

Frozen in Time: Murder at the Bottom of the World

Theodore Jerome Cohen

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Reviewed by Richard R. Blake for Reader Views (04/10)

Theodore Cohen goes back to a time in his life to create a fictional story based on his own real-life experiences during the Austral summer of 1961 -1962. He was part of a Chilean Antarctic expedition with a team of scientists from the University of Wisconsin doing a gravity survey. The work was down on the North Antarctic Peninsula.

Cohen carefully builds a plot which includes natural dangers of weather and environment, criminal activity, greed, and murder. Cohen uses actual events which occurred during the period 1958 through 1965. Real people from his life, fictional characters, and fictional agencies and organizations are all a part of the carefully developed plot. Cohen incorporates the Great Chilean Earthquake of May 22, 1960 and the theft of valuable assets from the bank's safe deposit boxes valued at millions of dollars to build suspense that leads to an unexpected surprise ending.

The following is typical of Cohen's amazing descriptions: " a world of ice, enveloping, looming over, and dominating the landscape...melting cracking, separating, inching inexorably toward the sea, calving in thunderous convulsions that send thousands of tons of ice and snow pouring down from great heights..."

The University of Wisconsin team had a threefold objective. Grant mapped large portions of the area and collected a variety of rocks and fossils that he needed in defense of his doctoral theses in Cretaceous sedimentation. David similarly was collecting rock samples needed for his doctoral work. Ted was working to establish a new gravity network in the Chilean Antarctica.

The book is thoroughly researched, fully documented, and highly informative. Ham radio operators will appreciate the detailed descriptions of strategies involved in communicating world wide with Ham radio and other high frequency communications. Avid Chess fans will enjoy the reference to highly complicated chess moves and mention of various well-known Chess Tournaments. Frequent references to Catholic tradition and rites will be of interest to practicing Catholics.

I appreciated the use of the Spanish language when appropriate in the dialog with the easy reference to the English translation. I was enthralled with Cohen's account of the Chinstrap penguins (a rookery of over 100,000.) Cohen's own pictures, other photos, maps and illustrations add a stunning visual dimension to the narrative

Cohen writes with depth, authenticity, and meaning as he draws from his own experiences. He adeptly expresses the feelings, emotions, and psyche of his characters. It became difficult to pinpoint where biographical writing ended and fiction began.

“Frozen in Time” is compelling reading combining the elements of conflict, suspense, intrigue, entertainment, and enlightenment. I highly recommended it.