Capt. John A. Svensson

15 October 2002

Brian Shoemaker

Interviewer

(Begin Side One – Tape 1A)

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BS: This is an oral interview with Captain John Svensson, 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 Shoemaker’s home in North Bend, Oregon, on the 15th of October, 2002.

Captain Svensson, or should we say John, it’s good to have you here and I appreciate your driving down from Seaside here to Coos Bay. Everybody that goes to the Ice has a background and that background really took him to the Ice, whether he admits it or not, if he happened to get selected or if he elected to go for some reason, usually that starts out somewhere back when you’re young. So, we’d like to know where you’re from, where you studied and basically, what took you off to the polar regions.

JS: OK. I was born in Southern California, beautiful Santa Monica, California. I spent my years living in the same house in Glendale, CA practically 26 years with my parents. I was gone when I was about 18. I took off to college when I was 18, and played college football two years when I was in college. I went to about six different colleges in Southern California before I went up to Humbolt State.
BS: Where’d you play football?

JS: Played football at a place called Cal Western which has changed it’s name probably every five years since I went there. I lettered for two years, broke my leg, and had to have an operation later in my life for that, but I won’t mention that in here. It has nothing to do with this.

When I was at Humbolt State, I was a fisheries major. I applied as a research biologist in the Gulf of Alaska, which paid about $400 a month at that time. And it was not exceptionally high pay, but they wrote me a very nice letter back and said they wanted someone with an MS in science, working on a PHD.

BS: What kind of science?

JS: Fisheries or biology. And I was a biology/fisheries major.

BS: Who wrote this letter?

JS: I believe it was Dr. Salow who is I was from the University of Washington. And I was just surprised at how low it paid. So, I dropped out of college. My grades really were not super good and I had some problems at home. My father had been sick, something like that. So, I worked in a machine shop for a while, got worried about the draft like most people, and joined the US Navy. Some Navy recruiter got me to join the US Navy Seabees reserve and so I went out to a couple of field camps with them and then went to two week boot camp. Tried to volunteer for the UDT, which is the current SEALS. At the same time, I was starting to climb mountains quite a bit. I was going to Yosemite for week-ends and climbing in the Sierra. I came back and got my Navy CM rating.

BS: What’s a CM rating?

JS: “Construction Man.” I believe it was construction man. And went on active duty. We were stuck in Port Hueneme, or some such place, and rode a ship over to Okinawa, and I spent my
weekends climbing and caving and doing stuff with the UDT members and with a unit in the Marine Recon.

**BS:** *Was that in Okinawa?*

**JS:** That was in Okinawa. We did a lot of caving, spelunking and I did a lot of climbing on the rock formations there. It was a kind of an interesting situation.

**BS:** *Did the Japanese climb?*

**JS:** When we stopped in Japan for a short period of time, of course, we were told not to go to Tokyo. This is my life. And that was the first place we went by train to Tokyo. Because of the riots in Tokyo we could only go to certain areas. Well, I’m not good at listening to the authorities sometimes, as you may want to put it, so we were in Tokyo. We were told not to take civilian clothes. I had mine in a little bag when I walked off the boat, and so I was fine. And I came back and wandered around the local area, I don’t know what the town was – Yokahama harbor – but I found a rock-climbing store and it was more fun to go through their climbing equipment than ours, but anyway, that’s kind of an aside, and it kept me out of the bars.

In Okinawa, I had scored really high in my naval tests and when I was in this unit, they stuck me in an office and I was the only enlisted person or officer in the outfit of about 300 people that had that honor. And I really did surprise a lot of people who came in. I got bored with the job. I like to work 18-20 hours a day and it wasn’t that, so I volunteered to go to the Antarctic. I passed my psychological tests.

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**BS:** *Which year was this?*

**JS:** This would have been in probably 1963. The fellow that went to San Francisco from Okinawa with me complained about the Navy to the psychologists, and he ended up back in the
same unit again, but I passed because I told them I loved the Navy, or something like that. You
know how that goes.

I had a great time in Davisville, Rhode Island. I got to travel, I hitch-hiked all up and
down the east coast. I’m building up to something. This is why I’m mentioning this.

BS: *Davisville, Rhode Island. What’s there?*

JS: Davisville, Rhode Island, is the stepping off place for the Seabees to go to the Antarctic, or it
was at the time. And we were in the Antarctic Support activities group and I spent most of my
week-ends climbing on the east coast. We were actually preparing to go to McMurdo Sound at
the time. My job, ironically at the time, was to make signs for officers who were attending
meetings and doing work on a pamphlet, which some of you know was the flight patterns of the
Antarctic. I think there were about 10 copies of this made. My partner in crime there was a
fellow called Paul Gormson and if one of us got stuck on KP because we were two of the lowest
rated people in there, we obviously couldn’t get the signs done for the officers for their meetings,
so the officers would get us off of KP almost immediately. It really worked out to my advantage
for quite a few months. Paul had been an ex-golf caddy and he played a lot of golf during the
week when we were supposed to be making signs. But since we got everything done when the
two of us were there, it worked out well.

Paul got us on a C-124, I believe the term for that plane was “Shakey Jake,” and the
reason why we got on that is that he knew I liked to see different things. So, we flew across the
United States, flapping our wings for how many hours did it take to get across the United States?
Eight, ten, twelve hours or something like that. And then we stopped on every island on the way
down. It was a very interesting way to travel. Luckily the pilots were golf nuts, so we landed
during the daytime so they could play golf in Hawaii, Canton Islands, Fiji, and New Zealand.
Really, a very nice way to travel. And flying over the Antarctic, Paul got hungry, so we started a fire on a little propane stove I was carrying, and one of the crew caught us and we sternly got chewed out and almost sent back to stay in New Zealand for lighting an open fire on an airplane.

Landing at Williams Field the day I arrived, they herded us around. The first thing I was told, because they knew I was a climber, was not to climb anything in the area including Observation Hill. That night, I was on top of the 850 foot peak. I did several local ascents by myself and with several others, including John Evans. John Evans was kind of a famous Yosemite climber at one time. I had known him before I went down there, so it was nice to see someone I knew when I was there.

My main job was to be a fireman and stand on fire watches. I had been sent for special training on the east coast to probably four or five different fire-fighting schools from Minnesota to Newport. The schools stuck us in rooms and smoked us and it was kind of a lot of fun, and we got to put out fire.

BS: Who was the Commander of Antarctic Support activities then? Do you remember?
JS: We had a Lieutenant Commander Olds.

BS: It should have been a Commander in charge. Was it McGregor?
JS: McGregor was the one in charge, yeah. And I liked McGregor real well. He was a decent person. I don’t know anything wrong about him. My main job was a fireman, so I stood fire watches all night. I toured the base. We had one day off a week, so I would always go to the New Zealand base to do something with myself, on that day.

BS: Now, were you supposed to winter-over?
JS: I did winter-over.

BS: You knew in advance?
JS: I knew in advance that I would be wintering over.

BS: You volunteered?

JS: I volunteered for the winter-over project.

BS: Why?

JS: Because I just wanted to do it. You know, why do you want to climb Mt. Everest? Because it’s there. It’s something to do. I extended for six months to go to the Antarctic. I figured it would be worth my time. I read over 300 books the year I was down there. I went to the Arctic later and I couldn’t read a book to save my soul.

BS: Let me back you up a little bit in your life. Had you read anything or heard anything about the Antarctic before you got in the service? Had you read anything about Admiral Byrd or any of those guys? IGY, of course, had already terminated.

JS: IGY was gone. Byrd was not that influential. Shackleton was more my cup of tea. I had read quite a little bit about Scott. Some of the northern hemisphere, Franklin. Stefansson has always been one of my heroes until a couple of years ago, I read a book that was very anti- Stefansson. But, when I look at things, if I was going to do a PhD on something, I’d do it on how Shackleton was a glorious leader. He could lead his men, but he never completed anything. Whereas, Stefansson went through and almost completed every project and he was an awful person to work for. You know, that would be a great theme for a PhD project. It would be really pretty good. I really don’t want to do that, but I’d do it for the fun of it.

Anyway, I spent my fire watches, which meant I wandered around. At the time I didn’t know it, but I walked into the Admiral’s quarters one time and checked for fire and everything and he got kind of irritated and I didn’t know he was one of my father’s friends. And it was kind
of funny afterwards, to hear about that from my father. But, anyway . . . I didn’t know because he wasn’t there that much of the time. I enjoyed the fire department. The first mid-winter fly-in was partially my fault and I’ll have to admit this, but I like to make raisin-jack. So, one time we were making raisin-jack. We made about 5 gallons and a fellow by the name of McMullen drank a little bit too much. He was the guy in charge of the fire department . . . he was a first class builder, I believe. And he jumped for the fire pole and missed it and landed on his head. So, they had to have a mid-winter fly-in to get him out of there. And I was the one who made the raisin-jack, but he drank it, jumped and missed the pole.

BS: They had alcohol for you, didn’t they?

JS: We had alcohol, but if you read the fine print, it said, “Do not drink beer in the Antarctic,” in the cold climate so I wouldn’t touch beer. You could drink mixed liquor, but the enlisted people were not allowed mixed liquor. Occasionally, I’d get a bottle of wine from one of the scientific crew who were friends of mine.

BS: Some of those crazy rules, you just wonder where they got them from. They drank beer in the Arctic for years and years and years before they ever had Deepfreeze.

JS: Well, it was crazy. Why should the enlisted people only be allowed to drink beer when it wasn’t healthy for them. And that didn’t make sense. Anyway, my only other experience with that was we had a little fire in the helicopter building. I ran in and tore the panels down one time and some of the people in there got kind of excited because they thought we should have looked around for the fire. But, we put the fire out in about two minutes, so we had the fire out before they could squawk too much.

Back to my surveying, I was there basically to help the surveyor and work with the fire department. The surveyor Paul Golmsen and I laid out Williams Air Field.
BS: *After the end of the winter?*

JS: After the end of the winter. They reestablished the town and the airfield. And we also worked on some studies of salinity of sea ice.[One time upon returning from Williams field on a D-4 Cat. Tractor I got bored, so I decided to do some blue topping or grading. I lowered the blade, the tractor stalled and I had to walk back to McMurdo. The petty officer in charge was very nice about the incident but I was greatly embarrassed.] And this is something that got me some of my jobs later on. And I might just mention in passing – a couple of incidents that happened down there. Kennedy was killed during that time and my parents, the day he was shot, got the Los Angeles Times and shipped it air mail special delivery to Fleet Post Office in San Francisco and I received it about four days later. I was the first person in the Antarctic to get a full newspaper. And I think every officer and virtually half the enlisted people came to the building to read that one newspaper. We took quite a few pictures of the flag at half mast, over McMurdo station.

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Another thing I was involved in was I flew in to Christchurch for a week-end leave. I had a choice of going to the Pole Station or going to Christchurch. The plane we came back on was a C-130. It was crash landed in a white-out. It was flight 813 on the 13th of the month and on the 13th trip of the plane. Just to add something to this, I’ve gone down five times on the 13th, and about half of them have been in Antarctic or Arctic work, one way or another.

BS: *It crashed?*

JS: What they did was they circled for five or six hours and they came in with their landing gear up with what they figured was 30 seconds of fuel left and they gave us a certain percentage – I
don’t know what it was at the time, but they said we didn’t have a real high chance of surviving this. But, as it was, we got through.

BS: C-130?

JS: Yes. C-130.

BS: Ski-equipped?

JS: No, it was an Air Force C-130. You might want to check on this. It’s hard to remember the particulars on this because it was such a flash at the time.

BS: So, you did a belly landing.

JS: We did a belly landing, yeah.

BS: So, what did they do? Jack the plane up, lower the gear and send it back?

JS: Yeah, I believe that’s what they did. We were back at the base by that time. The only thing I was mad about on the whole flight was that was a flight of Christmas mail coming in and there were two full pallets of mail. They dumped them. [I had brought two quarts of milk back from New Zealand as I was tired of the re-constituted milk. Well, someone drank a quart on the plane before it set down. I was shocked.]

BS: Over the station?

JS: Well, they dumped them over the airfield. In that drop were 52 bags of mail. I had five full bags of them myself. Nothing personal, but I had 50 boxes come in on that flight and it was amazing what it did to the different things in those boxes. I had a can of nuts that became powdered nuts. And I had some glass things that made it through and a few other things like that. It was quite interesting.

BS: When did you join the Seabees? What year was that?

BS:  *And you went to the Ice in ’62-’63 season?*

JS:  I went from ’63-’64. Probably another interesting thing was that when we were down there, there were two Russian planes going to Mirny – I believe it was two plane loads of Russians– they stopped at McMurdo and this was during the Cold War period. And it was very interesting to watch the Russians because the Russians made every meal the Americans had. And, of course . . .

BS:  *Wait, I’ve got to back you up. Where was it the Russians were making the meals? Mirny?*

JS:  No. They were eating all the meals at the US base at McMurdo. See what happened was the planes landed at Williams Field for some reason. The Russian planes. OK. The Russians came up. They put them up on the base. The Russians made every meal at the base and the Americans put on the dog. They cooked things that you wouldn’t believe for those poor Russians. They must have gained ten pounds while they were there. It was really quite neat.

BS:  *How long were they there?*

JS:  About three days. And another interesting thing was that you have to realize that most of the people I was dealing with were American servicemen. And on my fire watch, I noticed that there would be two American servicemen and one Russian sitting on the bunk with a bottle between them and there would be 30-40 Russians in there with 60-80 American servicemen, all drinking vodka and having a great time. And it was very nice to see this going on during the Cold War.

BS:  *Good comaraderie.*

JS:  Oh, tremendous comaraderie. Another thing, I always got a big kick out of the New Zealanders removing parts from the American trashed vehicles in the American dump. They’d look over the dump before the icebreakers came and broke the ice out and here would be the New Zealanders down there picking up parts. One of the things I almost got in hot water for was
a cook caught a penguin. And somewhere in my file, I have a picture of the cook with a machete in his hand and a penguin on the chopping block. And I don’t know if we want to mention this or not, but the cook was going to cook the penguin that night and we had to bury the penguin on the ice, it could have been an international incident. [While building Williams Field, a great storm blew up. Some 40 Navy personnel got trapped at the base. The first night I put on my winter outdoor clothing, boots and had my ice ax handy. I thought the building might blow away, the James way walls moved up to 18 inches with the gusts of wind. The next day, everyone moved to the mess hall. We used ropes to find the other buildings as we were in a white-out.(blowing snow) So forty of us watched the only movie there – “Where the Boys Are” I saw it seven times. The mess James way ripped and I volunteered to go up an eight foot ladder and fix it in 80+ mph winds. I did, but I got severe facial freezing in just a few minutes. Luckily the generator ran for five days and the cook kept busy. We all used a 55 gallon drum for a restroom. The only other incident of the storm was one fellow who had been drinking wandered off and he luckily walked (probably in a circle) into the side of a small out building after several hours. He was fine but we all worried about him.]

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**BS:** Oh, that happened all the time. You can talk about them. Nobody cares any more.

**JS:** And then there was an officer called Mr. Sellers who was out of Seattle and he was a climber. They climb different than the nuts from California.

**BS:** What was his first name?

**JS:** I do not remember Mr. Sellers’ first name. I just knew him as Mr. Sellers. And there was a guy by the name of Ernie who lived up on the hill. Did you know his last name? He had lived
underneath Stalin, Hitler, and at the time I believe it was Johnson. So, he was always complaining about the three tyrants he lived under at one time or another.

I was up visiting Ernie one day and one of the scientists lived out there by himself, or just above the guy that did the . . . he lived way up on the hill by himself.

**BS**: *I forget.*

**JS**: Anyway, Ernie and I were up there. Mr. Sellers came up there and the whole place went cold since Mr. Sellers was an officer and I was enlisted. Of course, you don’t have a lot of comaraderie sometimes. Sellers was a supply officer. That’s fine.

The scientific winter-over party . . . I had a comment on that. I got along with those guys. It was quite interesting. Seems like we had a big support thing down there. We had four scientists and three people supporting them in the lab and 105 Americans supporting them because the Russians were in the Antarctic! And you’d go over to New Zealand base and there would be 22 people there – and everyone of them had a scientific project. So, I was kind of disappointed that we didn’t have more of our people doing a little more science down there.

**BS**: *We didn’t do enough, I’ll agree with you there.*

**JS**: Well, we also went over to the Kiwi base to call home. That’s where we could get out on the I-band. [About midwinter I was out on a fire inspection. When I returned to the fire hall, the fellows said, “the Chaplin was there to see me.” This usually meant something bad. Sure enough my brother-in-law lost a friend. My family used the death to send me a message. We could not send or receive private messages to or from the Antarctic.] And I left the fire department and my roommate was quite a gambler and he was shooting dice one time. And he came back and I was sleeping and we opened up the closet the next morning and he had a whole closet full of money. I don’t know where it came from, but I knew gambling was illegal and they were always trying
to catch him playing. I don’t gamble and I rarely drink. The only other problem was an officer called Lieutenant Commander Olds and what he said was that there should be no nude or semi-nude women which meant Playboy models, on the walls so everybody took all their Playmates down except for the scientific staff and the scientific staff came out and put up nude men. I believe Mr. Olds got quite upset. [Another friend that I had was Charlie Hobson who happened to be a black man, he was what another good friend called a “sun burned Swede”. Charlie and I would to the library talk and listen to classical music. After I left the fire dept. I spent several nights with Charlie in the black quarters, and did not consider it. We stayed in touch for many years, the last time I saw him was in Seattle. He had become a hippy and tried to move to Canada.]

After that, I returned home and moved to Yosemite to climb and did various jobs – roofing, accounting, personnel . . .

BS: I’ve got to ask you a couple of questions about the winter now. How did you fare in the dark? Did you have anybody there that had trouble with the darkness, psychologically speaking?

JS: I really don’t think we had any problem with that. I’ll talk about that maybe a little bit when we talk about the Arctic. Ask me again when I get to T-3. The only problem we had was between Lieutenant Commander Olds and an enlisted fellow – an E-5 builder. Olds said something to him and he punched Olds and they sent him out, busted him down to CM, which is construction man, they sent him down, they transferred Olds out of there at the same time, and there were only four people that got transferred out of there when I was there. Two of them went through the ice with a D-8. It fell through the ice and they transferred those guys out of there the next day. They were equipment operators.

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**BS:** Oh, the D-8 went through. They didn’t go through.

**JS:** They didn’t go through. They kind of rode it down until they got good and wet. It was not a LGP D-8.

**BS:** They got wet, but they got out. Was that down by the pier?

**JS:** Probably around the ice pier.

**BS:** Did they have a floating ice pier then?

**JS:** Yeah. What they’d do at that time is they’d come in with the icebreakers, break it off straight, and then they’d come in with tractors, put sleds down there and then they off-loaded right on to the sleds.

One thing about off-loading these ships is that the first thing they lifted off the ship, there were 5 officers standing there getting their pictures taken, and then after that, all the officers disappeared. But, we also had a killer whale come up right next to us there and we figured we were on about eight feet of ice. But, I understand one of their ways to get seals off the ice was to bump it and the seal slides off the ice and they get dinner. So, we moved back from the edge real quick.

**BS:** Actually what they do, I’ve got movies of them . . . they’ll go in 20-30 feet on the sea ice and they’ll come up next to those Weddell seals and they’ll flip them into the water.

**JS:** Oh, they go onto the ice themselves?

**BS:** I’ve seen them. And they’ll try to stun them by swapping on them.

**JS:** Well, I haven’t seen that.

**BS:** They haven’t done that to people.

**JS:** One of the things my wife and I ran into was when we were sailing in Puget Sound, we were stuck in the middle of the night in the Straits of Juan de Fuca in a sailboat and they were all
around us and, of course, when you’re with your wife, you do things quite differently, but I have
to say I was quite scared and I was a little bit nervous anyway having whales around, or killer
whales around me all night, but the more I was around them with the commercial fishing and
that, the more I don’t worry about them.

As I said, I returned home to Yosemite and I started climbing there. I did various jobs –
work in the winter, climb in the summer. Finally, decided I’d better do something else. Moved to
Seattle and the third day, I got a job with the Department of Oceanography because I had
experience with salinity of sea ice.

BS: Department of Oceanography, where?

JS: Oh, I’m sorry – at the University of Washington. And I was with the Arctic section under
Dr. Larry Coachman.

BS: Tell me, what date was this?

JS: I probably started there in 1965, the fall of ’65. I spent a lot of time in the lab with a fellow
called Eugene Collias processing data, learning how to become an oceanographer. I went on a lot
of local cruises. Of course, being who I am, I volunteer for everything. It’s something I learned
in the Navy. If you volunteer, you get out of things. So, I volunteered for anything, and of
course, I got out of basically everything that was a cruddy job because I was out doing something
else with the outfit.

BS: Let me ask you a question. When did you get out of the service?

JS: When I returned from the Antarctic in ’64, I got out in probably October. I worked at
Macy’s for Christmas. When I got out, it was the only time I caught KP was the last night and I
had come down with the worst cold I’d ever had, as does anybody from the Antarctic, you don’t
have any germs for a year. You arrive at Treasure Island and you get sick as a dog. I probably
had 103 degree temperature. And I was in there peeling potatoes for the other guys. I didn’t want to spend any more time in the Navy. I didn’t dislike the Navy. I just thought it was my time to do something else. In fact, I actually rather enjoyed the Navy quite a bit.

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**BS:** *So, the Navy gave you your first experience on the Ice, and you volunteered for it.*

**JS:** I volunteered for it. Now, I moved to Seattle, and I was looking for a job. So, there was this article that said, job “Arctic section with the University of Washington Department of Oceanography,” and so I applied.

**BS:** *Arctic section with the department of oceanography?*

**JS:** Right. [They have Chemical, Biological, geological, and Physical Oceanography department]. What you are is you’re a physical type under the Arctic section. So, I did not have a college degree at this time. I make that well known, ok? I got a job because I’d done the salinity in the sea ice in the Antarctic. The job was to go to T-3 Fletcher’s Ice Island and do physical oceanography.

**BS:** *Who was the head of the department of oceanography’s arctic section?*

**JS:** The arctic section would be Lawrence Coachman – Dr. Lawrence Coachman.

**BS:** *Dr. Larry Coachman. Where is Larry today?*

**JS:** [Dr. Coachman passed away, we learned this when we visited Dr. Knut Aagard in Seattle and took him out to lunch at the Swedish club.] Well, I’ve been trying to get a hold of him because I want to get in the Explorer’s Club and he’ll recommend me for it. I believe he left Seattle, and he went back to the south somewhere – South Carolina or something like that. I think his family was originally from there. I didn’t work with him at the start. I didn’t start with him until I went to the Ice. What he did was he farmed me out on all these cruises around Puget
Sound to get sampling experience so that when I got to the Ice, I would know what I was doing when it came to water sampling. I did cruises off the Columbia River, Puget Sound, etc. And I was put in charge of several graduate students who had been doing routine lab work after a very short period of time and making sure that they completed their subjects. My first trip to T-3 was good because I had Derry Gault and a French student Pierre to help me.

BS: What date was that?

JS: Probably at the start of ’66, because I didn’t go right away

BS: You’d say around January or February.

JS: Probably January or February – dead of winter.

BS: Dark.

JS: Dark. No wait a minute. Let me think back on that. It was probably – I flew from down there about six times and you lose track of which times were which. If I remember right, the first time I flew up, they gave me a different size airplane coming up from Seattle, so I flew to a lot of different places. And when I got to Anchorage, I met another fellow who had a very expensive camera from Lamont, and the two of us walked downtown and came back and then we landed in Point Barrow and it was October 31st because every kid was in a puddle of water. And that’s the first thing I remember about Point Barrow. So, we must have gone in ’65. [The only time I got nervous about the dark was one night when I was working at my hydro hut about ½ mile from town. I felt aliens were watching me and were going to kidnap me. I also had some dreams if the plans stopped coming to T-3 on how we would walk out crossing 600 miles of ice.]

BS: Did you go out to Cape _____?

JS: No. but we got our lecture from Max, as usual. Probably three hours of a lecture.

BS: Who’s Max?
JS: Max Brewer, I believe. And I met John Schindler. I liked both of them.

BS: *Tell me about the lecture from Max.*

JS: The lecture from Max proceeded to give us . . . I don’t know what he was doing, but we were warned about it before we got there. You would go in and Max would be smoking his pipe and he would play with his pipe for probably about three hours and talk to you and that was called the Max lecture. Whatever the outcome of it or why he did it, okay I believe if he was trying to weed people out from going out there.

BS: *Did you learn anything?*

JS: Oh, I don’t want to say anything negative.

BS: *If the answer is no, it’s no.*

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JS: I probably learned a little bit about procedure out there and the only time I ever got in trouble with Max was, we had a fellow out there called Big John who did mechanical work and Big John was bigger than I am and I’m fairly large. His fingers were probably twice the size of mine. And when he fixed say a small gas engine, he’d have to have one of the scientists help him put the screws back in. Well, there was a station manager and I won’t mention his name because it’s not fair, but anyway, there was a complaint that Big John had put diesel in the oil of the engine to thin it down to start them or something and I wrote a very good progress report about how this fellow had helped me and I got chewed out from Max for sending this progress report in. Well, the guy had been very helpful to me. I didn’t know about the other incident. Big John had been a real help to me. I guess the lab was trying to get rid of him as the station manager did not like him.

BS: *Big John work for Max?*
JS:  Big John worked for Max. He was the mechanic on station.

BS:  So, anyway, take me through the process of getting out to T-3. You’re in Barrow. You flew commercially to Barrow, then how’d you get out to T-3?

JS:  I kind of don’t want to go into it too much, but the first plane I flew on had about 100 people on it. The second one had about 20, which was from Dawson, Canada or Juneau to Fairbanks. From Fairbanks to Point Barrow, there were only two of us on the plane, a stewardess and me. We got on the R4D out of Point Barrow, flew the R4D with those wonderful pilots they had up there at the time.

BS:  Who were they? Bobby Fisher?

JS:  Probably Bobby Fisher, and . . .

BS:  Zimmerman?

JS:  We knew we flying with the best Arctic pilots in the world at the time.

BS:  So, you flew to T-3 on an R4D. Where was T-3 at the time?

JS:  Oh man, that’s a good question. It was probably to the northeast about 400 miles.

BS:  You could fly all the way in the R4D.

JS:  Yeah, we flew all the way in the R4D and it returned. I don’t know what the mileage is on those things.

BS:  How did it land on the ice on T-3? With wheels or skis?

JS:  Wheels. We used wheeled aircraft.

BS:  Had a runway there?

JS:  Yeah.

BS:  How long?
JS: That’s a good question. I’m not a pilot. It was long enough to put the R4D down. And when I spent the summer there in the fall, the station manager went out and measured the ice on the airport so they could land and the ice wasn’t deep enough. It was only about 12 inches and I think they required 18 inches. And they almost went through in a couple of spots. The pilots were not very happy about that.

BS: That was in the summer.

JS: That was in the late summer. This was this time of year, but straight flight. There was no problems at all. The R4D would come about every three to six weeks and if we ran out of supplies and drop 12 – 13 boxes of goods by parachute – I think the best example on that was we ran out of flour one time and Carl, the cook, couldn’t make bread any more so we used mozzarella cheese with meat in between – used the mozzarella cheese as the bread. Made it kind of fun up there.

BS: So that’s living on T-3. R4Ds bring fresh food in to you occasionally?

JS: Yeah, every three to four weeks. They’d parachute it in during the summer.

BS: Now the summer, you were basically isolated. You had summer up there.

(400)

JS: Yeah, I had summer up there. We were out of range of helicopters.

BS: You couldn’t get out in the summer and the Antarctic, you couldn’t get out in the winter, usually.

JS: Well, you couldn’t except for that fly-in.

BS: Wasn’t worth it.

JS: Wasn’t worth it, no. But, in the summer, there was no leaving the Ice. There was no way to get off of it because basically the whole ice island would melt.
BS: Soft.
JS: Soft.

BS: How thick is the ice island?
JS: When we were there, we were told it was 150 feet. Some of the guys from GM drilled holes at 100 feet and went through.

BS: Who was GM?
JS: General Motors.

BS: Did you have separate camps?
JS: Basically, they ate with us but they were in separate camps.

BS: They were General Motors research, right?
JS: General Motors research. It was acoustical research. They had hydrophones at every 10 degrees for 360 degrees, and their code word was “Jolly Whale,” positive or negative.

BS: GM camp with the code words, what? Positive whale?
JS: “Jolly whale, positive,” or “Jolly whale, negative.” And I won’t say what they were listening for, but you can leave that to your imagination.

BS: They were listening for Russian submarines.
JS: We all knew that, but I think it was all classified. But, it was interesting to watch. There was an older fellow there and he was in his fifties. No, he was just a mechanic.

BS: Who was their main guy out there then?
JS: Well, I hate to say it but I believe the main guy that was out there did a lot of skin diving off of Santa Barbara and he took me to my hydro hut because we had some trouble getting some scientific stuff down the hydrohole because we also had a fish in there. And he set off the charge of dynamite in our hydrohole to blow out the ice in order so he could get one fish. And the other
thing is he caught a fish one time and stuck it in a jar and watched it die. He was a bit strange.

We had to set TNT charges in the ice hole to blow the ice out to have clear passage to lower our current meters or Nansen bottles. He helped me do the job just to watch a fish die.

BS: Yeah.

JS: But Marty Manuel was there. He was the mexican fellow that was there. But the fellow that I was talking about was a manual laborer who worked for General Motors who came up there to do part of the help with the drilling. He was about 54 and he realized for the first time in his life that he was too old to do this kind of work. He could not recover his energy like he could when he was younger. I think we all noticed that.

OK, when I got to T-3 the first time, we had a french graduate student come up and he had spent the summer on the ice and he showed me basically the job and duties on the island and left in a week. My title at the time was scientist. He also told me how to fix the micro switches if they malfunctioned, which they did.

BS: You were the scientist in charge of Larry Coachman’s work out there?

And your job was to study what?

JS: Physical oceanography. We’d measure currents, we would take water chemistry of the water samples and we’d help Lamont Geophysical Institute with celestial navigation. Later on, they got into the satellite navigation and that made it a lot simpler and a lot more accurate. During the summer, one time, we had about three weeks when we had no sightings of the sun or the stars or anything else.

(450)

BS: So you represented the University of Washington, then.
JS: Right. I represented the University of Washington. The physical oceanography, Arctic division.

BS: So, you went up there on your first trip in '65.

JS: Right.

BS: And you stayed how long?

JS: Probably about a month and a half and then they’d close the project down and then they’d wait a couple of months and then I’d go back. And we did this for about a year and a half.

BS: So, you cycled a lot then.

JS: Cycled back and forth.

BS: So, from October, '65 to about 1968?

JS: Right. It would be October of '65.

BS: You must have spent a good part of time when you stayed out there for the summer though. That was a couple or three months.

JS: Yeah, we spent four months out there in the summer.

BS: OK.

JS: I spent a couple of winter cruises and then I went out for the summer cruise and the summer cruise I moved up from scientist to scientific cruise leader. I got promoted and had a person working for me.

BS: Now you’re saying cruises. This is not on T-3.

JS: We considered T-3 to be a cruise.

BS: So you became scientific cruise leader.

JS: Right.

BS: That was the title they gave you.
JS: That was the title they gave me for the summer session. And I had a graduate student working with me. And he was considered the scientist.

BS: You made it possible for him to collect his data.

JS: Well, we were collecting the data for Dr. Coachman. He was basically my helper.

BS: So, Coachman was the chief PI.

JS: I spent two trips after that one, I guess they were about three months each, and this fellow I was with, Jim Bronson, we started looking at the accuracy of our equipment and our readings and this was one thing we were very interested in. We found that if we raised and lowered the current meter once a day at a set time – if I took the current meter, held it upright, put the fin on it and bent it at about 10 degrees each way, offset by 10 degrees, if we raised it, it would move and swing on the wire, and we could compare the mvt time without time above. Since you’re dealing with currents of .02 knots, something like that, if you move the fin, it accelerates real fast and it also moves the direction. So, when you’re reading – this was back when we had digital 4 film – so when you read the film that you knew, if I put on a piece of paper that we raised it at 1300, and raised it at 1400 the next day, you’d have 140 frames of film in between there – whatever the time measurement was at that time. OK. That’s how I’d mark the film when we’d move the current meters. Now, that was my idea to set the current meter off a little bit so that we could tell sequentially how many hours a day . . . my thing was if we had only 75 frames during that time, that the current meter’s clocks were off or something like this because anybody that has worked with mechanical things knows that they function really weird in 2000 meters of water.

(500)
When they brought it back, it was the start of the computer thing and I helped them set up the computer program at the University of Washington, physical oceanography, when I got back.

One of the things they did was they extrapolated the time. If they left the current meters down for 7 days, they took the total number of frames in that and they divided it equally. To me, that was poor science. They should have taken the time frames that we marked the current meter.

You see what I’m saying?

BS: Yeah. Were you studying _____?

JS: No, basically studying three layers of water. Surface, one at 50 and one at, I believe, 100 meters.

BS: 1500 meters.

JS: And then one at 2000.

BS: Meters.

JS: Meters, correct.

BS: And Larry was the PI on this.

JS: Right.

BS: Did Lamont get up there for the current studies?

JS: Lamont did certain current studies . . . but not to the extent that we did.

BS: Ken Hunting?

JS: I recognize Ken Hunting. He wasn’t there when we were there. John Hall was there. Marvin Fellman was one of my partners. Marvin Fellman was famous with the bears. Marvin Fellman was a New York Jewish guy. Well, he’s marching out to his hydro hut and coming back. Well, there’s a bear on the base. You know what that means. Everybody carries at 375. So, he goes out to the Hydro hut and comes back and there’s the bear between him and the base. Well, he’s never
shot a gun before in his life. And the bear comes right up to him, he held up the gun and yelled bang and the bear comes up, sniffs him and walks away. Marvin never went to the ice again. I was going to say . . . Marvin was a friend of mine because when I was in between going to the ice and working for the University of Washington, I had gone to the east coast and worked as a tree topper. And I was rock climbing in the Schawan gunks, and Marvin remembered me when he got to T-3 from the Schawan gunks. So, he was one of my climbing associates at one time. I never climbed with him, but he recognized me from the Schawan gunks on the Ice. It was kind of funny after the second day someone comes up and says, “I know you from the Schawan gunks.” So that’s how that goes, in small groups like that.

The other thing that we discovered was that with the salinometer – now, we used a portable salinometer to measure the salinity of sea water– and we found that in the winter time or during the summer, the outside of the building was 10 degrees and on the inside of the building the building was kept at about 50 degrees.

(550)

What happens is that you’ll find if you’re measuring salinity that you can have 30 degrees of difference if the walls of the building are cold. You put the sample next to the wall, there is a difference of degrees as each sample gets further from the wall. When you’re doing 30 to 40 samples and you’re going to have a difference of readings on 30 to 40 samples of temperature, so what we did was we ended up putting the sample bottles in the middle of the room, let them sit at the stable temperature for about 6 to 8 hours to get a good chemical analysis or good salinity content on them. And I found that reading the thermometers – I usually would try to compete with the student I was with, or the students. And I could always get a better, shall we say a better reading than they could, or more accurate reading consistently using the correction factors. We
changed thermometers around and found which ones were the correct and at one time I was
going to do a publication on this, but things changed as we’ll mention here a little bit further
down and a few other things. I would say that the people I worked with were John Hall, Merrill
Hefferich of the University of Alaska. Merrill did, what was it, northern light stuff. What I
remember about him, he flew with me one time and he was going to be 33 years old and he was
going to get his college degree. I thought, “God, this guy is really old to be getting a college
degree.” Well, I was 33 when I got mine.

BS: John Hall was from Lamont?

JS: Lamont. Feldman was Lamont.

BS: And they were technicians as well?

JS: Hall was a kid that had all furs when he came up there. His parents had had a lot of money.

BS: Fur clothes?

JS: Fur clothes. He had a $10,000 parka on to do the research work in.

BS: He got grease all over it and everything? You know how dirty you get.

JS: He kept it clean and only wore it on walks, Sunday, etc. And then we had Marybeth. The
first woman to ever land on T-3.

BS: Mary?

JS: Marybeth or Marybelle. She was a biologist and she came out there. I don’t know what her
last name was. But, they opened the door of the airplane and they said, “There’s a woman on
board.” Of course, you know you’re out there in the pitch black. And we’re looking around,
trying to figure out which one of these forms was the woman that jumped out. They’re all small.
And ironically, it was the biggest one that jumped out of the plane. And then they rolled the fuel
barrels for the plane.
BS: You mean tall?

JS: No, biggest around. Anyway, when we played Hearts, she always got the old maid. She was out there for about three or four days and they pulled her off. There was a lot of things changed with a woman on the base there. Made it kind of interesting, but [while Marybeth was there we found toilet paper stuffed in all the heat vent holes in the heads, typical of a woman. I lent and helped, the University of Alaska use our equipment for their sampling. It was the University of Washington’s hydrohut.]

When the plane came to get her, they brought all the stove oil out for the stoves and they’d roll out those 55 gallon drums and they’d land on a rubber tire and they’d bounce on the snow.

(Begin Tape 1B)

(000)

JS: So, I crawled back on the plane with them when they were getting ready to leave because I’d seen them dropping these 55 gallon drums out the plane, bouncing off the rubber, and I said, “Boy, does that look like fun.” So, I jump out of the plane on my back, I landed on that rubber tire and I thought I had killed myself. Because at 30 degrees below, and you land on rubber, it’s solid as a brick. I felt like I landed on a brick wall. But, that was the kind of stuff I liked to do.

Arnie Hansen, did you run into him yet?

BS: Oh, I’ve known Arnie a long time. Too bad he died. He went all the way back to IGY.

JS: He was a very good friend of mine. He, myself and Bronsen would, every Thursday, would go over to his place and have a hot buttered rum. He made a great hot buttered rum.

BS: This was on T-3?

JS: On T-3.
BS: *Who was he working for then?*

JS: Maybe Ohio. It was some midwest college. He spent all summer studying to make one measurement, and no one talked about their project too much. Most of my free time was going around helping other people with their projects because if you have a current meter down for 7 days, you’re only moving it for an hour a day. You can go help Lamont do bottom cores or anything else. That for me was worth a lot, I learned more about doing physical work on the water with cables and stuff like that. I’m extremely good with it. It paid off later in my life tremendously.

BS: *So you got involved in all the science.*

JS: I got involved with every project there was including the USC plankton tows and a lot of other stuff like that. I’m what you call a total workaholic. I’d rather work than do anything. When I got on T-3, it was like I’d gone to heaven because there were all these projects to help on. And I could go around and I didn’t feel obligated to be paid or anything. I just wanted to help the guys do something. It was fun, it was exciting.

I mentioned the GM crew and the weather service was out there – they were fun guys.

BS: *Who was the weather service?*

JS: Bernie was the one that got shot.

BS: *He was station leader, too.*

JS: He was station leader?

BS: *The guy that shot him.*

JS: Well, at that time when he was out there, he was working for the weather service. Those guys were decent people. They’d come out and we got to know them quite well. Jimmy, the station manager of the base, flew down to Fairbanks one time and spent $10,000 on one week
doing very strange things including having a taxi cab run for 24 hours a day in front of the hotel with two girls in it. And a few other things we won’t talk about. And I will say, I enjoyed Big John, the mechanic, and especially the Eskimos. And I believe one was Ray Ipuk. And there was a Jimmy and Charlie Hobson and Jimmy Kegaleg.

**BS:** *Charlie Hobson.*

**JS:** Charlie was actually a very good friend of mine. He used to come to the trailer we lived in with a shovel and hit the side of it to wake us up – he probably doesn’t want to hear this, but anyway . . . he used to come to the, when we were at ARL, he’d come by and try to bum booze off me. I’d carry three bottles of rum. I carried two little ones and a big one and the big one was for Arnie Hanson and me and the two little ones for Charlie and we’d load on to his ski machine, me without gloves, and take off to Point Barrow. [Charlie and I went to the town of Point Barrow which is dry. I got some very strange looks and comments from woman there. Charlie just told her to knock it off. It was my first experience with a prejudice person.] And we’d drink up the two things and they’d say, you sure you don’t have any more? Well, usually I’d go with the first one. We’d drink up that one and “You sure you don’t have any more?” and I’d say well this is my last one, and I’d pull out the second one. Then he knew he’d gotten me for all the liquor I had and I’d always save one for the little tea time we had on the ice. Kinda like the English, you know. I’m not a drinker, but it was fun to have something with somebody once in a while.

I did about two or three more trips the following year to T-3 the following winter.

**BS:** *The winter of . . . ?*

**JS:** Would be ’65, ’66. They sent Jim Oberland, who was my next door neighbor by the way in Seattle, and I didn’t know it. My wife looked out the window and said, “Oh, that’s our new
neighbor. Doesn’t that look like Jim?” and I said, “Yeah, it looks like Jim. I wonder what he’s doing here.” Turned out it was the guy I went to the Arctic with. I didn’t know he was moving in next door to me. Anyway, I got Jim ready to go and then I left there, I was to be the senior scientific cruise leader on the US Coast Guard Staten Island, in the Bering Sea for the University of Washington.

BS: *OK. Which year was this that you were on.* . . .?

JS: This would have been in ’66, before the summer. They didn’t feel that they needed me on T-3 because it was very routine, but they put me in charge of the USCG Staten Island Cruise.

(50)

BS: *So this is the summer of ’66.*

JS: Yeah. We’re trying to get the years fairly straight. That’s why I brought a resume.

BS: *OK, you’re scientific cruise leader when?*

JS: 1968, on the Coast Guard Staten Island.

BS: *Summer? Winter?*

JS: It was in the summer. We were in the Bering Sea, and we were on ice patrol, but while we were on ice patrol, we were allowed to do oceanographic work unless there was a rescue or something they had to go on.

BS: *Ice patrol. What’s that?*

JS: It’s where they go up and patrol and make sure the tugs get through and if they get trapped, they can break them out. This is my understanding of what it is.

BS: *Tugs going to resupply the north slope and all the Eskimo villages?*

JS: Right. Now, let me kind of backtrack. We’ll cover this and in just a minute I’ll come back to this. When I left T-3 that year, that was the most expensive ticket ever done by the University of
Washington to fly an individual and they gave me a ticket so I could pick up the icebreaker to be in charge of this icebreaking crew anywhere in Alaska. So, I had these students load all this stuff in Seattle and then I picked up the icebreaker at a later date. I met the icebreaker in Kodiak. [I had a little free time in Kodiak. I had brought my ice axe, so I hitched hiked out the road to find a snow slope to climb on. I did not get to snow but had great fun trying to hit the small end of beer cans that I threw into the air. One of the ride I got was very concerned about the ice axe and why I was carrying it.]

Things of interest about T-3. I did what I called yachting trips with Ray Ipuk and Charlie Hobson to study the water and the lead to the Polyanas. I believe it’s called Polyna, or a lead. We did chemical analysis and some current measurements. It was fun shooting the river that flowed off the ice islands. The Eskimos always carried a rifle in case there was a seal around. I mean that’s the way life is and I think along the same thing there, I was quite interested in finding out what the salt content and that stuff was and I worked quite a little bit up there. We did three or four trips up there by boat and did sampling. It was kind of a thing to set up and I was hoping I could get a publication out of it. However, no funding, no interest. And I think you know what I mean by that. You’ve probably run into this yourself. [This was done in future years using large submarines. However, when the submarine surfaced, it brought “a lot” of lower, more saline water to the surface. We sampled down to a depth of 10 meters, about ½ the depth of the submarine.]

One of the things I helped with was sanitation. Sanitation on T-3 was classic. In the winter time, we chopped ice and melted it down. Everybody including scientists went out and chopped ice, put it on a sled and brought it back and stopped at the storage tank and then we melted it down and about once every two to three weeks, we could take a shower. This was fine,
but in the summer we had a different situation. Since in the summertime, T-3 tends to melt, we had these streams around. Well, what they decided is they took the water, I don’t know how to explain this, but if you took the water by the mess hall and pumped it into the restroom, you would get fresh water and you would have fresh water in the restroom and to drink. That’s how we got our water supply, right? What they didn’t realize is the mess hall was downstream from the toilets. So, what we had was people using the toilet various ways and the fluid from that would run down and run into the mess hall and that’s where they started taking their water from. Well, that was one of the things I noticed about T-3 [I mentioned it to the station master and after that we got water from upstream of the rest room]. It was a humorous thing. I mean, it’s not something you’d . . . no one got sick, but it could have been really badly. And I just had to mention that.

One of the fellows up there, and I cannot remember his name to save my soul, but when I was up there, he was one of my dear friends lonely in California put my name into a lonely heart club. And I started getting letters from shall I say lonely women all over the United States looking for matrimony. [One fellow in the Arctic was called Pig Pen due to his bathing and not washing his clothes. At one meal someone saw a hole in his shirt, put his finger in the hole – the shirt literally fall apart at the mess table. Pig Pen returned at the next meal, looking crisp, shaved, and clean in a new clean shirt. He was a graduate in Geophysics at an Eastern college.] And one wrote Olive Oil on her paper – her letter. And so Pig Pen said, “I’m going to write this girl.” Well . . . I gave him the letter. The rest of them I wrote reluctantly and told them I’m happily with who I am and I’m not interested. One of my friends did this. I never even got a reply. But, anyway, Pigpen wrote this girl and ended up getting married to her a few years later.

**BS:** *The astronaut?*
JS: No, Pigpen. We called him pigpen because he never took a bath. And one day he went in there and he wore the same shirt all summer – T-shirt. One day someone reached over and grabbed one of the little holes in it and the whole thing fell apart on him. And after that we called him Pigpen for sure.

BS: So Pigpen married a gal from . . . ?

JS: Married a girl named Olive Oil from somewhere down south. It’s the same name as Popeye the Sailor Man’s girl.

The shacks on T-3 rise. The shacks in the Antarctic sink. Do you have any idea why?

BS: The infrared radiation melts them away in the Arctic and you don’t have enough snowfall accumulation and in the Antarctic, the infrared radiation is not sufficient to do it because it doesn’t counter the effect of the blowing snow to keep the level of blowing snow blowing back and forth. And it will bury your buildings.

JS: OK, that’s what I have. Because we had a lot of trouble in the Arctic. They were always tearing buildings off the pedestal, bulldozing it down, and then putting it back.

BS: See, you don’t have much snowfall on the sea ice. But, if you go out on the Greenland Ice Cap, they get buried, except on a glacier.

JS: Anyway, they moved one of these hydrohuts – moved it back 10 feet and the guy that was sort of in charge of me but never went to the ice with me by the name of Dick Tripp, and he was a good friend, walked out there one time with his pipe lit and didn’t see they had moved the hut back 10 feet, walked right into that hydro hole. They said when he came out, he looked just like a
seal. Blopped in and blopped right back out with his pipe lit. But, that was kind of a fun thing about that. And I mention the thing about the guy dynamiting a hole to get one fish.

I pulled a lot of pranks on the Eskimos because I really enjoyed them. We had a guy from Belgium – I won’t mention his name – he was doing some sort of research up there and the Eskimos had a lot of she fish shipped in for . . . they liked to eat them. I believe they ate them raw and they’d cut them up in front of their house there. And I saw this bag of fish there and so I grabbed the fish and went out and stuck it in the hydrohole. Well, about an hour later, here comes this guy from Belgium just shouting and excited he had found one of the largest fish ever caught in the Arctic. And he couldn’t figure out why it was in such bad shape. He figured it had gone underneath the sounder. And the sounder had deteriorated the whole fish. And he was so excited. He talked about that fish for about a day and a half. And I really felt bad about it. The Eskimos and I were just totally cracking up and it was one of the funniest experiences I’ve gone through. Everybody else was kind of . . . oh, well . . . you know how that goes.

I mentioned drinking. One of the Eskimos one time, we had samples from the University of Washington – Tom English’s program had samples of different marine invertebrates and this is where I’ve been gone so long I can’t use the right terms sometimes. They had sample bottles full of invertebrates with formaldehyde in them. Well, they had a big party and they always made beer in the sample bottles because when it came out, it was good homemade beer. There are some good pictures of me working with this and a 55 gallon drum making this beer. And we would bottle it up and stick it underneath these biologists bunks. Well, in the middle of the night, somebody broke in and they told him not to drink, that but he got the wrong one and he drank the formaldehyde sample and spit it out and disappeared into the dust. But, he was fine, I guess. But
it was quite an incident about drinking up there. [These wars consisted of me with snowballs and Eskimos with Caterpillar Tractors, I’d sneak up behind the tractor, throw a snowball, hit the operator usually in the head and he’d chase me tractor and all. Usually I’d find a nice building or snow bank to hide behind, continuing to pelt him and the tractor with snowballs. It was usually a standoff. I did not do this to the non-Eskimos, it could have been a problem.]

I always had wars with the Eskimos.

BS: Wars?

JS: Wars. I have an Eskimo name – Kalisak, I believe. It was for the size of my stomach more than anything, I think. It means large belly button. So, it’s not the most pleasant name in the world. Typical Eskimo humor.

BS: So, you said you had wars with them?

JS: What I’d do is I’d make a snowball, and I didn’t mention this in the Antarctic, but when I’d walk around because I had been a climber, I’d make snowballs because one of the famous German climbers did this, walked around and got his hands in snow so he could condition himself to climb on the ice. And so I figured if I did this in the Arctic and the Antarctic, I’d be very good at ice climbing and my hands wouldn’t freeze when I was on the ice. Well, that was a fallacy because I got really frozen bad one time shortly after that while doing a climb in Seattle. It was because I wasn’t pulling on them at the same time. Anyway, I’d make snowballs and I’d lob them at the Caterpillar operator. Well, the Caterpillar guy which was Jimmy, Charlie or Ray or one of the other guys – they’d come after me with the Caterpillar. And they’d try to bulldoze me or they’d come up to me with shovels when I was sleeping in my trailer and typical of the Arctic – it’s called the Big Eye – you can’t sleep for weeks, so what I did was take 5 sleeping
pills with me. So once every once in a while, I’d take a sleeping pill and I’d get back on my regular routine. And I figured 5 was enough and the doctor didn’t want to give them to me, but I got them anyway. By talking him into it. But, it was interesting because there is a thing that happens to a lot of people. You start staying awake, you can’t sleep because it’s light all the time, and now I currently still, from that time, put like a t-shirt over my eyes so I can sleep at night. This was something I got used to and I can’t sleep without it. Anyway, the Eskimos would come up with a shovel and slam it into the side of where I was sleeping if they knew I was asleep to kind of wake me up in the middle of the night. And if you’ve ever heard that on a metal trailer it doesn’t sound real pleasant. But, anyway, it was all in fun more than anything else and kind of why I knew it was in fun is because one day the young kid, Jimmy, came into the mess room and said, “Do you want to come over to visit us in about 10 minutes?” And I’m pretty gullible and so I said, “Sure,” so ten minutes later, I get up from reading the newspaper that everybody’s looked at 25 times and I walk over to Jimmy’s, I open the door and a bottle of water falls down on me and there are three Eskimos in there laughing their heads off. Funniest thing they ever saw. I consider that the war with the Eskimos.

The Galley. We had Carl’s Kakes - mozzarella cheese sandwiches and Karl’s vacation videos. And I don’t know if you guys have ever seen those things, but Carl was a good cook. But, when Carl would go home for two weeks during the year, he would take his wife and daughter on a trip to Washington, DC, and all we’d see is Carl’s car, driving down the highway with pictures of Washington monument as he was driving by it. It was really very humorous videos. [It was movies all about driving, taken out of the car window. We saw trees, statues, buildings go by at 20 mph. Often shaky but extremely enjoyable.]

BS: *He spent only two weeks a year off of the ice? He had a family?*
JS: Yeah. He was the cook. From what I understand, that was what he did. He did it for several years. His cakes – why I said his cakes. He would make four cakes at a time, put three underneath his bunk and put one out. And after the first day, they got kind of crusty. So, there they would sit, 3/4s cut, no one would touch them after the first day because they were too hard to eat. So, finally we started throwing the cakes out after the first day and it came out pretty good, we got nice fresh cakes.

And seating arrangements. One of the things I noticed and there were from about 6 to 50 people on the ice at a time. And people had certain seats they’d sit in. If you sat in their seat, they would not sit down until you moved. I mean, it was just that they had to eat in that certain chair and . . . Newspapers . . . after we were on the ice for about 6 weeks, someone would pick up an old newspaper and everyone would come up behind them to see what the news was. I mean, we were just starved for news, which you never got. Now, I hardly read the newspapers because I never got the newspapers when I was on the ice, or in my current profession.

(200)
When I got back I kind of helped the University of Washington set up its computer program. One of the problems we had with that was Jim Oberland’s wife was reading the film. We had a big unit that could track or measure the amount of degrees of how far she moved. She was very quick with her hands moved so fast that all the stuff she read did not come out, which was too bad. But, we had to re-read the whole thing. Of course, this was back in the computer card files. Probably the only interesting thing outside of it was, I lived with this Jim Bronson. On the ice everything we did together, he liked to hike and I liked to hike. We wandered around the island. We did all this stuff together. One day I lost a knife on an ice flow, [I did not know the knife had fallen out of my pocket and we watched the drift float away] and the next day somebody else
walked out there and found it on the ice flow. It had floated away from me and the thing had
come back in a different place. I thought that was kind of interesting. [Probably my most moving
experience on T-3 was when we heard a plane fly over. Of course, everyone ran out to see what
it was. It was a P-3V, so I ran into the stationmasters office and asked to talk to the plane. I told
the person on the plane that my father was the chief Project Engineer on its design and
construction. The plane circled several times and dropped some “new” newspapers, candy, etc.
Several weeks later my father received air pictures of T-3.]

In the fall of 1968, I was selected to head the Davis Strait Project. It was a project where
we would fly out to northern Canada, set up camp on the ice pack.

BS:  *Spring of . . . ?*

JS:  It was in the fall of ’69. So this would have been in the winter of 1969, I was going to head
the Davis Strait Project. There’s a spot of water up there that doesn’t freeze over in the winter
time. And it’s fairly good size.

In October, I was climbing in Washington State and fell and severely damaged my ankle.
I spent eleven months on crutches and it basically ended my polar career. I took up sailboating at
the time and it was something I could do with a handicap and it became racing as mentioned
below.

BS:  *Can I back you up from that? You went on the Davis Strait Project?*

JS:  I couldn’t go on the Davis Strait Project. Once I broke my leg, I helped them set up all the
stuff, ordered the supplies because I mentioned earlier that I’m very interested in cold weather
stuff – equipment, for the climbing – and after I broke it in October and about December, they
decided I couldn’t do it because of my leg. And so Jim Oberland went and he was my
replacement. It was not a very successful project.
After I set Mr. Oberland up, who was a very good friend, I took part in several Bering Sea cruises, both physical oceanography and geological oceanography. I was scientific cruise leader aboard the Staten Island, had a crew of 4 or 5 underneath me, we took 60 water chemistry and current measurement stations. [It required anchoring the US. Coast Guard ship and waiting until the anchor set. We placed four current meters across the lower Bering Straits. We use old 500 pound railroad wheels as anchors.]

BS: This is after the Davis Strait Project?

JS: This is just before. It was in between the Davis Strait. Then one was after it, so . . . I stayed with them for a couple more years. Actually, I worked there until 1973, until I got my college degree.

BS: In between sailing on the Staten Island, huh?

JS: Well, I did the Staten Island right at the end of . . . ’68?

BS: What kind of research was there out there?

JS: We were doing chemical and physical oceanography, mainly current analysis.

BS: Bering Sea?

JS: Bering Sea. We had 60 pre-selected stations as far north as Point Hope in the Bering Sea. It was a very different experience to work on a Coast Guard vessel. First off, the seating at senior officers mess, I did take a white shirt, so that I’d look presentable. I’d never had a steward take care of me before in my life and I’ve always done everything myself, period. And so it was very kind of fun for that reason. I noticed one thing that while you’re talking as a visiting scientist, and there was two of us scientific leaders, and there were two scientific parties aboard, the two of us were seated at the bottom of the table and the executive officers were at the top of the table. [The second seating in the ward room was for junior officers and my five person crew] If a
discussion came up on oceanography, especially on our stuff, we were never asked a question because we could never say anything unless we were asked a direct question. It was very strange. And we’d sit there and we’d wink at each other while these guys were spouting off about different oceanographic phenomena or something like this. It was quite interesting.

**BS:** *Hard to understand, for me, because we got involved with the science work and listened to the scientists.*

(250)

**JS:** But, you were interested in science. These guys were probably not. They were ship drivers. And I don’t mean that negatively. They did a wonderful job of driving that ship.

**BS:** *I understand.*

**JS:** One thing I learned on there was I had been warned when getting on the ship that you always let the enlisted crew know what’s going to happen before and you make sure that the guys – the chain locker – know how much anchoring you’re going to do, or someone like the captain can use it against you. And they can build a real hostile feeling toward the scientists on board. So I went down and I let the number one seaman recruit who had been smoking dope, he was the chain locker and I told him we have 60 some stations to do and when those were done, we were done. And, you know, I got wonderful respect from the crew. I got along with those guys. It worked out very much to my advantage. I had them help me and all sorts of things where sometimes there’s been a lot of conflict between scientific staff and USCG personnel, you know elitism on both sides.

**BS:** *Did you tell them you were an ex-enlisted?*

**JS:** I may have, I may not have. I wouldn’t have thought that. To me, people are people. There’s no difference. So, it may have come up in a conversation that I’d been in the Seabees or been in
the Antarctic or something. At that time, I was very interested in Arctic work and doing that stuff. I’d read about it but I just hadn’t been able to do it.

On those stations, we measured currents up to three knots, which they didn’t expect. We were wondering if the current meters were correct, but it was in the middle of the night and you could tell by the wire angle. Obviously, if the wire angle is zero degrees, you have almost no current. If it’s 15-20 degrees, you’ve got a helluva of a current running through there. One thing I learned there and it’s followed through in my own business is that if you have somebody that’s weak at doing the job, you always go and help them. It’s more important that they do a good job and you know who I had – I had Paul Jappa on there. His father was a physics professor at the University of Washington. He did an excellent job, but I had another fellow or another two fellows on there that I had to be on watch with just to make sure the watch went correctly. And I don’t mean that negatively. They’re 20 year old kids. They’re tired at 2 o’clock in the morning. So, you always make sure you’re a buddy to the guys you work with, especially in the Arctic.

The only comment I’ll make about the geological cruises were they were weird. This was a different cruise a year later. This I believe about a year later.

BS: Staten Island?

JS: No, this would have been on the Thompson. The Thomas D. Thompson.

BS: This was a USGS?

JS: [The Thomas G. Thompson was the University of Washington’s research ship.] They were just PHD geological oceanographers dealing with the university. But, they had 3 or 4 of them on the cruise. There was no plan. They were looking for the Bering Sea land bridge and there was no plan on where they were going to go next. They took a sample. There was no idea which way they were going to head after that. Which I can see, if they found something, then maybe you go
to where that is. That makes a lot of sense to me. It’s more open for research. But where I feel they bungled it is, we’d had breakfast, right? at 8 o’clock. As soon as everybody finished breakfast, immediately we’d have a station. We’d take a coring and do the work. Then we had lunchtime. We’d have our lunch. After lunch we’d have a movie and then we’d have a station right after the movie was over. And then we’d have dinner, we’d have a movie and a station right after that and then there would be no stations until 8 o’clock the following morning.

Meanwhile, they’d be profiling across the Bering Sea looking for something. I didn’t care if they found something in the middle of the night. They hit it in the middle of the night, they’d turn around and run back and get it the next day. But, I was on six hours, then you’re off six, or whatever it is. I was on the 12 to 6 watch. I was on with a fellow called Steve Smith who was probably the top computer guy at the University of Washington. And he and I were totally rewiring the computer system, we had a lot of fun rewiring the computer. He had been demoted to a technician for the trip because he had forgotten a computer disc or something like that. Anyway, it was just weird. I won’t say too much more about it. I felt it was a pretty good cruise, but there was too much they wanted to take a station when they wanted to take a station. [When it was convenient, not when needed, only after the movies. Also, the ship’s crew had 60 days of movies or so, and the researchers viewed all of them before they got off. The ship’s crew had no new movies to watch after the researchers left.]

Do you have any questions about the Bering Sea? I’ve been into Nome six times by water. And I know I’ve been on the *Thompson* and various other cruises up there. This was the geological ocean station was after I broke my leg.

**BS:** *Did you get up to the Bering Straits on this?*
JS: We stayed down around the lower islands. After about ’70, I kind of got out of it. When I broke my leg off at the ankle in ’69, and stuck it back on, I was really limited in what I could do. I was basically stuck in office work. I couldn’t do the high explorer stuff. So, I went back to the University of Washington and picked up an education degree and taught in the Seattle ghetto. Then became a commercial fisherman and I’m going to go into this in just a minute. Became a commercial fisherman, bought my own boat and started off with about a $5,000 investment. And scrimped through a couple of years and I guess our investment now is worth about 1.5m, so we’ve done pretty well with that.

BS: 1.5 million?

JS: Yeah. I could sell it a year ago for that. Now we’re down to about 1.2.

BS: Nice retirement.

JS: Yeah. It gives me a little bit of money. I got an MPA which is Masters of Public Administration from the University of Alaska. I was fishing and prices were kind of bad, so I figured I’d have to do something else for a while. Got that and taught at a community college for a while and then went and taught at Shelton Jackson College. Taught for a year there and taught economics, some 400 level courses.

BS: Where’s Shelton Jackson?

JS: Shelton Jackson is in Sitka, Alaska. Basically, the school was set up by Shelton Jackson, who actually introduced the reindeer to Alaska to give the natives something to do. I don’t know if you knew that or not.

BS: Way back.

JS: WAY back.

BS: So, that was Shelton Jackson.
JS: Right. And I taught environmental economics to small business management. I taught industrial arts and commercial fishing.

BS: *How long were you there?*

JS: I did it as a distinguished faculty fellow and I was there for one year. We did it for one year about three years ago because I was looking to get out of the commercial fishing. I could do it as a volunteer.

BS: *So, that was about 1999.*

JS: Yeah. We spent the new year 2000 in Seaside, DR with getting my teeth fixed in Portland, and returned to Shelton Jackson. I enjoyed the teaching. It was fun teaching business classes. Quite a bit different than doing vocational stuff, no dangerous tools.

BS: *Let me ask, how did your former experience working in the polar regions help you or affect your later life?*

JS: Oh, some of them are kind of off the wall and some of them are direct, so let’s start out with the first one that’s off the wall. I taught in the ghetto for a while and from what I could see there, the regular students I had no input on from polar experiences, mainly because you get in there, you talk about your subject.

BS: *Where’s the ghetto?*

JS: The ghetto in Seattle is Franklin High School. It was 30% white, black and yellow and 10% of I don’t know what. I don’t know if that’s a good term to use or not. We’ll see how it comes out. What I learned is later when I went up to Alaska and did substitute teaching, I’d still meet students who remembered my polar experience. This was 20 years later. People would come up to me on the street and say, “Oh I had you as a substitute teacher. I remember when you talked about going up to T-3 or going to the Antarctic.”
And when you think about it, how many substitute teachers do you remember yourself, that you even remember the substitute teacher, let alone what they talked about. I basically used it as a class control. I used it on resumes. I put it on a resume if someone was the least bit interested in polar research. I got a tremendous run for my money on it. They’d spent hours talking to me about that. And we avoid some of the questions I don’t want to get.

BS: So, like many old polar hands, you get a lot of feedback from people who are interested in someone that’s done something that’s not routine.

JS: Right. And interviewers for jobs, like teaching and stuff like that. I would say about 90% of the time, if I got the job, it was because of something having to do with the polar research. And 10% of the people are not interested in anything that would be on your resume. They’ll take one look at you and they’ll walk away.

In racing sailboats, it helped with my understanding of tidal currents, what to watch for, etc. Be observant. That’s one of the things about being a scientist. You’ve got to be observant. If you have a preconceived notation of what you’re going to get, you’re going to get that. It may not be correct, but you’re going to get it. But sailboat racing, I learned to look around to see what was going on. The first year I raced, I won the highest number of awards at the Seattle yacht club. My comment on that is it really impressed my wife – my future wife, I guess is the way to put it. It was about our second date and I said, “Hey, I’ve got to this awards banquet. You want to come with me?” I didn’t know I’d won all these awards. I got there and I was up in front half the time, so that was kind of . . . At the time I had a PC which was a 32’ keel boat. I went into the Star Class and raced and crewed on one of the Star World’s races once. We finished first over Dennis Conner in that race.
BS: Still race boats?
JS: I’m not in a situation where I can right now. I race with a fellow called – I bought sailboats for a while and raced them myself. I decided the PC class wasn’t competitive enough, so I got into the Star class. Well, Seattle had the North American champion, the current World champion and the Canadian champion racing sailboats there. They weren’t the same person. Three different people, plus about four others who were just about as good. And so, I’m a college student and I couldn’t afford $15,000 a year to spend on a sailboat, so I ended up crewing for Mr. Buchan for two years and Mr. Holt. Every race I raced crew for two years, we took first place, no matter who I raced with. It was quite nice. It’s good to have that kind of ability. But, like I say, my future wife was very impressed by it so that’s the good part of it.

I’ve always felt that my survival techniques that I learned in experimenting in polar regions have kept me alive in various bad situations. I spent a lot of my CM Navy pay buying climbing equipment to try in the Antarctic. When I left the Antarctic, I took almost my whole winter savings to buy a tent so I could go camping across the United States. But, it did pay off. I still have that tent. I left there with almost all my money in savings, got stuck in Hawaii because the engine shroud fell off during take-off, again on Friday the 13th. I had $5 on myself for 5 days in Hawaii and I learned by changing bunks every night that I could avoid mess cooking. That was the second airplane that really kind of (crashed?) they landed us on foam there. You know what the planes are like.

BS: Did you get time in New Zealand after you wintered on the ice?
JS: No, we had a little bit of time before we went to the Ice. And my parents had told me to contact some magistrate or something down there, and I didn’t and boy did they get mad at me
over that when I got home. I guess the fellow was a friend of theirs. He had a young daughter that he wanted to introduce me to or something.

**BS**: *Wanted to get her married off . . . yeah. They’re still marrying the girls, except now we’ve got women going down there.*

**JS**: I had several winters making snowballs, as I did firewatches in the Arctic. I did this to condition my hands for climbing when I returned. And the first time I went out, I froze the daylights out of my hands, so it didn’t work, but . . .

In commercial fishing, I’ve been in some terrible situations and I’ve come out of them because I was calm, basically. And then the other thing I’ll say is the happiness of simple games like the Eskimos enjoy doing, is another thing I got from the Arctic. In fishing, it’s probably my greatest thing besides the sailboat racing, where I was learning from my science. One of the things I remember about the science was that Dr. Ratray at the University of Washington was a physical oceanographer. He did well racing. I didn’t do as well, but he was in a different class. But, when I raced in the bigger races, I had more idea of what was happening in Puget Sound, and one time I asked him, I said, “Why don’t we do a current analysis of Puget Sound, but it’s far too complicated than in the middle of the Bering Sea, or the middle of the Arctic Ocean, to try to figure out which way the currents were going and stuff like that. It’s like when we hit that real high tide and current in the middle of the night on the USCG cruise. [Here the data was thrown out, considered incorrect. Even though the wire angle of the oceanographic table indicated great speed and the ship was anchored. It did not fit the computer model.]

(400)

The only thing that served me on that, they would have thrown it all out except that we had the current angles too on the lines, otherwise it would have been as bad science. Well, that was one
thing I didn’t like about the Arctic research was sometimes things were fabricated over. And I think you understand what I’m saying about that. Because sometimes it just didn’t look right.

As for fishing, I learned a great deal about currents on the sea floor bottom. I’ll make a notation here that one time I was helping Lamont and we got some pictures of the sea floor bottom and I said, “Gee, can I have a copy of one of those? I just want a picture of the bottom of the ocean.” And they gave it to me and about a week later, the kid came over to me and he said, “I can’t give you that because you might publish that picture. You might publish a paper on it.” And I just grinned because it was so silly. But, anyway, with fishing I learned a great deal about the currents and the sea floor bottom.

In 1988, I was the top fisherman in Alaska in 5 out of 6 fisheries.

**BS:** *What were those?*

**JS:** Long-lining, primarily. I had a big year in 1988. And they were up to a 3000 boats in some of the fisheries. In one of the fisheries, I caught approximately one half of the quota and two/thirds of the fish that were caught out of 38 boats of similar size or larger. It was because I’d spent so much time studying the topographic associated with tide patterns that I’d learned through dealing with current movement in the Arctic and stuff like that. Learning how to observe the current and stuff like that. When you lay your gear out, it’s very crucial that you set it with the currents and how does it flow over the top of something. A lot of our current measurements we were trying to do were micro-currents on the bottom and stuff like that. And I worked some with that, you know, for a period of time. I was really good at designing things. But, like I said, once I broke my leg, I was kind of dead in that field. And then I got a degree. I went back to get a degree in oceanography, and I looked at it and I said, I can get my degree in geography, finish
up in two years, go back and get a Masters in four years or I can get a Bachelors in oceanography in five years. So, that’s why I did what I did.

(550)

BS: *Tell me where you fished, generally.*

JS: Chatham Strait is roughly 400-500 fathom deep fjord southeast of Alaska. Clarence Strait is about 200-400 fathoms deep. It’s down by Ketchikan. The Chatham is one of the most lucrative fisheries there is. The Gulf is off of Yakatak. And then the halibut fishing is in the eastern Gulf up there.

BS: *When you say eastern Gulf . . . ?*

JS: From . . . well, I consider the eastern Gulf from Cordova east. Kodiak’s more in the western. I was east of Kodiak. And I didn’t go into the Bering Sea fishing. I almost did a couple of times, but I could see no reason to fish crab out there. For one thing, you want to be under 35 to fish crab and I was over 40 or something when I got started.

BS: *A lot of guys from here did.*

JS: And another thing about fishing crab is a lot of guys don’t come back. And speaking of experiences out there, with a 58’ boat, I’ve been in 40 or 50 foot seas with 100 mile an hour winds and that isn’t pleasant. I’ve run up to 90’ boats. [I have a USCG Master License.]

BS: *How was fishing with a bad ankle?*

JS: Well, we’re going to try to sell the boat this year. The price of fish has gone . . . well, I’ve diversified into salmon because I figured, fishing the high seas . . . I can’t really do it physically any more. I can run the boat and I can cook, but to go out on deck and stand there, I can’t do it any more. And you’re looking at 18 to 20 hours a day. I’ll tell you one thing, you’ve been in the Navy, one of the most exciting things this summer is we had a jet fly over us. One of the aircraft
carriers was probably 30 miles from us and a jet came over at about 500’ over the top of us. I ran in to get my binoculars when I saw it coming and by the time I got out there with my binoculars, it was way on the other side and I’m only 500’ from the jet. I was very impressed by that. It was fun to be around some of the Navy guys. I think we lost some gear to one of the submarines. We just lost some gear and it had been cut off and you don’t get stuff cut off at 100 fathoms unless someone runs into it.

(End of Tape 1B)

(Begin Tape 2A)

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BS: I’ve got a couple of questions here that I’d like to ask. In retrospect, would you do it again?
JS: Oh yeah.

BS: Would you do it differently?
JS: Well, I’d love to go as a chief investigative scientist.

BS: Run your own science?
JS: Yeah. I mean, to me . . .

BS: You think you might have if you hadn’t broken your leg?
JS: I think I eventually would have worked my way up, yeah.

BS: A lot of guys do.
JS: But once I broke my leg, then I was limited. That’s why I took up sailboat racing, because I knew I was through climbing and doing physical type work, basically. Then, I ironically got . . . I started sailing sailboats, then I got in the teachers’ program because I had to find some way to support myself. And like the teacher, my one that helped me, my mentor there was another Swede, he was a fisherman and he got me going with that.
BS: Well, obviously your career as a fisherman was kind of jump-started, in a way, by your work on the Ice. And there’s more to it than that. From being in charge out in the field, nobody you can turn to to help you. You can’t call an expert in like you can in a local, secure thing here. Awful lot of people don’t realize that if you get put out on a T-3 ice island, and you don’t have a screwdriver, you make one.

JS: One of the things on T-3, we had these current meters and what we found was that they had these micro-switches in them, and usually in electronic things, the mechanical things break first. So, we had to take those apart, bend them inside, put them back together and check them. And that kind of stuff is helpful for you if you’re running your own business.

BS: You’re running your own boat. You can’t walk ashore.

JS: Well, on my boat, I had [On my boat, I had 12vt and 32vt DC and 110vt and 220vt AC.] I had four different electrical systems. I had probably four or five computers and probably 10 radios.

BS: How big was your crew?

JS: When I was long-lining, we had up to 9 people – equal opportunity people, shall we say. I occasionally would take a woman or whatever else. I’ve had full crews of - this is a good one. I went out one time and looked around and someone said, “Well, we just got out of prison,” or something like that. And I was the only one who had not been in [major prisons such as Folsom] on the boat, and this was during some of the high fishing. And the next year, the boat I was leasing had nine kids on there. They were all confirmed Christians. And so the difference of what you get for crews. On my big season, my crew were basically people who had Masters degrees from Harvard and one was a leading authority on caribou in the world. But, the money was so great that they’d come and do this for the season and then they’d go back to what they were
doing. Right now, when I bought the salmon permit about 10 years ago, our average price was 35 cents a pound for the last 25 years. When I bought it, it dropped eight and now it’s down to 5. So, I’m trying to get out of the business because it doesn’t pay to go.

BS: Is there a government buy-out for your program?

JS: They’re considering it.

BS: OK, there’s another aspect to it. Dealing with people and the isolated environment of T-3 compared to the isolated environment on a boat.

JS: The first or second time I flew in to T-3, we had a fellow that was coming to Point Barrow to do an [analysis of the effect of television on the residents.] – it’s hard to call what the natives up there . . . BS: Nupiat?

JS: Nupiat. See, it’s changed. It used to be Skimoes, and then the whatchacallits, then the whatchacallits, and the whatchacallits . . . And I just call them people. I’d rather call people people.

BS: They don’t mind it – the Eskimos. A Nupiat is a proper name.

JS: Well, the Coast Guard fellows called them Skimoes. Anyway, I learned working up there, the basic thing is to get along with whoever you’re with and our boat, when I’d run boats and when I had smaller boats, I had people say, “I wish you’d get a bigger boat with a crew and facilities,” so I finally got a bigger boat. But, I’ve always had fairly good retention of people to work with and being able to work with them in tight places. I think what it was there was a guy going up to study the Eskimos when they got television and that was the first time I realized that people would actually study people on small bases. I know when the planes would come, when the plane was scheduled to come during the summer,

BS: To T-3.
JS: T-3, they were scheduled to come and pick up the guys on August the 15th. Well, on the 15th, everybody was expecting a plane, but the plane didn’t come. Well, on the 16th and the 17th, they were still talking about those dirty rats who flew the planes. On the 20th, they were about ready to shoot them. They were going to beat them up when they landed the plane. I mean it was really getting hostile. The minute the plane landed, everybody was happy, but you’d hear these things about how they’d get mad at somebody and I know, it was like running my boat. I had a wonderful crew on the boat this summer. My daughter was on there. She’s been on the boat approximately 7 years. She’s in graduate school in museumology. And I had a bunch of other people on there. And we had a wonderful time until the last two weeks. And when it was about ready to end, I noticed the crew and everybody else did, they were ready to strangle each other after two and a half months together on a small operation. And I know there’s been some psychological work done on it, and it’s an interesting thing because you take people from completely different backgrounds. I had a couple natives from the Northwest on the boat, and some kid, and we got along just really nice. And then all of a sudden, the last week, there’s little - I didn’t like that he parted his hair on the left side or you sat in my chair. Someone put pepper in someone’s coffee because he played jokes on somebody all summer. You know these little things that come up at the end. Boy, he was mad about that, putting pepper in his coffee.

BS: Well, that’s interesting. And you’ve got a pretty good perspective on how the polar work affected you and stayed with you. And that’s important to carry on for me for others. And some don’t. You know they can and you push them with questions because you’ve done it enough.

JS: I enjoyed the winter over. For one thing, there were no women down there, so there was no emotional . . . you know. When you’re 18 or 20, there’s an emotional thing, but that’s totally misplaced in your life. Then you have a total peace on that end and that’s why I read so many
books in the Antarctic. I don’t know why I couldn’t read anything in the Arctic, but it was the difference of night and day.

BS: You read a lot of books when you wintered in the Antarctic?

JS: I read about 300 books that winter. I’d read about 5 at a time, and this was everything from unibridged War and Peace down to . . . well, nevermind what they were.

BS: Yeah, you read a lot of light stuff. So, you think we’re done?

JS: I’d go back to either one if I got a chance.

BS: Well, that was my final question.

JS: And the other thing is that, ironically, when I finished my teaching, I got a job in Seattle, in the ghetto school. And then I went and applied to teach in Canada because I was getting involved in the fishing and I wanted to move to Alaska because of a thing called the judge Boldt decision which was a ruling by the federal government that gave the Indians 50% of the fish, and I didn’t like the way they implemented it. The decision may be fair, but you don’t just take someone and kick them out and give it to someone who isn’t there . . . but, anyway, we moved to Alaska and I will say that we had 5 job offers the first year I moved to Alaska and we were trying to pick between Cordova and Kake was what we finally decided on because it was closest to the fishing ground. Kake is outside of Petersburg. And one other place, wherever it was. And then the last place, in the middle of the night, Point Barrow called me and asked me if I wanted to come up and teach at Point Barrow. And she said, “Well, I looked at your resume and see that you’ve worked for ARL” and it meant so much to me to have them call me and ask me, I almost went up there, but I was getting involved with the fishing at the time and what I’d been doing is gill netting in Puget Sound and that was being destroyed and now it’s totally gone, almost. But, it was really nice to have someone look at the resumes and come up with that. So I was pleased.
BS: It’s interesting because the natives at Point Barrow – I went up when they had the 50th anniversary – and they’re campaigning to re-open it. Now that’s the only local community anywhere in the United States that wants the Navy back. And they started off the ceremony with God Bless the Navy. Amen. And their attitude was that the Navy had trained them to do all this technical work. Well, I think we’re done.

JS: One other thing. The University of Alaska and this was when we were living in Petersburg and I was fishing and you know, in the winter time you get kind of hungry. So I got a job at $1000 a week flying around to all these different native villages on the Bering Sea. And I went to about 6 to 10 and taught the natives how to hang and do gill nets. And it was a really good experience because I slept beside boilers, I slept on top of various places. As long as I could sleep there, I was happy. And I ate corn dogs for four days because there was no other food in town, and a lot of things like that. Drove to places on dog sleds because I could go from Stebbins to St. Michaels by airplane and it would have cost $75 or I could hire two locals to carry me on their dog sled and I think it was $50. So, I went with the locals on the dog sled and liked that.

BS: Did you get to St. Lawrence Island?

JS: I went ashore there and one thing I noticed at St. Lawrence Island is that all the dogs had blue eyes. And we walked around and looked at the drying fish.

BS: Siberian husky.

JS: I didn’t realize at the time that’s what they were, but . . .

BS: So you taught basically around the shore of the Bering Sea.

JS: Yeah, I was under John Doyle there. He hired about 4 fishermen from Petersburg, and the natives always thought we were funny because we all were very excited about what we were
doing. And I carved little wood fish to stick in the net and all sorts of things while I was up there. [I even made and fried 80 Swedish pancakes for a charity at one village.]

**BS:** So that was your winter project when you were fishing in the Petersburg area.

**JS:** Well, at that time, I taught school in Kake and then we moved to Petersburg. And I fished out of there. I substituted taught, as I mentioned there. When I’d go down the street in Petersburg, almost every year someone would say, “Oh, I remember you from high school.”

Well that was 20 years ago. They remembered my experience from T-3 and the Antarctic, and the bear stories about the Arctic. To me it was a very, very worthwhile experience.

**BS:** I guess, and it still turns you on. That’s important, to be turned on by that. OK, we’re done.