

## 2004 CANADIAN ARCTIC AND GREENLAND

Friday, July 30, 2004. A free ticket sounded good. Delta had quoted over \$800! So I traveled United to Winnipeg. Either the limo was early or I gauged my time wrong, for by 10:30 I had cleared security and was at United's gate 15 on the T concourse 2 hours early! The only food available at this end of the T concourse is Blimpie sandwiches. I managed about half of a six-inch turkey sub, which left a little to be desired. At 12:30 we took off for Chicago. I was in one of the forward seats in coach with lots of legroom. In Chicago I was in a wheelchair and they pushed me through octopus corridors twisting in every direction. It was a long walk and I would never have found United Express without the help. The sad part is that I was there in plenty of time to catch the 2:50 flight to Winnipeg, but my checked bag had to wait for the 5 PM flight. Susan had insisted I needed this 3 1/2 hour connection since I had to be in Winnipeg tonight without fail. I managed to find a Chili's restaurant but it had a long line. Thanks to my trusty cane seat, I sat in line and eventually had a nice meal. Then I sat in the very crowded waiting area for a long time until it was time for my plane. United Express is actually Wisconsin Air but we were in a 30 passenger United Jet. The flight from Chicago was only an hour and a half, and very pleasant with beverage service. My seatmate was a navy man on his way to Winnipeg to visit a friend. At Winnipeg I had another wheelchair and was taken through a series of locked gates to baggage claim and the cab rank. The cab took me to the Fairmont Hotel but wouldn't take American dollars. I had no Canadian. I was prepared to make him wait while I got some money changed in the hotel, but fortunately Evans had been waiting for me and came up with the right money. I have a pleasant room but will do little but sleep for we have to have bags out by 9 tomorrow. It has been a long day!

Saturday, July 31. There are 84 of us, divided into two groups, for Calm Air's flight to Churchill. The flight takes 2 1/2 hours and I think the airplane was almost as old as I am. The restroom reminded me of a privy. However they served us a nice croissant sandwich.

In Churchill we were loaded into a school bus for a half hour ride to the ship. First we saw a plane, which crashed here ten years ago. It is so expensive to ship anything in or out that the plane still sits in all its wrecked glory for us to behold. At least I didn't have a crashed landing. That is one calamity I have managed to avoid!

They took us to Cape Merry, a national park overlooking the Churchill River. When I was here four years ago there was a lot of snow. No trace of it today and we walked out to examine the eighteenth century battlements that guarded the river mouth.

At last we boarded the M/V Lyubov Orlova. She is a Russian ship, not an icebreaker as I had thought, but "ice-strengthened" which seems to mean she has a double hull. Looking at the dents in the outer hull, she seems to have been well tested. Rumor has it she was once a Russian spy ship.

We had a brief orientation and introductions to the staff and then went on deck to watch us sail. There were beluga whales to escort us out into Hudson Bay.

There was more orientation before the welcome cocktail party where our Captain introduced some of his staff. Dinner followed. I had smoked salmon followed by snapper and rice, all washed down by wine. We ate with a young couple, John Jappy and Catherine Granier. He is a patent agent in London. She is a statistician from Toulouse, also working in London. It is a veritable United Nations aboard. There is a large group from Taiwan, and many from the UK. I have also met an Italian couple and one from Australia.

My cabin is basic but comfortable. I am happy to have it to myself for it would be crowded for two. Evans and Charity are next door.

As soon as dinner was over I retired to my cabin although there was a movie offered for those wishing more.

Sunday, August 1. Our course was northeast all day across the calm blue waters of

## 2004 CANADIAN ARCTIC AND GREENLAND

Hudson Bay. It really should be called Hudson Sea, for it is so large. At the end of the day fog rolled in.

There was plenty to keep us busy. First we had our mandatory safety drill. They briefed us in the forward lounge then made us retrieve our life vests and go to our muster stations.

This was followed by a lecture from our historian, Susan Barr. She told us how Spain and Portugal dominated the lower latitudes so England and Holland concentrated on the upper ones, trying to find a passage to the fabled riches of Cathay.

First she told of Martin Forbisher who made three voyages between 1576 and 1578. He discovered the long fiord now called Forbisher Bay and explored 240 miles of it before finding a dead-end. On a subsequent voyage he came looking for gold but he only found fool's gold. He took tons of the worthless rock back to England. On his third voyage he brought 15 ships but found the bay frozen and had to winter over.

The next explorer to seek a northwest passage was John Davis, 1550-1605. His were scientific expeditions. He charted the south east coast of Baffin Island, as well as Cumberland Sound and the Strait, which bears his name.

Henry Hudson, 1610-1650, reported seeing mermaids but they were probably Harp Seals. He thought he had reached the Pacific when he got to Hudson Bay. When his crew found that they weren't to have the riches he promised them, they mutinied. Hudson, with some of his supporters was set adrift in a small boat with no supplies. The eight mutineers sailed the boat back to England where they stood trial, but were not convicted.

William Baffin in 1616 charted the strait which bears his name. He also determined his latitude, the first man to do so.

Jens Munk, 1619-1628, a Danish explorer-navigator attempted to find a passage. 65 men on two ships wintered at Munk's Harbor, which became Churchill. All but three died of scurvy. The survivors sailed back to Norway and Munk was jailed. King Christian pardoned him and sent him back to Hudson Bay to bring his second ship home, but no one wanted to come with him.

To put all this in perspective, it is possible that Munk could have passed the Mayflower on one of his voyages.

The Hudson Bay Company was founded in 1670 as a trading post for furs. The company built Prince of Wales Fort, at the entrance of the Churchill River, but the French later came and knocked it down. It has been reconstructed.

And still the search for a Northwest Passage continued.

Sir John Franklin, 1786-1843, mapped many parts of the area and is known for "eating his boots" one starving winter.

Dr. John Rae, 1813-1893 came from the Orkney Islands for the Hudson Bay Company. He walked many miles on snowshoes and finally found natives who could tell him how Franklin had died. He got a \$10000 reward for finding Franklin.

Raoul Amudson in 1903-05 finally found the Northwest Passage but it never became popular because of the ice.

After lunch Norm Lacsá gave a workshop on Arctic flowers. He tried to educate us to look for certain features on the flowers to help in the identification. There are about 400 vascular plants in the high Arctic. Because of the permafrost plants grow close to the ground and sometimes have laterally developed root systems. Trees grow to only inches high. The dimmed room is a heady sedative and many of us had trouble keeping our eyes open.

We then had a briefing on how to get in and out of the zodiacs.

Then I went to hear Liz Jeneid, the art teacher, explain how she hoped to have us express ourselves with line drawings. There are about 25 of us willing to try.

The best lecture of the day was the last one when Frank Todd, our ornithologist showed some remarkable slides while he talked about the sea birds we might see.

After supper, I sat through our briefing on how to act around polar bears and went wearily off to bed!

## 2004 CANADIAN ARCTIC AND GREENLAND

Monday, August 2. Still heading northeast across Hudson Bay. We are 64 degrees north. Our mirror sea has developed a roll so we are getting our sea legs. We have also run into thick fog, which slows us down.

First lecture after breakfast was by the photographer, Quinton Gordon. He says he has a 100% record in helping people with digital photography. I hope he can help me with some of my problems since I have never gotten beyond "auto" for a setting. He showed us some beautiful slides he has taken, pointing out how he shows size and depth and so on.

Norm followed by a very good geology talk, telling how sedimentary rock develops. By using people in the audience, he demonstrated how minerals interact with one another. We "squeezed" the water out of imaginary rocks causing our magma to cement together. Glaciers always move forward. When we talk about them retreating, we really mean melting. Permafrost is anything frozen for two or more years. The Arctic can be defined as the permafrost area. He discussed how in a Tsunami storm there is much destruction.

After lunch I struggled into my shore going gear. I made the mistake of putting on my boots before the Gortex, and then I couldn't get the boot off I ended going up to reception for help! Finally I was ready: layered clothing, life vest and pack. I felt like I was carrying the weight of the world on my shoulders. We are in two groups: Belugas and Polar Bears. The three of us are belugas.

We boarded the Zodiacs and motored ashore in a drizzly rain. Ashore I was allowed to ditch the backpack but not the life preserver, since we might have to evacuate in a hurry if we saw polar bears!

I found some Arctic flowers and took some pictures. I even found the setting on my camera for close-ups so I am slowly learning this digital camera.

I walked up the beach to the ruins of a Hudson Bay Company outpost. Nearby was the ruin of an Inuit pit house. Fashioned much like an igloo it had a stone foundation, which would have been covered with whalebones and skins.

Nearby was a graveyard for the Hudson Bay Company. One grave was decorated with flowers, but there was no sign of who had put them there. Most walked up the beach to see some caribou but I found the walking difficult as burdened as I was. The drizzle had now become light rain. Thus I caught the first zodiac back to the ship.

Our second art workshop found us exploring different media. We drew someone, looking only at the face, not the paper. My first looked something like a misguided Juan Miró! My next attempt looked like a gnome. Neither looked like Catherine, whose face I had been "meditating" about.

We had a wrap-up of our shore excursion, dinner and early to bed.

Tuesday, August 3. I had a hard time waking up and am becoming very stiff and sore, but managed to gather myself together and go to my art class after breakfast. We kept being interrupted to go see our first icebergs.

Then we had our briefing for the Zodiac tour of Akpatok Island.

Kirsten LeMar gave a lecture of polar bears with stunning slides to go with it.

After lunch Susan gave a lecture on various historical points all over the Arctic and Antarctic.

Then we got ourselves clothed for the zodiac tour. I remembered to leave my boots for the last! Since we won't be going ashore, I took only my camera and boarded zodiac #2 with some other belugas. The fog was pretty thick but we found the island. Then there was discussion over whether we were seeing polar bears or rocks and finally decided rocks. We couldn't see the bird cliffs for which this island is noted, but we did see numerous birds and watched them flap and run taking off from the water.

The ship gave a blast of her horn so we could set a course for our return and soon she emerged from the fog. It was a lot of effort for very little return.

That night they showed an Inuit film. It did show some how the Inuit people live, but the

## 2004 CANADIAN ARCTIC AND GREENLAND

plot and dialogue left much to be desired. I left.

Wednesday, August 4, 2004. A busy day. I ran up and down the stairs so many times I lost count. I can't imagine why anyone would need to use the Stairmaster in the gym! Started out with an art class. Liz wanted us to construct a book showing feelings. My feelings were all bad about this and after making innumerable squiggles I threw the whole bit away. I spent the rest of the morning experimenting with drawing an iceberg using ink, chalk and washes.

Next Kirsten gave a talk about pennapeds, the seals and walrus.

After another filling meal (I must be gaining weight despite the exercise of climbing stairs), we had a workshop on digital cameras by Quinton. He was trying to acquaint us with Photoshop. After listening to his poor presentation, I decided I don't need this expensive program! In the pre-cruise data, there was supposed to be a Michael Poliza to be the photography expert. Quinton must have been a last minute substitute and he knows nothing. He doesn't even have a computer on board (his belongs to his wife) so he must borrow others. The talk was interrupted several times so we could go up on deck and take pictures of icebergs. I have a jaded eye after the icebergs of the Antarctic, but perhaps we will eventually see some of the ones that are bigger than our ship.

Frank gave a lecture on birds of the tundra. His slides are outstanding. We seem to have one of the leading naturalists of the world on board. My attempts at birds are not working out. My shutter speed is too slow, my zoom not big enough.

Before dinner the Russian staff put on a rousing performance of Russian dancing. All the waitresses and crew are Russian. Dinner was also Russian. Vodka was passed out at the door and I had borsch and beef stroganoff. The other three at our table were Japanese. Koji Furukawa won a free bottle of wine for spotting a whale. He is a leading photographer in Japan. Yasu Deguchi is a cardiologist.

The evening entertainment was part two of the Inuit film. I didn't go.

Saturday, August 7. Our wake-up call announced we are 67 degrees 65 minutes north, and officially in the Arctic Ocean! 66 degrees, 33 minutes is the polar circle. It is a grey day and there is a good roll to the swells.

Frank talked on the birds of Greenland and Norm talked on ice.

We are ahead of schedule again and will enter beautiful Disco Bay soon. There are more and more incredible icebergs. After lunch and a briefing I take the opportunity for a nap for it sounds very strenuous for the next 24 hours.

How many iceberg pictures do I need? The joy of a digital camera is that you can take 50, thrown out all but the few good ones and be ready to go again, all without buying a role of film. Mine is basically a point and shoot but I am still getting some great shots. Charity promises to burn a disk for me of the shots she is taking with her great camera. She has much greater speed and magnification than me.

The chef put on a barbecue dinner: every kind of meat except hamburgers, and even corn on the cob! He never repeats a meal, although we do recognize leftovers being used in the salad bar the next day.

At eight we left for a glorious zodiac cruise of Icefjord. Massive bergs striated with bright blues, gunfire sounds as the glaciers calved, blowing of a humpback whale who dived and surfaced a number of times, fulmar birds swooping and landing on the ice floe. We even had a rescue at sea as another zodiac ran out of fuel. Almost two hours passed as quick as a wink. It was wonderful! We had a drink in the bar before bed. I hadn't had a Baileys Irish Cream in a long time.

Sunday, August 8. Ulluliat, Greenland. We were minibused up to a hill overlooking the town where all the sled dogs were chained. There are about 7000 people in Ulluliat and they say there are more dogs than people. The dogs are used for hunting and

## 2004 CANADIAN ARCTIC AND GREENLAND

transportation and are not pets. They live outdoors all the time. There was a campground there. The guide said the Germans camp in rounded tents, the Danes in peaked ones. There was also a cemetery for the town.

We started on a hike to see the glacier. It was first marshy and rocky. Then the rocks got bigger and slippery and the "trail" was even less apparent. I struggled up hill for some time, but at last had to give up. Evans was concerned about me and wanted me to wait near the trail. The only problem was that if you sat, there were swarms of bugs waiting to entertain you. I did not linger long and slowly made my way back to the bus. Wild blueberries were delicious. The bus took us into the center of town and left us near a souvenir shop. The souvenirs were very expensive and not very uninviting. Prices were in kroners and Euros. Greenland belongs to Denmark. In a nearby building was a butcher, rendering a seal. It was interesting to see the thick layer of blubber, but the inner organs were not too appetizing. I tried to follow the map to the museum and even found a museum, but it wasn't the Knut Rasmussen museum. Later I found it might have been the art museum. In any event it was not open this Sunday, but there was a nice view of the tight little harbor from it. Later I found some of the group who knew where the other museum was. Knut Rasmussen is a favorite son who did research into the migrations of the Inuit people into Greenland. His house holds exhibits and dioramas of how the Inuit people lived. I found a ring in the gift shop made from a reindeer horn in the shape of a polar bear. Walked back past the church to our landing spot. A christening was going on and the people were all dressed up in their native costume with a heavy shawl of beads over their shoulders and the white polar bear fur boots and pants.

Fell asleep after lunch and almost missed art class. Liz wants to have an exhibit of our works. I have seen first graders do better work than mine! But I framed them and added them to the pile.

Susan talked on the Norse in Greenland.

Monday, August 9. A gray rainy day in which to see Sisimiut. We climbed up from the harbor to see a museum area where they have preserved some buildings from an earlier time. One held an exhibit of artifacts. One had an art show. The sod house was furnished inside much like the one in Pangnirtung.

More walking uphill and we found a lovely souvenir shop. I bought a Tupilak made from a musk ox horn. A Tupilak wards off evil. The carving has two leering faces. On the back are two walrus heads the symbol of Sisimiut.

Finally reached the main street and investigated the general store before heading back to the ship. Walking is so tiring in my boots.

The afternoon was full with disembarkation talks, final wrap up by the staff (and even George, the elderly man who has required so much help, thanked everyone who had helped him.) I packed. Then we had an art show of all our creations. I don't believe much was bought. The farewell dinner was complete with baked "Arctic", the traditional parade by the wait staff of the flaming baked Alaska.

We entered the long Stromfjord up to our final stop. I stood on deck taking even more pictures of this beautiful fjord. The hanging glaciers were spectacular.

Tuesday, August 9. So at last we came to Kangerlussuag, Greenland, our final stop. There is nothing here except the remains of a US air force base built in WW 2. The air force also built a 4 km long road, the longest paved road in Greenland. The airfield has a long runway which can handle anything that flies. The "town" is a collection of prefab buildings and a couple of hotels. We drove beyond the town up into the hills. In the distance we could see a black blob, which was identified, as a musk ox. The disappointment of this trip has been the shortage of wild animals. In the distance we could see the Greenland ice cap, largest in the world. I was sorry we were not taken to see it.

So at last we were dropped at the airport for the hassle of collecting and checking our

## 2004 CANADIAN ARCTIC AND GREENLAND

bags. That done, we headed upstairs to the bar and found a quiet corner away from the smoke. The airport hotel had an Internet connection so we all got out our computers to check our mail and so forth.

The European members of our group were surprised to find a flight leaving for Copenhagen. Quark never suggested this to them. Instead they had to fly to Ottawa and the next night have an overnight flight to Europe, when they could have been home a day earlier.

At last the flight was called and we were bused across the field to our First Air Charter flight. It was a nice jet and we had lots of empty seats to spread out. They had threatened us with a five-hour flight to Ottawa, stopping at Baffin Island to refuel. But the wind god was kind and gave us a favorable wind so we didn't stop and got to Ottawa in 3 1/2 hours.

At Ottawa we were delayed because some one had bought some illegal souvenirs. Walrus and Elephant tusks may not be imported. So we sat for some time on the bus while a thunderstorm howled at us.

The Fairmount Chateau Laurier Hotel is magnificent. I have a room with a sitting area. We ate in the bar. I had smoked salmon, Charity had a tower of cheese, and Evans had the Indian hors d'oeuvres.

Wednesday, August 10. My wake-up call came at 5 AM. I ran into two of the Japanese from our group in the lobby and they let me share a cab with them to the airport. The airport provides a wheelchair in Canada and the men don't accept tips. I made my 7:45 flight with time to spare. You clear American customs and immigration before getting on the plane. Air Canada gave us a tiny cramped jet for the two-hour flight to Chicago. Here I was again wheel chaired through the tentacles. Then it was two more hours to Atlanta. Elizabeth Cerulli met me and brought me home. We had to half unpack my bag to get it light enough to carry up the stairs!