BS: This is an oral interview with Commander Ronald McGregor taken as part of the Polar Oral History Project of the American Polar Society and the Byrd Polar Research Center on a grant provided by the National Science Foundation. The interview was conducted by Brian Shoemaker at Commander McGregor's home in Washington, DC on the 27th of October, 2001.

Well, Commander McGregor, I've known you for years and your involvement in both the Arctic and the Antarctic. It's good to have you here today. I'd like you to tell me where you got started and a little bit of your background, what you brought to polar research. You were picked to come, you chose to come, but you weren't naked when you showed up. You had some experience to offer, so that you were chosen once you volunteered. So, if we can start with the build-up to that which is your education background.

RM: OK. I left Canada . . .

BS: You're from Canada originally.
RM: Yes.

BS: *And, by the way, I'll be asking dumb questions - not because I don't know, but so we can get them on tape.*

RM: I was brought up in the extreme western part of Ontario in Canada and when I finished high school - having been born in Beaudette, Minnesota, I had dual citizenship - I opted to establish allegiance with the United States, so that I could attend college. As my sponsor, my elder sister invited me to live with her husband and her, and they would make arrangements for me to enter college in Philadelphia. So, I moved to Philadelphia and after one year of pre-education to college work in the United States, I entered Haverford College. I was, at that time, interested in a pre-medical course, but was shifted into a chemistry and biology program. An adjunct professor by the name of Dr. Thomas Jones (in 1960, he became the first Director, Office of Polar Programs, National Science Foundation), advised me, while I was at Haverford College, that I had a bent toward biology, so I selected to major in biology. I spent two years at Haverford College, probably not the most happy years of my early life. I was among three others who were not Quakers and after the end of the second semester, upon the death of my father in 1937, I didn't finish that academic year. And with the family in Philadelphia - my sister, her husband, and their not-yet-one-year-old child drove with me to Rainy River, Ontario, for the funeral of my father.

While we were there, my three brothers, myself and my sister and her husband and my brothers' wives sat around the table as most families do when there is a decision to be made. The family agreed that I could take the summer and solicit a more amenable college or university to attend. This was in the summer of 1937. So in '37, I drove over a good bit of the midwest at the family expense, thank god, and toured many colleges,
starting with the University of Minnesota in Duluth, and going through a good part of
Minnesota and a goodly part of Wisconsin.

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I elected to go a Lutheran college in Moorhead, Minnesota, where I found the Dean of
Men and the members of the faculty, that were still there during the summer, a very
friendly and wonderful group. Reverend Roy Harrisville was the head of the Lutheran
churches in Moorhead. He was also the Chaplain for the school - Concordia College in
Minnesota. He was so outgoing and so pleasant to be with and arranged for me to meet a
good many of the local people in the congregations of the Lutheran churches in
Moorhead and college.

BS:  What's the name of the college?

RM:  Concordia.

BS:  Concordia.

RM:  I spent a good bit of time, I think about ten days, on the campus, so that I attended
two Lutheran services in the Moorhead Lutheran Church. And I got back home and the
estate had been settled and we were going to get on with our family life. I stayed with my
mother during that summer in Rainy River, Ontario, and the church - the Presbyterian
church there - asked me to be a counselor at their summer camp on Rainy Lake, which I
did. In late August, I went to Concordia, went through the enrollment process and joined
the freshman class of 1938.
BS: *How old were you?*

RM: Well, let's see... '38 and... twenty.

BS: *You were born in 1918.*

RM: Um-hum... 1917, Sept. 19.

BS: 1917.

RM: September of '17, and I spent three years at Concordia. I guess I'm enamored with cold weather, having been brought up and spent a good bit of my time with long winters and a considerable amount of darkness. And while I was there, one of the professors was starting a book called *Koochaching* which is the name of a county in which International Falls in Beaudette are located, and told of the first immigrants who came to that part of Minnesota and the tough time they had. And we spent many hours sitting around shooting the breeze about how you lived in the winter time in the woods. I graduated in 1941, from Concordia College.

In the final year at Concordia, my baccalaureate was in, of all things, philosophy and the minor was biology. In the spring semester, a group of Naval officers, all of them aviators, came on to the campus of Concordia College to talk about enlisting in the Navy's aviation training program. I was enamored with aviation. I had first flown in 1933, with my sister and her pilot, Forrest Leathers, who taught me the rudiments of flying. So, it looked like a great chance and they were actively seeking baccalaureate people to go into the Navy's aviation program. I made application and was accepted.
In September of 1941, I became a Seaman Second Class in aviation training at Wold Chamberlain Airport in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and successfully finished the pre-pre-flight training and was accepted to enter training at Pensacola.

BS: Did you do any flying during this period?

RM: Wold Chamberlain Naval Air Station, Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN.

BS: Yes.

RM: Yes.

BS: How much?

RM: Oh gee, about 16 hours.

BS: You did get to fly?

RM: I would say in N2S and N3N airplanes, I think a total, maybe, of 16 hours in each. We were detached and sent to report to Corpus Christi, Texas. Gus Morrison, one of my friends that I met at pre-pre-flight training and Leonard Schramm - the three of us started for Corpus Christi in Morrison's car. Morrison was the wealthy one of the crowd. His Dad was the physician in Minneapolis - a surgeon. And we hiuckoed down the Mississippi and then over to Corpus Christi, and went into the indoctrination class run by the Marine Corps called boot camp. And that's where I learned that I wasn't very akin to hot weather. Oh, man, the heat down there was tremendous.
BS: *Push-ups on the grinder in the sun?*

RM: Oh, yeah. The grinder was the sea plane ramp. We were getting heat from both ends.

BS: *Oh yeah.*

RM: Then we were detached - no flying there at all - just exclusively the Marine Corps ground pounding. One of the things that I didn't like about it was the fact that the trousers they issued to us had no back pockets and man, that's inconvenient when you're just out of college. So, pretty soon you learn to leave everything in your room. We were there for the term of boot camp - four weeks - and at that time, we were completely indoctrinated as to what it meant to be a citizen of the United States military and having committed yourself under oath to defending the country. We then cranked up Gus's car which hadn't been run for 3 weeks, and drove over to Pensacola, where we joined in the training program in Pensacola. This was in October. And we started classes, mornings or afternoons, classrooms - the afternoons or the mornings, aviation flight training. First at Cory Field flying N2S's and N3N's, then when we got to instruments, SNJ's at Main Station. And then, boats - P-boats at the main station.

BS: *P-boats being . . . PBY's?*

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RM: I started with P2Y's and then when we got so that we could handle them on the water, they moved us into PBY's. They phased out the P2Y's and we had PBY's and
PBY5A's and later PBM's. Afterward, they sent us down to Miami for advanced single engine training and that's when they decided that they had to say, "You're going to go into fighter training, you're going to go into multi-engine training, you're going to become a flight instructor," and so on. When I finished, I had some training in Buffalo Brewsters at Miami, and later I was sent back to Pensacola to become a flight instructor - primary flight instructor - at Cory Field.

BS: *Were you commissioned? Where were you commissioned?*

RM: I finished my training . . . I was commissioned as of March, 1942, and I went from Miami to Mainside Pensacola and then back to Cory Field as a flight instructor. That was in March of '42.

BS: *Right after your commission.*

RM: Yes.

BS: *And what were you instructing in?*

RM: Primary flight - N2S's and N3's. I hated the N3N's because they had such a big wing, they floated forever. In January, 1943, I was sent to the American Airlines flight school at Fort Worth, Texas, because my background was in multi-engine, to learn to fly DC-3's. I finished flight school successfully there, became a co-pilot - I guess you call them a first officer - in the DC-3 on the government contract runs that American Airlines had across the southwest of the United States.

BS: *But, you were in the Navy.*
RM: Oh, yes. And then, after I had finished that and I had successfully passed the examination as a co-pilot, I sat on the left-hand side with American Airlines. Cecil Schilberg was my plane commander and he got me through the plan for the captain's test. It involved about 30 hours of en-route flying and demonstration of handling, en route emergencies and terminal relationships with contractors who loaded our airplanes, all carrying Navy materials.

BS: This is interesting because the Navy must have had to augment them with the pilots because they didn't have enough with the expansion.

RM: No, this was a training program.

BS: OK, part of the training.

RM: And they used this as a deal to set up a Naval Air Transport Service. I'm coming to that now. When I finished training, I was ordered to Kansas City, Kansas, to report to the Fairfax Airport at Kansas City, Kansas, where VR-3 of the Naval Air Transport Service was located.

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No airplanes, office space, no BOQs, no military facilities, go downtown, get a room, let us know where it is and we'll make arrangements to take care of your room rent and we'll pay you a per diem for food. The commander was V.A. Dorrel.

So, at the advice of the personnel officer at the new command, I went over and got a room in a downtown hotel in Kansas City, and then the next morning, I reported
where I had a room and what kind of a rate I could negotiate by the month. And they said, "We're going to negotiate it for a year." "Why are you doing that?" "Because they're building a Naval Air Station 35 miles west of Kansas City, Kansas, and it's going to be at Olathe, Kansas. The squadron had a single-engine, two-seater SNC aircraft that we used to maintain our instrument-flying proficiency. We did our flying from Kansas City, KS, Municipal Airport.

BS: *SNC, not SNJ?*

RM: SNC. It was a single engine scout aircraft built by Curtis at Columbus, Ohio.

BS: *Forerunner to SNJ?*

RM: Same time.

BS: *Same time.*

RM: One by North American and one by Curtis.

BS: *Swapped ends on landing?*

RM: Hey . . . !

BS: *I flew the J. I'm perfect. I can swap ends on landing. I proved it. Funny.*

RM: And then, I'd been there about a month and we got our first C-47 - excuse me, R4D2. And upon the arrival of that one - we got three airplanes the same day - and upon
their arrival, we had a commissioning ceremony putting VR-3 Air Transport Squadron 3 of the Naval Air Transport Service in being. All of the planes or all of the plane commanders, were formerly trained Naval aviators who had gone into the aviation transport business commercially, and who were called back and they were the pilots, the plane commanders, for our squadron. And each of the new guys was assigned to a plane commander. And fortunately, of all things, Cecil Schilberg, who I flew with at American Airlines, was my plane commander. We had a schedule of indoctrination flights and transition to the R4D, both ground school classes and flight classes.

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I finished my en route flight training under the guidance and provisions of Cecil Schilberg, and went into the final examinations of instrument flying and route checks with four different route check pilots. The routes involved were from Kansas City, Kansas, to Wichita, to Albuquerque, to Winslow, Arizona, to Bakersfield, California. There was another route from Olathe, Kansas, to Oklahoma City, to Dallas-Ft. Worth, Dallas-Ft. Worth to El Paso, and El Paso, to San Diego. And the east coast routes were from Olathe, to Columbus, Ohio, to either Floyd Bennet Field, New York, or Mustin Field in Philadelphia, or Washington National Airport and after Patuxent River was opened, to Patuxent River, and to Norfolk, Virginia. And then we had a seldom used route which was the fourth one that went from Olathe, Kansas, to Dallas-Ft. Worth, then to Jacksonville, and thence to Miami. That was very seldom used and it was for special events, the nature of which I never understood and I've forgotten all about.

That took about 10 days. After I finished that element, I was designated a plane commander on the western sector that included flights from Olathe, Kansas, toward either Los Angeles, Bakersfield, or San Francisco - sometimes to Seattle, and sometimes to Kodiak, depending upon how they rerouted us and how we interacted with Air Transport
Squadron No. 1 which flew out of Seattle, Naval Air Station, Seattle. I did this until 1944. Then, I became the Officer in Charge of the Oakland detachment of VR-3. I had, at that time, working through me all of the flight crews who had crew-rest and were rescheduled out of Oakland. It was another crew change terminal.

BS: What was your rank at the time?

RM: Lieutenant? Because I had just gotten married in ’44, and you had to be a lieutenant to get married in those days, or a lieutenant junior grade. Anyway, so Lois and I drove from Olathe, Kansas, to Oakland, and I set up shop there. And I sat directly below Admiral "Blackjack" Reed, Commander Naval Air Transport Service (NATS). When he got mad at his aides, I could hear him stomping. I would go out and have a cigar when that happened. I had a maintenance crew that interacted with the staff maintenance crew and a flight scheduling crew and a cargo handling crew and a baggage handling crew, because we were carrying passengers.

BS: Was this overseas?

RM: Yes, to Honolulu. One of the things that was a difficult thing to handle - we were receiving from overseas, western Pacific, the mentally disturbed. That's probably not the right word, but. . .

BS: Shell-shocked?
RM: Yes, or battle-stressed, battle-fatigued. Battle fatigue is the best word because it covers the whole range.

BS: So does shell-shocked.

RM: And they were sedated and in bunks. We had R4Ds, I think they were 4's that were ambulance planes so that they could put . . .

BS: Are these mostly Marines? Seabees?

RM: No. We had Air Force, whoever, and the reason was because Oakland was the big receiving base and then they went to Ft. Worth.

BS: Hospital there?

RM: Yes.

BS: Casualty reception center.

RM: So, we would get those people, then they would reschedule them as soon as they were ready to fly. We received them and they were in the state of complete relaxation. There had been drugs administered. There were physicians and two graduate nurses, military-types, assigned to each crew so that that was the only time I ever flew ahead of the locked door.

BS: You mean we had locked doors back then and we're just thinking of having them again today.
RM: Yes. But, you know the locked door was just turn a knob.

BS: I understand, but you had a sailor right there that would stop them, right?

RM: Oh yeah. The radioman sat there with a .45 right there. Anyway, we never had an incident in the whole year we flew that mission. Not one incident. And we picked them up. VR-5 out of Honolulu would deliver them to us. They'd come in ambulances from the Oakland Naval Hospital, they'd go right on the airplane in the litters, and we would already be in the cockpit - the crews - and the two doctors and the two nurses who were going forward would be there and we'd fly non-stop from Oakland to Ft. Worth, off-loaded the patients and return to Oakland empty, or go on to pick up a load at Patuxent, and back to the west coast. That was probably the most rewarding experience I had in VR-3. The most rewarding was my marriage, of course, but that's aside.

Then I started looking at things to do and at the end of the war, I was reassigned to go to carrier aviation training at San Diego.

BS: This was towards the end or after the war?

RM: After the war.

BS: OK.

RM: And those orders were canceled and I was sent to the Naval Air Station at Guantanamo Bay. And I reported to Captain Dan Gallery.
BS: *Admiral Dan Gallery, the writer?*

RM: Yes, and he dispatched me to his brother, Captain Gallery, who was the Commanding Officer of the Naval Air Station and I was designated the Operations Officer there. Had a wonderful and fantastic tour of duty.

BS: *He had a tremendous sense of humor, didn't he?*

RM: And I got to fly two of Grumman's less spectacular airplanes - the single-engine pontoon amphibious sea plane. It was a scout plane. I've forgotten what it's designation was. And then we had the twin-engine J2F that we used to fly around Cuba with counselor officers. It was an amphibian. And that's where I learned to take off on instruments because as soon as you put the power on, the nose dug in and, whoosh, water everywhere. Anyway, that was a lovely tour of duty.

BS: *Wife with you?*

RM: Oh yes. She came . . . I had to wait for housing, and I had a lovely 3 bedroom house with a huge living-room, a huge dining-room, a magnificent kitchen, maid's quarters over the garage, maid equipped.

(400)

BS: *West side or east side of the bay? Had an air station on the west side.*

RM: East side.
BS: *East side. Oh, you were over the main station.*

RM: Yes. Commodore Battle, the only Commodore I ever served under, was there and his wife had lost a leg and she was the most gorgeous and generous and compassionate woman I've ever met, even more so than my wife. But, she was just great. One of the interesting things that I did there was that we sort of connected with the existing Cuban Air Force in aviation safety matters, so if they had an aircraft accident, we took a crew over to examine the aircraft to see what we could find out. It was sort of like a bobtail aircraft incident examination.

BS: *Were you a trained aviation safety officer?*

RM: Not at that time. After leaving Guantanamo, in 1946, I went to VP Squadron in Norfolk, Virginia, via ASW and Mine Warfare Training. My final squadron was VPAM-4. CDR Vossler was CO. March, 1948, the squadron was later redesignated as VP-34.

BS: *Which year, roughly? Not an important detail, just trying to structure the time frame.*

RM: OK. This was an active patrol squadron and it was during the time that the Israelis and the Palestinians were having monumental squabbles.

BS: *1948.*

RM: '47, maybe.
BS: *But, Israel hadn't become independent yet.*

RM: This was when they were having the war with Palestine. One of the things that our squadron was tasked to do was to be a communications station right off Tel Aviv. So, the flying boat would land out there in international waters and we would provide communications, interaction with any of the governments. We had covered communications from the flying boat.

BS: *PBM?*

RM: Nope, PBY. And boy, they were terrible. One of the things that was not permitted on the boat was any sardines. We had a lot of guys get sick. Finished up there. We did a lot of ASW (Anti-Submarine Warfare) work and a lot of mine warfare. Conducted in-shore patrols along the Atlantic coast, had deployments on the Rappahannock River and Bermuda.

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And we also flew and did companion work or joint work with the boat squadrons from the Royal Canadian Air Force or the Royal Air Force at Bermuda. We had a very lovely sea plane base in Bermuda, as a result of the four stacker trade that Roosevelt and Churchill made. From there I was detached from VP-34 and went to the Navy post-graduate school - line officer school. Then I went on to the staff of the line school under Admiral P.D. Stroop, the shortest Navy guy to command an aircraft carrier.

BS: *I knew him. I used to brief him when he was COMNAVAIRPAC.*
RM: Great guy. The only time I got cross-wise with him was at the Cascavone Ball when you break eggs filled with gold dust over the heads of friends. We had confetti in them, and when I was breaking the egg, I smacked the top of his head and he grew to be 10 feet tall right then. Anyway, after that, I went into graduate school at Monterey - meteorology. It's now called atmospheric physics. Then, I was detached and went to the Naval Air Station in Guam as meteorologist. And the day that my wife arrived and we moved into quarters, the next morning at 5:00 AM, bang, bang, bang on the door. The Leading Chief of the Air Weather Central at Guam came to the door and he told me, "You now have orders back to Monterey - Naval Air Station, Monterey."

BS: Which year was this, do you remember, roughly?

RM: October, 1951. I didn't have one year at Guam, but I did . . . where I learned about meteorology and forecasting thereof was, we forecasted for the Korean War. We forecasted for Pan American's flights into and out of Guam. Guam to the Philippines, and North to Hawaii and the association and briefing those crews was just really a very excellent experience. Came back to NAS Monterey, September, 1952, and was the forecaster there for 2 years. Then, I went aboard the Hamburger Maroo, Salisbury Sound, August, 1954, and was ordered, the operations officer, it was sort of an emergency. I didn't have any leave. I was ordered to go right from duty one day in the middle of the week to report for duty aboard the Salisbury Sound in San Diego. I got down there and the relieving ceremony concluded, "My name is Arnie Havoo. The only communications I've had with my commanding officer is by memo and he responds by memo and you're going to have my job. Good luck." I took over the Operations Department. The ship had four times failed to successfully pass ready for deployment fleet training.
BS: *The ship had, or the meteorology group?*

RM: The ship had, but I was the Operations Officer.

BS: *You were the Operations Officer on a ship.*

RM: Yes! Capt. E.M. Morgan was ordered on board as the Executive Officer at the same time that I was. Capt. Hawkins also came aboard at this time as Commanding Officer.

BS: *You had sea planes aboard?*

RM: No, we serviced sea planes for the Commander Taiwan Patrol Force. We had the Formosa Patrol Force and they had assigned two squadrons of PBM's. One would be in the Formosa Strait and we would service them at anchor.

BS: *Fuel, repairs?*

RM: Whole nine yards. We could hoist them up on the deck for maintenance.

BS: *What was the designation of the ship?*


BS: *No, I mean the Salisbury Sound. Was it a sea plane tender?*

BS: *OK.*

RM: And when we were not in the Formosa Strait - if the Straits got hot, we would deploy from Cameron Bay in Okinawa around the Horn either to Keelung or Koachung and go into the Straits and establish an anchorage - and then we established lighted sea-ways for the guys to land on at night or early morning.

BS: *Were you a Lieutenant Commander, Commander?*

RM: I was Lieutenant Commander and made Commander on our deployment. Incident - I made Commander on the day that we passed our first fleet training, our final fleet training experience. We had to pass fleet training in San Diego. We had to go through it again in Honolulu, and we had to go through it in, Japan at Naval Base Yokuska.

BS: *Yokuska?*

RM: Yokuska. So, by the time we got down there, the Task Force Commander, Admiral Kivette, called the Commanding Officer and said, "My staff would like to give you an operational training examination. When can you get underway?" "In thirty minutes, Admiral." We went out and cruised around in the western Pacific and came back and set up in the Buckner Bay, in Okinawa, set up the sea-way, anchored and serviced nine airplanes. That's the longest I've ever been without sleep.
And they said, "OK. We'll accept you." So, from no-go to go full bore . . .

(End of Tape 1 - Side A)

(Begin Tape 1 - Side B)

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BS:  This is Tape 1 -B of the Ron McGregor interview continued. OK. You mentioned that you'd like to talk about how you became interested in the Antarctic and the Arctic.

RM:  To go back to Guantanamo Bay time frame, one of the questions Brian asked me was, "When did you become interested in polar work and the Navy's role in polar work?" While I was on duty as the Operations Officer at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, when Operation High Jump was going to Antarctica. Their ship supply system went from the Seabee Center at Davisville, Rhode Island, down the east coast, through the Panama Canal and thence to the Byrd Station anchorage.

BS:  Byrd Station. Where was the anchorage?

RM:  Wherever they anchored to off-load onto the USS Glacier.

BS:  Oh, Little America.
RM: All right. And in one of the hot messages that came to Guantanamo Bay Naval Station's Operation's Officer, hand-carried by Captain Gallery, was a request to expedite the shipment of the skis that were left in Davisville, Rhode Island, through Cuba on to Panama, so that the ships could get them and they could be delivered to the expedition going to Little America. That's a complicated sentence, isn't it.

BS: I understand.

RM: And I was tasked to contact . . .

BS: These were for the planes, right?

RM: The planes that were carrying the skis from Davisville, Rhode Island, to Jacksonville, Florida, to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, then to Panama, to the Southern Command. They would take them off the airplanes and put them on the ships. And then the ships would deliver them to Little America, for the people "on the Ice."

BS: So, this actually was for "Operation High Jump." For the R4Ds?

RM: No, these were for the members of the shore party.

BS: Oh, human skis. I gotcha. OK. Skis for the men. They sailed away and forgot them, huh?

RM: Somebody at Davisville, saw the whole stack of them in the warehouse.

BS: Where did the skis catch up to them?
RM: In Panama.

BS: So, you got involved. How did you get involved?

RM: I got involved because I was tasked to make sure that from Jacksonville, that the coordination between Jacksonville Naval Air Station and Panama Naval Air Station and Guantanamo Naval Air Station were completely coordinated so there would be a minimum amount of ground time on board. Each of the flight crews was duplicated in the air and they flew continuously from station to station. The supply ships would pick the skis up in Panama.

BS: OK.

RM: And in this coordination process, I got into the library at Guantanamo Bay, which was pretty scanty on polar operations and polar discovery, but I read a couple of stories about Scott's expeditions. I read Endurance, and a lot of stuff about Admiral Byrd that was in pamphlet and articles from magazines. And it stimulated my reading up till now, till today.

(50)

For instance, I just received Graham Rowley's book on his 1939 archeological expedition into Baffin Bay. So, it became sort of a boutique history event!

BS: Do you now have a library of polar books?
RM: Yeah.

BS: *How many? Do you know? A hundred?*

RM: I don't know. Five shelves.

BS: *Probably 100 plus!*

RM: After the *Salisbury Sound*, I went to Hawaii in the Early Warning Squadron based at Barber's Point. Our patrol area was from Midway Island to Adak. As soon as we picked up Adak and identified it as the Naval Air Station Adak on our radar - search radar - we would make a 180 and fly back to Midway.

BS: *W-121s? Willy Victors?*

RM: Yes. WV-2s. We would be deployed as a crew to Midway. We came under the operational command of Commander Barrier Patrol Pacific. We would be based there for a month, and we would fly back to Barber's Point, go back into training, clean up the squadron business and do it again.

BS: *This was your first experience in the polar regions? Arctic regions?*

RM: No, I had been up to Kodiak, Alaska, before when I was in the VR-3.

(100)
BS: *The Arctic being defined as the 10 degree summer ice up there, actually incorporates the oceans.*

RM: As long as I talked about Adak, I'm in the Arctic.

BS: *Yes.*

RM: OK.

BS: *You're in the Arctic - not to the Arctic Circle, but in the Arctic region. It extends . . .*

RM: And the family was with me at NAS Barber's Point, Hawaii. I now had a daughter, seven years old.

BS: *Barber's Point?*

RM: Very pleasant place when I was in Barber's Point. Hated going to those swimming pool sessions with a passion, especially when they set the pool on fire. I was there until 1956, and I was then ordered to the University of Southern California for Aviation Safety School training. From finishing that, I reported to the Bureau of Aeronautics Facilities Command to be the Aviation Safety Officer in the Facilities Division.

BS: *System's Command.*

RM: No, Bureau of Aeronautics, Facilities Division that later became the Air Systems Command and again, I was under Admiral P.D. Stroop, and Hap Asman was another friend who was in the Bureau of Aeronautics and our friendship started when I forecasted
his transpacific redeployment from the western Pacific, Yokuska to Seattle, and I managed to keep him inside of a low pressure system all the way and they had a miserable trip. I went to work for him in the Bureau of Aeronautics and at every opportunity, he reminded me about my forecasts.

BS: *Is P.D. still alive?*

RM: I don't know.

BS: *He was alive a few years ago. Stroop Field, of course, is North Island, San Diego, CA.*

RM: I think he's dead and I think I remember that from an advertisement in *Army-Navy Times*.

BS: *'88, '89 when I knew him. Ed McKeller was his aide when he was AIRPAC.*

RM: And while I was in the Bureau of Aeronautics, I arrived there in August of 1958, in Washington. I became aware of a group of men and women called the *Antarctic* Society. I established contact with Mrs. Ruth Siple while she was on rest and relaxation from her husband's tour in New Zealand. He was the scientific officer at the embassy in Australia - Australia or New Zealand. And I got all kinds of information about the Antarctic and that focused my cold regions desires more than anything else. My reading on Antarctica was broadened by access to the library in the Pentagon and at the Bureau of Aeronautics. I was there as the Aviation Safety Officer, and worked under Capt. Allemand as Facility Aviation Safety Officer. I visited a good many aircraft manufacturing sites and was on inspection teams to make sure that they were meeting the
requirements of contracts for safety principles. And when I saw something that I thought should be considered under safety, I wrote reports to the Chief of the Bureau of Aeronautics. A regular job for an Aviation Safety Officer. I guess they have them at plants now.

Then, it became apparent that my career did not lead to promotion - to four stripes. And I talked to my Aviation Assignment Officer and he gave me these things and I had become enamored with the history and the stories of polar regions and one of the things that became apparent was that, although we advertised that we sailed in every ocean, we sure as hell didn't sail in the Arctic at that time - 1960. The Task Force Commander of Task Force 43, Deepfreeze, was located in Washington, DC, so I asked my boss, Capt. Allemand, if I could take time off periodically, to go over and shoot the breeze with TF-43 personnel to see if I wanted to volunteer for that program. They were advertising for volunteers at that time and my assignment officer told me that there was going to be a change in the Commander Antarctic Support Activities (CASA), would I consider that? It's a one year tour and I was to winter-over. I talked to Lois about it. She said, "Yes, if you want to do it. Is it going to make your career any bigger or better?" And I said, "No. But, it will make me feel good because I've read so much about it and I have enjoyed everything I've read and I think that the people who go down there are really not kooks. They are people who have a wonderful view of the world, not just east and west, but also north and south." And we agreed as a family and I went to talk to the staff. Captain Roy Schultz was the Chief of Staff and I spent a goodly bit of time with him. I also spent a goodly bit of time with the physician on the staff - this was in the summer of 1961. I finally grabbed the bull by the horns and volunteered and I became the relief of the wintering-over CASA, and was ordered to Davisville, Rhode Island, to report to the
Commander Construction Battalions Atlantic. And I became a member of his staff as Aviation Officer. A delightful job!

It was my principal job while there to train and coordinate the new people coming on board for an Antarctic summer group and for a winter-over group. In addition, I had to accept and inventory all the materials that would be shipped to the Antarctic for the Antarctic Support group, for the staff, for the National Science Foundation and for VXE-6.

(200)

BS: VX-6.

RM: VXE-6.

BS: VX-6, then.

RM: And we . . .

BS: I say that because it's two different squadrons. When I came back in the '80s, it was VXE-6, not the same VX-6 that we had in the '60s. Different mentality, different way of operating, different way of thinking.

RM: Anyway, experimental was associated with research and the tie in with the National Science Foundation. I was part of some of those discussions. We conducted classes in all of the normal things that commands do, zone inspections, sending people off to school, building a staff that was loyal to the command and the command that was loyal to every
member of the community in which we resided - a very wonderful relationship with the Commander of the Seabees, Atlantic.

BS: *Now, you haven't gone to Antarctica. You're talking about prepping.*

RM: Yeah. One of the interesting things that we did at Davisville, as the Antarctic Support Activity - the staff directed us to look into preparing buildings to be established under the snow at Byrd Station and at Pole Station using a Cat or a snow machine that cut tunnels. It was a development made by the Swiss to keep their roads and railroads open, and buildings were installed in tunnels. The tunnels were non-heat transferable. The buildings inside vented heat to keep the tunnels from caving in on itself as the result of the moisture and hoar frost collecting on the sides, on the floors and on the overhead. The staff had done the work on the snow machines that were to dig the trenches. They were enormous things. They could eat through, if they were digging in the snow and they came upon a full length crowbar, they could just grind it up and spit it out through the chute. That's how powerful they were. But, our job was to find a contractor who would build the buildings for us and deliver them to Davisville, Rhode Island, to go aboard ship, to go down to the Antarctic in October.

BS: *Where were they unloaded there? McMurdo?*

RM: Yeah. And the man that I tasked to do it was Lieutenant Commander Timberlake, our Public Works Officer. He and the Supply Officer and the Financial Officer got together and collected bids from a number of companies that had been building such buildings for the Arctic and for northern Canada, and for a couple of Soviet connections
for Siberia, and they, from the experience that had been accumulated at Davisville, through the mobile construction battalions who had been down to the Antarctic, they altered the bid, the work to be done, and to satisfy the environment, and when this was all done, the Alberta Trailer Company in Edmonton won the contract. They had big plants in Alberta and when they had got the contract, they said one of the clauses of the contract was that all of the people who were going to winter over using these buildings - that meant Byrd Station and Eights Station - had to participate in the construction. There had to be skills in electricity, in communications electronics, in heat management and air circulation management. And these were all rates that were handy in MCB, so we canvassed the guys who wanted to volunteer to do this and shipped them off..

BS: *To Edmonton.*

RM: To Edmonton. And they were shipped back to us to go down to the Antarctic. We had to set up a communications system so that they would be able to talk to their wives while they were in Alberta and the wives met them when they got to Davisville, on the way down South. And they had 10 days together. But, we had to set up a communications station in Edmonton, so they could talk to the people in Antarctica who were living at McMurdo and Pole Station, Byrd Station. Eights Station had not been established yet.

BS: *Let me ask you a question here. Was your Master Chief Goody Gudmundson?*

RM: Nope.

BS: *Master Chief Gudmundson. Wasn't. Not then. OK.*

RM: I had . . . this was for the Deepfreeze, '62, huh? OK.
BS: *In October, you went down for Deepfreeze, '62.*

(300)

RM: OK. At the same time, we talked to the people down in Antarctica on the radio - Top Hand, we used - we talked to CNO, CNO gave us a circuit and told everybody when we were going to talk and so on. We wanted to set up a system where we had a very professional group of men. Now, we would have to say men and women that were available during the summer operation to travel from station to station to bring everything on the station up to contract before we turned the station over to the winter-over party. And each one of those elements was headed by a Chief Petty Officer and then there were, I think, three people with that rate assigned to each team, so we had sort of like a 12 man team, four person teams, and they cross-fertilized each other. The only thing we didn't have on it was a cook and we didn't have a cook on board that team because all of our cooks were sent to the Navy Cooking School. They came back as First Class Petty Officers, or the equivalent thereof. And after they did that, they were sent to the Biltmore Hotel Cooking School in the Biltmore Hotel in Providence, Rhode Island. And many of them, when they had finished wintering-over and left the Navy, went to work for Biltmore in their catering service. I don't know whether they still do that or not. Well, no, if they've got a contract.

BS: *Well, you mean for the cooks.*

RM: The cooks.
BS: Twice, when I was Commander down there, my leading chef came from the White House, one after the other.

RM: Who?

BS: One was Chief Krug. He came from the White House to me, and the guy that I had - and I forgot his name - when I got there went to the White House. I had meals at the Commander's house down there - the Captain's house down there. It's now, well they've torn it down, but it was a Shoebox when I left. I had the job longer than anybody but Dufek. And it was wonderful. I'd throw dinners, catered dinners from the galley, but they came over and cooked them specially for congressmen, senators, Prince Edward, the Prime Ministers of New Zealand, Australia. I had the whole House Science and Technology Committee down there, and threw a dinner for them. NSF didn't understand how their budget went through. NSF didn't even get called over to testify. Lou Branscomb was the head of the National Science Board who brought the committee down to Antarctica.

(350)

RM: Ed Todd, for a man who headed the program, really didn't like it.

BS: He didn't want to be pushed around, but he wasn't managing. We had to do his job for him. Anyway, cooks ... Biltmore for training. That was an aside.

RM: The other thing we did was so that the amateur radio circuits would be familiar to the people "on the Ice" after winter-over set in and their families in the States would be
familiar, we set up a training program devoted to amateur radio for wives and husbands at Davisville before I left.

BS: *Question - was Walt Jones involved? Chief Walt Jones? He was later. I think he was '63.*

RM: But, I think he was involved because I didn't leave until '63.

BS: *I interview him. He's retired in Oregon.*

RM: Oh, had they moved to Hueneme?

BS: *'63. No. He came down specifically to do ham radio and he lived in McMurdo, based in McMurdo for one full year throughout the winter. Anyway . . . he was an EOC - engineman, tractor driver. He'd done Ham Radio in Little America earlier. He was on the traverses to the first Byrd Station, drove a tractor, and as a sideline, when he wintered-over, he learned Ham Radio. He was so good at talking, he was invited back. Didn't have to go out and play in the snow or anything. He sat in the HAM shack at McMurdo year round. One year term.*

RM: *'63. He must have gone down there in . . .

BS: *Knuckledragger.*

RM: Yeah.

BS: *Had a torn ear from a bar room brawl. Cut off a piece of his ear. Quite a character.*
RM: I don't recall him.

BS: *I have lunch when I drive through Grant's Pass, Oregon.*

RM: The communications people were on the periphery, or the joint between . . .

BS: *He wasn't a radioman.*

RM: No.

BS: *He wasn't a radioman, but he was always used.*

RM: But, the HAM radio system was shared with VX-6, and so it was right on the boundary of the two stations.

BS: *Gotcha, gotcha.*

RM: OK. So, yeah, he may come back.

BS: *OK. So, you are still in Davisville, training these guys for all kinds of things.*

(400)

RM: Yeah. And in September, 1961, we cranked up and oh, we had meetings with the staff. We had pass in review with the staff, we had joint meetings with VX-6 and the staff and we had intramural softball league, soccer leagues, anything to get a marriage of every
enlisted man and every officer into something so that they would interact at Davisville, at Washington, and at Quonset Point. That was what Admiral Tyree wanted and that's what the Commander of Seabees wanted, so that when his Mobile Construction Battalions who were going to put in Byrd Station and Eights Station and the nuclear power plant that everybody would know each other before they got on the airplane to leave. So, it was a lot of standing in the auditorium at Quonset - that was the only place that was big enough to hold us all - talks by the staff, talks by each Commander, talks by the boss technicians. We invited the National Science Foundation who were up there to come and we asked the staff of Task Force 43, if you're going to have a full dress inspection, please invite Tom Jones who was the program manager at NSF at the time - Antarctic Projects Officer. And whoever is going to be in the Antarctic to come over. They had people stationed there, they were invited in. They came sometimes and sometimes they didn't. But that was the thrust of what we were trying to do as directed by Admiral Tyree.

BS: *Did Tom Jones ever make an inspection at Tyree's invitation? Did Tyree invite him to do a personnel inspection or any thing like that?*

RM: Oh yeah. That's what I'm trying to drive at.

BS: *Quite interesting, yeah.*

RM: Yeah. And Tom Jones always had his Chief of Staff with him who was the guy who was going to be with us in the Antarctic. Either Phil Smith or . . .

BS: *Jerry Huffman?*
RM: No. The guy before Jerry. Jerry was an also-ran. The guy who at the last minute decided not to stay.

BS: Ken Moulton?

RM: Ken Moulton, yeah. And they came up - Tom Jones and one of those guys was at every pass in review or every personnel inspection. And Tom Jones, he'd show up for zone inspections every once in a while, because he came up to look and see what his people were doing in their warehouse. And I always invited him to walk around with me and he got to know a lot of people. You know the guy who changed the treads on the CATS and stuff like that. Did you know that he built pipe organs?

(450)

BS: Tom Jones?

RM: And was an accomplished pipe organist and played in one of the biggest Lutheran churches in Washington?

BS: No, I didn't.

RM: And maintained the organ.

BS: I know the organists have to maintain the organs because organists are few and far between, to begin with. And half of them are women and they have to maintain their own organs. Who do you hire? Well, in a big city, maybe you'd find somebody, but every little town has an organ.
RM: We have a company in Cleveland that comes in twice a year to look at ours. A whole lot of other things were going on because Mobile Constructions Battalion 1 and a very large detachment of Mobile Construction Battalion 1 were assigned under Antarctic Support Activities. The main battalion was responsible for assisting Martin-Marietta in the building of the nuclear power plant. That was to be installed when we were there. And the big detachment were the people who were involved in the establishment, or the building and establishment of the new Byrd Station. That was the one where they used the trenching tool and the buildings.

BS: *Who was the Officer in Charge of that project? Do you know?*

RM: I haven't the vaguest idea.

BS: *How about the nuclear power plant? They have an Army guy come down?*

RM: The whole thing was run by the small nuclear power thing from the Army. We also had, I think it was a Navy captain who was tied to the small plant that the Army and the Navy devoted to the building of the nuclear power systems for the Navy.

BS: *This guy Gudmundson that I spoke about, Master Chief, built the base for that - excavated it.. So, he might have been the year before you or whatever.*

RM: He might have been. He might have been with the battalion. He would be sort of a hands off.

BS: *Yeah, you wouldn't touch him. I gotcha. Well, he really wasn't.*
RM: Well, then it was done prior to my watch.

BS: *Probably that was it.*

(500)

RM: Because they were really going balls to the wall when I got there. Interesting story - I may as well tell it now. We had one of the enlisted men in MCB-1.

BS: *Incidentally, these are my notes.*

RM: OK. Anyway, we had to make very pure water. So, the battalion built, I think the longest rubber fresh water bladders to hold the water. It was contained in what I believe to be the longest Quonset hut ever built. It was filled up with 10,000 gallon specially built bladders to hold this distilled water until it was ready to go into the system and it had to be replenished. The engineering, I don't know about. Anyway, this part I know, because we commandeered heating devices from VX-6 and the helicopter detachment that was just downhill from the nuclear power plant. The Commanding Officer of MCB-1 took issue with a young disgruntled enlisted person who was supposed to have the watch up at the nuclear power plant water system and he didn't like what this Commanding Officer told him. So, when he went on the watch at midnight, he turned all the heat down except in the office and we had the longest, skinniest piece of ice in the world. The whole damn thing froze before they got to it in the morning. Well, you know where the site was. Don't you remember this?

BS: *Yeah, I know. I don't know the story, though.*
RM: We went down to . . . got out of bed and walked across the street when I heard about it and talked to Bill Everett, C.O. of VX-6, and I said, "Have you heard about what happened up there?" And he says, "What happened up there?" I said, "We got a big ice cube." And he said, "What do you mean?" And I said, "All that distilled water that we've been making all this summer is now ice."

(550)

And he says, "What are you going to do?" And I says, "You're going to provide me, I hope, with blowers to take all that heat and we'll confine it in the building and secure the building so that it thaws. "How much gas is it supposed to take?" I said, "I haven't even thought about that. That's the staff's problem. We've gotta get that water back."

BS: *Now you're talking to whom?*

RM: Bill Everett. Captain Bill Everett.

BS: *He was MCB-1?*

RM: No. MCB-1 doesn't know yet.

BS: *Bill Everett is the guy in charge of VX-6?*

RM: VXE-6. He's got the heaters. The engine heaters. He was . . .

BS: *OK. CO VX-6, Bill Everett.*
RM: And as soon as we agreed what to do to thaw this, we went collectively to talk to the CO of MCB-1 who was just down the street one building - woke him up - and told him what we were going to do. And he says, "I wonder how come I didn't know?" And then we told him about this kid that he'd given a bad time to. "Geez, I didn't even remember."

BS: Passive, aggressive. Anyway, you didn't get out of Rhode Island yet.

RM: Oh, yeah, I was on my way . . . well, it was something that came up when we were talking about the marriage of teams. This was a disconnect. This guy didn't marry with us. They had an enlisted man on . . .

BS: No, I understand, I understand.

RM: Now, back to getting out of Rhode Island. As you know, you go to Travis Air Force Base, crawl on to magic bullets and go to Hawaii and from Hawaii to Fiji, and from Fiji to - this was in September - from Fiji to Christchurch and when I arrived at Christchurch, the assistant Public Works Officer who had gone down ahead to get things lined up for us from New Zealand providers, had two pipers as side-boys when I got off the airplane. Everybody's sitting and waiting for the Admiral to debark and finally, the Chief of Staff says, "Hey, you're supposed to get out first." I says, "Two stars up there. Not me."

(End of Tape 1 - Side B)

(Begin Tape 2 - Side A)
BS: You're just getting off the plane in Christchurch.

RM: So, after being told to get out of my seat and get my legs in motion to the back of the airplane and when I stood in the door at the debark, two pipers were at the bottom of the ladder piping me into New Zealand, which I thought was a very wonderful experience.

BS: You were piped in as . . . ?

RM: Commander of Antarctic Support Activity.

BS: Oh, you were the Commander of Antarctic Support Activity (CASA). OK.

RM: That's what the Admiral said. There was a guy, winter-over Commander, down there, so I really wasn't official.

BS: OK.

RM: We spent some time in New Zealand looking over equipment and going over to the Embassy, talking to Paul Siple and others in the science community and the Councilor officers. The Ambassador was on leave back in the States with his family.

BS: What did you think of Paul Siple?
RM: Well, can we talk about it later?

BS: Sure. You met his wife before.

RM: Yeah. It comes up. We're talking about 1961. We're getting ahead again.

BS: It's '61, you got off the plane.

RM: Then, spent time in New Zealand going through all of the necessary things to get ready. We got clothing, we got more lectures, we did a little bit of mountain rappelling under the New Zealand Antarctic group in the mountains there outside of Christchurch. We had done some of that in our training exercises with the National Science Foundation team, the winter-over team, the MCB-1 teams and the Antarctic Support MCB group, and the winter-over group. When they were up at Skyline Drive, we had lectures from members of both countries' programs - New Zealand and the United States - and members of the staff and the science community principle investigators who were going to be involved, or their students who were going to be involved in wintering-over research and science. And we also did some ice safety - can't do much ice safety in August - and we did some rock rappelling. But, we were able to get up on the glaciers outside of Christchurch and do the real thing.

Then, when we had finished that stuff, we flew from Christchurch to . . . now we're about the first week in October, and the ice runway at McMurdo is ready to take us on board and we flew down. I was part of the passenger list with the staff, along with principals in my staff. And we landed at McMurdo. It was kind of a nice day. We flew in a C-121, colder than a well-digger's ass.

BS: Did they let you sit in the seat?
RM: Yeah.

BS: *Good. Flew some, huh?*

RM: Well, Bill Everett saw to that. I also got right-hand side time in the C-130s and he gave me a designation. I never exercised it.

BS: *So, you got to fly the C-130s later.*

RM: Yeah. Went through ground school in McMurdo. Very personal instructors, and a bunch of ensigns and JGs as fellow students with this grimy old Commander.

(50)

And then after being greeted by the outgoing CASA . . .

BS: *Who was that?*

RM: Don't remember his name. All I know is that the staff was not pleased with his performance.

BS: *Staff hated him with a passion. Then it wouldn't have been Bob Dale or Dusty Blades.*

RM: No. He spent all of his time in the amateur radio office talking to his family and when they wanted to talk to him, he turned them over to his Exec.
BS: *I think it's important. And he didn't do anything to alleviate that during the winter? He separated himself from the unit, basically, sounds like, and let the XO run it. Don't know.*

RM: Well, the command stayed down there and the new Commander came in at Davisville. Change of command, the whole nine yards on the Ice. It was Commander Antarctic Support Activities! I took command on "the Ice."

BS: *I see!*

RM: It seems that this is the second time that I've done this. The first time on the *Salisbury Sound.* And it became pretty awful stuff. Especially with a tender passionate guy like myself.

BS: *Admiral Tyree just wanted him out of there. He knew before you went. Did they . . .? You knew there were problems when you were at Davisville.*

RM: Oh, they told me there were problems. That's why I volunteered.

BS: *That you were going to have to straighten things out.*

RM: That I had a problem and they had set up the kind of training I was going to do. They said, "We're not going to fill in the details, but you're going to have to do this, and we'll be up there. Somebody from the staff will be up there often enough to see that you're on track." We added to it, because our . . . it turned out that when I was there, the Chief Petty Officers were so excellent that there was no distinction between the Chief
Petty Officer and a Commissioned officer. We drank together, we ate together, we
caroused together, we played softball together, we did of all that. And we intermingled
with VX-6, which was a really liberal outfit. We had a ball there. That training program
was just great and Capt. Bill Everett and his gang contributed monumentally to it.

BS:  OK. I understand about the passions. And you relieve the former CASA who was
hated.

RM:  The staff was not pleased with him. It was one of those things. I think his command
loved him because he wasn't interfering. That's a conclusion I came to, talking to the
enlisted men - the ones that I talked to before they left. And I had a very good relation
with the staff and all of the people that I was associated with - those people who were
working for me as staffies had good relations with their counterparts and we met, as a
group, we would show up at staff meetings -- Admiral Tyree and his bosses, and Bill
Everett and his key people and Ron McGregor and his key people, so we had that kind of
an action going all the time. We had one exception who was the ship Operations Officer;
he was rude and crude and didn't fully understand the responsibilities that he had to the
people who were subsisting from his good offices at McMurdo, at Pole Station, and at
Eights Station and at Byrd Station. So, what we had there was a disconnect. Not a serious
one. Very quickly, all of us learned to operate around him.

(100)

BS:  Remember his name?

RM:  Nope. But, I'll have it. And Capt. Roy Schultz, who was Chief of Staff under
Admiral Tyree, sort of protected us from this man's idiosyncrasies. He had been in the
Superintendent and Salvage offices and was really a field man of consummate skill in his chosen field, in salvage. But, he was a loner. He'd go into shops, get in a vehicle, drive it off. It would break down and he would just leave it, walk away, not tell anybody.

BS: *Freeze up?*

RM: Well, there were enough people milling around so they'd see it, they'd go over and take a look at it and say, "Hey, you guys running this thing out here. You want it to be out here?" "No. Send somebody to get it, ok?" They didn't even know it was out of the pool. And then the Martin-Marietta people came in with their nuclear power plant about toward the end of November and MCB-1 had been here. They had gotten everything all lined up for those guys so that when they came on board they could start their work right away. And fortunately, we had fresh water for them up on the hill. Got it thawed out.

BS: *Got it thawed out?*

RM: Anyway, about the same time Martin-Marietta came on board, the detachment that was to build the new Byrd Station arrived. We put the snow machines in Herces and flew them to McMurdo. We'd established a new runway there and we were ready to go into Byrd and start to work when they arrived. Lieutenant Dave D'Vekka was . . .

BS: *He made Captain?*

RM: Yes and he also received the US Navy highest peacetime decoration. He was a superb officer and gentleman.

BS: *He made Captain. Quite sure. He was at Hueneme when I was there.*
RM: He got a promotion to RADM and became C.O. Facilities Engineering Command!

BS: *I knew him years later*

RM: He got a principle honor from the President or from the Secretary of the Navy. Congressional Medal of Honor? No. Anyway, a very important medal for his work establishing his detachment, making the team work before they got "on the Ice" and when they got "on the Ice," they did a magnificent job, on time, on schedule and everybody that went out to visit that site, VIPS - a batch from Switzerland, from all of the Antarctic nations had a representative come down and see this new way of building stations. Instead of building them on the surface and letting the snow accumulate around them, they dug holes in the snow and put the buildings in.

BS: *You went out and saw it? Did you get out there? Of course, you did.*

(150)

RM: Dave D’Vekka invited me. When we were up in Davisville, he wrote me a letter from CO MCB-1 DET Alpha or Bravo. We had a DET Bravo who worked with the Martin-Marietta people. They had Dave at the work site, building the new Byrd Station with members of my staff. This group worked smoothly together before we got involved in going out to Byrd Station to erect the new facility. As a result the Officer in Charge of Detachment Alpha and the Public Works Officer CASA, worked hand in glove without direction from me while erecting the nuclear power plant or with the construction of the new Byrd Station. During that year of construction - that summer of construction - we did not have an incident that required any kind of disciplinary action. People were so damn
busy that they would have a drink and go to sleep and wake up in time to go to work, which was good. We had some problems, but none of them required that kind of action.

Then, comes Thanksgiving, low and behold, without too much notification shows up a whole bunch of Soviet airplanes.

BS: *Hmmmm. That was November or so?*

RM: Yeah, Thanksgiving.

BS: *What kind of airplanes?*

RM: Comparative to a C-130. Antanov II, is it?

BS: *How many of them?*

RM: There were three Antanov IIs. They had one passenger plane - four-engine - I don't know what the designation of it was. And the head of the Arctic-Antarctic Program for the Soviet Union, who was a university man and his staff. They were using this time to fly their people to their station at Mirny. This was after Dickerson and Reedy had made their transpolar, '62 or '63. I may be wrong about that.

BS: *And that was the previous year. '61.*

RM: Well, I was down there.

BS: *OK, it was '61, just before Christmas. Do you remember who the head of the Arctic and Antarctic Program was?*
RM: I don't know whether I have a picture or not, but I'm sure the National Science Foundation would know.

BS: Igor Zotikov? Was he with them?

RM: Yeah.

BS: He later wintered . . . we're getting ahead.

RM: OK. They landed . . . we had like 24 hours notice. And we greeted them like VIPS, and they had all of their summer party except those people who were coming around by ship who were on the way at that time, and these were the sort of, advance guard. And when we took them up to mainside, we set aside places for them to sleep. We apologized because they had to sleep with Yankees and they said there's no difference. Their interpreter said, their political advisor said, and the next morning we all met.

(200)

BS: Antarctic Treaty had been ratified the previous June.

RM: Oh, yeah. No problem. And they were not violating anything other than notification. That could have been a sticking point. But, Admiral Tyree was not about to do anything like that, nor was Tom Jones, because they saw the Antarctic and Arctic Program in the Soviet Union as a source of information for conducting research in polar regions at that time.
BS: *And they knew a lot more than we did!*

RM: Anyway, we met and we talked, all through interpreters at this meetings. And it became very clear right at the beginning that they wanted to look at everything we had in the nuclear power plant. Not supposed to be any down there, according to the Treaty.

BS: *No, you can have it. I wrote my thesis on it at Cambridge.*

RM: Yeah, but the by-product of it is not permitted, like . . .

BS: *Not permanent storage. But, you can have it there, ready for trans-shipment. They're more worried about nuclear trace elements. Everybody uses them. That comes under it, too. I mean stuff that you shoot in the veins of a fish . . .*

RM: Anyway, and their leader and . . . as this was asked and the Soviet leader asked Admiral Tyree for this privilege to look over the plant and Admiral Tyree says, "I was waiting for you to ask that question. You have freedom of access to any records we have here and the Martin-Marietta man, right here, who was in charge of building it, will give you briefings that you need to satisfy your desires." And his science staff, which was about four people who were sitting right beside him or around him, you could just see their eyes go zing. They expected all kinds of hankey-pankey. Tyree really pulled a coup.

BS: *So, they spoke English.*

RM: Let me continue. And then, we went . . . we had a huge Thanksgiving dinner. One at noon and one at night. And we sort of split up the crowd so that both ends of the spectrum of personnel management were available, but up until after dinner, you always
had to have an interpreter handy. And the next day, I was sort of walking around taking a
look at things and checking on where the tractors were and all that kind of jazz when I
walked into the power plant and here's a Russian engineer working great along side of a
young Oriental from California who was the head of my power plant program in
McMurdo - Iyo, I can't remember. He was a Chief Petty Officer, and they were speaking
the best English I ever heard. And that was true. On the tractors, they're sitting there, a
couple of beers between them to keep them warm so they could sip a bit. So, after I
learned this, I went around and hunted up people to see if they were talking and everyone
in the Soviet crew had studied English. So . . .

(250)

BS: *Was this, where you heard this guy speaking English, this was in the power plant -
the nuclear power plant?*

RM: No, this was in the diesel power plant. In the camp.

BS: *OK.*

RM: As an aside to this, we got along great and instead of being there for one night, or
two nights, they were there for 10 days. We were afraid they were going to be there for
Christmas and we didn't have enough Christmas food, so we were going to have to have
them fly some down.

BS: *They did not announce that this was an official inspection, under the terms of the
Antarctic Treaty?*
RM: It was too soon for that, Brian. The Treaty was not ratified until, I think, just before we went "on the Ice."

BS: June? June 23rd, 1961, was when it was ratified.

RM: OK, we went on the Ice in September, 1961.

BS: They could have inspected under the terms of the Treaty, because they ratified it.

RM: Who cares?

BS: I understand. We'll talk about it afterwards.

RM: An interesting thing - the skipper of MCB-1 and the director of the Martin-Marietta installation group, we sort of met every afternoon before dinner and sort of after working hours. If there was ever an after-working hours, we'd get together and the CO or the Exec of VX-6 would get together just to say what happened today. What do we need to do to make tomorrow better, kind of stuff. And a guy from MCB-1 has only one thing to say and he says, "It was a joy to talk to the guys from Russia. I enjoyed it very much." And the Martin-Marietta man said the same thing, only he said, "If they were inspecting the power plant for violations, they were asking the wrong questions." So, that was the evaluation. Now, our enlisted men, our Chief Petty Officers were very, very, very . . . because they had people, they were going . . . the winter-over people for the Soviets were in these planes going over to Mirny, so they had their top technicians in each field. And afterward, I made an effort to get together with my chiefs and shoot the breeze with them about what they thought of this and they said, "They're every bit as good as we are and they're no different than we are." And the communications guy, my Chief, he was a
Master Chief in communications - radio man - remember they had, I don't know whether they have communications keys down there or not any more. Is it all?

BS: *They have them but they don't use them. They have telephones.*

RM: At that time, the communicator could identify whoever was on the key at every station and there was always a big contest about who was the fastest and who was the clearest on the key, the most distinct.

(300)

BS: *September 11th - this is an aside - September 11th, they e-mailed me a photo of the Dome at South Pole with the flag at half-mast in the twilight. The sun doesn't come up until the 21st, this was 10 days before the sun, but there was enough light. It's going to be on the centerfold of the next Polar Times.*

RM: You should zing that . . .

BS: *To the President? I'll send him a copy of the Polar Times.*

RM: Yeah. Was it folded over, so he can see? Do you know anybody over there on the staff?

BS: *Well, I know Peter DeFazio. He's our Congressman. I know him.*

RM: Anyway, to get on with this.
BS: *I just wanted to show you the difference in communications.*

RM: Yeah. He said, "We have a little contest within the communication stations," up on the top of the hill, you know. And I said, "You didn't go on the air, off schedule." And he said, "No, we just set up a system in there and we challenged each other on speed keys, and I hate to say it, but we didn't have anybody that could touch that Russian." So, it was a very good visit for, I think, everybody.

BS: *Especially since it was the Cold War.*

RM: Oh, yeah. Well, . . .

BS: *It was before the Cuban Missile Crisis.*

RM: Well, if that had grown . . . if we had thrown up walls of any kind, it wouldn't have worked. I wouldn't be able to say what a joy it was. And it was, really . . .

BS: *You would have been in violation of the Antarctic Treaty.*

RM: Oh, yeah!

BS: *And obviously Tyree was involved and well briefed because of his response that you told me. He had to allow them in and it was our national policy to allow them in because we wanted them to allow us in, but we wanted them to allow us in somewhere else. We made our first inspection, finally, at both Vostok and Mirny, in '63*

RM: Were you with VX-6 when they flew into - what's the name of the station?
BS: Vostok?

RM: Vostok, yeah.

BS: Back up . . . you were instructed?

RM: Oh, we were instructed by State Department muckety-mucks . . . well, I was part of a group that was called to Washington to be inspected by, or to be addressed by the State Department along with junior members of the staff - of the Admiral's staff - in a very informal way about the implications of the Treaty. And two things came up - disarmament and inspections.

(350)

And the thing that I remembered more than anything else was, you're going to hear a lot of people who visit other stations, not as part of an inspection team, talking about Station Commanders wearing sidearms, which the Chileans and Argentines did. You are not to talk about that until we run an official inspection of those stations.

BS: We're feeling our way.

RM: Yeah. In 1961, they were aware that this was going to be a problem and that it snuck past every foreign office in Europe before they realized what they had.

BS: Well, the Brits were wearing them, too, at their bases.
RM: Yes.

BS: But, our inspections . . . I'll have to look. I've got all the reports at home. I'll have to look to see if we mention those because we might have unofficially told them.

RM: Well, I sure that that's how it was handled because they had other things to worry about.

BS: We could have guns down there, not for aggressive purposes, but for killing seals and what have you.

RM: But, you have to get a license.

BS: You should mention it under the Treaty, but you don't have to. They're considered working stuff. I mean, you've got dynamite. Everybody's using dynamite to blow holes, construction. So, anyway, they spent 10 days and this was still in the summer. Why don't we try and get to . . .

RM: Ten days doing what?

BS: You said the Russians were there 10 days.

RM: Oh, yes. And that puts us in late November, early December. Wasn't November the 28th Thanksgiving?

BS: November . . . somewhere in there is Thanksgiving. It's the last Thursday in November.
RM: OK. So, in the first week in December, they departed for Mirny Station and at the
good-bye ceremonies, there were exchange of VX-6 and Antarctic Support Activities
hoods and hats for the official Soviet winter hat.

BS: Really?

RM: Yeah. And I, in 1994, when mine was so moth-eaten, I had to get rid of it, but we
had a great time.

BS: So, OK, here you are at mid-season.

RM: OK, Christmas went uneventful. The next thing was celebrating the discovery of
the South Pole by an international group of very important people being flown to South
Pole Station. Representing the United States was Paul Siple, the Science Director at the
Embassy in New Zealand, and Gordon DeQ Robin, from Britain, and the Baron de
Gerlache from Belgium.

(400)

BS: Oh really? Gerlache or his son?

RM: No, the son. The old man was dead. But, his son had spent winters at Belgrano.
And we had ceremonies in the Pole Station, after which we went out to Paul Siple's
mirror and the circle of flags and Tom Jones from the National Science Foundation, Bert
Crary from the National Science Foundation, Larry Gould, Phil Smith, Admiral Tyree,
Captain Schultz, Bill Everett, VX-6 and Ron McGregor, CASA, and others.
BS: *That's before Christmas.*

RM: No, that's after we opened Pole Station in early January.

BS: *Oh, you opened it in January, huh? Couldn't get in or what?*

RM: Too cold.

BS: *How cold was it?*

RM: I don't know. Around 65 below zero.

BS: *A really cold year.*

RM: Yeah. That's when we had to break ice right up to Hut Point. We lugged everything over to Hut Point and didn't go out until - when did McMurdo go out the first year? That year?

BS: *Sometimes it doesn't go out.*

RM: But, they had to break a long way in to Hut Point. We had three icebreakers coming right up to make a channel. We didn't have really good access until, I think, mid-December. So, the Pole would be early January then.

BS: *You had the stuff on the ship for the Pole.*
RM: Yeah. For the Pole.

BS: *You didn't have fuel enough to fly there? You couldn't fly there and land anyway?*

RM: Not at that cold.

BS: *At 65 below there, huh?*

RM: Yeah.

BS: *We had a break every year, but I always delayed the breaking until January. They didn't like that. The icebreakers want to come in and tear up the harbor, but then we'd lose the ice runway and if the ice runway was good, I didn't let them break.*

RM: I didn't have ice runway problems the seasons that I was down there.

(450)

BS: *Did you have an ice runway into January and February? Did it get soft?*

RM: Yep. And then we had . . . by that time we had the emergency runway over on the shelf by Scott and if the operations officer for VX-6 said, "No," we took them over there. So, the latter part of the season, we had two fuel systems.

BS: *We did that, too. We always had the ski-way on the ice shelf, but . . .*

RM: We were the first ones to do that across from Scott Base.
BS: *OK, back to McMurdo. You've just taken Siple to Pole.*

RM: Yeah, and it was a very impressive ceremony with everybody putting signs up in Pole Station. I don't know whether they're still there or not. I hope they are - plaques. We went and then the next thing was to get ready for winter-over in McMurdo and each of the pole stations, so the teams that we had trained in Davisville, Rhode Island, before we went down to the Ice, became very active in bringing all of the stations up to top quality and quantity for the winter-over, making sure that there were sufficient high use repair parts for all of the vehicles, all of the transportation systems, for the heating system, for the whole management of a small town in a very, very, very remote place. We were able to get that done by the end of February and we departed . . . I think, the last flight was in the first week in March from the ski-way over by Scott Base. And then the ships departed up until the 15th of March, and the 14th of March, Ron McGregor's orders from the Commander Antarctic Support Activities at McMurdo were changed to Commander Ronald K. McGregor, Commander Antarctic Support Activities in Davisville, Rhode Island.

(500)

That was the year they stopped the winter-over for CASA. And they formed a small staff for CASA to start the reeducation program for the next wintering-over party. But, it was a disappointment. I had a great and glorious black beard, because everybody from the staff had gone back first class, by air, and then the dogs were waiting to go and that's when I got my orders.

BS: *So, when you left, CASA disappeared.*
RM: No, CASA moved.

BS: CASA moved.

RM: Yeah. CASA became a permanent base at Davisville, Rhode Island.

BS: A permanent operation, then. OK.

RM: And it's a CASA Detachment that wintered over.

BS: But, thereafter, CASA was, specifically at Rhode Island.

RM: And I ended CASA wintering over.

BS: You were the last winter-over Commander Antarctic Support Activities. After that, it became Commander Antarctic Support Activities, DET Antarctica.

RM: Then sometime later it became a contract operation. The winter-over. And CASA disappeared.

BS: That happened before '72, or so, Commander of Task Force 43 became Commander of Task Force 199, still a flag billet. They absorbed all of the Seabee activities, everything except VX-6, which became VXE-6.
Different outlook. When NSF became a lead agency, there was friction that went on for years. And that was a shame. That's all changed now. I think it's a better operation now than it ever was under total civilian control. Contractor's fabulous. Contractor never really totally took over until after my time. The military still was doing most of it - the Seabees were still doing most of it. Of course, we were doing all of the flying. So, why don't we just kind of leave it there? Here you are starting winter-over. We've got to talk about winter-over.

RM: Winter-over was in Davisville, and I was home a good bit of the time in Washington and that's lovely.

BS: Oh, you left the DET behind.

RM: Yeah.

BS: I gotcha. I'm glad we brought that up.

RM: VX-6 did a fantastic job of flying me from the helo pad at McMurdo Station . . .

(End of Tape 2 - Side A)

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(Begin Tape 2 - Side B)

(000)
BS: The date is now 21 February 2002. This is a continuation of the polar oral history interview of Commander Ronald McGregor that began on 27 October 2001, in Washington, DC. This interview follows in sequence to the last interview. However, it is being conducted by telephone with Commander McGregor at his home in Washington, DC. and the interviewer, Brian Shoemaker, at his home in North Bend, Oregon.

Ron, thanks for continuing this interview by telephone. We had to finish this by telephone because the first part was so successful and that took a lot of time. We ended with you getting short notice orders back to Davisville, in 1962. And you were beginning to explain that CASA did not winter-over from that point forward. So, why don't we just go from there. And we'll talk as long as we can. If you need a break, just let me know, or if somebody comes to the door or whatever, just say, hang up for a minute and call me back in 5 or whatever.

RM: As I said the last time we met, I was ordered by the Task Force to return to New Zealand for a change of duty orders as Commander of Antarctic Support Activities to be home ported in Davisville, Rhode Island, for a normal two-year tour, and possibly a three year tour. And the icebreaker, Burton Island, was up near the Tucker Glacier and it was returned to McMurdo. When they got within range of a round-trip helicopter trip, they helicoptered me from McMurdo to the Burton Island and then we sailed on for New Zealand. Paul Astapenko, who was the Soviet meteorologist, was also on board and since we were both trained in meteorology, we had some good conversations. We struck the rough water and Paul confined himself to his cabin, very ill, and we proceeded to tie all the chairs to the legs of the tables in the ward room so we wouldn't fall out of them backwards while eating a meal.

BS: Tell me, how do you spell his last name?
RM: A-s-t-a-p-e-n-k-o.

BS: *And he was a Soviet?*

RM: Yeah. And he was ordered to McMurdo for the summer operation, and then we was going to have a tour of duty at the Antarctic Weather Central in Australia. We didn't see Paul until we got into the quiet waters of Christchurch in New Zealand. He came out much thinner and very white. But, a gleam in his eye that said, "This is what I wanted."

And while all this bad weather was going on, I found a place in the engine room where two catwalks intersected that seemed to be the least violent place on the ship. I collected paperbacks and squirreled them down in the engine-room at my seat of power. So, I read a handful of paperback books until we got into quiet waters near New Zealand. Then we went into beautiful, sunny weather. No breeze except the ship's generated - almost calm Pacific waters, which was unusual. And we went into Christchurch, and I was met by the Chief of Staff, Captain Schultz, and I went to where I was going to be quartered and he said, "We're going to fly out. You fly out with us as a member of the staff. You're having a change of duty orders to be home ported in Davisville, as a Task Group Commander under Task Force 43."

(50)

We got into a C-141 in Christchurch, and our next stop was in Hawaii overnight, and then the next stop was in Travis Air Force Base - a magic bullet flight is probably the least interesting of all trips in aviation history. It's fast and it's very comfortable, but absolutely nothing to see but the inside hull of the fuselage with one port hole near the door.

BS: *I've done it a number of times. What year was this?*
RM: '62.

BS: OK.

RM: March of '62.

BS: OK, I'm listening.

RM: We had some interesting talks on the flight back, though, because this was the 50th anniversary of the discovery of the South Pole and there were lots of VIPS going back and forth from McMurdo to the Pole Station. And the day the celebration was scheduled, the Scientific Officer in the Embassy at New Zealand, who was the first Boy Scout to winter-over at South Pole, Paul Siple, was one of the honored guests. The Baron de Gerlache of Belgium, whose father was one of the more important explorers in the Antarctic in the days of discovery. He was the first man to winter over in 1998, on the Atlantic side. And Gordon DeQ. Robin from Britain was along and they were the principals, along with Admiral Tyree, who, at a small dinner at the Pole Station, did some talking and we went outside when the sun was right and took a few pictures and . . . I can't recall his name, but he wintered-over on the Palmer Peninsula side - a Norwegian whose wife is a member of the Antarctic Society. Do you recall her name?

BS: Was it one of Amundsen's men?

RM: No.

BS: No, I don't.
RM: They nailed him into his quarters because he was such a bad guy.

BS: Oh, Finn Ronne.

RM: Yes, Finn Ronne was along too, and he convinced me if I would run around the wrong way of the circulation of the earth at the South Pole Station, I would live for an extra year for each time I ran around the South Pole the wrong way. I felt a lot like wrong-way Corrigan, but I did it and I had an enjoyable three or four circuits around the Pole and wound up panting at 9,000 ft. I found out that I wasn't in such good physical shape. That was back before we headed for Christchurch.

BS: That was equivalent to 11,000 ft, you know, because the pressure altitude is less there.

RM: Yeah. And when we got to Travis Air Force Base, the Admiral says, "You're family lives in Washington." And I said, "Yeah." And he said, "Well, we'll let you go here and you know how to get a travel plane in and get tickets and so on. And you fly on to Washington. We're going to fly up and meet with the Seabee Command at Quonset Point, and discuss what we want you to do while you're there."

(100)

And I said, "Well, do you need me to be along?" And he said, "No, after you get back, we'll get together and we can go over it and make any changes you think necessary." And he said, "We're going to base it on what the group that you took into the Antarctic with us in September. We're going to want to go through how you set up a training program.
How you set up your corps of experts to go and visit every station whenever it was necessary, and your relationship with the Construction Battalion and Martin-Marietta who was the nuclear power plant people." And I said, "OK, it's all in the book." And I bailed out and flew directly from San Francisco to Washington. I got a flight out that night and arrived in Washington at about 6:30 in the morning, really pooped and Lois was there waiting for me. I had ten days and we renewed our relationships and she said, "I hate it when you're away and you come back and all of a sudden I'm no longer the master of my own destiny and you take over the accounting and everything and it makes me feel bad." But, that lasted about 10 minutes. And after that, I went up to Davisville, Rhode Island. We investigated the way the things that we had done the previous summer in training and where we sent our people for training and we set up a relationship between CASA and the mobile construction battalions that were tasked to do construction - the Deepfreeze '63 and '64. And the Seabees went through what the staff was planning and one of the big things was discussions and drawings and brainstorming about building a geodesic dome at the South Pole.

BS: That early, huh? That was '62. Ten years before it was built that we began to plan to build the South Pole Dome?

RM: Huh?

BS: That was 10 years before the dome was built?

RM: Yeah. And at the same time, when the ship building folks were looking into, with the National Science Foundation, looking into the building of the first ice-strengthened research ship that was going to be based at Palmer Station. During Deepfreeze '62, was when we established Palmer Station. And in it's very beginnings, it was a very minimal
station and we were worried during the summer of '62, that we would have to fly emergency in, but it never happened. The Officer in Charge and the physician there were a couple of good solid citizens.

BS: *Who were they?*

RM: I don't remember their names.

BS: *Was Dusty Blades involved then? Or was that the next year?*

RM: Next year, I think he went down in '63.

BS: *OK.*

(150)

RM: And one of the big things that we did while in Davisville, we tried to fold VX-6 and CASA at Davisville, and they had a change of command that summer up there and Dee Greenwell, who became the Commanding Officer, and I got together and we said, "How can we make this so that when our guys get down on the Ice, they're not meeting themselves for the first time?" And he says, "Well, the first thing we can do is have companion briefings whenever the staff visits. And we can have briefings, you and I can set up briefings of our people in the auditorium at Quonset Point and we'll just have a field day getting it ready and talk about what current stations look like, what their capabilities are, what the next thing we're going to have to do, what seems to be the future of the program." And so we set up a series of every two weeks, one morning a briefing at the auditorium at the Naval Air Station Quonset Point.
BS:  *Now, you were living at Quonset?*

RM:  Yeah, living in the BOQ.

BS:  *OK, and your family was in Washington?*

RM:  Yeah. And every Saturday morning at the crack of 4:00, I'd start back for Washington, and so I'd get back Monday morning, about 9:00 AM. And Lois would come up for a week once in a while, just to ding around whenever there was something going on. And we tried to set up, well VXE-6 and CASA, at that time, when people started coming on board, the new people for our outfit, we started to set them up as a separate mission-oriented organization like a battalion and we went through all of the military things and set it up so everybody knew who and where each person sat in the hierarchy. And then we married that with the same thing that went on in VX-6, so that when the people met at Quonset Point, there were already some icebreaking things that had occurred. One of the things was that the heavy equipment operators that might be working at Williams Field all worked together with plane captains and crew members, and we cross-trained plane captains and crew members and the work force that addressed the preparation of the runways and all of that stuff, so that it wasn't unusual every day when there were people out working with the D-8s and D-9s and the D-4s that were available at Davisville, that they would be running them back and forth and participating in the maintenance and our guys were over working with the mechanics, working with the guys at VX-6.

BS:  *So they'd know not to leave equipment on the runway when the planes were landing and taking off.*
RM: And one of the big things was making sure that the berms on the runways were properly groomed on a daily basis so that we didn't have loose snow blowing across the ice-runway, or ski-way.

(200)

And it worked out very well and when the flag came up to look and see what was going on, we were treated separately because the Admiral inspected VX-6 and talked to them and then he'd come over the next couple of days and spend a couple of days with us.

Now, along with this, we were . . . the Alberta Trailer Company was building our quarters that were put into the snow, so we had a training program where all of the people who were going to be at stations that had Alberta Trailer Company in the snow buildings, would go there and participate in the actual construction on the line of the buildings, installing the water works and that whole thing. And we had a Master Chief Petty Officer with the construction people who would attend with them and then this Master Chief became the person at McMurdo who had a team of people, plumbers - the whole nine yards. I think 5 - the chief and four members, which were technically the best we had - would go to each station and work on those things. We had one of those for the deployment and we had the same kind of a training program for the radio people and the electronics technicians, so that we had these people available to go to any station at any time when weather permitted the C-130s to take them in, to do an overview and a review and a repair and we started a preventive maintenance program with highly trained specialists. We had a complete radio station at the Seabee Center where all of the radio men would set circuits and be connected with Antarctic stations and be on the circuits as a daughter station.
BS: Yes.

RM: And we had operators, a preventative operator maintenance gang, and we had a preventative maintenance electronics gang who were based in McMurdo during the summer. Now, the only person who went back to Davisville with me was the Operations Officer.

BS: So, he didn't winter-over either, huh?

RM: No, he wintered-over. He came out at mid-winter fly-in. That's when he came out.

BS: Oh, you had a mid-winter fly-in in '62?

RM: Yes, which was the first one, I think. And it was because of an emergency at Byrd Station.

BS: OK.

RM: As I recall, and maybe Arped didn't show up until the next spring. In any case, then the Chief of the winter-over party became the Officer in Charge of McMurdo Station and when he reported, he was my Executive Officer (XO).

BS: And his name was Arped?

RM: No, no. Arped only was there . . .

BS: I gotcha. And your XO was, what was his name?
RM: CDR Soyat.

BS: Good!

(250)

RM: He was - [there was a big tall drink of water and he would jump from the duty with the Greek Navy in Insirlick] In any case, he ran a very great show in his winter-over time and he was there when we built up each one of the teams at Davisville, Rhode Island, and when he came in, he looked around and he says, "Well, do you mind if I improve it?" And I said, "No." And he really got . . . he saw the value of this kind of training for all of his people and he broadened it to include all of the cooks and the bakers and people in the food service arena. And we sent them to the full range of military cooking schools and baking schools - food preparation schools. And after that, we made a deal with the Providence Hilton that they would go to work in their kitchens on a rotating basis and they managed the kitchen and the dining rooms at the Hilton in Providence.

BS: Oh, that's neat. They learned some classy cooking, I imagine.

RM: Oh, yeah.

BS: That paid off for the troops later on.

RM: Oh, I'll say. And he was the one that brought Hilton along the line and he was sort of a Renaissance kind of a guy in the cooking arena. And he really was interested in making sure that the guys got involved in it. When I got back to Davisville, the Seabee
Center, I made myself available to the Commander of the Seabee Center. I asked if there was any way they could use our people and any of my officers on their staffs, just let me know and we'd make them available. We wanted to make sure - one of the things the staff wanted was we wanted to make sure there was a solid interaction at Davisville between all of the Seabee people who were going to go down and do the construction work and they were tied right into our supply system. And, in fact, they did a great deal of it because we only had one or two people at Davisville, until mid-summer.

(300)

BS:  *Now this is the group that was going to winter-over in ’63, I take it.*

RM: Yeah. And the construction gang would be down there in ’62-’63.

BS:  *Yes. Gotcha.*

RM: And so, then this caused our gang, for the first time, to be folded into all of the athletic activities that were going on between CBC and CB-1 and Quonset Point VX-6 and Quonset Point itself, the Naval Air Station, so there was a very active and complete athletic program. And the dentist who came in, Dr. Ron Koss, was a great softball fan and a very fine softball player, so he put together a crackerjack softball team and we had an enlisted man that could throw that ball so fast, it looked like a tennis ball. And we won the championship that year, which was great. And our biggest win was when we beat CB Center because they were bragging about how good they were at the end of the season. We had a playoff with them and that's when we won all the cups. I don't know whether that was a good thing or not, but it was really a joy.
When I was up there, one of the things that I did that the people in the command enjoyed very much - I went down to the automobile licensing bureau. I had a Chevrolet convertible and I got one of those arrogant license plates and I had CASA license plates, and put them on the car. When I drove on the base the first time, the guys whooped and hollered. And so, little things like that gave us an identity and winning the softball championship and those kind of things, I found, were really great and wonderful things to keep the people tied together and working their butts off in the training program. We sent our mechanics to Caterpillar and Caterpillar evaluated each one, identified who they thought the leader should be, and whether they were going to be able to handle the equipment. Caterpillar had records of all of the equipment we had at each station, so that it built up a strong relationship. When we called, they would send somebody right away.

BS: *Was this Caterpillar in Peoria?*

RM: Yeah.

BS: *That's neat. That's the main headquarters with the company.*

(350)

RM: And they would have people come down from the company and spend a week or two with our guys out in the field and Ansel Fire Company, they were the people who we were working with on dry chemical firefighting materials which really work in that kind of weather and will not flow into the snow and spread under the snow and pop up behind us and all that kind of stuff. And the man who was tied in with that was their representative in Boston, and he came down once a week and demonstrated the use of dry chemicals and the care of it. And he participated in the designing of the - putting the
purple K domes or the dry chemical domes on the pressure barrels on a track vehicle to be at Williams Field. And at the helicopter pad in town, they were sled mounted and towed. But, we didn't think that was fast enough at Willy, so that's when we learned that they couldn't sit. They had to be moved every once in a while just to shake the powder up so they wouldn't cake. And I think they found a chemical that wouldn't do that. And the Alberta Trailer Company had people come and go through with our construction people. And we had the Ansel Firefighting, we had all of the people who were responsible for maintaining and caring for and using the dry chemical - the firefighters, whatever their other rates were, were sent to the Ansel School just outside of Milwaukee. And these things built a corps of interaction that created some kind of envy. Which school was the best? The cooks won because when the guys would go up to the Hilton and here were these guys taking care of them and they would get really good treatment, that's the school to go to. And it was repetitive, because the following summer I had to do it again, and the Deepfreeze, '62 - that was September, October of '61, when we went down - was the first time that we used these people to see how the training worked. And that was the time that they were Martin-Marietta and Seabee I, MCB-1, was putting in the nuclear power plant. The year before, the summer before, '60-'61, they dug the hole into which the nuclear power plant was going to go.

(400)

And they came and prepared the hole, got it ready, the power plant came in on the Arneb, and it was delivered up to the site, and then they started the installation.

BS:  *Now, which year did the Arneb bring the plant down?*

RM:  '61-'62.
BS: *Your first year there or second year?*

RM: First year fall of '61, because I was back in Davisville, in the summer of '62, when they told us they had come on line.

BS: *OK. And so they came on in the winter, huh? In their Antarctic winter, they finally came on line?*

RM: Well, it was a test run, all right. And then they came on line just before we got there in September, '62.

BS: *Yeah, OK.*

RM: So, that when the Admiral arrived, we had one leg of the system being powered by nuclear power and a companion diesel electric was on the side, supporting him. Strange thing happened - we had to have fresh distilled water for the power plant and before it was built, we had a 10,000 gallon specially built bladder installed up in a Quonset - the longest Quonset I ever saw - at a constant temperature, and after they got all the water made and desalinated, and . . . it became the purest water on the Antarctic continent, I guess. And one of the kids got mad and went up at about 3 o'clock one morning and shut the heaters off and we wound up with a 10,000 lb. ice cube. And MCB-1, who was responsible, devised a system to melt the ice without damaging anything. And it worked. And that did not delay in any way the installation of the system. We got the water back when it was needed.
Fortunately, it was a problem for MCB-1, and they handled the disciplinary action on that young man.

BS: *It's interesting. We had some vandalism periodically throughout winters. The psychiatrists talked about it. You know, the isolation and the darkness had complications on mental fatigue, etc., when guys who ordinarily wouldn't do that type stuff, did it in the winter when it was dark.*

RM: Yeah. And, you know, when we went back down, the way it was set up, and because we had a station at Davisville, our guys would talk back and forth, particularly the senior members of the winter-over team that were being trained, would talk quite a bit and there was available time for them to do so on the radio and you understand, it wasn't talk. This was key. They used speed keys, so they had to talk to the radioman who would convert it into Morse and send it off and it would be received, written, given to the guy and then they would go back and forth this way. And they developed all kinds of codes and systems so that they could shorten the length of transmission time and receiving time. So, there was interaction between the people who were on the Ice and the people who were trained to relieve them. The builder at Pole Station had access to the builder who was going to relieve him the next year. And that made the training a little bit more important to the people at Davisville, and it kept the guys on the Ice less isolated and more in contact with the outside world, which was a good thing.

BS: *So, you were taking care of the guys on the Ice from Davisville.*

(500)
RM: This was something that those men decided that, "Hey look, if we're going to be doing this, how about talking to them?" It was make the facilities available for them to do these things.

BS: *I see. You didn't have voice communication, so . . .*

RM: Only way we could get voice was using Top Hand, and we had to go through the Pentagon to get that. And we figured out a way to do it with Morse code. So, a lot of things evolved - serendipity is a very wonderful thing because pretty soon we got radiomen helping builders and mechanics and equipment operators and they're talking together, trying to get a message to a guy who's a hemisphere away? And the tying together of these two communities who were going to relieve one another was, I think, a plus.

BS: *Oh, absolutely. So, this was in Davisville, in the summer - your summer, their winter.*

RM: And then, Lou Timberlake was our Public Works Officer down there and we were trying to get in on the first of September, rather than the 1st of October. Admiral Tyree, his Operations Officer, who was a salvage man, a Commander, convinced him that we should be able to get the runway cleared in August and early September. We should be able to make the first landing on the 10th of September on the ice in the bay. And Lou Timberlake convinced me that we ought to take a try at it. And we tried it. But, we never fully understood the weather in August, like the month of August and early September. And we had downslope blizzards and all kinds of terrible weather conditions, but on the 10th, they had a 7,500 long ski-way built.
BS: *This was a ski-way, was it, not an ice runway?*

RM: An ice runway, reconstituted ice runway.

BS: *What do you mean by reconstituted ice?*

RM: Well, they clear it down to bare ice and then they take a device just like a harrow and run it back and forth and this crunches all of about an inch and a half of the top surface of the ice into really tiny pieces and then it refreezes and it has a little bit of a quality like concrete does on top. A little bit of a friction enhancer, so that when the wheels go down, you can use the brakes. You don't slide. You're familiar with that.

BS: *Yes, I just want to explain it for the tape.*

RM: OK. And we got in early, but not significantly early, but the price to the equipment was horrendous and fortunately, we had a trained crew who knew every nut and bolt that was there to come in and work with the existing crew to get us back on the step again, and I understand that was the only time that they tried to do that. And they went back to October.

BS: *Yeah. They do it in August now. Well, they did in my day, '82-'85. We went in in August every year and they're still doing it.*

RM: On ice?
BS: Yes. In fact, they try to make it on sunrise, which is August 19th.

RM: We were not prepared for it.

BS: Well, there is different equipment from when I was there in '67 because it was more capable of handling the lower temperatures.

RM: One of the things we discovered was, going back and forth to Williams Field, that the oil pan and the wiper holes in the crank shafts froze up. The snow beneath was well below zero causing those wiper channels to freeze up.

BS: Did you fly in on that flight in September?

RM: No.

BS: You didn't. OK.

(End of Tape 2 - Side B)

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(Begin Tape 3 - Side A)

(000)
BS: This is Tape 3 of the Commander Ronald McGregor interview. This portion of the interview is by telephone between CDR McGregor at his home in Washington, DC and Capt Shoemaker's home in North Bend, Oregon. The date is 21 February 2002. OK, Ron, we're discussing Win-fly, 1962.

RM: So, we spent a long time in Christchurch, waiting for things to get better. One of the nice things about it was that when I got ready to get off the airplane, I noticed that nothing was happening and pretty soon the Chief of Staff, Captain Schultz, came back and said, "Ron, you have to get off first." And I said, "I don't think so." And he said, "I think so. The Admiral has directed you to disembark first." And when I hit the door of the aircraft as we were disembarking at Christchurch, they had a New Zealand military pipe band to play "Scotland ____" as I came down the gangway and set foot in New Zealand, for the second time.

BS: That was in 1962, right? In September, sometime?

RM: Yeah, in September.

BS: That's neat. Well, you had a military unit there, too.

RM: Yeah. The National Science Foundation had people there and by that time, VX-6 had most of the squadron down, getting ready to go in. And they had a lot of training flights taking the Admiral down to Dunedin where the tin-can was ported that was going to be the station ship. Did they (CTF-4) have a destroyer (DD) based in Dunedin when you were there?
BS: *In the ’60s, they did. We cut it out somewhere between the ’60 and the ’80s.*

*Navigation was better. We had inertial by then.*

RM: Yeah. I guess it was the most uncomfortable tour of sea duty that anybody on a tin-can (a destroyer) ever had. However, I wasn't on it, so I don't know. And when we finally got in, I think it was October 3rd, our gang got in. VX-6 took the equipment operators on their first go-in flights, but the majority of the CASA people did not go in until the 3rd of October. It was great to watch the training and the communications systems that we had developed to keep in touch with the people who were working and wintering-over was just great because you could see them - the new people - just melding right in with the people that were there. The winter-over party and the CASA group and the Mobile Construction Battalion (MCB) people who were going down to build had already married before they ever left Davisville, so there was a lot of interaction there. Now, this big slug of people comes in and they are friends. They are not new people. So, the changeover went very well and very quickly.

Then, in that year, we set up a deal where deserving enlisted people were given an opportunity to go up to Christchurch on a flight and return, giving them a couple of days of R-and-R in New Zealand, and this had to be for something extraordinary. Can we go back to ’62?

BS: *Sure.*

RM: I don't recall whether we talked about the longest garden hose in the world?

BS: *No.*

(50)
RM: OK. 1962 was kind of a bad ice year. And when the tankers came in, they couldn't break the ice to get us into Hut Point to transfer fuel from the tankers into the fuel tanks at McMurdo, so we had about a 3-1/2 mile run from where the tankers could tie-up to the ice securely and start off-loading. So, we had to scurry around and find 3-1/2 miles of rubber hose in sections of, I think they're 50 feet - I don't recall the exact numbers. I know that they carried 57 gallons of gas in each one. And we had to hook up to the systems on the ship and we got this thing going and everything was going great and it was going to take a long time to pump the tanker's fuel from the tanker, 3-1/2 miles over the ice in a rubber hose. I think it was 3-1/2 inches in diameter all the way into the tanks at McMurdo. And shipboard high pressure fuel pumps were being used to keep it flowing and there were booster pumps periodically to boost it back up in, I think they were about 3/4s of a mile apart. And this thing got going and everything was going great and the fuel was flowing and one night, about 3:30 or quarter to 4:00, as I recall, somebody came in to my bedroom and said, "Commander, we've got a problem." And I said, "What's the problem." And he says, "I can't tell you, but get your robe on and something warm and we'll stand at the door and you can see it." And I looked out over the back of the hut that I was dwelling in and looked toward Hut Point and there was a garden hose, spraying fuel all the way for 3-1/2 miles long.

BS: *It just split?*

RM: No. We found that there was another guy who flipped his cool, I guess. He was on a Weasel and he drove a sinesoidal wave from Hut Point all the way down the hose line, across each section of the hose and it broke in those sections. So, each hose was pumping gas.
BS: *What kind of gas? Av gas?*

RM: I think it was fuel oil at that time. Diesel. That was the stuff that we were pumping. And we quick got on the phone and called the ship and said, "Shut your power off. The hoses are leaking." And the guys says, "We know, we're shutting the pumps off right now." And there were only three sections of the hose line that didn't have a cut and that young man was sent to Christchurch.

BS: *Was he a winter-over or was he one of the new guys?*

RM: It was one of the local guys.

BS: *He wanted to get off the Ice that bad?*

RM: I guess so. I don't know what happened to him. His records were up in Christchurch, in any case.

BS: *What did he drive over it with? A sled or . . . ?*

RM: A Weasel.

BS: *Oh, I see, so the tracks cut it up.*

RM: Yeah. And evidently he was going quite fast because there were skid marks where he made the turns to get on the line. But, we had a hell of a job cleaning that up. And we never did get it all out of the ice.
BS:  *This was in the ’63 season. This was what time of year?*

RM:  1962. I think it was January, just after Christmas.

BS:  *Well, that's when the tankers come, yeah.*

RM:  And so we had to scurry around and find fuel hoses to do it again and run a parallel line. Then we had to package all of the damaged hose up and send it up to New Zealand to get it off the island. It was a hell of a maneuver and clearing it up was even worse. We used front end loaders to do most of it.

BS:  *You scraped the fuel out of the ice.*

RM:  Yeah.

BS:  *You didn't let it drain through or just leave it?*

RM:  We tried not to. And that was about a 6 day effort. And then we found we were not getting anything, so we left it alone. And it was about the same time that the New Zealanders came over to thank us for our garbage heap because they were able to rebuild all of their Weasels from our trash heap out on the ice. So, a little plus and a lot of minus in that effort. That was in January of ’62.

And back to coming in in 1963. Everything went really well. But, since the Assignment Officer saw new four-striper job in CASA and they saw it being up at Davisville, it became attractive for people who wanted to volunteer to do it of the rank of
Captain. And my relief was a Captain. He relieved me in November of ’63. And it was a permanent change of station for me. I was ordered to Washington, DC, to relieve the Polar Operations Officer on CNO staff and that I did in the first part of December in 1963.

BS: *Who was the Captain that relieved you?*

RM: Capt. James Elliott.

BS: *Wasn’t Capt. Don Bursik, was it?*

RM: No. This was a surface ship man. And he was quite senior. I don't know whether he thought he was going to make two stars out of it or fleet up to Commander of Task Force 43 or not. Anyway, he relieved me. Change of command was great. He was full of praise for the way everybody was heaving around before I left.

BS: *So, that ended your tour the middle of the season, huh?*

RM: Yep. Well, the Polar Operations Officer was retiring on the first of January and they needed somebody and this Captain had volunteered and the Assignment Officer says, "Whoops, maybe we can get a Rear Admiral out of this." And I don't know if that's what they thought. But, in any case, I was relieved. Admiral Reedy was the Task Force Commander. His Chief of Staff was still Captain Schultz when I left.

BS: *When did Reedy relieve Tyree? It was during your term, I take it.*

RM: Yeah, it was in the States and it was in the fall of ’62.
RM: '63.

BS: Yeah, OK.

RM: I used to wear a go-to-hell hat when Tyree was down there - you know that Scotch fore-and-aft hat with the braid hanging out the back and the red button in the center and the McGregor plaid on the edges?

BS: Yes.

RM: And Admiral Tyree thought that was great. And he said, "You surely are identified." And Admiral Reedy saw it and the first thing he did after he got the change of command, he said, "Ron, I don't want you to wear that hat any more. You'll wear the uniform of the day."

It was interesting when I moved into the Pentagon, because at that time, money was pretty tight - especially ship-building money - and the Navy was trying to get more nuclear powered carriers, bigger ones and to go forward and ask for money for . . . we could never get a polar proposal past the in-house Navy ship requirements branch for icebreakers.

BS: You worked in that section in the Pentagon?
RM: I was the Polar Operations Officer.

BS: *Oh, so after CASA, you took over what position in the Pentagon?*

RM: Polar Operations Office.

BS: *As Commander of the Polar Operations Office or Head of the Polar Operations Office?*

RM: There was only one guy, one secretary.

BS: *As the Polar Operations Officer, huh?*

RM: Yeah. And we worked directly for . . . I don't remember his name.

BS: *Dick Black?*

RM: Oh, no. He was long gone by then. Admiral Strain was our boss. Three star, Admiral Strain. And we were sort of one of those boxes off to the side that they didn't know what to do with, but they had to worry about us.

BS: *What was Strain's job?*

RM: He was VCNO for Operations.

BS: *OK. OP-03 then.*
RM: Yeah. And then there was a Rear Admiral Foley under him and I reported directly to him. He was very busy about Viet Nam.

BS: I see. What did your work involve then? Now, this is . . . here you are. You report in about December of '63.

RM: Yeah.

BS: And your job involved what? You mentioned acquiring icebreakers or attempting to.

RM: Making sure that the requirements that were needed by the staff were met, particularly in operations scheduling and making sure that some guy, Assistant SecNav or SecNav for Treaty affairs and arms control didn't inadvertently sabotage the new Treaty. And in the office with me was a Coast Guard Commander whose name I don't recall, and we together wrote up a position paper. We found out that the national policy for icebreakers was vested in the Coast Guard and we used that as a basis to write a paper suggesting to the CNO and thence to the DOD and to the Coast Guard to transfer icebreakers totally to the Coast Guard.

(200)

This Coast Guard commander and I had taken this all through the operations people to make sure that we had all of the necessary nuts and bolts covered. And we made one recommendation - that the funding for shipbuilding of operations be vested in the Coast Guard. And we met with the Coast Guard and the Navy met with the Assistant Secretaries of the Armed Services. We met with the Chiefs of Staff and then we went to DOD and everybody agreed with what we had proposed. And then in '64, I think, the
transfer of responsibility for new icebreaker construction was transferred to the Coast Guard.

BS: So, that's when the Coast Guard began to take over all of the icebreakers.

RM: Yeah. Well, they didn't even know that they were responsible for it. They thought it was the Navy's responsibility and because they had the Great Lakes, they thought that was their only play. And when we started looking into the policy and responsibilities, that's where we found this nugget. Whether it was good or not, I don't know. But, it happened. Now, at the same time, I was also very closely tied in with . . . Task Force 43 was, if I needed staffing, those were the guys who did it. Roy Schultz was still the Chief of Staff under Reedy and I was a good pair of eyes and ears for the staff on things Antarctic. Roy used to give me a call probably once every couple of days, and we'd hash over what had gone on. And as I was the representative to the National Science Foundation from CNO, it was bucked down from Assistant SecNav to Strain's office and Strain bucked it to me and I attended all of the meetings.

BS: So, you were responsible for coordination with NSF.

RM: That's right.

BS: But, you worked for Ops, basically.

RM: OPS-03, yeah. But, most of my time was spent in SecNav's bailiwick with the arms control guy. And that's where we launched the policy thing about icebreaker construction.
BS: *I just realized something. We did the first inspection in 1963 down there under Reedy, of the Russian stations.*

RM: That's right. That's also the time when Reedy and Dick Dickerson made that Africa to McMurdo flight. *(Note - see CDR Richard Dickerson interview).*

BS: *Right. So, you knew Dick on the Ice.*

RM: Oh yeah. He was in VX-6.

(250)

BS: *Oh yeah, I know. That's where he became the Herc King, more or less. Tell me about that inspection. Were you down there when they made that inspection? They flew over to Vostok and then Mirny?*

RM: Yeah. I was still on for it. At that one, I remember, we had a meeting at State Department and we were talking about arms control and we were getting ready for the Treaty and somebody mentioned that on a personal visit to the Chilean station, and at that time Chile and Argentina were still feisty about land down there - and one of the fellas said, "Well, the only armament that we know of down in Antarctica is a .45 holstered pistol that the Commanding Officer of the Chilean Station wears all the time." And dumb me, I said, "Well, if no one else has a gun, guess who's in control?" And that broke that meeting up. How are you going to tell Chile to take a revolver off a guy's hip. I don't know. Anyway, the association with NSF got me over to the second consultative meeting *(Note: This was the second meeting of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties)* in Belgium, in Brussels.
BS:  *How did that go?*

RM: Where the principal item was protection of pinnipeds and not harvesting them off the Ice and all of that kind of stuff. And it was cranked in as an addendum to the Treaty and enlarged and became part of one of the major environmental protection documents in the Antarctic Treaty. *(Note: This was the Protection of Antarctic Flora and Fauna Agreement).*

BS:  *Ron, I want to go back to that first inspection. That was in the spring of '63. You were gone by then, or were you still on the Ice? Reedy went over and flew . . .*

RM: Now, when Reedy flew from Africa to McMurdo . . .

BS:  *That's not what I'm talking about. He flew from McMurdo to Vostok and then he flew . . .*

RM: That was when I was still CASA.

BS:  *OK. You were still CASA. That was my point. You didn't go on that flight.*

RM: No.

BS:  *OK. But you remember Reedy and the guys going.*

RM: Yeah, sure.
BS: State Department people came down?

RM: Yep.

BS: And who was the Chief inspector? Do you know?

RM: No. Don't remember.

BS: It was a very defining moment because we weren't sure the Russians would allow us to inspect.

RM: Well, I don't think they could do anything because in '61, when they inundated us at Thanksgiving and Christmas, I think they had to respond.

(300)

BS: That was not an official inspection, though. Inspections have to be announced and all that. You know they can't just show up. That's just the guys going back and forth.

RM: Well, that was I guess the first and only time they flew their new party to Vostok via McMurdo.

BS: The reason, probably, that they stopped and I'm reading between the lines, is that we went on those first inspections, on the orders from President Kennedy after the Cuban Missile Crisis because he said we need to get Russians used to unilateral inspections which they won't put into any of our other treaties. And that's how we got caught with our pants down in Cuba. So, he said inspect and everybody said the Treaty will fall apart and
he said it's not worth a damn unless we inspect. So, he ordered that inspection directly to Reedy. And you know Reedy got personal orders from Kennedy on that because Reedy was the Commanding Officer of Joe Kennedy, Jr., who got killed in World War II. Reedy was his commander and he was very tight with the Kennedy family.

RM: Oh, yeah.

BS: So, they wanted Reedy and I'm always trying to make this connection to find out just what Reedy was told by the Kennedys because he went to the White House and knew the President. Knew him since he was a young man. And he knew what he was talking about.

RM: Oh, yeah.

BS: But, you were there. You saw them pass by.

RM: And they challenged our right to put a nuclear power plant at McMurdo the year before. That's what that was all about.

BS: Yeah. Well, the Treaty's pretty specific about that. You can take nuclear stuff down. You just can't store it.

RM: It was interesting that when they dug the hole out, anything that was associated with nuclear power that was above the ambient noise level had to be taken out of Antarctica. You were down there at that time, weren't you?

BS: Um-hum
RM: And it was my understanding that they said, "Well, just to be on the safe side, we'll go so many milligals below the ambient noise and ship those rocks off to somewhere."

BS: Port Hueneme.

RM: Yeah. Parking lot

BS: Well, Jerry Brown, when he was governor, said he was going to stop that and he never did. The Navy just came and dumped them anyway and took them off to storage somewhere. But, you know what is interesting, Ron, is that finally one of the geologists down there who did work around the continent named Ed Zeller. He went around on the other side of Observation Hill and found out it was just as hot. It was natural background radiation.

(350)

RM: Yeah.

BS: They would have had to move the whole hill. So, that's when they stopped doing it. That hill was just as hot. I went up with Ed. He had his Geiger counter. Ed's job was to fly around the Antarctic looking for uranium deposits. So, he had the proper equipment to tell. So, anyway, we're getting sidetracked. OK. You went to the consultative meeting in Brussels and the subject was pinapeds. This was, what? 1964? '65?

RM: Yes.

BS: And what then?
RM: Then I got embroiled in the Inter-Agency Antarctic working group as Navy slave, I guess you'd call it. We reviewed everything that was going to be done in NSF and all of the agencies to make sure that we did not in any way violate the Treaty, or not only the Treaty, but to look at countries that were going to try to come in as new members to the Treaty. And that was really dull bureaucratic work, just read, read, read, read, read. And then you'd get into discussions with the representatives who were either putting money in or asking NSF or another agency to help them fund their programs down there. And I think, perhaps, that it was a good program and it served for an early Treaty, it served the Treaty well because it kept, for the United States, it kept all the agencies that were involved and some not involved, and a good many universities apprised on an annual basis of what was going on.

BS: *Under the auspices of the Treaty, then.*

RM: Yeah, yeah. State Department drove it. And I think most of it all was driven, really, by Tom Jones over at the National Science Foundation. At that time, he was Antarctic Programs.

BS: *But, he didn't want to have it over there at NSF because he'd get a conflict of interest since they were driving the field work. Well, it sounds like a good program.*

(400)

RM: Well, there were some things that were pretty naughty. When I was exposed to . . . when Admiral Tyree had to go up and justify budgets for the Navy to the Department of Interior, they were sort of our overseers, and I became very upset when I would hear
members of the House and the Senate or their staffs at the hearings - the sub-committee hearings - I did this for two springs, call members and the Assistant Secretaries of Defense and Assistant Secretaries of the Armed Services terrible names and I just became real feisty about it. Admiral Tyree leaned over and says, "Relax. There will be nothing in the record about the language that's being bandied around in here. All you do is nod your head and agree." And I think one of the greatest reliefs of not working on the Task Force was when I didn't have to go up to the House and the Senate to listen to those sub-committee meetings.

BS: *What's a for instance that they'd say? I mean would they just use bad language or . . . accuse?*


BS: *These are the kind of guys that are using their office to bully people.*

RM: Well, I guess it establishes some kind of a funny manhood, but I saw it as denigration of people who are busting their butt to do things for these guys.

BS: *And you didn't talk back to them because you were afraid of losing your budget.*

RM: I didn't get a chance to talk to them! The Navy blazed the way for the National Science Foundation because the Navy was used to testifying to this group. They had for a long time. This was the group that said, "Build a nuclear power plant. We don't care what the Treaty says." And that was before the Treaty had been ratified. The Treaty was ratified in '61.
RM: So, the National Science Foundation, they were in the same meetings with us, but they seldom did more than just submit comments. This was a committee that was really trying to reduce the budget of the overall Navy and one of the principal things was, "Why are we doing this when the Treaty says 'No Military'?"

RM: I know, but that's the way they came at it. So, their interpretation of that part of the Treaty was 'no military.'

RM: No, this was '63 and then I attended when I was at CNO, as a non-participant, I was invited by Admiral Reedy to attend. With Tyree, I was directly involved but, as a CNO person, I was not involved in the hearings at all. And then, the affair that brought the United States into conflict with Viet Nam, the attack on the destroyer, that was the time when I came up for transfer. And at that time or just before that, Ice Island T-3 sailed out of the Arctic Ocean, down Fram Strait.

BS: That was ARLIS-II.
RM: ARLIS II. And Max Britton was the Head of the Arctic Program at ONR and he asked me to go with them and make arrangements for icebreakers to take the people off the ice floe and take them into Iceland. So, I made noises to the Coast Guard and they responded with alacrity and Max Brewer and Max Britton and Ron McGregor went up to Iceland and talked to the Navy Commander up there and he made arrangements for transportation for our people from Iceland to the States and all that good stuff.

(500)

BS: Did you go on the icebreaker out to pick them up?

RM: Nope. I stayed as a communicator in the hole in Iceland.

BS: Were you still attached to CNO then?

RM: Yep. And when my name came up on the list, I was - this was after the ARLIS II evacuation - Max Britton asked that I be transferred to his program in ONR. And I agreed to it and I went over there right after that happened.

BS: OK.

RM: And then I worked in the Arctic program until I retired from active duty in '68. And then I was involved in Navy Arctic Programs after Max retired for 13 years as a civilian until '81.

BS: So, you worked in the Arctic Program beginning about '67?
RM: '66-'67.

BS: 1966, and you retired to . . .

RM: I retired in '68 from active duty and then I became a Navy civil servant and retired from that in '81.

BS: So, you took over, more or less, the desk that you had when I knew you in the Arctic Program.

RM: Yeah. That's when . . . who was the Chief of Naval Research Admiral who said, "I want my flag over Barrow?" It was at this time that an officer and CPO billet was established at the Naval Research Laboratory in Barrow, Alaska.

BS: Was this a little guy?

RM: Yeah. Little short guy.

BS: Yeah. That's the one I wrote a letter to saying that things aren't going right in Barrow when I'd gone up there as a student in '69. Admiral . . . well, I can't remember, but maybe I'll think of it. So, you retired from the Navy in 1968. How many years?

RM: 27.
BS: 27 years. And you started a new phase of polar service. We need to know a bit about that. What was your job at ONR while you were in uniform?

RM: I worked as a number two man to Dr. Britton, who was the section head at Arctic Programs. And it was a basic research program.

BS: And Dr. Max Britton was the Arctic Head.

RM: He was the head of the Arctic Program.

BS: OK. And what did that involve? I'm going to ask questions that you know I know the answers to, Ron, but they've got to go on the tape.

RM: We were dealing essentially through universities that would submit proposals to do basic research. The Arctic Institute of North America was the access to universities in Canada, so that jointly the Canadian Armed Forces and the United States Armed Forces could fund. That got us involved with the Canadian acoustic program and basic research and the US basic research in acoustics under ice, under water.

(600)

And through the ONR branch office in London, we made contact to use Thule, Greenland, with the Air Force under their treaty arrangements with Denmark and our own treaty agreements to use NORD.

(End of Tape 3 - Side A)
RM: We were then able to cover the Arctic Ocean from Barrow, from the most northerly station in Canada, from Alert, and from Thule Air Base and from NORD. We would step off to establish ice floe stations from those positions and it gave us an opportunity to look at the Eurasian continent and it's basin in the Arctic Ocean.

BS: *And this was acoustically as well as physical oceanography?*

RM: All under basic research. We were looking at can we use acoustic measurements to determine salinity - vertical salinity profiles - in the ocean to identify water masses and all this kind of thing. Sort of basic oceanography. I think you're more familiar with that than I am. And then the ice dynamics program, which we labored with in the very early stages trying to find out what ice is all about in a saline ocean and how it changes from saltwater ice to freshwater ice and the drainage process that occurs therein and how it affects the upper levels of the Arctic Ocean mass . . .

BS: *Called ice dynamics, huh?*

RM: Yeah. And it involves all of the principle sciences from the sun's initial radiation of the earth to the radiation from the heat of the core of the earth through the ridges and valleys in the ocean that are exposed. And the Arctic Program as it was in the Office of Naval Research physical sciences department was sort of like one of discovery and description and describing the events in the scientific arena that caused change or
provided a steady state. Now, along side of this program, within the experimental
development program in ONR and in other branches of the service, there were offices
that were particularly interested in Navy application of this ocean - the seventh ocean of
the world. And they would tag onto a basic research program that was unclassified to get
into the field to work within existing systems and improve upon them with what they
learned from making samples, description and working with and in the environment of
the Arctic Ocean.

BS: *This was guys like Beau Buck.*

RM: Yeah.

BS: *And Waldo Lyon, aboard subs as well as from ice stations.*

RM: Oh sure.

BS: *Is any of that unclassified now? Beau Buck's work?*

RM: Some of it is, but some of it is not.

BS: *Yeah, they keep it classified even though it's quite well known. So, you're kind of
stuck about talking about it and putting it on a tape and things like that. You can still be
in violation.*

(50)
RM: But, we learned a lot because during that period of time from 1968 . . . oh, earlier than '68, the Soviets had permanent year-round stations that they occupied and supplied and in the spring, they put out temporary stations that were established by their Arctic and Antarctic Institute - and various universities. They were established with total government support, mostly the Soviet Navy. And on occasion, we would, when they were within range, we would fly over and visit with them or they would fly over and visit with us. This happened maybe once a year. But, they had a network of listening stations or acoustic programs going on from 1968 until 1989.

BS: Soviets had listening stations floating around all over the place.

RM: Yeah.

BS: Did they have remote ones?

RM: No. Not that I know of.

BS: They had some guy sitting there with a tape recorder and listening, huh?

RM: Yeah.

BS: I'm surprised it came from the Arctic and the Antarctic Institute because that could kind of get them in violation on the Antarctic Treaty.

RM: Well, I think there's a wall between them.

B: Yeah, OK.
RM: You know, whatever it may be.

BS: *It's interesting because you know they may have had guys going from classified to unclassified programs back and forth. That's basically what I did, Ron. I was classified and I was out there with Beau Buck and ARLIS V, certainly when I was up at Barrow, and then I'd go back to Antarctica as the Commander.*

RM: But, one of the exciting things that we learned was they were doing work in extremely low frequencies and as you know, that requires a lot of power to drive it, but they did a lot of that in their spring stations. They'd use one of the year-round stations as a source and then tie them in with all of the temporary summer stations, or spring stations. So, whether it would vio . . . I never found out, I never took the time to learn whether it was valuable to them or not. I know that we were interested in it and on the black side, some things were done to do it and I was never cleared with a high enough clearance to get involved.

BS: *Did you know Dr. Igor Zotikov?*

RM: Yeah.

BS: *When he was down in Antarctica?*

RM: Yeah.

BS: *You did. So, he overlapped you down there then.*
BS: *It's quite interesting because he had an assignment at CRREL (Cold Regions Research and Engineering Laboratory) later on, you know. He had exchange duty at CRREL. And they had him going in and out. They forgot that he was a Russian and he just sort of had free run of the place. I don't think it hurt anything. People that know Igor said that it certainly didn't. But, he'd even have visitors, they used to check their badges and they'd just sort of wave Igor through. He tells a funny story about going through security. He had a couple of American Generals with him in the car and they got stopped at the gate and the guard said, "Who are these guys?" And Igor says, "Don't worry, I'll vouch for them." He still tells that story. Cold War's over!*

RM: The Office of Naval Research had a wonderful tie in with basic research being conducted in ice and snow by CRREL. Willy Weeks had four or five people working with him from Cornell, is it there?


RM: Dartmouth, yeah. And we were able to generate and fund about 6 or 7 Ph.D.s out of there that went to work for Willy later and then are now their own PIs at various universities, but that was really a good outfit to work with.

BS: *CRREL was.*
RM: Yeah, in basic unclassified research, they really loved to do it because it gave them access to a lot of good stuff in universities. Willy and Norbert Untersteiner, I think, were the mother and father of AIDJEX! Their ideas along with Joe Fletcher!

BS: Yeah. Joe Fletcher, certainly. It's interesting because Willy's my neighbor up here in Portland. I stay with him when I go through there. I have for a number of years now, so I see more of Willy than anybody else. So, I did a really thorough interview with him and he said he didn't have much to do with AIDJEX. He went out there to the main station at first, but then he had to go off to do other stuff.

RM: Yeah. In the early part . . .

BS: He pushed it, yeah.

RM: Then, those principle investigators, led by Untersteiner and Fletcher, working in ice at the time were the ones that drove the National Science Foundation into participating and without that, it wouldn't have happened.

BS: Well, Joe Fletcher, being the Head of the Office of Polar Programs when it came up, was a very big factor.

RM: Yeah!

BS: My son-in-law is there, you know, at NSF, so anyway . . . that's an aside. So Willy and Norbert played a big role.
RM: Yeah, and the Canadian Continental Shelf Program in the Arctic islands were big players.

BS: *Tell me about the Canadian Continental Shelf Program.*

RM: Well, that was a program that started in 1963 or '64, and it was to establish a base from which the Canadian government could be involved in petroleum exploration and be wise enough to make decisions on where and when and how to protect the environment from the slings and arrows of oil development.

(150)

And it started around the delta of the McKenzie River, and went north and east all the way up to Alert Air Force Base. They did a fantastic job! They would base ashore and do all of their lines ashore, go to an ice camp, refuel and come back. So, they had a go and come on every line that they ran. And they covered all of the oceanographic and ice sciences and bottom stuff and sub-bottom stuff that was available to them at the time.

BS: *Were the oil companies involved with them?*

RM: Oh, yeah. They were very tightly involved. The Canadian government is very tightly involved.

BS: *The head of the US government, in that respect?*

RM: Oh yeah. Sure.
BS:  *Interesting. I remember some of those guys were out in AIDJEX.*

RM:  Yeah, sure. But, I think that was because Dr. Fred Roots managed, through the Canadian Research Council, directing the Canadian Continental Shelf Program.

BS:  *The one that had been to Antarctica?*

RM:  Roots was a Canadian Member on the Academy of Sciences, Polar Research Board.

BS:  *Well, the guy I'm thinking of went to Antarctica on the joint group of British, Norwegians, and so he was on the Canadian . . .*

RM:  Fred Roots.

BS:  *Fred Roots, is that who you were trying to think of?*

RM:  Yes. Roots was with the Research Council.

BS:  *But, he was at the AIDJEX meetings that I went to.*

RM:  Oh yeah, sure. He would be playing the same kind of role that the principle National Science Foundation guy would because the research money came from the Research Council and it would go to the Continental Shelf if they had any research. What the heck was the guy's name on the Continental Shelf Program? His name was Dr. Russ Banks.

BS:  *I don't know. I only worked with Fred.*
RM: Maybe you remember the guy who was responsible for air support, getting the air contracts to support them in the Canadian geological survey. His name was Jack Hunt, Logistic Coordinator for Canadian Continental Shelf Program.

BS: *No, I don't remember.*

RM: In any case, I guess that was . . . the best marriage that ONR had with the National Science Foundation was the AIDJEX program. And that was because Joe Fletcher's attachment to NOAA and we had NOAA, at that time or before, no when he was with NOAA, they were providing meteorologists on T-3 and ARLIS II.

(200)

And that, of course, wound its way into history when one of Beau Buck's men killed the meteorologist out there on T-3.

BS: *The meteorologist came from where, you say?*

RM: NOAA.

BS: *NOAA, OK.*

RM: And then Joe Fletcher, when he went into the National Science Foundation, he was a good friend and well known to us and his Antarctic work with the Air Force with the Shakey Jakes (C-124 aircraft) dropping everything onto South Pole Station, so we knew Joe very well.
BS: Joe set those C-124s up?

RM: He flew 'em.

BS: Well, the guy that was in charge of that program was Chester McCarty - Major General Chester McCarty.

RM: Yeah. But, Joe Fletcher flew them.

BS: He was flying down there?

RM: Yeah.

BS: I didn't know that. The guy who flew over the first landing at South Pole is a guy named Allen and Chester McCarty, of course, he came down that first year himself and he had overflown the North Pole and within the same year, overflew the South Pole before the Navy landed there. Quite a showman. I knew him well because he died here. He was 98. And he's from Portland.

RM: Yeah..

BS: Joe Fletcher set up C-124s over Antarctica.

RM: Shakey Jake was a 25, wasn't it?

BS: They had C-124s down there.
RM: Yeah.

BS: *The Globemasters.*

RM: Yeah. Well, he was really . . . of course, in the Arctic, he was the guy who discovered T-3. So, there was no doubt, so that when he got to the National Science Foundation, he had been brainwashed by every university professor, I think, in the United States of America that worked in the Arctic - what short shrift the Arctic was getting compared to the Antarctic. And he says, "Well, we'll see what we can do." And I think that's what precipitated him going to the National Science Foundation when he did.

BS: Yeah.

RM: And it was the right time because it was now time to look at ice on the macro scale instead of the micro scale.

(250)

BS: He should have stayed. He only had a short term. What caused him to leave after only about three years? I mean, in that business, it takes that long to get your feet . . . get your programs well established.

RM: Well, he got AIDJEX (*Arctic Ice Dynamics Joint Experiment*) going and I think he thought, I'm not going to be able to do anything bigger or better than that, so I'd better move.
BS:  Well, the bad thing about it was there should have been follow-ons to AIDJEX and it took a long time till SHEBA (Surface Heat Budget of the Arctic Ocean). And the NSF withdrew back from the Arctic, so much so that when Wilkniss came, I was there and Wilkniss told me one day, that AIDJEX was a Navy program and he just dismissed it. So, I got Norbert to write up a paper and he and I bounced it back and forth and we threw it at him, told him how it all came about. He sat down and read it and he says, "I'll be damned. Well, we should be doing more stuff up there." Of course, he had to get his arms around the Antarctic first. But, he was a guy that could move stuff, whether you liked him or not. But, I don't think he ever really got things going in the Arctic. Certainly the guy who is pushing it is Carl Erb. Carl's pushing it like mad. Did you have to fight for funds for AIDJEX?

RM:  Well, the chair that Max occupied and the one that I filled in after he left was responsible for submitting a budget for the basic research Arctic Program. It was based upon what basic research the Navy thought it needed to meet it's requirements. And some of the most glorious rhetoric I have ever participated in was written to make Norbert Untersteiner and Willy Weeks and Knut Aagard and Beau Buck's program fit into that basic research on classified funding to maintain the program. And one of the things that sold it better than anything else was the fact that we had a career pattern for a graduate student to go through to Ph.D. and be gainfully employed in his field after graduation. That was the selling point in the Navy! Until they combined the Assistant for Research with the Assistant for Installations and then - I think it's installations now - then the research program got overwhelmed.
And when, in 1989, when the Russians collapsed, the black acoustic money and the unclassified basic research money dried up. And it's just starting to come back now.

BS: *The black money dried up?*

RM: To a great extent.

BS: *But, the open money...*

RM: It's down about 50%, and most of what happens now is that... the unclassified research, the Navy participates with NSF.

BS: *Yeah. Well, NSF's going big time. They're planning big things. Carl Erb kind of briefs me when I go there to visit my son-in-law, and I always run in and pay my respects.*

RM: See, when I was there, the Arctic Program had five people in it and now there's just one professional at ONR.

BS: *Who's that now?*

RM: He's a guy who used to be Assistant SecNav for RDT&E. He's a geologist. Can't think of his name. He was one of the guys who got his Ph.D. under the Arctic program. He did a lot of work on the river basins of the North Slope, under Dr. Jess Walker of LSU.

BS: *So, ONR is now one person, huh? How about funding-wise?*
RM: I don't know what the level of funding is now.

BS: *How did SpaWars fit in when they came along? What's SpaWars stand for?*

RM: Space Warfare.

BS: *Space Warfare.*

RM: Yeah. When they started tapping the Soviet undersea cables was when SpaWars came in. And they looked around to see where money was that they could legitimately take a shot at in the research area and that's when the Navy's black Arctic Program had it's genesis.

BS: *You mean active duty Navy, as opposed to black research.*

(350)

RM: Because the acoustic program in the Office of Naval Research had been on a stable funding level for about three years and they just didn't have enough to make it go. So, we were dragooned into passing anything of that program over to SpaWar and at that time, the Arctic, the ONR program, the basic research part of it was maintained to fund ice floe stations and logistics route and logistics to support the ice floe stations. And the bulk of the money was shifted from basic research, to experimental research funded by SpaWar to address the submarine community's desire and CIA's desire. Now, there were other black programs that were involved in it. You've read about them.

BS: *Yeah. So, ONR basically went to unclassified work supporting stations.*
RM: Well, the Arctic Program always did that.

BS:  *Yeah, I know. How did that change? I guess I should say, why did they shut down Barrow? I agreed they should shut down Barrow, but...*

RM: We couldn't afford it.

BS:  *Well, it was unnecessary because technology had overcome it. You could support ice station research from Fairbanks.*

RM: That's right.

BS:  *And live in a little bit more comfort. Better support.*

RM: And we couldn't afford to support the DEW line stations on a research budget. That just was not in the cards at all. And we tried a couple of times to go to installation support money and we could never shift over, out of the 61, 62 program to get additional money to support the ITT contract.

BS:  *Yeah.*

RM: So, we had to carve out money to support the ITT program when the Air Force bailed out and the University of Alaska maintained the laboratory.

BS:  *Tell me - I want to change this from work in the field so much to talk about NARL. NARL came along, theoretically, in the ’40s, but the build up of the main lab and what-*
have-you came along after that. You were there when they put all that together, were you not? I mean, you were with ONR.

(400)

RM: Well, for years, Max Britton had tried to get a laboratory built up there. And in the interim, he spent money to get the old Quonset hut kept alive, a library and all that kind of stuff, but in the meantime, he had been fighting a battle to get a military construction program to build a laboratory with support facilities combined in one building. Laboratories, mess hall, accommodations and offices. When the military construction program finally got going and it started to wend it's way through the approval processes and the appropriation processes, everything was considered go except the mess hall and auditorium wing.

BS: That's because the Air Force had a mess hall?

RM: Yeah. They said you can live off the mess halls that are there and we're going to have to keep the airport open. Right after that the Air Force bailed out and we got the whole damn ball of wax.

BS: Yeah.

RM: We could have cut down the ITT program considerably if we hadn't had that. Plus the fact that we inherited from the Navy Petroleum Office all of the crap from the development of . . .

BS: Gas field.
RM: Yeah, Naval Petroleum Reserve No. 4. Anyway, did you ever go down to Umiat and take a look at that place?

BS: Oh, yeah.

RM: OK. I guess you got . . . were you there when they moved all that stuff out? No.

BS: Of Umiat, no.

RM: It had all gone by then.

BS: Yeah.

RM: OK. So, you didn't see it when it was at it's miserable best. Anyway, we finally got approval to build it and it was sort of like about a 5 year program. We had to build the base and get all the gravel and all that crap, complete and ready to go, put the pilings in and all that stuff. And then they had a big - it was the Cadillac of the north as far as laboratories were concerned on the shores of the Arctic Ocean. I don't know whether the Canadians have got a better one or not, but then it seemed that the researchers had been living off the lab at no cost for a lot of years and one of the senators wrote in to one of the appropriation acts that every program should pay it's logistics expenses as well as the research.

(450)
Well, when they came to us for money and they didn't have a logistics thing in, we said who's going to pay the logistics? "Well, you've been doing it all these years. Why don't you continue to do it?" "We can't. We have to charge you." So, we charged other agencies, other parts of the Navy, you know. There was between Max Britton and Dr. Lyon, there was a quid pro quo thing going on all the time that was . . . we had a door in to that laboratory and every once in a while, a peer reviewed paper would appear and for that, money was exchanged.

BS: *Somebody could go to jail for that.*

RM: Oh, no, this was third party, on track.

BS: *Well, I understand, but you have a university researcher up there getting free support from government that comes out of some other pocket.*

RM: No, this was a member of his staff. His science officer.

BS: *Who was this now? Who's the his? You say Max Brewer's staff?*

RM: Oh no, no, no. This was Waldo Lyons at the Arctic Submarine Laboratory in San Diego.

BS: *Oh, oh.*

RM: He did the geology of the Chukchi and wrote a couple of very good papers. So . . . we were able to hang on maybe for 6 years doing this, and finally, Admiral Owen, I guess it was, said, "Fellows, you can't continue to do this. You're stealing research dollars to
buy beans and bananas and you can't do it. And we're going to have to do something very drastic and there is no possibility to get new money with all of the money going to the Navy's stealth program," which I heard about through that, which was the submarines. And we've just got to do something.

(500)

Well, it precipitated two things. One was that the money that was supposed to support the stealth program in ONR was not big enough, so they put SpaWar in the position of driving the 6.2 program, experimental research in the Arctic Ocean, and that took our money - part of our money to do that - from the laboratory, not from the ITT contract. OK? And then it came to crunch time, so we started talking to the Department of Commerce, Department of Interior, and the State of Alaska because that was an airport and there were certain things that were available to them at cost and so on. But, we never could ever bring the money up to meet the requirements. SpaWars was directing the research that they wanted to move away from the Beaufort Basin into the Eurasian Basin - the Fram Strait area. So, that meant that now we had to logistically support Barrow and the ice stations out of Barrow and ice stations out of Thule and Nord, Greenland.

BS: Didn't make sense, did it.

RM: Well, we couldn't do both.

BS: I know.

RM: That was when, who was the guy? Were you up there when the Admiral spent a week at Barrow?
BS: *Well, it was after my time because the first guy that came up there was Admiral Geiger.*

RM: Yeah, Admiral Geiger.

BS: *Was that after I was relieved? Well, he didn't stay on. I was there for another 4 or 5 days after I was relieved.*

(550)

RM: In any case, he was the one that was our boss at that time. Although he never said that we should do it, he said, "We can't support the Air Force and the Department of Commerce and the Department of Interior to keep a safety runway for Barrow."

BS: *In the Office of Petroleum and Oil Shale Reserves. That's fine.*

RM: And he said, "They're not contributing anything and I think it's time that we started making a motion to find out who wants to take it. If no one wants to take it, then we have to take . . . quit supporting the DEW line station and it's air strip and supporting the Naval Arctic Research Laboratory at Barrow. And we went through . . .

BS: *Gnashing of teeth?*

RM: We went through . . . the first thing we had to do was to talk to the people that we were supporting - the agencies and, "What are you going to do about it?" "Well, we are not going to do anything about it. It's your station. You took it over and it's yours to do
with what you want." So, the next thing was to go to the Bureau of Land Management people in the Navy and say, "What are our options?" And their recommended options. They said, "There aren't many options. You either continue it on a reduced basis, which means you'll have to shut it down to air operations." "Well, we can't do that with the Air Force." And "Tough. You'll have to do it." And then, once you make the decision to return the land to the Bureau of Land Management, you must work with them. So, the Navy Land Management people, the property people and the Bureau of Land Management people got together and the Department of Interior, and the Navy Petroleum's Office, and the Navy Petroleum Office was out of it because it had been broken off from the Petroleum Reserve and made a Navy piece of property early in the 70s. And that's when the Air Force bailed out and so on. So, in the late 70s, most of our time was devoted to meetings, trying to engineer this transfer of the Naval Arctic Research Laboratory to someone.

BS: *Was this when Pet 4 was being transferred, too?*

RM: No, Pet 4 had been . . . No, no. Pet 4, that's another . . .

BS: *I know it wasn't linked to it. That was separate, but . . . I was just wondering*

(End of Tape 3 - Side B)

(Begin Tape 4 - Side A)

(000)
BS: This is a continuation of the McGregor interview by telephone with Brian Shoemaker on the 21st of February 2002. And we were just talking about the closing up of NARL - the Naval Arctic Research Laboratory. OK, you got it.

RM: And at the same time, we were making noises about transferring the property and the facility back to the Bureau of Land Management. We were looking for somebody or some activity that would be willing to take it over and it, being the station and the laboratory. And be willing to support the Air Force's small DEW line program on a reimbursable basis. And the land management was all of the strange ways in which property had been carved up and transferred from one agency of the government to another agency of the government and it became a very complex and difficult negotiation. And finally, it was resolved because the North Slope Borough became interested in the property to continue to use the laboratory to support Arctic research, but in addition, to become an educational center. Sort of like they were thinking of something like a community college, looking at those things environmental, peculiar to a community on the Arctic Ocean. And this was the status of the transfer when I retired from Navy Civil Service in 1981. And since that time, the North Slope Borough has been managing or shortly after that they took up management of the Arctic Research Laboratory Properties. And to the best of my knowledge, they are now the owners of that property. I don't know whether the Alaska Natives Act was amended to include that as part of the North Slope Borough or not, but they are the responsible agent to the Bureau of Land Management for the properties.

Anna Mae Weston was the contract officer for the Office of Naval Research and she was involved from the beginning on this land transfer from the Navy to whoever. And I have no other contact with her. So, all I know is that the North Slope Borough is now the manager and had agreed to take it over and they had made the laboratory a
functioning research center and education center on the North Slope. How's that grab you?

BS: *Yeah. Is Anna Mae still with ONR?*

RM: No, no. She retired about 4 years ago, and she went back to West Virginia.

BS: *She got family?*

(50)

RM: Well, she had two children and I don't know whether she remained - whether she and her husband are still together or not. But, the children are now adults.

BS: *Tell me, a field that I'm quite interested in is your opinion about using the natives to support research. How did that work out over your field of time you were there? You certainly were involved with a lot of them.*

RM: Well, first of all, their tolerance of Max Brewer was probably the most wonderful display of human ingenuity that I've ever known.

BS: *You say they tolerated him.*

RM: Well, their tolerance of his eccentricities, their patience to wait for days to talk to him, and the fact that they honored him because he was there and stayed there. When I was out on T-3, we were away from control and I found that the support that those guys gave us out on T-3 was great. And they never seemed to be affronted when you said, "Is
there something that I could help you with?" I made that mistake and I wound up changing tracks on a Weasel, which is a back-breaking job if ever there was one. Now, I never saw or was I exposed to how Hank Kutchel or Dr. Ken Hunkins or Beau Buck or Dr. Willy Weeks used the Eskimos in support of science. I saw them only in the logistics arena - managers of Caterpillar tractors repair, working on Caterpillar tractors, and things of that nature. And the one thing that I found that worried me was the fact that they sometimes got very intoxicated. I wasn't close enough to the community to know whether it was widespread or not, but it was enough that I talked about it with Max a number of times and with Max Britton. And both Britton and I felt that it was something that we had to deal with. But, we didn't know how - at least, I did not. So, we lived with it. When you looked at it over all, the guys that maintained the airplanes did a pretty fair job. When they were on the ice and there was some control exercised over liquor, alcohol, it seems to me that things ran pretty well. There, living on an ice floe station or an ice station is perhaps the most rigorous and without a doubt, the most risky of living conditions. I think, perhaps, there were times when things went awry that were unavoidable. I think the isolation sometimes gets to be so bad that people who normally can handle it, get forced into doing things that they don't want to do. And I think the principal example of that was when we had the murder on Ice Island T-3.

(100)

BS: OK, you were talking about natives in the support of science. How about running the base? How'd they do running the base?

RM: Well, we had a contract with ITT, and before them, Holmes and Narver and they ran the base. Their level . . . their management was much more pervasive and better than the University of Alaska's management of the laboratory.


BS: I understand.

RM: I don't want to talk about Kelly and Denner.

BS: Anyway. . .I agree. ITT, if they hadn't been there, we would have been in big, big trouble. They were Holmes and Narver, I guess, before then up at Barrow. They ran the base!

RM: They just picked up the phone and said, "We've got to resupply T-3. Do it."

BS: Unfortunately, the University of Alaska got in the way.

RM: I don't know whether the University of Alaska had any kind of an agreement with them or not, but I know that it was one of the provisions of the ITT contract that they would provide messing facilities.

BS: Oh, they did a wonderful job. They did all kinds of things for me. They charged us for some of those things because I added them on the contract under my whatever clause it was. And the other great coordinator that was up there was Andy Heiberg.

RM: Yep.
BS: *During Operation AIDJEX, he did what the University of Alaska was supposed to be doing basically, bottom line.*

RM: Yep.

BS: *He did their work for them.*

RM: And young Beau Buck did it before him.

BS: *Yep.*

RM: I'm talked out, I'll tell you.

BS: *Yeah. Towards the ends of these interviews, you're kind of grasping at . . . oops, I forgot to tell you this and gee, let me go back and tell you that. And that's fine. Good interview!*

(End of Tape 4 - Side A)

End of Interview