

## A SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF STAY

*Jeremy Smith*

Stay is a Guide Dog collection box in the form of a life-sized golden retriever that since 1991 has wintered at every ANARE station, spent time at various field sites including the Prince Charles Mountains, Mt Brown and Bechervaise Island, and has visited places as remote as Heard Island and Spitsbergen. Most of the dog's journeys have been surreptitious and a consequence of kidnap, and as a result Stay has acquired almost legendary status in the recent folklore of ANARE. However, as with all legends, rumour and fancy have over the years become blended with history. Even Stay's sex has been disputed, but I can assure doubters that a recent close examination of the dog showed no trace, past or present, of masculine gender (an enormous dildo-like object that appeared in one photograph taken on St Patrick's Day 2003 was actually the foam-filled, detached arm of Ming Lee – but that, as they say, is another story!); so he is a she!

Stay had a passport hung around her neck for several years, recording many of her travels, but it was disintegrating by the time it disappeared (Mawson 2001). Her adventures have therefore been reconstructed by seeking information from expeditioners and others who have crossed Stay's path over the years. The present account is the result of these enquiries, and I am very grateful to all those who have provided photographs and memories.

According to a short history of Stay written in about 2000 by Jenny Whittaker, "Stay was collected from the Guide Dogs Association in Elizabeth St Hobart in late 1991. The idea was that of Station Leader John Wilson - he was annoyed at learning that the real dogs were being sent home from Antarctic stations, therefore Stay was a symbolic protest against this decision. He also thought it would be a way to raise a few dollars for the Blind Institute/Guide Dog Association.

John Wilson describes how it occurred: "Mark Underwood ... was in the Taroona Pub with a group of friends one night shortly before departure. As we left I asked him if he could get hold of a (guide) dog to take South - for the good intention of collecting some money, some publicity and some fun. But at that time it was a political statement also because as a result of Australia forcing through the Environmental Protocol, the smaller nations who were now being forced to clean up their stations looked for a payback - and came up with the notion that Australia's dogs in Antarctica could spread distemper to the seal populations. (The biggest load of shit ever - the seals had more chance of getting distemper from dogs wandering along the coast of Tassie). Anyway, politics being what they are, Australia made the sacrifice and all the scientists sold their souls in support. It was pathetic. So as Aussie dogs came out - Stay went in. Mark had managed to get a dog from the Tassie Blind Institute.

"I had a particularly rough journey in the Division trying to get the Director to allocate maintenance funds, that were identified by Parliament, towards the upkeep of the new station assets. He wanted to rob the allocation, usually by subtle means such as substituting maintenance staff for scientific staff on voyages. So as payback/out of frustration/malice, whatever - I decided that not only should we have a dog in our group but we should also have an imaginary naughty puppy that pissed on anything that was "good". See the analogy? Subsequently the barbs towards HQ appeared in the weekly contributions to Icy News - and no doubt you can get hold of some '92 copies to follow the satire/bitterness/whatever. Wrex started off as a physical toy but that went nowhere so he became a myth shortly after birth-

existing only as a shadow of the Division's Director - who coincidentally had a similar first name - I think it was Rex.

"So Stay was a proud dog that was not particularly useful in any way, shape or form. But, as people are wont to do, she became a target for miscreants and dog fanciers of all persuasions - the fetish people I guess. They dognapped her to Mawson and so the saga continues." As John Brooks recalls: "John (Wilson) actually left his employment with AAD shortly after his RTA and of course, had established the saga of Stay throughout his year. It was about the time that AAD were forced to bring out the dogs from Mawson because we had written the Madrid protocol so tightly. John regularly talked about Stay in his monthly reports and even about her fictitious pup WREX. (You can imagine what Rex Moncur thought). This was kept up all year and helped gain the cult following for Stay."

Jenny Whittaker again: "Stay was to have been returned to the Guide Dogs Association in early 1993, when the wintering Davis expeditioners returned to Australia, however his/her adventures had only just begun - all year the expeditioners on the other stations had been subjected to incessant stories about Stay so during an early season visit to Davis, Mawson expeditioners stole the dog."

Kate Kiefer heard the story from Paul Gleeson (P.D.G.). "Mawson, being quite devastated by the loss of the real dogs, decided that Stay should live at Mawson as a dog substitute. On the first voyage of the 92/93 summer season, (V1, *Aurora Australis*, Mawson/Davis fly off, Marine Science), two outgoing Mawson winterers did a reconnaissance trip and found Stay at Davis. They took Stay back to the ship where they were sprung trying to get (her) on board by Marty Betts, VL. As they wanted to get Stay back to Mawson, the two Mawsonites put Stay into the care of Paddy, one of the ship's crew, with the intention of (her) being handed over to Mawson station during the next voyage of the season. However, during that voyage (V4, *Aurora Australis*, Mawson/Davis changeover), the Husky Bar was set up by the crew and it was decided that Stay would be a great addition to the ship's bar. They diligently made (her) a lanyard from green rope and Stay became a regular in the Husky Bar. Negotiations between Paddy and P.D.G. (who had wintered at Mawson in '92 and stayed for the subsequent summer) had Stay coming off the ship at Mawson for a visit during the changeover, on the proviso that (she) was returned to Paddy before the ship departed for Davis. However, the Mawson crew had different ideas - there was no way that Stay was not staying! Stay was hidden on station until after the ship departed; Paddy was said to be less than impressed."



Stay's woes had only just begun. She was taken to the dog line at Mawson, from where the huskies were shortly to be removed forever, and was pissed upon at least twice. An accident at Mawson also deprived her of a leg. John Innis witnessed it: "I was about 3 metres from Stay when she lost her leg in early 1993. It is of course a long and complicated story. I was at

Mawson, having arrived in Nov '92 on the first voyage in. I think Stay had wintered at Davis in 1992, but 'appeared' at Mawson mid season 92/93. Our year book says "No-one knows how Stay got here from Davis, but we suspect she heard about the old Mawson dogs being lonely, and promptly took off after an auroral experience involving an epic journey to Mawson".

"The 'auroral experience' referred to was a trip on the 'AA' of course, Davis to Hobart and back to Mawson. From memory, Voyage 1 92/93 went to Mawson then Davis, and V4 a few

months later did the same thing. I believe that Stay absconded from Davis on V1, and returned to Antarctica, to Mawson, on V4, but I could be wrong on that.

"Anyway, during the summer an 'incident' occurred involving one expeditioner reading bedtime stories out aloud to a large number of other expeditioners in the old donga line at Mawson. As it turned out, the old donga had about 10 extra people, other than those sleeping there, on this night. The 'bedtime story', well, it involved what reputable journals would call 'letters to the editor', and a lot of beds. (It was a very humorous evening - yes, I was there as a listener!) The result, a week later, was the 'reader' was brought to trial for 'corrupting minors'. (I'm not sure whose idea it was, but it was a great idea). The whole station attended the trial, with people dressed up, cross-examination of witnesses, etc. It was a really great night, a good party atmosphere. The jury found the reader guilty as charged, but noted extenuating circumstances and he was discharged. However the station leader was sentenced to a 'texta-ing'! After this was done, our station leader decided it was appropriate to grab a chippy, who had been fairly liberal with the texta, and return the favour. The chippy bolted for the door, and was well on the way, when our station leader - Al Grant, a former rugby player - launched himself across the room, and brought the chippy down. Stay unselfishly broke their fall, but there was a loud crack at the impact. Yes, Stay's leg was off.

"As Davis had been agitating for the return of Stay, another of our chippies (Peter Orbansen) decided it made sense to make a prosthetic for Stay, and send the real leg to Davis with a ransom demand. When Davis received the leg there were apparently a few people who thought we'd cut it off intentionally."

Kate Kiefer writes "The leg was sent out to the ship with the green lanyard attached, and a note explaining that "this is all you're getting". So Stay then stayed for the summer. ... Throughout the summer, Stay was photographed by Pepe, in various locations (on the dog line, in a hag, on a scooter, in Chernobyl) and ransom notes sent regularly to Davis with the pictures ... There was little response from Davis.... At the end of summer, P.D.G. decided that it was time for Stay to move on. Stay was hidden in the ceiling of the Red Shed until the *Ice Bird* was due to depart Mawson (V8 ... summer personnel retrieval)". John Innis recalls "as the *Ice Bird* pulled out of the harbour on the last voyage of the season Stay was suddenly spotted on board being carried as a trophy of war, amid much gesticulation and jeering."

Kate Kiefer again: "Stay had a long trip on the *Ice Bird* - (she) got to see Heard Island, en route to Macquarie Island. At Macca, Stay was handed over to a new carer, a Met Fairy by the name of Tom Chlebowski ... Stay was to stay at Macca for the winter in the hope of catching a lift to Casey the following season."

It appears that Stay wintered at Casey in 1994 although that is not definite. It is certain that she spent next winter, 1995, at Mawson. She was hidden for most of the 95/96 summer in a traverse van at Gwamm on the plateau, where she was secure from an exhaustive search by would-be kidnapers of roof spaces and other possible hiding places at Mawson itself. Shortly after her return to station towards the end of summer, a summering carpenter called Smoothie fitted her with a new Huon pine leg which she wears to this day. She wintered again at Mawson in 1996, participated in a traverse to the Prince Charles Mountains, and next summer visited the ship *Kapitan Khlebnikov*.

Later that summer she was stolen again. Gordon Bain recalls: “Stay (was) aboard *Aurora Australis* during Voyage 6 1996/97 just before we arrived at Macquarie Island. ... I can't verify it but daresay Stay offloaded at Macca and remained there for the winter - we were the last ship that season as I recall.”

She seems then to have remained at Macquarie Island for two winters, 1997 and 1998, before being taken back to Kingston where she was put in a locked office by Shipping and Air Operations staff. However, before long she was ‘liberated’ once more and removed from the Antarctic Division, upside down in a wheelie bin. She then had a short holiday touring parts of Victoria with police friends, including Ian Lanyon who was to become the next Davis Station Leader.

The story is taken up again by John Innis. “In late 98 Ian Lanyon organised to have Stay sent to Davis for the 99 winter (which I did at Davis), but he spoke a little too loudly in a bar one night while the *AA* was still on the ocean, with the result that Stay once more was diverted elsewhere - possibly Casey”.

Coral Tulloch was an artist aboard Voyage 6 of that disastrous 1998-1999 shipping season, and heard of Stay long before she met him: “(She) fascinated me, when I heard about (her) on my trip south, so I wrote what I could find out about (her) in my voyage journals and then, as we were leaving Davis, some giggling blokes (we had picked up at Mawson) came down to the WOV container and pulled out STAY! They had kidnapped (her). I was delighted. Stay remained in the bar for a couple of days and would come out every now and then, but was spirited away to a safe cabin at night. I had the privilege to be able to spend some time with (her) and draw (her). (In fact, we became stuck in the ice at Casey; everything had to be flown in ... after many years, I can now say that Stay got my seat on the helicopter to Casey - HOW can I be angry about that!). As I was also an artist, of course I got the job of the voyage T-Shirt. Someone came up with the idea that we should have an anagram, and use Stay. As the ship had been in great trouble that year, 1999 - fire, stuck, etc. Stay stood for Safest Trip All Year, and I did the drawing: Stay on the front, and on the back of the T-Shirt is an image of the *Aurora*, with Stay pointing out from the bow of the ship.”

Stay arrived at Casey in style, sitting in the front seat next to the helicopter pilot, properly strapped in and wearing earphones. She spent the 1999 winter at Casey, but was stolen again the next summer. In 2000, she wintered at Davis, where she arrived in March on Voyage 6 (*Aurora Australis*), and the Station Log records that dinner on Saturday 11th March was at the “Stay Welcome Restaurant”. She also appears in the front row in the Davis winter expeditioners’ photograph for 2000.

Later that year according to Jenny Whittaker Stay was “hiding out in Hobart.... It has been suggested that Stay should do exactly that - stay at Kingston and raise money for the Guide Dog Association. The Guide Dog people once asked when we were going to return the dog and how much money we thought had been raised. They were told the horrible truth "Never" and "None" but found the whole story very amusing. It's about time we redeemed ourselves, so when you see "Stay" around the building, please give generously.”

But Stay did not stay, and was next heard of at Mawson. Judy Clarke recalls her there: “Stay had a sojourn on Béchervaise Island ... during January 2001. ... She was dognapped from Mawson at Christmas 2000 and reappeared back on station in the driver's seat of the JCB (I think) several weeks later. She spent most of the 2000-01 summer at Mawson.”

Stay wintered too at Mawson in 2001, but once again it was soon time for her to move on. Alison Lane remembers Stay from Voyage 5 in 2001-2002: “I met Stay ... on the *AA* last year (the epic voyage that went from Casey via *PB* to Mawson). Stay was kidnapped in a mail bag from Mawson and spent much of the voyage on the bridge. We were diverted to pick up *PB* people and drop them at Mawson where the *PB* had been headed when it got stuck before we went back to Hobart. A couple of Mawson winterers - the doc and one or two others - came out with us bringing Stay in a mail bag.”

A Squirrel helicopter then flew Stay from the ship back to Davis. That was when I first met her myself. The pilot Kevin Drake had just got out of the helicopter after flying from *Aurora Australis*, saw me standing near, and called me over to show me what he had in a side pannier. I was delighted!



At Amundsen's statue, Spitsbergen, 2002

However, yet again she did not remain for long, disappearing from the bar within days. The kidnapper this time was Chad Marshall who had overheard some expeditioners at the bar late at night plotting to throw the dog into the incinerator, so he immediately rescued her and arranged for further travels. He writes: “Stay left Davis at the end of 2001/02 summer and journeyed to Ny Alesund international research station on Spitsbergen in the Svalbard Archipelago in the High Arctic for the northern summer via Hobart and the UK. Ny Alesund is the “the world's most northerly settlement” at 79 degrees north. Ny Alesund has played a considerable role in polar exploration being the starting point for Amundsen's overflights of the north pole by Zeppelin etc and the end point of Wally Herbert's pioneering crossing of the Arctic via the pole ... hence Stay's interest in visiting. Stay returned to Davis in December 2002.” She emerged from hiding as the last ship departed in early March 2003, and at the time of writing is still here – but for how long?

Stay remains technically the property of the Guide Dogs Association. John Brooks again: “I did some research on this a few years ago, primarily because I was the person with whom the Guide Dogs Association was corresponding in the hope that they might retrieve their valuable asset. My understanding is that one John Wilson... conned the Royal Guide Dogs Assn into giving him Stay on the basis that he would take her to Antarctica and return with her full of cash. I eventually had to confess to the Guide Dogs Assn that Stay was not coming back and it was really no use in trying. In an effort to appease them (and avoid payment of the supposed value \$1500) I offered to write an article detailing the exploits of Stay and asked all users to give me stories. I also offered to place some guide dog models around the Division during the Open Day (which was about 1996), a small one of which is still in my office. The people concerned thankfully saw the funny side of things and all worked out well.”

Mawson expeditioners raised more than \$1000 for the Guide Dogs Association in 2001. In 2003 at Davis, at the last calculation, we had collected \$1916.20 for our own ‘Stay Fund’.



At Davis Station, home, March 2000.

by **Jeremy Smith**