



### JOHANNES JACOBUS LA GRANGE

#### Recipient of 1st Award of the South African Antarctic Medal – 1964

In response to a call by the Award Committee for nominations for the award of the First South African Antarctic Medal, the names of six candidates were received. In some cases motivation was lacking and from the start the Committee eliminated some of the nominations from the detailed consideration. After consultation with persons who know the remaining candidates, the Committee decided to award the First South African Antarctic Medal to **Johannes Jacobus la Grange**.

#### CITATION:

Of all South Africans, La Grange stayed all in all by far the longest time on Marion Island and at Antarctica. On Marion Island he worked as meteorologist for a total of two years from October, 1950 to April, 1952, and then again from March to November, 1954. He stayed at Antarctica for over three years, from December, 1955 to March, 1958 as a member of the Trans-Antarctic Expedition, and from December, 1959 to January, 1961 as leader of the first South African Antarctic Expedition. In addition to this he spent about two years full-time in the preparation for expeditions or the processing of the collected data.

*Publications:* La Grange has written approximately 25 articles, treatises and reports on the various aspects of Marion Island, Antarctica and the Southern Oceans. These works are of both popular and scientific nature. They include:

1. "Meteorology. Shackleton South Ice and the journey across Antarctica." (Scientific Reports No. 13 – Transarctic Expedition 1955/58).
2. "Notes on the Birds and Mammals of Marion Island and Antarctica (SANAE)." (For publication in the *Journal of the South African Biological Society*).

The first-named publication may be described as La Grange's *magnum opus*. The processing of the meteorological data, the comments and numerous remarks and hints about observation are witness of extreme practical insight and efficiency.

His articles indicate a great versatility of interests. Apart from meteorology he has also written on glaciological observations, sea temperatures and pack-ice of the Antarctic Ocean, huskies, administration, compounding and the scientific programmes of expeditions, etc. In this connection the following should be specially mentioned:

"The requirements and nature of the logistic support for a small national Antarctic Expedition" (Antarctic Logistics Symposium, Boulder, Colorado, 1962. Symposium Papers, p. 43).

Although most of La Grange's articles have appeared in the Weather Bureau's Newsletter, the following names of magazines and books which carried articles on the Antarctic, bear witness of the wide field covered by him: *Polar Record* (Cambridge), *Outlook* (Johannesburg), *Journal of the Mountain Club of South Africa* (Cape Town),

*Antarctic* (Wellington, N.Z.), *Notos* (Pretoria), *Afrikaanse Kinderensiklopedie* (Cape Town) and *Staatsamptenaar* (Pretoria).

*Publicity:* No other person in South Africa contributed as much to publicity for Antarctica as La Grange. He has presented about one hundred lectures, mostly with slide illustrations, to schools, scientific societies and at public occasions, as well as giving broadcasts, and compiling, in 1961, six dramatised programmes for the S.A.B.C.'s School Radio Programmes, while a seventh programme, illustrated with slides, was the first audio-visual broadcast to schools. He played a considerable part in the photography, commentary and direction of the sound film, "Die Koue Suide – The Cold South". In addition his popular and lighter scientific articles have reached a wide reading public. Also to be mentioned is the fact that the articles of clothing and equipment used in Antarctica, and in the past few years exhibited in the Permanent Scientific Exhibition at the show-grounds, Pretoria, have been supplied almost exclusively by La Grange. He has furthermore taken a leading rôle in the foundation and continuation of the South African Antarctic Association. He has served on the committees of the latter since its inception, and has been Chairman of the Association for the past 15 months.



La Grange has made the first of the Huskies in South Africa available to SANAE for breeding purposes. The returning Belgian Expedition of 1961 presented him with *Fatima* and *Bidule*, as a gift to himself and Mrs. la Grange. He presented them to the Department of Transport. Several litters have been born at Onderstepoort and placed at the disposal of SANAE.

Some further facts may be mentioned. Firstly, the energetic way in which he, in the short time of less than three months (between 9 September and 3 December, 1959), helped to organise the first Antarctic expedition. Together with Messrs. H. P. Smit and S. A. Engelbrecht, he went to Britain, Norway and Germany to acquire supplies and apparatus and to negotiate the take-over of Norway Station. Programmes had to be drawn up, team members appointed and prepared, supplies listed and packed. In all this the experience gained from his participation in the Fuchs Expedition stood him in good stead.

Secondly, the amount of work accomplished by the first expedition under difficult circumstances in Antarctica bears witness of outstanding leadership. The Norwegian base was in a poor condition and had to be cleaned up, new apparatus and aerials had to be erected, supplies had to be transported 25 miles, and this took a very long time.

Nonetheless, programmes in meteorology, geomagnetism, glaciology, physiology, as well as geological field work and charting were successfully completed. The glaciological field work was based mainly on La Grange's experience with the Fuchs Expedition.

In 1958 the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns honoured La Grange with the medal for scientific endeavour in Antarctica. For his participation in the Trans-Antarctic Expedition, he received the bronze medal of the Royal Geographical Society, the British Polar Medal, and a medal of the New York Explorers' Club. High honours indeed. The South African Antarctic Medal is awarded him for all his activities in connection with Antarctica and the Sub-Antarctic Islands, since 1950.

## **CURRICULUM VITAE**

### **Academic**

Johannes Jacobus la Grange was born on 13 October, 1927 at Ladismith, in the Cape. In 1944 he matriculated at the De Villiers Graaff High School, Villiersdorp. While he was working he attained his B.Sc. degree at the University of Pretoria in 1962, main subjects being Zoology and Geography. He attained the B.Sc (Hons) degree in Geography at the same institution at the beginning of 1966. He finished the written part of his M.Sc. thesis in Town and Regional Planning at the end of 1967 and his completed treatise was submitted shortly after to the University.

### **Experience**

#### **1949-1963**

During the period that he worked at the Weather Bureau, he was a member of four relief parties to Marion Island (1950-1952 and 1954), where he did meteorological and biological work. In 1955-58 he was a member of the Trans-Antarctic (Fuchs) Expedition and was the first South African in 1958 to reach the geographical South Pole. For his oceanographic, glaciological and meteorological work during this period The South African Academy for Science and Art presented him with its first medal for scientific achievement in 1958. He was awarded the British Polar Medal with clasp "Antarctic 1956-58" as well as the New York Explorer's Club Medal. He is also the possessor of the Royal Geographical Society's Bronze Medal.

In 1960 he was the leader of the first South African expedition to the Antarctic, and received the South African Antarctic Gold Medal in 1964.

#### **1963-1974**

In 1963 Mr. la Grange began work for what was then known as the Council for the Development of Natural Resources. At present he is a Director in the Department of Planning and the Environment, and is also the head of the sub-department of Environment Problems.

Mr. la Grange represents the Department on various committees, and is chairman of some of them.

### **Travels Abroad**

In his various capacities he has visited many countries including Australia, New Zealand, England, France, Germany, Italy, Holland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Brazil, Uruguay, Malawi and Kenya.

In 1969 he attended a sitting of the United Nations Committee in New York for the Safe Use of the Sea, and also visited Canada.

In 1969 he visited the United States at the invitation of the US-SALEP (United States-South African Leader Exchange Programme).

In 1973 he attended the United Nations meeting of the Control Board for the Environment, and in 1974 attended two meetings of this Board in Nairobi. In 1974 he attended the 14th General Meeting of SARCCUS in Malawi.

### **Memberships**

Mr. la Grange is a member of a number of institutions both in South Africa and abroad.

### **Publications**

Mr. la Grange is the author of about 50 publications. In the last few years his time has been taken up with official publications which have not appeared under his name.

### **General**

Hannes la Grange is married and has three children.