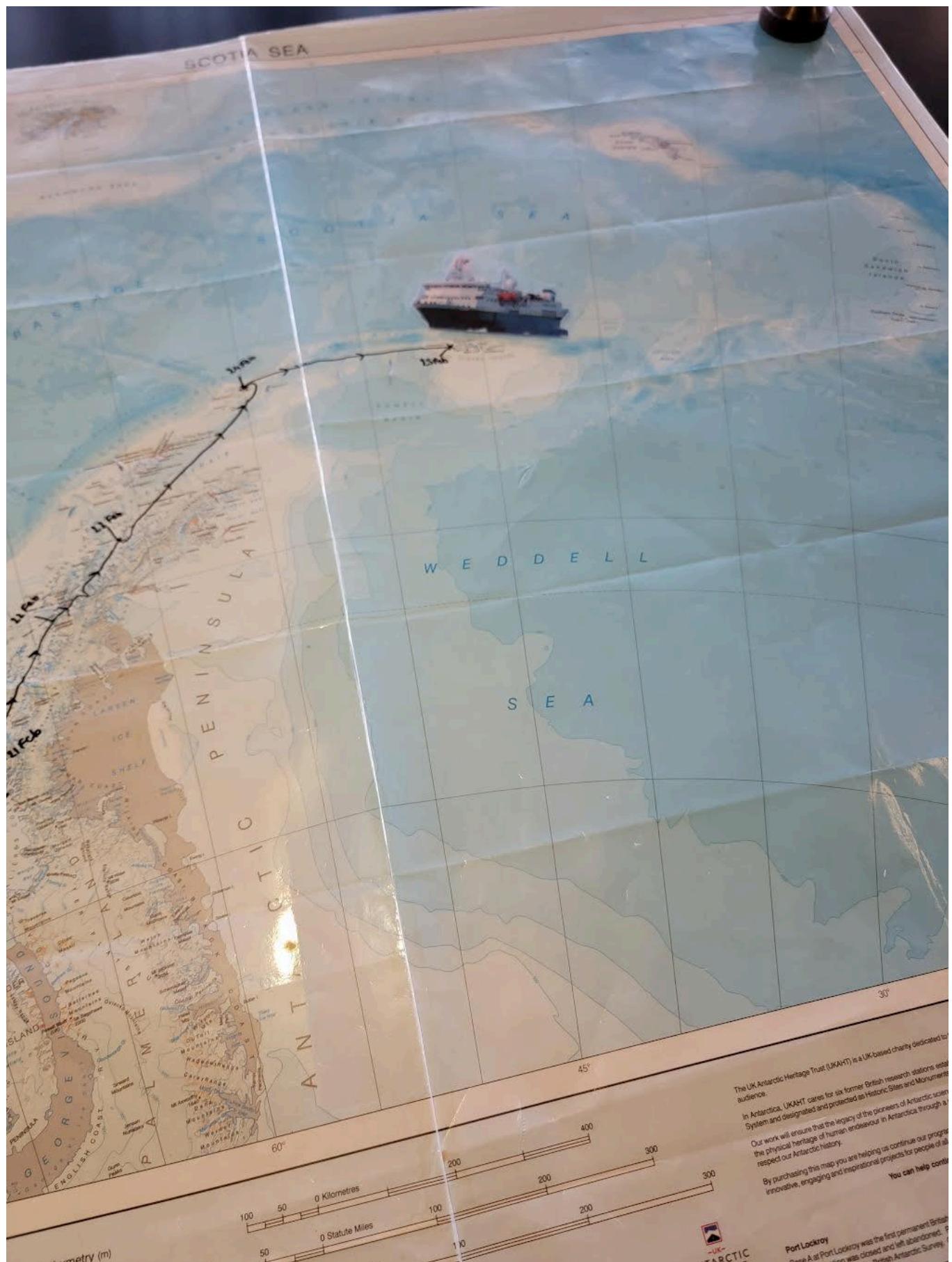
At Point Wild, Frank and the men waited.

February 25, 2023: What Did You Expect to See? Sydney Bloody Opera House?

Signey Island in the South Orkneys. 30 degrees Fahrenheit. Overcast. Light snow. 3 feet swells.

We tried all morning to find a place in the South Orkneys that was calm enough for a landing and/or a Zodiac cruise. No such luck until after lunch, when we happened upon a secluded cove on Signey Island where we can at least come ashore for a bit before a full day at sea tomorrow.

I can't show you Signey Island on any map I have as it's not marked and it's in the middle of the South Scotia Sea. Here's the best I can do.



Signey Island is somewhere northeast of Elephant Island, where we left Frank Wild and the men yesterday. Needless to say, there is not an opera house on Signey Island. There are, however, many tuxedoed creatures, as you can see. And, if I was hungry enough, I guess Aida one. Take it easy.

The Marx Brothers followed my group around.





And speaking of seals, there were a lot of them. I saw six, but I didn't see the Seventh Seal.





Now that I've started, I'm taking it to the Max.

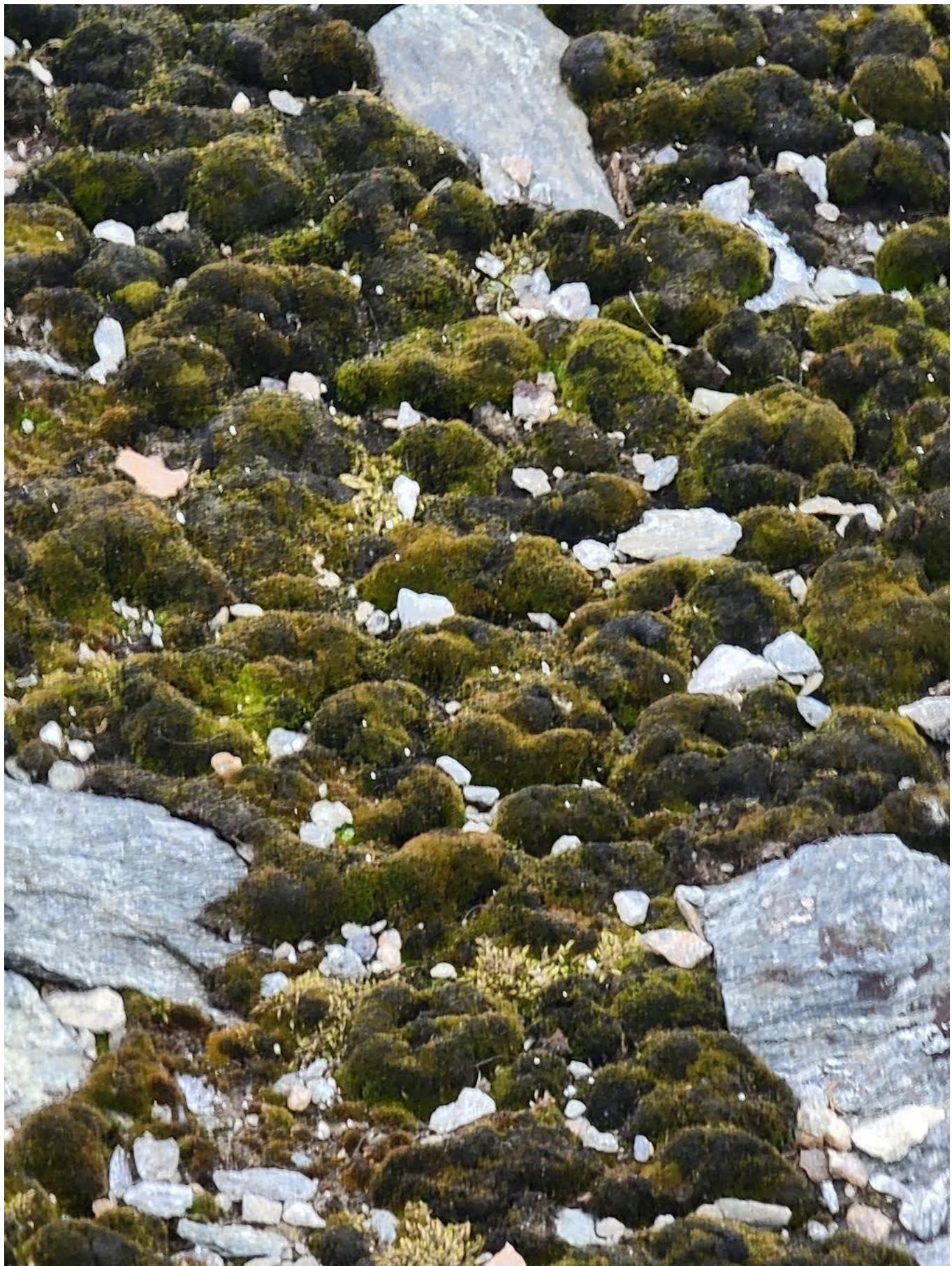


I did manage to see a Berg man.





I also saw vegetation, but it was nothing I am able to lichen it to.





As we were picking our way through the South Orkneys, we had an interesting presentation on the geology of Antarctica. It rocked.



Okay, okay. I'll stop. I'll just leave you with a few snaps to contemplate what life is like near the bottom of the world. That should seal the deal.













February 26, 2023: Over the Bounty Main

Somewhere in the Scotia Sea. 34 degrees Fahrenheit. Overcast. 4 feet swells.



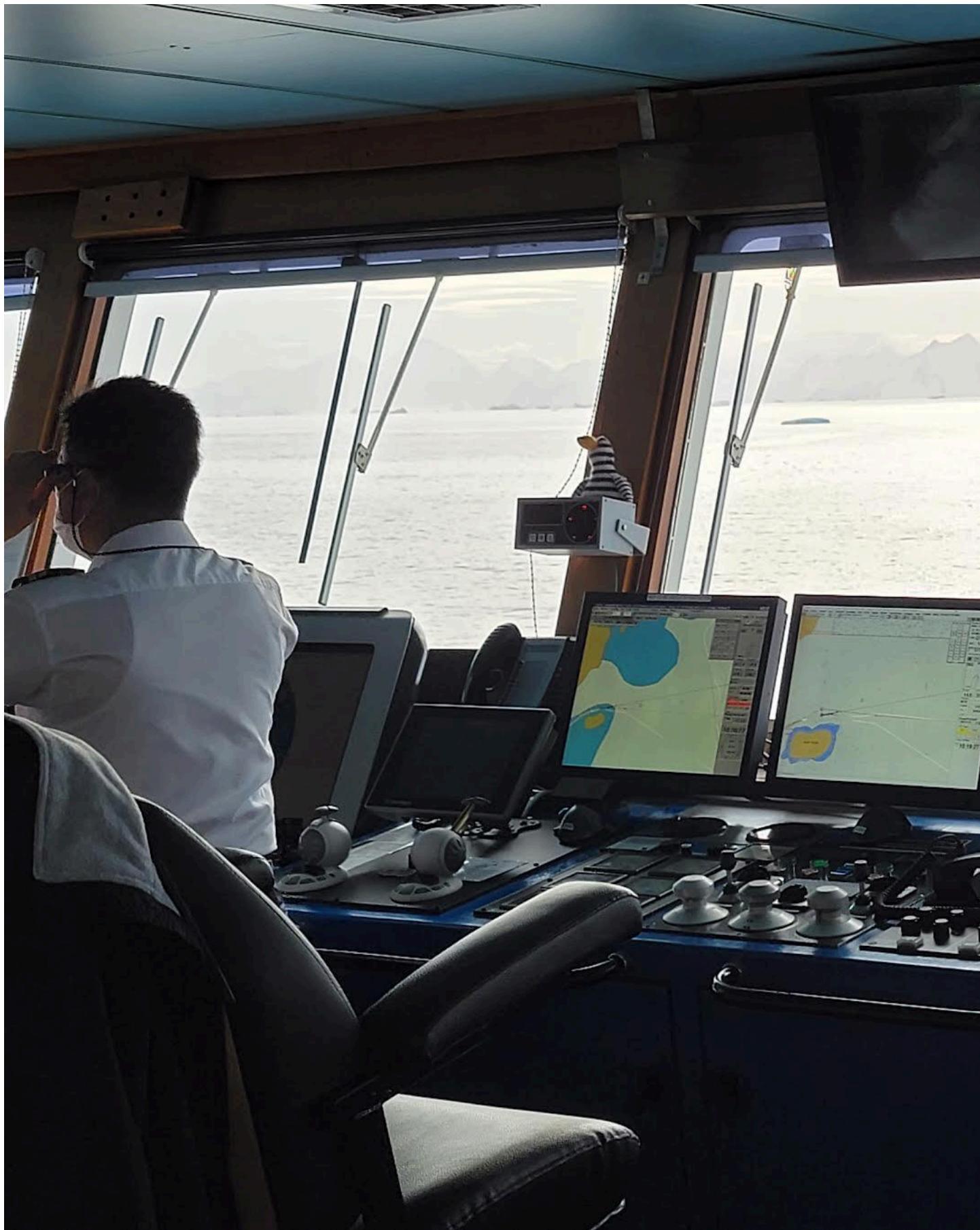
Since we will be at sea the whole day, now might be a good time to tell you what life on board the ship is like.

There are 142 passengers and about 100 crew. The passengers are mostly from the U.S. with a few from England, Australia, the Galapagos, and Canada. The captain is Finnish and does not look like Gavin McLeod. Here is what he looks like:



He told me he went to sea at 17. I don't think I've ever before heard anyone tell me they "went to sea."

The first mate is Ukrainian, most of the sailors, housekeepers and kitchen and wait staff are Filipino. The Chef is Peruvian. The naturalists are Dutch and American. The historian is English. The Nat Geo staff photographers are Dutch and American. The ornithologist is Spanish. The videographer is American. The diver is Icelandic. The hotelier is German. The ship has an open bridge policy; meaning anyone can go to the bridge at any time. Here's a shot of the bridge:



The tour boss is Ecuadoran. He has to have the toughest job on the ship. There's always a plan. In fact, there are plans from A – W given the unpredictability of the weather. Plan W is Plan "Wine." When all else fails, inebriate. We have to be flexible. There's no other choice. We've deviated from our original plan at least 4 times on our trip. That is not a problem. If we had stuck to the original itinerary, we would not have been the first people to kayak in Molle Sound, we would not have gone to the South Orkneys, and we would not have gone to Signey Island, proving once again that it's not the destination, it's the journey.

I find the historian to be the most interesting person on board. He's from Hull, in Yorkshire. He's spent 30 years in the Antarctic and has overwintered 12 times. He has a beard worthy of ZZ Top and he seems to know everyone connected to Antarctic exploration; which I think is a pretty small community. For example, he casually mentioned that he ran into Falcon Scott (Robert Scott's grandson) in Ushuaia a few weeks ago. What!?! First, Falcon Scott must be around 80 years old. Second, what is/was he doing in Ushuaia? But that seems to be how it is in the Antarctic game. There's a painting in the dining room that was painted by Keith Shackleton in 1974. Coincidence? I think not.

That's the thing that strikes me about this world. I think Scott, Shackleton, Amundsen, et al are not wired like the rest of us. I think there are people in this world who don't really fit into "normal" life and who live life on the edges, not so much because they want to, but because they must. A lot of them die young. And violently. Scott, we know about. Amundsen disappeared in 1928 while attempting to rescue a stranded party in the Arctic. Shackleton dropped dead of a heart attack in his 40s. I think our historian is a guy like that. He has intimated that life in the Antarctic is no longer like it was in the "good old days" when he started out in the early 1990s. He believes the internet has dampened the spirit of exploration and has diminished the camaraderie of the old days; allowing everyone to retreat into the online world once their workday is done. My impression is that he's nervous about his place in the world; that he is now a dinosaur with no real place to fit in. Or maybe that's just me projecting my own apprehensions.

‘I am no good at anything but being away in the wilds with just men. I feel of no use to anyone unless I am outfacing the storm in wild lands’.

Sir Ernest Shackleton

He told his wife Emily, ‘I am no good at anything but being away in the wilds with just men. I feel of no use to anyone unless I am outfacing the storm in wild lands’.

mod the Shackleton-Rowett Antarctic

I typically start my day on board at 6:30 with morning yoga in the lounge.



There are about 10 regulars who attend. Breakfast is from 7 – 8:30.



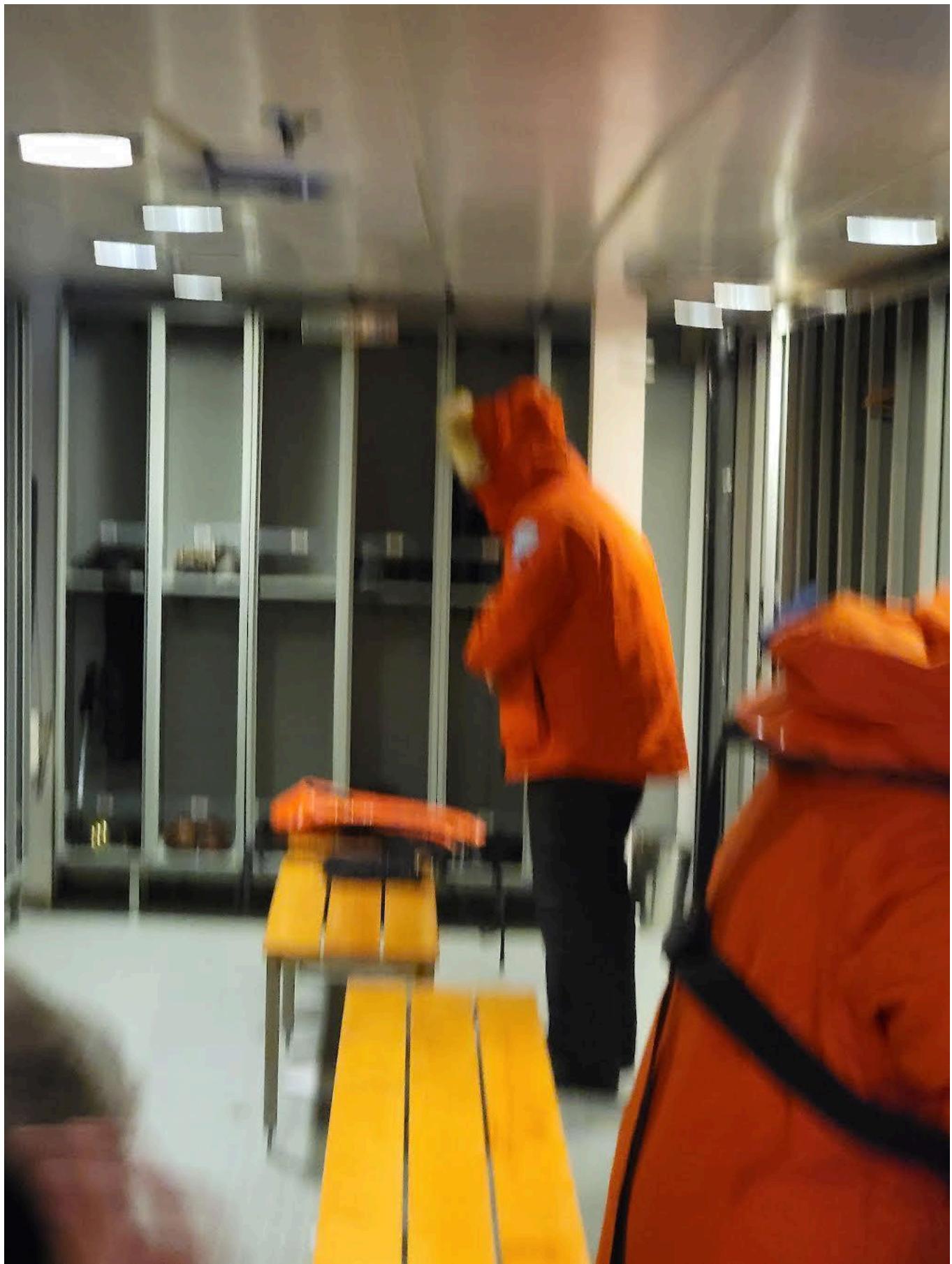


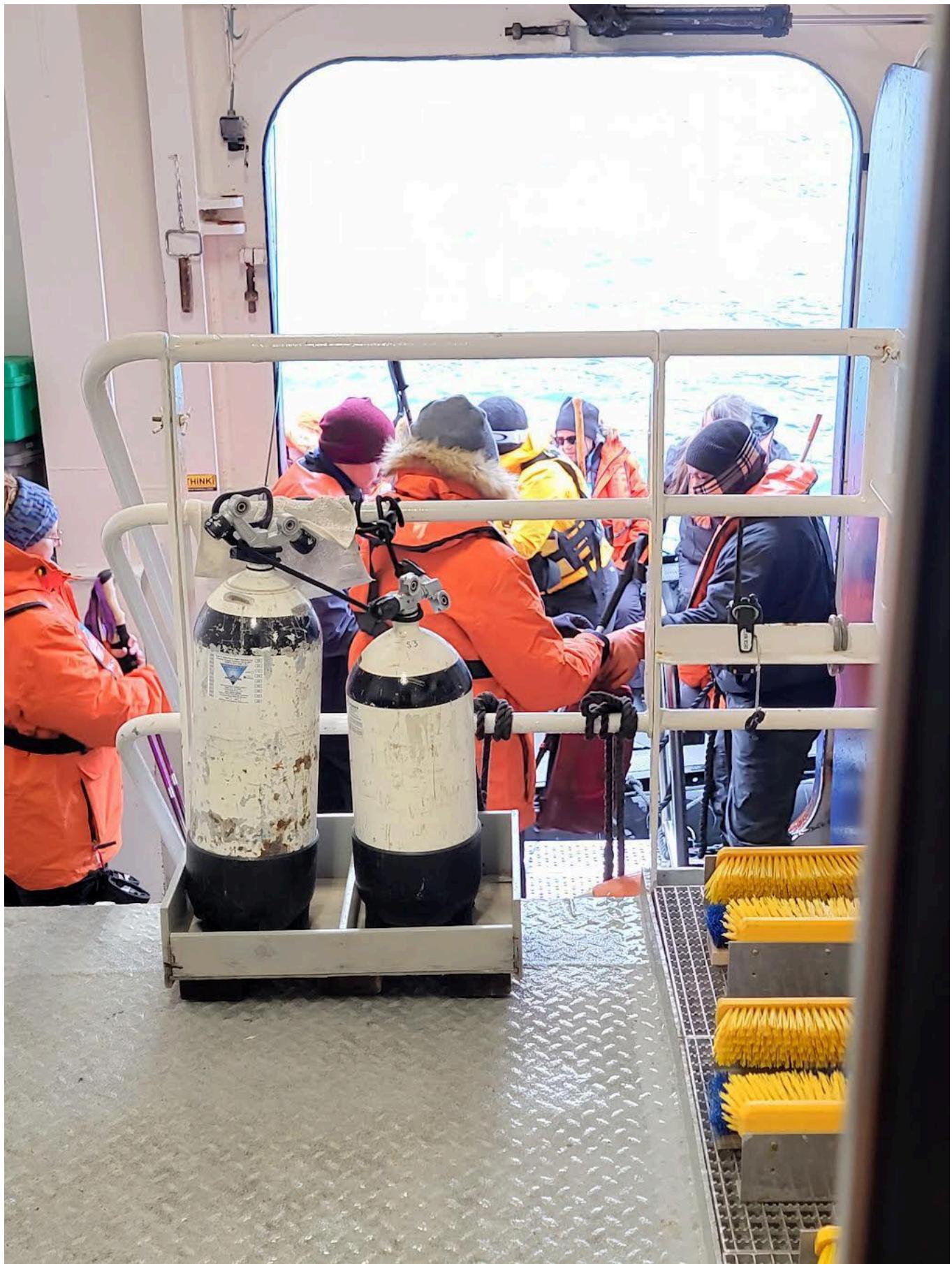
If we're at sea, like today, there are presentations by the Naturalists or the Photographers at 9:30 and 11. This morning's presentation is Mapping the Antarctic. We've had presentations on such topics as geology, ornithology, whales, ice, algae, and the Antarctic Treaty the Antarctic may be the most peaceful place on the planet with the treaty that has been in force since 1956. No nukes. No economic exploitation. No mining. Only scientific research and international cooperation among the 12 original signatory nations and the additional 21 nations that have signed on since 1961. I Like Ike.



If we're at a place we can land, there are morning shore explorations with the Naturalists and the Photographers or, if a landing is not possible, Zodiac cruises. A tip: You cannot take a photograph from a moving Zodiac, so don't even try. A Zodiac "cruise" is more like a combination of a rodeo event coupled with NASCAR. My best advice is to hold on for dear life until the driver slows down at a picture spot.







Lunch is at noon. Then a repeat of the morning schedule (Zodiac cruise and/or shore landing or 2 presentations) in a different place, as the ship moves to a different spot during lunch. A recap occurs during cocktail hour at 6:30 where the Naturalists/Photographers give brief overviews of topics of interest. Dinner is 7:30 – 9.

It gets light around 4:30 a.m. and it's fully dark by 11 p.m.

The food has been interesting. Every night, we celebrate a different culture's native fare. Highlights have included native food of the Philippines and of Peru.

There is not that much free time. However, attendance at every event is optional and there are people who don't do anything but look out the window.

The chart room is swanky with self-service coffee and sodas all day long. Everyone on board gets to have dinner in the Chart Room, hosted by the Captain, once during the trip.



2 bars allow for plenty of booze. I assume the wine selection is top drawer. At least that's how the waiters present it.

There have been a couple of Covid cases, requiring the poor sufferers to quarantine in their cabins for 5 days. That has to be the ultimate suckage. There are TVs in every room and one can see the presentations on closed circuit TV from the comfort of their bed. I think there's a movie channel. Otherwise, nada. Cell service and internet are non-existent.

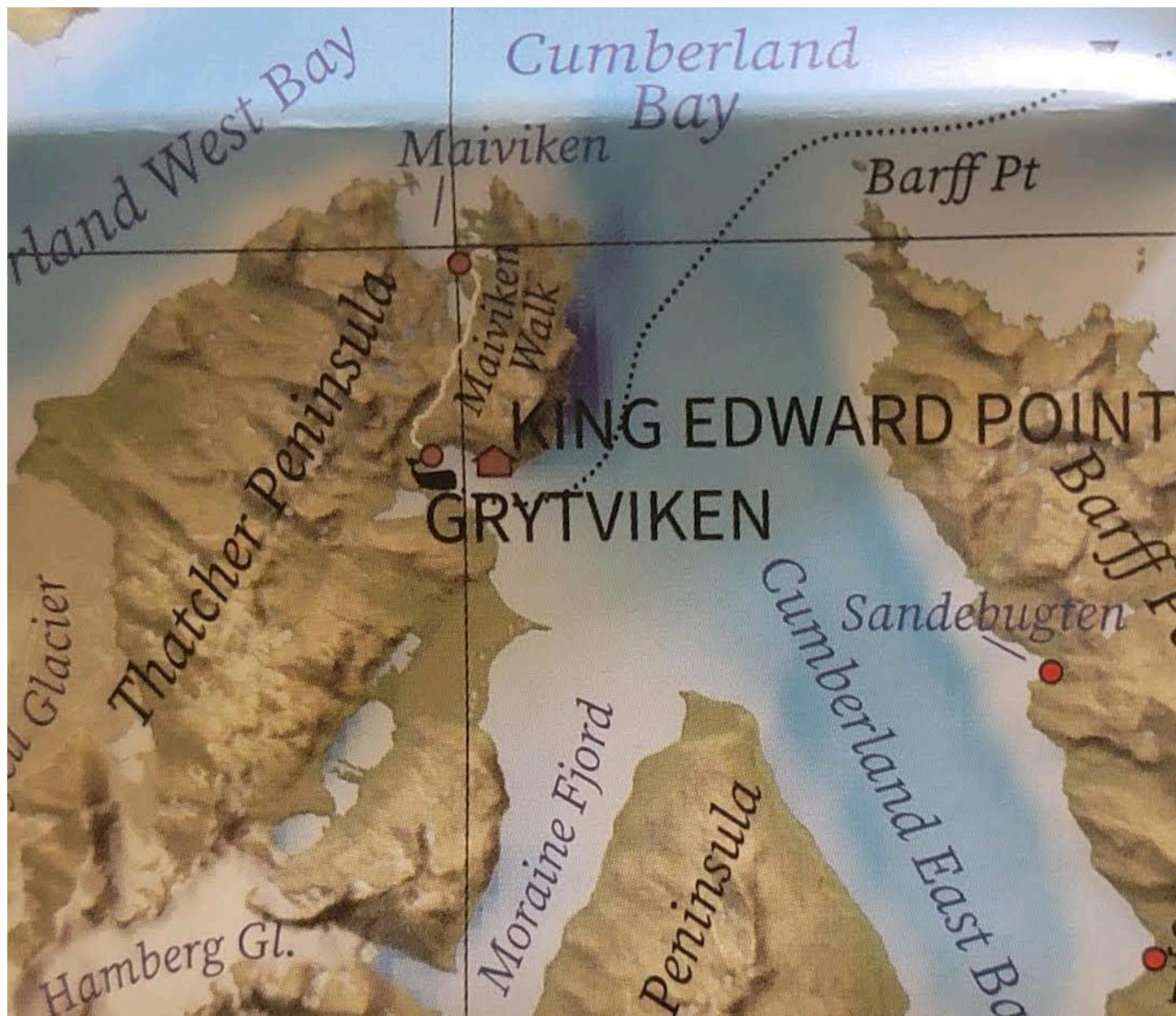


While I've enjoyed being disconnected from the world and find that I don't miss the internet or the phone one bit, I shudder to think of the bombardment of information awaiting me once I return to Ushuaia. But for now, who cares? It's time for our daily ration of grog. Drink up me hardys. Aaaar!



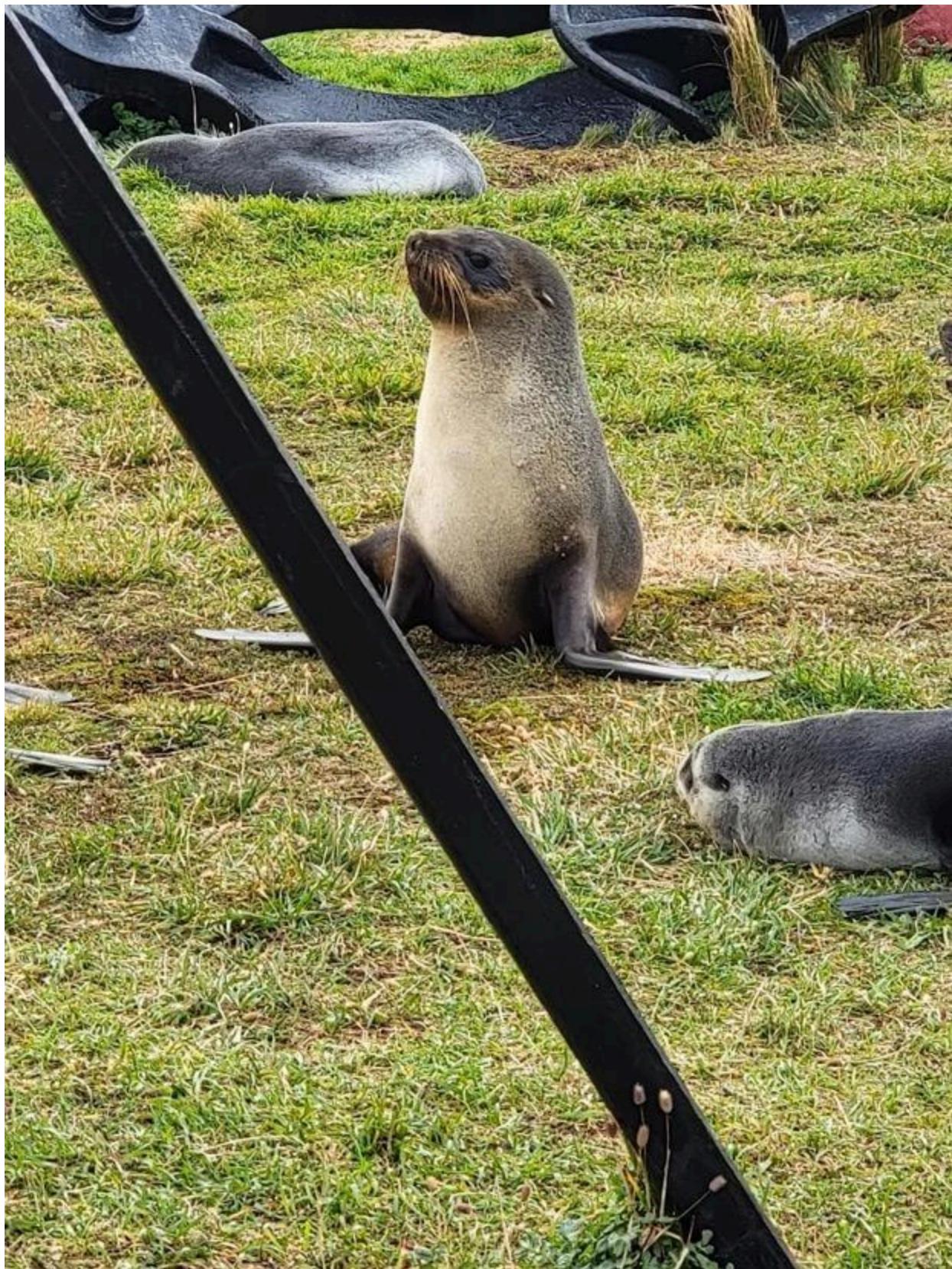
February 27, 2023: A Whale of a Tale

We landed at Grytviken after lunch. Grytviken is what's left of a whaling station. We had a whale of a good time.



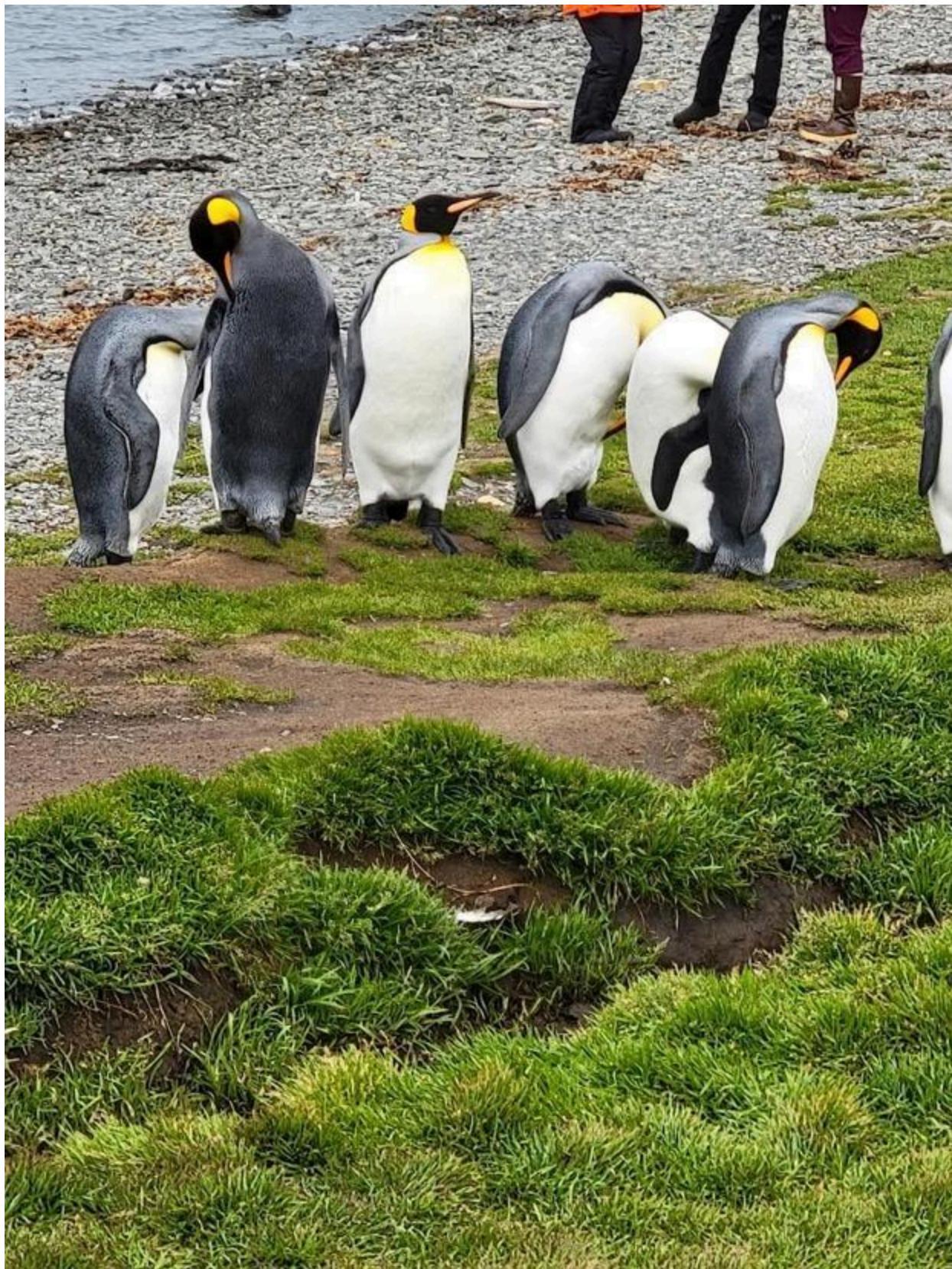


There were lots of baby seals.





There were also some King Penguins.



There was also a museum.





CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR FESTIVAL OF FUN

LEITH HARBOUR
1959-60

CHRISTMAS EVE 8pm ONLY CINEMASCOPE - MUSICAL
24th DEC. SEVEN BRIDES for SEVEN BROTHERS
HOWARD REEL & LANA POWELL

CHRISTMAS DAY 12.30

COWBOY
Jennifer Jones as ROBY GANTRY
Co starring - Charlton Heston

6.30/8.30 COMEDY - TAXI
Dan Dailey and Constance Smith

6.30/8.30 CINEMASCOPE - MUSICAL
Eleanor Powell as Marjorie Lawrence
in "INTERRUPTED MELODY"
Co starring - Glen Ford

6.30/8.30 COWBOY -
AUDIE MURPHY in "DESTRY"

30th DEC. 6.30 ONLY AMERICAN FILM -
The Prisoner of Zenda

7pm. GUS RANKIN and his 'stars'
"Hogmonay Revels"

12.30 COWBOY -
Audie Murphy in "GUNSMOKE"

6.30/8.30 AMERICAN BOXING FILM -
PAUL NEWMAN in "ROCKY GRAZIANO"

1st of Season's Greetings to all
With them Happiness and Prosperity

VULCAN

KALEE

Grytviken was in operation from 1904 until 1962. In season, 500 men worked 12 hour shifts seven days a week. They killed a lot of whales. They also concocted ingenious ways to distil alcohol.



There was a church, but they didn't really use it much. Apparently, they stored potatoes in it. That makes me guess vodka was the drink of choice, or maybe aquavit as most of the personnel were Norwegian.

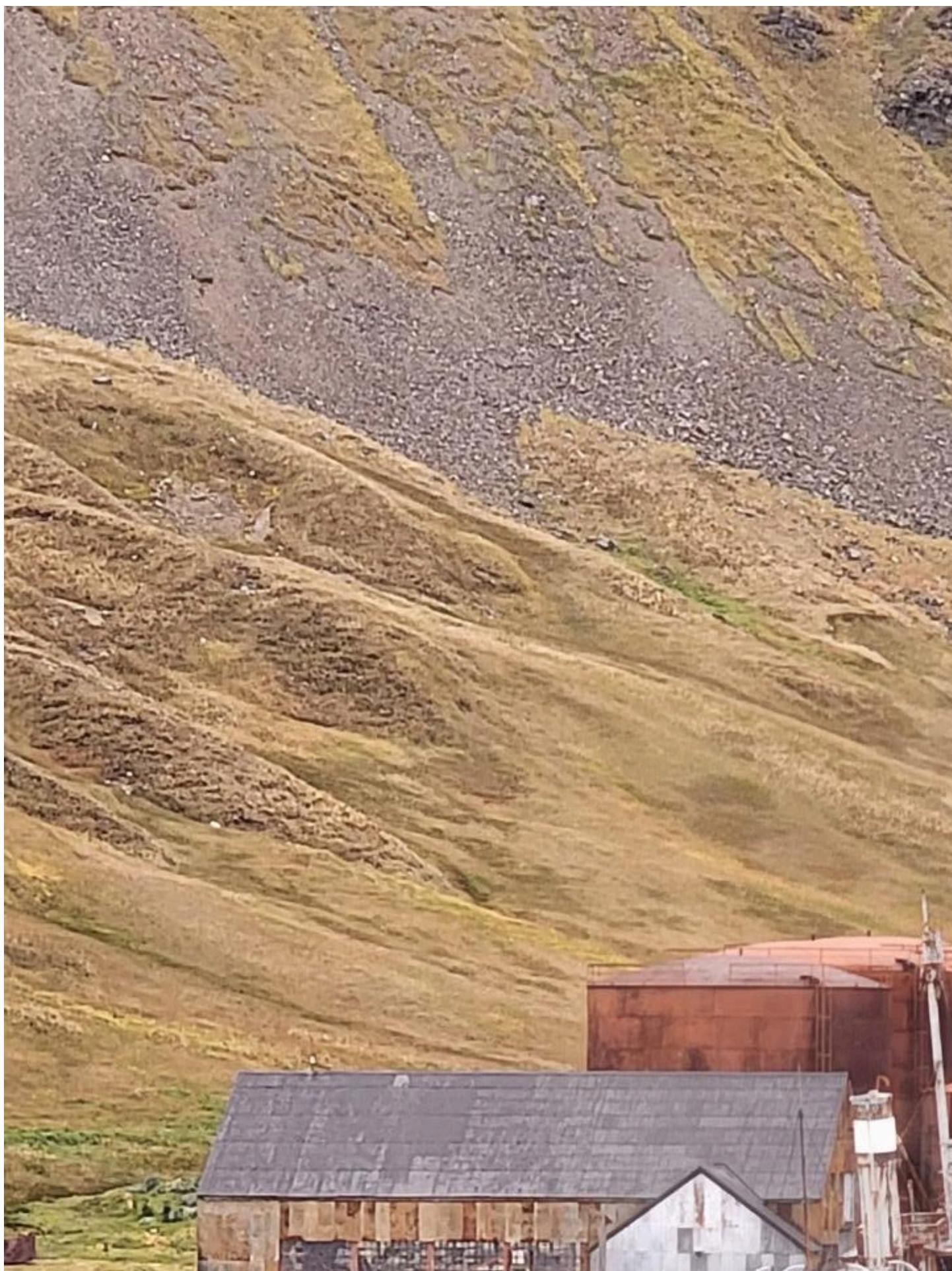


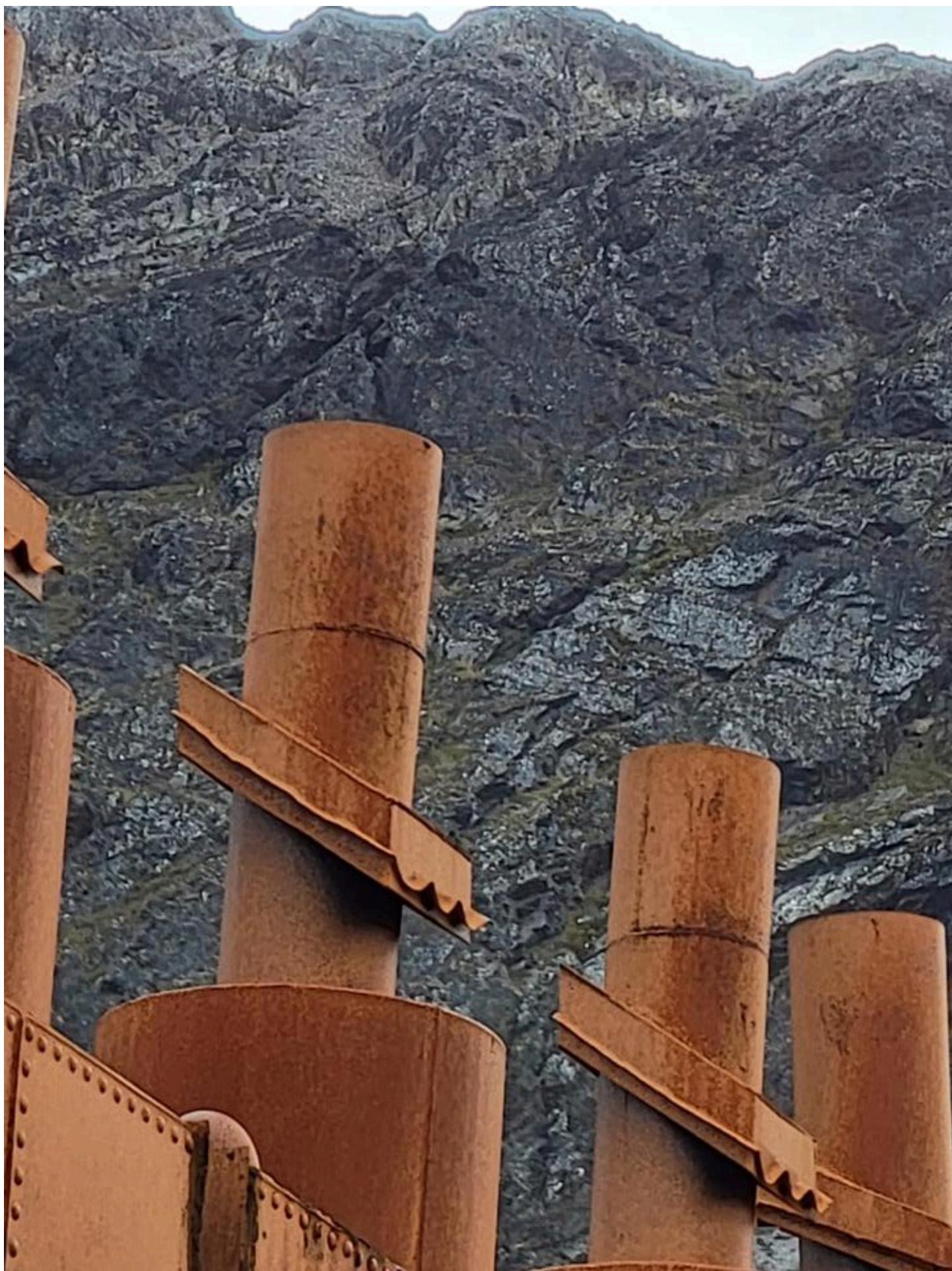


I assume not many of them were criers, else the others would tell them to stop blubbering. Okay, I'll stop spouting off.

Here are some snaps I took at Grytviken, where great slaughter took place over many years.













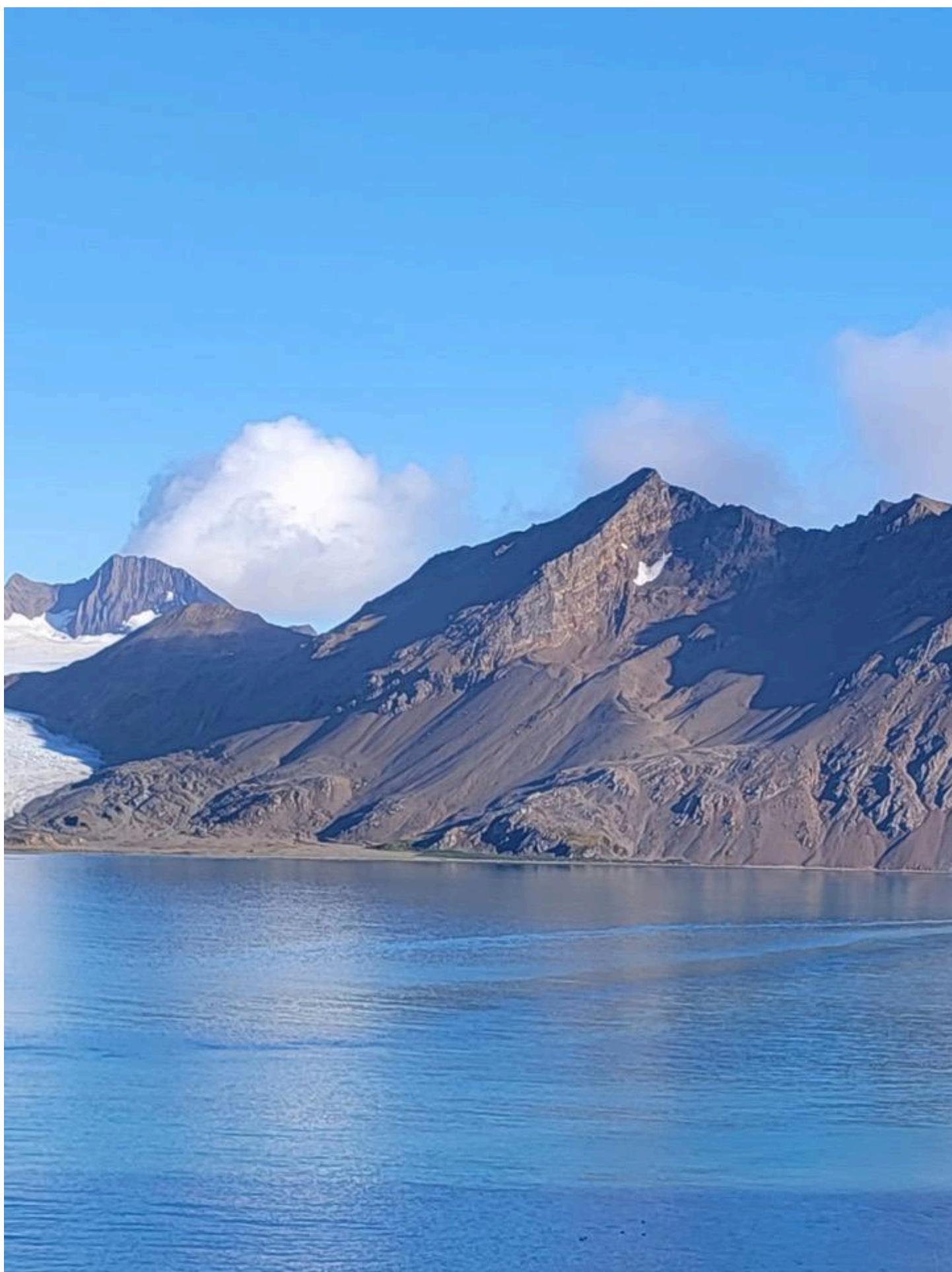
CHINA
MIA



February 28, 2023: “I’ve lost my ship. My name is Shackleton.”

Fortuna Bay – South Georgia Island. 37 degrees Fahrenheit. Mostly sunny. Calm Sea.





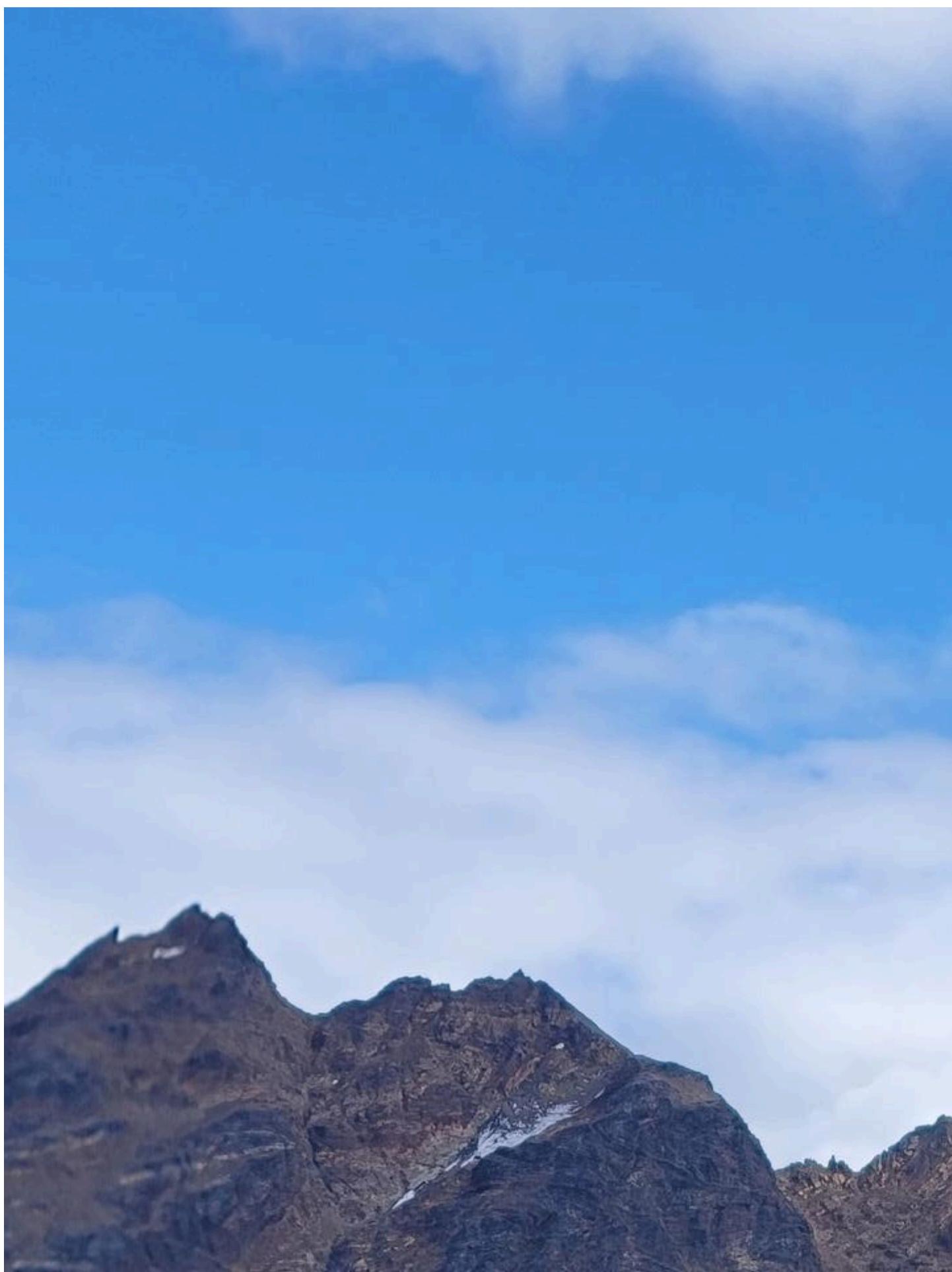
We hit the beach at 7:30 a.m. to walk the last 5 miles of the Shackleton Traverse.

On May 11, 1916, after 17 days at sea, this is what Shackleton would have seen:



Imagine. 17 days at sea in an open boat. 800 miles of open water. Very little sleep. Very little food. Unrelentingly wet and cold. The navigator, Frank Worsley, was able to take exactly one sextant reading during the journey. One. In 800 miles. They hit South Georgia Island – a 100 km wide crescent shaped island in the middle of the South Atlantic - by dead reckoning. Freaking amazing.

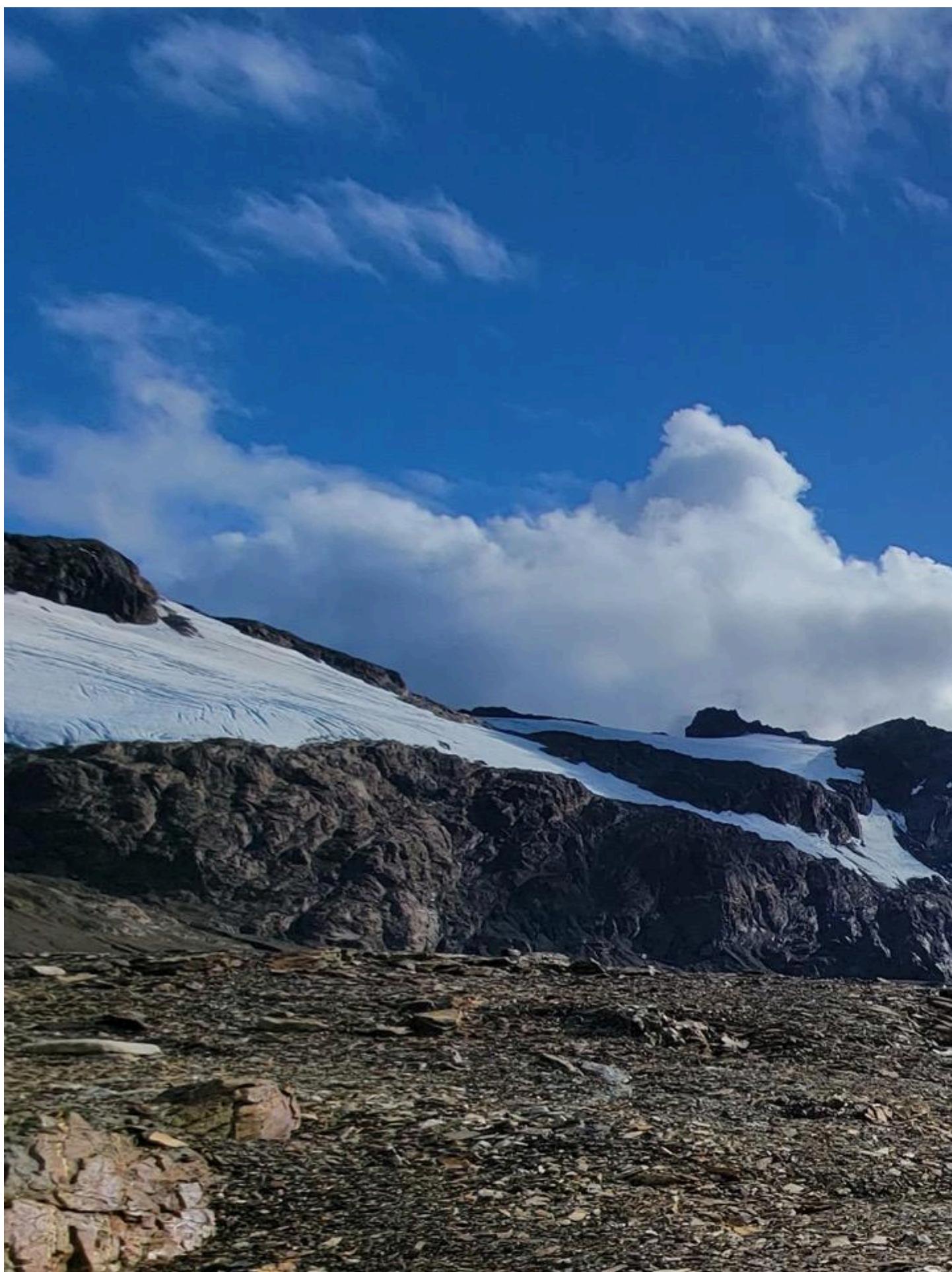
And for a little extra fun, they hit the beach on the side of the island opposite their destination - the whaling station at Stromness. So, what did they have to do? They had to traverse a mountain range to get to the other side of the island.



3 men (Worsley, Crean, and Shackleton. The other 3 remained at the landing spot). 20 miles. 36 hours forced march. No food. They didn't dare sleep because they very well might have died if they allowed themselves to close their eyes.

Some of us hiked the last 5 miles of the Traverse today. After a cozy night's sleep in a climate controlled cabin and a hearty breakfast. While perhaps not as historically significant as my friend Henry Vaccaro's undertaking the last 5 miles of the Bataan Death March, it was meaningful to me. I won't say it's the toughest hike I've ever been on, but it will do until the toughest one comes along.

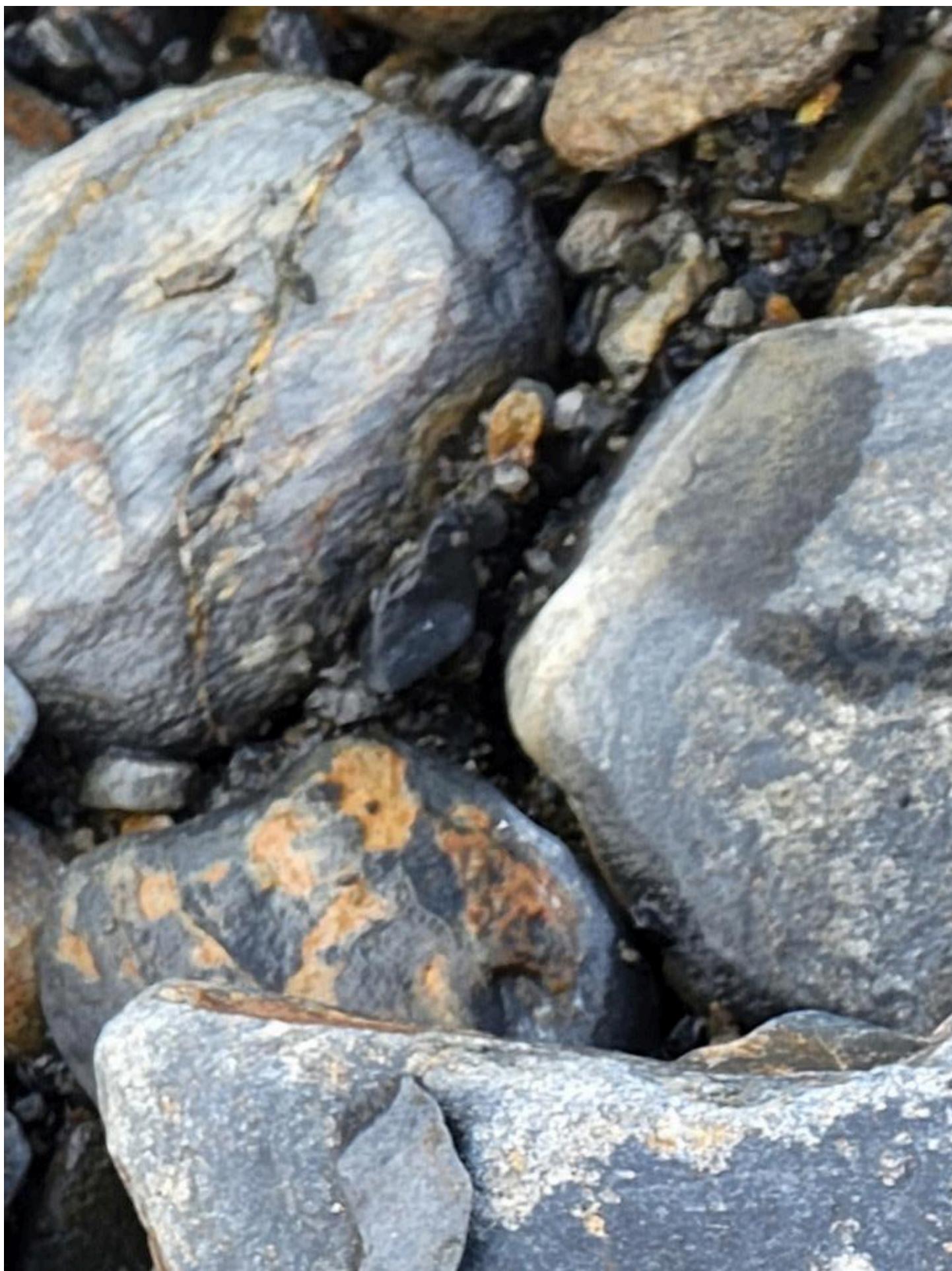
We ascended about 2000 feet during our little jaunt. I thought I was on the Camino again. Here are some shots of what Shackleton climbed. Only it was covered with snow when he climbed it.





In his account of his little romp, Shackleton said he knew he was in the right pass because he recognized the rock formations from when he re-supplied South Georgia on his way to the Antarctic 2 years earlier. No small feat. What we climbed was a moonscape. Nothing but rocks. It's amazing to think that Shackleton remembered a particular rock formation.

And speaking of rocks, my friend Bill Wolski always looks for rocks shaped like the State of Ohio when he hikes. Bill is from Ohio. He now lives in Georgia. Bill, this is for you:



A rock shaped like Ohio on South Georgia Island. Ohio. Georgia. Georgia. Ohio. It's a seamless web, folks.

Shackleton speaks of the hand of God leading him out of the last pass. When the 3 compared notes later, the others also spoke of an unseen force guiding them to the Stromness whaling station. As they came out of that last pass, they heard the 7 a.m. whistle at Stromness. This is what they saw:

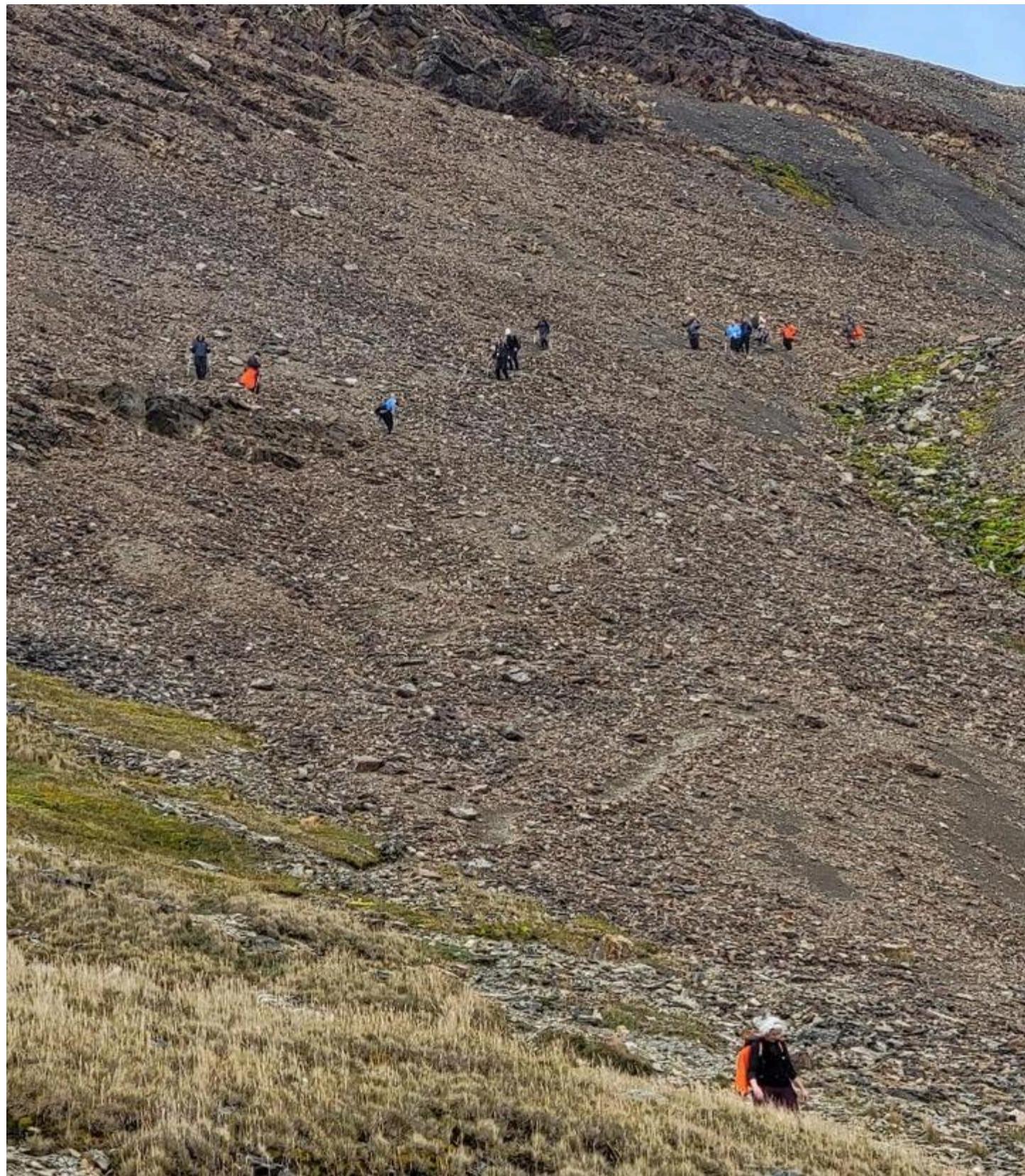




Shackleton and the men slid down a glacier on their keisters to the plain you see in the photo (the Stromness Plain).



Good thing they had that glacier. If it had been snow covered rocks, there's no telling what would have happened. "Ouch! My wedding tackle! I'm now a soprano!" The glacier they slid down has fully retreated after only 107 years. Damn you, global warming!



When they reached the plain, they staggered about a mile to the station and presented themselves at the harbor master's shack, whereupon Shackleton introduced himself with the words that introduce today's entry.

Stromness immediately dispatched a ship to pick up the 3 guys on the other side of the island. Picking up the 21 men on Point Wild was another matter.

Remember that May is the beginning of winter in the Antarctic. Three attempts were made in the dead of winter to pick up the men at Point Wild without success. Finally, in early November 1916, a Chilean ship, the Yecho, with Shackleton aboard, picked up Frank Wild and the 20 other men on Elephant Island. There's a statue of the Captain of the Yecho at Point Wild. I saw it but I couldn't get a picture as we couldn't land, and the Zodiac was bouncing too much. The Antarctic Treaty only allows for one monument per island. Chile beat England to the punch. Hence, a statue of the captain of the Yecho and not Frank Wild, who kept 21 men alive for 7 months; the only casualty being 2 toes that had to be amputated from Perce Blackbarrow, the man who had stowed away at the beginning of the expedition. Talk about a bummer of a vacation.



The rescue happened in the nick of time as the men on Elephant Island were out of food. The day before the Yecho arrived, they had cut cards to see who would be the first to be killed so that the others could eat him. You want fries with that?

Reportedly, Shackleton was amazed that WWI was still raging when he inquired at Stromness. Many of his men enlisted and served after they returned to England. Some of them were killed. Imagine surviving 7 months on a deserted rock in the South Antarctic only to die in a muddy trench in Flanders. And who says God doesn't have a sense of humor?

Shackleton has taken a few lumps in the historical record for getting his men into their fix in the first place. Perhaps rightly so. He wasn't the best planner. Crean never forgave him for shooting the dogs and Mrs. Chippy, the ship's cat. Here is Tom Crean:



The church at Grytviken hosted Shackleton's funeral in 1922. Many of his old mates attended, including Worsley; he of dead reckoning fame. Crean did not attend.

Shackleton sleeps in the little cemetery overlooking the bay at Grytviken.





IN MEMORY
WILLIAM CHARLES
MASTERTON, SOUTH GEORGIA
WHO DIED 11 MAY 1959
KILLED BY AN AVALANCHE

There's a tradition of drinking a toast to "The Boss" when one visits his grave. Why one drinks a toast to Bruce Springsteen, I have no idea. . . . You silly ninnymuggins! Shackleton's nickname was also "The Boss." For those who are confused, this is Bruce Springsteen the Boss:



This is Ernest Shackleton the Boss:



Before we drank our toast to Ernest Shackleton the Boss, our historian read some Tennyson and we hoisted a glass as the sun peeked out from the hills that surround the little bay at Grytviken. Here's a bit of what he read:

"I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
Life to the lees: All times I have enjoy'd
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone, on shore, and when
Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;
For always roaming with a hungry heart

Much have I seen and known; cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honour'd of them all;"

There are a ton of books about Shackleton. You can read some of them and make up your own mind. I'll leave the last word to Apsley Cherry Gerard, a member of Scott's crew who was in the search party that found Scott, Wilson, and Bowers dead in their tent (Cherry Gerard was played by a young Hugh Grant in *The Last Place of Earth*). Cherry Gerard was also the author of "The Worst Journey in the World", about a little excursion he and Wilson took in the dead of winter to study penguin habits. In the 1950s, when reminiscing about the Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration, Cherry Gerard said "It's Scott for scientific method and Amundsen for speed and efficiency. But when disaster strikes and all hope is lost, get down on your knees and pray for Shackleton."

In
the dear
Memory of

ERNEST · HENRY
SHACKLETON
EXPLORER

Born
15th Feb. 1874
Entered Life Eternal
5th Jan. 1922

ERNEST · HENRY
SHACKLETON

EXPLORER

1922

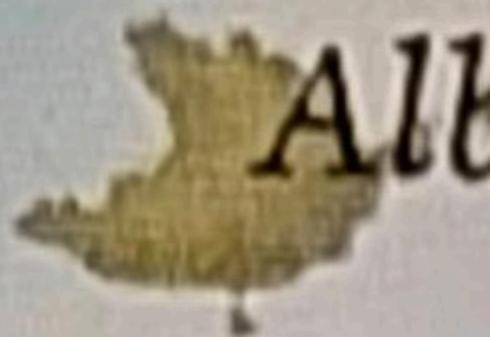
Bert and Ernie hope you have enjoyed this presentation.



March 1, 2023: By the Time We Got to Woodstock, We Were Half a Million Strong.

The Salisbury Plain. South Georgia Island. 37 degrees Fahrenheit. Overcast. Calm sea. Fresh wind.

Bay of Isles



Sāli

acier



Yesterday, we tried to land at St. Andrews Bay to see the largest King Penguin colony on the planet. No such luck as the seas were too rough. So, we had to settle for the second largest King Penguin colony on the planet. Here's something to give you an idea:

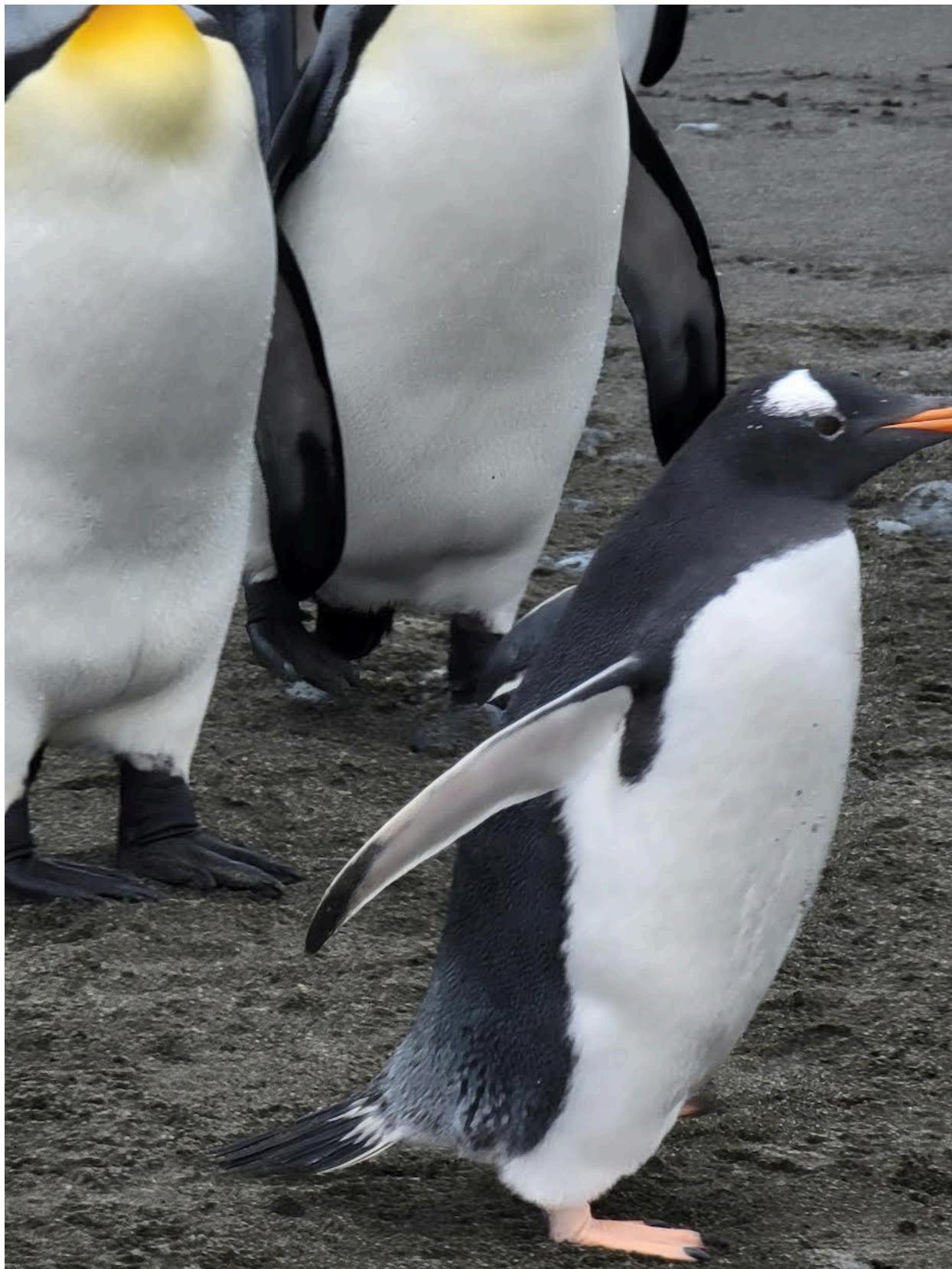


Hendrix plays at sunrise.

This one would make a great jigsaw puzzle:



It is estimated that there are 250,000 pairs of King Penguins on Salisbury Plain. Plus, one Gentoo. Poor little fellow. He kept squawking, looking for another of his kind, I suppose. Either that, or he was playing Marco Polo.



I know there's a joke about 150,000 flies not being wrong, but I won't make the analogy. Suffice it to say, there's a reason we walk around in something called "Muck Boots." It ain't mud, Dermot.

Obviously, I have no idea what it was like at Normandy on June 6, 1944, but I couldn't help thinking about it as I walked the beach. Thousands of beings being strafed by flying things that are trying to kill them; or, at least, trying to kill their young.



The Skuas swoop in looking for penguin eggs. The Albatrosses patrol the beach like Kite Runners. Here are some of the birds I saw today:









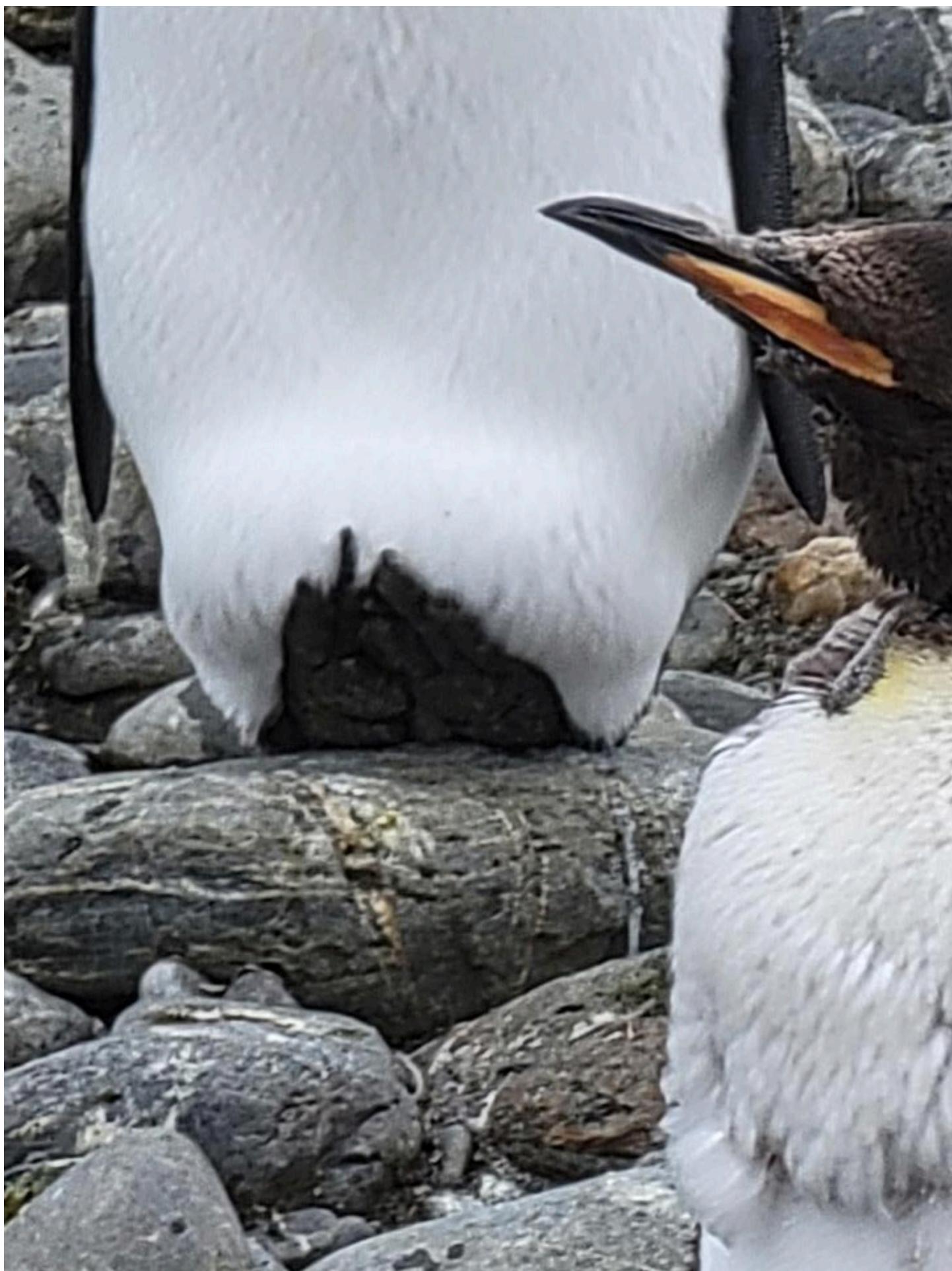


South Georgia Island is known as the “Galapagos of the South” due to its biodiversity. It’s 100% protected and the South Georgian inspectors aim to keep it that way. They take their jobs seriously. We had a bio inspection of our outer wear before we were allowed to come ashore, replete with fluorescent lights in our pockets, to make sure there are no foreign species being introduced. A G-man named Gavin came aboard to make sure we’re not carrying the Andromeda Strain. Gavin has a large beard and is very jolly, but I suspect he’s licensed to kill, so we didn’t mess with Gavin.

There were 3 foreign species introduced on S. Georgia Island during the whaling years – rats (understandably, as they stowed away on the ships), reindeer (because the Norwegians didn’t want to eat penguins), and dandelions. The last of the reindeer were eradicated in the 1990s. Those who know think the rats are gone, but they are not certain. Dandelions are problematic as their seeds are spread by the birds. I didn’t see any dandelions, but this plant is called Burnet. It’s all over the place. It kind of looks like a dandelion, but it has sharp stickers that can wreak havoc with your skin if it gets stuck to your clothing and you try to pick it off.



As much as we have a natural tendency to want to help little animals in need, we can't. On South Georgia, one is prohibited from interfering with nature. For example, some of the penguins are molting; an uncomfortable, itchy process that saps the penguins of vital energy. Here's a little guy molting:



By this time of the season, if there are still eggs, those that survive the dive bombing Skuas and hatch into little penguins will die because they won't have time to fledge before winter sets in (BTW, King Penguins have a 400 day fledging process; the longest of any bird in nature).



Some birds, get picked off here and there or they just die; as we all must.

Seals die too. Someone up North is wondering why this guy doesn't write anymore:



This is our last morning on South Georgia. We were supposed to be here another day, but there is a larrupin' storm coming our way and we either need to hightail it out of here or get a bucket. I've enjoyed my time here. It's a beautiful place. Let's hope it stays that way, lest some asshole developer turns it into a golf course.



March 2, 2023: A Photojournalistic Odyssey

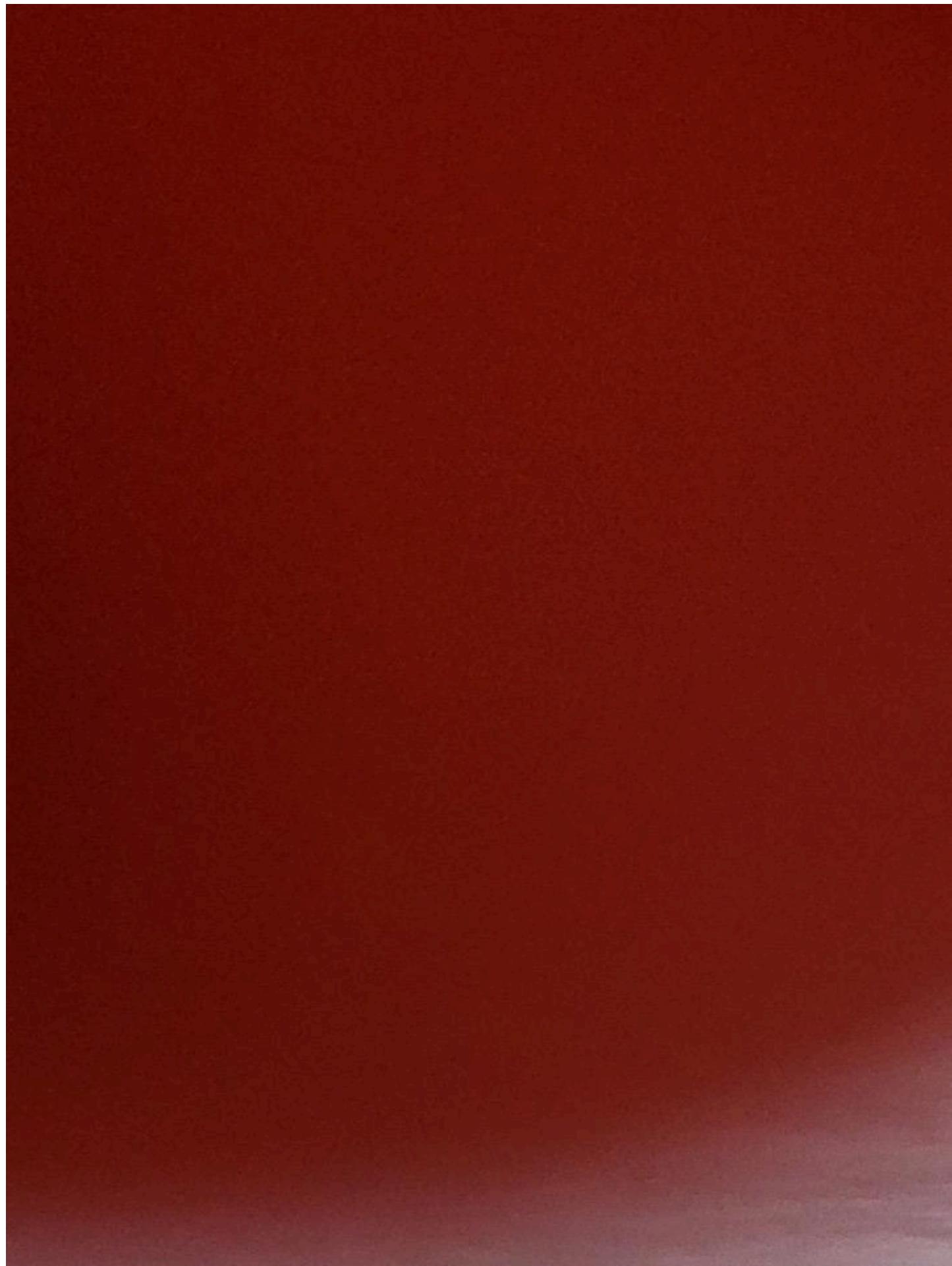
Somewhere in the South Atlantic. 43 degrees Fahrenheit. Partly sunny. Rough Seas – 12 feet waves

We will be at sea all day today and tomorrow, on our way to the Falkland Islands. Walking around on the ship is challenging as the wave swells are very high. Apparently, it's considered poor form to ask the height of the waves. If you ask a mariner, he or she will just look at you. But there are ways to find out; so I did.

Remember when I told you one the National Geographic photographers gave us a photo challenge to tell a story in photographs? Here's mine. I call it "There's Something About the Antarctic I Can't Quite Put My Finger On." Enjoy!







Ah, I'm just kidding with you.

Here's the thing about taking pictures down here if you're a complete amateur, like me: One is so geared up that when photo ops present themselves, getting a good photograph is mostly a matter of luck. I've already passed along the tip regarding the futility of taking photos while holding on for dear life in a Zodiac. On a typical shore landing in the late Antarctic summer, you'll be wearing skivvies, a merino wool base layer, a fleece layer, vest, waterproof pants, muck boots, waterproof gloves, and a parka. You'll be carrying a bottle of water, your photo gear, and a walking stick. Topping it all off, you'll be wearing a life preserver while traveling in a Zodiac.



Thus, you'll be looking like Randy in A Christmas Story.



Since you won't have unencumbered mobility, you just have to do the best you can with your camera. I just use my cell phone for pictures as it is the simplest solution. Once in a while, I get a good photo. I will post my 10 favorite shots from the trip later.

In the meantime, we have a few presentations lined up for today. They keep us fat and drunk, with plenty of presentations to keep our attention diverted from staggering around the ship like Lucy on the Queen Mary.



I'll post more tomorrow, assuming we don't see Moby Dick in the meantime.



Have a great day.

March 3, 2023: Let's Go Surfin' Now. Everybody's Learnin' How.

Somewhere in the South Atlantic, north of the Antarctic Convergence. 43 degrees Fahrenheit. Overcast. Rough seas – 30 feet waves.

Yes, you read it right. 30 feet waves. It's interesting trying to eat breakfast with all of your silverware, glassware, and china sliding all over the table. In some cases, platefuls of food slide off and fall to the floor. To give you some idea, here is a photo of our ship:



During our navigation to the Falkland Islands, waves routinely crash over the bow. The dining room is on the deck above the blue section and the waves batter the windows. Here is a bad picture of a wave battering the window:



There is a rope for people to hold onto as they make their way through the bistro to the dining room. Like this:





The mantra of “one hand for the ship and one hand for you” is especially apt at the moment. Of course, that begs the question of what Admiral Lord Nelson would do; having only one arm and all.



Which brings me to the topic of seasickness. Given the sparse turnouts at the presentations the last couple of days, it's fairly safe to assume there's a significant percentage of passengers who are currently seasick. I have only been seasick once in my life. I was 10 years old and still remember what it felt like. It was pretty miserable. In an attempt to stave off seasickness, I used the Scopolamine patch our first 2 days out, but it made me feel groggy and gave me dry mouth, so I stopped using it. So far so good. I'm able to walk around the ship reasonably well, but, once in a while, an extra feisty wave breaks over the bow and causes the ship to wobble, sending me slamming into a wall. Now I know how a pinball feels.

And what is the Antarctic Convergence, you ask? Remember when I told you about the Circumpolar Current that goes in a clockwise direction around Antarctica? Well, the Antarctic Convergence is where the Circumpolar Current meets the South Atlantic Current. North of that point (the Convergence), the sea will no longer freeze.

Of course, in turbulent seas like what we are currently experiencing, one can't help trying to remember the words to "The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald" or to "There's Got to be a Morning After" from The Poseidon Adventure. Damn you, Maureen McGovern!

I once met a guy in Taos, New Mexico who served on the ship that rolled a 360 in the Vietnam War. After his tour was over, he moved to Taos, vowing to never go near the water again. I'm not really worried about anything happening to our ship, as it seems to be trundling along just fine. In fact, it's hauling butt at 20 knots because we are surrounded by storms and the captain is trying to get us out of harm's way as quickly as possible. But I'm not scared. After all, you're looking at a man who's laughed in the face of death, sneered at doom, and chuckled at catastrophe...I'm petrified.



BTW, isn't that Shelly Winters?



Must be a lingering side effect of the Scopolamine.

Oh, yeah! Now I remember: "The searchers all say they'd have made Whitefish Bay if they'd put 15 more miles behind them". Damn you, Gordon Lightfoot! See ya in the Maritime Sailors' Cathedral in Detroit.



March 4, 2023: Laurels for Stanley

Somewhere east of East Falkland Island. 50 degrees Fahrenheit. Mostly sunny. Heavy chop with 10 feet swells.

The pitch and yaw of the ship in the heavy seas kept me awake all night. It's a strange sensation to feel like you're sliding to the foot of the bed every time the ship pitches. Then you turn on your side, only to have the rocking of the ship roll you over on your back. I was glad for daylight and nearing arrival at Stanley.

This is us, docking at Stanley, on East Falkland Island.







Stanley has a permanent population of approximately 3500 people. It is a self-governing overseas British territory and looks every inch like the idea of England plopped down in a very un-English place. It reminds me of a cross between Cape Ann, Massachusetts and Scotland.



It has a governor general and an 8-person legislature. Its governor general is female. The first in Falklands history. Well done, Charles. Here is where she lives.



Argentina will tell you the Falklands belong to it, but they are wrong. It has never belonged to Argentina and never will. The Falklanders are, to a person, decidedly pro-British. They periodically have referendums about nationalization. The last one was in 2020 and 98.6 percent of the electorate voted to stay with England. Sounds normal to me. There are 86 different nationalities represented among its populace.

Now for the “Conflict.” No one calls it a war. My understanding is that Argentina just decided they were going to take over the Falklands; claiming that they belonged to Argentina. Sound familiar? Apparently, there was a big shot scrap metal dealer who somehow convinced 20 Argentinian troops to land with him on South Georgia Island while he attempted to loot the scrap metal at the abandoned whaling stations. Someone on South Georgia rang up the Governor General of the Falklands (whose jurisdiction extends to South Georgia) and said “excuse me, guv, but did you know...”. Things escalated from there. Not to be out-Reaganed, Margaret Thatcher opened up a can of whup ass – led, no doubt, by helicopter pilot Prince Andrew, who was, no doubt, looking for underage girls to conquer. Rule Britannia!



But everybody's friends now..... Not really. The Falklanders don't like the Argentinians and the feeling is mutual. A bunch of people died for no real good reason in a dumb war worthy of Grenada. Except..... the Falklands are a strategic port in the South Atlantic because it doesn't freeze there, and it rarely snows; making it a great place for re-supply and repair if you happen to be waging a war. Germany wanted it in WWI, Germany and Japan both wanted it in WWII. Maybe Maggie wasn't so wrong after all. Grenada on the other hand.... will someone please explain to me why St. Ronald of Reagan thought it was a good idea to blow up Club Med?



The Falklanders' main allies are the Chileans and the Uruguayans. In fact, if you have some kind of complicated medical issue, the RAF will fly you to its base in Montevideo.

The Falklands is a windy place, indeed. About 40 mph on average, which was the windspeed today. There is not much temperature fluctuation throughout the year. Only about 10 degrees. We had intermittent sun and rain this afternoon as we toodled about the main drag.

Everyone seems to have a garden of some sort. From truck gardens to colorful wildflowers like these.





In fact, the Falklands are largely self-sufficient in the food department. They grow potatoes, carrots, broccoli, asparagus, tomatoes, strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, and apricots. Beef is cheap, chicken is dear, fish is abundant. A food flight comes from Chile once a week, carrying such exotic fare as bananas at a pound a piece. Chile also sends a ship once a month with non-perishables, so you can get your Amazon delivery.

We ended our afternoon at The Victory Bar, which is supposed to be some super duper locals hangout.

VICTORY BAR

V



I was underwhelmed. They were out of beer on tap (seriously?) and we had to settle for canned local beer on the deck.

We are going to spend the night docked at the quay, so perhaps I will actually get some sleep as the ship won't be moving. I hope you're having a great Saturday and I'll check in with you tomorrow.



Victory

HUSBAND

Is your husb...

