

The International Ice Patrol

(From *The Friendly World*, by R.E.S. Chalmers and J. Chalmers)

The White Star liner *Titanic* sped across the Atlantic Ocean on her maiden voyage. It was almost midnight on 14 April, 1912. The stars were shining and the sea was like glass. Suddenly the look-out saw an iceberg directly ahead. He sounded the warning bell, and telephoned his report to the bridge. For more than thirty seconds nothing happened. From his place in the crow's nest, the look-out watched with horror as the ghostly mass of ice loomed nearer and nearer. At last – it seemed almost by a miracle – the bow of the giant ship swung clear and avoided a head-on collision. Seconds later however, there was a grinding jar. The submerged edge of the iceberg had torn a great gash in the ship's side below the water-line. The sea began to pour in. The ship, which had been considered unsinkable, was doomed. In less than three hours the *Titanic* sank, with a loss of 1,513 lives.

The *Titanic* disaster shocked the world. In 1913, as a result of an international conference held in London, it was decided to send out ships to patrol the danger area. Thus, the International Ice Patrol came into being. From the beginning it has been managed by the United States. Each member country pays for the upkeep of the service according to the tonnage of its ships which pass through the patrol area.

Most of the icebergs come from the eastern and north-western shores of Greenland. The great glaciers from the mountains of Greenland, forced by the pressure of millions of tonnes of snow and ice, are forever creeping towards the sea. Every so often the lip of a glacier breaks off at the shore line. There is a thunderous roar and an enormous splash, and another iceberg is born. Thousands of these icebergs, many of them longer than a football field and higher than a twenty-storey building, float away every year. Those from the eastern shores of Greenland are swept by currents round the southern tip of the island. They are joined by icebergs from the north-western shores. In time, all are caught in the grip of the Labrador Current and carried towards Newfoundland and the shipping lanes. Fortunately, many run aground on the way and melt harmlessly in the sun. Others survive and continue to drift southwards. Eventually the icebergs meet the northward-flowing Gulf Stream, which is a current of water about twenty degrees (Celsius) warmer than the Labrador Current. In a few weeks this warmer water melts the icebergs, and the danger to shipping is removed. Thus, nature succeeds where man has so far failed. Many attempts have been made to dispose of the icebergs. Shells, torpedoes, mines, and incendiary bombs have all been tried in vain.

It is the duty of the International Ice Patrol to locate all icebergs and chart their course. This task is made more difficult because, during much of the

iceberg season, which lasts from April to July, the region is blanketed by dense fogs caused by the meeting of the warm Gulf Stream and the cold Labrador Current. Today all the resources of modern science are used to make the sea-ways safe. Every February, reports of icebergs approaching the shipping lanes are radioed to the Ice Patrol headquarters in Newfoundland. These are sent in by the United States Coast Guard.

As reports come in, each iceberg's position is accurately recorded on a huge wall map at headquarters. Patrolling aircraft and fast cutters fitted with radar keep a constant check on ice movements. Twice daily a bulletin is broadcast in Morse code to all ships in the ice area. Every four hours ships at sea report their position and speed, together with ice conditions, visibility, and wind direction.

It is the source of great pride to the International Ice Patrol that, since it began, no lives have been lost in the transatlantic steamship lanes it guards.

A Meaning in context

1. Give the meaning of each word or phrase as it is used in the passage.

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| (a) liner (l. 1) | (j) run aground (l. 30) |
| (b) maiden voyage (ll. 1, 2) | (k) dispose (l. 36) |
| (c) bridge (l. 4) | (l) torpedoes (l. 36) |
| (d) crow's nest (ll. 5, 6) | (m) incendiary bombs (ll. 36, 37) |
| (e) loomed (l. 6) | (n) chart (l. 38) |
| (f) a grinding jar (l. 9) | (o) blanketed (l. 40) |
| (g) water-line (l. 10) | (p) bulletin (l. 48) |
| (h) shipping lanes (l. 29) | (q) visibility (l. 50) |

2. Give a synonym for each word and make sentences with both words.

EXAMPLE

directly (l. 3) — straight

He looked **directly** at us when he made the remark.

We told him to drive **straight** on till he came to the traffic-lights.

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| (a) ghostly (l. 6) | (f) grip (l. 28) |
| (b) gash (l. 10) | (g) duty (l. 38) |
| (c) doomed (l. 11) | (h) dense (l. 41) |
| (d) conference (l. 14) | (i) constant (l. 48) |
| (e) upkeep (l. 17) | (j) broadcast (l. 49) |

B In each case, choose the best answer.

1. We can infer from Paragraph 1 that the look-out of the *Titanic*
- was negligent in performing his duty.
 - performed his duty conscientiously.
 - was tardy in reporting what he saw.
 - informed the wrong person of what he saw.

2. How did the liner avoid a head-on collision?
 - A The iceberg floated away from the ship's path.
 - B The ship slowed down and stopped.
 - C The ship quickly changed direction.
 - D The ship reversed quickly.
3. The International Ice Patrol has as its members
 - A the shipping magnates of the world.
 - B captains of ships which ply between Europe and North America.
 - C individuals who are concerned about safety at sea.
 - D nations which want the sea-ways made safe for their citizens to travel.
4. Which statement about icebergs in the Atlantic Ocean is false?
 - A Icebergs are masses of ice which broke off from glaciers.
 - B Most icebergs come from the shores of Greenland.
 - C Icebergs cease to be a threat to shipping when they reach Newfoundland.
 - D Icebergs take a few weeks to melt in the Gulf Stream.
5. The International Ice Patrol is responsible for
 - A the disposal of icebergs.
 - B monitoring the movements of icebergs.
 - C clearing the shipping lanes of dense fogs
 - D ensuring that no accidents at all arise in the sea-ways.
6. Which of these statements is true?
 - A The International Ice Patrol has been efficient in carrying out its functions.
 - B The International Ice Patrol has been successful in keeping the sea-ways free of icebergs.
 - C The International Ice Patrol has achieved less than what it had set out to do.
 - D The International Ice Patrol is proud that it has prevented deaths of any kind in the transatlantic shipping lanes.

C Answer these questions in your own words.

1. Why do you think we can attribute the shipwreck of the *Titanic* to the look-out? You can infer the reason from the first paragraph of the passage.
2. What service was introduced to ensure that such a disaster would not occur again? How is the service maintained?
3. How are icebergs formed? Where do most of them come from?
4. "... nature succeeds where man has so far failed." Explain how.
5. For how many months does the normal iceberg season last? How are the sea-ways made safe during that season?
6. How do ships at sea and the Ice Patrol headquarters maintain contact? What do the ships report?



Shooting Sharks

(From the chapter entitled "Diving for Sport and for Science" by Bill Barada in *World Beneath the Sea*, a Special Publication of the National Geographic Society)

Slipping into the waters of the Pacific at Rangiroa Atoll, I flipped my way into the larger of two submarine passes that split the reef. Cautiously, I began to creep down one of its coral walls. Beside me, my friends Al Giddings and Dewey Bergman moved with the same discretion. The reasons for our vigilance were all around us — throngs of foraging sharks, including greys, black tips, and white tips. 5

We had planned this hazardous undersea itinerary with the hope of making a film documentary on sharks in a "feeding frenzy". Like many divers before us, we sought to pierce some of the riddles of shark behaviour by observing and recording it at close quarters. We had found a perfect "studio" here in the Tuamotu Archipelago. In this cleft in the coral, hundreds of five- to ten-foot (1.5 - 3m) sharks prowl a 300-yard-wide (275 m), mile-long (1.6 km) strip of water. 10

As the darkly ominous shapes swarmed about us, Dewey and Al got set with their movie cameras. I had a still camera, but my main job was to shoot fish with my spear gun, attracting sharks to the bait and sending them into action. 15

The sharks began swimming quietly on all sides of us, keeping a distance of about 15 feet (4.5m) — too far for good filming. Each time I aimed the spear gun, one shark would line up behind my target. I could see his eyes rolling as he waited for me to fire. Excited, the others moved swiftly around him. When a 15-pound (7 kg) snapper swam into range between the cameras, I shot it. The sharks went wild, coming at us from all directions as they raced for the fish. 20

Dodging the voracious predators, Al and Dewey swept their cameras over the mad scene while I gripped the harpoon line with one hand and held myself fast to the coral with the other. When a shark hit the fish on the end of the line and took off, a pack of about fifty zoomed into a tight circle over our heads. The piece of coral I clung to snapped off, and the thrashing brutes fighting over the fish on the end of the line began pulling me towards them. I let go of the line and watched gratefully as the battling pack swam away with the prize. 25 30

Five days and 2 500 feet (760 m) of film later, we concluded our dives among these dreaded creatures. We had found that sharks don't always live up to their reputation of being dangerous man-eaters — at least not until familiarity really starts breeding contempt. Each day they became more aggressive, and we had a number of very close brushes. 35

Why did they tolerate us at all? Was it the fresh seafood dinners we provided? Perhaps. As investigators know so well, sharks react unpre-

dictably to the presence of human beings, but very often attack surface swimmers or those who have been injured or appear distressed. Our self-contained underwater breathing apparatus, or scuba, let us move about among them with ease and control. 40

A Meaning in context

1. Match each word in the first column with its meaning in the second column.

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| (a) discretion (l. 4) | (i) trip or route |
| (b) vigilance (l. 5) | (ii) animals which prey on others |
| (c) foraging (l. 5) | (iii) record of a real event or activity |
| (d) hazardous (l. 7) | (iv) endure or allow without interference |
| (e) itinerary (l. 7) | (v) prudence |
| (f) documentary (l. 8) | (vi) hunting or searching (for food) |
| (g) frenzy (l. 8) | (vii) brought to an end or completed |
| (h) voracious (l. 25) | (viii) watchfulness or alertness |
| (i) predators (l. 25) | (ix) very hungry or greedy |
| (j) concluded (l. 33) | (x) risky or dangerous |
| (k) aggressive (l. 37) | (xi) violent excitement |
| (l) tolerate (l. 38) | (xii) disposed to attack |

2. Give the meaning of each sentence in your own words.

- We sought to pierce some of the riddles of shark behaviour by observing and recording it at close quarters.
- My main job was to shoot fish with my spear gun, attracting sharks to the bait and sending them into action.
- Sharks do not always live up to their reputation of being dangerous man-eaters.
- Familiarity breeds contempt.
- We had a number of very close brushes with the sharks.
- Sharks react unpredictably to the presence of human beings, but very often attack surface swimmers or those who appear distressed.

B In each case, choose the best answer

1. Why did the writer and his friends move down the coral wall cautiously?
- They were unfamiliar with the strip of water they were in.
 - There were sharks all around them.
 - The coral edges were jagged.
 - For all the above reasons.

2. How did the writer get the sharks into action?
 - A He harpooned a shark.
 - B He shot a snapper.
 - C He threw waste food to them.
 - D He feigned distress.

3. When did the writer shoot the snapper?
 - A He shot it as a shark was pursuing it.
 - B He shot it when it was moving towards the sharks.
 - C He shot it when it was within range between the cameras.
 - D He shot it as a shark lined up behind it.

4. What happened immediately after the writer had shot the snapper?
 - A The sharks swam in circles above the fish.
 - B The sharks showed momentary interest, but then moved away.
 - C The sharks were scared off by the impaling of the snapper.
 - D The sharks rushed to get at the snapper.

5. Why did the writer let go of the harpoon line?
 - A He had to as he had lost grip of the piece of coral.
 - B He was being pulled towards the sharks.
 - C He became too exhausted to hold on.
 - D He could not see as the water was turbulent.

C Answer these questions in your own words.

1. What was the extent of the strip of water in which the sharks prowled? Where was it?
2. What was the purpose of the undersea itinerary the writer and his friends made?
3. What was the writer's task in the filming of the documentary? What difficulties did he face in carrying it out?
4. When, according to the writer, did the sharks begin to "live up to their reputation of being dangerous man-eaters"?
5. How were the writer and his friends equipped for their job? What benefit did they derive from the scuba?