



This is the standard Pole shot, some people take the picture with their shirt off, I chose not to. This is 90 degrees south latitude and whatever longitude you care to call it. As you can see in the background this isn't the most scenic spot on earth. The ice sheet here is about two miles thick which gives it an altitude of about ten thousand feet. We had a real mysterious outbreak of altitude sickness with people going down just before I did. I think there were seven people in a two week period that had to be flown back to McMurdo and most on to Christchurch. Most of them were sent home, a couple stayed on at McMurdo.

So, South Pole, very cold. I really did want to go there and I got the perfect opportunity.

A small job that took less than a day to complete and a ride down on a Fri and back here to McMurdo on Mon. Just enough to say I have been there.



This is the new elevated station. As you can see the outside is still being completed, the inside is finished. This is the first season that it has been occupied. Which made me one of the first people to be able to stay in this station and one of the last people to work in the old dome before it is dismantled.

The raised design supposedly will extend the life of the building by about fifteen years. The building can raise about twelve feet above its present elevation as the snow rises. All of Antarctica is a desert, very little snow but it blows around until it finds something to drift around. Anything you build will get buried, you can only keep digging it out so long and it gets ahead of you.



One of my favorite things about the Pole – my own warm room. I was really surprised that I got to stay inside; there are tents that are used in the summer. Remember summer is a relative term. There are rooms for 154 people inside and this summer there are between 180 and 200 people there. We have some very large research projects under construction this season which is causing some crowding. Last winter there were 52 at the station, and the winter population will be about the same this year.



This is the view from my warm room, looking out at the old dome. There is a lot of history buried in the ice out there. Fifty years of continuous living and research took place in that little area. Even the newer structures like the power plant are built under the ice now, they are going to end up there anyway and it keeps them out of the wind. Having the living quarters on top is a good thing though.



There are some very strange things in the old buildings and ice tunnels. This is in the old dome; an emergency exit is (was) a ladder up to the surface. That must have been added later as the snow climbed higher than they could remove it. The wicker basket is from a hot air balloon. Why they would have had a hot air balloon down there I do not know.

It's frosty in here, no wind but a constant -54F. When you're working out in the weather you always have to watch the others for frost bite and hope they do the same for you. The dome is pretty well cleared out, only one building left that we worked on and a smaller electrical shed. There is food stored here – why not it's just a big freezer, but some is past its due date by a few years.



This is the old power plant, also under the ice near the dome. It will have to be taken apart and the pieces will be flown or traversed back to McMurdo and then shipped off continent. Everything we bring in has to be taken back eventually. The system isn't perfect yet, but we do go back and clean things up from years past



This was the original entrance to the station. If you can zoom in on the sign above the door it reads "The United States of America welcomes you to Amundsen – Scott South Pole Station". The entrance is kept dug out so that the dome can still be used for storage. The archways on either side of the entrance are also used for storage.



The metal enclosure is usually called the beer can; it houses a killer thirteen flights of stairs. When you just came from sea level to ten thousand your lungs don't like to do the stairs. The stairs take you from the new structure to the level of the old tunnels and passageways. The same level where the current utilities are located. Everything below is cold except things that generate their own heat like the power plant.



This is what most of the lower level looks like, and dark without the flash of the camera. You can see some of these spaces haven't been used for a while. It's been a long time since this door was closed. I forget what is reflecting light in the background, but it is not an open window.



This is the inside of the station. They have no separate fire station so the firefighters use these lockers in the main hallway. It was strange to be working here with everything brand shiny new, some things aren't entirely worked out yet.



This is inside the dome looking up at what used to be the central skylight. I don't think there has been a firm decision on what is to be done with the structure. The construction manager would like to dig it out and raise it to the surface and use it for another twenty years. The Navy Seabees would like to ship it back to California and put it up at their museum, but don't have the funding. NSF just wants it off continent so it will probably be taken apart and scrapped.



Last picture from the Pole. I'm facing north here, of course my back is turned to the north also and you probably know about my right and left sides.

I always run out of room here so you don't get to see any of the new ten meter telescopes that are expected to get better images than the Hubble in space. Or a project that isn't very photogenic but it is large. The Ice Cube project is a square kilometer of thousands of receivers drilled into the ice at various depths to record neutrinos that have passed through the earth and give off little bursts of energy at the bottom of the ice sheet. Cool stuff.