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Dr. Louis B. Slichter  
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Dear Dr. Slichter:

As your nearby neighbor, I was interested in reading about your role as Chief Scientist in the upcoming Polar Expedition. What was of particular interest was the mention of Dr. Paul Siple and his wife, Ruth. This may be a bit of historical trivia, possibly of only casual interest to you, but I'm sure it will be of great interest to Ruth Siple.

This is the story of how Paul happened to go to the South Pole with Admiral Byrd as a teenage Boy Scout.

Back in, what now seems to me the Dark Ages, 1928, Admiral Byrd announced that he was sponsoring a nationwide contest to choose a Boy Scout to accompany him to the South Pole. I grew up with Paul in Erie, Pa. The area had an extremely active Scouting organization, due in a large part to a Chief Scout Executive named Harry Frayer. Paul and I were both extensively involved and were counselors for several years at Camp Thomas, on the shore of Lake Erie. Even at that time, at the age of fourteen or fifteen, it was easy to tell that Paul was a superior person. He was already showing signs of great leadership, industry and ability. I recall that, as fast as a new merit badge was announced, Paul would go to work and quickly qualify for the badge. At that time I think there were about 60 badges in all.

When the Byrd contest was announced, it was Frayer's idea that Paul could probably qualify. We did an extremely energetic job of rounding up testimonials in Paul's behalf, from teachers, colleagues, scout leaders, relatives and others. We finally had a voluminous brochure which was sent to the Admiral.

Paul was selected as one of the six finalists who were invited by Byrd to come to New York to spend a week with each other and with him. His method of making the final selection was quite clever. At the end of the week, he had each boy write down his answer to the question, "If you were going to the South Pole, who among you would you choose to accompany you?" Paul got five votes.

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Just prior to the sailing of the expedition, a group of the most active Scout leaders in Erie got together and decided to go to New York and see Paul off. There were about 15 or 20 of us. Having a total capital of probably less than \$15.00 apiece, we didn't exactly know how to go about it. My father loaned us an old out-of-service International flat-bed truck. It was so old that it had acetylene headlights. If it didn't have solid rubber tires instead of pneumatics, it certainly felt like it by the time we completed our three day, 450 mile trip to New York. We put up in a little off-Broadway fleabag of a hotel for, as I recall, something like 75¢ a night. It was an interesting sight in the mornings when we left the hotel to see this motley mixture of hustlers, hookers, hoofers, has beens and never-was's intermixed with about fifteen Boy Scouts in full dress regalia. I do recall that we all got bed bugs.

The admiral was very hospitable and assigned someone to see that we were entertained. When the, I believe it was three, ships sailed, he let us get on board his flagship, "City of New York," to sail out into the harbor, from where we were returned by small boat. This was so that we could say, "We sailed for the South Pole with Admiral Byrd."

What may be of particular interest to Mrs. Siple is the accompanying three clippings. One is a picture from a New York newspaper which shows Paul kissing his mother good-bye while his father stands to the right. I am peering over his father's right shoulder. Paul is dressed only in his undershirt as he was perspiring from helping the loading of the ship.

It is interesting how this one event determined Paul's career and shaped his entire life, including his four expeditions to the Antarctica and his year-round stay at the Pole during the International Geophysical Year.

As I don't know how to reach Mrs. Siple, I would appreciate your passing this material on to her with my best regards.

Best wishes for a fruitful and successful expedition.

Sincerely,



Gus Michel