

Lessons from the Bottom of the World

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Perhaps it isn't surprising that in a land that is completely different in landscape and climate from any we had ever visited, there were surprising bits of knowledge and wonder around every corner. From the sublime to the ridiculous, as the three generations of Skillings reflected our trip there are memories and lessons that will stay with us forever.

- The immensity of the icebergs took our breath away. Some icebergs were the size of small cities. They were also endlessly varied in shape, inviting us to play the "that iceberg reminds me of..." game. Among shapes identified were mushrooms, rabbits, and pipe organs.
- Using snow pants as a sled is the best (and most fun) way down a glacier. (Just ask Chaney)
- The weather in Antarctica in January can be much nicer than the weather at home, especially St. Louis.
- Penguins are endlessly fascinating. (Ask any of us, but especially Van)
- The sound of an avalanche and ice calving is awesome and like nothing we had ever heard, especially when in a zodiac motoring in the midst of it all.
- The biggest sea birds, Albatross and Petrels, need the assistance of air currents to become air born. The smallest bird on the beach, the Sheethill, is the most aggressive. (Ask Jeff if you doubt this)
- Staying in bed during rough waters is a great isometric exercise.
- Antarctica was not always covered in ice. Thanks to Christine Siddoway we now know that it was once a greenhouse of vegetation.
- Sea spray stings and gives you as good a burn as the sun.
- Waterproof boots are not the best for hiking, but you do it anyway.
- "By Endurance We Conquer" was the Shackleton family motto. It also defined the CC spirit when confronted with the loss of the ship we were to sail on. Not only did we go forward on a new ship, we celebrated extra time in Tierra del Fuego during the delay and the idyllic weather once we finally set sail.
- You cannot catch Christine Siddoway without a smile on her face and her enthusiasm and intellectual curiosity is contagious. She is also a patient and inspiring advisor for seventh grade science projects. (Again ask Chaney)
- None of us thinks we will ever take another Antarctic cruise. The trip was so perfect we fear that any other trip would be doomed to disappoint.

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