

**CHARLES ROYALLY SNUBBED**

**Don't think you can call us 'old waxworks' and get away with it**

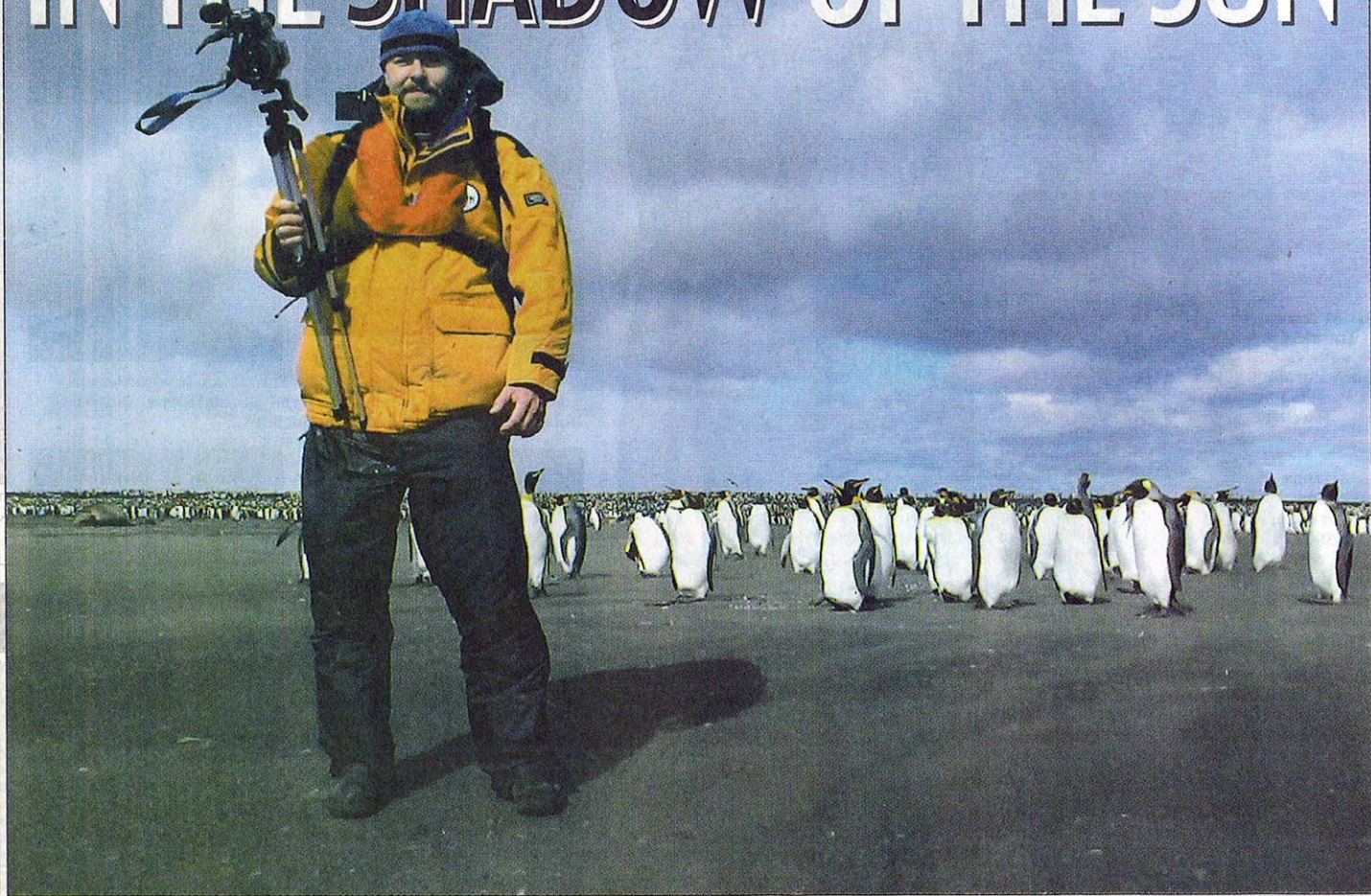
**Prince Charles**, who caused a stir by describing Chinese officials as "appalling old waxworks," has failed to make the cut at Shanghai's new Madame Tussauds Museum. Charles's late wife, Diana, and their elder son, Prince William, are on display. So are movie stars Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie. It was speculated that Charles was nixed because of his unflattering reference, contained in a diary he kept during a visit to Hong



Kong in 1997 for the handover of the former British colony to China. A British newspaper published the diaries last year. The Shanghai museum, which opened this week, is the sixth Madame Tussauds. The others are in London, Amsterdam, Las Vegas, New York and Hong Kong. *Reuters*

**TRAVEL: ECLIPSE CHASING**

**IN THE SHADOW OF THE SUN**



David Makepeace's pursuit of a total eclipse took him to a penguin rookery in Antarctica on Nov. 23, 2003. He recently returned from eclipse chasing in Libya.

OLIVIER STAIGER

hobby that way," he says. "The gratification of totality is really spread out."

A director and editor in film and TV, Makepeace practises "very conscious saving" to fund his three- to four-week trips, which cost anywhere from \$8,000 to \$12,000. His world map is peppered with push-pins marking all the places he's travelled to, some for work, but mostly in pursuit of solar eclipses. To catch the 74-second eclipse in Antarctica on Nov. 23, 2003, he went to Port Elizabeth, South Africa, sailed by icebreaker down through the bottom of the Indian Ocean to the coast of Antarctica, then travelled inland through pack ice to the Shackleton Ice Shelf near the Russian Mirny research station. Afterward he returned to the coast and sailed to Tasmania before coming back to Toronto.

"It was otherworldly because of the ice," he recalls, describing the glaciers, glacial valleys, icebergs, chunks of icebergs and "bergy bits." Then there were the colours: lots of deep blue, some green and even ruddy red. And, of course, white: "One of the things you realize when you go to Antarctica is that white is not white. White is a million things. It's on this great spectrum from pure white all the way to deep icy blue."

At the other end of the temperature extreme, he returned just recently from one of his most rigorous expeditions, to the deserts of Libya, in late March. He camped in Jalu, in the middle of the Sahara, in one of three government-sanctioned campsites accommodating 3,000 to 4,000 people. "The fact they were able to host that many people in one of the most unforgiving places on the planet was remarkable," he says. The increasingly tourist-friendly Libyan government oversaw every detail: tents, food, water, security, emergency services and medical evacuation. After the eclipse, on March 29, Makepeace spent another intense week in 44C temperatures trekking in the southwest Sahara near the Algerian border before returning home.

Makepeace has begun sharing his enthusiasm for the workings of the solar system. Indeed, his Web site (eclipseguy.com) declares: "You must see a total solar eclipse at least once before you die!" In 2000, in association with the Space Channel, he made a short documentary titled *Hooked on the Shadow*, using footage he shot during his eclipse chases in Aruba and Turkey. The next year saw the release of *Africa Total Eclipse*, his short film of the Canadian eclipse expedition to Zambia. He has also gone into elementary schools in Toronto and Calgary giving workshops that include interactive models and his documentary. "The kids are just sponges," he says. "They love it!"

Though he looks forward to coming home by the end of each trip, he admits to going through what he terms Post Exotic Excursion Disorder. "To a certain extent, I don't want to go out and start interacting with people in the First World," he says with a laugh. "There's a certain amount of wanting to just hang on to the experience. ... I love the trips so much, they're so meaningful and so powerful for me, I just want to stay in them."

Meanwhile, the universe is calling again. The next total eclipse is on Aug. 1, 2008. If all goes according to plan, Makepeace will be chasing it, perhaps to Nunavut, Greenland, Siberia or Mongolia — wherever the universe leads him.

*Weekend Post*

**FOLLOW THAT BLACK DOT**

**Grand obsession takes a traveller around the globe**

BY ALEXANDRA INNES

A wake-up call from the universe seldom comes with an advance warning.

When David Makepeace travelled to Baja, Mexico, in 1991, he wanted to meet up with a girl he'd been seeing in his hometown of Toronto. She worked in the travel industry and was in Baja for the tourists who had come to see a total solar eclipse. Though Makepeace had an interest in physics, space and cosmology, he had no idea the exceptionally long seven-minute eclipse would change his life.

"It was overwhelming," he says. "It was overpowering how beautiful it was, how deep blue the sky was. To be standing in this pocket of shadow, with 360 degrees of orange horizon, with stars and planets out in the sky, on this little hill above this little town in Mexico on the Baja peninsula, with this image over my head — the blackness of the moon with the corona streaming out from behind it in all its glory — it was like a giant message from the universe saying, 'You Are Here.'"

Makepeace, 28, spent two days quietly pondering the experience. He decided the universe wanted him to sit up and take notice.

"It's a transportation device," he says of a total eclipse. "It takes you

out of your normal experience and it puts you somewhere else. It gives you cause to open up your eyes and all your senses."

Sitting in his Toronto apartment, tastefully crammed with eclipse-watching paraphernalia and memorabilia, Makepeace still speaks with reverence about the Baja eclipse that transformed him into an incurable eclipse chaser. He talks of the slow dimming of light to a soft, silvery glow. Of shadow bands racing across the ground like ripples in a swimming pool. Of the complete and dramatic transformation from full midday sun to a completely black moon when the moon moved directly between sun and Earth.

**'IT'S A HARD HOBBY.**

**THE GRATIFICATION IS REALLY SPREAD OUT'**

"You see one, under ideal conditions, and it knocks your socks off. And as soon as it's over you say, 'My God! I want to do that again.' It's like the best ride, but cosmic in nature."

Fifteen years, seven continents and 14 expeditions later, Makepeace has witnessed nine total eclipses, putting him in a tiny group of Canadians who have seen that many. The other five eclipses were either partial or annular, with the sun's light still visible. Though a total eclipse occurs every 18 to 24 months, very often it is only visible over the ocean, making it much more difficult and expensive to see. "It's a hard

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