# *MY COLD WAR:*
# *Two Years Aboard A Navy Icebreaker*

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Memoir for family and friends written November, 2013
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Overview

At 0900 one fine morning in June, 1962, I led some thirty classmates in the Navy Hymn "Eternal Father, Strong to Save," a role assigned to me as the only Glee Club member among the graduates in the Yale Naval ROTC program. Feeling rather dashing in our dress whites and military hair cuts, we were duly commissioned as Ensigns. the lowliest officer rank in the Navy but still deserving of a salute from a veteran petty officer as we filed out of the room (tipping him by Navy custom). Then on to the university graduation ceremonies "Neath the Elms" of the Old Campus where President John F. Kennedy gave the commencement address and received an honorary degree ("I have the best of both worlds, a Harvard education and a Yale degree").

Unlike my classmates who chose flight training, destroyers, submarines, or the Marine Corps (some of them later serving in Vietnam), I had requested assignment to an icebreaker and, not surprisingly, my request was granted. Three weeks after graduation, the Navy icebreaker U.S.S. *Edisto* departed Boston Harbor for Labrador and Greenland with me on board. This unorthodox choice of duty was in fact a byproduct of my father's infatuation with the Arctic where he twice ventured on natural history missions aboard the schooner *Bowdoin* with the renowned explorer Donald B. MacMillan. (My father's work on arctic botany was published in a *Scientific American* cover article, as well as *National Geographic* and his own books.)

My two years aboard *Edisto* took me northwards for two summer seasons—first a couple of months on the west side of Greenland and second to East Greenland with shore leave in Iceland and Norway. Between those two northern deployments, we headed south to Antarctica via the Panama Canal and New Zealand— an epic eight-month voyage in the wake of Captain Cook, Scott, Amundsen, Shackleton, Byrd—and at times, Captain Ahab. I was duly "baptized" in crossing the Arctic Circle, the Equator, and the Antarctic Circle, all in one year! I missed a birthday as we crossed the International Date Line enroute to New Zealand on November 1. Between our hectic schedule of deployments, we returned to our home port of Boston where the ship was torn apart and its crew indulged in well-deserved revelry.

For me—21-years-old when it began— this was a time of intense challenge and rapid growing-up. I sailed some 40,000 miles to and from the ends of the earth. I learned

how to “con” a ship as “officer of the deck” (OOD), how to command crew members twice my age (while learning from them what I was supposed to command them to do), and how to drink beer while circling the ship in a landing craft (alcohol being banned on the ship itself but not its boats). It was a time of high adventure interspersed with periods of utter boredom, or the other way around.

There were close calls and brushes with history. As gunnery officer I nearly blew the bow off the ship due to a mechanical malfunction, but months later I saved us from collision with a taunting Russian merchant vessel off of Norway. We steamed past Cuba in October, 1962, but like aborigines, we were blissfully ignorant of the Cuban Missile Crisis a couple of weeks later as we crossed the South Pacific out of radio contact with the rest of the world. But our photographs of the remains of a former Antarctic base sticking out of an iceberg made *Life Magazine*. It was definitely an interesting two years!

The Ship and Its Crew

*Edisto* was built just after World War II, the last of seven “Wind Class” icebreakers designed to support military and scientific missions in polar regions. As compared with sleek destroyers and cruisers, icebreakers were homely stepsisters: short, wide, slow, and heavy. *Edisto* was 269 feet long, 63 feet wide, and displaced (weighed) about 6,500 tons fully loaded. She was powered by six 2,000 horsepower diesel engines harnessed to two electric motors which drove the ship’s twin massive fifteen-foot propellers. The diesel-electric power plant (similar to conventional submarines of that era) enabled the ship to maneuver in tight places and apply huge bursts of power controlled by throttles on the bridge. The lower face of the bow angled sharply sternward to allow the ship to ride up on ice flows, breaking through them with the ship’s weight and forward momentum. The hull was double-bottomed and rounded to reduce the risk of becoming trapped (“beset”) in heavy ice, and possibly sunk like Shackleton’s *Endurance* in 1914. As described later, when the ship did become stuck, fuel and ballast water could be rapidly pumped between tanks on either side to wriggle the ship out of a tight spot.

*Edisto* carried a small motor launch (the “Greenland Cruiser”) and a couple of landing craft to ferry personnel and supplies ashore when the ship was at anchor in open water. Since an icebreaker spends a lot of time in ice pack where its boats are useless, she was also equipped with a flight deck and two helicopters, along with flight officers and mechanics to operate them.

The ship’s company included about a dozen officers and some 220 enlisted crew members. The officers included a few veterans of previous polar voyages on *Edisto*. However, the Captain and Executive Officer were both new to icebreaker duty as were my cohort of “college kid” ensigns.

The enlisted crew were an assorted group ranging from gangling recent high school grads to veterans of many years and types of naval service. Like the musical *South Pacific*, there were some real characters who enlivened shipboard life . Many were homesick during our long deployments in remote places. In my early assignment as the ship’s Morale Officer (whatever that meant), I tried to raise all our spirits with pithy accounts of local history and lore from some of the places we visited. (Without Wikipedia, I relied on a few polar accounts borrowed from my Dad and some imagination.)

The First Northern Voyage (June–August, 1962)

Little did I suspect that I would literally be entering the “cold, cruel world” within three weeks after graduation! But when I arrived on board in the Boston Navy Yard in mid-June, *Edisto* was preparing to depart within days. So I said my good byes to “folks back home,” pulled out my new khaki sea-duty wardrobe, and settled in to a corner of the junior officers bunkroom which I shared with my fellow ensigns.

Our departure from Boston was suitably impressive: the crew arrayed in their dress uniforms, lines released from the pier and hauled aboard, three blasts on the ship’s whistle, a brass band playing something martial, and a gaggle of families and girl friends waving fond farewells. With immense clouds of diesel smoke from the stack, the ship revolved itself and pointed out to sea. Downtown Boston and the harbor islands receded into the dusk and we began to roll, and roll, and roll. I quickly realized that the football-shaped *Edisto* was built for durability but not comfort. Everything loose flew around until we finally made our belongings properly shipshape. Fortunately, I never became seasick in the many roller-coaster voyages ahead, but some other newcomers on board were not so lucky. (One poor ensign wore a pail around his neck during his first bridge watches at sea).

Following the track of my Dad on the *Bowdoin* years earlier, we steamed (or rather dieseled) northeast along the Maine coast, rounded Nova Scotia, crossed the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and entered the fabled Strait of Belle Isle between Newfoundland and Labrador: the gateway to the Arctic. There we encountered our first ice bergs floating majestically towards warmer waters and oblivion, countless miles from their natal glaciers in Greenland, Baffin Island, and Ellesmere Island.

Our first port of call was a military base at Goose Bay in Labrador where we were supposed to escort cargo ships through drifting pack ice. But there was very little ice and a great deal of fog. So we anchored and sat for an anti-climactic two or more weeks with nothing to see or do. We were too far from the Goose Bay base for any of the crew to go ashore. So we cultivated the pastime of drinking watery beer while circling the ship in our World War II landing craft. (Are we having fun yet?)

Finally, we were ordered to proceed on to Greenland. We continued north, crossing the Arctic Circle which is the southernmost latitude (66 degrees, 33 minutes North) which experiences at least one night of “midnight sun.” All neophyte officers and crew were duly christened as “bluenoses” by those who had crossed the Circle before, with the liberal application of grease and smelly stuff to make us appreciate our new status.

After a few days of navigating through rough seas, the fog lifted and the great Greenland coastal mountains and ice cap (two miles thick in some places) loomed ahead. Our first destination was Sondre Stromfjord on the southwest coast of Greenland, the site of a Cold War U.S. air base military air base (it was closed in 1992). We steamed into the fjord with wonder at the sheer cliffs and ice formations towering above us on either side.

Here I was given my first “independent command” to go ashore with a couple of technicians whose job was to repair a radio navigation beacon. The three of us motored ashore in the Greenland Cruiser and I spent a couple of hours taking pictures while the technicians fixed the beacon. Mission Accomplished! Back to the ship we went only to discover that heavy seas were causing the ship’s stern to rise and fall about thirty feet while our motor launch was doing exactly the opposite. Climbing a rope ladder dangling from the stern risked being squashed between the boat and the ship. We each had to wait

until the exact moment when the ship's deck and the launch were passing each other and then make a terrific leap aboard (rather like Jack Lemmon as Ensign Pulver in the movie *Mister Roberts*).

We continued north through Baffin Bay and Davis Strait to Thule in northern Greenland—the traditional stopover and staging base for past arctic explorers, including Donald B. MacMillan and his schooner *Bowdoin.* By 1962, Thule was a critical facility for the Strategic Air Command whose B-52s carrying hydrogen bombs were dispatched towards Russia during the Cuban Missile Crisis, a few months after our visit. (Thule in 2013 continues to wage the Cold War a quarter-century after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Has no one told them?)

North Star Bay, the site of Thule, was scattered with hundreds of bergs newly spawned by several glaciers that flowed towards the ocean from the great inland ice cap. Barren red sandstone cliffs loomed behind the port area. But even this far north, pack ice was in short supply that year and we were not needed to escort cargo ships in and out of the bay. (We would make up for that later in Antarctica.) We tied up to a pier for the first time since leaving Boston and ventured ashore in search of something wet. My chief recollection of Thule is stumbling back to the ship from the Officers' Club about 2330 (11:30 p.m.) in dazzling, unrelenting sunlight, carrying clothes and vinyl records purchased at the base store. Such are the rigors of the Far North.

Our trip back to Boston was uneventful except for a well-photographed polar bear that obligingly appeared one night on a nearby ice flow. (Goodness knows what its grandchildren are standing on today.) While that two months "up north" was not exactly the stuff of epic poems, we ensigns at least gained some experience in shipboard life, protocol, and survival techniques. For instance, I learned not to rely on one "fair-weather girl friend" to be my pen pal during long voyages. In the weeks of refitting the ship for the long trip South I lined up seven or eight different females as correspondents. At our infrequent mail calls, I usually heard from at least one of them.

<u>South to Antarctica</u>

This was the Big One: almost eight months away from our home port, most of the time underway at sea or in ice with watchstanding around the clock. (More on that later.) We departed Boston in mid-October, rounded Cape Cod, and steamed down the East Coast to the Caribbean like a great fat pleasure yacht. We passed east of Cuba one sultry night, seen only on radar, and continued to Panama.

Soon after beginning the three-week crossing to New Zealand, the waters we had just traversed off Cuba became the stage for the near end of civilization. During the critical "thirteen days" in late October, the Russian missile bases in Cuba were photographed from a U-2 spy plane and the world went crazy. The Strategic Air Command went on high alert and the U.S. Navy (the real one) established a blockade against Russian ships approaching Cuba. Armageddon was narrowly averted by a secret deal whereby the Russians withdraw their missiles from Cuba and we did the same for ours in Turkey. By the time we rejoined the outside world at New Zealand, it was thankfully over.

Christchurch on the South Island of New Zealand has been the staging base for U.S. Antarctic operations since the 1940s. After our three-week slog across the Pacific, we tied up to a pier in Port Lyttleton for a blessed five days of warm spring weather and New Zealand hospitality before heading into the unknown. In my case, a serendipitous visit to

Christchurch Cathedral in my uniform attracted a lunch invitation from the Straubel family. (I would later travel around Europe with my contemporary, Paul Straubel; he and his wife Helen are still wonderful and welcoming friends.)

Leaving springtime New Zealand astern, we headed south past Campbell Island into the 3,000 miles of maritime hell between New Zealand and Antarctica: the "world's stormiest ocean." It lived up to its reputation. *Edisto* which could roll in a flat calm careened through 90 degree arcs as we traversed the "Roaring 40's," the "Furious 50s," and the "Screaming 60s." The ship heaved, bucked, rolled, and shuddered as massive seas engulfed the vessel as high as the radar above the bridge. *Edisto* was sealed up like a submarine with no one allowed on deck for any reason. Bridge watches were spent clinging to handholds and radar stands with one's weight endlessly shifting from one leg to the other. Unappealing meals were consumed, if at all, at tables equipped with retaining wires to prevent chairs from toppling over backwards. Sleeping was practically impossible in heaving bunks, except for those salty mariners who provided themselves with hammocks in the sailing ship tradition. (I joined them during the second northern voyage).

Of course, the further south we went, the colder it became. After crossing the Antarctic Circle, breaking waves began to form a mantle of ice on all exposed surfaces, adding tons of weight above the water line and making the ship roll even more viciously. Two weeks out of New Zealand we finally reached the South Polar ice pack, a girdle of more or less continuous sea ice extending up to sixty miles from the Antarctic coast that year. (Global warming has since reduced its width considerably.). Once we entered the pack, the ship finally leveled off and the crew poured out on deck to breathe and begin de-icing the ship.

However we soon experienced the Antarctic equivalent of "out of the frying pan and into the fire." No sooner had we regained some semblance of normality in the pack ice, than we became stuck. Still fifty-some miles from our destination and far out of reach of any rescue ship, we were entirely on our own. Like an automobile caught in a snowdrift, we tried to ram the ship forward and back with all our six diesels pushed to their limits. No progress. After rolling our hearts out for the previous two weeks, we now tried to force the ship to roll by pumping fuel and water from tanks on one side to the other and hanging boats overboard on davits. Dynamite was inserted into the ice near the bow and exploded. A lot of ice chips flew around but the ship didn't budge. Someone suggested that the entire crew move to one side and jump up and down in unison (I'm half serious). Still no progress. Would we have to abandon ship when the fuel and food ran out like Shackleton in 1914 or the tragic Franklin Arctic expedition in 1845-6?

As you may have suspected, we survived. Somehow, the ice pack loosened its grip and we resumed bashing our way towards McMurdo Sound, the site of the principal U.S. Antarctic scientific base. McMurdo in 1962 consisted of a motley collection of orange thermal huts providing living and working space for a few hundred scientists and support staff during the summer season. During the dark months from May until November, McMurdo's population dwindled down to a few dozen who "wintered over" with no sea or air connection to the outside world. During the busy summer season, McMurdo was and still is the logistical hub for the outlying scientific stations scattered around the continent, including one at the South Pole itself. McMurdo's iconic backdrop is the 14,000 foot-high Mount Erebus—a magnificent ice-sheathed volcano that simmers against the blue skies of the Antarctic summer. Closer at hand, we often encountered seals slumbering near open leads in the pack ice. Most entertaining were the swarms of small (16 inch tall)

Adelie Penguins, and their solemn big sibling, the Emperors. All penguins are irresistible and they provided comic relief frequently during our long hours and days of ice-bashing.

*The 60-Mile Channel*

We never actually "reached" McMurdo. We broke our way to within a few miles of the base but could get no closer due to the thickness of the ice pack. Also, the air strip serving the cargo flights from New Zealand was on the ice near shore, and we didn't want to plow up the airport. With no piers and water far too deep to anchor, we remained "at sea" for the entire five months between departing and returning to New Zealand. Occasionally, we would tie up to the pack with ice anchors, put over a ladder, and let the crew play football and drink beer. Bridge watches continued nevertheless and we officers of the deck had only one night in four of uninterrupted sleep.

We rendezvoused with two other icebreakers near McMurdo: our Coast Guard sister ship *Eastwind* and the somewhat larger and clumsier *Glacier* (self-described as the Free World's largest icebreaker). For weeks, we operated as a trio of oversized tugboats, hauling cargo ships and tankers in to McMurdo and back out to open water. Early in the season, pack ice extended sixty miles from the mainland and we steamed back and forth day and "night" to keep the channel from closing up as the pack shifted.

When we first arrived, the McMurdo inhabitants were very cold. An ill-fated experiment with a "pocket nuclear plant" had proven useless and McMurdo was almost out of diesel oil. They laid an emergency pipeline out to an ice-strengthened tanker which we had brought as near the base as possible. Unfortunately, the pipeline leaked and untold amounts of petroleum were discharged into the pristine marine ecosystem.

Helicopters frequently flew back and forth between the ship and McMurdo, bringing mail and supplies and giving the Captain and senior officers opportunities to go ashore. However, such privileges did not extend to lowly ensigns. I would never have set foot at McMurdo but for a stomach ache. Thinking I had appendicitis, the ship's doctor ordered me to be flown to the base clinic. Fortunately, I recovered before they operated on me and I had a few hours to wander around McMurdo and chat with some of its personnel. Blessed freedom!

After weeks of channel maintenance, we received a welcome reprieve, on Christmas Eve no less. As described in a press release (which I wrote as "Public Information Officer"):

> "[The three icebreakers] have been fighting around the clock to maintain a slender channel through the McMurdo Sound ice pack. Frequently, tides and adverse winds have practically nullified in hours what required many weeks to accomplish. During the afternoon of 24 December, the situation was stagnant. Fifty ice-choked miles remained and the breakers were losing the struggle with the shifting pack. While holiday festivities were in progress below deck, *Edisto* continued to break ice through the night. Suddenly, a "divine wind" out of the south reaching hurricane force in gusts changed the entire situation. Open water appeared, cracks widened to rivers, and the ships started forward."

Of course, the pack soon closed up again and we continued bashing our way back and forth to maintain the channel for several weeks after Christmas. We suffered some damage to our propellers when backing over ice flows, but not enough to put us out of action. Our larger "flagship" *Glacier* managed to incur enough damage to return for a mid-

season break in New Zealand —a respite not available to the sturdier Wind-Class icebreakers, *Edisto* and *Eastwind* despite our best efforts.

Accidents were common in those unpredictable conditions. One bright night we were directed to turn around a cargo ship (*Arneb*) and tow her up the channel to open water. Someone who flunked high school physics directed that we pull *Arneb*'s bow around while her stern was held steady by a tow cable to a bulldozer on the ice pack. But a fifteen-ton bulldozer is no match for a 6,000 ton icebreaker and a 10,000 ton cargo ship. As our wire cable to *Arneb* went taut, both ships began to drift forward, dragging the bulldozer towards the edge of the pack. The driver frantically paid out all his cable and leaped for his life as the big yellow machine dropped into a couple thousand feet of water. Luckily for *Arneb,* an alert crew member cut the wire with a blowtorch at the last minute (at great danger to himself) or the dozer's cable would have lacerated the ship's stern, possibly sinking her.

*Ocean Stations*

Sometime in mid-February as the pack thinned and the resupply season wound down, we were no longer needed for channel maintenance. A couple of oceanographers (welcome new faces in the officers' wardroom) were delivered by helicopter. For the next month or so, we were assigned to the dreaded activity known as "ocean stations." We left the pack ice behind and steamed from one point to another as selected by our guest oceanographers. At each "station" we stopped for hours of exhausting, stomach-churning rolling while the scientists lowered their bottom sampling gear and hauled up cores of sediments and marine organisms from thousands of feet below.

Our wanderings beyond the vicinity of McMurdo, however, did yield a couple of pleasant surprises. One was a stop to resupply a remote research station on Edisto Inlet on the Antarctic mainland about 300 miles from McMurdo. Our namesake inlet proved to be one of the most gorgeous corners of the Earth that I have ever seen. It was a small embayment surrounded on three sides by ice-sheathed mountains rising sheer from the water to ten thousand feet. Icebergs of endless variety in shape and size lay on every side. We anchored (first time in months) and launched our boats, giving the crew the chance finally to set foot on land and fraternize with very welcoming penguins.

The other surprise occurred as we cruised along the face of the Ross Ice Shelf, a mass of floating ice the size of California that fills a great indentation in the Antarctic shoreline. Someone on watch noticed a huge tabular iceberg with debris spilling out its side and masts rising above it. This was later determined to be the crushed buildings of Admiral Richard Byrd's Little America IV base established on the ice shelf in the 1940s. The berg in which its wreckage was encased had broken off from the ice shelf and was floating northward to oblivion. Photographs we sent back to Navy headquarters appeared in *Life Magazine* and elsewhere.

As we plied Antarctic waters out of helicopter range from shore, the only means of communication with folks back home was the ship's amateur radio ("ham") station that had been purchased with ship's recreation funds. I happened to be one of two licensed amateur radio operators on board but as a watch-stander I had little time to spend on hamming. Fortunately, the other operator was a Chief Radioman who had the time and skill to spend hours setting up "phone patches" through helpful ham operators in the States who placed long distance calls for crew members. Before the advent of communication satellites, long distance radio relied on a phenomenon known as "skip"—bouncing radio signals off the ionosphere when atmospheric conditions allowed.

Amazingly, the skip worked well from Antarctica and we were able to regularly “work” hams in the States  Officers or enlisted men would often be waked anytime to talk to their family and sweethearts twelve time zones away. Most were at a loss for words when the great moment arrived!

Homeward Bound

As February wore into March, the sun dipped below the horizon for the first time in months, and sea ice began to form once again. After several delays, we were finally released to return to New Zealand and home. At last, we steamed north across those stormy seas but gaining warmth as we approached New Zealand in its autumn. Upon tying up in Port Lyttleton, the ship’s crew organized a whale of a party and all hands (other than the saturnine Captain and the morose Exec)  had the best time in months. The Straubel family welcomed me back to their home and introduced me to their English friend, Penny Payne with whom I would correspond over the next year. Once I finished my Navy service in June, 1964, she and I joined Paul Straubel and another friend from Australia on a summer’s Grand Tour around Europe.

*Gunnery Malpractice*

Revived in spirits, quite literally, the *Edisto* crew returned in various conditions from shore liberty and off we steamed towards Panama.  The return trip was uneventful except for one incident involving me as Gunnery Officer (the latest of my many administrative assignments).

Icebreakers were not intended to be warships and we were equipped with only a single World War II-era five-inch (diameter) naval gun. Below the Antarctic Circle, the firing of military weapons was, and still is, prohibited by international law. That enlightened policy ensured that my duties as gunnery officer were not onerous. But upon returning to the open Pacific, the captain ordered a gunnery exercise. The gun mount was unlimbered, ammunition transferred from the magazine, and a target dummy named “Oscar” was thrown overboard. High above the bridge, Ensign Platt gripped the handles of the gun director and squinted at Oscar as we circled him at a distance of a half mile or so. Tensely I pulled the firing trigger expecting a tremendous bang and a splash near the target.

Nothing happened except for loud shouting from the bridge and particularly the Captain. I looked down at the gun mount: the barrel was depressed and pointing at the bow of the ship rather than at Oscar. The safety officer inside the mount had disabled the firing key and avoided blowing our bow off. As they say, practice makes perfect.

*The Case of the Spotted T-Shirt*

An incident worthy of Captain Queeg in *The Caine Mutiny*  occurred as we approached the Panama Canal. During three weeks of crossing  the Pacific, the deck crew was engaged in the time-honored Navy tradition of scraping and painting the ship. I was OOD one evening as we waited at anchor for our turn to enter the Canal. Unbenownst to me, the Captain had just issued an order that all crew members must wear clean uniforms devoid of paint spots. From the darkened bridge I sent a messenger down to inform the Captain that it was our turn. The sailor had some paint on his clothes, and the Captain summarily fired me as Officer of the Deck.

While demeaning, this was nevertheless a welcome change for me—no watches and full nights of sleep for a while. The other watch officers were incensed however because losing me speeded up their rotation so they had less sleep. Life indeed is unfair. But just as I was getting used to not standing bridge watches, we stopped in Norfolk, Virginia for an administrative inspection by the Admiral and his staff. Questions were raised as to why Ensign Platt was dropped from the watch rotation. Since paint on a crew member's T-shirt on a dark night seemed rather frivolous, I was restored to my former status and the drudgery of watch-standing at night. But soon we returned to Boston, and a new Captain!

North Again

Our second Arctic voyage, and third deployment in twelve months, took us to the east coast of Greenland for no apparent reason but it was great fun. We had favorable ice conditions, great scenery, and a friendly welcome from local Inuit families in kayaks. And our new captain, a former submariner, was relaxed, good humored, and self-confident—a welcome change from his predecessor. We paid a brief visit to Reykjavic, Iceland—the land of volcanoes, hot springs, high literacy, and beautiful women. But the crew had to be recalled from liberty as a gale approached, forcing us out to sea ahead of schedule.

Somewhere in the North Atlantic between Iceland and Norway, we had a brief whiff of the real Cold War. I was the bridge officer one gray and stormy afternoon, when our radar identified a ship on a collision course. According to the international "Rules of the Road" when two vessels are converging, the ship to starboard (right) must maintain its course and speed and the ship to port (left) must maneuver to avoid collision. We were the former and I continued steaming straight ahead. The other ship continued to close, and a voice shouted on the intra-ship radio channel: "Hello Americans, We Love You." She was a Russian merchant vessel playing "chicken" with us. I ordered five blasts on our ship's whistle—the international danger signal. The captain lost no time getting to the bridge and fortunately took over. We continued as before and the Russian veered behind us a couple of hundred yards away—our own small incident of "they blinked first."

We had a week's liberty in Oslo—evidently our superiors were treating us nicely for a change. I visited the *Fram* Museum housing the actual vessel which the Norwegian explorer Fridtjof Nansen had frozen into the pack ice in an attempt to drift across the North Pole in 1893-6. At my suggestion, our Captain presented one of our ship's plaques to the *Fram* Museum with a suitable encomium written by *Edisto*'s ever-resourceful Public Information Officer (although I was not invited to the ceremony).

With that, our wanderings were done. We returned to Boston and a nine-month drydock overhaul when our propellers damaged in Antarctica were finally replaced. In mid-November the week before Thanksgiving, 1963, I happened to be in the Norfolk, Virginia Airport, returning to Boston from a Navy firefighting school. It was there, fifty years ago to the day as I write this, that "Camelot" ended with the shooting of President Kennedy who so eloquently had launched the Yale Class of '62 on the high seas of life only eighteen months earlier.

With the ship torn apart, I spent the drydock months living ashore at the Bachelor Officers Quarters in the Boston Navy Yard next to the U.S.S. *Constitution*. My former digs eventually became the Visitor Center for the Boston Navy Yard National Historic Park. The *Constitution* still commemorates the War of 1812 but there are no visible legacies of

the Navy Yard's role as home port for the icebreakers whose long and arduous deployments to the polar regions began and ended there.