Unloading at McMurdo and LA-V

At McMurdo NESPELEN's cargo had been discharged smoothly by Seabees and a special Marine Corps assault fuel-farm team. Now NESPELEN was ready to head for Little America with fuel.

TOWLE's unloading was interrupted nine times when the ice either broke or threatened to break, but her cargo-handling battalion unloaded tractors and supplies as rapidly as the base could put sleds alongside. While her cargo handlers worked one or two holds with American cargo for McMurdo, others emptied another 800 tons of New Zealand cargo onto smaller sleds brought alongside by the New Zealanders shuttling materials from TOWLE to build their base (Scott Base) two miles from Hut Point.

Sir Edmund Hillary of Mount Everest fame was a frequent visitor on board the TOWLE as the New Zealand expedition ship ENDEAVOR drew water from the American transport while New Zealand tractors emptied her of their cargo.

At the season's beginning Kainan Bay resembled the same unloading site that had been used a year earlier to discharge cargo to build Little America. Bay ice eight feet thick graduated up a natural snow ramp to the Ross Ice Shelf and it was apparent that the unloading procedure would be identical.

SYMBOL OF "MEN AT WORK FOR PEACE AND PROGRESS".

But nature intervened. While ATKA and MERRELL stood offshore, ground swells undermined the bay ice and carried countless acres of ice to sea. Each time the ships would try to move closer a new breakup would start.

Soon there was no bay ice. A search was begun to find a point on the barrier low enough to discharge cargo. Once located, the next job was to blast and bridge crevasses between that point and Little America.

A trail was finally bridged and MERRELL came alongside the barrier. She had laid offshore so long her cargo handlers, like the Little America base personnel, were anxious to get to her cargo.

Once MERRELL was alongside the barrier ground swells again began to come in from the sea, causing the ship to surge up and down against the barrier. Discharging 37-ton tractors and crated Otter airplanes from a surging ship onto a jagged ice barrier is no mean feat of seamanship, but it was done.

Unloading of MERRELL was interrupted by GREENVILLE VICTORY's arrival at Little America. That veteran of *Deep Freeze I* had cargo for Little America as well as for Knox Coast. Too, there was a possibility she would have to backload all of ARNER's Knox Coast cargo if that ship didn't pass inspection after her hull damage, so the priority was to get GREENVILLE VICTORY's cargo off at Little America and get her back into circulation.

By now the barrier itself had begun to chip and break off at Little America. Valiant icebreaker ATKA, who had two years earlier recommended Kainan Bay as the ideal site for Little America V, now was called on for a job unique in icebreaking history . . . she was ordered to buck the barrier in an effort to shave a straight edge for the thin cargo ships to come alongside. She was operating on only four engines since a flooded generator room had put two of her engines out of commission.

But shave the barrier she did. Her forecastle paintwork and her forward rails took a severe beating from the thick ice barrier but the ships got alongside.

Once GREENVILLE VICTORY was through unloading at Little America and NESPELEN had discharged her fuel there, both returned to McMurdo Sound.

Inspection at McMurdo ruled ARNER fit for the Knox Coast assignment but resulted in GLACIER's replacing NORTHWIND.

With Captain Gerald Ketchum, Deputy Task Force Commander, embarked GLACIER sailed from McMurdo Sound January 14, 1957 with ARNER, GREENVILLE VICTORY and NESPELEN in her wake. The plan was for GLACIER to squire the ships through the pack, then release NESPELEN to go on to Australia for a second load of aviation gasoline. GLACIER would rendezvous with CURTISS north of the icepack to make cargo shifts, then overtake the Knox-bound ships.