

WEEK

# 6 ANTARCTICA

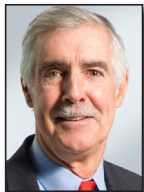
Next Week:  
Climate Change



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11:44:00 UTC



By Rich Wilson, Skipper  
*Great American IV*

In Captain James Cook's day, it was thought that there must be a Great Southern Continent that would balance the weight of Europe and the Americas on the globe. In 1774, he sailed deep into the south, incredibly to 71 degrees south, trying to find it, but without success. The first known landing on Antarctica was purportedly by the American sealer *Cecilia*, at Hughes Bay in 1821.

The continent has lured the great explorers: Scott, Amundsen, Shackleton and others. They wished to get to the South Pole. Now this land continent houses researchers of many varieties and nationalities. In fact the Antarctic Conservation Treaty, which manages the continent, must be deemed a great diplomatic success, as there is to be no militarization of, nor mining on, the continent, it must remain 'pristine' for several decades to come.

Important research on climate change has been done in Antarctica by measuring ice thicknesses on land, and whether more or fewer icebergs are breaking off from the continent into the sea. We see this in the Vendée Globe, where, to keep the competitors safe from accidentally running into an iceberg, there has been established an Antarctic Exclusion Zone, where we cannot go. Satellites are taking pictures of icebergs, but they can only see ones that are bigger than 80 meters long. As icebergs move north into warmer water, they break up into sizes unseen by the satellites. Even in our race so far, because of these observations and interpretations by experts, our AEZ has been expanded 5 times.

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## Polar Art

By Daniel Finamore

I write this just as Rich has begun rounding the southern tip of Africa at 40 degrees and 27 minutes south and has begun some of the most arduous

sailing, highest wind speeds and biggest waves he expects to encounter. He has entered the Antarctic Circumpolar Current, which rings the Antarctic continent and essentially passes through all the major oceans. For racing sailors like Rich, sailing into the strongest current in the world has obvious benefits as it will carry him very quickly. For centuries, however, this current and its extreme conditions proved a formidable barrier for ships sailing south.

During the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries – the age of exploration – theories about a vast southern continent were based in notions that land on the earth's surface somehow had to be balanced, and since there was so much land in the northern hemisphere, there had to be an equivalent amount of land to the south. Some of this imagined land even appeared ringing the bottom of world maps, labeled *Terra Australis Nondum Cognita*, Unknown South Land. They had never seen it, but they felt sure it must be there.

Although their theories were wrong, the land at the bottom of the world does, in fact, exist. Captain James Cook encountered a vast field of icebergs during his second voyage in the 1770s and his official on-board artist drew sketches and ultimately an

engraving of it to illustrate the voyage account. By 1840, several expeditions claimed to have sighted the Antarctic mainland. A fabulous print by the French expeditary artist Louis Le Breton shows men climbing excitedly onto rocks from small boats with penguins standing by watching – the whole scene surrounded by towering icebergs. The hazards of floating ice ringing Antarctica inspired traveling artists for many years following, no doubt in part because their size evoked a sublime sense of nature and its dangers, and were more overtly dramatic than the relentlessly barren snowfields inland. Antarctica is a magnet for artists to this day, many of who revel in disproving our notions of it being a barren and colorless environment. Since the 1950s, the Antarctic Artists & Writers Program of the National Science Foundation has sponsored

the work of more than 100 artists who desired to visit Antarctica in the course of their work.



## NEWS EXPLORER

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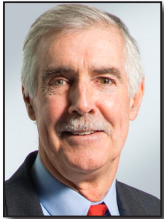
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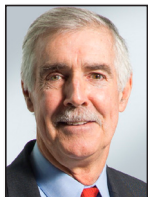
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