

4. Chukchi Sea and Beaufort Sea Projects

At 2208 on 24 July 1977, BURTON ISLAND weighed anchor and was underway en route Chukchi Sea to begin NOSC scientific operations. A coastal route was followed to the Bering Strait and radar was the principal means of navigation. At 0619 on 25 July, a radar landfall was made on King Island and at 0740, BURTON ISLAND entered the Bering Strait at position 65-26N 168-09.5W. BURTON ISLAND crossed the Arctic Circle at 1432, 25 July at position 66-33N 168-34W. At 2304, the first Chukchi Sea oceanographic cast was conducted at position 68-24N 168.31.5W.

Ice was first sighted at 0934, 26 July from position 69-46.6N 168-29W. This was scattered small floes of first year pack ice.

From 25 July to 5 August 1977, NOSC scientists completed 157 oceanographic stations in the Chukchi Sea. The principal means of navigation during this period was the basic DR plot obtained from sunlines when weather permitted. TACAN fixes were obtained when BURTON ISLAND's aircraft were within range of Barrow's tower and these fixes helped refine the DR plot. OMEGA was erratic during this period and the Navigation Satellite was inoperative.

Fog required the constant vigilance of OODs and lookouts as well as the radar watch in CIC. Various bergy bits, growlers and pack ice was encountered, much of the latter being multi-year, blue ice.

At 1421, 5 August 1977, BURTON ISLAND anchored in 50 feet of water to a gray mud bottom off Barrow, Alaska in position 71-21.9N 156-41W. The anchorage was approached at right angles to the beach in order to more readily gauge the set and drift. A current of approximately 2 to 3 knots was experienced and BURTON ISLAND was set to the southeast until close inshore where an eddying swirl was experienced. Visual bearings ashore included the AERO Beacon, Spire and Racon Tower at Point Barrow.

While anchored off Barrow, NOSC personnel were disembarked and CCGD17(ecv) personnel were embarked. At 1958 on 7 August, BURTON ISLAND weighed anchor, underway en route Skull Cliff via a point 50 nautical miles offshore (pumping bilges) to construct the first of four Racon towers.

From 8 August to 16 August 1977, BURTON ISLAND constructed Racon towers as follows:

SKULL CLIFF (DELTA)
70-54-51N
157-37-19W

DREW POINT (DELTA)
75-51-56N
153-54-50W