

Press Release

Qml2000/gcom004/ 29 11 00

The Scientific Mission

The scientific mission of THE WALL expedition contains two main parts.

1. Thanks to Ronald Ross's presence in the team, the expedition was solicited by *Stanford University*, California, to make meteorological observations and to collect lichen from the immediate vicinity of the Orvin Mountains.

Why weather? Why lichen? Why the Antarctic?

Before we reply to these questions, you should know that the **Space Systems Development Laboratory in the Aeronautics and Astronautics Department** led by Professor Robert Twiggs (Twiggs@Stanford.edu) – who sponsored this mission – has been carrying out research on the conditions of life in the coldest climates for a number of years. At the time of the encounter last year between Hubert and Ross in Queen Maud Land, the American had already been commissioned to gather as much meteorological data as possible, thanks to a small portable weather station that he had taken with him.

This research was directly related to the studies being conducted by the members of the "**Pascal Mars**" project of the **NASA Ames Research Center** (<http://www.arc.nasa.gov/>) on man's future missions on Mars. The conditions that prevail on that planet would appear in effect to be strikingly similar to those that are observed for most of the time in the Antarctic.

This time, Roland Ross will take two weather stations with him. He will commission the team of climbers to install one on the summit of Holtanna; this mini-station should function for a year and its data should be transmitted via Stellenbach University and its amateur satellite, Sunsat, to a permanent research station in the Antarctic. The results will then be published on the Internet.

A further facet of the mission sponsored by Stanford University consists in the collection of lichen specimens and the observation of their space biology (Ronald had found some there last year). These observations will then have to be assimilated with those of Dr Chris McKay on behalf of the **NASA Ames Research Center** on the extreme conditions of life on the planet Mars. In the same context, the expedition will place measuring instruments here and there intended to collect data on conditions in the Antarctic environment throughout a complete year.

2. The second part of the scientific mission is closely related to Europe. Following the specimen collection made by Alain Hubert and Dixie Dansercoer during their 1997-98 crossing of the Antarctic, the leaders of the **Polar Snow** project (Grenoble University) (<http://glaciog.ujf-grenoble.fr/~christo/polarsnow/index.htm>) who had sponsored this work have asked Hubert to extend the method of photographing crystals that he had developed during his adventure (and which was later adopted by most polar researchers).

In addition, Polar Snow have asked Hubert to carry out a series of comparative borings on the polar ice-shelf (same depths, same dimensions and several kilometres apart) for the purpose of amplifying the database that the project had already collected in its study assessing the mass of the polar ice cap.

The Wall in Antarctica
From 30 november
Queen Maud Land
www.antarctica.org

Please inform! Thank you.
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