

CMDL Outreach: Bringing Antarctica to the Classroom

L. Lock¹, and A. Thorne¹

¹NOAA Climate Monitoring and Diagnostics Laboratory, 325 Broadway, Boulder, CO 80305; 303-497-4208; Fax: 303-497-6290; E-mail: Loreen.Lock@noaa.gov

CMDL is unique among the Ocean and Atmospheric Research Laboratories in that it operates five remote Atmospheric Baseline Observatories, one of which is located at the South Pole, Antarctica. Antarctica has always been a place of mystery, luring the hardy with its remoteness and harsh climate, yet Antarctica is critical to the understanding of the global atmospheric environment. It is here that two members of the CMDL staff spend a year at a time conducting a wide range of atmospheric measurements at the Atmospheric Research Observatory, a building located upwind of the main South Pole support facilities and an invigorating quarter-mile walk to work each day, often in temperatures in the -80°F range in winter.

In an ongoing effort to bring the excitement and relevancy of research to the public, and particularly to students who may someday work alongside our scientists, a presentation was developed by a scientist who lived and worked at the South Pole station that both entertains and educates. This poster illustrates with pictures (Figure 1) and letters from grade school children how outreach work can open the mind and stir the imagination. Today, as science and math fall backstage to reading tests, and as field-trip funds are continually cut, science needs to be brought to the schools by research facilities such as NOAA.

In fiscal year 2003, CMDL staff made over fifty presentations to elementary, middle, and high school classes and answered Antarctica-related questions in 120 letters from children around the world. This outreach work was above and beyond CMDL's usual participation in science festivals, science fairs, the annual Ocean Bowl, and presentations made to classes that visit the David Skaggs Research Center in Boulder, Colorado.



Figure 1. A ski-equipped LC-130 drawn by the hand of a 1st grader from Brighton, Colorado, when asked what she most remembered about Loreen Lock's Antarctica presentation.