

## Ephraim David “Jack” Field - 14/7/28 to 26/11/2019

by Richard Willing



Jack, the happy and unflappable cook, made five tours to Australian Antarctic bases: Macquarie twice, Mawson twice and Wilkes once. With subsequent reunions and midwinter dinners he was known to a large number of people associated with Antarctica, who all held him in high regard.

I first met Jack 63 years ago when we assembled in Antarctic Headquarters in Collins Street when Melbourne was buzzing with the Olympic games. I met this tall upstanding young man who held himself very erect with a quiet slightly retiring manner. I did not know who he was or what he did, but I knew that this was a man that I was glad to know. As the cook, Jack was arguably the most important person at the base. Ours was a happy base, in part because of Jack's wizardry in providing high quality meals for six days a week. We all went on the "slushy" roster every three weeks or so and spent the day working under Jack's eagle eye cleaning the kitchen and dining room, getting stores and washing dishes. Jack was proud of his empire and we had to work hard to keep it in the condition that he wanted. All this was done under his firm guidance but with much good humour. Jack was always cheerful, happy in his strong Christian faith, with a stack of little witticisms or practical jokes. On Sundays he used his free time to take hundreds of photographs, go for walks away from the camp, perhaps taking one of the dogs out, or just read books if the weather was bad. This meant that we amateurs had to take it in turns to provide three Sunday meals, with variable results – mostly not too bad, some surprising haute

cuisine, while others occasionally were catastrophic. One Sunday night a tin of carrots, accidentally left in the oven at dinner time, exploded in the middle of the night and blew the oven door off, causing the night watchman a degree of anxiety. Jack had a great knack of making little extras for special events such as birthdays. For mine he carved a wooden emperor penguin by hand, used food dye to colour it and put it on a cake.

Our expedition to Mawson in 1957 was for the International Geophysical Year (IGY) so the party contained many physicists getting their equipment ready for the start of the IGY in July. I was the doctor, but there was not much doctoring to do, so I was able to spend time in the field studying the biology and breeding habits of the Emperor penguin rookeries within reach of Mawson. I would go out for a few days with a companion to study these birds. Because they breed during the Antarctic winter it meant short days and long nights in the tent. Jack came with me on one of these trips. We spent quite a lot of time keeping warm in our sleeping bags, chatting about all manner of things and solving the world's problems. During one of these long periods of forced inactivity he told me about his family. He was born into a large family and wanted to have a large family himself. He and Diana were happily married for more than 60 years, and kept the tradition going by having 7 children. Attending his funeral I met these now adult children, but was quite amazed to find that they had 31 grand-children and growing number of great-grand-children, 15 and counting. The family expressed their gratitude that members of ANARE Club attended his funeral.

Jack was a regular attender at Midwinter Dinners which he enjoyed. At the call of the years he was the last man standing over the last few years because of his first trip to Macquarie Island in 1953. He has been missed from these dinners over the past couple of years but not forgotten.

Farewell Jack, you have been a good friend and a great guy, and you are sorely missed.