When Weather Makes History

WMH 001 - "Rescue From The South Pole"

FINAL Script

Writer/Producer: Greg Scott

1.	**TEASE**	**TEASE**
2.		**NATPOP** **(Howling wind)**
3.		Antarctica. Pure. Untamed. Breathtaking…
4.		**NATPOP** **(Silence)**
5.		…and one of the most inhospitable places on earth.
6.		In the summer, when the sun hangs over the horizon, the average high temperature is 30 below zero Fahrenheit.
7.		*Then* the darkness comes.
8.		**MUSIC HIT**
9.		On this episode of "When Weather Makes History," the only doctor at a South Pole research station discovers she has cancer.
10.		But the extreme weather makes it too risky to get help.
11.		**Dr. Jerri Nielsen** **They told me that it would be easier to get us from the space station than from the South Pole in the winter.**

12.		Even military aircraft can't land in the bitter cold.
13.		**<u>Brian Gomula, Air Operations Officer</u>** **The weather itself is // pretty much our enemy.**
14.		Airmen volunteer to fly on a dangerous mission into the frigid continent…
15.		They will risk their lives to save hers.
16.		**<u>George McAllister, Rescue Pilot</u>** **She // was dying and we needed to get her, now.**
17.		**<u>TITLE PAGE/ANIMATION'</u>** **"When Weather Makes History"** **<u>Reveal Title</u>** **"Rescue From The South Pole"**
18.	**<u>ACT ONE</u>**	**<u>ACT ONE</u>**
19.		**<u>MUSIC HIT</u>**
20.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Stamp Reveals</u>** **November 21, 1998**	November 21st, 1998.
21.		**<u>NATSOT</u>** **(Plane lands)**

22.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Map</u>** **Revealing 3 stations**	An LC-130 Hercules cargo plane touches down at the Amundsen-Scott South Pole Research Station. It's one of three year-round American Research facilities in Antarctica.
23.		Forty-six year-old Dr. Jerri Nielsen steps off the plane to begin a new life.
24.		Divorced, and tired of her job as an emergency room doctor in Ohio, Jerri is eager for a fresh start.
25.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Lower Third</u>** **Dr. Jerri Nielsen**	**<u>Dr. Jerri Nielsen</u>** **It looked like a new deal and I believe that when things get unmanageable, you should try something different.**
26.		Jerri will be the sole physician for the research scientists and support staff on what they call simply, "the ice."
27.		On this day, it's 35-degrees below zero.
28.		**<u>Dr. Jerri Nielsen</u>** **I knew nothing about the South Pole. I knew nothing about Antarctica. // When I landed // I felt like my lungs were being burned. I felt that I was no longer on this planet.**

29.		At the bottom of the world, Antarctica is the windiest, driest -- and *coldest* continent.
30.		The South Pole has only one sunrise and one sunset per year.
31.		Walt Fischel, one of Dr. Nielsen's colleagues, is familiar with the phenomenon.
32.	**GRAPHIC: Lower Third** **Walter Fischel** **Welder**	**Walter Fischel, Welder** **The sun comes up // at the South Pole September 21st, one time. // and it stays up. It circles around 24 hours a day until March. // There it goes under the horizon and you will not see that sun until September.**
33.		Summer here occurs between October and February.
34.		These warmer months are critical to human survival.
35.		It's the only time of year when the U.S. military can fly in and supply the South Pole station.
36.		It's one of only 47 year-round international research stations on the entire continent.
37.		Brian Gomula is with the New York Air National Guard, which, along with the Air Force, transports supplies and personnel to the

		Antarctic. These provisions enable the station to operate throughout the year.
38.		This ongoing mission is known as "Operation Deep Freeze."
39.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Lower Third</u>** **Brian Gomula** **Air Operations Officer**	**<u>Brian Gomula, Air Operations Officer</u>** **Everything that we deliver during our season, // they live on during that year to include the fuel that they burn, the food that we've carried in and the people and medical supplies that support those stations.**
40.		**<u>MUSIC HIT</u>**
41.		Jerri Nielsen enters the compound she will call home for the next year: an aluminum dome, 55-feet high and 165-feet wide that houses small, heated metal buildings.
42.		**<u>Dr. Jerri Nielsen</u>** **There // were // little orange // buildings // and they were like refrigerators that you lived in, but instead of keeping cold in, they kept the cold out.**
43.		**<u>Walter Fischel, Welder</u>** **When you walk inside the dome it's orange. // All of the buildings are orange. // It looks kind of like the Wizard of Oz in there.**

44.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Sub-Title</u>** **<u>DR. JERRI NIELSEN:</u>** **This is the front of my office.**	**<u>NATSOT</u>** **This is the front of my office.**
45.		The doctor 's private quarters are attached to a two-bed medical clinic, which are housed in the "Biomed" building.
46.		**<u>Dr. Jerri Nielsen</u>** **The medical equipment was not state of the art. // I had just the basics that a physician would need and a basic clinic.**
47.		Jerri gets used to her new surroundings, and meets more than 200 colleagues affectionately called "Polies." They come from all walks of life.
48.		Walt Fischel is a 31-year-old welder. He's helping to build a new research station that will eventually replace the aluminum dome.
49.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Lower Third</u>** **Walter Fischel** **Welder**	**<u>Walter Fischel, Welder</u>** **The type of people drawn to the South Pole are definitely adventuresome. // Very interesting people. I mean the smartest astrophysicist to // the guy that can wrestle a Kodiak bear. //We had it all.**

50.		It takes Jerri awhile to get used to the harsh conditions.
51.	**GRAPHIC: Lower Third** **Dr. Jerri Nielsen**	**Dr. Jerri Nielsen** **I was exhausted by the altitude, and by the cold. // // Nothing but ice as far as you could see.**
52.		The extreme polar climate leads to unique medical challenges, some from the 9,300-foot altitude.
53.		**Dr. Jerri Nielsen** **We know that // being at altitude will affect wound healing. But the things that I saw were very, very unusual and interesting.**
54.		**NAT POP**
55.		**Dr. Jerri Nielsen** **Toenails would become thick and heavy like talons on a bird. // People developed gastrointestinal problems. // We haven't done much research in these places in the world.**
56.		During her first few months, Jerri develops strong friendships with her fellow "Polies" -- taking part in poetry readings, playing poker and listening to live music.
57.		Life is as normal as it can be in this forbidding place.

58.		**NAT HIT** **(Winds howl)**
59.		**MUSIC HIT**
60.	**GRAPHIC: Stamp Reveals** **February 15, 1999**	February 15th, 1999. Outside it is 50 degrees below zero. A brutally cold and dark winter is imminent.
61.	**GRAPHIC: Sub-Title** **Aircraft is on deck.**	**NATSOT (PA System)** **Aircraft is on deck.** (Applause)
62.		On this day, the last passenger plane of the season is about to evacuate most of the crew.
63.		Now, only a courageous skeleton staff of 32 men and 9 women will spend the winter here.
64.		As Dave Fischer, the Station's summer manager, prepares to depart, he assures the winter crew.
65.	**GRAPHIC: Sub-Title** **DAVE FISCHER:** **You guys are taking on the toughest job the U.S. Antarctic Program has to offer, I think, in wintering over here. And we are there to help you.**	**Dave Fischer, Departing Station Manager** **You guys are taking on the toughest job the U.S. Antarctic Program has to offer, I think, in wintering over here. And we are there to help you.**
66.		The Polies who stay behind throw a party to celebrate their seclusion at the South Pole station.

67.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Sub-Title</u>** **<u>DR. JERRI NIELSEN:</u>** **This is the 90 South Bar.**	**<u>NATSOT</u>** **This is the 90 South Bar.**
68.		Soon, temperatures will plunge during the winter darkness.
69.		For the next eight-and-a-half months, they will be virtually cut off from the outside world.
70.		**<u>Walter Fischel, Welder</u>** **After February 15th, the temperature stays pretty much below minus 65. And an airplane can operate in that temperature, it just cannot land and takeoff.**
71.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Lower Third</u>** **Brian Gomula** **Air Operations Officer**	**<u>Brian Gomula, Air Operations Officer</u>** **Once it hits minus 58 Fahrenheit the fuel gels, and then past that point it basically freezes and won't flow like it normally would in an aircraft.**
72.		**<u>NATPOP</u>** **(Harsh wind)**
73.		Their isolation will be compounded even further by a tenuous communication system. It limits their correspondence.
74.		**<u>Walter Fischel, Welder</u>** **Besides email, which is not 100**

		percent functional due to the orientation of the antennas and the satellites at the South Pole, you, you're isolated until the temperature is conducive to land an airplane.
75.		**<u>Dr. Jerri Nielsen</u>** **The idea that there was no way in or out excited me because I like to test myself. I like to have opportunities to see how strong I can be.**
76.		**(Beat)**
77.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Stamp Reveals</u>** **March 1**	March 1st.
78.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Sub-Title</u>** **<u>DR.JERRI NIELSEN:</u>** **It's my birthday party... 47.**	**<u>NATSOT</u>** **It's my birthday party... 47.**
79.		Jerri Nielsen celebrates her birthday.
80.		As the Antarctic summer fades to winter, Jerri focuses on all her responsibilities.
81.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Lower Third</u>** **Dr. Jerri Nielsen**	**<u>Dr. Jerri Nielsen</u>** **You // have // a long list of winter tasks // We did some training // because I needed a trauma team. I needed a group of people who could help me in case someone was badly injured.**

82.		Then, one night in early March, while reading research on a patient's medical condition, Jerri inadvertently runs her fingers across her chest.
83.		**<u>Dr. Jerri Nielsen</u>** **I found // a small // lump. (Beat) // I know that the only treatment for breast cancer is early detection and early treatment. // I immediately thought, "Well I'm going to die."**
84.		With the arrival of the brutal temperatures, the earliest chance for a flight out is eight months away.
85.	**<u>GRAPHIC: WMH Bug</u>** **When Weather Makes History**	Coming up, Jerri Nielsen worries about what to do next, while she fears the worst.
86.		**<u>Dr. Jerri Nielsen</u>** **Our last plane had just left. // It was like a death sentence.**
87.	**<u>ACT TWO</u>**	**<u>ACT TWO</u>**
88.	**<u>BUMPER IN:</u>** **When Weather Makes History**	**<u>BUMPER IN</u>**
89.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Stamp Reveals</u>** **March, 1999**	March, 1999. Dr. Jerri Nielsen detects a small lump in her breast while secluded at this remote American South Pole research station.

90.		At this time of year, the average low temperature is a brutal 70-degrees Fahrenheit Below Zero.
91.		**<u>NATPOP</u>** **(Wind)**
92.		Military aircraft cannot land here for the next eight-months, leaving Jerri with the stark realization that she might die at the South Pole.
93.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Lower Third</u>** **Dr. Jerri Nielsen**	**<u>Dr. Jerri Nielsen</u>** **I didn't think that I could get treatment so I figured that I was going to die.**
94.		**<u>NAT POP</u>**
95.		**<u>Dr. Jerri Nielsen</u>** **I didn't know how cancer was going to be and how long it would take to kill me.**
96.		For three months, Jerri keeps her medical condition a secret from officials.
97.		**<u>Dr. Jerri Nielsen</u>** **I didn't tell anyone because I figured why, in this very dangerous world should I tell people that the only medical person could be dying?**

98.		**<u>NATPOP</u>** **(Harsh winds)**
99.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Stamp Reveals</u>** **June, 1999**	June, 1999. Winter has arrived. Seasons in the Southern Hemisphere occur opposite to the Northern hemisphere. The temperatures keep plunging to as low as 100-degrees below zero.
100.		Jerri examines the lump in her breast and finds it is growing. It's now the size of a grape. She decides she has to inform the head of the station, Mike Masterman.
101.		**<u>Dr. Jerri Nielsen</u>** **I realized that I had to tell someone because I was developing large lymph nodes under my arm, it was hurting a lot.**
102.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Stamp Reveals</u>** **June 10**	June 10th. Jerri gets in touch with her employer, Antarctic Support Associates, which in turn contacts the National Science Foundation, the organization that oversees most U.S. Antarctic operations.
103.		Together, officials review the situation. The assessment is grim.
104.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Lower Third</u>** **Brian Gomula** **Air Operations Officer**	**<u>Brian Gomula, Air Operations Officer</u>** **At that time of the year it's total darkness. The temperature has routinely hit minus 100 Fahrenheit and it's windy. It's probably one of the windiest continents in the world, which create blizzard**

		conditions, whiteout conditions and very hazardous to flying.
105.		The extreme cold could easily disable an aircraft's hydraulics system, and cause the fuel to crystallize. A rescue attempt is too risky.
106.		While officials begin to work on a contingency plan, Jerri decides to break the news to fellow Polies, and friends and family back home.
107.	**GRAPHIC: Lower Third** **Dr. Jerri Nielsen**	**Dr. Jerri Nielsen** **I emailed my family and let them know that I had the lump and that it was a concern so that they would hear it from me first.**
108.	**GRAPHIC: Lower Third** **Lorine Cahill** **Jerri's Mother**	**Lorine Cahill, Jerri's Mother** **She was // just kind of flippant about the whole thing. // I knew that it could be serious. But really I thought oh, usually these things aren't, you know, they're often benign.**
109.		**NAT POP**
110.		**Lorine Cahill, Jerri's Mother** **So I told her it's probably nothing.**
111.		**NATPOP** **(Harsh wind)**
112.		But, a shockwave ripples through the close-knit "Polie" community. They're concerned for the doctor's well being… and their own.

113.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Lower Third</u>** **Walter Fischel** **Welder**	**<u>Walt Fischel, Welder</u>** **At that moment, you're thinking twice about taking any kind of unnecessary risks because your doctor // could become incapacitated.**
114.		**<u>BEAT</u>**
115.		Friends back home refer Jerri to Dr. Kathy Miller, an oncologist at the Indiana University Medical Center. Doctor Miller is faced with an unusual problem.
116.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Lower Third</u>** **Dr. Kathy Miller** **Jerri's Oncologist**	**<u>Dr. Kathy Miller, Jerri's Oncologist</u>** **Our first challenge was to really try and, and get a diagnosis and find out if this lump really was a breast cancer.**
117.		Dr. Miller recommends that Jerri undergo a biopsy.
118.		**<u>MUSIC HIT</u>**
119.		The "Polies" band together to help. Among them is Walt Fischel, who once served as an Army medic.
120.		**<u>Dr. Jerri Nielsen</u>** **So, I taught Walt // how to // do the biopsy // using a dried up apple and what was left of a potato.**
121.		Performing the biopsy will require inserting a needle into Jerri Nielsen's

		breast, extracting a tissue sample, and staining it to highlight the cells.
122.		Fellow Polie, computer specialist Lisa Beal, will use a video camera hooked to a microscope to capture the cell stain images that will be emailed back to doctors in the United States.
123.		**<u>Walt Fischel, Welder</u>** **Email // wasn't a common every day thing. // And we only had the capability about two hours a day because of the position of the satellites.**
124.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Stamp Reveals</u>** **June 22, 1999**	June 22nd, 1999. Just as communications satellites begin to move up over the horizon, the procedure gets underway.
125.		Jerri receives instructions from doctors in the United States through an internet telephone hook-up.
126.		Dressed in a hospital gown, and using a local anesthetic and ice to numb the area, she performs the biopsy on herself. Walt Fischel assists.
127.		They transmit the cell stain images.
128.		**<u>NATPOP</u>**
129.		But old equipment and outdated stain dyes make it impossible for

		pathologists to read the images. The biopsy is a failure.
130.		To determine if Dr. Nielsen has cancer, she will need new medical equipment and supplies.
131.		Even though planes can't land at this time of year, officials at the National Science Foundation think it might be possible to stage an emergency air supply-drop.
132.		They turn to the U.S. Air Force for help.
133.	**GRAPHIC: Lower Third** **Christopher Golob** **Deputy Mission Commander**	**Christopher Golob, Deputy Mission Commander** **The National Science Foundation// was concerned that she might have cancer, and so they asked us, the Air Force, to drop in supplies and medicine to her. // We wanted to coordinate that and get the medicine dropped in as quickly as possible.**
134.		The Air Force, along with the Air National Guard, routinely transports supplies to the Antarctic as part of Operation Deep Freeze. But this type of mission is rare.
135.		**Christopher Golob, Deputy Mission Commander** **It was a re-supply into the South Pole, something that hadn't been done in the middle of winter in a number of years.**

136.		Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Golob, one of the mission leaders, is among 22 members of the military who volunteer to fly on this dangerous mission, from McChord Air Force base in Tacoma, Washington.
137.		**<u>Christopher Golob, Deputy Mission Commander</u>** **We had quite a few more than we usually do. We had the pilots, // the mission commander, // the engineers // the loadmasters // And the navigators.**
138.		**<u>NATPOP</u>** **(Mechanical SFX)**
139.		The Air Force packages the medical supplies in large, cardboard bundles that will be dropped from the plane using parachutes.
140.		Then, they prepare a C-141 Starlifter airplane for the extreme weather conditions of the Antarctic.
141.		**<u>Christopher Golob, Deputy Mission Commander</u>** **That was a painstaking preparation because we have to wipe off all the grease off all moving parts out of that airplane and go back in with a fine motor oil. // The grease // we know would freeze in that cold weather, and we couldn't afford to have our flaps freeze in the down**

		position, have doors freeze in the open position. Because once something like that happens, we can't return back to base.
142.		As the mission draws near, Jerri Nielsen grows anxious. She doesn't want to endanger anyone's life to save hers, but is grateful when the mission proceeds.
143.	**GRAPHIC: Lower Third** **Dr. Jerri Nielsen**	**Dr. Jerri Nielsen** **After I realized that they were going to do it, I was very relieved and so happy that I might have a chance.**
144.		Major Greg Pyke takes on the job as pilot, flying into one of the coldest, most dangerous places on earth.
145.	**GRAPHIC: WMH Bug** **When Weather Makes History**	His high-risk mission is next, on "When Weather Makes History."
146.		**Greg Pyke, Air Drop Pilot** **We plan for the worst, and hope for the best. // Failure really wasn't an option.**
147.		**NATPOP** **(Harsh weather)**
148.	**ACT THREE**	**ACT THREE**
149.	**BUMPER IN:** **When Weather Makes History**	**BUMPER IN**

150.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Stamp Reveals</u>** **July 8, 1999** **<u>GRAPHIC: MAP</u>** **Tacoma, Washington**	July 8th, 1999. McChord Air Force Base, Tacoma, Washington. A C-141 Starlifter Cargo plane prepares to take off on a daring 9,200 mile journey to Antarctica.
151.		**<u>NATPOP</u>** **(Plane taking off)**
152.		Once there, the crew will air drop lifesaving medical supplies for Doctor Jerri Nielsen.
153.		Nielsen is stationed at the South Pole science research facility. The medical supplies will help determine if a lump in her breast is cancerous.
154.		Major Greg Pyke will pilot the C-141 Starlifter.
155.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Lower Third</u>** **Greg Pyke** **Air Drop Pilot**	**<u>Greg Pyke, Air Drop Pilot</u>** **Here we are in the, the flight deck of a 141 //This is the, the pilot seat, this is where I sat during the flight.**
156.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Map</u>** **Flight path from Tacoma to Christchurch**	The Starlifter takes off from Tacoma. It flies non-stop to Hickam Air Force Base in Hawaii. There, it refuels and departs -- conducting in-flight refueling halfway to their next destination, Christchurch, New Zealand.

157.		Once in New Zealand, the crew prepares for its final 3-thousand mile leg of the journey to Antarctica.
158.		Maintenance personnel wipe off excess grease from the plane's wing flaps for flying in polar conditions. They finish loading the bundles, which will be air dropped.
159.		**NATPOP**
160.		Six, 350-pound cardboard parcels are filled with medical supplies, including equipment to diagnose Jerri Nielsen's illness, and chemotherapy drugs in case she has cancer.
161.		**BEAT**
162.		**NATPOP** **(Harsh weather)**
163.		Low temperatures at the South Pole in July average around 82-below zero Fahrenheit – far too cold for a military plane to land. Even a flyover is dangerous.
164.		As a navigator for the mission, Captain Martin Oliver knows the dangers involved with the unpredictable polar climate.

165.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Lower Third</u>** **Martin Oliver** **Air Drop Navigator**	**<u>Martin Oliver, Air Drop Navigator</u>** **Weather patterns change very quickly. // The way that we were going to drop was a visual drop, so we had to have weather that allowed us // to look at the ground and to be able to identify our, our target.**
166.		Making their mission even more hazardous - the crew won't have the benefit of moonlight. The moon will be below the horizon.
167.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Lower Third</u>** **Greg Pyke** **Air Drop Pilot**	**<u>Greg Pyke, Air Drop Pilot</u>** **Typically in the past, our mid-winter airdrops they coordinated around a full moon so we have some light to, to fly over and do the drops on. This one here we didn't have the luxury of picking the day that we wanted to do it.**
168.		There is no room for error. Everything must go like clockwork.
169.		**<u>NATPOP</u>** **(Harsh weather)**
170.		Deputy Mission Commander Christopher Golob knows how quickly the extreme temperatures of Antarctica can freeze up the aircraft.
171.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Lower Third</u>** **Christopher Golob** **Deputy Mission Commander**	**<u>Christopher Golob, Deputy Mission Commander</u>** **Normally our airdrop is out our**

		back doors. // We couldn't guarantee // that if we opened them up they would close again.
172.		Once the cargo is dropped, there will be additional dangers.
173.	**GRAPHIC: Lower Third** **Walter Fischel** **Welder**	**Walter Fischel, Welder** **There was concern about the parachutes not opening on the boxes.**
174.	**GRAPHIC: Sub-Title** **POLIE:** **Is there anybody who hasn't heard yet, that we're having an airdrop?**	**NATSOT** **Is there anybody who hasn't heard yet, that we're having an airdrop?**
175.		**MUSIC HIT**
176.	**GRAPHIC: Stamp Reveals** **July 10**	July 10th. At the research station, the Polies get word that The Starlifter has just taken off from New Zealand. It is just over six-hours away.
177.		The Polies construct makeshift signals that will help light up the drop zone.
178.		**Walt Fischel, Welder** **We had to douse wood in diesel fuel and put it in metal barrels, which we coined as smudge pots, just for the pilots to see the drop zone.**
179.		**MUSIC HIT**

180.		As the plane approaches, winds are calm. The temperature on the ground is 86-degrees below zero --- but conditions can shift without warning.
181.		The crew has just enough fuel for two airdrops and the return trip.
182.		**NATPOP** **(Strong wind)**
183.	**GRAPHIC: WMH Bug** When Weather Makes History	Coming up next on "When Weather Makes History," the Air Force will attempt this very dangerous mission.
184.		**Greg Pyke, Air Drop Pilot** **This was their only lifeline. We knew we had to get this stuff down there as soon as possible.**
185.		**NATPOP** **(Harsh weather)**
186.	**ACT FOUR**	**ACT FOUR**
187.	**BUMPER IN:** **When Weather Makes History**	**BUMPER IN**
188.	**GRAPHIC: Stamp Reveals** **July 10, 1999**	July 10th, 1999. Antarctica. An Air Force C-141 cargo plane is closing in on its destination...an isolated American research station at the South Pole. It will attempt to make an emergency medical air drop.

189.		The station's only doctor needs the supplies to determine if a lump in her breast is cancerous.
190.	**GRAPHIC: Lower Third** **Christopher Golob** **Deputy Mission Commander**	**Christopher Golob, Deputy Mission Commander** **The entire mission, weather's on our mind.// Every 30 minutes we were, we were monitoring and contacting people at the South Pole, as well as back at Christchurch// what do you see for weather? What are the winds doing?**
191.	**GRAPHIC: Lower Third** **Martin Oliver** **Air Drop Navigator**	**Martin Oliver, Air Drop Navigator** **Well, altitude // affected the mission in several ways. //, one of the problems it posed us is to be breathing oxygen, // So, you have your helmet on and your oxygen mask. So, now your vision and your mobility is cut down considerably.**
192.		Even if the Air Force crew successfully drops the 350-pound parcels on target and intact, the "Polies" down below will need to find them in the darkness, load them onto bulldozers, and quickly bring them inside.
193.	**GRAPHIC: Lower Third** **Dr. Jerri Nielsen**	**Dr. Jerri Nielsen** **All of us were at different places. Some people were spotters on top of buildings to see where the packages // landed. They had // large heavy equipment // to go out and try to // pick up these packages because we had very little time**

		before everything would freeze and wouldn't be any good.
194.	**GRAPHIC: Stamp Reveals** **9:00 PM**	9 pm. The "Polies" light their makeshift "smudge pots" outlining the drop zone.
195.		The Starlifter is traveling at 200 miles per hour. The crew members wear night vision goggles, oxygen masks and cold weather gear, as they close in on the drop zone.
196.	GRAPHIC: Lower Third **Christopher Golob** **Deputy Mission Commander**	**Christopher Golob, Deputy Mission Commander** **We were hoping // that night there'd be a little bit of a moonrise as we were told by the weatherman, and there was no moon.**
197.	**GRAPHIC: Lower Third** **Greg Pyke** **Air Drop Pilot**	**Greg Pyke, Air Drop Pilot** **It was just pitch black. There was no moon illumination at all.**
198.		700 feet above the icy ground of the South Pole, the smudge pots are within view.
199.		The crew opens the cargo doors.
200.		**Walt Fischel, Welder** **There was a lot of concern with the amount of time they could leave the door open on the aircraft.**
201.		**Martin Oliver, Air Drop Navigator** **With the doors open, now the**

		temperature has dropped dramatically. Things start freezing, you're cold, so you're all bundled up.
202.		The crew pushes two packages, fitted with strobe lights, out the cargo doors.
203.		**<u>Greg Pyke, Air Drop Pilot</u>** **We wanted two bundles to go out just to check and make sure everything was going to work.**
204.		**<u>NATPOP</u>** **(Strong wind)**
205.		**<u>Walt Fischel, Welder</u>** **With the wind chill, it was minus 150. It was completely dark. // I barely saw the plane fly over.**
206.		The freezing temperatures extinguish the strobe lights in seconds, but the "Polies" spot the packages anyway. They report back to the Starlifter that they will be able to retrieve them.
207.		Now the Air Force must circle around and drop the remaining four parcels in the same amount of time, and on target.
208.		**<u>Martin Oliver, Air Drop Navigator</u>** **If // the cargo was blown away // it would be a logistics nightmare for them to be able to go out in the // darkness, and be able to // retrieve those bundles. // Dr. Jerri Nielson needed those supplies. And so we**

		had to be right on target.
209.		The Starlifter circles back and releases the remaining parcels.
210.		**<u>NATSOT</u>** **(Cheering on plane)**
211.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Lower Third</u>** **Greg Pyke** **Air Drop Pilot**	**<u>Greg Pyke, Air Drop Pilot</u>** **You can hear all the loadmasters cheering for the excitement of just having accomplished the drop.**
212.		**<u>Dr. Jerri Nielsen</u>** **This was very exciting for us all // they started throwing out these packages and we almost felt like it was an Easter egg hunt.**
213.		The Starlifter sets a return course for New Zealand. On the ground, the "Polies" find five of the six bundles.
214.		**<u>MUSIC HIT</u>**
215.		An hour-and-a-half later, they locate the sixth parcel. The parachute had failed to open properly. An ultrasound machine lies in pieces on the ice.
216.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Lower Third</u>** **Dr. Jerri Nielsen**	**<u>Dr. Jerri Nielsen</u>** **My friend // found it and I saw him and his eyes, all of his eyelashes were frozen totally solid and he had to break them in order to get them open.**
217.		Even though the equipment in the last parcel was destroyed, the "Polies" are ecstatic.

218.		They've gotten vital supplies, and find there are some pleasant gifts.
219.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Lower Third</u>** **Christopher Golob** **Deputy Mission Commander**	**<u>Christopher Golob, Deputy Mission Commander</u>** **We felt like as long as we were going down there, let's take some non-essentials. // We took down fresh fruit, //vegetables, // lots of different bouquets of flowers and cards to wish her well.**
220.		**<u>Dr. Jerri Nielsen</u>** **There were all kinds of things in the packages. There was a new movie, // fruits and vegetables // and then of course um, the medication I needed to stay alive.**
221.		**<u>NAT SOT:</u>** **Polie: All right Doc, what do you think about tonight?** **Dr. Jerri Nielsen: It was fun.** **Polie: Is it exciting?** **Dr. Jerri Nielsen: Yes.** **Polie: Is it an adventure?** **Dr. Jerri Nielsen: Yes.** **Polie: Is this the total polar experience?** **Dr. Jerri Nielsen: Yes.** **Polie: All right, all right good for you.**
222.		The airdrop was a success. The flight crew makes it safely back to New Zealand, and Dr. Nielsen has the necessary provisions for a proper diagnosis.

223.		**<u>MUSIC HIT</u>**
224.		Equipped with a new powerful microscope and fresh cell dyes, the makeshift trauma team stains the remaining tissue from the first biopsy and transmits the images over the internet to the pathologists in the United States.
225.		But the results are still inconclusive.
226.		**<u>NATPOP</u>**
227.		Dr. Nielsen must undergo a second biopsy to extract fresh tissue.
228.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Lower Third</u>** **Walter Fischel** **Welder**	**<u>Walter Fischel, Welder</u>** **I remember the second biopsy was easier to find the tumor. // If it was the size of a grape the first time, it was a golf ball the second time. // This thing was growing... fast.**
229.		The trauma team sends new slide images to the pathologists.
		MUSIC HIT
230.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Stamp Reveals</u>** **July 22**	July 22nd. Days after emailing her biopsy images to the States, Jerri Nielsen checks in with computer specialist Lisa Beal, and finds out the results have arrived.
231.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Lower Third</u>** **Dr. Jerri Nielsen**	**<u>Dr. Jerri Nielsen</u>** **I read // the answer from the**

		pathologist and it was a great shock because I hadn't readied myself. // And there it was in black and white that I had cancer.
232.		In fact, an aggressive form of breast cancer. Her worst fears are confirmed.
233.		It would be another three months before favorable temperatures permit a plane to land, and evacuate Jerri back to the States. She emails the news to her family in Ohio.
234.	**GRAPHIC: Lower Third** **Lorine Cahill** **Jerri's Mother**	**Lorine Cahill, Jerri's Mother** **The first night when I heard that it was cancer that I just paced and paced back and forth and // tears just ran down my cheeks.**
235.	**GRAPHIC: Lower Third** **Phil Cahill** **Jerri's Father**	**Phil Cahill, Jerri's Father** **I just accepted the fact that there's nothing I could do. You know it's the way of life. // She's there and we're here and I hoped for the best and was just nothing I could do.**
236.		In the meantime, with the help of her colleagues, Jerri begins to treat herself with the chemotherapy medications that were air dropped in.
237.		During the following week, Jerri keeps up with her work and socializes with her fellow "Polies".

238.		**<u>Dr. Jerri Nielsen</u>** **I continued my life, I decided what was important in my life and those are the things that I was going to do. I took my treatment and I continued.**
239.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Lower Third</u>** **Walter Fischel** **Welder**	**<u>Walter Fischel, Welder</u>** **During this time // I mean she was seeing people, // cleaning teeth, and counseling people if they needed it. // I mean she was doing her job well.**
240.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Stamp Reveals</u>** **August 6, 1999**	August 6th, 1999. By the third chemotherapy session, the tumor is responding well to treatment, shrinking in size.
241.		But Jerri has been injecting what amounts to poison into her bloodstream.
242.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Lower Third</u>** **Dr. Jerri Nielsen**	**<u>Dr. Jerri Nielsen</u>** **The first chemo made me sick. It made me feel like I was walking through Jello. I was always so very, very tired.**
243.		In addition to constant fatigue, Jerri's long hair is coming out in clumps every time she touches her head.
244.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Sub-Title</u>** **<u>POLIE:</u>** **Welcome to the South Pole's edition of "Start the Madness."**	**<u>NATSOT:</u>** **Welcome to the South Pole's edition of "Start the Madness."**

245.		She decides to throw a "Make Jerri totally bald party, " while fellow Polies shave her head.
246.		**<u>Dr. Jerri Nielsen</u>** **It was hard to deny your illness when you look at your reflection and you're bald.**
247.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Lower Third</u>** **Lorine Cahill** **Jerri's Mother**	**<u>Lorine Cahill, Jerri's Mother</u>** **When I first saw the picture of her bald, of course I cried. But, // she had a pretty head and it was little bit in fashion already at that time.**
248.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Stamp Reveals</u>** **September**	September. More than a month into her treatment, Jerri is responding well but her veins are collapsing from the frequent injections.
249.		Back in Indiana, Dr. Miller thinks an early rescue might soon be needed.
250.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Lower Third</u>** **Dr. Kathy Miller** **Jerri's Oncologist**	**<u>Dr. Kathy Miller, Jerri's Oncologist</u>** **We had been talking with the folks at the National Science Foundation about rescue from the very beginning.**
251.		Over the next two weeks, Jerri's condition deteriorates.
252.		**<u>Dr. Jerri Nielsen</u>** **At first the tumor shrank and I thought oh, this is just incredible. This is wonderful. It's working. Maybe I have a chance. But then it started to grow again.**
253.		In late September, Jerri emails Dr. Miller that the tumor is now growing rapidly.

254.		Dr. Miller tells National Science Foundation officials that Jerri's condition is critical. An early rescue is her *only* hope.
255.		**<u>NATPOP</u>** **(Wind blowing)**
256.		Military officials agree to the rescue, four weeks before the station is to reopen. This will be one of the earliest South Pole landings in the history of the U.S. Antarctic program.
257.	**<u>GRAPHIC: WMH BUG</u>** **When Weather Makes History**	Coming up, the Air National Guard prepares to fly into one of the harshest climates on earth, to rescue Jerri Nielsen.
258.		**<u>George McAllister, Rescue Pilot</u>** **She was dying and we needed to get her... now.**
259.	**<u>ACT FIVE</u>**	**<u>ACT FIVE</u>**
260.	**<u>BUMPER IN:</u>** **When Weather Makes History**	**<u>BUMPER IN</u>**
261.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Stamp Reveals</u>** **October 1, 1999**	October 1st, 1999. Winter is finally fading away. The sun is beginning its slow rise above the horizon. Temperatures start to climb, but are still extreme – averaging around 70-degrees below zero.
262.		South Pole physician, Dr. Jerri Nielsen is suffering from breast cancer. Her only hope for survival is

		an emergency rescue.
263.		Weather conditions make plane landings too risky for eight-and-a-half months out of the year.
264.		The station reopening is almost a month away. But with Jerri's life at risk, the Air National Guard will attempt an historic rescue.
265.		It will be one of the earliest flights into the South Pole ever.
266.		**<u>MUSIC HIT</u>**
267.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Map</u>** **Schenectady, New York**	The rescue mission will be launched from Stratton Air National Guard Base, in Schenectady, New York,
268.		Rescuers will fly in two ski-equipped LC-130 Hercules aircraft from the 109th Airlift Wing and meet up with a third plane in Christchurch, New Zealand.
269.		All three planes have a specific purpose. One will rescue Dr. Nielsen. One will be on standby in case of emergency, and one will provide mechanical parts.
270.		Lieutenant Colonel Brian Gomula helps coordinate the operation.
271.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Lower Third</u>** **Brian Gomula** **Air Operations Officer**	**<u>Brian Gomula, Air Operations Officer</u>** **The 109th Airlift Wing is the only unit, anywhere in the world, that has large, ski-equipped aircraft. // That's the unique capability of the**

		airplane, the skis. The airplane is capable of landing on hard runways, normal runways with wheels and skis in the snow.
272.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Map</u>** **Flight path from New York to Christchurch.**	The plan calls for the two LC-130's to depart the Stratton Air National Guard Base in New York and fly halfway around the world, with stops in California, Hawaii and Pago Pago in American Samoa, before landing in Christchurch, New Zealand.
273.		Once in New Zealand the crews will monitor the weather conditions.
274.		When the weather allows, they'll continue on to McMurdo Station on the coast of Antarctica. This will serve as the staging area for the flight to the South Pole.
275.		**<u>NATPOP</u>** **(Wind blowing)**
276.		Only one of the aircraft, will make the final leg of the journey to the South Pole station.
277.		**<u>George McAllister, Rescue Pilot</u>** **And my airplane, // we were actually going to land at the South Pole, and pick up Dr. Nielsen.**
278.		Major George McAllister will have to land on an icy, snow-blown runway, and must keep the engines running.
279.		If the aircraft stays on the runway too long, there's a good chance the

		mechanical parts will freeze and the landing skis will stick to the ice.
280.		**<u>George McAllister, Rescue Pilot</u>** **The bottom is coated with Teflon, because any time you bring 155,000 pounds of uh, of a sliding airplane to a stop, you freeze in place//. So, now, when you want to // bring Dr. Nielsen on the airplane, what we were worried about was the airplane being stuck in place and not being able to get it freed up because of the extreme cold.**
281.		**<u>BEAT</u>**
282.		At the South Pole research station, Jerri Nielsen's condition is growing worse by the day. She can only complete the smallest of tasks.
283.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Lower Third</u>** **Dr. Jerri Nielsen**	**<u>Dr. Jerri Nielsen</u>** **I got very tired. // I started to have problems with my balance and I was dropping things.**
284.		**<u>MUSIC HIT</u>**
285.		**<u>BEAT</u>**
286.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Stamp Reveals</u>** **October 6**	October 6th. Less than three weeks before the South Pole Station is scheduled to re-open for flights, the two LC-130's take off from New York.
287.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Stamp Reveals</u>** **October 10**	Four days later, on October 10th, they land in New Zealand. So far,

		the mission has run just as planned. They refuel and crews rest. Weather permitting they'll take off the next day.
288.		**<u>NATSOT</u>** **(Harsh weather)**
289.		But the weather doesn't cooperate. The rescue teams are grounded by strong winds and blizzards in Antarctica.
290.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Lower Third</u>** **Brian Gomula** **Air Operations Officer**	**<u>Brian Gomula, Air Operations Officer</u>** **The weather itself is, is very dangerous and pretty much our enemy. Whether it's the winds, whether it's a blizzard, // it's // very hazardous.**
291.		**<u>MUSIC HIT</u>**
292.		Jerri's brothers, Scott and Eric Cahill, have also flown to New Zealand, and now anxiously wait for their sister's rescue.
293.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Lower Third</u>** **Scott Cahill** **Jerri's Brother**	**<u>Scott Cahill, Jerri's Brother</u>** **I hoped that I would be able to see her before she died. And I think that's the best that we had to hope for at that point.**
294.		**<u>MUSIC HIT</u>**
295.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Stamp Reveals</u>** **October 13**	October 13th. After three-days, the weather breaks. The rescue planes can finally take off again.

296.		Nine-hours later, they land at the McMurdo Research Station on the coast of Antarctica.
297.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Map</u>** **Flight path from McMurdo to the South Pole**	They are now just 800 miles short of the South Pole.
298.		The ten-member crew including a medical team, is anxious to complete the mission. But again, they're grounded due to cold weather--this time, at the South Pole, where it's 76-degrees below zero.
299.		Jerri's condition keeps deteriorating. The rescue team waits for two long days.
300.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Lower Third</u>** **George McAllister** **Rescue Pilot**	**<u>George McAllister, Rescue Pilot</u>** **We were losing our patience // // We're essentially sitting around flight ops, looking at each other, waiting for the, the thumbs-up to go.**
301.		**<u>NATSOT:</u>** **(Harsh weather)**
302.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Stamp Reveals</u>** **October 16**	October 16th. On the second day of waiting, a blizzard whips across the South Pole.
303.		But while it snows, the temperatures begin to rise. It's still too cold for a landing, but the forecast looks hopeful. Air National Guard pilot George McAllister gets the go-ahead to take off.

304.		**<u>George McAllister, Rescue Pilot</u>** **It was 67 degrees below zero at the South Pole, and it was below weather minimums. // So we were banking that that three-hour flight that the weather would improve, and the temperatures would rise.**
305.N		**<u>NAT POP</u>**
306.		The Polies are on standby. It's a bittersweet day for Jerri.
307.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Lower Third</u>** **Dr. Jerri Nielsen**	**<u>Dr. Jerri Nielsen</u>** **The day that they told us that they were coming we were excited. I was sad because I was leaving all my great friends there on the ice.**
308.		**<u>NATPOP</u>** **(Plane flying)**
309.		Three hours after the rescue plane takes off from the coast of Antarctica, it begins to make its descent at the South Pole.
310.		The temperature has risen to minus 53 degrees, just barely acceptable for the plane to make a landing.
311.		**<u>NATPOP</u>** **(Harsh Weather)**
312.		But there's a new problem. The wind has picked up. White out conditions quickly develop.
313.		**<u>George McAllister, Rescue Pilot</u>** **We knew the approach was going to be a big challenge. // We started**

		calling into the South Pole saying, you know, prepare Dr. Nielsen and get her up to the on load spot.
314.		**<u>Dr. Jerri Nielsen</u>** **We heard the plane come and we were shocked because it was a total white out.**
315.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Lower Third</u>** **Walter Fischel** **Welder**	**<u>Walter Fischel, Welder</u>** **We all felt that it was too hard for the plane to land. So, I remember myself hearing the roar of the, the propellers and thinking that he's not going to land, there's no way. I mean he cannot do this.**
316.		Blowing snow obscures the horizon line and the runway. Unable to make a visual landing, the pilots must rely only on the plane's radar.
317.		**<u>Dr. Jerri Nielsen</u>** **And the only way I knew they landed was I heard a thud.**
318.		**<u>George McAllister, Rescue Pilot</u>** **We let our main skis take the brunt of it. Once we got on the ground we're saying, // we've landed and bring Dr. Nielsen out, and they thought we were kidding //because the density of the snow was so thick that they didn't see us taxiing up until we got right up to the on load spot.**
319.	**<u>GRAPHIC: WMH Bug</u>** **When Weather Makes History**	Coming up next, the "Polies" only have minutes to get Jerri onboard before the plane's hydraulics will freeze.

320.		**<u>Walter Fischel, Welder</u>** **We were all prepared. // We grabbed the doctor, and // we zipped her up in a // snowmobile.**
321.	**<u>ACT SIX</u>**	**<u>ACT SIX</u>**
322.	**<u>BUMPER IN:</u>** **When Weather Makes History**	**<u>BUMPER IN</u>**
323.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Stamp Reveals</u>** **October 16, 1999**	October 16th, 1999. Antarctica. In white out conditions, an LC-130 Hercules cargo plane makes an historic landing at the South Pole.
324.		Nine days before the research station is scheduled to reopen for flights, the plane touches down on the icy runway in extreme weather conditions.
325.		Doctor Jerri Nielsen needs to be rescued. She is suffering from breast cancer and is gravely ill.
326.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Lower Third</u>** **Dr. Jerri Nielsen**	**<u>Dr. Jerri Nielsen</u>** **I had to be helped to the plane, I was so weak.**
327.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Lower Third</u>** **George McAllister** **Rescue Pilot**	**<u>George McAllister, Rescue Pilot</u>** **We on loaded Dr. Nielsen very quickly.// It might have been the fastest turn at the South Pole.**
328.		So fast, that there's no time for good-bye.

329.		**<u>NATPOP</u>** **(Plane takes off)**
330.		Three hours later, the rescue plane lands at McMurdo station. Jerri is transferred to a waiting plane, and flown directly to Christchurch, New Zealand.
331.		Once there, she is whisked away to a nearby hotel where her brothers, Eric and Scott, anxiously wait.
332.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Lower Third</u>** **Eric Cahill** **Jerri's Brother**	**<u>Eric Cahill, Jerri's Brother</u>** **They brought her to the hotel room and we were thrilled to death to see her. She was just like always.**
333.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Lower Third</u>** **Scott Cahill** **Jerri's Brother**	**<u>Scott Cahill, Jerri's Brother</u>** **She just looked like // my sister // again, and she looked beautiful.**
334.		Then, Jerri is flown to Indianapolis, for treatment at the Indiana University Medical Center.
335.		For the first time, Jerri has a face-to-face meeting with her oncologist, Dr. Kathy Miller.
336.		**<u>Dr. Jerri Nielsen</u>** **She was everything I thought she would be. She was a great doctor, a very compassionate person.**
337.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Lower Third</u>** **Dr. Kathy Miller** **Jerri's Oncologist**	**<u>Dr. Kathy Miller, Jerri's Oncologist</u>** **In some ways it felt like we had known each other for a long time because we had developed a relationship with the video conferencing and over our emails.**

338.		Jerri undergoes a battery of medical tests to determine the extent of her cancer.
339.	**GRAPHIC: Lower Third** **Lorine Cahill** **Jerri's Mother**	**Lorine Cahill, Jerri's Mother** **One after another test came up clean. // I just, I thought, 'Oh my God, maybe there's a chance. Maybe there's a chance.**
340.		The next day, Jerri has a lumpectomy.
341.	**GRAPHIC: Lower Third** **Phil Cahill** **Jerri's Father**	**Phil Cahill, Jerri's Father** **It looked like she was going to live and that was a very happy moment in our lives.**
342.		Jerri survives.
343.		**BEAT**
344.		But her battle with cancer is not over. In 2005, her breast cancer recurs and this time it spreads into her bones. She is treated with radiation and chemotherapy.
345.		And she remarries, making the most of every day.
346.	**GRAPHIC: Lower Third** **Dr. Jerri Nielsen**	**Dr. Jerri Nielsen** **I've traveled all over. // I am practicing emergency medicine now and I love it.**
347.		**Dr. Kathy Miller, Jerri's Oncologist** **You can tell that this is an**

		adventurous woman who loves life, // and I very much admire that.
348.		**<u>Scott Cahill, Jerri's Brother</u>** **We've been lucky. She's had a magnificent life since she's been back. And a lot of it is because of those guys // that // risked their lives for her.**
349.		**<u>MUSIC HIT</u>**
350.		While helping Dr. Jerri Nielsen, the US Antarctic program made history twice. Completing one of the first moonless airdrops in extreme polar temperatures, and one of the earliest polar winter air landings.
351.	**<u>GRAPHIC: Stamp Reveals</u>** **2007**	In 2007, a new, state-of-the-art research center was completed at the South Pole.
352.		Individuals who are drawn to Antarctica are willing to face the extreme challenges of living in a polar climate -- people like Jerri Nielsen, who despite her ordeal, has no regrets.
353.		**<u>Dr. Jerri Nielsen</u>** **It's made me more accepting of the way things are. It makes me like what I do more and I don't believe so much that I'm dying, I believe that I'm living.**
354.	**<u>END OF SHOW</u>**	**<u>END OF SHOW</u>**