BS: This is an oral interview with Commander Jehu Blades III, "Dusty," at his home in Boulder, Colorado, on the 12th of March 2000. The interview is part of the Polar History Project of the Byrd Polar Research Center Archival Program and the American Polar Society on a grant sponsored by the National Science Foundation. The interviewer is Brian Shoemaker.

Commander Blades, you were a Naval Aviator who operated in both the North and South Polar regions. Tell us about your background, where you're from, what inspired you to become a Naval Aviator, and some of your previous duty that prepared you to fly in the Arctic and the Antarctic.

DB: I was born in Baltimore, Maryland, 1925, and I grew up in the city of Baltimore. I started college at Washington College, went only one semester and then got into the Navy. This was in 1943. I was able to get into the Aviation Cadet Program. I'd always wanted to go to Annapolis because I lived there and spent a lot of summers in the city of Annapolis and on the water around the Chesapeake Bay, but my appointment was an alternate appointment and it didn't materialize. So, as I say, I was lucky to be accepted into the Naval Aviation Cadet Program and got started in that way.
BS:  *OK. You got in the Navy in 1943, then?*

DB:  Yes, in July of 1943.

BS:  *You saw World War II experience?*

DB:  No, I was in flight training for the duration of the war, much to my dismay. I went through the various stages of civilian pilot training, and then pre-flight school and primary flight training and finally Pensacola. Got my wings in April of 1945 at Pensacola, was sent to Opa-locka, Florida, for training in carrier based torpedo aircraft - the old TBF made by Grumman - and was assigned to transitional training at Opa-locka and then some on the west coast and finally wound up in a replacement squadron at Barber's Point in Hawaii just at the end of the war. The time at the end of the war on VJ Day, that was my status and I felt really put upon. Here I spent two years learning how to fight a war and I missed the war. But it wasn't long before I gained some sense and realized that wasn't the best reaction. But in any case, I went on to carrier air groups. Carrier Air Group 19 was my first assignment - torpedo bombers - Far East tour and task force trip to Australia.

  Came back and worked into an assignment in what was the prototype of the AWACS aircraft. The Navy called it the guppies. It was torpedo bombers, these Avengers that were modified. A large dish antenna replaced the torpedo bay with a bulbous cover over it and these planes gained the nickname "guppies." But the AWACS was originally a tool to be used by a task force commander in the Navy to be able to see the battle situation out ahead of the task force. And these guppies flew out ahead and had a capability of relaying a radar picture that they could see from altitudes several hundred
miles ahead of the task force, relaying it back to the flight _____? on the flagship.

And so I did that for a couple of years. I had various carriers assignments with these radar planes.

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And then in 1949, I was stationed at Reem? Field near San Diego. Igor Sikorsky, the developer of the first successful helicopter, was giving a speech at North Island in San Diego and I went to hear it. After the speech, I went up to talk to Mr. Sikorsky and indicated an interest in the helicopter development and he sent me out to have a ride with Jimmy Beaner who was his personal pilot and the pilot who worked with him on the development of the helicopter. Jimmy gave me a ride around in the helicopter and I hied myself back to Greenfield. Went into the personnel office and put in an application for helicopter training.

BS: *What kind of helicopter was it?*

DB: The HO3S was the helicopter that was being used at Lakehurst at the time when I went there for training as well as the HTL. The first was a Sikorsky - the basic Sikorsky helicopter with the pilot set in front of three passengers in the back. The HTL was the beginning of the Bell 47 - the small two-person helicopter with the bowl canopy.

BS: *What's HO3S stand for?*

DB: Helicopter Observation made by Sikorsky. And this was a follow-on from one of their earlier models of the Sikorsky helicopter. An interesting thing is, when I first went to Lakehurst, the training helicopter was a predecessor of the HO3S and I can't remember
it's designation, but I do remember that if we took off from the Naval Air Station at Lakehurst and wanted to pick somebody up out in the boondocks, we had to tell them to wait before they got in and go and find a rock and I would demonstrate about the size of the rock and we'd have to put that in the baggage compartment so that when they got in, the center of gravity would be appropriately placed for the flight thereafter. So helicopters have come a way since then. But I got qualified in helicopters at Lakehurst and at the completion of that, I got orders to Naval Line School in Newport. The family had hardly settled in Newport, when the Korean War caused a cancellation of the general line school and many other activities and all of us were sent off to serve in some connection with the war in Korea.

I was assigned to HU2 - helicopter utility squadron in the San Diego area at Reem Field and went off on a tour of duty in helicopter rescue work aboard the *USS Princeton* off of the east coast of Korea, doing pilot rescue work around the carrier and some rescue work ashore from the carriers for downed pilots . . .

BS: *Behind enemy lines?*

DB: On the beach. I beg your pardon?

BS: *Behind enemy lines?*

DB: Yes, I had one mission that went fairly deep into enemy territory. After I came back from that tour in Korea in 1951, I continued to work with HU2 in San Diego. Duty with HU2 was an interesting assignment because HU2 was called on to do a lot of interesting kinds of things. One quite interesting program that I was lucky enough to be involved with was the operation of a helicopter from a submarine. Not just a visiting submarine, but being based aboard with the helicopter. Being based aboard the submarine, I worked
with the *USS Perch* which was a conventional submarine that had a large container on the after deck that was used by the Marines to house their reconnaissance rafts and equipment. It was a cylindrical tube that was attached to the deck.

(100)

Well, somebody had figured out a system for building a dolly and a track that went in and out of this tank on the back of the submarine. The dolly had a platform that was about six or eight feet square and they operated a small HTL H47 helicopter on floats - on rubber floats - and the dolly platform was exactly the size of the floats on the helicopter. And the idea was that the helicopter would land on the dolly, the crew would get up on the helicopter and remove one main bolt that held one of the two rotor blades on, take it off and store it in the tank and then they would roll the helicopter into the tank on the dolly and they'd close the water-tight door and everybody would go below and the submarine could submerge. And the idea was that this was possibly a tool that could be used for reconnaissance by the Marines and others.

We got, in practicing this and I was the first one to actually try this for an extended period of a few days living aboard the submarine and launching and recovering, but we got it down to a timing whereby the submarine, from the time the submarine first broke the surface until the periscope of the submarine disappeared below the surface, having recovered the helicopter, got down to the neighborhood of three minutes total. So it seemed like a pretty good operation. It never did become an operational tool for other reasons, but it was an interesting project for me.

The next interesting thing that came my way leads into the subject at hand here, the Polar Operations. The opportunity came to serve aboard the icebreaker *USS Burton Island* with two helicopters and I was assigned to be the Officer in Charge of this
helicopter unit aboard the Burton Island. This was in 1952, and with one other pilot
from HU2, we did so.

BS: What kind of helicopters?

DB: This was, again, a Bell HTL was the Navy designation of it - the small two-person
bubble canopy helicopter on rubber floats.

BS: So you had two HTLs.

DB: We had two HTLs, yes. The Burton Island had an open deck. No hangar facilities.
The helicopters were tied down on deck. The operation that year was a double operation.
The first part of it was called "Barracks 52" and this was part of a logistics resupply
exercise to replenish the northern communities that the Navy undertook to support. This
included some DEW-line stations, Port Barrow, of course, and then going east from Port
Barrow to several DEW-line stations and over to Barter Island. The icebreaker escorted
resupply ships - cargo ships. And that was Barracks 52.

When that was completed and the cargo ships were escorted safely back into open
water again, the Burton Island then undertook what was called the Beaufort Sea
expedition of 1952, operating out in the Beaufort Sea doing various hydrographic and
other kinds of work. The purpose of the helicopters aboard the Burton Island were for ice
reconnaissance. And so this was quite an interesting introduction to polar exploration for
me and for my fellow pilot.

(150)

BS: So you returned. You had two trips.
DB: Just one.

BS: *First you supplied the DEW-line and then you went on into the Beaufort Sea.*

DB: Um-hum. And then there's an interesting follow-on to that, but before I get to it, let me just mention that the Skipper of the *USS Burton Island* at the time was Commander Eugene Maher and among the interesting things, as we left the Seattle area headed up the inside passage, why my fellow pilot and I were anxious to get flying and so we suggested to the Captain that we use the time going up the inside passage to get familiar with the deck and get a little practice in in preparation for the work to come. Well, Captain Maher not only approved of that, he said, "Well that's a good idea. While we're about it, why don't we offer rides to all of the ship's crew who want them to do a little sightseeing on this beautiful inside passage?" And so we spent the whole trip from Seattle up to Juno taking people up for rides, one after the other. Anybody on the ship who wanted to go could sign up and so we did that. The two of us pilots really appreciated the Captain's position on this and we had a lot of fun.

One of the other collateral duties of the helicopter group aboard the icebreaker was to provide medical and other assistance to small native communities on the way up so we did that a few times as well, going into native villages and bringing people who needed medical or dental attention out to the ship to be helped and then taking them back again.

After the Beaufort Sea operations were completed, it had been decided that the *Burton Island* should try to return to the east coast of the US via the Northwest Passage. And so we headed over to make a transit through McClure Straits was the route that was planned and the ship headed over that way and there were several interesting things that happened in connection with that. As we were approaching Banks Island, which is on one
shore of McClure Straits, Captain Maher and I were up doing ice reconnaissance. He liked to ride in the helicopter and do his own reconnaissance from time to time. And we were up on that kind of a trip when we had an engine failure in this small helicopter and we made an auto rotation and landed on a sand spit on the north shore of Banks Island. The ship was not in sight after we . . . The landing was uneventful. We made an auto rotation in a clear area and landed ok, but the ship was no where in sight and we weren't able to raise them on the radio. So it looked like we would have a couple of days there to wait until the ship came over the horizon and we could talk to them again - tell them where we were.

BS: *Did you have survival gear? Tent and all that?*

DB: *Yes. We were well provided with the survival provisions and covers and what not. It was interesting to me. Most ships commanders, I imagined never having been one, but I imagined would be pretty upset if they were out flying in a helicopter and they lost contact with their command because of an incident like this. Captain Pat Maher, however, thought this was just a great opportunity to have a good experience. And so he pitched in with me and together we pitched a tent using the airframe for the backbone of the tent and got out all of the survival equipment and he was just as happy as a clam to be able to do this.*

(200)

BS: *How long were you there?*

DB: *I think we were picked up on the third day, if I remember correctly. We were fine. Had plenty of good survival rations and everything was just hunkey-dorey. The weather*
was good and the ship eventually came over the horizon. We could talk to them on
the radio and so the other helicopter which had been downed so it couldn't make the - it
had been out of commission, so it couldn't make the original search - had been put back
together and they came over and brought us what we needed to get going again. So that
was an interesting experience.

Proceeding on the ship into McClure Straits became beset in the throat of the
Straits by the pack ice in the Straits. Got into a position where we couldn't go forward,
couldn't go back, we couldn't move for a while and so the ship exercised it's heeling
tanks, transfer of water from port to starboard and back again to try to rock the ship. In
addition, Captain Maher brought the crew out to sally? ship in the old way. While they
were transferring fuel to the starboard side, they'd have the crew all go over and stand as
far outboard as they could on the starboard side and then reverse the procedure to the port
side. So that provided a little interest for everyone and eventually after, oh I don't know,
less than a day, we managed to back and work our way out again. But we couldn't go
farther to the east and so the ship came back and returned to Seattle via IC Cape and the
normal route to the west.

BS: And that ended your Arctic sojourn.

DB: That introduced me to the Arctic and it ended it for the time being, yes.

BS: Did you go back to the Arctic?

DB: Not in the Navy. After I retired I went back and spent some time in Alaska.

BS: OK. We talked about that too. OK. You came back to Seattle and what did you do
then? Did you go back to San Diego?
DB: Went back to San Diego and was working in the business of rescue training, survival training, rescue training which was a collateral duty for me. And developed some interesting techniques. This business of helicopter rescue was being developed at that time. The so called Chicago Clamp was a development that we came up with there which was a device that fits on the rescue hoist cable and it can be moved up by hand by the person being hoisted. In other words, he can climb up the cable if that were necessary. And other things, and that was very interesting business to me - developing these procedures and tactics.

BS: How did you come to go to the Operation Deepfreeze or join VX6?

(250)

DB: Well, let's see. That was in 1952, towards the end of 1952 that I left. Now the Skipper of HU2 left before I did - was assigned to the rotary wing test unit at the Naval Air Station, Patuxent River, Naval Air Test Center. And after he had been there for a month or so, I was coming up for a change of duty and he arranged for me to get orders to serve with him at Patuxent River. And so that's what I did. I went from San Diego to Pax River. I was a member of Test Pilot School Class No. 11 in 1953 at Pax River and worked for this fellow - his name was Doug Billet and I enjoyed my assignment there. After working at Patuxent River, after graduating from school, I worked in several of the different test divisions and on completion of that tour of duty, I was fortunate enough to get orders to France to the Military Assistance and Advisory Group - MAAG - in Paris. And I had a great time. The family went there. Our youngest daughter was born in Paris and I spent my time on French naval ships in the Mediterranean and other places. And the family lived outside of Paris and we just had a great time.
BS: *Parlez-vous français?*

DB: Oui, bien sûr pourquoi pas. That was one of the good things about that assignment. Often you go to an overseas assignment, which I later did in Italy, and if you're not working in the language that the Navy kindly trains you for, you don't have nearly the grasp of it that you do. But in that assignment, why, as I say, my duties were with French navy squadrons and so the work was all in French and that was a great help.

Came back from France and was returned under orders to a second tour at Patuxent River, again working in different aspects of rotary wing helicopter testing. And to get to your question - this is sort of a long route to it, but I, towards the end of that second tour at Patuxent River, as one of my collateral duties, I was on duty as a Command Duty Officer at the Naval Air Station, Patuxent River one night when I noticed that people were coming in to report to a new outfit that I didn't know anything about that was being formed at the Naval Air Station, Pax River, and this new outfit was called VX6. It was an aircraft squadron that was being formed to provide air support for Operation Deepfreeze - the series of operations that would ensue. And so this sounded like really an interesting thing and it brought back memories of my experiences in the Arctic and so it wasn't long after I had collected a little information about this squadron that I hied myself off to my detailer and said, "How about sending me to VX6? I'm right there. You won't have to spend any travel money," and so he did. I just went across the field from the Test Center to the VX6 hangar and reported for duty and this was in 1954.

(300)

I was hired by VX6, so to say, to be a cargo helicopter pilot for Deepfreeze I. Deepfreeze I was the first push of the US and US Navy to get down to the Antarctic to
prepare for the International Geophysical Year which was being planned for 1957. But bases had to be built, facilities had to be provided, provisions had to be put in place, and so these things all started with Deepfreeze I. And the squadron's job was to get down there and build their facilities that they would need for support of the IGY and at the same time, to start a major aerial mapping program which would serve the IGY and just the great need in general to map, essentially, an unknown continent.

Now when I reported for duty at VX6, I was going through the regular process of the naval officer's check-in. You have a check-in sheet and you go around to all the departments of the new organization, new squadron and say, "Hi, I'm Joe Blow and I'm new here. What do you have to tell me?" And each department will brief you on what you had to do and what their job was. It's a standard procedure in the Navy as all Navy folks know. But in this process, in the first day or so that I reported aboard, I took a break during the day in visiting the differing departments for a cup of coffee in the ready room and while I was sitting in the ready room visiting with some of the other guys and having a cup of coffee, one of the officer's came in and said, "Who wants to be Skipper of a YOG?" Well, I didn't - I was a Lieutenant JG. I didn't know what a YOG was. I didn't even know it was a ship. I thought it must be some kind of an aviation uh . . . . In any case, I'd never been a Skipper of anything as a Lieutenant junior grade, so without any further thought of the matter, I said, "I do." And there wasn't much other response, and so as it turned out, they said, "OK. You'll be Skipper of the YOG." At that time I learned that a YOG was a small yard tanker. It was used in ports and harbors to transfer fuel from shore to ships in the harbor. It was a small ship - 265 feet in length, as I recall. Could carry in the neighborhood of 250,000 gallons of fuel.
The task force officers, people responsible for the planning for this first Deepfreeze I operation, were facing the problem of having the squadron's airplanes down there with the mission of doing a lot of flying over the continent and mapping and the problem of how to get fuel down for them to do this presented itself. Part of Deepfreeze I was to take the necessary equipment and supplies and Seabees down to build a fuel depot at McMurdo. The first base to be built was to be the main base at McMurdo on McMurdo Sound - McMurdo Station. And one of the highest priorities was to build a fuel farm there for the squadron's fuel. But during that first year, the squadron wouldn't have the benefit of that fuel farm, so they had to get gas down there and the decision was made, 'We'll take a couple of these YOGs. We'll get them out of the boneyard, fill them up with fuel and send them down there and let them carry the av gas for the squadron's planes in these ships. Use it during that first summer of operation.' So that's what a YOG was and within ten days of the time I reported aboard the squadron at Patuxent River, I was on my way to Norfolk to the South Annex in Norfolk to look at the YOG-34 and to prepare to take it down as a Skipper down to the Antarctic, 9000 miles from South Annex to McMurdo Sound.

BS: Was this ship self-propelled?

DB: It was a self-propelled tanker. One of the problems with its self-propelling was it's maximum speed was 8 knots. Task Force 43 was being formed at the time with the USS Glacier, brand new icebreaker as flagship and neither the flag nor the Skipper of the Glacier wanted to go 9000 miles at 8 knots, and so the plan was to tow the YOG. There were two of them being taken down and I had one of them.

BS: Who had the other?
DB: I can't recall the name?

BS: *Squadron pilot?*

DB: No I don't think so. I think it was somebody else.

BS: *How many on the crew?*

DB: I was given a crew of 25 Seabees to take the ship down - myself and 25 Seabees. The Seabees were going down to build fuel farms, to build McMurdo Station, and so at the outset, nobody knew anything about ships.

(400)

The Seabees basically didn't, and neither did I. My shipboard experience had been in the ready room and no ship handling experience to speak of at all. So, in any case, I arrived down at South Annex and went to see the YOG-34 and it turns out it had just come back from Iceland and been surveyed as soon as it got back. In other words,

BS: *Decommissioned.*

DB: Decommissioned. I located it at the South Annex and it was moored on the outer end of a series of ships. To get to it, I had to go across the decks from one ship to another. I got out there and let myself down onto the deck of the small YOG and I looked around for the crew or the Captain or whoever, somebody to report in to, and nobody seemed to be around. There was a sailor kind of lounging on deck and I asked him where the Skipper was and he says, "There he goes," and he pointed up to the higher deck of the
ship along side which the YOG was moored and here was this Lieutenant pulling a
sea chest on a rope up from the deck of the YOG. And I sort of called up to him. I told
him who I was and said, "I was wondering if I could talk to you for a few minutes," and
he said, "I'm sorry, I gotta go. I'm getting out," of the Navy, he meant. And I said, "Well
can't you just visit with me for a few minutes." He said, "I'm sorry. I would if I could,
but I can't. I've gotta go." And I said, "Well where are the ship's records and things I'll
need to have?" And he said, "Oh, I shit canned them." And he disappeared. And the few
men who were left aboard were also packing and off to be discharged or go to another
assignment and so essentially, there was nobody left aboard and the Seabees hadn't
started to arrive yet. So this was a little disconcerting. In looking the ship over, it was in
pretty bad condition. The food had been left in the reefers and the power had been off for
a few days and there was rotten food. And the safety equipment on this tanker had - fire
extinguishing flooding system was hanging in pieces and so there seemed to be a little
cause for concern.

(450)

The Task Force was going to depart in not a great deal of time from then, so my - instead
of staying aboard that night, I got myself up to Washington to talk to somebody on the
staff, to the Admiral if I could, to tell him that I needed some help. In any case, I pointed
out some of the problems and he said, "Well, that's fine. I know you can take care of
these things. We'll be leaving."

BS:  *Who was this?*

DB:  Admiral Dufek. Admiral George Dufek was the Commander of Task Force 43.
BS: You reported directly to him as Skipper of the YOG.

DB: Yes, at that time. I mean, I didn't know that. I just went up to Washington to go to Headquarters and see who I reported to and they sent me in to the Admiral. In any case, he said, "Well look. As far as not knowing anything about ships. Your crewmen being in the same boat. I'll tell you what you can do if you want to. You're welcome to go around and talk to the Skippers of any of the ships in the Task Force going down. There was a handful of ships going down together. And he said, "If you can borrow experts in whatever you need, why you have my authority to do it." And so that was a big help and I did get around to talk to various ships and I got myself a good warrant boatswain who really knew his business - his name was Fisher.

BS: What was his first name?

DB: Mel, I believe. No, no. I'm not sure what his first name is. But he was Boats? Fisher and so he became my Executive Officer. And I got myself a couple of good boatswain's mates who knew their way around the deck of a ship. I got a Chief Engineer - a Chief who knew diesel engines. This YOG had a 500 horsepower ancient diesel engine. I got a quartermaster. And a couple of other experts and so we wound up with a crew of about 30. And were ready to take on the various tasks that needed to be addressed before we left. The fire system was one of my major concerns and I got support from the Task Force Commander to race around and get experts to come down and get it hooked up and in acceptable shape. The next operation was to take on my cargo fuel.
I was at the South Annex and I had to go, oh probably several miles to a refueling pier and that presented a little problem, never having had much experience in ship handling, but that first day in Norfolk, I bought myself a copy of "Knight's Modern Seamanship," and it was my constant companion for quite a while there. One of my experiences was I was along side a tee or just a regular pier, and I had to back out into the stream and the estuary that this pier was in was fairly narrow. And I had to back out and then head towards the mouth of the estuary. Well I really hadn't had any discussions with anybody about how the effect of maneuvering a single screw ship was and my plan was to back out and to back around 90 degrees and then go forward out the estuary. Well, it turns out that the single screwed ship, at least this one, wouldn't back the way I wanted it to back, and so I wound up making a 360 and then a 90 degree turn before I got headed for the estuary.

BS: *With Knight's in your hand?*

DB: It was in my hand all the time, but it wasn't too useful under pressure. But in any case, I've learned about single screwed ships from that. We proceeded over to the refueling station. I can't think of the name of it there in Norfolk, but in any case, I was approaching the fueling dock and there were several people on the dock with loud hailers telling me to stand off. Not to come along side. And they said, "We'll put you along side." And so they sent a tug out to lay me along side the refueling dock and we got set up and started the refueling operation and when I got secured to the mooring, I went in to the refueling office and asked about the procedure.
It seemed to me like a simple matter for me to just come along side by myself and I asked why I needed the tug to put me along side and they explained that the YOG-34 had been in before and had exploded at the pier and sunk several years prior to this time.

BS: *Your YOG?*

DB: Yeah.

BS: *Did you have a name for it? Was there a name?*

DB: No it didn't have a name. It had a call sign which was Father Time 34, but it didn't have a name. Just YOG-34. But in any case, they said, "So we didn't want to take any chances with the YOG-34. We weren't taking any chances at all." It turns out that the ship had been fueling there and a galley hatch had been, port had been open, and there had been some fuel spillage during the refueling and the fumes came in, were ignited in the galley and caused the explosion and the ship went to the bottom right there.

BS: *Anybody killed?*

DB: No, I don't think so. I don't recall that they said that. But they were certainly pretty nervous about having YOG-34 along side again. But in any case, we got refueled and went back to the South Annex and got moored OK. And the *Glacier* was not far away.

(End of Tape 1 - Side A)
DB: While we were trying to get things together to get underway, I went to see and subsequently spent a good deal of time with Captain Eugene Pat Maher who had been appointed as the Skipper of the brand new icebreaker Glacier. And Glacier was the Task Force flagship and she was going to tow me from Norfolk to McMurdo most of the way. Not in and out of ports and through the Canal and places like that, I would operate independently, but to speed the whole operation up, it was set up for Glacier to tow me. Well during this time of getting all the provisions aboard the YOG, getting the equipment put back in order and ready for sailing and what not, I spent a good time in the company of Captain Maher visiting him aboard Glacier and asking him for the expert advice that a novice so much needed. At least I was certain I needed a great deal more than I had. Pat Maher was really very helpful to me. As I mentioned before, he had been my Skipper aboard the Burton Island back in 1952 and I was just delighted to find that he was the Skipper of the ship that was going to tow me to the Antarctic. And so we spent a good deal of time together and I had my "Knight's Modern Seamanship" out and I was asking him how to elaborate on it and to give me some helpful hints as to how to be a ship handler in three easy lessons. And he was very patient and very helpful.

We talked at some length about what the best action would be if we got into a storm and the tow broke and I was independent from the Glacier - what the best course of action of my part should be. And I remember, we talked a good deal - he mentioned a theory of the cork, as he called it. Don't try to use your engine. Don't try to negotiate the swells in any particular fashion. Just make out like you're a piece of flotsam on the surface and he said that there's a school of thought that that's the best approach to take. In
any case, this was never really resolved. But the discussion of the different approaches was very useful.

In any case, as the day of departure - deployment - approached, we talked about how we would do that and the plan was that we would both deploy from our moorings, our berths, and proceed out into the ocean and make up the tow outside in the open ocean. And we went through the procedure of how that would be done - my approach to his stern and the passing of the messenger and the passing of the tow cable and rigging it. There was a bridle designed for the YOG - a Y-shaped bridle with a shackle into which the towing cable would connect. At about the same time, Admiral Womble was Com Serv Lant??. And I had in the course of my preparations, I called on him and told him who I was and what I was doing there and what not. And he was very cordial and he said, "Well I should like very much to come by and see you off when you leave." And I said, "Well I would very much like that too, Admiral." And so he said, "Well I'll be down and wish you well." And so I went back to the ship and then I was, in talking with Captain Maher, he said, "Well now when we're ready to get underway, I'm going to have a ceremony aboard Glacier on the flight deck and Admiral Womble is going to come give a speech and what not, and when the ceremony is completed, I will give you a signal - a hand signal."

(50)

The ship's were within a short distance of one another. He said, "I'll give you a hand signal. When you get my signal, I want you to cast off and get underway. And then I will follow." I said, "That's fine." I went back to the ship and I was thinking about the situation and I said, "Well, if Admiral Womble is going to be aboard the Glacier and then he's going to come over and visit me, what if Captain Maher gives the signal before Admiral Womble gets here?" and so as the moment approached, I was still dealing or
trying to deal with that particular quandary. Well, it came to pass before I had
resolved the situation. I was singled up and already to go. The crew was ready, standing
by. I was on the bridge and watching Captain Maher for his hand signal and Admiral
Womble hadn't shown up. And sure enough, before the Admiral got to the YOG, down
went Captain Maher's hand and my decision at the moment was that I'm going to be with
Captain Maher for quite a time and I won't see Admiral Womble for a long time. So
when Captain Maher gave me the signal, I cast off and proceeded out and I sent a
message of apology to Admiral Womble for not awaiting his kind send off.

In any case, we proceeded out and made up the tow without incident offshore and
headed south. The seas were calm, the weather was ideal and I need to stop here for a
moment to say that since the purpose of towing the YOG rather than having it proceed
independently was to go faster than 8 knots, we needed, or Captain Maher needed to see
how fast he could tow the YOG. The Glacier had unprecedented power for an icebreaker.
It was the most powerful icebreaker that was around at that time. It was on her maiden
voyage. And so Captain Maher wanted to see how fast the tow could be done. So as we
proceeded south towards Cape Hatteras in essentially calm seas, Captain Maher gradually
increased the speed. He would push it up a notch or two and we'd see how it went. And
he'd inquire as to how she was riding. And we did that and we got down towards the end
of a day approaching the Cape Hatteras turning point and we had reached a towing speed
on flat, calm water of 17 knots which was a surprisingly high speed for a ship of that size
to be towed.

Well, at that point, the shackle into which the towing cable hooked broke. The
two legs of the bridle fell down so they were hanging vertically from the side of the YOG
and the cable, of course, was disengaged. This was just about approaching sunset in terms
of time of day. So our immediate problem on the YOG was to get the legs of the bridle up
on deck, put in a new shackle and deploy it or get it ready to deploy and then make an
approach and hook up the tow again. But this was not easy. We didn't have the kind of
winching equipment aboard the YOG that you would have aboard a larger ship. So Boatswain Fisher did an excellent job of arranging to - using the single winch that we had back aft on the ship and fair leading the cable up to the bow to hook onto the legs of the bridle and bring them up on deck, we finally got them up on deck, but by that time it was as black as the inside of your hat outside.

(100)

But they finally got the bridle repaired and ready to make the approach. I got on the radio with Captain Maher and told him that we were all set and he said, "OK. We talked about this before so you know how to make your approach. The fact that it's dark will complicate it a little bit, but you can count on my ship's lights as range lights so as you make your approach to my stern, you line up the range lights and you'll be in good shape." So we did that. The *Glacier* stabilized her course and I came around and started making my approach toward her stern with her ship's lights being used as range lights lined up just the way they should be and I was cautious in having much of a speed differential, however it seemed like we were lagging and lagging and not getting there. And so I would add a few turns from time to time to increase the closure rate when all of a sudden the ship, the *Glacier*, came into view. I couldn't see it before. All I could see was the lights. Well the range lights that I happened to be using weren't the stern light and the masthead lights as they should have been. The lower light was a light that was on a boom that was rigged out to the side and as a result, I was approaching the *Glacier* essentially amidships and by that time, I had turned on enough extra turns that my rate of closure was pretty fast. Well as soon as I realized that, I gave the command engines full astern and I was not at all sure that we wouldn't bisect the *Glacier*. Wind up in the ward room of the *Glacier*. But as it turned out, the fates were good to me and we stopped. I stopped. The rate of closure stopped just as our bow was about three feet from the
Glacier. The Glacier's crew handed over the towing cable with no need for a messenger, we took it aboard and rigged it up and everything was just fine. And at the conclusion of that operation, I got a message from Captain Maher, saying "What a beautiful approach. Well done."

BS: That was off Hatteras.

DB: So the tow made up. We continued on down towards the Panama Canal. The plan was to go through the Canal and then head out directly from Balboa essentially a direct course for Littleton, the port of Christchurch, New Zealand. Headed out across the Pacific, I guess one of the next things I might mention was the crossing the line ceremony which both the Glacier and other ships of the formation all had their own celebrations. The exercise aboard the YOG was a lot of fun. Everybody got a kick out of it. A lot of creative costuming and acting went on. I must say that after that point, there was a - seemed like it might be a kind of a down side. The crew appeared very much like a crew of pirates after that. They got very attached to their headrags and other pirates kind of dress, but the YOG was a kind of informal vessel, so it worked out all right. Everybody enjoyed that.

(150)

As we proceeded across the Pacific, occasionally and from time to time, the seas became heavier. The swells became quite large and were cause for some concern. As we proceeded, why I experimented, in talking with Captain Maher, experimented with different YOG conditions - ship conditions. Whether or not to use the engine. To keep it shut down or to use it to try to ease the strain during some of the periods which seemed to
be causing a lot of strain on the tow. Eventually, in route, the waves got I would
guess, 60 feet or more between tough and crest - huge waves.

BS:  *On the way to New Zealand.*

DB:  On the way to New Zealand, yeah. The tow cable, as we would head up the face, the
YOG would be angled up and going up the face of the wave, the tow cable would be
going into the wave and we couldn't see the *Glacier* at all at times. And the critical point
came when the YOG got to the crest of the wave with the tow cable headed at a sharp
angle down to the *Glacier*, and when that - the force of the tow caused the YOG to pitch
over from a climbing angle to a descending angle, at that point, the YOG would - the
vibrations of the hull would really be very considerable and made a number of us aboard
the YOG wonder if she might come apart doing that stuff. But in any case, we seemed to
work out a good combination of the towing speed and our assisting speed using our own
engine to minimize that.

Just as a note, when we got to New Zealand, I examined the ship and the deck
plates amid ships on the YOG on the main deck were deformed about two inches - waved
from these stresses.

Let's see, another point of interest I think on our way to New Zealand was the
celebration of Thanksgiving. We were there 1200 feet behind the *Glacier* and the
combination of the boatswains mates and the galley on the *Glacier* came up with a great
plan for providing a really special Thanksgiving dinner for the crew of the YOG. The
galley fixed up a really super Thanksgiving dinner with all the trimmings and loaded it all
in ammunition cases - ammunition boxes - which the boatswain's mates encased in kapok
life jackets and tied on the ends of lines and floated back to us. They were recovered by
the crew on the YOG and we had a very special Thanksgiving dinner, thanks to this
ingenuity of the icebreaker's Captain and crew.
BS: That was where? South Pacific?

j


BS: Neat.

(200)

DB: Our trip across the Pacific to Littleton was punctuated by difficult conditions from time to time, but it was also smooth sailing and a pleasant time for many of us. The crew all really enjoyed the southern Pacific waters as they came into them sighting whales and new experiences for a lot of us. And in the evenings, on the quiet evenings after the evening meal, why all of us would get together on the mess deck and just talk and tell sea stories and what not and our cook, a fellow named Raymond Speers, a Seabee cook - he was a wonderful guy and a good cook - but he told a story one night. He was reminiscing - reminiscing about a girl that he knew once who was just such a great girl. And he went back to explain that the reason he had gotten into the Navy was that he had grown up on a farm on Mississippi and he just hated farming. He said his job was to plow and he used to wake up in the morning and just keep his eyes closed and pray that it would be raining so that he couldn't go out and plow and he said he joined the Navy just to get away from that. But then he was thinking about this girl and he was reminiscing and he sort of leaned back and he said, "Man," he said, "if I had a horse that could walk like that gal, I'd go back to plowing forever."

So in any case, we arrived off of Littleton. The major ships of the Task Force went in and moored. The YOG was assigned to the mooring at the coaling? pier in Littleton harbor and we went in and got secured and everything was fine. And by that
time, I had been studying up on my Naval courtesy matters also alluded to in "Knight's Modern Seamanship." One of the things was that when ships of the Task Force came in that the Skippers reported to the Commander and I got a message from the headquarters which had been established in Christchurch that as soon as I got secured, I should come over and report to Commander of Task Force 43 - report my arrival. Well, we got set up in the coaling pier. Got secured and what not. I got my white uniform out and got it on with all the accouterments and checked out and went ashore and crossed the coaling yard to find out how I would get to Christchurch. And they said, "Oh, isn't a train until tomorrow." And I said, "Well I've got to get there now. I can't wait until tomorrow." And one of the fellows there in the yard said, "Well there's a goods train over there. It's just leaving now. It's going in. You might be able to get on that." And so I found myself in my white uniform, running across the railroad tracks to get in a boxcar, which I did, to ride into Christchurch. Well it was a little hard on my uniform, but in any case, I managed to get there and not have to wait until the next day. And I went to the hotel where the Admiral and his staff had settled and went in. Knocked on the door of the Admiral's suite, was admitted, and there was a large party going on - a reception going on. I was met by a flag lieutenant at the door and told him who I was and why I was there and he said, "Oh, that's fine. Come on in."

(350)

Gave me a glass that was a v-shaped cocktail glass. And as I held it - it was empty - he put some whiskey in it and then with a siphon bottle, gas propelled siphon bottle, he shot the siphoned soda into the glass and it and the whiskey went down one side and out the other side, all over my uniform. And so I proceeded to make a damp report to Admiral Dufek that the YOG had arrived in good shape and was ready for further orders.
BS: *Tell us about Dufek.*

DB: Admiral George Dufek was, I thought, a real model of an officer. He had been called back to duty for the purpose of being the Commander of Task Force 43. And he was proceeding down and everything he did seemed to be really the greatest way that things should be done. Admiral Byrd was also aboard the *Glacier* as a kind of Commander Emeritus or honorary leader of the expedition, but the military commander was Admiral Dufek. He was most encouraging, as Captain Maher had been, in my efforts to be a seaman when I was really an aviator and gave me a lot of encouragement and support and I greatly respected him.

BS: *Did you meet Admiral Byrd?*

DB: I'm sorry.

BS: *Did you meet Admiral Byrd?*

DB: Yes, I met Admiral Byrd.

BS: *Where did you meet him the first time?*

DB: Aboard the *Glacier*, prior to sailing and then after we got down on the Ice, I was in his company a number of times. Very impressive, interesting gentleman. Really seemed like being a part of history to be in his company and to hear him talk about his experiences in the Antarctic in previous years. The time had come, the ships were staying in Littleton for about a week. The *Glacier* had gotten orders to proceed on ahead to start icebreaking operations ahead of the rest of the Task Force, so I was assigned to proceed
in company with the USS Eastwind - another icebreaker which formed a part of the Task Force 43. So we did. We got underway from Littleton. There wasn't towing involved in this stretch from New Zealand to McMurdo, but I just sailed in company and under the guidance of the USS Eastwind.

BS: So you sailed it down there from Christchurch.

DB: Yeah.

BS: Sailed with the Eastwind. It broke ice?

DB: Yes. Un-huh. As necessary. We didn't get to the ice until we were fairly close in to McMurdo, but when we did get there, we found that there was not a direct approach to McMurdo at all and Glacier was at work breaking a channel through the ice.

(400)

As I recall, we were at the ice edge when we first arrived, we all moored to deadmen along the ice edge.

BS: How far north was it at that time?

DB: I think, as I recall, we were about 15 or 20 miles from McMurdo and that had to be the length of the channel that Glacier was working on. Very heavy ice and difficult task. So we were out at the ice edge for quite a number of days. In the meantime, the ship started offloading and transporting supplies and equipment and personnel and what not across the intervening ice to the site of the future McMurdo Station.
BS: *Your ship?*

DB: No. I meant the cargo ships. We didn't do anything but wait at that time, but they had D8 bulldozers and equipment hauling supplies and equipment from the other ships across the ice.

BS: *What were the other ships?*

DB: The *Eastwind*, the *Greenville Victory* was one of the supply ships - a USMSGS ship and there was another MSGS cargo ship and I can't remember the name of it right now.

BS: Greenville Victory, another ship . . .

DB: *Edisto, Glacier* . . .

BS: *Eastwind and Glacier. OK.*

DB: While we were along the ice edge, there was a lot of interesting things going on. If I may anthropomorphologize for just a moment. The penguins - we were introduced to the penguins en masse at that point as all the ships were lying along side the ice edge. Emperor penguins and Adelie penguins came in great crowds to see what was going on. They'd gather around the ships and exchange comments about these strangers in their land. One night in particular remains in my memory very vividly. At this time, the summer was there. There was no nighttime, there was no darkness. I was on deck of the YOG, sitting on one of the (bits? beds?) at two or three in the morning. Everything was quiet and there was a lone Adelie penguin came walking down to the ice edge, past all the
ships. Our ship was moored to a pair of deadmen and the large mooring lines which were four or five inches in diameter, came down from the deck of the ship and then lay on top of the ice until they got to the deadmen. Well as this penguin marched along the ice edge, he came to this obstacle to his progress, this large mooring line that was in front of him. He stopped and he looked to the right and he looked up on deck to the left at this mooring line, at this obstacle in his way.

(450)

The next thing I noticed, he was jumping in place. And it was quite obvious that he was trying to gauge his ability to jump over the lifeline while walking erect. Well, he decided that he probably could and so he jumped and he tripped and he rolled over on his rounded belly and he got up and he brushed himself off and walked off swearing.

BS:  *Um-hum. All the ships showed up at the same time, or was the Glacier ahead of the others?*

DB:  *Glacier* was ahead. The others all came at the same time.

BS:  *How far ahead? Couple days?*

DB:  Glacier was three or four days ahead of us, I think.

BS:  *She had helicopters?*

DB:  Yep.
BS: *Those were the first Americans that went in to McMurdo then?*

DB: Yes.

BS: *You don't know who the helo pilots were, do you?*

DB: I'm sorry.

BS: *You don't know who the helo crews, do you?*

DB: I can't remember the names right at the moment. I do know, but . . . Now while we were at this ice edge waiting for the channel to be made, why an occasion happened where a storm developed along the ice edge in that area and was quite a difficult time for 15 or 20 hours. Some of the ships cast off and stood off. I was advised to simply double up and stay where I was, if I could. As I recall, the winds reached 80 or 90 knots during the storm and so it was a significant problem for a few hours. In any case, there was no serious damage. During this time - not during the time of this storm, but during the time along the ice edge, I was ordered to move about and transfer some fuel for the aircrafts' usage and transfer it to some tanks - rubberized tanks on the ice as I recall and also transfer it to some ships and as I moved around the area there, I was able to take advantage a bit of the fact that the YOG was a refugee from the ships' graveyard. She was battered and dented anyway, so it really didn't matter if I scraped the ice a bit in moving around.

(500)
And so the Task Force Commander gave me the job of escorting some of the cargo ships a little bit from place to place to go in front of them and push the ice aside and for a while I was being called Icebreaker Junior. But that worked out OK. Eventually, the channel was broken up to the land inside of Hut Point - that is around the point and up into the side of it where the plan was to make a shoreside docking facility. And the YOG was eventually brought up along the outside of Hut Point and secured to the land. Deadmen in the land itself.

BS: Now this was on the opposite side from Scott's hut?

DB: Scott's hut was kind of on the crest of the hill, of the spit . . . the point.

BS: Yeah, it was on the bayside where they built the camp.

DB: Bayside is where the . . .

BS: And there was a cross on the hill?

DB: Yes, that's right.

BS: And then you were on the other side?

DB: On the outside. And so we secured it there. The crew went about their original primary tasks. The Seabees went off to their building assignments and the sailors went back to their ships and various assignments. My primary duty was flying cargo helicopters for VX6 and so I . . .
BS: *Can I ask a question just to clear up . . .? You mentioned that you fueled some* fuel into fuel bladders, *but did you also fuel aircraft or did you . . .*

DB: I can't remember. We talked about that before. I think maybe I did. I think maybe I did because I know I was moving around from place to place.

BS: *I've seen photos of VXE6 and aircraft fueling from a ship. They taxied to the edge of the ice.*

DB: Yeah, yeah. I believe I did. De Havilland Otters, yeah and maybe . . .

BS: *Do you know what date that was that you tied the YOG up, roughly?*

DB: What?

BS: *When you tied the YOG up at Hut Point? December?*

DB: Now I was very late December or early January and I'm not sure of the date, no.

BS: *OK. Then you transferred back to the squadron. You were done once you tied up?*

DB: I was done - that job with the YOG and I, uh . . .

BS: *No formal change of command.*

DB: No, no.
BS: *Everybody left the ship there?*

**DB:** Well no. There were a few days there when nothing was happening and they needed me in the flying and I turned the ship over to the quartermaster until the securing of Hut Point was done. And then everybody left. Both YOGs, the other YOG which did not come down in company with the *Glacier* and with my YOG, it came down separately, but they were both secured, bow to stern, along the outside of Hut Point. The idea was to use the fuel from them during the season for the aircraft operations and then just leave them there with no thought of getting them back. And this is what they did and I'm not sure about the other YOG which was YOG-70, but the YOG-34 I understood, disappeared during a winter storm a year or so later from its mooring position on Hut Point. Apparently broke its moorings and went down somewhere.

BS: *You don't know what happened to the other one.*

DB: No. I don't.

BS: *OK. So now you're back flying.*

DB: Now I'm back flying. Flying the HR2S. No, it's the HO4S. The Marines call it HRS. It was a large Sikorsky with the passenger and cargo compartment underneath a high cockpit position. Real workhorse in the Sikorsky line during that time so we could carry a lot of cargo and we did work in carrying scientists out to various locations.

BS: *Later designated the H-34?*
DB: H-34, yeah. Right.

BS: *OK, so you flew from the land there or were you based on the ice?*

DB: Based on the ice and then working our way into a spot at McMurdo, a pad. But prior to that being prepared, just operating from the ice. And these were brought down, I think, by the icebreakers. Yeah, I'm sure they were.

BS: *How many were there? How many helicopters?*

DB: I would guess four or five of these H-34s.

BS: *And did you start flying . . . you flew cargo, would they unload it and help move that ashore? Back and forth and back and forth?*

DB: Yeah. They would offload onto the ice and the helicopters would pick them up from piles on the ice edge and take them up and after the ships moved in, moving stuff from the dry land mooring area up into the camp area.

BS: *Where did you live?*

DB: I believe we lived in the first temporary huts that were built at Hut Point on a temporary basis. Yeah, they had a squadron Jamesway set up for us.
BS: *Did you fly over to the dry valleys?*

DB: Yeah.

BS: *When was that?*

DB: During that summer. I can't pinpoint it, but I made a number of trips over there taking scientists over.

BS: *So you flew that season as well in January.*

DB: Yeah, the Taylor dry valley and several others surrounding it.

BS: *You don't remember any of the scientists, do you?*

DB: I can't remember names. There was a professor from the University of Birmingham, England, as I recall. Maybe his name was Green? I don't remember. I remember Father Dan Linehan was there and I flew him around to various places. Father Linehan was a seismologist who had done work in various parts of the world - I think in Rome and in South America, using seismographic techniques to locate underground caverns and tunnels and structures and what not. And so he came down and was a pioneer in seismic work, I think, under Deepfreeze.

BS: *Who was the first to fly over to the dry valleys in helicopters?*

DB: I don't know. Things were . . . you know, you knew what you were doing. Helicopters were coming and going and ships . . .
BS: *Yeah. So the scientists were getting going well before IGY.*

(650)

DB: Oh yes. Yeah. Yeah. The Seabees and various Navy personnel were involved in building the bases and preparing the infrastructure for the IGY, but the scientists were going down there to do their work for that year, primarily. I mean they were making plans undoubtedly for the IGY work, but they were also doing their current investigations at a brisk pace.

BS: *OK. Did you get to fly any of the fixed wing ops?*

DB: I'm sorry.

BS: *Did you fly any of the fixed wing operations?*

DB: No. I was flying strictly helicopters down there.

BS: *Well what fixed wing aircraft were they operating down there?*

DB: The P2Vs on skis and they had P2V8s, as I recall, or at least one of them or several of them that had the additional jet engines assist. And they used jato as well in various aircraft. The De Havilland Otters were workhorse small bi-planes or not bi-planes, but small single engine aircraft. R4Ds - the ski-equipped R4Ds - at least one or two or them. Seems to me there was one that was crunched that year - an R4D, if I'm not mistaken. There may have been an R5D down there that first year as well.
BS: **C-54?**

DB: Yeah.

BS: **OK. How did you get back? I'm pushing you . . . . What other significant things happened during that period of time?**

(700)

DB: Well not that I was involved with, but there was an Otter that was flying from Little America to McMurdo piloted by Lieutenant Commander Glen Lathrop that in an overcast, flew into a mountain, but flew into it at such a small angle in the snow field that the airplane simply flew into the snow field and came to a relatively undisastrous stop. And they were stranded there while search parties were looking for them for quite a while, but no one was injured in that.

BS: **This was during the season?**

DB: Yes.

BS: **During the summer. OK. And so, what'd they do? Camp by the aircraft?**

DB: I don't have any personnel knowledge of it, but I did talk to Glen afterwards and I think they camped out in the airplane. I think it wasn't damaged.

(End of Tape 1 - Side B)
(Begin Tape 2 - Side A)

(000)

BS: This is Tape 2 of Dusty Blades' narrative of Deepfreeze I. So you flew helicopters, it came time to leave McMurdo. Why don't we just take it from there?

DB: OK. The departure ceremony from McMurdo was an impressive one to me. A young officer, Seabee officer, whose name was Dave Canham - Lieutenant Cdr. Dave Canham - was the first wintering over Navy Commander, Leader, and the new McMurdo Station had just been built. It was still a long way to go. But the ceremony that all of the departing troops, including myself, attended at McMurdo saying good-bye to Dave and the members of the first wintering over party was quite an impressive moment in my memory. And that was in March of 1956 and my job, flying for VX6 as a cargo pilot, had been completed and I was assigned to the USS Glacier as a ice reconnaissance pilot for the trip home. The Glacier departed McMurdo sometime around the middle of March, as I recall and proceeded eastward on the circumnavigation of the Antarctic continent, heading east and going around towards the Antarctic peninsula, the Weddell Sea and the Antarctic peninsula. And as the ship proceeded around, at various points at the Task Force Commander or the Skipper of the Glacier, I don't recall what the command structure was on that trip, but in any case, they nosed the ship in at various places, put landing parties ashore, planted a flag and took various forms of observations in these different areas.
BS: *You went up through the peninsula?*

DB: Yeah. And then we went up the east side of the peninsula and proceeded on up to Rio di Janeiro, stopping at Montevideo en route there for a couple of days, then up to Rio and I and some of the other VX6 people left the ship at Rio and flew home from there. Flew back to Patuxent River from there.

BS: *And did you stay with the squadron for the next season?*

DB: No. When I got home I left the squadron and went on to my next duty assignment, which I can't remember what it was right now.

BS: *Didn't impress you much.*

DB: I'm sorry.

BS: *Didn't impress you much.*

DB: No, it was probably very good. I just can't remember.

BS: *So that was 1956. So what other duties did you have between then and the next time you came to Antarctica?*

DB: Let's see. My . . . I had a tour of duty following that first trip to Antarctica, I had a tour of duty with the Military Assistance and Advisory group in France. I was based in Paris and acted as a Naval Aviation Advisor to the French Navy. Spent most of my time aboard French aircraft carriers and with French squadrons in the Metropole and France
itself and around the Mediterranean and North Africa. Had a very, very interesting tour there. I came back from France and had a second tour at Patuxent River. No, I think I'm getting this mixed up.

BS: *Did you meet any Frenchmen who had been down during IGY when you were there?*

DB: No.

BS: *You didn't? None of them looked you up. They were actually there from 1954 forward. They were a year ahead of us.*

DB: You mean at d'Urville?

BS: *DeMontrevert?*

DB: No. I never got over to the French sector at all. I didn't come across any French people. I served a second tour at Pax River and from there was assigned to the Pacific Missile Range Facility in Hawaii and spent a three year tour there recovering space objects from the mid-Pacific. We had several ships with helicopters aboard and when there would be re-entry material that would land in the ocean, we would recover it and return it. As that tour was coming to an end, I applied for an opening as the prospective Commanding Officer for the Deepfreeze wintering over party, 1964-65. There was a notice put out that this was, that there was an opening and I applied for that. And the assignment was made. I got my orders and proceeded to Chile, to Valparaiso where I picked up a Navy icebreaker, the *Edisto*. She was proceeding down to the Antarctic with
Seabees and other personnel to build the planned Palmer Station. As a prospective Commanding Officer of the wintering over party, why I was put aboard the Edisto to be on hand and observe the creation of Palmer Station so that I would have an understanding of the situation there during the wintering over period because the plan was to build the Palmer Station and leave the party there for the coming winter.

So we stayed there at Embers? Island for, I can't remember exactly, but probably a couple of weeks while the creation of the new station, which was on the site of an earlier British research station, was built, and the proceeded on to McMurdo Station.

BS: *Who was the OinC there?*

DB: At Palmer?

BS: *Um-hum.*

DB: I don't remember who. Don't remember the name.

BS: *Seabees manned it? Did Seabees man it? Operate it then? The station.*

DB: I didn't . . .

BS: *Did Seabees operate and man the station?*

DB: No, I think . . . maybe they did. I don't know.

BS: *So you went from there to McMurdo.*
DB: Yep. Upon arriving at McMurdo at the essentially early in the summer working season, I acted as the Executive Officer of McMurdo Station during that time. Captain Elliott was the Air Support Activities Commanding Officer of the Station during the working period. And I acted as his Executive Officer during that time.

BS: *And that was in the November-December time frame?*

DB: Yeah. Also flew the helicopters supporting the science effort, flying field parties out and providing provisions for them and what not.

BS: *How were your relations with the scientists?*

DB: Well friendly. I wasn't very cognizant of their work other than just from casual conversations with them. But it was always very interesting to me to be able to observe all the things that they were up to and be a part of that.

BS: *Do you remember any of their names?*

(100)

DB: The Senior Scientist for the wintering over party and he was there during the summer - he was the senior during the summer - was Art DeVries. Really an outstanding fellow as I remember. A marine biologist. Also at this time, I got acquainted with the man who was my counterpart at Scott Base. A very historical figure, I guess you'd say. His name was Adrian Hayter. He was the leader of Scott Base for the summer and for the coming wintering over season. Adrian - very interesting background. He has written a number of books about it. But he was a British Army Officer in India during World War
II. He was a Commander of a Gurka Battalion. At the end of the war, the British were shifting their emphasis to Burma and he, rather than continue his Army career, he resigned in India and he had never sailed before, but he went to England and acquired a small sailboat which he named *Shiela*. I think she was somewhere in the neighborhood of 17 foot long and sailed it single-handed back to New Zealand. He stayed and did various things in Australia and New Zealand for a while and then got the urge again and went back to England and acquired another sailboat and sailed the other way around the world back to New Zealand. So he was an around-the-world solo sailor. After that he did a number of things. He worked with Outward Bound in New Zealand in the sea training program for Outward Bound.

In any case, he was appointed to this job as leader of Scott Base and during the winter, the two of us became good friends and enjoyed a number of experiences together, one of which was a rousing 4th of July celebration put on by McMurdo during which time we were attacked by a red-coated unit hauling a cannon over the pass between Scott Base and McMurdo with the avowed intention of retaking this pocket of rebels for the King or Queen, as the case may have been. But another experience which was made possible for me by Adrian Hayter was they invited me to go out with the dog team on various occasions just to get acquainted with it, which I did and enjoyed very much. And I took a several day trip with one of his dog handlers and team across the bay ice.

During this trip, the ice was perfectly level and along our route was covered with a fair covering of snow. And the dog team - we were on a straight shot across the ice - and at one point the lead dog veered off to the right and Ivan McDonald, the dog handler, stopped the team and tried to straighten the lead dog out to go the direction that Ivan was telling him to go. And the dog absolutely refused. After a time of trying to discipline the dog, why Ivan got out a probe - a steel probe - and walked up the intended course and found that there was a considerable lead in the ice that was completely masked by this
snow cover. And the dog somehow sensed that and couldn't be made to go the way he was told because he sensed the danger involved.

(150)

BS: *Did you camp during this trip?*

DB: Camp? Yes, un-huh.

BS: *How long were you out?*

DB: I think three days.

BS: *What time of year was this?*

DB: In the middle of winter.

BS: *Dark?*

DB: Dark, yeah.

BS: *Let's back up a little into the summer. You temporarily were assigned to XO of the Station to get you used to running the station and then you went back to VX6?*

DB: No. As soon as the summer ended and the summer troops all left and the Admiral left, this was Admiral Jim Ready, why I became the Commanding Officer of what was called ASA Detachment Alpha and that was the name for the US wintering over party at
McMurdo and at all the stations on the continent. At that time there were five wintering over sites at the time, including the Pole and Byrd Station, Eight Station and Palmer. And so when they left why I assumed responsibility for that group and carried on throughout the winter.

BS: *OK. But in the summer you flew with VX6.*

DB: Yes.

BS: *Did they have a winter over VX6 _____ at McMurdo then? Was that included in your group?*

DB: Yes.

BS: *And did VX6 have a winter over officer in charge?*

DB: Um-huh.

BS: *And who was that?*

DB: Sorry. I can't recall.

BS: *OK.*

DB: I plead old age and incompetence.
BS: I can't remember half the names. Done too much travel. OK. So, basically you were still attached to the station, but you flew with VX6 in the summer. Did you fly in the winter too?

DB: No. Well, we made a few helicopter flights after everyone else left, but it didn't last very long because of deteriorating weather conditions.

BS: How late did you fly? Did you fly in the dark?

DB: No, probably several weeks after departure and shut things down.

BS: When did they begin flight ops again?

DB: Oh, I think in late August.

BS: Tell me a bit about wintering over and personnel relations. Did you have problems with people reacting to the isolation or the darkness?

DB: Yeah. This was an interesting thing. Everybody thinks that they're just fine and everything's going well, but things happen to people and the continual darkness. We lived in a considerable sized town there. We had facilities, we had a bowling alley and movies and streets and street lights and everything. But you got in a position where you went to bed at night and when you got up it's still as black as it was when you went to bed and it stays dark all day long. And it gets to people. And strange things happen. Funny things, humorous things and things that are not very humorous. We had, during that wintering over period, '64-'65, VX6 somewhere as the winter wore on, started reporting a phantom.
Various people around the VX6 facilities would report seeing a phantom. Not somebody that was real, but they would show up at some quarter and the person would come back and report seeing him, and it got - it was kind of a joke, but the people who reported him, were offended when people laughed about it because they apparently thought that they saw somebody.

Another example of things that happen - in the Chapel of the Snows, the chaplain's procedure normally was to leave the Bible open on the altar as a normal course of things. The chaplain arrived one morning to find the Bible opened and a passage in the Bible, the text of which was something to the effect of "Oh Lord, help me in my extremity" was circled with a ballpoint pen to the point to where the page was torn. In other words, it was defaced with some effort. And the chaplain told me about it the following morning, that he had found this. But we never discovered who this person was who was having a great deal of trouble. There was never any explanation for it or knowledge on any of our parts as to who had been in this anguish. So things happen. And I think some light can also be shed on this by the approach of daylight again. As the promised date of the first time that we would be able to see a glimmer of dawn, people's attitudes seemed to change. People seemed to be getting excited about it. And it's a little difficult to talk about. Obviously we all knew, and I speak for myself here. I knew very well that this was a normal cycle and we could expect daylight to come back on a given date and it would. But somehow, in my being, I heard the question. You know, maybe . . . is the sun really coming back? Maybe this darkness is the way it's going to be.

BS: *That's something that came up in your mind.*
DB: It came up in my mind and you know, I'd reject it when it came up. I'd say, you know, that's stupid. But it does come up. I don't know what psychologically how this happens, but I do know that on the first days when the sun was supposed to first show as a little glimmer on the horizon for just a few moments, the first day or first few days, that we all went out to the hill on Hut Point on the ridge and stood on the ridge and looked for this first glimmer of sun. And seeing it for me personally, was just a great feeling of exhaltation, of seeing this first light. And I know that a lot of other people had very similar feelings.

BS: *Was there any inter-personnel problems during the darkness?*

(250)

DB: No, other than the question of the phantom, you know. People saying this is not funny and something should be done about it. Somebody is playing a practical joke and they'd better knock it off or somebody'll get killed. And so there was concern about that, but it didn't result in a tangible discipline problem. And people, yeah, people get annoyed with one another and the tolerance of one person for another's weaknesses or mistakes is exaggerated under those conditions, I think. The drinking was a question that was difficult to make sure that you were viewing from all sides. On one hand, it was a release, and a considerable benefit, but it was abused as well in various cases and there was some discipline problems in that respect.

BS: *Did you have an exchange scientist there?*

DB: Yes we did. We had a Russian glaciologist whose name was Igor Zotikov and he was assigned as the exchange scientist during that wintering over period - '64-'65. We had
. . . everybody enjoyed, I mean it seemed like everybody enjoyed Igor's presence among us very much and he certainly seemed to enjoy it. He was a hard worker and was out working throughout the winter on his various projects, reveling in it. During the winter, one of our little collateral projects, I guess, was to get various classes going in different things and so Igor gave a class in Russian language which a number of us enjoyed. An interesting thing. This was. . . the Cold War was still in good shape at that time. And as we came to the end of the season when the airplanes would come in. The ships were coming in. And personnel were preparing to rotate, to leave. Igor and I got together. We had become close friends over the winter time and we got together and it soon became apparent that each of us wanted to ask the other one if we could continue our friendship . . . correspond. I was afraid that - I knew that I wanted to - but I was afraid that I might get him in difficulty politically if I were to do this openly. And as it turned out, when it came above board to be talked about, why he had the same feelings.  

(300)  

So essentially at the time when each of us was leaving, we agreed that it was OK. That we should continue the friendship and not worry about . . .  

BS: *Political differences.*  

DB: Yeah. Those differences. And I have seen him often since then. I spent Christmas two or three years ago with him in Moscow as his house guest in Moscow over the Christmas season.  

BS: *How about during the Cold War, before the break-up of the Soviet Union? Did you have trouble getting your mail through to him or . . . ?*
DB: Yeah. We agreed that, as I say, when we left the Ice in 1965, that we would correspond, but I was still not - I didn't feel it was wise to be too open in correspondence and for a number of years, our correspondence seemed to be mostly greetings, congratulations on national holidays. On the 4th of July, I would get telegrams from Igor wishing me well. And on May Day. This was sort of interesting. In our winter talks, I talked about May Day and our understanding that May Day in Russia was a time when all the heavy armament was rolled out in parades in Moscow and it was a kind of a glorification of Soviet military might. And he explained to me that this was just tacked on to a long Russian tradition of celebrating the end of winter and celebrating the coming of Spring and good weather and what not. And so, on May Day every year, I sent him a congratulations and greetings.

BS: Did you have a May Day celebration for him on the Ice?

DB: No. I don't think we did. We should have, but I don't believe we did.

BS: I always ask, because the Russians sent us May Day congratulations when I wintered over.

DB: I'm sorry?

BS: The Russians sent us May Day congratulations when I wintered over. Did you have ham radio?

DB: Yes.
BS: *How important was that?*

DB: Ham radio was exceptionally important. A great morale benefit to each one of us. And the volunteer ham operators who would connect all of us who were wintering over and missing our families and suffering from the withdrawal of light and all these things that we've been talking about - to be able to get on this radio, go down to the radio shack at McMurdo and get on and talk to your wife, talk to your kids and friends, it was just a wonderful thing.

BS: *I understand there was an incident back in the beginning of IGY in the winter over with Bert Crary and Pat Maher. Can you enlighten the world about that?*

(350)

DB: Yeah. I have to tell this from a third party point of view because I wasn't there, but a wonderful story to my mind about Pat Maher and Bert Crary. Pat, in 1957, beginning of the IGY, Pat Maher was the Military Commander of the Little America station and Bert Crary was the Scientific Leader there. Little America had gotten to the point where it was completely under the surface, connected with the various facilities, connected by tunnels and what not. And one of the projects, as I understand it, during that winter, was to build a sauna bath for the comfort and enjoyment of all hands. And this was done, but now I have to pause for a minute just to mention a feeling among the wintering over people. It's been the practice in recent years that when the wintering over period is broken by the arrival of the first aircraft in the Spring, that one of the priority or some of the priority passengers on that first airplane have always been psychologists and psychiatrists employed by the Navy and National Science Foundation to investigate the status, the
condition of the isolees. How did the isolees make out during this period of
darkness and what not.

Well this is all well and good, but the isolees themselves were most interested in
seeing the mailman first and seeing their friends and visiting with their friends as a matter
of second priority. And to have these docs jump out of the plane and start interviewing
them wasn't the thing that the wintering over people were most looking forward to. So
this was always a matter of conversation.

Well, at Little America during this time, Pat Maher and Bert Crary got their heads
together and worked up a scheme whereby they would have communications from the
surface to the sauna bath - radio communications. And they made arrangements that there
would be a lookout on the surface and when the first plane arrived and was in the traffic
pattern in the Spring, they would be advised, they would both plan to be in the sauna at
this time and they would be advised when the plane was taxiing up and about to stop.
And so they carried out this plan, and when they were so advised, why both Pat Maher
and Bert Crary, the two leaders of Little America Station, went out to greet the
psychologists and psychiatrists without a stitch of clothes on, either of them.

BS: *I believe it. Did you stay during the next summer season or did you go home at the* 
*end of the winter?*

DB: No, I went home at the end of the winter. I didn't stay for another work season.

BS: I guess we should raise the issue, did your troops go out and meet the first flight *au
naturel* when it came back? . . . without clothes on?
DB: No, no. I didn't hear that story until after I had returned from my wintering over time.

BS: *And did you fly back to the USA commercial?*

DB: Yes. I think I flew back military to New Zealand and commercial from . . . no, no. I think I flew back military all the way.

BS: *Have you returned to the Ice since?*

DB: No I haven't, but I feel that that's unfortunate. If I could have found a way, I think I should have.

BS: *In retrospect, would you do it again?*

DB: Oh, I'd do it again in a heartbeat.

BS: *It was worthwhile.*

DB: Wonderful experience. It really is. And one of the things about the - this is a kind of something that most everybody who's been there knows, but one of the misconceptions that people who haven't been to the polar regions is it's going to an area which is characterized by black and white and different shades of gray. And people who haven't been there don't really realize what a riot of color one finds in the Arctic, whether it's the Arctic or the Antarctic. In terms of the sky and the atmosphere and the ice and the water and the aurora or the austral phenomenon, just amazing colors.
BS: *It's beautiful, in other words.*

DB: It's beautiful.

BS: *Very dynamic. Do you have a feature named after you?*

DB: Yes. The US _____ on Geographic Names was, at the recommendation of I guess the staff, I don't know, but in any case, named a mountain in the Sentinel Range Mt. Blades, which was probably undeserved but very gratifying in any case.

BS: *When were you married? Before you went to the Arctic?*

DB: Oh yes, I was married in 1946.

BS: *And your wife put up with your absences to the Arctic and the Antarctic? How did she fare back home?*

DB: Yeah. As a Navy pilot, I was gone on cruises and what not throughout my career. Two or three months was about the maximum time away. My over wintering in the Antarctic was the longest time and in retrospect I'm more aware of the difficulty that this was.

(450)

We had five children at the time and she did a marvelous job, but it was very difficult. I realize that.
BS: *Well that was why ham radio was so important.*

DB: Yes, indeed. And we have people here in Boulder now who are ham operators and because of my experience in Antarctica, I have contacted them on several occasions and gotten them interested in talking with the Antarctic Stations and providing the same services.

BS: *That's wonderful. So you're in touch with the Antarctic through them.*

DB: Yeah.

BS: *Well that's wonderful. I thank you very much. We're going to open up the interview again and talk about a flight Commander Blades took to Cape Evans and some artifacts that he acquired there.*

DB: During Deepfreeze I, after I went back to helicopter flying, got off the YOG, I was flying various people around, scientists around, what not, one of my assignments was to fly a group of New Zealanders over to Cape Royds and Cape Evans. And during this flight, at Cape Evans, both of these sites had the basic huts and then they had dumps, outside supply storage areas where there was all manner of stuff that had been there for 50 years since the occupants had departed. A couple of the things I picked up there - a bit of interest. At Cape Evans, I picked up some matches out on the dump. There was a large pile of regular safety matches from England. The package says "Made in London by R. Bell and Co., Ltd. Lights only on the box." The precursor of what we know as safety matches. But these had laid out in the open for all those years, only covered with paper wrapper. And the package that I have here is just a small package, part of a larger paper wrapped package.
But it's in certainly usable condition and really quite good condition for that kind of exposure. The label on the match package says, "The perfect match. Strike lightly and a brilliant flame is produced. The wood being specially prepared, the burnt portion has no afterglow and does not drop off, thus insuring perfect safety."

We went from Cape Evans to Cape Royds, and at Cape Royds in a similar dump outside of the cabin, I picked up an item which is called Odumine. Odumine. And it's an elixir. I'll read from the label. It's quite interesting but it was taken down as part of the supplies earlier by Sir Ernest Shackleton's group whose base Cape Royds was. This is called "Odumine," and the subtitle is "Health in the Home. It's good for diphtheria, scarlet fever, cholera and yellow fever. All of these maladies are banished by this perfect sanitary fluid. As used in castle, cottage, asylums, school, hospital and stable." So you can see, it's really a quite a useful item and it's made by the Odum's Manure and Chemical Company. But this was part of the supplies - one of the supplies that Sir Ernest Shackleton took advantage of.

Also while I was at Cape Evans with this group of New Zealanders, also from the outside dump area, I picked up a broken lantern of a kind of railroad kind and the New Zealanders encouraged me to keep it as a souvenir. I have it and it's interesting. It was made in London in 1910 and undoubtedly loaded aboard Scott's ship for the trip down. And Brian has suggested and I should very much like to make this a contribution to an historical society perhaps in New Zealand that this would be of interest to.
Cape Evans is, perhaps I can explain it a little. The hut was . . . the snow was surrounding it and it was up to the level just under the eaves of the hut and the windows, the tops of the windows, you could see through them just at their tops where they were protected by the eave and thus not covered with snow. But lying on the snow, looking through those windows down into the room, it was very much like seeing a place where the occupants had only left a week or so before, or not very long before. Looking down into this room, there was a main dining table and on it was approximately three-quarters of a wheel of cheese. There were chunks of bread and condiments that had been there for 50 years since the Terra Nova arrived over the horizon late in the season and worried about being beset, got the people out of that - the remaining party left at Cape Evans from Scott's Expedition, got them out and aboard the Terra Nova and they took off while there was still time. But they just abandoned things just as they were and the bunks and the personal equipment and stuff were laying around the room. And it was really the closest thing I think you could find to really looking in upon a scene of history.

BS: Say it again. Your first name is J-e-h-u.

DB: Yeah. My first name is J-e-h-u and it's a Biblical name. I was named after my grandfather, but I very seldom encounter it. One place that I have encountered it was in Scott's original Pole party. One of the members of his party was named J-e-h-u, but it wasn't a human member. It was one of Scott's Siberian ponies. His name was Jehu, and so that was a very good connection for me. And the hut at Cape Evans had lean-tos, enclosed lean-tos which were stables for these ponies. And I've been told that the names of the ponies were on those stables, but we couldn't get in to see it at that time, so I don't know whether that's true or not, but I know that one of the ponies was Jehu.