(Begin Tape 1 - Side A)

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BS: This is an oral interview with Mrs. Edith Ronne taken as part of the Polar Oral History Project conducted by the American Polar Society and the Byrd Polar Archival Program of the Ohio State University on a grant provided by the National Science Foundation. The interview was conducted at Mrs. Ronne's home in Bethesda, Maryland, by Brian Shoemaker on 20 July 2000.

Jackie - I can call you Jackie?

JR: Please do. Most everyone does.

BS: OK. No one ever calls you Edith?

JR: Very seldom. If people don't know me they do call me Edith because they know that's my name. But when they do, I know that they don't know me.

BS: I've found most of the people in the polar business, whether they know you or not, talk about Jackie Ronne. Nobody ever says Edith Ronne. And it's kind of a . . . almost in awe, or almost in . . . well, you've got a reputation of being one of the friendliest, outgoing people in the business.

JR: Heavens, that's news to me and good news, as a matter of fact. Made my day.

BS: Well, good. I hope you feel good. I hope we're going to have a good day here. You were the first lady to ever winter over in Antarctica and, of course, that's important, but it's not the only thing. You had far more to contribute than that.

JR: Of course, Jenny Darlington was also along.

BS: She was along, too, but you were the one that was first suggested and then she tagged along, right?

JR: That's right.
BS: **OK. So, we'll call you Number One, but that's right, you were both there together. She can be the first one who ever got pregnant in the Antarctic.**

JR: That's true.

BS: **So, what got you there? How did you get started? Where were you educated?**

JR: Well, I was educated at Eastern High School in Baltimore. I graduated from high school when I was quite young. I was sixteen. Never had a date in my life before because it was an all girls school and I went away my first two years to college at Wooster, Ohio, and majored in boys, of all things.

BS: **You almost flunked out?**

JR: Well, I had gotten extremely good grades up until that time and my family saw that I was not getting along as well as I should, in their estimation, so they decided that it wasn't the school, for me. As a matter of fact, it wasn't. I'd grown up in Baltimore City and it was a large city and, of course, Wooster was a town of 30,000 and I was used to a big city. They brought me back to George Washington University and I lived with my aunt and uncle who were, incidentally, sending me through college. They had been paying for my college education. I lived with them. Had a marvelous time at GW. Much better than at Wooster, as a matter of fact, and graduated in History and I had a lot of English as well. It was a very enjoyable time for me. I look back upon it - I still keep up with GW quite a lot. I've lectured down there for them at least five times. Maybe more than that. And every other year they send trips to the Antarctic using my name as the leader to attract alumni to go on the trip. And then I met Finn on a blind date in Washington.

BS: **When you were in college?**

JR: No, I'd graduated by that time, but a very close friend . . . I was working in the State Department. As soon as I got out of college, I went to the National Geographic. . .

BS: **And when was that?**

JR: I graduated in 1940, and my first job was at the National Geographic Society. I worked there for about nine months, and got a job in the government. It was at the Civil Service Commission for a few months . . . about four months, I think . . . and transferred to the State Department were I remained until I went to the Antarctic, really. I sent in my resignation to State from Valparaiso, Chile. But, while I was in the State Department, I had a very good friend who was dating a friend of Finn's. And that's how we got together. She lived right above Rock Creek Park. She suggested that we have a picnic in Rock Creek Park, and this was
the first time I met Finn in her home. Her friend, Charles, brought him along and we took her . . . loaded up her little child's wagon and rolled the food and stuff down to Rock Creek and had a very nice, fun evening there. Within the next week, she asked Charles to find out from Finn what he thought of me.

(50)

BS: *You didn't prompt that, did you?*

JR: No, I didn't. Charles said that Finn had said that I was a very nice girl, very nice person, a little cold because I had refused to kiss him goodnight. But, I didn't run around kissing men goodnight on the first date. And I held that over his head the rest of our lives.

BS: *I think you're supposed to kiss girls on their first date.*

JR: Oh, you are?

BS: *Yeah, or you consider yourself a failure.*

JR: Oh, I see. Well, he certainly tried, but I put him down.

BS: *He probably never admitted that to anybody that he failed, did he?*

JR: No, not too many. But, then, a few weeks went by and he invited us over to his house to see . . . his apartment, to see his lecture film that he had made in the Antarctic in 1940-41, and the four of us had a pleasant evening at that time. Then a dance was coming up at the AAUW - American Association of University Women - and I asked him to go to that. After the dance was over, we were looking for a place, maybe to have a night cap or something. Most places around there - it was down on 17th Street, not far from Connecticut Avenue - they were closed by the time we got out and I suggested we go back to my home, which was in Chevy Chase, and have a night cap of hot chocolate. Little did I know then that Finn did not drink and the hot chocolate just appealed to him tremendously, so he was very happy we did that. We rolled back a rug and continued dancing. Charles made the comment that he hadn't seen Finn up so late for a long time. He was usually a very early-to-bedder, and so he was interested in the fact that Finn had lasted out the whole evening and was still going strong.

BS: *Finn had a reputation of being very physically fit. Was he really physically fit then?*

JR: Oh, he was.

BS: *How old was he then?*
JR: He was the same age as the year. This would have been in 1942-43, because we were married when he was 44 and I was 24. We went together for a year before we were married. I saw him practically every night in the week. And he died in 1980 at 80 years, and Finn was still so physically fit that he could still stand up straight and lower one leg and go down to the floor on the other leg without losing his balance. He always kept himself in very good condition physically.

BS: Good balance too.

JR: Well, he had very strict discipline. He was a very self-disciplined man that I find most Norwegians are. Finn could be criticized and some of it was deserved and some of it wasn't, but I think that the Norwegian personality stuck out in him quite a lot. Lots of characteristics that he exhibited in all of his work were Norwegian. He was born and raised and educated in Norway. He didn't come over here until he was about 23 years old.

BS: I'd heard that Finn got to play on the Fram when he was young.

JR: Yes, yes he did.

BS: Before Amundsen left, or after he came back?

JR: Well, no, it was before he left. Finn was 9 years old when his father was selected by Amundsen to go on what was then going to be a North Pole expedition. There were seven children in the family. He was the oldest of the younger three boys and they played on the Fram when it was being loaded in Oslo Fjord in Horton, Norway. There was a Naval base there and his father had been in the Norwegian Navy and they lived in Horton.

BS: Martin went with - this is an aside, but I think it's important because it's kind of fuzzy in a lot of people's minds - he went with, as part of the ship crew, with Amundsen?

JR: Yes.

BS: But he didn't winter over, did he?

JR: No. After Amundsen and his men unloaded at the Bay of Whales to build Framheim their base... .

BS: He took the Fram to Montevideo for the winter?

JR: That's right.
BS: *OK. So he sailed the Fram to Montevideo.*

JR: That's right. He stayed on board. . . he was part of the ship's crew. He was Sail Maker on the *Fram* and spent the winter in Montevideo.

BS: *In Montevideo.*

JR: Um-hum.

BS: *They were starving almost. Had no money.*

JR: I didn't know that.

BS: *Yeah. There was a Norwegian in Montevideo that funded the upkeep of the ship.*

JR: Oh really?

(100)

BS: *I forget . . . Don Pedro Kristofferson?*

JR: Yes! Yes, that's right. I recognize the name.

BS: *He was a Norwegian in Montevideo.*

JR: That's right. I think he was the Consul there or the Ambassador there or somebody.

BS: *He had immigrated. He was rich. Had a lot of money.*

JR: Where did you read this. I wouldn't mind . . .

BS: *Uh . . . something on Amundsen. I think someone wrote a book on it. It wasn't Amundsen's book, but . . . yeah.*

JR: I see.

BS: *I'll try and dig it out.*

JR: OK, great.

BS: *But. it's . . . of course, he named mountains, Mount Kristofferson, after Don Pedro Kristofferson.*
JR: Yes.

BS: *Anyway, we're getting aside. Here you are being wooed by this sailor.*

JR: Right. I met some of his friends around town that had been on expeditions with him. And I got more and more familiar with the subject matter. I was still working in the State Department at this time. We saw each other often. His apartment was nearby. . . he lived very close to the State Department just two blocks away. He would sometimes prepare dinner for me at night - Norwegian meatballs, of course. And I'd walk over and have dinner with him. We took walks all the time down around Haines Point and did a lot of interesting things. I remember him giving me a watch for my birthday on October 13th, but he was so excited, he couldn't wait until my birthday, so he gave it to me beforehand. Then, at around, I guess Christmas time of '43, he proposed and we were married March the 18th of 1944. We went skiing on our honeymoon. He, of course, excelled in skiing. In fact, that, supposedly, was the reason why I first met him. My friend introduced me because I was a skier. My skiing consisted of going down the Shoreham Hill in Washington, DC, and falling two or three times on the way down whereas Finn had skied all over the Antarctic continent. At that particular time, I think he had skied more miles behind a dog team than anyone in the world, including Amundsen, because he had done so many trips on the second Byrd Expedition and the United States Antarctic Service Expedition.

BS: *I'd be careful about claiming that. There's a lot of Eskimos that might challenge it.*

JR: Oh, yeah, well that's a good point! I meant in the Antarctic.

BS: *The Antarctic, probably.*

JR: Yeah, my thoughts are really in the Antarctic rather than the Arctic at the moment. He was very solicitous on our honeymoon. As many times as I fell, he would come right back up the short hill and pick me up and see that I was on my feet again and we had a good time. The following year, we went back to the same place - Stowe, Vermont - where we had been the year before and he skied on one mountain and I skied on another and that's the way it went from then on.

BS: *Are you a pretty good skier today?*

JR: He told me at the time that he had been to the Antarctic on two expeditions and that he would never go again. He said that just before we were married. I, fortunately, didn't believe him, which was good because it was about the time that we were married that the war began to wind down and he began making plans for another Antarctic trip and that's how I got involved in helping him.
BS: *This is when World War II ended.*

JR: Yes, that's right.

BS: *He started planning his trip.*

JR: Incidentally, Byrd only lived a block away from us. We were at 20th and F and he lived at 19th and F and walked down to the Navy Department to work as did Finn. So, Finn would bump into him going or coming often and they would walk together.

BS: *Was this the old Navy Department along the reflecting pool there . . . not the reflecting pool but near the Lincoln Memorial?*

(150)

JR: That's right. Yes. Well, it was the old Navy Department. And I was in the State Department very close by. I was two blocks away from our apartment, so I got to know Byrd as well. He was a very handsome man, of course. Then, Finn began making plans for his expedition and I immediately started helping. His native language, of course, was Norwegian. It wasn't English. So I did all of his editing from the very beginning. All the letters that were written to various important people, I edited. Byrd was interested in Finn's plans. But, he wanted Finn to give up his plans and go with him. Finn was not anxious to do that. The United States Antarctic Service Expedition had been Finn's idea to begin with. It was just going to be a very small group of people. He had contacted several Norwegian sealing vessels to set them ashore in the Antarctic. And he wanted to ski across the continent. Dick Black was a good friend of his at the time, and the two of them had made these plans. Dick was with the Island of Territories and Possessions in the Interior Department, and spoke about it to Governor Gruening, who was its head at the time, and the small plans that they had been making snowballed into the United States Antarctic Service Expedition, 1939-41. When Gruening spoke to Roosevelt about it, he immediately appointed his good friend, Admiral Byrd, to head the whole thing. They set up two bases in the Antarctic. West Base which was in East Antarctica and East Base which was in West Antarctica. Byrd did not stay down there during the winter at all. He went back - as soon as East Base was set up, he returned to Boston. When the commentators would broadcast, "Here's to you, Admiral Byrd and all of your companions in the Antarctic," he was sitting two blocks away from them at 9 Brimmer Street in Boston..

BS: *I did an oral interview on Gordon Fountain before he died.*

JR: Oh yes.
BS: And he said, after the '33 expedition, Byrd was too sick to winter over. He couldn't have done it. He said he felt he never really recovered. He was a changed man. And from that time on, with all of the US Government Expeditions, he was a figurehead.

JR: Yeah.

BS: Is that correct?

JR: More or less, I think.

BS: Because there was Dick and then Paul who headed each . . .

JR: That's right, exactly. Incidentally, Finn was in the Antarctic when Byrd died in 1957, but I was invited to sit with friends of the family at the funeral. I was at Byrd's funeral.

BS: So, anyway, that was before he met you, but now you're in the middle of planning with him in 1944 or so, '45, and he's thinking of having his own expedition. Did he originally plan to go to the Peninsula, or was it somewhere else?

JR: Oh, no, because he had been Second in Command at East Base when it had been set up on the Peninsula, that was his interest from then on. Now, the Navy was extremely interested in having Finn go back. They wanted him to stay on active duty and would have sent him with all the equipment that he needed. They were very interested in having him go. The Office of Naval Research had developed a plan of the scientific work that they wanted Finn to carry out while he was down there and it should have been, really, a piece of cake, but Byrd was not interested in having Finn in competition with him. Since Byrd was stationed at the Chief of Naval Operations Office, everything that the Office of Naval Research suggested to help Finn was turned down by the Chief of Naval Operations Office.

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When Finn saw that he would not be able to go on active duty, he went on inactive duty. The Office of Naval Research was so interested, they were still willing to give Finn $98,000 for the work that he had proposed to do, but still had to be approved by CNO and every time it went to CNO, it was turned down.

BS: You did the paper work for all of this.

JR: I did. I did.
BS: Have you got copies? Did you keep files?

JR: I have pretty good files. Some of them are here right before me.

BS: Boxes in the basement or . . . ?

JR: Well, that's right. I have a lot of files in cabinets and . . . Finn turned over quite a few of his files to the National Archives before he died. So there are really quite a lot down there. And it's a question as to whether I give all the rest of his papers to the Archives or the Library of Congress. They want them too, so . . .

BS: Do they want them? Will they take them?

JR: Yes, they said they would.

BS: They've stopped taking a lot of papers.

JR: What, the Library of Congress?

BS: Well, both the Archives and the Library of Congress because they're full. They're building more archives and more archives and more. . .

JR: Well, of course, Finn started his files at the Archives, so they would . . .

BS: I'd keep them all together if I were you.

JR: Well, this is the reason why I haven't given any to the Library of Congress, because they hate to divide that collection.

BS: So, you were shot down because Byrd was at CNO and . . .

JR: Yeah, he stopped everything that came through there. He did not want Finn to go. He wanted Finn to go with him. Years later, as a matter of fact, we were at a party - a wedding party in Annapolis - we were invited to the daughter's wedding of a Captain who had taken Finn to the Antarctic on the IGY down to Ellsworth Station in 1957. We didn't really know anyone at the party in Annapolis and we were about to leave, but the Captain Gambacorta, whose party it was, said, "No, no, there's someone here who wants to meet you very much." And he went off and brought back a Captain Flucke or Flucky who hemmed and hawed and finally said to Finn, "I always wanted to shake the hand of the man who had enough courage to stand up against the United States Government." Finn said, "What do you mean?" Captain Flucke replied, "I was Admiral Byrd's assistant when you were trying to get your expedition going." He said, "You have no idea, Byrd worked day and night to try and prevent you from leaving." And Finn said, "Oh, well, I knew that. I was aware of that, but I never heard it confirmed before."
And Captain Flucke said, "And you don't have it confirmed now because if you ever mention this to anyone I will deny having told you or every having even met you."

BS: You heard him. He said this to both of you.

JR: Yes. He said it to both of us, but he would not give any more specifics.

(250)

Now, actually, Byrd was very, very fond of Finn's father, Martin, who had been with Amundsen for twenty years and after Amundsen disappeared in the Arctic, Byrd asked him to come with him on the First Byrd Expedition, which he did. Byrd always had made very, very complimentary remarks about Finn's father. But Finn's father was not in competition with him. And Byrd knew that Finn was, and he knew Finn was ambitious and capable and Byrd just didn't want Finn running around his territory in the Antarctic. So, I think, as I have stated several times before in writings that I think the most remarkable thing about the whole expedition was that it ever left the United States and got going. Finn could never get enough money even to pay the men. They had to all go as volunteers.

BS: Did Hubert Wilkins get involved in that?

JR: Yes. Very much so. Sir Hubert Wilkins was a very good friend. He, of his own accord, sent some sledges down to Beaumont, Texas, where the expedition was sailing. The ship was being recommissioned at Beaumont Shipyard and he went down himself to help load the ship and say goodbye. At first the Navy was so interested in having Finn go that they, themselves, put in a bill to Congress to lend Finn the vessel.

BS: But that must have been at the CNO level. They're the only ones that can do that.

JR: Yes it was and before Byrd was even aware that Finn was planning this new expedition, somehow it got by. Because they were interested in having Finn do this, Finn had to set up a corporation because the ship couldn't be loaned to one individual. When the press broke the story and there were hearings in Congress, Byrd entered the picture. It was unfortunate the way that Byrd would double-cross Finn. They would walk to work together quite often and on one occasion Byrd said to Finn, "I'd like you to come up to my office. I want to help you and I'm going to prove to you that I'm helping you." So one day, Finn did go up to his office and he said, "Now I'm going to show you I'm helping you . . . actually General LeMay was terribly interested in Finn's plans - he was head of the Office of Research and Development at that time of the Army Air Force.
BS: *Air Corps.*

JR: Air Corps. General LeMay had given Finn Carte Blanche to get any equipment that he wanted from the Army. Byrd called up directly the man who was assigned by LeMay to help Finn with the reconversion in every way. He said he was Admiral Byrd and that Finn was in his office at the moment and he wanted this man to know that he, Admiral Byrd, was completely in back of everything that Finn did and to help him out in every way. And the man said, "Fine," and Byrd hung up and said, "You see, Finn, I'm helping you. I wanted this man to know that I was in back of you." As soon as Finn left the office, Byrd called the man back and said, "I want you to do just the opposite. I'm not interested in helping him out at all." The man told Finn exactly what had happened. This was happening just constantly. I can remember the night Finn came home and said Byrd had asked him to give Byrd all of his plans so that he could help.

(300)

Finn said, "If I give them to him, he'll take them. If I don't give them to him, he'll just fight against me the whole time." So, Finn did give Byrd his plans and I can show you, I have the papers, I can show you the plans that Byrd didn't even change the wording of Finn's major objective and he included it in the first objectives of his plans to get the coastline of the Weddell Sea from where the United States Antarctic Service Expedition stopped down to Coats Land. He didn't change the wording even from Finn's major objective. Fortunately, the Task Force did not get it. But as you can see, Finn had a lot of opposition from Admiral Byrd.

BS: *Proud of him. He's a pretty persistent fellow. So, anyway, this was still before the end of World War II?*

JR: Yes. This was at the end of '46 that all of this was happening. It was just absolutely touch and go. Finn had been asked to pick out sites for a Base at Thule, Greenland, for what is now Thule Air Force Base and he submitted plans for that. He had been asked . . . He was not put in charge of the Task Force going up there because as a Commander, he didn't have the rank, but he was on the Task Force which picked out the site.

BS: *That was Nanook?*

JR: Was it called Nanook? I don't remember.

BS: *I'm asking the question. It's when they went to build Thule.*

JR: Yes. I think they did build it on that trip, too. Of course, he was working day and night to get his own plans going. And this delayed his own plans. Another
funny thing that happened while Finn was busy with letters and planning and selecting personnel.

BS: *And you were doing all the . . .*

JR: Yeah, I was on the typewriter constantly . . . when he got a call from the Norwegian Embassy from a childhood friend, Christian Ostby, who was a Vice-Consulate at the Embassy at the time. He said, "I have some ridiculous man who wants to make some silly trip across the Pacific on a balsam raft and he needs supplies and everything you can think of and since you've just gone through this, could we come down? Could you help him out?" So, he brought the man down and Finn did help him. He gave him all his sources - the press contact from the North America Newspaper Alliance who was buying the story and so on and so forth. And he went on and on and on that we had been up skiing at a Norwegian place in Stowe, Vermont, and we had met a woman there, a Norwegian woman, who had been married in the Marquessa Islands. This man had already said that he and his wife had been in the Marquessas and they had been married there and I repeated, "Oh, we met this woman who also was married there and she was skiing with us up in Vermont." He brought a picture out of his wallet and showed us. Sure enough, it was his wife that we had been talking to up in Vermont.

(350)

When he left that night, Finn turned around to me and said, "Have you ever heard of such a plan? Well, that scheme will never capture the public's imagination." And of course, it was Thor Heyerdahl who had been there.

BS: *I had dinner with Thor at the Explorer's Club. I just happened to be sitting at the same table and Isaac Asimov, same table. That was my first trip to the Explorer's Club.*

JR: Oh really?

BS: Yeah. I'd been a member for a number of years and never gone to the annual dinner. I still don't go to many of them. I don't enjoy them.

JR: I don't go up for the annual dinner often, but I do go to the meetings here in Washington often.

BS: *That's what I like, is the local meetings. And the weekly meetings in New York. You know they always have something going on. Those are better than these one o'clock in the morning things. You were raising your money at the time you met Thor Heyerdahl. Who were your supporters? Who were your financial supporters for the expedition.*
JR: Well, of course, Finn tried to get in touch with everyone he knew. It ended up being government support - mostly the government that was interested in having all of this done. And the North American Alliance had given $15,000 for all of the reports coming back from the Antarctic.

BS: So, were you obliged to do so many reports.

JR: Later, yes, I did many newspaper articles. I probably averaged three a week. I was very conscientious about it. And some money came from private individuals that were good friends of Finn's. For instance, the Sweeney Family and . . .

BS: The Sweeney Medal guy from the Explorer's Club.

JR: That's right. Ed Sweeney. He was a very, very close friend - a lawyer who lived in Washington. And his wife. And also her father, Mr. John Hauberg, whom we knew. He donated money too. And Allen Scaife, that's the Mellon Family in Pittsburgh.

BS: Allen . . .?

JR: Scaife. S-c-a-i-f-e. There's still a Scaife up in the Pittsburgh area - a strong Republican who is in the news all the time. And Kasco Mills that was a dog food company. The coal was donated by a Texas Company from Beaumont.

BS: Kasco Mills, huh.

JR: Um-hum. The Weather Service, I think, contributed some money. But, the government . . . branches of our government were interested in having him do this. They cooperated beautifully. Particularly General LeMay.

(400)

And incidentally, I never mentioned Admiral Paul Lee. He was Head of Office of Naval Research at the time. And a funny story about him . . . one of the big reasons why I didn't want to go to the Antarctic . . . was I did not want the Office of Naval Research to think that Finn had intended my going all the time as a means of publicity. This was not so. I was afraid that people would misunderstand and think that he had always intended to take me, which was not so at all. At a reception upon our return, Admiral Paul Lee came up to me and in great seriousness said, "Madame, you have disappointed me greatly." Shocked, I asked why and Admiral Lee answered, "Because you did not produce the first citizen of the Antarctic."

BS: Well, we're going to get to that, aren't we?
JR: Yes.

BS: OK. Let's get it back in order. Here we are with the funds. Army Air Corps supported you - LeMay. And ONR - Office of Naval Research.

JR: That's right.

BS: And several private companies, but you got a big grant from Congress because of ONR. Is that correct?

JR: Well, it was only $28,000.

BS: $28,000.

JR: That's the only thing that ONR could give without approval of the . . .

BS: I understand. It was the only thing that ONR could do without the approval of CNO.

JR: CNO, yes. It was.

BS: So that was your major grant? $28,000?

JR: $28,000.

BS: What was your total funding?

JR: It was less than $50,000. The whole expedition was less than $50,000. Finn was never able . . . I think he finally raised $48,000. He was never able to get any more money because of Byrd's opposition and corporate money wasn't forthcoming then. It was right after the War and companies - the way the companies give money now for these expeditions, I just can't believe it. When I see how much money they're collecting. And we were just stripped for money.

BS: Did you go in debt?

JR: Oh yes. And the men weren't paid. They were all volunteers. Finn had intended to pay all the men. He never got enough money. It was a question of going or not going.

BS: But, there were some military seconded to you - Adams?

JR: Yes.

BS: And Lassiter? How about Fiske? Was he still in the Navy at the time?
JR: He was not still in the Navy. He had left the Navy. He was not in the Navy, no, but he returned to it in later years. And incidentally, he's one that gave all his papers, I think, to the University of Wisconsin, if I'm not mistaken.

(450) But he applied to go on the expedition. He got rumor of it somehow. Word got around and Harry Darlington came to Finn. He had been on the United States Antarctic Service Expedition as the youngest man on the Expedition. In the meanwhile, he had become a pilot and he came to Finn and said he'd like to do something for him. He was a pilot during the war and Finn needed a pilot. He was very, very helpful. He put Finn in touch with one of the people in Pittsburgh who gave money. And he helped out in many, many ways. He had just been married a couple of months before we met and he and his wife didn't even have a home to live in. She was from New York. His mother, who was from Washington, was much against his marriage to Jenny. But, the four of us became friends. There were a lot of things that we didn't know in the background that we found out later. That, for instance, Harry had been a problem growing up. Harry's mother. . . her name was no longer Darlington . . . it was Mrs. Guy Garrett. She was a very wealthy woman. After Harry and Jenny had left for Texas, she called us down to have tea at her home on Belmont Road here in Washington in a very nice section. She didn't say anything directly against Harry, but, in retrospect, she was trying to warn us and we didn't pick it up. She said that if Harry got depressed on the expedition, to that he was welcome home at any time. She was trying to convey something to us and we just didn't realize it at the time. She later sent money. I think she sent $250 worth of books for our library on the trip and asked us not to mention it to Harry. Harry was estranged from his mother at the time, which we did not know.

BS: So, here you are. You've got your money. And this is about 1946.

JR: Yes. Exactly.

BS: But you got support from the Air Force in the form of equipment?

(500) JR: Lots of it. LeMay just gave Carte Blanche to everything, anything that Finn needed. He selected three planes, two Weasels, spare parts and many other things. The reason why LeMay was so interested is because he felt that this was a much less expensive way of testing their equipment under cold weather conditions than it would be if the Army had done it itself and so this is the reason why he was interested. He sent all types of clothing to be tested in cold weather climate. And we tested it as well.
BS: *Did he send the pilots, too?*

JR: Yes, he did, but at the very last minute. The clothing, incidentally, I'll finish that story because there was enough clothing to fit everyone on board. And when we finished at the end of the expedition, we stripped, all of us, just took all of the clothing we had worn off and put it in one pile that was to be sent up to Philly for testing. Whether it was dirty or not, we didn't keep a piece of that clothing because we promised to send it back for testing and that's what we did.

At the very last minute, the two pilots delivered the three planes from one of the Air Force Bases in Texas. Jimmy Lassiter was the older of the two. He said when he sort of sniffed around and found out what was going on, he thought this looked like a pretty interesting thing to do. Finally, he asked the men about it and they said, "Well, speak to Finn." He finally went up to Finn and asked if he could be considered to go on the expedition and talked at great length about his qualifications. Finn was impressed by him. He said he would ask General Lemma if he could be released, which he did do and LeMay said he could go along. Then Lassiter said, "Well, my pal here, Lieutenant Adams, he's a great guy and we work well together, do you think you could get LeMay to agree to him? And LeMay did agree for the second time. That's how those two got on the expedition that was very fortunate because they did all of the major flying down there.

(550)

BS: *So they came along from the very beginning intending to fly?*

JR: Yes, yes. We had three planes - a twin engine C-45 Beech, a Noordwyn C-64 Norseman and a Stinson L-5 and could use the extra pilots.

BS: *Now, you say the planes were delivered by the two of them. Where was that?*

JR: Down in Beaumont.

BS: *They flew them to Beaumont.*

JR: Yes, from Kelly Field, one of the Army Air Force Bases in Texas.

BS: *OK. And so, all your supplies were amassed in Beaumont by railroad and . . .*

JR: Yes. The Beechcraft plane which was the largest of the three, was equipped by Bill Latady - our aerial photographer - with the framework for trimetrigon cameras. Unfortunately, as it was being loaded, a lifting load broke and it fell on the deck and was just ruined completely. 100%.

BS: *Did it damage the cameras?*
JR: It damaged everything.

BS: Everything.

JR: No, not the cameras. Not the cameras. The cameras were not in as yet. But Latady took all of the framework, the mounting equipment for the cameras, out of the plane and LeMay saw that we got another plane in Panama. It was a plane exactly like the one we had lost. It had been the commanding officer's plane in Panama. Of course, the commanding officer wasn't too happy about it. But, it was loaded on board in Panama, so we had the exact same plane. And Latady . . .

BS: Who's Latady now?

JR: He was the aerial photographer. Bill Latady.

BS: He was on the expedition.

JR: That's right.

BS: Bill . . . L-e-?

JR: L-a-t-a-d-y.

BS: OK. Latady. OK.

JR: And on the way down, he redid all of the equipment for mounting the cameras - the three cameras. One on either side of the plane and one pointing straight down. They covered horizon to horizon. There was a 60 degree overlap while photographing the terrain beneath.

(End of Tape 1 - Side A)

(Begin Tape 1 - Side B)

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BS: Did you keep a journal?

JR: I kept a very good diary. Every day, from the time we left Valparaiso, until we returned to the States, because it wasn't decided until Valparaiso that I would definitely accompany the expedition. I might as well start to tell the whole bit about how I happened to go. Finn had not been able to insure the vessel because it was a government vessel and while still at Beaumont, he had to fly back to
Washington to see the Congressman from the Beaumont district who was able to straighten out the insurance problem so that the government was finally able to insure the vessel. It was a Navy vessel being operated privately and you can see that that was a sticky matter. Anyway, it was insured finally and he came back to Beaumont. But, this delayed his departure and our final work sessions and because of that, he asked if I would go along as far as Panama and we could catch up on the things that he wanted to discuss with me - things I would have to take care of in his absence. I had intended to handle all of the background of the expedition in the States. I had a very good job in the State Department. It was very interesting, and I had intended to handle all of the expedition backlog or whatever came up. He asked if I wouldn't just extend my leave of absence from the State Department to go as far as Panama. After thinking it over for a bit, I got in touch with my understanding boss in the State Department to ask if I could stay for another week or so, and got permission to, so I did go as far as Panama. And on the way down, Finn began to see that there wasn't anyone that was going to write the articles contracted for by the North America Newspaper Alliance. He had a good imagination. His native language, of course, was not English, which is the reason why I had always edited all the letters that he wrote. It was then he said, "I think you would be much more of a help to me if you just went the entire way." I just blew an entire gasket and said there is no chance that I'm going to do that! I have a very good job at the State Department. No woman has ever gone on an Antarctic expedition before. I'm not interested in the publicity of going. I do not want the Office of Naval Research to think that you had this in mind all the time and we're using it for publicity. No! I'm not interested in it. Who would take care of our apartment? All the furniture in it? No! There's no chance of my going. But he was, of course, an extremely persistent man. If he hadn't been, he would never, never have gotten that expedition going in the first place.

BS: Did you let him boss you around?

JR: Yes. And he was working on me now instead of getting the expedition going, he was working on getting me going. So, he just kept at it and kept at it and by the time we got to Panama, it was pretty much decided then that I would go as far as Valparaiso, Chile, anyway. So I began buying a few little items in Panama that I thought I might need just on an off-hand chance. And I did write letters from Panama to my aunt and to my boss saying that there was a very off-hand chance that I might go the whole way and I wanted them to know because Valparaiso, Chile, would be the last port-of-call (so we thought) to get any mail back and forth. Well, by the time we got to Valparaiso, my aunt - I told her not to tell anyone at all - she told all my friends. She told them to try to persuade me not to go.

(50)

So, I had a stack of letters at the Consulate in Valparaiso, Chile, yea high, and my
aunt just gave all sorts of reasons why I shouldn't go. Many, many reasons, most of which I had already thought of anyway. And at the last sentence in the last paragraph of the last letter, she ended up by saying, "And don't forget. You might ruin your complexion." Something I certainly had not considered!

BS: Did the press get a hold of this then?

JR: No. Well, the press didn't know. They knew nothing.

BS: They didn't know. OK. She didn't tell the press.

JR: No. And I was doing the articles. I had already started writing some articles under Finn's name, not under my name, because nobody knew I was on board. The press didn't know I was on. The North America Newspaper Alliance didn't know.

BS: Was Jenny Darlington on board with you?

JR: She came down with me because she . . .

BS: From Beaumont.

JR: Yes. She considered it sort of a honeymoon. She wanted to go. We were friends and she wanted to go as far as I went because we would fly back together. We planned to fly back from Panama together and then when I decided to go on, she wanted to go, too, and we were going to fly back from Valparaiso together. So, by the time we got to Valparaiso, it hadn't been decided. It wasn't decided until we were in a Valparaiso hotel room when I finally gave in and consented. We called Bob Nichols. He was Senior Scientist, a great geologist, and talked to him. We asked his advice about the whole thing. And he thought I should go, but he thought I should go alone. He didn't think that I should take Jenny along. But, Jenny wanted to go. Her husband, Harry, did not want her to go. He didn't want me to go either. And finally, when he found out that I would go regardless, he gave in and consented for her to go, too. But, by that time, some of the men on board were suspicious of whether or not I was going to go the entire way and a couple of them didn't think, you know, they were adamant about no women on board. This is a macho country down there and they didn't want any women - they were getting away from women and they didn't want any women along. This was kind of funny at the time. Finn didn't say anything to them at all, but they had tackled the wrong man there. As far as Finn was concerned, it was none of their business and he was going to do it regardless. And those men, a couple that were mildly protesting, they came to me in the middle of the expedition and said how glad they were that I had gone. One of them, particularly. He's still alive and he's a very aesthetic, sensitive person who wrote a lot.
BS: *Who is this?*

JR: It was Chuck Hassage was one of the ones who was not interested in my going, but we became very good friends on the expedition. He was a very aesthetic man. Did a lot of writing of poetry and stories. He had not had a college education at the time, so he came in to have me check his English constantly in his various writings, which I did. And I encouraged him to go to college and finish college after he got back from the expedition. Which, incidentally, he did do. And he still writes, much better English now than when we were on the expedition. He still keeps in touch too.

BS: *Well, that's wonderful. So, here you are in Valparaiso.*

JR: Yes. And finally Bob Nichols said he thought I certainly should go. Well, I finally made up my mind that I would go and I let my family know and I also guess it was then that I told the North America Newspaper Alliance that I was going and would write the articles, but to keep it very low-key. I did not want any sensational publicity whatsoever. So, I did get aboard and we went down . . .

(100)

BS: *Well, let me ask a question before you get aboard, the rumor is that you only had a cocktail dress.*

JR: Well, this is true almost. When I give my lectures, I begin by saying I started off for a 15 month trip to the Antarctic with one small suitcase which contained mainly a good dress, a good suit, nylon stockings, and high heeled shoes. Literally, it was the truth.

BS: *Did you ever wear them down in Antarctica?*


BS: *Never.*

JR: Never. I also had a skirt and sweater along, I guess, so on really dressy occasions like Christmas and mid-winter night, mid-summer night, I did dress up in my sweater instead of government issue wool shirt and pants. And I think I had some sort of necklace. Maybe a string of pearls that I wore, so . . .

BS: *Have a big Christmas party?*

JR: Right.

BS: *Did Jenny dress up?*
JR: Yes. Much more so than I did, actually.

BS: She had more clothes.

JR: Yeah. I think she did. She was more interested in impressing the guys, I guess, than I was.

BS: Now, why did she come? She wanted to, I know, but . . .

JR: Well, she wanted to go, of course, terribly much because she considered . . . she was still on her honeymoon, for heavens sakes. And I wanted her to go. It was my doing, because my husband didn't want her to go and her husband didn't want her to go. But, I wanted her to go because I thought it would take away from any sensationalism that I was the first and only woman to go on an Antarctic expedition. I did not want the sensational publicity of this. I wasn't seeking it and I tried to keep it very low-key.

BS: So, you wanted her so there would be two women, basically.

JR: Yeah.

BS: OK. So here you are, getting ready to go. What did you do after that? Did you run around Valparaiso shopping?

JR: I collected a few things, not terribly much, actually. I remember I got a pair of ski boots in Valparaiso because the boots that we had, the Quartermaster Corps boots, didn't seem to fit me. I didn't have the right size, so I remember I did buy a pair of Chilean ski boots and some more cosmetics. And, another funny thing that happened. We took the inland passage down from Valparaiso because the seas were so rough, we had topside weight with the three planes and lots of dogs. We say the roaring 40s and the stinking 60s, so we took a pilot and took the inside passage down. And when we got to Punta Arenas, Chile, for a few days. Every time we went into port, you'd have to spend at least three to five days clearing the port if you didn't have an agent in the port, you had to do all the footwork yourself. I remember thinking in the middle of the whole thing, my gosh, I love to knit and how come I don't have any wool, any equipment to knit in the Antarctic. I certainly will have a lot of time on my hands. So I went into a woolen store and they had two types of wool there, American and Chilean, and I thought, I can get American any time. I'll take the Chilean wool. Then I said I would like to have some knitting needles please. "Knitting needles?" they said. They didn't have any knitting needles for sale at all. And I was just shocked. "Where can I get them in Punta Arenas? Can you tell me a place?" And they said, "We really don't know." There was a woman standing in back of me. She was from Santiago and she was down in Punta Arenas visiting her daughter just for a week or two every summer.
She overheard that I was going to the Antarctic. Of course, she couldn't believe this. Nobody could. I couldn't either. And she said, "Well, I have knitting needles with me and if you come back here at 2:30 this afternoon, they will be here. I'll go home and get them and bring them back for you." Which she did. I came in at 2:30, or 3:00 o'clock and got those knitting needles that she left and to this day, I feel absolutely terrible that I did not get her name and address.

I could have sent her a message from the Antarctic that I was using them and I've always felt very badly about the fact that I did not. I hope she's read something I've written so that she knows how grateful I am. Down there, I did a lot of knitting. I did after-ski socks and put innersoles on the bottom in order to have a base for them. I had knitted socks, not terribly long before and I remembered how to turn a heel on the sock. If I had to do it today, there's no way I would know how to turn that heel. So I did a lot of knitting.

BS: Did you do it for yourself, or Finn?

JR: Yes, yes.

BS: Did you knit anything for presents or anything else?

JR: No. I didn't.

BS: Do you still knit?

JR: Well, I do, but not terribly much. But, some examples of my knitting are on display down in the Naval Museum.

BS: I've seen it a long time ago. I understand they've updated it.

JR: Yes, I dedicated it. I opened that Antarctic museum section. They asked me to do that. Some of Byrd's stuff is down there and quite a lot of our stuff is there in the cases.

BS: That's good. It's a good place to have it. Have they got it temperature/humidity controlled and all that? Hopefully, doesn't deteriorate.

JR: I think they pretty much do, as I recall.

BS: They've got to be careful about the lights, they've found out. If you take full spectrum lights, it will fade out the colors.

JR: That's interesting.
BS:  You can get lights now that you can't tell the difference by looking, but they take out that spectrum.

JR:  That's interesting because it's sort of in a little section to itself there while, in the main thoroughfare it is quite light, but if you go into this little cove, it is a little darker. It is indeed.

BS:  Good. Good. OK. Here you are at Punta Arenas.

JR:  Yeah.

BS:  Punta Arenas. That's your last port-of-call.

JR:  Last port-of-call.

BS:  How was the trip across the Drake?

JR:  It was very calm. It was very calm. I've been across the Drake since then many, many, many times. (About 30).

BS:  Have you been across during a real storm?

JR:  Yes. On the way back, we had a real storm, but not going down.

BS:  Drake Lake. Drake Lake.

JR:  It was Drake Lake. But on the way back, we rolled 52 degrees to either side on the inclinometer, and that was maximum roll. That's enough to turn our ship over. Bob Nichols said later, he was lying down in his bunk and thinking about the whole thing. He thought, I know this ship is going over, shall I go up to Finn's cabin and get the keys to the safe and get my geological notes out of the safe, or shall I let them go down with the ship? This is on his mind. Sounds like a geologist, doesn't it?

BS:  Yeah. Going to take his rocks and jump overboard.

JR:  That's right. Exactly, exactly.

BS:  Well, so Drake Lake. Who did the navigating?

JR:  That was sort of a story in itself, too. Smitty did the navigating. Walter Smith, he's down in Florida.

BS:  I've talked to him.
JR: Yeah. You have talked to him? Great guy. On the trip down to the Panama Canal, he said, he told Ike, who was the Skipper, that we were coming upon the entrance of the Canal, but Ike didn't believe him. He had no reason to think that Smitty was a good navigator one way or the other and Ike said - it was getting dark - "We're going to lie to at the entrance to the Canal until I'm sure that that's the entrance." And Smitty said, "It is."

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But Ike said, "We'll lie to until morning, daylight," and in morning, the Stella Polaris, I think it was - which is a Norwegian cruise ship - was heading in the opposite direction toward us and turned in ahead of us into the Canal and Ike said, "Follow that ship!" From then on, he never questioned Smitty's navigation. Smitty had been right on. When we were getting to the continent, he hit it right on exactly where we were supposed to go.

BS: You mean to cut in to East Bay?

JR: Yes, exactly.

BS: Well, Heber Point is off and then had to turn in amongst the islands to get there.

JR: That's right.

BS: I see. I know the way, but . . .

JR: Have you been in to East Bay?

BS: I haven't been in there. We were stopped by ice a couple of years ago.

JR: Yeah, right.

BS: Yeah, well, we wanted to, but didn't make it. I understand they didn't get in this last year either. Bob was with them. He didn't get in there. The ice stopped them. Bob Dodson.

JR: Was with them?

BS: Was with one of the cruise ships.

JR: That was trying to get into East Bay?

BS: MEI ship, yeah.
JR: Is that right? That's interesting.

BS: He's going back next year.

JR: Yeah. I am too.

BS: Not for the whole season.

JR: There's only one ship.

BS: I make three or four cruises . . . it gets old.


BS: Same trip and . . .

JR: Right. That's what I do, too. I think I'll go on a couple of short ones. I can usually call the ones that I want to go on.

BS: I can too. They . . . the long ones . . . I've done them when I was in the Navy and I'm not interested in sailing to McMurdo again.

JR: Well, we got into McMurdo this past year, we got into McMurdo in 2000 after three tries. But, the Marco Polo isn't going over there any more, ending up in Christchurch, because they've gotten a second ship that will take care of that Far Eastern traffic for them, so they're going up through the Chilean fjords this time.

BS: OK. Here you are. Walter Smith got you right there.

JR: Right there. Finn kept pointing out to me the various landmarks as we were headed toward the continent. Although I had seen his film many times, I think seeing the Antarctic for the first time is just. . . It's an experience of a lifetime. It's a sensational thing to see the Antarctic Continent for the first time and I tell the people who are undecided about going that no one can really describe it. You have to see it to believe it. We got in and we were anchored, for heaven's sake, we anchored right in front of the British Base. Since the Americans were there last, they had built this British Base under the secrecy of war, the Brits had gone down there and established five bases on the Antarctic Peninsula. They have a fit when I say the Palmer Peninsula, so I'll try to remember to say the Antarctic Peninsula. It was the last minute before Finn left that the publicity actually came out about his getting the ship and going to the Antarctic. The British Embassy picked that up and sent it over to England. The Foreign Office got in touch with the Embassy to try to persuade Finn not to go because there was a British Base down there very close to the American one.
And, of course, again, they were trying to persuade the wrong person. Finn had no intention whatsoever of paying any attention to what the British Embassy said. He went up and talked to Ambassador Lord Inverchapel and said he couldn't possibly change his plans. That he was going to utilize that American Base of the United States Antarctic Service Expedition and that the American government was in favor of his doing so.

So, the British leader came down very formally and said, "Captain Ronne, I presume, and Mrs. Ronne," and so forth, welcomed me. And I was very conscious, then for the first time, of being the first American woman to land on the continent.

BS: What was his name?


BS: Ken Butler.

JR: K.S. Pierce-Butler. And Pierce-Butler is hyphenated. After a brief welcome, he made it plain to us that we were landing on British Antarctic territory. And then he said that ships had been in there of different nationalities and that the last ship had been there just a few days ago and had just torn up the American Base and just pulled everything apart and stolen quite a number of things and so forth and he would like to conduct us over there and to take a look at it. Which he did. It was just a mess. It took two months to clean that base up. Most of us stayed on board ship. We couldn't even live ashore because it was such a mess. I think it was actually a Chilean ship that had been in and Butler said he was unable to prevent them from looting all this property. Finn told the British leader that he was going to raise the American flag. On the United States Antarctic Service Expedition, they had built a tall flagpole on the highest point of the island. It was on a rocky ledge. The next morning, we got a letter from Ken Butler protesting putting up the American flag. Why were we putting up the American flag since this was British territory? I composed a letter that went back - I think it's in Finn's book - that as an American expedition, we were raising the American flag on the American built flagpole at an American built Base.

BS: That was built before the British.

JR: Exactly. It was so funny. And that was the end of the flag incident. But Finn had been treated so, in Washington by the British diplomats, that he wasn't going to take anything at all from them and he informed our men of all these happenings word for word and told them what his actions were. He was not eager for them to go over to the British Base. I think only about 9 British were there. There were a
couple more of them out on a trip, on the plateau, but he was not anxious for our people to go over and spend working time. We had to fix that base up so we could move ashore and he discouraged the men from going over there.

(300)

But heavens, they were dying to meet and talk to other people, so they would slip over all the time. They were back and forth. Well, eventually, Ken Butler came over to Finn and he said, "Look old man," he said. "I'm down here and you're down here and we're in isolation. I'm down here because I want to be. And let's get along." And they shook hands. And we became the closest friends with the British leader that you could imagine. He would come over at night and sit in our hut. I shared a 12' square hut with Finn that was attached to our main bunkhouse by a small tunnel. He would come over and chat about everything - the history of the Antarctic, the economic conditions in the United States and in Britain, and so forth. He was interested in returning to the United States with us. He was actually interested in coming over to find a job in the United States eventually. He was an excellent radio operator and he would have gotten a job in the States, but at that time, the economic conditions in England were such that you couldn't go back and be assured of a job. You could go back to the States and be assured of a job to support a wife and so forth, but that wasn't true of conditions in England at that time. So Ken Butler was rather interested in coming to the States. If he had done so, Finn would have supported him. He would have been his sponsor.

BS: *Who were the other Brits there? Was Kevin Walton there? Bernie Stonehouse?*

JR: Yes, both of them. I saw Bernard Stonehouse recently when I went over to England for Wally Herbert's investiture. Bernard gave me a copy of his new book when we met at Scott Polar Research Institute one day.

BS: *A little aside - I went to the Antarctic Club meeting in London in 1988 and met Kevin Walton and he says, "I've got a present for you." And a couple of days later, I got an American flag sent to my office. And it was the one that he stole from your flagpole. And he said, "This has just been kicking around the house for all these years." And I said, "OK." So, I called David Elliott at Ohio State. I didn't know you guys were around then. I met you later. But, I said, "I think this is kind of an important heirloom. We should keep it. Have you got a place to store it because I don't want to keep it." And I sent it to him. But, we can get that for you.*

JR: Is it at Ohio State?

BS: *It's . . . well, I'd have to call David and find out.*

JR: Oh, leave it there. I have one downstairs. Before we left Stonington, Larry
Fiske gave an American flag to each of the Britishers at their base and most had no use for one. But, we all became very good friends.

During the expedition, we had had trouble with our dogs on the way down. They got some distemper. So, we lost some of our best dogs. And the British had extremely good dogs and, of course, we had three excellent planes that were flying all over the place.

(350)

BS: *How many dogs did you ride with?*

JR: I can't remember the exact number.

BS: *But you lost some.*

JR: Yes, we lost some. I think it's probably in Finn's book, the number. I did know it, certainly, at one time. But, we made plans. Finn made plans with the British leader to do a joint British-American sledge trip and utilize our planes and they would utilize their dogs. And it worked out fine. They went right down that section of the Weddell Sea coast that Finn had recently flown over and got ground control points for the trimetrigon photographs. That's now called the Ronne Ice Shelf and named for me. It was the last unknown coastline in the world. In preparation for the sledge party and long flights, we wanted to set up an advanced base. The British had only one small Auster plane. Pilots, Jimmy Lassiter and Chuck Adams, talked it over with them and decided they were going to fly up and across the plateau to look for a good position for an advance base on the other side of the 6,000 ft. high plateau that divided the peninsula. To do that, the Auster plane with Britisher Thoman as pilot, was going to rendezvous on top of the plateau with our plane and go south together to find a place. The Auster plane was small enough that it could land first and pick out a landing field for our larger Norseman plane. The guys took off, but they never saw the Auster plane which had taken off shortly before them. They searched for it all over, but they couldn't find it on top of the plateau or on the other side.

BS: *This was before the winter?*

JR: Uh... no.

BS: *After winter.*

JR: After the winter, because we had to wait until the ice froze over the bay where our ship was anchored before we took our two larger planes, the Norseman and the Beechcraft, ashore. The ice had to be at least 6 feet thick before we could do this. There was some minor flying done before the winter with the L-5, but this was after the winter.
BS: *So the Auster was missing.*

JR: The Auster was missing. And we had very bad weather from then on for a number of days. But the American pilots, Lassiter and Adams, and both planes, searched for that Auster plane every day and place, even in bad weather.

There was no radio communication. It was just a totally lost plane. And, of course, we were using our gasoline to do this and gasoline was very precious to us as it would limit our exploratory flying program. But, we had to find this plane and the three men in it. Finally, after about a week, Lassiter flew down the coast where they would never be expected to have been, and sighted the Auster plane. The Auster plane had cracked up on the bay ice along the coast instead of inland. The plane was a wreck, but the three men that were in the plane were also sighted walking back on the surface of the bay ice and Lassiter brought them back, of course. I think Bernard Stonehouse was one of those.

BS: *He was.*


BS: *Grand old man.*

JR: Yeah. He is. He gave me his new book that was just published. Charles Switzenbank was there, too, at Scott Polar Research Institute.

BS: *Oh, Charles Switzenbank is very careful about what he talks about and for his records. And he can't make the claim of being the oldest Brit whose gone, and he made claims that he'd been down there in every decade since the forties. And he intimated like he was the first, you know - that he'd been down there in the 40s, the 50s, and so on. But he was on that joint Norwegian-British-Swedish one, three or four years after the Brits were down there. I mean Stonehouse and company were at . . .*

JR: I don't remember ever having met Switzenbank down there.

BS: *No, he wasn't there. He came along on the Norwegian-British-Swedish Expedition in 1948-50?*

JR: That John Yaever led from Norway.

BS: Yes.
JR: Oh, for heaven's sakes. I can't remember that Finn ever met Swithenbank.

BS: No . . . Swithenbank, he's really interesting. He kept good journals. He's on his third book since he retired and he's a really good writer, but a better photographer. Beautiful photographer.

JR: But, he writes some nasty things about Finn.

BS: Oh he does?

JR: And I don't think Finn ever met him. This is what I can't understand.

BS: Oh. I never saw anything that he wrote about Finn.

JR: I think I have it someplace. Oh, I know where he . . .

BS: Charles knows better. He's a pretty practical guy. But, Bernie is the Grand Old Man for the Brits now.

JR: Who is?

BS: Bernie.

JR: Oh, yeah, yeah. Great guy.

BS: He's been at it constantly.

JR: Right. Yes he has.

BS: Now that Walton's kind of pooped out. And others. But Bernie can claim more time, I think, than anyone else. Yeah, I cruised with him on the tourist business.

JR: Exactly.

(450)

BS: OK.

JR: Was he ever on the Marco Polo or not? Oh, I know what he was on. He was on the Explorer.

BS: He's been on almost all of them. He was with Marine Expeditions. He's been with Lindblad, he's been on the Explorer, he's been on . . . yeah, he bounces around and he was on the Rotterdam this year. That's a big one.
JR: Yeah, it is a big one. It might be larger than the *Marco Polo*.

BS: *It is.*

JR: Yeah.

BS: *Anyway, you saved the Brits. Now this was after the winter.*

JR: Right.

BS: *But we did some flying. Didn't we put Peterson and Dodson up on the plateau before the winter or during the winter?*

JR: Right, yeah.

BS: *What was the purpose of that?*

JR: To establish a weather station up there. They wanted a weather station so that they could do some flying across the plateau to the other side. And incidentally, Finn knew it was necessary because the weather was very, very seldom the same on both sides of the plateau at the same time. You know, I'm just saying this generally to give you an idea and I think I'm pretty accurate in it because I think we've figured it out before, but in the flying season in the Antarctic, all of the flying work was done in a period of a very few days. During the whole time the flying season took place, there were only eight good flying days, we're talking about, 24 hours a day. All the flying that they did was in short periods of time of two and three hours break in the weather. But the whole time we were down there, there were only eight 24 hour a day good flying days. Amazing. Now that, that might be argued. Maybe I made a mistake in that. But that's the way they figured it out. Finn may have mentioned that in his book, too. It was done in breaks in the weather. There would be a break on our side and by the time the plane got to the other side of the plateau, the weather had closed and they couldn't come back again.

BS: *Yeah.*

JR: It was just breaks in the weather.

B: *So, it started with... you wanted a weather station so that you could support the flying. And you put them up there by plane?*

JR: No, they went up by sleds.

(500)
BS:  *OK.*

JR:  Finn took them up with the dog team and left Peterson and Dodson up there. He stayed up there maybe 2 or 3 days with them and got everything set up for them, then came down again and left Peterson and Dodson up there with specific instructions to stay there until the plane was able to fly up to the plateau and change the personnel and bring additional equipment and so forth. He came down, but we never heard a word from them. Day after day went by and the weather was bad, so they couldn't fly the plane up to find out to change the personnel, to take any additional food up or supplies or anything. And day after day kept going by with no radio contact, but Finn was not worried about them at all because, in his reasoning, he couldn't think of anything that could possibly have happened to them. But, we had no radio reports from them whatsoever. So, finally after about a week went by, he began to be concerned as did other people, you know, would come in and say, "What do you think? Don't you think we should take a . . . ?" Well, he was planning to take a dog-team trip up the next day when Dodson came in late one night while we were all in looking at a movie in the mess hall. Finn was in our shack. I was in the mess hall and I heard Dodson come in, as we all did, saying, "Where's Finn?" And they said, "In his room." Dodson went tearing in there. Butler, the British leader, was at the movie too. Butler and I went tearing into our room and Dodson told Finn, "Peterson has gone down a crevasse." This was the first we knew. Everybody turned to, in order to get a search party operating right away.

BS:  *Was it daylight or was it dark?*

JR:  It was dark. The winter night was nearly over. It was light during the day, but dark at night.

So, anyway, Finn gave directions to sledgers what to take. He had bad blisters on his heels from the last trip.

BS:  *Your doctor was McLean?*

JR:  Well, our doctor was McLean. And their doctor was . . . wasn't it Budson?

BS:  *I don't know.*
JR: Yeah, I'm pretty sure it was Budson. Well, anyway, they climbed the glacier and when Finn got going, he caught up with them. He knew Peterson's mother and father very well. They were very good friends. In fact, Peterson's father was Finn's dentist. When Finn had anything done with his teeth, he went up to Boston to Peterson's father. And all Finn could think of was he didn't give Peterson two cents worth of survival. He just couldn't bring himself to think that if Peterson had gone down a crevasse, that he survived. On his way up there, he kept thinking, what to do with the body? How to tell the family on his way up there. This is the thing that was worrying him. What to do with the body? And, in fact, I'm not too sure that he didn't mention this to Butler who went too. But anyway, they climbed and searched until finally they found the crevasse. One of the first mistakes that Finn picked up was that in his hurry, Bob Dodson had put a stack of trail flags down marking the crevasse instead of stringing those trail flags out across the glacier so they could pick up the crevasse without missing it. When they got to the crevasse, Budson, who was the British doctor, volunteered to go down because he was the smallest man.

(600)

(End of Tape 1 - Side B)

(Begin Tape 2 - Side A)

(000)

BS: This is Tape 2 of the Jackie Ronne interview of the 20th of July 2000 at her home and we're just discussing the rescue of Peter Peterson in the middle of the Antarctic winter from a crevasse in the plateau.

JR: The British doctor, Budson, volunteered to go down. He was the smallest one of the people who were climbing in the rescue party. A line was tied around his waist and he was lowered down the crevasse with every body around, peering down. You can imagine the relief when he yelled back that Peterson was still alive. He called back, "He's still alive!" He had fallen down 110 feet and had ricocheted from side to side. He had a pack on his back. It had gone over his shoulders and he became wedged. The crevasse had narrowed down so that he was stuck between the two sides. The pack that he had on his back had fallen over his head and prevented the sound from coming up to the surface. He had been there stuck upside down for twelve hours. Dodson had called to him when he first saw him go down, and Peterson had asked for a knife. Dodson lowered a knife on, I think it was a 100 ft. line. Peterson never got the knife which was, I guess, just as well. But, he was down there for 12 hours and he later said that his whole life passed before him. He said that if he ever got out, that he would go and talk to a priest. Now, he wasn't Catholic at all, but this is what he said that he thought
about while he was down there. Budson took off the line he had around his own waist and tied it around Peterson. From the surface, they hauled him up, breaking loose like a tooth from its socket. And then, of course, they retrieved Budson. They put up a tent on the glacier there and took Peterson inside. The doctors examined him. He was brought back to base carried on a sled, with blankets around him. There was nothing wrong with him except a partially paralyzed shoulder that had been in that position for so long and some frost bite on his face.

BS: *Frostbite?*

JR: Yes. He did have some frostbite on his face. But in two weeks, he was up walking around camp just as though nothing had ever happened to him. Finn was so upset. He was so mad at those two guys because they had broken so many safety guides in order to get in there that he forbid Peterson from going off the island for the rest of the expedition. But he went down into an ice cave, later. Peterson was that way, you know. It was there and Peterson would have had to have done it.

BS: *Well, he went on the traverses, didn't he?*

JR: Not on any long traverse party, but his observations in atmospheric refraction took him over the bay ice west to clear the mountains by several miles for measurements ending with 1,700 usable measurements to help in designing radio equipment for polar use.

BS: *He said he did when I interviewed him. Finn must have changed his mind.*

JR: Yeah, he did. But at the time, Finn was just furious because . . .

BS: *They weren't roped up.*

JR: They weren't roped and earlier in the tent, Finn had noticed how helter-skelter Peterson acted the whole time. Peterson stepped on the radio key and broke it, so that's the reason why they couldn't communicate with base. Then their sleeping bags got wet because they didn't know how to take care of them properly. Also, they themselves were soaking wet and miserable, and then the bad weather prevented the plane from getting to them, so that's the reason why they started back.

(50)

Finn didn't find this out until much later, but on their way down, they took the wrong direction and they were in a crevasse area, heavily crevassed area, for three hours. They got themselves out of it and continued down thinking they were out of the crevassed area and they took their skis off rather than cope with the sastrugi
which slowed them down. That's when he went down the crevasse. Within ten or fifteen minutes after they took their skis off, Peterson disappeared down the crevasse. That was the reason for it. Finn was just beside himself with all the cardinal safety rules that they had broken. They weren't lashed together, as you say. And it just was one thing after another. And it's not that they hadn't been told because Finn had given lecture after lecture to prepare these guys. But they were young. They had been in the war. They thought that they were . . .

BS: *Invincible.*

JR: Invincible, right.

BS: *Well, Pete's still with us. And I can testify to you that he's just as ornery as ever.*

JR: Well, I haven't seen him for years. The last time . . . he was here for dinner before he ever went out there.

BS: *Well I saw him a couple of months ago. I saw him in May.*

JR: He went back to South America, too, for a while. To Chile, I think he was.

BS: *Peru.*

JR: Peru. OK. Peru.

BS: *He liked the Peruvians.*

JR: Right. So, that about sums up Peterson's crevasse incident. Of course, McClary seemed accident prone. They were putting up rhombic antennas on top of the glacier, raising the high poles for them, and McClary had his arm in a sling from an accident he had aboard ship on the way down. Something had dropped down the hold as they were loading stuff and, or fixing stuff that they had loaded, repositioning it, and hit him on the hand. So he had a broken bone on his hand. And he had his arm in a sling, but he wanted to get out for some exercise and he was just about ready to take that sling off, so he went up to help them with the rhombic antennas. He was uncoiling a rope, stretching it out and walked backwards. Everybody was yelling for him to stop, stop, stop, which he didn't hear and didn't do. He went off of a 150 foot ice cliff.

BS: *Well . . . McClary?*

JR: McClary. He, too, was one lucky man because he hit the ice below just as it had frozen in the last 24 hours or so. If he had hit the water instead, then it probably would have killed him, and another couple of days, the ice would have
been sufficiently frozen so that he would have knocked himself out with it too. But just as it was, it stopped him and gave him a little leeway so that he broke through the ice and went into the water. Of course, they hauled him up, threw him a line from the top and hauled him up immediately. But he was just one lucky man. He thought he was Shackleton anyway. He would go around with this huge coil of rope line hanging over his shoulders that was used for whipping the dogs. Those poor little tiny dogs and he just...it was sad. It shouldn't have been, but anyway. He wanted to go out sledging badly and Finn finally let him go out on the trail. On their way up to the plateau, they were caught in bad weather and they had to be in their tents for about three days in a white out and just had to stay there. When they got started again, the dogs were frisky because they had been sitting on the line, doing nothing, curled up sleeping for three days. They started off with a big race to get going. He caught hold of the handlebars of the sled which hit a piece of sastrugi and it pitched him forward over the sled and dogs and everything else. He hit his collarbone on another piece of sastrugi and broke his collar bone.

(100)

So he had had a broken hand, had gone off the ice cliff, had a broken collar bone, and was sour from then on. He was sour anyway. He had a terribly, terribly, terribly sarcastic tongue and apparently his father knew this because when his father came down to Beaumont to say goodbye, he gave Finn some money, $250, to take McClary along.

BS: Trying to fix him.

JR: Yeah. To get him straightened out. But I don't think to this day, he's straightened out. I never got involved in any of the discussions or arguments or back and forth type of thing on the expedition. I kept my mouth shut. I kept out of the way. I listened, but I didn't get involved in it. Finn and I, of course, discussed things back and forth when other people weren't present, but what I am trying to say is that McClary is one of the only two people on the trip that I ever sounded off against to his face and I let him have it. He made me so angry one day that I told him off.

BS: I understand. There's people like that in every group. Let's talk about you a little bit. Here you go down there and you set up quarters. You stayed with Finn, I hope.

JR: Absolutely, we had a twelve foot square hut that Finn had built on the last trip down there. He knew what went on on expeditions and he liked to have his own privacy. He liked to get away from the others because he knew they were constantly bitching and something was going on all the time.
BS: *Well, a leader has to do that to be separate himself, but also to give the men a chance to bitch about him.*

JR: That's right. And that's one of the reasons why I stayed away. I wanted them to be able to bitch among themselves against Finn whenever they wanted to without feeling that I was listening to them. So, for the most part, I stayed in our hut and they knew where I was and when they had any business with me and wanted to talk to me, they came over and quite often they did.

BS: *Did you eat with everybody else?*

JR: Oh yes.

BS: *You all ate together.*

JR: Except for breakfast because quite often I would stay up late at night or something, and I didn't always go in for breakfast. More often than not, I didn't. But we had a little stove in our room or hut, and we could do things over the stove and so forth. For the most part, I kept my own counsel. But, I never had a relaxing moment on the whole expedition. I was under tension the entire time. I had . . . Finn knew what Antarctic expeditions were like. I didn't. And so everything that happened worried me. I was only interested in one thing. It was the only reason why I was there and that was the success of the expedition. And everything that happened that could have caused some concern about what was going on in the expedition, I was under tension. My first remarks when I got back to New York or maybe it was sooner than New York, when I got back to Punta Arenas, I said, "I will never, never, never go to the Antarctic again." I've just finished my thirteenth trip there.

BS: *Did you have private toilet facilities for the women?*

JR: No.

BS: *You had a men and women thing.*

(150)

JR: Yes. There was a little house on the hill. And it had a flag on it and I think when it was occupied. . . I think as soon as you closed the door, the flag went up, when it was occupied. It was a matter of a few yards away from the bunkhouses and whether it was good weather or bad weather, that's what we had to use.

BS: *Did they make separate quarters for the Darlings?*

JR: The Darlings slept in the doctors quarters which was a room at the front of
the bunk house on one side of the front door. And Ike Schlossback had a room like it on the other side of the front door. The front door was between these two rooms.

BS: *Were there any, I've got to be careful how I frame this, any problems . . .?*

JR: With the Darlings?

BS: *No. With any of the men making passes at the women, let's put it that way.*

JR: Good question. And one which I don't think I had thought of. They wouldn't have dared. They never cursed around me. They never told a dirty joke around me.

BS: *Real gentlemen.*

JR: Exactly. And when Finn was away on trips, when he was away doing the flying for exploratory purposes, he would be away maybe three, maximum four days, maybe at a time. Possibly five. I can't remember that. I didn't know this then, but Jimmy Lassiter . . . Jimmy Lassiter and Chuck Adams were watching over me from the bunk house at all times. Nobody would have dared come in alone to my quarters.

BS: So, Lassiter watched over you. So, basically there were enough men watching over the women that you didn't have to worry about when your husbands left the camp.

JR: That's right. Do you want me to discuss the Darlington situation?

BS: *Yes, yes.*

JR: Shall we get on that now or . . . ?

BS: *OK.*

JR: Well, as I told you before, we were very good friends and Harry had been very, very helpful up until the time we really got down to the Antarctic. Finn had made him head of aviation, the third in command. Ike was second in command, and Harry was third in command. And as such, Finn relied upon him to tell the guys their various duties and assignments each day. We noticed after a while, that Harry began doing dumb things behind Finn's back. For example, he'd go out and he'd give the schedule for the day and then he would make a remark like, "I wouldn't do it this way, but this is what Finn wants." Eventually, it got back to us. Finn let it go for quite a while. He had an interesting personality because big things really didn't bother him. He was usually always very calm in a tough
situation or a big situation - he was very calm. But, little things bothered him quite a lot. The way they would tear open all the new batteries, for example, just to see what was in them and Fiske tore open and cornered the batteries.

(200)

He had every battery in camp in his loot box. Things like this would bother Finn. He didn't really lower the boom on Harry at all, but there were occasions when Harry began to come in and bitch about the aviation program. Now, Finn had discussed with Harry before he ever left Washington what his major intentions were in flying, exploratory flights and so forth. Harry had agreed to them all. Just was fine. Finn did a lot of planning of these flights both at home and while he was down there in the early winter, before the winter night set in. Harry was in on the discussions and Harry was free to come and go. He came in once and he was - I came across this last night. I think it's in one of these papers I wanted you to read. He started screaming at Finn about how dangerous the flights were. Finn sat there, just stunned. He couldn't believe his ears that he was hearing this from Harry. And he just let him rave on. He didn't argue with him. He didn't say anything to him about it, but Harry was probably drunk. They were making booze on the side. We didn't have very much liquor with us on the expedition and by this time, most of it had gone. But, they were drinking in their room from time to time. And he was just screaming at Finn saying that Finn couldn't count on him to do this dangerous flying. I was in the room and I heard it all - after 20 minutes or so, Finn said, "Harry, why don't you go back to your room and think this over and when you calm down, we'll discuss it again."

A few days later, Harry came in screaming again about how dangerous these flights were and how he couldn't be counted on. Finn couldn't count on him and all this stuff. Then it happened a third time with all the screaming and yelling about it and finally, Finn was absolutely calm the whole time and finally looked at him and said, "Harry, you're dismissed." And you know, once Finn made up his mind about this. It had taken him a long time to do it. But you were never going to change his mind about Harry again. Now, in the meantime, a number of things had happened. Our aviation mechanic, had told Finn that Harry was not keeping the Beechcraft in good order and that he certainly wouldn't fly with him under these conditions and so forth. And Finn had planned to be navigator while Harry was the pilot of the exploratory flights. But, there was just one thing after another with Harry and finally, Finn did say to him, "Are you telling me that I can't count on you, Harry?" And he said, "Yes, that's what I'm telling you." Now I have this written down. You can read it the way it happened. And that's when Finn just dismissed him. I have never in my own mind ever figured out why Harry did this because he had everything to lose.

(250)

I have some suspicions which I will also tell you, but he had everything in his
hands. He was in charge of aviation, he was third in command, there was no reason why he should have done this at all. It was unexplainable as to why he carried on like this. And I'm sure that he had been drinking probably each time that he came in and screamed and yelled at Finn. He later wanted to come back to aviation. Other people, Bob Nichols and others, begged Finn to take him back. But, that was the end. Finn would never have flown with him. He considered him entirely too dangerous to fly. And Harry realized that sitting out in that bunk-house were two Air Force pilots waiting to take over these planes. And that's all Finn did. He called in Lassiter and Adams and said, "You're it." And they were delighted. They knew the planes. They had flown the planes.

BS: *They were not intended to be the pilots?*

JR: Well, oh yes, they were always the back up pilots, but Harry was the main pilot of the main plane and flights always. But Lassiter and Adams flew all of the missions from then on. They landed in unknown territory. Flew both planes south. Had to pick out the places to land in places that nobody had been before. Unknown territory. There was never any accident or any trouble, any dissension between the two of them.

BS: *They never thought it was dangerous?*

JR: Never thought it was unreasonably dangerous.

BS: *Well, it was, but it was acceptable.*

JR: Yeah, acceptable. And, they got commendations from the Air Force after they got back. Finn wrote all kinds of letters about their work to the Air Force and so forth. It was as smooth running as you can possibly imagine. Now, if you can get this out of Chuck Adams. Are you going to see him again?

BS: *I haven't seen him. I'm going to.*

JR: Try to. He indicated the last time I saw him, he indicated that there was something that Lassiter had . . . that Lassiter knew why Harry Darlington acted this way. He would not tell me. He said he would never tell me. I'd love to know. I wish he would tell me. I'd like to put it in my book. You know, I'd like to know it myself. I suspect that Lassiter had said something to Harry. Had been working on Harry, that the flights were very dangerous or something. And that he had stirred Harry up sufficiently so that he did this. Now if you can ever find it out from Adams of anything at all, if you can use a round about way of getting the information out of him. I'm very good friends with Chuck Adams (as I was also with Lassiter), but he also was very close to Lassiter. Anyway, that's the way Harry acted and Finn would never have trusted Harry after that.
BS: So, the Air Force pilots really did a great job.

JR: Marvelous job. Finn couldn't praise them enough or see that they got enough commendations after they got back.

BS: Now here's . . . Larry Fiske didn't. . . did they call him Whitey then? Larry Fiske didn't fly.

JR: No.

BS: He was a flier though.

JR: Yeah. But he . . .

BS: He didn't want to. He wasn't part of it flying.

JR: Now, Ike Schlossback, of course, was a flier and flew - Ike, who was the Skipper, was the only person in the Navy at the time who had commanded surface vessels, underwater vessels and a flight squadron. He was in all three. But, he only had one eye. The other had been lost in an accident years before, but he wanted to go with Finn. Strange things happen in the Antarctic in isolation for that length of time. He came in to Finn once and said that Finn had promised him that he would be able to fly in the Antarctic. I mean this is crazy stuff. Now actually, Finn did let Ike fly as co-pilot on a number of flights, but never would he allow him to take a plane up. He had no depth perception.

BS: That's right.

JR: But he swore up and down that Finn promised him he could fly and it wasn't so at all. Just the opposite as a matter of fact.

BS: That was a good decision by Finn too. You don't fly with one eye. I mean I know there was Wylie Post, but Wylie Post killed himself.

JR: Yeah. Finn made Ike promise before he ever left Washington that he would never fly in the Antarctic and Ike agreed to it completely. But not after he got down there.

BS: Well, Ike wasn't too mad about that. He probably wanted to be told that he could fly as co-pilot.

JR: And Ike . . . after a while, things got boring and he wanted to start something,
you know. Ike was a funny. He was a riot.

BS: *Very popular, wasn't he?*

JR: Yeah. But we accused him of having a miracle cup, which he never washed, ever, and if he'd get up in the morning and he'd pour hot water in it and turned it in one direction, it would be coffee. If he turned it in the other direction, it would be soup. You know, it just was a filthy dirty cup and he never washed it, but that was Ike. He was an expedition hobo.

BS: *I've heard . . . was he ever married?*

JR: Never married. Never married. I've got to take you . . . have you been down in my basement, for heaven's sake? I've got to take you down there to show you a photo of him.

BS: *Well, let's get this done first.*

JR: OK. Just look around quickly.

BS: *So, we have guys in the Navy like that. They can winter over I don't know how many times. There are guys with the contractor now have wintered 10, 15 times, year after year. So, here you are. We haven't gotten into the expedition of flying and the discovery of the coast. It's spring and you're getting ready to go. You're going.*

JR: Right.

BS: *Did you go?*

JR: I flew at various times in all three planes. I was up several times with Jimmy Lassiter, but Finn would never allow me to cross that 6,000 foot high plateau and get on the other side of the 6,000. It was just around locally that he allowed me to go up in the plane and he did not want, if any accident . . . he didn't want me isolated on the other side of that 6,000 foot high plateau.

BS: *It would put him in the position of making personal decisions.*

JR: Right. Now, Harry Darlington, the first time I flew, Lassiter said, "Come on, Jackie, I want to take you up on a flight." And I said, "Oh, I'd love to go." And asked Finn, of course, and he said, "Sure, go ahead, go along." Finn was very pleased to have me go with Lassiter. And when Harry Darlington found out about it, he came screaming in to Finn saying, "No woman was supposed to fly on the
expedition. That it was understood in Washington that I would never fly in the Antarctic. And Finn said, "She wasn't going to the Antarctic in Washington. What are you talking about, Harry? We never had this conversation at all. You're dreaming." You had to catch him up in this. He just was way in left field all the time.

BS: *Did Jenny fly?*

JR: No.

BS: *She didn't want to? She probably had to support him.*

JR: Well, she did support him, which was great. She did what she should have done. She supported him.

BS: *She's caught in the middle too.*

JR: Oh, yeah, exactly. She was. And she said to me on several occasions, "All I do with Harry is try to put him, try to get him in a mood that he'll go along with Finn at all times." You know, she mentioned it several times. And I believe her. I think she tried terribly hard because it was to her advantage, too, for heaven's sakes.

BS: *Well, you're going off. They're going off exploring. The suns up. About what time did they get started?*

JR: Well, what happened was that they set up this advance base on the other side of the 6,000 foot high plateau, so they were getting weather from that base, from the weather station on top of the plateau and after the field party got out. They were going down that coast too, the British-American field party. We'd get weather from them, too. So, in a few hours of good weather, they could skip over and land at advance base and wait there until the weather was good.

BS: *Now, advance base was on the eastern side of the peninsula on the Larsen Ice Shelf?*

JR: No, it was more inland and south than that.

BS: *Cape Keeler?*

JR: Yeah.

BS: *Yeah. OK.*

JR: Cape Keeler and so there were quite a few people there from time to time.
The British-American sledge party, when they crossed over the plateau, stopped by Cape Keeler and stayed for a few days and then proceeded south down the Weddell Sea coast. The Norseman cargo carrying plane went over there constantly carrying material for the base and also gas for the long flight that would go south.

(400)

So they would go over and land and stay there a few days until the weather was good and then finally, when they got good predictions in the weather, everyone turned to. By this time the Cape Keeler base was underground. The snows had covered it and they had dug connecting tunnels under and . . .

BS: You had a building there then.

JR: Naturally. They did have one command tent there that they had dug down even with the surface, but mostly they had caves going out from that tent with people staying there with sleeping bags and so forth.

BS: So they slept underground, so to speak.

JR: That's right, they did. They definitely did. So, finally the day came when the weather was good and everybody turned to fuel both planes. Finn instituted what we called the leapfrog method. They would fly both planes south together until half of the gasoline supply in the Beechcraft was used. The Norseman was carrying huge 55 gallon drums of gasoline. They would both land and re-supply the tanks of the Beechcraft which was the photographic plane carrying the trimetrigon photography cameras. And then the Norseman would stand by at that place to guard the flight of the Beechcraft flying further south. And that's how they were able to explore the area. There were three people in the Beechcraft. Lassiter as pilot, Finn as navigator and Bill Latady as photographer working the trimetrigon cameras, and they flew down the coast until they were just north of Coats Land, stopped by bad weather and low gas. On one flight back, the radio altimeter picked up a rise in elevation below, to 700 feet, and this surprised Finn. And he said, "Oh, so this coastline rises gently until it joins the Polar Plateau area." So, he flew over this rise in the land enough to get several altimeter readings and wrote it up that way. I think it's probably on the map here, but what happened was that there was an island in the middle of Ronne Ice Shelf that's later named Berkner Island and that's what he had picked up there and didn't realize it was an island in the middle of the later-named Ronne Ice Shelf. It's probably not on that map because that's the original map. But, do you know the . . .

(450)

BS: So Finn discovered it.
JR: Yeah. Berkner Island, yeah. And it was named, you know, Berkner is an Island!

BS: *Of course, he was there when they realized it was an island in IGY.*

JR: That's right, yeah, he was.

BS: *So, the Beechcraft really... Norseman was plane guard, which is what we call it.*

JR: Standby.

BS: *The Beechcraft did the photo recon flights.*

JR: Right.

BS: *OK. Now, I've heard that you also worked with the British. You flew the dog teams forward. Did you fly them over to Cape Keeler or did they traverse from across the Antarctic Peninsula?*

JR: No, I don't think we ever flew those British dog teams.

BS: *Or your dog teams either?*

JR: No.

BS: *You never flew them into the field.*

JR: No, no, I don't think so. No, they traversed the whole thing by dog team. No, I don't think they were ever flown. Well, what we did fly was an occasional sick dog home.

BS: *Did you fly geologists into the field to collect rocks?*

JR: Bob Dodson and Nichols came back on their own the first time, but the second time, they were flown to start with. And one of the reasons why they were was because the bay ice proved to be thin when they started out the first time and they kept going into puddles of water and breaking through and get soaking wet. Now that's where Walton came in and he was unhappy with Finn because Finn let him, Bob Nichols and Dodson started off on the first trip. They went out and they found out there were big melt puddles. He let Walton go with them because Walton was more experienced.

BS: *Was this with dogs, now?*
JR: Yeah. They hadn't really started south, but they got out beyond Neny Fjord and Neny Island, and they were holed up in the tent for quite a while because of bad weather and poor ice conditions.

(500)

And Walton wanted to come back and reorganize and start again and Finn didn't want them to come back. He wanted them to keep going, to get out of this mess and keep going down the field. But they came back instead. Bob Nichols, of course, was the leader of the party, and instead of telling Finn on the radio that he was coming back because he knew Finn didn't want them to come back, he took it upon himself to come back on his own and Finn was unhappy about this. He decided that Walton was not going to go with them again because he felt that Walton was responsible for this decision that Bob Nichols had made. Anyway, he said that he would fly the two of them with their dog team down the coast to get started on the geology work. And Walton was not happy about that because he had been reprimanded by Ken Butler, his British leader. As a result of this, Finn completely revised his original plans and made plans to cooperate on a British-American sledge trip as well..

BS: So, he flew them to the what, the nunataks? The rocks that were sticking out and then they had to ski back or . . . ?

JR: No, they were on their own. They were out for a long time. They sledged with their fifteen dog team south along the west coast toward George VI Sound. Altogether they were out in the field for 105 days, I think. The people who were on sledge trips were all trying to break Finn's record of being out. In 84 days, he traveled 1,264 miles.

BS: Well, they were out for 105 days?

JR: Well, not continuously. They came back during that time after 90 days. . . but in all, he spent 105 days, geologizing which was more time geologizing in the Antarctic than anybody else before them.

BS: This was Bob Nichols.

JR: Bob Nichols and Bob Dodson.

BS: OK. So Nichols was Chief Geologist. So, the dogs went across and it was sort of a British-American dog team?

JR: No, no. There were two different dog teams in the field. One was the British-American party that went down to the east following the Ice Shelf and got ground
control on that coastline. And the other one, it was on the other coast, on the western coast of the peninsula that was geologizing.

BS: *Was that British?*

(550)

JR: No, that was Bob Nichols. No, the British weren't doing any geology.

BS: *And they had a dog team with Bob Nichols?*

JR: No, Nichols had a dog team, but it was 15 of our own dogs. They were not British dogs at all. They were our own dogs that Bob Nichols and Dodson had. And they purposely kept out of radio contact because they didn't want any advice from Finn as to what to do and what they weren't doing right and so forth. First of all, they did break their radio. And Finn got concerned about them and flew down and found them. He gave them another radio that they really didn't want and they broke that one too. They still didn't particularly keep in contact. In all, they had had 3 radios. Finn had to keep re-supplying them with food by air, and so every certain length of time, he went flying down to be sure they weren't in trouble and to re-supply them with food. At the southernmost point, when Finn went down there, they didn't want to be flown back. They insisted upon coming back by themselves, having spent 90 days, after which they were in camp just a few days and they wanted to go out again over to Red Rock Ridge, which they did do. They were out, geologizing over Christmas and even after the icebreakers came in. Bob Nichols went out into the field with one of the geologists who was on one of the Navy icebreakers which came in before we left.

BS: *What was the type - you did geology - glaciology? Was there a glaciologist along? Who did the glaciology?*

JR: Yes, Bob Nichols did the glaciology. Peterson did mainly meteorology also with balloon runs, solar radiation and atmospheric refraction and operated a cosmic ray machine. Andy Thompson was a geophysicist and he did a lot of things too - seismology, magnetic observations, and tidal observations. Both Thompson and Peterson worked on an interesting project correlating microseisms with the changing weather.

(End of Tape 2 - Side A)

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(Begin Tape 2 - Side B)

(000)
BS: *We were talking about science when we flipped the tape. So, let's expand a little bit on it. I understand you were involved.*

JR: We did a lot of seismology down there. Andy Thompson was in charge of that program and he really sent back the first earthquakes, I think, ever picked up in the Antarctic. He set up the seismograph on rock which was . . . you had to crawl under the tower, the met tower on the science building, and he set up the seismograph there and picked up these earthquakes, not only from around the world, but actually several of them in the Antarctic, a couple of weak ones within 100 miles. He sent back the results to the geological survey. When he was preparing to go out in the field for a while, he asked if I would take over the routine work of the program after he taught me, so I did for several weeks which I did by changing the sheets on the seismographic machines and I also went down to tidal shack and changed the recordings. . . the sheets that the recordings were being made on the tidal activity. So, I was sort of his assistant when he was out in the field.

BS: *So, you learned a lot about seismology.*

JR: Sure did.

BS: *And what were you recording? The tides or the waves?*

JR: No, the tides, the tides. It was in the back cove where the ship was anchored. We did have some tidal action.

BS: *How much tide did you have?*

JR: I was afraid you were going to ask me that. I can't remember anymore. There are a lot of things I can't remember anymore. It's been a while.

BS: *It wasn't a big tide, though.*

JR: No, no, no.

BS: *I haven't seen a big tide in the peninsula anywhere.*

JR: No, there wasn't. It was less because it was in the back cove. I can look it up. I'm sure I recorded it someplace.

BS: *You would have remembered it if it was a big tide.*

JR: That's right.

BS: *Wasn't forty feet.*
JR: No, wasn't forty feet. One or two, maybe, and the strange thing was that they showed a prevailing tendency to follow the sun rather than the moon.

BS: *Did he mention you as a co-participant in the paper?*

JR: No. I doubt very much that he did.

BS: *OK. So, you worked in the field. You're down there. Everybody's in the field until when?*

JR: Well, they were out 6 weeks, I guess. And they came back very enthusiastic - all of them when they came back - wanted to go out again. And it was funny, as I told you off the tape that as soon as they came back, they wanted to beat Finn's record that he had established when he was down there 7 years before when he was out for 84 days and traveled 1,264 miles. It was very fast, long. One of the longest sledge trips ever made in the Antarctic until very recent years.

BS: *He and Carl Eklund.*

JR: Yeah. Carl Eklund was a great guy. He was the best man at our wedding and as Finn said, the best sledging partner he ever had. They were very good friends and they had a lot of Swedish-Norwegian jokes going between them, too. But the . . . what subject was I on then?

BS: *We were talking about Finn's record out in the field.*

JR: Oh, yeah. But before that.

BS: *Everybody wanted to go out.*

JR: Everybody wanted to beat his record and they'd come back and say, "Well, we were out . . " one person (Woody) was out, I think 83 days - just under his record - it was funny. On his several trip, Bob Nichols was out the longest length of time. He was still out to the very last minute, even when the icebreakers came in, he was still going out with the geologist aboard the icebreakers. But, as soon as the others began getting back from the field, and the program was winding down, we were looking forward to getting back again, so they began packing up the equipment that wasn't needed and hauling it out to the ship to stow away.

(50)

BS: *This was about when?*

JR: Oh, February. And while the bay ice was still strong, they hauled out as much
equipment as possible. There were a lot of soft spots in the bay ice already. Jimmy Lassiter - of course the flying program was over by then. We'd used up all the high octane gasoline, so he couldn't do very much flying any more and boy then, he was anxious to get back to civilization. He took dynamite out and blew holes in the bay ice to see if he couldn't start the process of the bay ice leaving Stonington. Of course, all it did was to create a hole about 25 feet by 25 feet and that was the end of that. He gave that up finally and decided he couldn't dynamite his way out to open water with the ship. But, Finn got a message over the radio from the icebreakers that they were down in the vicinity and were definitely coming in and if we wanted to utilize the path to go out, that they'd let us out. So, we threw everything together immediately.

BS: So, Finn wanted to use them.

JR: Yeah. It was the better part of valor to do so.

BS: Would you have gotten out otherwise if they hadn't showed up?

JR: Well, two weeks after we left, all the ice went out of the bay. We would have gotten out.

BS: Well sometimes it will go out because the icebreaker . . . for instance, in McMurdo, it wouldn't go out a lot of years if we didn't bring the icebreakers in there.

JR: They really start it?

BS: It starts it.

JR: The British also utilized the path of the icebreakers to get in and out, too. They changed their personnel to get in and out and didn't want to take a chance of the ice not going out either.

BS: The reason I asked that was, of course, the '39 expedition down there. They had to fly out.

JR: That's right.

BS: They couldn't get in or out.

JR: Well, two weeks after we left, we heard from the British that the ice went out completely. But, Finn knew the commanding officers of the icebreaker . . . it was Ketchum, and everybody on the two ships came ashore to see us and see the base and so forth. They had been around the Antarctic, but they hadn't seen an active, operating base. They were quite interested in that. They took me up on a
helicopter flight briefly then, too. We were glad to see them. But we were ready to leave and by this time. Jenny Darlington, of course, was pregnant, so we were anxious to get her out.

BS: *When did she get pregnant?*

JR: Oh, she was about - I can't remember - three or four months pregnant.

BS: *So, you were ready to leave. The icebreakers showed up. You used the opportunity . . .*

JR: To get out. All the British came out to bid us goodbye. Ken Butler came up the gangway to bid me farewell. He intended to come to the USA in the future, but as it turned out, I never saw him again, although in later years, we exchanged Christmas messages for a while. The last thing I think they said - (they could travel much faster than we could) - and when they left us, the final signal or message from the icebreaker was, "Goodbye, good luck and God help you." Because from then on, we were running into a storm. We had a five day storm before we got in . . . we had not planned to go into Punta Arenas again. We were going right up to Valparaiso but the storm was so bad and Sig couldn't keep any food on the galley range. We were drinking pineapple juice for five days and just living on that. And we went into the Straits again to get out of the rough water and to clean up the ship.

BS: *Did Jenny ride with you?*

JR: Yes, of course, she was with us. They flew back from Punta Arenas. They left the ship there.

BS: *I'm surprised she didn't go back on the icebreaker.*

JR: Well, I don't know whether they would have allowed her. I have a feeling that probably Harry . . . I think Harry probably asked them, but I don't know the answer to that. I have no idea.

BS: *I certainly would have . . . if I were Skipper down there of one of those ships, I'd try to . . . they knew she was pregnant?*

JR: I'm sure they did.

BS: *They should have offered. But . . . well. I'll bet they did.*

JR: Yeah. Maybe they did. I think she saw the doctor on one of the icebreakers, probably . . . lots of our men did race on board. Well, the message from the icebreakers was, come if you want anything, your hair cut or come on over and
look around.

(100)

BS:  *OK . . . we're going home. You're in a storm, drinking pineapple juice.*

JR:  Yeah. Drinking pineapple juice. We got up to Punta Arenas and stayed there a few days. I can remember going in to the top restaurant, main restaurant there and I sat down and ordered one salad after another. Of course, we had been warned by the State Department not to touch the lettuce or any vegetables grown in Chile because of the soil, there was something wrong with the irrigation in the soil. It didn't make any difference to me. I just ate one salad after the other. Couldn't get enough salad and people asked me if I had any reaction. If I got sick or anything. Not at all.

BS:  *How about now when you go? If you eat in Ushuaia, do you eat salads?*

JR:  Oh I eat aboard the ship, mostly. But, yes.

BS:  *All the stuff you get aboard ship, though, comes out of Ushuaia.*

JR:  Of course. And there is one of the great restaurants on the hill in Ushuaia, too. Up, overlooking the whole harbor. Gorgeous.

BS:  *There's twenty great restaurants in Ushuaia. It's a good place to eat. Well, anyway, so you're there and where did you go from Ushuaia? Or Punta Arenas, it would have been.*

JR:  Well, yeah, it was Punta Arenas.

BS:  *And which way did you go back?*

JR:  Via Punta Arenas and we didn't go up the inland passage to Valpo. We went out to sea and we didn't come back to the inland passage. And when we came into Valparaiso, there were all kinds of whistles blowing and flags and so on and so forth. The guys on board ship said, "How did they know we were coming?" And "That's for us!" And Finn kept saying, I don't think that's for us at all." It turned out that the President of Chile who had just gone down to open the first Chile base in the Antarctic, was making his first visit down to Valparaiso since he had gotten back from the Antarctic. All the hullabaloo was for him. They had been down in the Antarctic for 24 hours and we had just come back after the whole year in the Antarctic.

BS:  *And he got all the . . .*
JR: He got all the honors. It was funny. And then we went up through the Canal and came back into New York where we . . .

BS: You didn't stop at Beaumont?

JR: No, we didn't. We went right into New York. Actually, Ike's license was up the first stop in the United States. He had his license covered going down there and coming back again, but after the first stop in the States, he didn't have a license anymore. So we went right into New York and we were received by the American Geographical Society in New York.

BS: The Geographical Society.


BS: Not the National Geographic.

JR: No. The American. And Lincoln Ellsworth came to the reception there, which was quite interesting. It was the last time I ever saw him. And Sir Hubert was there. He was Master of Ceremonies, Sir Hubert was. It was great to see family and friends. When I was in the Antarctic, I got a couple of radiograms from friends saying, "How do you like the new look?" Of course, I didn't know what the new look was and that was 50 years ago, when they started the long skirts. Of course, I went out immediately to one of the top stores in New York and bought myself the "new look." It was good to get in dresses again. I also said emphatically, "I will never, never, never go back to the Antarctic!"

BS: But you did go back.

JR: Oh, many times. Yes.

BS: First time as guest of the Chileans?

JR: Of the Argentines.

BS: Argentines.


BS: What year was that?

JR: It was 1959.

BS: About '59?
JR: Yeah. It was 1959. That's exactly it. And then . . .

BS: *What . . . they opened a new base, or . . . ?*

(150)

JR: No. It was their first tourist cruise, that's the reason. The first tourist cruise ever to the Antarctic. And the Argentines had it. I was an invited guest and Finn was on their icebreaker, the *General San Martine*. And so when our ship got to the Antarctic, they sent a smaller ship over to get him and they transferred him from the icebreaker over to our ship. He was very impressed because in the morning for breakfast, we just rang a bell, had breakfast in bed - this was unusual for us in the Antarctic where it was a do-it-yourself project and then to be on this great tourist ship to the Antarctic.

BS: *You were the first lady to go to the Antarctic and winter over and you were the first on a tourist ship. Now, was this a State owned ship, a Navy ship or was it a private expedition?*

JR: No, the Argentines, you mean? I think it was sponsored by the Argentine Government, however. It was a commercial Argentine vessel that was normally in trade to Europe and there were about 40 Brazilians on board and I think there were 12-14 Americans aboard. All friends of ours that wanted to go because I was going. And the rest - it was a large ship - there were several hundred of Argentines on board. And then, later . . .

BS: *Well, let me ask you a question right here. Were there zodiacs then? Did you go ashore?*

JR: We went ashore, but to my memory, there were not zodiacs. I think we tied up at a couple of docks. We went to Deception Island where there was an Argentine station. And I think we went to another Argentine base. We did not, as I recall, use zodiacs. We did get to the Le Maire Channel. We did go through La Maire Channel. In '71, I was invited . . . Finn and I were invited to go to the South Pole. Directly to the Pole. We went via McMurdo, of course, and it was all Navy transportation. Flew down in Navy planes and so forth.

BS: *Who was the commander of Deepfreeze then?*

JR: It was . . . um . . .

BS: *Gene VanReeth?*

JR: No, it wasn't.
BS: *Al Fowler? We talked about you and Finn going to South Pole as guests of the National Science Foundation in 1971. Is this for the new South Pole dedication? The dome, or . . . ?*

JR: Actually, it was Admiral Leon McCuddin and as I recall, it wasn't at the invitation of the National Science Foundation. I think it was the invitation of the Department of Defense.

BS: *Oh, I see. OK.*

JR: And it wasn't when the new dome was just started.

BS: *Was just in design . . .*

JR: We went down a flight of very icy steps into the old base. Went all around there and made a broadcast to Lowell Thomas directly. He put it right out on the air from the South Pole as we were making it.

BS: *Was Lowell Thomas with you?*

JR: No.

BS: *He was in . . . ?*

JR: New York. So we made . . .

BS: *At the Explorer's Club?*

JR: No, I don't think he was at the Explorer's Club. He may have been. He may have been. I'm not sure, but he had told us how to get in touch with him and we did. We talked to him from the Pole. And the dome was just being started then, at that time. It was just being erected. You could hardly see it. It wasn't very high off the ground. You could see where they were busy over there, but they didn't . . . we had lunch at the Pole. Had steak in the cafeteria line. That was impressive. When I was in the Antarctic, we had steak. We had lots of steak, as a matter of fact. We had it constantly. Every day because . . .

BS: *That's why those guys that winter over come out a little heavier than when they started.*

(200)

JR: Oh yes. But, the service was better now than we could provide when we were there. That was impressive.
BS: **OK. So that was your second trip after the trip in the 40s.**

JR: Yeah, that was my third trip down there because I'd been with the Argentines on the second time in '59, and this was the third trip in '71. Then, I waited a long time before I went down again. I didn't think anything more about it. And finally I got the idea that all these people were lecturing aboard ship and I knew Lindblad. So I wrote to him. And he got somebody to get in touch with me right away. And that's when I started going - first, on the *Explorer*, and then later on the *Marco Polo*.

BS: **So, the first trip was which year?**


BS: **To the Peninsula. Did you go back to your old base?**

JR: Yes. The secret objective of that trip - they didn't publicize it at all - was to get me in to the old base. And they almost missed doing so because the seas were a little bit on the rough side and kind of hard to launch the zodiacs, but we did get over there. And the *Explorer* people were very, very nice. They saw that I got ashore. My daughter, Karen, was with me. I'm always carrying cameras with me and they saw that we both got ashore and stayed there a half an hour before any of the other passengers on the ship were allowed to . . . they thought I would like to look around privately a little bit and see my old base. Actually, I didn't get inside it. The hut that I occupied with Finn for a year was locked, but we put a few big stones together and climbed up on that and looked in the window and it was absolutely devoid of anything. It was totally empty. The British had used the base, as soon as we'd left. They utilized the base and I think they put a new floor in that hut there. And had a big generator in there. All the furniture was taken out. It was completely different. That was true of all the buildings, practically. Everything had been stolen by various nationalities coming down and anyway . . . the bunk-house didn't have a thing in it. Didn't have any bunks in it. Didn't have the mess table or chairs. The galley - there was nothing in the galley. Three hundred pound cooking range was gone. Everything was . . . it was devoid. Not a stick in there. Actually, they had said that the British had put a new floor in there and stored their seals - the seal that they had killed there.

BS: **In other words, they took all the knick-knacks and lots of personality. Is that what you're saying?**

JR: Totally, totally. The only building that had anything in it at all was the science building and that had a small museum of just knick-knacks. Broken crockery that had been found around the place by Americans. Two American groups had been sent down there a couple of years before by the National Science Foundation to clean . . . first to assess it and see if it was worth saving and
cleaning up. The second group was in order to clean it up. Mike Parfit was one of them that was sent down and they cleaned up - did a lot of cleaning up of the place in order to preserve it. They hoped that the National Science Foundation would put more money into it and to fix it up... and leave it the way it had been.

(250)

BS: *Did Parfit go with the National Park Service?*

JR: Ummmm. I'm not sure that he was. I guess so. He does an awful lot of writing for the *National Geographic*.

BS: *He was in Antarctica - at McMurdo - when I was there. I know him. So Mike Parfit led a group to clean it up.*

JR: Yes, to clean it up and interestingly enough, when he got down there, he was so sorry that he hadn't insisted that I go down there because he said that the picture of me returning there would have meant a great deal to his articles and anybody's articles and he asked the *National Geographic* if they wouldn't fly me down, but it would have cost $50,000 to have gotten me down there, so . . .

BS: *This is after you had returned.*

JR: No, this is just before I'd returned. But I did go down the next year with the cruise ship. The canvas left on the buildings in order to keep the winds from coming inside, had all blown off the outside of the buildings. For the science building, where this little museum was, my architect daughter Karen had made three great big posters. One poster was on the results of the Ronne Expedition. One poster on her father's background and the other poster was on mine. And she had put these between very heavy plastic and screwed them into the wall. Hopefully, they wouldn't be stolen because everything else had been stolen, so that there was some sort of memento down there from us.

BS: *So, your return was disappointing in a way.*

JR: Yes.

BS: *Very much so. And your daughter was with you.*

JR: Yes. And I was delighted to have her see where I had spent a year, but it was sad to see how the base had changed and how everything had been stolen from it. Many nationalities' ships had gone in there and they just had just cleaned the place out of everything.

BS: *Probably Argentines and Chileans?*
JR: Yes. I think the British had done a lot too.

BS: *Blamed it on the Argentines and Chileans.*

JR: As I understood it from a Britisher, their government had told them to take anything that they needed from that base. It was considered abandoned on the high seas, when it's left like that for any length of time. And they had been told that anything that they needed, they could take. One building they took completely - the machine shop. I think one of their buildings at another base had burned down so they just took the machine shop apart and . . .

BS: *Well, the United States didn't do that to Scott and Shackleton's huts in Antarctica. There was some minor pilferage, but, of course, Dufek put a stop to that right away.*

JR: Oh, really. Well, now . . . of course, there were signs up that had been put there when Mike Parfit's group were down there signifying this base as the first American Antarctic site in the Antarctic. There were signs all over marking this. But, it didn't stop the ships from coming in and lifting the stuff anyway.

BS: *Yeah. Well, it's a shame. But at least you got to go back.*

JR: That's right.

BS: *Many expeditions, the guys that do them never go back.*

JR: That's true. No, I did get in and it was thanks to the hierarchy of the ship *Explorer*, because they were interested in getting me back in there.

(300)

BS: *Good. So, you went down in '95.*

JR: '95.

BS: *That was December of '95?*

JR: No, I think it was the beginning of '95, probably around January, '95. I think I went down in the Antarctic twice that year. I think I went again to South Georgia at the end of '95. Maybe it was the following year, but I think it was twice in '95.

BS: *Did you lecture on the . . . ?*

JR: I lectured on the *Explorer* on the two occasions and then . . . I've been
lecturing on the *Marco Polo* ever since.

BS: *What subjects do you lecture on?*

JR: The fact that I spent a year there, was the first American woman to set foot on the Continent, and spent a year there. I tell about the things I did and how the year went, our accomplishments, and how I felt about the whole thing, our food, what I did for exercise, skiing out on the glacier. What I did for entertainment, that sort of thing, I tell about in my lecture.

BS: *So, you've been doing it since the '94-'95 season. And you've done it every year since?*

JR: That's right.

BS: *For what, a month or two a year?*

JR: Um-hum. Yes.

BS: *I ask dumb questions for the tape. I know the answers, but . . .*

JR: Right.

BS: *And so you've got a set of five or six lectures that they call you up for.*

JR: Just two really. One, I end with a carousel of slides and the other I speak for 50 minutes to a film. I can give others, but these two are the usual.

BS: *Do they juggle you around to meet the schedule?*

JR: A little bit here and there. This last time I had an interesting assignment. Nigel Sitwell who is our expedition leader on the *Marco Polo*, had me lecture in the morning to the group of people - of about 200 anyway - to the group that was going ashore in the afternoon. And then switched them around. And it was interesting to do that a few times, because the afternoon group at the lecture asked more intelligent questions than the morning group. The morning group had their minds on going ashore and if they had all the stuff that they needed? Camera film, gloves, etc.? While the afternoon group had been ashore, were more relaxed and were ready to settle down.

BS: *They had heard the lecture, yeah. Well, I've done that, too, and at times in the middle of a lecture, "Whales!"*

JR: Right. I had that happen to me. A very funny experience.
BS: *And nobody wants to listen. See what I do, say, "Well, I'd rather go see the whales than listen to me. How about you guys?" Boom, they're up in a shot and out the door. And I figure joining them is better than fighting them.*

JR: I had a funny experience with the assistant captain up on the bridge while I was lecturing down in the auditorium. He hit what is referred to as the God Button which stops everything electronically on the ship. He did it by accident and it cut off the speakers and everything on the ship and just about 5 seconds after he did this by accident, somebody screamed out, "Whales!" and I was left up on the platform, by myself.

Everybody went out to see the whales. They couldn't hear me anyway. He apologized afterwards and we became very good friends as a result.

BS: Well, I think they were just getting into big time expeditioning. A lot more people, than just, say, Lindblad, had that first small market.

JR: Yeah, that's right.

BS: *And they had to learn some lessons. For instance, don't make announcements when there's a lecture going on unless it's an emergency. I used to get after the ship for that. I said, "Look, you've got routine stuff going on. We're trying to entertain passengers. They're your bread and butter." They know now.*

JR: Finn was the leader, you know, of the first Lindblad tourist cruise to go down there, I think it was in '66.

BS: '67. I was there when it came into McMurdo. You mean when it came into McMurdo?

JR: I don't think so . . . that only went to the peninsula. I don't think he went . . .

BS: That was '66. Then it was '67 into McMurdo. I was there when they came ashore. All the women. We liked them.

JR: Right. Exactly. Good to see some outside people, particularly if they were women, huh?

BS: We thought so. OK. So, and you're going to do it next year. That is, this season coming up.

JR: Yeah. Every year I say this is my last one and then I give in because I
thoroughly enjoy it.

BS: What's your favorite area to go to as a tourist leader?

JR: Well, I guess I enjoy it all, but certainly the Peninsula is the most scenic, by far. Cruising through LeMaire Channel is by far the most spectacular. And on the peninsula, I think my favorite is probably Waterboat Point. The reason why I'm interested in that is because Sir Hubert Wilkins left a couple of men there one year. They wanted to stay. He didn't want them to stay. But I know the story and I knew him so well, and I go visit pieces of the overturned boat that the two men lived under. He came back the following year and took the men home. But I like that and also it has a Chilean base there and they usually invite me in to have a cup of tea or something of this sort and you're in contact with other people. It's a . . .

BS: Chile.

JR: Chilean Base, right.

BS: Yeah. Mine's, I think, Paradise Bay. Of course that's Paradise Bay. Especially on a calm day with the reflection. But I like it all, too. I lived most of my life in Antarctica at McMurdo. It's not as pretty.

JR: No. And actually, there at Waterboat Point, if the tide is low, you can walk across some stepping stones and walk right onto the mainland.

BS: Right. Let me close this out with a question. Would you do it again? Would you have gone on that trip to . . .

JR: The first time?

BS: Yeah. The first time.

(400)

JR: In retrospect, that made my life. It opened things to all sorts of opportunities that never would have come my way had I not gone on that trip. So, when I came back and I said, "Never again," it's just something that I can look back upon with laughter now, as a joke, because it made my life.

BS: Would you winter again?

JR: Would I winter again? I'd have to give some thought to that.

BS: That's the tough one.
JR: That's the tough one.

BS: *The winter over group is a special club and, for instance, if you haven't done it, you're second class Antarctica. And I don't care how many times you've been down there. If you haven't wintered over.* . . .

JR: The people I see on lectures on the ship with me have never wintered over. Most of them have never. They're all lecturers and authorities in their field of penguins or the birds or oceanography or geology, what have you. But, they have not wintered over.

BS: *If you haven't seen the first sunrise in so many months* . . .

JR: That's right.

BS: *You've missed something very special.*

JR: Indeed, I agree.

BS: *Sundown was a let down, but the sunrise was more than just a pick-me-up. It was a total change of life. I'll never forget that first sunrise.*

JR: I've been all over quite a lot of the world as a result of this because I've lectured in Scandinavian countries, in Canada, in Japan, quite a few places in South America. None of this would have ever happened.

BS: *I heard that you're going to lecture at the Polar Society.*

JR: Yeah. I've been told that, yes.

BS: *Well, I'm very happy you are. What would you have done differently?*

JR: What would I have done different? I really truly can't think of anything. . .

BS: *Perfect life.*

JR: I would have done different. I've been very lucky in the things that have happened to me. My lifetime, I think of that very often, of how lucky I've been for the exposure I've gotten to do so many things in my life time. The results of having done this, truly.

BS: *Well, I think it's been a good interview. Is there anything you want to add?*

JR: I can't think of anything.
BS: *Any question that I should have asked? Anything that you've been dying to answer that I didn't ask.*

JR: I can't think of a thing. Oh, one thing I should have mentioned was the fun trip I took with four of the men to the Adelie penguin rookery at Red Rock Ridge. We drove across the Bay Ice in the Weasel about nine miles away and reached the seaward side by climbing along an icefoot to the rocky area where over 1,000 penguins in couples guarded their nests of pebbles, holding one or two eggs each. As soon as they saw us coming, they set up a deafening squawk. We watched male and female change places on the nest while the other went to sea to feed on small shrimp. The few eggs brought back and placed in an electric incubator failed to hatch after five weeks, but it had been a very interesting and fun trip. I've been to many rookeries since then.

BS: *Well, it's been an outstanding interview. Absolutely wonderful.*

JR: It's been fun to have you here, Brian. I've enjoyed it.

BS: *I know it sort of parallels what Fauno Cordes did, but I think we got more of what you did than she did.*

JR: Yeah.

BS: *And I was really more . . . of course, when she did hers was '92, before you got in the tourist trade.*

JR: That's right.

BS: *Have you added up the pieces of months that you've been down as a tourist?*

JR: No, I haven't to tell you the truth. But, I should do that since . . .

BS: *Yeah, there's a certain point in time, when your tourist time will by-pass your time the first time.*

JR: It might. I think the longest time I was down . . . this past year, I was on board for 7 weeks. I'm not usually on board for 7 weeks. Quite often for 4 weeks, but not for 7 weeks.

BS: *Well, what's nice about lecturing tourists for me and I'm sure you'll agree is that this is a group of people who are interested.*

JR: Right.
BS: *And you don't get that lecturing?*

JR: I said before, I was a graduate of George Washington University, and actually, what they do now is about every other year, they offer George Washington, the opportunity to go to the Antarctic and they use my name as a drawing card. So it's Jackie Ronne, ex- or . . . Jackie Maslin, '40, and they send out announcements to all people around that age or years. Usually they get about 20 people to go and I give a cocktail party for them on board so that they get to meet one another. And that's always fun to have some connection on board. And a number of my friends, of course, have gone.

BS: *Did they pay you a commission for using your name?*

JR: No.

BS: *Well, you could ask for one. Well, that's good. I think we can terminate it here. I think it's been fun.*