

Impossible Journey: The Story of the Victoria Land Traverse 1959–1960

BOOK REVIEW

Impossible Journey: The Story of the Victoria Land Traverse 1959–1960, Antarctica. By John Weihaupt, Alfred Stuart, Frans Van der Hoven, Claude Lorius, and William Smith. Forewords by Peter-Noel Web and Deven Castendyk. Published by The Geological Society of America. 2012, 135 pages. \$45 paperback only.

During the austral summer season of DF-60 eight USARP scientists made a historic traverse into previously unexplored areas of East Antarctica. Over a half century later their adventures have finally been made available in a single volume gleaned from the traverse team's scientific field notes and personal journals.

Written by team members, it is a scientific, historical, and adventurous account of a four-month, 2400-km journey into the unexplored East Antarctica. The traverse team conducted seismic, gravity, magnetic, geological, glaciological, and atmospheric surveys over the continental ice sheet, and so doing, the traverse encountered heavy crevassing on the Skelton Glacier, where SnoCats frequently broke through snow bridges, threatening the end of the traverse. On the high plateau, fuel shortages and frequent equipment failures also threatened to terminate the journey. The latter portions of the traverse were marked by near catastrophes in the vicinity of the Mertz and Ninnis Glaciers, and on the glaciers of the Transantarctic Mountains, where unknown and initially undetected substantial crevasse fields were encountered.



Front Row: Kneeling Claude Lorius, Alfred Stuart, and Thomas Baldwin. Back row: Frans Van der Hoeven, Louis Roberts, John Weihaupt, William Smith, and Arnold Heine.

compiled by Billy-Ace Baker



John Weihaupt

Weihaupt, now an emeritus professor at the University of Colorado Denver, was the team's seismologist, and he and his colleague, Frans G. Van der Hoeven, were responsible for the seismic, gravity, magnetic, and geological surveys during the exploration. Part of his work included gathering data to determine the thickness of the ice; core samples led to the first scientific evidence for Earth's contemporary global warming. Weihaupt and Van der Hoeven also were credited with the discovery of the Wilkes Land Gravity Anomaly, which potentially is the largest meteorite impact crater on the planet.

The book re-creates the Traverse, allowing readers to follow along with the researchers and the challenges they encountered. To purchase a copy of the book Visit: <http://rock.geosociety.org/Bookstore/default.asp?catID=9&pID=SPE488>

In an introduction to the publication, Weihaupt and colleagues write: "No human endeavor is more fascinating than exploration, whether of Earth's oceans, its highest mountains, or the polar high plateau. There is a need, primeval as it surely is, to go where no one's gone before — to be the very first."

Some of the discoveries made were the Wilkes Subglacial Basin, the Wilkes Land Gravity Anomaly, the Outback Nunataks, the USARP Mountain Range, and the upper reaches of the Rennick Glacier.

I am a happy scientist, I work for IGY

I measure this and measure that

But no one tells me why.

—Anonymus



**CMH2 Thomas Baldwin
Traverse Driver
& Mechanic**



Buz Dryfoose & His R4D

Editor's Note: The book contains a lot of never seen before color photographs of the terrain, the crew, and support personnel. I highly recommend it.