

The Explorers Club

Northern California Chapter

October 2008

In color at our web site: <http://www.diggles.com/ec/>

San Francisco—October 18, 2008

Don Hartsell

Airship Race

Note venues and dates with care.

San Francisco, CA!

Our next event is at 6:30 on
Oct 18, a Saturday evening,
at the Golden Gate Yacht Club.



Lighter Than Air Around the World

It will be the first organized international race of lighter-than-air skyships and, as the first full global circumnavigation by a lighter-than-air skyship, it will establish an international aviation record

“Each time you start new, start something big!” is Don Hartsell’s (MN07) motto. After more than 30 years of quiet thought, Don decided to follow a beckoning dream that had simmered on the back-burners of extraordinary, but undone, projects. As his then current project, digitally archiving 8 million historical documents for the Texas Archive and Texas Supreme Court, was coming to a close, he had to ponder the unthinkable. “What if I actually had to get a job, like everybody else? What would I do?” Rather than face such regimented realities, he came to the conclusion, he was simply unemployable. This was the same conclusion to the same question for nearly a quarter of a century; each time it was asked. His professional

career was more similar to a pinball’s path in a pinball wizard’s tournament.

After such a deeply personal inventory, he decided to organize a race of zeppelins, blimps and skyships to go around the world. He would justify it as the first global circumnavigation by a lighter-than-air skyship and a reinvigoration of a transport technique. He has created a partnership with the UNESCO World Heritage Center to enable children around the world to participate in an educational program about geography, history and culture by using the *World Sky Race* to be an internet classroom tool on a global basis.

Considering the importance of the environment, he found that many thinkers have

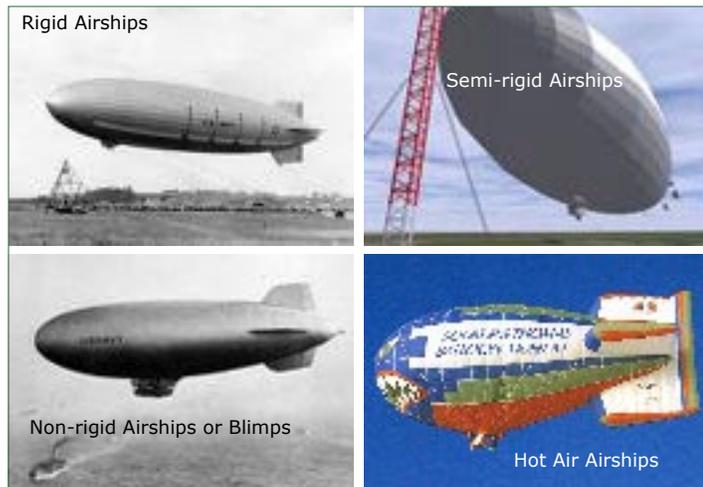
concluded that lighter-than-air travel is the greenest form of aviation technology this side of flying a kite. Looking for story tellers, an IMAX film, the *World Sky Champions*, will be produced as a documentary of epic proportions. In knitting together Ministries of Tourism on a global basis, he has found allies that are prepared to grant all possible assistance and protection.

The race will keep him busy enough to postpone, for awhile, “What if I actually had to get a job?” Come listen to the plans; it is happening sooner than you think. San Francisco will be a singularly important locale—as the end of the longest leg of the race; it will require in-flight refueling over the Pacific!

The first non-rigid airship was built and flown in 1852 by Henri Giffard using a steam engine.



Don Hartsell aboard a blimp.



Touring Antarctica in a Woodside Garden

The Woodside Fall afternoon was more like Summer in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley. Sweltering. Don Collin, a good friend of our late chair emeritus Ron Reuther, provided cool refreshment with his Penguin chardonnay. The garden shade offered relief. Some retreated to inside air conditioning. Bay Area explorers are not used to such warmth (when not in the field!) Besides, we had gathered to hear about the coldest place on earth: Antarctica. The contrast was laughable, especially to the Antarcticans who joined to listen to Dr. Art Ford (FN98).

As the sun bowed over the Santa Cruz mountains, the heat quickly dissipated to a balmy evening, and Art held forth on what people came to see and on how one gets to the southern-most continent. He speaks with an innate knowledge having spent some 35 summers there as a field geologist—often the first person to venture into the mountains of west Antarctica. He has watched the scientific sophistication of exploration develop as technology made field activities more safe and sometimes a bit easier. Those early days were simply really dangerous; the harshness of the weather and sometimes tragedy of the terrain remain. Yet, the beauty, the unknown, and expanse draw people—and that was his principle topic this night. In the 21st century a tourist can go *anywhere* on the continent, if his or her pocketbook allows. Art has spent fifteen years since his retirement lecturing to these folks during their visits.

When the agreements covering international cooperation in Antarctica were developed, a genuine achievement of the first International Geophysical Year in the early 1950s, tourism was never given a thought. Who, in his right mind would want to venture into this harsh place? Some, surely. For, as early as the 1960s, Lindblad Explorations took intrepid passengers to see rookeries of penguins and calving ice along the Antarctic Peninsula. The word spread, and there began a steady increase in visitors. In 1991, the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators was founded because governmental groups would not focus upon the growing intrusion on this neutral part of the world. IAATO is a volunteer member organization to advocate, promote and practice safe and environmentally responsible private-sector travel to the Antarctic. It has been a success—so far. There are but a few rogue visitors.

Getting to the Antarctic as a scientist, an explorer, is difficult. One goes through a vetting process by the National Science Foundation and, in spite of approval, bud-



Our speaker, Dr. Art Ford—in the Thiel Mountains in 1962 and ready to lecture. Mt. Erabus volcano from McMurdo Base (top); Mount (President Andrew) Jackson, the Antarctic Peninsula's highest peak.

gets limit how many can go each southern summer. Getting there as a tourist simply requires getting a ticket. Most visitors travel by ship to the coastal rim of the continent, and most of these to the Antarctic Peninsula that jabs north toward the southern tip of South America. One company (Adventure Network International) will fly hearty adventurers to a base camp at Patriot Hills, established in 1987, within sight of the Ellsworth Mountains.

The penguins are the big draw for visitors. A popular rookery on Deception Island has hundreds of thousands. One can go ashore, by Zodiac raft, but IAATO rules keep you at least 15-feet distant from the birds. Close enough. Rules also require cleansing boots at the ship—a strong effort to prevent any disease from effecting the birds. The *March of the Penguins* is credited with increasing tourism to an annual level of 40,000 visitors. “How many are too many?” asks IAATO. Even now, ship captains must communicate to assure each has the chance to be ‘alone’ in the icy seas. After crossing the godforsaken Drakes Passage passengers appreciate this.

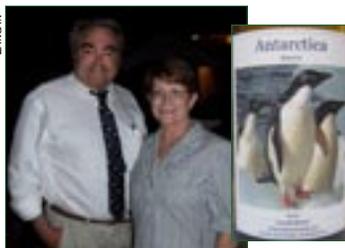
Contact Art, who lectures for Quark Expeditions, if you want to go!

www.quarkexpeditions.com



Dan Liebowitz and Basia Kanowick, with Jake, hosted our September event. The Polish tall-masted ship *Dar Poxorza* model was built by Basia!

Dan Liebowitz (MN66) and Basia Kenowick were gracious hosts for our September meeting. The gardens were filled with fresh flowers, the pesty insects sprayed aside, the food table groaning beyond adequacy. Dr. Dan, an expert on African expeditions and the slave trade (with two popular books on these subjects), welcomed chapter members. Ten years earlier, in May 1998, he had done so before—for an Art Ford talk on *Antarctica in Transition!*



Don & Joan Collin served their 'Penguin' wine.

Harry Hicks (MN87), our host in May when we visited south of Carmel, celebrated his 88th birthday in Woodside.

All sang a rousing Happy Birthday as he blew on a few representative candles.

Harry confirmed he is still active in retrieving an ancient death mask of Alexander the Great.



NorCA Member Celebrates A Birthday Bash In Palenque A Journal Cover Story as well

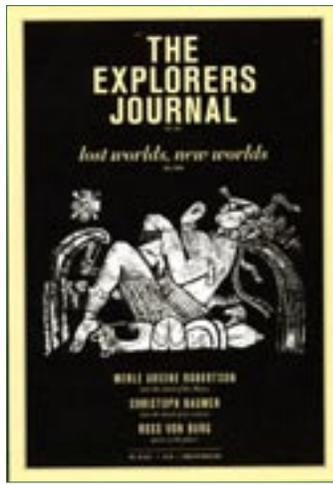


By now most have received their September copy of *The Explorers Journal* and read the cover story/interview about one of our senior members, Merle Greene Robertson FN96. (If not, you will soon.) Editor Schuster and Art Director Jesse Alexander did a beautiful job featuring some of Merle's extraordinary rubbings.

Over a career in exploration that began after she raised her family as a teacher, Merle developed the ink on silk-paper technique that was able to capture the details of the often pale

sculptures and iconography found on the temples in Central America. The method allowed detail to be brought forth that was difficult to see in photographs. Further, the rubbings could be photocopied, manipulated, reproduced and cut up—a process made even easier nowadays with computers. Her advances allowed epigraphers to gain an insight into deciphering Maya hieroglyphics. Skilled practitioners now read them well giving a deep understanding of the ancient times.

Merle invited her family and those who had worked with her over the nearly fifty years she has spent in Maya



lands to a 95th birthday celebration, in July, at Palenque, Chiapas, Mexico. It was a grand week of visiting, touring the site and new museum (where

findings of recent archaeological work she directed are on display in a marvelous setting), attending a symposium in her honor (ever the scientist she is!), and attending a grand gala evening dinner.

The Chapter Chair

In October we return to the Golden Gate Yacht Club after a series of hosted events for which the chapter has been very fortunate. We have a wonderful group of members who are willing to share their homes for our enjoyment! This will continue in November and December too.

Meanwhile the yacht club has been a great location for our meetings; one could hardly imagine a more dramatic view than watching the sun set over our Golden Gate. And the staff has been very welcoming; I am sure we shall return in 2009.

There is a sense of enthusiasm in our gatherings of late. Can we turn this into expansion? I urge each of you to turn your attention upon a potential club member, for it is one-on-one that we expand our membership. Each of you know why you belong; it is a very tangible reality of

comradeship and shared experience. Find someone and make it happen that they join. (I say this with enthusiasm, as a member of the Club's Membership Committee!)

New officers were proposed in September to take the reigns of our chapter; it shall keep us refreshed. I strongly suspect that activities will continue apace.

As part of the expansion of participation, we have formed an Emeritus Board, consisting of all former chairs. The purpose is to take a long-range view for the chapter, to seek recognition for individuals, to investigate ways the chapter interacts with headquarters and to advise the current management, as requested. You are welcome to contact any of these folks with ideas or concerns.

I am called away in October, but look forward to seeing you all in November.
—Lee Langan (FN99)



The new Palenque museum exhibits highlight materials retrieved over a decade under the Project of the Cross Group expedition led by Merle and largely funded by our late member Donald Marken (MN96). Mexican archaeologist Alfonso Morales led the field effort, and Lee Langan worked with Don (continuing after his death.)

Lee carried Flag 139 with Merle.
Above: portion of 11-foot-high colored stucco pillar mural the project uncovered in Temple XIX at Palenque.

After the week of good times in Chiapas, Merle continued on with an expanded group to Chichen Itza in Yucatan for further festivities.

A Request for Help

LOUISE ARNER BOYD (1887-1972)
Dr. Joanna Kafarowski, a Research Associate with the Canadian Circumpolar Institute is seeking information for the first comprehensive biography of American polar explorer Louise Arner Boyd. Born in San Rafael, California where she lived for most of her life, Boyd led seven Arctic expeditions primarily to Northeast Greenland between 1928–1941 culminating with her 1955 flight to the North Pole. Kafarowski will be in San Rafael and San Francisco during the last two weeks of November and is requesting that anyone with knowledge of Boyd or any of her colleagues, friends or employees contact her by email at:

gypsy_four@hotmail.com.

In particular, Kafarowski is hoping for contact from any descendants or relatives of Marjorie and Gordon Fountain (former members of this Chapter), Miss Janet D. Coleman, Helen Mori, Julia Langhorne Parker Calhoun (married to John Harrison Calhoun). Any assistance will be most gratefully received.

October 2008



Chair: Lee Langan
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ajvikings@aol.com
Secretary: Stephen E. Smith
Webmaster: Mike Diggles
Newsletter: Lee Langan

Lighter Than Air, Golden Gate Yacht Club
18 October — San Francisco, California

**Northern California
2008 Calendar of Events**

(Venues will be identified at time of event.)

Our next Meeting

October 18 (Saturday) Don Hartzell
Lighter than Air.
Golden Gate Yacht Club, San Francisco

Future Meeting Schedule

November 21 (Friday) Leela Hutchinson
Giant Cave Crystals
Dana home, Tiburon
December 7 (Sunday) Lee Langan
Holiday Gathering

Meetings earlier this year

January 26 Vince Backen
OR/V White Holly, SF Bay Model, Sausalito
February 22 Lawrence Lansburgh
David & Goliath in the Amazon, the Achuar
Golden Gate Yacht Club, San Francisco
April 4 Felicia Nuttner
The Marine Mammal Center GGYC
April 23 Jeff Morgan
Global Heritage Fund New Sites GGYC
May 30 Nancy Black
Whale Watching off Monterey
Hicks' home, Garrapata Beach, Big Sur
June 25 Marta Walsh at 100
DOER Marine, Alameda
September 27 Art Ford
Tourism in Antarctica,
Liebowitz home, Woodside

Send address changes and
corrections by email to Steve at
nauticos@oceanearth.org

October LOCATION

Date Saturday, October 18, 2008
Place: Golden Gate Yacht Club
San Francisco, CA
Time: 6:30 - reception
7:15 - dinner
8:00 - talk
Cost: \$60 (includes wine with buffet)
Please mail information (to right),
with payment, to Dr. Anders Jepsen
23 Dos Posos
Orinda, CA 94563
or email ajvikings@aol.com
or call (925) 254-3079

Reserve ___ spaces for **October 18 2008** at
Hartzell talk at GGYC
San Francisco, CA
Cost: \$60, buffet dinner with wine
Annual dues still payable @\$25

Name: _____

Address (if changed): _____

Companion: _____

If you desire a car pool from the
Peninsula call Helen Klaben Kahn

