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Dear Mom,

We attached our ACBAR receiver to the Viper Telescope here at Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station a couple of weeks ago, and now we are taking data. Everyone in our group has been working twelve-hour days at the telescope, seven days a week. I'm on the night shift. Well, "night" meaning from dinner until breakfast. It is actually daylight, and it will be daylight for six months straight. Weird. The main building of South Pole Station is a geodesic dome located about 100 meters from the actual Pole. The Viper telescope is about a kilometer away, a nice little walk across the ice runway.

There's housing for about 30 people under the geodesic dome. Another 25 can stay in the "El Dorm," or Elevated Dorm, away from the dome. There are over 200 people here during the summer, though. Lots of them stay in Summer Camp, which has Hypertats (metal huts) and Jamesways (Korean War-era tents). I stayed in a Hypertat last year, and I'm in El Dorm this summer. We eat in the galley, which is inside the dome. Cooks make four square meals a day: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, and Midsrats. Folks are working all three shifts, so there are meals around the clock to feed everybody. The food was my favorite part about the Pole. It reminded me of dorm food. And there was a lot of it.

And don't worry about me dressing warm, Mom. Everyone who goes to the Pole is supplied with ECW (Extreme Cold Weather) gear on loan from the US Antarctic Program. They give us a parka, jackets, insulated Carhartt overalls, thermal underwear, wool socks, hats, gloves, snow goggles, bunny boots, and so on. I brought my own insulated work boots because I prefer them over the bunny boots for climbing on the telescope. The clothing they provide is more than enough to keep everyone warm while they work outside. I only wish I'd remembered to wear it today.

Love,
Mike



Mike Daub is a graduate student in physics at Cal, working with Professor Bill "Swill" Holzapfel. He spent six weeks at the South Pole during January and February of 2001 and returned there in January 2002. Good son that he is, he keeps his mom apprised of life at the Pole.

