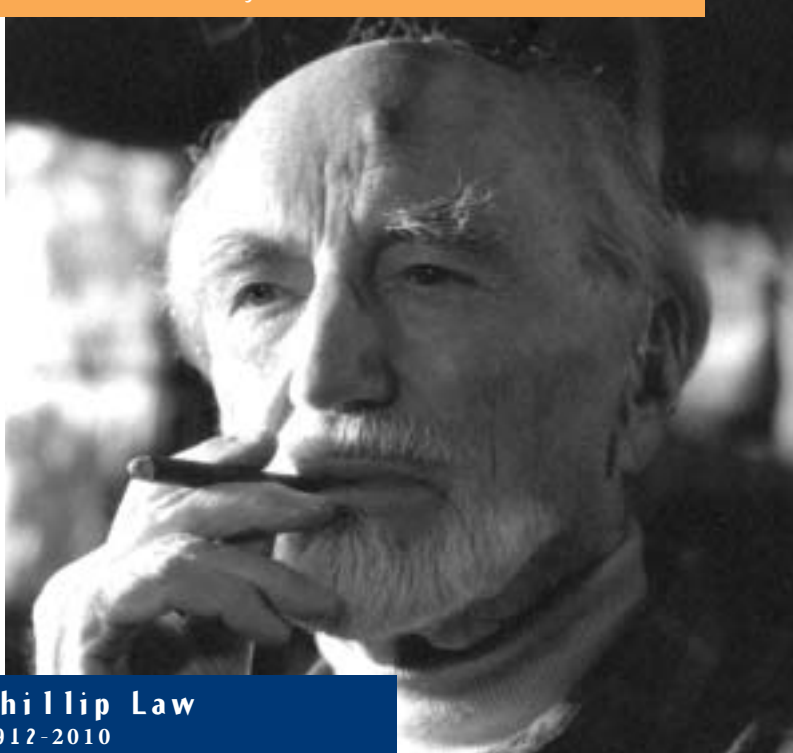


AUSTRALIAN BIOGRAPHY

A series that profiles some of the most extraordinary Australians of our time



Phillip Law
1912-2010
Scientist & Antarctic Explorer

This program is an episode of **Australian Biography** Series 2 produced under the National Interest Program of Film Australia. This well-established series profiles some of the most extraordinary Australians of our time. Many have had a major impact on the nation's cultural, political and social life. All are remarkable and inspiring people who have reached a stage in their lives where they can look back and reflect. Through revealing in-depth interviews, they share their stories—of beginnings and challenges, landmarks and turning points. In so doing, they provide us with an invaluable archival record and a unique perspective on the roads we, as a country, have travelled.

Australian Biography: Phillip Law

Director/Producer Frank Heimans **Executive Producer** Ron Saunders

Duration 26 minutes **Year** 1993

Study guide prepared by Kate Raynor © NFSA

Also in Series 2: Faith Bandler, Franco Belgiorno-Nettis, Nancy Cato,
Frank Hardy, Dame Roma Mitchell, Elizabeth Riddell

A FILM AUSTRALIA NATIONAL INTEREST PROGRAM

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SYNOPSIS

Phillip Law showed early academic ability and at the age of 16 became a teacher. He loved skiing and mountaineering and became fascinated by Antarctica.

In 1947 he was appointed Senior Scientific Officer on Australia's first post-war Antarctic expedition. In 1949 he became Director of the Australian Antarctic Division.

Law was Director of the Division until his retirement in 1966. During that period he established the Mawson, Davis and Casey stations and led numerous voyages to explore the coast of the Australian Antarctic Territory.

After his retirement, Law occupied a variety of other positions, among them Chairman of the Australian National Committee on Antarctic Research, and Council Member of the University of Melbourne. He is the author of several books including **Antarctic Odyssey**.

For his pioneering work Law has received numerous awards including the Founder's Gold Medal of the Royal Geographical Society, London and the Gold Medal of the Australian Geographic Society. In 1995 he was awarded the Companion in the Order of Australia.

CURRICULUM LINKS

This program will have interest and relevance for teachers and students at middle to senior secondary and tertiary levels. Curriculum links include SOSE/HSIE, Science, English, Environmental Studies and Australian History.

ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION POINTS

The Program: Story of a Life

- Did you know anything about Phillip Law prior to watching this program? If so, has watching this program changed your opinion of him in any way?
- Why might the filmmakers have thought Phillip a worthy subject to be included in this series of **Australian Biography**?
- Does this program leave you with any questions about Phillip?
- Imagine that you are a producer on the **Australian Biography** series and that you could have access to three people from Phillip's life—family, friends, colleagues, critics. Compile a list of four questions for each of these people, using this additional interview material to further develop the portrait of Phillip given in this program. How would you decide who might offer a valuable perspective on his life and achievements? Consider what new details you might gather when formulating your questions. Write a production statement outlining what you hope to achieve.
- The filmmakers intercut shots of Phillip responding to questions posed by interviewer, Andrea Stretton, with occasional photos and archival footage. Choose four family photos from different periods of your life and use them to construct a series of autobiographical snapshots. Who is in each photo? Who took the photo? Where were you? What was the occasion? What was the mood? Does the photo correspond with your memory of the time? What has happened to the other people (if any) pictured in the photo? How have you changed since then? Do you like the photo? Why/why not?
- Phillip shares a number of anecdotes from his life. Choose one of his stories and explain what it tells us about him. Imagine you could tell just one story from your life to convey a sense of you and your family. Write this story and then at the end note what you think it reveals about you.
- Choose six adjectives to describe Phillip.
- Do you think Phillip would be satisfied with the way the program represents him?
- What do you think are his strengths and weaknesses?
- Make a list of three questions you would ask Phillip if you had the opportunity to interview him. What do you think his responses might be?

Phillip Law's Motto: Take the Plunge—Jump Now and Then...

- Phillip Law personally led 23 voyages to Antarctica and the sub-Antarctic regions, and directed the Australian National Antarctic Research Expeditions (ANARE) activities that resulted in the mapping of 4,000 miles of coastline and 800,000 square miles of territory. In 1954, he founded the Mawson, Davis and Casey bases in Antarctica. He also made significant contributions to restructuring higher education in the 1960s in his position as vice-president of the Victorian Institute of Colleges. For which of his many achievements do you think he would most like to be remembered? What would you like people to remember you for?
- Phillip describes himself as an explorer and a scientist. What do these twin pursuits have in common?
- Phillip speaks of two driving forces: curiosity and an urge 'to be the first'. What are you curious about? What might you like to be first at?
- Phillip describes his early 'mountaineering' experiences: he and his grandfather would climb the hill behind their house where his grandfather would cook sausages and make billy tea. He was six or seven at this time, and describes these moments as 'magic'. Do you have memories of a special experience with one of your grandparents? Describe one of your 'magic' memories.
- Phillip tells the story of trying to climb Mount Charlie as a young man and having to delay his attainment of this goal until the age of 78. Describe a goal that took you a long while to attain. What kept you motivated and how did you feel when you finally fulfilled your objective?
- Phillip was one of six children. His father, a school teacher at Mitta Mitta, was a strict disciplinarian. On occasion, the children were beaten with a strap and locked in the coat cupboard. What effect do you think this treatment would have on the children and their relationship with their father? How have ideas about discipline and parenting changed over the last 80 years?
- Phillip was scared of his father, but his brother Geoffrey had a rebellious nature and was contemptuous of authority. Phillip describes himself as a conformist and says that he envied Geoffrey's freedom, the space he created for himself, his refusal to be constrained. Describe someone in your family whose personality and attitude to life are very different from yours. Choose a person who has had a big influence on your life and write an account of how they have changed you.

- Phillip says that in his early life he was a thoughtful person, carefully considering the possible consequences of any action. At 15 he decided that such an attitude was preventing him from enjoying life and that he would have more fun if he plunged head first into adventure. Geoffrey spurred him on, and while he found himself in trouble on occasion, it was worth it for the sense of excitement that came into his life. Would you describe yourself as a reckless or cautious person? What constitutes an adventure for you?
- Phillip says that Geoffrey stirred him from his lethargy, organising his first ski trip, for instance. Describe the first time you did something that has become important to you. How did you become interested or involved in one of your hobbies?
- Phillip describes his first experience of public speaking, which was at Melbourne University during World War Two. He felt thrilled by the power to rouse an audience's enthusiasms, to sway a group of people with words. How do you feel about public speaking?
- Phillip's first trip to the Antarctic was onboard the Wyatt Earp in 1947. The vessel was 'absolutely unsuitable' for the journey and the exploration struck terrible weather. For much of the trip the living quarters were six inches deep in icy cold water. Imagine you were on this voyage. Write a journal entry recounting some of the difficulties and hardships you confronted. How would you keep your spirits up?
- How did Phillip and his fellow explorers save their ship, the Kista Dan, after a hurricane lodged them in the ice? How long did it take them? Phillip describes feeling a mixture of fear and exhilaration during this episode. Explain his reaction to these circumstances.
- War broke out while Phillip was doing his masters thesis. He established the University National Service as a patriotic endeavour. List some of the activities this organisation was involved in.
- With the assistance and encouragement of a professor at Melbourne University, where he was enrolled in a PhD conducting research in classical physics, Phillip was appointed Chief Scientific Officer of Antarctic Expeditions. This was a 12 month position. He then applied for the position of Assistant Officer in Charge (Scientific). Many years later, his biographer uncovered archival material demonstrating that the unit's then leader, Stuart Campbell, disliked him and attempted to block his appointment. Imagine you are Campbell. Write a formal letter to the Minister for External Affairs outlining your reservations about Law's appointment. Why might Campbell have disliked Phillip, to the point of wanting to thwart his career?
- Essay topic: According to Phillip Law, '80 per cent of Australians are unadventurous'. Discuss.
- 'You don't know what your body can do until you force it through to the point of absolute exhaustion. And the same thing goes intellectually...We all have these infinite mental and physical resources built in—all it needs is the motivation or the necessity or the emergency to drag it all out...'. Describe a situation in which you were tested to your limit.
- Phillip says that most people aren't publicly recognised for their achievements until 50 years after the fact. Do you agree? Discuss the notion of recognition and celebrity.
- How does Phillip cope with disappointment?

Voyage to Antarctica: To Map, To Create New Knowledge ...

- Using resources in your library, research six facts about Antarctica and present them to the class.
- In the opening moments of the program, Phillip uses four adjectives to describe Antarctica: unapproachable, inaccessible, threatening and dangerous. Choose four different adjectives to describe this remote place, elaborating on your reasons for settling on particular words.
- Phillip was obsessed with the idea of establishing a permanent base in Antarctica and he learnt a great deal from his involvement with the Norwegians in the area. In 1954, Mawson Station was established. List some of the advantages of a station such as this, in terms of the research it would make viable. What factors would need to be considered in terms of the crucial decision concerning the exact location of such a station?
- Visit www.south-pole.com to discover more about other explorers. Do they have any common features in terms of character or personal background that might account for their urge to explore? Write a brief biographical sketch of Mawson or another key Antarctic explorer.
- Create a timeline showing the dates and major features of some of the key expeditions to Antarctica.
- Why do scientists go to Antarctica?
- Plan an expedition to Antarctica. Outline your intended route on a map and make a list of personnel, supplies, objectives, expectations about conditions etc.
- What is a weasel?
- Why is Antarctica important to the rest of the world?
- Nutrition is an important element in the planning of a successful expedition. How do Antarctic explorers meet their nutritional needs in this inhospitable climate?
- What are some methods used to keep dry and warm in Antarctica?
- In an interview to be found at www.science.org.au/scientists/pl.htm Phillip says that universities are now 'scrambling over each other for a place in the Antarctic work because it is proving so profitable'. Find out what he means by profitable.
- Phillip discusses work in the fields of geomagnetism, seismology and ionospheric measuring devices. Research one of these areas and present your findings to the class.
- One of the most important fields of research in Antarctica is meteorology (as Law says, 'Our weather comes up from Antarctica'). What does meteorology involve? What sort of information is gathered in Antarctica that informs forecasting?
- Phillip says that if you analysed the dangers of a trip to Antarctica you'd never go. What is a calculated risk? What are some of the reasons an expedition to Antarctica might fail?
- This interview is interspersed with a number of incredible photos of Antarctica, capturing a sense of what Phillip calls the continent's wonder, magnitude and unbelievable beauty. Choose one of these photos and use 50 words to describe what is presented, the mood, the conditions, etc.

FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

Books

Tim Bowden. **The Silence Calling—Australians in Antarctica 1947-97**. Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1997

John Hetherington. **Australians: Nine Profiles**. F. W. Cheshire, Melbourne, 1960 (includes a chapter on Law)

Phillip Law. **The Antarctic Voyage of HMAS Wyatt Earp**. Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1995

Phillip Law and John Bechervaise. **ANARE: Australia's Antarctic Outposts**. Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1957

P. G. Law. **Antarctic Odyssey**. Heinemann Educational, Melbourne, 1983

P. G. Law. **Australia and the Antarctic**. University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 1962

P. G. Law. **You Have to Be Lucky: Antarctic and Other Adventures**. Kangaroo Press, Kenthurst, 1995

Janet L. Mentha and Graeme F. Watson. **Education, Antarctica, Marine Science and Australia's Future: Proceedings of the Phillip Law 80th Birthday Symposium**. Royal Society of Victoria, Melbourne, 1992

Herbert Ponting and Frank Hurley. **1910-1916 Antarctic Photographs: Scott, Mawson and Shackleton Expeditions**. Macmillan, South Melbourne, 1979

Kathleen Ralston. **A Man For Antarctica: The Early Life of P. G. Law**. Hyland House, South Melbourne, 1993.

Kathleen Ralston. **Phillip Law: The Antarctic Exploration Years 1954-1966**. AusInfo, Department of Finance and Administration, Canberra, 1998

David Walton (ed). **Antarctic Science**. Cambridge University Press, Sydney, 1987

Videos

Phillip Law (director). **Blue Ice**. Film Australia, 1954. 30 minutes
A record of the 1953-54 Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition.

Frank Hurley and Phillip Law (directors). **Antarctic Pioneers**. Film Australia, 1962. 30 minutes
Captain Frank Hurley recalls his first voyage with Mawson in 1911 and later exploratory expeditions of the continent and Heard Island.

Map

Australian National Antarctic Research Expeditions, 1947-1966, under the direction of Stuart Campbell, 1947-48, and Phillip Law, 1949-66. Australian Surveying and Land Information Group, Department of Administrative Services in collaboration with Antarctic Division, Department of The Arts, Sport, The Environment, Tourism and Territories, Canberra, 1989. (This map is available at the University of Melbourne.)

Websites

Australian Antarctic Division <http://www.antarctica.gov.au/>

Australian National Antarctic Research Expeditions (ANARE) Club www.anareclub.org.au

Phillip Garth Law Guide to Records www.austehc.unimelb.edu.au/guides/lawp/photos.htm

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