



SANAE 50

Newsletter

LATE EDITION



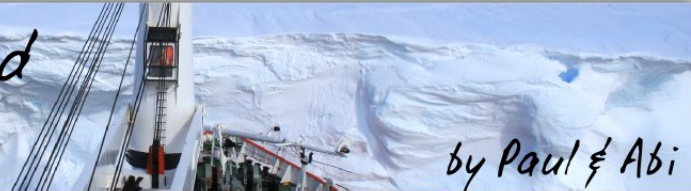
FEBRUARY 2011

Ous is hier!!!



deur Johan

Ice-shelf dead ahead, Sir!



by Paul & Abi

When 49 left 50



by Abi

Challenging 6



by Abi & Beatrice

Who is S50?



by Ruan

What is "Jags-wind" anyway?

by Beatrice



Ons is hier, ons is hier, ons is uiteindelik hier. Dit het ons lank gevat, maar oorname is verby, die laaste helikopter is weg en die skip het vertrek. ... Eienaardig hoe stil dit hier kan raak <grin>

Span arriveer Ma, 15 Nov 2010

Ons avontuur het begin Maandag die 15 November in Kaapstad. Ek, S'celo en Tiki werk toe al vir 'n geruimde tyd by SANAP se waterfront kantore. Besig om opleiding te ontvang in die masjienerie en stelsels waarvoor ons sal verantwoordelik wees op SANAE. Die eerste wat ek gesien het van my nuwe span is toe ek 'n klop en 'n vriendelike, dog versigtige "Hello" gehoor het van die deur se kant af. Toe loer Ruan in met Beatrice, Kevin en Renier reg agter hom. Die gewone besleefde "goeiemôre's" en "aangename kennis" word uitgedeel. Miskien bietjie onseker oor die nuwe mense wat nou hier ingestap het, en wat presies voor lê, maar daar was nie eintlik tyd vir ken mekaar nou nie. Ons reël toe vervoer en maak so vinning as wat ons kan om by Barlow-world uit te kom, waar die eerste van ons span-opleiding sou wees.

Swaar voertuie Ma-Vr, 15-19 Nov 2010

Tot op hierdie stadium is die swaarste voertuie wat enige een van ons gery het seker 'n minibussie gewees, of miskien 'n plaas trekker. Nou stel Janus en Marlyn ons bekend aan voertuie van by die 23 ton. Challenger Kruip trekkers en Caterpillar Bulldozers waarmee ons moet vrag verskuif daar onder in SANAE. Die voertuie is enorm, en hulle laat die aarde skud, en ONS moet hulle ry en versorg, vir die res van die jaar. Toe ek die eerste keer agter die "stuur" inskuif, en die krag van die Dozer ervaar, het ek bang geraak dat ek dalk iets gaan breek, of om ry met die gevaarte. Daar is net te veel krag beskikbaar. Daar was nie veel tyd gewees vir bang of versigtig wees nie, Janus het ons vinnig laat werk met die voertuie. Teen die einde van die dag het ons tenminste elkeen die basiese agter die rug.



Brand bestryding Di-Wo, 23-24 Nov 2010

Was dit nou vir jou 'n ding gewees. Twee dae van, eers klasse, dan die regte ding. Eers leer hulle vir jou die eenvoudige goed, hierdie is hoe jy 'n pyp oprol, dis hoe jy 'n suurstof masker aansit. Moenie voor die deur staan wat jy oopmaak nie, en so aan en so aan. Dan sê Ken vir jou, "Nou, staan jy nou hier met jou hoes-pyp, dan gaan ons 'n vuur daar anner-kant maak. En dan moet jy hom dood spuit". Klink eenvoudig nê. Daai vlamme klim uit daai olie pan uit met geweld en 'n k@k-houding. Nog nooit so warm gekry in my lewe nie. Ek is bly

my kamera het nie gesmelt nie. (Arme cheap japanese toy) En daai vuur raas,...en skiet en baklei. Hy wil nie uit nie. Ek gee nie om hoe groot jou brandblussertjie by die huis is nie, hy's NIE groot genoeg nie.

Kos kook lesse Do-Vr, 25-26 Nov 2010

Ah, die "stil" omgewing van Kenilworth renbaan. Jy weet wat, dis nie so stil soos die eiendoms makelaar gesê het nie. Maar na gister se rook & vlamme was die lugversogde omgewing van "Pick and Pay's School of Cooking" aangename rus kans gewees. Kerry het vir ons rustig deur die fyner punte gevat van kos maak. En toe elkeen 'n kans gegee om ietsie self te maak. Dag 2 het Kelly (Ja, dis iemand heel anders.) vir ons gewys hoe om te bak,... sonder om te flop. ;-) Ja dit alles klink m..rse "boring", maar dit was lekker. Dankie Kelly, dankie Kerry. Dit was die enigste verdomde rus wat ons gekry het deur die hele opleiding. En as ons geweet het wat vanaand, more en Sondag voorgelê het, sou ons dalk langer gebly het.



Tou klim Fri-So, 26-28 Nov 2010

Vir baie van ons was tou-klim 'n heel nuwe ding. Nie gedink ons sal dit nodig hê nie. Ek bedoel die wêreld waarna ons nou gaan is mos ... wel ... plat. So Ross Suter het ons een Vrydag aand onder hande geneem en ons probeer verduidelik wat die verskil is tussen 'n "clovehich" en 'n "carabiner". En hoe 'n mens dié en omtrent 3 dosyn ander goed gebruik om veilig in 'n gapende "crevasse" af te seil. "Jumar", "Prusik", "Belay", "cordelet", die woorde is te veel ek kannie byhou nie. Wat gaan ons doen met al hierdie goed? en Uhm... Wat is 'n "crevasse"? Volgende dag sal ons uitvind.

Vroeg op Saterdag oggend is ons teen die hange van Tafelberg, in 'n ou steengroef. Ross gee ons toe weer die gewone motiveerings en veiligheids toespraak, gevolg deur 'n paar demonstrasies. Toe is dit ons beurt. Met ons toue, hakies, ringe en ander staal vierterjasies gaan staan ons toe bo teen die rant van die steengroef en bind onself vas aan die naaste gerieflike rots, boom, paal ens. Of sommer 'n kombinasie van hulle. Nie een van ons het genoeg onderklere gebring vir as die tou

sou glijp nie, so sekermaak was die wagwoord. En toe moes ons ons eie toue toets. So is ons toe daar af, een na die ander. Baie trots op ons self en opgewonde oor die nuwe vaardighede wat ons geleer het, het ons gou die oggend om geoefen. Elke nou en dan wys Ross ons 'n nuwe tegniek wat ons moet probeer. Die res van die dag het gevlieg. Tussen kort demonstrasies en self probeer het die ure net verdwyn. Sondag middag het ons die laaste van die tegnieke geleer en klaar gemaak mee. Dalk hopeloos te min oefening gehad, maar die liggaam is swak en die dag was lank. Verseker gaan almal vanaand vroeg slaap. Niemand gaan in die Waterfront vanaand rondloop nie.



So, 28 Nov 2010

Ja, Reg, Ons moet in Kaapstad se strate gaan rondloop vir die aansit van die Krismis liggies in Adderley straat. Die gejuig het 18h00 begin en ons sou stap tot 22h00. Dit was nou iets heel anders. Nie gedink ek sou in November in Kaapstad koud kry nie. Die wind het gewaai laat dit bars. Het baie van ons laat wonder of ons reg in ons koppe is om Antarktika toe te gaan. Ag wat die koeël is deur die kerk, ons het ons pampoen skoene aan en ons Ice-axes reg, en so is Kaapstad se strate in. Goeie Blixem.

29 Nov-03 Dec 2010

Die chaos gaan voort. Noodhulp Maandag en Dinsdag. Ek sweer daai pop gaan nie meer lewendig raak nie. Gebreekte bene, draai hom toe in verbande, maak seker die rooi goed loop nie uit nie. Haal hy nog asem? Reg wag vir die ambulans. Reg, jy Pass. Hardloop terug kantoor toe, gaan pak. Het ons al ons geborgte goed gekom? Wanneer moet ons die paspoorte ingee? Hoelaat moet ons die kar terug gee? Waarmee gaan ons ry môre? Het ons drank al gekom? Woensdag spanbou: Ook 'n bietjie van 'n welkome rus. Raait ounes kom ons gaan pak verder. Daars nog 'n klomp bagasie wat nie in "containers" is nie. Hardloop hiernatoe, hardloop daarnatoe. Het jy al jou klere gaan omruil. Oo f\$%! ek het die seesiek tablette vergeet. Winkel toe, Kry somer sonbrand room. Hoeveel tandepasta gaan ek nodig kry? Kantoor toe, hiernatoe, daarnatoe, soontoe, moertoe, alles toe. (gaan ons klaar kry?)

Open day

Saterdag het Gideon 'n paar mense gesoek vir 'n Show-And-Tell by die SANAP ope-dag. Toe "volunteer" ek en die Doktor, Abi, vir dit. Maar die gewone; 'n paar skool kinders wat rondhardloop en skree en vingers wys. 'n Paar ouers wat geïntereseerd is, maar wat rondgesleep word deur hiperaktiewe kinders, na enige iets wat flikker of geraas maak. So het ons eerste kennis gemaak met die ou span: SANAE 49. Die wondere van "Skype" het ons 'n venstertjie gegee na die SANAE radio kantoor, met swaar gewigte soos Tyrell Sassen (Radio Tech) en Andre Harms (Span leier) voor die kamera. Later het Roger (HMO wetenskaplike) ook ingestap en die kinders beginne bang maak met sy lang hare en "patchy" baard. Die duiwel van die kinder bybel as ek moet sê. Lewellen (dokter) het ook later in gestrompel. Het blykbaar 'n "laat" nag gehad,...of iets. Ons het nie veel verder uit hom gekry daarna nie. Ek besluit toe maar om die "decent" ding te doen; die ouens het lanklaas vars vrugte gehad, toe gaan koop ek maar 'n paar vrugte en pak dit vir hulle op 'n bord. Ek sit dié voor die kamera neer,... as ek nou daar aan dink was seker nie die regte ding om te doen nie. Ek is 'n ysbad belowe deur Tyrell.

Na al hierdie opwinding is ons toe "af gegee". Behalwe die dokter. Sy moes die mediese admin doen vir die oornamspan. Need-to-know stuff and-all-and-all. Verder het die res van ons maar die laaste bietjie tyd gewy aan pak en regmaak vir die skip reis.

Boot ry Wo, 8 Dec 2010

O Jinne. Hiers baie mense. Kyk daar is SABC se kameras ook. Hennie het gesê hulle sal hier wees. En hulle het 'n goeie skoot gekry van hoe ons die Elektriese Ingenieur se drank oplaai,...uhm. Wonder watse indruk dit geskep het. Baie van die ou crowd was daar: die ouens van Titan Aviation, die DOW manne, Kaptein Freddie en sy span. Dis amper soos terug wees by die huis. (Ek het immers al 4 vaarte al mee gemaak). En ja, hulle sit my in my ou kamer, No 10, by die kroeg: wat dink hulle van my? ;-). Toe kom die lang wag. Almal wat weggaan is op die skip, almal wat koebaai sê, staan op die kaai. Net buite skree afstand. Niemand mag meer afklim om te groet nie, niemand mag meer opklim om te help nie. En daar sal ons wag vir 2 ure tot doane en aksyns gelukkig is alles is in orde, oo, nee, wag, hulle is nog nie hier nie. <sug> (kyk weer na my horlosie) Maar die tyd het verloop en nadat die mishoring drie kwart van die passasiers in die lug laat klim het van skrik, (Party mag dalk oorboord gespring het, ons weet nie.) het die SA Agulhas stadig weg beweeg van die kaai af, gedraai, en op die maat van "Time to say goodbye" vir oulaas verby die familie gevaar. Met 'n gewuif en 'n traan miskien, is ons toe oppad. In die onbekende in.





Met die silhouette van Tafelberg nog vars in ons geheue, word die onvermydelike "Lifeboat drill" afgekondig. "Attention all passengers: would you please proceed to the Heli-deck. Bring your emersion suit and life jacket, Thank you". Dit demp die gemoedere BAIE vinnig. "Maar dis koud buite, en die wind waai". Dink gou weer; waarheen toe is jy oppad? Oh,...Ja,...Reg, hier gaan ons. Dan staan ons almal op die dek met die oranje baadjies aan en die rooi sak met die emersion-suit in en ons wag om getel te word. Waarheen nou? Oh, Reddings boot. Mensig dis beknop hier binne. Daar gaan hoeveel mense hier in? 80?!? Gaan 'n bietjie ryp raak hier binne. Knyp ouens hier sal ons dood. Renier, los uit die flares! Arme Ruan, dit het hom 3 dae gevat om van die groen skynsel ontslae te raak.



Maar die ongemak was gou vergete en met aandete het ons begin ingeval by die ritmes van die skip. 07h30 Ontbyt, 11h30 middag ete, 18h30 aandete, 20h00 kroeg oop, 22h00 kroeg toe, slaap. Apply, rinse, repeat. Jy eet tot jy moeg is, dan slaap jy tot jy honger is. Dit was moontlik om te sien hoe van ons kollegas swel van voortvarendheid. Spekvet en gesond? Miskien. Die ritmes van die skip het dié keer nie die rowwe see van die "roaring-40's" en "furious-50's" ingesluit nie. Dit was so stil soos bad water, en blou lug?!? Wat gaan aan? Is ons op die regte vaart? Vinnig genoeg het die temperature begin val. Toe die eerste sneeu begin val was dit duidelik. Ons is nie meer by die "beach" nie. Die eerste ysberg het die punt hard tuis gebring. Daar was soveel



kameras gerig op daai stukkie ys, ek is seker, as dit kon, sou dit bloos. En dit was so met die 2de en 3de ysberg, maar toe ons by nommer 56 draai, toe was dit "Ja, whatever. Ons sal die volgende een kry."



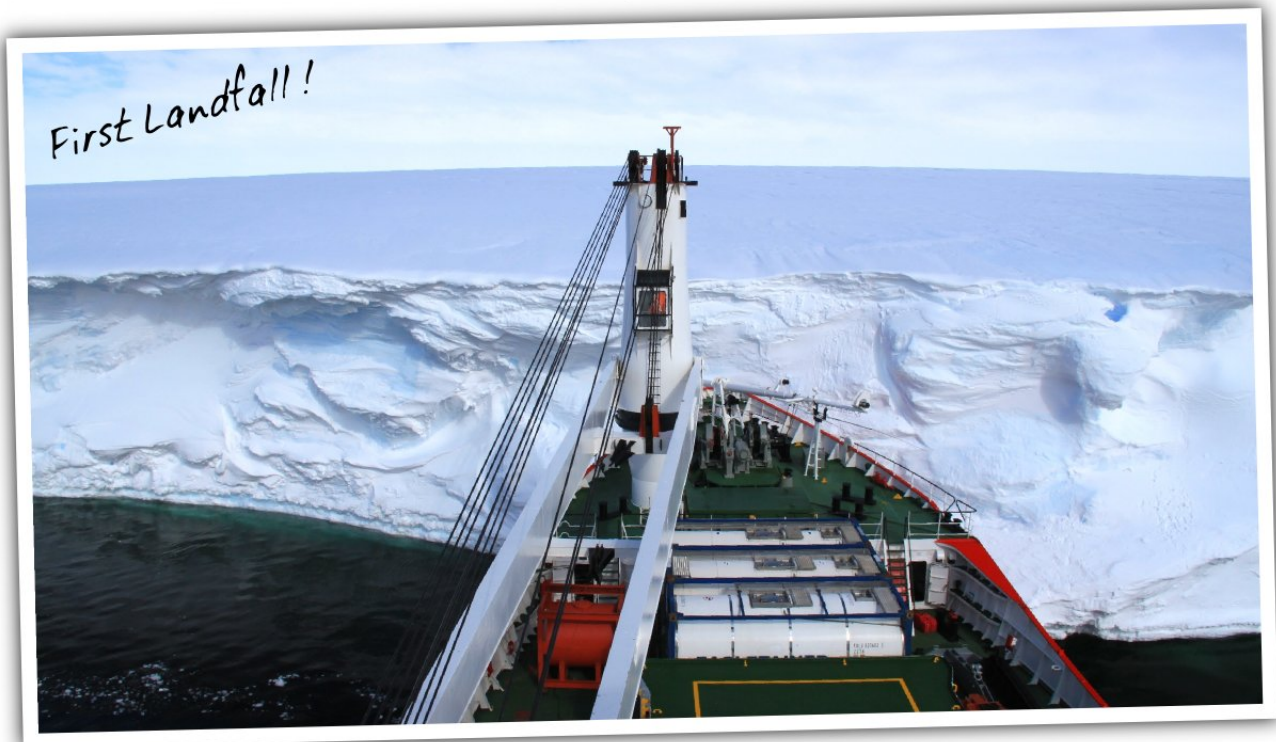
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 21 Hibiscus Way, Durbanville
 +27 (0)21 975 2700
 33° 49' 24.18" S
 18° 39' 22.33" E

Thank you Awesome Tools for the equipment sponsorship.

Maandag 20 Desember (12 dae later; dit moet 'n rekord wees!)

Ice-shelf dead ahead, Sir!

We have now reached Antarctica. Not just a series of floes, not just amblings of icebergs forming awe-inspiring vistas against a still, heavy sea, but the Land herself. Twice our bows have nudged into the Ice Shelf, while we have gazed achingly at the few metres separating us from our new home: metres which, until we can offload skidoos, Cats and cargo, remain still insurmountable. However, ice and current have combined to delay offloading. As the Agulhas offloads bow-on to the Shelf, not side-on, the one-knot current gently tugging the shore at Neumayer was enough to pull the ship out of line. Thus we departed "Beach-point One" and, seemingly in dismayed disgust, headed North at a great rate. The clouds gap and swirl and reform and open up; sudden glimpses of the Sun and blue skies flash out at unexpected points of the compass and disorientation is complete, until across the bows appears yet again the solid line of Ice that lures us into fond beliefs of finally walking on this pristine, enticing, frightening, incredible Land. Slowly, delicately we nuzzle up to her. Not a shock, not a bump, merely the faintest of thrills and the bows engage. The two cranes swing out. The hatches open. Mysterious creakings and clankings occur. The Monkey Island is packed solid with spectators, eagerly awaiting the moment. A skidoo emerges from the hold! And is lovingly cached, to be followed by two more. Then... the cranes judder back into rest-stations, the hold hatches are replaced, and we push off into the deeps again. Thus endeth Beach-point Two. Beach-point Three will prove third time lucky, we are certain.



The Team has been expecting the Call to Action for the last two days now, although the time and nature of this call remains uncertain. The Laundry is running day and night as people wash a voyage's accumulation of clothes and get their bags firmly packed. Hurried consultations take place in every corridor, at every meal-time, on every staircase about what and when and how. The ship has become a "ship of rumours" with murmurings of "We are going here,"; "We will fly tomorrow, or no, it's the next day?"; "We will unload at Akta / RSA Bukta"... No one, besides those on the bridge, seems to know, but everyone in the corridors claims to be the expert!

The ship has a certain comfortable routine to which we have become accustomed. Stress levels are rising as we face the unknowns dominating our lives for the next few days. These stressors lie not the large picture of the next fourteen months of life on the Frozen Continent, but emerge out of the small and often daily insignificant trivialities of life, like what bags can we take on the helicopter flight, how long until we receive our main baggage, what will our cabin allocations be, should we bring along a sleeping bag.

This uncertainty permeates the ship, giving a vigour to rumour and an urgency to all our actions. Every meal has a mental proviso: "Is this my last lunch on board, perhaps?". Mostly we have prepared ourselves with a small kit bag and our cold weather gear that we can grab in an instant, should we be called on by the flight crew and the good weather conditions. The rest of our cabin luggage is packed for overland transport and we may not see it for several days. In the midst of this bustle and anticipation the local denizens continue their age-old, placid ways. Beach-point One was right next to a very large ice-field less than one metre above sea level. As we approached it black dots became black splotches became penguins and seals. Their welcome was not exactly tumultuous; the Emperor Penguins accepted our arrival into their domain with an offhand sort of tolerant attitude, while the Elephant Seals lay unperturbed and uninterested as the ship glided past.



30 Dec 2010: Oorname

Ons het in "drips-and-drabs" by die basis aangekom. Tiki en S'celo met die Challengers vyf dae tevore, Die wetenskaplikes en Sparkies met die helikopter. En arme Abi, die Doktor, moes wag tot alle vragwerk eers klaar was by die Ys wal voor hulle haar ingevlieg het. Ek het ingekom met die eerste vlug van die mooiweer gaping, met die KAMOV! Weet julle hoe lyk 'n Kamov? Die russiese helikopter ekwivalent van 'n Massey-Ferguson trekker, Groot, Raserig, Ongemaklik, skud baie, maar damn is daai ding sterk. So hulle jaag ons klomp (12 van ons) in die heli in en pak ons in rondom die gearbox. Toe bondel hulle al die sakke wat hulle kan in saam met ons. As jy gedink het dit gaan gemaklik wees, Surprise! Al ooit in 'n minibus taxi gery? nou verstaan jy. Na so 14 minute kon ek my linker boud nie meer voel nie, maar dis reg, ons is oppad. Oor 31 minute gaan ons daar wees.



Die oomblik toe ek grond gevat het Tyrell my onmiddelik in die werk gesteeek. Jou eerste taak: "Flight-Following". Nou moet jy elke 15 minute praat met die helikopters en uitvind waar hulle is. Dis omtrent hier waar ek bykans heeltemal kontak met my span verloor het. Lyk my 'n Radio Tegnikus se lewe lyk heeltemal anders as enige iemand anders s'n. Bietjie soos 'n doktor s'n: mense kom net na jou toe as hulle 'n probleem het. Wat het geword van net kom kuier?

Die dag tot dag aktiwiteite op SANAE het gedraai rondom 3 goed; Oggend skoonmaak of Skivy, Aangaan met instandhouding & opgradering en Eet. Ja, eet is belangrik. Hier beteken 'n lee maag, geen energie. Geen energie beteken jy sal koud kry. Koud kry beteken jy kannie werk nie. Skep daar nog 'n stukkie bacon vir my, dankie. Orals was ou span besig om nuwe span te wys waar alles is, te leer hoe alles werk, watter goed het "spesiale" aandag nodig het. (met 'n hammer soms) Buite was spanlede besig om opleiding te kry van die bestuurders oor hoe presies 'n mens nou 'n Dozer of 'n Challenger gebruik. Uitpak van nuwe voorraad. Die verwydering van ou voorraad & vullis. Maar die vervelige slinger-draai van hoe maak ek nou, hoe doen mens dit, wat maak jy as.

Tot eendag toe daar 'n storm op ons neer gesak het. "Attention All personnel, Attention all personnel, outside is now off-limits. All personnel are to remain inside until further notice." 70 km/h winde en baie swak sig. Dit was ons eerste ervaring met die berugte "white-out" Jy kannie sien nie. Daar is genoeg lig, maar jy sien net wit.

Dis bietjie soos 'n mistige dag by die see, met rukwinde wat jou omwaai, en wind geblaaste sneeu. O-ja -17°C windchill byt nogal. En dan kyk die 49'ers jou so aan: "Wat bedoel jy? Dis nog niks nie!" Los my uit. Ek is besig om te aklimatiseer. Maar na 'n paar dae sal die son weer skyn, en dit het. In 24 uur stukke op 'n keer, maar ja. Die sonnetjie is nog skerp so 00:11 in die oggend.

Daar was darem 'n bietjie tyd vir speel ook. Frydag die 21 Januarie het ons 'n bietjie gaan braai,...buite,... op die ys. Dis seker een van die eienaardigste plekke wat ek al 'n kuertjie gehad het. Dokter Abi het vir ons 'n lekker pakkie vleis & verversings bymekaar gegooi. En met skidoos en slees is ons toe af na die "windscoop". Abi kon nie kom nie,



sy moes weer terug gaan skip toe. (Hulle het haar baie rond "ge-shunt".) Daar gekom het ons die braai opgeslaan, die slees in 'n laer getrek, en die verversings begin uitdeel. Ek dink Tiki het die vuur aangesteek, en net daar op die ys, het ons gebraai. Tipies Suid Afrikaners, sal ook enige plek braai.

Hiervandaan was dit afdraend al die pad. Oorname spele, die Oorname funksie, die einde van wetenskap projekte vir die oorname, inhandiging van paklyste en terug vlieg van personeel skip toe. Een na die ander moes ons mense groet voor hulle opklim om terug te vlieg skip toe, elke keer as daar 'n bietjie goeie weer was. Die plek raak maar stil as jy gewoon geraak het aan oorname. Skielik is daar net twee of drie mense in die eetsaal vir ontbyt. Teen die einde was dit net ons 11, die chef, die bestuurders, 'n paar sleutel personeel en SANAE 49.



Thank you Hazendal for the wine.



S33°49'24.18" E18°39'22.33"



That was the final view we had of them, ambling off down the Ice Road with that same nonchalant authority that had so struck us on our first encounter. They paused by the Smelter for one last time, giving to S50 as a final benison a few shovelfuls of snow each into the smelly hatch, and then the helicopter landed, Andre led his team into its maw, and they were gone. Only a swift spiral across the ice plain, a final zoom across the helideck, and S 49 left S 50 to the ownership of the Base and all its environs.

All that remained in the way of extraneous matter was a horde of drivers getting ready for the haul back to the Ship. Oh, Take Over had been great; we were losing friends and company that would be much missed in months to come. But for now, S 50 was hungry for Possession, and wanted that Cat Train gone.

It left.

We rejoiced.

Two hours later Generator Two started shrieking and yelling, having stripped a pulley. But we laughed gaily, set Alan the Diesel Mac. onto it, and continued to rejoice. The next evening, the fire alarm did its nut, and insisted that there were copious quantities of raging flames flooding out the hanger. This continued for two hours, while we rushed around the hanger, charged up and down and through every nook and cranny in Base, and tried to persuade the misguided thing to shut up, because it was wrong. A compromise was eventually reached: we shut it down, lamenting the loss of 49.

Day Three saw a massive drop in water levels by over 5500 litres. We assumed a leak. We looked for a leak. We went outside to look for a leak; an obvious move, until we add the fact that the wind was screaming through at forty knots and leaks are not exactly easy to see under such conditions. We gave in. We phoned the ship and asked 49, who told us good-naturedly that this loss was merely the result of some water sitting somewhere in some pipe and no leak was likely.

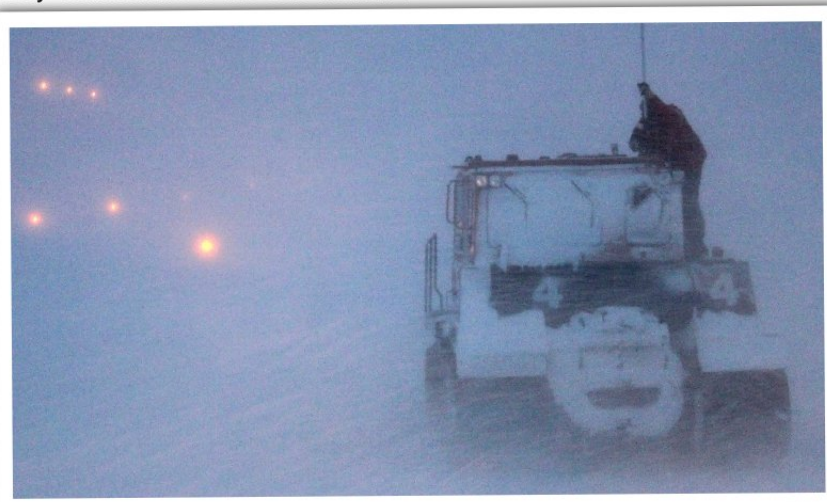
Day Four one of the ovens stopped working. We reached for the phone... exerted self-discipline and decided to ignore that oven for a few days.

Day five, day six... Day Seven. The diesel pump switch throws a wobbly: we cannot pump diesel up to base. Control panel in diesel bunker checked: lots of wires, fault not evident, cannot get any of the pumps to work. Eventually bypass circuit board and get manual control. And phone 49 frantically.

Day Eight: Where is the Cat train? No word heard from them in 24 hours.

Day Nine: Where is the Cat Train!? Still no word. What would 49 do?

Day Ten: Where is the Cat Train???



Day Eleven: Strobe light beacon on helideck refuses to work as Challenger Four arrives back in the middle of the night in a whiteout. 49, how do we fix it?

Day Thirteen: Cat train arrives! - sans Challenger Six – in the middle of the night in a whiteout, without a strobe light. Did 49 ever lose the odd challenger or dozer in the field?

Day Fifteen: Jigsaw blade in Waste room snaps; two other blades left to last entire year. 49, Oh 49, why didn't you warn us? Now what do we do?

Day Eighteen: Jigsaw blade in Waste room snaps; one blade left to last entire year.

But in the meantime, Day 16. 49 has landed in South Africa, 49 is kissing the sweet earth, hugging trees, eating tomatoes and rocket and nectarines and grass-blades; 49 is lounging on the beach, dancing in the rain, stroking their beardless chins, relegating responsibility. It's not their problem anymore. No more desperate phonecalls, no more frantic requests for advice.

So S 50 has now taken Possession. The Base is our responsibility through good and bad. All that remains to be said is, Thanks, S 49. It was – what's that word that James always uses – beautiful.

Challenging "Six"



The first month of stewardship of the Base is always a challenging one for the new Team. Cleaning up, clearing up and cargo work form the main focus of team activity, and that means Man and Machine learning to work with and trust one another through many, many snow-blown hours. Skidoos, dozers, and challengers are essential tools of everyday life, ferrying their drivers and their loads safely and uncomfortably across the miles.

Happier days...



So in that first month, before the wild ice and dark hours of Winter drive us indoors, we sojourn out on Cat trains and bond with these hardy creatures, throwing their might and our will defiantly against the elements.

Often the elements fight back. Thus it was, one fateful midnight, when Challenger Six Got Stuck.

White-out conditions. Winds of over forty knots and zero visibility. Plummeting temperatures and already over a hundred kilometres driven. Three challengers – Three, Four and Six – trying to keep in contact but not run in to each other in a world of plunging sastrugis and pouring snow.



Six trips over an unexpected sastrugi and lodges fast. Four sidles up in an effort to help but her steering freezes. Three comes back to rescue Six and Gets Stuck. Six, meanwhile, has undug herself by her own willpower and determination and swings round, full of bravado, to rescue Three. Six Gets Stuck... . An extract from Beat van Eden's diary (driving in Three with Kevin) gives a graphic insight into conditions that night:

We were approaching the half way mark where the caboose and other cargo were. We were going to take some of that cargo back to Base as well but because of this weather and our already heavy load we decided to drive on. But then Four had to refuel and we decided to stop at the caboose. Weather conditions were still bad and very uncomfortable to work in. I and Kevin were freezing (literally) in Three. The wind blows into the cab, the heater was broken and we drove in full Winter gear and in mummy bags. (...) We pulled away, Four followed but Six radioed. They were stuck. Kevin asked Renier in Four to go and assist Six. A lot of time passed, then Renier called us back to the caboose. We turned and did go about 150m of track. Number Three started slipping and we had no control; she would not turn and for a moment we thought we are going to crash in to the caboose

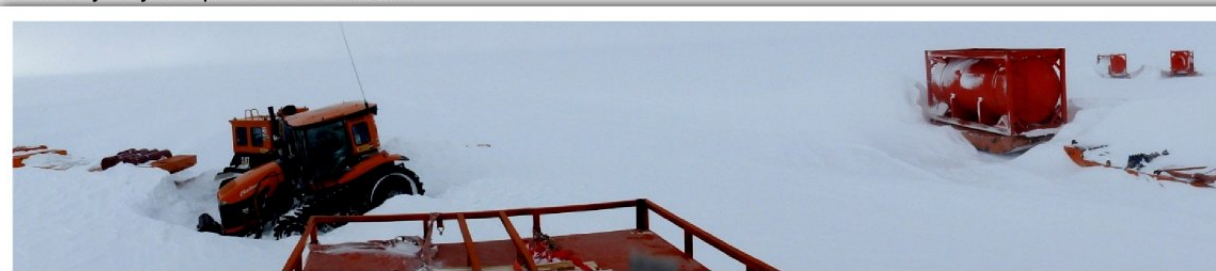
because the coordinates was just there. We felt a wall and I got out; I stuck my hand out in the white and felt snow. We had driven into a snow bank. Kevin sounded relieved and I did not know why until he said "Look right!". We were next to the caboose. Although we were very stuck we rushed to the caboose for some heat. In the caboose they said that number Six was free now after the cargo was unhooked and number Four was fine, just the steering was frozen - no biggie. Well we informed them that Three was stuck now.

And Six sprang forth to rescue Three and regummed herself to the sustrugl... .And so it continued by day and by night... . Snow. Wind. Cold, cold, cold. Repeated efforts to dig, and dig, and dig Six out. Trying to start the engine, trying to push, pull, tug, ram, sweet-talk and wheedle, scream at and curse and dig, dig, dig for three more days in extreme conditions. Another extract from Beat's diary:

Taking turns each tried to execute their plans on freeing the challengers: only five minutes possible at a time! The goggles froze up, the gloves froze to your body as did the balaclavas. We had to boil water on the gas stove for heat and to defrost gear in order to get it from our bodies. The cold sucked our energy and things went slowly. It was boring and all we could do was 'caboose talk', while hiding in our mummy bags. There were more than enough food to last us a few days but in one of our in-depth caboose talk sessions we decided that Johan will be the most viable option to eat when it came to that. Some how I think he did not agree, but majority rules.



Eventually it was decided to take Four, the only working Challenger, and drive flat out for Base, collect a bulldozer, and doze out Six and Three. They arrived in a White Out in the early hours of the morning, cavorting half-way across the Summer depot and well off the ice-road as their GPS tried to cope with the finer details of Base Approach. But they arrived, were welcomed back by an ecstatic Base crew, and set forth again some hours later, dozer in tow. This plan had significant merit, as was shown when Three was cleared of her snowy prison and could again tread proudly along the path homewards. This plan was not foolproof, as was shown when Six failed even to start, let alone leap from her attenuated prison walls. With a complete electronic shutdown not even her brakes could be released; she was locked solid and freedom lay beyond present resources.



Challenger Six buried her nose in the early hours of Tuesday, 8th Feb. The team spent four days trying to rescue her and finally were forced to leave on Friday 11th Feb, admitting temporary set-back. And arrived home in yet another white-out, just to end this adventure on a high note.

Rescue: Take Two. The following few days saw huddles of technicians hovering over Six's maintenance manuals, deeply debating the avenues and options of releasing our fallen challenger. The five-man task team assigned to Rescue: Take Two left in high fettle and clear skies exactly a week after the return of the previous train, with a definitive plan of action. This plan was relatively simple: get underneath the challenger, release the valve on the hydraulic brakes, get the machine into neutral, roll her forward - or backward - onto a sled, and tow her home. And do this fast, as the weather gap was small.

Like all good plans in Antarctica, between the concept and the fulfilment lies an endless series of hitches. In this case, the fact that the valve wasn't quite where we had been led to expect. Hooray – yet more digging. The underneath of an iced-up, snowed-in challenger is not spacious. S'celo, Ruan and Johan shared it manfully, chipping away chunks of ice to locate those components so airily portrayed in the manuals, while Tiki and the doctor dug, and dug, and dug. Manual labour, or so they say, is ennobling for the soul. We'll pass no comment on that. What is ennobling, though, is looking up for a few minutes at the sky and seeing – the Sun, setting in the West. The Moon, rising in the East. And the first stars any of us had seen in over two months. 18 hours of solid hard labour and frustration – it was worth it, for that short glimpse of an utter beauty.



For, of course, Challenger Six was not released. We dug and dozed every last particle of sastrugi away from her, hauled her, pushed her, jump-didn't-start her, twisted and fiddled and pulled all the levers and valves the manual suggested we could, and she just sneered sadly at our efforts. We left her at last, in a landscape so thoroughly bulldozed it resembled open-cast mining on the Moon, and fled before the coming bad weather. True to tradition we arrived back at Base in the worst white-out yet, in the early hours of the morning... .



Rescue, Take Three... but no. It is the end of February and Challenger 6 is still Out There in the field. The Struggle to release her continues, but not in this edition. You can follow the gripping story of the Team vs the Challenger in the March newsletter.

Who is S50?

So who's who in the SANAE 50 team? Eleven individuals, each with a specific role on Base. We may be divided roughly into two and a little bit groups:

A) Technical. Their job is running and maintaining the Base.

- 1) Radio Technician – Johan Hoffman (and Deputy Team Leader)
- 2) Mechanical Engineer – Tiki Jordaan
- 3) Electrical Engineer – Gerard De Jong
- 4) Diesel Mechanic - S'celo Ndwalane
- 5) Other Diesel Mechanic – Alan Daniels

B) Sciences. Their job is gathering information from a variety of instruments situated on the base, and maintaining the functioning of these instruments.

- 1) Meteorologist – Paul Lee (and Team Leader)
- 2) Cosmic Ray Engineer – Renier Fuchs
- 3) Radar Engineer – Ruan Nel
- 4) Space Weather engineer – Beatrice van Eden
- 5) Other Space Weather Engineer – Kevin van Eden

C) Health & Food Maintenance Crew

- 1) Doctor – Abi Paton



What is "Jags-wind" anyway?

Summer base:

The small South African base close to the Ice shelf and close to the German base, Neumayer III. It is used during Summer by the drivers and cargo-worker, and is big enough for about 20 people. It was built of material from the old Neumayer II. It consists of containers stacked together, but not linked. The sleeping counters, kitchen and lounge, bathroom and generator room are all separate. There is a small water smelter. The toilets are equipped with a 'sausage' plastic bag: after use just step on the peddle to roll the used plastic away. Summer Base is commonly referred to as "Die huisie by die see".



German base:

Called Neumayer III. The German equivalent of SANAE.



Cat Train:

More than one Challenger going on an expedition.

Challenger:

A big transport vehicle with rubber tracks used to move cargo.



Caboose:

One of the two containers rigged to house people for short times. Not very comfortable or clean (dependent on who was there last, of course.)

Take over teams:

The people that come to SANAE for six weeks in Summer. They do general maintenance, stock take, research...

Sastrugies:

Small hillocks of snow formed by the wind blowing around any object outside.



'Swart sakkie':

The bag you go to the toilet in. And dispose of as soon as a black marked waste drum is found.

Filter:

Spare part for the challengers. If one gets filled with it snow must be removed and defrosted. The main purpose though is for the comfortable placement of 'die swart sakkie'. It is a perfect fit.



White out:

Really bad weather with strong winds and snow. No visibility.

Caboose talk: Speaking nonsense; having bad ideas – and expressing them. Can be described by a certain three-lettered Afrikaans word.

'Jags wind':

Eintelik jag sneeu.

'Jag sneeu':

Snow blowing rapidly in the wind and entering the smallest openings and gaps.

Smelly:

Snow smelter tank with warm elements and a pump. Throw snow in to melt and pump water to base for use.

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Climate Stats: February 2011



Pressure

Maximum	898.8 hPa
Average Maximum	887.7 hPa
Average	883.8 hPa
Average Minimum	880.1 hPa
Minimum	863.9 hPa



Temperature

Maximum	-2.2 °C
Average Maximum	... °C
Average	-10.6 °C
Average Minimum	... °C
Minimum	-20.0 °C



Humidity

Maximum	95 %
Average	76 %
Minimum	22 %



Wind

Maximum Gust	59.4 m/s (138 km/h)
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Sunshine

Average Day Length	18:32 hrs
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SANAE 50 team members:

Abigail Paton - Doctor

Alan Davies - Diesel Mech (Generators)

Beatrice van Eden - Scientist (Spaceweather)

Gerard de Jong - Electrical Engineer

Johan Hoffman - Radio Tech (Dep. Teamleader)

Kevin van Eden - Scientist (Spaceweather)

Paul Lee - Meteorologist (Teamleader)

Renier Fuchs - Scientist (Particle Physics)

Ruan Nel - Scientist (HF Radar)

S'celo Ndwalane - Diesel Mech (Vehicles)

Tiki Jordaan - Mechanical Engineer

Series of the Month:

FARSCAPE

Movie of the Month:

Das Boot
THE BATTLE OF THE BALTIC

Quote of the Month:

Die Jagswind was erg... - Beatrice

Het julle gesien, die son het weer vanoggend
ontplof. -Gerard

