

# Speed-up as the Season Latens

Northwest sailed from McMurdo Sound January 25 to get her damaged propeller replaced in a Wellington drydock. She encountered some of the expedition's worst weather in the 2,500-mile passage to New Zealand, arriving March 2, 1957.

TOWLE finished unloading her drummed diesel fuel January 27 and had commenced backloading salvaged airplane parts when the bay ice began to break up in giant floes. She had only one skidland aboard when tractors and sleds were recalled to safety at Hot Point. Towle sailed for Christchurch January 28, the first cargo ship to complete her mission during Deep Freeze II.

Simultaneously with TOWLE's departure from McMurdo Sound, ATKA led MERRILL and CURTIS to Little America. They arrived a day later.

While MERRILL maneuvered to enter a narrow wedge whose side was straight and clear for coming alongside, CURTIS began to shuttle wintering-over Seabees and scientists ashore by helicopter.

The niche intended for MERRILL's berth was complicated by an underwater spur on the right side of the V. It could be seen from the surface and, by its depth, would have been dangerous to try to shave off by icebreaker.

Explosive charges were planted at strategic points on the barrier's edge in hope that the underwater spur could be blasted free. ATKA stood in close to observe the results of the blast.

The charges were fired simultaneously without visible effect. Then ATKA backed free, her officers promising that a second blasting effort would be required. No sooner had she got clear of the underwater spur, the edge of the barrier began to calve off. Not only did the spur break free—a sizeable portion of the barrier accompanied it. The tumbling mass of ice created such a splash that ATKA rolled 40 degrees from the wave it created. Had not ATKA backed free, the ice might have done serious damage.

As soon as MERRILL came alongside, seamy cargo specialists began to stockpile bay cargo on the safety of the barrier as rapidly as possible, then drag it to Little America after the ships left.

Unloading was again complicated when MERRILL, by now moored to the ice, got her propeller fruled by a wire cable. The cable had been used to keep in place a telephone-pole feeder between MERRILL and the face of the barrier.

As soon as CURTIS finished setting men ashore by helicopters she began receiving last year's wintering-over group by the same technique. Before all men were aboard CURTIS for the long voyage home, MERRILL backloaded tractors that would be taken to New Zealand for repair, and Byrd Station cargo that she would take to McMurdo Sound for the Globemasters to fly out and drop at Byrd Station. The latter material was beyond the capacity of the second train-

tee train which left Little America January 28 with seven tractors pulling 14 loaded sleds.

ATKA, CURTIS and MERRILL returned to McMurdo Sound February 7. NEUREUX got there a day later from Australia with her load of aviation gas. MERRILL unloaded the Byrd Station cargo for the airplane flights, then backloaded the salvaged airplane parts TOWLE had to leave behind when the ice broke in late January. She picked up tractors from McMurdo for repairs in New Zealand as well.

Admiral Dufek and his staff moved ashore from the ATKA February 7 and 8. The admiral consulted with Dr. Andrew Assur about the airstrip's progress. Since December 19, when the Globemasters flew north to join the Navy B5Ds which had begun evacuated from the falling ice strip to New Zealand, a daily check had been made on the bay ice. The SIPRE (Snow, Ice, Permafrost Research) Institute's Dr. Assur had been rushed from Greenland to try to get the strip back in shape. Unable to fly to the ice, he had remained in New Zealand and studied the daily radio reports as they were filed from McMurdo.

On February 8 the Task Force Commander fished wool to New Zealand that the strip was ready for resumption of air operations.

Dr. Assur arrived McMurdo Sound aboard the CURTIS to find that each of his radio recommendations had been followed to the letter. Meltwater pools had been punctured, drained and refilled with compacted snow, then restrained and re-refilled until pot-holes were nearly level. The final ingredient for successful completion of the treatment had been a prolonged period of cold weather which started in late January and early February of 1957. (Dr. Assur has been recommended for the nation's highest civilian award for his accomplishment which permitted the remaining flight to the Pole and Byrd Station.)

Colonel Horace Crosswell and Lieutenant Colonel C. J. Ellen arrived in the first Globemaster which landed at 9:18 p.m., February 9. Their smooth landing was witnessed by a good turnout of men at McMurdo Sound, some of the viewers being skeptics who'd predicted, "Those big planes will never return this season."

