

Peter the Penguin



Peter was an Adélie penguin and lived in Antarctica. Some thought this was Atlantis, but Peter knew it only as his home. He lived on the ice. It was Cold! Very cold, sometimes fifty degrees below, but Peter loved it.

He was three years old and stood about seventy five centimetres (that's two and half feet tall) and weighed about six kilograms. Penguins always seem as though they are late for dinner in they're black tailcoats and white shirt fronts. They all look rather portly as they waddle or slide along on their tummies.

It was late spring and the ice was starting to thaw. Peter did not care, he knew he could swim and catch fish. The sky was bright blue and the sea a dark mauve, great icebergs the size of skyscrapers floated majestically by. Peter loved the ice, to him this was paradise. Snow, snow and more snow, white as far as the eye could see and penguins everywhere. There must have been at least ten thousand, his brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts and cousins removed. They nested near the shore in-groups, from six to a hundred called Rookeries. The penguins would build nests from rocks some with a pile fifty centimetres high and others would steal rocks from old nests.

They would arrive around October and lay their eggs in November, the chicks would hatch around December. Each mating pair would take it in turns to look after the eggs and young, they were good parents. They braved, bad weather, leopard seals, Orcas, and Polar bears to catch krill for their offspring. The chicks would depart around February time leaving their parents time to have a little fun.

Penguins loved to party and always wore their evening dress just in case. Peter lived near a research station and airbase. He could fly underwater, but was fascinated by the great metal birds and whirly whales in the sky the humans used to fly. The pilots knew this and would search out a beach where the birds were gathered and fly slowly along it at the water's edge.

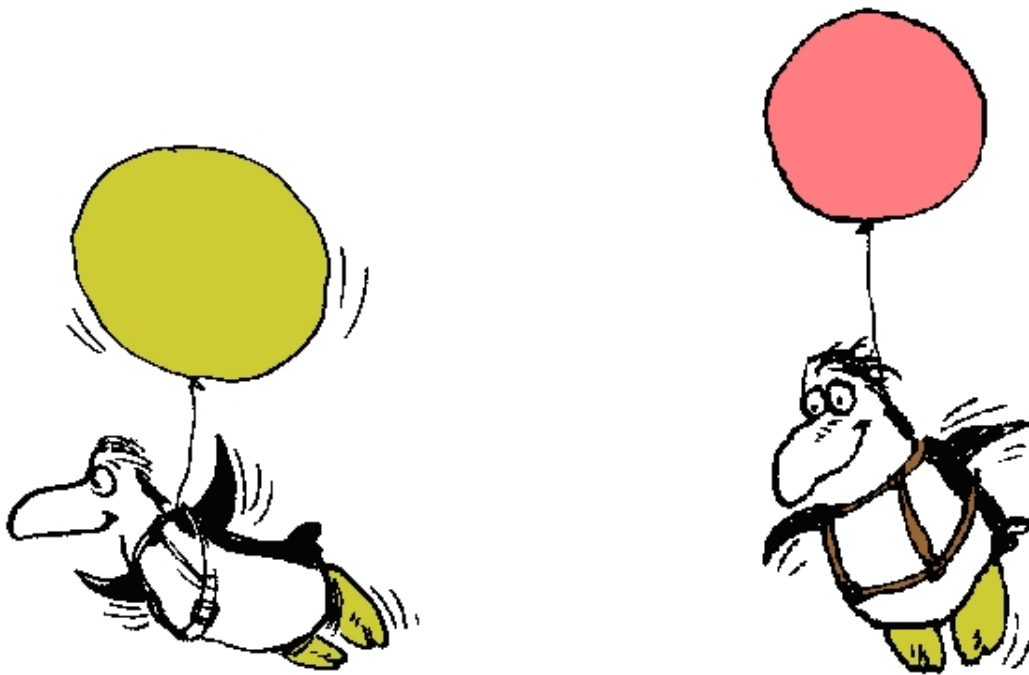
Thousand's of penguins would turn their heads in unison watching the planes and helicopters go by. Then the pilots would turn around and fly back. The birds would turn their heads in the opposite direction, like spectators at a slow -motion tennis match. The pilots would fly out to sea and turn directly towards the penguin colony and over fly it. Heads would go up, up, up and perhaps ten thousand penguins would fall over gently on their backs and lay like black and white dominoes on the snow.

After one of these encounters Peter would get up and brush himself down. He shook a flipper at the sky and promised the penguins would find a way to fly.



He gathered a few of his friends, Eric, Fred, Mont and Pong and they waddled up to the base in a line. As they got there, some of the scientists were preparing some weather balloons for tests. Penguins are great copycats and saw the way the men filled up the rubber bubbles from a helium gas canister. The men tied on a basket containing some instruments then let go.

"Whoosh!" The balloons soared into the air.



"We could do that!" Thought Peter. They waited until the men had gone, Then they started to fill their own balloons. As they pulled off the end of the rubber tube with their beaks some of them swallowed the helium gas, soon they were all squawking in high pitched Mickey Mouse voices. Instead of a basket they tied themselves onto the bulging balloons. One by one each penguin took off into the sky.

"Wheee-y ! They cried in their high pitched voices.

"We can fly-y high-h-h in the Sky-yy!"

The men in the helicopters were even more amazed to see the flying penguins. They could not believe it, nor could their colleagues on the ground and recalled them back to base for urgent tests.

"Flying Penguins! " Spluttered the base commander. "Snow sickness more like!"

Just then he blinked he was sure he saw a giggling penguin whizzing past the window of his glass igloo. Peter waved and smiled he was having a great time. He rose up and up in the air, soon he was level with a whirly whale. Now he could see the men inside. He was a little disappointed it wasn't a real whale, but he was also glad it did not eat him.



He looked down and saw the great penguin colony that stretched along the beach. They were also looking up at him fascinated.



As they stretched their necks higher and higher, one by one, they fell over in long lines. It was a really funny sight. He tried not to laugh. He could also see for miles, White Mountains, glaciers and floating icebergs. Here and there, he spotted polar bears, ice foxes and leopard seals; he shivered and knew he had to take care. In the sky were birds, giant petrels and skuas soared up and down beside him. It was a different world, but he knew he could not go too high. He called to his friends and together they let go or cut the string to the balloons.

They opened their flippers and tried to glide in like birds, but most crash-landed in a heap. Luckily it had just snowed and the snow was quite soft. Peter was not so lucky he hit a scientist on a snowmobile and they both went sprawling.

Everything went dark, when Peter woke up he was chained up to a post. It seemed he had hit the base

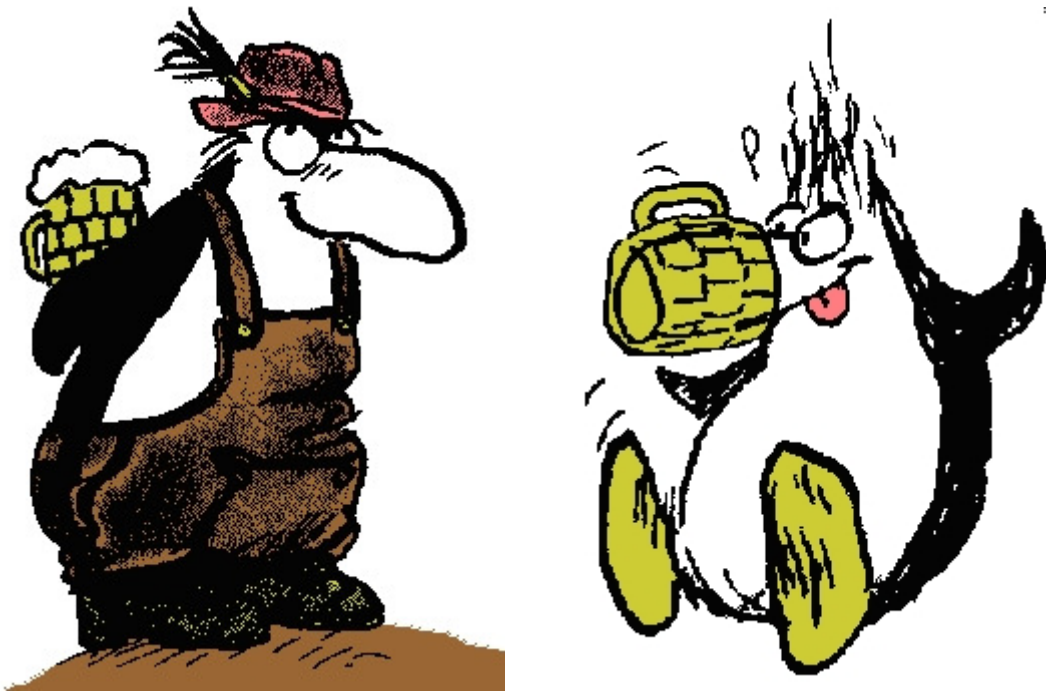


commander, who was determined to teach those pesky penguins a lesson for making him look so stupid.



Then about fifty penguins lined up in two rough groups, they started squawking and running around bumping into each other. The scientists came out to discover that the penguins had taken the field. It also turned out the barrels contained German beer; the penguins had also discovered this and were having a real party. It was total mayhem with penguins bumping into each other and

falling over. The sight was so ridiculous the scientists started rolling around the ice laughing. In the confusion Eric and Pong grabbed some wire cutters and managed to cut Peter free. Everything turned out OK! The base commander laughed so much he forgot about Peter. The silly football match cheered everyone up and they all joined in the party.



"PARTY ON PENGUINS!"