



TI is now represented on all seven continents!

Toastmasters Conquer Antarctica

People have gazed in awe at night's glittering stars since the dawn of human history. But how many of them ever did so in a place where there was no dawn? At least not for six months, which is how long an Antarctic resident could remain starstruck. The eventual sunrise sweeps the stars out

of view for an equally long time. Whichever half-year they welcome, those who journey to Antarctica find themselves perennially at the mercy of the elements.

The average annual temperature is -56F, and 200 mph winds can blast the coast of this 5,400,000 square mile continent. The land's icy covering, one to three miles thick, makes up 90 percent of the world's ice and 70 percent of its fresh water. This seems an unlikely accomplishment for a desert, which Antarctica in fact is. An extremely dry place, it receives merely an inch of precipitation each year.

Indeed, it is a harsh and uninviting place toward all living things except those who have either adapted genetically to its icy remoteness - like the Emperor penguin - or have reached its coldly indifferent shores equipped with an inextinguishable desire to survive there. One such immutable soul was Thaddeus von Bellingshausen who, in 1820, was the first human to see Antarctica. Captain James Cook was the first to circumnavigate the land mass, and in 1911, another explorer, Roald Amundsen, was the first to reach the South Pole.

Although Antarctica does not easily lend itself to such accomplishments, a hearty adventurer recently wrenched another first from its icy grasp. In keeping with his organization's ideals of goal-setting and risk-taking, the pioneering spirit was that of Toastmaster Albert Martin. His achievement? The chartering of the first Toastmasters club in Antarctica. Naturally.

Toastmasters International now bears the distinction of being the only service organization to be represented on

all seven continents, so Antarctic members aren't the only beneficiaries of Martin's motivation. Still, as a group they are set apart from non-polar Toastmasters by more than just geography. Firstly, they are the only ones for whom dressing for success entails donning extreme cold weather gear, complete with super-insulated rubber snow boots called

"bunny boots" by those in the know (and in the snow).

It's not as if Martin's credo is "I came, I saw, I started a Toastmasters club." Actually, he has long been doing scientific work in Antarctica for several months each year.



Toastmasters of all they survey.

Employed by the National Science Foundation and manager of its McMurdo Station (the largest research station on the continent), Martin also happens to be a longtime member of the Hi-Noon Toastmasters Club of Little Rock, Arkansas. When a fellow Toastmaster suggested the idea of starting a club even deeper south than Arkansas, Martin realized the goal for which he was destined. Enlisting the help of fellow scientist Lenore Hinson, they have managed to

recruit 34 members for the Antarctic Toastmasters Club 549-U from McMurdo's hardy winter population of 152.

Scientists are drawn to Antarctica to perform research ranging from astronomical observation to geographical surveying with the goal of bettering understanding of the Earth. And since Toastmasters International's mission includes the betterment of understanding on the Earth, the parallel between what seem like two vastly different enterprises is clear.

Toastmasters International stands at the beckoning edge of a humanistic, rather than a scientific frontier and most members will never have the chance to wonder at the southern stars and the breathtaking aurora that extends from horizon to horizon. Yet we can all work together, inspired by Albert Martin's milestone, to extend the organization's horizons as the new millennium dawns. **T**