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←70-foot Radio Towers Cap Little America

The first Byrd Antarctic Expedition built this outpost on the Ross Ice Shelf in 1929. Forty-two men were quartered here 14 months.

When Byrd returned a quarter of a century later, he found the masts almost completely buried (page 48).

↓The *Floyd Bennett*, a Ford trimotor named for Byrd's friend and flying partner, taxis from its snow hangar at Little America. The big plane performed superbly during the history-making 1,600-mile round-trip flight to the South Pole on November 29, 1929.

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At last came the day for the first attempt to fly over the South Pole. Like a mighty wall between them and their goal reared the lofty Queen Maud Range.

The engines labored as the trimotored Ford strained upward over Liv Glacier.

"Suddenly the ailerons failed to have any effect; the wheel turned loosely in [Bernt Balchen's] hands," Byrd wrote.

"Above the roar of engines Bernt yelled, 'It's drop 200, or go back!'"

Food Sacrificed for Altitude

"June jumped to the dump valve of our fuselage tank. A slight pressure and 600 pounds of gasoline would go overboard. But if we did that we would not have enough gasoline to reach the Pole and get back..."

Instead, two 150-pound bags of precious emergency food were jettisoned. The plane eased safely over the lip of the pass.

"Bernt let out a yelp of joy. No mountains ahead. A clear route to the Pole, dead ahead over the horizon!..."

Soon they were at the southernmost axis of the globe, 90° South.

"That imaginary point—the aloof and lonely bottom of the earth—was beneath us. I handed June a message to radio to Little America!

"My calculations indicate we have reached the vicinity of the South Pole. Flying high for survey. Soon turn north."

To an ordinary man, successful first flights over both Poles might have been enough. Byrd could easily have basked in glory. The Congress of the United States honored him by promoting him to Rear Admiral on the Retired List; book publishers, magazines, and lecture agencies sought him out.

In June, 1930, President Hoover presented Byrd with the National Geographic Society's Special Gold Medal of Honor. More than 15,000 members applied for tickets to see the Admiral's lecture film, but only 6,000 could crowd into the largest available hall, Washington Auditorium.

But to Byrd the vast unknown Antarctic



48 Andrew H. Brown, National Geographic Staff

Antarctic Veterans Hold a Reunion at Little America

Visiting Antarctica for what was to be the last time in December, 1955, Admiral Byrd stands on a familiar site. Snows of three decades had almost buried the 70-foot radio mast marking his 1929 base. His second camp, built atop the first in 1934, lies 40 feet below the surface.

Others (left to right): Dr. Paul A. Siple; Maj. Murray Wiener, the Admiral's Air Force adviser; Lt. Richard E. Byrd, Jr.; and Edward E. Goodale, an IGY representative.

"How many kindnesses and honors you have given me throughout the years; naming that long mountain range in Antarctica after me and bringing me a piece of rock from the range, presenting it mounted with a silver engraved identification mark on it. Ever since, this souvenir has held the place of honor on the mantelpiece in our home.

"Looking today again at our new map of the world (March, 1957, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC MAGAZINE), I see, not far away from my range, the La Gorce Mountains, another thoughtful kindness given me by honoring my lifelong associate. . . . I have not words to express how grateful I am for your warm, inspiring friendship.

"Your whole life exemplifies the highest ideals of America. All America loves you. . . ."

For the new United States scientific base at the South Pole, Richard Byrd chose the name Amundsen-Scott IGY South Pole Station. It was his way of paying homage to Norway's Roald Amundsen, who discovered the South Pole in December, 1911, and Robert Falcon Scott, the English explorer who reached it only a month later and died on the return trip. When the South Pole Station was dedicated in January, 1957, Admiral Byrd said:

"In this year of international activity in the Antarctic, it is fitting that we should honor the memories of those two great and gallant men who first reached the South Pole.

"...Scott lies gently shrouded in the Antarctic snows he loved and so often traversed. Amundsen lies at the other end of the earth, beneath the waters of the Arctic."

In his last article in this issue Admiral Byrd pays tribute to the men now carrying on his work in Antarctica, and in particular to the small group

wintering at the South Pole.

To these men news of the Admiral's death came as a shock. The flag at South Pole Station flew at half-mast from the day he died, March 11, 1957, until the sun went down to usher in the six-month antarctic night.

Admiral Byrd was buried with full military honors in Arlington National Cemetery on March 14, 1957. With the assistance of Mrs. Byrd and of Lt. Richard E. Byrd, Jr., the Admiral's son, the National Geographic Society has undertaken the planning and execution of a suitable graveside memorial.

It will not be easy to devise a monument that can begin to do justice to the memory of Richard Evelyn Byrd.