

Date: December 10, 2003

Location: Ushuaia, Argentina

Subject: Update #16 – Journey to the End of the World, Part II

Dear Friends and Family,

After two days of sailing across the stormy Drake Passage to return through the Beagle Channel, I found myself in the Argentinean city of Ushuaia which prides itself as being “The End of the World, The Beginning of Everything.” Anyway, I wanted to quickly share about the events of the past 4 days which have brought me here before I head back to Chile and into *Parque Nacional Torres del Paine* for 4 days of enjoying the beauty of God’s creation. =)



To start off this update, I thought I’d share on what would be a good packing list of clothing for a trip to Chile and the End of the World. =) I’m sure some of you may have noticed that I’ve pretty much been wearing the same clothes in all my pictures for the past 5 months. =P On a side note, I only brought about 7 shirts to Chile and had to buy several more for my 2 week trip in September. =)

<left> The key to staying warm or cool in Chile from the northern deserts to the glaciers and ice in southern Patagonia, is dressing in layers. For my upper body, four layers at most have sufficed even in the cold of Antarctica (but then again, it wasn’t that cold the day I was there... =P)! Everywhere I’ve gone, I’ve always

packed a thermal first layer, a regular t-shirt, a polar fleece and a windproof/waterproof Gore-tex jacket even if I didn’t end up using 3 of those layers. As for pants, I wore a pair of awesome lightweight windproof/waterproof pants that kept me cool in hot weather and relatively warm in the cold. The only time I needed my thermal layer underneath these pants was in Antarctica! =)

<right> As you may have guessed by now, my Journey to the End of the World landed me in Antarctica on December 6, 2003. South America is the closest you can get



to Antarctica and I didn't want to pass up this opportunity to step foot on the ice continent where nature reigns supreme. =)

<right> More specifically, I arrived at the Chilean Air force base on King George Island which is part of the South Shetland Islands in Antarctica.



<above> Early on Saturday, we flew out of Punta Arenas to fly over *Tierra del Fuego* on our way to Antarctica. We passed the snow covered mountains of the end of South America and saw glaciers and snow and ice as we headed south.

<right> As we flew towards the airstrip on King George Island, the landscape changed and we saw hundreds and thousands of icebergs floating in the ocean.



<left> The *Base Aerea Antartica Presidente Eduardo Frei M.* where we arrived and spent some time exploring the Antarctic landscape. Chile claims ownership of a large portion of Antarctica that overlaps with the claims of Argentina and probably other countries. Because of this, there is a population of Chileans who live on King George Island amidst the many international research facilities that dot the Antarctic continent.



<left> The flags of several countries including those of South Korea and Russia were waving in the Antarctic breeze. => I saw a zodiac with the Korean Antarctic team land by the Russian base and unload scientists and other personnel. =>

<right> At the Chilean base on King George Island, there was a signpost with distances to a lot of major cities. Here I am pointing out New York at a distance of 11,565 km. => Anyway, King George Island is only about a bit over halfway from Santiago (3,308 km) to the South Pole (3,095 km).



<left> A picture reminiscent of my Northern Expedition... except instead of salt... there was snow everywhere. => Thankfully, we all had sunglasses or our eyes might have been burned out by the glare on the snow everywhere!

<right> The Chilean village of *Villa Las Estrellas* on King George Island, Antarctica with a population of 46 habitants. Because of the Chilean government's desire to legitimize its claim on Antarctica, they encourage people to live down here. So... apparently, there are some kids who were born here and live here. I wonder what it must be like to go to school in Antarctica with only one other student... or for that matter, to live here... where there are 24 hours of sunlight during the summer and complete darkness throughout the winter! =>





<left> After trekking across Antarctic snow/ice from the Air Force base to *Villa Las Estrellas* and the Russian base, we arrived in the bay where icebergs and ice filled the water. I climbed up onto this slippery iceberg that had washed ashore for some pictures. =)

<right> And since we were enjoying our time on the Antarctic beach, I took a break to sunbathe on the shore. Oh wait, not a



good idea... there's a hole in the ozone down here! =D

While we were enjoying our time on the Antarctic shore, these penguins jumped out of the water, stared at me for a moment, and jumped back in the water and disappeared. It showed up again on the shore later on where it just waddled by and stared at us. =)

<left> A chinstrap penguin, which you can identify by the black line that runs under its chin, on the Antarctic shore. These are one of the many penguins that live in Antarctica! I had no idea there were so many penguin

varieties! =)

<right> After our time spent wandering around the shores of King George Island, Antarctica, we boarded a zodiac which took us to the ship we would call home for the next 3 days. The m/v *Grigoriy Mikheev* was a scientific vessel that's been converted for passenger use was a comfortable little Russian ship that would take us across the fearful Drake Passage, where the waters of the Pacific and Atlantic oceans collide, back to Ushuaia, Argentina.





<left> As we sailed away from Antarctica towards *Tierra del Fuego* and South America, we saw many tremendous icebergs that floated by. The deep blue color of some of these icebergs was astonishing!

<right> Another iceberg that floated by our ship. I wonder what the iceberg that hit the *Titanic* must've looked like! Apparently, what you see above the water is only 20% of the entire thing... some of the icebergs were bigger than our ship! Yikes! =)



<left> After some calm sailing, the weather got just a bit stormier in the evening and the next day or so. Giant waves swept our little ship up and down and splashed water all over the ship and onto the portholes.

Just to give an idea of how bad the storm was... of 10 passengers on board, only 8

arrived at dinner, and by the end of dinner, only 5 were still there. =) I, myself, felt just fine and had two servings of the delicious meal that was served that night. =P

<right> The view of the storm from the helm of the ship. =) There was an open bridge policy during our voyage back across the Drake Passage to Ushuaia so I got to sit up there and watch the storm roll us around for several hours. =P



Actually, we had good weather according to the crew, and that the storm hadn't really been a storm. =) I had actually been hoping to see something out of *The Perfect Storm* but there was nothing like that. Darn! =P

<right> When I got back to my cabin, this is what I found. The “storm” rolled the ship around, caused dresser drawers to fall out, things to fly around the room, and disorder in general. => You can see the protective barriers that keep you inside your bunk so that you don’t fall out as the ship rolls throughout the night. Trying to sleep as I was bounced up and down, and left and right was very interesting. =>



<left> Two tourists and eight cruise staff members

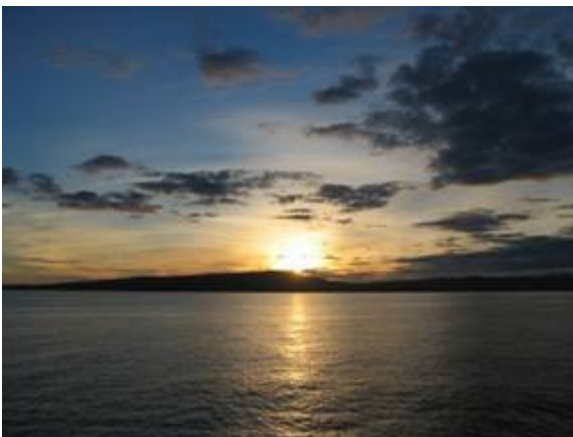


celebrating the safe voyage across the Drake Passage on the last night of our journey onboard the *Grigoriy Mikheev*.

<right> Looking out the window as we anchored down in the Beagle Channel, we



saw a double rainbow brightening up the sky. =>



evening and a peaceful night to sleep in a non-rocking boat. =>

<left> December 8th, 2003: A beautiful sunset on the Beagle Channel and a calm

<right> Woke up on December 9th to discover that we were docked in Ushuaia, Argentina. Since we never officially left Chile, I never got my Chilean exit stamp in



my passport. Doh! =P

There really wasn't much to do in Ushuaia, Argentina... I guess most people come here because it's so hyped up as "The End of the World"... even though Puerto Williams is right across the Beagle Channel on the Chilean side to the south. =)



<left> I took a tour of the Beagle Channel and saw more cormorants on the *Isla de Pajaros* in the Beagle Channel.



<right> We also saw some lazy seals sitting on the rocks on the *Isla de los Lobos*.



<left> Lastly, the lighthouse *Les Eclaireurs*, which they try to claim is the farthest south in the world... but once again, there exists a lighthouse farther south on the *Isla de los Estados* to the southeast.



<right> Lastly, I hiked up to look for the Martial Glacier 8km outside of Ushuaia. All I saw though was a beautiful valley, snow, and a flowing river of fresh mountain spring water. =) Apparently, there was about a foot of snow the week before and the glacier was completely covered. Oh well. =)

Anyway, I'll be heading back to Chile to spend the next 4 days hiking and camping in the *PN Torres del Paine* which should be amazing. Hope you enjoyed this update and that all is well wherever you may be!

- Dan