



ANTARCTICA – TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE 2021

Trip Report by Christopher T. Yacino

ABSTRACT

The Main Event of this trip was undoubtedly the Total Solar Eclipse on December 4, 2021, but there were many trials and adventures both before and after it. This report covers both the preparation for the trip and the trip days themselves, which were from 11/23/2021 through 12/9/2021 inclusive.

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Flights

This trip included nine separate flights. In order, they were:

- DL4736, BOS to JFK, 11/23/2021, 11:59 AM to 1:11 PM on an ERJ-175
- LA533, JFK to SCL (Santiago, Chile), 11/23/2021, 6:05 PM to 6:20 AM +1 day on a 787-8 PAX
- LA1161, SCL to PUQ (Punta Arenas, Chile), 11/25/2021, 9:04 AM to 12:19 PM on a 787-9 PAX
- FI1087, PUQ to UGL (Union Glacier, Antarctica), 11/29/2021, 11:00 AM to 3:10 PM on a 757
- Unknown Flight #, UGL to PUQ, 12/5/2021, 4:45 PM to 8:55 PM on a 757 (Iceland Air)
- LA288, PUQ to PMC (Puerto Montt, Chile), 12/7/2021, 8:08 PM to 10:15 PM on an A320
- LA288, PMC to SCL, 12/7/2021, 10:50 PM to 12:35 AM + 1 day on an A320
- LA532, SCL to JFK, 12/8/2021, 11:20 PM to 7:30 AM + 1 day on a 787-8 PAX
- LA6177, JFK to BOS, 12/9/2021, 9:50 AM to 11:04 AM on an ERJ-175

There were no significant delays and I arrived on-time at each destination. I did, however, forget to take a Lorazepam for each takeoff, but no ill effects occurred.

Genesis and Pre-Trip Preparation

I first heard about this Antarctica adventure while Sue and I were in Bali in 2016 for another Total Solar Eclipse (TSE), our first. We went to Bali with TravelQuest (TQ) and while on that trip, we spoke with one of the TQ guides, Paul, who filled us in on some of the details regarding the trip to Antarctica planned for five-and-a-half years later. After hearing what Paul had to say, I decided that I was interested, and I thought that Sue was, too. However, as the date approached on which a decision was needed, she had some second and third thoughts on the matter and, due to various and valid reasons, opted to not go.

The first deposit for the trip, the way originally planned by TQ, was due some time in 2019. I submitted my deposit at the proper time, along with some forms indicating my intent to go, which included some waiver paperwork since a trip to Antarctica is considered to be “extreme travel.” For various reasons, the global COVID-19 pandemic among them, I backed out of the trip early on and was able to get my deposit back. In late October of 2021 I received from TQ a “last chance” e-mail to sign up for the Antarctic Expedition and after talking it over with Sue, decided (again) to go!

Logistically, this would prove to be a challenge since there was now only one month remaining in which to do all of the preparatory work before I was to begin my travels. Because of the pandemic, the airlines and the Chilean government required lots of COVID testing and submission of numerous related reports and other documentation. I first needed to obtain official permission to enter Chile from the Chilean government and health ministry, for which I had to provide vaccination affidavits, fill out forms (lots of forms) and upload various identification documents. Next, I needed to submit many more, and often different, forms to TQ, mostly having to do with medical declarations, waivers of liability and emergency contact information. A couple of these forms needed to be “witnessed” by Sue. I also had to order a

great deal of required clothing, gear, and equipment for the trip. I received a detailed document from Antarctic Logistics & Expeditions (A.L.E.), the entity that runs Union Glacier Base Camp (UGBC), on exactly what clothing and gear – and quantities of each – they specifically required me to purchase, which pieces of clothing and gear are available to rent, and a list of some optional supplies. It turned out that I could rent the outer jacket, pants and boots made for extreme cold conditions, and the sleeping bag, rated for temperatures down to -60°F, that I'd need for the tent. Guest accommodations at UGBC are double-walled Clam Tents with two cots and a small table. Thin, cot-sized mattresses are provided, as are pillows, pillowcases, and linens for the guest showers.

I needed to purchase insurance that included a minimum of \$300,000 of “evacuation” coverage to get me off of Antarctica in the event of a medical emergency or to repatriate my remains in the event of something worse. Plus, I needed \$50,000 of medical insurance that would cover any conditions that could crop up, and it needed to specify that I'd be covered in the event that I contracted COVID while on the trip.

While doing all of this, I needed to get payment over to TQ as well as make travel arrangements that included airline tickets and a hotel room in Santiago for a period of quarantine while I awaited test results from an entrance PCR test that was to be performed on arrival at SCL. Finally, I needed a COVID test performed here in Massachusetts with a swab taken within 72 hours of the plane taking off from JFK. I got a PCR test swab taken (#1*) at 11:00 AM on 11/21/2021 at the Rite Aid in Clinton, MA, but not having received the results by the next morning, I decided to drive into Boston to have a test (#2) performed at Logan, just to be safe. It turns out that when I returned home from the testing at BOS, I had results in my e-mail inbox from Clinton, so I ultimately ended up with two negative test results for my trip, but I felt better having the two than possibly having none.

Day One – Tuesday, November 23, 2021

My plane to JFK wasn't scheduled to depart BOS until 11:59 AM, but Sue offered to take me to the airport on her way into work, so I was there at BOS by 6:00 AM or so, which was fine with me. I'd have been happy taking the Red Line in from Alewife to South Station, then the Silver Line to BOS, but this was certainly more convenient, and I'm a big fan of being at the airport super-early. As it was, I needed to go through “Delta Special Services” since my final destination was international, following which I sailed through security as a TSA-Precheck member. I checked my large duffel bag all the way through to SCL, carrying only the small backpack that was one of the required purchases for the trip.

The flight from BOS to JFK left on-time and arrived early. I needed to hop on a shuttle to go from gate C69 to A2, but I had almost four hours before boarding began for a 6:05 PM departure to SCL. I'd not yet had anything to eat on this day, so I went to the most promising-looking establishment, “The Palm Bar & Grill.” This was a LATAM (Latin American) air terminal, however, and the menu skewed toward Hispanic and Caribbean fare, which in general isn't very vegetarian-friendly. I settled on asparagus and mashed potato side dishes (no main dish) and a glass of Sauvignon Blanc.

I couldn't find any location in this terminal to charge my device, but it still had around 50% power at this point, so as long as there was in-flight entertainment, it'd be OK. As an aside, JFK himself had been assassinated exactly 58 years and one day prior to my arrival at his namesake airport.

* The number in parenthesis after a mention of a COVID-19 test indicates which of the eleven tests that were performed on me either before or during the trip this was. This one was the first.

The flight from JFK to SCL took off on-time. The plane, a 787, was giant and very smooth. I was assigned an aisle seat, but as departure approached and the number of passengers boarding the craft slowed to barely a trickle, and since I was the only one in my row (27A-B-C on the port side of nine seats across, as I recall), I took the window seat. But just prior to the doors being closed, a girl came to my row and said that she had 27A, so I got up to go back to 27C, but she said that the aisle was fine with her.

A similar thing happened on the BOS to JFK flight. Boarding was just about over and there were two seats on either side of the aisle (A-B and C-D). I was assigned 17C, but just before takeoff, a man came down and, to my relief, sat in 18C, one of the few seats still open. 18D (the window) was taken. Then another latecomer came down the aisle and told the gentleman that 18C was his seat. The woman in 18D said she was actually supposed to be in 17D (where I'd already moved) and as everyone stood up to switch seats, the latest arrival said if everyone was happy where they were, he would be perfectly satisfied sitting in 17C. So, I ended up with two unexpected bonus window seats, and the flight from JFK to SCL had no one in the middle seat, either, which is always a welcome development.

Dinner was served on the JFK to SCL flight, but there was no "Pure Vegetarian" meal request made for me for some reason. Normally it's an automatic thing when I book through Expedia. The options for a meal that I was therefore given were a chicken dish (no) or a pasta dish with meat sauce (again, no). When I refused both and said I'd just have some red wine and a water, the flight attendant said "How about a salad? There's no meat on that." I said yes, that would be lovely and thanked her. Upon opening the salad, I learned that the flight attendant's idea of "no meat" means a generous pile of smoked salmon! I was happy with that, though, as I'd really not eaten much all day. I watched a movie starring Angelina Jolie as a firefighter called "Those Who Wish Me Dead," which I enjoyed, then slept for a while. I started "Free Guy" starring Ryan Reynolds, but lost interest due, mostly, to tiredness.

Day Two – Wednesday, November 24, 2021

Breakfast on the flight had no meatless option, so I ordered an orange juice and coffee. During the flight, in addition to the movies, I read almost an entire book. Coming in for a landing at SCL, I witnessed the sunrise over the Andes out of my window around 6:00 AM local time (4:00 AM EST). When not watching a movie, I have the screen on that shows the plane on its flight path. We attained an altitude of 41,000 feet where the temperature was -72°F. SCL is at an altitude of around 1500 feet, and the temperature on arrival there was 59°F, a 131°F swing!

Upon arrival at SCL, I was required to get a PCR test (#3), go through customs and take a shuttle to the Hilton Garden Inn, where I'd made a reservation for the night. There was the usual array of unscrupulous taxi drivers and others trying to convince me that the hotel shuttles don't start until around 10:00 AM and that I'd be much better off hiring one of them to get there instead. I declined, not rudely but not warmly, either, knowing that the HGI was expecting me and that they'd promised a free shuttle. I needed to wait, but only for a short time for the shuttle's arrival. The driver would not accept a tip from me when I offered him some American dollars. Even with the testing, customs and waiting for the shuttle, I arrived at the hotel far too early to check in, so I went to the hotel restaurant for breakfast.

The Andes from my hotel room at SCL looking east



I was checked into my room by around 11:30 AM or so, which is early since official check-in didn't begin until 3:00 PM. I caught up on my trip journal and took a nap before dinner, which I went down to at around 4:00 PM. I enjoyed some nice red wine, salad with smoked salmon (again) and spinach ravioli. I had the waitress bring a bottle of the excellent Chilean Carmenere wine up to my room for me, which I sipped until bedtime while watching some Netflix on my device.

Day Three – Thursday, November 25, 2021 (Thanksgiving Day USA)

Breakfast started at 6:00 AM the next morning, following which I was scheduled for the airport shuttle at 7:00 AM. Also on the shuttle were members of a ship's crew that would be going over the Drake Passage between six and eight times, weather dependent, during the upcoming season. We spoke for a little while about our various upcoming adventures. None of them were aware there was a TSE coming up on December 4, or that it could be the focus of at least one of their voyages.

The airport experience itself was somewhat trying, but mostly due to the language barrier (I speak very little Spanish). I was able to eventually navigate everything fine regardless and got to my gate with plenty of time to spare. The flight from SCL to PUQ was uneventful, but I was unfortunately not able to wheedle a window seat this time. However, I had my paper, puzzles, and the remainder of "Free Guy" to watch, so I was well occupied. As a side note, these 787s are so very large that when taking off, they, to me, don't seem as if they're going fast enough to actually leave the ground, and the noise level is very low, like the engines aren't working quite hard enough. But the planes do manage to get into the air before getting to the end of the runway, so I guess the physics works out.

We landed in Punta Arenas, or more properly at PUQ, about eleven minutes late at 12:30 PM. The airport is somewhat of a drive, maybe twenty minutes or so, from the beautiful port city itself, which is located on the Strait of Magellan. On arrival at PUQ, I needed to show proof of a recent, negative PCR test to a guard waiting at a gate. Once outside the small airport, I quickly located the A.L.E. representative who pointed out the bus for the hotel. By this time, I'd seen David Eicher deplaning. For those of you unfamiliar with the name, he was the astronomer for the trip, our celebrity (at least to me), who had been editor in chief of "Astronomy" magazine for the past twenty years. He'd been with the magazine for around 39 years total. I've been a subscriber off-and-on (mostly on) for around 41 years, so I was quite familiar with his work (and likeness) and very excited to make his acquaintance. His seat on the plane was obviously to the rear of my own since he exited the plane well after I did. On the bus, he was in the seat directly in front of me, but I thought it would be awkward to introduce myself at that time, and rightly guessed that there would be other and better opportunities.

Our first stop was at the A.L.E. office to take a rapid COVID test (#4), after which we drove to the hotel, Cabo De Hornes Hotel Patagonia. I checked into room 504 and caught up on my trip journal. I also met, again, having first done so on our Bali trip, Cody Carter of TQ. I found out that she is the only full-time employee of that company.

Latitudes and Longitudes of Various Stops on the Trip

Dudley MA, USA: 42.0434 N, 71.9276 W

BOS: 42.3656 N, 71.0096 W

JFK: 40.6413 N, 73.7781 W

SCL: 33.3898 S, 70.7944 W

PUQ: 53.0042 S, 70.8472 W

Union Glacier Camp: 79.7681 S, 83.2617 W

TQ held a “Welcome Dinner” on the night of the 25th at 8:00 PM, which is quite late for me. The dinner options were chicken, fish, or vegetarian. I chose the latter. I showed up around twelve minutes early, but many people from our group were already there, including Cody and David, with whom I chatted for a few minutes. He was quite pleasant and seemed genuinely happy to speak with me for a bit. I told him of my subscriber history, mentioned I read his column(s) every month and that I began subscribing immediately upon seeing “Cosmos” for the first time (the real one, not the one with Neil deGrasse Tyson). I also congratulated him on his work with Dr. Brian May and spoke of their book, “Mission Moon 3-D” (which I own) and of Dr. May’s invention, the OWL Stereoscopic Viewer.

There were several speeches prior to dinner being served: Michel, Cody, David and one other, who may have been the owner of TQ, but I don’t remember and didn’t write it down. I later found out that the

Welcome Dinner – Jack in the blue shirt speaking with Michel of TQ



owner came on the trip because TQ needed fifty people and had forty-nine since one needed to drop out for health reasons (not COVID, as I understood it). The dinner was OK, but I’m not sure why some chefs, who are in the business of food service, after all, can’t be more inventive and interesting, both presentation-wise and flavor-wise, with vegetarian fare. This one was white pasta, which I seem to remember was penne, with very few vegetables and a rather bland sauce. I sat at a table with three Californians (sort-of). One, a lady named Kitt, works mostly from home but commutes from the Bay area to Phoenix to care for aging parents. The other two, also from the Bay area, work near each other but are in the USA on H1B visas. Jing, from China, had quite an ordeal getting permissions to

travel from the USA through Chile then back to the USA that made my own trials seem trivial by comparison. Alex, from Russia, was mostly quiet, but mentioned that he saw his first TSE in the Arctic in 2015, and that this one in the Antarctic was to be his second! A unique way to begin one’s eclipse-chasing career, at the top and the bottom of the world! Both Alex and Jing were fairly young and, seemingly, teetotalers. Kitt seemed around my age and also appeared not to drink. I, on the other hand, enjoyed the free cocktail provided by TQ for the toast (a bit sweet for my taste, but it was free, after all) along with a glass of red wine which cost an estimated \$5.36. (I arrived at this figure by dividing the posted cost of 4400 Chilean pesos by 821, the going rate that day.)

Even though the dinner ended well after 10:00 PM, since Punta Arenas is located at 53 degrees south latitude, and since it was late spring in the Southern Hemisphere, it was still very light outside. It also

became light very early in the morning. This was a marked difference from what people that I'd left behind in New England were experiencing!

Day Four – Friday, November 26, 2021

Breakfast at the hotel started being served at 7:00 AM. I was generally up earlier, and with no coffee available in the rooms, I usually had to bide my time with the paper or the NYT crossword until I could head down. I arrived there at 7:00 AM and chose several items from the buffet: fruits, granola with (hot) milk, yogurt, toast with jam and coffee. I ordered three over-medium eggs from the kitchen. The hostess brought me, instead, two very runny sunny-side-up eggs and said that the third would be out shortly, for which I thanked her. After breakfast I took a coffee and water back to my room, worked on puzzles and waited until I had to leave at around 10:20 AM for my daily COVID test (#5) and to pick up my rental gear. I'd decided to rent the outer jacket, pants, boots and a sleeping bag (good to -60°F) from the folks at A.L.E. since I couldn't think of when I'd use such heavy-duty cold weather gear ever again in this lifetime.

Once back in my room, I tried on all of my rental gear in conjunction with the gear that I'd purchased, and everything seemed to fit fine. It was also extremely warm. Afterwards, I decided I should go out to see some of Punta Arenas, although I didn't want to go anywhere with a potential for being crowded and where I could possibly come down with the COVID since I'd opted to not insure the trip other than for the required evacuation insurance. I'd asked Cody what I was supposed to enter for "Trip Cost" when prompted on the insurance website, i.e., the cost of the TQ charge alone or to include all airline tickets, clothing, and other expenses. She replied that it's certainly up to me, but when she purchases that kind of insurance, she puts \$1 as the cost of the trip and pays substantially less for the insurance as a result. I tried it and ended up paying \$47 instead of the alternative \$2,300 that it would have cost had I entered the actual trip expense. But as a consequence of this decision, I didn't want to take any unnecessary chances and so didn't really see too much of Punta Arenas.

With this in mind, I thought that a visit to the famous cimiterio was in order. I reasoned that I could comfortably walk there, it wouldn't be too crowded, and it would be sufficiently interesting. All of these turned out to be true. The walk took around twenty minutes or so, I saw only two or three other individuals in the cemetery, none of whom ever came anywhere near me, and it was quite interesting,



CTY inside the cimiterio

although I did not know any of the "famous" people interred (or otherwise stored) there. I never checked but assume that these individuals are known to people from Chile for either government posts held or, more likely given the location of Punta Arenas on the Strait of Magellan, for some feat of maritime prowess or bravery. The cemetery is pretty fancy and very well-manicured and maintained. It is certainly well worth a visit if anyone finds themselves near there for any reason.

There wasn't much else of note within a comfortable walking distance, although I thought it may be nice to walk to the "Estrecho de Magallanes" to have an up-close look at some point.

Other points of interest would have required hiring a ride, which I wasn't too keen to do for reasons

mentioned above. For the remainder of the day, I stayed holed up in my hotel room and ate dinner at the hotel restaurant.

Day Five – Saturday, November 27, 2021

There were some loud car noises as if people were racing and peeling out around 4:30 AM or so, but I was awake anyway, waiting for breakfast, reading the paper, and working on the NYT crossword. I also heard a few loud bangs, which could've been gunshots. Worrisome, but things seemed to calm down by around 6:00 AM or so.

After breakfast, I eventually made my way down to the A.L.E. office for testing (#6), where I met several more people on the trip with TQ, one of whom was going on the South Pole add-on trip. After testing I again spoke with Dave Eicher, found out his age (he's a few years older than I) and found out he is thinking of retiring soon to Arizona. He is originally from Oxford OH but has decided that an astrophysicist that is enamored of visual astronomy should go where there are clear skies more often than in his hometown or in Wisconsin, where he lives currently. I couldn't agree more!

I waited in my room for dinner to begin. There was a wedding reception being held at the hotel, which made for a short-staffed dining area. I met another deadhead, Wayne from RI, who was admiring the Jerry Garcia shirt I had on (my normal Saturday attire), and I also met Tora from Sweden (originally Norway), who had a rather large role in the construction of a very famous structure in southern Sweden in the city of Malmö. It is called the "Turning Torso" skyscraper, the tallest building in Scandinavia. She says: "I was a member of the board that planned to build it, and later really built it. Some of the members had objections to it and wanted me to speak for them, which I denied, because I wanted it. So it was built partly because of me, since the others dared not oppose the person in charge." Very impressive, and when visiting Malmö, I'll be sure to stop by to admire the structure!

She also mentioned she is 78 years old and that this will be her 24th TSE. She witnessed the previous one in Antarctica in 2003, one of, surprisingly, two people on this trip to have done so! We spoke, dined, and had some wine over the course of about ninety minutes, then Cody, Dave and Michel sat down at the table next to us. Dave ordered a club sandwich with no tomatoes or mustard and with the crust trimmed off. To drink, he ordered a Coca Cola. Cody ordered a Sauvignon blanc, and a pumpkin soup based on my recommendation. I forget what Michel ordered. A Diet Coke was delivered to Dave, which he sent back, asking again for a regular Coke.

I had pumpkin soup, Faro salad and apple/rhubarb tort with white cream ice cream. I also had two glasses of red Chilean wine, which was very nice. Had they been available, I'd also have had the crab dish as well as the hummus dish, both of which I'd also had the previous night. We all chatted for quite a while, another ninety minutes or so at least. I found out that Cody has a daughter, and that Dave plays the drums, and that there is no piano available in the mess tent (or anywhere else) at Union Glacier Base Camp.

Since we were all having such a nice conversation, I thought I'd broach the subject of taking a photo with Dave since, to me at least, he is a celebrity. I asked him if he thought that he could take an ussie with me at some point during the trip, to which he readily agreed. I then asked about his policy, mentioning that Shatner charged me \$200, wondering what his cost would be. He replied that he should pay me! He didn't, but he did, the next day, take a couple of nice photos with me.

Day Six – Sunday, November 28, 2021

I woke early again to loud car racing noises out in the streets, read the paper, did the NYT crossword, and had breakfast. I then packed my checked bag for the flight to Antarctica, which was scheduled for the next morning. It was to be picked up by truck at noon, after which I was to proceed down to the A.L.E. office for weigh-in (of the bag, not of me), boarding pass and final COVID test for this leg.

I went to the lobby at around 11:45 AM for the bag pickup. Once the bags were loaded, I walked to the A.L.E. office with a new acquaintance, Maria from LA. We walked a different route than the one that I'd been using; she said she goes a different way each time. We found the place with little problem, weighed our bags, and signed a couple of forms before being handed our boarding passes. On the way out, I was informed by our A.L.E. contact, Anita, that I should not be wearing the rented boots around town. I suggested that A.L.E. should mention that in the literature as I'd already packed my only other shoes that I'd brought on the trip. We were, in fact, told that we'd need to be wearing our rented outer wear when we landed in Antarctica the next morning and that we could take only a carry-on with us. My carry-on was the small backpack that we were required to purchase, in which a pair of shoes would definitely not fit. I mention all of this to you, dear reader; to Anita, I apologized and said I'd head right back to the hotel with them.

Maria and I then went next door for our COVID tests (#7), then headed back toward the hotel. We got to chatting and walked past the street on which the hotel was located. Finding ourselves headed toward the Strait of Magellan, we decided we may as well keep going. I told her as a point of interest that I'd read in the morning paper that this date (November 28) was the 501st anniversary of Magellan emerging into the Pacific Ocean after traversing this very route in 1520! We took a few photos then parted ways. I was getting nervous about my boots, and she wanted to see a little more of the street and the various monuments that were arrayed along it.

CTY at the Strait of Magellan - Photo by Maria



Later that evening I enjoyed a nice dinner and conversation with Maria from LA after she did me the favor of taking a couple of photos of me with Dave. Dave decided to take his own dinner to his room because he wanted to watch the Packers/Rams game. I learned that he had attended 97 Packers games so far! He is certainly a dedicated fan.

During dinner, we learned that the pilot had cleared the flight for the morning, so we were given our bus assignments. Both Maria and I were on the first bus, Bus B (!), which was to depart at 8:45 AM. Bus A would follow at 9:00 AM. I paid for my dinner and for another glass of wine for the room and headed up to watch some Netflix and Amazon Prime TV on my device.

Day 7 – Monday, November 29, 2021

I awoke at 3:45 AM, read the paper and did my puzzles. I was at breakfast for 7:00 AM, after which I got ready and headed down to the lobby. I checked out of the hotel and was surprised to have a \$135 bill awaiting me for the meals that I'd eaten while there. I was expecting a bill closer to \$153, but I didn't argue. I paid up and went to wait for the bus.

We got to PUQ at around 9:30 AM and went right through security to Gate 1 for the PUQ to UGL flight! Everyone was very excited; it was a beautiful day and was supposed to be in Antarctica, too. I was a little nervous, not knowing exactly what to expect nearly 27 degrees of latitude farther south than I was right then, and before this trip, around 71 degrees latitude farther south than I'd ever been! I assume there must have been other people that were a little nervous, but no one showed it, probably because we were all excited to be on our way after overcoming so many hurdles.

I met my tentmate at the gate for the first time. He'd been in Punta Arenas with us but had forgotten all of his gear in Santiago so had to spend his time in Punta Arenas scouring the area stores for replacements. He seemed quite amiable, introducing himself as "Jay." It turns out that, in my opinion anyway, we were a good match. I enjoyed getting to know him over the next week or so, and certainly hope to meet up with him again on other adventures.

The plane was on the tarmac a little way off from Gate 1, so we needed to take buses to it. It was parked in front of an Ilyushin 76 (Il-76), a Russian vehicle mostly serving as a commercial freighter, but also as an emergency response transport for civilian evacuation and for other humanitarian and disaster relief functions. Its ability to operate on unpaved runways makes it useful in undeveloped areas, and until very recently, we'd have been taking this beast to Antarctica. (I was able to find some of that information on Wikipedia, where you can find it, also, if you'd like to read further about it.)

We were headed, thankfully, to the 757-200 parked in front of the Il-76, a beautiful passenger jet operated by Iceland Air. Once at the plane we needed to clean our boots before entering the craft on a pad that was laid out at the bottom of the stairway leading to the rear door, and we received a shot of hand sanitizer on entering the ship. Since there were only around fifty of us, we could choose any seat we'd like and, in fact, each had our own row! I chose a seat on the starboard side, as usual, directly behind the wing, as usual since I like to watch the various wing adjustments during takeoff and landing.

The pilot announced that the weather on Union Glacier was very nice and that the flight would take around 4:10. The crew seemed to be all Iceland natives. We were all given a rapid COVID test (#8), with which we were all quite familiar, and snacks were served. I had Kryzpo (Pringles-style chips), Tribu (a mix of nuts, cranberries and raisins, I think), Triton (vanilla cookies with lemon cream) and a white chocolate Toblerone. Also available was a small bag of gross sausage snacks, which I refused politely. I enjoyed a water with this assortment.

The flight itself was completely the opposite of what I was expecting. We were to fly over the Drake passage, and even though we'd be very high up, I thought it could be turbulent up there. However, it was one of the smoothest flights I've ever experienced, up to and including landing on the fabulous Blue-Ice Runway. The particular area of the glacier where the runway is located is normally extremely

windy and the ice is therefore constantly and naturally swept clean as a result. The runway is naturally occurring and the only thing that the crew needs to do is to install the reflectors defining the exact path so that the pilot can land properly. Landing (and takeoff) is all visual since there isn't actually an airport

*Landing on the Blue-Ice Runway at Union Glacier
Antarctica*



or any instrumentation. That's why the pilot needs great weather. He needs something like 20 km visibility in order to land. I thought I heard that it can be done with 7 km, but they prefer to have more.

Another interesting point regarding the flight is that the PUQ – UGL – PUQ round trip is well within the range of the 757 (and of the Il-76), so refueling is unnecessary while the plane is at UGL. However, if need be, there are refueling options available, though the logistics involved make the operation one that is best avoided if not strictly required.

We touched down on the Union Glacier Blue-Ice Runway at around 3:15 PM. We'd all been given a 45-minute warning and told that the cabin temperature was being lowered so that we could start getting our extreme cold weather gear on. I dressed in all of my gear for the most part because, even though the air temperature at the runway was purportedly -6°C ($\sim 21^{\circ}\text{F}$), the wind and dryness could make things uncomfortable for those not accustomed to this particular climate.

We were allowed to deplane after the plane turned around at the end of the runway and taxied back up to where the vehicles were waiting. We went out the back and upon exiting the craft, the first thing that struck me, literally, was the wind! It just about blew me off of the stairs. However, despite the wind, conditions didn't seem bad at all. I guess this was in good part a function of wearing appropriate clothing. I was excited to step onto this continent on which so small a percentage of humans ever gets to trod and immediately took a selfie as soon as I was clear of the steps. I also took a photo of my feet just to prove I was standing on the blue ice of Antarctica.

There were four transport vehicles waiting for us, but we were told that we could walk around the plane and take photos for a while if we so chose, which I did. I walked all around the plane, under the wings and generally loitered for as long as I felt necessary. The scenery was striking and beautiful. I was happy that all of the prep work that we all did culminated in all of us being able to be in Antarctica; a victory even if the eclipse ended up being clouded out (I won't offer a spoiler here).

I chose to ride in the orange track vehicle which seated sixteen individuals with two or three guides in the front. I don't recall whether it was full. The drive to UGBC itself took around fifteen minutes and on arrival we were given a camp tour and orientation. Guides told us all about some of the requirements of the camp and the procedures that we'd need to employ to use some of the amenities such as the toilets and showers. They also told us where the off-limits areas of the camp were and the reasons for the restrictions. After the brief orientation, I brought my things to my tent and stripped off some of the heavier outer clothing that I had donned prior to exiting the plane. At the camp, which was protected somewhat by Rossman Mountain, there wasn't as much wind as at the runway and the 21°F seemed much more comfortable. I was able to wear just a couple of the layers that I purchased for the trip along with my hat and glacier sunglasses. Eventually, I ended up removing the hat and walked around only layered up to the "medium" level.

A few of the TQ group at Union Glacier Base Camp with Rossman Mtn. in the background



The dining tent, known as the "Fram," had a snack buffet of soups and bread prepared for us, from which I chose the mushroom soup with a couple of pieces of garlic pita. Tomato soup was also available and looked very nice. It was a bit early for a full dinner and since we had no official lunch, this was a thoughtful spread put on by the A.L.E. crew. We then had a short lecture by some of the guides on how to set up and use the sleeping bags, what to bring on excursions regarding gear and clothing, and how to use the pee bottles (the last item was mainly for the females and took place following all of the males' departure from the lecture).

Dinner followed at the Fram and was in turn followed by another brief lecture that gave broad outlines for schedules for the next few days. There were to be excursions to some points of interest surrounding the UGBC, various lectures at the library building (known as the "Yelcho") and other activities such as guided bike rides, but we could also choose to do things on our own. I decided to check a book out from the library, one that had to do with Antarctic exploration and that seemed to be a length suited for the six-night stay, called "In The Antarctic: Stories of Scott's 'Last Expedition'" by Frank Debenham, a gentleman that was a member of Scott's expedition. After brushing my teeth in the "Guest Showers" building, I went to my tent for the evening. It was daylight at 9:24 PM. There is no sunset during the Antarctic "summer" at 80 degrees south, so I'd purchased a sleeping mask. It was a busy and exciting day, and I was pretty tired, but my tentmate, Jay, wasn't in the tent yet so I started reading my book. Once Jay showed up, we chatted a bit and then I went to sleep.

Day 8 – Tuesday, November 30, 2021

I slept extremely well, unexpectedly. I woke up once during the evening hours (odd to call it "night" since it was so bright outside at around 2:30 AM) to use the pee bottle, but the combination of the -60°F sleeping bag, the balaclava, the base layer and the sleeping mask made sleeping extremely comfortable. I've stayed in hotels that weren't as comfortable as that two-man double-walled tent. I arose for breakfast by around 7:30 AM and Jay and I made our way to the Fram. A few of our tablemates, fellow members of Group 7, were already there having coffee. Breakfast, which officially begins at 8:00 AM,

was being brought out slowly but was ultimately ready by 7:45 AM. Meals are buffet-style and each of us were assigned to a group. There were seven groups (ours contained eight individuals), and these were the groups to which we were assigned for the duration of the time on the continent. We'd be eating with each other, going on excursions and other activities for which group structure was required.

After breakfast, I got myself in on a guided bicycle tour around the 10K loop that was to be leaving at around 10:00 AM or so. We needed to go with an A.L.E. guide the first time, but after that we'd be allowed to go without one, provided we had at least two individuals and signed out a two-way radio.

Meanwhile, Jay had installed an Indonesian flag onto our tent, not only because of national pride, but so that we could recognize our tent more easily. By this time, though, I was able to find our tent pretty well on autopilot since I'd been in and out of it so often in just the one day. I took a couple of photos of Jay with the tent and flag, and he did the same for me. Then it was time to get ready for my ride.

I was required to dress fairly warmly, but not in full gear. I was to put on all of my purchased gear as well as my "shell" layer, which protects against wind and precipitation. There was no precipitation, but away from camp the wind tends to increase, so that was an uncertainty that we were required to be prepared to encounter. We also needed to apply sunscreen to exposed skin, of which there was very little, and sun-protection lip balm to lips. I applied a generous amount of both even though I expected I'd wear both my neck gaiter and balaclava along with the ear-flapped/visor hat and hood(s) if need be. I used my glacier sunglasses instead of goggles and was required to put both water and a pee bottle into my backpack. I also took my camera in case a photo-op presented itself. I used outer gloves instead of mittens and I carried the base glove layer for picture-taking if needed. I wore hiking shoes with two sock layers. This may seem like overkill, but: 1) it's Antarctica, and 2) I'd never been on an excursion and didn't know what to expect.

In order to go on the bike ride, I sacrificed being able to hear the lecture on penguins in the Yelcho, but I decided I'd like to secure for myself the option of morning (or afternoon, depending on daily excursion schedules) rides if the weather held, and I wanted to be able to get some activity in the bag since the whole trip thus far was sitting around and eating. Plus, I was excited to be getting out for a little exploration, and we'd be (supposedly – more on this in a bit) riding past the eclipse viewing area, so I'd get a glimpse of that. It was -10°C (~14°F) with a light breeze in camp.

Before we took off, we found out from our guide that the mountain that seemed to abut our tents is called Rossman Mountain and is around 2 km away. This was shocking to all of us, as it really looked as if we could reach it in about a five-minute stroll. There were ten of us signed up for the bike ride, including our guide, Wes. We all chose a wide-tire bike based on our height (there were three size options), practiced for a minute or so, then set off. I could tell right away that there was going to be some trouble. Three people on the ride kept falling behind, one of whom was a relatively heavy smoker. The pedaling on the snowy, somewhat bumpy surface wasn't particularly easy and after about ¼-mile or so, one person (the smoker) decided to turn back to camp. Wes called the camp and requested a snowmobile with a sled so that the individual and a bike could be brought back to camp. We waited a few minutes for the rescue, then we went another ¼-mile or so. When Wes stopped, those of us around him also stopped and, looking in back of our position, I noticed that there were several individuals that were WAY back and two people walking their bikes, which was not an encouraging sign.

CTY and others on the guided 10K bike ride



Once everyone caught up, we continued on at a pretty good clip for a long while and stopped again. Wes said that he thought we were 2-1/2 or 3 miles in (of 7) and that we'd better turn back at that point, or we wouldn't make lunch (a concern for all of us). We waited about fifteen minutes for the stragglers and when they caught up with us, we turned back. At the turnoff where the path we were on met up with the road back to UGBC, Wes made a disturbing discovery: that he'd guided us down the wrong path and that the 10K loop turnoff was the one BEFORE the one that we took. The one we took, he said, would have eventually led us to a remote A.L.E. camp, but definitely not back to the UGBC, for which he

apologized profusely. We also didn't go past the eclipse viewing site as a result. I was worried that because of this snafu, this trip would not qualify us to go on the loop on our own over subsequent days, but Wes assured me that he'd put in a good word and didn't think that there would be a problem. In anticipation of us being allowed to strike out on our own, I and a couple of other individuals, Andreas (from Germany) and Reid (from the US), decided to go together in the morning.

Back at the tent, I removed my shell layer and was surprised that the inside was positively soaked with sweat! I didn't feel at all strained from the effort and didn't think that I'd been sweating, but I was obviously mistaken. At this point, I decided to count these outings as exercise. (Andreas later told me that his fitness watch indicated we'd biked for around 12K over an hour and a half or so.) Each side of the tent was provided with a line for hanging wet items, so I turned my shell layer inside-out and hung it up and got ready for lunch. Jay was outside the tent setting up his telescopes and photography equipment so that he could perform a "dry run" in preparation for the Big Day.

Lunch was baked fish, cabbage, cauliflower, quinoa, corn salad, vegetable soup, salad and rice. I had a little of everything, like I like, with a generous helping of hot sauce, especially on the rice. There were five different hot sauce options, all full, on our table. By the end of the trip, these would be mostly empty as we all ended up using quite a lot at each meal. I noticed that most other individuals on the TQ trip with us did not adorn their meals similarly, as bottles at other tables were still full by the end of the seven days.

Our group, Group 7 was scheduled to go on the afternoon excursion with Group 1 to the "Charles Windscoop." We could easily see the feature from camp, and it seemed fairly close (like Rossman Mtn.), but the guide told us it was around 22 km away. We were told it would take us around 45 to 50 minutes to get there in the track vehicle, we'd be able to walk (trek) around, guided of course, for a couple of hours, then we'd head back. It turned out that one individual opted to not go on the excursion, so there ended up being fifteen of us. It also happened that the trip to the area took only ½-hour or so.

We exited the exceptionally slow, rumbling vehicle (the same one that I rode from the Blue-Ice Runway to UGBC on the first day) and were each, in turn, fitted with crampon-lite contraptions over our boots and issued a trekking pole. Once everyone was properly outfitted, we headed toward the target feature. Anders, Brooke and Juan were our guides for this excursion. Anders seemed to be the main guide, and during our trek, he told us about the features that we were seeing and about glacier formation and behavior in general. Also on the way, I was able to have an amiable chat with Cody (TQ). It turns out that

she'd be performing as a dancer in an upcoming production of "The Nutcracker," I assume back in Prescott AZ, and that she had (as I recall) the "Winter Dance" stuck in her head. (Looking for this back home, I couldn't find a song listed with that title. Maybe it was "Waltz of the Snowflakes" from the end of Act I that she said, or maybe it was something else. I tried hard to catch everything that she'd said, but it was difficult to hear with all of that headgear on and with the wind.) Cody's daughter, 10, was also to perform, but in one scene as a party guest and then in another supporting role, both in Act I, I'd guess since there are no children in Act II except for Clara as far as I remember. Cody and her husband have been owners of an art gallery in Prescott for 17 years now, which is obviously quite successful. She also is, as you recall, the only full-time employee of TQ at present.

Our trek took us about 4K round-trip, according to Jay, and took around 2 hours total. He walked at a more leisurely pace than I and hung around Michel (TQ) for the most part. There was a small hill at around the one-hour point that our guide, Anders, figured we should "summit," which most of us did. After a short break, we headed back toward the vehicle. On the way back, two incidents occurred which had the potential to be disastrous but were thankfully not. One person from our party, upon de-summitting the hill, slipped and started on a slide from which he could not possibly recover. He was headed directly toward another trekker a few yards ahead and plowed into her legs but managed to maneuver in such a way that her fall was contained and, after recovering and righting themselves, it was determined that neither were injured, seriously or otherwise. A short while later, another member of our party ended up slipping and falling on his way back, but this happened long after I had returned to the vehicle, so I was not an eyewitness to this second event. As I understand it, one of his crampon-lite devices fell off in the process and one of our guides was radioed and started to head back to assist. However, those trekking with the individual were able to get his crampon-lite back on and lift him back up. He was also not seriously (or otherwise) injured to the best of my knowledge.



Cody and others "summitting" near the Charles Windscoop

Once we were all back at the vehicle, we returned our trekking poles and crampon-lite devices to the guides, and they prepared beverages (hot tea, cocoa or coffee) and snacks for us prior to boarding the vehicle. We all enjoyed these items (I chose a green tea, as did Cody, but many others opted for cocoa), then hopped onto the track vehicle.

Upon our return to UGBC about a half-hour later, we were asked to report to the Yelcho for a rapid COVID test (#9), then I decided that it was high time for a shave and shower! I went to our tent, which I suppose I should mention was named "Lopetegui" after General (R) Javier Lopetegui Torres (you can read a little about him here: <https://antarctic-logistics.com/2010/08/28/general-r-javier-lopetegui-torres/> if you'd like), grabbed my various products used in the shaving and showering process, and headed over to the Guest Shower buildings. I suppose I should also mention that all of the guest tents had names associated with them; individuals that had some connection with Antarctica, its exploration and/or its development.

Each of the two Guest Shower buildings had a sink with high faucet in the center, a cold-water container that was kept filled for brushing teeth and three shower stalls arrayed on the left and right sides. The buildings, although not heated, were quite warm and the shower stall areas each had locking doors so that the buildings themselves were able to be used by any combination of sexes at any one time. Each shower stall was something that would look fine in any modern house except with a few modifications that were necessary to accommodate the unique location in which they were being used. First, each stall had an associated five-gallon bucket which one filled using the faucet in the middle of the back wall of the building. About 2/3 full gave around a three-minute shower. Next, since all water – drinking,



Guest shower stall with wall switch for pump

cooking, washing, etc. – was produced by melting snow from a designated “clean snow” area that was one of the “off-limits” areas for us guests, the water from the faucet (and all faucets, it turns out) was extremely hot. Therefore, a bucket of clean snow was kept outside the door of the building so that one could, after filling the bucket to the desired level with hot water, scoop snow into it until the desired showering temperature was reached. Then the temperature-adjusted bucket of water was placed adjacent to the shower where there was a hose that was to be inserted down to the bottom of the bucket. A toggle on/off switch located on the wall next to the shower could then be switched up, turning a pump on that pumped the water through the shower head. Wastewater from the shower flowed through the drain and into a container for transport back to Chile for treatment. After my first shower, I decided that the hot water didn’t need any adjustment with snow. Since I shaved first, the water cooled enough in those few minutes for a pleasant experience. I found it best to run the pump to get wet, shut the pump off, lather up, then start it up again to rinse and let the bucket run dry. During my six night/seven day stay on the continent, I showered three times. In the literature we received before the trip from A.L.E., a shower every other day was the desired frequency to save on wastewater and cut down on having to make water, an energy-intensive process. On the signs in the buildings while we were there, however, it suggested a shower every three to four days, maybe because there were more of us there than is usual. I stuck with the “every other day” frequency.

I thought it lucky that I took a shower before my tentmate, Jay, attempted it because on the first day I filled the bucket only 1/3 full as suggested by the guide during the initial tour. I barely had time to rinse off when the water ran out. I told Jay he should probably fill the bucket as much as he could lift to afford himself a little longer rinsing time, which he did. As it was, even with the full bucket, he said he had just enough time!

Dinner that night was nice. The meat-eater protein was lamb, but the side dishes were all excellent, filling and vegetarian, and I easily had my fill. The after-dinner conversation over several glasses of wine was scintillating. It turns out that Rob and Chuck were shipmates in their teens, working in an engine room, and I, being a fan of “Disasters at Sea,” was fascinated by the hair-raising stories they told. There were tales of failing parts, rough seas and repairs being performed in cramped, cold, wet, dark spaces. All of that and there didn’t seem to be the proper suits aboard that now are required in case a crew needs to jump into the frigid North Atlantic for some reason. I enjoyed starting to get to know my tablemates a little better.

Day 9 – Wednesday, December 1, 2021

I again slept great from around 10:00 PM to 6:30 AM or so. Jay was still sound asleep when I arose, so I got dressed quietly and headed over to the Fram to make some coffee and to catch up on my trip diary. I made a full pot of French press and drank it all down prior to breakfast, which as I've mentioned started at 8:00 AM. Meanwhile, Wally and Jack showed up and we spoke about our various adventures and upcoming eclipses. Wally was from Group 7, but Jack was from another table.

After breakfast, I grabbed a two-way radio from the Comms office from a gentleman named Chago and told him that I would be going on the 10K loop with Andreas and Reid. He asked if I'd taken a guided ride yet and I told him that yes, I went out the day before. He laughed and asked if it was with Wes's group and I confirmed that it was, but that I knew the correct way to go regardless. It took the three of us around an hour to pedal around the loop. We were gone a bit longer, maybe 1:10 or so, because we stopped at the eclipse viewing area to have a look around, then we stopped at the "Welcome Back To Union Glacier Camp!" sign heading back into camp for some photos.



Reid (left) and Andreas

Andreas, who is from Germany, mentioned that the ride with Wes the day before (he was on it) was actually 12K. It was also rather rough as far as the grooming goes. On this day, we found the 10K loop to be well-groomed and, once we took the right at the "Christmas Tree" sign, which is what we'd failed to do the day before, an easy ride. I told Jay that, should he decide to go, he'd have no trouble and that we may go again the next morning if he wanted to join us.

I decided to attend the morning lecture at 11:00 AM called "Belgian Expedition: How the Belgians Discovered Antarctica." Actually, it turns out that the name on the slide was "Adrien de Gerlache's Belgian Expedition: 1897 – 99," but the former was the name printed on the activities board in the Fram. The lectures were held in the Yelcho and given by Carol, a member of the Guest Services team. Carol explained that the Belgian expedition ended up discovering the "Belgica Antarctica," a wingless midge (fly), the largest native land animal on the continent. The midges spend all year on the continent and contain a type of "antifreeze" in their bodies that allows them to survive over the winter.

After the lecture and lunch, I got ready for the day's excursion. Our group was to go to the "Drake Icefall" to do some exploring and trekking. It took us around forty minutes to get there. Like the day before, there were two groups of eight people (Groups 4 and 7), but one person from Group 4 decided to not go, so we had 15 people from the groups and three guides. We drove there in a Ford F550 that has six tires. The machine was designed and built by Ford for this very application: use by A.L.E. on Union Glacier Antarctica! It's quite a truck, with a much smoother ride than the track vehicle and capable of faster speeds.



CTY at the Drake Icefall

When we arrived at the Drake Icefall, we were told that it was windy, so we should wear our goggles instead of sunglasses and cover all skin on our faces with gaiters and/or balaclavas. We were also advised to wear all of our extreme weather clothing, including liner gloves under heavy gloves (I wore my mittens). I ended up being quite comfortable since I wore everything that I was told that I should, but there were a few in the group that were not because they did not.

We were again fitted with crampon-lites and given a trek pole. This trek was almost entirely on blue ice that resembled large ocean swells and was therefore

slightly more difficult than the one on the day before. It was still quite manageable with due caution, and there were no mishaps. Looking at the icefall, even as close to it as we seemed to be, we would never have guessed that it spans over two miles, but we were assured by our guides that it does, and by now we all believed them.

We trekked for around 1-1/2 hours, then headed back to the vehicle where we were again offered hot beverage and snacks from our guides. I didn't take any on this day. I took some photos as we drove back to the UGBC of the snow blowing fiercely around the mountain peaks and of the Blue-Ice Runway as we crossed over it.

After returning and stowing all of my heavier clothing and equipment, I shaved and showered. The water was only lukewarm for some reason, but it was warm enough for me, and I was satisfied to be clean after all of that trekking in addition to the morning's bike ride.

We had another lively after-dinner conversation over some wine and beer. After that, I went to bed to read for a while (it was already around 10:00 PM). Jay didn't show up in the tent until midnight or so. The winds were howling outside of the tent, and he was working on some of his equipment in the freezing Antarctic "night." He came in for good after a half-hour or so and had to work diligently in order to get his extremities, especially his hands, warm enough to comfortably sleep. I slept well enough again, this time waking up by around 7:30 AM.

Day 10 – Thursday, December 2, 2021

I went to breakfast in the Fram and enjoyed some coffee and conversation. We had a group ride scheduled for the 10K loop. After breakfast, I got dressed and geared up for it and went to the Comms tent where I needed to await Chago's arrival so that I could be issued a radio. I told him there would be four of us on this day: Rob, Chuck, Sue and me out on the loop. We chose our bikes and took off by around 9:20 AM or so. We made it about halfway to the "Christmas Tree / 10K Loop" sign (~1K or so)

when Sue decided that this ride wasn't for her, so she turned around and headed back into UGBC. I radioed Chago to let him know we were down to three for the loop and that Sue should be coming back into camp within the next few minutes.

The ride gets very smooth after the turn at the Christmas tree, and we made pretty good time, stopping at the eclipse viewing site for a look around and to have some water. We also stopped at the "Welcome Back To Union Glacier Camp!" sign for a photo op, where I took a few snaps of Chuck and Rob. We re-entered camp at around 10:20 AM or so, and after turning in the radio and hanging my soaked shell up to dry, I went over to the library for the morning lecture.



Rob (left) and Chuck on the 10K Loop

On this day, Carol gave a talk entitled "The Swedish Expedition: 1901-1903." The talk was extremely interesting, focusing on how the explorers were separated into three groups at various places, two of which were unforeseen, one by design. She then discussed the measures needed to be taken to afford any chance at all of survival over the brutal Antarctic winter and the eventual luck and good fortune mixed with a small amount of foresight that led to the eventual rescue of most. The sole casualty was a 19-year-old able seaman who died of a congenital disease and is buried on the island to this day. Following his death, the survivors packed his corpse in snow directly adjacent to the encampment. A penguin colony now oversees the grave, and humans are not allowed to disturb it in any way.



Large hill at the Buchanan Hills. I'd been up there already by the time I took this photo.

this while comfortably seated in the vehicle.

After lunch our group took our third scheduled excursion to the Buchanan Hills. It is a location that offers excellent views of Union Glacier, the Ronnie Ice Shelf and the Weddell Sea! However, visibility on this particular day was not optimal, so we ended up not being able to see all the way to the sea. Our guides were Anders, Brooke and Juan. Brooke told us that the ride would take around one hour, but it actually took 46 minutes. We were paired with Group 5, which included the Swedish Tora whom I've mentioned elsewhere in this report. Our group was one short as Michel decided not to join us, so we had fifteen total for the excursion. We had to climb a rather steep embankment to arrive at the point from which we were to embark on our trek. Luckily, we did

Once there, the guides determined that the crampon-lites were unnecessary and that we'd need only use the trekking poles. We exited the vehicle and made sure that our gear was properly adjusted before Anders set out up the jagged, steep hill to our vantage. I followed him relatively closely until we were nearly at the top, then glanced behind myself and realized that I was far from comfortable being up on such a steep embankment (I wrote in my journal "...in such a predicament."). I allowed a couple of

people to pass me, then made my cautious way back down to an alternate viewing point. On the way, I noticed that Tora had come to a similar conclusion, but wisely *before* attempting the perilous climb.

The wind was the strongest that I'd yet experienced on the continent, and the temperature, though a balmy -2°C at camp, was obviously much lower at this elevation, which Brooke informed us was around 2,490 feet. The view was spectacular, even with the less-than-ideal conditions, and well-worth the effort to get there. I, in fact, quite enjoyed these bracing winds and harsher weather because it made me viscerally aware of actually being in Antarctica as opposed to anywhere else on the planet.

Following the usual hot drink and snack offering, of which I again did not partake, we headed back to UGBC. The ride was uneventful, and we arrived before 5:00 PM. After removing my outer layers, I went to the library to catch up on this log and to do some reading on the subject of Antarctica before dinner.

Dinner was very nice, as usual, the difference on this night being that the table that was adjacent to ours (ours was the one closest to the buffet) was now occupied. It was vacant before, but now was populated with a group identified by a tag at the end of the table as "EMPS." This referred to a group of individuals that were, until then, staying in a remote camp located next to the Emperor Penguin rookery and were originally going to view the eclipse from that camp. The prospects for the eclipse to be visible from that location, however, had deteriorated to the point that the whole lot of them were flown to UGBC so that they'd have a better chance of seeing the Main Event. We met a few of them, including one person from Singapore, with whom I chatted for a while. Her significant other, originally from Houston and another couple, with whom I brushed teeth a little later on, also were in on the conversation.

We received, during dinner, an updated prediction on the expected weather conditions for the eclipse. The chance for cloud cover during the eclipse, as of 8:00 PM on this evening and based on the latest available models, was zero. We all hoped that would continue to be the case. Following dinner, I decided to read in the library for a bit since it is far more comfortable for reading than the tent. I finished the book that I took out from the library and learned that I should try to watch a film entitled "Scott of the Antarctic" when I get home. Once back in the tent, I watched an episode of "Squid Game" and went to sleep around 10:45 PM. Jay didn't get in until 2:00 AM or so. He was again working on debugging his camera and equipment setup.

Day 11 – Friday, December 3, 2021

I awoke at around 6:30 AM and made my way over to the Fram to make a pot of coffee. Eventually, Wally showed up and breakfast was served a little early at around 7:50 AM. I shaved, showered, and changed my underthings (base layer) for the first time in Antarctica. The excursion on this day was to leave at 9:30 AM, so I planned on heading over to the meeting point, right outside of the Fram, for 9:15 AM.

This excursion was a rarity in that our group was alone in a van (Van 1) and since there were four from our group that decided to not go for one reason or another, there were only four in the van, which made the ride quite comfortable. In Van 2, though, they seemed to have a full house. We originally were billed to go to "Rhodes Bluff," which is located to the right as one views the "Elephant Head" feature, but there reportedly were some extreme winds over there, so the guides made the decision that we'd instead go to a formation to the left of "Elephant Head."

We travelled past the Blue-Ice Runway, then cut down and across a hill comprised of more blue ice. After having some crampon-lites installed on our boots and being issued trekking poles, we were on our way. The trek itself was definitely on the milder side compared with previous excursions. It was icy, but relatively flat. Our guides were Brooke and Anders. Wes was leading the group in Van 2. Odd that he was alone with a full van and the four of us had two guides, the former being an 8:1 ratio and the latter being a 2:1 ratio.

Brooke explained some of what we'd be seeing, and Anders also provided some informational exposition. One of the features was that the ice itself, both the smoother areas and the more rippled parts, would be peppered throughout with air bubbles. We saw plenty of this effect, which is produced when pebbles and rocks of various sizes are blown in the strong winds onto the ice and, through a slow process of melting and refreezing around them due to their darker color absorbing more solar radiation over many years, work their way down leaving these paths made of air pockets. We were also told that the smooth ice, which was adjacent to glacial moraine as a rule, occurred because the ice under the moraine, which despite appearances was only a couple of inches deep, would melt and flow on "warmer" days and then refreeze.



One of the people in the group from Van 2, Rhona, a Scot who describes herself as an amateur geologist, informed us, after we were told that "Elephant Head" is a marble feature that stands out from the other rocks around the area, that marble such as that which comprises "Elephant Head" is made through a geological process of limestone compression. It was fortunate that she was there because Anders didn't seem to know that, and he thanked her for the explanation.

CTY with the Elephant Head formation in the background

Another unusual feature of that area for which we were meant to be keeping a lookout were numerous (purportedly, as we ended up seeing none) tracks from trilobites, or even actual fossils of the animals themselves. We searched and searched, but despite our best efforts, none of us could find a single one. Brooke assured us, however, that they exist, and that she will continue looking on future excursions.

Finally, we were to look for a wavy pattern on the rocks which, Brooke claimed, were indicative of the action upon the ancient seabed of waves and tides. Like the trilobite evidence, I saw none of this. I did, however, learn a little about Brooke: she quite enjoys a nice bourbon, either neat or with a splash of water, depending (on what, she didn't say); also, she will not say no to an Old Fashioned. Neither she nor Anders had yet seen an eclipse. So, in our van, I seemed to be the only one that had seen a TSE (Rob, Sue and Chuck were also in the van). Therefore, if the weather was favorable in the morning, it would be the first for those five and the third for me. I'll leave whether the weather cooperated as a suspense point for now, ensuring that you'll anxiously read on.

Before lunch, I formally met a person named Charles, originally from Vermont. He knew my name, but I didn't know his. He claimed that he overheard me introducing myself to someone at the hotel in Punta Arenas. He sat down at table 7 for a chat, and we were quickly joined by Rhona, Reid, another person

that I don't know, and Martin, whom I learned was a "government lawyer." After we chatted for a while, official Group 7 people started to show up for lunch and that other group retreated to their tables.

Following lunch, I went over to the library to catch up on this record, do a little reading and wait for the afternoon lecture scheduled to begin at 3:30 PM. The topic was "The Solar Eclipse: A Cultural History," by Carol, of course. She went through the history of eclipses throughout history focusing on the cultural aspects. She was very slightly off regarding a few of the scientific aspects but had apologized in advance of the lecture because she thought that would probably be the case. As usual, the talk was engaging and



Carol giving a lecture in the Yelcho

had a nice breadth of topics and appropriate cross-section of cultures represented. Overall, my plan to go on every offered excursion (because, since I was in Antarctica I wanted to get out as often as possible to witness the various sights on and around Union Glacier) and, when not on excursions, to attend every offered lecture worked out quite well. I missed only the lecture on penguins on the first morning because I wanted to go on the guided 10K bike ride, which turned out to be a good decision.

Since there was under an hour between the end of Carol's lecture and the start of David Eicher's presentation, I decided to head over to the Fram to wait for its start. The lectures that Carol gave were all in the Yelcho and the weather updates, David's talk and a post-eclipse presentation by Michel were all in the Fram. I sat in my usual seat at our table and was soon joined by other Group 7 members.

David's talk was much more scientific regarding the eclipse than was Carol's cultural overview. He gave an excellent, humorous, and informative talk, as expected, going over the geometry of eclipses, types of eclipses, apparent sizes of the Moon and the Sun (including the percentage difference, which is around 3% in the Moon's favor for this particular eclipse), and things to do and not to do during the eclipse (handheld-device astrophotography being a resounding NOT). Carolyn (head of guest services) gave a little update on logistics and transportation for the eclipse, Mark presented a final weather prediction as the eclipse was now a matter of hours away (his prediction was zero percent chance of cloud cover, but that it would be windy with a Real Feel approaching -30°C (-22°F), so we should all dress accordingly). David then ended with a Q&A session, for which he received and answered two questions.

I then enjoyed an interesting conversation with Wally followed by dinner. During dinner, we took some Table 7 photos, then I brushed my teeth and was heading to the library to read. On the way there I ran into Johanna, with whom I'd planned on biking the 10K loop in the morning, after the eclipse. We chatted for a while about the ride, deciding that we'd go after breakfast, around 9:00 AM. Her father joined us during our talk (we were outside the Fram). Johanna's father, Alan, was a paperboy in his youth, as was I, but the paper cost during his time delivering was \$0.30/week. He delivered the evening edition of his local paper in a South Carolina town. I delivered the Evening



Half of Group 7: Wally, Rob, Chuck, Takumi (l-r)

Gazette, the sister newspaper to the Worcester Telegram when I was a teen. The cost of the paper that I delivered was \$1.20/week of which \$0.30 went to me. Both of us delivered for six days per week, Monday through Saturday. I had a route that hovered between 20-23 customers at any one time, so my base pay was around \$6-\$7 per week plus tips, which usually brought my total to around \$10. It took around two hours over the six days, so I was earning around \$5/hour in 1978, which was pretty good. Alan didn't remember what his share of the thirty cents was, nor did he remember what he made weekly. I mentioned that I was able to keep myself in science and sci-fi books on that \$10 per week.

Before going to bed, I helped Jay carry his considerable gear (three bags and a tripod that would not fit in any of them) from the tent to the Track 5 vehicle. Due to the weight of his bags, he still needed to make two trips, taking the largest and heaviest of the bunch, while I took his smallest and the tripod. He'd decided to take the earliest transport to the site, which left camp at 10:30 PM. I'd planned on taking the latest, which was to leave camp at 3:30 AM since I didn't need to set anything up.

Day 12 – Saturday, December 4, 2021 – The Eclipse!

I awoke at around 2:30 AM so that I'd have time to get properly dressed, make sure that I had everything that I wanted to bring (solar glasses, solar binoculars, camera) and get to the Fram by 3:15 AM. The largest group of people had signed up for the 3:00 AM shuttle, but since First Contact wasn't until 3:53 AM, I saw no reason to arrive earlier than a few minutes ahead of that.

We'd gotten word the previous evening that, for some reason not revealed to us, two cruise ships that were going to try to get themselves into the Moon's shadow somewhere in the Weddell Sea turned back, so the individuals aboard would not be witnessing the eclipse. I figured that must have been at least a couple of hundred people, possibly many more. I think that left only those of us that would be watching this event from Union Glacier's eclipse viewing site, to the exclusion of all other souls on the planet, that would witness this TSE. This included not only those of us in the TQ group, but a team of NASA scientists, a crew from Madison Square Garden shooting footage for a new installation in NYC of some dome being built for the purpose, a few people at the adjacent Chilean military camp, the A.L.E. staff, and the "EMPS" people flown in the day before. I'd guess that we numbered around 150 people. So, 150 individuals out of the 7,000,000,000 (not exact numbers in either case, as far as I know) on the planet would be viewing this great event. Rounding off after doing the math, that's 0.00% of the planet's population, and I was one of them! (It turns out that the percentage actually calculates to around 0.000002%, so you can see that my rounding to 0.00% is accurate.)

Eclipse Rundown – Timing of Contacts

First Contact: ~3:53: AM*

Second Contact: 4:44:54 AM

Third Contact: 4:45:40 AM

Fourth Contact: ~5:36 AM*

*Since First and Fourth Contacts aren't the most awe-inspiring parts of the Main Event, I decided that listing their times to-the-second wasn't terribly important. The 46.5 seconds of totality between Second and Third Contacts is why we were all there!

I was dressed in my “excursion” outfit, meaning full under-layers, Antarctic outer layers and boots, neck gaiter, hat and goggles. I made sure to bring my camera (for crowd photos), eclipse glasses and binoculars. The Track 5 actually left camp early since we all showed up at 3:15 AM for the 3:30 AM



"Photographer Row" featuring dedicated individuals that had been setting up equipment for five hours

departure. We therefore arrived at the site by 3:30 AM, leaving over twenty minutes until First Contact, which was plenty of time to get comfortably situated. I disembarked, took a few photos of the crowd, the surroundings, and the row of photographers, most of whom had been there for five hours already! I then went inside the building and grabbed a chair to set up adjacent to “photographer row.”

First Contact is always exciting, even though it is not particularly visually stimulating, just because it finally signals the start of the long-awaited event. In my case, I’d been looking forward to this since March of 2016, over 5-1/2 years earlier. I witnessed First Contact and offered my binoculars, which are made solely

for solar viewing, to Reid, Maria and one or two others standing nearby. They seemed to appreciate the view after they could locate the Sun in the sky with the binoculars, which isn’t as easy as you may think.

The partial phases following First Contact seem to go slowly, but it actually was only around 51 minutes between First and Second Contacts; that is, until Baily’s Beads would make their long-awaited appearance. As Second Contact approached, we all made note of the increasingly eerie lighting around us, the sharpening of shadows, the gradual appearance of the most prominent and “trippy” (as Reid described them) Shadow Bands that I and anyone else there had ever witnessed, the appearance of Venus (I think I saw it, but maybe not since it was so low on the horizon), then Jupiter and finally Saturn. For me, Mercury proved too elusive, and I didn’t want to waste time looking for it. Just before second contact, we all witnessed the awesome sight of the Moon’s shadow racing toward us across the ice from the horizon! Finally, Baily’s Beads, a brilliant Diamond Ring, and then...

TOTALITY!!!

As anyone who has ever seen a TSE knows, all totalities are short, no matter their absolute (actual) duration. The apparent (perceived) duration of totality never seems to be more than about ten seconds. But in this case, the absolute duration at this particular site on the eclipse path was 46.5 seconds, the shortest of the three that I’ve now seen, which caused those ten apparent seconds to seem even shorter! For each of the other two, I was much closer to the center line of the path, and in fact, I was within a mile or so of the point of Greatest Eclipse for the 2017 Great American Eclipse in Hopkinsville, Kentucky. For this one, we were near the edge of the path for logistical reasons. There was just no easy and safe way to move the group closer to the center line on this continent.

As is my usual practice, I won't attempt to describe totality. For those that may be reading this who have never seen an eclipse, I don't want to do an injustice to the event by not crafting the descriptive prose with the skill it deserves. There are few individuals in the world that possess the requisite talent and are sufficiently poetically gifted to describe such a thing, and I am not one of them. Any description would need to capture the powerful, emotionally transformative effect that this event and this event alone has on the human psyche. Cheers, tears of joy, gasps of wonder and unrestrained happiness rippled through the crowd during this amazing once-in-a-lifetime event. Then, all too soon, the Diamond Ring of Third Contact appeared, then Baily's Beads and the closing partial phases prior to Fourth Contact.

During totality, I kept my focus directly on the Sun-Moon union, well aware that Third Contact was imminent. I noted that the corona seemed a little smaller than I'd seen during my other two eclipses, and that large flares were absent. I was able to see only a few small red prominences on top of the disc.



Eclipsed Sun - Antarctica 2021 - Image by Wijaya Sukwanto, a.k.a. my tentmate, Jay!

Champagne was poured in the on-site shelter to celebrate the beauty and splendor of the spectacle of nature that we'd all just witnessed. We then assembled and group photos were taken, one of which will probably appear in the "Astronomy" magazine article that David Eicher was writing while on the adventure. I thought that his article would probably appear in the March issue. And sure, it was five o'clock in the morning, but it definitely seemed appropriate to be toasting with champagne.

I watched the final few minutes of the partial phase through my binoculars, witnessed Fourth Contact (when the Moon's disc departs from the Sun's face), packed up my gear, returned my chair to the shelter and boarded the first transport for UGBC, which was about a ten-minute ride away. After stripping my outer layers off, I headed to the Fram to talk over the eclipse with Wally, Rob and Sue. We had some coffee, then a hot breakfast was served, unexpectedly, at 6:30 AM. Everyone else went to bed, but I stayed up for more coffee and to write this record. I was soon to get ready for my bike ride with Johanna and, maybe, Rob and Chuck also.

When the time came, neither Rob nor Chuck were anywhere to be seen, so it was only Johanna and me for the ride. I obtained a radio from Chago, who by then recognized me, even in all of my gear, and I told him I'd be going on the 10K loop with Johanna. She met me in front of the Fram, applied some sunscreen, put her neck gaiter on and we took off. Her father, Alan, videoed us riding out of the UGBC. This was ride number four for me and Johanna's first.

At the outset, I mentioned to Johanna that she should yell if I were pulling too far ahead of her, but she didn't. At around 1K out, I glanced in back of me and she'd fallen behind. I stopped to wait for her to catch up, and she mentioned she was having a struggle with her breathing, which was probably at least partly due to the fact that we still hadn't gone aerobic and, since we'd not yet come to the turnoff at the Christmas Tree, the going was a little rough. I encouraged her to hang in there, and that once we turned off it would be much easier going since the surface becomes pretty smooth and packed down at that point. Sure enough, after that she seemed to find her groove and we established a nice pace. We enjoyed our ride and conversation as we made our way toward the eclipse viewing area. Just before we

got there, we came upon ski poles set in the center of the path in an "X". There was another pair coming from the other direction as well, and they appeared to be protecting a 360-degree camera that was sitting in the middle of the path. We stopped, noticing that all tracks and footprints adjacent to these erections were concentrated to our left, so we proceeded around to the left, hopefully not disturbing whatever project someone had set up.

We arrived at the viewing area, stopping for some water and a photo op at a "10K Loop" sign. Johanna asked that I take a photo of her, framing the mountain range in the background. I took a few for her and she said they came out fine. She mentioned that she wanted to be able to show her trainer that she was getting some exercise, as she promised she would. The viewing area is around 3K or so from camp. From the viewing area, one rides up a small incline followed by an easy descent across the UGBC runway, then a short pedal following the runway on the right-hand side back into camp. We stopped at the "Welcome Back to Union Glacier Camp!" sign for another photo op. This time I took a few photos of Johanna posing with her bike at the sign. I then left Johanna and brought the radio back to Chago, informing him that we'd both made it back safely and unscathed.

I went back to my tent, stripped off my shell layer, turned it inside out and hung it up on the line to dry. Jay was fast asleep and appeared to not stir at all as I did these things. I gathered my book and headed over to the Yelcho to catch up on my journal and to read for a little while. It took Johanna and I about 1:10 to make our way around the 10K loop, including the water stop and photo ops.

Lunch wasn't served until 2:00 PM on that day (to give people an opportunity to catch a nap after the Big Event), so since we were back from our ride by around 10:15 AM, I had some time to myself. I ended up, after reading in the Yelcho, heading to the Fram at around 12:30 PM for some tea and to read some more. Eventually, Wally, Rob, Sue, Michel, Chuck and Jay showed up. We had a nice lunch, after which I ended up back in the library to read some more and to take a short nap.

There wasn't a lecture planned for this day, but due to popular demand, Carol ended up putting on a semi-impromptu one at 4:30 PM called "Women of Antarctica." It started out by featuring various women who had an influence on the exploration of, but did not ever get to, Antarctica. Eventually, she covered a number of women explorers that did make it to the continent and discussed their lives and contributions. She was quite engaging, as usual, and the crowd was very appreciative of Carol's willingness to put on another talk for us.

We needed to vacate the Yelcho by 5:30 PM so that it could be prepared for our "Celebratory Event" set to begin at 7:00 PM. Following that event, a buffet dinner would be held in the Fram. I went to our tent to relax until then.

CTY at the Celebratory Event with Juan (l) and Jing



The “Celebratory Event” was quite informal, featuring various hors d’oeuvres, beer, water and soda. Also featured was an A.L.E. slide show playing on a loop. We were encouraged to just mingle, enjoy each other’s company, and engage in discussions on the morning’s successful eclipse. I made sure to take a few “ussies” with many of the people with whom I’d been spending time in Antarctica, including staff and guests.

Dinner followed, during which Michel gave a slide presentation and talk highlighting various people and occurrences and generally reviewing the activities and interactions from the past few days. He made sure to thank all of those A.L.E. and

TQ staff that worked so hard to make sure that this trip was the resounding success that it was. I went back to our tent at around 9:45 PM to settle in for my final night in Antarctica – for now.

Day 13 – Sunday, December 5, 2021

I woke early, around 5:30 AM, and decided to shave. I didn’t want to wait until late in the evening after checking back into the hotel to do so. Unlike my first time in Punta Arenas, where a clerical error had me checked into a solo room, I was likely to be sharing a room with Jay for a couple of nights. After shaving, I grabbed my device and went to the Fram for some coffee. I soon realized that my device needed charging, so I plugged it in and went over to the Yelcho to grab a book to read. The water for coffee wasn’t very hot, and definitely not hot enough to brew a pot in the French press, so I had a couple of cups of lukewarm instant. Once Wally arrived, he took charge and had one of the kitchen staff get the flame going under the water and, after a little while, we had some decent coffee brewing.

Breakfast was the usual fare, then I went to the tent to get the sleeping bag rolled up and to gather all of my things for baggage check-in at the Yelcho at 10:30 AM. I handed my bag over to Carolyn (head of guest services), she checked my name off of the list and I went over to the Fram. In accordance with some sound advice from Jack (“What are you going to do? Just sit around here?!?!”), I signed up for the 2:00 PM trip out to the Blue-Ice runway to watch the Iceland Air 757 come in for a landing from PUQ. I treated it like another excursion, dressing properly, etc., and ended up being quite happy that I went.

The temperature at the runway was -12°C and the wind brisk at 30 knots, which makes for quite a chilly Real Feel, but as was the case during other excursions, proper clothing was key. I rode over on the F550, which as you may recall is the smoother, more comfortable ride. At the runway itself, there is a shelter and a row of bathroom stalls accessible from the outside. There were hot drinks and snacks available in the shelter. Once we arrived at 2:24 PM,



Iceland Air 757 approaching the Blue-Ice Runway for a landing

we were informed that the plane was about 20 minutes out. I milled around for a little while in the building but kept my eye on the sky for a sign of the plane. In around 18 minutes, I spotted it on its approach, so headed outside. We were allowed to stand right on the side of the runway to take photos and witness the spectacular landing. Wheels touched down at 2:44 PM.

The plane turned around at the end of the runway and taxied up adjacent to the shelter, where we all were. After the new group of A.L.E. guests deplaned and their baggage was removed from the hold, which only took around twenty minutes or so, the plane was quickly disinfected, and we were told we could walk over to the plane if we'd like and go aboard. This was around 3:30 PM or so, before the rest of the crowd from camp showed up. I was able to stake out a nice row in front of the wing on the starboard side of the craft and to get my rental clothing properly bundled up so that I could turn it in as instructed. We boarded without boarding passes or any other form of check-in process and were told to pick whichever seat we wanted. Most people had a row to themselves if they wanted it.

Once everyone was aboard, several people went to the cockpit to take photos of and with the pilots, which is unusual in today's post-9/11 aviation world. Following that activity, people went back to their seats and got buckled in and we were told we'd be taking off "shortly." There was no taxiing and in fact, none of the usual indications of any kind that takeoff was imminent. The plane didn't even move an inch – until it did. The engines ramped up quickly and the plane took off down the runway, right from where we were sitting! I spoke with several others later on and they were all surprised at this; another in a long line of things on this trip that none of us had ever experienced before.

Our initial flight path as we took off had us banking around and I could see the familiar shape of Rossman Mountain and the outline of UGBC out my window. From this vantage, it was clear, as it hadn't been when actually in the camp, just how far away from the mountain the camp is located. I finally had visual proof that the mountain was around 2K from UGBC after all. I knew the guides weren't being deceptive, but my mind couldn't accept the truth until then.

I watched "Going in Style" starring Michael Caine, Morgan Freeman and Alan Arkin, which I found to be entertaining, then tried an episode of the new "Veronica Mars," but was too tired to pay attention, so I threw on "Wiren: Sinfonietta In C Major, Serenade, Symphony No. 3 & Divertimento" performed by the Iceland Symphony Orchestra. Snacks were the same as the flight from PUQ to Union Glacier.



Arriving at PUQ after our Antarctic adventure

We arrived at PUQ at 8:39 PM, had our bags and were sitting on our assigned buses before 9:30 PM. We were each given a tag indicating "A," "B," "C" or "D," which corresponded to the bus we were to board. I was on bus "A" and chose the port side front seat. David Eicher sat in the starboard front and eventually Michel sat next to him. There were fifteen other guests aboard and two A.L.E. staff in front with the driver. I chatted with Dave for a while about this and that and, pointing at the smokers outside of the bus as we waited to depart, asked if he'd ever smoked. He replied that he hadn't since he's trying to stay alive. He quoted George Carlin from a routine with which I am not too familiar; something like "the point of living is not to die."

On the drive to the hotel, I remarked “What is this odd darkness setting in around us?” (Keep in mind that we hadn’t seen a sunset in about a week.) Dave replied that he’d heard there was to be another eclipse that night that would last until early the next morning. I also made a comment about the speed at which the bus was travelling, which was far more than the 10-15 kmh of which the Antarctica vehicles were capable. He agreed that it felt strange to be going so fast.

We arrived at the Cabo De Hornas at 10:08 PM. I checked in, was given keys to 517 and told my roommate was “Joe Reed,” or some similar name, a person with whom I was not acquainted, but I didn’t really care. I thought I’d be rooming with Jay but assumed there was some reason that didn’t happen. Since I was given both keys, I left the door slightly ajar in case “Joe” showed up. He never did. I showered and watched some “Jack Ryan” and “Squid Game,” then went to sleep.

Day 14 – Monday, December 6, 2021

I awoke at 6:30 AM, got dressed and went to breakfast. It was the usual fare for the hotel. I then took a walk to Laboratorio Magallanes to get a COVID test (#10). I was to get another the next day just to be safe regarding all of the paperwork and requirements necessary to re-enter the US. The test was 26,083 Pesos, or around \$31 (you can refer to the accounting spreadsheet for the exact cost in USD of each test). I met Wally, Chuck, Sue and Rob at the lab, and saw Wayne from RI and a couple others from the trip there, too. Wally took one last Group 7 photo, and we said our goodbyes since they were all leaving for home at around noon that day.

Once back in my room, I received a call from the front desk that I was to move across the hall to 514 and that she would send keys up to me. When I opened the door, Jay was there across the hall looking at me and the front desk woman. We’d be roommates after all! He went out for his PCR test, and I moved my stuff in. I also set up an airport transport with the A.L.E. representative, Nelson, for the next day at noon. Wayne was to be on that transport with me.

Jay returned to the room, slightly inebriated, at around 5:40 PM. I was getting ready to go downstairs for dinner at 6:00 PM. I went down and had my usual fare with three glasses of wine, then returned to the room at 8:15 PM or so. Jay was dead asleep but woke shortly after in a panic as he’d received word of a flight change to 8:44 AM. Since he’d need to arrive at the PUQ 1 to 1-1/2 hours prior to his flight, he set up a ride with Nelson for 6:30 AM. He said he wouldn’t be able to go out and party as a result of this, but I knew he’d find a way!

He packed all four of his large cases with all of his equipment, checking the weight of each with a handheld device, while I watched an episode of “Jack Ryan.” By the end of the episode, he’d gone out and I went to sleep. He returned very late, but I only awoke briefly when he came in.

Day 15 – Tuesday, December 7, 2021

I awoke around 6:00 AM, but Jay didn’t get up until around 6:15 AM or so. He tried, and failed, to get in touch with the front desk to get them to come up for his considerable luggage. I volunteered to bring his stuff down to the lobby while he got his morning things done. I was able to bring all but his backpack down in just two trips. He didn’t tip me, but I received and returned a couple of hugs with promises to see each other in 2023 for the Australian eclipse.

I then read the paper for a little while and at 7:15 AM took a walk back to Laboratorio Magallanes for another PCR test (#11) just to be safe. The main gentleman at the lab recognized me! I arrived at 7:26 AM, four minutes prior to opening, and took a number; I was A008, eighth in line already! By 8:00 AM, I'd paid, received my swab and was on my way back to the CDH for breakfast.

I dropped a few things back in the room, grabbed my device and went down to eat and have some coffee. I parked myself at a table next to Johanna and Alan. I originally said, "Good morning, Johanna, Johanna's Dad!" to which they laughed, and Johanna said, "His name is 'Alan.'" They then invited me to join them at their table, which I did.

I gathered a few breakfast items, sat, and we chatted amiably for quite a while. I learned a few things about them: 1) They live in the Monterey area, about 5 miles north of Carmel; 2) They know a good deal about Clint Eastwood and the various motivations he had that caused him to wish to become mayor; 3) They are quite familiar with the Lucia Lodge, where Sue and I have stayed three separate times now, the New Camaldoli Hermitage, which we've visited many times, and the Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park nearby featuring the McWay Falls; 4) That Alan is a pediatrician with a staff 50% of whom are bilingual and has many patients whose first (and only) language is Spanish; and 5) Alan is too lazy (his description) and/or otherwise occupied to learn Spanish.

Johanna became nervous that she had yet to receive her PCR test results and was going to check on them since she'd had the test done the day before (my own results arrived in an e-mail just a couple hours after I was swabbed). Alan was worried about setting up a ride for the airport transfer since he'd already put in a request to Nelson but hadn't heard back. They left to take care of those things.

After breakfast, I finished reading the Worcester Telegram and did my final packing, expecting to leave the room at around 11:40 AM or so. I went down to check out, paid my \$61.00 bill from the previous night's dinner, which was \$1.12 less expensive than my estimate based on 821 pesos to 1 USD, then went over toward the front doors, where many others were also waiting for a shuttle to PUQ. Two vans arrived, with Alfonso (the driver I'd been told to expect) coming around with his list of ten individuals and telling us that five of us were to go to each van. I chose the van in front, as did David Eicher, Maria, Wayne and Vicki, whom I hadn't yet formally met but recognized, so we introduced ourselves. Johanna and Alan were in the second van, as were Cody, Michel and Jing.

We arrived at PUQ by 12:30 PM, 7-1/2 hours before my flight. Most people had earlier flights. I was able to get my luggage tag for my duffel bag printed at the self-serve kiosk, checked through to BOS, but my boarding pass wouldn't print, so I got in line, and when it was my turn, I attempted to get a vegetarian meal for the SCL to JFK leg, but was unsuccessful. The agent said I hadn't requested one and that I needed to do so 24 hours in advance. I pointed out that this was well over 24 hours until that flight and I was requesting it now. She said I'd need to do it in SCL, so I figured I'd try there.

I got my boarding passes after a fashion, went through security and into the gift shop. I shopped around for a while and ended up purchasing a bag of Lays chips, water and a shot glass, which was my only purchased souvenir from the trip. I then went to the gate and sat on the floor to settle in and do some reading. However, Cody came up and sat next to me, so we talked for a little while. She'd ordered, and was eating, a type of pan-sandwich-pocket (I didn't ask specifics about it and couldn't readily identify it). We had a nice conversation, after which we hugged, and she got in line to board her plane.

As a side note, several people, including Johanna, Alan and Jing, were given tickets in First Class without requesting them! Unfortunately, that didn't happen to me. Also, I was unable to access the internet in PUQ, so couldn't try to reserve a hotel room for my considerable layover at SCL or try the LATAM website again for a vegetarian meal request.

The flight from PUQ to PMC was fairly crowded and my seat on the A320-200 was 30C, the last row on the plane, port side aisle. This is a terrible seat; there is no window back there in that row, no recline option for the seat, and very little leg room. The only worse seats are the "window" and middle seats in that row: 30A, 30B, 30E and 30F. Remember that if you ever need to take a flight on that style of plane.

We took off a little behind schedule, but since I had a 23-hour layover at SCL, I didn't care. On arrival in PMC, those staying there or making a connecting flight deplaned and the rest of us, a small percentage of the travelers, were allowed to stay aboard. After a quick cleaning and restocking, people started boarding and the plane completely filled up. Luckily, the leg from PMC to SCL was only 1:45.

Day 16 – Wednesday, December 8, 2021

We arrived at SCL just a little behind schedule at around 12:45 AM. I walked across from the terminal to the Holiday Inn to try to get a room for my layover, but they were completely booked, so I settled in for a long stretch at the airport.

I should mention a little about the deplaning at SCL. First, rows 1 through 3 were allowed to get off, then up to row 12 followed by rows 26 to 30! Then they presumably worked back toward the middle. I guess earlier deplaning is a small perk for being stuck in such abysmal seats.

I went through security to the gates area and found a place to get a little rest until Dunkin opened up. Once they opened, I got a large Americano, had my pill, and read for a while. I stretched out on some chairs (a surprising number of people were doing the same thing, some appearing as if they'd already been there for quite a long time) and woke after about an hour at around 8:00 AM. I took a walk along the lengthy stretch of the International Terminal searching in vain for something to eat. I didn't want to resort to chips or chocolate and the Dunkin offered only doughnuts, which don't interest me. During this trip, I constantly needed to keep in mind that with small toothpaste tubes, I was restricted to after breakfast and after dinner for teeth-brushing, so I needed to time my eating perfectly.

It was sometime around 9:00 AM when I found a place that offered a meal I'd enjoy: a vegetarian baguette, toasted, and a lemon water. After opening the water, I discovered that it was both sweetened and carbonated, which was disappointing. Regardless, I enjoyed the repast, after which I brushed my teeth (see above), caught up on my journal and settled in again for the (now) 13:45 wait until my flight.

At around 3:00 PM or so, I purchased some snacks: chips and mango cookies. At the appropriate time, I walked down to the E Concourse, where there is a Ruby Tuesday, for some dinner. I ended up eating some Honey Bourbon Salmon with zucchini and rice pilaf, Caesar salad and a glass of cabernet. After eating, I walked back to the C Concourse and looked on the flight board, and there, finally, was my flight listed. At that point, I was down to a 5:45 wait, but I still could not tell from which gate the flight would depart as that information wasn't available until two hours ahead, at 9:15 PM.

Once I knew from which gate my flight would depart, I made my way there. It became busy quickly, and I filled out a couple of forms that were necessary prior to boarding. The flight was nearly full. A family of

five was in the seats surrounding my own: two in my row and three in the row ahead of us. They were chatty, but only with each other, not with me, and it was clearly the first plane trip for at least two of the smaller children, the boys, so that was exciting for them all as a family.

After takeoff, which was on time, I started watching “River Cruise” starring The Rock and Kate Winslett. Paul Giamatti was also in it. It’s a Disney film and was OK. The Rock is pretty humorous for the most part, and Winslett was good, too, as was Giamatti. However, I was tired, so it took me three attempts throughout the nearly ten-hour flight to finish it.

Day 17 – Thursday, December 9, 2021

For dinner, which was served around 1:15 AM Santiago time, I chose the non-meat option: pasta with marinara, which was passable at best. I enjoyed a red wine and glass of water with it, then crashed – hard! The father in the family woke me once to use the bathroom, but I was right back out after his return. Breakfast was served about 1-1/2 hours before landing, but since there was no meatless option, I had two cups of coffee and a glass of water, which is my preferred breakfast anyway.

We arrived at JFK on time with a nice, smooth landing. LATAM runs a tight ship for deplaning, so that also went smoothly. Walking off the plane, I was pleased to see a Global Entry line and took it. It turns out that I was the only one that chose that path. I went through customs in under a minute, about the time it took to just keep walking, really, and went to the carousel to wait for my checked bag. Since I’d checked it in PUQ two days before, I thought it would be a miracle if it appeared, but it did! After collecting my bag, I exited the customs area and went to the “Recheck” area, where I turned it right back in. Then I took the airport tram from Terminal 4 to Terminal 2, which was not, as one would maybe expect, two stops away. It was six. Once there, I had my boarding pass printed, went through security (I was the only one there, but went through TSA-Pre nonetheless), and headed for my gate.

The first order of business once there was to shave and brush my teeth. Boarding took place shortly thereafter and the 34-minute flight to BOS took off on-time. I grabbed my checked bag and hopped onto the Silver Line (SL1) to South Station, where I boarded a Red Line Inbound to Alewife. (These transports were free. Had I gone from Alewife to BOS at the start of my trip, it would have cost me \$2.40, but you recall that Sue dropped me off.) I arrived at Alewife at around 12:50 PM. It was about a fifteen-minute walk, laden as I was with all of my luggage, to Neville Center at Fresh Pond, where I was going to put my stuff in Sue’s car, call her to let her know I’d done so, then head back out to get something to eat for dinner. As I walked past the front door, Sue ran out to greet me with a nice hug and kiss! I missed her, too.

I put my stuff in her car and headed out looking for a place to eat. I thought I’d eat at a sushi place fairly close to her work that I’d spotted on my walk from Alewife, but when I opened the door, I was greeted with the sight of garbage and a kitchen-looking area, so I went to the Summer Shack a little farther away. I had fish and chips, an Argentinian Malbec and a water. I enjoyed some seaweed salad as an appetizer. When Sue told me she was on her way out the door at Neville at the end of her workday, I started walking on the sidewalk back toward her work. She picked me up and we headed home.

[Note: For those that wish to see more reports like this, of trips that Sue and I have taken together, and to access Financial Accounting sheets of the trips, including for this one, please visit the following site: <http://yacinobeachhouse.weebly.com>. You can access archived trips, slide shows and more there.]